

CHALLENGES

The following pages outline some of the challenges that Hermitage is facing in creating a pedestrian-oriented town center.that

no sense of place

The center of Hermitage currently consists of unlandscaped parking lots, single story retail that is set back long distances from the street and overly wide streets. These predominant elements combine to create an atmosphere that is anonymous, drab and unattractive. These photos of the intersection of State Street with Hermitage Road, below, could have been taken anywhere in the United States.



EAST STATE STREET LOOKING WEST TOWARDS INTERSECTION WITH HERMITAGE ROAD



HERMITAGE ROAD LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS INTERSECTION WITH STATE STREET

no connection to natural features

There are several stream corridors in the heart of town that could provide a great amenity to the community. Erosion control projects have already been undertaken where the stream runs behind the elementary school complex. However, they are currently not treated as amenities; the projects would have to be extended both north and south in order to create trails.



STREAM CORRIDOR AWAITING EROSION CONTROL



STREAM CORRIDOR AFTER EROSION CONTROL

CHALLENGES

no pedestrian amenities

The current zoning code requires new development to provide a sidewalk, street trees and to not be separated from the street by parking, but development has been patchy since the regulations went into effect. There are a few unlinked pieces of sidewalk and some curb cuts without adjoining sidewalks.



CROSSWALK AND CURB CUT WITHOUT ADJACENT SIDEWALK AT THE INTERSECTION OF HERMITAGE ROAD AND STATE STREET



SECTION OF SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF BOB EVANS

high traffic volumes on hermitage boulevard and state street

State Street (State Route 3008) carries 18,000 cars per day while Hermitage Road (State Route 0018) carries 15,000 cars per day. The traffic volumes themselves, are not squelching pedestrian activities. Many pedestrian friendly retail centers around the world have similar, or even higher, traffic counts. The problem lies in the combination of the high traffic volumes, high vehicular speeds, excessively wide streets and a lack of pedestrian amenities, creating a very intimidating and uninviting pedestrian environment. There are many tactics for calming traffic, reducing traffic volume and encouraging pedestrian activity that could help mitigate this problem.

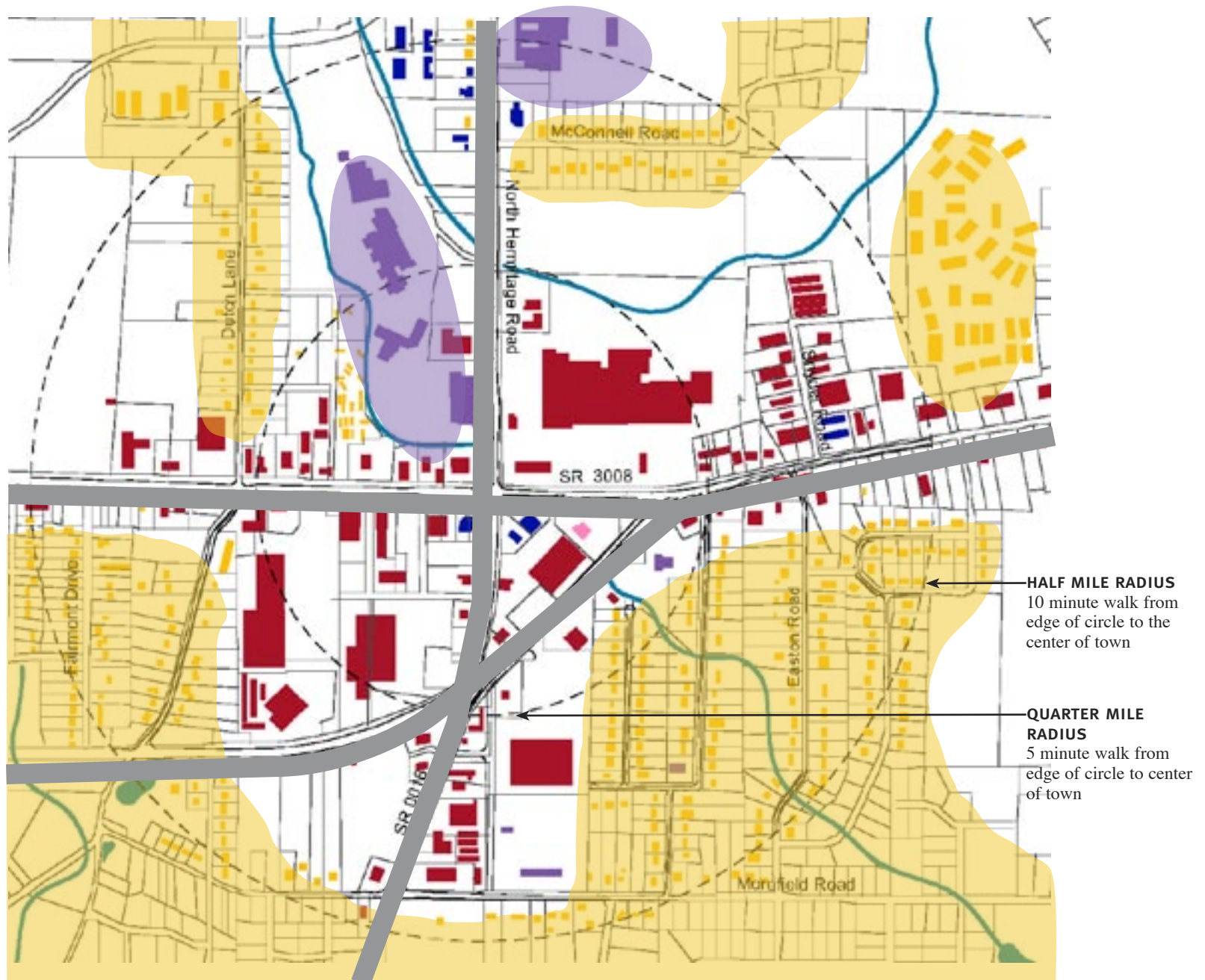


FORBES AVENUE IN OAKLAND, PITTSBURGH - Traffic volumes similar to those on State Street and Hermitage Road run through this retail district with heavy pedestrian traffic

CHALLENGES

disconnected uses

Like many towns that developed during the post-war era, land uses in Hermitage are segregated by type. Each use is confined within its own area of land, with no intermingling of uses occurring, making it very difficult to establish a pedestrian culture without additional development. Mixed use development promotes walkability by placing residents (ie, customers) within walking distance of the business that they frequent. The diagram below illustrates how the commercial district that is centered around Hermitage Road and State Street creates a barrier between residential neighborhoods. Wide, fast and heavily trafficked, the roads themselves also create a barrier, discouraging any pedestrian activity.



property use legend

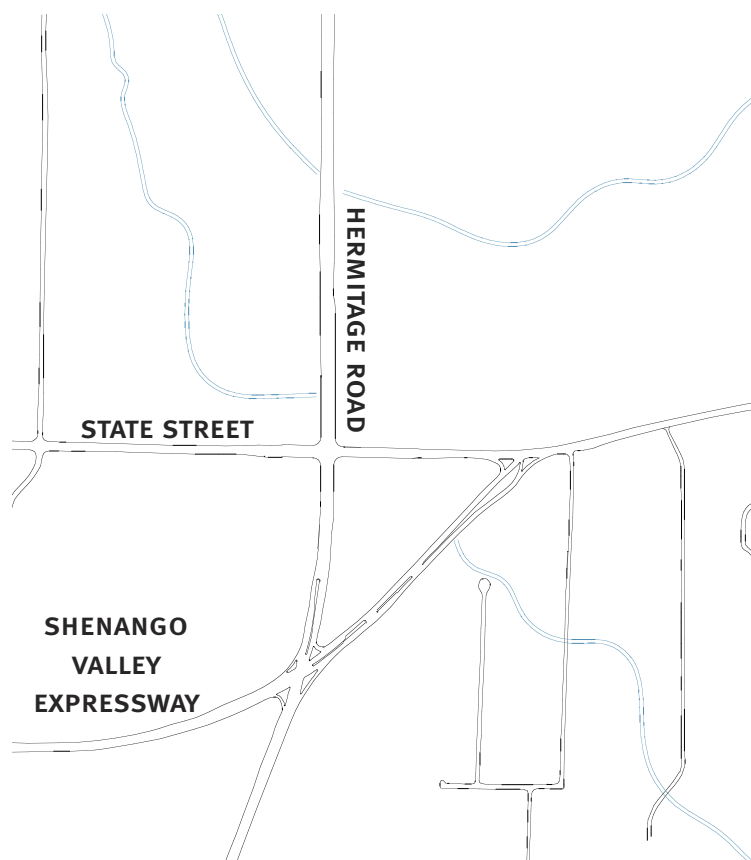


CHALLENGES

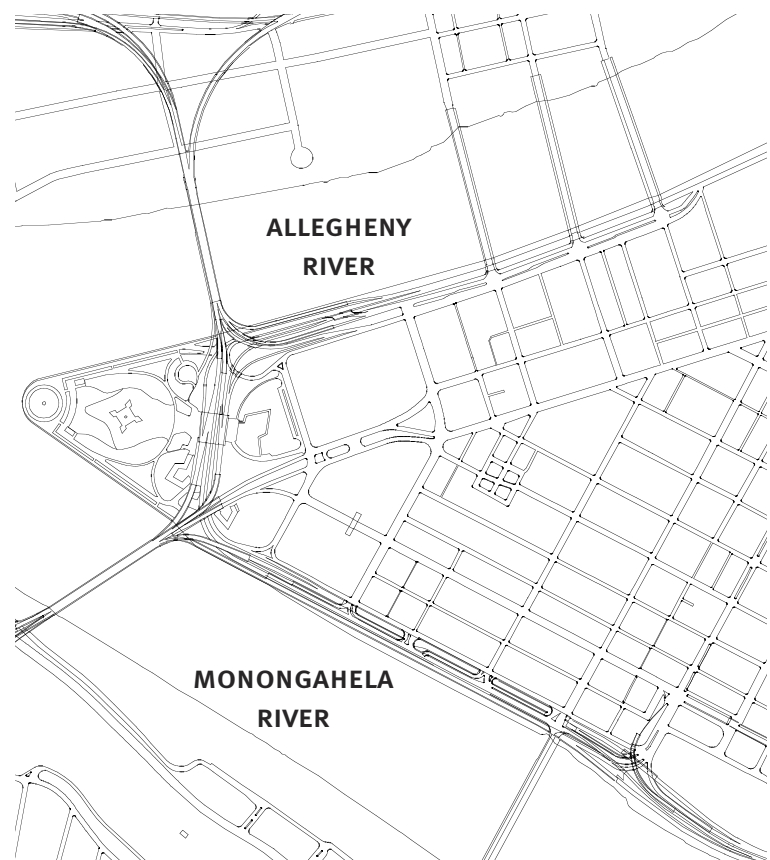
large blocks

Due to the lack of a finer grained street grid that would allow local residents to move about on side streets, almost all of the area's traffic is funneled onto Hermitage Road and State Street, causing congestion. These large blocks also make any potential pedestrian trips longer. For example, if someone living on Dutch Lane wanted to walk to the mall, they would have to either walk to State Street and then over to the mall, or walk to Highland Road and then south on Hermitage Road to the Mall. The construction of additional streets would create shorter routes for both pedestrians and vehicles. These additional streets would also open up more property for further development.

The two images below show the center of Hermitage at the same scale as downtown Pittsburgh. The scale of the blocks are completely different.



CENTER OF HERMITAGE



DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH

CHALLENGES

market assessment

As the chart below illustrates, Hermitage has a competitive demographic disadvantage when compared with other surrounding areas, in particular, high growth areas like Cranberry Township or the East End of Pittsburgh. Particularly in terms of potential retail development, the lower disposable income levels suggest that a large scale retail development or redevelopment is unlikely.

Early on in the planning process, the steering committee identified examples such as Crocker Park near Cleveland, Ohio as a positive model of what the ultimate goal for the Hermitage Town Center should be. This "town center" development is a mixed-use community that includes extensive high-end retail, apartments and offices to support an intensively developed public realm of streetscapes, public parks and parking garages. However, this project was undertaken as a coherent project under the control of a single developer with site control of the entire land parcel. Hermitage's relatively small population, slowly declining population and moderate income levels make it unlikely that this type of a developer intervention will take place, at least at the present time.

This means that change will most likely happen incrementally and the town center planning process needs to be based on that reality. It is clear, however, from the current level of developer and land-owner interest, that there is a market for new retail establishments, the new Super Wal-Mart and Home Depot projects testify to that fact. We believe that there is also a potential long-term market for residential development based on an aging population seeking new housing products such as condominiums and apartments.

comparative demographics

Topic	Hermitage - 10 mile radius	Waterfront - 20 minute drive	Cranberry - custom trade area
Population 1990	99,932	1,084,428	174,452
Population 2000	97,701	1,012,198	191,479
Population 2005	96,021	981,382	195,811
2005 Age <18	20,791	199,323	46,022
2005 Age 18-34	18,817	212,484	36,154
2005 Age 35-54	27,276	283,499	62,123
2005 Age >55	29,137	285,878	51,557
Average HH Income 1990	\$29,737	\$34,782	\$36,337
Average HH Income 2000	\$45,239	\$48,643	\$59,667
Average HH Income 2005	\$49,358	\$48,711	\$63,999
Median Disposable Income 2005	\$33,823	\$35,748	\$43,024
2005 Income Distribution \$0k - \$35k	18,532	189,591	29,326
2005 Income Distribution \$35k - \$50k	7,294	66,995	12,220
2005 Income Distribution \$50k - \$75k	7,336	72,269	15,320
2005 Income Distribution \$75k - \$100k	3,670	40,154	8,926
2005 Income Distribution >\$100k	3,239	46,349	12,244
Education >High School Degree	12,908	153,982	32,534
2005 Households	40,071	415,359	78,036
2005 Retail Expenditures/Household	\$18,855	\$18,547	\$21,187

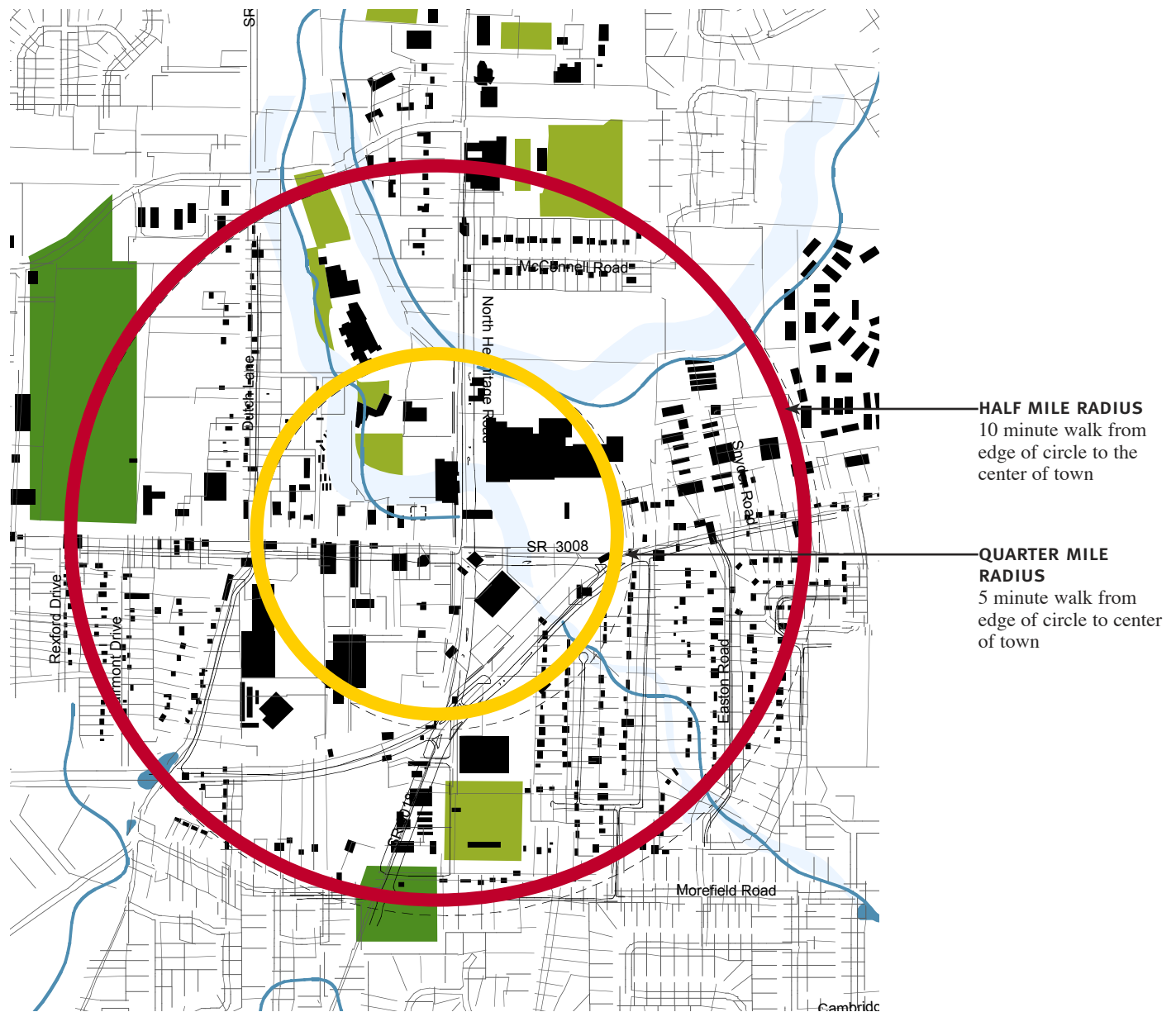
Note: Cranberry 2005 data based on 2004 study.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are many opportunities in Hermitage that will aid in achieving a memorable, active town center. Some of these opportunities were also listed as challenges, but if appropriately addressed, they could actually become an asset to the community.

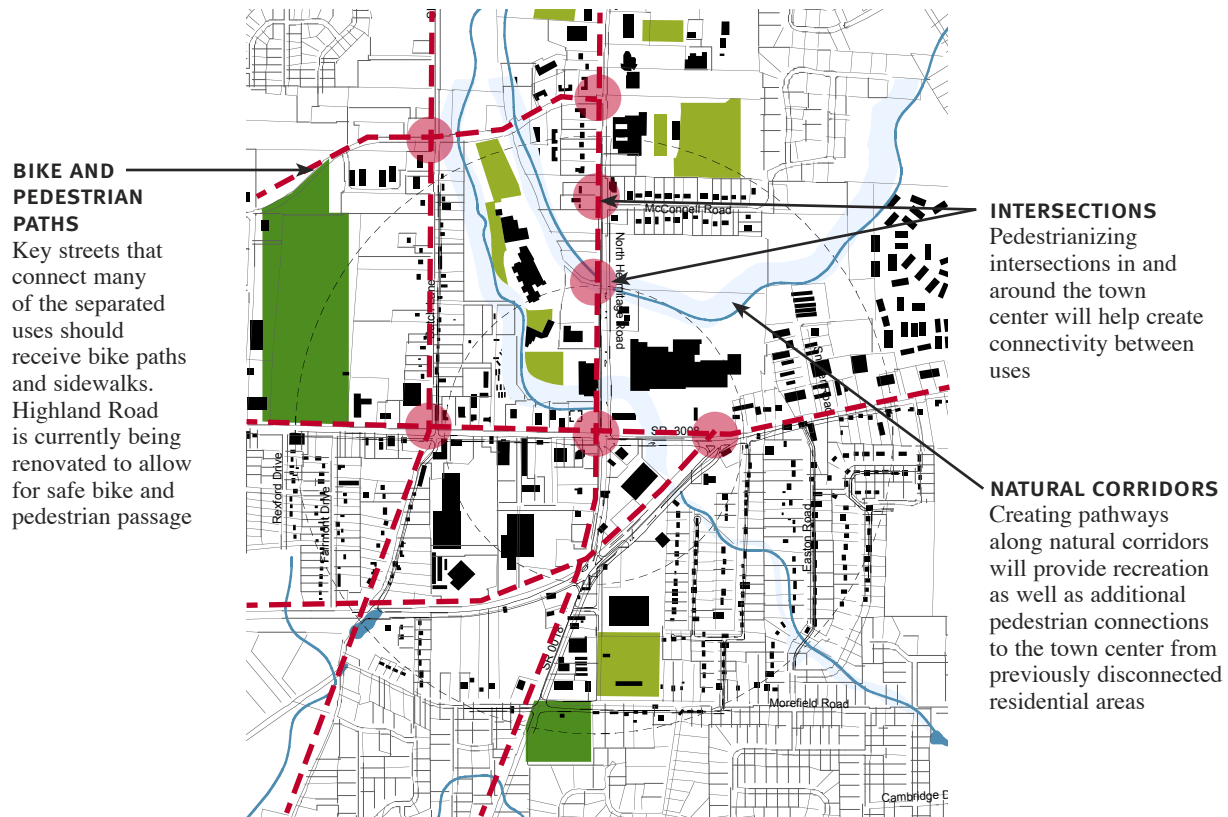
small area allows for greater walkability

The area being targeted as the center of town is quite compact. If pedestrian conditions were improved to make the area pleasurable to walk in and if more retail, residential and businesses were developed, the area would be very walkable.

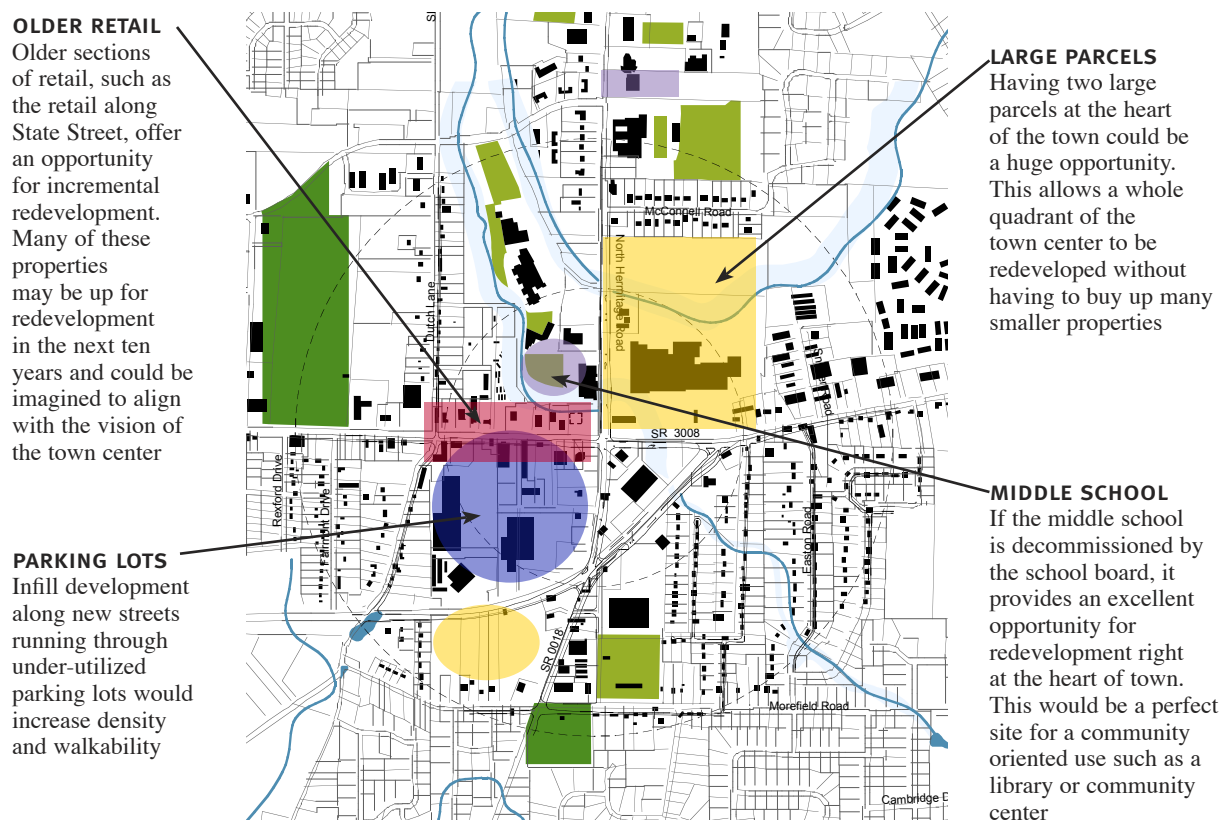


OPPORTUNITIES

connection opportunities



development opportunities



DESIGN CONCEPT

The diagram below illustrates the overall design concept. This concept organizes retail along Hermitage Boulevard and State Street and encourages mixed-use development to occur within a half mile radius of the intersection of the two streets. The following pages outline components of the design concept, each of which could be utilized in a variety of locations to create a walkable, memorable town center that would be the physical and social center of the community. These components are intended to be tools to shape future development into the vision of Hermitage that was established in the goal setting process. The final plan for Hermitage will most likely be quite different from any versions you will see on the next few pages, but the elements will be present in some form or another.

