

CENTRE AVENUE MIXED-USE FEASIBILITY STUDY

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

urban design associates

january 2005



Centre Avenue Mixed-Use Feasibility Study

UNDERTAKEN ON BEHALF OF
The Hill Community
Development Corporation

THROUGH A FUNDING REQUEST TO
The Hill District Growth Fund of the
Local Initiatives Support Corporation

CONSULTANT TEAM
Urban Design Associates

Cover Images:

A variety of close-up views of potential
plan configurations for the seven sites
studied during this design process

STEERING COMMITTEE

Terri Baltimore
*Hill District Community
Collaborative*

Beatrice Carter
Roy A. Hunt Foundation

Stephanie A. Cipriani
National City Bank

G. Reynolds Clark
University of Pittsburgh

Darla Cravotta
Carnegie Library

Evan Frazier
Hill House Association

Reverend Glenn Grayson
Churches & Clergy United

Maureen Hogan
*Consultant to Local Initiatives
Support Corporation*

Marc Knezevich
Urban Redevelopment Authority

Robert Lavelle, Jr.
Dwelling House

Sarah D. Perry
*Pittsburgh Partnership for
Neighborhood Development*

Stephen Schillo
Duquesne University

Rob Stephany
East Liberty Development, Inc.

Councilperson Sala Udin
Pittsburgh City Council

John M. Wilds
University of Pittsburgh

Richard Witherspoon
Hill District Federal Credit Union

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Terri Baltimore
*Hill District Community
Collaborative*

William Bersick
Hill CDC Board Member

Darla Cravotta
Carnegie Library

Jerry Dettore
Urban Redevelopment Authority

Michael Eannarino
*Housing Authority of the City of
Pittsburgh*

Clare Ann Fitzgerald
*Housing Authority of the City of
Pittsburgh*

Reverend Glenn Grayson
*Churches & Clergy United and Hill
CDC Board Member*

Elbert Hatley
Ebony Development

Maureen Hogan
*Consultant to Local Initiatives
Support Corporation*

Russell Jenkins
Urban Redevelopment Authority

Mary Kellers
McCormack Baron Salazar, Inc.

Ellen Kight
*Department of Community and
Economic Development*

Monique King-Viehlend
Urban League

Marc Knezevich
Urban Redevelopment Authority

Cynthia McShan
Ebony Development

Marimba Milliones
Hill CDC Board Member

Vannessa Murphy-Zur
*Pittsburgh Partnership for
Neighborhood Development*

Lorri Newson
*Housing Authority of the City of
Pittsburgh*

Leeretta Payne
*Pittsburgh Community Services (and
Hill District Resident)*

Marty Prentice
Hill House

Robert Rubinstein
Urban Redevelopment Authority

Stephen Schillo
Duquesne University

Skip Schwab
Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Peter Smerd
Hill CDC Board Member

Da Nita-Ouja Solomon
*Hill Community Development
Corporation*

Rob Stephany
*East Liberty Development, Inc. / Hill
Community Development
Corporation*

Sonya Tilghman
East Liberty Development, Inc.

Dorcus Turner
Hill CDC Board Member

Jerry Williams
Urban Redevelopment Authority

Andrea Wright-Banks
*Hill Community Development
Corporation*

Jason Vrabel
*Community Design Center of
Pittsburgh*

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW 1

Introduction
The Project Site
The Planning Process

DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES 3

Proposed Use Types
Sites 1 - 7

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES 18

Traditional Commercial Districts
Essential Building Qualities

BUILDING PLACEMENT & STREETSCAPE GUIDELINES 19

Building Orientation
Setbacks
Off-Street Parking
Loading & Servicing
Streetscape Guidelines

ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES 20

Massing
Height
Width
Entrances
Windows & Doors
Trim & Cornice Elements

Overview

INTRODUCTION

Centre Avenue, the commercial core in Pittsburgh's historic Hill District, has been the focus of numerous planning and redevelopment efforts over the last forty years, much of it detrimental to the social, financial, and physical health of the corridor. There have been bright spots, however, with the development of Crawford Square and several individual developments by developers such as Ebony Development and Central Baptist Church.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) has for years been assembling sites and buildings along the Centre Avenue corridor with the intention of designating a master developer for the properties. In anticipation of that selection, the URA in partnership with the Hill District stakeholders commissioned UDA to prepare the Centre Avenue Commercial Revitalization Study, published in September 2002. Currently, several developers are currently thinking through single-use and mixed-use development opportunities on Centre Avenue. Consequently, this planning process was undertaken by the Hill District Growth Fund to move the 2002 study further by providing overall context for specific development as it occurs so that there is a united vision in the end.

Through its funding partners, LISC has established a strategic investment fund for the Hill District known as the Hill District Growth Fund. This current planning effort was funded as the result of a request of the Hill CDC, the review/approval of the Hill District Growth Fund and the concurrence of LISC's Local Advisory Board. Also, through the Hill District Growth Fund, ELDI is providing technical assistance to the Hill CDC in the area of commercial development.

In this context, UDA had been engaged to reevaluate development scenarios for a few sites along Centre Avenue. The objective of

this study is to test the feasibility of mixed-use buildings on several sites along Centre Avenue during a one-day design workshop with the key stakeholders.

THE PROJECT SITE

Of particular interest to the Hill CDC is the potential for a mixed-use building in the two blocks between Centre Avenue and Wylie Avenue (A & B on the map below) immediately adjacent and east of the existing Hill CDC building. The Hill CDC had also added a third site (C), the URA site adjacent to the AUBA Shopping Center.



An existing conditions plan of Centre Avenue identifying the three sites that were initially selected by the Hill CDC for their potential development possibilities at the beginning of the study.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

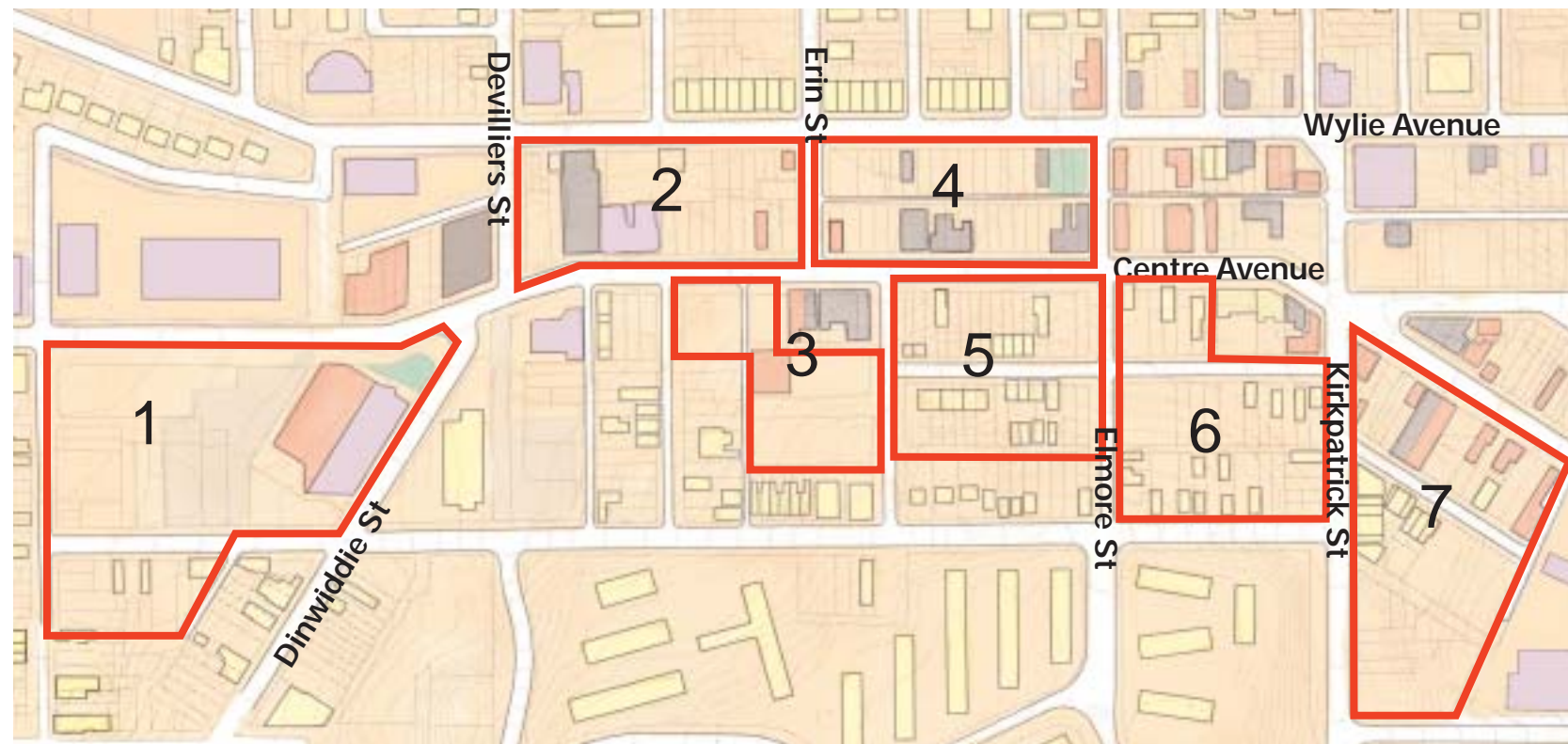
The workshop provided an arena for all development stakeholders to openly discuss their hopes and goals for the Centre Avenue commercial district. The intent was not to re-plan but revisit by testing new markets and mixed-use development scenarios. The design principles from the 2002 study effort were revisited and found to still capture the goals of those involved. In addition, the combined energies of the Hill CDC, LISC, the Hill District Growth Fund, the URA, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP), Carnegie Library, City Planning, the Urban League, Hill House, and McCormack Baron Salazar yielded additional sites of interest (see graphic at right for the four additional sites) and a potential development agenda. This agenda was identified from input from all of the workshop attendees and is represented in both written form (below) and graphic form (see Development Alternatives, pp. 3 to 17).

Potential Development Agenda

- Urban League Offices: 50,000 plus 75-100 parking spaces
- Carnegie Library: 15,000 plus 25 parking spaces
- Grocery Store: 14,000 plus 108 parking spaces
- Elderly Housing: 90 units plus 45 parking spaces
- Wylie Avenue Housing: 5 - 10 units
- New Granada Theater: Rehabbed as a cultural element
- Parking for Hill House: 82 parking spaces
- Ebony Mixed-Use Development: 8 housing units plus 2 commercial storefronts
- Market Rate Housing
- Public Open Space

PLANNING PRINCIPLES FROM THE 2002 CENTRE AVENUE STUDY	
PRESERVE Preserve and strengthen existing businesses.	PROVIDE A MIX OF USES Neighborhood serving retail, including a grocery store and drug store; commercial offices; culture/entertainment; live/work artist space; institutional; and residential.
FOSTER Foster new businesses from within the Hill District and attract new businesses from outside the Hill District.	DEVELOP PARKING Provide centrally located multi-use parking.
RESTORE Restore Centre Avenue as a great "main street" for the Hill District.	CONNECT Reinforce pedestrian and transit connections to the neighborhoods of the Hill District as well as to Oakland and Downtown.
ATTRACT Make Centre Avenue a destination for shopping and entertainment for both Hill District residents and visitors.	PROVIDE OPEN SPACE Provide green space, parklets, and gathering places for seniors, children, workers, and customers.
CELEBRATE Retain the historic character of Centre Avenue, and preserve and celebrate the cultural history of the Hill District.	
WELCOME Create a safe, drug free, pedestrian-friendly environment that is welcoming to all.	

The planning principles from the 2002 Centre Avenue Study were revisited and reviewed during this workshop for their applicability to this current effort.



An existing conditions plan of Centre Avenue identifying all seven sites that were identified during the design workshop by the stakeholder group for their potential development possibilities.

Development Alternatives

A unique quality to this Centre Avenue Mixed-Use Study was that the steering committee and stakeholder developers all came to the table with specific development initiatives. Through the course of the one-day working session, it became apparent that there are several opportunities for development on Centre Avenue that have a very real possibility of coming to fruition. The HACP must build 90 units of senior housing; the Carnegie Library is prepared to occupy new space along Centre Avenue; the Urban League is seriously considering the Hill District as a location for its Pittsburgh headquarters; and the URA has put out a Request for Proposals for a 14,000-square-foot grocery store on their property. The synergy of these proposals and the potential for their influence on the revitalization of the Centre Avenue commercial corridor led to the design team's response of a menu of opportunities (illustrated at right).

PROPOSED USE TYPES

The suggested development opportunities boiled down into the following building categories:

1. **Mixed-Use:** This is a building type that already exists on Centre Avenue and on many successful "main streets." It will accommodate a public-use ground floor such as retail, social, or institutional uses, with more private uses such as residential or office on the upper floors.
2. **Library:** This use-type can be a stand-alone building or, as preferred by the Carnegie Library, a first floor component of a mixed-use building. A preference for a single-level space was expressed.
3. **Grocery Store:** The RFP from the URA solicited proposals for a 14,000-square-foot building, but earlier studies looked at anywhere up to a 30,000-square-foot building. This use carries with it the highest parking ratio and specific loading concerns, making its site planning especially sensitive.



Site 1: Option 1



The workshop started with a review of relevant grocery store options for the site we are now calling Site 1. This sketch illustrates a conventional development for a 30,000-square-foot, one-story grocery store located behind a surface parking lot. It was not well received by the stakeholders during the workshop as the parking area on the corner was not a favorable approach to the core of the Centre Avenue commercial district.

Site 1: Option 2



- A** GROCERY STORE, 1 STORY @ 30,000 S.F.
(30,000 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- B** RETAIL, 2 STORIES @ 7,200 S.F.
(14,400 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- C** RETAIL, 2 STORIES @ 9,000 S.F.
(18,000 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- D** SURFACE PARKING, 183 SPACES

This sketch explores the idea of reconfiguring the Dinwiddie / Centre intersection through the gradual redevelopment of the AUBA Shops and creating two additional development parcels along Centre Avenue. A 30,000-square-foot grocery store at the corner of Centre and Heldman is illustrated with its surface parking lot to the east. Two-story retail buildings line the south side of Centre providing a continuous street edge which leads to a new plaza at Devilliers and Centre.

Site 1: Option 3



- A** GROCERY STORE, 1 STORY @ 14,000 S.F.
(14,000 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- B** SURFACE PARKING
146 SPACES

This option locates a 14,000-square-foot, one-story grocery store at the corner of Heldman and Centre and surface parking behind on the URA property. This scenario creates a strong retail edge as well as acting as a gateway to the Centre Avenue Commercial District.

Site 1: Option 4



This option builds upon Option 3 but shifts the grocery store to the east and places two-story retail buildings at the corner of Heldman and Centre to hold the corner and build a continuous street edge. This configuration allows the servicing for all of the retail to happen on the rear in an interior courtyard. The parking is shown behind the store.

Site 1: Option 5



- A** GROCERY STORE, 1 STORY @ 14,000 S.F.
(14,000 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- B** RETAIL, 2 STORIES @ 8,000 S.F.
(16,000 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- C** RETAIL, 2 STORIES @ 7,200 S.F.
(14,400 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- D** RETAIL, 2 STORIES @ 9,000 S.F.
(18,000 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- E** SURFACE PARKING, 134 SPACES

This option builds upon both Option 2 and Option 5 by incorporating the retail/grocery store configuration from Option 4 into the larger reconfiguration of Devillers and Dinwiddie block. Better development blocks and a stronger street edge are created along Centre.

Site 2: Option 1

- A** LIBRARY, 2 STORIES @ 7,500 S.F.
(15,00 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- B** RETAIL/RESIDENTIAL, 1 STORY RETAIL @
3,700 S.F.
2 STORIES RESIDENTIAL, APPROX 6
UNITS (11,100 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- C** GRANADA THEATRE REUSE, 1 STORY
RETAIL @ 9,100 S.F., 3 STORIES
RESIDENTIAL, APPROX 30 UNITS
(36,400 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- D** RETAIL/RESIDENTIAL, 1 STORY RETAIL @
2,000 S.F.
2 STORIES RESIDENTIAL, APPROX. 4
UNITS (6,000 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- E** RESIDENTIAL TOWNHOUSES, 14 UNITS
- F** SURFACE PARKING, 10 SPACES



Site 2 is the block on which the Granada Theater(C) and the Hill CDC's offices (purple building next to the Granada) are located. This option proposes new mixed-use buildings at the corners of the block (B, D) on Centre, the re-use of the Granada (C) into retail and residential uses, as well as a new two-story building dedicated to the library(A). A "liner" of new two- or three- story townhouse units are illustrated on the Wylie Avenue side of the block to restore the residential address and build upon the existing Wylie Avenue townhouses developed by the Hill CDC.

Site 2: Option 2

- A** RETAIL/RESIDENTIAL, 1 STORY RETAIL @ 7,500 S.F., 2 STORIES RESIDENTIAL, APPROX. 14 UNITS (22,500 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- B** RETAIL/RESIDENTIAL, 1 STORY RETAIL @ 3,700 S.F., 2 STORIES RESIDENTIAL, APPROX. 6 UNITS (11,100 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- C** GRANADA THEATRE REUSE, 1 STORY RETAIL @ 9,100 S.F., 3 STORIES RESIDENTIAL, APPROX. 30 UNITS (36,400 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- D** RETAIL/RESIDENTIAL, 1 STORY RETAIL @ 2,000 S.F., 2 STORIES RESIDENTIAL, APPROX. 4 UNITS (6,000 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- E** RESIDENTIAL TOWNHOUSES, 14 UNITS
- F** SURFACE PARKING, 10 SPACES



This option for Site 2 illustrates a mixed-use building (A) which has retail on the first floor and residential on the upper stories. In both this option and Option 1, the existing structures remain and the new development is sited around them.

Site 3: Option 1



Illustrated on Site 3, at the corner of Grove and Centre, is a mixed-use building with a 12,000-square-foot library on the first floor and residential units above. Parking is provided behind the building between Calliope and Addison Streets. Calliope Street is turned into an alley serving potential new residential units facing Grove and Rose.

Site 3: Option 2



This option for Site 3 proposes a retail use on the first floor with residential units above.

Site 4: Option 1



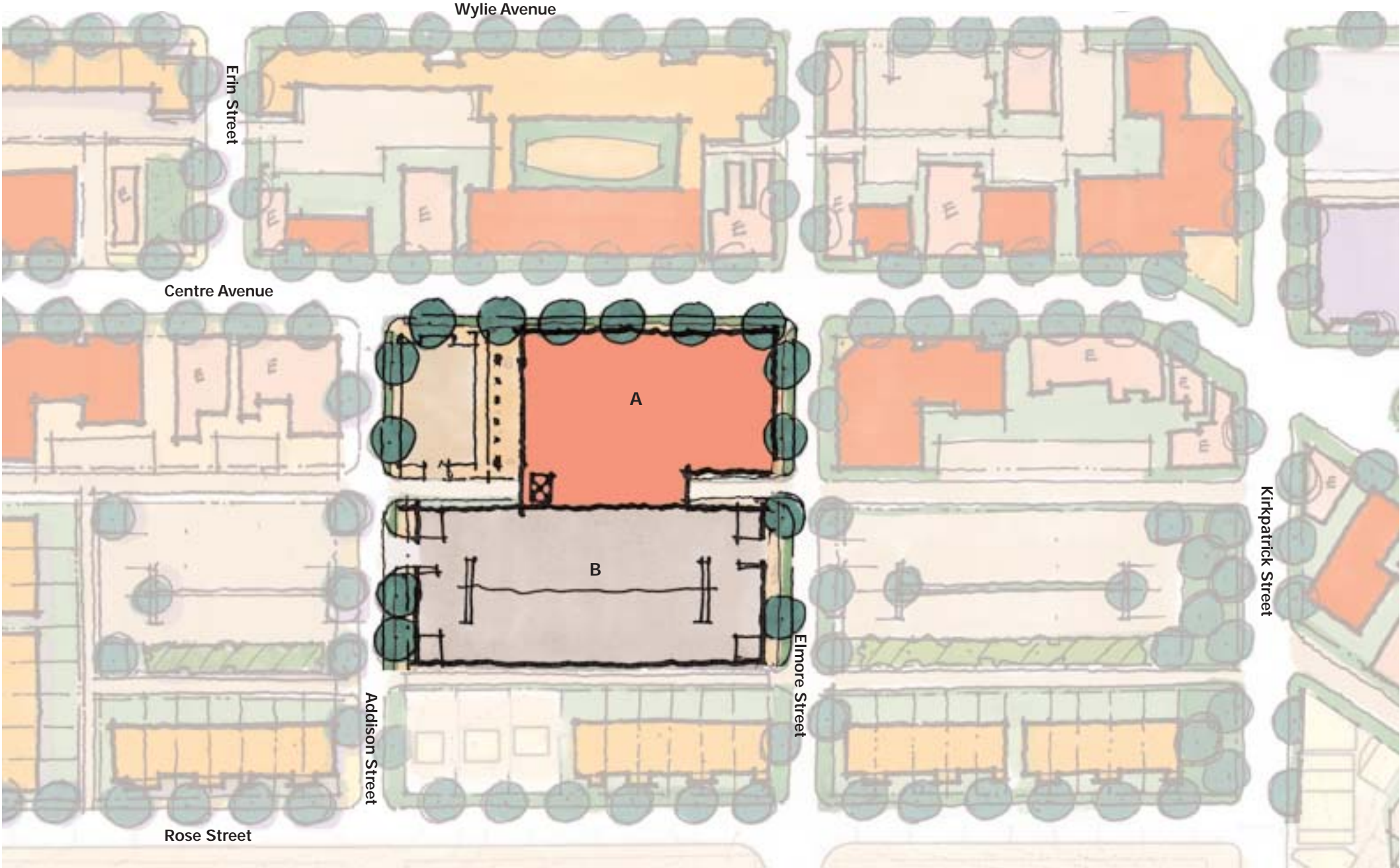
Site 4 proposes a mixed-use building on Centre Avenue between Erin and Elmore Streets accommodating a small retail use and the 15,000-square-foot Carnegie Library on the first floor and elderly housing on the upper two levels. The Wylie Avenue side of the building is connected to the upper stories on the Centre Avenue side, both of which comprise the 92-unit elderly housing project by HACF. A private garden courtyard is created for the residents between the "arms" of the building. Parking is provided on the west side of the block.

Site 4: Option 2



Option 2 proposes all retail uses of the first floor of the building facing Centre Avenue. Another alternative discussed during the workshop was allocating some of this space for the community activities for the Senior Housing program. Again, the upper floors as well as the Wylie Avenue frontage will be dedicated to the HACP program.

Site 5



- A** GROCERY STORE, 1 STORY @ 30,000 S.F. (30,000 TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- B** PARKING GARAGE 2 LEVELS, 120 SPACES

The proposal for Site 5 illustrates a 30,000-square-foot grocery store alternative located on Centre between Elmore and Addison Streets. The associated parking is placed behind the building in a 2-level structured parking garage.

Site 6



Site 6 contains the 50,000-square-foot Urban League office building on the corner of Centre and Elmore . Surface parking located behind it. The parking lot's edge along Kirkpatrick is buffered with a large, landscaped green. A row of townhouses is proposed on Rose Street to reinforce the residential fabric to the south.

Site 7



- A** GROCERY STORE, 1 STORY @ 30,000 S.F. (30,000 S.F. TOTAL GROSS SQ. FT.)
- B** SURFACE PARKING, 132 SPACES

The proposal for Site 7 illustrates a 30,000-square-foot grocery store is located at Kirkpatrick and Centre. The associated parking is placed in front of the store because of site grading issues. The Stakeholder felt this was a poor use for the important corner of Kirkpatrick and Centre.

Development Guidelines



These buildings along Centre Avenue reflect Traditional Commercial District qualities A, B, C and F and Essential Building Qualities A, B, C, and D.



As a final component of this study, the Hill CDC asked UDA to prepare a brief written design guideline based on the plan alternatives developed in the work session. This guideline codifies the Hill CDC's desire to establish architecturally appropriate infill development on Centre Avenue. This section will be used by developers interested in sites along Centre Avenue. On the following pages, we review the qualities of good commercial main streets, discuss essential characteristics appropriate for Centre Avenue, and then identify Building, Streetscape, and Architectural Guidelines that reflect the vision of the Hill District as outlined in the 2002 study.

TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

We have found that there are common characteristics found in traditional commercial districts that help to create and maintain a good “main street” feel within the public realm:

- A. Public uses along the street (retail, service-oriented office, or institutional use)
- B. A consistent vertical street edge of typically two or more floors, or in the case of voids between buildings, a continuous landscape treatment between buildings
- C. Composed architectural expression with open, transparent, commercial storefronts and punched window articulation for upper level floors
- D. Containment of public realm through the development of buildings on opposing sides of the street
- E. Streetscape elements that encourage pedestrian activity such as wide sidewalks, street furniture, pedestrian-scaled street lighting and street trees.

- F. Varied but harmonious building rhythm and bay rhythms
- G. On-street parking and nearby off-street parking resources

ESSENTIAL BUILDING QUALITIES

New mixed-use development along Centre Avenue in the commercial district should be understanding of its context and build upon the established architectural quality of this once vibrant main street:

- A. Typically three- to four-story buildings with an expression of base (storefront), middle (office or residential), and top (cornice line or roofscape)
- B. Simple window compositions above the ground floor with vertically-proportioned, punched openings
- C. Use of parapet walls with cornice expression or mansard roof forms
- D. Simple material palette typically of brick and wood trim
- E. Occasional canopies, awnings, and balconies as additive elements that do not extend the full length of the facade and typically occur at the break between the ground and second floors



Similar to the buildings along Centre Avenue shown in the photos to the upper left, this block which contains the historic Granada Theater building and the Hill CDC office building forms one of the more intact “street walls” on Centre Avenue. These buildings also reflect Traditional Commercial District qualities A, B, C, E, F and G and Essential Building Qualities A, B, C, and D.

Building Placement & Streetscape Guidelines



Commercial buildings at the intersection of Centre Avenue at Kirkpatrick Street



Above and right: Traditional neighborhood commercial districts in western Pennsylvania.



BUILDING ORIENTATION

The main entrance of a building should face Centre Avenue. Corner entrances are encouraged at intersections. Buildings on corners should also have composed secondary facades facing the side street. Special elements such as towers should be encouraged as a way to resolve a corner condition.

SETBACKS

To maintain the perception of a continuous street wall, 80% of each front building facade should be placed within five feet of the front property line. This setback zone allows for visual diversity and variety in sidewalk widths which provide for outdoor dining areas while maintaining a consistent street edge.

OFF-STREET PARKING

Off-street parking areas should be located behind buildings and shared whenever possible. If site conditions prohibit rear parking, lots may be placed beside the building but must be screened from Centre Avenue by landscaping treatments such as brick or stone walls, iron fences, or hedges that maintain the definition of the street edge.

Parking lots should never be located between Centre Avenue and a building's front facade. Vehicular access to parking lots should be from alleys and side streets in order to minimize curb cuts on Centre Avenue. Parking lots should have direct pedestrian access to Centre.

LOADING & SERVICING

All loading and service areas should be located behind the buildings. Such areas should be screened from view from side streets and alleys through the use of walls, fences, and landscaping.

STREETSCAPE GUIDELINES

1. Street Lighting: Pedestrian-scaled, traditional lighting is preferred; Cobra style highway lighting is not permitted. Street lighting and vehicular signal standards should be coordinated for the district.
2. Street Furniture: Benches for resting, bike racks to encourage bicyclists to visit, and city standard garbage cans to prevent litter should be provided throughout the commercial district.
3. On-street Parking: Metered on-street parking should be permitted wherever possible along Centre Avenue except during the peak travel hours of 6 - 9 am and 4 - 6 pm. Bulb-outs (when the curb projects to protect the parking lane) should be provided to enhance pedestrian and vehicular safety.
4. Fencing: Low masonry walls or metal picket fences (3'0" or less) can be used to screen parking lots and service areas. Metal picket fences should be paired with attractive landscaping to increase opacity. Higher fences are permitted where security requirements dictate and where lower walls provide insufficient screening. Chainlink fences are not permitted in the commercial district.
5. Street Trees/Verges: Street trees should be planted along Centre Avenue to enhance the pedestrian environment. Approximately 5'x5' planters with metallic grates flush with the surrounding sidewalk would be appropriate.
7. Signage, Banners, and Wayfinding: Banners are encouraged and should be hung from lightposts to identify the Hill District, particularly at important intersections. Street signs should be attached to lightposts wherever possible to minimize the amount of obstruction in the pedestrian realm.

Architectural Guidelines

MASSING

Buildings are composed of simple volumes with either flat or mansard-style roofs.

HEIGHT

Buildings should be a minimum of two stories tall. The first floor-to-floor height should be a minimum of 12 to 15 feet, in keeping with the existing buildings along Centre Avenue. Upper floor-to-floor heights should be a minimum of 10 feet. Single story structures should have a taller ground floor, 16 to 18 feet, to be in scale with the surrounding buildings.

WIDTH

Buildings wider than 30 feet should have facades divided into vertical bays that reflect those of historic Centre Avenue shopfronts.

4. Horizontal and Vertical Facade Composition: Building facades should be divided into a clear base, middle and top. Bases (storefronts) should be consistent in height (+/- 2 feet) along Centre Avenue. Historic facades are usually divided into two and three bay compositions above shopfronts and expressed as punched openings.

ENTRANCES

Entrances can be articulated by the addition of projecting awnings or signage. They may also be recessed slightly from the street in order to minimize door swings into the pedestrian realm.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

Ground-floor shopfront systems should incorporate glazed doors and display windows. Street-front doors that access upper level residential may be smaller scale and opaque, but must fit within the bay pattern. Upper-story windows should be "punched," vertical in proportion, and arranged in a simple, orderly compositions.

TRIM AND CORNICE ELEMENTS

Storefronts should be designed using a palette of columns, pilasters, and trim to frame shopfront windows. Large panels or a deep cornice expression above the shopfront serves as an area for signage or awnings. The tops of buildings should be delineated with some form of cornice expression, either with a trim material, with brackets and panels, or with accentuated brick and stonework.

An elevation study of the block of Centre Avenue between Erin and Elmore, depicts new buildings seamlessly integrated into the existing street fabric.

