

## 02 | PLANNING PROCESS

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The planning process for the Loop Corridor Plan was focused around achieving the goals set forth by the Loop Community Improvement District (C.I.D.), with the broader understanding to create a long-term vision for the Corridor.

The planning process started with the project team conducting a full analysis of existing conditions along the Corridor from the west end roundabout at I-70 all the way to College Avenue and the eastern edge of the C.I.D. Notes and photos were taken throughout the project area and then analyzed to determine which areas were in most need for improvement.

The west side of the corridor is more open, with new buildings, underground utilities and many thriving businesses, giving the corridor an updated look and more welcoming feel. The east side of the corridor still has overhead utility poles, some vacant buildings and limited evidence of new investment. The site inventory and analysis revealed a subtle, but growing, dichotomy between the west and east areas of the Corridor. The west end has more stable businesses and more conforming land uses while the east end has many properties for lease or sale, while also containing businesses which don't reflect the best image for the Corridor and the City of Columbia. The east end, as well as the west end, also contains many thriving businesses and institutions which have invested in their respective properties and continue to contribute to the Corridor area. Creating a vision which sustains the quality establishments on the Corridor, while fostering new investment was a primary goal of the planning process.

The C.I.D. had developed goals for the Corridor Plan which seek to address the issues facing the Loop in regard to land use, traffic, bicycle/ pedestrian circulation, identity and beautification. Some of the main emphases of improvements to the Loop are to improve traffic circulation, increase connectivity, and to make the road more pedestrian and bike friendly. The project team developed a number of traffic and bike lane alternatives for consideration. Critical to the discussion was the relevance of the bike lanes and how they would be used. Project team and stakeholder discussion determined that an improved bicycle circulation network would be accepted by the community and be an essential component to the

plan. Another important element of the plan developed with extensive discussion and evaluation was improving the access management of the roadway. Evaluation of the numerous driveway aprons on the road and how they impact traffic circulation was considered. A proposed consolidation of driveways, coupled with proposed roundabouts at Garth Avenue and Rangeline Street were evaluated as potential options to improve traffic circulation, in addition to pedestrian circulation on the roadway.

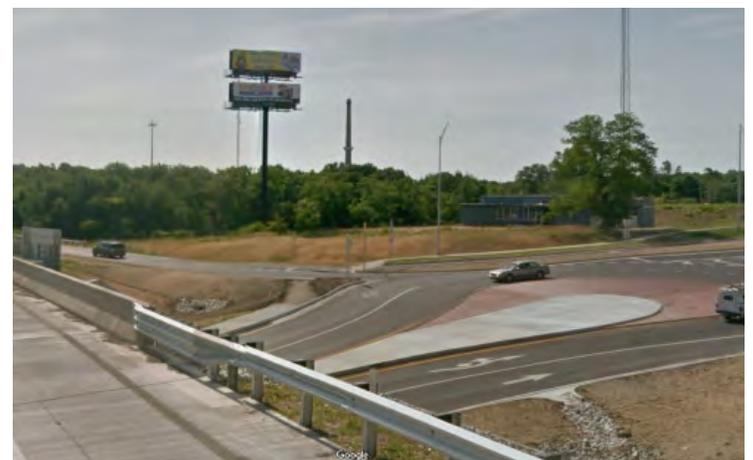
The planning process also developed a future vision on how to address stormwater on The Loop. The management of stormwater is a major development issue in the City of Columbia and the plan looked at numerous ways to address the issue.

The Loop Corridor Plan also had a stated goal to enhance the identity of the I-70 Business Loop. The project team knew that attracting pedestrians to circulate and gather on the street was critical to enhancing the image of the roadway. A street with activities and spaces, with people, would help to change the image from an auto-centric roadway to a more people and places oriented corridor, with room for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. The Corridor Plan identified areas on the roadway where new spaces that are inviting to users of all ages will enliven the corridor and draw users from one end of the Corridor to the other. Various alternatives were developed during the planning process and after much review and discussion from stakeholders and the public, five Placemaking Focus Areas were selected for the plan.

The planning process, utilizing the identified goals from the C.I.D., along with analysis, stakeholder input and sound community planning principles, conducted a 6 month planning study, resulting in a thorough, creative and feasible vision for the Loop Corridor.

## EXISTING SITE PHOTOS

- Variety of businesses, institutions and destinations
- High volume of vehicular traffic
- Limited landscape and green space on and off the street
- Lack of pedestrian networks and activity on the street
- Missing a sense of place and identity
- New infrastructure improvements on the west end
- Existing bicycle network facility is below standard and rarely used
- Many properties for lease/sale on east end
- Auto-centric street with limited spaces for pedestrians



# Public Meeting Summaries

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In an effort to build long term support and increased public awareness for the Loop Corridor Plan, the C.I.D. held public meetings, spoke with stakeholders, and utilized social media to engage their target audience for input on the plan. The goal was to come to a consensus with business and property owners on the needs for the Loop, proposed conceptual improvements and create awareness that a future vision was being created for the Loop.

The initial public meeting was conducted in early July 2017 to solicit input and announce the planning process, with over 70 people in attendance. The C.I.D. and project team hosted the first public open house to share the team's inventory and analysis of the corridor, showcase precedent ideas and listen the public's thoughts for Loop improvements. After the meeting, comments and notes were summarized and utilized in the development of concept plans for the Loop.

A project Visioning Meeting was held in mid August with property owners, business owners and public agency officials to review some of the initial concept plan ideas. The meeting offered key stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the initial plans for improvements. There were also in depth discussions on key issues such as bicycle network facilities, traffic access management and stormwater regulations. The meeting gave very good guidance to the planning team on the development of the concept plan alternatives which were presented at the second public meeting in early November.

The Loop Corridor Plan second public meeting, which attracted over 50 people, was held to allow the public to review and comment on the proposed improvements for the Corridor. Graphic boards showcasing analysis and the conceptual plans gave the public a chance to review

the proposed ideas. Attendees also had the opportunity to fill out a comment form at these meetings, listing their respective thoughts on the plans. With even more feedback from the second public meeting, the project team refined the proposed concept alternative plans further, to create the final concept plans of the report.

Both public meetings were advertised using the social media venue of Facebook and the Loop website. Afterwards, these platforms were also used to convey links to an online survey with the graphics and narratives of the public meetings, allowing for additional input. This was utilized by a number of community members who were unable to attend the meetings. Between speaking with members of the community and gathering data from the surveys online, several topics had the most interest. The public saw the need for enhanced pedestrian and bike infrastructure, increased areas of landscaping, better commercial shopping options and creating public spaces to be used by all in the community. These concerns reflected some of the goals of the C.I.D. and were incorporated into the planning of the concept plans and final report.



July Public Meeting



November Public Meeting



November Public Meeting



November Public Meeting

# Corridor Analysis and Diagram Overlay

A critical task in the Project Planning Process is developing a Programmatic Overlay Plan which accounts for the plan goals and program, along with the site inventory and analysis, resulting in resources which helps to guide the plan development.

The analysis of existing conditions was documented in a site inventory and analysis plan. This analysis considered many elements of the physical environment along the corridor. Such elements included the bicycle/pedestrian network, connectivity to agencies, viewsheds, vehicular circulation, drainage, land uses, landscaping, lighting and wayfinding, among others. Documented in an inventory and analysis plan, the evaluation helped to direct the project team to develop concepts which eventually became alternative plans for proposed improvements.

The project program of goals was developed by the Loop Community Improvement District (C.I.D.) and was confirmed by the project team early in the planning process. These goals which formed the project program were then considered in the context of the physical environment of the Loop. Applying the program as an overlay with the site inventory and analysis resulted in a programmatic diagram overlay.

The follow pages illustrate the Programmatic Diagram Overlay plan showcasing important findings and opportunities for the corridor plan.

- **Placemaking:** The evaluation of land uses and pedestrian circulation networks, along with the identified goal of making the street more attractive for visitors and business, resulted in identifying five areas for enhanced public spaces and potential new development.

- **Threshold Projects:** The site inventory and analysis noted the lack of landscape, landmarks and general unattractive character of the existing street. Areas for threshold projects, immediate and with limited expense, can be implemented for tangible and impactful change.
- **Stormwater:** Knowing that stormwater management is an important and sometimes difficult development issue, areas along the street and off of the street were identified for stormwater basins which would benefit economic development and enhance sustainable design opportunities on the corridor.
- **Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation:** The evaluation of the existing bike lanes and sidewalk facilities noted several areas which were below standard. Improving these facilities would greatly enhance the Loop to be multi-modal, connect to other areas, and foster an identity of being a more complete street for people as well as vehicles.
- **Gateways:** The site inventory noted that the linear corridor had numerous areas for major and secondary gateways which would help to define the boundaries and establish identity of the Corridor.
- **Public Landscape:** The stated goal of improving the aesthetics and attractiveness of the Corridor could be achieved in the public landscape along the parkway areas behind the curb and the broader right-of-way areas allowing for street trees, shrubs and perennials.



Site Inventory & Analysis Plan Graphic



Site Inventory & Analysis Plan Graphic

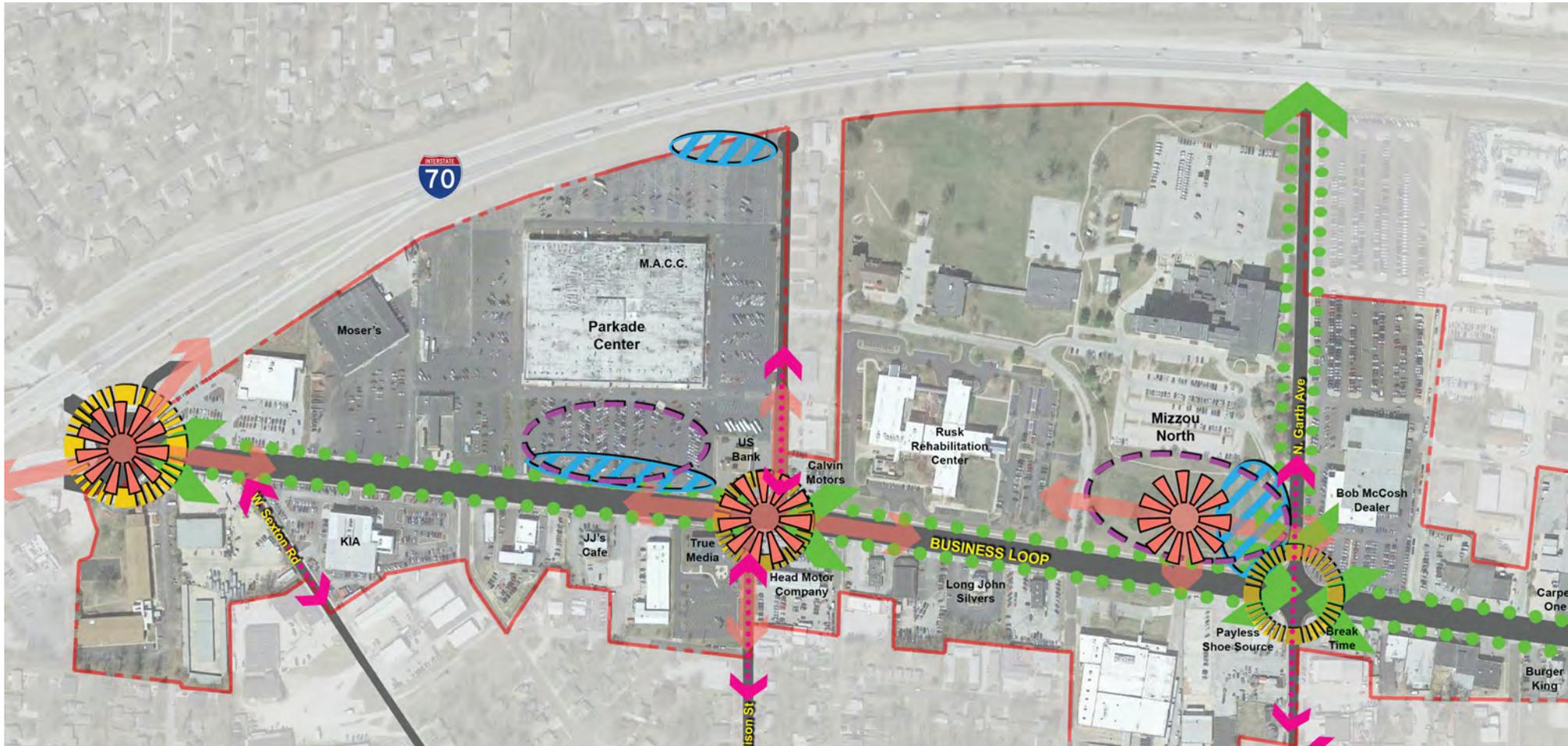


July Public Meeting Presentation Board



July Public Meeting Presentation Board

# Diagram Overlay



## Legend

-  Project Boundary
-  Proposed Placemaking locations
-  Proposed Threshold Project locations
-  Proposed Stormwater BMP locations
-  Bike/Pedestrian Circulation
-  Proposed Gateway locations
-  Areas to enhance the Public Landscape



