

Midtown Plaza Area Plan – North Central Sub Area Chart Notes

Monday April 29, 2013, St. Paul's Church – 11 E. 40th Street

After a brief presentation on project status, and the Vision, Guiding Principles, and public input summary and analysis, the attendees discussed issues and application of the Guiding Principles to the specific geographic area: 31st to 43rd, Southwest Trafficway to Gillham. The discussion is generally grouped into 3 topics – Land Use and Urban Design and Transportation.

Land Use & Urban Design

What are the biggest development issues in North Central Area? Where do they occur?

- Encroachment of businesses into neighborhoods.
- Scale / transitions between uses
- Node pattern needs to protect neighborhoods from encroachment issues
- Stop parking lots right across street from homes
- Can neighborhoods do more urban design guidance voluntarily?
- Scale / density / historic design is important
- Design guidelines / mismatch with land use and zoning – plan needs to address where these pressures are in the plan area.
- “Mixed Use” everywhere is NOT OK.
- 33rd – 34th / Pennsylvania – need to make sure neighborhoods are not overlooked
- Start at issues where you have pressure between neighborhoods and institutions
- Block scale land use discussion w/ Valentine & KC Life
- Westport High School – guidance for institutional land uses when it is no longer a school within a neighborhood)
 - The zoning ordinance needs to be strengthened to limit impacts of institutions on neighborhoods - even if it is a school.
 - The two concepts presented are valid for that building.
 - The area around the school needs athletic fields – could preserving athletic fields change the program of future urban schools? (i.e. similar to suburban centralized athletic complexes that changed suburban model, but scaled for city / urban patterns / neighborhood scale schools)
- Parks / more neighborhood scale uses needed in Westport (not light industrial)
- Can zoning be used to stop historic demolition?
- Each neighborhood needs education and review input into future land use map
 - Not just a “land use” issue – need to understand the relationship between the Future Land Use Map (long-term/ guide / general) to Zoning (immediate / law/specific) – there should not be a 1 to 1 match
- Need community resources to educate renters about the area and opportunities
- Deteriorated rental properties a problem for the image of the area as well as the housing stock

- New residential construction is not affordable for much of the renters and owners in the area
- City Place apartments cuts off Plaza /Westport neighborhood from Westport
- Spaces for youth are needed in Midtown
 - Places for kids to play and for teens to gather
 - Redesign of existing and the creation of new parks should cater to attracting families to the area
- Grocery store (Sun Fresh) in Midtown is good but not designed well
- J & G Market an asset
- Mixed-use development (retail / residential) is good for Midtown
- Neighborhood markets provide easy access for neighborhoods, need bodegas to serve neighborhoods
- Shop local strategies to support business are necessary
- Neighborhood and cultural gatherings should be promoted further
- KU Med and St. Luke's are two major institutions that contribute to the area
- Age in place policies are needed to address the aging population and to keep people in Midtown
- What should be done with institutions that close?
 - Quality market rate housing would be a good reuse
 - Reuse needs to be community oriented use or activity to replace what is lost
 - When it is no longer a hub it becomes a barrier
- Low rent rates don't keep rental housing stock maintained
- Investigate the possibility of a land lord registry
- What should be done with older homes?
 - Senior co-housing could be a viable option
- Need medium density housing, not high density
 - Scale and character of transitions between Single Family and Multifamily are important
- Jobs in area don't provide income sufficient to support housing stock
- Taxes paid and services provided don't balance
- Plan needs to indicate what design character is important and where
- Street level design features are necessary to improve connectivity
- Never allow development to vacate right-of-way
- Scale and mass of development needs to be coordinated with transit improvements
 - Development staff reports should indicate proximity to transit and destinations
- Mixed-use should incorporate Section 8 and market rate residential, an integrated housing policy
- Previous Plans said focus on nodes but implementation has not occurred that way
- Concern for housing and providing services for the retiring and aging population
- Little pocket park improvements would benefit the population of the area

What design issues are there in the area? What impact can design have?

- Scale / urban design as important or more important than use
- These meetings need to have something to react to – what are the recommendations / options first – not just more “issues” talk
- Design is currently only token gestures to character of neighborhood (fake balconies, etc.)
- Need to fix what is allowed by zoning vs. what is allowed in an “urban renewal district” (URD).
 - Do we have a policy for involving neighborhood association in the review process?
 - What design and development parameters should they review projects under?
 - What is everyone responding to / what are people’s expectations/criteria in this process?
- Need to be careful that generic or poor design guidelines don’t lock people into things that don’t respond to the neighborhood or site context
- Need to differentiate between development types vs. design guidelines
 - “Types” may allow single family and multi-family coexist better (there is a precedence for this working within the area)
- Replacement of homes by more of a “form-based” approach (not necessarily getting to materials, but basic guidelines on how different types make a contribution to the neighborhood)
- Public perception of the boulevards is that they are expressways
- Redevelopment and infill design should focus on people not cars
- Make area a destination, not a cut through
- Form follows function for redevelopment in the study area
- Jobs that build up existing communities should be pursued for this area
- Medical presence could be used as a development theme – medical center of city and region
- Westport Middle and Westport High reuse should complement the area and the community
 - Lifelong learning could be a theme for the area.
- How should parking be addressed to serve the different areas within the study area?
- Align zoning and regulations with goals and values of the plan
- Peak hour parking is an issue in commercial nodes and corridors
- Green spaces in Westport are necessary and support development and living in the area

Transportation

What transportation concerns do you have? Where do problems occur?

- East / west connections and Left Turns
- 39th and Southwest Trafficway – narrow lanes, turning movements
- 39th and Main – narrow lanes, no left turns, high speeds
- Valentine and Southwest Trafficway improved vehicle flow... good for cars and bad for pedestrians

- Connections from Westport south of Mill Street could be looked at to connect Plaza (relief from Southwest Trafficway to the plaza or Broadway / Nichols to plaza as the only connections
- 1 block north of Valentine / connect to Roanoke Park
- Look to what other groups have already said – particularly on Southwest Trafficway and Westport Road – why was there a lack of consensus? We seem to repeatedly face the same issues with no action and we start at the beginning again.
- Need to have neighborhood discussions on nodes, what they are and where they should be.
- Do not tear up Main Street capital improvements – take transit down a street that needs development
- Main Street is the “transit corridor” – group agreed.
 - Concerned if that means “transit development” and density or the transit system BRT or streetcar.
- What about the frequency / location of transit stops – should it have a pattern similar to downtown?
- Need to be sure to honor all the previous plans / lots of time and compromises went into it – other area plans the City has recently done do not have the detail sufficient to replace those plans
- Want an analysis of what creates the conflicts / problems from past plans
- What about streetcar on Broadway? – it is wider and has commerce/employment
- Streetcar planning is going too fast – city needs to know things work before moving forward with next phases
- Perception that streetcar is about development more than moving people

What transportation policies need to be added, changed or removed?

- Transportation decisions need to be made based on safety, not number of vehicles
 - Need to focus less on automobiles and more holistically, include bike, pedestrians and transit
 - 37th and Main is The Whole Person can be a resource for disabled accessibility throughout the area
 - Westport Road, Main Street to Broadway – speed is an issue
 - Armour and Wyandotte intersection is unsafe because of the on-street parking limiting views
 - Westport Area @ SW Trafficway
 - Prioritize improvement to the intersection (see UMKC Student Charrette)
 - Limited left opportunities along Southwest Trafficway are an issue
- SW Trafficway signals are not in sync and are an issue for traffic flow
- Public education needed for bicyclists and the use of the road and lanes
- Street car on Main Street can be a positive and a negative
 - Could help with thru traffic if people get out of their cars
 - Street could lose a travel lane and automobile traffic could be reduced
- Westport Road (Broadway to Main) is a raceway, with cars going too fast

- Street should be more pedestrian oriented by widening the sidewalks and narrowing the street to reduce speeds
- Parked cars limit turn visibility from the side streets making getting on to Westport Road dangerous
- Slow down the cars by narrowing the streets
- Signage could help with automobile issues by delineating the area as a pedestrian zone through signs, pavement markers and other means
- Balance the use and improvements for automobiles with other the other modes of transportation – pedestrian, bicycle, and transit
- Slowing cars down can help businesses
- Need variety of transportation opportunities that connect different places
- 43rd and Main intersection turn radius cause traffic backup because they are too small.
- 39th Street opportunity area for transportation improvement-
- The idea of using a Transportation Development District should be reassessed for Midtown link of Street Car to look at different taxing structure.
- Focus on east / west connections across the study area
- Quality of life improvements to transportation network necessary
- Gillham Road from 31st to 43rd Street – too fast and primarily through traffic

What infrastructure issues need to be addressed in this plan and where are problems occurring?

- Central to Broadway Stormwater
- Lighting improvements are necessary for safety.
- Improved connection between Plaza and Westport necessary for connectivity.
- Too many driveways on Main Street hinder traffic flow.
- Plaza to Troost connection needs improvement for walkability.
- Stormwater Policies can impact urban development.