MIXED USE AND STREETSCAPE INTEGRATION

Avondale
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“Creating new development so that people will stop and see what Avondale has to offer”

The goal for my project was simple. I wanted to propose new development that could help bring more money and people into Avondale. Currently Avondale receives a lot of attention but this is all focused on the hospitals and the Zoo. Not much attention, at least not positive, is focused on the neighborhood itself. This is another problem that I wanted to solve, or at least offer a solution for.

Explain how your project addresses the proposals delineated by the framework plan as well as how it addresses the four broad areas of:

Economic Development:

One of the areas I wanted to focus on the most was creating new development along Martin Luther King. With the new interchange being proposed, this means that MLK will not only become more crowded but more potential customers will be attracted to the area. The biggest problem within Avondale is that a lot of money comes through the area but not a lot is actually spent. By proposing new development this will hopefully draw more people to actually stopping and spending money in Avondale instead of just passing by like most do currently.

Neighborhood Redevelopment:

Similar to the economic development problem is neighborhood redevelopment. Avondale has a lot of older homes that have great architectural features. Homes like these could help make the neighborhood become the great place it once was. With all the potential that Avondale has to offer, the proposed development along MLK will hopefully spill over onto Reading, which will then spill onto the residential streets throughout Avondale and could create a ripple affect throughout the community. Now, this is not saying that everything has to be changed or redeveloped, but there are a few homes that could benefit from redevelopment/rehabilitation and other areas that could benefit from having a little more competition to help spur a change within Avondale.

Environment Improvements:

While this was not mentioned directly on my board, the proposed developments could be built using LEED construction materials and designs. The proposed parking lots could be
permeable surfaces so that rainwater can filter down into the soil instead of being funneled to a sewer line.

Transportation and other infrastructure:

Along with new developments and a potential new interchange come the issues of more traffic. My project details out how MLK could look with a separated lane for those who want to use the on-street parking that was proposed. Safety was the main issue that I wanted to address here and at the same time MLK could still hold the same volume of traffic that it does currently. Additionally, the development at Reading and MLK has the potential to eventually become a Transit Oriented Development. While the phase that I have proposed would only be a large mixed-use development that could possibly tie in a medical campus type developments, it’s location along a major bus route, a potential stop for the streetcar and also the light rail make it a prime location for such a development. The buildings have more than enough space to house new commercial and retail development along with some apartments and offices but they also have enough space to reconfigure at some point to accommodate a TOD.

**Project Description**

In order to create new development that would invite people to visit Avondale, this required a certain environment to be built. Something that was nonthreatening and open but at the same time easily visible from the road. Based off of my first precedent study, I found that in order to create such a space, you needed to bring the storefronts closer to the streets. I was able to create a way to do this without having to move any existing buildings by using the right-of-way to its fullest potential. This helped create the parking lanes along with closer sidewalks that run right up to the store front. These parking lanes also double as a bike lane so that bicyclists do not have to compete with the higher speed traffic that the through lanes have. By bringing the storefronts to the street, this not only increases the visibility of the stores but also of the pedestrians that will use them. The landscape buffers between the parking lanes and through lanes will act as a safety barrier so that people getting out of their cars to shop will not have to worry about any traffic that might be flying by on the other side of the buffer. This also means that more people will feel safer parking at one end of MLK and walking to the other.

Additionally, these landscape buffers should also act as a traffic calming device. While I do not want to slow traffic down to the point that it causes more congestion, I do believe that slowing down the traffic by bringing the street closer together with landscape buffers and other types of buffers will help drivers become more aware of their surroundings and thus become better drivers. The current configuration makes it seem like the drivers have more space than they really do and allows them to drive faster than they should. With my proposed street layout, drivers still have a similar amount of space but it may seem more confined than it really is. My hope is that while the buffers and parking lanes will help drivers become more aware of their surrounding for safety purposes that they would also become more aware of the development and shops that Avondale will have to offer.
Rationale

The existing commercial parcels and buildings do not offer enough for those just passing by to stop and enjoy. While they may serve the needs of the residents well enough to stay in business, they do not help draw in new customers. A few of the lots are vacant and could be used for new shops/restaurants that Avondale needs.

Also, the existing sidewalks aren’t very inviting or safe for pedestrians to use. The far setbacks of the buildings also don’t invite people who are even walking along MLK to use their services, let alone those who are driving in their cars.

I met with Bill Witten who is the Avondale Community Council Project Director. During our meeting we discussed what the major issues were surrounding the project area. We both were in agreement that MLK receives a lot of traffic on a daily basis yet the businesses nearby are struggling to stay open. This is because almost everyone that drives through Avondale is usually on their way to; Xavier, the University of Cincinnati, Children’s Hospital, University Hospital or the Cincinnati Zoo. A few may stop at McDonald’s or Dunkin Doughnuts every once in a while but that’s it. We both agreed that there needs to be something that draws people into Avondale to spend money.
it may not be something that they will necessarily stop on their way home, it will be something that sticks out in their mind and makes them want to come back and check it out. Also in this meeting we discussed the new interchange that could potentially increase the traffic and potential customers along MLK. If and when that interchange opens up, it will not only bring more employees down the eastern side of MLK, but it will bring in more students, teachers and anyone else who would rather hop on MLK rather than drive all the way down to McMillan/Taft. This means that Avondale needs something along MLK that will bring in some of the money that will be travelling through and create an open and inviting space to everyone that passes through. This has been something that the Avondale Community Council has been trying to accomplish, as seen in their 2005 Vision Plan which states that they want to “Develop the Avondale Town Center, Burnet Avenue, and Martin Luther King Drive into viable business districts providing excellent investment and job opportunities and increasing goods and services to the residents of Avondale (Avondale Community Council).

**Implementation/Funding Strategies**

Funding for a project such as this could be tied into the existing plans that the Avondale Community Council, the Avondale Business Council and Burnet Avenue Revitalization Team have created. In addition, the street improvements could be tied into the Uptown Transportation Study.

**Precedent Studies**

Octavia Boulevard is a great example of how to create a multiway boulevard. Octavia sees a lot of traffic and different forms of transportation and it has been able to separate bicyclist from automobile transportation through the use of greenspace barriers. The slip lanes that have been created give those who are stopping to shop or eat a safe way to do so. Also, by separating the normal through traffic from the commercial and bicyclist traffic it also slows down traffic and forces drivers to be more aware of their surrounding. The greenspace created on both the slip lane medians and the main median create a better, more pleasant environment aesthetically as well as being used as traffic calming devices. Another strength is that these types of developments help spur development in the areas they are implemented. Businesses and housing can be placed right in the middle of the hustle and bustle of daily life. This gives residents and customers a like a sense of living in an urban space.
The success of multiway boulevards are still hard to find, so seeing that Octavia Boulevard is such a vibrant and used area, this works in their favor. Other cities will want to visit San Francisco to see how this multiway boulevard works so not only does it set an example for other cities but it could also be used as a tourist attraction as well. It mixes commuter traffic with residential and commercial traffic and the businesses that are along Octavia are given a lot of opportunities to draw in a mixed diversity of customers. Having a separate bike lane will also help promote cycling and might encourage more people to ride their bikes since they have a safe route to ride along thus spurring on the “green” movement.

The second precedent study that I found was the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York. This development is a great example that could be used in the future for a TOD along MLK. Not only does this offer a great place for people to use when waiting for the bus or subway but it integrates those transportation features into the entire developments. There are many different stores, restaurants, coffee shops and other services like banks that are all under the same roof as where you would buy your bus/subway ticket.
Port Authority Bus Terminal floor plans
Bibliography

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