



Fremont Mall

Conditions that led to the creation of shopping malls are changing rapidly. Most malls are now decades old and are becoming imbedded within an urban context. Some of these malls are small and obsolete and have limited ability to expand because demographics in their trade areas have become less favorable for reinvestment.

As traffic congestion reaches crisis proportions and fuel prices continue to climb, the perceived convenience of mall shopping is rapidly disappearing. Most malls can be reached by only one means—the automobile—and this puts them at a disadvantage in relation to locations that are walkable, linked to public transit, and/or offer more multidimensional urban environments.

Customers are now seeking authenticity and a deeper sense of connection to their community, culture, climate, and daily lives. Among many shoppers, there is also an emerging preference for an outdoor, streetfront shopping experience in either a new centers or in older shopping districts that are better integrated with other daily activities and are amenable to other forms of transit including buses/shuttles, trolleys, light rail as well as bicycling and walking.*

Transformation of a Regional Shopping Mall, Fremont

Dead or underutilized shopping malls and superstores litter the American landscape. More than half a billion square feet of retail space—the equivalent to 4,000 shopping malls—sits empty, surrounded by many more thousands of acres of asphalt parking lots. Mall environments are often underutilized because they are oriented only to cars and multi-lane roads and are cut off from surrounding neighborhoods and the community.

This exercise examines how a regional shopping mall in northeast Fremont—built in 1967—could be transformed and revitalized into a transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood center.

Site Conditions

The Fremont Mall appears to contain about 20.89 acres of ground with 1,300 feet of frontage on the north side of 23rd Street. The site is 700 feet deep with Yager Road the eastern boundary. To the west the property is bounded by a small, older, partially vacant strip shopping center that is now owned by Fremont Area Medical Center for their future use.

Adjacent to the north is a 17-acre (1,300 feet long by 570 feet deep) which was apparently used as a borrow pit to raise the elevation of the Mall property, and is now used as a retention basin for the Mall property.

The Fremont Mall contains a Square Tire store, J.C. Penney's, Maurice's, Hallmark, Nebraska Sports, Gordman's, Radio Shack, two other retailers, a three-screen cinema, and a Hy-Vee grocery and pharmacy.

During the site visit (30 August 2006) the Hy-Vee was crowded. The other retail outlets were less than busy on a Thursday morning.

Within the Mall property there are three separate half-acre outlots. At the southeast corner of the property is a 4,950 square foot Village Inn restaurant. At the southwest corner of the property is a U.S.A. Steak restaurant. Near the center of the property frontage is a new Hy-Vee refueling station. These outlots were moderately busy.

The floor area ratio of building to total site is approximately just over 23 percent.



the site



The typical comments heard from Fremont residents:

- “Not much of a mall”
- “Too little selection when compared to Omaha”

Surrounding Area

The Fremont Area Medical Center is on 23rd Street and Clarkson Street, just to the west of The Fremont Mall.

Clarkson Street is alive with the new development of boutique medical clinics from orthopedic to dental surgery to women’s medicine to urology to family care. The immediate area is also the new location for assisted living centers such as Shalimar Gardens, Pathfinder House.

Perhaps of the most immediate interest to this charrette team is the development of Fountain Springs (an active adult neighborhood), a 66-unit housing development on a 40-acre property directly north of The Fremont Mall and separated from the Mall by the previously mentioned 17-acre retention basin.

To the east of The Fremont Mall, across the two lane Yager Road, is an older motel and an long succession of commercial development marching down 23rd Street culminating in a Wal-Mart, a new Menards, and a new motel about a mile and a quarter down the line. Luther Road (about a mile and a quarter to the east of the Mall) between 16th Street and Military Avenue seems to be the center of new single-family home development in Fremont.

The northeast corner of Clarkson and 32nd Street is also being rezoned R-4 for a \$9million residential project. One suggestion is to look at opening up the rear of the Fremont Mall, including parking, to the new residential developments to the north.

Observations and Comment

Nearly every resident interviewed expressed concern about the cost to taxpayers of any proposed development. Observations include:

- The Fremont Mall is nearly built out unless it can utilize the retention lot or stack/share some parking.
- Access from the Mall to the new developments to the north is severely impeded by the 17-acre retention lot and by the primitive configuration of Yager Road.

Fremont Mall Stats:

Description: One level enclosed shopping mall

Opened: 1967

Size: 202,000 sq. ft.



Existing tenants:

Bath & Body Works, Claire's Accessories, Fremont 4 Theatres, GNC, Gordmans, Hy-Vee Food Stores, Imperial Palace, JCPenney, Maurices, Nail Trix, Nebraska Sports, Radio Shack, Schweser's, The Buckle, USA Steak Buffet, Village Inn



The Fremont Area Medical Center is on 23rd and Clarkson, just west of the Fremont Mall.

• Fremont density for commercial development is F.A.R. of 25%.

• Residential single family is 3 units per acre, single family attached is 6 units per acre, multifamily is 12 units per acre, and mobile home is 6 units per acre.

• Mean travel time to work in Fremont is 16 minutes.

• Population at 2000 census was 25,174. Projected for 2020 is 27,500.



Fremont Visitor Center

- Could the borrow pit in the retention lot be reconfigured from an unsightly area to an asset such as a lake?
- Could a sidewalk/bike trail be added to the improvement of Yager Road so that pedestrians don't have to walk in the roadway at risk of life and limb?

At 202,000 square feet the Fremont Mall can serve the needs of 8,000 to 10,000 Fremont households, but is too small to qualify as a Community Shopping Center by today's standards (300,000 to 600,000 square feet). Households in surrounding communities can look to larger centers further east for their needs.

Municipal Transit currently serves the Mall. There is a taxi service in Fremont (two cabs).

Fremont Comprehensive Plan

Review of "The Fremont Plan," A Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Fremont dated May 1999 as relates to the Envisioning Regional Design Charrette. 1999 Recommendations Include:

- Provide for the affordable housing needs of seniors, young families, and long-time residents seeking to better their own housing needs. (Page 239)
- Encourage market-rate senior housing developments, within the constraints of the market. (Page 259)
- Strengthen Main Street's role as the flagship retailing and civic district for the City. (Page 182)
- * Some of Fremont's principal areas for growth are in the shallow flood plains northwest, north and northeast of the City. Development in these areas will require elevating of structures. (Page 174)
- Major public facility priorities include considering the need for decentralized library facilities. (Page 152)
- The pond north of Fremont Mall should be incorporated into a north community park. (Page 147) *Community park is defined on pages 126 and 127.*
- Proposed Community park sites include a North Community Park, east of Yager Road between a 27th Street collector and the collector parkway at 32nd Street. (Page 138)

- The overall park concept envisions a linked park system, molding Fremont’s open space system into a green network that unites the community and makes each major park the territory of everyone in the City. (Page 137) *Include some small park space and trail linkages in Fremont mall.*

- The City should investigate the development of an innovative transit system that enhances the existing “service route” system by combining aspects of demand responsive and service route systems.

Fremont should consider developing a service route system connecting major community features and reducing reliance on automobiles for some short trips. (Page 118)

- Transit system vehicle appearance is part of the marketing strategy for the program. Vehicles with a low scale, “user friendly” appearance are most attractive to such user groups as seniors or children. (Page 118)

- Fremont should maintain a continuous pedestrian network to complement the street system. (Page 116)

- Bell Street, which currently ends in a T-intersection at 23rd Street, should be realigned with Yager Road to provide a north-south arterial. This improvement will become more necessary with additional development in the north growth centers.

The project involves some redesign of the Fremont Mall parking lot, but helps traffic flow by providing convenient alternative access to the Mall from Yager Road.

An immediate term solution to traffic flow at this intersection is providing a double left turn lane from northbound Bell Street to westbound 23rd Street. (Page 111)

- A corridor enhancement program along the 23rd Street corridor, involving access management, improved circulation, and upgraded landscaping, could make this street a better functional and commercial environment.

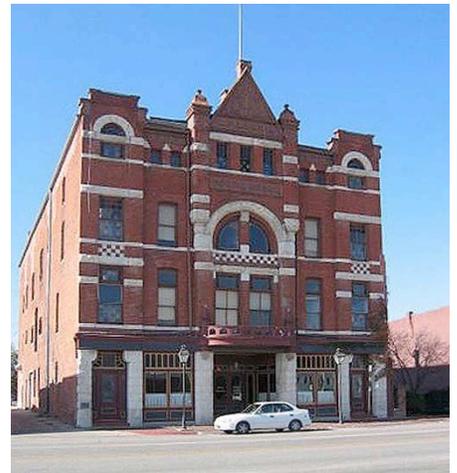
The intersection of 23rd Street and Clarkson had 19,000 cars per day in 1999. (Page 99) *See recommended Roadway Sections pages 109 and 110.*



Fremont Lakes State Park



Historic Barnard Park neighborhood



Love Opera House



Fremont Dinner Train

Median resident age: 37 years

Median household income: \$36,700 (year 2000)

Median house value: \$87,100 (2000)

Industries providing employment: Manufacturing (20.4%), Educational, health and social services (17.8%), Retail trade (15.5%).

Daytime population change due to commuting: -1,398 (-5.6%)_ Workers who live and work in the city: 7,358 (58.3%)

Population change in the 1990s: +1,288 (+5.4%). White Non-Hispanic (93.6%) Hispanic (4.3%)

Ancestries: German (44.8%), Irish (13.8%), English (9.3%), Swedish (6.3%), Czech (6.1%), Danish (5.3%).

Land area: 7.4 square miles

Located at the crossroads of major highway links to the Omaha and Lincoln metropolitan areas, the community offers quick access to big city amenities while retaining an independent rural community flavor.

Cultural attractions include the Louis E. May museum, the Fremont Elkhorn Valley Railway, and the shops that make up "The Antique Capital of Eastern Nebraska."

Fremont residents enjoy 15 neighborhood parks and a trail system as well as nearby Fremont Lakes State Park.

Midland Lutheran College, is located near downtown and Metropolitan Community College is planning to expand its Fremont Campus to a new site.

A campus-like setting is being developed in east Fremont that will include a Workforce Development "One-Stop" center, the new Metropolitan Community College campus, a new middle school, and a future water park.

about fremont

There are more than sixty manufacturers in the Dodge County area, of which 35.3 percent produce food and related products.

The second largest group of manufacturers are industrial machinery and equipment firms at 14.8 percent, followed by printers/publishers (13.1 percent); fabricated metal producers (9.8 percent); apparel and textile (6.6 percent); lumber and wood products (3.3 percent) and miscellaneous manufacturing industries (3.3 percent).

Christensen Business Park, approximately 100 acres of publicly controlled land, zoned for business and light industry.

Rethinking the Box

- **Less Can Be More** Opportunities abound in both a declining and improving asset. As the value of a mall decreases, the opportunities for large-scale change increase. This is when the possibility may arise for complete redevelopment or reconfiguration, or for the introduction of nonretail uses.
- **Broaden Your Vision** Create a vision for the entire mall district in which the mall site is a community center.
- **Unlock the Value of the Land** Consider an innovative mix of uses beyond the predictable and create something exciting. Mixing tried-and-true retailers with more distinctive (even local) retailers creates a broader market for the project.
- **Let the Market Be Your Guide** Customers may be heading for newer and better shopping venues in the immediate area, or to shopping opportunities just a bit farther away, effectively reducing the area from which the mall can draw. All the more important then to create a unique destination.
- **Build Consensus.** In an effective consensus-building process, all the stakeholders—including the developer, the local government, citizens, and tenants—help each other succeed and share the fruits of their success.
- **Think Holistically—Use the Five Domains** as your guide to consider all aspects that are critical to success.
- **Connect All the Dots** The mall as an island—a retail venue surrounded by a sea of parking, and set apart from everything except highways—does not meet the expectations of today's shoppers, who demand a more pedestrian-friendly streetfront experience.
- **Design Parking as More Than a Ratio** Parking based on certain ratios of spaces per unit of land use and configured as expansive fields of striped pavement has dictated development form in the suburbs. Conventional shopping centers often use three times as much land for streets and surface parking as for shopping. But parking is not only expansive; it's expensive and has an excessive impact on storm drainage. The transition from parking to other uses and back is integral to the total experience of place. The need for bike parking is especially important in college towns and in areas wanting to attract young professionals.
- **Creating a Sense of Community** requires a deep understanding of human behavior. Plan for people first, not for the infrastructure that engineers love. Remember that while people come to the mall to shop, they also come to gather in a place that offers a deeper meaning and a higher-quality experience. People go to Wal-Mart for perceived low prices, not to gather and commune.



Abandoned Kmart, Lincoln, NE



Crandall Arambula created a transit-oriented town center plan to revitalize a vacant shopping mall in Spokane Valley, WA.

Seeking Regional Solutions

- Coordinate planning with other cities, towns and counties in the region. Conduct regular conferences, meetings, and workshops for exchange of information and ideas.
- Identify and publicize examples of best practices to be used as models for creating healthy and sustainable communities.
- Establish a consensus of the region's most fragile natural, social and historic environments. Create strategies/mechanisms to protect these environments.

challenges & solutions

- Define policies that clarify or limit acreage development, protect rural lands for food production and natural habitat,
- Coordinate reviews of water-related policies to ensure equitable access to clean water for agriculture, municipalities, industry and wildlife.
- Encourage energy conservation and alternative energy production through effective planning and green building techniques.
- Encourage healthy lifestyles and rich living environments with compact, walkable communities.
- Create food-based, rural/urban coalitions; foster understanding of interdependencies of communities & natural systems.

Regional Challenges

Several regional challenges face this and other charrette locations in Nebraska's urban metroplex:

- Critical ecological systems are in path of rapid growth.
- Economic growth will not occur without attention to quality of life and the environment.
- The region's most valuable natural resources (water, wind, fertile soils, a 4-season solar climate) underutilized.
- There is no shared vision of preferred regional growth patterns or land use policies.
- Municipal and county governments have very different, conflicting approaches to planning and public policies.
- Water resources are uneven in quality/quantity.
- Infrastructure is lagging behind growth pressures.
- Agricultural and urban growth interests are in conflict.
- Region does not see itself as a unit of common economic interests; competitive tensions exist between communities and threaten growth.

tip: ideal outcomes should provide multiple solutions rather than one big solution; regional significance will be discovered through a multitude of potential concepts that make your charrette site more livable, sustainable, and environmentally appropriate.

** Introduction and materials on page 10 derived from "Ten Principles for Rethinking the Mall," the Urban Land Institute.*

Environmental



Social/Cultural



Technological

5 domains checklist

Economic



Public Policy



1. What was the most positive aspect of the workshop in your opinion?

2. If this workshop were to be held again, what three changes would you suggest to make it more effective?

3. Was the time for the workshop too short, too long, or just right?

4. What do you see as an immediate action item you can undertake in terms of sustainability after participating in this workshop?

5. Should any topics have been added to the charrette? 5.

6. What additional training would be useful to you?

7. Other comments?

Name (Optional)

charrette evaluation

