

Revitalization Strategy Recommendations

The review of existing conditions and findings from the economic and market analysis identified the Hamilton Road corridor's strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and challenges related to new development, corridor enhancement, and revitalization.

From a retail and business perspective the Hamilton Road corridor presents several strengths. There are many reasons for people to come to Hamilton Road to shop, seek entertainment, and engage in business activities. These strengths include the presence of a recently renovated regional shopping destination at Eastland Mall, the Holiday Inn Fort Rapids water park, several casual and family-oriented dining establishments, community-support organizations (including several churches, day care centers, and healthcare/medical complexes), and convenient highway access at I-70. In addition, there are several hotels for City tourists and corporate guests seeking value rates and proximity to the airport and downtown. A relatively significant number of low-rise office complexes present opportunities for small office users, such as dentists, doctors, attorneys, and other independent professionals.

The corridor also presents several strengths from a real estate and business recruitment perspective. Perhaps most significantly, the corridor provides convenient access to highway I-70 and high regional traffic counts. There are also several site-specific advantages, including competitive land costs, large parcels with ample space for parking, and minimal property fragmentation to facilitate redevelopment on key opportunity sites. In terms of business recruitment, existing space offers relatively low lease rates for commercial space, and there are several retail categories with low captures rates (i.e. specialty food and beverage, electronics, sporting goods, home maintenance and improvement). These characteristics offer opportunities for the corridor to develop new retail niches in categories that are currently underserved.

Despite these strengths, there are several drawbacks and challenges to achieving revitalization on the corridor. Most importantly, the Columbus regional retail market is oversupplied with Shoppers and Convenience Goods, and competition for customers is keen. Hamilton Road has an older property stock, where many are near their life cycle end, and the corridor lacks high-end retail, dining options, and overall amenities/positive image to attract new customers and tenants alike. Much of these qualities can be found in most newer retail "hot spots" as mentioned earlier, which presents a challenge for tenant recruitment. Finally, while several strip malls are ripe for redevelopment, high

occupancy rates in many other strip malls on the corridor provides little incentive to redevelop.

The office market faces similar challenges in terms of competition from other areas that offer more attractive amenities and newer Class B and Class A office space. These areas also offer more flexibility in terms of space and accommodating the needs of potential office users. In addition, slow office-based job growth throughout the region makes it even more difficult to attract new users to the corridor.

Much like the office market and retail market, the residential multifamily market faces significant challenges. New multifamily development should represent more of a long-term development goal, given the need for improved amenities on the corridor before developers and investors will consider Hamilton Road for this type of project. The national slowdown in the housing market and tightening credit market will also stymie developer interest in multifamily projects, particularly condominium development. Given the tightening credit market and general downturn in the condominium market, it is unlikely that this type of development will gain much traction in suburban locales such as Hamilton Road in the near future. The existing multifamily residential housing stock on the corridor also poses challenges. Most of this housing stock is of an “average” quality, and the relatively strong demand for this type of housing value presents little incentive for property owners to upgrade the properties.

4.1 Revitalization Vision and Goals

The diversity of the landscape along Hamilton Road, from I-70 to Big Walnut Creek, south of Refugee Road reflects the changing role that the roadway has played as the City of Columbus has grown and matured. Once a striving corridor peppered with convenience and comparison commercial uses and a destination for local and regional customers, the corridor now provides marginal commercial uses to area residents and serves as a corridor for through traffic to reach other vibrant commercial areas, secluded new subdivisions, regional highways and employment centers. Although much of the City’s development activity is occurring in new growth areas, established areas such as the Hamilton Road corridor present important infill opportunities and challenges that should not be overlooked.

Vision

The Corridor's economic, market, and physical conditions speak to the need for a new Hamilton Road Corridor/Eastland Area vision. Expressions of what the business and residential community desire to become are reflected in the following vision statement:

The corridor is a community of choice to today's residents and business owners and for future generations. That vision is created by an enhanced corridor roadway, strong businesses, vital neighborhoods, and abundant cultural and recreational opportunities.

Goals

The goals listed below help to form a foundation for the future of the Hamilton Road corridor. Through these goals, a general framework is established for the plan's more specific recommendations. These goals, like the recommendations/strategies that follow, are not in order of rank or priority.

1. Maintain the long-term vitality and attractiveness of the Hamilton Road corridor as a quality, commercial, office/research, warehousing, residential and mixed use environment.
 - o Promote an efficient and compatible land use pattern that establishes several community focal points in the corridor such as; the Hamilton Road/Grove Road intersection as a gateway into the expanded and improved office/research and warehousing district along Grove Road, both east and west of Hamilton Road, the community hub located at the intersection of Hamilton Road and Kimberly Parkway, with mixed commercial, office, cultural and educational uses to support area residents, and the Hamilton Road and Refugee Road intersection being the center of the corridor's regional commercial district.
 - o Strengthen aesthetic quality and a sense of identity for the corridor through development design guidelines that foster harmonious site circulation, planning, architectural and landscape architectural design for new development, and encourage aesthetic improvements at existing business locations.
 - o Provide for a diversity of innovative housing types (targeted predominantly to ownership markets) including creative designs that are

responsive to changing population needs and compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.

2. Enhance the potential for prosperous commerce.
 - Provide for necessary commercial, services and office/research uses to meet population needs and protect prime sites from inappropriate development.
 - Ensure that the level and type of business uses are compatible with the scale and character of established neighborhoods and other adjacent land uses.
 - Continue to develop a business and residential community partnership in the corridor to carry out a comprehensive implementation strategy and undertake marketing efforts.
3. Enhance public facilities and services to maintain a high quality of life and to encourage infill development
 - Support enhancements, as necessary, to existing utility systems and leisure facilities.
 - Promote safe pedestrian access to commercial, leisure/recreation facilities and natural conservation areas from nearby neighborhoods and employment centers.
4. Provide a safe, efficient, and cost effective transportation system.
 - Ensure proposed land uses and densities along the corridor are controlled so that the flow of traffic on Hamilton Road is not disrupted.
 - Limit and properly locate points of direct access to Hamilton Road and connecting streets.
 - Relocate service roads to the rear of development fronting Hamilton Road, by constructing new service roads and/or implementing shared access agreements through parking areas.
 - Provide a multi-modal transportation center that safely provides for all users.

4.2 Revitalization Strategies

Given the corridor's advantages and weaknesses, vision, and goals, taking an incremental approach to revitalize Hamilton Road retail establishments will help set the stage for more long term revitalization strategies. The following short term and long term revitalization strategies have been identified as opportunities to pave the way for corridor revitalization. These opportunities include real estate development, enhancements to tenant marketing and the tenant mix, and upgrades to infrastructure.

Table 4.1: Real Estate Development Revitalization Strategies

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Years</i>
Retail	Target and consolidate redevelopment in locations ripe for retail redevelopment (such as Eastland Square). Such clustering helps to congregate retail consumers and enables them to shop for various items on one trip. This also creates “destinations” allowing for larger and more visible development. Tenants in consolidated facilities also create more financial stability, and will be incentivized to improve storefronts, merchandise, etc. Clustering retail development will also contribute to a corridor “identity” that is increasingly important to shoppers who desire a shopping experience.	1-3
Retail	Assemble parcels of land in key locations by engaging its property owners. Property owners may choose to sell their parcels, relinquish the development rights but retain a stake in its future appreciation, etc. Land assembly is crucial to implementing retail consolidation, and packaging various parcels together makes it attractive for a developer to acquire and undertake new development.	3-5
Office	Incorporate office space into mixed-use projects. Office space can be better supported in clustered sites where different uses complement each other (e.g. retail amenities for employees, office space on second floor and retail on ground floor, etc.). Mixed-use, consolidated sites are generally more visible, more accessible (benefiting from being a “destination”), and offer more on-site amenities than scattered office sites.	3-5
Residential	Target key opportunity sites for redevelopment. The Development Department should look into key areas to consolidate retail and residential mixed-use programs, and develop plans to channel development into these areas, which may involve rezoning for mixed use. This will support the desired on-site, mixed-use amenities, as well as new development of “good”-to-“luxury” apartments, that may widen the appeal to demographics outside the immediate PMA.	3-5
Residential	Encourage development of senior housing affiliated with faith-based organizations. The potential to offer an opportunity to realize reduced housing costs and attract more members to their immediate market area may align with the missions of these organizations.	3-5
Hospitality	Target the underserved hospitality market southeast of Hamilton Road. The relatively little hotel competition in the area southeast of Hamilton Road and untapped market/growth near Rickenbacker International Airport may suggest sufficient demand for additional lodging facilities, particularly Airport oriented hotels.	3-5
Hospitality	Continue to develop the niche hotel market, such as the theme-based hotel at Fort Rapids Holiday Inn. New niche hotels (e.g. indoor waterparks, Nickelodeon themed hotels) are destination hotels and can attract people from beyond the Columbus region. Increased tourism can also support new retail and amenities on the Corridor.	3-5
Mixed Use	Employ mixed-use revitalization strategies in clustered key locations. A mixed use development format enables a higher capture rate for both shoppers and convenience goods because of the presence of on-site amenities. A mixed-use development meets more of shoppers’ needs on-site (e.g. groceries, drugs, furniture, etc.) than scattered businesses along a corridor.	3-5

Table 4.2: Marketing and Tenant Mix Enhancement Revitalization Strategies

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Years</i>
General	Invest in cosmetic improvements such as façade and pedestrian improvements, lighting, streetscape, etc. Improve the corridor’s image to potential tenants, residents, and customers alike.	1-3
General	Encourage uniform signage. Design guidelines that promote signage of a specific character should be developed to provide parameters which will present a clean, uncluttered appearance and make it easier for customers to find stores they are looking for.	1-3
General	Encourage façade improvements. In cases where property enhancements are more appropriate than redevelopment, façade improvements can do a great deal to create a more attractive entranceway for customers and employees.	1-3
General	Continue to build and strengthen business association. A Hamilton Road Business Association should be viewed as one of the primary vehicles to carry the corridor forward in achieving revitalization goals. The association can provide important organizational, financial, and advocacy resources to advance the revitalization agenda.	1-3
Retail	Enhance marketing and market image of the corridor. This may require a coordinated effort among retail establishments, brokers, and public entities such as the Development Department. Such efforts can include festivals or events that highlight the uniqueness of Hamilton Road’s retail establishments. (e.g. Taste of Hamilton Road, Artwalk, etc.)	1-3
Retail	Develop a recruitment strategy for both existing and new tenants. This strategy should be realistic and flexible to attract unique low-rent, non credit independent tenants to existing retail space varying in type and size. In particular, they should look towards recruiting convenience goods tenants that cater to the PMA with low capture rates (e.g. food and beverage stores, specialty food stores, etc.). Overall tenant selection should focus on tenants who offer high value in cultivating an “identity” for the Corridor (e.g. ethnic restaurants, furniture “row”, etc.) which helps cement the Corridor as a destination for shoppers. The recruitment strategy should address potential synergies between existing and new businesses along the Corridor.	1-3
Retail	Assuming consolidated development plans and a “destination” factor, recruit shoppers goods and entertainment oriented tenants that are unaffected by local demographic and economic conditions. The tenants may be able to draw more people from the Shoppers Goods PMA or further, areas more affluent and experiencing faster population growth. This may enable landowners’ ability to raise rates and serve to enhance property values.	3-5
Office	Facilitate subdivision of large office spaces. Given the current difficulty in attracting large tenants, subdividing large spaces will cater to the need of small scale tenants seeking lower rents in smaller spaces and likely increase occupancy rates, particularly in largely or completely vacant office buildings.	1-3
Office	Enhance marketing efforts, including outreach, which highlights opportunities for non-conventional uses such as medical offices, educational institutions and tenants seeking flexspace. The Hamilton Road Study Area’s demographics and comparatively lower rents may be attractive to non-conventional office users that serve the Primary Market Area residents (e.g. academies, institutes, vo-tech programs, social services, etc.)	1-3

Office	Recruit Medical Office tenants/medical complex. Medical office space generally has 20%-30% higher lease rates/SF than traditional office space. Office space in the Lionmark Corporate Center may also be attractive to non-credit medical tenants due to its large scale space, as well as flexspace that can be used for research and development purposes. This will likely require retrofitting the existing space to meet the medical tenant needs.	
Office	Consider office condominium conversions given that the Corridor caters largely to small-scale office users who may be interested in ownership. Many small-scale tenants who are looking to settle long term in an area may be attracted to owning a small office rather than continuous leasing. The office market on the Corridor should be sensitive to the needs of such users and their long-term investment goals.	3-5
Residential	Encourage recruitment of businesses that employ local residents.	1-3
Residential	Promote stronger connections to adjacent districts. The Hamilton Road Corridor is currently a predominantly retail corridor with I-70 to the north and I-270 to the south. By making transitions between adjacent districts more seamless, it can promote more connectivity between residents and their environment. It may also enhance the accessibility of neighborhood destinations to attract regional shoppers, which is crucial to the viability of mixed-use developments.	3-5
Residential	Create policies to encourage residential development to developers, such as strengthening homeownership programs, tax increment financing, upgrading infrastructure, and offering financial incentives such as limited-term property tax abatement.	3-5
Hospitality	Attract new hotel ownership and/or reinvestment. Improvements to the former Howard Johnson Hotel are signs that new management may offer the resources and perspective to attract attention and enhance performance.	1-3
Hospitality	Continue to attract corporate users seeking downtown proximity and high value. Hamilton Road is approximately 8 miles east of downtown, and the ADR for the Knights Inn and Hamilton Plaza Inn (rack rate \$47.65, \$62.00) on Hamilton Road are likely half and two-thirds the Columbus Region average, respectively. This may appeal to the budget conscious business traveler who wants to be close to downtown.	1-3
Hospitality	Cultivate the dual markets of business and leisure tourism. The interstate access along the Hamilton Road Corridor may be attractive to business tourists, and the growing niche hotel market may be attractive to leisure tourists. In addition, strong demand in both markets offer potential weekly and year round demand for lodging. Leisure tourism tends to be high during the summer and weekends, and business tourism during the weekdays year round.	1-3

Table 4.3: Infrastructure Upgrade Revitalization Strategies

<i>Type</i>	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Years</i>
Roadways	<p>Assess existing traffic patterns and pursue any vehicular transportation improvements that will increase facility carrying capacity and traveling convenience, i.e., install medians, improve signal timing, relocate service roads, etc. within the corridor and connect with existing and planned regional trail systems. Complete the traffic engineering study of the corridor to determine roadway and service road improvements needed to improve efficiency, safety and access to the corridor and its businesses. The improvements to the corridor should improve the balance and accommodate all motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists. As part of the study, the City should investigate connecting the pedestrian and bike facilities along Hamilton Road to existing and planned parks and open space and the regional trail systems adjacent to the corridor. Additionally, the program should reevaluate the potential of constructing an interchange at Hamilton Road and the I-270 freeway.</p>	3-5
Transit	<p>Coordinate with Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) to add quality bus stops/shelters along the Hamilton Road corridor. Examine COTA’s boarding and unboarding ridership numbers at bus stops along the corridor to determine best location for installing bus shelters. In addition to the bus shelters, improvements should include concrete boarding areas, trash receptacles, and area lighting and paved connections to shopping centers.</p>	1-3
Roadways	<p>Work with Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) on I-70/Hamilton Road interchange improvements. Coordinate with ODOT to improve access to Hamilton Road and Hilton Corporate Drive. Prepare an interchange enhancement plan including landscaping and sculptured grading in the open space areas of the interchange. Additionally, prepare plans to screen/buffer the outside storage area in front of the grain silos and associated cost estimate for all enhancement and screening improvements. Work with ODOT to secure funding for this enhancement/screening project to improve this critical gateway to the Hamilton Road corridor.</p>	1-3
Corridor Gateway	<p>Hamilton Road/I-70 Gateway signage. With the high visibility of the grain silos and the need to announce/promote the Hamilton Road corridor to the passing motorists along the I-70 freeway, the Hamilton Road Business Association should work with the owners of the grain silos to explore and implement a program to paint a sign on the silos that would be visible from the freeway and commercialize the corridor on this area landmark.</p>	1-3
Pedestrian/ Bicycle Access	<p>Extend sidewalks where needed into areas beyond the Hamilton Avenue corridor, to provide strong connections of side streets to the corridor. The City should improve and construct barrier free sidewalks where missing along all local and collector streets to ensure safe and walkable access for neighborhood residents to walk to various areas in the district and Hamilton Road and its businesses.</p>	1-5
Public Places	<p>Incorporate safety/security design techniques for all public places. To ensure continued success of all parks, open space and streets in the area, any improvement plans need to incorporate lighting, defensible design and programmed events for various user groups.</p>	1-3
Recreational Opportunities	<p>Investigate developing a park plan and community center to strengthen the character of the neighborhood and encourage the use of these features when negotiating private sector development plans. Neighborhood recreation centers and parks are critical to a county’s quality of life, and would assets to the Hamilton Road area, as well. The Hamilton Road area civic and business associations should engage the City’s Recreation and Parks Department in a combined effort to assess area recreational needs, and use that information to develop a program of action to improve recreational opportunities. Among the sites that could e considered for possible new recreational uses is the area west of Hamilton Road between Kimberly Parkway and Refugee Road.</p>	1-3