



SEG 3 – Recommendations

Background

Northtown extends from Madison Street on the west to County Line Road on the east and from the railroad tracks on the south to Maple Street on the north. The Northtown area comprises a wide range of different uses, including commercial, municipal, residential, and recreational. For the purposes of analysis, we divided the Northtown area into seven distinct areas:

1. West End
 2. Grant Square/Fullers
 3. Municipal Parking Lot/Mavon Properties
 4. North Buffer Area
 5. Memorial Hall/Burlington Park
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6. City Services
7. Hospital/Wellness House



The following objectives were identified through SEG deliberations:

- Link the commercial portion of Northtown with the Central Business District
- Ensure that the Village makes optimal use of land to support overall village needs while maintaining a unique character for Northtown
- Maintain existing structures with architectural or historical significance
- Maintain appropriate and effective transitions between commercial and residential areas

The Northtown SEG has identified four major issues facing the Northtown study area. Several of these issues have been divided into sub-issues.

Functional Uses

1. Adding parking on the current municipal lot
2. Redevelopment of the city services
3. Grant square and buffer zones

Building Form

1. Appropriately scaled buildings with timeless design and exemplary construction reflecting the established character of the Village.

Aesthetics

1. Visual connection with the Central Business District
2. Village green
3. Design review

Other

1. Alternative traffic across the tracks

Key Findings

In the Phase I Survey, seventy two percent (72%) of residents characterized shopper parking in the Central Business District as one of their most important issues. In the survey, fifty eight percent (58%) of residents support the construction of a stand-alone structure on village property and sixty percent (60%) of residents support the construction of a public/private mixed use structure (question 1.21). In addition, sixty percent (60%) of residents support the construction of a parking structure north of the tracks. SEG 3 estimates that the village is short approximately 700 spaces in the Central Business District. The existing municipal lot (between Lincoln and Washington Streets just north of the tracks) is a potential location for additional parking.

Over the next 20 years, it is likely that many portions of Northtown will be redeveloped. In the survey, eighty nine percent (89%) of residents support the use of a more formal appearance review process for commercial and multi-family construction (question 2.06). The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing all redevelopment in Northtown. In the survey ninety percent (90%) of residents want to maintain public services facilities on the site (question 3.01E). In the case of redevelopment, only restaurants fifty two percent (52%) and a public parking structure fifty three percent (53%) received support from a majority of residents. The water plant, wells and storage tanks continue to be used by the Village to provide water to residents. In particular, in drought years, the additional water supply is essential. Relocating the water plant and related facilities is prohibitively expensive. The Post Office is using only a portion of the current facility and may consider moving to a more appropriately sized facility in the future. The current location of the fire station allows a single facility to support the entire Village. The police station can be moved to any location in the Village. The Hinsdale Hospital intends to remain in its current location for at least twenty years and has no current plans for major expansion, contraction, or redevelopment. Other areas within Northtown may also be redeveloped in the next 20 years. As areas are redeveloped, the Village has the opportunity to redirect the current uses to uses more in-line with the long term vision of the Village.

The central business district has installed consistent streetscape elements, including lighting, seating and flower boxes. These elements provide a consistent and harmonizing feel within the CBD. In the survey eighty five percent (85%) of residents support the expansion of downtown style decorative light pole and fixture to other portions of the village (question 1.05). Seventy nine percent (79%) of residents support the extension of the decorative lamps, benches, and landscaping to the business area north of the tracks (question 1.04) In the survey, fifty three percent (53%) of residents preferred not to make changes to better integrate Village Hall and Burlington Park (question 2.06). Chicago Avenue between Washington and Garfield is extremely busy.

There are currently five locations for crossing the tracks within Northtown – Oak Street Bridge, Garfield, Washington, Lincoln, and Monroe. The latter four are at-grade crossings and the Oak Street Bridge is a single lane bridge with weight and traffic restrictions. As a result, emergency traffic is often required to wait at the tracks for trains to pass. In the survey, fifty six percent (56%) of residents supported building a vehicular underpass (question 1.07). Fifty seven percent (57%)

supported building a pedestrian underpass or overpass along the railroad. The Oak Street Bridge is owned and maintained by Burlington Northern. They are under no obligation to maintain the bridge. Burlington Northern is interested in upgrading their entire line to support double stack trains. The current bridge would need to be removed to allow this traffic to pass.

Recommendations

3-1 If there is confirmation of a parking shortfall in the CBD, it is recommend that the Village undertake additional study on this issue area to create a comprehensive solution

Critical Success Factors:

1. Any parking garage in this location should be designed in a way that better integrates Northtown with the CBD. However, we recommend that certain elements be included in any solution.
2. Every effort should be made to include as much of the entire block as possible in any redevelopment program (Lincoln to Washington and Chicago to the tracks)
3. The Washington Street side of the block should be of the highest priority for inclusion since it is very visible from the train station and the CBD. Ideally, this entire side of the block should be retail.
4. The side of the block along the tracks should be the second priority for retail development, since it is visible from the CBD. Alternatively, a thoughtfully designed, pedestrian connection along the railroad tracks could create a plaza-like atmosphere and an attractive view from the CBD.
5. The Village should require high quality construction, fully articulated, and appropriately scaled design to ensure that the structure is compatible with the historic character of the CBD.

Implementation Considerations:

1. The redevelopment program should focus on a mixed-use solution, including retail and commercial space in addition to parking. By including retail and commercial space, the structure has the potential to increase integration with the CBD.
2. The parking requirements for this area should be consistent with the CBD (e.g. providing the opportunity to buy out parking spaces).
3. Prior to building a structure, the Village should improve management of existing facilities before accepting that it is necessary to build a parking structure in Northtown.
4. Flagg Creek passes underneath the current Municipal Parking Lot and probably would need to be relocated in order to build a parking garage .

3-2 It is recommend that the Village consider selected portions of the Village Services area for redevelopment

Definition: The Village Services area includes the area along the tracks and Symonds Drive from Garfield to Elm. It includes the Post Office, Police Station, Fire Department, Water Plant, City Services, Youth Center, and Hinsdale Humane Society. Over the next 20 years, it is likely that several of the facilities in this area will require substantial renovation, expansion, and upgrades.

Critical Success Factors:

1. If the USPS moves out, the historic Post Office building should be maintained and adaptively re-used (e.g., restaurant).
2. The water plant and related facilities should be maintained in their current location.
3. The Village should consider relocating the Public Works excluding the water plant, and redeveloping this location.
4. When the Police and Fire stations require substantial renovation, the Village should explore relocating them to other sites. However, only sites that allow us to maintain a single location with the capacity to serve the entire Village.
5. Density in this area should be lower than the CBD, but could be denser than currently zoned.

3-3 It is recommended the Village seek opportunities to add residential space in Northtown and maintain convenience retail in existing locations

Definition: Areas 1 and 4 serve as buffer areas between commercial and residential areas in Northtown

Critical Success Factors:

1. Townhouse and duplex developments would be most appropriate in Areas 1 and 4
2. In these areas, the code should retain the requirement that any new development include adequate parking to address its particular needs (i.e. no buyout)
3. Empty-nester housing would be a desirable use of any of these buffer areas
4. Maintain the heavily residential character of the area of the Village north of the tracks
5. Continue to provide “convenience retail” services within Northtown
6. Provide additional housing options within the Village (e.g., “lifestyle” housing)
7. Area specific considerations:

Area 1: West End

Primary Current Use: Medical Office

Other Current Uses: Residential/Townhomes

Desirable Future Uses: Residential/Townhomes, Residential/Duplex, Residential/Condominium

Undesirable Future Use: Commercial

Area 2: Grant Square/Fullers

Primary Current Use: Retail

Other Current Uses: Commercial, Parking

Desirable Future Uses: Retail, Commercial

Undesirable Future Use: N/A

Area 4: North Buffer Area

Primary Current Use: Commercial

Other Current Uses: Residential/Single Family, Residential/Condominium

Desirable Future Uses: Residential/Duplex, Residential/Townhomes, Commercial

Undesirable Future Use: N/A

Area 7: Hospital/Wellness House

Primary Current Use: Medical

Other Current Uses: Residential/Dormitory

Desirable Future Uses: Medical

Undesirable Future Use: N/A

3-4 It is recommended that the Village consider supplementing the existing zoning regulations with graphically intense, form-based controls to deliver more predictable outcomes, and in so doing, ensure redevelopment that is reflective of the historic character of the CBD.

Definition: Identified below are some preliminary categories of such supporting controls. While the categories would remain the same, it is anticipated that the standards within the seven sub-areas of Northtown will vary.

Building Relationship to Street

Build-to line requirement

Minimum landscape setback

Strong building-sidewalk connection required

(windows, outdoor seating, etc.)

Minimum sidewalk width to accommodate pedestrian gathering places

Limitation on curb cuts

Building Height

Minimum and maximum floor heights

Minimum

Maximum

Parking

Surface com. parking allowed

Underbuilding or underground parking required

Payment in lieu of parking allowed

Com. parking ratio (per 1,000 gsf)

Res. Parking ratio per unit

Floorplate

Maximum requirement

Architectural Character

Similarity to CBD

Complementary to CBD

Standards for roofs and parapets

Standards for windows and doors

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Balconies reqd. for any allowed condo/apt.
Specified building materials
Unique Standards for com. signage

Landscape

On site landscaping required
Streetscaping required
Same streetscaping as CBD

Design Review

Required

Uses

Non-accessory public parking

Mixed use allowed (retail and office)

Commercial

General or Medical Office

Requirement for ground floor retail

Residential

Single family

Townhouse

Condo (freestanding)

Condo/apt. above commercial

Critical Success Factors:

1. Ensure that any new development in Northtown be designed to coordinate with the remainder of the Village
2. Where possible, improve the integration between Northtown commercial areas and the Central Business District

Implementation Considerations: Supplemental, form-based controls would require Village investment in a thorough character analysis that would actively seek resident input prior to adoption.

3-5 It is recommended that the Village extend CBD streetscape elements to the Northtown business district

Critical Success Factors: Install a comprehensive palette of nostalgic, ornamental streetscape elements, including pedestrian-scale lighting, bench seating, landscaped curb “bulbs” and trash receptacles, while using the same materials as on the south side of the railroad tracks.

Implementation Considerations:

1. While a one time, comprehensive installation is preferable, financial considerations may dictate a phased implementation.
2. Initially, the streetscape elements should be installed:
 - From the Police Station on the east to
 - Lincoln Street on the west
 - From the tracks on the south to
 - Chicago Avenue (north side) and to the north side of the Village Hall
3. Additionally, the elements could be extended west on Chicago Avenue past Grant Square

3-6 It is recommended that the Village develop specific proposals for the integration of Memorial Hall, Burlington Park and the Central Business District. The goal of linking these areas is to develop a truly celebratory sense of place at the heart of the Village

Definition: Using a variety of urban design and landscape architecture techniques to better integrate the Village Hall and Burlington Park with the Central Business District.

Critical Success Factors:

1. Improve the visual integration between Memorial Hall, Burlington Park, and Downtown
2. Increase pedestrian traffic across the tracks
3. Seek public input prior to final decisions since there are a large number of variables to consider

Implementation Considerations: Several specific popular options are as follows:

1. Use traffic calming techniques along Chicago Avenue between Garfield and Washington to slow traffic. Consider repaving this one block of Chicago in brick
2. Leverage the North-South axis of the Village that extends from Memorial Hall through the CBD
3. Bury the utility lines in Burlington Park
4. Explore a demarcated pedestrian crossing mid-block along Chicago Avenue (between Washington and Garfield) from the Memorial Building to Burlington Park as well as across the tracks from the parking area to the train station.
5. Consider the possibility of an pedestrian underpass

3-7 It is recommended that the code for the commercial portions of Northtown (area 3) be made consistent with the code for the CBD

3-8 It is recommended that the Village initiate a process to evaluate the issue of railroad track crossings and identify alternatives, such as underpasses, where appropriate

Critical Success Factors: If an underpass is proposed it should be designed to support all traffic in the case the Oak Street Bridge is closed. Ideally, the underpass should be located east of Garfield in order to support the traffic currently using the Oak Street Bridge. In addition, the Village should develop specific proposals for an underpass designed for emergency vehicles.