

# Municipality of Wawa Final Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

Downtown Wawa Community Improvement Plan

March 2024





Image Sources: Municipality of Wawa and WSP

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# Land Acknowledgment

The Municipality of Wawa acknowledges that we are on land that has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We would like to recognize that we are in the Robinson-Superior Treaty territory and on land which is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe. Specifically, we acknowledge the neighbouring community of Michipicoten First Nation, for whom we have great respect. We also recognize the contributions of all Indigenous peoples, including the Métis, in shaping and strengthening the community and Province of Ontario.



1

# Introduction



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

# 1 Introduction

The Municipality of Wawa has prepared a new Downtown Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and associated Urban Design Guidelines (UDG) to enhance and revitalize the Downtown. A CIP is a planning and economic development tool for municipalities to promote community revitalization and often serves as a catalyst for achieving economic, community planning and urban development goals. Municipalities use CIPs to enable a wide range of policies and Financial Incentive Programs that encourage private investment, and to support strategic municipal initiatives, aimed at the revitalization of targeted areas.

The purpose of the CIP is to establish the vision and goals for the Downtown, identify the recommended Financial Incentive Programs to meet the CIP's goals, and set out an implementation strategy which includes administration and marketing of the CIP, and monitoring of results. Many of the recommendations and guidelines in this document are intended to be supportive of, or benefit from, the goals and Financial Incentive Programs of the CIP.

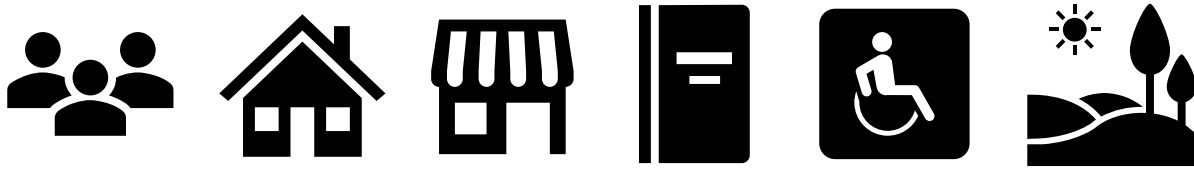


**Figure 1-1: Broadway Avenue Street Festival (Source: Municipality of Wawa)**



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## 1.1 What are Urban Design Guidelines?



**Urban design** shapes how places look and feel, and how people connect to and experience the places where they live, work and play. It is place making and considers the interrelationship between spaces, streets, and buildings that shape people’s experience of their community. It strives to support health, quality of life, well-being, functionality, and efficiency. Good urban design serves everyone, by respecting the details that make a place unique and full of character, while helping to ease movement and increase accessibility by creating comfortable, welcoming, safe spaces.

**Urban Design Guidelines** (UDG) are the documents that seek to instill good urban design practices, holding municipalities and developers accountable to the vision and goals that have been developed for a specific geographic area. Some design challenges in Northern communities such as Wawa include: climate-related considerations while still supporting local, and sustainable economic and tourism activities; aging building stock, building design and the selection of building materials to reflect local heritage; the prevalence of private vehicle use over more active transportation (e.g., walking, cycling, and mobility-aided movement); and the need to integrate parking without detracting from a pedestrian-friendly Downtown character, among other considerations. The UDG can respond to such challenges and provide CIP applicants with direction on how to achieve the CIP vision and goals, by implementing specific design elements, founded on community input and best practices.

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### 1.1.1 Structure of the Urban Design Guidelines

The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines document is organized as follows:

- **Section 1: Introduction** introduces the local context of Downtown Wawa, followed by how these Guidelines should be implemented; their purpose and structure; and the area they apply to.
- **Section 2: Guiding Principles** provides an outline of the CIP vision and goals, and urban design principles which the Guidelines aim to achieve.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

- **Section 3: Public Realm Design** presents specific public realm design elements such as (but not limited to) building façades, signage and gateways, streetscape design, furnishings, open spaces, and public art.
- **Section 4: Private Realm Design** presents guidelines related to private realm design elements including (but not limited to) building relationship, street wall, and the private-public interface.

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## 1.2 Downtown Wawa Local Context

Downtown Wawa, the heart of which is along Broadway Avenue, is currently comprised of a mix of retail, service, office, and other commercial uses, as well as residential uses and institutional uses. Downtown Wawa’s scenic location directly adjacent to Wawa Lake provides unique opportunities to spur local business activity and significant economic investment in the area. Key Downtown attractions include the Lion’s Beachfront Heritage Walk, and the Wawa Goose Nest Market, which offers seasonal opportunities for local entrepreneurs and artisans to sell their products to residents and tourists.

The history of Downtown Wawa is evident through the existing building composition which adds character and historic value to the Municipality’s core. However, over recent years, a significant number of vacant buildings and sites have resulted in fewer active businesses and a loss of economic activity in the Downtown, and a lack of aesthetic and urban design cohesion.

### Gateways and Public Art

The entry to Downtown from the south is marked by a highly visible and strategically located gateway sign. Other municipal signs and elements are found throughout the Downtown to reflect the area’s history, though some are in need of revitalization. The Downtown is also full of public art installations that contribute to a sense of local identity. “Heritage doors”, which are metal doors painted by a local artist (Heather Sinnott), and scanned and printed on metal as permanent installations, are found throughout the Downtown. There are also existing and planned building façade murals along Broadway Avenue which add vibrancy and reflect the local culture.



**Figure 1-2: Heritage Door (left) and Gateway Sign (right)**

### The Goose Nest Market

The Goose Nest Market, established in 2019, is one of the most unique aspects of Downtown Wawa. It is comprised of multiple compact wooden structures that can be rented by community members and entrepreneurs during local events and festivals, and is a valuable existing economic attraction where local vendors can showcase their goods. However, community members have suggested a need to consider reorganizing the layout of the structures to enhance the market experience for visitors through a more open environment. For example, suggestions have included reorienting the structures to form an internal courtyard, which may require the relocation of some of the historic mining monuments currently located on the site.



**Figure 1-3: Goose Nest Market**



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

### Wawa Lake Waterfront

Downtown Wawa is situated with direct proximity and vistas to Wawa Lake, including an expansive waterfront beach and the Lion's Beachfront Heritage Walk, which represents a tremendous amenity to attract both residents and visitors to the Downtown.

While the Municipality has made significant recent investments in the boardwalk, community members have suggested further improvements including the potential relocation or repair of the historic oil rig to enhance the lookout area. In addition, increased and refreshed signage, wayfinding to direct users to the boardwalk, as well as improved maintenance of the beach should be implemented.



**Figure 1-4: Wawa Lake Waterfront**

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## 1.3 How to Use the Urban Design Guidelines

The Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines (UDG) are intended to provide design directions and recommendations for the development and redevelopment of sites and buildings in Downtown Wawa, including the use of appropriate materials, building form and styles, consistent furnishings, enhancement through plantings, and overall site planning. Further, these Guidelines are intended to:

- Assist applicants in achieving community improvement project funding through the Financial Incentive Programs included in the Downtown Community Improvement Plan (CIP) by guiding how to meet the vision and goals for the future of the Downtown;
- Illustrate potential examples of the implementation of key urban design elements (e.g., street furniture, as well as hard and soft landscaping) in the Downtown context; and
- Assist Municipal staff in evaluating CIP applications and potential community improvement projects, as well as planning and undertaking municipally-led activities.

These UDG will not form operative policy but rather complement and enhance municipal policy objectives and the CIP. If there is a conflict between the UDG and the Municipality's Official Plan policies and/or Zoning By-law provisions, or other applicable municipal policies, those policies and provisions would prevail.

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### 1.3.1 Community Improvement Project Area

These Urban Design Guidelines will apply for properties located within the Community Improvement Project Area established in the Downtown CIP, as shown in **Figure 1-5**.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

Figure 1-5: Downtown Wawa Community Improvement Project Area





# 2

## Guiding Principles



## 2 Guiding Principles

This Section provides the overall vision and goals of the Downtown Wawa Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and outlines the Guiding Principles for the Urban Design Guidelines (UDG) that have emerged during the engagement process. Key engagement activities included a Downtown walking tour and Visioning Workshop with Municipal staff and community members, and Business and Community Surveys, which also included youth respondents from Michipicoten High School.

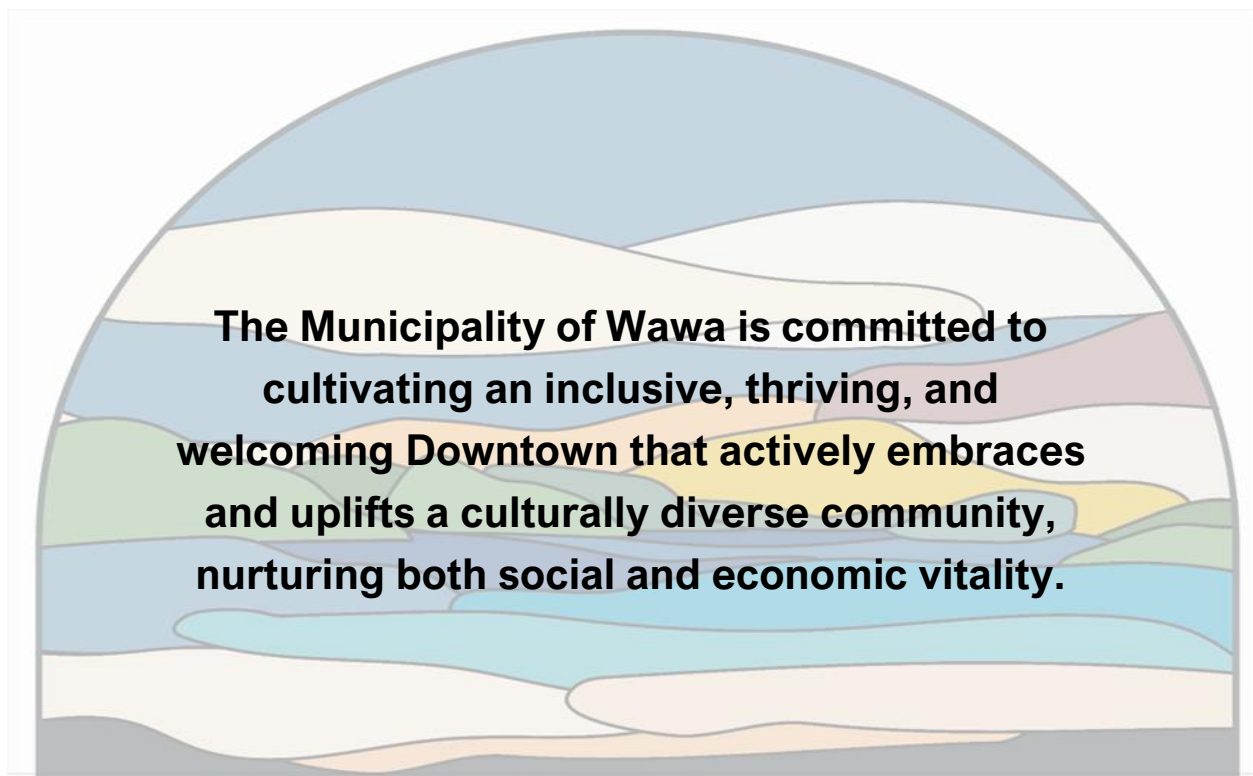
The Guiding Principles of the UDG are intended to be the backbone of this document. When reviewing CIP applications, the Municipality should ask:

- Are we meeting the intent of the Downtown CIP's vision and goals?
- Does the community improvement project's design uphold the UDG's Guiding Principles?

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### 2.1.1 Downtown Wawa Vision

Based on community input, and as established in the CIP, the Downtown Vision is as follows:





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## 2.1.2 CIP Goals

In order to implement this Vision, a series of CIP goals were identified and build upon relevant goals included in the 2008 Downtown CIP:

- 1 To reinforce the role of Downtown Wawa as a **primary destination** for business, commerce, and tourism in the community and the Algoma District.
- 2 Ensure the heritage, local businesses, and natural features located in the Downtown are promoted through recognizable and inviting **gateway features** to draw in residents and visitors.
- 3 Assist and collaborate with existing businesses and promote new businesses in order to achieve economic development goals.
- 4 Encourage the development and redevelopment of municipally- and privately-owned vacant and/or underutilized land and buildings, including the provision of additional Downtown housing units.
- 5 Support the **revitalization and beautification of the community**, through improvements to the public realm and infrastructure, and private properties.
- 6 Recognize opportunities and work proactively with CIP applicants and provide assistance to applicants through the building and development process.
- 7 **Increase accessibility and safety** through investments into existing and promoting more safety-based infrastructure such as crosswalks, public lighting features, and signage.
- 8 Encourage and reward pride and investment in property ownership, including celebrating and marketing successful community improvement initiatives.
- 9 Pursue the implementation of community improvements through a combination of municipal leadership and private investment.
- 10 Focus on overall positive and lasting first impressions, particularly through building façades, streetscaping, accessibility improvements, and entrepreneurial activity.

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## 2.1.3 Guiding Principles for the Urban Design Guidelines

Five (5) overarching **Guiding Principles** have been developed for the Urban Design Guidelines:

- 1 Position Downtown Wawa as a **destination** for visitors and locals to explore and enjoy.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

- 2** Promote the **enhancement and beautification** of Downtown, particularly through façade and streetscape improvements.
- 3** Encourage establishing more and stronger **connections to the lakefront**.
- 4** Embrace the distinctive **winter city** character of Downtown and create an inviting environment throughout the year.
- 5** Support and maintain a **safe and accessible** Downtown.

Based on the outcomes of engagement, top-ranked urban design elements included, in order of priority:

- Building façade improvements including signage;
- Street furnishings and amenities such as plants, seating and waste receptacles;
- Lighting;
- Sidewalk improvements; and,
- Accessibility features (ramps, automatic door openers).

The UDG include a focus on the above urban design elements, which have been instrumental in the development of the vision and goals of the CIP and UDG Guiding Principles. In addition, these guiding principles reflect current best practice for urban design and its application to Community Improvement Plans.



**Figure 2-1: Downtown Wawa (Source: Municipality of Wawa)**

*shop*  
LOCAL ARTISANS & STOREFRONTS

*live*  
SERVICES & ACCOMMODATIONS

EATSHOPLIVE.CA  
Everything local. Everything Wawa.

3

Public Realm  
Guidelines



### 3 Public Realm Guidelines

The public realm encompasses all areas that are accessible to the public, including the streets, sidewalks and waterfront. The public realm can generally be thought of as the space between a building façade and the street edge, and is essential to Downtown Wawa’s success. The public realm contributes to the overall character through the look and feel of the main streets, particularly along Broadway Avenue. The following guidelines will help drive public improvements in a way that aligns with the **Guiding Principles**, to reinforce Downtown Wawa as a destination, by enhancing and beautifying Downtown, fostering connections to the waterfront, and supporting a safe and accessible area for all ages and abilities.

#### 3.1 Streetscape Improvements

To complement community improvement projects on private properties along Broadway Avenue, the Municipality may consider investing in beautification efforts, to improve the Downtown; this can serve as a catalyst and inspire further private investment along the street. In order to concentrate efforts, it is recommended that any initial efforts and pilot project works be focused **between Ganley Street and Algoma Street at the northern end of Broadway Avenue**, capitalizing on the location and activity within the existing Goose Nest Market and municipal facilities along this stretch of Downtown.

The intent is for the Downtown streetscape to support local, and sustainable economic and tourism activities by prioritizing pedestrians, social interaction, commerce, and public events. It is noted that budget constraints may limit the immediate implementation of streetscape improvements, therefore a phased approach is recommended which prioritizes ‘quick wins’ and high-impact changes in the short- and medium-terms, with consideration for more major streetscaping projects recommended as part of long-term capital planning for the area. Refer to **Section 5.3** of the **Downtown Wawa CIP** for phasing recommendations.

**Figure 3-1** illustrates the phasing and locations where public realm improvements are recommended to be concentrated for the greatest impact across the Community Improvement Project Area.

**Figure 3-2** and **Figure 3-3** are conceptual renderings that have been prepared to demonstrate the potential implementation of various streetscaping improvements at Broadway Avenue and



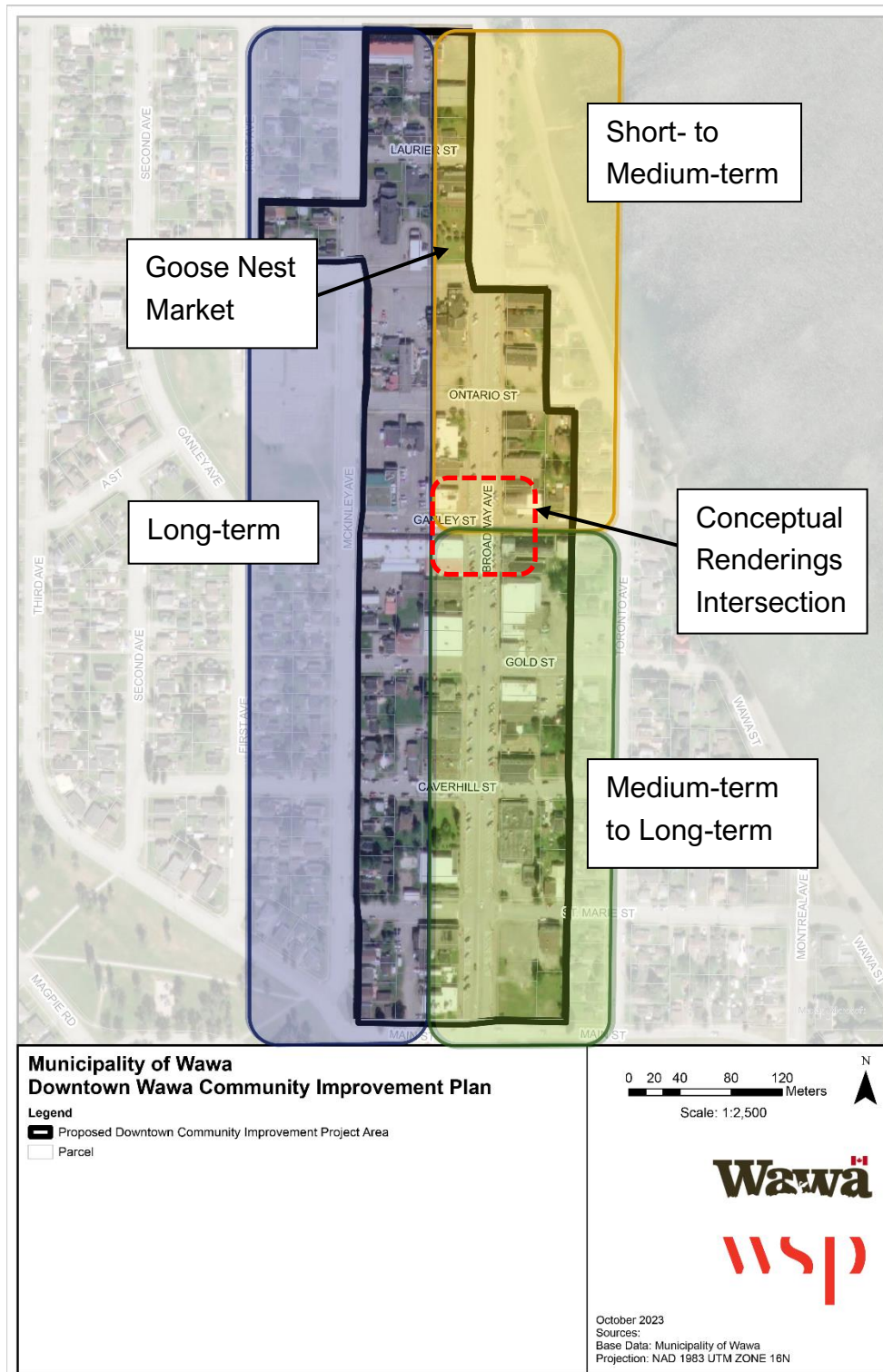
Ganley Street – a typical Downtown intersection – and which could be replicated at other intersections along Broadway Avenue.

The conceptual renderings illustrate the same perspective of the intersection in summer and winter conditions, showing both permanent and temporary seasonal streetscaping improvements to the public realm which are recommended throughout the various sections comprising these Urban Design Guidelines. Key potential streetscaping improvements illustrated include:

- Permanent bump-outs to narrow the street and crossing distances across Broadway Avenue for pedestrians, providing enhanced safety and opportunities for seasonal planters in the summer and additional snow storage in the winter;
- A painted crosswalk to visually identify Downtown as a pedestrian priority zone, with the added benefit of enlivening the streetscape;
- Hanging banners and planters, which can be removed from the street side during winter to avoid conflicts with snow removal equipment;
- Street furnishings, such as waste receptacles, benches, and bicycle racks;
- Parking spaces repurposed as a seasonal sitting area / patio space, which are reverted to their original condition in the winter; and
- Barrier-free parking spaces.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines



**Figure 3-1: Proposed Streetscape Improvements Phasing Plan**



**Figure 3-2: Broadway Avenue / Ganley Street – Potential Streetscaping Improvements (Summer) – For Demonstration Purposes**



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines



**Figure 3-3: Broadway Avenue / Ganley Street – Potential Streetscaping Improvements (Summer) – For Demonstration Purposes**



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### 3.1.1 Street Furnishings

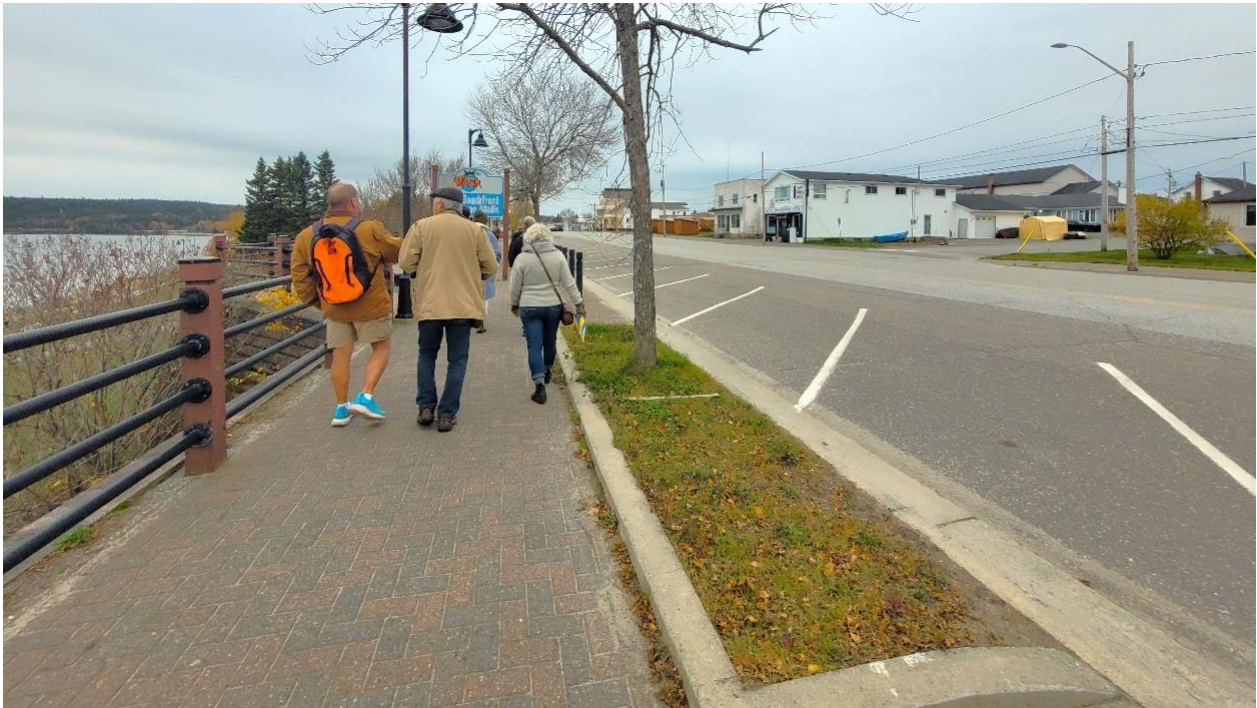
Street furnishings such as benches and waste receptacles provide much-needed pedestrian amenities and encourage people to linger longer in spaces. With the benefit of wide sidewalks along Broadway Avenue, there is ample room for furnishings to be added along the street while still providing the required pedestrian clear zone (i.e., a clear path of travel, free of obstructions). The following recommendations apply to the enhancement of Downtown Wawa through street furnishings and pedestrian-supportive boulevards.

#### Sidewalks

- 1** Where new or redevelopment of existing sidewalks are proposed, pedestrian clear zone routes must meet or exceed applicable municipal standards and current best practices in accessible design (per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act or AODA) and accommodate the needs of persons using a range of mobility aids (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, crutches), or with mobility devices or strollers. This includes:
  - a. 2.1 m clear width sidewalks preferred for unhindered pedestrian circulation. Clear width means that sidewalks should be clear of furnishings, landscaping, and other street infrastructure such as lighting columns and signage.
  - b. In situations where 2.1 m is not available due to existing conditions, an absolute minimum clear width of 1.8 m should be maintained.
  - c. To the extent feasible, sidewalks should have a straight alignment without path deviations which may be confusing or cause difficulty for users with reduced visual acuity or physical ability.
- 2** Where sidewalks intersect with driveways, they should clearly indicate pedestrian priority to minimize conflicts, and the sidewalk should be maintained at-grade through the potential conflict zone.
- 3** Currently, the sidewalks along Broadway Avenue are constructed of interlocking pavers in a herringbone pattern, as illustrated in **Figure 3-4**, and the Municipality has had some issues with heaving and surface damage from snowplows, leading to accessibility concerns. Alternative sidewalk materials may be considered for enhancement, such as decorative concrete (stamped or coloured), relaying the existing pavers, or relaying the existing pavers on a concrete foundation to help reduce heaving.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines



**Figure 3-4: Existing sidewalk and boulevard – north end of Broadway Avenue**

### Furnishing / Amenity Zones

- 1** Sidewalk clear zones should be separated from the street by a curbside furnishing and amenity zone (width varies depending on location, refer to **Figure 3-6: Broadway Avenue Street Demonstrative Cross-section**).
- 2** Narrowing the roadway at corners is encouraged through furnishing zone curb ‘bump-outs’ (i.e., the curb and sidewalk area would be extended into the street in a bulb-shape at corners, approximately the same depth as the existing parking spaces). This creates a shortened crossing, which contributes to added pedestrian safety and provides a visual cue for drivers to slow down. These added spaces would punctuate corners along Broadway Avenue and may also provide space for soil volumes to support street trees.
- 3** Temporary bump-outs may be constructed in existing parking spaces seasonally to test potential bump-out locations before committing to a constructed change. These pilot projects may be constructed using reflective pilons, fencing or other physical delineation of the space, and include moveable planters, seating, and other amenities. Refer to **Section 3.2 Parking and Flexible Spaces** for additional information.

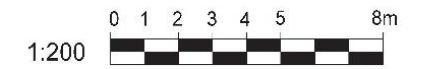
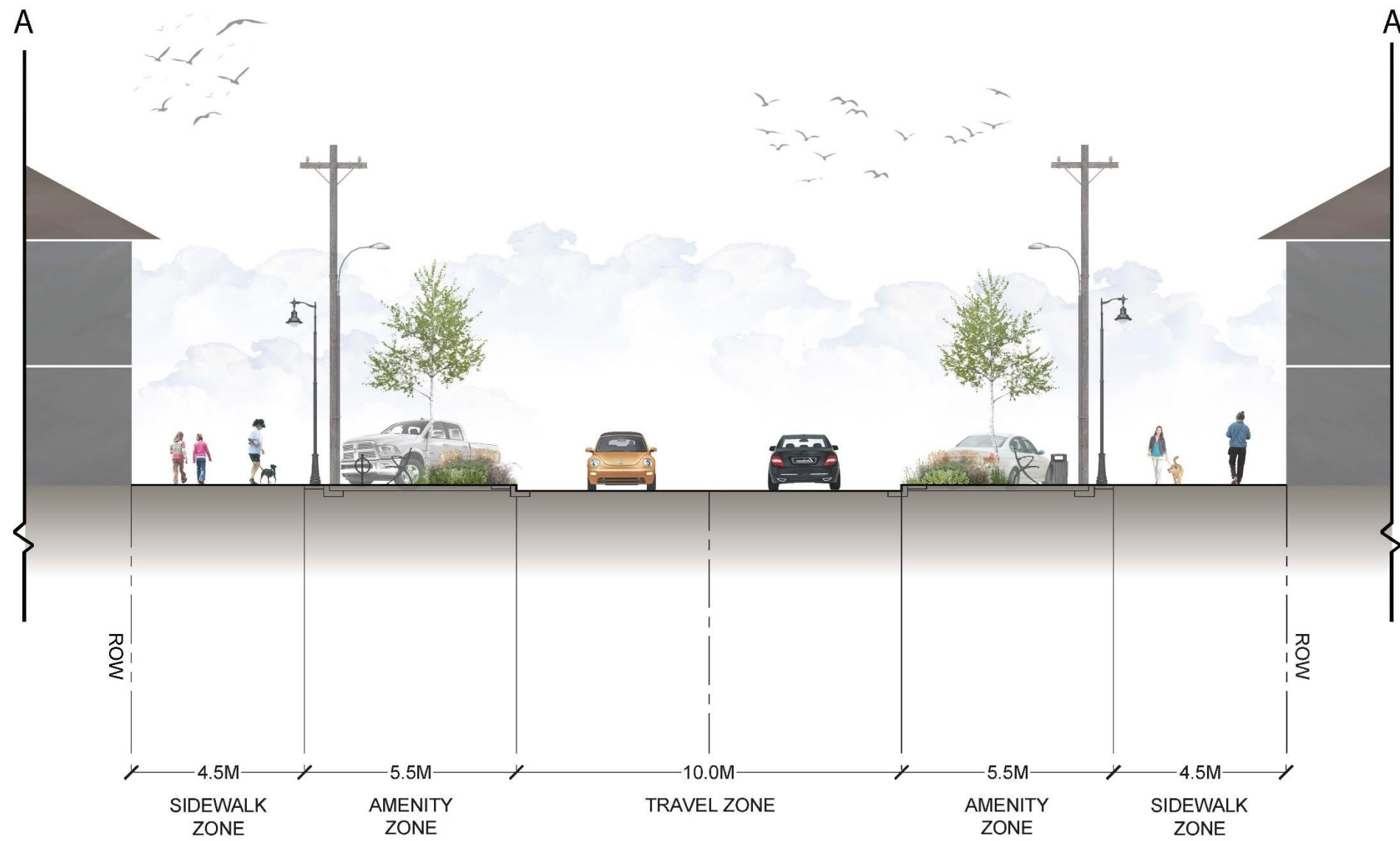
- 4 The furnishing zone should be primarily hard surfaced, to allow for unhindered circulation, and designed with as much width as possible to accommodate a range of different uses (e.g., movable landscaping installation as in **Figure 3-5**) and allow for additional snow storage during the winter season.
- 5 Space for spill-out uses, including café patios, should generally be accommodated within the furnishing zone. The location and extent may be subject to encroachment agreements and/ or permits from the Municipality.



**Figure 3-5: Movable planters delineating the public realm from the roadway**

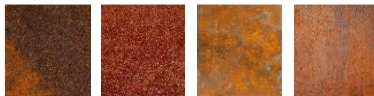
Figure 3-6: Broadway Avenue Street Demonstrative Cross-section

### DOWNTOWN WAWA - BROADWAY AVENUE STREET SECTION



## Site Furnishing Elements

- 1** Site furniture should contribute to the character of the Downtown, being of a consistent and recognizable style, materials, and colour scheme (see **Figure 3-8** for examples).
- 2** Site furniture may include elements such as benches, seat walls, seating and tables, picnic tables, bicycle racks, newspaper boxes, waste and recycling receptacles, bollards, and access control to certain areas.
- 3** Site furniture should be provided to improve user experience and facilitate increased levels of pedestrian activity for longer periods of time.
- 4** Provide seating at frequent intervals throughout the public realm within the furnishing zone (preferably 30 – 50 m spacing). This would create 2 to 4 seating areas on each block along Broadway Avenue.
- 5** Seating areas should be strategically placed to encourage social interaction and capitalize on views to the waterfront via side streets, where possible.
- 6** Provide waste and recycling receptacles in proximity to seating areas.
- 7** Provide seasonal bicycle parking (May to October), in convenient proximity to shops and restaurants.
- 8** Street furniture should be designed and constructed in recognition of the following design principles:
  - a. Aesthetically pleasing, high-quality design.
  - b. Made from durable, ethically sourced materials, and where possible should be manufactured from recycled materials. Recommended materials for seating and components with user interaction include timber, high-quality composite timber, and reconstituted stone for seasonal warmth / coolness. For other furnishings, such as light standards or bike racks, robust metals, preferably with integrated colour such as stainless steel, Corten (weathered) steel (where staining is not a concern), or anodized aluminum, are recommended. Polyester coated steel which has been tested to be highly resilient to nicks, damage and vandalism, may also be used.

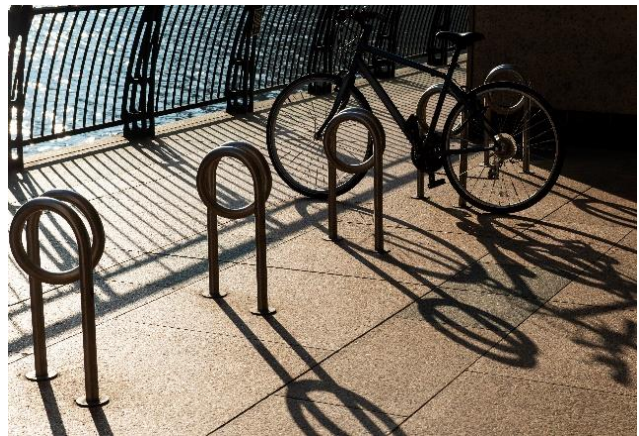


**Figure 3-7: Examples of different Corten Weathering Steel**



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

- c. Be modular for ease of upgrades and repairs, vandal resistant, and fully tested and certified with appropriate warranties.
  - d. Meet or exceed AODA Accessible Design Standards.
  - e. Incorporate sustainability (e.g., energy efficiency and solar-powered light fixtures, signage, etc.), where feasible.
  - f. Be fit for purpose and be comfortable to use.
- 9** The placement of street furniture should be designed to ensure pedestrian clear zones are free of obstacles and that required sight lines for pedestrians and vehicular traffic are not blocked.
- 10** Careful planning of street furniture locations will consider the need to provide intermittent locations that could support snow storage and not conflict with site furnishings.

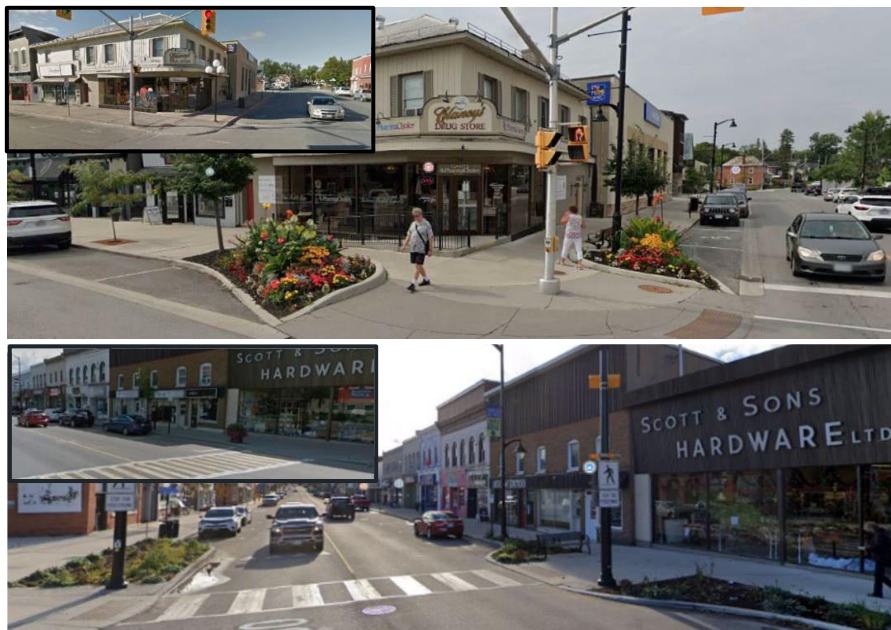


**Figure 3-8: Site Furnishing Examples**

### 3.1.2 Landscaping and Plantings

Landscaping and plantings serve to beautify and enhance streetscapes by adding to their visual appeal. Enhancements proposed for Downtown include:

- 1 Street tree planting, planter beds, and boulevard plantings, where space allows. Bump-outs (i.e., areas where the public realm is extended into the roadway, typically via a curb extension) would provide opportunities for street plantings.
- 2 Choose plants and trees that can withstand cold temperatures, drought, salt, compaction and snow. Low-maintenance species of plantings are preferred.
- 3 Planting will generally occur within the furnishing / amenity zones, and generally be centred within planting bump-outs, located 2.0 m minimum back from the curb to reduce potential damage from snow clearing or large vehicle movements.
- 4 Street trees should be carefully located to ensure they do not interfere with sight lines.
- 5 Plantings will be coordinated with utilities and below grade infrastructure to avoid conflicts.
- 6 Raised planting beds with urban tolerant plantings may be added to provide separation from parking areas, and protection around features, such as gateway signage.



**Figure 3-9: Landscaped bump-outs – before and after images**

Top: Streetscape & Landscape Design Plan, Arnprior, ON

Bottom: Downtown Streetscape Plan, Renfrew, ON



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

The potential implementation of site furnishings, such as benches and bicycle racks, seasonal raised planting beds, banners, and hanging baskets are illustrated in **Figure 3-10**.



**Figure 3-10: Broadway Avenue / Ganley Street - Potential Streetscaping Improvements - For Demonstration Purposes**



### 3.1.3 Lighting

Lighting, particularly when winter days are short and natural light is only available for a small fraction of the day, is integral to the safety and comfort of people in the Downtown. The following guidelines are recommended for Downtown Wawa:

- 1 Lighting poles and fixtures should be designed to be of a consistent style and materiality with other Downtown materials and furnishings.
- 2 Increase lighting to enhance nighttime aesthetics and pedestrian safety. Consider the addition of new pedestrian-scale lighting or mounting additional lights to the rear of existing light standards directed towards pedestrian clear zones.
- 3 Relocate the existing decorative lighting and banners to the pedestrian side of the light post to avoid future conflicts with snowplows. Alternatively, the decorative lighting could be placed higher to be out of the conflict zone.
- 4 Explore opportunities to enhance and expand the decorative lighting to key locations to further contribute to evening ambiance. The attractiveness and uniqueness of these lights are a charming part of the Downtown character, particularly in winter.
- 5 Create and mount new banners to replace empty or aging banners on light standards.
- 6 Accent lighting (as shown in **Figure 3-11**) may be used to accentuate landmark buildings, prominent building façades, landscape features, and public art.



**Figure 3-11: Accent lighting at Wawa Municipal Offices**



### 3.2 Parking and Flexible Spaces

On-street vehicle parking spaces along Downtown main streets can serve the dual purpose of providing short-term parking in proximity to businesses and serving as flexible spaces during warmer months when walking or other active modes of getting around are more desirable. Allowing for seasonal patio, café, or event space in these flexible spaces will encourage visitors to get out of their cars and walk around, attracting more people to the Downtown, encouraging them to linger and socialize, and consequently boosting local business.

- 1 Consider temporary sidewalk extensions and patios with seating and planters or other softscape features in lieu of parking spaces in the summer for interested businesses (see **Figure 3-12** and **Figure 3-13**). The design of these flexible spaces should have regard for impacts on circulation, loading, and road safety. Potential locations for temporary patio spaces would be coordinated on as-needed basis with business owners whose operations would benefit from outdoor seating, such as the existing seasonal patio space at the North of 17 Restaurant. The Goose Nest Market Area is also a potential location to accommodate a seasonal parkette or seating area along Broadway Avenue, to further enhance the public realm for pedestrians and specifically during peak market operations.



**Figure 3-12: Integrating temporary parklets in place of parking spaces**

Source: Noah Christman, Courtesy Flickr/SPUR

- 2 Permanent planted bump-outs with seating areas should be introduced to break up the line of angled parking in strategic locations. These would complement flexible spaces, but more importantly, provide visual interest and space for plantings that support and encourage use by residents and visitors.
- 3 Ensure sufficient barrier-free parking spots are provided. These could be incorporated with potential bump-out access points.



**Figure 3-13: Temporary patios encourage play and innovation**

Source: "New Event to Turn Parking Spaces into Temporary Parklets." The Pentagraph, Pentagraph Publishing 10 Jan. 2024, <https://shorturl.at/iltAL>

### 3.2.1 Bicycle Parking

- 1 Short-term, potentially seasonal, bicycle parking should be located throughout the Downtown to encourage cycling. Especially given the fact that the majority of the Wawa settlement area is located within 800 m to 1 km from the Downtown core along Broadway Avenue.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

### 3.3 Gateways, Signage and Wayfinding

Existing signage in the public realm is of varying conditions, from new installations such as the gateway sign at the southern entrance to Downtown, to older municipal signs that are wearing out. There is a need to update aging signage and implement new wayfinding and gateway features to direct visitors into Downtown and promote existing infrastructure, attractions, and historic destinations such as the Goose Nest Market, Lion’s Beachfront Heritage Walk, heritage artifacts and Heritage Doors.



**Figure 3-14: Signage – Left: Needs Replacement; Middle: Mid-Life; Right: Good Condition**

Two gateways currently exist which bookend the Downtown – the southern approach to the Downtown at Main Street and Broadway Avenue, which has a newly installed sign, and the northern entrance to the Downtown at Algoma Street and Broadway Avenue, which has a landmark comprised of the historic oil rig and Lake Wawa lookout point. These gateway areas should continue to act as anchors for the Downtown, and be the focus of efforts to enhance visual appeal due to their importance.

The following guidelines are intended to enhance and improve the gateways, signage, and wayfinding to and around the Downtown.

- 1 Revitalize existing municipal signs throughout the Downtown. Explore opportunities to collaborate with local artists to incorporate artistic and informational elements, enhancing the Downtown's aesthetic appeal.
  - 2 A comprehensive directional signage plan should be developed to guide residents and visitors to key destinations. Strategic locations should be prioritized, such as major attractions, public spaces, and parking areas. Determine and outline popular walking routes for seniors and/or typical walking distances from home to Downtown.
  - 3 Consider installing new crosswalks as a gateway opportunity, incorporating specific paving materials or decorative painting to signify the entry into Downtown and a more pedestrian-oriented environment.
  - 4 Signage should be intuitive, easy to read, and understand by using universally understood symbols / icons and tactile (braille) features, where reasonable.
  - 5 Signs for pedestrians should be low and sized to not overwhelm the field of view.
  - 6 Signage should be in prominent and expected locations (e.g., at corners and gateway locations).
  - 7 All new and replaced municipal signage should be on-brand to reinforce a cohesive Downtown identity.
  - 8 Consider additional branded signage at key entry points to the Downtown to reinforce a cohesive Downtown identity.
- 

### 3.3.1 Signage

Signage falls into one of four categories:

- 1 **Gateway signage** at Highway 17 turnoff. This sign should be visible for passing motorists – large and simple enough to catch attention, create a sense of intrigue and invite visitors to discover the Downtown.
- 2 **Entrance signage** at south and north entries to Downtown. These signs should be large and welcoming. They may also be enhanced to include some wayfinding elements (to Lake Wawa, cornerstone businesses, etc.)



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines



**Figure 3-15: Entrance Signage in Municipality of Wawa**

- 3 Wayfinding signage** A comprehensive directional signage plan should be developed to guide residents and visitors to key destinations. Strategic locations should be prioritized, such as major attractions, public spaces, and parking areas. Additionally, the following should be considered.
  - a. Wayfinding signage should be implemented around the Municipal Offices, Library, and Canada Post that denotes the centre of Downtown and other key locations.

- b. Consider implementing a Downtown business and amenities directory sign near the existing entrance sign at Broadway Avenue, Mission Road and Main Street, and directional signage to Downtown along Mission Road where many tourist accommodations are located.
- c. New wayfinding signage noting connections to the waterfront is encouraged to be located along Broadway Avenue. A waterfront trail icon and arrow can be mounted to existing signposts to guide visitors to the boardwalk and beachfront.



**Figure 3-16: Wayfinding and business directory / amenity directional signage examples**

Town of High River AB, "New Wayfinding Signs Making It Easier to Navigate." Okotoks Online, <https://shorturl.at/eprwH>

- 4 Interpretive signage** may be provided at key locations to provide educational information, such as for the historical mining equipment located in the Goose Nest Market area or other heritage resources.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

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### 3.3.2 Views and Vistas

- 1 Capitalize on the stunning viewshed of Wawa Lake from the northeast end of Downtown and the picturesque waterfront vistas along each side road leading to the water.
- 2 Emphasize the visual connectivity between the Downtown area and the waterfront area as part of a walking circuit that could touch on key features, open spaces and views in the Downtown to enhance the overall experience.

#### Lookout Points

- 1 Emphasize lookout points along Broadway Avenue to provide residents and visitors with opportunities to appreciate the scenic beauty of the surroundings.
- 2 Explore design enhancements to make lookout points to the east of Broadway Avenue more inviting and engaging (see **Figure 3-17**).
- 3 Consider connecting the waterfront lookout points with adjacent off and on-road trails / routes that create access points to and from the Downtown to the vista areas.



**Figure 3-17: Lookout point toward Wawa Lake**



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## 3.4 Public Waterfront, Parks and Open Spaces

Public opens spaces present opportunities to add vibrancy and increase beautification in the Downtown.

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### 3.4.1 Accessibility

- 1 Accessibility should be enhanced through:
  - a. Adding pedestrian crosswalks;
  - b. Additional lighting along Broadway Avenue;
  - c. Additional sidewalks and pedestrian connections to Lake Wawa and the Lion's Beachfront Heritage Walk; and
  - d. New and increased signage for businesses and wayfinding.



**Figure 3-18: New sidewalk connections to the lake and boardwalk are encouraged (as envisioned in yellow)**



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

### 3.4.2 Waterfront

- 1** Leverage the continuous waterfront pathway that extends from the north end to the beach at the southeast end of Downtown (Main Street).
- 2** Enhance this pathway as a key feature for pedestrian movement, recreation, and community engagement.
- 3** Address the lack of a sidewalk east of Montreal Street, preventing the completion of a 'loop' along the waterfront and connecting back to Downtown.
- 4** Prioritize the development of pedestrian infrastructure to facilitate a seamless and accessible waterfront experience.
- 5** Tackle the lack of signage and viewsheds from the southern end of Downtown, resulting in the underutilization of the waterfront.
- 6** Implement wayfinding elements and design interventions to draw attention to the waterfront's potential and improve accessibility.
- 7** Develop a strategy for beach upkeep and improvement to create a welcoming and enjoyable environment for residents and visitors.
- 8** Recognize the presence of Indigenous totems along the beach as a unique cultural asset. These totems should be incorporated into the design narrative, respecting and celebrating the cultural heritage of the area.



**Figure 3-19: Downtown and Wawa Lake Waterfront (Source: Municipality of Wawa)**

### 3.4.3 Open Spaces

- 1 Explore the potential use of the wide grassed area at 78 Broadway Avenue for events, subject to permission from the owner.



**Figure 3-20: Lot at 78 Broadway Avenue (Source: Municipality of Wawa)**

- 2 Develop guidelines for responsible and community-focused events that align with the character of the area.

### 3.4.4 Goose Nest Market

The Goose Nest Market is a unique and charming feature of Downtown, creating an economic attraction for local vendors, visitors and residents.

- 1 It is recommended that the layout be optimized for pedestrian circulation in order to better facilitate the use of the site and traffic flow. To this effect, a U or L shaped layout which orients the existing cabin faces toward Broadway Avenue and Ontario Street is recommended.



**Figure 3-21: Goose Nest Market**



### 3.5 Public Art

Public art creates a sense of identity and discovery in an area. Wawa has an active art community and significant history and culture that can be celebrated through permanent and temporary installations. Downtown Wawa also benefits from the existing ‘Heritage Doors’ and murals at 45 and 59 Broadway Avenue which contribute to the identity of the community and help to enliven the Downtown. The implementation of new public art and murals is encouraged strategically throughout the Downtown, with particular emphasis on visitor engagement and social sharing on platforms like social media. The following guidelines apply:

- 1 Art installations may be interactive and should contribute positively to the Downtown narrative and identity.
- 2 Potential opportunities for public art should be focused in areas such as blank façades (e.g., murals) and open spaces (e.g., sculptural installations).



**Figure 3-22: Murals can spur interest and tourism through social media ‘moments’**

- 3 Community expression and local history are key considerations to planning and selecting public art and artists. Proposed art should align with community values and desires. Working with local artists, community groups, and Indigenous groups is encouraged.

- 4 Public art should, where feasible, be physically and visually accessible and barrier-free.
  - 5 Public art pieces should be durable and easily maintained.
- 

### 3.5.1 Murals

- 1 Murals should be thoughtfully designed to encourage interaction, spark curiosity, and foster a sense of inclusivity.
- 2 The visual enhancement and impact of murals will rely on being located at key locations for views from the public realm including gateways, corners, buildings adjacent to parks and open spaces adjacent to Broadway Avenue, or other key nodes along this street.
- 3 Murals should have visual appeal with interactive elements to help draw in different generations and may incorporate historic interest (e.g., the Heritage Doors).
- 4 Embrace vinyl mural applications as a cost-effective and flexible solution for temporary beautification. Encourage property owners to participate in a rotating mural program, allowing for dynamic changes and reduced costs.
- 5 Where there is concern for maintenance or the desire to cycle through murals, consider the potential for fastened mural panels that could be replaced or removed should infill development obstruct views towards them.



**Figure 3-23: Murals can be employed to enliven side streets and alleys**



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

### Heritage Doors

- 1 Continue to celebrate and preserve the Heritage Doors by promoting guided or self-guided tours or creating a digital map accessible to residents and visitors that annotates the installations.
- 2 Highlight the artistic process and historical significance to foster community engagement.
- 3 Consider leveraging the 'Portals to our Past' book as an educational tool for schools and tourists. Collaborate with local institutions to organize events, workshops, or guided tours that bring the book to life, enhancing public awareness and appreciation.



**Figure 3-24: Heritage Door, Goose Nest Market**

## Historic Mining Equipment

- 1 Evaluate the feasibility of relocating the historic mining equipment currently located at the Goose Nest Market to the vacant lot at the southeast corner of Downtown. Engage the community in discussions to determine the most suitable location that respects both historical significance and market use.
- 2 Consider installing didactic panels to complement the historic mining equipment and annotate their historical significance to the community of Wawa, its residents, and economy.
- 3 Acknowledging the concerns and challenges regarding the historic oil rig (i.e., obstructing views of the lake when driving through Downtown, and maintenance challenges to fix the existing lean), engage with the community to decide whether relocation or in-place repair is the most suitable solution, taking into account both practical and heritage considerations. Evaluate potential solutions, such as relocation, to balance the preservation of the oil rig's historical significance with the desire for unobstructed views.



**Figure 3-25: Heritage Mining Equipment in Goose Nest Market**



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# Private Realm Guidelines



## 4 Private Realm Guidelines

The private realm encompasses all areas that are privately-owned, including buildings, private alleyways / lanes, and lots. The private realm in Downtown Wawa forms part of its character; therefore, changes to building façades will impact the feel and experience along Broadway Avenue and the surrounding streets. The following guidelines are intended to direct private development and redevelopment to support and/or be consistent with the **Guiding Principles** and the Downtown character, reinforcing Downtown Wawa as a destination while enhancing, beautifying, and supporting a safe and accessible Downtown.

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### 4.1 Public-Private Interface

The public-private interface is the transition between the public realm (comprising the sidewalk landscaping and street furniture zones) and private property, including building façades and frontages and alleyways / lanes. This interface plays a critical role in supporting street activity, accessibility, and how vibrant the streets are perceived to be by users. The intent is that there should be a high level of permeability, both physical and visual, between the public realm and interior spaces of buildings lining Broadway Avenue.

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#### 4.1.1 Building Façades

Building façades are prominent components of the streetscape. Well articulated building façades provide a richness of experience for pedestrians and create visual interest, contributing long-term benefits for property value and community appeal. Wall articulation and plane changes, clear glass windows and window details, deep wall recesses or pronounced piers, material changes, and canopies all contribute to building articulation. It is the intent of these guidelines to foster visually engaging storefronts and enhance the visibility of active businesses through attractive façades, clear signage and window displays. Additionally, vacant buildings and storefronts are a challenge facing the Downtown. The following design guidelines are intended to encourage public and private investment in their rehabilitation.

- 1 Encourage temporary activation of vacant or open spaces for community events.
- 2 Adaptive reuse programs are encouraged to repurpose vacant buildings and reduce the negative impact of prolonged vacancies.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

- 3 Building frontages should be supportive of and encourage pedestrian activity through a combination of human-scaled features, active and clear fenestration (the arrangement of windows and doors on a building façade), and weather protection, where possible.
- 4 Building façades should be generally divided into individual units or storefronts through the use of entrances, canopies or signage overhangs, vertical breaks and/or raised pier details to create visual interest.



**Figure 4-1: Varying complementary architectural elements create a welcoming façade**

- 5 A variety of architectural elements should be employed to create a distinctive character for streetscapes. This may include:

- a. **Wall articulation** through the incorporation of bays, recessed doorways, entry thresholds / porches, columns, and material detailing. Longer building façades and walls especially should be broken up visually via wall articulation (e.g. vertical recesses/breaks or raised pier details or masonry features), and repeating landscaping elements, such as planters and planter boxes.
  - b. **Windows** should be articulated with sills, frames, vertical breaks, recesses, mullions and/ or grilles. Long expanses of glazing should be avoided. Retail frontages should employ at least 50% glazing (windows or glass) on the ground floor and along the street. Upper storeys should employ at least 30% glazing where they face the street.
  - c. **Entrances** should be defined through a combination of canopies, material changes, increased height, and/or recesses and wall articulation.
  - d. Architectural elements of new or improved building façades should **reflect the character and charm** of Downtown Wawa. This may be achieved by looking at historical reference images and incorporating details that allude to these elements.
- 6** Window displays are encouraged for retail uses and to encourage pedestrian activity.
  - 7** Where possible, a higher degree of wall articulation should be provided at intersection corners and especially at gateway entrances to the Downtown.
  - 8** Building elevations at corners will address both street frontages with consistent building material, architectural details, and window styles and details.
  - 9** For mixed-use buildings, defined horizontal breaks (e.g., change in material, change in fenestration, or decorative banding) should be provided between the at-grade storey and use and the upper floors of the building to provide visual interest and denote separation.
  - 10** Non-street facing building façades exposed to public view, open spaces, or facing parking areas should be addressed through the provision of windows, cladding materials and colours, wall articulation and/or architectural detailing consistent with the main façade.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines



**Figure 4-2: Façade Improvements – Before and After Images**

Top: City of Kenora - Before (left) & After (right); Bottom: City of Pembroke – Before (left) & After (right)

### 4.1.2 Materials

A complementary suite of materials is encouraged to be applied in development and redevelopment projects throughout Downtown Wawa, with allowance for some flexibility in textures or colours to create a diverse and exciting character for Downtown buildings. This section provides a recommended list of preferred materials which respect the historic context of Downtown, however, other materials may be used, provided that they are compatible with the existing character of the Downtown.

**1** Preferred materials include:

- a. Brick, reclaimed brick, stone cladding, and reconstituted stone;
  - b. Timber, reclaimed timber, and high-quality composite timber where it is appropriate to the architectural style;
  - c. Cement boards / siding (e.g. hardi-board); and
  - d. Robust metals, preferably with integrated colours such as stainless steel, Corten (weathered) steel (where staining is not a concern), or anodized aluminum may be utilized as accent materials.
- 2** Material cladding to be avoided include vinyl and aluminum siding, stucco as primary cladding, and wood or asphalt shingles.
  - 3** Materials used in renovations or additions should also be complementary to the existing building through replication of the same materials, or through being complementary in texture, form, and/ or colour.
  - 4** Where possible, all materials should be sustainably sourced, reusable and/or recyclable.
  - 5** Attractive, but cost-effective materials are generally preferred.
  - 6** All materials are to be suitable to Wawa's climatic conditions (e.g., tolerant of the application of salt in winter, slip resistant, and able to withstand the freeze-thaw cycle, etc.), robust, low maintenance, easily repaired/replaced, and appropriate to their location and anticipated use.



**Figure 4-3: Use of Masonry on Building Façade (Brick and Stone)**



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

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### 4.1.3 Signage and Lighting

Signage and lighting are important components to the overall feel and character of a building and the Downtown streetscape. Building signage provides an opportunity to add visual interest and emphasize building entrances, while describing or advertising the buildings' service or use. Signage should not dominate the streetscape and should be scaled for pedestrians rather than automobiles.

#### Signage

- 1** Aging or missing storefront signs should be restored or refurbished.
- 2** Signage should be clearly visible, provide visual interest, and be sized to be complementary to the building's architecture and pedestrian scale.
- 3** Fascia signage (signage on the front façade of a building) should not be placed beyond the height of the at-grade storey of the building and should generally not exceed 75 cm (2.5 feet) in height.
- 4** Signage should not obscure windows, cornices, columns, or other architectural elements. It should be limited to the storefront of a building and placed in a consistently defined area on the façade for commercial and mixed-use buildings.
- 5** Signs should be made from natural materials; back-lit or internally illuminated and plastic fascia signs are discouraged. Signage should be lit through an external fixture or light source (e.g., down lighting, overhang lighting, goose neck lighting, etc.).
- 6** Signs with individual cut letters that are backlit or lit indirectly through lighting fixtures are encouraged.
- 7** Projecting / hanging signs, perpendicular to the building façade, should be permitted as they can add to the pedestrian experience. They may encroach into the public realm provided that they do not project more than 1.0 m from the building, and have a minimum 3.35 m clearance between the bottom of the sign and grade. Refer to Municipality's Sign By-law for additional requirements.

#### Lighting

- 1** The municipal address should be clearly visible and well lit on all buildings.
- 2** Building entrances and façades should be lit with wall mounted or recessed mounted lights.

- 3 Lighting should be directed downwards to accentuate the building façade and shielded from bleeding light beyond the frontage.
- 4 Should a building be designated as a heritage structure, historical photographs should be consulted to establish the types and styles of signs appropriate to it. Architectural signs marking historical dates and names should be integrated into the building fabric and constructed from cast metal, stone, or tile.



**Figure 4-4: Lighting and Signage Examples**

#### 4.1.4 Canopies and Awnings

- 1 Continuous awnings or canopies are encouraged to provide weather protection and should provide an identifiable break or gap between storefronts.
- 2 Awnings or canopies should be designed and located to not interfere with signage or architectural features of the building. Bubble-style or box-style awnings / canopies are to be avoided.
- 3 The bottom of the awning should be between 2.1 m and 2.4 m above the sidewalk, or at a height that does not obstruct storefront entrances.
- 4 Where signage is provided on the canopy or awning, it should be stencilled or painted on its surface; it should not be illuminated.
- 5 The colour of awnings / canopies should be coordinated with the colour package of the building's main cladding materials and color scheme.



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

- 6 Canopy / awning materials should be of high quality to ensure durability and preservation, including high quality canvas, cloth, or metal. The use of aluminum, vinyl or plastic awning / canopies are discouraged.

### 4.2 Siting and Orientation of Buildings

Site design and the layout of a lot for development or redevelopment can impact the feel and character of the Downtown, and how residents and visitors experience Wawa. The following guidelines are intended to promote the **enhancement and beautification** of Downtown.



**Figure 4-5: Awnings for Storefronts**

- 1 Site and building design should present attractive and consistent cladding treatments on all elevations exposed to public view, including rear areas, where these areas are publicly accessible or visible from public spaces.
- 2 Back of house facilities (e.g., kitchen, storage) should be well screened and designed to avoid potential public safety or security risks.
- 3 Rear entrances and publicly accessible routes, such as alleyways, are to be easily identifiable and navigable. It is encouraged that side or rear entrances be treated as 'secondary storefronts' with attractive and visually permeable façades.
- 4 Where new buildings are located next to lots with parking forecourts, the side elevations of the building should include detailing, active windows with clear glazing, and/or other architectural features to address public views from the street.



- 5 Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to address both streets. Where corner lot rear elevations are exposed to street view they should be consistent in architectural design and quality with the front and external side elevations.
  - 6 Enhancements, particularly opportunities for public art, including murals, should be considered to improve aesthetics of any blank walls that are visible from the public realm, such as along alleys leading to rear parking.
- 

#### 4.2.1 Parking

- 1 Parking in the private realm should generally be screened from public view and occur on the back of private lots.
  - 2 Access to parking is encouraged to be from a side road or existing lanes / alleys, wherever possible.
  - 3 Parking driveway access curb radii should be reduced to increase areas for planting and to help compress the pedestrian crossing of the driveway.
- 

### 4.3 Built Form

The existing mixed-use buildings are a key strength of Downtown Wawa. It is the intent of these guidelines that the aesthetic character of these buildings be maintained or enhanced, and that adaptive reuse, where applicable, is encouraged. Collaboration between small businesses and upper-storey residential units is encouraged to support the objective of creating a vibrant and connected community.

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#### 4.3.1 Building Height and Massing

Building height and massing can affect the pedestrian experience and quality of a streetscape, affecting how a building “fits” within its context and impacting the level of sunlight and shadowing on the public realm. The following guidelines aim to create a continuous street wall and building massing supportive of pedestrian activity and appropriate to the Downtown Wawa context.

- 1 Building design should sensitively respond to the overall composition of the Downtown including built form scale, proportion, massing, and contributing to a continuous street wall. To this end:



## Downtown Wawa Urban Design Guidelines

- a. Building massing should reinforce a continuous street wall frontage along Broadway Avenue; buildings should be located at the front property line (0 m setback), and spaced at 0 m from adjacent buildings to help define the public realm.
  - b. Buildings adjacent or opposite one another should be compatible in massing and height. A continuous height of 2 storeys is encouraged, with added height permitted where a strong horizontal break or slight stepback (min. 1.5 m) from the second storey is introduced on the third storey.
- 2** More prominent building massing and articulation should be provided at corners and especially at the gateway entrances to the Downtown, as well as to frame views and vistas to open space and natural features, such as Wawa Lake, where they are adjacent.
  - 3** Mixed-use buildings with retail / commercial uses at grade should have a minimum ground floor height of between 3.7 and 4.5 m to provide flexibility for at-grade retail and commercial uses.
  - 4** Buildings at corner sites should be sited and massed to address the intersection as well as the two flanking public road edges.



**Figure 4-6: Corner Buildings: Dual Street Frontages Enhance Side Streets**

### 4.3.2 Heritage Conservation

At the time of writing, no buildings within Downtown Wawa have been formally designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, however, buildings may still have local heritage value to residents. Should any buildings be designated in the future, the following guidelines would apply to their development or redevelopment. The reuse of potential heritage building resources and their sensitive integration is encouraged. Adaptive re-use is a process where an existing building or structure is renovated or updated to suit a new use or purpose. This process is encouraged for older buildings or properties that may have architectural or cultural heritage significance as a way of preserving important features, while allowing for redevelopment and new uses to occur. The following guidelines apply to adaptive re-use:

- 1 Adaptive re-use is encouraged for older buildings, and would be required for any which are designated, listed or have been identified as having potential heritage significance.
- 2 Seek to balance adaptive re-uses that implement current building standards and design goals with the preservation of key heritage features.
- 3 Where adaptive re-use is not feasible, recycling of materials should be considered for reuse rather than being disposed.



**Figure 4-7: Historical Building Façades – Town of Wawa**

(Image source: Johanna Rowe, Personal communication via email, October 23, 2023)



5

Conclusion

## 5 Conclusion

The Urban Design Guidelines (UDG) for the Downtown Wawa Community Improvement Plan (CIP) will be implemented through improvements to the public realm and in the review of applications for private development, redevelopment, and community improvement projects. The implementation of these UDG will facilitate the improvement of existing conditions in Downtown Wawa, help to achieve the vision of the CIP, and contribute to as a cohesive look and feel for the area. The UDG and CIP may be reviewed by Council after 10 years to assess their effectiveness and success, or on as needed basis as determined by Council as new urban design opportunities and priorities arise.

The UDG are intended to be flexible, allowing development and redevelopment to adapt to changing trends and future shifts in the Municipality's financial resources and priorities. Where proposed development and projects meet the intent and guiding principles of the UDG, the Municipality may consider them to be in conformity with the UDG.

Above all, the UDG signify the Municipality's dedication to the community, including residents and visitors, as well as present and future business proprietors to support local and sustainable economic and tourism activities, and inspire downtown beautification. The UDG strive to bolster the vitality of Downtown Wawa and help the Municipality thrive as a proud northern community.

