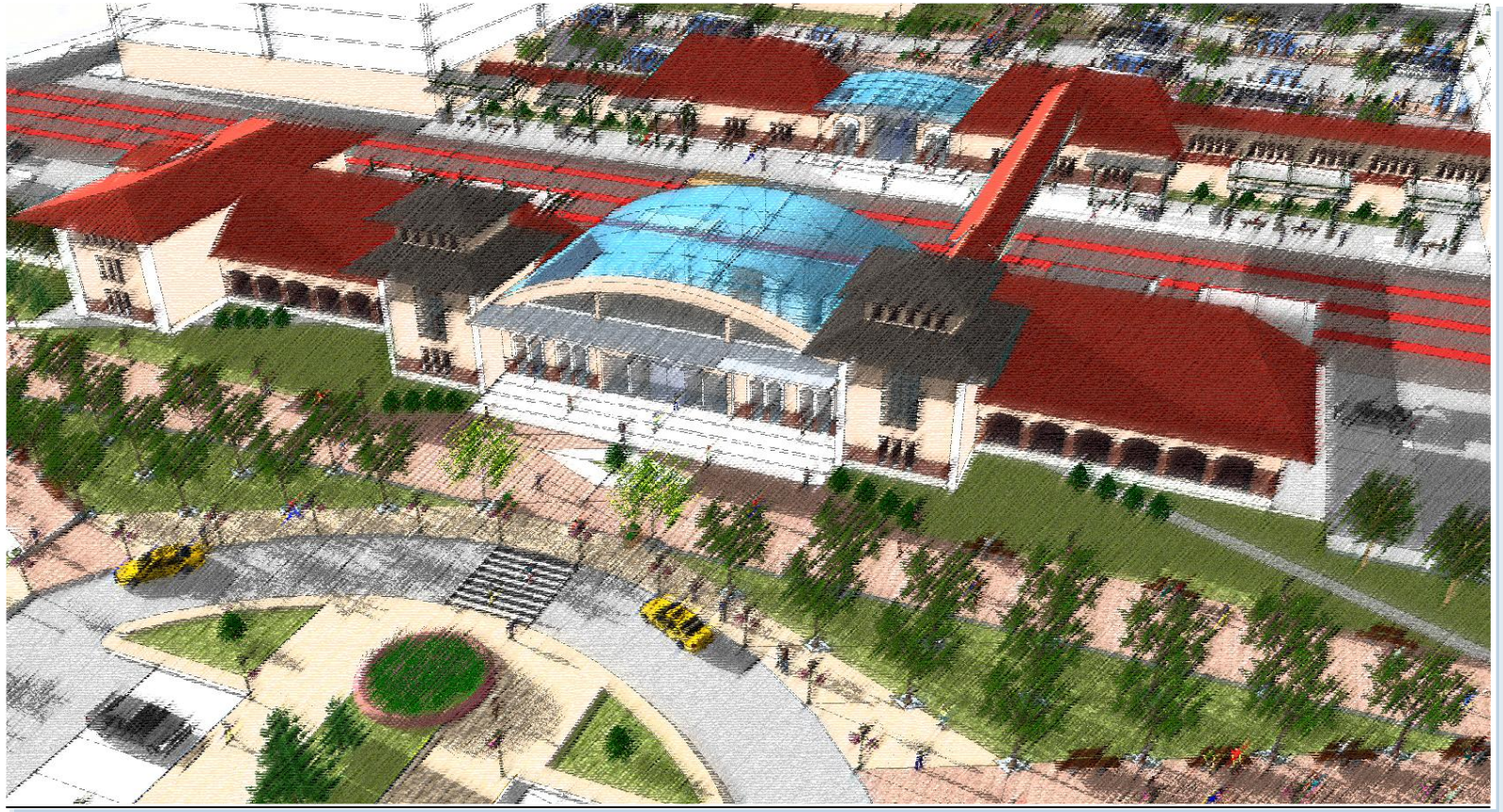
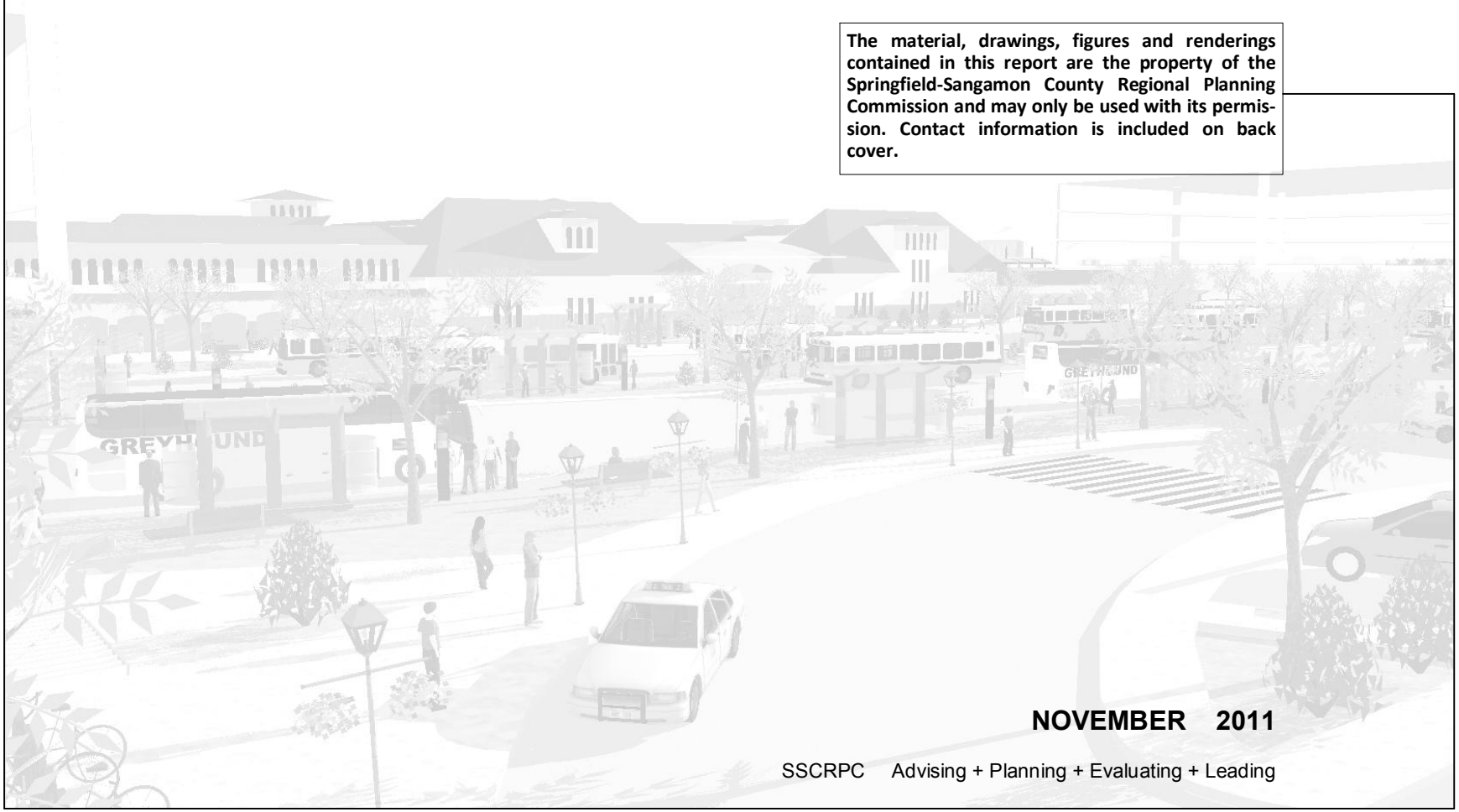
Thinking Beyond Transit

SSC RPC Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission



Transit Oriented Development in Springfield, Illinois: A Planning & Urban Design Exercise

November 2011



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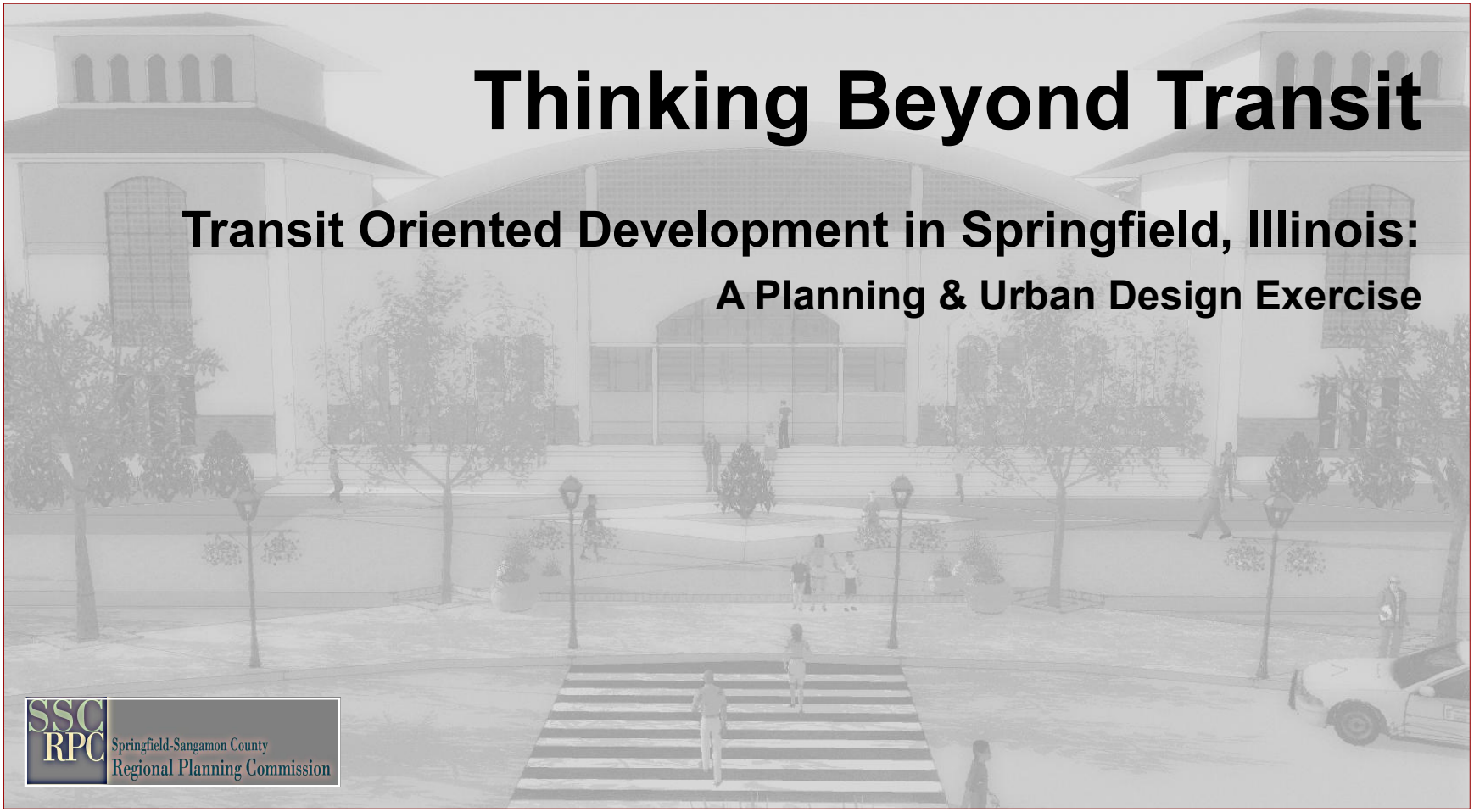


Thinking Beyond Transit

Transit Oriented Development in Springfield, Illinois:

A Planning & Urban Design Exercise

SSC RPC Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission

Prepared by the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission.

Neha Soni Agarwal, Associate Planner for Transportation Planning, Project Team Leader

Thinking About Transit Oriented Development

Efforts by the Springfield Mass Transit District (SMTD) to develop a "multi-modal" transportation facility in Springfield, intended to bring public transit and passenger rail service together at one site accessable to pedestrians as well as vehicular traffic, generated interest in the effect that such a facility might have on the development and redevelopment of the areas surrounding it. This was in part because the location proposed by SMTD was adjacent to an area of identified redevelopment need, but also because other cities are finding that when transit stations are made part of a well-planned development and redevelopment effort, they can have beneficial effects.

This type of development, which blends transit facilities, residential improvements, and commercial redevelopment together as an urban development strategy, is often called ***Transit Oriented Development***, or ***TOD***. TOD comes from the basic observation that people who depend upon public transit systems — bus or rail — like to live, work, shop and even play near transit stops.

These developments, which tend to occur within a reasonable walking distance of a transit stop offering fast, frequent and reliable service, often include a mix of uses at higher-densities than one might normally find in some urban and most suburban areas. If well planned, they can offer safe, attractive and "walkable" environments with memorable streets, squares and plazas, while limiting vehicle parking to reduce the barriers parking lots often create.

Since the proposed SMTD facility was also to serve as a new station for passenger trains, recent developments concerning high speed rail (HSR) increased interest in the potential that a multi-modal facility like the one proposed might offer as a pivot-point for redevelopment in Springfield's city center.

Of course the extent to which transit oriented development will occur around transit facilities is influenced by many variables, including the nature of the facility's location itself. To come to terms with the conditions affecting TOD success, the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) conducted a review of the literature in an attempt to identify factors relevant to TOD planning.

The SSCRPC's Conceptual TOD Planning Project

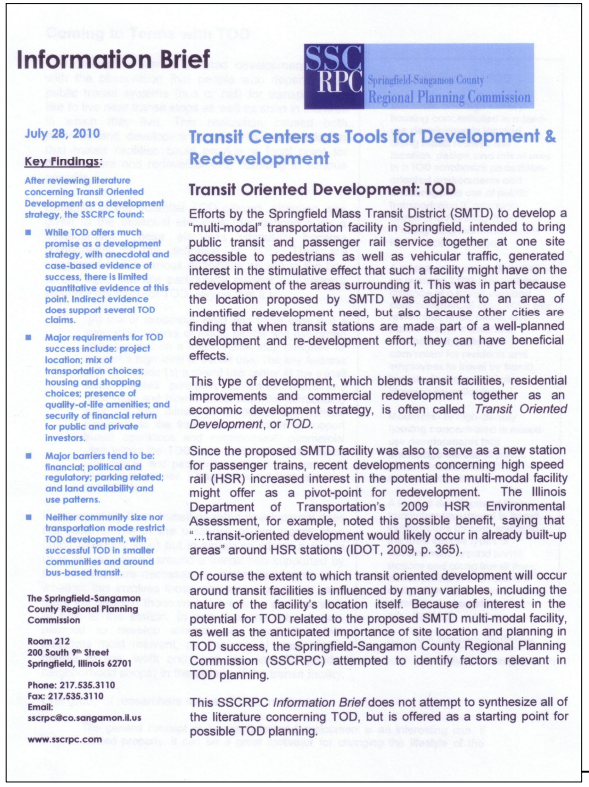
Supporters of TOD contend that it offers numerous advantages, including:

- Providing another tool for "smart growth" development;
- Improving the liveliness and economic viability of surrounding urban areas, becoming an engine for new development and redevelopment associated with transit facilities;
- Expanding lifestyle and transportation choices for citizens with changing interests and needs — such as both "Generation X" and "empty nesters" — providing an additional opportunity for the development of walkable, residential neighborhoods in the center-city;
- And can ultimately help reduce urban sprawl by enticing those who commute from suburban areas to relocate to the transit-served center-city.

But while the SSCRPC found both anecdotal and quantitative support for these contentions in its review of the TOD literature (shown to the right and available at www.sscrpc.com), such a review does not provide an adequate picture as to how TOD might unfold on a real site. The SSCRPC staff believed it necessary to explore how a TOD might develop in Springfield so as to give local policy makers and the public a better idea of its utility in an real situation and place. Conducting such a conceptual planning and design exercise was also seen as a way to:

- Demonstrate how a mix of uses can develop and be complimentary;
- Show how new development associated with TOD can connect with and support existing development;
- Identify the planning challenges that TOD might face in an existing environment;
- Address concerns about large facilities and developments becoming a barrier to linking neighborhoods and parts of the community;
- And even identify urban design elements that could be applied in other ways and in other places.

These ultimately became the goals of a planning and urban design exercise.



Information Brief

SSC RPC Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission

July 28, 2010

Key Findings:

After reviewing literature concerning Transit Oriented Development as a development strategy, the SSCRPC found:

- While TOD offers much promise as a development strategy, with anecdotal and case-based evidence of success, there is limited quantitative evidence at this point. Indirect evidence does support several TOD claims.
- Major requirements for TOD success include: project location; mix of transportation choices; housing and shopping choices; presence of quality-of-life amenities; and security of financial return for public and private investors.
- Major barriers tend to be: financial; political and regulatory; parking related; and land availability and use patterns.
- Neither community size nor transportation mode restrict TOD development, with successful TOD in smaller communities and around bus-based transit.

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Transit Centers as Tools for Development & Redevelopment

Transit Oriented Development: TOD

Efforts by the Springfield Mass Transit District (SMTD) to develop a "multi-modal" transportation facility in Springfield, intended to bring public transit and passenger rail service together at one site accessible to pedestrians as well as vehicular traffic, generated interest in the stimulative effect that such a facility might have on the redevelopment of the areas surrounding it. This was in part because the location proposed by SMTD was adjacent to an area of indentified redevelopment need, but also because other cities are finding that when transit stations are made part of a well-planned development and re-development effort, they can have beneficial effects.

This type of development, which blends transit facilities, residential improvements and commercial redevelopment together as an economic development strategy, is often called *Transit Oriented Development*, or *TOD*.

Since the proposed SMTD facility was also to serve as a new station for passenger trains, recent developments concerning high speed rail (HSR) increased interest in the potential the multi-modal facility might offer as a pivot-point for redevelopment. The Illinois Department of Transportation's 2009 HSR Environmental Assessment, for example, noted this possible benefit, saying that "…transit-oriented development would likely occur in already built-up areas" around HSR stations (IDOT, 2009, p. 365).

Of course the extent to which transit oriented development will occur around transit facilities is influenced by many variables, including the nature of the facility's location itself. Because of interest in the potential for TOD related to the proposed SMTD multi-modal facility, as well as the anticipated importance of site location and planning in TOD success, the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) attempted to identify factors relevant in TOD planning.

This SSCRPC *Information Brief* does not attempt to synthesize all of the literature concerning TOD, but is offered as a starting point for possible TOD planning.

The Project's Assumptions

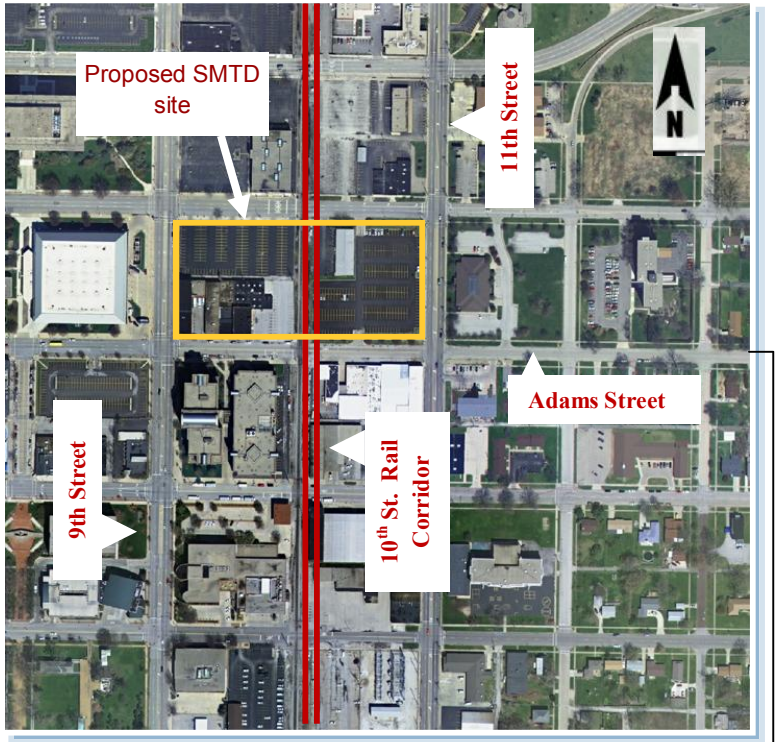
The SSCRPC's project was intended to be a conceptual exercise meant to better describe the nature of TOD in a real setting, not an argument for a particular location, a plan that could be immediately implemented, or a complete review of all the challenges and barriers a final TOD might face. To come to terms with the conceptual plan a number of assumptions needed to be made, however.

First, a location had to be selected. Since passenger rail was expected to be an element in any Springfield-based TOD, the SSCRPC had two existing sites from which to choose. The first was the current Amtrak station, which lies on the east side of Springfield's 3rd St. railroad corridor and is bounded by Jefferson St. to the north and Washington St. to the south. The other was the primary site for SMTD's proposed multi-modal center, which lies along the 10th St. railroad corridor and is bounded by 9th St., to the west, 11th St., to the east, and Washington and Adams streets.

The Planning Commission ultimately selected the SMTD site for the planning exercise as it found that the Amtrak location did not meet some of the basic conditions for successful TOD, and that the existing road network and traffic movement directions mitigated against the successful use of this site as a central bus terminal.

The selection of the proposed SMTD center site was also beneficial in that much work had already been done by the transit district in analyzing the site, it was adjacent to property owned by Sangamon County that could become part of the project area, and the street network made the site very amenable to bus movement when mixed with rail.

The selection of this site also meant that the project had to assume that high speed passenger rail would ultimately use the 10th St., rather than 3rd St., rail corridor. Since railroad relocation would be required in this case, the project had to also assume that space for at least three rail tracks would be required, and that any design would need to be flexible enough to handle an expansion of up to five or more rail tracks.



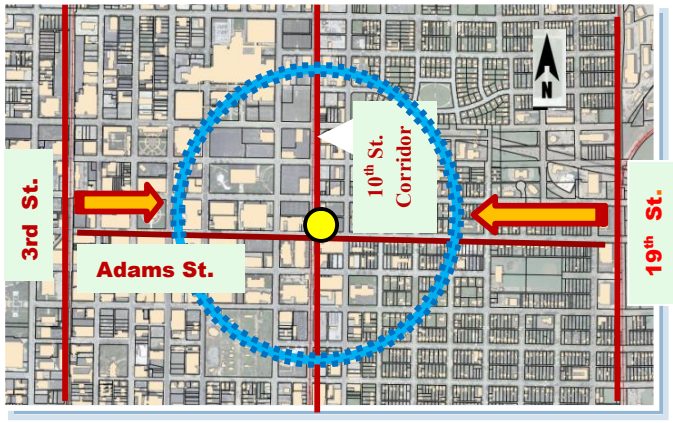
With this determination made, the SSCRPC project team assumed that the development area could include properties within 1/4 of a mile radius of the transit station. A quarter–mile is the most often suggested range for TOD as it represents a five minute walk from stop to edge. This is considered a short walk under most conditions. Selecting this range provided for a project site of eight blocks, or about 25 acres.

The SSCRPC made some additional assumptions not related to rail service that were important to the conceptualization of the project and its design.

It was assumed, for example, that existing property in the target area could be made available for the project. Since a notable portion of the property in the area was owned by Sangamon County, this increased project feasibility and helped reduce potential cost. The project also assumed that the ultimate design would need to accommodate some, if not most, of the existing uses in the area in the new development. It was considered important to project feasibility to provide existing users with new locations within the project. This would not only reduce cost, but help maintain vital businesses and services that had already found homes there.

In addition, because TODs need to support pedestrian and bicycle use, the project team assumed that the Complete Streets concept should become part of the planning. The Complete Streets Policy would help ensure that all modes of transportation are taken into account in project planning and design.

Finally, the project team did not assume that funding would be a barrier to the project. While any development project must be financially sound, as noted previously it was not the intention of this project to fully address implementation. At the same time, the project team desired to test a realistic plan. For this reason it looked to two previous projects — the Lincoln Square Apartments project, which was developed in the downtown, and the Center City project, which was not developed as it was designed for the area where the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum now sits — as providing guidance for financial feasibility. To the extent that components of the conceptual project were similar in scale to these projects, the components were considered feasible.



Primary Project Assumptions:

- Use proposed site for SMTD multi-modal facility.
- HSR uses 10th St. rail corridor.
- Site within 1/4 mile (5-min. walk) of transit station.
- Allow for 3-5 rail tracks.
- Availability of property.
- Accommodate some existing uses.
- Adopt Complete Streets.
- Realistic funding availability.

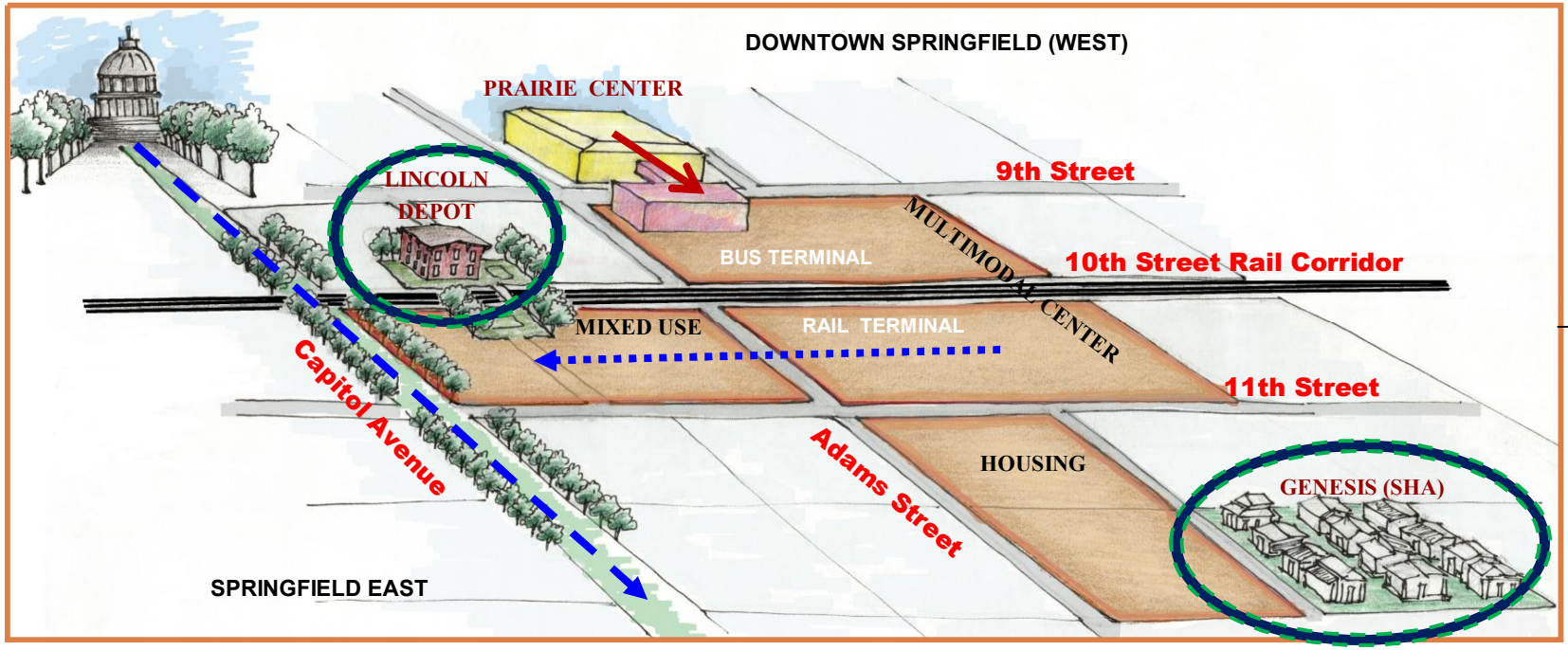
Results in 8 block site of approximately 25 acres.

Site Considerations

Based on the existing road network and in relation to surrounding uses, combining the eight blocks allowed for the conceptualization of the TOD as being made up of three component areas: a Multi-Modal Center, which would include the proposed SMTD bus transit center on the west side of the rail line and the rail passenger terminal, as well as some other development, to the east; a mixed-use development to the south on the blocks connecting Adams St. and Capitol Ave.; and a new housing development to the east, which would provide linkage to the new Springfield Housing Authority (SHA) Genesis project.

It would place the bus and rail terminals on either side of the rail line, allowing for better vehicle movement to and from each, and also provide some additional space for development. To the west, an expansion of the Prairie Capital Convention Center with a linkage to the public transit component of the multi-modal center, and to the east, additional space for commercial development linked to the passenger rail terminal.

This configuration would also provide a link to the City of Springfield's Capitol Ave. streetscape redevelopment project, which is planned to run from the State Capitol to Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. It was also seen as potentially offering the opportunity to enhance the preservation of the historic Lincoln Depot, making it more of a visitor attraction.



The Vision

In considering the site, the project team adopted as its vision the creation of a holistic development that establishes a unique identity and image for the city — making the area a "Gateway to the City" rather than just a transit station — and that also creates a sense of place for the people who would live, work and play in its vicinity.

As Jane Jacobs remarked, "making a place" is not seen as being the same as constructing a building, designing a plaza, or developing a commercial zone. When people enjoy a place, they find it to be one that makes them feel welcomed and comfortable for its special social and physical attributes.

Equally, the project team saw the project area as one that breaks down barriers. William H. Whyte has commented that, "What attracts People most, it would appear, is other People." The team's vision for the area was of a place where people from all corners of the city would come, and one that would discourage physical, visual and perceptual barriers.

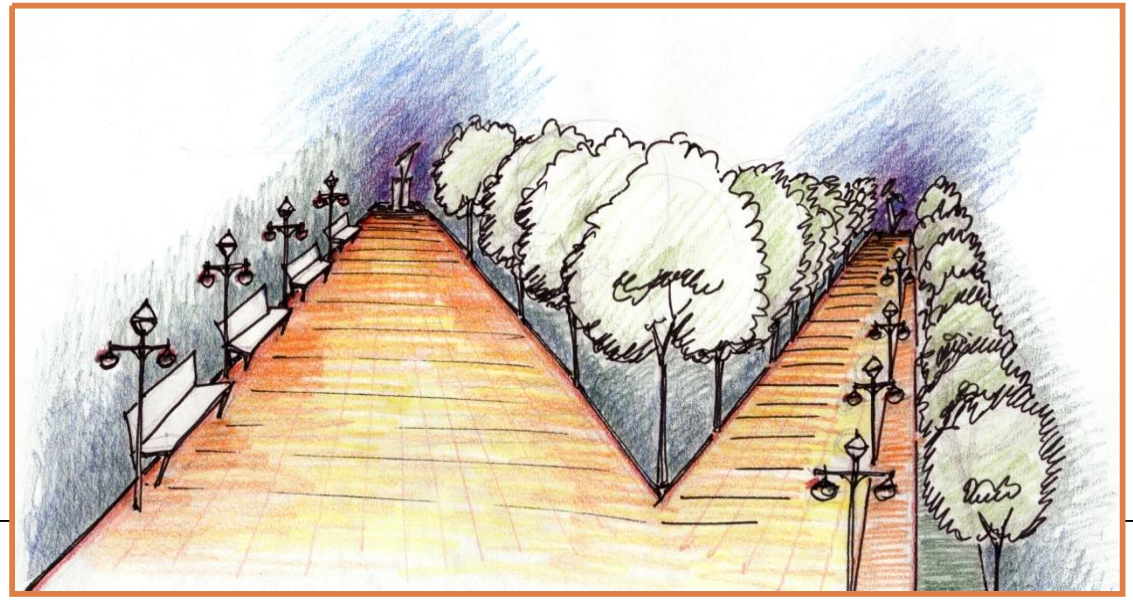
For this reason the project gave particular attention to certain design concepts intended to create a welcoming and comfortable feeling by encouraging linkages and establishing areas and spaces where people could interact with other people: a "bridge" between people as well as the east and west sides of the city center. Some of these starting-point concepts are described on the next few pages.

Design Concepts Included in Planning

TOD begins with the simple observation that people who depend upon public transit systems (bus or rail) like to live near transit stops as well as work and shop in the area in which they live. But research and case analysis suggest that for a TOD to be successful, its planning and design should intend to create an area that is both welcoming to visitors and comfortable for residents.

To create a welcoming and comfortable feeling for people living, working, visiting or just transiting through the TOD area, the project team found that attention needed to be given to such **physical elements** as benches, lamp posts, flower pots, and the like.

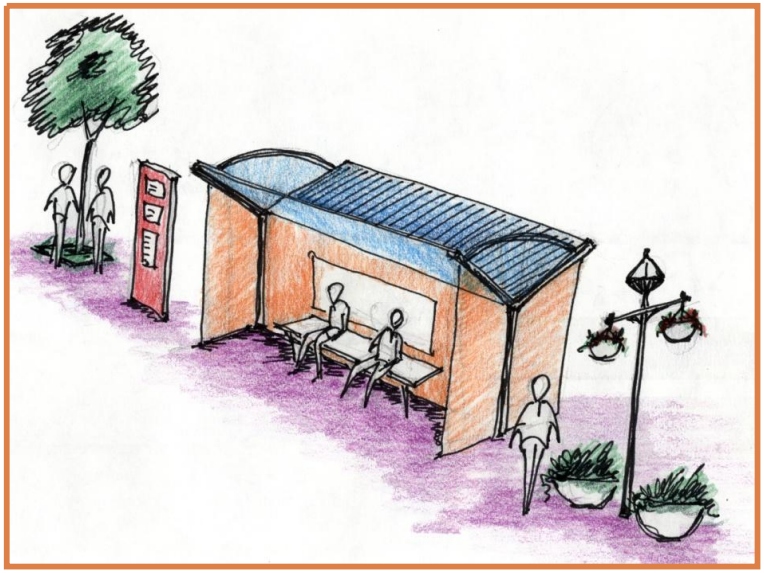
In addition, trees and pathways were seen as a means of encouraging people to interact. The pathways make it possible to create and connect **vistas,** which provide visual connections and also improve the pedestrian circulation pattern.

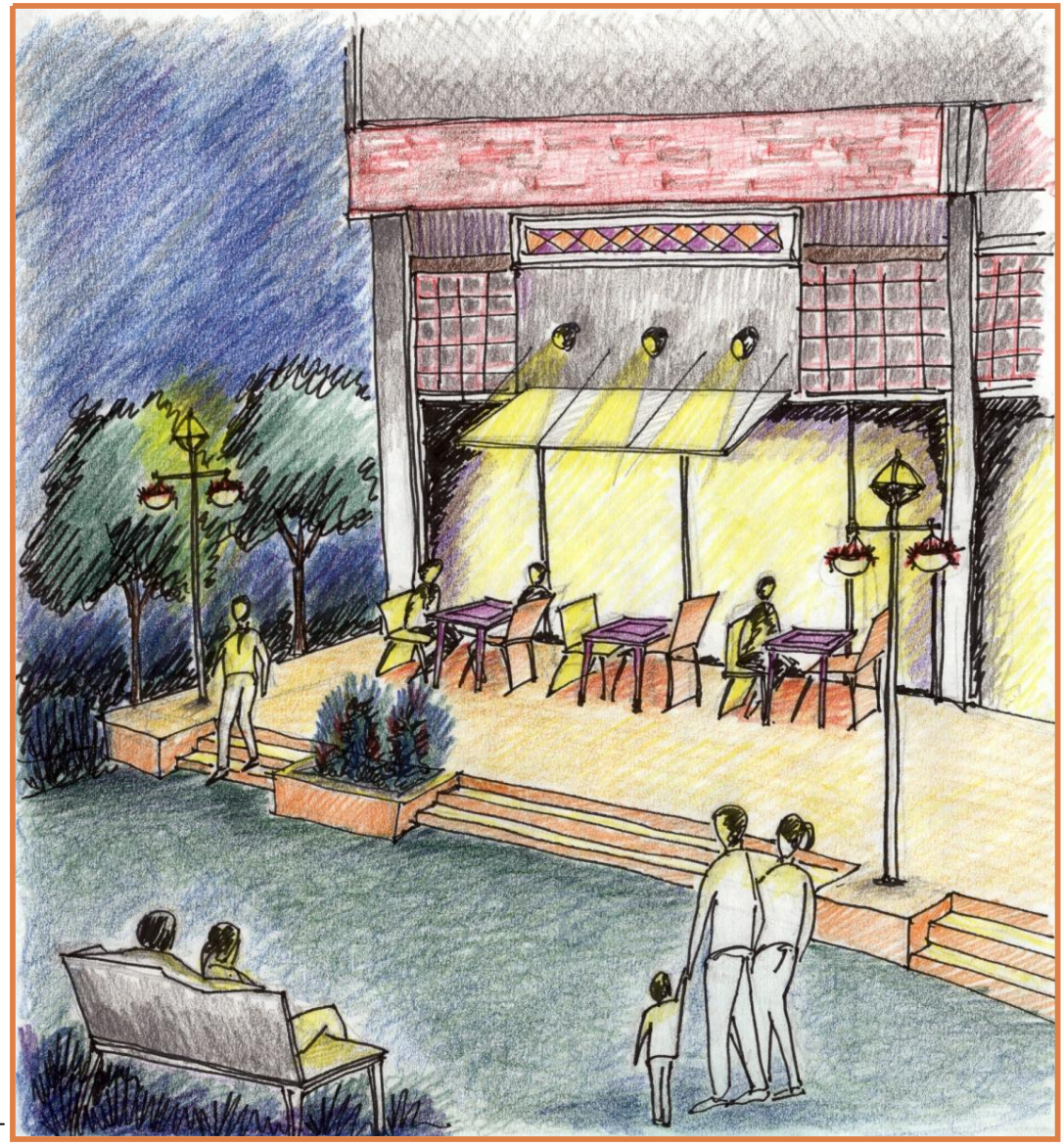


Art objects, like sculptures and fountains, can make an area more welcoming and friendly, and can also assist in the development of vistas and pedestrian circulation if they are placed at focal points. These sorts of elements, which need not be massive or expensive, can create landmarks for those visiting the TOD, and can also become points of interest and community around which people may gather and interact.

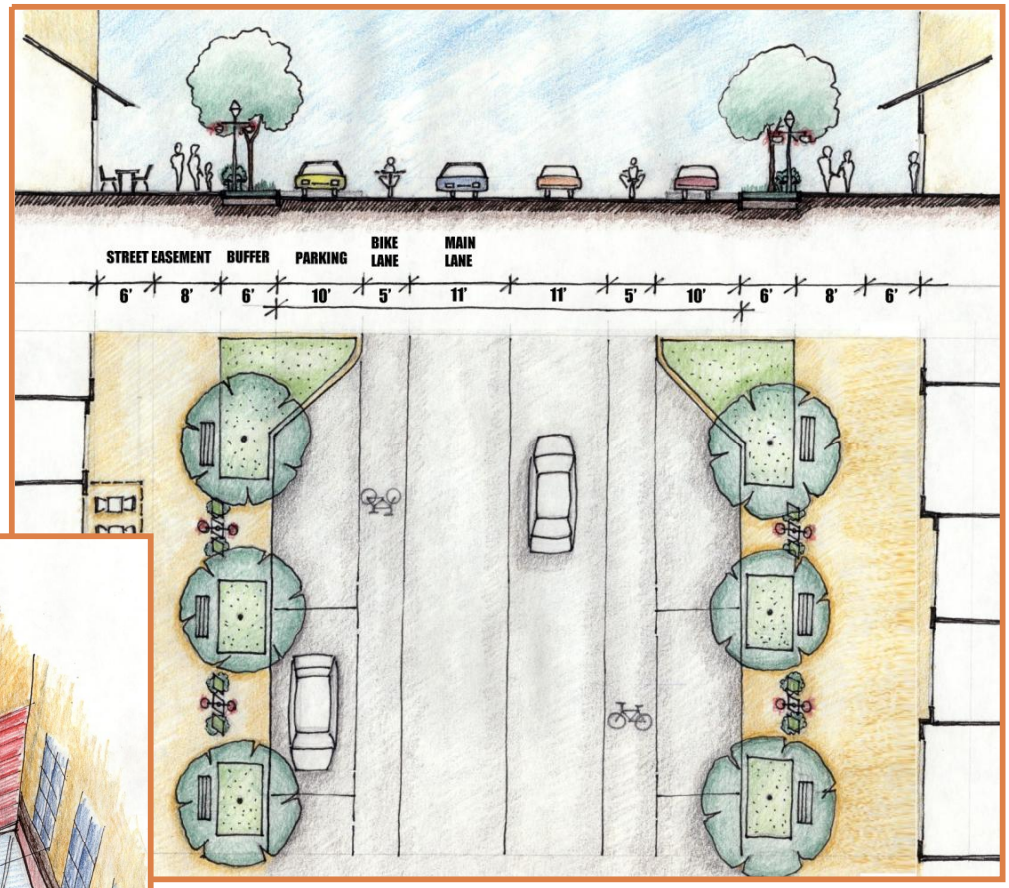
Cafés and restaurants with **outdoor areas and seating** were also seen as a means of encouraging interaction as well as providing a link between the surrounding retail areas and the social activities that take place on public plazas. They also provide for night time activities and entertainment, making the TOD a more attractive element for those living and working in the area.

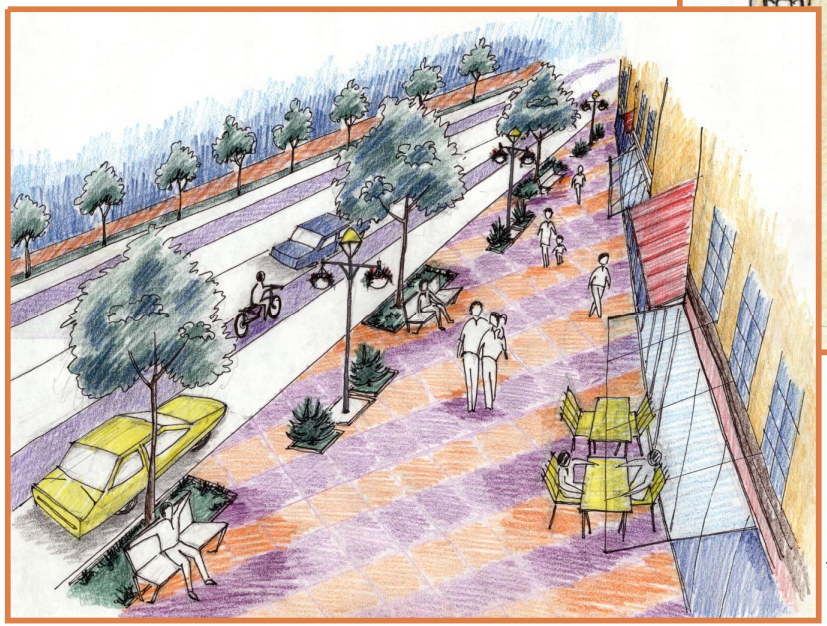
Since the focus of the TOD is transit, attention needed to be given to making the transit facilities attractive and welcoming as well. Shaded bus stops with schedule boards, covered and uncovered bike racks, artful lamp posts, flower pots and trees not only create a more comfortable and pleasing environment, but a safer one as well.

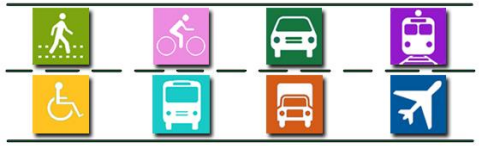




Previously it was mentioned that one of the assumptions made at the beginning of the planning process was that the Complete Streets concept be included in the design. This concept calls for the development's plan to entertain and be amenable to all modes of transportation and not just be automobile dependent. Of course TOD success requires the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment, so it is not unimportant that Complete Streets be included in planning and design. This means that planning and design should **address the streetscape as well as interior pedestrian paths** that include attractive walkways, street furniture, buffering landscapes, bike lanes and parking facilities, and adequate auto parking not dependent upon surface lots.







Although the project was seen as a planning rather than architectural exercise, the architectural style of the multi-modal facility became a factor as the project team attempted to address the goal of the TOD becoming a bridge between parts of the community rather than a barrier.

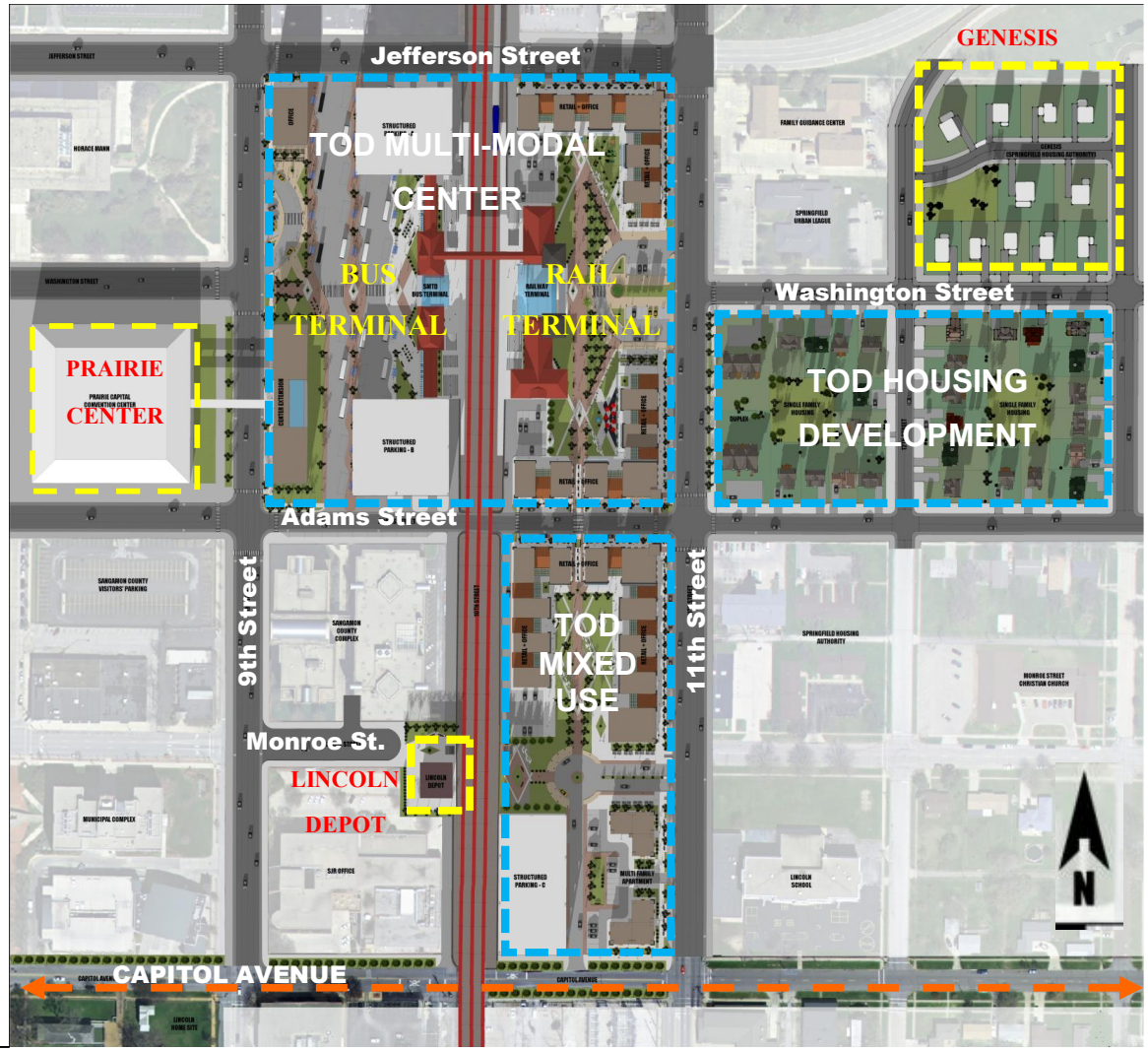
The ultimate design of any structures in a TOD will be largely dependent upon who serves as its developer, the final layout of the development, and how phases of the TOD unfold. But for this exercise the project team felt the need for some architectural scheme for the multi-modal facility to help address overall scale and provide design consistency, and so elected to base the facility's design on the architectural style of Springfield's Union Station — located on Madison St, near the Presidential Library and Museum — which was built in 1896. Union Station is an example of Richardson Romanesque style architecture, named for architect Henry Hobson Richardson.

The project team believed that this style was useful in reflecting the historical image of the city, linked the TOD area to Union Station and the nearby downtown, and still created a unique identity and focal point for the central component of the conceptual TOD.

The Illustrative Design: Conceptual Master Plan

As noted previously, the illustrative master plan includes three major components of the envisioned Transit Oriented Development:

- A multi-modal center, using the four blocks located between 9th and 11th streets, to the west and east, and Jefferson and Adams streets, to the north and south. It bridges the 10th St. railroad corridor, locating the bus terminal to the west and the passenger rail terminal to the east. It would also provide a linkage to the Prairie Capital Convention Center to the west.
- A mixed-use development using the two blocks to the south, which would include residential and commercial uses as well as a public space. This component of the TOD would provide linkage to Capitol Ave. and its streetscape, as well as provide a new point of visual linkage and accessibility for the historic Lincoln Depot.
- A single-family housing development using two blocks to the east. The housing development would not only provide for a different mix of new housing in the TOD area, but would also link the Springfield Housing Authority's Genesis project to the development.



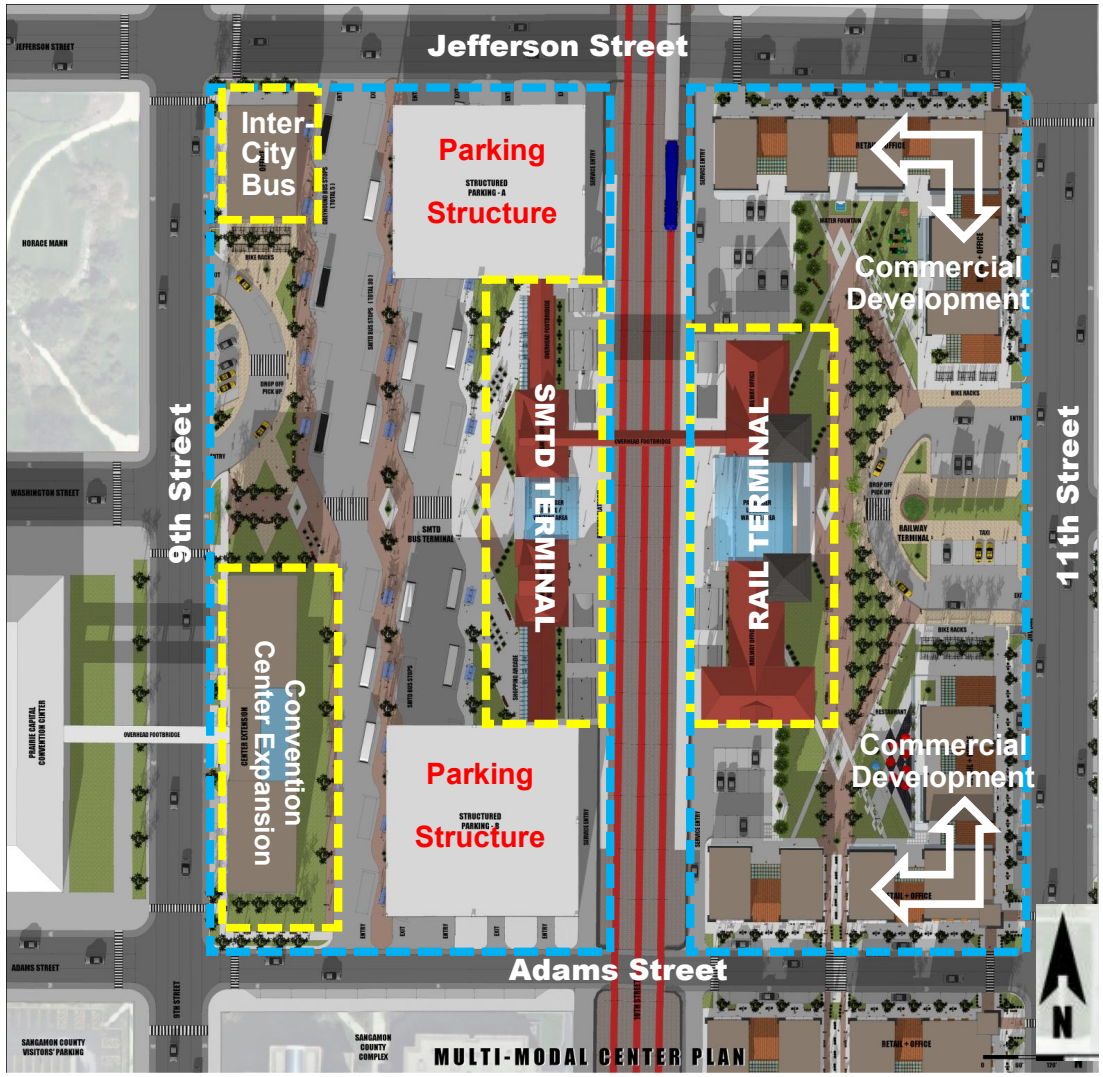
The Multi-Modal Center & Its Components

As conceptualized, the multi-modal center would have several components. On the 9th Street portion, to the west, these include:

- The Springfield Mass Transit's intra-city bus terminal, facing 9th St.
- Two multi-level parking structures. The structure to the north would provide parking for the rail terminal, employees of the various facilities, and possibly rental cars. The structure to the south would provide parking for the bus terminal and the Sangamon County Complex. Parking for the County Complex must be provided as the conceptual plan assumes that properties currently used by the county for parking would become part of the TOD.
- A facility for inter-city buses (such as Greyhound and tour buses) to the northwest, and space for Convention Center meeting and exhibit space expansion to the southwest.

The 11th Street portion to the east includes:

- The passenger rail terminal, facing 11th St..
- Space for commercial development on the block faces to the northeast and southeast.
- A public area that creates a visual linkage to the mixed use area to the south.



The Multi-Modal Center & Its Components: Bus Terminal

The rendering below provides a bird's eye view of the bus terminal looking from west to east.

The SSCRPC's plans call for more space to be committed to the facility than was planned by SMTD in order to provide more spaces for bus parking as well as additional space in the building itself for commercial uses, a driver's lounge, cafes, and a police sub-station. Some of the commercial space is suggested as a good location for a small business incubator serving new entrepreneurs.

The project team also suggests the addition of expanded exhibit and meeting space for the Prairie Capital Convention Center, which would be linked to the convention center via a sky bridge crossing 9th St.

Note that bus access closest to the bus terminal passes under the parking structures, and that a taxi and passenger drop off area is provided along 9th Street. Not shown in this drawing is a facility that could be used by inter-city buses, tour and rental car companies.

The Multi-Modal Center & Its Components: Rail Terminal

This rendering provides a view of the passenger rail terminal and its associated commercial area looking from east to west.

One should make note of the sky bridge connecting the rail and bus terminals, as well as taking notice of the taxi and passenger drop off area which also connects to a central plaza creating a more visually open setting. Planned elements such as these can help break down east-west visual barriers.

Notice should also be given to the commercial area. The conceptual plan for the multi-modal center gives particular attention to moving commercial development to the east, and the conceptual plan staggers the height of the commercial buildings along the block face so as to open up the area visually as one looks from east to west.

Attention given to streetscape allows the commercial area to remain pedestrian friendly. Streetscape will be addressed again later in this report.

Multi-Modal Center: Access

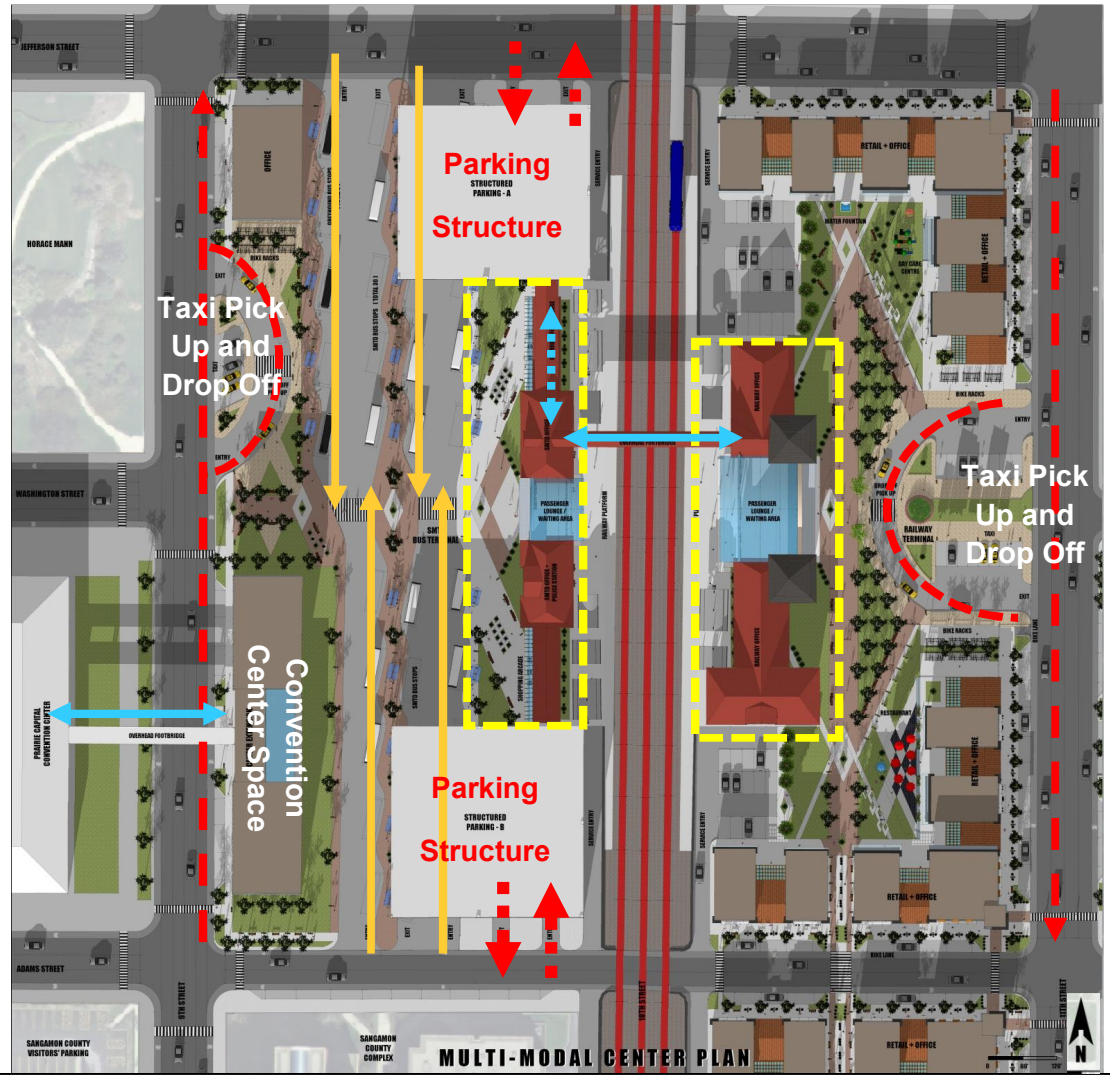
As the plan to the right indicates, access is provided to the multi-modal center in a number of ways, with separate routes provided for bus, car, taxi and even bicycle users.

Bus entry and exit is provided on two sides, both north and south, to prevent bottle necks. Since the bus facility lies along 9th St., trains travelling along the corridor should not affect bus scheduling. The plan allows for 5 inter-city and 30 intra-city buses to use the facility at the same time.

Taxi and auto pick-up and drop-off areas are provided for both the bus facility and the rail facility. Access to the parking structures are provided from Jefferson and Adams streets.

Since the plan calls for the bus and rail facilities to be linked by a sky bridge, passengers using the rail facility would be able to cross from it to the bus facility in this way, and then continue on to the rail parking facility to the north as well as the bus terminal.

A sky bridge also links the convention center to the west with new exposition and meeting space associated with the multi-modal center. Rail and bus passengers would be able to move easily to this facility and from there to the convention center and nearby hotels.



The Bus Terminal: Bus Ingress & Egress

The conceptual design for the bus terminal gives particular attention to bus ingress and egress, but not to the detriment of a safe and friendly passenger and pedestrian environment.

The drawing on the top right provides the project team's conceptualization of bus passenger shelters in the outdoor area, while the drawing below shows bus ingress and egress routes on either side of the passenger "island" that divides the loading area.

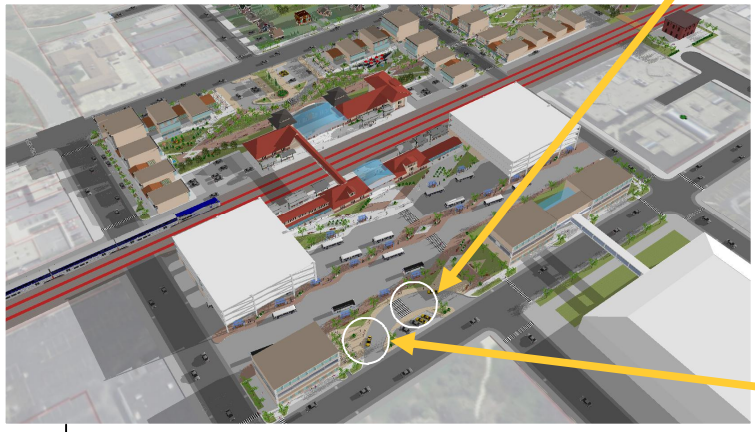
The spaces for inter-city buses can be seen in the upper left hand corner of the drawing below. These buses would be served in the proposed facility at the north-west corner of the multi-modal center.

The Bus Terminal: Supporting Other Transportation Modes

The plan for the multi-modal center area gives particular attention to making the area amenable to passengers as well as non-motorized visitors to the area and residents. For these reasons taxi and passenger drop-off areas are provided as well as facilities for bicyclists.

Drawing 1 shows the drop-off area serving the bus station and its associated facilities. Drawing 2 provides an example of how bicycle racks can be made a component of the planning. Both covered and uncovered bicycle racks are included in the conceptual plan.

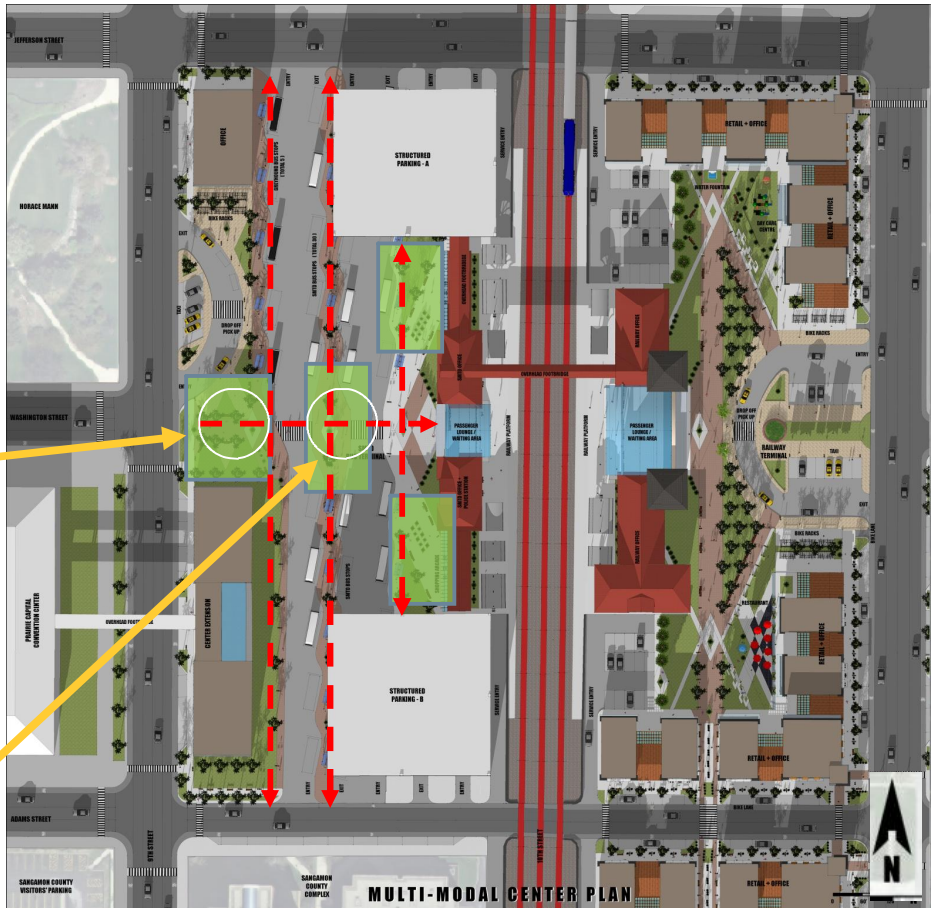
The inclusion of space for such amenities as bicycle racks can serve other purposes as well, for example serving as useful buffering areas to separate uses and movements on the site: in the example to the lower right, separating the drop-off and the inter-city bus area.



The Bus Terminal: Pedestrian Environment

Creating a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians is also a major component of a successful TOD plan. Pedestrian corridors are shown by red arrows on the drawing to the right.

Drawing 1, immediately below, shows how tree-shaded walkways can become part of the landscape for the center, providing a pedestrian-friendly environment as well as a means to open the area visually and reduce the perceptual barrier that a facility such as this one might create.



The establishment of pedestrian islands with seating, such as the one shown in Drawing 2 on the left, demonstrates a way to increase pedestrian safety in what could be a very active area. Similar spaces can be developed immediately adjacent to the facility.

The Bus Terminal: Adding Connections & Amenities

In planning the conceptual Springfield TOD, the project team found that special attention needed to be given to certain amenities that derived from the plan itself, as they create additional synergies.

For example, to the extent that safe pedestrian walkways with seating could be created adjacent to the bus terminal (Drawing 1), this offered the opportunity to open the area as a shopping arcade supporting the suggested small business incubator.

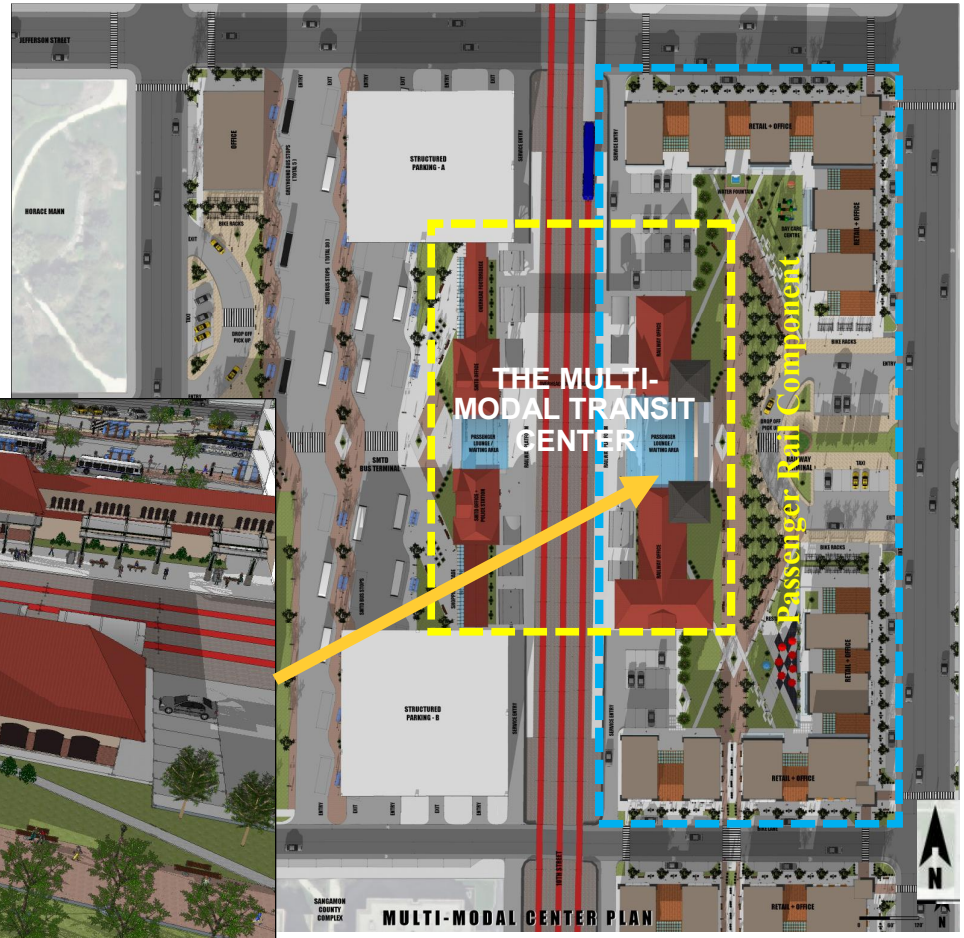
Creating additional exhibition and meeting space for the convention center on the TOD site required a means of safe pedestrian passage between the two facilities: a sky bridge (Drawing 2).

The Rail Terminal

To truly serve as a multi-modal transit center, passenger rail must be served by the facility as well. The conceptual plan allows for this by placing the bus terminal to the west and the rail terminal to the east, bridging the rail lines themselves with a pedestrian sky bridge.

The drawing below shows the conceptual design of the rail terminal looking from east to west. As with the bus terminal, the Richardson Romanesque style was used for this exercise in order to provide a sense of scale for the site.

The rail station and associated commercial structures make use of two blocks facing 11th St. By placing the rail terminal to the east, two planning objectives were met: rail and bus movement conflicts were minimized, and structures for new commercial activity were made available to the east where such activity has lagged.

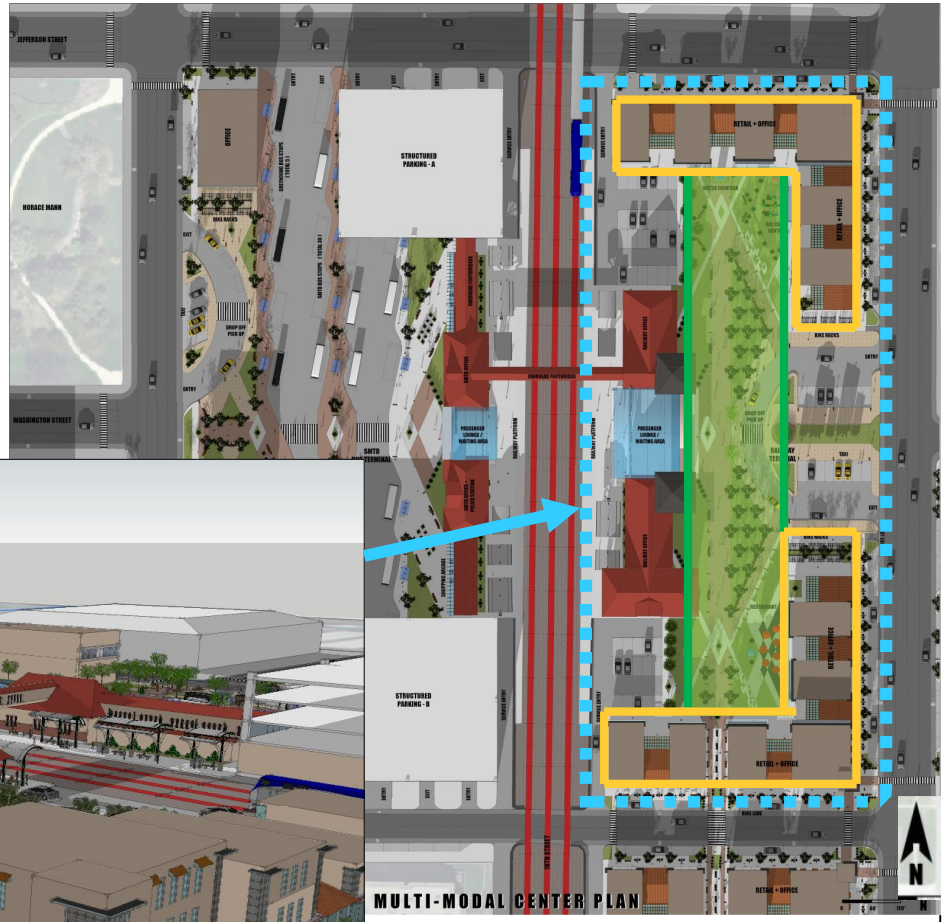


The Rail Terminal & Surrounding Component Area

While aspects of the rail terminal itself are very similar to those of the bus terminal, the conceptual plan for this portion of the TOD needed to meet additional objectives.

The built edges of the block, which were seen as housing commercial uses, needed to be considered. As this component would be facing an area to be redeveloped for residential use to the east and ultimately connect to the mixed use area to the south, the area needed to be as open as possible on its approaches and within its interior. This would require a human scale for the built form as well as simple and cost-effective landscape elements.

The resulting approach is seen in the illustration below.

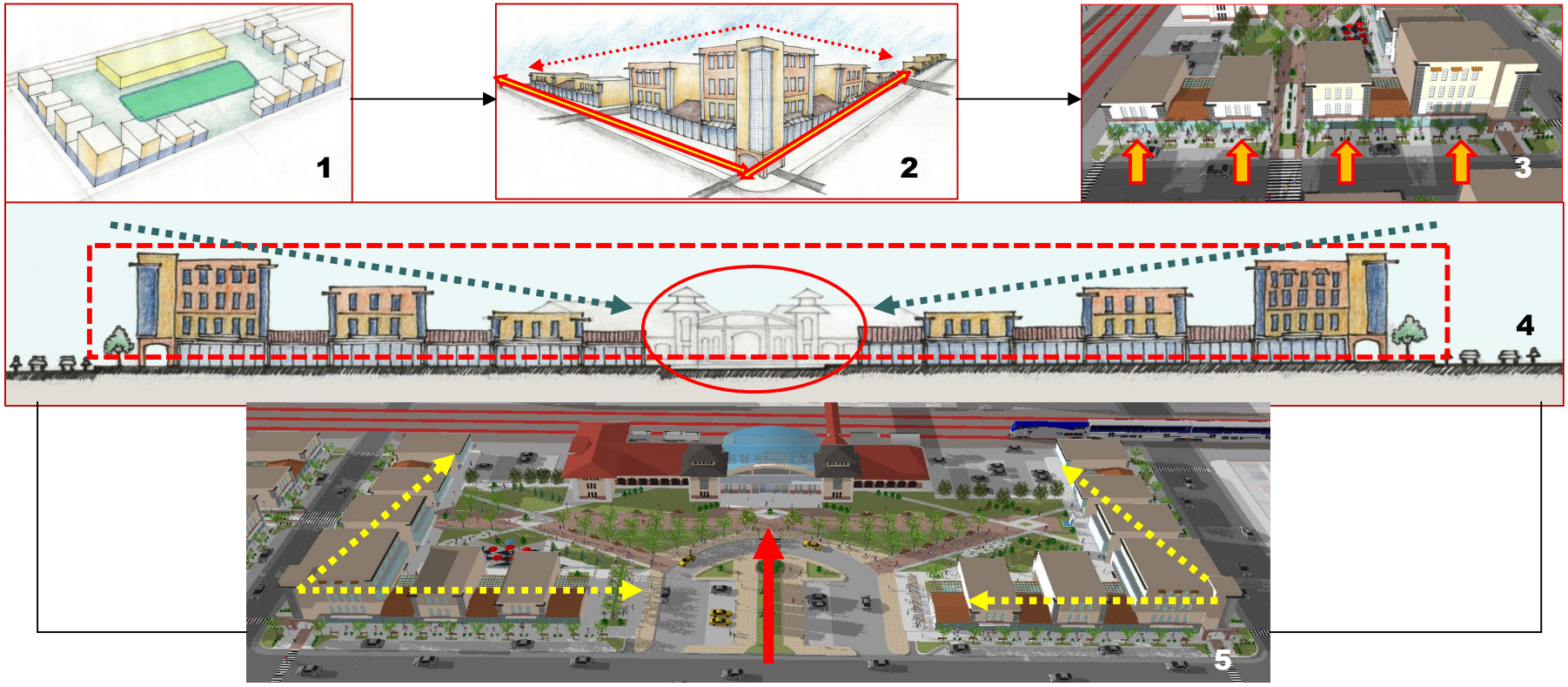


The Rail Component Area & Its Built Form Typology

Along with the rail terminal itself, two elements were critical to the planning and design of this component: the public space immediately adjacent to the terminal and the commercial buildings that would bracket this space (see Drawing 1, below.)

The challenge was to create a built form that would allow for a mix of commercial uses — predominately retail and office, but with the potential for use as a long-stay hotel and possible residential commercial club — while still meeting the objective of achieving an open vista that would not leave the area a visual barrier looking east to west.

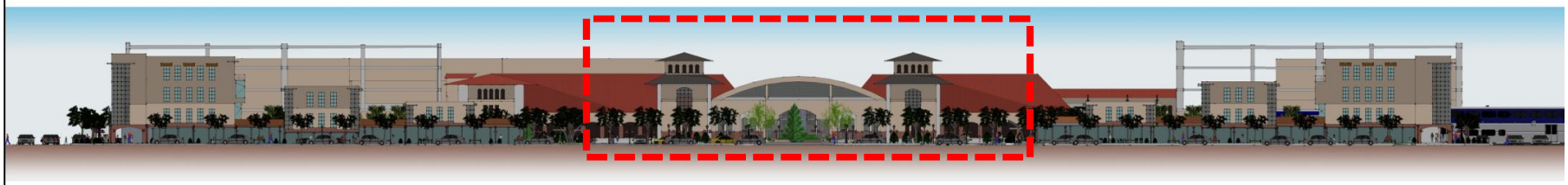
This was achieved by creating a continuous façade for the block wall that helps create pedestrian interest (see 2 & 3), while decreasing the height of the buildings from the street corners to the taxi and auto drop-off area immediately in front of the rail terminal (see 4). This approach establishes the corner buildings as the tallest, with the height decreasing as they are closer to the drop-off area. Used for both sets of commercial structures facing 11th Street, this approach focuses the visual axis on the public space and terminal via the drop-off point (see 5).



The Rail Component Area: Creating Links & Reducing Barriers

As outlined previously, one of the objectives of this planning and design exercise was to identify ways in which areas within and adjacent to the TOD could be linked while still reducing the visual barriers that such a development might create. One approach was to stagger the height of the commercial structures suggested as part of the rail component so that a vista would be created as part of the approach to the passenger rail terminal. This is shown in the drawing below looking east-to-west toward the rail terminal.

However the project team also thought it important to reduce visual barriers that might be created by the TOD in other areas, such as the east-to-west axis presented at Adams St. and at the historic Lincoln Depot. The project team's intention was to not only reduce barriers but to find ways in which doing so might create amenities.



Rail terminal looking east to west

Lincoln Depot

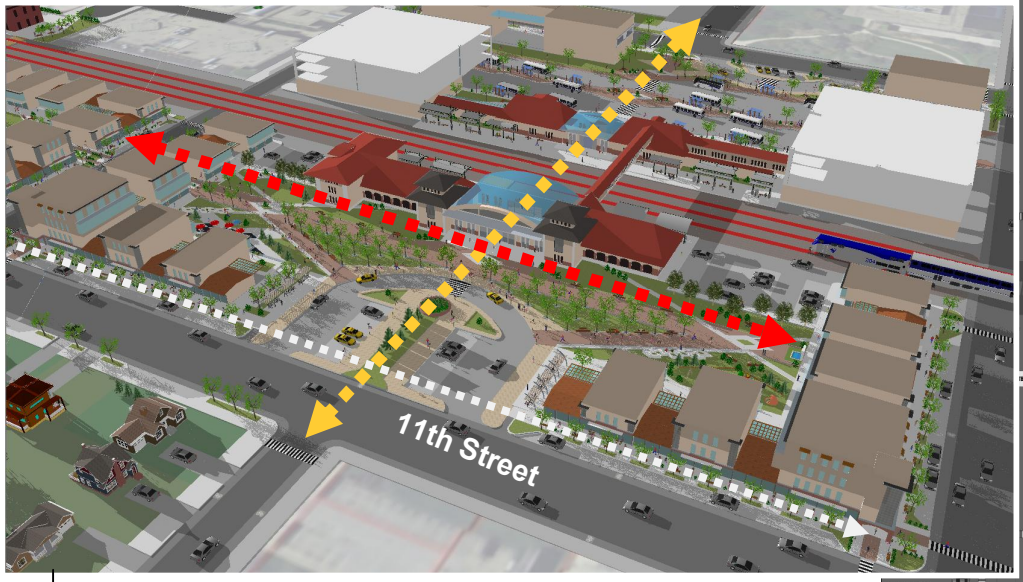
Adams Street

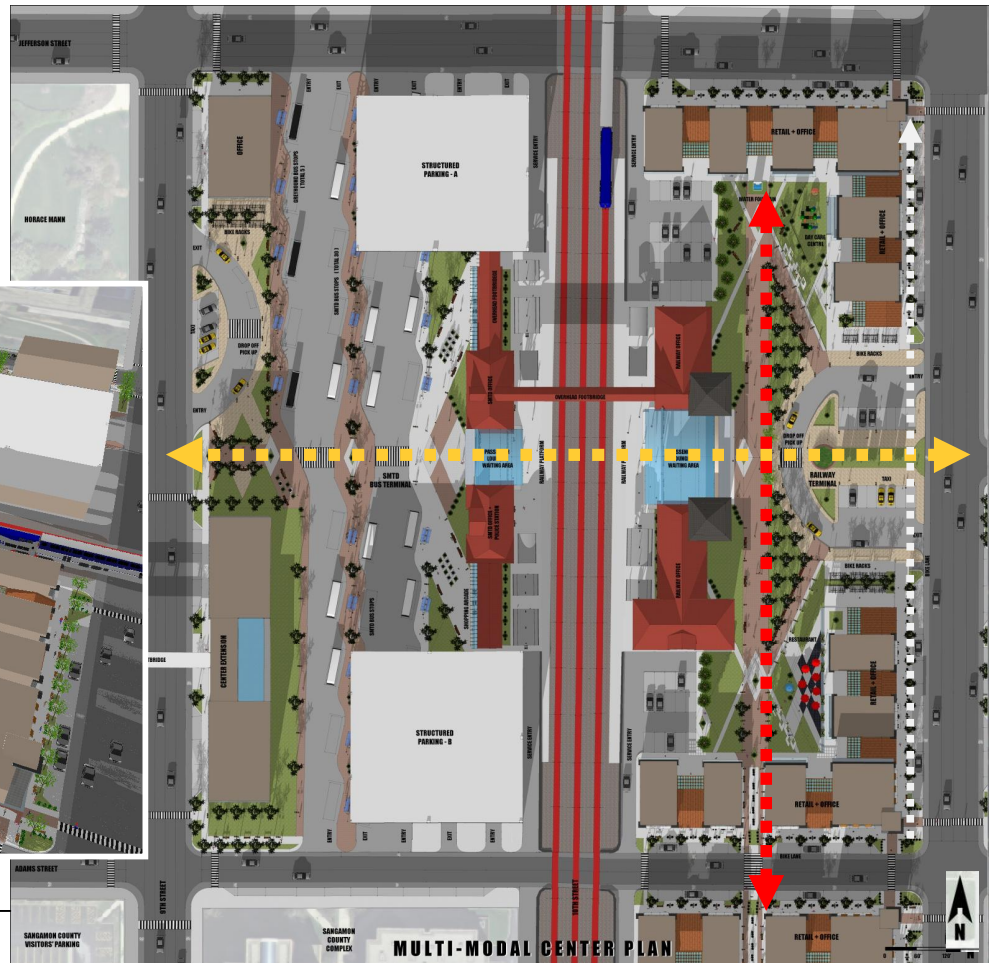
The Rail Component Area: The Visual Axis & Linkages

Prior to planning the public areas that would face the passenger rail terminal on the east, the project team considered what were felt to be the most important visual linkages. Two primary visual axes were identified: the east-west axis, which would link the center of the TOD to the residential development to the east and the downtown area to the west; and the north-south axis, intended to link the passenger rail station and its surrounding commercial development to the proposed mixed-use development component to the south.

A secondary point of emphasis was the block face and streetscape along 11th St., which was expected to become a focal point of the development that needed to be complementary to the proposed residential development to the east.

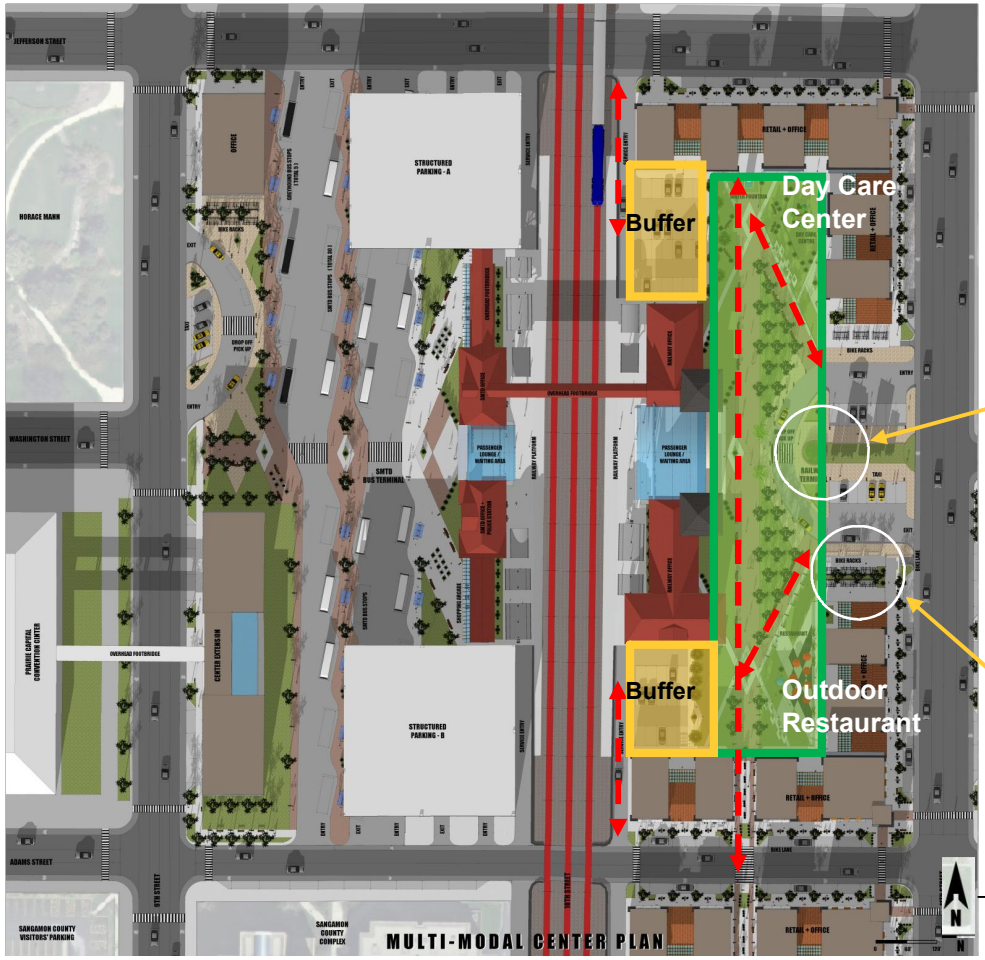
The project team believed that these visual axis lines needed to be open and welcoming, flavoring the planning of both the streetscape and the proposed public area adjacent to the passenger rail terminal .





The Rail Component Area: The Public Realm & Buffering

In considering the public area and its amenities vis-à-vis linkages and the visual axis, the project team found it necessary to consider three other aspects in its planning: pedestrian movement, shown by the red arrows in the drawing below; how buffering areas could be created to separate the rail lines from the adjoining proposed uses; and the potential location of some of these uses themselves, such as the day care center proposed in the SMTD plan and amenities such as outdoor restaurants.



The project team found that some amenities could be used as buffers themselves: for example, bike racks, walkways and drives, and landscaping.

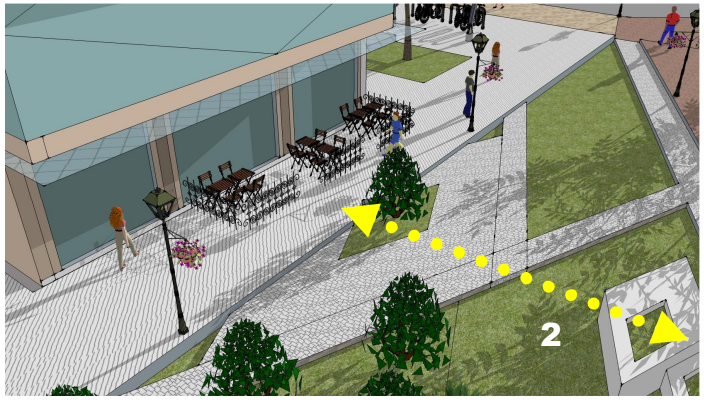
The Rail Component Area: Landscaping & Walkways as Buffers

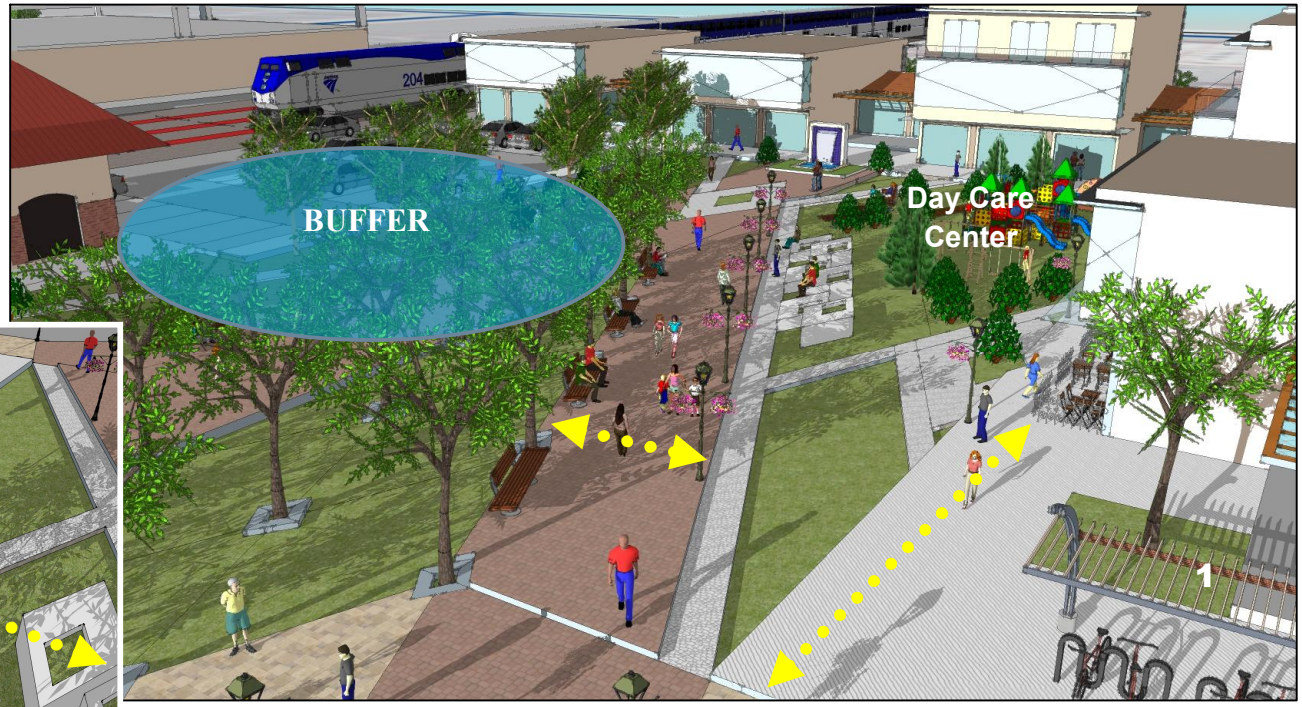
Drawing 1 shows how certain design elements can be used as buffers within a TOD. For example, the landscaped grove of trees provides a buffer between the fenced outdoor play area for a day care center, as does the wide pedestrian walkway.

The space set aside for such amenities as bicycle racks provides for a more visually open area, but it also can provide buffering between uses. In this particular case the bike rack area provides buffering between the day care center and the rail station drop-off and pick-up area, with the drop-off and pick-up area also serving the day care.

We would note that in some of the original thinking about the SMTD multi-modal transit center, the suggestion was for a day care center to be located within the terminal itself. The SSCRPC believes that the TOD plan should allow for a day care but that it be located outside of the terminal for a number of reasons, including: safety; separation from the more heavily used bus station; additional buffering from the tracks; easier access for those using the day care; and better access for residents of the proposed new residential development to the east.

Space for such commercial uses as outdoor eating areas (see Drawing 2) associated with restaurants can also provide for additional buffering if the TOD and its related uses are well planned. Note that the design elements needed for this buffering are rather simple and can be inexpensive. The use of buffers such as these encourages social interaction, is more welcoming, and creates a safer pedestrian environment.





The Rail Component Area: Vistas & Focal Points

In order to expand upon the pedestrian and visual linkages desired as part of this TOD conceptual plan, particular attention was given not just to the various axes but also to how open area vistas could be created and focal points included to draw visitors to and through it.

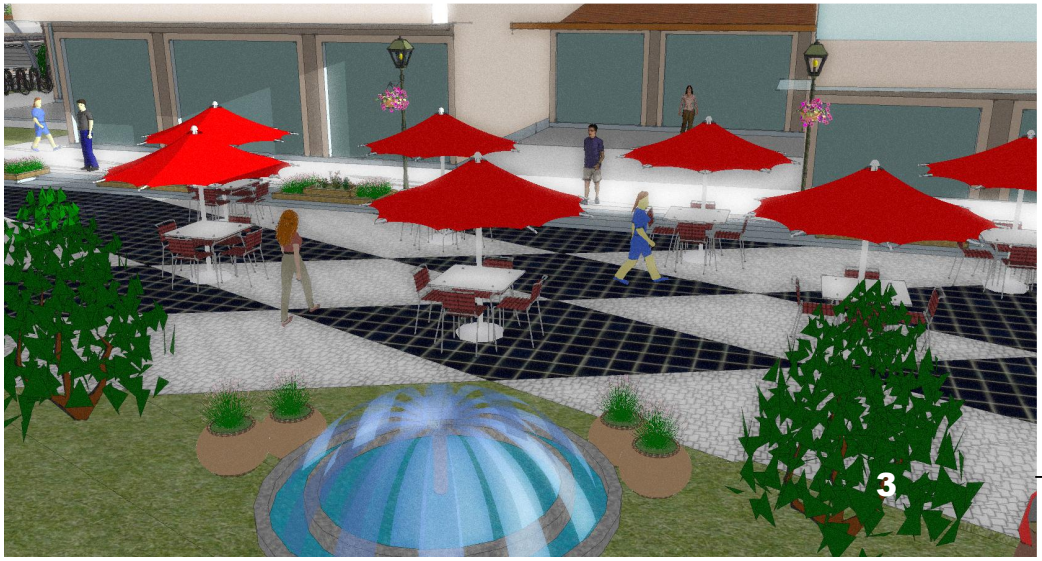
As examples, Drawing 1 shows the vista as one approaches the rail station from the drop-off point on the east. The access point provides a vista to the station focal point.

Drawing 2 shows the vista for visitors moving south to north along the major visual axis discussed previously. While landscaping and the design of the pedestrian way helps create focal points for a vista, Drawing 3 shows a water feature established as part of the plan and designed as a focal point for this same north-south interior vista.

The Rail Component Area: Amenities

Since the rail component is expected to be a commercial area as well as a transportation one, attention must be given to the amenities that it might offer a mix of users. This can include services, such as the previously mentioned day care center (see Drawing 1), that would serve people who live and work in the area as well as those who are making use of transit. It would also include pathways with simple seating (Drawing 2) for those who are shopping, visiting or waiting for transit, as well as outdoor seating for restaurants, commercial residential use (such as an extended stay hotel), and other entertainment businesses (Drawing 3).

We previously noted how some of these amenities serve a dual purpose by buffering areas and uses. But its is equally important to note that they serve as points of social interaction and linkage. An objective in this planning was to design the components and features so that they help to reduce social — as well as visual — barriers, creating an additional bridge for community interaction. This concept will be expanded upon in discussing the mixed-use area which makes up the southern two blocks of the conceptual TOD.

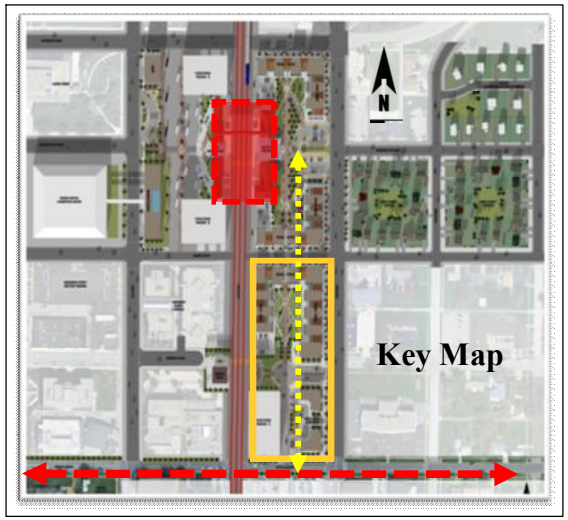


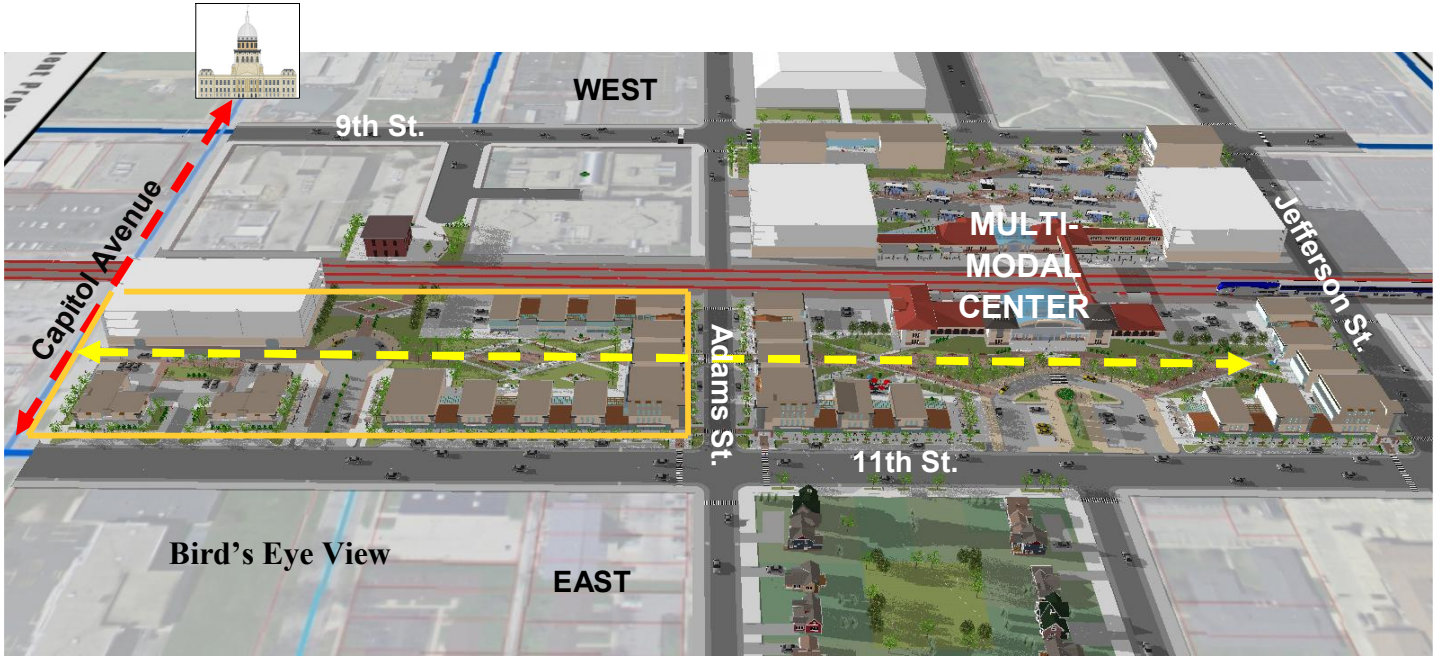
The Mix-Use Development Area Conceptual Plan

The map to the right and the drawing below show the placement of the TOD's mixed-use development area in relationship to the multi-model center to its north. The mixed-use area is conceptualized as having a number of components, including retail and office space, affordable multi-family housing (which could be a mix of apartments, townhouses, and condos) facing 11th Street, a parking structure serving both housing and commercial uses, and a relatively large landscaped public open space for both TOD-specific and community events.

A visual and pedestrian connection is made to both the multi-modal center as well as Capitol Avenue, creating additional linkage to the State Capitol at the end of this avenue. The open space becomes a public realm and pedestrian boulevard along the TOD's north-south axis.

The area would support such commercial activities as shopping and restaurants, but it also supports public activities through the use of landscaping and public seating. Again, the SSCRPC conceives this area as a place of social interaction and linkage, bridging the east and west via the TOD.

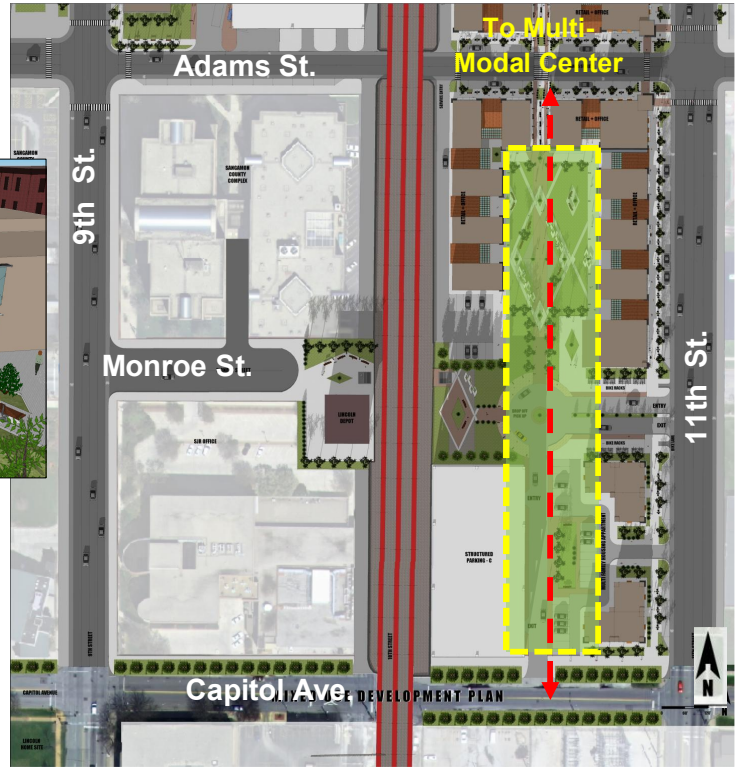


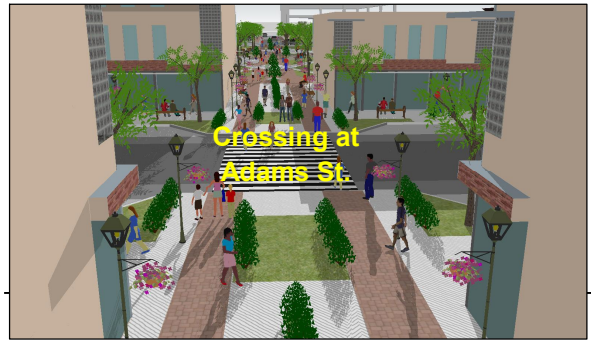


The Mixed-Use Development Area: Design & Connectivity

As noted on the preceding page, the mix-use development is conceived as being made up of four components: commercial office and retail space to the west; multi-family housing to the east, with residential spaces to the north being above commercial space while that to the south would involve more traditional apartments (12 1,800 square foot units); a multi-level parking structure (not shown in the drawing below) to serve the residential and commercial uses; and a public realm which would tie these uses together and also provide a public space for the community at-large.

The public space is not planned as being solely for residents and shoppers in the TOD, but a place for community activities.





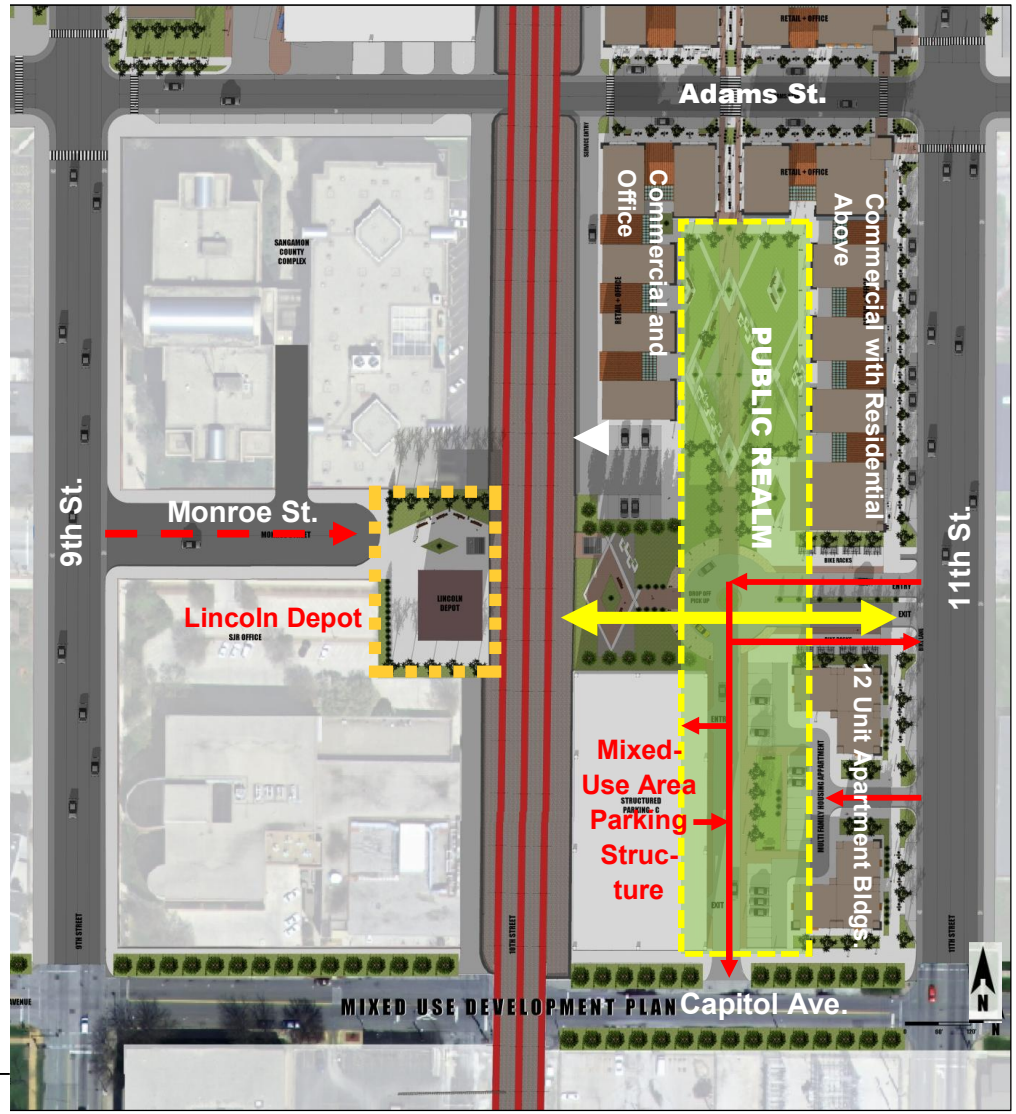
The Mix-Use Development Area: Creating Linkages & Connections

A number of linkage and connection issues were addressed in planning the mixed-use development area. The first related to Monroe St.

For the public area to be available for the project as conceived, the planning team found that Monroe would need to be closed. This in itself was not a barrier to planning as the team expected that streets such as Monroe might need to be closed if rail lines were consolidated for high speed passenger service. But with this closing, access to both the Lincoln Depot and the envisioned parking structure serving the mixed-use area would be limited. While access could be provided for service delivery and the like for the 12-unit apartment buildings at the intersection of Capitol Ave. and 11th Street, providing surface parking for the residential and commercial users in the development area absent a parking structure would severely limit the availability of space for the public area and create the type of visual break in the TOD that the SSCRPC's research found to be detrimental to project success in other places.

This was resolved by using the problem as an opportunity to create two additional design elements: landscaped space around the historic Lincoln Depot, making it better positioned as a visitor attraction and an element of the TOD conceptual plan; and a circular drive serving those visiting the area that also provides access to the planned parking structure.

The next page addresses how this could be done and provides an approach for other areas where rail crossings might be closed. Note the visual axis shown by the yellow arrow in the drawing to the right.

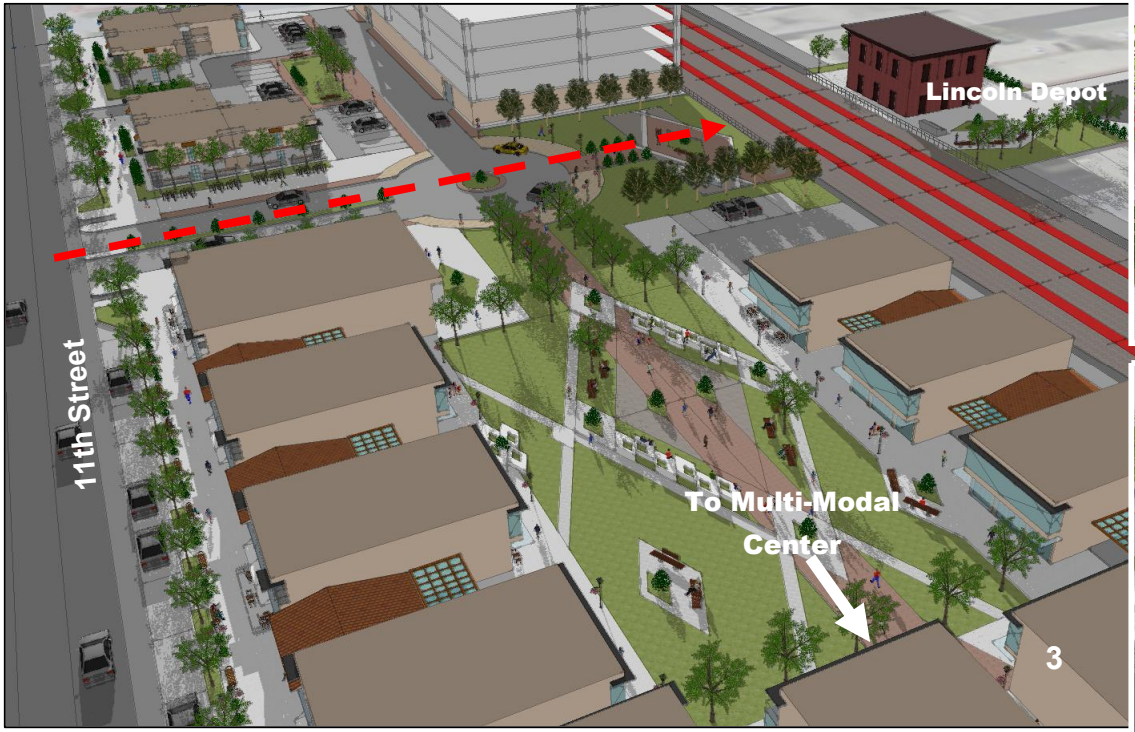


The Mixed-Use Development Area: Lincoln Depot & 11 St. Access

By closing Monroe St. to the west, land is made available for a small park and seating area on the depot's north side (see Drawing 1). Monroe would still serve the depot site via a turn-around that can be seen in the drawing on the previous page.

But the closure of Monroe also provides an opportunity to the east. The conceptual plan for this area shows a roundabout that serves a small visitor park across the rail lines to the east of the Depot. This roundabout provides access to both the park and the parking structure (see Drawing 3).

More importantly, by inserting the small park as a change in grade elevation at the site, and using the visual lines created by the tree line, bicycle racks, and landscaped median at this entry way, the rail lines seem to disappear (see Drawing 2). Rather than using the hard barriers most often found at road closings, the project team suggests a simple iron fence. This approach could be used at other closings.



Applying the Complete Streets Concept

As was noted when the assumptions for this project were discussed, the planning team determined that what is known as the Complete Streets concept was particularly applicable to the planning and design of Transit Oriented Developments such as the one conceived here for Springfield.

Complete Streets is meant to ensure that transportation planners design and operate roadways with all users in mind. Doing this is intended to address the needs of pedestrians of all ages, those with disabilities, bicyclists, and public transportation vehicles and riders.

The drawing to the right provides an example of how the concept might be implemented in the conceptualized Springfield TOD, showing a segment of Adams Street between the 10th Street rail corridor and 11th Street. In this example a sidewalk (red arrow) is provided adjacent to the block face with an associated streetscape (green tinted area). The streetscape provides a buffer between the sidewalk and the inset parallel parking area (inside blue dash marks). The streetscape provides some landscaping, but can also provide space for benches, trashcans and bicycle racks to make the area more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. In this example, immediately adjacent to the inset parking area is an on-street bicycle lane (yellow arrow consistent with the direction of traffic flow).

The reader will notice that accommodations have been made for crosswalks, which are shown as being striped black and white. The striping of the crosswalks is a relatively inexpensive way to not only identify safe areas to cross the street, but also slow traffic, making the roadway “calmer” and the area more neighborhood-like and pedestrian friendly.

The Streetscape Plan & Built Form Typology

The drawings below and to the right provide examples of the streetscape plan in conjunction with the built form topology, and shows how Complete Streets can be accommodated in the planning process.

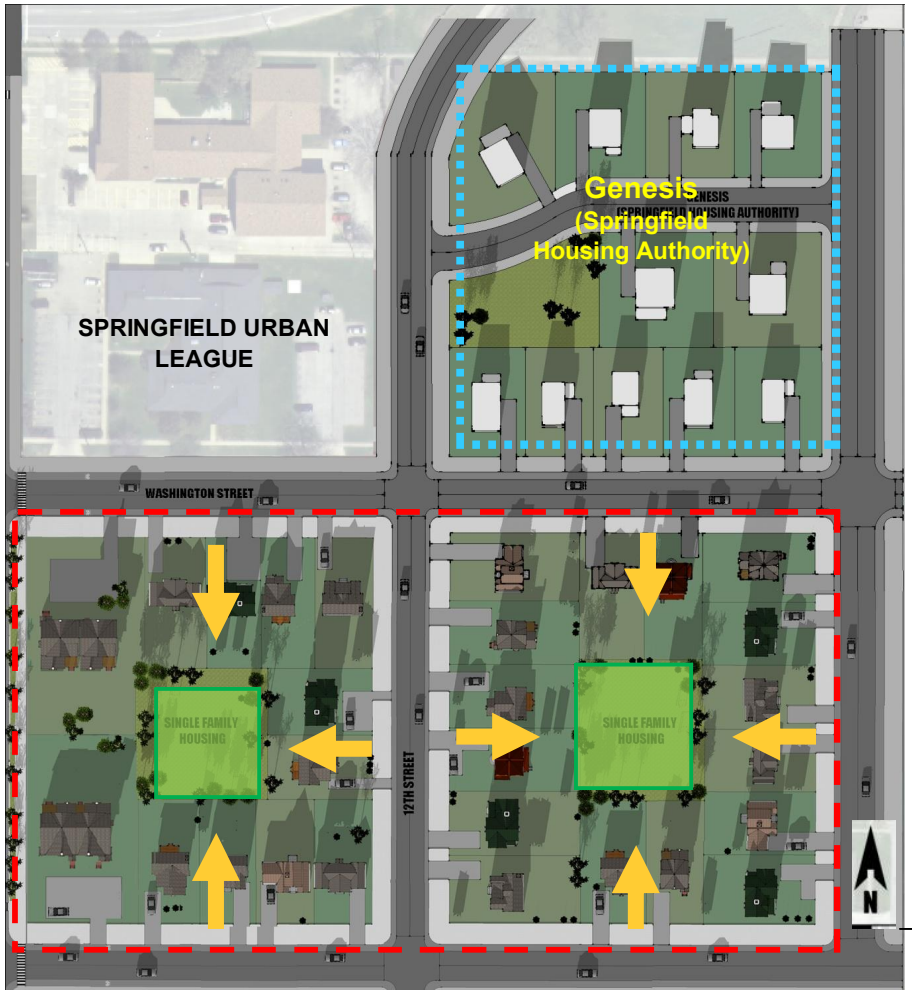
Drawing 1 shows a typical corner. Note how the building façade breaks the block face at the corners, allowing an overhang toward the corner “bump-out”. The change in block face makes the area more pedestrian friendly, and the “bump-outs” at the intersections make the area safer and helps calm traffic. This approach to façade design also makes the buildings more welcoming to visitors and shoppers.

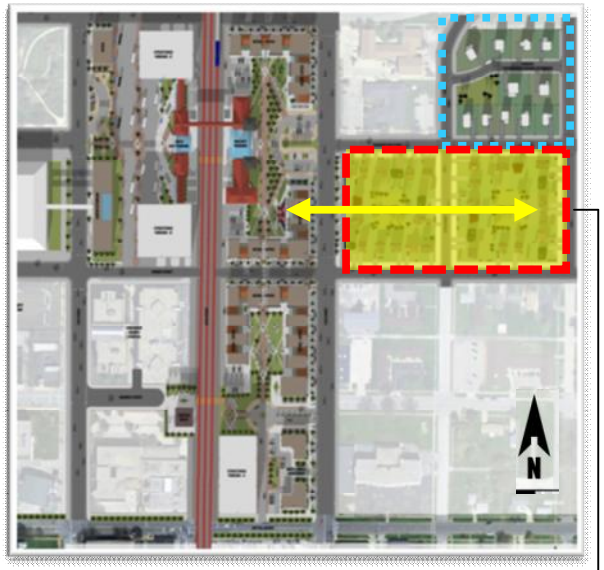
Drawing 2 shows a typical streetscape segment with outdoor seating, as well as landscaped “bump-outs”. The intention of this exercise was to devise a low-maintenance streetscape that fit the TOD area, was consistent with the Complete Streets concept, and created more of a neighborhood feeling.

Drawing 3 provides an overview of the Adams Street segment, showing how the various components might come together and tie this particular segment to the public area to the north.

The Residential Development Area

The conceptual plan presented here envisions a new residential development to the east of the multi-modal center component area that would link to the Springfield Housing Authority's Genesis Place development and connect it with the TOD. The inclusion of this component helps address the need for new housing development to the east by creating 26 single family houses as well as 4 duplex units. The design can support houses of up to 3500 sq. ft. on standard subdivision-size lots. The duplexes are located on 11th St. to the west, not only as a buffer between the activity that will take place in the commercial area associated with the TOD, but also because driveway access cannot be provided from 11th St.





The plan is able to site these units on the available two blocks because, unlike the Genesis project, plots are accessed from the edges and there are shared backyards that include a common neighborhood green space that is vehicle free. The SSCRPC found that such a design is particularly appealing to younger families and some singles. The Planning Commission also anticipates that the area would be attractive to Generation X and Y homebuyers who are looking for a neighborhood with more of an urban feel and an access to the city center that cannot be provided in typical suburban subdivisions.

The Residential Area Components

The drawing below helps demonstrate the proximity of the suggested residential development to the multi-modal center and the commercial corridor that is proposed for the west side of 11th Street. Washington Street, which divides the new residential housing area from the SHA Genesis project area, creates a visual connection between this area and the rail station.

Residents in the area would need to walk only a short distance to access transit and work or shop in the commercial area associated with the rail terminal block or the mixed-use development area at 11th and Adams streets.

The conceptual plan moves commercial and residential development to the east, and the SSCRPC believes that this could move the "center of gravity" of the downtown area further to the east as well.

In totality, a successful TOD in the project area used for this exercise could allow for both actual and perceived barriers to be broken down, with the TOD becoming a new link between east and west.

Lessons Learned from the Exercise

This project began with the overall goal of demonstrating how a Transit Oriented Development might conceptually unfold in a real Springfield location, and do so without losing sight of the lessons the Commission learned in its review of the TOD literature. The SSCRPC project team believes that it met this goal while also showing how such a development can be designed so as to include a mix of complimentary uses as well as connect with and support existing development.

Some of the more important lessons came from the attention that was given during planning to the concern that a project of this magnitude, encompassing several city blocks, might become a barrier to linking neighborhoods and connecting parts of the community. What the project team found was that by planning around specific visual corridors and axes, it was possible to minimize the barriers that such a development might create. In fact, the project team found that by including certain amenities the TOD could become a place for bringing the community together; a bridge rather than a wall.

For example, in considering the nature of public places, planners often ask, " If a local sports team were to win a national championship, where in your city would the celebration be held?" Unfortunately this is a difficult question to answer for Springfield, as open public spaces in the city -center are extremely limited in size (e.g., the south side of the Old Capitol Plaza) or access (the Old State Capitol grounds and Union Square Park). However the public space provided in the Springfield TOD could become just that sort of celebratory area and a place where people from all parts of the community might gather for events.

The project team also found that some of the design elements included in the conceptual plan could reduce other perceptual barriers. For example, the approach that the project team took to the closure of Monroe St. in the vicinity of the Lincoln Depot is significantly different from what is usually done in such a case: the road simply closed with a hard barrier, usually a metal guard rail. The project team's approach shows how a road closure might be turned into an amenity, even reducing the visual barrier that railroad tracks themselves create.

Staggering the building heights along block faces — allowing the block face to decrease in height from each corner as it approaches a central visual axis — is also an example of what could be done to address similar problems in other areas. Such an approach could be taken along a development corridor where the intent is to create connecting vistas, for example. In Springfield's case, and assuming that some redevelopment would occur in the vicinity of a high speed passenger rail corridor, this approach might be more generally entertained as an element of design or form-based zoning at major connecting points on either side of it.

Given the need for additional affordable housing in the urban area, the conservation-based approach that the project team took in the planning of the residential blocks is also informative. It allowed for more residential units to be placed on relatively small city blocks than would normally be the case with other site arrangements, but did so while still retaining adequate parcel size. And it created a form of neighborhood that is seen as being particularly attractive to the demographics of the customer-base most interested in what a TOD-related "lifestyle" might offer.

Of course significant questions remain, many of them associated with project market and financial feasibility. But even so, the conceptual plan developed by the project team offers local officials a template that can be used in the future as decisions are made concerning multi -modal center development, and a potential starting point for conversations with development interests.

The Project Team

SSCRPC projects such as this one are most often conducted by a project team leader who must depend upon the assistance of the entire Commission staff. The project team leader for the project described in this document was **Neha Soni Agarwal,** Associate Planner for Transportation Planning.

The SSCRPC staff includes:

Administrative Staff: Norm Sims, Executive Director; Mary Jane Niemann, Account Technician & Operations Assistant; Jane Lewis, Clerk-Typist.

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Land Use & Environmental Planning: Molly Berns, Senior Planner; Abby Bybee, Associate Planner.

Strategic and Comprehensive Planning: Jeff Fulgenzi, Senior Planner; Amy Uden, Graduate Public Service Intern (GPST), University of Illinois at Springfield.

Transportation Planning: Linda Wheeland, Senior Planner; Dale Schultz, Principal Planner; Kyle Phillips, Planning Specialist; Nathaniel Baker, Associate Planner.

Also on staff during this effort were Jacob Ferguson, GPSI, and Alex Meyers, Planning Aide/Intern.

Thanks must also be give to the officers and staff of the Springfield Mass Transit District and the Springfield Housing Authority for the assistance they provided in the conduct of this project.

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The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) is the joint planning body for the City of Springfield and Sangamon County. Along with these on-going responsibilities, the Commission works with many other municipalities, public agencies, and public-private entities throughout the region to promote orderly growth and development. It also acts in regional capacities, for example serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning and directing the development of the Sangamon Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Through the work of its 13-member professional staff, the Commission provides overall planning services related to land use, housing, recreation, transportation, economic analysis, and environmental matters, as well as special projects of local and regional interest, conducting numerous research studies, analytic reviews and planning projects — such as this one — each year.

The Commission that oversees this work is made up of 17 members including representatives from the Sangamon County Board, Springfield City Council, special units of government, and six appointed citizens from the city and county.