

# NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT



## Transportation Issues

Providing safe routes of travel for cars, bicycles, and pedestrians is a responsibility and priority for all communities. Examining the Cities of Sharon and Hermitage, found there to be several areas of deficiencies related to crash analysis and access density.

### Intersections and Segments

The review of all signalized intersection throughout the corridor enabled the study team to determine those that should be given further study and review. Operational measures at those interactions that were found to have decreased levels of service should be studied in detail. In addition to the review of those intersections, signal coordination amongst the signalized intersections should be explored. The intersection of Sharpsville Avenue and State Street was mentioned as a point of concern through public input. Through an in-depth, model-based analysis, the results showed that the operation of the intersection is functioning above average.

Regarding the future traffic analysis performed for the corridor, several intersections experienced decreased levels of service. Those intersections could be warranted for additional study and review to determine mitigation and optimization procedures.

### Crashes

Table 6 computes the crash rate for each Character Zone. In comparison to PennDOT acceptable averages, character segment crashes are generally higher than average, especially when evaluated per intersection segments along the corridor. In relation to access management issues, Zone 4 was called upon during public meetings as an area in which the amount of driveways and offset intersection cause issues for drivers and pedestrians alike. The rate reported support this claim. As per the FHWA benefits of access management, the topic of signal spacing is important in reducing congestion, improving travel

Zone	Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)	Signals per Segment	Crashes per Segment	Segment Crashes/Zone (per Million Vehicle Miles)
Zone 1	2,425	3	8	2.01
Zone 2	4,233	6	8	2.30
Zone 3	9,774	7	27	1.23
Zone 4	13,897	0	34	2.58
Zone 5	19,240	5	74	1.56
Zone 6	13,354	2	16	0.99

Table 6: Crash Rate per Zone

time, and most importantly for this part of the study, reduces the instances of crashes. The high number of signals in this short stretch of road can have an effect on the increased rates of crashes.

An Access Management Plan for Zones 4 through 6 will address driveway spacing, shared access, and signal spacing ultimately reducing crash rates in these areas.

A concentration of pedestrian crashes was identified near Sharon Regional Health Systems and the Sharon High & Middles Schools. This area would benefit from a detailed pedestrian plan and upgrades to sidewalks, crossings, and signs in the area.

### Pedestrians

The role of the pedestrian on a corridor such as State Street and Irvine Avenue is vital. When examining the fabric of the communities in Sharon, most of the businesses and structures have minimal setbacks, encouraging pedestrians to walk by and stop in. However, the opposite is generally true in Hermitage. Many businesses are located farther back from State Street with large parking lots in front, encouraging a more automobile friendly environment.

An investigation of the sidewalk network in both Cities shows that Sharon has a connected network, occupying over 90% of the available space given to a sidewalk path. On the other hand, Hermitage has many disconnected sidewalks with the sense of “sidewalks to nowhere.” Many of the sidewalks in the community are now built with new development because of newer building codes. This provides an opportunity for business to begin building sidewalks of their own to connect to the established

paths. Encouraging and providing more options for pedestrians can bring a new crowd of customers to businesses that may not have been seen earlier.

In addition to calculating pedestrian levels of service for each Character Zone, a Walk Score evaluation was performed for each zone. Walk Score is an online service provided by Google that enables users

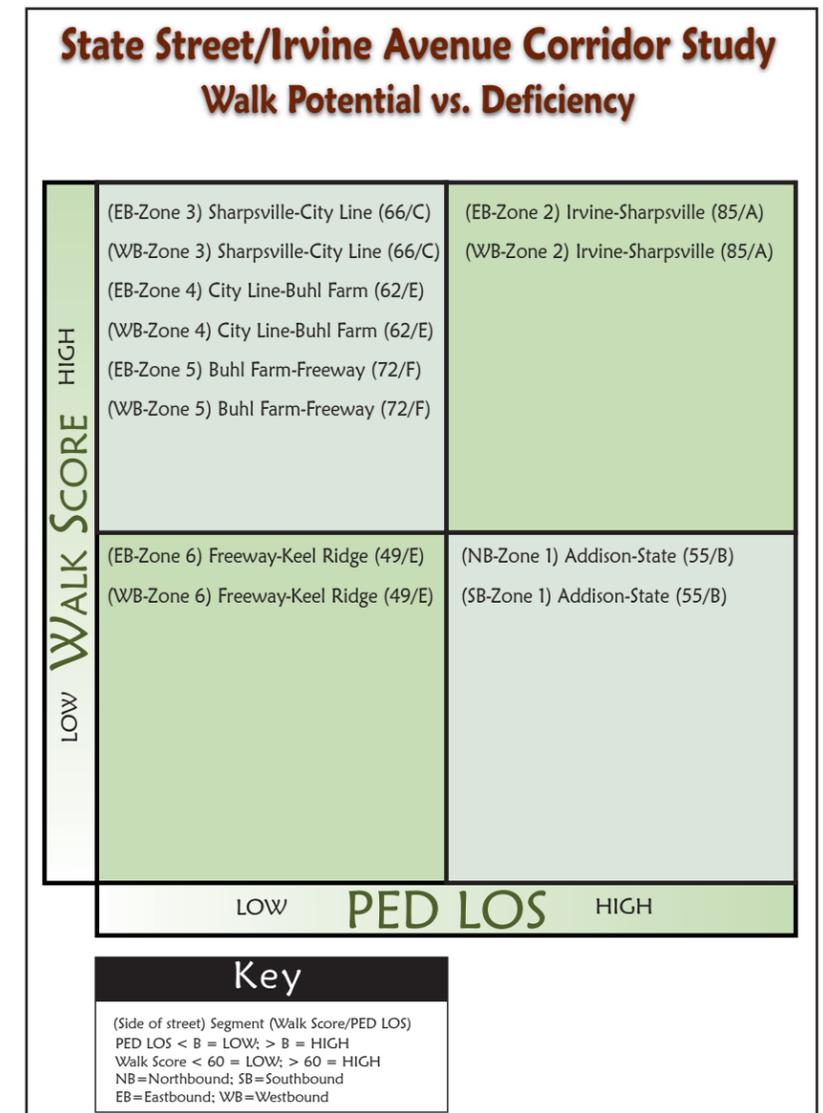


Chart 4: Walk Potential vs. Deficiency

to find walkable places to live. Walk Score calculates the walkability of an address by locating nearby stores, restaurants, schools, parks, etc. Walk Score measures how easy it is to live a car-lite lifestyle. The online software then calculates a score for a chosen address based on a zero to one-hundred scale. All zones analyzed returned scores from 49 to 85. Zones 3 through 5 resulted in higher scores and lower pedestrian levels of service indicating that this area has pedestrian generating services, but a low quality of service. As such, these zones should be designed to support, promote, and enhance pedestrian trips. The results are shown in Chart 4.

## Bicycling

Bicycle safety is judged on the presence or absence of a dedicated bicycle facility, shared lane widths including the on-street parking lane, and the amount of space a cyclist needs to safely maneuver. Other considerations which affect bicycle safety are speed limits, ADT volumes, percentage of heavy traffic, and the number of driveways or obstructions in the public realm.



Bike parking in New York City  
(Source: [www.streetsblog.com](http://www.streetsblog.com))

The State Street and Irvine Avenue corridor lack any form of dedicated bicycle facilities. Zones 1 through 5 provide no shoulder, giving users no comfort zone or room to maneuver. In most cases, the lanes are too narrow for cyclists to share the road, while ADT

volumes in Zones 4 through 6 are high enough that could give users a perceived lack of safety from the automobile. Cyclists, based on their experience levels, may feel more comfortable riding on the sidewalk or on the road.

## Parking

The parking data discussed in the Inventory & Analysis section of this report indicates that there is an adequate supply of parking within the Sharon Central Business District (CBD) to accommodate all of the current uses. However, the distribution of parking throughout the area indicates that patrons choose to park as close to their destination as possible.

There is an opportunity to encourage motorists to choose more remote parking if either the walk to/from their destination is safe, pleasant and inviting. Although public parking signs are helpful in identifying public lots, they do not help visitors reach their destination. A more sophisticated system, a defined wayfinding system, that helps visitors identify where they can park for specific destinations and then assist them in getting there might be needed. The public parking signs could be at the foundation of such a system. Other opportunities for improvements may include:

- *Reframe the parking paradigm* - Most people want to park as close to their destination as possible. Rather than promoting parking based on location alone consideration should be given to promoting it based on walking distance and time. This will take a concerted effort by all stakeholders to deliver a consistent message regarding parking.
- *Strengthen connections to public parking areas* - The experience visitors have along connections between parking and destinations can impact their desire to walk. People are more likely to walk when connections are identifiable, safe, and inviting.

In relation to bicycling opportunities, bicycle parking can be an opportunity for businesses to take advantage of. An average parking space that holds one car can be transformed into a place for up to 12 or 14 bicycle parking bays. This addition by subtraction method could increase individuals travelling to key destinations by more than 10 fold.

## Transit

The existence of the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service is important to those who choose to use alternate modes of travel. Building on the establishment of such a system is important to achieving a completely multi-modal corridor. Buses can be equipped with bicycle racks to allow for a wider range of users.

**”A vigorous five-mile walk will do more good for an unhappy but otherwise healthy adult than all the medicine and psychology in the world.”**

-Paul Dudley White

## Quality of Service/ Character Issues

### Walkability

When evaluating street side pedestrian environments the overall quality of the pedestrian experience is equally if not more important than typical level-of-service (LOS). If pedestrian ways look uninviting or feel uncomfortable people are less likely to use them regardless of whether they meet typical operational standards. In many cases evaluating urban downtown pedestrian facilities, such as State Street in the City of Sharon, using traditional LOS methods has little value because changes to the quantitative variables such as vehicle speed, sidewalk width, and traffic volumes are limited by the physical characteristics of the existing built environment. However, qualitative characteristics such as street trees and furnishings are often improvements that can be added to existing infrastructure and have proven to have positive impacts on walkability.



In suburban commercial strips – like Route 62 in Hermitage – traditional LOS methods can consider and account for the lack of sidewalks whereas most qualitative methods do not. Improving capacity is often possible in newer suburban environments but is typically not required or desirable due to low pedestrian volumes. While an evaluation of the qualitative characteristics of a pedestrian’s enjoyment of the walking experience is important to provide a complete picture of the pedestrian environment and to design an “inviting” sidewalk, it is a separate measure of effectiveness and must be developed and calibrated, if possible, separately from the sidewalk capacity or safety perception measures. Therefore, in addition to LOS, which uses quantitative roadway and traffic variables to describe pedestrians’ perception of safety or comfort, the consultant team also evaluated the Business Route 62 Character Zones using qualitative characteristics.

It is well documented that urban design characteristics such as enclosure, transparency, articulated building facades, and street trees impact people’s desire to walk and their enjoyment on the street. Most notably is Allan Jacob’s 1995 book based on his research of streets and the role they play in urban life. Jacobs describes in great detail the characteristics that are needed to develop “great streets.” His work has led others in countless studies involving qualitative factors and pedestrian comfort.

Qualitative analysis utilizes several factors that are not addressed in customary level-of-service analyses. By carefully evaluating each pedestrian way based on these types of factors, very specific recommendations for improving walkability can be made. For example, if it is documented that a street scored very low on shade trees, then it becomes apparent that the planting of trees is likely to be a promising course of action. Or, if an urban street with buildings close to the sidewalks scores low in regards to transparency then implementing or modifying design regulations with a first floor transparency requirement could help to improve walkability.

The Character Zones (1-3) that include sidewalks were evaluated using the six (6) qualitative factors described to the right. Although Zones 4 and 5 do have segments of sidewalk they were not included in the evaluation because they are newly established and simply lack too many of the qualitative factors to make the evaluation worthwhile.

- **Enclosure/Definition**—Is the degree to which the edges of the pedestrian realm are well defined. Excellent enclosure focuses pedestrians’ eyes along the street and has positive impacts on safety by conveying a feeling of narrowness to motorists, which slows traffic.
- **Transparency**—Transparency is the ability to see through the interface between the public space and private space.
- **Articulated Buildings**— Facades of buildings should add interest to the pedestrian experience through the varied application of materials, design, and color.
- **Buffer from Street**—The presence of a “buffer zone” between pedestrians and moving vehicles enhances pedestrian safety and increases the level of comfort.
- **Shade Trees**—The presence of street trees improves the comfort level of pedestrians by providing protection from harsh weather and helps to define the pedestrian realm.
- **Street Furnishings**—The presence of benches (rest areas) and trash receptacles.

## Evaluation

Each Character Zone was evaluated based on the factors using a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 equal to 'Very Poor', 2 equal to 'Poor', 3 equal to 'Average', 4 equal to 'Good', and 5 equal to 'Excellent'. The scores were tabulated and a mean score for each route was generated. The score for each zone along with opportunities for improvements are listed below.

Character Zone 1: Score 1.8

- » Opportunities: Improve the definition of the sidewalks, plant urban tolerant shade trees, include street furnishings where appropriate.



Walkability (Zone 1)

Character Zone 2: Score 3.5

- » Opportunities: Strategically replace street trees with urban tolerant and commercial district friendly trees and upgrade street furnishings.



Walkability (Zone 2)

Character Zone 3: Score 2.2

- » Opportunities: Improve the definition of the sidewalks in certain locations, plant urban tolerant shade trees throughout, include street furnishings where appropriate.



Walkability (Zone 3)

## Opportunities for Improvement

A topic that was discussed early in the discovery process and one that work has been started on is the idea of gateways. Gateways can act as a first impression for those passing through or visiting the area. They also help with traffic calming and improvements in traffic and pedestrian safety. Areas within the Study Area that have been identified as possible gateway locations are:

- Irvine Avenue and the Ohio State Line;
- Hermitage Road and State Street; and
- Keel Ridge Road and State Street

The Hermitage Rd and State St location is part of the Hermitage Town Center Plan.

Another area that is open for opportunity is street lighting. Residents have expressed their concern regarding the quality of street lighting in Downtown Sharon. The areas that exhibit high volumes of pedestrian activity should be looked at first for lighting improvements.

Wayfinding throughout the corridor has also been an issue discussed at length. Many street signs throughout the length of State St and Irvine Ave show signs of degradation. There are also issues of wayfinding in terms of access to parking and destinations. Those areas that have higher volumes of pedestrians and motorists can be critical locations for improved wayfinding signage that can increase overall safety for all users.

**Dewey Avenue Mixed-Use District Zoning Project**

[c] Landscaped entryway signage or features; and/or  
 [d] Site amenities including, but not limited to, public space, art, clocks, etc.

(2) Prohibited Design Elements  
 [a] Motor vehicle parking;  
 [b] Access drives; and  
 [c] Drive lanes or aisles, except those which provide direct access to a public highway.

3. Building Composition

a. Buildings shall exhibit a clearly defined base, mid-section, and crown. This can be accomplished using a combination of architectural details, materials and colors.

b. Architectural details or features such as dormers, masonry chimneys, cupolas, clock towers, and other similar elements are encouraged.

*A well articulated base, mid-section, and crown can be achieved in all building types and sizes including multi-story buildings, as depicted in the topic illustration, and single-story buildings, as depicted directly above.*

**Code Illustrations & Graphics** - More and more communities across the country are incorporating building and site design standards into their zoning documents. The most effective means to communicate these standards consists of using a combination of words and graphics as shown above. Neither Sharon or Hermitage currently utilizes drawings or illustrations within their zoning codes.

## Zoning & Regulatory Needs & Opportunities

Both cities have strengths and weaknesses associated with their current regulatory framework. Based upon the review of the recent plans and studies and the existing zoning documents for both cities the following needs and opportunities are provided for further consideration:

- 2007 Comprehensive Plan - A Comprehensive Plan forms the legal foundation for a municipality's land use policy and zoning regulations. In other words, the preparation and adoption of a Comprehensive Plan provides the most effective basis for developing or modifying a municipality's zoning ordinance or code. Hermitage has not adopted the 2007 Joint Comprehensive Plan document. As a result, any references to the official comprehensive plan in the zoning ordinance refers to the plan adopted in 1993. The adoption of some or all of the 2007 Plan is an opportunity for the Hermitage to clarify and update its land use policy.
- Access Management - In order to increase driver safety, preserve the market area of existing businesses and to extend the operational life of the roadway, both cities should add access management provisions to their existing land development regulations. These requirements could take the form of an overlay district for East State Street or apply to all non-residential districts in Sharon and Hermitage. Typical access management provisions include driveway spacing standards, limits on the number of driveways permitted per parcel, and cross or shared access requirements.

- Building & Site Design Standards - The commercial zoning districts that encompass the Irvine Avenue/State Street corridor do not contain adequate building or site design standards necessary to achieve a high level of development. It is clear from the recent planning efforts and the public input received during this process that both communities would like future investment to positively contribute to the character of the corridor, enhance the public realm, and foster pedestrian activity. Incorporating appropriate design guidelines and standards into the existing zoning documents for Sharon and Hermitage are an effective approach achieving this goal.
- Landscaping Requirements - As previously stated, Hermitage has extensive landscaping requirements that articulate type and number of plantings, size of trees, and spacing requirements for non-residential uses. Sharon has similar requirements within the TND District. These types of standards could be extended to other districts within Sharon to ensure a more consistent level of landscaping throughout the City.
- Bicycle Parking - Adding a provision that requires bike parking to the off-street parking requirements of both cities.

It should be noted that the City of Hermitage zoning ordinance contains an 18 South Overlay District. This district contains many, but not all of the opportunities identified in this section. It may be appropriate to extend the code elements of this overlay district that are considered successful and beneficial to the East State Street corridor. These elements include:

- Restrictions on front yard parking.
- Access management requirements.
- Building and site design requirements such as maximum setback allotments and transparency requirements.

These needs and opportunities will form the basis of the regulatory recommendations of the final report.

## Programmatic Opportunities

Providing a bicycle and pedestrian friendly environment, as important as it is, cannot solve all bicycle and pedestrian problems. Some safety problems might be more easily resolved through programs than through facilities. Public awareness and education programs are important components when encouraging more people to safely bike and walk.

This section contains examples of several initiatives and campaigns that could be included in bicycle and pedestrian education and encouragement programs. These were selected based on an assessment of the project area and discussion with local stakeholders. Do not necessarily consider these as recommendations but rather opportunities to explore further as this study progresses. Additional programs and initiatives may also be considered.

In order to move these types of programs ahead, it is critically important for a local organization or champion to lead the charge. This is typically a local bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organization. Most successful programs are a collaborative effort between a local advocacy organization, government agencies, and local businesses.

## Education

Education can be a powerful tool for changing behavior and improving safety skills. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists can benefit from educational tools and messages that teach them the rules, rights, and responsibilities of various modes of travel. In addition to programs merely promoting walking and biking, an effort needs to be made to cover such topics as pedestrian and motorist laws. For example, there are Route 62 corridor users that do not understand that motorists must yield to pedestrians crossing at intersections, regardless of whether there is a marked crosswalk in place or not. Others may be confused as to when crossing a street mid-block constitutes

jaywalking. There are numerous education programs and initiatives to help create a safer and more enjoyable street for all users. Below are only a few to consider.

### Share the Road Campaign

A Share the Road Campaign is intended to educate motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians about their legal rights and responsibilities on the road, and the need to increase courtesy and cooperation to improve safety. The program targets all residents and visitors to a community.



Share the Road Road Sign

### Bicycle Light Campaign

A bicycle light give away is an excellent way to promote bicycle safety. Often, light giveaways occur at daylight savings time in the fall when darkness comes earlier. A program like this is typically a collaborative effort that involves sponsors and local police departments.

### Walk Wise Drive Smart Program

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2010 24.8% of the population in Hermitage and 16% in Sharon were over the age of 65. As more Americans reach age 65 and older, safety concerns for senior pedestrians are growing. Walking is



Walk Wise/ Drive Smart

a key to maintaining physical and mental well being and it enables senior adults to stay connected to their community, but several fears and dangers keep elderly adults from walking. Walk Wise, Drive Smart is a program in Hendersonville, North Carolina that combines educational, encouragement, enforcement and environmental activities to create a safer and more inviting walking community for seniors.

### Wayfinding Signage Program

Wayfinding pertains to directional signs, distance markers, posted maps, information kiosks and other aides for getting people places. Pedestrians and bicyclists are more apt to walk and ride in places where they can easily find their destinations. A wayfinding sign system can help all road users including motorists find their way.

### School-aged Children Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Education

As recommended in the PA 18 Planning and Transportation Study, the Hermitage School District should consider investigating the possibility of introducing pedestrian safety curriculum to students as part of physical education and/or health and wellness classes. According to the Study, the Northwest Regional Highway Safety Network is a



School Children



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comprehensive safety project funded by PennDOT’s Bureau of Highway Safety and Traffic Engineering and administered through the Erie County Department of Health has a grant program that might be able to assist with a program.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has developed age-appropriate education programs to provide parents, caregivers, teachers, community leaders, and children with tools to learn the important basics about bicycle safety. Other opportunities for bicycle safety education include bicycle rodeos and helmet campaigns.

### Encouragement

Sometimes providing improvements to the pedestrian and bicycle environment is just not enough to get people to walk and bike more. Improvements are most effective when combined with programs and initiatives that not only educate the public about walking and biking but also encourage people to actual walk and bike.

### Health Benefits of Walking and Biking

There are numerous programs and campaigns emphasizing the health benefits associated with walking and biking. With childhood obesity at the forefront of many public health discussions, programs are aimed at getting children moving. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership works with local communities to get more children to walk and bike to school safely. Prioritized walking route maps can be handed out to parents and school children to encourage safer and more enjoyable trips to and from school. Strengthening social relationships between one another can provide a base to promoting healthy living.

### Save Money

While walking is free and bicycling can be very economical, car ownership is expensive and consumes a major portion of many residents’ income. A program to promote the economic benefits of walking and biking should be considered.

### Bike/Walk to Work Day

In New Hampshire a Bike/Walk to Work Day capped off a week-long, statewide Commute Green NH Challenge, which encouraged not only bicycling and walking, but riding transit and carpooling too. People that left their car at home received free breakfast and other rewards.

### Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements (PSA) can provide accurate and current information to the public. PSAs are valuable as they are versatile and can reach a large audience on pedestrian and bicycle issues, education, and announcements. One challenge is that PSAs can be costly and may not reach the intended audience. A low-cost approach may not be as effective as utilizing a public relations firm and purchasing advertising time targeted to a specific audience.



Commute Green New Hampshire

“Public participation, supporting the population’s commitment and guidance to urban planning actions, is of utmost importance in the development process and transformation of the cities for the future.”  
- World Academy of Science, 2009



Project Website

## Public Outreach Results

Meaningful community participation is critical in developing a reality based plan with support from elected officials, local residents, business owners, and property owners. A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was developed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services and public meetings. In order to gather meaningful public input, the Consulting Team will employ the following methods outlined in the PIP:

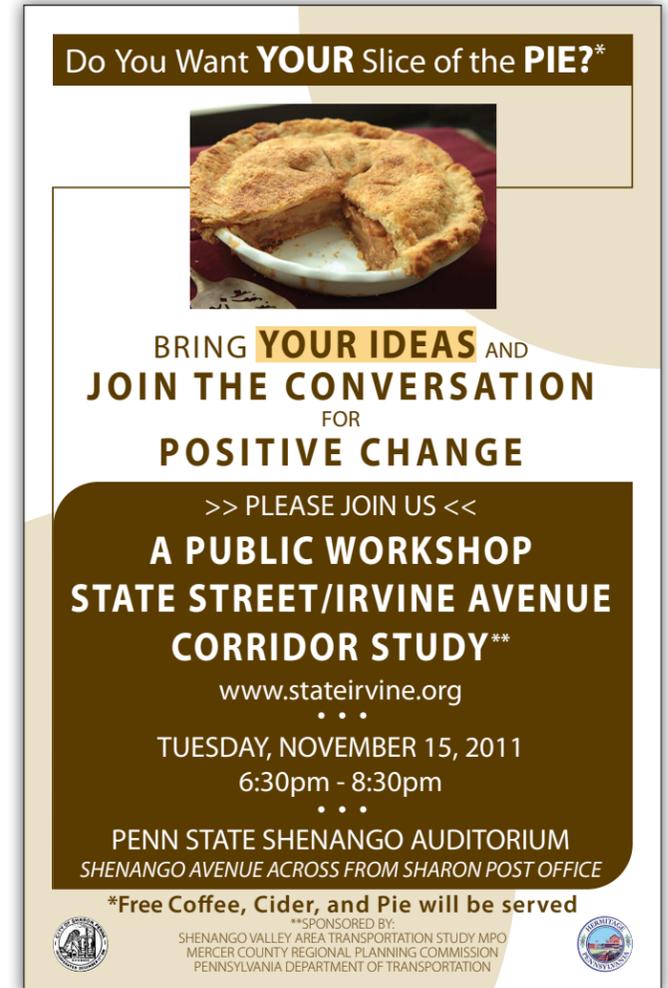
- Steering Committee Meetings
- Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Meetings/ Discussions
- Presentations for Elected Officials
- Meetings with Stakeholder Groups (e.g. Sharon School District Officials, churches, social organizations, emergency service providers)
- Youth Workshops
- Public Discovery Workshop (November)
- Community Open House
- Public Presentation of Final Plan

- Project Website
- QR Code
- Facebook Page
- Twitter
- Surveys
  - Community Preference Survey
  - Online Survey
- Media
  - News articles
  - Radio
  - TV
- Community Event
- Flyers, project poster, etc.

Results of the input received through the public involvement process are included in the appendices as well as summarized on the following pages.

## Discovery Workshop

The study team held a public discovery workshop on Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the Penn State Shenango Auditorium. Approximately 20 knowledgeable and engaged citizens attended the workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to solicit input on the overall effectiveness, safety and comfort of the transportation system within the study corridor and the overall appearance of the study corridor. Members of the community have shared valuable opinions and insights regarding pedestrian and bicycle circulation and connectivity, parking availability and proximity, traffic congestion and safety throughout the corridor. Issues surrounding pedestrian crossings in the vicinity of the Case Avenue Elementary and Sharon Middle and High Schools as well as Sharon Regional Health System, and the overall appearance of the corridor were also discussed. The information gathered at the various meetings, interviews and workshop has proven to be instrumental in identifying issues, opportunities, and the potential for improvements all along the corridor.



Discovery Workshop Announcement Flyer

## How Important Is Function vs. Form?

Land uses and the built environment often create a sense of place along highways, and the most important places are usually located near the center of a settlement or built up area. The importance of movement of motor vehicles can vary along the length of a highway and can change over time. Movement and place considerations are important in determining the appropriate design speeds, speed limits, and road geometry. Similarly, the form and character of the adjacent context must also be considered. As the importance of movement increases, the emphasis on place can take on less importance. Alternatively, as the importance of place and character increase, the emphasis on vehicular movement diminishes and becomes secondary to maintaining the qualities and features of a place. During the Discovery Workshop each resident was asked to mark on the Movement vs. Place graph their view of the corridor's role in the future, this exercise was completed for each of the six Character Zones. Chart 5, on the following page, illustrates results of this survey. The consensus indicates that overall, the corridor currently has more of an emphasis on vehicular movement than sense of place. Based on an analysis of data obtained at the workshop, there is a desire to place more emphasis on the corridor having a sense of place than serving as a conduit for vehicular movement.

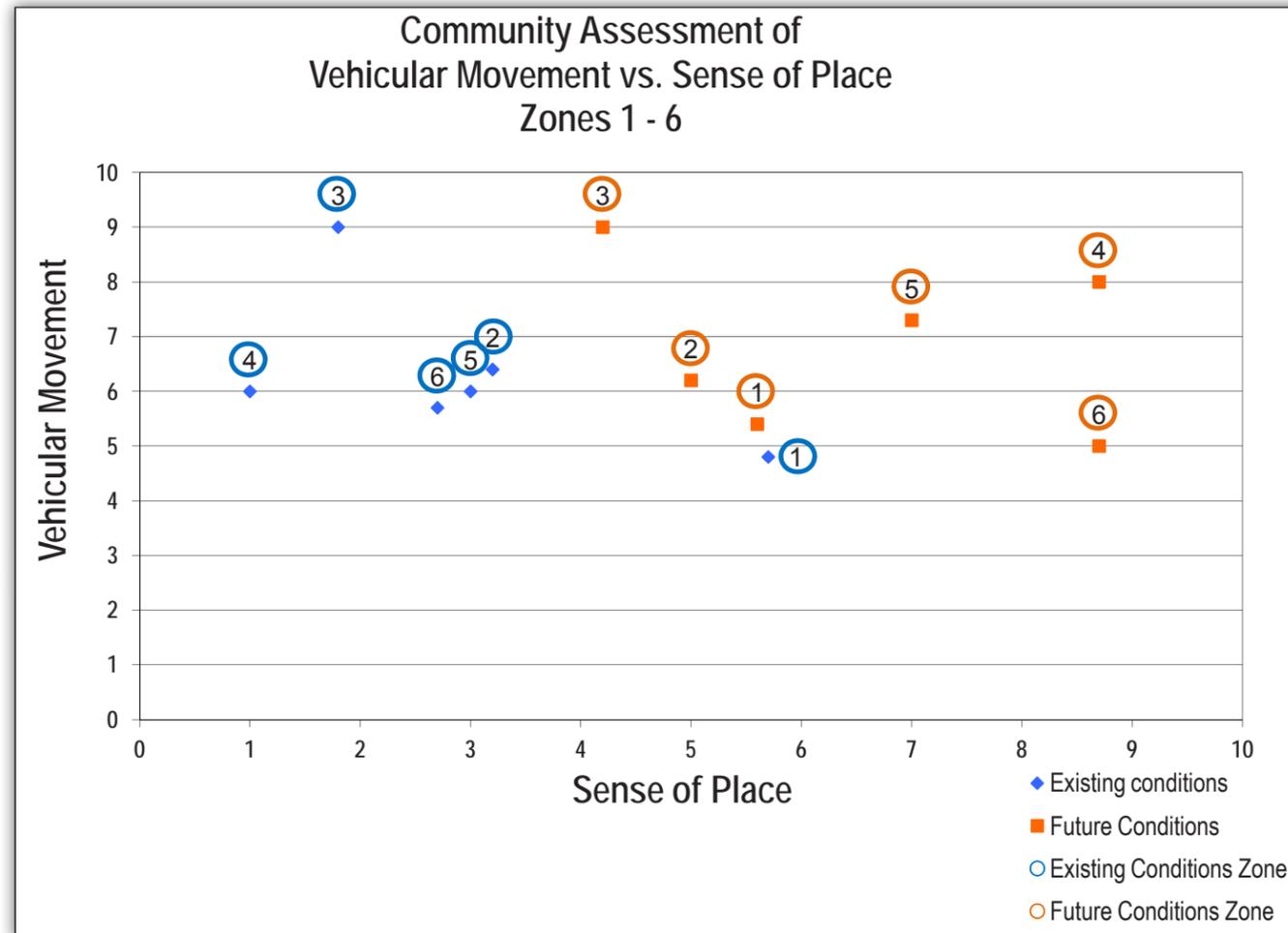


Chart 5: Movement vs. Sense of Place Survey Results

MOVEMENT

SENSE OF PLACE



**50%** of respondents would bike along the corridor if there were accommodations for biking on the roadway.

**63%** of respondents would walk along the corridor between Buhl Blvd and Keel Ridge Rd if the sidewalks were well constructed, wide, and provided a safe route.

**81%** of respondents feel that it is important to have a signage system to improve vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding.

**83%** of respondents feel it is important to strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections between the Corridor and the surrounding neighborhoods.

**86%** of respondents feel the overall appearance of the Corridor should be improved.

### Online Survey

In order to verify the issues expressed by the Steering Committee and the attendees of the Public Workshop, an online survey was administered as part of this planning process. In November, 2011, surveys were mailed to property owners throughout the corridor and distributed through many other means including website links, churches, Sharon school district personnel, etc. Approximately 230 surveys were submitted either through the online service Survey Monkey or in hard copy format. Approximately 65% of the respondents are Sharon residents, 25% are residents of Hermitage and 10% live outside the study area. The survey results are summarized in Chart 6 (a detailed breakdown of the results is included in the appendix).

According to the survey results, more than 63% of the respondents travel the corridor almost daily, with another 25% traveling the corridor a few times per week.

Many of the survey questions (18 of 22) were phrased to convey a positive statement. As a result, the questions with the least favorable response rate (less than 15%) represent issues that should be considered a higher priority and addressed in the near term. Questions with a favorable response rate between 20% to 50% are a moderate priority and should be addressed in the mid-term. Finally, the questions with a favorable response rate above 50% are a lower priority and should be addressed in the long term. Chart 6, on the following page, summarizes the results which are sorted from higher to lower priority issues.

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**State Street/Irvine Avenue Corridor Study**

The following survey is part of an ongoing study to improve vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic movement and safety as well as the aesthetics of the corridor within the Cities of Hermitage and Sharon. The primary study area includes the **US 62 Business Corridor** from Keel Ridge Road to the Ohio border. Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Please be aware that the results of this survey will remain anonymous.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Please respond to ALL questions. Mark only one box per question.      Shade boxes like this:       Not like this:

1. How often do you typically drive on any segment of the US 62 Business Corridor between the Ohio State line and Keel Ridge Road?	Almost Daily <input type="checkbox"/>	Few times per week <input type="checkbox"/>	Few times per month <input type="checkbox"/>	Less than once per month <input type="checkbox"/>	Never <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please use the scale on the right for the following statements.</b>					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
2. I feel that walking along the sidewalks					
a. on State Street between Irvine Avenue and Buhl Boulevard is a comfortable experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. on State Street between Buhl Boulevard and Keel Ridge Road is a comfortable experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. on Irvine Avenue is a comfortable experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I generally feel safe from traffic while crossing					
a. Irvine Avenue on foot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. State Street on foot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I feel the current pedestrian accommodations and traffic control create a safe environment for children to walk across E. State Street to school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. It is important to strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections between the State/Irvine Corridor and surrounding neighborhoods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I would walk along the corridor between Buhl Boulevard and Keel Ridge Road if the sidewalks were well constructed, wide, and provided a safe route.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I feel that riding a bike along					
a. State Street between Irvine Avenue and Buhl Boulevard is safe from traffic and a comfortable experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. State Street between Buhl Boulevard and Keel Ridge Road is safe from traffic and a comfortable experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Irvine Avenue is safe from traffic and a comfortable experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I feel there is sufficient bicycle parking along the corridor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I would bike along the corridor if there were accommodations for biking on the roadway.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I feel there is sufficient parking for existing businesses in downtown Sharon.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. If on-street parking is not available, I feel parking in a nearby parking lot is convenient.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I feel traffic flows well along State Street					
a. between Irvine Avenue and Buhl Boulevard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. from Buhl Boulevard to Buhl Farm Drive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. from Buhl Farm Drive to Keel Ridge Road.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I feel that there are too many traffic signals along the corridor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I feel there are too many driveways along State Street.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I feel safe from accidents when driving the corridor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I feel transit service along the State/Irvine corridor is sufficient.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I feel the overall appearance of the corridor should be improved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I feel it is important to have a signage system to improve vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding (i.e. to direct visitors to places of interest within the areas).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

34399

**Please complete reverse side**

Example of Resident Survey - Print Version

# NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT

	7% of respondents feel riding a bike along Irvine Avenue is safe from traffic and a comfortable experience.
	9% of respondents feel riding a bike along State Street between Irvine Avenue and Buhl Boulevard is safe from traffic and a comfortable experience.
	9% of respondents feel riding a bike along State Street between Buhl Boulevard and Keel Ridge Road is safe from traffic and a comfortable experience.
	9% of respondents feel that walking along the sidewalks on Irvine Avenue is a comfortable experience.
	9% of respondents feel there is sufficient bicycle parking along the corridor.
	12% of respondents feel that walking along the sidewalks on State Street between Buhl Boulevard and Keel Ridge Road is a comfortable experience.
	20% of respondents feel transit service along the State/Irvine Corridor is sufficient. 24% of respondents felt transit was insufficient, while 57% had no opinion.
	32% of respondents feel safe from traffic while crossing Irvine Avenue on foot
	39% of respondents feel that walking along the sidewalks on State Street between Irvine Avenue and Buhl Boulevard is a comfortable experience.
	41% of respondents feel safe from traffic while crossing State Street on foot
	41% of respondents feel that traffic flows well along State Street between Irvine Avenue and Buhl Boulevard.
	45% of respondents feel safe from accidents when driving the corridor.
	47% of respondents feel that there are NOT too many traffic signals along the corridor.
<b>P</b>	48% of respondents feel there is sufficient parking for existing businesses in downtown Sharon, 44% disagree
	53% of respondents feel that there are NOT too many driveways along State Street.
<b>P</b>	57% of respondents feel that if on-street parking is not available, they feel parking in a nearby lot is convenient.
	63% of respondents feel that traffic flows well along State Street between Buhl Boulevard and Buhl Farm Drive.
	63% of respondents feel that traffic flows well along State Street between Buhl Farm Drive and Keel Ridge Road.



Public Discovery Workshop Presentation

-  Motor Vehicle Traffic Flow
-  Bicycle Circulation & Safety
-  Transit
-  Pedestrian Circulation & Safety
- P** Parking

Chart 6: Survey Results Sorted by Priority

## Community Preference Survey Results Cities of Sharon & Hermitage

To Be Encouraged

To Be Avoided

Building Location



Franchise Architecture



Facades



Landscaping & Screening

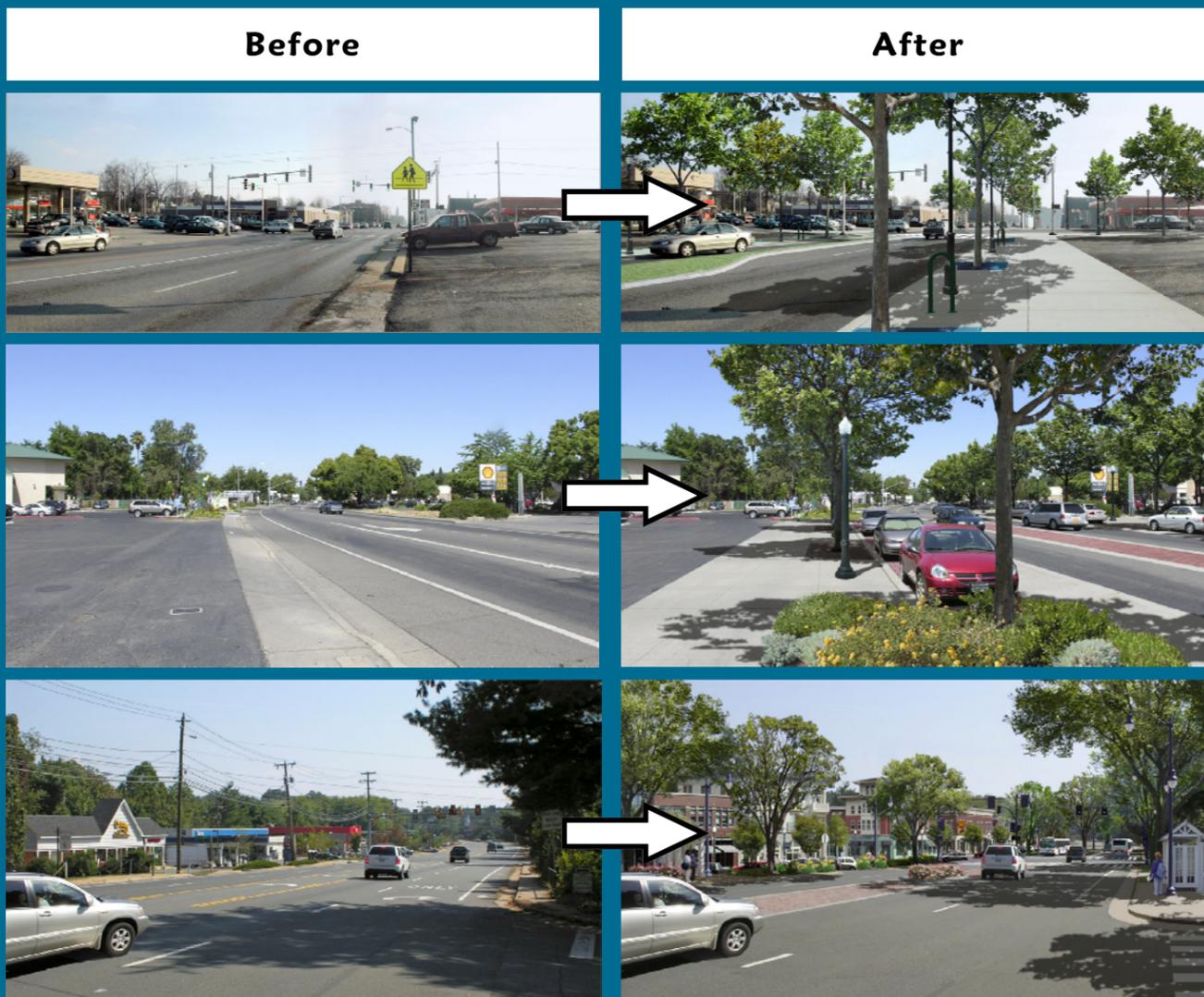


Streetscapes



## Re-Envisioning Great Streets

The images below show examples of three distinct highway corridors from Arkansas, California and Virginia. Each of these communities took the initiative to re-envision how these corridors function, look, and feel. The results of this process are illustrated in the photo-simulations on the right side. As you can see, each community desires operational enhancements such as flush or raised medians, pedestrian improvements including sidewalks, street trees and decorative lighting. Collectively these features create a more safe and comfortable experience as you travel the corridor while enhancing the local “sense of place.”



Images Courtesy of Urban Advantage

## Community Preference Survey Results

On November 15, 2011 the project team administered a Community Preference Survey (CPS) at the Discovery Workshop. The results of the survey were summarized and provided to the Steering Committee and are contained in the Appendix. The purpose of the survey was to gauge local attitudes towards various types of design including architecture, landscaping, signage, and the overall appearance of the streetscape. This survey consisted of residents, property owners, business owners, and community leaders ranking images of various types of development on a scale from 0 (un-appealing) to 10 (very appealing). A visual summary of the results are shown on the previous page. Based upon the CPS results, the following design principles are preferred along the State/Irvine Corridor.

### High Scoring Images had the Following Characteristics:

#### *Building Scale & Location*

- Buildings at or near the sidewalk;
- Buildings at least two stories in height;
- One story structures that have the scaling of a small two story structure; and
- Wider structures are broken up into smaller visual increments.

#### *Facades*

- Front facades with large amounts of transparency (e.g. windows & doors);
- Architectural details that add visual interest to the facade; and
- Primary building entrances that face the street and are clearly identified using visual clues and design details.

#### *Parking*

- Parking that is screened from view (preferably behind a building); and
- Parking lots broken up with a variety of landscaping treatments.

#### *Streetscapes Elements*

- Wide sidewalks;
- A flush or raised, center median with plantings; and
- Traditional streetscape elements such as textured pavement, benches, landscaping, and decorative lighting.

### Low Scoring Images had the Following Characteristics:

#### *Building Scale & Location*

- Buildings set back far from the sidewalk;
- Visually short, one story buildings; and
- Large blank walls.

#### *Facades*

- Front facades with little or no transparency (e.g. windows & doors);
- A lack of architectural details; and
- Primary building entrances that are not clearly identified using visual clues and design details.

#### *Parking*

- Large expanses of parking in front of the building;
- Parking placed immediately adjacent to the sidewalk or roadway; and
- Parking that has not been screened from view or has no landscaping.

#### *Streetscapes Elements*

- Narrow sidewalks or a lack of sidewalks;
- Wide streets with no features or striping to break up the asphalt between the curbs;
- A lack of traditional streetscape elements such as textured pavement, benches, landscaping, and decorative lighting.

The results of the CPS will serve to inform the various design and regulatory recommendations necessary to achieve Sharon’s and Hermitage’s vision for the State/Irvine Corridor.



Zone 3: Jefferson Avenue. School crossing guards in front of Sharon Regional Health System

## Key Issues and Opportunities Summary

Key issues and opportunities have been summarized based on the inventory and analysis, the results of the online survey, public input received at the discovery workshop, and feedback provided by the steering committee and other focus groups.

The collective engagement and analysis tasks to date, have identified and/or reaffirmed broader issues and key areas of need on a corridor wide basis. They are as follows:

- Creating a consistent design standard based on zonal contexts
- Create a “green” streetscape and corridor
- Signal coordination
- Need for making the corridor more usable for pedestrians and cyclists alike (i.e. Complete Streets policies, SRTS)
- Advance Access Management strategies for Zones 3 - 6 with coordination between Public and Private interests
- Opportunities to leverage and restore prominence to Zones 2 and 3
- Road diet between Hermitage Rd and Buhl Blvd
- High pedestrian crashes near hospital and schools
- Sidewalk improvements for areas that have them
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements throughout the corridor
- Transit stop improvements
- Opportunities to improve pedestrian crossing conditions at mid-block locations and signalized intersections, especially in the areas of the schools and hospital
- Need organizational capacity and structure to implement change

- Need public relations campaign to change the negative community paradigm and to celebrate and build from existing assets
- Need for articulated gateways and transition areas
- Capitalize on new investment to implement a horizontal and vertical mixing of land uses
- Develop landscaping standards for non-residential development in Sharon that complement Hermitage’s existing requirements
- Create site and building design guidelines and standards to improve the overall appearance of land uses along the corridor
- Detailed intersection reviews at:
  - Shenango Valley Freeway/State St
  - Hermitage Rd/State St
  - Kerrwood Dr/State St
  - Ellis Ave/State St
  - Buhl Farm Dr/State St
  - Buhl Blvd/State St
  - Euclid Ave/Stambaugh Ave/State St

Key Issues are summarized by Character Zone and are depicted on Key Findings maps on the following pages and as follows:

### Zone 1:

- Improve sidewalks (including accessibility)
- Improve streetscape
- Address sight line issue at curve
- Develop as a gateway to the region and State
- Identify a location for a gateway sign
- Land use regulations should enhance the gateway into Sharon and protect the existing residential character of the street
- Targeted economic development initiatives for vacant and underutilized property

### Zone 2:

- Leverage downtown anchors (Reyers, The Winner, Daffin’s)
- Improve sidewalks, street crossings, and traffic signals
- New street trees (strategic placing)
- Façade improvements
- Re-use existing buildings
- Enhance overall downtown circulation and wayfinding
- Better integration of Penn State campus with the State Street corridor
- Code requirements should foster a traditional development pattern and emphasize the architectural quality of the new and re-modeled buildings

### Zone 3:

- Improve interface between public & private realms
- Improve streetscaping
- Improve pedestrian crossing issues near hospital and schools
- Protect historic character
- Zoning provisions should balance building design standards with the installation and placement of site amenities to upgrade the quality of the built environment

### Zone 4:

- Investigate improved transition between 5 lane to 3 lane section with a road diet
- Address congestion near Buhl Farm Road
- Consider right turn lane at Buhl Blvd westbound
- Several mid-block pedestrian crossings needed
- Zoning provisions should balance building design standards with the installation and placement of site amenities to upgrade the quality of the built environment

## Zone 5:

- Pedestrian safety issue crossing E. State St near Concord Rd
- Consider access control near Panera Bread (between Kerrwood Dr and Ellis Ave)
- Consider medians
- No ability to “park once and shop twice”
- Improve appearance and landscaping
- Zoning requirements should serve to advance key elements of the Town Center Plan, including developing a dense, mixed-use land use pattern

## Zone 6:

- Mid-block pedestrian crossing needed west of Keel Ridge Rd
- No cohesion in terms of design/character
- Shared access is needed
- Median might help with land use intensities
- Expressway intersection is confusing
- Zoning provisions should balance building design standards with the installation and placement of site amenities to upgrade the quality of the built environment

## Other Key Findings

The early discovery and engagement process revealed other issues and potential efforts of importance to the community and to the resulting success of the Route 62 Business Corridor Study. Specifically:

- Continued Public Outreach, Education and Engagement is essential for consensus on achieving community aspirations
- Key stakeholders that include elected officials and merchants along the corridor must be better informed and strategically engaged in the planning process

- New and continued partnerships with the Sharon School District, Sharon Regional Hospital, and the Hermitage and Sharon business communities must be strengthened and leveraged
- A wayfinding signage system for pedestrians and motorists is recognized as a key component for a user-friendly corridor
- Greater emphasis is needed for identifying funding sources and mechanisms for straightforward and streamlined implementation of recommendations
- Reducing the duplication of land uses found throughout the corridor

## Additional Opportunities

In addition to the issues revealed through the discovery process and inventory and analysis phase, the study team found several community characteristics that can be viewed as opportunities for promoting and leveraging its assets.

The first of those is the Shenango River. This natural resource can be used as a source of attraction and public pleasure. Secondly, build upon the grid-like network in the City of Sharon. This type of street connectivity, coupled with a sidewalk network can provide the infrastructure for a highly walkable community. Finally, the location of these two cities is within close proximity to cities like Pittsburgh, Erie and Youngstown, Cleveland, and Akron Ohio. Each of these cities are within 70 miles of Sharon and Hermitage and can be used to leverage their location based on a regional scale.

“Communities and neighborhoods are affected. Idling trains, traffic backups, grade crossing accidents and other safety issues all affect the quality of life in our neighborhoods.”

- Bill Lipinski

KEY FINDINGS

ZONE 1 [IRVINE GATEWAY]  
OHIO STATE LINE TO STATE STREET



**NOTES**

- > CODE ISSUE: Boarding a horse in a residential area should not be permitted.
- > Streetscape needs improvement.
- > Walkability Score: 1.8

BUSINESS ROUTE 62 CORRIDOR STUDY

CITY OF SHARON  
CITY OF HERMITAGE  
MERCER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

	ISSUE		SIDEWALKS	 <b>NORTH</b> 0 175 350 FEET	  
	OPPORTUNITY		PARKING		
	AREA OF CONCERN				

Figure 50: Key Findings (Zone 1)

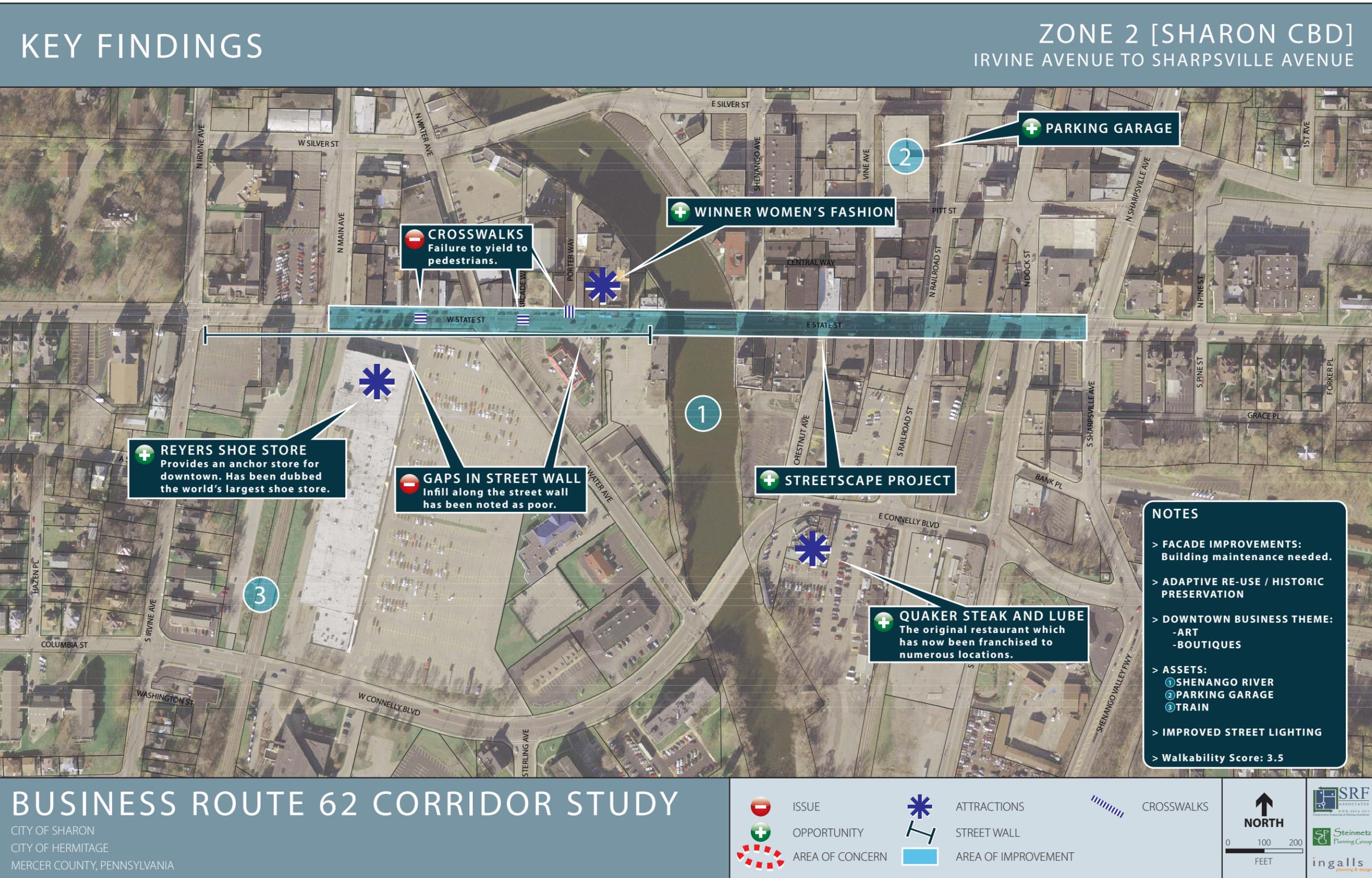


Figure 51: Key Findings (Zone 2)

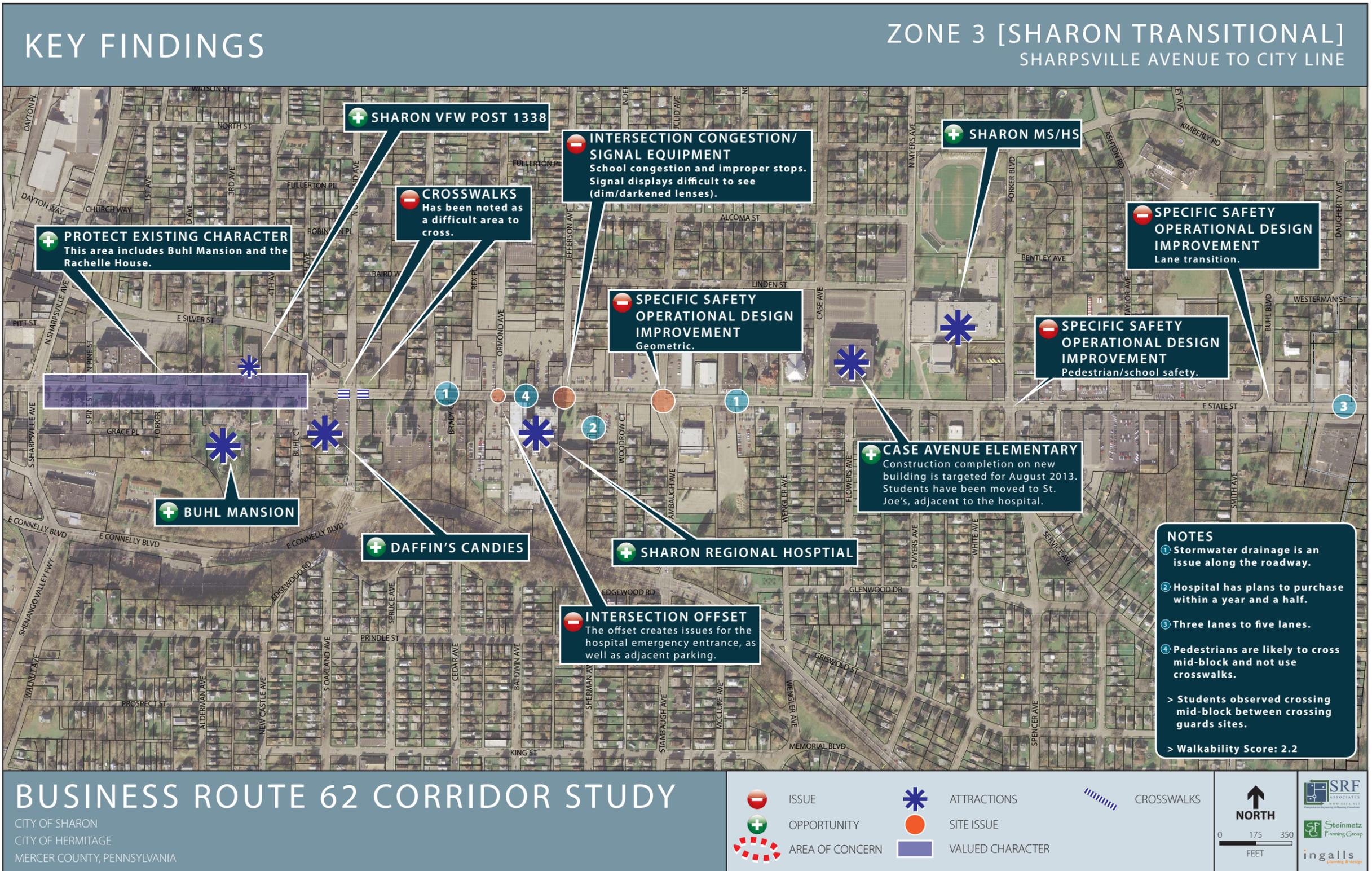


Figure 52: Key Findings (Zone 3)

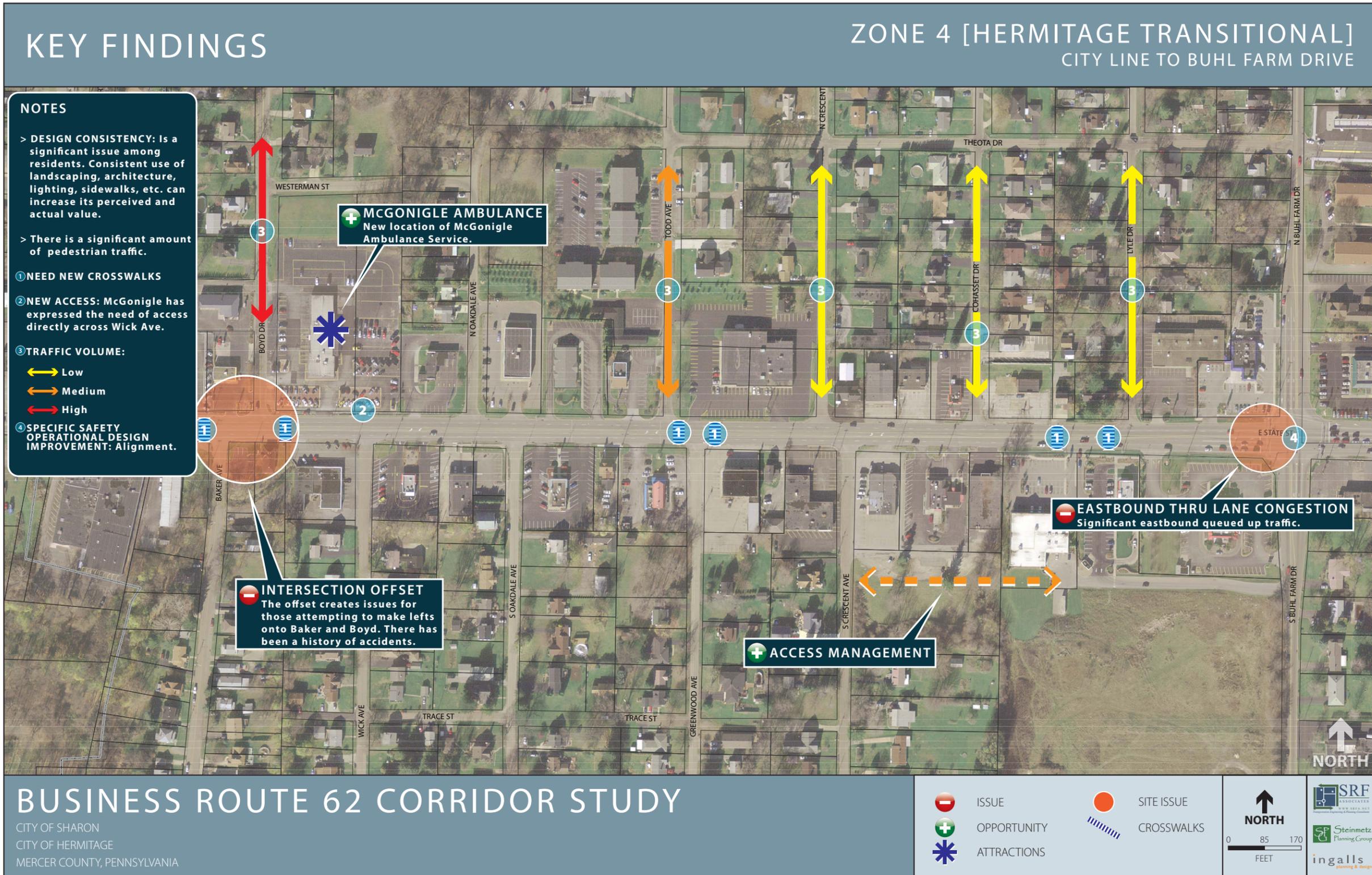


Figure 53: Key Findings (Zone 4)



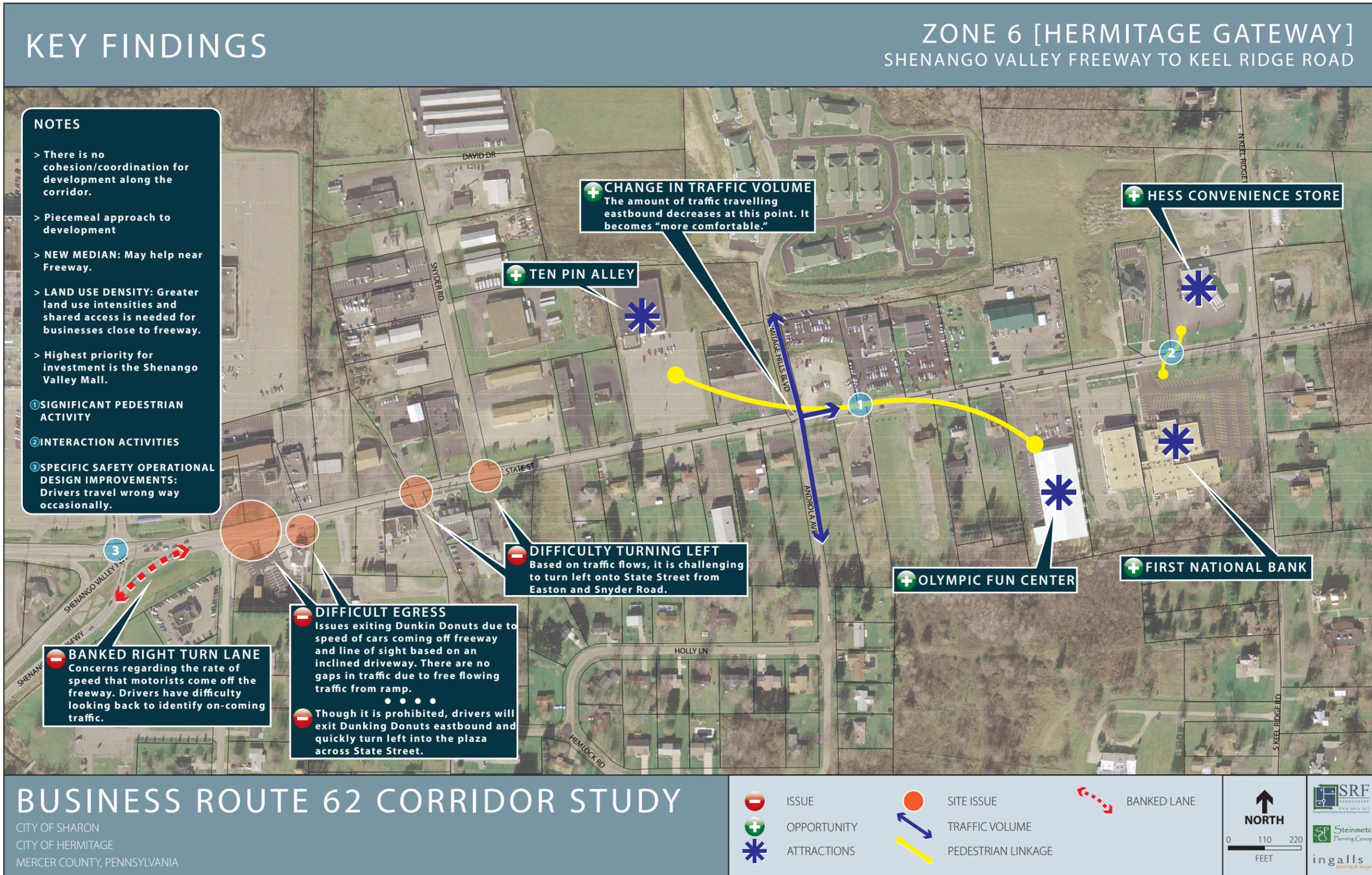


Figure 55: Key Findings (Zone 6)

