

VISIONS OF BELEN

December 10, 2018

Vision of Belen is a monthly feature in our newsletter which provides illustrations of how buildings and vacant lots in our MainStreet District might look. Sketches of existing buildings show how they might be improved to make them attract more businesses and potential customers. We might also provide sketches of buildings on vacant lots that are on the market and illustrate some ideas about how they be developed. These Visions of Belen could have a significant impact on our district, adjacent businesses and our community in general.

This month we are featuring some ideas for developing what I believe is one of the most significant vacant lots in Belen. This lot is on the southeast corner of Main Street and Reinken Ave. It is bordered by Hub Furniture to the south and a utility building to the east.



The sketch above illustrates how two buildings might be placed on the lot. This imaginary development shows a single story (3000+ square feet) restaurant building facing Reinken and a two-story building, facing Main Street, with retail on the ground floor and offices (or even apartments) on the second floor. The most important feature in this solution is the location of the parking which is behind the buildings not out in front. The reason this is so, so important is that it reduces the scale of the highway and gives everything a more humane scale. One only needs to look across the street to the north to see what I am talking about, all the parking for those buildings is located in front with no landscaping. What a harsh, uninviting environment! That site will certainly be the subject of one of my "Visions of Belen" articles in the future. Another important feature of this solution is the location of the space between the two buildings. This space has very carefully been designed so that cars headed south on Main Street get a glimpse at where the parking is located, not only does this help people figure out the parking but it also creates a very interesting view that people will naturally be curious about. This solution provides 30 parking spaces, an area for a dumpster and a restaurant delivery space. The corner space also provides areas for some much, needed landscaping. There is an excellent example of good landscaping

diagonally across the street, take a look at the new Dominos Pizza. Envision what that site is going to look like in a couple years as the tree fill out. Great job Dominos!



Here is street view of the two-story building, while it does not look like the Harvey House, many features of the Harvey House and buildings of that era are present in this design. Some of the borrowed historic design features include, a covered walkway, balconies, all though hard to see in this view beam extensions supporting exposed rafters are used, the per portions of windows and their divided lites are historic in nature and some brick has been introduced. The door at the left end of the two-story building leads to a stairway and possible elevator.



The single-story building is not a contemporary design but a design borrowed from the original train depot. This site is the northwest corner of our MainStreet District and I believe it is extremely important to create buildings that reflect the historic nature of our district. Based on my years of practicing architecture, I know it is possible to create a new economical building that reflects some sort of history of an area. I believe it would be completely inappropriate to propose a franchise cookie cutter building solution for this site. If a franchise of some sort were interested in this site and began with an understanding of what the community desires, then a good architect could produce a great solution right from the start. It is when people come in to a community and they don't understand what is wanted because no one has taken the time to convey their vision, that is when everyone ends up fighting and less than desirable solutions are agreed to. So, if you look at this and you don't like it say something. This is not my community, it is our community and I am completely okay when people tell me I missed the mark and I need to change something. Lets all work together to make Belen the place we all love and make it greater than it was.

For our Visions of Belen, we try to look at the best case scenario for our community because we want the best for the people of Belen and if that is what we show that is what people will start expecting. If you have any comments you want to share you can contact us at the Chamber of Commerce offices on Dailies Ave. or come to our News at Noon lunches every last Thursday of the month at Rita's Restaurant at 11:30 am. We would love to see you there.