

DRAFT

US-2 CORRIDOR VISUAL ENHANCEMENT PLAN

ESCANABA/GLADSTONE

SEPTEMBER 20, 2003



Prepared by:

The US-2 Visual Enhancement Planning Project Partnership

Funded by:

The People and Land (PAL) Program of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

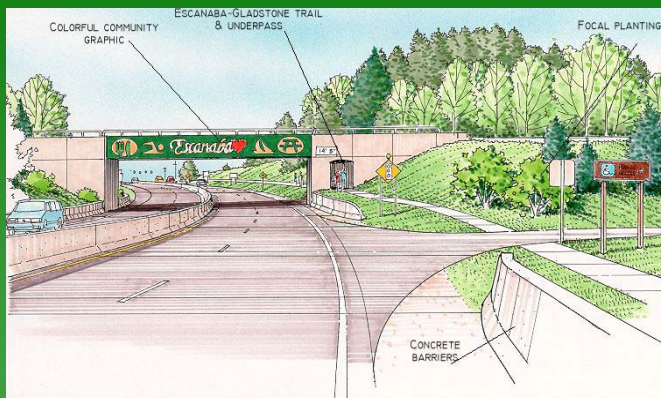




Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....2
Introduction and Project Description3
 What is Visual Enhancement3
 Why Visual Enhancement4
Existing Conditions – Summary of Field Analysis5
 Gladstone.....5
 Escanaba Township.....7
 Wells Township.....7
 Escanaba Commercial.....7
 West Escanaba.....8
Community Input.....9
Suggested Improvements.....11
 Gladstone.....11
 Escanaba Township.....11
 Wells Township.....12
 Escanaba Commercial.....12
 West Escanaba.....13
Conceptual Designs.....15
Achieving Results/Implementation.....31
Funding Enhancements.....45
Appendix A: Sources of Additional Information

List of Figures, Conceptual Designs and Tables

Figures

Figure 1 - US-2 Corridor Study Area.....6
 Figure 2 – MDOT, Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory49

Conceptual Designs

Conceptual Plan 1 – Gladstone, Westbound US-2 at Railyard16
 Conceptual Plan 2 – Gladstone, Eastbound US-2 entering Curve17
 Conceptual Plan 3 – Escanaba/Wells Township, North of Viaduct18
 Conceptual Plan 4 – Escanaba, Westbound US-2 at Escanaba River.....19
 Conceptual Plan 5 – Escanaba/Wells Township, Westbound US-220
 Conceptual Plan 6 – Escanaba, Westbound US-2 at North City Limit21
 Conceptual Plan 7 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, South of Danforth Rd.22
 Conceptual Plan 8 – Escanaba, Westbound US-2 at Fairgrounds23
 Conceptual Plan 9 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2 entering Curve24
 Conceptual Plan 10 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, N. of Ludington St.25
 Conceptual Plan 11– Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, N. of Ludington St.26
 Conceptual Plan 12– Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, Entering Town.....27
 Conceptual Plan 13 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, West of City Limit28
 Conceptual Plan 14 – Cross Section, Westbound US-2, South of Gladstone29
 Conceptual Plan 15 – Cross Section, Westbound US-2, Escanaba30

Tables

Table 1 – Achieving Results, Sections 1-4..... 34-37
 Table 2 – Summary of Economic Development Tools53



Acknowledgements

The US-2 Visual Enhancement Planning Project and the planning guidance contained in this document would not have been possible without the financial support of the People and Land (PAL) program of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

In addition, a number of organizations and individuals were vital to this project and developing the guidance and recommendation contained within this document. The following individuals logged long hours of travel, recorded extensive field documentation, gave numerous presentations and held many discussions leading to the development of this plan. Their effort, dedication and importance to this project cannot be understated.

Rita Hodgins

*District Extension Educator
MSU Extension*

Victor Nelhiebel

Victor Nelhiebel Land Architecture

Gerry Harsch

Planner, City of Charlevoix

John Campbell

*Executive Director
Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning & Development
Commission (Region 11)*

Dave Gillis

*Executive Director
Central Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Regional
Commission (Region 12)*

James Stingle

*Executive Director
Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Regional
Commission (Region 13)*

Tom Nemacheck

*Executive Director
Upper Peninsula Travel & Recreation Association*

Adrian Stroupe

*Regional Planner
MDOT*

**US-2 Visual Enhancement Advisory Committee
Members from the Communities of**

*Ironwood
Bessemer
Watersmeet
Iron River/Crysal Falls
Escanaba/Gladstone
Mackinac County*

Joe VanderMeulen

*Executive Director
Land Information Access Association*

Carl Ferguson

*Program Development Specialist
Land Information Access Association*



Introduction and Project Description

Introduction

Views from the road often form our first and most lasting impressions of a region and a community. What we see through the windshield can make us feel welcomed and at ease or uncomfortable and threatened. What can communities in the Upper Peninsula do to ensure that both residents and visitors feel welcomed and encouraged to stop?

Visual enhancement planning helps a community re-consider appearances from the perspective of a visitor. What attracts people to your town and local businesses? What encourages people to stay and enjoy your community's recreational resources? What keeps them coming back?

Last fall, the People and Land Program of W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided a grant to the Land Information Access Association and several project partners for the development of "visual enhancement plans" for many sections of the US-2 and M-134 corridors. The primary goal of this project is the preparation of a usable and well-supported visual enhancement plan for the US-2 and M-134 highway corridors, with a particular focus on critical community and tourist areas. We are also interested in motivating and supporting local and regional efforts to reverse on-going deterioration and preserve existing visual assets.

The project partners used a series of regional forums, press releases, newsletters and a web-site to introduce the concept of visual enhancement, describe why it is important for tourism and economic development, and discuss opportunities for communities to receive planning and implementation assistance. Building on the community participation and excitement generated from our initial outreach efforts, we invited several communities to participate in free, focused planning activities. This plan and the graphics and recommendations contained herein are the result of those activities.

What is Visual Enhancement?

Historically, highway design and construction has been oriented to concerns about safety, structure and cost. These areas remain foremost in the minds of new highway designers, as they should. However, their preeminence often eclipses another equally important design value - Visual Quality. The visual qualities of a roadway have important ramifications for drivers and communities along the corridor. A driver's view from the road often forms their entire impression of a region and informs their decisions about where to turn, where to stop and how to ultimately arrive at their destination. The visual qualities of a roadway can keep drivers informed, interested and alert or, conversely, confused, bored and tired.

When assessing existing roadways, visual qualities must be addressed from the standpoint of enhancements. What can be done to enhance the visual qualities of a particular roadway is a



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

community decision which should be addressed at the local level. However, some activities typically associated with visual enhancement are

- Adding bike or pedestrian facilities
- Limiting curb cuts and providing attractive, easy to follow directional signage
- Adding attractive landscaping or interesting street level features
- Preserving, rehabilitating or renovating historic structures
- Preserving scenic vistas or agricultural land
- Cleaning up of blighted areas
- Establishing design guidelines for signage, landscaping, materials, siting, etc.

Why Visual Enhancement?

Beyond the specific benefits of attractive streetscapes and safer and more efficient travel, the benefits of visual enhancement run much deeper. More attractive, interesting and informative transportation corridors can have dramatic impacts on community pride and economic development. Specifically, communities undertaking enhancement projects have seen:

- higher tax revenues
- increased tourism revenue
- increased private investment and new business creation
- increased employment
- increased interest in community history and civic engagement



Existing Conditions – Summary of Field Analysis

A proposal concentrating on the segment of US-2 that runs between Gladstone, Escanaba Township, Wells Township and Escanaba was one of six project proposals from along the US-2/M-134 corridor selected to receive visual enhancement planning assistance as part of the this project. This segment of the US-2 corridor is located in Delta County in the South Central portion of Michigan's Upper Peninsula

The subject of this study and plan is the section of US-2 corridor running from the northern entry into Gladstone through Escanaba. - approximately 10 miles (see figure 1).

Corridor Overview

The portion of U.S. 2 from the north boundary of Gladstone to the west limit of Escanaba is the most urbanized in the U.P., as well as the most traveled. The southern half of this stretch is essentially a commercial corridor, with all the same issues one finds in other highway or commercial sprawl areas. The north half alternates between bay views, residential and industrial.

There are many positive aesthetic attributes along this corridor. There are exceptional views of the bay and a nice wooded bluff that parallel a section of the corridor. There are numerous tourist accommodations and the community college campus and Pioneer Trail Park are both pleasant areas along the corridor.

Many of the positive aspects of the corridor are overshadowed by problems. High concentrations of billboards and commercial sign clutter, as well as unscreened industrial and material storage areas near the roadway detract from the aesthetic appeal and give the corridor a very cluttered appearance in places. There are also numerous driveways in many of the commercial areas that create awkward access problems. Few sidewalk connections combined with high traffic speeds and volume make any non-motorized transportation unlikely. Lastly, there are few clearly indicated places for tourist information and little consistent tourist directional signage.

Gladstone (North to Southern Limit)

The approach to Gladstone from the east along US-2 is uncluttered and pleasant dominated by woods and lowlands. Entering Gladstone the traveler is presented with long views of industrial buildings, storage yards, rubble fill and railyards - especially at the curves. These are interspersed with views of residences. There is little or no screening present, so the few billboards present dominate the view. Wide right-of-ways would allow significant landscape screening of these areas.

The corridor through Gladstone seems dominated by a mix of residential neighborhoods that back up to roadway along with some commercial and industrial areas. High traffic speeds, difficult intersections at the city access point and no landscape screening contribute to a "pass-through" feeling. It seems that access and directions to the city and extensive waterfront park is overshadowed by traffic, commercial signage and the sides of buildings. Where the roadway opens



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

<Insert plan view of corridor>



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

to the bay, there is no pedestrian crossing from the city to the bluff areas. There are excellent opportunities for community welcome features at north and south ends of the corridor in Gladstone.

Escanaba Township (Gladstone limit to Escanaba River)

This stretch of the corridor has excellent open views of Little Bay de Noc and the Escanaba peninsula - backed by wooded bluff. There are some small businesses and well-screened residences along the bay. However, traffic moves along at high speeds and there are no pull-offs for scenic views or photos. Also, there is currently no non-motorized pathway along this stretch.

As you leave the side of the bay, it becomes clear that billboards are spreading and located prominently on curves. Also, there are several prominent auto and R/V sales displays adjacent to road. Further along, the Escanaba River crossing is visual landmark, offering views of the views of dam, Mead plant and viaduct. There is also understated access here to the Pioneer Trail Park and DNR facility. It is apparent that future land use in this area, particularly the development of vacant parcels could significantly impact visual quality.

Wells Township (River to South Viaduct)

This stretch of corridor is the entry to Escanaba. The middle viaduct is a logical gateway to Escanaba and offers an uncluttered approach with a great opportunity for community identity graphics. Following the viaduct, the corridor goes to boulevard style, with trees in median (to college) providing visual relief. Here the wide right-of-way would allow significantly more roadside landscaping as well as more median landscaping. The businesses are well set back, and the service road on northbound side provides separation.

On the eastern side of the corridor, the Cemetery is pleasant green space; however a derelict billboard detracts from the appearance. Also, the cement products site and other industrials on east side of road are unattractive and require screening. The Community College campus and YMCA are attractive, with wooded, green frontage and would provide an excellent location for a community feature or tourist information structure. Further along, the area north of south viaduct is unattractively cluttered with billboards. This entire section of roadway has no walkways.

Escanaba Commercial Zone (Viaduct to M-35/Ludington Corner)

This section of corridor is heavily commercial, with many drives and curb-cuts and heavy traffic. There is extensive frontage parking with no visual separation between road and parking. Few street trees, older highway-type streetlights, very little landscaping and paving to edge of curb in most areas further contribute to a cluttered feeling. There are currently only scattered sidewalk sections and most pedestrian crossings are unmarked. There are also few off road connections. Competing and inconsistent commercial signs along with scattered billboards clutter the view and make directional signs difficult to spot.



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

The U.P. State Fairground is a clear opportunity for an aesthetically appealing community feature along this stretch of roadway. The use of concentrated tree plantings in combination with a tourist information station would work well.

West Escanaba (West limit to M35)

The West Approach to Escanaba is currently open and pleasant in many areas but will develop quickly. There is an unscreened truck-yard and materials storage, and billboards are spreading and dominate the view in stretches. The Hospital area is excellent example of well screened, signed development, and further along, the welcome sign is well-located. However, the welcome sign needs a landscaped backdrop as it currently could be confused for another billboard.

From the welcome sign, the corridor turns commercial. There is much unscreened parking and paving to the curb similar to the north-south commercial corridor. The view in many places is of blank building sidewalls. There are some sidewalks. The M-35 corner is overwhelmed by 3 gas stations, access drives, and a confusing array of signs. There is no landscaping. The “Escanaba” sign over Ludington Ave. is visible and attractive, although blocked by streetlights and in competition with commercial signage.



Community Input – Notes from Community Meeting

Escanaba/Gladstone/Wells Township/Escanaba Township

U.S. Highway 2 Visual Enhancement

Steering Committee Meeting

Monday, April 14, 2003

Vision 2020

- A corridor with no billboards
- uniform signage throughout the corridor to include directional signage
- Screening/landscaping around businesses that is well maintained
- Tasteful, appealing well maintained signs
- Shining, freshly painted overpasses
- A sense of welcome to our communities
- Clean, well maintained communities
- Small town feel
- A sea of green space
- Our communities are so inviting that people want to stay
- A sense of pride
- Interesting flowers and trees
- People walking around
- Lots of activity
- Lively places
- Power lines have been cleaned up and where feasible, placed underground
- Grand entrances into the communities with vegetation and landscaping
- Inspiring monuments
- Access is safe and convenient
- There is a safe feel to our communities

Current Conditions

Debris

- Left over from the winter on the roads and in the parking lots
- Builds up over the winter on easements and ends up as a clump of dirt
- Bark flies off logging trucks and ends up all over
- Trash thrown from vehicles causes blight

Landscaping

- Tall weeds and grass
- Not maintained
- Landscaping is expensive and whatever we plant has to be accommodated by our short growing season

Unsightly businesses

- Run down and inappropriate fencing
- Untidy appearance
- No screening
- Zoning issues



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Signage

- Dated
- Some don't serve any function
- Confusing
- No uniformity
- Poor directional signage
- Things are hard to find
- Lincoln/Washington – “unless you're from here, you don't know it's there” – end up getting lost

Signage continued

- Too big
- Too high
- Not consolidated
- Our ordinances don't address these issues

Rail overpasses

- Rusty
- The banks near the overpasses are not maintained and are full of weeds

Congestion

- Not safe
- Not inviting
- Too many curb cuts
- Traffic is moving too fast

Location of welcome center – visitor information

- Not visible

Locations to be addressed....

- Rail yards in Gladstone
- The corridor in Wells Township from Main Street to the river
- Viaduct – bridge in Escanaba
- Car dealership – used cars – rv area in Escanaba Township

Some suggested solutions...

- Reconfigure the 4 lanes to two lanes with service roads/turn lanes with more greenery and traffic calming/over pass near schools
- More frequent road right-of-way maintenance
- Beautify with natural species
- Encourage formation of ‘adopt a highway’ groups
- Secure easements on private property to clean up power lines – locate lines back further from the road right-of-way
- Serious, well thought out, comprehensive master plan
- Knowing where development is going to occur
- Pursue some type of uniform signage or coordinated system/possibly forming a joint authority
- Develop a property inventory and present design plan to property owner for improvement
- Develop a beautification strategy
- Designate bike paths and explore funding options
- Improve landscaping throughout the corridor
- Improve directional signage



Suggested Improvements

Based on Field Visual Analysis and input from Community Meetings, we have developed a series of recommendations for enhancing the study corridor. We summarize the recommendations in this section and then present some conceptual designs depicting enhancements in the following section.

While the corridor is very diverse and different segments will benefit from different enhancement activities, there is one suggested improvement that we feel will benefit the entire corridor. We suggest the development of a uniform system of attractive, distinct signs for points of interest, main roads, etc. for the combined communities. The signs could possibly incorporate a single logo or theme (e.g., the “heart” of Upper Michigan or Bay De Noc.). These signs would be used for all Tourist/Recreational facilities along the corridor (e.g., historic markers, scenic pull-offs, Wells Sports Complex, Felch Grade Snowmobile Trailhead, etc.) providing regional consistency for visitors.

Gladstone (North to Southern Limit)

For the Gladstone area, we suggest the following:

- Using a divided highway or boulevard style roadway with screening landscaping in the median
- Developing a prominent ‘welcome’ feature for westbound travel at initial curve
- Beginning directional signage early on the approach
- Limiting or restricting billboards
- Using large, dense tree/shrub masses, including evergreens (native) in wide right-of-way to screen industrial buildings, yard storage areas and rail yards
- Reclaiming the dump/fill areas
- Providing an overpass or underpass pedestrian crossing of U.S. 2 at M-35 or Delta
- Developing community “welcome” feature on triangular parcel near south city line.

Escanaba Township (Gladstone limit to Escanaba River)

For this section of roadway, we suggest the following:

Shoreline Roadway

- Prohibiting billboards on both sides of the roadway
- Developing a scenic view pull off at midpoint
- Developing an off-road trail on shore side of U.S. 2

Auto & R/V Sales

- Developing a setback requirement for vehicles
- Requiring landscaped frontage

Signage

- Removing all non-conforming signs
- Prohibiting future billboards and limiting business signs



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

- Prohibiting all paired billboards

Landscaping

- Screening all existing industrial buildings, storage and parking with mounds, walls, fences and plantings, paying special attention to sidewalls

Blight and Utilities

- Enforcing blight ordinances with unmaintained properties.
- Refurbishing south viaduct
- Relocating or burying on-road power lines, especially crossing overhead wires

Future development

- Requiring substantial setbacks for buildings and parking, with plant buffer at roadway

Wells Township (River to South Viaduct)

For this section of the study corridor, we recommend the following:

- Refurbish middle viaduct with bold graphics depicting local heritage/recreation opportunities and adding decorative landscaping around the viaduct
- Enhancing the boulevard style roadway by:
 - Adding mounds and decorative tree/shrub plantings
 - Relocating overhead utilities near road
 - Adding new street lighting at intersections only
 - Locating directional signs in the median
- Adding a Visitor Information Center for the region with an after-hours kiosk, potentially at College Ave., on west side
- Enhancing the commercial area by:
 - Screening frontage parking with mounds, shrubs, trees in the wide right-of-way
 - Screening building sides by plantings at side property lines
- Developing a north-south trail/walkway, with well marked crossings at signalized intersections.
- Restricting or removing billboard clusters, especially at south viaduct
- Screening parking in the service road area by adding street trees
- Screening storage yards, industrial buildings (sidewalls) with mounds, trees, fences (in and out of r.o.w.) in the industrial zone

Escanaba Commercial Zone (Viaduct to M-35/Ludington Corner)

For this section of the study corridor, we recommend the following:

Roadway

- Reducing curb-cuts / access points



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

- Providing continuous sidewalks and well marked crossings

Streetscape

- Adding brick pavers between curb and walk in narrow r.o.w. areas
- Adding new, distinctive street lights with banner mounts
- Using pole/arm signals, with street signs at major intersections
- Adding street trees, possibly in raised planters
- Developing pocket parks at available parcels

Landscaping

- Screening frontage parking areas with shrubs, walls, fences and mounds, as space allows
- Screening sidewalls, storage and side property lines
- Removing frontage parking/paving, where possible

Signage

- Removing non-conforming signs
- Restricting multiple signs, add-ons, “temporary” signs, billboards

Fairground

- Adding new signage at corners, with landscaping
- Adding a new decorative fence
- Creating a possible tourist information area

West Escanaba (West limit to M35)

For this section of the study corridor, we recommend the following:

Roadway

- Substantially limiting new billboards on the approach to Escanaba
- Limiting access in commercial area by consolidating drives or using service drives
- Requiring substantial setbacks for new development
- Screening truckyards and open storage along approach

Landscape and Streetscape

- Extending streetscape treatment through existing commercial area with sidewalks, streetlights, and pavers
- Limiting frontage paving, screening parking and sidewalls or sideyards

M-35 Intersection

- Removing current signal light and using pole/arm signals
- Relocating overhead utilities
- Reducing curb cuts at gas stations and adding corner landscape treatments



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

- Limiting signs and removing add on or temporary signs

Welcome area at Willow Creek

- Adding focal and backdrop landscaping
- Removing fence
- Creating a possible informational pull-off



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Designs

Several conceptual designs were prepared for the US-2 corridor. The enhancements depicted in the conceptual designs on the following pages are based on input from community meetings and field analysis of existing conditions. Where possible, we selected locations that were indicated as problems areas in the community meetings or could provide the greatest impact to overall corridor enhancement. With limited resources, the project partnership was not able to prepare designs for the entire corridor. However, elements of each conceptual design are clearly transferable to other corridor sections.



Conceptual Plan 1 – Gladstone, Westbound US-2 at Railyard

Current View



Proposed Enhancements

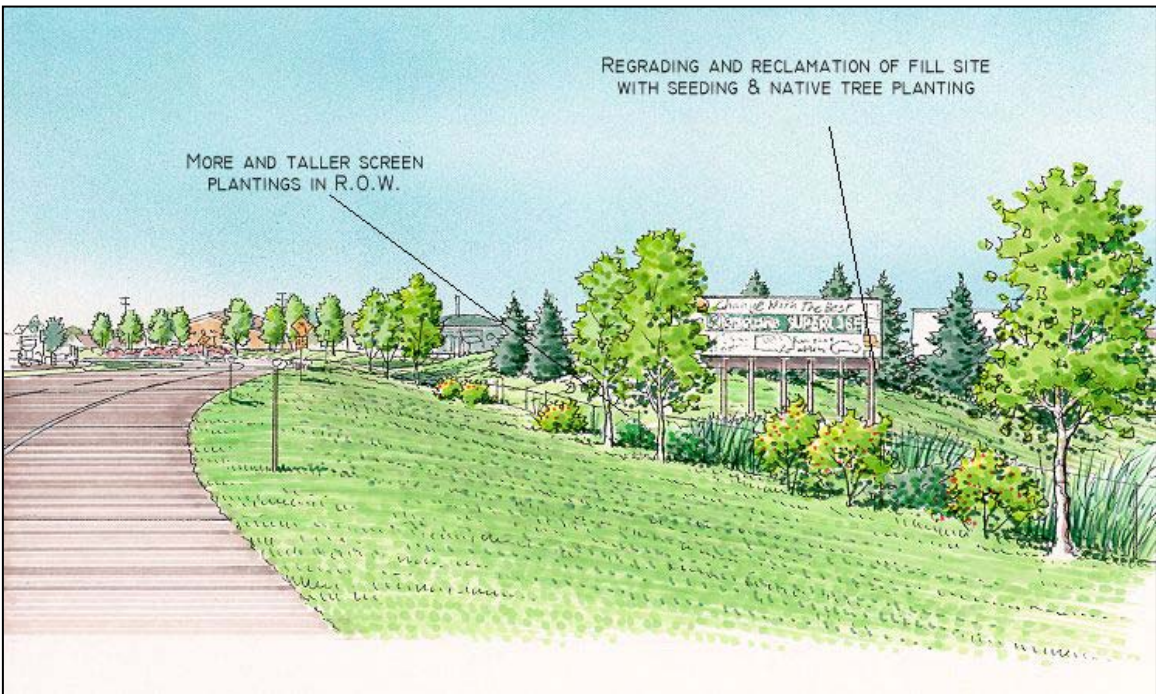




Conceptual Plan 2 – Gladstone, Eastbound US-2 entering Curve
Current View



Proposed Enhancements



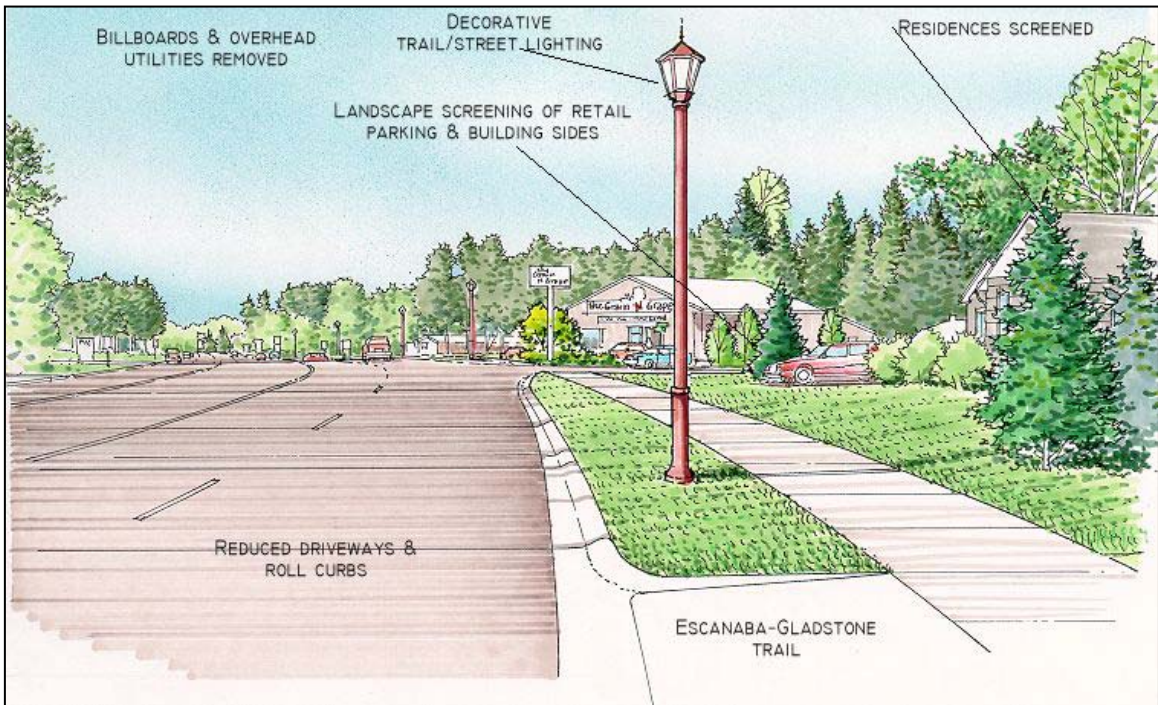


Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Plan 3 – Escanaba/Wells Township, North of Viaduct
Current View



Proposed Enhancements



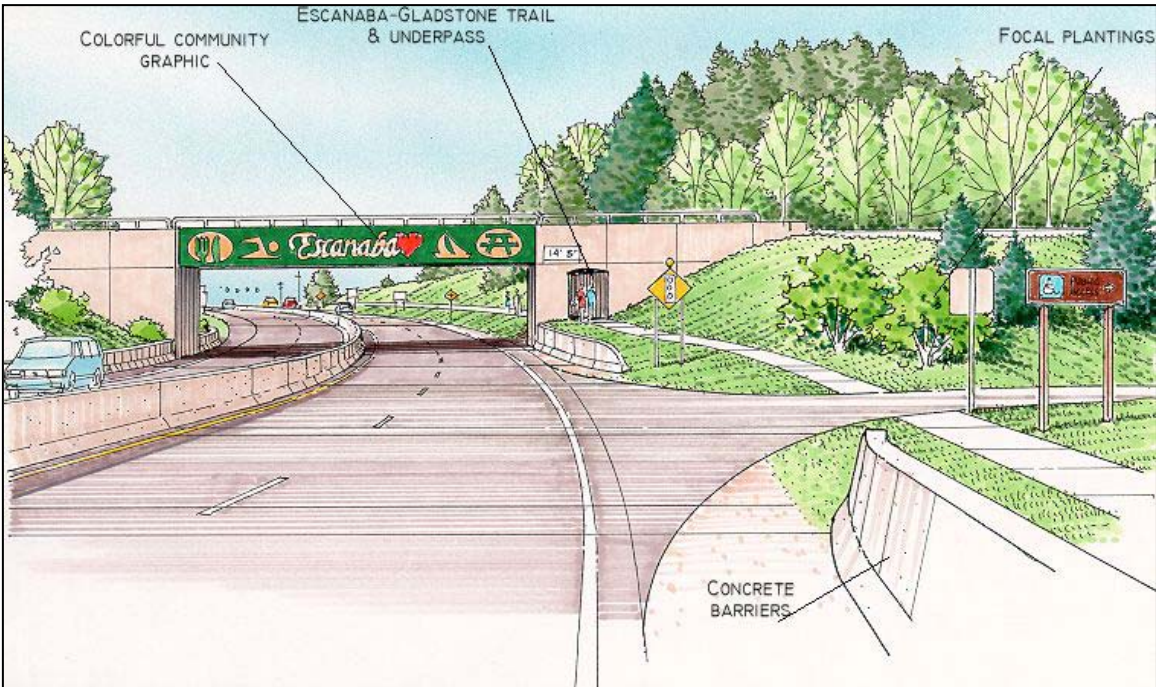


Conceptual Plan 4 – Escanaba, Westbound US-2 at Escanaba River

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





Conceptual Plan 5 – Escanaba/Wells Township, Westbound US-2

Current View



Proposed Enhancements



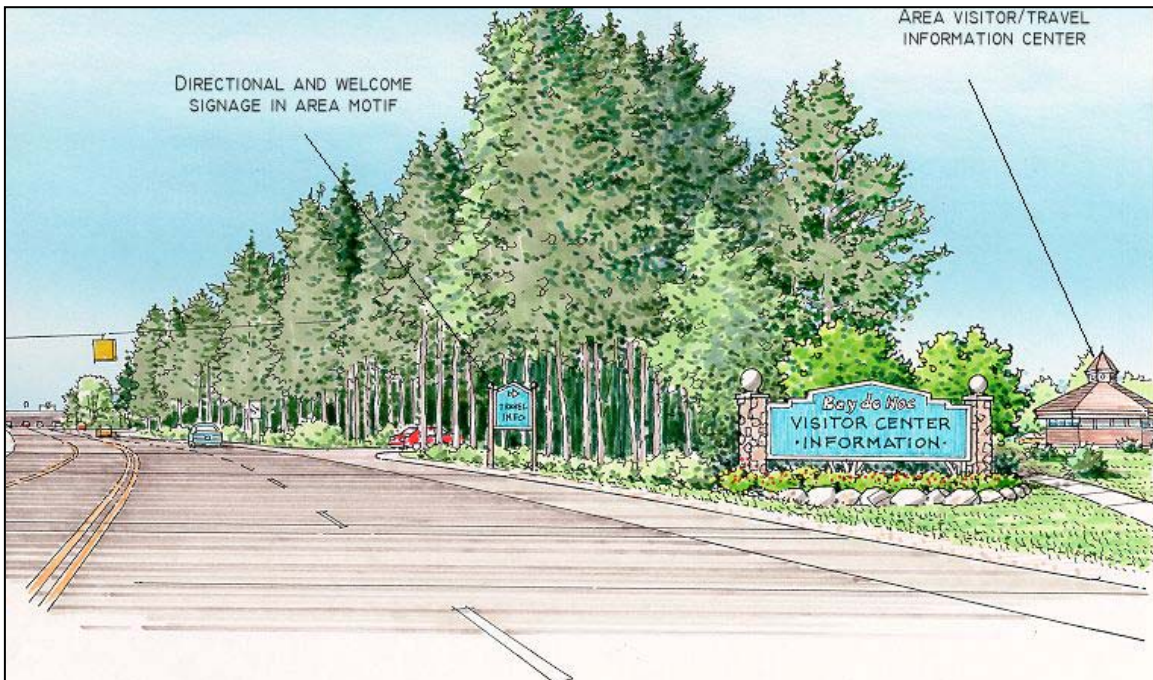


Conceptual Plan 6 – Escanaba, Westbound US-2 at North City Limit

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





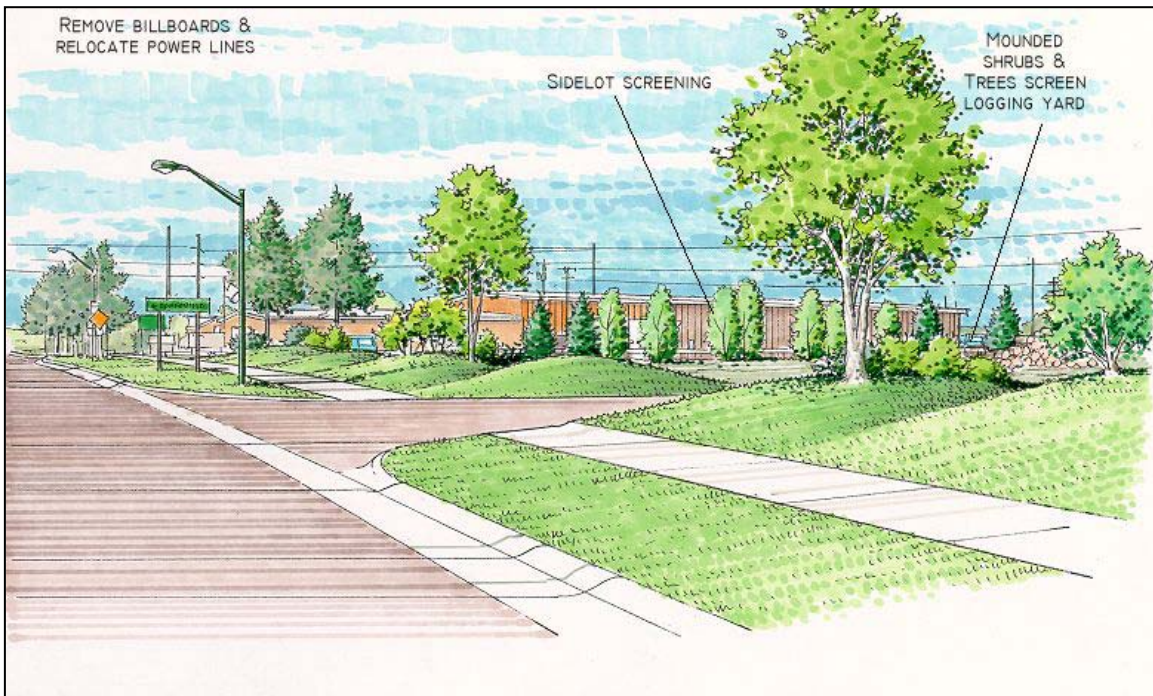
Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Plan 7 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, South of Danforth Rd.

Current View



Proposed Enhancements



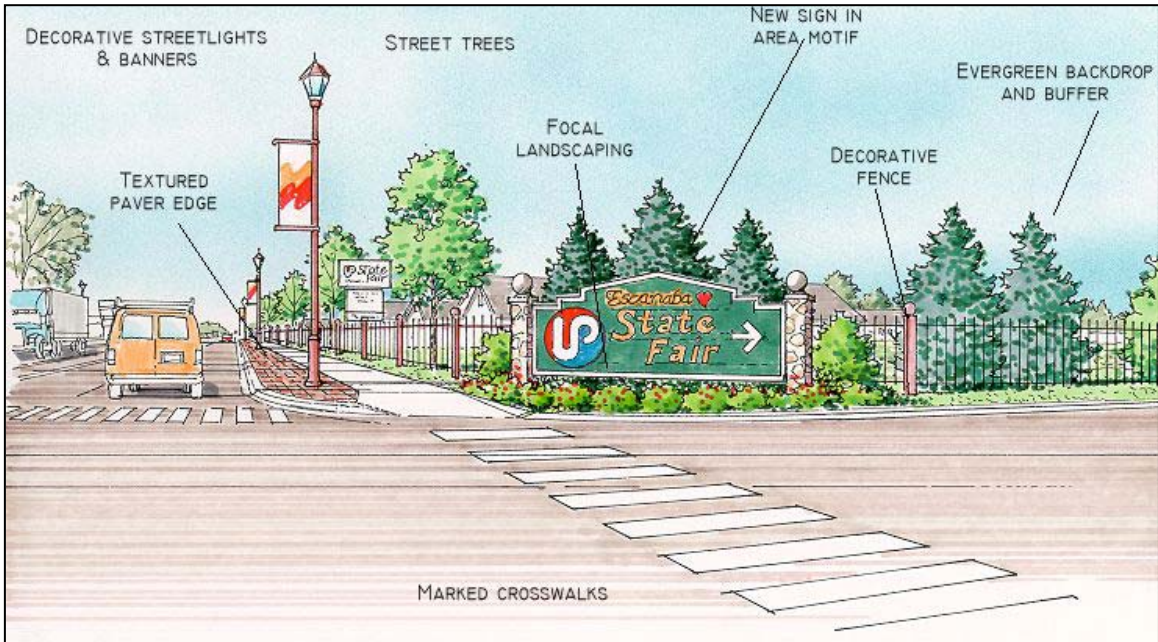


Conceptual Plan 8 – Escanaba, Westbound US-2 at Fairgrounds

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





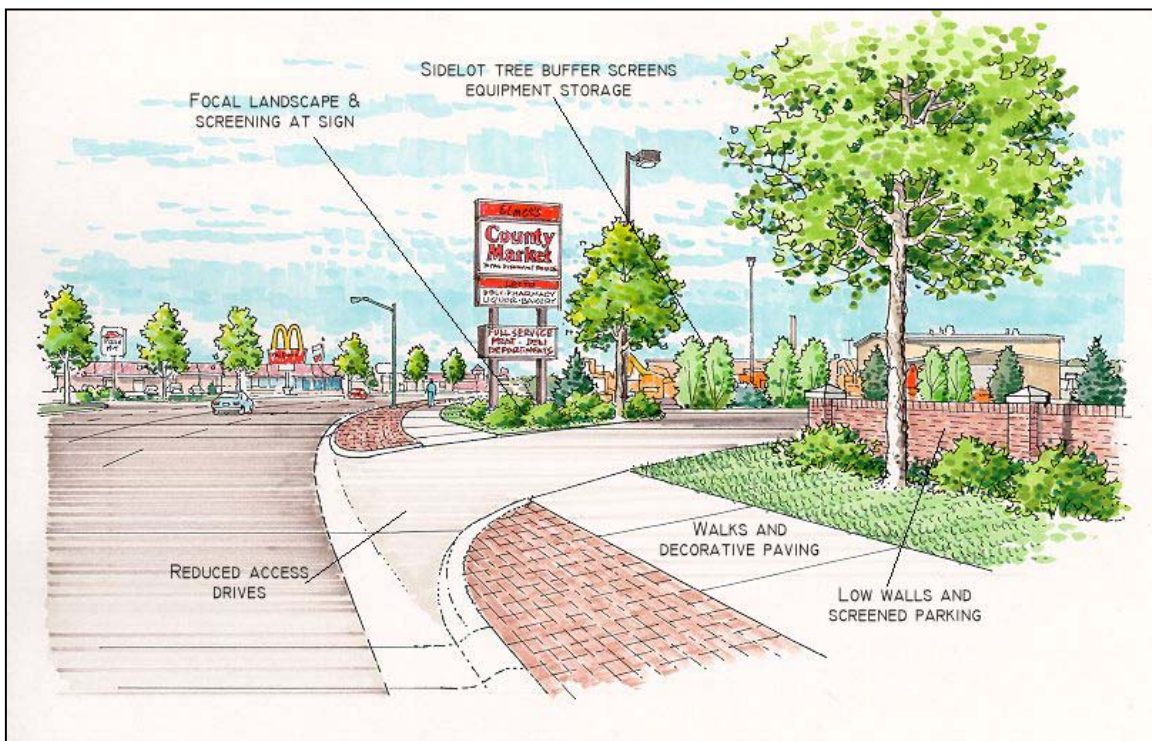
Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Plan 9 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2 entering Curve

Current View



Proposed Enhancements





Conceptual Plan 10 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, N. of Ludington St.

Current View



Proposed Enhancements



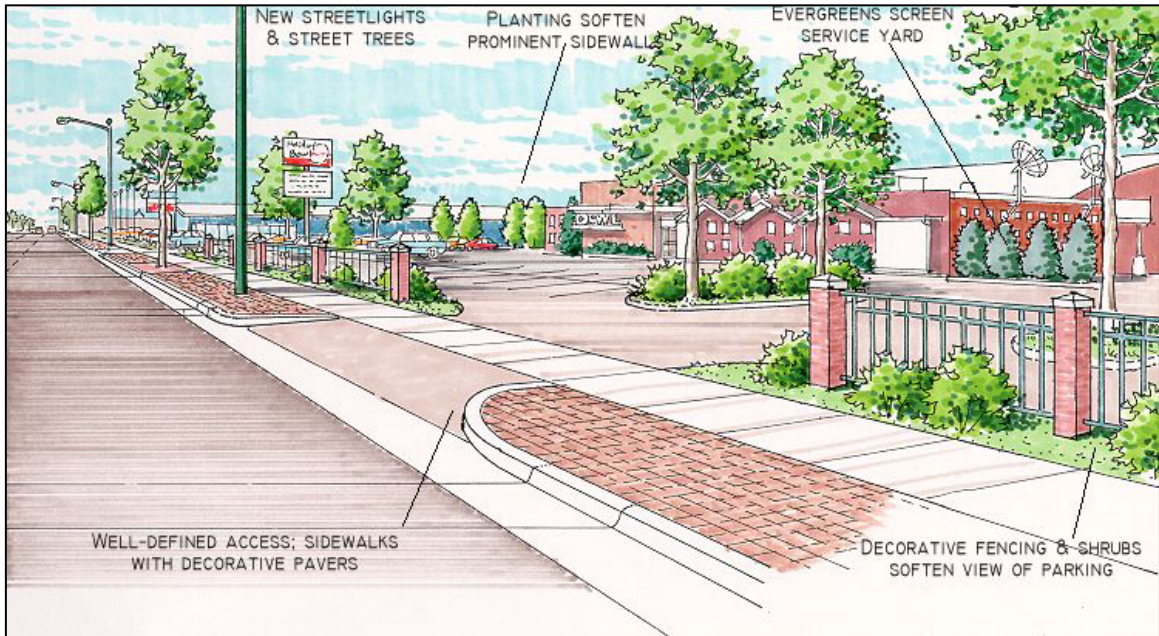


Conceptual Plan 11 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, West Side

Current View



Proposed Enhancements



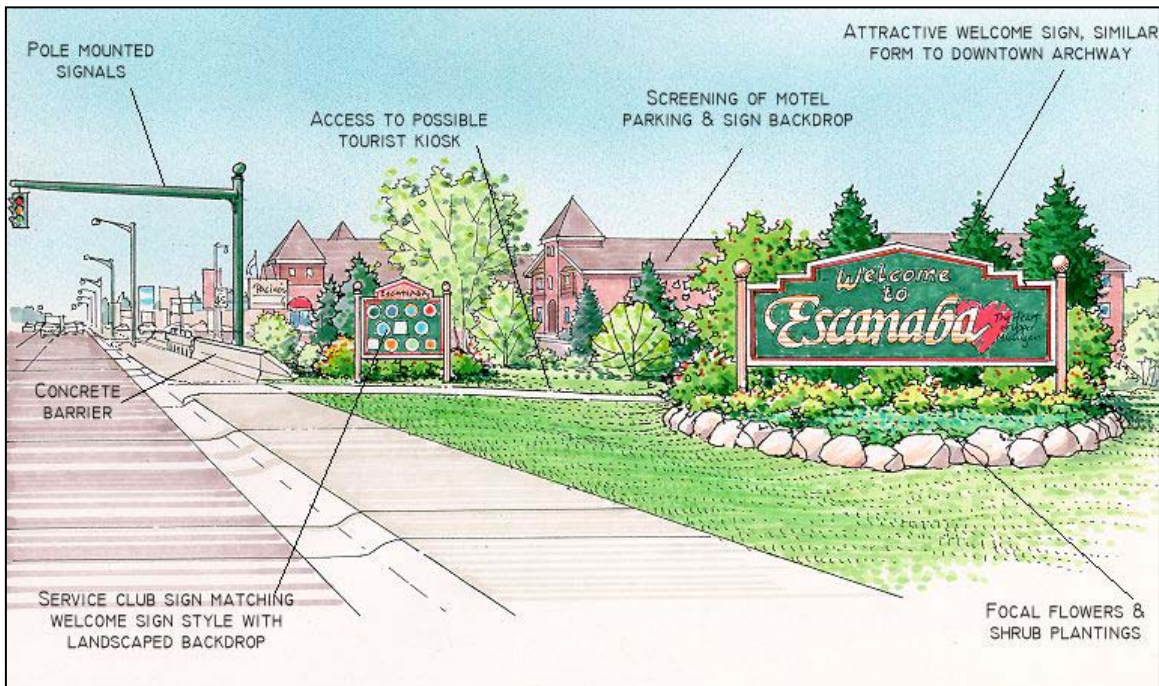


Conceptual Plan 12 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, Entering Town

Current View



Proposed Enhancements



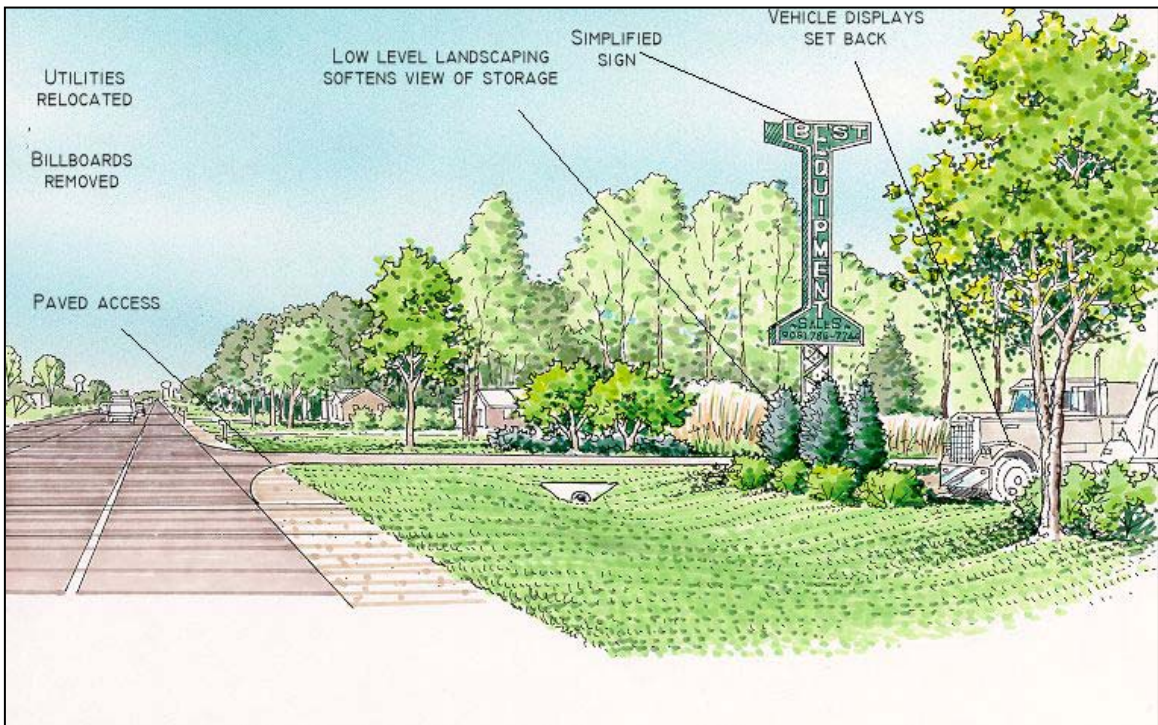


Conceptual Plan 13 – Escanaba, Eastbound US-2, West of City Limit

Current View



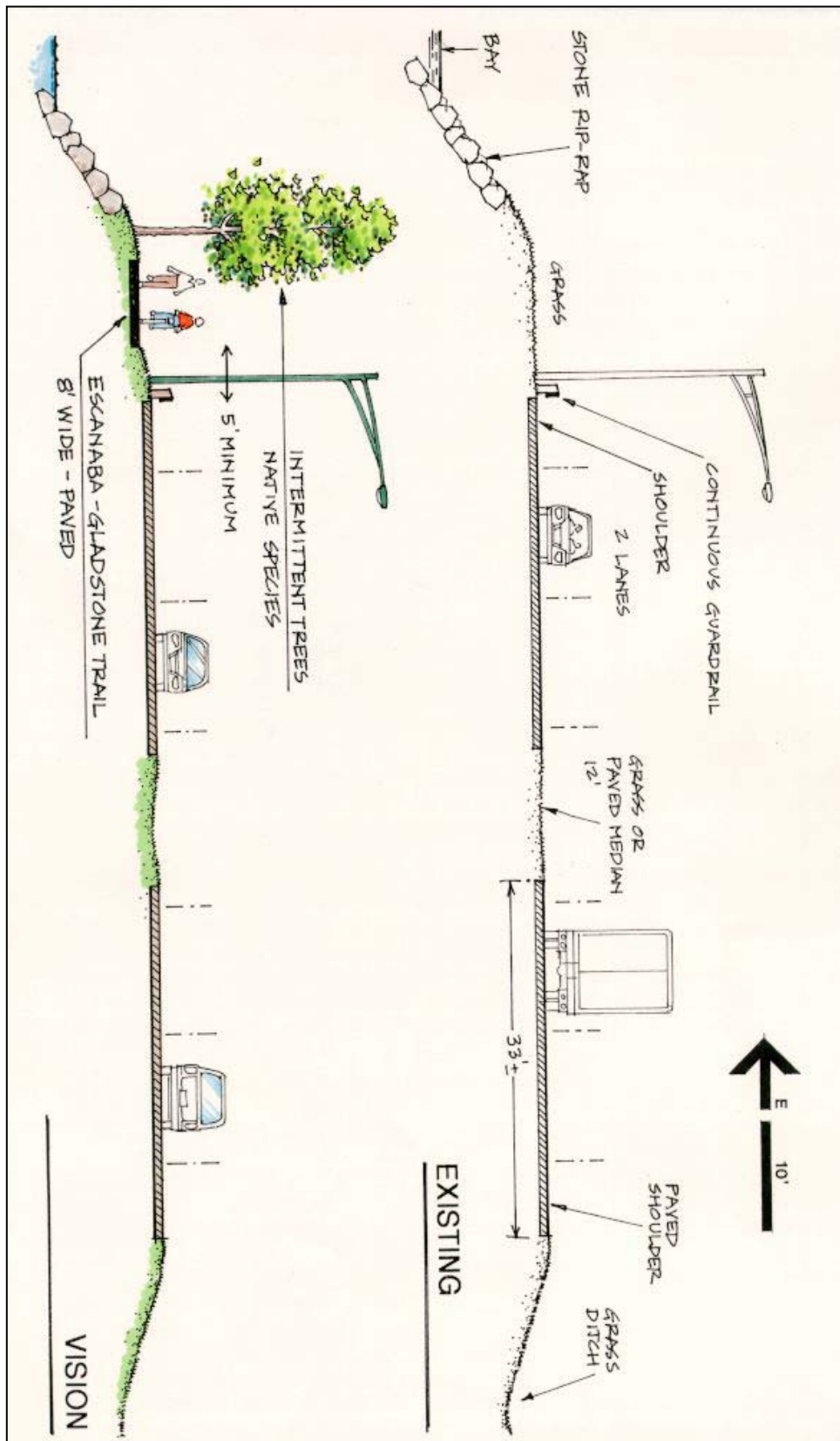
Proposed Enhancements





Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

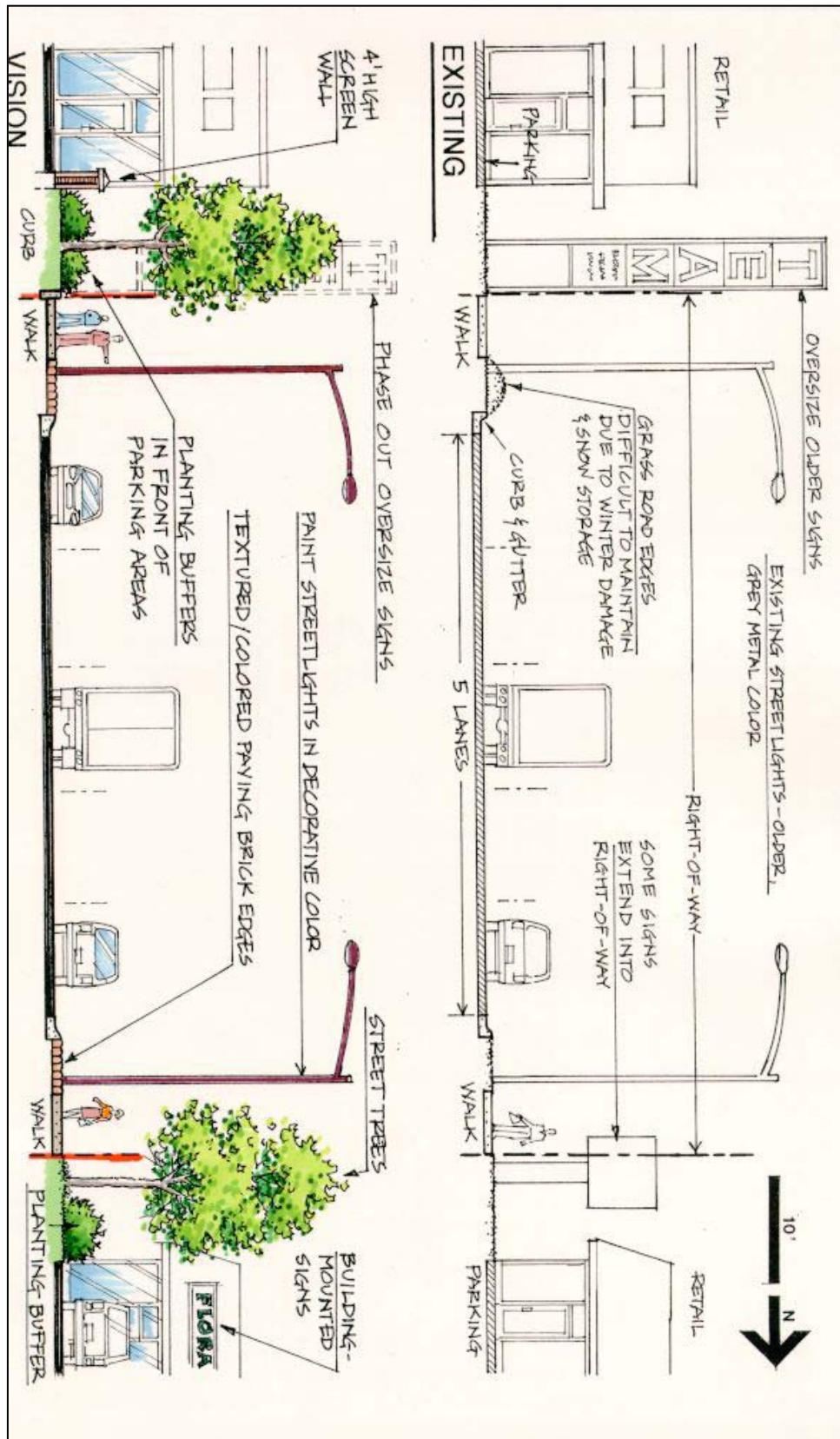
Conceptual Plan 14 – Cross Section, Westbound US-2, South of Gladstone





Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Conceptual Plan 15 – Cross Section, Westbound US-2, Escanaba





Achieving Results/Implementation

The previous sections of this plan focused on an analysis of existing conditions along the US-2 study area. We summarized findings and recommendations from community meetings and combined these comments with professional field analysis. We detailed suggestions for improving the US-2 study corridor and presented conceptual enhancement designs along the corridor. This section of the report will present an overview of how to implement the changes detailed in the conceptual designs.

It should be clearly recognized that implementing some or the entire series of corridor enhancements proposed in this plan is no small endeavor. It will require the continued commitment of the community steering team and other key stakeholders. New relationships between local officials, business owners and other community interests will have to be formed and nourished. It will require significant new sources of funding and/or substantial regulatory changes. This is a long term process and one that is likely to change over time.

Working Together

The implementation of a visual protection/enhancement program for the US-2 highway corridor in Michigan's Upper Peninsula could potentially be accomplished in several ways. Local areas acting on their own initiative could independently plan and undertake projects. Collectively, these independent efforts could result in significant protection/enhancement. An example of such a corridor is US-31 through Grand Traverse, Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet Counties in the Lower Peninsula where the communities of Traverse City and environs, Elk Rapids, Charlevoix, Petoskey/Bay View, Alanson, Pellston, and Mackinaw City have all worked independently and without coordination to contribute to visual enhancement of that highway corridor. The draw back to this approach can be a lack of visual enhancement/preservation continuity along the highway corridor and potential disregard for the corridor in rural areas.

A better, and perhaps more fruitful, approach to the protection/enhancement of arterial corridors that pass through a number of communities interspersed with rural areas, is to establish a supervisory or oversight body. This organization can work to plan, promote, and coordinate appropriate protection/enhancement activities throughout a large geographical area such as the Upper Peninsula. The National Scenic Byways Program provides a model for such an organization with its advocates groups. These groups are typically organized as non-profits that take on the responsibility for the preparation of "corridor management plans" which identify key resources, threats to those resources, preservation strategies, and marketing plans.

If appropriately organized as a nonprofit such an advocacy group has the ability to receive grants from charitable foundations, certain governmental funding, and tax exempt gifts from a variety of private donors. These funds can be used to support a staff and its expenses and/or to fund a variety of projects along the various roadway corridors.

The strength of such an organization, however, normally comes through its advocate members that volunteer and dedicate their time and energy to a variety of activities that support a planned and coordinated preservation/restoration program for the entire geographic area. Such an organization brings together groups from various local communities creating a synergism among interested parties which can breathe vibrant life and longevity into the preservation/restoration effort.



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Persistence to achieve the goals and objectives of a preservation/restoration effort is essential as implementation will not be achieved overnight, however, will take years as small accomplishments begin to accumulate and the effort snowballs to achieve a critical mass. That critical mass is essential to overcome false starts, political inertia, limited financial resources, resistance to change, resistance to regulate, burn out, etc.

A desire to imitate or “keep up with the Joneses” can be a driving force for community change. Often a forward-thinking community, by way of example, can inspire similar activity by other communities. This can be seen in the language found within the various zoning ordinances which are in place in communities along the U.S. 2 corridor. For example, essentially the same language requiring screening between residential and commercial and industrial uses, right down to specifying the plants to use, appears in several zoning ordinances adopted by communities along the corridor. Obviously one of these communities was the first to adopt such language. Others then followed the example of the first. The inspiration for visual enhancement/preservation projects can spread in a similar manner. For example, Community A adopts a billboard ordinance which is effective in stopping the visual blight of billboards. Community B learns of A’s success and adopts such an ordinance for its community.

A regional organization which brings the various stakeholders together can provide the inspiration, education, technical expertise and financial resources necessary to get the ball rolling and to keep it moving avoiding project melt down over time. It can assist the various component local groups in accessing and or working with the many private and public resources which either exist or could be created to contribute to the effort.

There are many fine examples of regional organizations which have been established to assure the successful implementation of a plan such as the proposed UP Transportation Visual Enhancement Project. One such organization is the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust in Washington State. Information about that trust as an example may be obtained from mtsgreenway@tpl.org. A Michigan example is the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy at Traverse City (www.landtrust.org) and the Little Traverse Bay Regional Land Conservancy at Petoskey/Harbor Springs (www.landtrst.org) that are working together to undertake protection/enhancement projects along the U.S. 31 corridor between Traverse City and Mackinaw City.

Implementation Tools and Resources

There were a number of different issues and suggestions raised during community meetings and most issues have been incorporated into the conceptual designs. In this section, we will suggest some tools and resources to address the most common problems. It should be remembered that in many cases, applications for enhancement funding, especially to state agencies, require plans and the conceptual designs can be useful for this purpose.



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

For a comprehensive matrix of problems/issues and suggested vehicles to address these problems, see Table 1. (presented in four sections 1-4). This matrix identifies approximately eighty (80) resources which could have a potential roll in implementing the protection/enhancement effort being proposed. These resources range from providing advocacy support to volunteer labor. They have been identified in the matrix as follows:

A	Advocacy/community support
E	Education support
F	Funding support
L	Project labor
R	Regulatory requirements
T	Technical support
V	Volunteer labor

- A.** Advocacy/community support can come from a variety of individuals or groups. These groups are important players that can send a positive message regarding the need and community support for the project and can challenge local politicians and governmental officials to act in a positive and responsible way to implement contributing activities such as enacting appropriate zoning ordinances, sign regulations, etc.
- E.** Education support regarding the benefits of implementing a restoration/enhancement project is available from a variety of sources such as the MSU Extension Service or the staff of the various Conservation Districts.
- F.** Funding support is available from a variety of fund raising activities, to grants from private and public sources, to the better utilization of the funds expended by governmental agencies in particular those responsible for the roadways and their corridors.
- L.** Project labor is either staff or contract labor which is assigned to preservation/restoration efforts by the agencies responsible for the roadways and their corridors. It may also come in the form of prison work crews which are available to assist communities.
- R.** Regulatory requirements are those which are set out in laws adopted to regulate the use of land. They include zoning and building codes and a variety of nuisance ordinances which can regulate blight, signage, landscaping, lighting, land use, historic sites etc.



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

- T.** Technical support is assistance which is available from professionals or perhaps qualified amateurs that have the technical expertise to envision, devise and implement preservation/restoration projects. They may typically be the staff or retired staff of various businesses or governmental agencies that due to their position or situation are able to offer their time and services to lead project implementation activities.

- V.** Volunteer labor may come from a variety of individual or community groups such as those that participate in adopt-a-road programs or Day of Giving efforts.

While the issues raised in each community were diverse and our suggested improvements are specific to each conceptual design, two things become clear about corridor-wide visual enhancement. The first step in corridor enhancement is removing things that clearly detract from corridor aesthetics and assuring they do not reappear. Two issues that were regularly mentioned in every community meeting that fall under this “removal” category are junk or blight and signage. We will address these issues specifically in the following pages. Other items that fall in the “removal” category and were mentioned include utility lines, unattractive street lighting and roadside debris often including waste from snowplowing.

The second step in corridor enhancement is adding things that add to corridor appeal. The issues most commonly mentioned during community meetings were landscaping, appropriate and attractive lighting, sidewalks or other non-motorized pathways, directional or recognition signage and driveway/curb cut reduction. We discuss how to implement some of these enhancements. Finally, most enhancement projects in this second category require funding. Therefore, in the final chapter, we detail available funding sources at the federal, state and local level.

Removing Problems along the Corridor

The first issue to address in beautifying corridors is removal of things that obviously detract from corridor appearance. Clearly, derelict structures, junk, trash and inappropriate signage make towns unappealing to visitors. It is also appropriate to deal with these issues first as they do not always require a source of new funds, only a collection and expression of community will.

Zoning

When there is a sufficient community will to enact and enforce adequate and workable regulatory laws such as zoning, blight and sign ordinances, much can be done in this manner to remove things that mar the visual landscape. Such laws can regulate and/or require signage, night lighting, landscaping, maintenance of property, land use, etc. Zoning ordinance provisions often take time to result in meaningful improvements particularly in slow growing communities where grand fathering may allow existing situations to continue for many years. Change does eventually come, however, after the years pass.

We performed a cursory review of select zoning ordinances currently in place in the various communities along the U.S.2 corridor. This review reveals several interesting facts. It appears that many of the communities have adopted a zoning ordinance, however many of the ordinances have been in place for twenty to thirty years and are seldom amended. Generally speaking, they seldom have meaningful sections that would contribute to the maintenance/enhancement of the visual



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

appearance of the highway corridor. Sign ordinances, while in place in some communities, are either outdated or not restrictive enough. Overlay zoning, often used to deal with specific community assets without redefining zoning districts, is not used. Blight, junk and landscape provisions are weak or non-existent. Table 2 presents a summary of this review.

Blight

Blight can be described as conditions “which cause a reduction of, or lack of, proper utilization of the area to such an extent that it constitutes a serious physical, social, or economic burden on the community which cannot reasonably be expected to be reversed or alleviated by private enterprise acting alone.” (*from Blight Control Ordinance, Williams Charter Township, Bay County, MI*).

While not pervasive along the US-2 study corridor, blight remains a significant issue. Derelict sign structures, unused and unsafe buildings and junk cars and appliances were found in numerous locations. These issues and others falling into the blight category can be addressed through a properly structured and enforced blight or (in the case of derelict sign structures) sign ordinance.

Provisions within the ordinance to address junk cars and appliances typically contain the following language:

No motor vehicle shall be kept, parked or stored in any district for residential use, unless it shall be in operating condition and properly licensed, or kept inside a building. The purpose of this provision is to prevent the accumulation of junk motor vehicles, and therefore it shall not apply to any motor vehicle ordinarily used, but temporarily out of running condition. If a motor vehicle is being kept for actual use, but is temporarily unlicensed, the Zoning Administrator may grant the owner a reasonable time, not to exceed six (6) months, to procure such license.

Likewise, no old, rusty and unsightly machinery, machines not suited for use upon the premises, or quantities of old and used building materials shall be kept or stored outside a building provided, however, that building materials fit to be used to improve the premises may be kept on site for one (1) year if they are piled off the ground so as not to become a rat and rodent harbor.

Source: *City of Charlevoix, MI, Ordinance*

Model ordinances are available from the Michigan Townships Association, the Michigan Municipal League and Scenic Michigan (see Appendix A, Sources of Additional Information).

Another innovative way to deal with blight or junk in a community is to have a *Community Cleanup Day*. Typically, a *Community Cleanup Day* is scheduled once or twice per year in the Spring and/or Fall. People residing in the jurisdiction sponsoring the cleanup can bring junk of all types – appliances, lawn mowers, cars parts, etc. – to one place for disposal. The local unit of government contracts with a waste hauler to provide roll-offs and disposal. Alternatively, some communities may offer similar curbside service. This activity is typically paid for out of local government funds.

Two other issues mentioned during the community meeting that could be considered blight-related were property maintenance, specifically unmowed or long grass and vacant lots. These issues can also be addresses through zoning ordinance provisions. A “Duty to maintain property” provision



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

within the ordinance can spell out what type of property maintenance is necessary. Typical “Duty to Maintain Property” language for a zoning ordinance reads as follows:

The owner or occupant of all land, structures and parts thereof, shall have the duty to maintain the same in a clean and sanitary condition free from any accumulation of dirt, filth, rubbish, garbage, junk, vermin and other duty not to act or omit to act so as to create or permit the existence of a nuisance as defined in this Chapter. This duty shall extend to any area of land between the lot line and adjoining streets and curbs.

Source: *City of Charlevoix, MI, Ordinance*

Some towns have enacted ordinances that specifically address maintenance of yards and landscaping, spelling out how long grass can be allowed to grow, etc. However, these can be seen as overly intrusive and this issue may be best addressed simply from neighbor and community pressure.

Lastly, in association with the blight and maintenance issue, the question of enforcement was raised. An ordinance is useless if it is not enforced. Properly written ordinances spell out enforcement responsibilities and it is up to the local governing body and their appointed officials to see that they are carried out. In some cases, the addition of a civil infraction ordinance helps communities enforce existing ordinances by allowing the local governing authority to secure liens against a property and lowering the burden of proof for violations.

Signage

The issue of signage was raised a number of times during the community meetings. The field observations indicate that this is clearly an issue especially along many of the commercial corridors and approaches to study communities. Specifically, in Ironwood, Escanaba and several other towns, otherwise beautiful stretches of highway approach are marred with oversized and improperly spaced advertising signage. It should be remembered, that the approach is a visitor’s first visual impression of a community, and first impressions last. In addition to the approaches, signage along the commercial corridors throughout the study area is inconsistent in size, number, height, type, color, lighting and setback creating a chaotic and confusing visual for the traveler. The abundance of advertising sign clutter limits the effectiveness of any directional or recognition signage and contributes to traffic and safety problems.

The first steps in addressing the issue of signage are to inventory the existing signs along the study corridor, gather public input and craft a practical, understandable and enforceable sign ordinance. This ensures that new developments and signage are consistent with the community’s goals. A sign ordinance should specify appropriate number, size, height, face area, type, color, materials, illumination, landscaping and setback of all newly erected signs within each type of district. The ordinance should clearly articulate the community’s goals in establishing the ordinance and mesh with goals articulated in the community’s comprehensive plan. Typical regulations in communities which have been successful in controlling signs are:

1. One free standing sign face size of thirty two (32) to (40) sq. ft. per business.



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

2. A free standing sign height of twenty feet.
3. A free standing sign setback from the highway right-of-way of ten feet.
4. Wall and window signage not to exceed twenty percent of the area of a building facade
5. Provisions for a “center sign” where multiple businesses and or buildings are identified.
6. Limitation of content to land use identification and not advertising.
7. Highway advertising regulations which restrict such signs from the corridor, or limit them to small appropriate districts, provide for significant spacing between signs, and limit their sign face size
8. Prohibition of banners, pennants, inflatable devices and other such signs which are designed to attract attention and not simply identify a business location.

These, it should be noted, are not the most restrictive provisions which a community may adopt.

Model ordinances are available from the Michigan Townships Association, the Michigan Municipal League and Scenic Michigan (see Appendix A).

Adding to the Corridor

Landscaping

Most of the conceptual designs highlight some added landscape features. Trees, shrubs and other greenery as well as berms and mounds can serve many purposes along a corridor. They can be used to soften views, screen unwanted views and reduce the impacts from sound and light on the motorist. They can also be used as focal points and attractive backdrops for community entrance signs. The addition of landscaping can be accomplished in different ways.

Many communities establish beautification committees to coordinate community landscaping. These are usually voluntary efforts that attempt to get business owners and other corridor property owners to take an interest in landscaping their properties. Other times, community beautification or garden clubs will undertake specific projects such as landscaping at the town entrance or an important community attraction. In some cases, these voluntary efforts are supplemented with funding from the local government.

In addition to voluntary/community efforts, landscaping should be addressed in regulatory language as well. The community’s master plan should establish policies and guidelines with respect to landscaping and layout the goals for having landscape requirements. Landscaping requirements should be included in the zoning ordinance and administered during a site plan review process for new developments. For corridors, the ordinance should:

- specify landscape requirements along the roadways and at major intersections
- provide landscape requirements for the sides and fronts of buildings visible along the corridor
- address the issue of snow storage and removal
- require landscaping that minimizes glare and light issues for the traveler and reduces noise for those alongside the roadway



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

- Require street trees along all highway frontages.
- Require parking lot landscaping that will provide summer shade for parked vehicles, screen cars from users of adjacent public right-of-ways and provide a green buffer between buildings and parking areas.
- Require screening of unsightly areas such as dumpsters, outside storage, etc.
- Require specific landscape treatment for the location and design of outdoor merchandise display areas such as those used for display of motor vehicles.
- Require watering sources for all landscape areas.
- Require appropriate design and landscaping of water retention/detention areas.

Sidewalks and Non-motorized Ways

Another often-mentioned issue during the community meetings was the lack of sidewalks and sidewalk connectivity. Sidewalks can be added during large roadway enhancement projects but should also be addressed in the zoning ordinance. Making sidewalks part of any improvement or new development will at least start the process. Hopefully, as new walks are added, completing an entire system becomes easier as the idea gains momentum. Typical language to address sidewalks found within an ordinance should include:

Sidewalks/Non-motorized ways: Pedestrian sidewalks or non-motorized ways shall be constructed to provide pedestrian access along highways _____ and other areas as may be designated by the unit of government, at such a time as any adjacent parcel is improved either by new construction or improvement to an existing land use. Sidewalks shall be provided in the _____ Districts and in planned developments in residential districts. In planned developments interior sidewalks or other non-motorized ways available to the public, may be substituted for the provision of this requirement if such substitution is approved by the _____ as a part of the site plan.

The upgrading or improvement of an existing land use shall not require the construction of a pedestrian sidewalk should the cost of the sidewalk exceed twenty percent (20%) of the construction or improvement cost. Sidewalk cost shall be based on a fixed amount of \$3.00 /sq. foot or a bid price submitted by the property owner from a qualified contractor verifiable by the Zoning Administrator. In the event consecutive improvements are made to the property within a three (3) year time period, the cumulative total cost of the separate improvements shall be considered when determining the need for such sidewalk construction.

Sidewalk construction shall meet the following requirements:

1. Sidewalk construction shall meet the current construction specifications of the Michigan Department of Transportation.
2. Sidewalk shall extend across the entire frontage of the property ownership.
3. Sidewalk shall be located whenever possible within the highway right-of-way, however, may be located on private property to avoid obstructions as



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

part of a designated bike path, and shall be located so as to insure connection and continuity with existing or future walks or bike paths on adjoining properties.

4. When required, permits must be obtained from the Michigan Department of Transportation.
5. Sidewalk maintenance including replacement in the case of inadequate construction as determined by the Zoning Administrator shall be the responsibility of the adjacent parcel owner.
6. Sidewalk construction shall be in essential compliance with the Non-motorized Facility Plan.

Source: *City of Charlevoix, Ordinance*

Lighting

Street lighting was mentioned often during community meetings and is incorporated in many of the conceptual designs. Street lighting, in both form and function, has significant impacts on corridor appeal. Poor lighting can make driving difficult and distracting. In addition, unappealing street lights can detract from a corridors aesthetic appeal.

Lighting is best addressed through a community's zoning ordinance. Among other things, the ordinance should specify the type, architectural style, wattage, height, placement and spacing of lighting along the corridor for different zones. These issues should all be incorporated into the site plan review process.

Managing Access

Traffic and the number of roadway access points were issues mentioned several times during the community meetings and obvious from field analysis. There are a number of ways to improve traffic flow, safety and access. Access management is:

"a set of proven techniques that can help reduce traffic congestion, preserve the flow of traffic, improve traffic safety, prevent crashes, preserve existing road capacity and preserve investment in roads by managing the location, design and type of access to property."

Access management techniques can include

- Driveway consolidation
- Driveway alterations
- Signage treatments/Restricting turns
- Avoid additional curb cuts
- Front and rear access
- Improved local street connections
- Medians

Source: Michigan Department of Transportation, *Reducing Traffic Congestion and Improving Traffic Safety in Michigan Communities: The Access Management Guidebook*, October 2001.



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

A detailed description of access management techniques, benefits and implementation is beyond the scope of this plan. For details, please consult the MDOT guidebook referenced above.



Funding Enhancements

A variety of potential sources of funding are available for the implementation of visual enhancement projects. Funding may come from a broad array of organizations at the local, state and federal level. In some cases, federal dollars are administered by state agencies. In other cases, applications can be made directly to federal programs.

Federal Funding Sources (may be passed through and administered by state)

Federal Transportation Enhancement Funding

In 1991, the passage of ISTEA (*Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act*) mandated that every state must reserve 10 percent of surface transportation funds for enhancement activities. This act was reauthorized in 1998 through 2003 with the passage of TEA-21 (*Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century*). This act expires on September 30, 2003. The Bush Administration has proposed reauthorization with the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFETEA)*, however, this has not been passed by congress. These acts work to fund enhancement through taxes on motor fuel and vehicles which are placed in the Highway Trust Fund. These funds are distributed to the states through the Federal Highway Program. 10% of the state's surface transportation funds are reserved for enhancement activities

Federal Eligibility

To be eligible for *Transportation Enhancement Funding*, projects must meet several criteria. They must relate in some way to transportation. They must provide for public access and fit one or more of 12 enhancement activities:

1. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities
2. Pedestrian and bicycle safety and education activities
3. Acquisition of scenic or historic easements and sites
4. Scenic or historic highways programs including tourist and welcome centers
5. Landscaping and scenic beautification
6. Historic preservation
7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities
8. Conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails
9. Control and removal of outdoor advertising
10. Archaeological planning and research
11. Environmental mitigation of runoff pollution and provisions of wildlife connectivity
12. Establishment of transportation museums

Michigan Eligibility

To qualify for enhancement funding in Michigan, the project must have a sponsor. The applicant must be a governmental unit that receives fuel tax revenues such as cities, villages, road commissions, public transit agencies, or MDOT. Also, the project must meet at least one of the following qualifications:

- Must be on or next to a highway, street or road that is eligible for federal aid
- Must be a historic facility or a historic site that is significant to transportation but has current transportation use



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

- Must provide a service related to transportation
- Must fit within the same types of activities as the federal program(above) except does not include:
 - a. Pedestrian and bicycle safety activities and education
 - b. Transportation museums

Regional Contact:

Adrian Stroupe, Regional Planner
MDOT-Superior Region
1818 3rd Avenue North
Escanaba, MI 49829
(906) 786-1800

State Contacts:

Amber Thelen
thelena@michigan.gov
517.241.1456

Jessica Pierce
piercej3@michigan.gov
517.241.0185

Michigan Department of Transportation
Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement Office
425 West Ottawa - P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, MI 48909

National Scenic Byways Grant Program

A program of the Federal Highway Administration, National Scenic Byway funds are available through a grant application process to undertake eligible projects associated with designated National Scenic Byways, all-American Roads or state designated byways. In Michigan, scenic byways projects coordinator is the Michigan Heritage Route Program through MDOT:

Pete Hanses
Heritage Route Program Manager
Michigan Department of Transportation-Transportation Planning Division
425 W. Ottawa
Lansing, MI 48909
Voice: 517-335-2934
Fax: 517-373-9255
E-mail: hansesp@mdot.state.mi.us

The following is a list of byways projects funded in Michigan through 2002



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Michigan

1998 SB-1998-MI-1 \$72,000.00 Corridor Management Plan
1998 SB-1998-MI-2 \$80,800.00 Statewide Planning, Coordination & Administration of Byway Program
2000 SB-2000-MI-2 \$5,695.00 M-15 Heritage Route Railway Feasibility Study
2000 SB-2000-MI-3 \$114,000.00 Development of the Michigan State Scenic Byway Program
2000 SB-2000-MI-5 \$40,000.00 Southeast Michigan's Main Street Marketing Plan for Woodward Avenue
2001 SB-2001-MI-1 \$311,074.00 Copper Country Bike Facility: Phoenix, MI to Delaware, MI
2001 SB-2001-MI-2 \$168,000.00 Cass River Bridge Aesthetic Enhancement (Vassar, MI)
2001 SB-2001-MI-3 \$35,000.00 Copper Country Corridor Management Plan
2001 SB-2001-MI-4 \$268,000.00 Southeast Michigan's Main Street Marketing Plan for Woodward Avenue/Phase II Implementation
2002 SB-2002-MI-3 \$44,400.00 Leelanau Heritage Route CMP Implementation
2002 SB-2002-MI-4 \$536,000.00 Southeast Michigan's Main Street Marketing for Woodward Avenue - Phase III Implementation

Total for Michigan \$1,674,969.00

Public Lands Highways Program

This program provides federal funding to improve access to and within federal lands. Funds are available for "any kind of transportation project eligible for assistance under Title 23, United States Code, that is within, adjacent to, or provides access to the areas (Federal lands) served by the public lands highway." A public lands highway means a forest road or any highway through unappropriated or unreserved public lands, nontaxable Indian lands, or other Federal reservations under the jurisdiction of and maintained by a public authority and open to public travel. Interpretive signs, rest areas, visitor centers, bicycle and pedestrian projects are eligible for this grant program. The next call for projects is subject to the reauthorization of the federal Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA-21).

Source: *National Transportation Enhancement Clearinghouse Website, www.enhancements.org, September 2003*

State Funding Sources

Transportation Economic Development Fund

The [Michigan Department of Transportation](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot) (MDOT) administers an Office of Economic Development that manages several types of Economic Development programs under the Transportation Economic Development Fund. Grant programs A, C, D, E, and F (B discontinued) are briefly described as follows:

Category A grants are targeted at specific industries, namely, Agriculture and Food Processing; Tourism; Forestry; High Technology Research; Manufacturing; Mining; and Office Centers of at least 50,000 square feet.

Category C grants are aimed at reducing congestion on county primary and city major streets within urban counties including advanced traffic management systems.

Category D grants seek to fund projects that complement the state trunkline system in rural areas, and

Category E grants seek to create and improve forest roads.

Category F grants are dedicated for road improvement for urbanized areas in rural counties.

Source: *Citizens Research Council of Michigan, Website, Last Revised on 05/09/01*



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Contact Information for Transportation Economic Development Fund:

Administrator: Jacqueline G. Shinn
Contact: Denise Curl
Phone: 517-335-1069
E-mail: curlld@michigan.gov
Website: www.mich.gov/mdot

Program Administration Section

Michael Kapp, Manager 517-373-2666
Deanna Finch, Systems Coordinator 517-241-4778

Project Development Section

Alicia Evans Suber, Project Dev. Manager 517-373-2752
Michael Leon, Economic Dev. Spec. 517-241-2568

Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory

Several of the programs we have discussed in this section are administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). These include the Transportation Enhancements and Heritage Route Program and the Transportation Economic Development Fund. In order to enhance the effectiveness of the Enhancements Program and the Heritage Route Program, MDOT undertook an Aesthetic Project Opportunities Inventory (APOI) in 2000. The purpose of this program was to identify aesthetic project opportunities along state trunklines and ensure the best and most coordinated use of funds.

The APOI identified many project opportunities along the US-2 corridor. Many of these project opportunities are located within the 6 communities and stretches of US-2 corridor that received planning assistance under this project. Also, many of the aesthetic opportunities identified during MDOT's inventory include many of the same treatments depicted in the conceptual designs presented within this plan. As MDOT may be a significant source of funds, this congruence is important to note.

A map of APOI locations is presented in Figure 3.



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Insert Figure 2, APOI locations



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Community Development Block Grant (State Administered)

(the following text is taken directly from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Website, www.hud.gov)

Program Objectives

The primary statutory objective of the CDBG program is to develop viable communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low- and moderate-income. The State must ensure that at least 70 percent of its CDBG grant funds are used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons over a one-, two-, or three-year time period selected by the State. This general objective is achieved by granting "maximum feasible priority" to activities which benefit low- and moderate-income families or aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight. Under unique circumstances, States may also use their funds to meet urgent community development needs. A need is considered urgent if it poses a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community and has arisen in the past 18 months.

Eligible Activities

Communities receiving CDBG funds from the State may use the funds for many kinds of community development activities including, but not limited to:

- acquisition of property for public purposes;
- construction or reconstruction of streets, water and sewer facilities, neighborhood centers, recreation facilities, and other public works;
- demolition;
- rehabilitation of public and private buildings;
- public services;
- planning activities;
- assistance to nonprofit entities for community development activities; and
- assistance to private, for profit entities to carry out economic development activities (including assistance to micro-enterprises).

State Contact:

Mr. William Parker, Coordinator
Housing Development Authority
P.O. Box 30044
Lansing, MI 48909-7544
Phone: 517-373-1462
Fax: 517-335-4797
Email: parkerw@state.mi.us
Michigan CDBG business incentives: 517-373-6213
Michigan CDBG housing resources: 517-373-1462



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

State Infrastructure Bank

The State Infrastructure Bank has low interest loans for transportation improvements. The program is administered through the Office of Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement.

State Contact:

Michigan Department of Transportation
Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement Office
425 West Ottawa - P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, MI 48909

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) has been in place since 1976. It provides financial assistance to local governments and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to purchase lands for outdoor recreation and/or the protection of natural resources and open space. It also assists in the appropriate development of land for public outdoor recreation.

Criteria

Applications are evaluated on established criteria such as resource protection, water access, and project need. At least 25 percent match on either acquisition or development projects is required from local government applicants. Recommendations are made by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board (members are appointed by the Governor) to the State Legislature for final approval. Criteria are spelled out in the "Recreation Grants Selection Process" booklet given to all applicants. There are eleven evaluation criteria:

1. Protection and use of significant natural resources.
2. Use of inland waters.
3. Population served.
4. Economic benefits.
5. Hunting, fishing and other wildlife-related values.
6. Need for proposal.
7. Applicant history.
8. Site and project quality.
9. Special Initiatives of the MNRTF Board (See below).
10. Financial need of the applicant.
11. Local match contribution.

There are at times special circumstances that factor into grant evaluation. Currently, the 2003 Special Initiatives of the Board are:

1. Acquisition or development of railways that contribute to an overall State trail system.
2. Acquisition of lands open to hunting or development of hunting-related facilities, such as shooting ranges.
3. Acquisition of lands that provide for deer habitat with thermal cover.



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

4. Local shooting ranges or State/local shooting range partnerships.
5. Acquisition projects that create, establish and protect wildlife/ecological corridors by connecting to and/or buffering existing protected and managed State or local natural areas, forests or game areas.

Eligibility

Any local of government, including school districts, or any combination of units in which authority is legally constituted to provide recreation is eligible. Local units of government, school districts and local authorities must have a DNR-approved recreation plan to be eligible.

Contact

Jim Wood
Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems
Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
(517-241-2480)
woodjb@michigan.gov.

Source: *DNR Website, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Section, September 2003*

Local Funding Sources and Economic Development Tools

Obviously, funding for enhancement projects can come from local sources. Discretionary outlays from the city, township or county budget have been used for planning and implementation. In addition, public bonds or private foundation funding can be used. Lastly, in some cases, fees tied to development, such as traffic impact fees or assessments, have been pooled and used to fund corridor enhancements.

Economic Development Tools

There are a number of economic development tools available to communities to encourage development and improvements in specific community areas. The following table compiled by the



Escanaba / Gladstone, MI – US-2 Visual Enhancement Plan

Michigan Municipal League describes some of these tools:

Table 2 *Summary of Economic Development Tools*

	DDAs	TIFAs	LDFAs	BRAs	EDCs	PSDs	BIDs
Authorized municipalities	Cities, villages and townships	Cities	Cities, villages and urban townships	Cities, villages and townships	Cities, villages and townships	Cities with designated principal shopping district(s)	One or more cities with an urban design plan
Limitations	One per municipality	No new areas established after 1989	One per municipality	Industrial or commercial property	Industrial area	Commercial area with at least 10 retail businesses	Commercial or industrial area with boundaries established by city resolution
Requirements	Deteriorating property values	Deteriorating property values	Industrial area	Environmental contamination	Industrial or 501(c)(3) nonprofit in master plan	Designated as a principal shopping area cities by resolution	Designated as a BID by one or more
Eligible projects	Located in DDA district with approved DDA/TIF plans	Within defined TIFA area	Public facility to benefit industrial park	Environmental cleanup	Issue bonds for private industrial development	Improve highways and walkways; promotion; parking, maintenance, security or operation	Improvement of highways and walkways; promotion; parking, maintenance, security or operation
Funding sources	TIF from District;	TIF from plan area	TIF on eligible property	TIF; Revenue Bonds	Tax exempt bonds	Bonds, special assessments	Bonds, special assessments, gifts, grants, city funds, other

Notes:

BIDs – Business Improvement Districts; DDAs – Downtown Development Authorities; PSDs – Principal Shopping Districts; BRAs – Brownfield Redevelopment Districts; LDFAs – Local Development Finance Authorities. For a summary comparison of these and Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) and Tax Increment Finance Districts

(TIFAs), see the Michigan Municipal Leagues’s Economic Development Tools, June 2000.

Source: *Michigan Municipal League. Economic Development Tool. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Municipal League,*



Sources of Additional Information

There are numerous sources of information concerning visual enhancement and corridor aesthetics. Many organizations offer publications and websites with extensive resources to help communities plan for and fund enhancement projects. They offer tips on developing community support and involvement in enhancement activities and assistance with developing regulatory guidance and sample language. This appendix will list and briefly describe some of the more prominent organizations and resources.

Organizations with Additional Information

National

American Planning Association, www.planning.org

Scenic America, www.scenic.org

The Trust for Public Land

Federal Highway Administration (Context Sensitive Design), www.fhwa.dot.gov/csd/index.htm

The Surface Transportation Policy Project, www.transact.org

National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, www.enhancements.org

National Council of State Garden Clubs Inc., www.gardenclub.org

The Nature Conservancy, www.nature.org

National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse, www.byways.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation, www.nationaltrust.org

Michigan

Scenic Michigan, www.scenicmichigan.org

Michigan Association of Regions, www.miregions.org

Michigan Society of Planning, www.planningmi.org

Michigan Township Association, mta-townships.org

Michigan Municipal League www.mml.org

Michigan Department of Transportation, www.mich.gov/mdot

Important Publications

Communities Benefit! The Social and Economic Benefits of Transportation Enhancements, National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse

A Guide to Transportation Enhancements, National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse

Land Use Tools and Techniques, A Handbook for Local Communities, SEMCOG, March 2003

Community Guide to Corridor Management Planning for Scenic Byways, USDOT, FHWA.

Preparing Corridor Management Plans: A Scenic Byways Guidebook, USDOT, FHWA.