

Urban Design

This Chapter of Luna Pier’s Master Plan discusses urban design and seeks to explore how new and redeveloped buildings will look and contribute to a sense of place. Colors, shapes, images, materials and the design of the built environment matter, and greatly influence how people perceive Luna Pier. Both public and private spaces and buildings are relevant to this discussion so that ultimately a more coordinated community appearance emerges.

Foundational Elements of Urban Design

Because people react and respond to the appearance of physical spaces and buildings in different ways, and architectural styles can be a matter of personal preferences, it is important that any efforts to define preferred styles be grounded in certain considerations. These include:

1. There should be a sense of authenticity to urban design that speaks directly to historic roots or other unique community elements.
2. There should be substantial local acceptance and endorsement of design standards.
3. Where possible, local urban design principles should “connect with” larger economic development efforts and community branding initiatives.

In Luna Pier, substantial effort was put forth to clarify desired urban design themes. The fact that Luna Pier is so prominently connected to Lake Erie made the idea that the City should express nautical themes an obvious first choice to explore. Consequently, early in the planning process, the web-based survey was posted on the City web site and the following question was posed:

Almost 9 out of 10 respondents (85.4%) supported this statement. Further, in subsequent community engagement efforts, similar voices were heard. Building on this, alternative design concepts emerged, along with ways to articulate these nautical themes in both public and private spaces. Delving deeper into this concept provided indications of even more support for this kind of community image.

As stated, urban design in a community relates to both public and private buildings and spaces. The City of Luna Pier intends to create a greater sense of place with urban design themes encouraging quality development and redevelopment that incorporates both subtle and bold nautical elements as illustrated in this Chapter. The City is also aware of the need to make both strong and subtle urban design statements so that overuse and saturation of nautical concepts does not occur.

Public Expressions of Urban Design

The City of Luna Pier has opportunities to communicate nautical themes in several ways. First, new public buildings can be built or existing buildings can be renovated with specific architectural elements. Secondly, a vast array of street furniture, structures in public parks, street lighting, vehicle parking lot elements and signage provide many opportunities to provide and communicate subtle cues about the essence of Luna Pier. These opportunities are described more fully in the following material.

A New City Hall

Luna Pier will need a new City Hall at some point in the foreseeable future. The existing structure is old and lacks improvements that would make it fully accessible for those with mobility impairments. Apart from where a new City Hall building is located, is the question of what it might look like. Perhaps no

other building in the City bears more responsibility for communicating an image and reflection of the whole community than City Hall. At this point in time, the decision to build a new City Hall is some years off, but it will be important to recognize the opportunity to make an architectural statement at the appropriate time. Examples of City Halls in communities similar to Luna Pier that have successfully communicated nautical themes are shown below.

Street Furniture and Other Public Elements

Street furniture and other elements include light poles, trash receptacles, benches, bollards and decorative fencing that might be used around public parking lots or as accent features. These elements provide subtle cues about community character. There are many options to choose from in terms of specific items. It is not the intent of this Master Plan to detail every element of street furniture to be installed in the future as it is recognized that full replacement of all elements will take many years. Further it is suggested that existing street furniture and other elements remain until they have reached the end of their useful life (or are replaced as part of a larger project). When these elements are replaced, they should be replaced with elements that are consistent with the new urban design principles expressed in this Master Plan.

Park Buildings and Play Equipment

Community parks provide an opportunity to express the character of Luna Pier



Wayfinding Concept #1



unfamiliar surroundings. A good wayfinding system can add considerable value to a community that seeks to be an inviting destination. Tourists or other visitors can become frustrated and uncomfortable when they are unable to find their destination or begin to feel disoriented. Fortunately, in Luna Pier, the basics of a wayfinding system are relatively simple given the street layout/orientation and compact size of this community.

Typically, three essential types of signage are involved in community wayfinding; gateway signage, directional signage and identification signage. Gateway signage should be dramatic statements at the main entrance to a community that signals a sense of arrival. In Luna Pier gateway signage already exists near the I-75 off ramp, but this structure can be upgraded to represent a more dramatic feature. Similarly, directional signage exists at the intersection of Luna Pier Road and Harold Drive. This signage should likewise be upgraded with a design that is consistent with other community signage. A successful wayfinding plan identifies decision points and the best wayfinding element for the situation. A combination of elements may be used if appropriate. Finally, identification signage is needed to identify public buildings such as City Hall and the Library.

As part of this Master Plan, a prototypical family of signs was developed to illustrate a possible wayfinding system for Luna Pier with a consistent design theme. It is expected that further discussion and deliberation on this topic may yield other alternatives, and that these design concepts may be further developed.



as a unique place. Specifically, shelter houses and other park buildings provide opportunities to communicate Luna Pier's association with the Great Lakes in both direct and subtle ways. Also, play equipment can emulate lake themes and nautical impressions as illustrated.

Signage and Wayfinding

Luna Pier hopes to attract visitors as an important part of its economic development strategy. This consideration underscores the need for a user-friendly and functional signage system to help visitors become oriented and comfortable in



Ground Mounted Identification Sign



Pole Mounted Directional Sign



Ground Mounted Directional Sign



Wayfinding Concept #2

Gateway Signage



Ground Mounted Identification Signage



Pole Mounted Directional Sign



Ground Mounted Directional Signage



Private Expressions of Urban Design

Private buildings and private urban spaces represent the bulk of the physical environment of most communities. Consequently, the look and architectural style of a particular place is largely determined by the sum of private design decisions made over many years. Often, those private decisions help create communities with considerable character and attractive appearance. Sometimes, however, private design decisions result in incompatible building designs, clashing color schemes and inappropriate or insensitive historic property renovations that diminish property values and overall community character. For this reason, many communities utilize design review processes to develop and preserve community character. Generally, architectural guidelines are developed as a companion to ordinances. These guidelines describe preferred design elements in terms of new construction and/or renovation. Design guidelines are often heavily illustrated and administered by separate boards that help compare proposed development with these guidelines.

It should be noted that while design review mechanisms can be a powerful implementation tool, it can also be somewhat controversial. As design review can have a significant impact on property rights, it is especially important to communicate the community-wide benefits of regulating architectural character, and to develop standards that are reasonably related to community goals. The challenge that lies before communities such as Luna Pier is the need to precisely define desired design elements and communicate objectives clearly. Design review mechanisms should not attempt to mandate good taste, beauty or charm – rather, it should speak clearly about architectural elements that help build a sense of place in a community. Such mechanisms should also allow ample room for freedom of individual expression and creativity, so that while, unifying themes are evident, a sense of monotony and sameness is avoided.

With these caveats, this Master Plan identifies architectural elements to be included in future development of a design review mechanism. It is recommended that implementation steps include developing a design review ordinance and companion design guidelines manual that furthers the principles shown in the following illustrations (which include images from existing structures in Luna Pier).

Residential Design





Downtown Mixed Use

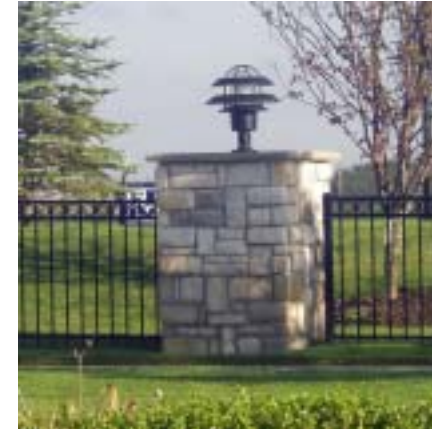


General Commercial



Other Public/Private Design Elements

There are opportunities to express the character of Luna Pier with other decorative or functional elements, other than building architecture. Design decisions related to street lights, benches, trash receptacles, along with flag poles, yard features, and bollards are all opportunities to express community character. Examples are provided on this page.



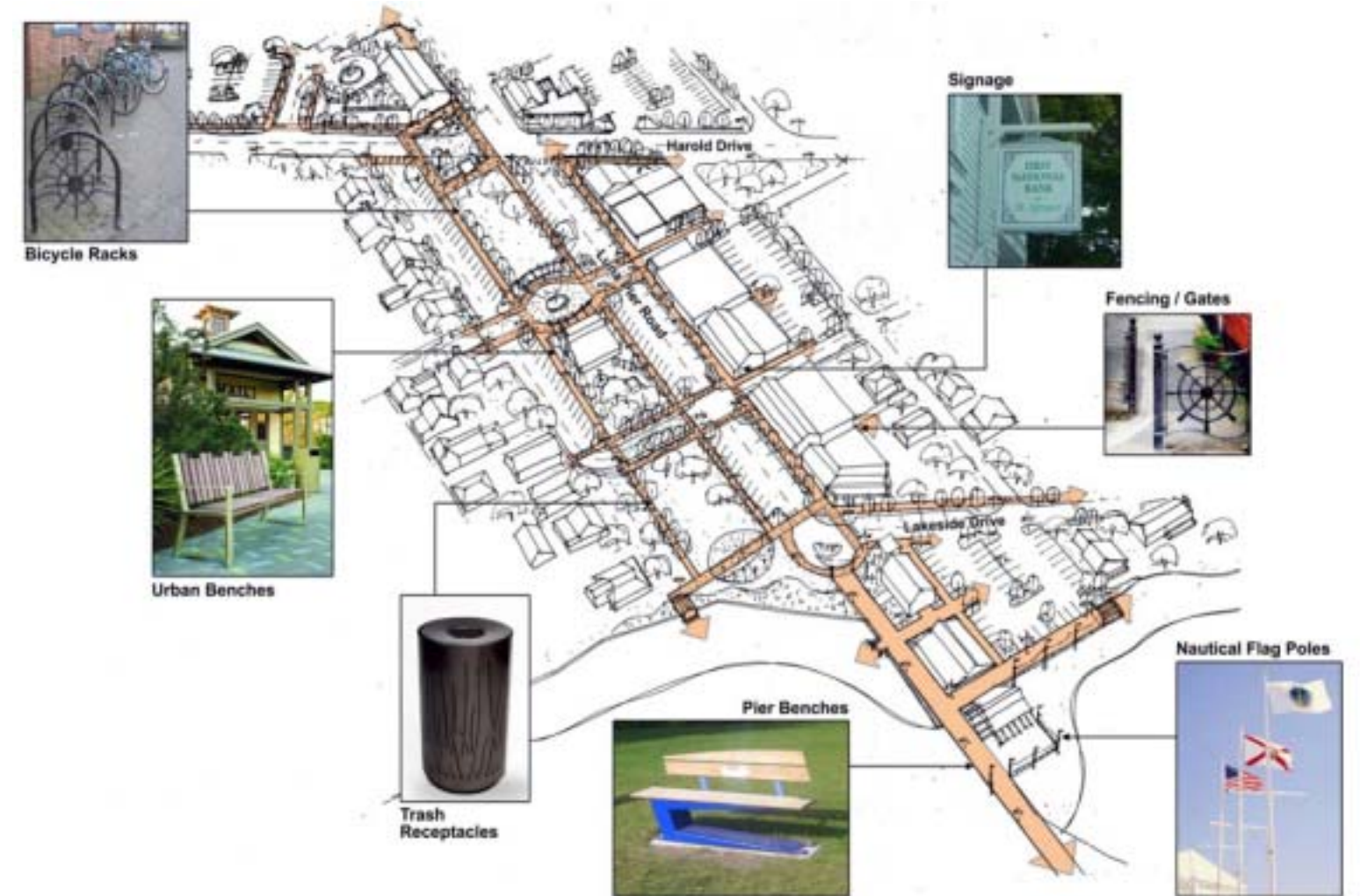
Supporting Downtown Design Elements

For many reasons, Downtown Luna Pier is a place where urban design is critically important and this area is singled out for special attention in this Master Plan. The importance of Downtown as a key location for economic development is described in Chapter 6, and of course, the Downtown of any community represents its very essence and character. Various lighting examples and street furnishings are shown for downtown Luna Pier. These examples show more specific locations and styles of materials and designs that fit the desired character of Luna Pier. It is recognized, however, that more input and deliberation are likely to be needed before final choices are made.



Street Furnishings as Downtown Urban Design Elements

Choices concerning the types of benches, bike racks, trash receptacles and similar elements represent opportunities to make a statement about Luna Pier as a distinctive place in that helps to draw people and provide a unique experience. As with lighting choices, it is recognized that more input and deliberation are likely needed before final choices are made.



Historic Roots of Urban Design

Certain elements of local architectural identity and design have been found in research efforts during the planning process. These elements provide clues with respect to local architectural traditions. Notably, a building that still stands today is pictured below and it suggests a certain kind of style and presence that is consistent with previous examples of desired building forms. Upper floor balconies speak to the functional need to see and feel Lake Erie nearby.

