



**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**"Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare." Japanese Proverb**

It has been many years since the hustle and bustle of the "North End" district of North Wichita. In the 1920s and 1930s many new buildings were being built in this neighborhood to serve its residents and workers. At the corner of Market and 21st Street a theater and department store exhibited Spanish Mission style architecture, reflecting the diversity of the neighborhood. These would become the namesake of a visionary new commercial district called Nomar International.

The redevelopment of this commercial district, located near the intersection of 21st Street and Broadway has been a vision of the community for many years. Numerous studies predict the possibilities and the successes that can occur if improvements are made to the infrastructure and new, creative, development is encouraged. The focus of this development is to make the district a well-defined destination location and build on its cultural heritage.

## THE VISION

This plan is the product of the individuals and groups that have worked together to produce the Nomar International vision.

This vision is focused to create a defined urban district that will accomplish the following:

1. Offer distinctive dining, shopping and entertainment experiences particular to the cultures represented in the area.
2. Create a district that will attract local and regional shoppers and promote economic renewal of the area.

## PURPOSE AND PLAN

This project's purpose is to define the area's strengths and challenges, build on what makes the area unique and offer design guidelines, possible regulatory changes, and imaging strategies to help create a strong, cohesive, successful, safe and inviting international entertainment and shopping experience. This document has been produced in concert with an integrated communications plan that consists of a branding campaign, strategic marketing plan, public relations suggestions and communications elements. The results are a union of a branding identity with physical improvements to create a sense of place that can be marketed for economic and social success.

## PARTICIPANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Many groups are to be commended for their involvement in this endeavor. Neighborhood groups include the 21st Street Business Association, the West 21st Street Community Development Corporation and the El Pueblo Neighborhood Association. Public entities assisting in information gathering and direction include the Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Department, Wichita Public Works Department and The Wichita State University Library. Not to be overlooked are the stakeholders of Nomar International, the residents, landowners and businesses that call this area their own. They will be the champions and recipients of the plan's success.

## DISCOVERING THE UNDERLYING THEME

Before developing a scheme for the future, a strong look at the area's past, present and people was necessary. When working with an established area of the city, one that has a significant history and strong presence in the community, a close look at its roots helps to boost its legacy and keep it true to its origin as it grows into the future.

This project researched the history of the area and identifies the periods in which it was first developed. There are a significant amount of vintage buildings and possible historic districts that remain intact within the project area. These buildings are easily recognized and their presence define the district's boundaries and character. Reuse of these structures is an important building block in the creation of a unique destination area, one that is not easily reproduced today.

Celebration of the neighborhood's cultural diversity is the main theme of this plan. It is understood that the depth of any culture cannot be fully comprehend within a short time. Therefore, images and general observations are presented to begin a dialogue to help explain the direction that is desired in the development. During community presentations attendees selected images of cultural life, art and architecture that reflect their vision of Nomar International. These visions are strong and universal.

## THE REALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

Wichita is a growing community. Not just in size, but in opportunity, cultural and historical pride and in a strong sense of community. Over the last 20 years visionaries have taken older areas of the city and transformed them into well-defined, thriving commercial and recreation districts. The Old Town Marketplace District and the Historic Delano District have both shown that collaborative efforts between developers, landowners, businesses, community leaders, public officials and designers can create successful and memorable developments within this marketplace.

Although the area has obvious strengths, a strong architectural history and a strong neighborhood character, there will be challenges in its redevelopment. Time takes its toll on infrastructure and public amenities, making it evident that successful new development will have to address improvements to existing roadways, sidewalks and public gathering areas. Accessibility is also a concern in older areas that have not had to address this need. Universal design regulations provide direction to developers to provide access for clients to all public spaces. Public expectations have also increased. There is a certain level of "finish" that has become expected in entertainment district development. This expectation must be met to attract consumers.

Support for improvement to the district has been growing in the neighborhood. Community groups are uniting to provide input to the City of Wichita for design direction of the district. This study is the product of their collaboration.

The first private sector improvement is most likely to be the Nomar Market. At this time the West 21st Street Community Development Corporation is focused on this endeavor. Other improvements will occur as developers, property owners and businesses renovate existing structures and build new.

## USE OF THIS PLAN AND ITS GUIDELINES

To create a strong cohesive sense of unity within a district there must be common "threads" that are identifiable without being repetitive or restrictive. These "threads" are identified within this plan's design guidelines and should be adhered to by those who wish to renovate existing facilities or construct new ones to keep continuity within the district and strengthen its theme.

The guidelines within this plan offer concepts for naming and brand development, signage design and color selection. This plan also provides guidelines for site development and architectural design through accepted style, materials and character development. Use of these guidelines will help strengthen and unify Nomar International and create a definable sense of place.

## BENCHMARK RESEARCH

### 21st Street North Corridor Revitalization Plan

The 21st Street North Corridor Revitalization Plan, adopted by the Wichita City Council in December 2004, identified the “West Sub Area” of the 21st Street North Corridor as Wichita’s International Marketplace because of its existing Hispanic and Asian populations and the potential to consolidate the existing ethnic retail, service and grocery stores into more attractive clusters to serve the existing community and attract a wider market. Many of the ideas in the revitalization plan are general in nature and have been carried over into this plan as a foundation for the guideline concepts that have been developed.

### Vehicular and Railway Circulation Plans

Urban circulation has been a concern of the City of Wichita in the project area. Several studies and projects are under way to minimize the conflicts of vehicular congestion along 21st Street North, Broadway, Market, Park Place and other area streets. The guidelines in this plan are directly related to the relationship of vehicular traffic and pedestrian place, identifying provisions that make future improvements friendly to both.

Current planning and construction projects are in the process of minimizing conflicts between railways and traffic along 21st Street east of Broadway. This will shorten travel time from Interstate 135, to the east, and will make it easier to access the project area. Predictions of traffic officials note that the quantity of vehicles using the section of 21st Street that goes through the project area may not increase with the present planned improvements and that other area arterial streets may be used by those wishing to get to Interstate 135. Therefore, additional width to the current 21st Street cross-section is not necessary and it may even be adjusted to be smaller.

### Comparable Zoning Regulations

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, two successful urban districts have been developed in Wichita: Old Town Marketplace and Historic Delano District. As a part of defining these districts, zoning overlays have been created within local code regulations. Nomar International is also unique in its existing zoning structure and foreseen programming needs, and will require new overlay zoning regulations authored specifically for the project area as noted in these guidelines.