

## Chapter 4 Redevelopment

The ability to improve economically, enhance community image, and ensure Highland Heights remains a desirable place to work, live and even go to college will to some degree depend on the City’s ability to manage land use change and redevelopment in three key redevelopment districts – Gateway East, Gateway West and Town Center.

This chapter is a strategic redevelopment guide for the City and its partners to reposition these three redevelopment districts consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals.

Many redevelopment district recommendations found in the 2000 and 2006 Comprehensive Plans are maintained. New policies are provided to advance opportunities identified by the Steering Committee.

Redevelopment district boundary expansions are planned for Gateway East, Gateway West and Town Center. The rationale for each district expansion is provided in the following sections of this chapter.

Policy recommendations for each redevelopment district follow. Strategies that apply to all three redevelopment districts are provided at the end of this Chapter.



## Gateway East

### Goals

(1) Redevelop Gateway East as a mixed-use neighborhood commercial district that provides a limited variety of retail, retail service, and professional office along US 27 with nearby supporting high-density residential use where land areas permit. (2) Transform US 27 into a modern commercial corridor with unified architecture, coordinated access points and efficient circulation. (3) Extend stone streetscape elements along US 27 as place defining enhancements.



### Location

Previous (black dash – 28.3 acres) and planned (solid yellow – 70.8 acres) boundaries are shown on the above graphic. Gateway East was expanded to the east to include US 27 frontage properties and Lowe’s.

Lowe’s is desired as a long-term business and land use at its current location. It is included in case Lowe’s voluntarily vacates their property.

Property located on the east side of US27 has been added because it is underperforming and its redevelopment is advantageous to create a unified redevelopment district.

Lastly, the northern boundary has been expanded to a midpoint between Thompson and Bramble. The expansion of land areas improves overall redevelopment district shape and size creating a more appealing redevelopment opportunity.

### Status

Gateway East, with vacant land and low density residential, is underutilized given its location next to regionally significant transportation infrastructure such as I-275, I-471, and US 27.

The majority of Gateway East is currently zoned R-1 Residential One followed by SC Shopping Center and GC General Commercial.



US 27 contain an incompatible mix of residential and commercial uses. US 27, as a primary thoroughfare, carries significant through traffic and is not an ideal location for single-family residential use as a result.



A number of houses along US27 are in comparatively poor condition and bear witness to the market's desire for housing on quieter and less heavily-traveled streets.

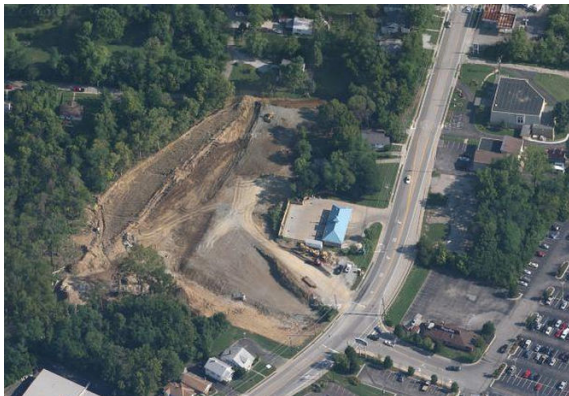
Many constraints hinder Gateway East's redevelopment. As a result, few redevelopment plans have been proposed for this area in years past.

Land assemblage of numerous small properties is perhaps the biggest redevelopment obstacle. Limited infrastructure and lack of access north of US 27 also serve as development constraints.

Even if adequate roadway infrastructure was in place, two left-hand turns are required to access property located north and west of US 27. Two left-hand turns make commercial use difficult.

Many residential lots facing US 27 have shallow lot depth relative to modern commercial development standards. This lack of lot depth limits most commercial redevelopment options.

One property owner recently filled in a significant area next to US 27. This leveling added usable lot depth and brought the grade of the property up to that of US 27's street level.



The raised grade at this location will aid efforts to construct a new commercial service road into the area north of US 27 as shown on Map RD1.

### Land Use

A mix of "Commercial / Business" and "Multi-Family Residential" is planned in Gateway East (see Map RD1). Commercial /Business is planned along US 27 including the existing Lowe's property.

Primary land uses desired in areas planned as "Commercial/Business" include healthcare, professional office and limited retail as defined further in the next paragraph.



Retail and retail services uses are planned along US 27 to include neighborhood-orientated beauty and barber shops, tailors and dry cleaners, cafes, carry-outs, and sit down restaurants without drive-thrus, and specialty food stores such as bakeries, ice cream parlors, and produce markets.

These uses generally align with uses permitted in the LSC Limited Service Commercial Zone.



Source: belvedereneighborhood.com



Residential is desired on upper stories of mixed-use commercial buildings or as a standalone secondary use approved as part of a 5-acre or larger mixed-use redevelopment project where at least 50% of a project contains primary land uses as defined in the previous two paragraphs.

Fast food restaurants, large retail (15,000 square feet or larger) and shopping centers (larger than 30,000 square feet) are not planned in order to avoid the proliferation of strip development and congestion.

“Multi-Family Residential” is planned north of US 27 frontage properties up to 12 units per acre or as set on an approved development plan.

New multiple-family residential developments, particularly where abutting single-family residential uses and zoning, are planned to exhibit neighborhood-orientated scale and architecture.



Source: claytonbuildingsolutions.com

New units will ideally offer housing styles and options not currently seen in Highland Heights. While garden apartments are not eliminated as a possibility, such design arrangements are widely available.

Taller, mid-rise apartments, if proposed, should be located closer to I-471 to minimize impact on adjacent neighborhoods.



Source: greendiary.com

### Circulation

A commercial access service road west of US 27 at the Lowe’s intersection, as shown on Map RD1, is needed to service Gateway East redevelopment.

Recent fill activity on the west side of US 27 across from Lowe’s decreased a 20-foot drop in elevation adjacent to the road there.

Improved signalization and adding a fourth leg to the Lowe’s intersection is needed to open land up for redevelopment west of US 27 in Gateway East.

Property with US 27 frontage can gain additional lot depth after the service road is constructed. Ideally, US 27 frontage properties will gain access off of the proposed service road to eliminate curb cuts on US 27.

Previous Comprehensive Plans anticipated an I-471 underpass or overpass to physically connect Gateway East and West. That concept is carried forward in this update.

This recommendation never received funding or priority status even though the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet commissioned a plan to study Gateway East-West connectivity.

Construct a temporary stub or cul-de-sac at the west end of this service road to permit a future extension across I-471. Ensure pedestrian facilities are included in the design of any approved service connector road.



Work with the State to apply access management standards on US 27 to control access points, curb cut widths and turn movements on and from US 27.

Access management improves corridor safety and efficiency by reducing turning movements and accidents.



The *US 27 Alexandria Pike Access Management Plan* calls for specific improvements to make US 27 safer and multi-modal.

These improvements include the consolidation of lanes and incorporating on-street bike lanes, narrowing wide curb cuts, and consolidating driveways. Again, while these recommendations have never received priority-funding status, they are none-the-less desired.

As discussed in Chapter 3 Transportation, the inclusion of additional bus transit service provided by TANK is desired in Gateway East to accommodate higher residential densities associated with planned multi-family development and higher job density associated with commercial redevelopment.

Ensure TANK officials are given all development plans that are submitted in the US 27 Corridor to ensure proper area is maintained for increased service including bus pullovers and shelters.

### Design

Use of durable building materials such as decorative masonry or brick should be required on building walls visible from a public right-of-way.

Use of high quality and long lasting building materials as already established in Town Center will further brand Highland Heights as a high-quality community and advance the streetscape theme already established in Town Center.



One- to two-story buildings are anticipated adjacent to US 27 with articulated facades and interesting roof-lines. Flat uninterrupted wall planes are discouraged.

Use wall plane changes, pilasters, columns, window sills, articulated entrances, arcades, awnings, water tables and decorative cornices – to name just a few architectural features – to make development architecturally interesting.

Incorporate pedestrian walkways between buildings and developments. Internal paths connecting to City sidewalks and paths are essential.

Extend stacked stone veneer wall streetscape elements into Gateway East similar to those found in the Town Center.



Require walls to screen parking lots facing US 27. Require low-profile monument signs with stone veneer bases that match stone streetscape/screen wall materials.



This strategy will further brand Highland Height's signature element and unify US 27 as the City's primary image corridor.

Encourage new commercial buildings to incorporate amenities such as rooftop patios, outdoor seating, and usable spaces such as plazas or greens to encourage neighborhood socialization.





### Map RD1 - Gateway East and Gateway West Redevelopment District Plan

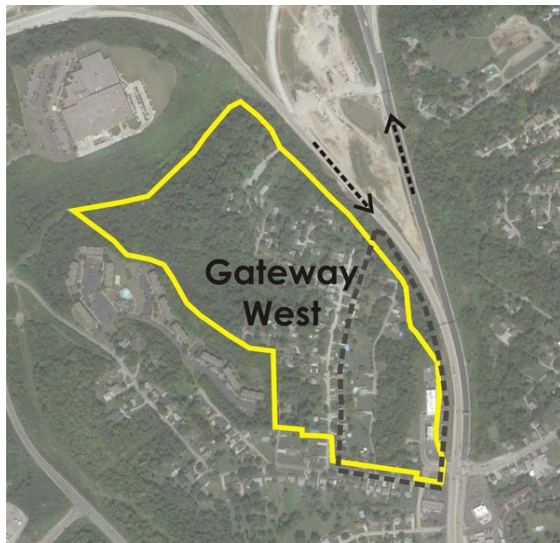




## Gateway West

### Goal Statements

(1) Transform Gateway West from a lightly-populated residential area to a university-affiliated business park. (2) Build upon the success established by NKU Foundation’s adjacent business park. (3) Support NKU’s commitment to entrepreneurialism, applied research and cutting edge technology. (4) Provide a suitable location to support regional economic development efforts to attract high-wage, high-tech employment growth.



### Location

As its name implies, Gateway West is located at Highland Heights’ front door adjacent to I-471 and US 27. Previous boundaries (black dash – 20.1 acres) and planned boundaries (solid yellow – 61.8 acres) are shown on the above graphic.

Gateway West has been enlarged to support efforts to develop a leading, university-affiliated business park as envisioned herein.

### Status

Existing land use is low density, single family residential. Gateway Shopping Center opened in 2010 near Sunset and US 27.

In many ways Gateway West is underutilized given its location next to regionally significant infrastructure including NKU, I-275, I-471, and US 27.

Environmental constraints are present, particularly along the western boundary. Constraints include rolling topography, steep hillsides, ravines and floodplains.



Current zoning is primarily R-1 One Residential. This zoning pre-dates the completion of I-471, I-275, and the more recently widened US 27. NKU, newly established four decades ago, was not then a leading institution it is today.



Gateway Shopping Center, zoned ROD Redevelopment Overlay District, was the first redevelopment project to come to fruition in Gateway West. This successful project consumed about one-third of Gateway West’s land area as designated by its 2006 Comprehensive Plan boundaries.





Residual property in Gateway West was never redeveloped. Reasons for this include difficulty assembling numerous small properties, limited infrastructure including poor access and opposition from some property owners.



### Land Use

The land use strategy for Gateway West supports “Business Park” development along with a limited amount of “Commercial / Business”. See Map RD1.

The majority of Gateway West is planned for “Business Park” land use and development. This future land use designation conserves land for economic development efforts aimed at attracting high-wage, high-tech jobs taking advantage of Gateway West’s excellent regional location.

Mid-rise corporate office, research and development, laboratories, healthcare and high-tech uses are planned in a master-planned business park setting. Higher education facilities are also desired.



This land use strategy is inspired by the success of neighboring NKU Foundation’s Research Park and the desire to further develop Northern Kentucky’s high-tech business cluster in Highland Heights.

This strategy has merit given NKU Foundation’s Business Park features two of the region’s leading high-tech, advanced manufacturing companies, General Cable and PPD’s Global Central Lab.

Furthermore, NKU is worldwide leader in the high-tech discipline of “informatics” and applied science. NKU provides extensive support to entrepreneurial programs including its acclaimed UPTECH business accelerator.



This concentration of intellectual capital far surpasses what is typically found in a community the size of Highland Heights. The goal of this plan is to leverage these assets for enhanced economic activity and for high-tech, high-wage job growth on behalf of local and regional residents.

Evidence suggests high-tech companies prefer to locate next to each other and next to universities to take advantage of an educated workforce.



University-affiliated business parks (also referred to as science parks or research and development parks) are seeing growth across the country as a result.

A business park in Gateway West will offer a strategic location for companies that want to be located close to NKU's facilities, leading subject-matter experts and an educated workforce.

A business park at this location may also aid NKU's efforts to protect its intellectual capital and to support current and graduate UPTECH companies.

Planned "Commercial/Business" uses are limited to restaurants and business services for the purposes of attracting and supporting adjacent high-tech corporations and their employees and creating a high-quality and attractive business park location. "Commercial/Business" is planned next to Sunset Drive and Gateway Shopping Center.

Commercial / Business uses that serve as amenity business support are limited to restaurants and business services. Standard, full-service, sit down restaurants are desired to fulfill business lunch needs immediately adjacent to planned business park uses. Fast-casual restaurants similar to Panera Bread are also acceptable.

Fast-food restaurants, large retail (greater than 15,000 square feet) and shopping centers greater than 20,000 square feet are not planned to avoid additional and unwanted congestion on I-471 and US 27.

### **Circulation**

Access and circulation improvements are needed to improve Gateway West's development potential.

East-west access is largely cut-off by the wedge created by interstate I-471 funneling down to Highway US27. Sunset Drive is a stub

commercial road before it curves south and turns into a two-lane residential street.

Realign Sunset Drive as shown on Map RD1 to provide a modern east-west service road that connects US27 and I-471 to University Drive and to a planned roundabout at NKU's North Connector Road.

This improved alignment will provide connectivity from the AA Highway to I-471 via the planned Pooles Creek and NKU Connectors. As such, this road will effectively bypass the Nunn Drive/US 27 intersection with a consequent reduction in traffic congestion.

A local service road running north off of Sunset is needed to provide access to the enlarged interior of Gateway West. A cul-de-sac at the end of this service road is anticipated due to the steep hillside barrier found on Gateway West's western and northern borders.

Pedestrian connectivity from Gateway West to NKU Foundation's Research Park and NKU's main campus can be made regardless of noted environmental constraints. This can be accomplished by planning and installing interconnected pedestrian walkways and bikeways.

Previous Comprehensive Plan policy anticipated an I-471 underpass or overpass to physically connect Gateway East and West. This alignment is carried forward as part of this update.

The 2006 Comprehensive Plan called for a new off-ramp exiting from southbound I-471 with forced right turn entry onto Nunn Drive.

This project is no longer supported as a viable option to relieve traffic on US 27. An off-ramp would bisect Gateway West and interfere with planned circulation. Such alignment would also significantly reduce total developable acreage.



The Steering Committee contemplated an inside through lane on I-275 starting northeast of 3 Mile Road following the I-471/US 27 off-ramp down to a forced right-hand turn onto Nunn Drive. This recommendation is not on Map RD1 but it is noted here for additional study if traffic conditions warrant.

### Design

Leading high-tech corporations are image conscious and often seek manicured business park locations.

Use durable, long-lasting building materials such as brick, stone and decorative masonry units on all building walls visible from a public street with possible exceptions for buildings deemed to be of otherwise exceptional architectural quality.

Use of decorative trim and large window openings consistent with modern, high-efficiency office buildings is desired to brand the business park.



Due to limited land availability, multi-story buildings are anticipated to reduce land consumption, increase leasable floor area, and to take advantage of highway visibility.



Incorporate pedestrian walkways between buildings and developments. Internal paths connecting to City sidewalks and paths are essential.

As with Gateway East, extend stone streetscape elements into Gateway West similar to those found in the Town Center.

Screen parking lots with low-profile stacked stone veneer walls. Require low-profile monument signs with stone veneer bases that match the stone streetscape/screen wall materials employed elsewhere.

Design and construct a “Business Park” entry sign using stone materials that incorporates planned streetscape elements.

Adherence to this strategy will unify US 27 as the City’s primary image corridor and brand Gateway East, Gateway West and Town Center as the City’s key commercial areas.

Permit signature wall signs – signs that can be seen at the top of multi-story office building from adjacent highways, to reward companies that locate in Highland Heights.



## Town Center

### Goal Statements

(1) Town Center is to be a vibrant, mixed-use focal point serving as both the real and symbolic center of civic and commercial activity of the City. (2) Planned redevelopment is intended to increase community pride, create a stronger sense of place and drive an identifiable and desirable community image. (3) Town Center should be a pedestrian-friendly node and be accessible from adjacent neighborhoods and from NKU. (5) Town Center needs to contribute to heightened social and economic wellbeing for Highland Heights and NKU.



### Location

Town Center is centrally located east and west of US 27 between Nunn Drive and Johns Hill Road.

Previous boundaries (black dash – 118.7 acres) and new boundaries (solid yellow – 48.5 acres) are shown in the above graphic. The western boundary has been moved from University Drive to Clara Drive on account of recent NKU land acquisition. The boundary has been expanded southeast to Bon Jan Lane and now includes E-Jay Plaza and Abby’s Child Enrichment Center.

Eastern expansion crosses Old Alexandria Pike and goes three properties deep to gain suitable lot depth needed to support commercial redevelopment.

### Status

Of the three redevelopment districts, Town Center has seen the most redevelopment activity. Retail establishments, restaurant and offices are currently present.

The Bluegrass Center, located on the west side of US 27 in Town Center, was the City’s first large-scale redevelopment project.

While the Bluegrass Center is a success, its design does not incorporate all of the urban design standards set forth in the 2000 and 2006 Comprehensive Plans, which called for a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly node.

While actual development does display high-quality building materials and landscaping, it lacks pedestrian connectivity and amenity space. As a result, the Blue Grass Center looks and functions more like a high-quality suburban strip than contributor to a real town center.





A recent redevelopment proposal for Town Center approved in 2012 calls for a 13,000 square foot commercial center called Highland Pointe.



Highland Pointe consumes the remainder of the “Island” property created after US 27 was realigned to connect to I-471. 5/3 Bank anchors the north end of the “Island” and was the first to redevelop there.



Town Center contains one of the largest undeveloped land parcels remaining in Highland Heights. This six acre parcel, located on the southwest corner of Nunn Drive and US 27, is a former supermarket site currently owned by NKU.



Town Center is currently zoned ROD Redevelopment Overlay District, LSC Limited Shopping Center, GC General Commercial and R-1 Residential One.

Several properties zoned R-1 maintain residential use. Housing tenure includes a mix of student rental and owner-occupied units.



Regardless of tenure, land use in this redevelopment district is likely to transition within ten years given NKU’s continued growth and heightened commercial interest in the US 27 corridor.



### Land Use

The “Town Center” Future Land Use Category is applied to the entire Town Center redevelopment district (see Maps LU3/RD2).

Vertical, multiple-floor development is planned to maximize remaining redevelopment opportunities and to create a more vibrant town center.

Ground floor is reserved primarily for retail and food service. Upper floors are planned as office and/or residential, including student housing.

Attached residential developments such as dorms and townhomes are planned as secondary uses permitted only when approved as part of a larger mixed-use redevelopment plan.

NKU is planning hospitality and conference center uses at the corner of Nunn Drive and US 27 to support area businesses and numerous events held at NKU.

Suburban style strip development and associated uses are not desired, including food service with drive-thru windows and shopping centers. See Table RD1 on page 18.

New retail establishments over 5,000 square feet are generally not compatible with the pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use environment envisioned for town center.

Larger retail establishments, to be considered, must demonstrate a high degree of urban design and architecture, including among other things compartmentalized store front and window bays framed with glass and decorative columns.

Parking garages are also planned provided at least three-quarters of any garage is set behind buildings with storefronts. Parking garages create dead zones in the pedestrian-friendly urban fabric.



Source: [welcometothelane.com](http://welcometothelane.com)

The picture above is of “The Lane” in Columbus, a proposed five-story mixed-use development that features a 109-room hotel, 108 luxury apartment units, 13,000 square feet of retail space and 13,000 square feet of office space.



Source: [brokensidewalk.com/tag/student-housing/](http://brokensidewalk.com/tag/student-housing/)

A proposed mixed-use dorm with 700 beds, 50,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space, underground parking and interior courtyards will strengthen the urban environment next to the University of Louisville on a 4.5 acre block.

### Circulation

Town Center has excellent access from US 27. Internal circulation improvements are needed as planned on Map RD2.

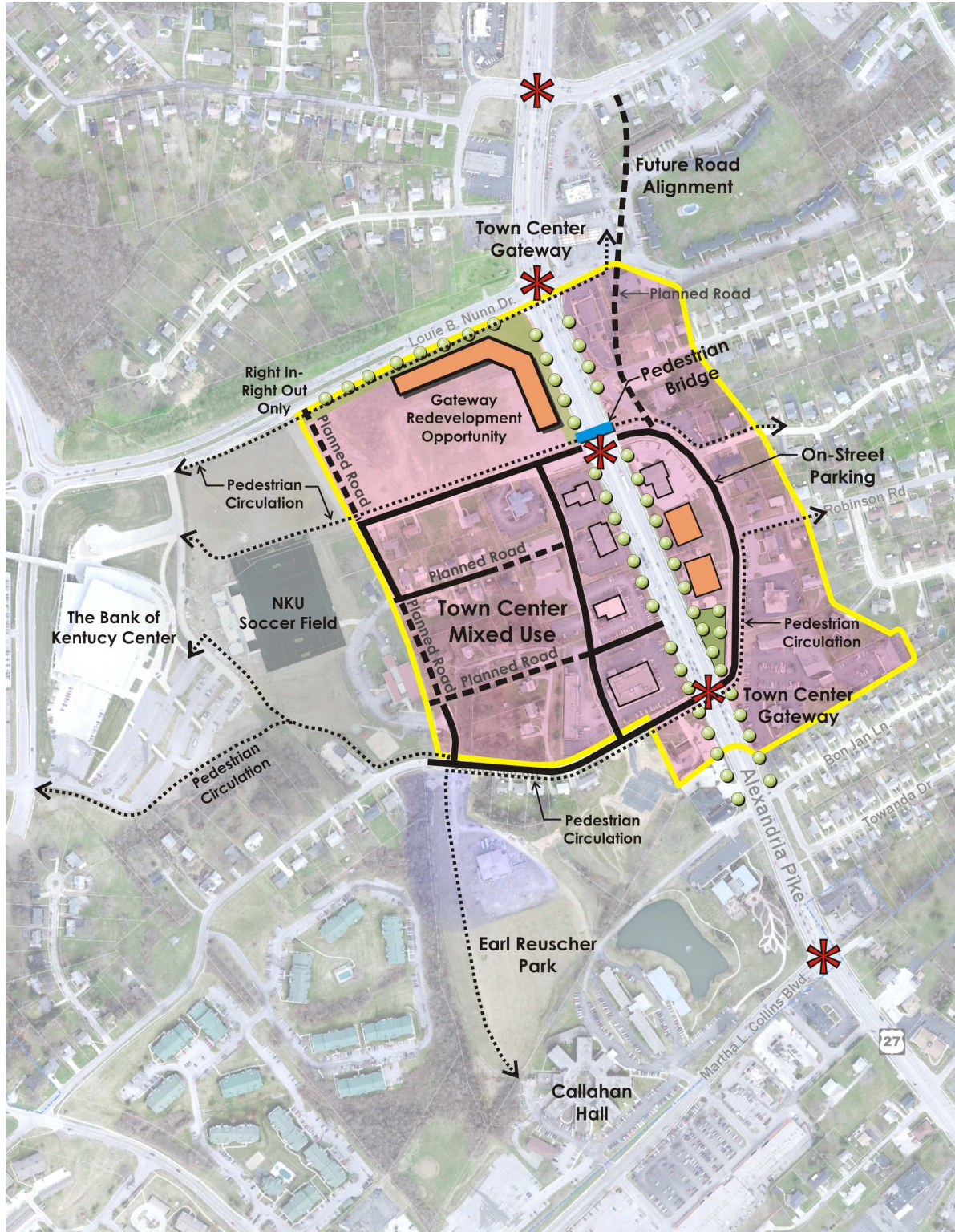
Planned street extensions, shown as black dashed lines, will provide a more integrated transportation system, increase circulation and reduce traffic congestion.

East-west street extensions are planned to create a grid block system that support pedestrian-friendly urban development.

Two parallel service roads are proposed on either side of US 27 as shown on Map RD2. These roads will bypass signalized intersections, improve internal circulation and reduce reliance on using US 27.



### Map RD2 – Town Center Redevelopment District Plan





**Circulation, continued**

Right-in and right-out only turning movements onto US 27 and Nunn Drive are planned as shown on Map RD2. Both roads will require additional study to determine proper alignment and intersection configurations at Nunn Drive and US 27.

Road alignments west of US 27 need to consider NKU's development plans for the 6-acre parcel located at Nunn Drive and US 27.

Town Center will benefit from a vibrant street scene. Safe and efficient pedestrian circulation is important to Town Center's overall success.

Pedestrian connectivity from NKU to Town Center will increase Town Center's viability as commercial mixed-use area. Town Center's success will in turn provide a high-quality, off-campus environment for students and faculty.



Require wide sidewalks on both sides of every street. A minimum of 14 feet or more is desired next to retail to allow for benches and outdoor seating.



A pedestrian bridge spanning US 27 close to Marshall Lane is called for to provide students and City residents safe passage across US 27 above grade and removed from traffic.

Use the pedestrian bridge to co-brand the City of Highland Heights and NKU as the graphic below demonstrates.

Construct the bridge with high-quality building materials that match adjacent architecture and stone streetscape elements. The bridge will serve as a defining gateway element in Town Center and provide a stronger sense of arrival.

Work with NKU to integrate the pedestrian bridge into any plan created for a mixed-use hotel/conference center at Nunn Drive and US 27.

Seek joint funding, include CMAQ funding as available to help pay for the bridge's construction.







### Design

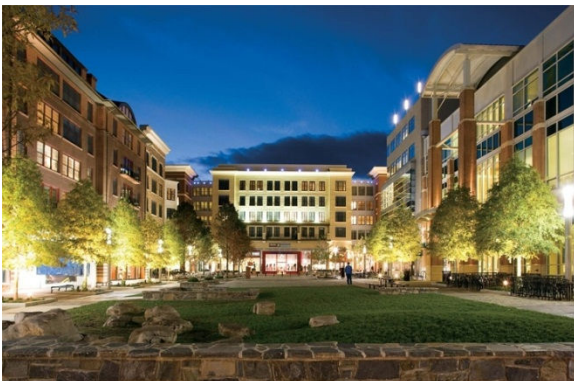
Town Center is an urban place. All future development needs to push building density higher and take on an urban form to create a truly pedestrian-friendly business district.



Locate future buildings adjacent to sidewalks. Ground floor vibrancy is accentuated by storefronts with clear vision glass and articulated entrances.

Pedestrians are accommodated with wide sidewalks between streets and ground floor retail. Outdoor seating is planned in Town Center.

Arrange buildings in a pattern that establish pedestrian amenities such as town squares, plazas or greens throughout Town Center.



A green or square west of Bluegrass Drive connected to the 20 foot wide pedestrian easement on the north side of Applebee's would serve as an ideal organizational feature.

As a matter of policy, ensure pedestrian amenities are provided as part of all new development in Town Center even if it is limited to a micro-patio with outdoor seating.



Source: schmidt-design.com

Use wide sidewalks and gathering areas to create a pedestrian-centric environment. Encourage private sector investment in outdoor gathering spaces.



Source: urbanspaceandplaces.blogspot.com



### Design, continued

NKU's vision for a mixed-use hotel/conference center with retail is in the developmental stage.

NKU has indicated that one or more small outdoor spaces available for public use and programming are being considered consistent with Comprehensive Plan policy.



Source: ids-placemakers.com

A formal water feature and/or piece of art would ideally be provided in attempt to create a central place and organizing feature in Highland Heights.



Source: modernsculpture.com

Creative use of lighting would ensure public spaces are used extensively day and night.



Source: Texas Tech University Facebook

The use of Tax Increment Financing or Kentucky Tourism Act or other program may offset development costs possibly making the cost of water feature or other similar element financially feasible.



Source: newcomblanheights.blogspot.com



Source: memphisjuncture.com



### Design, continued

NKU's proposed Town Center project is highly strategic as development at Nunn Drive and Us 27 will serve as gateways to both NKU's campus and Town Center.

Development plans need to integrate "campus" and "Town Center" architecture to mutually benefit both NKU and Highland Heights.

Continue to require brick and stone building materials in Town Center. New buildings need to complement and pay homage to existing Town Center architecture.

Maintain stacked stone veneer wall streetscape elements along US 27 as the City's signature design element. Wherever feasible, incorporate stone wall elements in streetscapes in Town Center's interior off of US 27.

Parking in Town Center should be on-street or behind buildings. Parking on the side of buildings is less desirable as it breaks the urban street wall.



Source: Strongtowns.org

Parking in front yards between buildings and sidewalks is least preferred. No more than two rows of front yard parking are planned.



### Town Center Development vs. Conventional Strip Commercial

Town Center	Strip-Commercial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unified mixed-use development building with coordinated character entrances, parking and loading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single, free-standing buildings with no consideration for establishing a unified character.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dense, tightly space buildings are located close to street and sidewalk with parking along the rear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buildings situated away from street with parking along the front</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pedestrian orientation and connectivity with pedestrian system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No consideration for a pedestrian system and its connection with the community.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development centers on a common pedestrian public space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No consideration and/or provision for a common public amenity space</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site amenities such as fountain, benches, landscaping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No site amenities, no green space, token landscaping.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration with neighborhood and streetscape.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No requirement for achieving integration with the adjacent neighborhood.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasis on uses, which do not depend entirely on the automobile.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasis on use that depend entirely on the automobile.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two-story buildings serviced by shared parking for the town center.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-story small footprint buildings with large areas devoted to parking</li> </ul>

The recommended town center urban design guidelines direct commercial redevelopment away from typical strip development toward a higher quality mixed-use development.

The key physical attributes that contribute to the effectiveness of a town center are as follows:

Communities across the nation report that technology-based businesses and industries are attracted to areas, which among other key factors, offer well-planned mixed-use business districts.



Mariemont, in Cincinnati, offers a successful example of a neighborhood-scale town center with mixed-use development that has withstood the test of time.

Mariemont is a planned community built in the early years of the 20th century on the basis of the garden city principles of planning.

- Complete pedestrian integration with adjacent areas.
- Mixed-use – commercial, office, residential, civic, entertainment, parks.
- No “big-box” users (i.e. large size drug stores, home improvement center, etc.).
- Diversified small retail units no greater than 2,500 square feet.
  - Controlled ingress/egress.
- Surface parking behind buildings.
- Convenient short-term parking along building fronts
- Pedestrian access to retail units from the rear
- Strong landscape character
- Site amenities – fountain, pedestrian areas, floral spaces, green commons.



### Redevelopment Strategies

Tools, resources and strategies are available to help the City pursue redevelopment in its priority redevelopment areas.

#### Land Assemblage

- 1. **Lead Land Assembly.** Most developers avoid land assembly when numerous small lots are involved such as the case with property in Highland Baby Farms Subdivision (the 1920’s layout precursor to what became the City of Highland Heights).

Land assembly adds time and money and increases risk with no guarantee of success. The City must champion this cause if redevelopment is desired any time in the near future.

Start the land assemblage process as soon as possible. Due to limited resources, the City should focus on one redevelopment area at a time. Land bank property until a redevelopment is proposed.

Gateway West is a high priority due to its potential economic return from planned high-tech office employment.

- 2. **Hire Additional Help.** The City needs additional human resources to effectively lead land assembly efforts. Legal, real estate brokerage and developer skill sets, among others, will likely be needed.
- 3. **Meet with Property Owners.** Proactively meet with property owners located in the assembly area. Be transparent, inform property owners of City goals and intent. Sign agreements with property owners interested in selling. Newport used this approach to assemble most of the property needed for to develop Newport on the Levee.

- 4. **Seek Partners.** The City will benefit by working with other organizations and entities, perhaps even developers, to assemble strategically located property.

NKU and Tri-ED are obvious examples of organizations that may be willing to support the City in its land-assembly efforts in the Gateway West redevelopment area.

- 5. **Seek Problem Properties.** Proactively find properties that have problems with clear titles, estate entanglements or are owned by heirs located outside the region, since these problems can take months if not years to solve.
- 6. **Revisit Urban Renewal.** Look at urban renewal as a possible option to give the City additional tools needed to assemble land, particularly from hold outs.

#### Equity Investment Approach

The “Equity Investment Approach” is a newer and arguably more sophisticated approach to land assembly. This approach makes participating property owners pro-rata shareholders of a larger area being assembled.

Property owners form unified ownership and a legal entity authorized to perform transactions on behalf of joint ownership such as a LLC.

Landowners receive shares of the new entity based on the proportional value of their property. Each owners share price is based on the proportional value of the entire land area as a whole.

This approach may result in higher share values for each property owner, particularly when zoning is changed from residential to commercial. This strategy gives property owners upside participation in a development project.



The City could act as partner in an Equity Investment Approach by offering property owners with technical assistance. The benefit to the City is larger properties self-assemble reducing time and use of resources.

**Financing**

The City is advised to meet with competent counsel before implementing any of the strategies outlined in this section.

1. **“Development Area” Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District.** One of three TIF types permitted in Kentucky, it is intended for use in already developed areas – such as the case for all three of Highland Heights’ redevelopment districts.

Assessed property in the TIF may not exceed 20% of the City’s total real property assessment. To qualify, the TIF “Development Area” must meet 2 of 7 tests for blight or include a mixed-use project in a research park. The City could possibly bypass the blight test if NKU/NKU Foundation was willing to expand the NKU Foundation Research Park into Gateway West.

Gateway West plans call for additional retail and office uses meeting the state’s mixed-use requirement.

**Increment Revenue.** Highland Heights may pledge 100% of its incremental revenues from real property taxes and/or occupational taxes for up to 30 years. Other taxing districts in the City may make the same pledge, except school and fire districts are not allowed to pledge their increment by state law. Additional increment can be captured with State participation.

**Tax Increment Bonds.** The City can secure increment bonds backed by pledged TIF revenue. This will provide needed working capital up front. Increment bonds do not have to be secured by the City’s credit rating.

**Use of TIF Proceeds.** Kentucky TIF law permits a broad range of eligible uses to develop, promote, and incentivize residential, industrial, office, recreation, and tourism development.

Eligible uses of TIF generated revenues include land-assemblage and demolition costs, cost to relocate residents, cost to design subdivisions and extend roads and utilities, cost to pay for the provision of lighting and parking; cost to promote development to new tenants; and to help companies construct facilities with grants and loans.

**State TIF Participation.** State participation in a “Development Area” TIF is economically advantageous. Projects that meet Development Area TIF requirements are eligible to receive up to 80% of State incremental revenues up to 20 years and may include sales tax, occupation tax, corporate tax and real property tax. State TIF revenues can be used only for infrastructure and land preparation costs.

**TIF Boundaries.** Weigh the option of placing all three redevelopment districts in one large TIF district or whether three separate TIF districts make more sense. Boundaries can be expertly placed to ensure requirements are met for State participation.



### **Maintain Ability to Use State Incentives.**

Careful construction of TIF legislation is needed to ensure the greatest monetary benefit possible is achieved when establishing TIF districts in Highland Heights.

It is possible to lose potential TIF revenue streams or negate the use of certain state incentive programs for economic development if TIFs are incorrectly structured. It is important to seek competent counsel on this matter before any TIF district is established.

2. **Industrial Revenue Bonds.** As defined by KRS 103.200, Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRB) may be issued by state and local governments in Kentucky to help finance industrial buildings.

### **IRB's fund projects, not developments.**

IRB may not benefit Highland Heights in the early stages of redevelopment or land assembly efforts. IRB requires a job-producing company be interested in building or expanding in a community before bonds are issued.

**Use of Proceeds.** IRB's may be useful after property is assembled and a specific project is proposed. Bond funds may be used to finance total project costs, including engineering, site preparation, land, buildings, machinery and equipment and bond issuance costs.

**Tax Benefits.** KRS 103 permits the bond issuer to hold title to the improvements financed with IRB proceeds. One of its main benefits is that the property owned by the issuer may be exempt from local property taxes during the duration of the bond issue. The same property may also be eligible to be taxed at reduced state rates.

IRB's impact all taxing districts located in the City including the county, school district and fire district.

IRB is the only state incentive program permitted to capture all of a local school district's annual property tax revenues. It will be important for City leaders to meet with all taxing districts, especially school district officials, before bonds are issued to determine if IRB use negatively impacts taxing district revenues and if compensation agreements are needed.

3. **Advocacy.** The City and its partners need to present a unified front supporting Comprehensive Plan initiatives to gain political support and financing. Nowhere is that more apparent than with road improvements.

Several transportation plans and studies produced over the past decades have resulted in numerous transportation improvement recommendations. All but a few of those plans have come to fruition.

Remaining projects have never reached priority status on OKI's Long Range Transportation Plan or on State project funding schedules. These projects are permanently on the shelf and will remain there until the City successfully advocates for their funding.





It is highly recommended that the City builds a coalition of regional partners that support Highland Heights’ plans before submitting funding requests to the State legislature.

**Alternative Funding.** Pursue alternative funding, including grants, as a means to leverage local public and private dollars.

**The Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ)** program supports surface transportation projects that contribute to air quality improvements and reduce congestion including bicycle, pedestrian and transit projects.

The **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)** provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation, recreational trail program projects and safe routes to school projects.

### Partners

The City is advised to assemble a team of partners, trusted advisors and firms with the necessary skill sets needed to skillfully redevelop targeted areas.

- 1. Work Collaboratively with Partners.** Enlist the help of the other organizations, entities and agencies that can provide political, technical and/or financial assistance.

NKU is a logical partner as many of the initiatives listed in this plan will ultimately impact the University. For instance, NKU is a major property owner in Town Center and Gateway West.

Campbell County, Tri-ED and the State may be interested in the business park concept proposed for Gateway West as it could advance a high profile development that could be marketed regionally to attract high-tech companies and jobs.

- 2. Team Approach.** One approach to area redevelopment is to assemble a team that takes the project from start to finish (concept through construction). This is a public-private partnership. All terms for the entire project are set before work starts to ensure everyone understands their roles and minimum expectations for work product and compensation. Another model is to assemble a different team for each major step – land acquisition, infrastructure planning, design, land deposition and development. This approach recognizes that no one team may be best for every step.

Others models exist. For example, communities can look to the private sector to assemble land, in which case the community can offset land-holding costs to keep developer costs down.

- 4. Seek Compensation.** Regardless of the model used, make it apparent that the City will require compensation to recoup its costs associated with land assemblage.
- 5. Marketing and Branding.** Work with NKU and Tri-ED to develop a suitable brand and marketing strategy for Gateway East and West.







The primary objectives in developing a Gateway West Business Park are to: (1) promote economic development in Highland Heights and the region; (2) provide additional area for NKU to expand its entrepreneurial and business programs; and (3) provide a location for corporations that desire close proximity to NKU.



It is recognized that success in achieving these objectives will depend in part on aggressive promotion of the location. Such a promotional effort will be more effective if the area being promoted has a unique identifiable image and name.

### Development Plan Requirements

New development within redevelopment districts should be guided by the following urban-environmental design standards and approval procedures:

1. Consistent with previous Comprehensive Plan recommendations, redevelopment should occur according to an approved development plan submitted by an applicant. A development plan is necessary to avoid uncoordinated development and costly mistakes.
2. Any redevelopment requiring rezoning of property must include a development plan.
3. Deny any proposed redevelopment that impedes or adversely affects the overall viability of redevelopment on adjacent properties or districts.
4. Development plans must demonstrate how redevelopment can be planned and

designed without interfering with subsequent redevelopment on adjoining property within the redevelopment district.

5. Development plans must present a cohesive development and building arrangement that considers internal and external traffic access and circulation, landscaping and parking on the subject property and adjacent property within the redevelopment district.
6. All new development within a redevelopment district must be planned and designed to maximize the economic opportunity of the site as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan.
7. The City is encouraged to adopt clearly articulated design guidelines that can be effectively communicated to applicants and enforced by the Planning Commission to ensure unified development is achieved district-wide.
8. Building placement, height, proposed use(s), intensity of uses and architectural features should be consistent with Comprehensive Plan objectives for the redevelopment district under consideration.
9. Matters of internal circulation and street design should conform to Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the site and redevelopment area with regard to its overall circulation pattern.
10. Any new redevelopment requiring a rezoning of property must be of sufficient size and configuration to allow for the appropriate and beneficial use of the property as envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan. This issue is further addressed in the following section.



**Redevelopment Parcel Size**

Highland Heights’ current zoning ordinances require a developer to assemble 3-acres or more of land to qualify for a ROD rezoning. This requirement is viewed by some as being too restrictive.

Highland Heights’ goal is not to stop progress but to ensure that coordinated and cohesive development is achieved. Achieving unified redevelopment is a legitimate public purpose.

As such, the 3-acre minimum ROD land area requirement is envisioned to remain in effect over the life of this Comprehensive Plan.

The current regulation could benefit from flexibility by recognizing that holding to a 3-acre minimum requirement may not benefit the City in all cases.

The following approaches offer additional flexibility without unnecessarily nullifying the intent of the requirement:

1. A rezoning application for less than 3-acres can be considered when the rezoning request enlarges an existing ROD. In such case, the area considered for rezoning shall be no less than one acre.
2. Permit joint rezoning applications of contiguous property as a means to meet the 3-acre minimum requirement and to promote collaboration between multiple property owners and developers. Require a master development plan to control the entire land area.
3. Create a series of development plan and rezoning tests by which to judge whether a rezoning request and development plan furthers Comprehensive Plan goals regardless of parcel size.

4. Waive the 3-acre requirement when hardships and unique situations are presented. One example is the Highland Pointe Shopping Center project which is located on less than three acres on the “Island” in Town Center.
5. The City proactively master plans the entire redevelopment area showing ideal locations for curb cuts, shared drives, new roads, landscaping and screening and building placement, etc. Properties smaller than 3-acres are granted zone change with conditions that the rezoned property develops consistent with the City produced master plan.

Consider asking property owners to participate financially in the development of a master plan on a pro-rata share based on property size or value of the area being planned.

6. Consider reducing the 3-acre requirement when the applicant submits a development plan for the entire redevelopment area that demonstrates that development on less than 3-acres will not impede or create uncoordinated development.

**Redevelopment Plan Uses**

The City currently requires confirmation of specific users as part of ROD rezoning and development plan approval. This requirement is considered by some to be restrictive and was a noted point of contention when the Steering Committee discussed enlarging redevelopment area boundaries.

Requiring future tenant names for development plan approval may hinder investment. Developers and corporations often require correct zoning before making



investment decisions. This reality in turn may hinder one's ability to attract and sign tenants.

It is possible to maintain adequate control over future use without knowing actual tenant names.

This can be accomplished by labeling permitted land use by lot or building on an approved plan and then enumerate a mutually agreeable list of specifically permitted and prohibited uses either on the plan or as condition of approval or as an exhibit or signed agreement. Similarly, use restrictions can be recorded as a covenant.

Taking the above approach one additional step, the City may consider adopting legislation that permit negotiations between the Planning Commission and an applicant during rezoning and development plan hearings.

Such negotiations may result in agreed upon parameters for permitted uses, strengthen existing development standards, and add new development standards beyond minimum zoning standards.

This technique would enable applicants to propose, and the City to review and act on, stricter development standards.

The use of conditional zoning should be supported by legislation to amend the Zoning Ordinance. Legislation should be adopted only after the potential benefits and negative impacts of conditional zoning are fully recognized and understood.

A clear and recognizable benefit to the public consistent with defined community land use planning and development goals should be identified before a text amendment is considered.

The City uses this technique to some extent now when reviewing ROD rezoning/development plan applications. Adopting specific legislation enabling negotiated and mutually agreed upon terms is preferred to ad hoc practice and provides greater transparency and predictability.

### **Seek Counsel**

Many recommendations are provided in the Development Strategy section of this chapter. Many of these strategies have financial and legal ramifications.

Planning Commission and City Council are advised to seek competent counsel before implementing any of the recommendations presented in the Development Strategy section of this chapter.