

UNIVERSITY HILL SKETCH PLAN - DRAFT

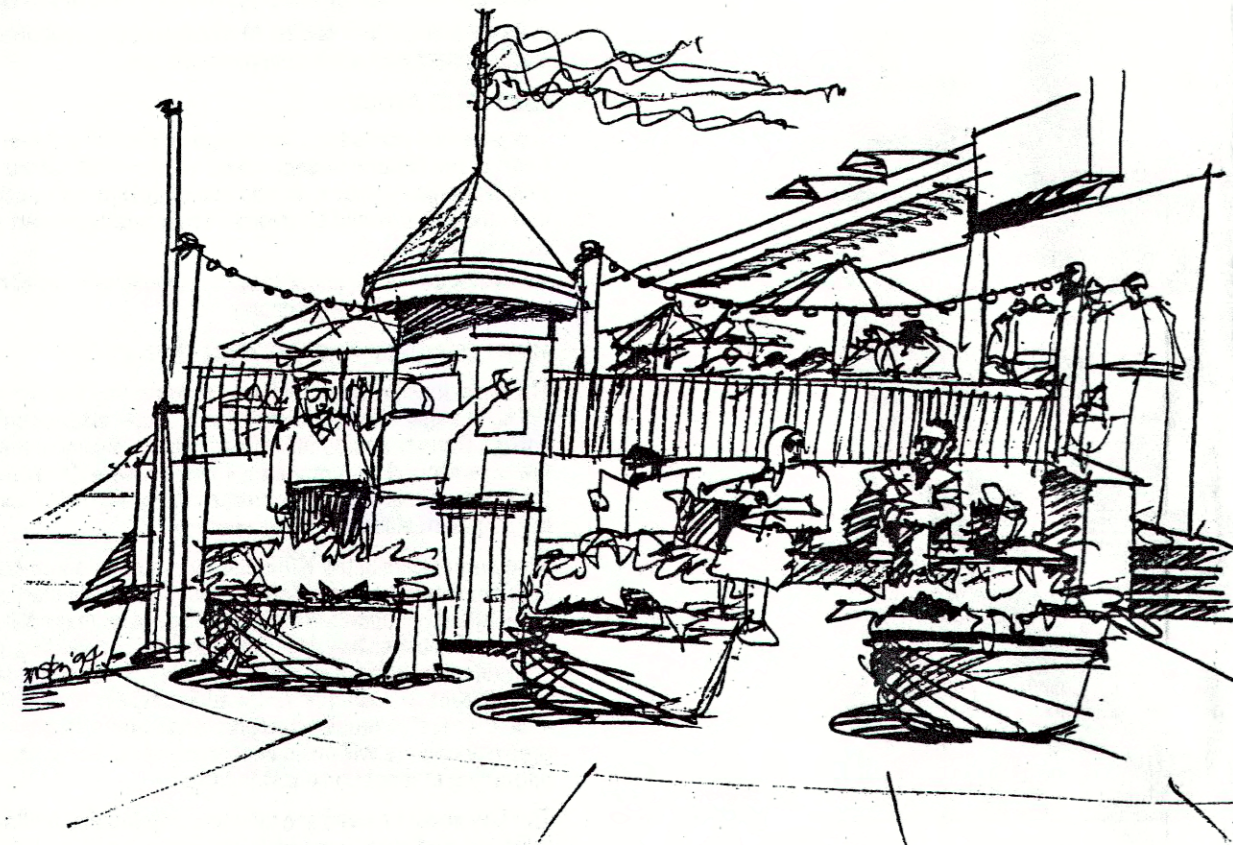
UNIVERSITY HILL GENERAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

12/95 planning
3/96 city council

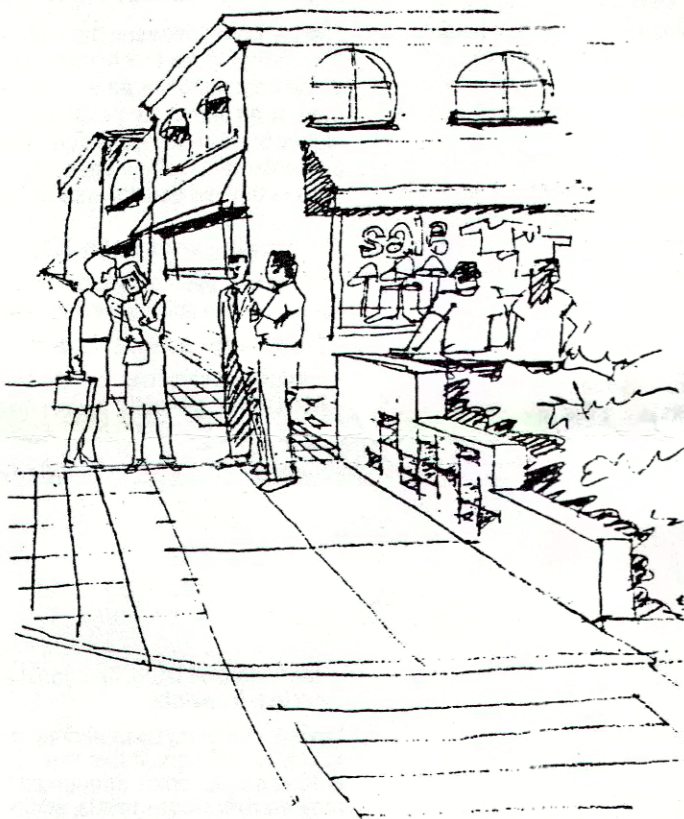
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Prepared For:
CITY OF BOULDER
Public Works Department
Planning Department

Broadway Character



On select corners provide special vertical elements, landscaping, and rest areas which create comfortable and interesting places with unifying elements carried throughout the site.



Create a uniquely designed wall at the parking lot at 13th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue which incorporates distinctive art elements, identifies the public realm, screens cars, and provides a special image for a highly visible corner.

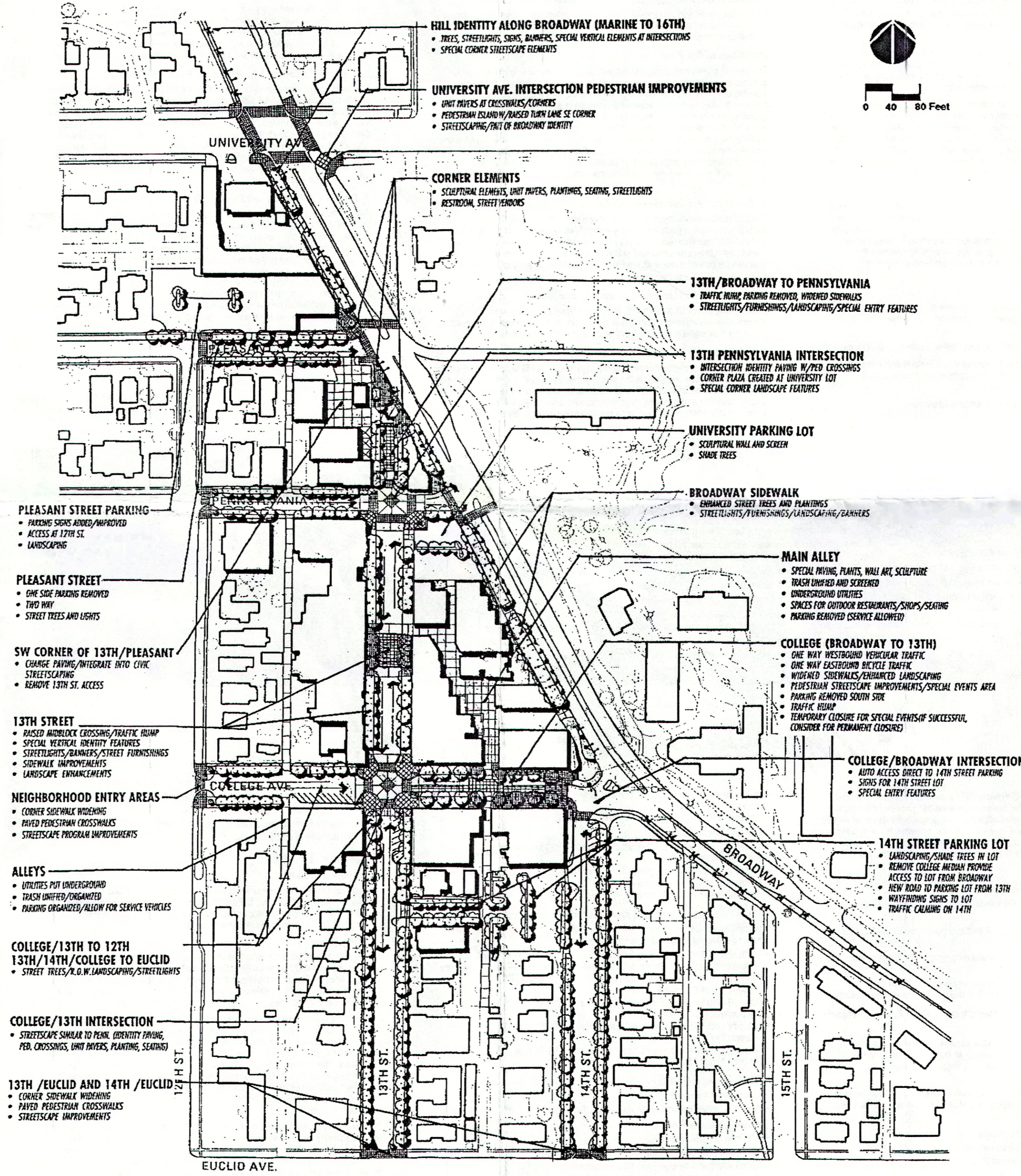


Add colorful flower pots, street trees, and pedestrian scale lights along Broadway to create a more attractive and pedestrian friendly environment.

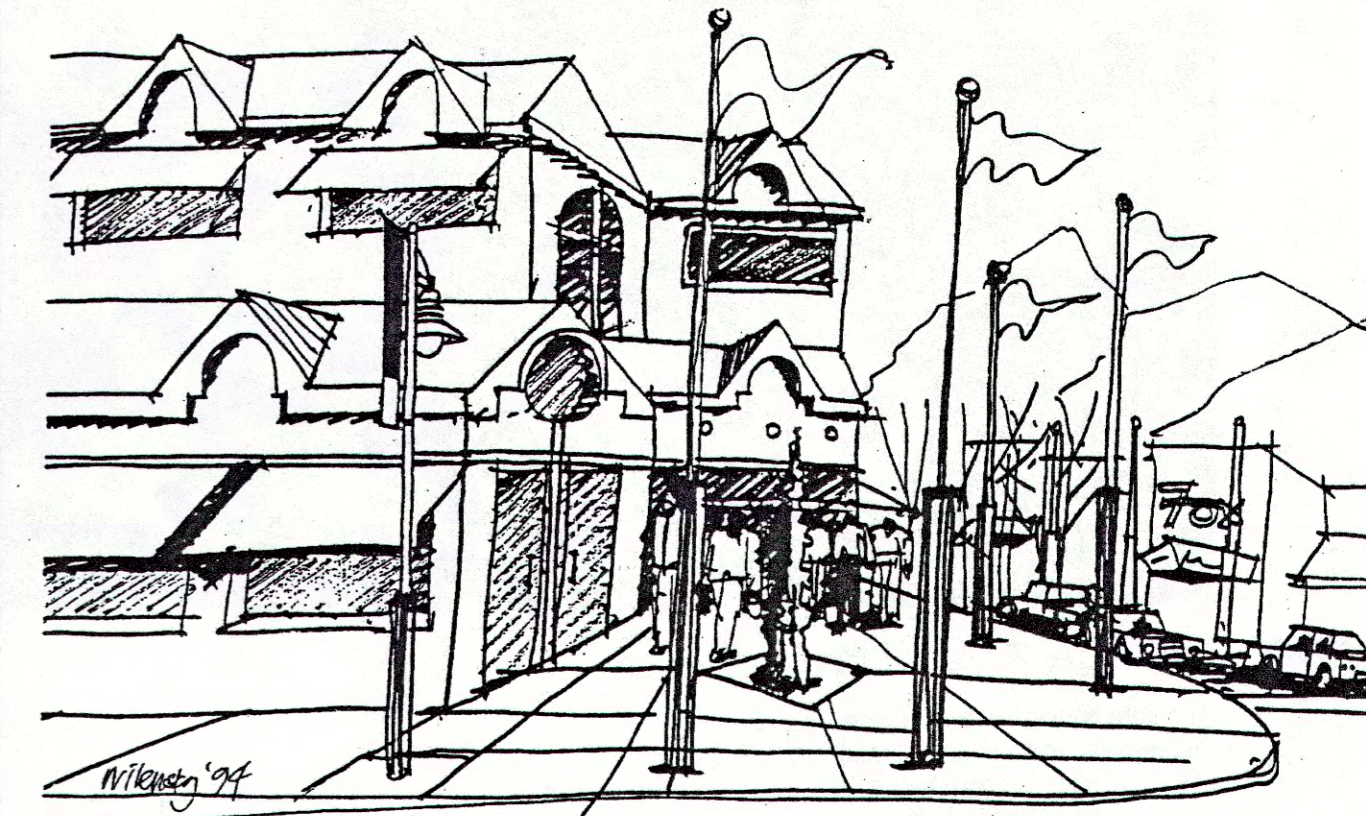
Vision

To Make the University Hill Commercial Area a Safe, Comfortable, and Attractive Place to Shop, Work, Visit, and Live

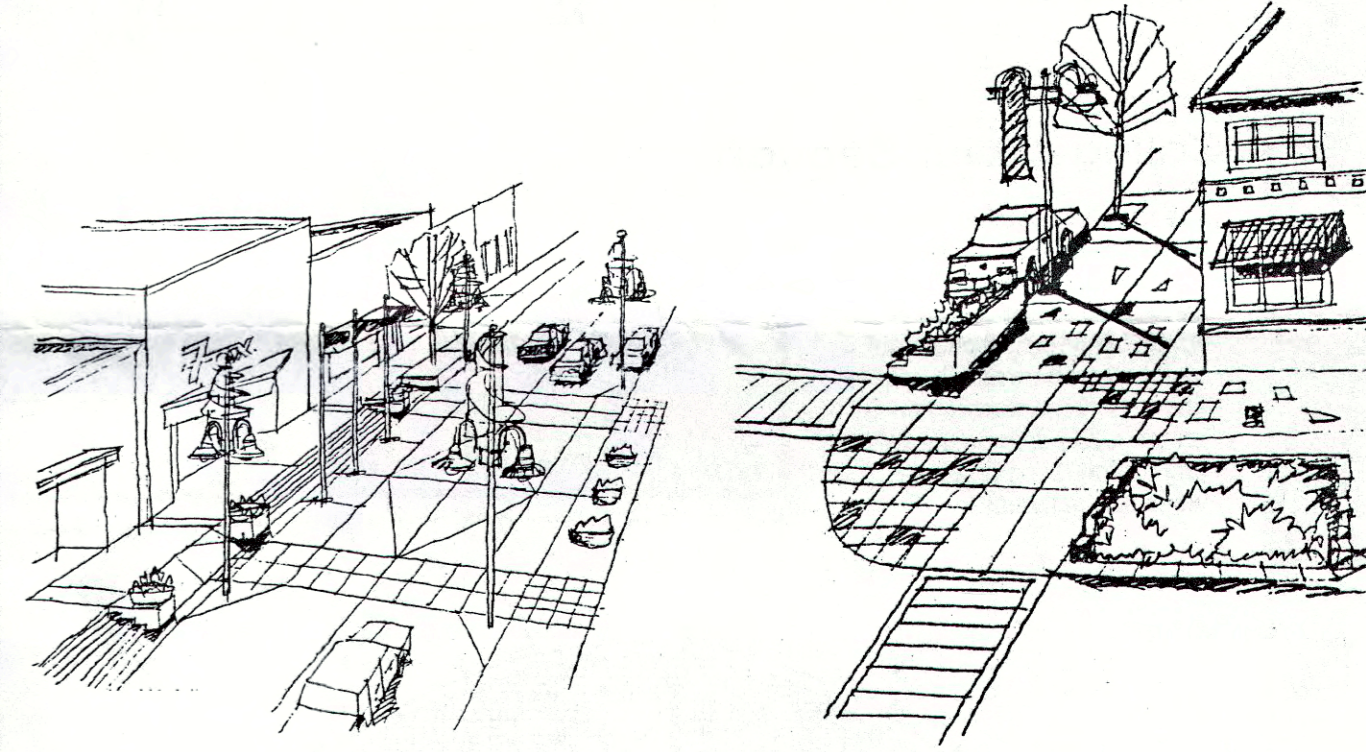
The Civic Improvement Plan



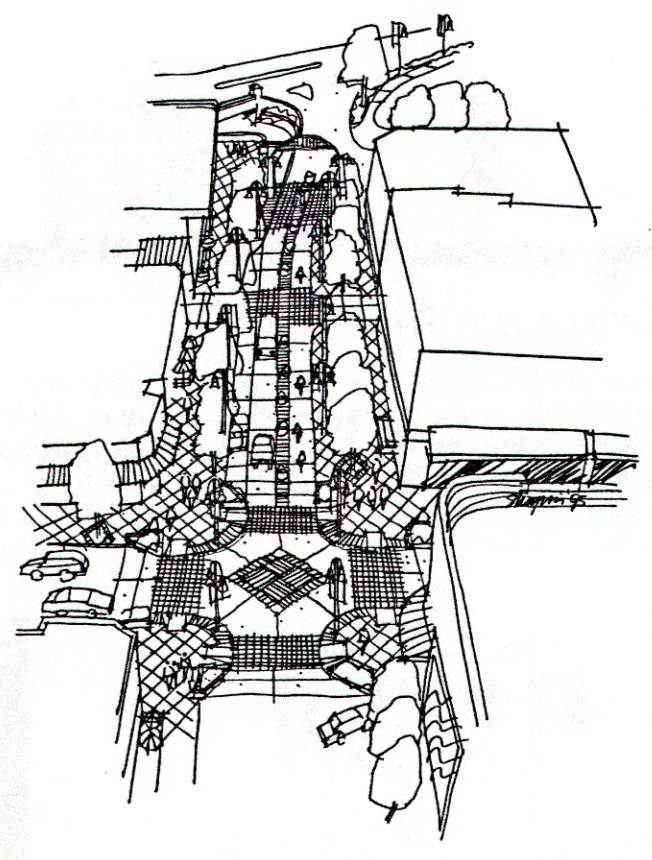
Core Area Character



Create a "mini park" on the southeast corner of 13th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue which provides special features such as a fountain, pedestrian scale lights, colorful banners, and artistic paving.



Develop special improvements in front of the Fox Theater to create a multipurpose pedestrian setting and to calm traffic on 13th Street. These improvements include a specially paved raised pedestrian crossing, amphitheater seating, street trees, pedestrian scale lighting, banners and other artistic elements. The development of corner landscape components and unique paving patterns will also express the playful and youthful spirit of the Hill.



Develop College Avenue as an interesting gateway identity street with improvements that enhance the pedestrian character and ambiance of the street.

Goals & Principles

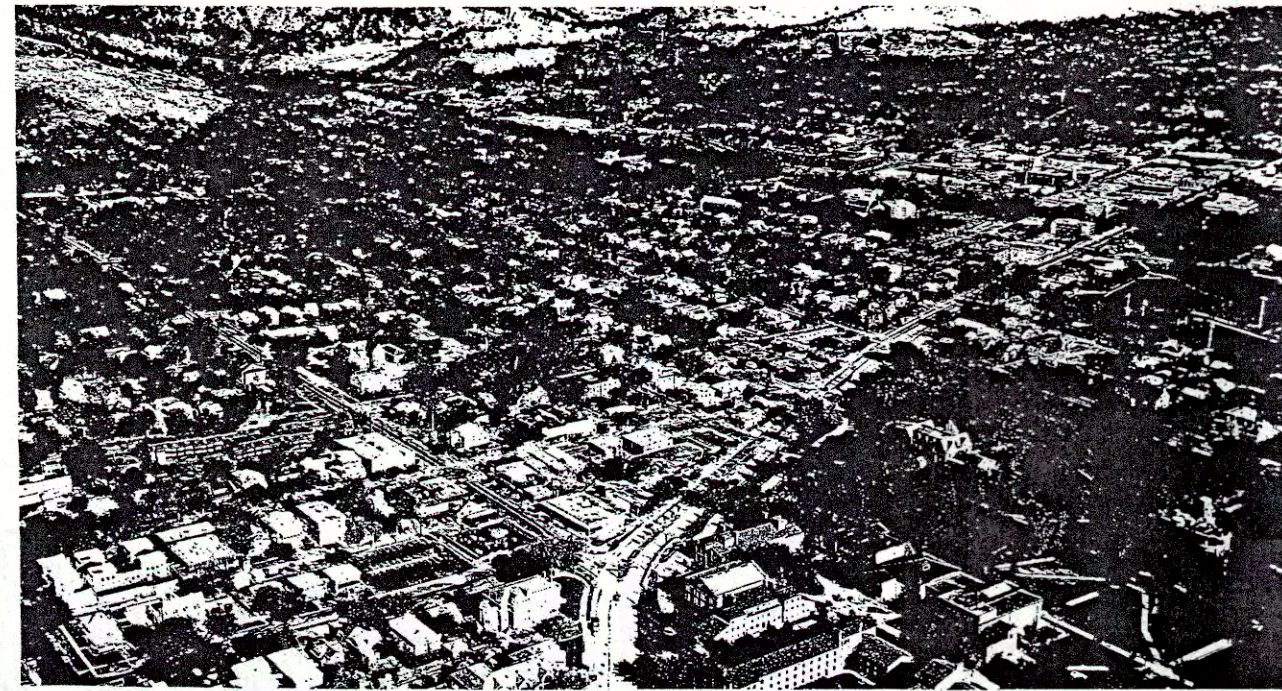
1. Encourage an attractive urban village image and development character that is active, inviting, and accessible to all modes of travel, and which strengthens connections with the surrounding community.
2. Promote a diverse mix of neighborhood and community uses to provide the opportunity to live/work/shop/play within the area, and to appeal to a wide variety of users.
3. Develop a transportation system that is designed for pedestrians, bicycles, transit, and cars, and which connects to the regional transportation system.
4. Improve the retail quality and operations within the district to better serve residents, the University, and the surrounding community, and to provide an economically healthy area with opportunities for careful redevelopment.
5. Improve the safety of the public right-of-way so that many different users can participate and enjoy the commercial area.

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UNIVERSITY HILL GENERAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

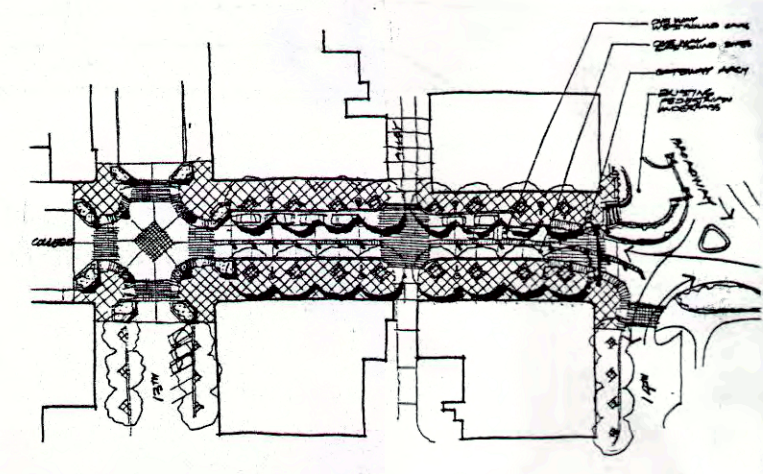
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Streetscape



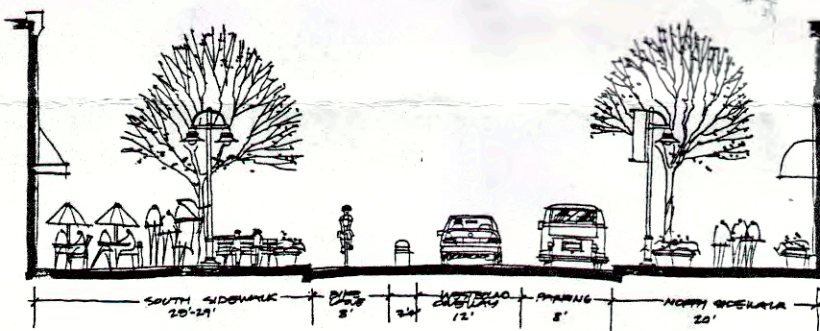
College Ave. Plan

The schematic plan for College Avenue shows streetscape and transportation improvements for the area between 13th Street and Broadway. The plan includes the westbound one-way roadway, a one-way eastbound bicycle lane, direct access to the 14th street parking lot, sidewalk and corner improvements, and Parallel parking on the north side of College Avenue.



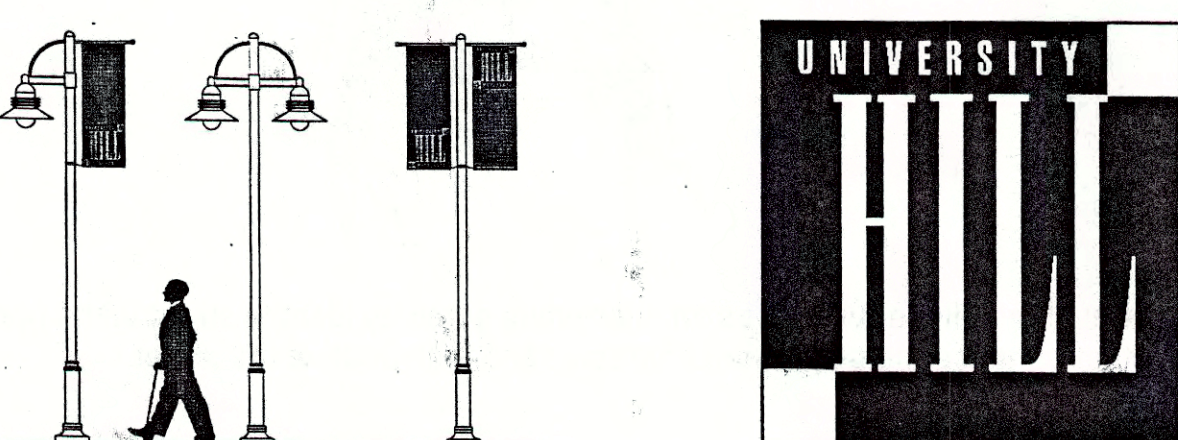
College Ave. Section

The midblock section illustrates the proposed character of development along College Avenue. Decorative streetlights, banners, potted plants, benches, and trees will help to enhance the pedestrian environment and provide the setting for improved retail services and activities.



Entry Gateway Features

This typical section above illustrates a gateway arch that will identify the historic commercial area. Two arches are proposed, one across College Avenue, just west of 14th Street, and the other across 13th Street, just south of Broadway Avenue. The purpose of the proposed arches is to identify the core area from Broadway, and to provide a friendly and attractive welcome to the shopping area. The design will incorporate the timeless character of civic improvements in the area, an identification sign, and public art.



Streetlights, Banners, and Area Identity

Decorative pedestrian scale streetlights, a banner program, and a new area identification program are proposed to more clearly identify the commercial area, to improve safety, and to enhance the image of the area.

Background

The Area Today

The University Hill commercial area is surrounded by the University of Colorado to the east and a high-density residential area to the south and west. To the north, the area transitions between high-density residential and commercial as it approaches the downtown. The Uni-Hill commercial area is very compact and includes restaurants, bars, entertainment venues, personal services, and specialty retail uses. Its primary user is the University student. There are some neighborhood services in the area including a small grocery store, a drug store, and two barbershops. There is limited office use and a high percentage of alcohol-related establishments.

There is excellent City and regional access to the commercial area from Broadway Avenue. There is also good transit access in and around the district. However, vehicular access to the three surface parking lots within the district is indirect and unclear. There are pedestrian and vehicular conflicts at most of the major intersections within the district. The existing alleys are not functional for delivery vehicles or for pedestrians.

The area has a "youth-oriented" character and is a 24-hour environment. The "Hill" is the current identity for the area and there is a strong tie to the University and its services. Maintenance and upkeep of the area is an ongoing problem due to the nature of the users and the activities of the area.

There is a lot of diversity and an eclectic mix to the buildings in the commercial area. The historic buildings give special character to the area - however, many of these historic buildings are screened by modern facades. Many of the commercial buildings are not well maintained and many have deep setbacks which are unattractive to pedestrians. There are major pedestrian and vehicular gateways to the area along Broadway Avenue and there is an active pedestrian life in the area. However, there are no areas for special events.

Purpose of the Plan

The University Hill Sketch Plan was undertaken in order to give the University Hill General Improvement District (UHGID) guidance on how to improve the area and to deal with problems and concerns the area was experiencing. The community was concerned with the area's safety, types of users, conflicts between travel modes, and the area's image and economic health. It was determined that a "master plan" for civic improvements for the area should be created to guide UHGID in making improvements.

The objectives of the plan were:

- To gain an understanding of the issues and concerns of neighborhood residents, property owners, merchants, the University, students, customers, and other users of the area.
- To build a vision based on the district and community's needs and desires.
- To improve integrated strategies to achieve this vision including the economic, transportation, urban design, and marketing components necessary to achieve the intended effect.
- To develop implementable designs and financing strategies.

Goals of the Plan

The following goal statements form the basis of the proposed plan:

1. Improve connections and relationships to the surrounding community.
2. Strengthen the district by developing an image that appeals to a wide variety of users and reflects the unique characteristics of the University Hill area.
3. Improve the pedestrian life for citizens of all ages and types by improving the streetscape amenities and providing a variety of services.
4. Mitigate the impacts of the automobile and encourage access by alternate modes of transportation.
5. Improve the retail quality, mix, and operations within the district to better service residents, the University, and the surrounding community.
6. As a long term goal, spur careful redevelopment of the district and adjacent areas to meet the affordable housing and commercial use needs of the community, and to strengthen the quality and image of the district.

Premises of the Plan

The plan recommends projects that will improve vehicular circulation and access, improve pedestrian and bicycle access and safety, create public spaces, unify the design and image of the area, and encourage the area to become a neighborhood center which provides services and uses for its surrounding neighborhood. The primary intent of this plan, and the associated land use and urban design recommendations, is to strengthen the use of the area by making the area more attractive and useable by the surrounding neighborhoods and University community that is within walking distance to the commercial area. By eventually attracting this close-in market, in addition to the existing user base, the area will eventually be a stronger and more diverse pedestrian district.

1. Enhance Pedestrian and Bicycle Access and Safety.

The pedestrian streetscape and civic environment in the commercial area will include a number of pedestrian features such as seating, landscaping, lighting, and signage for bicycles. A series of traffic calming measures, which include raised pedestrian crossings and sidewalk widenings, intersection and corner improvements, and crosswalk improvements will be installed to improve pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.

2. Create Attractive and Interesting Streets and Public Spaces

Street trees, sidewalk treatments, and street furnishings will unify the streetscape, complement the unique character of the commercial area, and make the sidewalks more attractive and pleasant for pedestrians.

3. Reinforce Walking as a Primary Mode

By improving the safety, accessibility, and aesthetics of the sidewalk environment, the plan reinforces walking as the primary mode of access in the commercial area. With the addition of improved corners, intersections and crosswalks, and a concentration on improving important streets and alleys, walking will become a more viable alternative for trips to the commercial area. By directing parking to

the perimeter parking lots and providing bike parking, people will leave their cars and bikes on the outside of the district and walk within the area.

4. Establish a Unified Design Approach and Adopt Design Guidelines

The commercial area will establish a unified and special design theme. The design elements and materials should enhance the civic environment and provide a uniform and special image that is visible in all public projects on the Hill. This unified approach should be encouraged for private development as renovation and redevelopment of existing properties occurs. Design guidelines for both the historic and non-historic portions of the commercial area should be developed.

5. Improve the Transportation System to Provide a Balance of Cars, Pedestrians, Bikes, and Transit

Traffic congestion within the area will be managed by addressing the existing street pattern. Intersection improvements will provide safer pedestrian crossings and connections. Traffic will be slowed on major arteries. Bicycle access will be improved by emphasizing access connections, minimizing hazards, and providing bike parking. Transit services in and around the area will be continued.

6. Encourage a Diverse Mix of Uses and Better Land Use

The operating characteristics of restaurants, taverns, and indoor amusement establishments need to be addressed, and the appropriate location and scale of commercial buildings needs to be encouraged. The ability to make improvements to non-conforming high density residential structures in the adjacent residential neighborhood should be made easier, while still minimizing impacts. A historic district for the commercial area as well as the residential areas surrounding the district should be examined. Techniques to ease the transition from the high density neighborhood to the surrounding low density neighborhood should also be examined.

7. Provide Landscaping and Seasonal Color

Add landscaping to encourage greater pedestrian use by screening and softening building walls and by providing shade and a visual, comfortable "urban park" type feeling. Along public streets and at major intersections, landscaping can enhance the pedestrian environment and present an attractive image of the area. Seasonal color will be achieved through the use of banners.

8. Create More Public Open Space

Provide small public spaces along the public right-of-way. Encourage programmed and spontaneous activities in these areas. These "mini-parks" should provide a place for concerts, art fairs, exhibits and other special events.

Planning Process

Community Input

A working group consisting of members representing the various Hill constituency groups helped staff direct the study. Two community meetings were held with the Hill community and interested public. To gain more insight into the issues of youth, several classroom projects were developed to involve University, high school, and middle school youth in the design process. A special open house was held for youth to participate in the project.

A meeting specifically for property and business owners of the commercial area was held to discuss the plan. The plan has also been displayed in the Hill Annex through its different design stages. An open house was held for public review of the project and to receive public input prior to the plan's first review by various City review boards. Public hearings on the initial draft plan were held before the UHGID Advisory Committee, Transportation Advisory Board, and Planning Board in March. City Council reviewed the plan at a study session in April.

Public Process Schedule

A community meeting will be held on August 30 and the plan will be on display in the lobby of the Municipal Building the week of August 28. Following the community meeting on August 30, the plan will be reviewed by the University Hill General Improvement District (UHGID) Advisory Committee on September 13, the Transportation Advisory Board on September 14, and the Planning Board on September 21. Public hearings will be held at all of these meetings to gather pub-

lic comment on the plan. The plan will then be presented to City Council for adoption at its October 4 meeting. The Council will also hold a public meeting.

Implementation Strategy

The Strategy

Adoption of this plan means that the University Hill General Improvement District and private property owners within the commercial area can proceed with improvements to their area. It means that capital improvement projects for the area can be coordinated and prioritized with other City-wide projects for public funding consideration. Two projects are already included in the Transportation Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Others will be proposed as a result of this plan.

The Projects

The projects fall into four major categories:

1. Transportation Improvements - traffic calming and pedestrian and bike enhancement projects
2. Alley Improvements - undergrounding utilities and reconstructing alleys for shared use and to improve function
3. UHGID Improvements - lighting, streetscape improvements, seating and civic areas, and image program
4. Neighborhood Improvements - pedestrian scale lighting and trees and landscaping immediately outside of UHGID in the residential neighborhoods

Transportation Traffic Calming and Pedestrian & Bike Access Projects

13th Street Improvements:

- Install two raised pedestrian crossings. One between Pennsylvania and Broadway Avenues and one located mid-block in front of the Fox Theater
- Close driveway access on 13th Street between Pleasant Street and Pennsylvania Avenue

University Avenue Improvements:

- Improve intersections at 13th Street and Pennsylvania and College Avenues with identity paving and pedestrian crossings; widen sidewalks and add corner plaza
- Construct University Avenue improvements:
- Acquire University of Colorado right-of-way
- Construct pedestrian island with raised turn lane on southeast corner
- Install utility pavers at crosswalks and corners

College Avenue Improvements:

- Make College Avenue one-way westbound for the year trial period
- Remove median allowing access to 14th Street surface parking lot from Broadway Avenue
- Widen sidewalks
- Install pedestrian streetscape and make special events area
- Install mid-block raised pedestrian crossing to slow traffic
- If needed, add traffic mitigation feature on 14th Street south of parking lot
- Install neck-downs and special paving at Euclid Avenue and 13th and 14th Streets and at College Avenue and 12th Street if project is made permanent

13th-14th Streets Connector Road:

- Acquire property on 13th Street

Build new landscaped access road that connects with existing 14th Street surface parking lot

Reconstruct 14th Street surface parking lot to conform to new road alignment

Gateway Features/Signage:

- Install gateway arches at Broadway Avenue and 13th Street and at College and 14th Street
- Install entryway signage along Broadway Avenue northbound and southbound between Euclid and University Avenues
- Add entryway lighting fixtures

Alley Undergrounding and Reconstruction Projects

The utilities will be undergrounded and the following alleys reconstructed with special paving, lighting, and other design features:

- Main alley - north-south alley between Broadway Avenue and 13th Street, and between College and Pennsylvania Avenues. Improve as "pedestrian alley."
- Alley #2 - north-south alley between 13th and 14th Streets (College toward Euclid Avenue)
- Alley #3 - north-south alley between 13th and 12th Streets (Pennsylvania to College)
- Alley #4 - north-south alley between 13th and 12th Streets (Pleasant to Pennsylvania)
- Alley #5 - north-south alley between 13th and 12th Streets (College toward Euclid)

UHGID Improvements

Lighting Improvements:

- Add decorative, pedestrian scale lighting throughout the entire commercial area

Streetscape Improvements:

- Add trees and landscaping
- Install additional bike parking throughout areas
- Construct special elements - information kiosks, water feature
- Consider adding a restroom facility
- Seating/Civic Areas:
- Make a "mini plaza" at corner of Pleasant and Broadway Avenues
- Screen wall around University-owned Pennsylvania Lot

Pleasant Avenue - Two-way Traffic Pattern

- Remove parking and restripe street for two-way traffic from Broadway to 12th Street
- Change curb cut to Pleasant Street surface parking lot to align with 12th Street

Neighborhood/Transitional Zone Improvements

Add pedestrian scale lighting, trees, and landscaping outside of UHGID's boundaries in the following transitional zones:

- 13th Street (end of district toward Euclid Avenue)
- College Avenue (end of district to 12th Street)
- Pennsylvania Avenue (end of district to 12th Street)
- 14th Street (end of district toward Euclid)

Financing The Plan

Improvement Costs

The total cost of the civic improvement plan is estimated at \$2,530,000 - \$1,754,000 in transportation improvements; \$1,050,000 in alley undergrounding improvements; \$510,000 in UHGID improvements; and \$216,000 in neighborhood improvements. These costs reflect design, build, and contingency costs.

Funding Sources

Although there may be some federal or state funding for art projects or urban open space, it appears that the most logical funding sources for the project will be City funding mechanisms. The funds that appear the most appropriate for consideration of funding this project are the Transportation Fund, UHGID Fund, General Fund, and a Special Assessment District.

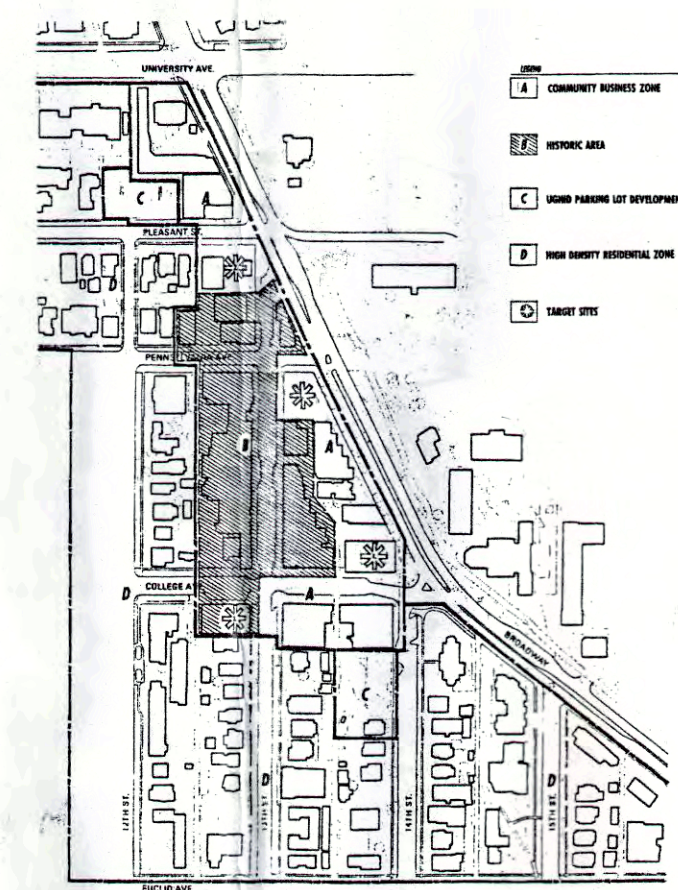
A Community Improvements Investment Fund (CIIF), which will be used to help finance capital projects for special areas, is proposed in the 1996 City budget. The CIIF will be funded by contributions from a combination of the General Fund and specific other City funds. The CIIF will be used to match, dollar for dollar, funds put into the project by the special area (for example, UHGID). Special projects with adopted plans will be considered for this funding. UHGID has requested \$50,000 per year for five years in CIIF matching funds. UHGID will most likely form a special assessment district to pay for its improvements. At this level of funding, UHGID can complete all of its proposed projects within five years.

Transportation Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds will be requested over a ten-year time period for all of the transportation improvements identified in the plan. Funds for the main alley reconstruction project are shown in the 1996 Transportation CIP, and funds for the 13th Street improvements are shown in the 1997-1999 CIP. Each transportation project proposed in the plan will be evaluated with other City-wide transportation projects to determine its priority in the overall CIP.

Each year, Public Service Company contributes funds to an alley undergrounding fund managed by the City. This money is available for undergrounding of Public Service lines throughout the City. Funds to underground the utilities in the main alley area being shown in the 1996 program. Each future alley project will be evaluated with other proposed alley projects to determine its priority in the overall undergrounding plan.

The neighborhood improvement projects for special amenities (lighting, trees, and landscaping) will be undertaken if the property owners within the neighborhoods are willing to form an assessment district to pay for the improvements.

Land Use



Land use, or zoning, can be used as a tool to manage the development and uses within an area to the desires of the City and the community. Many problems identified by the Hill community can be mitigated through different land use approaches.

COMMUNITY BUSINESS ZONE

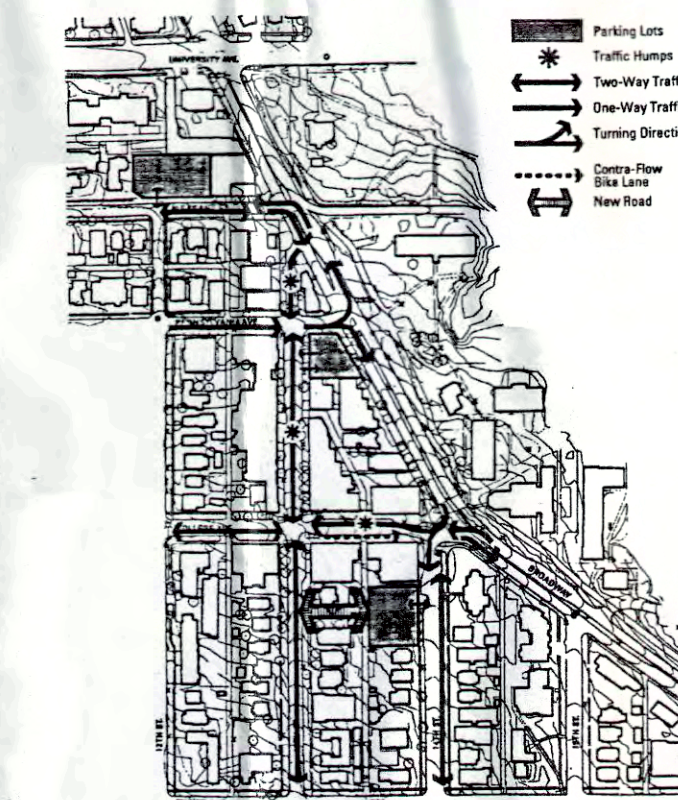
The business area is zoned CB-E (Community Business-Established). The zoning establishes the permitted uses and things such as building placement and height. The primary land use concern in the Hill commercial area has to do with some of the uses of the area and their impacts - generally nuisance impacts (trash, noise, security). The appropriate mix of uses should be determined and use charts can be used to reinforce the desired mix.

The zoning district standards should be used to control building placement and overall scale. Bulk chart charges should be augmented with design review of individual projects such as happens in the downtown area under the purview of the Downtown Design Advisory Board. Design guidelines should be established for both the historic and non-historic portions of the commercial area.

The following land use actions will be undertaken:

- In addition to increased enforcement and centralized management, zoning code changes will be explored in the CB-E zone to deal with the operating characteristics of restaurants, taverns, and indoor amusement establishments.

Transportation



The System Today

There is excellent City and regional access to the commercial area from Broadway Avenue. There is also good transit access in and around the district. Vehicular access to the three surface parking lots within the district is indirect and unclear, and some of the one-way streets are confusing to motorists. Access to the 14th Street parking lot is achieved from Broadway Avenue. There are pedestrian and vehicular conflicts at several intersections within the district.

Premises of Vehicular Access, Circulation and Infrastructure Improvements

Several projects are proposed in the plan to improve vehicular movement and access, provide convenient access to parking lots, and to strengthen the pedestrian environment within the Hill.

- Vehicular access will be improved to the three existing parking lots located at the edges of the district.
- Pleasant Street will be converted from a one-way street to a two-way street between Broadway and 12th Street and the entry curb cut to the Pleasant Street parking lot will be relocated to align with 12th Street.
- Raised pedestrian crossings will be constructed along 13th Street to slow traffic. One will be located between Pennsylvania and Broadway Avenues and the other will be in front of the Fox Theater.

Major intersection improvements are proposed at the intersections of 13th Street and College and Pennsylvania Avenues. These improvements include corner sidewalk widening, raised planters, corner and street intersection access paving, and paved pedestrian crosswalks.

- The median at the intersection of Broadway and College Avenues will be removed, and the curbs realigned to allow direct access to the 14th Street surface parking lot. In order to safely provide this access change, College Avenue, between Broadway Avenue and 13th Street, will be converted to a one-way westbound street.
- A new landscaped access road will be built between 13th and 14th Streets, south of College Avenue to link 14th Street with 13th Street.
- The major alley within the commercial area (the north-south alley between Broadway Avenue and 13th Street, and College and Pennsylvania Avenues) will be improved as a pedestrian alley. The alley will be made more attractive and functional by undergrounding the utility lines, repaving, and developing

• Zoning code changes will be explored to encourage the appropriate location and scale of commercial buildings based on the urban design of the Hill. A process will be initiated to develop design guidelines for the Hill and the appropriate approach to implementation.

HISTORIC AREA

The potential exists for a local historic district in the commercial area. The heart of the historic district would be along 13th Street between College and Pennsylvania Avenues. In addition to design review, there are a variety of incentives that would be available to property owners if the area becomes a historic district.

• A dialogue will be initiated with property owners about the potential benefits of historic district designation.

HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONE

The high density residential area surrounding the commercial portion of Uni-Hill is, in many cases, run-down and poorly maintained. The area is zoned HR-E (High Density Residential - Established). Many of the residential properties in the area around the commercial district were developed at densities greater than that permitted under current zoning. Current maximum density permitted is 27.2 net dwelling units per acre.

Many properties in the HR-E district are considered non-conforming, due to lack of compliance with density and parking standards, as well as various other site development standards. Because these fall into the category of non-conforming uses, they are prohibited from expanding, modifying, or changing without undergoing a Use Review. Interior remodels are allowed, but changes beyond that, including physical additions, are not. Thus, while the City has various "triggers" that require that properties upgrade, the actual impact is that property owners will avoid improvements to the property to avoid the required upgrading to meet current standards.

The City should amend the land use regulations to allow changes to existing buildings and structures while accepting some non-conformity of the building and site.

The 1992 Boulder Survey of Historic Places found the potential for a University Hill historic district in the area between 9th Street, Pleasant Street, 16th Street, and Baseline Road. A historic district would include the development of design guidelines, review of exterior alterations, provisions dealing with "demolition by neglect," and financial and other incentives for property owners.

The transition between the high density residential area around the commercial district to the low density residential area in the neighborhood to the south of the commercial area is rather abrupt. In many situations around the City, there is an intervening medium density zone. The City should examine techniques to ease this transition. These could include rezoning or perhaps even a transfer of development rights program from the nonconforming dwelling units in the low density area to the high density area.

The following actions should be undertaken:

- Make improvements to the non-conforming high density residential structures easier while still minimizing their impact.
- Examine the potential for a residential historic district.
- Examine techniques to ease the transition from the high density neighborhood to the surrounding low density neighborhood.

more consolidated, functional and screened trash pickup.

Review and analysis of parking utilization data show that the existing parking supply is sufficient at this time. In fact, some of the lots seem to be underutilized at certain times throughout the day. Considering very modest growth and projected employee levels, additional parking supply to meet new demand cannot be justified at this time. However, if significant development or redevelopment in the area occurs, then consideration will need to be given to either expanding the parking supply or implementing travel demand management programs to accommodate the increased demand.

A major emphasis of the plan is to encourage parking at the edges of the district, while providing for improved pedestrian access and activity in the core. To accomplish the improvements, 29 public parking spaces will be removed. If the main alley project is undertaken, and if the private businesses along the alley choose to give up their existing private parking, a total of 18 additional spaces will need to be removed.

Access improvements to existing parking lots as well as better directional signage should provide for increased use of the lots. Implementation of the transportation improvements is projected to be phased-in over a ten year period, therefore, parking will not be lost at one time. Parking supply and demand will be monitored to determine if there is still a need for replacement parking as these projects progress.

Bicycle System

Concepts for improving bicycle access and parking have been incorporated as an integral element of the civic improvement plan.

• Signage and facility improvements should be undertaken on 11th and 12th Streets to connect the Hill with the downtown to the north and with local neighborhoods to the south.

• Bicycle traffic from University to Pennsylvania Avenues needs to be accommodated. Bicyclists should be allowed to use the sidewalk on the west side of Broadway between these two streets.

• Bicyclists will be encouraged to use 13th Street. The traffic calming measures that will be undertaken on 13th Street should make bicycle travel in this corridor safer.

• A contra-flow bicycle lane will be added on the south-side of College Avenue when the street becomes one-way.

• Bicycle parking will be distributed throughout the district in available sidewalk locations.

Trial One-way Westbound of College Avenue

The one-way westbound on College Avenue should be tested during a trial period before any permanent changes are made. The trial period should be undertaken for a minimum of one year to allow staff adequate time to perform traffic counts and to analyze sales and other economic indicators that might show impacts of the change. The trial traffic pattern change should be undertaken in the short-term. If the improvement is to be made permanent, funds to construct the change will be requested in the 2000 Transportation Capital Improvement Program.

As part of the implementation of the experiment, low cost mitigation elements such as signage will be installed to discourage traffic from diverting onto neighborhood streets. Traffic pattern changes will also be assessed on the surrounding residential streets for one month following the change to College Avenue. If there are substantial changes in traffic patterns, then additional low cost traffic mitigation elements will be installed. If the one-way westbound of College Avenue becomes permanent, then the mitigation elements will be made permanent and neck-downs and crossing improvements will be installed at the corners of Euclid Avenue and 13th and 14th Streets and at College Avenue and 12th Street.

Street Closures within the Commercial Area

Closure of any street within the commercial area should not be considered until the trial one-way westbound of College Avenue is completed. At that time, if street closures are to be done, an amendment to this plan would need to occur. This would require a public review process through the appropriate City review boards and City Council.