

Medium-Term Solutions Rejected by the Steering Committee

29. Residential Property Owners Lease Parking Spaces to Business District

Set a policy for a public process where a limited number of sites identified in the Redevelopment Plan, where residential property owners that are directly adjacent to the back of the business district, can seek approval to pave more of their rear yards and lease parking spaces to the adjacent business owners.

The Steering Committee stated:

Only want parking behind residential buildings that have been converted to businesses. Please suggest solutions to aesthetic concerns.

The parking solution drawings show the implementation of parking in the rear yards of many of the buildings that face side streets. This approach is done in a systematic way to illustrate the addition of parking in association with the intensity of use of the adjacent businesses on this specific block. The parking study suggests that flexibility will be of utmost importance to the usefulness of this solution. Parking behind these buildings is needed regardless of the use proposed inside the existing building, if the building is going to have a change to be retained (and not demolished). See photos below of City Block 2100, where much of the rear yards are already paved for private residential parking, which goes unused during most business hours. Flexibility in use would supply some additional parking for the business district.



Most of the rear yard behind 3118 Juniata is already paved for parking.



Most of the rear yard behind 3619 Connecticut is already paved for parking.

The best example of this need for flexibility of building use is the logical residential use of the existing two duplex buildings and the one four family property directly west of the large apartment at the corner of Grand and Connecticut – City block 2099. One possible scenario for this redevelopment is that the owner of the existing apartment building could purchase each of these buildings over time, gradually increasing the total parking spaces for this residential apartment development. None of the existing 45 apartment units have rear yards, and only 24 parking spaces are currently provided for this very large building that also has ground floor retail facing Grand. This larger residential project joining ownership of several buildings would nearly double the amount of parking spaces provided for this apartment development, and would link with the underutilized parking lot at the existing church on Wyoming Street. The building owner(s) could remain focused on the core business – leasing and management of residential apartments. This redevelopment would be less likely if the developer was required to lease the existing detached buildings to small businesses. The marketability of business space fronting the side street is currently unproven, and would be better if building owners could gradually test this office rental market rather than mandate only office use. The existing conditional use process could be used to implement this policy.

The existing landscape standards for the business district should be implemented wherever the new parking lots are adjacent to existing residential uses. Privacy fences should be required (where none exist) to separate the new parking lots from residential back yards (reference solution #24 for additional information on this topic). Solution #29 differs from solution #24 in property ownership.

30. Strengthen Architectural Design Standards in the Business District

The present architectural design standards in the business district's redevelopment plan should be strengthened to handle anything from small to large-scale projects. Projects proposed outside the current redevelopment area will have to seek rezoning or seek altering the boundaries of the Business District's

Redevelopment Plan. Strict architectural standards should be included in the changed area for new buildings to be built on these sites. Residents and business people should actively participate in the public hearings involved in any future change of zoning or expansion of the redevelopment area.

The Steering Committee stated:

Architectural standards already exist in the Redevelopment Plan. And the Plan has no jurisdiction outside the District's boundaries. Outside of the District's boundaries, stick with City's current conditional use or Board of Adjustment process instead of creating a whole new zoning designations.

Judging from the comments, the design quality of new buildings is directly related to building demolition in that the residents of the area appear to believe that new architecture is never as good as the existing buildings. This relates to the parking study in that changes to some of the existing buildings in the area are necessary to increase parking in the area. In the Short-Term Parking Solutions, demolition for parking lots is limited to a vacant commercial building and several garages. In the Long-Term Parking Solutions, some buildings in the area will need to be demolished to make room for the parking necessary to maintain the high level of quality of the Business District tenants. Higher quality, more specific design standards could make better guarantees that changes (especially new buildings replacing demolished structures) are more agreeable to the residents of the area.

Resident comments during the parking study process indicate disappointment in the design of the Streetside-Bread Company buildings built in the late 1980's. Resident comments suggest that they believe there are strong architectural aesthetic codes required for the South Grand Business District. Copies of the existing redevelopment plans for the Business District (Project #23, dated 2-18-81, revised 3-25-86, and amended 5-24-89) and (Project #783 dated 5-28-96, amended 11-17-98) are included in the [Appendix](#). Clearly by the numerous revision dates, the Redevelopment Plan for the area can be modified to expand the boundaries of the district or to tinker with the aesthetic codes.

Residents or any proponent of the historic architectural character of the Business District might be surprised by exactly how little architectural aesthetic controls are contained in the redevelopment codes. The design and landscaping of parking lots is well regulated, the results of which are visible in the parking lot created by The City Property Company at 3617 Hartford. This redevelopment to create a surface parking lot is done to the letter of the redevelopment plan guidelines. The existing Board of Adjustment process allows building demolitions as well. The original 1980's architectural redevelopment guidelines were clearly created for renovation of historic buildings, with little written in the code to describe the requirements of the architecture of new infill buildings. The section entitled "Façade Design" ([page 14](#) of Appendix material) contains a general description of how infill buildings should be designed.

The creation of more precise architectural design standards, especially for new infill buildings, may make it more palatable to allow the demolition of older buildings to create room for new infill building types to be built that provide more parking. One clear example of this new building type is the new infill building with ground floor retail and the upper floors structured parking. This more urban building type is shown in the parking solution drawings, and will be useful to limit the need for the more suburban approach of creating surface parking lots. Better regulating of the quality of the architectural aesthetics is key to implementing this infill approach with structured parking.

31. Implement the “Tan My” Parking Solution on Side Streets Where Possible

This solution currently exists at the Tan My Restaurant at the corner of Grand and Humphrey, where six 90 degree angled parking spaces are provided in place of the standard 2 parallel spaces along the curb. This type of additional parking is possible only on side streets where there is a larger side plaza along the commercial buildings. Three of the corners at Grand and Wyoming have these side plazas, one of which is the post office (where people illegally parking on the concrete paved plaza area even though it has a no parking sign – see map).

The Steering Committee disagreed with this solution, based on the following comments:

Steering Committee Member Comment: *No. This is a poor solution. It requires backing out over the sidewalk and is a dangerous and unattractive solution*

Business Comment: *This is very dangerous to pedestrians; poor aesthetics; eliminates potential use of area as outdoor seating for restaurants. (Prime example is the plaza on the SE corner of Grand and Wyoming recently improved as patio seating.)*

Resident Comment: *Do not want to encourage side parking ala “Tan My” which would cut down on areas for side gardens and dining.*

The parking solution drawings show the implementation of this solution at the northeast corner of Wyoming and Grand, fronting the Post Office. Nine metered parking spaces are created where there was formerly two metered parallel parking spaces. The meters could be short-term parking (30 minutes) to allow faster turn over to allow better access at the post office. Individual property owners should be allowed to determine how this portion of their lot would be used. Details of aesthetic guidelines could be developed to further regulate the design of side plaza parking.



Even with No Parking signs, the Post Office side plaza often contains illegally parked cars

The “very dangerous” comment overstates the situation. For the post office parking, the solution drawings create a sidewalk between the front of the parking spaces and the wall of the building. No backing out over a sidewalk is required. If pedestrians choose to walk behind the cars it will be no different that the millions of pedestrians that walk down the drive-aisles of typical suburban parking lots every day. For the post office, outdoor seating is not needed, and there is no garden here. Customers park on the existing paved

pedestrian plazas every day in the district, even when they have a “no parking” sign like the post office plaza. Also, the district should not work toward a mono-use functioning of tenants. It is in the best interest of the district to pursue a mixed-use development pattern with a variety of parking needs. A post office is a very desirable anchor tenant to a local business district. All restaurants with all patio seating will only serve to increase the peak demands for parking during the lunch or dinner rush.



Tan My could improve the sidewalk configuration by locating the pedestrian route between the building and the cars. Adding trees would help too.



Existing parking on the side plaza at the Southwest corner of Wyoming & Grand. Note that the car is actually parked on the sidewalk.

32. Remove Mid-Block Pedestrian Crossing & Install New Crossings at Juniata & Connecticut

The existing design of providing a mid-block cross walk (in front of Jay's International) is an auto-oriented strategy to theoretically speed cars through the district by removing the need for stoplights at Juniata and at Connecticut. If lights are synchronized properly, adding lights at these two intersections will increase pedestrian's ability to get safely across Grand. With more frequent pedestrian crossing opportunities, customers may be more apt to use the existing large parking lot accessed off of Juniata (Commerce Bank lot). Grand Boulevard in the Business District should favor pedestrians using the district and not the traffic speed of drivers cutting through the district. Downtown Kirkwood best exemplifies this principle, where Lindbergh Boulevard transitions from a highway road design north of Manchester Road only to become a 2-lane street with parallel parking within the Kirkwood Business district.

The Steering Committee disagreed with this solution, stating:

Many attested to using this crosswalk often. Perhaps instead of removing it, we could add curb bump outs here as well.

Steering Committee member comment

South Grand stoplights have been synchronized (reportedly by the City and State) if drivers go 30-35 mph. Removal of any light signals would have to be carefully undertaken due to emissions standards, which prevent certain changes such as removals or additions of traffic signals. This has been attempted in the past, once on S. Grand, and once on McCausland (my personal experience) and on both occasions the State told us that it would result in rescinding of the funds that had been allocated to street traffic flow due to their emissions and other complicated formulas of traffic expectations and environmental concerns. I believe it also had a federal guideline prohibition.

This solution is shown in the drawings to be implemented over time. A first step would be to clearly designate the pedestrian crosswalks at Juniata and Connecticut where none currently exist (no stoplights installed). With further research into the highway department requirements, the district should work to eliminate the mid-block cross walk in favor of adding synchronized lights installed at the Juniata and Connecticut intersections.

It is likely that many pedestrians use the existing mid-block crosswalk because there are no other pedestrian crosswalks for the three blocks between Hartford and Wyoming. The safety and ease in which a pedestrian can get across Grand will increase the desirability of the large parking lots located in the eastern half of the district. The current design for cross walk lights is not very pedestrian friendly. If there is an EPA formula that is sensitive to the addition of a single stoplight, the City could easily evaluate where else is the City an unneeded stoplight may be removed. Synchronization of these new lights should lessen the problems created by the addition of a single stoplight. Solution #6 provides additional description on cross walk design.

33. Shared Use Parking at St. Pius Church

The St. Pius Church lot is large enough to consider a shared use parking lot. One possible “shared” use would be for the high concentration of apartments (with no parking) on the end of City block 1489 (between Humphrey and Utah). Residential parking on the lot could be regulated by the purchase of a parking sticker to be placed in the window of the resident’s car. Shared parking for ground floor commercial properties is more difficult. The best manner to control daytime commercial public parking would be with the use of parking meters (owned and operated by the church). About 25 parking spaces could be fenced off fronting Grand, with access to both Grand and McKean. Since this parking lot is part of a school playground, any shared use should be very carefully reviewed, and a fence should separate public shared use from the children’s play area on the eastern end of this property.

The Steering Committee stated:

This is an impractical solution. St. Pius’ lot is generally always in use. School and church faculty and staff park there. Parents drop off children in morning and afternoon. And children use the eastern end of the lot for recess and after school. It’s unsafe to allow parking as a use while kids use so much of the lot. Additionally, there are many meetings held at St. Pius’ facilities (both church and school), which require parking.

This solution is not shown on the drawings. St. Pius Church should decide how to best use their large parking lot. The existing safety issue concerning separation of the play yard and parking lot remain in the parking lots current design. Future use as any shared or other public parking should fence and separate public parking from church and school parking, and all parking should be separated from play yard. The solution drawings do show how re-striping the parking lot to arrange the drive aisles along the long dimension of the parking lot can increase the total parking spaces without an increase in lot size. The layout of parking lots is always most efficient where drive aisles are oriented along the length of the lot.