



NORTH TOPEKA ARTS DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

DRAFT - DECEMBER 2016

Prepared for:

NOTO Arts District Association,
Redbud Foundation, Heartland Visioning,
City of Topeka and Shawnee County

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NOTO ARTS DISTRICT

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I. INTRODUCTION

PLANNING MISSION

In 2015, Heartland Visioning, North Topeka Arts District Association and Redbud Foundation started a major planning initiative to address the future of the popular NOTO Arts District. With committed civic leaders and business/property owners and a new Arts Center, along with the infrastructure and riverfront projects planned for Downtown Topeka and the Kansas River, the two organizations and Heartland Visioning staff felt that the timing was right to craft a detailed blueprint for NOTO's future.

The Redbud Foundation, which has been a long-time supporter of NOTO, funded the effort. Heartland Visioning was the overall project coordinator. LaMotte West, an Oregon-based planning firm and The Lakota Group, a Chicago-based planning/design firm, were retained to prepare the Master Plan. The City of Topeka and Shawnee County officials and staff provided on-going input.

The objectives of the NOTO Arts District planning process included the following:

Consider NOTO's larger community context: The planning effort needed to consider NOTO's larger context, which is bordered by Garfield Park and Quincy School Campus on the north; the Kansas River on the south and east; and Topeka Boulevard on the west. Linkages to the Oregon Trail riverfront plan, Topeka Rescue Mission campus, Great Overland Station campus and surrounding North Topeka East residential neighborhood were important.

Build on the North Topeka East Plan: The City's 2013 Historic North Topeka East Neighborhood Plan sets the stage for a detailed vision for the Arts District's future. That Plan addressed the overall neighborhood's land use, zoning, housing needs and historic character.

Determine NOTO's boundaries: NOTO stakeholders expressed a need to address District boundaries in regards to where they are considered today and where they could be in the future.

Determine key NOTO negatives and positives: The Master Plan should address the current issues and challenges facing NOTO as well as its positive elements such as its active businesses and strong arts theme.

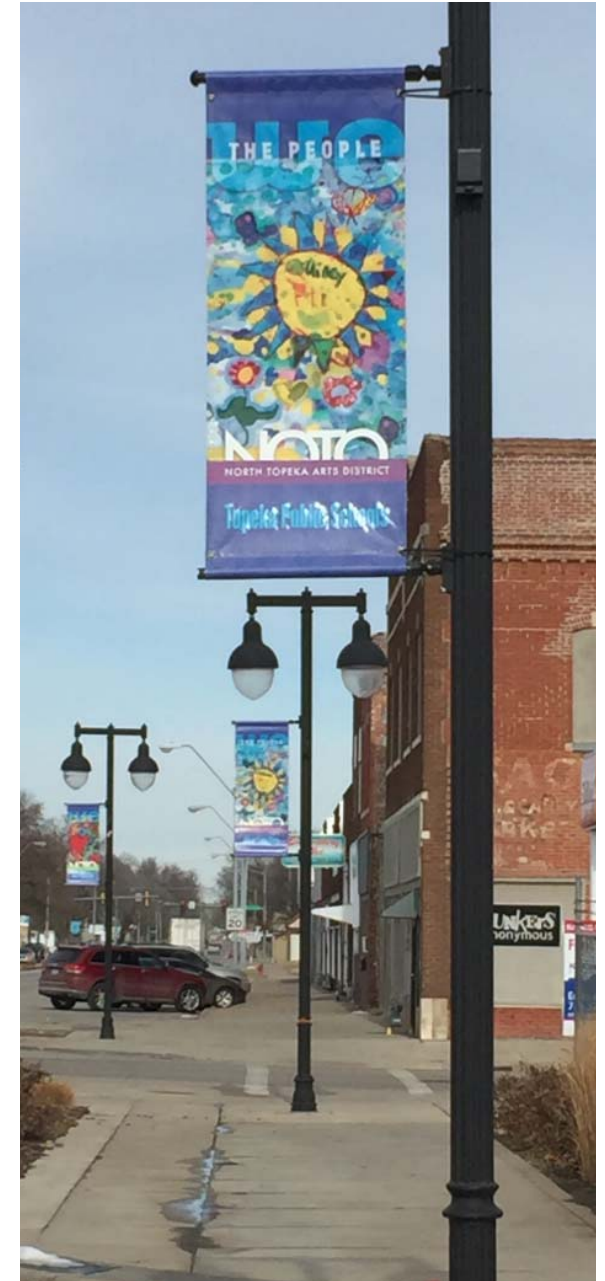
Generate alternatives and concepts: The master plan should address NOTO's infill and new development potential, access, parking, streetscape, buildings, signage and outdoor public art. Design concepts should focus on "place making" and show how NOTO's physical character could be significantly changed.

Asses the potential for a National Register Historic District: The potential for creating a National Register Historic District that provides tools for building rehabilitation needed to be assessed.

Generate alternative management strategies: New ways to more effectively manage NOTO as a cohesive, thriving business district were to be considered.

Craft a shared vision and plan: The process should result in a shared vision and plan for NOTO enhancement and growth that can be used to guide funding strategies, capital improvement programming, new development and retention/attraction of local businesses.

Organize a plan implementation strategy: The master plan should include an implementation strategy with priority projects.



PLANNING PROCESS

The NOTO master planning process included the following steps and phases:

Pre-Planning (Fall 2015):

25 focus group discussions in October with NOTO businesses, artists, property owners, civic leaders and City/County officials to shape the project scope. The discussions confirmed the critical need for a NOTO development plan as well as a new District management strategy.

Phase 1: State of the District:

Meetings were held with local business/property owners, artists, civic leaders, City/County staff and NOTO's Plan Advisory Committee. A community workshop in January discussed District negatives and positives.

Phase 2: Community Visioning:

Meetings with local business/property owners, artists, civic leaders, City/County staff and the Advisory Committee. A community workshop in April discussed a range of ideas, concepts and strategies for enhancing, developing and managing the District.

Phase 3: Master Planning:

Meetings were held with local business/property owners, artists, civic leaders, City/County staff and the Advisory Committee. A community workshop in June reviewed the first draft of the Master Plan and prioritized potential enhancement/development initiatives. A plan briefing for the City Council, County Board and City/County staff was conducted.

PLAN PURPOSE

The North Topeka Arts District Association, Heartland Visioning, City of Topeka and Shawnee County as well as civic leaders, business and property owners and developers will use the NOTO Arts District Master Plan as a guide for planning and development decisions over the next 5 to 10 years. It will serve several purposes depending on the needs of the user:

Development/Vision Framework:

The Plan provides a vision and framework for enhancement and development activities within and near NOTO.

Public Investment Guide:

The City and County can use the Plan to program public investment initiatives. It can also be used by public agencies and the Association to seek grants at the local, state and federal levels.

Private Investment Guide:

The Plan provides a base of information about the area's potential for people interested in investing and developing in the District.

Marketing Tool:

The Plan can be used by economic development agencies and the Association to promote existing NOTO business as well as its development opportunities.



Roundtable discussions during the first community workshop in January 2016.



Planning development strategies during a second community workshop in April 2016.

2. STATE OF THE DISTRICT

DISTRICT CONSTRAINTS

The following is a summary of the issues and concerns affecting NOTO that were discussed during the planning process. They represent negatives or challenges that were identified by local stakeholders and civic leaders as well as the consultant team.

Area Land Use/Infrastructure:

- There is vacant land, a large levee and active railroad tracks between the NOTO Arts District and the Kansas River and Great Overland Station to the south.
- Long freight trains block pedestrian movement from NOTO to the River and Station.
- Vacant land and physical gaps also exist between NOTO and the surrounding residential neighborhoods to the east, west and north.
- North Topeka East is a struggling, lower income neighborhood with declining population and home ownership.
- Most residential blocks between NOTO and Quincy School lack sidewalks and have numerous houses in need of repair and renovation.

District Land Use/Boundaries:

- There is confusion about the Arts District boundaries; is it two blocks on Kansas Avenue or is it a larger multi-block district?
- There is concern that NOTO is recognized throughout the region as an arts district, but is mostly known for special events and not its businesses.
- The District has a “critical mass” of artists but not buildings/development. It appears to be a few blocks of storefronts that are isolated and disconnected from its surroundings.
- There is a need for more retail/service businesses and restaurants.
- Artists have moved to the area, converted buildings into studio/gallery space and activated NOTO, yet the District does not have much pedestrian and shopper traffic.
- Some service and supply companies have been in the area for years but may not be compatible with a pedestrian-oriented retail shopping and dining street in regard to open storefronts, outside storage and truck parking/access.
- NOTO is lacking a bigger draw and economic activity that regularly attracts visitors.
- The area’s lack of activity and overall poor physical conditions contributes to a negative perception regarding safety, especially for artists and merchants that work late hours.

Public Space:

- The District lacks usable public spaces; there is no central plaza or green that is a gathering place for visitors, shoppers, merchants or artists.
- Veterans Park on the west side of the Kansas Avenue Bridge and the park on the east side of the Bridge lack amenities and landscaping, and are underutilized.
- The back of the Arts Center, which was the former Post Office loading zone, is not an attractive open space.
- There are no tot lots or playgrounds in the immediate vicinity that could draw families with children.
- The river edge near NOTO lacks amenities that draw people to the water.
- The District lacks public restrooms for daily and event use; businesses are continually asked by visitors and customers to use private facilities.

Streetscape Conditions:

- The streetscape along Kansas Avenue does not have a “Main Street” feel as it lacks street trees, benches, planters, public art, overhanging business signs and “color”.
- The pedestrian path between the NOTO parking lot and Kansas Avenue has minimal landscaping and seating.
- The street lights along Kansas Avenue are dated in appearance and their light fixtures appear too big for the scale of the street.
- NOTO has become known as an arts district but, has minimal outdoor public art.
- The alleys flanking Kansas Avenue are very visible and regularly used, and need paving improvements.
- Overall, the District lacks a “sense of place” and distinct character.



An underutilized lot on Kansas Avenue



Streetscape conditions on Kansas Avenue

Building Conditions:

- Several storefronts are “boarded up” and need improvement and a fresh look. The rear and side walls of most buildings are very visible to motorists and pedestrians from the Kansas Avenue Bridge, local streets and parking lots and also need improvement.
- Several buildings along Kansas Avenue as well as nearby homes have historic character and need renovation. Two buildings on Kansas Avenue, including the vacant theater, especially need stabilization and renovation.
- Most buildings lack attractive easy-to-see business signage.

Wayfinding/Signage:

- It is difficult to find the district when driving as there is minimal directional signage throughout the City and area leading to NOTO.
- There are no distinctive landscape, signage or building gateways that lead to the District from surrounding streets, especially when traveling from Downtown north over the river bridges or along Morse Street, Quincy Street and Topeka Boulevard, which are major routes to/through North Topeka.

Parking:

- There is concern that NOTO has adequate parking for daily needs but not special events.
- The District’s rear parking spaces/lots need improvement, including landscaping.
- People attending area events are parking and walking along the tracks on the vacant lumber yard site, which has raised/exposed concrete foundations.

Business Costs:

- Rising rents and taxes in NOTO are a concern for businesses, property owners and artists.

District Management:

- There are concerns about the District’s management regarding special events planning, business and artist involvement/representation, stakeholder communication, marketing/promotions, fundraising and operation of the Arts Center.
- Coordination/communication between local groups and businesses is a “sore spot” regarding special events, i.e. street and sidewalk closures, stage locations, services and parking.
- The district lacks common/regular business hours, especially during evenings and weekends; some galleries and antique stores may only be open by appointment. The lack of regular hours is negatively affecting interest in the area from developers, businesses and conferences/conventions, i.e. “Where’s the action”.
- The NOTO Arts Center needs funding for its daily operations and maintenance.
- There seems to be eight business/community groups active in the North Topeka area, which has created confusion as to “who is in charge” as well as concern about overlaps and gaps in service?
 - NOTO Arts District Association
 - NOTO Arts Center Board
 - NOTO Business Committee (NADA)
 - NOTO Artists Committee
 - NOTO Anonymous
 - North Topeka Chamber
 - NATO (North Topeka on the Move)
 - North Topeka Neighborhood Association



Streetscape conditions on Kansas Avenue



District buildings in need of facade and storefront improvements

DISTRICT OPPORTUNITIES

The following are city, neighborhood and district attributes that provide NOTO with “building blocks” for the future. They represent strengths and positives that were identified by local stakeholders and civic leaders as well as the consultant team.

Leadership/Commitment:

- The Heartland Visioning initiative, which involved over 5,000 people in a grassroots planning process, led to a significant regional commitment to NOTO from civic leaders.
- The NOTO board includes representatives from universities, museums, foundations and local stakeholders. Not many business districts have such a wide representation of civic leaders.
- NOTO has come a long way in a short time:
 - Early efforts focused on renovating buildings for reuse by artists; approximately 35 artists and businesses have moved to the area.
 - The NOTO “brand” is now established as a special place for the arts; the popular First Friday Art Walks and other local events have become regional “happenings”.
- Civic leadership also helped preserve/reuse the vacant Post Office on Kansas Avenue as the NOTO Arts Center, which is now a centerpiece for the District.
- NOTO has created a partnership with Quincy School involving arts education and events.
- Several property owners have made significant, continuing commitments to stabilizing and preserving buildings and improving the overall District.
- Active businesses and artists want to be more involved in NOTO leadership and management.
- Local service businesses, who have been in NOTO for a long time, have expressed interest in helping improve the District.
- Business/property owners and artists noted that they like NOTO’s “camaraderie”, “awesome energy”, “being part of it” and potential for growth as a destination.
- Local artists are interested in showing their work at the Arts Center.
- The City and County are committed to revitalizing Historic North Topeka East and NOTO Arts District. Following the 2013 land use strategy, the City changed zoning designations, programmed infrastructure improvements and helped the School District receive a Safe Routes to Schools grant to improve local sidewalks.
- The City, County, Riverfront Authority and Heartland Visioning are committed to improving the riverfront. Topeka has received federal funding for major infrastructure improvements that will set the stage for the planned Oregon Trail greenway and park along the River. The National Park Service recently held a charrette to kick-off the design phase of the Trail.
- The City is near completion of a major Downtown streetscape renovation along Kansas Avenue. Developers are renovating Downtown buildings with a mix of uses, including residential. These actions will bring more activity and “in-town” housing opportunities to Topeka’s central area, which is a short distance to NOTO.

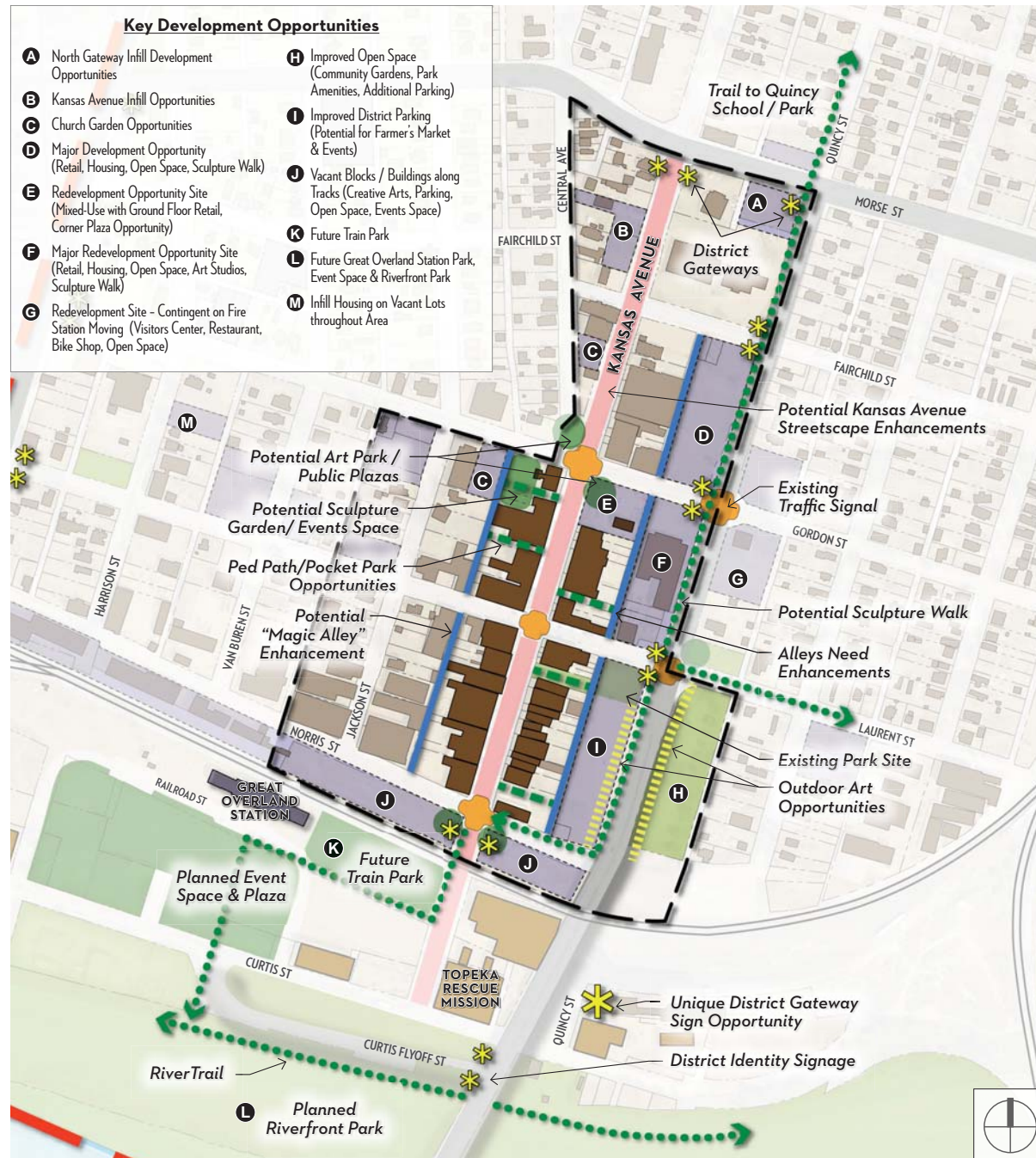
Activity Generators:

- Downtown Topeka, Great Overland Station, Garfield Park and Quincy School are “activity generators” near NOTO that regularly draw visitors to the area.
- The Great Overland Station and Rescue Mission are planning/building improvements to their campuses.
- The Oregon Trail Park project along the Kansas River could become a regional and national draw near NOTO.
- Bridges over the Kansas River provide direct, over-the-tracks access to NOTO.
- Topeka Boulevard, which is three blocks west of the District, is a busy street that serves the larger North Topeka area.
- With additional programming and events, the NOTO Arts Center can attract more visitors.
- The large vacant corner of Kansas Avenue and Gordon Street could become an anchor development for NOTO.
- The NOTO District, which is a prime example of a small town Kansas Main Street, has the most significant grouping of historic commercial buildings remaining in Topeka. It would be a good candidate for preservation benefits/tools.
- The District has “Main Street” style angle parking on Kansas Avenue and seems to have a good supply of street and off-street parking.
- The County owns the large NOTO parking lot between the bridge and Kansas Avenue. This lot could be expanded. The vacant site along the tracks has potential as new parking for special events.
- The County also owns Veterans Park and the pedestrian path connecting the park to Kansas Street. They have potential to be more active and attractive public spaces.

Development Opportunities:

- The large, mostly vacant blocks adjacent to the District have potential for new development that could help activate NOTO and give it more critical mass.
- There are numerous vacant lots in North Topeka East that represent significant infill housing opportunities. Artists, business owners and millennials expressed interest in housing in or near NOTO.
- Several NOTO buildings could be renovated/ improved to add retail and restaurant space and housing to the District. A music venue is also a possibility in a restaurant, pub or vacant theater space.
- A mural was recently installed on the rear of a NOTO building and a new sculpture installed in front of the Arts Center.
- Numerous artists and design-related businesses are located in Topeka. Some are in isolated locations or sub-optimal buildings and could be candidates to move to NOTO.
- Several blocks of commercial and industrial uses located east and west of NOTO contain active businesses that could be part of an expanded District. Some artists and businesses have begun to expand into these blocks.

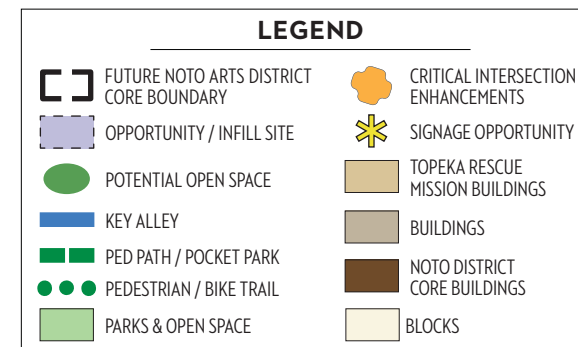
FIGURE 2.1 - DISTRICT OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS



Initial Ideas/Concepts

The following are initial ideas, suggestions and concepts for improving and developing the Arts District that were generated during the planning process by stakeholders, leaders and the consultants:

- Enhance streetscape and overall physical conditions... Dress it up!!!
- Open up and improve building fronts; and improve building backs and sides.
- Improve alleys.
- Enhance the path leading from the NOTO parking lot to Kansas Avenue.
- Establish a central gathering place.
- Add public art, art walks and sculpture gardens.
- Add directional, identity and overhanging business signs.
- Enhance rail crossings for pedestrians.
- Add public restrooms.
- Consider NOTO parking lot and former lumber yard for event vendors/staging.
- Keep sidewalks and storefronts open and clear during festivals.
- Test and establish regular business hours for the District.
- Consider shared staffing in galleries to reduce artist time away from work.
- Consider shared staffing to keep stores open during key hours.
- Organize a coordinated approach for special events.
- Generate ideas for code changes related to street closures for special events.
- Add more events to bring more folks to NOTO.
- Consider a daycare center near the school or NOTO district core.
- Consider artist live/work space.
- Consider new housing products such as tiny houses, apartments and townhomes.
- Consider mixed-use development on key sites.
- Consider historic district designation.
- Work on **"me versus we"** attitude when it comes to NOTO's leadership.
- Create a plan for the next 5 years with a shared vision.



3. DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

The NOTO Arts District Master Plan provides a vision for how NOTO can revitalize and redevelop in the future. The Master Plan addresses key issues affecting the Arts District and builds upon its positives and strengths, including its arts brand, artists cluster, historic small town Kansas character, North Topeka context and location near Downtown Topeka and the Kansas River.

PLAN VISION

The following is an overall vision for NOTO based on the Master Plan:

In the near future, the North Topeka Arts District will be a larger, more attractive and active place that is home to a wide range of artists and businesses serving local and regional residents as well as Topeka visitors. Its small town Kansas commercial character will be preserved and anchored on the north by a revitalized neighborhood and on the south by the new Oregon Trail Riverfront Park.

This special business district will be guided by a new “Main Street” leadership structure that effectively manages its operations and growth, while continuing to bring positive change to North Topeka.



PLAN OBJECTIVES

The following Master Plan objectives provide more specific direction toward achieving NOTO’s future vision:

NOTO Growth:

- Expand District boundaries to foster revitalization of additional retail buildings on Kansas Avenue.
- Add more business and property owners to the NOTO Association to strengthen the organization and provide services to nearby businesses.
- Foster a larger economic development synergy around NOTO that includes adjacent commercial and light industrial businesses and blocks.
- Consider the Arts District as a regional draw for tourism as well as for “creative” businesses involved in arts, design and technology.
- Consider NOTO as the local, “walk to” shopping and social hub for the North Topeka neighborhood.

NOTO Development:

- Redevelop key opportunity sites to catalyze area revitalization and strengthen the City’s economic base.
- Introduce new residential development to the area to further activate NOTO with shoppers and visitors and spark neighborhood revitalization.
- Establish an historic district along Kansas Avenue to provide tools for building owners to renovate structures and preserve local character.
- Improve existing parking and create new parking for shoppers, restaurant patrons and special event visitors.
- Link the District to the major improvements planned for the Kansas River frontage.

NOTO Enhancement:

- Establish a “sense of place” for NOTO by improving and beautifying its physical conditions.
- Improve existing public spaces and create new spaces for people to gather and for special events.
- Establish a signage system that reinforces the NOTO “brand” and facilitates access to and within the District and Riverfront.
- Incorporate public art into NOTO streetscapes, alleys, public spaces and gateways.
- Foster a “pride of place” amongst business and property owners to facilitate improvements to private properties.

NOTO Management:

- Reorganize the NOTO Association into a Main Street organization that addresses management, marketing, special events, economic vitality and physical change.
- Incorporate management of the NOTO Arts Center into the reorganized District Association.

FIGURE 3.1 - DISTRICT VISION - LOOKING SOUTH FROM MORSE STREET - AERIAL VIEW



Illustration by David Walker

AREA PLANNING

North Topeka East Neighborhood Plan

The City's Historic North Topeka East Neighborhood Plan provides a base of information about the area's history, demographics, physical conditions and housing. It highlights the area's lack of investment activity, infrastructure needs and that 25% of its housing stock is in deteriorated condition.

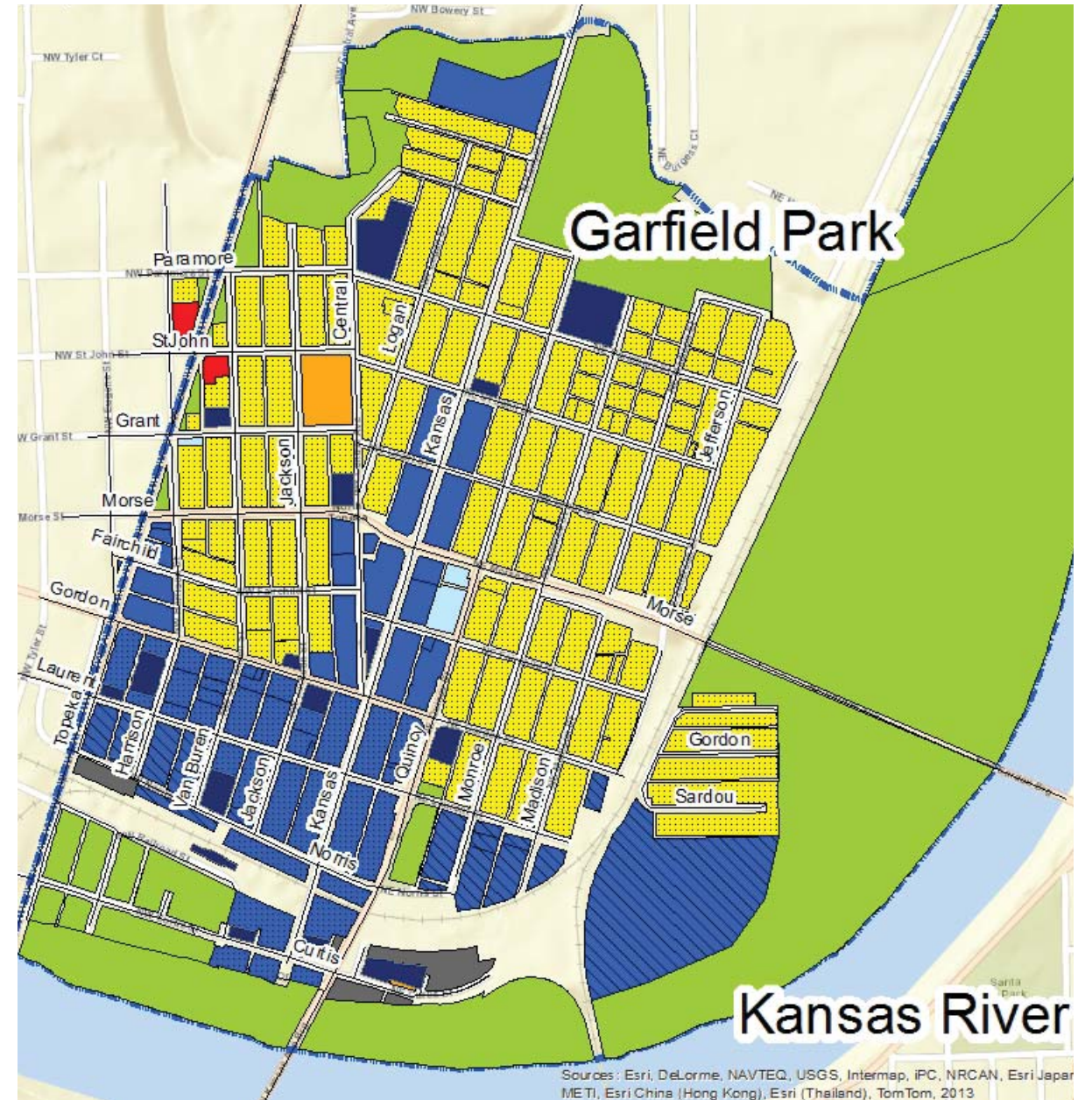
The Plan emphasizes North Topeka's "traditional small town design" and notes that Quincy School, Garfield Park, Soldier Creek Greenway and NOTO Arts District can be anchors for area revitalization. Its land use strategy recommends extensive housing renovation and construction to enhance North Topeka's historic setting.

Since the Plan was completed in 2013, the City has refined area zoning designations, completed a street improvement project along ABC Street and established a new bike route on Central Avenue, which leads directly into NOTO. Topeka recently received a grant of \$650,000 from the Federal Safe Routes to Schools Program to improve sidewalks in North Topeka leading to Quincy School.

Removing deteriorated structures and improving homes, yards, alleys, streets, sidewalks and fences in North Topeka is needed to get it going in the right direction and to draw more interest to the Arts District. The North Topeka East Plan sets the stage for a more focused revitalization of NOTO as a mixed-use district that serves the neighborhood and City. Improving and developing NOTO will enhance the livability of North Topeka.

Consideration should be given to rezoning the underused and vacant properties along Kansas Avenue north of Morse Street from commercial to residential use. Such an initiative could help concentrate retail activity south of Morse Street and improve physical conditions north of NOTO and south of Quincy School, while introducing opportunities for new housing near the Arts District. Consideration should also be given to eliminating heavier industrial zoning classifications that are not in character with a "creative arts and technology" zone.

FIGURE 3.2 - HISTORIC NORTH TOPEKA EAST: FUTURE LAND USE MAP



Great Overland Station

The Great Overland Station is an historic 1927 Union Pacific Railroad Station that was preserved as a railroad heritage and Kansas cultural museum. The Station campus is located between the NOTO Arts District and Kansas River. It is a major draw for Topeka area residents and visitors, and will be the centerpiece of the Oregon Trail Park planned for the riverfront. The campus includes the BNSF Plaza, which displays the flags of America's 50 states, and Veterans Memorial and Railroad Park.

Great Overland Station also hosts numerous events that attract over 30,000 visitors per year to the following:

- Memorial Day and Veterans Day events (300)
- Railroad Festival (4,000)
- Gala and Harvey House Lunches (750)
- Santa Day (750)
- Weddings and Parties (15,000)
- Museum (10,000)
- All Veterans Memorial/Corridor of Flags (3,600)

Railroad Park is located at the east end of the Station and provides a physical connection between NOTO and the riverfront near Kansas Avenue. Along with restoration of the Park's rail cars, this space should be enhanced with additional railroad memorabilia and landscaping. The public plaza and streetscape projects recommended along the north side of the rail tracks for the Arts District should be coordinated with improvements planned for Railroad Park and overall Station campus.

Parking is becoming an issue for the Great Overland Station and will especially need to be addressed when the Oregon Trail Park is developed. The large parking lots planned to serve NOTO along Norris Street (100 spaces) should be considered as part of a larger future parking plan for the Station and riverfront.

The Arts District should increase communication / coordination with the Great Overland Station to improve area parking, pedestrian access/safety, events management and area marketing.

Oregon Trail Riverfront Park

The City of Topeka was recently awarded \$8,000,000 in Federal funding to improve infrastructure along the Kansas River. These improvements, which are currently in the engineering phase, will stabilize bank conditions, raise water levels near Downtown and NOTO for recreational use and upgrade the area's storm water management capabilities.

A design charrette, recently hosted by the City and U.S. National Park Service, addressed how the waterfront can be further enhanced as a major cultural and recreational park (see Figure 3.3 to the right). The new park would celebrate the Kansas River, which is a National Water Trail, regional railroads and Topeka's historic location at the start of the Oregon Trail. It could become a large tourist draw for Topeka and NOTO.

The Arts District Master Plan provides linkages to this future waterfront park as well as to the Great Overland Station and Topeka Rescue Mission campuses, located between NOTO and the River. The Arts District Plan shows how the District can embrace its unique surrounding land uses.

FIGURE 3.3 – OREGON TRAIL SCULPTURE CONCEPTS



Image(s) credit: National Park Service - Heartland Visioning Charrette

PLAN INITIATIVES

Historic Preservation

In recent years, cities around the country have increasingly turned to arts districts as a revitalization tool. This has often happened in places that contain a significant concentration of historic buildings that provide affordable and flexible spaces for the creative arts industries to thrive. Such businesses seek out and locate in “character-rich,” “high livability” environments that are often found in historic areas.

The preservation, rehabilitation and reuse of NOTO’s historic buildings should be considered a critical component to revitalizing the District. Together with place making enhancements to NOTO’s public spaces, the NOTO Arts District can become an even more compelling place for artists, businesses, investors, visitors and local residents.

Historic preservation is often defined as public or private efforts to conserve and protect buildings and districts that have important architectural or historical significance. NOTO contains a rich collection of historic commercial architecture that exemplifies Kansas history. Preservation efforts should focus on reuse of empty buildings and upper-floors along with stabilization, rehabilitation and maintenance of key buildings that define its character.

A key goal is to rehabilitate NOTO’s historic buildings in a manner that retains unique architectural features while accommodating imaginative signage, storefront merchandising and unique elements such as wall murals and “ghost” signs. These features and elements contribute to its stability, visual environment and sense of vibrancy. A preservation approach encourages stakeholders to become stewards of NOTO’s architectural legacy while making arts-based place making a main feature of the District.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation’s official list of buildings, structures, sites and objects worthy of the preservation. The National Register is a program of the National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Department of the Interior. It is administered in Kansas by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), also known as the Kansas Historical Society. The program is meant to raise awareness and promote efforts to identify, evaluate and preserve the country’s historic resources. Historic resources may be listed in the National Register individually or as part of a district within definable geographic boundaries. Districts may also include parks or natural resources having historical, architectural, archaeological or cultural significance. There are 90,540 individual listings in the National Register nationally as well as more than 1.7 million contributing buildings and structures within National Register Historic Districts.

National Register designation is honorary and poses no restrictions on the use, treatment, transfer or disposition of property. It also does not mandate property owners to undertake specific actions to restore or rehabilitate their buildings. The only level of protection afforded to listed buildings/districts is in regards to federally-funded/licensed projects that may adversely impact National Register-listed resources.

Register of Kansas Historic Places

The Kansas SHPO administers the Register of Kansas Historic Places, which recognizes buildings and places significant to the history of the state. The same criteria used to evaluate properties for the National Register are used for the Kansas Register. Districts listed in the National Register are automatically listed in the Kansas Register. Listing in the Register of Kansas Historic Places is honorary and places no restrictions on the use and disposition of property.



NOTO’s historic commercial buildings are the District’s most significant assets.

City Historic District Designation

Topeka administers a preservation program through a Historic Preservation Ordinance that permits the Landmarks Commission to designate landmarks and historic districts to “protect, enhance and perpetuate historic, distinctive and important elements of the city’s cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological and architectural history.”

Similar to the National Register, a City Historic District must represent a significant collection of historic resources with definable boundaries. A nomination report also has to be prepared, which is then forwarded to the Planning Commission for adoption of an historic overlay zoning designation. The District designation and overlay zoning is ultimately approved by the Topeka City Council.

It should be noted that there are several differences between City Historic District designation and the National Register of Historic Places. Unlike, the National Register, which requires a majority of the property owners within a proposed historic district to reject a designation, the City requires 75 percent of the property owners to provide written consent for a City Historic District designation.

Within a City Historic District, the Landmarks Commission is authorized to conduct design review for contributing properties regarding major alterations to exterior facades that are visible from the public right-of-way. The Commission also reviews proposed demolition of properties. Similar to a National Register Historic District, a City Historic District designation does not place limits on the use of property.

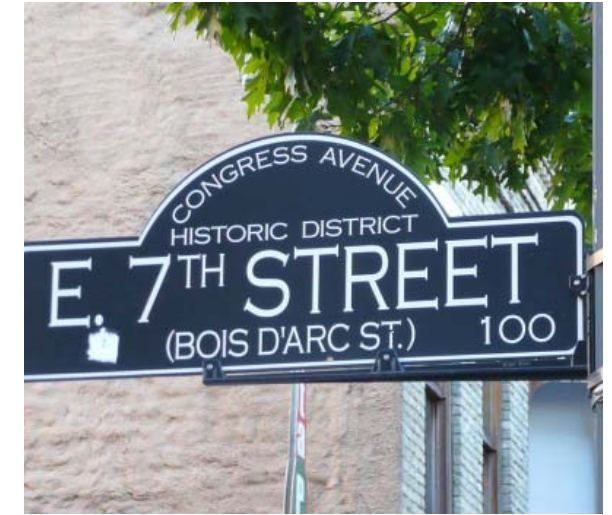
The principal benefit of a City Historic District is that it protects against the loss of significant historic buildings and investments in historic properties from insensitive or poorly planned development that can undermine property value

and make an area less attractive to investors. Local historic district designation encourages people to buy and rehabilitate properties because they know their investment is protected over time. Properties within a City Historic District may also be eligible for federal and state historic preservation tax credits.

Most cities seek listing in the National Register of Historic Places as it provides significant tax incentives for property rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. Such incentives are powerful drivers for commercial district reinvestment and for reusing buildings for retail uses, upper floor housing and offices, art galleries and live/work spaces. National Register listing also provides significant marketing and branding opportunities, which would help attract businesses, artists, investors and visitors to a place considered historically and architecturally significant.

A National Register district designation for the blocks along Kansas Avenue from Norris Street to Fairchild Street should be pursued as a high priority by the City and NOTO Arts District Association. The North Topeka East Neighborhood Plan noted that NOTO had “sufficient integrity to warrant a state/national historic district” as it contains “the most significantly intact grouping of historic commercial buildings remaining in Topeka”.

At this time, a City Historic District designation should be a secondary priority for NOTO. Since 75 percent of property owners must consent to such a district, more work would be involved to reach consensus. Over time, as more building rehabilitation activity occurs using the tax credits allowed through the National Register, the Association and City could explore a local district designation.



Historic district designation can be used to market, brand and tell the story of NOTO’s history and development (above), as well as protect and promote the rehabilitation of historic commercial buildings (below).



Façade/Building Rehabilitation Program

In recent years, as new businesses have opened in NOTO, a number of building improvement projects have taken place involving simple storefront painting, signage and awning projects - projects that have significantly enhanced NOTO's visual appearances. A smaller number of buildings have undergone more extensive storefront rehabilitation and reconstruction, opening up such storefronts with new window glazing that at one time may have been covered up or enclosed. Several upper facades have also undergone repair and repainting.

Going forward, façade and storefront rehabilitation activity should continue to be facilitated by the NOTO Arts District Board and the City of Topeka with the goal of generating momentum for on-going and more substantial and larger-scale improvements to occur, including storefront reconstruction and rehabilitation, upper façade preservation, building material maintenance and the adaptive use of interior spaces. Such efforts should focus on establishing a Façade Improvement program that offers both financial and design assistance to NOTO property and business owners.

- **Financial Incentives.** To encourage building improvements in traditional commercial districts such as NOTO, many communities establish Façade or Building Improvement Programs, which offer financial incentives to partially underwrite different types of improvements from signage to storefront improvements, to building envelope maintenance and material preservation needs. Typical financial incentives include matching grants for rehabilitation expenses up to a maximum award amount and low or

no-interest loans, although direct grants are more commonly used. Grants are usually offered on a 50-50 matching basis with awards ranging from \$2,500 to \$20,000 depending on where the maximum grant award amount is set and the total capitalization of the grant fund. To receive the grant, a property or business owner would need to submit an application with schematic designs or construction-level drawings showing planned improvements and how they conform to design guidelines that may be established by the NOTO Arts Board or the City. Additionally, the grant comes in the form of a rebate to the applicant once the rehabilitation project is completed.

- **Design Assistance.** In addition to the financial incentives, a Building Improvement Program may also provide design assistance to NOTO property and business owners to help their project planning and ensure that proper building preservation and rehabilitation procedures are followed. Elements of design assistance may include schematic drawings, cost estimates and on-site visits with the property owner and a qualified historic preservation architect. For example, design assistance could provide up to \$2,500 in architectural services and be funded through the City, a business improvement district (BID), or a combination of outside funding sources. The services could also be incorporated as part of the grant award proceeds. Design drawings can then be used by a building or property owner as part of the application submittals to the grant or loan program.

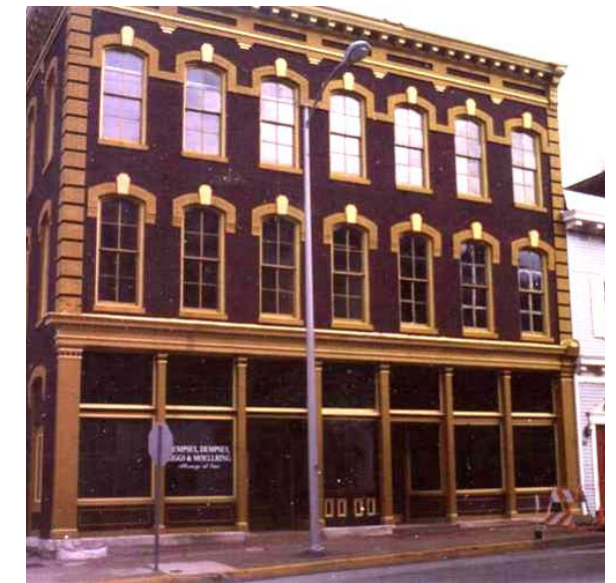
Most façade or building improvement programs are managed by the municipality given that are often the primary or sole source of financing for such programs. In some cases, a Main Street revitalization program and its volunteer Design Committee may conduct the application and design review aspects of the program. For Main Street programs, the Main Street manager or executive director serves a critical role in educating property and business owners on the availability of incentives and design assistance. The Design Committee may also assist the City in creating the design guidelines, organizing technical workshops of building rehabilitation topics, and creating lists or databases of qualified local contractors.



Before, Harpole Building, Downtown Quincy, Illinois



Design schematics and financial assistance can help NOTO property owners undertake facade and building improvements.



After, Harpole Building, Downtown Quincy, Illinois

FIGURE 3.4 - FACADE/REHABILITATION CONCEPTS



Above - examples of facade and storefront rehabilitation

District Boundaries

A key strategy of the Arts District Master Plan involves changing NOTO's boundaries. Currently, the District is considered by stakeholders as the two commercial blocks along Kansas Avenue between Norris and Gordon Streets.

The boundaries should be expanded north to Morse Street and east to Quincy Street. This expansion would foster improvement of additional "Main Street" buildings along Kansas Street and bring more attention to the businesses located there. Expanding NOTO north and east would also establish District gateways at Morse and along Quincy, which are arterial streets. (See "Fig. 3.5 - Potential District Boundaries")

Eventually, NOTO should be expanded east to the rail tracks south of Laurent Street and west to Topeka Boulevard to include adjacent commercial and industrial blocks. Such a move would strengthen the NOTO Arts District Association, while also providing more attention and services to nearby businesses. This larger expansion would also create more visible gateways into NOTO along Topeka Boulevard, which is a major arterial street.

The larger District should be considered Topeka's "Creative Arts and Technology Area". It could be a synergistic location for not only artists, retailers and restaurateurs but small commercial and industrial businesses involved in the arts, design and technology. Examples of such businesses include graphic design and architectural studios, internet start-up space, custom metal/wood working shops and printing/framing stores.

The expanded district would also include eight residential blocks with several vacant lots west of NOTO. These blocks have potential as a "Creative District Housing Zone" that could provide homes for artists and local business owners. Building new housing as "demonstration or model projects" on the vacant sites would fill in neighborhood "gaps", provide "walk to" living for people active in NOTO and foster revitalization of the larger North Topeka area.



The existing NOTO District gateway at Kansas Avenue and Gordon Street.

FIGURE 3.5 - POTENTIAL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



LEGEND

	POTENTIAL NOTO ARTS DISTRICT CORE BOUNDARY		SIGNAGE OPPORTUNITY
	BUILDINGS		BLOCKS
	NOTO DISTRICT CORE BUILDINGS		PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Public Space & Trails

An important initiative of the NOTO Plan is to establish a comprehensive system of public spaces that serve local employees, business owners, artists, shoppers, restaurant patrons, special event attendees and neighborhood residents. Such a system could include new trail links that connect NOTO to Garfield Park, Soldier Creek Greenway and Quincy School to the north and Great Overland Station and future Oregon Trail Park to the south.

The following are public space and bicycle trail recommendations:

Veterans Park:

This County Park, which is an underutilized open space, should be expanded to align with the pedestrian path that leads to Kansas Avenue. It should be improved as a more active park that serves children as well as adults. Improvements should include tot lot/play equipment, seating, gateway art and a water feature.

Pocket Park:

The existing County path extending from Veterans Park and NOTO's parking lot should be enhanced as a pocket park with seating, plantings, wall murals, sculptures and wall lighting. The open areas behind adjacent buildings should be incorporated into the design of the park, including dumpster screening, wall treatments, special lighting and outdoor cafes. An example of this concept is shown in Figure 3.6.

Bridge Park:

This County open space is located on the east side of the Kansas Avenue Bridge. It is underutilized and has potential to be a more active space that serves the surrounding neighborhood and brings more people to the Arts District. A fenced dog park, community gardens and bocce ball courts should also be considered. Special lighting and public art should be considered for the open area underneath the Bridge's viaduct.

FIGURE 3.6 - POCKET PARK/PATHWAY ENHANCEMENTS BETWEEN NOTO PARKING LOT AND KANSAS AVENUE



Illustration by David Walker

Section 3 - District Master Plan

Church Gardens:

The yards adjacent to churches located on Kansas Avenue and Gordon Street should be improved with special plantings and gardens to enhance these locations as green pockets within the Arts District.

NOTO Sculpture Garden:

The space behind the NOTO Arts Center was the loading zone for the former Post Office. It is an unattractive asphalt hardscape with chain link fencing and no landscaping. This site represents a major opportunity to build a special public space that could be used on a daily basis by shoppers, residents, artists, business owners and employees as well as for special events. It should be enhanced with sculptures, plantings and a central lawn along with a pathway leading to it from Kansas Avenue (see Fig. 3.7).

NOTO Central Park:

The cul-de-sac at the south end of Central Avenue is a large asphalt area that is sometimes used for event parking. A simple realignment of Central into Kansas would eliminate its need as a vehicle turn-around and allow it to become an additional open space for the neighborhood and “North Stage” for special events. It should be improved with a central focal feature that marks it as a gateway and trail head for NOTO and the Central Avenue bike trail. Street trees, plantings, public art, open lawn, seating, decorative fencing, water features and a band shell should be considered.

NOTO Square:

The southeast corner of Kansas Avenue and Gordon Street should be considered for a major new open space and/or a mixed use development with a large corner plaza. Like the Central Park concept, this space also has potential to become a “North Stage” location for special events. Public art, special plantings, water features, seating and a band shell should be considered.



FIGURE 3.7 - NOTO SCULPTURE GARDEN AND EVENTS SPACE



Norris Street Sculpture Walk:

Establish a sculpture walk on the south side of Norris. This linear open space would be located on the edge of new public parking lots recommended along the rail tracks. It would also be a location for taxi and bus stops along with street parking for food trucks during events.

Norris Street Corner Plazas:

Establish large plazas at the southwest and southeast corners of Kansas Avenue and Norris Streets. These spaces would enhance the rail crossings as gateways to NOTO and the Riverfront. Like Central Park and NOTO Square on the north, these spaces would serve the southern end of NOTO and be potential “South Stage” locations for special events. Public art, special plantings, water features, seating and a band shell should be considered.

Corner plaza with public art, landscaping treatments, and seating.



Quincy Street Greenway:

Establish a new greenway along the west side of Quincy from Laurent to Morse. Such a greenway, which could have a variety of plantings and linear gardens, would provide locations for NOTO gateways and public art as well as a front yard setback for future buildings.

Quincy Street Bike Trial:

Establish a bike trail within the Quincy greenway and on Quincy Street north of Morse to connect NOTO to the park/school campus and riverfront. This new trail along with the existing bike trail on Central Avenue would provide an internal loop for North Topeka that is anchored by the Arts District.

Public Restrooms:

There is a need to for public restrooms within the District to accommodate shoppers on a daily basis and patrons of the numerous special events that are held in NOTO. Such facilities should be considered near Veterans Park, the pedestrian path and NOTO parking lot.

FIGURE 3.8 – POTENTIAL NORTH TOPEKA BIKE TRAIL LOOP



Streetscape/Streets

Major streetscape improvements are envisioned for Kansas Avenue between Norris and Morse Streets along with its side streets to enhance NOTO's physical character and create an overall District identity. A comprehensive streetscape enhancement should include:

District Lighting:

The existing street lights along Kansas Avenue have a dated appearance and light globes that are too big for the scale of the sidewalk and storefronts. The lights should be improved or replaced with new poles and fixtures. A minimal solution would be to repaint the poles and replace the fixtures with a more attractive lamp and efficient LED bulbs. Lighting design should fit the District's small town Main Street character and include lights within public spaces and parking lots and alongside streets, paths and alleys.

Special Lighting:

The Kansas Avenue Bridge along with the adjacent grain silos should be considered for special lighting treatment to create a gateway effect for those traveling to NOTO, Great Overland Station and the Riverfront from the north. Such lighting has been used successfully in other cities as a place making feature that draws residents and visitors to an area.

The viaduct under the Bridge along with public art elements and the backs of buildings visible from NOTO streets should also be considered for special lighting. String or Tivoli lighting should be considered for open spaces, paths and sections of Kansas Avenue.



Bridge viaduct lighting can improve safety while providing an artistic element in an underutilized space.

FIGURE 3.9 - POTENTIAL STREETLIGHT UPDATES



FIGURE 3.10 - NOTO BRANDING/GATEWAY CONCEPT USING GRAIN SILOS



Plantings:

There are several locations along Kansas Avenue that have enough room for small landscape pockets that would help add color to the street.

Street Trees:

Kansas Avenue has a barren, harsh look. Trees should be planted along the street to create a green, Main Street character and provide shade in the summer. Trees could be added at regular intervals along sidewalks, within planting pockets and/or within a few parking places.

Street Furniture:

Decorative seating and trash cans should be added throughout the District, especially in public spaces and paths.

Public Art:

NOTO, which has a lot of quality artwork on display and for sale inside buildings, shops and studios, lacks outdoor art that enlivens public spaces and reinforces its arts brand. Sculptures, wall hangings, murals and special lighting should

be installed throughout the District, especially along Kansas Avenue and in public spaces. Rotating exhibits of outdoor sculptures should be considered along with permanent art installations to add variety and color to the streetscape and provide an ongoing draw for visitors.

Kansas/Gordon Intersection:

This intersection is in need of an additional stop sign for traffic heading east and west to facilitate traffic flow and pedestrian movement along the Kansas Avenue streetscape.

Quincy/Laurent Intersection:

Traffic headed northbound from Downtown Topeka can use the Kansas Avenue and Topeka Boulevard bridges to access NOTO. From the Kansas Avenue Bridge motorists must travel to Gordon Street to turn left into the District as left turns are prohibited at Laurent. The potential for opening up the raised median at Laurent to allow left turns should be considered. If feasible, such a change would create another gateway access point for NOTO.

FIGURE 3.11 - KANSAS STREET STREETScape\BUILDING REHABILITATION CONCEPT



Bicycle rack public art



NOTO public art-wall mural

Section 3 - District Master Plan

Alleys

The two alleys flanking Kansas Avenue serve local businesses and need paving improvements. They have potential to be enhanced as “green corridors” that accommodate vehicles as well as pedestrians, which often use them during special events. Some artists and businesses have begun working in buildings across the west alley and local artists recently installed a mural on a building facing that alley.

Patching deteriorated paving, enhancing building backs with painting, artwork and signage, consolidating and screening dumpsters and adding plantings and lawn pockets would improve the alleys and create another draw for shoppers and visitors.



Gateway Signage



Wall Mural Installation



'Pop-Up' People Space



Green Paving

FIGURE 3.12 - POTENTIAL ALLEY ENHANCEMENTS CONCEPT



EXISTING ALLEY



ENHANCED ALLEY

Signage

An attractive signage system that raises the visibility of NOTO and facilitates travel to and within the District should be implemented. Such a system should incorporate a new graphic brand for NOTO, follow one overall design theme and include the following components:

Gateway Signs:

Such signs should announce arrival into NOTO and be made of high quality materials. Where space exists, they should include landscaping and lighting. Gateway signs should be located on the edges of an expanded District at:

- North - Kansas Avenue at Morse
- South - Kansas Avenue at Norris
- West - Topeka Boulevard at Laurent, Gordon and Morse
- East - Quincy Street at Laurent, Gordon, Fairchild and Morse.

Internal Identity Signs:

Identity signs could be placed throughout the District to reinforce its image and brand. This could include simple window or wall decals, small corner markers and/or special street signs that include the NOTO logo.

Business Signs:

Few businesses in NOTO have overhanging or blade signs that identify their products and services. Such signs add interest and color to a streetscape while making it easier for motorists and pedestrians find individual businesses. Overhanging signs should be attractive and imaginative. They could incorporate designs by local artists and creative arts businesses as well as whimsical images and “icon signs” such as a toothbrush for a dentist office or coffee cup for a café.

Wayfinding Signs

Signs should be located outside the District to lead motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians to NOTO. Signs inside the District should be placed to direct visitors to the Arts Center, public parking and public spaces.

Parking Signs:

Public parking locations should be identified along with parking regulations.

Information Kiosks:

Kiosks can provide orientation and information about the District, local businesses and special events. They should be placed at key activity generators.

Nearby Land Uses:

A comprehensive signage system for NOTO should also coordinate its wayfinding signs with directions leading to Great Overland Station and the future riverfront park.

Signage types: decorative street signs (below), business blade signs (below right photos), painted window sign (middle left), decorative wall sign (middle right), kiosk (top left), directional wayfinding sign (top right)



ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN

The NOTO Arts District Master Plan envisions redevelopment that accommodates a mix of commercial, restaurant, residential, open space and parking opportunities, along with an enhanced physical environment that unifies the District and gives it a sense of place. (See “Fig. 3.13 – NOTO Arts District Master Plan”)

The Master Plan is a vision for the next 20 years and should be revisited every 5 years. The Plan includes catalytic development projects that could increase business and developer interest in NOTO. On properties not targeted for redevelopment, there are also opportunities for improvements to buildings, storefronts, parking lots and landscaping.

Development densities shown in the Master Plan reflect new buildings based on the District’s land use setting and physical potential. The site designs illustrated in the Plan show conceptual development densities, landscape/streetscape design and parking layouts. Actual uses, densities and layouts will vary as public agencies, property owners and developers generate more specific site plans in the future.

LEGEND

- POTENTIAL NOTO ARTS DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- EXISTING BUILDING
- POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT BUILDINGS
- REUSE OPPORTUNITIES
- RESIDENTIAL USE
- COMMERCIAL USE
- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- MAJOR GATEWAY OPPORTUNITY

CONCEPT NOTES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A CORNER GATEWAY B PARKING LOT & SITE ENHANCEMENTS C KANSAS AVE. STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS D LIVE / WORK INFILL DEVELOPMENT E REUSE OPPORTUNITY F NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT - 1-Story (11,500 sf) G CHURCH GARDENS H NEW PUBLIC PLAZA & EVENT SPACE - Central Ave. Realignment - Band Shell I NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT - 3-Stories, 24 units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> J NEW QUINCY STREET GREENWAY - Art opportunities K INFILL HOUSING - 2-Story, Duplexes L FIREHOUSE REUSE - Restaurant use with outdoor dining area M BUILDING ADDITION - 5,000 square feet N NEW PUBLIC PARK & PLAZA O NOTO ARTS CENTER - New sculpture garden & events space P DISTRICT ALLEY ENHANCEMENTS Q PATHWAY ENHANCEMENTS - Pocket Park - Outdoor Seating R NEW MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT - 3-Stories, 16 units - Corner retail (2,500 square feet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S ENHANCED VETERAN’S PARK T ENHANCED NOTO PARKING LOT U ENHANCED BRIDGE PARK V GATEWAY PLAZAS W NEW NOTO PARKING LOTS - 95 spaces - Land bank for future expansion X IMPROVED GREAT OVERLAND STATION CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS - New lawns and enhanced Train Park Y FUTURE OREGON TRAIL RIVERFRONT PARK - Culture / history walk - Enhanced waterfront, landscaping & trails - Boating facilities Z INFILL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
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FIGURE 3.13 – NOTO ARTS DISTRICT MASTER PLAN



Development Sites

The NOTO Master Plan identified a number of sites throughout the Arts District that have the potential for new development, redevelopment, public space or parking. Specific development recommendations for each of these sites are provided on the following pages.

FIGURE 3.14 - DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY SITES - LOOKING SOUTH FROM MORSE STREET



NOTO - North Blocks: Preferred Concepts

Southwest Corner of Morse/Quincy:

- Establish a corner gateway spaces with public art on a vacant corner.



Kansas Avenue (west side Morse to Fairchild):

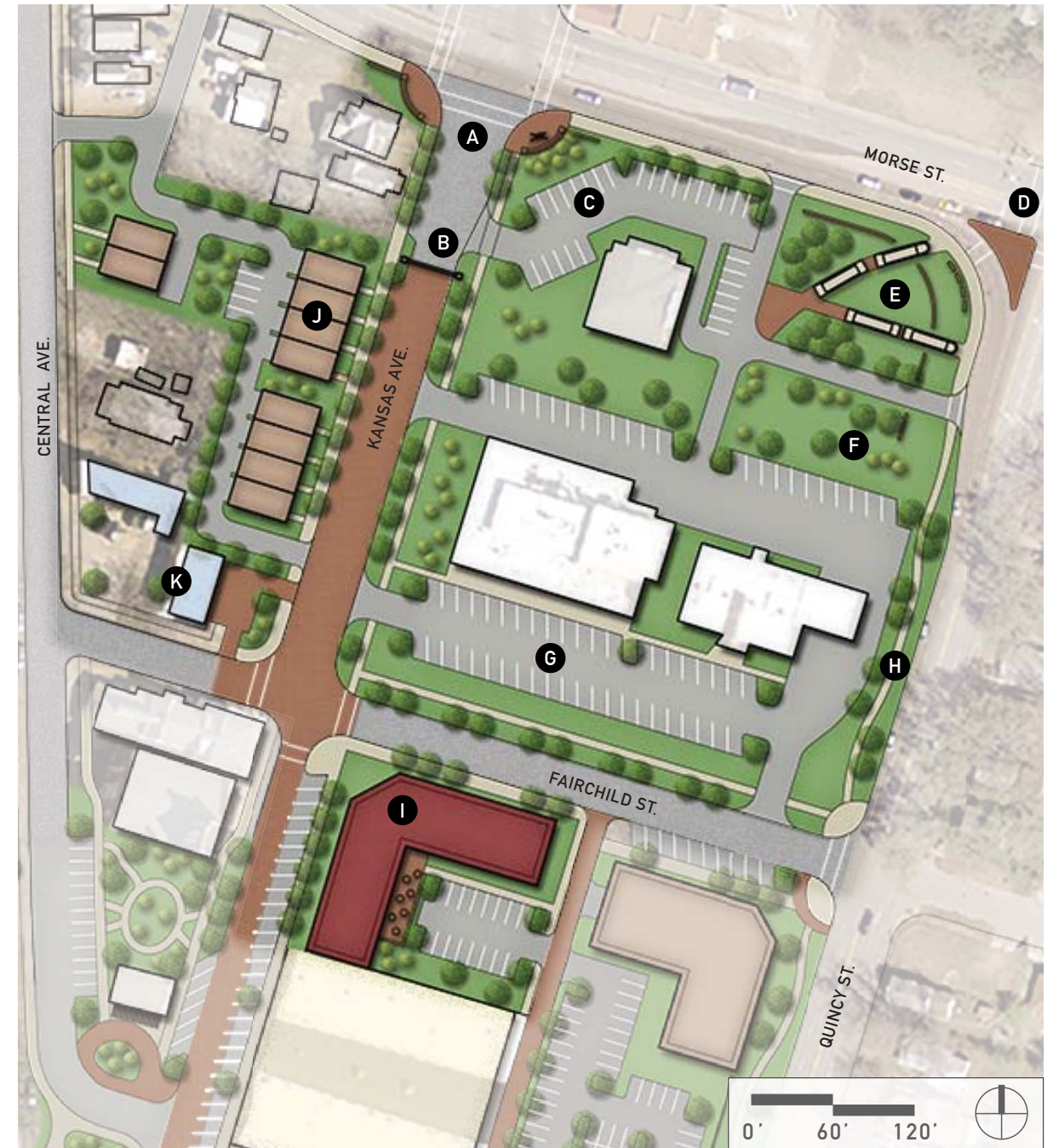
- Redevelop used car and vacant lots with small retail buildings with upper floor office space or housing, possibly as live-work space for artists and designers. New structures should be built along the sidewalk to create a Main Street “street wall”.



Southeast Corner of Kansas/Fairchild:

- Develop the underutilized corner with a single or multi-story, mixed-use building.

FIGURE 3.15 - PREFERRED CONCEPTS



CONCEPT NOTES

A NOTO NORTH GATEWAY
- New signage and branding elements

B GATEWAY ARCH

C PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS
- 32 parking spaces
- Improved landscaping

D INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT
- Safety enhancements

E CORNER GATEWAY
- Gateway and branding opportunity

F IMPROVED OPEN SPACE

G PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS
- Improved landscaping

H NEW QUINCY STREET GREENWAY
- Linear park with art installations, decorative landscaping and seating
- Bike trail to Quincy School and Garfield Park

I COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- 1-story building
- 11,500 square feet
- Outdoor patio space
- 16 parking spaces

J INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- 2 or 3-story buildings
- Ground floor commercial or studio space with residential above

K BUILDING RE-USE
- Re-use building for new commercial
- Add outdoor seating area

NOTO - North Blocks: Alternative Concepts

Southwest Corner of Morse/Quincy:

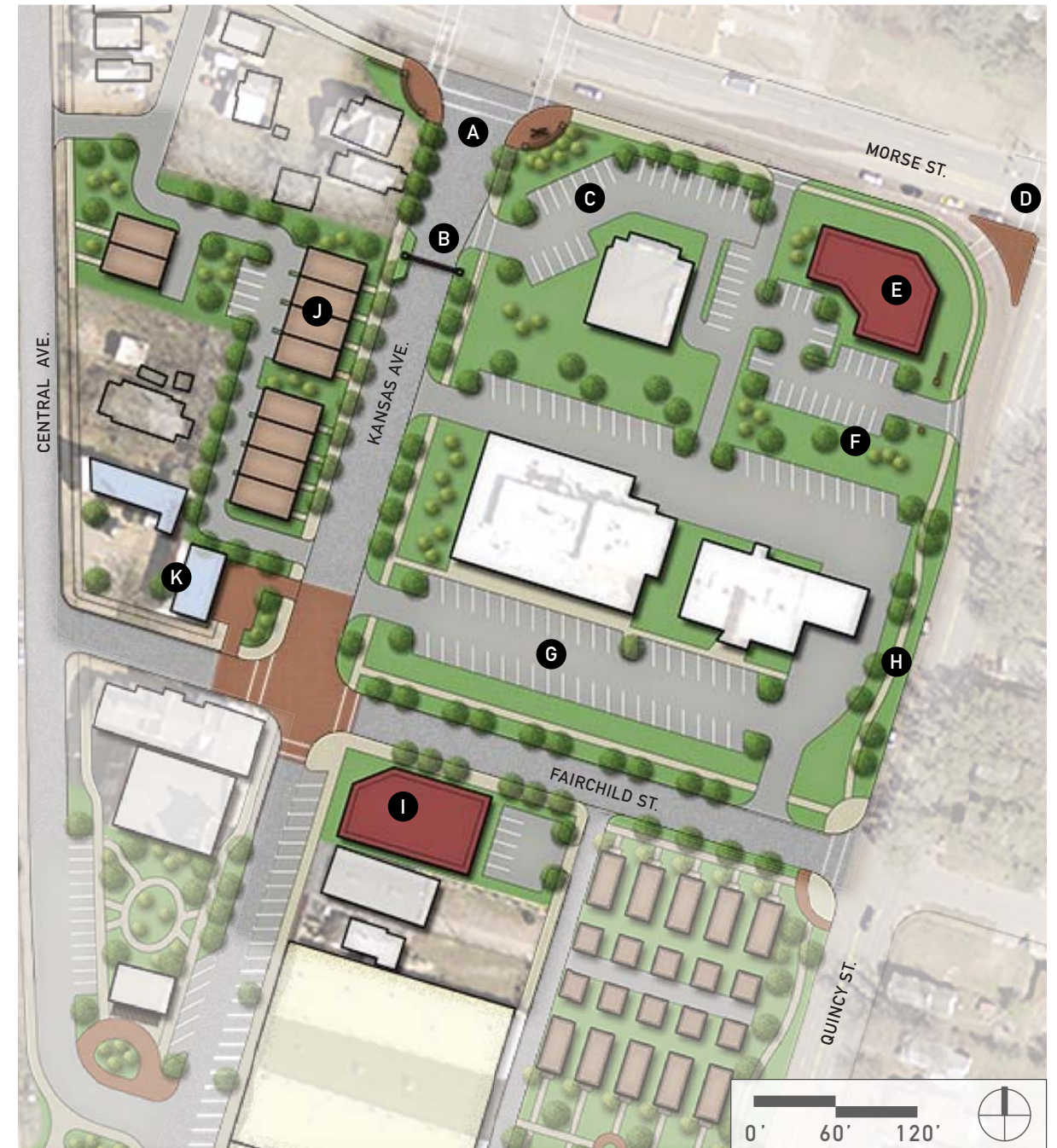
- Develop a single-story retail building.
- Establish corner gateway with public art installations.

Southeast Corner of Kansas/Fairchild:

- Develop the underutilized corner with a multi-story, mixed-use building.



FIGURE 3.16 - ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS



CONCEPT NOTES

A NEW NOTO NORTH GATEWAY
 - New signage and branding elements

B GATEWAY ARCH

C PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS
 - 32 parking spaces
 - Improved landscaping

D INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT
 - Safety enhancements

E COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
 - 1-story building
 - 6,000 square feet
 - 24 parking spaces

F IMPROVED OPEN SPACE

G PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS
 - Improved landscaping

H NEW QUINCY STREET GREENWAY
 - Linear park with art installations, decorative landscaping and seating
 - Bike trail to Quincy School and Garfield Park

I COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
 - 1 - 2 story building
 - 5,000 square feet
 - 6 parking spaces

J LIVE/WORK INFILL DEVELOPMENT
 - 2 or 3-story buildings
 - Ground floor commercial or studio space with residential above
 - 10+ units

K BUILDING RE-USE
 - Re-use building for new commercial
 - Add outdoor seating area

NOTO - Mid Blocks: Preferred Concepts

Kansas Avenue (west side Fairchild to Gordon):

- Create NOTO Central Park as new public space and potential special event location by realigning Central Avenue into Kansas Avenue and using the existing cul-de-sac.



NOTO Arts Center:

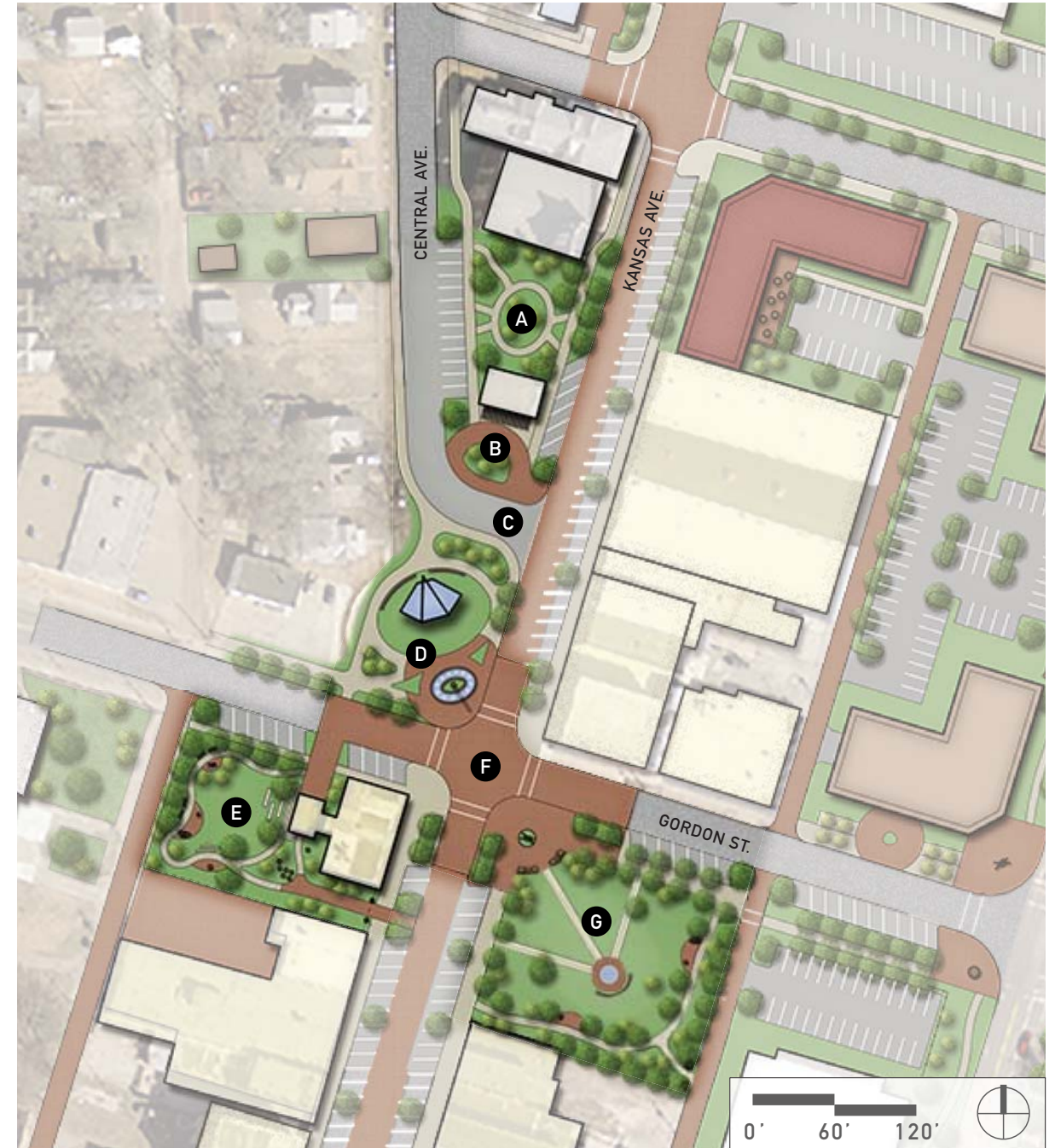
- Create NOTO Sculpture Garden as new public space and event location on former loading zone.
- Consider diagonal parking along Gordon Street.

Southeast Corner of Kansas/Gordon:

- Create NOTO Square as a new public open space and potential event location on vacant corner.
- Consider diagonal parking along Gordon Street.



FIGURE 3.17 - PREFERRED CONCEPTS



CONCEPT NOTES		
A CHURCH GARDEN	C CENTRAL AVENUE REALIGNMENT	F INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT KANSAS & GORDON
B PARKING AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS	D NOTO CENTRAL PARK	- New diagonal parking
- New parking on Central Avenue	- New public open / event space	- Additional stop sign
E NOTO SCULPTURE GARDEN	G NOTO SQUARE	- New public open / event space
- New public open / event space	- Public art and seating areas	

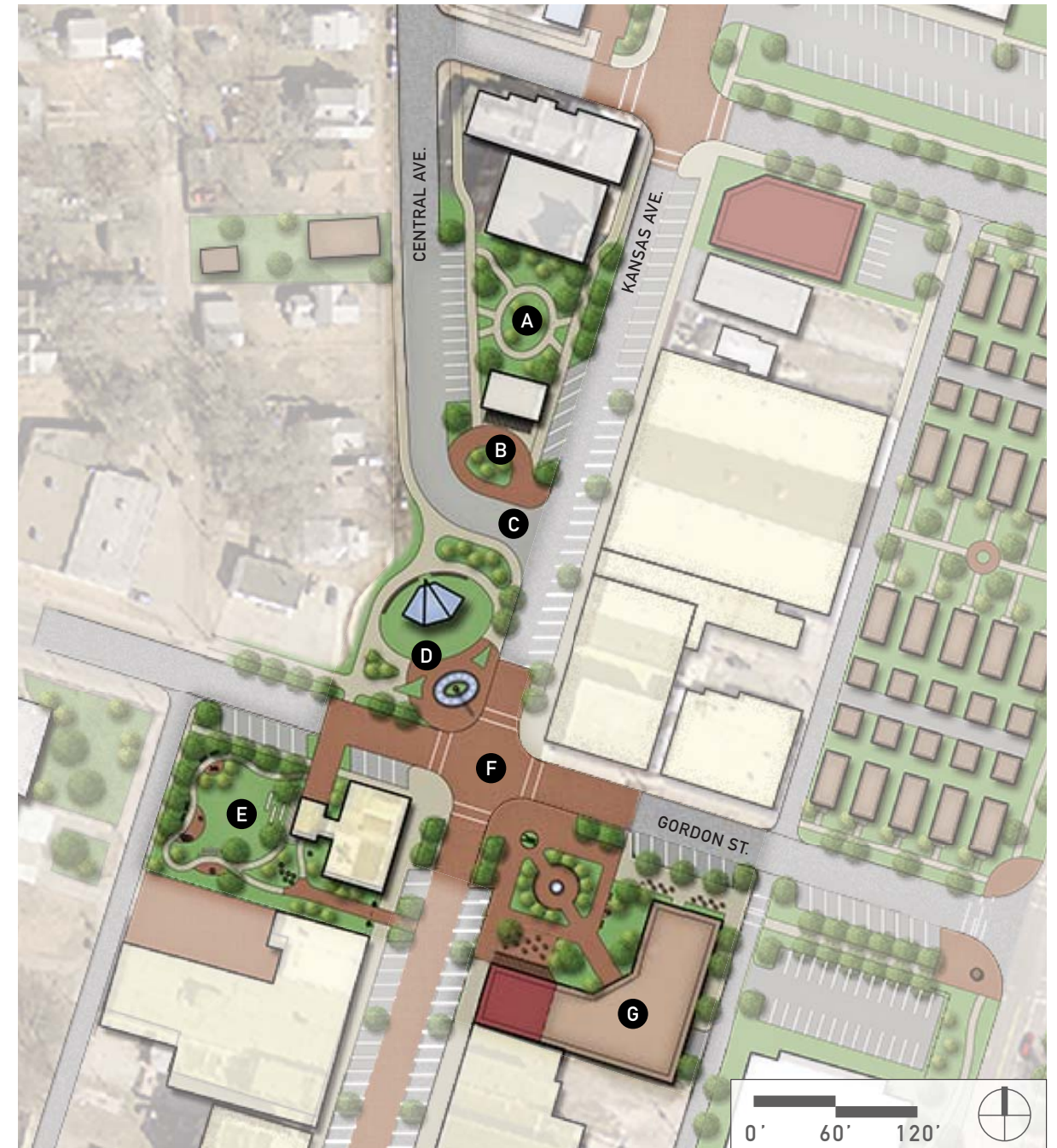
NOTO - Mid Blocks: Alternative Concepts

Southeast Corner of Kansas/Gordon:

- Mixed-use building with large corner plaza.



FIGURE 3.18 - ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS



CONCEPT NOTES		
A	CHURCH GARDEN	
B	PARKING AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS	- New parking on Central Avenue
C	CENTRAL AVENUE REALIGNMENT	
D	CENTRAL PARK	- New public open / event space
E	SCULPTURE GARDEN	- New public open / event space
F	INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT KANSAS & GORDON	- New diagonal parking - Additional stop sign
G	MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT	- 4-story building - Ground floor retail space - Upper story residential use - Corner plaza with focal element - Outdoor dining patio

NOTO - Quincy Blocks: Preferred Concepts

Quincy Street (west side Fairchild to Gordon):

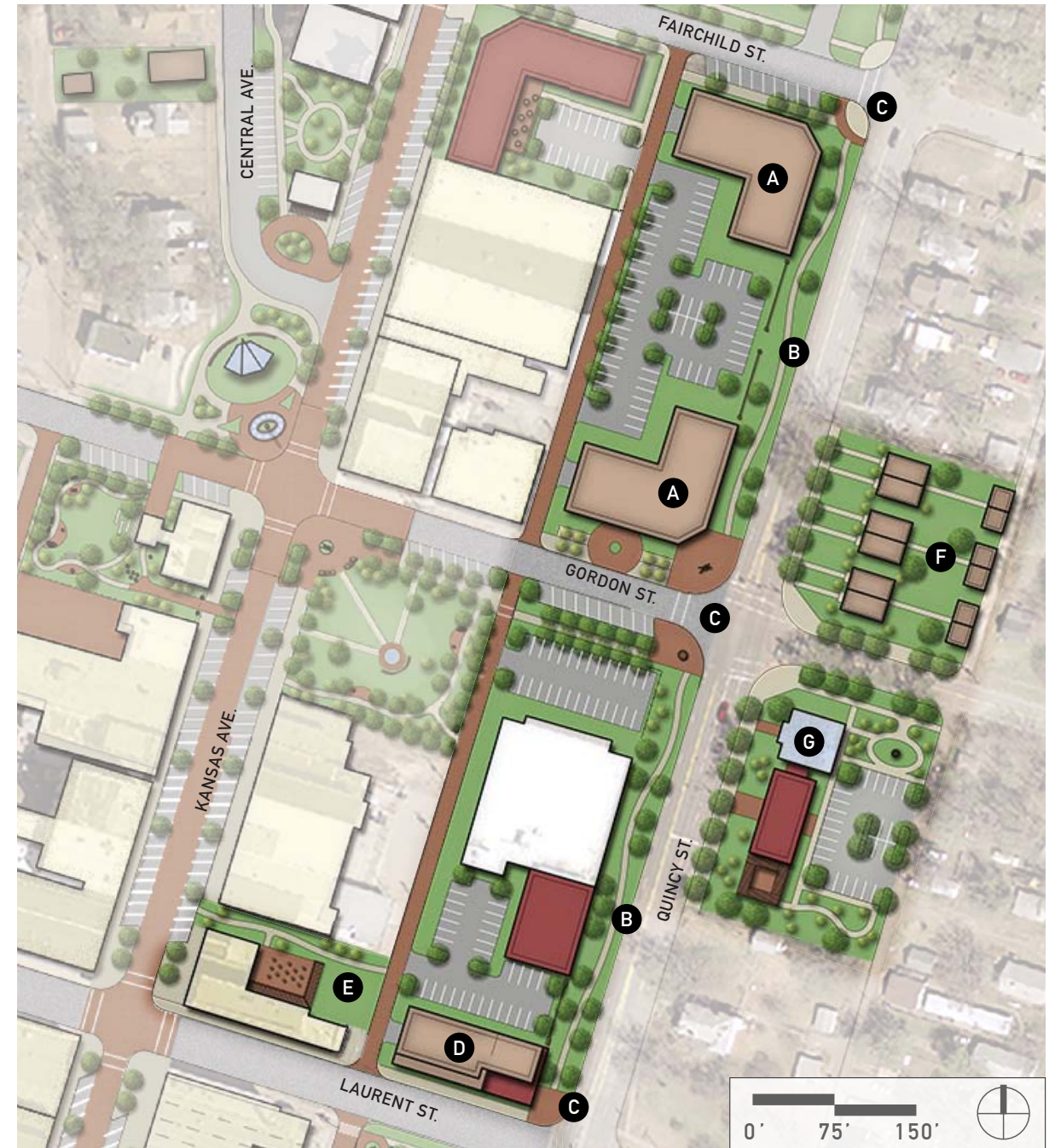
- Develop apartments or condos on large vacant block to add activity to NOTO.

Fire Station Corners at Quincy/Gordon:

- If Fire Station is ever decommissioned, reuse historic building as restaurant or commercial use such as a bike shop. Add outdoor cafes and gardens.
- On northeast corner, develop homes in scale and character with adjacent North Topeka neighborhood.



FIGURE 3.19 - PREFERRED CONCEPTS



CONCEPT NOTES		
A	APARTMENT / CONDO DEVELOPMENT	
	- 3-story buildings	
	- 12 units/floor (800 sf)	
	- 36 in each building	
B	NEW QUINCY STREET GREENWAY	
	- Linear park with public art, landscaping and seating	
	- Bike / pedestrian trail to Quincy School and Garfield Park	
C	DISTRICT GATEWAYS	
D	COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT	
	- 1 or 2 stories	
	- 5,000 square feet	
	- Restaurant opportunity with outdoor dining patio	
E	SITE ENHANCEMENTS	
	- Pedestrian path	
	- Outdoor cafe	
F	INFILL HOUSING	
	- 2-story duplexes	
	- 1,500 square feet	
	- 6 total units	
	- 2 garage spaces per unit	
G	EXISTING FIREHOUSE REUSE	
	- Reuse of existing firehouse	
	- Restaurant (2,500 sq. ft.)	
	- Addition (3,200 sq. ft.)	
	- 27 parking spaces	
	- Green space	
	- Outdoor dining patio	

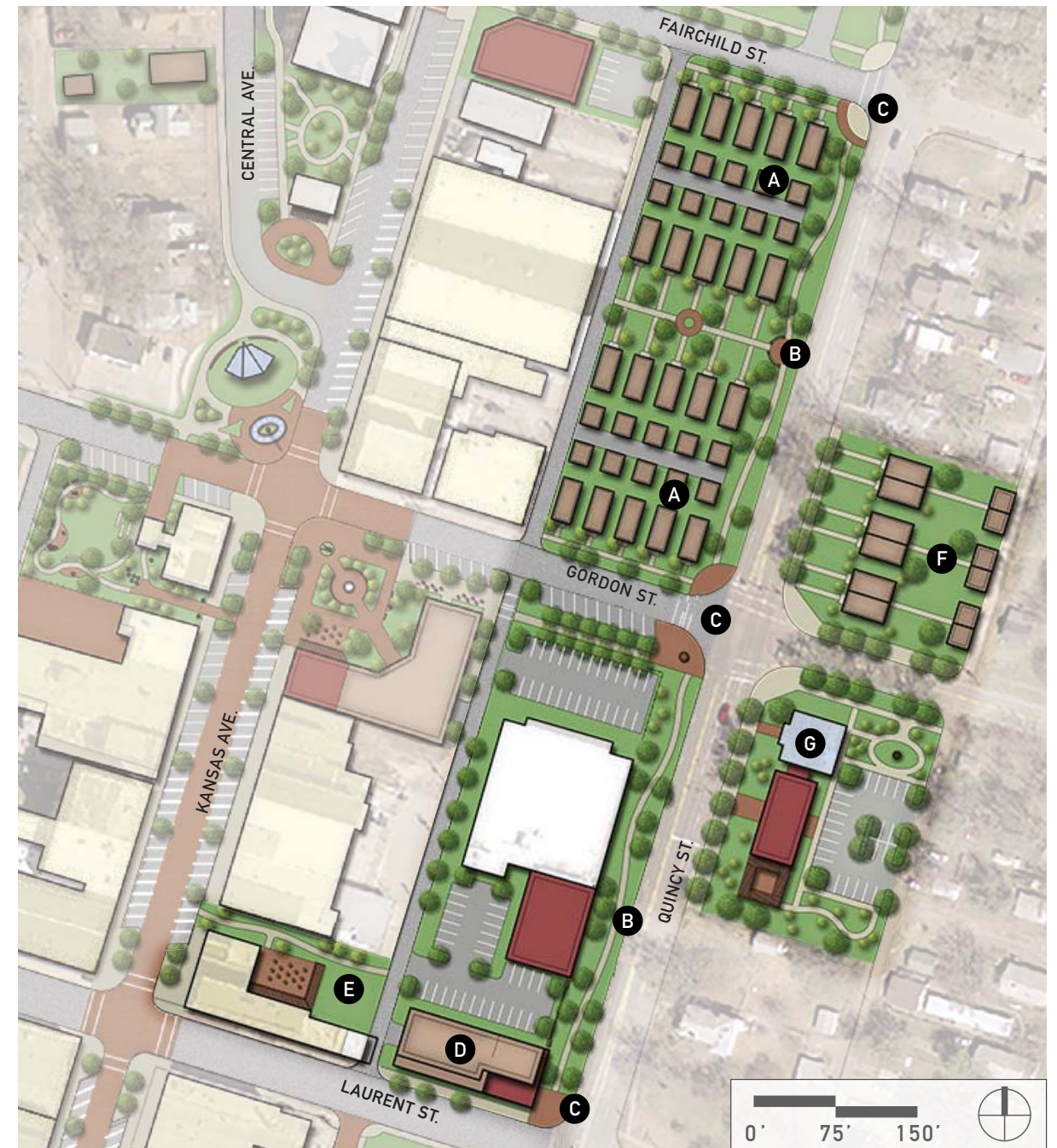
NOTO - Quincy Blocks: Alternative Concepts

Quincy Street (west side Fairchild to Gordon):

- Consider development of a cluster of “tiny houses” or small cottages.



FIGURE 3.20 - ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT 1



CONCEPT NOTES

A COTTAGE COURT / “TINY HOUSE” DEVELOPMENT

- 2-story single-family units
- 1,440 square feet
- 20 units total
- 1 garage space per unit
- Common green space

B NEW QUINCY STREET GREENWAY

- Linear park with public art, landscaping and seating
- Bike / pedestrian trail to Quincy School and Garfield Park

C DISTRICT GATEWAYS

D COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1 or 2 stories
- 5,000 square feet
- Restaurant opportunity with outdoor dining patio

E SITE ENHANCEMENTS

- Pedestrian path
- Outdoor cafe

F INFILL HOUSING

- 2-story duplexes
- 1,500 square feet
- 6 total units
- 2 garage spaces per unit

G EXISTING FIREHOUSE REUSE

- Reuse of existing firehouse
- Restaurant (2,500 sq. ft.)
- Addition (3,200 sq. ft.)
- 27 parking spaces
- Green space
- Outdoor dining patio

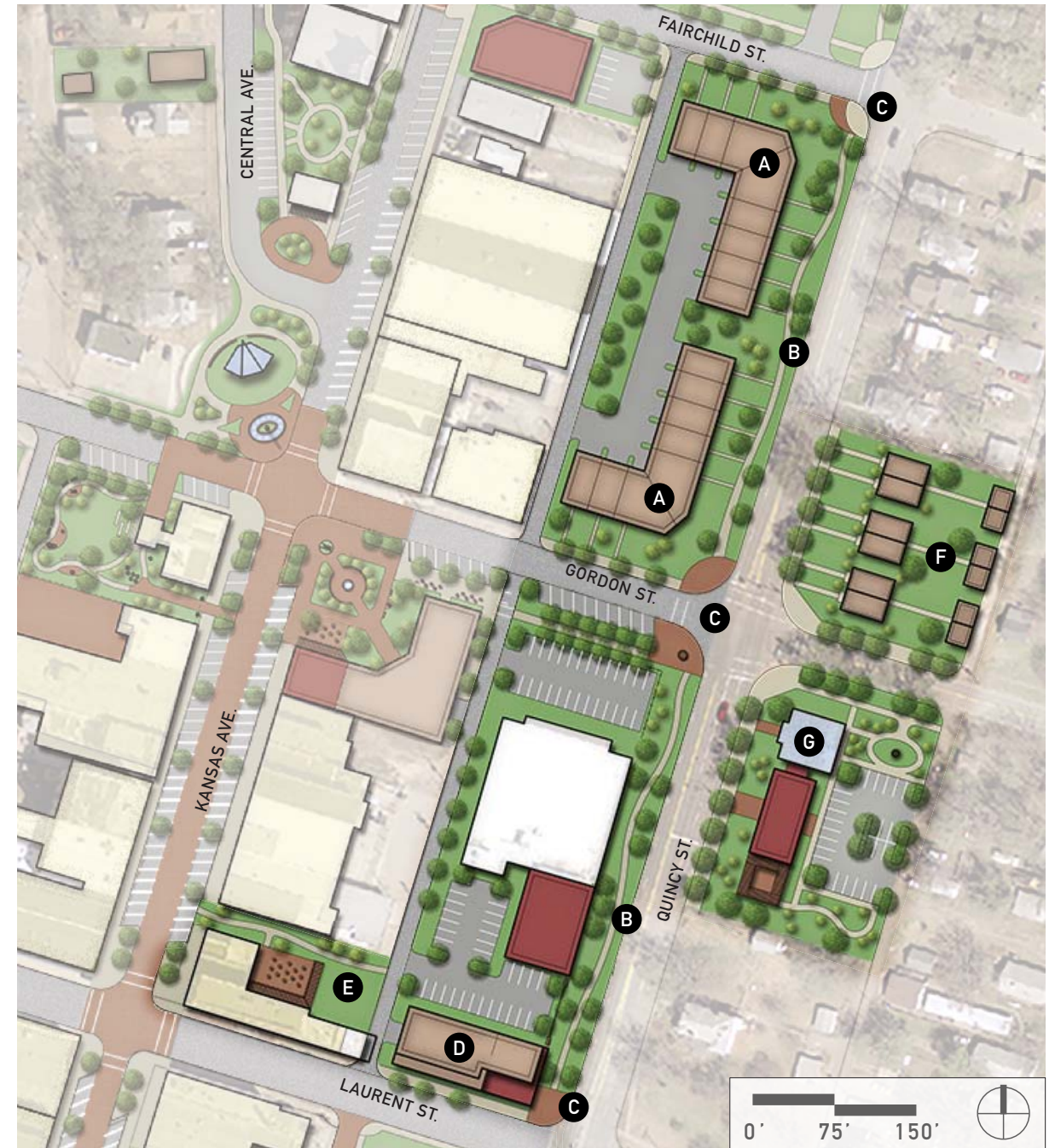
NOTO - Quincy Blocks: Alternative Concepts

Quincy Street (west side Fairchild to Gordon):

- Consider development of townhomes on Quincy Street.



FIGURE 3.21 - ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT 2



CONCEPT NOTES		
<p>A TOWNHOME DEVELOPMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 to 3 story units - 1,500 to 3,000 square feet - 16 units - 2 garage spaces per unit 	<p>C DISTRICT GATEWAYS</p>	<p>F INFILL HOUSING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2-story duplexes - 1,500 square feet - 6 total units - 2 garage spaces per unit
<p>B NEW QUINCY STREET GREENWAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linear park with public art, landscaping and seating - Bike / pedestrian trail to Quincy School and Garfield Park 	<p>D COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 or 2 stories - 5,000 square feet - Restaurant opportunity with outdoor dining patio 	<p>G EXISTING FIREHOUSE REUSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reuse of existing firehouse - Restaurant (2,500 sq. ft.) - Addition (3,200 sq. ft.) - 27 parking spaces - Green space - Outdoor dining patio
	<p>E SITE ENHANCEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pedestrian path - Outdoor cafe 	

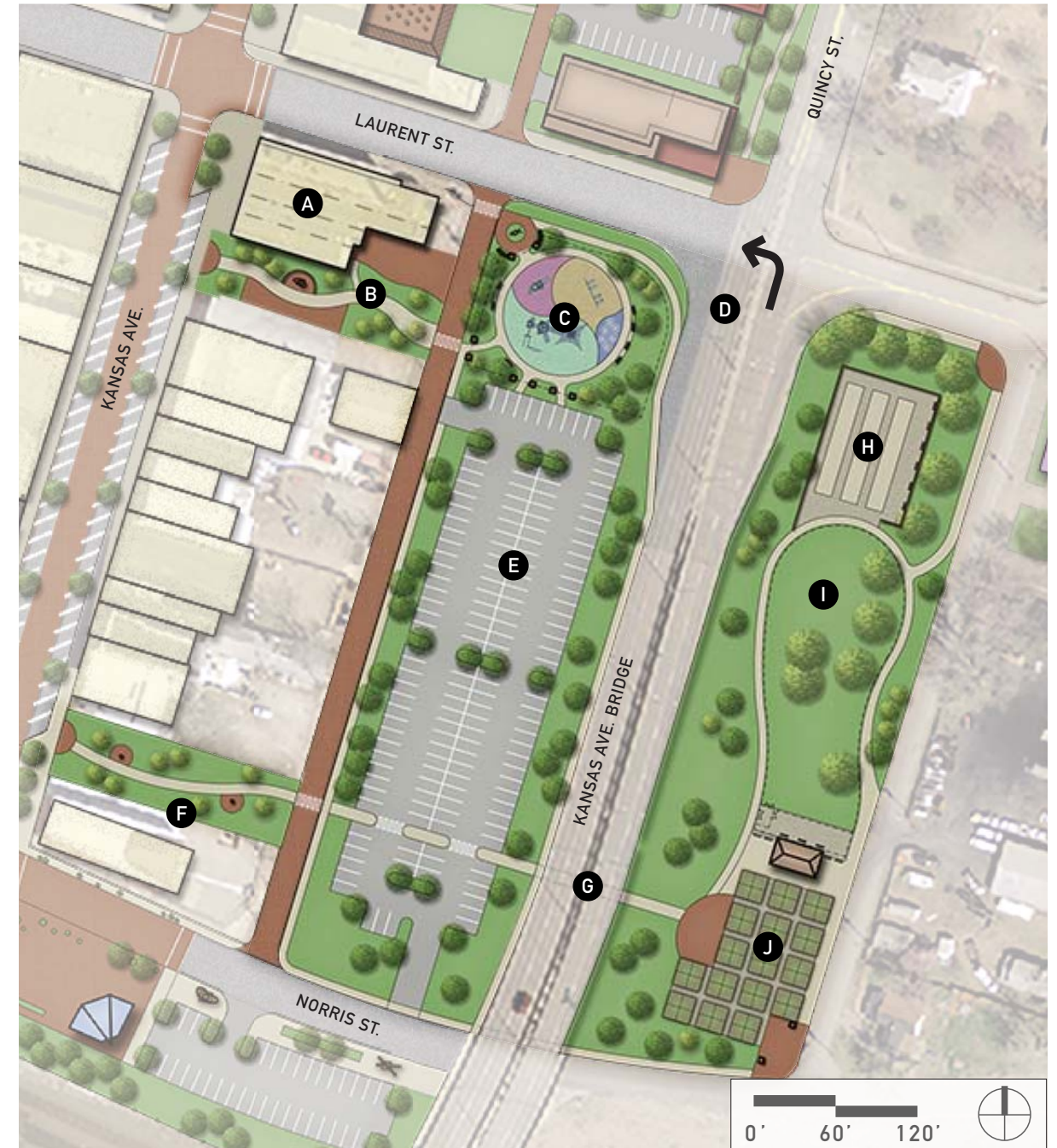
NOTO - Veterans Park / Pedestrian Path / Parking Lot: Preferred Concepts

Veterans Park/Path/Parking Lot:

- Improved park spaces on underutilized Veterans Park and unlandscaped pedestrian path leading to Kansas Avenue.
- Expand NOTO parking lot to the south and add driveway to Norris Street.
- Further explore potential for left-turn from Kansas Avenue Bridge onto Laurent Street.



FIGURE 3.22 - PREFERRED CONCEPTS



CONCEPT NOTES

A EXISTING BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

- Back of building improvements
- Outdoor cafes
- Wall murals / public art

B ENHANCED PEDESTRIAN PATH

- Pocket park, seating, wall art and lighting

C ENHANCED VETERAN'S PARK

- Playground & gathering space
- Water feature
- Public art
- Decorative fencing
- NOTO gateway

D POTENTIAL LEFT-TURN

E PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS

- 153 Parking spaces
- Improved landscaping

F SITE ENHANCEMENTS

- Pedestrian path
- Outdoor cafe

G ENHANCED BRIDGE VIADUCT

- Special lighting
- Pathways
- Public art

H BOCCIE BALL COURTS

I DOG PARK

- Fenced play area

J COMMUNITY GARDENS

NOTO - Norris Street Blocks: Preferred Concepts

Norris Street (south side Jackson to Bridge):

- Build new parking lots along Norris Street on vacant lumber yard site to provide parking for shoppers, employees and special events patrons. Improve block west of Jackson with open lawn as a “land bank” if needed for future parking.
- Establish taxi and bus stops on Norris Street along with a preferred parking zone for food trucks during events.
- Create a Norris Street Sculpture Garden along the sidewalk.
- Create large corner plazas at Kansas Avenue to provide gateways to NOTO and the Riverfront as well as potential special event spaces.
- Redevelop the vacant properties along the tracks west of Jackson. Consider adaptive reuse of former industrial buildings for studios, brewpubs and restaurants.



Corner Plaza and Rail Crossing



Plaza with Public Art

CONCEPT NOTES

A ADAPTIVE USE

B LAND BANKED PARKING
- 102 Spaces

C DISTRICT PARKING LOTS
- 95 Spaces

D RAILROAD LANDSCAPE BUFFER

E CORNER GATEWAY PLAZAS
- New public open / event spaces

F SCULPTURE WALKS / STREETSCAPING
- Public art
- Landscaping
- Bus / taxi stops
- Food truck staging areas

FIGURE 3.23 – POTENTIAL BUILDING REUSE CONCEPT

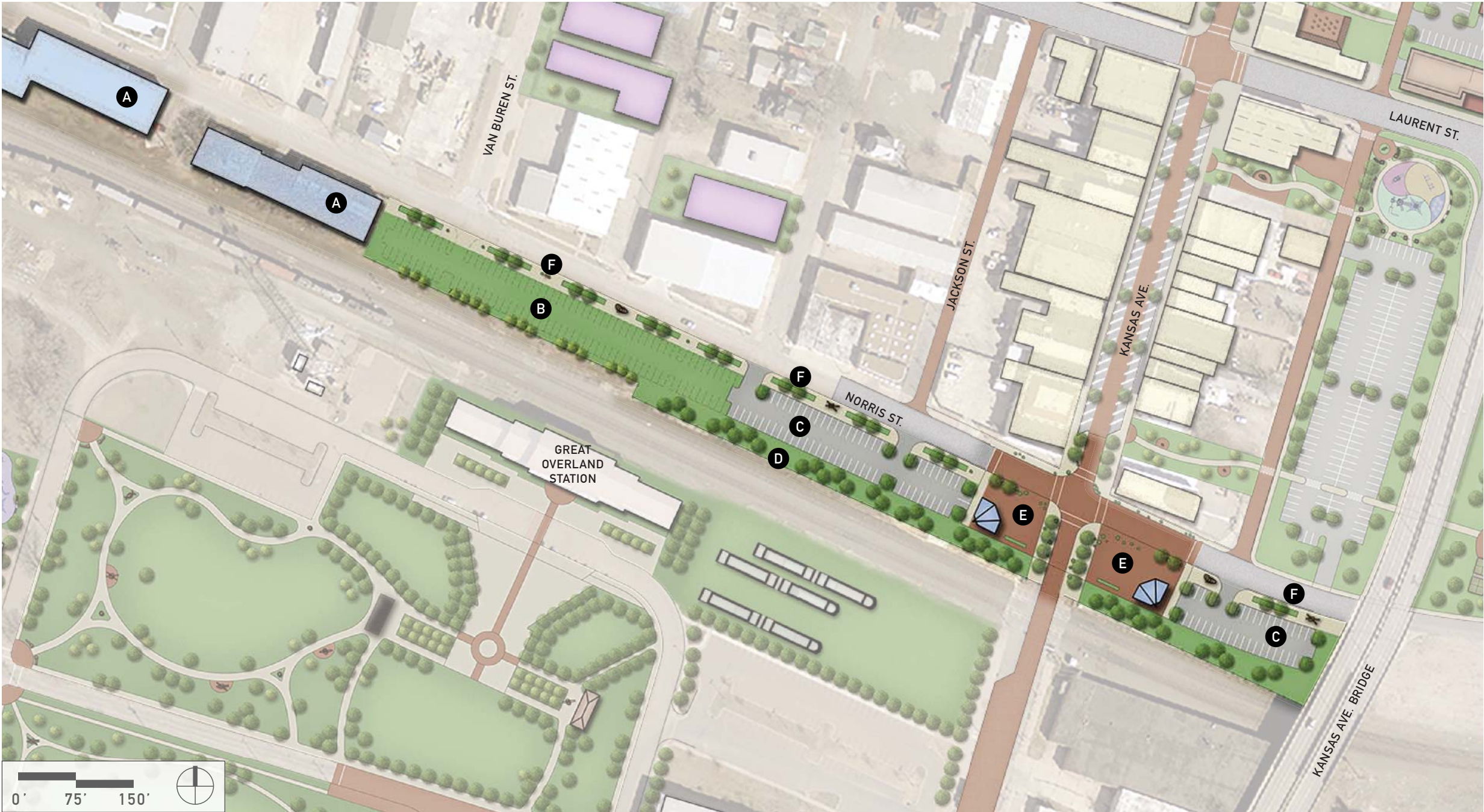


EXISTING WAREHOUSE



POTENTIAL WAREHOUSE RE-USE

FIGURE 3.24 - PREFERRED CONCEPT



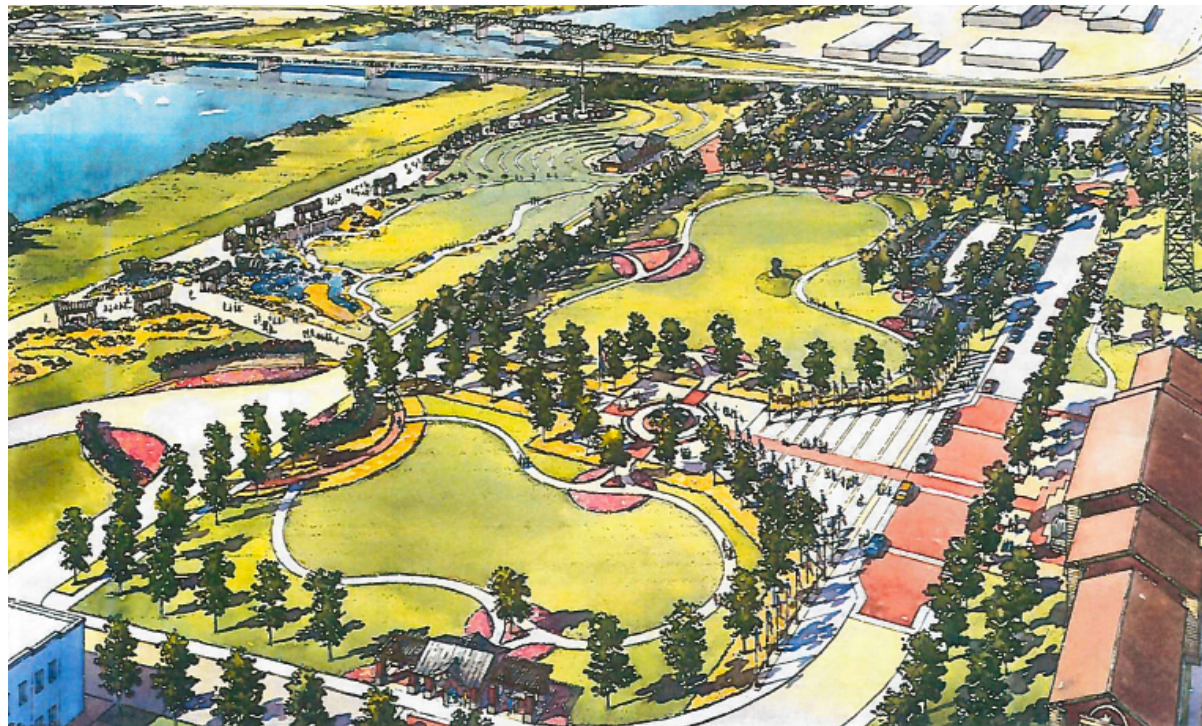
Riverfront - Initial Concepts:

Riverfront:

- Continue acquisition of obsolete properties south of NOTO, improvement of the Great Overland Station and Topeka Rescue Mission campuses and future development of the Oregon Trail Riverfront Park.
- Establish streetscape, gateway, parking, event management, and marketing linkages between the Riverfront and NOTO.

<u>CONCEPT NOTES</u>		
A RAILROAD PARK	D GREAT LAWN AREA	G RIVER WALK
- Entrance features & landscaping	- Formal open space for recreation activities and events	- Cultural trail
B OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER	E NEW PLAYGROUND	- Wayfinding elements and trail amenities
C IMPROVED CURTIS STREET CROSSING	F GREEN SPACE	H SCENIC OVERLOOKS
- Pedestrian safety improvements	- Large open areas with restored native landscape	I RIVER ACCESS
		- Boat house
		- Boat launch
		J BOAT DOCKS / SLIPS
		K PEDESTRIAN BOARDWALK

FIGURE 3.25 - CHARRETTE VISION FOR GREAT OVERLAND STATION PARK



Concept Illustration by Bucher, Willis & Ratliff



Riverfront Park and Trails

FIGURE 3.26 - PREFERRED CONCEPT



Infill Housing

Neighborhood Infill (Artists Housing Zone):

- Create “model” housing developments to “infill” vacant lots west of Kansas Avenue and south of Morse. Such housing should include homes and townhomes that fit the small town Kansas character of North Topeka.



Single Family Infill Housing



Single Family Infill Housing



Single Family Infill Housing



Single Family Infill Housing on Small Lots



Duplex Infill Housing



Duplex Infill Housing with Live-Work Units



Rowhomes



Mixed-Use



Infill Housing

Facade Improvements

In recent years small-scale building rehabilitation projects have taken place in the NOTO District. When working with business and property owners on future rehabilitation projects, especially of the Façade Improvement Program is implemented, the following building design issues should be a focus of rehabilitation efforts:

Storefronts:

Good design in commercial districts starts with good storefronts, which is the portion of the traditional building with the main entrance to the interior commercial space facing the sidewalk and wide expanses of glass meant to display goods and merchandise. Traditional storefronts typically have four components: bulkheads or kneewalls that support the storefront window glazing, the storefront display windows, cast iron columns that frame the storefront and entrance, and the transom windows above that are designed to filter light into the interior storefront. Above the transom window band is the storefront lintel that supports the second story. Several NOTO property and business owners have rehabilitated their storefronts to their approximate four-part configuration. In other instances, storefronts have been enclosed or covered over with alternative materials. These properties are potential candidates for future rehabilitation. Returning the storefront to its approximate historic appearance would help make it serviceable again for retail stores, galleries and restaurants. It would also allow shoppers and pedestrians to see inside the stores and the merchandise and services being sold.

The NOTO Design Committee should work closely with property and business owners on determining an appropriate course of action regarding storefront rehabilitation, preferably with assistance from a qualified preservation architect and

contractor. Storefronts that have been significantly modified or altered will require investigation to determine what elements of the original storefront remain and if they can be rehabbed and re-used. Original elements such as transoms, storefront framing and bulkheads, should be retained. In other cases, especially if the storefront has been bricked-in, a complete storefront rehabilitation may not be feasible. Replacement materials should match or be approximate to the materials used in storefronts of the particular time period in which the building was built. For example, late Victorian commercial buildings often featured storefronts with cast iron columns and wood bulkheads. In the commercial buildings built during the early part of the 20th century, copper and aluminum storefront framing was often employed instead of wood.

Care should also be taken to preserve and maintain storefront features in Mid-Century Modern buildings, including their slanted entrances, terrazzo floor tiling and projecting canopies. Several NOTO buildings were modified with Mid-Century storefront elements, which are now considered historic building materials. Anodized aluminum and tinted glass should be avoided as replacement materials since they are not compatible to traditional storefronts.

Examples of intact historic storefronts (top images), storefront display window (middle left), recent NOTO storefront rehabilitation using aluminum framing (middle right), Luxfer transom glass in existing NOTO commercial building (bottom left), NOTO building with Mid-Century slanted storefront - candidate for rehabilitation (bottom right).



Upper Facades:

The majority of commercial buildings in NOTO are two to three stories in height with the building portion above the storefront level considered the building’s upper façade. These upper facades were constructed mostly in brick or stone masonry with window openings to upper-story office and living spaces, many ornamented with decorative window hoods and surrounds. The brick facades of several NOTO commercial buildings feature stone banding, brick corbeling and high-style bracketed cornices. Buildings constructed after 1900 feature less window ornamentation, plainer facades and simpler cornices. Cornices, window hoods and surrounds should be preserved as their removal would significantly detract from the building’s historic appearance. Brick and stone masonry should be cleaned and repointed matching the original mortar’s color and bonding strength. Replacement brick and stone should also match the original masonry as closely as possible. A good masonry repointing effort will ensure the building will stand another 80 to 100 years.

Windows:

Many NOTO historic commercial buildings have retained their original upper-story windows. These should be preserved and maintained whenever possible. To promote energy-efficiency, caulking and weatherstripping the existing windows, as well as installing storm windows, are often the most cost-effective solutions to maintaining the original windows rather than replacing them. Windows exhibiting some level of deterioration with missing panes and decay in the window muntins and rails can still be reasonably repaired. However, original windows with extensive deterioration, including missing and deteriorating sashes, muntins, rails, jambs and hardware may be replaced with wood and aluminum-clad windows with the same pane configuration as the original. Replacements should also duplicate the frame width, depth and other decorative details of the original windows.

Boarded-up windows should be re-opened with window replacements that fill the window opening and duplicate the original window’s configuration, and glazing pattern.

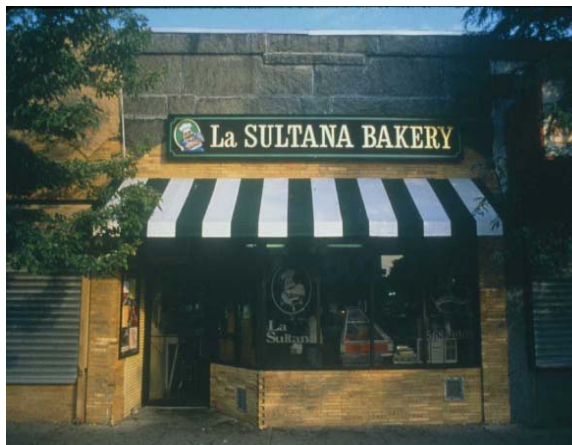
Building Envelope:

Several buildings along Kansas Street have significant building envelope issues, including deteriorating walls and missing roofs and windows. While some property owners are currently addressing their building envelop issues, others are not and immediate action is required in some instances to maintain a building’s structural and architectural integrity. These issues should receive priority attention by the NOTO in terms of working with property and business owners to find appropriate courses of action for building stabilization. Building envelop needs could be eligible expenses under a Façade Improvement Grant or Loan Program.

Awnings:

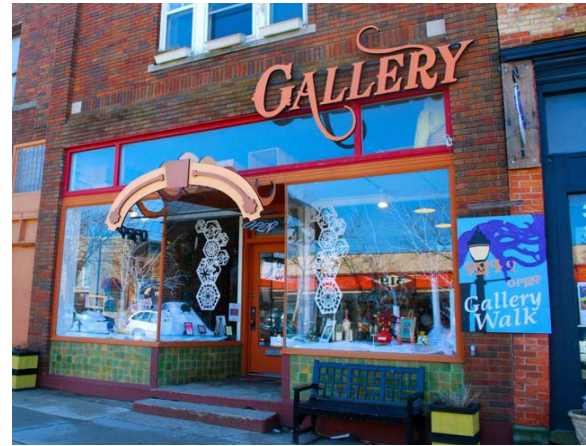
Signage and awnings are important design features that add color and visual interest to a historic commercial building. Historically, awnings were added to help regulate the temperature inside the storefront and protect merchandise from sunlight exposure rather than for decorative purposes. Awnings should reinforce and be compatible with the storefront’s overall design, as well as fit snugly within the storefront window or door openings. Awnings can be fixed or retractable and are generally sloped away from the building. Backlit and plastic awnings should be discouraged.

Rehabilitated upper facades (top images), NOTO buildings with significant repointing and stabilization issues (middle left and right), examples of traditional and contemporary awnings (bottom).



Signage:

Signage for historic commercial buildings can come in several forms, including signs mounted to walls or fascia boards, projecting and blade signage, signs suspended from canopies, awning signs, and window lettered signs. Regardless of the form, signage should be high quality, expressive of a business' brand image, and designed and manufactured with high quality materials. Consideration should be given to revising Topeka's sign ordinance to allow for projecting blade signage mounted perpendicular to a building's storefront. This type of signage allows for a wide range of creativity for expressing a business' brand image and fosters an interesting frontage character. Neon signage can also be considered as long as it complements the storefront design and the building's overall architectural style. Signage, should not obscure storefront and architectural features.



Ghost Signs:

A number of NOTO commercial buildings have remnants or "ghosts" of historic painted signs on exterior walls; in some cases they have been repainted. Such signs tell the story of the businesses that once occupied the building. Experienced sign painters should be used to repaint ghost signs to ensure the sign's historic character remains intact.



FIGURE 3.27 - BUILDING REHABILITATION EXAMPLE WITH POCKET PARK



Contemporary business signage (left, top photo), ghost signage (left, middle photo), wall mural (left, bottom photo)

4. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

The Arts District Master Plan sets a vision for how NOTO can be changed into a thriving, mixed-use commercial district. To achieve the Master Plan's recommendations, a proactive, commitment by the Arts District Association, City of Topeka, Shawnee County and NOTO property and business owners will be needed.

First Steps

Setting clear priorities based on organizational capacities and financial resources will be critical to building momentum for short-term impact and long-term change. The following first steps need to be taken to establish a strong organizational base for implementation of the Master Plan:

- Reorganize NOTO Arts District Association into a Main Street Organization (See Section 5: Management Strategy). (Association)
- For each initiative/project define action steps in committee work plans. (Association)
- For each initiative/project establish teams that report to a committee (i.e. District Expansion, Streetscape, Signage and Public Space Teams). (Association)
- Formally adopt NOTO Arts District Master Plan as the guiding document for District revitalization. (Association and City)
- Establish on-going communications with affiliated organizations. Designate NOTO board and/or committee members as liaisons. (Association)
- Become involved with planning of the Oregon Trail Riverfront Park, with emphasis on sidewalk/streetscape/trail links, parking needs, event coordination and joint marketing opportunities. Designate NOTO board member as liaison. (Association)

The County, City and Association should then explore the following potential sources of funding:

- Regional capital improvement funds for public space, streetscape, street and alley improvements.
- Regional economic development funds for District physical improvements, building rehabilitation, business assistance and NOTO management involving grants, loans and/or revolving loan pools.
- Regional tourism funds for District signage and physical improvements.
- Kansas Historic Preservation Trust Fund grants for preparation of National Register of Historic Places application for NOTO and design assistance.
- Kansas Heritage Trust Fund grants and National and state historic district tax credits for building stabilization and rehabilitation (if NOTO is listed on National Register of Historic Places and Kansas Register of Historic Places).
- Shared resources for area/district maintenance involving NOTO, Great Overland Station and Topeka Rescue Mission.
- Federal, state and local grants.
- Private sector and foundation fund raising (ie. corporate sponsorships for public spaces, event locations and special lighting projects).

Priority Initiatives/Projects (1 to 5 years)

The initiatives and projects presented in the NOTO Master Plan are considered important to the future of the Arts District. The following were identified during the planning process as priorities:

Neighborhood Revitalization:

- Help facilitate neighborhood clean-up and sidewalk repairs as well as housing demolition, rehabilitation and development in North Topeka. (NOTO Association, North Topeka Neighborhood Association and City)
- *Artists Housing Zone.* Explore potential for "model" housing developments on vacant lots south of Morse west of Kansas Avenue. This project will require outreach to developers and builders. (City, property owners and possibly housing agencies and Topeka Home Builders Association)

District Boundaries:

- Meet with property/business owners north and east of NOTO to discuss District expansion. (Association)
- Formally expand NOTO boundaries along Kansas Avenue north to Morse and east to Quincy. (Association)

Historic Preservation:

- Meet with NOTO property owners to further discuss the benefits of a historic district and to review the process for creating one. (Association and City)
- Prepare a National Register of Historic Places application for designation of Kansas Avenue from Norris to Morse as a Historic District (See additional information later in Section 4). (City and historic preservation consultant)

Existing Buildings:

- Review options for stabilizing key NOTO buildings and establishing a building improvement program (See additional information later in Section 4). (City, property owners and architect experienced with historic structures/Topeka building codes)
- Work with the City to establish a Facade Improvement Program (NOTO Association, North Topeka Neighborhood Association and City)
- Review options for encouraging NOTO businesses to add attractive overhanging/blade signs on building facades along Kansas Avenue. (Association, City and property/business owners)

Public Space:

- *Veterans Park - Pedestrian Path - NOTO Parking Lot.* Plan and improve these public spaces as one overall project; including a public restroom. This project will require schematic design and cost estimates. (County, City and landscape architect/ civil engineer)
- *NOTO Sculpture Garden.* Convert Arts Center backyard into a special public space. This project will require schematic design/cost estimates. (Association and landscape architect/ civil engineer).
- *NOTO Square.* Create new open space on southeast corner of Kansas/Gordon on full site or as part of a mixed-use development. This project will require schematic design/cost estimates, and possibly outreach to developers/builders. (County, City, Association, property owner and landscape architect/civil engineer).
- *Central Park.* Change large Central Avenue cul-de-sac into new park/event space. (County, City and landscape architect/civil engineer).

Streetscape:

- *Street Lights/Trees/Plantings/Furniture.* Improve overall streetscape character of Kansas Avenue between Norris and Morse Streets. This project will require schematic design/cost estimates. (City and landscape architect/civil engineer).
- *Special Lighting.* Further study the potential for enhancing the nearby grain silos as a NOTO gateway feature with painting, lighting and/or signage. This project will require design studies. (City, property owner and architect/graphic designer/lighting consultant)

Streets:

- Further study the potential for adding stop signs at the Kansas/Gordon intersection. (City)
- Further study the potential for allowing left turns into NOTO at the Quincy/Laurent intersection. (City)
- Further study the potential for adding diagonal parking along Gordon Street between Quincy and Jackson. (City)

Signage:

- Establish comprehensive District signage system. This project will require graphic design (logo/color/content), schematic design for fabrication/installation and a plan that shows locations of each sign. (Association, City and landscape architect/graphic designer)

Alleys:

- Repair deteriorated paving in alleys flanking Kansas Avenue. (City)
- Further study the potential of enhancing alleys as “green corridors” with painting, lighting, landscaping, paving and signage. This project will require design studies. (Association, City, property/business owners and landscape architect/civil engineer/architect)

Public Art:

- Create a public art program to introduce permanent and temporary public art throughout NOTO public spaces, streetscape and alleys. Also consider “pop-up” or temporary art in vacant storefronts. (Association and Washburn University)

New Development:

- *Quincy Street (west side between Fairchild and Gordon).* Develop new housing on large vacant block. This will require outreach to developers and builders. (City and property owner)

Later Steps

As the NOTO Arts District Association builds capacity within its new organizational structure the following initiatives/projects should be considered. These recommendations were seen as important to the future of NOTO, but considered as later phase actions.

Neighborhood Revitalization:

- Consider rezoning commercial blocks along Kansas Avenue north of Morse for new housing development. (City)

District Boundaries:

- Meet with property/business owners located in the commercial/industrial blocks east and west of NOTO to discuss District expansion. (Association)
- Formally expand NOTO boundaries east to rail tracks south of Laurent and west to Topeka Boulevard south of Morse. (Association)
- Incorporate “Creative Arts and Technology Area” into the NOTO Arts District brand and marketing as well as Topeka economic development initiatives. (Association and City)

Public Space/Streetscape:

- *Norris Street Parking Lots/Sculpture Walk/Corner Plazas.* Construct parking lots, sculpture walk and corner plazas/event locations. (Association, City and Great Overland Station)

- *Food Trucks.* Establish preferred parking zone for food trucks during events along Norris Street (after parking lots/sidewalks constructed). (Association and City)
- *Bridge/Veterans Park East.* Change the park east of Veterans Park into a more usable public space. (County and landscape architect/civil engineer)
- *Quincy Street Greenway/Bike Trail.* Establish greenway and trail along Quincy. (County, City and landscape architect)
- *Church Gardens.* Work with local churches to improve open spaces. (Association and churches)
- *Special Lighting.* Further study the potential for lighting along and under the Kansas Avenue Bridge as a NOTO and riverfront feature. (City and lighting consultant)

New Development:

- *Norris Street west of Jackson.* Further explore the potential for adaptive reuse of buildings along the rail tracks. (Association, City, property owners and builders)
- *Kansas Avenue (west side between Morse and Fairchild).* Develop mixed-use buildings on used car/vacant lots. This project will require outreach to developers and builders. (City and property owners)
- *Southeast Corner of Kansas/Fairchild.* Develop underutilized corner. (Property owner and builders)
- *Southwest Corner of Morse/Quincy.* Establish a corner gateway or develop a single-story retail building. (Association, property owner and builders)

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The following information discusses the steps required to establish a National Register Historic District for NOTO.

National Register District Nomination:

To designate a district, a formal nomination has to be prepared documenting how it meets eligibility criteria. A district must contain a significant concentration of contributing historic building resources that are at least 50 years or older and meet at least one of four National Register criteria:

- The district is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the country's history.
- The district is associated with the lives of significant persons in our past.
- The district embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master or that possess high artistic values or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- The district yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

A National Register District nomination is usually prepared by a preservation planner, historian or architectural historian and submitted to the Kansas SHPO for review and feedback. If the nomination is considered complete, it is then submitted to the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review, which considers the nomination for approval and listing in the National Register.

Once the Board of Review approves the nomination, it is then forwarded to the National Park Service for review and formal listing in the National Register. The process can take six to 12 months to complete.

Once a district nomination is being considered by the Board of Review, the Kansas SHPO notifies property owners of the pending designation and solicits public comment. If more than 50 percent of the proposed district's property owners object to the nomination, the district will not be listed in the National Register. However, the nomination may be forwarded to the National Park Service for a Determination of Eligibility to the National Register.

Historic Resources Survey:

In 2012, the City conducted a survey of historic resources in Downtown Topeka as well as the NOTO Arts District. The survey found that the Kansas Avenue blocks between Norris and Gordon Streets would be eligible for the National Register as a collection of properties that “convey information about the history and evolution of the North Topeka commercial district.” The survey also determined that NOTO contains 40 contributing buildings – properties that reflect the historical or architectural significance of the District, and 14 non-contributing buildings, ones that have been substantially altered or are less than 50 years in age. Six buildings north of Gordon and on the east side of Kansas Avenue were not included in the survey. Although two of the six have substantially altered storefronts, these buildings are of similar age to the buildings south of Gordon and should be evaluated as potentially contributing buildings to a National Register Historic District. These buildings should be inventoried prior to preparation of a nomination.

Design Guidelines:

Many communities also develop design guidelines that provide practical guidance to property owners on building rehabilitation and preservation procedures. In most cases, a property owner seeking design assistance or a grant/loan must meet design standards before a project is approved for funding. Guidelines are often created with photos, drawings and illustrations to describe appropriate design and construction techniques.

Design guidelines can be more than a document used for design review as they can also be a practical resource for building owners seeking Historic Preservation Tax Credits. NOTO design guidelines could be modeled after those recently prepared for the Downtown Topeka National Register Historic District.

NOTO Role:

Most building improvement programs are managed by a municipality as cities are often the primary or sole source of financing for such programs. In some cases, an established Main Street organization through its Design Committee receives applications and conducts design review for the city.

For most Main Street programs, however, the Main Street manager/executive director serves a critical role in educating property and business owners on the availability of incentives and design assistance as well as walking them through the application process. The Design Committee may also assist the city in creating design guidelines, organizing technical workshops and creating lists of qualified local contractors.



Building Components:

The following are the components that a building improvement program and design guidelines should address:

- Storefront rehabilitation and reconstruction
- Upper façade treatments
- Window rehabilitation and replacement
- Awnings and lighting
- Business signage
- Public art and historic painted signs (ghost signs)
- Preservation and maintenance of key architectural features
- Energy efficiency (i.e. HVAC systems, solar panels, roof gardens, etc.)
- Appropriate substitute materials
- Design components related to architectural styles

Funding Options

The following provides information about potential funding sources for the establishment of a NOTO historic district as well as building improvement program:

Kansas State Historic Preservation Fund Grant:

The Kansas State Historic Preservation Office administers the Historic Preservation Fund Grant program, which helps to underwrite a variety of preservation planning activities, including historic resource surveys, National Register nominations, design guidelines for historic districts, and walking tour brochures, websites and podcasts.

Kansas State Heritage Trust Fund:

The Kansas SHPO also manages the Heritage Trust Fund, which provides matching funds up to \$90,000 for projects that preserve contributing properties within a National Register Historic District. Applications to the Heritage Trust Fund are taken yearly and are highly competitive. NOTO buildings that need significant exterior improvements could be potential candidates for the Fund.

Topeka Neighborhood Revitalization Program:

The City administers the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, which offers property tax rebates for building improvements that raise the appraised value of commercial properties by 20 percent. Rebates are offered up to 95 percent for ten years for buildings listed in the National or Kansas State Registers of Historic Places, or properties designated as Local Landmarks or located within Local Historic Districts.



5. MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Since it was formed in 2008, the North Topeka Arts District Association has done great work changing the District's land use, stabilizing building conditions, attracting artists and arts-related businesses, creating special events, converting the vacant Post Office into an arts center and getting the area recognized as a special place within the City and County. Today, the Association is experiencing "growing pains" as there is a critical need to focus more on the daily operations and management of the business district and Arts Center. There is also a need to include more businesses and artists in the organization's leadership while still retaining involvement from civic leaders.

During the NOTO planning process different organizational models were considered to determine the most effective way to manage NOTO's daily activities. The recommended model represents a single organization that works together to manage, improve and develop the District in the future. This structure is based on the successful National Main Street Four-Point organizational model, which focuses on a single group that effectively manages the day-to-day operations of business districts.

The management strategy to achieve this new approach is intended to help local leaders build the Arts District Association for the next phase of NOTO's growth. It involves reorganizing the Association through the following actions:

- Create a new organizational structure with eight active committees.
- Merge the functions/activities of the NOTO Arts Center Board, NOTO Businesses Committee (NADA), NOTO Artists Committee and NOTO Anonymous into the new Arts District Association structure.
- Add new leadership to the board, including businesses, artists and civic leaders.
- Establish regular communications/liaisons with affiliate organizations, such as North Topeka Chamber, North Topeka Neighborhood Association, Great Overland Station, Downtown Topeka and Visit Topeka.
- Hire an Executive Director/Main Street Manager.

CORPORATE BY-LAWS

The NOTO Arts District Board recently drafted a set of corporate by-laws to pursue a 501c(3) charitable tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service. To accommodate the shift to a Main Street model operating structure the by-laws should be updated to incorporate the following:

Organization Purpose:

The current by-laws should more explicitly describe the mission and types of "charitable" activities of the NOTO Arts District organization. A typical purpose statement would include descriptive texts such as:

"This corporation is organized to stimulate neighborhood business district revitalization - through organization (encouraging cooperation and building leadership in the business community); promotion (creating a positive image for the NOTO Arts District by promoting it as an exciting place to work, live, shop and invest); and design (improving the function and appearance of the district); and to receive, administer and distribute funds in connection with any activities related to the above purposes."

Committees:

Since the NOTO board will be moving toward a formal committee structure, a more complete description of the roles and responsibilities of such committees should be included.

Membership and Finances:

If the NOTO board pursues an active membership and fundraising program, it is suggested that a section regarding such activities be added to the by-laws. The section would list what types of membership categories are offered by the organization and member voting privileges, and that an annual work plan and budget needs to be approved by the board before any spending is authorized.

Executive Director/Main Street Manager:

A section on the duties and responsibilities of hired staff should be incorporated.



NOTO BUDGET

Another next step is to prepare first and five-year operating budgets outlining projected expenses and revenues for the organization. An ideal start-up budget for a reorganized NOTO Arts District group could include the following:

Revenues		Expenses	
Memberships/Contributions:	\$35,000	Staff Salary:	\$45,000
City of Topeka Contribution:	\$33,000	Overhead:	\$ 9,000
Sponsorships:	\$12,000	Committees:	\$10,000
Fundraising Events	\$15,000	Printing:	\$ 4,000
Product Sales	\$ 5,000	Arts Center Operations:	\$32,000
Total:	\$100,000	Total:	\$100,000

In the longer term, as the organization gains more experience and capacity at fundraising, a more mature Main Street operating budget might include:

Revenues		Expenses	
Membership, Contributions:	\$50,000	Staff Salary	\$55,000
City of Topeka Contribution:	\$48,000	Overhead	\$12,000
Sponsorships:	\$20,000	Committees	\$20,000
Fundraising Events	\$20,000	Printing	\$ 8,000
Product Sales	\$ 7,000	Arts Center Operations	\$50,000
Total:	\$145,000	Total:	\$145,000



FUNDRAISING PLAN

A fundraising plan that identifies where revenue sources will or could be secured should be prepared. Going forward, a board fundraising planning session should be conducted to identify and evaluate all possible funding sources and to determine which of these revenue streams could be used to pay for start-up program operations and first-year committee work plan costs. If revenue streams are non-existent, NOTO leaders will need to brainstorm and identify what new revenue streams will have to be developed.

A separate fundraising plan should be developed for the Arts Center so that there are clear paths to how money will be raised for both the NOTO Arts Association as it implements its new management program and the operations of the Arts Center.

Possible revenue sources could include the following:

Municipal Contribution:

It is customary for most non-profit Main Street organizations in other parts of the country to receive a financial contribution from their municipalities to demonstrate public-sector support for commercial district revitalization. Moreover, the contribution becomes a start-up funding source for the Main Street organization that becomes stable and on-going. In mature Main Street programs, the municipal contribution often comprises one-third of a typical Main Street program's operating budget with the rest coming from private and non-profit sector sources. Municipal corporate funds and economic development programs are usually the source for providing on-going assistance to local business districts, either for operating revenues or

for project based funding. Another revenue source that is being used more is hotel/motel/tourism fees and taxes. Since NOTO is both a business district with active businesses and an arts district that can attract visitors and tourists, these revenue sources should be explored.

Memberships:

Membership contributions or dues from businesses and residents are common sources of monies for many Main Street programs. A formal membership program with clear membership level benefits provided in exchange for the contribution should be considered and created.

Special Fundraising Events:

These activities are often developed and conducted as special events but their intent is to raise monies through ticket sales, sponsorships, silent auctions, donated items and product sales. Most Main Street communities organize one or two such events during a given year, and in some cases, can raise significant revenues.

Sponsorships:

Generally, sponsorships from businesses and corporations are used to finance promotion events and festivals in which sponsors receive something in return, such as free advertising. The NOTO Board and its new Marketing/Promotion Committee should explore sponsorships to support future festivals, retail promotions, and other related activities. Revenues from sponsorships can be considered as contributing to the service that the organization provides to plan, promote and manage an event or program.

Grants:

While grants are often not used to underwrite operating expenses for Main Street revitalization organizations, they can fund special projects or initiatives. Some operating monies may be sought through local foundations or corporate donors that realize that on-going funding of the organization is as critical as is a special project or program. Start-up operating grants should be sought in the near term to get the NOTO organization positioned for the next five years.

Product Sales:

Some Main Street communities have had success in selling special products such as Christmas ornaments, tee shirts and hats, limited edition prints and locally produced products. Since NOTO is an Arts District, there may be more opportunities for special products that can be sold in the Arts Center and/or in local shops and restaurants. However, some products sell better than others and NOTO’s new Organization Committee should use its best judgment to determine what products might sell well in NOTO.

Technical Assistance:

In some cases, business district organizations have benefited from receiving technical assistance from outside sources such as public agencies, institutions and businesses. Such assistance, while not consisting of direct funding, can help out with information technology/computer/website assistance, meeting rooms and event venues, staff health care and retirement programs, marketing and promotions, special events logistics and business development.

Business Improvement District (BID):

The State of Kansas allows local communities to form Business or Community Improvement Districts to fund a variety of downtown or business district maintenance and enhancement activities. A BID is a self-imposed tax on commercial property or business owners that is used to fund a variety of activities within a designated district. A CID is a sales-tax-based improvement district. Since the group is considering a reorganization of its structure and committees, the NOTO Board may not be in position currently to advocate for adoption of a BID or CID. However, such funding may be worth exploring in the long term as it provides a steady source of revenue that is managed by local business and property owners. Such funding would allow the District to collect in effect “membership dues” from all its owners rather than just those that choose to help out and participate in the organization.



MAIN STREET COMMITTEES

In addition to developing a fundraising plan, NOTO district leaders should move forward in establishing the Main Street model committees – **Operations, Design, Marketing/Promotion and Economic Vitality**. Each committee should have a group of volunteers; initially five to seven in number. An appointed committee chair should help facilitate committee meetings and manage committee activities, including work plan development, recruiting other volunteers and securing monies to support committee activities.

The chairperson should serve in their positions for one-year terms with a possible term renewal for additional one or two years by the NOTO Board. The chairperson should be a member of the Board and provide on-going liaison and leadership for the Board and committee. The roles of the committees and chairpersons can be more specifically defined within the organization’s by-laws or through separate written job descriptions.

Organization Committee:

To the NOTO Arts District’s credit, there is already a great record of accomplishments in just a few short years. Utilizing the Main Street revitalization approach, the Association should look forward to a new level of capacity and effectiveness in addressing NOTO’s revitalization and management needs. To reach that new level of organizational capacity, NOTO will need to have an active and effective Organization Committee.

Typical Organization Committee activities and initiatives include:

- Assists the NOTO board of directors with fundraising strategies and initiatives.
- Recruits, retains and recognizes volunteers at all levels of the NOTO organization.
- Assists the NOTO board in developing future leadership, conducting board succession planning and nominating new members to the Board.
- Assists the Board and Promotion Committee with external communications such as announcements and press releases.

In essence, the Organization Committee needs to be a working committee with volunteers who take responsibility for undertaking and completing specific tasks and projects. Ideally, the Organization Committee should have at least five or more committee members that meet on a regular basis, once a month.

Please note that financial management of the association, including bill paying, insurance matters, and payroll activities, is typically the responsibility of the Board Treasurer and Executive Director/ Main Street Manager rather than the Organization Committee.



Design Committee:

The design component of the Main Street Approach encompasses several different aspects, including land use and master planning, urban design and place making, building rehabilitation, signage and graphic design and historic preservation. Some areas of activities for the Design Committee will also require the involvement of other committees, especially with issues such as building rehabilitation incentives, graphic design for special events, and promotion initiatives.

From implementation of the overall NOTO District Master Plan to individual building initiatives, this committee's scope should be focused on enhancement of the physical or built environment. Historic preservation is often a key point for a Design Committee. This work usually assesses the potential of historic buildings for rehabilitation and adaptive use and the next steps needed to stabilize or improve them.



Typical Design Committee activities and initiatives include:

- Provides design assistance and review services to property owners regarding building maintenance and rehabilitation projects.
- Assists the City and other groups with programming District development projects, design enhancements (public spaces, paths, streetscape, facades, district signage, business signage), and capital improvements recommended in the Master Plan.
- Works with the Economic Vitality Committee on creation of incentives to help spur investment in buildings.
- Works with the Promotion Committee on graphic design/branding of NOTO marketing initiatives.
- Assists the City in assessing the eligibility of properties for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places individually or as part of a district.
- Provides consultation with developers and investors seeking to use the Federal and State historic preservation tax credit programs.
- Undertakes outreach initiatives to build awareness of NOTO's heritage and historic resources.

Economic Vitality Committee:

Historic architecture and the emerging cluster of arts-related businesses are significant strengths that make NOTO a compelling place within the Topeka region. NOTO's unique building and business assets will serve as good foundations for further investment and growth.

Though NOTO has fostered an influx of new arts-related businesses that have taken up space in many of its underutilized spaces and storefronts, there remains challenges to filling building vacancies along Kansas Street. Two key economic vitality goals for NOTO include continuing to support and incubate new arts and other retail and commercial ventures, and finding new uses for vacant upper-floors and buildings. A more complete utilization of NOTO building spaces helps to spur and support ongoing investment in those buildings and the businesses housed in them.



An Economic Vitality Committee focuses on the real estate and business market of the District, and performs an economic development function that helps strengthen existing businesses and attracts new development.

Typical Economic Vitality Committee activities and initiatives include:

- Supports business development initiatives that encourage new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activity.
- Conducts active business retention and recruitment efforts.
- Researches and promotes incentives that support new business activity and building rehabilitation.
- Serves as a liaison to the City and other entities regarding NOTO economic development issues and initiatives, including District expansion to nearby blocks.
- Assesses market potential and needs for certain types of retail and commercial ventures that could be supported in NOTO.

Marketing/Promotion Committee:

The Marketing/Promotion Committee's focus is on marketing and promoting the District. It is also the committee that directly plans and organizes special events.

While physical improvements to existing buildings and the arrival of new businesses provide visual signals that reinvestment is occurring in NOTO, it is through promotion activities that offer opportunities for shoppers, visitors and residents to experience the positive changes that are occurring and the diversity of activity. In districts like NOTO, promotion activities also have the potential to fulfill important social functions in bringing people together from the North Topeka neighborhood as well as the overall region. Community-wide events as well as business district events are key components of the "quality of life" of a city.

It is important to note that retail promotions are different from festivals in that they are designed to specifically increase sales for all businesses within a district. Sidewalk sales, sales events and associated collaborative advertising are typical types of commercial district retail promotions. Main Street groups operating as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization are forbidden from producing promotions that are seen as only benefiting specific businesses, which is not considered a non-profit "charitable" activity by the Internal Revenue Service.

Typical Marketing/Promotion Committee activities and initiatives include:

- Organizing special events designed specifically to build on NOTO's strengths and bring people to the District. Special events are intended to be fun and to focus on non-commercial aspects. Therefore they may not ring registers as a direct result of the event. However, over time, they should build customer awareness and support for the District. The Committee will also assist the Board in liaison and coordinating activities with public agencies responsible for special event planning and management.
- Implementing image building/branding/messaging activities that help to reinforce positive perceptions of the NOTO district. Such activities help support overall revitalization efforts by communicating the message that there is a reason for coming to NOTO to experience both its commercial and non-commercial aspects. Image building activities tend to focus on printed materials or marketing campaigns, but they can also include special events or projects and social media.
- Managing an overall NOTO promotion calendar and coordinating with other organizations and entities, including providing logistical and marketing support for promotion activities not directly undertaken by NOTO.

OTHER COMMITTEES

The following are additional committees that should be established within a reorganized NOTO Arts District management structure. Like the Main Street model committees, the chairperson should serve in their positions for one-year terms with a possible term renewal for additional one or two years. The chairperson should be a member of the Board and provide on-going liaison and leadership for the Board and committee. The roles of the committees and chairpersons can be more specifically defined within the organization's by-laws or through separate written job descriptions.

Arts Center Committee:

An Arts Center Committee should be formed to oversee the operations of the Arts Center facility, including the creation of a Facility and Fundraising Plan that outlines future facility uses and funding. Such a plan would provide clear paths to how the facility will be maintained and programmed as well as how much money may be able to be raised from grants and donations as well as from program and event revenue.

Artist Advisory Committee:

Similar to the Business Advisory Committee, an Artists Advisory Committee could: assist in promoting activities for artists and arts-related businesses; and serve as a liaison between the overall NOTO Arts District organization and local artists. The committee could also serve as a support group or information clearinghouse for artists or artist/entrepreneurs seeking information on start-up financing, finding space in NOTO or how to participate in artist-organized events and activities. This committee could also help reach out to local artists when other committees need volunteers for a program, project or event. Artist Advisory Committee activities that involve promotions and events should also be coordinated with the Marketing/Promotion Committee.

Business Advisory Committee:

A Business Advisory Committee would serve two important functions: assisting with retail promotions that benefit NOTO businesses directly; and serving as a liaison between the overall NOTO Arts District organization and local businesses. The committee could also serve as a support group or information clearinghouse for businesses seeking information on start-up financing, finding space in NOTO or how to participate in business-organized events and activities. This committee could also help reach out to local businesses when other committees need volunteers for a program, project or event.

Activities involving promotions and events will need to be coordinated with the Marketing/Promotion Committee, which should be the organization's clearinghouse and leader for such activities.

NOTO Anonymous Committee:

NOTO Anonymous is a group of young people who have volunteered to help get NOTO "on the map" by fostering special events and programs. The group is dedicated to the Arts District and its future growth. A closer working relationship between the NOTO Arts District Association and NOTO Anonymous could be considered by establishing the group as a committee of the Board.

In this role, the new committee could be advisors to the Board and work with the other committees to generate promotion and event concepts and to help with planning and managing these activities. This committee could also help reach out to potential volunteers when other committees need help with a program, project or event.

NOTO Anonymous Committee activities that involve promotions and events will need to be coordinated with the Marketing/Promotion Committee, which should be the organization's clearinghouse and leader for such activities.

COMMITTEE WORK PLANS

All NOTO committees will need to develop thorough work plans that detail specific activities and projects to be undertaken in a given year. Work plans should include:

- A complete list of projects/tasks.
- Volunteers assigned those tasks.
- Estimated hours needed to accomplish the activity, including staff time.
- Estimated timelines to complete the work.
- Project/task budgets.

The committees will need to complete the information for each work plan activity before it can be ready for actual implementation. As a rule of thumb, each committee should focus on two to three projects a year and do them well. Too many projects may overload for the volunteers. Each committee's work plan should be reviewed and approved by the Board within the context of the organization's overall work plan and overall budget before any spending is authorized.

DIRECTOR/ MANAGER

A job description for a full-time Executive Director/ Main Street Manager should be developed by the Board outlining job responsibilities and knowledge/ skills required for the position. The job description should also be used to prepare a job announcement, which should be posted to the websites of Main Street America/National Main Street Center and/or in statewide economic development organizations.

Once a sufficient operating budget has been raised, the NOTO Board should proceed to hire a full-time Executive Director/Main Street Manager. An ideal candidate should be someone with good communication skills who are self-starters and have some experience working in a non-profit organization setting.