

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1	Analysis	6	Programs.....	34
Introduction	2	Regional Context	7	Neighborhood Programs	34
Background of the Project	2	Immediate Context	7	Transportation Programs	60
Key Players	2	<i>Downtown/Riverfront Redevelopment</i>	8	Central Corridor Programs	87
The Process	3	<i>Adjacent Neighborhoods</i>	10	Parks and Open Space Programs	101
The Document	3	The Midtown Study Area	11	Implementation Matrix	111
Components of the Plan	4	<i>Historical Analysis</i>	11	Appendix	124
<i>Analysis</i>	4	<i>Physical and Environmental Analysis</i>	12	SWOT Documentation	124
<i>Community Vision</i>	4	<i>Transportation Existing Conditions</i>	14	Zoning Classifications	139
<i>Case Studies</i>	4	<i>Regulatory Analysis</i>	15	Historic Structures/Districts	142
<i>Programs</i>	4	Market Overview	18	Residential Building Typology	151
<i>Implementation Matrix</i>	4	<i>Demographics</i>	18		
<i>Appendices</i>	4	<i>Employment</i>	18		
<i>How to Use the Document</i>	4	<i>Businesses and Services</i>	18		
Acknowledgements	5	SWOT Analysis	20		
The Destination Midtown Planning Team	5	Vision	23		
		Case Studies	24		

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

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.

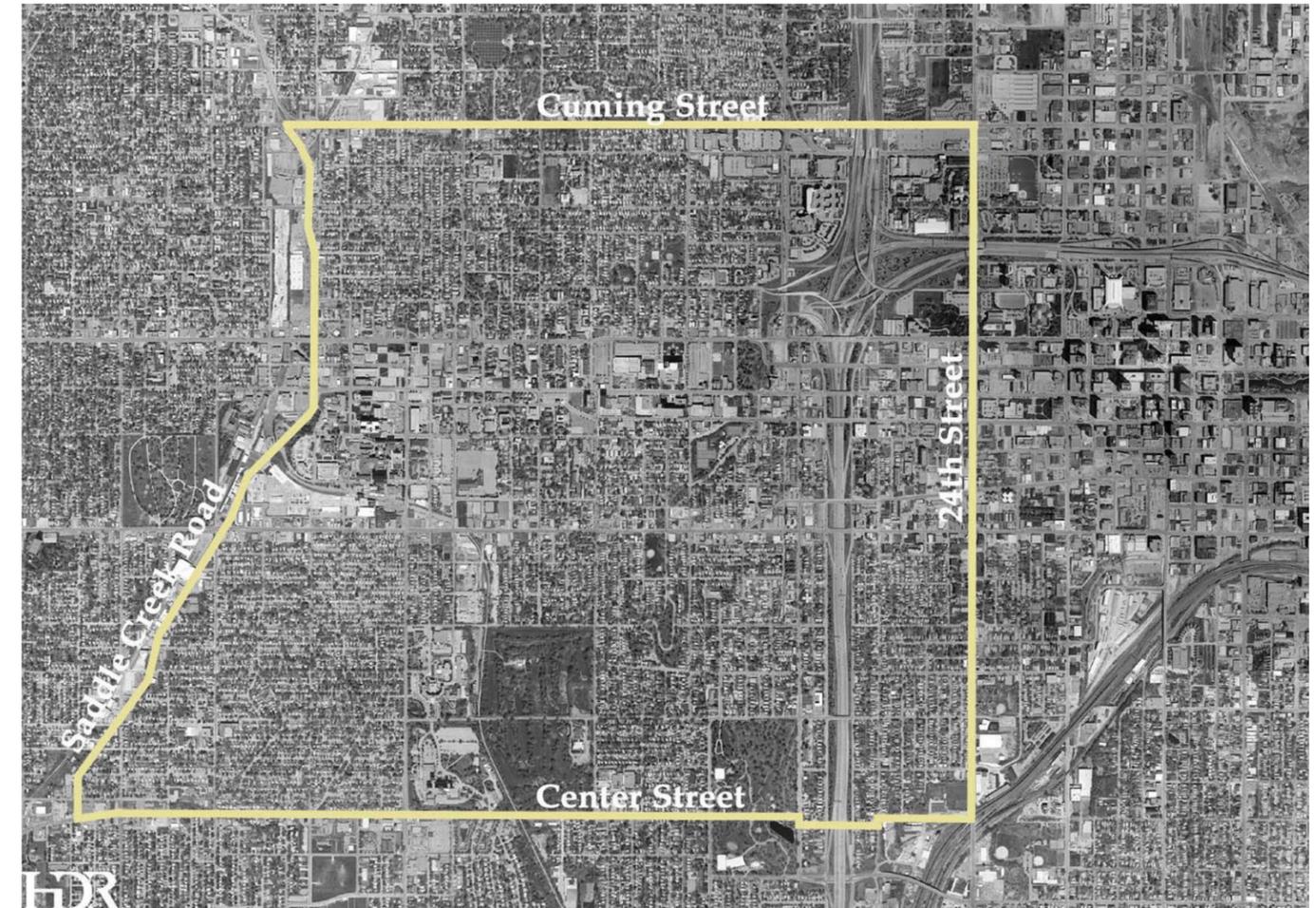
The Destination Midtown Study Area is approximately 3.6 square miles in size and is home to over 28,000 people, or nearly 7% of the population of the city. With a density of over 7,500 people per square mile, Midtown is truly an urban environment, even though the predominant residential building type 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



Destination Midtown Study Area boundaries

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.



Public meetings held as part of the planning process

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.

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.

Acknowledgement

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

Jim Anderson, Omaha Planning Department
Bob Bartee, University of Nebraska Medical Center
David Brown, Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce
Dr. Lou Burgher, Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce
Marty Carmody, The Nebraska Medical Center
Jim Champion, Charlie Graham and Midtown Merchants
Roger Christianson, Omaha Public Power District
Bob Daisley, Mutual of Omaha
Bonnie DeSmet-Bacon, Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association
William Dinsmoor, The Nebraska Medical Center
Mike Faust, Peter Kiewit Sons', Inc.
Pete Festersen, Mayor's Office
Chris Foster, Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
Dick Jeffries, Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce
Christine Johnson, Mutual of Omaha
Larry Kavich, All Makes Office Equipment Company
Jim Landen, Security National Bank

Don Leuenberger, University of Nebraska Medical Center
Rob Maglinger, Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce
Margie Magnuson, Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association
John McClelland, Mutual of Omaha
Bob Peters, Omaha Planning Department
Fred Salzinger, Creighton University
Jim Thompson, Leavenworth Neighborhood Association
Jim Vokal, Omaha City Council
Pam Zbylut, Security National Bank

Destination Midtown Communications Committee

Destination Midtown Finance Committee

Elected Officials

Mayor Mike Fahey
Councilman Jim Vokal

City of Omaha

Mayor's Office

Pete Festersen
Tess Fogarty
Steve Scarpello

Parks Department

Larry Foster, Director
Pat Slaven

Planning Department

Bob Peters, Director
Jim Anderson
Kevin Denker
David Fanslau
Linda Frink
Bridget Hadley
Steve Jensen
Jim Krance
Lynn Meyer
James Thele

Police Department

Thomas Warren, Chief

Public Works Department

Norm Jackman, Director
Charlie Krajicek
Scott McIntyre
Hank Vieregger

Lively Omaha

Connie Spellman

Greater Omaha Neighborhood Center

Deidra Andrews

The Destination Midtown Planning Team

HDR, Inc.

Douglas J. Bisson, Community Planning Manager and Project Manager
Tim Crockett, Department Manager
Matt Tondl, Department Manager
James A. Moore, Project Principal
Ignacio Correa-Ortiz, Community Design Manager
Troy Henningson, Land Planner
John Olson, Land Planner
Eron Smith, Land Planner
Charlie Hales, Transit Planning Principal
Matt Selinger, Traffic Engineer
Tara Kramer, Traffic Engineer
Lisa Tedesco, Senior Marketing Coordinator
Julie Leahy, Graphic Artist
Steve Caito, Marketing Coordinator
Trish Newell, PR and Media Manager
Jackie Fox, Promotional Marketing/Media
Aaron Detter, Planning Group Volunteer and Photographer
Liz Birkel, Planning Group Volunteer

Sub-Consultants

Jonathan Barnett, University of Pennsylvania

Seth Harry, Seth Harry and Associates, Inc.

Rich McLaughlin, Rich McLaughlin Architecture & Town Planning

P. Knight Martorell



South Omaha, another unique & geographically distinct district in Omaha



UNMC / The Nebraska Medical Center and ...



Peter Kiewit Sons' Inc, both notable landmarks in Midtown

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

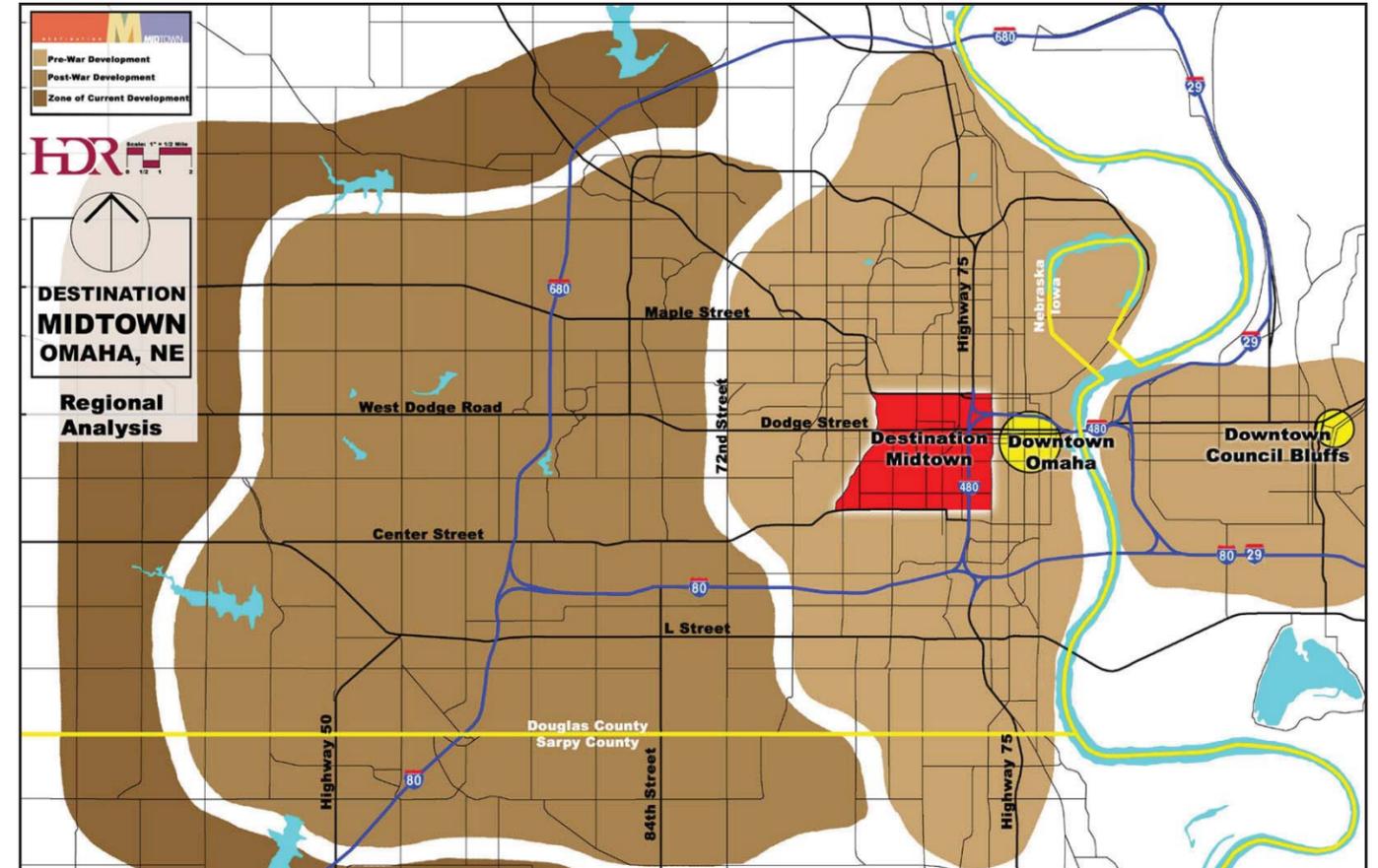
system that connects many of these parks, the Field Club Golf Course and the Field Club Trail.

- Civic uses are also abundant, 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.



View of Midtown Neighborhoods and St. Cecilia's Cathedral from Mutual of Omaha



Regional analysis map showing metropolitan growth patterns

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.

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.

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.

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.

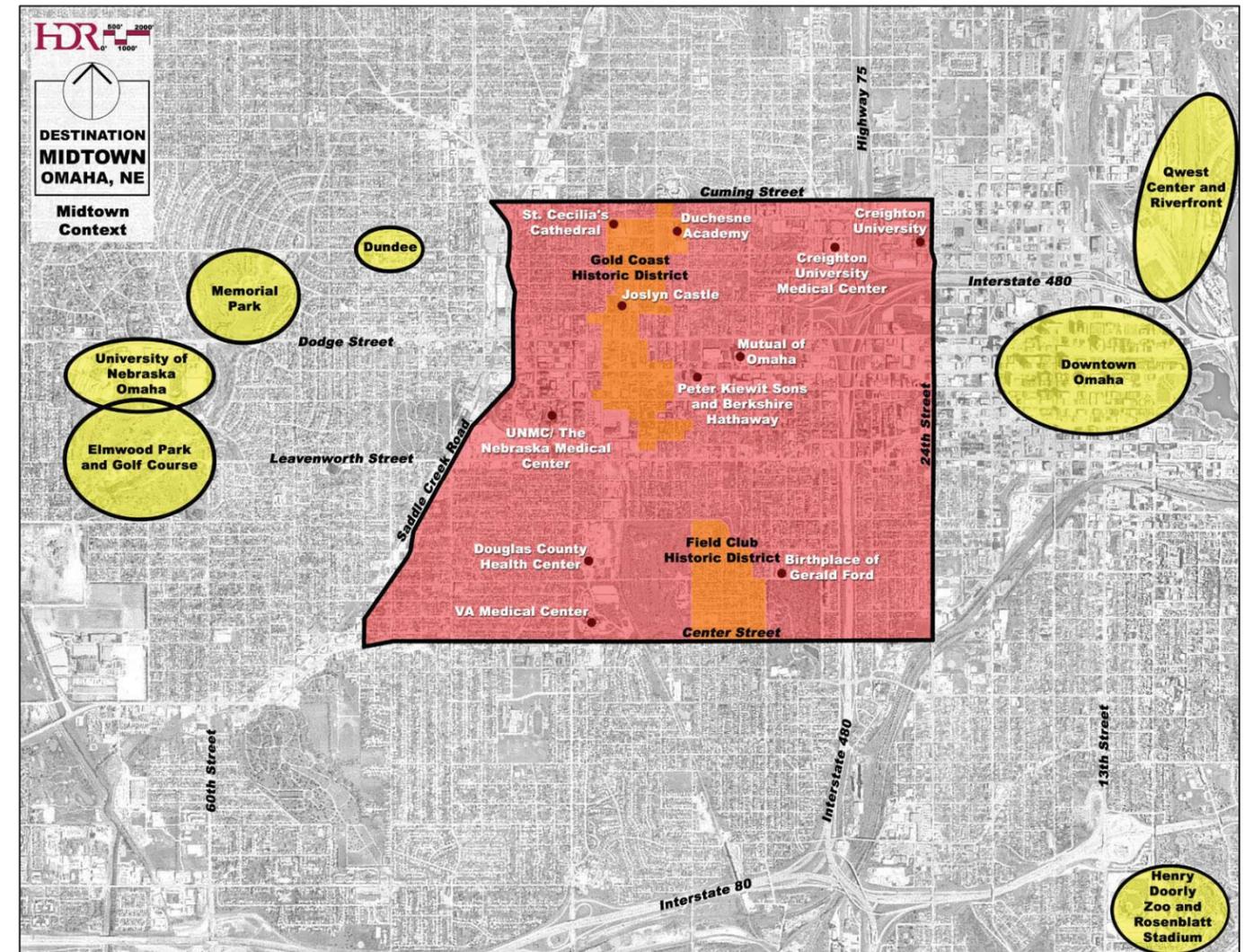
During the 1970's the city took the initiative and developed the Gene Leahy Mall, from 10th Street to 15th Street. The concept for the mall was to develop a public open space linking the core of downtown with the Missouri River. This was the first initiative to get residents back to the river, and was 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,



Map showing Midtown and its immediate context

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.



Photos of downtown/riverfront redevelopment, including downtown Omaha skyline, the Old Market, Heartland of America Park, Rick's Boatyard at Lewis and Clark Landing, the Qwest Center, and the new Hilton Hotel.

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.





Homes along south 51st Street immediately to the west of the Study Area



Apartments located along Center Street, immediately south of the Study Area



Home in Bemis Park, located immediately to the north of the Study Area

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, sits 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.

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.

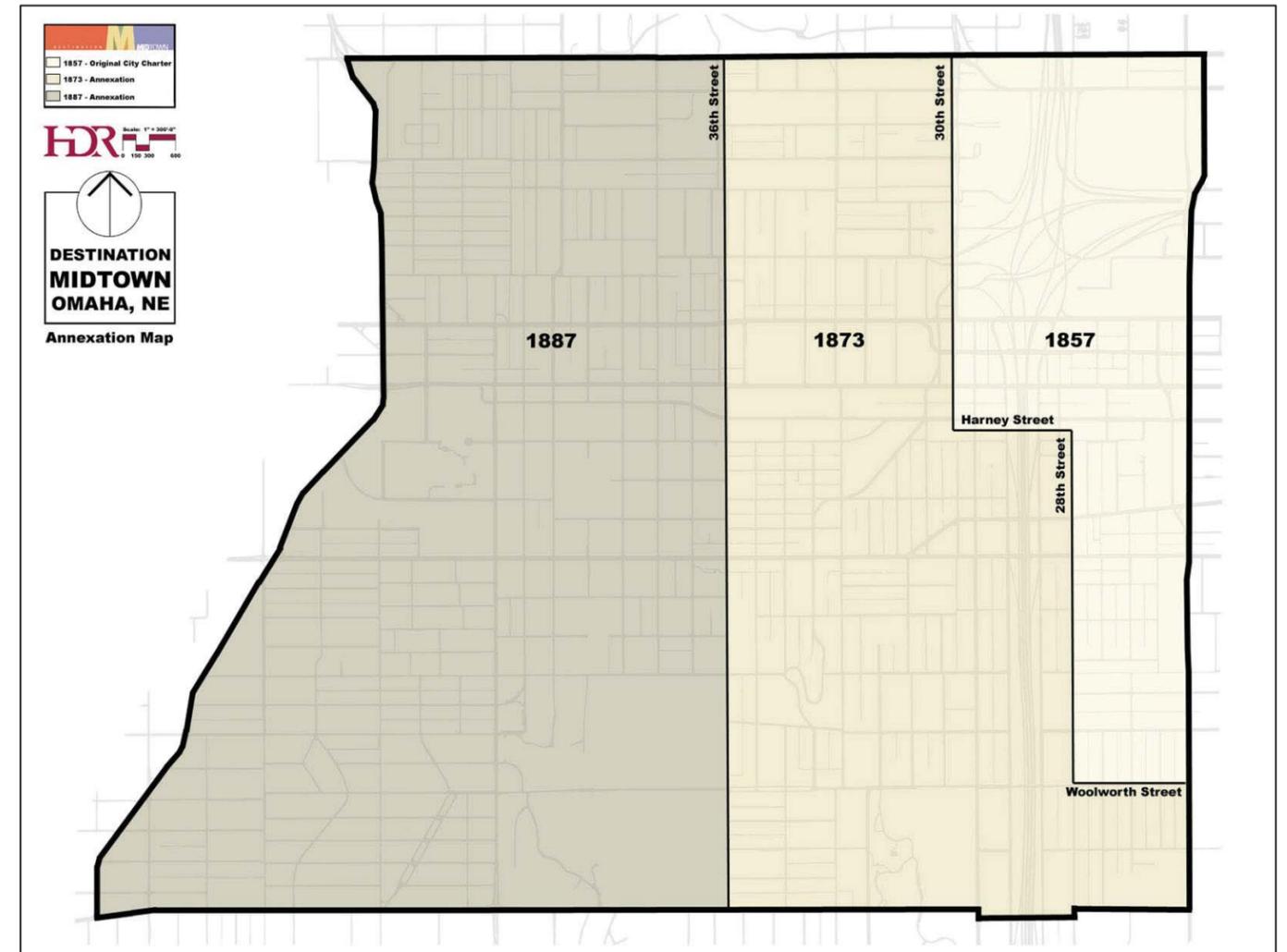
Growth came to the area at a much faster rate during the 1880’s. In 1880, Bishop James O’Conner purchased 12 acres of land for the Academy of the Sacred Heart (a girl’s academy) at 36th and Burt Street. Operated by a society of religious women, construction of the school began in February of 1882. At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



Annexation map of Midtown Study Area

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.

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.



Midtown hills



Leavenworth Park

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.

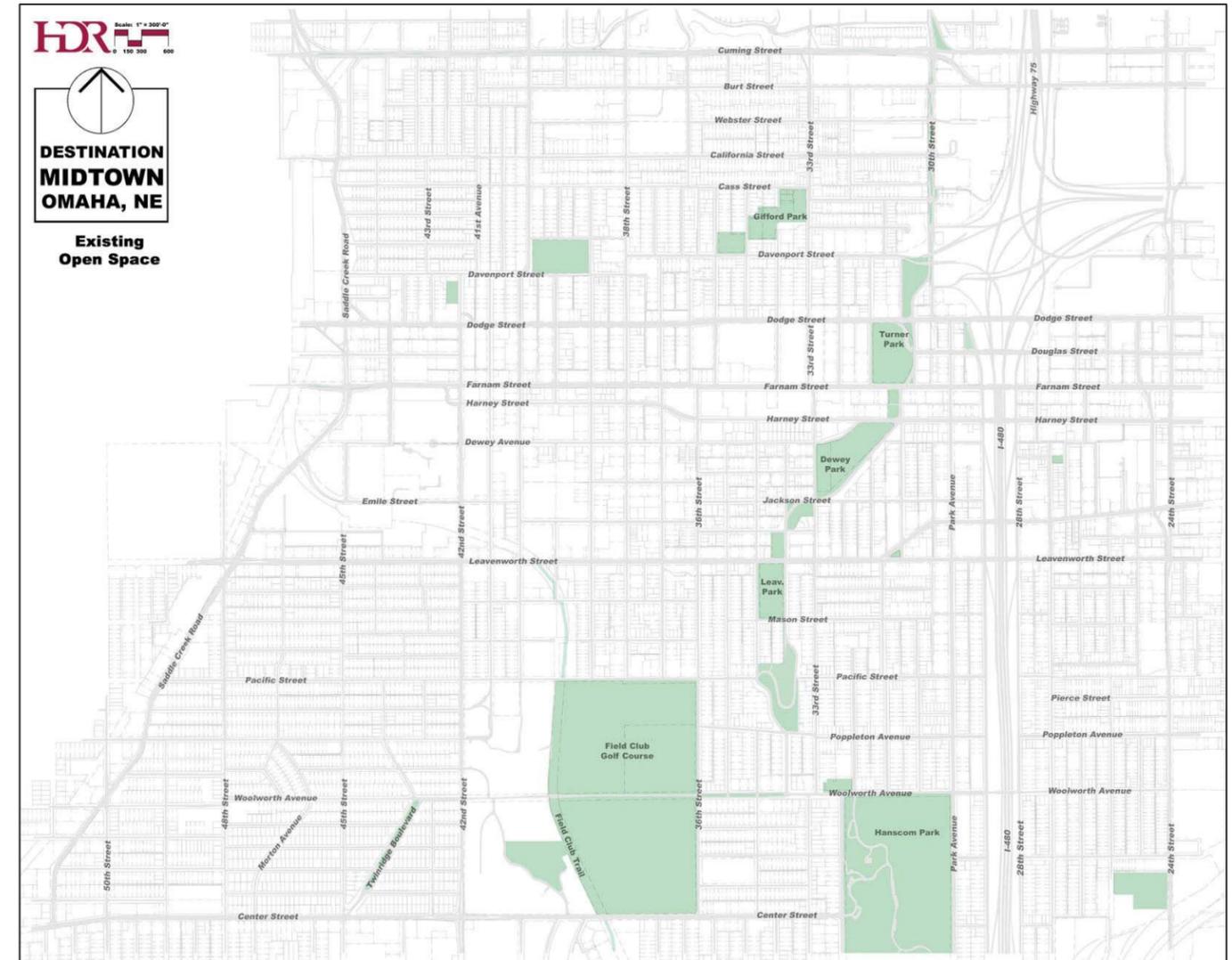
The major watercourse within the area is Saddle Creek, which forms the western boundary of the Study Area. Saddle Creek has been enclosed in an underground culvert, but the valley created by the creek remains a significant topographic feature within the Study Area.

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.



Map of existing open space within Midtown Study Area



Ford Birth Site

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



Mutual of Omaha tower and dome

figure/ground map, which represents the existing urban fabric (all existing structures are colored black, everything else is white), has been included.

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.

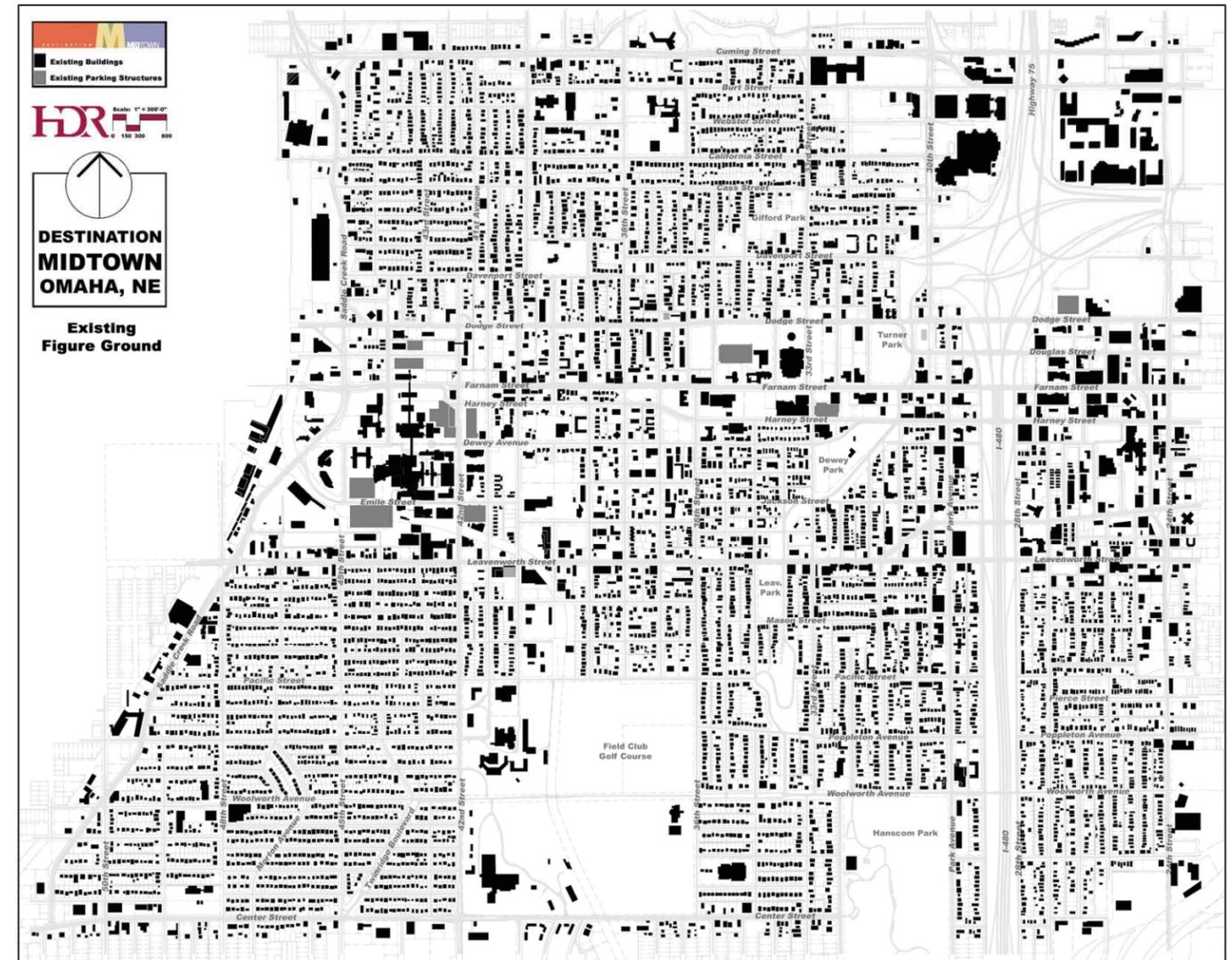


Figure / ground map representing all existing structures in Midtown

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.

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 probation 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.

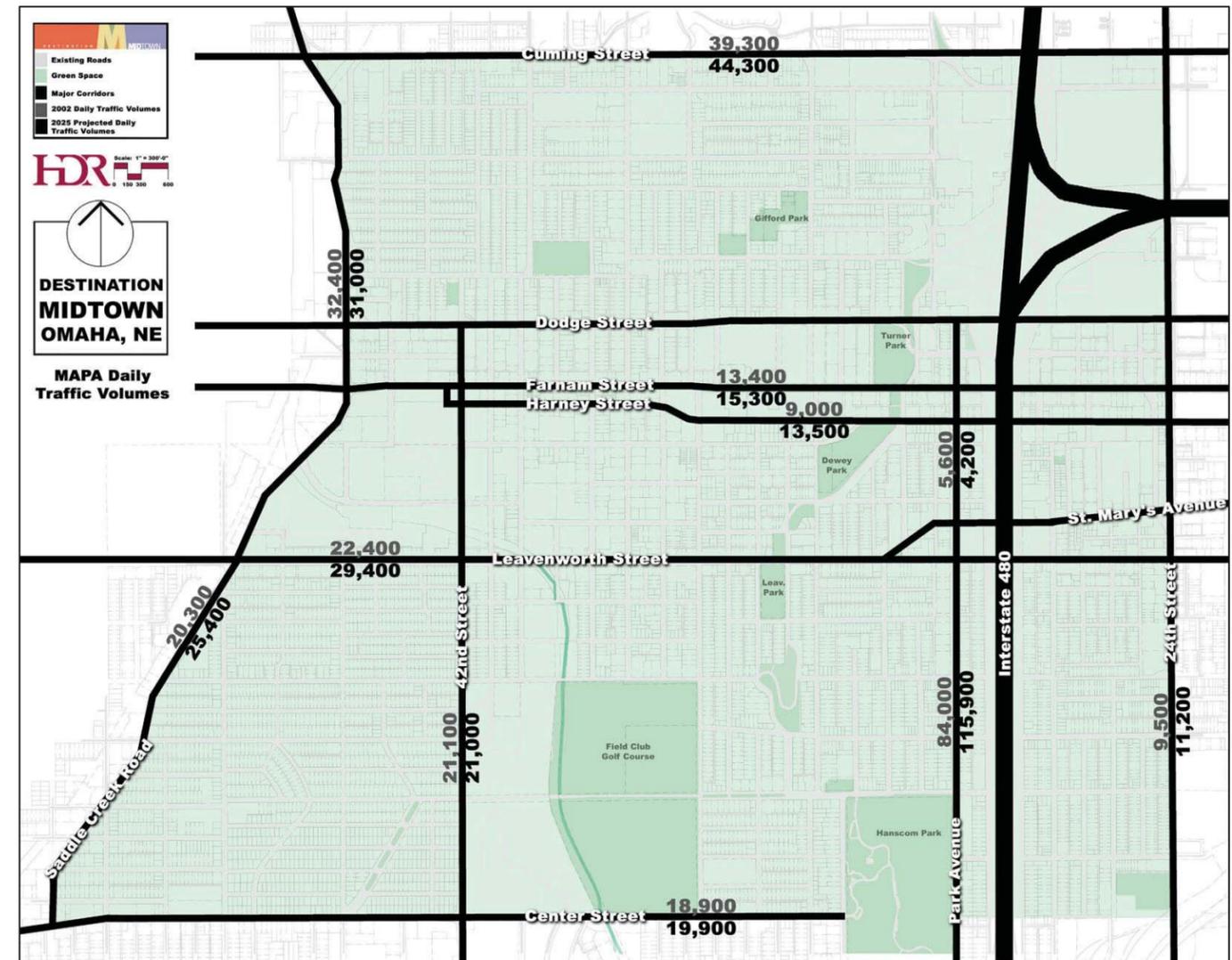
- Right turn to go left for westbound Dodge Street at 42nd. This is one of the odd turning situations that exist along Dodge Street due to the prohibition of left turns on Dodge.
- Split of one-way pairs (Harney / Farnam and Dodge / Douglas) with very substandard geometry.
- Geometry in the 30th and 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.



Map of major streets and existing and projected daily traffic volumes

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.

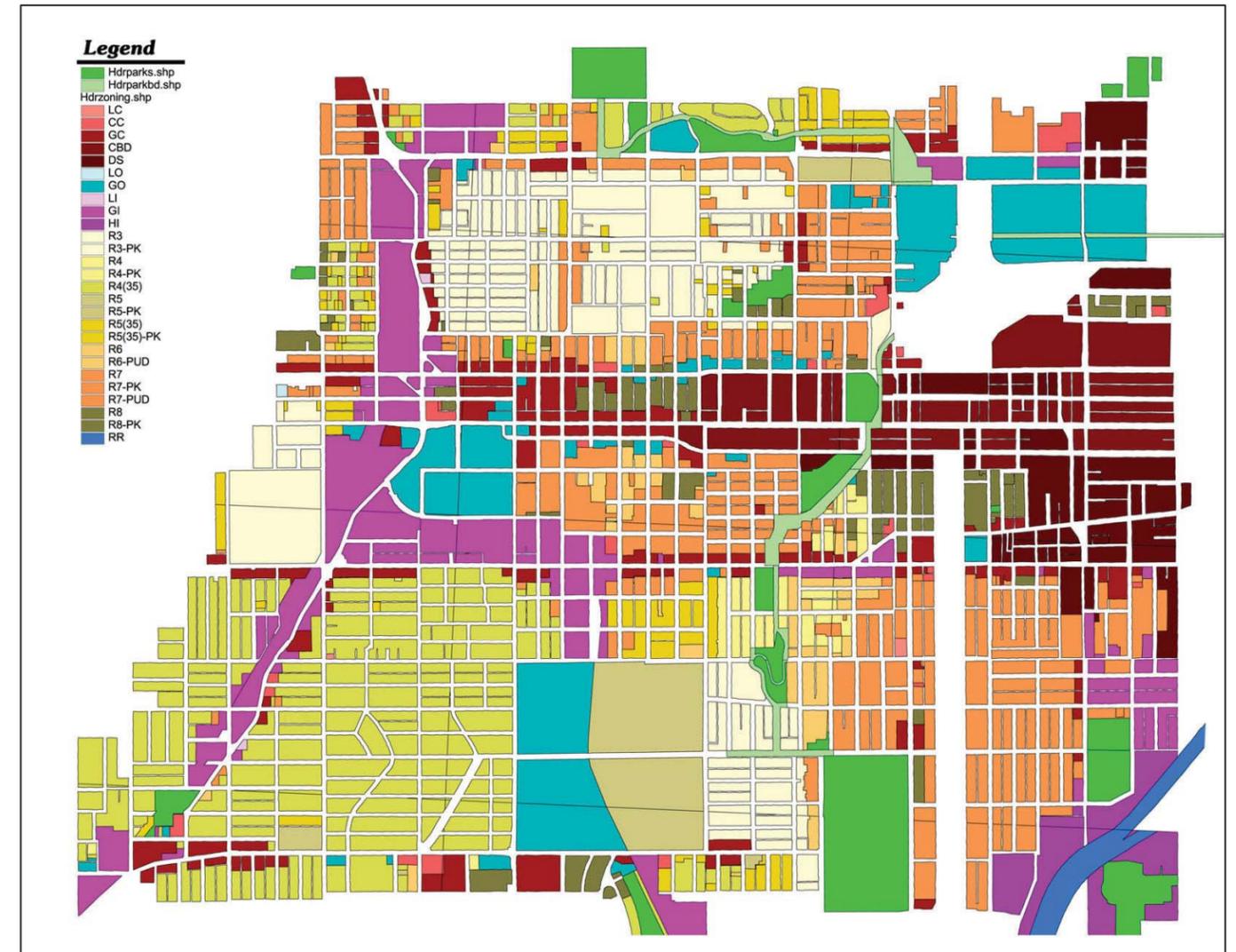
In addition, the CBD zoning category waives the off-street parking requirements that impact most other uses, and provides incentives for certain development features including street level commercial uses, expressly intended to “encourage pedestrian traffic and contribute to street activity.”

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).
- Omahans (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)



Map of existing zoning in Midtown. Zoning category definitions are included in Appendix

- 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)

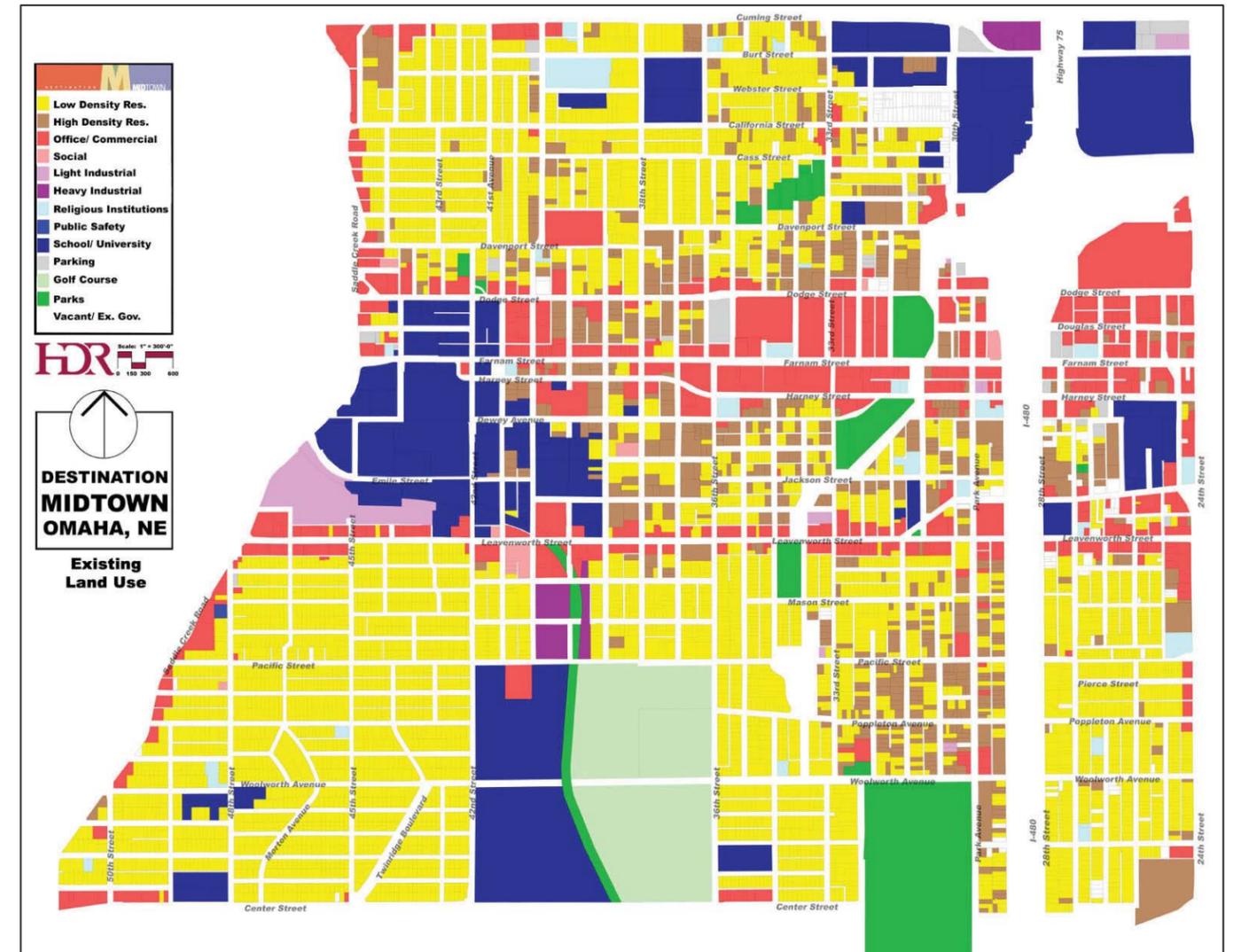
Land Use Element

- 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 is 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 **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** of the Midtown district in its present condition, and then to discuss both the **Opportunities** for positive change and growth within the district and potential **Threats** 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 Cuming, 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.

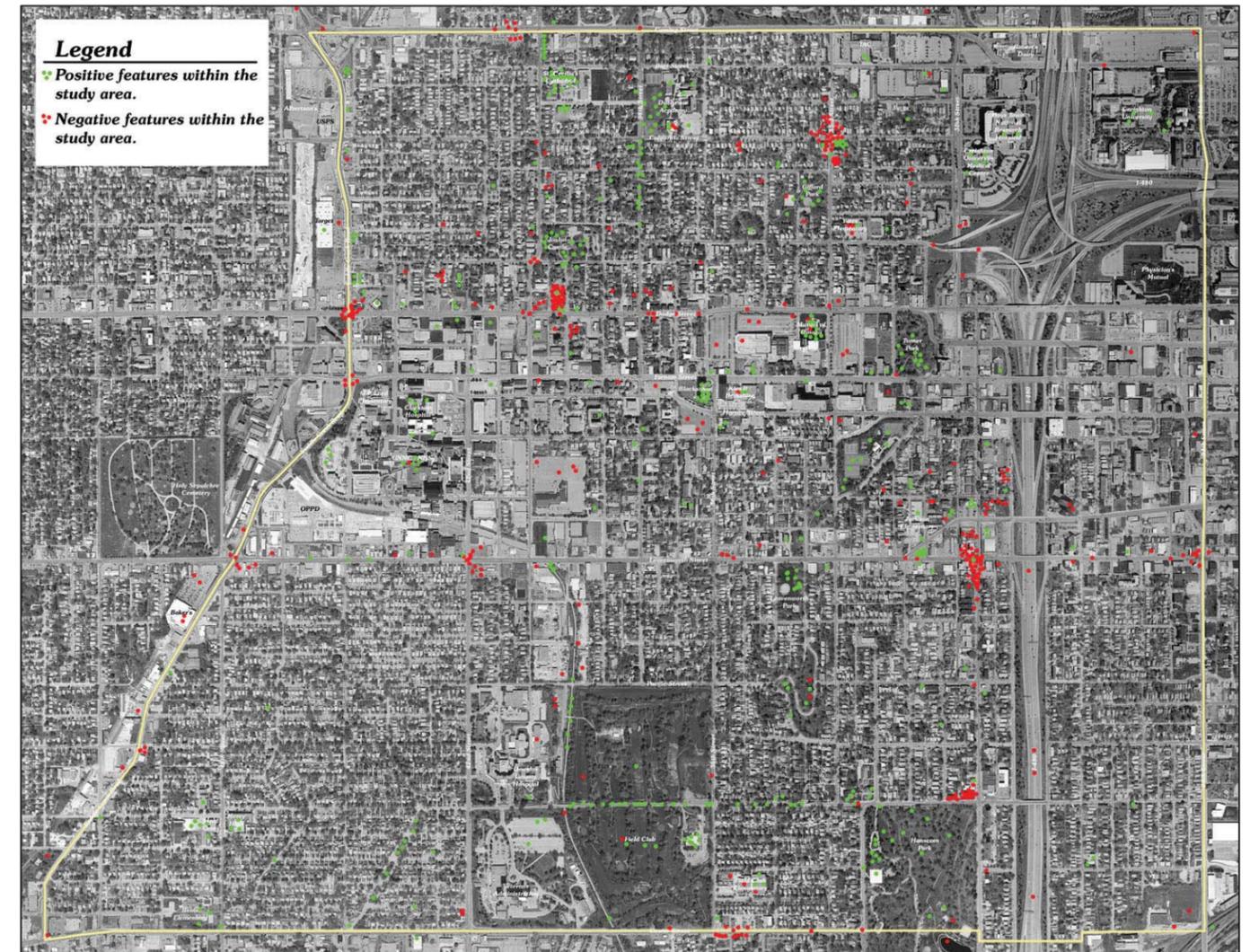
This analysis helped identify the top ten **positive** features within the Destination Midtown Study Area:

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

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



Map detailing location of positive and negative features as identified by participants of SWOT Analysis

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
- 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.

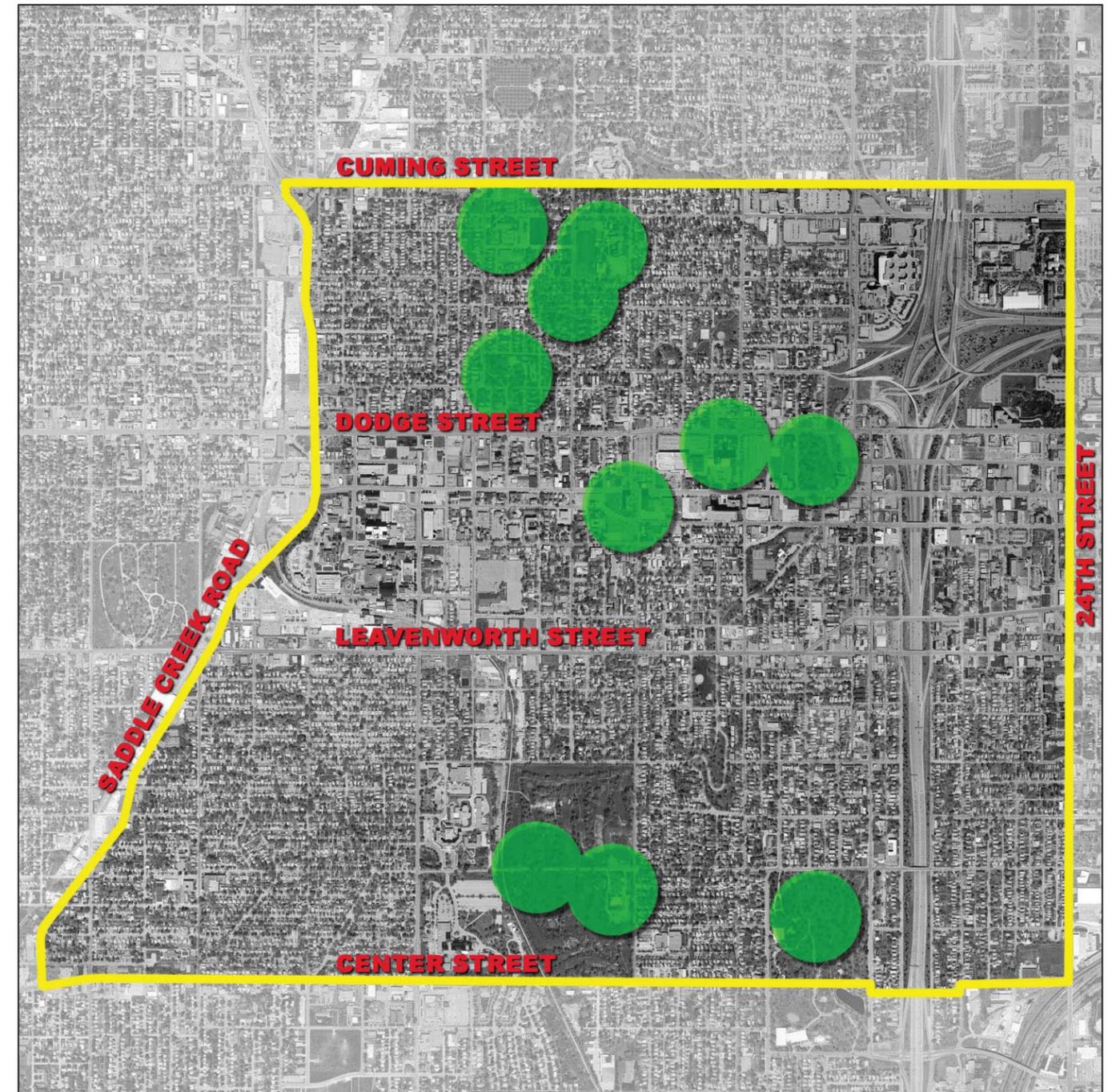
Results of the SWOT analysis were tabulated for each of the sub-areas and for the entire Study Area. Detailed results for each sub-area and the entire Study Area is included in the appendix at the end of this document. Summary results for the Study Area as a whole are examined below.

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



Map of top ten positive features

3. Lack of code enforcement
4. Public safety (drugs, alcohol, prostitution and crime)
5. Tax penalty to renovate properties

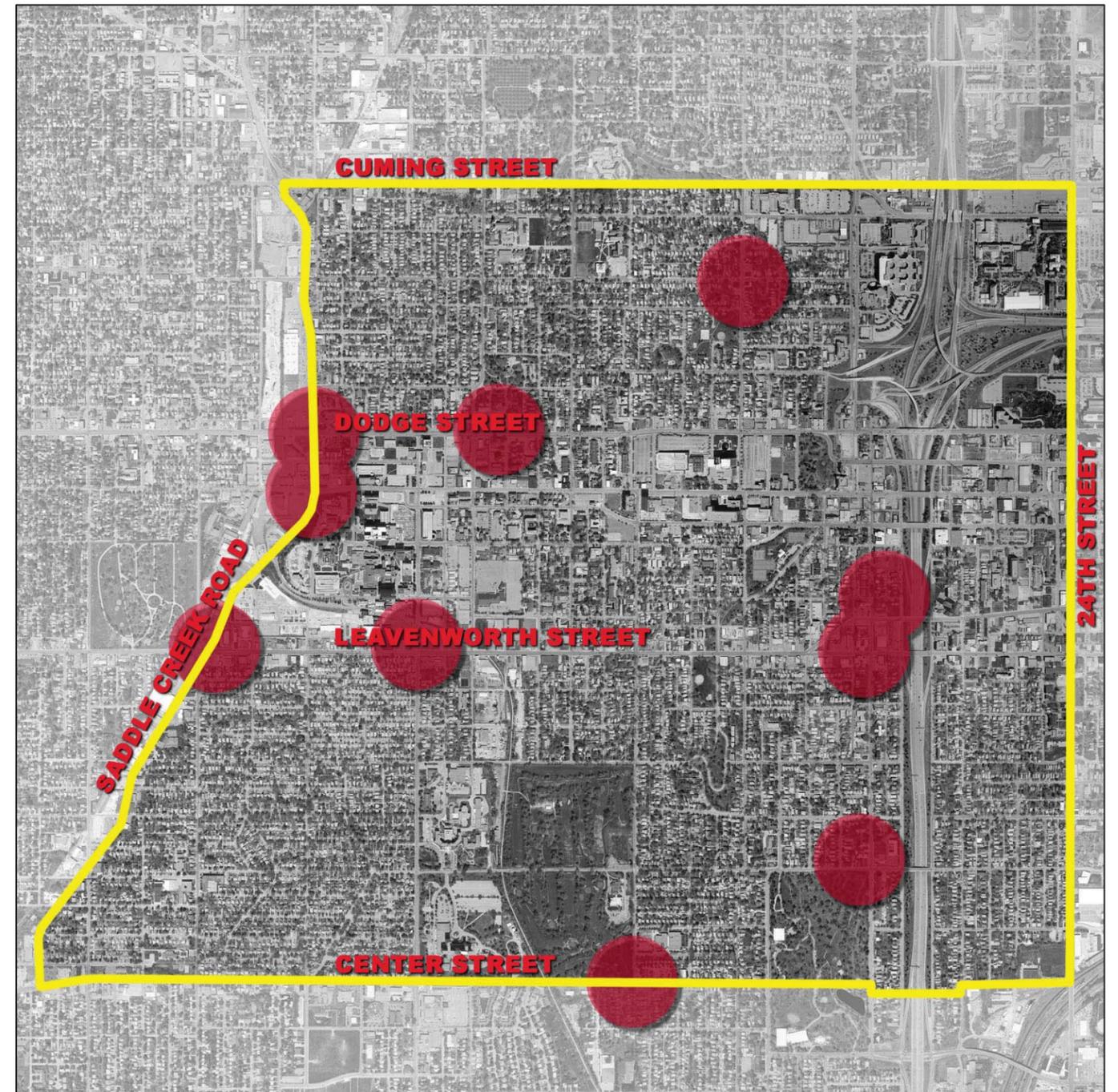
Primary Opportunities within Midtown:

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.



Top ten negative features

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.



Destination Midtown delegation in Portland



Portland light rail

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 infill development

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



Environmental remediation of former gas station site on MLK Boulevard



McMenamin's Kennedy School



Zupan's neighborhood grocery store



Belmont Dairy infill residential



Existing neighborhood business center

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



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.



New development in Pearl District



Streetcar line and mixed use development



A district for all ages



Neighborhood park in Pearl District

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.



Modern Streetcar



River Tech building



N.W. 23rd Avenue pedestrian-oriented mixed-use district



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



Public Meeting held at Duchesne Academy



View of Central Corridor taken from Mutual of Omaha

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,



April 01, 2003 Announcement of Destination Midtown planning process

- 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

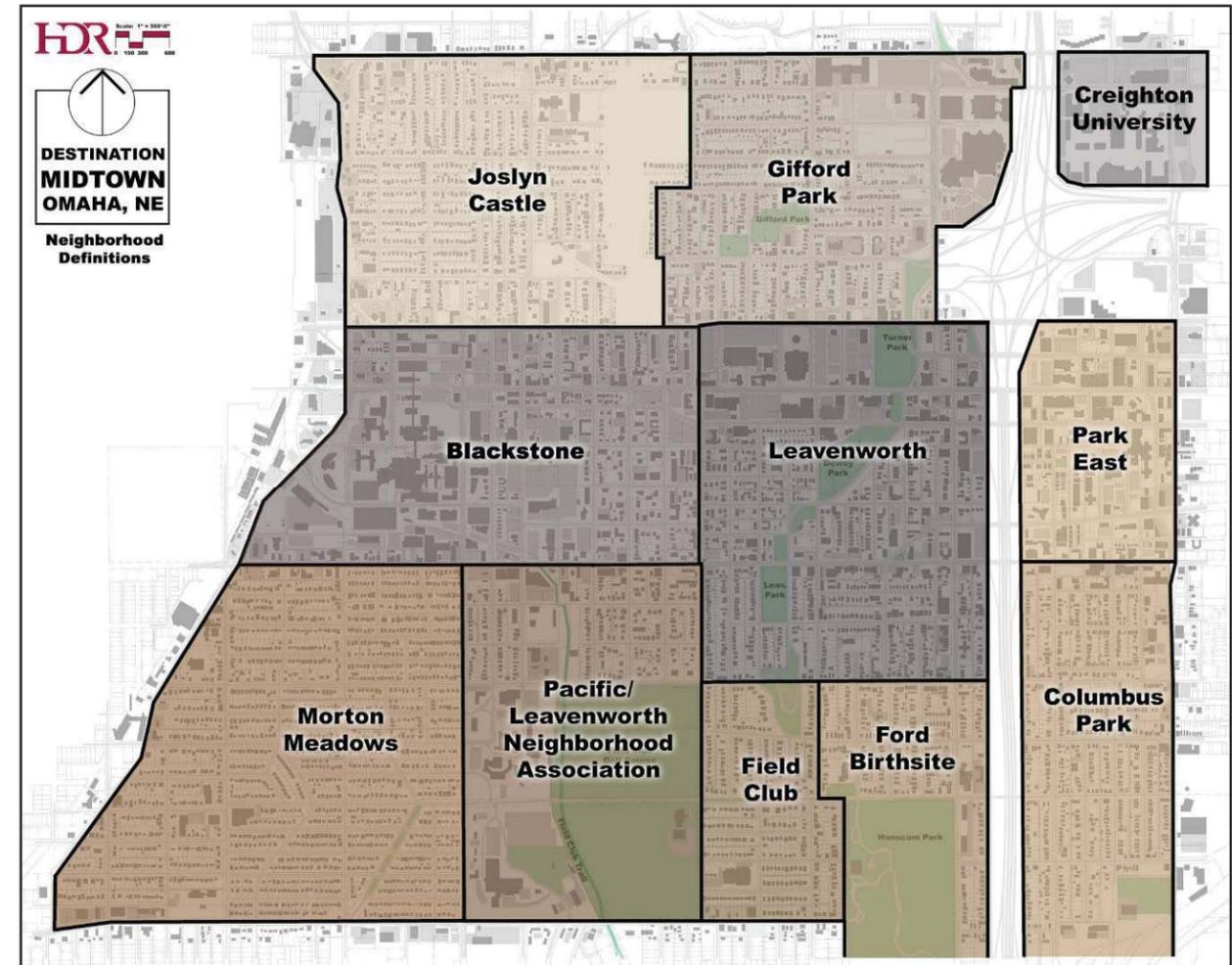
obvious sources of funding can be found. To the extent that municipal revenue sources are significantly limited, the public sector can be looked to for leadership in the areas of program administration and staff oversight. To the extent that viable profit-making businesses and development activities 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-



Map of neighborhood association boundaries

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



Graffiti along residential alley



Vandalized car on midtown residential street

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 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



Rear alley near 33rd and California



Midtown Citizens Patrol sign

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



Trash and discarded material



Inoperable vehicle in driveway



Travel Inn located at 39th and Dodge

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



Conversion of single family home to apartment



Trash and litter along alley

the neighborhoods. If not, the procedures should be revised.

Timeframe: Medium Priority



Example of well maintained homes in Destination Midtown Study Area



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