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MERIDIAN CORRIDOR PLACEMAKING STUDY



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David Holt, Mayor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Placemaking Study Team would like to extend a special thank you to the residents, business owners, community leaders and others of the Meridian Corridor for their time and insight into developing this study. The following individuals are recognized for their significant contributions to the preparation of the Meridian Corridor Placemaking Study.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 (pg 7)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

02 (pg 13)

PROJECT TIMELINE

03 (pg 17)

HISTORY

04 (pg 25)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

05 (pg 43)

**STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENT**

06 (pg 55)

DISTRICT PLACEMAKING

07 (pg 115)

RECOMMENDATIONS

08 (pg 121)

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

09 (pg 124)

LIST OF FIGURES





Figure 1: Picture courtesy of Visit OKC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose & Goals

This section summarizes the intent of the Meridian Corridor Placemaking Project and the importance of re-investing in Meridian to keep it a valuable asset for Oklahoma City and its visitors.

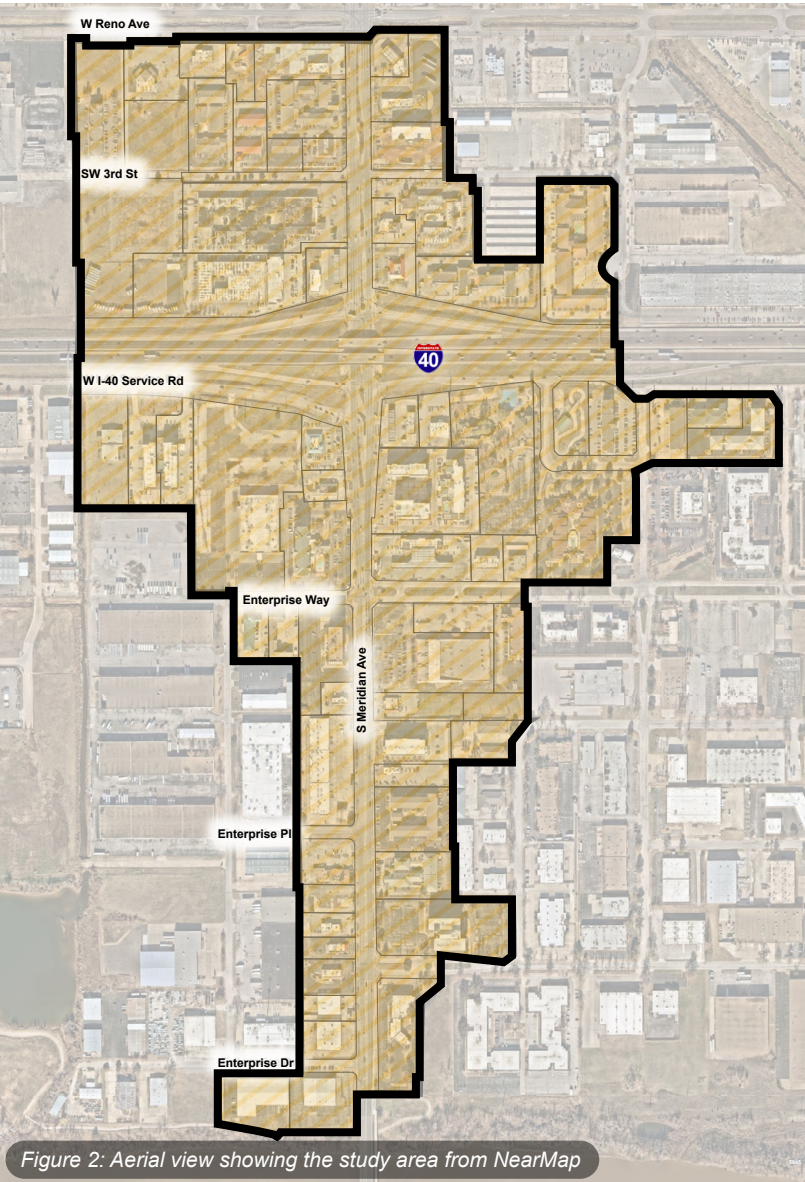


Figure 2: Aerial view showing the study area from NearMap

North End

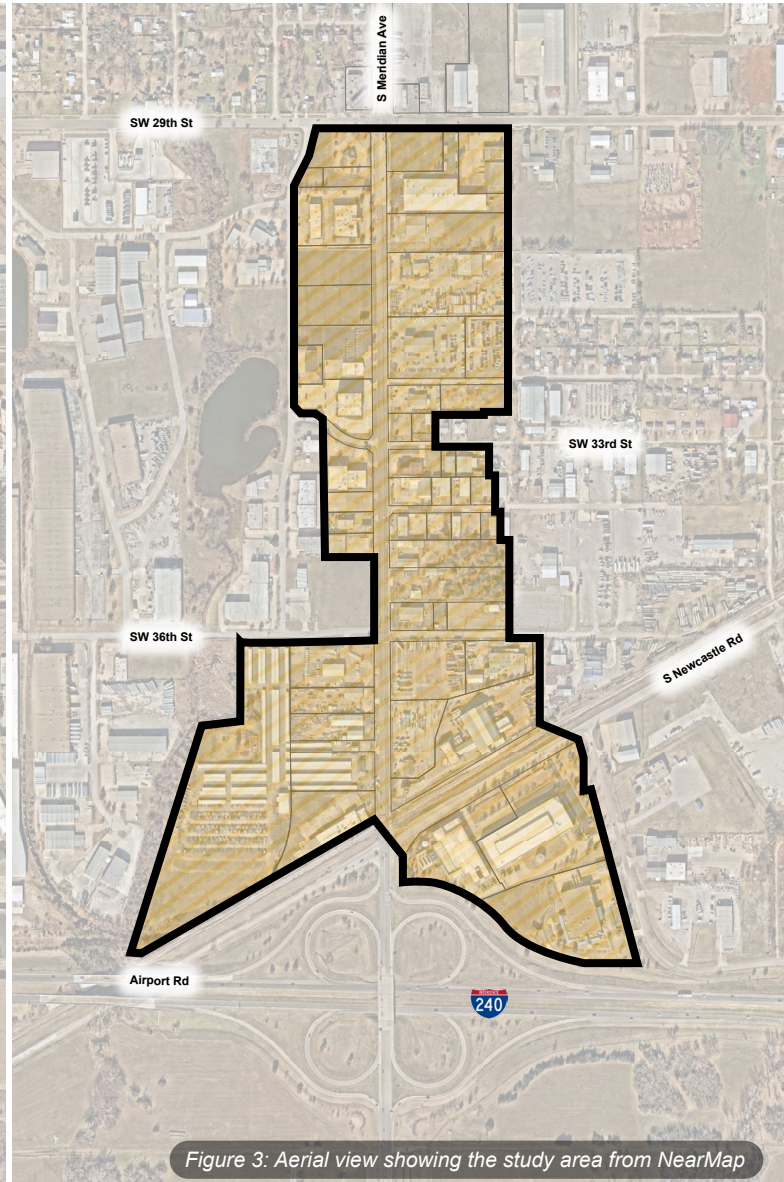


Figure 3: Aerial view showing the study area from NearMap

South End

Introduction

The Meridian Corridor has long been a critical gateway to Oklahoma City, linking Will Rogers International Airport to downtown OKC and serving as a key economic corridor. Despite its strategic location, the corridor has more recently struggled with disinvestment, outdated infrastructure, and a fragmented identity. As a historic hub for hospitality and commerce, the area has more recently seen increased safety concerns, declining business activity, and an overall lack of cohesion.

This study was commissioned in 2023 by the City of Oklahoma City Planning Department to re-imagine the Meridian Corridor as a vibrant, safe, and economically viable commercial district, addressing its current challenges while leveraging its existing assets. Our approach is rooted in placekeeping—ensuring that improvements respect the corridor's history while positioning it for long-term success.

This Placemaking Study was conducted with three clear opportunities for the district on the horizon: (1) the proposed addition of a light rail connecting downtown to the airport along Meridian by the Regional Transportation Authority, (2) the City of Oklahoma City's impending plans for a General Obligation (GO) Bond vote in 2025, and (3) the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) recognition that the I-40 bridge over Meridian will need to be replaced in the next 10 to 20 years. Through extensive stakeholder engagement, we identified six focus areas that will guide phases of improvements, each requiring different levels of involvement from the public, private, and civic sectors.

1

Business Improvement District & Civic Involvement

A strong, unified management structure is vital for sustained success in the Meridian Corridor. Creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) or a formal property owners association would provide ongoing funding for maintenance, security, branding, and infrastructure enhancements. The BID would allow business/property owners to pool resources, enabling the district to implement higher-quality services that the City alone cannot provide.

Why this matters

- Establishes a mechanism for long-term district management.
- Provides funding for security, cleanliness, and beautification efforts.
- Creates a collective voice to advocate for City resources and private investment.

A well-structured BID will give businesses along the corridor more control over their environment, ensuring the improvements made through public investment are maintained and leveraged for continued economic growth.

2

I-40 Bridge Enhancements

The I-40 bridge serves as the primary gateway into the Meridian Corridor, yet its current condition does little to reflect the significance of the area. Improvements to the bridge, including enhanced lighting, public art, landscaping, and structural design enhancements, will create a stronger sense of arrival and contribute to a safer, more welcoming environment.

Why this matters

- Establishes a signature gateway that sets a positive tone for visitors traveling from the airport.
- Enhances pedestrian safety and encourages more connectivity between both sides of the corridor.
- Improves perceptions of the district, reinforcing it as a high-quality commercial destination.

Short-term improvements such as lighting and murals can create an immediate impact, while long-term reconstruction of the bridge which is a (ODOT) long-term plan, will allow for more significant architectural enhancements.

3

Riverfront Enhancements

The Oklahoma River is one of the district's most underutilized assets. Currently, the riverfront lacks direct connections to the businesses along Meridian and does not offer the types of public spaces, amenities, and activities that could enhance its role in the corridor. The study recommends activating the riverfront with new development, improved access, and public amenities to create a stronger draw for both visitors and locals.

Why this matters

- Leverages a natural asset to attract dining, recreation, and entertainment.
- Provides opportunities for trail-oriented development that supports businesses.

Key improvements include trail connections, thinning overgrown vegetation for better visibility and safety, and encouraging riverfront-facing commercial development. Over time, the corridor can evolve into a mixed-use district where visitors can seamlessly move between hotels, restaurants, the river, and transit options.

4

Streetscape Enhancements

The Meridian Corridor is currently auto-dominated with wide roadways, excessive curb cuts, and limited pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. A coordinated streetscape improvement plan would introduce wider sidewalks, improved lighting, landscaped medians, and wayfinding elements that enhance both safety and aesthetics.

Why this matters

- Makes the corridor more walkable and inviting, improving the experience for both residents and visitors.
- Creates cohesion in the district's appearance, reinforcing a distinct identity.
- Supports business growth by making storefronts more accessible and encouraging foot traffic.

Short-term improvements can include street furniture, landscaping, and lighting upgrades, while long-term plans could explore median additions, better transit integration, and multi-modal connectivity. Over time, the corridor can transition from a high-speed thoroughfare to a balanced, pedestrian-friendly commercial corridor.

5

Safety & Security

Public safety is one of the most pressing concerns for business owners and visitors along Meridian. Transient populations, crime, and inadequate lighting have created a perception of an unsafe environment. Addressing these issues requires a multi-pronged approach, including increased police presence, improved lighting, partnerships with social services, and district security initiatives through a BID.

Why this matters

- Reduces crime and improves perceptions of safety, making the corridor more attractive for investment.
- Encourages more evening and nighttime activity, boosting economic opportunities for restaurants and entertainment venues.
- Supports businesses by providing a more inviting environment for customers and employees.

Collaboration between business owners, law enforcement, and social service providers will be essential to implementing solutions that balance security with compassionate approaches to homelessness and loitering.

6

Events & Branding

The Meridian Corridor lacks a cohesive identity, making it difficult to market the district as a destination. Establishing a strong brand and hosting regular events will create an engaging, recognizable district that attracts visitors and supports local businesses. Events such as food festivals, art walks, seasonal markets, and live music will activate the corridor and give it a distinct character.

Why this matters

- Strengthens the corridor's identity, making it more recognizable and marketable.
- Increases foot traffic and encourages visitors to stay longer and explore.
- Supports local businesses by providing regular promotional opportunities.

Branding efforts should focus on connecting Meridian's identity to Oklahoma City's broader tourism efforts, potentially aligning with the airport's rebranding and the City's western heritage. A strong brand, supported by wayfinding signage, public art, and digital marketing efforts will reinforce the corridor's presence as a must-visit district.



Figure 4: Concept for I-40
Underpass Credits by ADG Blatt

Implementation & Phasing

These six focus areas represent a multi-phase approach that will unfold over time, requiring different levels of involvement from businesses, property owners, the City, and private developers. Some short-term actions—such as lighting, murals, and wayfinding—can be accomplished within 1-5 years, while larger-scale initiatives like riverfront development and bridge reconstruction will take more than 20 years and require strategic funding mechanisms. The study outlines a clear roadmap for implementation, detailing:

- Short-term (0-5 years): Quick wins, including lighting, branding, security partnerships, General Obligation (GO) Bond 2025 and business coordination.
- Mid-term (5-20 years): More substantial streetscape improvements, early BID development, I-40 bridge enhancements and targeted business attractions.
- Long-term (20+ years): Major infrastructure investments such as Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), riverfront development, and full-scale corridor transformation.

Conclusion

This report is not just a planning document, it is a blueprint for action. The recommendations provide a pathway to reposition the Meridian Corridor as a premier gateway to Oklahoma City, transforming it into a thriving, safe, and economically resilient district. The vision can only be achieved through coordinated efforts between public and private stakeholders, sustained investment, and a commitment to creating a place that is both reflective of its history and forward thinking in its approach.



Figure 5: Picture courtesy of Visit OKC

PROJECT TIMELINE

Project Schedule and Milestones

This section outlines the stages of the Meridian Corridor Placemaking Study.

TIMELINE OF THE

MERIDIAN CORRIDOR PLACEMAKING STUDY

1

FALL 2023

Project Kickoff



2

WINTER 2023

Initial Stakeholder Engagement
Key Stakeholder Meeting



3

QUARTER 1 2024

Stakeholder Engagement



4

QUARTER 2 2024

Stakeholder Engagement
& Research Strategy



5

QUARTER 3 2024

Progress Evaluation
& Strategy with Team



6

QUARTER 4 2024

Report Draft



7

QUARTER 1 2025

Report Released
and Recieved





Figure 6: Aerial shot of Meridian Corridor in the early 1980s
Picture courtesy of Metropolitan Library Systems

HISTORY

Rise of The Meridian Corridor

The Meridian Corridor in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, has a rich history that reflects the City's growth and evolution over time. This section provides an overview of the rise of Meridian Avenue from a major thoroughfare celebrating food, entertainment, and local culture to a corridor predominantly focused on lodging and struggling with perception issues.

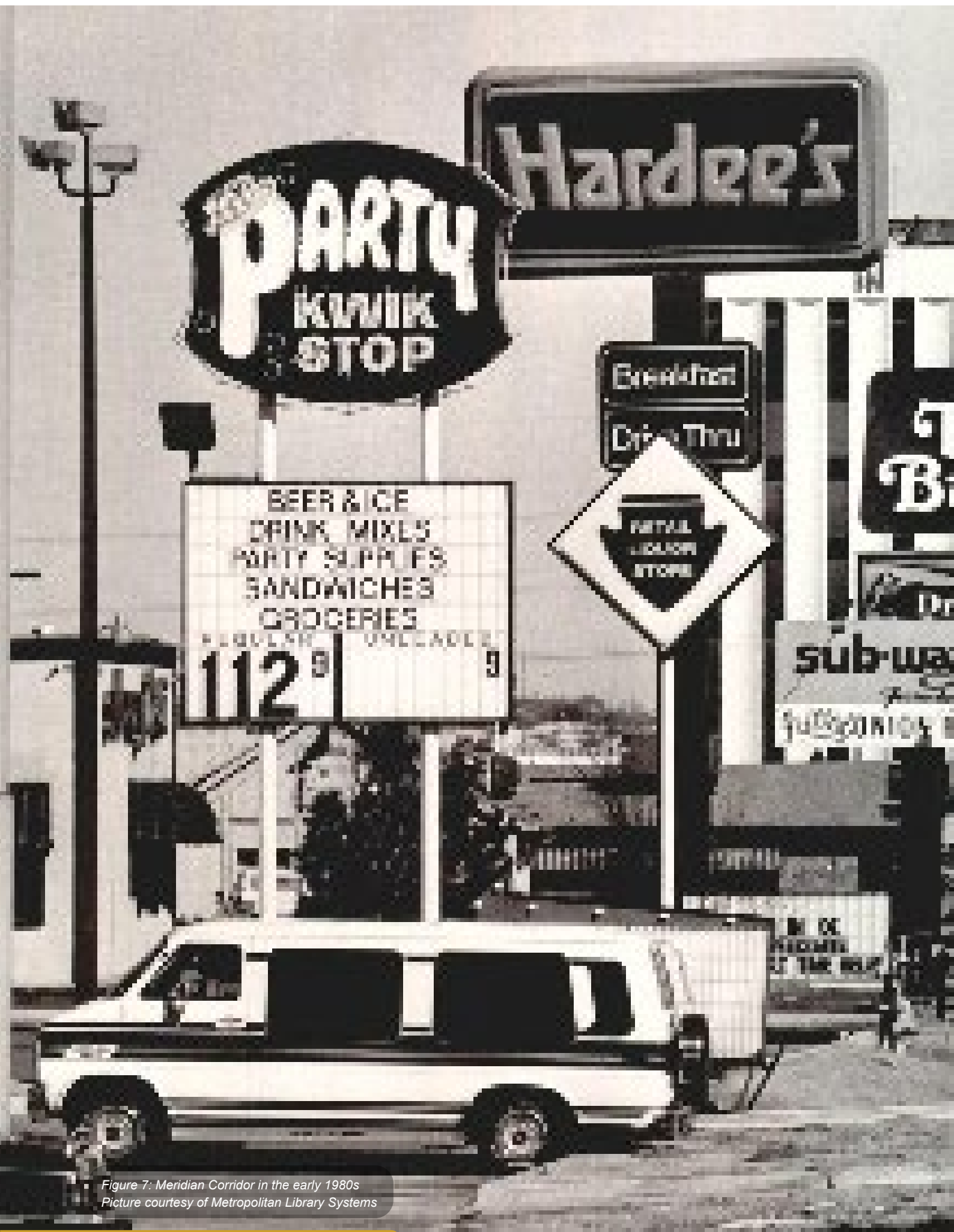


Figure 7: Meridian Corridor in the early 1980s
Picture courtesy of Metropolitan Library Systems



BACKGROUND

Meridian Avenue's ties to aviation date all the way back to 1911 and the establishment of the Oklahoma City Municipal Airfield. The first terminal building was added in 1934, and the Airfield was renamed in honor of Will Rogers in 1941. Throughout the Second World War, the airport increasingly became a hub of activity, and the following decade brought significant development to Oklahoma City, particularly its south side. Beginning in the late 1950s, major Urban Renewal activity in the downtown area displaced many warehouse and light industrial users. This pushed growth out to the City's periphery, like Meridian Avenue, which provided the users ample space to develop even larger areas for the growing trucking and freight industry. Urban Renewal activities also led to the demolition of several downtown hotels, which allowed other parts of the City, especially Meridian, to capitalize on this reduced supply. During this same period, the new highway system simultaneously revolutionized the concept of individual mobility, fundamentally changing where travelers wanted to stay.

The I-40 bridge on Meridian Avenue opened in 1965, strengthening the connection between Will Rogers Airport and downtown Oklahoma City. In 1966 continued growth at the airport led to the construction of an entirely new streamlined terminal designed to launch Oklahoma City into the modern jet age. Newspaper accounts mention that the following year the first hotels opened along the Meridian Corridor to cater to the growing number of travelers. In 1969, construction began on the district's most notable building, the Aero-Meridian Tower and a couple of years later Trammell Crow began development of the Metropolitan Industrial Park, bringing hundreds of new workers to the area.

During this era, the Meridian Corridor experienced significant commercial development. Retail establishments, restaurants, and hotels began to line the avenue, serving both residents and travelers. While other restaurants surely existed before it, the Hungry Peddler became perhaps the corridor's first note-worthy one in 1973. It would be joined quickly by two of the district's most beloved establishments, Molly Murphy's in 1976 and Applewoods in 1978. That same year, the noted western wear company Tener's would leave historic Stockyards City for Meridian. Just one year later, in 1979, the bar Cowboys opened, capitalizing on a renewed interest in western music and clothes best epitomized in the 1980 movie *Urban Cowboy*. In a short time five other nightclubs joined Cowboys along the corridor. In 1983 the Oklahoman newspaper declared Meridian to be Oklahoma City's "Restaurant Row". During this same period, downtown Oklahoma City struggled to redevelop the massive amount of land cleared in the previous two decades before eventually being struck by job losses and office vacancies brought on by the collapse of Penn Square Bank.

While downtown tumbled throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Meridian increasingly became the place to hold major events, like proms, or to take out-of-town guests to eat. However, by the mid-1990s, the fates of these two areas would begin to reverse. In 1996 Molly Murphy's closed its doors and just four years later in 2000, the owners of Applewoods chose to relocate the restaurant to a newer developing area along the Memorial Road corridor. Investment in the Meridian area continued, but the focus was on the river, which was revitalized in 2004 by the Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS). In 2007, the River Cruises were added, allowing a new way to travel from Meridian to downtown and the emerging Boathouse District. That same year, four new hotels were announced for the corridor capitalizing on the newly rediscovered river and the recent westward extension of SW 15th Street. During this same period, the City of Oklahoma City also constructed a new streetscape for Meridian in an early effort to bring renewed interest and camaraderie to the district's property owners.

APPLEWOODS RESTAURANT

Applewoods existed on Meridian for 15 years and is perhaps best remembered simply by its hot apple fritters. The restaurant was owned by Dick Stubbs, notably the long-time owner of Cattleman's in Stockyards City, and at the time of its closure employed 130 people. Browsing online forums, one can find countless former patrons mentioning Applewoods as a top restaurant they would like to see come back, trying to find recipes for specific dishes, or sharing their memories of spending special occasions at the restaurant. Given its 500-seat banquet facility, Applewoods was particularly popular for teens dining out before prom or homecoming dances, as well as for wedding rehearsal dinners. A second location for Applewoods opened in 1982 along Northwest Expressway. Upon news of its closing in 2000, the Oklahoman newspaper reported that during its heyday the restaurant had been included in Hospitality Magazine's Top 100 Volume Restaurants in the country.

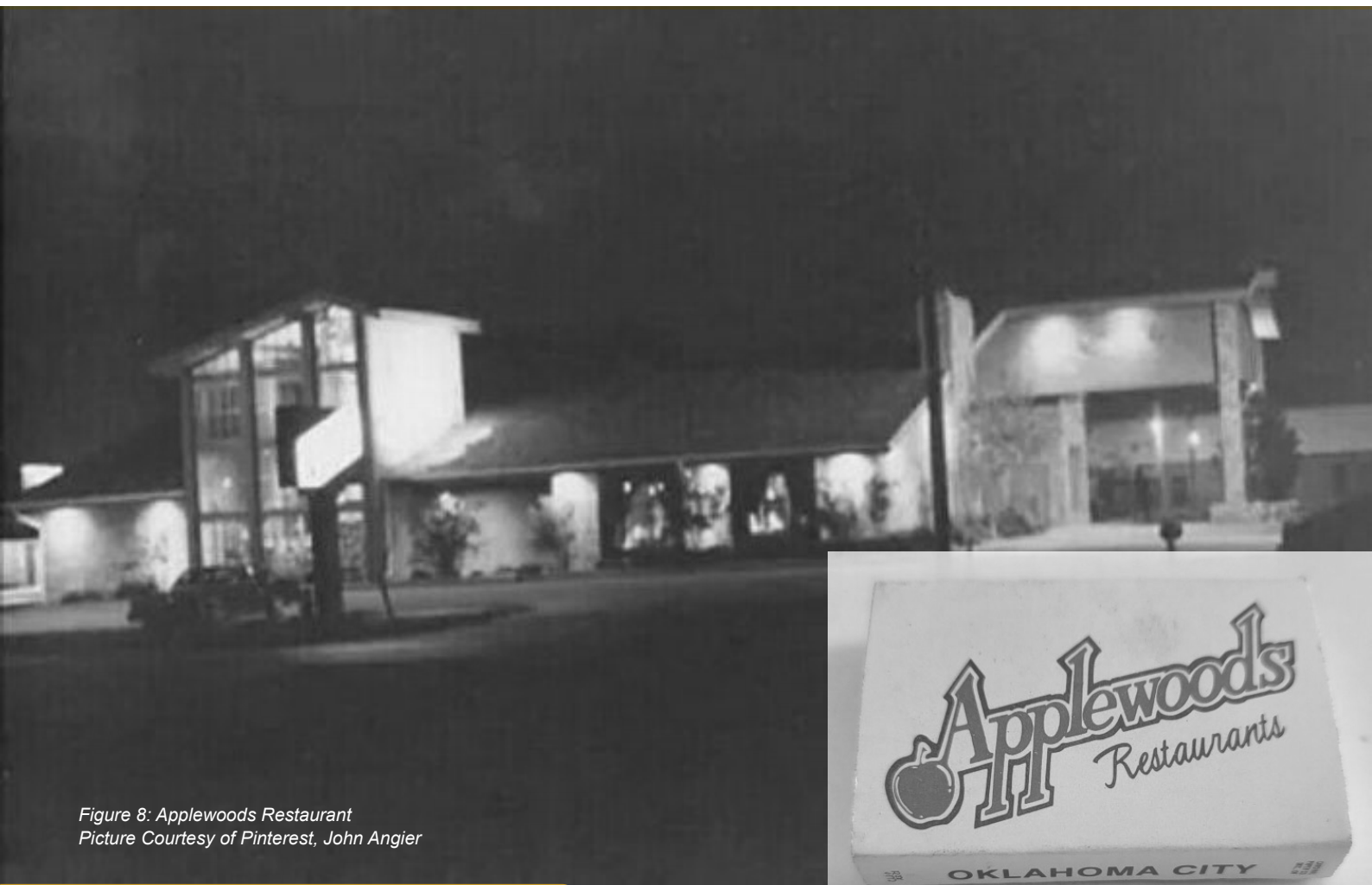
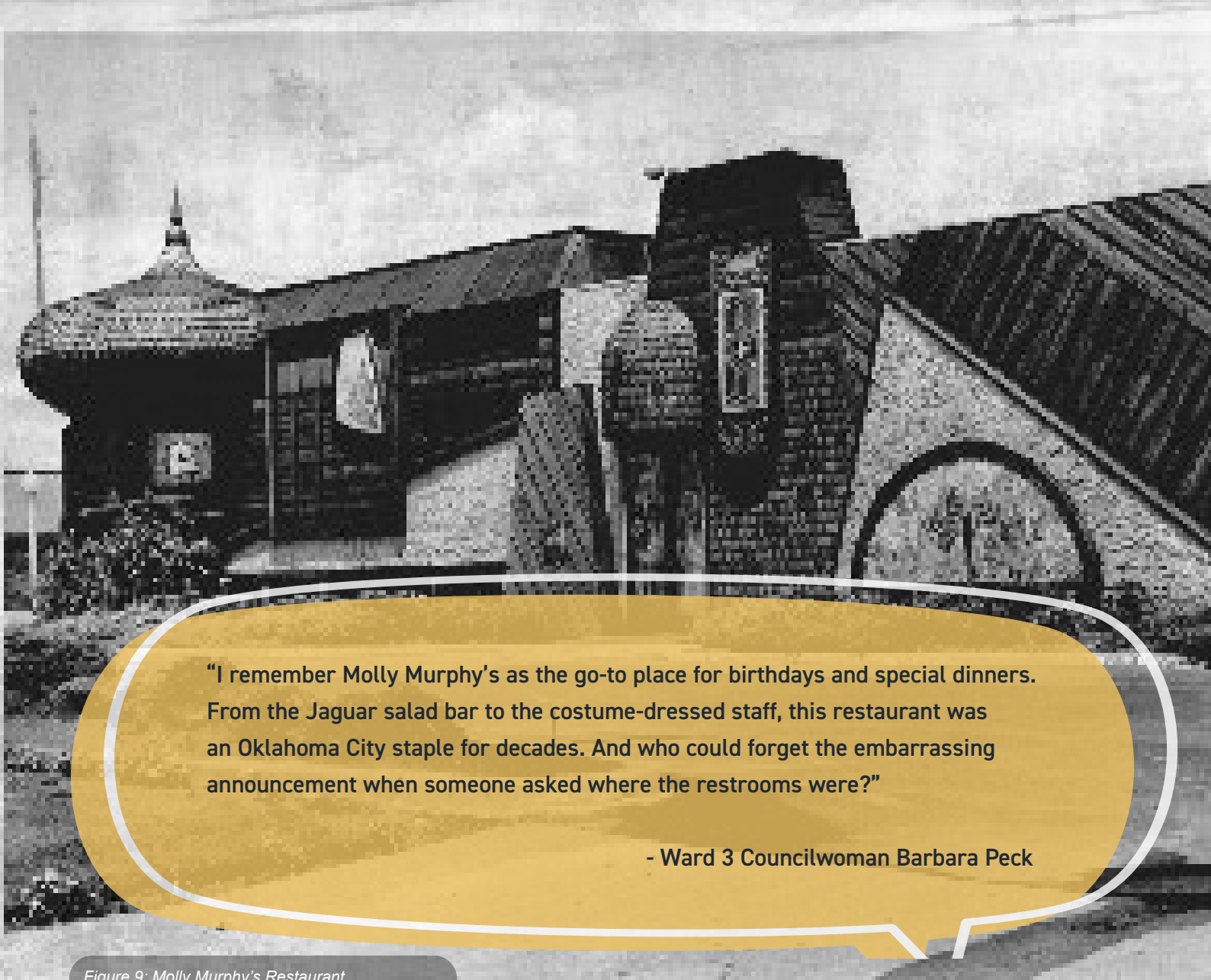


Figure 8: Applewoods Restaurant
Picture Courtesy of Pinterest, John Angier



"I remember Molly Murphy's as the go-to place for birthdays and special dinners. From the Jaguar salad bar to the costume-dressed staff, this restaurant was an Oklahoma City staple for decades. And who could forget the embarrassing announcement when someone asked where the restrooms were?"

- Ward 3 Councilwoman Barbara Peck

Figure 9: Molly Murphy's Restaurant
Picture courtesy of Metropolitan Library Systems

MOLLY MURPHY'S HOUSE OF FINE REPUTE

Molly Murphy's House of Fine Repute was a well-known, quirky restaurant in Oklahoma City that was famous for its eclectic decor and costumed staff. Designed with a variety of themed rooms, each with its own distinct style and ambiance, guests could dine in rooms decorated to look like a ship's cabin, a medieval castle, or a tropical island, among other creative themes. One of the defining features of Molly Murphy's was the costumed waitstaff, who dressed up as different characters. It wasn't unusual to be served by a pirate, a superhero, or a famous historical figure. Beyond just serving food, the staff would often entertain guests with jokes, performances, and impromptu skits. This interactive approach made dining at Molly Murphy's a memorable experience for visitors of all ages. Given its playful atmosphere, it was a popular destination for families and groups, offering a dining experience that was both entertaining and unconventional.

Although both Applewoods and Molly Murphy's have been closed for many years, they remain beloved memories for those who visited them during their heyday. Many people who dined at them as children or young adults remember the experience fondly and continue to share stories about their time at Applewoods and Molly Murphy's.



Figure 10: Picture courtesy of Metropolitan Library Systems

- 1941** ● Oklahoma City Municipal Airfield renamed in honor of Will Rogers
- 1965** ● The I-40 bridge on Meridian Avenue in Oklahoma City opened
- 1982** ● Chamber estimates 12,000 workers in the area, 10 motels with 3,000 rooms, between 35-40% of City's room tax came from Meridian Corridor
- 1983** ● "Meridian is restaurant row" - The Oklahoman
- 1986** ● "Reno-Meridian Area Bustling" - The Oklahoman
- 1996** ● Molly Murphy's Closes
- 2000** ● Applewoods restaurant seeks new home - (Applewoods' lease on SW 3rd lapses)
- 2004** ● MAPS River improvements are completed, putting water back in the Oklahoma River
- 2007** ● Addition of River Cruises linking Meridian to the Boathouse District and Downtown
- 2008** ● Meridian Landing Opened
- 2016** ● Champion Hotels began investment in Meridian
- 2020** ● OnCue Express opened on Highline Boulevard

The opening of other major MAPS investments, such as the Bricktown Ballpark, the revitalized Civic Center, and the new Norick Downtown Library throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s combined with a national trend back towards downtown areas undoubtedly created new competition for Meridian; as did newer suburban commercial developments throughout the 2000s, particularly those that pushed farther west to cater to major population booms in Mustang and Yukon. Today, the Meridian Corridor remains a key part of OKC's infrastructure due to its proximity to Will Rogers International Airport and its significant concentration of hotel rooms. It remains a major route for travelers entering or leaving the City. While its restaurant offerings once rivaled any other area in the metro region, most discussion on the topic recognizes that this part of the corridor needs improvement.

Overall, the history of the Meridian Corridor in Oklahoma City is one of growth, development, and adaptation to the changing needs of the City and its inhabitants. It continues to play a vital role in the life of the City, serving as a major thoroughfare with the potential to remain a key place in the larger Oklahoma City landscape. Desires to renew this area have endured as part of a broader focus on keeping Oklahoma City attractive for business, tourism, and development.



Figure 11: 1982 view of traffic on Meridian
Picture courtesy of Metropolitan Library Systems



Figure 12: Picture courtesy of Visit OKC

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Present Trends and Issues

This section records a wide range of baseline factors including demographics of communities along the corridor, current market conditions, types of land uses and businesses, current transit access, community needs and interests, as well as present infrastructure conditions. Existing conditions, illustrated with infographics, become the foundation for future design and placemaking interventions.



Figure 13: Drone shot showing the existing Meridian Corridor
Credit by Johnson and Associates



BACKGROUND

As a vital thoroughfare to and from the airport in Oklahoma City, the Meridian Corridor has developed into a mixed-use zone with commercial, residential and industrial developments throughout time. The Meridian Corridor is home to major commercial activities well suited for a car-dependent atmosphere, but with the change in perspectives and the need for more walkable and people-friendly activities, there are pressing concerns that need to be addressed for a better and more inclusive placemaking effort.

The development of the String of Pearls Master Plan in 1979 invigorated a public improvement project for the 18-mile river corridor along the Oklahoma River from Lake Overholser to NE 23rd St. It emphasized recreational, economic and environmental benefits to the residential neighborhoods with increased and better connection to trails, open spaces, sports and riverfront recreation.

The plan includes seven recreational areas: Lake Overholser Pearl, State Park Pearl, I-240 Pearl, Sports Center Pearl, Riverfront Pearl, Theme Park Pearl and Prairie Pearl. Within the seven pearls, the Meridian Corridor lies in between the State Park Pearl and the I-240 Pearl. As quoted in the master plan, the String of Pearls enhances the visitor's image of the Oklahoma River corridor as the "front lawn" to enter Downtown. Building upon this, the Meridian Corridor becomes an important gateway to Oklahoma City that should represent the city's culture and beauty for the residents as well as the visitors. The enhanced Meridian Corridor could become an addition to the "String of Pearls" with determined interventions.

Just as urban waterfront redevelopment capitalizes on public space in cities, commercial corridors should be considered assets that can be redeveloped to support civic life, enhance economic development, and serve as neighborhood resources.

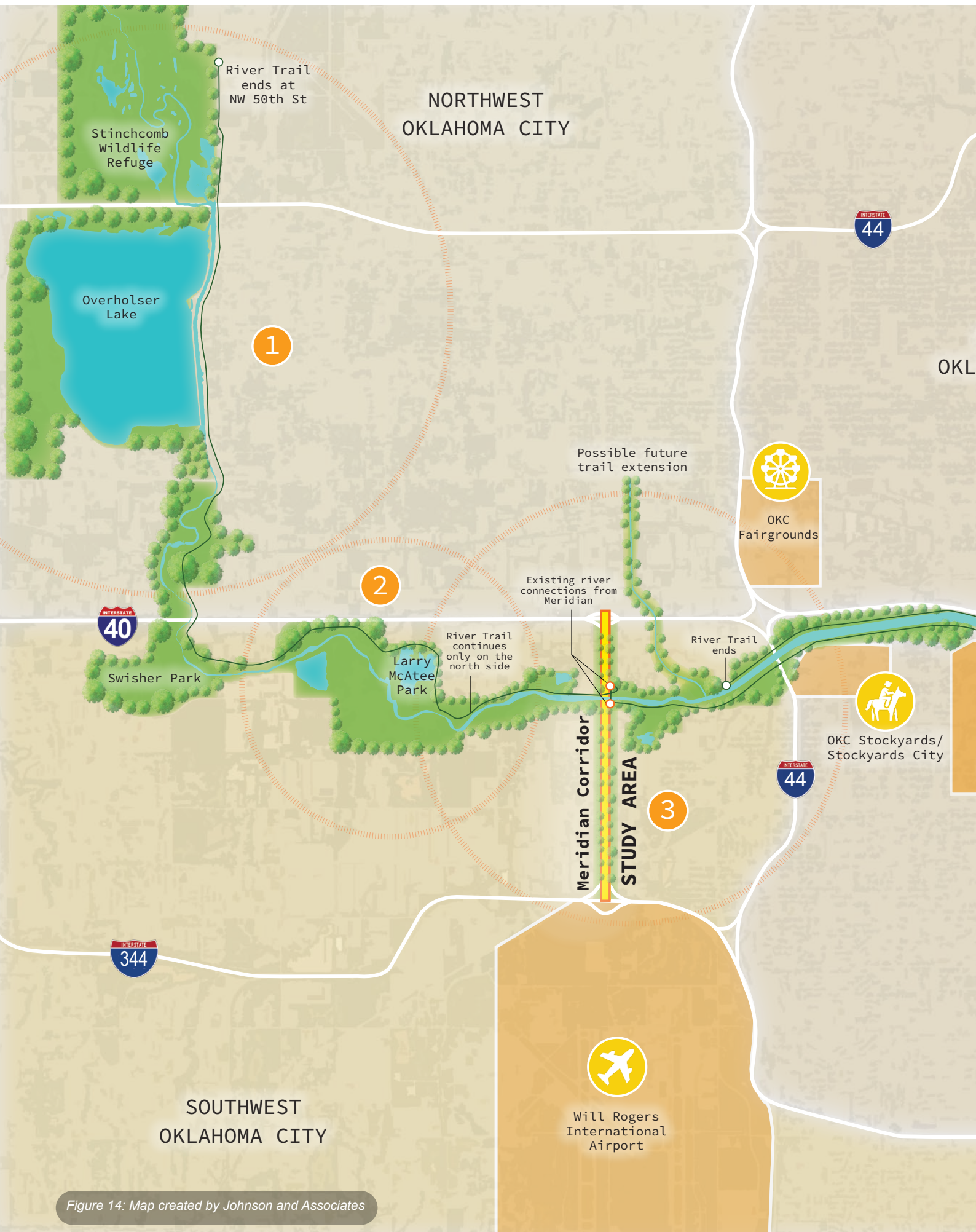


Figure 14: Map created by Johnson and Associates

STRING OF PEARLS AND AMENITIES MAP

Legend

- 1 Overholser Pearl linking the lake and residential neighborhoods
- 2 State Pearl linking recreational parks like McAtee and Swisher Parks
- 3 Future pearl addition of Meridian as an active commercial corridor
- 4 I-40 Pearl connecting OKANA Resort, Downtown, Innovation District and booming residential districts like the Wheeler District

The map outlines key destinations and highlights the Meridian Corridor study area, including proximity to significant landmarks such as Will Rogers International Airport, Oklahoma City Zoo, OKC Fairgrounds, and the Central Business District. This geographic context shows the corridor's strategic position for economic and community development. Enhancements to the Meridian Corridor reinforce the links of the String of Pearls making it a potential connection that accentuates riverfront development and recreational activities for residents and visitors.



DEMOGRAPHICS PROFILE

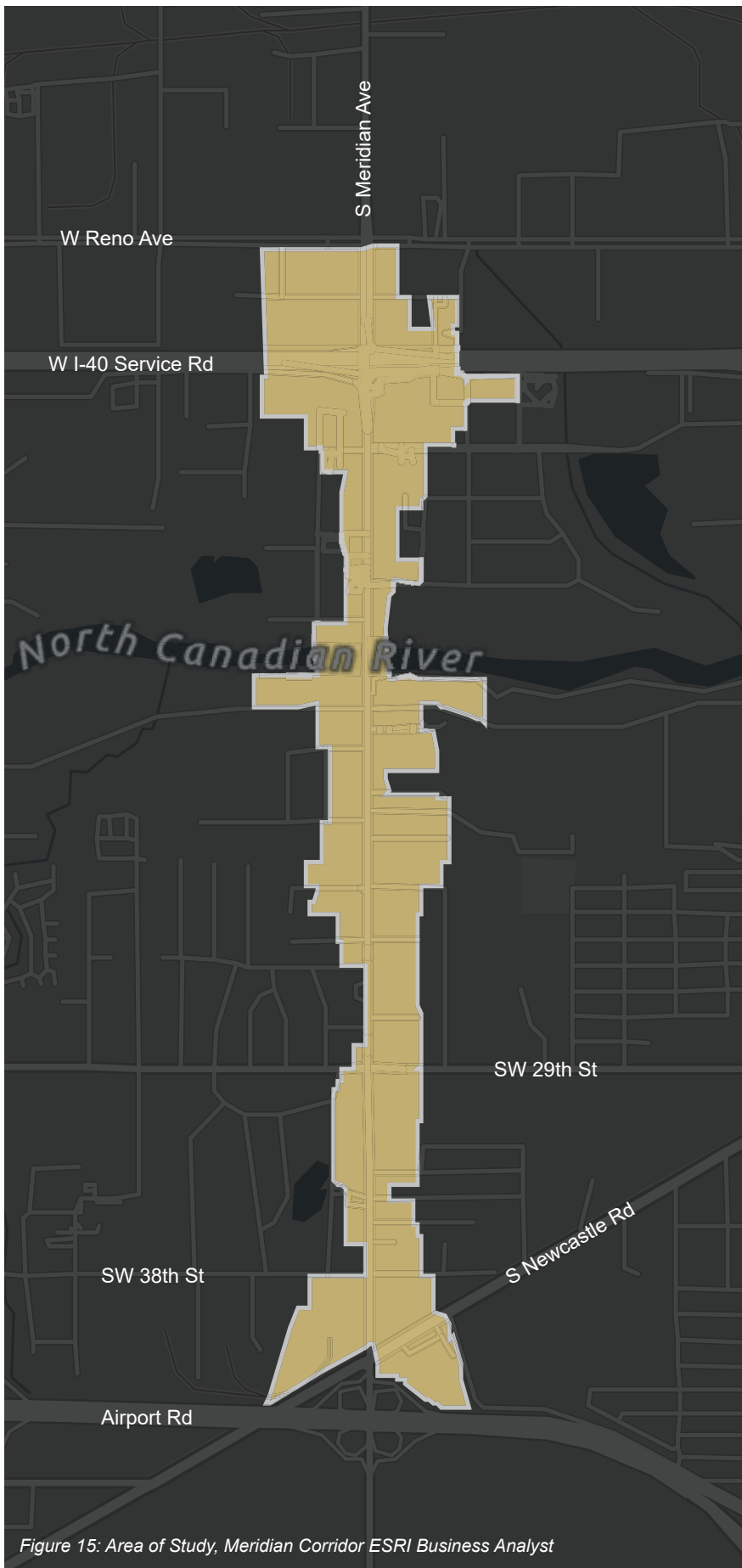
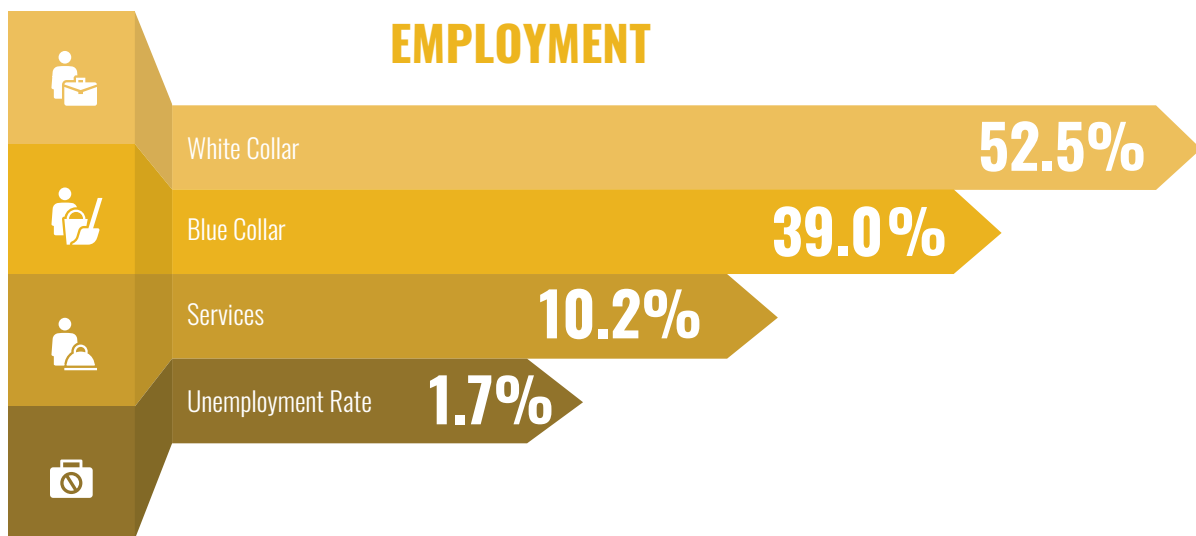


Figure 15: Area of Study, Meridian Corridor ESRI Business Analyst

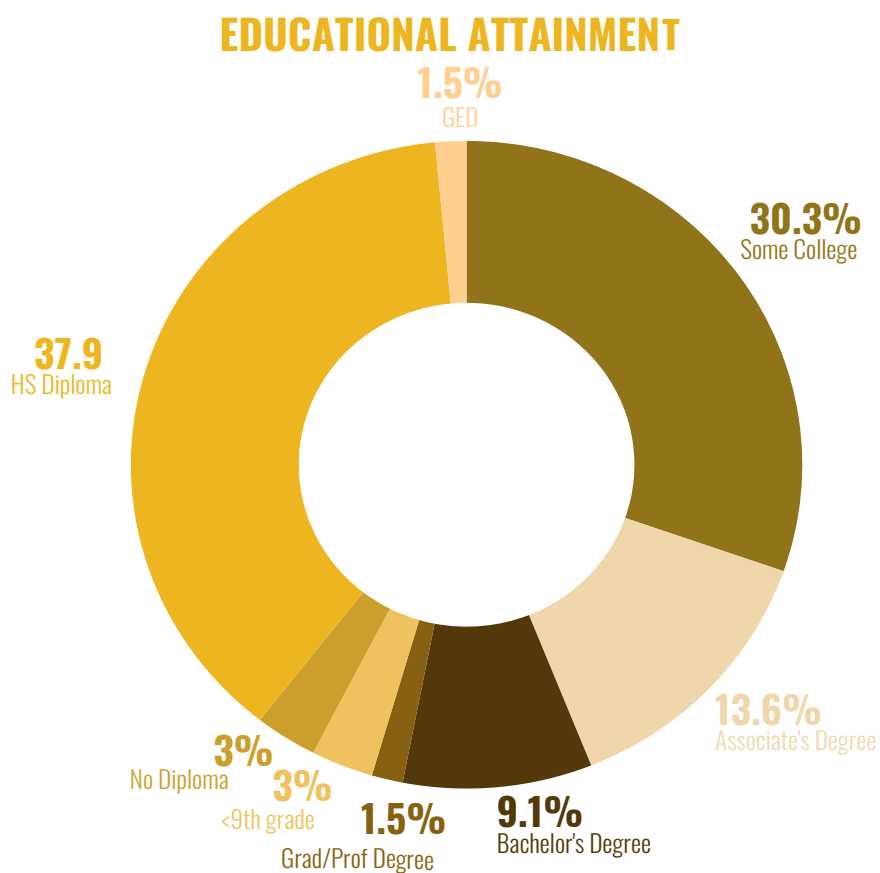
The existing conditions analysis provides a comprehensive baseline assessment of the Meridian Corridor, examining demographic profiles, current market conditions, land uses, business landscapes, transit access, community needs, and infrastructure conditions. This foundational understanding is critical for informing future design and placemaking interventions along the corridor.

The data collected highlights significant trends and issues impacting the community, including population demographics, economic indicators, employment distribution, business types, transportation patterns, and housing characteristics. The following sections provide a detailed analysis of each component supported by the corresponding graphics.

The Meridian Corridor features a modest population of 91 residents across 36 households, with an average household size of 2.53 people. The median age in the area is 38.8 years, indicating a relatively mature community. Educational attainment varies, with 30.3% of residents having some college education, 13.6% holding an associate's degree, and 9.1% with a bachelor's degree.

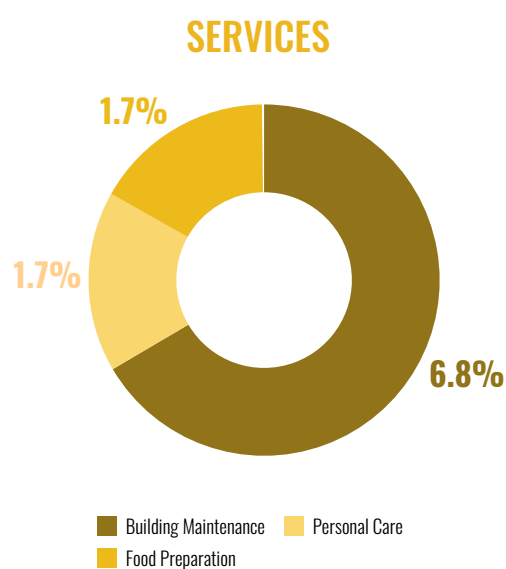
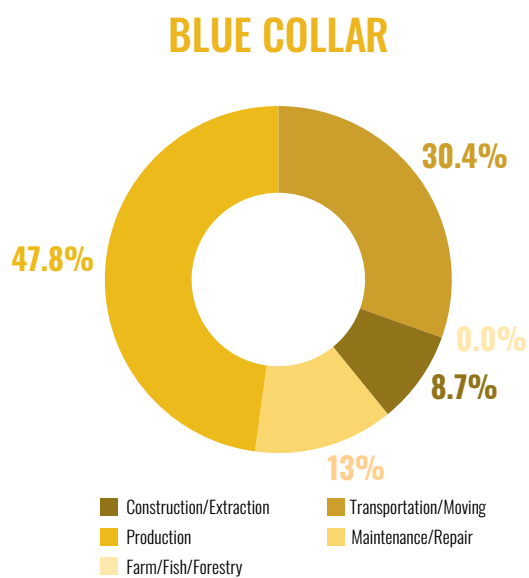
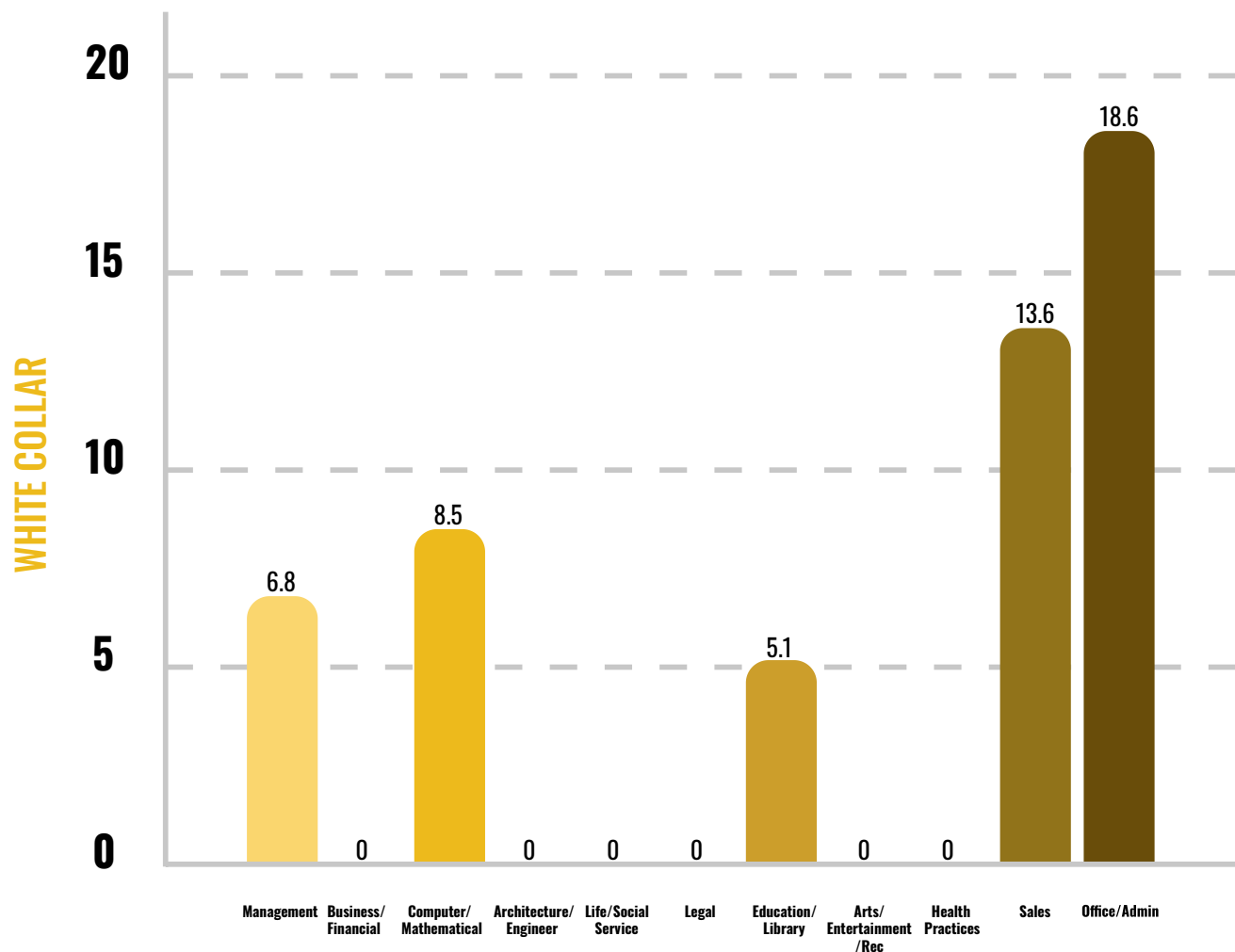


The employment landscape shows a healthy mix of occupations. White collar roles such as management, business, and financial positions make up a significant share of the workforce.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development data indicates a strong presence of white collar jobs (52.5%), followed by blue collar (39.0%) and service occupations (10.2%). Key industries include construction, production, and transportation contributing significantly to the local economy.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

WORKFORCE POPULATION

BUSINESS



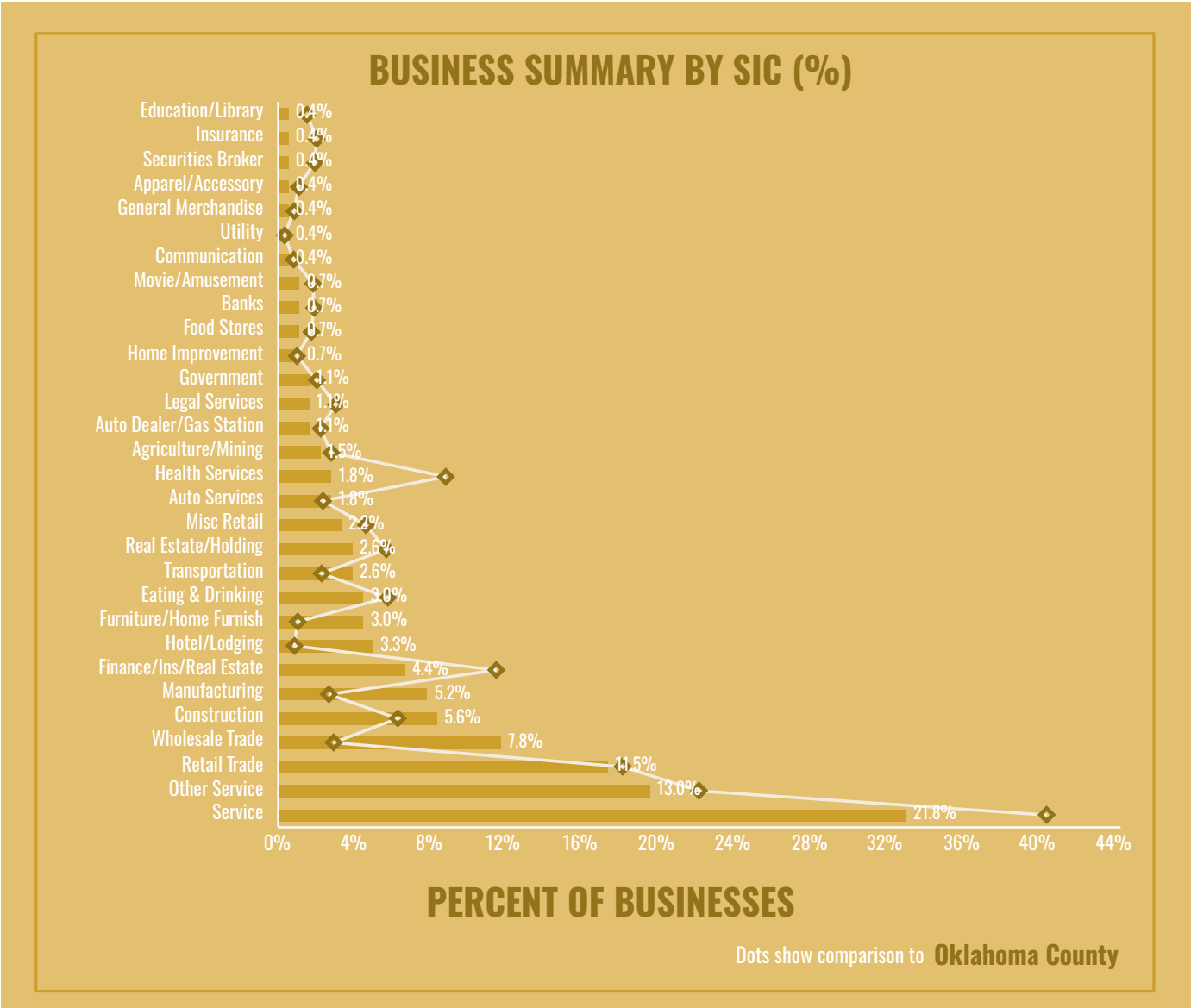
179
Total Businesses



3,690
Total Employees

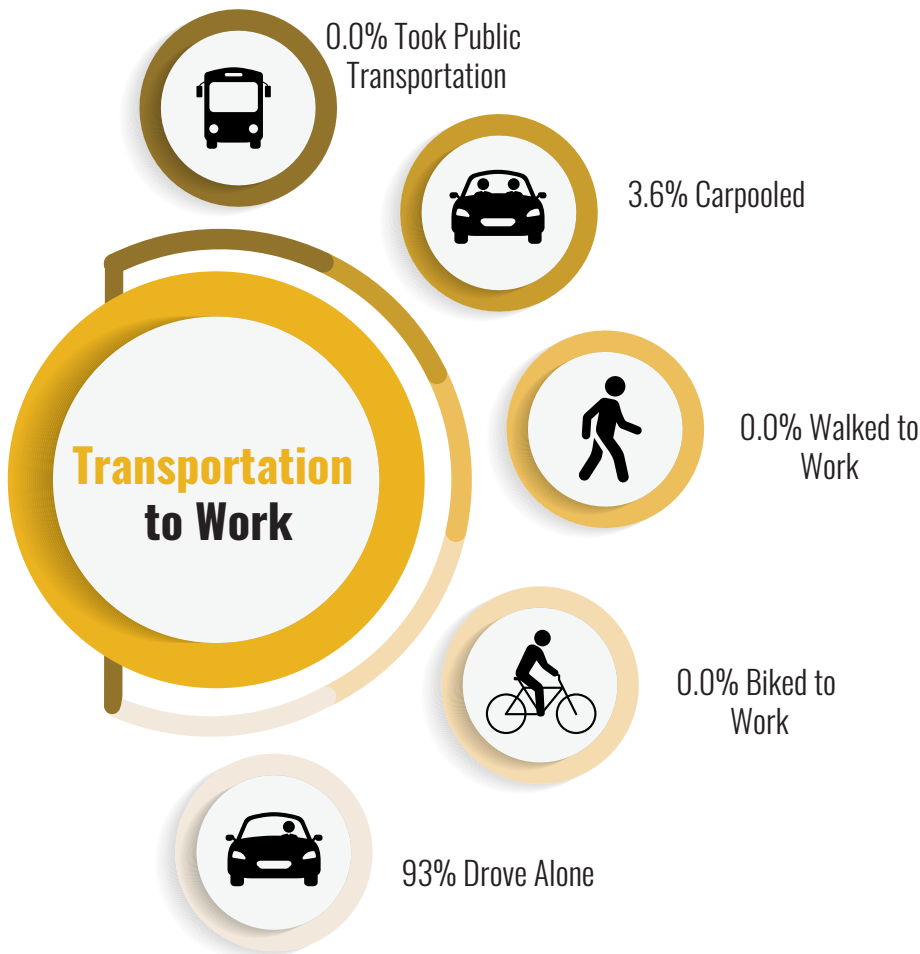
There are 179 total businesses in the area, supporting approximately 3,690 employees, highlighting the corridor's role as an employment hub within Oklahoma City.

The business summary by the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system reveals that service-based industries dominate, comprising 21.8% of businesses, followed by retail trade (11.5%) and wholesale trade (7.8%).



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

COMMUTING PATTERNS

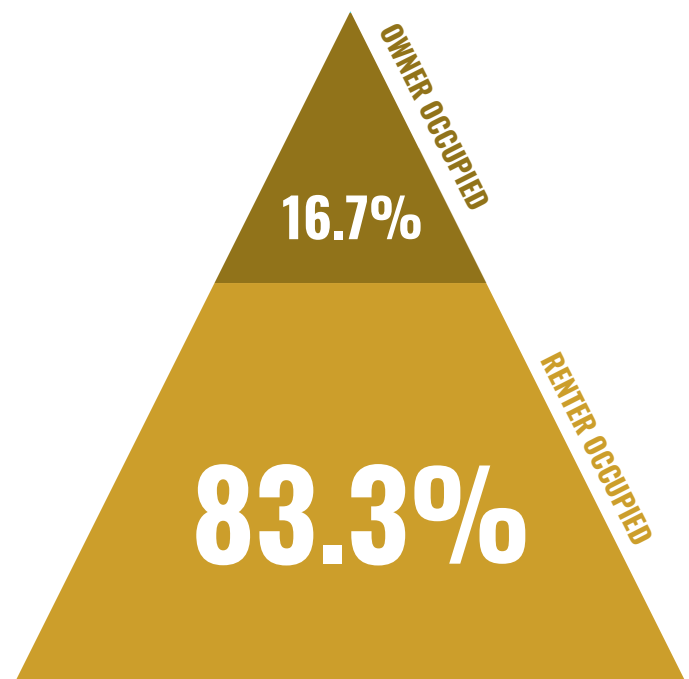


For those that live in the area there is a strong reliance on private vehicles, with 93% of residents driving alone to work and 3.6% carpooling. No residents reported using public transportation, biking, or walking to work, which suggests opportunities to enhance multimodal transit options.

Discrepancies in Census data regarding transportation to work can arise from various factors, including how respondents interpret the question, the timing of data collection, and the limitations of survey methodology.

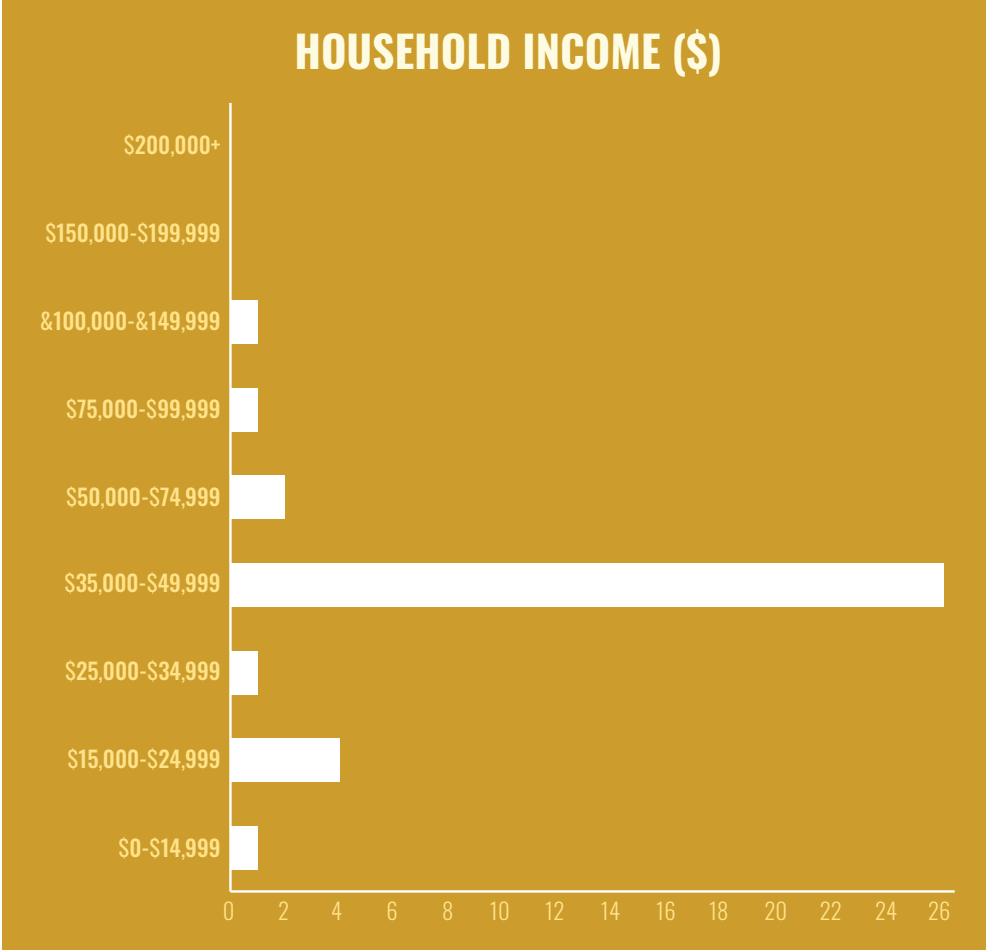
HOME OWNERSHIP

Homeownership is relatively low, with only 16.7% of housing units being owner-occupied while 83.3% are renter-occupied.

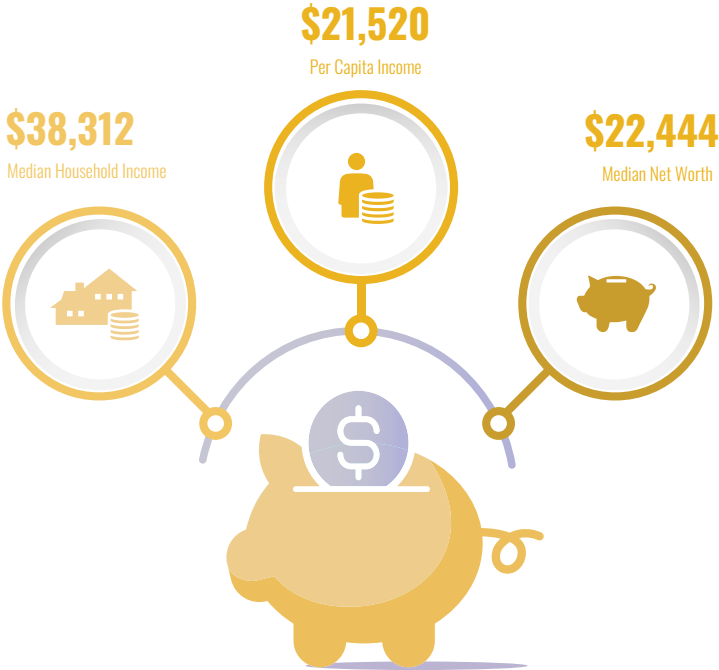


Source: ESRI Business Analyst

HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Household income distribution in the corridor is diverse, with a notable concentration of households earning between \$35,000 and \$49,999 annually. The median household income stands at \$38,312, with a per capita income of \$21,520. The median net worth of households is reported at \$22,444.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst



Figure 16: Drone shot showing the I-40 bridge and traffic movements
Credit by Johnson and Associates

CURRENT ISSUES

Corridors like Meridian, that have existed for several decades, now find new commercial development is occurring both farther out on the suburban fringe, as well as in older, more walkable districts closer to city centers. They are raising awareness that the same factors that required revitalization efforts in commercial districts from the early 20th century are now beginning to impact those built in the late 20th century. While those districts from the early 20th century were more pedestrian friendly, communities across the nation are seeing that districts built focusing on the automobile are not immune to decline and will eventually reach the end of their first lifecycle. These declining factors can include:

- Aging buildings, which can become more expensive to repair
- Absentee property owners allowing their properties to deteriorate
- Loss of key tenants to newer commercial areas

Throughout the history section of the report, the cycle of the Meridian Corridor has been observed. Today, this aging commercial district suffers from a variety of poor existing conditions that limit its ability to attract businesses, customers, and investment. There are distinct locations along the corridor that have been facing critical concerns. The intersection at I-40 and Meridian Ave has been inhabited by people experiencing homelessness who have been building encampments on a regular basis. Similarly, there is a hostile and unwelcoming environment for pedestrians due to excessive curb cuts and the high transient population. Businesses like hotels and restaurants in the Meridian Corridor have a hard time improving their perception of safety for the commuters and visitors.



Transient homelessness has continued to rise on the Meridian Corridor for the past decade plus. When speaking with Stakeholders this issue comes up faster than any other topic. This can be driven by various social and economic factors, often creating challenges for both the homeless population and local businesses. Impacts on the commercial district can be as follows:

1. **Business and Economic Effects** – Customers may feel uneasy, and some businesses might see reduced foot traffic.
2. **Public Safety & Health** – Concerns may arise regarding sanitation, mental health crises, or substance use in public spaces.
3. **Strain on Services** – Homeless shelters, outreach programs, and medical facilities may struggle to meet rising demand.
4. **Increased Law Enforcement Presence** – Cities may deploy additional officers, which can lead to tensions between officers and the unhoused community.

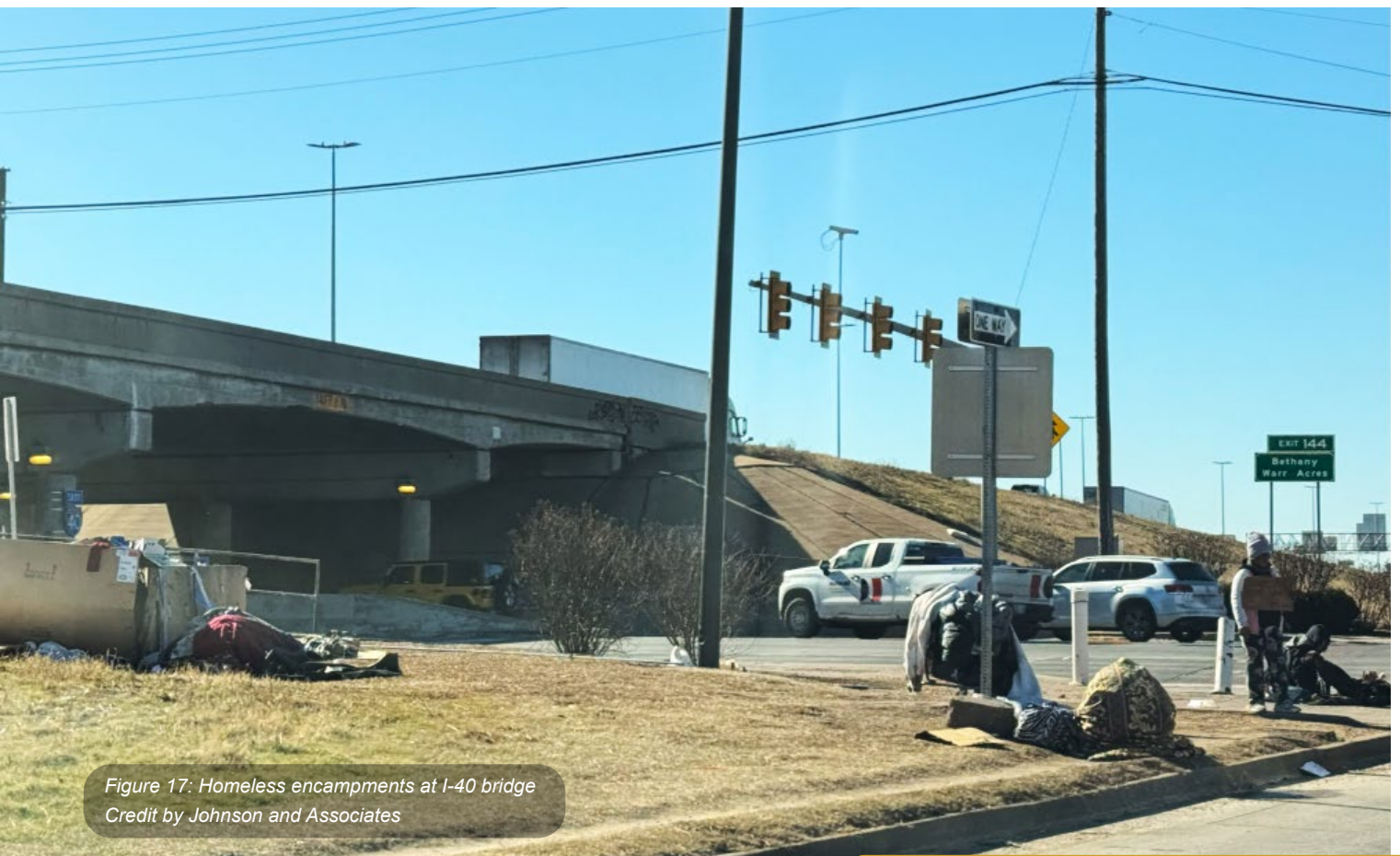


Figure 17: Homeless encampments at I-40 bridge
Credit by Johnson and Associates

CURRENT ISSUES CONTINUED

Infrastructure Deterioration

1. Cracked or uneven sidewalks creating accessibility issues.
2. Outdated or non-functioning streetlights leading to safety concerns.
3. Aging utility lines and drainage systems cause frequent maintenance issues.
4. Lack of safe medians along the corridor.

Safety and Perception Issues

1. Poor lighting, making the corridor feel unsafe at night.
2. Abundance of homelessness and loitering.

Vacant and Underutilized Properties

1. Empty storefronts create a sense of decline.
2. Vacant lots with empty billboards and demolition footprints.
3. Large parking lots with little pedestrian activity.
4. Underperforming businesses struggling due to lack of foot traffic.
5. Public amenities and bridge underpasses are prone to hostile use.



Figure 18: Boarded up abandoned buildings



Figure 19: Vacant lot with abandoned sign posts
Credit by Johnson and Associates



Figure 20: Overlapping powerlines and lampposts mark the skyline view
Credit by Johnson and Associates

Declining Aesthetics and Identity

1. Outdated or deteriorating building facades and signage.
2. Cluttered or inconsistent storefront designs.
3. Lack of landscaping and greenery, making the area feel uninviting.



Figure 21: Obstructions along the pedestrian sidewalks

Poor Urban Design and Accessibility

1. Lack of pedestrian-friendly amenities.
2. Few bicycle lanes or transit connections, discouraging alternative transportation.
3. Overly wide streets that prioritize vehicles over walkability.
4. Little access to the Oklahoma River and lack of street furniture for visitors.

Economic and Regulatory Challenges

1. Zoning or land-use policies that discourage mixed-use development.
2. High vacancy rates leading to reduced property values and investment.
3. Lack of incentives for small businesses to move in or expand.

THINKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Despite all these issues, the Oklahoma River, being an asset to the community, has not been utilized to its full extent. The pedestrian bridge connecting the West River Trail observes casual runners, enthusiastic bikers and strollers alike. The pedestrian bridge is separate from the vehicular bridge, providing more room for beautification and user experience improvements. This pedestrian bridge poses an opportunity to capitalize on the full potential of future riverfront development by connecting those who live/work in the Meridian Corridor. As was emphasized by the stakeholders, Issues of overgrown vegetation reduce visibility and continuous existence of homeless encampments reduce the perception of safety. Additionally, future extensions of the trails could provide a connection to Swisher Park to the west.



Figure 22: West River Trail and pedestrian bridge over Oklahoma River
Credit by Johnson and Associates



Figure 23: Public art seen as advertisement and beautification
Credit by Johnson and Associates



PROPERTY OWNER INVOLVEMENT

Given the vitality and presence of well established restaurants and hotel venues, there are beautification improvements and efforts carried out by property owners to enhance accessibility both physically and visually. Promoting public art, encouraging landscaping at the entry and providing benches as resting spaces are a few approaches that the businesses along the corridor have been using. The street is lit with tall lampposts throughout the corridor which signifies the importance of a defined corridor identity. Currently, there are a few residential apartments, like Meridian Apartments, along the corridor that provide housing options. Given the opportunity, the Meridian Corridor can become an active and vibrant place to live, work, shop and eat. There have been two new bus stops added along the sidewalks recently, showing the need for more transit friendly amenities. The Meridian Corridor is progressing slowly, but it needs to transform itself as a place where people want to be.



Figure 24: Credit by Johnson and Associates

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Outcomes of Public Outreach

This chapter summarizes the process and results of public meetings and discussions carried out in the past year which successfully reached the property owners, stakeholders and district officials along the Meridian Corridor.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Early in the process, the consultant team worked closely with city staff to identify key stakeholders along the Meridian Corridor. Key stakeholders play a crucial role in the success and sustainability of any project. Their value lies in their ability to provide resources, expertise, influence, and support to achieve common goals.

SEPTEMBER 7, 2023

Johnson & Associates with ADG Blatt selected for the project

JANUARY 9, 2024

Stakeholder meeting with the Champion Hotel team

JANUARY 12, 2024

Stakeholder meeting with the Airport team



DECEMBER 7, 2023

J&A attends Champion Hotels Holiday Luncheon

JANUARY 9, 2024

Stakeholder meeting with OKC Fairgrounds team

JANUARY 31, 2024

Stakeholder meeting with the FAA team



FEBRUARY 7, 2024

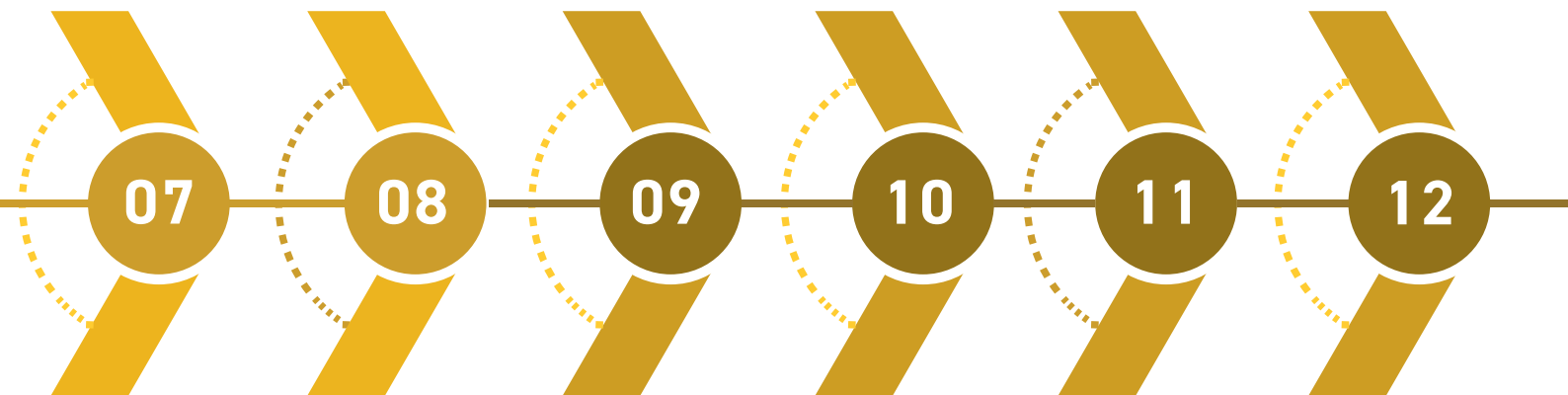
Meeting with OG&E about Meridian

FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Meeting with Jim Parrack, Price Edwards

MARCH 7, 2024

Meridian Corridor OPEN HOUSE First Public Meeting



FEBRUARY 13, 2024

Meeting with the City and Key to Home Program regarding Homelessness

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

Meeting with National Reining Horse Association

DECEMBER 8, 2024

Meridian Corridor OPEN HOUSE, Second Public Meeting



Figure 25

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The word cloud to the left indicates the most used words or phrases from our stakeholder engagement meetings. These phrases noted the importance of the airport, the fairgrounds and most importantly, the strong memories the stakeholders have of the corridor. Places like Applewoods and Molly Murphy's were discussed in almost every meeting. These meeting places hosted some of the most important life events for the people of Oklahoma City: weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, and important business meetings. These memories continue to resonate with the folks who have shared experiences. However, these memories are just that.

As stakeholders turned their focus to the Meridian Corridor as it stands today – and what it could become – their optimism was often overshadowed by concerns. Rather than a destination, Meridian is now seen as a corridor in decline. Conversations were dominated by issues of safety, homelessness, panhandling, and poor lighting. Whether rooted in perception or reality, these concerns are universal among stakeholders and make it difficult to envision a brighter future.

Yet, that future is not out of reach.

The remainder of this report explores actionable strategies to re-establish Meridian as a premier destination for visitors, families, and professionals. **The magic of Meridian is still alive and with the right leadership and collective vision, stakeholders seem ready to cue the drumroll, lift the curtain, and bring Meridian's next big act to life.**



Figure 26: Second Meridian Open House, Dec 8, 2024
Credit by Johnson and Associates



“The Meridian Corridor is valuable because of convenience and cost – this is what their clients think. 75-80% of clients are repeat clients. So, we know the calendar every year – can plan around that!”

Figure 27. First Meridian Open House, March 7, 2024
Credit by Johnson and Associates

OUTCOMES

31

Attendees

First Meridian Open House, March 7, 2024

Major strengths of the Meridian Corridor to most of the stakeholders included good quality hotels and it being in a prime location closer to the airport and other attractions. The team discussed the GO Bond that is anticipated in October 2025, and many supported the idea and understood the importance of a Business Improvement District, a future Bus Rapid Transit route connection, and making Meridian a safer and more inviting place with busy restaurants and retail options.

The open house also included five activities for attendees to engage in and for the team to gather important information from stakeholders on improving the corridor. The stakeholders were asked to write notes on what they want to see in the Meridian Corridor. The top concern to all the stakeholders was the issue of homelessness and the transient population continuously gathering under the bridges, riverfront areas and businesses in the corridor. The major focus of the study should be on how to improve the riverfront as a main attraction for people coming to Meridian and improving the current infrastructure such as sidewalks, landscaping, light features and other site amenities that contribute to a more pedestrian friendly experience. The major locations where stakeholders want to see improvements included intersections at Meridian and SW 15th Street, I-40 Service Road, SW 36th, SW 26th and the River Corridor. A visual preference study was also carried out to identify the priority preferences.

Second Meridian Open House, December 8, 2024

This open house focused on getting input from property and business owners about their preferences for different placemaking projects. The open house also provided information regarding Key to Home Partnership and the role of the organization in helping the homeless population in Oklahoma City and providing shelters. The following preferences were highlighted in terms of placemaking projects along the Meridian Corridor:

45

Attendees

Wayfinding

Sculptures and festival hangers. Market the future developments in the corridor.

Underpass and Bridge Lighting

Lighting should be synonymous throughout the corridor and increase safety under the bridges.

Symbols that represent Meridian

Airport branding, Native American Culture, Oklahoma's western heritage.

Median Design Look

Median design with low maintenance greenery hasn't been maintained properly in the past.

River Enhancements

Discovery boats running and stopping at riverfront stops closer to the Meridian Corridor, provide more riverfront amenities.

Bridge Enhancements

Under bridge lighting with solar power. Provide an aesthetic look to the bridge.



Figure 28: Second Meridian Open House, Dec 8, 2024
Credit by Johnson and Associates

PRIORITIES



Creating and Funding a Business Improvement District

Business Improvement District required for private security, public security, and to reduce unsafe conditions around the businesses along the corridor. Concerns on how to encourage business survival on the Meridian Corridor as many businesses are relocating. Reach out to the City of Oklahoma City and The Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City for Creation of a Business Improvement District and Tax Increment Financing District.



Addressing Safety Concerns

Affected business owners' complaints on homeless and panhandling populations harassing clients. Increase safety through regular security patrols in the businesses along the corridor.



Improve River Amenities

Positive response to riverfront restaurants and businesses. Access to the riverfront by trails should be on both sides. Add retail, restaurants and public-friendly activities to activate the riverfront. Include multi-use trails for pedestrian and bicycle-friendly activities, connecting the river and the Meridian Corridor.



Landscaping Improvements

More trees, landscape features and median improvements to promote beautification. Remove parking and develop greenery along the corridor.



Improve Lighting Amenities

Additional lighting to the east and the west of Meridian going towards the more industrial side of the corridor.



Events

Bring more street activation events like street festivals, food trucks, farmer's markets.



Improve Pedestrian Crossings

Reduce curb cuts and promote safe sidewalks for pedestrians. Include curb extensions and bump outs for pedestrian safety.



Identity for the District

Recognize and market an identity for the district. The identity of a commercial district is crucial because it defines its uniqueness, attracts businesses and visitors, and fosters economic growth.



District Identity Markers

Make the Meridian Corridor a gateway that represents a distinct image of Oklahoma City through banners, public art installations and lighting.



Public Art

Increase public art related to the airport, Western Heritage and Native American influences.



Temporary Activations

Promote more seasonal festivals, street front markets and pop up shops along the corridor.

STRENGTHS

1. Direct connection to the airport from downtown through interstate highways and connectors.
2. Well-established hotels and businesses, franchise restaurants and retailers.
3. Linkage to Meridian Landing, open spaces and parks along Oklahoma Riverfront Corridor.
4. Strong emotional connection with vast groups of Oklahoma City residents.
5. Strong visitor numbers and daily traffic volumes to support dining and shopping.
6. Mix of land uses which provide a mix of primary and secondary jobs.

WEAKNESSES

1. Lack of safe pedestrian pathways and infrastructure that serves only vehicular travel.
2. Large surface parking lots fronting the street with excessive building setbacks.
3. Lack of trees and vegetation.
4. Pedestrian pathways that are narrow, in poor condition and interrupted by excessive curb cuts with no visual interest.
5. Large utility poles cause visual clutter preventing large street trees along perimeters of the roadway
6. High-intensity industrial land uses are prominent in the corridor and create potential conflicts with future land uses while creating a less desirable streetscape.

O PPORTUNITIES

1. Activate the riverfront by encouraging and requiring interaction between development and the riverbank.
2. Cohesive branding highlights the district's history and assets.
3. Increasing safe and accessible pedestrian and bike connections to the riverfront trails, airport, downtown and fairgrounds.
4. Provide a mix of land uses that attract daytime and evening populations while providing opportunities for visitors to remain in the corridor.
5. Beautification through increased vegetation and green spaces.

T HREATS

1. Loss of major employers like FAA or Tinker Federal Credit Union.
2. Significant transient population.
3. Citywide perception issues.
4. Increasing number of vacant lots and displacement of local businesses.
5. Abundance of heavy industrial uses.
6. Unsafe pedestrian pathways (i.e. lack of lighting, excessive curb cuts, sidewalks abutting street).
7. Growth of nearby commercial and retail developments drawing patrons away from the Meridian Corridor.



Figure 29: Picture Courtesy of Visit OKC

DISTRICT PLACEMAKING

Key Priority for a Healthy Corridor

As a major connector, the Meridian Corridor should develop as a healthy commercial corridor that is able to provide services and amenities for people who live, work and travel along it. District placemaking is a planning and design approach to improve connections to jobs and different parts of the community, secure safety for the inhabitants and enhance art in the community. By understanding a wide range of baseline factors, including the demographics of communities surrounding the corridor, current transit access, market conditions, types of land uses and businesses, and community needs and interests—as well as sidewalk, travel lane, intersection, and other infrastructure conditions, recommendations have been determined for reviving the Meridian Corridor with a new identity as a healthy commercial corridor.



Figure 30: Art Festival at Paseo District, Oklahoma City
Picture Courtesy of The Oklahoman



INTRODUCTION TO PLACEMAKING

Considering the Meridian Corridor as an avenue that connects the airport to prime locations in Oklahoma City, district placemaking becomes a holistic approach towards fostering an urban environment that prioritizes the creation of inclusive, sustainable, and vibrant public spaces that enhance the quality of life for all residents. Placemaking involves designing and shaping public spaces to promote community engagement, social interaction, and a sense of belonging. Strong district management encourages various aspects of governance within the district, including public services, infrastructure development, law enforcement, education, healthcare, and economic development. The Meridian Corridor should promote order and harmony both aesthetically and socially through placemaking and beautification efforts whilst ensuring pedestrian safety.

There are many examples of successful placemaking events in various districts and neighborhoods throughout Oklahoma City. Known as one of Oklahoma City's preeminent art communities, the Paseo District encourages the work of artists to be showcased and explored. Every first Friday of the month, they invite visitors for a gallery walk where patrons can explore Paseo's unique arts and crafts. Additionally, the annual Paseo Arts Festival in May showcases artists from across the country and provides a diverse range of art forms, including painting, sculpture, jewelry, pottery and more. The event also stands out as a celebration of art with music and food, creating an inviting atmosphere for all who join.



Figure 31: OKC Memorial Marathon, Oklahoma City
Picture Courtesy of Visit OKC

New mixed-use developments in Oklahoma City such as OAK on Northwest Expressway and Wheeler District on Western Avenue are home to growing communities that are walkable and bikeable. They are successful in the sense that they provide residential living, shopping and retail, restaurants and commercial uses as well as providing community spaces and event spaces for live music, seasonal farmers markets and artistic landmarks. District placemaking efforts will be a gamechanger in the case of the Meridian Corridor that has been neglected for so many years. This section further breaks down district placemaking into several focus areas with various case studies that can help shift the Meridian Corridor into a new direction of revival and prosperity.





PLACEMAKING IN OKC

The Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon is held downtown annually in April to honor the victims, survivors and responders of the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing. The event hosts around 25,000 runners from different states and countries, and supports the ideology of uniting the communities together in the hope of making a positive difference in the world today. The Lunar New Year Festival celebration in the Asian District features lion dances, traditional Chinese music and Asian food markets. The district houses international markets, groceries and popular Asian restaurants that are busy with customers and visitors on a daily basis. These are just a few of the many events in Oklahoma City, and each event celebrates and signifies the City's diversity, history and community spirit.



Figure 32: Residences in Wheeler District, Oklahoma City
Picture Courtesy of Wheeler District Website

IMPACT OF DISTRICT PLACEMAKING

Increased Foot Traffic

Well-promoted corridor events attract visitors and shoppers, leading to increased foot traffic for local businesses. This can result in higher sales and revenue for participating establishments.

Promotion of Local Economy

By showcasing the offerings of local businesses and entrepreneurs, corridor events support the growth and sustainability of the local economy. They encourage residents to shop locally and support independent businesses.

Brand Exposure and Marketing

Participating businesses can benefit from increased brand exposure and marketing opportunities through their involvement in corridor events. They can reach new customers, build brand awareness, and differentiate themselves from competitors.

Improved governance

Brings governance closer to the people, allowing for more responsive and tailored solutions to local issues and needs. Local officials are often more accessible and accountable to the residents of the district.

Efficient Public Services

By decentralizing administration, district placemaking can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. Local authorities are better positioned to understand and address the specific challenges faced by their communities. Well-designed public spaces are often safer and more secure, as they encourage increased surveillance and informal social control. Active and well-used public spaces are less likely to attract criminal activity.

Community Involvement

Fosters greater community engagement and participation in decision-making processes. Stakeholders have a more direct voice in shaping policies and programs that affect their lives. By promoting inclusive and participatory decision-making processes, district management can contribute to social cohesion and community resilience. It helps build trust between stakeholders and authorities and fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity.

Enhanced Vibrancy

Events such as street festivals and art walks contribute to the vibrancy and attractiveness of commercial corridors. They create a lively atmosphere that encourages people to linger, explore, and enjoy the amenities of the area.

More Economic Investments

Investments are vital for improving the quality of life and promoting economic growth within the district.

EXAMPLES OF DISTRICT PLACEMAKING IN OKC



Figure 33: Picture Courtesy of Scissortailpark.org

Saturday Farmers Market at Scissortail Park, Oklahoma City

The seasonal market located at Scissortail Park runs every Saturday from April through October and supports local farmers and artisans in Oklahoma. All items for sale are homegrown, homemade, or created by locally owned and operated vendors. The program continues to grow and serve the community through grant funding from United States Department of Agriculture.



Figure 34: Picture Courtesy of The Oklahoman

Plaza Walls, Oklahoma City

In 2015, the Oklahoma City Arts Commission and property owner Steve Mason granted local and regional artists permission to create their own artwork on the Plaza District's alley walls. The murals rotate in the Plaza Walls throughout the year and feature a diverse range of artists.

MERIDIAN FOCUS AREAS

This section provides an in-depth exploration of each of the six focus areas mentioned in the executive summary. Each focus area is outlined with an introduction, relevant examples, and key takeaways, serving as the foundational framework for the report's recommendations.

1

Business Improvement District and Civic Involvement

Explore the idea of creating a BID and/or implementation of a Board of Directors or hosting stakeholder meetings regularly. Future land use and economic development recommendations aligned with civic involvement may lead to more varied uses to enhance walkability, safety, and entertainment options at the corridor.

2

I-40 Bridge Enhancements

Reimagine the I-40 bridge as a gateway to Oklahoma City. Design a welcoming and inviting atmosphere with improved landscaping, enhanced infrastructure, and enhanced district identity as a perfect segue to invite visitors and improve the quality of the Meridian Corridor for the residents and business owners alike.

3

Riverfront Enhancements

Activating the Oklahoma River is one of the crucial development initiatives for the businesses and stakeholders in the Meridian Corridor. Implementing commercial activities facing the river, paving a new mixed-used trail connection along the riverfront corridor, and adding more recreation activities along the river will accentuate the overall quality of life in the corridor.

4

Streetscape Enhancements

Streetscape enhancements are the primary improvements to the Meridian Corridor. Imagining a cohesive landscape plan with median additions, sidewalk extensions, and public realm inclusions for short term benefits and redesigning the street for light rail in the long-term scenario. Add wayfinding elements and enhance public space design to improve the experience for pedestrians and drivers.

5

Safety and Security

Concerns of safety and transient populations along the Meridian Corridor were the most common topics that came up in the stakeholder meetings and engagement. Examine the safety issue with specific parameters for the Meridian Corridor.

6

Events and Branding

Looking at the Meridian Corridor as a brand, how it can be improved and how it can be tied into the airport rebranding and Oklahoma City's heritage and culture. Event programming creates a thriving, connected, and harmonious community because it allows stakeholders to test the viability of temporary activations for long-term success.

“Typically formed through a collaborative effort between businesses and local government, a BID enhances the area’s economic vitality, public safety, cleanliness, and overall attractiveness. It keeps business owners updated on progress within their district.”



“Traditional government funding tools, such as General Obligation Bonds used by the City of Oklahoma City, can be tapped to help pay for some infrastructure costs, but are unable to pay for ongoing maintenance.”

Figure 35: Green Team, Downtown OKC

Picture Courtesy of Block by Block, News / OKC Green Team's mission is to keep downtown clean and safe

1

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT AND CIVIC INVOLVEMENT



A Business Improvement District (BID) is a specially designated area within a city where businesses collectively fund improvements and services, such as enhanced security, marketing, or beautification projects to boost the area's appeal. Typically formed through a collaborative effort between businesses and local government, a BID enhances the area's economic vitality, public safety, cleanliness, and overall attractiveness. It keeps business owners updated on progress within their district.

Once a BID is established, property owners within the district pay a special assessment (a fee), which is the primary source of funding for the BID's activities. The amount each property owner pays is typically based on factors such as the size of the property, its assessed value, or its square footage. In some cases, the fee may vary depending on the type of business (e.g. higher fees for retail businesses that directly benefit from increased foot traffic). It may also receive funding from local government grants, private donations, or other fundraising activities, but the special assessment is generally the core funding mechanism. Private/public partnerships play a crucial role in the success of a BID. Partnership and mutual investment between the BID and private property owners ensures the greatest rate of success to have a thriving and successful district. By leveraging the strengths of both sectors, private/public partnerships foster economic growth, improve urban environments, and create thriving business districts that benefit all stakeholders.

When working with commercial areas that have existed as long as Meridian it is common to find that there is not a high level of collaboration or communication across its various properties and business owners. However, the improvements that often arise out of stakeholder engagement processes require longer term collaboration, ranging from initial efforts to raise awareness and to lobby for desired improvements through project execution and finally to ongoing maintenance. To enact change to the degree desired, it is essential that owners in the corridor begin meeting on a regular basis. These efforts do not need to immediately result in the creation of an organization, but owners have come close in the past to creating an association for the area. Initial meetings can and will focus on identifying those owners with a shared interest in seeing positive change and establishing those that are willing to put in the extra work that is necessary.

Many of the concerns and ideas discussed by Meridian stakeholders and in this plan will require either an upfront cost or funding for ongoing maintenance. Traditional government funding tools, such as General Obligation Bonds used by the City of Oklahoma City, can be tapped to help pay for some infrastructure costs, but are unable to pay for ongoing maintenance. Additionally, the City must consider the long-term maintenance demands of anything it might add to an area like Meridian. With many other areas in the city wanting similar upgrades, it becomes necessary for areas that want even higher-level amenities to contribute some of their own funds.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Organizational Directives

- Work with the City on interim opportunities to acquire part-time staffing positions.
- Meet on a more regular basis to discuss shared district goals and concerns. Include employers, not just hospitality interests.
- Reinstate non-profit corporation for Meridian, establish Board of Directors and pursue an IRS designation.
- Sustainable plan for district management. BID, Board of Directors, Meridian District Manager to facilitate overall district management for Meridian.
- The City works with The Alliance to explore creation of a tax increment financing district.
- Work to understand the demographics, purchasing behaviors, travel patterns and economic characteristics of the corridor's potential to attract external customers (businesses, brokerage community).
- Encourage property owners to upgrade sites and buildings (i.e. fencing materials, parking lots, lighting).
- Conduct a hospitality study by experts to determine market demands and associated uses that should be encouraged or recruited.
- Engage strategic partnerships, such as homeless outreach non-profits, OKC Fairgrounds, FAA, Visit OKC and the Chamber.

Land Use and Zoning

- Identify key properties for acquisition or redevelopment.
- Property owners and City Staff work together on code updates to encourage by-right entitlements that increase street frontage requirements and mixed uses.
- Focus on commercial growth for the corridor that will increase economic development for Meridian.
- As redevelopment occurs, new codes should tighten design requirements for buildings frontages and landscaping.

District Activities (Activation / Maintenance)

- Require properties abutting the river to enhance the trail and interact with the river from a site plan/building design standpoint.
- Sustainable green team that monitors and maintains the landscaping daily.
- Create a maintenance plan. Establish a plan for regular maintenance of landscaping, lighting, and street furniture. Ensure funding and resources are available.
- Create an overall public art plan for the district.

EXAMPLES OF BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS



Figure 36: Picture Courtesy of flickr

Downtown Oklahoma City Partnership

Downtown Oklahoma City Partnership (DOKC) is a not-for-profit organization created in 2000 to manage and market the Downtown Business Improvement District. Its mission is to manage, maintain, and market the downtown area. The BID Advisory Board (BID Board) recommends strategies for enhanced services within the BID to the DOKC Board of Directors, DOKC staff, and City Council. DOKC oversees seven downtown districts: Automobile Alley, Midtown, Bricktown, West Village, Deep Deuce, City Center, and Film Row.



Figure 37: Picture Courtesy of Visit Detroit Facebook Page

Downtown Revitalization, Detroit

Detroit's downtown revitalization transformed an underdeveloped urban district into a thriving hub. The partnership between the City of Detroit, private investors, local businesses, and community organizations used over \$5 billion in private investment to create public spaces, retails, office spaces, dining and other entertainment options with improved public transit options like the QLine Streetcar.

Existing Condition of I-40 & Meridian Intersection looking North



Figure 38: Credit by Johnson and Associates



2 I-40 BRIDGE ENHANCEMENTS



The I-40 bridge is widely viewed as one of the primary gateways to the Meridian Corridor, making it one of the district's biggest opportunities for placemaking improvements. Unfortunately, it also represents one of the biggest eyesores for district stakeholders. In the long term, the City of Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation are in discussions about the need to eventually replace the bridge. This would represent a significant opportunity for a better organized Meridian association to lobby for additional improvements as a part of that reconstruction.

In the short term, there are many ways that the Meridian stakeholders could work to improve the overall aesthetic of the bridge. It is recommended that the Meridian stakeholders work with the City and ODOT on using the excess land in the approaches east and west of the south side of the bridge for the addition of terraced landscaping that might also serve as a platform for large scale district branding and public art opportunities. Districts seeking revitalization efforts will also turn to strategies that can take even less time to implement and are generally described as "lighter, quicker, cheaper". The accompanying renderings show how a mural and better lighting could improve the underpass – making it better lit and ultimately providing the feeling of a safer environment overall.

In a long-term scenario, ODOT will completely renovate and reconstruct the I-40 bridge and the City can include beautification efforts such as public art installations that welcome visitors to a prominent gateway to Oklahoma City. Encouraging zoning code changes to allow mixed-use development to occur, could bring more commercial and residential land uses to the area, instead of large gas stations and drive-thrus. Mixed use developments may promote a better quality of life and enhance safety measures for residents in the future.

Concept for I-40 & Meridian Intersection Improvements



Figure 39: Credit by ADG

Median improvements with low maintenance vegetation

Terraced landscaping with district identity markers

Landscape improvements and public art installations





Figure 40: Credit by ADG

Concept for Improved I-40 Bridge Underpass

Transformation into a welcoming gateway to Oklahoma City



Existing Condition of Riverfront Corridor



Figure 41: Credit by Johnson and Associates

3 RIVERFRONT ENHANCEMENTS



How the public perceives a commercial district is largely driven by the individual businesses that make it up. The Meridian Corridor has done an incredible job over the last two decades of expansion in its primary line of business: lodging. However, in that same period, stakeholders felt that the district's food offerings have steadily declined. Sometimes a single restaurant with the right branding and identity can define an entire district. One doesn't have to look much farther than Cattleman's to see how it has been able to singlehandedly define the visitor's experience to the larger Stockyards City Main Street. By comparison, many throughout the stakeholder engagement process noted not only the food at Applewoods and Molly Murphy's, but also the way that these restaurants made them feel about Meridian. With that in mind, it is recommended that supporters of Meridian explore ways to bring destination dining opportunities back to the corridor.

The planned Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) transit improvement along Meridian carries with it the potential to turn the intersection of Meridian with the river into a rare multi-modal hub within the City's larger transportation network. Currently the river trails provide a unique transportation option not found as strongly in other districts in the City. Similarly, Meridian is one of the few districts to be served by the River Cruises. The eventual addition of the light rail, or even Bus Rapid Transit, if used as an intermediate step, will bring yet another option to the corridor. This addition provides those travelling to and through the district countless new options. Just a few examples include eventually allowing light rail users to disembark on Meridian and then transfer to the trails on a bicycle to ride towards downtown or for a River Cruise rider to disembark at Meridian to catch the light rail to a restaurant farther north on the corridor, or even south to the airport. If leveraged correctly and as seen throughout the history of urban living, the meeting points of various forms of transportation can be incredible activity generators.

Depending on the direction that you approach the Oklahoma River it is possible that you might not even realize that the river exists. This is especially true of the north side. None of the existing buildings were constructed to take advantage of this unique vista and some even turn their back on the river or have parking lining the river. The vegetation on both sides of the river contributes to this lack of visibility. To that end it is recommended that the City thin out some of this vegetation to improve sightlines, particularly on the north side.

Lastly, the bridge over the Oklahoma River is functional but non-descript, lacking anything that is particularly memorable or that communicates the importance of the area to the Oklahoma City community. Bridge enhancements can be designed to communicate a sense of arrival for travelers. The included rendering shows a bridge with a much larger presence. While this may not be possible with the existing bridge, there is likely a window in the distant future in which this bridge may need to be replaced – either to support future investments in light rail or simply because the existing bridge has become functionally obsolete. When that opportunity arrives, district supporters should be prepared to lobby for a structure that better communicates the importance of the district. In the meantime, district supporters should also explore what improvements might be possible from a “lighter, quicker, cheaper” mindset. The included images show a handful of ways that nearby communities have used sculpture and light to bring additional attention to bridges at important crossing points.



Figure 42: Atlanta Beltline, Atlanta
Picture Courtesy of DISCOVER ATLANTA

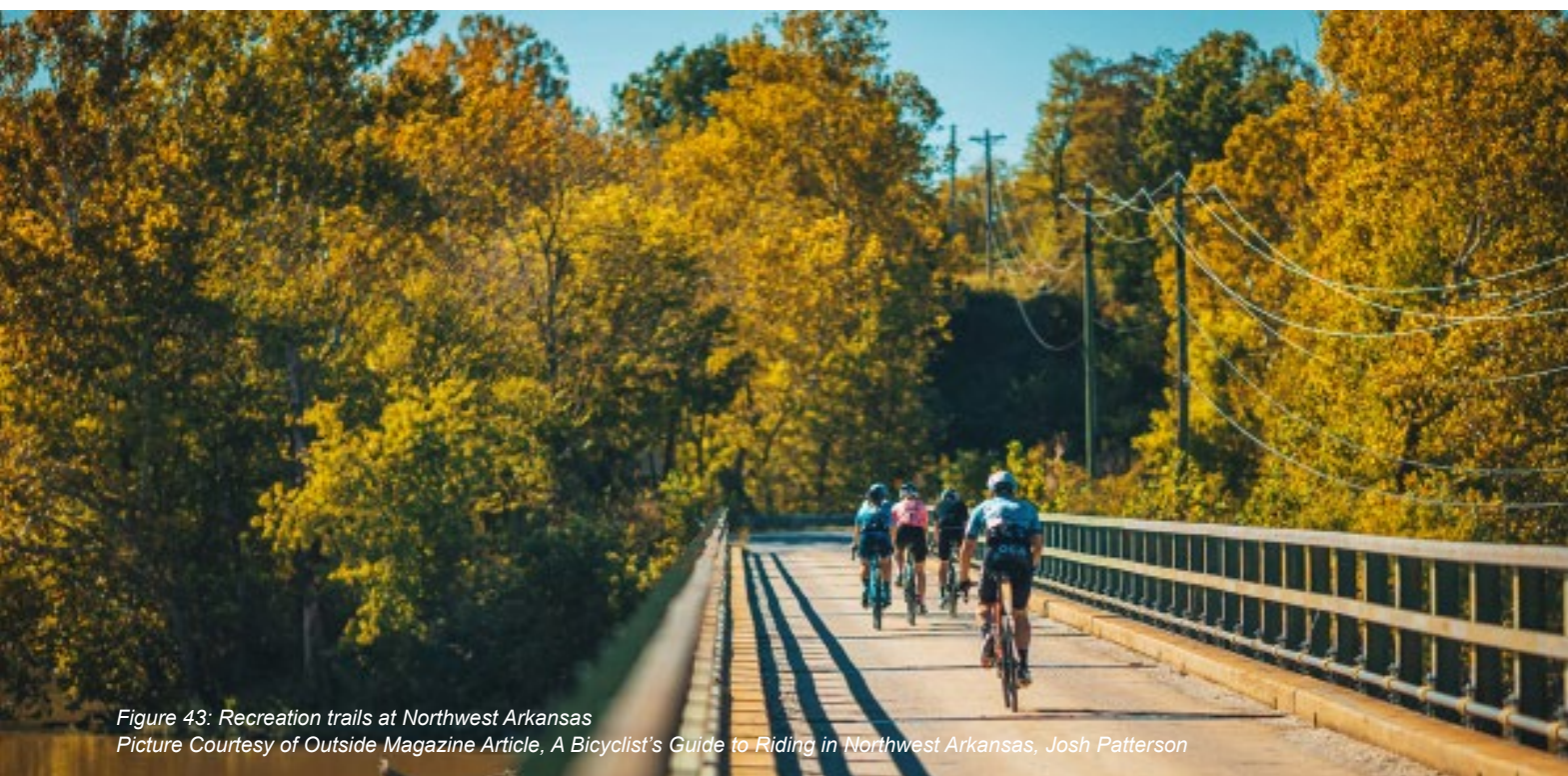


Figure 43: Recreation trails at Northwest Arkansas
Picture Courtesy of Outside Magazine Article, *A Bicyclist's Guide to Riding in Northwest Arkansas*, Josh Patterson

Given all these goals - (1) to better showcase the meeting of the river with Meridian, (2) to capitalize on the many different modes of transportation, and (3) to improve upon the dining options in the district - it only makes sense that district supporters should explore how to add food options specifically at this important nexus. With the success of Atlanta's Beltline, ongoing improvements along the Trinity River in Fort Worth, and the evolving marriage of trails and entertainment occurring in NW Arkansas, there is an emerging market to cater to users of the trails. Unlike many other pockets of the Oklahoma River, Meridian is well positioned to capitalize on the concept of Trail Oriented Development. The best way to accomplish this would be through the repurposing of river-adjacent parcels to dining opportunities in much the same way that a small cluster of restaurants have successfully capitalized on the views of Lake Hefner.

Building upon the idea of encouraging more riverfront development, it is important to remember that the City of Oklahoma City has not engaged in a major visioning effort for the full river corridor in over 20 years. Many of the individuals that drove that effort back then and championed those ideas for many years later have moved on. Many parts of the river, like the Boathouse District and the Wheeler neighborhood, have seen significant reinvestment in that time. Meridian, however, has not seen any significant development capitalizing on its riverfront in several years. We believe this all points to an opportunity for this study to re-open dialogue on new ways that Meridian might generate new development taking advantage of its riverfront.

The rendering on the following page shows how a new road could be added on the north side of the river, east of the existing bridge. This road would help create a traditional 4-way intersection just north of the bridge and would open the river shore to new development opportunities. Earlier planning documents for the Meridian area indicate now forgotten hopes of adding another riverboat landing on the north side to mirror the one that now exists on the south side. This landing could become the hub for additional development, capable of taking advantage of the river as an amenity.

While the renderings on the following pages will show increased development along the north side of the Oklahoma River, equal opportunity exists for development along the south side. The south bank boasts an existing boat launch and plaza that could be activated for events and water sports. The City of Oklahoma City owns parcels on both banks of the river, making them prime opportunities for activation, engagement, and development. The purpose of the renderings and discussion is primarily to highlight the immense potential the river has in this location and how its transformation would impact the Meridian corridor. After the completion of this report, the City of Oklahoma City, its partners, and stakeholders will embark on an update to the river master plan. This revisiting of the investment on the Oklahoma River will further refine and suggest improvements not captured in this report. These images and ideas should be seen as the teaser toward larger projects and exploration into unlocking the potential of this natural, unimproved portion of the river.



Figure 44: Trinity River, Fort Worth Dallas
Picture Courtesy of Culture Map, Fort Worth

Concept for Revitalized Riverfront Corridor



Future inclusion of light rail development

Enhanced crosswalks

Sculptures and public art as wayfinding elements

Future developments facing the river

Riverfront restaurants and public space enhancements

Future boat landing

Trail or
improve

Figure 45: Credit by ADG



Bridge enhancements as a landmark

Existing river cruise landing

Future West River Trail extension

ent
ments



Figure 46: Credit by ADG



Bridge beautification as a landmark, enhancing pedestrian walkways and biking links to the trail



Riverfront development as a catalyst for an active corridor with public realm improvements



Figure 47: Credit by ADG



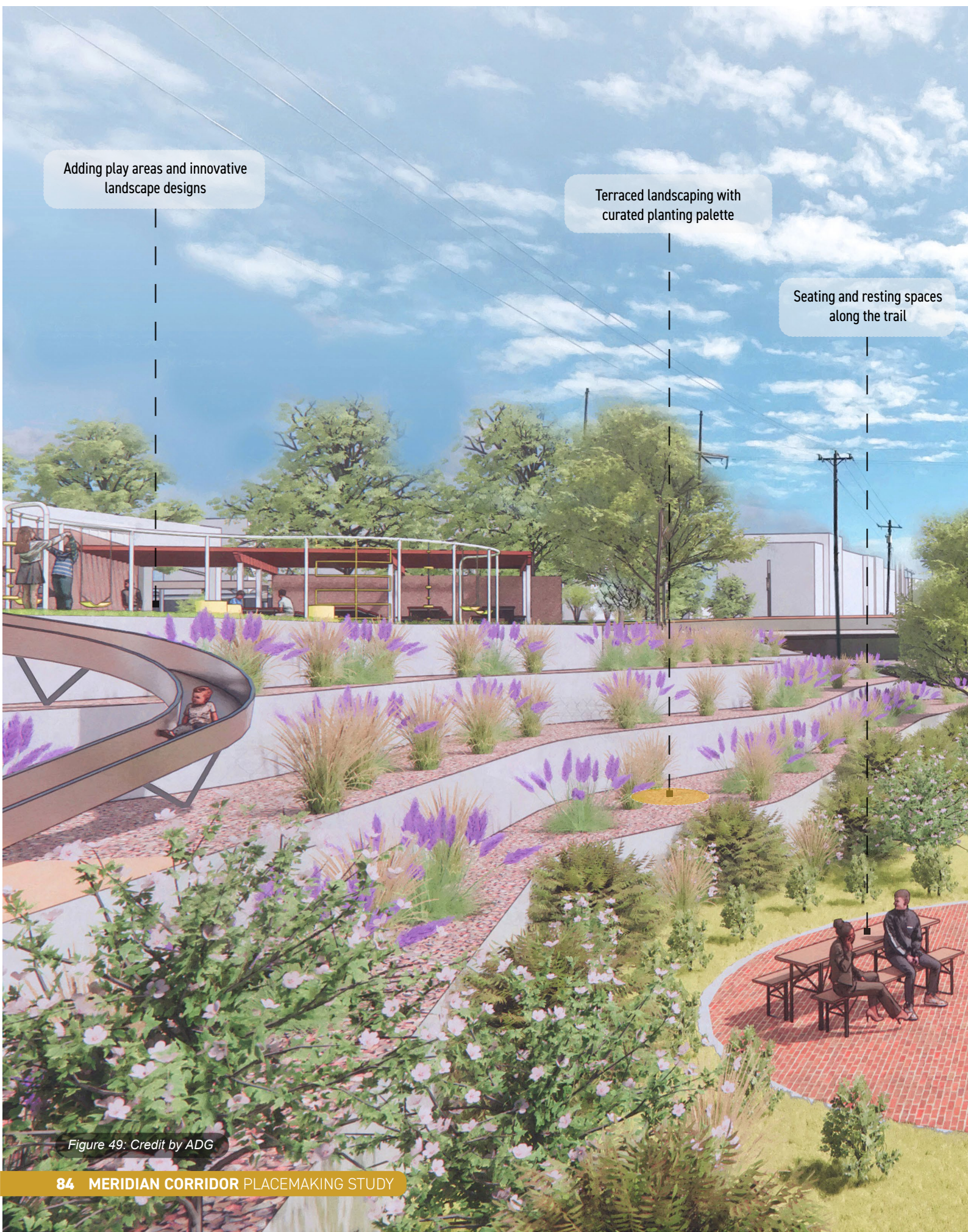
Figure 48: Credit by ADG

A safer intersection with pedestrian amenities, public art and inclusion of mass transit to boost public movement and a catalyst for



future riverfront oriented developments

Concept for Transformative Trail Experience

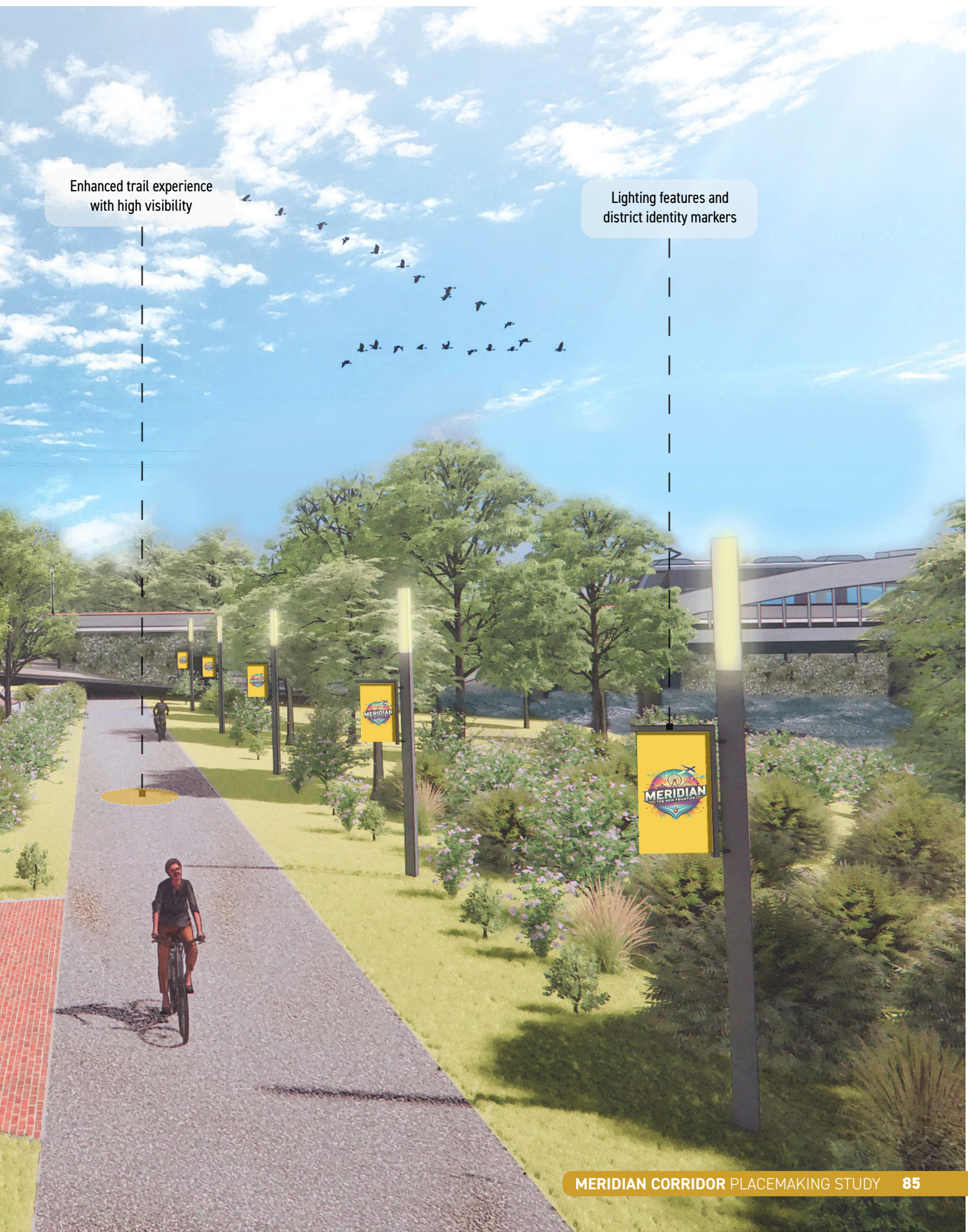


Adding play areas and innovative landscape designs

Terraced landscaping with curated planting palette

Seating and resting spaces along the trail

Figure 49. Credit by ADG



Enhanced trail experience
with high visibility

Lighting features and
district identity markers



Figure 50: Existing Boot Barn Parking Lot
Picture Courtesy of Google Earth



4 STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS



Stretching from the I-40 bridge to the Will Rogers International Airport, the Meridian Corridor is a linear monotonous street, lined with traffic lights, lampposts, electric poles and billboards, representing classic characteristics of an American suburban commercial area. Currently it constitutes four drive lanes, with a middle turn lane, excessive curb cuts, discontinuous buffers alongside sidewalks and longer crosswalk distances that further show how cars speed down the street well beyond the given 35mph speed limit.

The streetscape conditions in the corridor present several challenges that affect both motorists and pedestrians, limiting the corridor's potential as a vibrant and attractive urban space. Sidewalks in many areas are narrow, inconsistent, or missing entirely, making pedestrian navigation difficult and unsafe. Less pedestrian friendly and more car centric, the streetscape elements lack useful amenities, pedestrian access to shops and restaurants, covered canopies, seating and landscaping. There is a lack of cohesive landscaping, street furniture, and public art, giving the corridor a stark and uninviting appearance. There are limited or no dedicated bike lanes. Addressing the current streetscape challenges will not only enhance safety and mobility but also encourage economic growth by making the area more attractive to businesses, visitors, and residents alike.

Concept for Median Addition Locations



Figure 51: Credit by Johnson and Associates

Key Components for Streetscape Improvements

Accessible Streets

Develop a comprehensive landscape plan including infrastructure and streetscape improvements that ensure accessibility for all types of users, including those with disabilities on compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

Pedestrian Oriented Street Layout

Plan for pedestrian-friendly spaces and accessible sidewalks. Provide vegetation as barriers from travel lanes, high visibility crosswalks at frequent intervals, and safer intersection design. Introduce pedestrian countdown signals to inform walkers of the remaining time to cross. Implement Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI) such as installing pedestrian crossing signals to give pedestrians a head start before vehicles.

Multi-Modal Transportation

Addition of mass transit services like Light Rail or Bus Rapid Transit to make the corridor more accessible to the public. Provide covered bus stops and terminals with beneficial amenities like seating and charging stations.

Median Improvement

When landscaped properly, the median increases safety and aesthetic quality of the street in addition to reducing traffic speed for pedestrian safety. Add medians along the corridor at specific intervals with a low-maintenance design including less greenery and more hard surfaces (can include boulders, rocks and pebbles).

District Identity Markers

Implement wayfinding symbols and maps for easier navigation and identifying prime locations and events in the Meridian Corridor. Cohesive district street furniture, shade structures, light poles, bollards, trash cans and information boards.

Lighting Design

Adequate lighting along the corridor, particularly in parking lots, alleys, underpasses, and other dimly lit areas, helps improve visibility and reduces the likelihood of crime. Low-energy solutions such as Light Emitting Diodes (LED) minimize energy consumption and light pollution. LEDs have a long lifespan of 50,000–70,000 hours when not operated at high temperatures. Alternative power sources such as solar-operated lighting posts and bollards can also be used.

Long-term Solutions

Critical infrastructure improvements include burying utility lines underground or blending utility lines with the streetscapes and relocating surface parking.

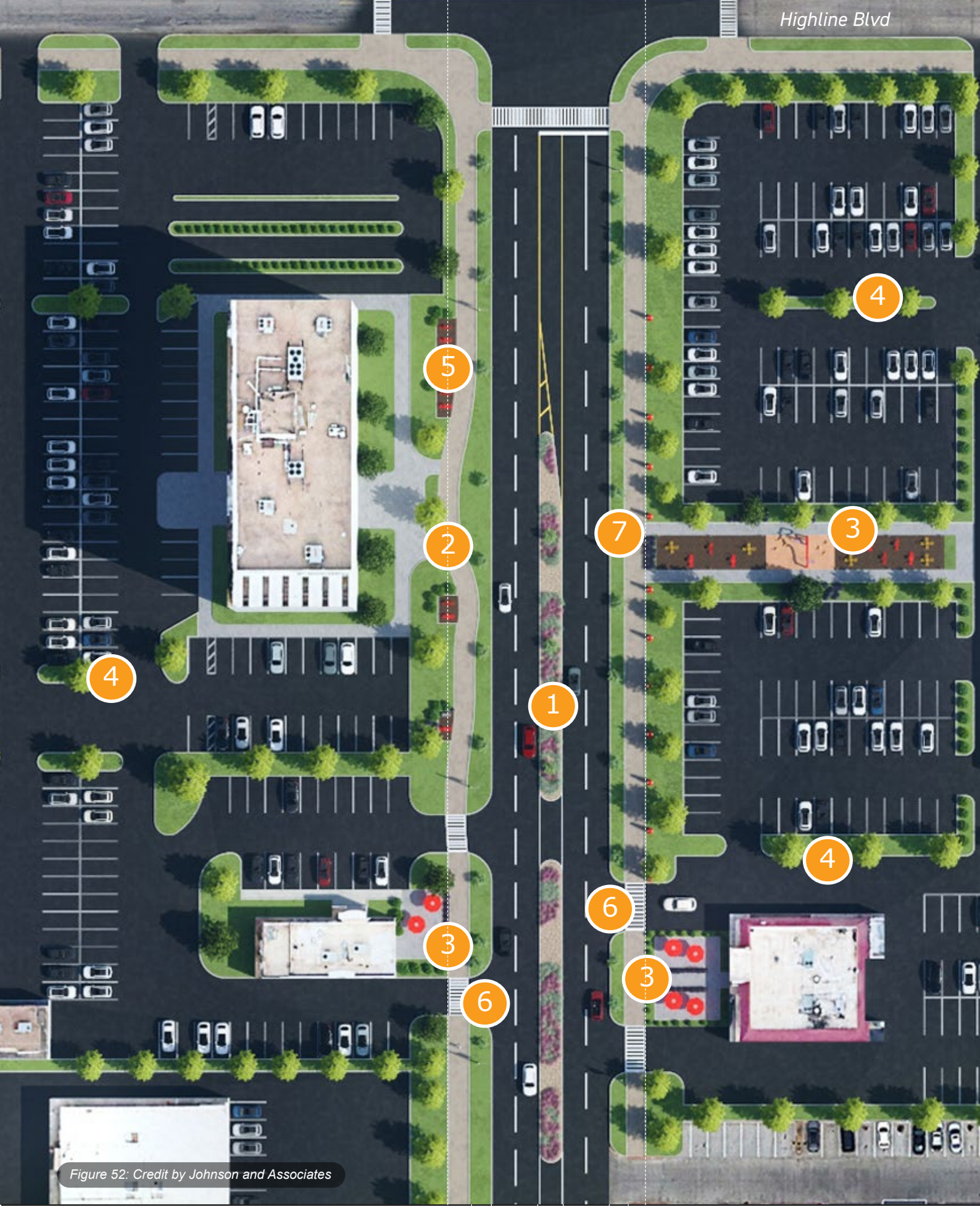


Figure 52: Credit by Johnson and Associates

Private
Property

Sidewalks

Buffer

Travel Lanes

Median

Travel Lanes

Buffer

Sidewalks

Private
Property



MID-TERM STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS

- 1 Install medians with minimal vegetation and rock beds that are easy to maintain.
- 2 Reduce curb cuts with continuous sidewalks and vegetation along the buffers that are low maintenance.
- 3 Install direct pedestrian access to the existing businesses, shopfronts, and restaurants.
- 4 Encourage property owners to include islands with native vegetation in parking lots.
- 5 Adding more amenities like seating, movable chairs, and trash cans at regular intervals.
- 6 Improve pedestrian safety with better crosswalks, LPI devices, and traffic calming measures.
- 7 Place district identity markers such as information boards or sculptures. A few ideas include:
 - Large scale installation of paper airplanes.
 - Re-use of historic airplanes or specific parts, such as wings or tails.
 - Re-use of the concrete columns circling the Boot Barn property from its Shepler's days.
 - Sculpture of a Cowboy on a horse or a pegasus.
 - Branding a logo for the Meridian Corridor.
 - Introducing specific lines from the state song "Oklahoma!" as a recurring theme throughout a future streetscape project.
 - Fabrication of art pieces representing the abstract flight path of birds.

Concept for Mid-term Streetscape Improvements



Figure 53: Credit by Johnson and Associates

Property Line

8' Sidewalk

6' Buffer

11' Travel Lane

11' Travel Lane

12' Median



Zapata's
Mexican Restaurant

Boot Barn

BOOT BARN
WESTERN & WORK WEAR

MERIDIAN
THE NEW FRONTIER

ZAPATA'S
TRUE MEXICAN FOOD

an

11' Travel Lane



11' Travel Lane



6' Buffer

8' Sidewalk

Property Line

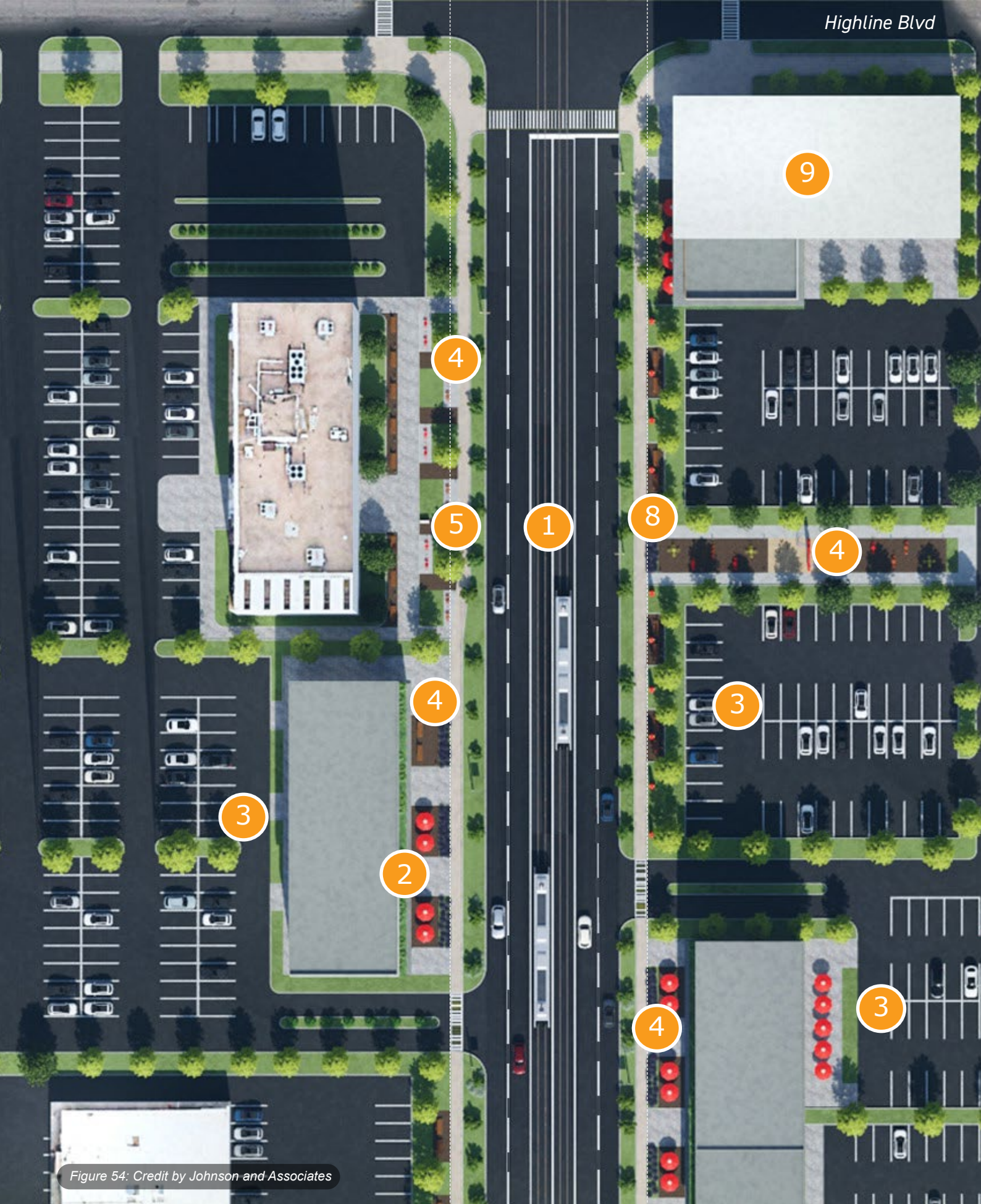


Figure 54: Credit by Johnson and Associates

Private
Property

Private Property
Improvements
Sidewalks
Buffer

Travel Lanes

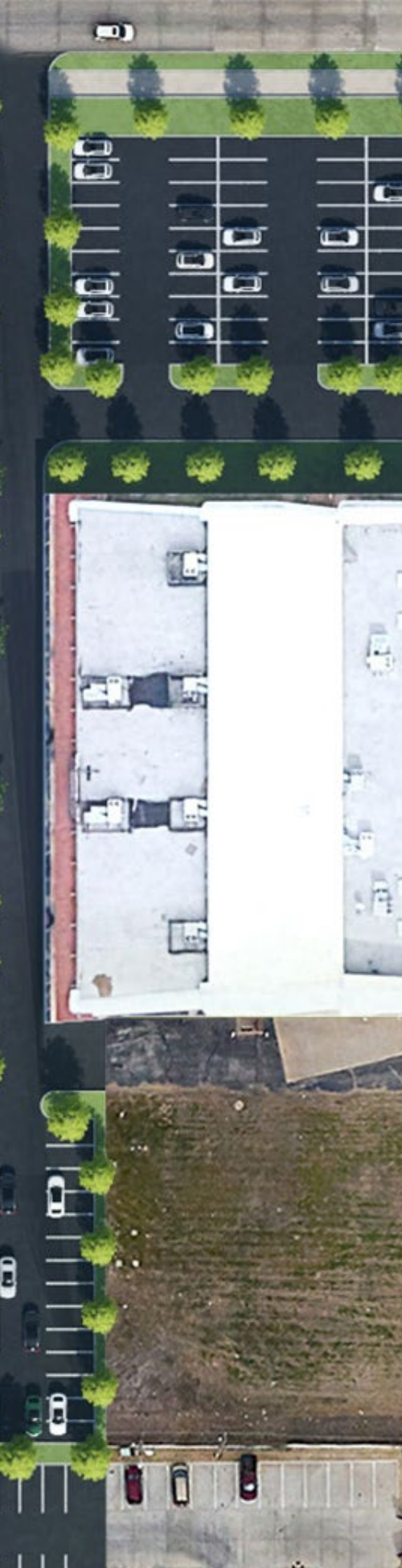
Transit Lanes

Travel Lanes

Buffer
Sidewalks

Private Property
Improvements

Private
Property



LONG-TERM STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS

- 1 Considering mass rapid transit, develop street with two-way transit line, four travel lanes, enhanced sidewalks and buffers.
- 2 Encourage mixed use developments with offices, restaurants, and residences with more street front uses.
- 3 Encourage screening of parking from street via landscaping, buildings, or other creative solutions.
- 4 Promote existing buildings with more pedestrian friendly amenities, parklets, and public spaces to engage the visitors. Promote the addition of landscape points with inclusion of these amenities and beautification efforts.
- 5 Install canopies and transit shelters at regular intervals with services like charging stations and ATMs.
- 6 Consider burying the electric and utility lines underground.
- 7 Provide lighting features that are more human scale and improve the aesthetics of the streetscape.
- 8 Reduce the use of large billboards and advertisement boards. Provide district maps and wayfinding elements to identify locations.
- 9 Encourage private property owners to explore better use of surface parking areas such as adding amenities for public use, leasing a part of land for new developments.

Concept for Long-term Streetscape Improvements



Existing Office Building

Figure 55: Credit by Johnson and Associates

Building Line

Public

6' Sidewalk

6' Buffer

11' Travel Lane

10' Travel Lane

14' Transit Lane



Boot Barn

14' Transit Lane



10' Travel Lane



11' Travel Lane



6' Buffer

6' Sidewalk

Public

Building Line

Property Owner Responsibilities

Analogous to parks and open spaces, streets are public spaces that require the movement of people and easy accessibility to function and regulate properly. Improvements such as adding medians, green buffers, sidewalks, bike paths, crosswalks, and lighting features do fall under the City's transformation responsibilities, but to enhance the charm and activity in a particular commercial street requires equal efforts from the property and business owners. An enhancement concept focused on one of the private property (shown in the picture to the right) along the Meridian Corridor is used as an example to show how unused surface parking can be transformed into a vibrant and livable place through tactical interventions. As shown in the picture below, efforts such as keeping the property clean, creating a parklet with movable seating, and well-maintained landscaping provide direct pedestrian access from the sidewalks to the storefronts. Adding play areas for children and resting spots for parents and other patrons will create a safer environment overall.



Figure 56: Credit by Johnson and Associates



Figure 57: Credit by Johnson and Associates



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Existing Streetscape Conditions



Excessive curb cuts

Figure 58: Picture courtesy of Google Earth



Unmaintained
landscaping

No medians

Concept for Mid-term Streetscape Interventions



Figure 59: Credit by Johnson and Associates



Buffers with native plants

Adding district identity markers

Property owner improvements

Median addition with low maintenance landscaping

Concept for Long-term Streetscape Interventions




Figure 60: Credit by Johnson and Associates



Limiting large billboards for a clearer skyline

Addition of new mixed-use developments along the street

Future light rail development

An aerial photograph of a modern urban sidewalk. Several people are walking along the path, which is bordered by a green lawn on the left and a street with trees on the right. A wooden bench is visible on the sidewalk. A yellow speech bubble contains text about pedestrian safety.

“Improving pedestrian safety in commercial corridors involves a multi-faceted approach, addressing infrastructure, enforcing policies and growing technological solutions.”

Figure 61: Sidewalk improvements through Project 180 Streetscape, Oklahoma City
Picture Courtesy of OJB.COM

5 SAFETY AND SECURITY



Security and safety are essential in a commercial district because they create an environment where businesses, customers, and employees feel comfortable and protected, which encourages economic growth and community vitality. Ensuring safety in commercial districts is crucial for the well-being of businesses, customers, and the community at large. After studying and spending time on Meridian Ave, it is clear that pedestrian safety needs to be addressed. The City of Oklahoma City adopted Vision Zero Action Plan in February 2025, which recommends strategies to help the city achieve safer vehicles, safer roads, safer speeds, safer people and post crash care. Improving pedestrian safety in commercial corridors involves a multi-faceted approach, addressing infrastructure, enforcing policies and growing technological solutions. The focus areas under safety and security include:

Infrastructure Improvements

Infrastructure improvement projects along the Meridian Corridor primarily need to focus on building pedestrian-oriented street layouts, supporting multi-modal transportation networks, introducing traffic calming measures, and safer pedestrian mobility with signage and improved street lighting. Prioritizing these aspects would improve connectivity to the Meridian Corridor from different communities in Oklahoma City, boost the vibrancy along the corridor through safer accessibility and mobility options and accommodate the pressing needs of businesses located in the area.

Policy & Enforcement

A robust policy and enforcement strategy requires strong public-private partnerships and leadership roles to govern the corridor and its future developments. Street safety policies and enforcement along the corridor should strictly focus on a combination of visible police presence, collaborating with organizations like Key to Home Partnership and the City to educate residents and business owners on transient issues and enforcing traffic laws such as speed limits and traffic signal violations.

Technological Solutions

Technological solutions, when implemented, become important guardrails to make sure that the adopted enforcement is equitable and functional. Innovative approaches such as speed safety cameras, speed limit indicators, and more have been used to improve street safety and reduce crime.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Organizational Directives

- Engage with City of OKC on Key to Home program.
- Engage with other local non-profits that are involved with homeless services.
- Explore installation of gates/fencing around hotel parking lots. Secure funding and partnership with property owners.
- Leveraging technology such as mobile apps (Citizen's app) for reporting incidents, emergency notification systems, and smart sensors for detecting unusual activity can complement traditional safety measures.
- Explore part-time security patrol funded by collective groups of property owners, a potential BID service.
- Increase police presence to enforce pedestrian right-of-way laws. Implement automated enforcement, such as red-light and speed cameras.

Actionable Safety Enhancement

- Conduct a lighting audit of the Meridian Corridor. Sustainable district management to oversee lighting efforts along the Meridian Corridor.
- Educate private property owners regarding best practices when it comes to security and safety for guests. Adequate lighting in parking lots, alleys, and other dimly lit areas helps improve visibility and reduce the likelihood of crime.
- Implement unique lighting installations that also serve as interactive art elements.
- Adopting Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) in the commercial areas along the corridor by implementing features such as clear sightlines, natural surveillance, and landscaping to discourage criminal activity.
- Installing CCTV cameras and other surveillance equipment to monitor activities in the area can act as a deterrent to criminal behavior and provide evidence in case of incidents.
- Extended medians with increased landscaping will help to calm traffic.

EXAMPLES OF SAFETY MEASURES



Figure 62: Credit by Johnson and Associates

Bricktown, Oklahoma City

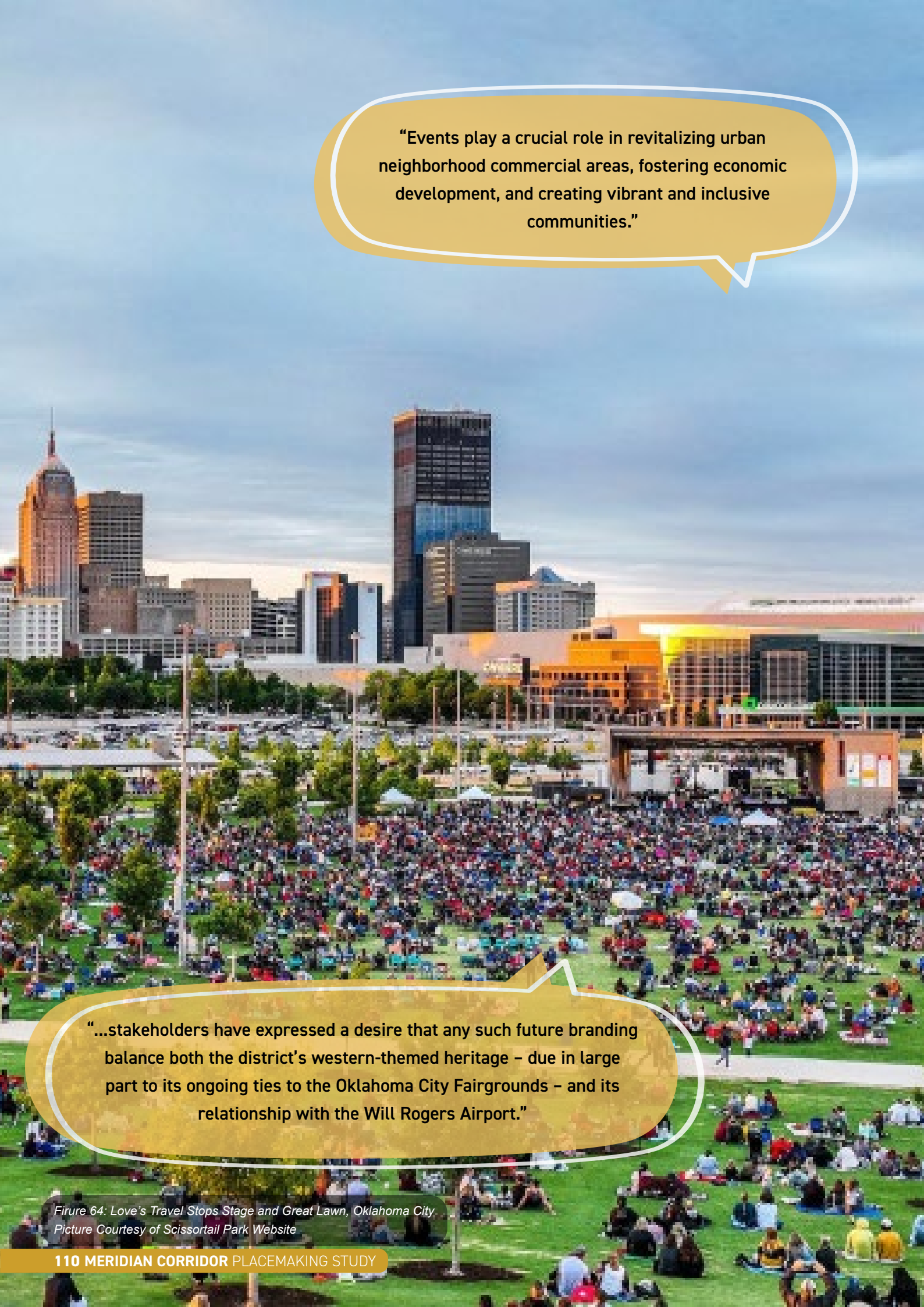
Each bridge underpass in the Bricktown District in Oklahoma City showcases unique murals painted on the walls and safety barriers to prevent casualties. In addition, enhanced lighting and light fixtures increase visibility and promote a safer environment for pedestrians and commuters.



Figure 63: Picture Courtesy of Key to Home Partnership

Key to Home Partnership

The Key to Home Partnership, a collaboration of more than 50 organizations with the City of Oklahoma City, is working to prevent and end homelessness as well as educate the community on the issue. The City of OKC works directly with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to allocate federal funds across the partnership to support programs that provide shelter, housing, and supportive services to people experiencing homelessness. The Key to Home Partnership decommissioned an encampment at Meridian and SW 15th, rehousing nine individuals in October 2024.

A wide-angle photograph of a large crowd of people sitting on a grassy lawn in front of a city skyline at dusk. The crowd is dense and fills the foreground and middle ground. In the background, several tall buildings are visible, including a prominent skyscraper with a pointed top. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting sunset or sunrise. Two yellow speech bubbles with white text are overlaid on the image. One is in the upper right, and the other is in the lower left.

“Events play a crucial role in revitalizing urban neighborhood commercial areas, fostering economic development, and creating vibrant and inclusive communities.”

“...stakeholders have expressed a desire that any such future branding balance both the district’s western-themed heritage – due in large part to its ongoing ties to the Oklahoma City Fairgrounds – and its relationship with the Will Rogers Airport.”

Figure 64: Love’s Travel Stops Stage and Great Lawn, Oklahoma City
Picture Courtesy of Scissortail Park Website

6

EVENTS AND BRANDING



Commercial corridor events could be a beneficial addition to the Meridian Corridor. Events in various districts and neighborhoods throughout Oklahoma City have been very successful in attracting communities to those specific districts. Events play a crucial role in revitalizing urban neighborhood commercial areas, fostering economic development, and creating vibrant and inclusive communities. These events aim to promote local businesses, attract customers, and enhance the vibrancy of the area.

Oklahoma City is exemplary in terms of hosting a variety of events and festivals throughout the year, many of which are organized in specific districts. Each event celebrates and signifies the City's diversity, history and community spirit. Just a few of these districts include the Bricktown District, Deep Deuce, Downtown OKC, the Asian District, the Plaza District and the Paseo District. Scissortail Park's Great Lawn and stage area in Downtown OKC is a signature stop in the City for art shows, exhibits, campaign fundraisers, concerts, music festivals, larger corporate events, dance recitals, and fashion shows. The community members plan events like the Saturday Farmers Market, walking club, yoga, and Zumba classes that keep the park active and vibrant with visitors.

Shared district branding is one of the first tasks that a newly founded association should pursue. In its past, the area previously used the term "Aero-Meridian" and through the course of this work and meetings with stakeholders, some have advocated using the name "West End" moving forward. Once buy-in on this name is achieved or as a part of that process, district supporters should use pooled resources to work with a professional marketing and branding firm towards both an official name and additional collateral. These items will become important in terms of establishing a shared presence in both the physical and digital landscapes.

Throughout this study, stakeholders have expressed a desire that any future branding balance both the district's western-themed heritage – due in large part to its ongoing ties to the Oklahoma City Fairgrounds – and its relationship with the Will Rogers International Airport.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Organizational Directives

- Host regular conversations between business owners about seasonal event programming and strategies throughout the year.

Marketing / Branding

- Develop a strong brand for the corridor that includes a unique name, logo, and identity that sets it apart from competing areas. Set up district identity markers along the sidewalks to make the branding more visible and engaging.
- Use digital platforms, social media, and traditional marketing to promote events and tell the story of the corridor's history, cultural significance, and ongoing development efforts.
- Launch loyalty programs or collaborations with local influencers to promote businesses in the area and encourage people to shop or eat locally.
- Conduct a competitive analysis with other commercial areas within the region to determine the corridor's unique selling points.

Event / Collaboration Opportunities

- OKC Fairgrounds has 80% annual reoccurring events - pick a large event weekend and host a parking lot festival with food and entertainment.
- FAA has a daily shuttle for students to go to lunch on Meridian, work with them to engage this lunch audience.
- Set up temporary events to activate private surface parking lots.
- The Oklahoma River was the most important amenity to stakeholders. Partner with private property owners to activate the river with seating, shade, and possible events.

Enhancements / Maintenance

- Several areas of vacant lots along Meridian can be activated with seating, shade, or programming.

EXAMPLES OF EVENTS AND BRANDING



Figure 65: Picture Courtesy of Visit OKC

Modern Frontier Campaign

In 2020, the Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau launched “The Modern Frontier” campaign to reshape the City’s image. This initiative blends Oklahoma City’s rich western heritage with its contemporary advancements, highlighting the City’s collaborative, diverse, and innovative spirit. The campaign has been instrumental in attracting tourists and businesses by showcasing Oklahoma City as a dynamic and forward-thinking destination.



Figure 66: Picture Courtesy of PLAZADISTRICT.ORG

Plaza District, Where Creativity Lives

The Plaza District adopted a branding campaign with the tagline “Where Creativity Lives”, which resonated with both residents and tourists, attracting a broad range of artists, businesses, and creatives. This helped the district stand out in Oklahoma City with a unique blend of murals, galleries, music venues, and small businesses. Events such as the Plaza District Festival and the monthly Second Friday Art Walks have further helped to establish the district’s reputation as an arts destination.



Figure 67: Credit by Johnson and Associates

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies and Actions

This section provides actionable strategies as project recommendations for developing Meridian as a healthy corridor.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT A



CREATE A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT & IMPROVE CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

- o Work with the City on interim staffing support.
- o Reinstate non-profit corporation for Meridian, establish a Board of Directors and IRS designation
- o Meet regularly with stakeholders, including employers.
- o Engage in funding exploration (grants, sponsorships, BID).



MAJOR CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT

- o Future design considerations to accommodate BRT route.
- o Implement significant riverfront enhancements & activations.
- o Require properties abutting the river to integrate with trails & public access.
- o Work with property owners & City Staff on zoning/code updates for better street frontage & mixed-use allowances.

GLANCE

BRANDING & MARKETING INITIATIVES

- o Develop a strong brand identity (name, logo, markers).
- o Leverage digital platforms and social media for promotion.
- o Launch loyalty programs or local influencer collaborations.
- o Continue conversations with City Staff regarding the 2025 GO Bond.



INFRASTRUCTURE & BEAUTIFICATION

- o Develop a district-wide maintenance plan for landscaping, lighting, & street furniture.
- o Encourage property owners to bring parking lot landscaping up to code.
- o Work on enhancing underpasses with lighting & public art.
- o Improve medians with low-maintenance landscaping & extend existing medians for more green space.
- o Remove unnecessary curb cuts/shared driveways to improve walkability & safety.



RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE CONTINUED



EVENTS & PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION

- o Partner with the FAA to better engage lunch audiences.
- o Host artist invitations for public art installations.
- o Organize a large parking lot festival during a major State Fair weekend.
- o Set up temporary events in underutilized lots to activate spaces.



PROPERTY & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- o Identify key properties for redevelopment or city/private acquisition.
- o Work with City Staff and The Alliance to explore Tax Increment Financing (TIF).
- o Conduct a hospitality study to determine market demands.
- o Provide data points to the brokerage community to encourage redevelopment.
- o Increase design standards for industrial redevelopment to improve frontages & landscaping.

COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP & SAFETY ENHANCEMENTS

- o Partner with OKC Beautiful for regular LitterBlitz clean-ups.
- o Engage homeless outreach organizations.
- o Organize power washing, painting, or mural installations.
- o Improve pedestrian safety with better crosswalks & traffic calming measures.



SUSTAINABLE GROWTH & LONG-TERM PLANNING

- o Develop a sustainable plan for district management with a fulltime Meridian District Manager.
- o Strengthen partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce and City for long-term development.
- o Conduct a competitive analysis of commercial areas to refine Meridian's unique selling points.
- o Encourage commercial growth aligned with future land use plans.





Figure 68: Credit by Johnson and Associates

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Project Implementation

The matrix for each recommendation defines projects to be carried out in short-term (0-5 yrs), mid-term (5-20 yrs) and long-term (20+ yrs) scenarios.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

As mentioned in the executive summary, the proposed project recommendations are categorized into short-term, mid-term and long-term based upon their achievability in given time frames.

These recommendations are intended to guide the Meridian Corridor leaders and stakeholders. The district stakeholders, with the support of the City of Oklahoma City Staff, can implement these items to improve placemaking along the corridor and subsequently revitalize this gateway corridor. Without the leadership of the District, the City is limited in their ability to move the district forward.

Recommendations		Short-Term (0-5 yrs)	Mid-Term (5-20 yrs)	Long-Term (20+ yrs)
1	Create a Business Improvement District & Improve Civic Involvement	●		
2	Major Corridor Enhancements			●
3	Branding & Marketing Initiatives	●		
4	Infrastructure & Beautification		●	
5	Events & Public Space Activation		●	
6	Property & Business Development		●	
7	Community Clean-Up & Safety Enhancements	●		
8	Sustainable Growth & Long-Term Planning			●



Figure 69: Credit by Johnson and Associates

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: View looking towards the West side of Oklahoma River Corridor.....	6
Figure 2: North End of study area within Meridian Corridor.....	8
Figure 3: South End of study area within Meridian Corridor.....	8
Figure 4: Concept for I-40 Bridge Underpass Improvements.....	11
Figure 5: View of Meridian Corridor looking North.....	12
Figure 6: Aerial shot of Meridian Corridor in the early 1980s.....	16
Figure 7: Meridian Corridor in the early 1980s.....	18
Figure 8: Applewoods Restaurant.....	20
Figure 9: Molly Murphy's Restaurant.....	21
Figure 10: Businesses along Meridian Corridor in the early 2000s.....	22
Figure 11: 1986 Hot Rod Street Festival on Meridian, and 1982 view of traffic on Meridian.....	23
Figure 12: View looking towards the East side of Oklahoma River Corridor.....	24
Figure 13: Drone shot showing the existing Meridian Corridor.....	26
Figure 14: Location and Amenities Map showing study area within Meridian Corridor.....	28
Figure 15: Area of Study, Meridian Corridor from ESRI Business Analyst.....	30
Figure 16: Drone shot showing the I-40 bridge and traffic movements.....	36
Figure 17: Homeless encampments at I-40 bridge.....	37
Figure 18: Boarded up abandoned buildings.....	38
Figure 19: Vacant lot with abandoned signposts.....	38
Figure 20: Overlapping powerlines and lamppost mark the skyline view.....	39
Figure 21: Obstructions along the pedestrian sidewalks.....	39
Figure 22: West River Trail and pedestrian bridge over Oklahoma River.....	40
Figure 23: Public art seen as advertisement and beautification.....	41
Figure 24: Meridian Public Open House held on March 7, 2024.....	42
Figure 25: Word cloud from stakeholder engagement efforts.....	46
Figure 26: Meridian Public Open House held on Dec 8, 2024.....	47
Figure 27: First Meridian Public Open House held on March 7, 2024.....	48
Figure 28: Second Meridian Public Open House held on Dec 8, 2024.....	50
Figure 29: Active public activities in Scissortail Park.....	54
Figure 30: Art Festival at Paseo District, Oklahoma City.....	56
Figure 31: OKC Memorial Marathon, Oklahoma City.....	58
Figure 32: Residences in Wheeler District, Oklahoma City.....	59
Figure 33: Saturday Farmers Market at Scissortail Park.....	61
Figure 34: Plaza Walls in Plaza District, Oklahoma City.....	61
Figure 35: Green Team, Downtown OKC.....	64

Figure 36: Night View of Bricktown Canal, Oklahoma City.....	67
Figure 37: Businesses in Downtown Detroit.....	67
Figure 38: Existing Condition of I-40 bridge & Meridian Intersection looking North.....	68
Figure 39: Concept for I-40 & Meridian Intersection Improvements.....	70
Figure 40: Concept for Improved I-40 Bridge Underpass.....	72
Figure 41: Existing Condition of Riverfront Corridor under study.....	74
Figure 42: Active trail movements in Atlanta Beltline.....	76
Figure 43: Recreation trails at Northwest Arkansas.....	76
Figure 44: River activities in Trinity River, Fort Worth Dallas.....	77
Figure 45: Concept for Revitalized Riverfront Corridor.....	78
Figure 46: Developments facing the river and trail improvements.....	80
Figure 47: Existing river bridge beautification.....	81
Figure 48: Addition of transit services and its positive impacts.....	82
Figure 49: Concept for transformative trail experience.....	84
Figure 50: Existing Boot Barn Parking Lot.....	86
Figure 51: Location Plan showing the proposed median additions along Meridian.....	88
Figure 52: Plan view of proposed concept mid-term streetscape improvements.....	90
Figure 53: Concept of mid-term streetscape improvements.....	92
Figure 54: Plan view of proposed concept long-term streetscape improvements.....	94
Figure 55: Concept of long-term streetscape improvements.....	96
Figure 56: Plan view of Boot Barn with concept for property improvements.....	98
Figure 57: Concept of private property improvements.....	99
Figure 58: Existing Sidewalk Conditions along Meridian.....	100
Figure 59: Concept for mid-term sidewalk interventions.....	102
Figure 60: Concept for long-term sidewalk interventions.....	104
Figure 61: Sidewalk improvements through Project 180 Streetscape, Oklahoma City.....	106
Figure 62: Bricktown bridge underpass design.....	109
Figure 63: Picture showing efforts of Key to Home Program.....	109
Figure 64: Love's Travel Stops Stage and Great Lawn, Oklahoma City.....	110
Figure 65: Modern Frontier Campaign by Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau.....	113
Figure 66: Event programming at Plaza District.....	113
Figure 67: Concept for adding median in the mid-term street enhancements.....	114
Figure 68: Concept showing transit lanes in the long-term street enhancements.....	120
Figure 69: Existing Condition along Meridian.....	123
Figure 70: Concept showing river improvements.....	126



Figure 70: Picture Courtesy of Visit OKC

