

## **Midtown Plaza Area Plan - Work Team #2 North Brush Creek Sub-Area Notes**

Tuesday, April 30, 2013, The Offices of Gould Evans, 4041 Mill Street

After a brief presentation on project status, and the vision, guiding principles, public input summary and analysis, the attendees discussed issues and application of the Guiding Principles to the specific geographic area: 43<sup>rd</sup> Street to Brush Creek, State Line Road to Paseo Boulevard. The discussion is generally grouped into 3 topics – Land Use and Urban Design and Transportation;

### **Land Use and Development**

*Where are the biggest opportunities for development/redevelopment within the area?*

- A specific opportunity area is between Troost, Paseo, Brush Creek, and Cleaver (with townhomes and single family). With the Cleaver Streetscape and Gates development, this is a natural progression.
- A general opportunity area is between Troost and Paseo – utilizing the vacant lots.
- Apartments along Cleaver (between Main and Warwick) work within the context of the Plaza area.
- Restore multi-family on Brush Creek east of Troost.
- There is anxiety that the CC Plaza will be “ruined” if the land use mix of the area replaces residential with office uses.
- We should be careful of how development/redevelopment occurs on 45<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Street within the West Plaza Neighborhood. Commercial development must not be allowed to “turn the corner” into residential areas or destroy existing homes.
- In defining “mixed-use” development – it was the consensus of a work group that it must have a mix of uses, which includes residential, in each building of a new development.
- It is strong neighborhoods that will make corridors within the planning area successful.
- There is concern with commercial spreading west along 47<sup>th</sup> Street (west of Plaza).

*What are the challenging development areas within this sub-area?*

- Plaza Plan – Land use, Transportation – need better understanding of relationships between uses
- Plaza Commercial core land use recommendations should remain - current zoning is an issue because it allows for taller buildings than the tradition 1-3 stories that are currently present
- Need analysis of future development pressures – (supported by group)
  - Where development is appropriate
  - Level of detail of the Plaza Plan
  - Madison / Belleview corridor
  - Center of Plaza
- Cleaver II / Troost southeast corner – mixed use – Troost advocates needed
- Plans currently encourage development in undesirable area along the Troost corridor
- Development along Troost is good, but do it right

- Worst land use is parking – limits transit
- Open zoning is an issue on Troost
  - Allows anything
  - Need to grow market for development
- Protect character and scale of Plaza
- The Plan should focus on future of the area.
- St. Lukes – include in the process need to meet their needs
- Madison / Belleview Corridor – development opportunity for higher density
  - Protect neighborhoods – currently frayed edges
- Cleaver II / Troost - lacks of quality developers, battle with City (floodplain / permitting)
- Troost Avenue Development – we have nothing to fight with (no document or guidance) it is “Cowboyville” – need a document to protect corridor from unwanted development

*Where is development appropriate?*

- Madison /Belleview Corridor – office
- Plaza – careful with mix of uses – residential / retail / office
  - Residential – mix of incomes
- UMKC – south of Volker – residential and campus
- Troost and Cleaver – Gates Development
- Sustainable Development – resident oriented, enduring development, target and strategic
- Troost Corridor – good development – rehabilitation and reuse
- 43<sup>rd</sup> Street miserable – Broadway to Trafficway – even through Westport
  - Traffic patterns are difficult to access surrounding areas
  - Patterns of uses / Institutions make it pedestrian hostile
  - Concern of future ownership pattern – Steptoe neighborhood (41<sup>st</sup> to 44<sup>th</sup>) – cultural / historic significance – needs protection
- 43<sup>rd</sup> and Main Street – no left turn is an issue – no one follows
- Main Street Corridor issues led by MainCor is a positive
  - Street car potential could improve transportation with new development
  - No more development with phony windows
  - Streetscape may be too busy with so many amenities
- Belleview / Madison development a concern – how do we balance growth and development with neighborhood protection?
- Systematic problem of institutions – big players not at the table – at some point the plan needs to control their growth
- '89 Plaza Plan vs. zoning - was a huge compromise back then, but no political will for zoning change (only effective when request for assistance is made)
  - Planning recommendations map reflect zoning issues as of 1989
  - Plan is very specific / geographic unlike other typical plans.
  - Is that level of specifics appropriate? How does this translate to guidance?

- Use, height, design, transitions at a specific scale need to be defined
- Uses – neighborhood retail to regional destination - O.K. evolution
  - How do we guide the next evolution?
  - Do not want to see “save the plaza” organize again project by project
  - Need to look at potential of historic overlay district
    - Guidelines with enforceability
- The range and mix of uses is critical too – need more guidance on keeping the balance of uses on the plaza and surrounding area
- Bowl Concept has worked – strengthening the concept is a good idea
  - 4 to 11 Stories sometimes gets overlooked because some people jump to 11 – should be 4 stories and “if” you address specific design issues you can get 11 stories
- Plaza Westport connection needs more explanation / definition to attract people between the two areas
- Seasons 52 Restaurant Design – example of why guidance needs teeth, so grass roots is not watchdog for design issues
- Preservation of neighborhoods is key – plan needs to get specific / mainly on institutional encroachment (slowly chips away because of institutional power)
  - UMKC example – growth and development issues resolved through master planning efforts
  - Institutions owning homes a concern – transient population, maintenance, etc.
  - Expectations on where transitions occur vs. where institutions grow
  - Strong neighborhoods are also very important to them
- Why redevelop what is already successful – can we guide development to the where it is most needed?
- 45<sup>th</sup> and State Line (Google / live work on KS side)
  - Positive unique sense of place, small scale, good neighborhood node prototype for scale balance and transitions

## Urban Design

*Where are the biggest challenges/opportunities as they relate to urban design?*

- There is a scale that “feels” right, it is 1:1.5 (road: building) that should be used in development in the plaza bowl area.
- There is concern about the heights allowed by B4-5 zoning in the “traditional Country Club Plaza” – something must be done to protect it.
- There is the perspective that we should not be too prescriptive in height limitations in the Plaza Area because any strict rules welcome abuse of their intentions by developers
- In addition to height, massing of buildings is an important issue. A small “massive” building can be less pedestrian friendly than a larger, “well-articulated” building.

- It is likely that the design guidelines within adopted plans, like the Plaza-West Neighborhood Plan, can be applied/serve as a guide to other neighborhoods that currently have no guidelines....height, infill guidelines, building materials...

*What are the areas of concern with regards to urban design within the area?*

- Protect Country Club Plaza – the way it looks and functions (low rise, pursuit of original vision, ease of parking, walkability, Icon, Surrounding - high density – high rise – no parking)
- Preservation of parks and connections (walkability) is important to the area.
- Parking systems for zones – reduce need for individual lots, support discrete districts (rules for buildings)
- Plaza – uniform (single) ownership & management (JC Nichols) = Quality Development
  - Plan needs design guidance to address original development concept
  - What use to private policy (JC Nichols) to address design and development is now public policy for which the public must enforce through public hearings
  - Need to create creative solutions to address design and development issues for unwilling (current) owners to address development, design, traffic and pedestrians
- The creation and maintenance of the area’s “sense of place”
  - 45<sup>th</sup> and State Line
  - Contemporary design
  - Careful with design guidelines
  - Preservation – mix of old and new
    - Crossroads
    - Downtown
    - Organic growth
- Have to get the land use right before you address design
- Don’t try to make every place look like every other place
- Not just businesses on Troost – we should look to introduce higher density residential
  - Residential neighborhood – integrity is key
  - Improve school system
  - Zoning an issue – open zoning that allows for uses that community does not want
  - Mixed-use – retail first floor (University Avenue – St. Paul)
  - ½ block issue – good and bad
  - Integrate development with existing development
  - Property loss an issue – need improved market
- 39<sup>th</sup> and Broadway – stabilization – zoning , historic preservation, incentives
  - Brings other amenities
- Other locations of distinct character
  - West Plaza neighborhood
  - Troost / Cleaver II needs to become an area of distinct character
- Can urban design / urban form be codified? – need to define pedestrian oriented scale / street, and public oriented buildings

- Troost Corridor Plan / Troost Action Plan
  - Streetscape needs to remain and expanded – stay the course
- What should we be incentivizing?
  - Urban style development – not suburban / car oriented development
  - Things that build healthy neighborhoods – community gardens or other creative uses of struggling properties
  - Local / independent business that serve the local community
- What are some examples of development that is out of character for the area? Where are they?
  - CVS /Walgreens – all locations
  - Dollar General - Troost
  - Nelson / Atkins Art Museum
  - Armour and Main with stainless steel cutouts – replaced bakery
  - 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison Project (Plaza Vista) ordinary and uninteresting – does not complement the Plaza
  - 46<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania – new condos – somewhat a design issue
  - 43<sup>rd</sup> and Westport Road – Apartments, gated, barrier and changed the grid
  - Swinney School– It is proposed that there will be office in the middle of the neighborhood (but what alternatives?)
- Density works with variation on scale, building design and form
  - A cohesive public realm is necessary to define an area.

## Transportation

*What are great connections we have today? What are ideas for new connections?*

- Westwood Road is a great connection from Westwood Park to Loose Park.
- We need more emphasis on Bike Routes.
- Establish connections from Main Street to JC Nichols Pkwy through American Century Towers and Mill Creek Park.
- There is a lack of orientation between area destinations in the North Brush Creek Area. It is necessary to improve this through pedestrian way finding or another method.
- There should be less emphasis put on connecting the planning area to all areas of the metropolitan area and more emphasis on how to connect the area locally.
- There must be a way established that considers the character of an area before infrastructure improvements are installed in an area. A citizen mentioned the installation of cobra head streetlights within the CC Plaza....said it seems like “character takes a back seat to utility.”
- There is a concern that the introduction of stop lights in the CC Plaza has a negative impact to the traditional priority of pedestrians in the area. Possible solutions for the area are to remove the stop lights or to have a pedestrian only cycle in traffic control operations at intersections.

*Should the development of an improved multimodal system assumed for this area?*

- Auto dominance brings too much parking
- Rebuild city as mixed modal system – streetcar is a necessary component of system
- Street car should be the beginning of regional transit system
- B.R.T. lines necessary to build a multimodal system
- Key is the opportunity to move – walking and biking to connect institutions /destinations and move people into the urban core
- Is a Nodal development pattern necessary? – YES!
  - Peak oil will force the use other transportation modes
  - Establish bike routes that can serve development nodes
  - Maintain car access / parking (handicap necessary)
  - Nodes along transit routes – development opportunities
  - Look at transportation system holistically to serve development and connect neighborhoods
  - Zoning regulations – no parking should be allowed around transit stops
  - Nodes – size of commercial / mixed-use area and amount and size of parking an issue.
    - Plan represents an opportunity to define specific node density, size, and uses – define unique nodes.
- Multiple modes of transportation has and will attract people to this area
- Bikes necessary
  - More defined lanes “bike boulevards” – move off major streets
  - Boulevards – room for all modes plus
    - Bikes on boulevards
    - Currently boulevards seem to operate as expressways – enforcement issue
  - On-street parking – can generate density / need capacity
  - The grid street pattern in the area is good – disperses traffic, promotes multimodal, should keep two-way streets
- Traffic calming needed to slow traffic
- Development and transportation are linked – supports density
  - Ability to empty building – economic development issue
  - Addressed by development – need for marketing buildings
  - Manage traffic with land use and development
- Street improvements necessary to support development
  - Outlined in Plaza Plan
  - Impact study could identify improvements
- Less regulations = dynamic market places
- East / West Connections
  - One-way streets an issue and should be reviewed
  - Change traffic patterns – US 71 brought intense traffic
    - East / west streets not redeveloping

- Cleaver II currently operates as a thoroughfare
- North / South barriers – 39<sup>th</sup> Street, 31<sup>st</sup> Street
- Is Brush Creek a Barrier to walking? - NO
  - Bridges are barriers
  - Traffic calming for universities to south
- No left turns an issue
  - Not allowed off of boulevards
  - Too much waiting
  - Signalization / synchronization issues
  - Rockhill and Cleaver II – cut through neighborhood
  - Volker and Oak – Please Improve Soon!

*What parking issues exist in this sub-area?*

- Encroachment on neighborhoods by institutions – on-street parking
  - Impacts home activities and need for parking
- MAC properties – they have no parking plan – need transit to support density of development
- Need impact accountability for parking in or adjacent to neighborhoods
- Providing parking is a redevelopment issue
- K.U. Med. impact across State Line to provide parking for students, faculty and staff
- Neighborhood parking impact of public events at schools or other public gathering spaces
- Armour Boulevard – URD with parking would be an ideal development situation.
  - Parking requirements are not compatible with development of old structures.
- How do we keep traffic on Volker vs. Cleaver II
  - Traffic improvements do not work – overall circulation does not seem to work / need to balance and disperse flows. The one-way make Cleaver II easier to use. Will the future streetscape improvements help?
- Belleview from 43<sup>rd</sup> to Ward Parkway is way too fast.
  - Turn at Ward parkway is too fun to drive fast. Speeds are remarkably high – button pedestrian crosswalk gets lost in it all.
  - Speed makes Belleview a big barrier.
- Presence of traffic lights on Plaza has harmed the pedestrian priority of the Plaza.
- What are the challenging transportation areas?
  - Nichols Parkway / Brush Creek Boulevard – intersections too close, turn lanes too shorts, too wide for pedestrians, etc.
  - 43<sup>rd</sup> and Broadway / Nichols – odd pedestrian flow
  - Southwest Trafficway / Westport Road – traffic flow and pedestrian accessibility is bad
- What bike issues exist?
  - Need more bike lanes

- Challenging links, crossing intersections (Brookside / Main / Volker – too large for pedestrians or bicycles)
- Main Street a barrier between Plaza and museums – traffic, speed and size of intersection
  - Lots of different activity centers need better linking – UMKC, museums, Plaza, Westport
- Make paths along Brush Creek more walkable / bikeable – not a pleasant place – needs to be more of the amenity it was supposed to be
- Disagree that Brush Creek is a barrier – lots of pedestrian crossings.
- Need public education on how to use bus and bike lanes.
- Streetcar – Need to define what happens around stops?
  - What level of investment is OK? How much is too much?
  - At nodes is going more than ½ block deep OK – when and how?
  - OK to all if the scale / design / transitions protect the key features of neighborhoods