

V. REVITALIZATION & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A. REVITALIZATION CONCEPTS

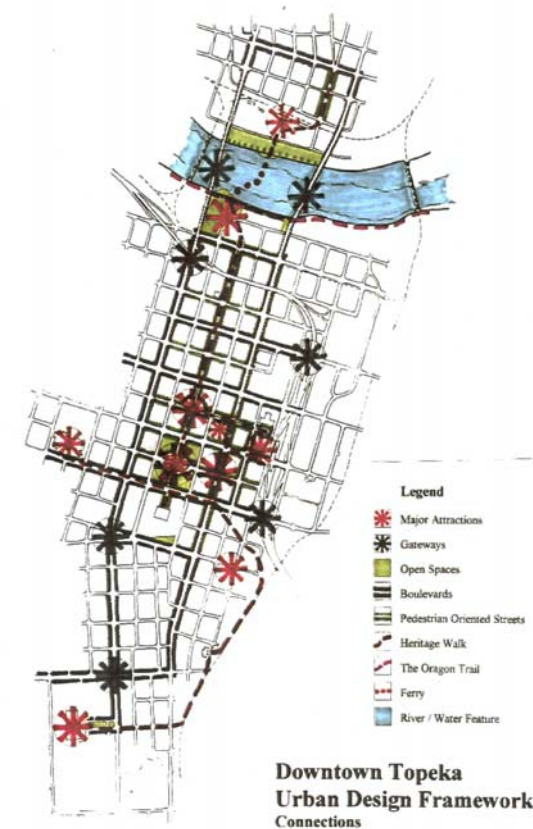
#1. Destination Known: Linkages Within A Metropolitan Hub

Historic North Topeka and its environs are reminiscent of a “small town” atmosphere. Of course this is what Mr. Laurent and Mr. Curtis may have had in mind when they laid out the charming town of Eugene. The area was planned and has functioned to be somewhat independent at times from the rest of the Topeka, even at some expense. This subordinate role in the city has been reinforced over time by post-flood zoning plans and lack of Interstate access. For revitalization efforts to succeed, Historic North Topeka needs to be viewed more as a destination that is an extension or northern anchor of downtown and therefore, the region as a whole. The recently proposed Downtown Topeka Urban Design Framework (*see right*) illustrates this concept within the context of an overall development framework for Downtown.

#2. Focus Area Synergy: Mix, Mass, and Mesh

Successful revitalization of an area occurs where the total becomes greater than the sum of its parts. For example, somebody fixing-up their house stimulates others to fix up their house and pretty soon the entire block is fixed up and everybody on the block receives a greater return on their investment. This so-called synergy is a dynamic of well-planned and targeted investments into a defined area.

By definition, no singular project (e.g., Great Overland Station Museum) can be a true “catalyst” for an area’s revitalization unless there are two



or more different elements it is in contact with. In a downtown or mixed-use district, an essential *mix* of ingredients (employees, residents, customers, tourists, etc.) in sufficient amounts/densities (critical *mass*) need to be in contact (the *mesh*) with one another to enable true synergistic effects to take place. (*Urban Land Institute, 1998*)

Almost all of the Plan's **Focus Area** – south of Morse Street and west of Topeka Boulevard – represents a 5-minute walking radius from the center of the business district at N. Kansas Avenue and Laurent Street. The compact nature and diversity of potential uses and destinations in this area can make for highly successful spin-off investment. *Revitalization strategies and investments should be primarily concentrated within the Focus Area so as to achieve the greatest impact possible.*

#3. Standards: Take Pride in Assets

Historic North Topeka conveys an identity that is embodied in its very name. Without promoting, preserving, or taking pride in the historic assets and characteristics that make this area unique, revitalization efforts are sure to fail. It has been noted that there is nothing wrong with Historic North Topeka that can't be fixed with what is right about Historic North Topeka. Actions that detract from the integrity of its historic character or "small town" appeal will only serve to make revitalization of the area much more difficult. New development should compliment, not detract, from existing styles. In addition, new investment will be most encouraged in the long term when standards are in place to retain the area's unique character.

#4. Focal Point: Great Overland Station

The old Union Pacific Depot, now known as the Great Overland Station, is by far the most well-known and visible landmark in the planning and Focus Area. The Station's current renovation as a museum to celebrate railroad heritage in Kansas is a high profile project with great significance for Topeka and Kansas as a whole. It is the largest source of current identity for the area and therefore, new development and initial revitalization scenarios should be linked to its "coat-tails". It is a source of great pride for North Topekans who own much of Topeka's railroad heritage. Actions and improvements needed to make the Station/Museum project work in conjunction with the business district must be pursued as a priority since those will only help to open up other catalytic opportunities and lead to ripple affects throughout the Focus Area.

#5. Brownfields to Greenfields: A Rediscovered Waterfront

The nearly 300+ acres between the levee and the railroad tracks is largely comprised of open industrial uses or underutilized open space. An opportunity to return the riverfront to the public for their enjoyment and recreation exists

that could provide another point of entry for Topekans and non-Topekans to rediscover their heritage and what makes this community so special. The riverfront is the scene of many historic events and sits at the forefront to the city skyline. Re-discovering the waterfront and making it user-friendly to the public will only further a re-defined image for North Topeka and Topeka as a whole.

B. URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Why do some places affect us so mysteriously and forcefully while others don't? The urban design framework describes an "anatomy" of place and how spatial elements can be enhanced to function together for successful revitalization (see [Map #11](#)). It describes elements of our everyday environments that can alter the quality and perception of an area. Urban design "clues" for the Focus Area are broken down into traditional neighborhood design, districts, edges, views, landmarks, streetscapes, and paths.

1. Traditional Neighborhood Design

Like so many new ideas, traditional neighborhood design (TND) is not new at all. It is a revival of pre-automobile community building precepts that dominated American city landscapes and some of the country's most cherished neighborhoods developed prior to World War II. It is being revived by architects, planners, and developers across the country as an alternative to suburban development where "cookie cutter" tract homes and detachment from one's neighbors have left a growing number of households yearning for a more community-minded option. TND elements are reminiscent of small towns or villages that capture a real sense of community. Historic North Topeka is blessed with many of these same elements of a traditional neighborhood since it was originally laid out as a small town itself. Identifying, promoting, and expressing these elements are a major factor in reviving this "new" image and returning market stability to property values. Some of the more relevant components to TND include the following:

- **Size and density** – A complete, walkable neighborhood unit is best accommodated in an area of 40-160 acres at an average density of 5+ units per acre. This provides for a critical mass of people in close proximity to daily services and activities. The *Focus Area* is 100 acres north of the railroad tracks and manages a 5-minute walking radius from the center of the business district. However, densities are only 3.8 units/acre due to the large number of vacant lots and low density residential development.
- **Internal balance of housing, jobs, and services** – Traditional neighborhoods were developed around a full range of daily activities. Housing was the predominate use, but schools, shopping, services, work, and recreation were also in close proximity or walking distance. Over-reliance on any one non-residential use precludes the area from generating a healthy range of community activities.

- **Identifiable neighborhood center** – A civic focus and informal gathering place for residents/users of the area fosters community socializing, celebrations, and identity. Garfield Park is utilized in this vein with a park, shelter house, community center, etc. Within the Focus Area, the Kansas Avenue business district is an activity node, but it lacks a true common area that is not street related.
- **Streets for both people and cars** – Neighborhood streets are public places meant to comfortably accommodate all forms of transportation, including pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Human-scaled building types** – Small lot platting, variety of building articulations fronting the street at eye-level, and front porches that promote social interaction are types of “human-scaled” elements that generate a cohesive urban pattern.

2. Districts

Districts are classified as smaller sub-areas of a Planning Area or neighborhood that represent a cohesive grouping of like uses and character that may have physically or mentally-defined boundaries. Crossing over district boundaries should be noticeable and are typically marked by changes in land use. Districts for the Planning Area are illustrated by the land use categories in **Section IV (Land Use Plan)** and **Section V.D (North Crossings)**.

3. Edges

Edges refer to a neighborhood’s appearance at its boundaries or exterior. These are the most visibly-prominent areas of the neighborhood because they typically border heavily traveled streets and convey a continual impression of a neighborhood. Edges can be broken down into gateways and image streets/areas:

- **Gateways** – *Gateways* are a district’s “front door” into the community. They greet one’s entry into a district and give the first impression of an area. They can be designed at pedestrian or vehicle-scales and can include prominent buildings as well as landscape, signage, or focal point treatments. Major gateways are the key entry points into Historic North Topeka which occur at Quincy/Laurent, Quincy/Morse, Topeka/Gordon, and Topeka/Paramore. Secondary gateways occur at Kansas/Morse, Kansas/Gordon, Quincy/Laurent, and Topeka/Morse.
- **Image Streets/Areas** – Since streets are public spaces, the more frequently used streets act as further image identifiers of a place. The same can be said for *non-street* public spaces as well. In Historic North Topeka, key image streets include Topeka Boulevard, N. Kansas Avenue, Quincy Street, Gordon Street, and Morse Street. In addition, areas that will be more frequently

used or draw more attention of people include the area around the Great Overland Station, the riverfront (particularly as seen from the bridges), and the Garfield Park/Quincy Elementary School area.

4. Views/Landmarks

Views of visually arresting landscapes, be it a single structure, group of buildings, or natural formations, can be a transforming experience that prompts a highly positive connection to a certain place. Historic North Topeka offers several prized view-sheds that, if protected and capitalized upon, can open up new “windows” to previously obscured landmarks offering completely new experiences of place. These view-sheds include:

- **View to Capital dome** – Van Buren Street looking south of Gordon; Great Overland Station looking south
- **View to Great Overland Station** (*see picture*) – Alley between Van Buren and Jackson looking south of Gordon; Norris Street/Kansas Avenue looking west; Topeka Boulevard and Kansas Avenue bridges looking northeast and northwest, respectively; Curtis Street looking north between Jackson and Van Buren
- **View to Kansas River** – Topeka Boulevard and Kansas Avenue bridges looking northeast and northwest, respectively; top of levee looking south, east, and west; elevated view looking south of Great Overland Station
- **View to Downtown skyline** – Most north-south streets looking south between Topeka Boulevard and Kansas Avenue



5. Streetscapes– The area between the building walls and the street can be defined as the *streetscape*. With buildings traditionally parallel to the street, a streetscape is the building fronts and the street together. The character or quality of a streetscape is dependent upon the quality of the street, the buildings that front it, and the combined effect of the two. (see Sec. F - Design Guidelines)

6. Paths - (see Sec. D - Circulation Plan)

Recommendations:

TND elements can be translated into **performance measurements** that will benchmark how well the neighborhood is doing in re-establishing itself as a traditional neighborhood:

- *Increase Focus Area dwelling units by 125 units*
- *Increase land use area percentage for residential (including mixed-use residential) 26% to 40% while decreasing industrial 55% to 40% in Focus Area*
- *Develop a community-gathering place in conjunction with the Great Overland Station and Kansas Avenue business district*
- *Establish building design guidelines for residential and commercial in-fill development (see Design Guidelines under Section E)*

Other key urban design **strategies** that will take advantage of Historic North Topeka's inherent qualities include:

- *Focus revised "historic" neighborhood signage and landscape elements at major gateways; reflect higher quality development at all gateway points complimenting historic character of area.*
- *As a priority, focus major rehabilitation efforts and new in-fill development along image streets/areas while removing blighting influences.*
- *Encourage the "greening" of current brownfields that define Historic North Topeka edges, images streets/areas, gateways, or view-sheds*

C. CIRCULATION PLAN

The Plan's goals and guiding principles translate into the following major recommendations for circulation as illustrated on Map #12:

Improved Access:

- The most prominent access issue involves constructing a new interchange at Topeka Boulevard and Interstate 70 so that cars will be able to exit I-70 into N. Topeka without the difficulty of using the myriad of local street connections throughout downtown.

- A new interchange should be designed and constructed in combination with a new Topeka Boulevard Bridge superstructure that only has an expected 10-year useful life remaining. The piers are assumed to be in adequate condition.
- An access ramp from the bridge to the riverfront should be accommodated in the design to by-pass conflicts with the railroad tracks. A fly-over from Gordon Street or a ramp from the bridge to the riverfront area is not recommended prior to the bridge being rebuilt because they would only act as temporary “fixes”.
- Before the bridge is rebuilt, specially designed signage is needed to help wayfinding to the Great Overland Station and N. Kansas Avenue and should be placed at key points directing traffic to and from Gordon Street.

Heavy Truck Routing:

- The high number of heavy truck traffic trips generated by the grain elevators south of the tracks is incompatible with future land use plan for North Crossings. Two major improvements would make this acceptable: 1) a traffic light installed at Laurent and Quincy to facilitate left-turns, or 2) construction of an alternative truck route. The traffic light option is not supported by traffic engineering standards because of a lack of adequate sight distance.
- Alternative truck routes include: 1) east of Norris to Gordon, 2) east of Curtis to Porubsky, or 3) ramp off of Kansas Avenue bridge east to Curtis; the preferred route to be explored first should be a Norris to Gordon connection. Re-routing the trucks over the Kansas Avenue Bridge is recommended since the preponderance of truck trips are either created by Cargill shipping freight to their plant on the south side of the river or by trucks wanting to access I-70 at First Street.
- All heavy truck trips are occurring during 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with the majority of those occurring in the hours before and after 12 noon. Entertainment uses dependent on evening or night time activity would not be adversely affected.
- Traffic calming devices should be installed to prevent heavy truck routes from entering 800-900 blocks of N. Kansas Avenue and residential blocks; secondarily, access to other parts of North Crossings, such as the riverfront and N. Jackson should also be avoided

Parking:

- The existing parking capacity in the N. Kansas Avenue area is comprised of roughly 150 on-street spaces on N. Kansas Avenue and side streets and a 225 space parking lot (if redesigned) at the foot of the Kansas Avenue bridge.
- Various other potential parking lots could be accommodated north of the existing parking lot (200 spaces), Norris Street west (100), Norris Street east (100), and a mini-lot off of N. Kansas Avenue (25).
- If an entertainment anchor is developed, a major new parking lot is recommended off of Gordon Street between Jackson and Van Buren (400 spaces).

Pedestrian Linkages should occur...

- Over the railroad tracks approximately at Norris and Kansas (west side)
- Along the top of levee and abandoned rail lines connecting to trail system south of Kansas River; this includes connections from Kansas Avenue and Topeka Boulevard bridges
- Heritage trail development highlighting various historic points of interest in Historic North Topeka and which connects to downtown south of the river; a cross-river connection could occur along the Kansas Avenue Bridge or a ferry boat shuttle linking the proposed city park south of the river
- Along paths connecting parking lots behind storefronts to interior of N. Kansas Avenue. If these lots are privately developed, easements should be sought to reserve public paths.

*The Circulation Plan Map shows various alternatives for new roads and does not imply that they all should be constructed. Refer to **Sec. VI - Implementation** for further cost and phasing information.*

D. NORTH CROSSINGS

The mixed-used North Crossings district combines the N. Kansas Avenue business district, Great Overland Station site, riverfront, and historic blocks south of Gordon Street between Topeka Boulevard and Quincy Street into a unified theme district based on the area’s prominence in Topeka/national history. These historic “crossings” – Pappan’s Ferry established in 1849 led to Topeka’s founding and eventually helped African-Americans escape into freedom on the underground railroad, the crossing of the first train through Topeka in 1865, and the crossing of western settlers along the Oregon Trail – all took place within this geographic setting. Today, it is envisioned that this area can become a new crossings for Topekans and visitors alike to learn about this historic setting while having fun doing it. It provides an identity to be celebrated by invigorating it with a new future while still rooted in its past prominence.

The North Crossings is broken down into 2 sub-districts – the entertainment district and riverfront – that have their own potential and constraints. These sub-districts are described in detail below and their land use concepts are illustrated in [Map #13](#) and [Illustration #2](#):

1. THE ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

Any place left primarily to tourists ceases to be a real place and eventually loses its appeal even to tourists

Roberta Brandes Gratz, *The Living City*

Most mid-sized to large cities are reviving obsolete warehouse and commercial districts into “old town” mixed-use restaurant/bar, entertainment, shopping, and living areas. Whether it is Kansas City’s River Quay, Oklahoma City’s Bricktown, or Lincoln’s Haymarket, these areas all try to recreate urban marketplaces festive for tourists and locals alike. They all are intimate places steeped in history that were cut-off from the city’s central business district, but whose buildings remained intact representing opportunities to re-adapt them into new ways of enjoying our urban spaces. Once an attraction is established and commercial uses follow, a residential component is phased in making them true urban marketplaces with 24-hour activity. Topeka’s traditional downtown provides for some opportunity for this, but lacks an intimate setting or “district” that is walkable and cohesive. Although the Watertower redevelopment area is planned as a major entertainment/office/retail component at the southern end of downtown, a district has not yet evolved in Topeka that could attract and retain younger adults that would compare to Lawrence’s downtown, Manhattan’s Aggieville, or Kansas City’s Westport.

A. North Kansas Avenue

Topeka’s most adaptable area for such a mixed-use entertainment district could lie within the North Crossings centered on and around the historic 800-900 blocks of N. Kansas Avenue. Over 200,000 square feet of ground floor space exists within these two blocks of attached buildings with uses ranging from lumber warehousing to watch/clock repair shop. The district was once the hub of community of life in North Topeka, particularly prior to the 1951 flood, where residents came to shop and do business forming a vibrant north end of Topeka’s Kansas Avenue corridor. Today, it sits isolated from through traffic with a new set of users occupying the mostly intact building fronts. Its isolation is also an opportunity to maintain a pedestrian-oriented environment that is so critical. It maintains a good amount of real and perceived daytime activity due to the high number of building contractor employers, truck deliveries, and trains. The low 12% estimated vacancy rate for storefronts paints a picture not of desperation, but one of great potential if some key actions are taken to introduce more of a user-friendly theme. Property values remain low, but many active businesses remain. Several new retail businesses have recently relocated to the Avenue seeking out more retail potential. The key to further unlocking the potential of this district lies in creating an atmosphere conducive for new investment.

- **Restore and maintain historic quality and pedestrian-orientation to buildings/streetscapes.** An urban entertainment district works best where people are attracted because the place is “real”. That means keeping building forms, styles, and

infrastructure true to their original feel and building off of the peculiarities of the area (see *Design Guidelines* and [Illustration #3](#)). In addition, dwellings that have been identified as homes of past railroad engineers, etc. could be saved and threaded into museum exhibits for the Great Overland Station.

- **Seek out “destination” uses such as restaurants, micro-breweries, live entertainment, galleries, or recreational venues, that will attract non-residents.** North Topeka already has many establishments that are “institutions” of themselves (e.g., Porubsky’s, Heidleberger Cafe, Herman’s Beef and Sausage House, etc.) that if expanded or relocated to N. Kansas Avenue, would be great destinations in of themselves pulling their clientele with them. Entrepreneurs need to be encouraged to locate businesses here that can be new attractions as well.
- **Improve comfort-level.** Safety is a major concern for most people not familiar with the area. An atmosphere of safety could be created by improving streetscapes, lighting, storefronts, and visible security that can improve people’s comfort-level. Security patrols or “ambassadors” could be utilized. The best assurance for safety remains in attracting a critical mass of users.
- **Encourage adaptive re-use of buildings for residential and artist purposes.** N. Kansas Avenue commercial buildings should be encouraged to re-use second/third story space for loft apartments. Likewise, historic non-commercial structures, particularly the residences in the 800 block of Jackson Street, should be preserved if not for housing then workspace, bed and breakfast, or other viable use. Likewise, old advertising signs on buildings could be re-painted. Artist space is almost non-existent in Topeka and the buildings could be pursued for living, work, and gallery space.

Perspective – Future Streetscape of N. Kansas Avenue

Illustration #3



- **Seek out an entertainment anchor and link to N. Kansas Avenue and Great Overland Station;** new development should be designed to encourage patronage within district and not isolated from each other (see “Entertainment Anchor” below”)
- **Remove heavy truck circulation route** (see Circulation Plan)
- **Create a central gathering or civic space**
- **Provide for physical expansion in the future**
- **Where possible, maintain existing non-entertainment employment activity (e.g., smaller industrial businesses) to maintain daytime activity and potential retail customer base.**
- **Ensure that merchants/businesses do not monopolize convenient on-street parking spaces on N. Kansas Avenue.** As success of new businesses grow in the area, parking will become premium. There are currently 150 on-street spaces in the 800-900

blocks of N. Kansas and on cross streets within a ½ block. This number will likely be slightly reduced when streetscape improvements are made. While parking lots are planned for, these on-street spaces will be the first to be filled and should be reserved for customers only with no curb cuts allowed.

Accommodations should be made for new development to further invigorate the district if blended appropriately. Four new development ventures are initially envisioned for the entertainment district to facilitate its growth: **(1) completion of the Great Overland Station Railroad Museum, (2) an entertainment anchor, (3) a pedestrian overpass and (4) a farmers market.**

B. Great Overland Station Railroad Museum

Topeka Railroad Days, Inc. is leading efforts to preserve and restore Topeka's historic Union Pacific Railroad station. With \$3.4 million in federal ISTEAs combined to \$2.6 million of matching private funds, they have begun to renovate the station for use as a museum and education center celebrating railroad heritage in Topeka and Kansas. The Grand Waiting Room will be transformed into the main gallery where both permanent and changing exhibits will be displayed. Photographic displays, touring exhibits, model trains, hands-on activities for children, costumed docents representing people of the railroads, restored pieces of rolling stock, and freight trains rumbling by will add to the experience. Although, the building itself is physically separated from the entertainment district by two rail lines, its 75,000 – 100,000 annual customers creates a destination attraction that can act as an entertainment anchor for the district if better linked both visually and physically. These customers can create demand for services on N. Kansas Avenue. Meanwhile, the area south of the Station is more appropriately linked to future efforts to redevelop the riverfront (*see Riverfront*). The station's renovation is well underway to be completed by the year 2000 and will become the centerpiece of the North Crossings revitalization.

C. Entertainment Anchor

Entertainment attractions can dramatically enhance the market appeal of mixed-used districts (Urban Land Institute, *Developing Urban Entertainment Centers*, 1998). Types of anchors that would be activity generators could include:

- Cinema complexes (movies)
- Live music or stage performances (indoor or outdoor)
- Game-based attractions (*Gameworks*, high-tech game centers, arcades, etc.)
- Educational facilities (museums, aquarium, halls of fame, etc.)
- Specialty-format film theatres (360-degree films)
- Family entertainment centers (batting cages, driving ranges, rock-climbing, laser tag, etc.)

The entertainment anchor is the initial and critical draw into an entertainment district causing repeat visits. Once the entertainment anchor generates activity, signature restaurants with more mass appeal are viable and extend the length of stay. Retailers round out the experience by creating shopping opportunities and inducing activity beyond entertainment. The entertainment anchor is key to the success of the district. The Great Overland Station railroad museum will be an anchor in the future if properly “linked” to activity north of the Station. The estimated draw of visitors to the Station will generate activity, but probably not at the daily levels needed to transform N. Kansas Avenue for retail and dining uses. A second entertainment anchor would be necessary to stimulate further daily and evening activity.

The key to design is making such a potentially large-scale building fit within the intimate scale of the district and compliment N. Kansas Avenue businesses and the historic Union Pacific Depot building. Another just as important key is to provide convenient parking and access for a new anchor. Therefore, the size of the building and necessary parking realistically dictate that this complex be located off of N. Kansas Avenue and not along its frontage. However, it should be linked to pedestrian traffic on N. Kansas Avenue by being adjacent to the Avenue for ideal synergy at a pedestrian scale.

For purposes of the Plan, an 8-screen movie theatre is used as an example of what could fit within the district. A typical 8-plex averaging 210 seats/screen occupies a footprint of approximately 33,000 square feet (0.8 acres) and requires a maximum of 4.5 acres of on-site parking for 475-500 spaces. Based on these typical suburban-style requirements, a city block (including alley) within Historic North Topeka could support 400 spaces with the remainder satisfied in on-street parking or parking lots within a one block radius.

It is recommended that any major entertainment anchor be sited on the east side of Jackson Street immediately adjacent to the backs of N. Kansas Avenue buildings (see Illustration #2). The entrance should face Laurent/Jackson Streets to visually link N. Kansas Avenue and the Great Overland Station museum. A well landscaped CPTED-approved parking could be located off of Gordon Street between Jackson Street and Van Buren Street convenient to ingress and egress. Any significant turn-of-the-century homes should be preserved and relocated. Building design could be elevated to allow surface level parking under floorplate thus maximizing efficiency of space and conserving pedestrian-scale of area. If needed, the building could cross over Laurent Street while allowing pedestrian traffic to pass through at street level.

As a secondary alternative to a major entertainment anchor, a multi-family residential use designed as a planned unit development would help to increase density and a customer base for the commercial district. While not having the same economic development impacts on N. Kansas Avenue, this use would certainly aid in the vitality and livability of the district by providing a critical 24-hour activity.

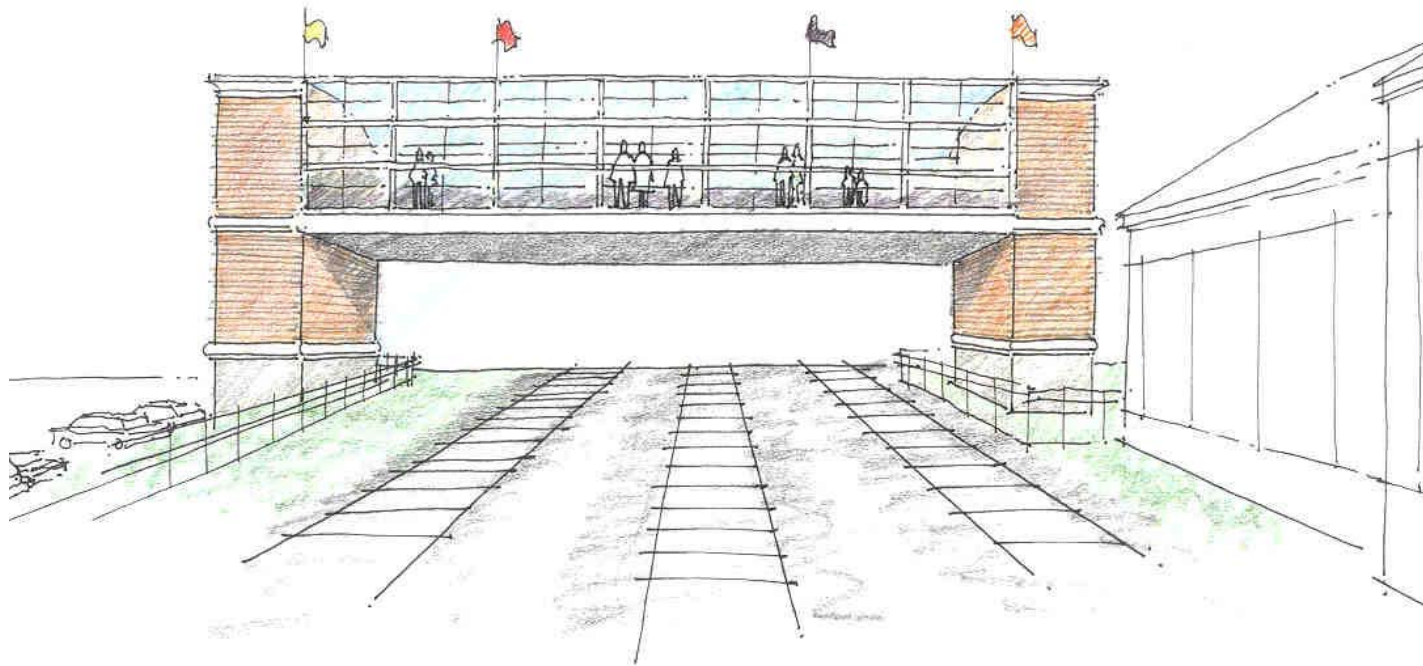
D. Pedestrian Overpass

In order for the N. Kansas Avenue entertainment district to be positively impacted by the Great Overland Station Museum and vice-versa, a pedestrian overpass spanning the railroad tracks along the west side of Kansas Avenue is recommended to facilitate an unimpeded flow of pedestrian traffic (see Circulation Plan Map #12 for location and Illustration #4 for depiction).

This overpass would serve a two-fold purpose: 1) safe access between entertainment district and riverfront district, and 2) a view platform. The safe access of pedestrians, persons with disabilities, and bicyclists who want to cross the tracks would be ensured with an enclosed stairway and elevator on both sides. Station Museum patrons could park north of the tracks off of Norris without having to worry about getting stuck waiting for a train to clear. Likewise, those that do park here and cross over the bridge would be treated to an ideal viewing experience from an enclosed platform where they could not only see the trains go by, but also feel them as they rumble underneath them. This sensory experience can be another part of the overall attraction to the Railroad Museum. This structure should be high enough for train clearance (20'), be architecturally compatible to the Great Overland Station, and designed for natural surveillance (e.g., transparent elevator walls) to eliminate any hiding spots. A pedestrian overpass would likely cost six times *less* to construct than a vehicle fly-over and would do more to enhance the synergy of the area than a potentially divisive vehicle bridge. If roughly half of the lumberyard property is used to accommodate parking, 90-100 spaces could be located here. In addition, a landscaped berm, ample lighting, and well-designed fence system is recommended between the parking lot and tracks for sound attenuation and safety purposes.

Pedestrian Overpass/View Platform

Illustration #4



Just north of the tracks directly in front of the Station, lies an opportunity to commemorate a park space celebrating North Topeka history. A park for gatherings was historically located north of the UP depot when it was on the east side of Kansas Avenue. It contained a gazebo and landscaped open space to accommodate special celebrations and VIPs to the area. This also could be designed as a safe ground-level viewing area to experience the active train lines.

E. Farmer's Market

An informal Farmers Market, which currently exists in a State-owned parking lot downtown at 10th Street and Topeka Boulevard during the summer, will soon be displaced by pending office development. It is recommended that a formal year-round and permanent farmer's market space be located at one of several sites elsewhere within the downtown. One of those potential sites includes the North Crossings to serve as another destination-oriented use.

Typical vendor stall dimensions of a 12.5' wide and 20' deep could be accommodated at various locations within the entertainment district. Peak vendor demand at the current downtown parking lot location is 40 per day. A permanent location with an overhead metal canopy would need linear dimensions of 250' x 60' (15,000 sq. ft.) for 40 vendor stalls/parking (both sides) including a covered center pedestrian aisle and display space. Assuming that demand for space could exceed current projections with a covered facility and utilities to the site, the initial facility could be expanded if successful. Parking is estimated to be required at 1:200 of retail space which translates into 75 parking spaces (16,200 sq. ft.). Based on these assumptions, an estimated area of approximately 1.5 acres is needed for a fully functional farmers market including future expansion equal to double current demand. The facility can be designed with potential space enclosures that could allow the market to operate non-seasonally. Sites that meet these dimensional requirements north of the tracks include:

- **Quincy Street Parking Lot** – A 1.9-acre parking lot and park space currently owned by the City of Topeka at the based of the Kansas Avenue bridge and behind the storefronts in the 800 block of N. Kansas.
- **N. Kansas Avenue** – The 800 or 900 block of N. Kansas Avenue could be closed down for market activities on weekend hours. Each block has just under 1 acre of public right-of-way that can be used for vendors and pedestrians, although parking for customers would be quite limited if not allowed on that block.
- **Schmidt Builders Supply Lumberyard** – This 1.4 acre elongated-shaped property located between Norris Street and the railroad tracks is currently home to Schmidt Builders Supply lumber storage and offices.
- **New Gordon Street Parking Lot** – If a movie theatre is developed on Jackson Street, a city-block of parking off of Gordon Street between Jackson and Van Buren would need to be developed. This block could serve a farmers market on axis with the Great Overland Station within its 4-acre site.

In Historic North Topeka it is recommended that the Quincy Street Parking Lot or N. Kansas Avenue sites be explored for a farmers market on a trial basis in order to acclimate both vendors and customers to the North Crossings environment. These sites are publicly-owned and can be established at minimal cost with no dislocation of existing businesses. They both are easily identified sites within Historic North Topeka and have good access from Topeka Boulevard or Kansas Avenue south of the river. As success of the market and revitalization efforts move forward, permanently establishing a covered facility at any of the four sites or a site south of the tracks should be assessed and pursued as feasible. An exciting potential exists to develop an extensive market site

south of the tracks which would be highly visible from the two bridges if grade-separated vehicle access can be provided to the riverfront.

2. THE RIVERFRONT

The area generally south of the Great Overland Station/Union Pacific Depot between the Kansas Avenue and Topeka Boulevard bridges comprises the North Crossing's riverfront. This roughly 24-acre site is comprised of three major land owners – Union Pacific, BRB Contractors, City of Topeka – which control over 82% of the land area on the land-side of the Kansas River levee. A perfect compliment to the entertainment district would be to redevelop this area as another destination for events, activities, and recreation. Enabling the public to rediscover Topeka's historic riverfront, which was the site of its founding, could be another major attraction to the area that will add to the synergy of the North Crossings. Its redevelopment potential is largely defined by its constraints. Those constraints consist of:

Vehicular access – Vehicular access to the area is limited to two access points (N. Kansas Avenue and Tyler Street) both impeded by train crossings causing countless delays and uncertainty. Increased truck traffic may also become a greater concern given the need to redirect them off of N. Kansas Avenue.

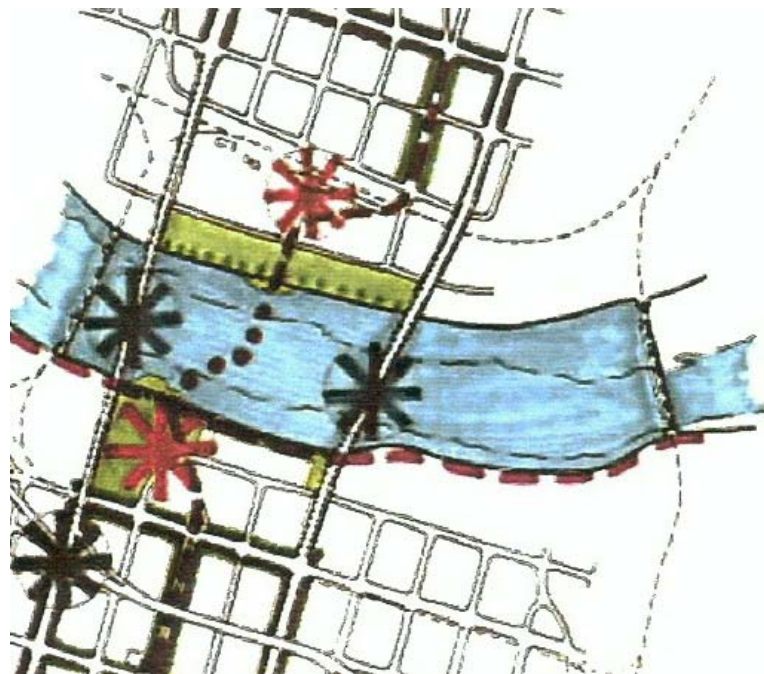
Industrial property – BRB Contractors and Union Pacific control most of the industrialized land available and which would need to be acquired. Furthermore, the land may be potentially contaminated from past industrial usage and may require significant clean-up.

Topeka Rescue Mission – Another 1.3 acres is owned by the Topeka Rescue Mission to operate the city's major homeless programs for men with a new women and family center expansion currently under construction. It is expected that both buildings will accommodate 349 beds.

However, the Great Overland Station Museum, beautiful skyline and Capital views looking back across the Kansas River, and its frontage on the waterfront, all make this an ideal location to plan for future "greenfield" development. Topeka Railroad Days, Inc. has proposed a new park to surround the station on approximately 10 acres of land currently owned by Union Pacific that would be the permanent home for Locomotive 3463 along with other pieces of rolling stock such as a business car, club car, dining car, sleeper, and caboose. This landscaped urban green space would provide an ideal setting for family and community events spilling out from the station to the north.

It is proposed that a major urban park be established south of the Great Overland Station to the waterfront that would compliment the proposed Millennium Park south of the river (*see illustration below*). It could be a logical extension for festivals and events held in conjunction with the Museum's programming (e.g., Railroad Days). As vehicle access and circulation to this district is improved, the riverfront park would be an ideal green space setting for city and regional events to take place. The "greening" of both sides and creation of linkages will serve to make the river a new destination for Downtown. It is envisioned that events could be taking place simultaneously on both sides of the river with ferry shuttles and/or pedestrian bridges linking both sides. Access to an improved levee-walk with lighting, benches, etc., outdoor skating rinks, amphitheater for outdoor music and stage productions, and sites commemorating historical events (e.g., Pappan's Landing, Charles Curtis house, Oregon Trail) is also envisioned.

Given the budget, time, and development constraints in building grade-separated vehicular access (*see Circulation Plan*), the uncertainty over land acquisition and clean-up, and the stigma of the city's major homeless facility, it is recommended that the riverfront redevelopment take place on pace as a second priority within the North Crossings area unless these constraints change. However, because of the scope of the project, property acquisitions and business relocations should be initiated as opportunities arise so that the project becomes more feasible spread out over a number of years. BRB Contractors, the largest private property owner in this district, has a business need to better consolidate their operations onto one site that is not affected by train traffic, increases efficiencies, and allows expansion room. If implemented in a timely fashion, relocation to a consolidated site elsewhere in North Topeka would enable their growth to occur while allowing for an exciting new type of growth along the river, thus creating a greater economic impact for the City.



From: Urban Design Framework for Downtown Topeka (draft 1999)

E. DESIGN GUIDELINES

The kind of culture that can maintain reasonable human commitments takes centuries to create but only a few generations to destroy.

James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense*

The enormous appeal and potential of Historic North Topeka lies within preserving and restoring the period building styles and intimate street settings of traditional neighborhoods that predated post-World War II development. This generation of North Topeka has become stewards to this legacy and finds itself faced with the question of “how?”. Surveys show that much of this legacy has been lost already to deterioration and neglect. With many of the buildings evoking turn-of-the-century attributes, ways to protect the area from further loss of character need to be pursued. Value, in both property and community, is lost when these elements are not maintained. Education is essential to recapturing these neglected treasures, as well as maintaining existing and creating new treasures. Good design does not have to cost anymore than less sensitive design. Understanding what constitutes appropriate design for the area will empower the community to pass this legacy on to the next generation.

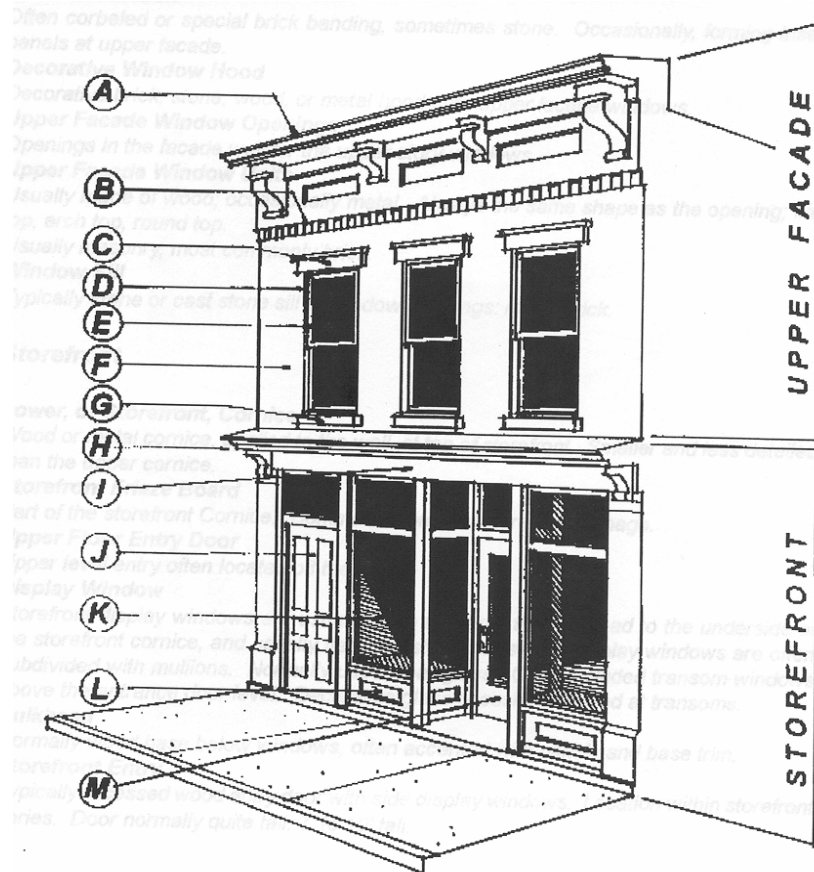
A. COMMERCIAL/MIXED-USE

Commercial and mixed-use buildings of historic character and sufficient integrity are primarily found in the 800, 900, and 1000 blocks of N. Kansas Avenue. The old Union Pacific Depot, listed on the National Register, should also be looked at as a model for new and renovated commercial/mixed-use buildings. These and other commercial buildings within the Focus Area that have potential for local or national listing should adhere to basic guidelines below for rehabilitation as demonstrated by Illustrations #5, #6, #7, and Appendix B.

Street facades and rehabilitation

1. Original **facades**, including windows and openings, should be retained.
2. Encourage removal of applied **siding** treatments, metal fascias and canopies wherever possible.
3. Repair damage from siding treatments and rejuvenate upper facades hidden by treatments. Siding treatments often tend to preserve the façade in good condition. If architectural elements (e.g., upper and lower cornices) have been removed or damaged, reconstruct/restore original elements.

A Traditional Storefront Façade – Illustration #5



- A. Upper Cornice
- B. Brick Decoration
- C. Window Hood
- D. Window Openings
- E. Window Units
Always the same shape as window openings.
- F. Masonry Wall
- G. Window Sill
- H. Storefront Cornice
- I. Storefront Frieze Board
Common location for sign
- J. Upper Floor Entry Door
- K. Display Window
Normally clear glass separated from window transom w/ mullions. Extends to underside of 2nd floor.
- L. Bulkhead
Normally wood based below windows, accented w/ panels and base trim.
- M. Storefront Entry
Typically recessed door with side display windows.

4. Maintain or reconstruct large **storefront windows**. Original storefront windows usually begin at 18"-24" above the ground and extend to the underside of the second floor.
5. NEVER **paint** unpainted brick or sandblast brick to remove paint. If painted, colors should visually relate to building elements and neighboring facades (i.e., earth-tones). Placement of colors should be based on the existing hierarchy of detail: base and major/minor trim colors. Base color is the upper wall surface and storefront piers.
6. New **windows** should fit the size and shape of their original openings. Mirrored or smoked-glass windows should not be used since they are not original materials and detract from the district's character.
7. Maintain original decorative stone details, window hoods, cornice brackets and woodwork whenever possible.
8. **Awnings** or canopies should be of traditional design, preferably cloth, and not unusually large or awkward in shape. Avoid excessive signage on awnings, back-lit awnings, and round awnings.
9. Keep the size of **signs** modest and locate them at the storefront cornice line; they may overhang the public right-of-way if they do not obscure architectural details or dominate the building. Avoid plastic materials on the exterior of signs since this is not a traditional material. A well designed and maintained building is as much of an advertisement for a business as the sign itself.
10. Avoid permanent **fences** visible from street frontages or public areas that are chain-link or wire. Barbed wire should not be permitted in a non-industrial district.

New Construction

1. All building designs should be compatible with the major elements of historic architecture along the N. Kansas Avenue mixed-use district and the Union Pacific Depot: red brick buildings with limestone or grey concrete trim are desirable.
2. Buildings should be set back from the street uniformly to present a continuous façade line along the street, except that minor recesses, projections for entries, and similar elements may be acceptable.
3. Human scale elements along the street front should be included within the building's design.
4. The desired height of buildings should not exceed forty (40) feet.
5. The street grid system and views of the Union Pacific Depot and Capital need to be preserved.
6. Parking lots should have CPTED ("crime prevention through environmental design")-approved design elements, interior landscaping, and be located behind buildings in the interior of blocks, or side yards to the maximum extent feasible.
7. Mechanical or electrical equipment should be hidden or screened from street level view.

Design guidelines for commercial and mixed-use structures should at a minimum, be applied to the "entertainment district" with consideration given to "expansion" or "riverfront" areas for new construction.

B. STREETSCAPES

Streetscape guidelines would apply to N. Kansas Avenue (500-1000), gateways and other “image” streets identified under the Urban Design Framework. Some major recommendations for the **800-900 blocks of N. Kansas** Avenue include (see Illustration #8):

1. **Pedestrian Bump-outs** – Located at intersections and mid-block crossing to shorten pedestrian crossing distances, slow traffic, and visually deter heavy truck traffic. These bump-outs should include space for raised landscaped planters that are slightly setback from the curb at intersections and mid-block crossing.
2. **Overhead Gateway Signage** – Located at Gordon and Norris for gateway affect and to deter heavy truck traffic.
3. **Sidewalks** – The possibility exists for the 10’ wide sidewalks to be extended up to 18’ to provide for outdoor display, dining, planter, and/or street furniture space; this option might require parallel instead of angle parking, but could be limited to mid-block locations where pedestrian crossings would be located. New sidewalk concrete should be laid with brick paver trim and brick paver treatments at intersections, crosswalks, and any extensions of the sidewalk.
4. **Shade Trees** – Shade tree plantings should be spaced from intersection to intersection judiciously so that storefronts are not obscured to any great extent, but that a pleasant walking environment is provided; at a minimum, intersections and mid-block crossings should have multiple plantings.
5. **Lighting** – Existing street lights are spaced at a 100’ interval. Since the fluted poles retain a desired character, they should remain to provide vehicular light. Pedestrian lighting that is historically compatible could either be spaced mid-point between the street lights or attached to the street lights with an arm bracket overhanging the sidewalk. In addition, metal placards or signs could be placed on light poles at pedestrian level scale with the district name on them. Interchangeable canvas banners could be placed higher up on the street light poles announcing different events.
6. **Street Furniture** – Benches and trash receptacles should be historically compatible to building architecture and placed at appropriate intervals along the sidewalk.

C. RESIDENTIAL

Historic North Topeka exhibits many residential architectural styles prevalent at the turn of the century and pre-1930 era. The design of houses were dictated by the narrow lots, resulting densities, and materials available. The key to understanding and applying design guidelines lies in assessing the existing inventory and establishing key design standards that will fit within a traditional neighborhood. Here are three examples of traditional architectural styles found throughout the neighborhood:

Folk Victorian (1870-1910)

- gable-front-and-wing subtype without Victorian detailing
- cross gable roofing with steep pitch
- can be 1 or 2 stories
- wooden posts atop brick piers supporting porch that is length of wing
- bay window with 1-over-1 double hung sash
- common in Southern states
- gable-fronts are prominent in Little Russia



Craftsman (1905-1930)

- Bungalow with low-pitched front-gable roof
- decorative brackets support overhanging eaves; roof rafters usually exposed
- one-and-a-half story
- full or partial width porch supported by wood post sitting atop brick piers extending to ground
- wood clad with horizontal shingles
- center entry and rear garage



Queen Anne (1890-1910)

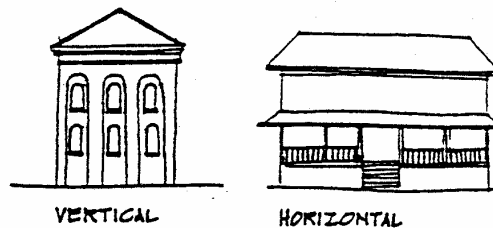
- very late variant of Queen Anne style
- two-story gable façade with cross-gable roof
- horizontal wood clapboards with fishscale shingling
- pediment marking entry over full length porch
- wood posts atop painted brick piers extending to ground
- balustrade provides railing for porch



Various other styles throughout the neighborhood include Gothic Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Italianate, Homestead, and other minimal traditional styles. Together, these provide context for guiding renovations of existing traditional-style homes and construction of new in-fill dwellings. Several basic design elements should be followed in order to maintain a neighborhood's character:

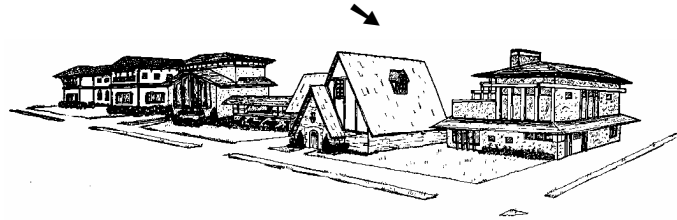
Massing and Form – *Massing* generally refers to how a given amount of space is reflected in a building's design. For example, the space could be a rectangular box with no porch and a flat roof, OR two smaller boxes of uneven height and a full length covered front porch with front-gable roof. The *form* would determine how the building is positioned on the lot. This is typically dictated by lot design and setbacks from property lines. In order to retain the area's character, several guidelines should be followed in Historic North Topeka related to massing and form:

1. The height, width, and general proportions of a building should generally conform to other buildings in the neighborhood. That would include a building frontage narrower than its depth with a visible main from street, elevation of floor above ground, and a proportional front porch.
2. The ratio of wall surface to openings should be consistent with traditional buildings in the neighborhood. This includes width and height of window and door openings. Enclosure or re-positioning of original window placements should be avoided. Size and proportion of window space to façade should be kept consistent with neighborhood
3. Buildings should be of vertical or non-directional appearance so that horizontal lines are minimized. Flat wall surfaces, particularly frontages, should be avoided.

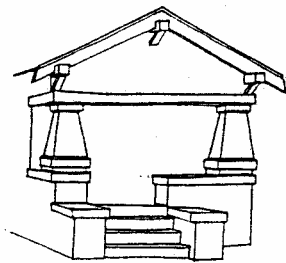


4. The slope, massing, and configuration of the original roof should be maintained. Roof pitch should be kept within range of predominate building style. Low gable, domed, A-frame, and shed-vaulted roof shape are inappropriate.

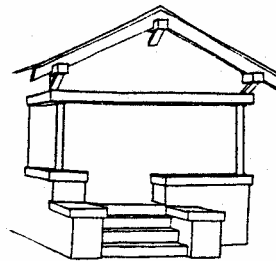
Example of inappropriate roof line and front setback on a given block



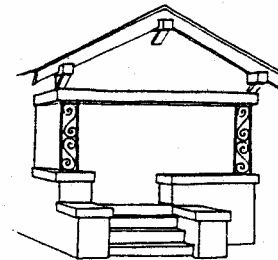
5. Additions to traditional dwellings should be complimentary and subservient to the main structure.
6. Front doors should be accentuated and painted/stained.
7. Garages should be built in the rear yard behind the house or to the side in proportion to the main structure. Access should be from alley unless historical front curb-cut exists.
8. Historic details – balconies, covered porches, decorative shingles, bracketed eaves, columns, balustrades, arches, turrets, etc. – should be in proportion with the building and considered on contemporary designs only where appropriate.



Yes – solid and sound looking original elephantine wood/stucco columns that match house



Avoid – steel pipe columns are structurally adequate, but do not look sturdy to hold up the house



Avoid – wrought iron style columns are out of place on a bungalow porch and may not be structurally sound

Materials

1. The use of natural materials is strongly advised. Imitation or synthetic materials, such as aluminum or vinyl siding, should be avoided particularly on the primary dwelling.

2. The front and side facades are the most visible sides and should be protected. Appropriate façade materials – brick, wood siding, stucco, and cut stone (if original) – should be used.
3. Wood siding, trim, and detailing should be painted, stained, or otherwise protected if intact and restored if deteriorated or missing whenever possible.
4. Avoid metal or plastic window frames. Dark tinted, smoked, or reflective glass should not be used since they are not original and diminishes the district's character.
5. Roof materials should consist of wood shingles, composition shingles, slate, clay, or other similar materials deemed appropriate. Roll roofing, built up tar and gravel, or plastic roofing materials are typically not appropriate unless a roof is not visible from public areas.
6. Exceptions to these guidelines may be deemed appropriate if a new house is manufactured off-site, but meets the massing and form guidelines above.
7. Attached single-family housing, or townhouse design, may be appropriate if within an acceptable area according to the land use plan or adjacent to image or arterial streets. Mid-block attached housing should be discouraged.

Design guidelines for residential structures should at a minimum, be applied to identified blocks with sufficient historical integrity (e.g., primarily >50 yrs. old) within the Focus Area. If desired by the community, the area may be expanded to adjacent residential blocks of the Planning Area. An example of what infill housing would look like following these guidelines is depicted in Illustration #10.

F. HOUSING

A neighborhood is in many ways defined by its housing. The housing portion of this revitalization strategy is designed to change the perception of the Historic North Topeka housing market to residents and non-residents alike by improving the supply of existing housing and creating a greater demand for market-rate housing.

Housing Rehabilitation – Community perception of the housing market affects the confidence of local residents in investing in the neighborhood. When a market is perceived to be in a declining state or when property values/rents cannot adequately support new investment, maintenance of properties is deferred and disinvestment begins. Activities therefore should be geared towards improving the existing housing stock in the community. With 72% of the residential properties in the community exhibiting either major or intermediate deficiencies (see [Table 4](#)) the need for a more targeted rehabilitation program is apparent. The following strategies could help achieve this objective:

- **Identify strategic blocks to concentrate rehabilitation efforts:** [Map #14](#) illustrates the location of blocks that present new housing opportunities. These blocks and the blocks surrounding them should be targeted for more concentrated rehabilitation efforts within the community. This should be coordinated with the in-fill housing activities discussed below and in the implementation section.
- **Areas for conservation-based rehabilitation:** The Design Guidelines section notes that there are certain characteristics of older, historic homes in terms of size, mass and scale which need to be conserved. Areas with a large percentage of historically significant homes need to be identified. The historic housing stock within those areas needs to be protected by discouraging architecturally insensitive renovations/alterations. In addition, some of the most historic homes are found within the North Crossings and should be targeted for conservation in lieu of any major redevelopment proposals. The most significant buildings should be identified and relocated within Historic North Topeka if redevelopment poses a conflict.

In-Fill Housing Development – Historic North Topeka presents numerous opportunities for in-fill housing development with an abundance of vacant parcels (9% land area, 16% of all parcels), in some instances comprising entire blocks. In-fill housing development will help to stabilize the neighborhood by removing the blighting influences of excessive vacant lots and deteriorated mobile home sites in traditional neighborhood settings, increasing the density of population and attracting homeowners. All new in-fill activities should be coordinated with rehabilitation efforts to create a synergistic effect. The following strategies would contribute to the success of compatible in-fill housing development:

- **Identify strategic in-fill housing and adaptive reuse areas:** Map #14 illustrates areas that might be suitable for future in-fill development. In-fill housing development can be divided into three general categories: lot-by lot in-filling of deteriorated mobile home sites and vacant lots; the adaptive re-use of vacant non-residential structures; and the wholesale redevelopment of large tracts of land. These concepts are explored in more detail below:
 - **North Kansas Avenue:** This area comprises the 800 and 900 blocks of N. Kansas Avenue. The area consists primarily of historic row-style commercial buildings that have the potential for adaptive reuse for loft style apartments above the ground floor. New residential opportunities will be an essential component to the successful revitalization of this historic area into a viable mixed-use district.
 - **Van Buren/Fairchild:** With a large number of vacant lots, relatively high number of unoccupied dwellings, and poor housing conditions, the 1000 and 1100 blocks of Van Buren Street has considerable potential for wholesale in-fill redevelopment. Assemblage of land would front Morse Street and possibly Gordon Street for high visibility. Any in-fill efforts should be pursued in combination with the rehabilitation efforts of historic homes on Fairchild Street and Jackson Street, which boasts some of the area's best remaining collection of period homes. The area has fair homeownership levels.
 - **Curtis Junior High Blocks:** A city block in the 1300 range of Jackson Street comprises the former Curtis Jr. High School grounds (*see right*). The only building improvement on these two tracts of land is the school itself, which is located on Grant Street. These areas therefore are optimal for larger-scale in-fill projects of single-family detached houses. The school could be renovated for an adaptive re-use such as a retirement community, branch library or community building.
 - **North Crossings:** Directly south of the Van Buren/Fairchild site across Gordon Avenue, exists a potential for higher density in-fill development to create further synergy in the North Crossings area. The 900 block between Van Buren and Harrison is currently occupied by 8 detached houses, open storage, and 3 vacant lots that could be replaced by apartment complexes consistent with the Plan's design guidelines. Some of the structures should be evaluated for preservation. 320 Laurent is the oldest church



in Topeka and should be preserved on site. The 900 block between Van Buren and Jackson may also be worthy of the same treatment if parking is not needed for the entertainment district.

- **Madison/Jefferson South:** This 5-block area along the 1000-1100 blocks of Madison and Jefferson Streets in the northeastern portion of the Focus Area exhibits relatively poor exterior conditions, with 4 of the 5 blocks experiencing major deterioration. The area has a large number of mobile home sites and courts which could be an opportunity for an affordable in-fill project. This area has not retained a much of its original historic housing stock. However, new in-fill housing could stimulate private rehab efforts in the 1100 block of Monroe Street which has a fine collection of turn-of-the-century homes, but is in poor condition. The area has poor homeownership levels.
- **Madison/Jefferson North:** This area is similar to Madison/Jefferson South except it is in the 1300-1400 blocks. It exhibits relatively poor housing conditions with a large number of mobile homes, vacant lots, vacant homes, and blight. A major constraint to wholesale redevelopment is the cost of installing new curb, gutter, or sidewalk improvements which the area lacks. Another constraint to the redevelopment of these blocks is their adjacency to the railroad tracks, which could be overcome through appropriate buffering techniques.
- **NW Taylor and NW Western:** These two tracts of land are largely unused and undeveloped. Given the existence of two large mobile home communities adjacent to these areas, these sites might be a suitable location for new planned mobile home communities.

- **Identify areas with significant intact historic housing stock:** Special considerations need to be made to ensure that in-fill housing in blocks with a large percentage of historically “significant” housing is architecturally compatible with the surrounding historic homes. These areas are identified on the Housing Opportunity Areas map as “housing conservation areas”. Refer to the Design Guidelines section for more discussion of this topic.
- **Overcome perceived obstacles to development and redevelopment:** There is a perception in the development community that the current building regulations present an obstacle to redevelopment projects on narrow lots and the renovation of older buildings. Eliminating this perceived obstacle to development in inner-city neighborhoods will be crucial to attracting new investment to HNT.
- **Encourage development that is compatible with surrounding neighborhood:** The appearance and character of new in-fill housing should be similar to that of adjacent or nearby housing. See “Design Guidelines”.

Homeownership – Although not a panacea for all of a neighborhood’s problems, an increase in the number of owner occupants can contribute to the stability of the neighborhood. HNT is predominantly a renter neighborhood with only 36% of the housing units

in the community being owner occupied. Much of the problem may be attributed to a perception that the housing market in HNT is declining. The abundance of dilapidated housing and vacant lots is evidence that, while the market may or may not be declining, the demand for owner-occupied housing is low. The following strategies can be employed to attract new homeowners to the area and increase existing homeowner confidence.

- **Downzoning:** The implementation section discusses this in more detail. Many low-density residential blocks are presently zoned for high-density multi-family residential uses and even highly intensive non-residential uses. This action would help to improve homeowner confidence and predictability in the neighborhood by preventing further encroachment of incompatible uses in residential blocks.
- **Coordinate with rehabilitation and in-fill efforts:** The rehabilitation and in-fill efforts combined with homeownership efforts will have a synergistic effect which should attract additional investment and therefore, new homebuyers to the community. The removal of the blighting influences of dilapidated housing, mobile homes and excessive vacant lots, will make the community more attractive to potential homeowners.
- **Overcome and change current negative outside market perceptions of HNT:** As is evidenced by the non-existence of any TOTO houses in Historic North Topeka, the outside market perception of the neighborhood is quite negative. TOTO (Topeka's Opportunity to Own program) is a market-driven program relying on realtors and first-time homeowner clients to choose the house of their choice on the open market. Acquisition and renovations costs cannot exceed \$50,000. The energies being created by new investment in the North Crossings area should be able to give potential residents/homebuyers another opportunity to look at living in Historic North Topeka. Therefore, the community should take advantage of this higher profile to work on a marketing brochure and establish a working relationship with a realtor(s) who is willing to market the area to new homeowners.

Manufactured Housing and Affordability – Manufactured housing has become an increasingly attractive and affordable alternative to site-built housing in recent years. A 1998 publication on manufactured housing by the American Planning Association and the Manufactured Housing Institute reports that the cost of building a manufactured home is about $\frac{1}{2}$ the cost of site-built homes, making it the only type of housing that some households can afford to own. They further state that approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of



the housing starts in 1996 were manufactured homes, evidencing their growing popularity. Recent advancements in the design of manufactured housing have resulted in a new breed of residential design manufactured homes that are virtually indistinguishable from site-built homes (*see picture at right*). This is particularly true when site-built features such as porches, entryways and garages are added to enhance the design of residential design manufactured homes.

Manufactured Housing can be divided into two distinct types: *mobile homes* and *residential-design manufactured homes*. A **mobile home**, according to the Topeka/Shawnee County Comprehensive Zoning Regulations, is a manufactured structure for dwelling purposes that is less than 22' wide. This dimension accommodates single-wide mobile homes with or without a foundation. A **residential-design manufactured home** (RDMH), is defined as a manufactured home that is:

“on a permanent foundation which has: (a) minimum dimensions of 22 feet in body width, (b) a pitched roof and (c) siding and roofing materials which are customarily used on site-built homes.”

RDMH's are treated the same as site-built homes in the building permit process and are permitted in all single-family dwelling districts, provided that they are at least 22 feet in width. Mobile homes are regulated differently. A mobile home is specifically excluded from the definition of a single-family dwelling in the zoning regulations and is prohibited in all single-family zoning districts, with the exception of the "R-4" district. In order to place a mobile home on a property the owner must have the proper zoning and obtain a mobile home license, which is updated annually.

In the aftermath of the 1951 flood, the demand for housing in Historic North Topeka was declining and disinvestment in the housing stock began. In an effort to encourage redevelopment in the area, many traditional residential blocks were rezoned to multiple-family and industrial zoning districts, which permitted the use of mobile homes. As older, dilapidated houses were razed, they were often replaced with mobile homes as a low-cost alternative to the larger site-built homes in the community. This practice resulted in an incompatible land use arrangement and further discouraged homeowner investment of the existing frame houses. With the adoption of the Comprehensive Zoning Regulations in 1992, mobile homes were no longer permitted in the zoning districts found in HNT. However they continue to exist in the neighborhood as legal non-conforming uses. The following strategies can be employed to amortize mobile homes from traditional residential settings while continuing to provide affordable housing alternatives:

- **Encourage residential design manufactured homes to maintain an affordable housing environment:** As in-fill housing is developed in the community, replacing vacant lots and mobile home sites/courts, the use of residential design manufactured homes should be encouraged to help preserve the affordable housing environment. As was noted above, the primary

advantage of RDMH's are their affordability. A typical RDMH would be 25-50% less than the cost of a site-built home. Another advantage of RDHM's is their visual compatibility with traditional site-built homes. Other cities like Louisville, Kentucky; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Washington, D.C. and Birmingham, Alabama have used manufactured housing for urban in-fill projects and have met with much success. These projects have produced a variety of architectural styles, each tailored to be compatible with the particular neighborhood in which they are located.

- **Promote Mixed Income Developments:** When a neighborhood like Historic North Topeka is “rediscovered” the inevitable result is that the average cost of housing increases, often displacing low-income residents. Developers who make a substantial investment for in-fill and wholesale redevelopment projects should be required to address the affordable housing needs in the area and integrate new development with low-moderate income housing.

G. PARKS

The parks and trails referenced below are anticipated to be consistent with any future Parks and Trails element of the Comprehensive Plan (Refer to *Map #15* for locations):

Existing	Size (ac.)	Type	Recommendations
1. <i>Garfield Park</i>	23.7	<i>Community – active and passive</i>	<i>Make part of regional trail system along old Soldier Creek channel. Maintain and upgrade as premier community park in North Topeka.</i>
2. <i>Charles Curtis Greenway</i>	5.8	<i>Linear - passive</i>	<i>Acquire properties as opportunities arise and complete greenway as buffer on heavily traveled image corridor.</i>
3. <i>McKinley Park</i>	0.8	<i>Mini-park – active and passive</i>	<i>Not central to residential population and within increasingly non-residential area. Policy should be to put <u>major</u> park improvements into establishing new future park site (see Oregon Trail Park).</i>
4. <i>Veterans Park east</i>	2.0	<i>Special use – passive and active</i>	<i>Could be offered in land swap for business relocation for future park space. Save ne corner of Quincy/Laurent for gateway effect.</i>
5. <i>Veterans Park west</i>	0.4	<i>Special use – passive</i>	<i>Redesign to provide parking and potential Farmers Market space. Veterans Park can be consolidated with WW I-II monuments in a more prominent and worthy setting.</i>
6. <i>Curtis Cemetery</i>	0.9	<i>Special use – historic site</i>	<i>Preserve historic Curtis Family cemetery and provide access along regional trail system.</i>

Proposed	Size (ac.)	Type	Recommendation
<i>7. Riverfront Park south of Great Overland Station</i>	<i>14-20</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Brownfield to greenfield project that would establish regional gathering place for events related to Great Overland Station. Would compliment efforts to develop Millennium Park south of river by linking pedestrian and/or ferry service. Could include levee trail, historic landmarks, and outdoor facilities for music, ice skating, etc. Would require industrial business relocations and improved vehicular access.</i>
<i>8. Sardou Recreation/Nature Trail Park</i>	<i>98.0</i>	<i>Special Use/Open Space</i>	<i>Replace farming use to support kite flying, model airplane, and/or athletic field use. Explore use of creek inlet for canoe launch area. Preserve natural vegetation and habitat area along river.</i>
<i>9. Levee Trail</i>	<i>1.7 miles (0.4 miles between bridges)</i>	<i>Linear - recreational</i>	<i>An urban trail should be established on top of Kansas River levee from at least from Topeka Blvd. Bridge to old Soldier Creek inlet. Trail between Kansas and Topeka bridges should include lighting, benches, and turnouts to support higher usage for strolling, viewing, and gathering. It would be part of an overall regional trail system.</i>
<i>10. Kansas River Open Space</i>	<i>84.0</i>	<i>Open Space - passive</i>	<i>Grow back to natural state of vegetation and habitat; add possible nature trail.</i>
<i>11. Oregon Trail Neighborhood Park</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Develop as more centralized park for residences in neighborhood with children's play and picnic settings. Could commemorate historic Oregon Trail that follows UP line through site. Rail line used infrequently by Goodyear, but would need appropriate fencing from park for safety.</i>

H. UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Utility infrastructure typically consists of *non-transportation* related capital infrastructure. The utility infrastructure needs for the residential areas with traditional neighborhood design elements are illustrated in Map # 15. In this case, sidewalks and brick streets have identified as well in this section. Sidewalks have been identified because they are considered standard urban capital improvements in a traditional neighborhood design setting. Brick streets are mapped to alert others for their preservation. Brick sidewalks have not been mapped, but are included in the recommendations below and should be preserved as necessary.

Needs and Recommendations:

- **Sidewalks, Curb, and Gutter** – All blocks within TND areas should be completed for sidewalks and curb/gutter work. Some areas of the neighborhood are devoid of these basic urban infrastructure services and have no way to revitalize the housing development on those blocks without these basic services. Some blocks border on slum conditions and are impassible for pedestrians because of the lack of curbs/gutters.
- **Water Main Replacements** – The issue of “red water” and the replacement of old rusting water lines with new water mains should be completed as soon as possible. Clear drinking and bathing water is another basic service that must be ensured before any residential revitalization can occur.
- **Storm Sewer Improvements** – The Fairchild Pump Station in Little Russia was built in 1927. When the river rises, the sluice gates close, and rain run-off cannot be pumped out into the river without this facility working properly. It should be replaced within the next several years to insure against rain run-off backing up and causing property damage. The sewer line itself should be assessed for replacement as well, but as a second priority.
- **Kansas River Levee** – The Army Corps of Engineers is currently performing a 3-year Feasibility Study to determine the need to provide a minimum of 100-year flood protection for all the Topeka levee units. The North Topeka Unit protects the Planning Area from River flooding and may need upgraded although the weakest point of the levee is believed to be further down river not affecting the revitalization area.

Estimated costs are identified in the Implementation Summary Agenda (**Section VI**).