

CROSSROADS AREA REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Introduction

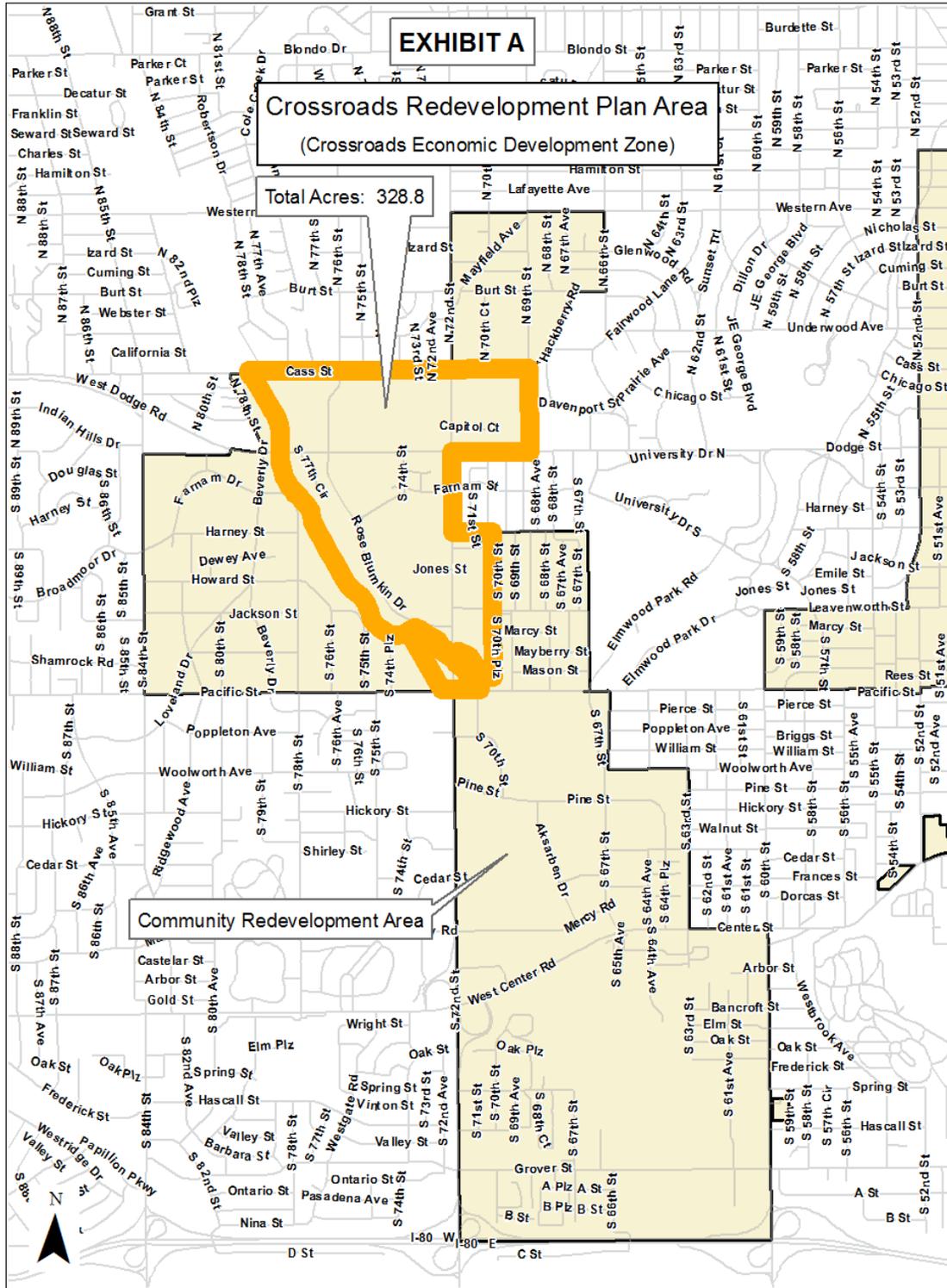
The Crossroads Area Redevelopment Plan coincides geographically with the area of the Crossroads Economic Development Zone (CEDZ). The CEDZ is a sub-district of the larger Community Redevelopment Area designated previously and approved by Resolution No. 886 at the City Council August 9, 2012. The Community Redevelopment Area designation fulfills Nebraska State requirements to enable economic development/redevelopment incentives. The CEDZ was created to focus the impact of the Community Redevelopment Area designation towards a specific and limited boundary requiring immediate attention. The CEDZ is generally bounded by Cass Street on the north, the Little Papillion Creek on the west, Pacific Street on the south, and the eastern edge following 70th Street to Howard, then to 72nd and Dodge Streets, and then 69th Street back to Cass Street and comprises approximately 329 acres located within Census Tracts: 6400-4, 6701-1, and 4600-3.

For the purposes of this document the “Crossroads Redevelopment Area” shall refer to the geographic area of the CEDZ situated within the larger Community Redevelopment Area described above.

The purpose of the Crossroads Area Redevelopment Plan is to provide the following:

1. Assess existing conditions within the CEDZ in terms of infrastructure, land values and other indicators of economic condition and potential.
2. Determine the long term development/redevelopment capacity for CEDZ and consider challenges and strategies for implementing development/redevelopment.
3. Provide zoning and or specific design guidelines to properly manage development activities within the CEDZ aligning it with the objectives of the Omaha Master Plan.
4. Establish plans for improved infrastructure and other public improvements as incentives for and enhancements to private development/redevelopment.
5. Consider additional economic incentives to promote development/redevelopment within the CEDZ.

Exhibit A – Crossroads Redevelopment Area



Existing Conditions

History

Commercial development within the Plan Area enjoyed early success due the confluence to two primary arterials; Dodge Street and 72nd Street. The Plan Area also serves as a significant point of orientation within the City, culturally and historically. The four quadrants of the city; east, west, north and south intersect at Plan Area representing the center of the Omaha. The transitional character of the area has rightfully earned it the name of The Crossroads.

Physical Conditions

The core of the Plan Area currently features multiple land uses that are dominated by one- or two-level retail, small multi-tenant office buildings and older light industrial. Development evolved over many years in a disconnected inharmonious manner. Many of the original tenants have left and the remaining buildings have been retrofitted for subsequent uses/tenants and exhibit higher than normal vacancy rates.



Much of the Plan Area was developed without the benefit of proper subdivision, which resulted in an inadequate street layout and irregularly platted lots. The resulting poor traffic circulation and lack of street frontage, particularly between 72nd and 76th Streets, made it virtually impossible to maximize land development. Rather, development occurred in a piecemeal fashion with little integration and very few cross access easements. This has resulted in poor access and less than advantageous sight lines of businesses, which hinders marketing efforts. Some retail structures have been abandoned and sites have fallen into disrepair, further hindering marketing efforts. These conditions substantially impair proper growth and development, retard the provision of housing accommodations and constitute an economic and social liability.

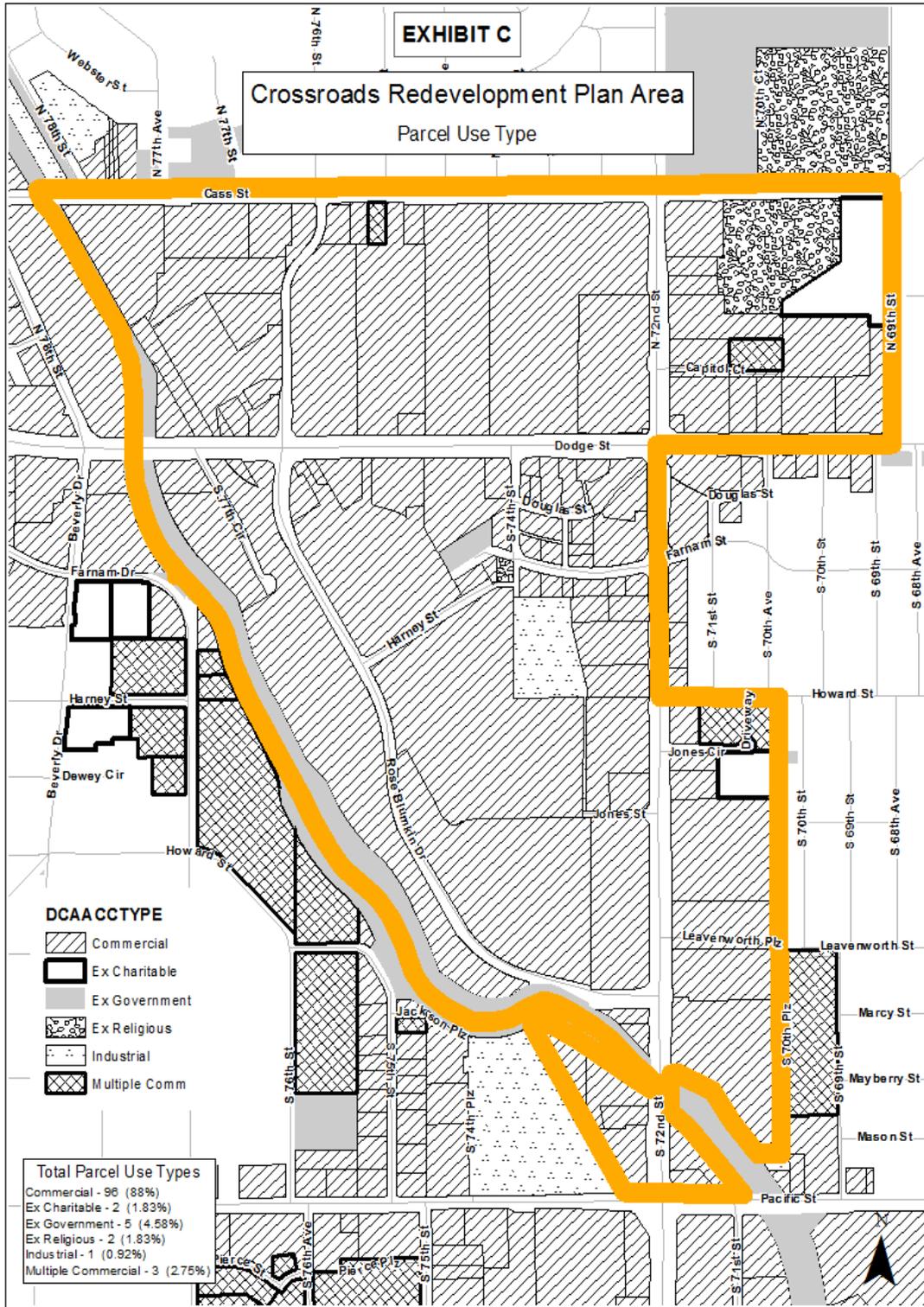
Land Use

There are a variety of uses within the Plan Area ranging from fast food restaurants, religious assembly, financial services, grocery sales, restaurants, medical offices and retail stores.

According to the County Assessor’s records, there are a total of 109 parcel account types in the Plan Area. The following are the existing account types:

◇ Commercial properties	96, or 88%
◇ Multiple Commercial	3, or 3%
◇ Exempt Charitable	2, or 2%
◇ Exempt Government	5, or 5%
◇ Exempt Religious	2, or 2%
◇ <u>Industrial</u>	<u>1, or 1%</u>
Total	109 or 100%

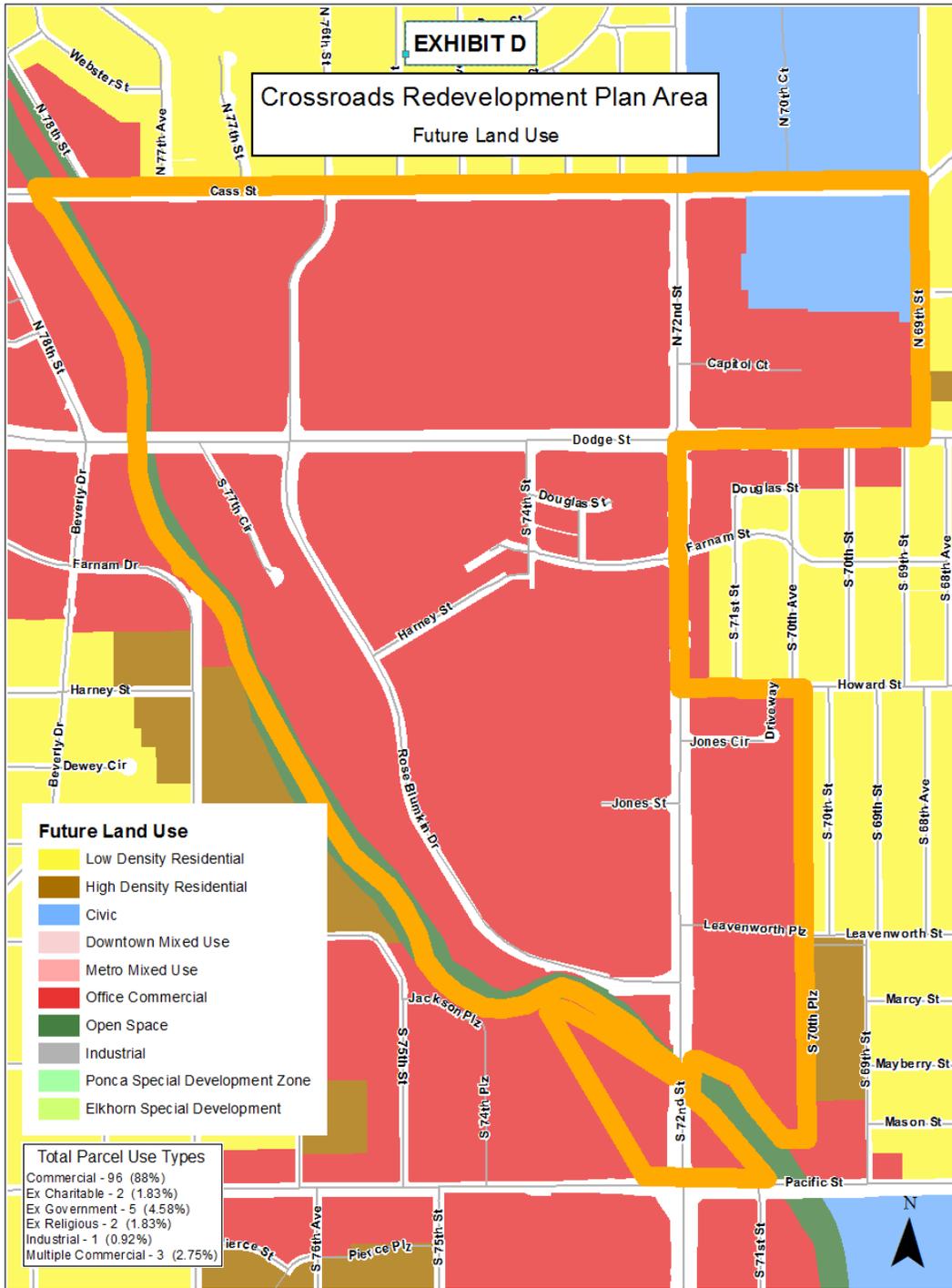
Exhibit C – Land Uses



Future Land Uses

The Future Land Use map, in the City’s Master Plan, proposes Office and Commercial as future land use for the entire Plan Area; one parcel is programmed for Civic use.

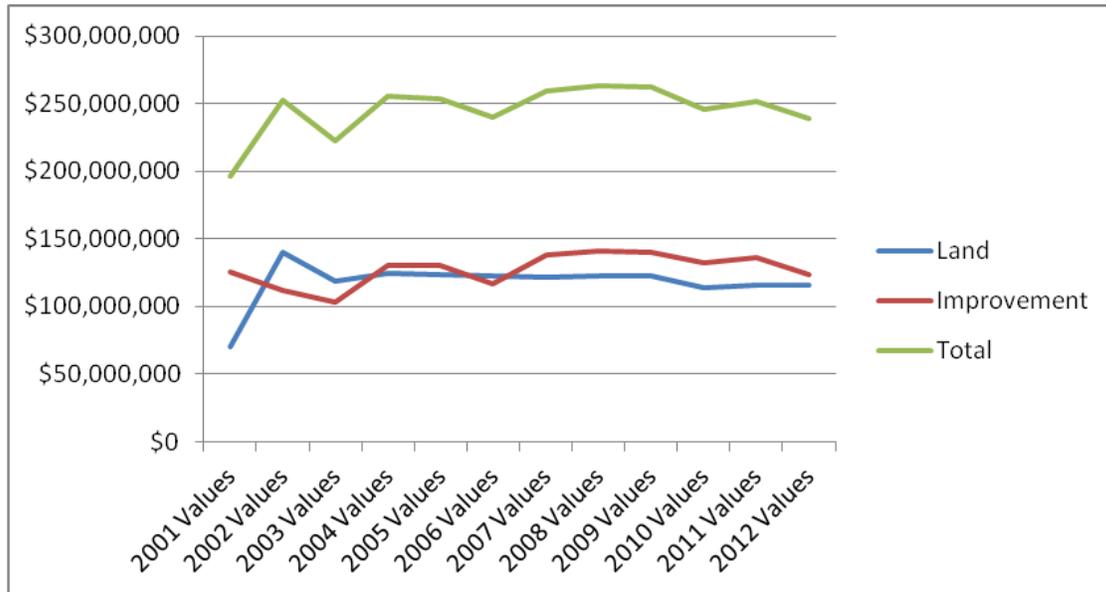
Exhibit D – Future Land Use Map



Property Valuations

Property values within the Plan Area have fluctuated, but have generally remained stagnant or trended downward over the past decade. The lack in growth of property values is directly related to aging physical structures, aging infrastructure, lack of reinvestment into the properties, and to the overall economy. Table 1 and the corresponding graph below illustrate the general trend in property valuations within the Plan Area.

Table 1 – Property Values



Source: Douglas County Assessor’s Office

Building Conditions

Based on County Assessor information (see Table 2), the physical condition of the buildings in the Plan Area are generally average and good. The functional obsolescence of a particular building is not considered for the purposes of these statistics.

Table 2 – Building Conditions

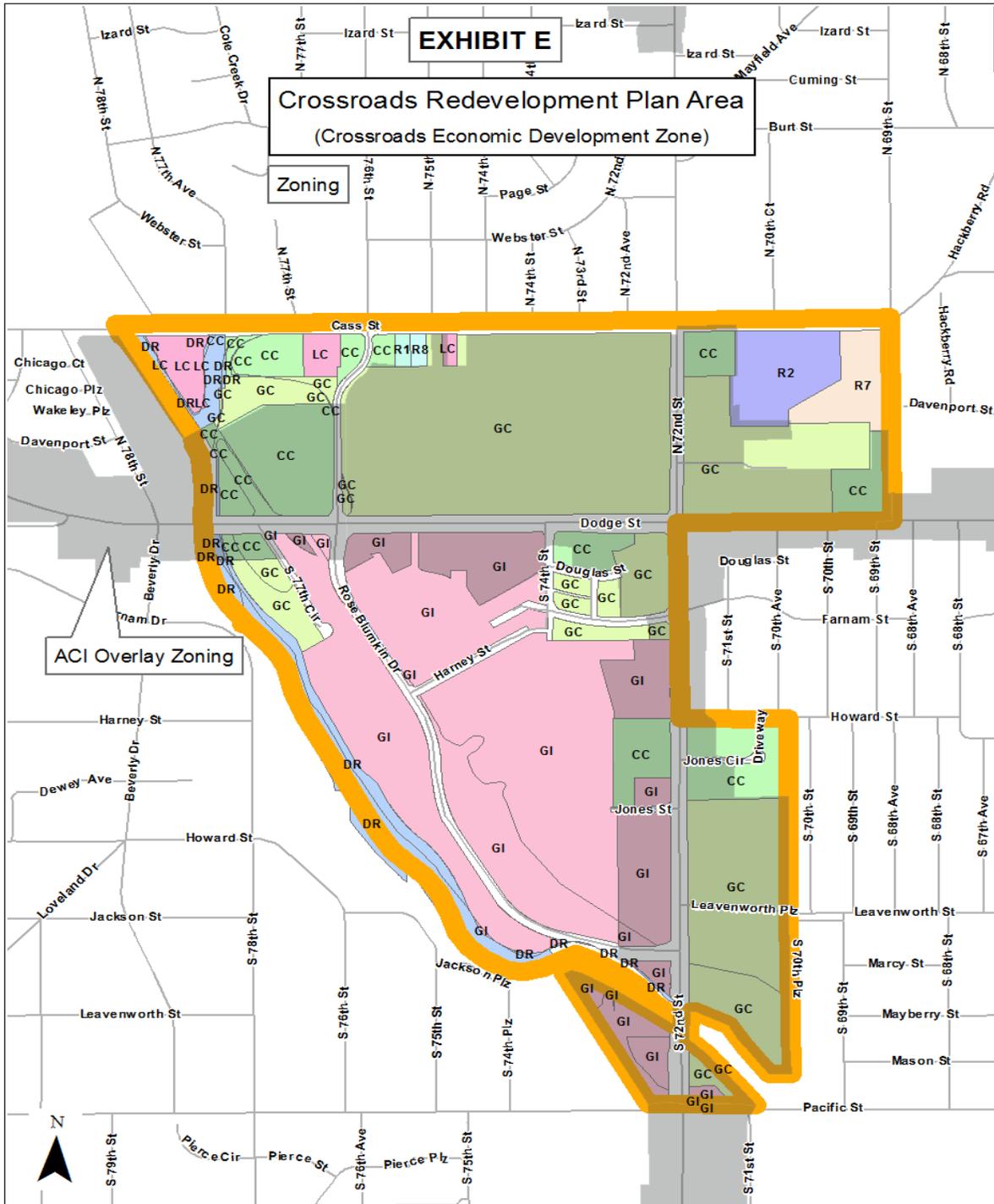
<u>CONDITION</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Good	15	17%
Average	72	79%
Fair	3	3%
Poor	<u>1</u>	<u>1%</u>
TOTAL	91	100%
Note: 18 Parcels were vacant within the Plan Area and were not assigned a rating by the		

Source: Douglas County Assessor’s Office

Zoning

The properties within the Plan Area are primarily zoned commercial and industrial with a few exceptions for single and multifamily. A portion of the Crossroads Redevelopment Area also includes an Area of Civic Importance (ACI) zoning overlay.

Exhibit E – Existing Zoning



Crossroads Mall Area

The significance of the Crossroads Mall can be summarized by the following:

- ◇ Large, historic, central landmark in Omaha
- ◇ It is currently operating as a distressed mall, thereby reducing the attractiveness of quality development in the vicinity

While some traditional malls have done well by attracting and targeting key anchors, complementary retailers, and restaurants, Crossroads has struggled to attract similar businesses. Malls have transformed from traditional enclosed areas to lifestyle centers that incorporate open public spaces that are pedestrian friendly. Crossroad's survival as a retail destination will require repurposing this property to compete with other retail centers in the metropolitan area and region.

While the Crossroads was a prominent destination, its decline led to disinvestment in the surrounding area, which has been partly reinforced through existing permissive zoning that hampers strategic, district wide redevelopment.

Infrastructure

The Crossroads Redevelopment Area is well served by existing utilities. Due to irregular platting and the ad hoc internal street structure utilities are poorly organized for subsequent redevelopment activities and significant reconstruction is likely. Exhibit F shows the location and frequency of sanitary and storm sewer facilities and the lack of a grid network of facilities.

The Crossroads Redevelopment Area is bisected by the two major arterials of 72nd and Dodge Streets with an estimated annual daily traffic of approximately 89,000 vehicles. Cass Street, the northern boundary of the district, has an estimated annual daily traffic of approximately 70,000 where it intersects with 72nd Street. Rose Blumkin Drive and 76th Street further bisect the Crossroads Redevelopment Area in the north-south direction and are designated a local and collector street respectively.

The block structure is extremely large and predominantly serves vehicular traffic. The area is dominated by vehicular activity, poor sidewalk conditions, lack of connectivity and intimidating pedestrian environments. Most internal traffic circulation is on private driveways, which are considered to be in fair to poor condition. The drive aisles often occur within surface parking lots that adjoin. However, each development was planned separately, so there is an overall lack of connection due to site layout and differential topography. The Crossroads Redevelopment Area lacks a pedestrian circulation system and pedestrians must necessarily mix with vehicles. Mixing pedestrian and vehicle movements in poorly defined environments increases the likelihood of accidents or injury and is a public safety concern.

There are no known impacts to the area as a result of the Combined Sewer Overflow project. This precludes unforeseen long-term sewer infrastructure improvements.

The Crossroads Redevelopment Area at one time included a high volume transit center within the NW quadrant. However, recently, the transit center was removed through the redevelopment of the site it shared with commercial development. The removal of this transit center significantly reduced transit access to and from the District and this area of the community.

Exhibit F – Infrastructure



Long Term Objectives and Redevelopment Vision

The current conditions of the Crossroads Area indicate that redevelopment and reinvestment is necessary as property values decline and the centralized location and access to the adjacent market is exploited. The primary purpose of preparing this plan is to facilitate strategic redevelopment of this area in order to achieve the highest and best use benefiting property owners and the community. The Planning Department is provided with the mandate to exercise its regulatory and economic development powers to uphold and implement the Master Plan for the City of Omaha which is regularly updated to reflect the needs, objectives and goals for the city at large through extensive public engagement process.

Omaha Master Plan

The Omaha Master Plan and its individual chapters, known as “elements,” provide a clear set of objectives that can be conveyed in terms of subsequent regulatory and economic development activities, creation of policies and capital investments. Following is a summary and outline of key objectives from relevant elements of the Master Plan that pertain to the creation and redevelopment of the Crossroads Area Redevelopment Plan:

Concept Element

- **Vision:** Omahans’ need to take pride in the physical attractiveness of their city and work to eliminate visual blight and to promote high quality design. Omaha’s urban form must be carefully designed to eliminate land use conflicts, reduce traffic congestion, encourage pedestrian movement, and incorporate open space.
- **Goals:** Be pro-active rather than reactive regarding development; ensure the cohesive and interrelated design of projects; reverse deterioration in older areas of the central city; prevent negative changes to neighborhood character; ensure a mix of necessary retail and personal services in all areas; reduce traffic congestion and costs by shifting from a “sparse hierarchy” to a more balanced transportation pattern with more emphasis on a “dense network” street system.
- **City Form/Development Patterns:** The basic development pattern for Omaha will be based on a series of high-density mixed-use areas that together contain the majority of the city’s employment, shopping, services, open space and medium- to high-density housing. The bulk of the city’s low-density housing will be in areas surrounding high-density mixed-use areas.
- **General Design Quality:** The City of Omaha will utilize a combination of incentives, policies, and design review procedures to attain a high degree of design quality in Omaha, in its own projects - such as public spaces and civic buildings - and in the private sector.

Urban Design Element

- **Delineating the Areas of Civic Importance:** The City should select locations that are of primary importance in shaping its physical image and pursue objectives and policies to preserve and develop these places of civic importance in ways that greatly benefit Omaha.
- **Preserving and Creating Distinctive Civic Places:** There are some distinctive places that help to define Omaha's image, and there are opportunities to improve these places and create more. Omaha should promote the preservation and creation of these places through legislation and public investment.
- **Streetscapes:** Street lights, traffic signals, traffic information signs, parking signs, street identification signs, street trees, and street and sidewalk materials are important components of the City's image. All elements of streetscape within the delineated areas of civic importance should contribute to harmonious and consistent designs for these areas.
- **Pedestrian Oriented, Mixed-Use Centers:** Commercial activities in Omaha should occur in pedestrian-oriented mixed-use centers rather than in continuous strips along arterial streets.



CEDZ Development Potential Illustrated in the Urban Design Element, 2004



Mixed-use Development

Transportation Master Plan

To support its vision of a high quality of life for all people, the City of Omaha Transportation Element has four goals:

- **Provide balanced options for enhanced mobility:** Create and plan for a wide variety of transportation options serving the needs of commuters and local trips.
- **Attain a safe and healthy environment:** Promote active transportation through planning and design that accommodates pedestrian activity in a safe environment.



- **Create livable and connected neighborhoods:** Create neighborhoods that are walkable with services in close proximity to residential areas.
- **Promote economic returns with fiscal stability:** Consider public capital investments as a means to leverage private investment and earning a greater return on how public money is spent.



Multi-modal Mixed-use Corridor

Environment Element

- **Large-Scale City Form:** Develop a city form that reduces the per capita cost of providing city services and establishes the density necessary to support more energy-efficient forms of transportation.
- **Land Use Development Policy:** Develop at high residential densities and with true mixed uses that produce more diverse environments and reduce the number of necessary automobile trips.
- **Land Development:** Create individual developments with components that are connected, walkable and accessible to all modes of transportation by providing safe, defined and pleasant routes from the public realm to destinations based on the needs of each mode. Through redevelopment and change to underused areas, establish densities that support transportation alternatives.
- **Transportation Network:** Develop and operate a transportation network that moves people and freight within and through the metropolitan area efficiently, maximizing access and minimizing vehicle miles traveled, energy consumed and pollutants emitted.
- **Active Transportation:** Provide a high level of citywide access and continuity to pedestrians and bicyclists to promote healthy active lifestyles.
- **Transit:** Develop a public transportation system that offers a degree of coverage, convenience and amenity that provides transportation equity for dependent customers and makes transit an attractive option for discretionary passengers.

A Mixed Use Urban Model

The objectives of the Master Plan related to the Crossroads Redevelopment Area suggest that subsequent redevelopment in the area should result in a highly functioning, dynamic, dense and livable urban environment providing a high quality of life. These objectives further illustrate the transition from the existing low density commercially dominated pattern of development to a high density mixed-use model of development.

According to the 2010 census, more than 80 percent of the country's population now lives in urban areas



Mixed-use Development

(in comparison to rural). In June, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that during the 2010-11 period, population in 27 of the largest U.S. city centers grew faster than in the surrounding suburbs for the first time since the 1920s.

Market trends for housing and lifestyle choices are evolving towards an urban model as preferences for living close to jobs, shopping, entertainment and public transportation become more common and prevalent. This type of urban development has been characterized as “walkable urbanism” as compared to the historically dominant form of “drivable urbanism” or suburban development. Walkable urbanism provides much higher density, employs multiple modes of transportation that get people and goods to destinations and integrates many different real estate products in the same place.

Walkable urbanism is further characterized as possessing the added value created by combined activities and land uses often referred to as “place-making.” Such places are formed as cultural and economic centers, a value that is realized by the community of property owners and citizens. Walkable urban development calls for radically different approaches to urban design and planning, regulation, financing and construction. Most importantly, it also requires the introduction of new ideas: place management and strategic redevelopment.

Redevelopment Goals

The vision for Crossroads Redevelopment Plan Area and the CEDZ is built upon the civic goals expressed by the Master Plan. Future development/redevelopment should strive to achieve the highest quality urban form and generally conform to the goals outlined below.

1. *Establish the Crossroads Redevelopment Area as a pivotal redevelopment area resulting in true mixed-use 24/7 pedestrian friendly destination for the region:*
 - *Providing unique and high quality retail destinations*
 - *Entertainment; Hospitality*
 - *Office and Research; Civic Uses*
 - *Residential*
2. *Establish the Crossroads Redevelopment Area as a key transportation hub and improve multi-modal transportation and connectivity*
 - *Improve connections to existing transportation network*
 - *Integrate emerging alternate transportation infrastructure into the development*
 - *Create connections to the adjacent neighborhood and business districts*
 - *Create connections to regional trails, parks and the Little Papillion Creek*
3. *Provide a full range of housing choices*
 - *For sale and rental*
 - *Townhouses, apartments, lofts condos*
4. *Provide an efficient public street network*
 - *Connect to adjacent land uses*
 - *Establish pedestrian scaled development blocks*
5. *Provide district wide parking solutions*
 - *Structured parking*
 - *On-street parking*
 - *Shared parking between compatible uses*
6. *Plan for redevelopment of commercial areas within the CEDZ*
 - *Provide for continuity of subsequent redevelopment*
7. *Provide for public gathering places such as town squares and pocket parks*
 - *Include district wide public WIFI connections and state-of-the-art technology infrastructure*
 - *Design streets as public places*
8. *Provide high quality building design and construction*
9. *Integrate principles of environmental and fiscal sustainability into all planning for the district*



Mixed-use Development

Redevelopment Challenges and Solution Strategies

Public Improvements and Infrastructure

The disparity between the redevelopment objectives and existing conditions presents significant challenges. Unlike greenfield development (converting agricultural land to commercial or residential), a significant amount of infrastructure and buildings exist in the redevelopment area that do not support subsequent development design, platting, right-of-way or utility needs. Often this infrastructure requires major relocation and improvements that increase the capacity to support a second generation of development. The front-end costs for redevelopment are significantly higher and occur in the early stages of project formation which is different than conventional development. New infrastructure provided for greenfield development had traditionally been funded by public means through the formation of sanitary improvement districts (SIDs) or other municipal capital improvements. However, in redevelopment areas the funding mechanisms for infrastructure reconstruction, demolition and feasibility analysis are limited.

The mixed-use/urban model of redevelopment is characterized by a dense arrangement of mixed uses incorporating high standards of design for public spaces such as streets, sidewalks and open spaces. Such public spaces provide a network of connectivity designed for and scaled to multiple modes of transportation. Therefore, the pedestrian environment is designed as a necessary and important component of street and site design. Urban environments provide access with a number of different street types. This typology includes high capacity arterials, smaller commercial collector streets, residential streets and service ways.

As a means to facilitate infrastructure improvements the City should assist qualified projects in the Redevelopment Area, pursuant to its powers under the Nebraska Community Development Law in the following ways:

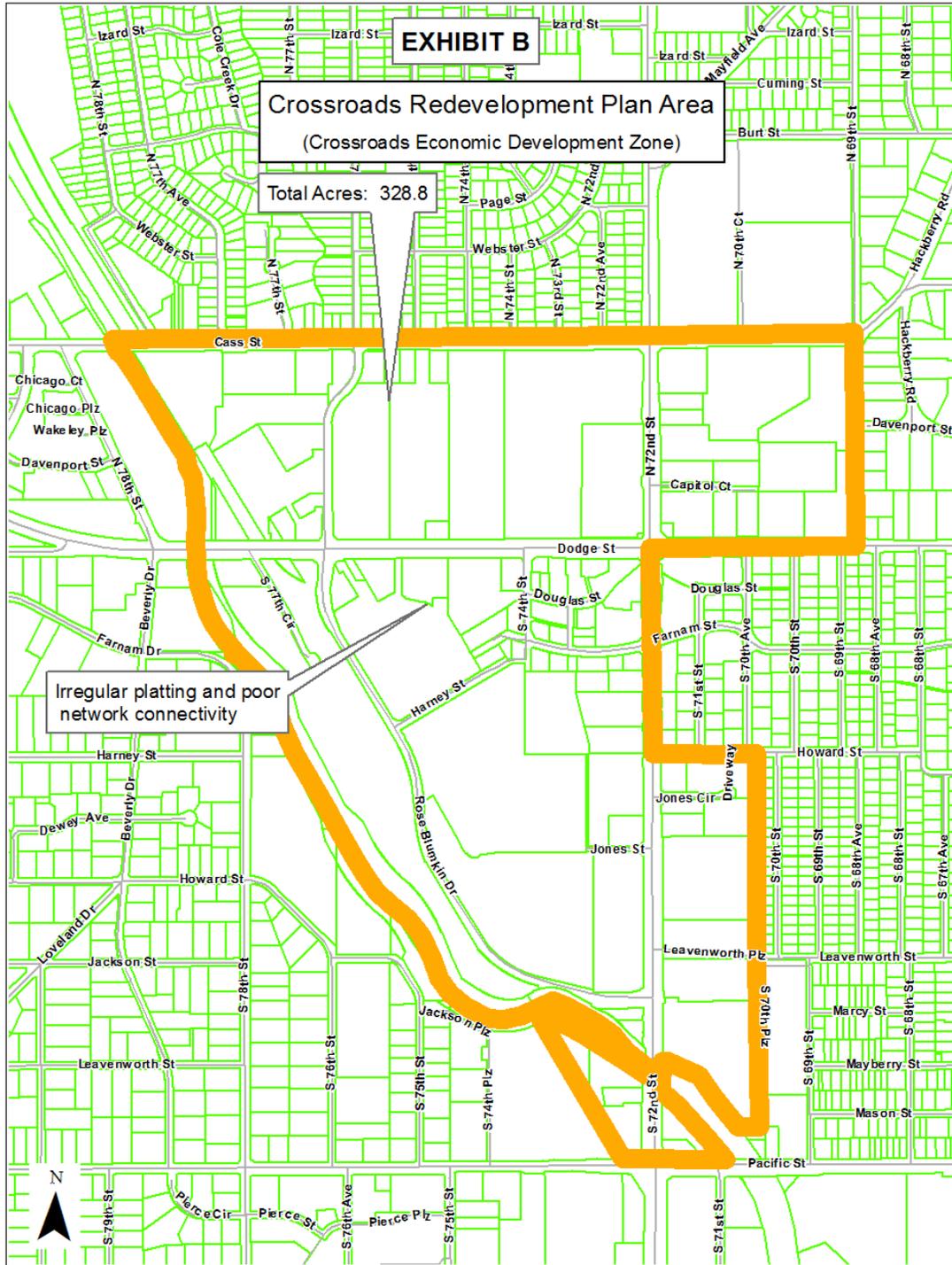
1. The City will utilize tax increment financing pursuant to Sections 18-2147 through 18-2150 of the Nebraska Community Development Law to the maximum extent possible to assist with but not limited to the financing of land acquisition, demolition, utility relocation, offsetting environmental and survey costs, architectural and engineering related to the redevelopment of this site, and the installation of public improvements. This Crossroads Area Redevelopment Plan contemplates specific project plans being presented to achieve the redevelopment and revitalization of the CEDZ.
2. The City will consider, investigate and implement additional sources of revenue for capital costs associated with redevelopment including, but not limited to, the prioritization of projects within the Capital Improvement Program, State tax incentives and public-private partnerships.
3. The City will provide subdivision overlay regulations to specifically provide for the creation of pedestrian oriented right-of-way standards, block patterns and platting requirements for the Redevelopment Area.
4. Consider the use of other economic incentives such as Enhanced Employment Area and NE Transformational Tourism and Redevelopment Act.

Land Acquisition

Due to the ad hoc nature of development, the existing configuration of parcels is irregular and inappropriately scaled to achieve long range policy objectives. The assembly and transfer of property into the proper and necessary arrangements define the single most challenging aspect to the redevelopment of the Crossroads Redevelopment Area. Acquisition and reassembly of land requires significant up-front capital and can also be a very time consuming endeavor that can postpone redevelopment indefinitely. Without facilitated and coordinated land assembly and distribution it is likely that redevelopment will occur on a parcel by parcel basis without benefit of achieving a larger collective synergy.

Land assembly is primarily necessary in order to reconfigure infrastructure providing more efficient connectivity and distribution of services. Developing an efficient network of streets, service ways and utilities requires coordinated land development. Having the capacity and means to assembly land is critical to the success of redevelopment.

Exhibit B – Existing Parcel Configuration



As a means to facilitate land acquisition and assembly the City should assist qualified projects in the Redevelopment Area, pursuant to its powers under the Nebraska Community Development Law in the following ways:

1. The city will consider, investigate and implement additional means of facilitating land acquisition and assembly of parcels for redevelopment including but not limited to land banking, securing rights of first refusal on strategic properties and engaging in public-private partnerships.
2. The City will use its power of eminent domain, if necessary, pursuant to the authority granted it by Sections 18-2107 and 18-2122 of the Nebraska Community Development Law, to assemble property within Redevelopment Area.

Planning and Zoning

Urban Design

Building design and placement are also a critical aspect of the design and creation of urban places. Buildings and site design features are considered integral to the formation of dense urban environments, specifically the ground level adjacent to public ways and orientation of building access. Buildings generally “front” public ways and provide access from multiple locations at the pedestrian level. Building design cannot be disassociated from street design as they work collectively to create the comprehensive environment. Current zoning for the Redevelopment Area does not adequately address the design and placement of buildings. Subsequent development, if not adequately addressed, could jeopardize long range goals for the area.

Access and Parking

An important distinction between existing patterns of development and a compact urban form is that the creation of compact urban environments, by definition, results in a “district”. Districts are further characterized by high a proportion of pedestrian activity between specific businesses or destinations within the district similar to traditional downtown environments. Within a district, a large portion of vehicle parking is provided with a nominal amount of direct access to businesses. Within an urban district, one can generally expect to walk the remaining 300-500 feet to a specific destination. This last leg of the journey is often similar in length to traversing large expanses of parking in conventional shopping areas however it is designed with higher standards for pedestrian activity. Provisions for special needs such as handicap parking, service, and deliveries are also included.

Development designed to provide for vehicular access to individual business rather than access to the district as a whole creates a downward pressure to building density and erodes the value of the urban model. Excessive amounts of surface parking and low density, single use buildings are inconsistent with the objectives and goals of the Master Plan and needs to be addressed.

Density

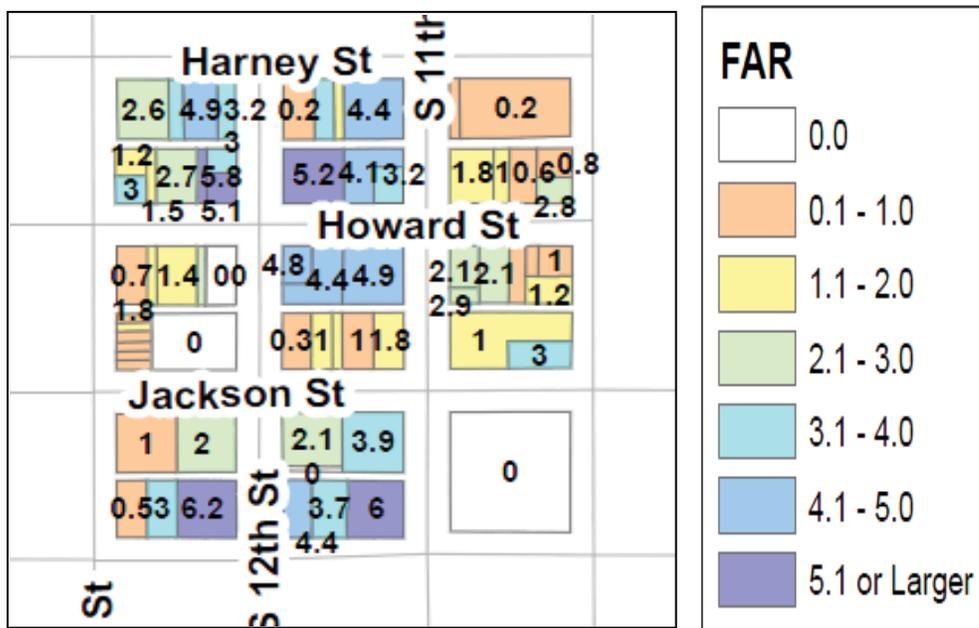
Public infrastructure and services are provided to developed areas of the City and paid for by various forms of public funds. The cost of such infrastructure is directly proportional to the geographic distribution of the infrastructure or service. Low density horizontally disbursed development has a higher proportion of public expense than compact urban areas. High capacity arterials without benefit of a dense grid of streets, extensive distribution of power and sewers, police, police/fire, public transportation and schools all contributed to costly infrastructure to serve low density development and in some cases the costs are higher than the tax revenue received. The Omaha Master Plan calls for the strategic investment of public capital to provide higher efficiency, lower public expense, an increase density and a sustainable municipal overhead. Current zoning for the Redevelopment Area does not include any provision to achieve the density recommended by the goals of the Master Plan.

Goal 5 in the Environment Element, Urban Form and Transportation provides more specific recommendations by suggesting that the City should “Establish true mixed use nodes that integrate residential activity centers, commercial development, and employment focuses into highly connected nuclei.” It further states in Goal 5.1:

“Establish both minimum and maximum percentages of land that can be placed in any one overall use category (e.g. residential, office, commercial, and industrial) within mixed use areas designated by the comprehensive plan or within mixed use development proposals.”

The Crossroads Redevelopment Area has significant potential for increased density. Density of development is traditionally measured in terms of a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) which equals the total building square footage divided by the total site square footage. An FAR of less than one is considered low density. Comparing the design, density and land use of existing and recently constructed mixed-use urban environments in Omaha illustrates the potential for increased density. Following are illustrations (Figures 1-4) of FAR densities for four existing districts; the Old Market District, Midtown Crossing, Aksarben Village and the Crossroads Redevelopment Area.

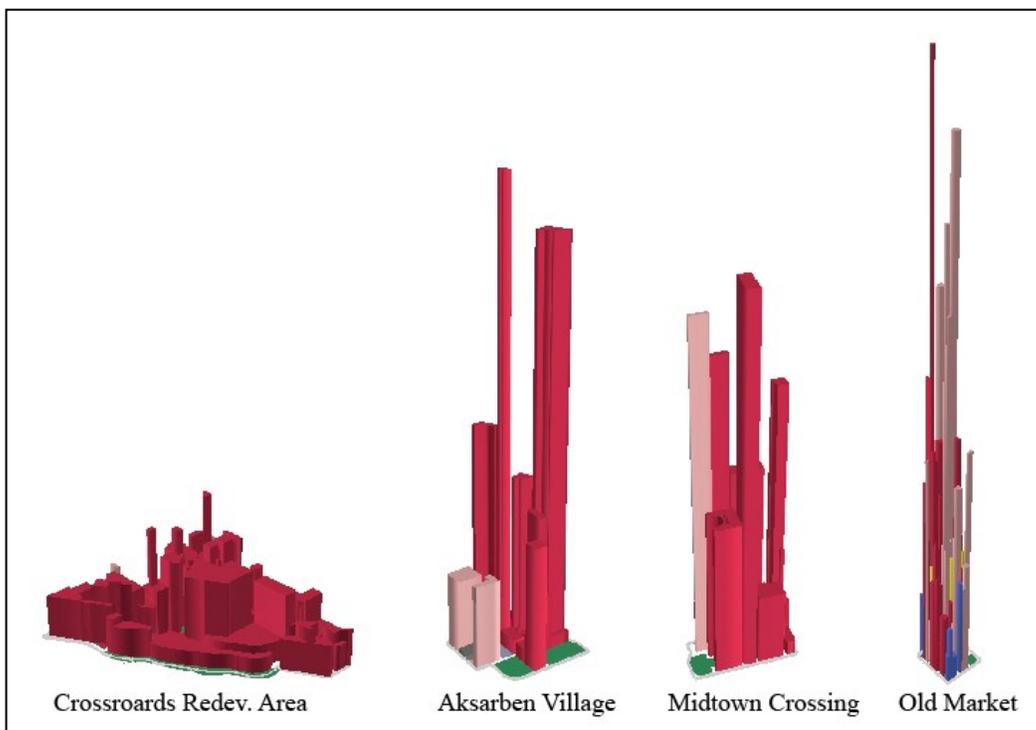
Figure 1 – Old Market FAR



Land Value and Tax Revenue

The value of land is directly proportional to higher density and a higher FAR; as the developable area increases, so does the land value. A higher tax base per acre also provides for a higher quality of infrastructure and services. As a strategy for achieving a more sustainable fiscal outlook, higher density redevelopment is required for certain parts of the city. Such areas should be located strategically in “nodes” and achieve a higher standard of design quality to more satisfactorily provide for the higher density of people, buildings and activities. The Crossroads Redevelopment Area is one such node with a central, strategic location and significant capacity for increased density. The illustration in Figure 5 shows corresponding valuation per acre in four mixed-use development districts previously illustrated. By not controlling density the city does not have the means to increase property valuation, increase tax base to assist funding the aging and inadequate infrastructure in the Crossroads Redevelopment Area.

Figure 5 – Valuation per Acre



As a means to achieve the goals of the Master Plan and facilitate the highest and best use for the Crossroads Redevelopment Area the Planning Department should exercise its authority and powers to provide for the following:

1. Provide district wide urban design guidelines and regulations via overlay zoning calibrated to achieve high quality urban design and meet the objectives of the Master Plan.
2. Provide “complete street” design standards throughout the Redevelopment Area to provide for the safe and efficient movement of all modes of travel.

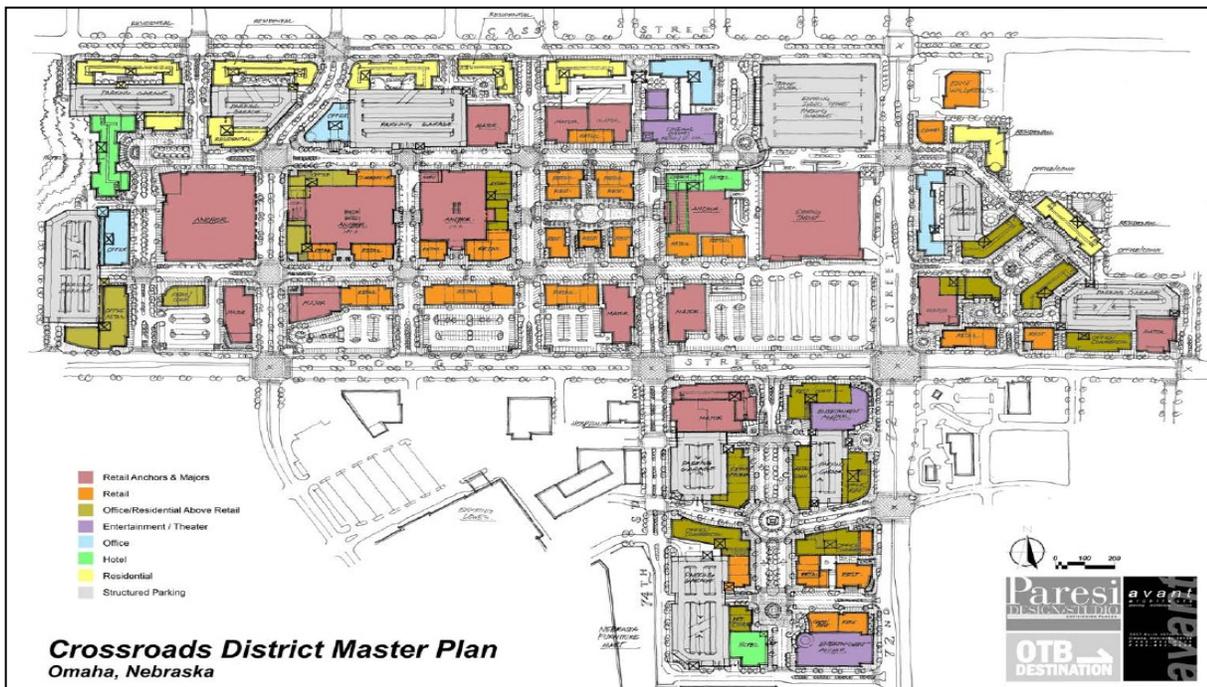
1. Consider, investigate and implement, if feasible, parking requirements that facilitate the achievement of higher densities of development and may include reducing parking minimums and establishing parking maximums for surface parking lots, and requiring structured parking for large developments.
2. Consider, investigate and implement if feasible, the creation of district wide parking structures paid in part or whole by parking revenue bonds.
3. Consider, investigate and implement if feasible, minimum densities of development by means of establishing floor area ratios (FAR) for new development to achieve density goals of the Master Plan.

Compliance with the Community Development Law

The area meets the requirements of the Nebraska Community Development Law and qualifies for the submission of an application for the utilization of Tax Increment Financing to cover costs associated with project development as submitted for approval through the Tax Increment Financing process. The project is in compliance with the Master Plan, appropriate ordinances and development regulations of the City.

Conclusion

The Crossroads Redevelopment Area is poised for significant redevelopment. The vision and objectives portrayed the Master Plan imagines a highly vibrant, mixed-use regional destination providing jobs, retail and entertainment, housing and public facilities showcasing Omaha as a first-choice city on a national stage. However, this area also bears the possible threat of devolving into a deeper state of decline and blight for the city, exhibiting homogeneous, low density auto oriented development without benefit or example of a greater community value. To achieve a higher and best use, development for the area will be required to be managed on a civic scale and cannot be achieved by actions of individuals or organizations alone. A combination of thoughtful guidelines and regulations, proactive planning and capital investment and unprecedented public and private cooperation will be required. The purpose of this plan is to initiate the process of successful redevelopment and provide a legacy of high quality urban design for the Crossroads Redevelopment Area and the City of Omaha.



Conceptual Development Scenario