

MEMORANDUM

TO: Wyoming City Council
FROM: Economic Development Commission
DATE: March 18, 2022
TOPIC: Wyoming North Pike Economic Development

The Charge:

In early 2020, there was interest among the Economic Development Commission (EDC), as guided by the 2018 Master Plan to look at North Pike (Wyoming's northern portion of the Springfield Pike Corridor) and start surveying properties to identify what development opportunities may exist. In early 2021, the residential structure on the corner of East Charlotte Avenue and Springfield Pike was razed due to fire damage and listed for sale. With a newly vacant corner lot, a few additional properties in transition, and a couple new businesses opening their doors in Wyoming, the North Pike Subcommittee was re-engaged by the EDC at their April 6, 2021 meeting. The subcommittee is comprised of four EDC members: Bryan Blade, Ken Edelman, Chris Harmon, and Grant Hoffman, with direct staff support from Community Development Specialist Tana Bere. The members were charged with identifying potential redevelopment opportunities in the North Pike consistent with the 2018 Master Plan, and to bring recommendations to City Council.

The 2018 Master Plan identifies four Zones of Potential Change: The City Center (Wyoming Avenue business district), The Promenade (the area around the Civic Center), North Pike (the northern gateway) and South Pike (the southern gateway). Survey respondents from the 2018 Master Plan were asked to rank the highest priority areas, and the results indicated North Pike was the second highest priority area only after the City Center. Respondents were then asked to provide additional comments and the top three responses were: Wyoming needs more restaurants/dining options, increase in the diversity and number of businesses, and to encourage development and renovations.

The 2018 Master Plan includes strategies for each Zone of Potential Change and a possible vision, as shown in Image 1 below. The strategies specific to North Pike are the following:

1. Explore opportunities for strategic infill, reuse, and redevelopment with mixed uses that emphasize retail, restaurant, office, civic, and residential uses appropriate for this commercial corridor and northern gateway.
2. Collaborate with the Village of Woodlawn to ensure revitalization and improvement of the contiguous commercial corridor and extension of Springfield Pike roadway improvements.
3. Review the zoning code and consider potential amendments that may be necessary to accommodate desired housing, commercial, and mixed use development types at appropriate densities and design standards.

4. Explore the potential to improve the streetscape on the west side of Springfield Pike from the south property line of LaRosa's to Rolling Hills Drive and from Browning's of Wyoming to the north corporation line on the east side of Springfield Pike within Wyoming, and from that point to the north property line of the Rec Center in conjunction with the Village of Woodlawn.
5. Consider the creation of Development Design Guidelines for renovation and redevelopment of properties.
6. Explore opportunities to improve the Wyoming Recreation Center frontage to add sports fields/courts and spectator space, improve the Springfield Pike streetscape and enhance pedestrian access to the Rec Center.
7. Consider the potential of limited rezoning of residential properties located behind properties fronting Springfield Pike in order to facilitate desired redevelopment along the Pike. Care should be taken to engage property owners and develop appropriate design standards.

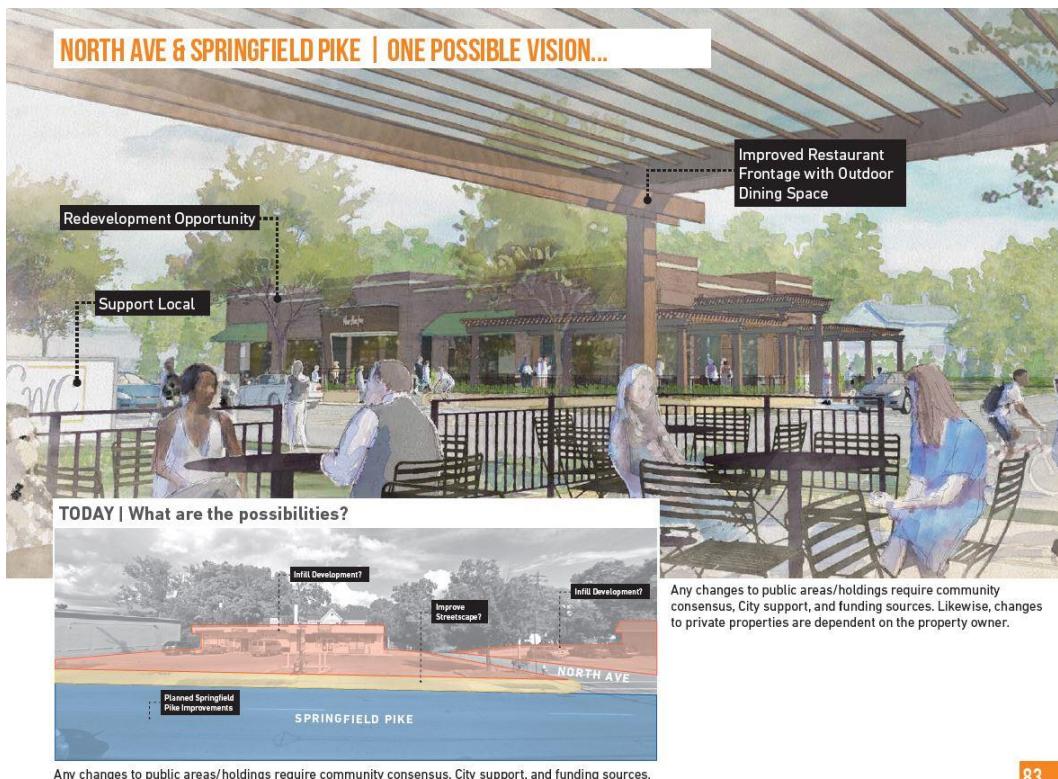


Image 1: North Pike Rendering from the 2018 Master Plan

The Process:

The North Pike Subcommittee met on July 22, 2021 to kick off this effort. At this meeting, members agreed on the boundary for the study area and discussed the goals in the 2018 Master Plan. They decided that before beginning a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis that the business and property owners should be interviewed to gather their insight on North Pike. The members created a list of interview questions and contacted the stakeholders over the next couple of months. Once the interviews were complete, the members discussed the strengths and weaknesses of North Pike, and potential opportunities over several months. They considered opportunities for strategic infill, reuse, and redevelopment that would bolster this commercial corridor and northern gateway. At their December 21, 2021 meeting, the subcommittee members reviewed the draft report and refined their recommendations.

Study Area:

The 2018 Master Plan describes four Zones of Potential Change: North Pike, South Pike, the Promenade, and City Center. North Pike comprises the northern portion of Springfield Pike from the City's north corporation line to Forest Avenue. This Zone of Potential Change includes a wide collection of commercial uses and structures with many representing opportunities for re-purposing to more contributing uses and pedestrian-scale redevelopment.

The study area which is referred to as North Pike for the purpose of this report was established by the North Pike Subcommittee and is pictured in Image 2, below. The study area is bounded by Bonham Road to the north, East Charlotte Avenue and West Charlotte Avenue to the south (including the LaRosa's property on the southwest corner), and encompasses the commercial properties within the area along Springfield Pike. The boundary was created to focus on the part of North Pike with commercial uses clustered together at the northern-most portion. While the subcommittee recognized there are many commercial properties to the south of the study area, there are also several residential properties fronting this stretch of Springfield Pike ending at Forest Avenue. The purpose of the identified study area is to concentrate on the group of properties which are zoned for commercial use and comprise Wyoming's northern gateway.

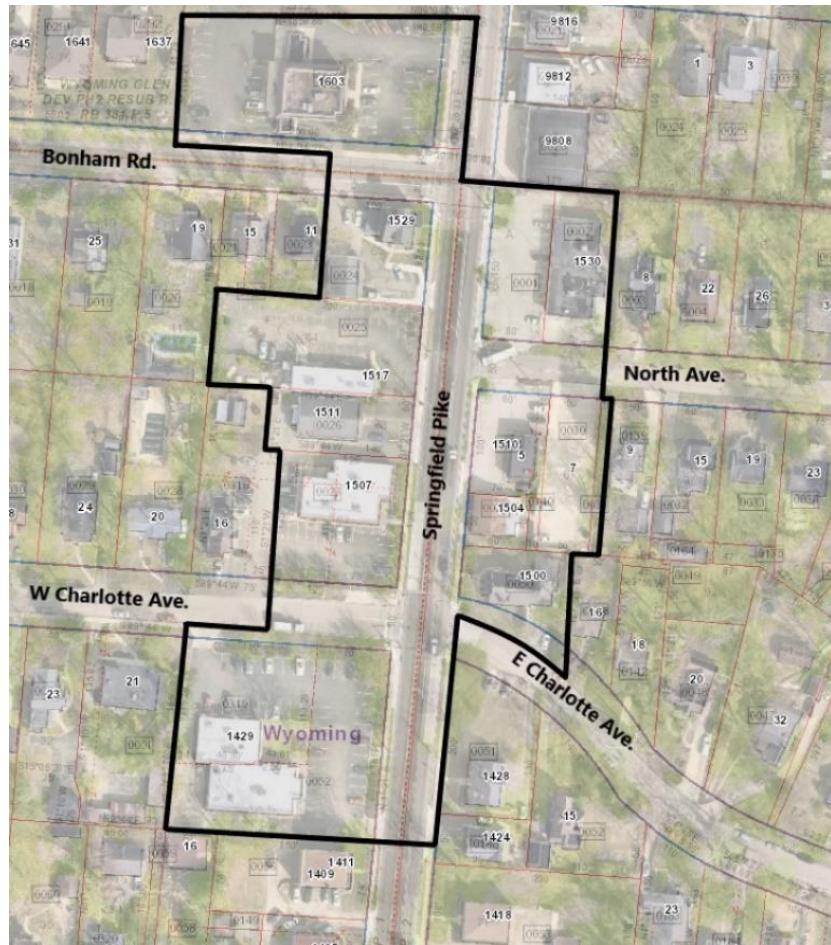


Image 2: North Pike Subcommittee Boundary Map

Existing Conditions:

North Pike is located along Springfield Pike and is not only the City's northern gateway from the Village of Woodlawn but is located along a major arterial road. This portion of Springfield Pike has an average daily traffic volume of approximately 17,400 vehicles (according to the 2018 Master Plan). North Pike is composed of a variety of commercial uses and structures. Most of these structures have been developed in a suburban style with buildings set behind parking. The majority of buildings located along this section of Springfield Pike were constructed in the mid to late 20th century. While providing business activity along this portion of Springfield Pike in many instances, the physical design of the sites and buildings does not reflect a high-quality or welcoming built environment which can be found throughout the City.

Although outside the delineated study area (and within the Village of Woodlawn), there should be mention that since the adoption of the 2018 Master Plan, streetscape and pedestrian improvements have been made at the Wyoming Rec Center. The before and after photographs below, show how streetscape improvements can have a significant impact on a development, and more notably enhance a corridor.



Image 3: Nearing Rec Center on Springfield Pk. in 2019



Image 4: Nearing Rec Center on Springfield Pk. in 2021

The area is almost completely built-out along Springfield Pike with the exception of 1500 Springfield Pike, a residential property which caught fire and was demolished in December 2020. The lot was sold to a new owner in July 2021 and has remained vacant. Other recent transitions include the closing of the CWC restaurant, which was sold in August 2021 and opened as The Arepa Place (a restaurant that specializes in Colombian dishes) in February 2022. Drayer Physical Therapy opened an office at 1507 Springfield Pike, next to the Internists of Wyoming, in early 2021. The Subway restaurant is relocating to the property next door (formerly JC & C Salon), which means their existing location at 1504 Springfield Pike will soon be available. A laundromat is currently pursuing zoning approval to locate at 1532 Springfield Pike (formerly Choi's Cleaners), the property on the same lot as the Wyoming Food Mart. This storefront has been vacant for over a year.

The following are a list of the current businesses located in North Pike: Fifth Third Bank, Diverse Images Barber and Beauty Salon, The Arepa Place, Kwik N' Kold, Internists of Wyoming, Drayer Physical Therapy, Wyoming Family Chiropractic, Star Nails, Wyoming Hair Salon, LaRosa's Family Pizzeria, Wyoming Food Mart, and Subway. Of the twelve businesses, seven are service-oriented establishments and three are restaurants. The members reached out to these stakeholders to gather information on their future plans and opinions of North Pike.

Although not all current businesses could be reached, interviews were conducted with business owners and/or property owners of Fifth Third Bank, The Arepa Place, Kwik N' Kold, Internists of Wyoming, Drayer Physical Therapy, Wyoming Family Chiropractic, Star Nails, Wyoming Hair Salon, LaRosa's Family Pizzeria, Wyoming Food Mart, and Subway.

Joseph A. Westendorf Trustee is the property owner of 1511 Springfield Pike (Kwik N' Kold), 1507 Springfield Pike (Internists of Wyoming & Drayer Physical Therapy), and 1429 Springfield Pike (LaRosa's, Wyoming Family Chiropractic, Star Nails & Wyoming Hair Salon). The new owners/operators, Tom and Laura Westendorf, shared that these properties are stable and there are no planned changes or upgrades to any of the sites.

A representative for Fifth Third Bank stated that there are no current plans for changes or upgrades to the property. Fifth Third Bank wants to be a good neighbor and would consider

participating in a plan for streetscape improvements either through contributions to the funding or specific upgrades on their site.

The Broeman family owns 1530 Springfield Pike (Wyoming Food Mart & former drycleaners) and agreed the property could use upgrades. Dwight Broeman shared the Food Mart has several years left on their lease which limits the marketability if they are to consider selling the property for redevelopment. He said they would welcome public streetscape improvements and would reasonably cooperate with the City on further improvements to their property. Additionally, they may be interested in participating in a larger redevelopment project.

The owners of The Arepa Place have invested significantly in the interior and exterior improvements to their property, and they are interested in any updates the City is willing to make in the area.

Lastly, the operator of Subway stated they are moving to the neighboring property at 1510 Springfield Pike and have begun a significant renovation of the former hair salon. Subway decided to relocate because the building at 1504 Springfield Pike is in disrepair.

Of the stakeholders interviewed, all indicated they are invested in Wyoming and plan to stay in North Pike. Many recognized the area can use improvement, specifically improvements to the streetscape. There are a few business and property owners that expressed they would consider partnering with the City in some capacity.

Key Issues:

There were several weaknesses and threats identified from the subcommittee's SWOT analysis and survey of the business and property owners. Findings on the key issues facing the North Pike are as follows:

1. Streetscape. The streetscape along the northern portion of Springfield Pike does not reflect a high-quality built environment found elsewhere throughout Wyoming. The City Center and Promenade have an intentional streetscape which showcases the character of the community with ample street trees, landscape plantings, signage, benches, and other improvements. The Promenade is also located along Springfield Pike but has a vastly different feel than North Pike, shown in Image 5 and 6 below. North Pike currently has only one street tree (many were removed for the reconstruction of Springfield Pike), and narrow sidewalks. Moreover, most businesses in North Pike have large curb cuts and parking located in front of the buildings. The streetscape is not very pedestrian-friendly and does not convey a welcoming gateway as you enter Wyoming from the Village of Woodlawn.



Image 5: North Pike Existing Streetscape



Image 6: Promenade Existing Streetscape

2. **Design Standards.** North Pike does not have any established design standards. Each building has its own architectural features, and each stands out as individual properties rather than presenting as a cohesive district. The buildings are one-story except for 1529 Springfield Pike (Diverse Images Barber) and 1603 Springfield Pike (Fifth Third Bank), and the majority were constructed between 1960 and 1990. The building at 1504 Springfield Pike, currently leased by Subway, is the only building which is built close to the front property line and has no parking fronting Springfield Pike. The varying styles of buildings, location of parking, width and number of curb cuts, amount of pavement in front yards, and lack of a cohesive streetscape cause North Pike to appear/feel disjointed.



Image 7: Looking North on Springfield Pike

3. **Vacant Properties.** North Pike has experienced a fair amount of transition over the last year. The building at 1500 Springfield Pike, a two-family dwelling fronting Springfield Pike with parking off East Charlotte Avenue, caught fire and was razed. The property was purchased in July 2021 and while no plans for redevelopment have been submitted to the City, an initial inquiry was made by a builder interested in constructing a single-family residence. The dry cleaner located at 1532 Springfield Pike ceased operation and the storefront has been vacant for over a year. Subway plans to relocate next door to the former hair salon at 1510 Springfield Pike, soon leaving 1504 Springfield Pike without a tenant. The presence of several vacant properties highlights a lack of investment in North

Pike. Fortunately, a couple formerly vacant properties have new occupants: Drayer Physical Therapy at 1507 Springfield Pike, and The Arepa Place at 1517 Springfield Pike.



Image 8: 1500 Springfield Pike



Image 9: 1530 & 1532 Springfield Pike

4. **Property Maintenance.** Numerous property maintenance issues have been identified on properties within the study area. While some properties, such as Fifth Third Bank, have plentiful and tidy landscape, the balance of North Pike does not benefit from the same level of upkeep. Several properties along Springfield Pike have tall weeds and empty landscape beds. The vacant properties at 1500 Springfield Pike and 1517 Springfield Pike were in particularly poor condition. Additionally, 1530 Springfield Pike (one of the first buildings you see entering Wyoming) and 1511 Springfield Pike have too many signs and are not in compliance with the City's Sign Code. The insufficient landscaping and additional signage do not contribute to a positive visual image for Wyoming.



Image 10: 1500 Springfield Pk.



Image 11: 1530 Springfield Pk. Signage

Recommendations:

The following are recommendations to achieve the vision outlined in the 2018 Master Plan. The recommendations are listed from the shortest to the longest timeframes for implementation goals. Each component is necessary to spur reinvestment and improve the visual character and quality of North Pike.

1. Code Enforcement. Several properties do not contribute to a positive image as you enter Wyoming from the northern gateway. Specifically, there are multiple businesses which are not in compliance with the City's sign regulations. The additional signage adds to the fragmented appearance of the district and visual clutter along this portion of Springfield Pike. In addition to the issue of signage, the landscaping on most properties could use improvement. Some properties have high weeds and other issues which do not meet the City's Property Maintenance Code, while others do not have violations but indicate a lack of investment.

The City should target the property maintenance violations and prioritize their limited code enforcement resources on properties located in the North Pike. Addressing some of these issues by applying the Property Maintenance Code will help create a more cohesive district. If all properties are maintained with the high-quality standard that is expected in Wyoming, then a vacant or underutilized site will appear less intrusive. Likewise, when the City redevelops the streetscape it should prompt property owners to reinvest in their property and help create a defined gateway.

The City has also been working diligently to bring properties into compliance with the Zoning Code through the development plan process. When there is construction, structural alteration, or change in use of any building other than a single-family residence, a development plan or development plan exemption is required. This review allows the City and its boards and commissions to look at the site and consider what improvements may be necessary to meet current regulations. A recent example is with the Subway development plan exemption request in which the Planning Commission required site improvements, including adding a landscape buffer between the public sidewalk and parking lot. Through this mechanism, the City can work with businesses on private improvements which is especially important given the narrow public right-of-way in this area.

2. Streetscape Improvements. Improvements to the streetscape will be vital to bring North Pike up to the visual quality of which Wyoming prides itself. This area is almost entirely built-out with no development design guidelines. Since the right-of-way is, in part, controlled by the City, it provides an opportunity to create a cohesive design. The first phase of streetscape improvements should begin at the LaRosa's property and continue north to the corporation limit on both sides of Springfield Pike. Eventually, these updates should be extended to connect the Rec Center, located within the Village of Woodlawn, to the City of Wyoming and to soften the transition between jurisdictions. Cooperation

with the Village of Woodlawn will be key for this second phase of improvements. The City should also look to partner with businesses for improvements on private property because the amount of public right-of-way is limited in this area.

These improvements should be a high-quality design and include wide sidewalks, street trees, landscape plantings, seating areas, drinking fountains, and trash receptacles, to create a welcoming and pedestrian-scale environment. North Pike has numerous utility poles and overhead lines which detract from the visual quality of the area. These lines should be buried or relocated to be less visually intrusive wherever possible. Additionally, North Pike is the northern gateway from the Village of Woodlawn into Wyoming and currently nothing signals to someone that they have entered our community. Designs should be explored at the intersection of Springfield Pike and Bonham Road to create a gateway. Potential improvements could include improved crosswalks using pavers or other material, a seating area, landscape planters, a decorative arch over Springfield Pike, and public art.

The streetscape design should also include improving the current bus stop locations, specifically on the southwest corner of Springfield Pike and East Charlotte Avenue and the northwest corner of Springfield Pike and West Charlotte Avenue. Both bus stops are located in North Pike and have no amenities for passengers. Surprisingly, there are also no informal gathering spaces in the North Pike. This is an opportunity to create a public gathering space as well as to accommodate bus passengers. The streetscape could incorporate bus shelters similar to the ones located in front of the Public Library and Centennial Park further south on Springfield Pike and/or establish a seating area near the bus stops. By tying these spaces into the streetscape design it adds additional amenities and provides more opportunity to interact in the public realm.

3. Strategic Acquisition and Redevelopment. There are a number of properties within North Pike which are underutilized and represent opportunities for redevelopment using modern and more tailored standards. Acquiring and redeveloping the entire frontage on the east side of Springfield Pike between the corporation line and East Charlotte Avenue would allow for infill development as illustrated in the 2018 Master Plan. However, the subcommittee has recognized gaining control of all four properties, each with different owners, is unlikely and the shallow lot depths hinders development potential.

The vacant corner at 1500 Springfield Pike is the most obvious choice for infill development because it is currently an empty lot. However, the lot is small at approximately 0.16 acres, and development of a property of this size into a commercial use would be difficult and likely require several zoning variances. Acquiring this property and the property directly to the north at 1504 Springfield Pike (the current location of Subway and includes the rear parking lot) is an opportunity to redevelop the corner and improve North Pike's design standards. Ideally, the entire block between East Charlotte Avenue and North Avenue would be redeveloped with mixed uses that emphasize retail,

restaurant, offices, and residential appropriate for this commercial corridor and gateway. However, given that Subway is currently renovating the building at 1510 Springfield Pike, and the subcommittee members anticipate they will operate there for many years to realize their investment, redevelopment of the entire block is unlikely at this time.

The property at 1530 Springfield Pike contains two separate commercial spaces – Wyoming Food Mart and the former dry cleaners which is vacant. The building and grounds do not contribute to a positive visual image as you enter Wyoming through North Pike. The building is dated and needs improvements to bring it up to modern standards. Additionally, the site has three curb cuts and nearly the entire front yard is paved. Redeveloping this site with a mixed-use building along the front property line and parking in the rear would help create a pedestrian-friendly district. Since the depth of the site is limited, opportunities to acquire residential property to the east should be explored to ease development limitations.

The City has made considerable investments in its Recreation and Family Aquatic Center (Rec Center), and most recently invested in turf playing fields and terraced seating with pedestrian access from Springfield Pike. The project also included streetscape improvements with extensive landscaping along the frontage of the property. Additionally, the 2017 Village of Woodlawn Action Plan captures Wyoming's improvements to Rec Center and the opportunities emerging at their southern gateway. The plan recommends that the Village of Woodlawn act to complement these efforts by first addressing the poorly landscaped areas across from the Rec Center, specifically the Weickerts Flooring and Techworld strip center sites. Given that Wyoming's Rec Center is located in the Village of Woodlawn, the walkability along this stretch of Springfield Pike is particularly important to better connect Wyoming to its Rec Center. Connecting the Rec Center to Wyoming should focus on the area between Barron Drive and Bonham Road. The properties to the east are located within the Village of Woodlawn and are a mix of commercial, residential, and industrial uses. Woodlawn's 2007 Master Plan contains recommendations for their South Springfield Pike Corridor which recognizes the need for building and site upgrades, better building maintenance, and an improved streetscape. Additionally, two potential gateways are identified for their southern entrance. A Major Gateway at the intersection of Barron Drive and Springfield Pike and an Alternative Major Gateway at McLean Street and Springfield Pike (the Rec Center entrance).

The subcommittee has acknowledged the importance of this portion of Springfield Pike located outside the City of Wyoming. The City should consider purchasing these properties fronting Springfield Pike in order to control the design and quality of the buildings as well as potential redevelopment. Acquiring several properties and redeveloping them is the most impactful option and will require a significant investment, in addition to political will, to purchase property outside of the City. The 2017 Village of Woodlawn Action Plan indicates that public improvements such as streetscaping,

roadway improvements, and other infrastructure can spur private development along Springfield Pike. Improvements to the built environment will complement North Pike by strengthening the link to the Rec Center, softening the boundary between jurisdictions, and creating a gateway for the Village of Woodlawn. Ideally this gateway will be at the intersection of Springfield Pike and Bonham Road with a similar concept of the "Where Friends Meet" sign creating a shared gateway for the City of Reading and Village of Lockland over the Mill Creek at Benson and Wyoming Avenues. When the City is designing an improved streetscape for North Pike, they should collaborate with Woodlawn to create a preliminary design for the portion of Springfield Pike from Bonham Road to the Rec Center.

Next Steps:

1. Code Enforcement. The City should focus on enforcing the Property Maintenance Code to resolve the existing violations which worsens the image of North Pike. The non-permitted signage, high weeds, and trash are present on several properties and can be addressed through targeted code enforcement. Code enforcement is often a slow and time-consuming process but priority should be given to these highly visible sites. The code enforcement framework is already in place and citations can be issued fairly quickly.
2. Replanting Street Trees. Part of Wyoming's physical identity is associated with its abundant tree cover, attractive tree-lined streets, and proud history of being known as a "Tree City USA". However, North Pike currently has only one street tree within the study area, which is unusual for a major corridor. The reconstruction of Springfield Pike required some trees to be removed which have not since been replanted. The City intends to replant street trees along Springfield Pike where feasible. Reestablishing street trees in North Pike should be a top priority and will greatly improve the desolate streetscape. Additionally, where there is not sufficient tree lawn to sustain a street tree, opportunities to work with property owners to plant trees along their frontage should be explored.
3. Corridor Plan. The 2018 Master Plan includes a vision for North Pike as a Zone of Potential Change. The vision calls for infill development, redevelopment to modern standards, and an improved streetscape. The recommendations in the Master Plan are generalized and have been expanded on through this report but are not as detailed as a corridor plan would provide. The City should pursue grant opportunities through Hamilton County to develop a corridor or special area plan for North Pike. A corridor plan would build upon this report and provide more in-depth recommendations, especially on the potential options for acquisitions and redevelopment backed by a market analysis. The plan should also examine opportunities to form a better connection between the City of Wyoming and the Rec Center located in the Village of Woodlawn. Ideally, the plan would establish some design standards for both the streetscape and renovations of private properties. A set of design guidelines would be particularly helpful when a business applies for

development plan review. The next opportunity to apply for a Hamilton County Mini-Grant is in Spring 2022, with a maximum award of \$40,000.

4. Streetscape Design. The subcommittee has reiterated that an improved streetscape is vital to improve the image of North Pike and to bring it up to Wyoming's high-quality standard for the built environment. The City is gearing up to design a streetscape plan for the Promenade based on a recommendation borne out of the 2007 and 2018 Master Plans and the Promenade Task Force. The City should consider creating a streetscape design for the Promenade and North Pike in tandem, which may be more economical and efficient. The streetscape design should include some elements found in Wyoming's other Zones of Potential Change, yet still speak to the character of North Pike. The design should include elements to create a gateway at the intersection of Bonham Road and Springfield Pike, and public spaces at the bus stops located at the corners of East and West Charlotte Avenue. Additionally, collaboration with the Village of Woodlawn is important to establish design standards along the portion of Springfield Pike leading to Wyoming's Rec Center. Depending on the timing and scope, the corridor plan could establish an overall streetscape design.
5. Acquisition Opportunities. The City should pursue opportunities to acquire high-impact properties to spur catalytic redevelopment. The highest priority properties are 1500 Springfield Pike (vacant lot), 1504 Springfield Pike (current Subway location) and the parking lot to the rear, 1530 Springfield Pike (Food Mart and former dry cleaner), and potentially the abutting residential properties. Redevelopment of 1500 Springfield Pike into a commercial use would significantly change that corner. 1504 Springfield Pike could be consolidated with 1500 Springfield Pike to create a larger development, or could be an opportunity for reuse with a possible rear expansion. The buildings at 1511 and 1530 Springfield Pike detract visually from the balance of commercial properties and are prime opportunities for infill development. Furthermore, the City should begin to collaborate with the Village of Woodlawn to spur economic development between Wyoming's northern corporation line and the Rec Center. Even though acquisitions in Wyoming are the highest priority at this time, if opportunities in the Village of Woodlawn arise, the City should investigate them.

[End of Report]