



Building a Neighborhood: Community Development Strategies for North Hermiston

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Building a Neighborhood: Community Development Strategies for North Hermiston

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COLLEGE OF DESIGN

Acknowledgments

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This report represents original student work and recommendations prepared by students in the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program for the City of Hermiston. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from the University of Oregon.

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Note: Student team reports are published in a separate compilation titled "North Hermiston Land Use Planning and Design: Final Group Reports"

About SCI

The Sustainable Cities Institute (SCI) is an applied think tank focusing on sustainability and cities through applied research, teaching, and community partnerships. We work across disciplines that match the complexity of cities to address sustainability challenges, from regional planning to building design and from enhancing engagement of diverse communities to understanding the impacts on municipal budgets from disruptive technologies and many issues in between.

SCI focuses on sustainability-based research and teaching opportunities through two primary efforts:

1. Our Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP), a massively scaled university-community partnership program that matches the resources of the University with one Oregon community each year to help advance that community's sustainability goals; and

2. Our Urbanism Next Center, which focuses on how autonomous vehicles, e-commerce, and the sharing economy will impact the form and function of cities.

In all cases, we share our expertise and experiences with scholars, policymakers, community leaders, and project partners. We further extend our impact via an annual Expert-in-Residence Program, SCI China visiting scholars program, study abroad course on redesigning cities for people on bicycle, and through our co-leadership of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), which is transferring SCYP to universities and communities across the globe. Our work connects student passion, faculty experience, and community needs to produce innovative, tangible solutions for the creation of a sustainable society.

About SCYP

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a year-long partnership between SCI and a partner in Oregon, in which students and faculty in courses from across the university collaborate with a public entity on sustainability and livability projects. SCYP faculty and students work in collaboration with staff from the partner agency through a variety of studio projects and service-

learning courses to provide students with real-world projects to investigate. Students bring energy, enthusiasm, and innovative approaches to difficult, persistent problems. SCYP's primary value derives from collaborations that result in on-the-ground impact and expanded conversations for a community ready to transition to a more sustainable and livable future.

About City of Hermiston

Hermiston is a vibrant destination that incorporates rural and urban opportunities as the largest city in eastern Oregon. In the 1860s Hermiston was known as a hotel called the “Six Mile House,” a stop for travelers in the Columbia River Basin. Following the establishment of railroads, the City was incorporated in 1907. Approximately eight square miles in area, Hermiston currently has more than 19,000 residents.

Hermiston’s employment rate is 62.1%, which is above Oregon’s employment rate of 59.3%, and has a mean household income of \$54,123. Seventy percent of the residents are between the ages of 18-64.

Hermiston is located at the junction of Interstate 82 and Interstate 84 in Umatilla County, near the Oregon-Washington border. Stanfield, the closest city, is five miles southeast, and Umatilla is located six miles north along the Umatilla River.

Renowned for its watermelons, Hermiston’s desert climate and proximity to the Umatilla River and the Columbia River have made agriculture a dominant industry since the early 1900s. In the 1970s potato processing plants and the introduction of center pivot irrigation firmly established

agriculture as an economic asset to the City. At the same time, industrial businesses like Marlette Homes, Inc., Lamb Weston, and Union Pacific expanded into Hermiston, further stimulating the economy. Additional commercial development in the 1990s and 2000s with Walmart and FedEx building distribution centers, led to an increase in employment opportunities and diversified economic growth. The 2010s saw further diversification of the economic base with the construction of data centers in Boardman and Umatilla with additional centers proposed for Hermiston as well. The City is a regional trade hub and is central to a broader area serving over 76,000 people. Hermiston’s success as a retail and data center continues to spur growth and development.

The City maintains 13 parks, 15 landscape areas, and more than 100 acres for the community while Hat Rock State Park, located near Hermiston, offers City residents and visitors a variety of recreational activities. In the summer, the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center hosts the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo, among other events that highlight Hermiston's rural culture.

Forty-four percent of Hermiston's population is Hispanic and as the City grows, it has emphasized inclusion. The City created the Hispanic Advisory Committee in 2012, which proceeded to represent and integrate Hermiston's Hispanic communities. It was presented the National League of Cities 2013 City Cultural Diversity Award, following achievements such as an annual Cinco de Mayo festival. Much of Hermiston's

outreach materials are available in Spanish and English, including information and inquiries related to the City's most recent visioning process, Hermiston 2040.

In 2016, the Livable Hermiston process included feedback from over 2,000 residents who identified priority assets, including the development of more parks and a multi-use facility over the next 20 years. In 2013, the Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency (HURA) was created to revitalize Hermiston's downtown area and in 2019 HURA was awarded Urban Renewal Project of the Year for development that stimulated the local downtown economy. With numerous plans to incorporate community ideals in the City's development, Hermiston has a promising cultural and economic future.

Sources:

United States Census Bureau
City of Hermiston
Hermiston Chamber of Commerce
Hermiston 2040

Course Participants

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Executive Summary

Recent economic investment of some of the largest companies in the US make Hermiston the fastest growing city in Eastern Oregon. As a result, Hermiston is experiencing rapid change in population growth and urbanization of rural land. The city of Hermiston presented students with the opportunity to present ideas for a site that is experiencing dynamic changes of due to rapid growth.

Five student teams were assigned a thematic area of focus to help deepen their research and frame their master plan proposals for the project site. From this focused research, students developed key strategies and recommendations for the City to consider. The student teams identified four key strategies to transform the project site into a vibrant neighborhood: increasing connectivity, focusing on affordable housing, placemaking opportunities, and community engagement and equity. The key strategies respond to the issues identified by the City by:

- Promoting connectivity and building robust alternative modes of transportation.

- Prioritizing affordable housing and leveraging development partnerships to annex vacant and blighted property.
- Using generative planning policies and creative placemaking to build community and foster small business.
- Focusing on community engagement and deliberate inclusion of the Latinx community.

This report is a summary of the primary ideas and strategies proposed by the student teams. The research and analysis undertaken by the student teams is described and insights that influenced the student teams approaches are highlighted.

Introduction

Hermiston is the largest city in northeastern Oregon. It is an important commercial hub for the region and is growing into a significant warehousing center for several large retailers such as Walmart and Amazon. The City is also an established food manufacturing and transportation center for the agricultural producers in the area. With commerce and transportation central to Hermiston's economy, traffic congestion is increasing, creating the busiest intersection in eastern Oregon (ODOT). It is the intersection of two regional highways, 395 and 207, in North Hermiston and primary boundaries to the project site under study. Recently the North Hermiston area has changed from a rural area into denser, residential development.

A critical question posed by the students is: **How can the City guide the development of a new neighborhood that is sustainable, equitable, and resilient?**

FIG. 1
Hermiston: regional
context



PROJECT STUDY AREA

The project site is along North 1st Street (Highway 395), an important commercial and transit corridor for Hermiston and the region. The project site is bounded by two major streets; East Theater Lane and East 4th Street, in addition to stormwater infrastructure called the “Hermiston Ditch”. The ditch is a combination open canal and piped system, and has been identified by the City as a potential path that would

cross North Hermiston. Adjacent to the project site are several new market-rate single-family residential developments and some of the largest retailers in town: Walmart, Home Depot, Grocery Outlet, among others. A car dealership within the project site along North 1st Street recently relocated, creating a vacant 12-acre property. This site is an opportunity to create a long-term growth strategy and catalyze cohesive development in this area.



FIG. 2

Hermiston Butte

Source: commons.wikimedia.org

City staff have identified the following goals for this area: improve circulation and reduce growing congestion; create a cohesive neighborhood that is annexed by the City and served by city infrastructure; and to develop a plan for the vacant site that increases connectivity and bolsters economic growth. Students considered these goals, in addition to the ideas proposed for the North Hermiston Local Area Plan, to analyze potential opportunities and challenges of revitalizing this area.

SITE OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

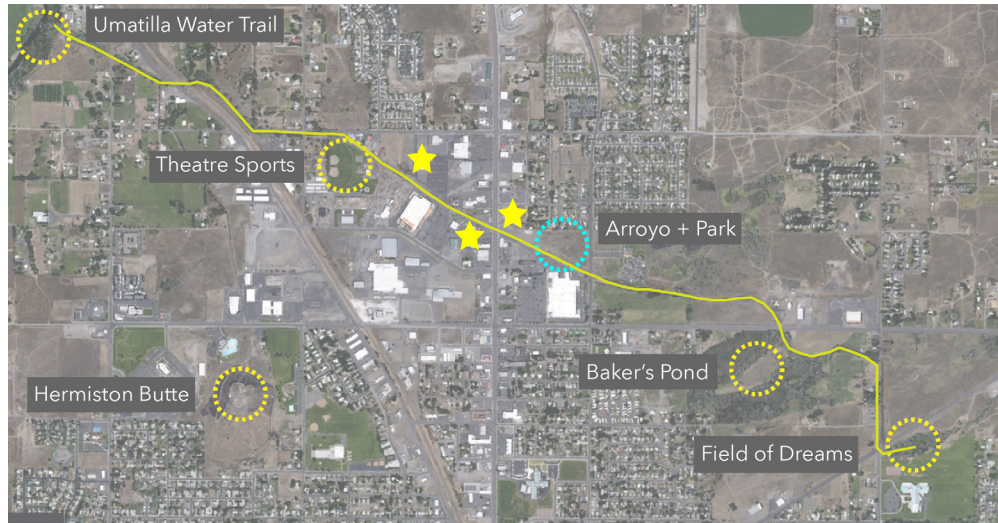
The student teams analyzed the existing development of the project site and researched the demographics, the economic trends, and housing needs of North Hermiston. The following paragraph highlights the student’s analysis on the opportunities and challenges for the site:

Opportunities include young families with children, growing local small business, and capitalizing on the

Hermiston Ditch as a pedestrian and bike path. The project site is home to a young and active community, with children under the age of 17 comprising one third of the population. The project site is a walkable distance to North 1st Street (Highway 395), a primary commercial corridor and a

prime location for small businesses. The Hermiston Ditch defines many property lines and, in some cases, is an easement; the Ditch could be converted to a walking and biking path connecting several parks and recreational fields in North Hermiston.

FIG. 3
Site photo of Hermiston Ditch



Challenges include older homes that are not served by city infrastructure, and limited street accessibility within the project site adding to congestion. The project area is a patchwork of parcels under either city or county jurisdiction, with most properties

served by aging wells and septic systems that regularly fail. Some streets are not maintained to city standards; this includes streets that are dead-end or gated, and less than 20% have sidewalks within the project site.

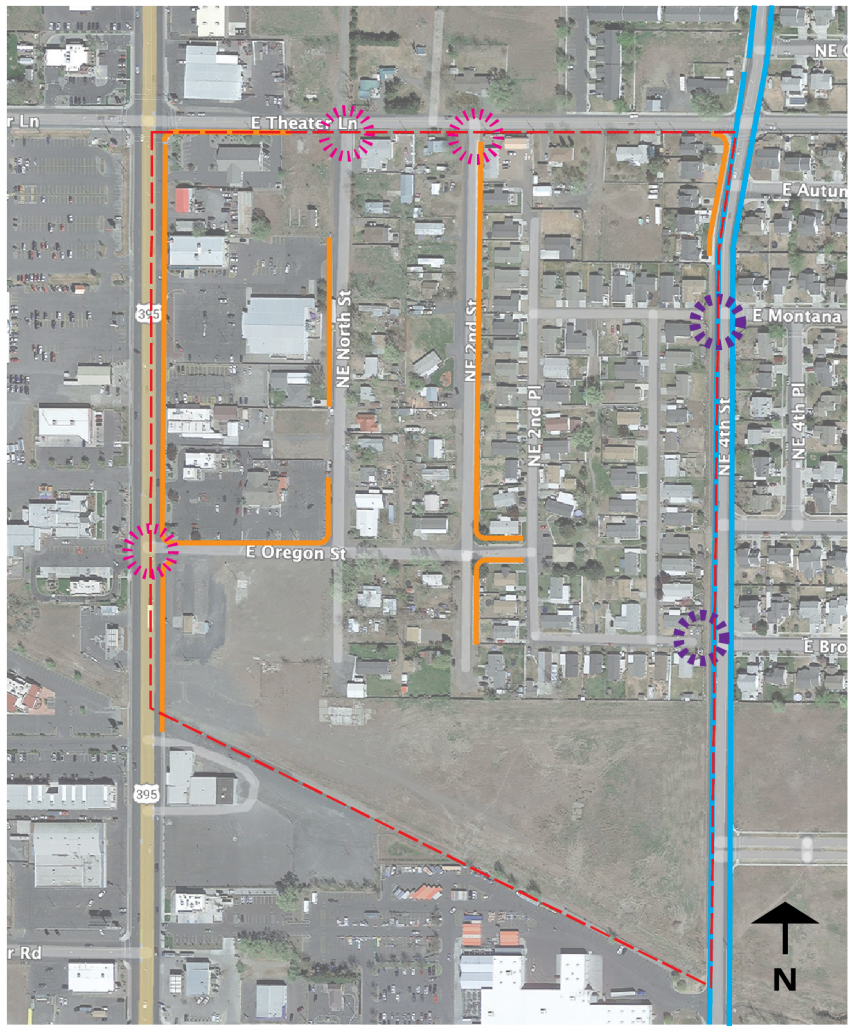


FIG. 5
Diagram of project site
conditions

Legend

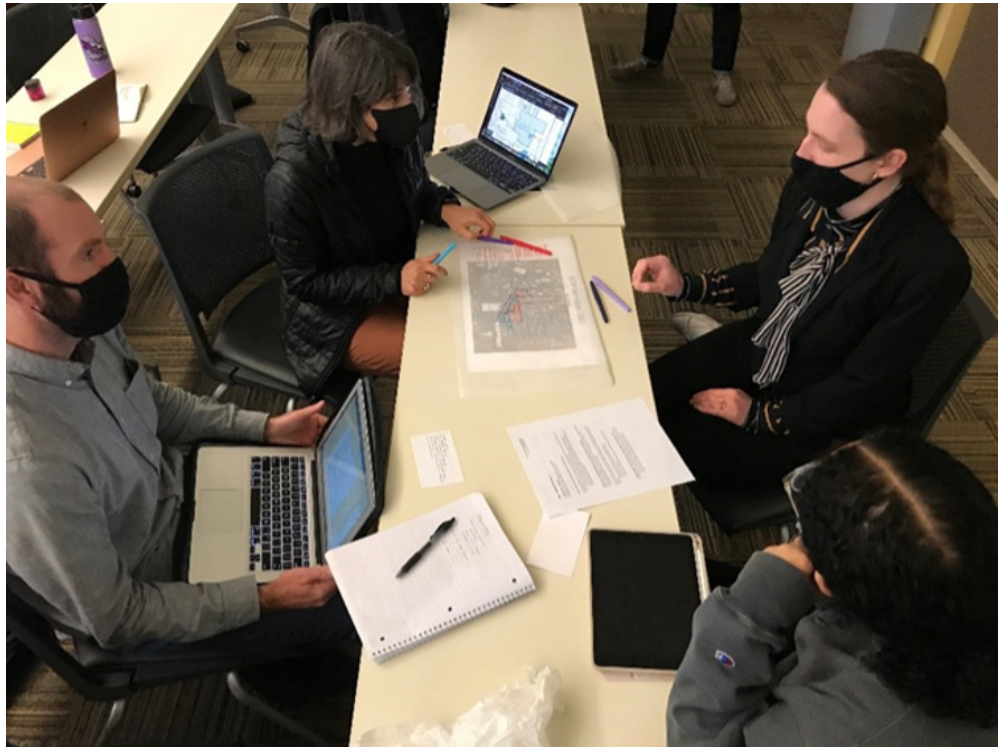
-  Private Street (gated)
-  Public Street Outlet
-  Site Boundary
-  Bike Path
-  Sidewalks

Methodology

In addition to the city of Hermiston’s goals and project objectives, students used the Oregon Department of Land Conversation and Development’s (DLCD) rulemaking process on “Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities” as a broad framework for their research and urban design proposals. Under this framework, each student team was assigned a thematic area of focus: rural economic development, climate resilience, sustainable transportation, racial justice, and affordable housing. The

student teams learned about Hermiston through a variety of research methods, discussed in the sections below. Due to the third wave of the Covid pandemic, students were unable to visit the site. However, student teams met virtually with City Manager Byron Smith, City Planner Clint Spencer, and the Chair of the Hispanic Advisory Committee Jose Garcia. These meetings helped the students understand the context and issues that are important to leaders in Hermiston.

FIG. 6
Student team work
session



LITERATURE REVIEW

An extensive review of Hermiston's Comprehensive Plan was the foundation for the student teams to frame the goals for the future growth and prosperity of Hermiston. The student teams review included analysis of supporting plan documents that focused on transportation, housing capacity, buildable lands, development standards, and natural hazard mitigation. From this research, the students identified three guiding insights: maintain economic stability and resilience, retain the historic small-town character and community identity, and ensure the livability of Hermiston as it continues to grow. In addition to reviewing Hermiston's planning documents, student teams researched a wide variety of reports, plans, and articles regarding their focus area.

DATA COLLECTION

In a learning exercise as well as a research effort, students utilized the 2020 and 2010 Census and the American Community Survey data to build demographic profiles on the project study area at multiple

scales; the Census tract level, city of Hermiston, Umatilla County, and the State of Oregon. Comparisons between geographics scales and time periods helped the student teams understand the growth and dynamics of Hermiston's demographics. Additionally, students analyzed the economic development trends and housing needs.

SITE ANALYSIS & DESIGN CHARETTE

Students analyzed the project site and larger area of North Hermiston by looking at the following conditions: street connectivity, transportation systems, built versus open space, infrastructure networks, zoning and development codes, and sensory and environmental attributes. The process revealed urban patterns and highlighted the need for improved connectivity at the project site. The new residential development surrounding the site modeled similar characteristics, and did not plan for many through street connections. The culmination of student teams site analysis took place in a design charrette, which is an urban design brainstorming session.

CASE STUDIES

Each student researched a case study relevant to the thematic area of focus and to issues studied in North Hermiston. Case studies provided students an opportunity to explore a particular issue or condition and to apply those examples in their urban design recommendations. Notable case

study research included: affordable housing developments and services for migrant farming families, cultural placemaking strategies that supported the establishment of new communities, and creative street and parking infrastructure that encouraged multiple transportation modes.



FIG. 9
City block comparison:
downtown hermiston
(left) project site (right)

Student Research & Recommendations

Five student teams conducted research and designed an approach to encourage the development of a neighborhood in North Hermiston. This report summarizes the four key strategies identified by the student teams to develop a resilient, equitable, and sustainable neighborhood:

- Increase connectivity
- Focus on affordable housing
- Create placemaking opportunities
- Engage the community

Recommendations and suggestions to achieve each strategy are outlined for the City to inform the development of their North Hermiston Local Area Plan.

KEY STRATEGY: INCREASE CONNECTIVITY

Student teams were encouraged to think more broadly about connecting the project site to North Hermiston

due to its lack of street connections. Connecting streets, as well as pedestrian paths and safe crossings, bicycle paths, and transit options, serve to increase access and mobility to people of all ages and abilities. Increasing connections can also encourage more activity, exercise, and foster community through neighborhood connections.

CONNECT STREETS & PATHS

Increasing street connectivity by strategic extension of fragmented streets can greatly increase accessibility to the project site. More street connections not only reduce vehicular congestion, they encourage additional modes of travel such as walking and biking because block distances are shorter. Shorter blocks increases the availability of direct routes, ultimately making travel distances shorter.

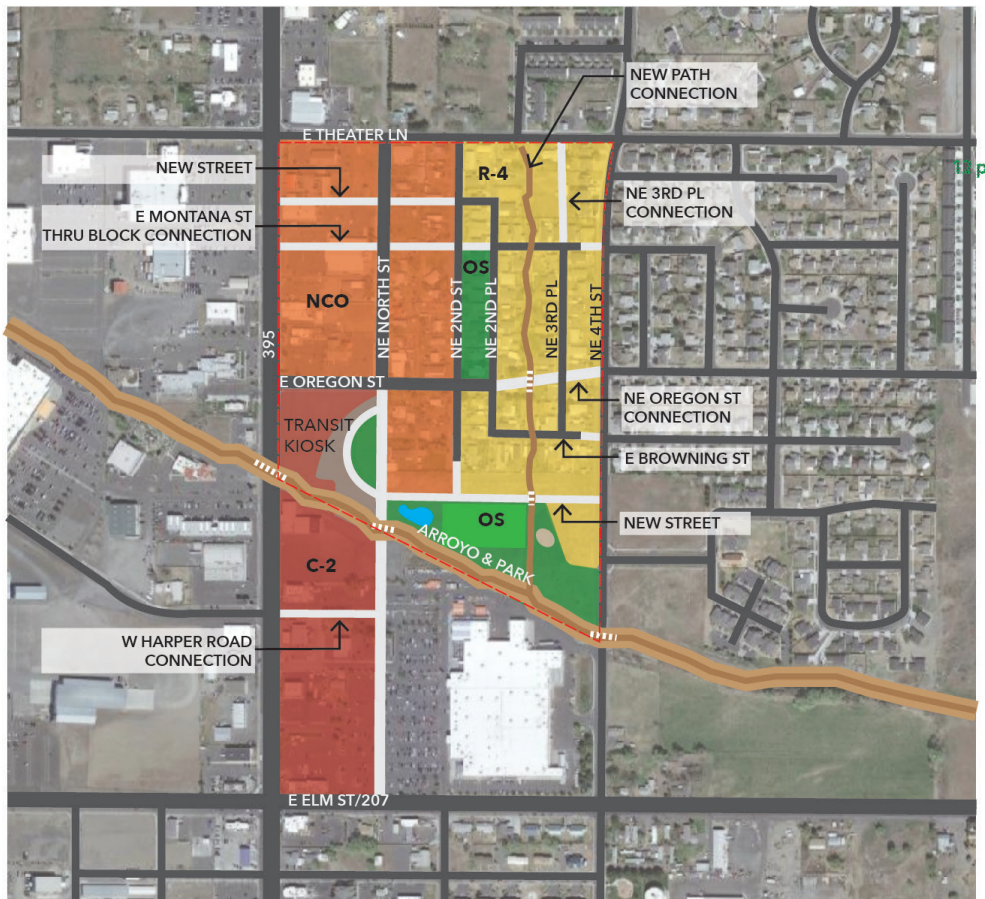


FIG. 10
Sustainable
Transportation Team
master plan

The challenge with increasing connections in the project site is the conversion of private property into public streets and subsequent displacement of residents. With this in mind, students proposed several street extensions that optimized the connection benefits of connection and could be based on a long-term plan:

- Connect E. Oregon Street to NE 4th Street for an east-west pass thru
- Connect NE. North Street to E. Elm Street (Highway 207) by converting parking area into a public street for a north-south pass thru
- Connect E. Montana Street to N 1st Avenue (Highway 395) to NE. 4th Street

Several of the street extensions propose converting thru drives on commercial (private) property into

streets. Reclaiming these private streets can increase connection, access, and reduce congestion at the major intersection of North 1st Street (Highway 394) and East Elm Street (Highway 207). The vacant lot presents an excellent means to increase east-west connections through the site; student teams show several street configurations for consideration. Strategic street improvements also present opportunities to extend underground city utilities into the project site.

Planning new streets that include space for dedicated bike lanes can help build a robust bike network through Hermiston. Expanding the bike path network to increase the safety of crosstown travel can encourage the engagement of younger community members. Pedestrian and bike paths

that are separate from the streets, like the potential future path along the “Hermiston Ditch,” serve to increase the safety, comfort, and activity within the community.

SAFE CROSSINGS

Safe crossings for pedestrians and other non-vehicular travel can increase the success of street connections. Investment in these critical connection points will stimulate community activity and neighborhood relations via walkability and bikability.

In addition to sidewalks, improving the visibility of crosswalks for pedestrians and drivers can increase safety at busy intersections. For multi-

lane intersections, shortening the walking distance with refuge islands in medians and corner bulb-outs are ways to increase pedestrian safety and use. The large traffic volume and travel speed along North 1st Street (Highway 395), in addition to the lack of crossings except at major intersections, creates a major barrier between east and west Hermiston. Planning for a mid-block pedestrian path at important intersections can increase connections. For the project site, a special pedestrian crossing to connect the future recreational path along the Hermiston Ditch is a terrific opportunity for a mid-block crossing and can increase the use of this non-vehicular path.



FIG. 11
Highway 395 in
Hermiston



FIG. 12
Intersection of
highways 395 & 207

FIG. 13
Aurora Ave Shoreline,
WA Before
Photo Credit Rethinking Streets



FIG. 14
Aurora Ave Shoreline,
WA After
Photo Credit Rethinking Streets



CHILDREN AND SENIORS

One student team featured the “8 80 Cities” initiative founded by Gil Penalosa, a transit expert and urban designer, who states “if everything we do in our public spaces is great for an 8 year old and an 80 year old, then it will be great for all people” (8 80 Cities | Creating Cities for All, n.d.). This initiative focuses on enhancing mobility in the built environment so that people of all ages are encouraged to walk, play, rest, and connect with their community.

Investments in infrastructure such as safe crossings, walking path networks, and access to transit stops

and ticketing contribute to the safety and build accessibility for the entire community. Additionally, investments in public infrastructure such as street trees with large canopies, low fences that are set back from sidewalks, and street furniture are some strategies to encourage community activity.

CONNECT AND EXPAND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

Hermiston offers an extensive transportation program: HART, WORC, e-scooter pilot program, and the taxi service for seniors and persons with disabilities. The student teams

proposed several ideas to build on these programs by expanding access and connecting transit modes.

Students analyzed “walksheds,” the quarter mile radius around a location indicating a comfortable walking distance for most people. As some transit programs require tickets to be

purchased downtown, only riders within the downtown walkshed have easy access. A transit kiosk pilot program in North Hermiston could expand access to purchasing tickets, be a transfer node between transit options, and offer a safe and covered location to wait for a connection.

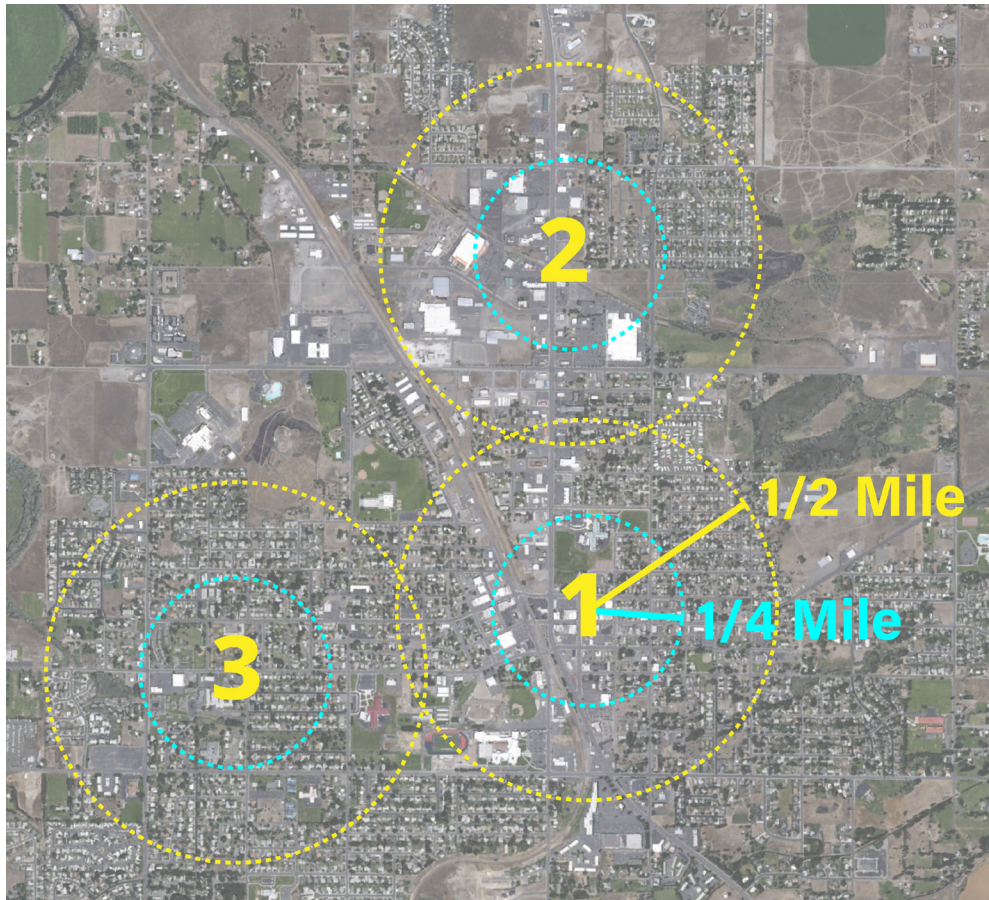


FIG. 16
Walkshed diagram

Additionally, one student team suggested the expansion of the Workforce On-demand Ride Cooperative (WORC) program to provide agricultural worker transportation to sites outside of town. Partnering with the Hispanic Advisory Committee could help the City focus this effort and connect communities that can greatly benefit from this service.

Many of these ideas can be applied to the greater North Hermiston area, as it develops and densifies over the next decade. A defining change for the project site will be the long-term plan for the street network and increasing the connections within and through the site. Reclaiming parking at commercial sites for new public street connections can balance customer access if customers have more transit

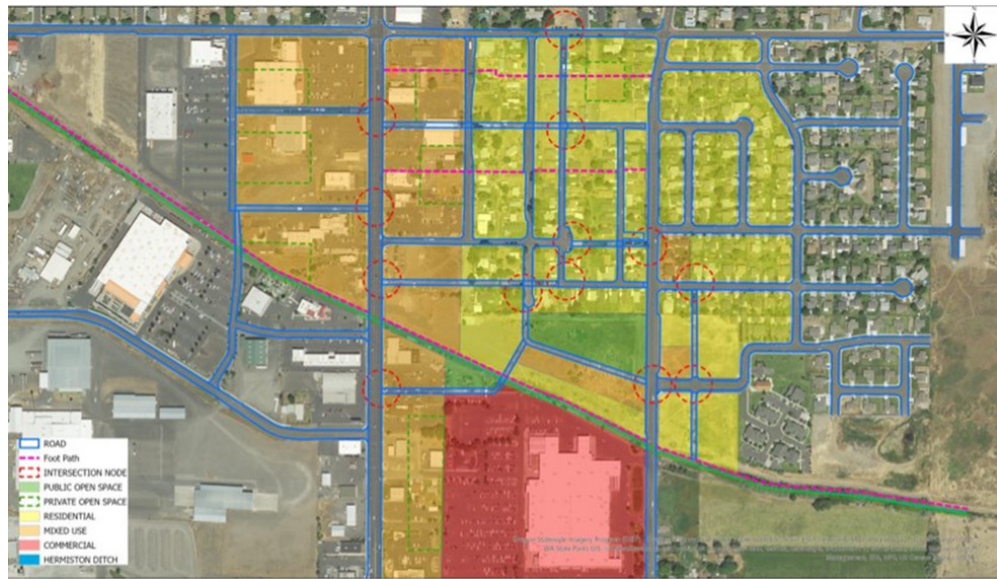
options. Ultimately, student proposals aimed to utilize existing city programs and recommend the expansion of these programs in the project site.

KEY STRATEGY: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Balancing new market-rate housing developments with investment in low-income housing is critical to meet the

projected housing needs of Hermiston. Nearly 40% of residents in Hermiston rent their homes and 30% of residents are cost burdened, spending over 30% of their income on housing (Census, 2021). Strategic planning changes and creative partnerships with nonprofit developers can incentivize low-income housing projects to meet current and growing demographic needs.

FIG. 17
Affordable Housing
Team Master Plan



PLANNING CODE UPDATES

The Neighborhood Commercial Overlay (NCO) Zone is designed “to provide a broad range of commercial services to dense residential users within walking distance” [cite]. The NCO Zone encourages a blend of commercial and residential at a higher density than single-family residential housing. Inspired by small-town centers, the NCO zone can create a vibrant street catered to pedestrians rather than cars.

Currently, the NCO zone near the project site is planned along East Elm Street (Highway 207). Student teams suggest extending this zone as a buffer along North 1st Street (Highway 395) instead. The NCO Zone is an ideal transition from the busy commercial

corridor and single-family residential neighborhood: it can increase pedestrian access to the commercial area, encourage small business enterprises to build on this access, and generate community connection and neighborhood identity.

Additionally, student teams propose revising the residential development code per Oregon State House Bill 2001, to encourage incremental housing density within the urban growth boundary. Although Hermiston is not required to meet this legislation until the population reaches 25,000, the housing needs per recent city findings project Hermiston will need at least 100 new housing units per year (Johnson Economics, 2021). Encouraging

slow density growth can reduce development sprawl and achieve the goal of increasing livability.

ALTERNATIVE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT MODELS

The housing affordability crisis has generated innovative approaches for low-income housing development and new models for home ownership. Some approaches, such as land banking, could present the City with opportunities to purchase vacant and blighted properties in the project site. Community-based, non-traditional housing developers can partner with the City on meeting the need for affordable housing.

Creating a land bank by partnering with Umatilla County is one option to annex the vacant and underutilized properties in the project site. Land banking can potentially reduce legal barriers, the time, and the cost of upgrading the public utilities of these properties. These changes can help revitalize the neighborhood (Alexander, 2005).

The affordable housing student team researched several models of shared equity homeownership as another method for investing in low-income housing. Establishing a community land trust can be a self-sustaining model for low-income individuals to build stability and wealth through homeownership (Democracy Collab., 2020). A community development corporation (CDC) is another means of leveraging public investment with a nonprofit partner as the developer. Limited equity housing cooperatives (LEHC) is another avenue to collective home ownership. All of these, among others, can complement and build on a land bank.

Similar to the state of Oregon and the US overall, Hermiston's population is 30% cost burdened, with some spending over 35% of their income paying for their homes. With the City's boom of market rate housing, investment in affordable housing is important so people of all incomes can live in Hermiston.



FIG. 18
Colonia Unidad, FHDC

KEY STRATEGY: PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

Creative Placemaking is defined as “the intentional integration of arts, culture, and community engaged design strategies in the process of equitable community planning and development” (ArtPlace, 2022). The vacant parcel in the project site presents a unique opportunity for the City to invest in generative planning policies. Every student team proposed placemaking strategies to build community and anchor the neighborhood.

RECREATIONAL & GREEN SPACE

Planning a park or playing field on the project site is an opportunity to build on Hermiston’s impressive parks and recreational system. As identified in Hermiston’s Parks Master Plan, the Hermiston Ditch already links several parks in North Hermiston. The project site is centrally located amongst existing and planned recreation areas, and can serve as another destination along the future recreational trail.

FIG. 19
Hermiston Ditch as recreational path connecting parks, Climate Resilience Team master plan



Several student teams proposed plans with a soccer field; both for kids to play on and as an investment in recreational activities embraced by the Latinx community. Additionally, a playing field promotes physical activity, community connection, aquifer recharge with permeable development, and reduces the urban heat island affect.

The Hermiston Ditch and future recreational trail is also an opportunity to showcase native plants and grasses, and introduce an ecological corridor through the City. Adding educational signage can showcase native plants of the region and describe the benefits of building wildlife networks through the City to the community.



FIG. 20
Vision for the future
recreational path
Source: Getty Images

COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL PLACEMAKING

The Latinx community has grown substantially in Hermiston over the past decade. Cultural relevance is important to foster ownership and build community capital. Several student teams suggest welcoming this community as a part of Hermiston's identity.

A community center is an example of a culturally inclusive space for the Latinx population. It can also highlight the impact this community has on the

City. A community center can host a welcoming network of neighborhood providers that acknowledge the hardships of integrating into a new community and invest in stabilizing immigrant populations in Hermiston. Suggested programs include services such as English as a second language, childcare, workforce training, senior support services, and legal assistance. Notable Oregon nonprofits who offer these services are: Euvalcree, Oregon Human Development Corporation, and Agape House.

FIG. 21
 Racial Justice Team
 Master Plan



Another opportunity for cultural placemaking is encouraging the diversification of culture in neighborhoods. Fostering opportunities such as farmers markets, sites for permanent food trucks, and sponsoring community celebrations of heritage are a few examples from the student teams. Encouraging community groups to feature local produce in these events is an opportunity for small business ventures, in addition to highlighting Hermiston’s local agricultural assets.

Placemaking can be defined as “both a philosophy and a practical process for transforming public spaces” (ArtPlace, 2022). Fundamentally, placemaking is making a purposeful connection between people and a place. It can serve as a starting point for the development of a neighborhood identity. Community participation is essential to a successful placemaking effort and the student teams offer many suggestions for this in the next key strategy.

KEY STRATEGY: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EQUITY

Purposeful engagement with all community groups can yield richer and more nuanced strategies that nurture a neighborhood identity rooted in community. Diverse communities

such as young families with children, indigenous people, seniors, Latinx, and disabled people often have less opportunity to engage with city planning decisions; this can often leave such groups feeling disenfranchised.



FIG. 22
Rural Economic Resilience Team Master Plan

Explicit Inclusion of Latinx Community

Many student recommendations in this report are examples of deliberate inclusion of Hermiston’s Latinx community. Recognizing this community as an asset to Hermiston can further growth and prosperity into the future. In this report, student teams proposed several suggestions that create dedicated space for this community in Hermiston.

One suggestion offered by the students is for Hermiston to officially adopt bilingualism and provide consistent Spanish translation of public signage, city information, and the City website. Though the City has made impressive strides in providing Spanish translation of many city documents, adopting bilingualism is a strong show of support and welcome.

Recognize CTUIR

The Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) serve as important resource to share the history and culture of the Hermiston area. Hermiston can memorialize CTUIR's partnership with the City via the establishment of the first public transit system for Hermiston. This story

can be communicated with imagery and names that commemorate the collaboration with the tribes and Kayak, the CTUIR transit system, and the Hermiston Area Regional Transit (HART). As the system expands with the growth of the City, new bus stops, benches, and transit kiosks offer opportunities to showcase this partnership.

FIG. 23
Kayak transit bus



Community engagement is an important component to placemaking and strengthening a connection between a community and the neighborhood (Project for Public Spaces, 2022). Engagement can take many forms such as: community workshops in partnership with community organizations, interactive displays that creatively encourage community members to participate,

and pop-up engagements at community events and markets. Connecting these engagement efforts with a public project or focused purpose such as a public park, pilot transit kiosk, a community center, or community events can help ensure community ideas and visions are heard and realized, creating a cultural connection in North Hermiston.

Conclusion

Hermiston is the fastest growing city in eastern Oregon and in a dynamic moment of its history. City staff are stewarding a robust recreational park system, planning future path networks throughout the City, and piloting multiple transportation programs from e-scooters to ride share and taxi services. These actions are a result of the City's primary goals summarized by the student teams: maintaining economic stability and resilience, retaining the historic small-town character and community identity, and ensuring the livability of Hermiston. Student teams sought to build off these operations with their master plan proposals for the project site.

Student teams proposed master plans that include strategies to develop the project site neighborhood by advocating for connection with the community. Student proposals presented several variations of street connections with the ultimate goal of shortening blocks and increasing access within the project site. Some suggestions for increasing connectivity include connecting transit options and improving pedestrian infrastructure in order to encourage street activity and connection between neighbors.

Students also suggested considering alternative development strategies to promote affordable housing projects in the project site. Some strategies highlight the potential to unify vacant parcels and annex county properties into the City. Teams also encouraged the expansion of mixed-use zoning to further encourage the quality and activity of streets in the project site. This mixed-use would create both a transition from the busy commercial district and encourage pedestrian access to the district.

Lastly, student teams emphasized fostering a community identity in the burgeoning neighborhood of North Hermiston through deliberate community engagement and creative placemaking. Several ideas were presented by the students for potential partnerships with community organizations and opportunities for placemaking. Many of the suggestions capitalize on the opportunities presented by the vacant site and could be incorporated into a future plan for the area.

Students were exposed to urban planning ideas and the considerations required for city planning, such as encouraging economic growth to protecting public health to safeguarding resources and finding balance with regional ecology. The student teams hope the ideas and strategies presented in this report can contribute to development of the project site into a neighborhood that connects, supports, and celebrates the community.

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