



CITY OF OTHELLO PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting 500 E. Main St. December 19, 2022 6:00 PM

For those who would like to attend remotely, see virtual instructions at the end of the agenda

1. Call to Order - Roll Call
2. Public Input
3. Approval of November 21 Minutes p.3
4. Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program – Public Hearing & Recommendation to Council p.6
5. Active Transportation Plan – Review Work in Progress p.30
6. November Building & Planning Department Report p.88
7. Upcoming Meeting Topics
 - a. **January 17:** Active Transportation Plan public hearing, recommend to Council. Economic Development/Local Improvement Districts/Tax Increment Financing. Fence code review. Landscaping code review.
8. Old Business
 - a. Subdivision Update – OMC Title 16 – This should be the next big project for the Commission
 - b. Zoning Update – Home Occupations – OMC 17.59 – We will come back to this as time allows
 - c. Housing/ADUs

Next Regular Meeting is Tuesday, January 17, 2023 at 6:00 PM

Remote Meeting Instructions:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81894213261?pwd=MjMwZ01Ubmdaai8xdlFua0dvd3dMUT09>

Meeting ID: 818 9421 3261

Passcode: 357731

One tap mobile

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City of Othello
Planning Commission
November 21, 2022
Zuleica Morfin

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Dorow called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chair Chris Dorow, Brian Gentry, Alma Carmona, and Daniela Voorhies

Absent: Kevin Gilbert

Staff: Community Development Director Anne Henning, Building and Planning Secretary Zuleica Morfin

Attendees: Sandi Duffey (Adams County Emergency Management). Bob Carlson attended remotely.

This was a hybrid meeting with Zoom available for remote attendees.

MINUTES APPROVAL

October 17, 2022 minutes were discussed. Chair Dorow noted that the second page, last bullet had a typo: "They liked *to* idea" should be "They liked *that* idea". Approved with that correction.

M/S Carmona/ Gentry

SAND HILL ESTATES #5 PRELIMINARY PLAT DEFERRAL/DEVIATION/WAIVER REQUESTS

Palos Verdes LLC has applied for the next phase of the Sand Hill Estates development north of Olympia Street. This phase includes some requests for deviations and deferrals of street and utility standards. OMC 16.40 sets up the process to deviate from standards and defer improvements. Community Development Director Anne Henning explained the four requests:

1. Sewer main offset from centerline, and sewer manholes offset from the center of the street. This request is necessary because it conflicts with the requirement that monuments be set at the centerline of intersections. Staff's determination is that monuments on centerlines are more important than manholes on centerlines.
2. Gravel temporary turnaround at the end of Mt. Si (Mt. Lago) St. The gravel turnaround will be removed and the street continued in a future phase. This is a standard way to address a street continuation. Staff recommends an easement for the turnaround and a covenant for permanent improvements if the street is not continued within 5 years.
3. 60' ROW for Cascade St, 13th Ave, & Mt. Si (Mt. Lago) St. based on Othello recently reducing the requirement for the constructed width of the street, leaving an extra 3' of undeveloped ROW on each side of the street. There is no need for the extra 6' of ROW. When the code is updated, this requirement will be corrected.
4. No sidewalk on east (canal) side of 14th Ave. The developer did not specifically ask for this waiver, but the submitted plans do not show sidewalk on the far side of 14th. This request has been made and granted in earlier phases of the development, based on no sidewalk being needed since there are no lots or other destinations on the east side of the street, only the canal abutting the street.

Engineering and Planning staff are in agreement that the requests are acceptable and recommend approval. Similar requests were approved for previous phases of the development.

Action: Motion to recommend to the Hearing Examiner to approve the deferrals, deviations, and waivers as recommended by staff. M/S Carmona/ Voorhies. Approved 4-0

MULTI-FAMILY TAX EXEMPTION (MFTE) PROGRAM - REVIEW DRAFT ORDINANCE

The City received a grant from the Department of Commerce to work toward implementing the adopted Housing Action Plan. We are using the grant to explore implementing the state's Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program. The Commission reviewed the draft MFTE ordinance prepared by the consultant. The Commissioners asked whether other taxing districts would be affected if Othello decided to adopt this program. Ms. Henning explained that the tax exemption would apply to all property taxes, such as school, hospital, library, EMS, etc. She and the Mayor are working on a letter to the districts, explaining the proposal and inviting them to participate in the process.

There were some specific points in the draft ordinance where the consultant asked for input:

1. 3.40.070 Application Review, sets the process for who formally determines whether applications should be approved. Since an application either meets the criteria or it doesn't, the draft ordinance has staff doing the approval, rather than requiring Council approval for a decision with no discretion involved. The Commission agreed it would be a waste of everyone's time to require a Council approval process when the criteria are so clear.
2. 3.40.050(h) provides an optional clause to discontinue the program after a certain number of units and/or a set time frame. Commissioners agreed they liked having a number of units rather than a sunset date, but were uncertain about the number to set it at. After discussion, they settled on 800 units, but noted that the ordinance could be changed at any time to increase or decrease this number, depending on how the program goes.
3. 3.40.100(5) provides an optional clause to cancel the tax exemption if the property owner fails to submit the required annual certification. The Commission was in favor of this provision.

Sandi Duffey, Adams County Emergency Management Director, questioned whether it was appropriate to encourage multi-family housing in proximity to the industrial areas with their ammonia and worse chemicals. Chair Dorow explained the Commission had this same discussion when evaluating city-wide zoning a few years ago. They acknowledged that the chemicals were a concern, but because of prevailing wind patterns and small size of the city, much of the existing residential area is already within the boundary for potential hazard. They felt Othello is constrained in how it can grow, and housing is greatly needed, so decided multi-family adjacent to existing residential made sense.

Ms. Henning asked the Commissioners if they would be ready to hold a public hearing on the updated ordinance at the next meeting. They agreed the hearing should be at the next meeting.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN - REVIEW 1ST DRAFT

The City's consultants, SCJ Alliance, are continuing to work on Othello's Active Transportation Plan (bicycle/pedestrian/non-motorized transportation) through a planning grant from QuadCo. After last month's review of the draft goals, policies, and framework, SCJ has submitted a first draft of the overall plan for review. The draft plan incorporates the Planning Commission's direction on changes to the goals and policies. After the Commission's review this month, SCJ will revise the draft and provide an updated version in December that can be circulated for public review. This version will be provided to the Commission at the December meeting for any changes before the public hearing version in January.

Chair Dorow brought up the idea of a Burke-Gilman-type trail. If this trail is planned around the edges of town, it would eventually be through town as Othello grows. Commissioners were interested in planning

ahead to make this happen. Possible corridors include 14th Avenue, 1st Avenue, Lee Road, Hwy. 26, north of Wahitis Elementary, and connecting the existing green trails shown on the map. The canals provide land uninterrupted by cross streets but it may be difficult to work with USBR and the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District to be allowed to create official trails. Ms. Henning said she would pass on these thoughts to the consultants to see what they could come up with.

COLUMBIA STREET

Chair Dorow mentioned there is a lot of vacant land between Columbia Street and Hwy 26 that would be good for a grocery store, restaurant, and other development that local residents would like to see. He wondered if there were ways to get developers interested and maybe finish out the street from 1st to 7th Avenue. He thought there should be a committee of interested parties, separate from the Planning Commission and maybe including the Chamber, groups like Rotary, and people from the business community. The Commission was in favor. Commissioner Gentry mentioned that a hotel would generate lodging taxes. Chair Dorow said he would talk to the Mayor about how to proceed. Ms. Henning said she could bring information on Economic Development, Local Improvement Districts, and Tax Increment Financing.

STREET SAFETY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION - TRAFFIC CIRCLE REPORT - INFORMATIONAL

After a long process of trying to find ways to slow traffic, reduce traffic cutting through neighborhoods, and prevent accidents, the Planning Commission made some recommendations to the City Council in the summer of 2021. City Engineering staff installed traffic “circles” in fall 2021 in one neighborhood as a test of the concept. Included in tonight’s packet is the City Engineer’s report to the Council, showing traffic volume and speed, both before the installation and then one year after installation. The 2023 draft budget includes money for traffic calming, with the exact measures to be determined later.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

Commissioner Carmona asked the other Commissioners if they thought it would be a good idea to increase the number of Commissioners to 7. All agreed, both to have more points of view and to avoid having decisions made by just a few people if a couple of Commissioners had to miss a meeting. It is also a way to involve more people in city government. Commissioner Carmona will discuss the idea with the Mayor as the next step.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm. Next regular meeting is Monday, December 19, 2022.

Chris Dorow, Chair

Date: _____

Zuleica Morfin, Building and Planning Secretary

Date: _____

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Anne Henning, Community Development Director

MEETING: December 19, 2022

SUBJECT: Multi-Family Tax Exemption Program—Public Hearing and Recommendation to City Council

Through a grant from the Department of Commerce for work toward implementing the [Housing Action Plan](#), the City hired a consultant to exploring creating a Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program. This program would provide a 12- or 20-year tax exemption for new multi-family development of at least 4 units if a portion were set aside for households below the median income. This program is intended to provide an incentive for building multi-family housing, which there has been very little of for a long time. Adding apartments to Othello's housing stock would provide additional housing options for local residents. The exemption applies only to the multi-family units themselves, not to the underlying land or any associated commercial or community buildings.

The Commission has been reviewing the proposal and draft ordinance. At this time, we have advertised for a public hearing. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Commission may make a recommendation to the City Council.

Staff Comments

1. At previous meetings, the Commission has expressed strong interest in the MFTE program as part of the solution to Othello's housing crisis. The Commission has reviewed the draft ordinance and provided direction, which is reflected in the attached draft.
2. With the consultant's help, staff tried to project the tax implications of the program. It was difficult to find comparable development since there has been so little that is not already tax-exempt. Staff used the Hawks Landing 2-triplex development on 2 lots on Pine & 4th as the model. Based on how that was assessed and projected up to 16 units on 5 lots, the theoretical 16-unit building would be assessed at \$1,066,656. What this would mean for the City and each taxing district is shown on the attached spreadsheet. Note that there are columns for the 12-year total and then for each year separately. For the City, it would be around \$3000/year in foregone taxes for this 16-unit building. That is about \$200/year for each unit (see the second table). It is important to remember this is not a reduction in taxes collected, the taxes just don't grow until the end of the exemption period.

Procedural actions

Action	Date
Planning Commission introduction & discussion	Sept. 19, 2022
Introduced to City Council	Sept. 26, 2022
Planning Commission review of draft ordinance	Nov. 21, 2022
Letter mailed to taxing districts	Dec. 9, 2022
Draft ordinance presented to Council for questions and comments	Dec. 12, 2022
Planning Commission public hearing	Scheduled for Dec. 19, 2022
City Council public hearing	Scheduled for Jan. 9, 2023
DNS issued (SEPA review)	Not required because this is not zoning

Action	Date
	or other development regulation
Submitted draft to Commerce for 60-day review	Not required because this is not considered a development regulation

Attachments

- Draft ordinance creating OMC 3.40 “Multi-Family Tax Exemption Program”
- MFTE Overview
- Spreadsheet showing projected foregone taxes for a 16-unit development

Public Hearing: Notice of a public hearing was published and posted for December 19. The Planning Commission should hold a public hearing and take testimony on the proposed creation of OMC 3.40 “Multi-Family Tax Exemption Program”.

Action: The Planning Commission should discuss the proposed ordinance and make a recommendation to City Council.



City of Othello
Washington
Ordinance No. 15

**AN ORDINANCE CREATING OTHELLO MUNICIPAL CODE
CHAPTER 3.40 ENTITLED “MULTI-FAMILY TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM”**

WHEREAS, Housing supply in Othello is limited, and homeownership is unaffordable for many households; and

WHEREAS, Rental housing costs are rising and restricting options for low- and moderate-income households; and

WHEREAS, There is a lack of housing options available to local households, including families with children and permanent housing for farmworkers, especially for low-income households; and

WHEREAS, The Washington State Legislature, in 2021, provided the first opportunity for Othello to offer the Multi-Family Housing Tax Exemption (MFTE) Program (Chapter 84.14 RCW) within the city; and

WHEREAS, Adoption of this ordinance will help increase and improve residential opportunities, including affordable and multi-family housing opportunities; and

WHEREAS, This ordinance meets all required provisions and procedures set forth in Chapter 84.14 RCW;

NOW, THEREFORE, the City of Othello does Ordain:

Section 1. Creating. Othello Municipal Code Chapter 3.40 entitled “Multi-Family Tax Exemption Program” is created to provide:

**Chapter 3.40
Multi-Family Tax Exemption Program**

Sections:

3.40.010 Purpose
3.40.020 Definitions

3.40.030	Tax exemption
3.40.040	Residential target areas
3.40.050	Project eligibility
3.40.060	Application procedure
3.40.070	Application review
3.40.080	Final certificate
3.40.090	Annual certification
3.40.100	Cancellation of tax exemption
3.40.110	Hearing examiner

3.40.010 Purpose.

Limited exemptions from ad valorem property taxation for multi-family housing in urban centers are intended to:

- (a) Stimulate, with economic incentives, new construction or rehabilitation of existing buildings for multi-family housing in targeted residential areas to increase and improve housing opportunities, including affordable housing; and
- (b) Increase the supply of mixed-income multi-family housing opportunities within the city.

3.40.020 Definitions.

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

- (a) "Affordable housing" means residential housing that is rented by an eligible household whose monthly housing costs, including utilities other than telephone, do not exceed thirty percent (30%) of the household's monthly income. For the purposes of housing intended for owner occupancy, "affordable housing" means residential housing that is within the means of low- or moderate-income households.
- (b) "Director" means the city community development director, or any other office, department, or agency that shall succeed to its functions with respect to this chapter, or their authorized designee.
- (c) "Eligible household" means a household that certifies that their household income does not exceed the applicable percentage of the area median income, adjusted for household size, and who certify that they meet all qualifications for eligibility.
- (d) "Household" means a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together.
- (e) "Low-income household" means a household whose adjusted income is at or below eighty percent (80%) of the area median income adjusted for family size, for Adams County, as reported by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- (f) "MFTE" means multi-family housing property tax exemption.
- (g) "Moderate-income household" means a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is more than eighty percent (80%) but is at or below one hundred fifteen percent (115%) of the area median income adjusted for family size, for Adams County, as reported by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

- (h) “Multi-family housing” means buildings having four (4) or more dwelling units designated for permanent residential occupancy resulting from new construction or rehabilitation or conversion of vacant, underutilized, or substandard buildings.
- (i) “Owner” means the property owner of record as filed with the county assessor’s office.
- (j) “Permanent residential occupancy” means multi-family housing that provides either rental or owner occupancy for a period of at least one (1) month. This excludes hotels and motels that offer rental accommodation on a daily or weekly basis.
- (k) “Permanently affordable homeownership”, for purposes of Section 3.40.030(b), means homeownership that, in addition to meeting the definition of “affordable housing”, is:
 - a. Sponsored by a nonprofit organization or governmental entity, which;
 - i. Executes a new ground lease or deed restriction with a duration of at least 99 years at the initial sale and with each successive sale; and
 - ii. Supports homeowners and enforces the ground lease or deed restriction.
 - b. Subject to a ground lease or deed restriction that includes:
 - i. A resale restriction designed to provide affordability for future low- and moderate-income homebuyers; and
 - ii. A right of first refusal for the sponsor organization to purchase the home at resale; and
 - iii. A requirement that the sponsor must approve any refinancing, including home equity lines of credit.
- (l) “Project” means the multi-family housing or portion of the multi-family housing that is to receive the tax exemption.
- (m) “Qualified non-profit organization” means a non-profit organization or any subsidiary or affiliate of such organization.
- (n) “Residential targeted area” means an area designated by the City as a residential targeted area in accordance with, and within the meaning of, Chapter 84.14 RCW.
- (o) “Support” for homeowners by an organization includes homebuyer education, home maintenance classes, financial education, or similar programs.

3.40.030 Tax exemption.

The value of new multi-family housing construction, conversion, and rehabilitation improvements qualifying under this section is exempt from ad valorem property taxation, as follows:

- (a) **Twelve-Year Exemption.** For twelve (12) successive years beginning January 1st of the year immediately following the calendar year of issuance of the final certificate of tax exemption if the property otherwise qualifies for the exemption and meets the conditions in this subsection. For the property to qualify for the twelve-year exemption under this subsection:
 - (1) The applicant must commit to renting at least twenty percent (20%) of the multi-family housing units as affordable housing units to eligible low- and moderate-income households, and the property must satisfy that commitment; or
 - (2) The applicant must commit to selling at least twenty percent (20%) of the multi-family housing units as affordable housing units exclusively for owner occupancy to eligible low- or moderate-income households, and the property must satisfy that commitment.

Affordable units intended for owner occupancy must be sold by the applicant with a covenant running with the land that prevents the use of the property as a rental unit and includes a resale restriction designed to maintain affordability for future low- or moderate-income homebuyers until the expiration of the exemption.

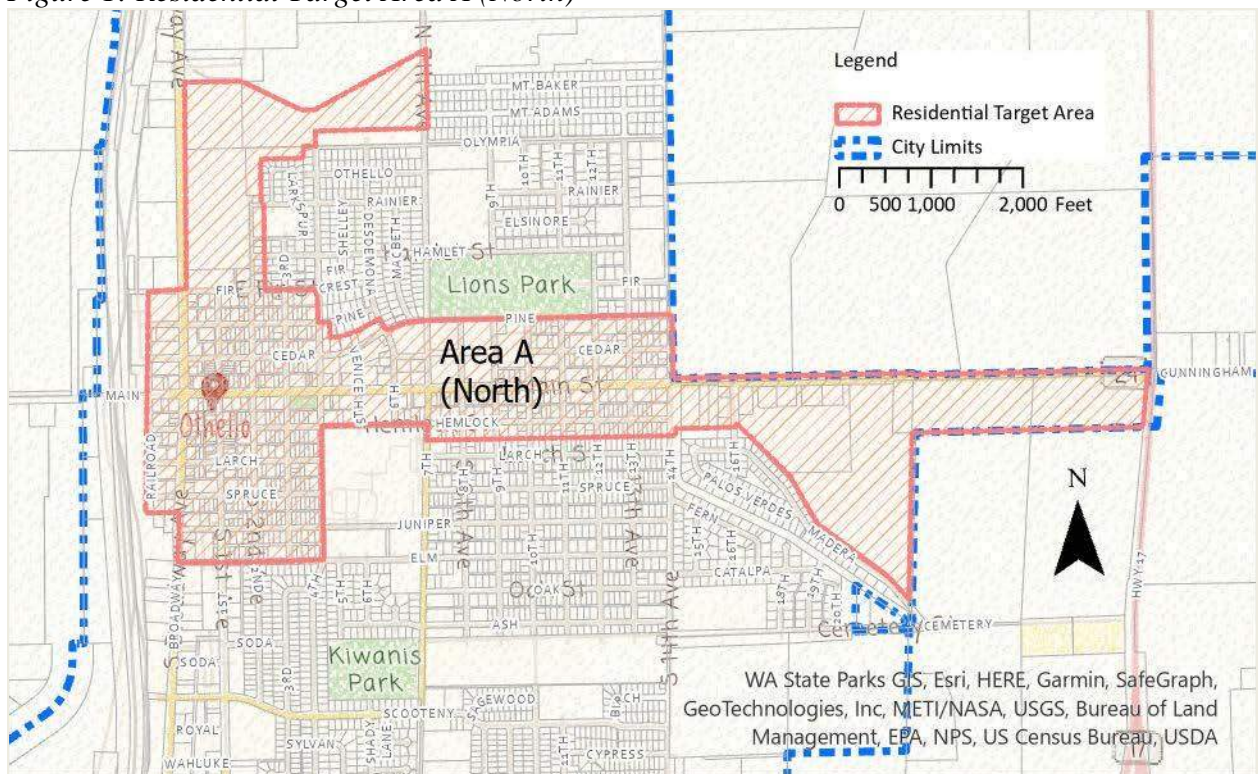
- (3) At the expiration of the exemption, the applicant must provide tenant relocation assistance in an amount equal to one month's rent to a qualified tenant within the final month of the qualified tenant's lease. To be eligible for tenant relocation assistance under this subsection, the tenant must occupy an income-restricted unit at the time the exemption expires and must qualify as a low-income household under this chapter at the time relocation assistance is sought.
- (b) **Twenty-Year Exemption.** For twenty (20) successive years beginning January 1st of the year immediately following the calendar year of issuance of the final certificate of tax exemption if the property otherwise qualifies for the exemption and meets the conditions in this subsection. For the property to qualify for the twenty-year exemption under this subsection, at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the units must be built by or sold to a qualified nonprofit or local government partner that will assure permanent affordable homeownership for eligible low- or moderate-income households and support the residents of these units. The remaining seventy-five percent (75%) of units may be rented or sold at market rates. All units receive the tax exemption as long as the conditions in the final certificate of tax exemption are met for the duration of the exemption.
- (c) If, in calculating the minimum proportion of the multi-family housing units in the project for affordable housing in this section, the number contains a fraction, then the minimum number of multi-family housing units for affordable housing shall be rounded up to the next whole number.

3.40.040 Residential target areas.

- (a) A residential targeted area must meet the following criteria:
 - (1) The residential targeted area is within an urban center as defined by Chapter 84.14 RCW;
 - (2) The residential targeted area lacks sufficient available, desirable, and convenient residential housing to meet the needs of the public who would be likely to live in the urban center if affordable, desirable, attractive, and livable residences were available; and
 - (3) Providing additional housing opportunity in the residential targeted area will assist in achieving one or more of the following purposes:
 - i. Encourage increased residential opportunities within the city; or
 - ii. Stimulate the construction of new multi-family housing; or
 - iii. Encourage the rehabilitation of existing vacant and underutilized buildings for multi-family housing.
 - (4) In designating a residential targeted area, the council may also consider other factors, including:
 - i. Whether additional housing in the residential targeted area will attract and maintain an increase in the number of permanent residents;
 - ii. Whether providing additional housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households would meet the needs of citizens likely to live in the area if affordable housing were available;

- iii. Whether an increased permanent residential population in the residential targeted area will help to achieve the planning goals through the City's comprehensive plan; or
 - iv. Whether encouraging additional housing in the residential targeted area supports significant public investment in public transit or a better jobs and housing balance.
- (5) The residential targeted area must allow an average minimum density equivalent to 15 dwelling units or more per gross acre.
- (6) At any time, the council may, by ordinance, amend or rescind the designation of a residential targeted area pursuant to the same procedural requirements as set forth in this chapter for original designation.
- (b) The boundaries of the designated residential target areas located within the urban center of Othello are depicted in the maps below.

Figure 1: Residential Target Area A (North)



The map displays a section of a city with various streets and landmarks. A large area is outlined in red, labeled 'Area B (South)'. Within this area, a smaller section is outlined in blue and labeled 'Residential Target Area'. The map also shows 'City Limits' indicated by a dashed blue line. Key streets include NIMNEY, MITCHELL, PANAMA, MOON, CLYDE, MCCANN, HUDSON, PARK, ROOSEVELT, CONCRETE, INDUSTRIAL, CURTIS, GARCIA, and HWY 26. Landmarks include Kiwani Park, SCOOTNEY, CYPRESS, GEMSTONE, COLUMBIA, SANDSTONE, and a CEMETERY. A legend in the bottom right corner identifies the red outline as 'Residential Target Area' and the blue dashed line as 'City Limits'. A scale bar indicates distances from 0 to 2,000 feet. A north arrow is also present.

The map displays the study area in Gemstone, with a focus on the residential target area. The map includes a legend indicating that the red hatched area represents the 'Residential Target Area' and the blue dashed line represents the 'City Limits'. The map shows a grid of streets, including Spruce, Elm, Oak, and Ash, and a large green area labeled 'Kiwanis Park'. The map also shows the location of the 'Bureau, USDA' and the 'City Limits'.

3.40.050 Project eligibility.

An owner of property applying under this chapter must meet the following requirements:

- (a) The new or rehabilitated multiple-unit housing must be located in a designated residential targeted area.
- (b) The project must be multi-family housing consisting of at least four (4) dwelling units within a residential structure or as part of a mixed-use development, in which at least fifty percent (50%) of the space within such residential structure or mixed-use development is intended for permanent residential occupancy.
- (c) For new construction, a minimum of four (4) new dwelling units must be created. For rehabilitation or conversion of existing occupied structures, a minimum of four additional dwelling units must be added.
- (d) Rehabilitation:
 - (1) Property proposed to be rehabilitated must fail to comply with one or more standards of the City's building or housing codes.
 - (2) Property proposed to be rehabilitated with existing multi-family housing that has been vacant for twelve (12) months or more does not have to provide additional multi-family units.
 - (3) If the property proposed to be rehabilitated is not vacant, an applicant must provide each existing tenant housing of comparable size, quality, and price and a reasonable opportunity to relocate.
 - (4) The exemption does not include the value of improvements constructed prior to submittal of the application for exemption.
- (e) The project shall be completed within three (3) years from the date of approval of the contract by the Director as provided in 3.40.070(b) or by any extended deadline granted by the Director as provided in 3.40.070(c).
- (f) As per RCW 84.14.030(6), the applicant must enter into a contract approved by the Director, under which the applicant has agreed to implement the development.
- (g) The project must achieve a minimum density of fifteen (15) residential units per gross acre.
- (h) No new applications may be accepted for inclusion into this program after the City has received MFTE applications which would result in 800 units of new multi-family housing.

3.40.060 Application procedure.

A property owner who wishes to propose a project for a multi-family property tax exemption shall comply with the following procedures:

- (a) Prior to the application for any building permit, the applicant shall submit an application to the Director, on a form established by the Director along with required application fees.
- (b) A complete application shall contain such information as the Director may deem necessary or useful, and shall include:
 - (1) A brief written description of the project;
 - (2) A preliminary schematic site and floor plans of the multi-family units and the structure(s) in which they are proposed to be located;
 - (3) A brief statement setting forth the grounds for qualification for exemption;
 - (4) A statement from the owner acknowledging the tax liability when the project ceases to be eligible under this chapter;
 - (5) Verification by oath or affirmation of the information submitted;

- (6) For rehabilitation projects, the applicant shall also submit an affidavit that existing dwelling units have been unoccupied for a period of twelve months prior to filing the application, or that housing of comparable size, quality, and price and a reasonable opportunity to relocate has been provided to tenants, and shall secure from the City verification of property noncompliance with the City's local housing standard; and
- (7) Any application fee as established by the City for review and consideration of the MFTE application.

3.40.070 Application review.

- (a) The Director may certify as eligible an application which is determined to comply with the requirements of this chapter. A decision to approve or deny an application shall be made within ninety (90) days of receipt of a complete application. An application may be approved subject to such terms and conditions as deemed appropriate by the Director to ensure the project meets the land use regulations of the City.
- (b) Approval. If an application is approved by the Director, the approval, together with a contract between the applicant and the City regarding the terms and conditions of the project, signed by the applicant, shall be signed by the Director or designee. Once the contract is fully executed, the Director shall issue a conditional certificate of acceptance of tax exemption. The conditional certificate expires three (3) years from the date of approval unless an extension is granted as provided in this chapter.
- (c) Extension of Conditional Certificate. The conditional certificate may be extended by the Director for a period not to exceed twenty-four (24) consecutive months. The applicant must submit a written request stating the grounds for the extension, accompanied by a processing fee, if required. An extension may be granted if the Director determines that:
 - (1) The anticipated failure to complete construction or rehabilitation within the required time period is due to circumstances beyond the control of the owner;
 - (2) The owner has been acting and could reasonably be expected to continue to act in good faith and with due diligence; and
 - (3) All the conditions of the original contract between the applicant and the City will be satisfied upon completion of the project.
- (d) Denial of Application. If the application is denied, the Director shall state in writing the reasons for denial and shall send notice to the applicant at the applicant's last known address within ten (10) days of the denial. An applicant may appeal a denial to the hearing examiner by filing a written appeal, together with any fees required, within thirty (30) days of notification by the City. The appeal will be based upon the record made before the Director with the burden of proof on the applicant to show that there is no substantial evidence on the record to support the Director's decision. The decision of the hearing examiner in denying or approving the application is final.
- (e) Amendments. An owner may request amendments to the contract by submitting a request in writing to the Director, along with the any fees established by the City, at any time within three (3) years of the date of the approval of the contract. The Director may approve amendments to the MFTE contract between the owner and the City that are reasonably within the scope and intent of the MFTE contract. The date for expiration of the conditional certificate shall not be extended by contract amendment unless all the conditions for extension set forth in subsection (c) of this section are met.

3.40.080 Final certificate.

- (a) Application. Upon completion of the improvements provided in the contract between the applicant and the city and upon issuance of a temporary or permanent certificate of occupancy, the applicant may request a final certificate of tax exemption. The applicant must file with the Director such information as the Director may deem necessary or useful to evaluate eligibility for the final certificate and shall include:
 - (1) A statement of expenditures made with respect to each multi-family housing unit and the total expenditures made with respect to the entire property;
 - (2) A description of the completed work and a statement of qualification for the exemption;
 - (3) A statement that the work was completed within the required three-year period or any authorized extension;
 - (4) A statement that the project meets the affordable housing requirements as required by this chapter.
- (b) Approval of final certificate.
 - (1) Within thirty (30) days of receipt of all materials required for a final certificate, the Director shall determine whether the work completed and the affordability of the units satisfy the requirements of the application and the conditional contract approved by the City and is qualified for a limited tax exemption under this chapter. The City shall also determine which specific improvements completed meet the intent of this chapter and the required findings of RCW 84.14.060.
 - (2) If the Director determines that the project has been completed in accordance with this chapter and the contract between the applicant and the City and has been completed within the authorized period the City shall, within ten (10) calendar days of the expiration of the determination above, file a final certificate of tax exemption with the county assessor.
- (c) Denial of final certificate.
 - (1) The Director shall notify the applicant in writing that a final certificate will not be filed if the Director determines that:
 - i. The improvements were not completed within the authorized period;
 - ii. The improvements were not completed in accordance with the contract between the applicant and the City; or
 - iii. The owner's property is otherwise not qualified under this chapter.
 - (2) Within thirty (30) days of notification by the City to the owner of the Director's denial of a final certificate of tax exemption, the applicant may file a written appeal, together with any fees required, with the City hearing examiner specifying the factual and legal basis for the appeal.

3.40.090 Annual certification.

- (a) Within thirty (30) days after the first anniversary of the date of filing the final certificate of tax exemption and each year thereafter, for the applicable tax exemption period, the property owner shall file a notarized declaration with the Director indicating the following:
 - (1) A statement of occupancy and vacancy of the rehabilitated or newly constructed property during the twelve (12) months ending with the anniversary date;

- (2) A certification by the owner that the property has not changed use and, if applicable, that the property has been in compliance with the contract with the City;
- (3) A description of changes or improvements constructed after issuance of the certificate of tax exemption;
- (4) The total monthly rent of each unit;
- (5) Information demonstrating compliance with the affordability requirements of 3.40.030, and other applicable requirements under 3.40.050;
- (6) For the required affordable units, the household size and income of each household at the time of initial occupancy and their current household size and income; and
- (7) Any additional information requested regarding the units receiving a tax exemption and meeting any reporting requirements under Chapter 84.14 RCW.

3.40.100 Cancellation of tax exemption.

- (a) The Director may cancel the tax exemption if the property owner breaches any term of the MFTE contract, covenant, or any part of this chapter. Reasons for cancellation include but are not limited to the following:
 - (1) The property no longer complies with the terms of the contract or with the requirements of this chapter, including the provision of affordable units;
 - (2) The use of the property is changed or will be changed to a use that is other than residential;
 - (3) The project violates applicable zoning requirements, land use regulations, or building code requirements;
 - (4) The property for any other reason no longer qualifies for the tax exemption; or
 - (5) The property owner fails to submit the annual certification required under 3.40.090.
- (b) Upon determining that a tax exemption shall be canceled, the Director shall notify the property owner or qualified non-profit organization, if applicable, by certified mail with a return receipt requested.
- (c) The property owner or qualified non-profit organization, if applicable, may appeal the determination within thirty (30) days by filing a notice of appeal with the City hearing examiner, together with any fees required, specifying the factual and legal basis on which the determination of cancellation is alleged to be erroneous. The hearing examiner will conduct a hearing at which the applicant and the City will be heard and all competent evidence received. The hearing examiner will affirm, modify, or repeal the decision to cancel the exemption based on the evidence received.
- (d) The Director shall notify the county assessor of the cancellation of the tax exemption thirty (30) days after the notification of the property owner or qualified non-profit organization, or upon an unsuccessful appeal under subsection (c).
- (e) If the owner intends to convert multi-family housing receiving a tax exemption under this chapter to another use, the owner must notify the Director and the county assessor within sixty (60) days of the change in use. Upon such change in use, the tax exemption shall be canceled.

3.40.110 Hearing examiner.

- (a) The city's land use hearing examiner is hereby provided jurisdiction to hear appeals of the decisions of the Director under this chapter. Said appeals shall be as follows:

- (1) Appeal of a decision of the Director that the owner is not entitled to a final certificate of tax exemption, filed within thirty days of notification by the City to the owner of denial of a final certificate of tax exemption.
- (2) Appeal of a cancellation of tax exemption, filed within thirty days of the notification by the City to the owner of cancellation.
- (b) The hearing examiner's procedures shall apply to hearings under this chapter to the extent they are consistent with the requirement of this chapter and Chapter 84.14 RCW. The hearing examiner shall give substantial weight to the Director's decision and the burden of overcoming the weight shall be on the appellant. The decision of the examiner constitutes the final decision of the City. An aggrieved party may appeal the decision to superior court under RCW 34.05.510 through 34.05.598 if the appeal is properly filed within thirty days of notification by the City to the appellant of that decision.

Section 2. Effective date. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect five days after its passage and publication of its summary as provided by law.

PASSED by the City Council of Othello, Washington this ____ day of _____, 2023

CITY OF OTHELLO

Shawn Logan, Mayor

ATTEST/AUTHENTICATED:

Tania Morelos, City Clerk

Approved as to form:

Kelly E. Konkright, WSBA #33544
City Attorney

PASSED the __ day of _____ 2023
EFFECTIVE the __ day of _____ 2023
PUBLISHED the __ day of _____ 2023

City of Othello

Multifamily Tax Exemption Overview

A recommendation in the 2021 Housing Action Plan



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Prepared by:

David Stalheim, Mud Bay Consulting Services

Summary

The city of Othello adopted a [Housing Action Plan](#) on June 28, 2021. Major findings in the Housing Action Plan include the following:

- Housing supply is limited, and homeownership is unaffordable for many households
- Rental housing costs are rising and restricting options for low- and moderate-income households
- There is a lack of diversity in the housing options available to local households and a misalignment between the size of housing units and the size of households
- There are limited affordable housing options large enough for families with children
- There is a lack of both permanent and seasonal housing for farmworkers, especially for low-income households

Based on these findings, the review suggested that Othello's current and future housing needs can be supported through four objectives:

1. Make it easier to build affordable ownership and rental housing
2. Increase housing variety and choices
3. Ensure opportunities for affordable and properly sized housing for families with children
4. Promote housing for seasonal and permanent workers supporting the agriculture-based economy

The objectives would be reached if the following four Housing Action Plan strategies are accomplished:

1. Revise Zoning and Building Standards
2. Parking and Transportation Standards
3. Affordable Housing Incentives
4. Process Improvements

This report focuses on one of the affordable housing incentives in the Housing Action Plan – “Explore the use of a Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) program for affordable housing”.

The [Multifamily Tax Exemption program](#) began in 1995 to incentivize residential development in urban centers. The program was originally limited to Washington State's largest cities. Over the years, the program's success in encouraging housing development prompted the State Legislature to offer it in smaller urban areas. In 2021, the Legislature amended the statute, making it available to all cities in the state, including Othello.

The City is considering adoption of this tax exemption program. Initial briefings with the Planning Commission and City Council were held early fall 2022 and the City is now considering whether to move forward with an ordinance to offer the property tax incentive starting in 2023.

What is the MFTE Program?

Othello could offer property tax exemptions for new construction, conversion, and rehabilitation of multifamily residential improvements. Projects that qualify do not pay property taxes on the residential improvements for either 12 or 20 years, depending on the program. The project would still pay taxes on the land and any nonresidential development, such as the commercial portion of a mixed-use building.

12-year program

To be eligible for the 12-year program, a project would have to build at least 4 units of multiple unit housing in an area Othello targets for this program. 20% of the units must be set aside for low- and moderate-income households (see income and rent limits below). The remaining units (80%) can be rented at market rate. At the end of the 12 years, the income and rent restrictions are removed and property taxes on the improvements would be required going forward.

20-year program

Like the 12-year program, a project in the 20-year program would also have to build at least 4 units of multiple unit housing in a target area. To qualify for this program, 25% of the units must be sold to a qualified nonprofit or local government partner that will assure permanent affordable homeownership (99 years). The nonprofit or local government must sell or rent to households earning no more than 80% of the area median income (AMI). The remaining units (75%) can be rented or sold at market rate. At the end of the 20 years, property taxes on the improvements would be required unless owned by a nonprofit or local government.

What are the Income and Rent Restrictions Required for MFTE?

Income Restrictions

The MFTE legislation requires a portion of the units be set aside for low- and moderate-income households (see above). Under this legislation, a low- and moderate-income household is defined as follows:

- “Low-income household” means a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is **at or below eighty percent** of the median family income adjusted for family size, for the county, city, or metropolitan statistical area, where the project is located, as reported by the United States department of housing and urban development (“HUD”).
- “Moderate-income household” means a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is more than eighty percent but is **at or below one hundred fifteen percent** of the median family income adjusted for family size, for the county, city, or metropolitan statistical area, where the project is located, as reported by the United States department of housing and urban development (“HUD”).

HUD doesn’t report income limits for Othello, so the income limits for Adams County are used. See the following table for the 2022 income limits:

Table 1: 2022 Income Limits for Adams County

	Household Size							
	1 PER- SON	2 PER- SONS	3 PER- SONS	4 PER- SONS	5 PER- SONS	6 PER- SONS	7 PER- SONS	8 PER- SONS
80% AMI (Low Income)	44,240	50,560	56,880	63,120	68,240	73,280	78,320	83,360
100% AMI	55,300	63,200	71,100	78,900	85,300	91,600	97,900	104,200
115% AMI (Moderate Income)	63,595	72,680	81,765	90,735	98,095	105,340	112,585	119,830

Source: Based on the HUD Published Income Limits for 2022 available in the Rent & income calculator available from Novogradac & Company
<https://ric.novoco.com/tenant/rentincome/calculator/z1.jsp>

Rent Restrictions

Housing that must be made available to low- and moderate-income households must be “affordable” to those households. “Affordable housing” means housing that is rented by a person or household whose monthly housing costs, including utilities other than telephone, do not exceed thirty percent (30%) of the household’s monthly income. HUD sets rent limits based on bedroom size as set forth below.

Table 2: 2022 Rent Limits for Adams County

Income	Bedrooms (People)				
	Efficiency (1.0)	1 Bedroom (2.0)	2 Bedrooms (3.0)	3 Bedrooms (4.0)	4 Bedrooms (5.0)
80% AMI (Low Income)	1,106	1,264	1,422	1,578	1,706
100% AMI	1,382	1,580	1,777	1,972	2,132
115% AMI (Moderate Income)	1,589	1,817	2,044	2,268	2,452

How would the 20-year homeownership program work?

If a developer wanted a 20-year property tax exemption, they would be required to sell 25% of the housing units to a nonprofit or local government, who in turn would be obligated to ensure that the units are “permanently affordable homeownership” for low-income households. Permanent affordability is enforced through the sponsor (nonprofit or local governmental entity), subject to a ground lease or deed restriction, includes resale restrictions, and has a duration of at least 99 years at the initial sale and with each successive sale.

The developer or owner would still benefit from the 20-year exemption on the 75% of homes not sold to the nonprofit or local government, and there would not be any sale or income restrictions on the units that are retained.

The median value of homes for sale in August 2022 was \$338,800; the lowest price on the market in August 2022 was \$280,000. Assuming a 20% down payment, a household would need an annual income

of approximately \$81,600 to afford the median value and \$67,320 for the lowest priced home on the market.

Can existing units be rehabilitated and qualify?

Conversion of a non-residential building or rehabilitation of existing buildings may qualify for the Multifamily Tax Exemption program. As with other aspects of the program, the two major requirements begin with the creation of at least four new residential units and setting aside at least 20% of the units for affordable housing, or 25% of the units for permanent homeownership in the 20-year program.

In the case of rehabilitation of existing buildings, the exemption does not include the value of improvements constructed prior to the submission of the application.

Where would these multifamily units be allowed?

Othello will be required to designate areas where this program would be offered. The state legislation requires the following:

1. The property tax exemption would only be available where the zoning and development standards allow multifamily units (at least 4-units) and in an area zoned for a minimum density of 15 units per gross acre.
2. The area designated must be a compact identifiable district where urban residents may obtain a variety of products and services. It must contain:
 - several existing or previous business establishments;
 - adequate public facilities including streets, sidewalks, lighting, transit, domestic water, and sanitary sewer systems; and
 - a mixture of uses and activities that may include housing, recreation, and cultural activities in association with either commercial or office, or both, use.

What are the potential property taxes that will be foregone for approved projects?

It is important to emphasize that the exemption is **not a reduction** in the amount of property tax that is currently collected by the City or other taxing districts; it is property tax that is foregone in exchange for new housing being constructed. The value of the land and any non-residential improvements will continue to be subject to property tax and any increase/decrease in valuation or levies assessed by the taxing districts.

The levy rate for property taxes for Othello in 2022 is \$12.663571501 per thousand of assessed value. For example, a property valued at \$200,000 would have a property tax levy assessment in 2022 of \$2,533.

A hypothetical development that adds \$1.25 million in construction value would save \$15,829 in annual property taxes based on 2022 levy rates. This exemption would be extended for 12- or 20-years, depending on the project and program. Cumulatively, this property tax exemption could amount to \$200,757 in foregone property taxes over 12 years for the project.

Other tax benefits from construction

While property taxes on the new housing construction are foregone, the construction is subject to sales tax. The city of Othello collects 1.6% of the sales tax collected. On a \$1.25 million construction project, the City could anticipate collecting \$19,875 in sales tax, which is more than five years of the city's share of property tax.

New housing development in the City can be a catalyst for other housing and economic development. In this incentive program, new housing construction must be in areas that have at least 15 units per gross acre and in an urban center that includes business establishments, adequate public facilities, and a mixture of uses and activities that may include housing, recreation, and cultural activities. Existing and new businesses should benefit from housing development in the urban center.

What other taxing districts are affected?

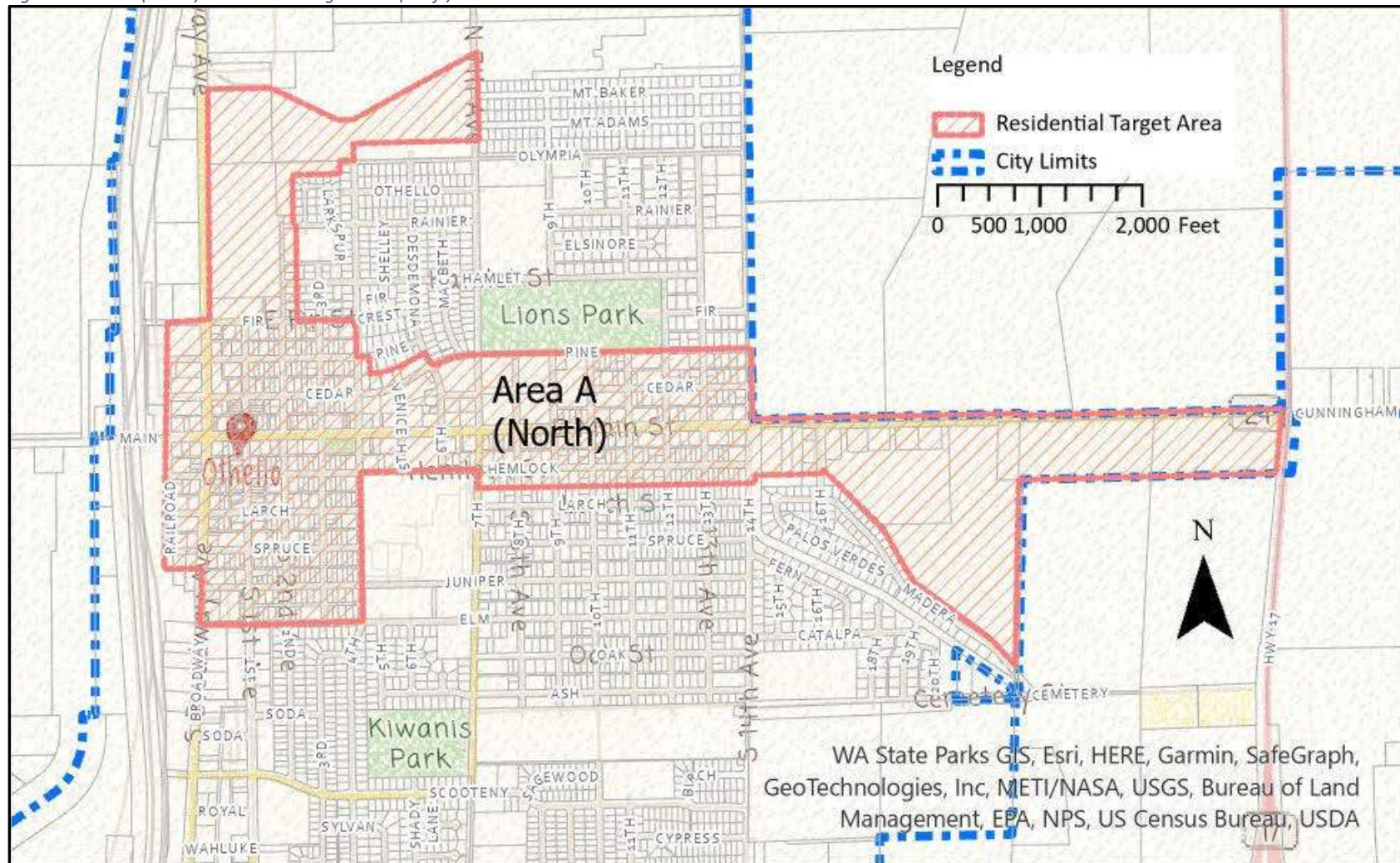
There are multiple taxing districts which receive portions of the property taxes levied, including State Schools, City of Othello, Adams County, Othello School District, Hospital District, Library, EMS Levy, Port of Othello, and the Parks and Recreation District. None of these districts would receive a reduction in the amounts collected but they would not see an increase in their collection from the residential improvement portion of an approved project until the end of the exemption period (12 or 20 years).

Residential Target Areas

The incentives must be offered in a compact identifiable district where residents may obtain a variety of products and services; there must be adequate public facilities; there must be a mixture of uses and activities; and the zoning must allow for multifamily units and achieve a minimum density of 15 units per gross acre.

Based on the foregoing, the following figures show options for Othello to consider in setting Residential Target Area based on existing zoning that allows for multifamily at the minimum densities required.

Figure 1: Area A (North) Residential Target Area (Draft)



The map displays a portion of a city, with a large area shaded in orange and labeled "Area B (South)". This area is bounded by a red dashed line. A blue dashed line indicates the "City Limits". The map includes a legend, a scale bar (0 to 2,000 feet), and a north arrow. Various streets are labeled, including 1st Ave, 2nd Ave, 3rd Ave, 4th Ave, 5th Ave, 6th Ave, 7th Ave, 8th Ave, 9th Ave, 10th Ave, 11th Ave, 12th Ave, 13th Ave, 14th Ave, 15th Ave, 16th Ave, 17th Ave, 18th Ave, 19th Ave, 20th Ave, 21st Ave, 22nd Ave, 23rd Ave, 24th Ave, 25th Ave, 26th Ave, 27th Ave, 28th Ave, 29th Ave, 30th Ave, 31st Ave, 32nd Ave, 33rd Ave, 34th Ave, 35th Ave, 36th Ave, 37th Ave, 38th Ave, 39th Ave, 40th Ave, 41st Ave, 42nd Ave, 43rd Ave, 44th Ave, 45th Ave, 46th Ave, 47th Ave, 48th Ave, 49th Ave, 50th Ave, 51st Ave, 52nd Ave, 53rd Ave, 54th Ave, 55th Ave, 56th Ave, 57th Ave, 58th Ave, 59th Ave, 60th Ave, 61st Ave, 62nd Ave, 63rd Ave, 64th Ave, 65th Ave, 66th Ave, 67th Ave, 68th Ave, 69th Ave, 70th Ave, 71st Ave, 72nd Ave, 73rd Ave, 74th Ave, 75th Ave, 76th Ave, 77th Ave, 78th Ave, 79th Ave, 80th Ave, 81st Ave, 82nd Ave, 83rd Ave, 84th Ave, 85th Ave, 86th Ave, 87th Ave, 88th Ave, 89th Ave, 90th Ave, 91st Ave, 92nd Ave, 93rd Ave, 94th Ave, 95th Ave, 96th Ave, 97th Ave, 98th Ave, 99th Ave, 100th Ave. Other labels include "Kiwani Park", "Columbia", "Concrete", "Industrial", "Curtis", "Garza", "Benches", "Nuevo Leon", "Bench Rd", "Catalpa", "Madera Cemetery", "Hwy 17", "Hwy 26", "Hwy 24", "Hwy 25", "Hwy 27", "Hwy 28", "Hwy 29", "Hwy 30", "Hwy 31", "Hwy 32", "Hwy 33", "Hwy 34", "Hwy 35", "Hwy 36", "Hwy 37", "Hwy 38", "Hwy 39", "Hwy 40", "Hwy 41", "Hwy 42", "Hwy 43", "Hwy 44", "Hwy 45", "Hwy 46", "Hwy 47", "Hwy 48", "Hwy 49", "Hwy 50", "Hwy 51", "Hwy 52", "Hwy 53", "Hwy 54", "Hwy 55", "Hwy 56", "Hwy 57", "Hwy 58", "Hwy 59", "Hwy 60", "Hwy 61", "Hwy 62", "Hwy 63", "Hwy 64", "Hwy 65", "Hwy 66", "Hwy 67", "Hwy 68", "Hwy 69", "Hwy 70", "Hwy 71", "Hwy 72", "Hwy 73", "Hwy 74", "Hwy 75", "Hwy 76", "Hwy 77", "Hwy 78", "Hwy 79", "Hwy 80", "Hwy 81", "Hwy 82", "Hwy 83", "Hwy 84", "Hwy 85", "Hwy 86", "Hwy 87", "Hwy 88", "Hwy 89", "Hwy 90", "Hwy 91", "Hwy 92", "Hwy 93", "Hwy 94", "Hwy 95", "Hwy 96", "Hwy 97", "Hwy 98", "Hwy 99", "Hwy 100".

The map displays the Gemstone neighborhood in Fort Collins, Colorado. A red hatched rectangle labeled "Area C" is situated between Elm St and Oak St, bounded by S 7th Ave and S 10th Ave. To the west of Area C is Kiwanis Park, shown as a green area. The map includes a grid of streets with names such as Spruce, Juniper, Elm, Oak, Ash, Birch, and Cypress. Major thoroughfares like S 2nd Ave, S 4th Ave, S 7th Ave, S 10th Ave, S 13th Ave, and S 14th Ave are also labeled. A legend in the bottom right corner identifies the red hatched area as the "Residential Target Area" and a blue dashed line as "City Limits". A north arrow and a scale bar (0 to 980 feet) are also present. The text "Bureau, USDA" is visible in the bottom right corner.

16 units on 5 lots (based on Hawks Landing triplexes)

Taxing District (Levy)	Levy Rate (2022)	12-year Exemption												
		Total	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
City	2.7784368197000	37,586	2,964	2,993	3,023	3,053	3,084	3,115	3,146	3,177	3,209	3,241	3,274	3,306
Adams County	1.5875308222000	21,476	1,693	1,710	1,727	1,745	1,762	1,780	1,798	1,815	1,834	1,852	1,871	1,889
EMS	0.3686376271000	4,987	393	397	401	405	409	413	417	422	426	430	434	439
Hospital	0.5993509269000	8,108	639	646	652	659	665	672	679	685	692	699	706	713
Library	0.4023695776000	5,443	429	433	438	442	447	451	456	460	465	469	474	479
Local-School	3.0598060319000	41,393	3,264	3,296	3,329	3,363	3,396	3,430	3,465	3,499	3,534	3,570	3,605	3,641
Parks-Rec-Dist	0.1511839061000	2,045	161	163	165	166	168	169	171	173	175	176	178	180
Port	0.3618325616000	4,895	386	390	394	398	402	406	410	414	418	422	426	431
State-School PT 1	3.3544234848000	45,378	3,578	3,614	3,650	3,686	3,723	3,761	3,798	3,836	3,874	3,913	3,952	3,992
TOTALS	12.6635717579000	171,311	13,508	13,643	13,779	13,917	14,056	14,197	14,339	14,482	14,627	14,773	14,921	15,070

Consolidated Rate 12.6635715010000

Difference 0.0000002569000

Per Unit Calculations 16

Taxing District (Levy)	Levy Rate (2022)	12-year Exemption												
		Total Per Unit	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
City	2.7784368197000	2,349	185	187	189	191	193	195	197	199	201	203	205	207
Adams County	1.5875308222000	1,342	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	115	116	117	118
EMS	0.3686376271000	312	25	25	25	25	26	26	26	26	27	27	27	27
Hospital	0.5993509269000	507	40	40	41	41	42	42	42	43	43	44	44	45
Library	0.4023695776000	340	27	27	27	28	28	28	28	29	29	29	30	30
Local-School	3.0598060319000	2,587	204	206	208	210	212	214	217	219	221	223	225	228
Parks-Rec-Dist	0.1511839061000	128	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Port	0.3618325616000	306	24	24	25	25	25	25	26	26	26	26	27	27
State-School PT 1	3.3544234848000	2,836	224	226	228	230	233	235	237	240	242	245	247	249
TOTALS	12.6635717579000	10,707	844	853	861	870	879	887	896	905	914	923	933	942

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Anne Henning, Community Development Director

MEETING: December 19, 2022

SUBJECT: Active Transportation Plan – 2nd Draft – Request for Direction

Our consultants, SCJ Alliance, are continuing to work on Othello's Active Transportation Plan (bicycle/pedestrian/non-motorized transportation) through a planning grant from QuadCo. After last month's review of the first draft, SCJ has submitted a second draft of the overall plan for review.

Staff Comments

1. This draft still has comments and corrections that need to be made, and additional graphics that need to be created. The Commission should mostly be reviewing for whether they are happy with the direction the plan is taking, and if they see any substantive changes that are needed.

Attachments

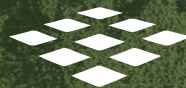
- Dec. 13, 2022 Draft of the Active Transportation Plan

Action: The Planning Commission should discuss the draft Plan and provide direction to staff and the consultants.

City of Othello

Active Transportation Plan

December 2022



SCJ ALLIANCE

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Introduction

The City of Othello has identified the need to enhance active transportation opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists. Major destinations such as schools, parks, downtown, and residential neighborhoods are not connected by safe active transportation infrastructure, making it difficult and risky to get around town without a car.

Through implementation of this plan, the City aims to improve the environment for cyclists and pedestrians, creating a reliable network that connects different destinations throughout the city. This plan establishes goals, policies, and prioritized projects that will help guide the city on a path forward to implementing the overall network and make getting around by foot or bike safer and more accessible.

This plan also lays out a strategy for achieving the goals of community access, physical activity, and promoting healthy lifestyles as required by the Growth Management Act.

What is Active Transportation?

Active transportation is any self-propelled, human-powered mode of transportation, such as walking or bicycling. While this plan mainly focuses on addressing the needs of people walking and cycling, active transportation improvements can benefit multiple other forms of transportation as well, such as skateboarding, scooters, and other micro-mobility methods, as well as wheelchairs and other mobility-assistance methods.



Demographics

To understand the growing need for active transportation, the following demographic analysis provides a snapshot of the current trends in Othello that impact the need for alternative transportation modes.

Population Growth

The 2020 Census reported a population of 8,549 in Othello. In Othello's 2015 Comprehensive Plan, it was projected that medium growth by 2020 would be a population of 8,262 and high growth would be 8,885. The fact that their population reached 8,549 in 2020 shows that Othello is experiencing medium to high population growth.

While the official population projection in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan was established as 17,825 people by the year 2035, more recent trends show that Othello is more on track with the OFM projections mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan than its separate official projection. For this reason, it is now assumed that Othello will have a population of between 9,896 and 11,007 by 2035, aligning with the OFM projections as stated in Table I-1 of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. The City will likely update these numbers in the next periodic update of its Comprehensive Plan, but it is safe to assume that the City will continue to experience medium to high population growth in the foreseeable future.

As the population grows, there will be more and more opportunities to build and promote an active lifestyle in Othello. Citizens are already asking for alternative transportation options for commuting and/or recreation, and this demand is expected to increase as the population grows.

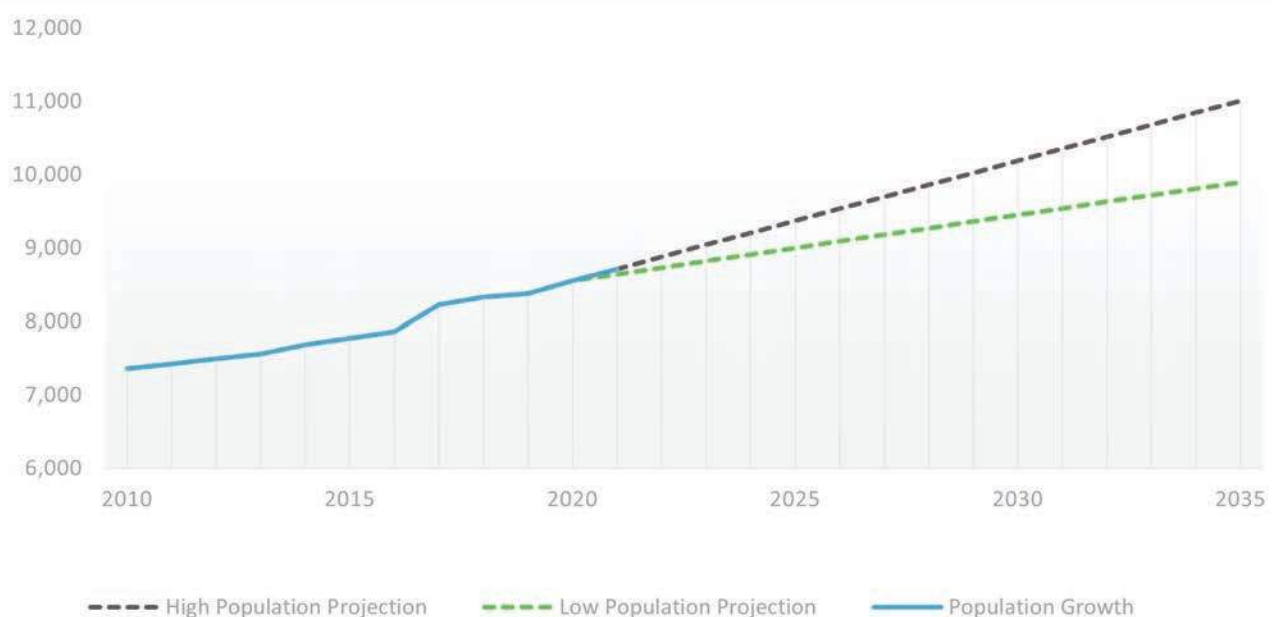


Figure 1: Population Growth and Projections

Age

In Table 1 below, it is notable how many young people, specifically under the age of 14, there are in Othello. Kids ages 0-14 make up 35.4% of the total population. People under 30 make up 59.5% of the total population. School-aged children and teenagers are more likely to get around town by foot or by bicycle, so the high number of people in these age groups must be taken into consideration while planning for transportation needs in Othello.

Language

Othello is home to many people who speak a language other than English. Of the population age 5 years and older, 34.9% of the population speaks only English, and 65.1% speaks a language other than English, whether that is in addition to English or not. The main language spoken apart from English is Spanish, with 59.8% of the population over the age of 5 speaking Spanish. This high percentage of people who speak Spanish in Othello should be taken into account when establishing informational signage, materials, and wayfinding for active transportation users. Active transportation options will be more accessible and more widely used if community members have information available in the language they are most comfortable with.

% of Population

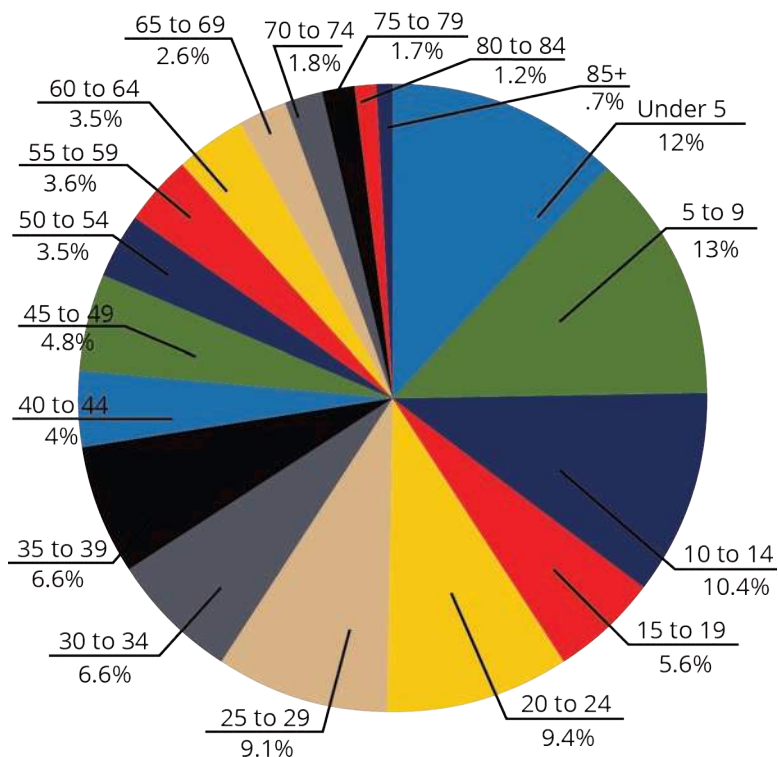


Figure 2: Population by Age in Othello

Disability

A major consideration in active transportation planning is ensuring that everybody in the community will be able to access what they need. Figure 2 notes that 6.2% of Othello's population experiences ambulatory difficulties, which means that they have trouble walking or climbing upstairs. 2.5% of the population have vision difficulties, and 2.6% have hearing difficulties.

By making infrastructure accessible to those who need extra support with their hearing, vision, or mobility, the city can ensure that its active transportation network is accessible by all. While ADA compliance is required in new infrastructure construction, the city should also consider strategic improvements and upgrades to existing sidewalks, crossings, and pathways to ensure that people with disabilities can access the active transportation network.



Othello Population with Certain Disabilities

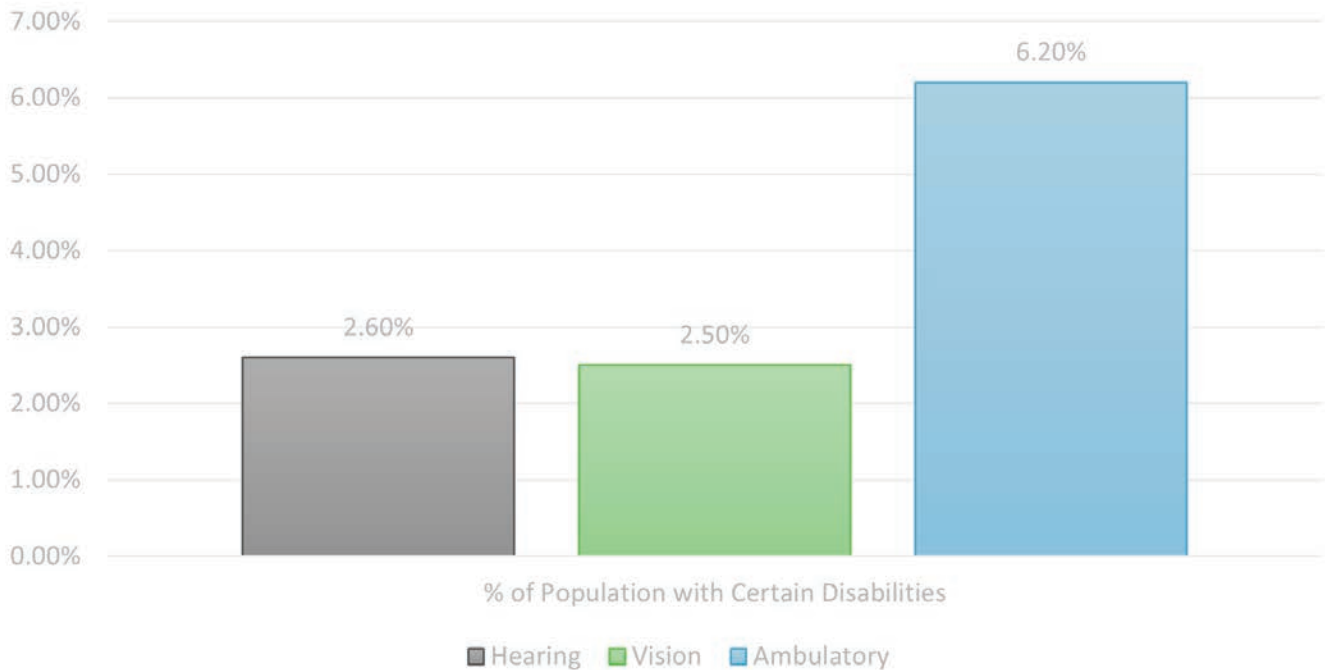


Figure 3: Percentage of People in Othello who experience certain disabilities

Commuting Trends

Commuting trends are especially important to understand in an Active Transportation Plan. Based on 2019 data, Figure 3 shows inflow and outflow job counts. Based on this data, there are 1,510 people who live in Othello who also stay to work in Othello. There are 1,761 people who live in Othello but leave city limits for work, and there are 2,933 people who live elsewhere but work in Othello.

This is important for understanding how many people are commuting within Othello and outside city limits. 1,510 people stay within city limits, and since the city is not large in size, it is reasonable to assume that a portion of this population would be willing to walk or bike to work. In planning for active transportation improvements, it will be beneficial to consider how the city can grow the number of people who both live and work in Othello and also grow the portion of those people that walk or bike to work.

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Ownership &
Transportation to
Work" on the next
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Vehicle Ownership & Transportation to Work

The 2020 American Community Survey estimates that there are 2,967 workers over the age of 16 in Othello. Of these workers, 1.4% have no vehicle available, 12.1% have 1 vehicle available, 50.3% have 2 vehicles available, and 36.3% have 3 or more vehicles available. Figure 4 shows the breakdown of how people in Othello commute to work.

While vehicle ownership is common among the majority of the working population in Othello, there are still at least 40-50 people without a car who need to figure out an alternative way of getting to work. This further emphasizes the need for active transportation improvements in Othello, indicating that not everyone has the option to drive themselves to work.

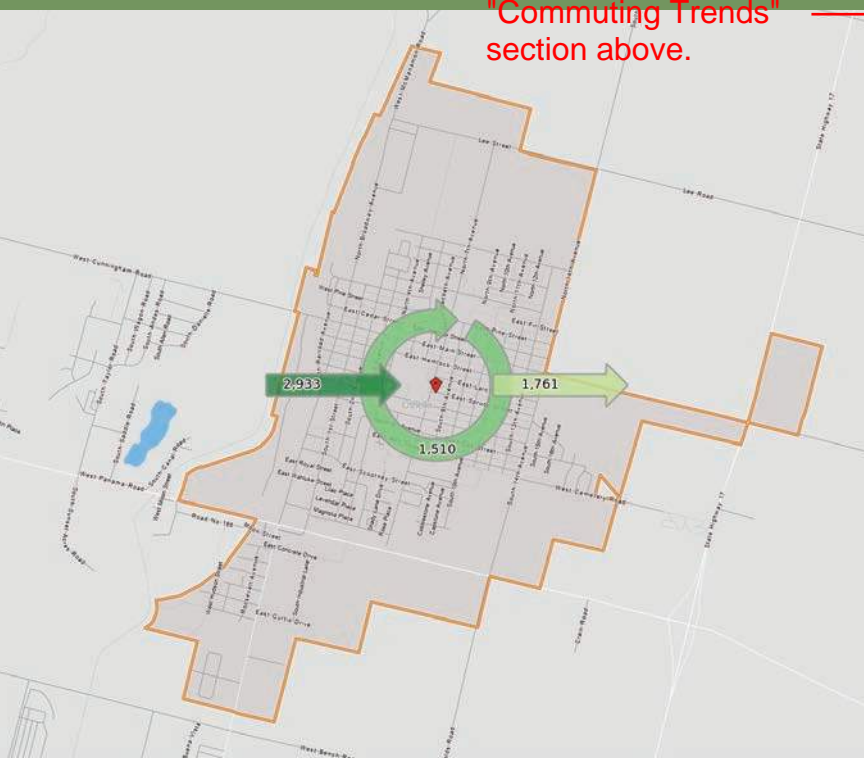


Figure 4: Inflow/Outflow Analysis of People who Live/Work in Othello.
Source: onthemap.ces.census.gov

Inflow/Outflow Job Counts in 2019



Note: Overlay arrows do not indicate directionality of worker flow between home and employment locations.

- ➔ Employed and Live in Selection Area
- ➔ Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
- ➔ Live in Selection Area, Employed Outside

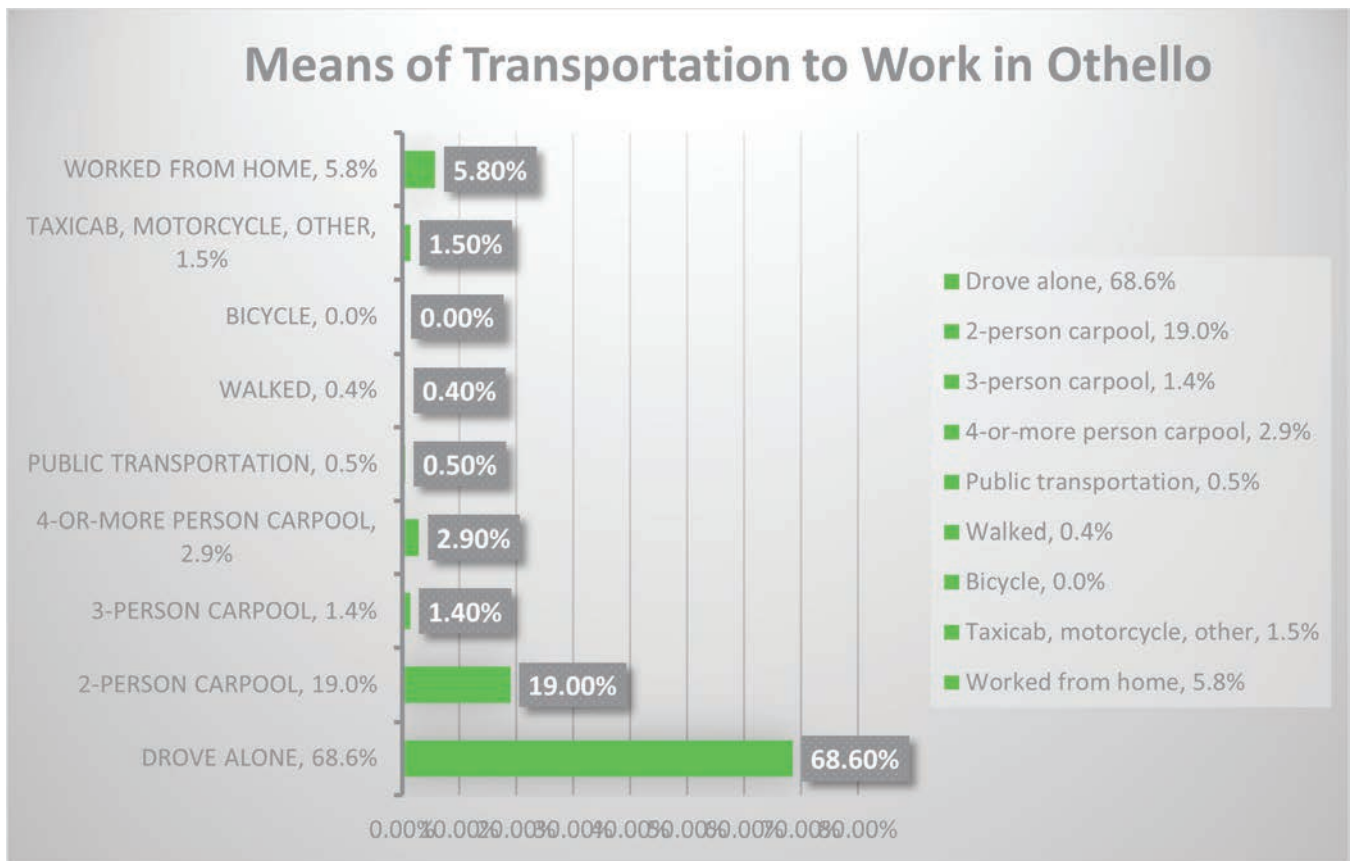


Figure 5: Means of Transportation to Work in Othello based on ACS 2020 5-Year Estimates

Connect to "Vehicle Ownership & Transportation to work" section

Context Map



Base map of city and surroundings to be added.

Figure 6: Context Map



Policy Review

The Department of Commerce states that “development of a community’s pedestrian and bicycle component occurs in the context of federal, state, and regional policies.” This section outlines those relevant policies and describes how Othello’s proposed active transportation network aligns with local, regional, state, and national transportation policies.

Othello Comprehensive Plan

Othello’s Comprehensive Plan provides context for how and where the city is looking to grow. As noted in the demographics section of this report, Othello is predicting a medium to high growth rate and needs to plan accordingly.

Some of the active transportation-related goals and objectives to note within Othello’s transportation section of the Comprehensive Plan are:

- ♦ Objective 4.2.3 – Pursue implementation of the Parks & Recreation trail plan within the growth area.
- ♦ Goal 4.3 – Incorporate ADA standards into all capital improvement projects and private development improvements that will become part of the City’s transportation infrastructure.
- ♦ Objective 4.4.2 – Implement the Parks & Recreation trail plan as part of any capital improvement project if the trail plan and street plan overlap.
- ♦ Objective 4.4.3 – Develop a greenway plan for Highway 26 and Highway 17.
- ♦ Goal 4.5 – Develop, prioritize, and implement an ongoing list of transportation Capital Improvement Projects.

These goals and objectives support the development of a safe and accessible network of walking and biking paths, sidewalks, crossings, and bike lanes. This plan aims to remain consistent with the comprehensive plan, and further build on its goals for active transportation.

Othello Complete Streets Policy

Othello adopted a Complete Streets Policy as Chapter 11.80 of the Municipal Code in 2020. This policy defines and outlines what complete streets in Othello will look like and the standards they are required to meet, emphasizing that the people of Othello should have options when it comes to transportation.

The policy ultimately aims to provide infrastructure for “pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, emergency responders, freight, and users of all ages and abilities in new construction, retrofit, and reconstruction projects of public streets.” Additionally, the Complete Streets Policy “focuses not just on changing individual streets but on changing the decision-making process so that all users are considered during the planning, designing, building, and operation of roadways.”

Othello’s Complete Streets Policy sets a strong foundation for the work proposed in this plan. The recommendations set forth later in this plan will have the support of the city code behind them, providing an extra dimension of feasibility to the proposed recommendations.



Othello Housing Action Plan

Othello's Housing Action Plan (HAP) was adopted in June 2021 with the purpose of providing clear direction on increasing production of market-rate and affordable housing, and the need for greater housing diversity, affordability, and access to opportunity for residents of all income levels. With a review of goals surrounding housing, transportation always needs to be addressed, as different housing options lead to a change in demand for specific types of transportation. Often, with increased density, active transportation options become more desirable.

Regarding parking and transportation standards, the HAP lays out strategic recommendations. It states, "The provision of parking and rights-of-way can affect the amount of land available for development and the costs of new projects. Adjusting these standards can help make developments more efficient, reducing costs and improving project feasibility". The plan suggests reviewing off-street parking requirements, encouraging or requiring alley-access, rear, or shared parking, and to reduce neighborhood street width requirements.

The overall HAP objectives are:

1. Make it easier to build affordable ownership and rental housing
2. Increase housing variety and choice
3. Ensure opportunities for families with children
4. Promote housing for agricultural workers

Expansion of the active transportation network in Othello can support these objectives, so that both housing options and active transportation opportunities improve, making Othello an even better place to live and work.

City of Othello HOUSING ACTION PLAN



Othello Parks and Recreation Plan

Othello's Parks and Recreation Plan was adopted in February 2022. Included in the plan is a map that outlines Othello's Parks & Trails Plan. That plan highlights some active transportation components including existing trails, proposed trails, and greenway trails. This helps identify some of the routes that have previously been prioritized. Through the Active Transportation Plan, Othello aims to further develop this network of paths and trails, aligning with the analysis and outreach conducted as part of the Parks and Recreation Plan.

In the Parks & Rec Plan's future needs analysis, it is noted that "More walking trails was highly desired by the community in the survey; however, the City doesn't currently have much of a place to put them. It is hoped these trails could be incorporated into the proposed eco park/nature park. Therefore, the trail expenditure is scheduled out beyond the 6-year timeframe of this plan."

The Parks and Recreation Plan, therefore, emphasizes the importance of expanding the existing sidewalk and pathway network to more fully connect throughout the city, which supports the purpose of the Active Transportation Plan.



Adams County Comprehensive Plan

Othello is located within Adams County. Adams County's Comprehensive Plan speaks to the 1,125.5 miles of graveled and 650 miles of paved county roads. Beyond the roads, the plan shares that public transportation does not exist in rural Adams County, besides some transit opportunities for the elderly or people with disabilities.

There are two policies that stand out regarding active transportation in the plan. They are:

Recreational Uses, Policy 7:

"Promote eco-tourism opportunities such as non-motorized interpretive trails that capitalize Adams County's history as well as natural and cultural resources, especially railroad history."

Transportation, Policy 14:

"Provide alternative transportation choices for the traveling public by identifying suitable bicycle routes within the county where incompatibility issues with long haul truck traffic aren't involved."

While Adams County is focused on moving people primarily on roads in personal vehicles, these policies do point toward a desire to have more transportation options for both residents and visitors.

QUADCO Regional Transportation Plan

The QUADO Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) includes Adams, Grant, Kittitas, and Lincoln Counties. This plan was adopted in December 2016 and plans for a 20-year period, from 2017 to 2037. The plan highlights six goals, under the themes of economic vitality, preservation, safety, mobility, environment, and stewardship. Within each of these categories, the plan highlights a goal that has to do with active transportation. This shows how moving toward better active transportation options is incorporated through the plan. The top goals identified in this plan are to:

- ♦ Protect the safety of our community
- ♦ Preserve and extend the life and utility of prior transportation system investments
- ♦ Enhance our region's economic vitality by promoting and developing transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods.
- ♦ Enhance the mobility of people and goods throughout the region by providing an interconnected transportation system and opportunities for choosing different transportation modes.
- ♦ Protect our region's environment and high quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment.
- ♦ Improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of our region's transportation system and growing communities with cost effective investments that have public support.

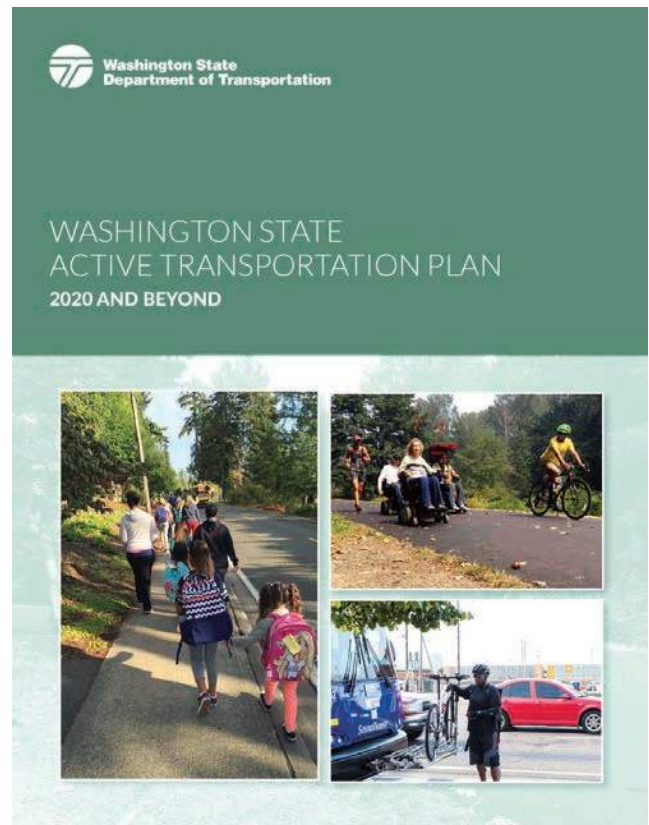


WSDOT Active Transportation Plan

In 2021, the Washington State Department of Transportation published the Washington State Active Transportation Plan: 2020 and Beyond. The plan discusses the importance of reliable active transportation options and the challenges in active transportation if certain facilities or amenities are not complete or are blocked from use. Since this plan covers the entire state, it focuses on both urban centers and the smaller, rural towns like Othello. The main goal for active transportation in the future is stated as, “The integrated transportation system of the future provides safe, welcoming, and connected networks that invite and enable everyone to walk and roll where they need to go”.

There are important benefits of bicycling and walking and these benefits help work toward a stronger Washington for everybody. These benefits include improvements in human health, the environment, the economy, local and regional mobility, accessibility, and congestion relief. This plan is evidence that Washington is planning for a future that involves active transportation as a regular way to travel.

Figure 3-35 in the plan shows how Othello connects to the Great American Rail-Trail, which is a project being undertaken by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Washington’s portion of this trail is



currently known as the Palouse to Cascades Trail, which will eventually connect across both the state and eventually the country. However, there is a large segment of the trail missing near Othello. It would be helpful to consider how Othello might eventually connect to and capitalize on access to this trail. This future connection may play a significant role in the economic development and recreational environment in Othello.

Existing Conditions

Sidewalks

Sidewalks provide dedicated space intended for use by pedestrians that is safe, comfortable, and accessible to all. Sidewalks are physically separated from the roadway by a curb or unpaved buffer space and are ADA compliant. Othello aims to have sidewalks on almost every street so that anywhere in town is safely accessible by foot.

Sidewalk Gap Analysis

There are approximately 37 miles of completed sidewalks within Othello city limits. It is also estimated that there are at least 46 miles of additional sidewalk length needed to ensure a complete and connected pedestrian network throughout the City. This accounts for sidewalks being needed on both sides of the street for all of the city blocks displayed in Figure 6.

Most of the gaps in Othello's sidewalk network are in the older, centrally located neighborhoods as well as the industrial areas on the outskirts of town. Newer neighborhoods and major arterials tend to have fewer sidewalk gaps.

These gaps make it difficult for pedestrians to safely access many areas throughout Othello. Lack of sidewalks and abrupt discontinuations can lead to confusion for pedestrians, forcing them into the street



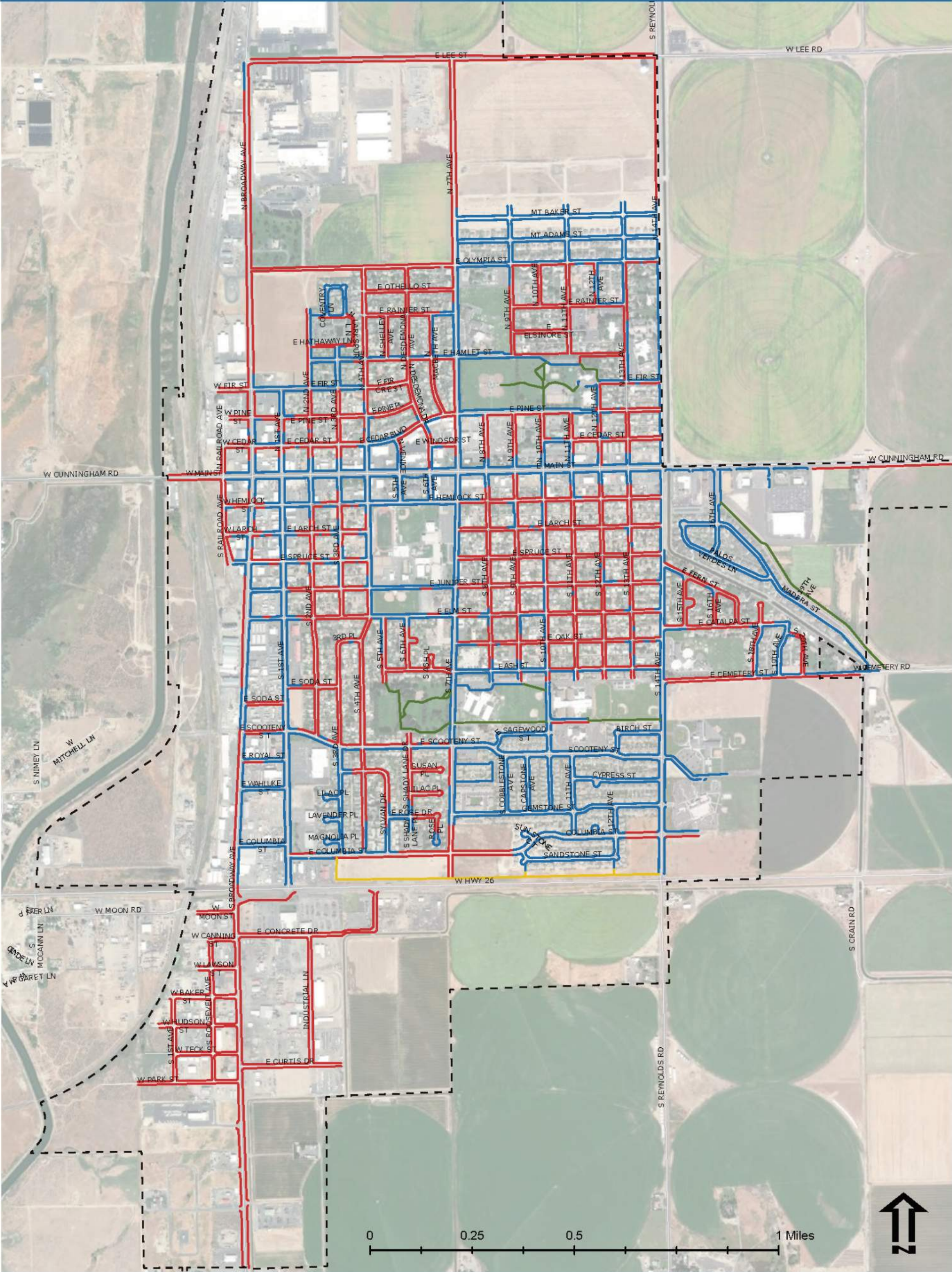
There are many instances in Othello where sidewalks abruptly end, providing no alternative to pedestrians.



where they have to contend with vehicles. In addition, since there are currently no bike lanes in Othello, people frequently use the existing sidewalks to ride their bikes as a way to stay separated from passing vehicles. Until bike infrastructure is provided in Othello, bike riding on the sidewalks is expected to continue occurring. Therefore, sidewalk gaps also lead to challenges for those riding bikes in town.

These sidewalk gaps ultimately incentivize more driving as people decide they would rather drive than walk or bike on unsafe streets.





Sidewalk Gap Map

- Existing Sidewalks -- 192,599 feet (36.5 miles)
- Missing Sidewalks -- 241,023 feet (45.6 miles)
- Existing Paved Paths -- 10,399 feet (2.0 miles)
- Missing Paved Paths -- 4,444 feet (0.8 miles)
- City Limits



Bike Infrastructure

Othello currently has very little infrastructure for bicycles. There are about 2 miles of existing off-street pathways, as indicated in Figure 6. These include the city park paths, the path on the south side of Lutacaga Elementary and McFarland Middle Schools, and the path on the east edge of town.

Apart from these unconnected paths, cyclists must share the roadway with vehicles. There are currently no bike lanes in the City of Othello. As with sidewalk gaps, this citywide gap in bicycle infrastructure makes cycling seem like a risky activity, and there are not many people that bike in Othello because of this. Some school children bike to school, but as seen in the demographics review, zero percent of people commute by bicycle in Othello.

By adding some new bicycle infrastructure, such as more paths and bike lanes, that safely connect throughout the city, Othello will likely see an increase in the number of people that choose to get around by bike.

Paved Paths

Othello has been working to develop its paved pathway system. These paths are safe routes for cyclists and pedestrians to get around without the need to contend with vehicles. Othello's city parks already have paved paths, and there is a paved path south of Lutacaga Elementary and McFarland Middle Schools, as well as one on the east edge of town, pictured in the images on the next page.

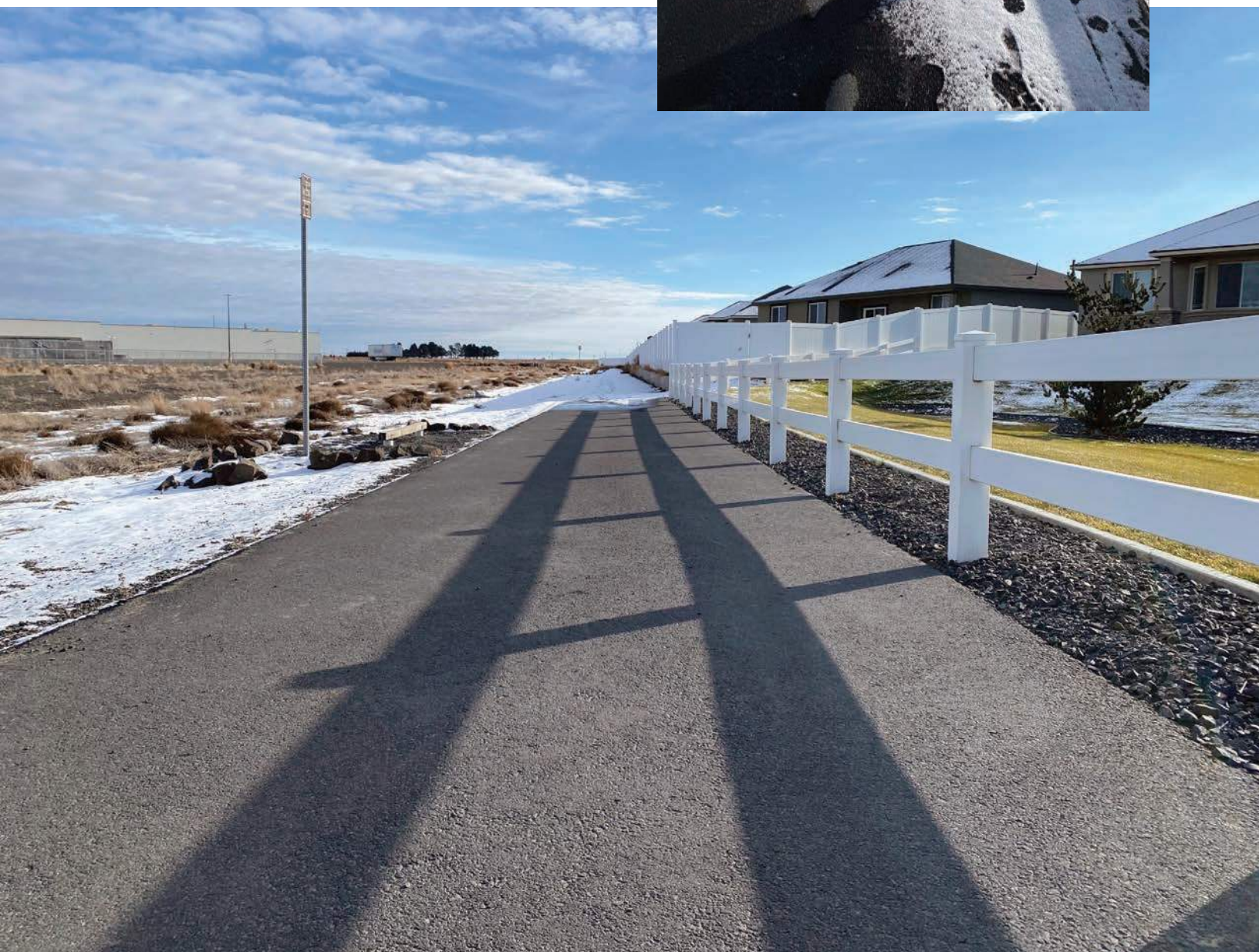
Figure 6 shows a "Missing Paved Path" type, which outlines where paved paths are either planned to be developed or have been identified as a community need in the past. The missing path along SR 26 is partially planned as a linear park just south of the existing Sandstone Street. The remainder of the missing path along SR 26 is not currently planned, but is an ideal route to provide separation from the highway and a connection to the new linear park.



Cyclists currently have almost no dedicated place to get around in Othello, forcing them to choose between riding in the road, or on the sidewalk.

As Othello works to improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, these pathways will be vital arteries for the active transportation network. It will be important to create a continuous network of pathways throughout the city to ensure cyclists and pedestrians have a safe, low stress environment in which to get around and recreate.

The paved path on the east side of town is quite popular, even getting use in the winter months.



Amenities

Bike Parking

In addition to providing ways of getting around safely by bike, it is equally important to have a secure way of parking and locking up bikes throughout the city. New development and upgrades to major destinations such as parks, schools, and business districts, should be required to provide a minimum number of secure bike parking spots, or bike racks, in convenient locations to ensure cyclists have an accessible location to park and lock up their bikes.

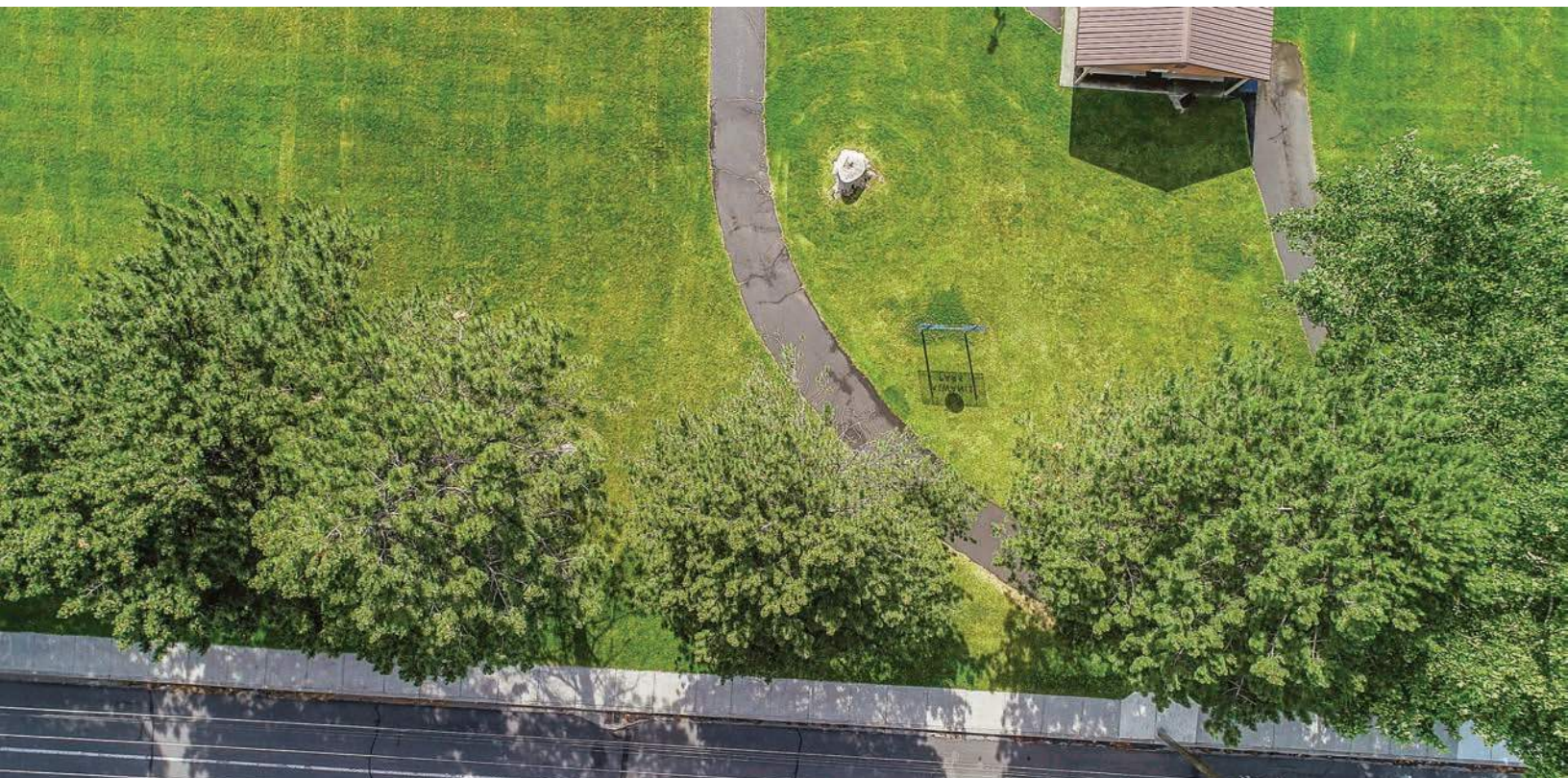
Other Amenities

In addition to bike racks, the city should also consider addition of amenities such as bike repair stations, rest areas with benches, drinking fountains, and shade, as well as wayfinding information posted throughout the community to help guide cyclists to their destination. These extra amenities will ensure a positive, secure, and accessible experience when getting around Othello by bicycle.

Informal Paths & Trails

Othello also has a number of informal pathways, such as the dirt paths along the canal next to North 14th Avenue. This is not a formal pathway or trail but is still regularly used by pedestrians. This is evidenced by the Strava Heatmap in Figure 7, which shows where walkers and runners tend to be the most active. This heatmap helps identify informal paths because it shows pedestrian and cyclist behavior by people who use the Strava App, which provides a sampling of where people gravitate toward when exercising or recreating. Strava data is limited to those who record their activity with Strava, so does not tend to capture more recreational walking or cycling, nor does it likely capture paths that children take to bike or walk to school.

Still, these heatmap paths demonstrate that people are using informal paths, such as those along the canals. It also shows which streets are more popular for pedestrian and cyclist activity.



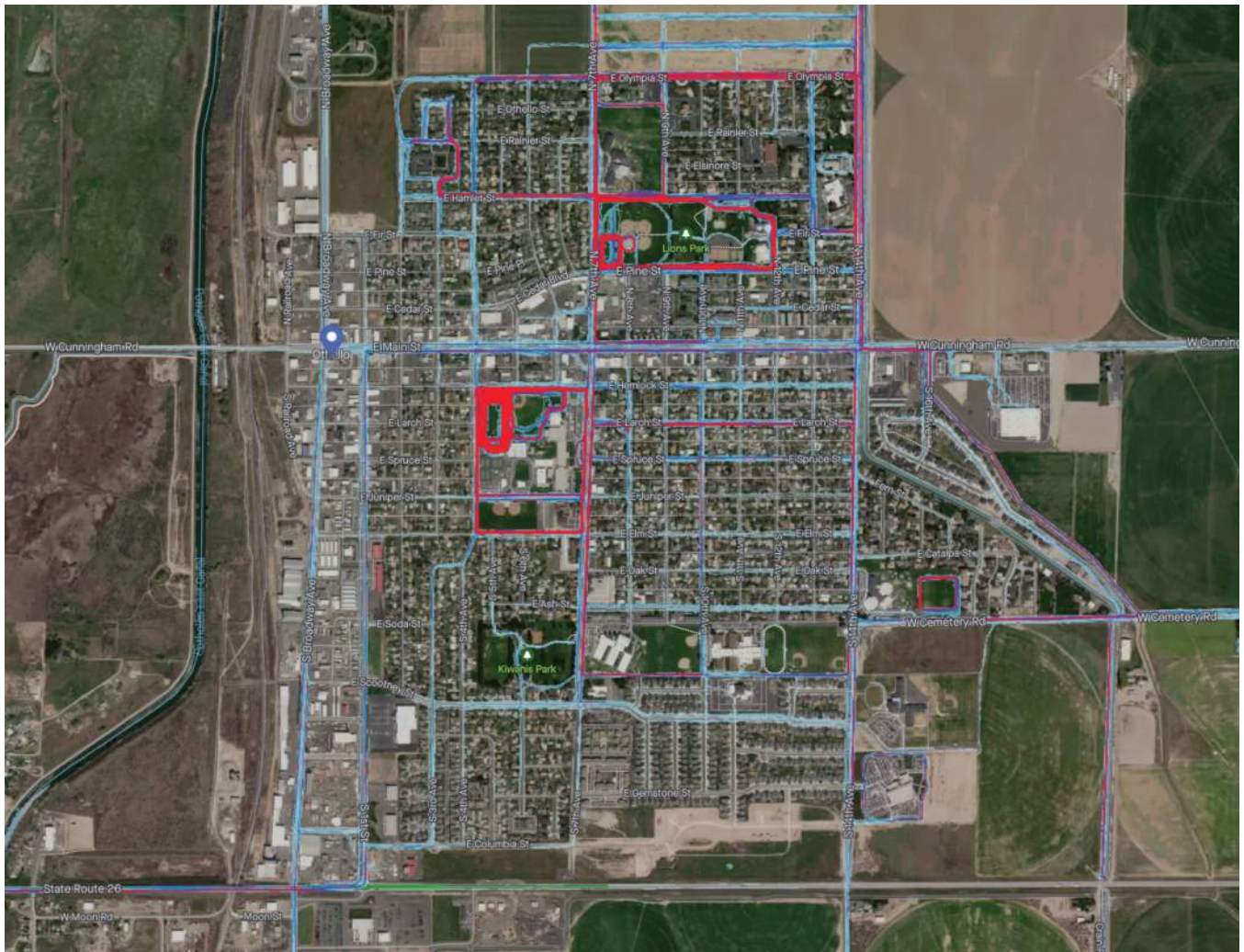


Figure 7: Strava Heatmap for Bicycle and Pedestrian Activity in Othello. The red lines indicate the most active routes used by Strava users, and light blue lines indicate less frequently used routes by Strava users. Dark blue lines fall in the middle. The green line along SR 26 is not part of the heatmap data.
Source: strava.com/heatmap



Opportunities

Wide Rights-of-Way

Othello's streets are very wide, and many of the streets have excess capacity based on current traffic volumes. In other words, there is plenty of publicly-owned space, making it feasible to reallocate more space for sidewalks, bike lanes, and buffers between pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.

Because of this, Othello should consider:

- ♦ Adding bike lanes on streets with sufficient right-of-way
- ♦ Adding parking-protected bike lanes on arterials
- ♦ Making minor changes such as signage, traffic-calming, and sharrows to low-traffic, slow-speed residential routes to make them bike and pedestrian friendly

Street Connectivity

The city's existing street network is largely in a grid pattern, so streets are well-connected with plenty of opportunities for route alternatives and greater accessibility to main routes.

Because of this, Othello should consider:

- ♦ Adding paved pathways to further connect the system of off-street active transportation network
- ♦ Connecting bike and pedestrian infrastructure with major destinations
- ♦ Completing the sidewalk network
- ♦ Improving crossings at strategic locations to ensure safe connections across busy intersections

Flat Terrain

Othello is mostly flat, which makes cycling and walking more attractive options than other, hillier, cities.



Othello Walk Path

The Othello Walk Path creates a 4.8-mile loop around the east-central side of the city. This path was established in the 2000s and funded through Adams County Paths & Trails. More recently, it was included in the Othello Parks and Recreation Plan and the Othello Comprehensive Plan, indicating that it is still relevant.

The existing path consists of a mix of paved pathways and sidewalks. However, the City has an opportunity with this plan to focus on enhancing this loop by providing more paved pathways, improving crossings along the route, and installing wayfinding signage to make the loop trail more accessible and well-known.



Figure 8: Map of the Othello Walk/Bike Path from the Parks and Recreation Plan

Challenges

Auto-Oriented Roadways

Othello, like many small towns, has developed in a pattern that is largely dependent on cars. Streets are wide, but sidewalks are narrow and most buildings are oriented toward parking lots or driveways rather than the sidewalk. This focus on cars can discourage alternative modes of transportation.

Lack of Existing Transportation Options

There is a lack of facilities for people walking and biking in Othello. While there are sidewalks throughout the city, there are also many gaps in the sidewalk network and long stretches without safe pedestrian crossings.

Maintenance and Funding

Funding the development of appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities is always a challenge, as is the funding and logistics of maintenance for these facilities.

Planning Process

Spatial Analysis

A spatial analysis effort was undertaken in order to determine which routes within the city are most vital to the active transportation network. City staff and the planning consultant group looked at a map of major destinations throughout the city, how these destinations are connected by the existing street and pathway networks, and then determined which routes might be most appropriate for various bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure types to subsequently request feedback on from the public and elected officials.

Public Outreach

Public outreach was an important step to ensure that the residents of Othello had a chance

to provide feedback on the vision for active transportation in Othello. The City gathered feedback through multiple methods of outreach, including a community survey, an in-person outreach event, and through multiple check-ins at planning commission meetings.

The survey was conducted during summer 2022 to gauge how people in Othello felt about active transportation needs in the community. A total of 218 respondents took the Othello Active Transportation Survey. Additionally, an in-person outreach event was held outside of Walmart on a Friday afternoon in July to ask people what they want to see from the active transportation plan (pictured to the right). Approximately 50 members of the public participated in the in-person outreach event.





Public Outreach Priorities

The following list summarizes the themes that emerged from this public outreach process. These priorities helped establish this plan's vision, goals, and project prioritization.

- 1 Improve existing sidewalks and develop a sidewalk maintenance program to ensure sidewalks and pathways are well-maintained.
- 2 Close gaps in the sidewalk network by adding sidewalks where there currently are none, especially around schools.
- 3 Develop more opportunities to walk and bike on pathways around town.
- 4 Ensure safe crossings on busy streets and near parks and schools.
- 5 Increase traffic calming efforts to slow down car traffic and improve driver behavior.



Vision

The vision for active transportation in Othello combines objectives from the demographics analysis, spatial analysis, existing policy framework, existing conditions, opportunities and challenges, and public feedback. This vision establishes the active transportation conditions that the City will strive for. The subsequent sections of this plan outline how the vision can be achieved by proposing a network, an action plan, and strategies for implementation.

Vision Statement

Othello aims to become a more walkable and bikeable city.

Othello's active transportation network will be safe, interconnected, and accessible, ensuring all who want to use it are able to. The City of Othello will have an established network of sidewalks, paved pathways, and bike lanes to ensure that there are equitable opportunities for people to get around town without needing a car. This network will connect major destinations throughout the city and enhance local and regional mobility. Active transportation routes will be separated from vehicle traffic to the greatest extent possible and they will connect safely across major intersections. Cyclists and pedestrians will be valued and prioritized by the City and its transportation budget, encouraging residents to walk and bike more often, ultimately increasing the level of active transportation use in Othello.



Goals and Policies

GOAL 1: Provide a complete, connected network of sidewalks, pathways, and bike lanes.

- POLICY 1.1 -- Ensure the bicycle and pedestrian facilities connect seamlessly to schools, parks, transit, employment centers, and higher-density neighborhoods.
- POLICY 1.2 -- Prioritize filling in gaps in existing networks, such as sidewalks, to provide continuous facilities and fulfill the Complete Streets Policy outlined in Othello City Code Chapter 11.80.

GOAL 2: Improve safety for people walking and bicycling on city streets.

- POLICY 2.1 -- Improve crossings where active transportation routes intersect with major arterials and where they connect to schools and parks.
- POLICY 2.2 -- Encourage traffic calming measures along all streets within the active transportation network.

GOAL 3: Provide equitable opportunities to access the active transportation network throughout the community.

- POLICY 3.1 -- Encourage amenities along bicycle and pedestrian routes that increase the comfort with using those facilities, such as street trees, lighting, bike racks, benches, and wayfinding/guidance signage.
- POLICY 3.2 -- Regularly monitor the active transportation network to ensure that travel lanes, signs, pavement markings, crossings, and ADA amenities are well maintained and cleared.

GOAL 4: Prioritize, fund, and maintain active transportation projects as the city grows.

- POLICY 4.1 -- Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian improvements where possible during scheduled street maintenance/construction.
- POLICY 4.2 -- Require development projects to provide their fair share of bicycle and pedestrian improvements if they are located along a designated active transportation route. (Othello City Code 16.33.130)
- POLICY 4.3 -- Identify and apply for funding to design, construct, and maintain active transportation facilities.
- POLICY 4.4 -- Include priority bicycle and pedestrian facilities in local improvement plans such as the CIP and TIP.
- POLICY 4.5 -- Where funding and/or time is short, utilize tactical urbanism approaches to initiate pilot projects. This includes installing temporary bicycle lanes, parklets, street furniture, & traffic calming to inspire long-term change and gauge community support.



GOAL 5: Increase awareness of the active transportation network.

- POLICY 5.1 -- Keep an updated map of bicycle and pedestrian routes available on the city's web page.
- POLICY 5.2 -- Develop a unified signage system for identifying routes and access points within the active transportation network that is consistent with established standards.
- POLICY 5.3 -- Once a sufficient network has been developed, organize educational and awareness programs such as a 'Bike to Work Month' to promote and increase the use and safety of active transportation.



Pedestrian Action Plan

It is Othello's goal to ultimately provide safe pedestrian access on nearly every publicly-owned street in the city. This will ensure that getting around town on foot is doable and safe for those of all ages and abilities.

Othello also recognizes that some streets need safe pedestrian access more than others. For example, ensuring there are safe, continuous sidewalks on local arterials is more important than ensuring there are safe, continuous sidewalks on residential streets simply because there is more traffic and faster speeds on the arterials. Because of this, Othello has identified two different priorities for pedestrian routes in town, Priority 1 Routes and Priority 2 Routes, as explained below and as shown in Figure 9.

Priority 1 Routes

Priority 1 Routes are the highest priority pedestrian routes. These follow arterial and collector streets across the city and provide a high degree of connection. These are also busier streets, making it more important that there are safe and continuous sidewalks and crosswalks.

Priority 1 Routes should:

- include a buffer from the vehicle travel lanes wherever possible
- take priority over Priority 2 Routes when filling in sidewalk gaps
- have safe crosswalks and/or crossing signals wherever two Priority 1 Routes intersect

Priority 2 Routes

Priority 2 Routes are all other city streets because pedestrians should have safe access to all parts of Othello. While it will be important to ensure these routes have sidewalks or safe spaces for pedestrians, they are the routes that provide a lower degree of connection, often connecting to residential areas or city outskirts.

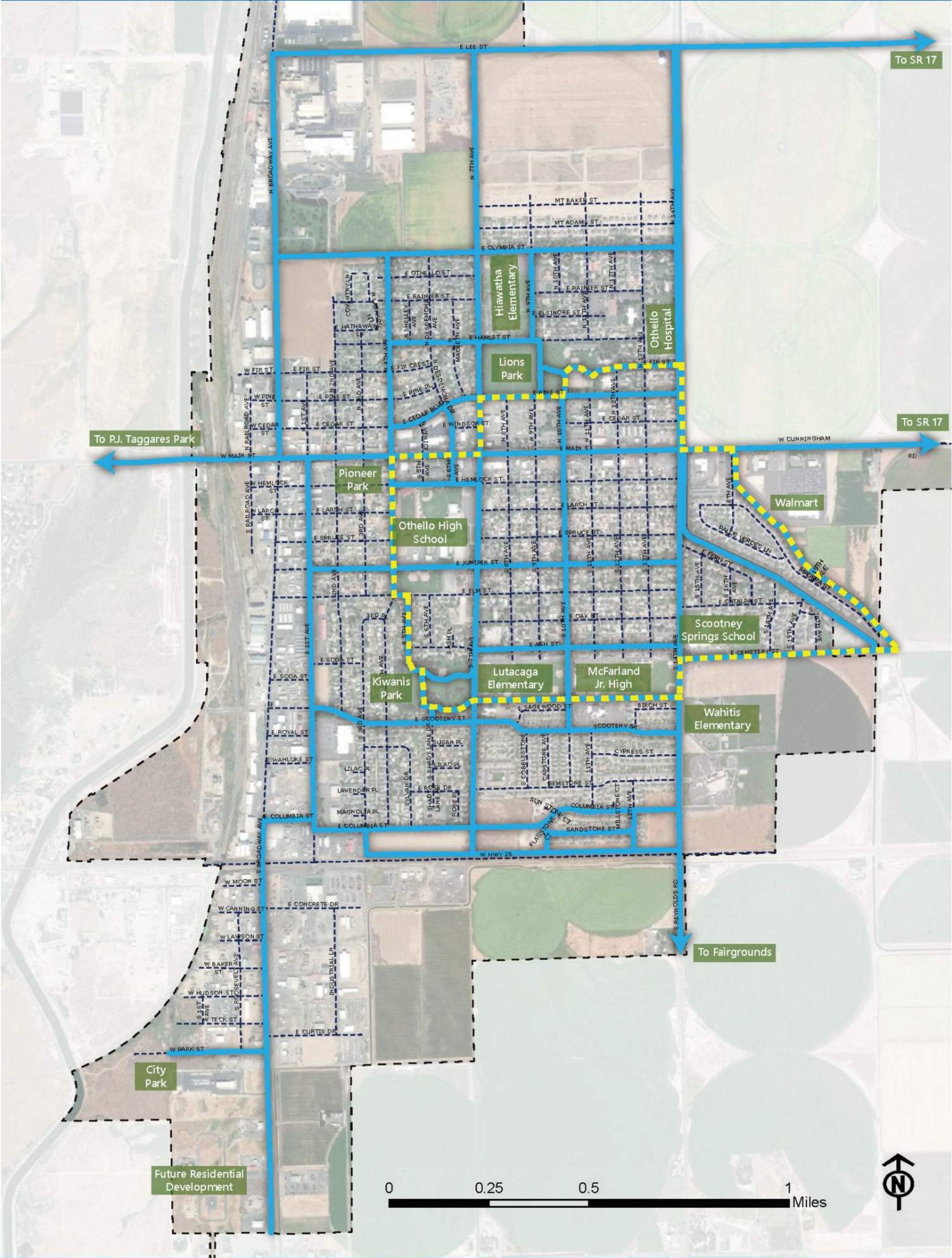
Filling in sidewalk gaps on Priority 2 Routes should be considered whenever other street work is done, or where specific gaps will make a big difference in pedestrian connectivity.

Safe crosswalks and/or crossing signals should be considered where Priority 2 Routes intersect with Priority 1 Routes as some of these intersections may provide beneficial connection points for pedestrians.

Othello Walk Path

Building on the existing Othello Walk Path, this plan aims to enhance this established route to create a safe, accessible, and enjoyable route for walking around Othello. The entire length of the Othello Walk Path is designated as a Priority 1 Route, however this enhanced path will ensure that all sidewalks are buffered from vehicle traffic, street crossings are very safe and visible, and that the route is comfortable, with many areas of shade trees, rest areas with benches and water fountains, and wayfinding signage. This will be the premiere walking route in Othello and maintain an already well-known and established loop.





Othello, WA Pedestrian Network

- Othello Walk Path
- Priority 1 Pedestrian Routes
- Priority 2 Pedestrian Routes
- City Limits

Figure 9: Othello Pedestrian Network

Pedestrian Conceptual Design

The following conceptual designs illustrate a general cross section for the identified facility type. These concept designs focus on the pedestrian realm, and do not represent actual plans and are not to scale.

Residential Street Concept

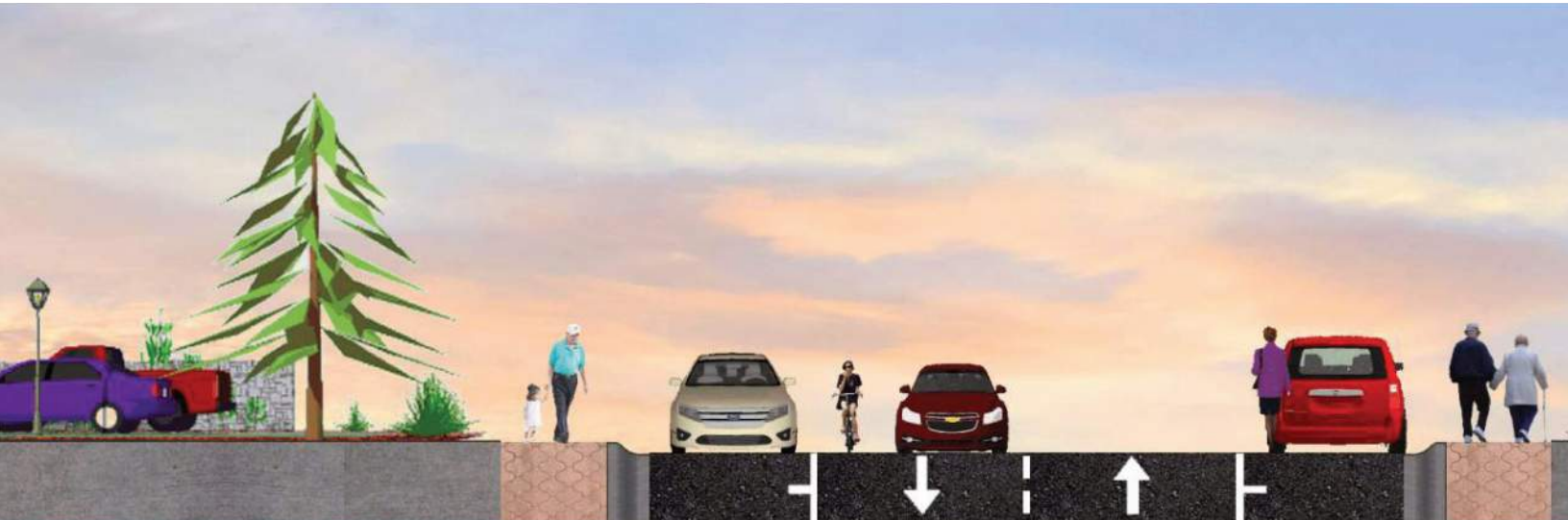


Figure 10: Residential Street Pedestrian Concept

The Residential Street Concept shows what pedestrian facilities should look like on most residential streets in Othello. This concept illustrates a simple residential street with enough curb-to-curb width for street parking on both sides of the street as well as two vehicle travel lanes – one in each direction. Sidewalks should be provided on both sides of the street, conforming to widths provided by Othello’s City Code. Residential streets do not need a lot of changes to become safe streets for pedestrians since there are fewer cars driving by, and often slower speeds.

By providing space for pedestrians on both sides of the street, even in residential areas, Othello will ensure that anyone can get around safely on foot, including children, seniors, and those with disabilities.

Collector/Arterial Street Concept



Figure 11: Collector & Arterial Street Pedestrian Concept

Unlike residential streets, collectors and arterials typically have higher volumes of traffic and higher speed limits. This creates conditions that feel less safe for pedestrians, making it even more important that safe and continuous sidewalks are provided on both sides of the street. It also becomes important to ensure that there is a significant buffer between the vehicle travel lanes and the sidewalks. This buffer can either be a wide shoulder, a street parking lane, or landscape/street furniture buffer, such as pictured in Figure 11.

Figure 11 shows a conceptual cross section of

an arterial street with two travel lanes in each direction and a center turn lane, with no parking lane on the side. Because the vehicle travel lane is so close to the curb, an extra buffer is provided, and can be used for street trees, benches, signage, lighting, utility poles, etc.

This figure is not representative of any particular location in Othello, but simply aims to illustrate that anything that provides a physical buffer between the vehicle travel lane and the sidewalk will greatly increase pedestrian comfort and safety.



An example of a mid-block RRFB crossing with a pedestrian refuge island in Airway Heights, WA

The concept also shows a pedestrian refuge island in the center lane. Pedestrian refuge islands are highly recommended for mid-block crossings or wherever the center turn lane is not needed for a particular section of roadway, such as at a mid-block crossing or where left turns are prohibited. These refuge islands help pedestrians to cross busy streets safely where they need to navigate crossing multiple lanes of traffic in each direction.

The concept also depicts a HAWK crossing signal, like the ones at the intersections of Main Street at 4th Ave and 5th Ave. Othello may decide that there are other locations where HAWK signals are appropriate, but ultimately the City should evaluate the unique context of each crossing location (see the section on “Choosing a Crossing Type” below).

Overall, collectors and arterials should provide buffered, accessible sidewalks on both sides of the street and regular safe crossing opportunities should be provided.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are separated into short term and long term recommendations. Short term recommendations are those that are expected to be more feasible within a 5-6 year timeframe (aligning with the TIP), and the long term recommendations are those that may only be possible in a 10+ year timeframe.

Short Term

- ♦ Fill in the sidewalk gaps along Priority 1 Routes.
- ♦ Improve pedestrian street crossings where Priority 1 Routes intersect each other.
- ♦ Improve the sidewalk, paved paths, and crossings along the Othello Walk Path route.

Long Term

- ♦ Add buffers (or furnishing zones) between the street and the sidewalk along Priority 1 Routes. Buffers may vary in size, and the Small Town and Rural Design Guide recommends furnishing zones of 4-6 feet for proper comfort and aesthetics.

- ♦ Fill in the sidewalk gaps along Priority 2 Routes
- ♦ Connect the pedestrian network to regional networks that connect to nearby communities and the Palouse to Cascades Trail.

Strategies

The following strategies can help inform how best to adapt to different situations and contexts for developing pedestrian facilities throughout Othello. **These are not prescriptive and aim to provide guidance on dealing with different situations.**

Using the existing Right-of-Way

Lanes as narrow as 10 feet do not result in an increase in crashes or reduce vehicle capacity on roads with speeds of 45 mph or less. Narrower lane widths of 10 feet or less can contribute to lower vehicle operating speeds, which can increase safety for all roadway users. Othello has many streets with travel lanes much wider than 10 feet. Some of this extra space could be repurposed for pedestrian infrastructure.

Choosing a Crossing Type

Intersections pose unique challenges to a pedestrian network. Without proper treatment, an otherwise safe network can suffer from intersection crossings that do not properly accommodate pedestrians.

Different types of crossings will be appropriate in different places, but generally the longer the distance to cross and the higher traffic volume on the road, the greater degree of crossing infrastructure needed. Othello aims to provide enhanced crossings wherever two Priority 1 Routes, and will regularly analyze the need for enhanced crossings wherever Priority 2 Routes intersect with Priority 1 Routes.

Othello may consider an array of crossing types, and ultimate decisions about which crossing types to choose will be determined based on the need of the particular intersection based on city and engineering analysis. These crossing types are outlined below.



Crossing Types

1. **Crosswalk Markings (Street Paint & Signs)**

Painted crosswalks provide designated places for pedestrians to cross safely. They indicate pedestrian right-of-way through painted pavement and signage and are appropriate for low-volume intersections and residential streets.

2. **Raised Crosswalks**

These are painted crosswalks that double as speed bumps since they require vehicular traffic to slow down as they drive over the raised crosswalk. This also brings greater awareness to pedestrians attempting to cross at these locations and may be appropriate on low-speed streets with high pedestrian volumes.

3. **Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacon (RRFB)**

The RRFB is an enhanced/active crossing type that allows pedestrians to press a button that activates flashing beacons to let cars know to stop. These are particularly effective as mid-block crossings or at multi-lane crossings with speeds of less than 40 mph and may be appropriate at many locations along arterials.

4. **High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK)**

HAWKs provide a high level of protection for pedestrians. These signals require vehicular traffic to stop long enough for a pedestrian to cross the street. These crossings are ideal for streets with high traffic volumes and multiple lanes in each direction. Othello has found HAWKs to be successful within town, and may choose to increase the number of HAWKs as arterial crossings.

5. **Grade-separated**

Grade-separated crossings separate cars from cyclists and pedestrians. Examples are bridges and tunnels. These are appropriate for locations where it is unreasonable or impossible to slow down vehicle traffic, or where vehicle volumes are very high. They are also options for overcoming barriers such as railroads or rivers/canals, and can be ideal options for paths that aim to provide continuous travel without the need to make stops.

6. **Traffic Control Signal**

Pedestrian crossings at traffic signals are already usually provided. However, bicycle and pedestrian safety should be enhanced by adding bulb outs, crosswalks painted in vibrant colors, and signal timing that prohibits cars from turning while pedestrians and cyclists cross.



Adding Accessory Features

Ideally, pedestrian facilities in Othello will consist of more than just the sidewalk itself. The experience of walking should be comfortable and enjoyable, and there are a few things that can help improve that experience on Othello's streets.

Street Furniture

Street furniture is a broad term that describes the various amenities that people walking on sidewalks can use and/or benefit from. This includes things like benches, drinking fountains, garbage cans, lighting, and signage. By adding street furniture, the City will help increase interest and comfort when walking through town.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding signage helps pedestrians orient themselves within the City, and can make walking around much more comfortable while also keeping

pedestrians on track and not distracted with trying to figure out where to go. Othello should ensure that wayfinding signage is available in both English and Spanish.

Landscaping

Having greenery lining the street makes walking much more enjoyable. Simply adding landscaping in the sidewalk buffer, or street trees along the roadway can make walking feel a lot safer, and can even encourage people to get out and walk more. Street trees also provide shade, which can be extra helpful for pedestrians out walking during the hot Othello summers.

The Role of Trees

Increased Pedestrian Safety

Trees play a role in calming traffic. In 2006, a study was done in Texas of ten urban arterial and highway sites. They compared accident records before and after planting trees. What the study found was a 46% decrease in crash rates after the trees were in place. The trees also helped to slow vehicles by up to 8 miles per hour.¹

Additionally, trees appear to narrow the width of the roadway. Accidents increased by almost 500% within an 8-year period when streets were widened and trees were not present.²

Reducing Heat

It is easily observed that shade cools the temperature for people compared with not having any shade. Trees have started to be recognized as a remedy to the public health concerns that have arisen from increased heat. One way to help keep members of a community from facing dehydration and heat exhaustion, and further caring for and protecting their health, is to provide more spaces where they can cool off. This is especially needed if the hope is for them to use active transportation options.

¹ <https://www.deeprout.com/blog/blog-entries/trees-are-a-tool-for-safer-streets-2/>

² <https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/research/transportation/>



Shaded surfaces may be 20-45 degrees cooler than unshaded materials³. By providing shade along the areas where people are walking and biking, they become more likely to use these forms of transportation.

Shade Protects Pavement

Shade is not only beneficial to humans, but has a positive impact on built infrastructure as well. A study done in Modesto, California showed that streets that were covered with at least 20% shade had 11% improved pavement conditions compared with streets that did not have shade. This translates to a savings of 60% over 30 years.⁴ Valuable infrastructure like sidewalks and streets can be protected and need less maintenance if they have the proper shading.

Increased Walkability

Trees promote feelings of relaxation, and they promote safety. Research done in the US has shown that tree lined streets encourage people to walk more than those without. A study done in Australia concluded that people who perceived their neighborhood as being highly green had a 1.37 to 1.6 times higher odds of better physical and mental health⁵, based on recreational walking being a significant predictor of mental health.

Overall, if the goal is to have increased walking and biking, trees play a valuable role in working toward that objective.

³ <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/using-trees-and-vegetation-reduce-heat-islands#:~:text=Trees%20and%20vegetation%20lower%20surface,peak%20temperatures%20of%20unshaded%20materials>

⁴ <https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/research/transportation/>

⁵ <https://jech.bmj.com/content/62/5/e9>



Bicycle Action Plan

Bike Lanes

Bike lanes are stripes painted along existing roadways that designate space on the street for bicycle use. In Othello, **bike lanes will be prioritized on streets that have higher traffic volumes or faster speeds** to help cyclists maintain distance from fast-moving cars.

Bike lanes can come in many different forms, and the decision to add bike lanes to streets in Othello will require looking at the specific context of the project and determining what is feasible. For example, it may be possible on streets with higher speeds and traffic volumes, to include a buffered bike lane, as pictured in Figure 12, which is a bike lane with a painted buffer between it and the vehicle travel lane, helping provide space for safety between bikes and cars. The Small Town and Rural Design Guide⁶ states that buffers should be a minimum of 18 inches wide.

Alternatively, bike lanes can be fully separated from the vehicle travel lane by including a physical barrier between the bike lane and vehicle travel lane, as pictured in Figure 13. This can take multiple shapes, including a parking lane, where the parked cars provide a physical buffer, or some other sort

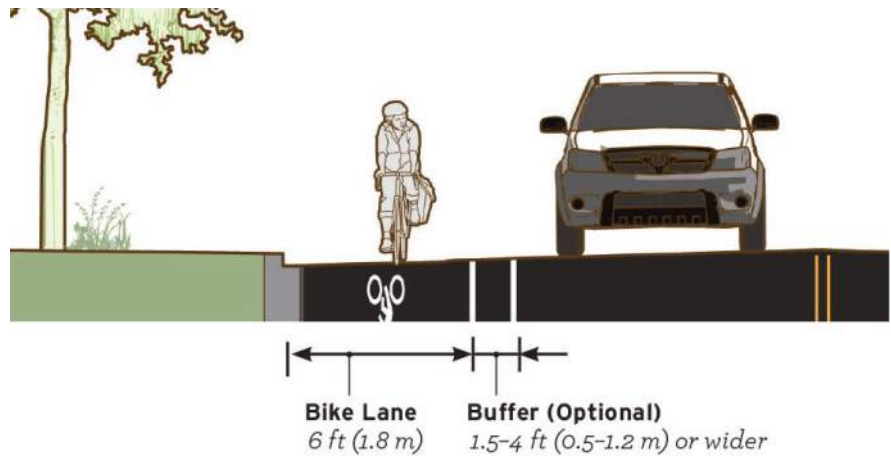


Figure 12: Bike lanes establish an area for exclusive bicycle use outside the path of motor vehicles.
Source: ruraldesignguide.com

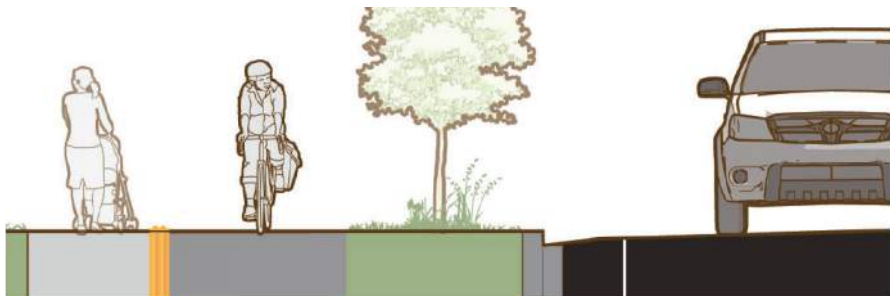


Figure 13: The use of physical separation with vertical elements, unpaved separation, or detectable edges may be more effective than painted buffers.
Source: ruraldesignguide.com

of physical separation such as bollards, planter boxes, or concrete (jersey) barriers. Separated bike lanes are best for high-speed, high-volume streets.

These various types of bike lanes should be considered, and the safety of the cyclists should be top priority when adding bike lanes to existing streets. **The safer the bike lane, the more likely it is to be used.**

⁶ <https://ruraldesignguide.com>



Bike Friendly Streets

Bike friendly streets are designated bike routes along low-traffic, slow-speed streets. These are often residential streets that connect across town. Some bike riders, such as kids riding to school, may already use these routes because of their calm and safe nature.

By designating these streets as “bicycle-friendly streets”, this plan would help ensure cyclists are continued to be prioritized through investments in safe crossings where these routes cross busier collectors and arterials, sharrows painted on streets to make drivers aware that the road is shared with bicycles (as shown in the example image on the right), and other traffic calming measures where appropriate.

Shared Use Paths

Shared use paths are pathways or trails that allow both bike and pedestrian use. They are the safest facilities for bicycles because they are physically separated from vehicle traffic. These will be prioritized in recreational areas, such as in city parks or along canals, as well as wherever bike infrastructure aligns with roads with speed limits over 35 mph, such as along SR 26.

Future Shared Use Paths

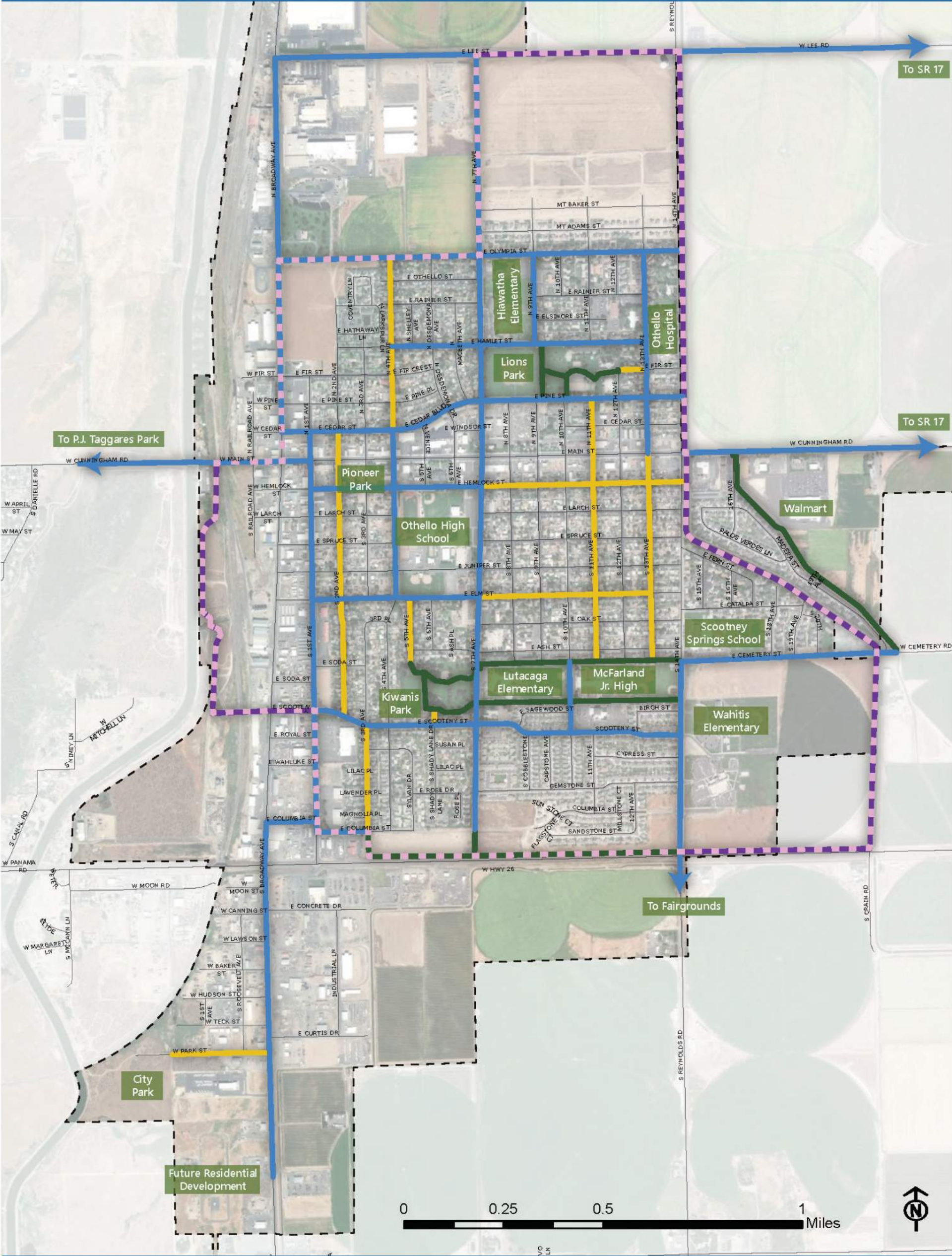
Future shared use paths will have the same characteristics as shared use paths, except these routes will likely take longer to implement. These are long-term projects, but indicate the desire for additional share use paths in and around Othello, helping create a more cohesive and continuous network of bike paths.

Future Othello Bike Loop

The Future Othello Bike Loop will be a 7.1-mile bike loop around the perimeter of Othello, and will consist of a mix of shared use paths and protected bike lanes.

This concept is a long-term project, but is vital to planning for the future of bike infrastructure in Othello. The goal of the Othello Bike Loop is to provide a long, continuous, recreational bike path that allows cyclists to ride further distances without regularly needing to navigate intersection crossings or vehicle traffic.

Share use paths on the Othello Bike Loop will require sufficient buffers between the path and any adjacent or nearby vehicle traffic. Likewise, bike lanes on the Othello Bike Loop will necessitate significant separation from adjacent vehicle traffic to ensure that cyclists feel comfortable and safe while riding on Othello’s premier bike route.



Othello, WA Bicycle Network

- Roads

City Limits
- Proposed Bicycle Routes

Bike Lane

Bike-Friendly Street

Shared Use Path

Future Shared Use Path

Future Othello Bike Loop
- Figure 14: Bicycle Network Map
- 71 of 90

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Bike Infrastructure Conceptual Designs

The following conceptual designs illustrate a general cross section for the identified facility type. These concept designs focus on the bicycle realm, and do not represent actual plans or designs and are not to scale.

Bike Friendly Street Conceptual Design

Bike Friendly Streets are typically low-speed, low-volume residential streets. Bike Friendly means that cyclists can ride anywhere in the street and feel relatively safe and comfortable. These are streets that most would feel comfortable letting their kids ride their bikes to school on.

Bike Friendly Streets can be configured multiple different ways – but the goal is essentially the same: to calm traffic and prioritize cyclists and pedestrians. Cars should feel like guests on these streets, and Othello can develop methods of accomplishing this, such as:

- ♦ Painting bike sharrows on the roadways to help notify drivers to be aware of cyclists
- ♦ Adding signs that indicate the street is a designated bike route – further signaling to drivers that bikes are the priority.
- ♦ Developing traffic calming measures that encourage drivers to slow down.
- ♦ Improving sidewalks, crossings, and other pedestrian facilities that are complementary to cycling infrastructure.

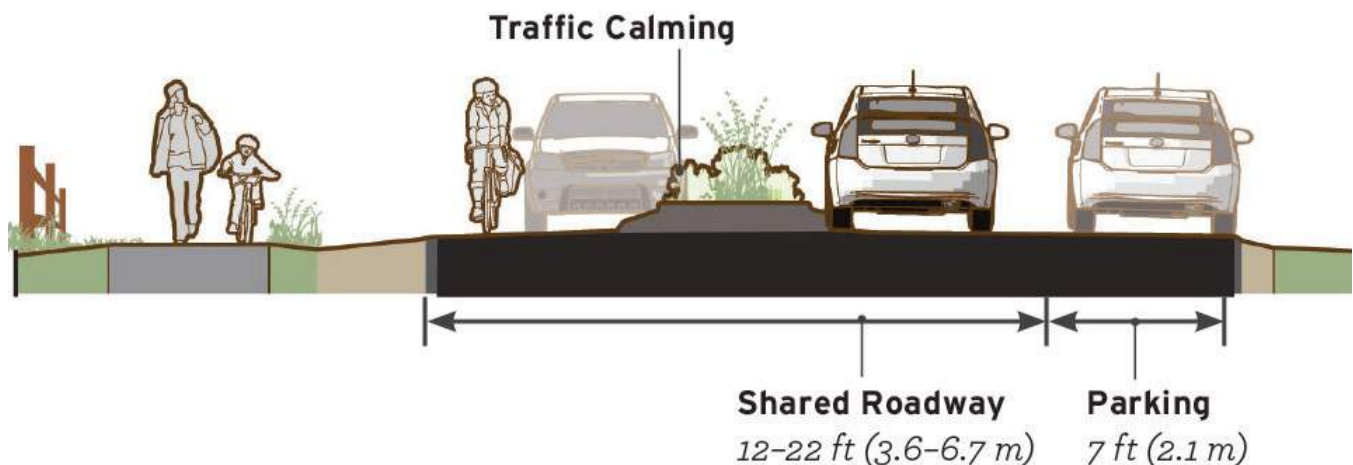


Figure 15: Example diagram with common elements of a bike friendly street.
Source: ruraldesignguide.com

Bike Lane Conceptual Design

As stated earlier, bike lanes come in many different styles and contexts. The two concepts presented here represent the varying degrees of buffers that bike lanes can have from the moving vehicle lanes. Generally, on roads with more lanes of traffic, more traffic volume, and/or faster speeds, the greater the buffer between the vehicle and the bike lane, the better.

Paint Buffer

Painted buffers do little to actually protect cyclists, since there is nothing except paint on the roadway between vehicles and cyclists. Painted buffers do, however, provide cyclists with extra room to maneuver without feeling like they are competing for space with vehicles. Many cyclists may still feel unsafe on these facility types, but a painted buffer may be the most feasible or logical option for certain places in Othello, as determined at the time of project design. By using existing lane space for a painted bike lane, vehicle traffic lanes become slightly narrower, which can have the added benefit of slowing down traffic on these routes.

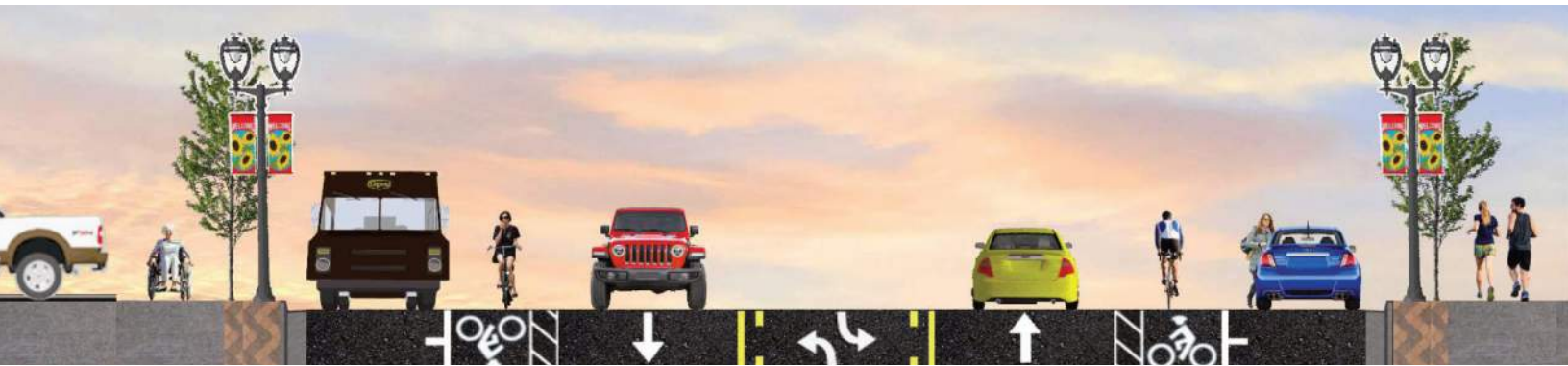


Figure 16: Bike lane with painted buffer.

Physical Buffer

A physical buffer is a material object that separates the bike lane from the vehicle travel lane. This can also take many forms, but a common and more feasible option is the parking lane buffer, as depicted in Figure X. In this situation, the parking lane is painted next to the vehicle travel lane, and the bike lane is designated between the sidewalk and the parking lane. This is one of the more feasible options because it does not require anything more than paint on the roadway, and instead utilizes the need for street parking as a way to keep bikes away from moving traffic. This is preferable over a painted buffer, but uses the same amount of resources: paint.



Figure 17: Bike lane with physical buffer (parking lane).

Other physical barriers could include:

- ♦ Grade separation (bike lane separated by a curb)
- ♦ Bollard buffer
- ♦ Landscape buffer

Bike lane grade separated by a curb



Bollard-protected bike lane

Bike lane with a landscape buffer





Figure 18: Paved Path (Shared Use Path) Concept

Paved Path Conceptual Design

Paved paths, sometimes known as “shared use paths” or “shared use trails”, are the ideal bicycle facility. These paths, such as the part of the Othello Walking Path on the east side of town, allow both pedestrians and cyclists to travel on them without any interference from cars (except where they cross streets).

These are the safest types of bike infrastructure and are safe for all ages and abilities. However, paved paths require more space than any other type of bike infrastructure since they are separated from existing roadways, and must be significantly wider than the average sidewalk to ensure there is enough space for both cyclists and pedestrians. Best practices from WSDOT recommend that shared use paths have a minimum width of 10 to 12 feet.

Othello aims to expand its network of paved paths where there is room and where it is logical and feasible to do so.

Recommendations

Short Term

- ♦ Add bike lanes to designated bike lane routes when completing regular road maintenance work.
- ♦ Improve crossings where bike lanes and paved paths cross arterials and collector streets (see strategies section below)
- ♦ Outline a bike-friendly streets program (see strategies outlined below)
- ♦ Develop traffic calming measures on designated bike routes
- ♦ Implement a Bike Rack Program
 - Include bike rack locations on bike map

Long Term

- ♦ Develop a network of protected bike lanes
- ♦ Develop a wayfinding system
- ♦ Expand the paved pathway network
- ♦ Expand the bike network to new development



Strategies

The following strategies can help inform how best to adapt to different situations and contexts for developing bicycle facilities throughout Othello. These are not prescriptive, and aim to provide guidance on dealing with different situations.

Reorganizing Street Space

Street space can often be reconfigured to accommodate the same capacity of vehicle traffic while also adding safer active transportation facilities. The strategies below offer some examples of reconfiguring streets to accommodate new or safer facilities.

1. In some cases, curbside on-street parking can be shifted away from the curb face to create parking-protected separated bike lanes. This type of project requires changes to pavement markings and attention to intersection design treatments.
2. On streets with parking on both sides, adding bike lanes or shared use trails may not require the removal of all on-street

parking if the parking is not being used efficiently. Deciding where to remove parking may depend on which side of the street has fewer or no businesses.

3. Converting diagonal parking to parallel parking can generate road width for the creation of bikeways and improve bicyclist safety. Front-in, diagonal parking creates conflicts with bicycle travel.

Choosing Alternative Facility Types

When the proposed non-motorized facility type is determined not to be feasible, other facility types which maximize user safety and comfort should be considered. For example, if the preferred facility type is a shared use trail and the current project is a street resurfacing, it may not be feasible for that project to install the shared use trail. The only practical option may be the installation of a bike lane.

In circumstances where the preferred facility type is not feasible, and the provision of a lower quality facility will not provide sufficient safety, a parallel route should be evaluated as an alternative that provides a similar connection.

"If a project is planned on a roadway that is a critical link in the bike network, including the appropriate bike infrastructure should be prioritized as a part of that project."

-FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide

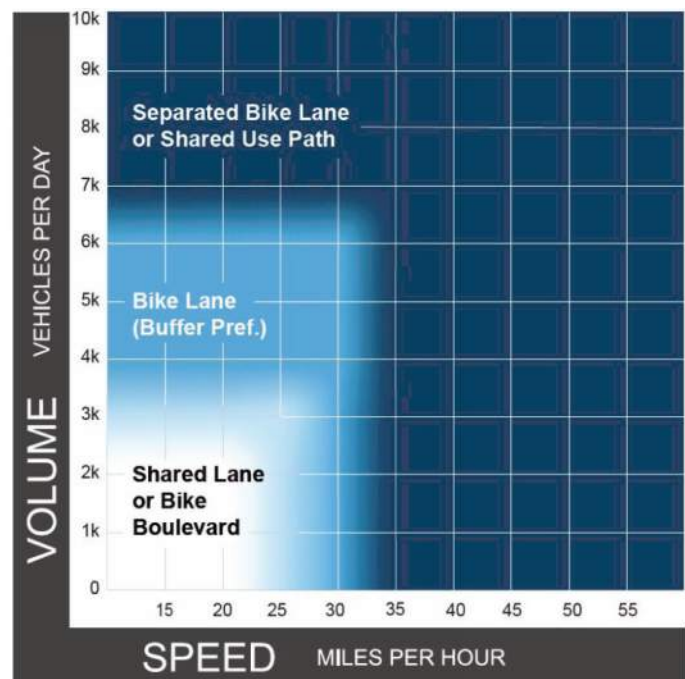


Figure 19: Preferred Bikeway Type Guide
Source: FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide





Installing Pop-Up or Temporary Facilities

Pop-up and temporary facilities can be good demonstration practices that provide immediate and inexpensive solutions. A pop-up bike lane, for example, can show the community what it would be like to invest in a permanent bike lane or path on that segment. Doing this can be a good strategy to gauge the community's reaction to new bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and gain buy-in on projects where some may be skeptical.

These types of projects can be implemented almost immediately because they use inexpensive materials such as traffic cones, pavement tape, planter boxes, and flex delineators.

"[Projects reallocating road space] can be implemented as temporary, or pilot projects to test measures to determine if they meet the needs of all users. This can be an effective strategy to engage community members and build long-term support for more permanent solutions. "

-FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide

Adding Accessory Features

Ideally, bicycle facilities in Othello will consist of more than just the bike lane or paved path itself. The experience of biking should be comfortable and enjoyable, and there are a few things that can help improve that experience on Othello's streets:

Bike Racks

Bike racks are vital to the individual decision of whether to make a trip by bike or not. When people have a safe, convenient place to lock up their bikes, they will be much more likely to choose to travel by bike. Bike racks should be clearly identifiable, and this could even be coordinated with public art efforts. Bike racks should be identified on bicycle wayfinding maps, and the City should consider a bike rack program that works with local businesses to install bike racks outside their business.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding signage helps cyclists orient themselves within the City, and can make biking around much more comfortable. These signs can be coordinated with pedestrian wayfinding.

Safety Programs

Bicycle safety programs may include education and training on how to use the roadway, local and state bicycle laws, advice for being safe on the road, the importance of wearing a helmet, and how to be a respectful driver. Other programs could include local campaigns to get people to bike more often, such as a "Bike to Work Week" or a Helmet Distribution event. It is important to get the community involved and make them feel like a part of the changes in town, and show people how these efforts to improve cycling in Othello will be beneficial to them and their families.

A bike friendly street program would help Othello gain momentum in creating a network of bike friendly streets, with support and assistance from the community. A bike friendly streets program could involve

- ♦ Choosing the first bike friendly routes on the Bicycle Network Map to become bike friendly streets.
- ♦ Identifying funding for small interventions on these routes such as bike sharrows and signage.
- ♦ Continue to monitor and improve traffic calming measures along these streets.
- ♦ Hosting events such as a ["Summer Parkways"](#) that gets community members out biking around these streets.



Speed Management and Traffic Calming

Othello should refer to the Small Town and Rural Design Guide for best guidance on traffic calming measures. The guide outlines strategies such as speed humps and speed tables, mini roundabouts, pinch points, lateral shifts, median islands, speed feedback signs, and speed reduction markings.

The guide also discusses the benefits of traffic calming, highlighting the graphic below that shows how much safer streets with slow speeds are for pedestrians (and cyclists).



Figure 20: Impact speed and a pedestrian's risk of severe injury or death
Source: ruraldesignguide.com

Accommodating for Bikes in Street Crossings

Cyclists must also be considered in crossing improvements. Crosswalks, RRFBs, and HAWK signals that align with sidewalks may be difficult for cyclists to access. Therefore, Othello should consider placement of crossing infrastructure on arterials and collectors to be accessible by both pedestrians and cyclists on routes where the two align.

The Small Town and Rural Design Guide provides the following guidance for accommodating bike lanes at intersections:

Design strategies for bike lanes at intersections emphasize reducing speeds, minimizing exposure, raising awareness, and communicating right-of-way priority.

- ♦ *Under most conditions, bicyclists have priority over turning traffic. Markings and signs should support this priority and remind motorists of the obligation to yield.*
- ♦ *Adjacent to a through-right lane, use a modified R10-15 Turning Vehicles Yield to Bikes sign to clarify user priority.*
- ♦ *Where a right-turn lane is established to the right of a bike lane, R4-4 Begin Right Turn Lane Yield to Bikes sign reminds motorists to yield to bicyclists before entering the lane.*
- ♦ *Where special emphasis is desired, green pavement color may be used within bike lanes and at merging or weaving areas where motor vehicles may cross bike lanes. For more information on the use of color, refer to FHWA Interim Approval 14 2011.*

Funding Opportunities

There are various funding strategies and grant opportunities to pursue to complete projects in this plan. The City of Othello should monitor these opportunities regularly to ensure grant deadlines are met and program funding is identified well in advance of the proposed project development. The funding strategies listed here are just some of the options available, so looking for funding opportunities outside of this list will be beneficial to the development of the non-motorized network.

Taxes

Property Taxes

County governments collect property tax levy for the County Road Fund . The County Road Fund is limited to no more than \$2.25 per \$1,000 of assessed value to be used for “proper county road purposes.” These purposes include establishing, laying out, constructing, altering, repairing, improving, and maintaining county roads, bridges, and wharves for vehicle ferriage.

Would the City have access to the County Road Fund?

Motor Vehicle Fuel Taxes (MVFT)

The 49.4 cents/gallon gas tax revenues collected by the state are shared among cities, counties, and WSDOT. This includes a dedication of a portion of the MVFT to grant programs managed by the County Road Administration Board (CRAB) and the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB). MVFT funds the following grant programs:

- Non-motorized vehicle tax. A portion of County’s motor vehicle fuel taxes are reserved for path and trail projects. This reserve is a percentage of motor vehicle fuel tax that can only be spent on non-motorized projects.
- Transportation Improvement Board (TIB). A small portion of the MVFT fund goes toward funding TIB.

Would the City have access to MVFT/non-motorized funds? Or only available at County level?

Sales and Use Tax for Public Facilities in Rural Counties

Monies collected in rural counties for the purpose of financing public facilities that serve economic development purposes in the rural county. These projects may include transportation improvements. Funded projects must be listed in the county or city economic development plan, comprehensive plan, or capital facilities plan.

Expand on this. Which agency is this through?

Adams County Paths and Trails Fund

Is anything available to the City?

Transportation Benefit Districts (TBD)

Cities and counties may establish TBDs to fund capital improvements and operations of transportation systems. Creation of the district requires a public hearing and a finding of public benefit for the formation. TBDs fund projects through voter-approved tax levies, bonds, sales taxes, motor vehicle fees, tolls, LIDs, and other fees.

Private Development Fees

A local source is from fees that are collected from a development that must provide mitigation for intersection or road improvements to meet transportation concurrency requirements.

Clarify if programs are sub-headings of TBD



Does CERB fund bike/ped improvements? Does Adams County have any of these funds to pass on, or is it all through QuadCo, our RTPO?

Recreation Trails Program

This is a FHWA program that develops and maintains recreational trails and trail-related facilities. Funds for this program are from the Federal Highway Trust Fund and represent a portion of the motor fuel excise tax collected from non-highway recreational fuel use (snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, off highway motorcycles, and off-highway light trucks).

Federal Public Lands Access Program

This program funds transportation improvements that provide access to, on, or adjacent to federal lands. This program is an updated version of the Forest Highway Program. Transportation improvements may include public roads, bridges, trails, or transit systems.

Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB)

CERB is a state board focused on economic development through job creation in partnership with local governments. The Board has the authority to finance public infrastructure improvements that encourage new private business development and expansion. In addition to funding construction projects, CERB provides limited funding for studies that evaluate high-priority economic development projects. Rural communities may receive loans and grants for public infrastructure to enable future business development – all the jurisdictions in QUADCO qualify as a rural county or rural community.

WSDOT Funding

Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – Adams County / WSDOT Local Programs

- ♦ Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds can be used for the widest range of transportation projects including street or sidewalk construction projects, design, and right-of-way acquisition projects, etc.
- ♦ Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds can only be used for bike and pedestrian facilities and programs, trails, some historic preservation projects related

to transportation, some environmental mitigation activities, etc.

- ♦ Funding priorities and project selection process are established by the funding agency (Adams County). STP and TAP funds have different requirements as to which facilities are eligible based on functional classification and project type, with greater flexibility for TAP funds than STP. Putting any federal money onto a project – even a very small amount relative to the rest of the project funding – effectively federalizes the entire project and all monies must be used in ways that meet federal reporting and accounting requirements and the project must comply with all federal standards for design, testing, and record keeping. A project designed with federal funds must go to construction within 10 years or else the earlier expenditure of funds must be repaid. Any federally-funded project other than a planning project must be managed by an agency certified by Highways and Local Programs for this purpose. Federally-funded projects have a minimum 20% local match requirement.
- ♦ For more information: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/localprograms/programming/stp.htm>

Pedestrian and Bicycle Program – WSDOT, Local Programs

- ♦ The Pedestrian and Bicycle Program objective is to improve the transportation system to enhance safety and mobility for people who choose to walk or bike. Since 2005, the program has awarded \$72 million for 159 projects from over \$337 million in requests.
- ♦ WSDOT issues a call for projects in the “even year” before the new biennium for selection by the legislature. For example, the application period closed in June 2020 for projects to be considered for funding in the 2021-2023 biennium. The most recent call for projects was in 2022. All public agencies in Washington are eligible to apply.
- ♦ For more information: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/support-local-programs/funding-programs/pedestrian-bicycle-program>



How could we use this for bike/ped improvements?

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

- ♦ The WSDOT Safe Routes to School program provides technical assistance and funding to public agencies to improve conditions for and encourage children to walk and bike to school. Eligible projects include infrastructure improvements within two miles of a school and education/encouragement projects.
- ♦ No match requirement but priority is given to projects with cash or in-kind match.
- ♦ The grant cycle is every two years. The most recent application was due June 2022.
- ♦ For more information: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/support-local-programs/funding-programs/safe-routes-school-program>

Regional Mobility

WSDOT provides a grant program for projects that promote multimodal transportation and improve high occupancy travel in order to reduce travel delay for people and goods. Projects can be capital construction, equipment acquisition, and operating. Most projects are transit-related in this program.

Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) Funding

Complete Streets Funding

- ♦ The Complete Streets Award is a funding opportunity for local governments that have an adopted complete streets ordinance. Board approved nominators may nominate an agency for showing practice of planning and building streets to accommodate all users, including pedestrians, access to transit, cyclists, and motorists of all ages and abilities.
- ♦ This program awards grants every two years, starting in 2017. Agencies with an adopted complete streets ordinance should confirm their eligibility.
- ♦ For more information: <http://www.tib.wa.gov/grants/grants.cfm>

Washington State

Department of Commerce Funding

Building Communities Fund

- ♦ This funding source provides grants for nonresidential community and social service capital projects. Eligible applicants must be registered as a nonprofit organization in the state of Washington with a legally constituted board of directors. The goal is to improve the economic, social, and educational climate in economically distressed communities. The program can defray up to 25% of eligible capital costs; there is no minimum or maximum grant award. Awards are of state funds.
- ♦ Commerce issues a call for projects in the “even year” before the new biennium. For example, the application period closed in August 2020 for projects to be considered for funding in the 2021-2023 biennium. The next funding opportunity will open in Fall 2022.
- ♦ For more information: <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/building-infrastructure/capital-facilities/building-communities-fund/>

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

- ♦ One of the CDBG opportunities most pertinent to Othello's Active Transportation Plan efforts:
- ♦ General Purpose Grants can be used for the planning or construction of public infrastructure such as streets and sidewalks, community facilities that serve lower income populations, affordable housing, and economic development projects. Application materials are available in March and due in June.
- ♦ CDBG funds can be used as local match for other federal or state grant programs used to fund CDBG-eligible activities.
- ♦ For more information: <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/current-opportunities/community-development-block-grants/>



Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)

Land and Water Conservation Fund

- ♦ The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides funding to preserve and develop outdoor recreation resources, including parks, trails, and wildlife lands.
- ♦ Applications are due annually in the spring.
- ♦ For more information: <https://rco.wa.gov/grant/land-and-water-conservation-fund/>

Volunteers and Donations

- ♦ While the local community may have limited funding resources to tap for capital

improvement projects, a number of the projects developed in this plan would be appropriate for smaller-scale contributions from businesses and civic boosters, as well as provide opportunities for community involvement either for-hire or as volunteers on the design and/or installation.

- ♦ Local artists can be used in the design and fabrication of signage and wayfinding features.
- ♦ Local contractors or vendors may be appropriate for some of the smaller projects, trail furnishings, art and signage installation, landscaping and painting.
- ♦ There are a number of opportunities to partner with private property owners to enhance the streetscape or view corridors where there is no clear demarcation between the public right of way and private property.

Table 1: Funding Opportunities by Facility Type

Facility Type	Recommended Funding
Shared Use Trails	Funding opportunities for shared use trails come from complete streets opportunities, WSDOT funding, and increase opportunities for regional mobility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Surface Transportation Block Grant Program ♦ Regional Mobility ♦ Complete Streets Funding
Bike Lanes	Bike lanes are funded mainly through larger program scopes and are a subset of why funding could be awarded to a project. WSDOT and Commerce have opportunities that integrate diverse modes of travel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Surface Transportation Block Grant Program ♦ Pedestrian and Bicycle Program ♦ Community Development Block Grants
Sidewalks	Sidewalks can be funded through a variety of programs. The more connections that are made, such as schools, parks, low income residential districts, the more funding is available. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Sidewalk Improvements Fund ♦ Pedestrian and Bicycle Program ♦ Community Development Block Grants
Routes to Schools	Connections to schools, neighborhoods, essential services, and parks have a variety of funding options through WSDOT, Commerce, TIP, and others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Safe Routes to School ♦ Small City Sidewalk Program ♦ Building Communities Fund ♦ Community Development Block Grants

update table based on
funding section updates



Conclusion

Othello is looking toward the future and planning for population growth and economic changes. This growth and change will come with increased pressures on the transportation system. Othello hopes to become a safer, more accessible city to help accommodate and capitalize on this growth. A very big part of this will be creating safer streets for all community members, and a big part of that is ensuring safety and accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians.

By moving forward toward these proposed facilities, networks, and strategies, Othello will be able to achieve the vision stated in this plan.





City of Othello
Building and Planning Department
November 2022

Building Permits			
	Applied	Issued	Final
Residential	8 ¹	10 ⁴	8 ⁷
Commercial	2 ²	2 ⁵	2 ⁸
Industrial	0	0	0
Total	10	12	10

¹ 1 new single family, 1 garage, 3 HVAC, 1 reroof, 1 stucco, 1 repair of damaged wall
² Plumbing at Othello Inn & Suites
⁴ 1 new single family, 2 single family foundation permits, 4 HVAC, 1 reroof, 1 stucco, 1 repair of damaged wall
⁵ STCU new building, Plumbing at Othello Inn & Suites
⁷ 2 single family foundations, 1 ADU, 1 patio cover, 1 reroof, 1 stucco, 1 fence, 1 pool
⁸ Lep-Re-Kon reroof, Post Office HVAC

Inspections

- The Inspector completed 86 inspections in November, including 14 rental inspections.

Land Use Permits		
Project	Actions in November	Status as of November 30
Charan Short Plat	No action (Prelim plat approved in June, owner put on hold in Sept.)	Next steps will be sidewalk and final plat.
M. Gomez Boundary Line Adjustment (Matching lines with businesses at 724-728-740 E. Main St)	No change (BLA approved in April.)	Waiting for copy of recorded BLA
Ochoa Short Plat	No change (Deferrals heard at Aug. 2021 Planning Commission meeting.)	Waiting for proposed covenant language from applicant's attorney, as specified in PC recommendation.
Sand Hill Estates #4 Final Plat	Remaining application items submitted. Determined complete. Routed for review. Engineering presented street and utility improvements to Council for acceptance	Comment period ends Dec. 14
Sand Hill Estates #5 preliminary plat	MDNS issued. Prepared deviations/deferrals for review by Planning Commission. Created Zoom link & QR code for remote hearing.	Public hearing scheduled for Dec. 5.

Land Use Permits		
Project	Actions in November	Status as of November 30
	Public hearing letters sent (English/Spanish). Staff report for Hearing Examiner.	
Story Rentals Short Plat (Ace Hardware)	Revised drawing submitted. Notice of Incomplete issued.	Proponent working on getting application items together.
Wahitis Short Plat	(History: May 2019 Plat approved. Dec. 2019 Scootney street/utility improvement plans approved by City. 5/26/20 USBR notified School District that it will be about a year before they have time to review it. Dec. 2021 OSD received paperwork releasing the USBR easement, but it had some errors that will need to be corrected by USBR.)	No change: Street improvements must be completed or bonded before accepting mylars for recording. USBR issues must be resolved before street improvements can proceed.

Rental Licensing & Inspection Program

- One new application was applied for and approved in November.
- There were 14 inspections at 3 sites in November (2 triplexes and 1 8-plex). None passed.
- 68 locations with a total of 117 units have been fully approved so far.
- There are currently 86 active applications for a total of 188 units in various stages of inspection and correction.

Development Projects

- Building Inspector Tim Unruh continues to manage the contractors and scheduling for the City Hall/Court remodel, painting, carpeting, temporary office relocation, etc.
- Continued meetings with developer about possible master planned development.

Housing

- Consultant provided a draft of the Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) ordinance, which the Planning Commission reviewed and commented on at their November meeting. The Commission will hold a public hearing on the updated ordinance at their December meeting.
- Consultant provided draft of MFTE informational letter to send to other taxing districts.

Parks & Recreation

- Submitted 3 applications to RCO for "Planning for Recreation Access", a new grant program that funds park planning and design work. Applications were for cultural resource reports, planning and designing Taggares Park improvements, and planning and designing a spray park (to be further along at the next grant cycle for construction funds). Grant rankings should be announced by January 15.
- Provided comments on documents for RCO's new Community Outdoor Athletic Facility Fund as part of the Technical Work Group.

Transportation

- Several rounds of review of maps and drafts of the Active Transportation Plan with consultant.
- Reviewed first draft of the Active Transportation Plan with the Planning Commission.

Other

- We continue to request refinements of our Permit Trax program for building and land use permits when we realize something could be done better. The Permit Trax company is always very accommodating and prompt in making updates. In November, we added to the list of inspections that are automatically added when various permit are generated. As part of this, Deputy Clerk Yvonne Hernandez and Deputy Finance Officer Jackee Carlson provided updated translations for the building permit inspection descriptions.
- Building Inspector Tim Unruh has made some suggestions to the City Clerk about how to rearrange the vault to fit more cabinets in.
- Annexation of city-owned properties (Taggares Park, Well 8, old dog pound, canal ROW) took effect Nov. 9.
- Helped review applications and was part of the interview team for the Grant Writer/Administrator.