

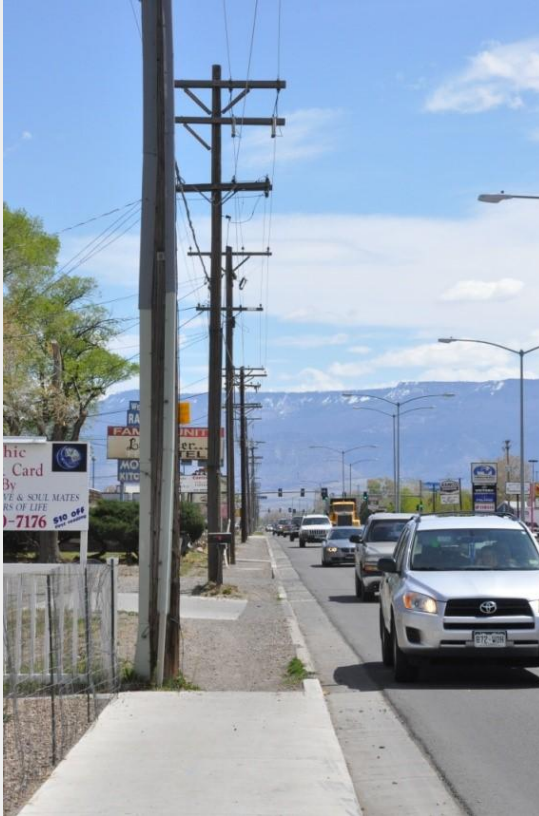
Merit Award – Project with a Small Budget: North Avenue Overlay Zone District



North Avenue Overlay Zone – Opt-In Standards and Incentive Based

Until the 1980's North Avenue was a primary retail tax generator for the City. Over the last two decades it has experienced a dramatic loss in revenue and seen a significant increase in commercial building vacancy (as high as 13% in 2012) in part associated with extensive new development of large commercial and retail centers along the western edge of the City. This new reality rang even louder, more true when my cousin came for a visit in 2012 not

having been back to Grand Junction since 1987 and without provocation from me said, “Boy, North Avenue sure is



boarded up.”

With the Corridor Plan and Overlay Zone in place North Avenue can reestablish itself with improvements that support a community environment, make it uniquely different, and bring people back. Rather than mimic the developments occurring on the City’s western edge, it can reclaim its identity by promoting developments that combine retail, office and residential with civic components (including Veteran’s Hospital and Colorado Mesa University campuses) to establish a distinctive character and sense of place.

Innovative: The North Avenue Overlay Zone District was created with “Opt-In” standards, containing built-in incentives and a point system. A landowner/developer may choose to use the “Opt-In” standards and receive the incentives or they may choose to develop under the standards and regulations found in the underlying commercial zone district.

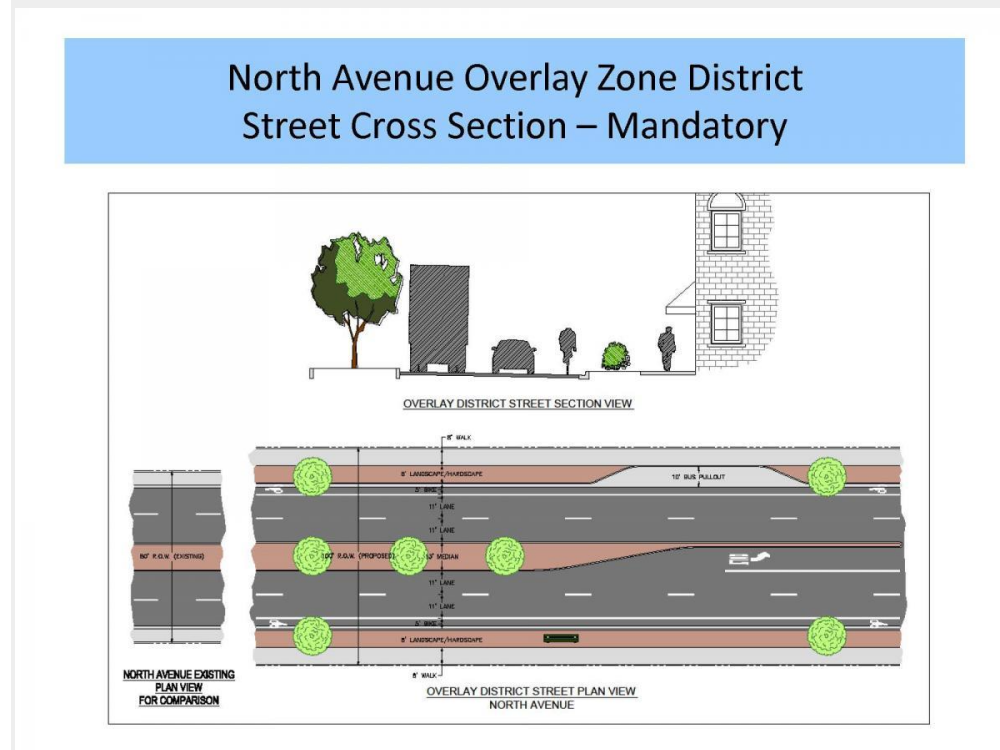
The mandatory standards of the Overlay Zone are required of all new development to establish the right-of-way width and streetscape features for the corridor. The Opt-In standards include incentives which relax some of the commercial base-zone standards (landscaping and setback requirements, for example) in exchange for meeting specific goals which will shape the desired character of the built environment. The point system allows a landowner to improve their site in specific ways which will help create the desired character of the built environment. The Overlay Zone does not establish financial incentives, but establishes a point system for distributing such funds if and when funds become available.

What makes the North Avenue Overlay Zone District outstanding?

- It created Opt-In standards in the Overlay that are incentive based.
- The work and support of the property/business owners Advisory Committee.
- The establishment of a new non-profit North Avenue Owners Association (NAOA) partnering with the City and taking a lead role in revitalization of the corridor.
- It established the structure of a point system that can be used when incentive funds are available.

Transferable: The concept of using opt-in standards and a point system for constructing certain improvements can be used in any overlay district in any community. Incentives encourage property to develop in a way that supports a vision. Certain standards may need to be mandatory, such as dedicating necessary right-of-way.

Public Participation: A lot of attention was garnered during the planning process. This included extensive media coverage with all three local television stations, local newspapers and an open house where corridor stakeholders and the general public were invited to review and comment on the overlay concepts.



Effective: Since the

Plan's adoption a renewed interest in North Avenue has occurred. The commercial vacancy rate fell to 7.5% in 2014. A new Taco Johns Restaurant was approved using the Opt-In standards. The Salon Professional Academy located into a vacant building and partnered with the City and Grand Valley Transit to construct an 8 ft. detached sidewalk, landscaping and bus pull-out. Other businesses have expressed an interest in the Opt-in standards. By providing an opportunity for reduced setbacks to improve façades and entrances, a desire for detached sidewalks to improve pedestrian traffic and an overall improved streetscape, the North Avenue Overlay Zone benefits the existing and future business community.

The overlay zone planning process was a catalyst for engaging the community to step up and be partners in improving North Avenue. As a result the North Avenue Owners Association (NAOA) made up of business and landowners along North Avenue was created in late 2012. Their mission is to be "committed to the promotion, economic revitalization, beautification and upkeep of the North Avenue Corridor as a vibrant business and residential area of the City of Grand Junction." The NAOA has increased its membership and efforts in marketing and partnering with the City to revitalizing the corridor.

The City received a 2013 Federal grant for \$1.19 million from the Federal Transportation, Community, and System Preservation Program. The grant will design streetscape improvements for three miles of the corridor and construct a three-quarter-mile section in the first phase. Proposed improvements include detached sidewalks, bus pull-outs, pedestrian crosswalks, improved street and pedestrian lighting, and landscaping for aesthetic improvements along

the corridor. Construction is planned for early 2015.

North Avenue Media Attention

What is the Grand Junction Media Saying About North Avenue?

Budget: The Planning Process lasted approximately one year, beginning in early 2012 with adoption by ordinance on February 22, 2013 Budgeted costs were \$480. The Overlay was managed and completed by using existing City staff.

David Thornton is a Principal Planner with the City of Grand Junction. You can find the North Avenue Overlay Zone District at <http://www.gjcity.org/LongRangePlanning.aspx>.

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