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Village Center Area: Main Street Enhancements

The landscape architect was asked to review the commercial section of East Main Street and suggest, in general, ways the village might improve the quality of the existing streetscape. Since this section of Main Street was recently renovated by the NYSDOT, the suggestions provided here focus primarily on auxiliary improvements that can further enhance the pedestrian experience along the street. To that end, this section describes a number of landscape enhancements for the street including: a description of positive aspects of the street and building facades, seasonal flower displays and ornamental plant containers, tree guards, location studies for a new village clock, strategies for new business signs, and ideas for the Moore Park frontage on Main Street.



Westfield's Streetscape has many fine Elements

1. Building Facades

The building facades with all their historic character, structural integrity and nuance of expression as provided by the owner/occupant provide the underlying framework for the streetscape. They frame the space and endow the space with human character.

Main Street in Westfield has a variety of facade types that lend character to the street including the 19th century commercial block along the north side of Main St., the elegant Moore Park, the vernacular Main Diner and the more recently added "car-convenient" structures such as the fast-food restaurants, banking and drug

stores. All the building types contribute more or less to the collective sense of the streetscape and all should be considered for the role they play in maintaining a healthy and lively streetscape.

The key design strategy related to building facades is to understand how the facade and the building location influence the enjoyment of the street space by people. The facades provide a sense of history, they hold narrative about the events that shape the community. They provide a rich, tactile visual field through the variety of materials and forms they employ. And perhaps most important, they es-

tablish the relative size or scale of the pedestrian space along the street - the sidewalk space.

The image above illustrates this idea. The buildings integrate nicely together and form a pleasant, modulated wall along the sidewalk. Store windows, doorways and awnings establish pedestrian scale and offer sensory interest in terms of color, textures, signage and fragrances. There is an intimacy here that supports and encourages human interaction - which is the goal the village has established for its streetscape: to encourage tourism, commercial development and an active village streetscape.

Every effort should be made to maintain the facades along the street and the associated sense of scale that establishes a comfortable space for people.

Note: There are areas along the street where changes to the building setback have allowed a greater presence of cars in the streetscape and consequently a loss of some of the pedestrian qualities of the street. See notes on the next pages of this section for strategies that can address these conditions.



Westfield's Streetscape has many fine Elements

2. Awnings

Awnings not only provide shade and shelter along the street but also add color, fabric texture and liveliness (motion) to the street environment. They are an important and authentic street element.

3. Signage

Signage along the storefronts on Main Street is pleasant and generally appropriate for the businesses and the types of architecture. Signs are typically placed on the facade and orient toward the street. Design enhancements suggest adding projecting signs that are visible from the sidewalk. (See sketch on page 26).

4. Sidewalks

Westfield is blessed with relatively wide sidewalks which can be used to support sidewalk commercial activities such as cafe seating, art and product displays.



5. Street Lighting

Street lights - poles & luminaires - are one of the most important elements in the streetscape for establishing human scale and aesthetic interest. The new light poles and luminaires recently installed by the village are an appropriate design for the street setting.

6. Street Trees

Street trees provide a living and dynamic element to the street. Flower, leaf color and branching patterns appeal to the sensual needs of village residents.

A variety of the Amelanchier species is currently in place and can provide a wide range of horticultural interest so long as a fairly moist soil environment is maintained. The tree is also somewhat delicate in its branching structure so efforts need be made to protect branches and trunk from impact and heavy snow damage. See discussion on streetscape enhancements for ideas to protect the trees.



street trees, in addition to providing shade and color, provide a "virtual wall" that encloses the sidewalk and separates the pedestrian space from the vehicular space

projecting signs can add visual interest to the street as well as shop advertisements

tree guards protect trees & add ornament to the pedestrian space

flowers & planters provide seasonal interest and a measure of softness to the sidewalk area

Streetscape Elements



The pedestrian space

As noted on the previous pages, East Main Street has many positive characteristics of a pleasant streetscape. There are several additional elements the village can add to enhance this setting even further. These include using annual flowers in decorative planters, placing ornamental steel tree guards around the street trees, use business signs that project into the sidewalk area from the shops use and occasional pavement material changes (adding unit

pavers in place of concrete) to provide interest in an otherwise uniform sidewalk surface.

This page and the facing page illustrate how these elements can help add more color and texture to the streetscape with a goal of making the sidewalk area a bit more lively and visually interesting.

Streetscape Elements

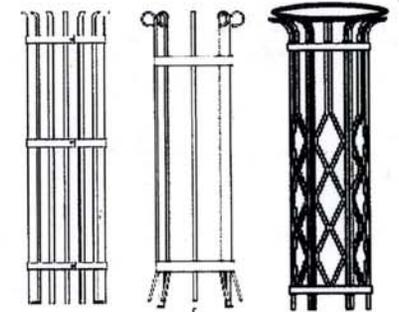


Steel/iron tree grates protect trees from impact damage.

Groupings of plant containers look better and give a stronger visual image than do linear arrangements, uniformly placed along the sidewalk.



Petersen Precast Site Furnishings



Ironsmith Steel Tree Guards

The illustration above shows several elements that can be used to enhance the existing streetscape in the village.

perience - you want the sidewalk to be a people place and not dominated by cars.

Groupings of annual flowers with sturdy, decorative containers will provide seasonal interest along the sidewalk as well as strengthen the sense of separation between the pedestrians and the cars moving along Main Street. This is important to establishing a pleasant sidewalk ex-

Another element that will add interest to the street as well as providing protection for the street trees are steel or iron tree guards. These protect the tree trunks from impact damage from car doors and sidewalk snow removal equipment.



Building facade change creates a "node" that can support a special feature.

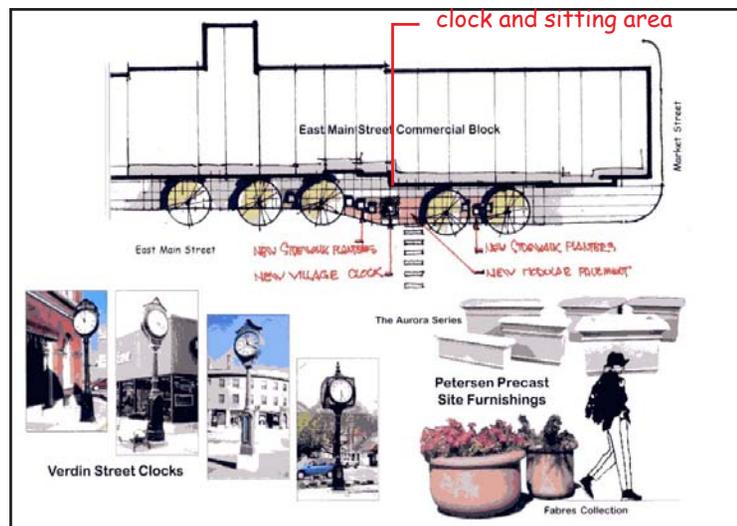


Village Clock Location: 'Heart of Main Street'

Purchasing and locating a village clock was one idea expressed by the community. Two locations were suggested by the landscape architect:

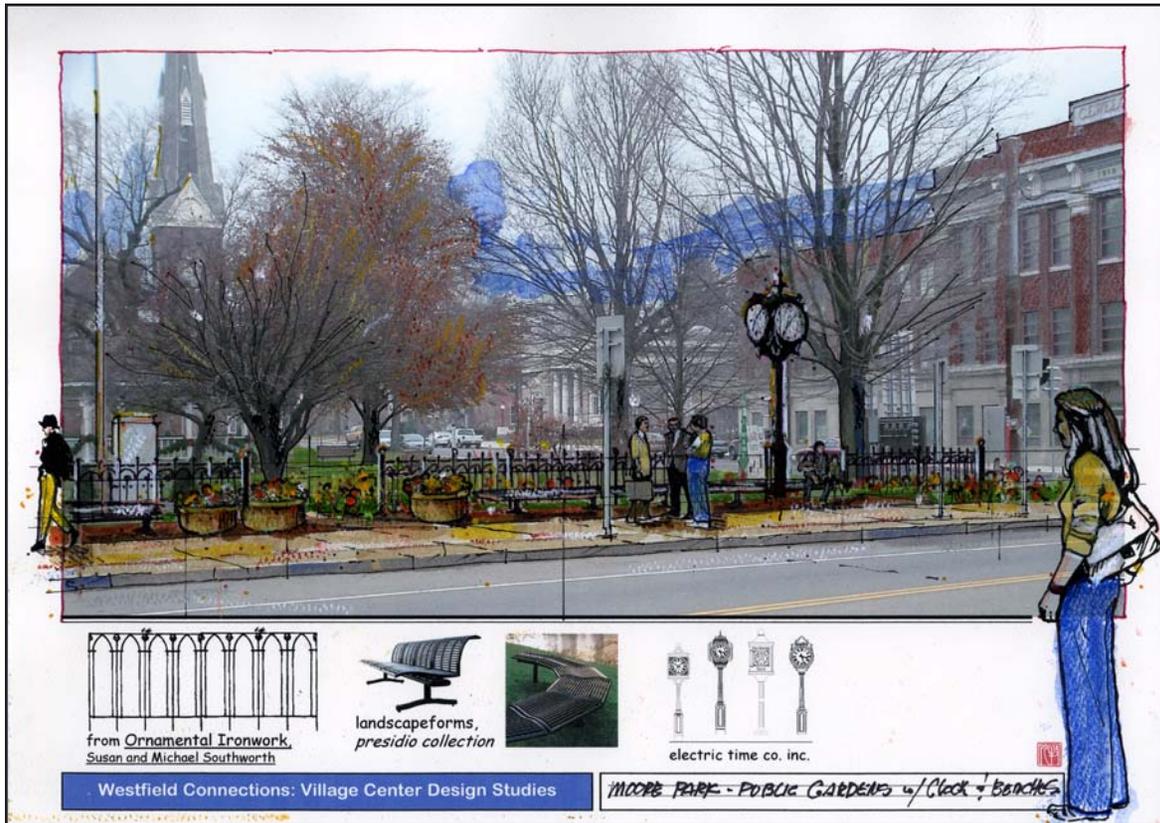
- 1, in the heart of Main Street and
- 2, Moore Park at the intersection of Main and S. Portage Sts.

This sheet illustrates the design potential for the Main Street location. In addition to locating the clock, the plan also establishes a small sitting area and includes modular pavers, planters for flowers and existing trees.



One suitable location for a Village Clock can be found along the north side of East Main Street, opposite the intersection of Elm Street and adjacent to the point where the building facade changes alignment. (see above)

The realigned building facade creates a special visual area along the streetscape and as such, presents an enhanced visual setting for a special landscape feature such as the village clock.



Westfield Connections: Village Center Design Studies

MOORE PARK - PUBLIC GARDENS w/ Clock & Benches



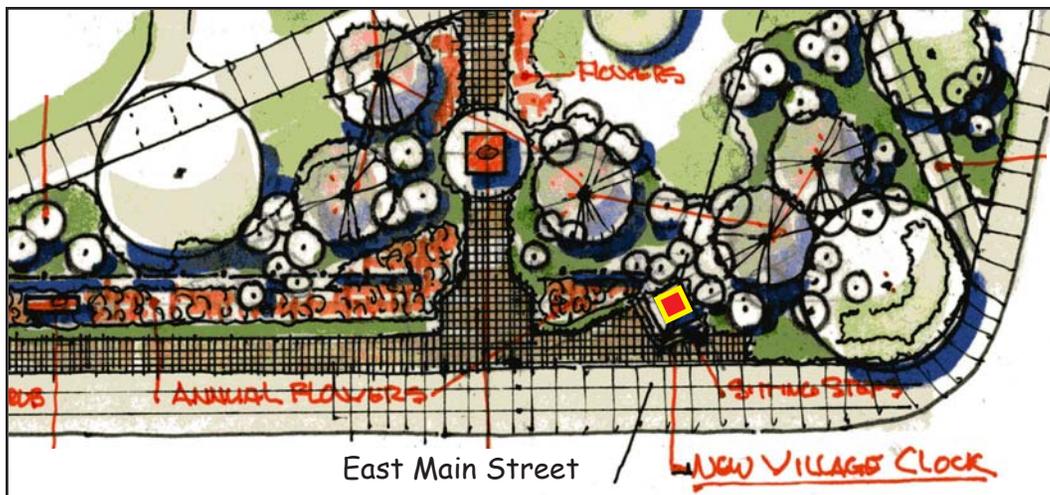
SW corner of Main & Portage Sts.



View looking south to Moore Park where the clock might be located.

Village Clock Location: Moore Park

Detail section of plan for Moore Park



South Portage Street

The Moore Park location for the village clock (corner of Main and Portage Sts.) places the clock at the main traffic intersection of the village and in a prominent viewing position for both local residents and visitors using Portage St. The park setting, as a community space also reinforces the appropriateness of this location - the clock as the "community timekeeper" located in the community's public ground.



Moore Park is not only a treasured open space within the village, it is also an important facet of the streetscape, providing horticultural counterpoint to the mostly masonry materials along Main Street. It is also the "front door" of the village for those arriving at the village along North Portage Street from the NYS Thruway.

The illustration above presents an idea where the frontage of the park is enhanced to create a stronger visual presence for the streetscape aspect of the park. In this way, the idea of the park is expanded beyond a single-entity green space to include a Public Garden along Main Street and a Commons area for the interior of the park. See Section 4, Moore Park Landscape Enhancements, for a complete discussion of design strategies Moore Park.



Certainly parking lots are a necessary part of our village landscapes. The concept for handling parking lots is to provide adequate parking but do it in a way so that the open, asphalt areas do not dominate the view along the village streets. The sketch on this page and on the following page illustrate a strategy using plant materials to “screen” the view, but not block the view, of the parking areas from traffic and

pedestrian corridors along the street. Screening allows people to see where the parking lots are located but presents a more appealing horticultural image between the parked cars and people driving or walking along the street. Screens can also include architectural elements such as low walls or fences or a combination of structural and horticultural elements.



Enhancing the Visual Quality of the Village Landscape with Plant Screens

In this example, plant screens have been installed to provide separation between the sidewalk and the parking lot, which is good. To be more effective, the plants should be allowed to grow slightly taller. It is not necessary or desirable to have thick, dense hedgerows of plants. We do not want to hide the parking lots but rather, place an element between the lot and the travel corridors that interrupt an otherwise continuous view from one asphalt area (roadway) to another (parking lot).

Also illustrated here are a stand of street trees placed within the plant screen. These trees accomplish two tasks: they reinforce the screen separation between the road and parking lot and, through their height, reestablish the spatial sense of the road corridor. This helps to maintain a smaller scale for the street landscape and thereby make it more appealing (comfortable) for residents and visitors.