

Omaha Master Plan
Mike Fahey, Mayor Report #264

Concept
Element



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Introduction

Purpose

Every great city has at its core a sense of place, something that sets it apart from the rest. It also has a citizenry which understands what makes their city special and is committed to maintaining and enhancing that special character.

As we approach the year 2000, residents of Omaha have many things for which they can feel proud: a diversified, stable and prosperous economy; a top ranked educational system; a good quality of life; and perhaps most importantly, friendly and caring citizens.

At the same time, the city is confronted with a host of immediate and long-term problems which typically have affected growing American cities. These problems include deterioration and loss of jobs in central city neighborhoods, outward growth beyond the city's financial jurisdiction, cost of public services associated with suburban development, loss of Downtown property value, and the quality of our environment. These problems must be addressed if we are to all fully enjoy and share in the benefits the city provides.

The main challenge, as we near the turn of the century, is how to address these and other problems while maintaining and improving on the positive aspects of our community. In order to accomplish this task the city needs a vision of its future and a guide to achieving that vision. It is the purpose of this document, therefore, to identify the kind of city we, as residents, want Omaha to be and to establish a direction for Omaha's future.

The Roles of the Plan

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.



The Omaha Building



Westward Growth

Communities prepare and adopt master plans for legal purposes. Cities adopt zoning and subdivision ordinances to promote the “health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the community.” Land use regulations such as zoning ordinances recognize that people in a community live cooperatively and have certain responsibilities to one another. These regulations establish rules that govern how land is developed within a municipality and its extra-territorial jurisdiction.

However, communities may not adopt land use ordinances without first adopting a comprehensive development plan. This requirement derives from the premise that land use decisions should not be arbitrary, but should follow an accepted and reasonable concept of how the city should grow. The Plan then provides the ongoing legal basis for Omaha’s continuing basis to regulate land use and development.

In using this plan, it is important to recognize that the policies and recommendations contained within the Plan are guidelines and targets for community development. As such, the implementation of these recommendations is phased and shaped by many factors over time. The Plan is not meant to be a rigid blueprint, but is rather an initial, comprehensive policy direction which will be embellished and further shaped by future events. This plan should be viewed as a flexible tool, adapted and modified over time by the city to remain vital and relevant.

Yet, a comprehensive development plan has an ultimately more significant role in the growth of a community. The Plan establishes a picture of Omaha’s future, based on the participation of residents in the planning of their community. This vision is particularly crucial at this time in Omaha’s history. Beyond defining a vision, the Plan presents a unified action program that will implement the community’s goals. Indeed, the Plan is designed as a working document - a document that both defines the future and provides a working program for realizing the city’s great potential.

As such, the Plan is a strategic document designed to assess a community’s current situation, establish a community vision, and develop specific guidelines and policies to realize those visions. The Master Plan for Omaha, above all, is a strategic rather than abstract document, designed to identify and address the major planning and development issues affecting the citizens of Omaha.

Planning Process

In an effort to identify the needs and aspirations of the community, a 50 member citizens task force was appointed by the Mayor to help guide the creation of the City’s Master Plan. Comprised of members from a broad cross-section of the community, the Mayor’s Master Plan Advisory Committee began meeting in July, 1991.

The committee, facilitated by the Planning Department staff, worked first to establish an overall "vision" for the City, and was then presented with a series of “Issue Papers”. Each paper addressed a set of related problems/opportunities confronting the city, provided related background information, and posed a series of questions for the committee to consider.

Committee members were asked to review the subjects presented and answer the related questions. The responses were then used to establish a set of “Concepts and Directions” which the City should follow in addressing the issues presented in each paper.

Following the completion of the committee’s work on the Vision, Concepts, and Objectives, a draft of

these components was sent to the Mayor, Planning Board and City Council for review, allowing for early input by appointed and elected officials. With Planning Board and City Council endorsement, the Committee began work on more specific “Criteria and Guidelines” to be used by the City to ensure that the goals and policies contained in the first three components are achieved. These were also sent to the Mayor, Planning Board, and City Council for endorsement. Lastly, a series of public information meetings were held to allow for direct citizen input, followed by committee review and final alterations to the draft Concept Element of the City's Master Plan.

Master Plan Content and Components

The Omaha City Charter states, “It shall be the duty of the Planning Director to prepare and maintain a master plan for the physical development of the city, to be known as the Master Plan. The Master Plan shall establish the City’s long-range policies, goals and standards as a general guide for its physical development.” The Charter goes on to define the areas that the plan must address but does not require a specific format for the plan.

This Concept Element of the Master Plan is divided into five general sections: 1) Introduction, 2) Vision, 3) Background, 4) Goals, and 5) Concepts and Objectives. The Vision section identifies the kind of city we would like Omaha to be. The Background section identifies current conditions and trends, and the Goals section establishes a general course of action in order to achieve the vision and to address the issues raised.

The Concepts and Objectives section is divided into five sub-sections: Urban Form, Urban Design, Housing and Community Development, Environment, and Infrastructure and Public Services. Each of these subsections identifies critical issues confronting the city and outlines policies and standards to address each issue.

Taken as a whole the Concept Element provides a broad vision for Omaha’s future and a comprehensive package of goals, policies and standards needed to carry out the vision (See Figure 1). It is limited by design, however, to the broad issues facing the city. It is not intended to address detailed issues such as the extension of sanitary interceptor sewers, housing and community development programs, or specific development plans for districts within the city.

These more detailed issues are addressed by “element” plans which deal with more specific functional and geographic areas of interest. The func-

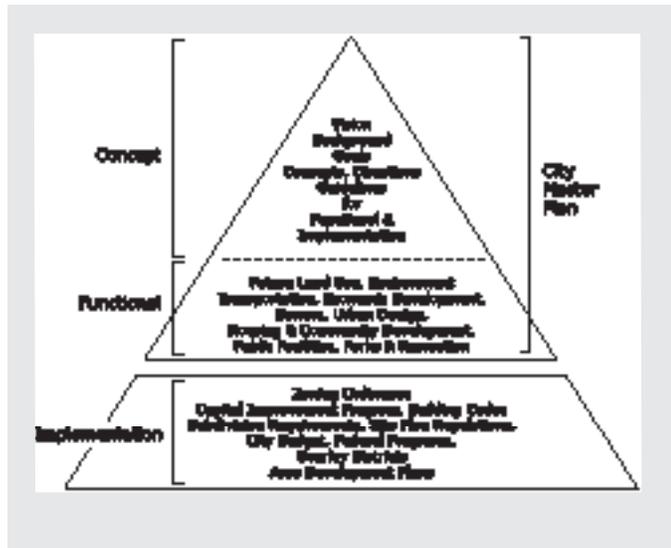


Figure 1
Master Plan Elements

tional components include such traditional elements as Urban Development, Land Use, Transportation, Parks and Recreation, and Housing and Community Development among others. Subsequent components of the Master Plan may include elements on Urban Design, as well as geographic components comprising district and area development and redevelopment plans for portions of the city such as Downtown and the city's riverfront.

These detailed element plans are intended to be used together with the Concept Element to guide the growth and redevelopment of the city. Even though these plans are often large in scope and detailed in nature, they all depend on the Concept Element to provide their direction and focus.

Amendments to the Master Plan

Policies and proposals within the Master Plan represent the willful intention of Omaha's citizens. It is appropriate and necessary that the Master Plan be reviewed and amended regularly to ensure that it continues to represent community standards and values.

Applicants submitting development and zoning requests which do not match the Master Plan and its elements, must first request approval of an amendment to the Master Plan. Project proposals that are not in conformance with the Master Plan should not be approved until such proposals are modified to be in conformance or the Master Plan is amended to allow for the proposal. In order for an amendment to be approved, it must be shown that:

- a. there is a factual defect in the map, illustration or section of the plan with which the proposal is in conflict; or
- b. the proposal will further another important aspect of the Master Plan and its elements.



Downtown Omaha

In order to show that the proposal meets one of these two criteria, the request must be accompanied by a formal analysis (Development Impact Assessment) which outlines:

- > how the proposal differs from the Plan and its elements;
- > how it meets one of the criteria;
- > how the Plan and its elements would need to be changed to allow for the proposal;
- > the justification for the proposed change;
- > the positive and negative effects of the difference;
- > how the applicant proposes to mitigate the effects.

In addition to this method, on occasion the City Council may find that the community supports an initiative that is not in conformance with the Master Plan. In such a case, it is evident that the Master Plan is incomplete, since it does not accommodate a new objective of the City Council. It is necessary, then, to amend the Master Plan in a consistent manner to reflect the will of the community.

Amendments may also be approved periodically following a formal view of the Master Plan. City planners will prepare a periodic summary of development activity within the city and its jurisdiction, complete with an evaluation of how current developments are promoting or preventing achievement of the objectives within the Master Plan. A full review of the Master Plan shall be undertaken at least every ten (10) years and be completed prior to the required ten (10) year review of the city's zoning and subdivision ordinances.

The Master Plan is a living document, and to the extent that Omaha's goals and objectives change, so the Plan must be reviewed and amended to reflect community needs.

Vision

Before Omaha can become the city we all envision, we must clearly and simply state what we want the city to be. Our fundamental vision for Omaha is that:

***Omaha must be a community committed
to promoting and maintaining a high quality
of life for all of its people.***

This overall vision is necessarily broad since it focuses on the essence of what we want Omaha to be. However, in order to understand what the vision means, we must begin to relate it to more specific areas of concern.

The following statements help clarify and expand on the fundamental vision. They describe the kind of city we want Omaha to be and they help explain what it means when we say we want a "high quality of life for all" of our residents.

- Omaha should take advantage of the cultural diversity of its people and help foster an appreciation of their differences and a spirit of cooperation in order to promote overall community betterment and equal opportunity. Omahans should continue to work to make their city a safe place to live, work, and visit. Omaha's educational systems must promote educational excellence at all levels. Human services need to be accessible and effective and should reflect the cultural diversity of the city's population.
- The visual and performing arts need to be supported by and must be accessible to all residents. Special attractions such as the Gene Leahy Mall, Henry Doorly Zoo, Joslyn Art Museum, Boystown and the Riverfront which add to Omaha's high quality of life and enhance the city's image need to be maintained and should be augmented by other attractions.
- Omahans' 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.
- Residents, businesses, and government alike must make a commitment to Omaha's natural environment and work to promote clean air and water, conservation and preservation of open space and agricultural land, recycling and resource conservation, protection of unique and sensitive natural features, and extensive urban forestry programs.
- Omaha's neighborhoods must be designed to supply a variety of affordable, quality homes along with a full range of the services and amenities which make each neighborhood unique. Private investment, pub-

lic programs and the involvement of community organizations should all be used in an effort to reverse and eventually eliminate deterioration within the city.

- Public and private cooperation should be utilized to ensure that Omaha's economy is viable and self-sustaining and that it provides diverse and rewarding employment opportunities, upward mobility, job security, and a good standard of living. Omaha's education system must provide quality employees at all levels and should help to rapidly retrain the structurally unemployed.
- Public improvements and services must be provided in a way which promotes balanced growth and redevelopment and distributes costs according to benefits received. Quality, efficiency, and equitable distribution need to be stressed in the provision of public facilities and services. In an effort to improve Omaha's overall quality of life, fiscal, social and environmental costs and benefits must be considered in decisions regarding public services.
- Omaha's plans and regulations must accurately reflect the community's desires, resulting in a clear direction for Omaha's future and rapid approval of proposals which follow those plans. Omaha must make every effort to be the best community in the metropolitan area, but should also work with other nearby communities to promote the growth of the entire region.



South Omaha Library

Background

Population

Although Omaha benefited from a moderate growth rate over the last 30 years, trends toward lower density development and an increased suburban focus have caused an increasing share of development to extend beyond the city's financial jurisdiction. Omaha continues to dominate the three County metro area (Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie Counties), but other areas, particularly Sarpy County, are becoming more competitive with Omaha. Between 1960 and 1990, Omaha's population grew by 11%, the population of Douglas County increased by 21%, and the metro area grew by 35%. The city's share of the metro area population dropped from 66% to 54%.

Housing

The growth rate of housing has been higher than population growth. Since 1960, the number of housing units in Omaha has increased by 48% in comparison to the 11% population growth. As with population, housing development in other areas is becoming more competitive. Douglas County's housing grew by 57%, compared to a metro area increase of 72%.

Omaha's share of metro area housing decreased from 68% in 1960 to 58% in 1990, while suburban housing located outside of the city (in Douglas County) increased from 11% to 17% (See Figure 2). The housing vacancy rate for Douglas County was higher in 1990 (6.5%) than the 1960 rate (4.8%). North Omaha, specifically, lost over 30% of its housing in the past 30 years (See Figure 3-Housing Units Percent of Change). Population densities have decreased from 9.2 persons per acre to 5.1 persons per acre in Omaha since 1960.

Compared to 1960 housing data, 1990 data shows an increase in the proportion of multi-family housing to single-family housing. In 1960, multi-family housing comprised 21.4% of all housing, while in 1990, 31.3% of housing is in multi-family structures. This is a reflection, in part, of the smaller households which characterize current trends, particularly the increasing number of single-person households. Similarly, the percentage of owner-occupied housing units in comparison to

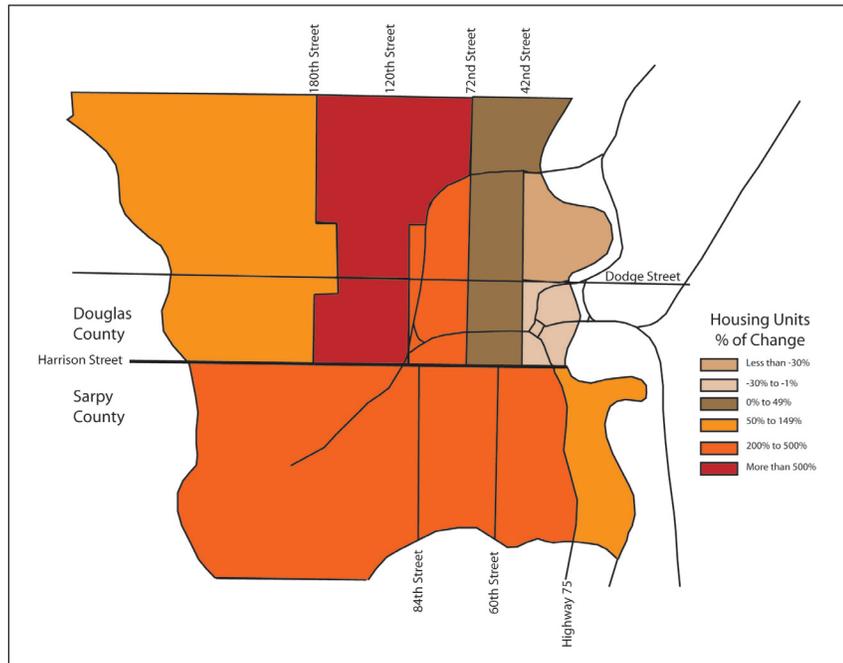


Figure 2
Housing Units Percentage of Change

renter-occupied units has decreased slightly from 1960 to 1990.

New construction of more than 32,039 units since 1980 has increased housing opportunities for many. Nonetheless, a 1990 survey of Omaha area residents, conducted by the Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR), indicated that residents with household incomes below \$30,000, and minority residents, are less likely to find satisfactory housing than others. This problem exists for both home buyers as well as renters. Residents living east of 72nd Street and north of Blondo are most likely to have difficulty finding housing which meets their needs in terms of both cost and quality.

Jobs, Employment and Income

In general, Omaha has had a relatively healthy economy, characterized by a stability that avoids the “boom and bust” cycles which other areas of the U.S. experience. Census data from 1990 shows an overall unemployment rate for Douglas County of 4.2%. This is a remarkably low rate compared to other American cities. Still, the benefits of low unemployment and increasing income levels are lacking for a significant portion of Omaha’s residents.

This data also identifies an area north of Dodge Street and east of 30th Street as having the highest unemployment rate in Douglas County (with portions of the area having unemployment rates over 20%). In addition, the CPAR survey mentioned in the previous section estimates the number of under-employed residents in that area to be over 31%.

During the eighties, Omaha experienced a shift in the location of jobs. In 1980, 59% of all jobs were located east of 60th Street, and 41% were found west of 60th Street. By 1987 however, the shares of employment had reversed, with 48% of the city’s employment east of 60th Street and 52% located west of 60th (See Figure 4).

Adjusting for inflation, the 1990 census data shows that in Douglas County, per capita income increased 9.2% and median family income increased 0.3% since 1980. Most families with incomes below 80% of the median live east of 42nd Street. Most families with incomes below 50% of the median are located generally east of 42nd Street between Fort and Pacific. The percentage of persons living below poverty level in Douglas County increased from 9.9% in 1980 to 10.8% in 1990.

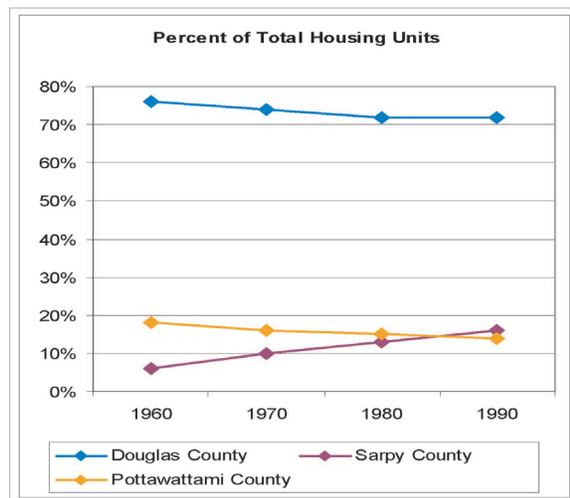


Figure 2

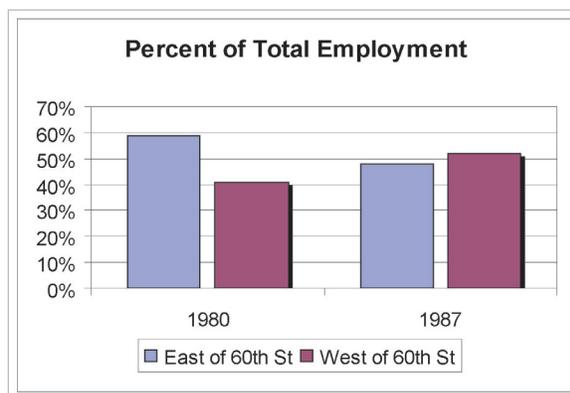


Figure 4

Retail Services

Consumer preference data for the Omaha area (1992 Omaha World Herald Consumer Preference Study) indicates a disparity in the availability of retail and personal services to residents in different areas (See Figure 5). The metro area west of 72nd, where 34% of the metro area residents live, accounts for 61% of metro shopping. By contrast, only 6% of the metro shopping takes place east of 72nd Street, an area home to 35% of metro area consumers. The lack of commercial services in the older areas of Omaha results in people of lower income having to spend more time and money traveling to obtain goods that they need.

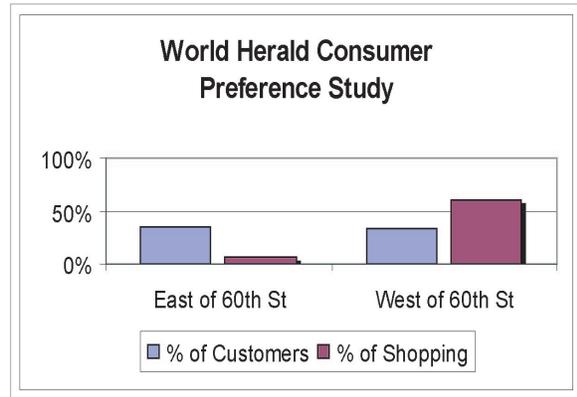


Figure 5

Land Use

Between 1960 and 1990, the physical area within Omaha's city limits has increased 100% (See Figure 6). This increase is attributable to increased vacant land, street right-of-way and public land, a pattern of lower density commercial, office, and parking lot development, and an increase in households in comparison to population (fewer persons per household). Between 1960 and 1985, the physical size of the city doubled, while the proportion of vacant land within the city increased 200%. The share of land used for street right of way increased by 127%.

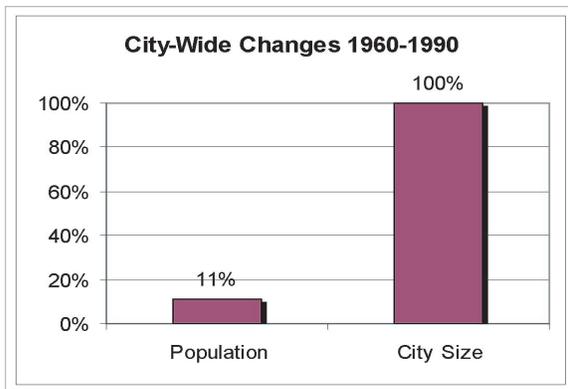


Figure 6

According to the City's 1985 land use survey, since 1960, the proportion of land used for housing within the city declined, while lower density auto-oriented patterns of retail and office development took an increasing share. Commercial development west of 72nd Street has one-half the amount of retail space per acre compared to the commercial development east of 72nd. New office development west of 72nd has one-fifth the square footage per acre as that of office developments east of 72nd.

Property Values

Overall, property values in Omaha have increased regularly. As with most cities, certain areas have increased at a lesser rate compared to the rest of the city. A comparison of the average sales values for homes in different areas of the city (1985 to 1990) reveals that while average value city-wide grew by 20%, homes in the area east of 42nd Street increased only 12%.

Although portions of Omaha's Downtown are healthy, as a whole several roles of Downtown have declined over the past 20 years. Significant public investment has been made to stabilize and maintain the health of the Central Business District re-establishing its role as a corporate employment, entertainment and cultural center. These successes have challenged the decline of the CBD's proportional valuation, which fell from 9.4% to 5.2% (1970 - 1990) of the city's total property value. The property values of the Downtown area grew more slowly than the city-wide property values, due to new construction further west, and businesses moving to new suburban locations.

Growth and Development

Omaha's growth has been steady and has outpaced many other cities. The primary new development areas have been located on the urban fringe, and Omaha's growth pattern has continued a westward focus, focused on the West Center, West Dodge and West Maple corridors to the west of I-680. Over 93% of all newly constructed housing units - an average of 2,069 units per year - were built west of 72nd Street between 1985 and 1990. However, as suburban growth draws further from Downtown, the older areas of the city experience economic and housing decline. Between 1985 and 1990, only 3.3% of the new homes were built east of 42nd Street, while 72.6% were constructed west of I-680. At the same time, over 200 units per year were demolished in the eastern-most portion of the city, amounting to 95% of all housing demolition. The result is a net loss of over 125 housing units per year in the area east of 42nd Street (See Figure 7).

Vacant tax delinquent property has increased substantially in older areas of Omaha. Land Reutilization Authority (LRA) figures show a rise from approximately 240 properties in 1981 to 2600 properties in 1991.

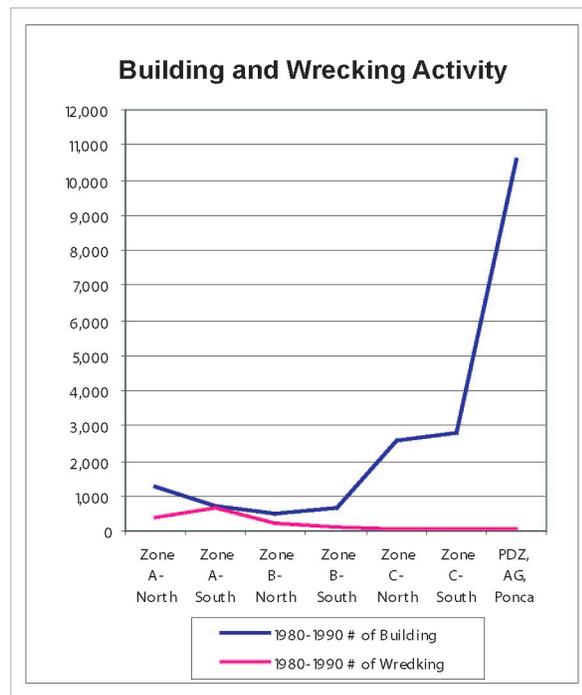


Figure 7

Urban Environment

In the 1991 CPAR survey of Omaha area residents, the quality of the environment was rated one of the community's top three concerns. In the same survey the quality of the environment was rated as the priority problem in the respondent's neighborhood. Omahans recognize that their satisfaction with their neighborhoods is related to our ability to protect and enhance the city's physical setting, natural resources and access to parks and open spaces.

Resource consumption and waste generation in the urban environment are critical determinants of a community's sustainability. Studies have been conducted which estimate resources consumed and the waste and pollution generated by a hypothetical city. These studies indicate that a city of Omaha's size converts their resources (food, fuel, water etc.) into an estimated 425 tons of air pollutants (nearly half generated by road transportation) and an average of 80 million gallons of sewage daily. In addition, a 1984 MAPA (Metropolitan Area Planning Agency) report estimated that Douglas and Sarpy Counties produce over 1,400 tons of garbage and over 680 tons of construction/demolition debris daily. These volumes are likely increasing as growth continues.

If not carefully done, urban development will continue to consume significant amounts of land and result in both temporary and permanent damage to the natural environment. A University of Nebraska-Omaha survey of native prairie remnants remaining in 1979 identified an estimated 130 acres of prairie divided between nine sites. In 1989 an estimated 78 acres in six sites remained, a reduction of 40% over the



Downtown Omaha

ten-year period.

In Omaha's jurisdiction, an estimated 33,000 acres of agricultural land were developed between 1960 and 1990. Studies estimate that annual soil loss (in the form of sediment) from light development is 10,000 tons/square mile per year in comparison to 100 tons/square mile/year from woodland. Sediment loss from heavy development is estimated to be ten times that lost during light development. For Omaha, this would amount to a loss of between 1/2 million to 5 million tons of soil in the past 30 years. In addition, the quality of Omaha's waterways is directly affected by significant amounts of sediment, polluting and silting the city's streams, rivers, and lakes.

Over 150 sites are known to have been used as various types of landfills in the Omaha jurisdiction over the past 30 years. (Other information indicates there are many other unidentified sites upon which materials have been illegally dumped.) Often, scenic wooded ravines, intermittent streams, and floodplain areas are targeted for landfills and dump sites due to the constraints which those environmental features place on urban development. Nearly one-third of the city's known landfills are located in the Ponca Hills area, and over one-third are in ravines in South Omaha See Map 1-Landfill Locations in the Appendix). Another 15% of the sites are in designated floodplains, with the remainder scattered primarily throughout North and Northwest Omaha.

Public Services

Omaha has a long and successful tradition of long-range capital programming to provide services and facilities in a predictable manner at lower costs to taxpayers. It is, therefore, a matter of concern that Omaha's population growth of 11% since 1960 has been far exceeded by growth in the costs of providing public services.

Although the city's population increased, population density decreased from 9.2 to 5.1 persons per acre between 1960 and 1990, while the area of the city doubled. Consumer preferences, transportation options, government policies, financing mechanisms, construction techniques and other trends and constraints all work together to encourage lower density development. Consequently, each person pays for an increased amount of streets, sewers and other infrastructure, as well as increased public safety costs.

Jurisdictional boundaries also create financial disparities, especially in the suburban areas outside of Omaha which benefit from services which the city provides. Since 1970, the 72% increase in population in those areas outside the city was accompanied by an increased need for street widenings, parks, libraries, and other facilities for which Omaha residents must plan, build and pay (See Figure 8).

Furthermore, the loss of housing and population from older areas of the city reduces service

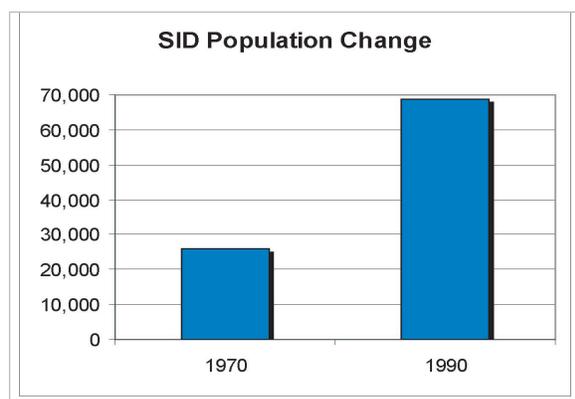


Figure 8

efficiency as vacant land expands in those areas. The high rate of demolition east of 42nd Street, and the extensive increase in vacant land within the city, indicate that the amount of vacant land with streets, sewers, and other public services is increasing significantly. Vacant land does not generate adequate taxes to pay for infrastructure or other services. According to a study conducted in 1989 by the City Planning Department, overall capital improvement needs for the Omaha area between 1989 and 2004 were estimated at almost \$900 million, while anticipated revenues were projected at only \$460 million.

Since 1950, there has been an increasing orientation toward auto-dependent development patterns in Omaha. This is evident when comparing street patterns of subdivisions developed before and after that time. By 1960, Omaha's street pattern consisted predominantly of "dense networks". At that time, 17% of the city's land was used for street right-of-way. In older areas of the city, access was possible via any number of routes. By 1985 however, the newer areas of the city were developed on a "sparse hierarchy" pattern of

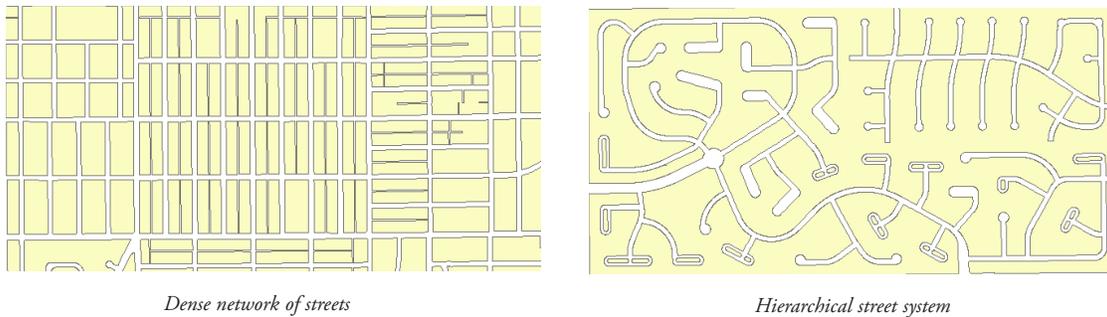


Figure 9

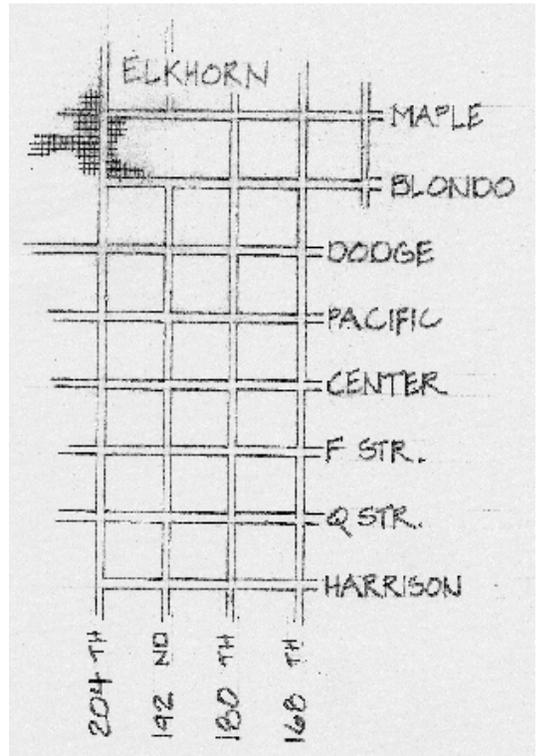
expressways, major and minor arterials, collectors, and local streets. Local streets were designed to provide access for local traffic, not for access through an area, and they often ended in cul-de-sacs. Because the major streets provided the only through access, they had to be much wider to accommodate huge volumes of traffic. Land used for street right-of-way had risen to 21% of the city's total land area by 1985 (See Figure 9).

Experience has shown that additional right-of-way, more streets, and wider streets do not provide a long-term solution to traffic congestion, as traffic increases to meet the capacity of the streets. For example, the 1990 Omaha Conditions Survey conducted by CPAR, named "street conditions" and "traffic congestion" in the top 10 worst things about Omaha, despite the fact that today more land is devoted to streets than in the past. The increased street right-of-way from 1960 to 1990 has been more than offset by the 213% increase in the number of vehicle registrations during the same period.

Sewers, when combined with dense network street patterns, allow the city to be compact and contiguous. For example, an area with sewers and a dense network of streets, such as central Omaha, has a housing density which averages 4.4 units per acre. In suburban Omaha, an area with sewers and a "sparse hierarchy" street pattern, there is an average of 2.1 units per acre. In the rural areas outside of Omaha, served only by septic systems, the number of housing units per acre is less than one. Omaha will achieve a signifi-

cantly higher development potential when sewers are utilized along with the dense network street configuration. This is crucial if the city's growth is to continue to be dominant in the metropolitan area. In the estimated 22 square miles remaining between Omaha and Elkhorn, at current housing construction rates, the higher density development pattern would allow for nearly 62,000 housing units—approximately a 40-year supply of homes, while the current suburban pattern would develop nearly 30,000 units—a 20-year supply. The rural pattern would result in approximately 13,000 units, or a ten year supply (See Figure 10).

Omaha and its jurisdiction currently have a total of over 200 park sites adding up to roughly 9,140 acres of park land. Three dam site lakes, Cunningham Lake, Zorinsky Lake and Standing Bear Lake, comprise 33% of that total area. Newly developing subdivisions are constructing trails along the Papillion Creek system, creating heavily-used recreation corridors and amenity value to neighborhoods. Yet, additional park land for recreational facilities is not always provided where needed. As a result, larger parks like those found in Omaha's original system of parks and boulevards are notably lacking in portions of the city west of 72nd Street. In addition, portions of the older areas of the city are unserved or underserved for certain facilities such as soccer, which have become popular since the time that those parks were developed.



Current Urban Density
 62,000 units = 40 Year supply of homes
Current Suburban Density
 30,000 units = 20 Year supply of homes
Rural Subdivision Density
 13,000 units = 10 year supply of homes

Figure 10
 Suburban Development

Goals

In order to achieve the vision set forth earlier, and address the issues identified in the last section, we first must establish a clear course of action. We must identify and agree upon the essential goals toward which the community's efforts should be directed. When applied together with the concepts, and objectives contained in the next section, the following goals will serve as the foundation for future growth, development and revitalization of the city.

1. Manage the growth of the city

- Be pro-active rather than reactive regarding development
- Establish a contiguous and compact pattern of growth
- Prevent new strip office/commercial development
- Create a series of high-density, mixed-use areas throughout the city
- Increase the city's market share of the metropolitan growth
- Evaluate and create fiscal policies which adequately manage the growth of the city

2. Develop and maintain a positive city image

- Strengthen the CBD as the city's "image center"
- Provide public amenities which enhance the city's image
- Preserve and protect unique natural and historic features which serve as a foundation for Omaha's overall image

3. Promote and maintain a high quality of urban design

- Create an "attractive" physical environment
- Ensure the cohesive and interrelated design of projects
- Emphasize people in the design of streetscapes
- Reduce sign redundancy and clutter

4. Preserve and promote the city's physical, ethnic, and cultural heritage

- Preserve historic structures
- Draw on the rich, diverse ethnic heritage of the city
- Expand and improve the city's cultural amenities

5. Create healthy and diverse neighborhoods throughout the city

- Reverse deterioration in older areas of the central city
- Promote the creation of a full range of jobs
- Conserve existing stable neighborhoods
- Encourage private investment
- Ensure good quality housing
- Encourage home ownership
- Promote the construction of affordable housing

- Ensure a mix of housing patterns, types and styles
 - Prevent negative changes to neighborhood character (slip-ins/conversions/spot zoning)
 - Ensure a mix of necessary retail and personal services in all areas
6. Protect our natural systems and environmental quality
- Protect the city's natural systems
 - Ensure that development is sustainable and can be supported by the natural environment
 - Preserve and protect sensitive natural features
 - Incorporate natural features into the design of the city
7. Provide public services efficiently and equitably
- Ensure that those who benefit help pay for the city services they receive
 - Ensure that sanitary sewers are extended in an orderly fashion
 - Utilize open drainageways as multi-use, open space corridors
 - Create an interconnected park and open-space system
 - Provide an equitable distribution of recreation amenities and services
 - Link transportation and land use planning and match street sizes to surrounding land use
 - Reduce traffic congestion and costs by shifting from a “sparse hierarchy” to a more balanced transportation pattern with more emphasis on a “dense network” street system.



Abbott Drive

Concepts and Objectives

Urban Form

Image Center

ISSUES:

The 1989 Ross Boyle Economic Development Study, prepared for the City of Omaha and the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, noted that Omaha needed to develop a clear and positive national and regional image. It went on to say that without this image Omaha could be hindered in its business recruitment efforts. At the same time, the overall growth of the city had begun to lessen the historic focus on the downtown as the city's image center and created the possibility that without action Omaha could develop the image of “Anytown U.S.A.”.

CONCEPT:

→ Omaha’s Downtown will be the clear and positive “image center” for the city. The types of activities necessary to create, enhance and maintain that image will be identified and located in Downtown.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The Downtown - Old Market - Riverfront area should be Omaha’s “image center”.
2. The Downtown/Riverfront area should contain a wide variety of activities and facilities, but should focus on being the location for: major governmental offices, major corporate offices, major cultural/entertainment facilities, major public open spaces and attractions, major convention/hotel facilities, educational facilities, and specialty retail and residential facilities.
3. Preserve important historic buildings in the Downtown/Old Market/ Riverfront area.
4. Improve public access to the Missouri River.



Omaha's Riverfront

Growth and Revitalization

ISSUES:

During the last thirty years Omaha has experienced healthy overall employment, population, household and physical growth rates. However, these positive trends are not uniform across the city. Also, like many American cities, Omaha's population and household growth was slower than its physical expansion leading to an increasing gap between the cost of providing services and city revenues. A lag between new development and construction of public facilities and a lack of coordination between land use and street patterns have resulted in inadequate public facilities in some newer areas and traffic congestion in others. Some older areas of the city have seen increases in deterioration, loss of housing and a shift in the concentration of jobs. Areas beyond the city's financial jurisdiction, including Sarpy County, are experiencing growth and an increasing share of the metro area's population, housing and jobs. Omaha's challenge is to reverse these trends, to revitalize declining areas, to preserve jobs and to ensure that adequate streets, sewers, parks and other public facilities are provided to serve new development.

CONCEPT:

→ 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 (See Figures 11 and 12).

OBJECTIVES:

1. The City of Omaha should actively plan for and promote the growth of the city. New development on the city's suburban fringe should be "contiguous" to existing development.
2. 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.

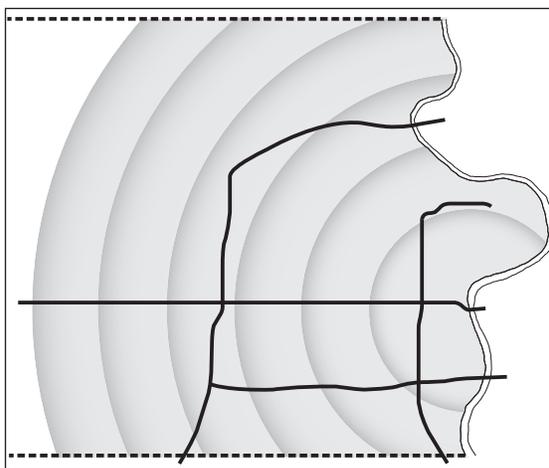


Figure 11
Balanced Growth

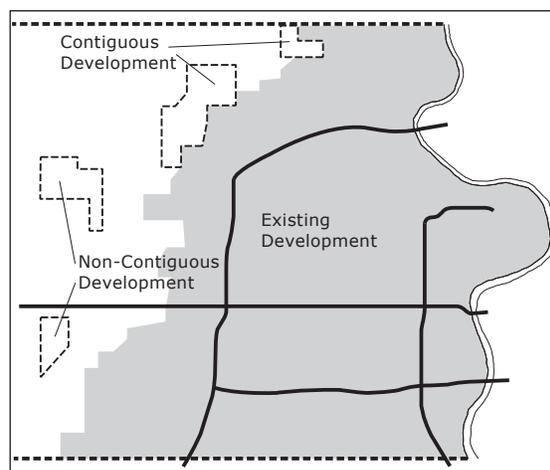


Figure 12
Contiguous Growth

City Form/Development Patterns

ISSUES:

Since World War II changes have occurred in the pattern of development in Omaha and across the country. Shifts from higher density to lower density land use patterns, from pedestrian and mass transit to auto-oriented transportation, and from “dense network” to “sparse hierarchy” street systems have contributed to: decreased office/commercial and housing densities, increased strip commercial, traffic congestion and sign clutter, piecemeal growth, higher public service costs, and jurisdictional limits to growth and tax base.

CONCEPT:

→ The City will utilize a pattern of growth that is based on a series of activity centers of varying sizes serving different parts of the metropolitan area. These will range from small centers serving a surrounding neighborhood to the downtown which serves as the dominant center for the entire region (See Figure 13).

OBJECTIVES:

1. Omaha should incorporate aspects of both “concentric” and “multi-nodal” forms of growth. The resulting pattern would be a modified “multi-nodal” form with the Downtown/Riverfront at the core and the other centers relating to the core and each other according to their function.
2. The Downtown/Riverfront should be considered the city’s dominant node serving as a center for the region.
3. A few major metropolitan-wide centers such as the I-680/West Dodge node should be created with each containing a variety of metropolitan level office, retail, housing, open space and entertainment uses.
4. Other centers serving smaller sections of the city should also be developed.

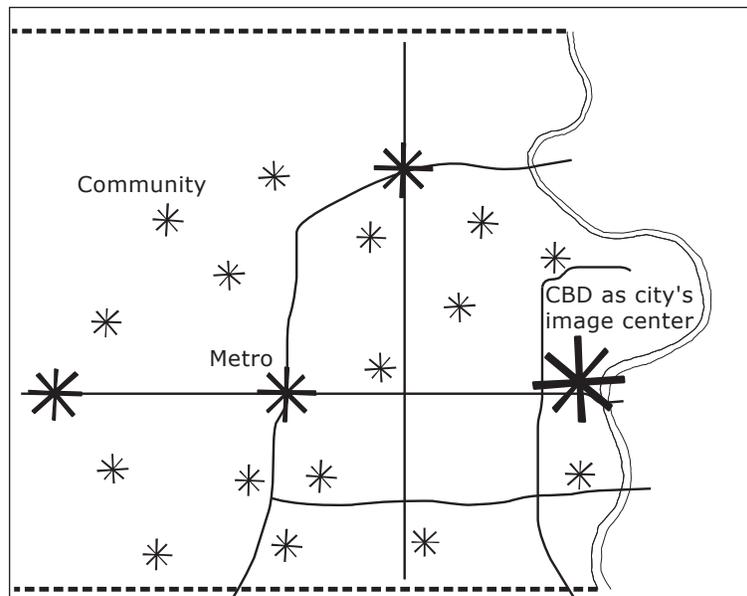


Figure 13
Mixed-Use Centers Concept

CONCEPT:

- The basic development pattern for Omaha will be based on a series of high-density mixed-use areas 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.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The City should be very pro-active in establishing the basic development patterns of Omaha and its jurisdiction.
2. A series of mixed-use areas containing, at a minimum, a combination of employment, shopping, personal services, open space and multi-family uses should be utilized in order to help relieve traffic congestion, allow for a more efficient use of mass transit, and help reverse the current pattern of strip commercial development. Educational, medical, cultural and community facilities should also be located in mixed-use areas, although these uses will be dependent on need and the size of the mixed-use area. (For example, a college or university would be appropriate in a metropolitan sized area and not in a neighborhood center.)



West Dodge Business Park

Urban Design

Architecture and Site Design

ISSUES:

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. Quality architecture and site planning can also ensure that projects are designed with adequate attention given to their surroundings.

CONCEPT:

- The City of Omaha will ensure that areas of the city are cohesive in terms of appearance and function. The City will require that proposed projects be considered within the context of their surroundings and that they be consistent with an overall design concept that considers the interrelationship of buildings, parking, open space, pedestrian movement and existing site features.

OBJECTIVES:

1. New construction should be visually and functionally compatible with its surroundings in terms of scale, form, proportion, detail, quality of material and land use.
2. Groups of buildings and building complexes should be cohesive in terms of appearance and function, allow for pleasant and logical pedestrian movement and form attractive open spaces and plazas.
3. Efforts should be made to preserve existing site features such as mature trees, natural drainage ways and wetlands and topography.
4. Groups of buildings and building complexes should be considered, for purposes of design, as areas rather than a series of independent projects. Parking should be an integral part of an overall design concept.



Millard Branch Library

Pedestrian Systems

ISSUES:

Some projects are designed only for the automobile, with little consideration for pedestrians, mass transit, or pedestrian amenities. This approach results in a lack of options and decreased mobility for those without access to automobiles. The use of bicycle and pedestrian trails and mass transit for access to centers of employment, shopping and entertainment is not always considered in the design of the city.

CONCEPT:

→ A pedestrian and open space system will be employed to facilitate pedestrian and other non-mechanized movement between areas of the city and to link low-density residential and high-density mixed-use areas together.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Pedestrian and open space systems should be developed to link areas of the city together and should include amenities such as landscaping, seating, lighting and bicycle paths.
2. Sidewalks should be provided in all areas of the city.



Field Club Trail

General Design Quality

ISSUES:

A high quality of design in the built environment is considered important to the image of a city and its ability to attract tourists and outside investment. Local government plays an important role in setting the standard of design in a community through the design of public facilities. A poor quality of design in public buildings indicates that the community does not care about its general appearance and sends a message that poor quality development is acceptable.

CONCEPT:

→ The City of Omaha will utilize a combination of incentives, policies, and design review procedures to attain a high degree of design quality in Omaha, in its own projects - such as public spaces and civic buildings - and in the private sector.

OBJECTIVES:

1. City government should set a high standard of design in its own work and encourage a high standard of design in the private sector.
2. Omaha should have high quality public spaces, landscaping, parks, civic buildings, monuments, bridges, boulevards and street furnishings.
3. Omaha should promote high quality design for its major civic, corporate and other image making buildings and building projects.
4. Public art should be an important consideration in the community's development.



Quest Center

Streetscape

ISSUES:

The design quality and maintenance of major entries into a city have an effect on the city's image. 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.

CONCEPT:

→ Omaha's streets will be made more attractive through increased landscaping, and through the tighter regulation of signs and adjacent land uses. The density of signs and sign clutter will be reduced as part of the concept. The historic park and boulevard system will be retained and enhanced. Special consideration will be given to the beautification of major entries into Omaha in order to improve our city's image.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Omaha's major urban corridors should be attractive, visually cohesive and well landscaped. Signs should not be the dominant visual feature of the street and should be limited to those needed for identification and traffic control.
2. Screening and/or buffering such as fencing, berms and landscaping should be utilized along major corridors. The design and placement of these elements should be coordinated to ensure an attractive and cohesive appearance for both residents and motorists.
3. Major entries into Omaha, such as Abbott Drive, the interstate and Dodge Street should be attractively designed and portray a positive image. The visual qualities of land-uses adjacent to major entries should be considered.
4. Consideration should be given to landscaping all thoroughfares in Omaha's jurisdiction, from the interstate system to residential streets. A street landscaping system should be developed to determine the degree of landscaping appropriate for each street type.
5. Omaha's historic parks and boulevard system should be retained and enhanced. The treatment of selected major thoroughfares such as parkways should be considered.



Old Market

Conservation

ISSUES:

Existing older building stock represents a massive investment in building materials, labor and time. Reutilizing older buildings makes use of this investment, reduces the cost of changing utilities and services in older areas, and reduces the need for new services in developing areas. It is important to consider the degree to which we conserve our existing older building stock. Historic buildings and districts are a reflection of a city's heritage, are related to a city's character and image, and have an impact on its ability to attract tourists, new residents and outside investment. It is important to consider the degree to which we preserve, protect, and renovate buildings and districts associated with our city's history.

CONCEPT:

→ Our important older buildings and areas will be preserved.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Omaha's sound, existing building stock, older neighborhoods and older business districts should be conserved and enhanced. Awareness of Omaha's unique physical features, and cultural and ethnic identity should be recognized and enhanced for both city residents and visitors to the community.
2. Infill that is compatible with its surroundings in scale, design and use, should be encouraged in older neighborhoods. Appropriate contemporary uses should be found for sound, underutilized older buildings, when possible.
3. A range of historic buildings and areas representative of Omaha's varied social and architectural history should be retained.



North 24th Street

Cultural Amenities

ISSUES:

The degree to which cultural amenities such as libraries, museums, zoos, major sports facilities, etc. are available to the average citizen plays an important role in a city's overall quality of life and its ability to attract outside investment.

CONCEPT:

→ Omaha will be served by a full range of cultural amenities.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Omaha should expand and preserve its existing cultural resources and pursue additional amenities such as a science center, libraries, a botanical garden and public spaces for community wide events.



Omaha's Botanical Garden

Housing and Community Development

Development Patterns and Affordable Housing

ISSUES:

In older areas of the city, demolition of housing units has outpaced new construction resulting in a significant loss of housing in the central city. An assessment of neighborhood conditions shows that significant portions of the area east of 42nd Street are in need of public assistance or special incentives for private development to return those neighborhoods to health. Indications of stress are also beginning to show in areas west of 72nd Street. Social service agencies indicate that there is a high demand for housing in the older areas of Omaha.



New Housing

However, nearly all of the new housing which has been built in those areas has been publicly funded. Due to a variety of factors such as financing and land assembly, private investment is very low in the older areas of the city.

Economic opportunity is also related to social and racial attitudes. Where racial and income segregation are identified, so too exist related obstacles to having adequate, affordable housing for Omaha's minority population. Eastern and central city areas have the highest unemployment rates and the largest share of households with low- and moderate-incomes. Housing for the homeless, disabled and other similar special needs groups is disproportionately concentrated in the older, eastern portions of the city. This results in fewer options of location for those residents and puts additional pressure on inner-city neighborhoods to accommodate placement of those facilities.

Financial institutions report that it is becoming more difficult for moderate/middle-income families to purchase affordable housing. Quality housing is especially difficult to locate and provide for lower income families. In suburban areas, the high cost of land and the need for higher valuations to help pay the cost of new infrastructure, deter low-cost housing construction. Flexible subdivision and design standards have been found by some cities to help reduce housing construction costs.

CONCEPT:

- The City will ensure that policies and programs are in place to create healthy and diverse neighborhoods and ensure that Omahans can find affordable housing throughout the city.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The City will reverse the causes that have traditionally led to patterns of deterioration. The City will establish incentives for development and redevelopment, based on existing needs. (More in areas with greater needs, less in areas with fewer needs).

2. Incentives for inner city development must be provided.
3. The City will establish practices and guidelines which ensure that Omahans have access to all styles and types of housing in a multiple of market ranges, throughout the city.
4. It is important that choices and opportunities are available for Omahans to find affordable housing throughout the city.
5. The City will encourage the development of infill housing which makes use of vacant land and existing under-utilized central city infrastructure.
6. The City will establish financial incentives to encourage new housing development in the central city.
7. The use of innovative site planning and design techniques will be encouraged as a way to reduce overall development costs (See Figure 14).
8. The City will streamline approval process procedures for platting, replatting, zoning changes, and site plan review in order to shorten review time frames and reduce development costs.
9. The City will encourage development of special needs housing throughout the city.

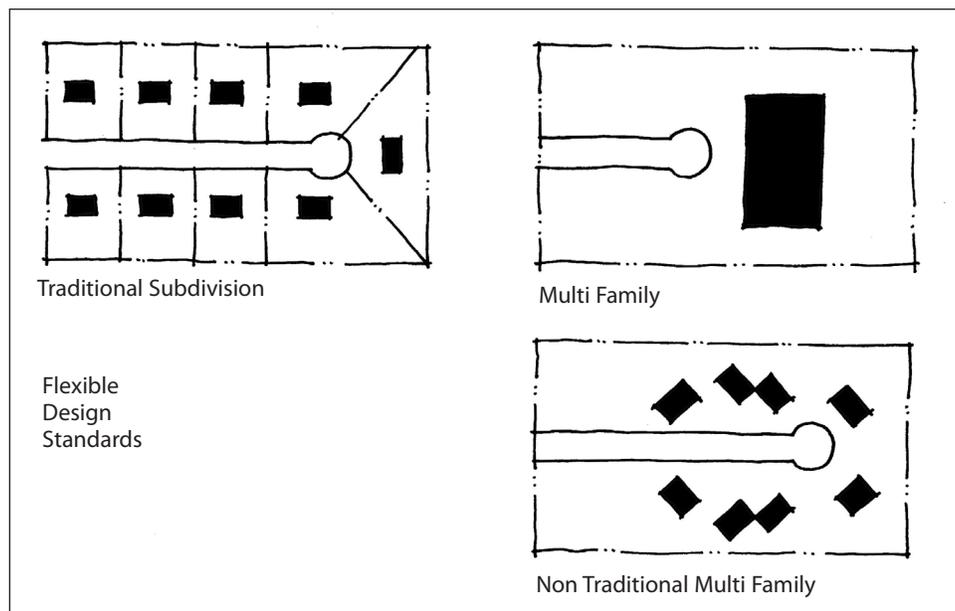


Figure 14
Subdivision Design Standards

Housing Conservation and Rehabilitation

ISSUES:

Areas where the majority of the housing stock needs extensive assistance are generally located in the eastern and central city, while areas needing moderate assistance have grown westward. Poor housing conditions, a decline in responsible property maintenance, absentee landlords, insufficient code enforcement, single-family to multi-family conversions, “slip-in” apartments, rezonings and variances to local ordinances, and large-scale land use changes have contributed to the expansion of deterioration in older areas. The City’s CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) program, focusing on efforts to conserve established neighborhoods and to preserve and expand housing stock in those neighborhoods, has experienced reductions in funding since the early 1980s.

CONCEPT:

→ Mechanisms to monitor and programs to maintain housing stability and neighborhood viability will be utilized by the City to ensure the preservation of the existing housing stock and to prevent detrimental changes to the neighborhood.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The City will identify existing neighborhoods in need of housing conservation and rehabilitation and will not pursue large scale relocation of residents, condemnation, and demolition of existing housing within said areas.
2. Rezoning, conversions, and “slip-in” apartments will be discouraged in conservation areas and special regulations and improved code enforcement will be implemented to encourage conservation and rehabilitation.
3. The City will encourage the preservation and renovation of existing housing stock and historic sites and structures through a variety of methods including the use of incentives.
4. New development should be consistent with the character of older neighborhoods, except in areas designated for extensive redevelopment.

Economic and Community Development

ISSUES:

The 1989 Ross Boyle report stated that although Omaha as a whole is thriving, not everyone in the community shared in the prosperity. It said that minority populations have significantly higher unemployment and lower incomes than most of Omaha's residents and indicated that acts of racism in Omaha create barriers to fully achieving economic development objectives and to projecting a strong, positive image.

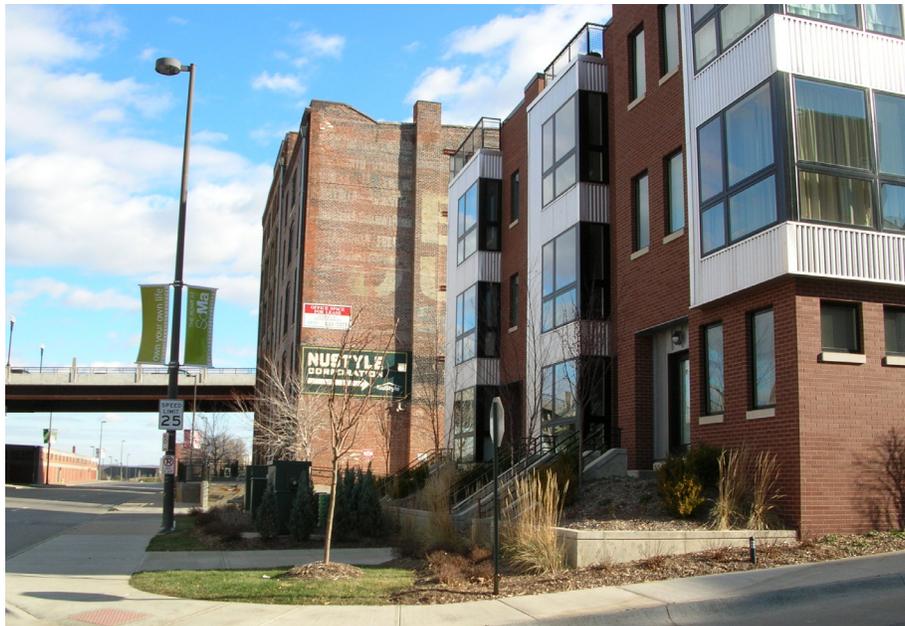
The shift in retail/commercial services and employment westward has left older neighborhoods with a lack of services and employment opportunities in comparison to the rest of the city. This creates an additional burden on residents of the central city, who must travel further for those service and employment opportunities.

CONCEPT:

→ Policies and programs will be established and maintained to create employment opportunities and to provide equitable levels of service to areas within the central city which have experienced declines in employment and infrastructure deterioration.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The City will promote redevelopment to provide a broader range of employment, retail, service and housing opportunities within central city areas identified as having the greatest needs.
2. The City will assist in upgrading existing central city infrastructure in order to accommodate economic and community development.



The Rows at SOMA

Environment

Sustainability

ISSUES:

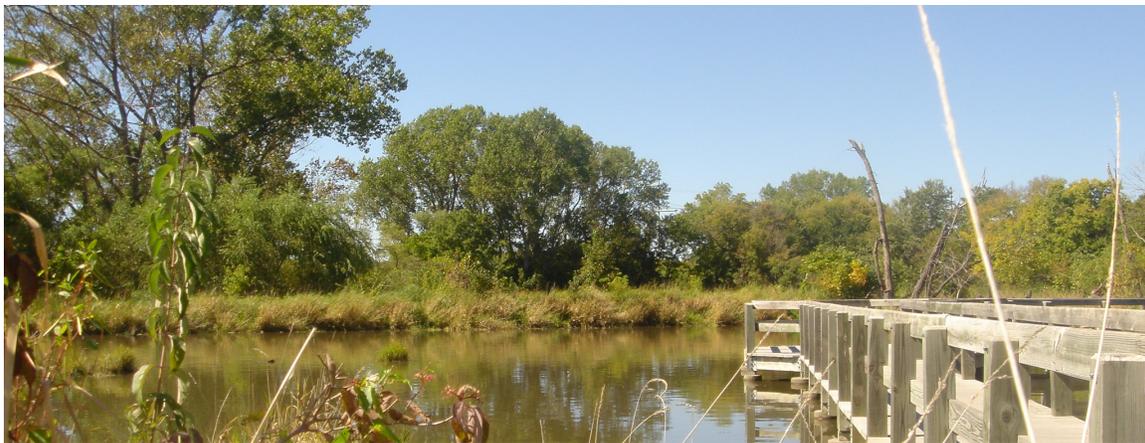
Humans and the natural environment need to be considered as inter-connected parts of a larger ecosystem. A community striving for a sustainable quality of life must consider the long-term health of both humans and natural resources. Working with, rather than against, natural systems can provide cost-saving efficiencies. For example, setting aside open space along natural drainage ways provides for flood storage and recreational use while also preserving natural features. Conversely, creating flood control reservoirs without controlling erosion and water quality within the lake's watershed will lead to costly dredging and reduce the lake's value as an amenity and fishery. Other special concerns in the Omaha area are loss of important farmland and the adequacy and quality of aquifers serving our water supply.

CONCEPT:

→ The long term effects of development on the environment and the finite nature of natural resources will be considered in all city projects, as well as in all private development. Emphasis will be placed on maintaining the health of environmental systems and protecting natural features at the initial stages of design for development.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Conservation of natural resources and concern for the long term effects of actions on natural systems must be a primary consideration in City decisions.
2. The City must be designed in a way which ensures that long term growth will support and sustain its surrounding natural environment.
3. Promote the use of alternative energy in the construction and rehabilitation of buildings and in overall site design.



Heron Haven

Important Natural Features

ISSUES:

Some of Omaha's natural features have been incorporated into our public open space system, providing benefits for recreation and education as well as enhancing the city's overall image and attractiveness. On the other hand, many of our natural features have been degraded and destroyed. Landfills have invaded wooded ravines, prairie remnants have been destroyed, streams have been eroded by increased runoff, and lakes have been polluted by silt. Although certain features have some measure of protection under Federal or local regulations, the degree of protection is limited. Filling of wetlands is regulated but dredging is not; disturbing slopes and vegetation in the North Hills area is regulated but disturbing wooded ravines is not.

CONCEPT:

→ Regulations, incentives and policies for the preservation, protection and re-establishment of sensitive natural features will be developed and enforced. Emphasis will be placed on the modification of development proposals to accommodate and protect natural features rather than modification of natural features to accommodate development. When modification of a natural feature is allowed, mitigation procedures and penalties will be utilized to compensate for the damage and/or loss.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Effective measures must be taken to ensure that lakes, rivers, wildlife habitat, wooded hills, ravines and waterways, natural springs, loess bluffs, prairies, rock outcrops, and steep slopes are protected from destruction. Special consideration will be given to wetlands and the Missouri River bluffs.
2. Actions which diminish the value or function of these natural features may be allowed provided they do not immediately or ultimately destroy the feature.
3. Development which results in the removal and/or damage of important natural features should be required to mitigate the damaging effects.



Riverfront

Environmental Quality

ISSUES:

Our natural environment must be healthy for the community to experience a high quality of life. If our air, water, and land are polluted, the overall health of the city and its residents suffer. Studies show that urban areas tend to be hotter than the surrounding countryside due to a lack of large “green” spaces, heat generated by urban activities, and the large number of heat-retaining building and paved areas. Land use decisions must also consider the compatibility of uses in terms of noise generated by transportation, industry, and other activities which cause discomfort and health problems. If not properly controlled, all agricultural and urban activities can adversely affect water quality and the health of waterways resulting in a loss of quality for drinking water, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

Higher intensity floods, erosion of waterways and increased urban pollution result from hard surfacing which drains additional water into streams and lakes. Capital-intensive solutions such as channelizing waterways in order to stabilize banks from erosion and move floodwater quickly downstream have resulted in the loss of trees and wildlife habitat along streams. Although floodplain regulations are designed to permit floodplain development while reducing flood damage, economic losses and damage can still occur during floods in developed areas.

CONCEPT:

→ By setting an example with its own projects, as well as developing policies and incentives for private development, the City will promote a more efficient, environmentally safe, clean city. Mitigation measures will be required for all development which results in pollution.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The City will make every effort to protect and improve the overall quality of our environment.
2. Omahans must work in a pro-active manner to prevent environmental degradation and eliminate waste and environmental pollution at the source, rather than addressing the problems after they arise.
3. Whenever possible, those who generate pollution must be required to mitigate the damage.

Urban Form and Design

ISSUES:

Increased land consumption and loss of natural features result from lower density development patterns. This pattern also increases auto-dependency, energy consumption and air and water pollution. Extremely low density, acreage-type development restricts future standard suburban development, reduces the efficiency of providing public services, consumes large amounts of agricultural land, and creates agriculture vs. residential conflicts.

Energy conservation and increased energy efficiency can provide economic benefits while reducing pollution and resource consumption. The City’s development pattern and its design and construction standards affect the degree to which this is achieved.

CONCEPT:

- Policies which emphasize higher density development, adaptive reuse, and infill will be used to reduce farmland and energy consumption, increase access to natural features, reduce flooding, and improve water quality. The expansion of the city will be regulated to prevent wasted services and loss of resources.

OBJECTIVES:

1. A balance should be established between preserving and developing important farmland around Omaha. This balance should reflect the importance of farmland preservation while allowing for efficient well-planned urban growth.
2. Restrictions should be established on the creation of rural subdivisions (large lots without urban services) in Omaha's Papillion Creek watersheds on its suburban fringe, where future extension of urban services is anticipated.
3. Current land use and development patterns should be modified to encourage reduced consumption of energy and other resources.
4. Development patterns should become more compact and require higher densities. The amount of land consumed by auto-related uses, including streets and parking lots, should be reduced.
5. Residential development should be given greater flexibility in order to provide a variety of residential development densities.
6. On sites where natural areas are set aside and their quality is preserved, higher density development should be allowed on the remaining land.
7. Limitations will be placed on filling and development in the floodplain.
8. The proportion of land used as parks should not be reduced as the city grows.
9. Additional tree cover, wildlife habitat and open space corridors should be established throughout the Omaha area (See Figure 15).
10. Existing City codes and ordinances should be modified to require a plan for improved energy efficiency.

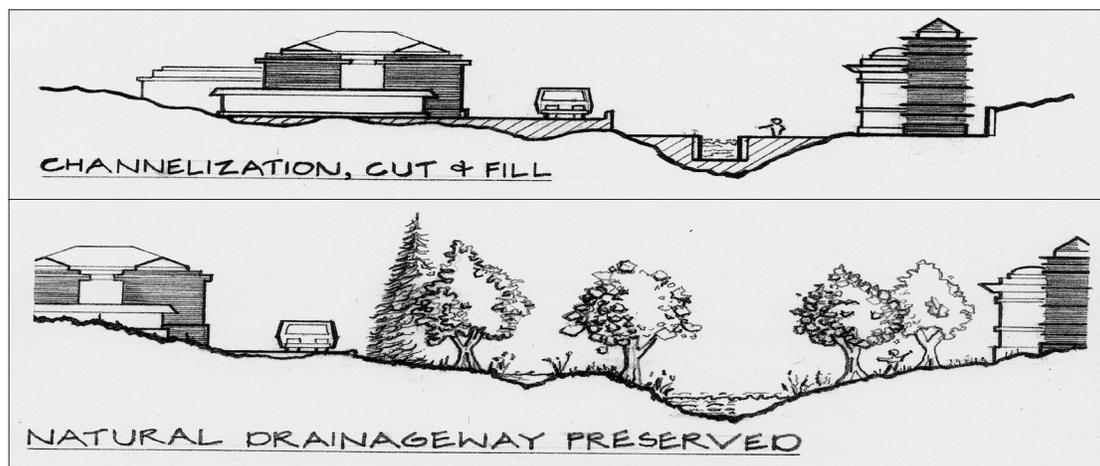


Figure 15

Infrastructure and Public Service

Public Goods and Services

ISSUES:

It is in the long-term interest of a community to provide services equitably. Growing areas of a city need new facilities while older areas require more maintenance, rehabilitation, and at times, reconstruction. Population and housing losses in older areas with existing infrastructure result in vacant parcels which reduce the efficiency of existing services and result in a higher per capita service costs. Lower density development also results in a higher per capita service cost. Growth which is not compact and contiguous creates gaps of vacant land, under utilized services, higher public service costs, and interruptions in orderly infrastructure extensions.

Residents and businesses located outside of Omaha benefit from services which the City provides and for which city residents pay. The proportion of the population within Omaha's planning jurisdiction which is located outside of the city's financial jurisdiction has increased over the past 30 years. Nearly all of Omaha's suburban development is financed through the use of Sanitary and Improvement Districts (S&IDs). This mechanism allows some of the initial site development costs to be borne directly by new residents. These costs become debt that must be paid before the City can afford to annex an S&ID. The City also issues debt to improve and rebuild its infrastructure, although at a lower proportion and at lower bond rates than S&IDs. The result is that total S&ID debt and interest rates are higher than that of the city.

CONCEPT:

→ The City of Omaha will ensure that all areas of the city are served by adequate, well-maintained infrastructure and public services. Services and facilities will serve both existing and anticipated development in an efficient, equitable, and cost effective manner. Those who benefit from City services will be required to pay for the services they receive.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Omaha will continue to provide its residents with adequate levels of public goods and services. The City will provide services that match anticipated needs and direct the desired growth of the city.
2. City services must be provided in a manner that promotes contiguous development.
3. The City will ensure the equitable distribution of public goods and services as efficiently as possible. Those who benefit from City services should be required to pay for the services they receive.
4. To ensure efficiency while promoting jurisdictional equity, the City will work with Douglas County to explore the feasibility of consolidating services.
5. Generally, development that significantly increases the cost of providing public goods and services will not be allowed unless the development provides benefits to the community that equal or exceed costs.
6. Maintenance of City facilities should be balanced with new construction. Adequate funding must be provided to ensure that existing public facilities remain in good repair.
7. The City will explore the feasibility of constructing facilities that may pump additional revenue into the local economy.
8. Possible financing techniques for public services and infrastructure improvements needed to serve new development will be incorporated into the various functional elements of the Master Plan.

Sewer

ISSUES:

Sanitary sewer service allows the city's growth to be compact and contiguous. Currently, Omaha's sewer plans guide new growth without prohibiting development. If subdivisions without sewers are allowed within watersheds planned for sewer service, they serve as a barrier to future growth, potentially increasing the cost of future sewer extensions. In watershed areas where the natural features (i.e. Ponca Hills, Elkhorn Valley) make the cost of sewer service prohibitive, individual treatment systems may be appropriate.

The Papio Watershed Sewage Treatment Plant serves many surrounding communities besides Omaha. Currently, there is adequate capacity in the trunk lines and treatment plant. However, there is a finite capacity to the system. As the system approaches capacity, the allocation of use between communities must be studied to prevent limitations to Omaha's growth.

Older areas of Omaha have combined sanitary and storm sewers, which create backup problems during storms. Also, open waterways in some areas are in need of improvement. Studies done to identify drainage improvement needs within the city indicate very high costs.

Stormwater drainage systems in new development are financed on a project-by-project basis. This results in a cost inequity for developments, lower cost upstream - higher downstream. Standards which Omaha currently uses for stormwater drainage facilities require enclosed facilities for all but very large drainageways. Public agencies are responsible for stabilization projects on major waterways. Some communities have found that utilizing open drainage facilities can save on the initial construction costs, and provide greenways which perform multiple functions, such as combined trail and utility corridors. Such measures can also be effective tools to improve water quality and reduce pollution in lakes and streams.



Flood Control with Recreational Opportunities

CONCEPT:

- Omaha’s sanitary sewer system will be constructed and maintained to meet existing and anticipated needs, to promote contiguous growth and to further the development pattern established by the Master Plan. Developments in watersheds served by sanitary sewers must connect to the system while those in unserved watersheds may use on-site systems. The City will also ensure that adequate stormwater controls are established and enforced and will integrate stormwater management into its multi-purpose open space and recreation network. New sewer construction will be balanced with on-going maintenance, separation and reconstruction needs and financing will directly connect benefits and costs.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The City will install sanitary sewers to promote contiguous growth and adherence to the Master Plan. Omaha will achieve a significantly higher development potential when sewers are utilized throughout the Papillion Creek watershed. This is critical if the city’s growth is to continue to be dominant in the metropolitan area. In those areas, where City sewers are provided or planned, low-density subdivisions with on-site sewer systems shall not be allowed. Large lot (1-5 acres) estate-type subdivisions may be allowed if they provide and pay for connections to city sewers and all other urban services.
2. Omaha will continue to maintain a sewer system that has enough excess capacity to accommodate growth expectations. The City shall continue to balance new sanitary interceptor sewer construction with financing for ongoing sewer maintenance and separation programs.
3. Future development will require plans for the provision of adequate stormwater controls. Storm sewer requirements shall accommodate the protection of wooded waterways that can be used for recreational purposes, especially as a segment of a planned trail.
4. Stormwater control will be treated as a public utility to promote the equitable distribution of costs and benefits.

Park and Recreation

ISSUES:

In 1983 the City adopted park facility service standards to ensure an equitable level of service throughout the city. Application of those standards shows gaps in service and duplication or overlap in service for some facilities in existing areas of the city. Also, west of 72nd Street, larger parks were generally not included in the planning for the new development resulting in a lack of moderate-sized public open spaces.

Often, parks and other recreational uses are located in floodplains or around unique natural features. Incorporating these features provides an opportunity to protect and utilize natural resources.

Omaha has several recreation facilities which have been developed to a higher standard which attract major tournaments and competitions, bringing money into Omaha's economy. The potential for additional facilities of this type has been identified, such as rugby fields and youth ballfields.



Moylan Ice Complex

CONCEPT:

→ The City will ensure that Omaha's park and recreation system will provide a full range of recreational services to Omahans and that developing areas contain equivalent levels of service to that of the city's. To the extent possible, the city's parks will be connected by an extensive open space network which will utilize existing boulevards, creeks, and other multi-purpose open space corridors to link existing and proposed parks. The system will be designed to protect, enhance, and incorporate natural features. Major recreational facilities will also be provided to accommodate and attract local, regional, and national events.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Omaha will continue to provide a wide range of recreational facilities and opportunities that promote reasonably equal service levels and accessibility to all city residents throughout the city. Parks will range in size from neighborhood to large regional parks
2. The City shall ensure that future suburban development will include recreation facilities that provide a level of service comparable to Omaha's.
3. As the city grows, it will continue to create and expand an interconnected park system linked by recreational trails that utilize the city's creek and boulevard networks. Along with the development of new trails, the City will strive to restore and improve the original boulevard system. The City will also strive to enhance and preserve wildlife diversity along these trails, while reducing costs, by providing low maintenance landscaping.
4. The City shall promote the development of major recreation facilities that will attract regional and national tournaments. Such facilities, whether indoor or outdoor, will be situated at locations to promote the city's image and be compatible with their surroundings.
5. The City will set aside a certain amount of appropriate parkland for the creation of wildlife habitat.

Transportation

ISSUES:

Development patterns which are dependent on the automobile contribute to increased traffic congestion, limit pedestrian and mass transit activity, and reduce mobility for the elderly, children and disadvantaged populations. The proportion of land devoted to street right-of-way has increased significantly in Omaha resulting in a much higher cost per capita for improving and maintaining roadways. Also, as growth continues outside of the city, traffic congestion increases on streets within the city which are financed by Omaha residents. Strip development along several of Omaha's major roadways has caused a decrease in service levels due to the high number of access points which interfere with the flow of traffic.

CONCEPT:

→ The city's street system and land use pattern will be directly connected and designed to further the overall development pattern established by the Master Plan. Proposed land use changes which exceed street capacities set out in the Plan will be avoided and street widths will be tied to surrounding land uses and traffic volumes. The overall layout of the street system will be designed to incorporate a dense network of local and collector streets and to reduce traffic congestion, provide better circulation, and reduce right-of-way costs. New street construction will be balanced with ongoing maintenance and reconstruction. New development will be designed to accommodate automobile circulation and encourage pedestrian movement, mass transit, and alternative modes of transportation.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Throughout the city and its jurisdiction, Omaha will continue to require adequate streets which promote transportation efficiency, reduce congestion and limit access points.
2. The City will develop flexible design standards for street sizes based on surrounding land use patterns and densities.
3. The City should avoid changes in land use that would generate traffic in excess of the design capacity of surrounding streets. When changes in land use intensity are allowed that exceed expectations and result in traffic problems, the developer of the land use responsible will be required to mitigate traffic impacts.



County Road Network



72nd Street

4. The City will plan for the realignment of streets and the construction of new street segments in areas where growth is hampered by missing and/or poorly planned street segments.
5. The City will promote street systems, such as “dense street networks,” that offer flexibility, provide for better traffic flow, and reduce street right-of-way and paving costs (See Figure 16).
6. Subdivisions with private streets, sewers and other typically public facilities will be allowed if they meet Omaha’s design, service and street layout standards.
7. The City will continue to balance new street construction with ongoing street maintenance programs.
8. Future development should provide for bikes, pedestrians, and mass transit. When the activity center concept becomes reality, the City will explore the feasibility of constructing a fixed transit (e.g. monorail or light rail) system that connects the major centers.
9. To provide transportation (bikes and pedestrian movement) and recreation alternatives, Omaha’s major activity centers will be interconnected by the linear trail system. Other activity centers will be situated on the linear trail system whenever possible.
10. Overall transportation planning for the city should include planning for an improved mass transit system and alternative modes of transportation.
11. The City will implement adopted traffic calming techniques, when appropriate, on local residential streets, in both existing neighborhoods and in new developments, to provide for a better balance between street users including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and autos. Such traffic calming efforts will support the tenets of the Master Plan.

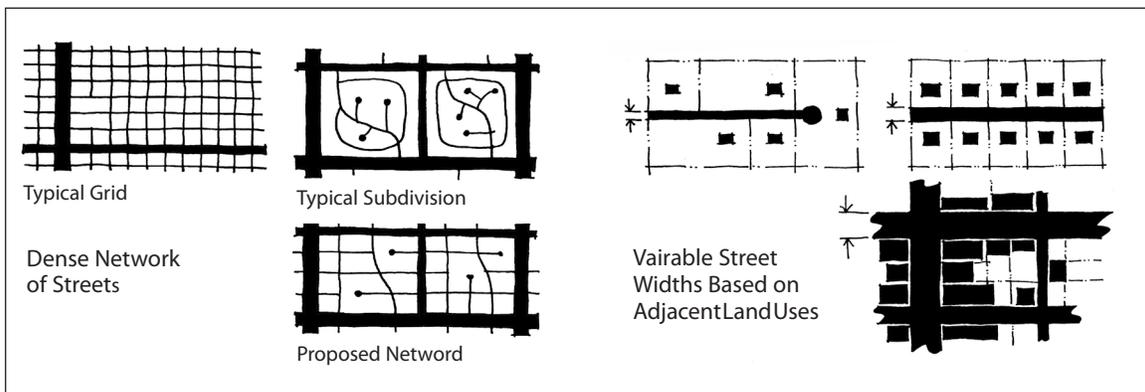


Figure 16
Street Designs

Other City Services

ISSUES:

In the past, there was a lack of coordination between different service providers such as street maintenance, sewer maintenance, parks maintenance, etc. Current city plans are to develop a joint use system to reduce duplication in facilities. Provision of similar services by different jurisdictions may not always result in the most cost efficient approach. The City of Omaha has begun to work with other public agencies to coordinate certain services and has recently reached agreements with Douglas County and the Millard Fire Department.

CONCEPT:

→ All public services will be located in a way which supports and promotes the city's desired pattern of growth and redevelopment.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The City will plan the future locations of schools, libraries, community recreational centers, and other civic uses desired by city residents.



Benson Branch Library

Appendix

Amendments to the Concept Element

Approved by Ordinance (No. 34335) October 1997

Amended by Ordinance (No. 34963) July 1999

