



MOORHEAD CITY WALK: A MASTERPLAN TO
REIMAGE MOORHEAD, MINNESOTA'S URBAN CORE

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MINNESOTA'S URBAN CORE

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By

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Chapter 1

Abstract

The following research investigates the main avenues of neighboring cities, Fargo, ND and Moorhead, MN which are divided by a political and natural boundary. This study will understand the dynamics of each city's urban core to propose a master plan of Center Ave in Moorhead, MN which will highlight Moorhead's distinct historical and cultural identity yet compliment successful revitalization efforts in downtown Fargo. The plan will further propose design standards to create a vibrant downtown commercial district which is woven over a prestigious recreational park utilizing the city's direct access to riverfront space along the Red River.

Many citizens of municipalities which are experiencing stagnant or a decline in growth, have negative views of their city. These opinions are apparent when citizens live next to cities which are experiencing positive growth. Many questions are directed to the local government, looking for a plan to improve the business climate and growth of the city.

Local and state governments look increase local tax revenues by attracting businesses. Usually this is done using tax or development incentives which in turn bring more tax paying citizens.

Even if companies receive incentives for locating their business within city limits, these businesses ideally will bring more skilled jobs, which in turn increases demand for local housing and increases

spending, provided the city has businesses that provide basic goods and services. This increase in spending thus generates more tax revenue. All these taxes collected can then be utilized to enhance the city by providing public services to their citizens. This cycle continues to grow the municipality.

Statement of Intent

The city of Moorhead has seen little to no growth in comparison to its neighboring city, Fargo, ND. The natural landscape overall is identical to both cities yet desirability and development in both cities are quite separate. Several factors, namely political boundaries, have shaped each city to what the position they are at today.

This project will identify these differences and propose a master plan of Moorhead's urban core, specifically Center Avenue. Case studies of similar border cities are first analyzed to examine the approach of revitalizing a downtown core that lags in development to a neighboring city across political boundaries. Each case study will examine the metropolitan area consisting of both cities and then focus on streetscape projects that set the precedent for future economic development in the urban core.

The master plan is then developed from research of the Fargo/Moorhead metropolitan area. History, cultural identity and opportunities are examined to propose a plan that extends the success of Fargo's urban core revitalization efforts to that of a new Center Ave in Moorhead, MN. The goal is to create a viable core that has a unique identity but compliments Fargo instead of competing for economic development.

Thesis Statement

I will develop a masterplan that characterizes Moorhead, Minnesota's unique history and culture which will coincide with new development along Center Ave, creating a vibrant downtown core that is distinguishable from Fargo's Broadway Ave

Project Typology

Streetscape Design

Community Programming

Urban Design Standards

Introduction

There has been a significant change of how streets were used from when the first automobile rolled down Main Street and how streets are used today. Cars have taken precedence in the public right of way focusing public dollars to invest in the Automobile Street rather than Complete Streets. Today and going into the future, landscape architects will be summoned to respond to changing environments along right-of-ways to create active spaces paths of circulation which connect communities, neighborhoods and cities. But why are some streetscape projects more successful by enhancing the neighborhood or central business district while other attempts fall short from expectations.

Urban streetscape projects can be classified into several categories, which focus on the primary users or purpose of the street itself. One such use is pedestrian malls. These types of streetscape projects completely remove traffic and allow pedestrians, bicyclists and emergency service vehicles full access to the right-of-way.

Transit malls expand the street to be multimodal; including rail, bus and taxi traffic (Rubenstein). These types of streetscapes allow public transportation to use the public right-of-way and will usually accommodate bicyclists. In 1982, 16th Ave in downtown Denver was transformed into a successful transit mall which appeals to tourists and local shoppers.

Overall, the most common streetscape development project focuses on accommodating existing and planned increase in automobile traffic, yet incorporate a more pleasant and safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Community members are given an opportunity to voice their opinions about what the community would like to see through channels such as town hall meetings. Unfortunately, it is difficult to obtain a general perspective of what a community as a whole envisions for a streetscape, as each person's perspective is their own opinion. One person may prioritize the traveling speed of an auto mile while another community member may value the width of the sidewalk.

Investment in streetscape development has significant advantages for key corridors of urban centers. Since the 1970s, streetscape development has been used extensively to encourage the return of downtown shoppers. Customers have found shopping malls located in the nearby suburbs to have easier access for parking. Additionally, the malls themselves become a conglomerate of goods and services which allow all the shopping and errands to be completed in relatively small area.

Effective design of an urban corridor can have positive effects for retail by increasing retail sales within the site area. With an increase in retail traffic, business owners and developers will have more desirability of property effected by a streetscape development. This increase in property values will encourage more private investment into further development of underutilized land which may be influenced by a unique experience created by visiting such a streetscape (Rubenstein).

The planning stages of a streetscape project allow opportunities for expression of cultural identities which relates strongly to both residents influenced by the streetscape and visitors that experience it. Cultural

elements may be conveyed through art implemented in the streetscape, site amenities, and entertainment and cultural venues themselves.

Several factors need to be considered to correctly design a streetscape which best compliments the use of the servicing buildings. Cultural, natural, socioeconomic, economic and political factors, once analyzed, will help develop to program the streetscape's purpose. Key elements can be associated to specific land uses or appeal more closely with the local desires.

Projects can be designed to maximize the potential benefit of a streetscape development at the current time, but considerations may be made for quickly adapting a streetscape should factors change. This cycle can be compared to the adaptability of a business. Apple Computer Inc. was well known for personal computers but saw a significant decline in the 1990s. But the company was able to reinvent themselves by acting quickly to create products that were simple in design and easy to use; users were able to participate in the experience.

Cultures are dynamic and an experience that works today may need to be modified, even if slightly, to continue providing maximum benefit to the community. Planners and architects should consider design features that can easily be adaptable for changing environments.

The following discussions will highlight the relationships amongst these factors and relate them to the programming of a proposed streetscape- Center Ave in Moorhead, MN.

Placemaking

It is important for people to relate to spaces in both the public and private settings. Experiences are created based on one's interactions with a space using all the basic sensory mechanisms which are then stored as a memory. Some experiences may be positive or negative but either is a learned experience to a person. For example, someone visiting a beautiful park during the winter may not be comfortable because

they did not have a coat. They would of course revisit the park again because of its overall intrinsic value, but they will bring a jacket for their next visit.

It is important to understand the simple needs of people and how they interact within a space to create successful designs. Spaces allow opportunities for social interactions. Interactions can be casual, unplanned or specific in its purpose. Public spaces provide a neutral environment in which these various exchanges take place. Additionally, the addition of site amenities enhance a public space, adding safety, comfort and information to a visitor. From the days of Ancient Greece to today's megatropolis, the streetscape has long been the traditional place for social interaction.

People are attracted to places that are interesting and will increase the amount of time they stay. Notable places may become recognized regionally and begin to attract tourism. An increase in tourism will also see an increase in the economic viability of the surrounding businesses (Bain). Additionally, retail goods and services which are necessary for daily activities generally are successful- think of the neighborhood minimart or gas station. These types of places provide the ultimate convenience shopping. Incorporating this convenience shopping within a streetscape can greatly enhance the viability of not only the convenience stores themselves but also increase sales for surrounding niche and boutique stores.

There are several challenges in designing successful places. Places need to be designed appropriately within the site's limitations and capitalize on opportunities, but also connect with the surrounding neighborhood context. For instance, a bike lane may be desirable along an urban streetscape but if the bike lanes do not connect to city destinations of value or the linkages themselves become diluted through their design, the overall purpose of implementing bike lanes will have little benefit to the urban streetscape.

Another challenge for placemaking is to have a place which can be utilized by all demographics at all times of the day. For example, Broadway Ave in Fargo, ND is enjoyed by all ages during the daytime on

a Saturday, but in the later hour's elderly or more conservative individuals may choose not to visit the active streetscape because of a younger crowd which may be engaged in the bar scene.

Land Development

Deciding what to do with a piece of land can be a resource intensive process which requires the assistance of a variety of consultants and stakeholders. But successful planning and analysis can maximize the economic, intrinsic and environmental benefits of a parcel of land and the buildings associated with it.

Generally, owners of private land are seeking to maximize the potential value that a piece of land can produce for them. For both residential and commercial properties, developers and land owners are seeking to maximize the amount of monetary profit that the property can generate.

Public facilities, on the other hand, must be assessed differently, as there is an intrinsic value to consider when developing land intended for public use. Designating land to be used as a park, for instance, will not generate revenue directly, but surrounding property values are likely to increase as the demand for these properties will increase. Additionally, retail sales will increase as more customers find the surrounding retail locations as unique and inviting to visit. Most streetscape projects are programmed to do just this. Nicollet Mall, for example, has wide sidewalks as well as publican private plazas.

Some basic concepts of land use must be understood to begin the proposal of using land for a specified purpose. Land which has similar uses will increase the capacity of the land. For example, several niche small retail stores which are spread out will have less customers that casually see their storefronts compared to a collection of stores. A customer may tend to visit a specific store but walk past others that may not draw their attention. (McMahan)

Developers may find that land uses may be appropriate for a particular point in time but later find the potential for a site to be capitalized by a different use. For instance, Niagara Falls, New York relied heavily on the industrial capacity that the city provided the region, but when many of the buildings used

for manufacturing became vacant as companies relocated due to technological advances and cheaper costs. “A large, relatively flat tract of land may be ideally suited for industry, but limited industrial demand may dictate residential development as the highest best use.” (McMahan) Granted the previous example involved an entire industry, having devastating effects on the city of Niagara Falls, many streetscapes see similar fluctuations at the business level; start-up restaurants have a high failure rate and niches boutique shops may find less customer traffic if their goods are no longer desired, thus leaving buildings vacant and waiting to be fitted for its next tenant.

One of the hurdles in repurposing land uses are long-term leases which potentially tie-up developable land. A particular initiative to revive a specified area may hit roadblocks, as fraction parcels are not available for development. Parking lots are a familiar example of easily developable land, but a landowner may have no desire or be contracted to retain the space as a parking lot.

Competition from other land developments will have an influence on how much of a particular type of property is established. A market demand of office development may become saturated but the increase in the workforce demand will likely create a demand in residential housing. Market analyses will provide developers and city planners a picture of property types available and how well suited the land uses are. Planning land uses surrounding the streetscape can greatly enhance the programming of the streetscape project for the intended users. A residential/retail mixed use neighborhood would have different needs than an office/retail neighborhood.

More recently, legal constraints have added to the restrictions a developer faces when analyzing the land use for a parcel of land. Generally, types of land development are meant to benefit the health safety and welfare of the general public. Many times land development codes are perceived as restrictive. Some government policies or programs directly benefit developers, such as North Dakota’s Renaissance Zone Legislation. This act provides incentives for development within a designated urban zone, which provide include both commercial and residential property, increasing urban residency and downtown investment (City of Fargo)

What to do with land can be challenging as our environment, economy and social customs are constantly evolving. Small changes occur over time which create thresholds that should be recognized.

Understanding these changes, when they occur and the effects can help develop a city design standards, zoning codes and taxpayer expenditures on city improvements.

Research Questions

Why do some streetscape projects fail to harvest the expected results of economic development and community building?

Does surrounding development determine the success or failure of a streetscape project?

What role do Business Improvement Districts have in the outcome of streetscape success?

What issues do architects face when planning for a streetscape design?

Hypothesis

Streetscapes fail because the land uses surrounding streetscape projects are not developed to their maximum capacity or fully analyzed in regards to economic, social or environmental capacities. If these factors cannot be fully understood than streetscapes could be designed to be more adaptable, allowing simple, cost effective changes to occur to retain the potential service of the streetscape to both the public and immediate users.

Case Studies



Project Name: Third Street

Business District

Location: Niagara Falls, New
York

Typology: Streetscape, Central Business District, Urban

Design Standards

Users: Tourists and Citizens of Niagara Falls, NY

The city of Niagara Falls, NY has been a city of stagnant growth, victim of the urban renewal movement in the 60s and 70s. The industrial history of the city was replaced with modernistic ideas that quickly fell short of their visions. Canadians developed their side of the border for tourism and a higher-class living whereas Niagara Falls, NY relied on their industrial strength. Eventually industries changed and jobs were either lost or relocated leaving Niagara Falls, NY struggling to make a name for itself.



This project focused on creating a transitional zone between residential neighborhoods and a downtown business district. The project included updates to underground infrastructure, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, way finding and lighting improvements. One concern from local businesses was the removal of parking spaces that were available before the streetscape renovations.

The streetscape renovation did not fulfill the vision to bring new developers to downtown Niagara Falls.
A lack in a marketing campaign was seen as the primary reason for the failure of the project from critics.

Chapter 3

Research Approach

The research for this paper will be a mixed method approach. The gathering of research will seek to identify and define relationships between property development and the level of success determined of streetscape improvement projects. The research findings from this paper will reveal to property developers, business owners, city officials and architects, that there are important elements and initiatives between a streetscape and the surrounding development which should be incorporated to increase the success of a proposed streetscape redesign.

Several studies have been conducted looking at the success of streetscape projects. Typically the criteria which is measured only after the completion of the streetscape project; such as an increase in business revenue. A significant difference in this research is comparing the existing conditions of the business environment, land use, and business types and looking at the success of the streetscape design.

Site introduction

Site Location: Center Ave in Moorhead, MN

The city of Moorhead is located adjacent to Fargo, ND and makes up part of the Fargo/Moorhead metropolitan area. The Red River separates the two cities as well as establish political boundaries.

Center Ave parallels Main Avenue, in downtown Moorhead, creating the city's urban core. Main Avenue is designated as the business loop for Interstate 94 and is an arterial road allowing traffic to move from the West side of the metro area to the East side. Main Avenue and Center Avenue, along with the two railroad tracks cross the river within a quarter mile radius of the downtown area.

Center Avenue was subject to an urban renewal project in the 60's and 70's to help revitalize Moorhead's image. Moorhead Center Mall was built to compete with Fargo's newly developed West Acres Mall, which at the time was on the outskirts of the residential neighborhoods. Buildings that needed repair were bulldozed along Center Ave to make way for the new mall, which included a new building for the city government.



Unfortunately, the modern buildings did not complement the remnants left of a historic downtown. Storefronts and sidewalks were replaced with parking lots and landscape buffers. Driving downtown became cumbersome as more people drove their vehicles to the open parking lots. Of course two sets of train tracks also created delays for downtown shoppers.

Moorhead has since encouraged developers to give Moorhead a new direction but several factors hinder action from developers. Compared to Fargo, there are more incentives to establishing new development in North Dakota than in Minnesota.

Corporate tax rates are nearly half of what Minnesota imposes on businesses. North Dakota has established a Renaissance Zone in Fargo's urban core to give developers and businesses a tax incentive for establishing a presence within this zone. Along with a 2004 streetscape renovation, this has been a catalyst for new development along Broadway- Fargo's downtown corridor.

North Dakota, politically, is a conservative state whereas Minnesota is liberal. Even though most residents in Moorhead would align themselves as conservative, policies are made further away at the State capitol- St Paul, some 225 miles away.

Fortunately, Moorhead can exploit the increase in development of downtown Fargo. Instead of competing for new businesses, Moorhead can focus on gaps that Fargo and North Dakota have. Minnesota is known for recreation. Many Fargo/Moorhead residents find weekend refuge at Detroit Lakes which is approximately an hour East of Moorhead. At the time of this research, Fargo has approved a floodwall project that will create a visual and physical barrier to the Red River. Moorhead could develop the extensive riverfront to be more recreational, yet is flexible with flood events. Moorhead is home to two university campuses in close proximity to downtown. Moorhead could house and entertain more of its student populations.

All these proposed changes can create a new image for downtown Moorhead that is vibrant and distinguished from its neighbor, Fargo. A new program should focus on the historical and cultural features that enhance the Fargo downtown experience. This project is called the Moorhead City Walk.

Data Measures

The following are data measures used for the research of this paper.

Land Use was measured by direct observation, interviews and mining of public records of existing businesses along the proposed site area along Center Avenue. Each business type was then entered into a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database for further analysis.

Examples include the size of building footprints, business type, etc.

Business Types will be observed to and categorized according to industry served and whether the business provides specialty goods or services or routine goods or services. Office and residential space will each have its own main category.

Business Environments will be assessed based on government incentives and programs available for developers and land owners. These include tax incentives, state and federal grants as well as restrictions on land use.

Each location will be analyzed for Establishment of programs and organizations, typically non-profit groups, which have an impact within the streetscape. These may include holiday

programming or parade events, business improvement districts or organizations such as a Chamber of Commerce.

Annotated Bibliography

(Reese and Blair 1990) Reese, Laura A, and John P Blair. 1999. "Competition and Cooperation in Economic Development." In *Approaches to Economic Development : Readings from Economic Development Quarterly*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Levy, Paul R. 2001. "Paying for the Public Life." *Economic Development Quarterly* 124-131.

Bloomberg. 2010. "The Fall of Niagara Falls." *Bloomberg Businessweek*, December 02.

This article describes vividly the decay of Niagara Fall, NY which was painted a victim of a ill-sighted urban renewal initiative. The industrial history of the city was replaced with modernistic ideas that quickly fell short of their visions. It describes how the Canadians developed their side of the border for tourism and a higher-class living.

This article goes on to explain the struggles facing a mayor who had a personal financial interest in downtown development. With a new mayor, the city has taken "incremental" steps towards growth. "In an era of tightened budgets, the goal is modest investments in projects that are meant to create a differentiated identity for the New York side of the falls."

Specht, Charlie. 2013. "State will rip out Robert Moses Parkway in Niagara Falls." *The Buffalo News*, February 20.

This article gives details about reconstruction of the Robert Moses Parkway in Niagara Falls. The reporter interviews business owners and officials which all support the project.

Wapera, S.D, Egbu, C.O. 2013. "Master Planning System: Constraints for Planning Authoritis in Jos Metropolis, Nigeria." *The Built & Human Environment Review* 61-82.

This writing identifies that master planning is a process that is not practical when applied to highly dynamic environments. Jos metropolis, Nigeria was the subject for this article which identifies the limitations of a typical Western master planning process which is applied to city in a developing country.

Strom, Elizabeth. 2008. "Rethinking the Politics of Downtown Development." *Jounrnal of Urban Affairs* 37-61.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

Business Improvement Districts

When property development is considered, the success of the streetscape is greatly improved. Business improvement districts, along with other non-profit organizations have the resources to focus on the micro area when looking at providing services to the streetscape level. City limits usually stretch public resources thin for improving infrastructure and organic growth. The creation of business improvement districts, similar to Fargo's Downtown Community Partnership, focus attention to the needs of a specific district or neighborhood. Resources can be dedicated for programming and planning events, programming the streetscape and acting as a mediator between property owners, users and business owners and city officials, planners and architects.

Changing Times

Forward thinking will enhance the longevity and taxpayer return on investment for streetscape projects. It is important to realize that neighborhoods are dynamic, constantly changing as economic, environmental and social trends change. Usually the time requirement to plan redevelopment for a particular neighborhood and respond to changing conditions is long and cumbersome. Time is needed for community feedback, collaboration with consultants and city officials, but sometimes these time

requirements miss windows of opportunity to make necessary changes or capitalize on dynamic conditions within a community, city, country and even the world.

One example of a window of opportunity is the oil exploration in the Bakken spread out over Western North Dakota. Beginning in 2008, the western part of the state began seeing increased tax revenues which in turn was earmarked for infrastructure projects, mainly vehicular transportation. Now in 2014, the oversupply of oil has made a significant decrease the commodity price of a barrel of oil to levels not seen since 2008. It is hopeful that the state will not see another boom/bust cycle leaving the main streets of towns like Williston and Watford City empty and in financial ruins.

Site Values

Site Development

Market analysis of land uses surrounding a streetscape project is integral to developing a streetscape project. Establishing a framework that can quickly assess the different land uses and propose new development for a unified growth plan will allow city governments, business leaders, community leaders and residents to respond quickly to changes in the business, political and natural environment. Changes such as a streetscape redevelopment project can capitalize on market conditions, maximizing the economic and social opportunities for its businesses and residents.

Streetscape designs can be designed in a way to be adaptable. What would a streetscape look like in different economic environments? How can simple changes to the streetscape enhance economic opportunities for businesses and land owners? These are some of the questions which are answered in streetscape design plan- the Moorhead City Walk.

Plan for proceeding

The following schedule includes phases and milestones projected to complete the streetscape masterplan of Center Avenue in Moorhead.

Phases:

- Further Research Findings (Completed by January 15th)

The goal of further research is to quantify the findings found in the initial research by surveying existing municipalities whom have initiated a streetscape redevelopment project within the last 5 years. The results of the surveys will help identify the process and participating stakeholders in the design of the streetscape. Success of the project will also be assessed based on change in land values, vacancies and revenues (if available) of taxes and sales, or both.

- Framework concept design and Development (Completed by January 31st)

During this phase of the project, a design framework will be developed on the either a theoretical or actual process of developing a masterplan for a streetscape project. The results of framework will be graphically displayed and highlight the process of the streetscape development rather than the final results of the masterplan.

- Design Development I (Completed by February 27th)

This stage will integrate the analysis completed using the framework tool previously established and potential conceptual outcomes based on various environmental, economic and social changes. Outcomes will be communicated by conceptual plans and processes.

- Design Development II (Completed by March 13th)

Final design development will explore more concept designs based on the most appropriate outcome using the design framework. The design will show a schematic solution to the current environment of Center Avenue in Moorhead and then show projections based on change in the

business, political and social environment. These follow-on planning tools will already stage the quick adaptation the streetscape design for future changes.

- Project Presentation (Completed by April 1st)

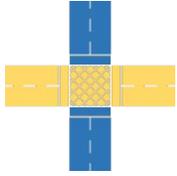
This will be the first presentation of the findings and results for the schematic masterplan of the Center Avenue in Moorhead. Discussions will focus on the process, using the framework and elements affecting the design of the streetscape.

- Project Presentation II (Completed by April 27th)

The final presentation for the masterplan and framework, highlighting the overall process of arriving to the proposed design but exploring the changes that will shape the streetscape and ultimately the community moving forward. This final presentation will highlight that the streetscape should not be found complete but rather part of a long timeline that should be modified as necessary to maximize the opportunity of the economic and social values available to the community.

Design Goals

The overall masterplan will provide a fundamental design solution for a streetscape design but the major goal is developing a process and framework which allows the streetscape to easily adapt to changing environments. The results of the proposed masterplanning process will prove to be more effective in economic stimulation of the surrounding businesses and increase the social value of the neighborhood. The project goals are described as follows:



Establish Primary Corridor(s). Identify primary road(s) as the epicenter of redevelopment.



Streetscape Framework. Establish zones to accommodate outdoor retail, pedestrian circulation, bicycle circulation, vehicle and transit circulation, plaza space, and street development.



Branding. Develop streetscape amenities and event programming to connect all components of the streetscape framework and surrounding community.



New Development. Propose infill development while maintaining existing structures, focusing on publicly held land as a catalyst for the overall project.



Renovate Moorhead Center Mall. Utilize the existing Moorhead Center Mall as a backbone to the retail corridor.



Connect to the Red River. Strengthen the connection of the Red River to downtown Moorhead.

Basemap

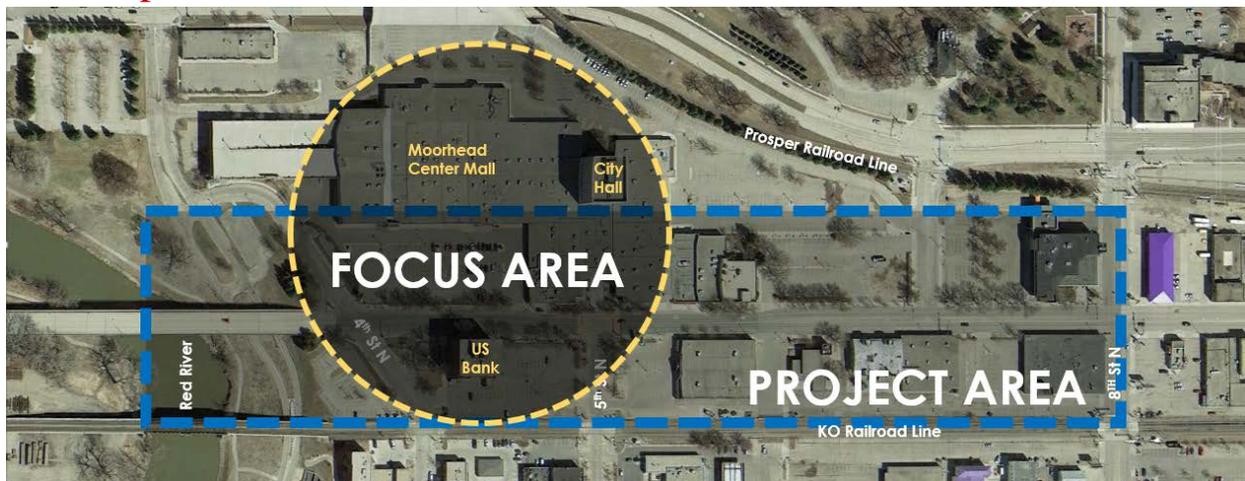


Figure 12. Downtown City of Moorhead, Minnesota

Site Inventory

The extents of the study area are shown in figure 1. The Red River borders the West side with Eight Street North bordering the East side of the focus area. Eighth Street North is a high trafficked arterial road

Figure 1. Downtown City of Moorhead, Minnesota

which connects directly to Interstate 94, one of three exits for Moorhead, Minnesota. The traffic on Eighth Street terminates at First Avenue North, which is also the northern boundary of the study area. The southern extent lies on the Burlington Northern Railroad tracks which splits the One-Hundred block of Moorhead in half.

The city of Moorhead borders Fargo, North Dakota, divided by the Red River. The downtown district of Fargo has seen significant improvements since the redevelopment of the Broadway streetscape in 2004. State tax incentives helped the city to designate a renaissance zone to spur redevelopment of downtown Fargo. Additionally, the state surplus in tax revenues had allowed the state to accommodate low corporate taxes consisting of five percent.

Traffic along Center Avenue is generally light, with peak traffic counts during the morning rush hour as employees head to work and again in the evening when they leave from work. Fargo has attracted many businesses, from startup companies to those named Fortune 500. There are only three access points for workers living in Minnesota to cross the border to Fargo: interstate 94, Center and Main Ave in downtown, and Fortieth Avenue North.

Vehicular traffic through Center Ave is mostly through traffic. Of the three blocks in the area study, only four driveways exist which allow customers and employees to enter properties directly from Center Avenue. These businesses include the Moorhead Center Mall, Scheels Hardware, United Sugars Corporation, and small specialty service retail center.

Only one building located within the study area was built prior to 1950- the Kahler's FM Hotel. The original brick buildings along Center Avenue were demolished during the movement of Urban Renewal in the late 60s and 70s. Some buildings were neglected and needed improvements which property owners were either unable or unwilling



Figure 3. Former FM Hotel which is now the US Bank Building.

to invest. The result was a downtown clearing of buildings to make way for the Moorhead Center Mall residential high rises.

All of the structures located within the study area are strictly commercial retail and services and commercial office. The Moorhead Center Mall provides the most square feet of retail space followed by the US Bank building and United Sugars buildings which provide commercial office space. The Moorhead City Hall is located adjacent to the mall, being the tallest building located along Center Avenue.

Matbus provides public bus service for both the city of Fargo and Moorhead. One bus route travels bus shelters located along Center Avenue in front of the mall for West-bound buses and in front of the US Bank building for East-bound buses. There are no dedicated bike lanes along Center Avenue.



Figure 4. Bus Shelter Located in front of US Bank building.

The Moorhead Center Mall is home 23 stores, restaurants and professional services, including an anchor tenant, Herbergers. A parking ramp was added to the complex to help facilitate parking even though most vehicles utilize the parking lots surrounding the mall.

One of the major challenges of Moorhead and Fargo is the dissection of the cities by the Burlington Northern Sante Fe rail lines. A northern line and southern line nearly converge at 8th Street on the East side of downtown Moorhead. Development is restricted as to not interfere with the right of ways in relation to the rail lines.



Figure 5. Trains regularly interrupt traffic and access to Center Avenue

The study area is susceptible to flooding which impacted the downtown area with the flood in 2009 which crested at 40.84 feet. Businesses were forced to close as the city shut down to support flood efforts allowing supplies and personnel to do anything necessary to prevent further flooding of the cities. Existing city flood infrastructure projects have been designed to mitigate flood levels of 44 feet.

Downtown Moorhead provides access to a park trails and parks maintained by the city's park district. Cultural centers such as the Hjemkomst Interpretive Center and Rourke Art Museum. The access to the park is disconnected from Center Avenue by steel girders and traffic lanes. The park itself is the most public green located in the core of the Fargo-Moorhead area. Recreation programs are available during the summer months which include canoeing/kayaking, bicycling and festivals.



Figure 6. A picturesque view from the parking ramp at Center Avenue Mall

Chapter 6

Research Summary

There was a well-known movie called “Field of Dreams”. Although the location of the film is based in rural Iowa, the concept is similar- “If you build it, he will come”, or “they” will come. Often this is the approach to streetscape projects. Simply clean things up on the street and incorporate the standard parts included in complete streets. Once the project is complete, the neighborhood will be vibrant and exciting, bringing visitors and increase revenues.

Unfortunately, a one-size fits all streetscape approach does not work for most locations. Does a streetscape project come before redevelopment or does development need to be active in order to predict the best applications of streetscape elements? For instance, a predominantly mixed-use residential and retail neighborhood should be closer to human scale and provide spaces for uses needed within the residential and retail needs of the neighborhood. A mixed-use commercial office and retail may be better suited to accommodate larger crowds and focus on pedestrian circulation.

Finally, once a streetscape proves to be successful, things may change in the neighborhood, the economy or the political environment that ultimately change the functions of the land uses surrounding

a streetscape. City planners will need to adjust the planning strategy for neighborhoods based on these changes, but the roadwork for these changes is extensive and a long process.

The focus of this project is to look at identifying a framework for assessing a neighborhood proposed for a streetscape project. The design of the Center Avenue in Moorhead will maximize the potential use of the land surrounding the streetscape. The framework establishes that the success of Fargo and current limitations of the business environment in Moorhead will show that predominantly mixed-use residential and retail development will maximize the economic potential of the neighborhood. In the end, the newly proposed streetscape project will be specific to the new land uses and show how a coordinated effort in land development with a streetscape project will increase the success of a renewed streetscape.

Chapter 7

Process

It was observed that the approach to a final master plan would be developed at three different scales- the corridor, street scale and site details (site amenities). Initial design considerations focused on defining the corridor. The site limits of the project were from the Red River to the 8th St N, but the focus of initial implementations of the project revolved around the 4th and 5th Street intersections with Center Avenue.

Corridor Program

Figure 6 shows the initial corridor concept which explores Center Avenue as a traffic road focusing on retail shopping. The Center Avenue Mall is retrofitted to allow an open public space leading up to the existing City Hall. This allows the local government building to have a front door entrance to a prominent public space within the city core. Additionally, breezeways are proposed on the North Side of the new Center Avenue Mall development, which expands the outdoor shopping experience.

5th Street North is converted to a full pedestrian mall from Main Avenue in the South and crossing Center Avenue. The pedestrian mall creates a strong axis which terminates at the city hall entrance.

A boardwalk is proposed, looking above 3rd Street North and the Red River. The boardwalk would support retail or entertainment venues proposed along 4th Street North and act as a connection to the Red River.

Buildings are proposed within existing open surface parking lots.

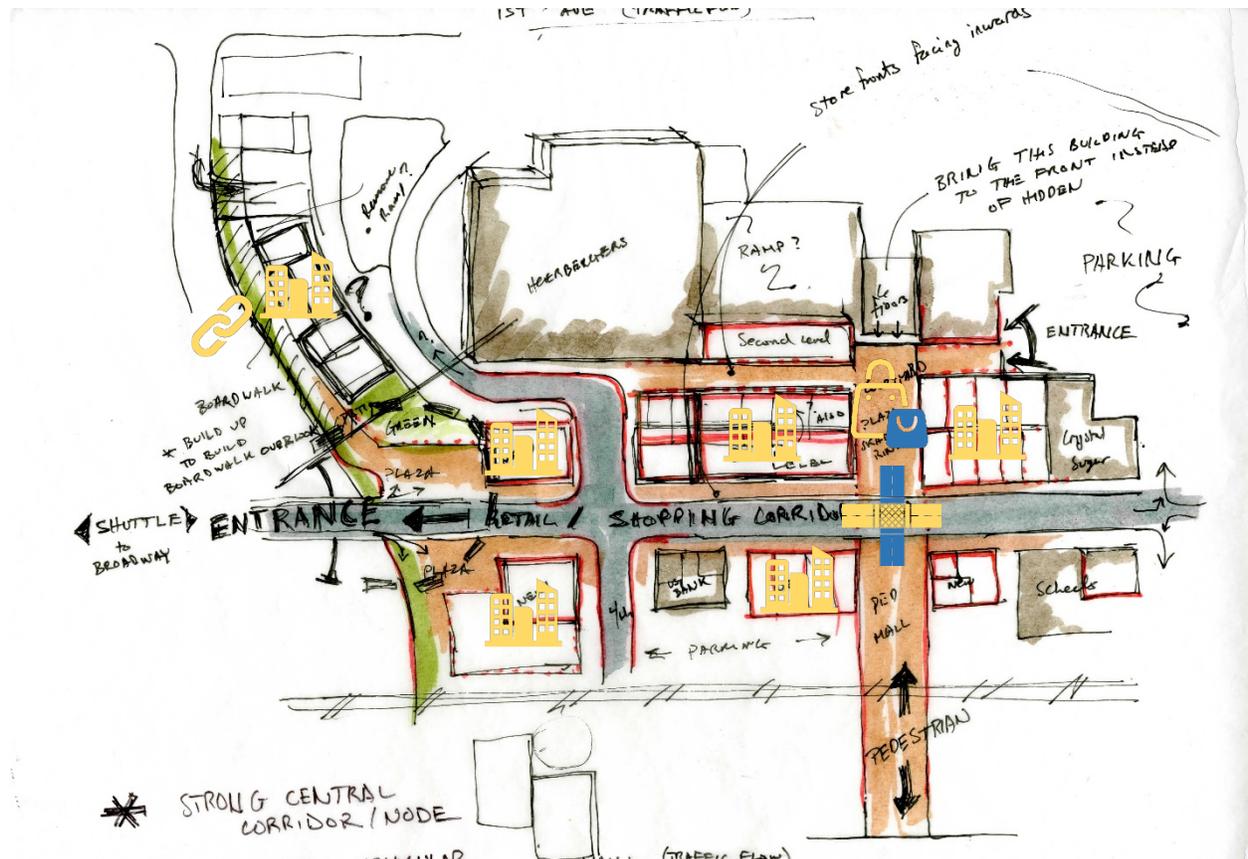


Figure 7. Corridor Concept 1

The second concept shown in figure 7, explores converting a portion of Center Avenue from 4th Street North and 5th Street North to a pedestrian mall. This would create a defined and comfortable commercial corridor. Traffic would be limited to 5th Street traveling north to Center Avenue Mall and then continuing east. The proposed traffic flow could pose a challenge to a customer base reliant on

vehicles, as the space is intended to be more intimate with a pedestrian experience versus- vehicles would be void of the main shopping experience.

The new open public space would be restricted to a courtyard, removing the breezeways, creating a clearly defined public space for events and proposed retail activates.

New buildings again, are proposed in locations of existing opens surface parking. Buildings on the west side of Center Avenue are orientated around the turnaround entrance from 1st Avenue North. The turnaround would be exclusively used as a drop-off/pick-up entrance. The Center Avenue Bridge is converted to a pedestrian mall, connecting downtown Moorhead and Fargo. The bridge would be restricted to pedestrian and bicycle traffic, creating a comfortable and strong connection to the Red River.

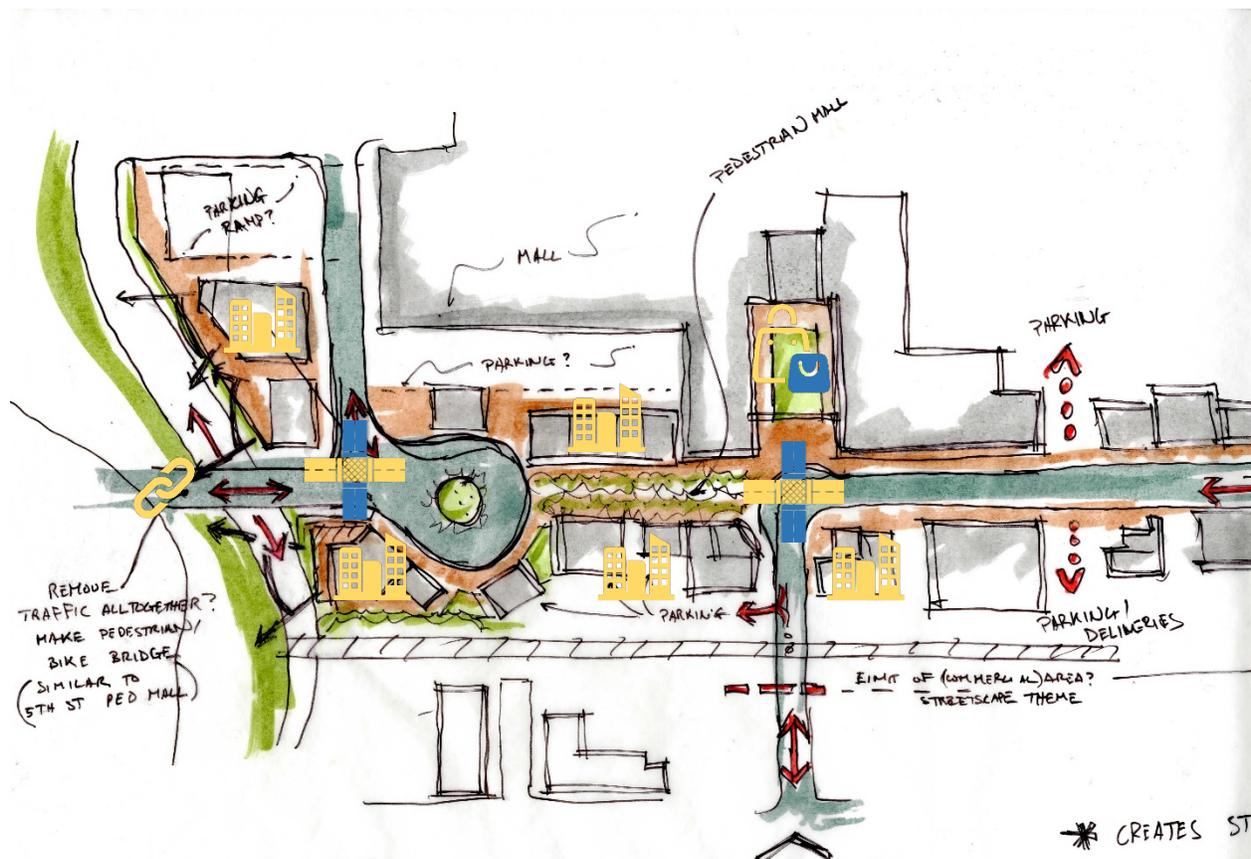


Figure 8. Corridor Concept 2

Both corridor concepts were revised to provide develop the overall programming of a refined corridor, as shown in figure 8. The streetscape is divided into three zones: an entertainment zone, a retail zone, and a transition zone. The Entertainment zone recognizes the recreational opportunities from visitors accessing the Moorhead Park system from the Red River and the large open spaces designed at the 4th Street and Center Avenue intersection. Sidewalks are not as defined, allowing a more meandering experience.

The retail zone would incorporate the Center Avenue Mall redevelopment and the 5th Street Pedestrian Mall. The straight, continuous sidewalks provide a linear experience for visitors. As the streetscape evolves and development increases, visitors may relate Center Avenue to a vibrant promenade.

The 5th Street Pedestrian Mall would be adaptable to host a variety of public events such as concerts, flea markets and farmer's markets. Proposed mixed-use development would line the public urban space, providing office/residential space on the upper floors and retail on the main floors.

Finally, the transition zone is identified in this project as a follow-on phase of development along the corridor. All of the properties in the transition zone are privately owned and would require stakeholder-driven development in order to move forward with the overall concept. Instead, one of the proposals of the Moorhead City Walk project is to create a successful core which then encourages surrounding businesses and land owners to invest in the downtown core. Design standards would be adopted, incorporating the properties in the transition zone into the Moorhead City Walk experience.

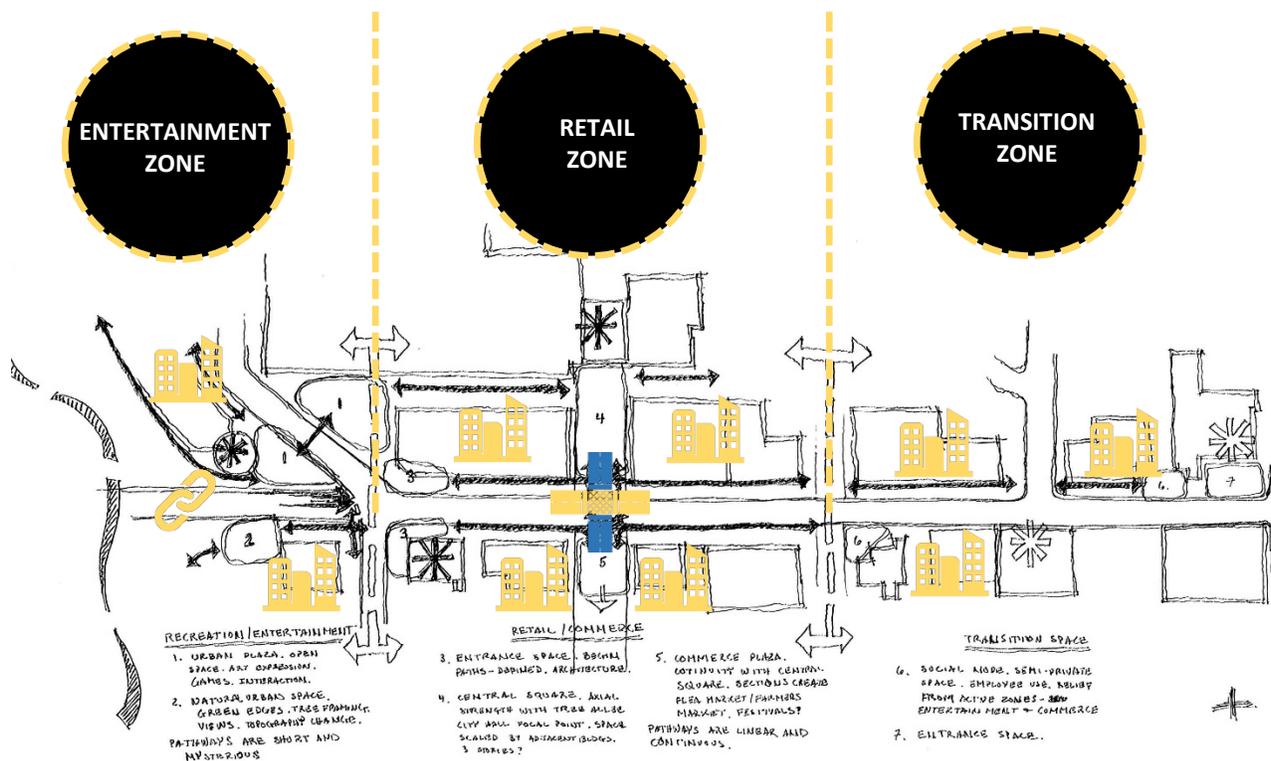


Figure 9. Corridor Programming of Center Ave

Business Development

Streetscapes are sometimes designed assuming that businesses will develop around the capabilities and constraints which the streetscape may offer. One of the influences of designing the street scale of the Moorhead City Walk, is understanding the different types of businesses which will be typical for the streetscape. The design of the streetscape is influenced when anticipating where certain business types may be best located. Parking needs, open space for customers and proximity to different business types add another layer to the design of the Moorhead City Walk. The following are the different types of businesses recognized as important for this project.



Generative Business

Can be an anchor tenant, this type of business generates customer traffic through its own branding, advertising or reputation.



Shared Business

Shared business activity occurs by attracting a customer base from some other source, such as a popular destination or a nearby generative business.



Sufficient Business

Business activity that occurs mostly by chance or convenience. Some specialty brick and mortar businesses may fall into this category.

Center Avenue Streetscape Framework

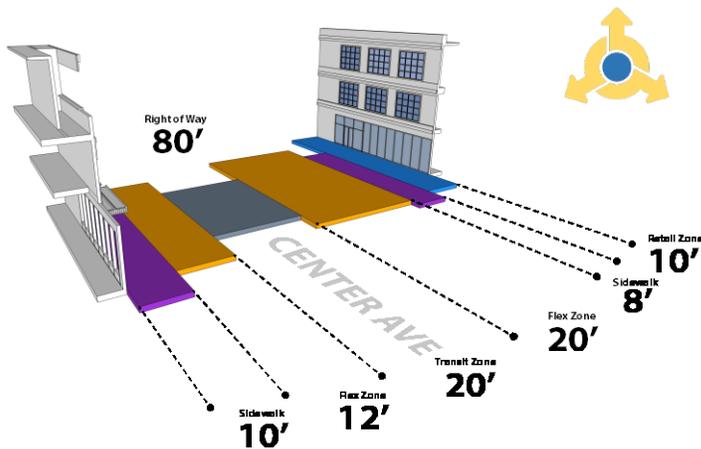


Figure 10. Streetscape Zones

The next scale in the development of the Moorhead City Walk project was to look at the street scale of Center Avenue and the 5th Street Pedestrian Mall.

One of the main goals of this project is to propose a streetscape

framework which can easily evolve

over time as the various environments (economic, political, social and natural) change. It is at this scale of the project that the streetscape is separated into zones, as pictured in figure 9. Together, the zones utilize the right of way and any change in usage of the zones does not require additional right of way space. Each width of the zones is sufficient for the various uses anticipated. These uses are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. Several uses and layouts were created to observe the overall space

requirements. Collectively, these uses prescribed a space requirement that developed into the proposed framework in figure 9.

Figure 10 shows initial design development of how zones may be used in the streetscape. The south side of Center Avenue is allocated dedicated retail space and a wider flex zone. Initially, the flex zone will consist of angled parking to support the generative businesses located in key nodes to help drive new

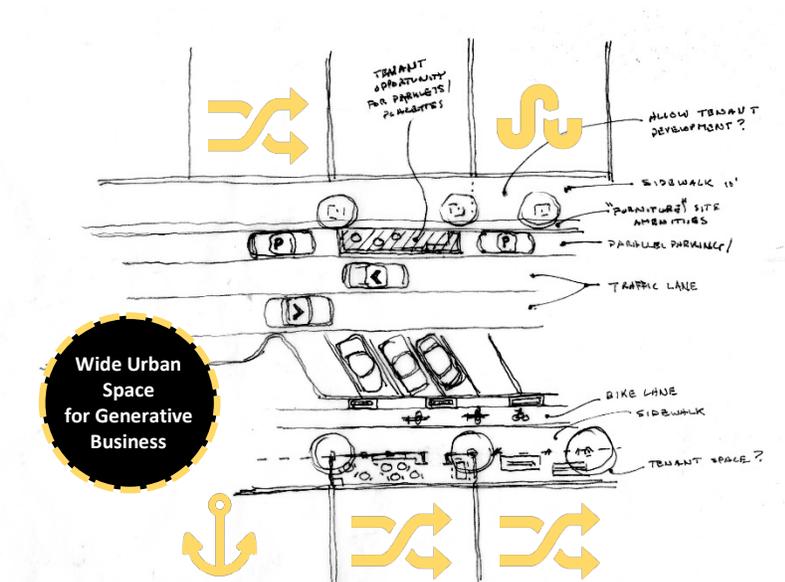


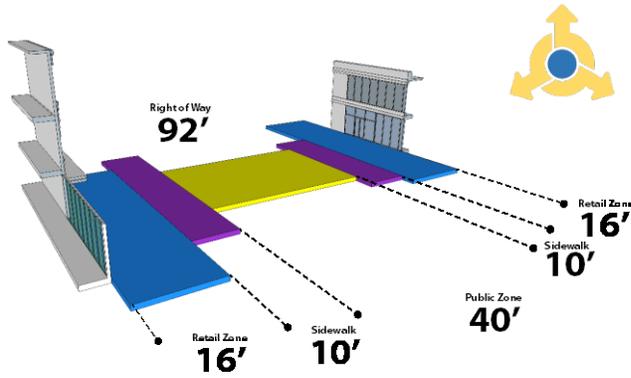
Figure 11. Design Development Example of Streetscape Framework

traffic to the City Walk. The north side of Center Avenue will utilize the flex zone as parallel parking to allow easy access to new development. The combination of both parking configurations allows tenants a variety of options, encouraging new developments to be occupied quickly.

5th Street Pedestrian Mall Framework

The 5th Street Pedestrian mall was divided into only three zones: The retail zone, Sidewalk Zone, and The Public Zone. The Retail and Sidewalk zone have the same characteristics and use as the Streetscape versions, but the retail zone is significantly larger. The increase in space provides great opportunities for surrounding retail tenants to bring part of their goods and services to the public. Opportunities are available to bring some of the indoors to the outdoors and vice versa, to create truly unique outdoor commercial and public space. Figure 11 shows the configuration of the 5th Street Pedestrian Mall.

As with the Streetscape Framework, the zones in the pedestrian mall were allocated after studying various activities and special requirements for those activities. The Public Zone anticipates a



predominantly commercial plaza where kiosk or mobile carts provide unique goods and services. The use of mobile kiosks allows seasonal and event adaptation for the public space. The space is designed to accommodate events such as outdoor

concerts, skating rinks, craft shows and farmer's markets. The separation of the pedestrian mall by Center Avenue creates a comfortable break in the mall where more than one event could easily be organized- one south of Center Avenue and one in the north.

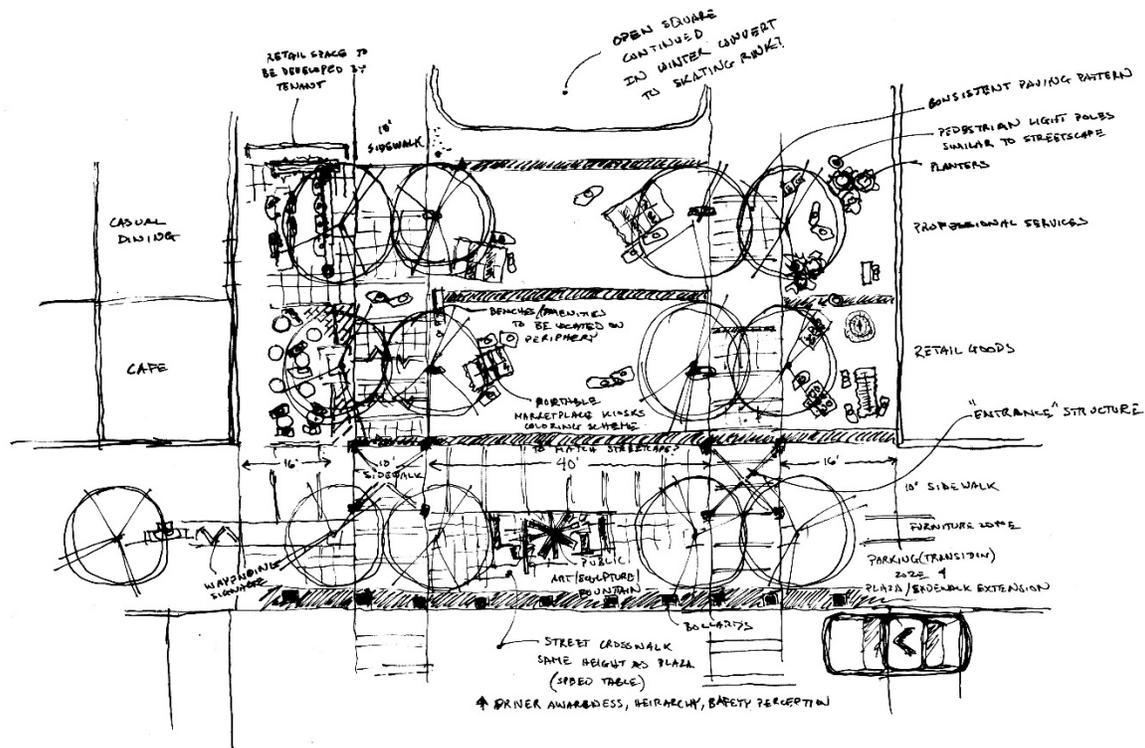


Figure 12. 5th Street Pedestrian Mall Concept

Collectively, the Moorhead City Walk becomes a destination for residents and tourists which support peripheral businesses.

Chapter 8

Moorhead City Walk Master Plan



Figure 13. Moorhead City Walk Master Plan showing different Zones

-  **SIDEWALK**
-  **FLEX**
-  **RETAIL**
-  **PUBLIC**

The master plan, shown in figure 12, encompasses all the design programming to the street scale. The Connection to the Red River is apparent with the repurposing of the Center Avenue Bridge to a Pedestrian Bridge which overlooks the river.

The public space situated in the entertainment zone is prevalent in the master plan, showing the different uses of the space, but yet circulation is still the backbone of the space. A proposed performing arts center would anchor the entertainment district, which utilizes the exiting parking ramp for direct connection. A hotel is proposed as the development of the entertainment zone progresses. Reflecting on a piece of history, the old Fargo/Moorhead Hotel, which is now being used as office space, could be renovated and repurposed back to a hotel.

Proposed buildings show where in-fill could occur in order to create a continuous retail façade that lines Center Avenue. This is an important concept for the city to strive for as the walking experience is the essence of the City Walk.



Figure 14. View of Entertainment Zone looking east down Center Avenue.

In the master plan, one also is able to identify the extent of modifications made to the Moorhead Center Mall. Most of the mall is to be updated only with a façade treatment. Only the southern end of the existing mall is proposed for redevelopment.



Figure 15. Entertainment Zone looking west towards Fargo

Streetscape Site Plan

The next scale of the Moorhead City Walk project explores the details of the each of the zones and how they may change over time. Again, one of the main goals of the project is to develop a streetscape which may adapt easily to changing environments. Figure 15 shows a comprehensive suite of uses, all incorporated in a single point in time. This is a good prediction of what the streetscape would actually look like as parts of it change while the use of other zones may stay consistent.

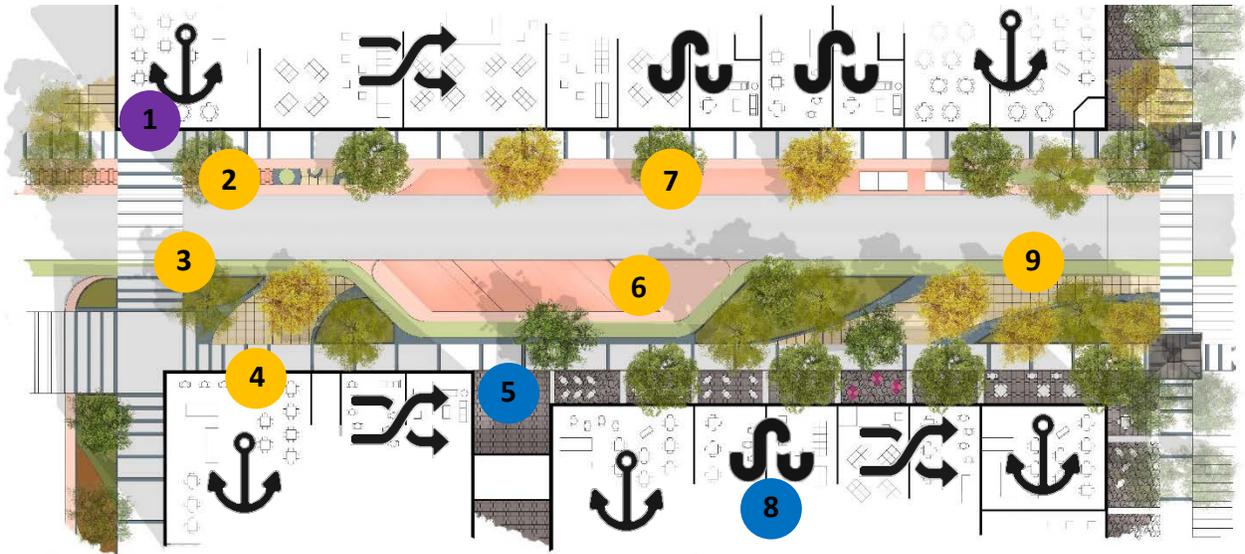


Figure 16. Streetscape Site Plan

1. **Sidewalk Banding.** Slate colored bands in the sidewalk decrease in distance as one approaches key intersections, providing a visual cue for situational awareness.
2. **Extended Curb.** Businesses may test the expansion of their store’s experience by offering services or displays in the Flex Zone. Initially this is done using parklets to determine if an extended curb would be an economical and desirable step.
3. **Planting Beds.** Planting beds and stormwater treatment systems are installed to create a spacious and pleasant streetscape once angled parking is undesirable.
4. **Entry Plaza.** Small entry plazas are placed to support extra pedestrian traffic for anchor stores or commercial offices.
5. **Outdoor Retail Space.** Retailers are allowed to design an in-store experience which brings the indoors to the outdoor space.
6. **Angled Parking.** Increased parking capacity is available through angled parking on implementation of the project to accommodate vehicles.
7. **Parallel Parking.** Parallel parking is available to support the necessary traffic while development and foot traffic builds along the streetscape.
8. **Boutique Store Location.** Boutique stores are typically new businesses which attract customers drawn in by anchor stores. Boutique stores provide the unique identity that the City Walk can provide visitors.
9. **Bike Lane.** A dedicated bike lane is available for bicyclists. The bike lane veers around angled parking to prevent collisions. Bike racks are available throughout the City Walk streetscape.



(a)



(b)

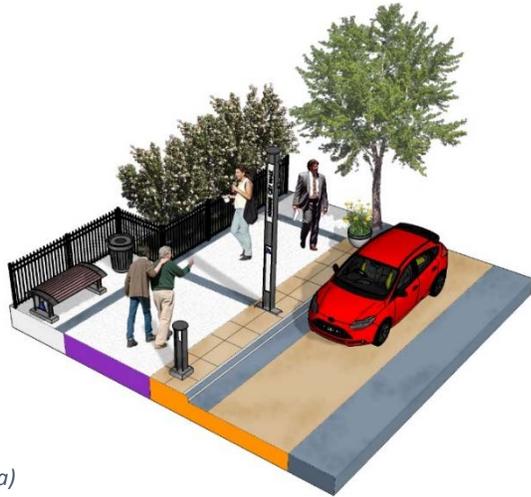


(c)

Figure 17. Progression of development along the South side of Center Ave

It is not expected that the streetscape would look like the master plan upon implementation. There is much needed investment and development as well as community buy-in, in order for the full master plan to be realized. But if done in smaller steps or phases, the full potential of downtown Moorhead is very feasible.

Figure 16 shows a series of a typical street section on the south side of Center Ave. In the initial implementation of the streetscape, undeveloped areas may simply be a landscaped buffer (a). Angled parking is available to support new and growing businesses until the City Walk experience is more developed- that is visitors are willing to park further away and walk along the City Walk rather than needing to park in close proximity to stores (b). Once downtown Moorhead becomes developed as more of a walking experience, visiting multiple shops along the main shopping corridor, then parking can be removed and replaced with more facilities which support pedestrian and customer experience (c).



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 18. Progression of development along the north side of Center Ave.

Figure 17 shows the same process, but on the north side of Center Avenue. Retailers on the north side do not have access to a “retail zone”, but with the use of initiatives such as parklets or street side cafes, retailers can “test” expanding their services or showcasing their goods on the sidewalk by utilizing dedicated parallel parking spaces (b).

Should a tenant or landowner determine that the parallel parking space would be more valuable to convert to an outdoor space, such as seating or displaying retail goods, then the curb be permanently extended to the edge of the street (c)

Again, no additional space in the right of way is required to make these simple changes. When change is anticipated and planned for, adaptation of the streetscape becomes easy and efficient.



Figure 19. Typical Street Section of Center Ave.

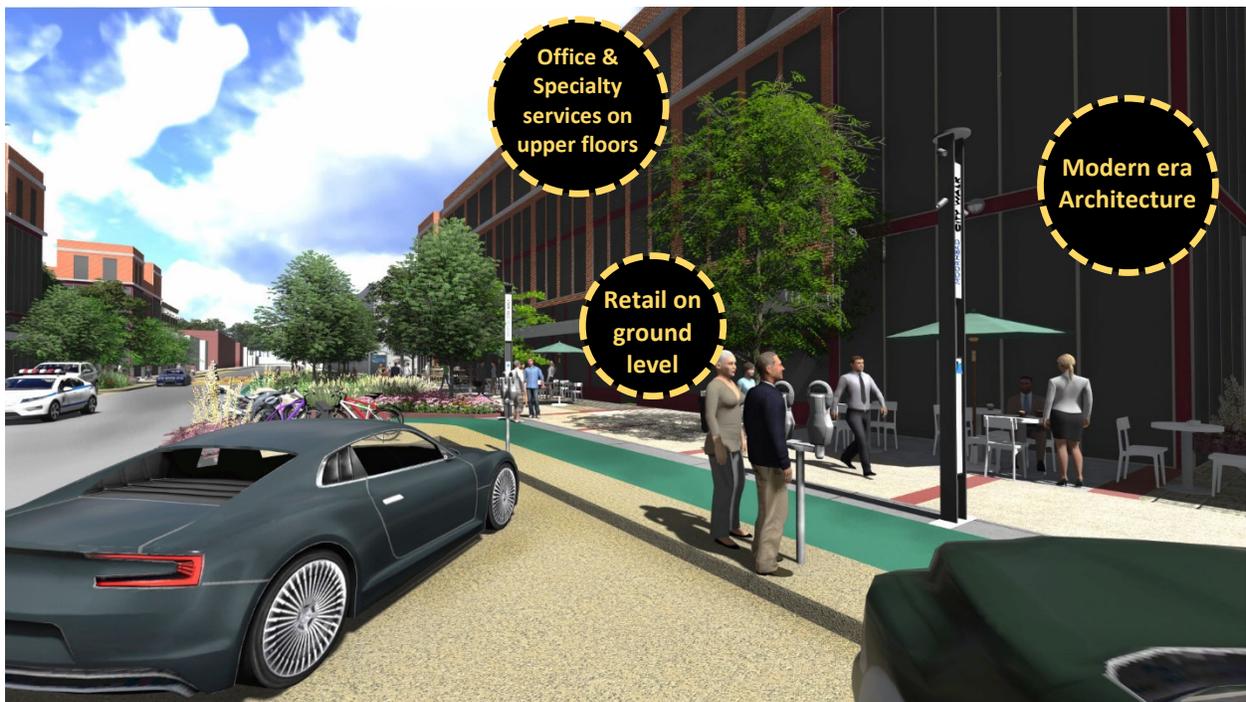


Figure 20. Moorhead Shopping Corridor looking southeast.

Pedestrian Mall Site Plan

The proposed conversion of 5th Street North into a pedestrian mall will provide a unique place for the community to gather and purchase specialty goods not found at typical retail stores. The design of the pedestrian mall focuses on a central public space encircled by the pedestrian circulation zone. An allee of

trees provides a vertical barrier for the circulation zone and the tree canopies create an overhead roof for the sidewalk, retail and public zones.

Prominent anchor stores are proposed on corner properties to draw in larger numbers of pedestrian traffic to support shared and succipient businesses located on the periphery of the pedestrian mall. A larger retail zone provides tenants with ample space for creating a personalized outdoor experience which adds a layer of identity to the overall pedestrian mall.

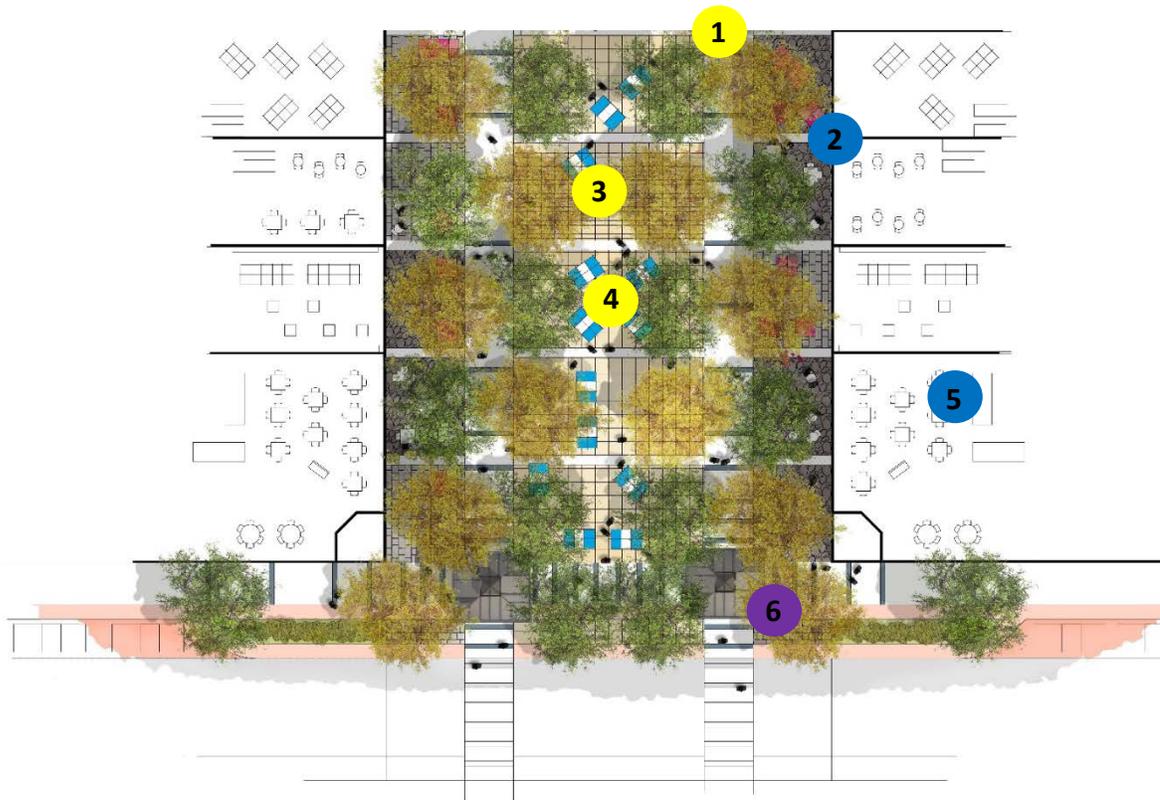


Figure 21. Typical Pedestrian Mall Site Plan

1. **Summer Alee of Trees.** A variety of deciduous trees will provide sufficient shade during the summer months for the entire plaza space.
2. **Outdoor Retail Space.** Retailers are allowed to design an in-store experience- outside which brings the store experience outside.

3. **Central Plaza Pavement.** The pavement of the central plaza is initially installed with colored concrete with beveled score lines cut in 4' squares.
4. **City Walk Kiosk.** New ideas for products and services are created all the time. These retail kiosks allow entrepreneurs and inventors to test their ideas with minimal capital expenditure on retail space and fixtures.
5. **Anchor Store Location.** Anchor stores generate business activity on its own brand reputation, advertising or experience. These locations should be located on the key corners of the mall to draw retail traffic.
6. **Sidewalk Banding.** Slate colored bands in the sidewalk decrease in distance as one approaches intersections, providing a visual cue to increase situational awareness.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 22. Progression of development of the Pedestrian Mall.

One of the unique features of the pedestrian mall is the highly adaptive central public space. Mobile kiosks can be positioned to fill the central space or to encircle a public event, selling snacks, beverages and memorabilia. Other economic events supported by the central plaza are craft fairs, flea markets and farmer's markets (figure 21, a).

The public plaza can take advantage of season change, such as incorporating a skating rink in the downtown core. Again, surrounding businesses can provide goods and services for visitors looking to ice skate or do other winter activities (figure 21, b)

Sometimes, changes make big shifts over time and the Moorhead City Walk takes in consideration this as well. The public space can easily be adapted to a central park which provides more amenities and use for a predominately residential community, as shown in figure 21, c.

Collectively, the pedestrian mall is adaptable for a wide range of uses, quickly and economically.



Figure 23. City Hall Square on the 5th Street Pedestrian Mall

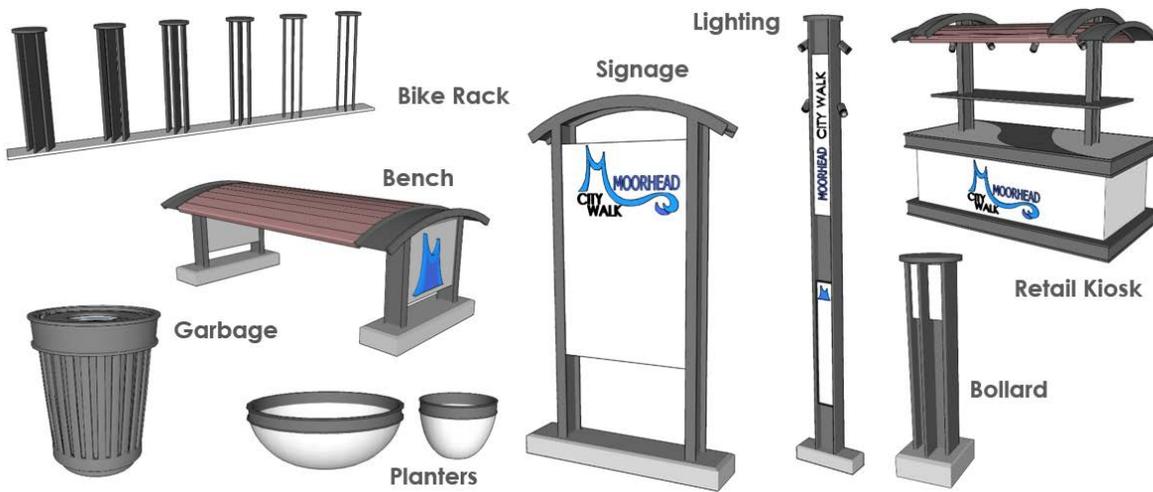
Branding

The final goal of the Moorhead City Walk is to provide a brand for the entirety of the project, establish a simple project-wide symbol of a new experience in downtown Moorhead. Simple and modern designs are used for standard sight amenities, which will be the only consistent component of the Moorhead City Walk.

Even at the detail level, the site amenities are design to be adjustable and easily relocated as the streetscape changes. Lighting is provided by lights which are adjustable. The sense of sound is added with the use of speakers which may play nature sounds in the evening or Christmas music during the holidays. Figure 24 shows a variety of site amenities that could create the experience of a new downtown Moorhead.



Figure 24. Examples of the Site Amenities used in the Moorhead City Walk



Ultimately, the small successful steps build over time to create a truly unique experience. One which will strengthen in itself as it become known as the Moorhead City Walk.

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