Promote home ownership through current and new programs.

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

**Timeframe: High Priority**

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

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

**Timeframe: High Priority**

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

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**
Absentee Landlords

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

Discussion
Absentee landlords or, more significantly, landlords with deteriorated rental properties or units that are not up to code, are a significant issue within the Destination Midtown Study Area. Providing resources to reduce the number of absentee landlords or to minimize the negative impacts of minimal maintenance and upkeep is one of the top priorities of Study Area residents. In fact, participants of the SWOT analysis identified absentee landlords and the problems associated with their properties as the single most pressing issue within the Study Area. Residents of Midtown neighborhoods identified a variety of issues associated with absentee landlords, including overcrowding, criminal activity, code violations, and a general lack of maintenance. These issues are seen as major obstacles to neighborhood stability and revitalization.

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

Programs
- Establish incentives to encourage absentee landlords to address problematic issues.
  - Absentee landlords should be provided incentives to address problem tenants and properties. Potential incentives that should be examined include the following:
    - Progressively escalating penalties and/or fines for non-compliance
  - Progressively stringent time limits allowed for compliance

Timeframe: High Priority
- Mediated conflicts through the City Prosecutor’s office
- Mandatory landlord notification of tenant arrests

Examples of negative impacts related to absentee landlords

Timeframe: Medium Priority
- Develop a center for landlord and renter education.
  - Often, landlords and tenants are not aware of code violations, expectations, and their rights. In order to assist in the education of landlords and tenants, a center for landlord and tenant education (such as the Greater Omaha Neighborhood Center) should be established. This center should provide useful information for both tenants and landlords, and should be jointly organized and run by City Planning staff, the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance and the Midtown Development Corporation
• Identify, promote, and expand programs that encourage and reward responsible landlords.
  Provide incentives to encourage maintenance and upkeep of the area’s existing housing stock. For example, the Neighbor Investment Program sponsored by Fannie Mae and the City of Omaha fosters investment in and protection of the area’s aging housing stock.

  **Timeframe: Medium Priority**

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

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

  **Timeframe: Medium Priority**
Rehabilitated house in midtown

Rehabilitation and Remodeling

Overview

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

Discussion

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

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

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

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

Recommendation

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

Programs

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

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

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

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

Utilize federal tax credits. Research existing federal tax credit programs and incorporate, if appropriate, within the Study Area.

**Timeframe: High Priority**

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

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

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

**Timeframe: High Priority**

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

Establish a one-stop shop for area residents to learn about, and apply for, financial resources available from local financial institutions and Fannie Mae. Meetings with representatives of such institutions indicate both the existence of numerous programs and opportunities for both residential and commercial properties, and considerable interest on the part of such institutions to work with residents and business owners from the Midtown Study Area. This outlet would assist residents in identifying the financial resources that meet their needs and applying for them. Administrative oversight for this outlet should come from the Midtown Development Corporation, with additional operational expertise coming from City Planning Department staff, the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance, and the representative financial institutions.

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**

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

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

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**

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

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**

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

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

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

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

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

Based on these initial ideas, the design team refined the neighborhood’s concepts during a design workshop held in November. Key components of the refined concept include the expansion and addition of a second level to both the grocery store and the building located at the southeast corner of the intersection. Existing multi-family structures are shown as renovated, and a new mixed-use structure is shown at the northeast corner of the intersection. All buildings are shown with retail uses on the lower floor and residential units above. Buildings front the street, and district serving parking lots are located behind the buildings. A “gas-backwards” facility, which provides a convenience store fronting the street and gas pumps to the rear, is shown at the northeast corner of the intersection of 33rd and Chicago Streets.

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**
Creating Places Where People Want to Be

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

  The Center Street corridor provides a unique opportunity for
  a mixed-use neighborhood business district serving adjacent
  neighborhoods. Residents identified the need to calm traffic
  along Center Street. This was to be accomplished by
  installing roundabouts and/or chicanes. The residents
  proposed a number of mixed-use buildings aligned around a
  roundabout at 36th and Center. These buildings were shown
  as two or three-story structures. These buildings were shown
  fronting the street, with parking tucked behind them.

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

  **Timeframe: Medium Priority**

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

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

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

Creating Places Where People Want to Be

DESTINATION MIDTOWN | Neighborhood Programs

Concept for neighborhood business district at intersection of St Mary’s Avenue and Leavenworth Street

Woolworth Avenue. On-street parking is provided along Park Avenue, and additional parking is located in surface lots to the rear of the new mixed-use buildings.

Timeframe: Medium Priority

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

Redevelopment of the Leavenworth business district provides a significant opportunity to stabilize and enhance adjacent neighborhoods. As shown, the redevelopment concept extends north to Jackson Street, east to Interstate 480, south to Marcy Street and west to Leavenworth Park. During the Neighborhood Design Workshop held on October 15th, neighborhood residents developed a variety of design ideas for this neighborhood business district. The concept developed by neighborhood residents reestablished this area as a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district serving adjacent neighborhoods. Residents identified several locations for new mixed-use structures, vacated streets to consolidate development sites, and concentrated parking in surface parking lots or parking structures that were located on the interior of blocks. In addition, residents enhanced the triangle park created by the intersection of Leavenworth Street and St. Mary’s Avenue and developed entrance features at the intersections of Jackson Street and 29th Street; Leavenworth Street and Jackson Street; and Turner Boulevard and Leavenworth Streets.

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

Timeframe: Medium Priority
Planning & Zoning

Overview

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

Discussion

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

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

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

Recommendation

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

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

Often, certain land uses and the issues associated with them are not in the best interest of neighborhoods. For example, several neighborhoods within the Study Area have a majority of their properties zoned as R-7 (medium-density multiple-family residential), while the vast majority of their structures are single-family homes. This creates conflicts with parking, overcrowding, and neighborhood integrity. In order to address this critical issue, the Planning Department and area neighborhood organizations should continue to coordinate efforts and initiate down zoning where population density and neighborhood design are in conflict. The attached map identifies several potential locations for down zoning, including the Columbus Park Neighborhood, the Gifford Park Neighborhood, the Ford Birthsite Neighborhood, portions of the Leavenworth Neighborhood (south of Leavenworth), and certain areas along Dodge Street. Based on neighborhood support, the City should initiate down zoning procedures as quickly as possible in order to help prevent further declines.

Timeframe: High Priority

Map identifying areas with potential for down zoning
Creating Places Where People Want to Be

DESTINATION MIDTOWN | Neighborhood Programs

Dodge and Leavenworth Corridor Infill Redevelopment Design Guidelines

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

Discussion
Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street were developed during the turn of the century, when streetcars provided access to neighborhoods and pedestrian oriented, mixed-use businesses lined major streets. These businesses were neighborhood anchors, and contributed greatly to neighborhood vitality. As these streets transitioned from neighborhood-oriented “main” streets into dominant vehicular routes to and from downtown Omaha, commuter-oriented uses emerged and the complexion of each corridor began to change. Over time, these corridors transitioned from neighborhood serving pedestrian-oriented environments to the hodgepodge of uses they are today. Commercial, office, clinical, and residential uses predominate, and several existing uses are transitional in nature and detract from adjacent neighborhoods and institutional uses. To complicate the situation, each of the uses was developed with a different site configuration, so that pedestrian-oriented uses are often sited next to auto-oriented uses. As redevelopment activity gains momentum, a consistent design and development pattern should be established that will ultimately contribute to neighborhood vitality and maximize the potential of Midtown’s primary corridors.

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

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

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

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

Timeframe: High Priority
Creating Places Where People Want to Be

DESTINATION MIDTOWN

Neighborhood Programs

Area proposed for Leavenworth Street corridor infill design guidelines

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

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

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

Timeframe: High Priority

Leavenworth concept incorporating design guidelines
Residential, Commercial, and Mixed-Use Infill Design Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

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

Timeframe: High Priority
Identify areas where neighborhood conservation overlay districts would encourage neighborhood revitalization.

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**

- Review outdoor advertising within the Study Area.

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**
Creating Places Where People Want to Be

DESTINATION MIDTOWN | Neighborhood Programs

Promotion & Maintenance

Overview

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

Discussion

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

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

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

Recommendation

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

Programs

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

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

Timeframe: High Priority

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Utilize special programs to maintain public property.

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**

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

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**

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

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**

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

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

**Timeframe: Low Priority**

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

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

**Timeframe: Low Priority**
Historic Preservation

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

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

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

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

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

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

 Timeframe: High Priority
 • Develop a Façade Improvement Program for the Study Area.

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

 Timeframe: High Priority
 • Develop historic preservation incentives in order to stimulate neighborhood revitalization.
   Owners of non-income producing residential property within the Study Area need incentives to renovate their homes. The City should lobby for tax incentives that encourage the renovation of historic residences. These tax incentives could take several forms, including:
   • Revise existing state law to allow tax benefits for historic renovations. This could include tax abatements/tax credits for improvements to historic structures or property tax deferrals (5 to 10 years) so savings could be reinvested in the property.
   • Establish a city/county tax benefit program that encourages reinvestment in “redevelopment areas” such as midtown.
   • Utilize federal tax credits. Research existing federal tax credit programs and incorporate, if appropriate, within the Study Area.

 Timeframe: Medium Priority
 • Continue survey efforts on behalf of the Omaha Certified Local Government and the Nebraska State Historical Society.
   Reconnaissance surveys have identified historic topics and resource types within the Study Area that would benefit from further study. The City Planning Department, working with individual neighborhood organizations and the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance, should initiate the following:
   • Initiate a citywide survey/evaluation of multiple-family dwellings for completion of a National Register Multiple-Family Dwellings Multiple Property Document.
   • Nominate the Omaha Park and Boulevard System for National Register eligibility.

 Timeframe: Medium Priority
 • Increase public education on preservation issues.
   Historic properties are a significant part of midtown neighborhoods. Increased public education on preservation issues will be vital to continued efforts to revitalize midtown neighborhoods. Specific neighborhood organizations and the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance should establish the following programs:
   • Discuss neighborhood history during meetings and include preservation as a priority of future plans and organization.
   • Create programs to educate area residents, property owners, and realtors about the “positive” aspects of historic designation. If possible, invite experts from outside Omaha and/or Nebraska to help with this educational process through lectures, workshops, etc.
   • Establish walking tours within historic neighborhoods.
   • Promote historic districts and landmarks with appropriate signage at gateway entrances and in front of designated landmarks.

 Timeframe: Medium Priority
Expand the geographic coverage of the area’s historic streetlights.

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

Timeframe: Medium Priority

Expose the original brick pavers on designated residential streets.

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

Timeframe: Low Priority

Designate the original route of the Lincoln Highway.

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

Timeframe: Low Priority
Transportation Related Programs

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

Dodge Street Corridor

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

Overview

Aside from the interstate/freeway system in Omaha, Dodge Street is the highest volume corridor and one of few continuous east-west corridors across the City. Land use intensity along the corridor prevented Dodge Street from being developed as the typical urban major arterial for which it functions. This characteristic extends west of the Study Area to 69th Street. Many of its means of handling through traffic result in adverse traffic flow within the Study Area.

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

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

Dodge Street is currently trying to serve multiple and divergent functions. As a result, it meets neither of these functional requirements very well. The provision of multiple points of ingress and egress conflicts with the flow of regional traffic. Traffic flow is hindered and the environment for adjacent businesses is marginalized.

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

Dodge Street Corridor Study Area

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

Within Midtown the street is attempting to serve as both a major arterial for moving a large volume of traffic in an efficient manner, and as a local street providing access to many small parcels. The street is lined by a variety of commercial and retail uses, ranging from fast food establishments and sit-down restaurants to small offices and national chains. Many of these businesses utilize direct access off of Dodge Street, with secondary access from adjacent intersecting streets. In addition, there are several spot locations of single-family housing.

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

Most of the retail uses that line Dodge Street have direct access to the street. As a result, traffic flow along the street is hindered by traffic turning into parking lots. In addition, the typical site layout of retail uses along the street ensures that surface parking lots are the dominant visual feature along the corridor. Buildings are typically located in the center of their lots and surrounded by surface parking and access drives.
In the 1970’s, in order to maximize vehicle capacity without major right-of-way impacts, the original four-lane street section was converted to a five-lane section with the center lane serving as a reversible through lane which provides a third lane in the peak hour direction (eastbound in the morning and westbound at all other times). Additionally, left turns were prohibited at all public street intersections. Addition of this center lane occurred without widening the original 66-foot Right-of-Way. The current roadway width is between 55 and 57 feet wide, with five 11-foot lanes. The center lane is somewhat wider in certain locations. This leaves between 9 and 11 feet of width outside the curbs for sidewalks, plantings, signage and other forms of street furniture. This is far too little space to create even adequate facilities for pedestrians attempting to walk along Dodge Street. Combined with undersized sidewalks is the haphazard placement of light poles, traffic signs, street furniture and other objects, which further impedes any form of effective pedestrian flow. Despite the prohibition of left turns from Dodge Street, such turns are often attempted by drivers looking to access properties on the opposite side of the street. These illegal turns further stifle effective traffic flow and create potentially dangerous conditions for drivers and pedestrians.

The Dodge Street and Saddle Creek Road intersection was one of the first grade-separated interchanges in the State of Nebraska. It was constructed in the early part of the 20th Century. Although revolutionary for its time, it has ceased to serve as a safe and effective interchange. Although a significant number of vehicles cross at this location, only a relatively small number actually use the interchange to access either intersecting roadway. This is due, in large part, to the confusing system of connecting ramps and the fact that, as designed, many drivers on Dodge Street are beyond the intersection by the time they realize it is an interchange. Ironically, many drivers ultimately utilize the parking lots of adjacent commercial uses to make the connection between these two streets. Dodge Street does not adequately perform any of its required functions at present and is disliked as a regional arterial road, both by the drivers who use it daily and by the adjacent neighborhoods who find it disruptive to the effective functioning of their neighborhoods. In addition, it is unsightly by any standards, which is particularly ironic for a street that was once considered one of the most beautiful urban streets in America.

Recommendation

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

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

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

Programs

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

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

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

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

**Timeframe: High Priority**
Examining alternative approaches to resolving the conflicts related to the current configuration of the intersection of Dodge Street and Saddle Creek Road.

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

Timeframe: Medium Priority
Expand the Dodge Street Right-of-Way to transform Dodge Street into an urban boulevard.

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

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

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**
Saddle Creek Road Corridor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Programs

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

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

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

Timeframe: High Priority

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

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

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

  Either option should consist of two travel lanes in each direction, a landscaped median, parkway landscaping with wide sidewalks and an off-street bike trail. Relocation must be done in such a manner so as to be compatible with Saddle Creek Road in the recently reconstructed segment north of Dodge Street and any improvement to the Saddle Creek Road / Dodge Street junction. If done correctly, a realigned Saddle Creek Road would incur many benefits, including the following:

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

Timeframe: Medium Priority
Dodge-to-Douglas “S” Curve

Overview

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

Discussion

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

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

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

Recommendation

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

Program

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

Timeframe: High Priority
Park Avenue Terminus

Overview
Park Avenue, once one of Omaha’s grandest streets, unceremoniously terminates at a “T” intersection with Dodge Street.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Timeframe: Medium Priority
Leavenworth Street Redesign

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

Discussion
Leavenworth Street was developed during the age of the streetcar. As such, it functioned as a transit route and as an arterial route for vehicles. Because transit predominated during this era, pedestrian oriented, mixed-use businesses lined the street. These businesses were neighborhood anchors, and contributed greatly to neighborhood vitality. Over time, streetcars were phased out and Leavenworth became a dominant vehicular route into downtown Omaha. As traffic increased, the street was widened in order to increase its capacity. With two lanes in each direction, sidewalks were reduced in width and on-street parking in many locations was eliminated in order to create room for additional lanes.

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

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

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

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

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

Timeframe: Medium Priority
Creating Places Where People Want to Be

Farnam and Harney Street Conversions

Overview

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

Discussion

Farnam Street and Harney Street were originally developed as two-way streets. As the use of mass transit in Omaha declined and private vehicle usage increased, these streets were converted to one-way pairs to facilitate traffic flow into and out of Downtown Omaha. East of 42nd Street, Farnam Street carries traffic westbound and Harney Street carries traffic eastbound. Traffic volumes on these two streets peaked during the 1960’s and early 1970’s. Over time, consumer patterns and preferences changed. New shopping, office, and residential areas were developed on Omaha’s western fringe. Downtown Omaha no longer maintained its status as the city's primary mixed-use hub. As a result, traffic volumes on Farnam and Harney began to decline. The most recent traffic counts for the Study Area, taken by the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), show that Farnam Street carries 10,000-14,000 vehicles per day and Harney Street carries 6,500-11,000 vehicles per day.

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

Recommendation

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

Program

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

**Timeframe: High Priority**
Creating Places Where People Want to Be

DESTINATION MIDTOWN | Transportation Programs

Turner Boulevard Conversion

Overview

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

Discussion

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

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

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

Recommendation

Return Turner Boulevard to two-way traffic.

Program

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

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

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

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

Timeframe: High Priority
42nd Street Traffic Calming

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

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

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

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

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

Forty-Second Street should be “calmed” between Farnam Street and Emile Street. This should be done as part of a much larger package of roadway improvements for UNMC/The Nebraska Medical Center, including left turn lanes at the intersection of 42nd Street and Leavenworth, Saddle Creek Road Realignment, and improved medical center signage. Calming measures could consist of lane reductions, streetscape amenities, intersection chokers, roundabouts, and other physical improvements that would yield a roadway more harmonious with an educational campus. Any measures that divert traffic must be evaluated to ensure that new traffic problems are not created elsewhere.

Timeframe: High Priority
42nd and Leavenworth Intersection Enhancement

Overview

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

Discussion

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

Recommendation

Provide northbound and southbound left turns from 42nd Street.

Program

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

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

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

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

**Recommendation**
Reconfigure the 40th and Davenport intersection.

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

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

  **Timeframe:** High Priority
Cuming Street Reconfiguration

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

Discussion
Cuming Street was widened to three lanes in each direction in order to facilitate traffic flow into and out of the downtown area. Over time, consumer patterns and preferences changed and Downtown Omaha relinquished its status as the city’s primary mixed-use hub. As a result, traffic volumes on Cuming Street have declined over the years. The most recent traffic counts show that Cuming Street carries 28,000-33,000 vehicles per day with future projections for 2030 relatively flat with increases to the mid to upper 30’s. Nevertheless, Cuming Street’s importance has not diminished. The new Cuming Street – Abbott Drive alignment on the north edge of Downtown Omaha will help direct new traffic and potential residents and customers into the Study Area. In addition, it will present an equally rewarding opportunity to draw on the excitement surrounding riverfront redevelopment efforts.

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

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

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

Specific improvements include:
- Reconstruct the southbound on-ramp to US 75 to bridge over Burt Street
- Convert Cuming Street to two-way traffic flow from 27th to 30th thus completing the continuity of Cuming from Saddle Creek Road to 10th Street.
- Reconstruct the 30th and Cuming intersection to provide adequate capacity for the future and to accommodate the Cuming and Burt Street changes.
- Convert Burt Street to two-way traffic from 16th to 30th Streets.

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

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

Timeframe: Medium Priority
Center Street – Hanscom Park to 36th Street

**Timeframe: High Priority**

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

**Discussion**

Center Street was widened to four lanes in each direction in order to facilitate traffic flow. Over time, consumer patterns and preferences changed and traffic volumes on Center Street declined. The most recent traffic counts show that Center Street carries approximately 16,500 vehicles per day between Hanscom Park and 36th Street. Across the country, neighborhood business districts in similar settings have experienced successful redevelopment efforts. As this district attempts to redefine itself, the existing 4-lane street section may be inappropriate. Redevelopment efforts in similar locations around the country have attempted to slow traffic and create a good pedestrian environment. This can usually be accomplished by making the sidewalks more pedestrian friendly, reducing the number of traffic lanes, providing on-street parking, and incorporating other traffic calming devices.

**Recommendation**

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

**Program**

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

**Timeframe: Medium Priority**
Conversion of Leavenworth Street and St. Mary’s Avenue

Timeframe: High Priority

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

Discussion

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

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

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

Recommendation

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

Program

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

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

Timeframe: Medium Priority
St. Mary’s Avenue and Leavenworth Street Interstate Bridge Redesign

**Timeframe: High Priority**

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

**Discussion**

When I-480 was constructed in the 1960’s, it cut through established neighborhoods. To lessen its impact on these neighborhoods, the interstate was lowered below grade. Bridges along major roadways were constructed to span the interstate. These bridges became the “connective tissue” that linked neighborhoods on each side of the interstate.

Unfortunately, these bridges were designed more for vehicle use than for pedestrians. The majority of the trips across the bridges are by car, and the interstate still acts as a barrier between the neighborhoods on each side of it.

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

**Recommendation**

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

**Program**

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

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

**Timeframe: Low Priority**

Leavenworth and St. Mary’s bridges