

“DESTINATION MIDTOWN”

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Executive Summary

Destination Midtown is one of the largest and most proactive planning studies in the history of Omaha. It was guided by a unique, first-of-its-kind partnership of neighborhoods, large and small businesses, institutions, and the City. The goal of the process was to establish a framework to assist Midtown return to prominence and make it a “destination of choice” within the metropolitan area.

The planning process was officially announced to the public on April 1, 2003; however, the groundwork for Destination Midtown was laid during the course of the preceding year and a half. Over that time, significant dialogue occurred between the City and participating neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions. As is typical with the cyclical nature of neighborhoods across the country, Midtown was beginning to show its age, and entities within the Study Area wished to chart a proactive path to the future.

Within the Study Area, some of the larger businesses and institutions had begun making significant capital investments. At the same time, issues within the adjoining districts were impeding neighborhood revitalization and impacting adjacent business and institutional uses. In order to insure that future public and private sector investments did not occur within a vacuum, the City, neighborhoods, and businesses began to discuss how to proactively address their common concerns. Thus, a partnership was born.

The Destination Midtown Study Area is 3.6 square miles in size. It is bordered on the north by Cuming Street, on the south by Center Street, on the east by 24th Street, and on the west by Saddle Creek Road. The area is home to approximately 28,000 residents and 43,000 employees. The area is very dense (7,700 residents per square mile) and known for its tree-lined streets, historic architecture, and economic and racial diversity. It is also one of the few locations within the Omaha metropolitan area where a resident can work, shop, and play, all within walking distance of home.

Guided by a series of public meetings, workshops, and design charrettes held over the course of the past year and attended by well over 800 people, the Destination Midtown planning process identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the Study Area and, based on these, established an overall vision for Midtown:

“Destination Midtown represents a unique partnership of public and private interests working together to return Midtown to prominence and make it a destination of choice in Omaha”.

Using this vision as a guide throughout the planning process, participants helped craft a variety of ideas and recommendations that address both neighborhood-oriented issues and physical design and/or functional issues. These

recommendations, when taken as a whole, ultimately seek to provide a comprehensive framework for the resurgence of Midtown Omaha. Over time, the scores of ideas and recommendations that were brought forth by the participants were refined by the Steering Committee into 101 programs for action, categorized by neighborhood issues, transportation enhancements, central corridor design programs, and parks and open space opportunities. Each of the programs within these categories holds special importance for the future of Midtown; however, the Destination Midtown Steering Committee believes that several are worth emphasizing and, as a result, has identified the following as the most important priorities for the future of the Destination Midtown Study Area:

Neighborhood Development

- Strengthen and enhance the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance
- Initiate down zoning within appropriate neighborhood settings
- Continue establishing community policing within the area
- Enhance code enforcement within Midtown

Economic Development

- Enhance the mixed-use neighborhood business districts within Midtown
- Enhance the corridors connecting the neighborhood business districts and adjacent neighborhoods
- Encourage rehabilitation and redevelopment by initiating appropriate discussions to encourage favorable tax treatment for significant investments
- Establish corridor and district design guidelines

Transportation/Corridor Development

- Explore the feasibility of relocating the Dodge Street to Douglas Street “S” curve to the east and converting Farnam Street and Harney Street back to two-way traffic
- Explore the feasibility of major reconstruction to Dodge Street and Saddle Creek Road
- Initiate discussions about enhancing the public transit system to include extension of the retro bus circulator routes into Midtown and/or establishing a streetcar line linking Midtown to adjacent areas.

Put into Action/Realize the Vision

- Establish a Midtown Development Corporation to coordinate development activities within Midtown

The final priority is of utmost importance to the Destination Midtown Steering Committee. It represents the future, and how this plan will live on now that the initial planning process has ended. Establishing this implementation mechanism will help ensure that follow-through occurs and that Midtown returns to prominence and becomes another destination of choice within the Omaha metropolitan area.

“Introduction” Divider Page

Introduction

Background of the Project

Destination Midtown emerged from the initiative of civic and business institutions located within Midtown Omaha. In particular, the leaders of UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center, located at the western edge of the Study Area, were concerned that the general conditions on both the Medical Center campus and the immediate surroundings could become a disincentive in their efforts to recruit the best students, faculty and staff.

Recognizing that this concern extended beyond the bounds of a simple campus plan, they approached HDR for ideas and suggestions as early as 2001. In the course of these proceedings, additional institutions and businesses were brought into the discussions. Mutual of Omaha, located less than half a mile to the east, quickly picked up on the topics and issues and added their own concerns and input.

Fairly quickly, a number of institutional and corporate leaders for this effort emerged; including UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center, Creighton University, Mutual of Omaha, Peter Kiewit Sons', Inc, OPPD, and Security National Bank, among others. Recognizing that the area of focus for this effort extended well beyond the limits of their individual and collective properties, these early sponsors sought the involvement of local civic groups, neighborhood associations and business organizations.

Over time, the extent of the Study Area became clearer as did the strong and diverse collection of supporters for the study effort. The "core" of the Midtown Study Area was always seen as the swath of the city bounded by Dodge Street to the north and Leavenworth Street to the south. The western edge of this core was Saddle Creek Road, which follows the path of the original Saddle Creek in a small valley with hills on either side.

Originally, the eastern edge of the core was seen as I-480, but the support, interest and involvement of residents and business owners to the east of the highway prompted the decision to move the eastern boundary to 24th Street.

Initial supporters recognized the need to create as great a range of community involvement as possible for this effort. To that end, they decided to expand the core Study Area to include the defined neighborhoods to both the north and south. This decision helped create the geography of the Destination Midtown Study Area: Cuming Street to the North, Saddle Creek Road to the West, Center Street to the South, and 24th Street to the East.

(Insert Boundary Map)

The Destination Midtown Study Area is approximately 3.6 square miles in size and is home to over 28,000 people, or nearly 7% of the population of the city. With a density of over 7,500 people per square mile, Midtown is truly an **urban** environment, even though the predominant residential building type is the single family house, the vast majority of buildings within the study area are less than four-stories tall, and the Study Area as a whole includes a remarkable amount of tree canopy and accessible open space.

Key Players

The Destination Midtown planning process was led by a Steering Committee that was constituted to truly represent the diverse interests and concerns of the residents of Midtown, the business owners within Midtown, and the City as a whole.

Members of the Steering Committee included:

- All Makes Office Equipment
- City of Omaha
- Creighton University
- Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
- Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce
- Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association
- Leavenworth Neighborhood Association
- Midtown Business Association (formerly the Med Center Merchants Association)
- Mutual of Omaha
- Omaha City Council
- Omaha Planning Department
- Omaha Public Power District
- Peter Kiewit Sons', Inc.
- Security National Bank
- UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center

The Steering Committee met on a regular basis throughout the planning process, and provided direction and guidance on all components of the Destination Midtown Plan.

The Process

The creation of the Destination Midtown Master Plan took slightly less than fourteen months from official inception to completion. Beginning with a formal press conference on 01 April 2003, the planning process included 9 public

meetings/workshops, 2 four-day design charrettes, and over 90 formal and informal public meetings, ranging in size from several people to several hundred people. Functionally, the process included several months of preliminary analysis, during which data were collected about the Study Area. This entailed both the compilation of physical materials and extensive community involvement ranging from one-on-one interviews with key representatives to open-microphone neighborhood meetings during which participants could speak to any and all issues and concerns.

The data collection and analysis phase of the project took approximately four months and culminated in a series of SWOT analyses, which involved the participation of over 300 community members. The purpose of these workshops was to allow the community to define and describe the relative Strengths and Weaknesses of the Midtown district in its present condition, and then to discuss both the Threats that might impact the district in the future as well as the Opportunities for positive change and growth.

(include photos of public participation)

The results of the SWOT analyses were summarized and presented to the community for review and confirmation. Based on these analyses and review, and working with the community, an overall consensus vision for the future of the Midtown Study Area began to emerge. This vision became the basis for the subsequent master planning efforts that took place between August and November of 2003.

The focus of the master planning phase of the Midtown study was two four-day design *charrettes* and a series of smaller public workshops. A *charrette* is an intensive interactive design process whereby a wide range of community input is solicited, analyzed, discussed and acted upon in an iterative fashion. Properly conducted, a *charrette* not only dramatically increases the ability of a planning or design team to gather information but also provides an effective means for receiving community feedback in response to proposals or suggestions.

The first *charrette*, held from 25 – 28 August at the Blackstone Hotel, focused on issues relating to the Midtown Study Area as a whole. Particular attention was paid to regional transportation issues and open space systems, the interaction of major arterial routes and the adjacent neighborhoods, and identifying key locations for focused redevelopment efforts within the Study Area.

In October, an evening workshop and a Mayor's Town Hall Meeting were held in order to focus specifically on issues of concern to neighborhood residents. During the course of the first *charrette*, a number of locations were identified as ideal sites for the development or redevelopment of neighborhood-serving mixed-use business districts. During a second evening workshop held in October, residents from the Midtown neighborhoods were invited to work with members of

the Consultant Team and City Planning staff and devise schematic designs for each of these potential neighborhood centers.

The second *charrette*, held on 17 – 20 November, built on all of the previous efforts and also began to address issues germane to the implementation of specific design proposals, including recommendations for UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center and Mutual of Omaha, as well as the creation of prototype residential infill proposals based on historical precedents within the Study Area.

The last four months of the planning effort were devoted to drafting, reviewing, editing and re-writing the recommendations for the final Planning document. Each section of the proposed document was submitted to the full Steering Committee for review and comments, and then returned to the Consultant Team for revision and final editing.

The Document

This Plan contained in this document is not the definitive proposal for the future of Midtown Omaha. Rather, it is a record of the work and effort of all of the participants in the Destination Midtown process assembled into a series of distinct topic areas. Each topic area includes a brief overview and a series of specific recommendations for future actions.

In some cases, these are quite specific –i.e. rebuild the intersection of Leavenworth Avenue and 42nd Street to facilitate westward traffic flow. In other cases, they are more general – i.e. increase public education about historic preservation issues.

Some recommendations can be achieved fairly quickly –i.e. encourage the creation of new and additional Neighborhood Watch organizations. In fact, some of the recommendations emerging from the study will have already been accomplished by the time the final document is distributed. Other recommendations, however, will clearly take time to accomplish –i.e. study the feasibility of re-establishing a streetcar link between Downtown and Midtown.

Some recommendations must be carried out and completed before other recommendations can commence –i.e. the recommended Midtown Development Corporation must be created before it can initiate other recommended development efforts. Many recommendations, however, are not intrinsically linked to other recommendations and can be carried out individually or as part of larger coordinated efforts depending solely on fiscal and functional efficiency.

Finally, there are many recommendations that can be accomplished at little or no formal cost –i.e. establish a unified Midtown Neighborhood Association. There are also recommendations whose achievement will clearly call for significant

investment –i.e. widening the right-of-way along Dodge Street. While such projects might potentially seem daunting, it is hoped that this document and the community-based process that it summarizes will provide the impetus, the framework and the motivation to move forward with further study and analysis as to which projects hold the greatest promise for the Midtown community and deserve the greatest efforts to achieve their accomplishment.

Components of the Plan

This document includes a number of distinct sections, including:

Analysis

The first section, “Analysis” includes a summary of the materials collected and studied during the first phase of the planning process. Here, as throughout the document, wherever possible, graphics are used to complement, if not substitute for, text. The goal of the section is to present a succinct overview of the Midtown Study Area as it currently exists. The section ends with a summary of the results of the SWOT Analysis.

Community Vision

The next section is brief, but important. Entitled, simply, “Community Vision,” it summarizes the consensus vision for the future of the Midtown Study Area that emerged from the workshops following the SWOT Analysis.

Case Studies

Inquiries were made throughout the planning process as to comparable cases from other communities across the country. Two were selected for some elaboration and are described in this chapter. The first case focuses on the efforts of the University of Pennsylvania, as a significant institution, to effect positive change in the area of West Philadelphia immediately surrounding the Penn campus. Given the involvement of UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center and Creighton University with the Midtown Study Area, the reference to Penn seems appropriate.

The second case is less geographically focused and includes a variety of approaches and methodologies. The City of Portland, OR is known across the country for the efforts it has mounted over the past three decades to redevelop its downtown and revitalize a range of older, in-town neighborhoods. The Consultant Team arranged for a two-day tour of several of these neighborhoods, including one in Vancouver WA, an adjacent city. The results of this tour and insights for their application to Midtown are presented in this section.

Programs

This section of the document describes the specific recommendations for improving and revitalizing the Destination Midtown Study Area. The section is broken into four sub-sections, each focused on a specific topic. Sub-sections include:

- Neighborhood Programs
- Transportation Programs
- Central Corridor Programs
- Parks and Open Space Programs

Each sub-section presents a series of recommended programs for improving the Midtown District. Each program is presented in the same format: an Observation commenting on current conditions; a Discussion elaborating upon the Observation; a Recommendation for actions to resolve or overcome existing problems or issues; and, a list of specific Programs to accomplish the Recommendation.

In general, the Recommendations and Programs are not presented in any hierarchy, nor is the accomplishment of one Program necessarily dependent upon the accomplishment of others, unless explicitly stated.

Implementation Matrix

The final section of the document summarizes, in tabular form, all of the programs discussed in the previous sections. The table includes a description of the program, the personnel who would be involved in carrying it out, and those who would need to administer it. Where relevant and definable, capital costs associated with each program are listed, as is an overall budget for carrying out each program.

Each program is ranked according to priority (Short Term, Medium Term, and Long Term). The lead agency for each program is identified as well as potential funding sources. Finally, the matrix lists a potential time-frame for accomplishing each program.

Appendices

Where materials were generated or information was assembled that is relevant to the Destination Midtown effort, but was not in a format for easy inclusion within the body of the text, they are included as appendices. In particular, the full details of the SWOT analysis are described as an appendix, both for clarity and to serve as a record of this important activity. Additional items in the Appendix include existing zoning classifications, historic structures and districts within the

Study Area, and an example of a proposed residential building typology for Midtown.

How to Use the Document

The Plan, in particular the Program section and the Implementation Matrix, is envisioned as a living document. In that sense, it is anticipated that the recommendations and programs can and will change over time. Some recommendations may be rejected or replaced over time; others might sprout new additional recommendations and programs. The strengths of the document includes the fact that it was developed in an interactive consensus-driven format, that it involved the efforts of hundreds of participants, and that it derives from an agreed-upon vision of the future.

The format and consensus should take on a life of their own once the document has been completed and handed over to the Destination Midtown Steering Committee and the City of Omaha. Others must pick up on the activities and concepts outlined in the document and move to bring them to fruition. The Matrix, in particular, should be used as a benchmark and a guide, but not as a cookbook.

Acknowledgements

Destination Midtown would like to thank all those who attended public meetings; called, emailed, or visited with suggestions and ideas; provided insight, thoughts, and guidance; and assisted through the course of this year-long process. If your name has inadvertently been omitted, we apologize and thank you for your contribution.

Midtown Residents, Employees, and Visitors

Destination Midtown Steering Committee

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David Brown, Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce
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Marty Carmody, The Nebraska Medical Center
Jim Champion, Charlie Graham and Midtown Merchants
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Destination Midtown Communications Committee

Destination Midtown Finance Committee

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“Analysis” Divider Page

Analysis

Omaha, like many cities across the country, includes many unique and geographically distinct districts. Examples include Downtown, North Omaha, South Omaha, Dundee, Benson, Florence and others. Each of these areas includes special features that are distinctive to that area and help make it unique. Combined, these areas, and others, help make Omaha its own unique place.

The Midtown District also contributes to the nature and character of Omaha. As defined for this project, the Study Area is bounded on the north by Cuming Street, on the west by Saddle Creek Road, on the south by Center Street, and on the east by 24th Street. This area has traditionally contained some of the city's most desirable neighborhoods, notable businesses and noteworthy civic uses. Originally developed during the late 19th century and early 20th century, Midtown, in many ways, still embodies a different time and age. Tree-lined streets, neighborhood businesses, historic architecture and a palpable sense of place all contribute to the uniqueness of the area.

Within the District, numerous specific defining features can be identified, including:

- Cohesive traditional neighborhoods such as the Gold Coast, Blackstone, Field Club, Morton Meadows, Joslyn Castle, Leavenworth, and Gifford Park. These represent nearly 60 years of America's urban history, extending from the last quarter of the 19th century until the advent of World War II.
- Historic architecture is abundant, including the Joslyn Castle, St. Cecilia's Cathedral, and the birthplace of former president Gerald Ford. The District includes two national register historic districts: the Field Club National Register District and the Gold Coast National Register District.
- Notable businesses are based in Midtown, including Mutual of Omaha, Peter Kiewit Sons, Berkshire Hathaway, UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center, and Creighton University/Creighton University Medical Center.
- Parks and open spaces are plentiful, including Hanscom Park, Leavenworth Park, Dewey Park, Turner Park, Gifford Park, the historic boulevard system that connects many of these parks, the Field Club Golf Course and the Field Club Trail.
- Civic uses also abound, including numerous neighborhood churches, elementary schools, Duchesne Academy, St. Cecilia's Cathedral, Creighton University, the Douglas County Health Center and the VA Medical Center.

Perhaps one of the paramount defining features of the Midtown District stems from its location immediately west of Downtown Omaha. The District is crossed by numerous regional transportation routes, including the dominant arterial road within the metro area, Dodge Street.

Regional Context

The City of Omaha is the largest city within the State of Nebraska, and the Omaha metropolitan region is the largest for several hundred miles in all directions. Founded on the western edge of the Missouri River in 1857, the City has traditionally been a river city. During its early years, the city grew north and south along the river. With continued growth, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th century when the city served as a dominant railroad hub for goods and people moving across the United States, the city began to expand in a westerly direction.

Moving upward from the edge of the Missouri River, Omaha is characterized by a series of hills and valleys, many of which include residual waterways. Turner Boulevard, which cuts through the eastern edge of the Midtown District, lies in such a valley, as does Saddle Creek Road, which defines the western edge of the Study Area. Between these two locations, the topography rises and falls as much as 233 feet. The highest point in the study area (1,263 feet in elevation) is located on the Field Club golf course, near the intersection of 36th and Woolworth Street. The lowest point in the Study Area, 1,030 feet, is located on Creighton University's campus near the intersection of 24th street and Cuming Street.

Today, growth within the metropolitan area is still in a predominantly western direction. For many residents, the intersection of 72nd Street and Dodge Street is the functional and psychological center of the community, even though most of the land around this intersection was undeveloped 50 years ago. Development of Omaha's western suburbs currently extends as far west as the community of Elkhorn, which is located at approximately 204th Street. Growth is also occurring to the south of Omaha, in Sarpy County, and in Council Bluffs, Iowa, located to the east of the city. The most recent population figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau show the Omaha CSA (combined statistical area) with a population of 829,133. The Lincoln metropolitan area, with a population of 277,666, is located approximately 45 miles to the southwest of Omaha.

(Include photos and regional analysis map)

Immediate Context

Although the city has experienced explosive westward growth, the city has been very proactive in maintaining the downtown core as the central focus and hub of activity for the metropolitan area. As a result, the Midtown Study Area should be viewed not only in the context of the city's continued westward growth, but also in terms of the continued downtown redevelopment and the more recent riverfront development initiatives.

(Include photos and Immediate context map)

Downtown/Riverfront Redevelopment

Immediately to the east of the Destination Midtown Study Area lie downtown Omaha and the riverfront. The dominant business district within the metro area, the downtown and adjacent areas have begun to diversify in recent years, particularly as older industrial uses were moved away from the edge of the Missouri River.

(Include Downtown Photos)

Downtown redevelopment began during the 1960's, when several buildings in the city's former meat and produce market were saved from a date with the wrecking ball. These buildings were renovated into lofts, restaurants, pubs, and unique stores. This mixed-use area is now called the Old Market and is currently one of the top tourist attractions in the state.

During the 1970's the city took the initiative and developed the Gene Leahy Mall, from 10th Street to 15th Street. The concept for the mall was to develop a public open space linking the core of downtown with the Missouri River. This was the first initiative to get residents back to the river, and was an immediate success. This grand open space spurred several public and private development projects, including construction of the W. Dale Clark Main Library, the Peter Kiewit Conference Center and State Office Building, and several new office towers.

During the late 1980's and early 1990's, corporate giant Con Agra threatened to pull its headquarters operations out of Omaha. As an incentive to keep Con Agra, the State passed a series of tax incentives for businesses and the City offered a redevelopment site for a new headquarters. This site was strategically located between the Gene Leahy Mall's eastern terminus and the Missouri River, but contained several historic buildings located in the Jobber's Canyon National Register District. Ultimately, Jobber's Canyon became the largest National Register District in the country to be demolished, and Con Agra built a new headquarters campus adjacent to the downtown Omaha riverfront. Omaha lost several grand buildings that may have been prime redevelopment candidates, but, for the first time in decades gained access to the riverfront in the downtown area. Several additional development projects ensued, including multiple loft conversions in the Old Market, the renovation of a Union Pacific warehouse into the Harriman Dispatch Center, and a new Embassy Suites Hotel adjacent to the Con Agra campus.

During the late 1990's, additional growth was directed into the downtown core. The City of Omaha created the Downtown Northeast Redevelopment Plan, which covers an area generally from I-480 south to Douglas Street and from the Missouri River to approximately 17th Street. The plan was developed in order to assist two major downtown redevelopment projects. The first project was for First National Bank of Omaha, and included construction of a new technology

center, city-owned parking structures, and an office tower. The Tower at First National Center, completed in 2003, is 633 feet in height and is the tallest building between Chicago and Denver. The second major project in the redevelopment area was the Omaha World Herald Freedom Center. This project consisted of a new printing press facility, a paper roll storage building, and a parking structure for the region's largest daily newspaper. Other projects that have occurred within or adjacent to the redevelopment area include construction of the Roman Hruska Federal Courthouse, a new Hilton Garden's Hotel, renovation of the Zorinsky Federal Building, and streetscape improvements along Capitol Avenue. A new 19-story headquarters for Union Pacific is nearing completion, and a \$90-million performing arts center located along the Gene Leahy mall is under construction.

Concurrently with the downtown northeast redevelopment projects, Omaha has maintained the momentum begun in the 1970's to get back to the Missouri River. Former U.S. Senator Bob Kerrey secured funding for his "Back to the River" initiative, which includes greenways, trails, and open spaces along both the Nebraska and Iowa sides of the river. The centerpiece of Kerrey's initiative is a \$23 million pedestrian bridge, to be located immediately north of Lewis and Clark Landing. This bridge is intended to provide pedestrian access across the Missouri River and to be a visual landmark similar to the arch in St. Louis.

The trails along both sides of the river will connect to many new and proposed developments. Rick's Boatyard, a large restaurant with both indoor and outdoor seating, was constructed at Lewis and Clark Landing, the site of the former Asarco lead refinery. This site was cleared and capped, and is now preserved as permanent open space along the river. Immediately to the north of Lewis and Clark Landing is a new City marina, the National Park Service Midwest Regional Headquarters, and Riverfront Place, a mixed-use development under construction immediately north of the proposed pedestrian bridge.

North of Riverfront Place is the new Gallup Campus, which houses corporate offices, Gallup University, and a child development facility. This project is significant because it brings several thousand executives to Omaha each year from around the country (and the world) for leadership development training. The campus is bordered on the north by Miller's Landing, an open space development on a former landfill site.

Across the river, Council Bluffs is also experiencing river related development. The pedestrian bridge is proposed to land at the base of One Renaissance Center, a project that will contain condominiums, apartments, and open space along the river.

The most eye-catching project along the riverfront is Omaha's new Qwest Center arena and convention center. This \$281 million project is located directly to the west of Lewis and Clark Landing, on the site of the former Union Pacific shops

and yards. This project, with its ultra-modern architecture, is intended to spur additional economic development activity within the immediate area. Hilton recently completed construction on a new 450-room convention center hotel, which is connected by skywalk to the Qwest Center.

Creighton University, located up the hill and to the west of the Qwest Center, recently completed a new Campus Master Plan. This plan will guide future growth and development of this Jesuit University for years to come. Creighton University and the Qwest Center are connected to the city's street grid by a reconstructed 10th Street and Abbott Drive/Cuming Street. These streets, and others in the immediate area, have received enhanced streetscape amenities to improve their appearance.

As can be seen, downtown development, especially along the riverfront, has exploded in recent years. Omaha has continued its quest to get back to the Missouri River, and has been quite successful with its mix of public and private sector projects and open space development. Most of these recent projects were initiated with the goals of economic development, improving the quality of life, and enhancing the city's national image. When announced, these projects were quite visionary, and often not without dissent. Destination Midtown continues this trend, and establishes a framework to achieve the vision of those who live, work, and shop within the neighborhoods immediately to the west of downtown and the riverfront.

Adjacent Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods to the north, south, and west of the Destination Midtown Study Area also directly impact Midtown. North of Cuming Street, which is the northern boundary of the Study Area, sit more traditional neighborhoods from the late 19th and early 20th Century. While homes in the Bemis Park neighborhood, just north of Cuming Street, are among some of the most notable in the city, as one moves further away from the Study Area, the size and scale of the houses diminishes and the need for maintenance and upkeep increases. Similarly, socio-economic issues, as a whole, increase the farther north one moves from the Study Area. Several initiatives have been put into place to address these issues, but a planning process to address these issues in a comprehensive manner does not exist.

(Include photos of adjacent areas)

As noted earlier, Saddle Creek, the western boundary of the Study Area, is located in the valley formed by the original creek. The western edge of the road is developed with a somewhat disparate mixture of retail, commercial and some residual industrial uses. The topography climbs quickly, however, as one moves westward, and within two blocks of Saddle Creek Road, older, stable middle class neighborhoods emerge, generally thirty or forty feet higher in elevation.

These include the eastern sections of the historic Dundee and Aksarben/Elmwood Park neighborhoods. Just to the west of the intersection of Saddle Creek Road and Leavenworth Street lies the Holy Sepulchre Catholic Cemetery, a testament to Omaha's place in America's early immigration and settlement patterns.

Neighborhoods to the south of Center Street, the southern boundary of the Study Area, tend to be fairly similar in scale, character and land use to the neighborhoods to the north. As Center Street moves westward from Hanscom Park to Saddle Creek Road, it encompasses a diverse range of uses including neighborhood retail and residential, the Field Club golf course, commercial uses, Beals Elementary School, and a modest amount of contemporary strip commercial. The VA and Douglas County Health Center sit on the northeastern corner of the intersection of Center Street and 42nd Street, immediately north of the site of one of Omaha's original shopping malls, The Center. Neighborhoods to the south of the study area are, for the most part, in stable or good condition. These neighborhoods require continued vigilance to safeguard against many of the issues faced by neighborhoods within the Study Area, but physical/design issues pale in comparison to those faced by Midtown neighborhoods.

The Midtown Study Area

The Destination Midtown Study Area is bordered on the east by 24th Street, on the north by Cuming Street, on the west by Saddle Creek Road, and on the south by Center Street. The Study Area is 3.6 square miles in size and contains approximately 28,000 residents and 40,000 daytime employees. The Study Area contains 13,000 housing units and is home to 30 historical landmarks, 22 churches, 16 schools, 11 neighborhood associations, and 7 parks. The following discussion details significant features of the Destination Midtown Study Area.

Historical Analysis

The City of Omaha was incorporated in 1857. Active promotion by early settlers and businessmen resulted in the city serving as the territorial capital for thirteen years. As Omaha developed, it became Nebraska's largest city. Transportation, communications, and agriculture contributed to the city's growth. By the 1870's, development began to occur within the area encompassed by Destination Midtown. Development in the area typically occurred along street or transit corridors, from east to west. Land for Hanscom Park was donated to the City during this decade, and Creighton University was founded in 1878.

Growth came to the area at a much faster rate during the 1880's. In 1880, Bishop James O'Conner purchased 12 acres of land for the Academy of the Sacred Heart (a girl's academy) at 36th and Burt Street. Operated by a society of religious women, construction of the school began in February of 1882. At the

same time, many of Omaha's elite began to move to the hills west of downtown. This was facilitated by the expansion of the horse railway, which reached 32nd and Cuming Street in 1883. During this decade, Omaha's electric railway was initiated in 1887, the Belt Line Railroad was completed in 1888, and the streetcar reached 40th and Cuming Street in 1889. Significant structures built within the Study Area during this decade included the Mercer House, the E.W. Nash House, the Douglas County Hospital, Mason Terrace-Von Closter Residence, the Yates House, and the Charles Turner House.

Growth continued during the 1890's, albeit at a much slower rate than which occurred during the 1880's. Significant structures constructed during the 1890's included the Garneau/Kilpatrick House, Hicks Terrace, the Guy Barton House, the Offutt/Yost House, the Wattles House, Cudahy House, and the Normandie Apartments. Two schools, Columbian and Saunders, were constructed during the 1890's, and the land for Turner Park was donated in 1897.

Following the Trans-Mississippi Exposition of 1898, the pace of development picked up in Omaha and Midtown during the 1900's. In 1902, several electric rail companies merged to form the Omaha and Council Bluffs Railway Company, which expanded to serve the Cathedral area via the Farnam and Cuming streetcar lines. The same year, the West Central Boulevard, which connected Hanscom Park and Bemis Park, was completed. The Field Club was founded in 1902, First Baptist Church was constructed in 1903, and Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church was constructed in 1904. In 1907, construction began on Temple Israel and the cornerstone was laid for St. Cecilia's Cathedral. Mutual of Omaha was founded in 1909, and land for the medical center was purchased along 42nd Street. Significant apartments and homes constructed during the 1900's included the Utah Apartments, the Clarinda Apartments, the Havens House, the Kirkendall House, the Joslyn House, the Gallagher House, the Brandeis-Millard House, the Epeneter House, the Storz House, the McLaughlin House, the Reinhold Busch House, the English/Kennedy House, the Breckenridge-Gordon House, and the Mary Reed House.

The decade of the 1910's experienced a substantial amount of new institutional, commercial, and residential development within the Midtown Study Area. Several buildings were constructed on the site of the present-day UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center campus, while several commercial buildings were constructed nearby at the intersection of 40th and Farnam. Automobile Row on Farnam Street was established during the course of this decade, as was the famous Blackstone Hotel to the west. At the far west edge of the Study Area (48th and Leavenworth), the Omaha Steel Works was constructed in 1919. Both Yates School and Park School were constructed during the decade, and several churches, including First Unitarian, First Presbyterian, and First Central Congregational were constructed. St. Cecilia's Cathedral opened for services, but the church itself was far from completion. Significant apartment buildings constructed during the 1910's included the West Farnam Apartments, the

Knickerbocker Apartments, the Page Apartments, the Colbert Apartments, the Melrose Apartments, the St. Regis Apartments, and the Tadousec Apartments, while significant homes included the Bradford-Pettis House, the McDonald House, the Edgar Higgins House, the Louis Nash House, the Arthur Metz House, the Charles Metz House, the Forster House, and the Barmettler House.

(include Annexation Map)

Growth and development of the area continued during the 1920's and 1930's, although it was on more of an infill basis as growth expanded beyond the Study Area boundaries. Technical High School, Jackson School, St. Peter's Church, and the Austin Apartments were constructed in the 1920's, and the Woodman Circle Building (Mutual of Omaha) and Saddle Creek Road Overpass were constructed in the 1930's. An annexation map, which identifies the year portions of Midtown were annexed is included, and maps identifying Midtown's historic structures and districts are included in the appendix.

Physical and Environmental Analysis

The Destination Midtown Study Area consists of a series of hills that run parallel to the Missouri River. A major ridgeline runs north-to-south and is located between 38th Street and 40th Street. East of this ridgeline, water flows into the Missouri River, and west of this ridgeline, water flows into the Platte River.

(Hill photos)

The major watercourse within the area is Saddle Creek, which forms the western boundary of the Study Area. Saddle Creek has been enclosed in an underground culvert, but the valley created by the creek remains a significant topographic feature within the Study Area.

Nearly all of the Study Area has been developed to some extent. The majority of the area contains residential neighborhoods situated between commercial corridors. The largest open space within the area is Hanscom Park, which is located near the southeast corner of the Study Area. This regional park contains large stands of trees and significant changes in elevation. In addition, a sizable fishing pond located in the middle of the park draws many people to the area.

Hanscom Park is connected to a sizeable portion of the Study Area by Omaha's existing boulevard system. Woolworth Avenue connects Hanscom Park with the Field Club neighborhood to the west, and Turner Boulevard extends northward toward Dodge Street. Along the way, Turner Boulevard connects Leavenworth Park, Dewey Park, and Turner Park. Gifford Park, a small neighborhood park, is located a short distance to the north and west of Turner Park. This complex of boulevards and parks comprises the vast majority of the public open space within the Destination Midtown Study Area.

Other significant open spaces within the Study Area include the grounds around the Joslyn Castle and the Field Club, a private golf course centrally located in the southern portion of the Study Area. In addition, the Field Club Trail runs north-to-south through the area, and connects the Leavenworth corridor with neighborhoods south of the Study Area. This trail follows the route of an abandoned railroad spur, and will ultimately connect with the City's regional trail network. Plans are currently underway to design and construct a trail along Turner Boulevard.

(Existing Open Space Map)

Omaha's street grid has been imposed on top of the area's undulating topography. This has established a unique framework for development. As Omaha expanded westward, civic uses such as St. Cecilia's Cathedral or the homes of well-to-do residents (Gold Coast and Field Club, for example) typically lined the tops of ridges within the area. Residents of lesser economic means then filled in the hillsides and valleys. Today this can be observed in many locations where masonry clad homes line the ridges and wood sided homes fill the valleys.

Commercial corridors typically developed in an east-to-west direction through the Study Area. Key corridors include Cuming Street, Dodge Street, the Farnam and Harney one-way pair, Leavenworth Street, and Center Street. Saddle Creek Road and 24th Street are the primary north-to-south corridors within Midtown.

The densest area within the study area is the central corridor located between Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street. This corridor contains a mixture of uses, including institutional, office, commercial, and residential, and is basically an extension of the downtown core into Midtown. Densities decrease (although they are relatively high for Omaha) as one moves north or south from the central corridor. With the exception of the commercial uses that front directly upon the corridors listed above, single family neighborhoods predominant the areas north of Dodge Street and South of Leavenworth Street. To gain a greater understanding of the study area, a figure/ground map, which represents the existing urban fabric (all existing structures are colored black, everything else is white), has been included.

(Include figure/ground map)

Major businesses and institutions that are located within the Destination Midtown Study Area include Creighton University and Medical Center, Mutual of Omaha, Peter Kiewit Sons', Inc., Berkshire Hathaway, and UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center. Daytime employment within Midtown tops 40,000 people, and drives the need for additional services within the area.

Most residents of the Omaha metropolitan area have visited the area at least on one occasion. Whether it was on a field trip in elementary school or driving through for an event downtown, Midtown contains several icons that most residents of Omaha can identify with. These include the bell-towers of St. Cecilia's Cathedral, the Mutual of Omaha tower and dome, Joslyn Castle, the Blackstone Hotel, the Ford Birth Site, and the mansions in the Gold Coast neighborhood.

Transportation Existing Conditions

The arterial street network within the Study Area is depicted on the adjacent map. In general, the street system is adequate to provide acceptable traffic service, and in some areas is now over designed for the traffic volumes being experienced today. Of note is Dodge Street and the Harney / Farnam one-way pair system that were designed to expedite traffic between the western suburbs and downtown in the 1970's. Over time, land use and societal changes in Omaha have reduced traffic flow along these corridors, thus leaving a street system, especially the east-west arterial system, with greater capacity than is currently necessary.

(Transportation map)

A review of the daily traffic volumes and capacities, along with a review of the Study Area, indicates that generally no major capacity problems, aside from a few movements at spot locations during the peak period of the day, exist. Although traffic congestion is not really an issue, the street system has several unusual means of handling traffic, which can contribute to undesirable cut through traffic, or unnecessary spot congestion, which in turn can be a barrier to redevelopment. Areas of note include:

- Dodge Street through the study area consists of an undivided five-lane cross-section with the center lane serving as a reversible lane that provides a third through lane in the peak traffic flow direction.
- Due to the reversible lane, no left turns are permitted from Dodge Street. Essentially, the Dodge Street corridor from 30th Street to 69th Street is designed to move vehicles through the study area. As such, people with destinations within the study area often have to make alternative routes in order to reach their destination.
- Antiquated interchange at Saddle Creek Road and Dodge Street with "hidden" ramp movements as well as several two-way ramps. Although an interchange, it hardly functions as one and forces traffic to use other routes that may be undesirable.
- Prohibition of left turns at 42nd and Leavenworth. This is one of several key locations where prohibition of turns has been noted as an issue.

- Oversized one-way pairs – although serving a purpose when peak volumes were an issue, they are now over-sized for the volume and lead to higher speeds through certain areas.
- Right turn to go left for westbound Dodge Street at 42nd. This is one of the odd turning situations that exist along Dodge Street due to the prohibition of left turns on Dodge.
- Split of one-way pairs (Harney / Farnam and Dodge / Douglas) with very substandard geometry.
- Geometry in the 30th and Dodge area with Turner Boulevard, Park Avenue, 30th Street, etc.
- Burt / Cuming – arena traffic flow.
- Cut through traffic that detracts from the surrounding land use function – 42nd Street through UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center campus and Burt Street through Creighton University.

In addition, the Nebraska Department of Roads will be reconstructing the North Freeway (US 75) / I-480 interchange in the northeast portion of the Study Area. This reconstruction will primarily be reconstructed within current right-of-way, but will result in some functional traffic flow changes. The ramps from 30th Street to northbound US 75 and eastbound I-480 are being removed and those movements are being relocated to 27th and Dodge Street. All other access to and from I-480 and the North Freeway (US 75) will remain as they exist today. This project is scheduled to begin in 2005 and be completed by 2009.

The City of Omaha and Creighton University are also planning a project to convert Burt Street and Cuming Street to two-way traffic flow from 30th to the Qwest Center area. This project is scheduled to be complete in 2005.

With the exception of the Field Club Trail, there is nothing in terms of on-street or off-street pedestrian or bicycle facilities within the Study Area. Because of the urban nature of Midtown, this deficiency should be addressed in the plan.

Furthermore, an area-wide traffic/feasibility study may ultimately be necessary to address the interrelationship of concepts (Dodge Street, Saddle Creek Road, Farnam Harney, etc.) that emerge from the Destination Midtown planning study.

Regulatory Analysis

The primary documents impacting the activities and operations within the Midtown Study Area are City's Master Plan, subdivision regulations, and zoning ordinance. By and large, these regulations are generally sympathetic to the efforts to revitalize and redevelop Midtown. The codes allow for a great deal of flexibility in attempting to redevelop within the district, and the language of the Master Plan is very much in keeping with the expressed goals and intentions of the participants in the Destination Midtown planning process.

City of Omaha Zoning Code

The Midtown Study Area contains a wide variety of land uses and zoning categories, as befits a large, mature urbanized area. The greatest portion of the district is zoned for residential uses, primarily R3-R5 (Medium- to High-Density Single Family) and R6-R8 (Low-, Medium- and High-Density Multi-Family). The Single Family zoning comprises the bulk of neighborhoods such as Morton Meadows, Field Club and Joslyn Castle, with the multi-family zoning found in the Blackstone, Gifford Park and Park East neighborhoods.

The western edge of Midtown, defined by the Saddle Creek Road corridor, includes extensive General Industrial (GI) zoning, indicative of the historic origins of these properties. A number of on-going light and heavy industrial uses can still be found in this area, although the zoning category is broad enough to include a wide variety of non-industrial uses such as offices and financial services, as well as neighborhood-related uses such as car washes, service stations and funeral homes.

Large sectors of Midtown are zoned for Commercial or Office uses (LO, GO, LC, CC, GC). Many of these tend to be large institutions – the University of Nebraska Medical Center/The Nebraska Medical Center, Creighton University, the Veterans Administration Center, and the Douglas County Hospital. Smaller amounts of commercial zoning can be found along the major arterial corridors, primarily Dodge Street, the Farnam/Harney one-way pair, Leavenworth Street, and parts of Center Street.

A large area of Midtown falls under the auspices of the Central Business District (CBD) zoning category. The central eastern portion of the Study Area, extending as far west as 36th Street, is controlled by these regulations, which tend to permit a wide variety of uses, with very few defined limitations as to height, setbacks, lot area, etc. This part of the District is the most eclectic, including high-rise office buildings and single-family houses, often within a few blocks of each other.

In addition, the CBD zoning category waives the off-street parking requirements that impact most other uses, and provides incentives for certain development features including street level commercial uses, expressly intended to “encourage pedestrian traffic and contribute to street activity.”

(Insert Existing Land Use Map and Existing Zoning Map)

City of Omaha Master Plan

The Omaha Master Plan is the legal expression of the City’s vision for the future. As such, it contains many elements that are directly related to both the efforts of Destination Midtown and the intended outcomes. The following highlight

sections taken from the existing City master plan that have relevance or application to the Midtown Study Area and the Destination Midtown planning process:

Concept Element

- The Master Plan represents the overall vision of Omaha and has two fundamental purposes. The first provides an essential legal basis for land use regulation such as zoning and subdivision control. Secondly, a modern master plan presents a unified and compelling vision for a community, derived from the aspirations of its citizens, and establishes the specific actions necessary to fulfill that vision (Taken from page 1 of the Concept Element).
- Omahan's (*sic*) need to take pride in the physical attractiveness of their city and work to eliminate visual blight and to promote high quality design. Omaha's urban form must be carefully designed to eliminate land use conflicts, reduce traffic congestion, encourage pedestrian movement, and incorporate open space. The preservation of historic buildings and sites is important to Omahans as they work to preserve their cultural and ethnic heritage. (Page 3)
- Omaha's neighborhoods must be designed to supply a variety of affordable, quality homes along with a full range of services and amenities which make each neighborhood unique. Private investment, public programs and the involvement of community organizations should all be used in an effort to reverse and eventually eliminate deterioration within the city (Page 4)
- *Concepts and Objectives* - The City of Omaha will establish the basic development patterns for the city. The City will utilize its regulatory authority in combination with development incentives to guide the balanced and contiguous growth of the city and to encourage the redevelopment of deteriorating central city areas. (Page 9)
- *Objectives* - Efforts should be made to combat deterioration within older sectors of the city by promoting the construction of new infill housing built within the interstate loop, revitalizing existing neighborhoods, and developing new commercial and employment centers within the city's older neighborhoods. (Page 9)
- *Concept* - The basic development pattern for Omaha will be based on a series of high-density mixed-use area that together contain the majority of the city's employment, shopping, services, open space and medium- to high-density housing. The bulk of the city's low-

density housing will be in areas surrounding high-density mixed-use areas. (Page 10)

- *Urban Design, Architecture, and Site Design* - For a variety of reasons, including current City design standards and zoning regulations, commercial and office developments are often designed and constructed independently which makes it difficult to plan for common circulation and parking or to create image places that become public symbols of the uniqueness of Omaha. Quality design can mitigate traffic congestion by eliminating multiple driveways, reducing land consumption through increased densities, and eliminating unattractive strip commercial patterns and associated sign clutter. (Page 10)
- *Streetscape* - Street systems which appear unplanned and which contain more signage than landscaping degrade the city's appearance. Omaha's historically significant original park and boulevard system has been severed in numerous places and is in need of rehabilitation. (Page 12)

Land Use Element

- *The Mixed-Use Concept and Existing Development* - One of the goals of this plan is to attempt to reconfigure certain existing, developed parts of the city into areas that function as true mixed-use centers...The potential mixed-use areas fall into two general types – those older streetcar-era commercial areas that were built before the second world war, and the more automobile-oriented centers built after the war. (Taken from page 14 of Land Use Element)
- *Streetcar-Era Commercial Areas*
 - Characteristics:
 - Often contain a number of late 19th and early 20th century buildings
 - A mix of uses
 - Relatively high-density
 - High percentage of properties sit directly on the property line, little or no setbacks, buildings often directly abut one another, on street parking, high degree of shared parking, pedestrian oriented, built during pedestrian/public transit era. (Page 14)
 - Guidelines:
 - Retain sound, late 19th and early 20th century buildings.

- Continue to encourage a mix of uses.
- Build infill that is compatible with the surrounding area in density, scale, design and use
- Appropriate contemporary uses should be found for sound, underutilized older buildings where possible
- Development should respect pre-existing setback lines
- Prevent office and commercial projects in mixed-use areas from expanding into surrounding residential uses
- Prevent mixed-use areas from growing together into strip commercial (Page 15)

Housing and Community Development Element

- *Guideline 1: Owner-Occupied Housing* - The City should provide a range of rehabilitation activities designed to meet the needs of the diverse populations that make up owner households. Most should focus on the rehabilitation of housing within specified geographical areas. One approach in the city's most distressed neighborhoods is to provide full, moderate and partial rehabilitations to low- and moderate-income owner households. Within a larger, though still focused geographical area, the City will work with area lending institutions to leverage private dollars for the rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing. (Taken from page 10 of Housing and Community Development Element)
- *Objectives of single-family rehabilitation efforts are:*
 - To provide dramatically visible, concentrated improvement in strategic parts of neighborhoods with the greatest economic and housing needs.
 - To make affordable rehabilitation financing more available in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.
 - To expand rehabilitation activity into low- and moderate-income neighborhoods which have seen little or no previous activity.
 - To use resources to leverage private sources, including lenders and the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority. (Page 10)
- *Guideline 5: Incentives for Development* - Provide incentives for redevelopment within inner-city neighborhoods to non-profit and for-profit organizations. The establishment of private/public partnerships are necessary to encourage the redevelopment of many inner-city neighborhoods. The total costs associated with the redevelopment of deteriorated neighborhoods are often greater than what individual organizations can absorb. The Land Reutilization Commission (LRC) will play a role in reducing the

costs of redevelopment within inner-city neighborhoods. The LRC is a governmental entity which exists for the purpose of returning tax delinquent real property to revenue producing status by selling such property to the public. (Page 12)

- *Guideline 9: Housing Code Enforcement* - The City should continue to enforce the housing code. (Page 11)
- *Development of neighborhood businesses and the creation of jobs* - Directly associated with the physical decline of neighborhoods is economic decline. When vacant houses and land are pervasive in a neighborhood, its overall economic viability is limited by the under-utilization of resources...In addition to the City-sponsored housing activities which strengthen neighborhood economic viability, the City should support a variety of activities that reinforce neighborhood business development, encourage small business starts, and create jobs for low- and moderate-income people. The economic development programs would build financial strength in neighborhoods and create jobs which would help people achieve economic self-sufficiency – the highest goal of any community development program. (Page 17).
- *Guideline 19: Local Economies/Small Businesses* - The City will promote economic development through the revitalization of neighborhood business districts and the development of small business opportunities. (Page 17)
- *Guideline 21: Jobs Creation* - Objectives for the City's Neighborhood Business Development and Jobs Creation effort are:
 - Building the local economies of community development neighborhoods.
 - Encouraging small enterprises, particularly those offering goods and services to neighborhood residents, to locate and remain in crucial neighborhood business districts.
 - Increasing the amount of retail activity in business districts.
 - Improving the commercial building stock of neighborhood business districts.
 - Encouraging new small business starts and expansion in revitalization areas.
 - Promoting the development of minority-owned businesses.
 - Creating jobs for low- and moderate-income people. (Page 19)

Transportation Element

- *Land Use and Site Design: The Concept Element states* - A series of mixed-use areas should be utilized in order to help relieve traffic congestion, allow for more efficient use of mass transit, and help reverse the current pattern of strip commercial development. (Taken from page 10 of the Transportation Element)
- *Neighborhood Mixed-Use Areas* - The neighborhood mixed-use area is intended to provide a level of service between that of the smaller convenience area and the larger community-sized mixed-use area. Large-scale grocery stores and drive-up fast-food restaurants are allowed in this district, as well as other stores whose type and scale are appropriate to serve the surrounding neighborhoods. Major retail and discount “box” stores designed to serve a large section of the city are generally not allowed. Office, medium-density residential, and civic uses are also allowed and encouraged in neighborhood mixed-use areas.
 - Access to the center is focused on automobile, transit, bicycle and pedestrian modes. The limits of the center is (*sic*) based on pedestrian walking distance, and the centers will be tied into the city’s overall pedestrian and open space system.
 - Neighborhood areas will be located at the intersection of a major and minor arterial, two major arterials, or a major arterial and an expressway. Generally, the center of neighborhood mixed-use areas should be no closer than one mile.
 - Center can accommodate moderate levels of through traffic.
 - Shared parking should be encouraged in non-residential portions of center. (Page 11)
- *Alternative Travel Modes: Mass Transit* - In order to provide other options to the automobile, the City must rethink mass transit’s role and encourage design which makes other options to the car more attractive. Increasing the role of transit in the city will not only make for a more efficient city, it will open up opportunities to those who don’t drive, low-income families, children under 16, and senior citizens. (Page 19)

Parks and Recreation Element

- *Guideline 2: Community Livability* - Utilize parks and natural features to enhance the living environment of the city’s neighborhoods and make Omaha a desirable place to live, work and invest. Increase neighborhood identity, culturally and physically, and connect neighborhoods together to create a sense

of community through the parks and open space system. Incorporate facilities for cultural and arts activities in the park system. (Taken from page 7 in the Parks and Recreation Element)

Summary

As stated, the codes, regulations and Master Plan in effect in Omaha are generally supportive of the stated ambitions of the Destination Midtown planning process. Specific projects still need to be evaluated on their merits, and the conventional processes of variances, exemptions, appeals and petitions will still continue. There is relatively little, however, in the ambitions of Destination Midtown that contradicts the allowable operations of the codes or the overall Master Plan.

Market Overview

Demographics

The most recent Census records indicate that in the year 2000, the Destination Midtown Study Area was home to 27,773 people, or approximately 7% of the population of the city of Omaha. At 3.6 square miles, the Study Area occupies just over 3% of the City's physical area, indicating a population density (7,715 people per square mile) that is over twice the average population density for the City as a whole (3,371 people per square mile) and nearly three times the density of the metro area (2,768 people per square mile).

The population of Midtown is 52% male and 48% female. Just under 6,000 people (21% of the total) are 18 years of age or younger. Another 6,300 people are in their twenties (23%), suggestive of the large numbers of college students within the Study Area. The median age for the district is 31, somewhat less than for the City as a whole (33.5); less than 10% of the Midtown population is of retirement age (65 and older).

Just under 21,000 residents list their race as white (76%). There are 2,663 African-Americans (10%). Just over 17% of the population is of Hispanic or Latino origin.

There are 12,576 households within the Study Area, with an average household size of 2.2 persons. This is somewhat lower than the average household size for the City as a whole, 2.42 persons per household, and the metro area, 2.55 persons per household.

Less than a quarter of the households in the Study Area (23.9%) include children under the age of 18. Nearly 7,700 households (61.2%) are occupied by a single adult living alone.

The median household income for residents of the Study Area is \$28,581 per year; the average household income is \$36,388. This is substantially lower than the median household income for the Omaha metro area, which is nearly \$46,000. Only some of this discrepancy can be attributed to the generally lower household size in Midtown; the remainder reflects that somewhat lower levels of economic prosperity within the Study Area.

In terms of income, 4,441 households had earnings of less than \$20,000 per year, with nearly 2,000 of these less than \$10,000. These numbers, however, may be somewhat misleading due to the large number of students within the Study Area. At the opposite end of the economic spectrum, only 455 households (3.6%) reported year 2000 incomes of greater than \$100,000.

There are 13,856 dwelling units in Midtown Omaha. Of these, 1,280 or just over 9% are vacant. Just under 29% (3,970) are owner-occupied, while the remaining 8,606 (62.1%) are rental units. Again, this statistic, to some degree, reflects the relatively large number of college students living within the district.

Over time, the population of Midtown has remained fairly stable. From 1980 to 1990, the population of the district dropped from 27,457 to 27,095, and then grew again to the current 27,773. Significant changes, however, impacted the composition of this populace. The percentage of residents over 65 dropped from 18% to 13% and then to 10%; the percentage of residents under the age of 18 grew from 17% to 20% and then to 21%. The median age across this twenty-year period has remained nearly constant. For all three census counts, the largest percentage of the resident population was people in their twenties.

In terms of education, 9% of the adult population (25 and older) never made it through 9th grade in school. An additional 10% have some high school education but no diploma. 26% graduated from high school, but went no further. At the other end of the spectrum, 18% of the adult residents have a 4-year college degree and an additional 9% have a graduate degree. The percentage of the population without a high school degree is somewhat greater than for the Omaha metro area as a whole (19% versus 11.4%), while the numbers for college graduates is somewhat lower (27% versus 30%).

In summary, the Midtown Study Area population is somewhat younger and poorer than the rest of Omaha, with a larger number of single people. It is much denser than the rest of the community, with a slightly smaller household size. Ethnically, Midtown is more diverse than the rest of the metro area. Educationally, a greater percentage of the residents failed to achieve a high school diploma, but nearly the same percentage of residents as within the metro area received a college degree or higher.

Employment

The 2003 labor force estimates for the Midtown Study Area suggest that there are nearly 23,000 eligible employees living within the district. Of these, just less than 12,000 are male and just less than 11,000 are female. Of the male population, just over 3,000 or approximately 25% are not in the labor force. 503 individuals, or 2%, are unemployed; the remaining 8,303 are employed.

For women, 3,943 individuals are not in the labor force. Of those in the labor force, 401 are unemployed and the remaining 6,600 women are currently employed.

Statistics on the number of residents who live in the Midtown Study Area and also work there are somewhat unclear. However, within the 3.6 square-mile Study Area, there are over 43,000 daytime employees; this accounts for just over

10% of the entire metro area employment. These employees work in 1,541 distinct business establishments. The vast majority of these businesses (66%) have fewer than 4 employees. Another 14% (223 firms) of the businesses have between 5 and 9 employees. Combined, four out of every five businesses within the Midtown Study Area have less than 9 employees.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, three businesses employ between 250 and 499 people, four employ between 500 and 999, and five firms within the Study Area have more than 1,000 employees.

Four of the top twenty employers within the Omaha metro area are located within Midtown: Mutual of Omaha, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, the Nebraska Medical Center, and Creighton University. Together, these four employers, alone, account for over 17,000 jobs.

In terms of major categories, 6,340 jobs in Midtown are in Finance, Insurance & Real Estate (FIRE), and nearly 29,000 are in the general category of "Service." These two categories, combined, account for 83% of the jobs within the Study Area.

The occupation types within Midtown are much more diversified. 22% (9,285) of the employees are listed as "Professional," and another 20% (8,674) fall into the category of "Clerical – Administrative Support Workers."

Within Midtown, the top 5 Occupations are:

- Professional 9,285 22%
- Clerical 8,674 20%
- Services 6,378 15%
- Executive & Managerial 4,813 11%
- Technical 3,789 09%

Businesses and Services

In terms of the types of businesses within Midtown, the largest type category is Health & Medical Services, with nearly 600 entities comprising 38% of the total. There are 137 businesses in the category of "Retail Trade," employing just under 1,500 people, and an additional 78 "Bars & Restaurants," employing 945 workers.

Disaggregating the retail trade data reveals the following breakdown:

- Building Materials, Hardware & Garden 14
- General Merchandise Stores 3
- Food Markets 10
- Convenience Stores 11

- Other Food Stores 9
- Auto Dealers & Gas Stations 24
- Clothing Stores 7
- Furniture Stores 3
- Home Furnishings 4
- Electronics & Computer Stores 3
- Music Stores 5
- Restaurants 46
- Other Food Services 14
- Bars 18
- Drug Stores 14
- Specialty Stores 45
- Catalog & Direct Sales 1

Summarizing the employment and establishment data, one sees a district that is vital both in terms of the number and types of employees and businesses. There are some voids or weaknesses in terms of the retail and related support services that are found within the Midtown Study Area proper. The resident population of Midtown, plus the influx of additional daily workers, indicates a demand for as much as 500,000 square feet of general service retail, of a variety that does not seem to be fully manifested in the existing situation. In particular, the District lacks full-service supermarkets within its boundaries. This absence reflects, in part, the fairly dense level of development within the Study Area and the relative lack of parcels large enough for suburban-style retail development where a 40,000 – 50,000 square foot anchor grocery store would require approximately 4 – 6 acres of land, with additional area required for associated in-line stores.

The demand for services provided by full-service grocery stores is not unmet; residents of Midtown are simply traveling outside the Study Area to shop. To the extent that such stores are still convenient to Midtown without being physically within its borders, the needs of the district residents are being accommodated. Several centers do cater to these needs, the closest being immediately west of the Study Area at the intersection of Saddle Creek Road and Cuming Street and on the southwest corner of the intersection of Saddle Creek Road and Leavenworth Street.

With respect to the future development of a full-service grocery within the Study Area, the demand for such a facility seems to exist, but the cost of land to provide it within the district may currently be stifling development. Older urban areas across the nation that are witnessing similar redevelopment efforts are seeing the creation of urban scale supermarkets. These are generally somewhat smaller than the suburban prototypes, offering a somewhat more limited range of products; the product range, however, is often carefully crafted to meet the demands of the immediate neighborhoods. Often, these urban groceries include some form of structured parking or shared parking, in order to reduce the overall

land required for construction. The economics of development dictate the degree to which this option is followed; does the cost of land outweigh the cost of creating structured parking? To the extent that it does, developers will choose to integrate structured parking into the stores.

With respect to restaurants and other establishments that provide food and beverage services, the Midtown district includes a refreshing variety of local and non-chain options. The dominant location for chain-related restaurants is along the primary auto circulation corridors within the District, specifically Dodge Street. Away from these primary arterials, a wide diversity of local “mom and pop” establishments can be found catering to resident demands; many of these buildings, if not the establishments within them, stem back to the period before World War II when the Midtown area was heavily serviced by street cars. Farnam Street and Leavenworth Street both include a variety of bars and restaurants, catering both to local residents and to the daily influx of workers within the District.

It seems clear that there are opportunities to expand and further diversify the retail and restaurant and bar options within Midtown. In part this can be accommodated through judicious clustering of uses, such as being proposed for several locations within the Study Area, where the benefits of location and adjacency accrue to all of the establishments, and where the costs of necessities such as advertising and parking can be spread across the range of beneficiaries. In particular, opportunities to mix uses, primarily office, retail, bars and restaurants, and residential, abound within the district, and present a key opportunity to overcome one of the area’s weaknesses, which is the lack or under-provision of parking.

To the extent that well-financed national retailers or restaurants look to move into the Midtown area, their involvement can help foster a positive influence. Such entities, however, should be made to adhere to the recommended design and development guidelines that emerge from the Midtown planning activities so that their arrival does not diminish or weaken the overall character of the Study Area.

SWOT Analysis

The data collection and analysis phase of the Destination Midtown project culminated in a series of SWOT analyses and summary meetings, which involved the participation of well over 500 community members from throughout the Study Area and beyond. The purpose of these workshops was to allow the community to define and describe the relative **S**trengths and **W**eaknesses of the Midtown district in its present condition, and then to discuss both the **O**pportunities for positive change and growth within the district and potential **T**hreats that might impact the district in the future. This participation was critical,

as it provided a base understanding of significant issues within the Study Area and set the stage for all ensuing efforts during the planning process.

The Workshops

In order to facilitate the SWOT analysis, the Study Area was divided into three geographic sub-areas and a workshop was scheduled for each. These areas included:

- North Area (Dodge to Cumings, 24th to Saddle Creek)
- Central Area (Dodge to Leavenworth, 24th to Saddle Creek)
- South Area (Leavenworth to Center, 24th to Saddle Creek)

The three SWOT analysis workshops were held on June 10 and 11, 2003. The only criteria for participation in a workshop was that a participant had to live, work, or have a general interest within the Study Area. SWOT analysis summary meetings were scheduled for the following month, from July 7 – 8, 2003.

The SWOT analysis workshops were divided into two major tasks. Participants in each workshop were informed that a SWOT analysis was a way of thinking strategically about the future of the Midtown district. The workshops were designed to be interactive, community based, and cumulative. The goal was to learn more about what community members thought about their community, as it is today, and as it might be in the future.

Identify Positive and Negative Features

The first task for the participants was to identify positive and negative features within the Study Area. Each participant was given 2 green dots and 2 red dots. Green dots represented positive features within the Study Area and red dots represented negative features within the Study Area. Participants were asked to approach a large aerial photograph of the Study Area and place their dots on it. Dot placement led to a greater understanding of the physical location of positive and negative features within the Study Area.

(Include SWOT Dot Map)

This analysis helped identify the top ten **positive** features within the Destination Midtown Study Area:

1. St. Cecilia's Cathedral
2. 38th Street/Gold Coast Neighborhood
3. Hanscom Park
4. Woolworth Street through the Field Club
5. Duchesne Academy
6. Joslyn Castle

7. Mutual of Omaha
8. Field Club
9. Blackstone
10. Turner Park

(Include SWOT Top Ten Map)

In a master planning process, positive features are typically seen as amenities, with a goal of emphasizing or building upon them. In the case of Destination Midtown, the area's park and open space system and its historic architecture were seen as significant elements that the planning framework should be built around.

The top ten **negative** features as identified by participants included:

1. Intersection of Park Avenue & Leavenworth
2. Intersection of 33rd and California
3. The Travel Inn
4. Intersection of Woolworth and Park Avenue
5. Intersection of Saddle Creek and Dodge
6. Intersection of 42nd and Leavenworth
7. Center Street commercial corridor between 34th and 36th
8. The northeast corner of Park Avenue and St. Mary's
9. Uses at the intersection of Saddle Creek and Leavenworth
10. Intersection of Saddle Creek and Farnam

(Include SWOT Bottom Ten Map)

Negative features are typically items that need to be improved upon or, in certain circumstances, turned into positive features. Using this logic, the Saddle Creek Road corridor and several rundown neighborhood business districts would need to be addressed during the Master Planning process.

SWOT Analysis

Each workshop continued by compiling a list of issues for each of the four SWOT criteria. Participants were asked to identify the major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the Study Area. These issues were then analyzed and summarized during a second round of public meetings held on July 7th and 8th. The goal was to establish a generally agreed-upon Vision for the future of the Midtown district, as a whole, as well as for individual neighborhoods and districts. The procedure for the SWOT analysis consisted of the following:

- Each participant was welcome to speak, but only as it pertained to the four SWOT categories.

- Each speaker should be brief; the entire exercise was to be completed in 90 minutes.
- If a speaker had a point to make and it was already listed, they were asked not repeat it.
- There were no “right” or “wrong” points, and everyone was entitled to their own viewpoint.

Results of the SWOT analysis were tabulated for each of the sub-areas and for the entire Study Area. Detailed results for each sub-area and the entire Study Area are included in the appendix at the end of this document. Summary results for the Study Area as a whole are examined below.

Primary Strengths within Midtown:

1. Historic architecture
2. Diversity
3. Strong neighborhood organizations
4. Pedestrian friendly, mixed use, and walkable
5. Central location and access to downtown

Primary Weaknesses within Midtown:

1. Absentee landlords
2. Poor perception of the area by others
3. Lack of code enforcement
4. Public safety (drugs, alcohol, prostitution and crime)
5. Tax penalty to renovate properties

Primary Opportunities within Midtown:

1. Tax incentives to promote redevelopment
2. Renovation of rundown properties
3. Opportunity to create a pedestrian friendly environment
4. Improve the appearance of Dodge Street
5. Independent businesses

Primary Threats within Midtown:

1. Increase in crime (drugs, prostitution, gangs, etc.)
2. Unkept rental properties
3. Absentee landlords
4. “Good” people giving up and moving away
5. Deterioration of commercial storefronts on arterials

The summary strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats listed above and in detail in the appendix become the framework upon which the plan document and ensuing programs were built upon.

Vision

Establishing a vision for the Destination Midtown Study Area was a key element in the planning process. The vision established the preferred end result for the area, and led to the creation of programs that would be necessary to achieve this goal. Typical to many planning processes, Destination Midtown established one encompassing vision and many subordinate visions. These visions were a direct result of the various issues that were identified during the SWOT analysis.

As part of the public workshops, participants were asked to comment on their long-term vision(s) for the Study Area. Participants were asked the following questions:

- What is your short-term and long-term vision for the Study Area?
- What do you see the area becoming within 5 to 20 years?
- What would you like to see happen in your neighborhood?

The answers to these questions were as varied as the participants themselves. The original list of responses numbered in the hundreds. In order to organize these responses, the individual “visions” were grouped into several themes, and are listed below:

Establish Midtown as a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented community

- Create strategic plans for the redevelopment of existing neighborhoods
- Encourage walking to work, school, stores, churches, recreation, etc.
- Foster a sustainable business district that acts as a “City Within a City,” where all daily needs can be met without leaving the area
- Help Midtown become a destination where people want to live and visit
- Maintain and enhance the viability of small independent, mom-and-pop stores and businesses
- Establish “park once” centers and districts

Transportation and Circulation

- Calm traffic on major arterial roads to make them less disruptive
- Create safer pedestrian crossings at major intersections
- Calm traffic on neighborhood streets
- Repave and repair alley infrastructure
- Enhance bicycle circulation and utility
- Encourage non-automobile means of transportation
- Create additional north-south links and connections

Architecture, Aesthetics & Overall Appearance

- Establish coherent design guidelines for neighborhoods and buildings
- Maintain and strengthen existing character and diversity
- Ensure that Midtown does not become West Omaha

- Protect and restore historic structures
- Establish rules, guidelines and examples of good, contextual infill development

Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Wildlife

- Turn Midtown into a showplace for urban park life for both passive and active recreation
- Save existing trees and create a plan for adding more
- Establish additional green space around UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center
- Make existing parks more family-friendly
- Study opportunities for urban wildlife habitat

Enhanced Community Cohesiveness

- Establish links between institutions and neighborhoods
- Establish Midtown as a viable alternative to the suburbs
- Foster a mindset of involvement and caring
- Create focal points and community centers

Code Enforcement & Government Issues

- Enforce current codes and stiffen penalties to encourage change
- Address the tax implications of renovating and restoring properties
- Establish design guidelines for new buildings
- Eliminate red-lining by insurance companies and realtors

Additional Issues

- Economics: Establish Midtown as a strong, self-sustaining community where people want to invest
- Housing: Ensure a diverse range of housing options, particularly for employees of major institutions
- Safety: Foster enhanced, neighborhood-based law enforcement; bring back the “beat cop”
- Participation: Establish a meaningful working relationship between neighborhoods, businesses, and the City

Based on the above answers and steering committee input, an overall consensus vision for the future of the Midtown Study Area emerged. This vision became the basis for the subsequent master planning efforts that took place during the course of the project.

“Destination Midtown represents a unique partnership of public and private interests working together to return Midtown to prominence and make it a destination of choice in Omaha”.

As such, the plan should establish a physical and functional framework in order to:

- Create a safe, vibrant area where people want to come to live, work, shop, and play;
- Reinforce the position of Midtown within the greater Omaha metropolitan area, strengthen the identity of Midtown, and create a positive image;
- Identify and optimize the role Midtown plays as a premier element within the region;
- Create a people oriented district that addresses safety, access, appeal, and opportunity; and
- Enhance the Study Area's abilities to attract and retain businesses and residents.

Case Studies

University of Pennsylvania Case Study

In the early 1990s the University of Pennsylvania found that the deterioration of the surrounding West Philadelphia neighborhood was having an adverse effect on its operations and on the recruitment of students and faculty. The geographical relationship of West Philadelphia to Center City Philadelphia is comparable to the relationship between Midtown and Downtown Omaha.

Beginning in 1996 the University of Pennsylvania, on the initiative of the President and the Board of Trustees, decided on policies of direct intervention. They resolved to accomplish their new policies through changes in administration throughout the University, rather than centralizing neighborhood initiatives in a separate office or program.

Penn determined on five new initiatives that corresponded to the worst problems in West Philadelphia:

- Clean and Safe Streets
- Housing and Home Ownership
- Improving Public Education
- Economic Development
- Commercial Development

Today there has been substantial success in all of these categories, adding up to a major transformation of the area. The University is preparing a detailed case study, which will be available to the public at the end of the summer of 2004. The following is a brief summary of the five initiatives.

Clean and Safe Streets

In 1997 Penn, in concert with other institutions in West Philadelphia, founded the University City District, which is comparable to a business improvement district, and is supported by voluntary funding commitments in five-year increments. 25 formerly unemployed people who were receiving public assistance are employed to clean sidewalks and remove graffiti. Another 40 employees are unarmed security guards who work closely with the Philadelphia and university police forces. The University City district also sponsors a shuttle bus, pays for street lighting improvements, and runs a marketing campaign to enhance the image of University City. Other important programs include UC Brite and UC Green. UC Brite is a \$1,000,000 program to split the cost of new light fixtures and their installation with landlords that has resulted in installing more than 2500 sidewalk and house lights at 1200 properties in 123 blocks. UC Green has planted more than 525 trees, as well as thousands of bulbs, and created neighborhood

gardens. The UC District also monitors city services and works to coordinate and improve them.

Results: More than 31% decrease in overall crime; polls show that more than 70% of residents find the area cleaner and safer

Housing and Home Ownership

Once fine neighborhoods around Penn were becoming run-down in the 1990s. Owner-occupied units declined by 12% between 1980 and 1990. Penn started giving mortgage incentives to faculty and staff after 1997 to buy in West Philadelphia neighborhoods including up to 120% financing on properties costing up to \$333,700. The University also rehabbed 20 problem properties in critical locations and put them back on the housing market. 386 Penn faculty have purchased homes in University City, with 40% of homes being purchased for less than \$100,000. 146 owners affiliated with Penn have taken advantage of incentives to rehab their house exteriors. The University also raised more than \$50,000,000 in capital to create a Neighborhood Housing and Preservation Fund to help protect the inventory of moderate priced housing. Penn's own investment in the fund was \$5,000,000. The fund now owns and operates more than 200 rental units. The University also acquired and leased an old industrial building to a developer who converted the building to 282 market-rate rental units plus 300,000 square feet of office space.

Results: Owner occupied units increased by 6% between 1990 and 2000, and have continued to increase. Existing rental choices have been protected and enhanced.

Improving Public Education

Penn has mobilized its faculty in the School of Education and in other departments to work towards improving the public schools in West Philadelphia. Faculty and students also can provide community service in the schools through the Center for Community Partnerships, and Penn students can serve as tutors and mentors through the University's Civic House. More than 1700 Penn faculty, students, and staff have participated in more than 130 educational programs in 33 West Philadelphia public schools.

Penn faculty have developed new curriculum units, mentoring and professional development programs at Powel Elementary, Drew Elementary, Lea Elementary, University City High School, and West Philadelphia High School. The three elementary schools had all been low-performing schools. Penn has also implemented health screening and health education in four West Philadelphia schools through its Medical and Dental Schools. The University has also helped expand evening and weekend school programs.

Perhaps the most important of Penn's commitments has been to raise funds to create a model public elementary school, the Penn / Alexander School, a collaboration among the Penn Graduate School of Education, which developed the curriculum, the School District of Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. Penn leases the land to the School District for \$1.00 a year, and is providing up to \$700,000 in annual operating support for a 10-year renewable term. Occupying a new building completed in 2002, the school has a diverse student body and special facilities that will serve the entire school district.

Result: More families are buying houses in West Philadelphia so that their children can attend the Alexander School, and property values are rising. The over-all level of quality in all West Philadelphia schools is going up. Penn is helping to improve the physical facilities at other schools, for example a new library and garden at Lea Elementary.

Economic Development

Penn has revamped its purchasing system to favor West Philadelphia suppliers. In fiscal year 2002 Penn purchased \$65.7 million in goods and services from West Philadelphia vendors. 2/3 were minority suppliers, and almost 1/4 were African-American-owned businesses. Penn has also revised its policies for its own building construction projects to insure MBE/WBE and West Philadelphia Business Enterprise participation, with over \$123 million awarded to such firms since 1998. Penn has also helped create a Knowledge Industry Partnership to find ways to leverage the economic power of Penn and other local research universities. Innovation Philadelphia is a public/private initiative begun by the City to promote economic development based on knowledge industries. The president of Penn currently is the chair of this organization.

Results: Penn is creating trust and a sense of mutual advantage for neighborhoods surrounding its campus.

Commercial Development

Penn recently won an award from the Urban Land Institute for its innovative development of properties on Walnut Street just north of the main part of Penn's campus. Penn invested \$90,000,000 in Sansom Square, a 228-room Hilton Hotel and 150,000 square feet of high-quality retail and restaurants. At 40th Street and Walnut, once considered the edge of the campus, the University developed a parking garage and 35,000 square foot grocery store, and, across Walnut Street, the Bridge Cinema, a multiplex film theater.

Result: this part of West Philadelphia, long considered dangerous at night and unattractive during the day, is now the City's second most active mixed-use area, after Center City. Although the University has not commented on these

investments, they are believed to be successful. These businesses also employ more than 200 local residents

Other Initiatives

Penn has long been the principal mover in the multi-institution University Science Center, the nation's oldest and largest urban science park, which is just to the north of the Penn campus. In addition Penn has just purchased 26 acres from the U.S. Postal Service, just to the east of the campus, to expand its science, engineering and medical research facilities. The effect of this purchase will also be to extend the Penn campus to become almost contiguous with Center City. Future plans include a new pedestrian bridge across the Schuylkill River connecting Locust Walk, the main pedestrian route through the Penn campus, to Locust Street in Center City.

Portland, Oregon Case Study

Portland, Oregon is recognized across the country as an innovator in terms of proactive planning, neighborhood renewal, and inner-city reinvestment. The city is known for its vibrant downtown, infill development, mass transit, and healthy neighborhoods. Because of this, and the fact that many of its neighborhoods were in similar condition to Midtown neighborhoods less than 30 years ago, it was selected as a Case Study for the Destination Midtown planning process. As a result, eight members of the Destination Midtown Steering Committee traveled to Portland, Oregon on March 29 and 30, 2004 in order to observe, first hand, redevelopment efforts and to hear about “keys to success” and the “pit-falls to avoid” from those who participated in and led Portland’s redevelopment activities.

Background

Portland was established in the 1840’s. The city’s early development was based on traditional New England planning principles, and it has always had a strong planning ethic. Portland is known as a “walkable” city, and its downtown street grid (200-foot blocks) is credited with establishing this pedestrian oriented framework. Today, the city is not as concerned about developing individual projects, but instead establishing a “quality of place.” There are several keys to recent redevelopment efforts, and none of this activity would have been possible without the involvement of the following:

- Public policy as the guide,
- Private sector active involvement, and
- Non-profit sector involvement

The travel team toured several neighborhoods and redevelopment areas while it was in Portland. Each of these areas was experiencing substantial amounts of reinvestment and redevelopment activity. More importantly, each of these neighborhoods had one or more elements that made it relative or pertinent to the Destination Midtown project. Each of these neighborhoods or projects is listed below, followed by a brief overview and “lessons learned.”

Alberta Street

Alberta Street runs through the heart of one of Portland’s distressed minority and low-income neighborhoods. The Northeast neighborhood was formerly known as “crack alley,” and drug dealing was so prevalent that the City placed Jersey barriers along the neighborhood retail street to limit traffic and prevent drug dealing in this working class neighborhood.

Remarkably, this neighborhood has “come back” in a relatively short amount of time. Area homes are being renovated, infill lots are being redeveloped, mixed-

use commercial structures have been developed along the Alberta Street corridor, and gentrification has become an issue. Several things have led to this amazing turn-around and revitalization:

- The Alberta Street Community Plan, which regulates development within this area, was put into place. This plan allows mixed-use development and has infill design guidelines to protect the integrity of the neighborhood.
- The area was designated as an urban renewal district, with the goal of encouraging new housing development.
- All sectors (public, private, and non-profit) were active participants in the turn-around. Several community development corporations (CDC's) operated in the area, and the housing authority initiated several projects.
- Neighborhood activism and community policing were early positive steps. Community policing consisted of the establishment of a police precinct within the neighborhood, walking beat patrols, and other "textbook" community policing activities.
- Criminals were taken out of circulation through coordinated law enforcement activities. The element responsible for the bulk of the criminal activity was removed from the community and placed behind bars.
- Existing market pressure and the CDC's jump started redevelopment.

One of the initial businesses within the area was a coffee house. The owner of this business required that the front door remain unlocked during business hours and that the employees interact with the community. This turned out to be a significant event, as the coffee house provided a venue for residents to gather and discuss neighborhood issues.

Now, a couple years later, there are several active businesses within the area, and a significant amount of infill development is occurring. Many of the businesses within the area display art in their buildings, and an art walk has become a monthly event that the community looks forward to.

Lessons Learned:

- Developer financing and code and permitting issues were early hurdles.
- The city and the developers must work together to build a good product.
- Current funding for projects within the area come from the Portland Development Corporation (PDC) and local banks.
- The PDC is a separate redevelopment agency that can utilize TIF and other programs, such as storefront façade programs, etc.
- Key components in turning the Alberta Street area around include:
 - Entrepreneurship
 - CDC's
 - Working with the Police

- Establishing relationships (buy-in) with the existing community.
- CDC's can raise the quality level of the residential fabric and improve the housing stock.
- Non-profits and developers must work together, and government must also be a willing partner.

Northeast Martin Luther King Boulevard and Northeast Broadway

Martin Luther King Boulevard and Northeast Broadway, traditional neighborhood retail streets, run through Northeast Portland, an area that is approximately 10% African American. During the 1970's, the Oregon Department of Transportation removed on-street parking from MLK Boulevard and replaced it with a wide median in order to facilitate traffic movement. As a result, local businesses closed due to the lack of parking and reduction in street life, and the area began to deteriorate. To reverse this trend, the City of Portland is now reducing the width of the median and putting parking back on the street. This has encouraged a substantial amount of redevelopment activity, as the street is now designed for both people and cars.

Other forms of traffic calming have been implemented both along the boulevard and on adjacent cross-streets. "Friends of Trees," an organization that provides funding for street trees, has been very active in the area. Street trees and other traffic calming techniques, which tend to slow traffic through the area, have been very important for the area's stability.

Lessons Learned:

- Remodeling neighborhood arterial streets to provide on-street parking and support pedestrian-oriented development (storefronts and streetscape) is an easy and effective means of encouraging neighborhood redevelopment.
- The establishment of mechanisms to encourage redevelopment is critical.
- The PDC was instrumental in resuscitating commerce along the boulevards.

McMenamin's Kennedy School

Kennedy School was an old, deteriorated neighborhood school that was in jeopardy of being demolished. This former eyesore, located along an arterial roadway, was painstakingly restored and is now a community asset. It houses a unique restaurant, artwork, and a community theater, all situated among beautifully landscaped grounds. This former school is now the focal point for adjacent neighborhoods and the entire community.

Lessons Learned:

- Neighborhood eyesores can be turned into community assets.
- Pay equal attention to the building and the grounds.
- Address community needs to create a lasting amenity

Belmont Dairy

The Belmont Dairy is classified as a mixed-use neighborhood infill project. This project is located along a former streetcar neighborhood business corridor and includes new contextual construction and renovation of several existing dairy buildings. This project contains the following:

- 66 affordable housing units (60% median family income = \$28k for household of 2)
- 19 market rate lofts
- Street level retail, including Zupan's, a 22,000 sq. ft. ground floor local grocery store
- 65 structured parking stalls in addition to on-street parking and direct access to a major bus line

Lessons Learned:

- Infill projects, if they respect the context of their adjacent neighborhoods, can be a significant catalyst for redevelopment.
- Infill development can provide neighborhood-oriented services for the immediate area and adjacent neighborhoods.

Esther Short Park and Adjacent Redevelopment in Downtown Vancouver, WA

Esther Short Park is a prime example of the use of public space to focus and encourage redevelopment activity within a geographic area. Most of the new development around the park has occurred within the last 6 years. Prior to that, the area was run down and perceived as a dangerous place to be. The key to the renaissance of the area was the use of public space to focus and inspire the redevelopment of adjacent property.

The Community Foundation of Southwest Washington was integral in providing the funding for redevelopment of the park. The city originated the idea to redevelop the public space, and approached the foundation to make it work. The city's plan was to use public space as an anchor for redevelopment activity, and the foundation would be the catalyst. This match of a good project with the right

donors provided the City of Vancouver with a new public square, grand flowerbeds, and a signature bell tower. As is often the case, money begets money, and several new projects have resulted, including the following:

- A new farmers market is located on the west side of the park.
- A 4-star, 226-room Hilton Hotel and 30,000 sq. ft. conference center to the south of the park.
- The adjacent Brewery Center, currently under construction, will contain 194 market rate apartments, 34 condos, 95,000 sq. ft. of office space, 12,000 sq. ft. of retail, and 809 underground parking stalls. The city is forgiving property tax for a set period of time.
- Heritage Place, another project under construction, will contain 137 condos, 16,000 sq. ft. of retail, and 143 parking spaces. The city will forgive property tax on the project for the first 10 years.
- A third apartment project is also currently under construction and will consist of 160 units (60% MFI), 20,000 sq. ft. of retail space and 8,000 sq. ft. of farmers market oriented retail. This project will be completed in September 2004.
- Columbia Newspapers is constructing a 5-story office and press facility immediately adjacent to the park.

Significant elements in the redevelopment of the park include the establishment, in 1998, of the Esther Short Sub Area Plan (a downtown redevelopment plan) that designated the area as an urban renewal district. The Mayor provided the leadership for the plan and made it his goal to reclaim the neighborhood. The key to this entire project was the tenacity of the Mayor, who is credited for his ability to garner private investment and establish a consistent agenda by the city (all departments) to reclaim the area.

As a result, the City took control of the area's parking program and established a downtown redevelopment authority, a sub area plan, and a renewal plan to provide a framework for redevelopment. In addition, a downtown redevelopment authority was established. Its board members are appointed by the City Council and appropriately skilled and focused on carrying out the plan (they are not political appointees). Both the public and private sectors market the area, and have succeeded in attracting all market segments, especially empty nesters and young professionals.

Lessons Learned:

- The Mayor relentlessly advocated this project. He was an activist and stuck his neck out.
- There was a high level of involvement by the private philanthropic community. It was a collaborative partnership between the foundation and the City.

- City staff put projects related to redevelopment within the area at the “top of the pile.” Project permitting and review met or exceeded private sector timelines.

Oregon Health & Science University

Children’s Hospital and University Hospital are located on Markum Hill, immediately south of downtown Portland. There is only one road to the campus, and it takes approximately 30 minutes to drive it. A recent master facility plan identified the need for additional campus construction, designating an increase from 3 million sq. ft. to 5 million sq. ft. This projected growth presented a key issue - where would they put the new buildings due to traffic and parking constraints. The two options consisted of the following:

- Should they walk away from the hill top campus? The answer was no, due to the existing massive investment in the site.
- Could they redevelop the additional 2 million sq. ft. elsewhere? The answer was yes, possibly.

Thus the idea for the tram connecting the hilltop campus and a downtown redevelopment site was born. The tram would reduce the existing 30-minute drive to the hospital from the downtown area to 5 minutes and provide immediate connectivity to retail. The tram would connect the existing campus with the South Waterfront Redevelopment Area, and provide new opportunities for jobs, housing, transportation, and environmental sustainability.

In order to facilitate this, the hospital established a district plan for Markum Hill (establishment of policies, goals, and zoning) and the City established an urban dense code for the South Waterfront Redevelopment Area, and included funding mechanisms for the tram, streetcar, and road infrastructure. The overall goal of the district plan was to improve the quality of life for the adjacent neighborhoods and create an opportunity for campus expansion. The project is currently moving forward.

Lessons Learned:

- The hospital needed to establish relationships with the neighborhoods (university staff now sit on neighborhood boards and act as liaisons).
- OHSU was a state agency until 1995. As such, they were an annoyance to the city. They have now fostered a working relationship with the city and are now much more involved with relationships at all levels.
- A large project like this takes much longer than anticipated.
- You must balance the process and the results (be there for each other).

- No matter the size of the project, you must look at yourself as a “developer.” As soon as you impact the neighborhoods, you are seen as a developer, even if you are a hospital or university.

City Leadership Discussion

Traffic calming and transit are two of the major tools that Portland has used to encourage redevelopment and improve the quality of life in the City’s neighborhoods. The City converted MLK Boulevard from a conduit for cars to a neighborhood oriented retail street. Today, light rail and the streetcar are instrumental in Portland’s redevelopment efforts. Within the last 15-20 years, Portland has built a “sense of place” and “community” and encouraged a substantial amount of economic development, as opposed to developing “projects.” Continuing these efforts, the City recently completed a \$28 million extension of the north line of the light rail, which now reaches the river just south of Vancouver, WA.

In Portland, it is about how the City serves the community. It’s a mindset. It is tough to make the cultural leap within a bureaucracy, but Portland has done so, and to significant success. The key issue for Commissioners and Directors is how to create a mechanism for deal making that is in the public interest. What kind of things can leverage investment with city funding?

- *To date, the Portland streetcar has leveraged \$2 billion in redevelopment activity based on an initial \$55 million investment.*

Leadership in Portland is about changing the rules. They have had to re-instruct their traffic engineers to do things differently. In Portland, there is a role for an aggressive administration.

Portland Development Commission Discussion

The Portland Development Commission (PDC) is the urban renewal agency for Portland. The PDC is funded through TIF and has a 5-member board appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. The board contains a balance of interests, with knowledge of the real estate market, finance, etc. Appointees are based on business competence and standing and not representation. The current composition of the board is:

- Well-respected private businessman (Chair)
- Real Estate Attorney
- CFO of an insurance company
- Retired Wells Fargo executive
- Community/small developer

The PDC is a deal making organization that does the bidding of the City Council (it keeps the tough issues such as condemnation away from the City Council). In order to make things happen, they “bite the bullet” and condemn property when necessary. The PDC has a staff of approximately 160 for the following functions:

- Development
- Economic Development
- Housing Agency

The PDC has a Storefront Program, which started in Portland’s Old Town District.

- The Storefront Program is a 50% matching grant to fix up exteriors, and has been very successful.
- They have renovated 400 storefronts in 12 – 14 areas across the city.
- They have used urban renewal money, federal money, and city bond money.
- They will match up to \$15,000, so if a project costs \$30,000, they will pay for \$15,000
- They have a pool of architects that provide free design services.
- The program is a small step that was established 15 years ago.

Lessons Learned:

- Communities should use their own tools and make them work, the PDC just happens to work best in Portland.
- The important thing is that someone (an organization) must make deals, real estate transactions, etc.
- It must be a catalyst for redevelopment.

Portland Streetcar and Pearl District

The Pearl District is one of the most successful redevelopment projects in the country. This redevelopment project was constructed on a brownfield site and, within a matter of years, developed into a new urban neighborhood with housing, retail, and office, and is connected to the downtown core and adjacent neighborhoods by streetcar.

Less than ten years ago, the site was a 50-acre rail yard owned by BNSF. Its original master plan called for 3 million sq. ft. of office space and surface parking. In order to maximize the site, a new plan was developed that reestablished the street grid and provided a framework for a very urban, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented district.

Within Portland, there is a general acceptance and desire to live in an urban center with amenities. Nationwide, urban living is now becoming very popular. The current market for the Pearl District is empty nesters and young professionals, with a few families.

To date, the Pearl District offers senior housing, market rate rental and condo units, affordable rental units, office and retail development, and civic uses. Retail options within the area include services, restaurants, and a grocery store (Whole Foods).

Lessons Learned:

- Good architecture is critical – there is no difference in look and feel between market rate housing units and affordable housing units.
- The provision of public infrastructure (streetcar and parks) was critical. The promise of the streetcar and its connections made this happen. Streetcar allowed for higher density (increased from 40 units/acre to 150 units/acre) development.
- This area has been successful because of the positive interaction between city government, developers, neighborhoods, and people willing to take a risk.
- The activity in the Pearl District has positively impacted adjacent neighborhoods.

River Tech Building Tour

This project by a local developer is an 8,000 sq. ft. adaptive reuse of an old Union Pacific warehouse. The key to this adaptive reuse was that it provided creative space, which is in demand by the creative, technology based companies in the city. The project utilized traditional financing, and the developer is now doing additional projects within the area.

Lesson Learned:

- A great location with great old buildings, combined with great developers with great concepts, has created a staggering impact on this area.

Northwest 23rd Avenue

Portland's northwest neighborhood is the densest neighborhood between San Francisco and Seattle. The neighborhood contains a mix of residential types, institutional uses, and street level retail uses. The Portland Streetcar runs through the middle of the area, and connects it with the Pearl District and downtown. Most of the redevelopment in the area has been the renovation of

existing housing stock and infill neighborhood retail. This is truly a neighborhood where you can live, work, shop, and play.

Lesson Learned:

- The streetcar has provided connectivity and instilled confidence in developers to begin projects.
- Infill development is contextual and fits the scale of the neighborhood.

Portland Summary

The trip to Portland provided a valuable experience as it relates to the Destination Midtown Study Area. There were several lessons that were learned, and those that seemed most applicable to Midtown include the following:

- When redeveloping an area, you must think boldly and creatively, and not let cost be the sole determining factor
- Public infrastructure creates a catalyst for private development
- You need a champion or a visionary to make things happen
- You need an entity that can “make deals.”
- You need seed money to “prime the pump”
- There must be a seamless mix of market and affordable units
- The design of buildings should be high quality, but simple and flexible
- You need to think like a developer
- There is no single model for success
- Small steps can add up to big steps
- You must consider housing, jobs, transportation and civic spaces

“Programs” Divider Page

NEIGHBORHOOD RELATED PROGRAMS

Implementation Mechanisms

Overview

Many of the issues within the Destination Midtown Study Area can be addressed using existing programs and funding sources. Where funding is not available or proposed programs are beyond the capacity of existing resources, special implementation mechanisms need to be established.

Discussion

The Destination Midtown Study Area has many issues that need to be addressed. These issues impact businesses and neighborhoods, and were identified during the SWOT Analysis and the many public meetings held as part of the planning process. Concerns range from ways of enhancing public safety and improving code enforcement to addressing absentee landlords and facilitating historic preservation. In today's environment of limited budgets and resources, the demands placed on city government and other traditional funding sources can be significant. As a result, new and unique implementation measures must be identified or created. Once this occurs, they must be utilized in order to effect positive change within the Study Area.

Recommendation

Establish special implementation mechanisms in order to address the diverse needs of local neighborhoods and businesses, and overcome the limitations of existing public and private agencies and program.

Programs

- **Establish a unified Midtown Neighborhood Alliance (MNA)**

One of the oft-stated benefits of the Destination Midtown Master Plan process was the fact that members of different neighborhood associations were able to meet one another and to discover that many issues unite them even though their homes and businesses might be physically quite remote. A tangible result of the planning process has been an increased recognition that all of the residents of the Midtown Study Area are part of a unique, comprehensive and integrated urban district. All the neighborhoods are critical parts of the Midtown district.

To solidify this understanding and to facilitate future planning and redevelopment efforts, the 11 distinct neighborhoods and associations within the Study Area have united to create a new umbrella organization, the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance. While each specific neighborhood association continues to speak directly to issues of individual importance, the MNA acts as a voice for the Midtown district as a whole and as a resource where residents and members of specific associations can mingle with others with similar concerns, goals and outlooks. The mission of the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance is to preserve the

integrity of and advocate for a vibrant community that is sustainable, secure, diverse, historically rich and economically strong.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Establish a Midtown Development Corporation (MDC)**

While some resources can be found within the City of Omaha, particularly with respect to administrative functions, and a number of non-profits and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can potentially provide assistance to the Midtown Study Area in implementing the programs outlined in this Master Plan, all of these institutions are limited in their ability to move the majority of these recommendations forward.

Towards this end, major institutions and corporations within the Study Area should seriously consider the creation of a not-for-profit corporation whose primary function would be to help carry out the programs recommended in this Plan. This Midtown Development Corporation would have a full-time director as well as at least one part time support staff person. Support for these personnel would come from the Midtown Redevelopment Fund (see below).

The Midtown Development Corporation would have two primary functions:

- It would advocate and coordinate development and redevelopment efforts within a designated Midtown Development District (recommended to match the boundaries of the Destination Midtown Study Area); and,
- It would support some special programs in the larger surrounding area. These programs may include:
 - Funding security and sanitation for the district, over and above (but not instead of) what is provided by the City of Omaha
 - Funding, at least initially, some neighborhood programs, specifically additional code enforcement and summer time recreation programs.
 - Providing housing assistance grants to encourage people to buy houses for themselves in designated parts of Midtown.
 - Providing common marketing and PR for activities and events within the area.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Establish a Midtown Redevelopment Fund (MRF) for targeted development and redevelopment activities discussed in the Destination Midtown Master Plan.**

As noted, both public and non-profit funds for enacting the recommendations of this Master Plan are limited if not non-existent. At the same time, the Midtown Study Area is the home of a number of significant private corporations and large institutions, all of whom are heavily invested in the Midtown district and its

revitalization efforts. A consortium of these entities should be created, with the purpose of establishing a fund to move critical elements of the Master Plan forward.

The fund should focus primarily on those elements of the ongoing redevelopment effort for which no obvious sources of funding can be found. To the extent that municipal revenue sources are significantly limited, the public sector can be looked to for leadership in the areas of program administration and staff oversight. To the extent that viable profit-making businesses and development activities can be undertaken in Midtown, the private sector should take the lead. The primary purpose of the proposed redevelopment fund is to address those areas and issues for which public, private or other institutional financial support cannot be found.

To this end, the private and institutional leadership that helped create the Destination Midtown planning process should evaluate their potential to create an initial three-year fund, financed at \$500,000 per year. A percentage of these annual revenues should be used to fund the aforementioned Midtown Development Corporation, primarily in terms of staff salaries.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Develop community-based master plans for neighborhood associations within Midtown.**

The current planning effort for the Destination Midtown Study Area focuses predominantly on district-wide programs that, if implemented, will positively impact the area as a whole. In specific instances, obvious locally-based interventions have been studied (see recommended Neighborhood Business Districts), but clearly many more site-specific opportunities exist that were beyond the scope and budget of this initial effort.

Because several neighborhoods have a significant number of issues and concerns, their needs, in particular, deserve to be addressed in more depth than the current Study. As such, the individual neighborhood associations should prepare community-based master plans for their neighborhoods. As with the current efforts, these plans should be carried out with on-going input and oversight from the specific impacted neighborhood residents and business owners. Leadership, technical expertise, and procedural oversight should be provided by City Planning Department staff, with additional assistance from neighborhood association members.

When completed, these plans should be approved by the Planning Board and City Council, and incorporated into the City's Master Plan.

- Develop a Community-Based Master Plan for the Gifford Park Neighborhood.
- Develop a Community-Based Master Plan for the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood.
- Develop a Community-Based Master Plan for the Ford Birthsite Neighborhood.

- Develop a Community-Based Master Plan for the Park East Neighborhood.
- Develop a Community-Based Master Plan for the Columbus Park Neighborhood.
- Develop a Community-Based Master Plan for the Leavenworth Neighborhood.

Timeframe: High Priority

Public Safety

Overview

While the majority of the Destination Midtown Study Area is relatively free of significant crime, certain pockets of criminal activity are present. Prostitution, drug dealing, and theft occur in these areas. Neighborhood residents request additional resources to address these activities and, often, residents in other parts of the City hear about these incidents and subsequent requests, and perceive the entire Study Area as being crime-ridden.

Discussion

Crime, both real and perceived, is an issue within certain pockets of the Destination Midtown Study Area. Providing additional resources to address criminal activity is important to a significant number of Study Area residents. A majority of the participants of the SWOT analysis identified the presence of criminal activity (crime, drugs, alcohol abuse, prostitution, gangs, etc.) as one of the most pressing issues within the area.

The Destination Midtown Study Area encompasses portions of all four of the City of Omaha's Police Precincts. Recent Omaha Police Department crime statistics for the Study Area show that violent crime (homicide, sexual assault, etc.) within the area is relatively low and has, in fact, decreased over the last three years. However, criminal activity such as larceny theft, motor vehicle theft, and burglary are more common. Residents of the area have identified the intersections of Park Avenue and Leavenworth Street, and of 33rd Street and California Street as being particularly crime-ridden. In addition, criminal activity at the Travel Inn located on Dodge Street at 39th Street, and prostitution along the Park Avenue corridor were seen as significant threats to neighborhood stability and vitality.

Residents of several neighborhoods, including Gifford Park, Joslyn Castle, Ford Birth Site, and Columbus Park have consistently brought up the need for additional resources to address criminal activity within their neighborhoods. Many of these neighborhoods have begun the process of mending themselves, but could easily regress with an influx of negative factors. Because the continued vitality of these neighborhoods depends upon their safety, creative and functional ways to address and eradicate criminal activity within them must be established. The inability or unwillingness to address these issues will ultimately stifle and stymie any other efforts at reinvestment and/or redevelopment.

Recommendation

Enhance law enforcement activities within the Study Area by addressing real and perceived public safety issues with creative and functional solutions.

Programs

- **Continue to establish “community policing” in order to address public safety issues within the Study Area.**

Neighborhoods within the Destination Midtown Study Area are very diverse and densely populated by Omaha standards. Conventional policing methods are not

always successful in urban environments such as this. “Community Policing” efforts represent an alternative approach to not only ensuring public safety, but also fostering successful reinvestment and positive change.

As described by the national Community Policing Consortium:

Community Policing is a collaborative effort between the police and the community that identifies problems of crime and disorder and involves all elements of the community in the search for solutions to these problems. It is founded on close, mutually beneficial ties between police and community members.

At the center of community policing are three essential and complementary core components: community partnership, problem solving and change management.

Community partnership recognizes the value of bringing the people back into the policing process. All elements of society must pull together as never before if we are to deal effectively with the unacceptable level of crime claiming our neighborhoods.

Problem solving identifies the specific concerns that community members feel are most threatening to their safety and well-being. These areas of concern then become priorities for joint police-community interventions.

Change management requires a clear recognition that forging community policing partnerships and implementing problem-solving activities will necessitate changes in the organizational structure of policing. Properly managed change involves a recognition of the need for change, the communication of a clear vision that change is possible, the identification of the concrete steps needed for positive change to occur, the development of an understanding of the benefits of change, as well as the creation of an organization-wide commitment to change.

Given the manifest benefits of such an approach, it is recommended that the Omaha Police Department continue its commitment to establishing community policing policies within the Study Area.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Increase police officer visibility by incorporating foot and bike patrols.**

The Police Department has designated Beat Patrols for the intersections of Park Avenue and Leavenworth Street and 33rd and California Street. Because these are areas of concern, the two locations will experience increased patrols, especially during the evening shift. This is important because public safety can be enhanced when police officers can be approached “on the street” and relationships can be formed with the local citizenry. This is especially true in locations that are relatively dense and that have an active street life. Because many locations within the Study Area meet these requirements, it is recommended that the Omaha Police Department identify additional suitable locations within the Study Area for foot and bike patrols, and establish them

where feasible. Such patrols are a crucial element of the aforementioned “community policing” approach to ensuring neighborhood safety.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Increase police presence within the area in order to improve response times and address the area’s unique requirements.**

Allocation of Omaha Police Department resources is determined by the demand for services, specifically 911 calls. The department also utilizes crime analysis data, which depicts trends and patterns of criminal offenses. Accordingly, the Study Area currently does not generate a disproportionate number of calls for service when compared to other geographic areas throughout the City. If criminal activity increases in the area and demands for police services change, the Police Department should re-allocate personnel to meet the community’s needs. With the aforementioned community policing, Precinct Commanders have the autonomy and flexibility to deploy their resources where they need them the most. In addition, they can also employ innovative strategies and execute enforcement strategies to eradicate the problems in these areas.

In the future, if additional police officers are needed within the Study Area and resources do not permit the re-allocation of personnel, additional private or public sector funding should be sought in order to provide officers specifically for the Study Area. If necessary, seed funding for such additional personnel can come from the Midtown Redevelopment Fund, but such programs should not be the primary purpose of the Fund.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Explore the use of private security forces to augment public safety within the Study Area.**

Several institutions (UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center, Creighton University, Mutual of Omaha, etc.) currently utilize private security forces to patrol their campuses. By expanding the geographic coverage of each of the respective patrols, these private security forces could provide additional “eyes and ears” to a significant portion of the Study Area. These security forces would not have the authority to make arrests, but could make a significant impact by their mere presence on the street.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Encourage the establishment of additional Neighborhood Watch programs within the Study Area.**

Neighborhood Watch has a proven track record when it comes to citizen-based crime prevention. Local neighborhood organizations should identify locations that are currently not covered by existing programs and encourage the creation of new programs within these areas.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Code Enforcement

Overview

Code enforcement infractions occur in many locations throughout the Destination Midtown Study Area. Deteriorated buildings, graffiti, litter, and tall weeds can be found in many neighborhoods. Enhanced code enforcement activity is at the top of the list for many neighborhood leaders and residents.

Discussion

Code enforcement is a critical issue within the Destination Midtown Study Area. The provision of additional resources to address code enforcement issues is a major issue for Midtown residents, and was identified during the SWOT analysis as one of their primary concerns.

Midtown residents identified a variety of code enforcement infractions that occur within their neighborhoods, including inoperable cars in yards and along streets, broken and missing windows, and deteriorated rental properties, as major impediments to neighborhood revitalization. These infractions occur predominantly in neighborhoods in the eastern portion of the Study Area; however, the infractions know no boundaries and can occur throughout the Study Area, especially along many of the arterial corridors that run through midtown.

Neighborhood residents, including those in Columbus Park, Leavenworth, Ford Birth Site, Gifford Park, and Joslyn Castle have expressed their desire for additional resources to address, in a timely manner, code enforcement infractions within their neighborhoods. These resources are imperative if neighborhood perception and revitalization are to continue.

Recommendation

Improve the effectiveness of the Code Inspection process within the Destination Midtown Study Area in order to address deteriorated properties and encourage neighborhood revitalization.

Programs

- **Provide additional code enforcement resources and staff for the entire Study Area.**

Code enforcement infractions within the Study Area generally take a substantial amount of time to resolve and can often become recurring events. This is brought about, in part, by limited resources and staffing and in part by inefficient operational practices, however the City's new code will address a new process. These latter weaknesses should be resolved immediately through greater administrative oversight and increased day-to-day accountability demanded of code enforcement officers. The problems of limited resources and personnel, however, can only be overcome by additional funding. This funding should be provided through increases in the city budget.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Provide special code enforcement officers for the Study Area.**

As noted, code enforcement resources are stretched thin throughout the City. However, within the Midtown Study Area, in order to address the significant number of code violations in a timely manner, additional code enforcement officers will be required. Inasmuch as new public funding for officers might not be immediately available, a program should be created to utilize private sector funding for special code enforcement officers, who would specifically target code violations within the Study Area. While such efforts are not the primary focus of the Midtown Redevelopment Fund, these funds can be used to initiate such a program, with the goal of seeking and finding other, permanent funding sources within a short time period.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Improve response times for code enforcement complaints.**

Many residents and/or neighborhood organizations report slow response times to complaints of code violations. The current response time for a code enforcement complaint is within 72 hours for receiving the complaint, and the time frame for repairs has been shortened from 90 days to 60 days. Neighborhood organizations and city staff should meet to discuss coordination (Mayor's Hotline – example: graffiti; Parks Department – example: weeds and litter; Police Department – example: abandoned cars and illegal parking; and Planning Department – example: enforcement of codes) and strategies that could improve response times for complaints.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Educate neighborhood residents and organizations on code enforcement procedures.**

Many neighborhood residents are unaware of or uninformed about code enforcement procedures. Knowledge of these procedures could greatly expand the resources available to residents. The City and/or neighborhood organizations should develop a code enforcement education program that emphasizes education and public awareness. This program should include the following:

- Booklets that help citizens identify and report code violations (incorporate the City's existing "checklist" of violations).
- Explanatory materials so that when a code inspector writes up a violation, it would be accompanied by explanatory materials that would identify city programs that can be used to correct violations, and sources of technical assistance.

The educational material should be made available through the Greater Omaha Neighborhood Center and the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Review the City's newly incorporated code enforcement procedures for effectiveness.**

The City of Omaha recently adopted new code enforcement procedures. These new procedures emphasize enhancements to the appeals process. These procedures should be examined periodically to ensure that they are effective and meet the needs of the neighborhoods. If not, the procedures should be revised.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Home Ownership

Overview

The rate of homeownership in the Destination Midtown area is significantly lower when compared to the rest of Omaha, which is approximately 60%. According to Homes.Com, the rate of home ownership in the 68131 zip code is approximately 26%. Particularly in the eastern portion of the Destination Midtown Study Area, the large number of rental properties has negatively impacted those neighborhoods. Minimal upkeep and lack of routine maintenance by rental property owners have contributed to the deterioration of these neighborhoods. Increased density has contributed to traffic, noise, litter, and parking problems. Since the majority of renters are transient, neighbors often do not know each other and many people are afraid to go out after dark.

A significant number of residents of Latino heritage have recently moved into the Destination Midtown area and many of these are families who are interested in home ownership. Although the vast majority are currently renters, those interested in home ownership provide a good opportunity to serve as a stabilizing force in the eastern neighborhoods of Destination Midtown.

Discussion

Existing research documents the fact that in any given neighborhood, the higher the rate of home ownership, the greater the overall stability of the neighborhood. Children growing up in homes owned by their parent(s) are significantly less likely to become teen parents, juvenile delinquents, or high school dropouts. Home ownership also enhances the lives of parents by increasing their personal efficacy and health. Homeowners are much more likely to be engaged in civic activities such as participating in their neighborhood associations and voting. Promoting home ownership in the Destination Midtown area will help stabilize and strengthen these neighborhoods.

Down payment and closing costs are often cited as two of the major barriers to home ownership. These barriers have been addressed by a variety of entities and there are many existing resources to assist first-time homeowners. Preparing people to become homeowners through financial literacy training, credit repair, and encouragement of savings are essential first steps to prepare entry level and lower waged individuals for home ownership. Fortunately, there are programs that can assist in these areas and will promote home ownership among the working poor.

Recommendation

Increase opportunities for home ownership within the Destination Midtown Study Area in order to improve neighborhood stability.

Programs

- **Establish employer-based benefits that enable entry level and lower waged workers to become homeowners in the Destination Midtown Study Area.**

Area employers can foster home ownership in the Destination Midtown area through employer-based benefits. Programs such as Employer Assisted Housing, Employer-Based Individual Development Accounts and financial literacy training all prepare lower-waged employees to become homeowners. Fannie Mae, United Way of the Midlands/Family Housing Advisory Services and local banks all have programs that can be utilized as part of a benefits' package that promote home ownership to workers in the Destination Midtown area.

While these programs will promote home ownership in Midtown, they will also promote worker retention and engender worker loyalty, thus benefiting area employers. Additionally, these programs have the flexibility to be tailored to the employer's need and can be designed to maximize the benefits to both employer and employee.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Promote home ownership through current and new programs.**

Existing incentives that encourage home ownership (bank loan programs, Fannie Mae programs, etc.) should be promoted and new incentives should be established. These new incentives should include grant programs to purchase deteriorated rental units and rehabilitate them into owner-occupied units and a program that targets the limited number of vacant lots for infill development of owner-occupied housing. Responsibility for carrying out these efforts should be shared between the Midtown Development Corporation, Family Housing Advisory Services, and local lenders.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Identify and provide education to employees in the Destination Midtown area about existing resources that provide assistance for down payments and closing costs.**

The City's soft secondary mortgage program, the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) and Fannie Mae's Smart Commute are among a number of programs that provide assistance in enabling first time home buyers to overcome the barriers of down payments and closing costs. Both area employers and banks can provide educational forums that highlight the existing programs that are available to help people become homeowners, including the Nebraska Mortgage Bankers' annual Home Buyer's Fair.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Utilize existing non-profit development corporations to construct new owner-occupied housing in Midtown neighborhoods.**

Omaha has several non-profit development corporations that are currently constructing new homes for moderate-income families. Because these entities are familiar with the provision of affordable owner-occupied units within Omaha, they should be specifically encouraged to purchase vacant lots or deteriorated

units in select neighborhoods within the Midtown Study Area, and to replace them with new owner-occupied housing units.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Absentee Landlords

Overview

Rental property dominates several neighborhoods within the Destination Midtown Study Area. Many of these units were originally built as owner-occupied single-family dwellings, but have been transformed into rental units and often subdivided into multiple apartments as part of the downward spiral of disinvestment that often overcomes older neighborhoods and urban areas. Currently, many of these former single-family units are in a state of disrepair, with code violations, parking violations, and a general lack of maintenance. The poor condition of these units negatively impacts the value of adjacent properties and reduces the likelihood of neighborhood reinvestment.

Discussion

Absentee landlords or, more significantly, landlords with deteriorated rental properties or units that are not up to code, are a significant issue within the Destination Midtown Study Area. Providing resources to reduce the number of absentee landlords or to minimize the negative impacts of minimal maintenance and upkeep is one of the top priorities of Study Area residents. In fact, participants of the SWOT analysis identified absentee landlords and the problems associated with their properties as the single most pressing issue within the Study Area.

Residents of Midtown neighborhoods identified a variety of issues associated with absentee landlords, including overcrowding, criminal activity, code violations, and a general lack of maintenance. These issues are seen as major obstacles to neighborhood stability and revitalization. Although absentee landlords own property throughout the Study Area, neighborhoods in the eastern portion are the most heavily and negatively impacted by this practice.

During the course of the study, residents of several neighborhoods organizations, including Leavenworth, Ford Birth Site, Gifford Park, and Joslyn Castle have specifically expressed the need to address absentee landlord issues within their neighborhoods. They have asked for new resources and/or incentives to encourage new owner-occupied units. Without these resources, it will be difficult to continue neighborhood reinvestment and revitalization.

Recommendation

Provide a variety of programs to neighborhood residents and neighborhood associations in order to reduce the number of absentee landlords within the Study Area and/or minimize their negative impacts.

Programs

- **Establish incentives to encourage absentee landlords to address problematic issues.**

Absentee landlords should be provided incentives to address problem tenants and properties. Potential incentives that should be examined include the following:

- Progressively escalating penalties and/or fines for non-compliance
- Progressively stringent time limits allowed for compliance
- Code violations attached to property titles
- Mediated conflicts through the City Prosecutor's office
- Mandatory landlord notification of tenant arrests

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Develop a center for landlord and renter education.**

Often, landlords and tenants are not aware of code violations, expectations, and their rights. In order to assist in the education of landlords and tenants, a center for landlord and tenant education (such as the Greater Omaha Neighborhood Center) should be established. This center should provide useful information for both tenants and landlords, and should be jointly organized and run by City Planning staff, the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance and the Midtown Development Corporation

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Identify, promote, and expand programs that encourage and reward responsible landlords.**

Provide incentives to encourage maintenance and upkeep of the area's existing housing stock. For example, the Neighbor Investment Program sponsored by Fannie Mae and the City of Omaha fosters investment in and protection of the area's aging housing stock.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Connect renters who are experiencing problems with their landlords to the Fair Housing Center and/or the Mediation Center to resolve conflicts and problems.**

Oftentimes, landlords are unresponsive to renters and problems associated with rental units. Promotion of existing resources, such as the Fair Housing Center and/or the Mediation Center, should be encouraged.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Rehabilitation and Remodeling

Overview

The Destination Midtown Study Area was originally developed during the later part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. This area contained some of city's most desirable neighborhoods, most notable businesses, and most noteworthy civic uses. During the past decades, however, the neighborhoods have aged and some of them have lost some of their luster. Important commercial uses have come and gone, and homes and businesses in certain areas have experienced various levels of physical deterioration.

Discussion

Aging and deteriorated homes and businesses, and the need to rehabilitate them, is an important issue within portions of the Study Area. The provision of additional resources to facilitate this process and enhance the neighborhoods is important to area homeowners and businesses. Large numbers of participants in the SWOT analysis identified redevelopment incentives as a critical opportunity to further neighborhood revitalization.

As part of the Destination Midtown study process, the Omaha Planning Department undertook a building condition survey of the Study Area. Every commercial and residential building in the area was ranked based on its condition. The buildings were ranked as "Excellent," "Good," "Fair," "Poor," or "Deteriorated."

Eighty-four percent (84%) of the buildings in the area were ranked in either "Excellent" or "Good" condition, while sixteen percent (16%) were ranked in "Fair," "Poor," or "Deteriorated" condition. The majority of the deteriorated structures were located in neighborhoods east of 33rd Street; between Dodge Street and California Street, to the west of 33rd Street; and along the Dodge Street, Leavenworth Street and Saddle Creek Road corridors.

During public meetings throughout the planning process, residents of these neighborhoods have consistently expressed the desire to turn neighborhood eyesores into assets. Residents want to be proactive, and address the current situation before it becomes worse. As a result, they are looking for additional resources and incentives to encourage rehabilitation within their neighborhoods, and to provide a new lease on life for many of these unique and architecturally significant buildings.

Recommendation

Develop additional programs and incentives to encourage the rehabilitation of poor and deteriorated structures within the Midtown Study Area.

Programs

- **Lobby for tax incentives to encourage rehabilitation of non-income producing property.**

As the situation exists, there is currently a disincentive to renovate older, run-down homes within the Study Area. If residents renovate properties, they are faced with a tax increase based on the value of the improvements. In many cases, the increased burden outweighs the benefits of the improvements; this implicit “penalty” reduces the incentive to renovate property, and thereby perpetuates continued deterioration.

As a result, the City, MNA, and MDC need to identify and pursue changes in state law that will reduce disincentives to reinvestment and to create tax incentives that will encourage the rehabilitation of homes and businesses. These tax incentives could take several forms, including:

- Revise existing state law to allow tax benefits for historic renovations. This could include tax abatements/tax credits for improvements to historic structures or property tax deferrals (5 to 10 years) so savings could be reinvested in the property.
- Establish a city/county tax benefit program that encourages reinvestment in “redevelopment areas” such as Midtown. Such benefits should apply to all properties regardless of their age or architectural merit, and could include elements such as a cap on the annual allowable increases in property taxes, particularly for targeted properties where reinvestment is desired.
- Utilize federal tax credits. Research existing federal tax credit programs and incorporate, if appropriate, within the Study Area.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Identify and secure funding to expand the City’s Target Area Program, Emergency Repair Program, and other programs that will help maintain the area’s deteriorating housing units.**

The City of Omaha currently operates a Target Area Program and Emergency Repair Program that make available direct rehabilitation financing to qualified homeowners residing east of 72nd Street. Assistance is provided to low- and moderate-income homeowners and other homeowners residing in low- and moderate-income census tracts and to homeowner rehabilitation projects that address slums and blight.

Use of the resources made available through these programs should be encouraged in the Destination Midtown Study Area. This would direct CDBG assistance to this area, and provide area homeowners with rehabilitation financing through grants and/or leveraged and deferred payment loans tailored to the needs of each property owner.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Develop a central outlet that provides financial institution resources to area residents.**

Establish a one-stop shop for area residents to learn about, and apply for, financial resources available from local financial institutions and Fannie Mae. Meetings with representatives of such institutions indicate both the existence of numerous programs and opportunities for both residential and commercial properties, and considerable interest on the part of such institutions to work with residents and business owners from the Midtown Study Area.

This outlet would assist residents in identifying the financial resources that meet their needs and applying for them. Administrative oversight for this outlet should come from the Midtown Development Corporation, with additional operational expertise coming from City Planning Department staff, the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance, and the representative financial institutions.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Encourage banks to develop a “Special Home Improvement Loan” for homeowners in the Destination Midtown area.**

Local financial institutions should be encouraged to develop a “Special Home Improvement Loan” for area homeowners that would waive fees or reduce the interest rate. This would allow area homeowners to make needed home improvements and keep existing housing stock in good repair and increase the value of their homes.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Develop a housing rehab program for low-income families.**

A housing rehab program that will enable lower income families to become homeowners if they are willing to rehab existing housing units should be established. This program would benefit the neighborhoods by maintaining the existing housing stock and increasing the number of homeowners. Special financing could also be developed to meet the cost of rehabbing an older home.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Utilize the “Main Street Program” to assist in the rehabilitation of the historic mixed-use neighborhood business districts.**

The Main Street Program is a valuable tool used around the state and the nation to assist in the rehabilitation of aging business districts. Several locations within the Study Area lend themselves well to this program. The Midtown Neighborhood Alliance should identify 1 or 2 locations where this program should be implemented. Funding for this program should come from a combination of City and private sector sources.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Rehabilitate and expand historic mixed-use neighborhood business districts within the Study Area.**

The Destination Midtown Study Area was originally developed during the heyday of the city's streetcar system. This system encouraged the development of neighborhood business districts at major stops along the routes. Because these major stops functioned as centers of their respective neighborhoods, the City should work with neighborhood residents, businesses, and developers to encourage the reestablishment of these locations within select midtown neighborhoods.

In particular, the following locations should be master planned as pedestrian-oriented mixed-use business districts with specific additional input from surrounding residents and existing business-owners. City Planning staff should undertake market assessments to determine the optimal mix of uses within each of these districts, should undertake additional master planning (building on the ideas shown in this Master Plan document), should revise the local zoning codes and land-development regulations to permit the development of such mixed-use centers, and should actively work with the neighborhoods, neighborhood associations, local funding sources and the Omaha development community to promote the effective development of such districts.

- **Develop a mixed-use neighborhood business district for the Gifford Park Neighborhood around the intersection of 33rd Street and California Street.**

The 33rd and California intersection provides a small-scale, but critical, opportunity for reinvestment and redevelopment within the Gifford Park Neighborhood. As shown, the redevelopment concept is centered on the intersection of 33rd Street and California Street, and extends north to Webster Street and south to Davenport Street. During the Neighborhood Design Workshop held on October 15th, neighborhood residents developed a variety of design ideas for this neighborhood business district. Chief among these were the addition of streetscaping amenities, a parking structure that would serve the entire district, archway entrance features, and the reconstruction or revitalization of several existing buildings. Rooftop gardens were shown on several of the buildings, and additional park space and artwork were incorporated.

Based on these initial ideas, the design team refined the neighborhood's concepts during a design workshop held in November. Key components of the refined concept include the expansion and addition of a second level to both the grocery store and the retail building located at the southeast corner of the intersection. Existing multi-family structures are shown as renovated, and a new mixed-use structure is shown at the northeast corner of the

intersection. All buildings are shown with retail uses on the lower floor and residential units above. Buildings front the street, and district serving parking lots are located behind the buildings. A “gas-backwards” facility, which provides a convenience store fronting the street and gas pumps to the rear, is shown at the northeast corner of the intersection of 33rd and Chicago Streets.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Develop a mixed-use neighborhood business district for the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood around the intersection of 40th Street and Cuming Street.**

Redevelopment of the 40th and Cuming neighborhood business district provides a unique opportunity for the residents of adjacent neighborhoods. As shown, the redevelopment concept extends east and west along Cuming Street and south along 40th Street to St. Cecilia’s Cathedral. During the Neighborhood Design Workshop held on October 15th, neighborhood residents developed a variety of design ideas for this neighborhood business district. The concept developed by neighborhood residents included the addition of multi-family units surrounding a central green space southeast of the intersection of 41st Avenue and Cuming Street. The residents also proposed new mixed-use, pedestrian oriented buildings on the northwest, southwest, and southeast corners of the 40th and Cuming Street intersection. These buildings would be served by a new access road located south of Cuming Street between 40th Street and 41st Avenue.

Based on these initial ideas, the design team refined the resident’s concept during a design workshop held in November. This refined concept strengthened the neighborhood commercial character of the retail enclave and focused on the provision of mixed-use buildings. The concept, as shown, includes a variation of the courtyard residential proposed by the residents, and is located at the intersection of 41st Avenue and Cuming Street. The building, with its central green space, has street level commercial uses along the Cuming Street frontage. Additional mixed-use buildings are shown lining Cuming Street to the east and west of 40th Street. These buildings define the street wall and, with streetscape amenities, enhance the pedestrian nature of the district. Additional mixed-use buildings are proposed along 40th street, extending south to the new plaza proposed by St. Cecilia’s Cathedral. Parking for uses in the district is provided by

“on-street” stalls or in surface parking lots located to the rear of the mixed-use buildings. A “gas-backwards” facility replaces the existing gas station at the northwest corner of 40th Street and Cuming Street.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Develop a mixed-use neighborhood business district for the Field Club Neighborhood along Center Street between 34th Street and 36th Street.**

The Center Street corridor provides a unique opportunity for reinvestment and redevelopment adjacent to the Field Club Neighborhood. As shown, the redevelopment concept is located along Center Street between 34th Street and 36th Street. During the Neighborhood Design Workshop held on October 15th, neighborhood residents developed a variety of design ideas for this neighborhood business district. The neighborhood’s main goal was to slow the speed of traffic along Center Street. This was to be accomplished by incorporating a variety of traffic calming measures, including reducing the width of the street, adding angled parking, and installing roundabouts and/or chicanes. The residents proposed a number of mixed-use buildings aligned around a roundabout at 36th and Center. These buildings were shown as two or three-story structures. These buildings were shown fronting the street, with parking tucked behind them.

Based on these initial ideas, the design team refined the resident’s concept during a design workshop held in November. This refined concept established a focused neighborhood-serving mixed-use center along Center Street, with on-street parking and a strong pedestrian character. The concept, as shown, includes a roundabout and fountain at the intersection of 36th and Center Street, surrounded by mixed-use buildings. This central space captures the green space from the Field Club Golf Course and becomes a focal point for the neighborhood. Additional mixed-use buildings line Center Street to the east, and town homes provide a buffer between the mixed-use buildings and the residential neighborhood to the south. Shared residential and retail parking is located to the rear of the buildings.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Develop a mixed-use neighborhood business district for the Ford Birth Site Neighborhood along Park Avenue north of Woolworth Avenue.**

Redevelopment of the neighborhood business district along Park Avenue would provide a unique opportunity to enhance the quality of life for neighborhood residents. As shown, the redevelopment concept encompasses Park Avenue from Pacific Street to Woolworth Avenue. During the Neighborhood Design Workshop held on October 15th, neighborhood residents developed a variety of design ideas for this neighborhood business district. The concept developed by neighborhood residents reestablished this area as a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district serving adjacent neighborhoods. Residents identified the need to calm traffic on Park Avenue. Ideas for this included the addition of chicanes, narrowing the street paving width, and adding angled parking. Residents also wanted to renovate existing apartment buildings or replace deteriorated structures with new, contextual buildings. Street level retail was proposed for several of the new buildings.

Based on these initial ideas, the design team refined the resident's concept during a design workshop held in November. This refined concept sought to maximize the redevelopment potential of this corridor. As much as possible, existing structures are maintained and, where necessary, new structures are designed to be compatible. A key element of the concept includes the re-skinning of the two twelve-story apartment buildings located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Woolworth Avenue and Park Avenue. In addition to being re-skinned, these two buildings are linked by a street-level retail arcade. Additional components include the development of new mixed-use buildings along Park Avenue and a "gas-backwards" facility located at the northeast corner of Park Avenue and Woolworth Avenue. On-street parking is provided along Park Avenue, and additional parking is located in surface lots to the rear of the new mixed-use buildings.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Develop a mixed-use neighborhood business district for the Leavenworth Neighborhood east of the intersection of Leavenworth Street and St. Mary's Avenue.**

Redevelopment of the Leavenworth business district provides a significant opportunity to stabilize and enhance adjacent neighborhoods. As shown, the redevelopment concept extends north to Jackson Street, east to Interstate 480, south to Marcy Street and west to Leavenworth Park. During the Neighborhood Design Workshop held on

October 15th, neighborhood residents developed a variety of design ideas for this neighborhood business district. The concept developed by neighborhood residents reestablished this area as a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district serving adjacent neighborhoods. Residents identified several locations for new mixed-use structures, vacated streets to consolidate development sites, and concentrated parking in surface parking lots or parking structures that were located on the interior of blocks. In addition, residents enhanced the triangle park created by the intersection of Leavenworth Street and St. Mary's Avenue and developed entrance features at the intersections of Jackson Street and 29th Street; Leavenworth Street and Jackson Street; and Turner Boulevard and Leavenworth Streets.

Based on these initial ideas, the design team refined the resident's concept during a design workshop held in November. This refined concept sought to maintain the original urban and architectural character and scale of buildings and establish significant opportunities for selective infill and redevelopment, with a goal of enhancing the existing patterns of development. This was achieved through the replacement of obsolete or deteriorated structures, optimizing the provision of on-street and on-site parking, and assembling properties to create viable real estate development opportunities for owners and investors. Key elements of the concept include the creation of a large redevelopment site by vacating 30th Street between Leavenworth Street and St. Mary's Avenue, the development of pedestrian-oriented mixed-use buildings along Leavenworth Street, the provision of shared parking, and entrance markers on the periphery of the district.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Planning & Zoning

Overview

Many neighborhoods within the Study Area contain slip-in apartments, inappropriate uses, and unsightly non-contributing structures that detract from the appearance and vitality of the neighborhood. Several neighborhoods also contain large homes that have been converted into apartments. These conversions have led to overcrowding, inadequate parking, and other associated neighborhood problems.

Discussion

Zoning can play an important role in maintaining or enhancing the vitality and stability of a neighborhood. Inappropriately zoned property within or adjacent to a neighborhood can lead to overcrowding, negative physical and psychological impacts, and disinvestment. Appropriate zoning, on the other hand, can help lead to healthy, safe, and stable neighborhoods where reinvestment is encouraged.

During public meetings held as part of the Destination Midtown planning process, neighborhood residents identified several cases where zoning has led to negative impacts on neighborhoods. Chief among these are the negative ramifications caused by the conversion of single-family homes into apartments. Also mentioned frequently by residents are the negative impacts caused by marginal or incompatible uses, such as the Travel Inn on Dodge Street at 39th Street, or the numerous auto sales lots located along the major arterial corridors within the Study Area. In addition, many neighborhood residents have cited the negative impacts of insensitive commercial design, including gas stations, chain dollar stores, and fast food restaurants.

Zoning can directly impact the health, safety, and welfare of neighborhoods. Residents of area neighborhoods understand this, and have requested assistance in addressing this need. Without such help or additional resources, the stability of several midtown neighborhoods will be in jeopardy and continued revitalization will be extremely difficult. To assist in understanding the role of zoning, a summary of each of the City's zoning districts is included in the appendix.

Recommendation

Address incompatible zoning where it occurs within the Midtown Study Area. In particular, look to establish incentives and guidelines for new development that is compatible with its surroundings and meets the expressed needs of local residents and businesses.

Programs

- **Identify locations within the Study Area where down zoning is necessary and initiate procedures when feasible.**

Often, certain land uses and the issues associated with them are not in the best interest of neighborhoods. For example, several neighborhoods within the Study Area have a majority of their properties zoned as R-7 (medium-density multiple-

family residential), while the vast majority of their structures are single-family homes. This creates conflicts with parking, overcrowding, and neighborhood integrity. In order to address this critical issue, the Planning Department and area neighborhood organizations should continue to coordinate efforts and initiate down zoning where population density and neighborhood design are in conflict. The attached map identifies several potential locations for down zoning, including the Columbus Park Neighborhood, the Gifford Park Neighborhood, the Ford Birthsite Neighborhood, portions of the Leavenworth Neighborhood (south of Leavenworth), and certain areas along Dodge Street. Based on neighborhood support, the City should initiate down zoning procedures as quickly as possible in order to help prevent further declines.

Timeframe: High Priority

Dodge and Leavenworth Corridor Infill Redevelopment Design Guidelines

Overview

The Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street corridors are lined with a variety of uses as they run through the Destination Midtown Study Area. These uses were developed at various times, and contain a hodgepodge of architectural styles and site configurations. Some buildings are pedestrian-oriented and front onto the street, while others are auto-oriented and set back behind surface parking lots. This varied development pattern, with its assorted disparate architectural styles, is less than optimal and does not maximize the potential of these two corridors.

Discussion

Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street were developed during the turn of the century, when streetcars provided access to neighborhoods and pedestrian oriented, mixed-use businesses lined major streets. These businesses were neighborhood anchors, and contributed greatly to neighborhood vitality. As these streets transitioned from neighborhood-oriented “main” streets into dominant vehicular routes to and from downtown Omaha, commuter-oriented uses emerged and the complexion of each corridor began to change.

Over time, these corridors transitioned from neighborhood serving pedestrian-oriented environments to the hodgepodge of uses they are today. Commercial, office, clinical, and residential uses predominate, and several existing uses are transitional in nature and detract from adjacent neighborhoods and institutional uses. To complicate the situation, each of the uses was developed with a different site configuration, so that pedestrian-oriented uses are often sited next to auto-oriented uses. As redevelopment activity gains momentum, a consistent design and development pattern should be established that will ultimately contribute to neighborhood vitality and maximize the potential of Midtown’s primary corridors.

Recommendation

Establish corridor infill redevelopment design guidelines along Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street in order to establish an urban design framework for future growth and development and maximize the potential of these important corridors.

Programs

- **Develop Design Guidelines for new Infill Redevelopment along the Dodge Street Corridor, between Saddle Creek Road and the Interstate 480.**

Design guidelines for future infill development along Dodge Street should be established, taking into account the programs listed elsewhere in this document that discuss the transition of Dodge Street from its current condition into a beautifully landscaped urban boulevard. As such, the guidelines should consider continuous easements or setbacks to accommodate the future landscaping and street widening and “build-to” lines to establish a uniform street wall in this new location.

In addition, the guidelines should encourage mixed-use, neighborhood serving redevelopment opportunities. Intended for new development, the guidelines should include requirements for architectural design and detailing, reduced distances between adjacent buildings, rear-yard parking, streetscape amenities, and recommended uses. The guidelines should facilitate cooperation among the developers of new infill projects, and should be designed to enhance the character of Dodge Street and encourage redevelopment activity along the corridor.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Develop Design Guidelines for new Infill Redevelopment along Leavenworth Street, between Saddle Creek Road and 24th Street.**

Leavenworth Street offers significant opportunities for selective mixed-use, neighborhood-serving retail, restaurant and commercial services infill and redevelopment, with a goal of enhancing the existing patterns of development through the replacement of obsolete or deteriorated structures. As such, design guidelines for future infill development along Leavenworth Street should be established, taking into account the programs listed elsewhere in this document that discuss the redesign of Leavenworth Street to include additional landscaping and on-street parking. The guidelines should be targeted towards new development and encourage mixed-use, neighborhood serving redevelopment opportunities. Assembling properties to create viable real estate development opportunities for owners and investors will be necessary.

Unified parking plans for the corridor will be critical, combining on-street and on-site parking, with adjacent buildings sharing parking as much as possible. The guidelines themselves should include requirements for architectural design and detailing, building and parking lot placement, streetscape amenities, and recommended uses, with the goal of enhancing the character of Leavenworth Street and encouraging redevelopment activity along the corridor. Many of these

guidelines can be drawn from a study of the historical architectural precedents along Leavenworth.

Timeframe: High Priority

Residential, Commercial, and Mixed-Use Infill Design Guidelines

Overview

Development within the Destination Midtown Study Area consists of original buildings interspersed with buildings that have been developed more recently. Original buildings, typically constructed prior to the mid-1940's, were pedestrian oriented in nature, while newer buildings are auto-oriented. These newer buildings are not contextual with the predominant development pattern, and tend to detract from the urban nature of the Study Area.

Discussion

Most of the structures within the Destination Midtown Study Area were originally constructed during the later part of the 19th Century and the early part of the 20th Century. Development patterns during this time tended to be pedestrian oriented in nature, and were relatively dense and dominated by a mix of uses. Newer post-World War II development, on the other hand, tends to be auto-oriented and architecturally disparate, and in many cases detracts from the character and vitality of adjacent neighborhoods.

This shift in orientation is often the result of insensitive architectural design and/or adherence to the City's Post-War development regulations, which promote suburban style development patterns. In order to limit the effects of insensitive infill development on existing neighborhoods, infill design guidelines should be established for the Destination Midtown Study Area.

Recommendation

Establish design guidelines for infill redevelopment within the Destination Midtown Study Area.

Program

- **Develop Design Guidelines for new Residential, Commercial, and Mixed-Use Infill Redevelopment within the Destination Midtown Study Area.**

Design Guidelines should be established for new residential, commercial, and mixed-use infill redevelopment within the Destination Midtown Study Area. These guidelines should apply to all new construction and focus on contextual site and architectural design and detailing. The goal of the design guidelines is to enhance the existing character and vitality of the area and encourage appropriate redevelopment activity when obsolete or deteriorated structures are replaced. This plan includes preliminary concepts for residential guidelines (see appendix). These concepts should be taken by City Planning Department staff and further refined to match, not only the historic precedents found within the Study Area, but the specific dictates of conventional contemporary architecture and construction practices. Planning staff should subsequently refine the zoning

codes and land development regulations for the Study Area to insure the effective implementation of the desired guidelines.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Identify areas where neighborhood conservation overlay districts would encourage neighborhood revitalization.**

Neighborhood Conservation overlay districts are intended to accommodate unique land uses, urban design, and other distinctive characteristics of older established neighborhoods. Inasmuch as these districts allow variations in permitted uses and site development regulations that are adapted to the needs of the specific neighborhood, they are a flexible tool that can help neighborhoods maintain their dominant character and at the same time encourage reinvestment. To optimize the potential to utilize this approach in the Midtown Study Area, the Omaha Planning Department should identify neighborhoods within the Study Area where Neighborhood Conservation overlays would be an effective tool to encourage revitalization. Working with the affected property owners, the Planning Department should begin the application process.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Review outdoor advertising within the Study Area.**

Off-premise and temporary signs produce visual clutter in locations in the Study Area. A committee comprised of representatives of individual neighborhood interests and City Planning Department staff should be established to generally review the City's signage regulations as they apply to the Midtown Study District, with particular emphasis on off-premise and temporary signage along major transportation corridors. If appropriate, City Planning Department staff should develop new signage ordinances and regulations for the Study Area, with particular reference to its historic character.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Promotion & Maintenance

Overview

Significant parts of the Destination Midtown Study Area currently serve as major commuting corridors between Downtown and west Omaha. Thousands of drivers move back and forth through the Area on a daily basis. Major arterials, which form the primary visual context for these commuters, are lined with marginal uses, vacant lots, and an abundance of signs, all of which lead to a negative perception of the Study Area.

Discussion

The Destination Midtown Study Area highlights the potential difference between perception and reality. For example, the major commuting corridors through the Study Area have significant issues that must be addressed. They are lined with marginal uses including the occasional vacant lot; they are obscured by visual clutter (signs, power poles, and lights); litter, deteriorated curbs, and broken sidewalks are often the norm; and landscaping often appears to be an afterthought. All of these items result in a very negative image of the area.

This initial perception, however, is not indicative of the area as a whole. The reality is that once visitors travel a block or two away from the arterial corridors, they experience wonderful neighborhoods with safe and decent homes, beautiful parks, stately trees, and historic architecture. Unfortunately, perception often wins out over reality, and the entire Midtown area is often stigmatized with a negative image.

During the SWOT Analysis and several public meetings held as part of the master planning process, neighborhood residents and businesses identified the negative perception of the area as a concern and asked for ways to address it. As a result, additional resources should be identified and utilized in order to address these circumstances and improve the image of the entire area.

Recommendation

Identify resources that will help improve the appearance of the area and help reverse the negative perception of the Study Area.

Programs

- **Increase the general level of city maintenance within the Study Area.**

Neighborhood streets, curbs and gutters, and sidewalks are often in need of repair. As a result, recurring general maintenance activities should be enhanced by the provision of additional funding. Inasmuch as such maintenance is a primary City responsibility, these additional funds should be provided through increases in the city budget with particular emphasis on those funds earmarked for Midtown. The Midtown Neighborhood Association and the Midtown Development Corporation should lobby for increases in associated funding.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Establish a special entity to assist with the maintenance and upkeep of the area.**

Currently, Public Works resources are stretched to the limit. Assuming that internal inefficiencies can be easily eradicated, in order to enhance maintenance and upkeep of the public realm in the Midtown Study Area, additional resources may be required. A special entity (possibly similar in structure and operation to a Business Improvement District (BID)) should be established that would utilize private sector funding for supplemental maintenance and upkeep within the Study Area. As with other programs, however, the creation of this new entity should not diminish or impact the level and quality of services currently provided to Midtown by Public Works.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Utilize special programs to maintain public property.**

Public right-of-ways and parks are in need of continued maintenance and upkeep. Several programs, including the “offenders to work” program, enhanced “Dumpster Days,” “Adopt a Street” programs, and organizations that require community service hours, such as fraternal organizations and scouting groups, should be utilized in order to clean and maintain City parks, streets, and sidewalks. This should supplement existing resources.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Promote individual neighborhoods or districts within the Study Area by incorporating special signage and landscaping.**

The Destination Midtown Study Area comprises a number of unique and special neighborhoods. These neighborhoods should be identified, promoted, and enhanced through the use of special signage and landscaping at gateway locations. Funding for this could come through a variety of mechanisms, including the Mayor’s special grant program and through public – private partnerships, with private funds used to procure signage and Public Works personnel used to install and maintain them. Examples include the new Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association sign at 42nd and Dodge or potentially the “Historic Gold Coast” and/or “Field Club” areas, among many others.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Turn public spaces and the grounds of Midtown’s top attractions into showcases for Omaha.**

Public spaces and the grounds of Midtown’s top attractions, such as St. Cecilia’s Cathedral and Turner Park, should be heavily landscaped for seasonal interest. Special funding sources, including grants through the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, should be sought to beautify Midtown’s attractions and turn them into “destinations” for all of Omaha.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Promote the Destination Midtown Study Area to those who are unfamiliar with it.**

Many residents of Omaha have a negative perception of the Study Area. A campaign to enhance the perception of the area should be instituted. This campaign should target residents of other areas of the city, realtors, financial institutions, and property insurers. The campaign should utilize newsletters and positive advertising, and should be a combined effort of the Midtown Development Corporation and the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance, with assistance from the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce

Timeframe: Low Priority

- **Promote support of public elementary schools within the Study Area by encouraging local corporations to "adopt-a-school."**

Local elementary schools should identify their needs, ranging from equipment and materials to human capital (mentoring). Corporate entities from throughout the city should then be encouraged to "adopt-a-school" and assist as necessary. This unique partnership will benefit not only the children and families within the Destination Midtown Study Area, but improve the perception of the area to those who might not otherwise frequent the area.

Timeframe: Low Priority

Historic Preservation

Overview

The Destination Midtown Study Area was developed during the late 1800's and early 1900's. The area contains a rich collection of historic residential, commercial, and civic structures. Whether listed as individual landmarks, part of designated districts, or simply as background fabric, historic architecture is one of the endearing qualities of this area.

Discussion

The Destination Midtown Study Area contains a variety of historic structures and districts. Several structures are locally designated and/or listed on the National Register. Notable historic buildings within the area include St. Cecilia's Cathedral, the Blackstone Hotel, the Joslyn Castle, and the Storz house. Districts within the area include the Field Club Residential Historic District, the West Central – Cathedral Landmark Heritage District, and the Gold Coast National Register District. The attached maps identify the location of midtown's locally and nationally designated landmarks and districts, and the photographs are included in the appendix.

Historic buildings contribute significantly to the unique and special feel of the area. The SWOT Analysis identified historic architecture as the primary strength within the area, and St. Cecilia's Cathedral was identified as the most positive single feature within the area. Historic architecture and neighborhoods are limited in number, and are one of the major draws for residents of Midtown neighborhoods.

Because of this, continued historic preservation should be a priority for the Study Area. Existing preservation programs should be continued and new programs should be identified and implemented. The continued desirability of these neighborhoods will depend upon the enhancement of this valuable asset.

Recommendation

Develop additional programs and incentives to encourage the preservation and enhancement of the Study Area's historic resources.

Programs

- **Nominate recommended properties as historic landmarks.**

The "Reconnaissance Survey of Selected Neighborhoods in Central Omaha" identified 21 individual properties worthy of historic designation. These properties should be recommended for National Register and local designation by property owners and neighborhood organizations. In addition, properties that will be identified during the on-going survey that is being undertaken within certain neighborhoods within the Study Area should also be recommended for historic designation.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Develop a Façade Improvement Program for the Study Area.**

Many old and historic commercial buildings are falling into disrepair. In order to maintain and improve their appearance and encourage reinvestment, the City should establish a Façade Improvement Program within the Study Area. This program should utilize the resources of the City Planning Department staff to provide technical and design advice and should be combined with financial resources from the Midtown Redevelopment Fund or other identified public or private sources.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Develop historic preservation incentives in order to stimulate neighborhood revitalization.**

Owners of non-income producing residential property within the Study Area need incentives to renovate their homes. The City should lobby for tax incentives that encourage the renovation of historic residences. These tax incentives could take several forms, including:

- Revise existing state law to allow tax benefits for historic renovations. This could include tax abatements/tax credits for improvements to historic structures or property tax deferrals (5 to 10 years) so savings could be reinvested in the property.
- Establish a city/county tax benefit program that encourages reinvestment in “redevelopment areas” such as midtown.
- Utilize federal tax credits. Research existing federal tax credit programs and incorporate, if appropriate, within the Study Area.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Continue survey efforts on behalf of the Omaha Certified Local Government and the Nebraska State Historical Society.**

Reconnaissance surveys have identified historic topics and resource types within the Study Area that would benefit from further study. The City Planning Department, working with individual neighborhood organizations and the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance, should initiate the following:

- Initiate a citywide survey/evaluation of multiple-family dwellings for completion of a National Register Multiple-Family Dwellings Multiple Property Document.
- Nominate the Omaha Park and Boulevard System for National Register eligibility.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Increase public education on preservation issues.**

Historic properties are a significant part of midtown neighborhoods. Increased public education on preservation issues will be vital to continued efforts to revitalize midtown neighborhoods. Specific neighborhood organizations and the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance should establish the following programs:

- Discuss neighborhood history during meetings and include preservation as a priority of future plans and organization.
- Create programs to educate area residents, property owners, and realtors about the “positive” aspects of historic designation. If possible, invite experts from outside Omaha and/or Nebraska to help with this educational process through lectures, workshops, etc.
- Establish walking tours within historic neighborhoods.
- Promote historic districts and landmarks with appropriate signage at gateway entrances and in front of designated landmarks.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Expand the geographic coverage of the area’s historic streetlights.**

Omaha’s historic streetlights are located within several Midtown neighborhoods. Expanding the geographic coverage of these streetlights into new locations would enhance appropriate historic neighborhoods. Potential funding sources include public – private sector partnerships and/or the previously mentioned special improvement district. In particular, private funds should be solicited to pay for the fabrication of the fixtures and Public Works or OPPD personnel utilized to install them.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Expose the original brick pavers on designated residential streets.**

Many streets within the Study Area were constructed with brick pavers. In order to enhance neighborhood ambiance and calm traffic, certain residential streets in designated historic districts should be milled to expose their original pavers or be reconstructed with authentic pavers. Neighborhoods Associations should identify key streets and work with Public Works to initiate this process.

Timeframe: Low Priority

- **Designate the original route of the Lincoln Highway.**

The original route of the Lincoln Highway ran through the Study Area. Because of the historical significance of this roadway, the route should be identified. This should be accomplished by placing special signage along its path.

Timeframe: Low Priority

Transportation Related Programs

Transportation is integral to the vitality of any developed setting. Although cars are the initial thought when “transportation” is mentioned, a proper transportation system is a balance of multiple modes of mobility – cars, trucks, bus transit, pedestrian, bicycles, and in some urban settings, rail transit. The following outlines the Midtown opportunities developed in response to the issues raised by Study Area businesses and residents. ***As with any of the major street improvements being discussed herein, detailed traffic studies to investigate the cumulative impact must be conducted.*** The costs of many of these improvements cannot be accurately determined at this level of study. More detailed evaluation of the infrastructure and concept level engineering is needed to accurately assess the costs.

Dodge Street Corridor

Participants in the SWOT Analysis repeatedly mentioned Dodge Street as a major area of concern. Multiple issues were noted and significant attention was placed on improving the multiple functions of this corridor. As such the answer is multi-faceted and will need to occur through a phased approach over an extended period of time.

Overview

Aside from the interstate/ freeway system in Omaha, Dodge Street is the highest volume corridor and one of few continuous east-west corridors across the City. Land use intensity along the corridor prevented Dodge Street from being developed as the typical urban major arterial for which it functions. This characteristic extends west of the Study Area to 69th Street. Many of its means of handling through traffic result in adverse traffic flow within the Study Area. The reversible middle through lane, prohibition of left turns and the functionally obsolete Saddle Creek Road interchange are notable examples.

Dodge Street has traditionally been a primary commuter corridor between the western suburbs and downtown. As a result, it carries a significant amount of regional traffic, yet it is lined by a variety of land uses. A majority of these uses are retail establishments on small lots that require direct access from Dodge Street. These establishments utilize, for the most part, mid-block curb cuts for vehicular access. This access, with its multiple curb cuts, leads to impeded traffic flow on Dodge Street.

Pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along this narrow corridor are minimal at best. The Dodge Street corridor lacks efficient pedestrian and bicycle accommodations both parallel to and across this busy corridor.

Dodge Street is currently trying to serve multiple and divergent functions. As such, it does none of them effectively. To many it is considered unsightly and a disruption to northward and southward neighborhood traffic flow.

Discussion

Dodge Street functions as Omaha's "main street." Despite the interstate system it remains the most direct route between the western suburbs and downtown Omaha. As a result, it carries a significant amount of vehicular traffic. Based on the most recent Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) traffic counts, approximately 40,000 vehicles per day use Dodge Street between 24th Street and Saddle Creek Road. Although less than it did in the past, Dodge Street still exhibits strong peak flows during the morning and evening peak periods. Due to lack of right of way width, adjacent street corridors have also been employed to move the peak period traffic. Farnam and Harney were employed as one way pairs, and Farnam immediately west of the Study Area was utilized as a reversible flow street to enhance the peak flow capacity of the east-west street system. Both the overall traffic volume and peak nature of the flows has abated in recent years.

Within Midtown the street is attempting to serve as both a major arterial for moving a large volume of traffic in an efficient manner, and as a local street providing access to many small parcels. The street is lined by a variety of commercial and retail uses, ranging from fast food establishments and sit-down restaurants to small offices and

national chains. Many of these businesses utilize direct access off of Dodge Street, with secondary access from adjacent intersecting streets. In addition, there are several spot locations of single-family housing.

By definition, an arterial street's primary purpose is to move traffic, not provide adjacent property access. Between Saddle Creek Road and 24th Street, Dodge Street attempts to serve two functions. As a result, it meets neither of these functional requirements very well. The provision of multiple points of ingress and egress conflicts with the flow of regional traffic. Traffic flow is hindered and the environment for adjacent businesses is marginalized.

Most of the retail uses that line Dodge Street have direct access to the street. As a result, traffic flow along the street is hindered by traffic turning into parking lots. In addition, the typical site layout of retail uses along the street ensures that surface parking lots are the dominant visual feature along the corridor. Buildings are typically located in the center of their lots and surrounded by surface parking and access drives.

In the 1970's, in order to maximize vehicle capacity without major right-of-way impacts, the original four-lane street section was converted to a five-lane section with the center lane serving as a reversible through lane which provides a third lane in the peak hour direction (eastbound in the morning and westbound at all other times). Additionally, left turns were prohibited at all public street intersections.

Addition of this center lane occurred without widening the original 66-foot Right-of-Way. The current roadway width is between 55 and 57 feet wide, with five 11-foot lanes. The center lane is somewhat wider in certain locations. This leaves between 9 and 11 feet of width outside the curbs for sidewalks, plantings, signage and other forms of street furniture. This is far too little space to create even adequate facilities for pedestrians attempting to walk along Dodge Street. Combined with undersized sidewalks is the haphazard placement of light poles, traffic signs, street furniture and other objects, which further impedes any form of effective pedestrian flow.

Despite the prohibition of left turns from Dodge Street, such turns are often attempted by drivers looking to access properties on the opposite side of the street. These illegal turns further stifle effective traffic flow and create potentially dangerous conditions for drivers and pedestrians.

The Dodge Street and Saddle Creek Road intersection was one of the first grade-separated interchanges in the State of Nebraska. It was constructed in the early part of the 20th Century. Although revolutionary for its time, it has ceased to serve as a safe and effective interchange. Although a significant number of vehicles cross at this location, only a relatively small number actually use the interchange to access either intersecting roadway. This is due, in large part, to the confusing system of connecting ramps and the fact that, as designed, many drivers on Dodge Street are beyond the intersection by the time they realize it is an interchange. Ironically, many drivers ultimately utilize the parking lots of adjacent commercial uses to make the connection between these two streets.

Dodge Street does not adequately perform any of its required functions at present and is disliked as a regional arterial road, both by the drivers who use it daily and by the adjacent neighbors who find it disruptive to the effective functioning of their

neighborhoods. In addition, it is unsightly by any standards, which is particularly ironic for a street that was once considered one of the most beautiful urban streets in America.

Recommendation

Initiate a Dodge Street improvement plan to transition the roadway to a compatible and complimentary street corridor that meets the needs of its major arterial function, while also enhancing the Midtown area it traverses.

A detailed engineering and land use corridor planning study should be performed to define the ultimate goals so that policies can be set to achieve the transition in a unified manner. Among other details, this study would define access, intersections, medians, ROW amenities, etc. The general outcomes of this study will consist of:

- A program to transition the land use along the corridor from high traffic generating retail uses to office, institutional, residential and civic uses.
- Return Dodge Street to its intended purpose of moving traffic efficiently and safely.
- Improvements to the junction of Dodge Street and Saddle Creek Road.
- Redevelop Dodge Street as a multi-modal urban boulevard.

Programs

Although specific details will emerge from the recommended detailed corridor study, the following are aspects that are likely to emerge from such a study. They are presented as multiple steps in a phased approach, from high priority to low priority.

- **Change the land-use along Dodge Street from retail to office, institutional, residential, and civic.**

Retail and commercial land-uses currently located along Dodge Street should be transitioned to other, less intensive uses. Retail and commercial uses typically generate numerous trips throughout the day and require surface parking located in the front of the building. This configuration leads to increased traffic volumes, mid-block turning movements that impede traffic flow, and neighborhood interface issues.

Because of this, the Planning Department should transition land-use along Dodge Street to office, institutional, residential, and civic uses. This transition should be accompanied by changes in setback requirements in order to allow buildings to be placed up to the property line, with parking located to the rear of the lot. Adjacent uses should be encouraged to share parking, and vehicular access would occur via intersecting streets, thus eliminating the need for mid-block turning movements and ultimately enhancing traffic flow. Lot usage could be optimized under this configuration, and site/building design and impacts would ultimately be more compatible with adjacent neighborhood uses.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Reduce the number of curb cuts along Dodge Street.**

In order to facilitate the flow of traffic along Dodge Street, the number of curb cuts should be reduced. This can be accomplished on a gradual basis in conjunction with land use changes. The Public Works Department should review all development proposals to ensure that future ingress and egress to sites fronting along Dodge Street occur from the adjacent intersecting streets. Over time, traffic flow along Dodge Street would be streamlined. The ultimate goal is to remove private drive ingress and egress points from Dodge Street and require that all access to fronting properties occur from adjacent intersecting streets.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Examine alternative approaches to resolving the conflicts related to the current configuration of the intersection of Dodge Street and Saddle Creek Road.**

It has been noted that this junction contributes to some of the undesirable traffic situations in the Midtown Study Area. Alternative improvements should be explored. Recommended improvements must be compatible with the overall Dodge and Saddle Creek corridors. Alternatives could range from the complete reconstruction of the existing interchange to a variety of “at-grade” solutions.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Expand the Dodge Street Right-of-Way to transform Dodge Street into an urban boulevard.**

It is unlikely that any plausible recommendation could figure out how to simultaneously increase the traffic capacity of Dodge Street, enhance its aesthetic appearance and reinvigorate it as a viable retail and commercial strip. The preference, therefore, is to examine the feasibility of optimizing the first two goals, and remove the responsibility for commercial and retail activity, as mentioned in the previous program. The long-term goal is for Dodge Street to serve as an elegant, civic parkway that links Downtown Omaha to its suburbs in the West, and, at the same time, become an elegant picturesque feature of the Midtown district.

A key element to achieving this goal is to expand the street right of way from the current 66-feet to approximately 100 feet. This would allow width for the creation of an urban boulevard street section, with three travel lanes in each direction. The boulevard would include a 16-foot median that would accommodate trees and other landscaping as well as selected dedicated left turn lanes. The introduction of left turn lanes could have a negative effect on traffic flow, thus they must be evaluated very carefully. By expanding the right-of-way, there would be enough room on either side of the street for wide planting strips immediately adjacent to the street, and wide sidewalks. Other urban design elements such as decorative street lighting and other street landscaping features could be built into the plan. The right-of-way enhancement will need to occur over time as redevelopment occurs along the corridor.

Without doubt, this is a long term goal, but one which must be established now in order to guide the transformation process. The first step in moving this forward is a feasibility study. Many traffic flow details, utilities, and other right of way impacts must be studied in detail. By enhancing the corridor flow, opportunities may be possible in other corridors, such as Farnam and Harney. From a traffic flow aspect, the east-west system must be evaluated jointly. The study should determine an optimal right-of-way for the proposed roadway, and analyze the implications for fronting properties. It should also include preliminary analysis of the traffic implications of the proposed street configuration. The Dodge urban boulevard concept should extend west of the Study Area to 69th Street, thus future feasibility studies should set the concept to this logical terminus.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Saddle Creek Road Corridor

Overview

Saddle Creek Road's name is derived from the fact that it is on top of the original Saddle Creek open drainage channel. Saddle Creek was enclosed in a large conduit with the roadway placed on top. The conduit is undersized and is subject to flooding during heavy rainfalls. The roadway through the Study Area is lined by several marginal uses and in need of redevelopment.

Discussion

Saddle Creek Road is located on top of the original channel for Saddle Creek. Saddle Creek Road passes under Dodge Street forming an antiquated and ineffective urban interchange (addressed in Dodge Street Corridor section). The creek itself has been enclosed and buried in a combined sanitary and storm sewer. North of Dodge Street the combined sewer was separated with the recent reconstruction of the roadway between Cuming and Dodge. During very heavy rainfall events, the roadway and adjacent areas are subject to flooding. The intense level of urban development within the Saddle Creek watershed has complicated this issue.

Similar to Dodge Street, Saddle Creek Road is a relatively high volume arterial roadway with a primary functional purpose to move vehicles. Adjacent property access is a secondary function.

In addition to being developed on top of a creek, the Saddle Creek Road corridor was developed adjacent to a rail line. As a result, many of the original uses in the area were industrial in nature. Through the years, many of these industrial uses transitioned to other, less intense uses. Neighborhood residents have labeled many of these newer uses as marginal. As these transitions occurred in the segment south of Dodge Street, adjacent residential neighborhoods grew and matured and UNMC/The Nebraska Medical center-related uses developed ever closer on the east side of the roadway. North of Dodge Street the corridor transitioned to commercial uses, such as small retailers and fast food restaurants. The original industrial uses are now a remnant pocket from an earlier time, and have been rendered incompatible by current development trends.

Left in its current state, property along Saddle Creek Road south of Dodge Street will be difficult to redevelop. South of Dodge Street the potential for flooding will persist until the storm and sanitary sewers are separated, and the prospect of new uses locating adjacent to marginal uses and a large-scale industrial facility is a hurdle that will be difficult to overcome. Although the roadway has been reconstructed north of Dodge Street and the threat of flooding has been diminished, existing property ownership and platting patterns will make redevelopment a challenge. As identified during the SWOT analysis held as part of the planning process, the Saddle Creek corridor has a significant number of negative features that will make redevelopment along the corridor a difficult and challenging task.

Recommendation

Initiate a Saddle Creek Road improvement plan. Whereas the goal of some corridors within the Midtown area is to diminish traffic volume and transform the functionality of the corridor, both Dodge and Saddle Creek are to remain primary arterial roadways. As with Dodge Street the goal for Saddle Creek Road is to transition the roadway to a compatible and complimentary street corridor that meets the needs of its major arterial function, while increasing its amenity value in order to encourage redevelopment.

A detailed engineering and land use corridor planning study should be performed to define the ultimate goals. The range of possibilities presented below is diverse. Short term improvements should be pursued while long term visions are established. The general outcomes of this study will consist of:

- A program to soften the edges of the corridor through additional landscaping.
- A program to transition the marginal land uses to a more compatible use.
- Explore the feasibility of major reconstruction of the south of Dodge Street segment in order to address the flooding issues and create major new redevelopment opportunities.

Programs

- **Enhance the existing Saddle Creek Road corridor to include additional streetscaping.**

The reconstruction of the north segment of Saddle Creek Road addressed the functional and engineering issues, however “outside the curb” amenities were not part of the reconstruction. A program should be developed to “soften the edges” in this segment.

The segment south of Dodge Street contains more open space and thus has a more immediate opportunity for aesthetic improvement. Opportunities to couple with redevelopment should also be part of the “short term” improvement plan for the corridor.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Explore the feasibility of major reconstruction of Saddle Creek Road south of Dodge Street**

A detailed engineering study should be performed to identify and address the right of way, cost, utility, sewer, and traffic issues associated with reconstruction of this portion of the Saddle Creek Road corridor. Reconstruction options consist of:

- An “on-alignment” reconstruction similar to what was done north of Dodge Street.
- Relocation of Saddle Creek Road to the west.

Either option should consist of two travel lanes in each direction, a landscaped median, parkway landscaping with wide sidewalks and an off-street bike trail. Relocation must be done in such a manner so as to be compatible with Saddle Creek Road in the recently reconstructed segment north of Dodge Street and any

improvement to the Saddle Creek Road / Dodge Street junction. If done correctly, a realigned Saddle Creek Road would incur many benefits, including the following:

- Open space amenity for active and passive recreational use by adjacent neighborhoods and uses
- Enhanced flood control and protection and improved water quality
- Catalyst for redevelopment
- The continued expansion of UNMC
- Separation of combined sewers

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Dodge-to-Douglas “S” Curve

Overview

Eastbound Dodge Street traffic connects to Douglas Street via a sharp “s” curve located on the east side of Turner Park. This exchange makes two very sharp turns, the first one nearly 90 degrees to the south and the second one nearly 90 degrees to the east. This curve, because of its design, can be hazardous during the best of driving conditions. The speed and volume of traffic on the “s” curve, and its less than ideal location, compromise the integrity of Turner Park.

Discussion

Dodge Street functions as a two-way street west of Turner Park. East of Turner Park, Dodge Street and Douglas Street function as one-way pairs, with Dodge Street carrying westbound traffic and Douglas Street carrying eastbound traffic. The transition from two-way traffic to one-way pairs occurs through a sharp “s” curve adjacent to Turner Park.

The design and location of this transition is less than optimal. Eastbound traffic, which often travels at a fairly high rate of speed, is forced to make a sharp turn to the south on the down side of a moderately steep hill. Within a couple hundred feet of this turn, traffic is then required to make another sharp turn to the east, where it intersects Turner Boulevard and aligns with the Douglas Street right-of-way. This series of sharp turns, including the intersection with Turner Boulevard, impedes the flow of eastbound traffic and creates a confusing, if not dangerous, condition for drivers.

In addition, the “s” curve establishes the northern and eastern boundaries of Turner Park, the premier park along Turner Boulevard. As a result of this adjacency, the integrity of Turner Park is significantly compromised. Including Farnam Street to the south, Turner Park is bordered on three sides by major arterials. These arterials negatively impact the nature of the park, and make pedestrian access difficult at best.

Recommendation

Relocate the Dodge-to-Douglas “s” curve to the east.

Program

- **Explore the feasibility of relocating the Dodge-to-Douglas “s” curve to the east, adjacent to I-480.**

Examine the potential to relocate the Dodge-to-Douglas “s” curve two blocks to the east, adjacent to the I-480 right-of-way. The transition would occur in the area currently occupied by the existing southbound frontage road. Because there is a greater east-west distance in this location, the “s” curve transition would not be as severe and thus a smoother and safer transition from eastbound Dodge Street to eastbound Douglas Street would result. In addition, relocation of the “s” curve would eliminate the negative impact it currently has on Turner Park. This would encourage greater use of this park and could ultimately lead to the redevelopment of properties adjacent to the park.

Timeframe: High Priority

Park Avenue Terminus

Overview

Park Avenue, once one of Omaha's grandest streets, unceremoniously terminates at a "T" intersection with Dodge Street.

Discussion

Park Avenue has a rich history as one of Omaha's most storied residential streets. Over the past several decades, though, the avenue has fallen upon more difficult times and does not retain the grandeur it once had. Once utilized as a major north-south street in the midtown area, its role as a principal street has been overshadowed by I-480, which lies one block to the east.

Park Avenue currently terminates on the north at a "T" intersection with Dodge Street. Prior to Dodge Street, northbound traffic on Park Avenue has the option of turning east on Harney Street or Douglas Street (both of which run one-way east) or it can turn west on Farnam Street or Dodge Street (both of which run one-way west). From these east-west streets, traffic dissipates into the local roadway network.

Several one-way streets traverse the multi-block area adjacent to the northern terminus of Park Avenue. Because of the nature of these one-way streets (high volumes at peak times and generally higher speeds), redevelopment of adjacent properties has lagged. The existing uses in this area, most of which are residential in nature, are isolated and difficult to access.

Recommendation

Terminate Park Avenue with a cul-de-sac at Douglas Street.

Program

- **Create a cul-de-sac on Park Avenue, connecting it with Turner Boulevard via Douglas Street.**

Park Avenue should terminate with a cul-de-sac at Douglas Street. This terminus should be ceremonial in nature, and connect to the west with Turner Boulevard. This Park – Turner exchange would facilitate connectivity to north 30th Street and help improve regional traffic flow. Douglas Street to the east of the cul-de-sac would be vacated, in conjunction with the Dodge – Douglas Exchange Program. This will create a unique enclave suitable for redevelopment, in close proximity to Turner Park and with easy access to the regional transportation network. Future redevelopment sites developed as part of this program could include the property on the east side of Turner Boulevard, overlooking Turner Park.

The planned improvements to the I-480 / US 75 (North Freeway) involve some changes to the ramp system interfacing with 30th Street. This primarily consists of removal of ramps built back in the 1970's that were to interface with the planned Dodge Street Freeway. As that never materialized, the ramps are being

removed. The Park Avenue improvement, as well as the Turner Boulevard improvement, is completely compatible with the planned interstate interchange reconstruction project.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Leavenworth Street Redesign

Overview

Leavenworth Street is a strictly utilitarian roadway, with two lanes in each direction and on-street parking where space permits. The street developed during the age of the streetcar, and remnants of its mixed-use, pedestrian oriented fabric are still visible. The current roadway design, which emphasizes through traffic, has deteriorated the pedestrian environment and does little to encourage neighborhood reinvestment.

Discussion

Leavenworth Street was developed during the age of the streetcar. As such, it functioned as a transit route and as an arterial route for vehicles. Because transit predominated during this era, pedestrian oriented, mixed-use businesses lined the street. These businesses were neighborhood anchors, and contributed greatly to neighborhood vitality.

Over time, streetcars were phased out and Leavenworth became a dominant vehicular route into downtown Omaha. As traffic increased, the street was widened in order to increase its capacity. With two lanes in each direction, sidewalks were reduced in width and on-street parking in many locations was eliminated in order to create room for additional lanes.

With fewer parking spaces for customers and changing shopping patterns, many neighborhood businesses closed and/or transitioned to other uses. Where once businesses lining Leavenworth Street contributed to neighborhood vitality, many of the newer businesses had negative impacts or detracted from neighborhood stability.

Recommendation

Redesign Leavenworth Street to include additional landscaping and on-street parking.

Program

- **Study the feasibility of redesigning Leavenworth Street to include additional streetscaping and on-street parking wherever feasible.**

A detailed study of Leavenworth Street should be undertaken. This study should identify preferred future street sections, right-of-way width, and traffic flow. Ideally, Leavenworth Street should be maintained as a four-lane arterial with distinct neighborhood characteristics, including on-street parking where it currently exists. Additional on-street parking and streetscape amenities, such as street trees and street furniture, should be provided where feasible. The intersections of 40th Street and 42nd Street should also be redesigned (see later programs) in order to allow effective traffic flow in all directions. These improvements, in conjunction with the corridor redevelopment programs mentioned elsewhere in this document, should encourage mixed-use, neighborhood serving redevelopment opportunities.

In situations where the current ROW simply will not allow four lanes of traffic plus on-street parking and streetscaping, the City Planning Department should consider developing alternative design guidelines and requirements for new development that would include a mandatory build-to line for new development with the space between the front façade and the edge of the right-of-way to be treated as an easement to be used for pedestrian traffic, plantings and, if applicable, outdoor dining, displays and other commercial or retail-related activities. This easement, while technically on private property, would effectively help create the desired character along Leavenworth, thereby helping adjacent businesses as well as pedestrians and drivers using the street.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Farnam and Harney Street Conversions

Overview

Farnam Street and Harney Street operate as a set of one-way pairs east of 42nd Street. Farnam Street carries westbound traffic and Harney Street carries eastbound traffic. Current traffic volumes on these streets do not warrant one-way traffic, and their one-way nature has been detrimental to adjacent neighborhoods and businesses.

Discussion

Farnam Street and Harney Street were originally developed as two-way streets. As the use of mass transit in Omaha declined and private vehicle usage increased, these streets were converted to one-way pairs to facilitate traffic flow into and out of Downtown Omaha. East of 42nd Street, Farnam Street carries traffic westbound and Harney Street carries traffic eastbound. Traffic volumes on these two streets peaked during the 1960's and early 1970's.

Over time, consumer patterns and preferences changed. New shopping, office, and residential areas were developed on Omaha's western fringe. Downtown Omaha no longer maintained its status as the city's primary mixed-use hub. As a result, traffic volumes on Farnam and Harney began to decline. The most recent traffic counts for the Study Area, taken by the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), show that Farnam Street carries 10,000-14,000 vehicles per day and Harney Street carries 6,500-11,000 vehicles per day.

These diminished traffic counts, combined with the alternatives provided by the reconstruction of I-80 and other regional roadway improvements, have reduced the need for one-way traffic on each of these streets. Relieved from the detrimental effects of one-way traffic, Farnam and Harney could reemerge as viable and exciting mixed-use, pedestrian oriented corridors in the heart of Midtown.

Recommendation

Return Farnam Street and Harney Street to two-way traffic.

Program

- **Explore the feasibility of converting Farnam Street and Harney Street to two-way traffic.**

Farnam and Harney Streets should be returned to two-way traffic. This would entail re-striping the existing pavement, installing necessary signage, and modifying existing traffic signals to accommodate two-way traffic. Typical street sections would need to be developed for both Farnam and Harney. Farnam Street should be studied to determine if it could function with two or three lanes and full on-street parking. Harney should be two lanes with on-street parking wherever available. Improvements should be designed to encourage neighborhood vitality and the establishment of pedestrian oriented, mixed-use development. The traffic implications of these changes must be studied in

concert with Dodge Street to ensure adequate east-west traffic flow continues to be provided through the Study Area.

Timeframe: High Priority

Turner Boulevard Conversion

Overview

Turner Boulevard is part of Omaha's historic parks and boulevard system. Traditionally two-way in design, it has been converted to one-way southbound between Dodge Street and Harney Street. Intended to facilitate traffic flow through the area, this one-way segment is now obsolete, hindering the flow of north-south traffic and ignoring its intended role as a pleasant alternative to north-south travel.

Discussion

Turner Boulevard was originally developed as part of Omaha's historic parks and boulevard system. Designed for two-way traffic, it was intended to provide "green" connections between Omaha's neighborhoods and its expanding collection of parks. The boulevard system quickly became a preferred alternative for those traveling between neighborhoods and wanting to avoid congested arterial corridors.

As the City examined ways to facilitate traffic flow into and out of downtown Omaha, this portion of Turner Boulevard was converted to one-way operation. Over time, consumer patterns and preferences changed and Downtown Omaha lost its status as the city's primary mixed-use hub. As a result, traffic volumes on adjacent arterials, and thus Turner Boulevard, began to decline. The most recent traffic counts for the Study Area, taken by the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), show that Turner Boulevard between Dodge and Harney carries 4,200 – 5,200 vehicles per day.

These low traffic counts and the associated roadway improvements proposed in conjunction with the Destination Midtown Plan have reduced the need for one-way traffic on this segment of Turner Boulevard. Relieved from the artificial constraints of one-way traffic, Turner Boulevard could again fulfill its role as a delightful alternative for those desiring to travel north-south in the eastern portion of the Study Area.

Recommendation

Return Turner Boulevard to two-way traffic.

Program

- **Return Turner Boulevard to two-way traffic between Dodge Street and Harney Street.**

Turner Boulevard should be returned to two-way traffic between Dodge Street and Harney Street. This would allow for continuous two-way traffic along its entire length. At its northern terminus, it should provide a seamless connection with North 30th Street, which should be treated as a parkway as it heads north to Cuming Street. The conversion of Turner Boulevard back to two-way traffic could be done relatively quickly. It would entail re-striping the existing pavement, installing necessary traffic signage, and modifying existing traffic signals to accommodate two-way traffic.

As part of the Destination Midtown planning process, Park Avenue, which runs north-south a block to the east of Turner Boulevard, has been designed to terminate in a ceremonial cul-de-sac at Douglas Street. A block-long segment of Douglas Street would connect Park Avenue traffic with two-way Turner Boulevard and provide an important link in the regional roadway network.

The planned improvements to the I-480 / US 75 (North Freeway) involve some changes to the ramp system interfacing with 30th Street. This primarily consists of removal of ramps built back in the 1970's that were to interface with the planned Dodge Street Freeway. As that never materialized, the ramps are being removed. The Turner Boulevard improvement, as well as the Park Avenue improvement, is completely compatible with the planned interstate interchange reconstruction project.

Timeframe: High Priority

42nd Street Traffic Calming

Overview

Forty-Second Street cuts through the middle of UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus. With two lanes of traffic in each direction and approximately 18,000 vehicles per day, the street effectively divides the campus in half.

Discussion

Forty-Second Street is a primary route into the Destination Midtown Study Area. Heading to the south, it is the only direct link with Interstate 80. As part of the regional arterial network, it has two lanes of traffic in each direction between Dodge Street and I-80. North of Dodge Street, 42nd Street turns into a residential street and terminates one block to the north, at Davenport Street. Approximately 18,000 vehicles per day use 42nd Street between Dodge and Leavenworth.

The UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus, located between Farnam Street and Leavenworth Street, is cut in half by 42nd Street. Clinical and research components of the medical center are generally located on the west side of 42nd Street, and educational and student oriented components are located to the east. The two lanes of traffic in each direction make it difficult for pedestrians to cross the street.

Recommendation

Calm traffic along 42nd Street between Farnam Street and Emile Street.

Program

- **Study various traffic calming measures to reduce speed and volume on 42nd Street. Implement those found to be most beneficial.**

Forty-Second Street should be “calmed” between Farnam Street and Emile Street. This should be done as part of a much larger package of roadway improvements for UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center, including left turn lanes at the intersection of 42nd Street and Leavenworth, Saddle Creek Road Realignment, and improved medical center signage.

Calming measures could consist of lane reductions, streetscape amenities, intersection chokers, roundabouts, and other physical improvements that would yield a roadway more harmonious with an educational campus. Any measures that divert traffic must be evaluated to ensure that new traffic problems are not created elsewhere.

Timeframe: High Priority

42nd and Leavenworth Intersection Enhancement

Overview

Left turns are not allowed from 42nd Street onto Leavenworth Street. Traffic coming into the Study Area from the south is directed through the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus instead of having the opportunity to distribute itself on adjacent arterials, such as Saddle Creek Road. This increases traffic through the medical center, further enhancing the division of the campus.

Discussion

The intersection of 42nd and Leavenworth currently allows left turns only from Leavenworth Street. Traffic can turn either south or north onto 42nd Street. Eastbound and westbound left turns are not allowed from 42nd Street. This means that traffic coming into the Study Area from the south, and desiring to head west onto either Dodge, Farnam, or Leavenworth Street, must first cut through the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus. This increases traffic on 42nd Street within the campus, greatly diminishing the quality of the campus environment.

Recommendation

Provide northbound and southbound left turns from 42nd Street.

Program

- **Reconstruct the intersection of 42nd and Leavenworth to facilitate left turns from 42nd Street.**

The intersection of 42nd Street and Leavenworth Street should be reconstructed to allow northbound and southbound left turns. This would require additional right-of-way for construction of the dedicated turn lanes. If done as part of a package of roadway improvements around UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center, traffic heading north would have an alternative route to Dodge Street. Traffic could be directed away from 42nd Street through the use of traffic calming devices and campus gateway signage.

Timeframe: High Priority

Intersection of 40th Street and Davenport Street

Overview

The intersection of 40th Street and Davenport Street is less than ideal. 40th Street jogs as it crosses Davenport Street – the northern and southern legs of the street do not align. Because of this offset, sight lines are reduced and the potential for collisions is enhanced.

Discussion

40th Street, one of the key north-south routes within the Study Area, carries approximately 6,700 vehicles per day between Dodge Street and Cuming Street. Davenport Street, which is residential in nature, links 40th Street with Saddle Creek Road and provides an alternative to Dodge Street. The intersection between these two streets is less than ideal. The alignment of 40th Street shifts as it crosses Davenport Street. This creates a dangerous offset with limited sight lines.

Recommendation

Reconfigure the 40th and Davenport intersection.

Program

- **Reconstruct the Intersection of 40th Street and Davenport Street.**

The intersection of 40th and Davenport should be studied in order to determine the most appropriate solution to the offset on 40th Street. It is not necessary to realign 40th Street itself, either north or south of the intersection; rather, the intersection itself should be re-thought. Potential solutions include, but are not limited to, traffic signals, stop signs, or a roundabout. Neighborhood leaders should be consulted as part of the engineering study process.

Timeframe: High Priority

Cuming Street Reconfiguration

Overview

Cuming Street, between 30th Street and Saddle Creek Road, is designed with three lanes of traffic in each direction and a concrete center median. The street is over-designed for current traffic volumes. The corridor is utilitarian in nature, with the exception of the small landscape project initiated by the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association.

Discussion

Cuming Street was widened to three lanes in each direction in order to facilitate traffic flow into and out of the downtown area. Over time, consumer patterns and preferences changed and Downtown Omaha relinquished its status as the city's primary mixed-use hub. As a result, traffic volumes on Cuming Street have declined over the years. The most recent traffic counts show that Cuming Street carries 28,000-33,000 vehicles per day with future projections for 2030 relatively flat with increases to the mid to upper 30's.

Nevertheless, Cuming Street's importance has not diminished. The new Cuming Street – Abbott Drive alignment on the north edge of Downtown Omaha will help direct new traffic and potential residents and customers into the Study Area. In addition, it will present an equally rewarding opportunity to draw on the excitement surrounding riverfront redevelopment efforts.

Recommendation

Redesign Cuming Street with two lanes of traffic in each direction and streetscape amenities.

Programs

- **Convert Cuming Street to two-way traffic flow between 27th and 30th.**

Cuming Street was converted to two-way traffic flow from 27th (North Freeway) to 10th Street as part of the street changes accompanying the arena / convention center. The segment from 27th to 30th was not converted. As such Burt Street remains a high volume roadway detracting from the safe movement of pedestrians between the main Creighton campus and the Medical Center.

Specific improvements include:

- Reconstruct the southbound on-ramp to US 75 to bridge over Burt Street
- Convert Cuming Street to two-way traffic flow from 27th to 30th thus completing the continuity of Cuming from Saddle Creek Road to 10th Street.
- Reconstruct the 30th and Cuming intersection to provide adequate capacity for the future and to accommodate the Cuming and Burt Street changes.

- Convert Burt Street to two-way traffic from 16th to 30th Streets.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Reduce Cuming Street between 30th Street and Saddle Creek Road to two through-lanes in each direction and add streetscape amenities where possible.**

Based on current traffic counts, Cuming Street no longer needs three lanes of traffic in each direction. Because of this, Cuming Street between 30th Street and Saddle Creek Road should be reduced to two through lanes in each direction. The center median should be reconfigured to include enough room for dedicated north and south turn lanes at all major intersections. Streetscape amenities should be continued west from Creighton University. The existing Abbott Drive – Cuming Street streetscape design should be used, with slight modifications to incorporate neighborhood character.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Center Street – Hanscom Park to 36th Street

Overview

Center Street, between Hanscom Park and 36th Street, is designed as a 4-lane section. The street runs to the south of the Field Club neighborhood, and provides access to the remnants of an erstwhile neighborhood business district. The street is over-designed for current traffic volumes, and lacks streetscape amenities.

Discussion

Center Street was widened to four lanes in each direction in order to facilitate traffic flow. Over time, consumer patterns and preferences changed and traffic volumes on Center Street declined. The most recent traffic counts show that Center Street carries approximately 16,500 vehicles per day between Hanscom Park and 36th Street.

Across the country, neighborhood business districts in similar settings have experienced successful redevelopment efforts. As this district attempts to redefine itself, the existing 4-lane street section may be inappropriate. Redevelopment efforts in similar locations around the country have attempted to slow traffic and create a good pedestrian environment. This can usually be accomplished by making the sidewalks more pedestrian friendly, reducing the number of traffic lanes, providing on-street parking, and incorporating other traffic calming devices.

Recommendation

Redesign Center Street with three lanes of traffic, on-street parking, and a strong pedestrian character.

Program

- **Reduce Center Street to 3-lanes between Hanscom Park and 36th Street.**

Center Street between Hanscom Park and 36th Street should be redesigned as a 3-lane section. On-street parking should be provided on both sides of the street, and streetscape amenities should be provided to enhance the pedestrian experience. These modifications to the transportation infrastructure, done jointly with private sector redevelopment efforts, could reestablish this area as an exciting and viable neighborhood-serving mixed-use district.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Conversion of Leavenworth Street and St. Mary's Avenue

Overview

Leavenworth Street and St. Mary's Avenue operate as a set of one-way pairs between Downtown and their junction, just west of I-480. St. Mary's Avenue carries westbound traffic and Leavenworth Street carries eastbound traffic. Current traffic volumes on these streets do not warrant one-way traffic, and their one-way nature has been detrimental to adjacent neighborhoods and businesses.

Discussion

Leavenworth Street and St. Mary's Avenue were originally developed as two-way streets. As the use of mass transit in Omaha declined and private vehicle usage increased, these streets were converted to one-way pairs to facilitate traffic flow into and out of Downtown Omaha. East of 31st Street, St. Mary's Avenue carries traffic westbound and Leavenworth Street carries traffic eastbound. Traffic volumes on these two streets peaked during the 1960's and early 1970's.

Over time, consumer patterns and preferences changed and new shopping, office, and residential areas were developed on Omaha's fringe. Downtown Omaha no longer maintained its status as the city's primary mixed-use hub. As a result, traffic volumes on St. Mary's and Leavenworth have declined. The most recent traffic counts for the Study Area, taken by the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), show that St. Mary's Avenue carries 6,100 to 11,800 vehicles per day and Leavenworth Street carries 12,100 -13,100 vehicles per day.

These diminished traffic counts, combined with the alternatives provided by the reconstruction of I-80 and other regional roadway improvements, have reduced the need for one-way traffic on each of these streets. Relieved from the detrimental effects of one-way traffic, St. Mary's and Leavenworth could reemerge as viable and exciting mixed-use, pedestrian oriented corridors in the heart of Midtown.

Recommendation

Consider returning Leavenworth and St. Mary's to two-way traffic.

Program

- **Study the feasibility of returning Leavenworth Street and St. Mary's Avenue to two-way traffic between their intersection and 24th Street.**

A study should be conducted that examines the feasibility of returning Leavenworth Street and St. Mary's Avenue to two-way traffic between their intersection and 24th Street. At minimum, this would entail the reconfiguration of the Leavenworth/St. Mary's intersection, re-striping the existing pavement, installing necessary traffic signage, and modifying existing traffic signal masts to accommodate two-way traffic. Typical street sections would need to be developed for each of these streets, and on-street parking should be provided wherever possible. Streetscape amenities, designed to enhance neighborhood

vitality and the establishment of pedestrian oriented, mixed-use district, should be incorporated. Future study should examine the feasibility of returning St. Mary's and Leavenworth to two-way traffic east of 24th Street.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

St. Mary's Avenue and Leavenworth Street Interstate Bridge Redesign

Overview

The St. Mary's Avenue and Leavenworth Street bridges over Interstate 480 are utilitarian in nature. They were designed to facilitate traffic movement over the interstate and little else. Even with the bridges, the interstate is a barrier between the neighborhoods on each side of it.

Discussion

When I-480 was constructed in the 1960's, it cut through established neighborhoods. To lessen its impact on these neighborhoods, the interstate was lowered below grade. Bridges along major roadways were constructed to span the interstate. These bridges became the "connective tissue" that linked neighborhoods on each side of the interstate. Unfortunately, these bridges were designed more for vehicle use than for pedestrians. The majority of the trips across the bridges are by car, and the interstate still acts as a barrier between the neighborhoods on each side of it.

This does not need to be the case. The new 10th Street Bridge south of Omaha's Old Market has a variety of functions. In addition to carrying vehicular traffic across the Union Pacific main line, the 10th Street Bridge functions as much needed spill-over parking for the Old Market, a venue for Western Heritage Museum related outdoor festivals, and as a true pedestrian link between the Old Market and neighborhoods to the south.

Recommendation

Enhance the St. Mary's and Leavenworth interstate bridges with pedestrian amenities and on-street parking.

Program

- **Redesign the St. Mary's Avenue and Leavenworth Street bridges over the interstate as pedestrian-friendly "links" that accommodate pedestrians and on-street parking.**

The St. Mary's and Leavenworth bridges over the interstate should be redesigned as pedestrian-friendly links that accommodate vehicular traffic, pedestrians, and on-street parking. This redesign should complement the efforts to return both St. Mary's Avenue and Leavenworth Street to two-way traffic, and the effort so establish a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use neighborhood business district along this corridor. The bridges over the interstate should be enhanced with on-bridge parking, new lighting, entry pylons, and pedestrian amenities. It is unlikely that these changes would require structural changes to the existing spans. Rather, re-striping and the addition of new amenities may be enough to achieve the desired effect.

Timeframe: Low Priority

Midtown Transit

Overview

The Destination Midtown Study Area is unlike any other area in Omaha. It was developed substantially prior to World War II, when development patterns encouraged a mixture of uses and pedestrian orientation. The area contains a variety of residential options, and residents can work, shop, and play within walking distance of their homes. Existing population density and neighborhood design encourage transit ridership.

Discussion

The Destination Midtown Study Area was developed during the streetcar era. Development patterns of the time encouraged a mixture of uses and mobility alternatives. This led to a neighborhood structure where a person could live, work, shop, and play, all within easy walking distance.

Unfortunately, Omaha was no different than any other city in the United States. Consumer patterns and preferences changed during the late 1940s, the 1950's and the 1960's, and mass transit usage declined. Rubber tire buses, seen as more flexible, replaced most of the streetcars, and Omaha's final streetcar line ended its operation in the 1950's.

However, streetcars have not been forgotten. A number of cities in the United States have recently developed new streetcar lines, and many more are currently incorporating them into their near-term future mobility options. Today's streetcars are seen not only as people movers, but also as redevelopment tools. Given the Midtown Study Area's average population density of more than 7,500 residents per square mile, a modern streetcar line may be the ideal strategy to link Midtown neighborhoods, employers, and institutions with the downtown and riverfront, and encourage redevelopment along the way. In the interim, MAT's retro bus circulator routes could be expanded from downtown into the midtown area.

Recommendation

Examine the feasibility of linking Midtown and Downtown with new transit options.

Programs

- **Expand the downtown circulator routes into midtown.**

The new downtown retro bus circulator routes have been a major success. Metro Area Transit should examine the feasibility of extending one or more of the routes into the Study Area. Potential stops include Mutual of Omaha, Kiewit Plaza, and UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Analyze the feasibility of creating a modern streetcar system linking the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center Campus and Downtown Omaha via Farnam and Harney Streets.**

Examine the feasibility of linking Downtown Omaha with Mutual of Omaha, Kiewit, the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center, and Midtown neighborhoods. The modern streetcar would link Omaha's significant concentrations of employment with many of its urban neighborhoods, and help encourage mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented redevelopment along the Farnam/Harney corridor.

Starting in Downtown Omaha, the preliminary streetcar route would follow Farnam Street west to 41st Street. At 41st Street, the streetcar would turn south to Emile Street, then east on Emile Street to 40th Street. At 40th Street, the streetcar would turn north to Harney Street, then east on Harney to Downtown Omaha. Later phases of the streetcar system could connect UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center with UNO and Aksarben.

Timeframe: Low Priority

Midtown Bicycle Plan

Overview

Bicyclists are clearly second-class citizens within the current organization and function of the Study Area's mobility system.

Discussion

At a number of public meetings during the master planning process, advocates for enhanced bicycle mobility vocally expressed their dismay with current conditions within the Midtown Study Area. In general, their concerns are well founded; bicyclists are clearly second-class citizens within the current organization and function of the Study Area. Given the preponderance of students and working class residents within Midtown, and its relatively high urban densities, this represents a considerable oversight. With its inherent grid system and a wide variety of street types within the Study Area, Midtown possesses the potential to be an exemplary location for urban cycling.

Recommendation

Develop a comprehensive bike plan for the Destination Midtown Study Area.

Program

- **Develop a bike mobility plan for the Midtown Study Area.**

The Midtown Master Plan includes a rudimentary study of the potential to develop such a comprehensive biking plan, but it needs to be further developed, tested and refined. In its current incarnation, the proposed plan includes three distinct types of biking facilities:

- Bike Trails – dedicated cartways designed solely for the use of bicyclists, generally distinct from any adjacent roadway;
- Bike Lanes – areas within a general purpose roadway used expressly for bicyclists; these are generally at least four feet in width and are striped and labeled as bikeways;
- Bike Routes – roadways that are signed for and listed for use by bicyclists but which otherwise include no physical concessions to bike riders. These are generally streets with some degree of excess capacity and generally low levels of vehicle traffic.

In cooperation with the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance and local cycling organizations, the City Planning Department staff should field test the Bike Mobility plan included in this master plan and alter, amend and improve it as recommended.

Timeframe: High Priority

Neighborhood Oriented Mobility Programs

Overview

Travel within the Destination Midtown Study Area has changed dramatically since the area was developed during the late 1800's and early 1900's. At the turn of the 20th century, mobility options included walking, biking, horse and buggy, private automobile, and streetcars. Today, fewer options are utilized. Private automobiles are the primary means of transportation within the area, and walking, biking and transit are utilized to a lesser degree. Because of these changes, mobility options within the area need to be examined and adjusted to meet the ever-changing needs of the area.

Discussion

The Destination Midtown Study Area was developed as grid network of streets. This network was broken by occasional boulevards and served by the city's streetcar network. Major east – west streets included Cuming Street, Dodge Street, Farnam Street, Leavenworth Street, Woolworth Street, and Center Street. Major north – south streets included 24th Street, Park Avenue, 38th Street, 40th Street, 42nd Street, and Saddle Creek Road. Turner Boulevard was the dominant boulevard within the Study Area.

This grid of streets continues to play a significant role in the development of the area. Where neighborhood business districts developed at the intersections of streetcar routes, commercial development now lines many of the major arterials. Often times this development has negative impacts on adjacent neighborhoods or creates a substantial amount of traffic or high demand for parking. The SWOT Analysis identified several road corridors and intersections as having a negative impact on the Study Area.

Because of this and the ever-changing needs of the area, enhancements to the mobility network should be a priority. Existing improvement programs should be continued and new programs should be identified and implemented. The continued vitality of midtown neighborhoods will depend upon the adaptability and enhancement of this valuable asset.

Recommendation

Provide a variety of new mechanisms to address the ever-changing mobility needs of residents and businesses within the Study Area.

Programs

- **Develop a variety of traffic calming options for neighborhood streets.**

Speeding and cut-through traffic are major issues within several Midtown neighborhoods. In coordination with the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance and individual neighborhoods, the Public Works Department should develop a variety of traffic calming options (reducing paving widths, on-street parking,

roundabouts, chicanes, etc.) for use on local streets. Construction of these traffic calming mechanisms should occur as part of routine maintenance or upon request of public, private or institutional entities who would be expected to contribute to the costs incurred.

Specific locations within the Study Area the merit consideration for the introduction of traffic calming measures include:

- Park Avenue, at various locations along its length south of Leavenworth Street;
- The intersection of 36th Street and Center Street; and
- 42nd Street as it passes through the UNMC/Nebraska Medical center Campus between Leavenworth Street and Dodge Street.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Expand parking options within the Study Area.**

Parking is a recurring issue within the Midtown Study Area whether it is under- or over-supplied. In certain areas, business owners are prevented from opening or expanding existing operations because they cannot provide on-site parking. In other locations, residents complain when visitors park on-street in front of their houses. In still other locations, the institutional need for parking creates large, unsightly parking lots that encroach into and disturb surrounding residential fabric.

As with many older in-town urban neighborhoods, the Midtown Study Area cannot match up to suburban standards and expectations for the provision of parking. An area-wide parking study for the Midtown district should be commissioned, with the express goal of optimizing the provision of parking on an area-wide basis as opposed to a property-by-property basis.

Such a study could be undertaken by City of Omaha staff, with assistance from external consultants, and could be paid for in a manner similar to the current Master Plan study. General goals for such a study would include, at a minimum, the following:

- Optimizing the use of on-street parking throughout the Study Area; it is clear that a block by block study would turn up an enormous number of potential on-street parking spaces that could be used in a wide variety of ways (i.e., neighborhood residents only, general purpose, time-limited, etc.)
- Optimizing the use of existing parking resources that tend to be monofunctional and are often grossly under-utilized throughout large portions of the day or week (i.e., parking lots and structures are large institutions such as UNMC, Creighton, Mutual of Omaha, etc.);
- Coordinating mixed-use development both internally and with its immediate surroundings in order to make effective

use of limited parking resources (i.e., proposed neighborhood business districts).

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Central Corridor Programs

42nd Street Landscaping

Overview

Forty-Second Street cuts through the middle of the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus. The street is designed for vehicular traffic, with few landscape or pedestrian amenities. The street's meager aesthetics belie its potential as a major civic feature for this important Midtown destination.

Discussion

Forty-Second Street is a major functional and ceremonial element on the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus. The street is a primary route through the Destination Midtown Study Area, and carries a significant amount of traffic through the heart of the campus. The street divides the campus into two halves, with clinical and research uses located to the west and educational and student oriented uses located to the east. Pedestrian traffic along the corridor is substantial, and crossings occur at regular intervals.

Although 42nd Street functions as a "front door" for the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus, its utilitarian nature ensures that a trip along its length is less than memorable. The street is designed with two lanes of traffic in each direction and sidewalks that are located directly behind the curb, placing pedestrians adjacent to traffic lanes. Trees, shrubs, and other streetscape amenities are limited in nature. As an important pedestrian corridor, 42nd Street does not live up to its potential as a great urban street.

Recommendation

Improve the appearance of 42nd Street by installing new landscape and streetscape amenities.

Program

- **Landscape 42nd Street between Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street.**

Forty-Second Street is a functional and ceremonial "front door" to the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus. Because of this important role, the corridor should be heavily landscaped with a variety of trees, shrubs and seasonal plantings between Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street. In addition, pedestrian amenities such as lighting, benches, and similar street furniture should be included. These enhancements should be done in conjunction with the traffic calming measures that were identified in the Transportation Program. If done correctly, these additions would provide a civic focal point for the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus and establish 42nd Street as a great urban street. In addition, they would assist in the creation of a seamless transition between the campus and neighborhoods north and south.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center Campus Design Guidelines

Overview

The medical center recently announced plans for new student housing along 38th Avenue. Neighborhood residents protested the design of the proposed structure and argued for more input into the design process. The medical center responded by soliciting input from neighborhood representatives and modified the design of the project to address neighborhood concerns.

Discussion

Expansion of institutional uses into adjacent neighborhoods can often lead to an atmosphere of conflict and stalemate. Research advances, changing technology, and expanding programs require campus growth and expansion; however, this growth can be incompatible with neighborhood uses and/or insensitive to the existing urban fabric. As a result, neighborhood protests can be vocal and delays in construction can be costly.

Because this process can repeat itself with every new development proposal, solutions must be established that ultimately provide a framework for future growth and development along the campus/neighborhood interface. This framework must identify the future limits of campus expansion and establish “rules” on how new buildings will be designed to address existing structures and protect neighborhood vitality.

Recommendation

Protect neighborhood vitality by establishing a design framework for future campus growth and development.

Programs

- **Develop design guidelines for buildings on the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus as it moves from west to east: From institutional uses, to academic and administrative uses, to residential uses.**

The eastward expansion of the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus and adjacent medical-related properties should be mediated through the use of design standards and guidelines. These standards and guidelines should take the form of a “transect,” and regulate the campus as it moves from west to east – from institutional uses, to academic and administrative uses, to residential uses. In particular, the medical center “transect” should match existing development with new development in terms of similar scale, function, and design vocabulary. Thirty-Eighth Avenue should be identified as the eastern limit of campus expansion, and UNMC/The Nebraska Medical center will be held to a higher standards if campus expansion occurs to the east of this line.

Timeframe: High Priority

UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center Corridor Design Guidelines

Overview

Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street are lined with a variety of uses. These uses were developed at various times, and contain a hodgepodge of architectural styles and site configurations. Some buildings are pedestrian oriented and front onto the street, while others are auto-oriented and set back behind surface parking lots. This varied development pattern, with its assorted architectural styles, is less than optimal and does not maximize the valuable frontage along these two corridors.

Discussion

Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street were developed during the turn of the century, when streetcars provided access to neighborhoods and pedestrian oriented, mixed-use businesses lined major streets. These businesses were neighborhood anchors, and contributed greatly to neighborhood vitality. As these streets transitioned from neighborhood-oriented into dominant vehicular routes into downtown Omaha, commuter oriented uses emerged and the complexion of each corridor began to change.

Eventually, these corridors transitioned from neighborhood serving pedestrian-oriented environments to the hodgepodge of uses they are today. Commercial, clinical, and residential uses predominate, and several existing uses are transitional in nature and detract from adjacent neighborhoods and the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center. To complicate the situation, each of the uses was developed with a different site configuration, so that pedestrian-oriented uses are often sited next to auto-oriented uses. As redevelopment opportunities present themselves and the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus looks to expand to the north and south, a consistent development pattern should be established that will contribute to neighborhood vitality and maximize the potential of Midtown's primary corridors.

Recommendation

Establish design guidelines along Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street in order to establish an urban design framework for future growth and development at the perimeter of the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus and maximize the potential of these important corridors.

Programs

- **Develop Design Guidelines for future UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center buildings adjacent to Dodge Street.**

Design guidelines for future UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center buildings adjacent to Dodge Street should be established, taking into account the possibility of the phased widening of Dodge Street in the future and/or turning it into a beautifully landscaped, urban boulevard. As such, the guidelines should consider continuous easements or setbacks to accommodate the future

landscaping and street widening and “build-to” lines to establish a uniform street wall in this new location.

In addition to medical center related redevelopment, the guidelines should encourage mixed-use, neighborhood serving redevelopment opportunities. Geared towards new development, the guidelines should include requirements for architectural design and detailing, reduced distances between adjacent buildings, rear-yard parking, streetscape amenities, and recommended uses. The guidelines should be designed to enhance the character of Dodge Street, encourage redevelopment activity along the corridor, and be developed in conjunction with the Dodge Street Urban Boulevard program mentioned elsewhere in this document. The guidelines should occur between 38th Street and Saddle Creek Road.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Develop Design Guidelines for future UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center buildings adjacent to Leavenworth Street.**

Design guidelines for future medical center buildings adjacent to Leavenworth Street should be established. In addition to medical center related redevelopment, these guidelines should encourage mixed-use, neighborhood serving redevelopment opportunities. Geared towards new development, the guidelines should include requirements for architectural design and detailing, building and parking lot placement, streetscape amenities, and recommended uses.

Specifically, the guidelines should consider on- and off-street parking in appropriate locations; a uniform 10' public easement located between the curb and front facade to accommodate widened sidewalks, outdoor seating areas, and outdoor merchandise displays; and "build-to" lines to establish a uniform street wall. The guidelines should be designed to enhance the character of Leavenworth Street, encourage redevelopment activity along the corridor, and be developed in conjunction with the Leavenworth corridor roadway improvements mentioned elsewhere in this document. The guidelines should occur between 38th Street and Saddle Creek Road.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

40th Street Mixed Use Interface

Overview

40th Street between Farnam Street and Leavenworth Street is utilitarian in nature. Its primary function is to provide access UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center related facilities. The street is lined with surface parking lots, and the pedestrian is an afterthought.

Discussion

40th Street cuts through the eastern half of the UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus. Educational buildings and student housing are located on the west side of the street and the Student Life Center is located on the east side of the street. Large surface parking lots flank both sides of 40th Street as it runs between Farnam and Leavenworth.

Immediately to the east of the medical center is the Blackstone Neighborhood. This neighborhood is relatively dense by Omaha standards. It contains many historic courtyard apartments and several more recent “slip-ins.” The neighborhood is also known for its large, historic homes built by many of Omaha’s early wealthy families. Many of these homes were converted to apartments, but have since been restored to single-family ownership.

The neighborhoods within the Destination Midtown Study Area were developed during in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Many of these prewar neighborhoods were located within walking distance of neighborhood business districts, and were known for their pedestrian orientation and mix of uses. Because of changing consumer patterns and preferences, few neighborhoods within the Study Area are currently served by neighborhood oriented business districts.

Recommendation

Redesign 40th Street to serve as an interface between UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center and adjacent neighborhoods.

Program

- **Redesign and develop 40th Street as a mixed-use interface between UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center and the Blackstone neighborhood to the east.**

40th Street between Farnam Street and Emile Street should be redesigned and developed as a mixed-use interface between the medical center and the neighborhoods to the east. The street should be designed to accommodate two lanes of traffic, parking lanes on each side of the street, and streetscape amenities. The pedestrian-friendly mixed-use district that will develop along 40th Street will have a distinct emphasis on the medical center to the west and the Blackstone neighborhood to the east.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center Gateway Features

Overview

The medical center is known throughout Nebraska and around the country for its innovative research programs and quality medical care. It is not known, however, for its campus setting, stimulating urban environment, or unique open space amenities. With the exception of a limited number of landscaped corridors and courtyards, the medical center campus does not announce its presence to passersby and lacks any significant “gateways” or design features.

Discussion

The medical center is located in a relatively dense, mixed-use neighborhood. The campus is situated between a historic residential neighborhood, the Dodge and Leavenworth commercial corridors, and an industrial corridor that was developed along an interurban rail corridor. Because of this constrained physical context, the campus has developed in a pragmatic and incremental fashion. Growth and development has been relatively conservative, and design elements have been limited to small-scale landscape improvements and uniform design palates.

Within recent years, UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center has purchased and razed several marginal commercial buildings along the south side of Dodge Street. These have been replaced with lawn and a limited amount of landscaping. With the exception of these recent efforts and the existing wayfinding signage at the 42nd and Dodge Street intersection, UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center does not have a true presence along any of its peripheral roadways, nor does it contain a singular identifying design element. Instead, it contains a variety of “images,” including the Lied Transplant Center tower, the Durham Outpatient Center entrance, and recently, the Durham Research Center tower. These “images” portray a variety of campus features, but none of them has established itself as the “post card” view of campus.

Recommendation

Establish the medical center’s presence along peripheral roadways with special “gateway” design features.

Programs

- **Develop “gateways” into UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center Campus from Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street.**

UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center should develop “signature” design elements in order to announce its presence to travelers along Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street. These design elements should draw attention to the medical center and act as gateways into the campus. They should utilize built and natural design features such as trees, shrubs, and seasonal color, and be constructed on the south side of Dodge Street between 42nd Street and Saddle Creek Road and the north side of Leavenworth Street near 42nd Street.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Develop a “gateway” into UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center Campus from Saddle Creek Road.**

A “signature” design feature should be developed at the western gateway to the medical center, along Saddle Creek Road. This design feature could be developed on land gained if Saddle Creek Road were to be relocated to the west, and provide a continuous expanse of green space and/or incorporate a water feature as a major design element. The feature should be designed as a focal point for UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center campus and provide easy access for neighborhood residents and businesses. This open space amenity would not only provide a “postcard” image for the medical center, it would also provide a framework for new medical center growth and expansion. In addition, it could provide much needed open space for midtown neighborhoods and encourage redevelopment of adjacent properties.

Timeframe: Low Priority

UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center Shared Parking

Overview

The medical center has a large inventory of parking stalls located in surface parking lots and parking structures. These stalls are well utilized during the day by patients, faculty, staff, and students. However, many stalls sit empty or underutilized during the evening hours.

Discussion

UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center has a large inventory of parking stalls located strategically throughout campus. These stalls are located in surface parking lots and parking garages, and are utilized by patients, visitors, faculty, staff, and students. Because parking demand peaks during the day, prime parking spaces can be difficult to find. However, several parking lots and garages clear significantly during the evening, and many sit underutilized until they fill back up in the morning.

As the Farnam/Harney corridor redevelops into a dense, mixed-use corridor, parking will be an issue. Although the district will be pedestrian oriented, many residents, employees, and visitors will arrive by private automobile. In order to achieve the density required for this type of environment, cost-effective parking will need to be provided “on-street” and in parking structures.

Recommendation

Utilize existing parking solutions, where possible, to meet anticipated parking demand.

Program

- **Develop a program to use existing and future UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center parking facilities to support mixed-use activities along Farnam and Harney Streets.**

A district-wide parking plan should be developed for the Farnam and Harney corridor. This plan should support mixed-use development and incorporate both on-street and off-street solutions. Existing and future medical center parking facilities should be utilized to the extent possible. The medical center should undertake an inventory of existing stalls and identify those that would be suitable for a shared parking arrangement. This arrangement would give priority to UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center users during the day, but allow off-peak parking for adjacent residents, employees, and visitors. This would help satisfy district-wide parking needs, and facilitate development of new residential, retail, and restaurant uses.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Turner Park Area Master Plan

Overview

Turner Park, one of the most visible open spaces within the Destination Midtown Study Area, is located at the confluence of major thoroughfares, two neighborhoods, and the Mutual of Omaha corporate campus. Although such a strategic location should be ripe with opportunity, the immediate area has not experienced significant redevelopment. Instead, the area contains vacant buildings, marginal commercial uses, and surface parking lots. As such, it represents a critical opportunity for redevelopment efforts in Midtown Omaha.

Discussion

Turner Park, which was developed as an important component of Omaha's historic parks and boulevard system, and the adjacent area represent a prime opportunity for redevelopment within Midtown. Strategically located along the Dodge Street and Farnam/Harney corridors, the area is situated between the Gifford Park and Leavenworth neighborhoods and adjacent to the offices of National Indemnity and the Mutual of Omaha corporate campus. Centered on the most visible open space within Midtown, this area should be alive with activity. Instead, it appears past its prime and is characterized by marginal commercial uses, vacant and/or mothballed buildings, neglected residential units, and expansive surface parking lots.

With Mutual of Omaha examining its future requirements for land holdings and facilities, and in recognition of the need to maximize this strategic location, a redevelopment master plan for the area should be developed and implemented. This plan should establish a vision for the area, examine redevelopment opportunities, and determine the appropriate uses, intensities, and character for the area. This plan should be established in conjunction with the conversion of Farnam Street and Harney Street to two-way traffic, the realignment of the Dodge – Douglas "S" curve, the conversion of Turner Boulevard to a two-way traffic, and the Park Avenue terminus, all of which are mentioned in the transportation section of this document.

Recommendation

Maximize the potential of the Turner Park area by developing a Master Plan for future redevelopment activity.

Program

- **Develop a Master Plan for the area around Turner Park.**

A master plan for the area around Turner Park should be developed. This plan should establish a framework for future redevelopment efforts in the area, and be centered on Turner Park. The plan should include the eastern portion of the Mutual of Omaha campus, properties along Dodge Street immediately north of Turner Park, properties immediately east of Turner Park, and the interface with the Gifford Park and Leavenworth neighborhoods. The plan should consider the Turner Boulevard Master Plan that was developed through the Leavenworth Neighborhood Association and the sculpture that will be placed in the park by the

Public Art Commission. Key components of the Master Plan should include the following:

- Develop an inventory of current land holdings and parking needs within the area.
- Incorporate the Mutual of Omaha and National Indemnity Strategic Plans for the future need for and use of such holdings and facilities.
- Develop a conceptual Master Plan for the area immediately surrounding Turner Park (several blocks in all four directions), including Mutual of Omaha's future Redevelopment Program for the area immediately west of Turner Park.

Timeframe: High Priority

Farnam/Harney Master Plan

Overview

The Farnam/Harney corridor between Mutual of Omaha and UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center is the geographic “heart” of the Destination Midtown Study Area. The corridor is situated between significant employment centers and located at the epicenter of Midtown’s dense, urban neighborhoods. Unfortunately, redevelopment along the corridor to date has been random and has not maximized the potential of the corridor.

Discussion

The Farnam/Harney corridor was traditionally the center of the Destination Midtown Study Area. The corridor contained a variety of dense residential options, including mid-rise apartment buildings, courtyard apartments, and higher density multiplexes and detached single-family homes. In addition, it contained pedestrian-oriented commercial uses and significant centers of employment, all of which combined to give the area vitality and excitement. Over time, many of the uses along the corridor have transitioned and/or were redeveloped, and much of the corridor’s contextual, pedestrian-oriented nature has been lost. Nevertheless, the corridor is currently home to some of Omaha’s leading corporate citizens, including Mutual of Omaha, UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center, Kiewit Construction Company, Berkshire Hathaway, Security National Bank, and National Indemnity.

Because there is no common vision or plan for the corridor, redevelopment activity has been random and has not reinforced the “urban” character of the original development pattern. As a result, the corridor has lost some of its vitality and its potential has not been maximized. In order to reverse this, a Master Plan for the Farnam/Harney corridor should be developed, with the goal of reestablishing the corridor as a dominant mixed-use regional center for Midtown. This plan should be established in conjunction with the conversion of Farnam Street and Harney Street to two-way traffic, as mentioned in the transportation section of this document.

Recommendation

Maximize the potential of the Farnam/Harney corridor by developing a Master Plan for future redevelopment activity.

Program

- **Develop a Master Plan for Farnam Street and Harney Street between 35th Street and 40th Street.**

A Master Plan for the redevelopment of the Farnam/Harney corridor should be developed. This plan would reestablish the corridor as a dominant mixed-use regional draw, with a strong pedestrian orientation and emphasis on local street-level shops, restaurants, and other retail and commercial uses. The upper levels of existing and future structures would be used for residential uses and offices, and a district-wide parking plan would accommodate the full range of parking needs. This plan would include the return of Farnam and Harney Streets to two-

way traffic with on-street parking on both sides, and examine the feasibility of a Farnam/Harney streetcar line and on-street bike lanes.

Timeframe: High Priority

Midtown Urban Grocery Store

Overview

The Destination Midtown Study Area is underserved by retail uses. Approximately 28,000 residents live within the Study Area and 40,000 people work within the Study Area. However, for the vast majority of daily needs, these residents and employees must drive to the Saddle Creek Road corridor or beyond to fulfill their shopping needs.

Discussion

The Destination Midtown Study Area is approximately 4 square miles in size. Within this area, there are approximately 28,000 residents and 40,000 daytime employees, but little in the way of commercial uses. Residents and employees of the area must drive to the Saddle Creek Road corridor, the Lake Manawa Power Center, Bellevue, or West Omaha for many of their shopping needs. This is especially true for grocery stores and other large format retailers.

The Study Area contains one grocery store, located along Park Avenue between Leavenworth Street and St. Mary's Avenue. Other nearby grocery stores are located along the west side of Saddle Creek Road, at Cuming Street, Leavenworth Street, and Center Street. All of these grocery stores are located on the periphery of the Study Area, away from the true "core" of Midtown.

A "niche" urban grocery store may be well suited for the core of the Destination Midtown Study Area. This grocery store could serve residents of the Study Area and adjacent neighborhoods, and take advantage of the traffic created by the establishment of the Farnam/Harney pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district.

Recommendation

Study the feasibility of developing an urban grocery store in the "core" of Midtown.

Program

- **Do a feasibility study for the viability of developing an urban grocery store along the Farnam/Harney Corridor, between 35th and 40th Streets.**

A feasibility study should be conducted to determine the viability of developing an urban grocery store in the core of the Destination Midtown Study Area. This grocery store should be located between Farnam Street and Harney Street, between the Mutual of Omaha campus and UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center. In this location, the store would be sited to serve residents and employees of Midtown and others traveling through the area. This "urban" location would likely require contextual architectural design and a unique parking solution, such as structured parking. In addition, pedestrian-oriented design will be critical as this facility could develop as a major anchor along the Farnam/Harney mixed-use corridor.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Creighton University Campus Design Guidelines

Overview

Residential neighborhoods, the Creighton University Medical Center, Creighton University, and Boys Town National Research Hospital converge in the area bordered by Cuming Street, Dodge Street, 30th Street, and 33rd street. Over time, institutional expansion and commercial uses have expanded into the eastern edge of the Gifford Park neighborhood. Recently, the Omaha City Council approved Creighton University's new Master Plan, and the university has announced plans to implement a portion of it, including new clinical facilities and a surface parking lot on the west side of 30th Street. Creighton has worked closely with the Gifford Park neighborhood on the plan, but residents are still concerned about neighborhood viability and the impact of institutional expansion into the neighborhood. Currently, neighborhood groups are asking for input into the expansion plans of Boys Town National Research Hospital, which is located adjacent to the Creighton University Medical Center.

Discussion

Expansion of institutional uses into adjacent neighborhoods can often lead to differences between residents and institutions. Research advances, changing technology, and expanding programs require that institutions grow and expand. This growth should not be incompatible with neighborhood uses and/or insensitive to the needs of the existing neighborhood. This requires meaningful dialogue and discussion between the affected parties, and mutually agreeable solutions.

This process is not unique to the interface between Creighton and the Gifford Park neighborhood, and solutions must be established that ultimately provide a framework for future growth and development along the institutional/neighborhood interface. This framework must identify the future limits of expansion and establish "rules" on how new buildings will be designed to address existing structures and protect neighborhood vitality.

Recommendation

Protect neighborhood and institutional vitality by establishing a design framework for future growth and development.

Programs

- **Utilize Design Guidelines for the interface between the Gifford Park Neighborhood and the Creighton University Medical Center/Boys Town National Research Hospital.**

The westward expansion of institutional uses should be mediated through the use of design standards and guidelines, such as those established in the Creighton Master Plan. These standards and guidelines should take the form of a "transect," and regulate these uses as they move from east to west – from academic and administrative uses, to institutional uses, to residential uses. In

particular, the institutional “transect” should match existing development with new development in terms of similar scale, function, and design vocabulary, and a western limit for institutional expansion should be identified. Creighton University should be held to a higher standard if campus expansion occurs to the west of this line. In addition, the dialogue between the neighborhoods, business groups, and institutional uses as it relates to expansion plans should continue. The Omaha Public Schools should be encouraged to participate in this dialogue, as the TAC Center is a major feature in this interface area.

Timeframe: High Priority

Park East Master Plan

Overview

The Park East Neighborhood is located between 24th Street and I-480, on the eastern edge of the Destination Midtown Study Area. This area contains a variety of uses and acts as an interface between the central business district and midtown neighborhoods. Because of the area's transitional nature and variety of uses, the area lacks a true identity and redevelopment efforts are wanting.

Discussion

The Park East Neighborhood is located in the transitional area between Omaha's central business district and midtown's neighborhoods. The area contains a variety of uses, including single-family and multi-family residential, office, commercial, institutional, and light industrial. While many of these uses provide stability for the area, several are less than optimal and contribute to the area's negative perception.

Compared to redevelopment efforts on the northern and southern periphery of the CBD, redevelopment has lagged in the Park East area. Substantial buildings await reinvestment, and vacant lots are positioned for redevelopment. Metro Area Transit has recently announced plans for a bus transfer center at the northeast corner of 24th Street and Farnam Street, and the Richard Young Hospital campus is available for redevelopment. These prospects offer significant opportunity for the area, and could buttress the critical link between downtown Omaha and the core of the Midtown Study Area.

In order to maximize these, and other opportunities within the Park East area, redevelopment efforts must be coordinated. Without coordination, these efforts will be piecemeal and lead to various results. As such, a vision for the area should be established and a plan to guide future growth and redevelopment implemented.

Recommendation

Develop and implement a Master Plan to guide redevelopment within the Park East area.

Program

- **Develop a Master Plan for the Park East neighborhood, between 24th Street and I-480.**

A master plan to guide future growth and redevelopment within the Park East area should be developed. This plan should be developed based on the needs of existing residents and property owners, and establish a vision for the area. The plan should establish a framework to coordinate redevelopment efforts and strengthen the area as a link between downtown and Midtown. As with any area plan, it should examine market conditions, future uses for the area, parks and open space, urban design, and mobility.

Timeframe: High Priority

Parks & Open Space Programs

Overview

The Destination Midtown Study Area was developed during the height of this nation's parks and boulevard movement. The area contains wonderful parks, many of which are linked together by Turner Boulevard. These parks are focal points for their respective neighborhoods, but enhancements could be made that would provide greater amenity value to neighborhood residents.

Discussion

The Destination Midtown Study Area contains a variety of public parks and neighborhood open spaces. Notable among these are Hanscom Park, Leavenworth Park, Dewey Park, Turner Park, and Gifford Park. Green corridors that run through the Study Area include Turner Boulevard and the Field Club Trail. The Field Club golf course, although privately held, is also an amenity for adjacent neighborhoods.

The area's parks and open spaces, because of their various attributes and visibility, contribute greatly to the quality of the area. The SWOT Analysis identified the parks and boulevard system as one of the area's major strengths, and mature trees and habitat were singled out as special amenities. Usable open spaces, whether they are active or passive, are one of the identifying features of this area.

Because of their significance, the continued enhancement of parks and open spaces should be one of the major priorities for the Study Area. Existing recreation and maintenance programs should be continued and new programs should be implemented. Neighborhood stability and enhancement depends upon the continued vitality of the area's parks and open space system.

Recommendation

Develop additional programs to enhance the Midtown Study Area's parks and open space system and to improve the quality of life for area residents.

Programs

- **Establish a Neighborhood Park Recreation Program.**

Parks within the area could benefit from more maintenance than the City is currently able to provide, and more active recreation programs for children and adults during the summer. To supplement the current Sun Dawg Program, which provides Omaha youth with 8 weeks of summertime recreational activities at various sites around Omaha, the City should explore the possibility of utilizing institutional funding for a Midtown summer recreation program in neighborhood parks. College-level or graduate students with appropriate qualifications could be hired for three months to be the superintendents of individual parks. These personnel would have the ability to hire other part-time summer interns to assist in maintenance, to organize and coach sports, to administer tennis courts and

give tennis lessons, and so on. Having an active administrative and maintenance presence in these parks during daylight hours all summer, could be a major neighborhood improvement, and would be relatively inexpensive to provide in comparison to the potential benefits.

Administrative oversight for this program should come from the Midtown Development Corporation in association with the City's Parks & Recreation Department. Funding should be solicited from a range of corporate and philanthropic sources, with a goal of creating a long-term recurring program.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Establish an “adopt-a-park” program within the Study Area.**

Park maintenance funds are currently stretched to the limit. In order to address park maintenance and upkeep needs, the City should establish an “adopt-a-park” program that would utilize Keep Omaha Beautiful, Inc. and/or corporate funding for park and open space enhancements. In addition, local businesses and neighborhood associations could sponsor volunteer workdays to assist City personnel in planting and maintaining the parks.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Establish citywide festivals to be held in parks within the Study Area.**

Midtown neighborhoods could be promoted by establishing festivals and other activities within the area. These activities would have citywide appeal, and could be held in area parks. Local businesses, institutions, and neighborhood organizations could provide funding for these activities, whose coordination and oversight should be undertaken by the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance and the Midtown Development Corporation.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Re-establish the City Arborist position.**

A city's tree canopy is one of its most important assets. Trees provide protection from weather extremes, reduce temperatures during summer heating, and add value to adjacent properties. Maintenance of this amenity is a time consuming task, but one that is critical to improving a community's quality of life. As a result, the City should provide funding for a City Arborist to help maintain and enhance the tree canopy within the area. Once this position is funded, the Arborist should initiate a street-tree planting program along residential streets within the Study Area.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Develop functionally aesthetic green space adjacent to the I-480/North Freeway interchange.**

The I-480/North Freeway interchange will be reconstructed over the course of the next several years. As reconstruction commences, the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association and the City of Omaha should work with the NDOR to establish a landscape plan for excess right-of-way. This right-of-way could provide functional and aesthetically pleasing green space for the Gifford Park neighborhood.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Enhance urban wildlife habitat within the Study Area.**

A variety of wildlife species live in Midtown Omaha. Birds, rabbits, opossums, raccoons, and fox have all been viewed within the area. In order to enhance the opportunity for urban wildlife and reduce park maintenance costs, the City should allow certain areas within city parks to naturalize and to serve as enhanced habitat.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Expand community gardens and landscaping within the Study Area.**

A variety of plant life exists within the yards, parks, and open spaces within the Study Area. Because of this, and due to the premium neighborhood residents place on landscaping, additional funding should be provided for community gardens and landscaping. For example, City Sprouts, Inc., a non-profit corporation that serves inner-Omaha neighborhoods, grows well-tended and beautiful gardens, brings people together to improve their environment, and increases the economic hopefulness of inner-city neighborhoods. It is comprised of community members, students, neighbors, and gardeners who work together to turn neglected inner-city vacant lots into beautiful, safe, and productive gardens. City Sprouts volunteers gather to grow vegetables, herbs, and flowers using sustainable organic gardening methods, and sell the produce at the North Omaha Farmers Market or give it to volunteers and neighbors.

Expansion of programs similar to City Sprouts could turn Midtown into a “garden district” by encouraging home landscaping, promoting business landscaping, and establishing community gardens and farmer markets on vacant lots within the area.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

33rd Street Streetscape

Overview

33rd Street is one of the primary north-south streets located within the Destination Midtown Study Area. The street provides a connection between the Mutual of Omaha campus and Dodge Street corridor and the neighborhood business district located at the intersection of 33rd Street and California Street. Few, if any, streetscape amenities exist along this segment of 33rd Street to encourage pedestrian activity between the Mutual of Omaha campus and Gifford Park Neighborhood and business district.

Discussion

33rd Street runs through the middle of the Gifford Park Neighborhood and is one of the primary north-south streets within the Destination Midtown Study Area. The street connects neighborhoods to the north and south with the Dodge Street corridor, and carries both local and regional traffic. With significant nodes along its length, including Bemis Park, Gifford Park, the 33rd and California neighborhood business district, the Mutual of Omaha campus, and Dewey Park, 33rd Street functions as a major link within the Destination Midtown Study Area.

Although 33rd Street is an important north-south street within the Study Area and it links a variety of neighborhood amenities, its character is no different than any of the many other streets within the Study Area. The street has narrow parkways, standard sidewalks, and limited landscaping, and is currently fronted by several marginal uses and/or structures. The utilitarian nature of the street does little to encourage connectivity and interaction between residents and the neighborhood amenities that line the street.

Recommendation

Develop 33rd Street as a strategic link between northern and southern portions of the Study Area.

Program

- **Redevelop 33rd Street as a strategic link between the southern and northern portions of the Study Area. In particular, strengthen the character of the street between the Mutual of Omaha campus and the intersection of 33rd Street and California Street.**

33rd Street presents a viable opportunity to play an enhanced role in the future redevelopment of the Gifford Park Neighborhood. Between Dewey Avenue and Cuming Street, 33rd Street can be enhanced with new development at Dodge Street, revitalized or replaced residences, a renovated and revitalized Gifford Park, and an effective neighborhood-serving commercial district at California Street.

In order to accomplish this, a corridor plan should be developed for 33rd Street between Dewey Avenue and Cuming Street, with special emphasis on the

segment between California Street and Dodge Street. This plan should be developed with representatives of the Gifford Park Neighborhood, Leavenworth Neighborhood, and Mutual of Omaha, and include enhanced streetscaping along both sides of the street. The streetscape should be designed to function as a strategic link for both pedestrians and vehicles, and connect the neighborhood business district with the Mutual of Omaha campus. Special attention should also be given to the northern terminus of the corridor adjacent to the Omaha Public Schools TAC building. OPPD should be consulted for a list of appropriate trees when planting will occur under power lines, and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum is a valuable resource for trees, shrubs, and perennials that are native to eastern Nebraska.

Timeframe: High Priority

40th Street Landscaping

Overview

40th Street is one of the primary north-south streets located within the Destination Midtown Study Area. The street provides a connection between the Dodge Street corridor and the neighborhood business district located at the intersection of 40th Street and Cuming Street. There are few, if any, streetscape amenities along this segment of 40th Street.

Discussion

40th Street runs through the middle of the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood and is one of the primary north-south streets within the Destination Midtown Study Area. The street connects neighborhoods to the north with the Dodge Street corridor, and carries both local and regional traffic. With significant nodes along its length, including Joslyn Castle, St. Cecilia's Cathedral, and the Cuming Street neighborhood business district, 40th Street has a ceremonial feel and functions as a "community" street.

Although 40th Street functions as a "community" street, its character is no different than any of the many other streets within the Study Area. It was developed as a typical urban street, with narrow parkways, standard sidewalks, and limited landscaping. Its existing utilitarian character does not signify its "community" role and does little to enhance the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood.

Recommendation

Enhance the appearance of 40th Street to signify its role as a "community" street.

Programs

- **Landscape 40th Street between Dodge Street and Cuming Street.**

Develop a landscaping plan for 40th Street between Dodge Street and Cuming Street. This plan should be developed with representatives of the Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association and St. Cecilia Cathedral. The plan should include enhanced landscaping along both sides of the street and be coordinated with the reconfiguration of the 40th and Davenport Street intersection program, mentioned elsewhere in this document. OPPD should be consulted for a list of appropriate trees when planting will occur under power lines, and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum is a valuable resource for trees, shrubs, and perennials that are native to eastern Nebraska.

Timeframe: High Priority

- **Develop a plaza in front of St. Cecilia Cathedral.**

St. Cecilia Cathedral is currently in the process of raising funds for the construction of a plaza along 40th Street. This plaza will act as a forecourt for the cathedral, and will extend from the cathedral's façade to a reconstructed parking lot on the west side of 40th Street. This plaza will connect the cathedral

with the adjacent neighborhood, and provide a space for public gathering and events.

Timeframe: High Priority

Dewey Avenue Landscaping

Overview

Dewey Avenue connects UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center campus with Dewey Park. The avenue is utilized by many pedestrians, and provides access from adjacent neighborhoods to the medical center campus. There are few, if any, streetscape amenities along this segment of Dewey Avenue.

Discussion

Dewey Avenue connects UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center campus on the west with Dewey Park on the east. The avenue cuts through one of Midtown's densest urban neighborhoods, and is used by many pedestrians. Many of these pedestrians live in the Blackstone and Leavenworth Neighborhoods and work or attend school at UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center.

Although Dewey Avenue provides a natural link between the UNMC/the Nebraska Medical center campus and Dewey Park, it is currently no more than a typical urban street section. It has standard four-foot sidewalks on each side of the street and sporadic street trees and OPPD power poles located in the parkway. The current design does little to enhance the pedestrian experience or encourage interaction between the park, neighborhoods, and medical center campus.

Recommendation

Enhance the character of Dewey Avenue to encourage connectivity between the medical center and Turner Park.

Program

- **Develop a heavy landscaping plan for Dewey Avenue.**

Develop a heavy landscaping plan for Dewey Avenue, linking Dewey Park at the east to the UNMC/the Nebraska Medical Center campus at the west. The Blackstone and Leavenworth Neighborhoods should participate in the development of this plan, which will require the burial of the OPPD power lines that are currently located along the parkway on the south side of the street. This will enable enhanced landscaping along both sides of the street and create a green pedestrian link between Turner Boulevard and 42nd Street. Steps should be installed at the southeast corner of 33rd and Dewey Avenue in order to address the change in elevation between the street and the park and facilitate direct pedestrian access. OPPD should be consulted for a list of appropriate trees when planting will occur under power lines, and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum is a valuable resource for trees, shrubs, and perennials that are native to eastern Nebraska.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

California Street Landscaping

Overview

With the exception of major arterial streets, California Street is the only local street within the Study Area to run unobstructed between 30th Street and Saddle Creek Road. The street connects Creighton University and Creighton University Medical Center with neighborhoods to the west, and is used by many commuters as an alternative to the area's arterial roadways. The street functions as a "community" street," but has few, if any, streetscape amenities along its length.

Discussion

California Street runs through the middle of the Gifford Park and Joslyn Castle Neighborhoods and is a significant east-west local street within the Destination Midtown Study Area. The street connects Creighton University and Creighton University Medical Center with neighborhoods to the west, and carries both local and regional traffic. With significant nodes along its length, including Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart and the 33rd and California neighborhood business district, California Street functions more as a "community" street than as a local street.

Although California Street functions as a "community" street, its character is no different than any of the many other local streets within the Study Area. It was developed as a typical urban street, with narrow parkways, standard sidewalks, and limited landscaping. Its existing utilitarian character does not signify its "community" role and does little to enhance either the Gifford Park or Joslyn Castle Neighborhoods.

Recommendation

Enhance the appearance of California Street to signify its role as a "community" street.

Program

- **Landscape both sides of California Street to create a "green" link between 30th Street and Saddle Creek Road.**

Develop a landscaping plan for California Street between 30th Street and Saddle Creek Road. This plan should be developed with representatives of the Gifford Park and Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Associations. The plan should include enhanced landscaping along both sides of the street and be designed to function as a "green" link for both pedestrians and vehicles. OPPD should be consulted for a list of appropriate trees when planting will occur under power lines, and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum is a valuable resource for trees, shrubs, and perennials that are native to eastern Nebraska.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Davenport Street Landscaping

Overview

Between 30th Street and 38th Street, Davenport Street is a local street lined by single-family homes and apartments. The street connects Creighton University and Creighton University Medical Center with Gifford Park and the Joslyn Castle. Currently, the street has few, if any streetscape amenities and does not stand out from any of the many other local streets within the area.

Discussion

Davenport Street runs through the middle of the Gifford Park Neighborhood and is indistinguishable from any of the many other local streets within the Study Area. The street connects Creighton University and Creighton University Medical Center with Gifford Park and the Joslyn Castle, and carries primarily local traffic. The street is lined with single-family homes and apartments and functions as a local street. Designed as a local street, Davenport Street has narrow parkways, standard sidewalks, and limited landscaping. Its existing utilitarian character offers little in the way of connectivity, and does little to enhance the Gifford Park Neighborhood.

Recommendation

Develop Davenport as a “green” link between 30th Street and 38th Street.

Program

- **Landscape both sides of Davenport Street to create a “green” link between 30th Street and 38th Street.**

Develop a landscaping plan for Davenport Street between 30th Street and 38th Street. This plan should be developed with representatives of the Gifford Park Neighborhood and should include enhanced landscaping along both sides of the street. The streetscape should be designed to function as a “green” link for both pedestrians and vehicles, and connect the neighborhood to major entities to the east and west. OPPD should be consulted for a list of appropriate trees when planting will occur under power lines, and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum is a valuable resource for trees, shrubs, and perennials that are native to eastern Nebraska.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

- **Turn the grounds of the Joslyn Castle into a showcase for Omaha.**

The grounds of the Joslyn Castle contain vestiges of the historic landscape that existed during the early part of the 20th century. Although a master-landscaping plan exists for the grounds, funding is limited to maintenance and upkeep. Special funding sources or assistance should be sought from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, JCI, Friends of the Castle, and MNA in order to return the

gardens to their original grandeur and turn them into a “destination” for all of Omaha.

Timeframe: Low Priority

Implementation Matrix

(Insert Implementation Matrix Here)

“Appendix” Divider Page

Appendix

SWOT Documentation

(Insert)

City of Omaha

Zoning Districts

Base District: Agriculture

AG Agriculture District - The AG agricultural district is intended to encourage and continue agricultural and rural uses in outlying parts of the city's zoning jurisdiction. The AG district is designed to prohibit premature and "leapfrog" development into rural areas not fully served by public facilities and to ensure that such development occurs adjacent to previously urbanized or urbanizing areas.

Base District: Residential

DR Development Reserve District - The DR development reserve district is intended to provide a transitional zone for the orderly conversion of land from agricultural and rural to urban uses. The DR district coincides generally with undeveloped land on the fringe of the urbanized area that has access to public facilities. However, the DR district may also apply to certain sites within central city development areas as well. It permits both agricultural and rural uses and very-low-density residential use. It assures that land is not developed prematurely or without adequate urban services.

R1 Single-Family Residential District (Large Lot) - The R1 single-family residential district is intended to provide for low-density residential neighborhoods, characterized generally by single-family dwellings on large lots with supporting community facilities. The R1 district provides for conditional approval of community facilities that generate larger quantities of traffic than residential uses. It is appropriate for established parts of the city, where it serves to preserve existing low-density environments; for newly developing, low-density neighborhoods; and for areas in which environmental considerations preclude the platting of smaller lots.

R2 Single-Family Residential district (Low Density) - The R2 single-family residential district is intended to provide for low-density residential neighborhoods, characterized generally by single-family dwellings on relatively large lots with supporting community facilities. The R2 district provides for conditional approval of community facilities that generate larger quantities of traffic than residential uses. It is appropriate for established parts of the city, where it serves to preserve existing low-density environments; for newly developing, low-density neighborhoods; and for areas in which environmental considerations preclude the platting of smaller lots.

R3 Single Family residential District (Medium Density) - The R3 single-family residential district is intended to provide for moderate-density residential neighborhoods, characterized generally by single-family dwellings on medium-sized lots with supporting community facilities. The R3 district allows for several development options for single-family residential construction. It provides for conditional approval of community facilities that generate larger quantities of traffic than permitted residential uses. The R3 district is appropriate for established parts of the city, where it serves to preserve existing single-family neighborhoods while promoting development of infill housing, and for newly developing neighborhoods.

R4 Single Family Residential District (High Density) - The R4 single-family residential district is intended to provide for medium-density residential neighborhoods, characterized generally by single-family dwellings on small lots and including supporting community facilities. The R4 district allows for several development options, adaptable to both infill construction in established neighborhoods and to developing areas. It provides for conditional approval of community facilities with greater traffic generating characteristics than the permitted residential use. The R4

district is appropriate for established neighborhoods in the city, particularly those exhibiting relatively small lots, and in newly developing areas.

R5 Urban Family Residential District - The R5 urban family residential district is intended to provide medium-density residential neighborhoods with single-family characteristics, while allowing considerable latitude in the physical design of housing. The R5 district permits single-family residential housing, duplexes and townhouses. It is adaptable to both established and developing neighborhoods, as well as to transition areas between single-family and multiple-family development. The R5 district recognizes changes in the form of single-family housing and accommodates these changes. As with other residential zones, it requires review and conditional approval of supporting community facilities with greater traffic generating characteristics than the basic allowed residential use.

R6 Low Density Multiple-Family Residential District - The R6 low-density multiple-family residential district is intended to provide locations for low-density multiple-family housing in the approximate range of 20 dwelling units per acre. It provides for the integration of such buildings with lower density housing types, including single-family, duplex and townhouse residential. The R6 district applies to established neighborhoods, including those where the limited conversion of large single-family houses is necessary to extend their economic life; areas in which a mix of single- and multiple-family housing is appropriate to create an urban neighborhood; transitional areas between lower and higher intensity uses; and developing multiple-family areas. The R6 district requires review and conditional approval of supporting community facilities that generate more traffic than the basic allowed residential use.

R7 Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential District - The R7 medium-density multiple-family residential district is intended to provide locations for medium-density multiple-family housing, in the approximate range of 40 dwelling units per acre. It provides for the integration of multiple-family housing with lower density housing types. In addition, the R7 district provides for the inclusion of limited office and commercial uses by special permit within principally residential developments, subject to specific standards governing land use intensity and compatibility. This allows for a mixture of compatible uses within appropriate neighborhoods. The R7 district applies to established neighborhoods where moderately high densities are appropriate, transitional areas between lower intensity and higher intensity uses, mixed use neighborhoods, and developing multiple-family areas.

R8 High Density Multiple-Family Residential District - The R8 high-density multiple-family residential district is intended to accommodate high-density multiple-family housing. The R8 district also provides for the inclusion of limited office and commercial uses, subject to specific standards for buffering and land use intensity. This allows for a mixture of compatible uses within appropriate high-density urban neighborhoods. The R8 district is most appropriate in centrally located areas near supporting urban services; near major institutional, employment and commercial centers; and in other areas appropriate for high-density, predominantly residential uses.

MH Mobile Home Residential District - The MH mobile home residential district is intended to provide locations for mobile homes in mobile home parks, subdivisions or planned unit developments. The MH district includes standards that ensure a good quality environment for residents of mobile homes and compatibility with surrounding conventional development.

Base District: Office

LO Limited Office District - The LO limited office district is intended to provide office locations generally serving neighborhood or community needs. The LO district may be located adjacent to or within residential areas and is designed to be compatible in scale and land use intensity with

residential settings. The district allows for the integration of limited supporting commercial uses into office developments. Combined with the MD major development overlay district, it is also appropriate for larger office developments, characterized by small buildings, low site coverage, and extensive landscaping. The LO district is most appropriate along collector and arterial streets, in areas of transition between residential and higher intensity uses, and in areas of existing and new office development.

GO General Office District - The GO general office district is intended to provide office locations serving community and citywide needs. The GO district allows for relatively intense office development, together with selected complementary commercial uses integrated into such developments. Site development regulations are designed to ensure compatibility with adjacent or neighboring residential development. GO districts are most appropriately found along or near minor and major arterial streets, on the edge of residential areas, in areas of existing office development, and in areas appropriate for new development. The GO district, through conditional use permits, also provides for large office developments and projects that, in appropriate urban settings, exceed allowed use intensities and regulations provided.

Base District: Commercial

LC Limited Commercial District - The LC limited commercial district is intended for neighborhood shopping facilities which serve the needs of residents of a surrounding residential community. Allowed commercial and office uses are generally compatible with nearby residential areas. Site development regulations are designed to ensure compatibility in size, scale and site characteristics with a residential environment. LC districts are most appropriate at intersections of collector and/or arterial streets at the edge of or in the core of residential neighborhoods, in planned commercial areas in newly developing residential areas, and in other locations where local commercial services are required.

CC Community Commercial District - The CC community commercial district is intended for commercial facilities that serve the needs of several neighborhoods. Allowed commercial and office uses are generally compatible with nearby residential areas. However, uses allowed in the CC district may generate more traffic and have more effect on residential neighborhoods than those allowed in the less intense LC district. Site development regulations are designed to minimize these effects. CC districts usually require access from major streets, primarily minor and major arterials. CC districts are most appropriate at major street intersections, at the edge of residential areas or at the junction of several neighborhoods, and in other areas appropriate for well-developed commercial facilities. The CC district, combined with the MD major development overlay district, provides further thorough review of commercial projects that may be regional in scope. A conditional review process for large projects further assures high development standards for planned commercial facilities.

NBD Neighborhood Business District - The NBD neighborhood business district is designed for established local business districts in the city. These districts were the commercial cores of towns that the city eventually annexed or developed along or at the intersections of public transportation routes. The NBD district accommodates the physical features of these commercial areas that are different from newly developing commercial districts. Uses are permitted in the NBD district that preserve the scale and integrity of such districts. In addition, mixed uses are encouraged in such districts.

GC General Commercial District - The GC general commercial district is intended for a wide variety of commercial uses and limited industrial facilities. Uses allowed in the GC district may generate sufficient traffic or have operating characteristics that make them generally incompatible with residential areas or lower intensity commercial and office districts. GC districts require access from major streets, primarily minor and major arterials. GC districts are most appropriate

along arterials, at major intersections, and in areas appropriate for commercial uses that are relatively well insulated from residential districts.

CBD Central Business District - The CBD central business district is designed to provide appropriate development regulations for downtown Omaha. Uses are permitted in downtown Omaha that are consistent with the future development and revitalization of the city's core. Mixed uses are allowed and encouraged within the CBD district. Additional provision is made for future combining districts, which provide more specific development controls for parts of downtown with distinctive physical characteristics.

DS Downtown Service District - The DS downtown service district applies to area on the periphery of the central business district. These areas characteristically display a mixture of residential, commercial, office and light industrial uses. These uses require close proximity to downtown Omaha and occasionally have operating characteristics that are not appropriate in other commercial zoning districts. The DS district also is intended to respond to the continued growth of downtown Omaha and accommodate development that supports this growth.

CH Highway Commercial Services District - The CH highway commercial services district is intended to accommodate commercial and limited industrial facilities with access needs that demand location along major arterials and highways. Uses allowed in the CH district are frequently automobile oriented. These uses have traffic generating, operating, lighting and other characteristics that may make them incompatible with adjacent residential or other limited intensity uses. The CH district is most appropriate along or at intersections of major arterials, at highway interchanges, and in other areas of heavy automobile traffic that are well insulated from residential districts.

Base District: Industrial

LI Limited Industrial District - The LI limited industrial district is intended to accommodate service type commercial and light industrial uses with relatively limited external effects in a high-quality environment. These use types generally have lower traffic volumes than other commercial and industrial uses. The LI district provides for conditional approval of other uses with moderate but controllable effects. The LI district, combined with performance standards, is appropriately located in both suburban and central city industrial areas, particularly those near to residential and commercial districts.

GI General Industrial District - The GI general industrial district is intended to accommodate a variety of commercial and industrial uses with moderate external effects. The GI district provides for conditional approval of uses with more significant effects that can be controlled through specific requirements. The GI district, combined with performance standards, is appropriately located in both suburban and central city industrial areas. GI districts should be insulated from residential and lower intensity use districts.

HI Heavy Industrial District - The HI heavy industrial district is intended to accommodate industrial uses with major external effects. These uses characteristically have operating characteristics and environmental effects that make them incompatible with surrounding uses. The HI district is most appropriately located in areas that are separated from residential and consumer-oriented commercial districts. When this is not possible in previously developed areas, the HI district is combined with performance standards and buffering requirements to minimize the effects of permitted uses. In addition, the uses that create the greatest conflicts with existing residential areas are controlled through special permit procedures.

Base District: Special

AV Aviation District - The AV aviation district is designed to accommodate major public and private airport facilities in the city.

RR Railroad District - The RR railroad district is designated to accommodate active railroad right-of-way and directly railroad associated property, including land owned by the railroad as right-of-way, switching yards, maintenance facilities, or leased property adjacent to the right-of-way.

MU Mixed Use District - The MU mixed-use district is intended to accommodate projects that combine several compatible land uses into an integrated development. The MU district may also be used to designate parts of the city that are appropriate for a mixture of residential, commercial, office and accessory parking uses. The MU district allows for mixing residential environments with workplaces and services. Development in the MU district must accommodate transportation systems, surrounding environments and pedestrian movement. For these reasons, projects constructed in an MU district are subject to a special use permit process.

Overlay Districts

PUD Planned Unit Development District - The PUD planned unit development overlay district is intended to provide flexibility in the design of planned urban projects, to encourage comprehensive planning of major developments, to permit innovation in project design that includes incorporation of open space and other amenities, and to insure compatibility of developments with the surrounding urban environment. The PUD district may be used in combination with any base district specified in this chapter. The PUD district, which is adopted by the city council, assures specific development standards for each designated project.

NC Neighborhood Conservation District - The NC neighborhood conservation overlay district is intended to accommodate unique land use, urban design, and other distinctive characteristics of older established neighborhoods. The NC district, used in combination with a base district, allows variations in permitted uses and site development regulations that are adapted to the needs of a specific neighborhood. In addition, the NC district may include supplementary site regulations. Variations allowed by an NC overlay district are established by a neighborhood conservation plan, enacted by the city council as part of the city's comprehensive plan.

MD Major Development District - The MD major development overlay district is intended to ensure comprehensive, coordinated developments in strategic areas of the city. The MD district establishes a planning process to guide development in such areas. The MD district is intended for use in combination with office, commercial, industrial, or mixed use base districts, and allows modification of site development regulations adapted to a specific area. The district ensures that areas which demand comprehensive, planned development due to land use, scale, public utility serve and safety considerations are not built up in an unplanned fashion.

ED Environmental Resources District - The ED environmental resources overlay district enables the adoption of special performance standards in combination with site development regulations of a given base district for areas of special natural environmental significance or sensitivity. These areas include hill environments; native prairies; areas with unique soil or drainage conditions; lake, river or creek districts; forests; or other areas with unique environmental characteristics.

FP/FW Floodplain/Floodway Districts - The FP floodplain and FW floodway overlay districts are intended to protect public health, safety and general welfare, and to minimize losses of life and property in flood-prone areas. The FP and FW districts are designed to:

- (a) Restrict or prohibit uses which are dangerous to health, safety or property during times of flooding or which cause substantial increases in flood heights and velocities.
- (b) Require development standards that protect uses that are vulnerable to flood damage.
- (c) Protect prospective purchasers of land that is unsuitable for intended uses.
- (d) Assure that property owners within the community are eligible to purchase flood insurance under the National Flood Insurance Program.
- (e) Comply with the minimum standards of the State of Nebraska Flood Plain Regulation Act.

PK Parking District - The PK parking overlay district allows for the primary use of a site for off-street parking purposes in zoning districts in which this use is not allowed as a permitted, conditional or special permit use. The PK parking overlay district is designed for common parking facilities within a neighborhood or for off-street parking separated from a principal use. The PK parking overlay district further recognizes that parking may be a temporary use within neighborhoods and should not affect its basic land use designation.

Airport Zoning - This article shall be known as the airport zoning regulations. These regulations are intended to provide for the safe operation of aircraft into and out of Eppley Airfield, Millard Airport and other airports operated by the Omaha airport authority, and other private aviation airports, by providing for zones in which development is restricted.

Historic Structures/Districts

(Insert)

A Building Typology for Midtown Omaha Neighborhoods

All mature neighborhoods continue to evolve incrementally and over time. Through the years, some building uses come and go, leaving their shells in place, and some building construction simply deteriorates. In all circumstances; however, vacant or underutilized property always becomes an opportunity to introduce new building uses that enhance the quality of life and/or provides housing choices with new amenities. By constructing new buildings in an incremental manner, new life can be introduced into Omaha's traditional Midtown neighborhoods.

At a larger scale, fragments of vacant and underutilized property become exceptional opportunities for mending a traditional urban fabric strained by a predominance of automobile usage. When originally constructed in the early 1900's, Midtown neighborhood's urban framework of building, lot, block, and street configuration were designed to comfortably and conveniently accommodate a predominance of pedestrian and transit travel. The fundamental urban structure of Midtown neighborhoods is distinctly different than that of contemporary suburbs, because their differences in design has been influenced by travel mode predominance

Today, however, Midtown's traditional neighborhood heritage is its greatest redevelopment asset. Existing residents remain as long as its indigenous character is preserved, for it is most likely the reason for their housing choice in the first place. Therefore, new construction that incrementally builds on that urban heritage attracts new investment, both by developers and individual residents.

The purpose of the following illustrations is to demonstrate design and development opportunities for infill and redevelopment properties that can enhance the quality of life and property value in the residential neighborhoods of Midtown Omaha. They illustrate standards for introducing additional housing options on single-use properties. The range of types does not include vertical mixed-use options, simply because mixed-use building opportunities have building, lot and block configurations more difficult to standardize. The illustrations also graphically demonstrate how local, small-volume builders can achieve smaller development site planning and development in a cost-effective, neighborhood-friendly manner. Development sites may include individual lots with an existing city plat. Such sites may also include aggregations of typical city lots for re-platting in order to accommodate a new set of housing types for rental or ownership.

Each opportunity is illustrated by a plan view of the building typical footprint on the lot, photographs of local or regional precedents, and a brief explanation of outstanding characteristics by which it may contribute to the neighborhood's urban and market value. Of particular note is how new building alternatives, with

contemporary parking requirements, retain and enhance the predominant character of Midtown Neighborhoods.

Minimum Lot Depth

The building footprints demonstrated are meant to accommodate typical lot depths in Midtown Omaha neighborhoods. Although these depths may vary slightly depending upon available land, zoning requirements and individual building designs, rule-of-thumb guidelines for minimum lot depths are listed below. Density calculations reflect the net density of developable land, and therefore do not include consideration of any public realm amenities, i.e., streets or alleys.

Number (Plate)	Building Type	Minimum Lot Depth	Typical Net Density
1	SFD House	110 feet	7-11 du/acre
	Mansion Apartment	110 feet	7-15 du/acre
2	Twin House	110 feet	10-13 du/acre
3	Town House	110 feet	12-14 du/acre
4	Row House	84 feet	13-15 du/acre
5	Courtyard Row House	125 feet	15-18 du/acre
6	Courtyard Apartment	130 feet	20-50 du/acre
7	Corner Apartment	130	10-50 du/acre

Compatibility

As a function of incremental construction of individual infill and redevelopment sites over time, three sets of subjective criteria may be used to evaluate individual projects for compatibility with the neighborhood as a whole.

1. *Scale and size of the building* – Does the proposed building have a mass and size that is compatible with its neighbors? Does it respect setback and parking configurations of the neighborhood?
2. *Travel, traffic and parking patterns of residential streets* – Does the proposed building have adequate off-street parking for its residents? Does the proposed building enhance the pedestrian and transit modes of travel for Midtown neighborhood streets? Does the proposed building provide for adequate on-street or shared parking for new resident’s guests?

3. *Rental and ownership choices* - Does the proposed building offer additional housing choices not currently offered in order to diversity economic opportunity for local citizens?

Topography

Midtown Omaha neighborhoods have a great deal of fluctuation in their topography. The riverbank terrain, upon which a rational urban network of thoroughfares was laid, presents these neighborhoods with challenges and opportunities for new construction. Many of the sites available for infill and redevelopment are not level building sites - the kind upon which most contemporary suburban housing is built. Therefore, each development site in the Midtown neighborhoods will have its own site drainage, ventilation and view shed challenges. However, the topography also offers inspiring design opportunities for terraces and decks.

For instance, design may effectively direct storm water drainage routes and conceal parking drives and garage doors from the public street. A site with a significant slope may also offer opportunities for tuck-under and double-loaded garages, rear decks, balconies, front porches, courtyards, and even roof terraces on apartment buildings. All of these features can be found in a range of precedents throughout Midtown Omaha. Some are demonstrated among the photographs on the following pages.

Detached House and Mansion Apartment

The single-family detached house on its own lot is the most predominant Midtown Omaha housing type. It is also the housing type of greatest real estate value. A measure of assist in the preservation of those homes that have been well maintained is to infill on vacant lots with new single-family houses. A rich variety of architectural style and detailing can be found among existing neighborhood homes. Houses that address the public street with pride and dignity are worth using as design references for new construction locally.

In certain Midtown neighborhoods, a number of larger estate houses are being converted into rental or condominium apartments. The grandeur of the large house in an authentic neighborhood is an attractive lifestyle for many childless adults. It is a housing market to be embellished by introducing additional Mansion Apartment buildings nearby, where several residential units occupy the form of a large mansion house. Within the architectural character of a grand mansion, 4 to 6 apartment units can satisfy a demand for smaller floor space living, but in an attractive, up-scale neighborhood setting.

Twin House

There are a number of Twin House precedents throughout Omaha's Midtown neighborhoods. However, most were built before government supported home financing was readily available. Although most Twin Houses are rental properties, at one time, this small, attached building type probably offered the next best choice to living in an apartment or a townhouse, but not quite as fancy as having one's own single-family house. In today's home financing market, Twin House *starter home* units can be sold for condominium ownership, and managed by an association of all owners, even as few as four.

The advantages of Twin Houses are that they provide small lot and shared wall affordability, and they provide each unit with at least three sides open to air and ventilation. In urban form, Twin Home choices would fit conveniently on an aggregation of only a few typical Midtown Omaha neighborhood lots. Neighborhoods that build this house type achieve attractive *starter home* ownership choices, but also offer that choice within the character of the surrounding, predominantly single-family houses.

For Twin House infill development, the value of repetition is in an economy of production building, such that the building mass and internal features of each unit are similar. However, predominantly single-family Midtown neighborhoods contain a variety of architectural styles and detailing that could become design determinants of each twin home street façade. By varying the facades of each set of Twin Houses, yet duplicating unit floor plans, additional Twin Houses could enhance the architectural character of Midtown Omaha neighborhoods.

Town House

The Town House is distinguished from the Row House by its garage placement. For this type, parking is relegated to the rear of the building's lot. Whether attached or not, the garage structure is not integral to the construction of the principal building. Therefore, Town House lots are longer, with a breezeway or covered walkway to connect the garage with the principal building. Such an arrangement allows for some privacy in a small, but intimate rear yard. In cases where the garage cannot be built immediately, a concrete parking pad for two off-street parking spaces would await garage construction.

Demonstrated by these examples of new construction in Longmont, CO, the architectural style of Town Houses may vary greatly - from a more historical to a more contemporary interpretation of local vernacular – and even along the same street. Such rich diversity in architectural style is what makes traditional neighborhoods so interesting, and so valuable. However, what makes Town Houses function well among its single-family neighbors is a common respect for public realm spaces and places. New construction of Town Houses is most effective in occupying vacant properties of existing neighborhoods through lot aggregation and redistribution in a new plat.

Row House

The Row House is so named because of its garage placement. A shallow lot depth permits a basement level to be designed as a garage and storage for the residents above. The garage is therefore an integral part of construction. A shallow lot depth also means there is no usable rear yard for these units and therefore minimal rear yard maintenance. This attached unit housing type is quite practical in areas where higher housing densities are preferred by both the City and local residents, but where a consistency of architecture among neighborhood center and residential buildings is also preferred. Row Houses are a highly urban housing type, with elevated door- yards and shallow front setbacks, typically located along transit corridors that connect neighborhood centers. Row Houses can help shape these heavily traveled routes into graceful boulevards.

Although several examples of Row Houses in Omaha exists to serve as architectural reference, these photographs of new infill construction in Minneapolis and Saint Paul demonstrate how site grading and building configuration can accommodate traditional higher-density buildings in an appealing architecture, along with the contemporary need for automobile garages.

Courtyard Row House

Called row houses for the way they are aligned, these attached unit buildings found in early 1900's neighborhoods were not originally built to accommodate covered parking on-site. In a newer version of this prototype, garages are accommodated one half level below grade, under each owner's unit. The unit's first level would then be one-half level above typical grade, increasing privacy for those inside.

This configuration allows the courtyard to become a semi-public place for building residents. Such courts can become enclosed play areas for children as well as gathering places for adult residents and their guests to *hang out*. Unit plans have a front-to-back arrangement, as does the building. More semi-private rooms face the courtyard, while more service and private rooms are to the rear and on the second level.

When several buildings are adjoined along a block face, garage drives and drainage systems can be shared, thus reducing paved surface areas and increasing opportunities for green, open spaces for local residents. At the same time, each resident controls what is above the ceiling and below the floor in each unit.

Courtyard Apartment

The Courtyard Apartment is a building type found throughout mature Omaha neighborhoods, and often provides dignified, affordable housing among predominantly single-family choices. As new apartment buildings accommodate a broader diversity of housing alternatives, many urban and architectural features could be emulated from local Courtyard Apartment precedents, including a single, dignified address for all tenants on a great street or court. New Courtyard Apartments may be either owner or renter occupied when built, but because smaller unit configurations are always desirable, individual buildings may evolve into rental or cooperative ownership depending on changing housing economic opportunities over time. Covered parking is accommodated at a ratio of 1 space per unit or more under the building, in either individual tuck-under garages or a single entry garage.

Corner Apartment

A more detailed program is defined for these illustrations because they demonstrate the means in which lot, building, circulation and parking requirements can be designed to achieve a diversity of apartment unit types within one building type.

Footprint	Number of Units	Number of Floors	Number of parking spaces, Type	Lot width, Area, Net Density
<i>Left</i> – 1 1BR wing, 1 2BR wing	6-12 18 w/elevator	1-2 3 w/elevator	16 – basement garage, 3 – tuck under garage	120' (.35 acre) 16-50 du/acre
Right - 2 wing, 4 large 2BR	4-8 12 w/elevator	1-2 3 w/elevator	12 – tuck under garage	130' (.38 acre) 10-30 du/acre

The Corner Apartment is a building type quite unique to Omaha in the upper Midwest. Originally built to accommodate rental-housing options during a time of predominantly pedestrian and public transit modes, contemporary construction would include infill development opportunities as a condominium ownership. Like Courtyard Apartment buildings, contemporary Corner Apartments would have cooperative, protected tuck-under and/or double-loaded garages under the residential flats.