Report & Preliminary Recommendations

Retail Discussion Group

Planning Division & Zoning Office
Department of Development
City of Columbus

October 27, 2006

Michael B. Coleman, Mayor
Mark Barbash, Director, Development Department
Matt Habash, President, City Council
Mary Jo Hudson, Councilmember
Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, Councilmember

Contents

A. Purpose 1

B. Columbus Trends 3

C. Meeting Topics & Background Discussions 7

D. Recommendations 15

E. Next Steps 27

A. Purpose

The purpose of this initiative was to consider all issues related to retail development in the city of Columbus and to determine whether any policy, regulatory, or programmatic changes were necessary. The format was a series of Brown Bag Meetings held by the Retail Discussion Group between September 2005 and March 2006. Those meetings were widely publicized, though the major participation was by city staff and elected officials. The meetings were co-sponsored by Mary Jo Hudson and Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, members of Council.

Issues that were specifically addressed during the Brown Bag Meetings included the following:

- The state of the retail market in Central Ohio.
- Recent issues experienced by the city relative to zoning, planning, and transportation.
- National issues and trends regarding big box retail development.
- Fiscal dimension of retail uses.
- Older neighborhood business districts and regional retail corridors.

This report presents initial recommendations for review and consensus of the discussion group, prior to the preparation of any legislation.

Two-story Home Depot in Chicago

The Brown Bag Meetings were co-sponsored by Mary Jo Hudson and Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, members of Council.

Participants in the series included the following members of the Retail Discussion Group, in addition to other interested individuals and guests:

- City Council
- Department Directors
- Staff from City Council
- Staff from the Planning, Building Services, and Economic Development divisions of the Development Department
- Neighborhood Design Center
- Columbus Urban Growth

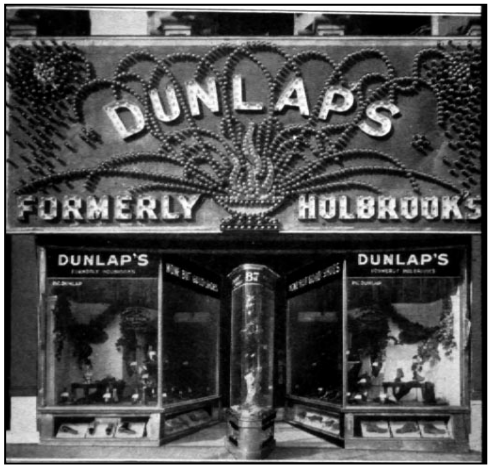
The Brown Bag Meetings were recorded and broadcast by GTV3 on a regular basis. The print media also covered individual meetings and newspaper articles were published.

CVS at Mashpee Commons on Cape Cod

B. Columbus Trends

Retail land use in Columbus has followed national trends, beginning with small shops in the historic core of the city, to some of the very first retail centers (Bank Block on Grandview Avenue, Town and Country Shopping Center in Whitehall – the "original" regional shopping center). The nature of these trends, including the emergence of the automobile-based shopping center, national grocery store anchors, enclosed regional malls, big box retailers, and retail as entertainment (Easton) is reflected throughout the commercial landscape within the Central Ohio region. These trends demonstrate the cyclical nature of the retailing industry.

Another industry phenomenon is that retail "follows rooftops". In other words, retail development follows residential expansion. This national trend, as exhibited in Columbus, results in higher vacancy rates and declining property values in older commercial areas as newer retail buildings are constructed near to newer housing developments throughout the region. As noted by many, Columbus may be "over retailed" partly due to this phenomenon.



Dunlaps Shoe Co., retail and mail order shoe business, operated at 46 N. High Street. Photo taken in 1914. Courtesy Columbus Metropolitan Library

The Bank Block on Grandview Avenue was one of the first auto-oriented retail centers in Central Ohio. It was built in 1927 by Don Casto, Sr. Photo courtesy Grandview Heights Library.

Several community or regional scale retail developments have gone through their own transformation. Some retail developments have suffered from higher vacancy rates due to these regional trends (and other factors), such as City Center, Great Southern, Hamilton Road corridor, among others. Several centers have undergone significant transformation, such as Graceland and Town and Country. The Northland Mall site, acquired by the city and under redevelopment by Urban Growth, stands to be the most dramatic redevelopment of a retail property in the region. Along with Easton as a retail as entertainment development (a local example of a national trend), OSU's Gateway project has introduced an urban, mixed use solution that offers street level retail in a pedestrian friendly environment.

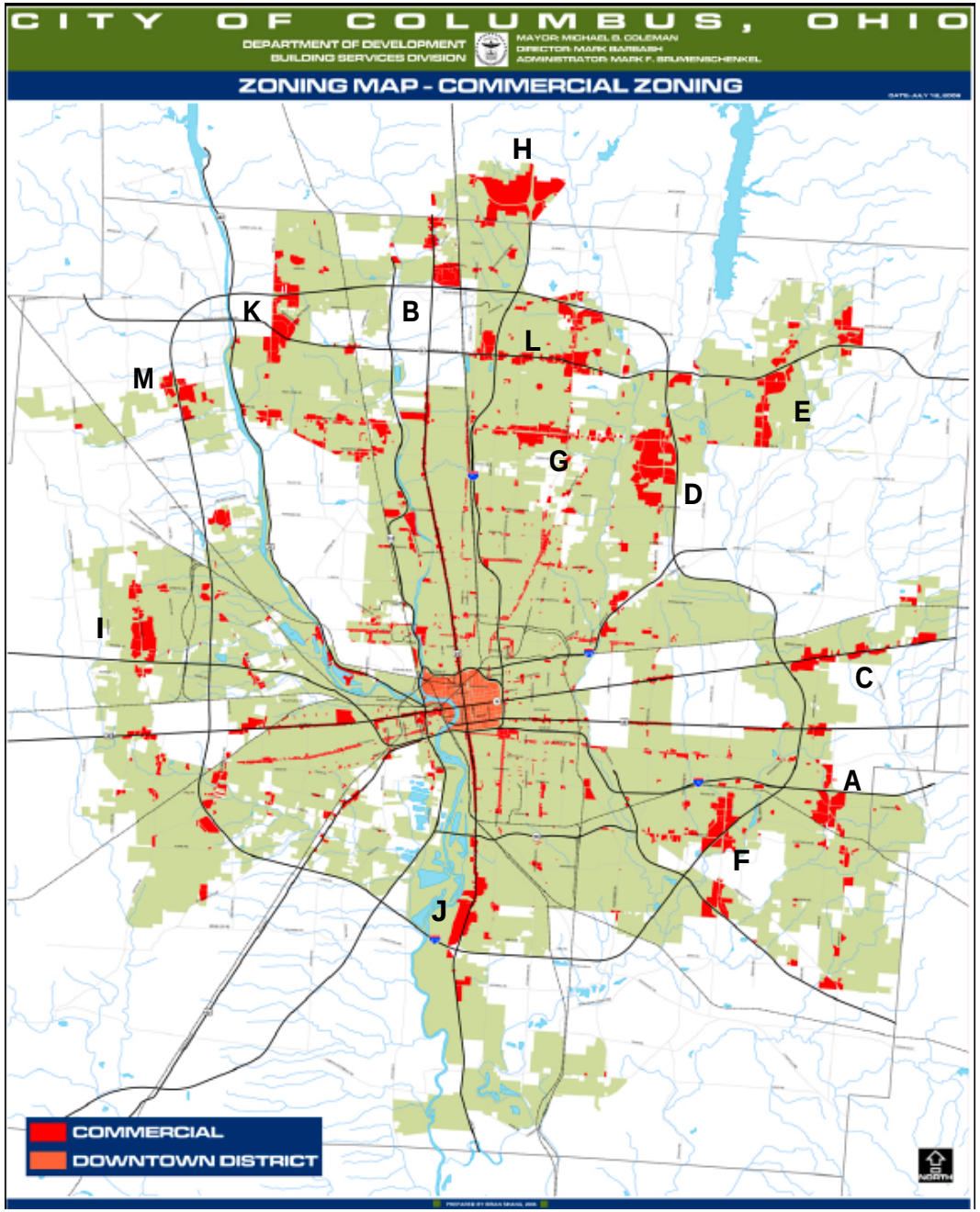
Easton Town Center reflects the current trend of lifestyle centers found throughout the US.

Street level retail in an urban, mixed use environment at OSU's Gateway.

In 2004 the Planning Division and Zoning Office conducted a short study of recent retail and big box trends in Columbus to gauge actual development activity. It was noted that the retail building trend has been dramatic, citing the Beechwold Hardware in Clintonville as a typical neighborhood based retailer at 7,800 square feet on a third of an acre site to the Home Depot on Sawmill Road at 126,000 square feet on 13 acres (in fact some single-tenant stores are exceeding 200,000 square feet in gross leasable area). Obviously this reflects the national trend that has changed the retail market and the size of individual stores in certain categories (general merchandise, food, hardware). A selective sampling of big box retailers in Columbus in 2004 found the following trends.

RETAILER	LOCATION	EST'D FLOOR AREA (SQUARE FEET)	SITE (ACRES)	EST'D DENSITY (SQ FT PER ACRE)
Giant Eagle	Clintonville	57,600	4.88	11,803
Kroger	Parsons Avenue	58,760	4.08	14,402
Dick's	Easton	70,000		
Walmart	South High Street	107,350	12.00	8,946
Target	Sawmill Road	120,250	11.50	10,457
Home Depot	Sawmill Road	126,000	13.00	9,692
Sam's Club	Sawmill Road	130,500	7.80	16,731
Meijer	Sawmill Road	248,300	20.76	11,961

This map displays the locations of commercial zoning in the city of Columbus. Major retail concentrations become apparent, such as Polaris, Easton, Sawmill Road, Hamilton Road, and Rome-Hilliard Road.



Major Concentrations

A Brice-Tussing Corridor
B Crosswoods
C E. Broad Street Corridor
D Easton
E N. Hamilton Road Corridor
F S. Hamilton Road Corridor
G Morse Road Corridor
H Polaris
I Rome-Hilliard Road Corridor
J S. High Street Corridor
K Sawmill Road
L SR 161 Corridor
M Tuttle

C. Meeting Topics & Discussions

The Brown Bag Meetings were held throughout the year at which specific topics were discussed regarding retail development. The purpose was to provide focused forums at each meeting that addressed a specific relevant topic. These sessions were videotaped by GT3 television and broadcast to the general public. Below is a brief summary.

1. Panel Discussion on the State of Retail - September 15, 2005

The first session to kick off the series focused on the general state of retail as an industry within Columbus and Central Ohio. The invited panel consisted of: Bill Lafayette, Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce; Tim Rollins, Metropolitan Partners; Chris Boring, Boulevard Strategies; and Charlie Fraas, Casto.

The following is a summary of the presentation:

- Columbus retail employment has declined since 2001 (about 14,000 jobs since early 1990s). But it would appear that the retail market is generally overbuilt in the Columbus metropolitan area but there are locations where communities are under served.
- Until Tuttle, Polaris, and Easton retail developments were constructed, the Columbus retail market was not fully developed concurrent with suburban development trends. The life cycle of retail is becoming more and more short lived (Northland Mall thrived about 30 years, but

Recent retail development on High Street in Clintonville

the Sawmill corridor is showing signs of economic strain after just 10 years).

- Retailers have a "herd" mentality when it comes to locating new businesses. This creates challenges for revitalizing older business districts where regional and national retailers are often unwilling to be the first to take the investment risk.
- The city's parking code requires too much parking. It is a disincentive to developers and reducing the buildable area. Separate urban and suburban parking standards should be addressed. Parking requirements for outdoor dining areas are also excessive.
- Design standards should be considered for major corridors because poorly executed commercial development negates the positive investments made by other businesses. This is especially applicable where the city is investing public dollars to revitalize retail corridors, such as Morse Road. The commercial overlays don't sufficiently address design issues.
- Economic incentives, such as tax increment financing (TIF), should be considered to assist with the revitalization of older business districts.

2. Retail Impact Issues: Zoning / Planning / Transportation / Environmental - October 13, 2005

The second session focused on a report by staff concerning the related zoning, planning, transportation, and environmental issues related to retail development. The panel consisted of: Vince Papsidero, AICP, Planning Administrator; Kevin Wheeler, AICP, Assistant Administrator; Chris Presutti, Chief Zoning Official; and Bill Lewis, PE, Assistant Transportation Administrator.

The following is a summary:

- When it comes to solving issues in particular business districts, one size does not fit all situations.
- Parking standards are both out-of-date and reflect a suburban approach as opposed to an urban approach where people walk or can complete several tasks in one trip. The city's standards are being reviewed and recommendations will be forthcoming. Parking ceilings may also be considered. Shared parking agreements are also an issue because of the on-going challenges are managing agreements.

- Standards in general should be defined based on whether the location is urban or suburban in nature. The zoning code currently isn't structured in that way.

3. Unique Issues of Big Box Format Stores - November 10, 2005

The third session focused on national issues and trends related to big box format stores. The speaker was Jennifer Evans-Cowley, PhD, AICP, Assistant Professor, City and Regional Planning, Ohio State. Dr. Evans-Cowley summarized her recently completed study commissioned by the American Planning Association and presented in the APA Planning Advisory Service Report *Big Box Regulation* (December 2005).

The following is a summary:

- Big boxes are getting bigger as evidenced by Wal-Mart Supercenter, SuperTarget, and Big Kmart stores. At the same time, Wal-Mart offers a Neighborhood Market format that is smaller.
- Powertowns are being developed around the country that offer a mix of big box stores and supporting retail tenant spaces in large complexes, such as strip shopping centers. Powertowns are 600,000 square feet or larger in gross leasable area (GLA), 80 acres in development size, three or more big box anchors, entertainment component, and community amenities.
- Big box retailers are becoming successful anchors of regional shopping malls. At the same time, big box retailers are embracing higher density, multi-story urban stores in cities such as Chicago, Minneapolis, and Cleveland.
- Big box retailers are developing and constructing alternative store designs to better fit local community character and context. Wal-Mart has developed several

Two-story Publix grocery store in Fort Lauderdale

new design templates, such as Adirondack, Art Deco, Cape Cod, Main Street, Mediterranian, and Urban Industrial. Green design has also been somewhat embraced by such big box retailers as Wal-Mart.

- Side-by-side stores have been constructed by big box retailers to address GLA caps adopted by cities around the country. In these cases, the stores are divided into two sections that are in separate but adjacent buildings.
- Big box retailers have developed drive-thru structures to accommodate certain auto-oriented services. Fuel stations are becoming integrated into big box sites.
- In terms of tools used by communities to manage big box retail (based on Dr. Evans-Cowley study), the following are in priority order: design review; design standards; community impact assessment; conditional use permit; square footage limitation; economic development incentives; moratoria; grocery square footage limitations; and demolition bonds.

4. Fiscal Impact of Retail - December 8, 2005

Retail land uses in Ohio have unique fiscal benefits (and costs) for municipalities in Ohio due to their reliance on the income tax. Randall Gross, Development Economics, a national consultant in fiscal impact analysis and economic development planning, made a presentation on this issue. Mr. Gross has conducted numerous fiscal impact studies around Ohio.

The following is a summary:

- Retail land uses typically generate net negative revenues for municipalities in Ohio because of the low income generation when compared with high service costs. Income generation is low because retailers typically pay their employees low wages (when compared to manufacturing and office employers). At the same time, retail development has a high cost relative to infrastructure and public services (traffic management and safety, in particular).
- Strategies to manage retail and encourage value-added investment include recruiting national retailers to neighborhood business districts (they generate customer traffic, contribute to marketing and promotions, and

attract other successful retailers), adopt an incentive to support retail development in key markets, relative economic development policies to wage levels (so that the biggest incentives match the best fiscal return to the city), adopt comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plans, and encourage mixed-use development to strengthen local retail markets.

5. Unique Issues of Neighborhood Business Districts & Regional Retail Corridors - January 19, 2006

Older commercial corridors have unique needs relative to retail redevelopment. The panel included Don DeVere (company), Doug Aschenbauch, Vice President, Campus Partners, and Dave Hull, Executive Director, Northland Business Association.

The following is a summary:

- There are degrees of distress in older commercial corridors. Those that developed in the 1950s and 1960s have been passed over by newer suburban shopping districts, such as Polaris. Important redevelopment tools include business associations and Special Improvement Districts (SIDs).
- Smaller parcels are a redevelopment challenge because they don't meet current business needs, much less development standards, which invariably means variances are often necessary. Also, the assemblage of lots is a redevelopment challenge because of the size of these parcels and the multiplicity of ownership.
- Existing structures are a challenge because they don't necessarily lend themselves to contemporary business needs. But architectural character is an important asset that

A mixed use project on E. Main Street in the Near East side

sets these districts apart from traditional retail shopping centers.

- Demolition and redevelopment costs translate into higher rents than new builds in greenfield locations. As density increases, the need for stacked parking also increases, which adds to project costs.
- It's important to create an atmosphere in older business districts, utilizing the sidewalk and amenities (such as street trees, pedestrian scale lighting, street furniture) to create a quality public space. On-street parking is critical because it slows traffic, buffers the sidewalk, and helps to create a more walkable environment. Sidewalks that are 22 feet in width in the Gateway project provide a lot of outdoor activity area.
- There are significantly underserved populations in older neighborhoods relative to retail development.
- Neighborhood based planning is very important to providing a policy environment and guidance to support older commercial corridors.
- Development guidelines, such as the Urban Commercial Overlay (UCO), are critical to ensuring new investment is consistent with existing urban character and walkability. The UCO should be expanded to additional corridors.
- Public-private partnerships are important to supporting urban redevelopment.
- Retail as entertainment drives customer traffic, which supports goods and services oriented retail businesses.

6. Preliminary Recommendations for Policies, Standards & Procedures - March 9, 2006

The staff presented preliminary recommendations at the March, 2006 meeting to gain direction from the participants prior to preparing draft recommendations for subsequent meetings. The broad topics addressed were as follows:

- **Conditional Use or Special Use Permit**: The question asked was whether an administrative permit of some nature was appropriate to consider as a mechanism for regulating large-scale retail development. This would require a minimum square footage of development that triggers the permit, an administrative process, guidelines and/or standards, mandating the permit in specific zoning districts, and whether non-retail uses should be included. The group consensus was supportive, and it was recommended that a policy statement be prepared as a

prelude to the new requirement (which is this report), relate it to parking study requirements, and consider a site plan approval process that could include the Development Commission.

- **Guidelines or Standards**: The group discussed the difference between guidelines (permissive) and standards (requirements), as well as the various topics that could be addressed (architecture, materials, site layout, parking, screening and landscaping, lighting, outdoor sales and storage, noise, and public amenities). A small amount of discussion was held regarding the use of incentives on urban sites and whether guidelines or standards would be implemented as policy or through the zoning code. The consensus was to recommend a set of guidelines and standards, to consider incentives where appropriate for only urban sites to encourage higher density, walkable development, and to consider a Pay As We Grow charge for suburban sites.
- **Parking Ceiling**: This discussion focused on a maximum amount of allowable on-site parking to reduce paved parking areas, requiring excess parking to be provided as a green area, and a parking study option that could justify additional parking above the ceiling. The consensus was to consider a ceiling, further investigate the issues, and consider a variance option for additional parking.
- **Economic Impact Study**: Requiring the submittal of an economic impact study was the focus on this discussion. Such a requirement is mandated in parts of the US as a requirement similar to a traffic study. It estimates the impact on existing businesses, as well as the fiscal return to the city. The consensus was not to pursue this kind of requirement.
- **Demolition Bonds**: This topic focused on a requirement that the developer of a large-scale retail development (especially big box format stores) files a demolition bond with the city to cover the potential future cost of demolishing abandoned retail buildings. This a requirement found on the west coast. The discussion focused on the requirement of a surcharge to build a fund that would address this issue, an incentive to encourage reuse of vacant

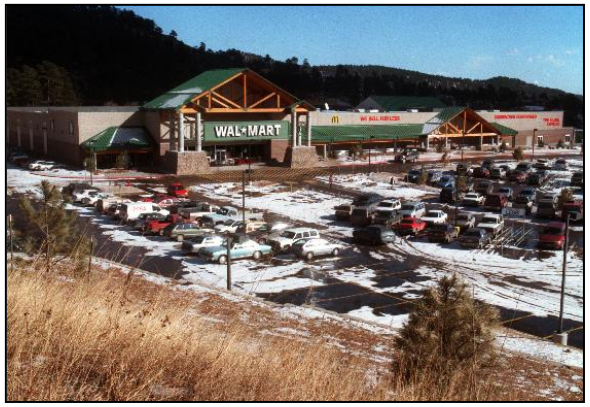
Street level retail at OSU Gateway

buildings, and environmental remediation issues. No clear consensus was achieved.

- **Green Construction Standards**: These standards relate to building architecture and materials, parking, stormwater management, and landscaping on retail sites, as well as the use of LEED standards. The consensus was to pursue this topic especially in light of Mayor Coleman's Green Initiative.
- **Living Wage Ordinance**: This topic focused on mandating certain wage and benefit levels for retail workers. The State of Maryland recently passed a statewide requirement on this issue. While supportive of the topic, it was determined that this is a statewide and not a local issue.
- **Incentives**: Whether incentives should be offered to encourage urban retail sites to be higher density, walkable, with two-story buildings and parking garages was the focus of this topic. The consensus was supportive of this issue. Other related items that were identified included whether working capital should be provided to smaller retailers (and by whom?), whether a market study would be an appropriate requirement when incentives are offered, and to consider whether older commercial corridors should be part of the NCR program.

Electronic Library

To facilitate the distribution of background materials for the Retail Discussion Group, an electronic library was created on the city's X-drive in a special folder titled *RetailDiscussionList*. Articles, reports, codes, design guidelines, photos, and other documents were posted in the folder.



Wal-Mart in the Rocky Mountains

D. Recommendations

This chapter of the report presents the detailed preliminary recommendations in response to the guidance provided to the staff of the Planning and Building Services divisions following the March 2006 meeting of the discussion group. The recommendations are presented by the following major topics: Administrative Permit; Design Guidelines and Standards; Parking Cap; Green Construction Standards; and Incentives for Urban Redevelopment.

The preliminary recommendations were reviewed by the Retail Discussion Group at its final meeting on September 15, 2006. The report was slightly revised, posted on the city web site, and circulated for additional comment to the Development and Public Service Departments, as well as the City Attorney's Office. Concurrently, the report will be circulated to the retail development community for comment.

Following a review of these comments this document will be revised into final form and issued. Legislation will be prepared by the Planning Division and Zoning Office, and circulated for comment prior to submittal to Council.

1. Administrative Permit

The Administrative Permit for Large Scale Retail Development would be the mechanism for implementing guidelines and standards relative to large scale retail development as a result of this study.

- The permit would be issued by the Chief Zoning Official. The decision would be appealable to the Columbus Development Commission.
- The permit would be triggered by an application for Zoning Clearance that usually occurs concurrent with the filing of a Building Permit application.
- The permit would apply to all retail development with a gross leasable area (GLA) of 50,000 square feet or larger.

A variety of materials can be used to define building exteriors, such as a mix of brick and stone veneer.

The exterior materials on facades can be articulated using small setbacks to help break up a structure's bulk.

- The permit would apply to retail shopping centers, big box format stores, and combinations of these buildings and development types provided that they are 50,000 square feet of GLA or larger.
- The permit would be issued as part of the Zoning Clearance process and prior to or concurrent with the issuance Building Permit application.
- The application would require submittal of a site plan, full color architectural drawings for all building elevations, material samples (or text committing to material standards), lighting plan, and landscape/buffer plan. These documents should be certified by a registered architect and landscape architect, as applicable.

2. Design Guidelines and Standards

The following design guidelines and standards would be applied through the Administrative Permit for Large-Scale Retail Development.

- **Building Facades.** All facades of a building that are visible from adjoining properties and/or public streets should contribute to the positive features of the building and encourage community integration by featuring characteristics complimentary to a front facade.
- **Exterior Building Materials.** Predominant exterior building materials should be of high quality. These include brick, wood, limestone, other native stone, and tinted/textured concrete masonry units appropriate to the building location. Smooth-faced concrete block, tilt-up concrete panels, or pre-fabricated steel panels should be prohibited as exterior building materials except on rear and side elevations that do not face a residential use, residential zoning district, or public street or right-of-way. In cases where these materials are used they should be painted to be complimentary to the primary elevations.
- **Facade and Trim Colors**. The use of high intensity colors, metallic colors, black or fluorescent colors should be prohibited. Building trim should feature brighter colors than facade colors, but neon tubing should be prohibited.
- **Facade Articulation**. Facades greater than 100 feet in length should incorporate recesses and projections a minimum of three feet in depth and a minimum of 20 contiguous feet within each 100 feet of facade length. Windows, awnings, entry areas, and arcades should total at least 60 percent of the facade length facing a public street.

Building entrances can be enhanced with canopies that emphasize the entry, while protecting consumers from the elements.

Building facades can be broken into smaller planes through façade articulation, windows, columns, and other similar treatments.

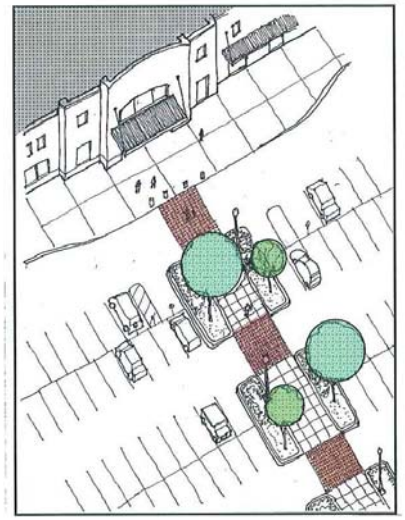
Building facades should include a repeating pattern that shall include no less than three of the following elements: color change, texture change, material module change, or expression of architectural or structural bay through a change in plane no less than 12 inches in width, such as an offset, reveal, or projecting rib. At least one of these elements should repeat horizontally. All elements should repeat at intervals of no more than 30 feet, either horizontally or vertically.

- **Entrances**. All sides of a principal building that face an abutting public street should feature at least one customer entrance. Where a principal building directly faces more than two abutting public streets, this requirement should apply only to two sides of the building, including the side of the building facing the primary street, and another side of the building facing a secondary street.

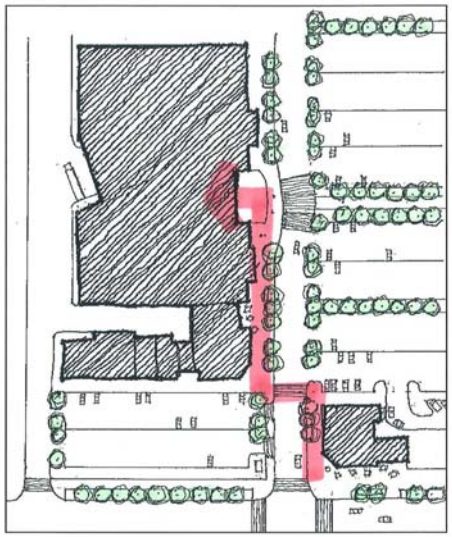
  Each principal building or tenant space should have a clearly defined, highly visible customer entrance with a minimum of three of the following features: canopies, porticos, overhangs, recesses/projections, arcades, raised cornice parapets over the door, peaked roof forms, arches, outdoor patios, display windows, architectural details such as tile work and moldings which are integrated into the building structure and design, integral planters or wing walls that incorporate landscaped areas and/or places for sitting.
- **Roof Lines and Materials**. Roof lines should provide variations to reduce the massive scale of these structures and to add visual interest. Roof lines should have a change in height every 100 linear feet in the building length. Parapets, mansard roofs, gable roofs, hip roofs, or dormers should be used to conceal flat roofs and rooftop mechanical equipment from public view. Alternating lengths and designs may be acceptable. Standing seam metal roofs are encouraged where appropriate.
- **Windows**. Smaller retail spaces that are part of a larger principal retail building should be transparent between the height of three feet and eight feet above the walkway grade for no less than 60 percent of the horizontal length of the building façade. Windows should be recessed and should include visually prominent sills, shutters, or other such forms of framing. Smaller retail spaces should have separate outside entrances.

Providing outdoor public spaces creates a more human built environment within a retail complex.

- **Public Gathering Spaces and Enhancements**. Each retail development should contribute to the establishment or enhancement of public gathering spaces by providing at least two amenities such as a patio/seating area, pedestrian plaza with benches, outdoor play area, kiosk area, water feature, clock tower, steeple, or other such deliberately shaped area and/or a focal feature or amenity that adequately enhances such public gathering spaces. Any such areas should have direct connectivity to the public sidewalk network and such features should not be constructed of materials that are inferior to the principal materials of the building and/or landscape.
- **Pedestrian Circulation**. A continuous internal private pedestrian walkway system should be provided from the perimeter public sidewalk to the principal customer entrance(s). This internal walkway should feature landscaping, benches, and other such materials/facilities for no less than 25% of its length. Internal pedestrian walkways should provide a weather protection feature such as an awning within 30 feet of all customer entrances. The internal pedestrian walkways should be distinguished from driving surfaces through the use of special pavers, bricks, or scored concrete to enhance pedestrian safety and the attractiveness of the walkways.



Pedestrian circulation is clearly demarcated with a sidewalk system linking the big box through the parking lot and to the public sidewalk system.



Combination of big box retail with smaller retail spaces connects to the street and community via sidewalks.

Pedestrian connections should be made from within a retail development to the public sidewalk system.

Sidewalks should be provided along the full length of any building featuring a customer entrance.

- **On-site Sidewalks**. Sidewalks should be provided along the full length of the building along any facade featuring a customer entrance and along any facade abutting public parking areas. Such sidewalks should be located at least six feet from the facade of the building to provide planting beds for foundation landscaping. Within the Urban Commercial Overlay, this requirement should be fulfilled by the public sidewalk.
- **Parking Location**. Unless located in a commercial overlay, no more than 60 percent of the off-street parking area for the entire property should be located between the front facade of the principal building and the primary abutting street unless the principal building and/or parking lots are screened from view by outlot development and additional tree plantings and/or earth berms.
- **Buffering**. Where building facades face adjacent residential uses, an earthen berm should be installed, no greater than a 3 to 1 slope with a minimum height of three feet, and containing at a minimum, a double row of evergreen or deciduous trees planted at intervals of 10 feet on center (*this landscape standard may be modified by the Zoning Office*). Additional landscaping may be required by the Development Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and/or City Council to effectively buffer adjacent land use as deemed appropriate. For urban locations, a six-foot tall masonry wall (not cement block) or fence may be substituted. *(need to address parking lot buffering)*
- **Supporting Uses and Structures**. Loading docks, trash collection/dumpster bins, outdoor display and similar facilities and functions, as provided for by code, should be incorporated into the overall design of the building and the landscaping so that the visual and acoustic impacts of these functions are fully contained and out of view from adjacent properties and public streets.

  Use of screening materials that are different from or inferior to the principal materials of the building and landscape is prohibited.

Retail, office, and residential uses work very well together in mixed use, urban settings – in this case, also incorporating a parking garage.

Providing racks for bikes will promote bicycling to retail centers.

No areas for outdoor display, trash collection or compaction, loading or other such uses should be located within 20 feet of any public or private street, public sidewalk or access easement, or internal pedestrian way. No delivery, loading, trash removal, or similar operations should be permitted between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., except in special circumstances and where steps are taken to reduce noise impacts.

- **Related Public Infrastructure.** Relative to current city code requirements, adjacent public infrastructure should be improved or provided. This includes public sidewalks, curbs and gutters, tree lawns and street trees, roadways, intersections, traffic signals, and street lighting.
- **Structural Design of Larger Tenant Spaces or Demolition Bonds**. Primary tenant spaces that exceed 75,000 gross square feet in area should be structurally designed to be easily divided into smaller tenant spaces. In addition, primary facades should be designed to incorporate future additional doors. For retail structures that choose not to meet this requirement, a demolition bond should be provided to cover the cost of demolition of a vacant structure within a specified timeframe.
- **Placemaking.** There will be unique situations where a retail development can establish a "place" that establishes a new identity, new location for intensive activity, and a destination for retail, housing and employment. In those situations, new development should consider the following:
    - Mixing uses – vertically within buildings and horizontally throughout the development.
    - Integrating COTA bus service on site with bus stop(s), as well as facilities that support walking and biking.
    - Multi-storied buildings with multi-storied parking in urban locations or suburban locations where densification is supported.
    - Shared parking facilities among adjacent and nearby uses.
    - Centrally located plazas and public gathering spaces that define the development's character and organize the development pattern.

Multi-story residential fronting on a civic space.

Big box single-tenant building(general merchandiser) with attached mid-size box space with interconnected sidewalk

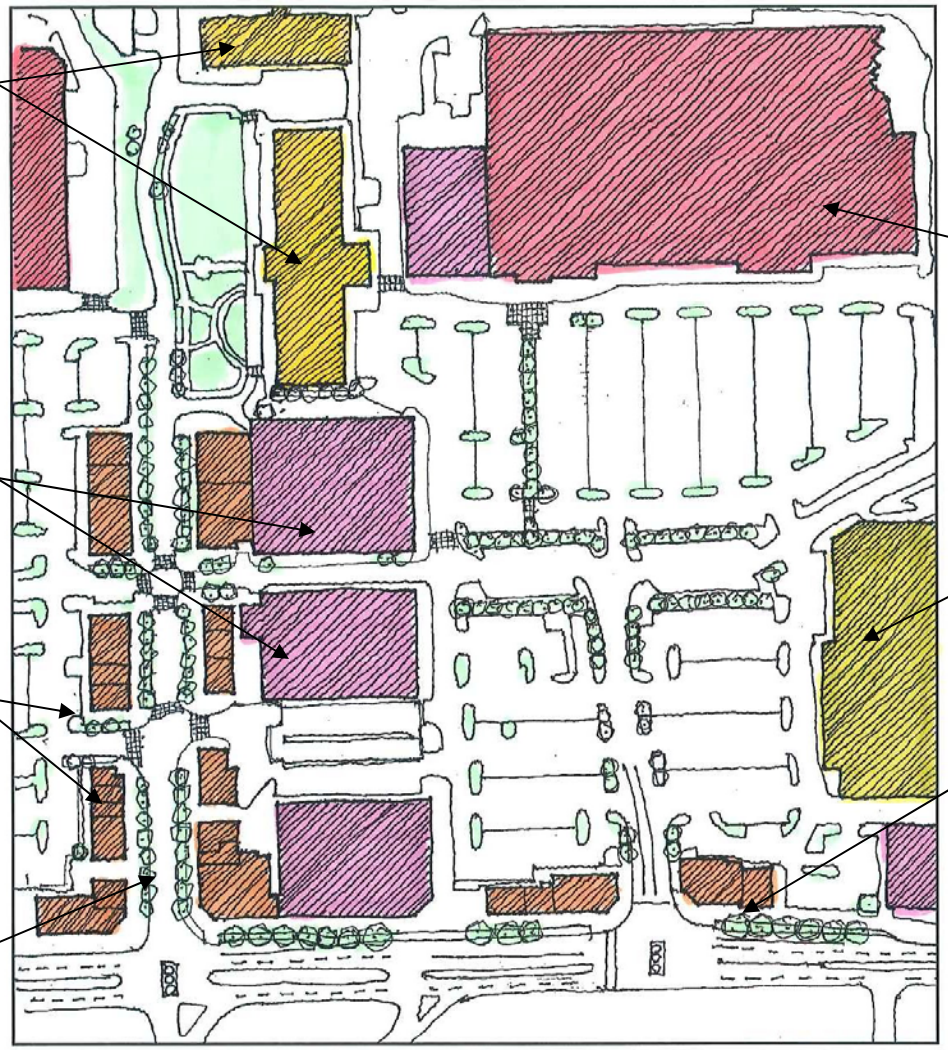
Mid-size box single-tenant retail buildings fronted by multi-story mixed use buildings.

Grocery store.

Two and three-story mixed use buildings fronting the main entry boulevard.

Multi-story mixed use buildings serve as gateway to big box entry.

Street spine leads deep into the site, creating a sense of place and arrival for the development.



Creating a "place" in a retail development requires an imaginative site plan that establishes a hierarchy of building types to create a walkable, pedestrian scaled built environment.

3. Parking Standards

- **Urban vs. Suburban Standards.** New parking requirements that differentiate between urban and suburban areas, with urban areas requiring lower parking requirements should be developed. A geographic area that identifies the urban area could be generated or criteria could be established that would allow for the lower parking requirements. Criteria would include a minimum threshold for surrounding residential densities, availability of transit, and availability of on-street parking. Furthermore, an administrative process should be established to allow for even lower parking minimums in urban areas. One potential would be to provide an administrative waiver pending a recommendation by an area commission or architectural review commission, in consultation with staff from Transportation and Building Services Divisions (see 3342.02 Administrative Requirements and 3372.615 Urban Commercial Overlay). An alternative would be to identify geographic areas where the reduced parking requirements would be given "by right" instead of using the above mentioned criteria. These geographic areas could be existing "NCR" districts or an urban commercial area to be defined.

In general, retail development is over-parked for the majority of the year resulting in unused paved surfaces – even on a Saturday afternoon in late summer.

- **Capping On-Site Parking**. A parking cap should be established for several uses, including large scale retail proposals, general office, medical or dental office, restaurant, tavern, or dining room, warehousing, and/or manufacturing. "Green" parking areas could be allowed to provide for overflow parking on peak demand days. For revisions to both minimums and the establishment of maximums, the study of local demand is recommended to ensure that any revisions to current requirements would provide adequate, but not excessive off-street parking. An outline should be developed for this study. The outline would identify five examples of each of the land uses noted above for both urban and suburban locations and the amount of parking that was required. A consultant could then be hired to identify the percentage of parking utilized for a daytime period and nighttime period for both a weekday and weekend. As noted, this study would then inform specific code changes to be implemented.

- **Alternative Approaches to Urban Parking Needs**. Other best management practices should be considered to reduce parking demands and provide support for the provision of parking in urban commercial districts. Two examples of best management practices include: a mechanism that would provide for "fees in lieu of" the provision of parking that could in turn support the provision of public parking facilities and/or the development of a policy/guidelines for shared parking.
- **Landscape Solutions**. Landscape design standards for parking lots should be developed for enhanced aesthetics and to manage stormwater and other negative environmental impacts attributed to parking lots.
- **Parking Lot Expansion into Neighborhoods**. Criteria for the review of development applications should be developed that would result in the expansion of parking lots into existing neighborhoods (parking lots that would "cross the alley").
- **Economic Revitalization Considerations**. The potential of developing public parking areas in urban commercial districts as an economic development tool should be studied.

4. Green Construction Standards

Encouraging or even requiring green construction standards could be considered as part of new standards. LEED certified buildings meet certain design and architectural standards. Mayor Coleman's *Get Green Columbus* initiative is addressing this issue through its research and policy formulation. It is recommended that retail development be a topic of discussion in that effort to ensure it is coordinated with other policy changes.

- **Stormwater Utility Fees:** The city of Columbus stormwater service rates have been established to be proportionate to the cost of providing stormwater service to each user. The stormwater service charge for commercial developments that are tributary directly or indirectly to the stormwater system is based upon the quantity of impervious area. City Code states that non-residential properties will be assigned an ERU (equivalent residential unit) multiple based upon the properties' individually measured impervious area (in square feet) divided by 2,000 square feet (one ERU). Impervious areas as defined by City Code are areas that have been paved and/or covered with buildings and materials which include concrete, asphalt, rooftop, and blacktop. Stormwater

The use of a bioswale for capturing, directing and filtering stormwater in a parking lot will reduce the environmental impacts from such impervious surfaces.

surcharges can therefore be reduced by minimizing these impervious surfaces, thereby minimizing the runoff from storm events.

- **Pervious Surfaces – Stormwater**: One method to reduce the amount of impervious surface created by the amount of parking required for big box retail is the utilization of pervious parking surfaces. The Low-Impact Development Center at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined permeable pavement systems restore soil infiltration functions in the urban landscape. The EPA has identified permeable pavements as suitable for use in spillover parking and parking aisles. Different types of permeable pavement include: reinforced gravel and grass pavement, reinforced grass pavement, 60% impervious concrete blocks with grass, and 90% impervious blocks with gravel. EPA research on permeable pavement has determined the following:
  - Permeable pavement system types vary widely in cost and are more expensive than typical asphalt pavements.
  - Cost comparisons between permeable pavement installations and conventional ponds or underground vaults are limited.
  - The elimination of conventional systems and reduced life cycle and maintenance costs can result in significant cost savings over the long term. (http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/pavements.pdf)

  Potential stormwater credits can be received from the city of Columbus with the use of pervious parking surfaces based on what role the pervious parking surface plays in the stormwater management system. If the pervious parking surface solely acts as detention for stormwater prior to entering the storm sewer, thereby decreasing the size of the onsite detention, then credits would not be received. However if the use of pervious surfaces were used over and above the site's water retention requirements the property would be able to reduce its size of onsite detention and receive stormwater credits.
- **Green Roofs:** The *Columbus Stormwater Drainage Manual* (March 2006) includes Green Roof Technologies as a stormwater quantity control to provide temporary onsite storage to detain runoff and control downstream flooding. Section 3.2.7 details the standards for green roof systems. Without grants, tax breaks, and regulations,

the initial expense may seem prohibitive for green roofs. However, although green roofs cost about twice as much as conventional roofs, they also last about twice as long. But green roofs documented advantages - saving energy, controlling runoff, offsetting urban heat islands, and providing new habitats for wildlife – benefit the public as much as building owners. (www.metropolismag.com)

Currently the city of Columbus offers stormwater credits for green roof systems. For example if a green roof is installed on a 60,000 square feet structure, then 30 ERUs can be deducted for the total site. Additional stormwater credits are also available for sites detaining more stormwater than what the design criteria minimum in the *Columbus Stormwater Drainage Manual* (March 2006).

The Green Building Subcommittee of the Green Team initiative is currently exploring possible programs to encourage the construction of green roofs. The Team is evaluating whether a revolving loan would be feasible to help developers defray the upfront costs of installing a green roofing system.

5. Demolition Bonds

A demolition bond is posted by a retail developer with a value of 110 percent of the present cost for demolishing a similar building. The bond is renewed each year under threat of business license non-renewal. When vacancy surpasses 12 months, the city can use the money from the bond to demolish the structure.

6. Incentives for Urban Redevelopment

Incentives for retail development should only be considered in limited locations where urban redevelopment is a city goal, where such retail development helps to revitalize an older, deteriorated commercial district, or where a mixed-use project incorporating retail uses is proposed in an urban location outside of the downtown.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts should be supported where significant amounts of urban-style retail development is proposed or recommended for an infill site. This should be limited to development that is higher in density, multiple stories, with structured parking.

Clean Ohio Revolving Fund (CORF) grants should be supported where development proposals address the goals of these recommendations and also result in meaningful environmental remediation.

Special Assessment Districts and Special Improvement Districts should also be supported as incentives to fulfill the goals of this report.

The Economic Development Division may be proposing an economic incentive for commercial business districts.

A stormwater utility fee reduction may be a benefit to developments that provide a green parking solution on their sites through a reduction in pervious surfaces.

E. Next Steps

The following next steps are recommended to begin implementation of the recommendations presented in this report.

TASK	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMEFRAME
1 - Group Review & Recommendations. The Retail Discussion Group reviews this report, agrees upon final recommendations, and establishes priorities among the various tasks.	Retail Discussion Group	September - October
2 - Internal Review. The Development Department will complete an internal review of this document and the Retail Discussion Group's recommendations, and forward same to the Mayor's Office for review and approval.	Planning Division	October
3 – External Review. The report will be circulated to retail developers and property owners for comment.	Planning Division	November
4 - Ordinance Preparation. The Development Department will initiate the preparation of legislation, which will be circulated for public and industry comment.	Planning Division and Zoning Office	December - January
5 - Ordinance Adoption. Following any revisions, the legislation will be forwarded to the Development Commission and City Council for adoption.	Development Commission and City Council	February - March