Urban Core Strategic Plan

March 2022

GREATER OMAHA CHAMBER

Urban Core Committee

HDR

Contents

01 Why We Need An Urban Core Strategic Plan **01**

The Need 02

Our Future Choices 04

02 Strategic Plan Area **05**

A Core Greater Than the Sum of Its Districts 06

03 The Evolving Urban Core **09**

Positive Investments – Solid Foundation 10

Understanding The Past 18

Taking Stock / Charting A Course 19

04 A Vision for the Urban Core **23**

Vision Elements 24

05 Action Plan **91**

Goals 92

Strategic Actions 93

06 Conclusion **99**

Acknowledgments 101

01 Why We Need An Urban Core Strategic Plan

THE NEED

Great Progress

Since its inception, Omaha's downtown and its adjacent riverfront have served as the heart and soul of the city and surrounding region. A place that is different from the ubiquitous office parks and strip centers that characterize most of America's urban landscape. It is because of its unique character that, for better or worse, the core and its surroundings also serve as the region's image to the world. With such an important role, the continued success of the core is imperative to the health of the city and the region as a whole.

Aerial photo of Downtown Omaha Credit: MAPA

Cities never stand still and the competition between cities never stops. They are either growing and moving forward or they are declining and falling behind. So, it is critical that Omaha's urban core continues to adapt, change, and grow if it is to be successful.

Since the 1960's, public and private sector leaders on both sides of the river have come together to continuously reimagine the urban core. Billions of dollars in public and philanthropic investments have been made to improve access to the urban core and enhance the quality of life for the region's residents through educational, cultural and entertainment facilities. These investments have encouraged billions more in private sector investments.

Today the urban core is experiencing a new surge of development and reinvestment. Driven by the philanthropic community and City, the $425M Riverfront revitalization and Luminarium project will reactivate the aging riverfront parks and bring a new level of energy to the core. At the same time, private investment in the Capitol District, Mercantile District, Blackstone neighborhood, Builders District, Millwork Commons and River's Edge are adding hundreds of residential units, offices, shops and restaurants to the growing core.

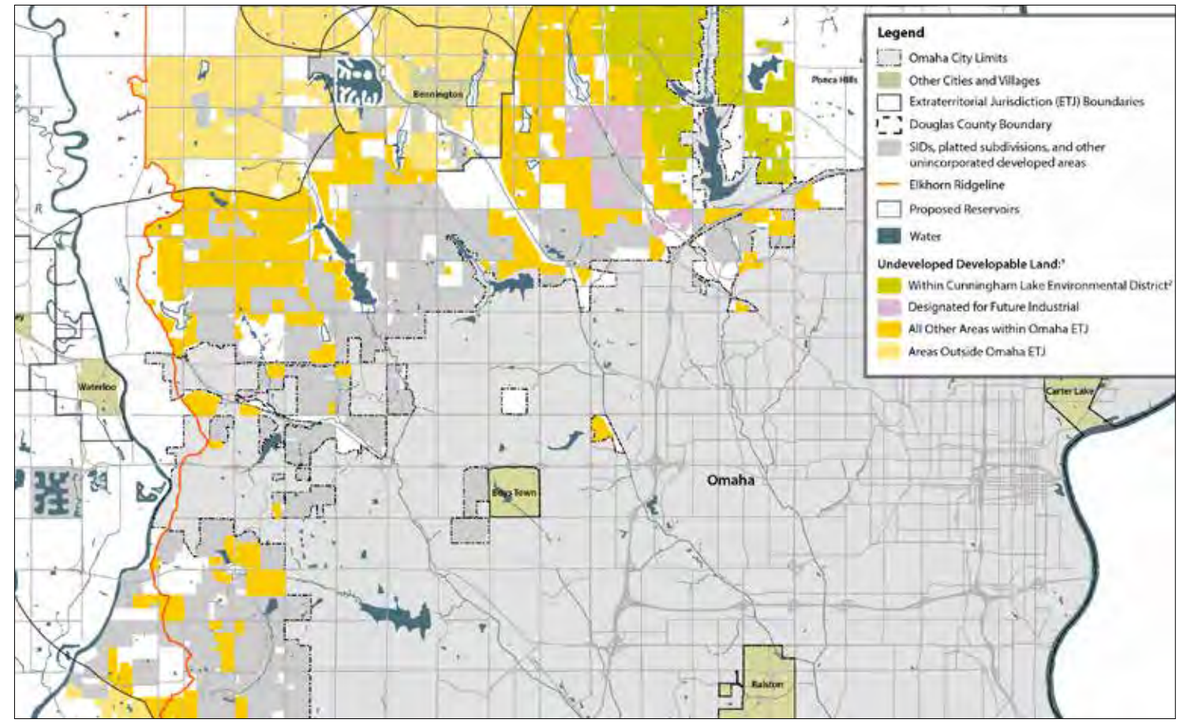
Lingering Concerns

As exciting as the projects listed above are, there are lingering concerns that we are not reaping the full benefit of the investments being made in the core. In fact, since the 1963 Downtown Plan, studies based on census data show that the downtown area lost 21,000 jobs rather than gaining the 12,000 jobs the plan projected. In addition, recent market studies, including one for the Riverfront, indicate that the urban core is falling short of capturing the jobs and population it should. The loss of jobs in the core has also had a negative impact on the neighborhoods surrounding the core on both sides of the river. It is clear that returning jobs to the core is fundamental to the efforts to revitalize these older neighborhoods, especially in North and South Omaha.

At the same time, Omaha and the State of Nebraska are working diligently to retain and attract a quality workforce to meet the needs of the metro's growing businesses. Much progress has been made but there is a sense among the business leadership that more needs to be done and that an enhanced urban core is critical to attracting the workforce that is needed.

Another concern is that for the first time in its history, Omaha is facing a dwindling suburban frontier. Since its inception in 1854, Omaha has benefited from a virtually unlimited ability to expand. Supported by a state law that allows Omaha to annex cities up to 10,000 in population, Omaha has grown both through new development on its suburban fringe and annexation of smaller communities. When combined with strong tools for managing and controlling growth, Omaha has been able to stay financially strong and avoid the problems of many older American cities, which have had their expansion impeded by smaller communities that surround them.

But Omaha's once unlimited frontier is shrinking. A combination of physical and legal barriers is beginning to combine to limit Omaha's ability to expand. The Missouri River on the east, low density acreage developments along the county line on the north, large existing cities and the county line to the south and physical barriers on the west are quickly coming together to limit Omaha's future expansion. Estimates by the City's Planning Department indicate that by as early as 2040 Omaha will begin to run out of prime land to develop on its suburban fringe and as early as the mid-2050s Omaha's 200-year pattern of robust growth through annexation will slow significantly. Essentially, Omaha will become "land-locked."



Omaha's limited growth frontier Credit: City of Omaha

OUR FUTURE CHOICES

Constrained growth and decline or exciting future?

Many older central cities have faced the problems of a declining tax base as the properties within their boundaries age and they become land locked by forces that limit their ability to expand and annex new properties. Some well-known cities did not take the steps needed to continually revitalize their central cities in order to remain strong and have been caught in a downward spiral of declining tax base, declining education and public services and disinvestment. This is the future Omaha must work hard to avoid.

The result of a slowing pattern of suburban growth means that in as little as 30 years Omaha's primary source of growth will be from within. Unable to annex significant numbers of high value suburban properties, Omaha will need to ensure that existing infrastructure and properties within the city are in good condition. It will need to redevelop, revitalize and reinvest in its large collection of wonderful older neighborhoods. As it enters its third century, Omaha's ability to maintain a stable and growing tax base with solid educational and public services will lie more in the continued revitalization and redevelopment of its urban core than at its suburban fringe. In short, Omaha will need to begin to grow up instead of out.

Maintaining and growing the older areas of the city proved to be a challenge from the 1960s until recently. The good news is that Omaha has made significant strides in reinvesting in its older neighborhoods and its urban core. Recent census figures show that older neighborhoods that had been losing population since the 1960s have begun to rebound. Investments by the City, foundations and businesses have begun to bear fruit and people are rediscovering the benefits of older neighborhoods designed around walkability and transit. At the same time, in the urban core, although job numbers have continued to decline, significant public, private and philanthropic investments in cultural and entertainment facilities have added immensely to the community's quality of life. As Omaha looks to the future, the question becomes "what does the community need to do to not only prepare for the future, but also to elevate Omaha to the next level as one of the country's most desirable big cities."

Reaching The Urban Core's Potential

To reach its potential, Omaha must reaffirm and reinforce the urban core's historic role as the cultural, entertainment, residential and employment heart of the region. To do so we must build on previous and current investments to create an even more exciting environment that attracts and retains companies, a talented workforce and our most important resource, our youth. We must create a place with plentiful jobs and a variety of housing options for all ages and incomes. A place that helps revitalize the neighborhoods that surround it. A place with a unique urban lifestyle where residents can live, work, learn and be entertained without relying on the car. A place that attracts visitors and investment while enhancing the quality of life for everyone in the region.

With additional targeted investment, the urban core can capture the jobs and population that market studies project, and serve as the engine of growth for the entire region. It is for this reason that the Chamber's Urban Core Committee was formed and this plan has been developed. The opportunity to create an even greater urban core for the Omaha / Council Bluffs metro exists. The Urban Core Committee is determined to make it a reality.

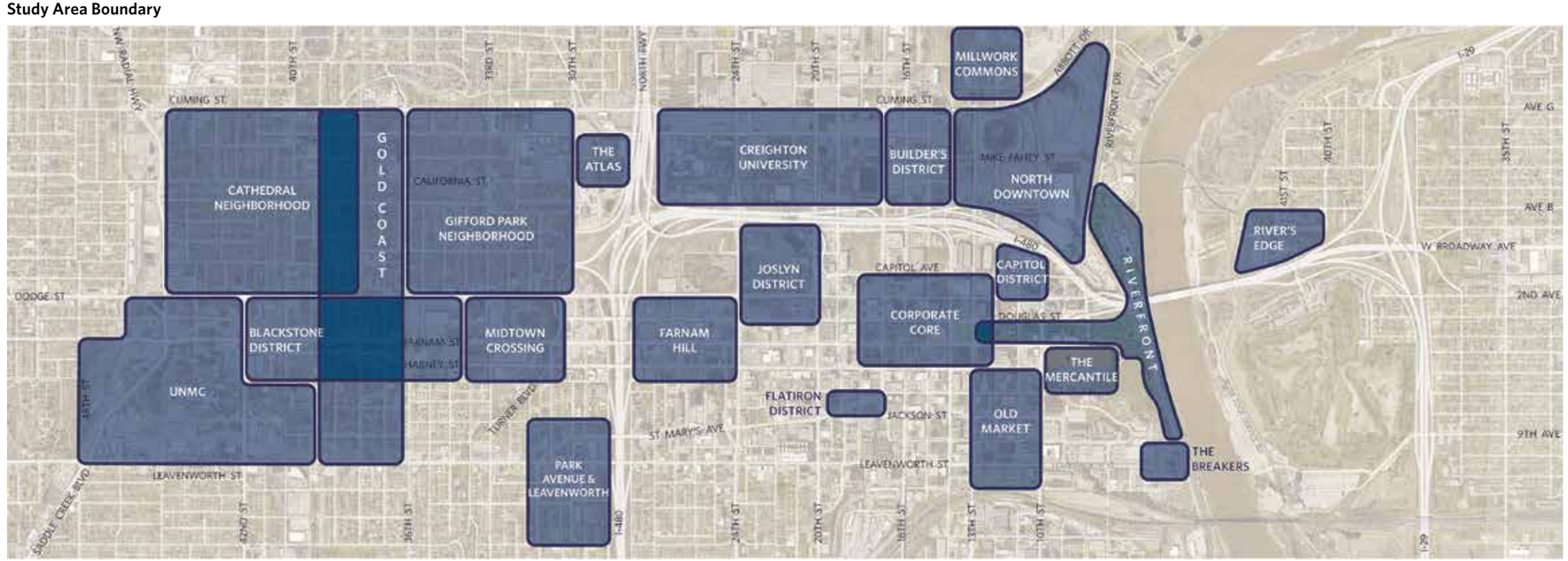
02 Strategic Plan Area

A CORE GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS DISTRICTS

Core Area and Districts

The general study area boundary for the Urban Core Strategic Plan is River's Edge and Dodge Park Golf Course on the east, 48th Street on the west, Cuming Street on the North and Leavenworth Street on the south, though the borders of the district should be considered somewhat porous with connections to the north and south. Located within this overall boundary are roughly 20 distinct areas ranging from historic neighborhoods like Gifford Park, Gold Coast and Blackstone to well-known mixed-use districts like the Old Market and Midtown Crossing and emerging ones like Millwork Commons, River's Edge and The Builder's District. While each of these places contain a unique combination of uses and features that set them apart, this plan provides an opportunity to weave them together to create an overall tapestry that makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Study Area Boundary



Neighborhoods and Districts

Connection to Surrounding Areas

The urban core boundary described above contains the study area for the Urban Core Committee's strategic planning effort. However, the interest of the Committee does not stop at the boundary's edge. The urban core has served for generations as the primary employment and entertainment hub for the Omaha and Council Bluffs neighborhoods that surround it and the health of those neighborhoods depends on the health of the core. Consequently, the intent of the strategic plan is to not only help revitalize the core, but to also connect and extend the investments in jobs, housing and amenities into the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the core and provide an economic boost to the entire Greater Omaha region.

Catalytic Project Impact Area

03 *The Evolving Urban Core*

POSITIVE INVESTMENTS – SOLID FOUNDATION

Cultural, Entertainment and Sports Facilities

Omaha and Council Bluffs are truly blessed with a strong philanthropic and business community that, together with the City government, have made significant investments in cultural, entertainment and sports facilities that have added immensely to the vitality of the urban core and to the region's overall quality of life. The following list identifies several of the major facilities within the core.

1. CHI Health Center
2. Charles Schwab Field Omaha
3. Holland Performing Arts Center
4. Orpheum Theater
5. Steelhouse
6. Joslyn Art Museum
7. Luminarium
8. Bemis
9. Kaneko
10. Children's Museum
11. Film Streams
12. Slowdown
13. The Durham Museum
14. The Hot Shops
15. Morrison Soccer Stadium
16. Seeman Stadium
17. Rose Theater

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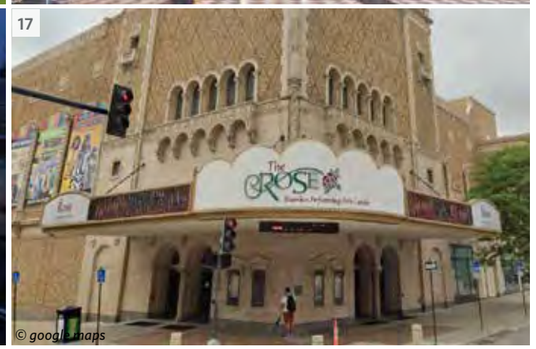


© google maps

Open Space

In addition to the facilities listed above, the philanthropic and corporate community have also joined with the public sector to develop and improve a variety of park and open spaces within the core. The work is highlighted by the $325 million Riverfront revitalization effort being led by Omaha's donor community, and a similar effort on the Council Bluffs side of the river. The following is a short list of the major park and open space amenities in the core.

OPEN SPACES

1. Gene Leahy Mall at the Riverfront
2. Heartland of America Park at the Riverfront
3. Lewis & Clark Landing at the Riverfront
4. Bob Kerrey Bridge
5. Turner Park
6. Dewey Park
7. Clarkson Park
8. Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park
9. Pioneer Courage Park
10. Spirit of Nebraska's Wilderness Park
11. Gifford Park
12. Skate Spot at Millwork Commons
13. Belle's Playgarden, Adventure Tower & Treetop Walk

Rendering of the soon to be completed Gene Leahy Mall at the Riverfront

Rendering of the soon to be completed Heartland of America Park at the Riverfront

Rendering of the soon to be completed Lewis & Clark Landing at the Riverfront

Corporate and Institutional

In addition to the many amenities listed above, Omaha's corporate community, educational and medical institutions and public entities have also made significant commitments to the urban core. The core presently contains all four of Omaha's Fortune 500 company headquarters along with numerous other major companies who call Omaha home. The core contains two of Omaha's three major university campuses and all of the major federal, state, county and city offices. The following is a list of many of these company, institutional and public facilities.

CORPORATE AND INSTITUTIONAL

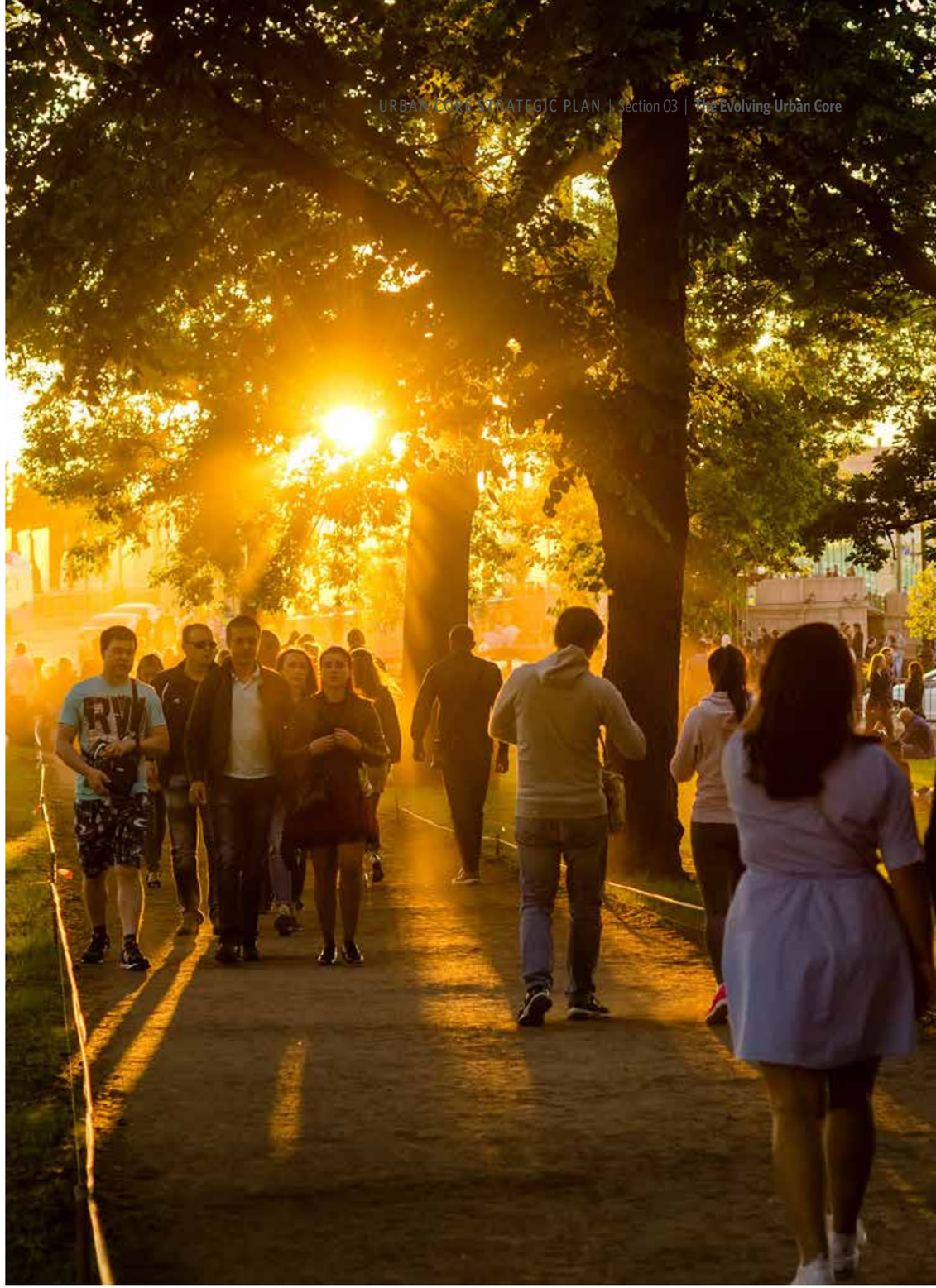
- Berkshire Hathaway
- Union Pacific
- Kiewit
- Mutual of Omaha
- First National Bank of Omaha
- Physicians Mutual
- Woodman Life
- Conagra
- National Indemnity
- Gavilon
- Toast
- Omaha World Herald
- Creighton University
- University of Nebraska Medical Center
- Hruska Federal Courthouse
- Zorinsky Federal Building
- Federal Reserve
- Omaha / Douglas Civic Center
- Douglas County Courthouse
- Juvenile Justice Center
- OPPD
- K-12 Schools
  - Central High School
  - Liberty Elementary
  - Gifford Park Elementary
  - Jackson Elementary
  - OPS TAC
  - Duchesne
  - Cathedral School

Mixed-Use Districts / Large Projects

As mentioned earlier, Omaha's urban core is a collection of major mixed-use districts and older neighborhoods. The following is a list of some of these existing and emerging mixed-use areas along with some major projects located within them.

MIXED-USE DISTRICTS / LARGE PROJECTS

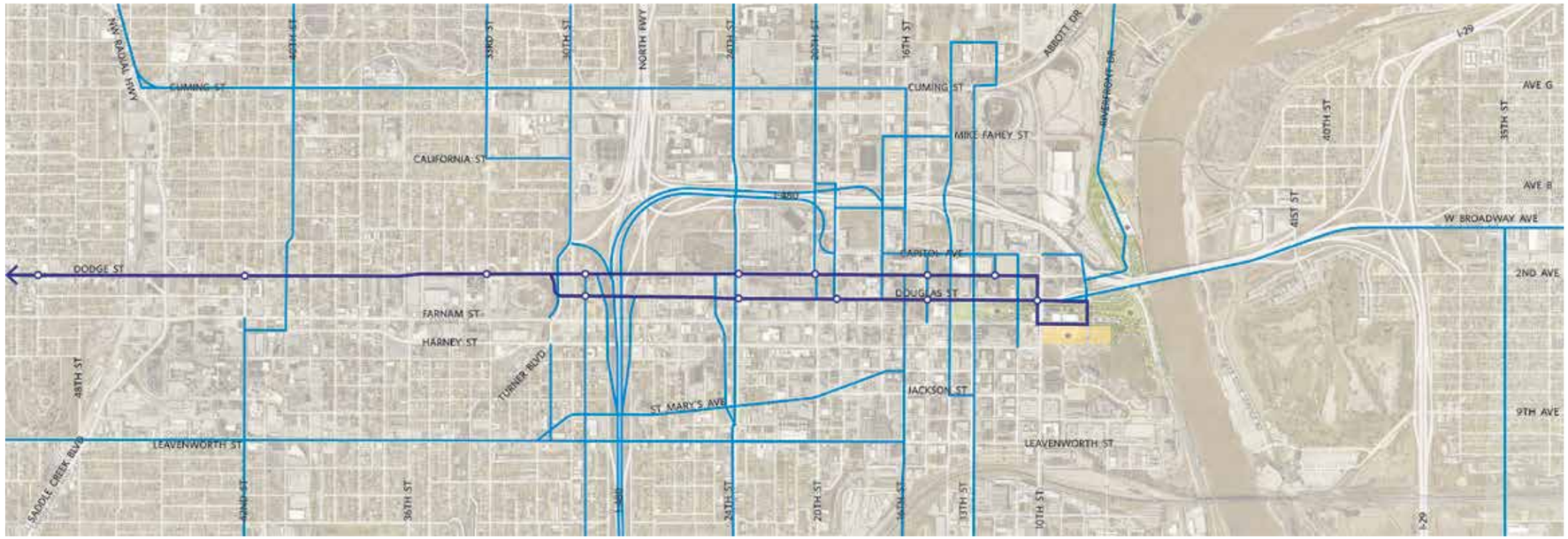
1. Old Market
2. Mercantile District
3. Capitol District
4. Builder's District
5. Millwork Commons
6. Joslyn District
7. Park Ave. & Leavenworth
8. Midtown Crossing
9. Blackstone
10. The Breakers
11. River's Edge
12. Gifford Park
13. The Atlas
14. Flat Iron District
15. Gold Coast
16. North Downtown
17. Corporate Core
18. Farnam Hill
19. Creighton University
20. University of Nebraska Medical Center
21. Cathedral Neighborhood



Transportation

Key to the urban core's future is the enhancement of the Metro's transportation systems. The Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce has taken a lead role in this effort through its ConnectGO effort. The project has focused on the maintenance and enhancement of the region's transportation infrastructure and public transit systems. Although regional in scope, the plan's key elements connect directly with the transportation needs of the urban core.

Omaha's public transit system, operated by Metro Transit, provides numerous east/west and north/south routes that connect to the core. The recent addition of ORBT, Metro's bus rapid transit (BRT) route along Dodge Street further enhances transit access to the core. In an effort to build on the success of ORBT, Metro is studying its entire system, including the addition of a new north/south bus rapid transit line that would also run through the core. In response to these BRT initiatives and in an effort to increase density, walkability and in turn the viability of transit, the City has recently enacted a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) overlay district that covers much of the urban core. The following map identifies the various bus and BRT routes within the core.



Urban Core Transit Map

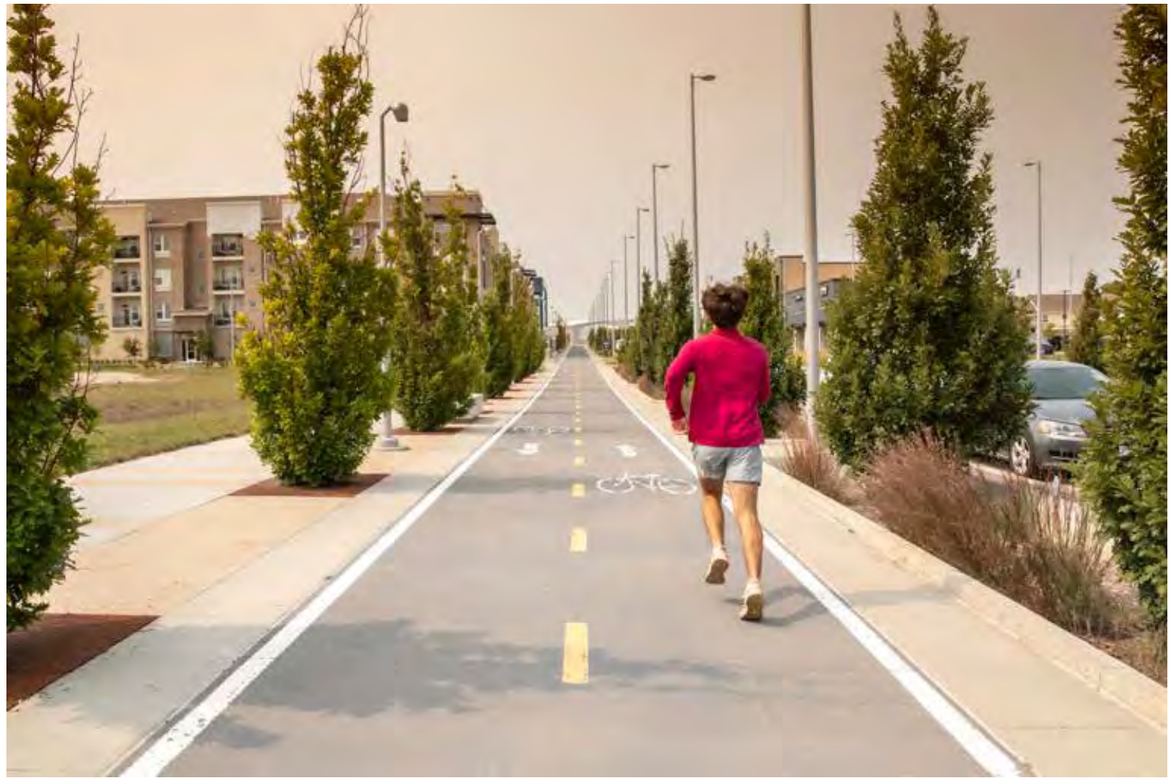
Omaha's urban core also benefits from its close proximity and easy access to Eppley Airfield, located along the riverfront just north of the core. Amtrak also provides a connection to the nation's passenger rail network with a station located at the edge of the core.

Both Omaha and Council Bluffs have made a concerted effort to improve the metro's bike network and enhance the ability for people to move in, out and through the core using bicycles. The Market to Midtown bikeway, North Downtown Pedestrian bridge and Riverfront Trail connector are examples of Omaha's continuing efforts to provide an enhanced, interconnected bike network. One that serves all ages with a low-stress system that connects to other bike routes in Omaha and also over the Bob Kerrey Bridge to the extensive bike network on the Council Bluffs side of the river. Similarly, Council Bluffs continues to build on its already impressive network with the creation of the River's Edge and First Avenue bikeways that will eventually connect directly to its system and the trails along the river.

Although much diminished from its original scale, the urban core retains a significant freight rail presence. The Union Pacific railroad bridge continues to provide a critical link in the regional and national rail network and rail yards to the north and south of downtown provide important service to rail customers adjacent to the core.

The core also has excellent access to the region's highways and interstate system. I-29, I-480 as well as Highway 6 and the North Freeway / Highway 75 run through the core providing efficient north/south and east/west connections to all parts of the region and country. These high-capacity corridors are also important from a commuting standpoint and crucial to the success of industrial users located on the fringes of the urban core.

Although critical to providing access to the core, the street and highway network designed in the 1950's and 60's to quickly move cars and trucks in and out of the core has also created problems. Grade separated I-480 and the North Freeway create physical barriers that serve to disconnect surrounding neighborhoods and even portions of the core itself. The one-way street network instituted in the 1950's focused on moving cars in and out of the core but also diminished the pedestrian environment and adversely impacted businesses that benefit from a walkable pedestrian environment. Industrial users who rely on good access to the I-480 and North Freeway ramps have encountered challenges as their trucks wind through emerging business, residential, hotel and entertainment areas. Addressing these issues will be critical to the continued success of the core.



River's Edge Protected Bikeway

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST

Previous Urban Core Planning Efforts

Beginning in the early 1960s, city leaders have put forth numerous plans for downtown. A 1963 plan for downtown included a goal of adding 13,000 new jobs increasing the then 48,500 jobs to roughly 61,500 jobs by 1980. In order to accommodate the new workers, the plan called for adding 8,400 parking stalls to the 29,000 stalls then located in downtown. The rest of the new workers were expected to use transit.

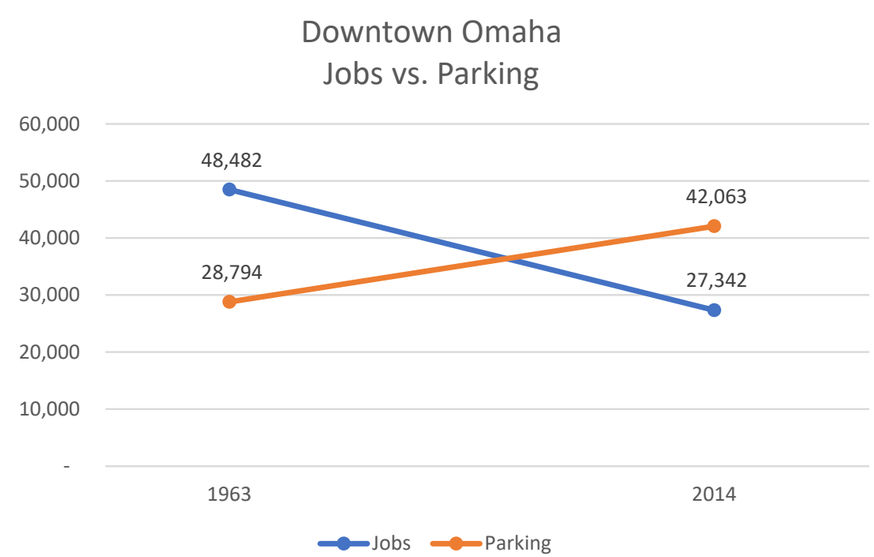
The 13,000 jobs never came. Instead, by 2014, downtown had lost roughly 21,000 jobs. However, downtown did add 13,000 parking stalls as more and more land was devoted to parking - reaching roughly 42,000 stalls by 2014. In an effort to attract jobs and keep up with suburban parking, downtown instead ultimately traded jobs for parking. (See Graph.)

The early 1970s brought a new plan for downtown. Called Back to the River, the plan acknowledged the challenges of competing with suburban shopping malls and office parks. It envisioned a new role for downtown with more open space, housing and major cultural and entertainment facilities. At the center of the concept was a plan to clear out the old industrial uses along the river and replace them with a large park and lake surrounded by a giant mixed-use mega-structure. A new one-block wide linear park running west from the river to a new public library would connect the river to the downtown office core. The plan also called for City, State and Federal governments to retain major public buildings in downtown and urged corporate leaders to stay in downtown and expand. The plan ushered in a new era for downtown and between 1975 and 1989 there were a total of 15 urban core redevelopment plans for new projects that built on the vision laid out in the plan.

In 2004 the Chamber initiated an effort to develop a plan for the area between 24th Street and the University of Nebraska Medical center (UNMC). The plan, called Destination Midtown, envisioned the revitalization of the area and its neighborhoods. It called for working with UNMC and Mutual of Omaha to coordinate development of their campus' with surrounding neighborhoods and envisioned the redevelopment of the parking lots between Turner Park and Mutual of Omaha. A Destination Midtown organization was formed and staffed by the Chamber, and by 2010, with the opening of Midtown Crossing, the vision was becoming a reality.

In 2009 the City embarked on another new plan for downtown. The 2030 Downtown Master Plan took a deep dive into the issues of downtown. Hundreds of citizens attend public workshops to help identify the issues facing downtown and to craft a new plan for its future. The plan was the first to document the problems of devoting so much land to parking in downtown. Market studies done with the plan showed that there was far more demand for office space and housing units than could be accommodated without increasing the height of new buildings and decreasing parking ratios. The plan called for creating a series of unique districts within the downtown area, reducing parking ratios, increasing transit access, and developing a streetcar to allow people to move around downtown without constantly moving their car and searching for parking.

Between the completion of the Destination Midtown plan in 2004 and 2019, over 30 separate plans and studies have been completed for the Downtown, North Downtown and Midtown areas. Other plans, such as the Chamber's Greater Omaha 2040 plan, take a more regional view but include components that link with the urban core. The documents cover a wide range of plans and studies including neighborhood plans, area development plans, redevelopment plans, project plans, market studies, transit and parking studies. Together they bring a great deal of information, data and clarity to the issues and opportunities facing the urban core. Many of the ideas covered in the plans have been implemented but many more have not. It is this unrealized potential for the urban core that has drawn the interest of the civic leaders involved with the Chamber's Urban Core Committee.



Graph: Jobs vs. Parking in Downtown Omaha

TAKING STOCK / CHARTING A COURSE

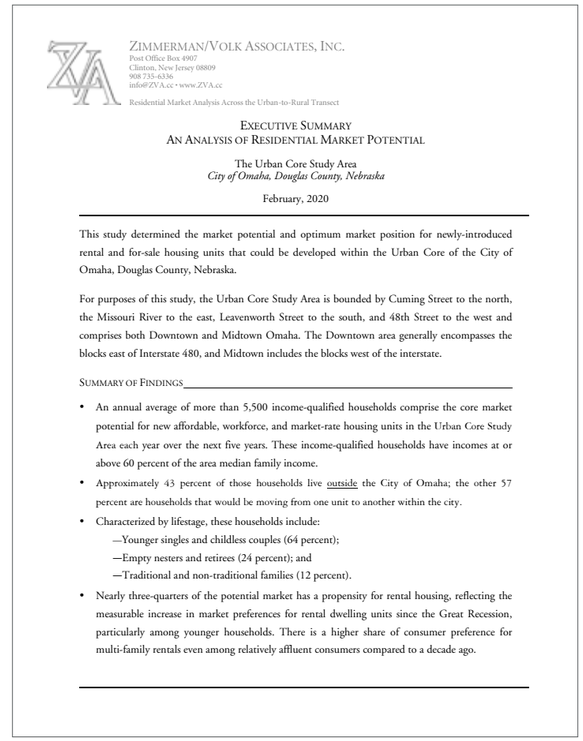
Urban Core Committee / City Commissioned Plans and Studies

With so many plans and studies having been developed for the urban core over the last fifteen plus years, the Urban Core Committee quickly determined that there was not a need to develop a new overarching plan for the urban core from scratch. Rather, the Committee wanted their effort to be strategic and action oriented. They wanted to focus on some key initiatives that had not yet been accomplished, take them on and carry them forward.

However, before diving into a series of projects, they first wanted to ensure that they had a solid basis for their efforts. To that end the Committee commissioned three studies related to the potential for development within the urban core. They included housing and retail market studies and a plan for a proposed urban core organization devoted to implementing the strategies and actions they identified. In addition, the City commissioned a plan for addressing parking issues in the core.

The **Housing Study**, prepared by Zimmerman/Volk Associates, included stakeholder interviews and identified the number of potential households both currently within the Omaha area and those moving into the area that would be interested in an urban lifestyle. The study looked at income ranges, housing type preferences, and potential price ranges. It identified the number of different unit types available at different price points for both rental and for-sale products. In general, the report concluded ... "Based on these capture rates, the Urban Core Study Area should be able to absorb between 481 and 718 new rental and for-sale housing units per year each year over the next five years, or a total of 2,403 to 3,590 units over the five-year timeframe."

The **Retail Study**, prepared by Gibbs Planning Group, aimed to quantify the demand for a range of retail establishments within the core. It was initially completed prior to the onset of the COVID epidemic in early 2020. As a result, it was felt that the initial report did not accurately reflect the urban core retail market in a post-pandemic environment. The report was updated in May 2021 but it was noted that the retail environment was still in flux and suggested another update after the market had settled into its new pattern. With that in mind, the updated report estimated that the urban core could support an additional 288,400 sq. ft. of restaurant and retail space above the current roughly 3.2M sq. ft. of first floor retail and restaurant space.



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Residential Market Analysis Across the Urban-to-Rural Transect

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AN ANALYSIS OF RESIDENTIAL MARKET POTENTIAL

The Urban Core Study Area
City of Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska

February, 2020

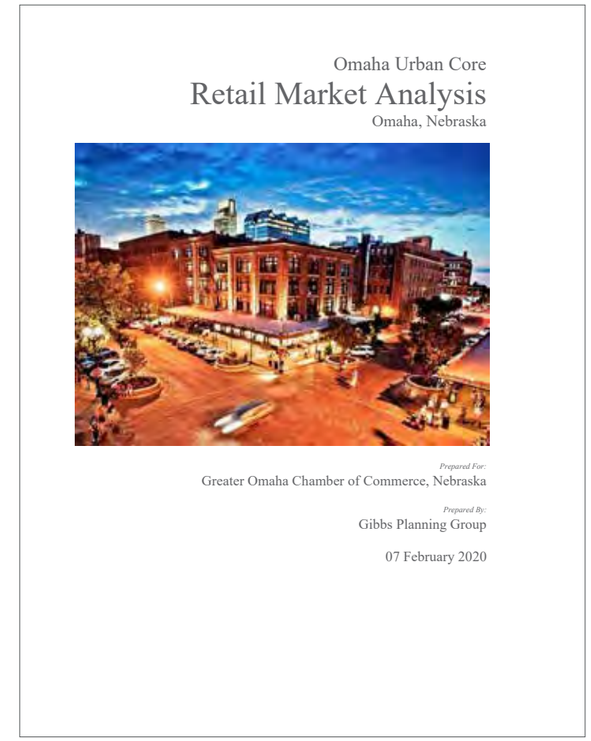
This study determined the market potential and optimum market position for newly-introduced rental and for-sale housing units that could be developed within the Urban Core of the City of Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska.

For purposes of this study, the Urban Core Study Area is bounded by Cuming Street to the north, the Missouri River to the east, Leavenworth Street to the south, and 48th Street to the west and comprises both Downtown and Midtown Omaha. The Downtown area generally encompasses the blocks east of Interstate 480, and Midtown includes the blocks west of the interstate.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- An annual average of more than 5,500 income-qualified households comprise the core market potential for new affordable, workforce, and market-rate housing units in the Urban Core Study Area each year over the next five years. These income-qualified households have incomes at or above 60 percent of the area median family income.
- Approximately 43 percent of those households live outside the City of Omaha; the other 57 percent are households that would be moving from one unit to another within the city.
- Characterized by lifestage, these households include:
  —Younger singles and childless couples (64 percent);
  —Empty nesters and retirees (24 percent); and
  —Traditional and non-traditional families (12 percent).
- Nearly three-quarters of the potential market has a propensity for rental housing, reflecting the measurable increase in market preferences for rental dwelling units since the Great Recession, particularly among younger households. There is a higher share of consumer preference for multi-family rentals even among relatively affluent consumers compared to a decade ago.

Housing Study



Omaha Urban Core
Retail Market Analysis
Omaha, Nebraska

Prepared For:
Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska

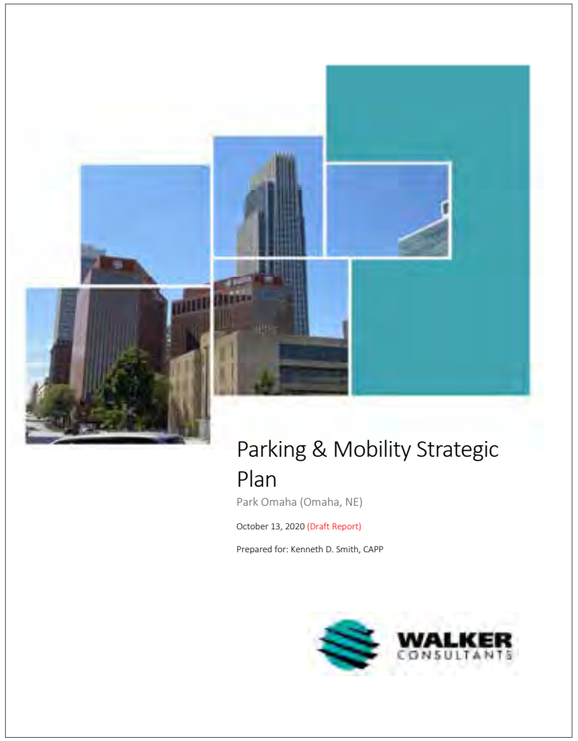
Prepared By:
Gibbs Planning Group

07 February 2020

Retail Market Analysis

The City of Omaha's Parking Division commissioned Walker Consultants to prepare a **Parking Master Plan** for the City. Its primary focus is on the urban core, where the vast majority of the City-owned parking stalls are located. The plan provided data that reconfirmed the counterproductive nature of increasing parking as a means to increase jobs and noted instead that increased parking has actually led to a decrease in jobs in the core. The plan found that even at peak occupancy there were over 17,000 vacant parking stalls in the core. The plan focused on the movement of people over the movement of cars. It called for a strategically managed parking system that would, 1) increase density and maximize development potential, 2) promote user satisfaction and control costs for developers, businesses, employees, residents and visitors, and 3) optimize use of existing parking assets so there is less hindrance to finding parking and enjoying the urban core. The plan laid out a series of specific immediate, medium and long-term steps for making better use of existing stalls, minimizing the number and cost of new stalls and supporting alternatives to driving. If implemented, the plan would provide more than adequate parking while making it easier to find vacant stalls and move around the core without a car. Ultimately, the combination of shared and managed parking and enhanced non-auto mobility would free up more land for development to meet the twin goals of attracting more jobs and residents in the core.

The Urban Core Committee's intent was that once the strategic plan was completed and the key initiatives they wanted to undertake were identified, they needed an **Urban Core Organization** that could carry them forward. To that end, the Committee commissioned planning consultant, Jim Cloar, to prepare a study that looked at alternatives for such an organization. The study's author interviewed numerous urban core stakeholders to identify what they saw as the need for the core and how an organization devoted to the core could help. The study looked at five successful downtown organizations in other cities as well as some similar models. The study recommended that eventually the organization be incorporated as a 501c3 entity but that it initially remains under the umbrella of the Chamber, and be small and nimble. It also included recommendations on the makeup of the Board of Directors, funding options and the type of person ideally suited to be the head of the organization. The report further recommended that the organization develop a plan of action and develop a campaign to promote the plan and to bring awareness to the organization. Lastly, the report focused on the need to establish trusted working relationships with city governmental and community organizations and that it works to position itself as the "go-to" source for information and comment on the urban core.



Parking & Mobility Strategic Plan

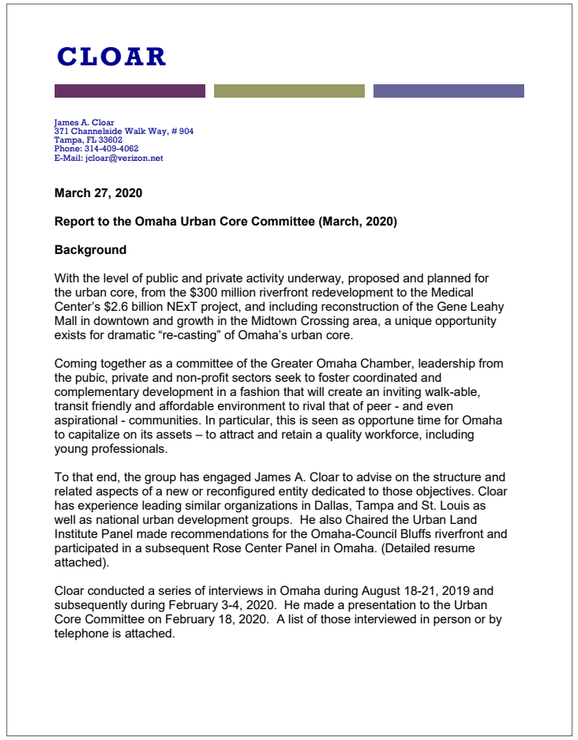
Park Omaha (Omaha, NE)

October 13, 2020 (Draft Report)

Prepared for: Kenneth D. Smith, CAPP

WALKER CONSULTANTS

Parking & Mobility Strategic Plan



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March 27, 2020

Report to the Omaha Urban Core Committee (March, 2020)

Background

With the level of public and private activity underway, proposed and planned for the urban core, from the $300 million riverfront redevelopment to the Medical Center's $2.6 billion NExT project, and including reconstruction of the Gene Leahy Mall in downtown and growth in the Midtown Crossing area, a unique opportunity exists for dramatic "re-casting" of Omaha's urban core.

Coming together as a committee of the Greater Omaha Chamber, leadership from the pubic, private and non-profit sectors seek to foster coordinated and complementary development in a fashion that will create an inviting walk-able, transit friendly and affordable environment to rival that of peer - and even aspirational - communities. In particular, this is seen as opportune time for Omaha to capitalize on its assets – to attract and retain a quality workforce, including young professionals.

To that end, the group has engaged James A. Cloar to advise on the structure and related aspects of a new or reconfigured entity dedicated to those objectives. Cloar has experience leading similar organizations in Dallas, Tampa and St. Louis as well as national urban development groups. He also Chaired the Urban Land Institute Panel made recommendations for the Omaha-Council Bluffs riverfront and participated in a subsequent Rose Center Panel in Omaha. (Detailed resume attached).

Cloar conducted a series of interviews in Omaha during August 18-21, 2019 and subsequently during February 3-4, 2020. He made a presentation to the Urban Core Committee on February 18, 2020. A list of those interviewed in person or by telephone is attached.

Urban Core Organization

Interviews

In addition to the plans and studies discussed above, the Committee hired HDR to conduct a series of interviews with community leaders and stakeholders both from within the core and from neighboring areas that are connected to the core. The 38 interviews included 64 stakeholders and focused on two major themes, 1) what are the challenges facing the City and urban core, and 2) what do you see as opportunities for change? The following are the top responses in each category.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

- Exporting our kids
- Loss of jobs
- Lack of diversity
- Lack of affordable housing
- Not family friendly
- Homelessness
- Gentrification
- Too much parking
- Can't move around without a car
- Not walkable or pedestrian friendly
- Lack of density
- Diminished tax base
- Lack of urban character
- Vacant / underutilized land
- Disconnected nodes of activity
- Lack of basic services (full-service grocery, hardware store, etc.)
- Limited development tools
- No dedicated / unified urban core advocacy entity
- Unsustainable transportation and development patterns
- Lack of unified vision and action plan

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

- Increased Bus / BRT Transit
- Multi-modal / Accessible w/o a Car
- Attract / Retain Talent
- Improved Connections
- Affordable Housing
- More Jobs
- Less Parking (Shared / District Parking)
- Streetcar / Circulator
- Urban in Character
- Mixed-income Housing
- Walkable / Pedestrian Friendly Streetscapes
- Full Range of Housing Types
- Additional Incentives / Tools for Development
- Access to Cultural / Entertainment / Sports facilities
- Leadership – Public / Private / Philanthropic Partnerships
- More Start-ups / Local / Minority Companies
- Access to Basic Services
- Design Guidelines / Zoning Changes
- Fill in / Connect Spaces Between Districts
- Multiple Outdoor Spaces

04 A Vision for the Urban Core

VISION ELEMENTS

Guiding Principles

Based on the interviews, the Urban Core Committee established a set of Guiding Principles that would form the basis of decision-making for the Strategic Plan. Accordingly, the Strategic Plan and proposed initiatives must ensure that Omaha's urban core is...

- Uniquely Urban
- Diverse
- Equitable
- Inclusive
- Sustainable
- Vibrant / Active
- Safe
- Affordable
- Attractive

Big Moves

Following the establishment of the Guiding Principles, HDR set up a three-day workshop with City staff and members of the Urban Core Working Committee. The purpose was to bring together the information from the earlier plans, more recent studies and stakeholder input and, using the Guiding Principles, develop a new vision for the redevelopment of the urban core. A series of sub-area plans were developed as a result of the workshop. Those plans will be discussed later. However, through the process a handful of bold ideas emerged that, together with several previously announced plans, have the potential to fundamentally change the face of Omaha's urban core. **The following pages list these big moves:**

PROJECT NExT + SADDLE CREEK SITE REDEVELOPMENT

The UNMC campus and adjacent Saddle Creek development site are in the midst of transformative change. Currently in design, the new 350,000 sq. ft. administrative center will be constructed at the southwest corner of Saddle Creek Road and Farnam Streets. This project will house critical functions for UNMC, such as workspace and collaboration for clinical faculty as well as administrative headquarters for many of the university and health care system functions. Construction of this complex will open up space on the east side of Saddle Creek Road for Project NExT. Project NExT is a transformative public-private partnership that will create a federal, all-hazard health security disaster response space that leverages UNMC/Nebraska Medicine's experience and leadership in infectious diseases and bio-preparedness to meet the country's current and future unmet health care training, education, and capacity needs. Together, these two projects will create thousands of new jobs for the metro area and have significant ripple effects throughout the region.

Project NExT and Saddle Creek Site Redevelopment

3D Model View of Project NExT plus Saddle Creek Site Redevelopment

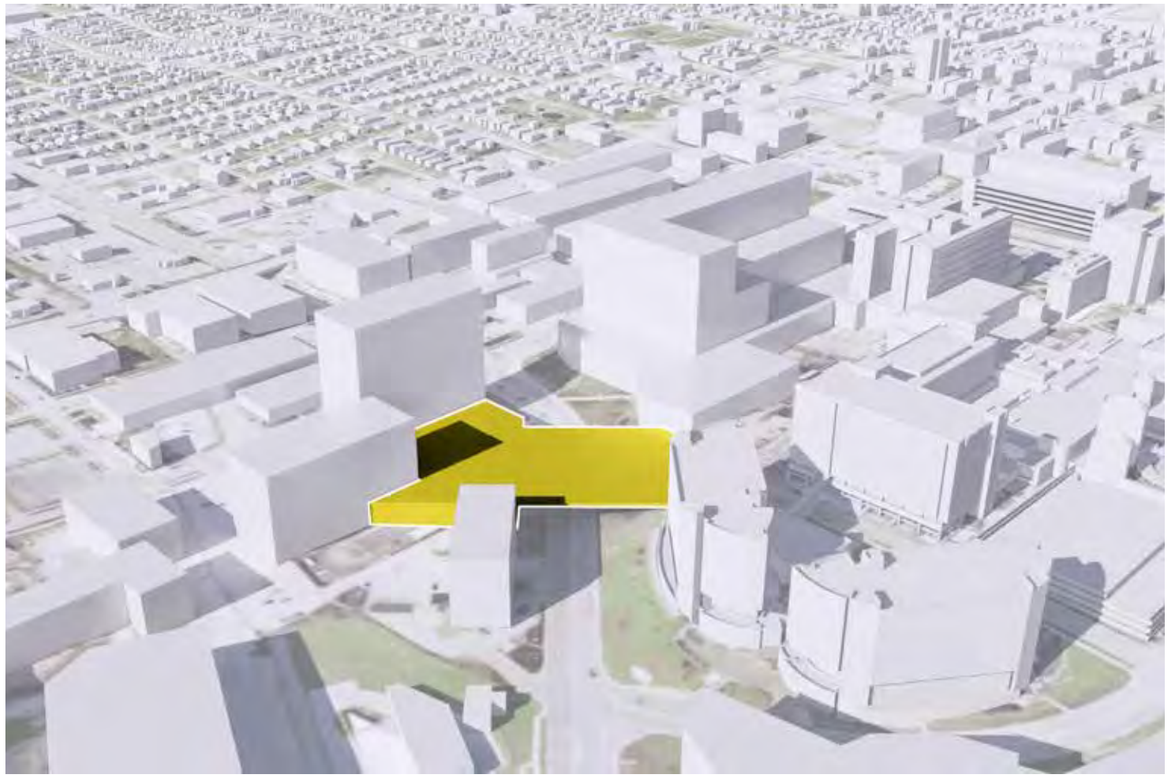
Early Concept Rendering of Project NExT

Concept Rendering of UNMC Administration Building on Saddle Creek Site

SADDLE CREEK LID

As mentioned in the previous section, the new UNMC administrative headquarters will be located to the west of the main UNMC campus and Project NExT, separated by Saddle Creek Road and a significant hillside. In order to provide a seamless connection between the two sites, a LID is proposed to connect the two sites. Essentially, a LID is a landscaped bridge designed to cross over Saddle Creek Road and provide a direct physical connection between the two sites while acting as an outdoor amenity for the campus. By providing both functional and aesthetic benefits, the proposed LID is critical to "bridging the gap" between the main campus and the Saddle Creek site and allowing the two sites to function as one.

Saddle Creek LID



3D Model View of Saddle Creek LID

Concept Rendering of LID over Saddle Creek Road

LIBRARY / FIRST BLOCK REDEVELOPMENT

The redesign of the Gene Leahy Mall created a new downtown development site bounded by 13th Street, 14th Street, Douglas Street, and Farnam Street. In addition, the W. Dale Clark Library, located one block to the west of this site, is in the process of being relocated several blocks to the south. These two strategic moves open up two blocks of prime land for redevelopment at the head of the mall. These sites are located in the corporate core, are incredibly visible, and overlook the significant reinvestment in the Gene Leahy Mall. Accordingly, development of these two sites will not be left to chance, and will be required to meet certain requirements in terms of use, design, and investment.

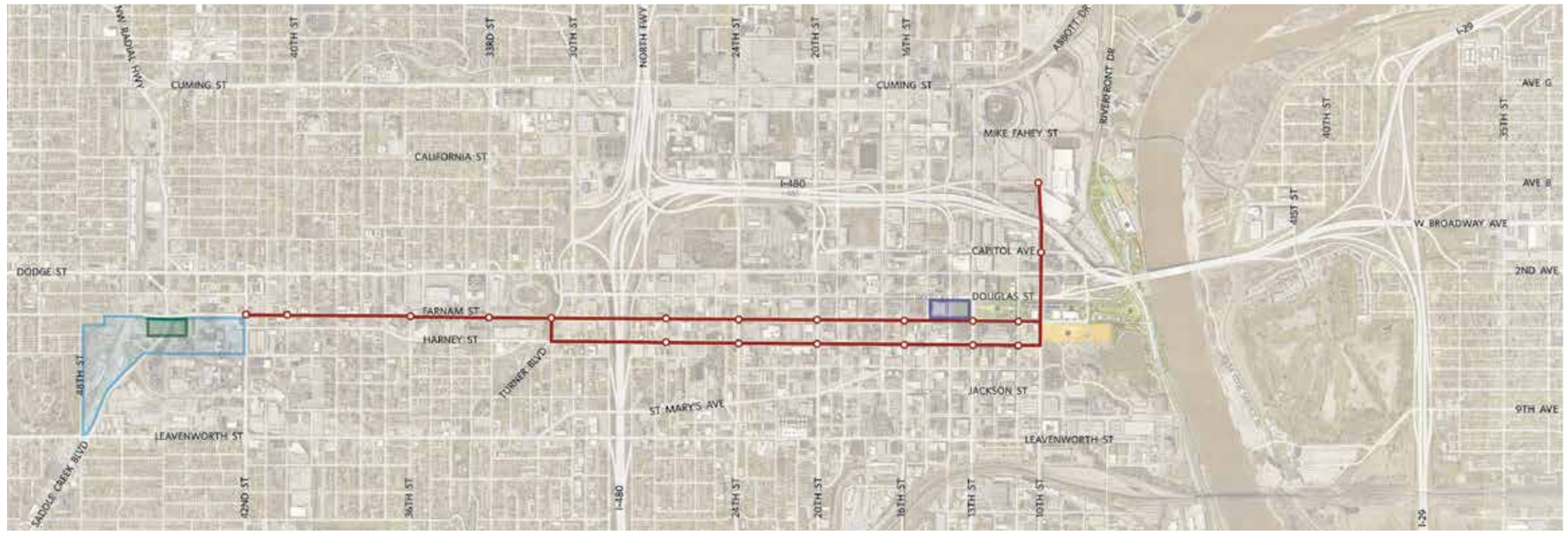
Library / First Block Redevelopment

3D Model View of Library / First Block Redevelopment Site

Renderings of Proposed Mutual of Omaha Headquarters Tower Credit Mutual of Omaha

STREETCAR

A total mobility system is essential to a high functioning urban core. In order to help achieve this, an initial streetcar route is proposed for the Farnam Street corridor, from 10th Street west to UNMC. This 3-mile route will have 13 stops along its route, 10-minute peak frequency, and be fare free. Complimenting Metro's transit system, it will be a catalyst for accelerating economic development throughout the Urban Core, better connect districts and uses along its route, and help establish a vibrant urban culture that will help attract and retain talent and compete with other metro areas.



Proposed Streetcar Route

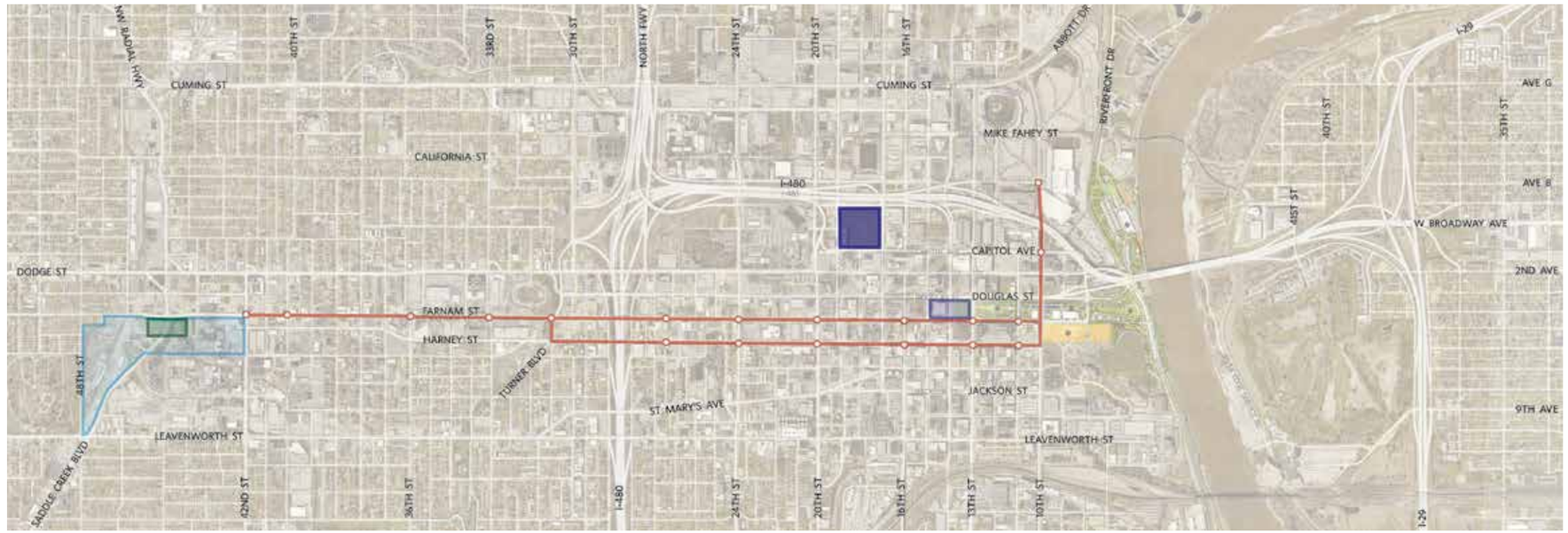
3D Model View of Streetcar

Kansas City Streetcar

View of Farnam Street looking west from 20th Street, with streetcar, enhanced streetscape amenities, and new mixed-use development lining the corridor. The Rose Theater is to the near left.

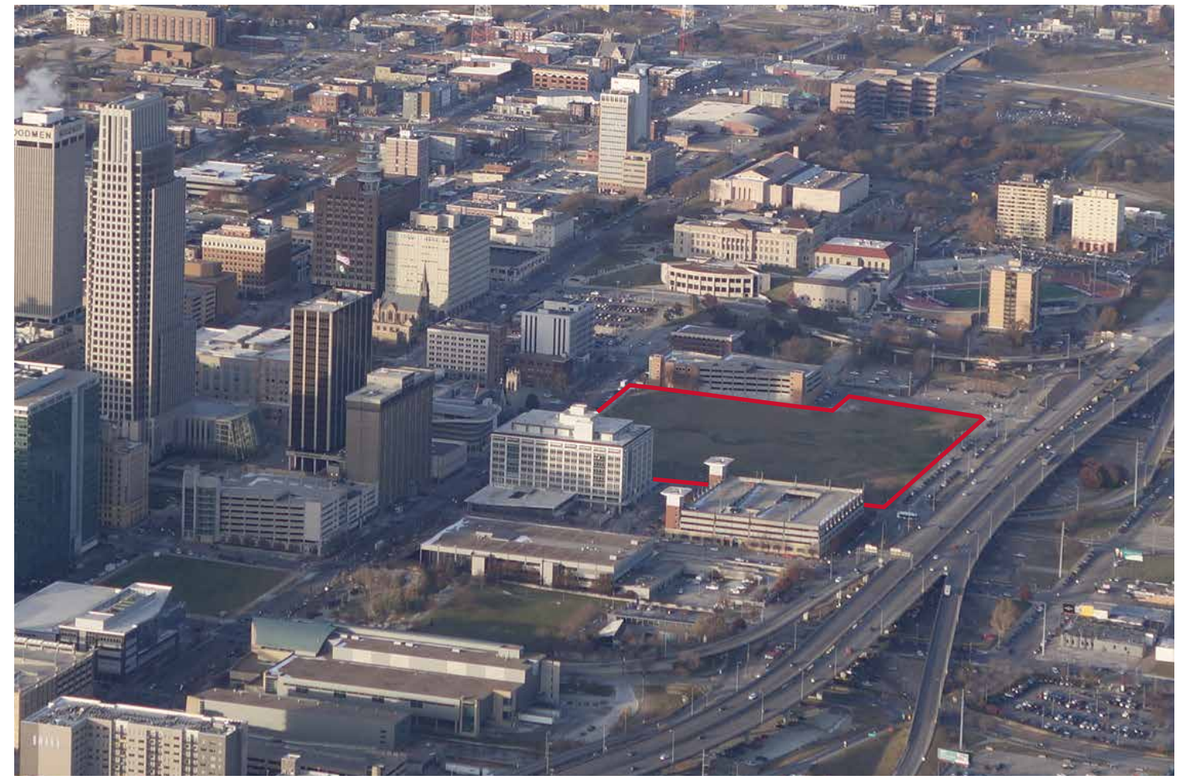
CIVIC AUDITORIUM SITE REDEVELOPMENT

The former Civic Auditorium site has been cleared for development and the city has selected a preferred developer for the site. The large, 4-block site contains a city parking structure and has easy access to I-480 and Dodge Street. In addition, it is strategically located between the Corporate Core, the Joslyn District, and Creighton University. Because of this, development on the site should be dense and mixed-use in nature, adding critical mass with a variety of residential, office, and neighborhood-serving retail uses.



Civic Auditorium Site Redevelopment

3D Model View of Civic Auditorium Site Redevelopment

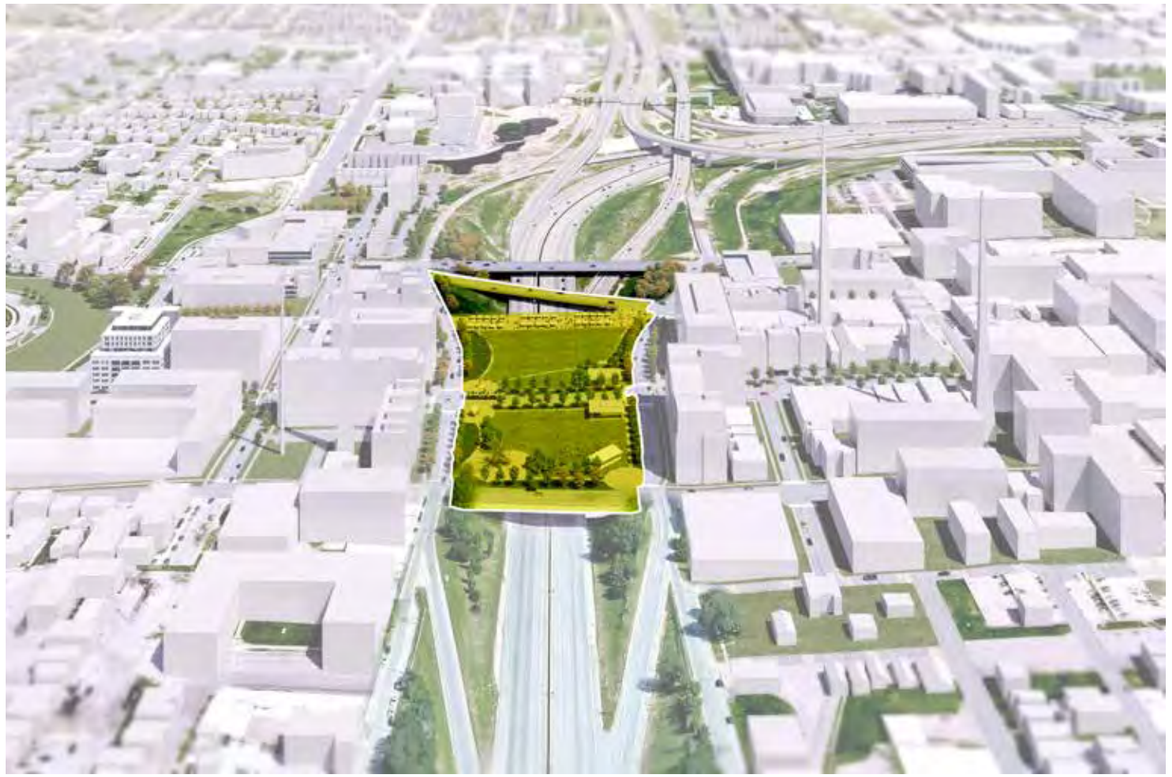


Aerial View of Civic Auditorium Site

I-480 LID

The north-south leg of I-480 is depressed where it runs between Downtown/Farnam Hill and Turner Park East/ Midtown Crossing. As such, it acts as a barrier between the adjacent neighborhoods – limiting bicycle and pedestrian crossings and negatively impacting development potential. Before streetcar tracks are installed on the Farnam Street and Harney Street bridges, the time is right to consider the construction of a LID, similar to the one proposed over Saddle Creek Road at the medical center. The east-west and north-south street network could be reconnected, and public open space could be developed over the interstate, allowing the reconnection across the interstate to be made and adding public amenity value, which has been shown to act as a significant catalyst for redevelopment, property values, and tax revenue.

I-480 LID



3D Model View of I-480 LID

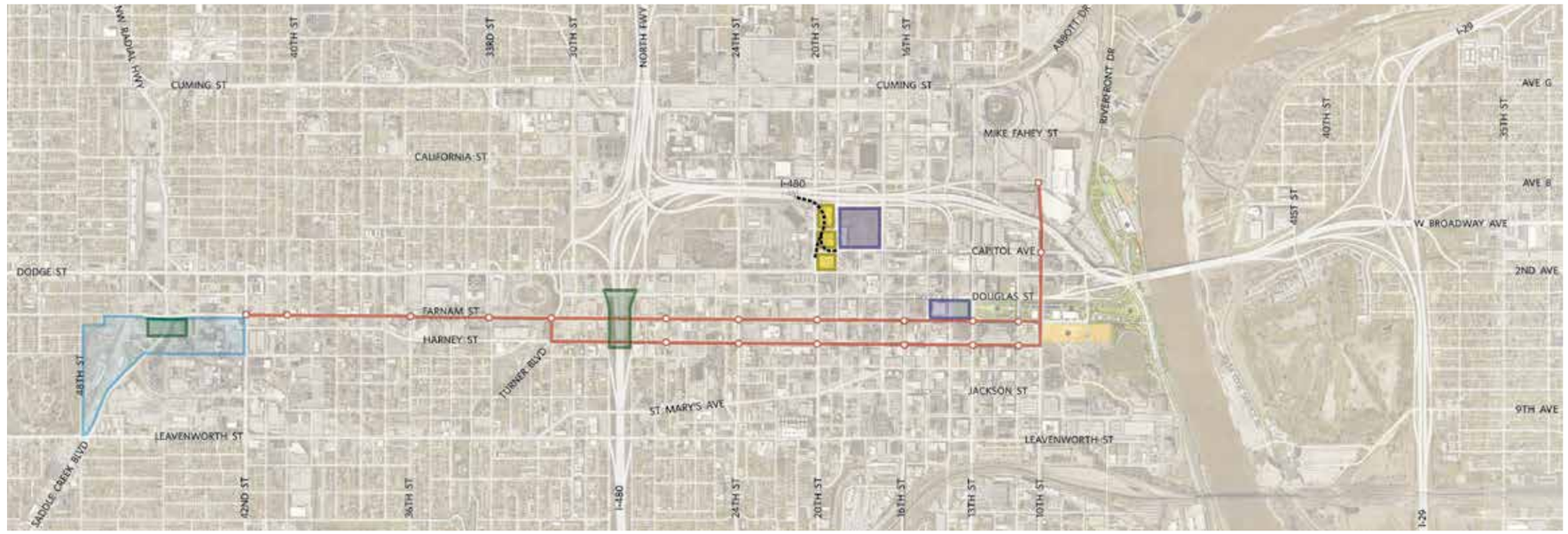
Klyde Warren Park, a LID over the Woodall Rogers Freeway in Dallas, TX

Left:
BEFORE
Photo of existing conditions looking to the southwest towards Midtown Crossing, showing the Harney, Farnam, Douglas, and Dodge street bridges over I-480.

Right:
AFTER
New LID constructed over I-480 between Harney Street and Douglas Street, containing programmable park space for neighborhood activities. Mixed-use infill development overlooks the new public space.

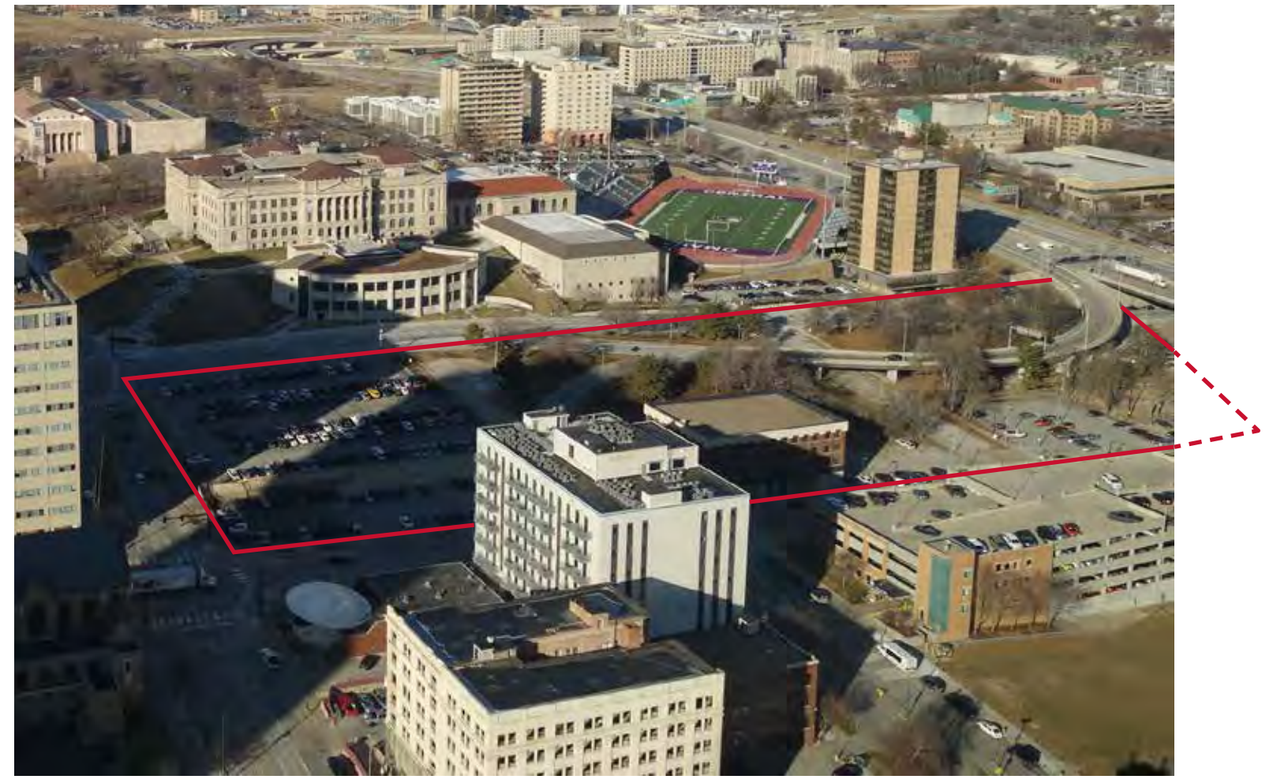
19TH & 20TH STREETS RAMP REMOVAL

When it was originally constructed, the 19th/20th Street I-480 off-ramp was designed to provide quick access to the Civic Auditorium, which has been replaced by the CHI Health Center. This, combined with a decline in downtown employment, has resulted in light amounts of traffic on this ramp. If this ramp was converted to a slip ramp, or eliminated altogether, three full blocks could be reclaimed for new development, providing an opportunity to add a significant number of new residential units or other compatible uses immediately adjacent to the Civic Auditorium redevelopment site.



19th & 20th Streets Ramp Removal

3D Model View of 19th & 20th Streets Ramp Removal



Aerial photo of existing 19th & 20th Street Ramps

30TH STREET RAMP REMOVAL

The I-480 and North Freeway/U.S. 75 system interchange was originally constructed with bridges and ramps leading to the west for the future West Expressway. The West Expressway was never built, and over time the bridges were removed and new on and off-ramps to and from N. 30th street were constructed. These ramps, on state right-of-way, are functional, but unnecessarily utilize a significant amount of land. If these ramps were removed, and new ramps that complete the final leg of the Dodge Street interchange were constructed, a significant amount of land could be removed from state-owned right-of-way and returned to the tax rolls. This equates to approximately 6 full blocks of land, which could be redeveloped with infill housing and other uses and help achieve the goals of the Urban Core Strategic Plan.

30th Street Ramp Removal

3D Model View of 30th Street Ramp Removal

Aerial View of Existing Ramp

MISSOURI RIVER BIKE / PEDESTRIAN / TRANSIT BRIDGE

A new bike/pedestrian/transit bridge should be constructed over the Missouri River, immediately to the south of the I-480 bridge. This bridge would provide a multi-modal connection between Omaha and Council Bluffs, linking uses, and users, throughout the Urban Core. Additionally, it would be instrumental in linking housing to jobs, and be a key catalyst in achieving the Urban Core's employment and residential goals.

Missouri River Bike / Pedestrian / Transit Bridge

3D Model View of Bike / Pedestrian / Transit Bridge

Tilikum Bike / Pedestrian / Transit Bridge in Portland, OR

DODGE PARK REDEVELOPMENT

Dodge Park is a City-owned golf course located on the east side of the Missouri River in Council Bluffs, directly across the river from Downtown Omaha. With golf declining nationwide, and the total number of rounds decreasing at Dodge Park, the time is right to consider an alternative use for the golf course site. A preferred option would be to construct a new walkable urban neighborhood on this strategic site. Connected to Downtown Council Bluffs via West Broadway and the 1st Avenue transit/trail corridor, and Downtown Omaha via I-480 and the new bicycle/pedestrian/transit bridge, a neighborhood on this site could be unlike anything else in the metro area. Close to jobs, transit rich, accessible to cultural amenities, and embedded in nature, a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use neighborhood would provide the lifestyle options that would allow the Urban Core to attract and retain talent and compete at a national level.

Dodge Park Redevelopment Site

3D Model View of Dodge Park Redevelopment

Left:
BEFORE
Existing view of Dodge Park Golf Course, looking west across the Missouri River towards Downtown Omaha.

AFTER
View showing Dodge Park Golf Course redeveloped into a new walkable urban neighborhood. Point towers overlook the Missouri River and downtown skyline, as well as the new bike/ped/transit bridge connecting Omaha and Council Bluffs.

I-480 FREEWAY RETROFIT

The east-west leg of I-480, located on the north side of Downtown Omaha, creates a barrier with neighborhoods to the north, including North Downtown, Creighton University, and North Omaha. As the lifespan of the existing elevated freeway nears its limits, consideration of alternatives, including a multi-way boulevard or a one-way couplet, should be given. These solutions are designed to maintain existing traffic volumes but help reconnect the bifurcated neighborhood fabric, create opportunities for new contextual infill development, increase property values, and return property to the tax rolls.

I-480 Freeway Retrofit

3D Model View of I-480 Freeway Retrofit

Example of a Multi-Way Boulevard, one option for replacing the elevated freeway section

BEFORE
Photo of existing conditions, looking south towards Downtown Omaha. The barrier created by I-480 is visible in this view.

AFTER
In this view, I-480 has been reconstructed as an at-grade one-way couplet. Downtown Omaha and North Downtown seamlessly merge together with new mixed-use development projects constructed on reclaimed right-of-way.

Total Mobility System

Over the last 60 years, taxpayers and the private sector have spent the equivalent of nearly $1 billion in today's dollars on transportation related improvements in an effort to attract more jobs to the urban core. In addition, the thousands of public parking stalls added to the core were, until the creation of the City's Parking Division, subsidized by millions of taxpayer dollars.

These investments were made in good faith as part of an effort to attract tens of thousands of new jobs and to handle the expected increase in commuting traffic associated with those jobs. Yet, as explained earlier, as more and more downtown blocks were converted to parking, the space for buildings to accommodate those jobs was reduced to the point that downtown lost 21,000 jobs. Ultimately, the result of the auto-oriented investments was a shift from a roughly 50/50 auto/transit mode split in 1960 to a 78/22 split today. In the end, the nearly one billion in taxpayer and private dollars invested serves roughly the same number of auto commuters today as before the investments were made beginning sixty years ago.

The problem with these auto-centric infrastructure investments has been that they were not done in a holistic way. I-480 was built to help bring more cars into the core without considering where to put the cars once they arrived or what impact the added parking would have on the amount of land available for buildings and jobs. It was assumed that although more money was being spent to make driving easier and less expensive, the percentage of people driving and using transit would remain the same. Therefore, only a small amount of new parking would be needed and it would pay for itself.

Unfortunately, these assumptions were wrong. Not surprisingly, investing in improved auto access drew people away from transit. Today this phenomenon is known as "induced demand". The shift in turn reduced transit ridership, revenue and service, which accelerated the shift. As people switched from transit to driving, more parking was needed not for new workers but for existing workers who previously used transit. As land was converted to parking, less land was available for new buildings and jobs, and as the supply of parking began to exceed demand, new parking no longer paid for itself. The result was a loss of jobs, an erosion of the character that made downtown unique, and an increase in public subsidy for parking.

The good news is that this pattern can be reversed. In fact, progress by the City's Parking Division has begun to make a meaningful difference. However, the steps taken so far are not enough. It will require even more changes and a shift from the auto-centric approach that has failed to work over the last 60 years.

Fundamental to the concepts outlined in the sub-area plans and to the future success of the urban core is an investment in a holistic, interconnected, total mobility system that simplifies and enhances the way people move in, out and around the core. A system that focuses on moving people rather than only moving cars. By enhancing the pedestrian environment of all-weather connections and sidewalks, improving and expanding public transit options and supporting alternative modes of transportation like bicycles, scooters and autonomous shuttles, residents, employees and visitors alike will be able to move about without the hassle and expense of constantly moving their car and searching for parking.

At the same time, a modern, well-managed, shared parking system will make it easier for drivers to locate available parking, thereby maximizing the use of existing unused parking and reducing the amount of additional parking needed to serve the growing core. Other modifications will help reconnect portions of the core that have been separated by the Interstate system and open land for redevelopment while maintaining the capacity needed to handle existing and future traffic demands. Similarly, the careful study and potential conversion of some one-way streets to two-way will enhance the pedestrian environment, spur redevelopment and increase activity for local businesses without adversely impacting the overall flow of traffic. Lastly, modifying current truck routes in North Downtown will help reduce conflicts between the trucks that need to easily and quickly access the interstate system and the desire of companies and residents to reduce the noise and congestion related to trucking activities in their neighborhoods.

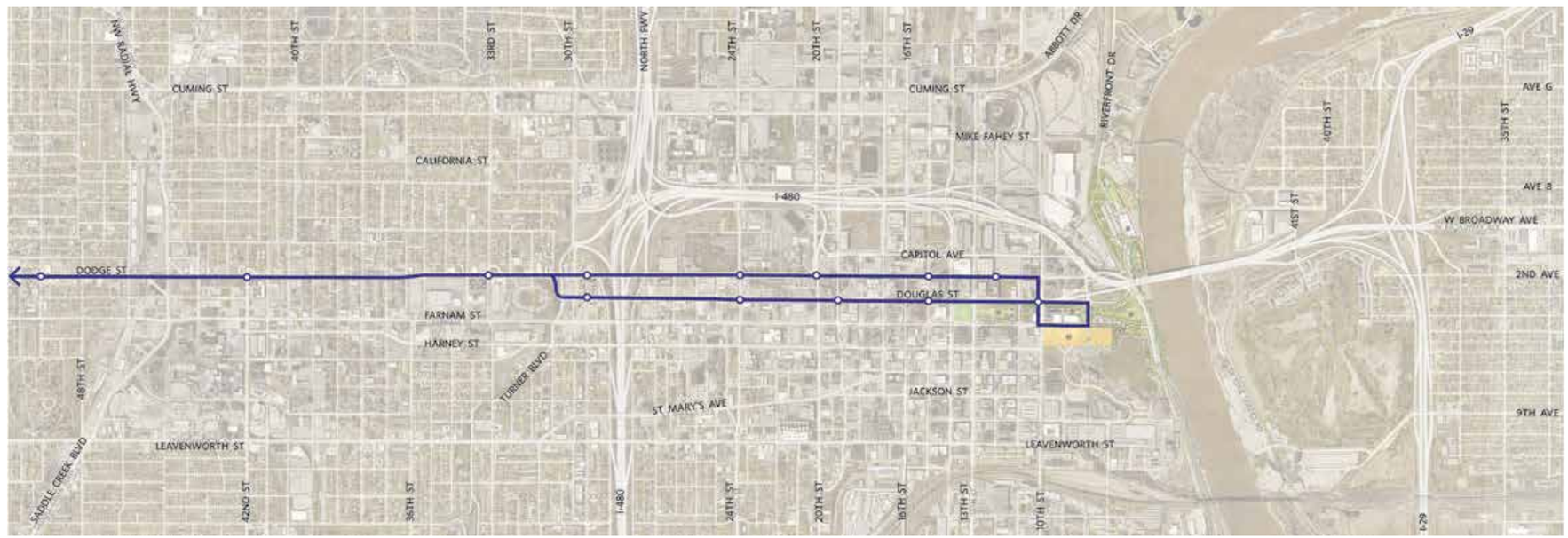
Council Bluffs is also looking for ways to enhance their riverfront and encourage redevelopment of the Dodge Park golf course by providing another more direct connection to the Omaha side of the river. A multi-modal bicycle/pedestrian/transit bridge would complement the Bob Kerrey Bridge and existing trails and would provide a two-mile recreational loop connecting both sides of the river. In addition, Council Bluffs would like to extend the proposed streetcar across the river to their proposed Dodge Park development site and possibly further to the east along their recently completed First Ave trail corridor. In addition, a north/south autonomous shuttle running between River's Edge and the casinos could help provide connections to the circulator and Metro's system.

By combining these transportation related improvements into a total mobility system, the urban core will become more accessible for both people and for the transport of goods and services. The following is a list of the potential mobility related projects identified through the workshop.

TMS - Transit

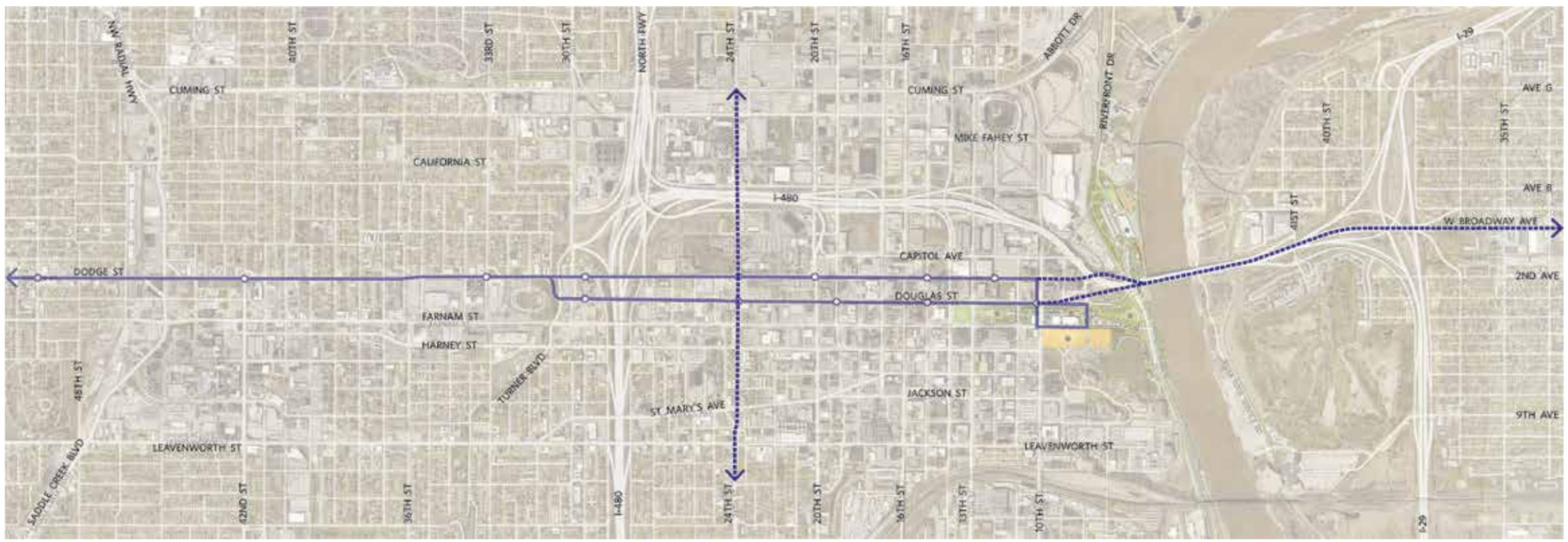
EXISTING BRT – ORBT

This diagram identifies Omaha's existing bus rapid transit route, which runs along Dodge and Douglas Streets west to the Westroads transit Center near the I-680 and West Dodge Road interchange. ORBT provides a true first-class transit function, bringing commuters from West Omaha into the Urban Core, and is the "spine" that future BRT extensions will connect into.



Existing ORBT Route

ORBT Omaha



Proposed BRT Extensions

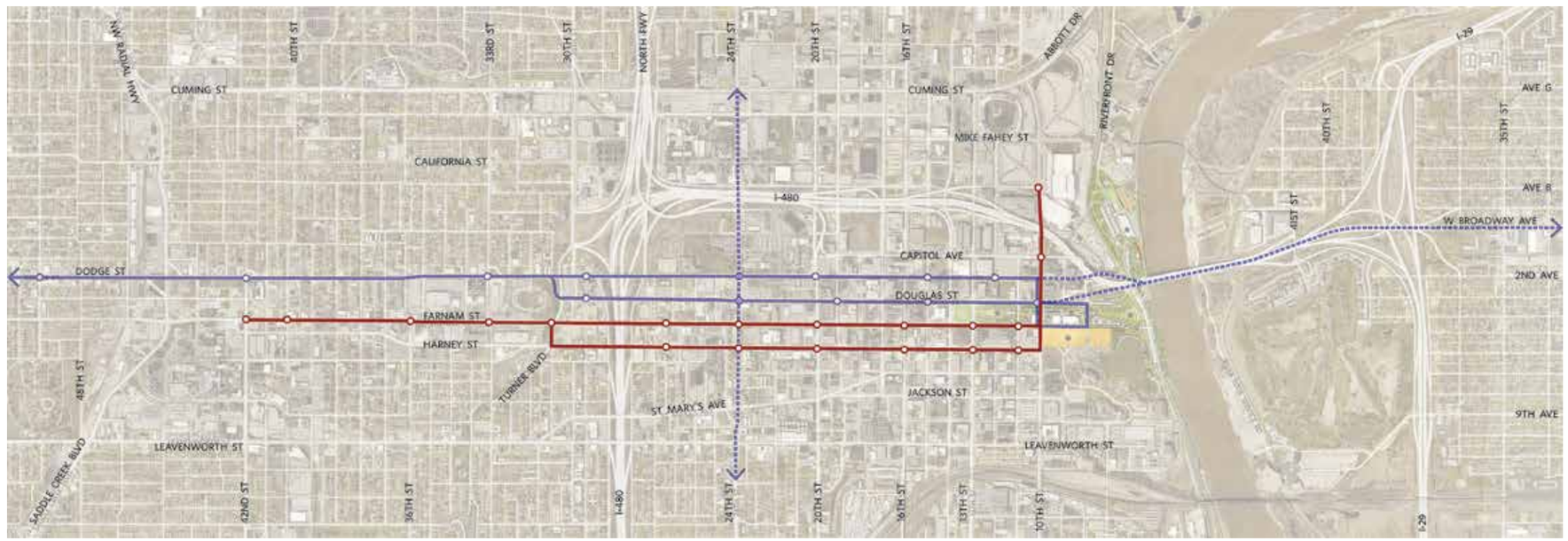
BRT EXTENSIONS

Two new BRT extensions are considered for the Urban Core. The first is a critically important north-south route along 24th Street, connecting residents of North Omaha and South Omaha to the Core, along with the existing east-west ORBT spine. A second extension, east across the I-480 bridge, would run down West Broadway in Council Bluffs, and connect with the city's downtown and medical district. Both new routes are essential for extending the reach of the BRT and bringing employees into and out of the Urban Core. Metro Transit is currently the planning service improvements to the 24th Street corridor as part of its MetroNEXT initiative.

ORBT Omaha

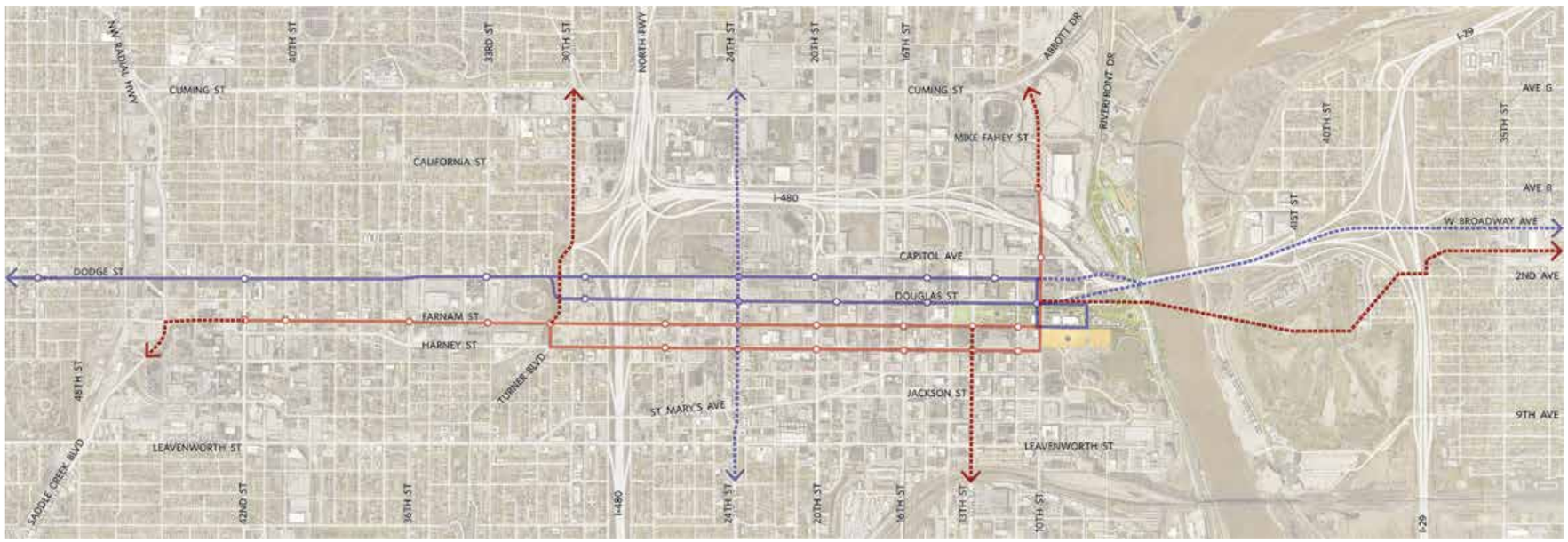
STREETCAR – PHASE I

The first leg of an Omaha streetcar system would connect the CHI Health Center, the Riverfront Parks, Corporate Core, Midtown Crossing, Blackstone, and UNMC. It would travel down 10th, Farnam, and Harney Streets. Unlike the transit function of BRT, the streetcar serves as an urban circulator, moving people around once they are in the Urban Core. It would be designed with peak-hour 10-minute headways, have 13 stops, and be fare free, while creating the spine for future rail investments.



Streetcar, Phase I

Kansas City Streetcar



Proposed Streetcar Route Extension

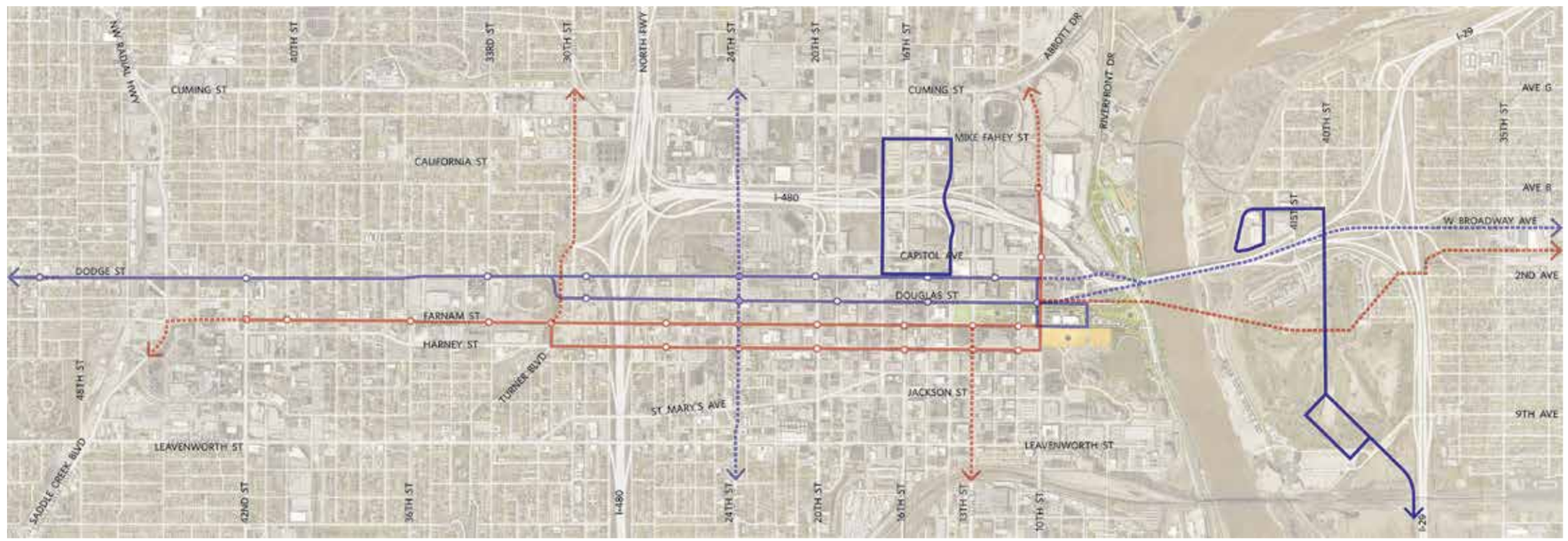
STREETCAR EXTENSIONS

Once the initial streetcar starter line is established, a number of extensions are contemplated. These include east-west extensions both to Council Bluffs and the former Steel Castings site west of UNMC, as well as north-south connections south on 13th Street, north on 10th Street to Millwork Commons, and north to the North Omaha business district at 24th and Lake. These connections will be catalysts for economic development and redevelopment, and provide circulation to and from the many neighborhoods and districts located outside the Urban Core.

Cincinnati Streetcar

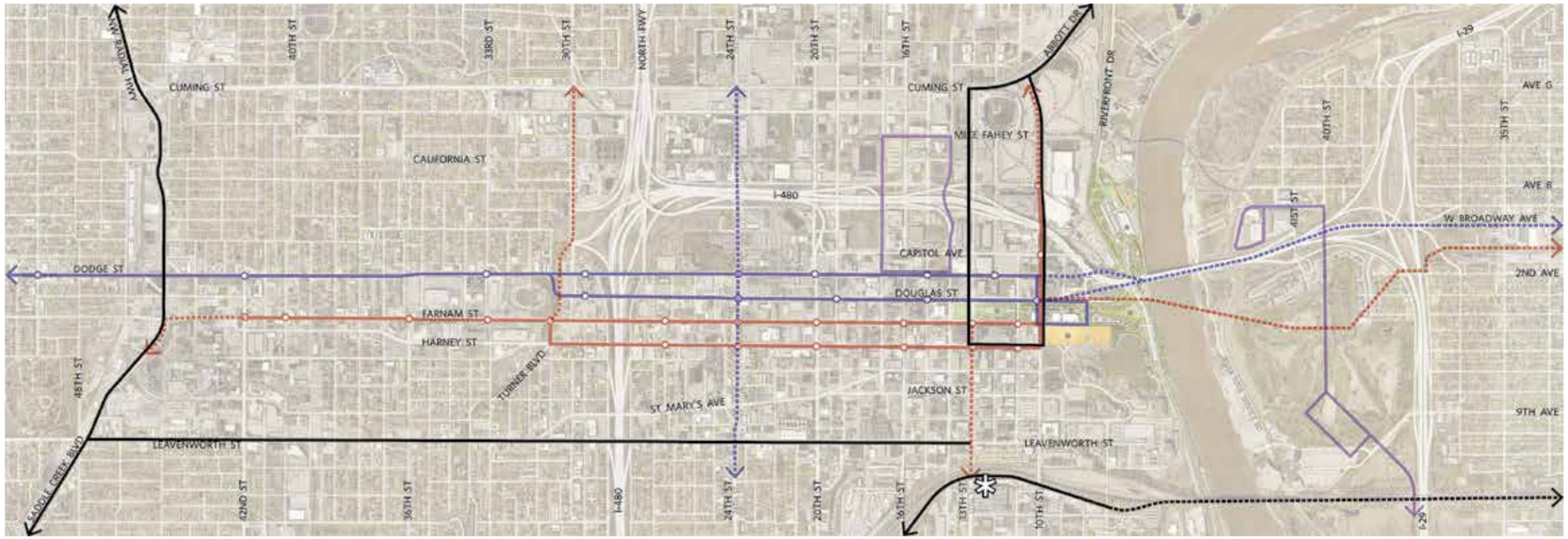
AUTONOMOUS SHUTTLE CONNECTORS

In the future, as technology continues to advance, autonomous shuttles will play an important role in the Urban Core's total mobility system. Two early routes are particularly suited to this technology – a loop connecting the Corporate Core with the Builder's District and the eastern edge of the Creighton University campus, and a route along the Council Bluff's riverfront, connecting the area around the Mid-America Center with River's Edge and the new neighborhood developed on the Dodge Park Golf Course site. This riverfront route would interconnect with both the Council Bluffs BRT and streetcar extensions, and allow for seamless access throughout the Urban Core.



Proposed Autonomous Shuttle Connector Routes

Example of an Autonomous Shuttle



Proposed Future Fixed-Rail Transit Routes

Example of Light Rail Vehicle in Portland, OR

Example of Commuter Rail in Salt Lake City, UT

FUTURE FIXED-RAIL TRANSIT

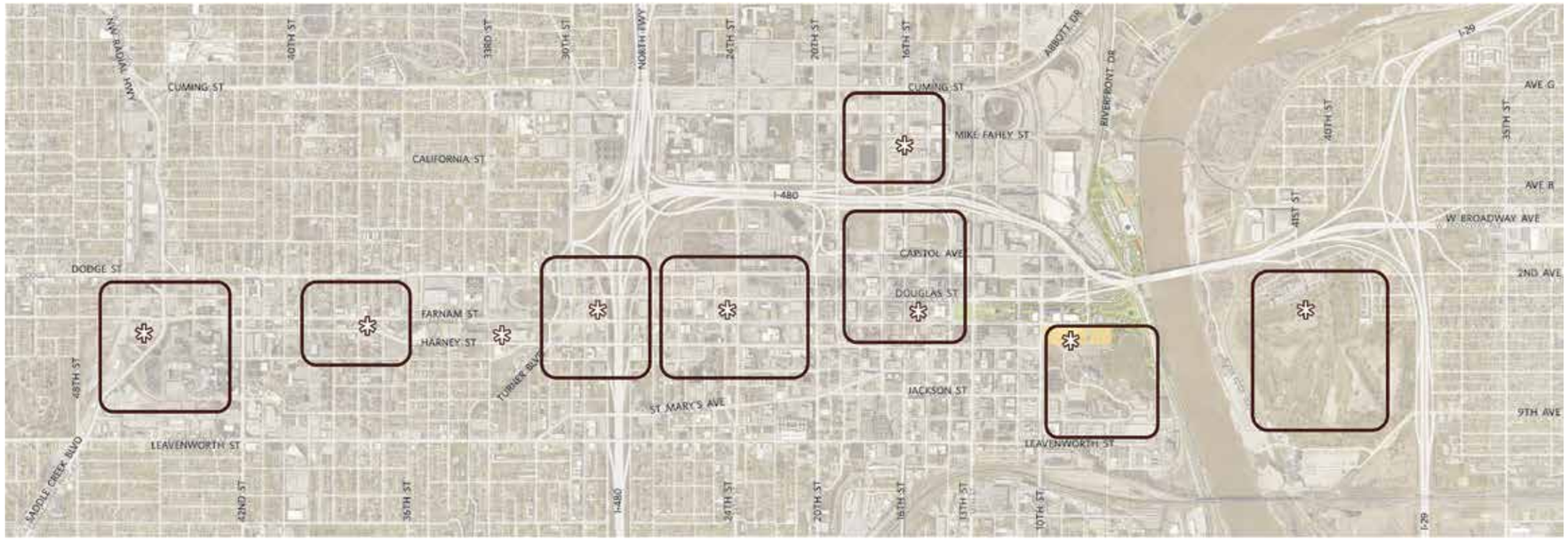
Over time, as the Urban Core builds on its momentum, additional modes of transportation will be necessary. These long-range investments could include fixed-rail transit options such as light rail, commuter rail, and inter-city/high speed rail. Light rail could help connect neighborhoods along the periphery of the metro area to the Urban Core. Commuter rail would be appropriate for connecting Lincoln and Omaha's bedroom communities such as Gretna and Fremont with the Urban Core, and inter-city/high speed rail has been studied for connections to the east, such as Des Moines, the Quad-cities, and Chicago. A central station, preferably near the historic Union Station, would help tie the commuter and high-speed rail together with the streetcar into a comprehensive system.

CALIBRATE & ENHANCE BUS ROUTES

As the Urban Core moves to a Total Mobility System, and new modes of transportation (including future BRT lines, streetcar, and autonomous shuttle routes) come online, it will be necessary to calibrate Metro's bus routes with these new modes. This will help to maximize the overall system and ensure that routes, headways, transfers, and coverage are all working in unison. The goal is a transit-rich environment that will allow residents, employees, and visitors multiple options to move around the Urban Core, without the need for a personal vehicle.

Bus Routes to be Calibrated with other Transit Investments

Metro Bus



Example of Parking Districts and Structure Locations

TMS – PARKING

A Total Mobility System is predicated on achieving a balance between pedestrians, cyclists, the various transit options listed above, and personal vehicles. Central to this is the strategic employment of parking resources. The City of Omaha and Walker Parking have created a Parking Plan for the urban core. This plan outlines a number of initiatives to help balance competing needs and resources, and right size our parking assets. The findings of this plan should be followed, including the overarching goal of creating a series of "park once" districts/corridors and the ensuing need for the strategic implementation of corresponding parking districts and parking structures. The adjacent diagram highlights potential parking districts and their associated district parking structures.

Example of District Parking Structure Embedded in Mixed-Use Neighborhood

TMS - Streets

1-WAY TO 2-WAY CONVERSIONS

Facing gridlock during the 1950's, many cities converted 2-way streets to 1-way streets. However, with the completion of the interstate system, these streets were not converted back to their original 2-way condition. With significantly less volume due to traffic migrating to the interstates, these 1-way streets saw traffic speeds and volumes increase as observant commuters found better options than the interstates. These corridors became high-speed conduits for commuters and a detriment to their adjacent neighborhoods. Owner-occupied homes became rental properties and vibrant retail uses moved out and were replaced with marginal uses or vacant storefronts. Many became known as "pass-through" neighborhoods. However, this has recently changed. Around the country, 1-way streets are being converted back to 2-way streets, with great success. Formal benefit-cost analyses have shown that societal benefits exceed the costs of implementing the conversions. Whether out of pocket savings (fuel, vehicle O & M, pavement maintenance, etc.) or societal impacts (improved air quality, time savings, crash reductions, health benefits, economic development, etc.), the benefits are real. The Farnam Street conversion is a perfect example. The adjacent diagram identifies 1-way streets within the Urban Core that should be converted to 2-way traffic. That said, the conversion cannot be done on a block-by-block or piecemeal basis. To be effective and to ensure traffic flow during the transition, these conversions must be done in a planned and coordinated manner.

The streets identified in the map are representational. An engineering study will be required to determine which one-way streets will be converted to two-way travel.

Proposed Streets for Conversion to 2-Way

Farnam Street Prior to 2-Way Conversion

Typical Urban Street following 2-Way Conversion

North Downtown Connector Road

Semi-Truck in urban area

NORTH DOWNTOWN CONNECTOR ROAD

A large heavy industrial area is located immediately to the north of Millwork Commons. This industrial area generates a significant amount of truck traffic. Preferring the shortest route to the interstate highway network, this truck traffic winds its way through North Downtown. Unfortunately, the noise and vibrations generated by this traffic comes into conflict with the redevelopment that is occurring within the neighborhood. To solve this issue, the concept for a North Downtown Connector Road, which would create a new street that would allow trucks to bypass North Downtown and exit to the North Freeway, should be funded and implemented. This would be a catalyst for further development within North Downtown, and open land for additional job-producing industrial uses in North Omaha.

STREET AND RAMP REMOVALS

The Urban Core contains a number of streets, bridges, highway ramps, and elevated sections of interstate that should be considered for removal. By removing these in the future, they could be replaced by context sensitive solutions, which would allow for new, denser redevelopment, more rooftops and office space, and an increase in the tax base. The following page identifies the new, context sensitive additions proposed for the Urban Core's street network.

Streets and Ramps Identified for Removal

The "Bridges to Nowhere" Prior to their Removal

Proposed Street and Ramp Additions

STREET AND RAMP ADDITIONS

As discussed in the previous section, the streets, bridges, ramps, and elevated interstate segments that are removed should be replaced with context sensitive replacements that create new land for redevelopment; encourage dense, walkable urbanism; and add to the tax base. The elevated section of I-480 that is identified should be replaced with either a multi-way boulevard or a 1-way couplet, while the new street networks at Dodge Park Golf Course and the former Steel Castings site should create a framework for pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use redevelopment. Missing links within the street network should also be constructed, including north 10th Street. Ramps should be designed to be as minimally invasive as possible, while creating opportunities for significant new redevelopment.

New Streets Create a Framework for Development in River's Edge

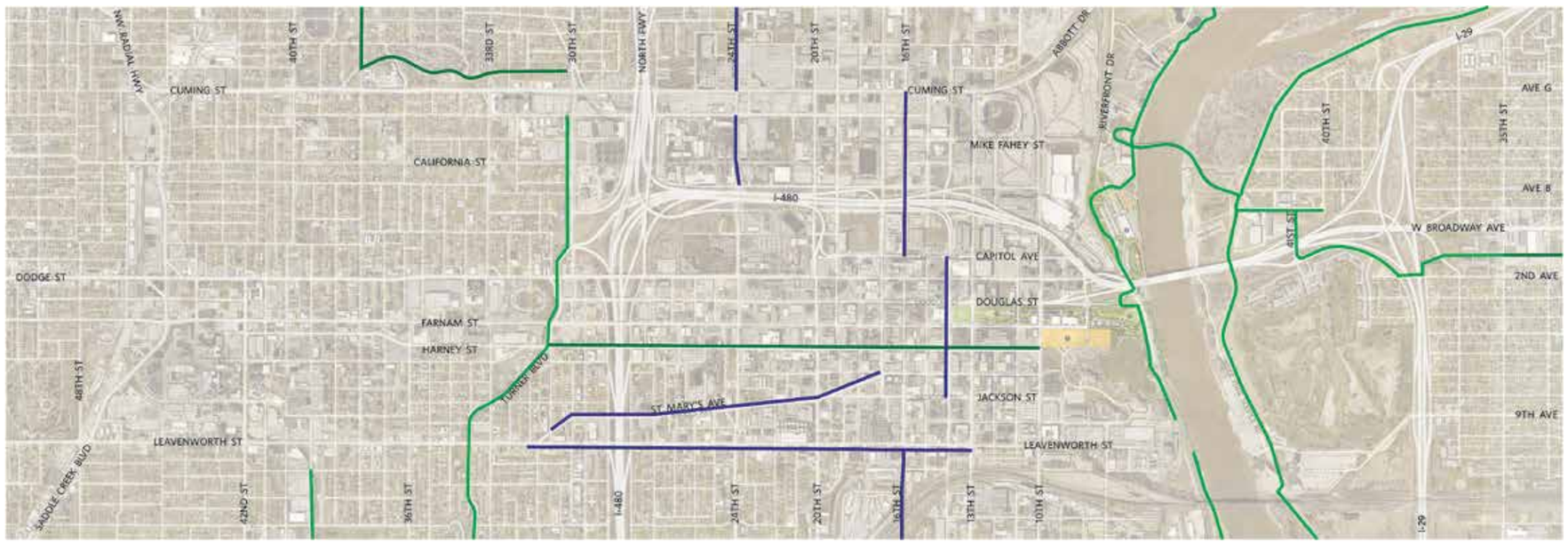
RAILROAD SPUR REMOVAL

At some point in the future, it will become more economical to truck newsprint to the World Herald printing facility. When this occurs, the rail spur that runs through North Downtown will not be necessary. Once removed, approximately six block frontages of land will be made available for infill development, making a significant positive impact on the neighborhood in terms of urban form, density, walkability, street-level activity, and retail viability.

Locations of Railroad Spurs Identified for Removal

Development on a former Rail Line

Aerial view of existing Railroad Spur



Existing Bicycle / Pedestrian Facilities

TMS – Bicycle / Pedestrian Facilities

EXISTING BICYCLE / PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

The Urban Core is served by a number of existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. These include several signed on-street routes, bike lanes, the Harney Street Protected Bikeway (a demonstration project), shared-use paths, and levee-top trails on both sides of the Missouri River. The Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, which crosses the river, is the most prominent of these, and serves as the primary connection between facilities in Council Bluffs and Omaha.

Harney Street Protected Bikeway

Riverfront Trail

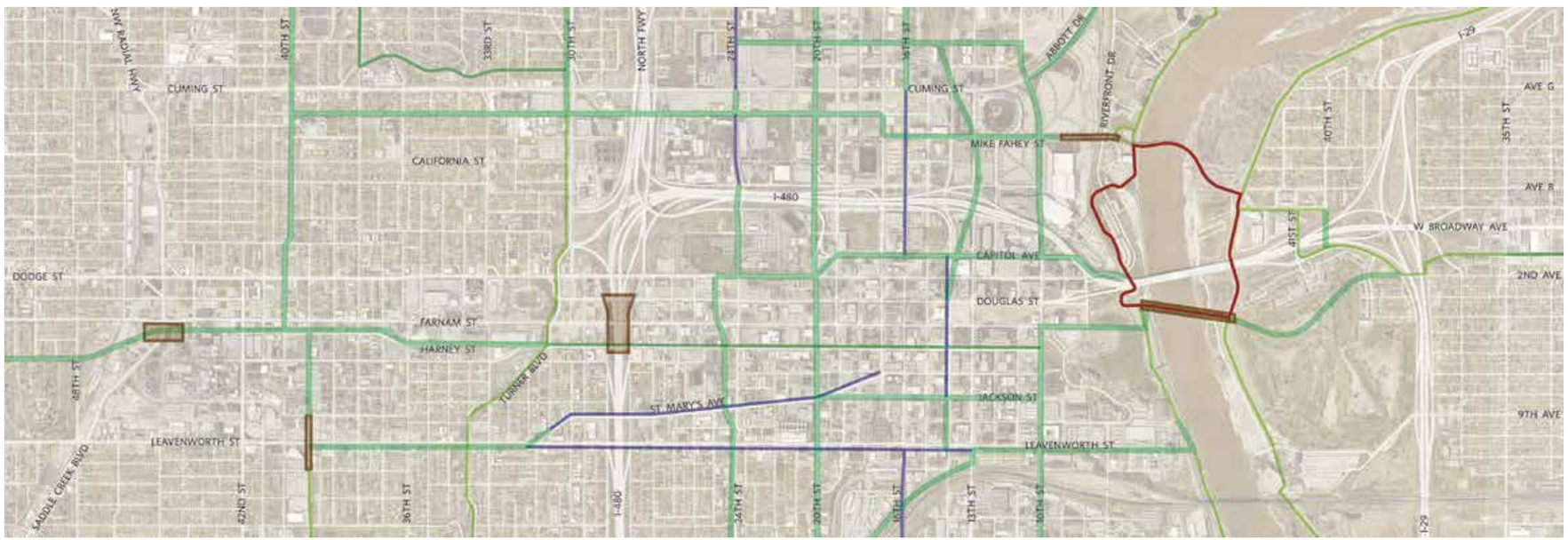
PROPOSED BICYCLE / PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Various active transportation planning initiatives anticipate a number of bicycle and pedestrian facility enhancements within the Urban Core. These include additional bike lanes, protected bikeways, shared-use paths, and levee-top trails. Many of these initiatives complete "missing links" in their respective systems, adding to their significance. Others are one-of-a-kind projects, including the bike/pedestrian/transit bridge over the Missouri River, the Baby Bob Bridge that connects the Bob Kerrey Bridge with North Downtown, and the two proposed LIDS – one over I-480 and the other over Saddle Creek Road. The 39th Street Pedestrian Bridge provides a critical north-south link in the system. Together, these facilities will provide a connected network of "low-stress" active transportation routes to help people safely and comfortably access jobs, education, or wherever else they need to go. Many of the specific routes will be identified in the forthcoming City of Omaha Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

Proposed Bicycle / Pedestrian Facilities

Rendering of "Baby Bob" Bridge

Rendering of Proposed 39th Street Proposed Pedestrian Bridge



Location of Riverfront Trail Loop

RIVERFRONT TRAIL LOOP

The proposed bike/pedestrian/transit bridge over the Missouri River has a number of direct benefits in terms of moving people in a linear fashion. However, it also has another key benefit – it creates a simple loop trail utilizing both sides of the river. Incorporating both the new bridge and the existing Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, this loop would be approximately 2 miles in length, a distance that can be navigated by most everyone, including children, seniors, and those walking, running, and/or cycling. Notably, studies confirm that most people prefer loop routes over out-and-back routes, further encouraging the use of the Urban Core's riverfront.

Urban Form

Some may ask why the City needs a new strategic plan to guide the redevelopment of the urban core. After all, there is significant redevelopment already occurring within the core. It is true that if Omaha merely wants to continue on its current path with four to five story wood structures and suburban parking levels there is not a big need to modify the current approach. However, if the urban core is to become what has been envisioned in the 30+ plans developed over the past dozen years, if it is to capture the market identified in numerous market studies, if it is to bring back the jobs that were lost and enhance employment opportunities for surrounding neighborhoods, if it is to become the city described by stakeholders in the interviews, if it is to achieve its potential, the status quo is not good enough. In order to attract and retain a talented workforce and accommodate the jobs and residents that are looking for an urban lifestyle, the character of the urban core must change.

The Omaha metropolitan area needs the urban core to be more than a slightly more dense version of suburbia. It needs the urban core to become the "uniquely urban" place described by the stakeholders. To become that place, the urban core must become more dense. It must have 15 to 20-story office towers, eight to ten-story residential buildings, shared parking and increased street-level activity rather than a scattering of four and five story buildings separated by large inactive acres of parking.

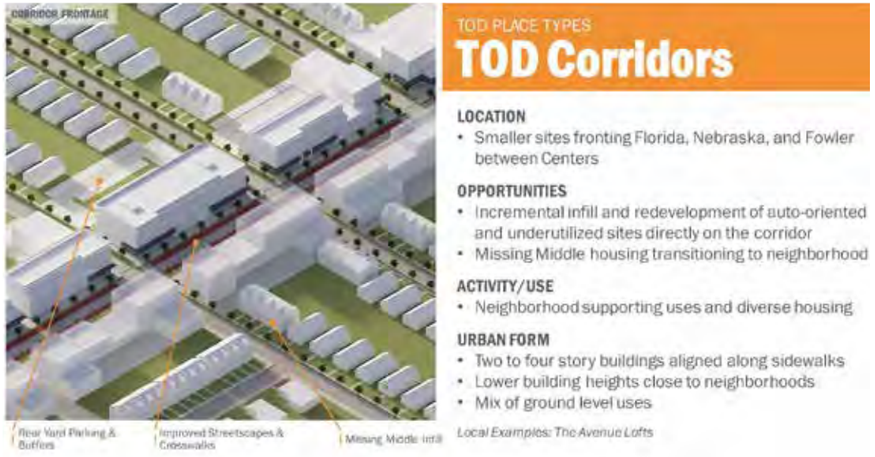
The recently enacted Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) overlay district enacted by the City is a major step in changing the character of the core. The guidelines encourage higher densities and reduced parking while providing guidance for better physical design and an enhanced pedestrian environment. This Strategic Plan supports the City's initiative and proposes adding tools to the toolbox as a way to help further the City's efforts.

This plan calls for further study to identify what are sometimes referred to as "A, B and C" streets. With "A" streets being the primary pedestrian oriented streets defined by attractive sidewalks and active street-level shops, restaurants and offices. On the other end of the spectrum are "C" streets that are devoted primarily to service uses characterized by loading docks and service zones. In between are "B" streets that exhibit some characteristics of each with more pedestrian amenities and limited-service functions.

In addition, this plan calls for a review of existing regulations to see if more can be done to augment the current TOD overlay, such as "by right" zoning, to make it easier for developers to move forward with their projects while also providing adequate opportunity for input from existing property owners. If needed, additional design guidelines could be added to specific areas within the core to facilitate redevelopment and ensure quality design.

Lastly, consideration should be given to new economic development tools to further incentivize higher densities and quality design. In some cases, incentives could be added while in other cases current incentives may be conditioned on achieving the level of design and development called for in the plan.

Example of an "A" Street



Example of Typical TOD Designs Standards

Example of a "B" Street

Example of a "C" Street

Land Reclaimed For Development

One of the major results of the workshop was the realization that because of the changes being envisioned for I-480 and rail service there were large-scale opportunities to reclaim land for redevelopment. The creation of a "lid" over I-480 between Harney and Dodge Streets reconnects land on either side of those major east/west corridors. The elimination and redesign of several I-480 ramps open a large amount of land on the east side of 30th Street north of Dodge as well as three blocks between 19th and 20th Streets north of Dodge. In addition, bringing I-480 to grade and moving traffic to a boulevard or one-way pair street layout opens another five blocks in the area just south of the emerging Builders District and Creighton University. Switching the delivery of paper and ink to the Omaha World Herald Freedom Center would allow for the elimination of the rail spur currently serving that facility and allow for the full development of the blocks impacted. Finally, the conversion of the current Dodge Park golf course to a new major mixed-use development will provide a smaller scale alternative to the urban scale of development on the Omaha side of the river.

Locations of Land Reclaimed for Development

Sub-Area Framework Plans

A key component of the strategic planning effort was the three-day workshop conducted by HDR. The workshop allowed Committee members, City representatives and other stakeholders an opportunity to consider past ideas as well as new possibilities for the redesign and redevelopment of the urban core.

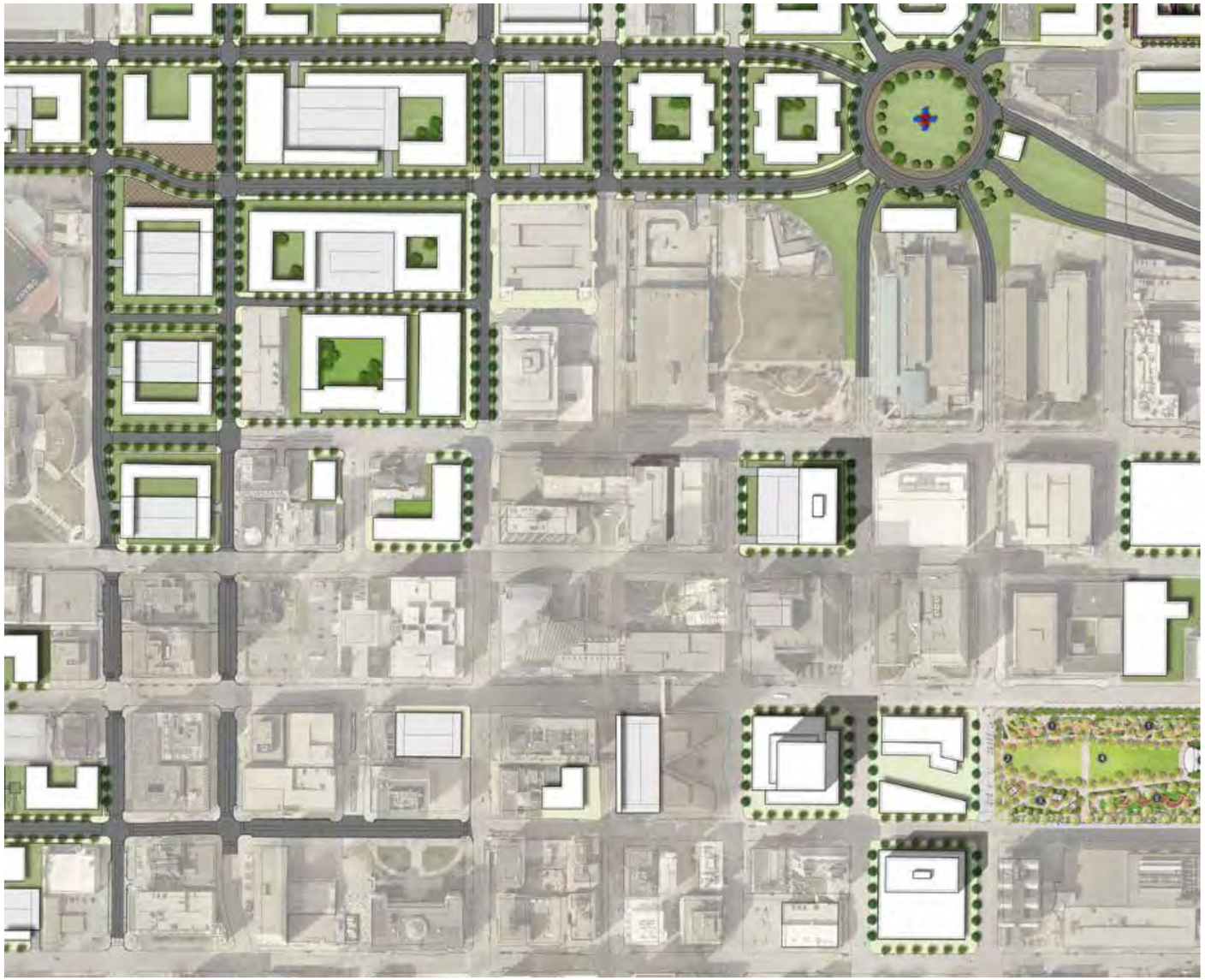
As ideas were generated, sketches and physical design concepts were developed and taken back to the stakeholders for refinement. Once consensus was achieved, the HDR team developed more refined versions that were presented to the Urban Core Committee for review and approval. After final approval, HDR further refined the drawings into a 3D computer model that allows the viewer to consider the plan from every angle and truly understand the potential impact of the ideas that were generated.

The following plans and images show the sub-area redevelopment plans and concepts developed in the workshop:

CORPORATE CORE

The Corporate Core is generally bounded by I-480 on the north, 13th Street on the east, Harney Street on the south, and 20th Street on the west. It includes the vast majority of the corporate offices that are located downtown, as well as governmental offices and several cultural facilities. It is also the most dense area within the Urban Core, resulting in several challenges, including parking. The Urban Core Strategic Plan outlines several initiatives that address parking, including the creation of parking districts and associated parking structures, and the implementation of a modern streetcar system. These, combined with enhancements to the underground pedestrian tunnel system and the strategic use of skywalks, can stitch parking together with the core's total mobility system to accommodate a significant amount of new development on infill sites.

Several sites have been identified for new infill development. These include the "first block" and the library site, the former Union Pacific Headquarters site, the former civic auditorium site, and the blocks currently occupied by the 19th - 20th Street I-480 off ramp. There are also several "one-off" sites, such as the State Office Building, that could accommodate a significant amount of new infill development. The goal is to add "critical mass" to the Corporate Core with new mixed-use development projects. Uses should include office, residential, retail, and civic uses. New buildings should address the street and their uses should help activate the sidewalks. The goal is to fill in the numerous missing "gaps" that were identified by many of the key stakeholders during their interviews. The goal of the Corporate Core framework plan is to identify strategic opportunities to maximize the potential of this key district.



CORPORATE CORE EAST

The Corporate Core East encompasses all of River's Edge on the east side of the Missouri River. To date, a significant amount of development has occurred on this site, including a new Class A office building and parking structure, a large apartment complex, two smaller mixed-use buildings, and two rows of townhomes. In addition, a civic pavilion and the Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park have been constructed at the landing of the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. The on-going reconstruction of the I-480/I-29 system interchange with West Broadway will greatly improve access to this neighborhood, which should further increase demand for new development. Efforts should continue to implement the master plan for the site, which calls for two additional corporate office buildings, a large mid-rise residential project overlooking the pavilion, additional mixed-use buildings, and smaller-scale residential typologies.

WEST DOWNTOWN

West Downtown is generally located between 20th Street and I-480. In the future, this will be a "transit rich" neighborhood, with the existing ORBT line located on Dodge Street and Douglas Street, the proposed north-south BRT line on 24th Street, and the future streetcar line on Farnam Street and Harney Street. Demand will increase significantly for redevelopment sites that take advantage of the district's proximity to transit. Accordingly, the framework plan emphasizes strategic infill of residential and office space on surface parking lots and sites with marginal uses. Demand for parking will be greatly diminished due to transit availability, and satisfied through the use of district parking structures. New mixed-use buildings should be appreciably taller than what currently exists and be designed to "address" their respective street frontages. Active ground level uses will be required at key transit stops and adjacent to park frontages, which will in turn function as outdoor living rooms. Over time, it is anticipated that the corporate campus open space located at the northwest corner of the intersection of 24th Street and Dodge Street will transition into a neighborhood park surrounded by a significant number of new residential units, including apartments, condos, and townhomes. The LID over I-480 on the western edge of the neighborhood will be discussed in the next section.

TURNER PARK EAST & LID PARK

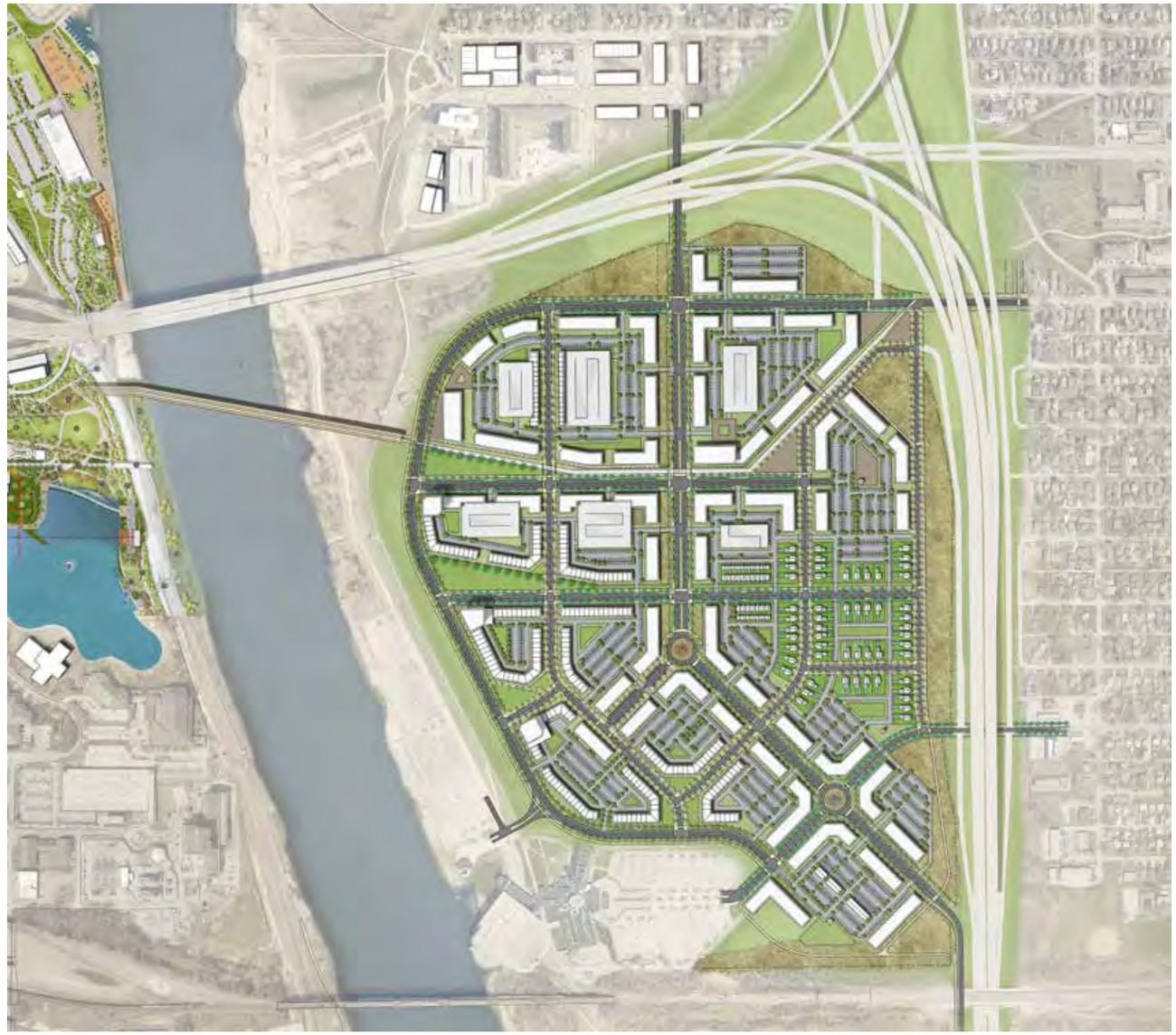
Turner Park East is located between I-480/U.S. 75 and 31st Street/Turner Boulevard. The neighborhood has great visibility and access from the regional highway network, major arterials, the existing ORBT line and the new streetcar line. Over the years, Mutual of Omaha has proactively purchased a number of properties in the area and created "shovel-ready" sites for new development. As a result, this area is ripe for development, and the future streetcar will only add to this momentum. As proposed, the neighborhood will be bookended by two significant public open spaces – the existing Turner Park and the future LID over I-480. New development projects in the area should take advantage of these amenities. Buildings should be mixed-use in nature, with a combination of office space, residential units, and retail uses. The overall development pattern should be dense and offer height to take advantage of views. Building frontages along key streets and both park frontages should be active to help enliven these key spaces. The LID will seamlessly merge Turner Park East with West Downtown and points beyond. North of Dodge Street, densities will decrease to be contextual with the Gifford Park neighborhood. Stacked flats, townhomes, and a variety of missing middle typologies are appropriate. Resident lifestyles will take advantage of a true urban neighborhood, with amenities such as shopping, restaurants, great parks, and transit all within close proximity.

I-480 RETROFIT

As the I-480 elevated freeway nears the end of its anticipated lifespan, NDOT and the City are faced with three options – refurbishing it, rebuilding it, or removing it and replacing it with a more context-sensitive solution. The first two options maintain the status quo. Traffic will continue to speed by high above the at-grade street network, the elevated profile will continue to act as a barrier between Downtown and North Downtown, property values on blocks that front onto the elevated section will continue to be depressed, and valuable real estate that could otherwise be redeveloped and added to the tax base will remain as right-of-way. The third option changes this equation. Removing the elevated freeway and reconstructing it as either a context sensitive multi-way boulevard or a one-way couplet will place traffic at-grade and calm it while maintaining existing traffic volumes. Downtown and North Downtown can then be re-stitched together so that there is no visible or functional barrier between the two, reclaimed property can be placed back on the tax rolls, and property values on adjacent parcels will increase. Additionally, land formerly occupied by the elevated section and requisite on- and off-ramps can be transformed with new pedestrian-oriented mixed-use buildings, helping re-create a neighborhood where one once existed and assisting the Urban Core to attain its lofty population and employment goals.

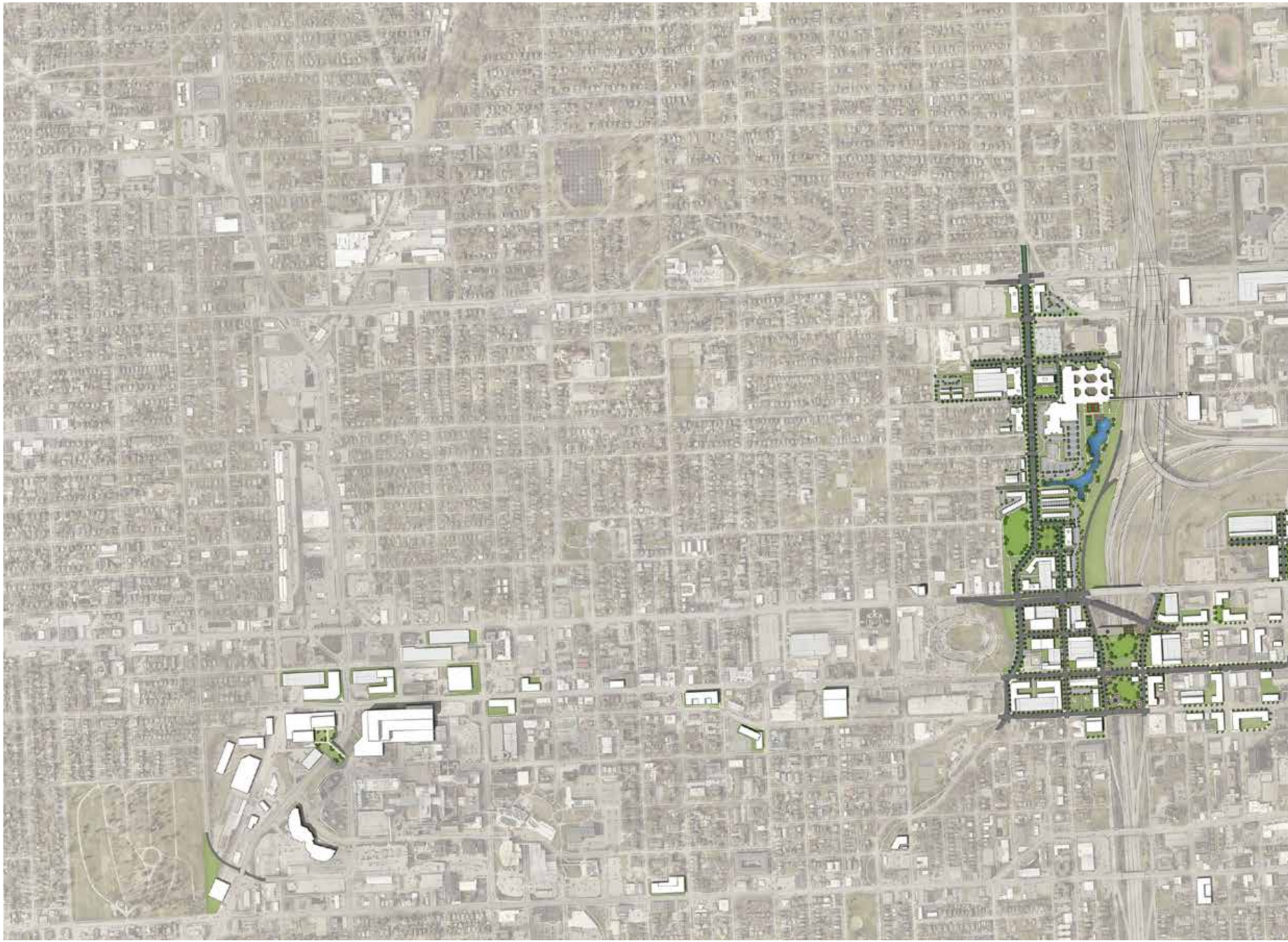
DODGE PARK REDEVELOPMENT

The Dodge Park Golf Course is owned by the City of Council Bluffs. With increased competition from other courses and the average age of golfers increasing, the number of rounds at Dodge Park has steadily decreased. At some point in the future, the course should be closed and transformed into a new waterfront neighborhood. This neighborhood should be pedestrian-oriented and mixed-use in nature, and contain a variety of uses, including office, neighborhood retail, hospitality, and a variety of residential typologies, including point towers, apartments, missing middle, townhomes, and village homes. Designed on a modified grid, this new walkable urban neighborhood should celebrate the river and emphasize view corridors towards the Downtown Omaha skyline. Small urban plazas, parks, and natural stormwater management practices should be integrated throughout the site, and residents will have a variety of mobility options, including a north-south autonomous shuttle route and an east-west streetcar providing access to jobs in Downtown Council Bluffs, Downtown Omaha, and UNMC. Developed correctly, this site can accommodate a significant percentage of the residential goal outlined in this plan.



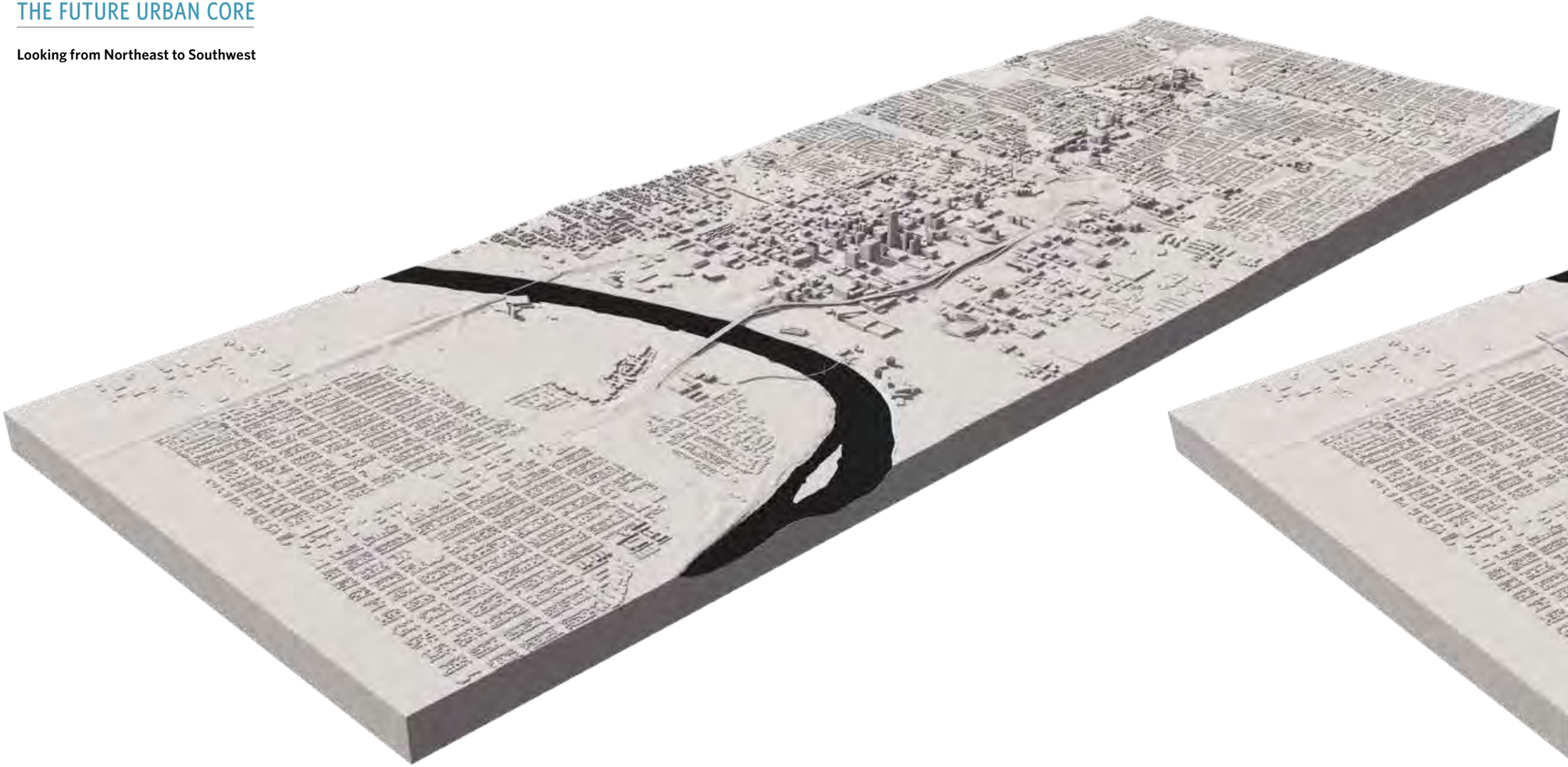
OVERALL COMPOSITE IMAGE

The Urban Core Framework Plan is a compilation of projects that are under construction, projects that have been announced but are not yet under construction, redevelopment plans that have been made public, and the six sub-area framework plans that were developed as part of this effort. In addition, larger sites that contain parking lots and/or marginal uses have been shown with new, conceptual infill projects on them. This all-encompassing compilation became the base for the Urban Core 3D model highlighted on the following pages and incorporated throughout this document.



THE FUTURE URBAN CORE

Looking from Northeast to Southwest



Existing Urban Core

New Development

Future Urban Core

THE FUTURE URBAN CORE

Looking from Southwest to Northeast

Existing Urban Core

New Development

Future Urban Core

Looking West towards Downtown Omaha from above the Missouri River

05 Action Plan

GOALS

Build On The Momentum

As outlined earlier in the plan, there are numerous exciting projects underway in the urban core. The Riverfront, Luminarium, Joslyn, and Steelhouse projects will add to the core's open space, cultural and entertainment venues. The Mercantile, Millwork Commons, Builder's District and Blackstone areas will provide additional settings for new housing, retail and office uses. And UNMC's Project NExT and additions to Creighton's campus will bring significant new employment and educational opportunities.

On their own, each of these projects adds to the momentum that is building in the urban core. However, by working to connect these projects into a unified whole and filling in the gaps, the urban core can become greater than the sum of its parts. The momentum is here. Now is the time to build on that momentum!

Achieve 30 / 30 / ~~30~~ 20

Since the development of the Downtown 2030 Plan in 2009, numerous market studies for all or part of the urban core have consistently shown that the urban core is underperforming and not capturing the potential market from an employment and housing standpoint. Although they cover various areas and timeframes, when taken as a whole the studies indicate that the urban core should be able to attract roughly 30,000 jobs and 30,000 residents over a 30-year period.

One of the primary goals of the Chamber's Urban Core Committee is to change current trends and identify the steps needed to attract potential jobs and residents. In fact, as the leaders of the urban core effort have begun to focus on the potential of the urban core, there is a growing optimism that with a unified effort, the goal should actually be 30,000 jobs, 30,000 residents in 20 years. The Committee feels the opportunity is there. It's time to take action to achieve this!

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Urban Core Committee

Mission

As a committee of the Greater Omaha Chamber, the Urban Core Committee will engage in activities supporting development and redevelopment of residential, commercial, office, and other real estate and related transportation infrastructure as may be desirable to improve the physical, social, cultural, and institutional environment of the urban core in the City of Omaha.

Guiding Principles

The Urban Core Master Plan and proposed initiatives must ensure that Omaha's urban core is: Uniquely Urban, Diverse, Equitable, Inclusive, Sustainable, Vibrant/Active, Safe, Affordable, and Attractive.

Goals

- Develop an identity/brand for the urban core and market it locally and nationally.
- Engage the Greater Omaha Economic Development Partnership within the Chamber to recruit business, retail, essential public services and residential development to the core.
- Engage the Chamber's research team to maintain and make available a database of information related to the current status and forecasts for the future of the core.
- Develop small area plans (or site plans) for areas of potential redevelopment.
- Help developers navigate the permitting and incentives process for projects within the core.
- Maintain a menu of sites available for development.
- Convene interested stakeholders on matters impacting the core.
- Engage the Chamber's Public Policy team to advocate for policies to support equitable growth within the core.
- Utilizing Chamber organizational resources, collect funds and facilitate construction of infrastructure projects critical to the core.
- Establish a program in support of affordable housing, focusing on mixed-income opportunities.
- Work directly with North and South Omaha community groups to implement projects relating to linkage with transportation improvements identified in the urban core.

Immediate Activities:

Total Mobility System / Modern Streetcar

The Urban Core Committee (UCC) and staff will partner with the Chamber's ConnectGO initiative and work with City, Metro Transit, MECA, the BIDs and others on the creation of a coordinated, integrated, total mobility system for the urban core.

Affordable Housing Program

The UCC has identified the need for affordable housing, (sometimes referred to as "workforce housing" or "housing within reach"), as one of its initial tasks. It is the goal of the UCC to help increase the total affordability of the urban core by helping to provide a combination of affordable rents, low utility bills, inexpensive transportation and improved access to services.

Economic Development Outreach

As identified as a goal in the Chamber's Prosper Omaha 2.0 plan, it will be important to hire a business recruiter on the Chamber's economic development staff who specializes in identifying and marketing to a group of potential companies who have indicated either by historic practice or recent statements that they prefer downtown locations for expansion of their businesses in markets. This would be an effort to attract existing Nebraska businesses to the Urban Core as well as recruiting firms from out of state to the center of the city.

Urban Core Marketing Initiative

In order to establish the bona fides of the urban core as a unique and exciting location for business and residents, a marketing campaign and materials must be developed. It is likely that an outside agency will be hired to develop materials and a campaign under the supervision of the chamber senior marketing and communication leader. It is expected that the marketing theme and materials will be consistent with the existing We Don't Coast brand and marketing guidelines.

NO/SO Project Management

One of the key components of success in the urban core is establishing a clear linkage with both North and South Omaha. The ConnectGO strategy and the UCC master plan recognize the importance of north and south transit options intersecting in the Urban Core. In addition, an effort to address site, transportation, housing, infrastructure and funding issues required to create an environment where development can happen in these communities will require chamber engagement, resources and support. Further the UCC structure can serve as a model for additional specific project execution in North and South Omaha.

Budget and Staff Support

The Chamber will identify from a variety of existing and new sources, the revenue necessary to support the work of the Urban Core Committee. To implement the work of the Urban Core Committee, the chamber will utilize a significant portion of its existing infrastructure including advocacy, marketing, economic development, recruiting, community development and leadership. From a staffing perspective it is anticipated that there will be three full time staff and several shared staff needed to engage in this work.

Full time staff will include:

- an economic development recruiter targeted at companies that desire dense urban or downtown locations
- a community development project manager to focus efforts on successfully completing projects in North and South Omaha
- an urban core and transportation specialist to work within the existing partners to ensure success of the UCC strategy

These staff will be supported by two existing executive support staff, the chamber's marketing team, the chamber's economic development team, the chamber's public policy team and the President's office.

Committee Structure

The Chamber's Urban Core Committee was first constituted in February of 2018 to begin the process of assessing the needs of the urban core and to develop strategies necessary to make the core a dynamic competitive place for growth. The original committee membership was made up of the largest land owners and employers in the urban core. Eventually, the committee membership was enlarged to include firms that had expertise necessary to guide the Master Plan. In addition, the members of the committee provided funding and guidance and staff expertise for all of the work of the consultants while the chamber provided staff and other support to the process.

As with all Chamber committees, members are appointed to ensure future success. The existing UCC has been resoundingly successful in guiding and funding the process forward which culminated in the creation of this master plan. It is anticipated that the urban core committee will now be restructured to reflect the shift from planning to implementation. The UCC will continue to respond to the needs of the employers in the urban core, provide insight and leadership needed to accomplish the Master Plan and will reflect the diversity of our business community. Representatives of urban core employers, the City of Omaha, housing experts, builders, utilities, developers and education leaders will be asked to join the UCC to work with the staff and community partners to accomplish UCC goals. In addition, former UCC members from the business community will be asked to provide advice and counsel on UCC initiatives. And finally, the existing working committee made up of city, chamber, utility and developer staff will continue to undertake the detailed effort of making these plans come to life.

Total Mobility System / Modern Streetcar

The Urban Core Committee will partner with the Chamber's ConnectGO initiative and work with the Cities, Metro Transit, MECA, the BIDs and others on the creation of a coordinated, integrated, total mobility system for the urban core. The primary focus of the effort will be on enhancing the movement of people and not just cars in, out and around the core.

The UCC will support the MetroNEXT effort to enhance bus and BRT public transit service serving the urban core. It will work with Omaha's Parking and Mobility Division on its efforts to create a coordinated and a shared "park once district" parking system. A system that maximizes the use of existing, underutilized and vacant parking, ensures the efficient development of new parking, and encourages the use of alternative transportation modes such as bikes, scooters, and autonomous vehicles. Additionally, expansion of the Heartland B-Cycle bike share system will help offer critical first-mile/ last-mile connections to extend the reach of public transit.

Heartland Bike Share eBikes

In addition to these activities, the UCC will support the City of Omaha, Metro Transit, and the newly created Omaha Streetcar Authority on the implementation of the long-discussed initial east/west "spine" of a modern streetcar system serving the heart of the urban core. Just as people do not pay to ride an elevator to move between floors of a building, the streetcar would essentially serve as a free horizontal elevator that would connect 13 major urban core districts and destinations and 9 major corporate buildings and development sites.

Downtown workers, residents and visitors will utilize the streetcar to travel between destinations without the need to constantly get in their car, drive between destinations and search for parking. When connected to Metro's ORBT and bus lines and the City's parking and alternative transportation system, the streetcar will provide the missing piece in a seamless "total mobility system". A system that will make better use of existing, underutilized and vacant parking, minimize the amount of new parking needed, open more land for development and encourage more high-density development within the urban core.

As has been discussed earlier in this plan, the urban core is growing and momentum is building. However, as the work on this plan has confirmed the findings of earlier studies, it is physically impossible to reach the Committee's goal of 30/30/20 without increasing the density of development in the core. More 3, 4, and 5-story buildings, together with more parking built at typical ratios, does not physically provide enough office space and residential units to accommodate the core's projected and desired demand, let alone the high-quality urban form necessary to attract discriminating employees and residents.

The modern streetcar is the catalyst needed to increase property values and in turn the level of investment required to reach the density necessary to accommodate the projected growth. As has been proven in city after city, it is the permanency of the modern streetcar's rails that provides the certainty needed for developers and lenders to invest in taller buildings with reduced parking ratios. It is for this reason that the Chamber's Urban Core Committee has become convinced that the time is right to develop the first leg of what could eventually be a modern light rail system for the Omaha area.

Example of Streetcar in Portland, OR

Affordable Housing Program

As the desire for urban living has accelerated in recent years, more and more older, less expensive existing housing within the core has been torn down and replaced with newer, more expensive units. These new projects have resulted in more housing units, increased investment and higher property values that ultimately benefit the City, County, OPS and other taxing entities through increased tax revenue. The new residential projects have also added tremendous excitement and activity to the core and have turned around declining neighborhoods while also enhancing safety.

However, this positive momentum has also resulted in a general loss of affordable housing that previously existed in the neighborhoods. This loss of affordable housing has been identified as major concern by many, including those who were interviewed as a part of this planning effort. Adding to this concern is the likelihood that the increased value needed to encourage higher densities will further incentivize the demolition of older housing and construction of new higher density housing.

A variety of public and private entities have begun to work on solutions to this problem. The Urban Core Committee has identified the need for affordable housing, sometimes referred to as "workforce housing" or "housing within reach", as one of the key initiatives of this strategic planning effort and one of the next tasks to carry toward implementation.

Housing within Reach at 75 North

To this end, the Urban Core Committee's Working Group has initiated contact with public and private, non-profit housing advocates to discuss how the UCC could help in the development of affordable housing within the core. Initial efforts have centered around capturing a portion of the increased tax revenue that would come from new, higher density development and using it to match philanthropic funding for affordable units. The intent is to provide a pool of funds that could be used to ensure that a significant portion of the new units being built would be available at a lower rent for eligible residents. The goal would be to not only replace any affordable units that are being lost, but to actually increase the number of units available in the core with as much as 10% of all new units being considered "affordable workforce housing."

In addition to lower rents, the UCC will work with housing advocates to consider not just rental rates but other factors, like transportation and utilities, that impact "total" affordability. Newer units will be built to higher energy efficiency standards, which should help reduce utility costs and increase affordability. Another consideration is the accessibility of basic services for those living in the core. It is critical that lower income residents have access to day care, medical care, medicine and groceries. The increase in population and incomes in the core will help encourage service providers to locate and expand in the area, which would help increase accessibility when compared to previous conditions in the neighborhood. Similarly, free transportation in the form of the modern streetcar could help provide inexpensive access to these services, provided they are located along the route or via re-calibrated intersecting bus routes. Ultimately, it is the goal of the UCC to help increase the total affordability of the urban core by helping to provide a combination of affordable rents, low utility bills, inexpensive transportation and improved access to services.

Implementation

As discussed at length above, in order to reach the Strategic Plan's goal of 30/30/20, it will be necessary to increase the overall density of development in the urban core. The City of Omaha's Transit-Oriented Development overlay district is a significant step in that direction. However, it will take more than allowing higher densities to accomplish the goal.

The sub-area framework plans developed by HDR during the three-day workshop provide a more detailed look at the type of development needed to physically achieve the 30/30/20 goal while also meeting the stakeholder's "Guiding Principles". But it will also take more than drawings and images to ensure that the goal can be met.

The development of a modern streetcar system is also critical to increasing densities and making it possible for people to move around without a car and programs are needed to provide "housing within reach". But these critical projects and programs require significant funding.

It is this final action step that sets this Strategic Plan apart from previous planning efforts. One of the primary charges of the Urban Core Committee was that the Strategic Plan must identify the key actions needed to accomplish the plan and to ensure that they are carried forward by the Chamber and its partners.

Toward that end, the UCC has begun taking the steps needed to progress toward implementation of the streetcar project, the broader total mobility system and an affordable housing program, while also striving to ensure that the necessary densities outlined in the sub-area framework plans are achieved. Those steps include the following:

- An updated cost estimate for the modern streetcar
- A financing plan for the construction, operation and maintenance of the streetcar and total mobility system
- Analysis of financing options and revenue projections
- Creation of a TIF District to provide funding for the streetcar, total mobility system and affordable housing
- Guidelines for TIF funding within the streetcar corridor to ensure adequate density and revenue
- Creation of a minimum investment plan for blocks within the streetcar corridor
- Task list and timeline for implementation

06 Conclusion

CONCLUSION

It has been roughly three years since the inception of the Chamber's Urban Core Committee. A seemingly long time for the development of a Strategic Plan that merely builds on a decade of previous plans. But unlike previous plans, the Committee decided that rather than just produce another plan, they wanted to actually make something happen.

The Committee wanted to identify the key initiatives that they felt they could undertake to move the urban core to the next level. To give Omaha a chance to compete toe to toe with other cities in the region and those to which the city aspires to become. A plan that would help the city attract and retain a talented workforce. A plan that would encourage the community's youth to stay and build a future. A plan that would allow the urban core to become more than just a collection of separate venues and districts and instead reach its full potential.

The Committee has taken the time to do more than just make proposals. It has already begun to act. The work has just started. It is now up the Greater Omaha Chamber, the Cities of Omaha and Council Bluffs, and their partners to carry it forward.

The Urban Core's Future

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Additional Interviewees

Arun Agarwal	White Lotus
Mickey Anderson	Baxter Auto
Rebecca Atkins	Chamber YP Council
Holly Barrett	Downtown Omaha Improvement District
Mogens Bay	Downtown Riverfront Trust
Alexis Bromley	ONE Omaha
Senator John Cavanaugh	Nebraska Legislature
Lauren Cencic	Metro Transit
Darius Christensen	Chamber YP Council
Kelsey Christensen	Chamber YP Council
Meredith Dillon	Front Porch Investments
Ryan Ellis	PJ Morgan Real Estate
Doug Ewald	UNMC
Cydney Franklin	75 North
César Garcia	Canopy South
Brandon Garrett	City of Council Bluffs
Former Councilmember Ben Gray	City of Omaha
Kelsey Haswell	Nebraska Methodist Health System
Todd Heistand	NuStyle Development
Father Daniel Hendrickson	Creighton University
Senator Megan Hunt	Nebraska Legislature
Rachel Jacobson	Heritage Services
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