“Strip Recovery:”

A 12-Step Process for Reinventing the Suburban Strip

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Step 1: Ignite the public leadership

- Formulate a plan & strategy
- Create partnerships for implementation
- Involve stakeholders: businesses, residents, institutions & government
- Create a delivery mechanism that can:
  - Do marketing/promotion
  - Coordinate information
  - Improve security
  - Manage traffic and parking
  - Coordinate public agency efforts
Step 2:

Anticipate market evolution

- Retail competition is intensifying
- Markets are changing (elderly, singles, two income, single parents, immigrants)
- Retail products are changing in response (town centers, streetfront, entertainment, mixed-use)
- Suburban residents are looking for a sense of community (public gathering places, more livable environment, more convenience in daily life)
Step 3: 

**Know the market**

- Commercial strips without regional access will likely reflect the demographics of the immediate area.
- Revitalization and development plans should be guided by an understanding of the market.
- Know your market and their shopping patterns.
- What is a realistic future for the strip?
Step 4:

“Prune” the retail-zone land

- Not every major arterial must be lined with retail
- Surplus of retail-zoned land makes it too easy to abandon old centers and keep extending the strip
- Scale the amount of retail-zoned land commensurate with the size of the market
Step 5: “Pulse” the development

- Use key intersections/transit stops to create walkable cores
- Use higher densities to achieve pedestrian concentrations that create an active street
- Use special implementation tools (TDRs, BIDs, eminent domain, tax abatement, accelerated processing) to achieve the “pulse points” of new live-work, high-value community development

Source: Urban Land Institute
Step 6:

**Tame traffic**

- Road as "Seam" vs. "Edge"
- Less than 8 lanes and speeds less than 30 to 35 MPH for “Seam”
- Accommodate the needs of through & destination traffic
- Traffic is good for business - 20,000 to 30,000/day
- Too much traffic can be a problem - maybe a need for alternatives
Step 7: Create a “place”

- Create attractive pedestrian connections between uses
- The presence of people maximizes retail health, rents and capital value
- A well designed development has more value than a stand-alone building in a parking lot.
- Plan sidewalks so people feel safe and comfortable
- Put active uses along the sidewalk – sidewalk dining – sales and display on the sidewalk creating vitality
Step 7: continued

Create a “place”

- Introduce “townscape” - small streets and secondary streets
- Design parking and access so that getting to and from the place is enjoyable and efficient
- Sleeve big boxes and decked car parks with active retail or service users
- Careful placement of landscaping elements (including big trees) to enhance the Place but not detract from the retail sightlines
Step 8: Diversify the character

- Mixed use development is a developer’s response to escalating land costs
- Use new mixed-use areas to reinforce the edge of the major artery and improve human scale
- Provide for high density housing at nodes to support mixed use
- Concentrate mixed use along the major arteries to conserve single-family neighborhoods
- Mixed-use projects create pedestrian usage and reduce vehicular trips
Step 9:

Eradicate ugliness

- Improve aesthetic experience
- Put utilities underground
- Landscaping: Use mature trees
- Create pleasant pedestrian experience
- Provide ample and appropriate lighting
- Allow only organized and attractive signage
- Require landscaping in all parking areas
- Place retail shops and restaurants close to and parallel to the road with parking behind
- Demand architectural excellence

Source: Urban Land Institute
Step 10: Enhance connectivity

- Provide multiple options for circulation (i.e., lots of smaller roads instead of one main corridor)
- Integrate alternative forms of transit (bus, rail, bike, pedestrian)
- Make sidewalks safe and attractive
- Facilitate access between different land uses (housing & commercial)
Step 11:

Put your money & regulations where your policy is

- If the private sector is to invest, the public sector must invest also
- Make capital improvements that achieve multiple purposes (e.g. traffic flow, aesthetic and environmental improvements)
- Consider public actions to deal with numerous parcels and land assembly
- Zoning policy must implement the strategy
- Integrate public services and actions by multiple agencies
- Enforce your codes
Step 12:

*Facilitate partnerships for implementation*

- Coordinate mutual interests
- Involve community stakeholders: businesses, residents, institutions & government
- Define realistic and achievable projects
- Establish a single entity to guide implementation efforts
Case Studies:

*Strip Recovery in Action*...
Case Study #1: Columbia Pike Town Center
Arlington, VA

- An existing strip corridor not dissimilar to Cobb Parkway or Highway 78.
- Adds density and shared parking.
- Utilizes form-based code, and broadens the mix of acceptable uses.
- Transit is being integrated into the corridor.
- Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization (CPRO) similar in form and intent to a CID.
Case Study #2: Memorial Drive Corridor

Atlanta/Decatur, GA

- An existing strip corridor typical of the genre.
- Adjacent residential neighborhoods suffer from blighted strip centers.
- Recovery adds density and provides for shared parking.
- New development used as a buffer between the strip and single-family neighborhoods.
- Transit is being integrated into the corridor.
- Focus on nodes of development helps break the task down into ‘bite-sized’ pieces.
Case Study #3: Highway 78 Corridor
Snellville, GA

- A heavily traveled strip suffering from retail migration and blight, but in earlier stages than Memorial Drive.
- Pockets of still-healthy retail were preserved
- Various types of nodes seek to spur new development in some areas, an shape it in others.
- Transit is not an immediate consideration, but may result from new development.
- The Highway 78 CID is an active advocate for policy and projects along the strip.
Questions?