

plus the sidewalk on each side of the paved cartway. A side-benefit of a wider planting strip is that snow cleared from the street is less likely to land on the sidewalk.

Goal 5 Statement

Older sections of Omaha have many tree-lined streets. Newer sections of Omaha do not, but the main arterial streets in the western part of Omaha have been built with wide rights of way that can accept substantial amounts of landscaping. Budgetary cut-backs and current City policies have not encouraged tree planting and maintenance. The City should adopt policies to preserve and enhance a connected series of landscaped streets as an important component of the City's image.

Objectives:

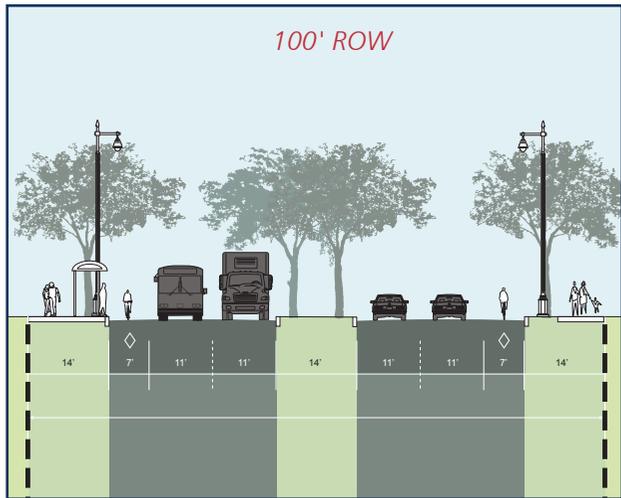
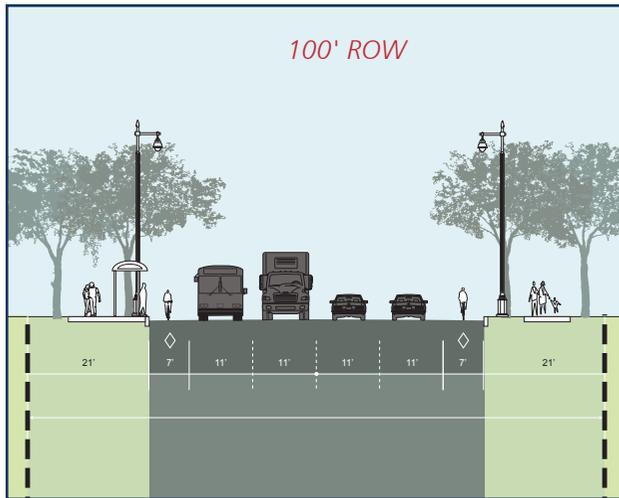
1. The City should encourage tree planting in appropriate locations along selected rights of way, should maintain these trees, and should assume liability for them.
2. The City should provide for tree planting in appropriate locations along selected rights of way when streets are reconstructed by the City.
3. The City should work with private donors to create tree planting programs.

Policies:

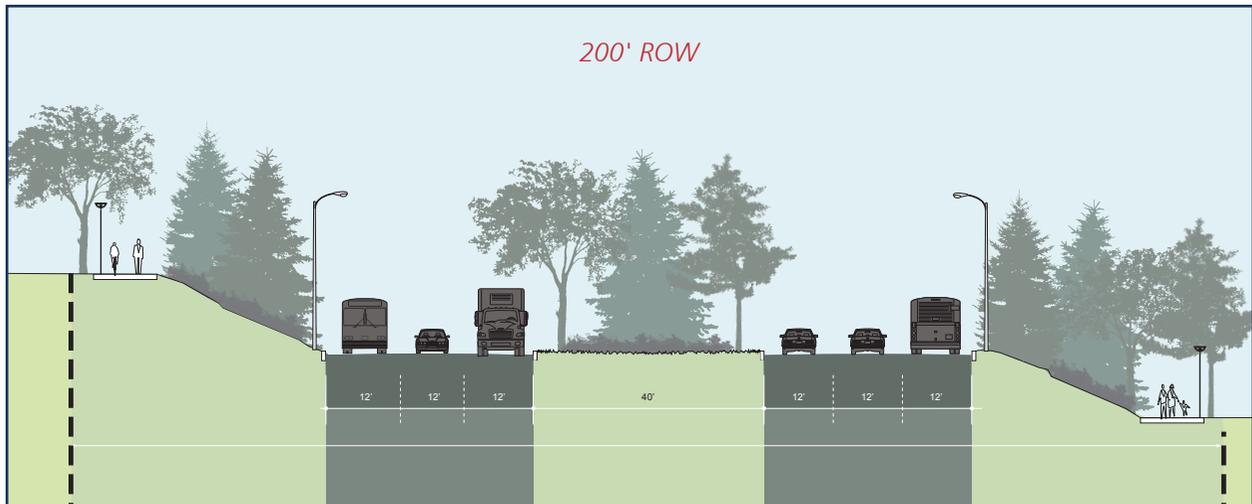
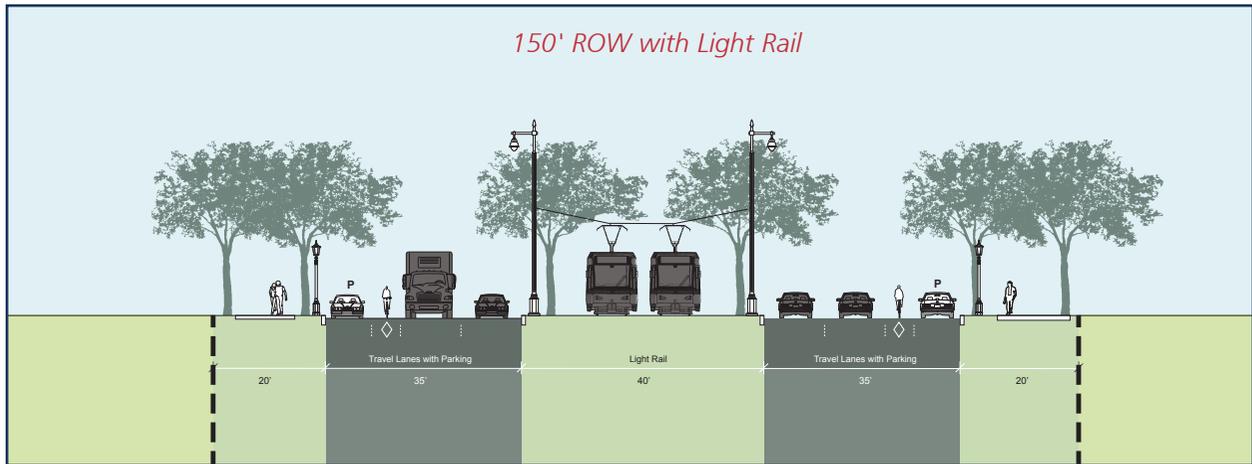
1. In consultation with neighborhoods, the City should identify the streets where tree planting should be encouraged.
2. The City should have programs funded from both governmental and private sources to plant and maintain trees.
3. The new Cleveland Boulevard in suburban areas should continue to be constructed and landscaped as new areas of the City are platted and annexed.

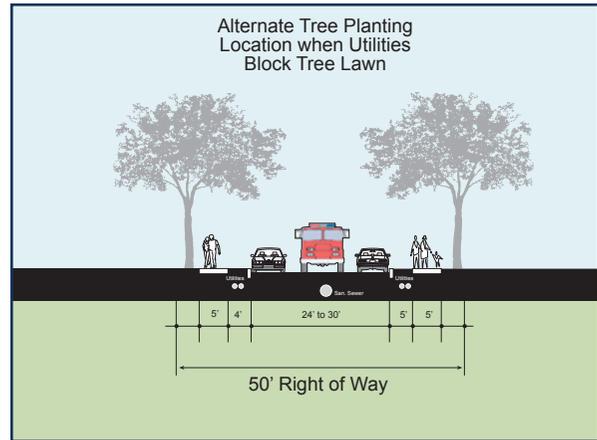
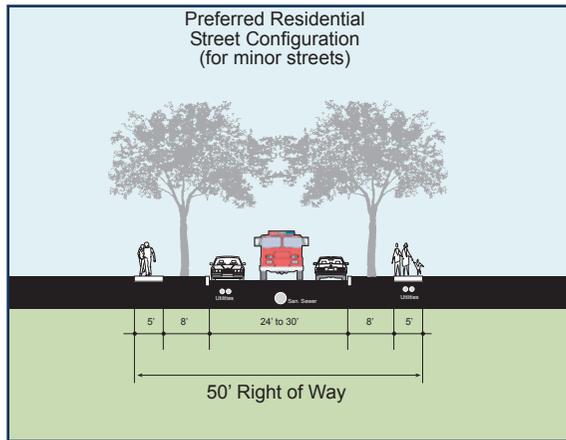


Woolworth Avenue is an existing boulevard in Omaha.



Diagrams showing typical cross sections for green streets.





Typical cross section for new residential streets showing placement of trees in a grass lawn between the sidewalk and the travelway. Where utilities prevent this configuration, trees will be planted in rows behind the sidewalk.

4. Developers should be required to adhere to minimum street and lot planting requirements for trees in new residential districts.

Implementation:

1. The City should prepare a Green Streets Master Plan, which delineates major streets that should have special tree planting design and maintenance. In addition to the boulevards in the older part of Omaha and the streets in west Omaha with 200, 150, and 100 foot rights of way the master plan should identify streets or corridors that can become the connecting links in the ultimate system of Green Streets. Dodge Street from I – 680 east is probably the most important link. Sorenson Parkway is another link where a green right of way is already present. Cuming Street east to Saddle Creek is another link, because it connects to Abbott Drive and the airport. West Center, Saddle Creek and Military Highway could also be green links, although transforming them in this way will be difficult.
2. There should be a new tree-planting initiative to add a significant number of new street trees each year. This initiative can be partly funded by private donations but should be managed by the City.
3. The City should have standards for tree planting in streets in new development including streets that are part of Sanitary and Improvement Districts and the Cleveland Boulevard concept should be included in these standards.
4. The Zoning Code should be amended to increase tree planting requirements for tree planting on new streets and individual lots in all zoning districts.
5. The City should fund tree planting and tree maintenance as necessary to create and maintain the Green Streets Master Plan.

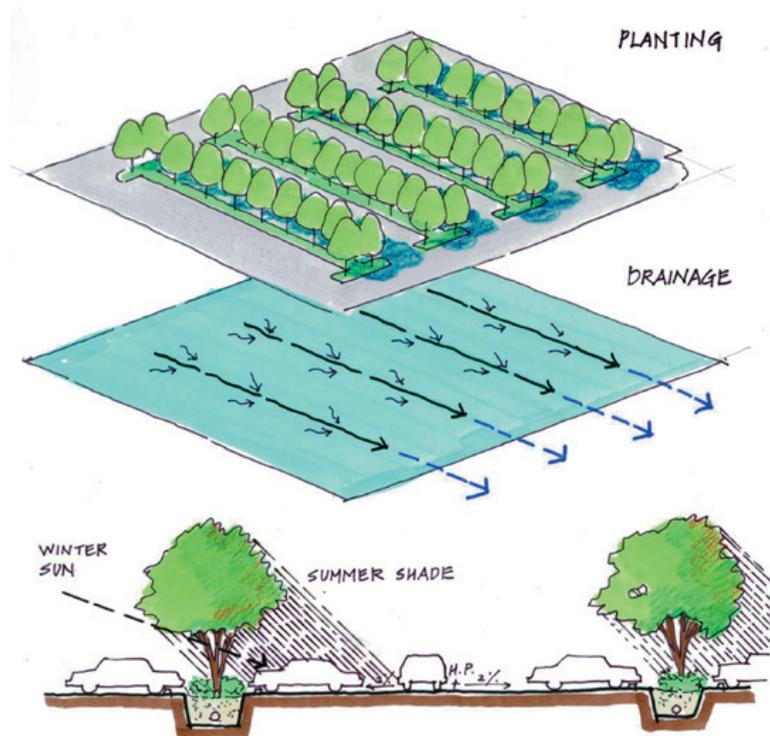


Diagram of techniques for making greener parking lots.

Goal 6: Green Parking Lots

Background

Large parking lots create heat islands, accelerate water run-off, and transmit automobile pollutants into the water table. Parking lots are also a big part of the image of the modern city. Developments that need to provide for water retention could do so by combining water-retention with the landscape design of parking lots. Existing City landscaping standards for parking lots require primarily buffering at the edges. Such requirements could be modified to require parking lot designs that enhance both the environment and the appearance of the city.

Goal 6: Statement

Large parking lots for industrial, commercial, institutional, and apartment residential uses in the City should be designed to minimize negative effects on the environment and microclimate and provide a landscaped environment.

Objectives:

1. Large parking lots should be designed to hold and filter stormwater runoff, reduce heat effects, and provide a landscaped environment.

Policies:

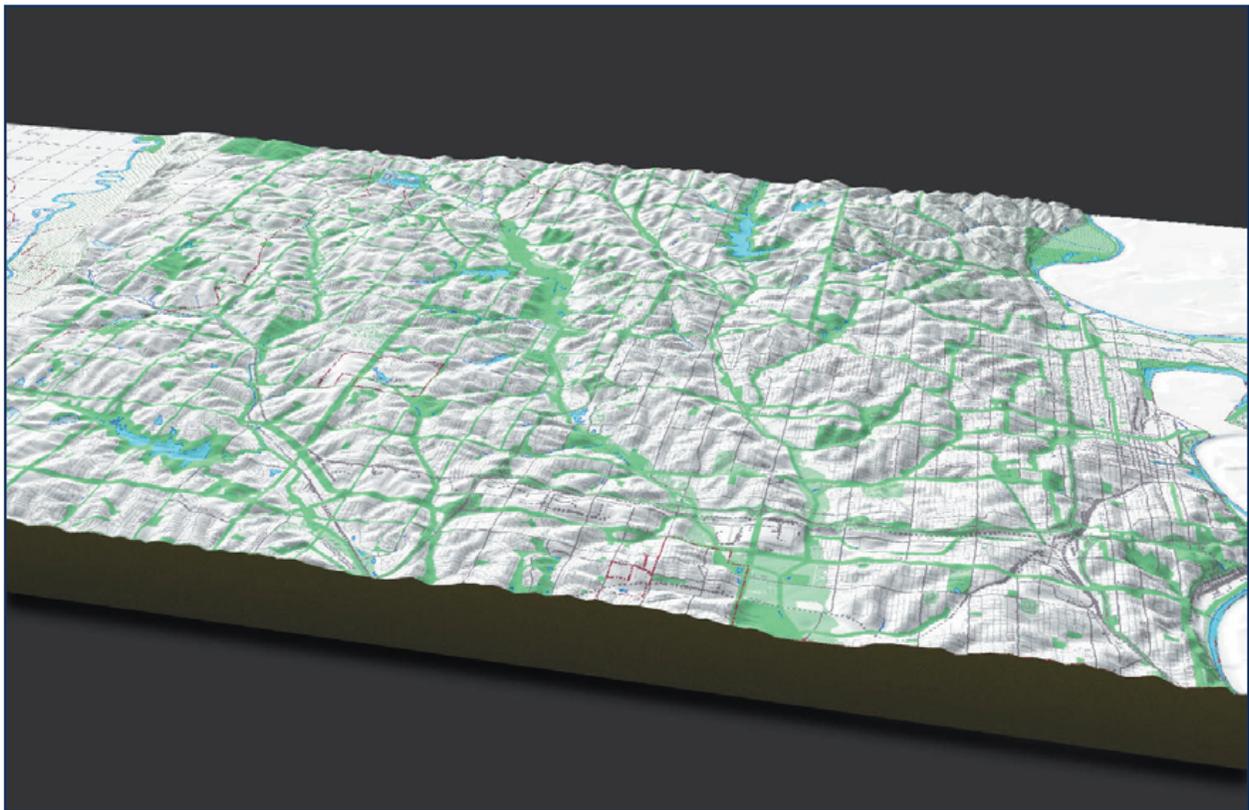
1. There should be standards for the size and other characteristics of parking lots containing more than a specified number of parking places in new development so that they hold and filter stormwater runoff, reduce heat effects and provide a landscaped environment without compromising public safety and effective snow removal.

Implementation:

1. The Zoning Code should be amended to include water-retention standards and filtration requirements for parking, including requirements that the retention and filtration continue to be effective.
2. Parking lot design requirements should be revised so that landscaping that provides for water retention and filtration can be made an integral part of the design.

Goal 7: A Green Image for Omaha

The achievement of the goals relating to the Papio park system, the trail system, freeway landscaping, green streets, and green parking lots should provide a green public open space framework for Omaha that will transform the perception of the City for both residents and visitors.



Perspective view of map showing Green Omaha goals.

Goal 7 Statement

The open spaces of the City should be unified and connected to create an image of Omaha as a green City.

Objectives:

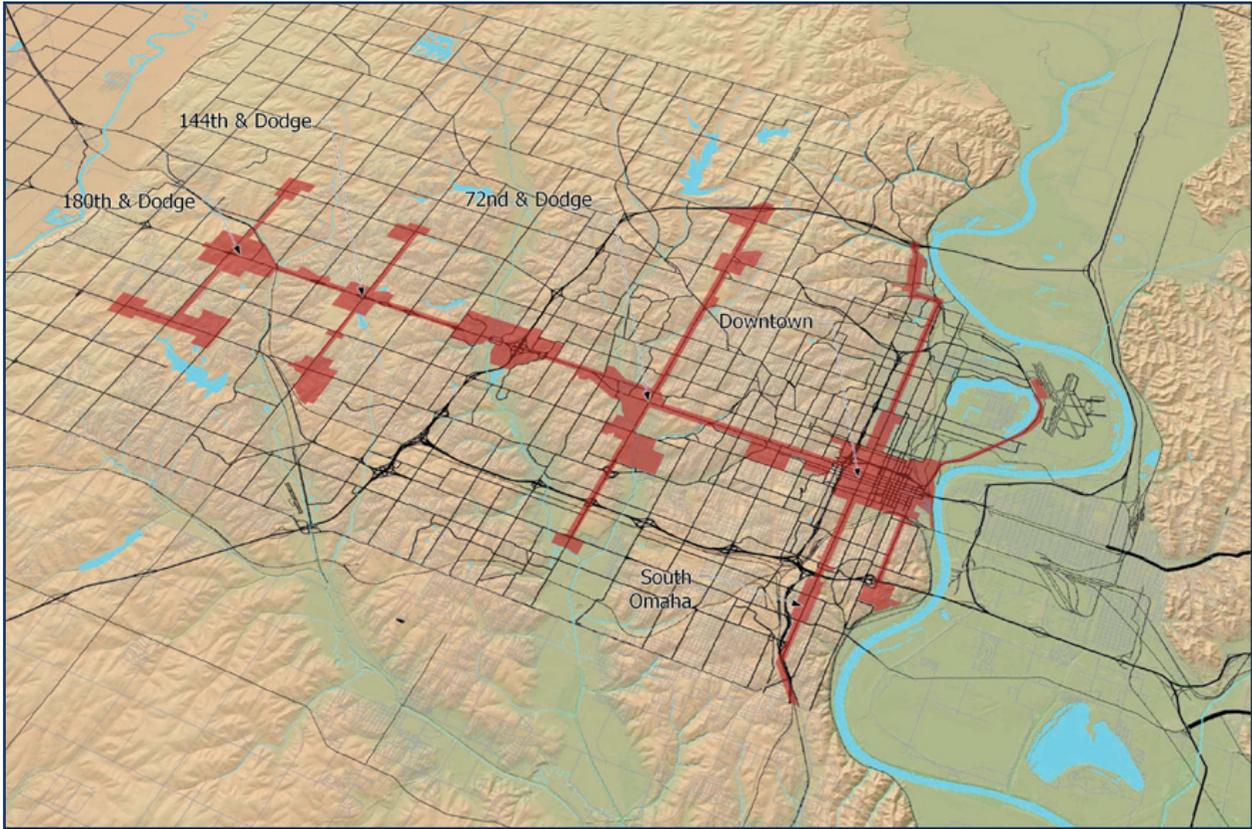
1. Each public and private development should be an opportunity to create and enhance a green setting for Omaha.

Policies:

2. The City should require all appropriate agencies to prepare an annual report detailing progress in creating and maintaining green streets, new and existing trails, new and existing parks, and other elements of the City's green setting.

Implementation:

1. An interdepartmental committee should be established including the directors of the Public Works, Parks, and Planning Departments. The Committee's purpose would be to monitor the implementation of the policies in the Urban Design Element of the Master Plan to be sure that the Green, Civic and Neighborhood policies are followed by the City. The Committee and its constituent agencies should be required to provide information for an annual report to be issued by the Mayor's office.



Perspective view of map delineating the areas of civic importance in Omaha

CIVIC OMAHA

The older parts of many U.S. cities show evidence that the designers and owners of many of the buildings once shared certain principles of civic design. Some of these principles were that buildings at the front lines of properties define the space of the street. Streets lead up to vistas of important buildings. Cornice lines and belt courses communicate building heights and give structures a defined base and top. Many of Omaha's downtown and midtown buildings reflect this traditional pattern of civic design and are built up to the street with defined bases and cornice lines. Central High School occupies the site of the first Nebraska state capitol and closes the vista of Capitol Avenue.

The new automobile geography of cities with many lanes of traffic and extensive parking lots conflicts with these civic design principles. Modern building construction and modernist architectural design concepts also conflict with the traditional ways that buildings have been located and designed to respond to a civic context.

Successful cities—first choice locations for business and residents—have shown the ability to reestablish a civic design consensus in older parts of the City and extend something comparable to important places in newer areas.

This Plan component presents goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures intended to preserve and restore civic design elements in the areas of greatest civic importance and extend comparable design concepts to key portions of Omaha that have been developed more recently without the guidance of civic design principles.

Goal 1: Delineating the Areas of Civic Importance

Background

The downtown, midtown, and uptown areas, in most cities are the places that have the greatest civic importance. They are locations where principal businesses and institutions are located; they are places that are part of an understanding of the city that most residents share. Transportation terminals are also of civic importance, as are major parks, and the streets that connect the most significant parts of the city, like Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles and Peachtree Street in Atlanta. In Omaha the street that connects the most significant parts of the City is Dodge Street, the main civic corridor, from the bridge crossing the Missouri River through downtown and midtown, past memorial park and the University of Nebraska, out to the site of the new overpass, Miracle Hills, and beyond to the proposed Gateway Park at 204th Street. Dodge Street is crossed at intervals by north-south corridors that are also an important part of the civic understanding of Omaha: Abbott Drive/10th Street; 24th Street, 72nd Street, 144th Street from Hillsboro to Oakview and 180th Street from Maple to Center.

Goal 1 Statement

Omaha's image should be defined by its built environment as well as by its green setting. The City should select the locations within the City that are of primary importance in shaping its physical image, and pursue objectives and policies to preserve and develop these places of civic importance in ways that help Omaha to be recognized as a first choice City.

Objectives:

1. The City should delineate the areas of civic importance.
2. The streets and public spaces within the delineated areas of civic importance should be improved in a consistent and harmonious way.
3. Private development should be responsive to the design of the public environment within the delineated areas of civic importance.
4. The City should seek to achieve the best possible civic improvements within the delineated areas of civic importance.

Policies:

1. The City should establish specific design objectives for the built environment within the delineated areas of civic importance.
2. The design of streets and street furniture within delineated areas of civic importance should be subject to special design standards.
3. All new or remodeled buildings within delineated areas of civic importance should address the City's design objectives.
4. New off-premise advertising signs should not be permitted within delineated areas of civic importance.
5. There should be design guidelines for on-premise advertising signs in delineated areas of civic importance.
6. The City should have the administrative capacity to achieve the objectives and policies for delineated areas of civic importance.

Implementation:

1. The Zoning Code should include an overlay zone entitled Area of Civic Importance, and each such area should be shown on the Zoning Map. An illustration of this concept is on page 22.
2. New development and remodeling of existing buildings within an Area of Civic Importance should be governed by design guidelines in the Zoning Code and subject to review by the City for compliance. These guidelines should address such topics as building placement,

building elevation and massing, site layout and landscaping of access roads and parking. The Planning Department would be authorized to issue a certificate of compliance for each proposed development or redevelopment based on review by City staff. Difficult issues would be referred to the Design Review Board for advice.

3. New off-premise advertising signs should not be permitted in an Area of Civic Importance and the City should follow policies that would reduce the number, and improve the placement, of existing off-premise signs.
4. For on-premise signs within an Area of Civic Importance there should be design guidelines, and these guidelines should be used by staff to review proposed on-premise signs, with the opportunity for review by the Design Review Board where advice is needed where there are difficult issues of compliance.
5. Street lights and other street furniture installed within public rights of way by the City or by private owners within an Area of Civic Importance should conform to the city's handbook for streetscape design.
6. The City planning department should be staffed with design expertise sufficient to keep up with the responsibilities for overseeing development, including development in the mapped Areas of Civic Importance.

Goal 2: Preserving and Creating Distinctive Civic Places

Background

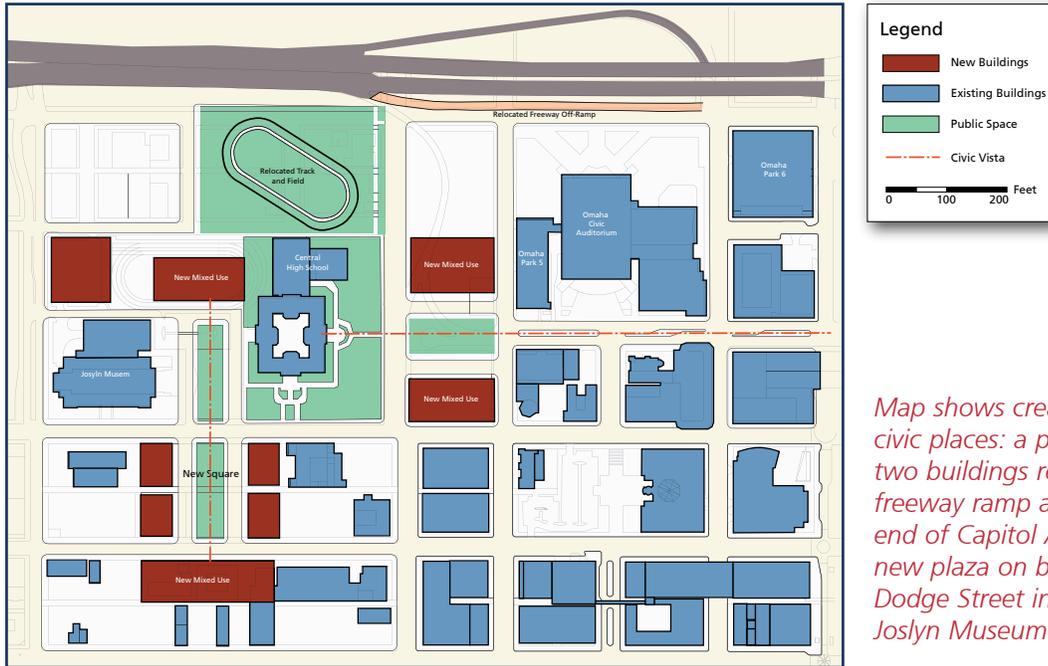
Within the Areas of Civic Importance there are places which have such a major role in making the image of the City that they require special public improvements and place-specific design guidelines to guide future development.

An example of such a place is Capitol Avenue looking west towards Central High School where the freeway ramp should be removed, and the urban design strengthened by design guidelines for new buildings and civic improvements. Turner Park in midtown is another such distinctive place, identified in the Destination Midtown study as a location for both detailed design guidelines and public improvements.

In newer parts of the City new civic places can be created by design guidelines and public improvements that will coordinate private investments, as in the gateway district taking form around Dodge and 180th Streets.

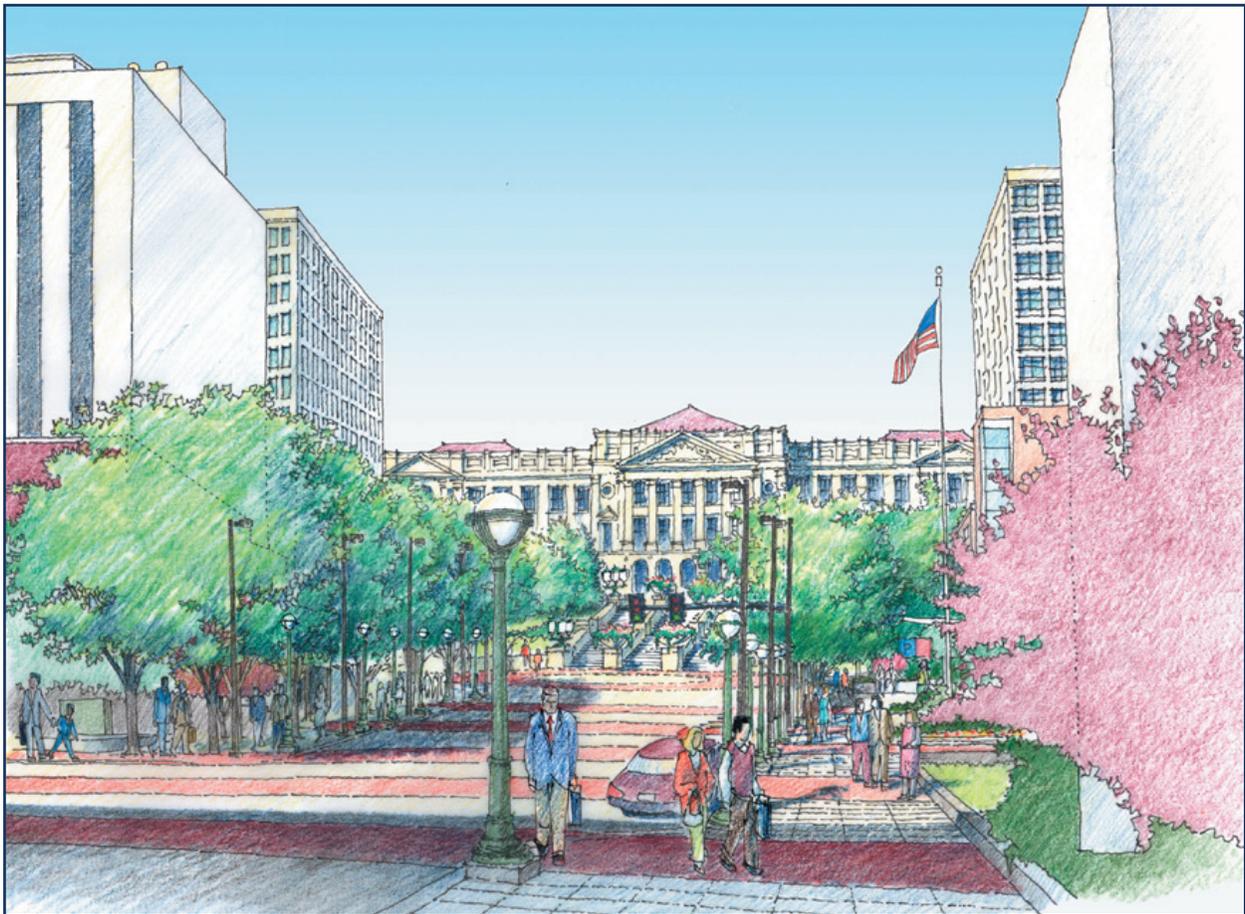
Goal 2 Statement

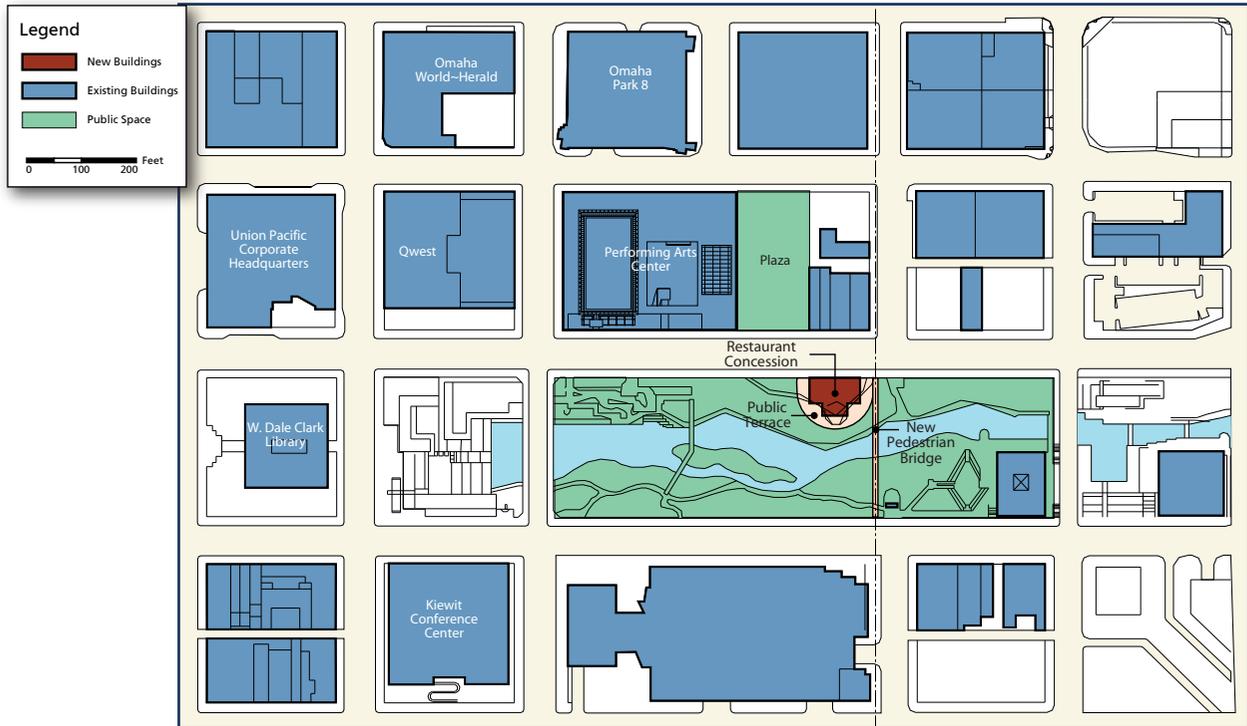
There are some distinctive places that help to define Omaha's image, and there are opportunities to improve these places and create more. Omaha should promote the preservation and creation of these places through legislation and public investment.



Map shows creation of new civic places: a park and two buildings replacing a freeway ramp at the west end of Capitol Avenue and a new plaza on both sides of Dodge Street in front of the Joslyn Museum.

Illustration of streetscape improvements, a new park, and new buildings to frame the civic vista looking west on Capitol Boulevard in downtown Omaha



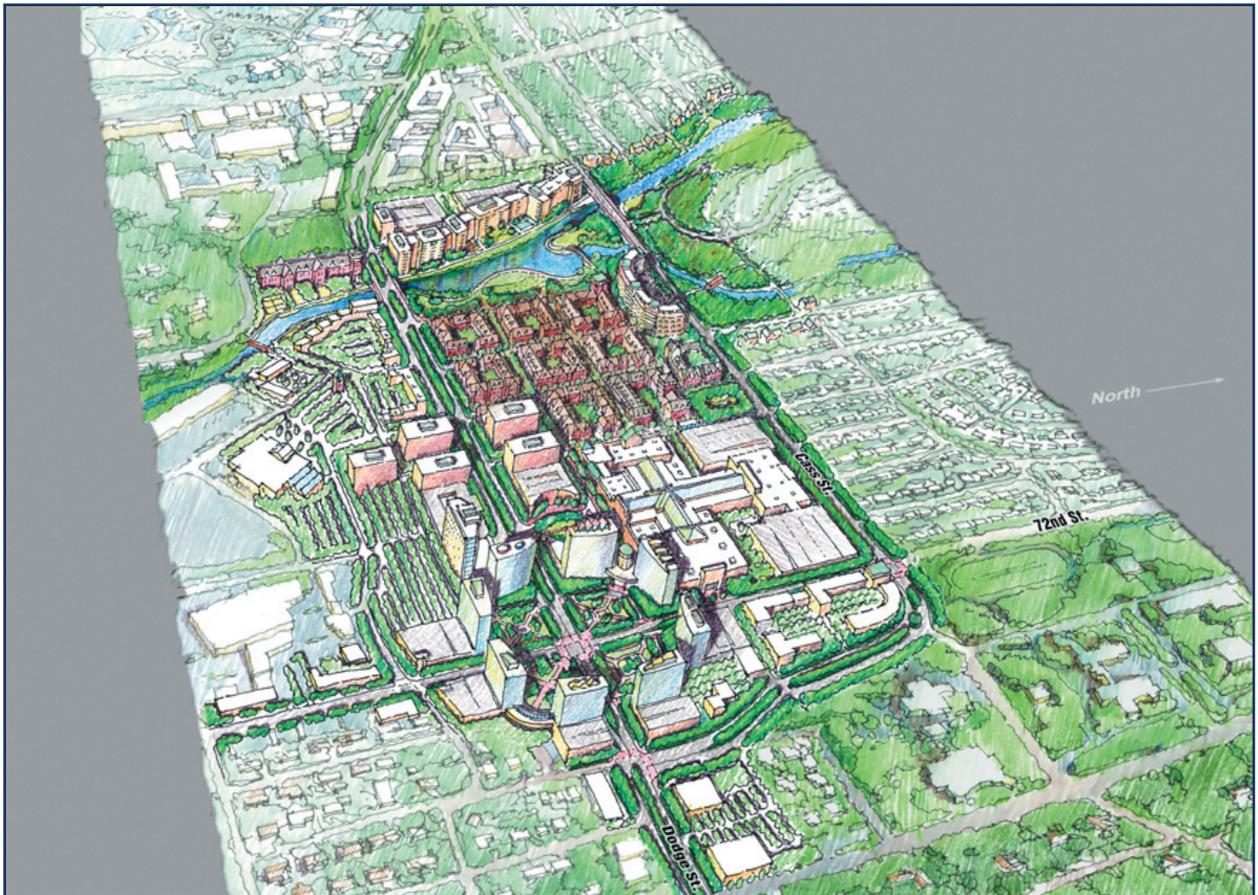


Adding a restaurant and a second pedestrian bridge to the Gene Leahy Mall will encourage more people to use and enjoy this important civic space.

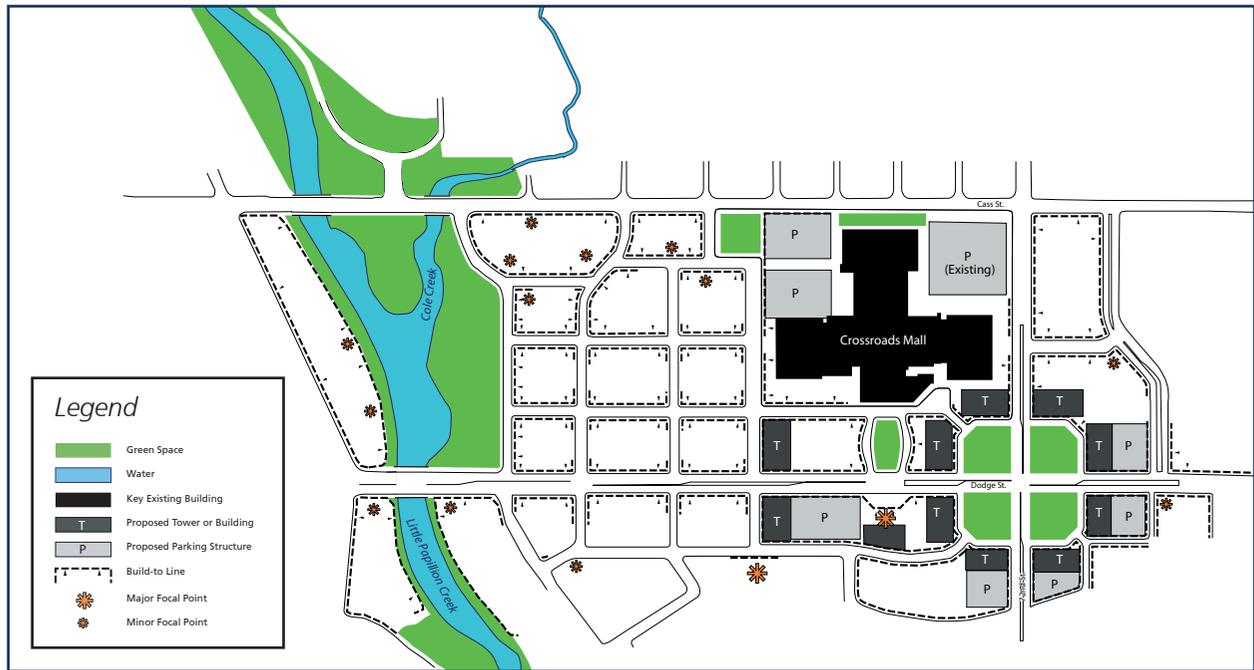




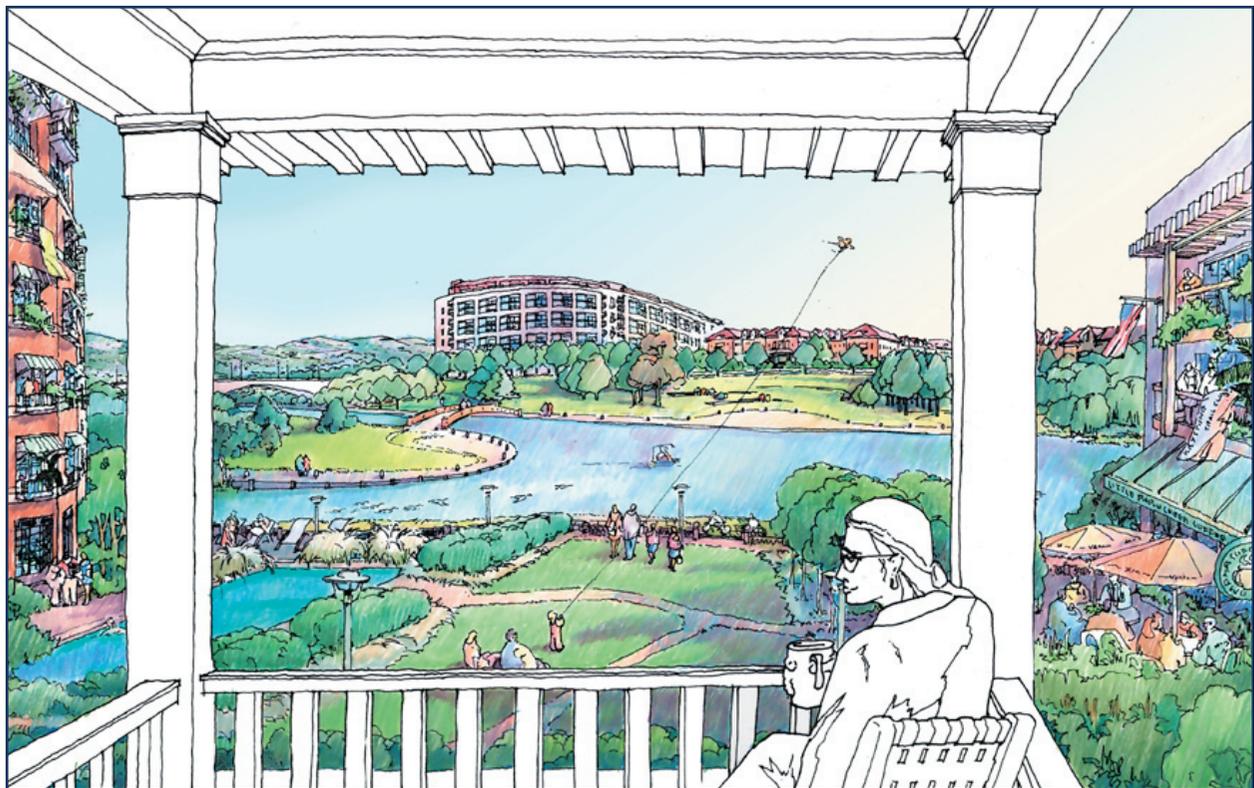
The sketch shows the existing development of land from the crossroads at 72nd and Dodge Streets looking west towards the confluence of Cole Creek and the Little Papio.



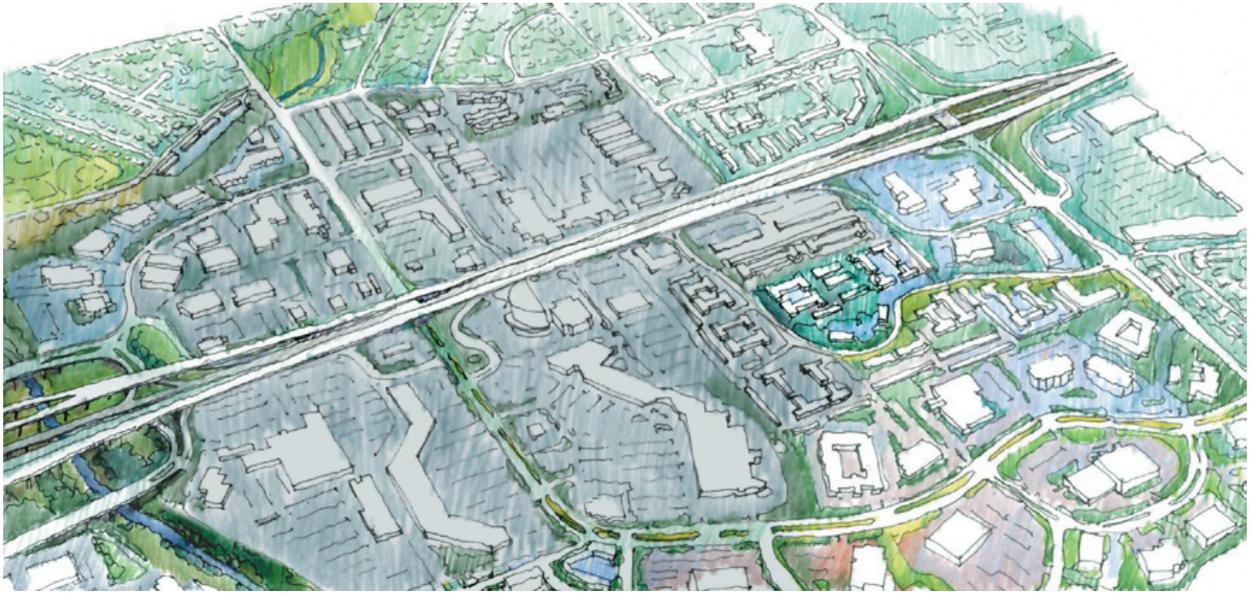
The sketch shows how a redesigned intersection at 72nd and Dodge creates a major civic square framed by office and retail buildings. A new park is created along the Little Papillion creek where a system of dams creates a lake. A new residential community faces onto the park.



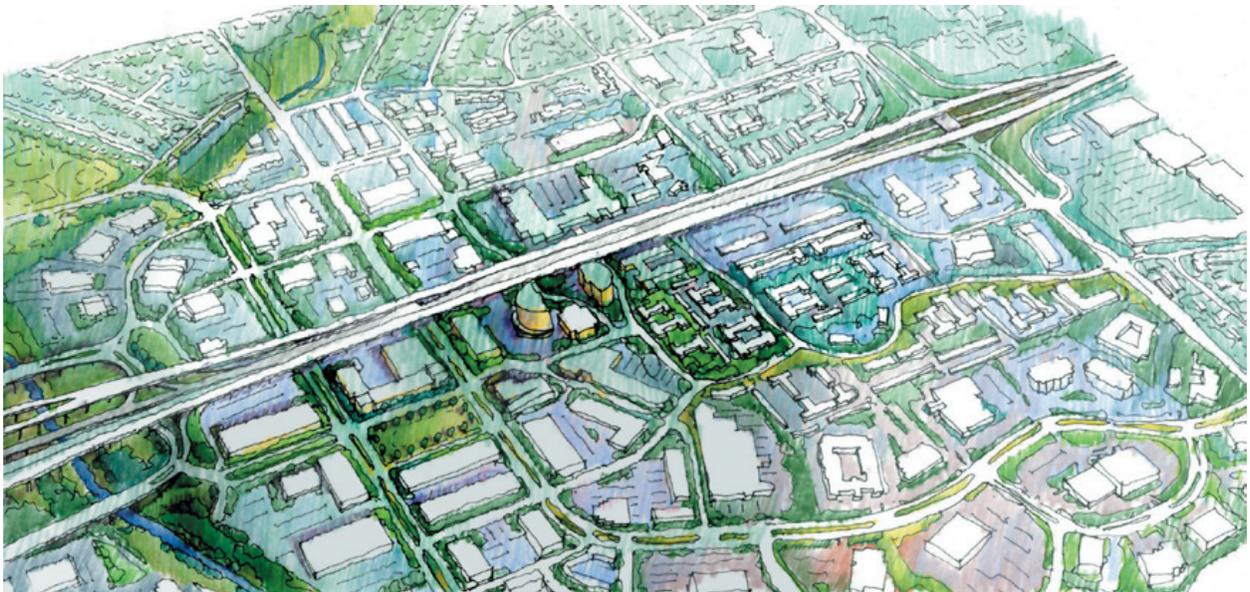
The diagram shows the design guidelines for redeveloping the area around Crossroads Mall as an urban village showing proposed street plan and build-to lines. A new lake and park would be created along Little Papillion Creek, serving as an amenity for new mixed-use development.



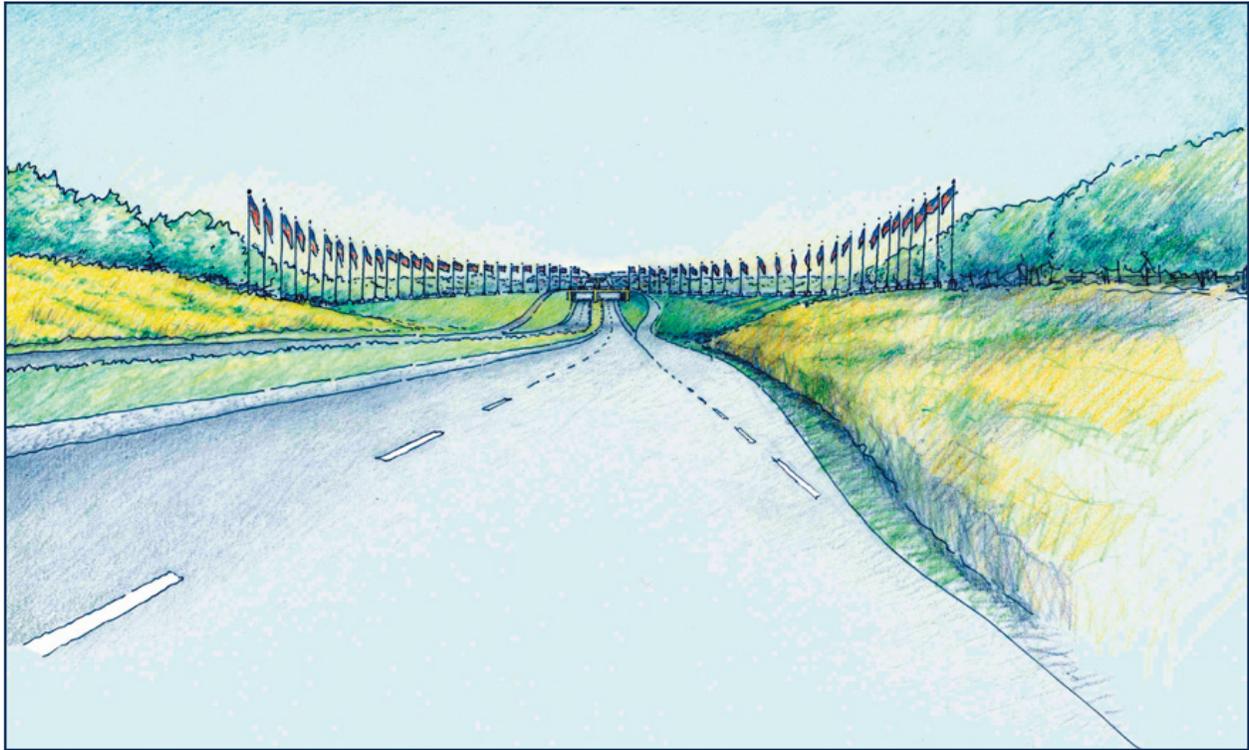
Future view of a new Crossroads neighborhood looking east across a lake and park created where Cole Creek meets the Little Papio between Dodge and Cass Streets.



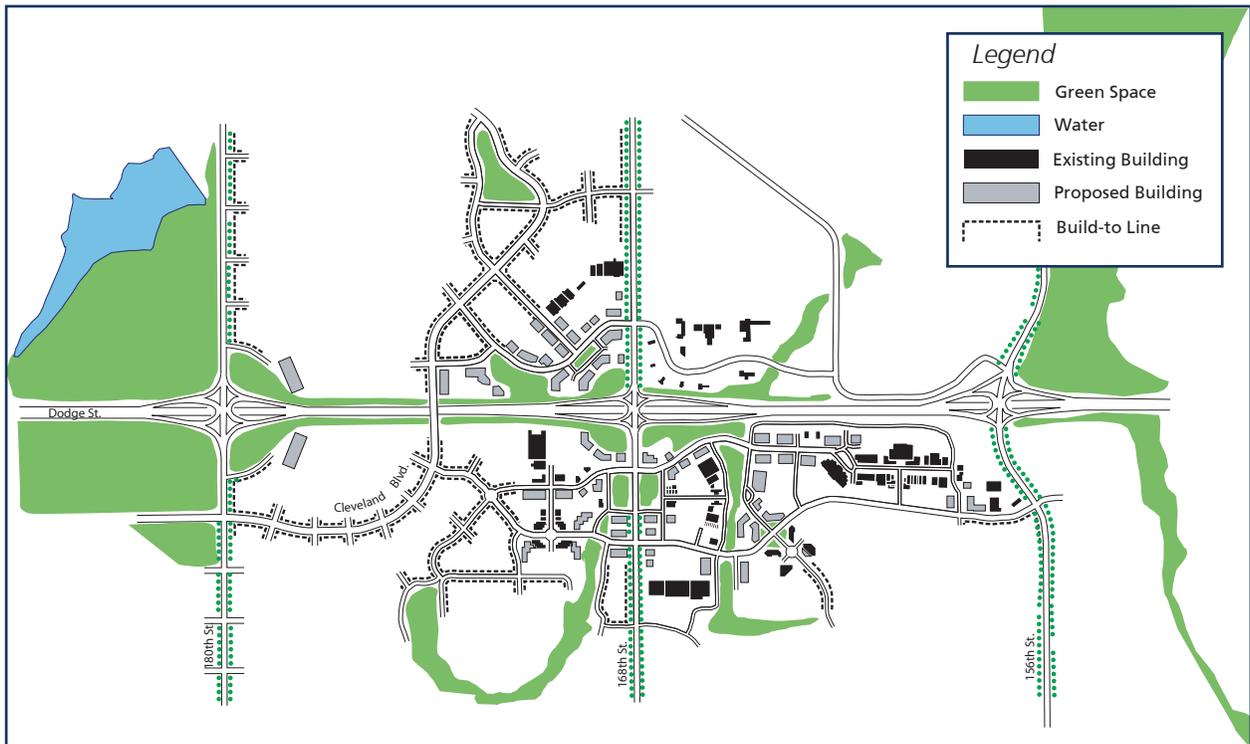
Sketch of an aerial view of Dodge St. between 114th St. and 126th St. as it will look after the completion of the new Dodge Street viaduct



Sketch of an aerial view of Dodge St. between 114th St. and 126th St. as the area might be redesigned to provide for interconnected mixed use development



Sketch of the proposed Omaha Gateway on West Dodge Street at 180th St.



Conceptual site plan for West Dodge Street between 156th and 180th Streets showing the new gateway to the city from the west and guidelines for integrating development proposed by several different developers

Objectives:

1. There should be specific plans to preserve, enhance, and create, civic places of significance to Omaha's image.

Policies:

1. The City should use legislation to implement specific plans for civic places.
2. New off-premise advertising signs should not be permitted within the areas covered by specific plans for civic places.

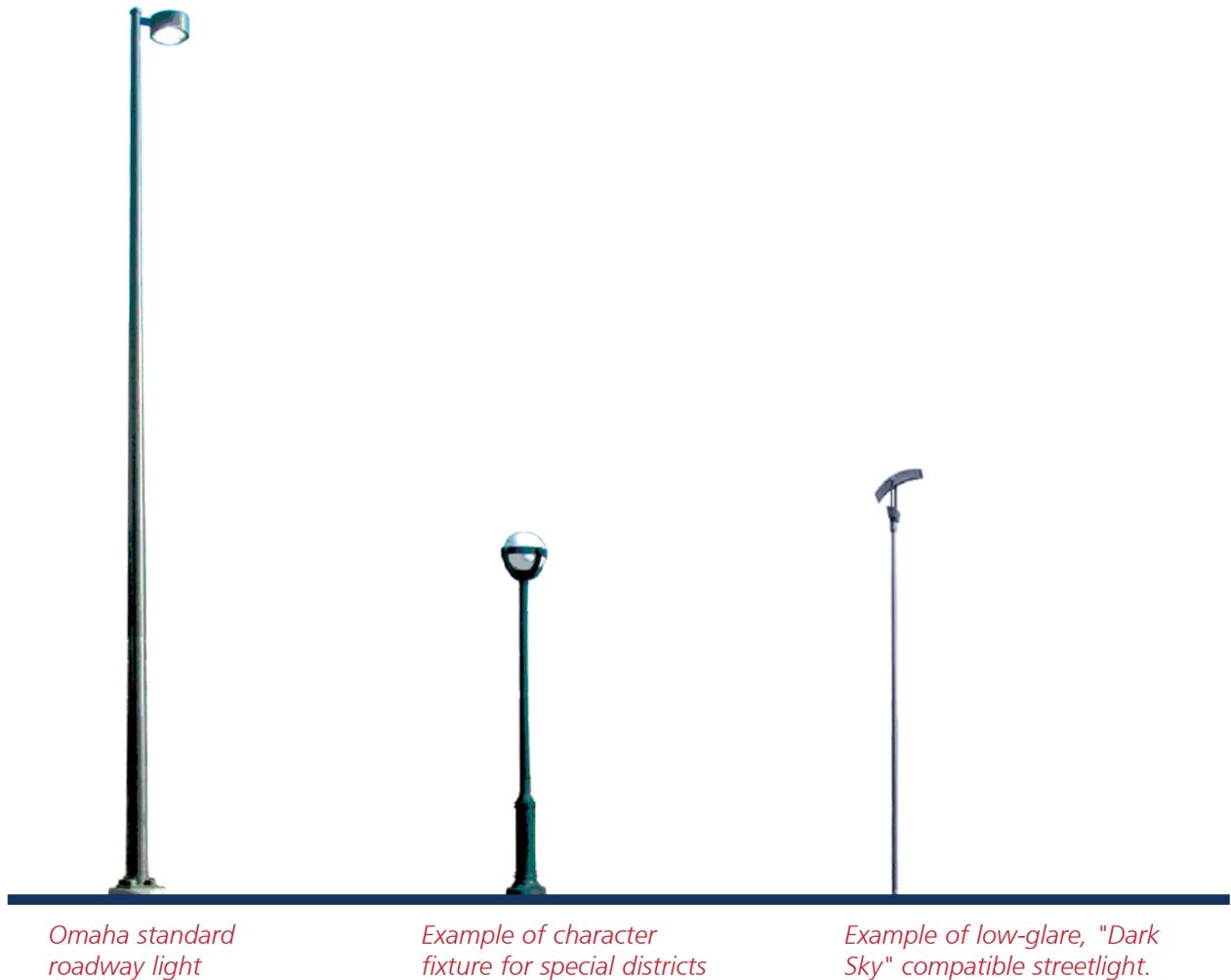
Implementation:

1. There should be a Civic Places chapter in the Omaha Zoning Code. The Planning Board should be able to map and the City Council should be able to adopt special *Civic Place Districts*. These districts would normally be located within the Areas of Civic Importance. Each such district would have specific design criteria for building size, placement, set-backs, and height relationships. These Civic Places would also be supported by public improvements that would be part of the over-all design of the place. Examples of the specific design criteria and public improvement concepts for a Civic Place are shown in the Urban Design Element.
2. New off-premise-advertising signs should not be permitted in a Civic Place District.
3. Development within a Civic Place district would be subject to review for compliance with the specific design criteria. The Planning Department would issue the certificate of compliance based on review by City staff. Difficult issues would be referred to the Design Review Board for advice.

Goal 3: Streetscapes**Background**

Street lights, traffic signals, traffic information signs, parking signs, street identification signs, along with street trees, and street and sidewalk materials are the parts of the streetscape that are important in creating the image of any city. Often their placement and design are the product of a series of ad hoc decisions that give little coherency and, instead, create a form of visual noise. People may tune them out, but their sense of the city is still very much affected by the way streetscape is designed and installed.

Omaha has already made some important decisions about streetscape. New tall street lights downtown and along Abbott Drive are helping to reinforce locations of civic importance. Omaha does not have, however, an official streetscape vocabulary that includes pedestrian level lighting fixtures, traffic signal design and placement, traffic information sign design and placement, plus standards for consistent design and placement of sidewalk materials, landscaping, curbs, and other parts of the City's streetscape.



Goal 3 Statement

Street lights, traffic signals, traffic information signs, parking signs, street identification signs, street trees, and street and sidewalk materials are important components of the City's image. All elements of streetscape within the delineated areas of civic importance should contribute to harmonious and consistent designs for these areas.

Objectives:

1. All elements of the streetscape within the areas of civic importance should be part of a consistent design vocabulary, and installed and maintained in ways consistent with the design.

Policies:

1. The City should have design and installation standards that set a consistent design vocabulary for all elements within the public right of way in delineated areas of civic importance.

Implementation:

1. There should be a handbook of design and installation standards for streetscape elements that is adopted by the City and applies to all streets, with specific standards for areas of civic importance.

Goal 4: Major Commercial Corridors and Intersections

Background

Land along a highway corridor is usually heavily zoned for commercial uses. But there is seldom enough commercial land at any one location to make a complete commercial center.

The Land Use element of Omaha's Master Plan outlines a strategy for remapping continuous commercial zones so that there are commercial centers at major intersections and the intervals between commercial centers along corridor streets are used in a different way, such as multi-family housing, turned to face the neighborhood, not the corridor street.

However, commercial corridors will continue to exist in Omaha for a long time. Design policies are needed to foster coherent building design relationships amid the parking lots on more recent commercial streets. In addition to these building placement and context concerns, there are also issues about the design of the individual structures and their parking lots. Commercial buildings are frequently designed to have a façade on the parking lot side that is emblematic of the building, with no attention paid to the other three sides of the structure. Policies are needed to reshape the placement and location of commercial buildings to help achieve commercial centers at major intersections and at intervals along corridor streets.

Goal 4 Statement

Major commercial corridors should be designed to present a coherent image for the motorist and a safe and manageable environment for motorists and pedestrians.

Objectives:

1. In major commercial corridors the City should have design standards for buildings, signs, and landscaping.
2. There should be programs for placing local utilities behind buildings or underground along major commercial corridors.

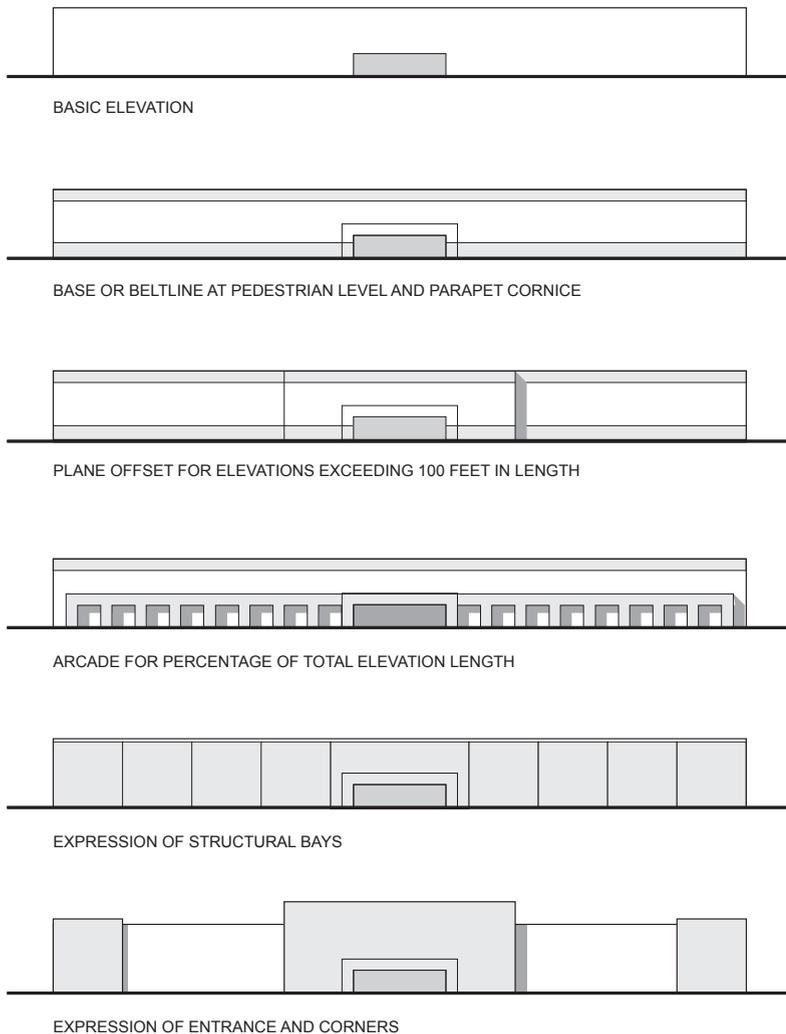
Policies:

1. Local service utilities should be underground along major commercial corridors or run in locations behind the buildings; high voltage above-ground power lines along major commercial corridors should be designed and placed to be as unobtrusive as possible.
2. Signs along a major commercial corridor should meet height, size and other relevant standards that help provide a coherent image for the corridor.

3. There should be landscaping and placement standards for parking lots in major commercial corridors.
4. Buildings in major commercial corridors should address such design issues as ease of access, building placement, set-backs, pedestrian-friendly environments, elevations, and screening of loading areas.

Implementation:

1. The City should adopt regulations governing the placement of above-ground utilities along major commercial corridors. Wherever possible, utility corridors should be established at the rear of commercial lots and not along the street frontages.
2. The City should create an overlay district for major commercial corridors within the provisions of the general commercial zoning districts to provide for site plan review with reference to design criteria for building placement, designs for all elevations, and landscaping.



Examples of elevation controls for large retail buildings -- by using a combination of these measures the impact of the building on its surroundings can be improved.

Goal 5: Pedestrian Oriented, Mixed-Use Centers

Background

The shops along Underwood Avenue near 50th Street in Dundee are clustered within walking distance of each other in buildings that front directly on the sidewalks, making the walk from one place to another lively and interesting. Dundee's commercial center is frequently mentioned as an example of a local shopping district that everyone in Omaha likes. Achieving comparable conditions in newer centers requires streets that accept on-street parking, sidewalks, and building placement with entrances along the sidewalks, seldom found in newer suburban development, despite their ability to foster a lively and interesting environment.

As noted under Goal 4 above, the Land Use Element of the Master Plan seeks to reshape commercial development into pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centers located near important intersections, rather than in continuous corridors along major arterials. These centers will also be nodes of activity that could ultimately be served by rapid transit. The intent is to create a situation where shoppers park once and walk to several destinations. The intersections where pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centers could occur fall into three categories: intersections of two major streets, intersections of a major and a minor street, and intersections of two minor streets. Each type of intersection will require different policies.

Goal 5 Statement

Commercial activities in Omaha should occur in pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centers rather than in continuous strips along arterial streets,

Objectives:

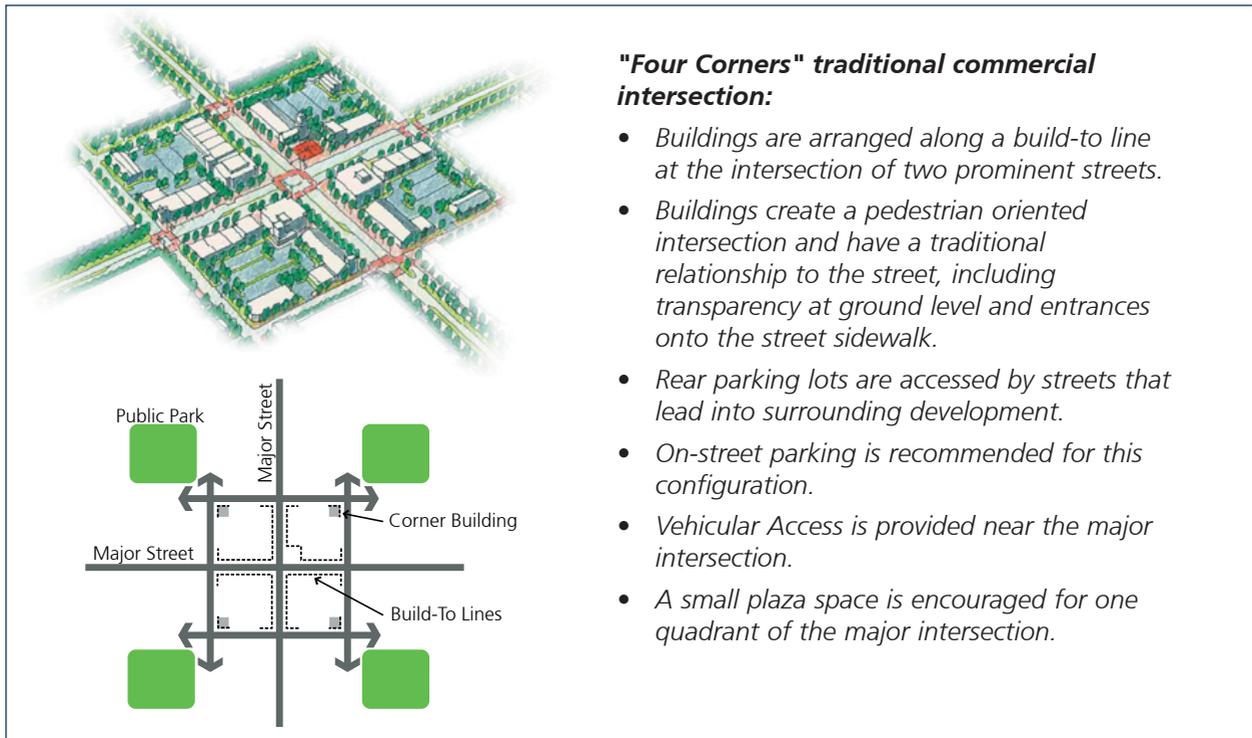
1. The City should facilitate and promote pedestrian-oriented, walkable, mixed-use centers as a key to a balanced transportation system that also fosters civic life.

Policies:

1. The City should use its zoning, mapping and redevelopment powers to facilitate the development of pedestrian-oriented, walkable, mixed-use centers. (See diagrams, p.38-39)
2. The City should adopt street design standards to facilitate the construction of pedestrian-oriented, walkable, mixed-use centers.

Implementation:

1. Locations in the already-developed parts of the City should be selected for pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centers and the City should use its public improvement, zoning and mapping powers to facilitate such development in these selected locations.
2. The zoning code should include a revised mixed-use zone that will facilitate the mapping and development of pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centers.



Creating a walkable neighborhood commercial center — the "Four Corners" development pattern

3. The map on page 58 shows where pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use centers should be located in parts of the City that are still developing. A variety of types of such centers is needed. Where two minor arterial streets intersect, the center should be in the form of a "Four Corners" mixed-use center modeled after the Dundee village center at the intersection of 50th and Underwood. This center is illustrated above and is structured around the intersection of two minor arterials, with connections to the surrounding neighborhoods. Other centers should expand on the Four Corners concept, correlating to the centers set forth in the Land Use Element of the Master Plan (10, 30, 60, 80, and 165 acres.) The diagrams on pages 38 and 39 illustrate these prototypical centers and elaborate on the following urban design standards:
 - a. Create places that replicate the form and function of a traditional "main street" or town centers,
 - b. Provide for a full mix of uses to be developed over time to ensure pedestrian vitality,
 - c. Provide for pedestrian activity with front doors opening onto the street and through streetscape design,
 - d. Connect commercial centers with surrounding streets and neighborhoods,
 - e. Integrate vehicular traffic and parking as a hierarchical block structure of streets and "back lot" parking.
4. Development regulations applicable in Sanitary and Improvement Districts should include standards for pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centers.

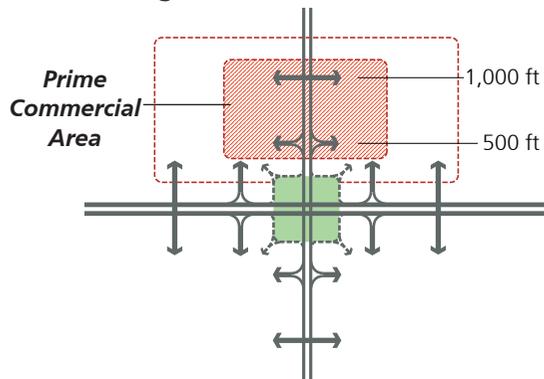
Guidelines for New Pedestrian-Oriented Mixed Use Centers

Pedestrian-Oriented Mixed Use Centers should be developed primarily at the intersection of major streets. Such locations not only offer excellent access and visibility for businesses, but also offer the potential to create memorable places accessible by a variety of transportation modes.

In order to create a successful walkable development, the following guidelines should be observed. These guidelines apply to mixed use development at all scales.

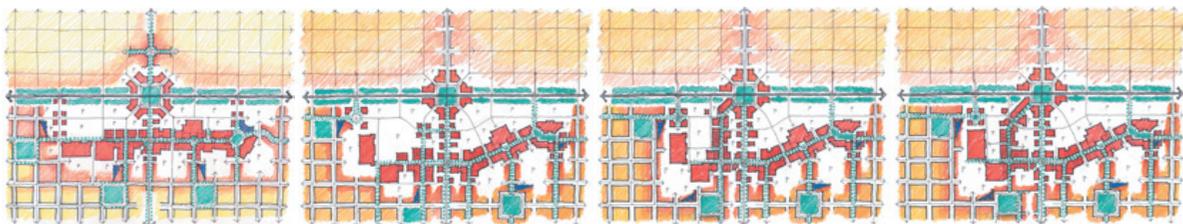
- *The intersection of arterial streets should be designed as a prominent public place, using both the massing of adjacent buildings and the design of the public open space. The land surrounding the intersection will be suitable for variety of development uses, including office, residential, civic or retail. A public square is suggested for especially large and busy intersections to create an attractive, landmark space.*
- *Development should orient to major streets, providing street-facing buildings and landscaping along arterial streets.*
- *Pedestrian oriented streets with a streetwall defined by mixed-use buildings should lead from arterial streets through the mixed use center into surrounding development. The streetwall is delineated by a Build-To Line. Development along these lines should either have a continuous building frontage along the line or a be comprised of a series of buildings which reinforce the line.*
- *All visible building elevations should be designed to the same level of architectural quality.*
- *Parking should be provided both on subsidiary streets in front of buildings and in rear or side parking lots.*
- *Large format "Big Box" retail should be designed to be compatible with pedestrian oriented streets. Large stores may be tucked behind a row of smaller storefronts or provide a terminating anchor for a shopping street.*

Access Diagram



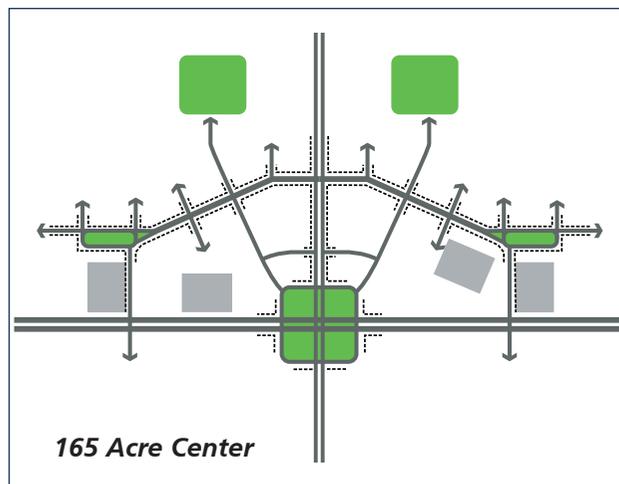
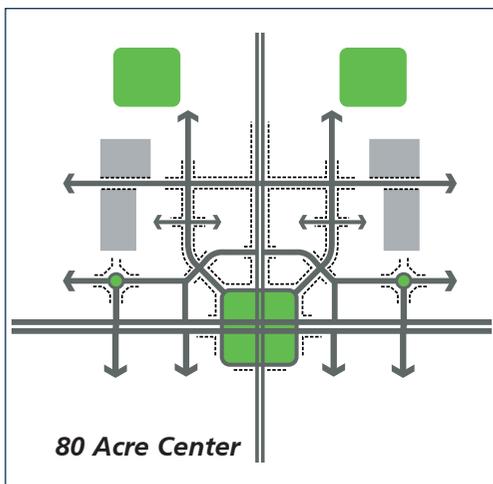
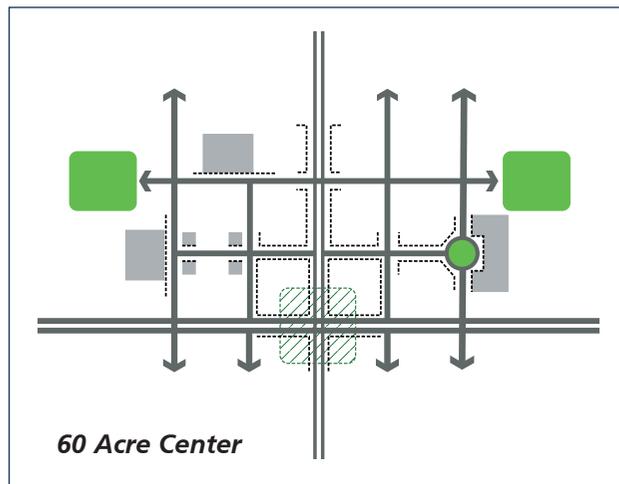
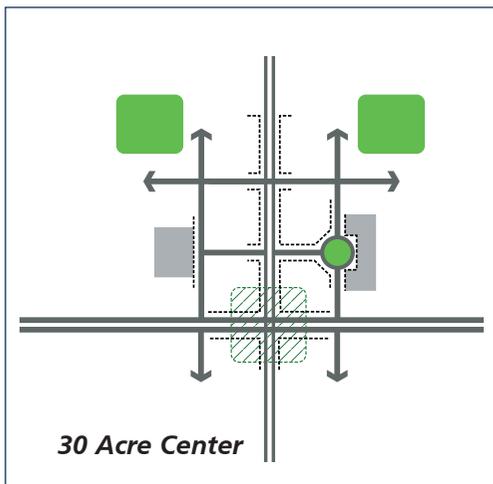
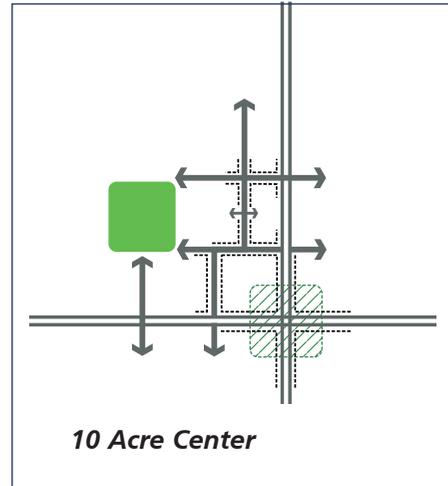
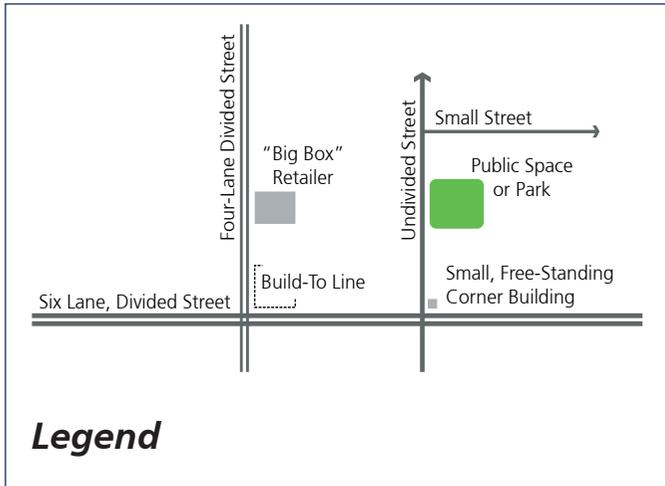
Access is provided from major arterial streets to pedestrian-oriented mixed-used centers as follows:

- *At 500 feet from major intersections, a right-in/ right-out half intersection is allowed.*
- *At 1,000 feet from major intersections signaled intersection with all turning movements is allowed*
- *Land within 500 feet of arterial intersections is subject to special controls for building orientation and site plans suitable to this prominent location.*
- *A special intersection design incorporating a square with additional access points is allowable for some land uses.*



Configuration variations for large pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centers.

Diagrams of Prototypical Pedestrian-Oriented Mixed-Use Centers



Goal 6: Conservation of Buildings

Background

Omaha has a Landmarks Commission and a well-functioning system for designating historic landmarks and historic districts. However, older buildings that do not meet the criteria for historic designation also need some measure of protection because they are part of Omaha's cultural heritage and contribute to the City's sense of place. They also represent valuable assets as structures. Real-estate investors today often find that old buildings have value, both for the atmosphere they create, and because the structure is less expensive than a new building of similar size. The conservation of old buildings is also consistent with public policies that promote sustainability and better use of limited resources.

Sometimes owners may be unwilling or unable to maintain their properties. Code enforcement is only part of the answer. But often owners need help in financing repairs, or in simply understanding what to do and how to get it done.

Goal 6 Statement

Existing buildings should be recognized as a potential resource to be preserved as heritage, as useful parts of the City's built environment, or to reinforce a community's sense of place.

Objectives:

1. The City should continue to designate and protect historic buildings and districts.
2. Development in historic districts and proposed changes to historic buildings should continue to be reviewed by the historic district commission.
3. The City should pursue policies that will make it easier for older buildings to continue to be functional.

Policies:

1. The City should have sufficient inspection staff to achieve full compliance with City codes.
2. The City should fund existing programs for assisting building owners to comply with code requirements at the level appropriate to the needs to be served by these programs.
3. The City should work with private donors to secure an initial level of assistance to bring code enforcement and compliance assistance up to the necessary level.
4. Codes should be reviewed to identify provisions that make it more difficult for older buildings to continue to be functional, and these provisions should be modified if the changes can be made without reducing public health, safety, or welfare.



Restored buildings in Omaha

Implementation:

1. The City should fund additional positions for code enforcement and support staff up to a number that permits pro-active enforcement, including surveys and identification of problem areas and buildings, as well as keeping current with all complaints. An analysis should be prepared demonstrating that these positions return revenue to the City both directly and indirectly.
2. The City should fund existing programs for renovation and preservation of buildings at the level needed to make them effective, and they should be made available to property owners seeking to correct code violations or upgrade their properties.
3. A pilot project, in the midtown area, should be funded to assess the effectiveness of code enforcement. Private funding could help such a demonstration.
4. A committee of architects and engineers should be created to review Omaha's building and other codes and report to the Planning Department if there are unintended consequences from some provisions that make it more difficult to preserve older buildings.



A rendering of proposed illumination of highway overpasses

Goal 7: Lighting Significant Structures

Background

Many landmark structures in Omaha are illuminated already. Other landmark structures in important civic locations should be illuminated, if the owners are willing to do so, and focal buildings in Civic Place Districts should be illuminated when they are constructed. Omaha at present has no criteria for illuminating buildings, and no City approval is required. If City illumination criteria were established, effective architectural illumination could be done by designers who understand how to bring out the best in a building's character consistent with such criteria.

Goal 7 Statement

The City should encourage effective lighting of significant structures in Areas of Civic Importance so that these illuminations reinforce the City's distinctive image. This lighting should be energy efficient and should be carefully directed to minimize light spill beyond the structure being illuminated.

Objectives:

1. The City should set standards for the illumination of significant structures in Areas of Civic Importance.

Policies:

1. The City should prepare design criteria for lighting of significant buildings and structures in Areas of Civic Importance
2. All proposed illumination plans should be reviewed and approved by the City.

Implementation:

1. Exterior illumination of buildings should be governed by a City ordinance. The Areas of Civic Importance are the preferred locations for exterior illumination.
2. All lighting plans should be reviewed and approved by City staff, with difficult questions going to the Design Review Board for resolution.

Goal 8: Public Art

Background

Omaha has an Art Commission that advises on locations for public art projects. Another role for this Commission is to review the selection of artists for public buildings where 1 percent has been set aside for art. The State of Nebraska has a statutory set-aside of 1% for art in public buildings. The City of Omaha does not have comparable legislation. The Art Commission could also help the City define policy about what constitutes appropriate public art in public buildings, including whether art should be defined only as separate commissioned sculptures or paintings, or should include artists designing integral components of the building, such as floors, railings, landscaping.

Goal 8 Statement

The City should encourage the placement of public art in appropriate locations and the incorporation of art in public structures.

Objectives:

1. The City should identify locations that are most appropriate for public art.
2. A source of funds should be secured that will enable the incorporation of public art in all above-ground structures built by the City, and significant buildings open to the public that are financed by the City.



A recent example of public art in Omaha:

Policies:

1. The City should include funds for public art in the budget for all above-ground structures built by the City, and significant buildings open to the public that are financed by the City.
2. The Art Commission should advise on the selection of artists whose work will be included in public structures.
3. The Art Commission should advise on the selection of artists for public commissions and the placement of art in public places.

Implementation:

1. The City should include funds for public art in the budget for above-ground capital projects.
2. The Art Commission should review the placement of art in public places, and advise on the selection of artists for public commissions.
3. The Art Commission should review and approve all works of art commissioned or accepted by the City.



Public Design: New regional headquarters for the National Park Service

Goal 9: General Quality of Public Design

Background

Every public building is an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the design of the city. Public buildings include bridges and other visible infrastructure such as streetscape, as well as police and fire stations, housing authority projects, parks and so on. Schools are also important public buildings that in Omaha have separate funding and administrative procedures.

Cities do not always take full advantage of the design opportunities offered by public buildings. Cost is a significant factor in determining what can and what can not be done to achieve design quality in structures paid for by city funds. Design quality in public building is a complex mixture of accurate budgeting, appropriate selection of design professionals and review and criticism during the design process.

It is not that good design always costs more, although it may, but that the budgets for a building tend to be set by the cost of previous comparable buildings. It is difficult to effect a significant improvement in public building design if there is not also a sophisticated analysis of building cost, in which desirable prototypes are identified and their costs ascertained as part of the budget process.

There also needs to be a reasonable process for finding the best possible designers for each building or structure, using outside, expert advice – at least for high-visibility projects.

Many cities use design review boards as a means of insuring quality for public buildings and structures or for projects built with public funds.

Goal 9 Statement

The City should seek the highest quality of design in the structures it constructs and significant buildings open to the public that are financed by the City.

Objectives:

1. Budgets for City construction should take into account the cost of materials, finishes and other elements necessary to achieve high-quality design.
2. Demonstrated design ability should be an important criterion for the selection of architects, landscape architects, engineers, and other design professionals.
3. The City should review and approve the design and placement of all above-ground structures built and / or financed by the City.

Policies:

1. The City should consider the cost of producing high quality design in determining the budgets for construction projects.
2. The City should seek outside advice as part of the process of selecting design professionals.
3. The City should institute a review and approval process for the design and placement of all above-ground structures that the City constructs and / or finances.

Implementation:

1. The budget process should include cost estimates based on up-to-date information and also include materials and design concepts that allow for a high-quality result.
2. The City's Architectural and Engineering Selection Process should be restructured to provide for more input from the City departments proposing each project. The Selection process should also include participation from design professionals who are outside the City government.
3. The City should create a design review board. A majority of its members should be design professionals. This board should review and approve the designs for all construction by City agencies and all construction substantially supported by City funds.

NEIGHBORHOOD OMAHA

Omaha provides two distinct residential life styles. In the eastern part of the City there are neighborhoods that have a variety of places to live, where people can walk, or be within a short drive, of parks, convenience stores, schools and places of worship. In the newer parts of Omaha there are many good houses and apartments; but most developments have only one kind of house or apartment and they are seldom close to stores, parks, or schools.

The challenge in Omaha is to preserve and restore the older neighborhoods and keep them as attractive as the newer parts of the city, while creating some elements of traditional neighborhoods in the new areas that are being developed as the City expands.

This Plan component presents goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures intended to preserve and restore traditional neighborhoods and extend comparable neighborhood design concepts to developing portions of Omaha. This Plan component also reaffirms the principle of Landmark and Historic District preservation, which should continue to be firmly based in the life of the community.

Goal 1: Creating Neighborhood Alliances

Background

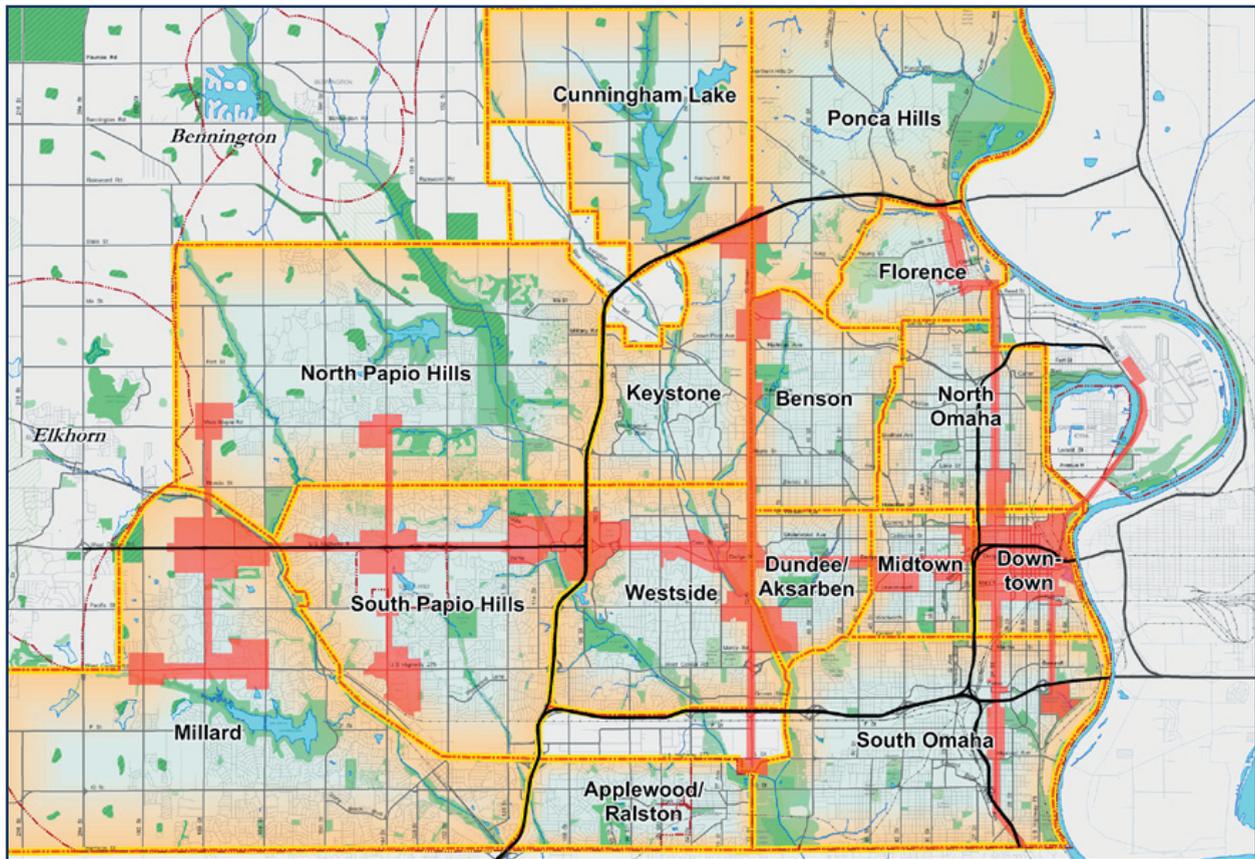
It can be useful to have a planning increment between the individual neighborhood and the entire city. Community planning districts, or advisory neighborhood commission districts, have been created in many other cities to address planning needs for geographical areas defined by a cluster or alliance of neighborhoods. Such alliances foster individual neighborhoods and can help define the delivery of such City services as the location of branch libraries, as well as help in decisions about the location of neighborhood recreation and commercial centers.

Goal 1 Statement

In 1990 Omaha established community planning districts as part of the Master Plan. Although the City has changed substantially since then, the principle of establishing planning districts within the City still has validity. The City should create planning districts that foster strategic alliances of individual neighborhoods defined by mutually acceptable boundaries.

Objectives:

1. Based on consultation with individual neighborhoods, the City should draw boundaries for planning districts that, in each case, create an alliance of neighborhoods.
2. The City should prepare as soon as possible a plan for each of these neighborhood alliance areas.



Map of Neighborhood Alliances with Areas of Civic Importance superimposed.

Policies:

1. This is a preliminary map of neighborhood alliance districts. The boundaries of these districts can be changed after public discussion and as plans are prepared for each area.
2. Based on the map of neighborhood alliances, the planning department should use staff or consultants to develop a plan for each neighborhood alliance area.
3. Each neighborhood alliance plan should apply the Green and Civic Omaha principles at the scale of the neighborhood alliance area.
4. The planning department should be staffed appropriately to work with and respond to the neighborhood alliance areas.

Implementation:

1. This preliminary map shows alliances of neighborhoods, analogous to Midtown Omaha, which is the prototype of the neighborhood alliance concept. Just as Midtown encompasses a diverse group of neighborhoods such as Joslyn Castle and Field Club, each of the neighborhood alliances shown on the map includes many separate, individual neighborhoods. Some of the proposed neighborhood alliances are based on location names that are well understood, such as Benson or South Omaha. Others, such as North Papio Hills are terms invented for areas that have not been delineated this way before. It is not expected that this map will be the permanent definition of the boundaries and composition of the neighborhood alliances, which will ultimately be defined by a process of public discussion and evaluation. The City should hold hearings on this map, or a comparable map, to define the geographical scope of each neighborhood alliance area for planning purposes.
2. The City should have staff or consultants prepare plans for each of the neighborhood alliance districts. Midtown is a prototype, but not a typical situation. Benson should be an early action choice.
3. The City planning department should prepare a basic scope to be followed in all neighborhood alliance district plans, and this scope should include all relevant Green Omaha, Civic Omaha and Neighborhood Omaha policies.
4. The planning department should be staffed to manage the planning of the neighborhood alliance districts.

Goal 2: Preservation and Enhancement of Older Neighborhoods

Background

Preserving older neighborhoods presents comparable issues to those discussed under the heading of Civic Omaha Goal 5, preserving old buildings. Similar proposals, such as increased funding and staffing for code enforcement, lending programs, assistance programs, encouraging a committee of local design professionals to propose code changes, design handbooks, more staffing for assistance programs, would all contribute to this goal. These principles should be applied on a neighborhood, or neighborhood alliance, scale.

Goal 2 Statement

Older neighborhoods should be recognized as resource to be preserved and enhanced for the residential environment that they provide.

Objectives:

1. Older neighborhoods should be maintained and enhanced through a combination of City policies that encourage private reinvestment and public expenditures that help keep these neighborhoods desirable within the real-estate market.

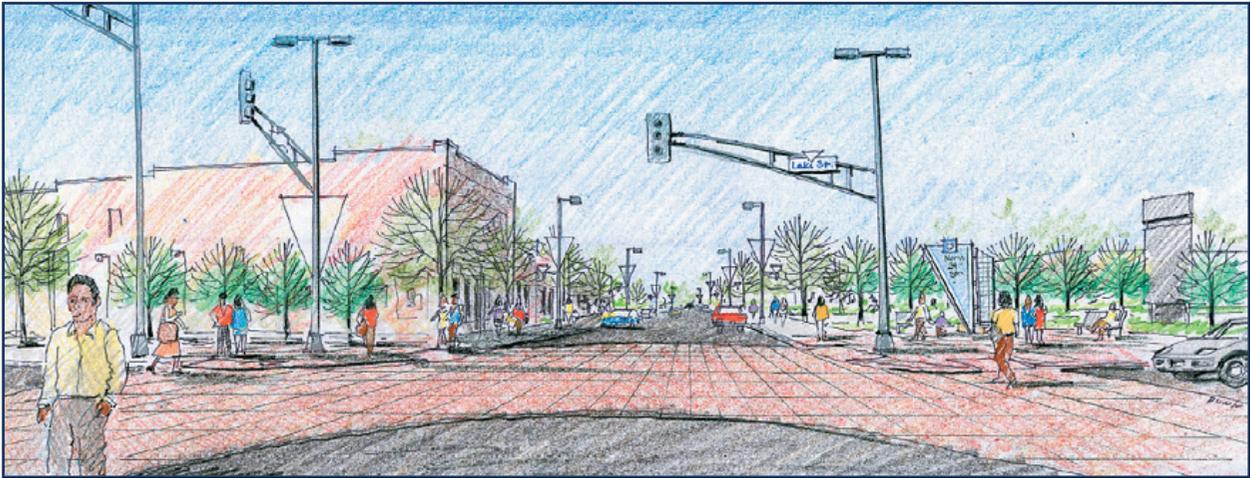


Illustration of North Omaha streetscape improvements on 24th St. (rendering by EDAW)

Policies:

1. The City should fund code enforcement at a level that goes beyond response to complaints and permits pro-active evaluation of buildings, yards, and vacant lots.
2. The City should fund existing programs for assisting property owners to comply with code requirements at the level appropriate to the needs to be served.
3. The City should work with private donors to secure an initial level of assistance to bring code enforcement and compliance assistance up to the necessary level, with the expectation that these programs will pay for themselves over time in increased construction activity and rising property values.
4. The City should encourage the construction of infill development that is in scale with the existing neighborhood.

Implementation:

1. The City should continue to designate and protect historic buildings and districts.
2. Development in historic districts and proposed changes to historic buildings should continue to be reviewed by the historic district commission.
3. Existing programs for renovation and preservation of buildings should be funded at the level needed to make them effective, and administered at a neighborhood level. They should be made available to property owners seeking to correct code violations or upgrade their properties.
4. A pilot project, in the midtown area, should be funded to assess the effectiveness of code enforcement. Private funding could help such a demonstration.



5. Neighborhood reference books should be prepared to show home-owners how to enlarge existing properties while keeping them in character with the surrounding neighborhood, and to show developers preferred methods of doing infill development in existing neighborhoods.

Goal 3: Preserving and Enhancing Retail in Older Neighborhoods

Background

Being able to walk to a convenience store is a significant part of traditional neighborhood life. However, food shopping patterns today are very different from the time when traditional neighborhoods were first built. Not every traditional neighborhood retail location can survive in today's competitive retail environment. However, in the context of plans for neighborhood alliances, the most likely locations in a neighborhood alliance can be targeted for enhancement. An example would be for the City to find a site where a large store and its necessary parking could be introduced immediately adjacent to a traditional shopping street, thus serving as an attraction that supports the existing retail and a reservoir of additional parking as well.

Goal 3 Statement

Retail districts in older neighborhoods should be preserved and enhanced where they remain viable, and replaced by other uses in areas that are under-utilized.

Objectives:

1. Retail districts in older neighborhood alliance areas should be evaluated for their current and future viability as part of the plan for each neighborhood alliance area.

Policies:

1. Viable, walkable retail districts should be supported by targeted initiatives that allow for additional parking and possibly larger anchor stores, designed to fit into their context, to help these areas remain competitive while still retaining their traditional character.
2. Locations for new retail districts, where appropriate, should also be identified.
3. Retail districts judged no longer viable as part of a neighborhood alliance area plan should be zoned to allow other uses, such as multi-family housing.
4. The City should pursue these initiatives with an appropriate level of staffing.

Implementation:

1. The City should initiate pilot programs that demonstrate how to intervene in existing neighborhoods to preserve and enhance existing retail or add it to an existing area. Prototype local development corporations could also be part of the pilot program to keep such retail areas in operation.

Goal 4: Neighborhood Retail and Other Amenities in Post-1950 Neighborhoods

Background

Some of Omaha's newer neighborhoods lack neighborhood retail or locations for neighborhood institutions that form an identifiable central place. Within the context of the neighborhood alliance concept, locations for suitable sub-centers can be identified and enhanced through appropriate zoning policies and targeted locations for public investments.

Goal 4 Statement

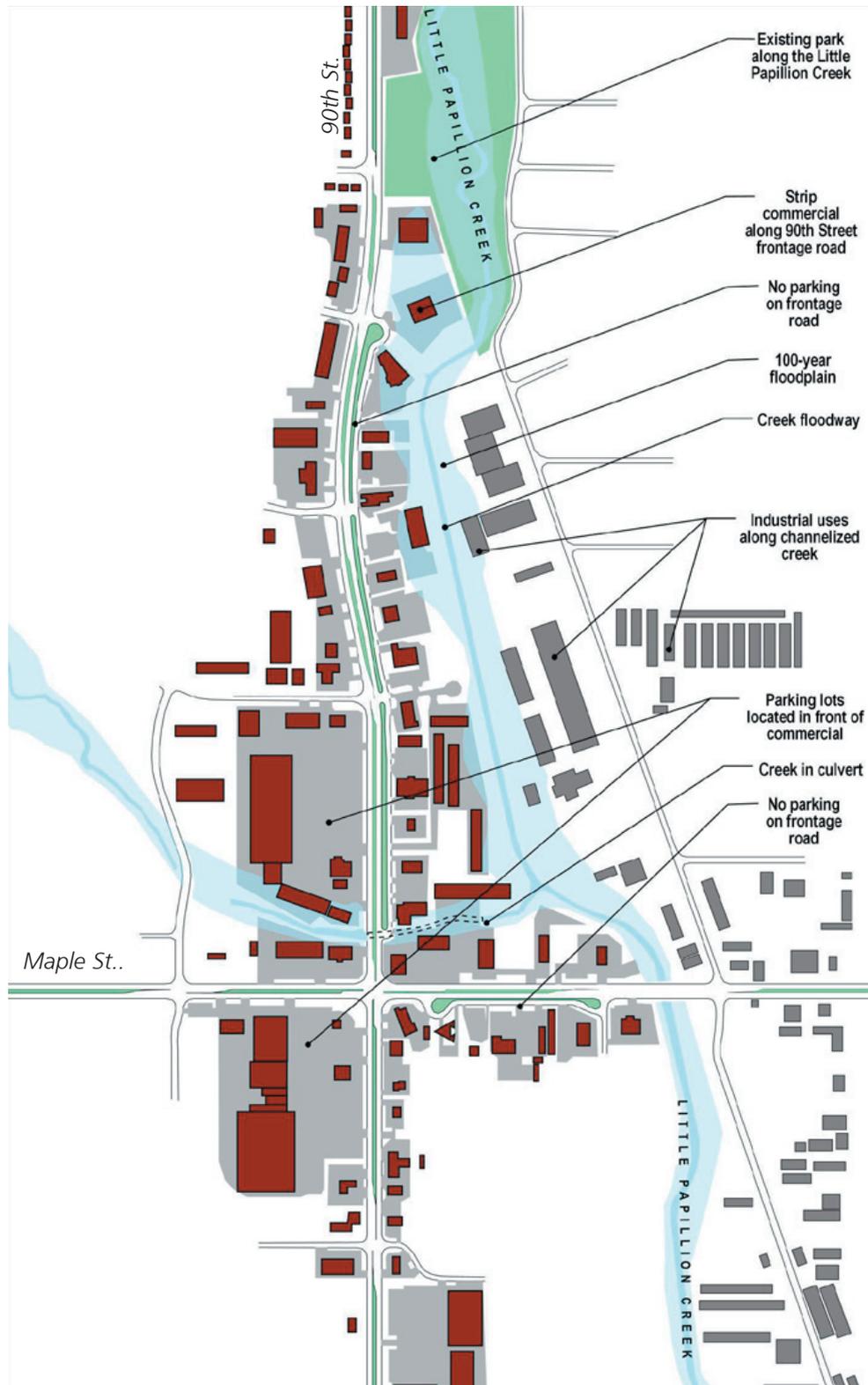
The City should pursue policies that promote the creation of neighborhood amenities that enhance newer neighborhood alliance areas.

Objectives:

1. Retail districts and other neighborhood amenities, such as public facilities and recreation, should be added in walkable locations to newer neighborhoods where such amenities are lacking.

Policies:

1. In response to neighborhood alliance area plans, the City should locate appropriate sites for walkable retail and other neighborhood amenities and encourage such development at these locations.
2. The City should be staffed appropriately to accomplish these initiatives.



The diagram shows the intersection of 90th and Maple Streets as it exists today. The pedestrian environment is neglected and buildings encroach on the floodplain.

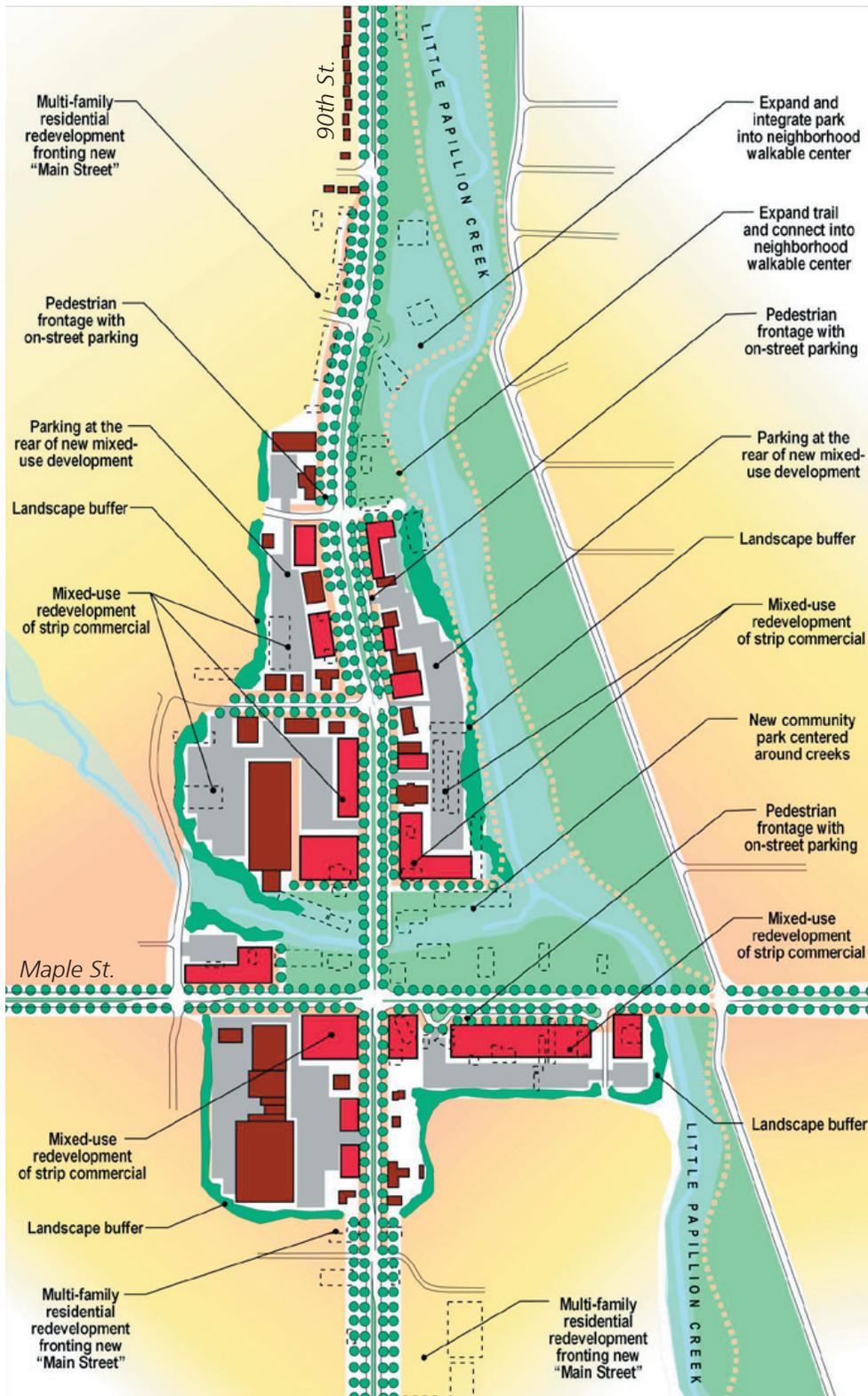


Diagram of potential redesign and redevelopment of the intersection area of 90th and Maple Streets. New buildings are built to the sidewalk with parking onstreet, beside, or behind buildings. Development is integrated into a new park built in the floodplain of Little Papillion Creek.



Illustrations show 90th Street north of Maple Street as it exists today and as it might look if redevelopment follows the illustrated guidelines. The redesigned street features new sidewalks and on-street parking on the frontage road, with buildings built to the sidewalk line. Additional parking is located in the rear and to the side of the buildings.



Implementation:

1. The City should prepare pilot projects that can be incorporated in neighborhood alliance district plans for adding retail and amenities to post-1950 neighborhoods.

Goal 5: Walkable Neighborhoods in Newly Developing Areas**Background**

The Master Plan currently defines acceptable locations for commercial districts of different size and intensity, based on a theory of creating walkable neighborhoods. This underlying neighborhood concept can be reinforced by new prototype designs that make it easier for walkable neighborhoods to grow up around commercial centers.

Goal 5 Statement

Omaha has many traditional, walkable neighborhoods in older areas. However, in the parts of the City that are currently going through the development process, walkable neighborhoods are seldom being built. The City should pursue policies that promote walkable neighborhoods in newly developing areas.

Objectives:

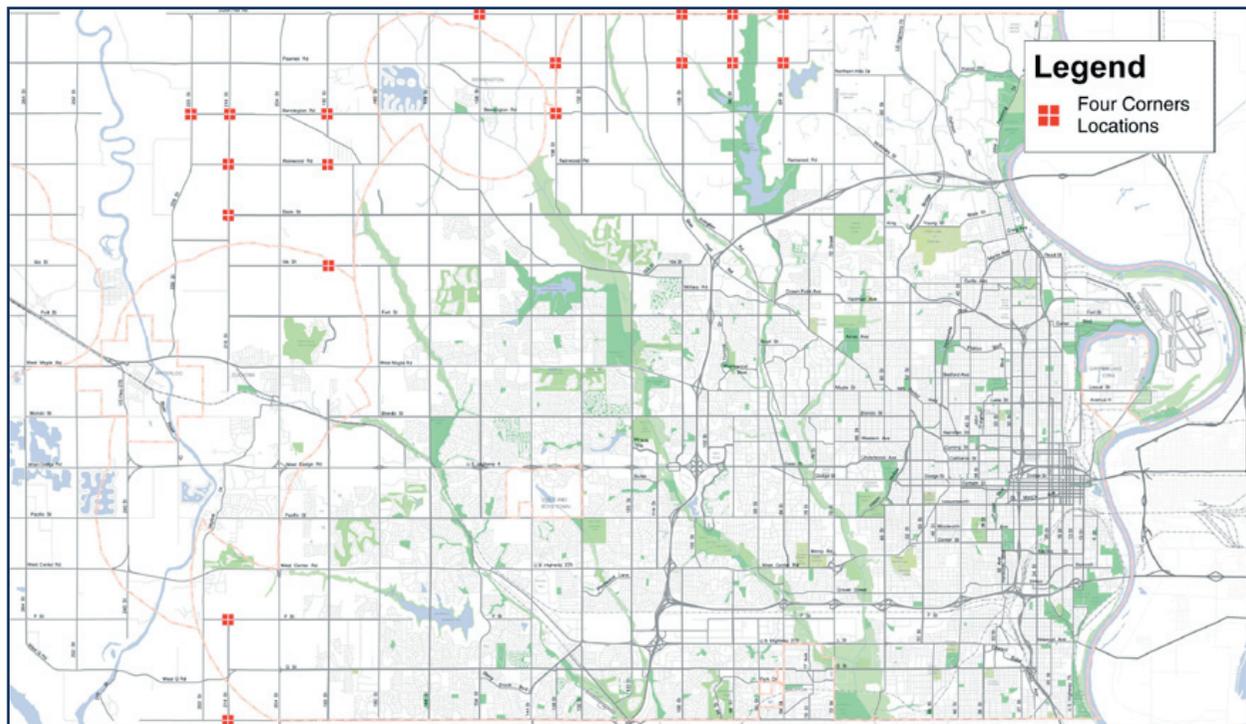
1. Traditional, walkable neighborhoods of about 160 acres should be designed to include a mix of housing types, and should include provision for civic structures and convenience retail.

Policies:

1. New standards for arterial streets, arterial street intersections, and building placement should be developed to foster walkable neighborhoods.
2. New standards should also be developed for walkable neighborhood street systems, mix of housing types, and building placement.
3. The City should continue policies of identifying and requiring locations for neighborhood parks and recreation areas.

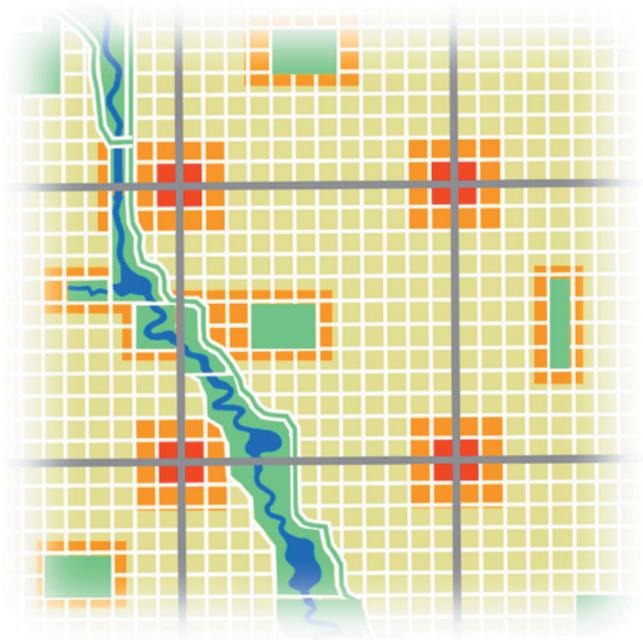
Implementation:

1. The City should adopt the locations shown on the map at the top of page 57 for pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use centers. The urban design standards for these centers are illustrated and outlined on pages 37-39 corresponding to the center sizes in the Land Use Element of the Omaha City Master Plan and to their relative locations at intersections of the arterial street system.
2. The zoning code should also include street and building placement concepts suitable for creating walkable neighborhoods that connect to pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use centers at major intersections.

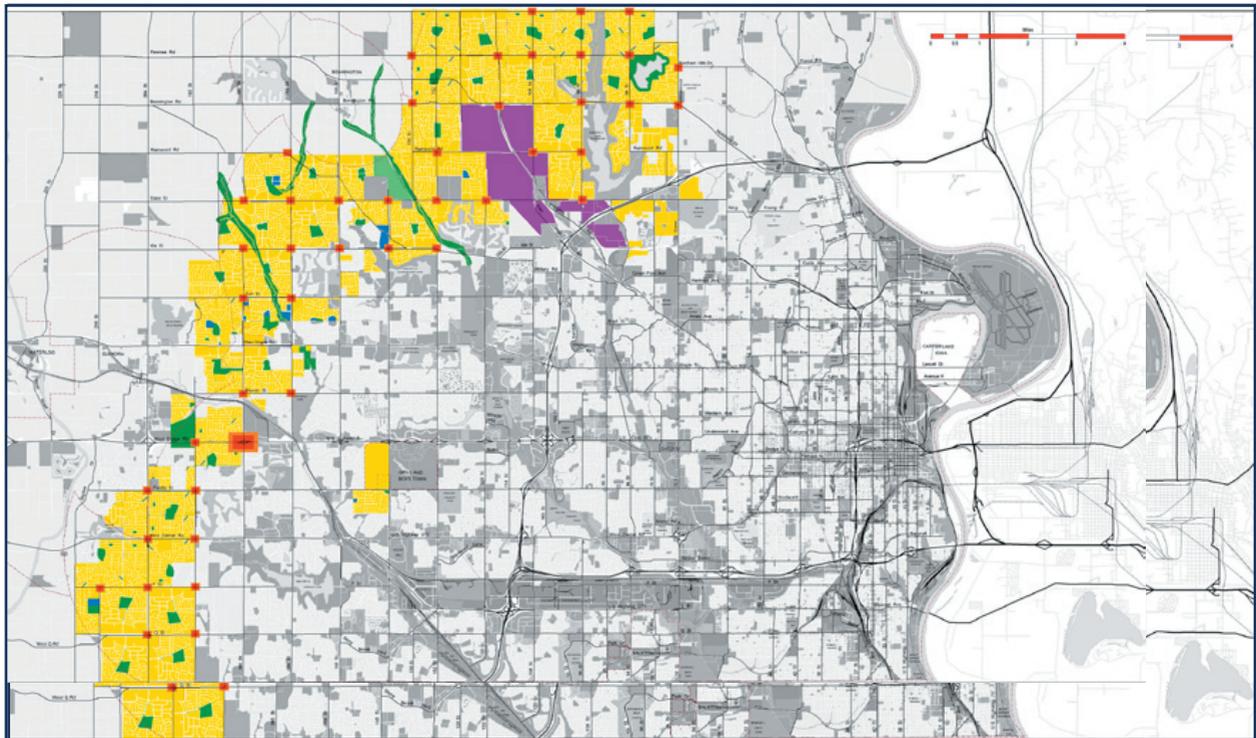


This map shows the locations of intersections within the current Omaha growth management area where the Four Corners development pattern is preferred.

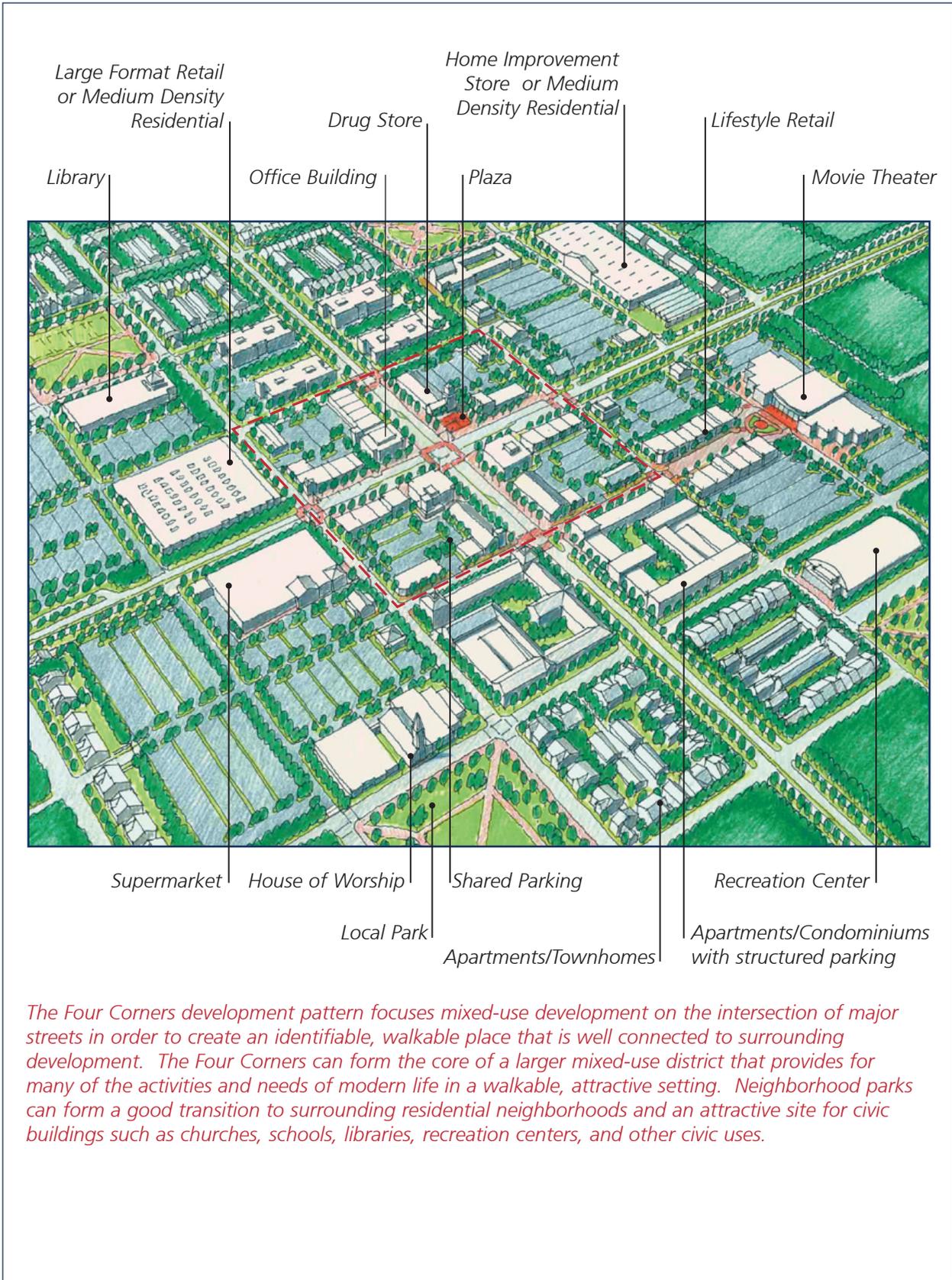
3. As noted earlier, the City should continue to include park locations and design requirements for them in the standards for S.& I.Ds.
4. Subdivision regulations for residential areas in developing parts of the City should include neighborhood design principles and allow for a mix of housing types, a connected street layout, and an environment friendly to pedestrians.
5. Development locations at the western fringes of Omaha have been identified as “four corner” centers that have the potential to grow over time and incorporate a mix of commercial and housing types as illustrated on this pages 57 - 59. The City should adopt models for such development that incorporate a dense network of local and collector streets to reduce traffic congestion, provide better circulation, and reduce right-of-way costs, as also stated in the Land Use Element of the Omaha City Master Plan. New development will be designed to encourage pedestrian movement, mass transit, and alternative modes of transportation.



Clarence Perry's diagram (at left) of a walkable neighborhood (1929) showing community buildings around a central park and retail districts at four-corner locations. This model can serve as the basis for mixed use development in newly developing areas of Omaha following the Four Corner concept (at right).



Potential future land use map showing walkable neighborhoods relating to commercial centers and the parks designated in the Suburban Parks Plan.



The Four Corners development pattern focuses mixed-use development on the intersection of major streets in order to create an identifiable, walkable place that is well connected to surrounding development. The Four Corners can form the core of a larger mixed-use district that provides for many of the activities and needs of modern life in a walkable, attractive setting. Neighborhood parks can form a good transition to surrounding residential neighborhoods and an attractive site for civic buildings such as churches, schools, libraries, recreation centers, and other civic uses.

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