

Led by Jeff Speck and now largely implemented, the Envision Ada plan reorganized a village downtown that had been half obliterated by a large 1970s-era strip mall. In addition to replacing local, walkable retail with auto-oriented businesses, this shopping center had cut the main street off from its riverfront, hiding it behind parking and dumpsters.

The plan rebuilt the main street to a walkable geometry and replaced the shopping center with mixed-use urbanism that gives a friendly face to both the main street and a new riverfront park. It also reconfigured the downtown’s main intersection and rebuilt more than 1,000 feet of the principal cross street, lining it with development parcels to give the Township a proper face to the highway it enfronts. A new street between the two new main-street blocks terminates on a relocated historic schoolhouse at the river’s edge. A form-based urban design code within the plan has shaped dozens of new buildings to harmonize with the village’s historic architecture.

Few American towns have planned to replace their 1960s strip malls with proper walkable urbanism, let alone pulled it off. The Envision Ada plan presents a replicable model for regenerative small-town urbanism.

- CLIENT**
Township of Ada

COLLABORATORS
Progressive A/E

TIMELINE
2013-2017

CATEGORY
Downtowns

BUDGET
N/A
- SCALE**
24 acres

STATUS
Completed

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In one of the most dramatic and complete examples of suburban retrofit, an historic Michigan village rebuilds half its downtown to replace a strip mall with a walkable main street and expose a hidden riverfront.



An ideal American small town, damaged by strip development, gets back to its roots.





Replacing an auto-oriented strip center with a traditional main street was one of the key accomplishments of the plan.



