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CORRIDOR PLAN



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- A. Porter On the Ground
- B. Porter Charrette
- C. Market Analysis
- D. *Streetscape Concept Design Document*
(attached separately)





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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

To succeed, any project must become a working partnership with the people of a community.

This was the philosophy used throughout the development of the Porter Corridor plan. Taking this direction was more critical for this project than for many projects, as the idea to create a plan began with public displeasure at the need for viable business to expand and the resulting pressures these expansions created on the neighborhood. A number of commercial developments along Porter Avenue came before the City requesting to remove homes adjacent to their properties, most of which the commercial owners had purchased over time, to expand parking. The neighbors that were insulated from the commercial uses by these, now rental homes, were no longer going to have the buffer. The Planning Commission and City Council struggled with pleasing both groups and having little direction from existing plans.

The Planning Commission and City Council determined that it was time to address issues along Porter Avenue and the best way to begin was to appoint a citizen-based committee and hire an outside consultant with a broader perspective of the issues. Using this process was the right choice for Norman and, more specifically, for Porter Avenue. Creating a community consensus around neighborhood needs and

economic development will ultimately attract more partners, funders, and the support of countless individuals who want to be a part of the solutions and improvements for their community.

The purpose of this plan is to guide future improvement of the Porter Avenue Corridor, while focusing on the existing community and the rich history of the area. This document will explore the opportunities for pedestrian movement, street and landscape improvements, and pedestrian amenities, while taking into account the relationship of the existing residential community with the proposed future commercial and residential development.



INTRODUCTION

CORRIDOR LOCATION

Map 1 on the following page is a Vicinity Map for the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan. The Study Area (Map 2) centers on Porter Avenue, with study area boundaries established by the City as an area south of Haddock Street, north of Castro Street, west of Findlay Street and east of Crawford. This area is crossed by the east/west high traffic corridors of Robinson, Gray, Main and Alameda. Porter Avenue is strategically located at the east end of downtown Norman and runs perpendicular to Main Street and Gray. Key landmarks within the corridor include Norman Regional Hospital, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Hiland Dairy, and downtown Norman.

CORRIDOR HISTORY

Since its early days following the Land Run of 1889, Porter Avenue has played a central role in the life of Norman's residents.

By the turn of the 20th Century, nearly a dozen churches had located on or



adjacent to a predominantly residential Porter Avenue, creating a hub of community activity on Sundays and throughout the week. This included the Methodist Episcopal Church South, home of Oklahoma Territory's first college-High Gate Female College at Norman. A few of these Porter Avenue congregations have flourished and remain anchors along the corridor.

Schools, a hospital, and a dairy moved in, along with a variety of small busi-



Victoria Von Koeppen



Victoria Von Koeppen

Porter Avenue's transition to highway status began in 1924 when it was christened Oklahoma State Highway 4. In 1926, Porter was rechristened U.S. Highway 77, signaling a new importance for the corridor and attracting a lively mix of occupants.

nesses and services, motor courts, numerous restaurants, and other small operations that catered to highway traffic.



INTRODUCTION

Vicinity Map

**CHAPTER
1**



INTRODUCTION

**INSERT PROJECT
AREA MAP 2**

**CHAPTER
1**



INTRODUCTION

Even today, many Oklahomans regard Porter Avenue as a segment of “the old football highway,” the last stretch of the journey to see OU’s Sooners play at Owen Field, and a convenient place to grab a bite to eat after the game was over.

Over the years, popular gathering spots along Porter included the Flying Red Horse Café, the Courts Grill, Gilt Edge Ice Cream Parlor, J.D. Vaught’s Texaco, Greenleaf Grocery, Red’s Tavern and the iconic Tee Pee Bar and Grill.

During the early heyday of the automobile, *North Porter Avenue also became home to a number of “motor companies” that included car dealerships, gas stations, service and repair shops, and parts stores.*

These early auto-oriented businesses brought with them the architectural influences of the day and Art Deco style was born on Porter Avenue. Representing a stark departure from Victorian excess and homey Craftsman design, Art Deco was a popular style of commercial architecture throughout the country. It heralded sleek moder-

nity and became the style most associated with the progressive optimism of the early Automotive Age.

Motor companies dominated Porter Avenue and Main Street for decades before Norman’s car dealers migrated west, eventually forming the interstate corridor’s “Mile of Cars.” After car dealers migrated away from Porter Avenue, motorcycle dealerships moved in. Even today the wheels and movement theme lives on along Porter in the form of muffler and radiator shops, tire stores, and used car lots.

During the past 119 years, Porter Avenue has evolved from a sleepy residential street with churches and schools, to a busy commercial corridor with a great deal of promise.

Porter Avenue’s central location in Norman, surrounded by comfortable 20th Century neighborhoods, its mix of land uses, and its compact scale all bode well for a future Porter Avenue that is a community destination, a hub of activity, and a great street.



NORMAN, OK
CORRIDOR PLAN

INTRODUCTION

WHY REVITALIZE PORTER AVENUE?

Historically, Porter Avenue was a segment of the main road linking Oklahoma City and Dallas, Texas. The street provided a place for travelers to stop for gas, dinner and a place to spend the night. In the process, Porter Avenue also provided a face to the world for the community's growing university. As the community struggled with the development of Interstate 35 and the shift of new development to the west, Porter Avenue was the largest casualty, leaving a dismal outlook for the future.

The cost of not acting to reverse the current state of Porter Avenue is significant.

By not making an investment to improve the streetscape, adopting new ordinances to deal with the commercial and residential conflicts, and developing public/private partnerships, what exists today is the best Porter will ever be.

With no public involvement, existing business will continue to come and go, while the impact on the existing neighborhood will be great. There will be no conveniences and the neighborhoods will continue to struggle with maintenance, vacancies and a high number of rental properties. Potential business and employment will be lost, together with related financial benefits. Blight will

continue to spread as the quality of businesses in the corridor begins to decline, thereby diminishing the quality of life.

The future of Porter Avenue should not continue along its current path. Porter Avenue can become a new destination place, where residential and commercial uses peacefully coexist in an attractive environment. A concerted community-based effort to address the many challenges facing Porter Avenue will bridge the gap between the neighborhoods, commercial districts and the City as a whole.

VISION

Through the process outlined in the following pages, the community worked through a visioning process

Porter Corridor Vision

Porter Avenue will be a core area destination that brings new economic and social vitality to the City of Norman. Porter Avenue will be a gateway to the community and will be recognized for its uniqueness and visual appeal, from streetscape to storefronts. The corridor will offer a balance of commercial, residential and institutional uses that complement the adjacent neighborhoods. Porter Avenue will be recognized as a corridor that connects the community, utilizing all forms of transportation, with a commitment to safety and pedestrian uses.

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Following the direction outlined in the Vision statement, creating a walkable, mixed-use district will allow for the creation of a new destination district focused on livability versus the automobile. As the country focuses on becoming more sustainable, Porter Avenue will begin to fill that important role for Norman as the redevelopment of the corridor will promote walkability, use of transit and the recycling of existing buildings and infrastructure. Streets are the most prominent and prevalent public spaces in any town. Making them more pedestrian friendly is the best thing a community can do for the people. A walkable district quickly becomes a magnet for both public life and economic expansion, thus enriching the community in several ways, including sustainability.

Continued revitalization of Norman's downtown area, including Porter Avenue, will enhance Norman's ability to attract residents who seek the highest quality of life. Norman will compete successfully to attract the growing "creative class," often defined as professionals who seek community amenities, arts and culture, authentic destinations, recreational opportunities, strong neighborhoods, intellectual engagement, good schools and economic vitality.

Using the key factors developed in the Vision statement, a set of goals were developed to breakdown the specific areas.

1. Aesthetics:

Create a destination environment that is reminiscent of Porter's transportation "roots," complemented by intimate green spaces, a spectacular public streetscape and high visual interest which will create an environment for private investment on adjoining land throughout the corridor.

Porter will become a collage of lively spaces, serving all ages, daytime and evening. Porter will incorporate new standards for urban design that are compatible with current development on Main Street, the historic transportation role of Porter Avenue and the historic patterns of surrounding neighborhoods, while promoting rehabilitation and preservation of key structures within the area.

2. Neighborhoods:

The Porter Avenue corridor will successfully define neighborhoods which blend multiple lifestyle uses, retaining important historic assets while introducing residential options that address needs of all ages and incomes.

Neighborhoods surrounding Porter Avenue will be safe, walkable and well maintained and offer connectivity and easy access to amenities.

3. Transportation and Safety:

Establish Porter Avenue as a safe, accommodating connection with downtown Norman and other established commercial districts, as well as the City's established transportation network, and adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Vehicular traffic will be managed in a way that maintains the corridor as a safe transportation mode for all. Por-

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1



INTRODUCTION

ter Avenue will be a transportation corridor, providing for bus and pedestrian transportation.

4. Economic Development:

Porter Avenue will be a significant revenue-generating corridor for the City of Norman, encouraging development efforts to create a balance of uses. Resulting development will connect seamlessly with adjacent neighborhoods, parks, trails and institutions that are central to the Porter Avenue Corridor. Porter Avenue will be guided by new standards that encourage development, safeguard architectural integrity and benefit the area as a whole.

5. Land Use:

Porter Avenue will balance its active commercial and mixed use areas with the surrounding established neighborhoods. Land use will maximize Porter's opportunities for housing, economic growth and transit connections.

PUBLIC INPUT

The public involvement process brought city leaders, the planning team, the planning committee and the community together for mutual education and discovery that led to development of the vision and goals for the future.

The process in Norman involved extensive face-to-face contact for the purpose of acquainting the com-

munity with the planning process, identifying problems and potential solutions, clarifying current conditions through collaborative fact finding, establishing community priorities and bringing residents actively into the planning process. Corridor stakeholder committee members appointed by the City of Norman represented the interests of constituencies throughout the planning area. The selection of a broad-based stake-

The Porter Stakeholder Committee included: Jim Gasaway, Chair; Jim Adair, Robin Allen, Joel Barbour, Roger Brown, Amber Clour, Jeannette Coker, Carol Dillingham, Ty Hardiman, Diana Hartley, Cindy Gordon, Mike Tower, Zev Trachtenberg, Jim Wade, David Whitaker, Jeff Willard and William Woods.

holder committee offered the planning team an advantage both at project inception and throughout the planning process because they brought a diversity of views to the table. Members of the corridor stakeholder committee immersed themselves in understanding study area issues and assumed leadership roles through appointed Focus Groups that studied aesthetics; transportation and safety; economic development; neighborhoods; and citizen mobilization.

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The following activities took place with the Corridor Stakeholder Committee and community during Phase I:

Project launch with internal interviews with Mayor, Councilmember Dillingham, City Manager, officials from planning, revitalization, public works and other City staff.

Initial corridor stakeholder committee kickoff, which identified assets, liabilities, potential solutions, and priorities. Throughout the process, the corridor stakeholder committee was especially active with community contacts and promotion of planning events.

Face-to-face individual and small group interviews with approximately two dozen Porter Corridor stakeholders and phone interviews with approximately a half dozen additional stakeholders and those with technical expertise, followed by a summary document.

Appointment of focus group chairs who helped with research, community contacts and goal setting.

Media briefings, notifications and personal contact for advance articles and editorials as well as on-site coverage at the charrette and the public open house, response from commercial and educational television, press.

Articles for web posting, on the City's website.

Flyers were prepared for the charrette and open house and were distributed by hand delivery, email and mail to media, stakeholder committee, residents, stakeholders, property owners and other interested parties.

Porter on the Ground, was a visual, walking assessment of Porter Avenue conducted by the corridor stakeholder committee, staff and consultant, focused on assets and liabilities which resulted in a scrapbook (see Appendix A) that was distributed to the plan committee, City staff and others.

Regular updates by the plan committee chair at Planning Commission meetings, which provided television updates for the wider community.

Stakeholder Committee Priorities

1. Aesthetics
2. Porter width
3. Area not a destination
4. Lack of sidewalks/connections
5. Traffic and parking
6. Pedestrian and school children – safety
7. Hospital/medical district changes
8. Competing business/residential interest
9. Nothing to attract young
10. Drainage swale – within paved area
11. Reuse of older buildings
12. Ordinances
13. Truck traffic-dairy through neighborhoods

INTRODUCTION

The following activities occurred with the Porter Stakeholder Committee and community during Phase I, continued:

Charrette was a four-day open design workshop that included internal committee assessments and public assessments. Approximately 50 residents signed in and participated in discussions, while others dropped in for brief periods of time. A detailed description of the process was prepared (see Appendix B).

60% Update Report was provided to the City Council, which outlined the plan progress. This was televised to the general public.

A public open house was held to view and discuss the draft plan. The meeting attracted an estimated 140 attendees. Two formal presentations were made to the public with detailed boards and information set up in a gallery format for those interested in viewing the information at their own pace. A survey was distributed during the event. The results indicated strong support for the plan.

Neighborhood presentations were conducted by Councilmember Dillingham and City staff to acquaint residents with the plan proposals and impact on their neighborhood.

Presentation of the final plan occurred at a City Council work session, on September 1, followed by a presentation at Planning Commission on September 10 and final presentation before the City Council on September 22.



INTRODUCTION

PHASE II: PUBLIC STREETSCAPE DESIGN

On September 22, 2009, City Council directed staff to proceed with Phase II of the Porter Avenue Corridor Study, the creation of the Public Streetscape Concept Design. Working with Ochsner Hare & Hare, the following activities occurred with the Porter Stakeholder Committee and community during Phase II:

Held “Streetscape 101” Sessions to discuss components and functions of a streetscape with Porter Steering Committee and Porter Avenue Merchants.

Developed Access Management Issues diagram, analysis, and developed Streetscape Design Alternatives. Discussed Access Management and reviewed Design Alternatives with Steering Committee.

Held Interviews with Individual Property Owners to discuss future plans for their properties and aspirations for the future of Porter Avenue.

Held Public Open House to discuss Streetscape Design Alternatives and to gather public feedback on streetscape preferences on February 10, 2010.

Identified Preferred Streetscape Design Alternative based on public and City feedback on alternatives.

Presented Final Streetscape Concept Design document at a City Council meeting on April 27, 2010.

An attractive streetscape is the foundation of a revitalized commercial corridor. Completion of the Public Streetscape Concept Design represents the first step in revitalizing Porter Avenue. The City Council must move forward with implementation when the time is right for the community. Next steps will include additional phases of design and ultimately, construction of public improvements along the street.

In order to achieve the revitalization goals identified in the Public Streetscape Plan, the City of Norman must first undertake a detailed traffic analysis. This analysis will allow us to fully understand the “system of systems” that is the city’s road network. With that knowledge and understanding, the City can choose the best alternative for roadway design along Porter Avenue that will meet all of the city’s requirements.

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PUBLIC MEETINGS

During the past two years, the City of Norman has hosted over thirty public meetings on the Porter Corridor project, including four public hearings at City Council and Planning Commission and three community-wide Open House events.

date	meeting	mailed notification
Sept 28, 2008	Stakeholder Committee Kickoff	
July 15, 2008	Stakeholder Committee	
Aug 5-6, 2008	OHH Community Interviews/walking tour	
Oct 2-4, 2008	Design Charrette	post cards
Jan 13, 2009	Stakeholder Committee	
Jan 13, 2009	Progress Report to City Council	
April 7, 2009	Stakeholder Committee	
April 22, 2009	Old Silk Stocking neighborhood	post cards
May 6, 2009	Miller Neighborhood	post cards
May 14, 2009	First Courthouse Neighborhood	post cards
May 20, 2009	Community Open House	post cards
July 28, 2009	Stakeholder Committee	
Sept 1, 2009	Planning Commission	post cards
Sept 22, 2009	City Council	post cards
Dec 5, 2009	Corridor Walking Tour	post cards
Dec 8, 2009	Steering Committee	
Dec 9, 2009	Porter Ave Merchants	letters
Feb 3, 2010	Steering Committee	
Feb 9, 2010	Steering Committee	
Feb 10, 2010	Community Open House	post cards
Mar 23, 2010	Steering Committee	
April 6, 2010	Steering Committee	
April 13, 2010	Steering Committee	
April 27, 2010	City Council	
May 25, 2010	Steering Committee	
June 8, 2010	Steering Committee	
June 15, 2010	Steering Committee	
June 22, 2010	Steering Committee	
July 8, 2010	Planning Commission	letter
July 20, 2010	Steering Committee	
July 21, 2010	Public Meeting & Open House	letter
Aug 10, 2010	City Council	letter



CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

In order to make decisions for improvement and change, it is important to understand what is currently in place, including the physical environment, existing land use and zoning, public streets and pedestrian ways, existing housing stock and commercial uses. This section of the document will outline the existing conditions in the Porter Corridor at the time of this study.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Topographically, Porter Avenue and the surrounding area is generally flat with long vistas. These conditions allow for extended views, which are accentuated by the turning points in the road. These turning points are referred to as the “seductive curve”, which give users a sense of curiosity to seek out what is beyond the turning point.

Flood Plain

Natural characteristics, such as floodplain, do exist within the study area, but are limited. *Floodplain is found in the southeastern portion of the project area. The floodplain is within an existing residential area and is generally contained within the Bishop Creek drainage basin.* No where does the flood plain extend to the commercial areas of the Porter Avenue Corridor.

Environmental Conditions

Based on the past automotive and industrial uses within the corridor, there is much speculation regarding soil contamination. In the 1980’s, a significant amount of environmental review and clean up occurred in the corridor. This study did not include environmental evaluation. It is likely that there are more areas of the Porter Corridor that need to be evaluated prior to development or redevelopment in the area.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

EXISTING LAND USE/ ZONING

The existing land use along Porter Avenue is entirely commercial in nature with the exception of the church campus located midway along the corridor. Predominant land uses include automobile services, medical, religious and restaurants. There are a number of underutilized properties, some of which have been vacant for many years. On the following page is Map 3, Existing Land Use, which is based on information gathered in a windshield survey. The Existing Land Use map indicates how a property is currently being used. The Future Land Use Plan, found in the Norman 2025 Plan, indicates the City's desire for the future use of the area.

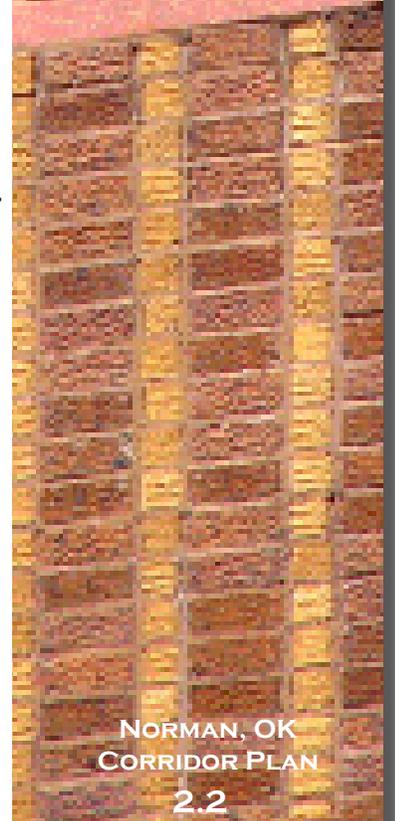
Future land use is primarily commercial along Porter and residential to the east and west of the commercial area. Exceptions are the Quasi-Public use, which allows for St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Industrial for the Hiland Dairy near the southern end of the corridor, and Office for the medical office uses surrounding the hospital at the north end of the corridor.

It is also important to consider the current zoning of properties in the corridor (see Map 4, Existing Zoning). The primary purpose of zoning is to segregate uses that are thought to be incompatible. Zoning is typically used to prevent new development from interfering with existing residential or commercial uses and to preserve the "character" of a community. Zoning

adjacent to Porter is primarily C-2 and C-3 which allows for commercial development. The exception is the dairy to the south and another small parcel north of Robinson (I-1), Norman Regional Hospital (R-1) and other R-1 properties at the most northerly point and southerly points. Outside the commercial areas, parcels to the east and west are primarily zoned R-1, R-2 and R-3 allowing for a variety of residential uses and densities. The majority of the single family residential area is zoned R-3. The R-3 zoning category is a Multi-Family Dwelling District allowing for any use permitted in the R-2 District, plus apartment houses and accessory buildings, and accessory dwelling units. Other zoning found outside the commercial strip includes Norman Regional Hospital which has a section of O-1 zoning, Longfellow Middle School (A-2), and additional commercial (C-1, C-2 and C-3) along Robinson, Gray, Main and Alameda.

Although zoning outlines what is currently allowed, current zoning should not limit the pursuit of a higher and better use for a piece of property. Likewise, the City should consider downzoning property that is not intended for a more intense use, e.g. historic residential areas that are zoned for apartments.

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EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing land use map

**CHAPTER
2**



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Zoning Map

**CHAPTER
2**



EXISTING CONDITIONS

PORTER AVENUE CIRCULATION

Porter Avenue began as a major transportation route in Oklahoma. Today, it still carries a significant amount of automobile traffic.

The Porter Avenue Corridor Study accepted by City Council September 22, 2009 included a chapter on transportation. While transportation improvements are integral to the overall revitalization of the Porter Corridor and pedestrian mobility and public safety remain important issues, the study's transportation recommendations became an impediment to establishing a community vision for corridor revitalization.

For this reason, the Transportation and Accessibility sections in Chapters 2-3 of the Porter Corridor Plan August, 2010 have been removed. A detailed traffic analysis for the Porter Corridor will be conducted later when the City is in a position to fund the level of analysis that is required to make responsible and effective transportation recommendations.

Existing Conditions

The Porter Avenue corridor is a four-lane, undivided roadway with direct residential and commercial driveway access. The roadway is approximately 40' wide allowing 10' lane widths. Porter also has two bends in the road at Acres and Alameda that are perceived as dangerous. The surrounding transportation network is a typical grid layout, with no access

restrictions. There are traffic signals at the Porter Avenue intersections of Robinson, Johnson, Gray, Main, Eufaula and Alameda Streets. All other intersections along Porter Avenue are stop controlled at the cross streets.

Pedestrian Movement

Porter Avenue's current pedestrian network is not very effective for walking either parallel to the road or crossing the road. There are existing crosswalks along Porter at signalized intersections all of which are installed in accordance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices



(MUTCD), adopted by the City of Norman. However, segments of sidewalk are missing and many segments are in severe disrepair. At the intersection of Acres and Porter, there is a lighted, in-ground cross walk system. The system is designed to sense a person moving between two bollards at the side of the road. When the system senses a person, it sets off flashing lights on the road telling drivers to stop for the pedestrian.

Safe Routes to School

In 2009, the City of Norman received a \$200,000 federal grant from the Safe Routes to School program which is ad-

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ministered by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. The grant will make infrastructure and non-infrastructure improvements to the areas surrounding Longfellow Middle School and Jefferson Elementary School, both of which are in or near the Porter Avenue Corridor. These improvements are designed to minimize the social and physical barriers that prevent children from walking or biking to school.

Infrastructure improvements on Porter Avenue will include the application of new “school crossing” pavement markings on Porter Avenue north and south of Acres Street; the installation of overhead, mast arm-mounted school crossing flashers north and south of Acres Street, and the repair and installation of new sidewalks and accessibility ramps throughout the area. Non-infrastructure activities include school-based programs designed to encourage walking and biking to school, and to educate children, parents and teachers as to how this can be done safely and enjoyably.

ROADWAY LIGHTING

Porter Avenue has a variety of lighting including cobra head fixtures ranging in age and placement. *The current mix of light fixtures is visually unappealing and in many cases provides an inefficient lighting pattern.* Often public street light fixtures were placed on a round concrete base which acts as a curb for the road. This lack of cohesive design and detailing contributes to the neglected look of the corridor.



EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

A general housing conditions survey was done within the residential areas of the Porter Corridor Study Area. The survey ratings were based on a scale of 1-4 (1 = sound; 2 = minor deficiencies; 3 = deteriorated; 4 = dilapidated). The housing conditions survey indicated that the majority of the housing in the Porter Corridor was in sound condition with a few homes having minor deficiencies and only a few structures that would be described as deteriorated.

This study also evaluated the amount of rental property versus owner-occupied property *Based on data from*

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EXISTING CONDITIONS

the Cleveland County Tax Assessor's Office, we estimate that 49% of the housing in the Porter Study Area is not owner occupied. The majority of the rental properties are located immediately adjacent to the existing commercial properties throughout the study area.

Houses throughout the Porter Corridor Study Area are predominantly single story, early 20th century structures. These houses are generally horizontal with single gable, low-pitched roofs. Front porches are commonplace and sidewalks are generally present, or at least on one side of the street. Bungalows, the most common house type in the Study Area, figured prominently in Oklahoma and Midwestern history as a practical, affordable, family-friendly housing style. The Porter Corridor Study Area includes several historic neighborhoods that contain a variety of Craftsman and bungalow architecture.

EXISTING SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES

As Porter Avenue's history indicates, there have been a multitude of land uses and tenants along Porter Avenue during the past century. A few architecturally significant structures remain on the corridor and help define the character of the area.

Through corridor walks and discussions with Norman residents, seven structures were identified as architecturally significant and important to the community to preserve. These structures were identified for their Art Deco/Art

Moderne design and their historical significance to the corridor.

These significant structures include: the round dental office at the southeast corner of Apache and Porter; the Greenleaf Grocery Building at the southeast corner of Eufaula and Porter; the automotive building at the northwest corner of Eufaula and Porter; the old Phillips 66 station at the south end of Ellison's Feed & Seed) at the northeast corner of Comanche and Porter; two automotive buildings at the northwest corner of Gray and Porter, and Van's Pig Stand (a former Sinclair gas station) at the southwest corner of Daws and Porter.

The seventh structure is a quaint former gas station located at the northwest corner of Himes and Porter. It is desirable to save this building, but it is preferable to move the structure within the site or move it to another location. The property on which it sits is ideal for redevelopment but the location of the historic structure would make redevelopment difficult. (See Map 5 Significant Structures)



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EXISTING CONDITIONS

As the revitalization of the Porter Corridor develops and takes shape, it is important to preserve these character and history-defining structures. Future developers should carefully consider the many opportunities for adaptive reuse of these existing structures and how revitalizing old buildings can add charm and personality to a new use. (See Map 5, Significant Structures Map.)

SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES

- **Dee's Diner (now Janet Reid Dental office)**
509 S Porter
- **Greenleaf Grocery building**
SE corner of Eufaula and Porter
- **Cadillac Dealership (now University Muffler)**
222 S. Porter
- **Phillips 66 Station (now south half of Ellison's Feed & Seed)**
115 S. Porter
- **Performance Muffler building**
333 W. Gray
- **A-1 Automotive Repair building**
(former Comer Thomas Garage)
204 N Porter
- **Van's Pig Stand (former Sinclair gas station)**
320 N. Porter
- **Former Gibble Gas Station building**
NW corner of Himes & Porter



Structure Map





CHAPTER 3: THE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

After reviewing all of the existing conditions and completing an extensive public input process, the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan was developed. *The plan consists of multiple layers addressing all the concerns outlined by the City and the public.* Specific plans developed include a recommendation to revise the existing Future Land Use Plan, the proposed line between commercial development and residential land uses, streetscape concepts, and land use transition concepts.

Though a larger land area was initially studied in order to understand all the relationships of land use, a smaller land area is designated as the Porter Corridor Plan boundary, as shown on Map 6. This plan area boundary encompasses Porter Avenue itself plus roughly one block east and west of Porter, except around the hospital. Given their proximity, these adjacent blocks will be effected by future changes along Porter. The policies of the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan will be implemented inside this plan boundary.

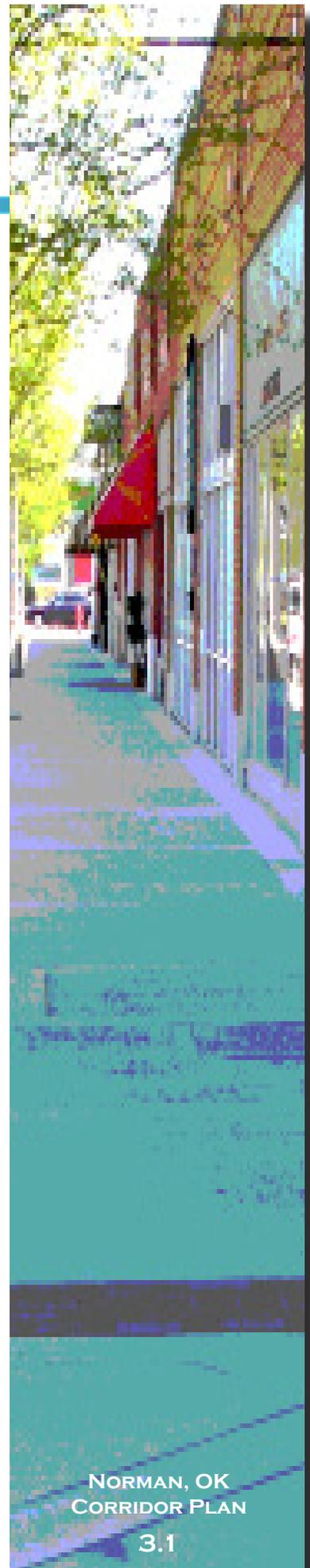
"THE LINE"

In cities across the United States and the world, commercial and residential districts have coexisted for centuries. In many cases, these land uses are mutually dependent. Residents need goods and services near their neighborhoods; business owners need a steady supply of customers. At a physical level, this is a delicately

balanced relationship. And nowhere is the balance more delicate than at a district's edges—the place where one land use stops and another one starts. These edges must be carefully designed to make boundaries clear and be managed by both sides in order to protect that fragile harmony.

Disagreement about the location of the line between commercial and residential is what created the need to conduct an analysis and work through a public process along Porter Avenue. As residents grew frustrated with commercial entities' desire to expand and tear down neighboring houses, the community turmoil escalated. The removal of affordable housing stock within an older neighborhood drew much attention as residents perceived the continuation of land use conflicts as evidence that they were "losing the neighborhood." Likewise, the need for commercial uses to expand and provide parking for their patrons was critical to the continued use of the property and viability of the business. Unless the situation improved, businesses would not expand or locate on Porter Ave.

Conducting a public process allowed residents and commercial property owners to voice their opinion and to gain an understanding of other viewpoints. Allowing the groups to work together with an outside consultant who had no vested interest in the outcome facilitated the process that re-



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sulted in the conclusions of this plan. The process allowed for the participants to collectively think through the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints of the corridor. Using this technique allowed both sides to think in a broader manner with regard to what is best for the community as a whole. With compromise and detailed information, a revised edge was developed.

In an effort to manage the edge and provide an understanding between the residential and commercial properties, a “line in the sand” had to be drawn signifying a limit for commercial expansion or redevelopment.

To identify this line, a detailed review of existing land uses, property ownership, neighborhood conditions, market analysis (see Appendix C), previous plans and development standards was conducted. The following are key points that were important considerations when locating the line:

1. Commercial development requires a minimum of 225 to 250’ depth to provide the critical mass and appropriate parking on site.

2. Residential uses need a sufficient number of houses facing one another to continue the function and character of a traditional neighborhood.

3. The existing zoning regulations in Norman are based on traditional suburban development standards, which require significant front yard setbacks and elevated parking requirements.

4. A significant number of existing residential structures within the corridor are not owner-occupied.

Initial Conclusions

Identifying a line for development is about setting community expectations. This detailed evaluation of the study area produced an encouraging result: it is possible to establish a line along Porter Avenue that provides enough depth for commercial development, sufficient critical mass to preserve residential neighborhoods, and which still maintains nearly all of the owner-occupied housing units. (See Map 7, Commercial Development.) In all instances where the line did not extend to a public street paralleling Porter, a minimum of three houses was maintained to sustain the rhythm and feel of a neighborhood. All commercial areas were allowed a 250-foot depth from Porter Avenue.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

As described earlier in the document, a future land use plan outlines the City’s desire for development in the Porter Corridor. *The plan identifies appropriate locations for residential, commercial, industrial and public uses.* Providing a land use vision for the community allows new residents and commercial investors alike to anticipate what will be developed on adjoining property, where public improvements will go, and what access to public facilities will be available. (See Map 8 Proposed Future Land Use.)

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Insert Plan Area Boundary map

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Insert Future Land Use map



**CHAPTER
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THE PLAN

Insert Extent of Commercial Development
line map

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The proposed Future Land Use Plan was developed in concert with the Extent of Commercial Development line, and the results of the market analysis.

The market analysis conducted on the Study Area by Canyon Research Southwest (CRS) provides a detailed market forecast in Norman and specifically the Porter Avenue Corridor (see Appendix C). The analysis indicates a positive outlook for the corridor, including potential absorption rates of 33,000 to 66,000 square feet of retail, 34,000 to 46,000 square feet of medical and professional office space, and 180 to 230 residential units over the next 15 years.. All of these estimates are based on a review of the community as a whole with appropriate percentages applied to Porter Avenue. It should also be noted that these identified square footages are net of any demolition of existing commercial or residential property.

Though the market analysis reflects a positive outlook for the Porter Corridor, the Future Land Use recommendations are not a significant change from the city's existing Future Land Use Plan. The recommendations are just more finely tuned to meet the needs of the neighborhood, Porter Avenue property owners and the city as a whole.

Mixed Use

The mix of uses recommended for the Porter Avenue Corridor will allow for a continuation of existing land uses and an opportunity to intensify uses in appropriate locations, e.g. adjacent to downtown.

As development trends continue toward higher density, the demand for complementary uses increases. For example, areas near downtown that allow commercial as well as residential land uses benefit both by providing a continual customer/client base in addition to lessening the traffic load on streets. The future land use plan for the corridor recommends appropriate locations for mixed use, including the intersections of Main/Porter and Gray/Porter. These locations' proximity to downtown allows them to have a positive impact on both settings. Currently downtown Norman essentially ends at the intersection of Main Street and Porter Avenue. Throughout the planning process, residents expressed a desire to extend the vitality of downtown to a revitalized Porter Avenue. Providing a mixed use development at this location will create this extension and act as a gateway to downtown.

Commercial

With the declaration of a commercial limit line, appropriate locations for commercial uses within the future land use plan were identified. It was critical that these two pieces of the puzzle be considered together. Based on the location of "the line", a continuation of commercial uses as indicated in the future land use plan is recommended along Porter. One recommended change is the location of additional retail at the southeast corner of Robinson and Crawford. This area is currently a mix of low density residential, retail and office uses. It is envisioned that the development of this property would orient to Robinson and would

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require the elimination of one block of Hayes Street between Crawford and Porter. Eliminating the street will create enough square footage to provide a viable development and will remove a right in/right out turn on Porter that is too close to the Robinson and Porter intersection. This proposed land use amendment does not include the property at the southwest corner of Porter and Robinson as these are existing viable uses that are compatible with this proposal.

Residential

Medium density residential is recommended between Rich and Acres on the east side of Crawford. These parcels are currently single family residential units with R-3 zoning, which allows for multi-family residential. The proposed future land



use of medium density residential in this area will allow for townhomes, row houses or duplex development. These medium density uses are recommended as an alternative to the existing single family homes, because they would provide a density buffer between the commercial development along Porter Avenue and the single family homes on Crawford. The continued use of this area as single family is appropriate and redevelopment to medium density should not be done on a lot-by-lot basis, but with multiple parcels.

South of Main Street, additional residential density is recommended in the area of Comanche south to Apache on the west side of Ponca. This area is shown as high density residential, allowing for future apartment development. Based on the market analysis, additional apartments would be viable in the south Porter corridor. This location has been identified due to its proximity to the University of Oklahoma, Campus Corner and downtown, access to arterial streets, and the number of rental homes already in the area. Currently the properties are zoned R-3, which allows for apartment development.

Apartment development in this area would require the vacation of right-of-way and it is recommended that building heights and design be sensitive to the neighboring properties.

Other Land Uses

Industrial, Quasi-Public and Public Uses maintain the same area as in-

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dedicated on the existing Future Land Use Plan. At the south end of the corridor, the dairy has been in place for a number of years, and though walls have been added to separate it from the neighborhood, it is recommended that any desire to expand the industrial use be carefully examined due to noise and traffic concerns. Additional parcels were not provided for the hospital as a new hospital is under construction on the west side of Norman.



The new hospital will take the pressure off of the current facility, limiting the need to expand.

As the existing hospital facility restructures, new development opportunities will be created both on and off the campus. Senior housing and state of



the art medical buildings should be considered for the hospital and surrounding properties.

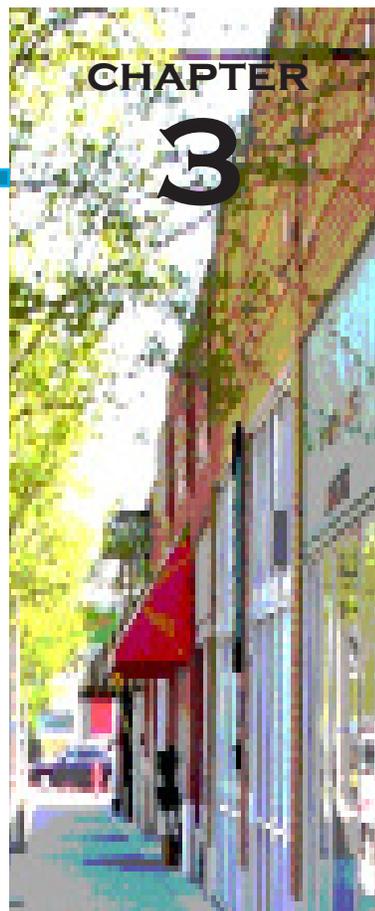
The only Public Use within the corridor is the fire station located at the northwest corner of Main and Ponca. This facility houses fire and emergency equipment as well as administrative offices. At this time, there is no need to provide additional parcels to expand this use.

DEVELOPMENT

Although many plans have been devised for Porter Avenue and the surrounding area through the years, the only way progress can be made is by moving forward with development and reinvestment. Development in the current economic climate is a challenge for most of the nation, but the Oklahoma City area is unique with job growth continuing in a positive direction. While job growth is at a slightly lower percentage rate in 2009 than in years past, there is an expected rebound in 2010, according to the Center for Applied Economic Research. And though Norman has some dependency on the Oklahoma City metropolitan area for jobs, its local job market is strong.

As the County seat for Cleveland County, with the University of Oklahoma's continued growth in student population, and the number of medical facilities in the community including a new hospital, Norman's econo-

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my is able to hold steady when others are having difficulties. With this positive position and the market analysis' strong indicator of the community's ability to absorb a significant amount of retail, office, and residential square footage over the next 15 years, Porter Avenue is poised for growth and redevelopment.

As indicated in the Canyon Research Market Analysis, the intersection of Main Street and Porter Avenue might be considered the Porter Corridor's "Fifty-Yard Line." This highly visible intersection is a gateway to Downtown Norman, and is also the nexus between North and South Porter Avenue. This intersection has high traffic counts but is underutilized given its prominent location. Several buildings at this intersection may be suitable for adaptive reuse.

Future private sector investment at Porter and Main that combines building rehabilitation and new development will work synergistically with Main Street, extending Downtown one block. In addition, new mixed-use development in the heart of the Porter Corridor will likely have a catalytic effect on investment to both the north and south of the intersection. The City can set the stage for new investment at this prominent location by installing streetscape improvements that extend Downtown's character and pedestrian environment and atmosphere one block east.

The market analysis identifies the northwest corner of Gray and Porter as a location for redevelopment. This area is important to the Porter Corridor because it functions as the northeast gateway to Downtown Nor-



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man and is a natural activity node. Gray Street is one half of a one-way pair with Main Street and acts as the northern edge of Downtown. So the intersection of Porter and Gray, like Porter and Main to the south, has high traffic volumes and visibility.

In particular, the block northwest of Main and Gray has good potential for strategic redevelopment. Much of the block is underutilized though there are several architecturally or historically significant buildings that could be suitable for adaptive reuse. As indicated on the Proposed Future Land Use Plan, this area should be redeveloped as mixed use with first floor retail, second floor office and residential.

Design Character

Porter Avenue has played a unique role in the history of Norman, a fact un-

derscored by the surviving examples of Art Deco architecture throughout the corridor. These features make Porter distinct from other corridors in Norman.

To preserve this character and still foster modern development, key buildings have been identified for potential adaptive reuse. These buildings, as outlined in Chapter 2, are adjacent to Porter Avenue and have the setbacks desired for a higher density, pedestrian-oriented development pattern. Adaptive reuse of these structures is strongly recommended. The opportunities for future uses of these buildings are endless, including reuse as themed restaurants, coffee shops, or music venues, just to name a few.

To achieve significant redevelopment within the corridor, a variety of fi-

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nancing mechanisms will be necessary to make the projects feasible. These financing options are an important factor based on land and building costs in a developed area. A more detailed description of financing mechanisms is provided in Chapter 4.

MANAGING THE EDGE

The dominant land use pattern in Porter Corridor neighborhoods is early 20th Century, single-family houses. These neighborhoods have a defined density, and the way in which buildings are situated on lots creates a rhythm along the street.

Ensuring the long term viability of both residential and commercial uses is important for the future of Porter Avenue and the City of Norman. To manage the edge between these land uses there are a number of recommendations, including:

- **No blanket rezoning to commercial**
- **Appropriate Buffering**
- **Standards for parking lot design and landscaping**
- **No “leapfrog” development**
- **Site plan submittal and review for development within the corridor**
- **Design guidelines that require four sided architecture**

For any significant change within the commercial district, all of these items should be given serious consideration.

Rezoning

Blanket rezoning of areas within the corridor without consideration of a site plan is not recommended. Each location identified for future commercial or residential uses, should be fully evaluated and a complete site plan developed to understand the full impact the project will have on the area and the necessary improvements that will be required to make the project successful.

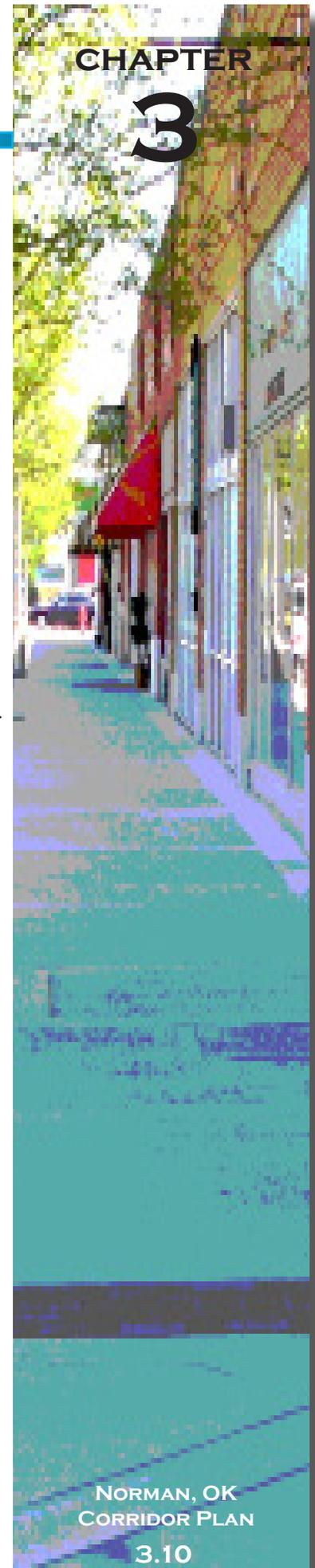
Buffering

To live in concert with one another, a graceful transition between land uses is imperative. Through evaluation of existing transitions in Norman and other communities, a set of concepts were created to help develop appropriate buffers.

Although walls or landscaping can stand alone as a buffer, a combination of the two has a greater impact on commercial and residential users alike. The goals of buffering are to diminish potentially negative impacts of commercial activities on adjacent residential properties, to convey a firm understanding of the commercial limits, and to provide an attractive edge for both residential and commercial uses.

To accomplish these goals, buffering walls should be 4 feet high, tiering up to 6 feet high along the backyard section of the adjacent residential lot. This will buffer adjacent residential uses from noise and car headlights. Four feet allows a safe height for visibility and six feet allows backyard privacy for the adjacent residen-

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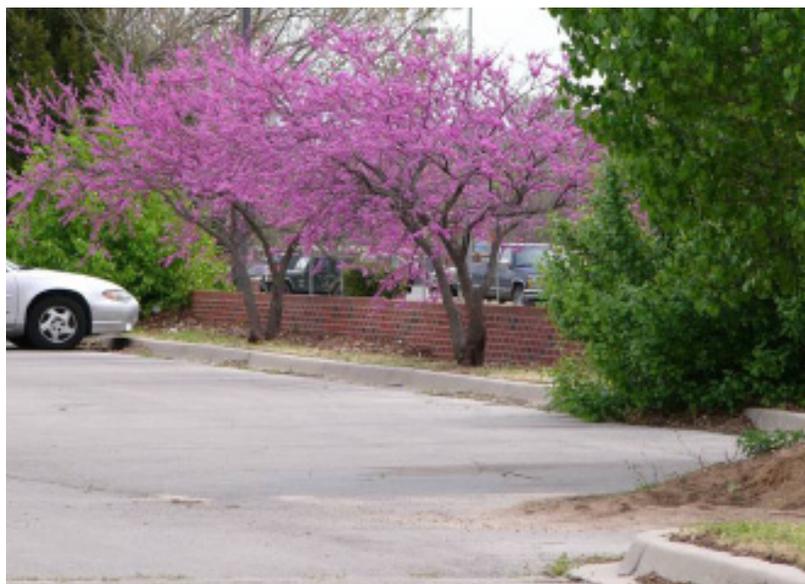
tial land use. Buffer walls should be complimented with low plant material to soften the impact of the wall. Tree plantings should be added to buffer noise from the commercial uses. Where appropriate, openings in the walls should occur to allow pedestrian connections between residential and commercial uses.

In addition to buffer walls and landscaping, neighborhood gateway monuments or signage should be used to give the residential areas adjacent to Porter Avenue more of a defined edge and to give them a more prominent identity. Neighborhood gateways are beautification tools that are also effective in making a clear separation between adjacent land uses.

Design and installation of neighborhood gateway elements can be done in collaboration with the four neighborhood associations that border Porter Avenue and could be funded through the use of CDBG funds. Well-designed neighborhood gateways often combine the important functions of land use separation, beautification, and place-making.



The future of an attractive, economically healthy neighborhood commercial district depends in no small part on the preservation of healthy neighborhoods around it.



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To evaluate alternate scenarios along the corridor, an example design was developed at Frank Street west of Porter, showing an expanded parking lot and a proposed wall and landscape buffer. This design shows the wall and landscaping inside the commercial property line, requiring maintenance by the commercial property owner.

Before



After



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At Dawes Street, a similar evaluation was done showing a pedestrian connection between the residential and the commercial uses. This design is based on the installation of a cul-de-sac on Dawes and shows a similar 4' high masonry wall with generous landscaping. A sidewalk connection is critical here to ensure that residents can easily access the local establishments without the need to drive their cars.

Before



After



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Parking Lot Design Standards “Leap Frog” Development

Creating a more urban feel and controlling access on Porter will generally require parking to be located at the rear of the Porter-facing property adjacent to the residential areas. In conjunction with the walls and landscaping for the transition, parking lot design and landscape standards should be developed to offer appropriate shading, noise control, and buffering. Lighting guidelines should also be developed for parking and building lights. Lighting guidelines should limit the light spill onto the residential properties and light cutoffs should be required to limit light source glare.

Although a future land use plan has been developed indicating additional land for commercial development or expansion, as well as areas for increased residential density, controls are needed that do not allow “leap frog” development. In other words, *single family homes should not be left between existing commercial development and new commercial development.* Leaving these parcels interrupts the cohesive neighborhood unit. The graphics below show what is meant by “leap frog” development, an inappropriate development pattern for the Porter corridor.



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Design Guidelines

In order to eliminate the possibility of “leap frog” development and other potential problems outlined in this document, a set of design guidelines that include a site plan review process should be put in place for all proposed new development, substantial rehabilitation and expansion within the Porter Corridor.

Design guidelines should target commercial redevelopment, substantial rehabilitation, and expansion. Single-family residential rehabilitation should be exempt, but proposals to subdivide a single family structures into denser residential uses should be subject to review. The design review process would allow careful consideration of the impact of a proposed development on adjoining properties as well as the corridor as a whole.

As a part of the design guidelines, architectural controls that require an architectural finish on all sides of a building should be considered. This is sometimes referred to as “four-sided architecture” (see examples). This requirement ensures an aesthetically pleasing view from adjacent residential properties as well as an attractive entrance for patrons parking in the rear of the building.



Front Elevation



Rear Elevation

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STREETSCAPE

Streetscape improvements refer to the process of beautifying a street with traditional elements such as landscaping, street light standards and street furniture. Streetscape also includes the art of creating public destinations. *Through the combined use of streetscape elements, and the development of themes and unique settings, an ordinary street can become a quality public space that promotes community and activity.*

In evaluating Porter Avenue's past, themes emerged surrounding the automobile and Art Deco architectural style. Using these themes, concepts were developed for monumentation, banners, street paving, bus stops, and public art. (See charrette sketches in Appendix B) These themes have been embraced by the community and carried through conceptual designs.

To create the synergy needed to cause private investment in the area, the public sector must show a good faith effort toward public improvements.

Phase II

In Phase II of the Porter Corridor Planning process, Ochsner Hare & Hare designed a streetscape plan for Porter Avenue to help implement the long range vision for corridor revitalization. The *Public Streetscape Concept Design* is included in Appendix D which is attached as a separate document.

The *Public Streetscape Concept Design* expands on the long-range vision of this plan and focuses on seven goals

for the corridor:

- Minimize land use conflicts
- Manage the edges between residential and commercial land uses
- Enhance Porter's aesthetics/image
- Improve pedestrian mobility and public safety
- Promote development and revitalization
- Promote adaptive reuse of significant structures
- Establish zoning ordinances and design guidelines to guide revitalization efforts

Specifically, streetscape improvements that are described in the plan target the goals of 1) enhancing Porter Avenue's image and aesthetics; and 2) improving pedestrian mobility and public safety throughout the Porter Corridor.

The Streetscape Design Concept focuses on the design within the public right-of-way, i.e. the area from behind the existing Porter Avenue curb line to the property line of adjacent parcels.

The Streetscape Concept explores the aesthetic enhancement of the corridor through the use of landscape, hardscape, site furnishings, amenities, and creating a signature look that is unique to Porter Avenue. Additionally, the plan provides for much needed and clearly defined safe travel ways for pedestrians, enhanced by crosswalks, crossing signals, and planning for ADA accessibility.

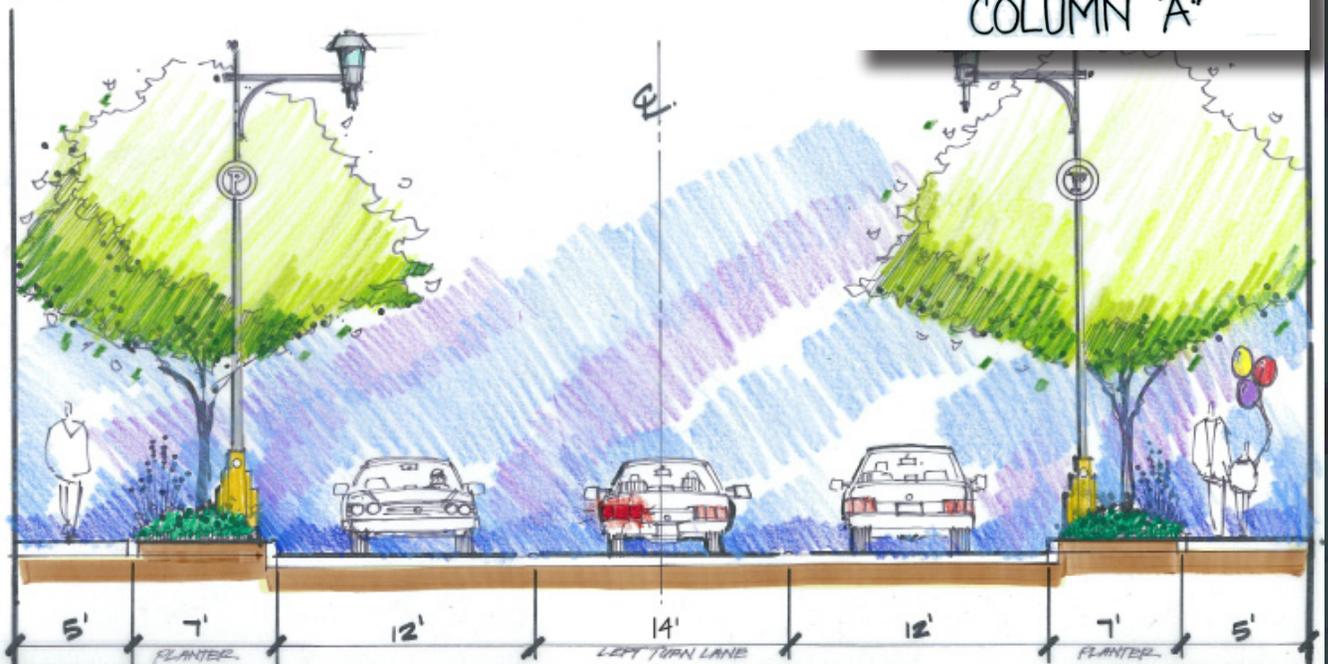
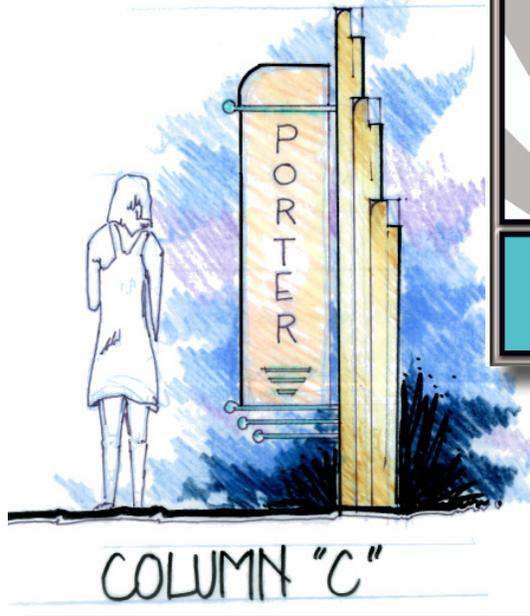
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The drawings below were developed during the Porter Avenue Charrette in October 2008. The concepts explored Art Deco and automotive themes in the design of streetscape elements along Porter Avenue.



CORRIDOR PLAN

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ALTERNATE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

An important part of the streetscape is the sidewalk space. Sidewalk space must connect naturally with the surrounding community in order to provide easy interaction. Sidewalks are identified for the entire length of Porter Avenue along with crosswalk locations at prominent intersections. Allowing residents and business patrons to cross Porter safely is of great importance for the commercial tenants and the neighborhoods alike. The only types of trails proposed for use within the Porter Corridor project area are sidewalk trails. The purpose of these trails is to connect the Porter Corridor with parks and trails located outside the project area.

Looking at the broader picture, it is imperative that people have access to the Porter Corridor from greater distances without the need for a car. The current sidewalk system through downtown Norman provides access from Legacy Trail and the train depot to Porter Avenue without a need for new infrastructure. Trail locations have been identified for other parts of Norman, connecting park space, neighborhoods and other destinations. (See Map 9, Sidewalk Trail Connections.)

Trail connections can come in many forms depending on the environment. In areas with existing homes, it is recommended that trails be no more than 6 feet in width with street trees between the trail and the curb, while

in a more open and natural area trail widths can be up to 10 feet in width.

Community members have expressed interest in including bus stops along the corridor. This can be accomplished through the use of pull-off areas for buses, allowing for a continued drive lane and safety for the transit users. CART currently provides bus service within two blocks to the east and west of the corridor. For now, these less traveled roadways are a good alternative to providing service on Porter Avenue. As development of the streetscape continues, it will be important to continue open communications with CART.



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Insert Sidewalk Trail Connections Map



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SUMMARY

Porter Avenue is a complex corridor layered with history, character and potential. This chapter articulates pieces of the puzzle that can be utilized to create a revitalized and an enhanced Porter Avenue. The pieces include the commercial development limit line, a future land use plan, key development areas, different types of transitions to manage the edge, and complimentary streetscape designs.

Norman is seeking greater control of the Porter Avenue Corridor's destiny by intentionally creating a future that looks bright and prosperous for neighborhoods and commercial districts alike.





CHAPTER 4: IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This document proposes many recommendations for the future development and redevelopment of the Porter Avenue corridor. In order to realize the vision and implement the ideas set forth in this document, an implementation plan, cost estimates and identified funding mechanisms must be outlined. Based on the size of the corridor and complexity of the improvements, the implementation will require the coordinated efforts of public and private groups alike. It is imperative that public expenditure occur in order to create the environment for private investment.

The corridor plan is the first step in a much longer process of redefining and redeveloping Porter Avenue. The focus of the plan is on creating a long range vision for the corridor, upon which detailed projects may be implemented as the next steps. There are seven primary revitalization goals set forth in this document.

The success of overall revitalization will be determined, in large part, by how successfully these goals are realized, not only initially at project start-up, but throughout the life of the implementation of the Corridor Plan. The seven goals are:

- 1. Minimize land use conflicts between residential neighborhoods and commercial property owners along Porter Avenue.**
- 2. Manage the edge between the residential and commercial property owners through a variety of transitions.**
- 3. Enhance the aesthetics and image of Porter Avenue providing for a sense of place and community.**
- 4. Improve the pedestrian mobility of the corridor while promoting public safety along the corridor.**
- 5. Promote development and revitalization of the corridor including the introduction of mixed use development.**
- 6. Promote adaptive reuse of architecturally and historically significant structures.**
- 7. Establish zoning ordinances and design guidelines for the specific needs of the corridor.**



IMPLEMENTATION

PROJECT START UP

Timing and commitment are needed to implement a revitalization project of this scale. There are many steps in the process that need sustained energy and focused attention. To ensure the continuation of the plan as

to manage marketing, communications and activities requiring acceptance and use of funds. With these groups, the City and the public will be assured the plan vision is sustained and that time does not diminish the intended impact for the community.

1. Initiate Project Start-up
2. Develop Appropriate Policy
3. Identify Market Niche and Business Mix
4. Develop Marketing and Communication Strategies
5. Undertake Planning and Design for Plan Recommendations
6. Develop Economic Incentives and Funding
7. Identify new projects

outlined in this document, a structure for corridor management is recommended. At a minimum, this structure should include a plan facilitator and an advisory board. The plan facilitator should be a consultant or outside staff member who reports to the advisory committee, oversees the requirements of the plan and helps with the funding guidelines. The primary responsibility of this position would be administering grant programs, housing programs, code compliance, historic preservation and neighborhood planning. It is also recommended that the corridor stakeholder committee continue to serve in an advisory capacity as the public voice for future improvement reviews and for promotion of revitalization of the area.

Alternatively, the City should consider developing a 501c3 not-profit board

POLICY

A number of the components recommended in the plan should be implemented in part through updates or revisions of various approved plans and policies of the City. These are as follows:

Approve Final Corridor Plan Document

The first step in moving the plan forward is the Approval of the final plan document by the Planning Commission and City Council. Once complete, the City should modify the *Norman 2025 Plan* to include the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan and Future Land Use Plan.

Amend Ordinances

Once adoption of the Plan is complete the City should modify City ordi-

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nances to allow for the recommended development and improvements. The ordinances should be modified to:

- Support urban design standards, including mixed use, zero lot line setbacks, increased density, and lesser parking requirements, the development of design guidelines and a zoning overlay district;
- Support infill development requiring compatible setbacks, lot coverage, building height, building facades, materials, and parking requirements;
- Require buffering techniques between residential and commercial uses, including landscaping, walls, trash enclosures, lighting standards and four-sided architecture;
- Update site plan submittal and review requirements while streamlining the process; and,
- Prohibit “leapfrog” development

MARKET NICHE AND BUSINESS MIX

The Porter Avenue Corridor has three unique development zones.

The northern third of the corridor will be most affected by Norman Regional Hospital; and, as a result, will attract primarily medical-related uses and businesses. The middle portion of the corridor, located in close proximity to downtown, is best suited to support mixed-use development which includes residential, retail and office tenants. Finally, the southern portion of the corridor is best suited for the development of higher-density resi-

dential housing. Together, these three development zones and their diverse mix of land uses and tenants will redefine Porter Avenue as a unique urban corridor.

A primary goal of redeveloping the Porter Avenue Corridor Study Area is to redefine its image and retail market to best capitalize on both local residents and out-of-town visitors. Retailers now account for only one-third of the corridor’s mix of businesses. Most existing retailers are located in the middle third of the corridor. Physical and locational constraints limit the Porter Avenue Corridor’s ability to attract national tenants and big-box retailers. Like downtown Norman, the Porter Avenue Corridor business community will best prosper by cultivating unique local businesses. Independent retailers rather than national chains are more likely to locate within the corridor, providing the opportunity to foster a unique market niche and identity.

Two independent restaurants now serve as major customer destinations for the corridor, generating high traffic volumes. Restaurants generally cluster together to capitalize on existing customer traffic patterns. Emphasis should be placed on attracting more unique restaurants that complement the existing restaurants and attract more customers to the corridor. Close proximity to Norman Regional Hospital will improve the potential of attracting additional restaurants to Porter Avenue.

Clusters of specialty retailers (i.e., home furnishings, entertainment and

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clothing) improve the image and marketability of the Porter Avenue Corridor as a retail destination.

Given the proximity of downtown Norman and the current availability of inexpensive commercial space, art galleries would be a good fit. A cluster of galleries would compliment area restaurants and help foster a unique market image. Other prospective specialty retailers to the corridor might include apparel and accessories stores, antique stores, bike stores, music stores, book stores and hair salons. Given the close proximity of residential neighborhoods, nightclubs should not be included in the Porter Avenue tenant mix.

Although it is important to draw in outside businesses, it is just as important to keep existing small businesses and develop new ones from local entrepreneurs. This is vital because existing small businesses contribute more to the local economy than new outside businesses of equal size. Existing businesses are already established in the community, and typically most employees live in the local area, and locally owned businesses tend to spend their profits locally. New businesses which are attracted from other areas typically are not locally owned and their profits tend to escape from the local economy. Successful revitalization of the Porter Avenue Corridor will rely on maintaining and attracting a unique mix of local restaurants, specialty retailers and medical-related businesses.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

Identity

The Porter Avenue Stakeholder Committee should undertake development of visual identity and joint marketing efforts to make Porter Corridor's identity visible to the general public and along the corridor. One of the first efforts should be the refinement of the Porter Corridor logo and theme through the schematic design process. Using the logo and theme in a marketing campaign to inform the community that the initial planning effort is complete and that the implementation effort has begun will generate excitement for the corridor. Public education about the process of planning and corridor/neighborhood revitalization should continue to be provided.

Communication

Communication within the corridor that extends community-wide is important for the long term prosperity of the project. It is recommended that the Corridor Steering Committee establish a newsletter for residents, corridor businesses, stakeholders and interested citizens in order to communicate the progress of the corridor. Information should be provided to the press routinely regarding Porter Corridor activities. Media representatives should be invited to track the project, provide a special column for that purpose or introduce special insert sections.

The Porter logo also can be displayed on billboards, utility pole banners or

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windows of establishments along the corridor. Public events along the corridor are encouraged.

The Corridor Stakeholder Committee and staff should join in a series of roadshow presentations to be scheduled at organization meetings, churches, schools, etc. to explain the project. The presentations should be in simple terms and utilize effective graphics. The meetings should be interactive and provide for opportunities for public feedback.

Recruitment Strategy

A strategy and schedule of recruitment efforts should be developed. The project facilitator, identified in the start-up section above, should assume the primary responsibility of recruitment of candidates for revitalization. Additional sections along the corridor, following the Main Street and Porter Avenue demonstration block, may be selected for further development.

FUNDING ANALYSIS

Promoting economic development efforts in the Porter Avenue corridor will be a large task to be carried out by the City or other entity as determined. Tasks to be completed include the promotion of business retention and recruitment, offering of economic incentives and funding opportunities to property owners, and packaging and marketing redevelopment sites.

Business Retention and Recruitment

Small business is the foundation of

the Porter Avenue Corridor's economy. Small businesses have historically suffered from a high failure rate. A principal goal in revitalizing the Porter Avenue Corridor is to increase the employment base. The City could establish a plan to aid existing businesses and enhance the skills of its owners.

Established in 1996, the Norman Economic Development Coalition (NEDC) is a joint effort of the University of Oklahoma, the City of Norman, and the Norman Business Community through the Norman Chamber of Commerce. This unique partnership was formed to work full-time on economic development in the Norman community.

While a goal of the Norman Economic Development Coalition is to retain and attract businesses to the community, no organization exists specifically for the purpose of revitalizing the Porter Avenue Corridor business community. Once redevelopment occurs an additional group should be considered to complement business recruitment efforts of the Norman Economic Development Coalition. This group's goal would be to retain existing businesses and recruit new businesses for Norman's central core that includes the Porter Avenue Corridor, downtown Norman and Campus Corner. To elevate the scope of this new business recruitment group, identifying both public and private sector funding should be a priority. Potential sources include city grants, membership dues, funds generated by additional events, fund raising and implementing a self-imposed taxing jurisdiction such as a

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business improvement district. To assist in the diversification of the corridor's retail base, consideration must be given to the further development of retail concepts that will build sufficient critical mass to truly leverage a market niche. As an example, the existing restaurant niche could be expanded to include coffee houses, bakeries and cafes with patio seating. Another example is a home furnishings niche that includes furniture stores, kitchen and bath accessories, interior designers, contractors, art galleries and home electronics stores.

Economic Incentives and Funding Opportunities

During the early stages of revitalization attracting private sector investment in the form of new businesses, property rehabilitation and new development is difficult due to the associated risks. For property rehabilitation and new construction market rents typically are insufficient to support financially feasible development. Government-sponsored financial incentives assist in reducing the risks of investing in building rehabilitation or business expansions and, thus, often serve as catalysts for long-term reinvestment. To assist in the revitalization process the City should consider a variety of economic incentives. Financial assistance may be available at the local, state and federal levels.

Local Economic Incentives

Forms of low-cost local economic incentives available to the City to stimulate revitalization of the Porter Avenue

Corridor include adopting flexible zoning ordinances and building codes to facilitate property rehabilitation and new construction, building permit and utility connection fee reductions and deferrals, and public infrastructure investment.

Funding mechanisms available to the City for financing future capital improvements include general obligation bonds, sales tax financing, public-private sector partnerships, tax increment financing (TIF) and business improvement districts (BID).

Public-Private Sector Partnerships

An example of a public-private sector partnership created to assist revitalization efforts for a specific real estate development include sharing in infrastructure costs, property acquisition, and City occupancy of a completed project.

Tax Increment Financing ("TIF")

The Oklahoma Tax Increment Financing Act ("TIF") permits cities to establish Redevelopment Districts and carry out redevelopment projects within such districts. Section 850 et seq. of the Oklahoma Statute authorizes development tools for cities to use in cooperation with other local taxing jurisdictions to spur revitalization and economic development in targeted areas of the city. This is accomplished primarily by encouraging private investment by constructing public improvements that are funded through

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TIF generated revenues. Within an established TIF district, a “base” level of annual tax revenue received in the district is established at the time the TIF is approved, and in future years tax revenues received above the base amount are diverted from the taxing agency (school district, city, county, etc.) to the TIF district to pay for public capital improvements within the district. Taxes are still collected in the TIF district; however, instead of the tax proceeds being used for the general purposes of the taxing agencies, they are used to pay for public improvements to benefit the TIF district. Incremental tax proceeds may be used in accordance with approved TIF Plans for project area improvements such as facilities, infrastructure, parks, sidewalks and other public projects.

The theory of TIF is based on several important principles:

1. Private redevelopment would not occur without the provision of financial incentives.
2. The tax base in the redevelopment district was in fact stagnant or declining. Healthy areas that grow and develop without the intervention of the TIF do not need tax revenues diverted. Where TIF is necessary, it will cause an incremental increase that the taxing authorities would otherwise not have realized.
3. The taxing authorities that give over their tax increment for a number of years will eventually receive the revenues of a larger tax base.

Tax Increment Financing was utilized to fund \$1.3 million in streetscape improvements to Campus Corner. Since 2001, approximately \$10 million in private investment has been made in Campus Corner, including façade improvements, building renovations and the construction of approximately 15,000 square feet of new commercial space. An additional 100 parking spaces have also been constructed. In recent years, Campus Corner’s tenant mix has gone more upscale in an effort to create a shopping and dining destination offering home grown restaurants and unique boutique shops. The repositioning of Campus Corner has broadened both the customer base and the market draw and now attracts customers from throughout Norman.

By City ordinance, on May 23, 2006 the City of Norman, adopted the University North Park Tax Increment Financing Plan to fund eligible project costs associated with necessary infrastructure improvements. The TIF Plan allows for 50 percent of the increased ad valorem taxes generated by the development and 60 percent of sales tax revenues generated within the district to be diverted to the TIF district improvements and other project goals over a period of up to 25 years, with total project costs of \$54,725,000.

Business Improvement District (BID)

Since the early '70s, Business Improvement Districts (BID) have been used as a mechanism for revitalization. BIDs now operate in 42 states and the

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District of Columbia. This powerful tool allows for an assessment on property within a defined area. Revenues from this assessment are then directed back to the area to finance a wide range of services, including capital improvement, security, maintenance, consumer marketing, economic development, parking and transportation, public space regulation and social services. The leading service provided by BIDs is consumer marketing, such as promoting events and producing maps and newsletters.

There are state laws regarding Business Improvement Districts which business and property owners must be familiar with before creating a BID. They can be found in Oklahoma Statute Title 11, S39-112. Creating a BID involves two public hearings. The first hearing will give property owners who will be in the proposed district a chance to say whether they want the district or not. The second hearing gives property owners a chance to discuss how much each will pay to fund the district's activities. Cities make the final decision about creating a BID. After approval of the BID by the City Council, the City will begin collecting the district assessments from the businesses operating within the BID.

Neighborhood Redevelopment Act

The Neighborhood Redevelopment Act is used to promote, stimulate, and develop the general and economic welfare of the community. This Act enables communities to establish a re-

development trust authority to undertake redevelopment activities within neighborhoods. The use of powers include expending public monies and the use of eminent domain. The Act also states that the governing body may do all things necessary and proper in its discretion to redevelop and maintain its commercial, industrial and residential neighborhoods.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

Norman, as a CDBG entitlement City within the State of Oklahoma, receives annual funding to meet objectives established by the community which comply with those established by the State of Oklahoma. Although CDBG provides significant funding for housing initiatives, there also is funding for a number of non-housing initiatives which include:

- 1) construction or reconstruction or installation of public facilities and improvements, such as facilities that are publicly owned and will be operated for the general public. The facilities may include fire stations, libraries, streets, sidewalks, drainage, water and wastewater.
- 2) sustaining economic growth and development, which includes roads and streets, and infrastructure necessary to help expanding or startup businesses and may include improvements to City owned industrial buildings.

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These assistance programs, financed through the Community Development Block Grant program, must create new jobs and increase per capita in-



come
in
Oklahoma.



programs, low-interest revolving loan program, façade improvement grants, and Enterprise Zones.

NEXT PHASE OF PLANNING AND DESIGN

The initial phase of planning is the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan. The plans and strategies in this Plan are the guidebook for the future improvements. These Plans and related strategies are defined at a corridor level. A more detailed study of the individual recommendations will be necessary.

The next phase of planning and design studies will further define the scope, scale, cost and impact of the plan recommendations as specific projects. It is from this next phase, and subsequent planning phases, that specific plans are designed, funded, approved and built. The complete steps for the developing of the public improvements within the corridor are identified on the following page.

Other Economic Incentives

Additional forms of local economic incentives could also be offered to stimulate revitalization in the Porter Corridor. These include public grants, low-interest direct loans, relocation assistance, site clearance and demolition, assuming or sharing costs of infrastructure improvements and using or leveraging other fund sources such as housing funds, tax credit

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Phase 1

- **Schematic Design.** The City should fund the schematic design, which will include the layout of all right-of-way and roadway improvements. The location of all improvements including curbs, drives, turning lanes, medians, landscaped areas, street trees and grates should be identified. In schematic design, the improvements should be designed in plan view, while leaving the three dimensional designs for subsequent phases. It is also critical that this phase include working with the property owners along Porter Avenue to discuss and determine how best to deal with access management and parking issues. [COMPLETED April 27, 2010]

- **Zoning Overlay District.** The City should have developed an overlay zoning district for the corridor that takes into account all of the items outlined in this document, including transitions, architecture, buffering, parking lot and lighting design, and site plan submittal requirements. [IN PROCESS: Phase 1 will protect the line between residential and commercial land uses. Phase 2 will be implemented at a later date when funding is available to implement streetscape improvements.]

- **Long Range Transportation Plan.** In order to make effective recommendations for roadway improvements in the Porter Corridor, the City should undertake a detailed traffic analysis of the Porter Corridor as part of a larger citywide Long Range Transportation Plan.

- **Capital Improvements Plan.** The City should identify within the CIP all identified cost associated with public infrastructure improvements and required engineering studies. Such engineering studies should include a City wide transportation plan which contains: a travel demand model development; major thoroughfare plan; land use development assessment for 5, 10 and 20 year increments; a 5, 10 and 20 year improvement scenarios; multi-modal plan to include transit, bicycle and pedestrian; freight movement; rail crossing plan; and, examination of current funding mechanisms.

Phase 2

- **Identify Public Improvements.** The City should prioritize public improvements associated with the Porter Corridor and begin to implement these improvements as funding becomes available.

- **Identify Funding Sources.** A variety of funding will be needed to implement public improvements in the Porter Corridor. The City should identify these sources and develop a multi-year strategy to seek and secure funding for public improvements.

- **Design Development.** Design Development involves taking the approved layout of the Schematic Design and beginning to study it in three dimensions. The materials and constructability become more refined. In addition to refining the layout plan, sections and sketches are used to better understand changes in materials and surfaces. Design development is the place where the first intensive cost estimates are done and evaluated. The information is tested using site survey information and computer aided design and drafting. Design specifications and material cut sheets are considered.

Phase 3

- **Construction Documentation.** The documents that are used to construct the project improvements are developed. These documents include grading and drainage plans, layout plans, paving plans, landscape and irrigation plans, and specifications which ensure that the approved materials are used.

Phase 4

- **Bidding and Negotiation.** This is where the design consultant provides any necessary qualification of bidders as well as clarification of the construction documents.

- **Construction Administration.** This is where the design consultant reviews the contractor's construction progress and helps them to understand and perform as the construction documents were intended.

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Demonstration Projects

One of the key components of the plan is the initial use of a demonstration project to facilitate the idea of the early, visible success. Early, visible success is critical to the future implementation of the redevelopment plan. A group of small demonstration projects, such as branding, show the public, private investors, existing businesses and residents, and potential funding agencies that change is occurring for the better, which builds momentum and excitement.

The more visible the project or improvement, the more it will be recognized. The successful completion of the initial project begins to solidify the perception that the area can change and is changing. Often, it is this change in perception that helps trigger the most vital component of all development and redevelopment, private investment. Demonstration projects for the corridor might include:

- Develop monumentation (gateways) for existing residential neighborhoods using CDBG funds
- Use Porter logo to develop banners for installation on light poles designating the corridor;
- Form a Porter Corridor Merchant organization to create promotions for the existing businesses;
- Continue media promotions that highlight plan and corridor progress.
- Assemble land
- Determine property owners' willingness to participate in the project, whether by selling their property or becoming a partner

- Re-use of publicly owned property, removing clouded titles from privately purchased property
- Relocate existing businesses and residents
- Demolitions and clearing of sites

Another option for property assemblage is eminent domain, or the act of obtaining private property for a public use and justly compensating the property owner. Using eminent domain to assemble land is politically unpopular and should *only* be done as a last resort.

Following assembly of the land, the City should move forward with a two-step developer solicitation process to execute the concept plan. Also vital to demonstration projects is the offering of financial incentives. As the acquisition of multiple small parcels can be expensive, including the cost to remove existing structures and potential environmental issues that may need to be addressed, redevelopment is an expensive undertaking. To secure private sector interest in redeveloping property, the City will need to provide development incentives.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR KEY PLAN MILESTONES

The multitude of recommendations can be addressed as milestones that lay ahead for the Porter Corridor Plan. These are illustrated in the following chart. Additionally, the entity(ies) responsible for that milestone and the recommended start date are also indicated:

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Porter Avenue Corridor Plan Key Milestones		
Plan Milestone - Next Steps?	Responsibility - Who?	Recommended Start Date - When?
Approve and Adopt Final Corridor Plan Document	City Staff / Community Leaders	September 2009
Establish an ongoing Corridor Advisory Committee	City	Following Approval of Corridor Plan – October 2009
Construct Revised Development Ordinances	City Staff	Following Approval of Corridor Plan – October 2009
Schematic Design of Public Infrastructure Improvements	Consultant	Following Approval of Corridor Plan – October 2009
Develop Financial Incentives	Consultant / City Staff / Community Leaders	Following Approval of Corridor Plan – October 2009
Develop a Transportation Plan for the Community	Consultant / City Staff / Community Leaders	TBD
Locate Funding for Phase 1 Infrastructure improvements	City Staff / Community Leaders	Following Schematic Design
CIP Amendment	City Staff	Following Schematic Design
Establish 501c3 not-for-profit board	City/Consultant	Following Schematic Design
Identification of Plan Facilitator	City/Consultant	Following Schematic Design
Engineered Design of Public Infrastructure Improvements	Consultant	Following Schematic Design
Develop demonstration projects	Corridor Advisory Committee / City Staff	Following Approval Schematic Design / Life of Project
Develop demonstration block	Consultant / Corridor Advisory Committee / City Staff	Following Approval of Schematic Design / Life of Project
Right-of-way Assembly for Infrastructure Improvements	City / Consultant	Following Approval of Schematic Design / Life of Project
Developer solicitation	Consultant / City	Following Demonstration Block Design
Marketing and Communication	Corridor Advisory Committee / City Staff	Life of the Project
Retention and Attraction of Business	Corridor Advisory Committee / City Staff	Life of the Project
Design Development of Public Infrastructure Improvements	Consultant	Following Approval of Schematic Design
Construction Documentation of Public Infrastructure Improvements	Consultant	Following Approval of Design Development
Bidding and Negotiation of Public Infrastructure Improvements	Consultant / City Staff	Following Approval of Construction Documentation

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SUMMARY

For Porter Avenue to become the exciting, attractive destination place that has been envisioned by the Corridor Stakeholder Committee and the citizens of the area, it is vital that the implementation plan be followed and the momentum continued. By implementing this plan, contentious issues between the residential and commercial property owners will diminish and the quality of life for all residents within the corridor will improve. Although implementation will take many years, ensuring early “wins” with continued plan development and public improvements will demonstrate the City of Norman is serious about making a difference along Porter Avenue.

