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EAST ROSEMARY STREET DISTRICT

ANALYSIS

This one block district along Rosemary Street from Henderson to Columbia Streets primarily serves a supporting function for the Central Business District and is dominated by off-street parking with several small restaurants and bars and two banks. There is one on-grade Town-owned parking lot and two parking decks. The Rosemary Street Parking Facility is more similar to buildings in the adjoining Central Business District in its architectural detail and is topped with a courtyard, easily accessible a few steps up from the east-west alley that runs through the block. The existing architecture in this district is variable. The scale of the dominant buildings, especially considering the narrow width of the roadway, provides a more urban spatial character than in other districts.

The most significant issue in terms of designing desired streetscape improvements is the lack of adequate public right-of-way. The incomplete sidewalks and the absence of site furnishings reflect this lack of space, and give this district its visual character.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Curb Extensions and Crosswalks

Within this district, narrow rights-of-way limit the construction of sidewalks and prevent consideration of any substantive curb extensions. In this area there is no on-street parking and due to the high traffic flow we recommend that that all travel lanes remain open. Since the Town owns some of the adjoining property, however, improvements such as bench groupings associated with curb extensions in other districts may be possible behind the existing right-of-way.

Sidewalks

The typical width and location of the recommended sidewalk varies within this district due to space constraints and the character of the adjoining use. Diagram 15 shows one such pattern recommended in this district for sidewalk construction adjoining on-grade parking.

In this case the 5 ft. wide concrete sidewalk is located at the back of curb with a 5 ft. wide landscaped area behind it to help screen the parking and provide room for small tree plantings. Implementation of this pattern would require the purchase of additional right-of-way or the negotiation of landscape and pedestrian easements where private property is involved, a point that will be discussed in more detail in the Design Implementation section. Where more space is available, we recommend widening the sidewalk or providing a 3 ft. setback from the road to provide more distance between pedestrians and adjoining travel lanes.

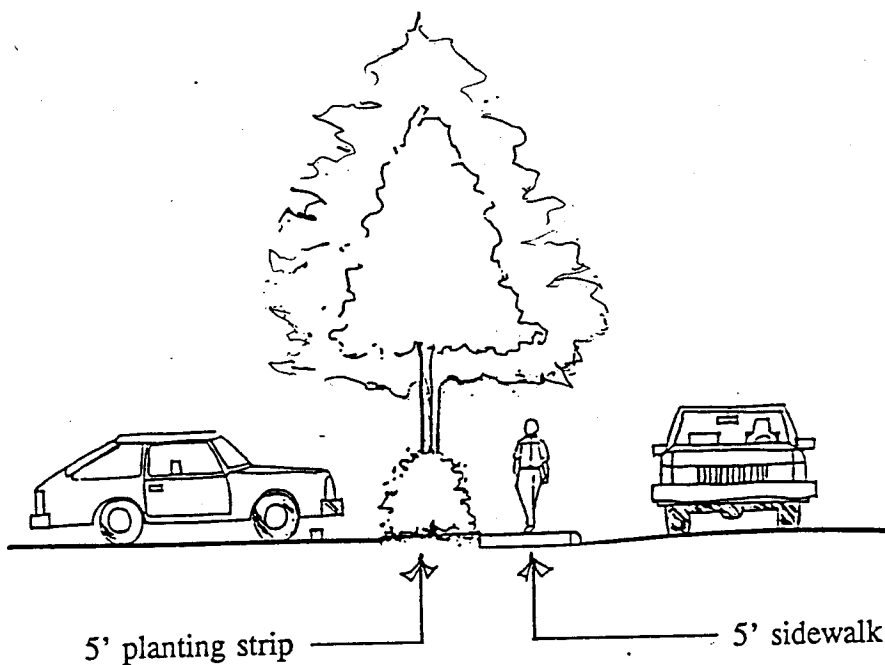


Diagram 15. East Rosemary Street District
East Rosemary Street Sidewalk Section (North Side)

Lighting and Utilities

Recommended lighting in this district includes two-tier automobile and pedestrian lighting utilizing the fixtures and illumination levels recommended for the University Square District. Along the sidewalks directly adjacent to the Rosemary Street Parking Facility, we recommend custom fixtures consistent with the facility's plaza landscaping. This free-standing pedestrian light fixture and the streetside plantings adjacent to the parking facility are shown in diagram 16.

Site Furnishings

There are limited opportunities for typical site furnishing patterns in this area due to the lack of available space. Some room for benches and trash receptacles may be available near the Columbia Street intersection if the recommended redesign of Town parking lot 2 as described in the Central Business District section is pursued. Similarly, at the corner of Rosemary Street and Henderson Street, some public open space exists behind the old Post Office that could be better integrated into the overall streetscape design.

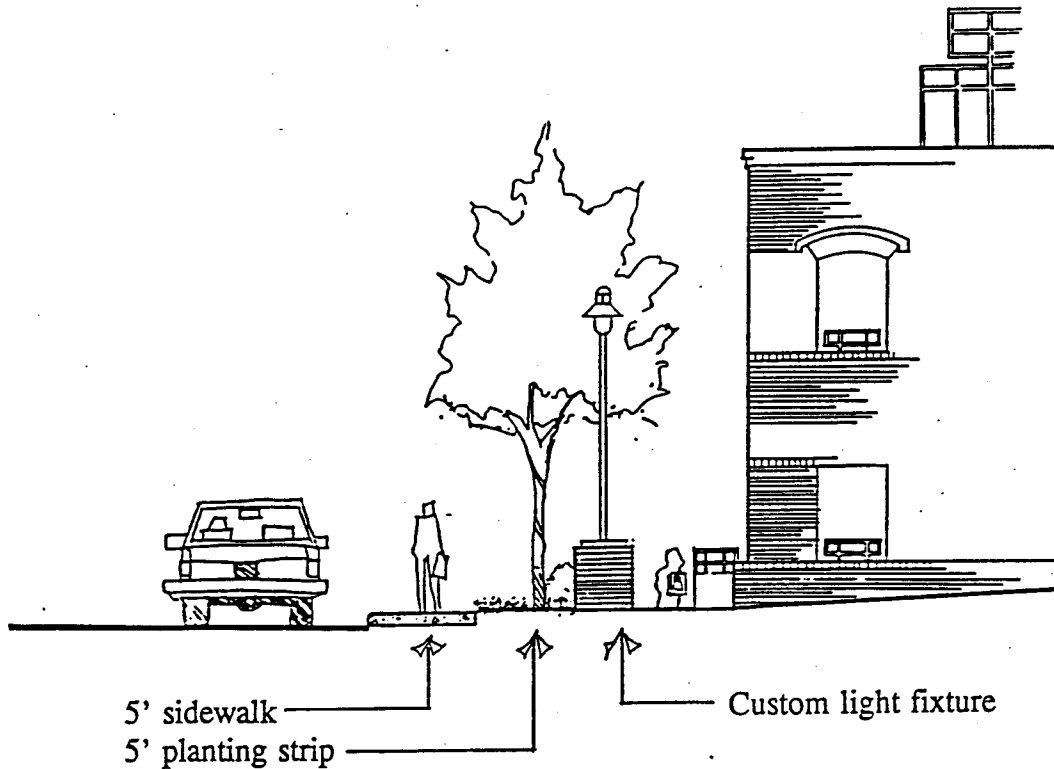


Diagram 16. East Rosemary Street District
East Rosemary Street Sidewalk Section (South Side)

Plantings

Because the right-of-way is very limited, adjoining property owners should be encouraged to install and maintain plantings like those shown in the above diagram. Joint ventures with property owners and the Town should be considered to enhance these highly visible areas. Most significant among these plantings would be the inclusion of trees where space exists to provide some canopy over the street.

WEST ROSEMARY STREET DISTRICT

ANALYSIS

This district includes the area from the InterFaith Council Homeless Shelter west along Rosemary Street to the Carrboro town line, and includes all of the adjoining cross streets that intersect with Franklin Street. It is the downtown's largest district and is made up of diverse businesses, on-grade parking lots and two large churches. It is distinguished from other districts by its interspersed residential and commercial building types, the former typically set back from the street while the latter abut narrow sidewalks. This diversity of spatial organization along the district's streets gives it a less uniform character than found elsewhere in the study area.

Rosemary Street is three lanes wide in this district with some turn lanes and limited parallel parking. Overhead utility lines on wooden poles line the south side of the street and visually dominate the streetscape, due to their own appearance and the effect they have on adjacent tree pruning practices. Trees, where they exist in this district, are typically set back in yards, and very little canopy exists to shade the street or sidewalks. Sidewalks are incomplete, especially along the south side of Rosemary, and grade changes directly behind the curb force pedestrians to walk in the travel lanes between some sections of sidewalk.

Lighting is somewhat inconsistent in this area, especially on the adjoining cross streets, and includes both high pressure sodium and mercury vapor streetlight fixtures. The issue of crime, particularly in the western part of the district, was a concern mentioned by participants in the public workshop and increased lighting has frequently been suggested as a means to improve this area.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Curb Extensions and Crosswalks

Opportunities for a curb extension and crosswalk in this district are limited, due to the minimal width of most streets. One possible location for these improvements is in the middle of the 200 block of West Rosemary where on-street parking exists on the north side. Several options exist for an exact location, including an alignment with Nunn Alley and a location farther west behind 440 West Franklin. Whether the curb is actually extended into the parking lane on Rosemary Street or an improved crosswalk is created without a curb alignment change will affect the potential for a bicycle lane in this area and merits further study. Incorporating the crosswalk with a walkway from Rosemary to Franklin Streets is the recommended solution, but would require that right-of-way or pedestrian easements be obtained to assure that this connecting walkway could be adequately maintained.

An improved crosswalk in this area would function to break up this very long block, and along with other improvements, would provide a pedestrian node in the downtown's most automobile-oriented environment. A non-signalized crosswalk currently exists in this area, and whether this improved mid-block crosswalk should be signalized merits further study. As a Town-maintained, rather than a State-maintained road, the process of signalizing a crosswalk on Rosemary Street would not require NCDOT approval, and a variety of signalization options could be considered for use at this location.

Sidewalks

We believe that the completion of sidewalks on both sides of the cross streets as well as on Rosemary Street is probably the single most important streetscape improvement needed in this area. Adding sidewalks will improve pedestrian safety and would tie this district into the downtown as a whole, both functionally and aesthetically.

The specific design of the sidewalks in this district would vary according to existing conditions, but would typically fall into one of two patterns. The first pattern is similar to that recommended for the East Rosemary District shown in diagram 15, where a 5 ft. wide concrete walk is constructed at the back of the curb. This pattern could be combined with trees and low plantings behind the walk wherever possible, especially adjacent to parking lots.

In situations where grade changes would require retaining walls to be built behind the walk we recommend a 3 ft. wide separation between the walk and curb to avoid forcing pedestrians to walk between a wall and moving traffic. An example of this pattern is shown in diagram 17. Although somewhat difficult to maintain in good condition, this 3 ft. wide turf strip could also be included on most of the south side of Rosemary Street and elsewhere where this pattern is already established. Where on-street parking exists, however, turf maintenance is particularly difficult, and the 3 ft. strip should be bricked or the walk installed adjacent to the curb.

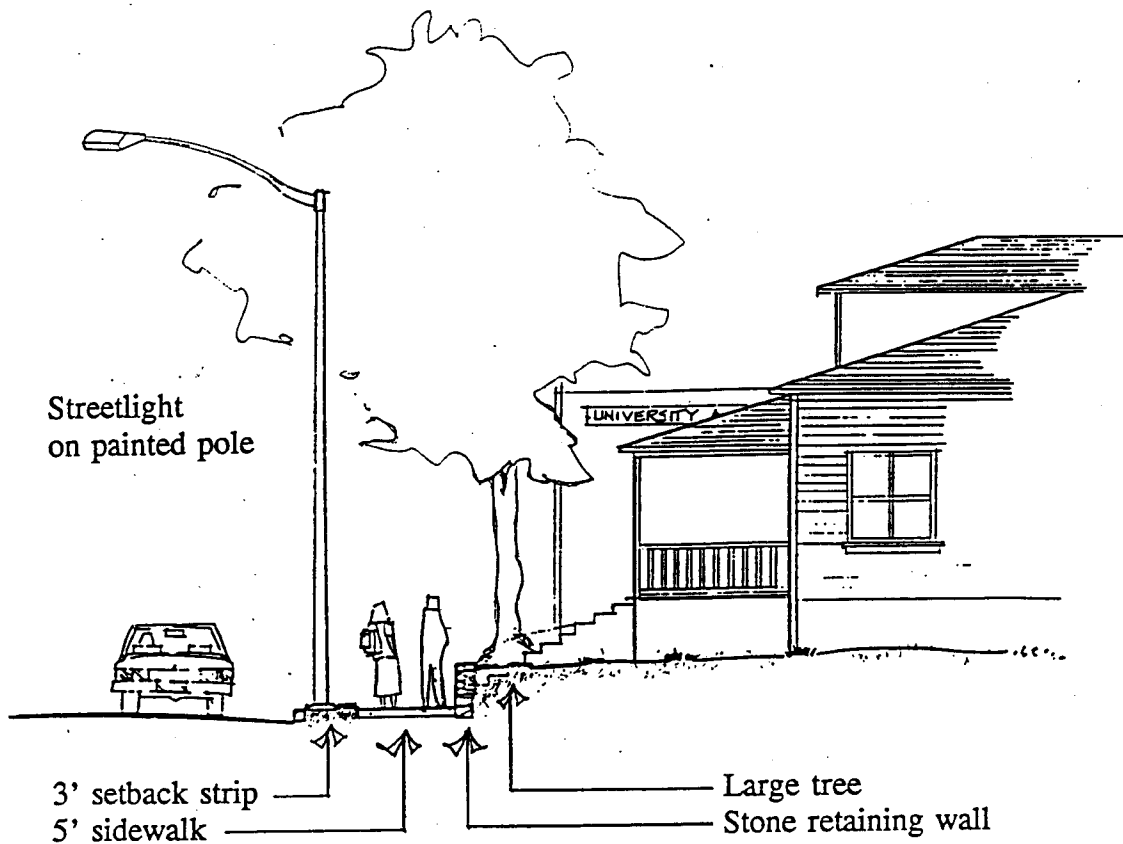


Diagram 17. West Rosemary Street District
West Rosemary Street Sidewalk Section (South Side)

Lighting and Utilities

Recommended lighting improvements in this district vary and respond to current pedestrian use patterns. In the 100 block of West Rosemary Street, from Columbia to Church Streets, we recommend a two-tier lighting system like that recommended for the 100 block of East Rosemary. This pattern could later be expanded into the 200 block as new development increases the urban context of the streetscape there. If the recommended improved crosswalk is realized on West Rosemary Street, this area could also include pedestrian scale lighting.

We recommend that in other areas of the district, the use of a single level of lighting, with high pressure sodium luminaires on newly installed poles. We recommend tapered metal poles painted to match the somewhat more ornamental poles recommended for use in the two-tier system, typically between the curb and sidewalk. On the cross-streets, we recommend the use of these same poles and fixtures, spaced to provide a more uniform lighting level than currently exists.

We further recommend the placement underground of all utility wires which are now overhead thereby eliminating the need for the existing wood poles. The removal of these poles and wires would not only be an immediate aesthetic improvement, but would allow for the development of shade trees to help define the scale and enhance the character of this district.

Street Furnishings

The recommended curb extension on West Rosemary Street provides this district's best opportunity for grouping site furnishings like those recommended elsewhere downtown. We recommend the installation of telephones, trash receptacles, benches, and a kiosk, using the placement patterns described in the Design Components section of this report. This grouping of site amenities would complement the improvements recommended for other locations downtown and help tie this district into the streetscape design as a whole.

The potential for substantial groupings of furnishings elsewhere in this district is limited to areas behind the current right-of-way. Adding a pedestrian node associated with one of the Town parking lots in the 100 block of West Rosemary Street is one possibility which could be studied, as is the possibility of a joint venture with one of the churches or other private landowners farther west. We recommend the placement of benches and trash receptacles at intersections and bus stops along the linear stretches between these possible groupings, wherever space permits.

Plantings

Placing utility lines underground provides an opportunity to develop a tree canopy over the district's streets and sidewalks. This improvement would require a coordinated effort on the part of public and private interests, utilizing trees on private property as well as on landscape easements or expanded right-of-way.

We also recommend the screening of on-grade parking lots through the use of narrow landscape easements and the planting of trees at the recommended improved crosswalk on West Rosemary Street. In other areas, where buildings are close to the street, property owners should be encouraged to include shrubs or other low plantings between their facades and the sidewalk, preferably in low planters which are compatible with the adjacent buildings. This pattern would be a variation of a West Franklin Street Business District planting pattern and is recommended to help unify the streetscape design.

In summary, we believe that the West Rosemary Street District has a great need for streetscape improvements when compared to the other districts within the study area, and that the improvements recommended here will require considerable effort. We further believe that because Rosemary Street is such an important and heavily used thoroughfare, the character it establishes is critical to the perception of the downtown as a whole.