

SECTION 2 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Merriam is a first-tier suburb of Kansas City, Missouri and, for the most part, is a fully developed community that is land-locked. There are approximately 80 acres of vacant land, mostly small lots dispersed throughout the community. Merriam is perceived by its residents as a quality place to live, work and play. Overall, Merriam is a healthy community with stable neighborhoods, a strong retail and business base, and good infrastructure. The major emphasis of this plan is therefore on how to maintain and enhance the existing sense of community and business environment while creating new opportunities to ensure Merriam continues to be a quality place.

This section is entitled the Planning Framework because it outlines the goals, strategies and activities necessary to reach the community’s vision for the future. The framework provided uses many of Mid-America Regional Council’s “Creating Quality Places: Successful Communities By Design” principles and describes the specific implementation activities necessary for Merriam to continue to be a quality place.

2.2 Merriam’s Vision for the Future

Everyone wants a healthy and safe place to live. People want good schools, affordable housing, accessible shopping and recreation, good paying jobs, cultural activities and places of worship--the mix of attractions that makes a community livable. Most people agree on what Merriam should be in the future. This community-based Comprehensive Plan outlines the strategies to make this vision of the future a reality.

MERRIAM IS A QUALITY PLACE THAT ATTRACTS
PEOPLE BECAUSE OF IT’S STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS,
ACCESSIBLE SHOPPING, JOB OPPORTUNITIES, INVITING
PUBLIC SPACES AND IT’S CONVENIENT LOCATION TO
REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS.

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2.3 Forces of Change

As a land-locked community, Merriam has little vacant land. The population is projected to grow from around 12,000 to 13,000 over the next 20 years. The housing stock is in good condition, housing values remain strong, new businesses are moving to town, and vacancies in industrial/commercial property are low. Merriam benefits from its strategic location on I-35 and major arterials/highways moving traffic to major metropolitan employment centers or shopping destinations.

The Johnson County economy and the health of the Kansas City urban core both greatly impact Merriam's future. As population fled from the Kansas City urban core, as a first-tier suburb, Merriam benefited from this shift. Now that Johnson County suburbanization continues to move south and west, the center of economic influence moves away from Merriam. With this shift, the disinvestment and deterioration experienced in the urban core could be experienced in the future in Merriam if action is not taken. Another potential threat is complacency by elected and civic leaders regarding trends shaping the future of Merriam. Many contemporary social commentators' stress that the rapid and sweeping changes brought about by globalization, technological advances, and the information economy will heighten the need and desire of people to find a community with a sense of place, connection to the past, and a vibrant social fabric.

The strategies outlined include quality improvements in the existing infrastructure and services as well as policies to promote compact development. Compact development, although based on density increases, does not lead to a decrease in the quality of life. Rather, it increases accessibility, creates more appropriate living styles for all ages, and is more attuned to "new urbanism" than older suburban styles. If Merriam follows these two major strategies, they will not only positively shape their community but will contribute to the success of the metropolitan area.

2.4 Homes and Neighborhoods

Plan for Homes and Neighborhoods

To preserve, enhance and create the quality homes and neighborhoods desired, Merriam has developed a series of Goals Statements. Strategies are provided to help achieve the goals considering the current situation and forces impacting Merriam's future.

HOUSING CHOICE & DIVERSITY GOAL 2020:

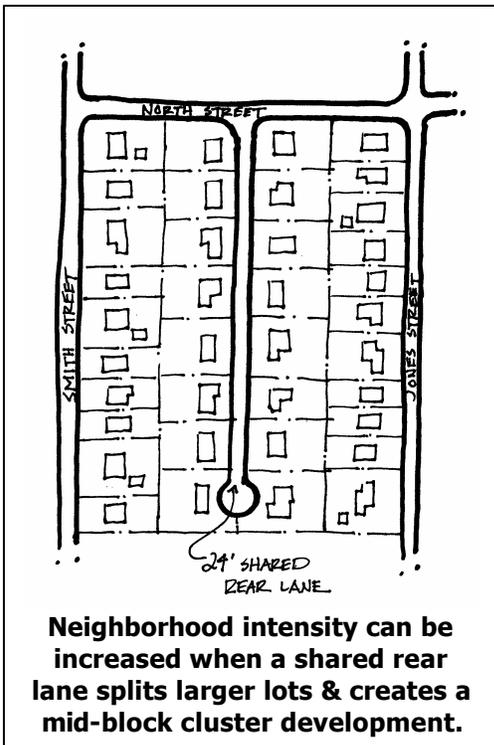
Merriam offers a choice of well designed and maintained housing types and sizes to meet the needs of residents of different economic levels and age groups.

Current Situation:

Merriam offers diverse housing types and sizes. There are 23 distinct neighborhoods with single-family detached homes being the most prominent type. One-third of housing units are multi-family. Merriam is a "hot" location due to its proximity to the Plaza, downtown Kansas City, other Johnson County shopping and quality schools and public services. Homes are in demand because of they are affordable for Johnson County and typically are well-made and maintained.

Forces Impacting the Future:

The majority of homes in Merriam have only 2 bedrooms and a one-car garage. About 70% of the homes in the City have 2 or 3 bedrooms. Demand for these "starter" homes may increase due to accreditation problems in the Kansas City, Missouri school system. Because the market is shifting to 4+ bedrooms, Merriam is likely to experience large-scale remodeling of individual homes and even tear-downs with complete reconstruction on a lot-by-lot basis. Many homes sit on large enough lots to accomplish this but in areas with smaller lots, these neighborhoods may not be able to meet the market demand. As the population ages, Merriam should experience pressures to accommodate different housing products to accommodate these shifts such as maintenance-free living, small lot



patio homes, and assisted living facilities. Merriam's convenient location may also move the market to accommodate more young professionals who desire high-end townhomes.

Implementation Strategy:

The following strategy will create more choice of housing types:

Allow Infill Development:

Allow in-fill development to promote efficient use of land and meet the needs of a changing population subject to site design standards and architectural integration with the existing residential character.

Density:

Allow increased density to be interspersed throughout the community.

Large-Lot Parcels:

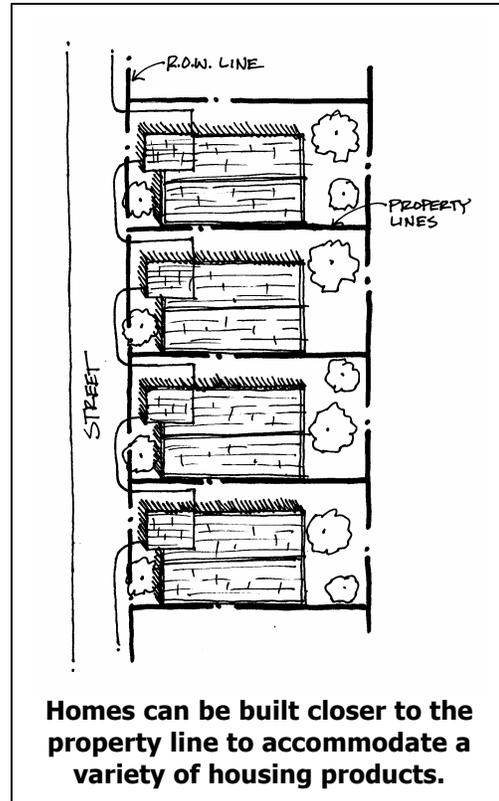
Allow interior-block cluster development and mid-block lanes.

Smaller Lot Sizes:

Allow housing on smaller lots to accommodate a variety of housing products (example: maintenance-free patio homes) and market trends (tear downs or remodels).

Accessory Units:

Allow accessory apartments or units (example granny flats). Accessory apartments represent a way to adapt single-family housing to accommodate local housing needs of an aging population. Local zoning laws typically need to be amended to remove restrictions that prevent accessory apartments. City officials may want to consider using a conditional use permit to allow accessory apartments, if they believe local residents will feel threatened if the apartments are allowed by right. The downside of a conditional use permit is it can become an expensive and time consuming endeavor with neighbors turning decision-making into a political decision. The benefit of the conditional use permit is it allows the Planning Commission to place restrictions that ensure the apartment is used for members of the extended family aged 60 years or older.



Flexible Zoning:

Allow home additions, tear downs and reconstruction of homes if design can be integrated into the community character.



The top sketch shows a new or remodeled home that does not fit. The bottom sketch shows how a larger home can be designed so as to fit into the neighborhood.

Current Situation:

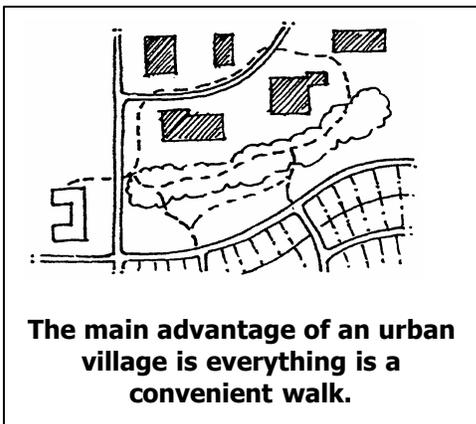
Although developed during a time when the planning philosophy was to segregate uses, many Merriam neighborhoods are conveniently located to commercial office, retail and public spaces. Many neighborhoods are tucked away but very near major commercial corridors. For example, Sherwood Forest and Vernon Place are just off Shawnee Mission Parkway. Hickory Hills/Merriam View and Eby's are across the street from Merriam Town Center. Pinegate and Vernon Place surround the City's largest community park, Antioch Park.

Forces Impacting the Future:

Because it is transversed by I-35 and Shawnee Mission Parkway, Merriam's neighborhoods will continue to experience pressures from the encroachment of commercial development. The residential housing market is strong. Future planning commissions will have to balance the concerns of existing residents with the ability to create new housing or mixed-use opportunities.

Implementation Strategy:

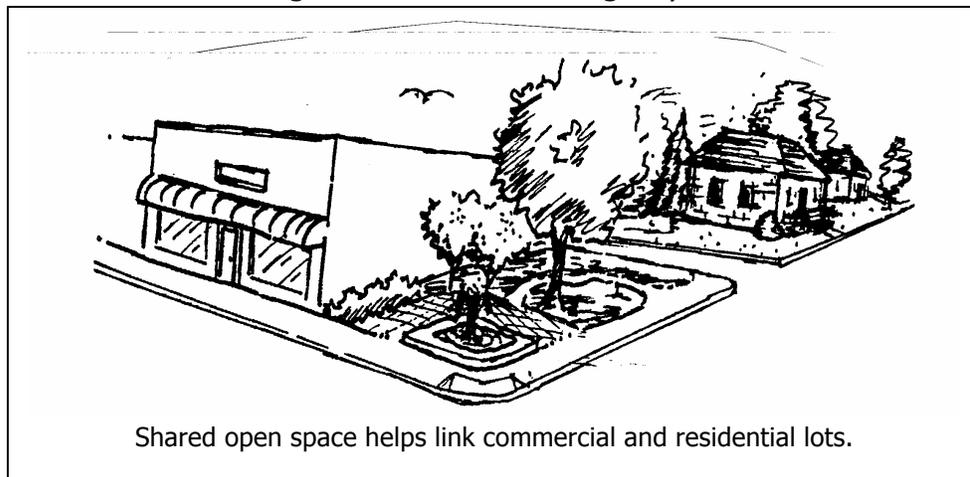
The following strategy will create the linkages desired:



Create Urban Villages: Capitalize on opportunities that presently exist or can be created to combine commercial, retail, recreation and various housing types into cohesive, pedestrian-oriented environment or neighborhood.

Create cohesive and interactive land uses where people can safely walk to a nearby school, shopping center, park or activity center. An area identified in Section 7 Future Land Use to apply the Urban Village Concept

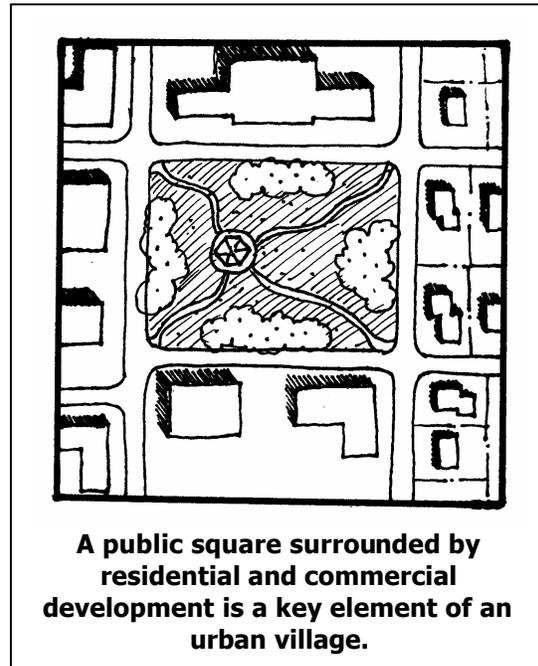
is the Grandview Neighborhood surrounding City Hall.



Develop design principles to offer a comprehensive set of guidelines addressing human-scale design, architectural compatibility, pedestrian paths and sidewalks, and other elements to contribute to creating cohesive neighborhoods or urban villages.

The following principles identify key elements that should be contained in the design guidelines.

- ✓ Public spaces, square or park for each neighborhood to allow citizens of all ages to meet and gather.
- ✓ A network of inter-linked pedestrian walkways within the neighborhood. Place close attention to roadways with sidewalks to ensure that they create a public space where people feel safe and are encouraged to move comfortably.
- ✓ Encourage various home types to allow people of all life-cycle stages to reside in a neighborhood. Allow housing of various densities to locate in a neighborhood. The key is to ensure the location, size of the project (i.e., total acreage), density, building size and mass, open-space proportions, and architectural design of apartment or townhouse compliment surrounding homes.
- ✓ Accommodate religious, governmental, or educational institutions. Ideally, these activities should be located in the center of the neighborhood. Site plan review and conditional approval is important to ensure neighborhood compatibility.
- ✓ Encourage new development to respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries. When feasible encourage in-fill development to adhere to the existing street/block pattern.
- ✓ Careful attention to street tree planting is vital to strengthen the visual appearance and character of a neighborhood.
- ✓ Preserve existing natural amenities that might exist within a neighborhood, such as woodlands or water bodies.



**REINVESTMENT GOAL
2020:**

**Merriam's housing
stock contributes to
the vitality of
neighborhoods**

Current Situation:

The majority of the homes were built in the 1950s and 60s. Housing values range between \$80,000 and \$130,000 which is considered affordable by Johnson County standards. Approximately 40% of the housing units in Merriam are rental. Since 1995, homes on average that have resold have appreciated at or slightly below (28%) the Johnson County average of 32 percent.

Forces Impacting the Future:

As described previously, the mid-range housing market demands 3 to 4 bedrooms with a two-car garage. Houses built in the 1950s and 1960s do not generally offer these features and those that do are typically not on the market. Citizens wanting to move from their "starter home" to their second home may have to move from Merriam to find these features. Remodeling may be one option, but 1950s homes are typically not desirable to renovate for historic preservation purposes. Remodeling of \$130,000 homes to add the features desired may not be cost effective for the owner and many are on small lots, may be difficult to accomplish. Because of this trend, some neighborhoods could experience declining property values if measures are not taken.

Implementation Strategy:

The following strategy will ensure the housing stock desired:

Invest in Existing Housing Stock and Neighborhood Infrastructure:

- a) Create and foster public-private sector programs to ensure resources are available to help existing homeowners maintain their homes, and allow new homeowners to improve their homes.
- b) Continue to invest public dollars in residential neighborhood infrastructure improvements.
- c) Establish a land use pattern that maintains and supports the stability of existing residential neighborhoods.
- d) Encourage reinvestment in residential areas based on a strategy of mixed use, human-scale design, pedestrian-movement, and compatible architecture.
- e) Enforce property maintenance and structural codes.

**PUBLIC SERVICES GOAL
2020:**

People are attracted to Merriam neighborhoods because of the quality educational, recreation, public safety, infrastructure, medical and social services.

Current Situation:

The health of a community or neighborhood is strongly dependent on its attractiveness to residents. The quality of public services and facilities are critical to the vitality of any city. Merriam currently has a quality educational system with neighborhood schools and is perceived as a safe community. Merriam has the best fire insurance rating in Johnson County. Quality health care is accessible through Shawnee Mission Medical Center, located in Merriam. Citizens benefit from an extensive park

system, recreational and leisure programs. The water and sewer systems can adequately serve Merriam into the future. The street system is essentially in place and the city is investing heavily in maintenance and improvement. The major public facilities challenge for Merriam is the Turkey Creek Flood plain. Turkey Creek, which is located through the middle of Merriam from the city's north to south boundaries is the major source of flooding. A good portion of Downtown Merriam is in the flood plain.

Forces Impacting the Future:

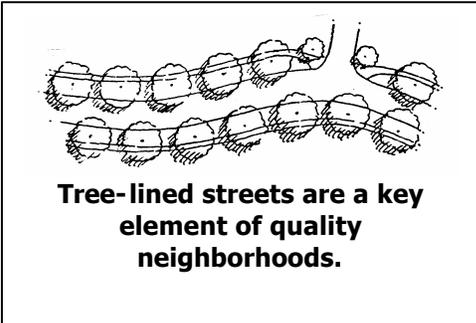
As a first tier suburb, being perceived as a safe community to live in is a key force in the success of Merriam's neighborhoods. The quality of the school system will also be a critical factor to the desirability of Merriam's neighborhoods. In a survey conducted by the Indianapolis Realty Association to determine why reinvestment in older residential districts was occurring at a rapid (and unexpected) pace, the data conclusively show that the price to value ratio per unit and the presence of a strong school that could be reached within the neighborhood boundaries were the driving factors. The number of school age children is projected to remain fairly constant over the next 20 years in Merriam yet neighborhood schools may be closing due to district-wide budget constraints. Citizens will continue to request more open space, more park opportunities and high quality recreational and leisure services. Infrastructure investment will be needed as neighborhoods age. One of the strongest forces expected to impact Merriam is that of nature; specifically the flood waters of Turkey Creek. There are three options that will need to be considered in the next 20 years: 1. Move the water away from the people, 2. Move the people away from the water, and 3. Continue to live with the effects of building next to a creek. Trying to control nature will be the most costly and difficult of the three options.

Implementation Strategies:

Develop design guidelines that consider safety as well as aesthetics.

Many communities are implementing the concept of Community Policing Through

Effective Design (CPTED) to either build or retrofit properties with certain features, such as proper lighting and effective security systems.



Work with local and state public school officials to continue providing a quality education system.

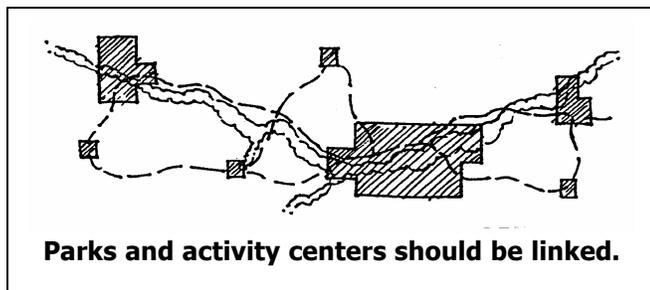
Continue to upgrade streets to urban standards while preserving natural features and assets of the neighborhood.

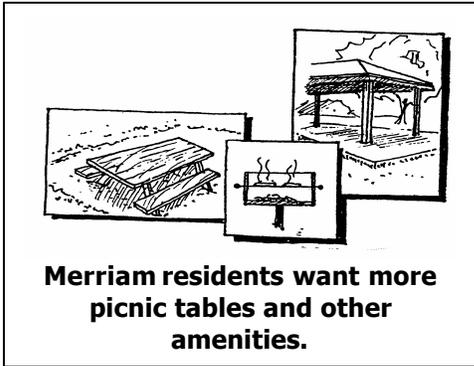
The city has a program of rebuilding streets, installing curb and gutter and sidewalks in residential neighborhoods. When infrastructure improvements are made, they should be designed to fit with the character and preserve the natural features and assets of the neighborhood. For example, street widths should be evaluated to determine whether they can be narrowed to a more human scale. Mature street trees should be saved in the design if possible and new trees planted if needed.



Acquire, reclaim and preserve natural features as open space and link those resources to public places by pedestrian and bike paths.

- a) Look for opportunities to acquire parkland in areas currently underserved such as the northwest, northeast, central and southwestern parts of Merriam.
- b) Consider expansion of Brown Park and Vavra Park.
- c) Expand Turkey Creek Streamway Park north of Johnson drive past the Farmer’s Market along Turkey Creek to Merriam Drive.
- d) Continue to use property buyouts of flood-prone structures when feasible.





Expand recreational, cultural and educational programs to meet current and future population needs. Merriam provides both active and passive recreation activities for a variety of age groups. Two recent surveys indicate that Merriam citizens want more trails, athletic fields, restrooms and picnic shelters. Two age groups are expected to migrate into Merriam over the next 20 years. These groups include people over 75 years of age (particularly women) and young

adults, including women ages 20 to 24, and men ages 25 to 29. Programs and amenities should be designed to meet current and future citizen’s needs.

Cooperate with county, state and federal agencies to address flooding concerns in city. Johnson County is planning a watershed study for Turkey Creek. The Corps of Engineers is considering a study of Turkey Creek.

Adopt Best Management Practices for Stormwater. Johnson County is working on the development of Best Management Practices to help cities comply with Phase II of the Clean Water Act.

Continue to work with Shawnee Mission Medical Center to maintain it’s prominence in Merriam. Shawnee Mission Medical Center is not only a major employer in Merriam it is a regional health care facility that serves Merriam residents and draws visitors to Merriam.

**IDENTITY GOAL
2020:
Merriam’s
neighborhoods have
a distinct identify
that helps define
their boundaries and
fosters pride and
belonging among
residents.**

Current Situation:

Merriam is a community made up of distinctly different neighborhoods. The types of housing, width and design of streets, mix of land uses, and public spaces make each neighborhood unique. Some neighborhoods, such as Sherwood Forest, Edelweiss and Vernon Place have a sense of community and are well known in the real estate market. Others have yet to define an identity.

Forces Impacting the Future:

The neighborhood identity is needed to improve the feeling citizens get living there but is also needed to market Merriam as a quality place to live.

Implementation Strategies:

Create Individual Neighborhood

Identity: Create a sense of identity and belonging for each neighborhood. A community neighborhood does not replace or function as a homeowners association created by private covenants. The intent is to improve communication, facilitate coordinated neighborhood planning, and enhance the sense of community.



- a) Work with neighborhood associations and local citizens to identify "Community Neighborhood" boundaries.
- b) Develop neighborhood building activities.
- c) Create gateway markers into neighborhoods.
- d) Create a regional identity and positive image for Merriam's neighborhoods to help them attract new residents and investment.

2.5 Commercial Development

To preserve, enhance and create the quality commercial development that contributes to the long-term vitality of the community, Merriam has developed a series of Goal Statements. Strategies are provided to help achieve the goals considering the current situation and forces impacting Merriam in the future. The main focus is on improving the functionality, visual appearance, and interface of commercial development districts, corridors, and centers.

**MIXED DEVELOPMENT
GOAL 2020:**

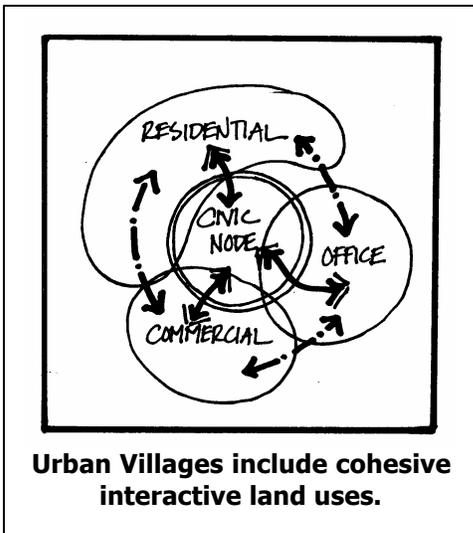
Merriam's commercial development includes many activity centers where a variety of uses (e.g. retail stores, residences, civic buildings, and office.) thrive because they are connected

Current Situation:

The land use in many areas of Merriam are becoming more mixed. This movement has been market driven. For example, Shawnee Mission Medical Center has purchased the Georgetown Shops next door and contemplates a mixed use development of medical retail and office activities. This movement has been a private-public partnership, for example, Merriam's Downtown. As is the case in most downtown areas, Merriam's vision for their downtown includes commercial office and retail mixed together.

Forces Impacting the Future:

Most downtown office dwellers enjoy the convenience of nearby shopping and restaurants. Retail shop owners understand the benefit of a captive audience. The mix provides economic benefits to both and brings a vitality to the commercial area. Many communities are realizing that the “small town feel” and convenience of commercial development integrated with surrounding public spaces and neighborhoods are what people want. Complete segregation of uses has produced a community design that is and will be undesirable in the future.



Implementation Strategy:

Accommodate the densities, mix of uses and infrastructure that the market demands:

Retail, office, and industrial business is needed in any community to provide a diversified tax base. The Future Land Use Plan in Section 7 provides for an appropriate mix of these commercial activities with residential and public spaces. Rather than a strict segregation of these different uses, the Plan encourages mixed land use to increase the livability and economic vitality of the community. For example, The Future Land Use Plan in Section 7 purposefully does

not break out retail from office as separate commercial development categories. It is recommended that they be mixed together and with other uses. The neighborhood around City Hall is identified as a potential mixed-use development. A good example of mixed-use area in Merriam is the land east of I-35 between 67th Street and 75th Street. There are low density, moderate to high density, commercial retail, office and light industry all connected by sidewalks.

Require new development and major redevelopment to be integrated into the surrounding area:

The scale, character and function of Merriam’s commercial development should be compatible and integrated with that of its surroundings. The development on the Eastside of I-35 represents a contemporary “office campus” design and relates positively with the residential neighborhood. The placement of the L-shaped office building at 67th and Antioch (6700 Antioch Plaza) demonstrates how effective proper placement can enhance public space and create a positive relationship to the street. Other design techniques support integration and improve how the entire area functions together.

WALKABILITY GOAL 2020:

Merriam’s activity areas are designed for pedestrian access.

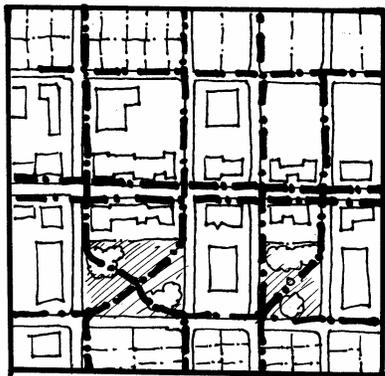
Current Situation:

Pedestrians presently do not have a pleasant and welcoming space in many commercial corridors and shopping areas in Merriam.

Forces Impacting the Future:

If commercial development is going to be part of a neighborhood, citizens should be encouraged to walk to them. Therefore, citizens will expect these commercial activity centers to be easy to walk to and easy to walk around. According to MARC’s Creating Quality Places project, quality shopping areas will need to be “designed to make the pedestrian feel comfortable and safe by providing wide sidewalks, storefronts that open to the street, shade and shelter and a sense of spatial enclosure.” They will need to be “designed to facilitate employee and customer access on sidewalks, bicycle trails, transit service and roads.”

Implementation Strategy:



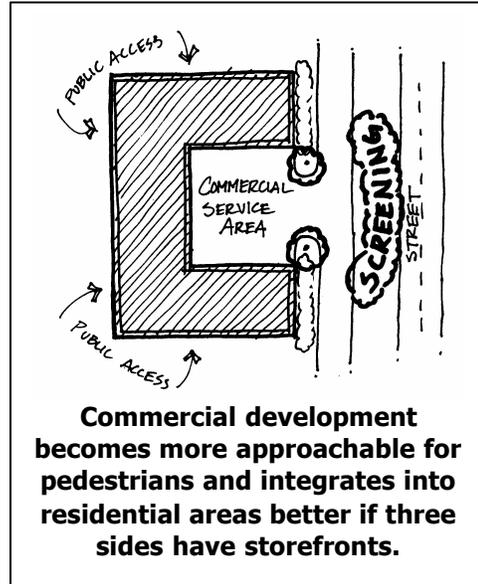
Urban Villages connect various land uses using pedestrian linkages.

Improve the interface and pedestrian connectivity to commercial areas with nearby residential neighborhoods.

The first step in developing a pedestrian-friendly community is to evaluate how people could walk from their neighborhood to nearby shopping centers. The next step is to ensure public sidewalks are available. Improvement is needed to gain better access to and improve circulation in the Downtown, Merriam Town Center and along Shawnee Mission Parkway. A good example of a connected mixed-use corridor is 67th from I-35 to Antioch. Sidewalks connect residential to office, retail and light industrial areas.

Improve pedestrian movement within commercial areas.

Because most commercial developments in Merriam are already built, it will be important to work with these existing commercial business owners to develop a more walkable commercial corridor, strip or center. For example, the Downtown Merriam Plan includes traffic calming and streetscape improvements to make the area more pedestrian friendly. This type of plan is highly recommended for Shawnee Mission Parkway and Merriam Town Center because of their proximity to quality neighborhoods. Other commercial areas of the community could also benefit.



Require new commercial development to address pedestrian movement as part of their development plan.

In terms of new development, pedestrian access and internal movement can be addressed during the design. A good example of new commercial development encouraging pedestrian movement is along East Frontage Road from Shawnee Mission Parkway to 67th Street. Restaurants, hotels and shopping are all connected with a lighted sidewalk so Merriam visitors can walk to all of these services.

VISUAL APPEARANCE GOAL 2020:

Merriam’s commercial developments are visually appealing.

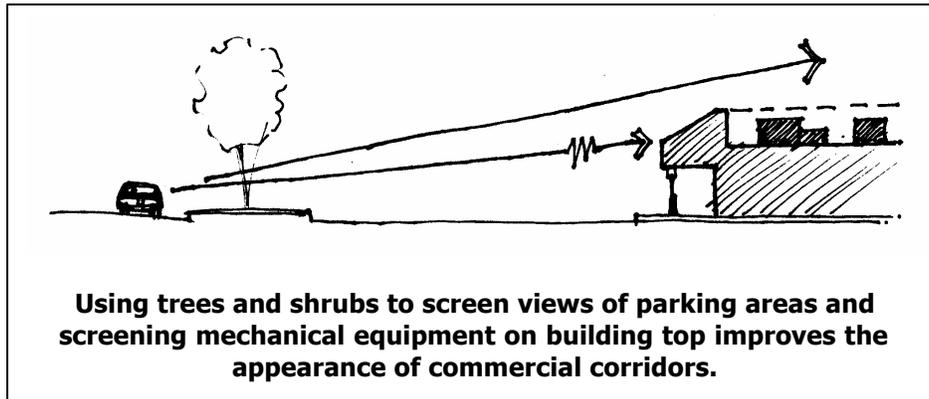
Current Situation:

There are some areas of Merriam’s commercial development that are visually appealing. The 67th Street, I-35 Development Node represents visually appealing development. However, some major corridors, nodes and centers need improvement. For example, Merriam Town

Center could use some improvements to make it more visually appealing from I-35. Several corridors could benefit from a more visually appealing design. The Merriam Downtown Plan includes many recommendations to improve it visually.

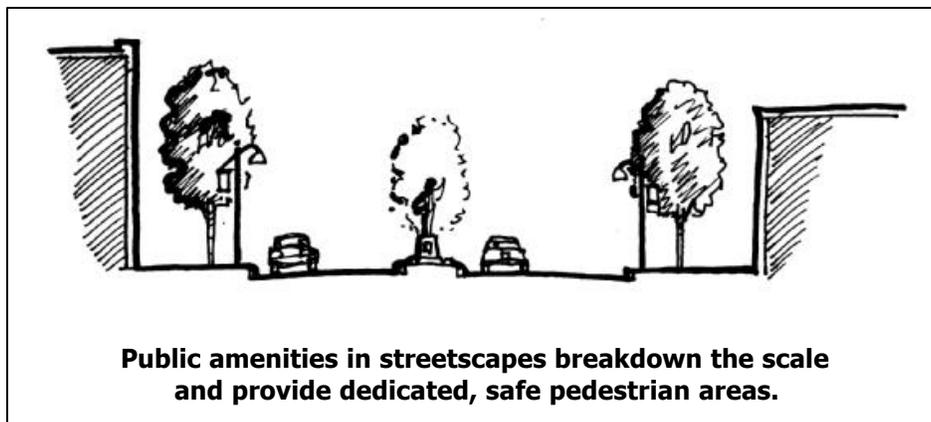
Forces Impacting the Future:

As the epicenter of economic influence moves further west and south in Johnson County, the visual appearance of older areas of Johnson County will become more and more important. Sprucing up and even redeveloping commercial nodes, corridors and centers are likely to occur in the next 20 years to accommodate market trends.



Prepare and implement corridor enhancement plans.

- a) Implement Merriam Downtown Plan recommendations.
- b) Prepare commercial corridor enhancement plans similar to the Downtown Merriam Plan for Shawnee Mission Parkway and 75th Street. Include streetscape plans, pedestrian access, entry signs, and other public sector improvement recommendations.
- c) Prepare commercial corridor zoning revisions and design guidelines to address business signage, perimeter and parking lot landscaping, architectural design and materials, pedestrian access, building location, screening, potential public transit stops, and shared access or parking.



Invest in amenities to beautify publicly-owned space. Develop streetscape plans using street trees, landscaped medians, streetlights, landscaping, entry signs, and public art to provide a defining community image of public space. Consider installing city or corridor entrance markers or signage.

DURABILITY GOAL 2020:

Merriam’s commercial buildings are built to last with quality materials and are designed for changing uses to accommodate shifts in the market

Current Situation:

Many buildings in Merriam were well constructed of quality materials. For example, several of the newer buildings along West Frontage Road north of 75th Street show a commitment to quality materials and design. Some buildings are of lesser quality materials and were not appropriately designed to accommodate shifts in the market. For example, an older office building on Shawnee Mission Parkway is facing occupancy

constraints due to its architectural design. It is next to a residential area and in an attempt to minimize the impact of commercial business located near residential development, a more residential design was used which has not functioned well. Many building owners have and are investing substantially to build high quality buildings or remodel existing buildings. In the Downtown, this investment is constrained because many buildings are in the flood plain.

Forces Impacting the Future:

Once again, as development investment dollars in Johnson County move south and west, the need for well-designed buildings made of quality, long-lasting materials will be important to stay competitive.

Implementation Strategy:

Balance the preservation of existing development with the desire of the marketplace to create new development opportunities. Allow buildings’ purpose to adapt and change over time.



Current Situation:

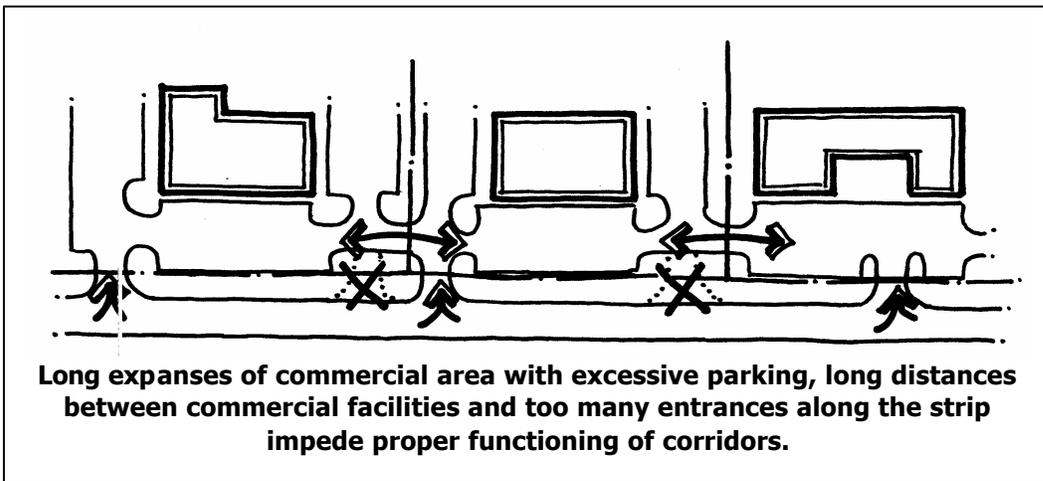
To meet city codes, most developments are designed to accommodate shoppers on the busiest shopping day of the year. Parking lots are typically designed without much consideration to pedestrian circulation, the scale, location and type of stores.

PARKING GOAL 2020:

Merriam’s shopping areas provide convenient parking consistent with the scale, location and type of stores.

Forces Impacting Needs:

Parking is now and always will be a focus of business owners. Some business owners feel cities require too much while others feel the amount of parking limits the potential number of shoppers. Two forces will impact the need for parking in the future. First, the creation of a pedestrian/bicycle friendly environment will reduce the need for automobile parking in urban village areas. Second, Phase II of the Clean Water Act will require cities like Merriam to be concerned not only with storm water management and flooding but also the quality of storm water runoff. Reducing impervious surfaces such as parking is one way to reduce storm water runoff.

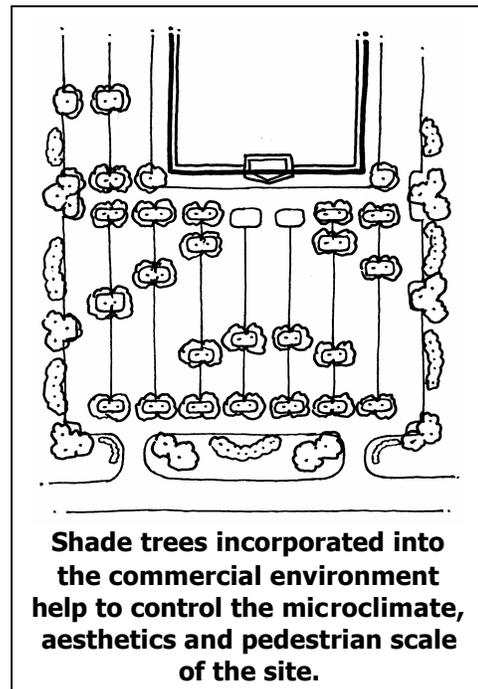


Implementation Strategies:

Minimize an over supply of parking:

Allow flexible parking arrangements such as on-street parking and shared parking to minimize an over supply of parking. Minimizing parking while still meeting the needs of the development conserves land and reduces impervious surface and storm water run off. Consider reducing existing parking areas where appropriate. The Downtown Merriam plan includes shared parking in the Farmer’s Market.

Improve visual quality and function of parking areas. Parking should be divided into smaller components to the rear or side of the buildings. Landscaping and sidewalks should be encouraged to reduce impervious surface, improve visual quality and provide for safe pedestrian movement. Encourage



existing and require new commercial development to use internal connections between building sites and/or parking lots to minimize the number of curb cuts. The Merriam Downtown Plan includes on-street and angled parking to increase parking and the comfort level of pedestrians.

Conduct a parking needs analysis study for Downtown Merriam. As the Downtown Merriam plan is implemented and more activity is created, a study of the need for additional parking is recommended.

2.6 Transportation

Plan for Transportation

To ensure Merriam has a transportation system that effectively transports people and goods throughout and beyond the community, the following Goal Statement was developed. Strategies are provided to help achieve this goal considering the current situation and forces impacting Merriam in the future.

Current Situation:

Streets are one of the principle organizing elements in a city. Merriam’s street network is in place and has significantly influenced the development pattern. Merriam benefits from Turkey Creek Streamway Park Trail System and some sidewalks exist, but for the most part the street network is primarily oriented for the automobile. Public transportation is limited. Johnson County Transit offers one public bus round that passes through Merriam serving approximately 50 riders per day.

MULTIMODAL GOAL 2020:

Merriam’s transportation system appropriately accommodates various modes of transportation balancing access, mobility and congestion minimization.

Factors Impacting the Future:

To permit easy functioning of all these diverse activities and mixed uses, the transportation system will need to be capable of serving efficiently a variety of densities and travel volumes. A multimodal system is needed. Multi-modal transportation system accommodates a variety of transportation options including automobiles, public transit, pedestrians and bicycles in a balanced way to maximize access and to minimize congestion

throughout the community. Walkability, residential street design and linkages has been address in previous strategies. The congestion problems of the current street network will only get worse with increased traffic volume. Johnson County Transit is planning a 2-year pilot commuter rail project to utilize heavy rail for public transportation. They are currently evaluating locations in Merriam along the railroad tracks to house a passenger terminal station. Potential locations currently being evaluated by Johnson County Transit include the general area north of Johnson Drive and east of Merriam Drive adjacent to the railroad tracks.

Implementation Strategies:**Improve traffic flow along major transportation corridors.**

- a) Participate in "Operation Greenlight," an initiative to synchronize street lights across jurisdictions in the Shawnee Mission Parkway corridor.
- b) Consider the realignment of Grandview Road and Johnson Drive as depicted on the Future Land Use Map in Section 7.
- c) Implement traffic calming in the Historic District of Downtown Merriam.
- d) Study alternatives to mitigate congestion at the at-grade railroad crossings located at 75th Street and West Frontage Road and Johnson Drive, just east of Merriam Drive.

Plan for public transit stops within the commercial corridors to enhance the opportunity for people to shop in Merriam and use public transit. Work with Johnson County Transit to implement this strategy.

Target road and transit projects along corridors that will better connect key activity centers. Program these improvements in the Capital Improvement Plan and continue coordination with surrounding jurisdictions.

Participate in regional public transportation projects, specifically the commuter rail project and work to secure a passenger station in Merriam.

2.7 Conclusions

To implement this Plan, additional planning is needed similar to the Downtown Plan, incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan by reference. The various strategies outlined will require an updated zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, design guidelines and many other ordinance changes and program modifications.

At the start of the 21st century, there are many positive attributes, features, and characteristics about Merriam that make it a pleasant place to live, work and play. The success of Merriam's future during the life of this plan rests on its ability to adapt to changes in ways people work and shop, create new strategies to reshape neighborhoods based on changing lifestyles, and seek community involvement in decision making.

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