

# PLAN OF HISTORIC BAKER CITY 2001

PREPARED FOR HISTORIC BAKER CITY BY PLANMAKERS

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Historic Baker City, Inc.

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# INTRODUCTION

This report details a plan and action program for downtown Baker City, Oregon. The plan establishes a blueprint for the continuing revitalization of the downtown and offers the city and Historic Baker City (HBC) Inc., excellent opportunities for key improvements.

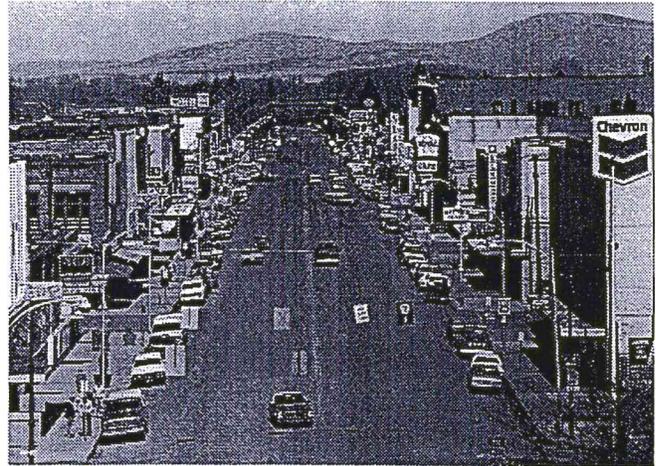
The report begins with the goals of the downtown, a historic perspective, problems and potentials, and then outlines special projects, design concepts, and specific details. Finally, tools and strategies for implementation of the plan are identified. The 1982 plan identifies the existing conditions of the downtown at that time.

This plan serves as a long-range working document for guiding development, preparing policies, determining design details, and setting priorities. Continuity in making decisions relative to the downtown can be assured with the plan serving to encourage and guide the area's development to the mutual benefit of the city, HBC, property owners, and the individuals who will use it. The plan of Historic Baker City requires an ongoing evolution of support, city approval, financial resources, and dedication to achieve a lasting and dynamic impact on the city's future success.

## 1982 DOWNTOWN PLAN UPDATE

This plan evolves from *A Plan for Historic Baker City* prepared by Planmakers in 1982 for the City of Baker City. It was adopted by the city and Historic Baker City, Inc. was formed to provide downtown management. The plan served as a catalyst for a downtown revitalization program and has had immeasurable success in developing downtown Baker City into a special place that is loved by the local community and visitors.

Baker City has become a more desirable place to live because of its attractive downtown. Although downtown Baker City is a far better place than it was nearly twenty years ago, it has not yet fully achieved its mission of a healthy and prosperous downtown. The 1982 plan was an excellent framework for reversing the



Baker City in 1982

decline of downtown; it showed how Baker City could stabilize and begin restoring its central city heritage. The revitalization of downtown was adopted by the city and county in 1987 as a fundamental part of the region's economic development plan. Blocks of rehabilitated buildings, rich in history and design, have become the magnets that draw people there. A milestone was the restoration and the 1998 reopening of Geiser Grand Hotel in 1998 with its signature cupola clock tower.

## HISTORIC BAKER CITY SUCCESSES

A key to the downtown's success was the formation of Historic Baker City, a non-profit, board-driven organization, and the creating of a Main Street manager position. Numerous projects have been completed or are underway. Successes include a façade program with over 75 historic façade renovations, streetscape improvements, improved signage, a marketing campaign, promoting events and special projects like Old Post Office Square. In 1998, the Economic Improvement District passed with 90 percent approval of the assessment, allowing the work of HBC, to continue for five additional years. These historic preservation successes have earned the city, HBC and property owners awards from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Oregon Downtown Development Association.

HBC has only been measuring economic development impacts in terms of new businesses and jobs since 1985.

The results:

- \$1.8 million in grant money has been leveraged towards a \$15 million private sector match.
- Net increase of businesses downtown is 65.
- Net increase of jobs (full-time, family wage) is 115.
- First floor Main Street vacancy rate is 6 percent; 1982 vacancy rate was 25 percent.

Downtown Baker City is the largest center of employment for Baker County with over 168 businesses in the downtown, employing more than 500 people.

The district has over 138 property owners.

## MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### HISTORIC BAKER CITY MISSION

*The mission of Historic Baker City, Inc., is to develop and promote a healthy and prosperous downtown, serving a community rich with culture and history.*

### VISION

*The vision is to maintain Baker City as the premier rural downtown shopping experience in the Pacific Northwest.*

### GOALS

Goals for the downtown are identified below as accomplishments, partial accomplishments and projects to be accomplished.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Restoration of Baker City name – 1989
- Incorporated Historic Baker City, Inc.
- Established position of a downtown manager – 1993
- Supported Powder River Pathway Project – 1993
- Established building façade restoration grant program
- Restoration and rehabilitation of over 75 building façades, and including such landmark buildings as the Old Post Office, the Geiser Grand Hotel, and Baker Tower.
- Reconstruction of Main Street and downtown sidewalks, with trees and historic streetlights.
- EID established and expanded in 1998 for five years
- Formed partnership between HBC and Baker City

- Reconstruction of Post Office Square
- Launched downtown marketing campaign
- Established a design review commission
- Held several yearly downtown promotions
- Visitors and convention bureau established
- Placement of Interstate, city entrance, historic district, and building signs
- Installation of benches, bike racks and planters – 1998
- Published walking tour brochure – 1999
- Prepared downtown marketing video – 2000
- Business directory completed – 2000

### WORKS IN PROGRESS BY HBC AND PARTNERS:

- New armory underway
- Trolley-transportation from Campbell Street to downtown attempted
- Broadway Avenue streetscape improvements underway
- Resort Street streetscape plans prepared for future construction
- Additional building plaques installed
- Business directory updated
- Business recruitment initiated
- Oregon Trail Regional Museum improvements started
- More downtown trees/green space to be planted
- Promoted scenic byway tours
- Continued Façade Renovation Program

### LONG-TERM GOALS:

- Create a safe and accessible Main Street for all users
- Pursue 1<sup>st</sup> Street streetscape
- Prepare a downtown logo
- Establish volunteer recruitment program
- Adopt design standards for new construction in district
- Build Court Street Plaza as downtown gathering place
- Upgrade meeting facilities
- Encourage and promote upper story housing
- Develop a ghost sign program
- Complete Alleyway project
- Develop an arts/cultural facility
- Develop a multi-modal transportation center
- Underground utilities

## OBJECTIVES

*To establish an economically sound and attractive center for community life, offering a diverse mixture of shopping, entertainment, business, housing, and recreational opportunities.*

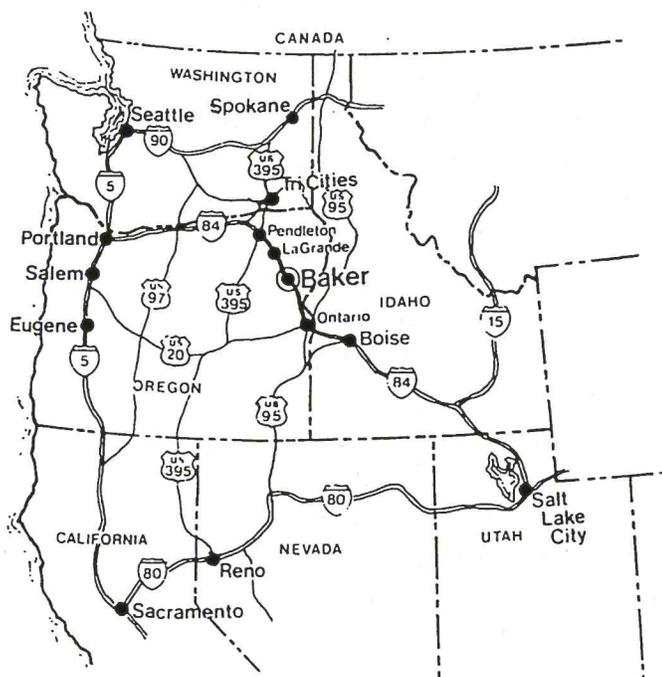
*To rehabilitate Baker City's historic building façades to their original appearance.*

*To stimulate expanded retail shopping and enhance business development, retention, and recruitment efforts.*

## SETTING

Located in the northeastern quadrant of Oregon and situated along the southern end of the Powder River Valley, the city of Baker City is partially surrounded by hills and mountains. The river valley extends twenty-five miles to the north, while the panoramic Elkhorn mountain range rises 9,000 feet to the west. The ridge is snow-capped ten months of the year. To the east, foothills rise to the Wallowa Mountains, which are snow-capped year round. Known as the Eagles, the mountain peaks reach 10,000 feet in elevation.

The city of Baker City is sited near the 45<sup>th</sup> parallel and has an elevation of 3,471 feet. Baker City's climate is typical of the temperate and semi-arid high plateau regions of the west; average annual precipitation is nearly 12 inches and the seasons are well defined.



Regional Location

Baker City is 304 miles east of Portland and 128 miles west of Boise. It is served by Interstate 84, U.S. 30, Oregon highways 7, 86, and 203, the Union Pacific Railroad, and the Baker City Municipal Airport, which accommodates general aviation.

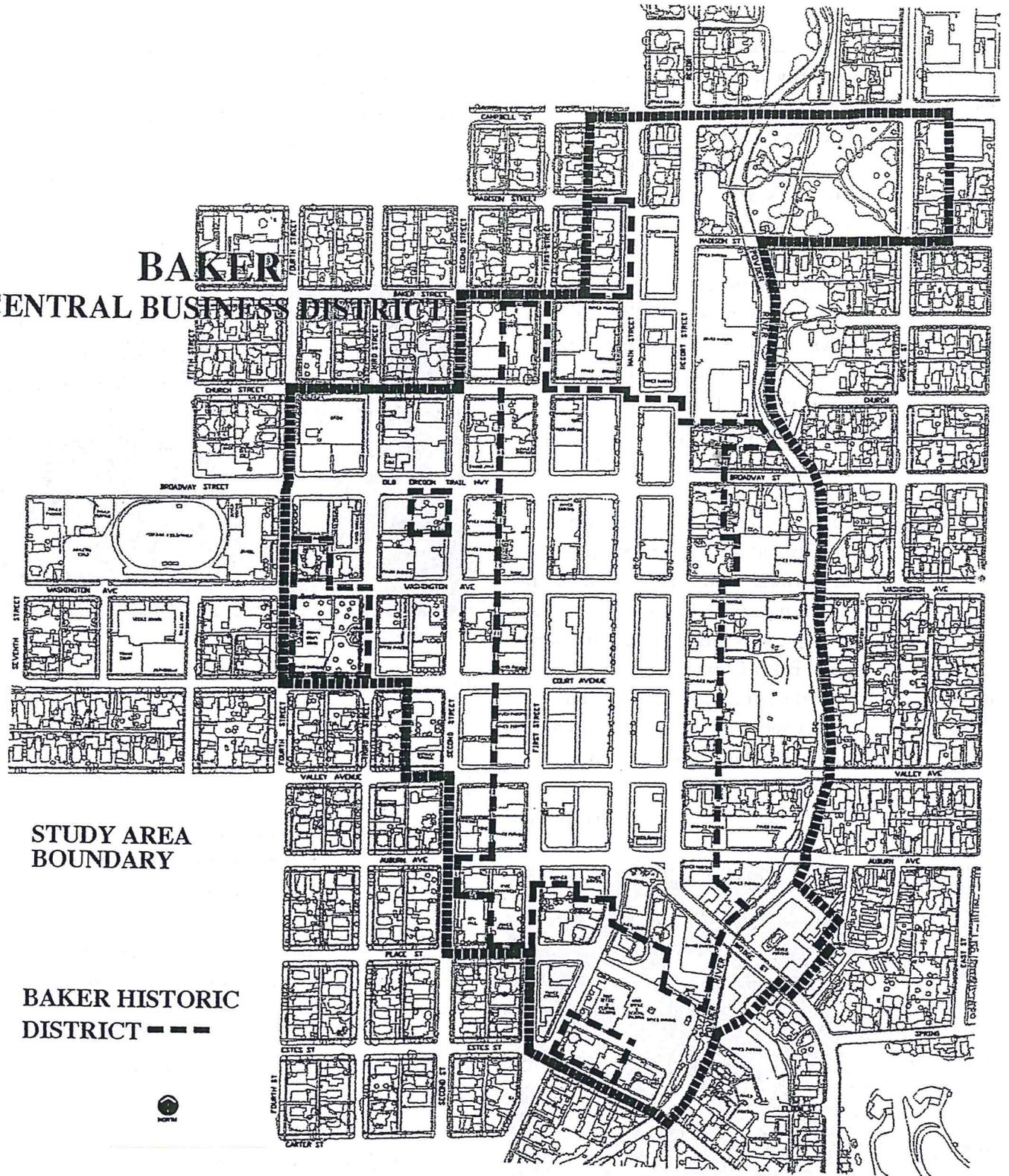
The community lies in the center of an enormous outdoor recreational area. The surrounding region includes the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla, and Malheur National Forests; the Hell's Canyon National Recreation area; and the Eagle Cap and Strawberry Mountain Wilderness areas. Other major attractions include the Anthony Lakes ski area, the Sumpter Valley Scenic Railroad, Sumpter Valley Dredge, and a host of ghost towns and old mines.

The city has a population of 9,880 in 2000 and serves as the county seat for Baker County. The area's economic base includes cattle, farm products, forest products, tourism, recreation, and mining. An addition to the economy was the opening of the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center five miles east of Baker City in 1992.

## STUDY AREA

This plan focuses on Baker City's central business district. The study area encompasses the equivalent of some 39 blocks with boundaries extending from the Powder River to 4<sup>th</sup> Street and from Estes Street to Campbell Street, and includes 15 block Baker City Historic District, downtown entrances, and adjacent commercial areas that constitute the city center. The study area includes Baker City's principal retail district, offices, financial institutions, and other service establishments. Also included are the city, county, and federal buildings, many restaurants and motels, and a few apartments and single family homes. The downtown is platted on a true north-south grid system with the majority of blocks being 252 feet by 216 feet with narrow 25- and 50-foot by 100-foot lots. Street rights-of-way are typically 80 feet wide with the exception of 100-foot Main and Broadway streets and 85-foot Resort Street. Alleys are generally 16 feet wide. Special emphasis in the study area was given to the heart of the commercial district along 1<sup>st</sup>, Main, and Resort streets.

# BAKER CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



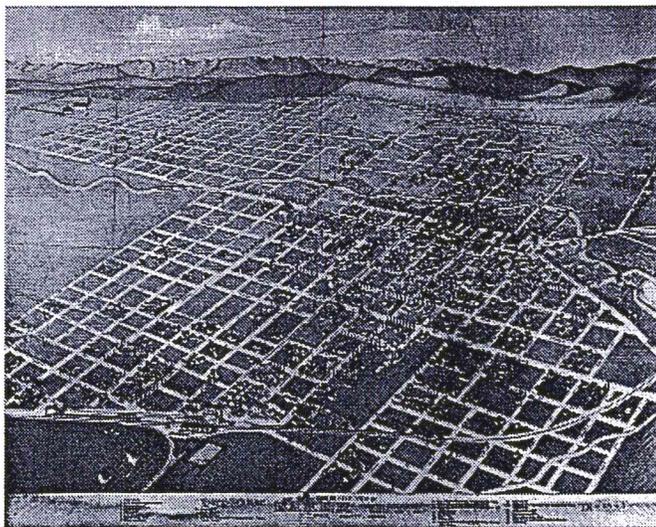
STUDY AREA  
BOUNDARY

BAKER HISTORIC  
DISTRICT - - -

# BAKER CITY HISTORY

Baker City possesses an especially rich historical heritage. The initial settlement was advantageously located along the southern end of the Powder River Valley where it lay nestled against the hills and was served by the Powder River. The small settlement began to flourish in 1861, a year after gold was discovered in the nearby mountains. Gold fever immediately generated activity and an influx of people, which in turn led to new strikes. Auburn, the first town situated in the mountains, was located near the first gold strike and established as the county seat in 1862. However, after the nearby mine began to peter out, the early settlers moved their businesses to Baker City and the growing settlement soon became the supply base for all of the mining towns in the vicinity. Another major influence on Baker City's growth was the flow of emigrants on the Oregon Trail who passed through the Powder River Valley during the 1850s and 1860s.

Originally, in 1865, R.A. Pierce secured the town site and called it Baker City, but later J.M. Boyd contested the ownership and was awarded the forty-acre town site of Baker City. The town platting was officially recorded in 1868 and laid out on a grid pattern with a true north-south, east-west axis. Baker City, as the town was originally called, was the namesake of Colonel Edward D. Baker, senator from Oregon who died leading his troops in the War Between the States. He was the only U.S. Senator to die in action while in office. The same year Baker City was approved as the new Baker County seat.



1892 Bird's Eye View of Baker City

## EARLIEST COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS AND ADDITIONS

The earliest buildings in Baker City were a saloon, boarding house, hotel, blacksmith shop and livery stable, all catering to the surrounding mining activity. The first store was located on the northeast corner of 1<sup>st</sup> and Valley streets and operated by A.H. Brown. Mercantile, furnishing, clothing, hardware, variety, and grocery stores followed these businesses. Baker City's first hotel, the Western Hotel, opened up on Front Street (now Main Street) in 1865 and was headquarters for the overland stages which served the city five times a week.

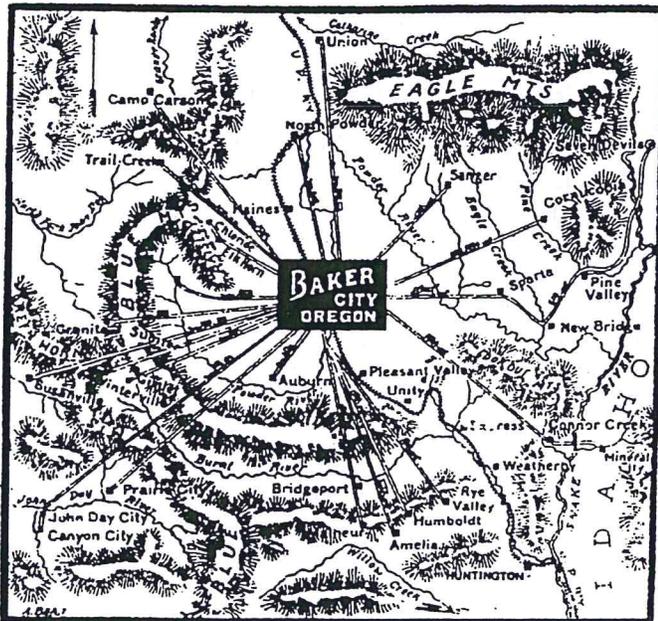


Packwood Hotel on 1st Street

In 1874 Baker City came of age and its people proceeded to form a city government. The 1870s also saw continued growth with the establishment of the *Bedrock Democrat* newspaper (now *Baker City Herald*), Basche Hardware Store, a county courthouse, school, churches, lodge halls, and homes. A number of buildings were now being constructed of brick, including the Cosmopolitan Hotel at Main and Court streets, built by Father DeRoo. As the staging center of eastern Oregon, The Cosmopolitan became the main stop for many of the freight wagons which kept gold and supplies moving around the country. Later, The Cosmopolitan was remodeled with the addition of a third-story mansard roof and renamed the Arlington Hotel. Another early hotel was the Packwood, built by entrepreneur, W.H. Packwood. In 1878, stone craftsman, John H. Jett opened the Baker City Marble Works, providing the city with stone and marble building materials and monuments. Stone began being used to provide relief to brick masonry.

New additions to the town were platted first to the east in 1870, beginning with the Fisher Addition, which extended from Main Street to the Powder River. This addition contained a row of narrow, 100-foot wide blocks between Main and Resort streets and large parcels from Resort Street to the river. Boyd's Addition to the north and Place's Addition south of the town, following the original block and street size, were platted in 1872. Place Street was the Baker City end of a toll road, which extended from Auburn. It was run by M.E. Place, who also operated a toll bridge over the Powder River leading to Pleasant Valley.

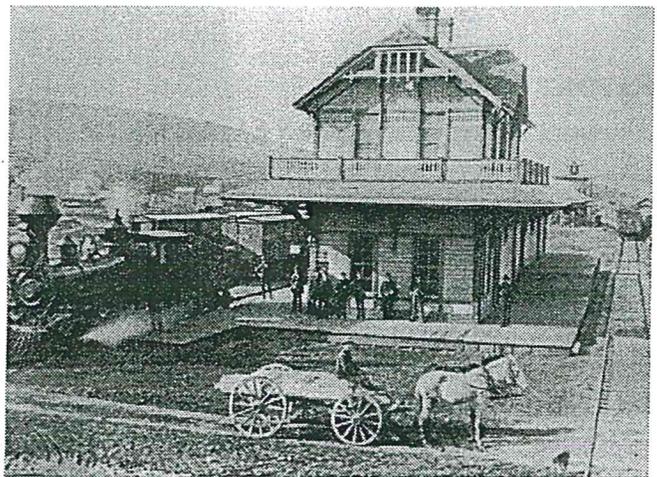
Many of the street names have been changed over the years. Broadway Street was first called Commercial Street and then changed to Center Street to give Baker City a more metropolitan air. Other renaming changes included Main to Front and back to Main in 1911, Wilson Street to 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Wood Street to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, California Street to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, East Street to 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Charles Street to Estes Street, Baker Street to Valley Avenue, Well Street to Court Street, Marshall Street to Washington Street, Union Street to Church Street, Ann Street to Baker Street, and Fisher Street to Williams Street, which later became Madison Street. Campbell Street was once called North Street and was named after a Mr. Campbell who homesteaded on the river near the present street. Post Office Square, as it is called, faces the old Post Office on Auburn Street.



Center for the Mines

## BAKER CITY'S ECONOMY

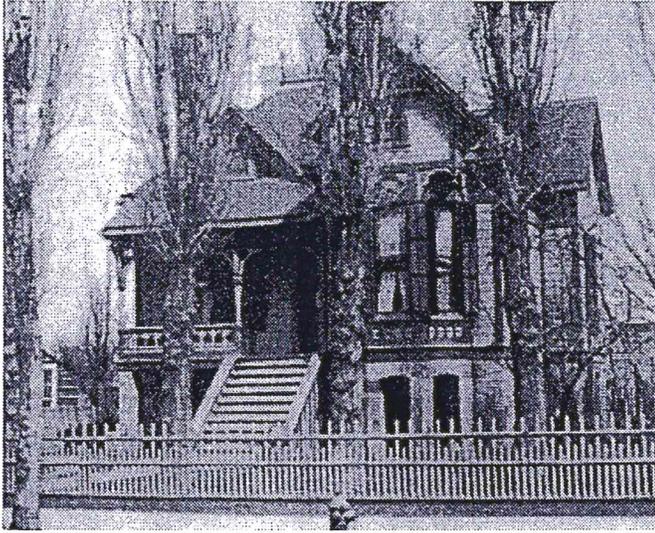
Baker City's economic base became more diverse in the 1880s with lumber, railway transport and small factories contributing to the expanding mining operations. Baker City was the undisputed center for the mines with new gold booms occurring northeast of the city. The nearby mines included Virtue, Flagstaff, Emma, Hidden Treasure, and Friday. Baker City's diverse resources included a brewery, soda factory creamery, soap factory, and cigar factory. The earliest bank, First National Bank of Baker City, founded by James Virtue, opened in 1882.



Railroad Depot

August 19, 1884 was a joyous day for the city with the arrival of Oregon Railway and Navigation Company. The railroad joined Union Pacific at Huntington to give Baker City direct rail service to the east and west. The train depot was built near Broadway and 10<sup>th</sup> streets and the surrounding area blossomed with hotels, saloons and a store, becoming known as the Waterfront. Baker City Stages carried passengers from the depot to the city's hotels. In 1900 rails were laid for a street railway to serve the city. The Baker City Street Railway and Motor Company operated a horse-drawn street car from Auburn Street along Main Street and then out Broadway to the O.R. & N. Depot. The line was never equipped with electricity.

Forestry products became a Baker City industry in the late 1880s with the opening of both lumber and planing mills. Manufactured lumber products included moldings, doors, windows, blinds, and general lumber.



Resort Street residence of Dr. O.M. Dodson facing Court Street

## RESORT STREET

The Resort Street area, of which very few historic photos exist, was platted in 1870 as Fisher's Addition, which extends from Main Street to the Powder River. During the 1870s and 1880s Resort Street, facing the commercial downtown, was one of the most prestigious residential locations in the city. Sereen B. McCord, Baker's first mayor and blacksmith, built his shop in 1871 and his home in 1873 at the corner of Broadway and Resort. Existing today, the buildings are the focal point of Baker City's early history. McCord was mayor for four terms, being elected on a reform movement platform, promising to clean up the gambling and prostitution which were pervasive in the city at the time. County Sheriff and Judge James Shinn built an attractive two-story, wood Italianate house on Resort Street in 1876. After his death his widow married James Wisdom, making additions to the home and adding out buildings to the lot, which extended to the river. The grandest home on Resort Street, a two-story masonry home with a round turret, was built by Luther B. Ison in 1887. The restored home is currently occupied by the Bank of America. Dr. O. M. Dodson's house stood on Resort Street facing Court Street. The Ross House (c. 1866), located at 1810 Resort, is possibly the earliest wood frame structure in the Baker City Historic District.

## CHINESE INFLUENCE

The Chinese, who came to the area to work the mines and build water systems like the Eldorado Ditch, contributed a great deal to the life and economy of Baker City. After the first gold rush was over, a good many stayed on and became part of the community. They built Chinatown adjacent to Resort and Auburn streets running to the river. A fine Joss House or Buddhist temple was built on Auburn Street in 1883. The Chinese proved extremely hard-working and independent, operating laundries and eating places, working as house servants, and growing and selling vegetables. The local Chinese often sold their wares from handcarts and baskets, giving lily bulbs to friends to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

## EARLY HOMES

Residential growth also began to take place on the East Side of the river and to the west of the downtown with the construction of the home of Edmund Perkins and John Wisdom, a druggist, in 1878. The home had a steep gabled roof and exhibited elements of the Gothic and Italianate styles. Another architecturally significant house was the 1880 Heilner House on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. This imposing house is of the Second Empire Style, highlighted by a mansard roof and set in a park-like garden. To the north, two almost identical Italianate style homes were built on Main Street in 1882 and 1890 — the Samuel Baer, now the Baer House Bed and Breakfast, and Leo Adler homes, now the Leo Adler Museum.

## THE 1890S – ERA OF ELEGANCE

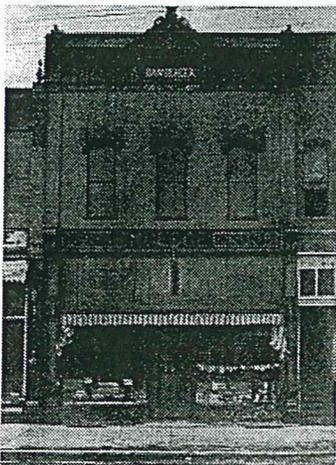
The 1890s were a period of tremendous growth for Baker City. The area was undergoing its second mining boom with the White Swan mine, claimed in 1893. The Baker City Iron Works began manufacturing mining machinery in 1892 along with finish castings and architectural cast iron. Baker City's first elegant hotel, the seventy room Hotel Washauer, later named the Geiser-Grand, was completed in 1889 and featured an elegant interior with a dining room which had a seating capacity of 200. Other hotels that served the city included the St. Lawrence, Sagamore, and, later, the Antlers.



Geiser Grand Hotel

With the installation of a city water works and a reservoir which supplemented earlier windmills and irrigation ditches, most services were now available to the city. Electricity, gas, and telephone franchises were established. Gas and steam plants were located along the Powder River off Washington Street. The city had a fire company and police service. Other metropolitan features included streets, hydrants and sewers.

In the late 1880s and 1890s, Baker City saw numerous new business buildings open. This was due both to the booming economy and the need to replace wooden store buildings lost through fires. Major fires burned entire blocks of mostly wooden frame buildings in 1886 and 1888. Handsome business buildings constructed of brick and stone replaced them and scores of new mercantile establishments went into operation. At the time, the stores on the west side of Main Street, including Neuberger's, Heilners, Weils, and Baers, were

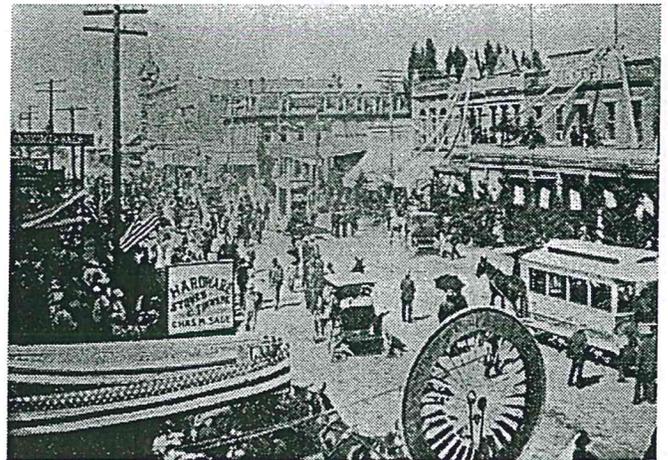


1888 Bamberger Building, now Betty's Books

considered very fashionable and proper, while the buildings on the east side of Main between Valley and Court streets housed five saloons. Young people and ladies were discouraged from frequenting the east side of Main Street with its saloons and houses of ill

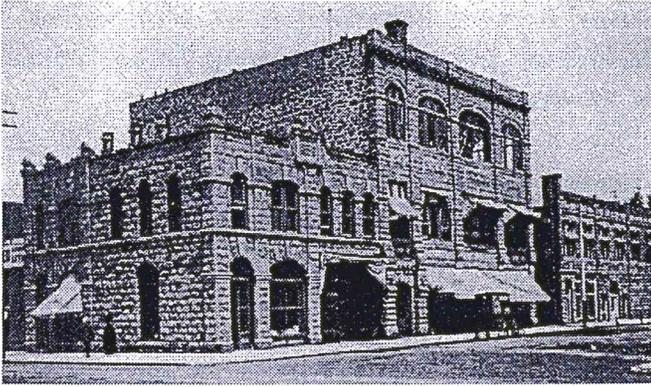
repute. Salvation Army members would march along Main Street, playing their music and preaching in front of the saloons.

Another major economic factor in Baker City's growth at this time was the Sumpter Valley Railroad Company. Affectionately called the "Stump Dodger," the narrow gauge railway extended 80 miles between Baker City and Prairie City. The railway was started in 1890 by David C. Eccles and reached Sumpter in 1897 and Prairie City in 1909. Their Baker City depot, which was recently renovated, was near the Union Pacific depot which burned in 1895. The railway served cattlemen, prospectors and lumbermen, and provided shipping between the John Day Valley and the main line of the Union Pacific Railroad. The Sumpter Valley Railway also provided passenger service and was considered one of Oregon's most picturesque lines. The railway carried passengers and mail until 1937, logs into Baker City until 1946, and then, in 1947, the line was abandoned and scrapped. Portions of the line have been rebuilt and the Sumpter Valley Railroad once again serves as a scenic and historic railway.



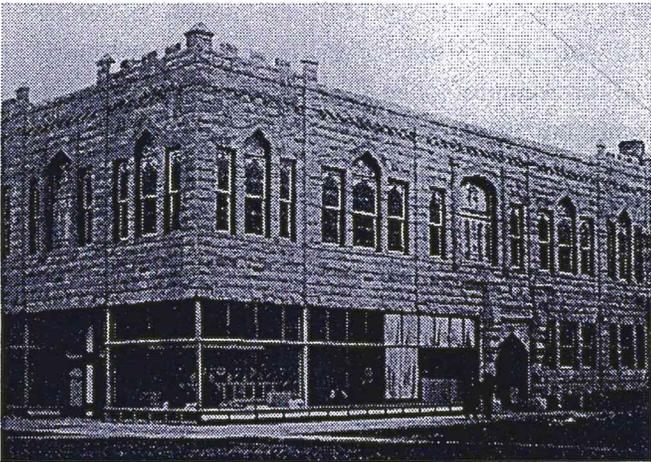
Main Street festivity

The prosperous years of the 1890s led to another substantial building boom in the early 1900s. Stonemason John Jett mastered his trade, expanding from rock foundations and ornamentation to entire stone buildings. Beautiful and impressive cut-stone buildings were dedicated in a period of strong civic pride. City Hall was built in 1902-03, St. Francis Cathedral in 1905, the Carnegie Library in 1908, and County Courthouse in 1906-08, Pythian Castle in 1907, Elkhorn Eagles Building in 1908, and the Rand Building



Valley Avenue stone buildings

in 1908. The buildings' volcanic tuff rock was quarried 12 miles south near Pleasant Valley. The stone was easily worked when quarried and then hardened with exposure, providing a strong design element in the downtown. This building period was crowned by the handsome, classical U.S. Post Office in 1909 and a large Y.M.C.A. in 1912.

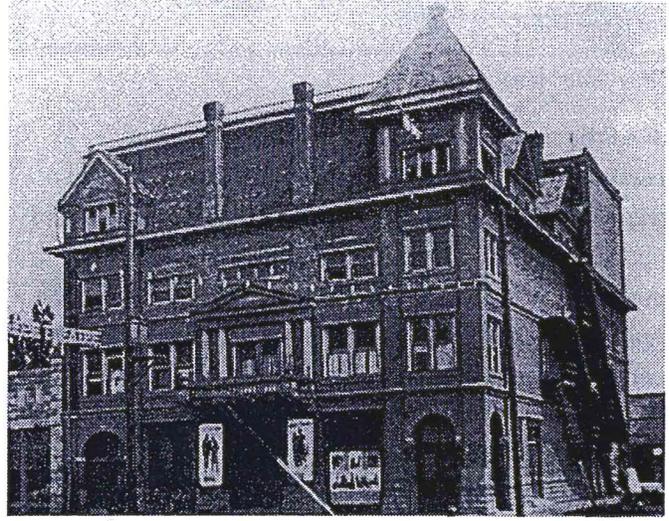


Pythian Castle

## CULTURAL CENTER

Baker City was the cultural center of Eastern Oregon. This was because the early settlers planned and built a community based on the need for cultural living. Band concerts were featured every Wednesday night on Main Street until they were moved to the new bandshell in the park. Other Baker City events included Fourth of July parades held on Main Street, which featured various floats and summer carnivals, Chautauqua and tent shows, musical entertainment, and home talent shows.

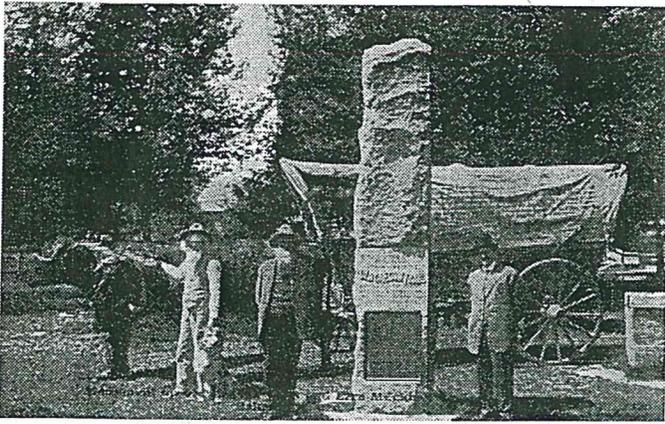
In 1897 pioneer brewer Henry Rust's Opera House was ruined by fire and subsequently replaced by the impressive Baker City Opera House, the finest of its kind between Portland and Boise. This magnificent theater made Baker City a regular tour stop to the best of the traveling companies, and always played to a full house. The Baker City Opera House later became the Clarick Theater; then, sadly, it was destroyed by fire in 1937.



Baker City Opera House

One of the most enjoyable events of the season was the St. Valentine's Day Masquerade Ball, often held in the Armory on the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Broadway streets. Another popular attraction was a tally-ho, a high open coach pulled by four horses, that took lively groups on picnics and excursions.

Catering to other interests, the local literary society, the Alpha Club, was organized to help establish the library, and the Commercial Club was the predecessor to the Chamber of Commerce. Later events in Baker City included a celebration commemorating the Oregon Trail and the 1934 Baker Mining Jubilee, celebrating Baker City's history and mining activities. The free celebration featured a parade, pioneer picnic with the crowning of a Pioneer Queen Mother, and Queen of the Miners Jubilee, rock drilling and log sawing, concerts, air circus, water carnival, and baseball games. Other Baker City activity centers included the old race track, located one mile from town, which later became the fairgrounds, and the Sam-O Springs at the east end of Baker City, which featured natural warm water from the springs located in an octagonal spring house.



Ezra Meeker commemorating the Oregon Trail in Geiser-Pollman Park

Geiser-Pollman Park has served the city since the turn of the century. The Geiser-Pollman families deeded the two-block site along Campbell Street as a public park for the enjoyment of the citizens. The site along the Powder River existed as a grove of lovely trees since the first pioneers came to the Baker Valley. The property was first owned by Charles Fisher and known as Fisher's Grove. Later, Henry Rust used the grove as a beer garden. Over time, the city improved the park with sidewalks, play and picnic equipment, drinking fountains, electric lights, and a large band shell.

### **BAKER CITY'S POWDER RIVER**

The Powder River flows through Baker City's center and the fertile land of the Baker Valley. During the 1890s, cyanide from processing gold up stream poisoned the river and killed the fish. A major flood occurred in 1897, causing substantial damage and leading to a number of homes being moved. Early photos of Baker City show small pools and marshes to the east of the river. Over the years these areas were filled in. During the 1930s, the W.P.A. lined the riverbanks with stone and rechanneled the river, removing bends between Washington and Valley streets and between Bridge and Estes streets. The rechanneling allowed areas along the west side of the river to be reclaimed. In recent years, dams were built on the river, greatly reducing the potential for flooding.

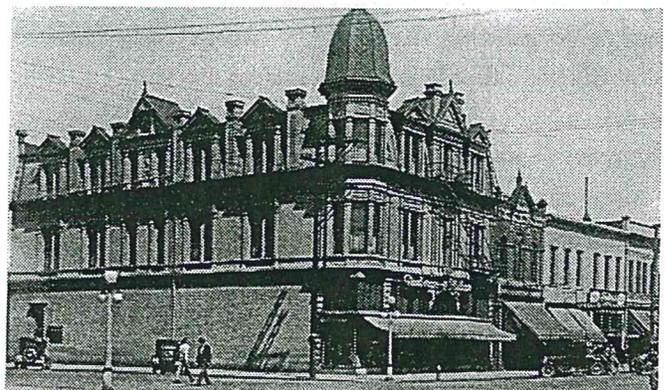
### **INDUSTRIAL DIVERSIFICATION**

Gold production declined throughout the 1910s, forcing the city to rely on its developing lumber and cattle industries. Prior to this, the extended period over which the mining booms occurred had the effect of giving Baker City time to develop a strong and varied culture. Lumber and cattle had become substantial parts of the local economy from the 1890s, but after World War I these two industries replaced mining as the mainstay of the economy. Cattle, first a result of the necessities of emigrants along the Oregon Trail, started a market for hay. The luxurious grasses of the valley fed herds of cattle and sheep. In addition to agriculture, wool also became a major product shipped from Baker City.

An indication of Baker City's changing awareness and efforts to become more modern came in 1911 when the citizens voted to drop "City" from its name. Citizens voted again in the 1980s to return the word "City."

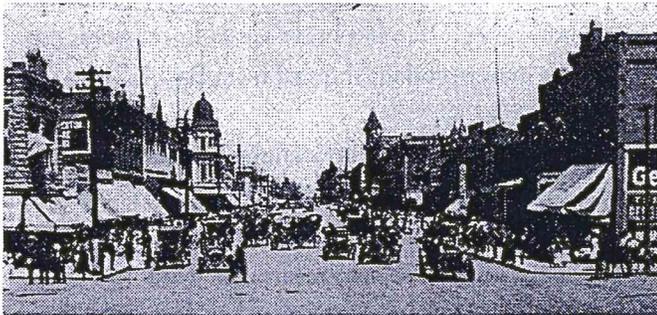
### **SPECIAL FEATURES**

Baker City's pedestrians were served by a number of drinking fountains and streetlights located on the sidewalks in the downtown. Gas streetlights appeared in the 1890s, replacing kerosene lamps. Two gas streetlights were located at the intersection of Main and Broadway, and lit by a lamplighter. Later, large round bowls, with gaslight, hung in the middle of each intersection. These lights were eventually replaced with electric lights. For a period of thirty years, Main Street featured attractive, three-globed, cast-iron streetlights. Another special feature was a lighted fountain for horses, located at the center of the intersection of Main and Court streets.



Neuberger and Heilner Department Store. Notice the three-globe lights.

In 1920, an impressive welcome arch was erected on North 10<sup>th</sup> Street. This fine wooden structure with rock piers adorned the western entrance to the city. On the north, it stated: "Baker welcomes you; Enter with knocking and depart likewise." On the other side was the inscription "Baker wishes you good luck. Come again." The arch was a community effort erected by the Chamber of Commerce with donated materials and lighting provided by the city. The wood pilaster also called attention to the resources and advantages of the city as well as providing space for advertising.



Main Street ca. 1910

## THE AUTO ERA

During this same period, the automobile began to appear on Baker City's streets and influence the mode of city travel. The first car in Baker City was introduced in a parade in 1905. With advances in the private automobile making longer trips possible, auto travel became popular on the country's pioneer highway. Highway 30 was the main route to and through Baker City, utilizing Bridge, Main, and Broadway streets through the downtown. This early automobile travel led to auto camps, such as the Oregon Trail Auto Tourist Campground with cabins and auto stalls near Bridge Street. These auto camps were the predecessors to the city's motels. In 1929, Baker City built its largest and tallest building, the ten-story Baker Hotel. Today, it is still the tallest building in eastern Oregon.

In recent years, unfortunate losses to Baker City's architectural legacy include the demolition of the ornamental Elk's Lodge on Court Street for a new lodge-hall, the fire-caused destruction of Levinger Drug building on Main Street, and the original Citizen's National Bank stone building and the Imperial Hotel, both near the corner of Main and Washington streets. The banking community also replaced most of its old banking facilities with new ones. A recent loss was the



The Baker Tower was rehabilitated in 2001

demolition of the large stone St. Francis Academy on Church Street during the 1970s. Another was the loss to fire of the Rand Building at Washington and First Street.

## THE CHALLENGE

For decades, Baker City's downtown was the focal point of the area's commercial and social activity, the backbone of the marketplace where most of the goods and services people needed could be found. Downtown merchants prospered from the patronage — not only from local residents, but also from travelers of the region's major east-west highway, U.S. 30, which was routed through the downtown.

The completion of Interstate 84, in 1973, while decreasing truck traffic through the downtown corridor, also decreased the number of potential customers (travelers & vacationers) prior to the opening of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in 1992 and the marketing efforts of Historic Baker City, Inc. The advantages of interstate access to other cities such as Boise and LaGrande gave opportunity to local shoppers to leave town to do their shopping and created more of

a demand for better customer service and thoughtful selections from the remaining and potential retailers in the downtown area. While much of the historic façade of Main Street was covered by unsympathetic “updating” and remodeling, the programs and grants available through HBC have offered incentives and information resulting in over 80 historic restorations in the historic district alone. Pass-through funds were made available through grants from Meyer Memorial Trust, Ford Family Foundation, Leo Adler Community Fund, and USFS Old Growth Timber Initiative. The efforts of downtown property owners to reclaim their history and sense of place had a rippling effect on many of the adjoining neighborhoods and the historic preservation and restoration projects now extend in all directions of the downtown corridor in both residential and commercial districts alike.

Since the creation of HBC and the hiring of a full-time director in 1993, the number and variety of retailers has grown considerably. While no single department store has filled that existing gap, there are small clothing, sporting and dry goods retailers in addition to the newly constructed Bi-Mart in the Campbell Street corridor to greater satisfy the needs of local shoppers and traveling visitors alike.

The ongoing concerns of downtown parking and pedestrian safety and accessibility are being addressed in a number of ways. Currently the focus is on education and awareness. Although employee parking is still one of the main contributing factors to the perceived lack of parking, no specific areas have been identified to alleviate on-street parking. Minimal striping and signage due to the city public works budget constraints and limited enforcement of overtime parking violations further complicate the situation.

Restricted pedestrian movement in the downtown results from having to cross heavily traveled streets and/or from long walking distances encountered when crossing streets such as the 100-foot wide Main Street and Broadway Street. Efforts to create better awareness of pedestrian and cyclist safety issues and greater enforcement of the speed limit in the downtown have created somewhat safer conditions although the need

for enforcement is ongoing. The walking surfaces of many of the downtown sidewalks are in poor condition. No public restroom is available downtown. Truck traffic passing through the downtown creates excessive noise for the pedestrian and limits the viability of sidewalk seating for downtown eateries in addition to contradicting the design principal of unity required for a strong shopping environment.

**TABLE 1:  
BAKER CITY  
POPULATION  
1880 TO 2000**

Year	Population
1880	1,258
1890	2,604
1900	6,663
1910	6,742
1920	7,729
1930	7,858
1940	9,342
1950	9,471
1960	9,986
1970	9,354
1980	9,470
1990	9,140
2000	9,880

HBC grant writing efforts and generous funding from grantees such as the Leo Adler Community Fund, the Collins Foundation, Old Growth Diversification Fund, Pioneer Bank, and Cycle Oregon provided over \$48,000 for streetscape improvements. These improvements include the installation of benches, planters, banners, trash receptacles, trees, and bicycle racks on both Main Street and Broadway Street. Volunteer teams assembled and installed all of the various items creating a greater sense of pride and ownership in the heart of

downtown by residents, property, and business owners. There is no current organized system of watering and efforts to keep planters and trees healthy have been undertaken largely by business owners themselves. There have been no funds available to pursue the Resort Street Improvement Plan; overhead power lines and trash receptacles are still part of what gives Resort Street an alley image.

New and revitalized businesses along Main Street have helped keep the sidewalks and gutters clean, providing a more inviting feel for all users. Side streets are plagued with poor sidewalks and many are unsightly and in disrepair near vacant buildings. Although no bike lanes have been created along Main Street and current signage restricts riding on the sidewalks, more cyclists are using the Main Street corridor for touring and commuting. Other visual improvements to Main Street are due in part to the City’s Design Review

Commission, which inspects and approves all plans for changes to storefronts and signage in the historic district. The Design Review Commission also awards Big Deal Grant funding to help offset the costs of these improvements.

Commercial expansion along Campbell Street, which serves as the main connector from Main Street to Interstate 84, has been perceived as a threat to the economic health of businesses in the downtown. There is a sense of partnership growing between all area retailers due to the joint efforts of HBC and the Chamber of Commerce. The current focus is on creating smarter, stronger retailers in order to keep the downtown shopping district healthy while development continues in outlying districts. Future seminars and cooperative marketing efforts will continue to support that goal. The relocation of downtown's only full service grocer to the Campbell Street corridor re-emphasizes our need to address some type of public transportation in addition to maintaining and building more effective and safer pedestrian, cyclist, and handicapped accessibility.

## **REVITALIZATION POTENTIAL**

Downtown Baker City is in a most advantageous position, having a relatively compact city center which functions well commercially and possessing a strong identity through its numerous historic buildings. Access to the downtown from the surrounding city and Interstate 84 is excellent. Wide streets plotted on a grid system allow for smooth traffic movement, wide sidewalks, and on-street parking. Some of the strengths of the downtown include a large variety of retail establishments and services, numerous financial institutions and a governmental center.

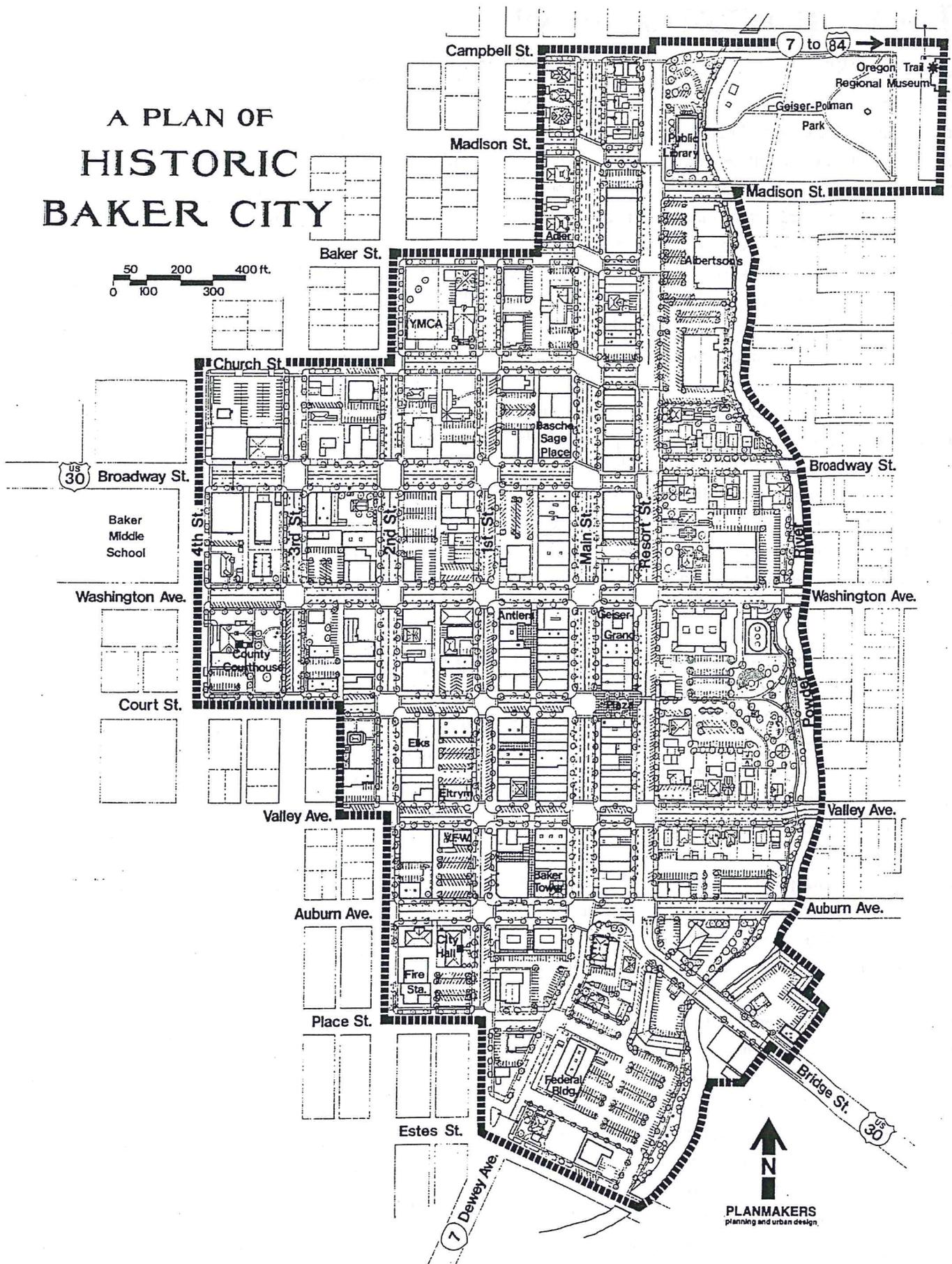
The downtown is fortunate to consist of primarily all commercial land uses with surrounding residential use and no industrial uses. Special amenities include the Powder River which flows to the east of the downtown, and the nearby Geiser-Pollman Park, Oregon Train Regional Museum and Baker County Fairgrounds. The downtown is also relatively close and easily accessible to travelers on Interstate 84 via Campbell Street and Highway 30.

The city and county adopted revitalization of downtown in 1987 as a fundamental part of the region's economic development plan. While the nation has been flourishing and Baker County's economy has struggled, downtown Baker City has not only managed to remain consistent, but also it managed to grow within these conditions. Key milestones include Main Street sidewalk and streetscape improvements in the 1980s, the opening of the National Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in 1992, and the re-opening of the Geiser Grand Hotel in 1998.

Baker City's major asset is its strong history and architectural character. Baker City is a unique place, unlike any other. With its skyline dotted with impressive towers and spires and its snow-capped mountain setting, Baker City has been described as looking like a European village. Distinctive large structures like the City Hall, County Courthouse, Geiser Grand Hotel, Baker Tower, and the Catholic Cathedral serve as landmarks and tend to draw people to the downtown, where they find streets lined with architecturally significant facades. Many buildings are constructed of stone. Baker City's numerous restored historic buildings provide a strong continuity, quality, and identity, which sets the stage for an attractive city center. Other attributes include Baker City's friendly atmosphere, the qualities of small town living, the surrounding, picturesque mountains, and convenient access to eastern Oregon's many recreational areas and scenic loops.

What factors elevate a city above the commonplace? One is a sense of scale; people want to feel that they fit — not as passengers or particles in a mass — but in an individual human dimension. Exceptional places are always walkable. Baker City is already pedestrian friendly. It can improve its river connections and expand the Leo Adler Pathway. Likewise, additional streetscape and pedestrian areas can be developed. Expanded parking and management will create a stronger community center. Additional marketing, more small shops, better signs, and upper floor housing and offices are to be encouraged. New fiber optics connections will support business and technology. The expansion of downtown arts facilities and programming will further strengthen the downtown into a viable and appealing shopping, residential, cultural, and entertainment area.

# A PLAN OF HISTORIC BAKER CITY



**PLANMAKERS**  
planning and urban design

# THE REVITALIZATION PLAN

## LAND USE

Baker City's city center has excellent opportunities for improvement and growth, beginning with encouraging the expansion of retail, office, and residential uses. Sound planning and development decisions will be required for the downtown to maintain its unique character and to improve and expand in an orderly manner. No land use changes are recommended for the commercially zoned study area, but special design criteria are needed to insure protection of Baker's historic structures and guide compatible new developments. Those properties within the Baker Historic District require design guidelines which will assure that construction activity be in keeping with the character of the historic environment. The Baker City Design Review Commission will utilize design guidelines to maintain the architectural integrity of the historic district and work to protect, preserve, and enhance those qualities which make downtown Baker City a special place.

Future development guidelines are also recommended for the area between Resort Street and the Powder River. These land parcels represent a valuable resource for the city's future development. Small, piecemeal development, which would prevent future large-scale developments such as a convention facility or hotel in the downtown, should be discouraged.

Another important planning recommendation is to protect and enhance residential areas adjacent to the downtown, preventing encroachment into these strong residential neighborhoods. Utilizing upper floors of existing buildings for residential housing and constructing new higher-density housing on the periphery of the downtown should be encouraged.

Planning policies supporting downtown revitalization are required to achieve lasting city center success. Most important is that downtown Baker City be maintained as the commercial, social, and civic center of Baker County. To achieve this goal, the city and county must continue working together in making decisions and supporting policies which affect the downtown. The business district requires compactness and centrality so

that a strong economic environment can be maintained. It is recognized that the growth of additional retailing centers outside the downtown area could have an adverse impact on downtown revitalization. Policy should encourage such centers only when they would not have an adverse impact on the interests of the existing economic community, especially the downtown.

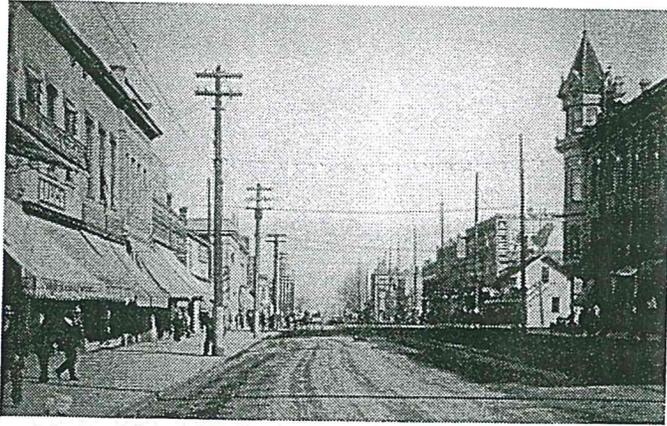
Attention is also called for in requiring adequate landscaping and quality signing for new development within the study area, and particularly on the main entrances serving the city.

Special tourist commercial zones serving Interstate 84 would complement the downtown by providing commercial activities necessary to traveling motorists. A strong downtown also needs a healthy and diverse economic base to draw from. Therefore, it is recommended that the city strive toward gradual growth and diversity through ongoing industrial and technology development.

## TRANSPORTATION

Generally, the city and downtown are well served by Baker City's transportation system. The downtown is favored by wide rights-of-way such as the 100-foot arterials on Main and Broadway streets. Another major asset for Baker City is that state and interstate highways advantageously serve the downtown. The downtown is relatively close and easily accessible to travelers on Interstate 84 via Campbell Street and Highway 30 and benefits from its central position to Baker City's residential neighborhoods.

Downtown traffic circulation can be further upgraded through the development of a safer and more functional system of streets and sidewalks. First priority should be given to designating a truck route that allows truck traffic to bypass the downtown business area. Other improvements call for the continued repair of downtown streets and improved regulatory and information signing. Those areas with heavy turning movements should be monitored; where necessary, turning lanes and/or signals should be installed to ease traffic congestion.



Early photo of Main Street

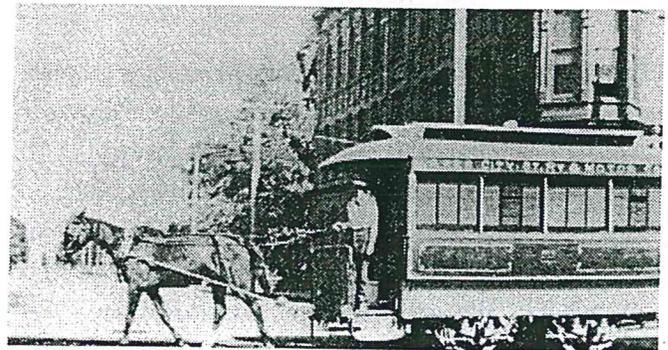
Main and Broadway streets are designated as the major arterials carrying traffic into and through the downtown. Minor arterials supporting the downtown include Resort, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Auburn and Washington streets. Special design considerations are called for on Washington and 4<sup>th</sup> streets due to the locations of Baker City Middle, Brooklyn and South Baker City schools and adjacent neighborhoods. Such design should insure safe movements for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicular traffic. Good design and signing will also minimize safety problems on portions of Resort, 1<sup>st</sup>, Valley and Court streets, where angle parking is recommended. Court Avenue, between Main and Resort streets, is also closed to traffic for a new park and special events area.

A critical component of the downtown is designing walkable, safe, and attractive areas. Emphasis is given to making the downtown pedestrian-friendly with full-width crosswalks, wide sidewalks, street plantings, street lights, information signs, benches, expanded streetscape areas, and connections to the Powder River. New sidewalk designs at a number of downtown intersections call for expanded curb lines, are designed to improve pedestrian circulation and safety, and facilitate traffic turning movements. Unique amenities, such as interpretive signs or public art, that are conducive to pedestrian activity are encouraged.

A bikepath proposed for the west side of the Powder River, the Leo Aldler Pathway, will encourage north-south bike and pedestrian movement. Two proposed six-foot bike lanes, striped for bike traffic on Washington Street, will connect Baker City Middle and Brooklyn schools and provide an east-west flow.

Although the automobile will continue to be the prime mode of transportation in Baker City, travel by bus and air continue to grow and efforts are underway to re-establish Amtrak. Improvements to all transportation systems are encouraged. The train depot has been rehabilitated and continued improvements are recommended to upgrade the visual character of the area and of Broadway Avenue entering the downtown. This is especially important in attracting visitors and creating a good first impression of the city. Likewise, an improved Greyhound bus terminal is needed, as is the continued support of the City-County Senior Citizen's Bus. The Baker City Municipal Airport, three miles north of the city, also requires enlarging and improvement so that it can expand its air service.

One of the future opportunities for Baker City is to refine its role as a transportation center by developing a terminal facility which would link all transportation systems together. From this facility, easy access could be gained to the airport, train, bus service, taxi, etc. The facility would enhance tourism and business travel, and be designed to welcome newcomers and promote visitor activities in Baker City. A preliminary concept of the Oregon Trail Travel Station is located on the triangular parcel between Bridge and Auburn streets and the Powder River.



Early streetcar

Presently, a major addition is needed to get visitors to and from the downtown when staying at hotel or motel accommodations located along Campbell Street near I-84. It is recommended that a uniquely styled bus or trolley be purchased, making these two areas easily accessible to the traveling public. Such a vehicle would

play an important role in meeting in-bound and out-bound trains, buses, and planes and could be financed jointly through public and private resources, with a major share being funded by hotel operators. The Baker City Street Railway and Motor Company once operated a horse-drawn streetcar from the downtown to the railroad depot.

Another transportation component to be addressed is the need for a bed and breakfast hostel to accommodate bicycle users who patronize the Bikecentennial 76 route going through Oregon. This bike route utilizes Highways 7 and 86 through downtown Baker City.

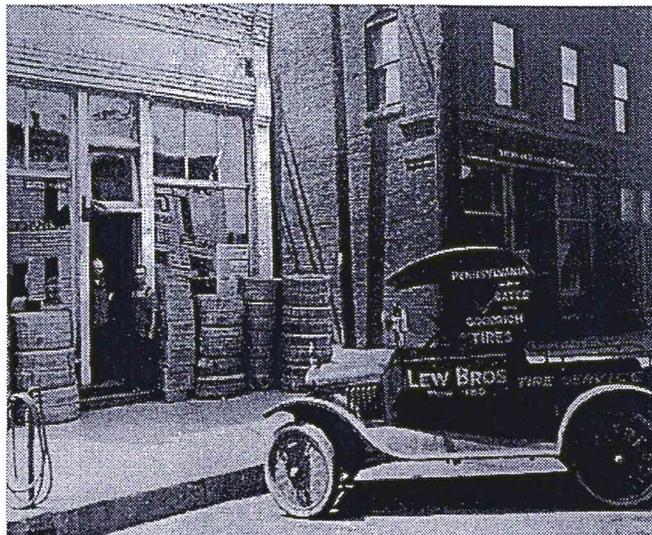
## PARKING RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for all city center uses to compete effectively, improved parking management by the city, HBC, merchants and property owners will be required. This calls for good signing and striping, enforcement, employee parking spaces, additional new facilities, and the redesign and improved utilization of many existing parking areas. These measures will provide an adequate supply of parking spaces to serve the downtown.

Currently, 2,189 parking spaces are within the project boundary. Under the proposed downtown plan, the parking spaces would increase to 2,681, an addition of 492 spaces, a 22 percent increase.

The greatest opportunity for additional parking in areas where it is most in demand, comes from the redesign of on-street parallel parking to angle parking on 1<sup>st</sup>, Resort, Court, Valley and Main streets. This public parking resource will provide the city with an additional 187 spaces, almost double that which currently exists on those blocks. The redesign of the spaces will also increase the visibility of available parking, further strengthening downtown capabilities.

A number of opportunities also exist to expand and improve off-street parking facilities, including new parking areas on the vacant land between Resort Street and the Powder River. One important aspect of the parking system is establishing outlying parking areas to provide downtown employees with a place to park, thus freeing central parking spaces for needed short-term use by shoppers and office users.



Former angle parking in front of Lew Bros. on Washington Street

Other elements of a parking management program include striping on street spaces, improved signing to indicate where parking is located and an ongoing enforcement of parking regulations by the City of Baker. Parking management is an ongoing need, with parking solutions being continually fine-tuned to best serve and promote the downtown.

TABLE 2	PROPOSED PARKING TOTALS		
	Existing	Proposed	Additional Spaces
On-Street Spaces	1,121	1,308	187
Off-Street Spaces	1,068	1,373	305
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,189</b>	<b>2,681</b>	<b>492</b>

The following parking details are recommended:

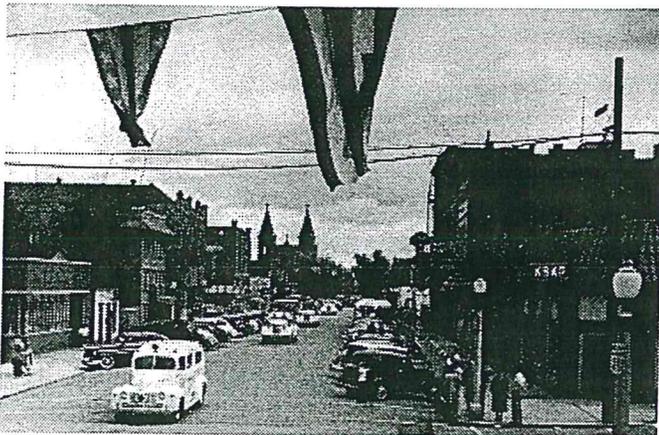
### Parking Information and Uniform Parking Time:

Periodic parking information is required to educate the public as to where parking is located and to regulations relating to time zone parking. Promoting the availability of close-in and convenient downtown parking should be an ongoing activity by the downtown merchants and HBC. Another important feature necessary to increase usage of lots is better directional signs. These signs should be placed at key points, specifying where parking is located. Also, parking signs should show a unified downtown parking signage system.

To provide a uniform on-street parking program, all curb areas within the city center should be signed and enforced for a two-hour maximum time limit. Shorter time zone hours may be set in some prime locations where quick turnover is required. With adequate enforcement and discouraged employee parking, the two-hour time zones would provide adequate turnover as well as free and convenient parking for the downtown user and shopper.

**Employee Parking Policy:** An employee parking policy should be facilitated by HBC and the City of Baker City to encourage employees to park outside of the prime shopping district. Shoppers would have maximum access to close-in short-term spaces while employees would use more distant long-term parking spaces. Such a program requires ongoing monitoring by employers and financial contributions by merchants, employers and the city. The funds would be used to lease or purchase and improve nearby long-term parking spaces. An outlying employee-parking reservoir is recommended:

**Calvary Baptist Church:** The church parking lot at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Church is available for employee parking during weekdays.

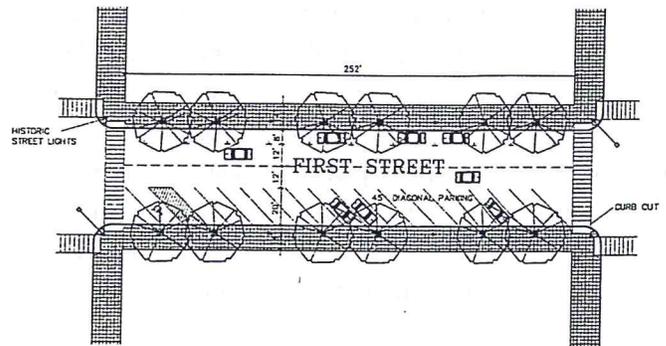


1st Street — notice angle parking and single-globe street lights

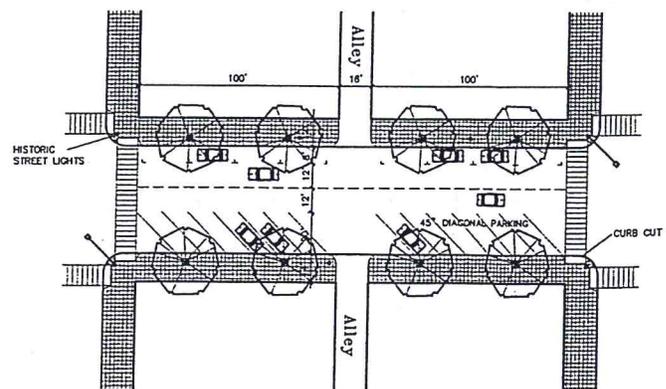
**On-Street Angle Parking:** A number of on-street spaces should be redesigned from parallel parking to angle parking. Re-striping on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in front of the County Courthouse recently provided 22 spaces, nearly double the former alignment. Depending on the width

of the street, either a 60-degree or 45-degree angle is recommended. The first stall is striped as a handicapped space and the last stall a compact space. Re-striping of all downtown on-street parking stalls is recommended. Striping modifications can be tried on a trial basis to monitor success. Angle parking also has the added benefit of slowing traffic. Increased angle parking is proposed for the following streets:

Resort Street would maintain angle parking on the east side. The 85-foot right-of-way will allow 60-degree angle parking. Parallel parking and delivery spaces would be maintained opposite the angled spaces. Approximately 22 spaces per block would be provided.

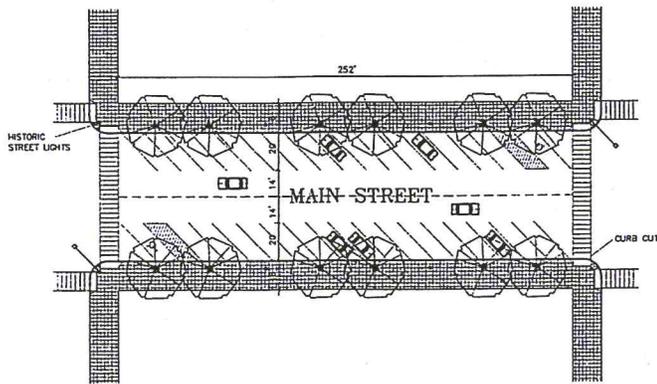


1<sup>st</sup> Street would change from parallel to angle parking on the east side of the street. This design allows for an excellent parking relationship with the central business area and minimizes pedestrian/vehicle conflicts. As illustrated, at a 45-degree angle, 16 spaces per block would be provided. Parallel parking currently provides 10 spaces per block. This public parking resource for six blocks will provide the city with an additional 36 spaces.



Valley Avenue, from Resort to the alley between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, would have angle parking on the north side.

Court Street, from Main to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, would be designed for angle parking on the south side.



Main Street with its 100-foot right-of-way has the capacity to allow angle parking on both sides of the street along with two lanes of traffic. As illustrated, 45-degree angle parking will allow 16 spaces per side. An added benefit of angle parking is slowing traffic on Main Street. Converting six blocks to angle public parking will provide the city with an additional 72 spaces. This future phase would provide additional parking, but is dependent on developing a truck route around the city center and the demand from upper floor use.

**Off-Street Parking:** A number of opportunities exist to develop off-street parking on vacant or underutilized space within the study area. Also, several existing lots require redesign, paving, striping, and signing so that they can be fully utilized and better serve the downtown.

**Former Rand Building site:** Referred to as the hole in the ground, this site at 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Washington would accommodate 22 spaces. The city or HBC should purchase this lot for parking.

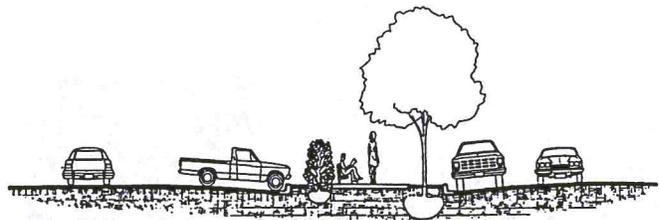
**Leo Adler Parkway:** Two vacant areas off of Resort Street between Broadway and Washington streets would be redesigned for parking space as part of the Leo Adler Parkway, with approximately 81 parking and two RV spaces to serve the downtown. See Leo Adler Parkway concept plan.

**Small Lot Development:** Property owners are encouraged to expand parking spaces by adding or improving parking on or near their business. Examples of proposed new parking areas include the northeast corner of Resort Street and Valley Avenue; an alley lot facing Resort Street between Auburn and Valley avenues; and a new parking area behind the former KBDR Radio building.

**Parking Policy and Management:** Though off-street parking is not required for new development or rehabilitation within the central commercial zone, all major new projects should be encouraged to integrate parking into the development.

Parking stall size should be modified, allowing twenty-five percent of the spaces for small seven- and one-half-foot by fifteen-foot spaces to accommodate small cars. All public parking should be periodically striped. A parking enforcement system must be established and maintained for control. Those living downtown would purchase a residential parking sticker allowing extended parking in the downtown.

**Bicycle Parking:** Continue installing secure bicycle racks in accessible, high visibility areas. An improved design will encourage use.



Screen off-street parking with landscaping

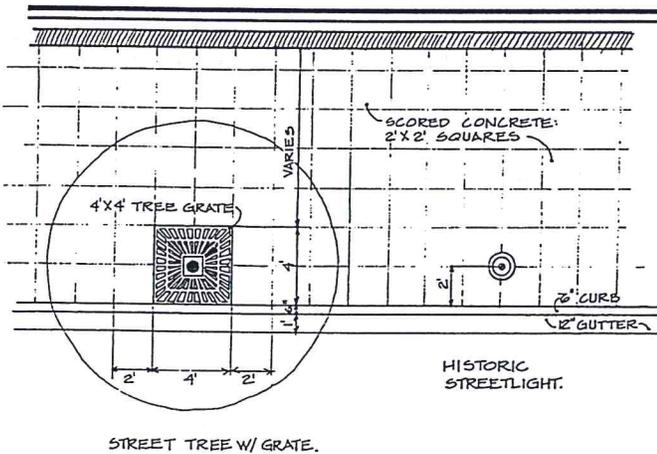
**Parking Lot Improvements and Landscaping:** Downtown off-street parking lots should be paved, signed, striped and landscaped. To create an attractive shopping environment it is important that the parking lots be well screened from view by landscaping. A five-foot landscaping setback from property lines should be established for all downtown parking lots. The figure illustrates the type of vegetation and/or fences and walls that should screen off-street parking lots.

# STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

## SIDEWALKS

Baker City's central retailing area requires more pedestrian appeal. An attractive city center streetscape improvement program assures the downtown its place as the prime commercial destination and helps to induce shopper traffic. Main Street sidewalks were handsomely rebuilt in 1986 with scored concrete, street lights and trees. But many of the side street sidewalks present a difficult walking surface because they are worn and broken. Resort, 1<sup>st</sup>, and all east-west streets lack interest due to a shortage of street trees, greenery, or pedestrian-oriented lighting.

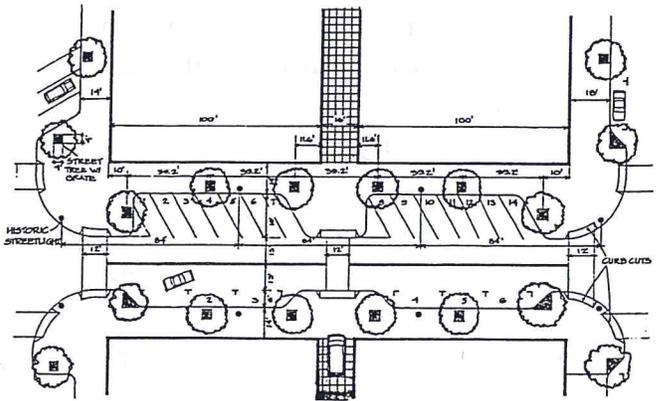
The sidewalk area, or streetscape, can be improved to play a major role in the downtown's revitalization. An overall singular identity can be established by utilizing consistent paving materials, streetlights, and trees. Such a streetscape improvement would enhance the shopping and entertainment atmosphere by providing a comfortable environment and a unifying design theme throughout the downtown. As has been proved repeatedly by successful shopping centers, presentation of an attractive image is simply good business.



Sidewalk detail

New sidewalk construction throughout most of the downtown is recommended to insure good pedestrian movement, improve walking safety, and provide an attractive entrance to businesses. Dimensionally, the typical 250-foot by 216-foot blocks are served with sidewalks varying from eleven to twenty feet in width. Main Street, for example, has two sixteen-foot wide sidewalks with most of the downtown's sidewalks averaging fifteen feet in width. All streetscape improvements will follow the City of Baker City's Standard Specification & Drawings for Public Works Construction.

The texture of the shopping floor is an essential visual element of the city center. Attractive paving materials should be used throughout the city center to guide the movement of pedestrians as well as to please the eye. Due to durability and cost considerations, it is recommended that scored concrete sidewalks continue to be constructed. All sidewalks would be scored with two-by-two-foot square patterns. This sidewalk standard will guarantee a uniformity of materials and finish. Utility improvements should coincide with the excavation of old sidewalks when access is available so a cost saving can be realized.

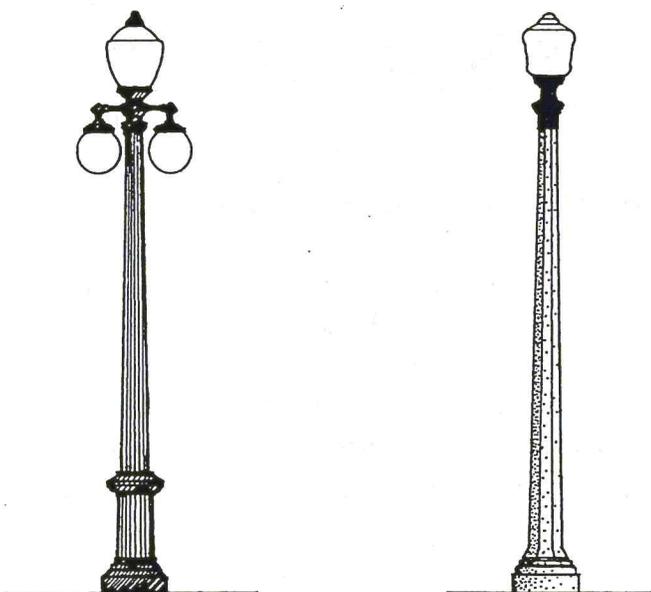


**Expanded Intersection Corners:** A number of the downtown's intersections are redesigned in this plan to shorten the pedestrian's street-crossing distance and better unify the shopping district. This is accomplished by expanding the curb line into the street or bulbing the corners. The design improves sight distance between the driver and the pedestrian entering the crosswalk and is beneficial in encouraging traffic to slow down.

Expanded intersection corners are proposed for Main Street at Madison, Washington, and Auburn avenues. The bulbed corners make it easier for pedestrians to cross the 100-foot right-of-way as well as slow traffic on Main Street. Other expanded intersections are proposed on portions of Resort and 1<sup>st</sup> streets. The expanded sidewalk area at the corners also offers optional uses such as additional landscaping, seating, bike racks, public art, and other street furniture. Overall, these strategically located intersections will tie the downtown shopping area together and reduce the conflicts generated by mixing vehicles and pedestrians.

### LIGHTING

Good lighting will allow the downtown to be fully used at night, provide security, and enhance the city. Two types of lighting would differentiate downtown use. The first would be the use of ornamental light standards along the sidewalks. As illustrated, two types of ornamental light standards are recommended. The three-globed light which once graced Main Street would be utilized in special areas such as the proposed Court Street Plaza. The single-globed concrete standard lights, which currently light Main Street and the Baker City Courthouse site, would be used on all streets in the downtown. The city has the original mold, which can be used to manufacture the standards needed in the downtown. These 14- to 15-foot high lights would contain energy-efficient power units and a non-breakable globe.



Street lights

Such accent lighting would provide a warmth of light and personalized atmosphere needed for the downtown. The pole and base of the light standard are attractive during the day and add another dimension to the street scene. Like street trees, unique lighting will provide a unifying environment for the business district.

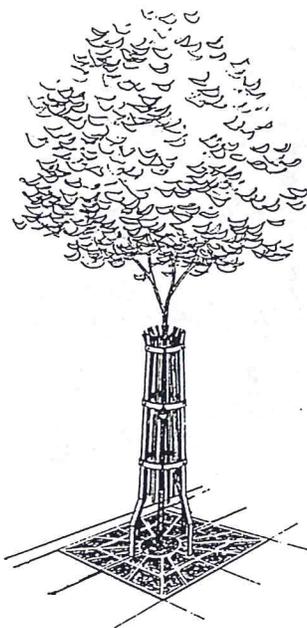
Other lighting would be contemporary overhead lighting to provide for the safe movement of traffic. These new lighting poles, some accompanied by traffic signals, would be located at major intersections. These poles would be of a dark color and unobtrusive in design. As an alternative to the contemporary poles, Valley Iron and Steel Company in Eugene manufactures poles and traffic controls which would enhance Baker City's historic theme.

### TREES

One of the major voids in the downtown has been the lack of greenery and trees. Trees, more than any other single element, enhance livability and provide a comfortable environment. Trees help soften the harsh effects of the summer sun and give visitors a more favorable impression of Baker City.

Street trees are a major component of the business area improvement program. Trees are to be incorporated within all public rights-of-way, excluding alleys, in order to add a much needed natural amenity to the streets and to provide a continuous and changing element which helps link the downtown together as an identifiable place.

Trees in the downtown will have to fit the growing site. The plan generally calls for a small to medium size species with good upright growth to fit narrow areas and for trees that are relatively maintenance free. Additionally, the new trees will have to withstand the downtown environment of traffic pollution, reflected heat from cars, and a limited water supply; and they must be pest resistant and long-lived. Another problem is vandalism and the killing effects of too much build-up of salt used for winter snow removal.



Tree, grate and guard

As illustrated, trees would flourish along Resort, Main, 1<sup>st</sup>, and all cross streets. Trees are set approximately 40-foot-on-center along sidewalk areas. An irrigation system is essential for the survival and low maintenance of the trees. For more detailed information about tree choice consult the City of Baker City Selection Guide for Street Tree Planting.

For the downtown area it is recommended that a variety

of species be utilized. These include:

**Ornamental:** Flowering Crab  
Flowering Plum  
Flowering Cherry  
Flowering Pear  
Flowering Apple

**Shade:** Sunset Locust  
Green or European Mountain Ash  
Little-Leaf Linden

All trees should have a minimum trunk size of three inches when planted to ensure visual impact and durability. A four-foot square tree grate is recommended for both protection and esthetic value. For areas of high vandalism, tree guards should be employed to protect the trees; otherwise trees should be well staked.

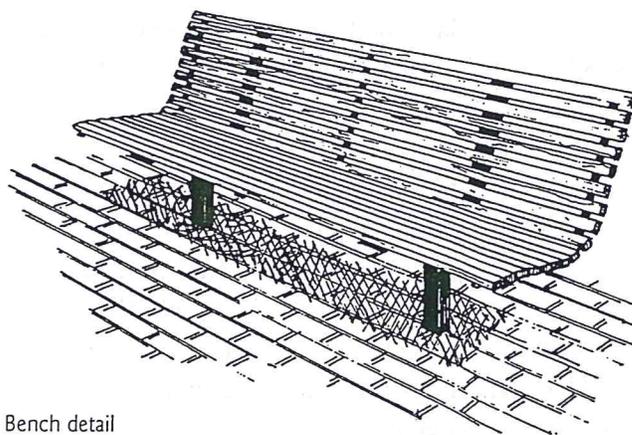
## PLANTINGS

In addition to trees, areas adjacent to parking lots require screening. Evergreen hedges would serve well to minimize parking areas. A minimum five-foot landscaped setback for all downtown parking areas is recommended. Other plants are encouraged at intersection areas with expanded corners, parks, and private landscaping.

## STREET FURNITURE

A number of street furniture elements should be strategically located in the downtown. HBC has developed a Streetscape Improvement Program to purchase and install trash cans, banners, bike racks, and street benches in the downtown.

The following are suggested for inclusion:



Bench detail

**Street Benches:** Seating for pedestrians invites visitors to linger longer. They are located in such a way as to facilitate conversation and pedestrian viewing. Benches installed on Main Street should be realigned to face the sidewalk. Examples include cast iron benches with wood slats, six feet long and bolted in place. Cost approximately \$550. Source: Blake Industries, P.O. Box 155, Abington, MA 02351 or 617-337-8772.

**Bicycle Parking:** Bike racks are located in accessible high activity areas of the downtown. A new bike rack design is recommended as current bike racks are not well used.

**Kiosks:** A few information kiosks accent the business district and serve as a mirror of current events. A number of historic markers would also complement the downtown.

**Trash Receptacles:** Unimposing small receptacles should be placed throughout the area to aid in litter control. Examples include a round receptacle, free-standing with mahogany slats. 24 gal. and 36 gal. capacity, with black metal tops (VIS-HF24M and VIS-HF324). The cost is \$463 and \$545 respectively. Source: Upbeat, Inc. 4350 Duncan Ave., St. Louis, MO 63110 or 800-325-3047.

**Banner Wires:** A few overhead wires or poles for banners, flags, or promotions will assist special city events.

**Drinking Fountains:** A number of outdoor fountains should be encouraged in order to serve the pedestrian environment.

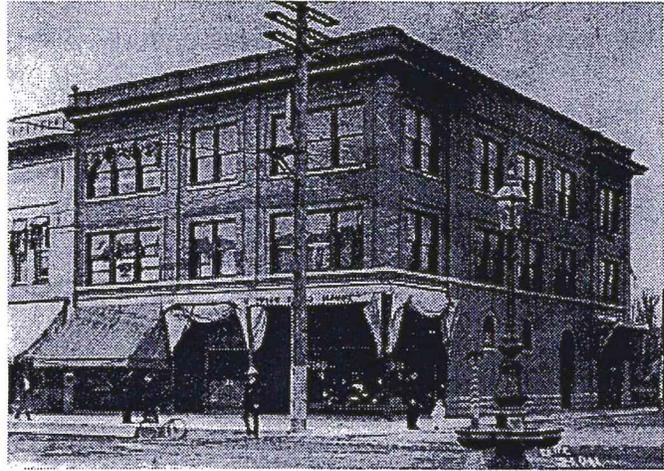
**Awnings:** Fabric awnings that provide color and function are recommended for business storefronts. Awnings reduce glare and help serve as energy savers by controlling the amount of sunlight penetrating the storefront. Building orientation determines awning needs. Building fronts with northern exposures seldom require awnings. However, for those storefronts which need awnings, soft weather-treated canvas or vinyl materials which allow for flexible or fixed installations are recommended. Fabric colors that are visually compatible with the colors of the building's exterior should be selected. Awnings also present a good location for store signage.

Aluminum awnings or suspended fixed metal canopies should be avoided. If a fixed canopy must remain, it is recommended that an 18-inch ribbon of colorful fabric hang along the edge.

In conclusion, the incorporation of these important pedestrian amenities into the center of Baker City will create a pedestrian environment with great appeal to shoppers and visitors. Such streetscape improvements will help to increase retail patronage, encourage private investment by creating a progressive environment for business actions, and carry over to create a new image for the city.

## **PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

Downtown Baker City is without the benefit of any park within close proximity to the commercial center along Main Street. Though Geiser-Pollman Park is on the edge of the downtown, its location is not close enough to adequately serve downtown shoppers and users. Likewise, Post Office Square is primarily dedicated to commemorate the Oregon Trail. Therefore, it is recommended that additional open space be developed to complement the city center.



Proposed Court Street Plaza fountain that once graced the intersection of Court and Main Streets (see cover)

## **COURT STREET PLAZA**

The best location for a new park is on Court Street between Main and Resort streets. This location is centrally located to the commercial heart of the downtown and involves utilizing a public right-of-way that has minimal traffic function. The public mini-park would be the focal point for downtown events, a place for relaxation and play by downtown users, and an intriguing public place for visitors.

The 80-foot by 132-foot park space should be designed to encourage public use and to educate its visitors about the rich history of Baker City. Potential park elements include a water feature, serving as a replica of the decorative cast-iron water fountain and light that once graced the intersection of Main and Court streets. Another element could include a large carved stone feature representing Baker City's abundance of stone architecture and honoring its skilled stonemason, John H. Jett. A key component would be a presentation area for events. The park would also include trees, seating, and three-globed ornamental light fixtures. An evergreen tree would continue the tradition of a Christmas tree at that location. Adjacent businesses, such as the Front Street Cafe, would be able to set up tables for outdoor dining in the afternoon shade. The park would be accompanied by an interpretive kiosk about the historic district's architecture and city's mining heritage, and the story of "Paint Your Wagon," which was partially filmed at this site in 1968. Information would also be presented on the Sumpter Valley Railroad, the nearby Oregon Trail Regional Museum and current events.

The park would serve as a center for concerts, exhibits, civic events, the Miner's Jubilee, an arts and crafts fair, and a harvest festival. The park's design and central location would create new opportunities for promoting downtown retail sales through many of its events. It would also provide sitting areas, shaded by trees, in which to relax. An appropriate name for the park, possibly John H. Jett, should be chosen. A fund-raising campaign should be held and a detailed design for the park refined by a professional designer. Such a park would greatly enhance the appeal of the downtown and assist in creating a new image for the city, generating a feeling of pride for all of Baker City's citizens.

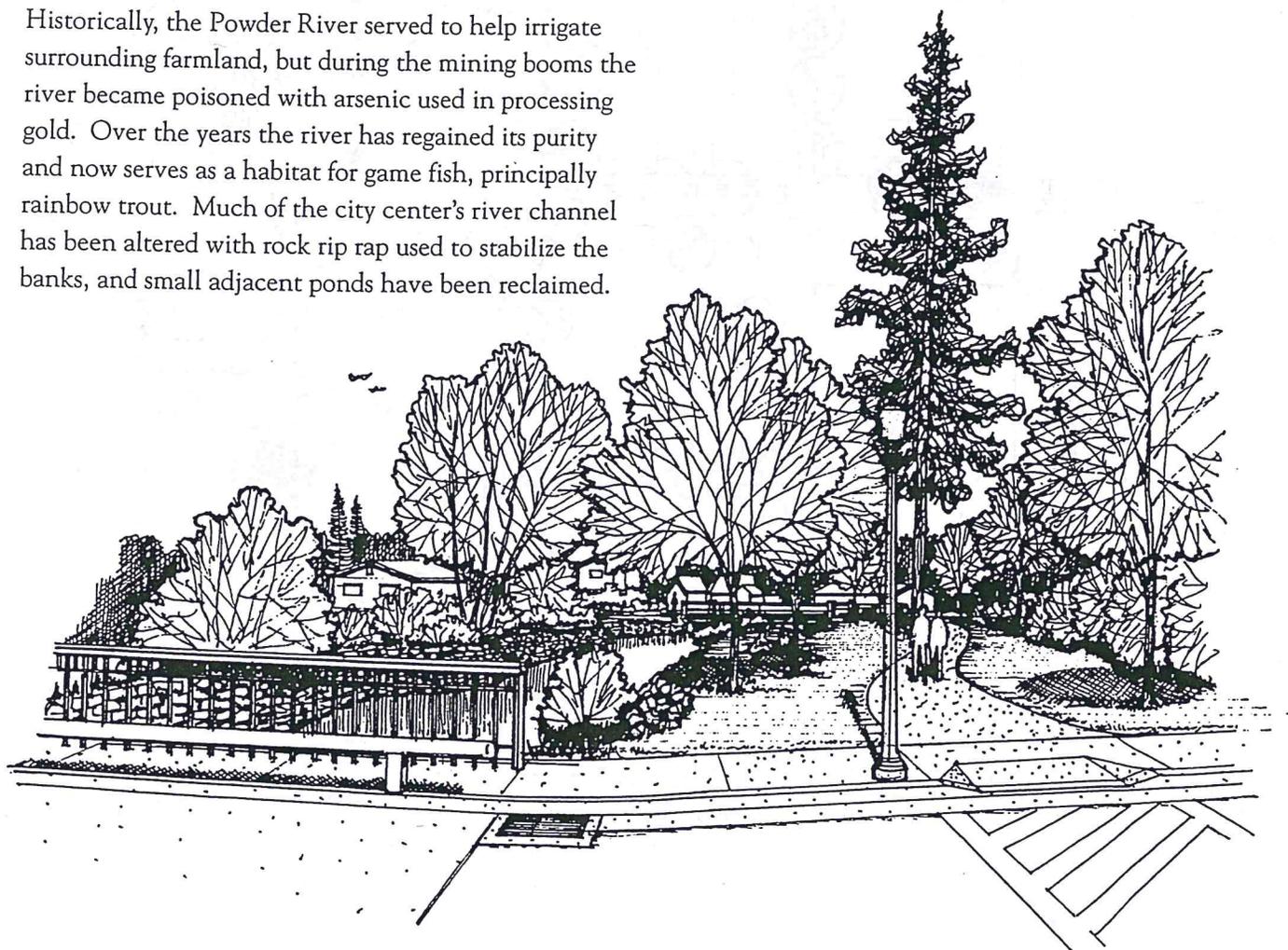
### LEO ADLER PARKWAY

The Powder River provides the downtown with a natural amenity that can contribute significantly to the variety of experiences needed for a stimulating city center. Besides offering relief from the formal character of the downtown, the riverfront invites the visitor to get in touch with the area's natural environment, one of Baker City's finest features.

Historically, the Powder River served to help irrigate surrounding farmland, but during the mining booms the river became poisoned with arsenic used in processing gold. Over the years the river has regained its purity and now serves as a habitat for game fish, principally rainbow trout. Much of the center's river channel has been altered with rock rip rap used to stabilize the banks, and small adjacent ponds have been reclaimed.

The river flows to the north, and its water flow is controlled by Mason Dam. In 1966, the U.S. Geological Survey designated a flood plain along the river. Currently, the Powder River through much of the downtown seems forgotten, with the exception of the Geiser-Pollman Park and the Federal Building with its small grass strip and picnic benches. Its west riverbank lies barren while its east side is abutted by modest homes. Through the assistance of the Leo Adler Community Fund, the City of Baker City is developing a linear parkway along the Powder River. Portions of the parkway path system have been completed and additional segments are being purchased and wait funding.

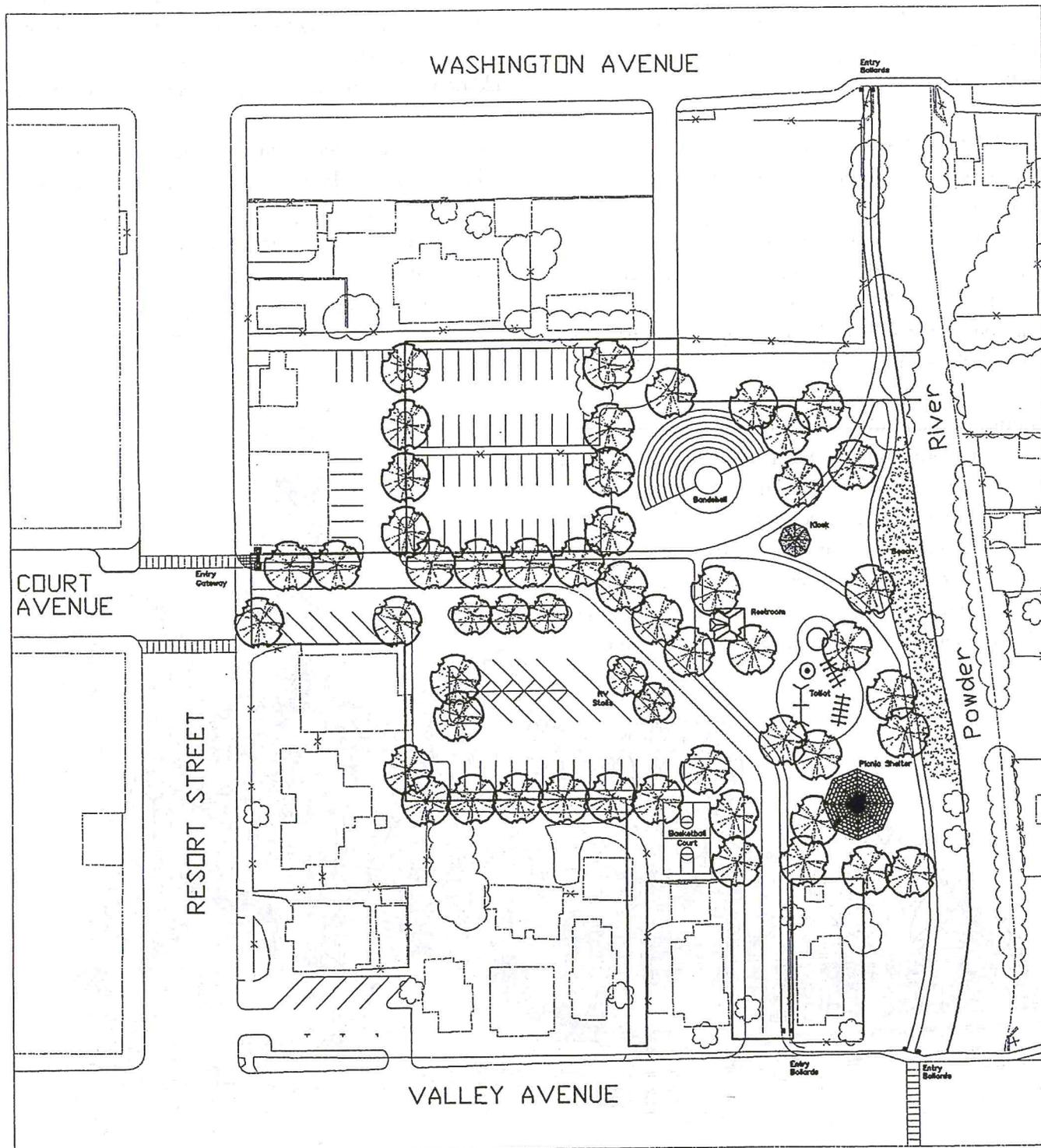
As the Powder River is a major asset to downtown Baker City's revitalization potential, it is recommended that the west riverbank from Estes Street to Campbell Street be developed as a linear pathway. Such a pathway and its natural setting would be a primary stimulus for new development along the river. Currently, the majority of the west river bank is vacant,



Proposed Leo Adler Parkway

which makes the timing ideal for establishing the pathway. The linear pathway would be formed through a variety of methods, including public purchase, private donation, easements, and building setbacks. A 50-foot building setback from the high-water line of the west bank would discourage encroachment on the river and allow for the pathway and adjacent landscaping. Improvements would include a 10-foot wide pedestrian and bicycle pathway with a hard surface, along with

natural low-maintenance landscaping. The pathway would also accommodate maintenance and security vehicles. Difficult access through the narrow riverbank space behind the Albertson's store may require special engineering. An option is to bring the parkway onto the east side of Resort Street between Broadway Avenue and Madison Street. Another option to connect the pathway through this area is to follow existing streets east of the river.



Leo Adler Parkway Concept Plan