



## *Morse Road Design Study*

City of Columbus

Department of Trade and Development, Planning Office

Northland Community Council and

Northland Area Business Association

with:

Kinzelman Kline, Inc.

LDR International

Main Street Connections

Parsons Transportation Group

December, 2000

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b><i>Acknowledgements</i></b>	<b><i>ii</i></b>
<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b><i>Inventory and Analysis</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>
Function and Aesthetics of the Corridor	3
Strategic Assessment of the Corridor	7
<b><i>Public Street Improvements</i></b>	<b><i>11</i></b>
Proposed Morse Road Street Section	11
Access Management	12
Street Plans	15
Elements of the Streetscape	18
County Improvements	22
Preliminary Cost Estimates & Phasing	23
<b><i>Opportunity Sites</i></b>	<b><i>25</i></b>
Site 1: Former Sun TV Site	26
Site 2: Huntington Bank Site	27
Site 3: Nazarene Church Camp Site	28
Site 4: Arena Motors Site	28
Site 5: Vacant Property	29
Other Opportunity Sites	30
<b><i>Outline Design Guidelines</i></b>	<b><i>31</i></b>
Site Design	31
Landscape Design	33
Signage	34
<b><i>Strategic Recommendations</i></b>	<b><i>39</i></b>
Market Research	39
Suggested Use Strategies	39
Catalytic Projects	40
Funding Options	40
Plan Implementation and Enforcement	40
Other Suggestion	40

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### City of Columbus

Michael B. Coleman, Mayor

### Columbus City Council

Matthew D. Habash (President)

Richard W. Sensenbrenner (President, Pro-Tem)

Kevin L. Boyce

Jennette B. Bradley

Michael C. Mentel

Maryellen O'Shaughnessy

Charleta B. Tavares

### Department of Trade and Development

Mark Barbash, Director

J. Patrick Grady, Deputy Director

Stephen R. McClary, Planning Administrator

Dick Ritchie, Neighborhood Planning Manager

Suzanne Wingenfield, Senior Planner

### Northland Community Council:

Steve Thompson, President

Pamela Thomas, Vice-President

Chuck Wolfe, Secretary

Rolla Wagner, Treasurer

### Member Associations:

Beaumont Neighborhood Civic Association

Blendon Woods Civic Association

Brandywine Meadows Civic Association

Chestnut Hill Civic Association

Clinton Estates Civic Association

Cooper Ridge Civic Association

Creekridge Civic Association

Devonshire Civic Association

Forest Park Civic Association

Friendship Village

Little Turtle Residents Association

Maize Morse Tri-Area Civic Association

Minerva Park Community Association

Northgate Civic Association

Northland Area Business Association

Northland Jaycees

Parkview Civic Association

Preston Commons Homeowners Association

Strawberry Farms Civic Association

Tanager Woods Civic Association

Trouville Manor Homeowners Association

West Albany Civic Association

Westerford Village Civic Association

Western Creek Civic Association

Woodstream East Civic Association

Woodstream West Civic Association

### Northland Area Business Association:

Steven Keller, President

Curtis McGuire, Vice President

Beth Ann Chesnes, Treasurer

Greg Gerhard, Secretary

### Members:

Autoville USA, Karl Rd. Dental Group, Big Brother Big Sister Assoc., Bob Caldwell Chrysler-Plymouth, Bob Caldwell Dodge Country, Bob Daniels Buick Co., Buckeye Maytag, (C) 3 Solutions For Nonprofit, C & G Investment Assoc., Checkcare Systems Of Columbus, Chesrown Oldsmobile-GMC-KIA, Cooperonline.Com, Inc., Crown Hallmark Shop, Fair Trade Realty, Fifth Third Bank-Morse Rd, Fifth Third-Kroger, Forest Park Veterinary Clinic, Gabby's, Goodwill Columbus, Morse Road Family Dental Group, Gripping Solutions, Hadler Companies, Jacinto W. Beard, D.D.S., Jamesong Entertainment, The Kennel Club Of America, Krieger Ford, Lamar Asset Mgmt & Realty, Linda C. Brown Cosmetics, Litech Lighting Mgmt. Services, L.J.T.K. Inc. - Subway#11805, Mail Boxes Etc., Mail Boxes Etc - 161, Maize Morse Civic Assoc., Mark A. Bell, Mark F. Taggart Co., Mobile Electronics, Monaco's Palace, National City Bank, Northland Community Council, Northland Car Wash, Northland Chiropractic Center, Northland Joint Venture, Northland Dental, Northland Mall, Northland Medical Pharmacy, Oakleaf Village, Office Depot, Ohio Plastic Surgeons, Orginals To Remember, Plumbers & Factory Supplies, Ralph W. Smithers, Redleg's Lumper Service, Remax Achievers, Rush Motors Sales Inc., Saint Francis Desales H.S., Schoedinger Funeral Services, St.Matthias Church, Steven C. Emrich, D.D.S., The Steven L. Keller CPA Co., Northland Coin Laundry, This Week Comm. Newspaper, Trueman Club Hotel, United Skates Of America, North YMCA.

### Morse Road Design Study Steering

#### Committee:

George Hadler, NABA

Mark Rush, NABA

Andy Bukovinsky, NCC

Mark Bell, NCC

James Dean, The Richard E. Jacobs Group

Doug Krieger, NABA

Scott Blyze, Limited Real Estate

Tim Lucks, Franklin County Engineer's Office

Robert J. Weiler Jr., Columbus Board of Realtors

Michael Reese, City of Columbus - Mayor's Office

Pete Cass, City of Columbus - Legislative Research Office

Stephen R. McClary, City of Columbus - Planning Administrator

Bill Lewis, City of Columbus - Traffic Engineering

Tammy Noble, Franklin County Development Department

### Interview Participants

The following individuals contributed to this document through individual and group interviews: Arlene Shoemaker, Dorothy Teater, Dewey Stokes, Guy Whorley, Tammy Noble, Dean Ringle, Tim Lucks, John Bryner, Jim Jewell, Matt Habash, Richard Sensenbrenner, Bill Bopp, George Hadler, Ron Barnes, Mike Green, Jim Hutchison, Jayne Knost, Bob Weiler, Steve Moluse, Barry Weigand, Bill Hoffman, Bob Lawler, Mike Reese, Mark Barbash, Pat Grady, Steve McClary, Mark Rush, Doug Krieger, Jim Gill, Greg Gerhard, Dick Nourse, Connie Caldwell, Tim Doran, Jeff Farion, Suzanne Wingenfield, Tim Rollins, Linda Patterson, Steve Gladman, Columbus Apartment Association members, Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, David Baker, Jeanette Bradley

The Morse Road corridor became a major retail and residential center for Columbus in the 1960s and 1970s. Over time, competition in the retail, office and residential markets throughout Columbus along with a decrease in investment in the corridor has diminished the vitality of this district. Recognizing the impact that this deterioration was having on Columbus, and specifically, the Northland community, Columbus City Council funded *The Morse Road Market Study and Redevelopment Strategy* that was completed in July of 1999. Using the general recommendations of this study as a foundation, the Morse Road Design Study establishes the vision for physical change to the corridor.

This Study addresses five miles of the Morse Road corridor from Interstate 71 on the west to Interstate 270 on the east. The corridor **Inventory and Analysis** includes a thorough evaluation of traffic and circulation, land uses, pedestrian circulation and aesthetics. This information was gathered through data collection, field observations, and interviews with the community. Public meetings and one-on-one interviews with local business owners and community representatives revealed numerous issues and concerns regarding future redevelopment of the corridor.

The recommendations of this plan are organized into four categories: Public Streetscape Improvements, Opportunity Sites, Outline Design Guidelines, and Strategic Recommendations. **Public Streetscape Improvements** address the enhancement of the public right-of-way, which includes: a landscaped median, and an upgraded edge treatment with curb and gutter, street trees, sidewalks and streetlights. These improvements will significantly improve the quality of the corridor by controlling vehicular access and defining a pedestrian environment. Other

improvements include pedestrian upgrades at all intersections and the enhancement and definition of the Northland Community gateways.

**Opportunity Sites** identify catalytic redevelopment projects that could be implemented at key sites along the corridor.

**Outline Design Guidelines** establish the design principles that will guide the development of these key parcels. In addition, these standards will guide the redevelopment of the rest of the corridor as it changes over time.

Finally, **Strategic Recommendations** are made for implementing the overall plan. These recommendations include suggestions for additional market research, additional funding options, establishment of a planned zoning district, and the proposed structure of an appropriate organizational entity that will guide the future redevelopment of the corridor.

## INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

The Inventory of the existing condition of Morse Road and the subsequent analysis which reveals the opportunities and constraints of the corridor are achieved through data collection, field observations, the previous observations of the *Morse Road Market Study and Redevelopment Strategy*, and numerous interviews with community members. The issues and concerns of the public were discussed at public meetings and through individual interviews with local business owners and community representatives. The corridor has consequently been evaluated from two different perspectives. First, the physical conditions that impact the functionality and the aesthetics of the corridor are addressed. Secondly, the current market issues and policies that affect redevelopment along the corridor are addressed in the Strategic Assessment.

### ***Function and Aesthetics of the Corridor***

The following physical conditions represent issues that could be addressed through streetscape improvements and redevelopment to enhance the functional and aesthetic qualities of the Morse Road Corridor.

### ***Access and Circulation***



Left turns across at least three lanes of vehicular traffic occurs from most parcels along Morse Road. In addition, short distances between curb cuts create unsafe conditions.



Curb cuts close to intersections create unsafe conditions. This condition is common at most major intersections along Morse Road and is often found at gas stations that possess multiple points of access.



Some parking areas are not physically separated from the service road or Morse Road. This creates an unsafe condition by allowing vehicles to enter the road or enter the site at any location.



Short stacking distances into parcels or at service roads creates congestion.

# INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

## Pedestrian Access and Amenities



No sidewalks currently exist along Morse Road.



Pedestrian access across Morse Road is difficult today. The wide expanse of pavement and the lack of pedestrian amenities at the corners create an intimidating pedestrian experience.



The lack of pedestrian sidewalks makes it difficult to access the bus stops along the corridor. In addition, only six of the thirty-eight bus stop locations have shelters.

## Aesthetics and Landscape



Overhead utilities visually dominate much of Morse Road. Service lines that cross Morse Road and leaning wooden utility poles with large cross arms are particularly distracting.



Few parking areas are screened with vegetation.



Most sites provide little or no interior landscaping.



While the typical seven lane cross section along Morse Road is necessary to continue to move vehicular traffic, the extremely wide cross section of pavement lacks visual interest and may encourage higher vehicular speeds.



No street trees or additional landscaping exists to visually unify the corridor.

# INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

## Lighting



“Cobra head” style light fixtures currently light the majority of the Morse Road corridor.



New bronze light fixtures have recently been used between Sunbury Road and Trindel Way.

## Signage



A variety of sign shapes, sizes and heights can be found on Morse Road



Sign height and size often do not relate to parcel size



Directional traffic signs should be sized appropriately



Multiple signs on individual parcels create visual clutter



Billboards visually dominate the Morse Road landscape in some areas.

# INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

---

## Gateways



The Interstate 71 interchange, including the on ramps and off ramps are currently maintained at minimal levels.



The western gateway to the Northland community (top) and the eastern gateway (bottom) currently do not announce the community or establish the appropriate image.

## Easton

The Easton development area makes up the eastern end of the Morse Road corridor. Many of the functional and aesthetic issues that currently exist along Morse Road to the west are being addressed in this new development area through new site amenities and development standards. Easton possesses an identifiable image of its own with its distinctive blue light fixtures, traffic signs and traffic signals. Landscape plans for the Easton segment of Morse Road have been completed and will be installed in the near future.



## INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

### Strategic Assessment of the Corridor

#### A. Market Analysis

The following represents insights and comments into information found in the Morse Road Market Study and Redevelopment Strategy that was commissioned by the city of Columbus and prepared by Wallace, Floyd and Associates.

##### 1. Retail

###### *Trade Area Boundaries*

Although the Market Study and Redevelopment Strategy indicates that various factors were considered when determining the primary market area (PMA) and secondary market area (SMA), the PMA and SMA boundaries were determined to be perfect rings. The PMA had a radius of 2.3 miles from the Morse Road/Cleveland Avenue intersection and the SMA had a 3.5 mile radius. If factors such as natural and physical boundaries, the nature of existing retail and competing retail concentrations were taken into account, the result would be market areas defined as irregular shaped polygons, not concentric circles.

###### *Competition*

The Market Study and Redevelopment Strategy recognizes increased retail competition in the “regional market” for the Morse Road retailers. However, the study does not specifically cite what regional shopping malls/districts compete with Northland Mall and its surrounding retailers. The study does mention competitors that are in the trade area but makes no mention of other outlying regional shopping centers or districts that impact

the size of the trade area. Shopping districts that currently compete with Northland Mall and Northland corridor merchants include, at least to some extent, City Center, Easton Town Center and its surrounding big box stores, the retail area on U.S. Route 23 north of I-270 that consists of big box stores like Kohl’s and Wal-Mart, the Lennox Town Center, the Sawmill Road retail corridor and the retail development at the Polaris Centers of Commerce.

With the planned new fashion mall at Easton and the recent ground breaking for the new Polaris Town Center shopping mall, shopping patterns and trade area boundaries for the Morse Road corridor and especially Northland Mall are likely to change dramatically over the next few years. Announced anchor department stores for Easton include Nordstrom and Lazarus. Easton’s high-end fashion focus is sufficiently different from Northland’s target market which suggests that the two could successfully co-exist. However, with six announced department store anchors including Lazarus, Sears and JCPenney, the current anchor stores at Northland, Polaris will be a direct competitor to Northland for at least a portion of its current trade area shoppers.

By taking existing significant competing centers of retail activity into consideration, it appears that the secondary market area may in fact at present be larger than estimated. The large amount of inflow dollars that occurs in the area also seems to indicate that the market area boundaries could potentially be expanded. On the other hand, when proposed new competition is taken into consideration, it appears that the market area for shopping goods may shrink significantly once these new centers are opened.

Morse Road has a regional shopping mall, nine major strip shopping centers, and 17 other

shopping centers with over 4.7 million square feet in the 3.5 mile radius trade area. The primary trade area experienced \$1.5 billion in retail and personal service sales in 1998. Automotive dealers and auto-related goods comprised one-third of these sales. The retail supply in the area was dominated by automotive and auto-related goods, music-related goods, and furniture and home-related goods.

Inflow/Outflow analysis indicates that an inflow to the primary and combined trade areas currently exists for all store types. The analysis shows that general merchandise, apparel, home furnishings, building materials, and automotive stores in the primary trade area have at least 50% net inflow of consumers from outside of the combined trade area.

###### *Other Considerations*

Several retail trends are and will continue to impact Morse Road’s commercial corridor that must be considered when determining the best strategy to implement regarding residential and commercial development and redevelopment. These trends include: the consolidation of big box retailers, a renewed interest in urban markets, developers’ increased interest in the “new urbanist” and neo-traditional approaches to development and design, the redevelopment of older malls, Internet usage’s potential impact on traditional in-store retail sales, and the rise of retail/entertainment clusters.

Big Box Consolidation – Until recently, numerous retailers have competed in shopping goods categories such as pharmacy, hardware and home improvement, office supplies, and home electronics. Increasingly, these categories are being dominated by two or three major players. Retailers such as HQ and Builders Square have

## INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

been pushed out of the market by Home Depot and Lowes, leaving large vacant stores. The drug store industry is now dominated by CVS, Rite Aid, and WalGreens that are springing up on every heavily traveled street corner attempting to gain a larger market share. OfficeMax, Office Depot and Staples are dominating the office category. Best Buy and Circuit City are increasingly dominating the home electronics category.

**Urban Retail Markets** - Many big box retailers including Home Depot, Staples, CompUSA, Office Max, and Wal\*Mart are increasingly interested in returning to often under-served older urban areas. As the number of new sites available for development at the outer edges of metropolitan areas dwindles, these retailers are beginning to test smaller neighborhood store concepts for continued growth in older markets. Home Depot has built four stores in New Jersey to test the viability of a new concept called Villager's Hardware. Staples introduced a smaller version of its store in Boston nearly 10 years ago, called Staples Express. CompUSA is carefully developing smaller stores in Texas. Office Max has begun testing a smaller version of its store that is named PDQ and Wal\*Mart is testing a 40,000 square foot grocery store concept for neighborhood markets. The biggest challenges these chain retailers will be faced with is adapting their formats to the unique characteristics of individual neighborhoods and competing with local retailers that often offer superior customer service and unique assortments.

**New Urbanist and Neo-Traditional Development** – In an effort to counter the negative effects of sprawl and take advantage of Americans' growing desire for a more pedestrian scale and stronger sense of community in their neighborhoods, some developers are applying new urbanist or neo-traditional principles in the layout, design and function of the

new communities they are creating. These types of projects are typically mixed-use, incorporating a number of land-uses such as office, residential, and retail that complement and support one another. Other characteristics typical of these developments include higher density and pedestrian orientation.

### 2. Office

According to the Market Study and Redevelopment Strategy, the office market in Columbus remains strong with low vacancies and high absorption rates. Downtown office vacancies were around 5% in 1998.

The Northeast sub-market contains approximately 10% of the region's Class A office space and 3% of the Class B space. The vacancy rate was 2.5% for Class A space in 1998 with estimated net absorption of 362,000 square feet. Class B space had a vacancy rate of 6.4% with 76,000 square feet of net absorption. Office lease rates for suburban space averaged \$19.87 per square foot, according to the Market Study and Redevelopment Strategy.

The study describes what additional development is currently occurring in the Columbus metropolitan area. New office development is occurring at Easton with a total of over 4 million square feet planned. Current vacancies at Easton Oval total 3%. An additional 1.4 million square feet of office development is planned for the Business Campus at New Albany.

### 3. Housing

Although no study has been conducted recently regarding what types and amounts of housing opportunity might exist in the vicinity of the corridor, there appears to be a lack of move-up

housing in the area. There may also be sufficient demand to support new multi-family housing carefully positioned between existing market-rate and luxury projects in the vicinity. Quality multi-family housing for seniors may also be an area of opportunity.

### B. Stakeholder Interviews

The design team had the opportunity to talk with a number of stakeholders that included representatives from the Morse Road commercial district, the city of Columbus, and Franklin County. The goal of the interviews was to gain a more intimate knowledge of the issues that face property owners, merchants, and residents in the Morse Road corridor and realize the potential strategies that could be employed to address those issues. Interviewees were asked to define the most critical issues facing the Columbus Metropolitan Area and Morse Road corridor, and to identify the revitalization/redevelopment tools that could be utilized for its renewal. Below is a summary of the interviewees' responses.

Respondents were in general agreement that the Morse Road commercial corridor has and will continue to serve a critical role as the center of economic activity in the Northland community and, to a lesser extent, the broader region. Northland Mall is recognized as the center and most important anchor of the corridor. The concentration of major, manufacturer-affiliated auto dealers is also considered an anchor and destination draw for the corridor. Most felt that the corridor remains strong at present but is threatened by the challenges outlined below. There is a consensus that strong and collaborative action is needed quickly to prevent further deterioration and disinvestment that will otherwise ensue.

## INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

*Most critical challenges facing Columbus Metropolitan Area (in order of mention frequency) –*

- sprawl/land-use patterns/sustainability
- lack of a comprehensive plan (city, county, region)
- transportation/infrastructure (projected increases in congestion, maintenance of existing, mass transit/rail)
- workforce development/labor shortage
- schools/education
- downtown revitalization
- level and quality of city services
- housing (diversity, quality, low home ownership percentage)
- lack of effective public/private partnerships
- political structure (at-large council)
- tax structure (too low)

*Most critical challenges facing Morse Road commercial corridor:*

- appearance/image (property & infrastructure maintenance, inconsistent signage, vacancy appearance, etc.)
- adjacent multi-family neighborhoods (management, maintenance, crime)
- unfriendly to pedestrians (too wide, no sidewalks, poor linkages to neighborhoods, speed of traffic, etc.)
- insufficient, reactive code enforcement
- current and potential competing centers of retail activity (Easton, Polaris, US 23, City Center)
- over-built commercial (vacancy appearance, inappropriate uses, too many car dealers, etc.)
- safety perception
- lack of Morse-Bethel connector
- not enough parks

*Most appropriate role in renewal/redevelopment of older commercial corridors:*

- City of Columbus – infrastructure development and maintenance, code enforcement, planning/

marketing studies, community policing, appropriate zoning and development standards, development incentives, streamlined approvals process, political leadership/vision

- Franklin County – infrastructure development and maintenance, complementary zoning, code enforcement, city/county collaboration regarding long range planning, annexation, water/sewer, etc.
- Foundations/Non-Profits – public amenities (beautification, recreation, culture); support of local social service agencies and community non-profits
- Columbus Urban Growth Corporation – land assembly and preparation, development catalyst, public/private partnership facilitation.
- Northland Community Council – community consensus building, leadership and advocacy; business community collaboration; planning and design review
- Northland Area Business Association – city and community collaboration; critical role in representing and promoting area business interests; input to and cooperate with proposed zoning and code changes and enforcement; augment city services with Special Improvement District or other cooperative approach to such tasks as infrastructure maintenance, parking lot security, marketing, etc.
- Financial Institutions – community reinvestment, participation in creative approaches to financing redevelopment
- COTA – convenient, attractive, affordable, accessible public transportation along corridor and between it, neighborhoods and regional destinations; rail development
- MORPC – regional transportation planning

# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

Many of the functional and aesthetic issues identified in the analysis phase of this study can be addressed with physical improvements to the public streetscape. The following enhancements will improve vehicular circulation, establish a safe and functional pedestrian environment and improve the Northland Community image along its most highly visible corridor.

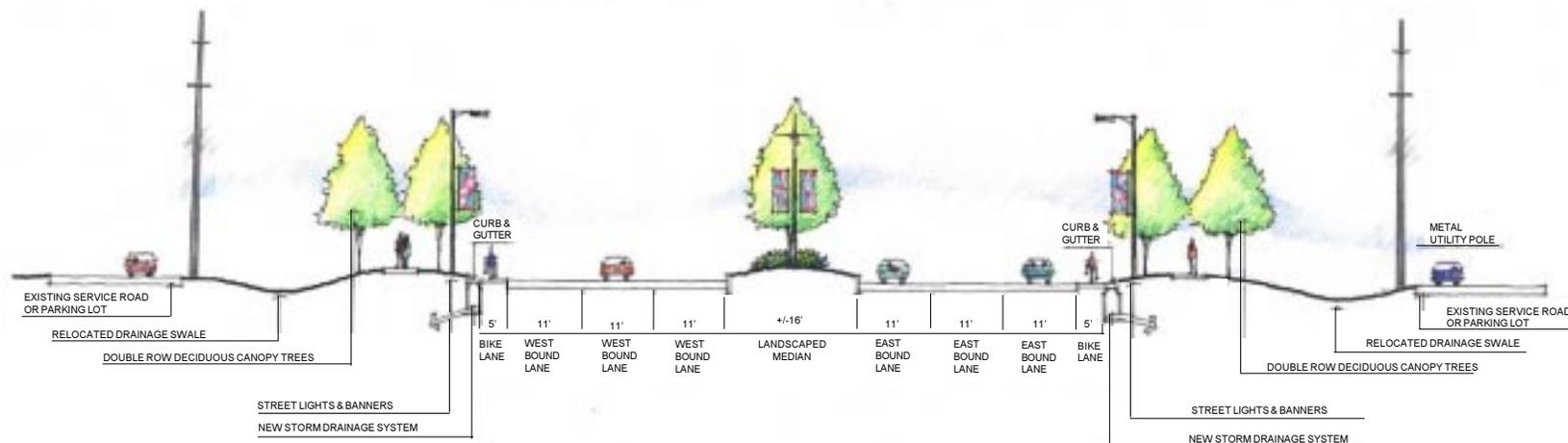
## Proposed Morse Road Street Section

The proposed Morse Road street section includes a variety of improvements that will create a safer and more functional streetscape. A new landscaped median will physically separate the vehicular traffic moving in opposite directions.

The primary benefit of such a median is the ability to control vehicular movements along the corridor. In addition, the median diminishes the visual impact of the extremely wide pavement section of Morse Road and may help reduce traffic speeds that are currently posted at 45 mph. The three existing lanes of traffic in each direction should be maintained in order to accommodate the existing traffic volume along Morse Road.

The edges of Morse Road will be improved to clearly define and separate the vehicular environment from the pedestrian environment. Curbs and gutters will be installed to control storm water drainage and continuous concrete sidewalks will be placed 8 feet behind the curb. A continuous 5-foot bike lane will be part of the standard street

section adjacent to the street gutter. Other amenities that will help visually unify the corridor include groupings of street trees, upgraded utility poles, upgraded street lights and decorative banners.



# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

## Access Management

In order to address the variety of vehicular access issues that were identified in the analysis segment of this study, a number of devices are proposed. These include the introduction of a landscaped median, the minimizing of curb cuts and improvements to service road intersections.

## The Median

A continuous median that is placed in between each signalized intersection along Morse Road will prohibit left hand turning movements across three lanes of vehicular traffic. While this will create safer driving conditions, it will also limit the access to individual parcels to right in/right out movements. The inability to make left turns in to and out of most parcels will be accommodated by providing reasonable access for all parcels to a signalized intersection. This will require that the existing service roads be extended in some locations to achieve this access. Two such locations are illustrated below. In addition, u-turn movements will be permitted at selected locations. These locations will be determined through a more detailed traffic analysis.



A new service road will be required in front of the Haimerl Center to provide access to a signalized intersection. A low wall may be considered in front of the Center to define a courtyard and help screen the view to the service road.



The introduction of a landscaped island will bring organization to this area of uncontrolled parcel access just east of Almont Road. This collection of parcels is currently under parked. Efforts should be made in the redevelopment of this parking and access area to meet or exceed the existing number of spaces. Consideration should be given to negotiating a shared access agreement with the owner of the under utilized parking lot at the northeast corner of Almont Road and Morse Road. A new circulation route for service vehicles should also be provided. A possible solution may be to provide access between the two buildings west of Milano Florist and continue the service route behind the florist to the retail center to the east.



# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

## Parcel Access and Curb Cuts

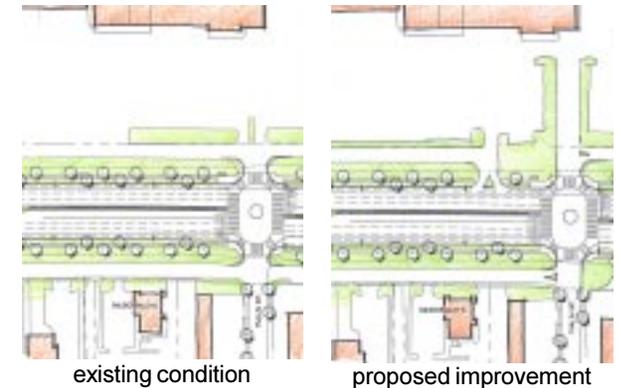
A maximum number of access points will be permitted based on parcel size. Shared access points will be encouraged between smaller parcels. Minimum distances will also be established between these access points and between access points and public street intersections. See the Outline Design Guidelines for more on Parcel Access and Curb Cuts.

## Service Road Intersections

The intersections of service roads with public streets or major parcel access drives are very confusing and often dangerous locations. Lack of adequate stacking distance for automobiles creates congestion and confusion. In the short term, efforts should be made to eliminate these intersections, where possible. In other locations where elimination is not practical, limiting certain turning movements could improve the safety at those intersections.



All service road intersections should be evaluated in regards to existing access and safety. The diagram above suggests refinements to the Northtowne Boulevard/Walford Street service road intersections that would improve circulation and safety.

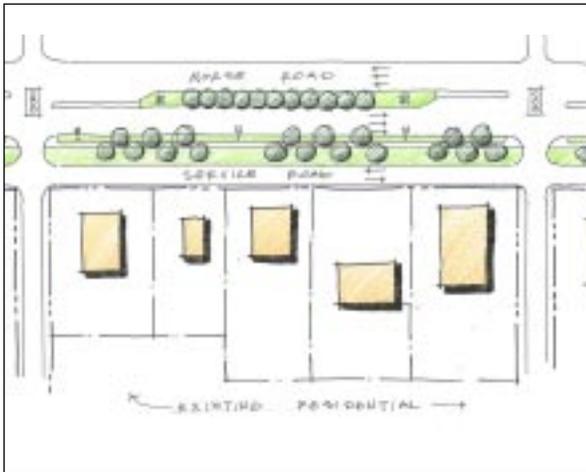


Increasing stacking distances at public street intersections and at entrances to private commercial development will improve circulation and safety. The diagrams above illustrate a proposed improvement to the Northtowne Retail Centre that would significantly increase the stacking distance.



Some service road connections should be eliminated to maximize stacking distances and create safer intersections. This service road connection to Northtowne Boulevard is not necessary because existing access to the retail center and the restaurant outparcel is provided further away from the intersection.

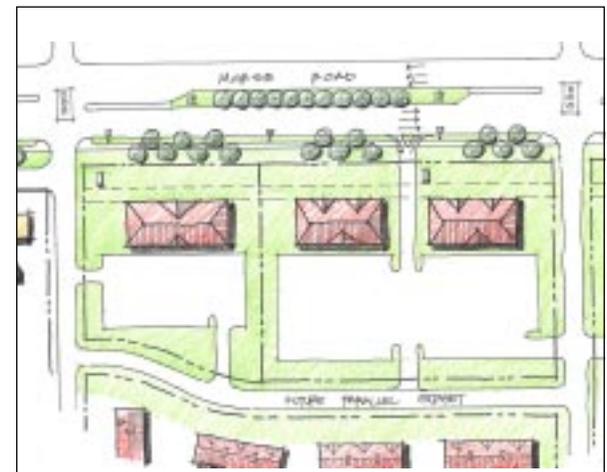
# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS



**1** Typical service road providing access to multiple parcels along Morse Road.



**2** Eliminate service road when redeveloped properties have direct access to the local north/south street network.



**3** Future redevelopment of larger parcels should promote the complete elimination of service roads by providing access to the local north/south street network and/or by establishing a new parallel street system.



# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

## Karl Road to Lemarie Court

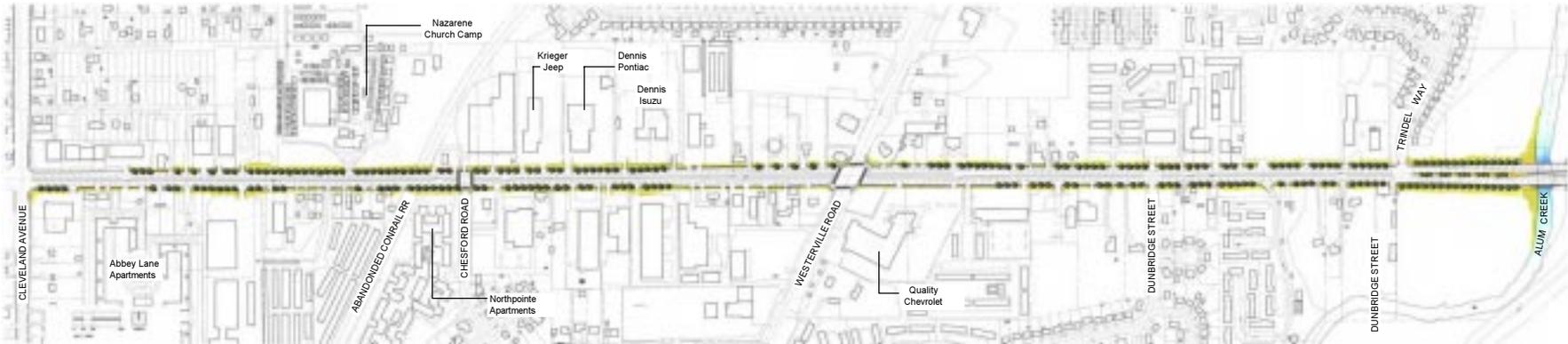


## Lemarie Court to Cleveland Avenue



# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

## Cleveland Avenue to Alum Creek



## Alum Creek to Interstate 270



## **PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS**

### ***Elements of the Streetscape***

#### ***Landscaped Median***

In addition to the functional access management aspects of the median, the treatment of these spaces will help diminish the scale of the street and establish a unique image for the corridor. The typical landscaped median will be 16' in width. A rhythm of post and banners that alternate with upright groupings of trees will add visual interest without blocking views across the corridor. Low plantings of small shrubs or perennial color will be planted at the base of these trees. These plants should be particularly hardy and resistant to drought conditions and salt spray. Turf grass should be established on the majority

of the ground plane to simplify maintenance. Where left turn lanes reduce the median to a width of 4' at intersections, the median should be treated with brick or concrete pavers to further reinforce the unique identity of the corridor.

#### ***Curb and Gutter***

A new curb and gutter will divide the vehicular environment from the pedestrian environment along Morse Road. New storm drainage including catch basins and storm pipe will also be required. A combination of the curb and gutter and a smaller open drainage swale may still be required where old service roads exist. The condition and capacity of the existing storm drainage system will need to be further evaluated at the time of final design and engineering.

#### ***Sidewalks***

Standard concrete sidewalks will be 5' wide and placed 8' behind the curb. Handicap accessible curb ramps will be used at all access drives and public streets. Walks will connect with existing walks at the crossing streets.

#### ***Bike Lanes***

5' wide asphalt bike lanes will be provided between the gutter and the inside vehicular traffic lane. The Morse Road corridor serves as a major east-west connector in the larger regional bikeway network. These lanes will be clearly marked with City of Columbus standard bikeway markings. These lanes should not follow the curb and gutter line where right turn only lanes exist for automobiles. Rather, these lanes should continue as any other vehicular lane of traffic.



#### ***Street Trees***

The placement of street trees along the edges of Morse Road will help visually unify the corridor and establish a more comfortable pedestrian environment. Tree specimens must be able to tolerate the harsh urban conditions of Morse Road relative to heat, drought and salt spray. Trees should be large growing, long-lived deciduous trees. The form of these trees should be upright as opposed to broad and spreading to minimize the amount of overhang into the street or into overhead utility lines. The canopy of the trees should be maintained at a height of 8' to ensure views under the trees to fronting commercial properties. A staggered spacing of trees will create a visual baffle that will also provide views into sites. Trees should generally be planted in groupings of five or seven and allow breaks or windows into properties. While typical breaks between tree groupings will be 60' to 120', larger breaks of 120' to 180' will be permitted in front of car dealerships to allow views into their vehicular

# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

display areas. Site distance requirements should be carefully considered in the placement of all street trees.

## Utility Poles

While the *Morse Road Market Study and Redevelopment Strategy* proposed the burial of above ground utilities, further research has found the cost to be prohibitive. An existing city ordinance 910.06 should be further explored as an alternative means of cost effectively burying utilities along Morse Road or along other city streets. A possible aesthetic upgrade to the existing above ground utilities is to replace the existing wood utility poles with metal poles along both sides of Morse Road. Poles along both sides will minimize, if not totally eliminate, the number of lines

that cross Morse Road. Poles should be painted bronze to match the standard street light pole color. All poles should be located behind the sidewalk and street tree plantings.

## Street Lights

Continue the use of the standard City of Columbus street light and pole that has been used between Sunbury Road and Trindel Way. Break away banner arms should be specified as part of these light poles.

## Posts and Banners

Banners will be used along the corridor to enhance visual interest and reinforce an identity for the Northland community. As the Easton development has established its own clear identity, so

to should the Northland community. This treatment should begin at the eastern and western gateways to Northland. Banners should be hung from street lights and from ornamental posts located within the landscaped median. A banner program could be established that changes with the seasons or announces special annual events in the community.

## Traffic Signs

The collection of smaller items can add visual clutter along the corridor. Consistent treatment of smaller elements such as traffic signage can help to visually unify the corridor. Bronze sign posts and bronze sign backgrounds are recommended for all traffic signs along the corridor.



*A view looking west at Sandy Hill Lane shows how the impact of overhead utility lines will be diminished as a result of the streetscape enhancements.*



*New bronze light fixtures have recently been used between Sunbury Road and Trindel Way (left). Banners will be installed on street light poles and on ornamental posts located in the median (right).*



*Traffic signs can be consistently treated along the corridor with bronze painted posts and bronze backgrounds. The Easton development has implemented a similar treatment in the "Easton blue" color.*

# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

## Intersections

All signalized intersections will receive broad, painted cross walks to alert drivers to the pedestrian crossing. Traffic signals will be hung from bronze mast arms at all intersections. This will eliminate the amount of visual clutter at each intersection. Street names will be hung from these mast arms as well to aid in visual recognition of the crossing streets. Major intersections along Morse Road at Karl Road, Cleveland Avenue and Westerville Road will receive additional amenities to reinforce their importance as major nodes along the corridor. Amenities include low masonry walls, specialty paving at the corners, and ornamental plantings.

## Bus Stops

Bus stops along the corridor will be significantly improved by providing safe and convenient pedestrian access to the stops with the introduction of concrete walks. Concrete pads will also be installed to provide access to the buses that will stop along the curb. COTA is currently exploring options for a new standard bus shelter. These new shelters should be significantly more open or transparent than the existing shelters. This will promote the sense of security with added visual surveillance. Over time, shelters should be installed at all of the bus stops along the corridor.



*Proposed improvements to an existing bus stop located west of Almont Road.*



*Proposed improvements to the intersection of Karl Road and Morse Road.*



# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

## Gateways

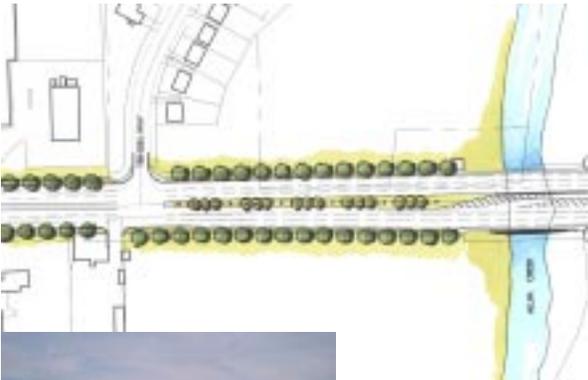
Special treatment should be given to the eastern and western gateways into the Northland community. These thresholds represent unique opportunities to establish an image for Morse Road and the Northland community. The Easton development should maintain its own identity along the corridor by reinforcing its gateways at Interstate 270 on the east end and at the intersection of Sunbury Road and Morse Road on the west end.

The west gateway to the Northland community begins at Indianola Avenue and includes the existing railroad bridges and the Interstate 71 overpass. In addition to the basic streetscape elements, special treatment should be given to the side slopes and the railroad bridges. The bridges should be painted and possibly receive

ornamental lighting. "Northland" could be announced with painted letters on the bridge or perhaps on a separate sign that could be attached to the bridge structure. Since this gateway also represents the threshold into the Beechwood/Clintonville neighborhood to the west, those communities should be represented in any design/redevelopment of this gateway.

The right-of-way of the Interstate 71 interchange should also be improved. The infield areas should be treated with a geometric planting of large upright trees that are easily recognizable as one travels at higher speeds along the highway. Off ramps and on ramps could also be enhanced with slope plantings, trees and increased maintenance.

The east gateway to the Northland community should be established just west of the Alum Creek Bridge. A large painted area of asphalt that is not currently used for vehicular traffic lanes could become a landscaped median. This median would consist of the standard pattern of planting and posts with banners that will be common from Interstate 71 to Cleveland Avenue to the west.



East Gateway at Alum Creek



West Gateway and the I-71 Interchange



# PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

## County Improvements

Over one mile of the five mile Morse Road right-of-way is currently located within the jurisdiction of Franklin County and not in the city of Columbus. This segment extends from Cleveland Avenue on the west to Trindel Way on the east. The County currently has plans to widen this segment of road to match the seven lane cross section to the east at Easton and to the west of Cleveland Avenue. Construction on this project is scheduled to begin in April, 2001.

In response to this study, the County has collaborated with the city of Columbus to integrate the recommendations of this plan into the widening project. A landscaped median cannot be incorporated into this project as a result of the complexities associated with access to the various smaller

parcels along this segment. Some of the following streetscape upgrades will be included as part of the county's widening project or will be implemented after the project is complete.

**Sidewalks** - to be relocated from three feet to seven feet behind the curb where sufficient right-of-way allows.

**Street Trees** - to be installed at 40' on center in locations where the sidewalk has been relocated to seven feet behind the curb.

**Street Lights with Banner Arms** - to match the city of Columbus standard street lights that have been installed from Sunbury Road to Trindel Way. Revisions should be made to the light pole specifications to include the appropriate banner arms.

**Utility Poles** - existing wood poles along the south side of the road will be replaced with bronze metal poles which will be placed along both sides of the street to minimize utility line crossings.

**Intersection Upgrades** - to match other signalized intersections along the corridor with broad, painted crosswalks and bronze mast arms. Specialty treatments should be provided at the intersection of Westerville Road (State Route 3). This will require coordination with the Ohio Department of Transportation as they have jurisdiction of this state route.

**Traffic Signs** - to match the standard treatment of bronze painted sign posts and backing with reflective sign decals.



In some locations, the existing right-of-way will not allow the sidewalk to be relocated to seven feet behind the curb. These parcels will conform over time as the sites are renovated or redeveloped.



Road Section - Proposed County Road Widening



Road Section - with Proposed Streetscape Upgrades

## PUBLIC STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

### **Preliminary Cost Estimates and Phasing**

The following preliminary estimates of probable construction costs have been provided in order to establish preliminary budgets for individual construction projects. The individual projects were selected based on their ability to be constructed with a logical and definable beginning and end. Any or all of these definable projects could be combined based on available funds. In fact, every effort should be made to obtain sufficient funding to complete all of the improvements concurrently. Any phasing of this project risks leaving portions undone as a result of changing budget priorities. Funding opportunities are discussed in more detail in the *Strategic Recommendations* of this plan.

#### **Clarifications**

1. The estimate of probable construction costs include material and labor at current prevailing wage rates.
2. Testing, handling and removal of any materials deemed to be hazardous is excluded.
3. Special insurance and bonds are excluded.
4. The estimate of probable construction costs reflect year 2000 costs. Estimated projections must be made into subsequent years as and if construction is to take place in those subsequent years.
5. The costs for the following items are not included in the construction budget:
  - A. Water main and sanitary sewer main line or lateral line repair or replacement.
  - B. Storm sewer construction outside of the Morse Road right-of-way.
  - C. Fire hydrant replacement beyond the existing number currently found within the Morse Road right-of-way.

D. Sidewalks, street trees and other improvements to the north and south of the Morse Road right-of-way into adjacent neighborhoods.

E. Bus Shelters

F. Electrical distribution, light fixtures, storm drainage, water service, or irrigation system within the center median islands.

G. Utility relocation from existing poles to new metal poles. Cost of metal pole upgrade and installation is included in this estimate.

H. Private property identification signage

I. Reconstruction of existing Morse Road travel lanes.

#### **West Gateway**

**\$500,000 - \$650,000**

Morse Road right-of-way from Indianola Avenue to the Interstate 71 north bound off ramp/on ramp. Includes railroad bridge painting, earthwork, landscaping, and retaining walls.

#### **I-71 Interchange**

**\$350,000 - \$425,000**

ODOT right-of-way including infield areas and off ramps and on ramps. Includes earthwork, landscaping, and new lighting.

#### **East Gateway**

**\$160,000 - \$200,000**

Morse Road right-of-way improvements including a portion of median from Sunbury Road to Trindel Way. Includes pavement demolition, median curb and gutter, median pavement and landscaping, topsoil, street trees and post & banners.

#### **I-71 to Karl Road**

**\$6,500,000 - \$7,500,000**

Morse Road right-of-way from I-71 north bound on ramps and off ramps through the Karl Road intersection. Includes limited pavement widening

and asphalt surface course, median segments, curb and gutter, storm drainage improvements, fire hydrant and valve relocations, traffic signals and traffic control, earthwork, landscaping, street lights and metal utility poles.

#### **Karl Road to Cleveland Avenue**

**\$8,000,000 - \$9,000,000**

Morse Road right-of-way from Karl Road through the Cleveland Avenue intersection. Includes limited pavement widening and asphalt surface course, median segments, curb and gutter, storm drainage improvements, fire hydrant and valve relocations, traffic signals and traffic control, earthwork, landscaping, street lights and metal utility poles.

#### **Upgrades to Proposed County Widening Project**

**\$750,000 - \$900,000**

Upgrades to the proposed Franklin County road widening project from Cleveland Avenue to Trindel Way. Includes street trees, banner arms, metal utility poles, traffic signal mast arms, crosswalk paint, specialty intersection treatments and traffic signage.

#### **Annual Landscape Maintenance Estimate**

**\$100,000**

Annual maintenance of all turf and plant materials from the West Gateway to the East Gateway. This assumes that maintenance of the Easton segment of Morse Road will continue to be managed independently. This includes turf mowing (22 cuts per season), turf fertilization and weed control (3 applications), plant bed mulching (once per season), spring and fall leaf cleanup, and pruning of shrubs and trees. This estimate does not include maintenance of additional amenities such as specialty pavers, banners or specialty traffic signs.

## OPPORTUNITY SITES

While improvements within the public right-of-way will create a more functional street and improve the image and identity of the corridor, the future reinvestment into private properties is essential to the redevelopment of this corridor. In considering the potential opportunities for private redevelopment along the Morse Road corridor, a variety of current market issues and physical planning issues need to be considered. The following redevelopment challenges must be addressed.

- Existing retail is overbuilt and spread along corridor
- Much of existing retail is functionally obsolete
- Current zoning is not conducive to residential or mixed-use land uses
- Limited availability of incentive or assistance for redevelopment
- Community/Neighborhood identity is not expressed along the corridor
- Conflicts exist between current retail and multi-family residential
- Lack of park space adjacent to residential areas
- Fragmented secondary road network

In order to address these challenges, any future planning along the corridor should consider the following redevelopment objectives:

- Reduce the amount of “retail land” in the corridor
- Cluster retail development at specific nodes along the corridor
- Encourage mixed-use development
- Promote residential infill including senior housing
- Improve pedestrian and vehicular linkages to the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Encourage enhancement and rehabilitation of existing properties
- Seek catalytic redevelopment projects

Several redevelopment opportunities exist along the corridor today. Many other opportunities continue to present themselves on almost a daily basis. This plan studied five sites along the corridor. These sites were selected based on their availability, size and location along the corridor. Although some of these sites have changed ownership or use recently, they still deserve further study as to their long term land use.

The following opportunity sites have been reviewed in this study:

- **Site 1: Former Sun TV Site**
- **Site 2: Huntington Bank Site**
- **Site 3: Nazarene Church Camp Site**
- **Site 4: Arena Motors Site**
- **Site 5: Vacant Property**

With the previously mentioned redevelopment objectives as a foundation, the following land uses have been considered for opportunity sites.

- Hotel - for high visibility/high image sites
- Restaurants - freestanding and/or integrated with larger sites
- Office - range of office types based on location
- Mixed Use - encouraged for medium and large scale sites
- Residential - range of densities that complement adjacent neighborhoods

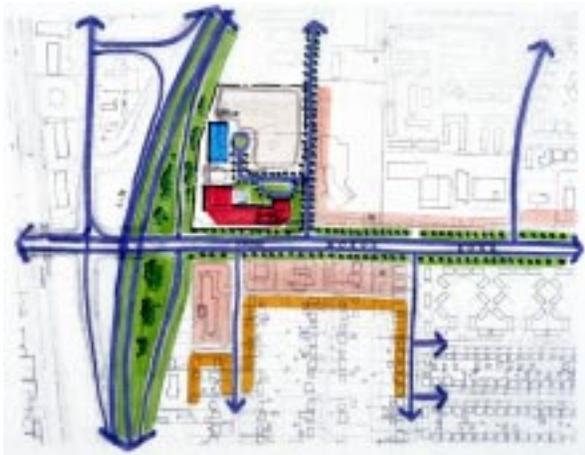
## OPPORTUNITY SITES

### Site 1: Former Sun TV Site 9.88 acres

This site is unique because of its extremely high visibility and access from Interstate 71. While the site could accommodate one or two office uses (Option 3), it also possess ideal visibility for a hotel (Option 1). The site is large enough to accommodate more than one use including a possible outparcel (Option 2). Because of the sites location, it becomes an integral part of the gateway experience as one travels east along Morse or exits Interstate 71. This suggests that regardless of the use, architecture should address the street with parking located behind the structure.



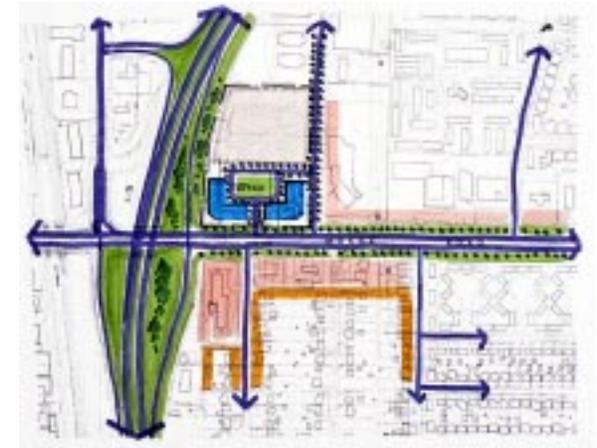
View of the site frontage, looking east along Morse Road.



Option I – Hotel/Office



Option II – Office/Restaurant



Option III - Office

# OPPORTUNITY SITES

## Site 2: Huntington Bank Site 18 acres

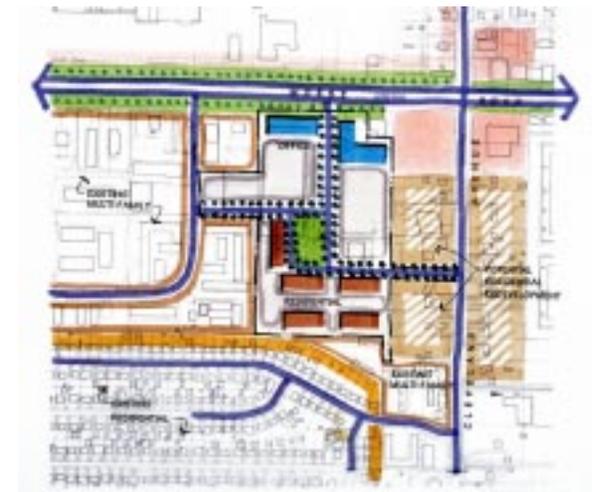
This site is currently available for re-use. As competition continues regionally for Class A office or retail, it may become increasingly difficult to replace this user with a comparable use. These studies therefore, represent new uses that would compliment the adjacent neighborhood context. The residential context of multi-family housing to the west and single family housing to the south implies residential infill would be an appropriate transition to the retail corners at Morse Road and Cleveland Avenue (Option 1). Senior housing should be encouraged based on the lack of available housing options for seniors in the area. Possible combination of professional office in the north part of the site and residential in the southern portion may also be a possible opportunity on this site (Option 2). All options should possess connections to the existing street network and usable open space for area residents.



View of the existing Huntington Operations Center.



Option I – Multi-Family Residential



Option II – Office/Multi-Family Residential

## OPPORTUNITY SITES

### Site 3: Nazarene Church Camp Site

27 acres

### Site 4: Arena Motors Site

2.8 acres



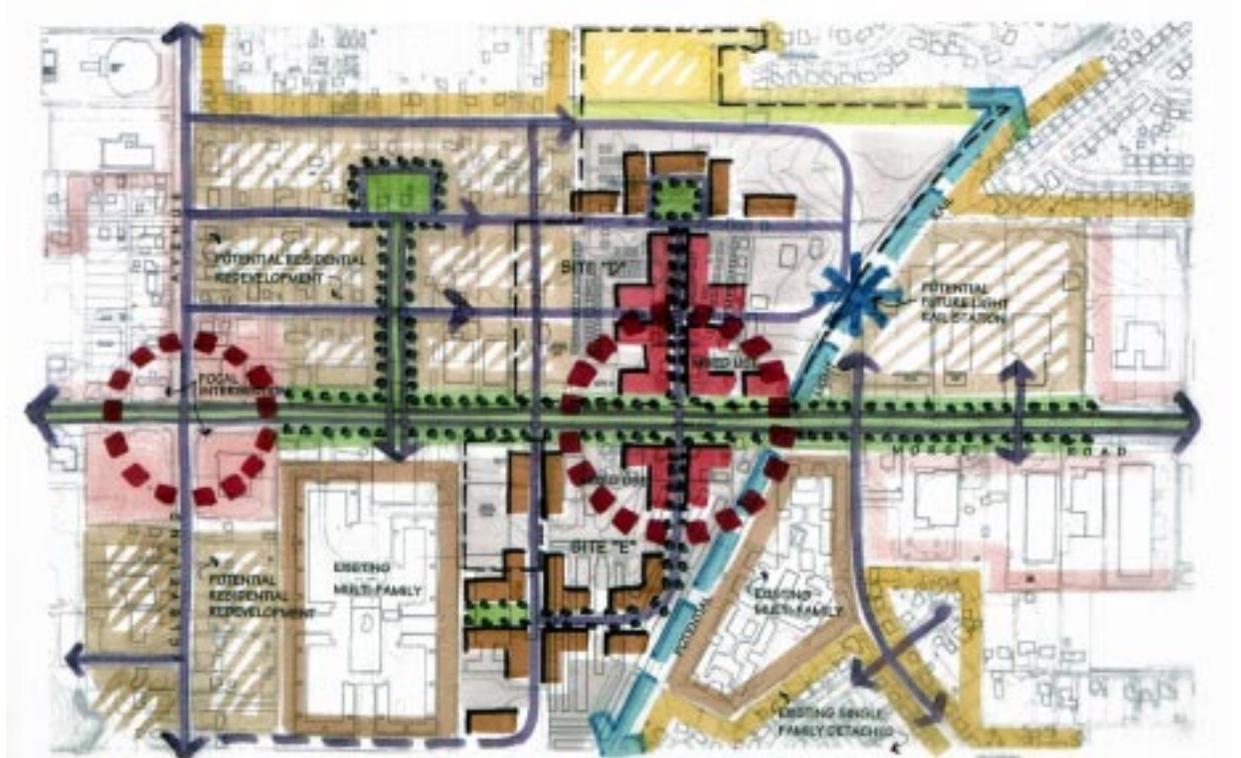
A remaining structure on the Nazarene Church Camp Site

The Nazarene Church camp site represents a unique opportunity along the corridor for a mixed use development. Its size will allow for a mix of higher density residential that transitions to a mix of retail and residential along the Morse Road frontage. The proximity of the site to Alum Creek parkland and to the Easton development further east suggests an opportunity for above market residential housing.



View of the Arena Motors frontage.

The Arena Motors site is small enough to be considered part of a larger redevelopment opportunity. A variety of smaller parcels and transitional uses may suggest that a larger mixed use development could extend from the abandoned RR corridor west to the node at Morse Road and Cleveland Avenue. Furthermore, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) has identified the abandoned railroad corridor as a future light rail corridor to downtown Columbus. Any development in this zone should contribute to a possible transit-oriented, mixed use development. Any future rail development should be grade separated from vehicular and pedestrian traffic on Morse Road.

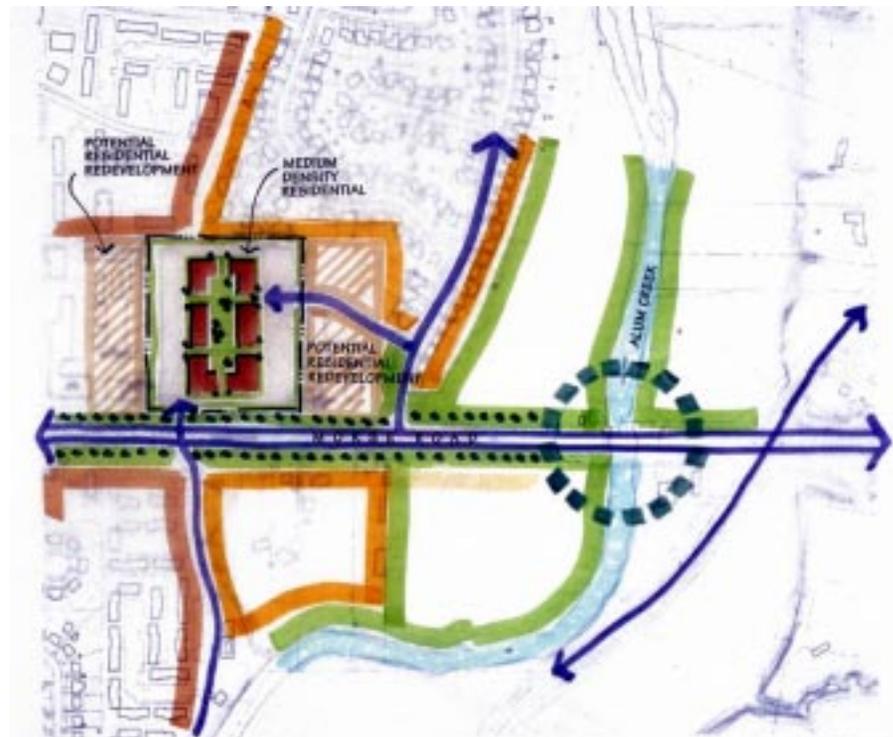


**OPPORTUNITY SITES****Site 5: Vacant Property****6.7 acres**

Based on the adjacent neighborhood context of this site, the opportunity for above market residential housing or senior housing exists. The proximity of this site to a future recreation trail and the Alum Creek parkland, in addition to the proximity to the new Easton development will make this a very desirable place to live. Adjacent parcels could be consolidated and redeveloped as part of this development project.



View of the site, looking east along Morse Road.



## OPPORTUNITY SITES

### Other Opportunity Sites

While the previous five sites represent important redevelopment opportunities along the corridor, many others exist and continue to present themselves as land uses and parcel ownership change. One example exists at the northeast corner of Morse Road and Maize Road. This abandoned gas station is detrimental to the visual quality of the Morse Road corridor and reinforces its declining image. This site should be immediately improved through demolition of the existing pavement and structures and reseeded. With such high visibility at the first major intersection from I-71, this site could become an extension of the Woodward Park Retail Center or a free standing building. Architecture should engage the street intersection to maximize visibility and define the intersection.



View of the site, looking northeast across the intersection of Morse Road and Maize Road (top). The existing condition of the site includes old pavement, lighting and structures (left).



# OUTLINE DESIGN GUIDELINES

## Site Issues and Recommendations

In March of 1992, the city of Columbus adopted *The Northland Development Standards*. These standards address site development issues throughout the Northland community. The following outline design guidelines specifically address site development issues along the Morse Road corridor and provide recommendations toward solving these problems through future development. The City should use the following recommendations as the foundation for development standards that will be part of “The Morse Road Planned District” (See *Strategic Recommendations* for more on the implementation of the Planned District). Ultimately, these new “Morse Road Development Standards” will be used in conjunction with *The Northland Development Standards* to guide and evaluate development along the corridor. The “Morse Road Development Standards” will take precedent over all other standards when considering site development within the Planned District.

The following site and landscape design issues along Morse Road were identified by analyzing the overriding issues that surround the corridor: access and circulation, pedestrian access and amenities, aesthetics, signage, and redevelopment opportunities. Following each issue are recommendations toward solving these problems through future development. The issues and recommendations are divided into three sections: site design, landscape design and signage.

## 1.0 Site Design

**1.1 Parking Setbacks.** Minimal setbacks for parking create traffic stacking issues and leave only minimal space for landscaping. By defining an appropriate parking setback, traffic safety and the aesthetics of the corridor will be improved. To create a consistent setback, the city should make efforts to acquire all right-of-way necessary to establish a consistent right-of-way along the corridor.

### *Recommendations:*

- A 10' minimum setback should be adopted to provide an adequate landscape buffer. This setback should only be permitted where the desired right-of-way width has been established. Larger setbacks should be required along parcels where additional right-of-way acquisition is anticipated by the city.
- Parking should be encouraged to the side and/or rear of buildings.

## 1.2 Building Setbacks and Orientations.

On many sites, the significant building setbacks from the road allow broad expanses of parking areas that dominate the viewshed. On other sites, the buildings are oriented in such a way that vehicular circulation is too close to Morse Road to maintain public safety.

### *Recommendations:*

- A minimum 20' setback for buildings is recommended. This setback should only be permitted where the desired right-of-way width has been established. Larger setbacks should be required along parcels where additional right-of-way acquisition is anticipated by the city.
- Where feasible, minimize parking in front of retail uses to reduce building setback.
- For small parcels such as restaurants, small offices and freestanding retail, parking should be located at the sides and rear of the building only.
- Large commercial sites and regional shopping centers should be organized to create shared parking opportunity and clearly define pedestrian circulation.



*While most buildings along Morse Road will maintain a deeper building setback, freestanding retail, restaurants, small offices and elements of larger buildings or retail centers can address the street with minimal setbacks.*

## OUTLINE DESIGN GUIDELINES

**1.3 Pedestrian Access.** Currently, multiple buildings are positioned on parcels with no clear organization or pedestrian relationships between separate businesses and the road. Many parcels do not provide adequate on-site sidewalks. Sidewalks are needed between buildings and from public sidewalks to buildings. A coherent pedestrian access plan is needed.

*Recommendations:*

- Sidewalks should be 5' in width.
- Sidewalks should be provided along the building face and along any parking that is adjacent to the structure.
- Sidewalks should connect structures with the public sidewalk.
- Sidewalks connecting adjacent parcels are encouraged, where appropriate and feasible.
- Sidewalks should be constructed of broom finished concrete.
- Connections for pedestrians and bicyclists should be provided between existing and new residential development, particularly to the north and south of Morse Road, and commercial uses along Morse Road.

**1.4 Parcel Access and Curb Cuts.** Numerous curb cuts exist along the corridor providing each individual parcel with access. The curb cuts are often spaced too close together, creating circulation and safety problems. Standards should be adopted which address specific design criteria including: shared entrances, spacing between entrances, spacing from intersections, access types and stacking distances on site.

*Recommendations:*

- Each parcel should be limited to one curb cut off Morse Road; shared curb cuts are to be created wherever possible for contiguous parcels.
- Larger sites (e.g. retail centers) will be permitted more than one curb cut with a minimum

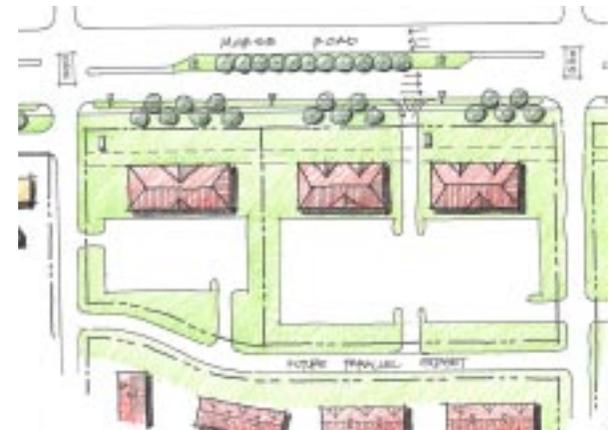
spacing of 600' from edge of pavement to edge of pavement.

- Buildings with drive-through service may be permitted to have two curb cuts depending on site layout and if it is necessary to minimize back ups on to Morse Road.
- Shared access between adjoining properties should be encouraged to minimize curb cuts.
- Pad sites should share access with larger retail centers for simplified on-site circulation.
- Curb cuts should be spaced at least 125' from any major intersection, edge of pavement to edge of pavement.
- Minimum spacing between curb cuts to be 250', edge of pavement to edge of pavement.
- Right-in/Right-out only access should be encouraged when secondary access is necessary.
- Appropriate stacking distances should be designed for individual sites.

**1.5 Service Roads.** Service roads along Morse Road reduce the number of curb cuts but create additional setbacks.

*Recommendations:*

- Access points off the service road to parcels should be limited to one per parcel.
- Where possible, maximize the distance from Morse Road to the service road along cross streets.
- Where possible, extend or create service roads to reduce or eliminate direct access to Morse Road.
- In the redevelopment of larger sites, eliminate service road where possible by providing parcel access a minimum of 125' from Morse Road.



Service Roads can be eliminated over time through the redevelopment of larger sites.

# OUTLINE DESIGN GUIDELINES

## 2.0 Landscape Design

**2.1 Parking Lot Screening.** Parking areas are inadequately screened along the majority of the corridor.

*Recommendations:*

- Screen surface parking lots with a minimum 3' high continuous evergreen or deciduous hedge, earth mounding, or masonry wall (hedge size at installation = 24" ht. and 30" spacing). A creative combination of these elements is encouraged for longer frontages to avoid visual monotony.
- Car dealerships are not required to screen vehicular display areas, but are encouraged to maintain a similar treatment with lower hedge material or perennial plantings.



Many parking lots abut service roads with little or no separation. This parking lot should be improved with the minimum parking lot setback and a 3' hedge to screen the parking lot.

**2.2. Parking Lot Landscaping.** Currently, very few parking areas provide interior landscaping that could improve the overall visual quality of a site. Guidelines for improving the aesthetic quality of parking areas and the site should address breaking up large expanses of pavement and providing shade, buffering, and screening from adjacent properties and roadways.

*Recommendations:*

- Any surface parking lot over 6,000 sq. ft. or 20+ parking spaces shall provide interior landscaping with a minimum of 5% of parking area designated as green space.
- No parking area should exceed 20 parking spaces in a row without breaking up the pavement with a landscape island, at least 36' X 9' in size or 324 square feet.



Hedges will visually screen parked cars without obscuring views to the storefronts beyond.

- A minimum of two shade trees should be planted per parking island.
- Parking lot trees (at installation) should be large growing, deciduous shade trees 2 ½ - 3" cal. and 12-14' height.
- Car dealerships are not required to have interior landscaping in vehicular display areas.



Interior parking lot landscaping visually breaks up large expanses of pavement. Fewer large islands are encouraged as opposed to a larger number of small islands that create difficult environments for tree growth.

## OUTLINE DESIGN GUIDELINES

**2.3 Sight Distance.** Sight distance may be an issue on certain parcels based on current site design.

*Recommendations:*

- The lowest branches of trees should be 8’.
- Shrubs should not to exceed 24" in height.

**2.4 Appropriate Selection of Plant Material.** Plant material throughout the corridor is inconsistent and in some cases, inappropriate. Minimum plant sizes at installation and suggested materials should be established.

*Recommendations:*

- Minimum standard plant sizes at installation are as follows:  
Shade Trees – 2 ½” cal. 12-14’ ht.  
Ornamental Trees – 8-10’ ht.  
Evergreen and Deciduous Shrubs – 24” ht.
- Recommended plant materials are as follows:  
**Shade Trees** - to be used as street trees, parking lot trees, and site perimeter areas

Acer platanoides  
*Norway Maple*  
Acer rubrum  
*Red Maple*  
Acer saccharum  
*Sugar Maple*  
Cercidiphllum japonicum  
*Katsura Tree*  
Gleditsia triacanthos inermis ‘Moraine’  
*Moraine Honeylocust*  
Platanus acerifolia  
*Columbia London Plane*  
Quercus palustris  
*Pin Oak*  
Quercus phellos  
*Willow Oak*  
Quercus rubra

*Red Oak*  
Tilia cordata ‘Greenspire’  
*Greenspire Linden*  
Zelkova serrata ‘Village Green’  
*Village Green Zelkova*

- **Ornamental Trees** – to be used as accent trees in site perimeter areas

Amelanchier canadensis  
*Shadblow Serviceberry*  
Cercis canadensis  
*Eastern Redbud*  
Malus spp.  
*Crabapple Varieties*

- **Evergreen and Deciduous Shrubs** – to be used as hedges to screen parking lots

Abelia grandiflora  
*Glossy Abelia*  
Berberis thunbergii  
*Redleaved Japanese Barberry*  
Euonymus alatus ‘Compactus’  
*Dwarf Winged Euonymus*  
Hypericum calycinum  
*St. Johnswort*  
Ilex glabra ‘Compacta’  
*Compact Inkberry*  
Ligustrum obtusifolium  
*Border Privet*  
Myrica pennsylvanica  
*Bayberry*  
Taxus media ‘Hicksii’  
*Hick’s Yew*  
Viburnum carlesii ‘Compactum’  
*Compact Carlesii Viburnum*

### 3.0 Signage

Inconsistent sign types, sizes, colors and locations currently litter the Morse Road streetscape. The following recommendations for signage modifications should apply to all new signs. In addition, the city of Columbus should consider implementing a program that would require existing non-conforming signs to be modified or removed over a designated period of time.

**3.1 Type and Location.** Many signs along the corridor are too tall or large for the business that they represent and the scale of the corridor. Appropriately sized signs in visible and appropriate locations are key to the success of business and the visual appeal of the corridor.

*Recommendations:*

- No sign should be placed as to interfere with the safe movement of vehicles or pedestrians entering, leaving, or crossing a public right-of-way.
- No views of approaching or intersecting traffic should be obstructed.
- Directional signs should not exceed two square feet in area and one foot in height.

### 3.2 General Wall Signs

*Recommendations:*

- The maximum allowable size for any wall sign should be one square foot for every lineal foot of width of the building face to which the sign is attached, but should not exceed the maximum size allowed for the use by the Code.
- Wall signs should generally be limited in number to one per building or use. For buildings or uses on corner lots having at least 100 feet of lot frontage on each of two public rights-of-way, a second wall sign may be permitted facing the second right-of-way.

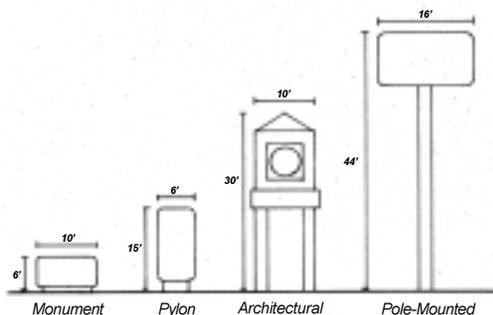
# OUTLINE DESIGN GUIDELINES

- No two wall signs should be closer than 30 feet apart. The provision for a second sign should not apply to individual tenants in a multi-tenant building.

### 3.3 General Ground Signs

*Recommendations:*

- Ground signs may be monument, pylon, architectural, or pole-mounted. Monument signs are preferred for the corridor
- All ground signs should be located on the property to which it refers. See *Monument Signs* for sign easement option.
- No sign should interfere with the safe movement of pedestrians and vehicles.
- All heights are to be measured from the top of the sign to the established grade line.
- Ground signs should be limited in number to one per lot or multiple lots if devoted to one specific use or user. Buildings on corner lots having at least 100' of frontage on two public rights-of-way may be entitled to two ground signs, one oriented to each street.



General Sign Types

### Monument Signs

*Recommendations:*

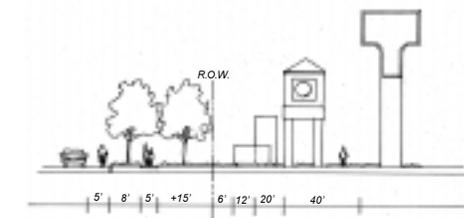
- Monument signs should be encouraged in the corridor.
- Monument signs are defined as a horizontally-oriented sign that does not exceed 6' in height.
- Setback - two conditions:
  - a. Signs could be placed within service road right-of-way if signage easement is established
  - b. Provide a minimum 6' setback from right-of-way where no service road exists
- Recommended maximum size is 60 sq ft. (6' height x 10' width)

### Pylon Signs

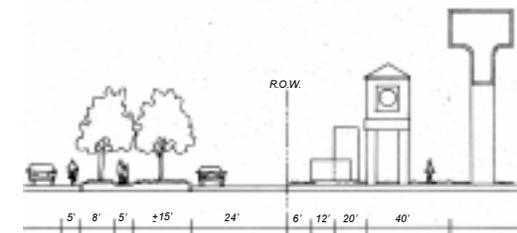
*Recommendations:*

- Pylon signs are defined as vertically-oriented, ground-mounted signs, not exceeding 15' in height.
- Recommended minimum setback from right-of-way – 12'
- Recommended maximum size is 90 sq ft (15' maximum height x 6' width)

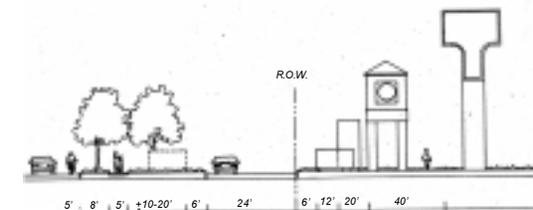
### Signage Setbacks



With no service road



With a service road



With a signage easement

Some good examples of monument signs and pylon signs exist along the corridor today.



# OUTLINE DESIGN GUIDELINES

## Architectural Signs

### Recommendations:

- Architectural signs are defined as signs that reflect an architectural character based on their design and material.
- Recommended minimum setback from right-of-way – 20'
- Recommended maximum size of structure is 300 sq ft (10' x'30)

## Pole Mounted Signs

### Recommendations:

- Pole mounted signs are mounted on either one or two poles not to exceed 44' in height.
- Poles should be designed as an integral part of the sign with similar color, form and material.
- Recommended minimum setback from right-of-way – 45'
- Recommended maximum size is 144 sf (9'x16')
- Recommended maximum mounting height - 44'

Examples of quality signs on the corridor today: an architectural sign with joint identification (left) and a car dealership pole mounted sign (right).



## 3.4 Sign Design.

### Recommendations:

- Signs should be limited to four primary colors, including black and white. The background is considered one of the four permissible colors. Any other additional colors should be used sparingly as accents.
- Create contrast between background colors and lettering colors. Typically, lighter letters on dark backgrounds are more legible than dark letters on a light background.
- Coordinate and complement building colors with the sign color(s).
- Any multifaceted sign should consistently display the same name, message, and graphics on all faces.
- Reverse side of single side signs should be unobtrusive and should blend in with the overall sign and its surroundings.
- Reverse sides of all permanent signs and structural supports must be completely enclosed.
- Sign bases should be part of the overall sign design and compliment the sign face, parcel architecture and landscape design.

## 3.5 Typography Style and Size.

### Recommendations:

- No more than two typefaces should be permitted per sign.
- The use of upper and lower case letters (except for upper-case only logos) should be used on larger messages to conserve space and increase readability of the sign message.
- Building mounted signs should have letters that are appropriately sized based on building size and facade. A maximum letter height should be established.
- Monument and ground mounted signs should have letters that are appropriately sized for this smaller sign type. Recommended maximum letter height is 18" for a 60 sq. ft. sign.
- No more than 2 sizes of lettering per sign.

## OUTLINE DESIGN GUIDELINES

**3.6 Sign Message.** Many signs have too much information on one sign making them difficult to read by passing motorists.

*Recommendations:*

- Sign information should be restricted to the name, address, function and logo of the establishment. Wording should be kept to a minimum for motorist legibility.
- Include the business address on the sign when it is not clearly displayed on the building.
- Gasoline stations, whose principal business is the sale of motor fuel, may display, in addition to those signs permitted above, the following:
  - one, non-illuminated, double-faced sign not exceeding five square feet on a side for each set of motor fuel pumps identifying "self-service" or "full-service."
  - price and grade information can be displayed only on the permitted sign, in manually changeable copy. Changeable

copy for these purposes should not include liquid crystal display (LCD), light emitting diodes (LED), or other similar elector/mechanical displays. This is the only circumstance in which changeable copy may be used.

- Signs limited to the identification of the brand name, logo or type of fuel sold and other signs as may be required by law shall be permitted on the motor fuel pumps. Fuel pumps should not be illuminated. No signs projecting above the pumps may be permitted, except as required by law.

- Any other signs as may be required by law.

- Drive-thru menu boards are should only be permitted on the property to which it refers. Signs should not be visible from the public right-of-way and should not exceed 32 square feet in size.

**3.7 Billboards.** Billboards or billboard sized signs create visual clutter

*Recommendations:*

- The city of Columbus should take all necessary and appropriate steps to remove billboards and non-conforming signs from the corridor. The city should consider implementing a program that would require signs to be removed over a designated period of time.

**3.8 Number of Signs.** Too many signs per parcel compete for drivers' attention.

*Recommendations:*

- The number of signs should generally be restricted to one ground mounted and one building mounted per parcel. Exceptions may be made for extremely large sites with multiple entries. Auto dealerships should be permitted two ground mounted and two building mounted signs if a separate new car and used car sales operation exists on the same property.
- Ground signs should be limited in number to one per lot or multiple lots if devoted to one specific use or user. Buildings on corner lots having at least 100' of frontage on two public rights-of-way may be entitled to two ground signs, one oriented to each street. The two signs should be no closer than 75 feet.
- An overall sign plan should be submitted for all buildings and complexes with, or intended for, multiple tenants before sign permits for the complex or individual tenants are issued.
- Joint identification signs are recommended whenever feasible. A joint identification sign should not exceed the maximum permitted height of any ground sign. Signage of individual occupants (e.g. retail anchors) on that joint identification sign may not exceed 250 square feet.

*Examples of existing joint identification signs at two existing retail centers along the corridor.*



## OUTLINE DESIGN GUIDELINES

---

- One ground sign, identifying only the name of the shopping center or building complex, is preferred where there is a minimum of three uses sharing the same site. Such signs are permitted in addition to the permitted signs of individual occupants, but should not list the names of these occupants.

**3.9 Sign Lighting.** Sign lighting along the corridor is inconsistent, is often not properly disguised and can be a hazard to vehicular traffic.

*Recommendations:*

If sign lighting is required or desirable, one of the following methods should be employed:

- By a white, steady, stationary light of reasonable intensity, directed solely at the sign and/or otherwise prevented from beaming directly onto adjacent properties or rights-of-way. Light fixtures should be screened from view by site grading or evergreen shrubs. No exposed light sources should be permitted.
- By white interior light of reasonable intensity with primary and secondary images lit or silhouetted on an opaque background. The background must be opaque. No additional background lighting or illuminated borders or outlines should be permitted.
- The level of illumination emitted or reflected from a sign should not be of an intensity sufficient to constitute a demonstrable hazard to vehicular traffic on any right-of-way or parking lot from which the sign can be viewed.

**3.10 Temporary Signage.** Temporary signage clutters many sites along the corridor

*Recommendations:*

- Use temporary banners or signs as an on premise temporary sign for a period not to exceed 30 days.
- Temporary signs should be limited to four colors, including black and white.

## STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### Market Research

#### Retail

Through further analysis, a Northland revitalization organization should continue to refine the current primary market area (PMA) and secondary market area (SMA) for the Morse Road corridor. This will provide a more accurate definition of the natural and physical boundaries and identify the nature of existing retail and competing retail concentrations. Although some of the findings that resulted from analysis of the Morse Road PMA and SMA are significant, additional analysis would enable the gathering of more specific and more accurate demographic and retail expenditure data for the population that resides in those census tracts and/or portions of census tracts falling within the trade areas. Additional research would be of value in predicting anticipated changes in shopping behavior within the corridor's existing trade areas once the new centers are opened and developing strategies to successfully address these new competitive realities.

The Morse Road Market Study and Revitalization Strategy suggests that Morse Road retail should focus primarily on meeting the needs of its area residents instead of residents in outlying areas, concluding that the area will have a difficult time competing with regional draws at Polaris, Easton, and Route 23. A clear direction regarding what specific opportunities might exist or where the retail should ideally be located still needs to be identified. Additional research and more detailed analysis of current demographics, existing retail, current and potential competition and trade areas would be of value in developing a comprehensive and achievable retail recruitment and development strategy.

NOTE: Demographic data at present relies primarily on projections from the 1990 Census. This data should be updated as soon as 2000 Census results are available. As pointed out by a number of interviews, the demographics of the area have changed over the last decade. Retailers should position themselves in a way that meets the changing needs of their consumers.

#### Office

The Morse Road Market Study and Revitalization Strategy suggests that an office opportunity exists on the Morse Road corridor, specifically at the H. H. Gregg and Huntington sites. A more detailed analysis is recommended to confirm this opportunity and define precisely what type of opportunity exists. Specifically, a detailed examination of job growth patterns, competing developments and levels and types of desired amenities would be beneficial in determining the various office development opportunities.

#### Housing

A Northland revitalization organization should also conduct more research on the housing market to confirm the above opportunities and identify the specific types of new single and/or multi-family housing that could be supported in the area. Primary market research including a telephone survey with a representative sampling of area residents could be invaluable in confirming and defining retail and housing behaviors and demand potential for the area.

#### Suggested Use Strategies

Although additional research is necessary to confirm and detail opportunities for new retail, office and housing uses along the corridor,

sufficient information exists to make a few general observations:

#### Retail:

- As reflected in the numerous vacancies and marginal or inappropriate retail uses along the corridor, too much retail exists at present. Much of what does exist is functionally obsolete being too small for today's big box retailers and too large for the convenience and specialty retail opportunities that appear to be present in the market.
- As redevelopment occurs, total retail space should be reduced and clustered in nodes primarily in the vicinity of key intersections along the corridor.
- At Northland Mall, a significant investment in upgrading and augmenting the tenant mix will be necessary to stabilize the center and sustain its long history of success in the community. Mall ownership has indicated a willingness to pursue such an investment once competitive circumstances are more clearly defined.
- The southeast corner of Morse and Karl Roads is currently occupied by city of Columbus police and fire facilities. This is a key site that is more appropriate for commercial development. The city should consider relocating its facilities to an underutilized site along the corridor, making this site available for appropriate, significant commercial development
- A police substation in Northland Mall to address perceived crime problems in the center should be considered.
- Any new office and/or housing developments proposed for the corridor should consider integrating some convenience and/or specialty retail. Appropriate mixing of uses has been shown to create more viable and pedestrian friendly developments.

## STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### Office:

- While additional research is suggested to confirm and define the opportunity, it may be possible to successfully redevelop existing or build new office space along the corridor. Office uses desiring proximity to an available work force, professional services targeting the dense, middle-income, older population in the vicinity and users seeking value-priced, quality space and amenities could all be areas of opportunity.
- An opportunity for office spaces with amenities and lease rates positioned above those currently available along the corridor, but below those available in new Class A locations such as Easton and Polaris, may exist.
- The feasibility and potential draw of installing fiber optic cable along the corridor as a means of attracting technology-related office uses should be considered.

### Housing:

- As indicated, there may be opportunities for new single and multi-family developments at selected sites along the corridor including move-up housing and better quality multi-family and senior housing.
- Any effort to create new residential development along the corridor will require a high-density, multi-family component to offset the high cost of acquisition based upon current land values on the corridor.

### Mixed-Use:

- Several of the larger sites along the corridor could be candidates for mixed-use development incorporating elements of residential, office, hotel and/or retail uses.

## Catalytic Projects

Developing one or more of the key sites along the corridor through a public/private partnership is a critical first step toward changing the Morse Road image and energizing private development/redevelopment along the corridor. Suggestions regarding sites and types of developments that might be appropriate are contained in the *Opportunity Sites* section of this plan.

## Funding Options

With the current level of disinvestment and projected additional competition facing most Morse Road businesses and property owners, convincing them to finance a significant portion of public infrastructure improvements may be problematic over the near term. Most are already operating at a competitive disadvantage to newer developments around the city's edges featuring new public infrastructure, large freshly paved parking lots and the latest retail concepts. Many of these projects have also benefited from development incentives not currently available on Morse Road.

Alternative sources of funding for recommended infrastructure improvements should be thoroughly pursued before property owners are approached for a tax assessment. These sources could include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Other city departments including Public Service, Public Utilities, and Recreation and Parks
- Ohio Public Works Commission
- State departments including the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Ohio Department of Development and the Ohio Department of Natural Resource

- Federal programs supporting development of intermodal facilities such as the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21), or any other federal bikeway and greenway programs.
- Other local foundations and non-profits
- Private sponsorships/donations and any other private sector resources

Property owners should be encouraged to provide funding to maintain and promote the corridor through a Special Improvement District. This mechanism will address such issues as landscape maintenance, banner program maintenance, specialty signage maintenance, sidewalk snow removal, parking lot security, and marketing.

Every effort should be made to obtain sufficient funding so that the public infrastructure improvements proposed for the Morse Road corridor can be completed as part of one project. Any phasing of this project risks leaving portions undone as a result of unanticipated or conflicting budget priorities. For the revitalization of the corridor to be effective, it must be able to take advantage of the traffic and activity levels present at both ends of the corridor.

## Plan Implementation and Enforcement

In order to create a mechanism by which these recommendations and outline design guidelines can be enforced, it will be necessary to establish "The Morse Road Planned District". This planned district will become part of the City of Columbus Zoning code. Proper development text can be established for this planned district based on the Outline Design Guidelines and streetscape standards established by this document as well as any relevant guidelines from the *Northland*

## STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

*Development Standards.* The Morse Road Planned District development text should include, but not be limited to, the following: prohibited uses, site design, landscape design, signage, and lighting.

### **Other Suggestions**

- Community circulator – COTA should be approached about the possibility of adding a Northland community circulator to transport area residents to key points within the community and along the corridor.
- Organization – The steering committee assembled for this project, which includes representation from all the key constituencies on and affecting the corridor, should remain in place and lead an effort to create a permanent, non-profit Northland revitalization organization to oversee implementation of a comprehensive plan to redevelop the corridor. Northland Area Business Association, Northland Community Council, the city and the county should all play important roles in this effort. While the city has taken the lead thus far, leadership should ultimately be placed in the hands of the Northland community with the cooperation and support of the city and county government.

This organization should establish a Board of Directors that will dedicate itself to the growth and vitality of the Northland area through advocacy, marketing and management. Through this Board, a Community Development Corporation can be established that will cultivate private sector leadership and development in the Northland area. This Board will also assist the Morse Road property owners in establishing a Special Improvement District for maintenance, security and marketing of the corridor.

- Code enforcement – It appears that code enforcement currently makes up somewhere around 1/2 of 1% of the city's budget. One interviewee stated that code enforcement operates today with the same number of inspectors as it had in 1973. The area they have to cover has grown exponentially over that same period of time. For the efforts and investments that are necessary to redevelop these older commercial corridors to be sustained over the long term, the city's code enforcement staff must be significantly expanded and strengthened. This is especially true if recommendations for stronger, more detailed codes are adopted. Some communities have successfully expanded their code enforcement efforts by augmenting their code enforcement staff with individuals from their fire, public health and/or police department staffs. Enforcement staff should also be given ticket-writing power to increase the effectiveness of their enforcement activities.