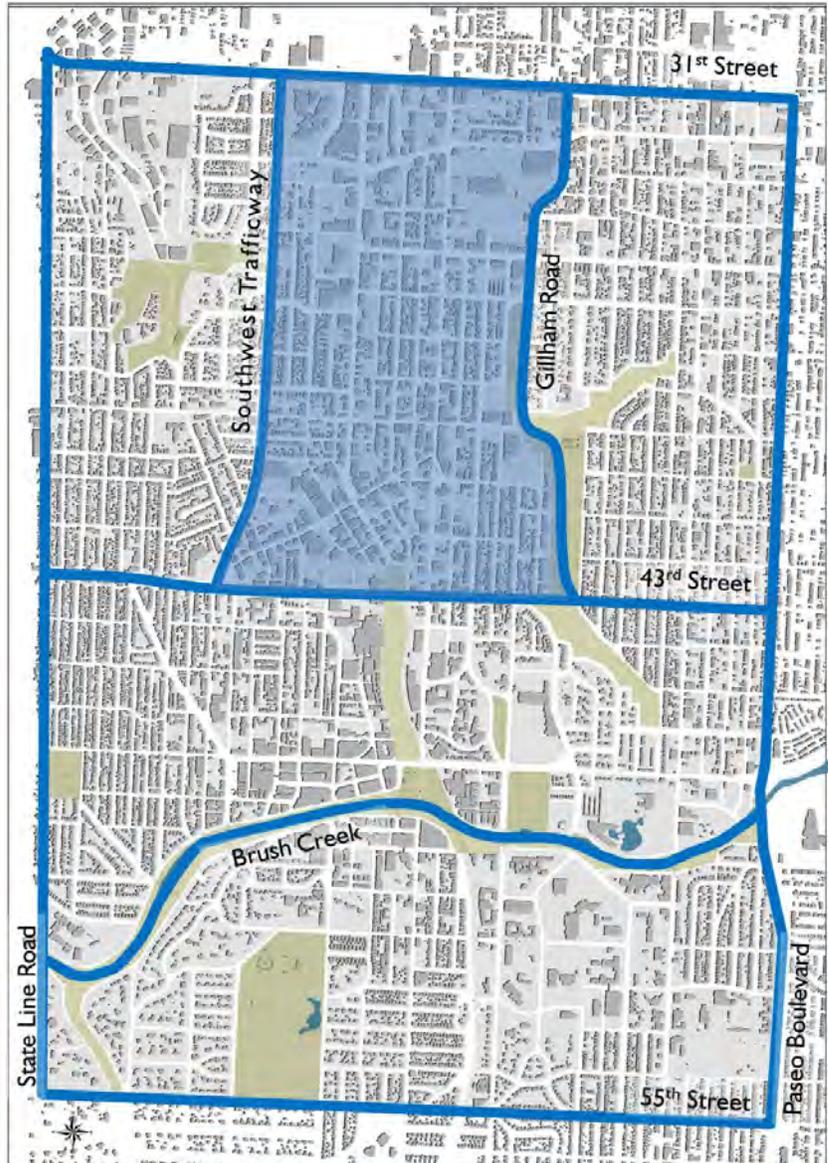




# Midtown / Plaza Plan

Information Booklet for the North Central Sub-Area

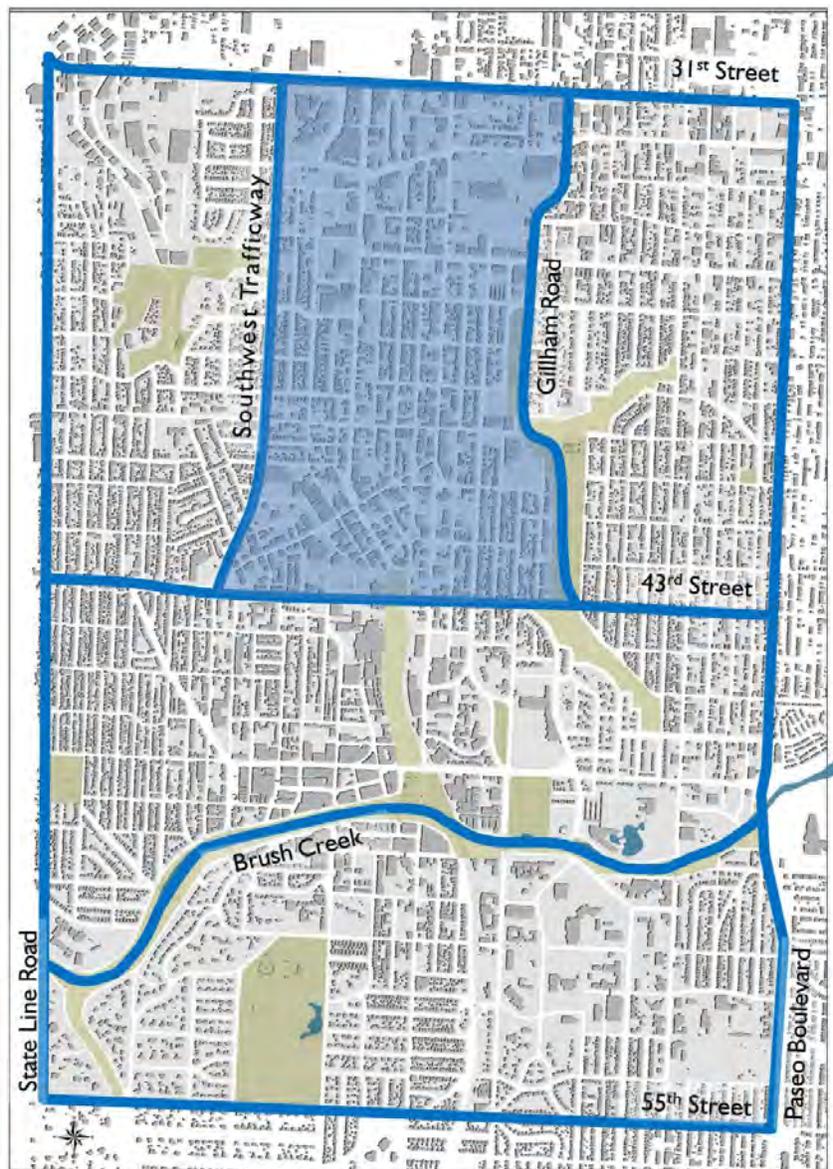
29 April 2013



(Back of Cover.)



Your continued participation in the planning process is important to the future of the Midtown / Plaza area. This upcoming meeting represents further advancement of the planning process towards creating a plan document. The feedback received at the initial work team meeting, the planning analysis and policies of the existing plans will provide a foundation of information to discuss specific issues, challenges, assets and ideas for the planning area at the upcoming meeting. The meetings are focused on specific sub-area of Midtown/Plaza to allow a more in-depth discussion. The information gathered at this meeting will contribute to the draft plan to be prepared over the next few months. Public review and comment of the draft plan will lead to adoption by the City as a new plan of record for the Midtown/Plaza Area. Please stay involved in the process and continue to bring your thoughts and ideas to the process to shape the new Midtown/Plaza Plan.



### **NORTH CENTRAL AREA**

31st Street to 43rd Street, Southwest Trafficway to Gillham Road



# I{INTRODUCTION}

## A. Intent

The second meeting of the Midtown/Plaza Area Plan Work Teams will focus on specifics and details needed to implement the vision and goals identified by participants in the process to date. This meeting is broken into smaller geographic areas to encourage more detailed analysis and discussion. To support this meeting, summaries of the data and analysis to date, and overview of current plans and policies are provided in this document. Discussion on this information should focus on what improvements, updates or changes to current plans and policies are needed, what should stay the same, and what new ideas we need to include to better implement the vision and goals.

**We look forward to your continued participation on the 29th of April at St. Paul's Episcopal Church (11 E. 40th Street), from 5:30 to 7:00 PM**

## B. Research Methodology

The information contained in this document focuses on the public input, the analysis completed to date and the current plan policies. The public input has come from the first two public meetings, the first two steering committee meetings, the technical committee meeting, the business and resident surveys and the [www.plankcmo.com](http://www.plankcmo.com) website. The analysis overview comes from the data and analysis prepared by the city and consultant team. A detailed review of all 15 current plan documents impacting the study areas is the basis for the policy topics. For this particular area within Midtown / Plaza 4 current plans are applicable, which include:

- Westport Area Plan (1972)
- Main Street Corridor Land Use & Development Plan (2003)
- Main Street Streetscape Plan (2008)
- Cultural Heritage District Plan (2011)

The information provided in this workbook is intended to provide you with base information, help you collect your thoughts and ideas, and shape our discussion for the upcoming meeting.

## C. Discussion Topics

Thus far in the planning process, the topics of **transportation, urban design and land use** have garnered the most discussion. Each of these topics is interrelated and also relates to other important topics such as infrastructure, economic development, and housing. Therefore, this meeting is organized under these primary themes from previous public input.

## D. Draft Vision and Goals

After gathering initial input from meetings, surveys, and our online town hall meeting ([www.plankcmo.com](http://www.plankcmo.com)), the Vision Statement and Goals have been drafted. The vision and goals were discussed at the last Work Team meeting. The upcoming meeting will discuss the application of the vision and goals geographically.



## VISION STATEMENT

The Midtown/Plaza Area is a vibrant urban community where neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions reinforce one another. The character and identity of the area creates a special sense of community that attracts lifelong residents. As the area evolves, respect is given to its historic development pattern and the safe, connected, diverse, and sustainable environment is enhanced.



### GOALS

1. Provide integrated modes of transportation (transit, bicycles, pedestrians, automobiles, etc.) to get people from one place to another within and throughout the plan area.
2. Encourage strong neighborhood identities, personalities, and character while increasing quality housing choices for all stages of life and income levels.
3. Strengthen an urban development pattern with appropriate density, physical layout, and infrastructure, that integrates the diversity of uses found throughout the plan area.
4. Support and invest in the existing commercial nodes, while fostering an environment that attracts and retains quality businesses.
5. Preserve, enhance, and invest in the area's regional destinations.

## II {TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS}

All modes of (transportation, pedestrian, bicycle, transit and automobile), have been a primary topic of conversation in the planning process. The information and feedback received illustrates that current transportation systems have both a positive and negative influence on the area, that a balanced transportation system is valued, and that the ability of people to use the area is important. The information provided below is a summary of the public input, the analysis, and current plan policies. Initial discussion topics are suggested at the end of this section.

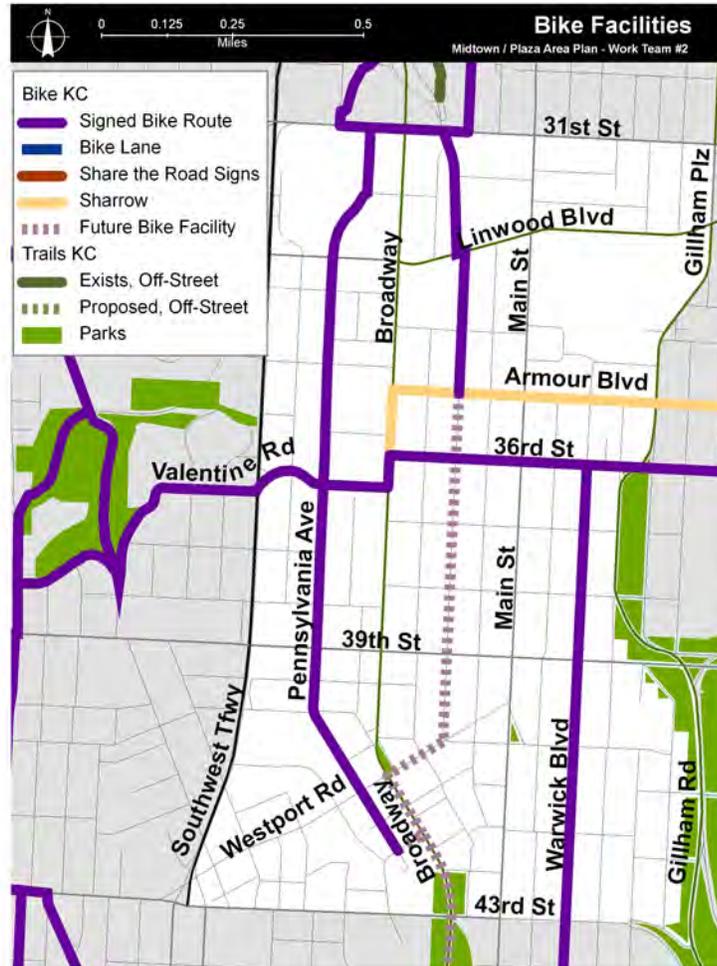
### A. What We have Heard

Below is a summary of the input/feedback we have received to date:

- Multi-modal transportation options and convenience attract people to the area, this includes pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile.
- The proximity and accessibility of places within Midtown / Plaza and connections out to the metropolitan area make getting around easy.
- The existing connectivity east/west across Midtown/ Plaza is poor, interrupted by too many barriers and lack of east/west through streets.



- There is a need and desire to improve ease of use for pedestrians, bicycles and transit so those systems function at a level similar to the system already place for the automobile.
- Deteriorating infrastructure, curbs, gutters, sidewalks and streets, deter from the quality, connectivity, affordability, and image of the area.

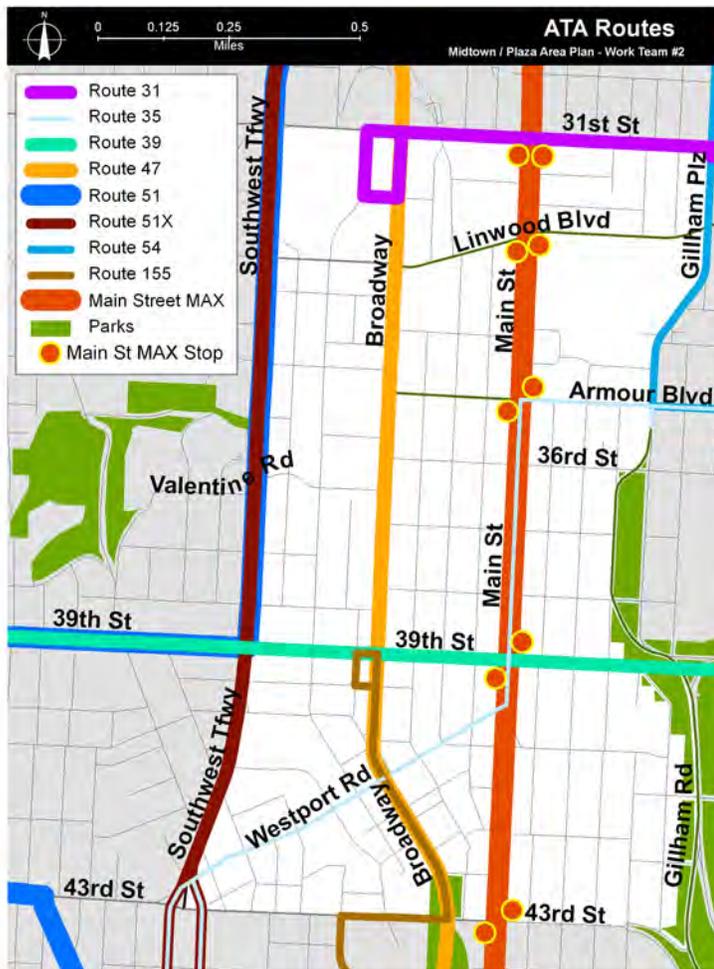


## B. Transportation Analysis

There was an analysis of the transportation systems conducted within the area that includes analysis of the area’s traffic, parking, transit and pedestrian and bicycle networks. A brief overview of the findings for this area is included in this section.

- The major travel corridors define the edges of the neighborhoods within Midtown/Plaza.
- Direct east/west connections across the study area are lacking. Opportunities exist to improve this condition at 31st Street, Linwood Boulevard, 39th Street and 43rd Street that all cross the area.
- This sub-area has four primary transit routes that carry over 1,500 passengers a day. Broadway Boulevard (1,500 passengers), Main Street MAX (over 4,750 passengers), 31st Street (over 2,500 passengers) and 39th Street (over 3,200 passengers).
- 43rd Street between Madison Avenue and J.C. Nichols Parkway is the only section in the North Central sub-area that rates a congested.





### C. Current Policies

All transportation policies from the 4 plans impacting this area were logged. Each policy was then summarized and organized into themes. The following reflects general transportation themes for all current plans within this area. The numbers in the parenthesis represent the plans that support the theme, based on the key below.

- Provide housing within walking distance of retail and office to reduce driving demand and avoid capacity increases on roads (1, 2)
- Maintain neighborhood-scale, pedestrian oriented streets – narrow, on-street parking, etc. (1, 2)
- Discourage through traffic in neighborhoods; reduce speed in and adjacent to neighborhoods (2, 4)
- Improve pedestrian crossings/safety at activity nodes (2, 3)
- Parking strategies are needed – particularly to protect neighborhoods from large-scale / regional uses (2)
- Promote a multi-modal system/networks; improve transit access (2, 3)
- Improve safety and appearance of corridors (2, 3)
- Improve pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods, transit stops and destinations (2, 3)



## Current Policies Key

1. Westport Area Plan (1972)
2. Main Street Corridor Land Use & Development Plan (2003)
3. Main Street Streetscape Plan (2008)
4. Cultural Heritage District Plan (2011)



### D. Discussion Points



1. What policies do we need to delete, edit and/or add?
2. What improvements are needed to improve pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, and transit use and connections? Where are these improvements needed? Specifically, how and where do we improve east/west accessibility?



## III { URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS }

Much of the conversation during this process has focused on the design and scale of spaces and structures in Midtown/Plaza. The variety of different places within Midtown/Plaza, and the individual design of those places, centers, corridors and neighborhoods contribute to the diversity, image and history of the area. It is clear that the urban design elements with the Midtown/Plaza area are and will continue to be a defining element of this community. The information provided below is a summary of the public input, the analysis, and current plan policies. Initial discussion topics are suggested at the end.

### A. What We have Heard

Below is a summary of the input/feedback we have received to date:

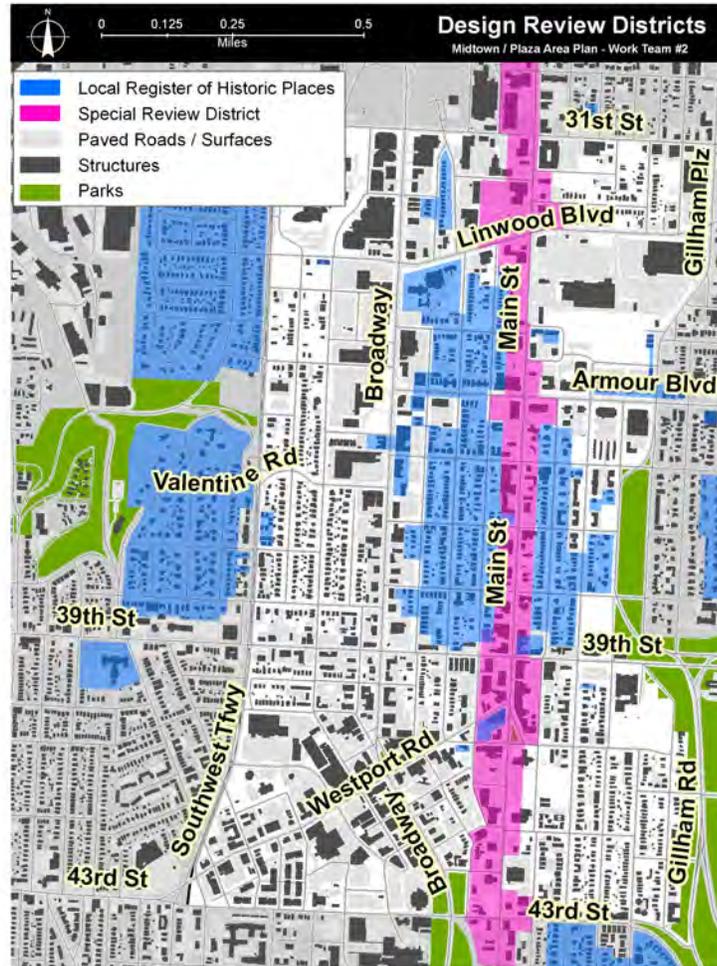
- Diversity of places and experiences, large and small, help to define the Midtown/Plaza area and its distinctive sense of place.
- Design of public spaces, streetscapes, landscapes, parks and gathering spaces contribute to the quality and identity of Midtown/Plaza.
- The preservation of the architecturally and historically significant is important to the future of the area.
- Design guidelines are important and should reinforce an urban development pattern, address factors such as quality, character, scale of development, and the transitions between different uses.

### B. Urban Design Analysis

An analysis of the urban design elements, including gateways and landmarks, connections, parks and boulevards, patterns, streetscape and landscape, building orientation, parking and architectural character, within Midtown/Plaza was conducted. A brief overview of the findings for this area is included in this section.

- The Midtown/Plaza area benefits from several different urban design features that help define the character of the area. Neighborhood gateways, parks and boulevards, and streetscape improvements contribute to the area.
- Many of the distinct places in Midtown/Plaza have unique urban design features. Transitions occur between different uses and in different development settings in many different ways.
- Within the current plan documents, depending on their scope and age, there is uneven attention paid to urban design within the public realm, in particular, improvements within the public right-of-way that can strengthen the unique places and the physical and perceived connections throughout the area.
- The current plan documents address urban design features in a variety of ways and lack a consistent approach and terminology to define the intent and elements that are important to Midtown/Plaza.
- In addition to plans that contain urban design guidelines in the area, the north central area has the Main Street Special Review District and locally designated historic districts which are zoning overlay districts that address residential and commercial design.





### C. Current Policies

All urban design policies from the 4 plans impacting this area were logged. Each policy was then summarized and organized into themes. The following reflects general urban design themes for all current plans. The numbers in the parenthesis represent the plans that support the theme, based on the key below.

#### TRANSITIONS

- Emphasize transitions and distinct places with gateways (2, 3)
- Treat sensitive transitions (commercial nodes: neighborhoods) with care and design strategies (2, 4)
- Use low-scale compact building formats to manage effective transitions among different uses (2, 4)

#### CHARACTER

- Improve safety and appearance of corridors; Incorporate public art (2, 3)
- Transform utility elements into visual assets (3)
- Protect the historic character and aesthetics (buildings and public realm) (2, 3, 4)

#### CONNECTIVITY

- Improve pedestrian crossings / safety at activity nodes (2)



- Promote multi-modal system / networks; Improve transit access (2)
- Designate pedestrian and amenity area as a critical part of the right-of-way/public realm (3)

#### **PATTERN**

- Buildings should reinforce the public realm – build to the street; create permeable facades; limit/hide the parking (2, 3)

#### **Current Policies Key**

1. **Westport Area Plan (1972)**
2. **Main Street Corridor Land Use & Development Plan (2003)**
3. **Main Street Streetscape Plan (2008)**
4. **Cultural Heritage District Plan (2011)**

#### **D. Discussion Points**



1. What policies do we need to delete, edit and/or add?
2. Where are design guidelines appropriate/wanted (what geographic areas)? Where are zoning overlays or other tools appropriate/wanted?
3. Design guidelines typically address building orientation, massing and proportion, materials, signage, screening, and transitions. Are these appropriate to include? What other elements are important to include in design guidelines?

## **IV {LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS}**

The different land uses and urban development pattern in Midtown/Plaza contribute the unique physical context of the area. The information provided below is a summary of the public input, the analysis, and current plan policies. Initial discussion topics are suggested at the end.

#### **A. What We Have Heard**

Below is a summary of the input/feedback we have received to date:

- The diversity of places, activities and neighborhoods defines the community of people that is Midtown/Plaza.
- The location of future density in the Midtown / Plaza Area, particularly the height, scale and transitions of development is a concern, but most appropriate along major corridors and areas adjacent to transit stops (not within existing single family neighborhoods).
- Holes in the urban form, parking lots and vacant lots, represent an opportunity to fill in the urban development pattern. However, “suburban development” with large surface parking areas erode the character of this urban area and are not appropriate.
- A variety of housing type, style and affordability contributes to the livability of the area and will allow residents to age in place.

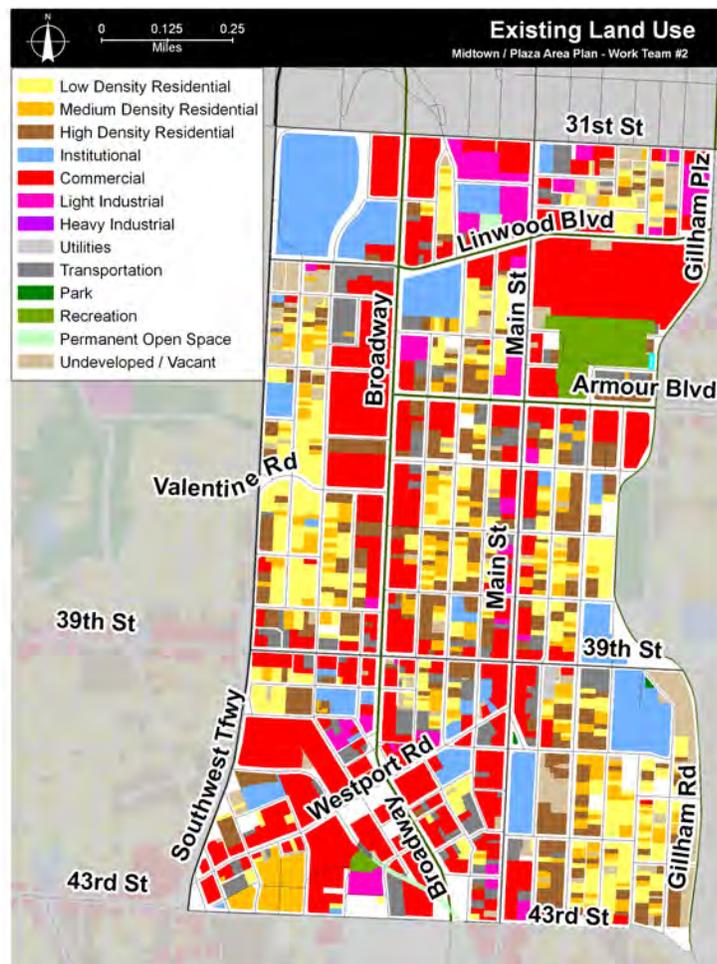


- Midtown / Plaza is a good place to do businesses and small, local businesses are important to the economic success in the area.
- Adequate infrastructure and infrastructure maintenance is necessary to support redevelopment in Midtown/Plaza.

## B. Land Use Analysis

An analysis of the land use conditions within Midtown / Plaza was conducted. A brief overview of the findings for this area is included in this section.

- The parks and boulevards system embraces the topography of the area, provides public space for residents and is a defining feature of the land use patterns in Midtown / Plaza.
- Commercial corridors and centers, Main Street, Broadway, Linwood Boulevard and Westport, dominate land use in this area and provide goods and services to Midtown. Thirty-three percent of the land area within this sub-area is commercial.
- Fourteen percent of the land area in this sub-area is low density residential, eight percent is medium density, and another fourteen percent is high density residential.
- Current land use plans do not address the scale and pattern of development within Midtown / Plaza.



### C. Real Estate Market Analysis

An market analysis was completed for the housing and commercial markets for the entire Midtown/Plaza study area. A brief summary of the findings is included in this section.

#### HOUSING

- A decrease in population, housing units and lower median income has led to an increase in vacancies in the housing market. Development projects throughout the area have recently reversed this trend.
- There is a lack of quality, affordable housing in the Midtown / Plaza area. Lack of State funding continues to hinder the replacement of affordable housing stock.
- Significant amounts of residential rehabilitation are taking place in this area, primarily along Armour Boulevard.
- Other factors negatively affecting the housing market include: individuals perception of crime, vacant properties and lack of school accreditation.
- Multifamily demand exists in the Midtown/Plaza area to primarily serve young professionals and students and retirees.

#### COMMERCIAL MARKET (OFFICE AND RETAIL)

- More than 43,000 people come into the Midtown/Plaza area each day for work, while a little more the 13,000 (of a total population for the area of approximately 40,000) leave the area for work, approximately 3,000 residents stay in the area for work.
- Office vacancy rates remain above 12% for the area, up from 10% in 2007, compared to citywide vacancies of 17%. Retail vacancy rates are approximately 8%, down from near 10% in 2009, compared to citywide vacancies of 11%.
- Conservative lending practices, uncertainty of City and State incentive programs and changing development priorities, location and type, are challenges for economic development in Midtown/Plaza.
- The Midtown/Plaza area market benefits from its walkable, connected, abundant park and open space, culturally and historically rich, unique urban environment that is attractive to redevelopment.
- Forty-two percent of businesses in the Midtown / Plaza study area have been in the area more than 21 years, 54% have less that 25 employees and 27% rate Midtown / Plaza as an excellent place to do business.

### D. Current Policies

All land use and development policies from the 4 plans impacting this area were logged. Each policy was then summarized and organized into themes. The following reflects general land use and development themes for all current plans. The numbers in the parenthesis represent the plans that support the theme, based on the key below.

#### NEIGHBORHOODS

- Rehab / strengthen existing single family homes (4)
- Discourage commercial encroachment into neighborhoods (2)
- Integrate different housing types by following historic development patterns (2)



## **CENTERS & CORRIDORS**

- Eliminate strip development patterns in favor of commercial development nodes (1, 2)
- Promote mixed use nodes at major intersections (1, 2)
- Mixed use nodes should be pedestrian oriented (use, scale, design) and support transit (1, 2)
- Integrate more compact, walkable, and high-activity land use in association with transit improvements (1, 2)
- Discourage commercial encroachment into neighborhoods (1, 2)
- Buildings should reinforce the public realm – build to the street; create permeable facades; limit/hide the parking (2)
- Require commercial areas to be small scale and pedestrian-oriented; use landscape, screening and buffers to transition high impact or car-oriented site design (1, 2)

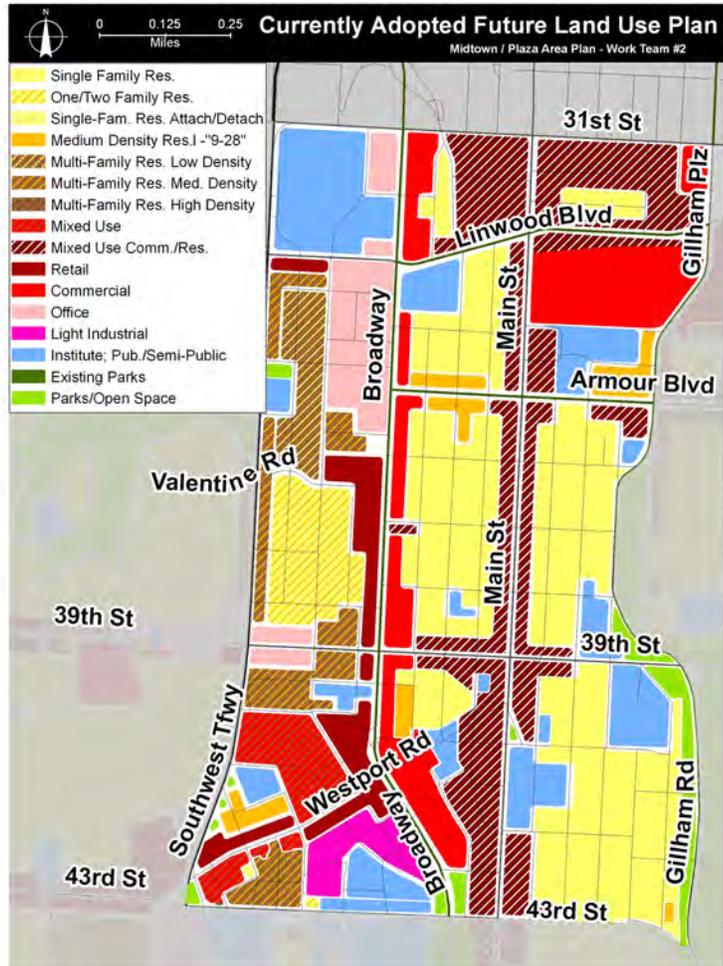
## **TRANSITIONS**

- Use low-scale compact building formats to manage effective transitions among different uses (1, 2)
- Support existing institutions; growth and development through master plans and open communication (4)

### **Current Policies Key**

1. **Westport Area Plan (1972)**
2. **Main Street Corridor Land Use & Development Plan (2003)**
3. **Main Street Streetscape Plan (2008)**
4. **Cultural Heritage District Plan (2011)**





### E. Discussion Points



1. What policies do we need to delete, edit and/or add?
2. Where is a greater intensity of development appropriate?
3. Where are redevelopment opportunities in this area?
4. Where are the challenging areas within this sub-area? Why are they a challenge?



