Crossroads Mall and Surrounding Area

REDEVELOPMENT AND URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

July 13, 2011
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Prepared by the City of Omaha Planning Department
Introduction

The intersection of 72nd Street and Dodge Street is both the physical and cultural center of the Omaha municipal geography. Historically, this intersection emerged as the second generation commercial hub outside of the principle Downtown and Midtown market. Originally developed in the mid 1950’s the Crossroads Mall was an early example of decentralized commercial development made profitable by the advent and proliferation of the automobile, the post-war economy and westward suburban expansion. Subsequent suburban expansion and new generations of commercial development has placed unmet competitive pressure on the area as newer commercial areas emerged further out in the suburban ring.

Currently the commercial area surrounding this intersection exhibits many indicators of decline in both economic and public infrastructure. There are several key institutions and businesses that are thriving in the area; however the general trend over the last decade is one of decline, as exhibited by the extremely low occupancy of the crossroads mall and other area vacancies. The poor circumstances of district planning and transportation infrastructure add to the depressed conditions creating considerable redevelopment challenges.

The existing commercial development pattern of the district evolved prior to modern planning methods and exhibits an ad hoc and poorly configured low density arrangement of mostly single story structures. The block structure is excessively large and disproportionate to that of contemporary pedestrian scaled urban environments. Block lengths in some cases extend from 1200 feet to 2300 feet.

The street network is also disproportionate to that of pedestrian scaled urban environments. There are no public streets designed to be hospitable to both pedestrian and vehicular activity. Reintroducing proper block scale and a street network is critical to the successful redevelopment of the area.

Large scale redevelopment potential at the intersection of 72nd and Dodge is considerable and eminent. It is the intention, role and authority of the Planning Department to guide redevelopment towards the highest and best land use and to address the larger civic implications of development and the impact it may have on the quality of life for all citizens of Omaha. A short sighted and poor redevelopment activity affects all economies within the municipality.
Redevelopment Goals

The redevelopment goals for the district shall generally conform to the objectives outlined below.

1. Establish the 72nd and Dodge commercial area as a pivotal redevelopment site resulting in true mixed-use 24/7 pedestrian friendly destination for the region
   a. Providing unique and high quality retail destinations
   b. Office and research
   c. Entertainment
   d. Hospitality
   e. Academic and Civic Uses
   f. Residential

2. Establish 72nd and Dodge as a key transportation hub and improve multi-modal transportation and connectivity
   a. Improve connections to existing transportation network
   b. Integrate emerging alternate transportation infrastructure into the development
   c. Create connections to the adjacent neighborhood and business districts
   d. Create connections regional trails, parks and the Little Papio Creek
   e. Create connections to the University of Nebraska - Omaha

3. Provide a full range of housing choices
   a. For sale and rental
   b. Townhouses, apartments, lofts condos

4. Provide an internal public street network
   a. Connect to adjacent land uses
   b. Establish pedestrian scaled development blocks

5. Provide district wide parking solutions
   a. Structured parking
   b. On-street parking
   c. Shared parking between compatible uses

6. Plan for redevelopment of commercial areas on all four quadrants of the 72nd and Dodge Street intersection
   a. Provide for continuity of subsequent redevelopment

7. Provide for public gathering places such as town squares and pocket parks
   a. Include district wide public WIFI connections
   b. Design streets as public places

8. Provide high quality building design and construction
Development Principles and Guidelines

Redevelopment with the district shall conform to the general principles outlined in the following sections:

Development Blocks

Large development site should be divided into urban scaled development blocks ranging between 350 and 550 linear feet per block face. Access from large high volume arterials may vary and requires approval from the Public Works Department. Each block should be large enough to accommodate a central parking structure.
Streets

Intervening streets shall constitute the primary public realm. They shall be designed to accommodate various modes of transportation (complete streets) and range in size and function to accommodate the various contexts of the redevelopment area. Streets should provide on-street parking, landscaping and generous sidewalks.

They should be designed for active public places and provide multiple entrances to adjacent land use. Street design should reflect the need of the adjacent land use. A clear distinction should be made between public streets and parking lot access ways.
Open/public spaces

Public spaces should be integrally designed into redevelopment projects. Small public plazas for gathering may also be designed into the public street environment.

Network of Open, Public and Pedestrian Spaces
Land Uses

Land use and street design shall be strongly correlated. The internal street network shall express a logical hierarchy as related to land use ranging from the most intensive commercial streets to least intensive residential streets. Building and site design should relate to the adjacent streets without intervening parking lots. Buildings and sites should be designed for the best possible pedestrian experience. Designing sites and buildings for “drive by” visibility only shall be avoided. Mixing land uses vertically is preferred however some horizontal distribution of uses may be acceptable. Planned density in either case should be greater than conventional suburban commercial development.
Building Set Backs

Buildings shall be designed in relation to the adjacent streets and sidewalks and shall follow the build-to set-back requirements of Omaha’s Area of Civic Importance (ACI) zoning requirements as recommended by the Planning Department.

Building Height

Multiple story buildings shall be used to achieve higher levels of building density. No building shall be less than two stories (programmed and occupied floors) in height within the redevelopment area. Maximum height shall be six floors. Height in excess of six floors may occur upon approval following the special use permitting process.
Landmarks, Focal Points and Grouping of Buildings

The design of sites and buildings should respond to key corridors and open spaces providing focal points or landmarks that reinforce the hierarchy of land use. Grouping of buildings shall be used to further define and contain public spaces.
Parking

Parking should be provided and managed for the district as a whole. Parking should accommodate short term users (0-1 hour), medium users (1-4 hours), employees (4-10 hours) and residents. The majority of long term and employee parking should be accommodated in parking lots and structures mid-block accessible via service lanes.

Network of Surface, Street and Structured Parking
Parking (continued)

Parking structures should avoid being located directly adjacent to public streets; however they should be easily accessible by pedestrians. The design of parking structures shall conform to the ACI-1 zoning requirements. On-street parking shall be provided throughout the development area. Commercial areas shall have diagonal parking. Diagonal or parallel parking shall be provided on residential streets for guests. All residential buildings shall have dedicated parking for residents located off-street internal to buildings, in parking structures or in small surface lots. All surface parking lots shall be designed to meet or exceed the green parking requirements of ACI-1 districts.

Access and service
Service to all buildings shall be located in the rear of the site or in the middle of blocks similar to traditional alleyways. One curb cut per block shall be permitted on all blocks less than 350 feet in length and two curb cuts per block for those longer than 350 feet. Loading areas and dumpsters are required to be internal to the block and accessed by service lanes. No service facing onto public right of way and or public spaces should be avoided.
D. Design Principles and Guidelines

The design of sites, buildings and public right of ways shall conform to the urban design principles and provisions of Chapter 55 – Zoning, Article 22 – Urban Design of the Omaha Municipal Code. Urban design principles required for pedestrian oriented districts are described below. These principles are included here for reference.

1. Sidewalks, Build-to/Set-back Lines and Transparency:
The area between the street curb and the building or property line is referred to as the roadside environment. It is a complex and dynamic component of any streetscape. Together, the three urban design provisions of Sidewalks, Build-to/Set-back Lines and Transparency serve to create an enhanced pedestrian oriented roadside environment.

a. Sidewalks:
The roadside extends from curb to the building face or property line and is characterized by four zones; the curb zone, the utility/furnishing zone, the travel zone and the building zone. The curb zone is typically a 2-3 foot area allowing for movement parallel to the curb for access to parking meters and street parking. The utility/furnishing zone is an 8-10 foot section allowing for a variety of street activities and infrastructure including but not limited to street trees and landscaping, seating, bike parking, and public art. The travel zone may vary in width dependent on location and should range in width between 5-10 feet. The travel zone should provide clear, unobstructed movement that meets ADA requirements. The building zone is a 2-3 foot area immediately along the face of adjacent buildings. Since people typically do not walk directly next to buildings, walls or edges this area allow for people to stop or browse retail. In some cases, this area may become much wider to allow for sidewalk seating and or dining. Roadsides may vary in width and accommodations and should be designed according to their context, the intended use and in conjunction with urban design regulations and guidelines.

b. Build-to/Set-back Lines:
The arrangement of buildings in relation to the street is a critical component in making streets become places. Building facades adjacent to sidewalks help to create a sense of enclosure by acting as a wall for the street. The street-wall organizes pedestrian movement and activity along the roadside through the common public space of the sidewalk. Without a clearly defined edge the street lacks cohesiveness, becomes ambiguous and the sidewalk tends lose its relevance as the path of travel. Subsequently, the street and roadside must be carefully designed to provide for the concentration of pedestrian activity within the roadside environment.

c. Transparency:
When a building is adjacent to the sidewalk it should provide for a visual connection between the sidewalk and the first floor. This connection is necessary to link the interior functions of buildings with the sidewalk environment. Uses such as retail sales, restaurants, general services, offices and entertainment are well suited for linking to the sidewalk areas. Transparency cannot always be accommodated due to operating characteristics of some businesses but it is an urban design element which is strongly encouraged. Long expanses of blank walls are not allowed in certain areas and will be regulated within the District.

2. Utility Access:
Access to utilitarian components of the streetscape such as utility equipment, loading docks and parking lots is a necessary function within the urban infrastructure. The street environment should not be considered a conduit for these utilitarian elements but as public places designed for pedestrian oriented activity. Care should be used in designing locations and appearance of utility elements and their access should not pre-side over the pedestrian environment.

a. Screening:
Utility equipment such as dumpsters, loading docks and HVAC equipment may obstruct and or diminish the appearance of streetscapes unless carefully designed. Service areas and utility equipment should be designed to be in remote locations and/or screened from public view. Screen walls should be constructed of quality materials similar to the adjacent building materials.

b. Location of Utilities:
Overhead services such as utility poles, transformers and connections should be located underground when possible. Often these utilities are installed and maintained by different agencies over an extended period of time and can result in a disorganized and cluttered appearance.

c. Vehicular Site Access:
Curb cuts for access to parking lots should be limited in quantity and size to reduce the number of times vehicles cross sidewalks. Parking lots should be accessed via alleys or adjacent parking lots when possible.
3. Green Parking Areas:
Parking lots are important components of the urban infrastructure. However, these facilities often place vehicles and pedestrians in direct conflict with one another and do not necessarily contribute to the appearance of the streetscape. Providing perimeter landscaping and interior landscaping helps to improve their overall appearance and can also help mitigate excessive storm water run-off from the site and provide shade. Green Parking lot regulations establish minimums for parking lot landscaping and also provide an opportunity to utilize storm water mitigation concepts within these facilities. Landscaping is typically required at the time of construction and is required to be maintained permanently.

4. Parking Structures:
Parking structures are an efficient means to increase parking density and capacity within urban areas. Parking structure design should be compatible to the surrounding context. Requirements for exterior building materials, height and scale of building elevations help to create this compatibility. When a parking structure is adjacent to a pedestrian oriented streetscape, provisions should be made to include retail in a portion of the ground floor. This helps to maintain the quality and character of the roadside environment and mitigate large expanses of blank walls.

5. Neighborhood Connectivity:
Maintaining street connectivity in urban areas is necessary to allow for the free movement of all forms of mobility. Commercial areas should be easily accessed from neighborhoods without requiring unnecessary or circuitous travel. Every effort should be made to keep the grid intact. Vacating streets or alleys is discouraged and working to create new or maintain existing connections is required.

6. Signs:
Regulating the type, quantity, height and location of signs is an important part of urban design requirements. Excessive amounts of signage and/or poorly located signs can lead to visual clutter and confusion. Streetscapes are public places where signage should be informational and limited to business identification only. Business may promote special offers or additional information on the interior of the building.

7. Retaining Walls:
Large expanses of tall, undifferentiated wall areas next to sidewalks or adjacent properties are discouraged. Certain methods of landscaping and limiting rise and run of walls is recommended to limit the effect of large retaining walls. Walls that are screened from view or behind buildings require fewer mitigating measures.

8. Building Design Guidelines:
Development characteristics which are well suited for suburban environments can cause a significant degree of conflict for areas intended to be pedestrian oriented. Retail buildings should meet general design requirements to avoid the introduction of suburban based formula development into certain contexts. The concern is not one of use but form and compatibility of development patterns. Providing requirements for the following general characteristics of building design in addition to other urban design provisions will help to assure better quality of design and compatibility for the District. Variables needing requirements generally include:

- Facades – buildings should have continuity of design on all sides
- Base of Buildings – designed with pedestrians in mind
- Wall Materials – requires the use of quality materials
- Proportion of Height to Length of Elevations – limits long undifferentiated facades
- Relating Large Retail Buildings to Sloping Sites – preserves existing topography
- Building Signs – limited in quantity, size and location
- Proportion and Visibility of Entrances – to be accessible from pedestrian walkways
- Organization of Windows – to be designed in proportion to the building elevation
- Utility Screening – rooftop equipment, loading and service entrances, exterior site equipment, etc...

(For further examples and graphical representations refer to the Urban Design Handbook for Omaha.)

J. Project Review and Approval Procedures

Urban Design Site Plan Review:
All projects within the redevelopment district shall receive an urban design site plan review as established by section 55-607(c). The urban design site plan review procedure includes a detailed review by the Planning Department to assure compliance with recommendations of Omaha Master Plan and zoning requirements.
## Aksarben Village

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<th>Residential Units</th>
<th>Retail Sq Ft</th>
<th>Garage Parking (Stalls)</th>
<th>Parking (Stalls)</th>
<th>Hotel Rooms</th>
<th>Projected Assessed Value</th>
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<th>Retail Sq Ft</th>
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**Totals**

- 15.18 Acres
- 487 Residential Units
- 223809 Retail Sq Ft
- 2840 Parking Stalls
- 191 Hotel Rooms
- 132 Projected TIF

*these are for the entire project

*these stalls may be spread out over other lots

### Building Sq Ft

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Total 223809