

# **THE NORTH 48TH STREET/ UNIVERSITY PLACE PLAN**

***A Neighborhood Revitalization  
and Transportation Analysis***



***Prepared for  
The City of Lincoln, Mayor Coleen J. Seng,  
The Urban Development Department, and  
The Public Works & Utilities Department***

***By The Schemmer Associates Inc.  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**he North 48<sup>th</sup> Street/University Place Plan outlines a concept for the future development of the N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street/University Place business district and neighborhood. The Lincoln City Council and Lancaster County Board approved the N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street/University Place Plan as an amendment to the Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan in June 2004. This Plan addresses the area of N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street between Leighton Avenue and Adams Street, and the business district and neighborhood defined by Adams Street to the north, Francis Street to the south, 46<sup>th</sup> Street to the west and 56<sup>th</sup> Street to the east. The purpose of this planning study was to define deficiencies, opportunities and recommendations within the study boundaries under the following subject areas:

- Transportation,
- Streetscape and Business Environment,
- Redevelopment,
- Local Traffic Circulation and Parking,
- Linkages,
- Neighborhood Development and Land Use.

This study was a partnership between the University Place Business Association and major commercial property owners, the University Place Community Organization (UPCO), Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU), and the City of Lincoln. A Task Force composed of representatives of the partnership and other interested stakeholders, all with an interest in the future of this unique district, assisted in developing this Plan.

## Transportation Recommendations

- N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street should maintain four through-lanes between Leighton Avenue and Adams Street.
- Left-turn lanes should be provided at the Huntington Avenue and Madison Avenue intersections, and prohibited at other intersections between Leighton Avenue and Adams Street.
- Provide full traffic signals at Huntington and Madison Avenue and a pedestrian signal at St. Paul Avenue. Initially, the existing pedestrian signal at Huntington should be replaced by full signalization. The Madison Avenue signal should be installed when warranted. Warrants will probably be achieved as part of major redevelopment of the Green's redevelopment site on the southwest corner of 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison and/or after the closing of vehicular access onto 48<sup>th</sup> Street from St. Paul Avenue. The pace and impact of area redevelopment and traffic redirection will influence the timing and sequencing of these traffic signal upgrades.
- St. Paul Avenue should be converted to a pedestrian plaza on both sides of 48<sup>th</sup> Street, to about one-half block east and west of the intersection.

## **Streetscape Recommendations**

- The current planters should be replaced by boundary walls, providing a sense of greater sidewalk space adjacent to commercial buildings developed on the property line.
- St. Paul Avenue should be converted to a pedestrian plaza one-half block east and west of the N. 48th Street intersection.
- The 48th Street frontage of Huntington School should be attractively landscaped. This landscaping and site improvement project should include acquisition of the auto dealership on the southwest corner of 48th and Adams.
- The 48th Street frontage of UNL's East Campus should be enhanced, including such features as a trail paralleling 48th Street, enhanced landscaping and/or an attractive edge wall, and a campus gateway feature at 48th and Leighton.

## **Redevelopment Recommendations**

- Madison Avenue, from 48<sup>th</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup>, should be developed as an extension of the traditional business district.
- The Green's site should be developed with a mixed-use project, providing strong street definition along Madison Avenue, with street level commercial and at least one upper level of residential or office use.
- The Hall's site should be developed with a mixed-use project, completing the Madison Avenue "main street" extension and continuing a clear street definition along 48<sup>th</sup> Street toward Huntington Elementary School.
- Street-oriented commercial redevelopment should occur along the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street between Huntington and Walker Avenues.
- All redevelopment on opportunity sites should maintain a strong street orientation, typically orienting parking to the rear of the site.
- City involvement in the redevelopment process should include evaluation criteria that encourage desirable businesses, with a focus on businesses that appeal to the university communities.
- The City should assist redevelopment of strategic sites as the private market responds to improving neighborhood conditions.

## **Local Circulation and Parking Recommendations**

- Public parking for the business district should be expanded west of 48<sup>th</sup> Street, with pedestrian connections to rear building entrances and to the residential areas to the west.
- Parking facilities and circulation on the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street between St. Paul and Madison should be reconfigured and expanded to provide more parking and greater convenience to customers of area businesses. St. Paul Avenue should be designed as an auto “court,” providing convenient on-street parking and access to all existing lots and driveways.
- A signage system clearly directing customers to parking areas should be installed in the business district to supplement existing signing.
- Intersection or street design features should be installed to channel left turns and cross movements to improved intersections.
- Improvements should be considered at the Hy-Vee shopping center on the north side of Leighton Avenue to reduce functional conflicts, improve connections to the neighborhood, and reduce the visual and operating conflicts created by truck loading and service areas adjacent to the residential neighborhood.
- The City should consider traffic calming concepts along Leighton Avenue between 48<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets, and implement measures found to be appropriate through this investigation.
- The City should monitor traffic and parking performance along 47<sup>th</sup> Street and 49<sup>th</sup> Street, the two local streets that parallel 48<sup>th</sup> Street.
- A drop-off loop drive should be provided off Cleveland Avenue for Huntington Elementary School.
- A new local street segment will improve access to commercial development on the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street south of Leighton Avenue and improve access to University Place Park.

## **Linkages Recommendations**

- The City and UNL should develop a trail along the west side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street, with a connection to University Place Park along Dead Man’s Run under a new 48<sup>th</sup> Street bridge. This project should be fully integrated into an enhancement program for the 48<sup>th</sup> Street edge of the UNL East Campus.
- A future East Campus entrance at Francis Street should be developed as a major gateway to University Place as well.



- A trail should be developed through the UNL East Campus, either along Dead Man's Run or the south side of Leighton Avenue, connecting to the John Dietrich Trail at 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Fleming Fields Recreational Sports Park. This trail should cross under 48<sup>th</sup> Street through a redesigned system in University Place Park. In addition, a sidewalk connector trail should be developed along the south side of Leighton/Huntington Avenue to provide a secondary connection to the Dietrich Trail and new sports park.
- 50<sup>th</sup> Street should be evaluated and adapted as a share-the-road bicycle route between University Place Park and the NWU campus. This route may continue north to connect with the John Dietrich/Murdock Trail system near 49<sup>th</sup> and Benton.
- St. Paul and Baldwin Avenues should be reinforced as promenades between 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Streets, forming a strong functional and visual connection between the NWU campus and the University Place business district.
- A north-south connection, linking NWU and the neighborhood, should be considered along the approximate alignment of 53<sup>rd</sup> Street.
- University Place Park north of Dead Man's Run should be master-planned as a neighborhood park.

## **Neighborhood Development and Land Use Recommendations**

- Lincoln should implement a neighborhood development strategy in University Place, with strategies designed to help bring about desirable outcomes on each block face.
- The City and neighborhood should implement a surgical rezoning strategy, based on the character and preferred occupancy outcome of each blockface.
- Redevelopment of selected sites can create new housing resources for prospective homeowners, including members of the university community. One opportunity could be the east side of an improved 51<sup>st</sup> Street.
- The improvement of the residential quality of the University Place neighborhoods is a widely shared goal. One important step in achieving that goal is to provide the neighborhood residents, particularly those in the blocks surrounding the Nebraska Wesleyan University campus, with a plan that helps them feel confident that future University expansion will not have a detrimental impact on their property values and overall quality of life. This plan should also include provisions, which facilitate collaborative efforts by the University, the neighborhood, and the City to invest in the revitalization of these neighborhoods.

# INTRODUCTION

Lincoln's University Place neighborhood is in many ways unique and varied. It includes many of the ingredients that can create a great urban setting – the attractive and historic Nebraska Wesleyan University campus in its heart, the East Campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on its edge, a neighborhood business district complemented by a variety of other services along its main street, a major community park featuring a newly enhanced water recreation facility, an historic residential district, good regional access, and a lively and committed neighborhood organization.



*The University Place Art Gallery is an example of a civic amenity that helps to define the neighborhood as a center for the arts.*

Yet, for a variety of reasons, the neighborhood – with so much opportunity and activity – has not achieved its full potential. Indeed, several of its major systems and assets have historically had conflicting priorities and objectives. These inherent conflicts continue to affect the area; and, in many ways, their successful resolution into both a visionary and a functional whole is the principal goal of this planning effort.

The conflicting priorities start with the tensions between neighborhood quality and transportation function. The neighborhood's principal street, 48<sup>th</sup> Street, is a major arterial that carries about 25,000 vehicles per day. Yet, 48<sup>th</sup> Street is also the main street of a

traditional commercial district, featuring small-scale buildings built at the property line, developed during the time when streetcars were a principal mode of transportation in Lincoln. The economic health of a "main street" district and the essential functioning of a major arterial are at least superficially at odds.

A major institution like Nebraska Wesleyan University generates understandable demands for land, parking, and housing that it must address. Yet, these requirements can also affect the quality of the residential environment. Historically, owners of residential property in areas with high rental demand have sought multi-family zoning to maximize the potential return on their property. Yet, this very multi-family zoning can also potentially reduce property values and investment security of owner occupants. Thus, understandable, but conflicting priorities have historically kept University Place from achieving what is ultimately the common priority of all stakeholders – a beautiful and rewarding urban neighborhood that, because of its diversity and appeal, satisfies the needs of all parties.

This Plan is dedicated to the proposition that these conflicts can be resolved and that these obstacles to University Place's continued health can be removed by a carefully crafted set of policies and directions. It was funded through a partnership of the City's Public Works & Utilities Department and Urban Development Department, acting on the premise that the priorities of transportation and community revitalization can lead to common solutions. The process that led to its preparation involved a close collaboration of City staff, consultants, and a partnership of primary stakeholders that included the University Place Community Organization, the University Place Business Association, Nebraska Wesleyan University, and other business and property owners, who were united in their commitment to develop strategies that would work toward common benefits.

The individuals and groups involved in this process contributed good will, hard work, and creativity to find common ground and develop innovative solutions to both the transportation and revitalization challenges presented by University Place. The intent of this process was to provide a sound blueprint that guides these same partners toward implementation of these strategies and, ultimately, an urban neighborhood that fulfills its promise.



***48<sup>th</sup> Street is a major arterial and the “main street” of a traditional commercial district.***







Neighborhood Revitalization Study Area Traffic Analysis Study Area

# PART ONE: EXISTING CONDITIONS

**T**his section describes the existing conditions and some of the key issues affecting the University Place neighborhood. The information found in this section was derived from previous studies, data from City GIS databases, field inventories, and discussions with stakeholders.

## Study Area Boundaries

The University Place study area is defined by Adams Street on the north, Leighton Avenue on the south, 46<sup>th</sup> Street on the west, and 56<sup>th</sup> Street on the east. The revitalization component of the Plan also considered the area bounded by Leighton Avenue on the north, Francis Street on the south, 48<sup>th</sup> Street on the west, and 52<sup>nd</sup> Street on the east.

## Demographic Information

- Total study area population / housing units / density,
- Housing occupancy,
- Household by type,
- Age distribution,
- Race.

The total population of the University Place Study area, based on 2000 Census Data, is 3,123, which is roughly 1.4 percent of the City of Lincoln's total population. The study area contains 1,318 housing units of which 1,237, or 93.85 percent, are occupied. This occupancy rate is slightly lower than the overall city occupancy rate of 95.05 percent.

**Table 1.1, Population, Housing Units, Density**

	Uni-Place Study Area	Lincoln
Total Population	3,123	225,581
Total Housing Units	1,318	95,199
Total Occupied Housing Units	1,237	90,485
Population in occupied housing units: Total	2,441	213,938
Density (Total Pop/Total Housing Units)	2.37	2.37
Density (Occ. Housing Pop/Occ. Housing Units)	1.97	2.36

*Source: 2000 U.S. Census*

Of the 1,237 housing units, 197 are owner occupied, and 1,040 are renter occupied. This equates to 15.93 percent owner-occupied units and 84.07 percent renter-occupied units, a ratio of greater than five renter-occupied units to one owner-occupied unit. This contrasts significantly with the overall city ratio where there are more owner occu-



**Table 1.2, Housing Occupancy**  
**Occupied vs. Vacant Housing Units**

	Uni-Place Study Area		Lincoln	
	Units	%	Units	%
Occupied	1,237	93.85%	90,485	95.05%
Vacant	81	6.15%	4,714	4.95%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,318</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>95,199</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Owner vs. Renter Occupied Housing Units**

	Uni-Place Study Area		Lincoln	
	Units	%	Units	%
Owner occupied	197	15.93%	52,448	57.96%
Renter occupied	1,040	84.07%	38,037	42.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>90,485</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Population in Occupied Housing Units**

	Uni-Place Study Area		Lincoln	
	Pop.	%	Pop.	%
Owner occupied	514	21.06%	135,922	63.53%
Renter occupied	1,927	78.94%	78,016	36.47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,441</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>213,938</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

pied units (58 percent) than renter-occupied units (42 percent). The contrast in terms of population is even greater. The University Place study area has 21.06 percent of its population in owner-occupied units and 78.94 percent of its population in renter-occupied units. The city, overall, has a much greater percentage of its population (63.53 percent) in owner-occupied units.

A difference between the makeup of the study area and the overall city does not necessarily identify a problem, but does help us understand the character of the neighborhood. At less than 2 percent of the total population, the sample is not large enough to expect identical ratios. The higher incidence of renter-occupied units, for example, is expected of a neighborhood with a university within its perimeter. However, the entire University Place neighborhood itself, which makes up only about 1.5 percent of the city's population, has 49.28 percent owner-occupied units and 50.72 percent renter-occupied units; a ratio that is only slightly less than that of the overall city. This comparison seems to indicate that the study area is fairly unique in its housing makeup.

The study area has 1,237 households with 34.44 percent classified as family households. This is significantly lower than the city's 59.21 percent of family

**Table 1.3, Households by Type**

	Uni-Place Study Area		Lincoln	
Total Households	1,237		90,485	
Average Family Size	2.84		2.99	
<b>Family Households</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>34.44%</b>	<b>53,580</b>	<b>59.21%</b>
Married-couple family	253	20.45%	-	
With own children under 18 years	111	8.97%	-	
No own children under 18 years	142	11.48%	-	
Other family	173	13.99%	11,653	12.88%
Male householder; no wife present	52	4.20%	3,061	3.38%
With own children under 18 years	24	1.94%	-	
No own children under 18 years	28	2.26%	-	
Female householder; no husband present	121	9.78%	8,592	9.50%
With own children under 18 years	81	6.55%	-	
No own children under 18 years	40	3.23%	-	
<b>Non-family Households</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>65.56%</b>	<b>36,905</b>	<b>40.79%</b>
Male householder not living alone	127	10.27%	5,363	5.93%
Female householder not living alone	122	9.86%	4,024	4.45%
Male householder living alone	286	23.12%	12,173	13.45%
Female householder living alone	276	22.31%	15,345	16.96%

Source: 2000 Census

**Table 1.4, Population by Age Cohort**

Age Cohort	University Place Study Area						City of Lincoln					
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
Under 5 yrs	160	79	81	5.1%	5.2%	5.1%	15,199	7,727	7,472	6.7%	6.9%	6.6%
5 to 9 yrs	89	53	36	2.8%	3.5%	2.3%	14,272	7,351	6,921	6.3%	6.5%	6.1%
10 to 14 yrs	115	50	65	3.7%	3.3%	4.1%	13,840	7,037	6,803	6.1%	6.3%	6.0%
15 to 19 yrs	539	231	308	17.3%	15.1%	19.3%	18,472	9,171	9,301	8.2%	8.2%	8.2%
20 to 24 yrs	1,007	495	512	32.2%	32.3%	32.2%	27,110	14,103	13,007	12.0%	12.6%	11.5%
25 to 29 yrs	290	153	137	9.3%	10.0%	8.6%	19,224	10,293	8,931	8.5%	9.2%	7.9%
30 to 34 yrs	172	88	84	5.5%	5.7%	5.3%	16,596	8,752	7,844	7.4%	7.8%	6.9%
35 to 39 yrs	151	90	61	4.8%	5.9%	3.8%	16,778	8,691	8,087	7.4%	7.7%	7.1%
40 to 44 yrs	138	80	58	4.4%	5.2%	3.6%	16,703	8,425	8,278	7.4%	7.5%	7.3%
45 to 49 yrs	124	68	56	4.0%	4.4%	3.5%	15,591	7,716	7,875	6.9%	6.9%	7.0%
50 to 54 yrs	86	44	42	2.8%	2.9%	2.6%	12,839	6,343	6,496	5.7%	5.6%	5.7%
55 to 59 yrs	60	26	34	1.9%	1.7%	2.1%	8,832	4,283	4,549	3.9%	3.8%	4.0%
60 to 64 yrs	39	16	23	1.2%	1.0%	1.4%	6,624	3,135	3,489	2.9%	2.8%	3.1%
65 to 69 yrs	41	19	22	1.3%	1.2%	1.4%	6,055	2,776	3,279	2.7%	2.5%	2.9%
70 to 74 yrs	31	14	17	1.0%	0.9%	1.1%	5,739	2,486	3,253	2.5%	2.2%	2.9%
75 to 79 yrs	41	15	26	1.3%	1.0%	1.6%	5,015	2,003	3,012	2.2%	1.8%	2.7%
80 to 84 yrs	23	7	16	0.7%	0.5%	1.0%	3,475	1,258	2,217	1.5%	1.1%	2.0%
85 yrs +	17	3	14	0.5%	0.2%	0.9%	3,217	811	2,406	1.4%	0.7%	2.1%
<b>Total Pop.</b>	<b>3,123</b>	<b>1,531</b>	<b>1,592</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>225,581</b>	<b>112,361</b>	<b>113,220</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

**Table 1.5, University Place Race**

	Pop.	%
White	2,811	90.01%
Hispanic	107	3.43%
Black	95	3.04%
Asian	72	2.31%
American Indian/Alaskan	21	0.67%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	5	0.16%
Other	12	0.38%
<b>Total Pop.</b>	<b>3,123</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

**University Place Traditional Business District along 48th Street.**

Lincoln, Nebraska

households. Of these families, the study area has a slightly higher percentage classified as "other family," which indicates a single-parent household. Of the 426 family households in the study area, 173 or 13.99 percent are classified as "other family" compared to the citywide percentage of 12.88 percent. The distribution of single-parent households is significant because they are more likely to have low incomes and more frequently require support services.

The age distribution of the study area compared to the overall city indicates a much higher incidence of 15-to-24-year-olds and a slightly higher incidence of 25-to-29-year-olds. This, again, is due to a significant student population located within the study area. The study area has a lower incidence of persons in the 30-to-59 age groups, which is significant because these age groups tend to earn the highest wages.

The makeup of racial characteristics within the University Place study area is typical of the City of Lincoln, with relatively few minorities.

## Land Use and Development Patterns

The University Place study area is a mixed-use urban neighborhood, deriving much of its character from this variety. Two maps illustrate the existing land use patterns within the study area. The "Existing Building Use" map represents the land use inventory that was conducted in March 2003. The "University Place Land Use" map illustrates the existing land use patterns, as recorded at the Lancaster County Assessor's Office. General land use patterns are described below.

### Commercial Uses

Commercial development is concentrated along the 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and exhibits two development configurations. The area between Madison and Baldwin resembles a "main street" district, characterized by historic buildings and zero-depth setbacks. This part of the University Place district is typical of the transit-oriented commercial clusters



*The center of the traditional business district along 48th Street.*

that grew around Lincoln's streetcar system in the early part of the 20th Century. This traditional business district includes a mix of retail, service and restaurant uses, with recent trends producing additional restaurant, antique, and home-design related establishments.

Residential uses in the traditional business district consist of several second-story apartments and an historic apartment building at 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison. A fire in 2003 at the Green's Furnace & Plumbing site destroyed one-half block of storefront buildings along 48<sup>th</sup> immediately south of Madison, creating an immediate opportunity for redevelopment.

Auto-oriented commercial development is located north and south of the traditional main street district. This development pattern includes freestanding commercial buildings, often separated from the street by parking lots. The largest commercial blocks include the Hy-Vee center and adjacent commercial strip development on the northwest corner of 48<sup>th</sup> and Leighton; and the more recently developed Walgreen's on the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> between Huntington and Baldwin. Business types south of Baldwin include a variety of consumer-based establishments, while commercial uses north of Madison are dominated by used-car dealerships, auto repair, and more marginal businesses. Several of the freestanding commercial buildings have long orientations perpendicular to 48<sup>th</sup> Street. This pattern creates at least some pedestrian connection to the street and reduces the amount of parking directly parallel to 48<sup>th</sup> Street.

## ***Civic Uses***

Civic uses, most notably the Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) campus, define the University Place neighborhood. The NWU campus is bounded by Madison Street on the north, Huntington Street on the south, 50<sup>th</sup> Street on the west and 56<sup>th</sup> Street on the east. The University, founded in 1887 and affiliated with the Methodist Church, has a student body of 1,500 students and employs 390 faculty and staff.

The university community extends to properties around the periphery of the campus, north of Madison, south of Huntington, and west of 50<sup>th</sup> Street. Some of these properties are owned by NWU and are utilized for parking, student services, campus organizations, and university-related housing. Other sites on the periphery accommodate fraternities and sororities.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's (UNL) East Campus forms the other dominant institutional use in University Place, lining the 48<sup>th</sup> Street frontage between Leighton Avenue and Holdrege Street. The campus adjacent to University Place is used largely for experimental crop production, and appears agricultural in character. Long-range campus development plans call for a new entrance at Francis Street and environmental enhancements to the eastern part of the campus.



*The western edge of the Nebraska Wesleyan University Campus along 50th Street.*

The district also hosts more local nonprofit or public uses. Huntington Elementary School includes most of a two-block area between Cleveland Avenue, Adams Street, 48<sup>th</sup> Street, and 46<sup>th</sup> Street. This new Lincoln Public School structure offers pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade classes, and had a 2003 enrollment of 418 students. Most of the site east of the school building is used for unstructured play and is a gravel-and-earth surface lacking landscaping.

University Place Park, located at the southern edge of the study area, is a community park of about 22 acres. The park's major improvement is a recently reconstructed aquatic recreation facility, located in the southwest corner of the site. Other features include a ball field, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, playground equipment, picnic shelter, and unstructured open space. Dead Man's Run creek bisects the park with most of the park facilities located south of the creek. The north side of the park, with greatest adjacency to the residential neighborhood, is largely undeveloped, and is linked to the rest of the open space by a pedestrian bridge.



*A single-family residence in the University Place neighborhood.*

The landmark First United Methodist Church also is a significant civic land use. The church site is located along 50<sup>th</sup> Street between St. Paul and Madison Avenues, adjacent to the NWU campus.

### ***Residential Uses***

A diverse mix of residential uses makes up the balance of the study area. High-density zoning, applied to a formerly single-family neighborhood, has produced a heterogeneous residential pattern, where apartment buildings, single-family conversions, and single-family houses are likely to occur on the same block. In general, however:

- The north side of the neighborhood, between Madison and Adams fully mixes multi-family and single-family use types. Larger-scale multi-family buildings are somewhat predominant between 52<sup>nd</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets, while single-family and smaller multi-family structures are more dominant between 49<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Streets.
- Single-family uses are more dominant in the southeastern part of the study area, along and south of Walker Avenue and east of 50<sup>th</sup> Street. This area includes the primarily single-family Charles F. Creighton Historic District.



- Multi-family uses and conversions are dominant around the edges of the NWU campus and in the transitional areas between the campus and the 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor.
- Multi-family uses are predominant along 47<sup>th</sup> Street, giving way to single-family uses toward the western edge of the University Place study area.

Based upon the building-by-building field inventory conducted by the study team, the University Place study area contains 276 single-family residences (many of which are rentals), 72 two- to four-unit residences, 73 multi-family structures, six fraternities or sororities, and one assisted-living residence facility.

## Residential Occupancy

Based on data from the County Assessor's Office, the study area includes 265 renter-occupied parcels and 178 owner-occupied parcels, a ratio of about three-to-two. However, the distribution varies for different parts of the district. West of 48<sup>th</sup> Street, renter- and owner-occupied parcels are in approximate balance, with rental occupancy more prevalent toward 48<sup>th</sup> Street. Areas south of Huntington Avenue also display an approximate balance.

The highest percentage of renter-occupied parcels are found east of 48<sup>th</sup> Street to the north and west of the NWU campus. North of Madison Avenue, renter-occupied parcels outnumber owner-occupied parcels by a ratio of nearly two-to-one, while the area east of 48<sup>th</sup> Street and west of 50<sup>th</sup> Street between Madison and Huntington approaches a ratio of five renter-occupied to two owner-occupied parcels.

These ratios reflect the influence of a large student population within the study area and gradual changes in land use, including trends toward multi-family conversions and replacement of single-family with multi-family. The "Occupancy Status" map illustrates which residential parcels within the study area are owner-occupied and which are renter-occupied.

**Table 1.6, Residential Unit Parcels**

	Parcels	%
Single-family	257	58.01%
Sorority/fraternity	6	1.35%
Converted houses	57	12.87%
Duplexes	22	4.97%
Multi-family	101	22.80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
Owner Occupied	178	40.18%
Rental	265	59.82%
<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: 2003, Lancaster County Assessor



*Many single-family homes have been converted to, or replaced with, multi-family residences.*



**Table 1.7, Occupied Housing Units - Owner vs. Renter, Vacant Housing Units, and Householder by Race**

	Units	% of Total
<b>Owner Occupied</b>		
Householder 15 to 24 years	11	0.89%
Householder 25 to 34 years	25	2.02%
Householder 35 to 44 years	53	4.28%
Householder 45 to 54 years	44	3.56%
Householder 55 to 64 years	24	1.94%
Householder 65 to 74 years	17	1.37%
Householder 75 to 84 years	17	1.37%
Householder 85 years and over	6	0.49%
<b>Owner Occupied Total</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>15.93%</b>
<b>Renter Occupied</b>		
Householder 15 to 24 years	368	29.75%
Householder 25 to 34 years	271	21.91%
Householder 35 to 44 years	165	13.34%
Householder 45 to 54 years	107	8.65%
Householder 55 to 64 years	44	3.56%
Householder 65 to 74 years	40	3.23%
Householder 75 to 84 years	37	2.99%
Householder 85 years and over	8	0.65%
<b>Renter Occupied Total</b>	<b>1,040</b>	<b>84.07%</b>
<b>Total Occupied Housing Units</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Vacant Housing Units**

	Units	%
For rent	61	75.31%
For sale only	2	2.47%
Rented or sold; not occupied	-	0.00%
For occasional use	6	7.41%
For migrant workers	-	0.00%
Other vacant	12	14.81%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Occupied Housing Units, Householder by Race**

	Units	%
White alone	1,129	91.27%
Black or African American alone	38	3.07%
American Indian, Alaska Native alone	8	0.65%
Asian alone	17	1.37%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander alone	1	0.08%
Some other race alone	14	1.13%
Two or more races	30	2.43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,237</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

## Residential Assessed Values

Assessed values of residential properties within the study area generally fall within low-to-moderate ranges for the City of Lincoln, with approximately 74 percent within the \$60,000-\$100,000 range and 91 percent within the \$60,000-\$120,000 range. The "University Place Residential Assessed Values" and "University Place Multi-family Assessment Values" maps illustrate the range of assessed values for residential properties. Table 1.8 presents the number of residential properties within each assessed value range and the percent of properties within each range.

**Table 1.8, Distribution of Assessed Values for Residential Parcels**

Range	No. of Properties	% of Total
\$6,000 - \$20,000	2	0.63%
\$20,000 - \$40,000	1	0.32%
\$40,000 - \$60,000	6	1.89%
\$60,000 - \$80,000	95	29.97%
\$80,000 - 100,000	140	44.16%
\$100,000 - \$120,000	54	17.03%
\$120,000 - \$140,000	12	3.79%
\$140,000 - \$160,000	4	1.26%
\$160,000 - \$180,000	1	0.32%
\$180,000 - \$200,000	2	0.63%
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Lancaster County Assessor's Office

## Commercial/Industrial Assessed Values

Assessed values for commercial and industrial properties also vary within the study area, but are generally low. More valuable properties tend to be located in the southern portion of the district, related largely to the scale of the lot and improvements. Properties in the southern portion of the study area, with a contemporary orientation to the automobile, are typically larger than parcels in the traditional "main street" district between Baldwin and Madison Avenues.

Table 1.9 illustrates the number of commercial/industrial properties within each assessed value range and the percent of properties within each range. Nearly half of the commercial and industrial properties within the study area are assessed at less than \$100,000; and nearly 90 percent are assessed at less than \$300,000.

The "Commercial/Industrial Assessed Values" map illustrates two categories of value ranges for commercial and residential properties within the study area.

**Table 1.9, Distribution of Assessed Values for Commercial and Industrial Parcels**

Range	Properties	% of Total
\$0 - \$100,000	40	49.38%
\$100,000 - \$200,000	17	20.99%
\$200,000 - \$300,000	15	18.52%
\$300,000 - \$400,000	2	2.47%
\$400,000 - \$500,000	2	2.47%
\$500,000 - \$600,000	1	1.23%
\$600,000 - \$700,000	1	1.23%
Greater than \$700,000	3	3.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Lancaster County Assessor's Office

## Building Conditions

Table 1.10 displays an assessment of building conditions for residential structures in the University Place study area. The condition assessment is based on an exterior walking inspection, completed in October 2003. Buildings are rated on a five-point scale, from 1 for excellent to 5 for deteriorated. The tabulation compiles information by block. It also assembles information by subdistrict, corresponding to definable parts of the residential neighborhood. These compilation districts include:

- **NWU North Campus Area**, including the area between Madison and Adams from 50<sup>th</sup> to 56<sup>th</sup> Streets.
- **North Transition**, from 50<sup>th</sup> to 48<sup>th</sup>, Huntington to Adams.
- **South Transition**, from 50<sup>th</sup> to 48<sup>th</sup>, Garland to Huntington.
- **South Campus**, from 50<sup>th</sup> to 56<sup>th</sup>, Huntington to Garland and Leighton.
- **West**, from 46<sup>th</sup> to 48<sup>th</sup>, Leighton to Cleveland.



*A University Place business in a converted residence along Baldwin Avenue.*

**Table 1.10, Residential Building Conditions**

Block	Number of Residen- tial Structures	Aggregate	Block	Number of Residen- tial Structures	Aggregate
<b>North Campus</b>			<b>South Campus</b>		
<b>Madison to Cleveland</b>			<b>Huntington to Walker</b>		
50th to 51st	8	2.81	50th to 51st	7	2.00
51st to 52nd	7	2.79	51st to 52nd	11	2.93
52nd to 53rd	8	2.81	52nd to 53rd	7	2.57
53rd to 54th	12	2.21	53rd to 54th	6	2.42
54th to 56th	14	2.61	54th to 56th	13	2.25
<b>Cleveland to Adams</b>			<b>Walker to Leighton</b>		
50th to 51st	16	2.66	50th to 51st	11	2.48
51st to 52nd	14	2.39	51st to 52nd	11	2.41
52nd to 53rd	14	2.29	52nd to 53rd	13	2.50
53rd to 54th	12	2.67	53rd to 54th	11	2.45
54th to 56th	12	2.58	54th to 56th	14	2.46
<b>North Campus Total</b>			<b>Leighton to Garland</b>		
			50th to 51st	10	2.15
			51st to 52nd	11	2.30
<b>North Transition</b>			<b>South of Garland</b>		
<b>49th to 50th</b>			51st to 52nd	14	2.82
Cleveland to Adams	15	2.90	<b>South Campus Total</b>		
Madison to Cleveland	12	2.67		<b>139</b>	<b>2.46</b>
St. Paul to Madison	6	*	<b>West</b>		
Baldwin to St. Paul	3	*	<b>47th to 48th</b>		
Huntington to Baldwin	5	*	Madison to Cleveland	2	*
<b>48th to 49th</b>			St. Paul to Madison	1	*
Cleveland to Adams	3	2.33	Baldwin to St. Paul	2	*
Madison to Cleveland	7	3.07	Huntington to Baldwin	2	*
St. Paul to Madison	1	3.00	Huntington south		
Baldwin to St. Paul	3	2.00	<b>46th to 48th</b>		
Huntington to Baldwin	3	2.17	Madison to Cleveland	11	2.91
<b>North Transition Total</b>			St. Paul to Madison	12	2.83
	<b>58</b>	<b>2.69</b>	Baldwin to St. Paul	12	2.75
<b>South Transition</b>			Huntington to Baldwin	10	2.35
<b>49th to 50th</b>			Huntington south	5	2.55
Huntington to Walker	10	2.00	<b>West Total</b>		
Walker to Leighton	11	2.86		<b>55</b>	<b>2.70</b>
Leighton to Garland	9	2.72	<b>University Place Total</b>		
<b>48th to 49th</b>				<b>413</b>	<b>2.56</b>
Huntington to Walker	3	3.00			
Walker to Leighton	5	2.75			
Leighton to Garland	6	2.50			
<b>South Transition Total</b>					
	<b>44</b>	<b>2.59</b>			

\* Aggregate included in the total, but now shown individually by block

Source: RDG Planning & Design, 2003

Lincoln, Nebraska

## Historic Significance

The University Place neighborhood includes the Charles F. Creighton Historic District, generally located along Walker and Leighton Avenues between 49<sup>th</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> Streets. Other currently designated historic sites include:

- The Saint Charles Apartments at 4717 Baldwin.
- Old Main at the NWU campus.

Other potential historic designations in the study area include:

- University Place City Hall (Art Center) at 48<sup>th</sup> and Baldwin.
- Citizen State Bank (Berry Law Office) at 48<sup>th</sup> and St. Paul.
- Wesleyan Hospital (Madison Avenue Apartments) at 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison.
- Carnegie Library (MEG engineering office) at 48<sup>th</sup> and Cleveland.
- First United Methodist Church at 50<sup>th</sup> and St. Paul.



*Historic Old Main at Nebraska Wesleyan University.*

The University Place business district between Baldwin and Madison may have sufficient integrity to merit landmark or National Register district designation. Other individual buildings of architectural or historic distinction are dispersed throughout the study area. However, modifications or new construction make additional district designations unlikely.

## Neighborhood Assessment and Development Issues

The University Place neighborhood is unusual for its combination of major educational institutions, established residential neighborhoods, neighborhood business district, contemporary retailing, and a major neighborhood park. This provides most of the ingredients of success and vitality for a lively and high-value urban neighborhood. Yet, to many residents and stakeholders in the neighborhood, University Place has not realized

its full potential. The previous section presented the “facts” of this neighborhood – its demographic, land use, housing, commercial, and historic environments. This discussion will assess issues in the area, examining the diverse neighborhood by analytical subdistricts. These districts are similar to those considered in the housing conditions evaluation, and include:

- The 48<sup>th</sup> Street commercial corridor.
- The North Campus area, including residential and institutional uses directly north of the Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) campus.
- The transitional areas between 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Streets, where the campus and residential communities blend into the 48<sup>th</sup> Street transportation and commercial corridor.
- The South Campus area.
- The portion of the study area west of 48<sup>th</sup> Street.

This discussion presents a brief description and a review of key issues and opportunities for each subarea.

### ***The 48<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor***

This major corridor can be divided into three sections with distinct characteristics. Most people visualize University Place as a traditional “main street” district bounded by Baldwin on the south and Madison on the north. Between Madison and Adams, the main street character of the district breaks down, and the street frontage includes a variety of relatively small freestanding commercial buildings. Huntington Elementary School also takes up much of this frontage. More contemporary, automobile-oriented retailing and services occur south of Baldwin.

Significant issues and trends for this part of the study area include:

#### **North of Madison**

- Relative underutilization of commercial land along 48<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Unattractive district entrance at 48<sup>th</sup> and Adams, including a small used-car dealership and unlandscaped Huntington School site.



***Heavy traffic on 48th Street, north of Madison Street.***



- Traffic conflicts with convenience-store curb-cuts close to the 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison intersection.
- Attractive reuse of the Carnegie Library provides an anchor for this two-block area.



*Convenience store location creates turning-movement conflicts near the intersection of 48th Street and Madison Street.*



*The Carnegie Library, converted to an office, provides an anchor for future redevelopment north of Madison Street.*

#### **Traditional Business District between Madison and Baldwin**

- Recent trends have included several new retail and service businesses, focusing on restaurants, home design, antiques, and specialty retailers.
- Narrow sidewalks, planter placement, and 48<sup>th</sup> Street traffic create a relatively unfriendly pedestrian environment along the "main street."



*Pedestrians and traffic must coexist within close proximity along 48th Street.*



*The alleys parallel to 48th Street provide comfortable outdoor spaces.*

- Vacant property, the result of a major fire during 2003, creates a half-block redevelopment site at 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison.
- Difficult and confusing parking and circulation patterns around the business core. The combination of public and private parking and access easements contribute to difficulty of use.
- Business district to NWU-campus linkages along Madison, St. Paul, and Baldwin are relatively weak on the ground, despite a direct linear connection.
- Development of some rear-entrance activity has occurred, particularly on the southwest quadrant of 48<sup>th</sup> and St. Paul.

#### **South of Baldwin**

- Recent development has included Walgreen's at 48<sup>th</sup> and Huntington, and commercial construction at 48<sup>th</sup> and Leighton.
- Confusing local circulation into strip centers and the post office from 48<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Underuse and possible availability of commercial site between Huntington and Walker on the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street.



*Benches and landscaping at the intersection of 48th Street and Baldwin Avenue.*



*48th Street contains a mix of traditional and contemporary commercial development.*

- Traffic and internal-circulation conflicts within the Hy-Vee center at 48<sup>th</sup> and Leighton. Poor pedestrian and vehicular access and connectivity between this site and the neighborhood to the north.
- Relatively unattractive streetscape through this portion of the district.

- Poor internal neighborhood access to commercial development south of Leighton on the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street.

### ***NWU North Campus Area***

The NWU North Campus Area has been influenced both by campus expansion and associated development, and the effects of relatively high-density zoning. As a result, it exhibits a relatively unplanned mixture of campus-related uses, conversions of single-family houses to multi-family use, and as-built multi-family development. Islands of single-family occupancy continue within this mixed-use area. Significant issues and trends in this area include:

- Encroachment of marginal commercial and industrial uses east from the 48<sup>th</sup> and Adams intersection.
- Significant housing deterioration in certain parts of the subarea.
- Unsightly additions to large houses as part of earlier multi-family conversions.
- New dormitory development by NWU on the north edge of the campus. These new units may alter the demand for off-campus housing, reducing the marketability of more marginal multi-family building. This in turn creates opportunities for new, more appropriate infill development.
- Parking demand that exceeds capacity of local streets, created by high-density housing on relatively small lots. NWU student housing construction may also increase parking demand on the north campus area.
- Uncertainties over University expansion directions.

### ***Transitional Areas***

Areas of transition are found among the blocks between NWU and the 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor, which possess very diverse land uses and development patterns. The blocks between 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> are the university's front door and include extensive visitor and student parking. This location also represents the primary interface with the commercial corridor. In between are a mix of residential and office buildings and First United Methodist Church.

Significant issues and trends in this area include:

- A major and growing demand for parking. Despite large, University-owned surface lots on the west side of 50<sup>th</sup> Street, parking demand appears highest in this part of the neighborhood.

- Local circulation. Two-sided, on-street parking, local traffic generated by both the university and business communities, and relatively narrow streets create some congestion, especially along 49<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Campus/business district connections and campus visibility from 48<sup>th</sup> Street. Despite a large presence in the neighborhood, the University is tucked two blocks away from its primary approach route. The University campus and the business district are also not strongly connected, despite their relative adjacency.

### **NWU South Campus**

This area includes University Place's most identifiably single-family streets, and incorporates the Charles Creighton Historic District. The University also maintains a major presence along Huntington, and has purchased property on the south side of the street, used largely for parking and campus services. Its recent parking study recommends parking development along Huntington.

Major issues and trends in this part of the district include:

- Campus development on the south side of Huntington, along with residential area impacts. Campus development could have significant impacts on the adjacent Creighton historic district without appropriate buffering. In addition, uncertainties can arise from possibilities of additional University acquisitions.
- Neighborhood stabilization in the face of high-density zoning. The Creighton historic district is zoned for multi-family use yet maintains a single-family, primarily owner-occupied character. Current zoning is inconsistent with present use, and can be a destabilizing influence.
- Increasing traffic on Leighton Avenue. The removal of on-street parking on Leighton in 2003, brought about by increasing traffic volumes, raises concerns about higher traffic speeds, threatening the continued residential quality of this key street.
- Connection to University Place Park. The park south of Garland Street is relatively undeveloped, to some degree dividing the main part of the park from the residential neighborhood.

### **West**

This area includes the study area north of Leighton Avenue between 46<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Streets. The block from 47<sup>th</sup> to 48<sup>th</sup> is largely influenced by the commercial corridor, and presents a relatively undefined edge to the residential area. The blocks from 46<sup>th</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup>, on the other hand, are solidly residential, and include a combination of single-family residential and smaller-scale multi-family uses.

Issues and trends in this area include:

- Relatively undefined boundary conditions between the commercial corridor and the residential neighborhood. These conditions include both the 47<sup>th</sup> Street frontage and the north edge of the Hy-Vee center along Leighton Avenue.
- Business district traffic and parking demands along 47<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Local circulation and pedestrian connections between the neighborhood and Hy-Vee along 47<sup>th</sup> Street.
- The lack of landscaping for Huntington Elementary School along 48<sup>th</sup> Street and concern about drop-off movements on Cleveland Avenue.

## Transportation Analysis

The N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor serves a vital role in the overall transportation network for the City of Lincoln. The street is identified as an urban minor arterial for both the existing and future functional classification systems. Currently, 48<sup>th</sup> Street provides four



*48th Street, north of Leighton Street, carries approximately 25,000 vehicles per day.*

through-lanes of travel (two in each direction) between "O" Street and Adams Street, allows continuous travel between Old Cheney Road on the south and Superior Street on the north, and provides a grade-separated underpass at the B.N.S.F. railroad tracks south of Cornhusker Highway.

Because of the street's important role in both the city arterial network and the local street system, transportation functions deserve special attention as part of the N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street/University Place study. Indeed, the premise of this work is to identify directions and policies that serve the needs of both transportation and neighborhood development.

## Traffic Volumes and Operations

Traffic data collected in May 2003 show that N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street currently carries about 31,000 vehicles per day (vpd) south of Leighton Avenue, 25,000 vpd between Leighton Avenue and Adams Street, and 20,000 vpd north of Adams Street. An origin-destination study, with the general limits of Adams Street (north), Leighton Avenue (south), 56<sup>th</sup> Street (east) and 48<sup>th</sup> Street (west), was performed to track where vehi-

cles are both coming from and going to. The results of this study indicate that 60 percent of the vehicular traffic on 48<sup>th</sup> Street is “through-traffic.” In this case, “through-traffic” is defined as vehicles entering the project area at one location and exiting at another, without starting or stopping at a location within the project area. This information indicates that:

- A significant volume of vehicular traffic is using 48<sup>th</sup> Street, and
- While a moderate volume of vehicular traffic is turning on and off 48<sup>th</sup> Street via cross streets, the majority of 48<sup>th</sup> Street traffic is moving through the project area without starting or stopping at businesses, residences, or schools within the project area.

Currently N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street within the project area is composed of two through-lanes in each direction with left-turn lanes at Leighton Avenue and Adams Street. Between these two east-west arterials, the street does not provide dedicated left-turn lanes. Therefore, left-turning vehicles waiting to turn must do so in the inside through-lane. Waiting left-turn vehicles therefore block vehicles traveling straight through intersections, adding to traffic congestion and increasing the potential for both rear-end crashes and problems associated with lane changes, as some traffic weaves to the right around a stopped vehicle.

### ***Signalization***

The existing roadway network is supplemented with full, four-way traffic control signals at the intersections of Leighton Avenue, St. Paul Avenue and Adams Street. Also, a pedestrian signal for crossing 48<sup>th</sup> Street is provided on the north side of Huntington Avenue. Because this pedestrian signal is closer to the intersection than allowed by federal guidelines, the City of Lincoln Public Works and Utilities Department is considering either relocating it to a point farther from the intersection or fully signalizing the intersection for both vehicles and pedestrians.

### ***Transit Service***

University Place is serviced by three City bus routes:

- The “Havelock” route, operating along St. Paul Avenue west of 48<sup>th</sup> Street and 48<sup>th</sup> Street north of St. Paul Avenue.
- The “University Place” route, operating along 48<sup>th</sup> Street south of Huntington Avenue, Huntington Avenue between 48<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets and 56<sup>th</sup> Street north of Huntington Avenue.
- The “48<sup>th</sup> Street Shuttle,” traversing 48<sup>th</sup> Street throughout the project study area.



A fourth route, "Bethany," touches the southeast corner of the project area as it travels along 56<sup>th</sup> Street and Leighton Avenue. The "Bethany" route serves the southeast portion of the University Place residential areas but has little, if any, impact on the University Place business district along N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street.



*Pedestrians at 48<sup>th</sup> Street and St. Paul Avenue.*



*Existing bus stop at St. Paul Avenue.*

### ***Pedestrian Activity***

Volumes of pedestrians crossing 48<sup>th</sup> Street were also observed and recorded during three two-hour time periods on an average weekday at each of the east-west cross streets within the project area. Pedestrians crossing at "mid-block" location — that is, at locations between two adjacent intersections — were also noted. Pedestrian volumes along N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street are summarized in Table 1.11.

**Table 1.11, Pedestrian Movements Crossing N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street**

Location	2-hour Time Periods		
	A.M.	Midday	P.M.
Adams Street	30	3	22
Cleveland Avenue	4	3	5
Madison Avenue	7	7	6
St. Paul Avenue	14	34	12
Baldwin Avenue	6	13	3
Huntington Avenue	20	19	28
Walker Avenue	8	12	0
Leighton Avenue	1	4	8
"Mid-block"	16	20	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>107</b>

*Source: The Schemmer Associates, 2003*



*Pedestrian signal at 48th Street and Huntington.*



*Alternative lane and access configurations were considered for 48th Street.*

## Crash Rates

Recent three-year (January 1, 2000 – December 31, 2002) crash data were obtained to assess the relative safety of the 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor within the University Place project area. A summary of these statistics is provided in Table 1.12.

The data presented in Table 1.12 indicate that the intersections throughout the N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor experience relatively low crash rates (i.e., less than 1.0). However, the segments between intersections have much higher rates, largely a result of rear-end crashes. In fact, of the 41 crashes that occurred during this three-year period along street segments between intersections, 26 – or 63 percent – were rear-end collisions. These crashes are most likely a byproduct of general vehicle congestion and/or left-turn vehicles stopped in the inside through-lane waiting to complete their turns.

**Table 1.12, N. 48th Street Crash Statistics (Jan. 1, 2000—Dec. 31, 2002)**

Location	No. of Crashes	Segment Length (mi.)	ADT <sup>1</sup>	Crash Rate <sup>2,3</sup>
at Leighton	30	-	35,100	0.78
Leighton to Walker	7	0.0679	22,200	4.24
at Walker	5	-	29,450	0.16
Walker to Huntington	9	0.0682	22,200	5.43
at Huntington	20	-	26,500	0.69
Huntington to Baldwin	4	0.0700	22,200	2.35
at Baldwin	8	-	26,500	0.28
Baldwin to St. Paul	6	0.0700	22,200	3.53
at St. Paul	25	-	27,550	0.83
St. Paul to Madison	5	0.0691	22,200	2.98
at Madison	18	-	26,500	0.62
Madison to Cleveland	7	0.0691	22,200	4.17
at Cleveland	2	-	26,500	0.07
Cleveland to Adams	3	0.0893	22,200	1.38
at Adams	33	-	36,600	0.82

<sup>1</sup> Average Daily Traffic

<sup>2</sup> Accidents per million (1,000,000) vehicle miles (segment)

<sup>3</sup> Accidents per million (1,000,000) entering vehicles (intersection)

Source: City of Lincoln

## Transportation Alternatives

Through the input of the Task Force members and guidance from professional staff, the following key transportation goals were identified for the project:

- Produce a smooth, safe traffic flow along 48<sup>th</sup> Street, accommodating current and projected traffic at moderate speeds.
- Make crossing 48<sup>th</sup> Street easier and safer for pedestrians.
- Improve the safety of making left turns at strategic intersections.
- Minimize additional traffic impact on surrounding properties.
- Avoid additional traffic on residential streets.

To address these goals, the study team developed five transportation alternatives. Each was evaluated to determine how well it satisfied the general transportation goals. The five alternatives were:

### ***Alternative A ("Do Nothing")***

Maintain the existing roadway system as it presently exists (i.e., two through-lanes in each direction without turn lanes between Leighton Avenue and Adams Street).

### ***Alternative B***

Maintain four lanes of traffic on 48<sup>th</sup> Street but prohibit left-turns off of 48<sup>th</sup> Street, requiring vehicles to "turn right to go left." In order for a vehicle to make a left turn, it would first make a right-turn, then proceed to the next north-south street (47<sup>th</sup> Street for southbound traffic or 49<sup>th</sup> Street for northbound traffic), then use an east-west street to cross 48<sup>th</sup> Street.

### ***Alternative C***

Maintain four lanes of traffic on 48<sup>th</sup> Street with left-turn lanes provided at Huntington Avenue and Madison Avenue; prohibit left turns at all other locations between Leighton Avenue and Adams Street; and construct a pedestrian plaza at St. Paul Avenue.

### ***Alternative D***

Provide three lanes of traffic on 48<sup>th</sup> Street; one lane in each direction plus continuous center left-turn lane.

### ***Alternative E***

Provide three lanes of traffic on 48<sup>th</sup> Street (one lane in each direction plus continuous center left-turn lane) and construct a pedestrian plaza at St. Paul Avenue.

These alternatives were evaluated and a matrix was created to summarize how well each alternative addressed each of the general goals. This matrix is presented as Table 1.13. The goals have been expanded somewhat within this table to focus on specific issues that were noted throughout the project.

**Table 1.13, Transportation Alternatives Matrix**

	48th Street Transportation Alternatives				
	A	B	C	D	E
<b>Vehicle Capacity at LOS 'E' (vpd):</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>
<b>Vehicle speeds on 48th Street</b>	Present posted speed limit is 25 mph.	Minimal change in speeds.	Minimal change - Concentrated locations for left turns will increase capacity, thereby increasing speeds slightly.	Lower speeds - Due to decreased vehicle capacity/greater congestion.	
<b>Safety and comfort of motorists turning left off of 48th Street</b>	Less safe and uncomfortable.	Improved - Vehicles must "turn right to go left."  May increase cross traffic and driver confusion.	Improved - Left-turn bays protect vehicles at Huntington and Madison.  Left turns restricted at Baldwin and St. Paul because of intersection design and pedestrian plaza.	Less safe - Left-turn lanes provided at most intersections.  Fewer gaps in opposing traffic may obstruct left-turns during peak periods.	Less safe - Left-turn lanes provided at most intersections.  Fewer gaps in opposing traffic.  Left turns restricted at St. Paul (ped. plaza).
<b>Safety and comfort of pedestrians crossing 48th Street at unsignalized locations</b>	Limited crossing opportunities.	No change.	Slightly improved.	Significant decrease in safe crossing opportunities -  Fewer lanes at unsignalized locations results in narrower roadway to cross.  Lower vehicle capacity/greater congestion will mean fewer safe crossing opportunities in traffic to allow pedestrians to cross.	
<b>48th Street pedestrian environment</b>	Proposed planter modifications will increase width of sidewalks, therefore, improving the pedestrian environment.		In addition to planter modifications, the St. Paul pedestrian plaza also enhances the pedestrian environment.	Three-lane roadway allows wider sidewalks on 48th, thus improving the pedestrian environment.	Pedestrian plaza creates better pedestrian environment.  Three-lane roadway allows wider sidewalks on 48th.
<b>Traffic operations (vehicle delay)</b>	Acceptable.	Improved -  Slightly less delay on 48th because of greater vehicle capacity.  Increased delay for side street traffic and longer trip time.	Improved -  Slightly less delay on 48th because of greater vehicle capacity.  Side street delay similar to existing.	Worsened -  Additional delay at intersections on 48th.  Additional delay for side street traffic.  "Bottlenecking" on 48th due to lack of lane continuity.	
<b>Traffic impacts to area residential streets</b>	Minimal.	Some impact as a result of vehicles turning right to go left or changing travel patterns to get places.	Minimal change.	Significant impact -  Lower capacity/greater congestion on 48th Street will increase cut-through traffic in the neighborhood.	
<b>Traffic impacts to other arterial streets</b>	Minimal.	No change.		Significant impact -  Lower capacity/greater congestion on 48th Street will divert traffic to other arterials (33rd St. and 56th St.).	
<b>Vehicle safety</b>	Comparable to other intersections of similar nature.	Minimal decrease in crashes as a result of removing left-turning vehicles from through lane.	Minimal decrease in crashes as a result of providing separate lanes for left-turning vehicles.	Number of crashes will likely increase because of decreased capacity/increased congestion.	

vpd: vehicles per day





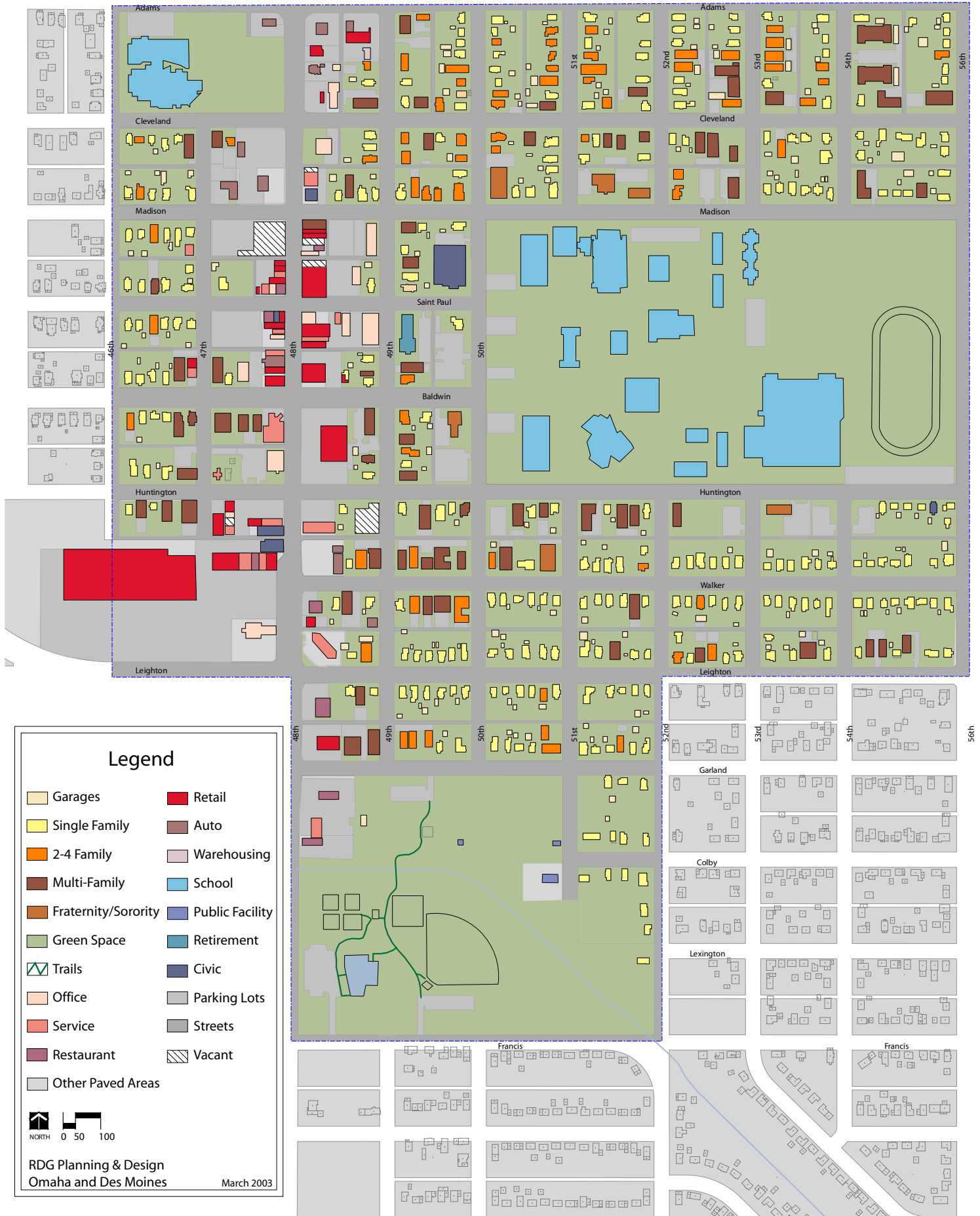
*Obstructed view at Madison Avenue.*



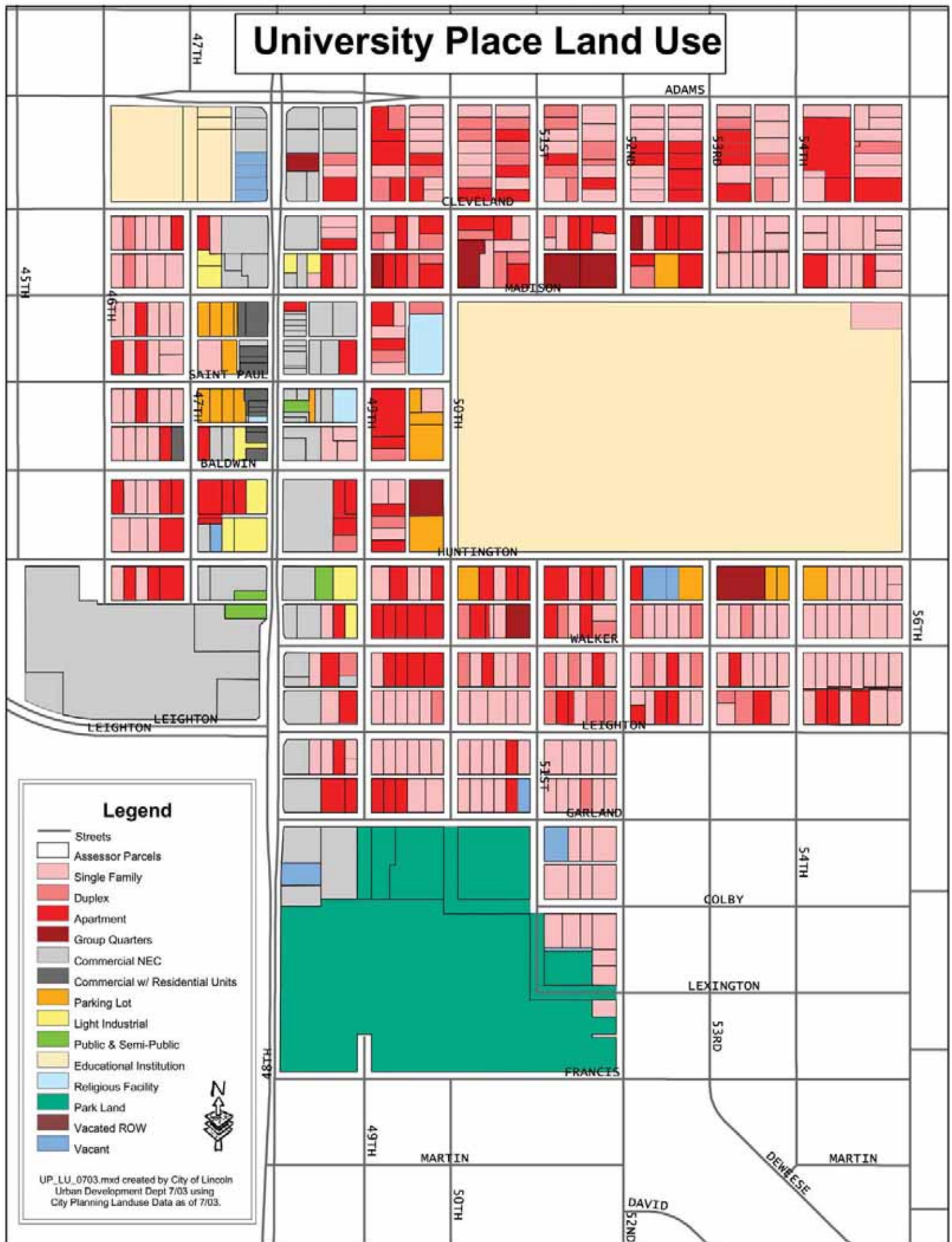
*48th Street looking north from Leighton Avenue.*



## Existing Building Use

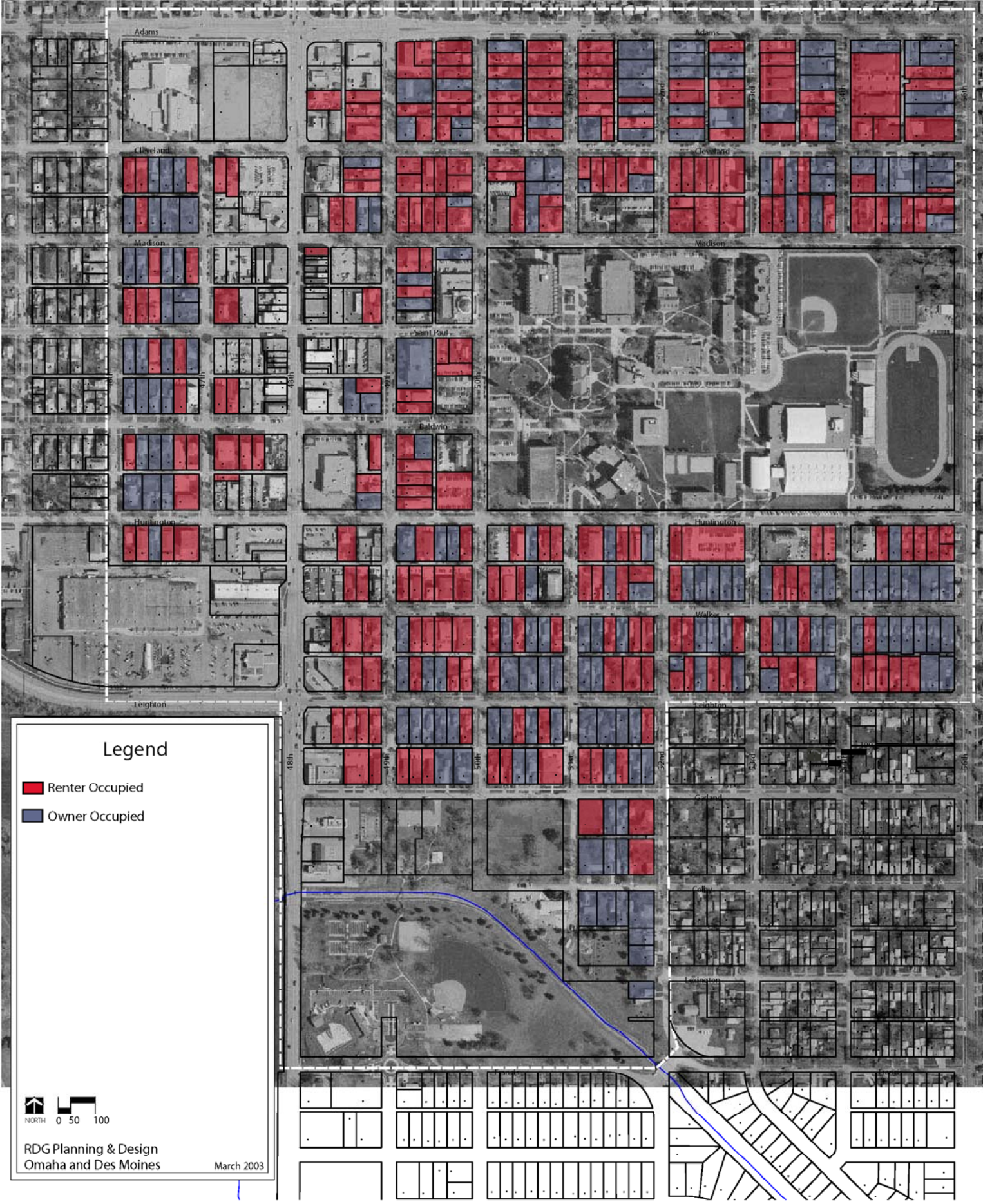


# University Place Land Use



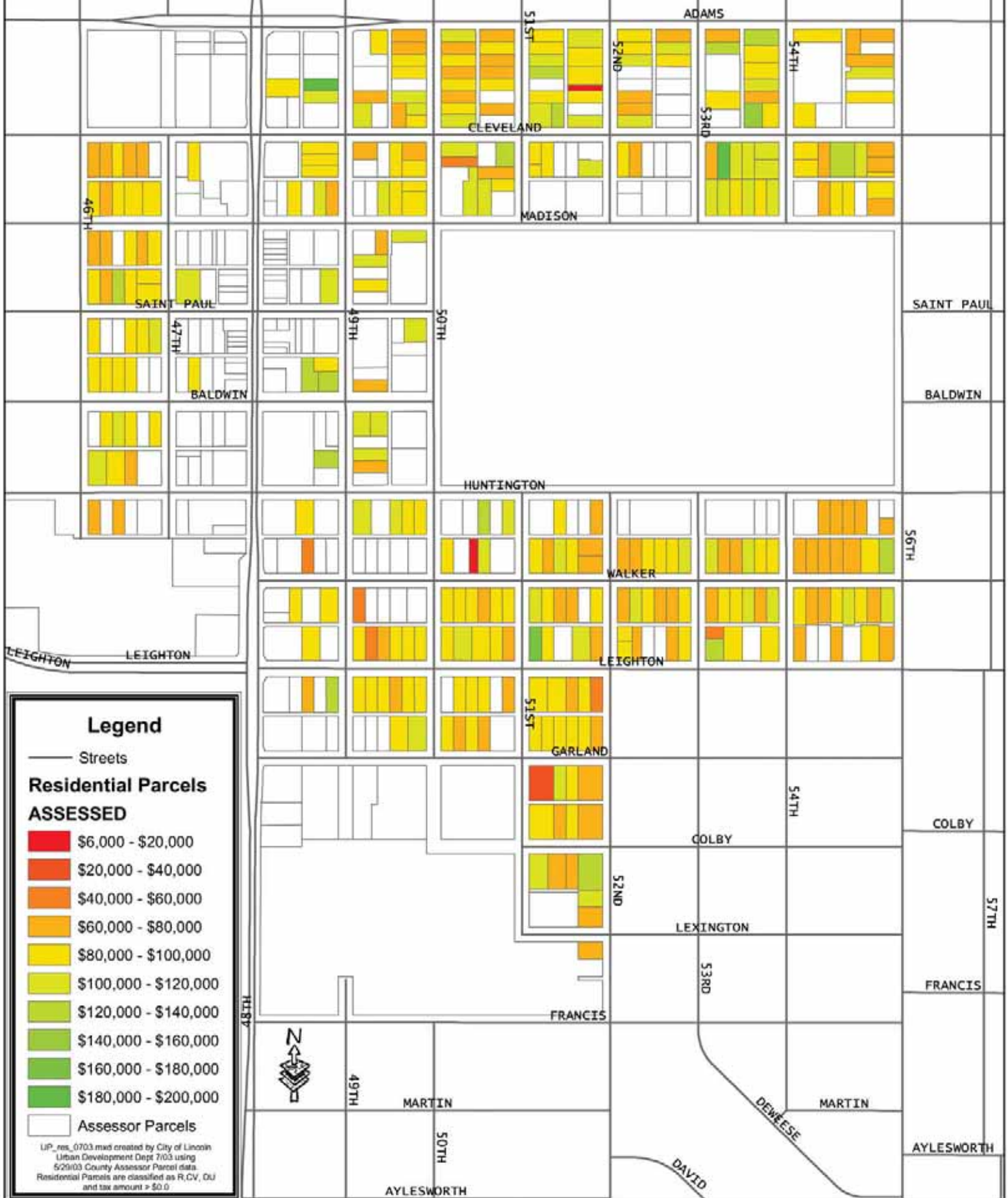


# Occupancy Status

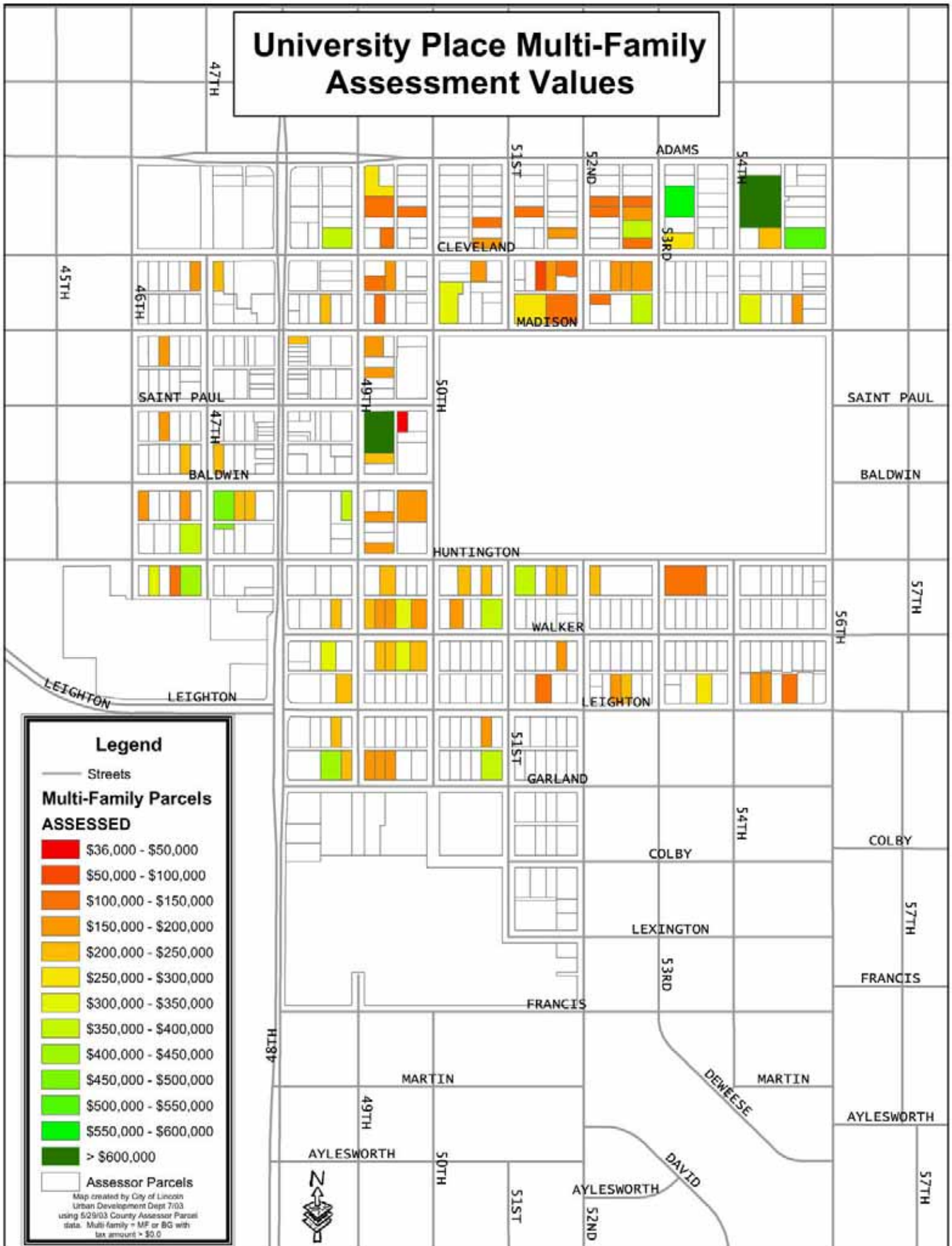




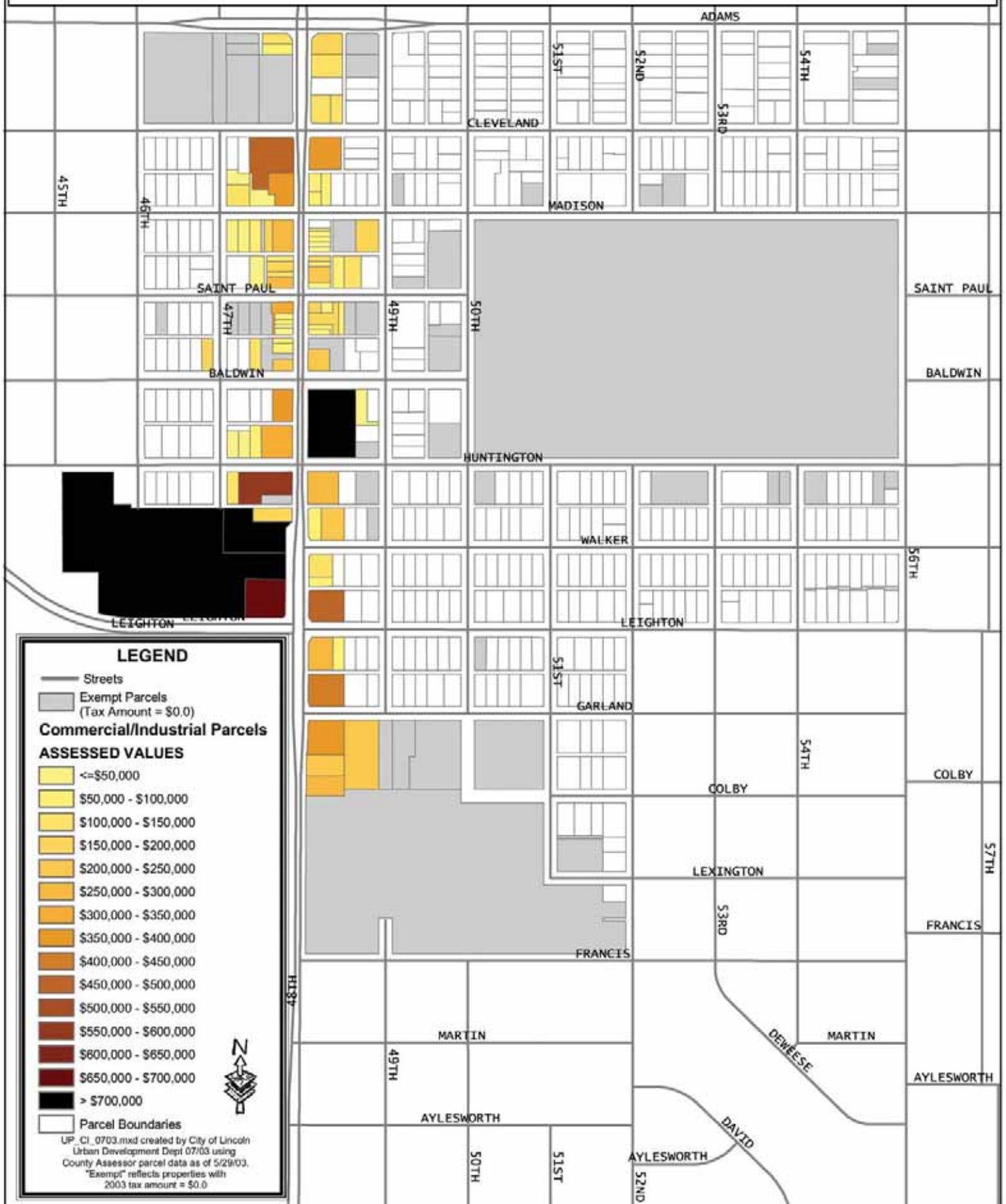
# University Place Residential Assessed Values



# University Place Multi-Family Assessment Values



# University Place Study Area Commercial/Industrial Assessed Values and Exempt Properties







## PART TWO: PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

**T**he involvement of the people who live, work and go to school in the study area was essential to developing the traffic and revitalization plan for N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street/University Place. The study process created a mechanism to move the area's key stakeholders beyond an uneasy coexistence to a collaborative partnership with the shared goal of creating a plan for a great neighborhood with a sound transportation system. This process led to the recommendations presented in Part Three of this Plan.

### Task Force

The creation of a Task Force of key stakeholders in February 2003 was a critical part of the participatory process used to develop the plan for N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street/University Place. The Task Force included 35 representatives from the different groups who have an interest in the area to ensure that the study took all views and ideas into account. These groups included:

- University Place Community Organization (UPCO),
- University Place Business Association and major property owners,
- First United Methodist Church,
- Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) administration and students,
- Huntington Elementary School,
- Northeast Family Resource Center,
- The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), and
- Neighborhoods, Inc.

The Task Force met nine times, approximately once a month, between March and November 2003. Throughout the study, the study team worked with the Task Force to:

- Identify existing traffic and land use issues,
- Analyze area housing and physical conditions,
- Review traffic data,
- Brainstorm goals and strategies,
- Consider design alternatives,
- Develop a common vision of the neighborhood's future, and
- Identify specific actions to make that vision a reality.

A general description of each meeting follows to describe the general flow of the Task Force process. Additional details of each meeting are available in the meeting summaries included in the Appendix to this report.

#### ***Meeting 1 – March 6***

The first meeting kicked off the study process with introductions and a study overview. Task Force members participated in a small-group exercise using maps to draw and discuss the area's problems.



*Task Force members develop strategies for addressing neighborhood issues at the second Task Force meeting on April 3, 2003.*

### ***Meeting 2 – April 3***

The study team presented an overview of the traffic component of the study, and discussed the origin-destination study that would be used to evaluate travel patterns in the project area. The group discussed the upcoming Focus Group meetings on April 15 and 21, and the Design Workshop meetings on April 30 and May 1. The group worked on developing strategies from the issues identified by the Task Force during Meeting 1.

### ***Meeting 3 – May 1***

This meeting followed the Neighborhood Design Charrette, discussed below. The study team presented the detailed results of the Focus Group and Charrette meetings.

### ***Meeting 4 – June 5***

The study team gave a presentation on the existing traffic conditions within the district and the traffic issues on 48<sup>th</sup> Street, based on the data collection and analysis that had occurred to date. This included results of the origin-destination survey. The Task Force discussed five alternatives developed for meeting the study goals. The study team explained the traffic analysis that would be necessary to evaluate the effects of each alternative.

### ***Meeting 5 – August 14***

The study team provided an update of the revitalization component of the study and results of the traffic analysis of each alternative.

### ***Meeting 6 – September 11***

The study team presented the conceptual neighborhood development plan addressing the housing and neighborhood revitalization objectives of the study. This session addressed a comprehensive community development strategy for the neighborhood, based on principles of housing and neighborhood conservation.

### ***Meeting 7 – October 2***

The Task Force discussed the conceptual plan and written summary with study team members. The purpose of this meeting was to reach consensus on the overall recommendations of the coordinated plan.



### ***Meeting 8 – October 9***

The Task Force continued its discussion of the conceptual plan with study team members, and indicated a general agreement on plan recommendations.

### ***Meeting 9 – November 6***

The final meeting of the Task Force followed the public open-house meeting. Task Force and study team members discussed the community meeting and future steps for implementing the plan.

## **Outreach**

Outreach efforts throughout the study included informal conversations with business owners and residents during site visits, individual meetings with business owners, meetings with NWU leadership and student government, and presentations to City department directors and the UNL facilities planning group.

## **General Public Involvement**

The broader public was also invited to learn about and participate in the N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street/University Place planning process. A project Web site and e-mail address were set up to give an overview of the process, announce public meetings, and allow citizens an easy way to make comments. The public was also invited to two rounds of intensive, participatory workshops on the project.

### ***Focus Group Meetings***

Focus group meetings were held throughout the day on April 15 and again on April 21 at First United Methodist Church. The purpose of these meetings was to gather input from people who live and work in the project area. The meetings were publicized by direct mail to project area addresses, on the project Web site, and by posters distributed to several businesses in the project area.

Attendees included employees of area businesses, NWU students and staff, neighborhood residents, property owners and business owners.



*The First United Methodist Church hosted the public participatory process.*



*The concept of creating a pedestrian plaza at St. Paul and 48th Street was developed through discussions with participants of the Design Workshop and Charrette held April 31 and May 1 of 2003.*

Comments addressed:

- The business district's image/identity, streetscape, and redevelopment opportunities,
- The relationship between the business district and NWU, its staff and students,
- Vehicle and pedestrian traffic concerns on 48<sup>th</sup> Street and other project area streets,
- Huntington Elementary School,
- Business and on-street parking,
- NWU's place in the neighborhood,
- Parks, trails and recreation, and
- Neighborhood housing.

Consultants and City staff incorporated the comments from the Focus Group meetings into the work of the Task Force identifying challenges and possible solutions and opportunities for the neighborhood and its transportation system.

### ***Design Workshop***

A design workshop or "charette" was held over a two-day period on April 30 and May 1 at First United Methodist Church. The purpose of the workshop was to allow planners, landscape architects, and engineers on the study team to develop conceptual development plans openly and with simultaneous input from the public. Charrette results were presented to participants at the end of the session. The design concepts were then refined and enhanced during the subsequent planning process.

The workshop was publicized by direct mail to project area addresses, on the project Web site, and by posters distributed to many of the businesses in the project area. Attendees included employees of area businesses, NWU students and staff, neighborhood residents, property owners and business owners.

Primary focuses of the charrette included:

- **Linkages.** Addressing streets, trails and aesthetic elements that link the business districts, residential neighborhood, university campuses and parks to each other.
- **48<sup>th</sup> Street traffic and business district.** The charrette proceedings concluded that 48<sup>th</sup> Street's environment was incompatible with its function as a traditional pedestrian-oriented "main street." Rather, 48<sup>th</sup> Street provides a first contact and marketing presence for the district, with other, more pedestrian-friendly environments connected to but located off the arterial street. Concepts of intersection improvements and separate left-turn lanes at Madison and Huntington evolved from these discussions. The charrette also suggested creating a street atmosphere at the backs of the businesses along 48<sup>th</sup> Street, encouraging use of rear entrances and parking.
- **Pedestrian friendliness.** A pedestrian-friendly environment should be developed in the business district, connected to but not directly on 48<sup>th</sup> Street. This concept, along with traffic concerns, led to the concept of a pedestrian plaza on St. Paul Avenue that would serve both traffic requirements and provide a signature urban space for the district.



*Redevelopment opportunities for the vacant Green's site were discussed at the Design Workshop and Charrette held April 31 and May 1 of 2003.*

- **Redevelopment.** This focus considered the types and configurations for development of major opportunity sites within the district, including the north and south sides of Madison Avenue west of 48<sup>th</sup> Street.

### ***Community Open-House Meeting***

A community meeting took place on October 30 to present the study recommendations and obtain public comments before finalizing the recommendations. All addresses within the study area received a postcard notice of the meeting and posters were displayed at various businesses and institutions. The City also distributed a press release announcing the meeting and placed changeable message boards along 48th Street announcing the meeting in the project area.

The meeting was held at the First United Methodist Church, with 77 people attending. Two identical PowerPoint presentations of the study process and preliminary recommendations were provided. Five display stations were assembled based on the following subject areas: study recommendations, business, neighborhood, transportation/traffic, and comments. A handout summarizing the study was distributed.

### **Plan Recommendations**

This process, designed to create many venues for community participation and deliberation, led directly to the specific concepts presented in Part Three of this Plan.





Early sketch of the pedestrian plaza and parking configuration developed during the public participatory process.







## PART THREE: THE UNIVERSITY PLACE PLAN

**T**he North 48th Street / University Place planning process was built on relating the requirements of transportation system planning to those of neighborhood development. Often, transportation and revitalization planning occur in isolation and, all too frequently, seem to work at crossed purposes. Transportation systems are sometimes measured by how quickly and smoothly traffic moves through an area. On the other hand, neighborhoods often see regional traffic as an imposition on them, and are negatively affected by rapid traffic and high parking demands. The University Place Plan recognizes these different demands and takes the position that it is possible to have a successful transportation system that also reinforces neighborhood development.

Given this approach, the Plan and its recommendations address six specific areas of concentration, together forming a comprehensive strategy that serves the needs of both transportation and neighborhood revitalization. These six areas include:

- **Transportation**, considering the function of 48<sup>th</sup> Street within the University Place study area within the overall Lincoln transportation system, and how that functional role can best be satisfied.
- **Streetscape and business environment**, addressing the health of the University Place neighborhood business district and the type of environment that it presents to residents, business owners, and customers.
- **Redevelopment**, reviewing strategic reinvestment opportunities within the University Place area and identifying physical forms and strategies that can most effectively capitalize on these opportunities.
- **Local traffic and circulation parking**, understanding that changes along 48<sup>th</sup> Street also affect local traffic movement, and that local traffic in turn affects the livability of University Place as a quality residential neighborhood.
- **Linkages**, addressing both the “internal” connections among the residential neighborhood, the business district, and the neighborhood’s large educational institutions – Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) East Campus; and the external linkages between University Place and the rest of the city.
- **Neighborhood development and land use**, considering the quality of the neighborhood environment for its residents and stakeholders, and addressing the pressures and changes that affect the neighborhood’s investment climate.

This section establishes the goals and principles that direct the recommendations for each of these areas of concentration. It continues by presenting the specific recommendations that will implement these principles.

## Transportation

***Vision: N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street will function successfully as a north-south arterial through north Lincoln, balancing speed and capacity with the urban context of a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood business district.***

N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street is an important north-south arterial through the north-central part of the city. Of north-south routes east of 27<sup>th</sup> Street, only 48<sup>th</sup> Street provides direct access free of railroad grade crossings north to Cornhusker Highway and beyond. Although the Antelope Valley Project may have an effect on 48<sup>th</sup> Street traffic volumes, this effect is more likely to stabilize rather than reduce traffic volumes in the corridor. Concepts that reduce the capacity of 48<sup>th</sup> Street will either increase congestion in a way that is unacceptable to most users of the street; or divert traffic to other parallel streets that are even less able to handle these volumes.

However, an approach that places a primary priority on increasing the capacity or speed of traffic moving through the corridor will have highly negative effects on the quality of the University Place neighborhood. Lincoln's neighborhood business districts lend a fabric and scale to the city that is fundamental to its quality of life. A program that substantially increases the traffic capacity of N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street by widening would require major demolition of many of the district's "main street" commercial buildings, effectively destroying the character of the business street. Such a program would eliminate one of the major features that adds distinction to the surrounding residential area. It would also harm the quality of the NWU's neighborhood setting, degrading the environment that the University offers to its students and staff. Deterioration of University Place's environment and ultimate value to the community is too high of a price to be paid for higher traffic capacity.

As a result, the University Place Plan recommends a middle course, diagnosing and adjusting the street design to optimize traffic flow without affecting the urban fabric of the University Place district. Transportation policies should implement the following principles and goals:

- *N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street through University Place should maintain a smooth, safe traffic flow, accommodating current and projected levels at moderate speeds.* "Smooth" and "safe" does not mean "faster." Design treatments should address problems that obstruct flow or create potential hazards and interruptions, such as left turns from moving lanes. However, the design speed and performance of the street should be appropriate to the environment of an urban "main street" business district.
- *Pedestrians should find crossing N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street to be easier and safer than at present.* Transportation policy in urban districts should respect the needs of pedestrians as well as vehicles, particularly in urban business districts. N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street should not be a barrier that divides neighborhoods and businesses on either side of the street. It should be relatively crossable at strategic points along its length.

- *Motorists should be able to turn left from 48<sup>th</sup> Street at strategic locations without impeding through-traffic.* While most traffic on N. 48<sup>th</sup> is composed of north-south through-movements, a significant number of motorists turn left off the street to reach NWU, First United Methodist Church, and area businesses and residences. This requires turning from the inner moving lane, which creates both traffic friction and possible crash points. Limiting left turns to specific locations and moving left turning traffic from the stream of through-traffic reduces this friction and helps create a smoother traffic flow.
- *Redesign of N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street should minimize the impact of traffic on the viability of adjacent properties.* Commercial buildings along N. 48<sup>th</sup> are typically in a Main Street configuration, built out to the property line. Typically, the building façade is 12 to 12½ feet from the face of the curb. Reducing this distance will bring moving traffic closer to buildings, affecting their commercial viability. Any changes to the street channel should occur where space permits, without affecting existing development.
- *Changes to N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street should not channel additional traffic onto local residential streets.* Most land uses in University Place are institutional or residential. The relatively high density of residential development already produces significant local traffic. Changes to N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street should not have the unintended consequences of making local traffic conditions worse by diverting through-traffic to local streets.

The planning process led to the conclusion that Alternative C, presented in the Transportation Analysis section, most appropriately satisfied these various requirements. The recommendations presented in this section represent the actions prescribed by this alternative.

## **Transportation Recommendations**

### **Four Through-Lanes**

*N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street should maintain four through-lanes between Leighton Avenue and Adams Street.*

Four lanes are necessary to move current traffic volumes efficiently, and can continue to handle projected traffic volumes adequately. Reducing the street to three lanes (one through-lane in each direction with a continuous center left-turn lane) would reduce its capacity below current volumes, thereby diverting traffic to other arterial streets, such as 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and 56<sup>th</sup> Street. Because these other arterial streets are already experiencing traffic volumes above their design capacity, 48<sup>th</sup> Street traffic would also be diverted to local, neighborhood streets. On the other hand, increasing the width to five lanes (two through-lanes with a continuous center left-turn lane) would require either substantial land acquisition or bring traffic to within five to six feet of the front facades of buildings. This would violate the principle of minimizing negative traffic impact on

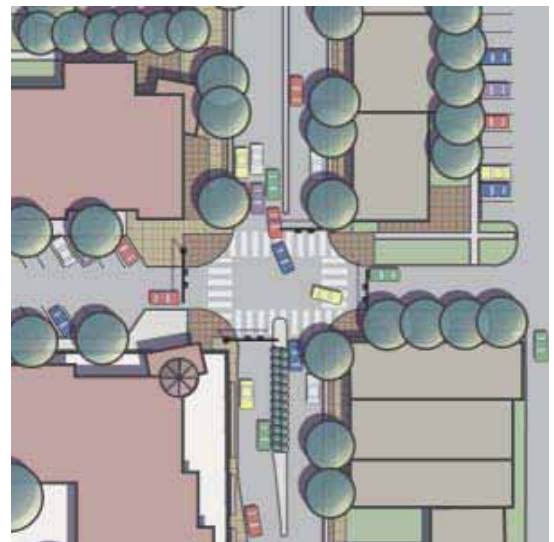
adjacent properties. The five-lane solution provides a dedicated left-turn lane throughout the district; but left-turn movements can be managed more appropriately by limiting their availability to strategic locations without negative effects on the district.

### **Left Turns at Madison and Huntington**

*Left-turn lanes should be provided at the Huntington Avenue and Madison Avenue intersections, and prohibited at other intersections between Leighton Avenue and Adams Street.*

This recommendation preserves the concept of four through-lanes that are unobstructed by left-turning traffic. Left-turn lanes would be maintained at Adams Street and Leighton Avenue and new left-turn lanes would be provided at Madison Avenue and Huntington Avenue. This will reduce the number of conflicts between through- and left-turning vehicles caused by left-turning vehicles turning from the inside through lane. These locations are logical because:

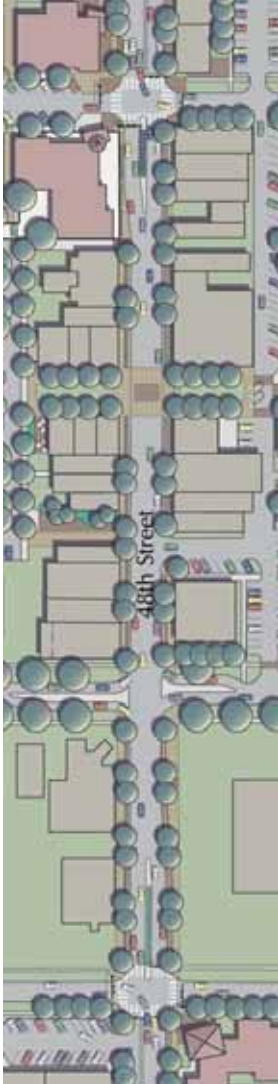
- Huntington and Madison frame the NWU campus and are the principal points of access to the University. The internal campus access drive intersects Madison Avenue. Campus facilities that attract public use, including the field house and theater, are located on the south side of the campus and are accessed along Huntington.
- Adjacent development patterns, including the Green and Hall redevelopment sites at Madison and the Northeast Printer redevelopment site and existing Walgreen's at the Huntington intersection, provide enough room to redesign these two intersections to accommodate a dedicated left-turn lane. Another logical location for a left-turn movement, St. Paul Avenue, does not have adequate space for a left-turn lane without property acquisition and probable demolition of commercial buildings. This intersection is the commercial heart of the University Place business district; attempting to widen the intersection would critically harm the character and function of the district.



*Illustration of proposed redevelopment and left-turn lane at 48th and Madison.*

### **Two Full Signals, One Pedestrian Signal**

*Provide full traffic signals at Huntington and Madison Avenues and a pedestrian signal at St. Paul Avenue. Initially, the existing pedestrian signal at Huntington should be re-*



**Illustration of the 48th Street corridor with full traffic signals at Huntington and Madison, and a pedestrian signal at St. Paul.**

*placed by full signalization. The Madison Avenue signal should be installed when warranted. Warrants will probably be achieved as part of major redevelopment on the Green's redevelopment site on the southwest corner of 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison and/or the closing of vehicular access onto 48<sup>th</sup> Street from St. Paul Avenue. The pace and impact of area redevelopment and traffic redirection will influence the timing and sequencing of these traffic signal upgrades.*

The N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street study segment currently provides a full traffic signal at St. Paul Avenue and a pedestrian signal at Huntington Avenue. Traffic analysis indicates that the segment of the street between Adams and Leighton can accommodate two full signals (with both vehicular and pedestrian signalization) and one pedestrian-actuated signal while maintaining satisfactory traffic flow. In addition, the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), a nationally accepted traffic engineering document, does not permit pedestrian-only signals at vehicular intersections. Therefore, the Huntington Avenue signal must be upgraded to full signalization or moved at least ninety feet from the existing intersection.

This Plan recommends upgrading the Huntington Avenue signal to full signalization because of the street's status as a collector street and the planned intersection redesign to provide a dedicated left-turn lane from N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street. The second full signal should be provided at Madison Avenue, the other intersection that can successfully accommodate a dedicated left-turn lane. This signal is especially helpful because the view of traffic moving westbound from Madison onto 48<sup>th</sup> Street is obstructed by an existing apartment building.

While the intersection of 48<sup>th</sup> Street/Madison Avenue is an ideal candidate for traffic signalization, federal requirements restrict when and where traffic signals may be implemented. A series of "warrants" – criteria such as vehicular volume, vehicular delay, pedestrian volumes, and crashes – have been outlined in the MUTCD. These criteria must be satisfied before a traffic signal may be implemented. Presently, traffic volumes at this intersection do not warrant signal installation.

This Plan recommends that the Madison Avenue signal be installed when warranted. Warrants will probably be achieved as part of major redevelopment on the Green's site on the southwest corner of 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison and/or the closing of vehicular access onto 48<sup>th</sup> Street from St. Paul Avenue. The pace and impact of area redevelopment and traffic redirection will influence the timing and sequencing of these traffic signal upgrades.

This Plan also recommends converting the full signal at St. Paul Avenue to a pedestrian-actuated signal. Because the intersection cannot accommodate a controlled left-turn,

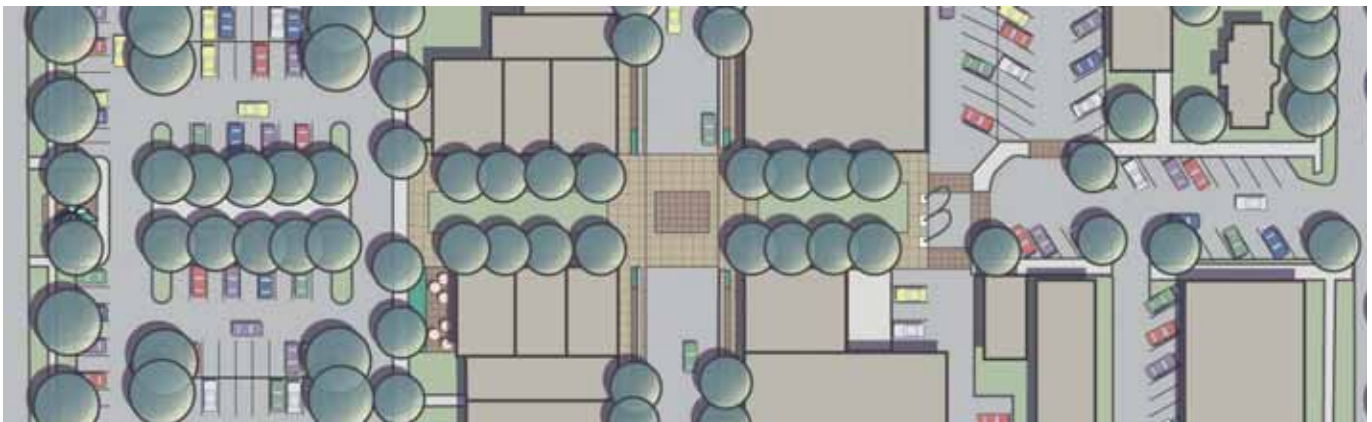
retaining full signalization here is not recommended. The two full signals are more appropriately located where all traffic movements are allowed. A pedestrian signal at St. Paul, however, can accommodate the primary pedestrian demand and reinforce the intersection's character as the heart of the district. In addition, coupled with the Pedestrian Plaza recommendation below, pedestrian signalization can provide free movement to pedestrians to all corners of the intersection.

### **St. Paul Pedestrian Plaza**

*St. Paul Avenue should be converted to a pedestrian plaza on both sides of 48<sup>th</sup> Street, to about one-half block east and west of the intersection.*

This critical recommendation completes the main N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street recommendations, and can go far to reinforce the quality of University Place as a business environment. As the heart of the district, the St. Paul intersection is the focus for pedestrian activity, reinforced by neighborhood attractions such as Ville Grille. The plaza concept reinforces this character and provides urban open space back from the main street for activities such as outdoor dining, performances, special events, and simply watching city and neighborhood life. Pedestrian activity and attractive design, as is proposed at this intersection, can also have the additional beneficial tendency of slowing through-traffic.

However, the St. Paul Plaza has important transportation functions as well. If St. Paul were to remain open to vehicular traffic, a pedestrian actuated signal would not be allowed because pedestrian signals are required to be a minimum of ninety feet from an intersection. To maintain a smooth traffic flow, no more than two full signals can be provided between Leighton and Adams. Keeping a full signal at St. Paul would come at the cost of one of the proposed signals at Madison and Huntington. This Plan considers full signalization at intersections that can accommodate left turns a high priority.



**Illustration of proposed pedestrian plaza at St. Paul Avenue. The plaza will extend approximately one-half block in either direction from 48th Street, creating a pleasant location for pedestrians and events as well as providing a visual icon for the neighborhood and business district.**



## Streetscape and Business Environment

***Vision: N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street will provide an attractive physical environment, improving the ability of existing businesses to market themselves and creating an atmosphere that encourages investment on opportunity sites.***

N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street, in common with other commercial corridors in Lincoln, is both a transportation and business environment. However, in “main street” districts, the character of streetscape is particularly important to business success. This is true for two primary reasons:

- Unlike contemporary commercial “strip” development, a substantial number of customers view the public street frontage at pedestrian rather than vehicular speeds. In the auto-oriented commercial environment, interaction with the street is at relatively high, vehicular speeds. The customer typically pulls into a parking lot off the street and, as a pedestrian, moves between the car and the entrance to the destination business. In a main street environment, customers typically park in common lots, and typically will experience a street environment as pedestrians.
- Businesses are less likely to be freestanding and more likely to be part of a block with common walls. Some of N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street’s businesses and commercial structures are in an auto-oriented configuration. However, the core district between Baldwin and Madison Avenues is made up largely of buildings with common walls and no setback. This district character again emphasizes the sidewalk and appearance of the street.

An attractive public environment, in the absence of reasonable marketing efforts and a good business mix, cannot create a strong business district. However, a positive environment can help a district market itself as a destination. It is one of the many tools that can help nurture more business and a stronger “brand” – a set of pleasant expectations that a potential customer has of the experience of visiting the district. Thus, it is not accidental that businesses along N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street have banded together to support a major city streetscape initiative and to create a Business Improvement District to maintain these improvements. The following principles and goals should guide the district’s streetscape development efforts:

- *N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street should offer improved visual quality and pedestrian scale.* However, the street’s primary through-transportation function will prevent it from ever becoming a truly pedestrian-friendly environment. The street should offer the best front door environment possible, because the appearance of the street represents the image that the district presents to prospective customers. However, the street presently carries 25,000 vehicles per day on a street channel that is only twelve feet from the front façade of many businesses. As a result, 48<sup>th</sup> street itself will never be an environment for quieter or longer-term pedestrian activities – strolling, lei-

surely shopping, or outdoor eating. Pedestrians on 48<sup>th</sup> Street, like motorists, will be in transit, walking along the sidewalks to reach a destination. The design of the streetscape, as well as the overall concept of how the business area works, should reflect this fact.

- *The overall project should provide pedestrian spaces that are related to and visible from the street, but are comfortably separated from the effects of heavy traffic.* While N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street may never be a promenade for strolling, public space for the activities that lend texture to an urban business district must still be provided. In University Place, these spaces should be visible from the main arterial, so that the passing motorist can see their presence and that activities remain connected to the street. However, they should also be relatively insulated from the effects of heavy traffic – part of the street, but also away from it.
- *N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street should not be an undue barrier for pedestrians, and should be relatively crossable.* This principle was discussed earlier from a transportation perspective. However, it also makes economic sense. Business districts are most successful when customers visit for more than one purpose or destination. A physical environment that encourages pedestrians to use both sides of the street increases business and creates a more satisfying and interesting user experience.

## **Streetscape Recommendations**

### **A Sense of Sidewalk Space Through Boundary Walls**

*The current planters should be replaced by boundary walls, providing a sense of greater sidewalk space adjacent to commercial buildings developed on the property line.*

The planters installed along N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street during the 1980s were designed to help insulate pedestrians from moving traffic and protect them from spray and other traffic effects. However, the planters present a relatively monolithic façade only about six feet from the building line. This emphasizes the narrowness of the sidewalks and contributes to an unfriendly corridor effect, typically a function of a high length-to-width ratio. This Plan recommends replacing the planters with a boundary wall concept. The main face of



**An alternative sidewalk configuration along 48th Street, replacing the planter boxes with decorative walls to increase space for pedestrians.**

the wall is about the same distance from the curb as the existing planters, and it includes enclosed returns at its ends. However, this treatment lacks a continuous sidewalk edge. Instead, the structure defines enclaves for landscaping and street furniture. This design change reduces the corridor effect of the street and can give the sidewalk a softer, somewhat less uniform and sterile edge.

The boundary wall concept will provide the same protection from spray and splash that the planters offer, because it provides the same barrier to the street. However, the perceptual width of the sidewalk will increase, and more space will be available for amenity features. It is important that the street façade of the wall also be attractively detailed. Other aspects of the current N. 48<sup>th</sup> Streetscape Plan, including installation of ornamental lighting, should be implemented.

### **St. Paul Plaza**

*St. Paul Avenue should be converted to a pedestrian plaza 1/2 block east and west of the N. 48<sup>th</sup> street intersection.*

The transportation system necessity of the St. Paul Plazas was discussed in the previous section. However, this project may well be the central strategy for physical and economic revitalization as well. The plaza project will establish this central intersection as a pedestrian precinct, in a way reclaiming this part of the 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor for the business community. The plazas will provide places for outdoor eating, events, and special programming that are connected to but separate from the noise of traffic on the street. Effectively implemented and designed, they will be a bridge between the east and west side of the street, and form gateways to the neighborhoods on either side. In short, the plazas and the scale and access that they bring will make city life dominant at the heart of the district without compromising the imperatives of traffic movement.

### **Two Full Signals, One Pedestrian Signal**

*Provide full traffic signals at Huntington and Madison Avenues and a pedestrian signal at St. Paul Avenue. The Madison Avenue signal should be installed when warranted. Warrants will probably be achieved as part of major redevelopment on the Green's site at the southwest corner of 48th and Madison and/or the closing of vehicular access onto 48th Street from St. Paul Avenue.*

This policy also repeats a traffic and transportation recommendation that serves dual purposes. The recommended signals will improve the ability of pedestrians to cross 48<sup>th</sup> Street, increasing the likelihood that customers will use the district for more than one purpose. Improved signalization is likely to moderate traffic speeds, and discourage motorists from speeding up to beat a signal change at St. Paul, currently the only signal intermediate between Adams and Leighton. Finally, the pedestrian signal at St. Paul, permitting full access to all points of the intersection, will reinforce the role of this key location as the center of University Place.

### **Huntington Elementary School Landscaping**

*The 48<sup>th</sup> Street frontage of Huntington Elementary School should be attractively landscaped. This landscaping and site improvement project should include acquisition of the auto dealership on the southwest corner of 48<sup>th</sup> and Adams.*

The north entrance to the University Place neighborhood is both extremely visible, representing many people's introduction to the neighborhood, and relatively unattractive, despite the fact that most of the west side of the street is a school site. Replacing the current chain-link fence and landscaping the 48<sup>th</sup> Street frontage would improve the visual quality of this critical entrance, upgrading the district's image and, consequently, increasing the probability of major reinvestment. Acquisition of the used car dealership on the corner eliminates a poorly located curb cut and provides space for construction of an attractive neighborhood gateway feature.



*Eastern edge of Huntington Elementary School.*



*Illustration of proposed landscaping and site improvement of Huntington Elementary School grounds, pick-up/drop-off lane along Cleveland Avenue, and neighborhood gateway feature at 48<sup>th</sup> and Adams.*

### **UNL East Campus Edge Enhancement**

*The 48th Street frontage of UNL's East Campus should be enhanced, including such features as a trail paralleling 48th Street, enhanced landscaping and/or an attractive edge wall, and a campus gateway feature at 48th and Leighton.*

The East Campus exposure along 48<sup>th</sup> Street south of Leighton has a major impact on the quality of the neighborhood; yet, like the Huntington Elementary School site, it is relatively unattractive, marked only by a barrier fence. A corridor upgrade, completed as part of an overall East Campus development program, would have an enormously positive impact on the neighborhood, and would strengthen the link between the University and the University Place neighborhood. A finer-grained streetscape on the west side of the street might also have the benefit of countering the "expressway" look of 48<sup>th</sup> Street south of Leighton, and consequently moderating traffic speeds. Elements of an East Campus corridor project should include:

- *Replacement or screening of the chain-link fence.* The chain link fence should be screened with landscaping or replaced, possibly with an undulating decorative wall to create a sculptural feature and to help break the rigid linearity of the corridor. Features of the design may be coordinated with the boundary walls proposed as part of the business district streetscape program. However, any replacement structure must accomplish the security needs of UNL.
- *Trail development along 48<sup>th</sup> Street.* Trails have been developed along other edges of the East Campus, most notably Holdrege Street from 33<sup>rd</sup> to 48<sup>th</sup>. The Comprehensive Plan recommends a trail along 48<sup>th</sup> Street from Dead Man's Run south as well as along Dead Man's Run to 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, eventually connecting to the Dietrich trail. Trail connections are discussed more fully as part of the "Linkages" recommendations. Trail development would connect the neighborhood and campus to other major trails in the region, and would help to introduce activity to the west side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street.
- *Enhanced landscaping.* The East Campus exposure presents a relatively barren appearance, despite the fact that this side of the campus is used primarily for experimental crop production and other agricultural use. A successful landscaping program can be themed around the agricultural nature of the campus and help to define a transition between the rural nature of the East Campus and the urban street that passes by it. Landscaping can also add a needed vertical dimension to the 48<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape.
- *Leighton Avenue Gateway.* The northeast corner of the UNL campus, at 48<sup>th</sup> and Leighton, is especially important because it represents the interface between the campus and University Place neighborhood. A physical gateway feature can reinforce this connection and provide the East Campus with a positive presence as a major component of the University Place community. It also reinforces the broad concept of the neighborhood as a connected progression of two universities and business and residential communities.



## Redevelopment

***Vision: Major opportunity sites in University Place will experience new development that reinforces the urban character of the district and provides features that knit the campus and neighborhood communities together.***

The N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor includes several strategic opportunities for new development or upgrade of existing land uses. These sites benefit from the street's high traffic volumes and role as a principal conduit in Lincoln's transportation system. They also have the added market attractions of the NWU campus and a relatively densely populated neighborhood.

Yet, all too often, the quality and intensity of development on opportunity sites under-shoots the potential, and frequently produces small, freestanding commercial buildings surrounded by parking. This in turn prevents the overall district from expanding its markets and growing into the type of urban environment that can generate business for both existing and new enterprises. Indeed, existing property and business owners have a vital interest in maximizing the yield generated by potential neighborhood redevelopment sites. Higher yield and levels of activity produce more business and, ultimately, more value for all stakeholders.

The "Transportation" and "Streetscape" recommendations are designed to create conditions that can help the neighborhood take best advantage of its opportunity sites. Opportunity sites include parcels where market forces and locational assets could create more productive patterns of land and building use, and where redevelopment may be advisable. These efforts should be guided by the following goals and principles.

- *Redevelopment in University Place should reinforce the Main Street character of the district.* University Place has elements of both a "main street" district and an auto-oriented commercial corridor along its length through the study area. Yet, it is the main street components that provide the neighborhood's strongest image features. These finer-scaled features also appear to have the best chance of attracting customers from the campus. Observations from other university campuses suggest that once students get into their cars to go on shopping or food trips, they rarely stop two or three blocks away. A neighboring business district's best chance of maximizing campus-related business is to attract student customers as pedestrians. As a result, this Plan proposes that the future of expanded markets in University Place lies on the "main street" side of the ledger – new development should reinforce the scale and texture of a main street district, rather than follow the patterns of default commercial development, where buildings are typically disengaged from the street.
- *Land uses on opportunity sites should integrate the NWU and UNL East Campus communities into the business district, making University Place the "hometown" environment for both campuses.* The business district's most logical opportunity

for short-term market growth is capturing a larger share of campus-related business. Of the two potential university markets, NWU is clearly more connected to the core of the business district. Yet, with a few exceptions, most members of the university community do not use the University Place district. Students interviewed report that businesses and building uses in the district do not provide services or destinations that appeal to students. Clearly, a main street setting two blocks away from a residential campus should attract student business; and the businesses and activities that attract students should also attract customers from the larger city.

- *Opportunity sites should provide a mix of urban uses.* Potential redevelopment sites in University Place are both strategic and precious. Therefore, it is essential that land be used to its highest potential. Typically, single-use development may create one type of business, but cannot generate the synergy and investment diversity that can cause the district to transform itself. Therefore, new development should seek to incorporate a variety of uses – new retailing and services at street level, with residential and office development above. Mixed-use redevelopment extends the hours during which the district is active and increases the chances that people will use it for a variety of purposes. Upper-level housing development, in particular, integrates 48<sup>th</sup> Street into the neighborhood's residential environment and increases the number of people who informally and routinely use neighborhood retail services.

## **Redevelopment Recommendations**

### **Madison Avenue as a "Main Street" Extension**

*Madison Avenue from 48<sup>th</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> should be developed as an extension of the Main Street business district.*



*Illustration of proposed redevelopment of Madison Avenue.*

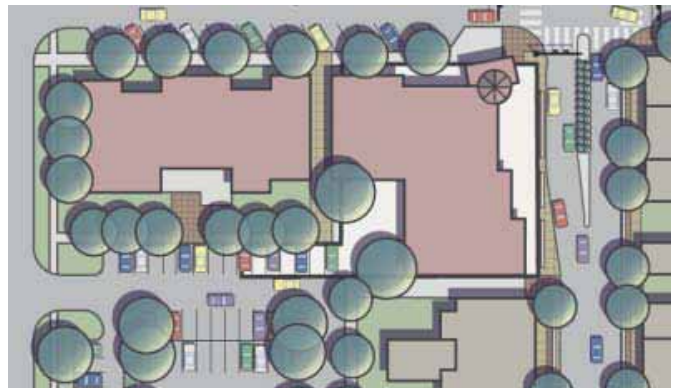
Two primary opportunity sites, the Green's Furnace & Plumbing property and the Hall Motors' property are located along Madison Avenue between 47<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Streets. Appropriately designed development can allow the 48<sup>th</sup> Street main street district to turn westward onto Madison. The Madison block, with local traffic only, provides the opportunity for the pedestrian-friendly, street-oriented commercial environment that 48<sup>th</sup> Street, with its high traffic volumes and limited right-of-way, cannot. The Madison streetscape also should include street landscaping, diagonal parking, and pedestrian amenities that can create a unique district. Orientation of redevelopment to this street further satisfies the principle of providing pedestrian-oriented public space that is connected to, but separate from, 48<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **Mixed-Use, Street-Oriented Development on the Green's site**

*The Green's site should be developed with a mixed-use project, providing strong street definition along Madison Avenue, with street level commercial and at least one upper level of residential or office use.*

The Green's site, on the south side of Madison between 48<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Streets, is a critical site whose ultimate reuse will determine the personality of other development in University Place. Anticipated redevelopment includes the following features:

- *Street level commercial development oriented to Madison Avenue.* Commercial development should consider establishments that are appealing to the University community. NWU itself may consider establishing a significant commercial presence in this development.
- *One or two upper levels of development, with a priority to be placed on upper level housing.* Quality housing for faculty, graduate students, staff, and other community members can further cement the relationship between the campus and the University Place district.
- *Short-term customer parking provided by diagonal stalls along Madison Avenue.* This provides convenient parking and reinforces the potential main street environment of the extended district.
- *Primary parking in an expanded public lot behind the Green's site and existing 48<sup>th</sup> Street storefronts.* This concept, discussed further under the Local Traffic Circulation and Parking recommendations, provides adequate parking to support



*Illustration of proposed redevelopment of the vacant Green's Furnace & Plumbing site.*

full yield of the site, yet avoids compromising the pedestrian character of the district. An attractive walk-through connection should be made between the rear parking and Madison Avenue.

- *Design with adequate setbacks off 48<sup>th</sup> Street to provide for the intersection improvement.* Redevelopment provides adequate space to accommodate the upgraded, signalized 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison intersection. This upgraded intersection, in turn, is fundamental to taking full economic advantage of the Madison Avenue redevelopment sites. The design of the project must accommodate the planned intersection improvement.

### **Mixed-Use Street-Oriented Development on the Hall's Site**

*The Hall's site should be developed with a mixed-use project, completing the Madison Avenue "main street" extension and continuing a clear street definition along 48<sup>th</sup> Street toward Huntington School.*

This site, accounting for much of the block between Madison, Cleveland, 48<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup>, logically follows the successful redevelopment of the Green's site. Currently, land uses include the John Hall auto dealership, an auto service facility and a convenience store. Proposed redevelopment patterns are consistent with those proposed for the Green's site, and include:

- *Street level commercial development oriented to Madison Avenue.* Commercial development on Madison should complement uses on the site across the street. Urban housing, such as townhouses, may be a possibility along Madison toward 47<sup>th</sup> Street, depending on market demands.
- *Street-level commercial or office development along 48<sup>th</sup> Street.* The street near Cleveland Avenue may have a smaller retail component, as distances from the center of the district increase. Office or service uses may be appropriate at street level; building configuration should maintain a clear definition of the street.
- *Residential development in either an upper-level or attached urban configuration.* Residential development should be integrated into planning for the Hall's site.



*Illustration of proposed redevelopment of the Hall's Motors site.*

- *Short-term customer parking provided by diagonal stalls off Madison Avenue.* This extends the main street character of Madison Avenue, and provides convenient, on-street parking for short-term customer use.
- *Primary parking behind street frontages.* Parking should be accessed from Cleveland Avenue and 47<sup>th</sup> Street to avoid interrupting the street frontages. Walk-through connections should be provided from the rear parking and the Madison Avenue and 48<sup>th</sup> Street frontages.
- *Design with adequate setbacks off 48<sup>th</sup> Street to provide for the intersection improvement.*

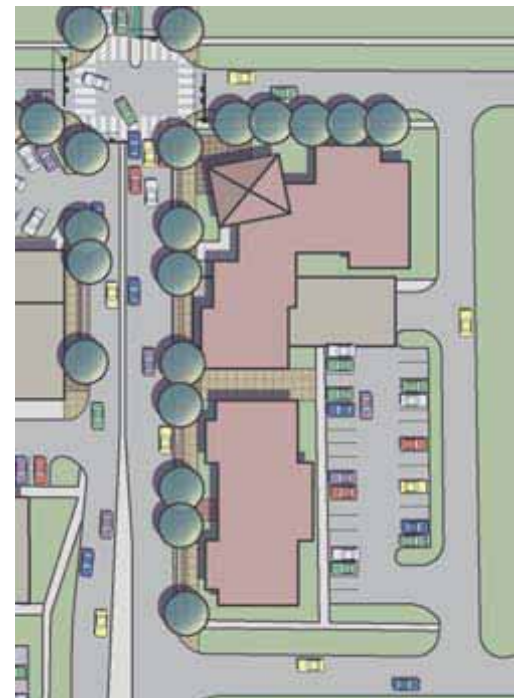
Together, the two sites on either side of Madison Avenue will transform the character of the district. The Madison Avenue streetscape, intersection improvement, and traffic signal create conditions that make this redevelopment likely, and more effectively tie 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison into the campus environment. The overall redevelopment concept demonstrates the mutually beneficial effects of transportation and revitalization programs.

### **Commercial Redevelopment of the “Northeast Printer” Site**

*Street-oriented commercial redevelopment should occur along the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street between Huntington and Walker Avenues.*

Redevelopment of this underused but strategic site, across from auto-oriented commercial development on the west side of the street, provides adequate space for the redesign of the 48<sup>th</sup> and Huntington intersection and provides another strategic commercial development opportunity. Features of the redevelopment concept for this site include:

- *Urban commercial development oriented to N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street.* Commercial development should help define the major street, with parking provided to the rear. Upper-level mixed-use development should be considered on this site; however, adjacent development is more typically single-level commercial.
- *Parking provided behind 48<sup>th</sup> Street development.* Parking for a new project should be provided behind new buildings, with access from Huntington and Walker Avenues. A walk-through connection should be provided between parking and 48<sup>th</sup> Street.



**Illustration of proposed redevelopment of the Northeast Printer site.**



- *Design with adequate setbacks off 48<sup>th</sup> Street to provide for the intersection improvement.* As at Madison, left-turn movements and full signalization create conditions friendly to commercial development. The design of any redevelopment project must provide adequate space for the planned intersection improvement.

### **Street-Oriented Development Design**

*All redevelopment on opportunity sites should maintain a strong street orientation, typically orienting parking to the rear of the site.*

In an urban district that aspires to special quality and distinction, the street is very important; streets in University Place and similar districts provide our primary spaces. Therefore, projects on the redevelopment sites discussed above, or on other sites in the district as development continues, should define the street frontage and emphasize an easy and pleasant connection between the public environment and the front door of buildings and businesses.

A strong orientation has benefits far beyond aesthetic philosophy. A good street environment will generally manage local traffic circulation more effectively than many curb cuts off the principal arterial. It provides better pedestrian access, in turn contributing to greater safety and reducing the use of cars for routine short-distance trips. From a site planning perspective, street-oriented development uses side streets more effectively and increases the development yield on parcels of land. Finally, by strengthening neighborhood character and encouraging the connections among businesses, the probability of multiple-destination trips is increased, a major objective of urban retail strategies.



**48th Street frontage of the vacant Green's site.**

### **Targeting Desirable Outcomes Through the Redevelopment Process**

*City involvement in the redevelopment process should include evaluation criteria that encourage desirable businesses, with a focus on businesses that appeal to the university communities.*

A strategic retail development focus should be attracting businesses that appeal to campus-related customers. The benefits of this strategy include:

- Increasing linkages between the campuses and the University Place business district, expanding the retail customer base by increasing market share of an existing resident market.
- Extending the campus environment to 48<sup>th</sup> Street, giving the universities (and particularly NWU) a more positive neighborhood environment to market to prospective students, and increasing the quality and variety of life offered to students.
- Opening the possibility of mixed-use development by making it more convenient for faculty, staff, and some students to live in and around the business district.
- Encouraging retailing, services, and activities that tend to appeal to other market segments around the city.

The City of Lincoln is likely to be deeply involved in major redevelopment of opportunity sites, through property acquisition and conveyance and/or project financing. As such, it should evaluate proposals based on their consistency with the principles of this Plan and, for commercial projects, their ability to market space to businesses with appeal to the campus community.

### **Future Redevelopment Sites**

*The City should assist redevelopment of strategic sites as the private market responds to improving neighborhood conditions.*

The Green, Hall, and Northeast Printer properties are priorities for redevelopment, and will be strategic points that will establish a momentum for other redevelopment efforts. The City should be ready to assist desirable redevelopment of other strategic sites in the neighborhood when market demand emerges. These potential redevelopment sites will likely include:

- The block between 48<sup>th</sup>, 49<sup>th</sup>, Adams, and Cleveland.
- The block east of 48<sup>th</sup> between Huntington and Walker.

## Local Traffic Circulation and Parking

***Vision: University Place will offer adequate, convenient parking to its customers, businesses, and residents, and will provide a local circulation system that both functions effectively and avoids degrading its residential neighborhoods.***

Much of the focus of this planning process has been on the transportation function of N. 48<sup>th</sup> Street. Indeed, this is important because many people in Lincoln will evaluate the effectiveness of this Plan based on their experiences of moving along this street. However, people who live, work, and study in University Place are at least as concerned about the supply of parking and functioning of the neighborhood's street system. These issues are especially important when a neighborhood originally developed for single-family residents has undergone a transition to higher residential densities through the conversion of houses or insertion of as-built multi-family buildings.

An urban university campus adds to these parking problems. NWU, like many colleges, does not meet its parking demand on campus. The University has completed a comprehensive parking study that proposes substantial parking supply additions along Huntington Avenue on the south side of the campus. However, new dormitory development on the campus' north side will increase parking demand on that side as well. Universities have difficulty buying the land necessary for surface parking, which in any case can threaten the quality of the campus; but have equal difficulty raising funds to build very expensive parking structures. As a result, a good deal of parking demand is met by the neighborhood's already crowded streets.

In this difficult milieu, planning for parking and local circulations must satisfy three essential criteria:

- *The overall supply of parking in the neighborhood should be increased, without destroying the character of the area.* Parking demand is generated by three sources – the business district, the University, and the residential neighborhood – and each requires somewhat different solutions. Resolving business district parking issues involves increasing both the supply of convenient parking and the ease by which customers find that parking. The University must identify locations for new parking, including the consideration of decks over surface lots. However, it must take care not to harm the neighborhood by expanding opportunistically into the residential fabric. Residential parking issues involve assuring that development has adequate parking to meet demand; and, in some cases, reducing densities to be more consistent with the carrying capacity of local streets and the on-street parking supply.
- *The neighborhood should provide good local traffic circulation at speeds appropriate to residential areas.* While most of University Place follows the City's street grid, the NWU campus, University Place Park, and the Dead Man's Run floodplain interrupt the grid's continuity. This, along with existing traffic signal placement, tends

to channel traffic onto a few continuous streets, such as Leighton Avenue between 48<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets.

- *Good traffic circulation is also important to the business community.* Many users find the University Place business district somewhat difficult to navigate and do not readily comprehend the location of parking. It is a function of an effective business district circulation system to get people from the main street to parking spaces as quickly as possible; and to minimize the amount of time that customers spend navigating local streets.
- *The overall traffic system should minimize the amount and effect of additional traffic on residential streets.* In a stressed local traffic environment, proposed changes should not fix one problem while creating others. Local Circulation and Parking Recommendations

### **Local Circulation and Parking Recommendations**

#### **Expanded Business District Parking West of 48<sup>th</sup> Street**

*Public parking for the business district should be expanded west of 48<sup>th</sup> Street, with pedestrian connections to rear building entrances and to the residential areas to the west.*

The district's largest existing public parking is located south of St. Paul Avenue and west of 48<sup>th</sup> Street. With the development of the Green's property and the proposed St. Paul pedestrian plaza, this lot should be expanded to the north. Features of this concept include:

- A circulation loop through the lot, with access off 47<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Pedestrian access through a landscaped sidewalk around the outside of the expanded lot, serving both rear building entrances and pedestrian paths to 48<sup>th</sup> and Madison. This rear access has already been developed near Mo Java Cafe south of St. Paul, and can provide another group of intimately scaled open spaces to complement the street frontage and the St. Paul Plaza.
- A clear pedestrian connection through the lot along the axis of St. Paul. This helps link the plaza to the neighborhood and may include a gateway arch along 47<sup>th</sup> Street on the St. Paul alignment.

This concept provides convenient and expanded business parking, while maintaining the integrity of the main street business environment.



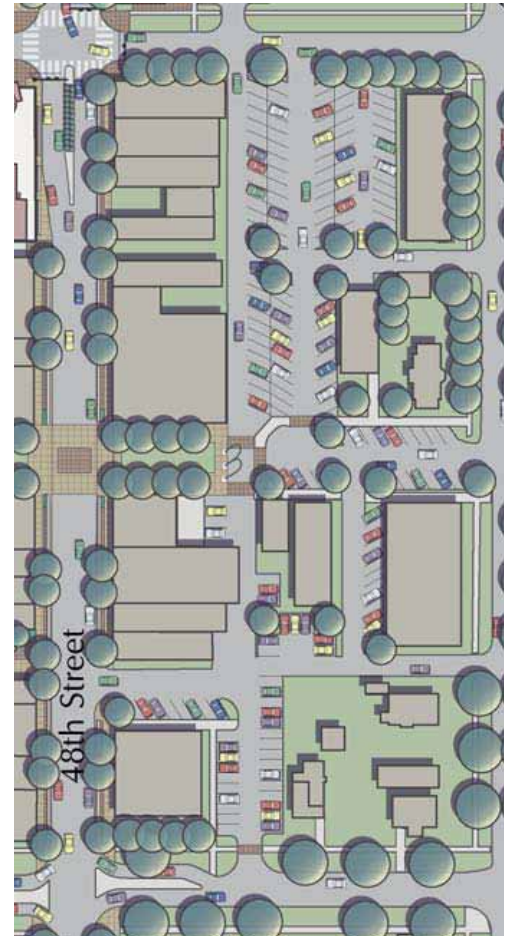
**Illustration of proposed expansion of parking and access for businesses west of 48th Street.**

### **East Business District Parking and St. Paul Court**

*Parking facilities and circulation on the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street between St. Paul and Madison should be reconfigured and expanded to provide more parking and greater convenience to customers of area businesses. St. Paul Avenue should be designed as an auto "court," providing convenient on-street parking and access to all existing lots and driveways.*

Business district parking on the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street is a combination of public and private lots that tends to be confusing to users and somewhat inefficient. The proposed pedestrian plaza on St. Paul provides an opportunity to rethink this area and expand both its parking supply and ease of use. Features of this redesign include:

- *Reconfiguring the private and public lots to provide convenient access off Madison Avenue.* Because of the improved Madison intersection and the pedestrianization of St. Paul Avenue, most traffic will enter these lots from the north. Angled parking should be reconfigured for north to south access. An alley adjacent to the 48<sup>th</sup> Street commercial buildings would become a drive aisle, lining up with a private alley that extends south of St. Paul. This reconfiguration should maintain preferential parking access for neighboring businesses, including the dentist's office, that currently maintain private parking. Therefore, a portion of this lot may be marked for proprietary use, and may be divided from the public portion of the lot by landscaping or pavement features. The final lot design should also provide convenient parking for people with disabilities.
- *Adding a parking module to the public lot along Madison.* This can be done by acquiring part of the landscaped area adjacent to the currently vacant office building on 49<sup>th</sup> and Madison. The resulting lot also has access from 49<sup>th</sup> Street; however, its primary access is from Madison, limiting the number of cars circulating into neighborhood streets.
- *Developing diagonal parking along St. Paul Court.* This court is the remaining part of the street between 49<sup>th</sup> Street and the pedestrian plaza. Diagonal parking provides convenient front door parking for businesses along the street. It also replaces the small, front yard parking area in front of the dentist's office building on the north side of St. Paul. Diagonal parking can be phased or modified to avoid conflicts with existing driveways. Indeed, St. Paul Court is designed to maintain access to all existing parking and private drives in the area.



*Illustration of proposed reconfiguration of circulation and parking east of 48th Street.*



- *Maintaining strong pedestrian access along St. Paul between 49<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup>.* The design of St. Paul Court includes a strong pedestrian connection east toward the NWU campus. Streetscape and gateway elements included in the pedestrian plaza should be continued along St. Paul Court.

### **Parking Directional Graphics**

*A signage system clearly directing customers to parking areas should be installed in the business district to supplement existing signing.*

Parking in the University Place business district is difficult to comprehend. A clear directional graphics system should provide wayfinding information from key entrance points, especially the improved Huntington and Madison Avenue intersections, to parking lots. This clear signage can reduce confusion and get customers away from neighborhood streets as quickly as possible. Special graphics may also add to the marketing presence of the business district.

### **Traffic Controls to Prevent Improper Left Turns**

*Intersection or street design features should be installed to channel left turns and cross movements to improved intersections.*

Maintaining capacity and a smooth traffic flow on 48<sup>th</sup> Street depends on avoiding interruptions or conflicts along the street. Thus, left turns and cross-movements between Adams and Leighton are limited to the future signalized intersections at Madison and Huntington. Traffic control devices should be included in the street and intersection design to prevent these movements at other locations. These include:

- Maintaining the existing raised medians at Cleveland and Walker Avenues.
- Installing a “pork chop” diverter at the Baldwin intersection, forcing right-in/right-out movements from Baldwin to 48<sup>th</sup>.

### **Internal Traffic and Neighborhood Connectedness to the Hy-Vee Center**

*Improvements should be considered at the Hy-Vee shopping center on the north side of Leighton Avenue to reduce functional conflicts, improve connections to the neighborhood, and reduce the visual and operating conflicts created by truck loading and service areas adjacent to the residential neighborhood.*

Hy-Vee and associated commercial development at 48<sup>th</sup> and Leighton is a very important part of the neighborhood business picture. Some aspects of parking and circulation design within this project create potential hazards that can affect traffic flow and safety outside the boundaries of the site. In addition, it is in everyone’s interest to have all parts of the business community function as conveniently and safely as possible for customers.



*Illustration of proposed circulation improvements at the Hy-Vee Shopping Center.*

The Hy-Vee center is entirely on private property. However, this Plan recommends the following program of improvements to improve the function of this very important component of the neighborhood.

- Improvement of the west Leighton Avenue entrance, including continuation of a median at the entrance to prevent cross movements close to this major entrance.
- Better definition of pedestrian access through the site from the north to the main store entrance, continuing through the site to Leighton Avenue.
- Relocation of the center sign away from major circulation routes.
- Clearer routing and connections of 47<sup>th</sup> Street south into the parking lot.
- Reconfiguration of parking to improve visibility for internal traffic movements.
- Reducing the size of the truck access throat north of the center to provide a clearer sidewalks and pedestrian zone into the center from the north.

- Providing landscaping and vertical buffering between the north boundary of the commercial center and adjacent residential properties.

Both Hy-Vee and the City have an interest in resolving these issues and creating a center that functions more safely for its customers. If a parking area redesign is agreed upon, the parties should discuss cooperative mechanisms to finance the program.

### **Leighton Avenue Traffic Calming**

*The City should consider traffic calming concepts along Leighton Avenue between 48<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets, and implement measures found to be appropriate through this investigation.*

Leighton Avenue, through the Charles F. Creighton Historic District, is experiencing increasing traffic volumes. This pattern is caused by the street's continuity to 56<sup>th</sup> Street and the full signal at 48<sup>th</sup> Street. As a result, and mandated by federal requirements, the City's Public Works and Utilities Department removed parking from the street and added a roadway centerline in 2003. This action in turn concerns residents, who believe that it will produce higher traffic speeds.

This Plan recommends consideration of traffic calming applications to this segment of Leighton. Measures to assure that typical traffic speeds remain appropriate for a primarily single-family residential setting should be evaluated. It is important to note that many residents seem less concerned about the loss of on-street parking than the possible increase of traffic speed that might result.

### **Performance Monitoring of 47<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> Streets**

*The City should monitor traffic and parking performance along 47<sup>th</sup> Street and 49<sup>th</sup> Street, the two local streets that parallel 48<sup>th</sup> Street.*

Any change to flows and access along the 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor are likely to have the greatest impact on the adjacent parallel streets – 47<sup>th</sup> to the west and 49<sup>th</sup> to the east. These streets already experience high on-street parking demand and relatively high volumes of traffic circulating around the business center. With implementation of the 48<sup>th</sup> Street program, parking and circulation along these streets should be monitored. This ongoing process could result in:

- Removal of on-street parking from one side of the street. Proposed additions to the parking supply between Baldwin and Madison could provide enough off-street parking to make one-side only parking feasible along these streets. This in turn could help reduce congestion and improve the performance of these local service streets. Typical of any request for on-street parking removal, it is the City's policy for this request to be made by the adjacent property owners. The City will work with the neighborhood association, NWU, business owners, property owners and



**On-street parking along 49th Street.**

other stakeholders to address parking needs along these streets and other issues such as traffic flow and the effect on pedestrian safety.

- If warranted, installation of future traffic control devices such as stop signs to manage traffic flow and improve pedestrian safety.

### **South Neighborhood Access Improvements**

*New local street segments in the south part of the neighborhood will improve access to commercial development on the east side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street south of Leighton, and to areas around University Place Park.*

These specific improvements, designed to improve internal neighborhood street connections and reduce traffic friction along 48<sup>th</sup> Street, include:

- *A rear commercial access south of Garland, serving commercial development along 48<sup>th</sup> Street and opening potential development sites west of 49<sup>th</sup> Street. This provides local access to the Dairy Queen and neighboring sites, making it unnecessary to use 48<sup>th</sup> Street to reach these establishments. It also provides access to other currently unused sites east of 48<sup>th</sup>, and may be used for additional neighborhood park access.*

- *51<sup>st</sup> Street from Colby to Garland.* Upgrading this unimproved, one-block segment would complete the street grid in this part of the neighborhood and provide better access to University Place Park. New residential development could be established on the east side of the street, designed in a way to allow the park to flow out to the new street and into the adjacent residential area.
- *Colby Street from 51<sup>st</sup> to 52<sup>nd</sup> Street.* As with 51<sup>st</sup> Street, upgrading this unimproved, one-block segment would complete the street grid in this part of the neighborhood and provide better access to University Place Park.



*Illustration of proposed drop-off loop for Huntington Elementary School.*

### **Huntington Elementary School Drop-Off Loop**

*A drop-off loop should be provided off Cleveland Avenue for Huntington Elementary School.*

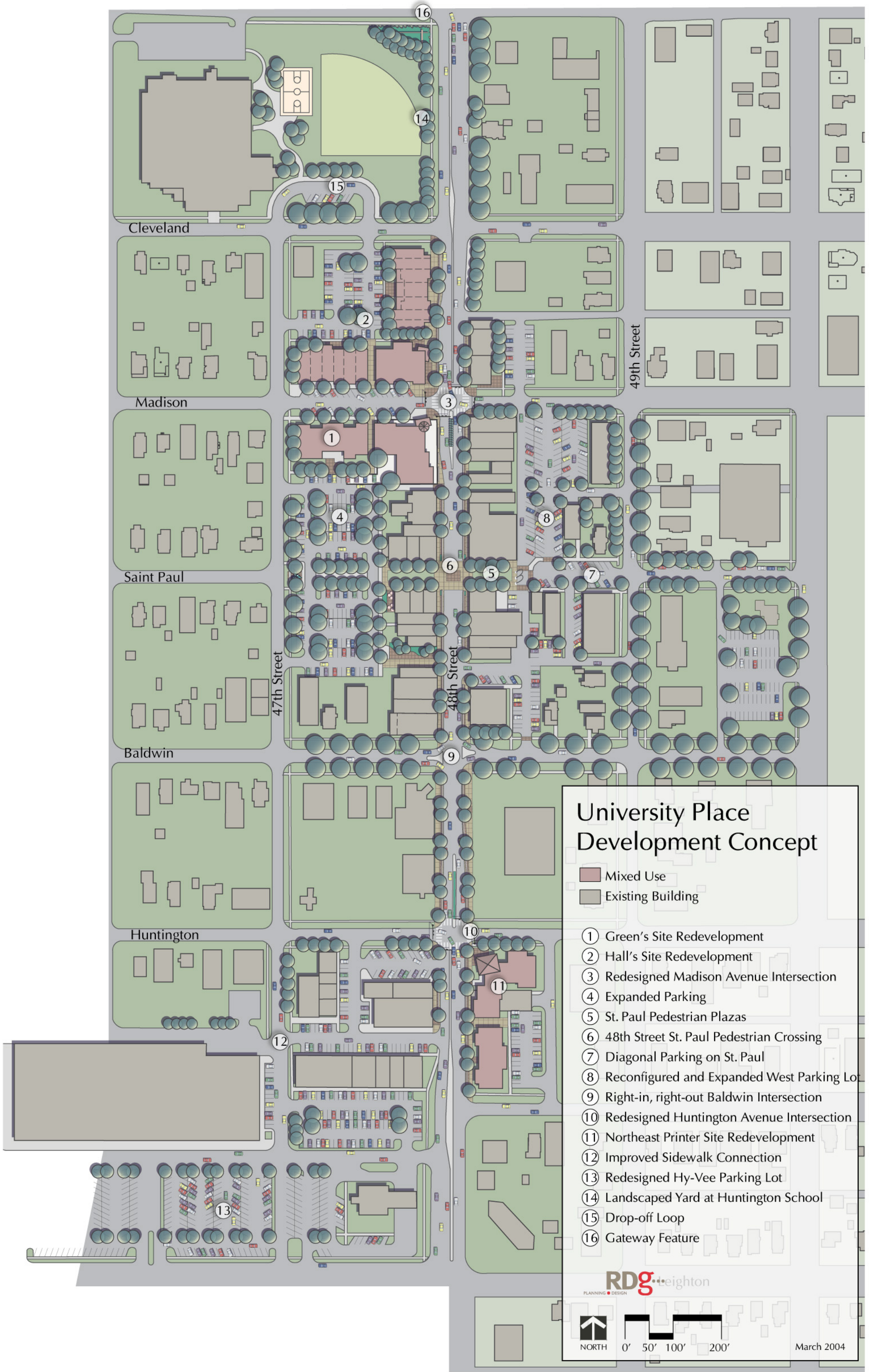
The elementary school has no dedicated drop-off lane, resulting in considerable congestion along Cleveland Avenue at peak times on school days. A one-way drop-off loop should be considered, with an exit lining up with 47<sup>th</sup> Street. This loop could be built as part of the overall site improvement effort discussed as part of the streetscape recommendations. Implementation of this recommendation would require review and approval by Lincoln Public Schools.

## **Linkages**

***Vision: The University Place neighborhood should connect two university campuses and the residential and commercial communities; and should provide trail and open space linkages to other parts of the city.***

Connections and sequences are traditionally very important in Lincoln. The City's planning and development patterns have historically valued linkages among neighborhoods, evidenced by the long-term growth of its comprehensive trail system. This priority linkage also should guide planning policies in University Place. Linkage in the neighborhood occurs on two levels: internal and external.





The neighborhood planning area includes an unusually rich variety of features, including the University Place business district, the NWU campus, the UNL East campus, Huntington Elementary School, University Place Park, the Charles Creighton Historic District, and landmark institutions like First United Methodist Church. These features, in close proximity, create the potential for an unusually rich neighborhood environment. Yet, in some cases, the connections are more apparent than real. Much of the NWU community feels only weakly connected to the 48<sup>th</sup> Street business district. The two university campuses, potentially linked together through the neighborhood and its business district, are instead two very distinct and somewhat reclusive places. Elements of the neighborhood that should reinforce each other sometimes stand in uneasy co-existence.

The other level of linkage is external, how the University Place neighborhood connects to the rest of the city. The neighborhood is not directly connected to the City's trail system, except for an on-street route. The strongest inter-neighborhood link is 48<sup>th</sup> Street itself, but this street does not provide good non-motorized connections, particularly to the south.

The linkage system provides the framework that unifies University Place and connects it to the rest of the city. The following priorities should guide the development of this structure of internal and external linkages.

- *The University Place neighborhood should be connected directly to Lincoln's trail system.* The MoPac and John Dietrich Trails are relatively near to University Place, but connections from the neighborhood to these facilities are not clear. Safe and clearly designated trail links to these trails are important to integrate University Place into Lincoln's greenway system.
- *The UNL East Campus, the neighborhood, and the NWU campuses should be connected into a unified sequence.* While the NWU campus is the neighborhood's dominant presence, University Place includes two major universities. Linking the East Campus and NWU through the neighborhood assures that the four critical components of the neighborhood – the two universities, the residential community, and the business district – form a unified sequence of elements that reinforce each other.
- *The University Place neighborhood and NWU must be integrated successfully.* The University and neighborhood have strong interests in their mutual health and prosperity. Yet, this commonality of interests must go deeper than public pronouncements. If the neighborhood and University view each other as uneasy partners in co-existence, University Place will continue to fall short of this compelling potential. Strong physical linkages can start this process of understanding the vital importance of each partner to the health and quality of the other.

## **Linkage Recommendations**

### **48<sup>th</sup> Street Trail**

*The City and UNL should develop a trail along the west side of 48<sup>th</sup> Street, with a connection to University Place Park along Dead Man's Run under a new 48<sup>th</sup> Street bridge. This project should be fully integrated into an enhancement program for the 48<sup>th</sup> Street edge of the East Campus.*

This trail would connect south along 48<sup>th</sup> Street to the MoPac Trail, which crosses 48<sup>th</sup> Street at an overpass about one mile south of the neighborhood. South of Holdrege Street, the south boundary of the East Campus, the right-of-way has enough room to support a continuation of the sidewalk trail. Future roadway improvements to 48<sup>th</sup> Street will include a new bridge over Dead Man's Run. This bridge should be designed to provide trail access along the creek under 48<sup>th</sup> Street to University Place Park. This crossing will provide a strong, barrier-free link between the East Campus and the neighborhood. The 48<sup>th</sup> Street Trail should continue north of Dead Man's Run to a proposed gateway feature at Leighton Avenue and connect to a campus periphery trail along Leighton/Huntington to 33<sup>rd</sup> Street.

### **Francis Street Gateway**

*A future East Campus entrance at Francis Street should be developed as a major gateway to University Place as well.*

The master plan for the East Campus envisions a campus entrance at Francis Street. Francis also forms the south edge of University Place Park and is the main access to the swimming pool. As it develops, this new intersection should be designed as both a gateway to the campus and an entrance to the neighborhood – physically and functionally expressing the connection between the East Campus and University Place.

### **Dead Man's Run and Leighton/Huntington Trails**

*A trail should be developed along Dead Man's Run through the UNL east campus, connecting to the John Dietrich Trail at 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Fleming Fields Recreational Sports Park, provided that an alignment can adequately satisfy campus security concerns. This trail should continue under 48<sup>th</sup> Street through a redesigned system in University Place Park. In addition, a sidewalk connector trail should be developed along the south side of Leighton/Huntington Avenue to provide a secondary connection to the Dietrich Trail and new sports park.*

The Dead Man's Run Trail is proposed in Lincoln's long range trail plan, and would connect through the East Campus to the *Fleming Fields Recreational Sports Park* and link to the existing Dietrich Trail at 33<sup>rd</sup> Street. The trail should continue along the creek under a new 48<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge and through University Place Park. This Plan recommends a new pedestrian connector bridge over the creek on the alignment of 50<sup>th</sup> Street, provid-





**Dead Man's Run through University Place Park.**

ing a clear connection to the front door of the NWU campus. The trail should include a loop around the edge of University Place Park, providing a direct link to the pool. The Dead Man's Run alignment will require resolution of UNL concerns about campus security.

This Plan also recommends a sidewalk connector along the south side of the Leighton/Huntington Avenue system between 48<sup>th</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Streets as a secondary connection to the Dietrich Trail and Fleming Fields. This also serves apartment development along the north side of Huntington Avenue. A sidewalk connector will provide

a continuous access, available in the short-term, between University Place and the new park.

### **50<sup>th</sup> Street Share-the-Road Route**

*50<sup>th</sup> Street should be evaluated and adapted as a share the road bicycle route between the Dead Man's Run Trail and the NWU campus. This route may continue north to connect with the John Dietrich/Murdock Trail system near 49<sup>th</sup> and Benton.*

This street is the logical connection between a Dead Man's Run Trail through University Place Park, the residential neighborhood, and the front door of the NWU campus. 50<sup>th</sup> Street should be designated as a "share the road" (STR) route. The STR route should be consistent with signage conventions used on a citywide basis. It should also have continuous, barrier-free sidewalks on both sides of the street and may include directional information and mileage. 50<sup>th</sup> Street could also continue north as an STR route across Adams Street to Somerset and 49<sup>th</sup> Street. Here, the route would connect with the John Dietrich Trail and its continuation northeast as the Murdock Trail. All recommendations are subject to review and approval by Lincoln's Pedestrian/Bicycle Advisory Committee, Parks & Recreation, Planning Committee, and City Council.

### **St. Paul and Baldwin Avenue Promenades**

*St. Paul and Baldwin Avenues should be reinforced as promenades between 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Streets, forming a strong functional and visual connection between the NWU campus and the University Place business district.*

NWU's campus design includes east-west malls on axis with Baldwin and St. Paul Avenues, marked by entrance arches on line with these streets. Its current campus plan includes an open space ellipse defined by these two malls. Clearly, continuation of the

promenade concept along St. Paul allows the campus to extend to the business district; and for the business district, in turn, to extend itself toward the campus. Promenade linkages along these two avenues, designed to give NWU a strong exposure to 48<sup>th</sup> Street, is consistent with both the traditional campus plan and the fabric of the University Place neighborhood.

Promenade development along St. Paul and Baldwin Avenues, including:

- Enhanced, thematic lighting, providing both common campus/business district design themes and a level of lighting that pedestrians find secure and reassuring.
- Improved, consistent formal landscape design.
- Graphics and design features that provide the University with a clear presence on 48<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Attractive, continuous sidewalks, along with street furniture that includes benches and historic interpretive materials. The promenades, for example, could feature interpretive graphics of notable NWU graduates and neighborhood residents, highlighting the human history of the neighborhood and its historic relationship with the campus.

This Plan recommends the utilization of the Baldwin and St. Paul promenades as a way of expressing the linkage and partnership of Nebraska Wesleyan University and the neighborhood toward their mutual growth and prosperity.

### **North-South Campus Link**

*A north-south connection linking the University and the neighborhood together should be considered along the approximate line of 53<sup>rd</sup> Street.*

The campus plan for NWU proposes a north-south campus mall between Madison and Huntington Avenues just east of the proposed campus ellipse. If developed, this axis can form a secondary gateway and link to the neighborhood. Emphasizing a pedestrian connection south along 53<sup>rd</sup> Street can help tie the campus to the Charles Creighton Historic District, an attractive neighborhood that could prove especially attractive to faculty residence.

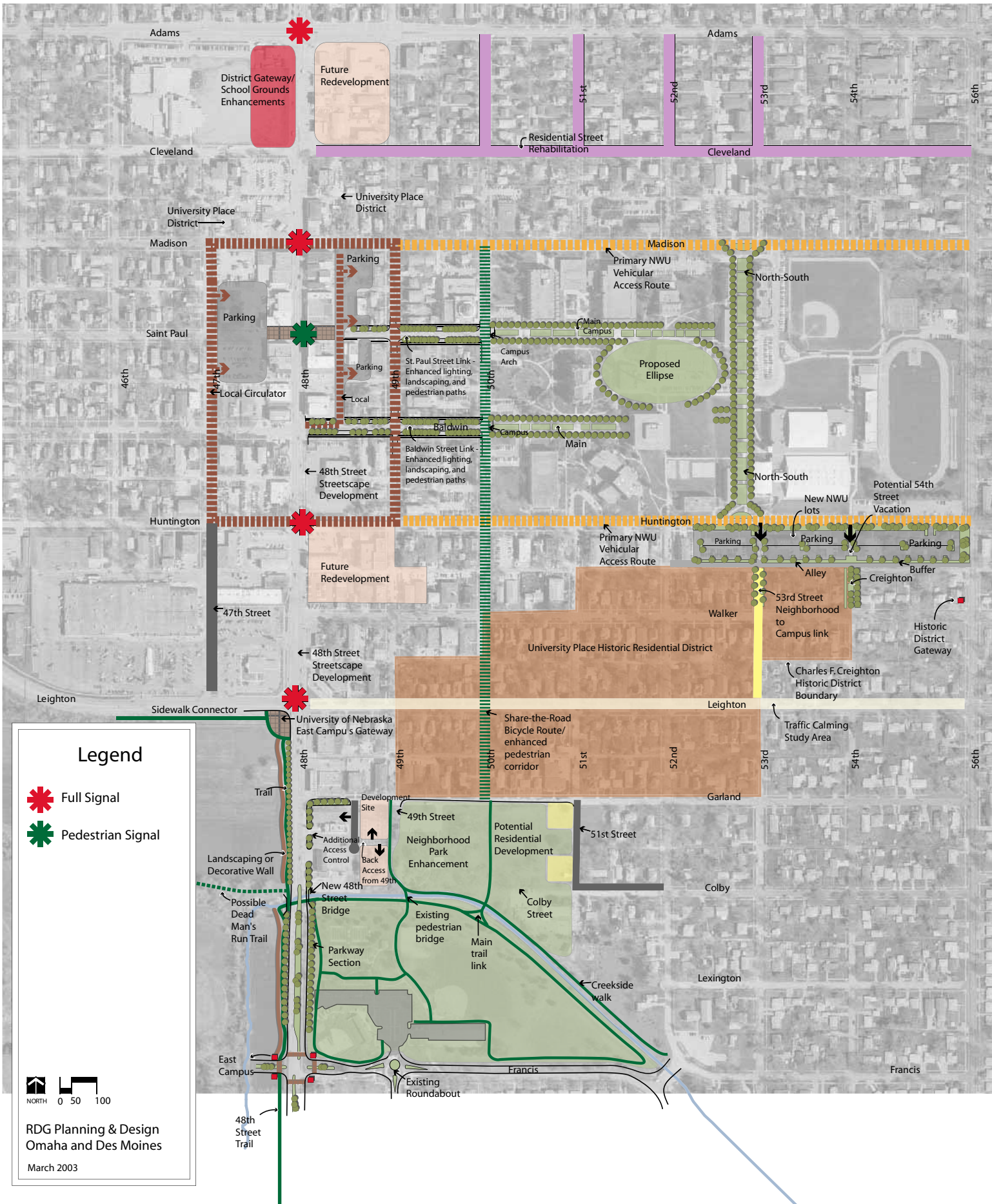
### **University Place Park Enhancement**

*University Place Park north of Dead Man's Run should be master-planned as a neighborhood park.*

University Place Park is an important neighborhood resource, but is not strongly connected to the University Place neighborhood. The area south of Garland Avenue is undeveloped and, in some ways, is a barrier between the neighborhood and the pool to



# Linkage Strategies





*Newly redeveloped pool at University Place Park.*

the south of the creek. In addition, the discontinuous street grid south of Garland also severs the park from the neighborhood. 48<sup>th</sup> Street actually becomes the major connection between the park and the residential community.

The area north of the creek and south of Garland, all part of the park, should be a resource rather than a barrier. This park area should be master-planned as a neighborhood open space. As recommended above, trails or sidewalks/connectors should connect residential streets and the NWU campus with the main community park south of the creek and with the Dead Man's Run Trail. Additionally, connecting 51<sup>st</sup> Street through to Colby Street will also help increase access to this part of the park.

## **Neighborhood Development and Land Use**

***Vision: The University Place neighborhood will offer a sound residential environment for a variety of people, but will emphasize its quality and security as a place to own a home.***

The University Place Plan appropriately emphasizes issues of transportation and business revitalization. However, the dominant land use in the neighborhood is residential. For University Place to realize its potential as a unique urban district, it must offer a strong and stable residential environment. Indeed, poor housing affects other aspects

of the neighborhood. Members of the university community will not venture toward the business district through a neighborhood that they perceive, rightly or wrongly, to be insecure or deteriorating. Neighborhood business districts require the support of strong residential constituencies. Finally, campuses in declining or stagnant neighborhoods increasingly become reclusive enclaves; if this happened in University Place, it would defeat many of the outcomes envisioned by this Plan.

It is precisely in this area of residential quality that University Place has tended to fall short. High-density residential zoning has encouraged conversion of single-family structures or insertion of multi-family buildings on relatively small sites, greatly changing the personality of the neighborhood. Members of the university community relate that many faculty members once lived near the campus, a desirable condition that no longer exists. Single-family conversions compound parking problems and frequently result in unsightly additions to structures and eventual deterioration. University Place, once a primarily single-family, urban neighborhood, is now largely marked by rental occupancy and, in many places, a major change in the scale of structures.

Yet, the neighborhood does have major assets. Despite multi-family buildings, the area retains a sense of its smaller scale character. Many of the as-built multi-family buildings are well maintained, and areas like the Charles Creighton Historic District exhibit high owner-occupancy and architectural quality. Indeed, appropriate residential and land use policies can conserve this strategic residential neighborhood. These policies should be guided by the following principles.

- *Public policy should reinforce existing, positive patterns of development, and discourage or prevent undesirable trends.* Despite neighborhood change over the years, reinvestment is occurring in University Place. This is evident in purchase and rehabilitation of homes, and the designation and continued popularity of the Creighton Historic District. Community development policy should encourage and reinforce this quiet, one-house-at-a-time reinvestment. In addition, a substantial segment of the neighborhood's housing stock will continue in rental occupancy. Efforts to rehabilitate and maintain rental housing should also be reinforced. Actions should ultimately increase the value, and the rental yields, supported by the neighborhood.
- *In University Place, homeowner investments should be viewed as financially secure and the level of uncertainty should be reduced.* Much of the premise of zoning (regardless of how maligned traditional zoning has become in planning theory) is to provide a property owner with some level of security and knowledge about what will happen next door. This accounts for the pervasive popularity and interest in this time-honored planning implementation tool. Unfortunately, much of University Place is over-zoned; even areas that are primarily single-family are zoned for multi-family development. As a result, the security of homeowner investments is degraded. Zoning policy in the neighborhood should offer greater safeguards to owners.

However, zoning is not the only problem that leads to uncertainty. Major institutions like universities tend to expand to meet specific, sometimes short-term needs like a parking shortage. This is a problem common in urban neighborhoods and not just limited to University Place. However, the fear that a lot next to a house might be purchased by the University and used for parking or a non-residential purpose adds uncertainty that can discourage reinvestment.

Good residential development policy reduces uncertainty, and helps to assure an owner that he/she will ultimately realize a return on investment.

- *University Place should be an increasingly attractive residential setting for NWU or UNL faculty and staff.* The concept of a “university community” is very attractive, where faculty and staff live close to the focus of their careers. University Place once was this kind of community, and can be again in the future. Efforts should be considered that market the neighborhood to members of the university community and create additional housing opportunities for them.
- *The overall level of owner-occupancy in University Place should increase.* While a good supply of quality rental housing is important in a diverse urban neighborhood, it is owner-occupants with a financial stake in the area that form the core group that keeps a neighborhood healthy and strong. Therefore, a long-term objective of community development strategy must be to increase the level of resident equity in the neighborhood. The policies of all major actors – the City of Lincoln and its departments, the business community, and NWU – must be measured against their effect on this long-term goal.

## **Neighborhood Development and Land Use Recommendations**

### **Outcome-Based Neighborhood Investment Strategy**

*Lincoln should implement a neighborhood development strategy in University Place, with strategies designed to help bring about desirable outcomes on each blockface.*

Because different parts of University Place have different occupancy characteristics, an overall, “one size fits all” strategy is really not appropriate. Instead, this Plan recommends a development and investment program, based on the housing configuration and occupancy characteristics of each blockface. This program should be based on the projected, desirable occupancy outcome of each block, on a continuum ranging from completely owner-occupied to completely renter-occupied. The outcomes along this continuum include:

#### ***Owner Occupancy/Single-Family Focus***

These block faces are primarily built up with single-family houses and are predominately owner-occupied. The desired outcome should produce a primarily owner-occupied, single-family blockface. Strategies should redirect existing rental properties to ownership

***Multi-Use/Ownership Dominant***

These blackfaces include a combination of single-family and multi-family properties, usually in smaller structures such as 2 to 4-unit buildings. Typically, at least half the structures on the block are owner occupied. The desired outcome on blackface will include both single-family and multi-family/rental properties. A majority of the property frontage, defining the character of the block, will be single-family, owner-occupied. As-built or rental conversions in good condition will be maintained and conserved. Residential investments policies should increase the level of ownership on the block.

***Multi-Use/Rental Dominant***

These blackfaces include a combination of single-family and multi-family properties, but as-built rental structures typically dominate. Typically, at least half of the structures on the block are owner occupied. The desired outcome on blackface will include both single-family and multi-family/rental properties. A majority of the frontage, defining the character of the block, will be multi-family/rental properties. Residential investment policies should reinforce ownership, such as owner-occupied rehabilitation. However, ownership redirection policies designed to convert rental units to owner-occupied units will generally not be applied.

***Rental Focus***

The character of these blocks is almost entirely rental/multi-family. As a result, the projected outcome on blackface will be primarily multi-family/renter-occupied. While existing, sound single-family structures should be maintained, investment policies should reinforce continuation of quality rental settings. Ownership redirection policies designed to convert rental units to owner-occupied units will not be applied.

***Policy Concepts***

*A variety of programs apply to these various contexts. A catalogue of strategies that apply to University Place's various residential settings follows.*

***Conservation/Maintenance:***

- Applies to residential structures currently in good to excellent condition.
- No significant capital investment necessary.
- For multi-family structures, monitor maintenance. Preventive code enforcement, with quick response to complaints and notification to owners of incipient condition problems.
- For single-family/owner-occupied structures, code enforcement on neighboring structures on block, action on emerging site condition problems on other properties on block.
- Supporting infrastructure improvements, including curb reconstruction and street surface rehabilitation.



***Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation:***

- Same actions as conservation/maintenance.
- Target rehabilitation financing to existing owners, including minor or moderate rehabilitation.

***Rental Rehabilitation:***

- Monitor building conditions.
- Active code enforcement on rental properties and site conditions.
- Rental rehabilitation financing, in most cases minor rehabilitation, for multi-family structures.

***Multi-Family Parking:***

- Applies to high residential density, multi-family areas with high building coverage and inadequate on-site parking.
- Acquire deteriorated/unsustainable sites, build off-street parking to serve other buildings on street.
- Potential assessment of multi-family properties using new parking.

***Acquisition/Rehab/Resale:***

- Applies to single-family structures in declining condition that remain feasible for rehabilitation/recycling. Structures typically are vacant, investor-owned with limited economic future, or owned by seniors seeking a different or more appropriate housing setting.
- Purchase, rehabilitation, and resale by a neighborhood or university-based community development corporation.
- Interim financing provided by City CDBG, or through local lender involvement.

***Deconversion Incentives:***

- Applies to single-family structures that have been converted to multi-family use. Candidate structures must be appropriately sized and configured for feasible single-family use.
- Initiate incentives to encourage private owner acquisition and conversion back to single-family use. Incentives may include combined purchase/rehabilitation loan

assistance, or Community Development Corporation (such as Neighborhoods, Inc.) acquisition/resale in as-is condition, combined with rehabilitation financing.

***Redevelopment:***

- Applies to deteriorated or inappropriately used properties, or remnant land uses, such as single-family lots surrounded by higher-density uses.
- Acquisition and reuse of sites. Final uses may include expanded commercial sites adjacent to 48<sup>th</sup> Street corridor, or infill residential use in residential areas. Final residential use should be consistent with the recommended occupancy outcome for each block.

***Downzoning:***

- Applies to blocks that are zoned for higher-intensity uses than appropriate for the residential policy designator.
- In ownership focus blocks, typical downzoning from R4, R5, or R6 to R2 or intermediate district.
- In mixed-use/ownership dominant blocks, downzoning to R4 from higher-density districts.
- In mixed-use/rental dominant blocks, downzoning to R4 or R5 from higher-density districts.

***Residential Street Rehabilitation:***

- Curb replacement/repair, street resurfacing.
- Sidewalk reconstruction.

**Table 3.1, Residential Policies Matrix**

	Ownership Focus	Mixed Use/ Ownership Dominant	Mixed Use/ Rental Dominant	Rental Focus
Conservation/Maintenance	■	■	■	■
Owner-occupied rehabilitation	■	■	■	
Rental rehabilitation		■	■	■
Multi-family parking			■	■
Acquisition/rehab/resale	■	■		
Deconversion Incentives	■	■		
Redevelopment	■	■	■	■
Downzoning	■	■		
Residential street rehabilitation	■	■		

## **Policy Matrix**

The policy matrix presented below in Table 3.1 matches community development strategies to the occupancy outcome preferred for each blackface. The "Residential Policies" map presents the recommended outcome for each block. It also indicates specific sites that should be considered for specific actions, such as infill construction, spot redevelopment, deconversion to single-family occupancy, and possible acquisition/rehab/resale.

### **Focused Downzoning**

*The City and neighborhood should implement a surgical rezoning strategy, based on the character and preferred occupancy outcome of each blackface.*

Established neighborhoods like University Place were frequently zoned for high-density use after World War II, based on the mistaken assumption that their value could best be maintained by following the appraiser's principle of permitting the "highest and best use." Unfortunately, this practice promoted development patterns that may have been "highest" (in density at any rate), but were not often the "best." Indeed, these upzonings created uncertainties that tended to drive owner-occupants out and promoted conversion of single-family houses and lots to multi-family use.

In recent years, with increasing interest in established neighborhoods, community groups have promoted large-scale downzonings, returning large areas to single-family zoning. However, these efforts face opposition from existing multi-family property owners, who face the prospect of nonconformance and even clouded titles as a result. Because of the very mixed land use pattern in University Place, this Plan does not recommend such a blanket downzoning.

Instead, this Plan recommends a more surgical zoning policy, again based on the preferred occupancy outcomes and characteristics of each blackface. While the policy must be designed and implemented carefully by the Planning Department and the University Place Community Organization (UPCO), the effort should follow these general rules.

- Blocks designated as "Ownership Focus" should be downzoned to R2 if currently zoned R4, R5, or R6. This applies to much of the Creighton Historic District.
- Blocks designated as "Mixed-Use/Ownership Dominant" should be downzoned to R4 if currently zoned R5 or R6.
- Blocks designated as "Mixed-Use/Rental Dominant" or "Rental Focus" should typically retain their current zoning.
- Blocks that are part of the likely expansion area of the University should generally be zoned R6.

The City may also consider creating design standards to ensure that new construction is compatible with the neighborhood.

### **Spot Redevelopment**

*Redevelopment of selected sites can create new housing resources for prospective homeowners, including members of the university community. One opportunity could be the east side of an improved 51<sup>st</sup> Street.*

Part of the residential strategy should be assembly and spot residential redevelopment of selected sites. The improved 51<sup>st</sup> Street between Garland and Colby Avenues could provide a venue for new housing adjacent to an expanded and upgraded University Place Park. This street frontage is out of the Dead Man's Run floodplain, and could be done in such a way as to permit expansion of the park. The design of a project should include neighborhood park exposure to 51<sup>st</sup> Street.

### **Nebraska Wesleyan University Campus Surroundings**

*The improvement of the residential quality of the University Place neighborhoods is a widely shared goal. One important step in achieving that goal is to provide the neighborhood residents, particularly those in the blocks surrounding the Nebraska Wesleyan University campus, with a plan that helps them feel confident that future University expansion will not have a detrimental impact on their property values and overall quality of life. This plan should also include provisions, which facilitate collaborative efforts by the University, the neighborhood, and the City to invest in the revitalization of these neighborhoods.*

A major institution like NWU is a great boon to an established neighborhood, increasing both its marketability and quality. Yet, it can also be a source of uncertainty, especially if it tends to acquire property when opportunities arise. Uncertainty is the enemy of residential investment, and an important objective of these residential policies is to provide homeowners with greater predictability about the future of the neighborhood. Therefore, this plan recommends the following:

- The main academic uses be focused between the one-half block north of Madison and south of Huntington, between 48<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets.
- NWU is encouraged to regard the blocks to the West of the current core campus, between 50<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Streets and Madison and Huntington as an area suitable for campus expansion. Campus-related commercial and residential activities should be increasingly integrated into the 48<sup>th</sup> Street business district, and could be accommodated in this transitional area.
- NWU should not expand its campus domain more than one half block South of Huntington between 56<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Streets. The purpose of this limit is to preserve the integrity of the Creighton Historic District.
- In the area North of Madison Avenue to Adams Street, NWU and the neighborhood will work with the City to develop a plan for improving housing in this area. This plan will address additional strategies for improving housing and how NWU could help by investing in housing and renovation.

- NWU and the neighborhood will work with the City to develop a plan to address parking issues.

This Plan also recommends the block along Madison Avenue between 53<sup>rd</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> Streets retain its current residential character. This architecturally distinctive block could be used to house visiting or permanent faculty, and contributes strongly to the character of the neighborhood.

## Implementation

The Lincoln City Council and Lancaster County Board approved the North 48th Street/University Place Plan as an amendment to the Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan in June 2004. The N. 48th Street/University Plan is a guide for the future of N. 48th Street and University Place; it does not represent final design. Implementation of the Plan's recommendations will require further refinement, decision-making, design and funding.

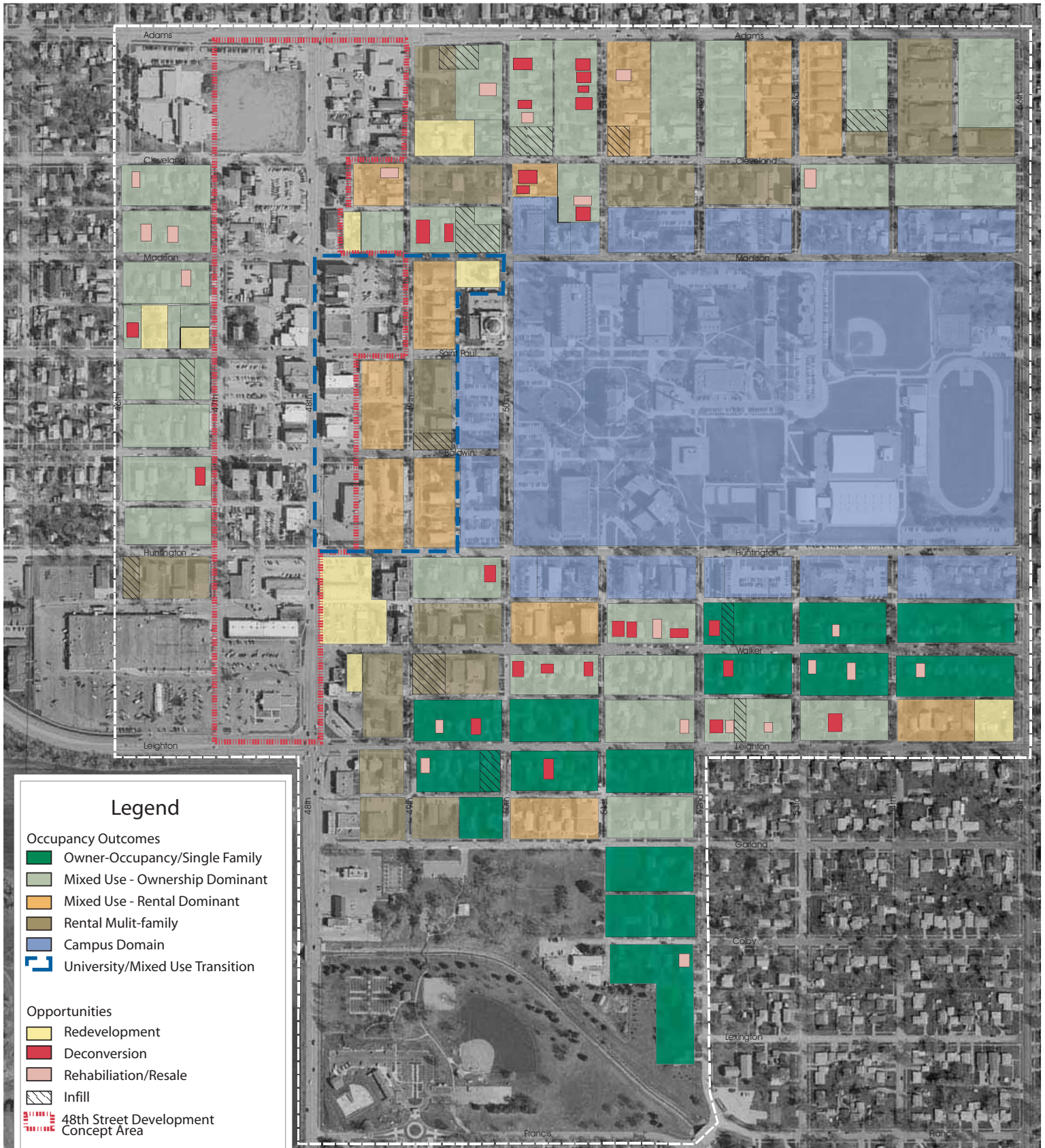
To ensure the recommendations of this Plan are properly implemented, the City will establish an implementation committee comprised of stakeholders in the neighborhood and City staff. The committee's responsibility will be to prioritize the projects identified in this Plan, taking into consideration a number of elements, such as impacts on other projects, dependence on other projects, financing, timing, strategic importance, and other elements deemed appropriate by the committee.

After prioritizing specific projects, amendments will likely be made to the University Place Redevelopment Plan and possibly the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Actual implementation for projects will need to follow the prescribed City processes for approval and obtaining additional funding.



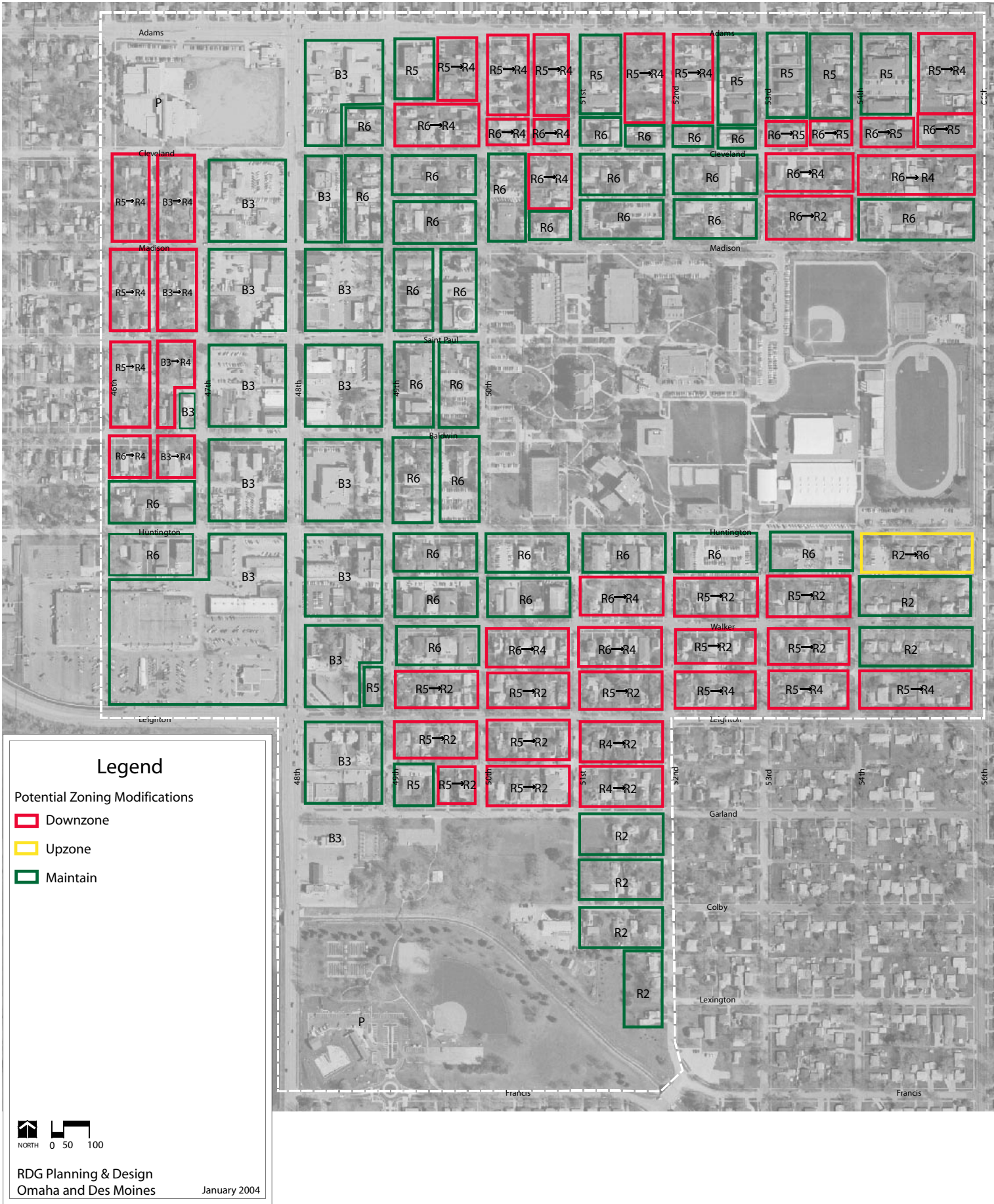


# Residential Policy Categories





# Potential Zoning Modifications



# Proposed Zoning Map

