

HIGHWAY 5 / NORTH RIVER MASTER PLAN
PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE
DECEMBER 19, 2007
OPEN HOUSE REPORT

A public Open House was held at the Blank Park Zoo on December 19, 2007. Attendees were introduced to the planning process for the Highway 5/North River area plan, the long-range nature of the plan, and the initial concepts being discussed by the project advisory committee. The rest of the open house was used for attendees to review and comment on display boards illustrating the major themes from the initial discussions and direction in the planning process.

The stations presented both graphic and narrative elements intended to prompt comment. In addition to pictures of similar development types representative of the Character Area, narrative was provided in three sections:

- **Character Area Description** – The general description of the area used to conceptualize the predominant development patterns and land uses that would be promoted in this general vicinity.
- **Guiding Principle “Checklist”** - Assumptions on how the Character Area, and development according to the prototypical development pattern could further the overall Guiding Principles developed by the project Steering Committee to guide the entire planning process.
- **Considerations...for Comment** - Observations intended to stimulate further comment from the public. These are either anticipated issues that must be addressed or overcome, questions on if the pattern accurately or best meets the Guiding Principles, or other considerations that test the feasibility or public acceptance of implications that may result from developing according to the development patterns typical of that Character Area.

Included is a summary of the material used to inform and prompt comment at each station. This is followed by the written public comments received at the meeting, in their entirety. This, along with other public input opportunities will be used to inform the project Steering Committee, and assist in their direction on future steps in the planning process.

STATION 1 - VISION, VALUES, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, CHARACTER AREAS (GENERALLY)

The Vision, Values and Guiding Principles, and the Character Areas Development Framework Map with descriptions of each Character Area were on display at this station. This station provided a broad overview of the entire project area, and solicited input on the overall direction of the project as a whole.

Public Comments:

- Better transitions from ag to urban uses over time, preservation of ag long-term in many areas, compatible uses and development near areas, need to more carefully balance prime ag vs. prime development if they are the same
- Environmental protection can and should allow for row crop and alternative agriculture – some of the highest csr in the state is found in this area – farms can be a destination, wineries can be educational, etc.
- The vision statement starts off as “Des Moines future” for sustainable development – it seems to at the fore leave out those persons who live in the study area – the vision statement should be reworded to include those from the study area and the statement should fairly represent their vision for sustainable development as well
- You have no idea how big the flood plain is along the North River
- When we are annexed will I be able to afford to live here? – will be forced to sell to make room for development – love the peace of the country – going to have to move
- Like to see all development embrace sustainable principles (i.e. USGBC guidelines for buildings, particularly commercial) – it appears this is the case per your guiding principles – please keep this in your guiding principles going forward
- Primary vision for northern Warren County should be to preserve all farmland – the coming economic crisis and depletion of our energy sources behoove us to stop urban sprawl and consolidate population densities in existing urban areas
- If this land is annexed to Des Moines and a transit zone developed with high density urban type housing will I still be able to pay the taxes required to support this change?
- The river area or floodway may need to be larger and more generous, also the area surrounding this area needs to keep or build more – enough growth to protect this natural process, also trails are important to residents in area

STATION 2 - DESTINATION CHARACTER AREA

Description:

The area for Destination development was selected because of its adjacency to Highway 5 and its proximity to both 65 and 69 Highways. The Destination area is intended as a holding area for the potential of a unique destination element in the region. This is an area that could be very tourist oriented with support uses such as hotel, entertainment, office, and commercial.

Guiding Principles "Checklist":

- Mobility:** *The destination area is strategically located in the Des Moines metropolitan area with convenient highway access and could include future transit extensions – particularly if a TOD is developed in the character area further south.*
- Community Character:** *The destination area enjoys visibility from Highway 5 and proximity to the North River floodway and flood plain, potentially allowing for a strong incorporation of natural amenities into the campus character and design.*
- Economic Vitality:** *The concept of the destination area is centered on a one-of-a-kind experience or place. Often these types of places contribute to regional economic vitality due to their relative competitive edge and large draw to the area.*
- Environmental Performance:** *The destination area includes a major portion of a watershed sub-basin, and presents the potential for an integrated, regional storm water management plan, rather than site-by-site detention/retention measures.*

"Considerations...for Comment":

- Mobility:** *Destinations by their nature draw people from the region and beyond. How can any of the destination development concepts you are envisioning serve the "transportation choices" and "enhanced mobility" values of the vision statement?*
- Community Character:** *Do the destination areas you are envisioning signify a unique character of the community or region it is in, and if so what unique qualities of this area and region should a "destination" emphasize?*
- Economic Vitality:** *Destinations often provide significant economic impacts for a region, particularly if they have the competitive edge of offering a one-of-a-kind experience. Given that future enhancements are being considered for the zoo area nearby, are there any destination-type draws for this area that could support those efforts or be distinct from those efforts?*
- Environmental Performance:** *Often destinations can offer experiential opportunities in association with natural characteristics of the area. Are there any natural features in this area could lend to this type of experience-based, and more natural development?*

Public Comments:

- There is a real storm water problem in this area, it would be nicer if the destination area could be closer to the arena, capital, Drake, sports, ball field, etc.
- Go for it – the sooner the better
- This area is Warren County, not the Des Moines metro
- This is not the Des Moines metro area, it is Warren County
- This meeting is a formality – the City of Des Moines isn't interested in people, it is interested in money – stay out of Warren County
- Thanks for meeting, please keep us informed
- No to Des Moines – you have a long way to go – Des Moines has to fix a lot of their problems before taking on more – sewer, road drainage, keeping business on the north side and south side; DART transit has to improve to be able to accommodate what they are neglecting now before planning for more area
- We need to understand how Des Moines has jurisdiction for this study

STATION 3 - CAMPUS CHARACTER AREA

Description:

The area for the Campus character was selected because of its adjacency to Highway 5 and its proximity to the airport, and 28 Highway, Fleur Drive and 9th Street interchanges. The Campus area will consist of corporate office parks or educational / research campuses with small scale supporting commercial uses.

Guiding Principles "Checklist":

- Mobility:** The campus area is strategically located in the Des Moines metropolitan area with convenient highway access and proximity to the airport, and an employment centers serve as a transit destination – possibly justifying further transit investment in this area.
- Community Character:** The campus area enjoys visibility from Highway 5 and proximity to the North River floodway and flood plain, potentially allowing for a strong incorporation of distinctive natural amenities into the campus character and design.
- Economic Vitality:** The campus area has an existing supportive infrastructure framework, and can lend to a jobs/housing balance if population grows in the southern metropolitan area.
- Environmental Performance:** The campus area includes a major portion of a watershed sub-basin, and presents the potential for an integrated, regional stormwater management plan, rather than site-by-site detention/retention measures.

"Considerations...for Comment":

- Mobility:** Campuses can tend to be automobile-oriented due to a dominant use (employment). What other development characteristics that should be considered to ensure that pedestrian, bicycle, and transit use is emphasized or supported?
- Community Character:** Campuses and employment uses on a "ring" or loop highway are not inherently unique and exist in many communities. What characteristics could make a campus environment distinctly different from other significant employment destinations in suburban Des Moines or other regions?
- Economic Vitality:** Campuses require a critical mass of major class A office space, and the regional market for this type of growth is limited. What are the characteristics of employment uses that justify this location, as opposed to downtown and the TOD Character area – each of which also need significant employment bases to be successful?
- Environmental Performance:** Campuses tend to have a regional draw. What strategies in addition to transit accessibility should be explored to ensure that this type of development pattern does not induce greater regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMTs)?

Public Comments:

- You'll create higher tax value if you place around the army post road.
- Post office buildings downtown or west of airport – didn't buy land to be in the middle of office building – property value will go to the dumps – keep offices downtown or west where they started – agree to keep it peaceful /no office buildings
- Would like to recommend Middle South Creek be designated a green area – between Fleur and R63 – this is a flood plain
- Part of the area is wet land – should build west of the airport – land is better for building – study is wrong – around 63rd north is best
- Campus area is too big – should be a mile or less away from interstate
- Believe you should consider routing Fleur south of Hwy. 5 in a southwest direction directly south of Hwy. 5 to connect at Beardsley and R57 Hwy. – this will relieve the northeast corner of Norwalk and improve access to south Warren County
- Prefer this land on Beardsley remain farmland and residential
- Oppose development of residential/commercial/business ventures right up to the banks of the North River – a wide green space on both sides of the river should be preserved for pedestrian, bike and horse trails, as well as for wildlife preservation and clean water
- The guiding principals address the idea of development of the area – do not want land developed – enjoy the fact that you can drive a few minutes and be out in the country – to turn this beautiful piece of land into lots for corporate office buildings is something do not want
- Right in the middle and do not like it – develop Des Moines first north of Hwy. 5
- Use up existing office space that is empty before building new offices
- What you are trying to do is good blend of all – do not forget building a tax base so people can afford to live there
- Move the campus area to west of Clover Hill and split it with R63 and go west to the R&T and Ipers area

STATION 4 - NORTH RIVER NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AREA

Description:

The North River Neighborhoods are located in the western portions of the planning area. This area anticipates several new neighborhoods arranged in a compact, walkable pattern, with a small-scale commercial, mixed-use, or civic destination (school, park or recreation amenity) as the focal point of each neighborhood and within walking distances of most residences within that neighborhood. These neighborhoods may display variety of development patterns and physical characteristics based upon the context of the various sub-areas and sites created by the framework corridors and environmental conditions.

Guiding Principles “Checklist”:

- Mobility:** *The neighborhood model assumes more of people's typical daily needs can be met by walking or biking, in addition to car trips.*
- Community Character:** *The neighborhood model assumes an improved “public realm” with a variety of distinct streetscapes and opens spaces as the focus of development – often vastly different among individual neighborhoods.*
- Economic Vitality:** *The neighborhood model supports smaller scale, often local businesses within close proximity to patrons.*
- Environmental Performance:** *The neighborhood model can provide for the same, or greater development in a smaller footprint, and integrates important natural features as an important focus of development.*

“Considerations...for Comment”:

- Mobility:** *A highly connected street network is required to support the neighborhood model. What strategies exist to preserve the potential and develop these connections overtime, while recognizing the interim and longer-term viability of existing uses?*
- Community Character:** *Housing types are often diverse in the neighborhood model. What ways do you think are appropriate techniques to integrate diverse housing (smaller lots, townhomes, multi-family) into new neighborhoods?*
- Economic Vitality:** *The neighborhood model anticipates neighborhood-serving retail as a focal point of adjacent neighborhoods. How can the potential for these businesses be incorporated with the pace of residential growth (“rooftops”) in the vicinity, as opposed to interim retail uses that may be attracted to the area.*
- Environmental Performance:** *The neighborhood model provides for a larger amount of growth (residential and retail) on a smaller footprint. Assuming the North River Neighborhoods Character Area may accommodate over 50 years of Des Moines forecasted growth, what phasing strategies, transitions to new development, and interim uses are appropriate while preserving growth potential?*

Public Comments:

- Don't want to see development that results in an area that looks like Merle Hay Rd. – tired and ill-kept – while Clive and WDSM have done an okay job on developing new land in certain residential areas it looks like cookie cutter/slop up entry level houses – sensitive to the area being used as a support system for the commercial areas – Norwalk already has high property taxes and this development seems to result in Des Moines getting the high revenue tax base (commercial development while outside the area may end up getting the low tax revenue base (residential development) which requires higher infrastructure expense/needs
- Put city money into Southridge Mall, Army Post Rd. and Fleur north of Army – use buses to transport people to above businesses – it should handle 75 years of growth for Des Moines
- Not in support of this planned land use whatsoever – if you could convince me that this is something other than a vehicle with which developers will make several million dollars and we'll be left with higher taxes then maybe I could think different
- Norwalk is in need of commercial development to lower the tax burden on residential property owners – your North River Neighborhoods sound largely residential in nature and consume most/all of Norwalk – consider more large-user/higher density commercial development in the Norwalk city limits

STATION 5 - RIDGELINE NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AREA

Description:

The Ridgeline Neighborhoods are primarily south of the North River. Topographic, vegetative and hydrologic features are integrated into the development pattern through clustering techniques that preserve these features as the determining framework elements both visually and physically. The patterns for the development would be determined on a sub-area and site basis in a manner that protects and takes advantage of the natural conditions. These areas are predominantly residential, although very small-scale commercial uses that support the immediate neighborhoods or niche or destination businesses that emphasize the rustic or natural character of the area may be appropriate as focal points for neighborhoods or housing clusters.

Guiding Principles “Checklist”:

- Mobility:** Organization of neighborhoods around a system of greenways and open spaces will present significant opportunities to connect areas to a regional bike and trail system.
- Community Character:** Significant opportunities exist to incorporate topographic and hydrologic features into any new development.
- Economic Vitality:** The Ridgeline Area anticipates a different format of residential development and neighborhoods. This may diversify housing opportunities and can enable development potential while still achieving natural aesthetic and environmental goals for the area.
- Environmental Performance:** Lower intensity of development presents an opportunity to identify and preserve the most ecologically important areas of the Ridgeline Area.

“Considerations...for Comment”:

- Mobility:** The Ridgeline Area assumes a predominantly low-density, residential development pattern, with little commercial support. What other strategies exist to improve mobility for existing and future residents of this area assuming this more automobile-oriented pattern?
- Community Character:** The Ridgeline Area anticipates that sub-watersheds (framed by waterways and drainage courses) will be the organizing framework for different neighborhoods and open space systems. What other distinctive natural features exist in this area, and what will be necessary to enhance or preserve these natural features?
- Economic Vitality:** Larger-lot, detached homes make up the predominant development type for the Ridgeline Area. What – if any – other complimentary development could provide a fiscal balance that ensures appropriate community infrastructure and services in this area?
- Environmental Performance:** Residential development – in terms of location, planning and building techniques – is responsible for much of our living habits and energy consumption. What techniques and innovations could be explored to minimize energy consumption of current and future residents of this area?

Public Comments:

- You call it guidelines however this will develop into zoning regulations and plans for building – do not want to live in developed area
- Where, if anywhere, is the balance of interests with agriculture? At no point during the presentation was this ever mentioned – or is it a given that agriculture has no interest
- If the 40% of the open space in Ridgeline area is left to row crop production it might cash flow as an idea

STATION 6 - URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AREA

Description:

Located north of the Highway 5 corridor this area is seen as an extension of existing and planned urban development patterns. The primary local road pattern shall be a grid system with a high level of connectivity. The Urban Neighborhoods should consist of mixed density residential and neighborhood support commercial, institutional and employment uses all integrated into the urban pattern.

Guiding Principles “Checklist”:

- Mobility:** The neighborhood model assumes more of people's typical daily needs can be met by walking or biking, in addition to car trips.
- Community Character:** The neighborhood model relies on an improved “public realm” with a variety of distinct streetscapes and opens spaces as the focus of development – often vastly different among individual neighborhoods.
- Economic Vitality:** The neighborhood model supports smaller scale, often local businesses within close proximity to patrons.
- Environmental Performance:** The neighborhood model can provide for the same, or greater development in a smaller footprint, and integrates important natural features as an important focus of development.

“Considerations...for Comment”:

- Mobility:** The neighborhood model requires greater street connectivity – particularly at the Collector and Local Street level. In the Urban Neighborhoods Character Area, where are logical connections to be made for future streets?
- Community Character:** A pedestrian-oriented retail center is an essential focal point of the neighborhood model. In the Urban Neighborhoods Character Area, what one or two locations are best suited for this?
- Economic Vitality:** The neighborhood model stresses businesses that support needs of neighborhoods – ideally those within walking distance. What strategies and techniques should be explored to place to build market support (residences) for neighborhood oriented businesses?
- Environmental Performance:** The neighborhood model stresses organizing neighborhoods around significant environmental features. What features exist in the Urban Neighborhoods Character Area that could become a natural framework for future neighborhoods?
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Public Comments:

- Would rather not see cookie cutter housing developments take over, but at the same time do realize that development of this land is inevitable, so when it does occur – would really like the idea of preserving as much of the environment as possible by including trails, parks and natural areas – if you're going to develop think green please
- Make more high density housing apartments, etc., move retail to Southridge, some high rise offices should be in the area
- Really don't need anymore retail stores in the area – why not utilize the Southridge area?, Trails to Southridge – bike paths, walking paths in the surrounding area
- Before they can cut down anymore trees in the SW 9th/Canly Line/Cloverhill Rd. area they need to put drainage tubes in creeks, etc. so that the silt doesn't run into storm sewers and sewer system, these areas need to be upgraded
- Please provide list of those homeowners that are on the committee – would like to contact them
- Before any new development can occur in the area next to Cloverhill Dr. the water lines/sewer lines all need to be fixed (slip lined) – that was promised years ago but it never happened – don't promise things that you can't hold up on year end
- Put on city website so accessible

STATION 7 - TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER AREA

Description:

The general area for a development with a Transit-Oriented-Development (TOD) emphasis. Policies in this area anticipate a compact, walkable pattern of development, but on a large-scale and with densities that support the growth of transit routes through the area and a transit station as a focal point of development – essentially assuming the characteristics of a new small town. This location was selected because it is along a major north/south route (Highway 69) which is envisioned as a future transit corridor from Indianola to Downtown Des Moines. This area would include mixed-use development and residential formats in an urban style.

Guiding Principles “Checklist”:

- Mobility:** TODs are necessarily pedestrian-friendly as well as transit-friendly – ALL transit trips begin with pedestrians.
- Community Character:** TODs include a wide diversity of housing types: condos, apartments, townhouses, and small-lot detached homes. TODs also rely on a significantly high design quality of the public realm (streetscapes and open spaces) as the focal points of development.
- Economic Vitality:** TODs can be more adaptable to short-term economic development cycles, as the development pattern does not rely heavily on one particular retail or office format, rather it incorporates these uses into a fixed, transit-supportive pattern and format.
- Environmental Performance:** TODs accommodate the same amount of development in a much smaller overall development footprint.

“Considerations...for Comment”:

- Mobility:** TODs require a critical mass of transit trip origins (residential density) and destinations (employment/entertainment uses) be developed in association with a significant transit investment. What strategies are necessary to “grow” transit to this region and preserve the potential for this type of development timed with transit growth?
- Community Character:** TODs do not require a comparatively large land area – typically 15 to 25 acres encompasses the Mixed Use Station Area (although surrounding, supportive neighborhoods are larger). What can be done to phase and transition a future TOD with existing uses that also maintain longer-term viability.
- Economic Vitality:** TODs require a significant employment component, but also double as a retail/entertainment hub. What should be done to ensure the viability of these other supportive uses vs. the conventional retail / entertainment uses and formats that may be attracted to this area in the interim.
- Environmental Performance:** TODs provide a smaller, compact area of more intense development. What locations within this Character Area (or the entire study area) are most appropriate for employing this type of development pattern?

Public Comments:

- The highest and best use for agricultural land is to produce food, the less residential and commercial development there is on presently farmed land the more benefit to the citizenry as a whole
- Currently the electric service is very unstable in this area – any development would require a major overhaul
- Tree cover in this area should be preserved
- Don't think the TOD is necessary in the future – replaces ag developed ground with high economic generation for high cost and high economic benefit – the benefit and cost difference is very low
- The beauty of the natural environment/rolling hills should be protected along 65/69 from Des Moines to Indianola, TOD's along the Hwy. 65/69 corridor forever change the area – this is part of the natural environment viewed by thousands each day – creating high density TOD may be necessary but maintaining open space is equally important
- Not clear to me if Rt. 28 south into Norwalk is potential transit route – consider if not, could connect Rt. 28 to Army Post or to Fleur somehow – go to airport and then downtown, car traffic on Rt. 28 is increasing steadily as residential booms in Norwalk and south – transit here includes bike paths – currently Norwalk not connected to downtown without riding miles out of the way to access trails – no shoulders on main roads, no sidewalks
- What happens to the Scotch Ridge Church (a national historic site) – why should we believe that a transit zone will actually provide useable service to residents when the city of Des Moines doesn't have a workable plans for bus transportation within its present limits? Current bus routes are zig-zag, infrequent and inconvenient – transit = bus? train? automobiles?