

# **Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study**

Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

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Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of the *Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study* is to develop a thirty-year vision and act as a tool for guiding decisions on future redevelopment, infill development and infrastructure changes in the Elmwood area. The study area is generally bounded by TH 7, TH 100 and Wooddale and Brunswick Avenues in southeast St. Louis Park. The Southwest Corridor, which includes a recreational trail, traverses the northern portion of the study area and parallels the CP Rail corridor. The study process included participation from public agencies, local businesses, property owners, neighborhood residents, and developers.

The study takes into consideration anticipated changes that will be affecting the future of the Elmwood area. Such changes include reuse or redevelopment of particular key parcels in the study area due to ownership changes, business operational changes, and site vacancies. Additionally, changes inside or adjacent to the study area will further influence land use and transportation circulation. These include widening and reconstruction of TH 100, implementation of light rail transit, other redevelopment within St. Louis Park (e.g., Excelsior & Grand) and expansion of the Park Nicollet and Methodist medical facilities. Anticipated changes are expected to catalyze further redevelopment in the Elmwood area.

This study examined current land use patterns, market opportunities and financial feasibility as the basis for making land use recommendations. These recommendations were further based on a set of planning principles developed as part of the study process. The Planning Principles, as described in Chapter 6 of this report, address issues of land use and development, circulation, open space, and stormwater. Based on the planning principles—and together with community input and the guidance of the *City of St. Louis Park Comprehensive Plan 2000-2020*—the study determines the following primary findings for the future vision of the Elmwood Study Area:

### ***Land Use***

- North of the Southwest Corridor and east of Wooddale, the current McGarvey Coffee site should be redeveloped for high-density residential.
- Properties in the southwest and southeast quadrants of Wooddale Avenue and TH 7 should be redeveloped for low-density office space with onsite parking, keeping in mind the gateway nature of the parcels.
- South of the Southwest Corridor, north of 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Hoigaard's should remain as is with potential for office campus development should retail operations change.
- Parcels fronting the north side of West 36th Street should continue as industrial uses in the near-term, but eventually become part of mixed use development with retail/service on the first floor and housing above, establishing West 36th Street as a "main street".
- Current Quadion-owned parcels west of Wooddale Avenue should be redeveloped for residential use, progressively increasing in density from Oxford Street north to West 36th Street.

- The Pechiney Plastics site should continue as an industrial use; should there be an opportunity to redevelop, medium-density residential use should be considered.
- Parcels adjacent to the south side of the West 36<sup>th</sup> Street should be redeveloped for mixed use with retail/service on the first floor and residential or professional offices above.
- The current site of Micro Center/Burlington Coat Factory and the VFW should be redeveloped for high-end (Class A) high-density office potentially connected with medical services.

### ***Transit***

This study assumes that light rail transit (LRT) will be implemented within the Southwest Corridor, causing relocation of the freight rail in the adjacent CP Rail corridor. Should this occur, current CP Rail right of way would be available for alternative uses within the Elmwood Study Area. A center platform LRT station could be located within the Southwest Corridor immediately east of Wooddale Avenue. Parcels in the northeast quadrant of Wooddale Avenue and West 36<sup>th</sup> Street should then be used as a multi-modal transit facility interfacing circulator bus activity, a park and ride, and walk-to/bike-to traffic with LRT access.

### ***Transportation***

- Wooddale Avenue should be extended south and east, implementing a new crossing over TH 100.
- Xenwood Avenue should be extended from Wooddale Avenue north to the TH 7 South Frontage Road, and a four-way signal control should be implemented at the Xenwood/Wooddale intersection.
- Reconstruct Wooddale Avenue as a boulevard.
- Realign the TH 7 South Frontage Road to increase space between the frontage road and TH 7 near the Wooddale Avenue/TH 7 intersection.
- Improve pedestrian/bicycle accommodations throughout study area to serve transit, parks, retail areas, and regional pedestrian/bicycle connections.
- Improve streetscape of West 36th Street.

During the planning process, it became apparent that many factors will influence the exact timing and significance of changes brought to the Elmwood Study Area. While it is impossible to identify exact phasing, the study presents suggestions for logical sequencing for near-term, mid-term, and long-term improvements. This sequence is subject to change with the timing of major influencing factors.

The *Elmwood Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study* is intended to cast a long-term thirty-year vision and integrate land use, transit, and transportation guidance for both public and private sector activities. Recommendations made in this report should not be taken as a proactive redevelopment plan. Rather, it is a framework to be implemented when the timing is appropriate, guiding decision-making as opportunities arise.

Since future changes within the study area will be based upon a balance of public and private sector initiatives, ongoing communication between the City, County, property owners, business tenants and neighborhood residents must continue as a means of seeking the best interest for the Elmwood area. This document should be consulted on a regular basis and updated as the policy and physical environment affecting the Elmwood Study Area continues to evolve.



- Proposed Land Use**
- Retail/Service
  - Office - Low Density
  - Office - High Density
  - Industrial
  - Park/Open Space
  - Multi-Family Residential - High Density
  - Multi-Family Residential - Medium Density
  - Multi-Family Residential - Low Density
  - Public/Institutional



**STUDY AREA ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park



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Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

**1.0 STUDY DESCRIPTION AND INTENT**

**A. STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION**

The Elmwood Study Area is located in the southeast portion of the City of St. Louis Park (see Figure 1) and consists of approximately 120 acres. It is bound by Trunk Highway (TH) 7 on the north and TH 100 on the east. The study was originally to be bound on the west by Wooddale Avenue; however, special considerations caused several additional parcels to be included. Beginning at the south terminus of Wooddale Avenue, the study boundary runs west along Oxford Street, then north along Alabama Avenue. At 37th Street, the boundary turns west again, to include the park property at 37th and Brunswick and continues north to TH 7. Figure 2 illustrates the Elmwood Study Area, key properties and surrounding landmarks.

The Southwest Corridor traverses the northern portion of the study area, paralleling TH 7. In the Elmwood Study Area, this corridor consists of a paved recreational trail and is being considered for light rail transit (LRT) use. The CP Rail corridor, which parallels the trail to the south through the study area, is presently used for freight rail. For the purposes of description, this study refers to both the trail and rail corridors as the Southwest Corridor. Additionally, the study area has been broken down into several sub-areas. Figure 3 depicts the sub-areas, which include the following:

▪ **Rail North**

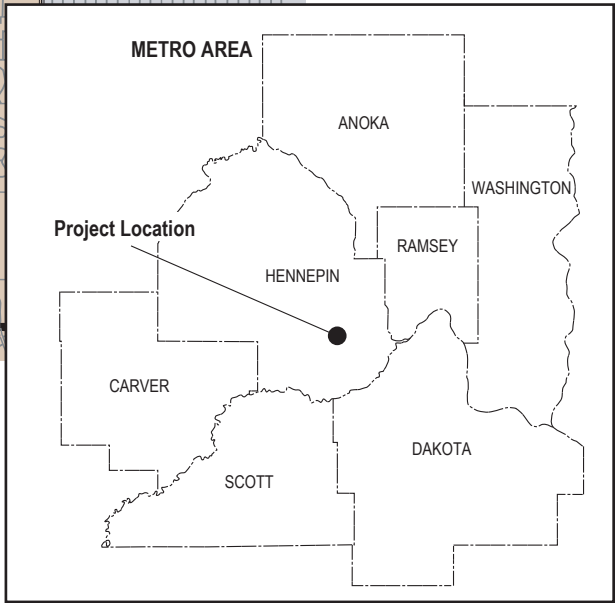
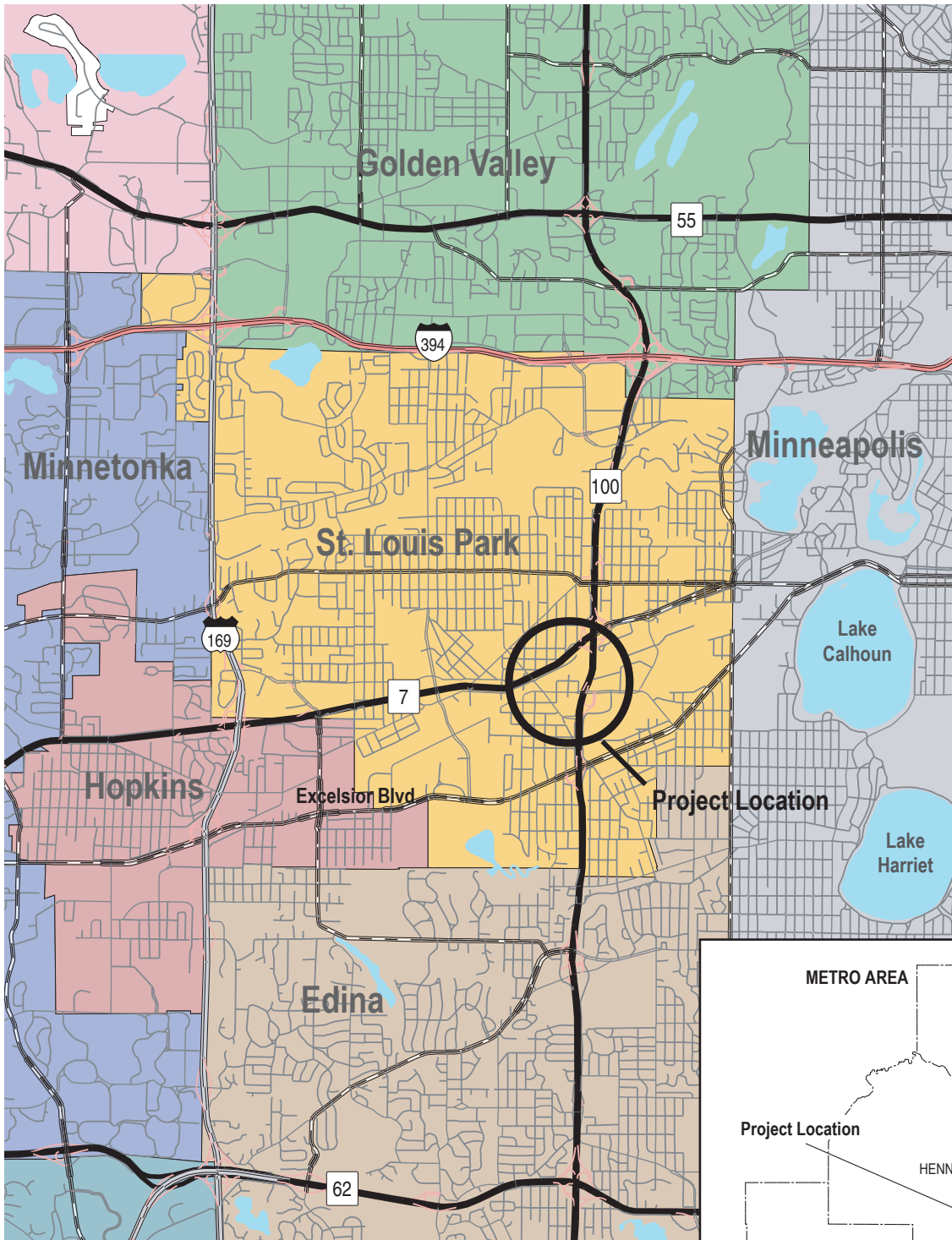
The “Rail North” sub-area includes parcels north of the Southwest Corridor and south of TH 7. This consists of properties in the southwest and southeast quadrants of the TH 7/Wooddale Avenue intersection and properties east of the intersection along the TH 7 Frontage Road. Major property holders include the Dworsky Family in the southwest quadrant of TH 7/Wooddale Avenue, the former Soomek Rug site at the southeast quadrant of TH 7/Wooddale Avenue, McGarvey Coffee, and Cityscape Apartments.

▪ **West 36th Street (North)**

This sub-area is bounded by 36th Street on the south, the rail corridor on the north, TH 100 on the east, and Wooddale Avenue on the west. The largest property owner of the sub-area is Hoigaard’s retail store located in the northeast portion.

▪ **West 36th Street (South)**

West 36th Street borders this sub-area on the north, which is further defined by Wooddale on the west and TH 100 on the east. Significant property occupants include the Micro Center and Burlington Coat Factory retail building, which fronts TH 100. Offices owned by Quadion Corporation are included in this sub-area and located at the southeast quadrant of the West 36th Street/ Wooddale Avenue



**REGIONAL CONTEXT**

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 Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
 City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 1**



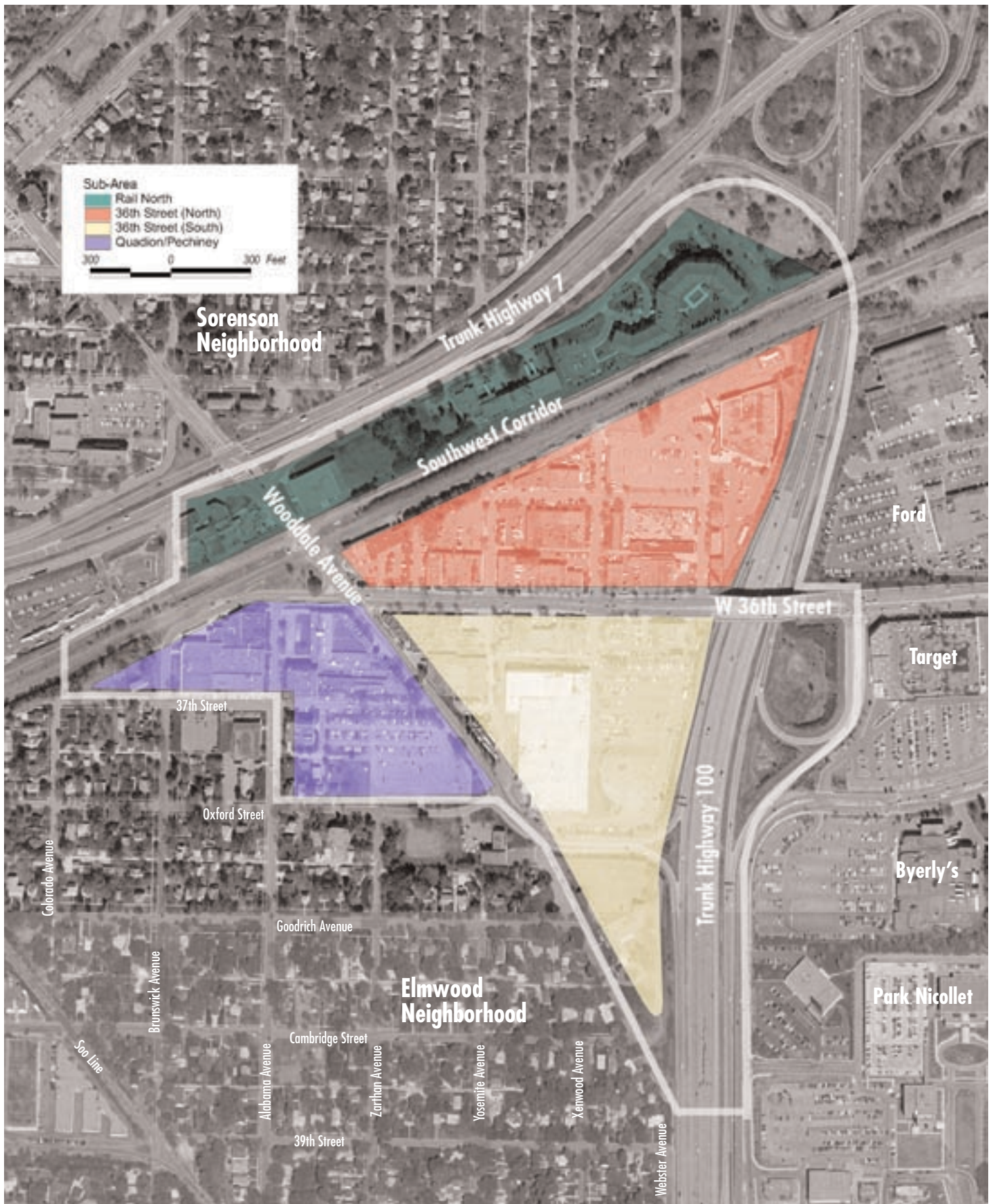
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4434

### ELMWOOD STUDY AREA

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 City of St. Louis Park

Figure 2



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**ELMWOOD SUB-AREAS**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
 Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
 City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 3**

intersection. Aldersgate United Methodist Church is located in the southeast corner of the sub-area.

- **Quadion/ Pechiney**

West of Wooddale Avenue, south of the rail corridor, are several parcels that were included in the study area due to their anticipated land use changes and potential for redevelopment. This consists of three large parcels owned by Quadion Corporation and one owned by Pechiney Plastics. Jorvig Park, located in the northwest portion of the sub-area is also included.

## B. IMPENDING STUDY AREA CHANGES

The *City of St. Louis Park Comprehensive Plan 2000-2020* recommended a land use study for the area of the Elmwood Neighborhood bounded by TH 7, TH 100, and Wooddale Avenue. As mentioned earlier, the study area was amended to include particular sites that are pending change in the near-term. The Elmwood Area Study therefore took into consideration known changes that will be affecting the future of the area and may catalyze further redevelopment in the neighborhood. Future changes affecting the Elmwood Study Area include the following:

- Reuse of parcels owned by Quadion Corporation.
- Dworsky Family properties reuse or redevelopment.
- Reuse of the currently vacant former Soomek Rug site.
- Reconstruction of TH 100 and related access improvements near 36th Street, which could affect parcels occupied by Hoigaard's, VFW, Burlington Coat Factory/ Micro Center, and the church.
- Expansion of Park Nicollet and Methodist Hospital.
- Circulation changes to the West 36th Street and Excelsior Boulevard interchanges.
- Development of LRT and expansion of bus circulators.

## C. STUDY INTENT

The intent, in part, of the Elmwood Area Study is to develop a long-term vision for land use, transit, and circulation in the study area. This vision is assumed to have a 30-year planning horizon, although particular parcels and sub-areas within the study area are likely to be implemented before this. The vision for land use, transit, and circulation should not be seen as a rigid pictorial of the neighborhood's highest and best use. Rather, it should be seen as a tool for guiding decisions on future redevelopment, infill development and infrastructure changes. Recommendations for this vision are discussed in Chapter 5.

## D. STUDY ASSUMPTIONS

The Elmwood Area Study takes some assumptions into consideration in establishing a long-term vision for the area. These assumptions include elements outside of the study area that will have a significant impact on Elmwood's future. This includes the following:

- TH 100 access and circulation

- LRT in the Southwest Corridor
- Transit-oriented influence
- Park Nicollet and Methodist Hospital expansion
- Other redevelopment in St. Louis Park (e.g. Excelsior & Grand)

E. STATEMENT FROM CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The *City of St. Louis Park Comprehensive Plan 2000-2020* includes information regarding the character and development opportunities for each of the neighborhoods within the City. The Comprehensive Plan includes the following details regarding the Elmwood Neighborhood:

- **Neighborhood Character**

“This neighborhood is the location of many of the original homes in St. Louis Park. They are north of West 39th Street, which is part of an original subdivision resulting from the late 1800s. The influence of railroads is deeply felt within this neighborhood, which is subject to noise from trains switching from east-west to north-south tracks. The northeast portion of the neighborhood contains a mix of industrial and retail uses and is potentially a redevelopment area. The area directly south of TH 7 is a mixture of industrial and residential uses. The neighborhood is located across TH 100 from the Park Commons area.”

- **Specific Development Guidelines**

“A land use study is recommended for the area bounded by TH 7, TH 100 and Wooddale Avenue. This area is subject to redevelopment and uses compatible with the future transit potential of the CP Rail Bass Lake Corridor are encouraged. This may include a transit station, and a mixture of residential, work place, and retail/service uses. One desirable result of a land use study would be to precisely locate the most favorable site for a transit station. Land use designation changes will follow based on the study results.

The area west of Wooddale Avenue contains a number of historic homes. This area may qualify for historic preservation and exploration of establishing a historic district in this area is recommended. In the meantime, in order to preserve the historic quality of the neighborhood, no home additions which are inconsistent with original architecture should be permitted.”

- **Desired Neighborhood Improvements**

“Complete sidewalk system; improve sidewalk accessibility.; improvement transit, including hop-a-ride and LRT; affordable senior housing; trees; improve park equipment; traffic calming; improved trails and trail connections; streetscape improvements on Excelsior Boulevard; pedestrian lighting; safe street crossings at Excelsior Boulevard and at TH 100 and TH 7 and Wooddale, improved maintenance on all residential multiunit properties.”

## 2.0 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC PROCESS

A public involvement plan was developed for use during the Elmwood Area Study. The plan outlined techniques that would involve Potentially Affected Interests (PAIs) in the study process. PAIs included neighborhood residents, business owners, property owners, developers, and other agencies and representatives. The plan provided for several different committees, meetings, and formats for disseminating information to those involved. These are described below.



*Neighborhood Involvement*

### A. COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Three public community meetings were held throughout the study process. The purpose of these meetings was to provide residents, business-owners, and property owners an opportunity to contribute to the development of the long-range vision for the Elmwood Study Area. City and County staff, along with the consultant team, presented information regarding proposed future land use, transit and transportation scenarios and solicited feedback from the group.

The format of the meetings generally consisted of a combination of an open house, presentation, and workshop sessions. The open house portions were an informal setting, which allowed for presentation of visuals and one-on-one exchanges between attendees and staff or consultants. Presentations typically included a slide show or discussion regarding latest scenarios and recommendations. Workshops separated attendees into small group settings to focus on specific information or provide detailed feedback on specific proposals.

Overall, the community meetings provided an opportunity for participants to ask questions, express concerns, react to proposals, and make suggestions in a public setting. Information gathered at community meetings was used to shape or modify future land use, transit and transportation scenarios and provide guidance on the long-range vision of the Elmwood Study Area.

### B. COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was to advise city and county staff and consultants about community-based issues related to future land use, transit and transportation scenarios. Members reviewed consultant work, provided advice on neighborhood impacts, long-range visioning, and amenities/livability, and feedback to study recommendations. The CAC met at major milestones throughout the study process.

The CAC was comprised of stakeholder representatives within the Elmwood Study Area, including property owners, businesses owners, neighborhood organizations, and planning commissioners. A total of six meetings were held at St. Louis Park City Hall, with a typical attendance of approximately 15 people. Regular attendees included representatives from the following businesses and organizations:

- Elmwood Neighborhood Association
- Sorenson Neighborhood Association
- Business owners and tenants
- Property owners
- City and County staff

C. TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was comprised of a small group of agency staff with technical experience in land use, transit and transportation planning and engineering. The group met monthly to review work completed by the consultant and guide decision-makers on issues related to operational aspects of the study. Members represented the following agencies:

- City of St. Louis Park (Community Development, Public Works, Parks)
- Hennepin County
- Metropolitan Council
- Metro Transit
- Mn/DOT
- Three Rivers Park District
- Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority
- Twin Cities and Western Railroad

D. PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

A Project Management Team (PMT) was formed to provide direction to the study and coordinate work between agencies and consultants. Representatives on the PMT included staff from the City of St. Louis Park, Hennepin County, and the consultant team. The PMT met regularly throughout the study process.

E. OTHER

Additional methods were used to disseminate information to the public and collect data regarding current land uses, business operations and plans, and neighborhood interests. These included the following:

**Newsletters**

- Elmwood Area Study Newsletters

Two newsletters were produced for the Elmwood Area Study to publicize new information to those involved and to make area residents and business-owners aware of meeting dates and agendas. Copies of these newsletters can be found in the appendix.



- “Park Perspective”

The City of St. Louis Park distributes a citywide bi-monthly newsletter titled “Park Perspective”. An article regarding the Elmwood Area Study was included in May/June 2002 issue of the newsletter. This article discussed the objectives of the study and the relation to the southwest corridor transit study being conducted by Hennepin County.

- “SLP Business Line”

“SLP Business Line” is city newsletter distributed to businesses in St. Louis Park. In the Spring 2002 edition of this newsletter, the Elmwood Study was described and included discussion regarding the history and objectives of the study and upcoming meetings.

### **Websites**

Information was available on the City of St. Louis Park’s website. A brief summary of the study purpose and status was included under the section of the website pertaining to pending decisions. The site also provided links to newsletters produced for the study. The Elmwood Study was also featured on the Hennepin County website, which provided descriptions of the study area, purposes of the study in relation to development and usage of the Southwest Corridor, and status of the study.

### **Cable TV**

One of the City’s cable programs, “Park Perspective” conducted an interview with City and County staff on May 9, 2002, near the beginning of the study process. This program was aired on the City’s cable channel, Channel 17, between May 22, 2002 and June 25, 2002 typically twice a day. The interview provided details about the need for the study and its expected results. Information about who to contact regarding the study was also made available.

### **Property and Business Owner Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with individual property or business owners in order to obtain a focused understanding of future plans for the various properties. Interviews included the following:

- Quadion Corporation (Jim Vos, CRESA Partners)
- Hoigaard’s (Connie Hoigaard, Sam Thorpe)
- Burlington Coat Factory/ Micro Center (Roland Lampert)
- VFW (Korey Bannerman, Dick Anderson)
- Dworsky Family Properties (Jonathon Dworsky, Bob Tenner)
- Pechiney Plastics (Patti Mann)
- Standal Properties on West 36th Street (Mr. and Mrs. Standal)
- Elmwood Neighborhood Representatives (Cate Ford, president; John Basil, immediate past president)
- Douglas Corporation (John Fudala, Douglas Skanse)

- Frantz Construction (Mike Frantz)
- Aldersgate Methodist Church (David McBride)
- Industrial Arts Supply (Mike Raymond)
- Peninsula Industries (Sidney Rebers)

### **Neighborhood Association Meetings**

The Elmwood Neighborhood discussed progress of the Elmwood Area Study at regular neighborhood association meetings and provided feedback to the City and County on issues concerning area residents. Primary concerns included traffic in the neighborhood, compatible land uses with the single-family residential area, community character, location of new TH 100 bridges, and potential for adding move-up single-family housing.

### **Neighborhood Resolution**

The Elmwood Neighborhood Association drafted a position statement with regard to the Elmwood Area Study in July 2002. This statement addressed the following principles:

- Greatest good for the entire community
- Economic viability
- Easier accessibility to area
- Community Demographics
- Need for changes to transit system
- Greater exposure for businesses
- Environmental responsibility

Recommendations based on these principles are further discussed in Chapter 5. A copy of the Elmwood Neighborhood Association Position Statement can be found in Appendix E.

### 3.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

#### A. LAND USE AND PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Land uses in the Elmwood Study Area are predominantly retail/commercial and industrial with office, civic/institutional, and multi-family uses as well. Figure 4 illustrates the existing land use in the study area, and Figures 5a-5c include aerial oblique photos of the existing Elmwood Study Area. Land use within each of the study's sub-areas is discussed below.

##### **Existing Land Use**

- Rail North

At the intersection of TH 7 and Wooddale Avenue, the southwest quadrant consists of the Dworsky Properties, which are currently retail/commercial uses. The southeast quadrant is referred to as the former Soomek Rug site. This building is currently vacant but was previously used as a showroom/warehouse facility. East of this intersection, along the TH 7 Frontage Road, is an industrial use (McGarvey Coffee) and a multi-family residential use (Cityscape Apartments).

- West 36th Street (North)

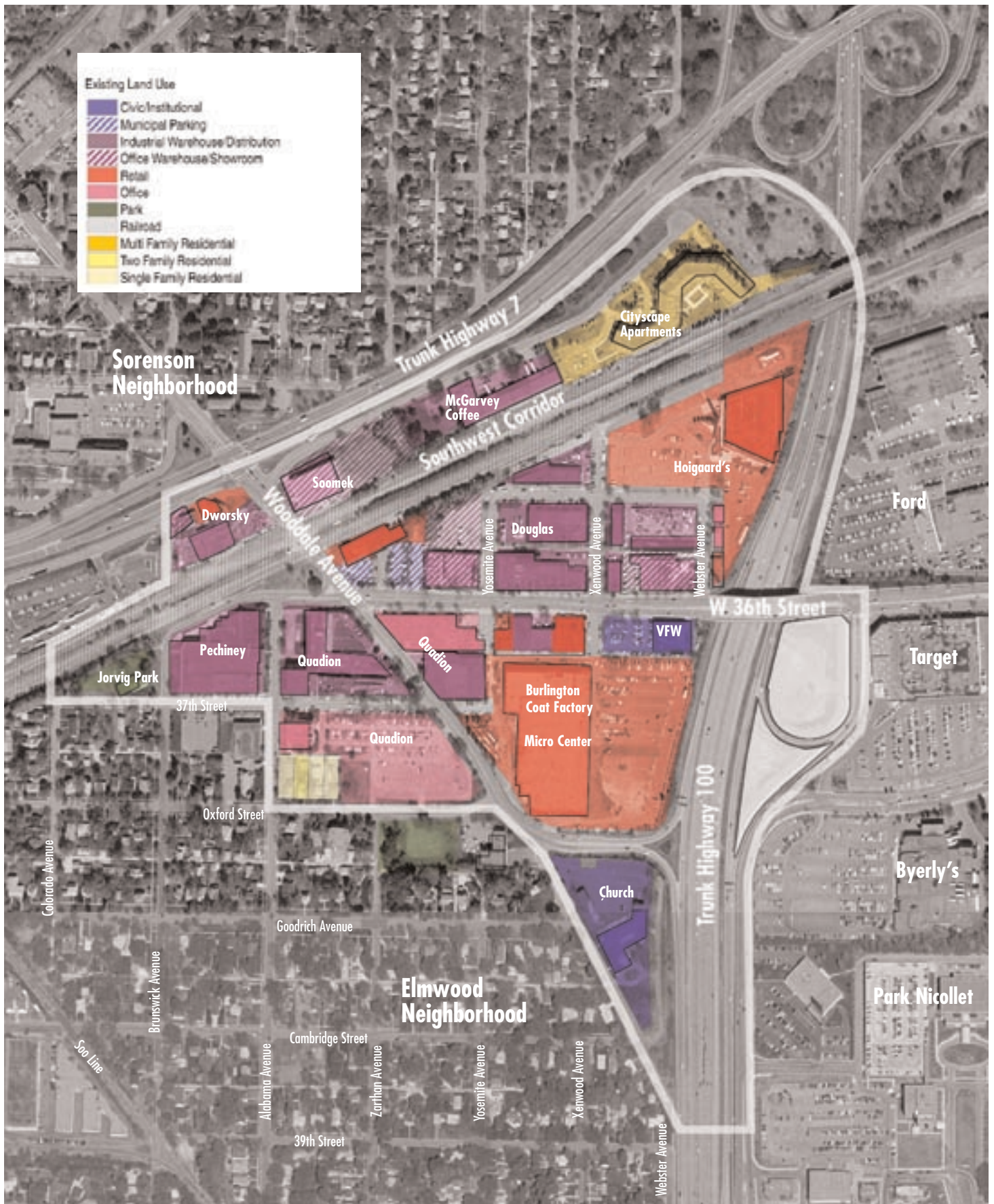
Along 36th Street, east of Wooddale Avenue, the majority of properties consist of retail/commercial and office uses. North of 36th Street, land uses are mostly industrial. In the northeast portion of this area, south of the rail corridor is Hoigaard's, which is a retail use comprising several parcels.

- West 36th Street (South)

South of 36th Street, east of Wooddale Avenue, land uses are mostly retail/commercial. One exception is the VFW, which is considered a civic use, located at the east edge of the study area. Another exception is the office uses of the Quadion-owned building in the southeast quadrant of the 36th Street/Wooddale Avenue intersection. The majority of this sub-area consists of the large retail stores of Micro Center and Burlington Coat Factory. These retailers front TH 100 and include large areas of surface parking on the eastern half of the property. South of Micro Center and Burlington Coat Factory is Aldersgate United Methodist Church in the southern portion of the study area.

- Quadion/ Pechiney

West of Wooddale Avenue are industrial and office uses. The largest parcels in this sub-area comprise the office building of Quadion Corporation and a large surface parking area to the east of this. North of the office use is a vacant building also owned by Quadion that was formerly an industrial use. To the west is Pechiney Plastics, an industrial use. The northwest corner of this sub-area is used as a public city park.



**EXISTING LAND USE**

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 Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
 City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 4**



*Retail Center (Burlington Coat/Micro Center)*



*Looking West on 36th Street*



*Hoigaard's/Cityscape Apartments*



*Looking South*



*Soomek / Dworsky*



*Quadion / Pechiney  
Looking South*



*Wooddale Ave. Looking South East*



*Looking North East*



*Looking East*

## Physical Condition

Most of the buildings within the study area were constructed in the 1940s and 1950s. Many buildings were originally built for industrial uses, but were eventually converted to retail, office or services uses. Several properties along West 36th Street experience regular tenant turnover. Others have maintained a presence in the same building for many years.

In the 1970s, West 36th Street underwent significant streetscape enhancements. Elements of this are evident in the bricked walkways, sidewalk benches, planter boxes, and boulevard trees. However, these features have considerably deteriorated over the past 30 years. Overall, very little infrastructure or building improvements have been made to the retail/commercial and industrial areas of the Elmwood Study Area.

## B. ZONING AND GUIDE PLAN

### Zoning

Zoning for the Elmwood area was updated for the City's 1992 Zoning Ordinance, as is shown in Figure 6. Much of the study area is zoned for industrial uses. Industrial zoning includes all of the parcels west of Wooddale Avenue. The northern half of the rail corridor and two middle parcels along the TH 7 Frontage Road are also zoned for general industrial use. Properties adjacent to West 36th Street and east of Wooddale Avenue are zoned for industrial park use or retail/commercial use.

Exceptions to industrial and retail zoning include the southwest quadrant of TH 7/Wooddale Avenue, which is zoned for Mixed-Use. In the northeast corner of the study area, the parcel consisting of high-density housing is zoned for multi-family residential use. Additionally, the church property in the southeast portion of the study area is zoned two-family residential.

### Guide Plan

According to the *St. Louis Park Comprehensive Plan (2000-2020)*, planned land uses in the Elmwood Study Area are similar to current land uses. The Redevelopment Chapter of the comprehensive plan identifies the Elmwood Study Area as a candidate for further study. Therefore, few guide plan changes were made in the area at the time of the plan's adoption.

Figure 7 depicts planned land uses according to the City's Comprehensive Plan. The majority of the study area is planned for industrial use. Commercial uses are planned to continue for the northeast parcels in the "West 36th Street (North)" sub-area and at the Hoigaard's property and at the current Micro Center/ Burlington Coat Factory site. Civic use is also planned to remain on the current church property. One guide plan change within the study area is located at the southwest quadrant of the TH 7/Wooddale Avenue intersection. These parcels are guided for civic mixed use rather than retail/commercial use.

Table 1 outlines the existing land use, zoning, and guide plan for particular sites of interest in the study area.





**CURRENT ZONING**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
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 City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 6**



**GUIDE PLAN**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
 Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
 City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 7**

**Table 1: Current Land Use, Zoning, and Guide Plan**

<b>Property</b>	<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Guide Plan</b>
Dworsky	Retail/ Commercial	Mixed Use	Civic Mixed Use
Soomek Rug Site	Warehouse/ Showroom	General Industrial	Industrial
McGarvey Coffee	Industrial	General Industrial	Industrial
Hoigaard's	Retail/ Commercial	General Commercial	Commercial
Douglas Corp	Industrial	Industrial Park	Industrial
Pechiney Plastics	Industrial	General Industrial	Industrial
Quadion Corp (east of Wooddale)	Office and Industrial	Industrial Park	Industrial
Quadion Corp (west of Wooddale)	Office and Industrial	General Industrial	Industrial
VFW	Civic/ Institutional	Industrial Park	Industrial
Micro Center/ Burlington	Retail/ Commercial	General Commercial	Commercial

Source: SRF Consulting Group, Inc.

**C. CIRCULATION**

**TH 100**

One advantage of the Elmwood area is its close proximity and accessibility to TH 100. From southbound TH 100, access is gained via an exit that brings traffic north on Wooddale Avenue to 36th Street. Northbound traffic must exit east of the study area and cross back over TH 100 on 36th Street. Currently, Mn/DOT is planning to expand TH 100 between 36th Street and Cedar Lake Road, to eliminate an existing bottleneck. These plans, and their affects on the study area, are discussed in Chapter 5.

**Local Street Network**

Current circulation through the study area is provided by the minor-arterials of West 36th Street, running east/west, and Wooddale Avenue, which bisects the area running northwesterly/southeasterly. Remaining streets are positioned in a grid-like pattern. The commercial and industrial area of Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street is separated from the residential area to the south by limiting through-access to residential streets. The south terminus of Wooddale Avenue ends in a cul-de-sac adjacent to the church property. Through-access from the neighborhood to arterial streets is also limited on Webster, Xenwood, Yosemite and Zarthan Avenues.

Alabama Avenue does provide access from Excelsior Boulevard on the south to West 36th Street on the north through the Elmwood residential area. Currently, this road is classified as a minor-collector and a municipal state-aid roadway, which requires minimum design criteria and allows for truck and bus traffic through the area.

## 4.0 REAL ESTATE MARKET

In order to make informed development recommendations for land use, design and transportation improvements, a market assessment of the Elmwood Study Area and its environs was performed. This market assessment of the Elmwood Study Area and St. Louis Park included sections on current economic conditions in St. Louis Park and the region, real estate market conditions, and development potential.

The final analysis evaluates conditions and near-term demand for four land uses that are likely to be part of future development or redevelopment projects in the Elmwood Study Area: industrial/flex, office, retail and residential. The complete market assessment is included as in the Appendix, but key findings are outlined below.

### A. ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

Though located in the rapidly growing dynamic Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), population growth in St. Louis Park has not been significant in the past decade. Between 1990 and 2000, population in St. Louis Park grew by less than one percent, compared to 15.4 percent in the metropolitan area. This is not unusual given St. Louis Park's physical position in the area as an older first-ring suburb. St. Louis Park's households grew at a higher rate, 4.3 percent, but still significantly less than either Hennepin County (8.8 percent) or the MSA (16.7 percent).

Projections for the area, however, are for a higher percentage in growth in both population and households in the coming decade. The Metropolitan Council projections, which account for new developments that are proposed or underway, predict that 3,000 additional people will live in St. Louis Park by 2010, an increase of 6.5 percent from 2000.

It is likely given the population characteristics and composition of existing households (as of the 2000 Census) that the majority of growth in St. Louis Park will be in smaller households and groupings with fewer children. There are more and more single-member households and average household size continues to decline. Demand for certain development types—particularly smaller, denser, low-maintenance housing units—is likely to increase over the course of the decade.

Income and employment trends reveal that St. Louis Park has a relatively stable local economy. As with the rest of the country, area unemployment rates are somewhat higher than they were eighteen months ago, however, significantly below national unemployment rates. The broad diversity of industry types that exist in the region as a whole and within St. Louis Park have helped shield the entire region from the worst of the recessionary trends that have hit three sectors the hardest—manufacturing, telecommunications and internet.

## B. REAL ESTATE MARKET CONDITIONS

Trends in the real estate market for four different land use types—industrial/flex, office, retail, and residential—were analyzed. The key findings of this part of the analysis are as follows:

### **Industrial/Flex**

In the West Suburban Submarket of the metropolitan area, which includes St. Louis Park, *industrial/flex* has been in fair to poor condition in the past year prior to this study date (2002). There has been negative absorption (i.e., more space going back into the market prior to lease expirations) of more than 200,000 square feet in this area. Some of this is due to the continuing decline of manufacturing and some due to over-building in the late 1990s. In the Elmwood Study Area, there has been a natural evolution of true industrial uses toward flex or showroom uses.

### **Office**

The *office* market in the West Suburban Submarket is somewhat healthier than the industrial space market, but there are large blocks of vacancies that must be absorbed before new product could be introduced. Class A net rents average about \$16.50 per square foot as of the end of 2001, a slight decline from \$16.82, the average of the previous six months.

Outside of the I-394 corridor, St. Louis Park has a small amount of office space, though the area is not considered a major node of office activity in the region. The Elmwood Study Area has limited traditional office space, though one mixed-use development with an office element, Wooddale Crossing, is proposed for the area.

### **Retail**

Within a two-mile radius of the Elmwood Study Area, there is a substantial amount of *retail*, including large malls and shopping centers. According to brokers, the retail market in the West Suburban Submarket is strong, but at or near capacity given population growth and transportation access and circulation.

The intensity of current retail development and new users (who have made commitments to space) in the area, limit the near- to medium-term future for retail in the Elmwood Study Area. Several “big box” developments—including Target, Super Target, Wal-Mart and Kohl’s—now have locations near the study area. The new Excelsior & Grand project, a major mixed-use redevelopment project on Excelsior Boulevard in St. Louis Park, has signed leases with other significant users including Kinder Care, Snyder Drug and Panera Bread.

### **Residential**

The *residential* segment of the real estate market is the strongest of the four use types analyzed in St. Louis Park and surrounding areas. Average selling prices for all types of housing in St. Louis Park increased by 14.0 percent from 2001 to 2002. This rate of increase in sales price is slightly higher than for Hennepin County as a whole.

Most homes sold in St. Louis Park are single-family detached units less than 2,500 square feet, largely because single-family detached units, as a type, represent almost 80 percent of the for-sale housing stock in the City. Brokers report that townhouses and condominiums also sell quickly.

Apartment vacancy in the West Suburban Submarket and the more immediate St. Louis Park region is relatively low, but has experienced increases in the last year. (For instance, apartment vacancy rates were at 3.5% in April, 2001 and 7.8% in April, 2002.) There are few medium- to large-sized apartment buildings in St. Louis Park. Cityscape Apartments, the large apartment building located in the study area itself, has a current vacancy rate of about three percent. Louisiana Oaks, a new apartment complex located at TH 7 and Louisiana Avenue, has a comparable vacancy rate. The national average of this type of development is eight percent.

### C. DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Because the range of changes that will occur in the dynamic regional market is unclear and because the Elmwood community has voiced a preference for certain types of uses, this analysis approaches development projections from three different standpoints. These are: 1) what current market pressures are likely to bring, 2) community preferences, and 3) infrastructure improvements.

#### **Current Market Pressures**

Under current market pressures demand for development or redevelopment of space if available and with minimal changes to land use controls or infrastructure investments is as follows:

- Higher end industrial showroom/ warehouse uses through conversion of existing uses (given limited potential for new development);
- Multi-family (apartments or condominiums) and townhouses – 200 to 300 high density units, 80-100 medium density units
- Age-restricted and/or assisted housing (potentially inclusive in units listed above).

#### **Community Preference**

From community meetings held in April and June 2002, it is clear that there is a strong community preference for new single-family detached housing of “move-up” (i.e., larger, more expensive than current stock) quality. Unfortunately land values, development costs, current selling prices of homes and limited lot size potential make it difficult to develop single-family detached housing in St. Louis Park without substantial public subsidy. Even then, if the desired single-family detached units are “move-up” quality, this by definition may further limit public subsidy options; public subsidies for housing are generally reserved for affordable housing designed for low- to moderate-income households.

Though demographic indicators and market conditions do not point to low-density single-family detached housing units as the most feasible or market-supportable use in the Elmwood Study Area, anecdotally there appears to be demand for such a use. Numbers are difficult to project, but it probable that the majority of units in such a development would be townhouses.

### **Infrastructure Improvements**

Several infrastructure improvements are being contemplated including TH 100 improvements and the addition of an LRT station. If these improvements occur, several other uses, not currently feasible or supportable, could occur. The range, in no particular order, includes:

- A small regional commercial center (50,000-75,000 square feet) or a single use “big box” retail user (50,000-75,000 square feet);
- An enhanced neighborhood retail area on 36th Street;
- An office park (150,000+ square feet); and
- High-density residential (200-300 high-density units, 80-100 medium-density units).

## **5.0 LAND USE AND CIRCULATION PLANS**

### **A. RECOMMENDED GENERAL LAND USE PLAN**

As described earlier, the purpose of the Elmwood Area Study is to develop a long-term vision for land use and circulation in the study area that is assumed to have a 30-year planning horizon. Recommendations made in this report should not be taken as a firm plan, but instead as suggested elements guiding decision-making as opportunities arise. This report is not intended to be used as pro-active redevelopment plan. Rather, it is a framework to be implemented when the timing is appropriate.

Figure 8 provides a depiction of the recommended land use and a circulation plan. Additionally, Figure 9a-9c include local examples of comparable land uses to those recommended. The study area is comprised of a series of sub-areas that may, in part, contribute to future redevelopment phasing and implementation of related infrastructure improvements. A description of the conceptual vision for each sub-area follows. These visions are based on the planning principles established by the study process, which can be found in Chapter 6.

#### **Rail North**

Parcels fronting on TH 7 are likely to change due to economic obsolescence or evolving needs of the owner. Cityscape Apartments is a stable use and should remain as is. If, and when, redevelopment of the McGarvey Coffee site occurs, this parcel should be redeveloped to a residential density consistent with Cityscape Apartments. Its building quality, site development and overall appearance should meet or surpass the Cityscape site.

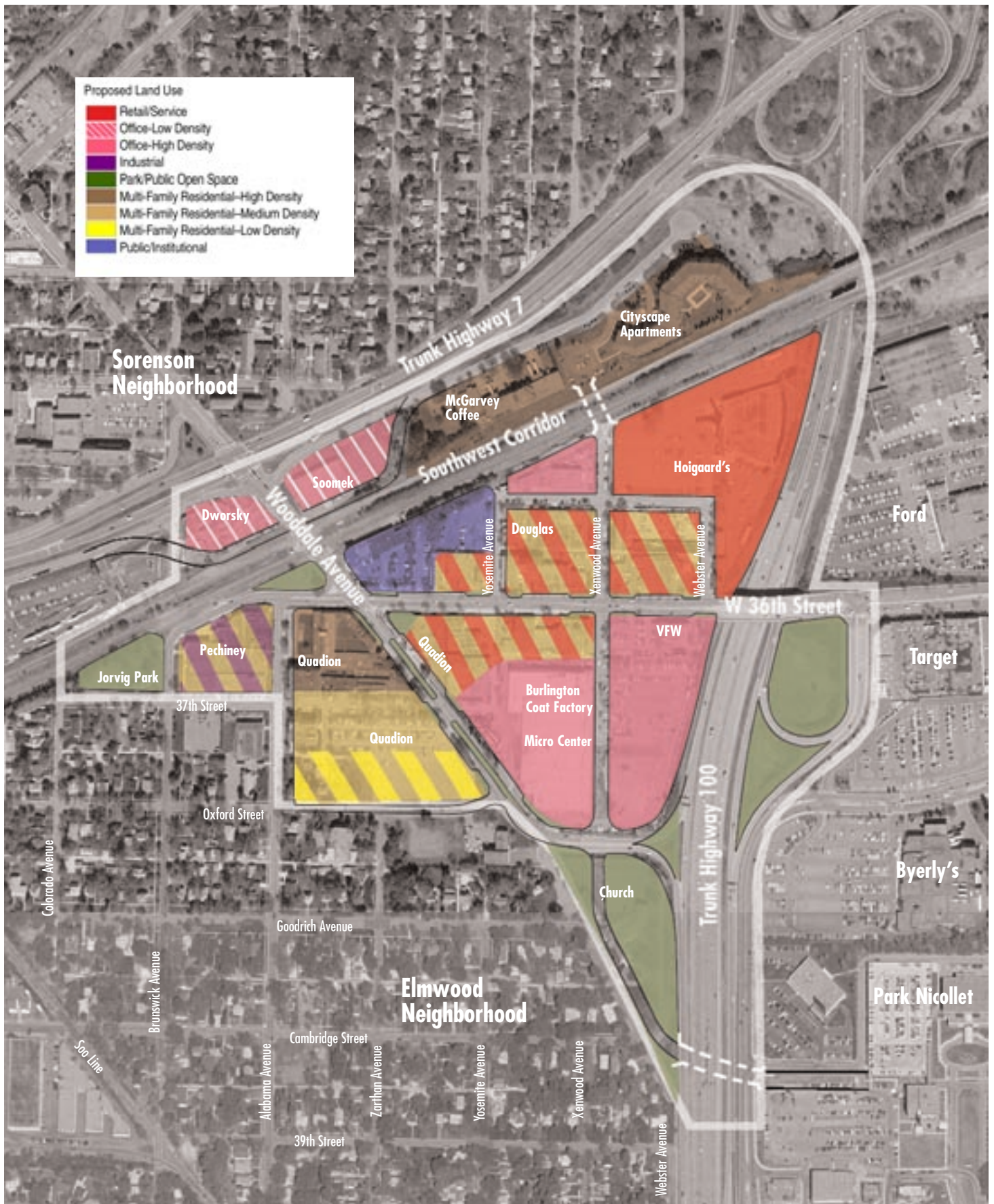
Redevelopment of the Dworsky Family properties and former Soomek Rug site will be implemented in the near future as owner needs and parcel economic obsolescence occur. These parcels, located in the southwest and southeast quadrants of TH 7 and Wooddale Avenue, should provide a gateway flanking Wooddale Avenue. Realignment of the TH 7 Frontage Road, pulling the roadway closer to the railroad corridor, provides an opportunity for new building footprints with strong visibility and good access. These parcels should be reused for low-density office, such as professional office or related professional services that would generate low vehicle trips. On-site parking requirements for tenants need to be considered. Building design and finish are important given the gateway nature of these parcels.

#### **West 36th Street (North)**

Hoigaard's is likely to continue serving as a retail anchor for this portion of the Elmwood Study Area. Hoigaard's name recognition, regionally, strengthens the neighborhood's identity. The parcel size also provides ample opportunity for business expansion, if needed. If an alternate use for the Hoigaard's parcel is desired, a campus style office development should be considered. This land use would incorporate one or more office buildings. Structured parking and extensive landscaping is recommended.

Parcels fronting the north side of West 36th Street should continue as industrial uses in the near-term, but eventually become part of mixed use development supporting the





**FUTURE LAND USE AND CIRCULATION PLAN**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
 Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
 City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 8**



**Senior Housing**  
Medium to High Density



*St. Louis Park*



**Market Rate / Non-Age Restrictive**  
Medium to High Density



*St. Louis Park*



*Minneapolis*  
**Townhomes**  
Low to Medium Density



*Richfield*



*St. Louis Park*



**LAND USE EXAMPLES**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 9A**



*Richfield*



*Minneapolis*

**Mixed Use**

First Floor Retail, Office or Apartment Above



*Edina/Minneapolis*



*Golden Valley*



*St. Louis Park*



*St. Louis Park*



CONSULTING GROUP, INC.

**LAND USE EXAMPLES**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 9B**



*Plymouth*



*Golden Valley*

**Office / Campus**



*Minnetonka*



*Golden Valley*



*Wayzata*



**LAND USE EXAMPLES**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 9C**

adjacent neighborhood's retail/service needs. Buildings height vertically with retail/service on the first floor and housing above would assist in establishing West 36th Street as the "main street" for the Elmwood area. Building density should be three to four floors. Surface parking behind the buildings will be needed on an interim basis until district parking can be enacted. At that time, additional building density could be infilled.

If the Southwest Corridor is developed for LRT, it will not likely co-exist with the freight rail that currently operates on the parallel CP Rail corridor. The existing freight rail would therefore be relocated. This would make current CP Rail right of way available for redevelopment or alternative uses between Dakota Avenue on the west and the municipal boundary of St. Louis Park on the east. This includes the portion of the CP Rail corridor within the Elmwood Study Area.

Assuming LRT is implemented in the Southwest Corridor, a center platform transit *station* could be located within the corridor as part of the LRT system, immediately east of Wooddale Avenue. Adjacent parcels to the south of the station should then be used as a multi-modal transit *facility* interfacing circulator bus activity, a park and ride, and walk-to/bike-to traffic with LRT access. This area may ultimately incorporate structured parking as a part of the transit complex, which could be considered as shared parking with multi-use properties located immediately east of the transit facility.

### **Quadion/Pechiney Plastics**

Near-term reuse of the Quadion site is likely with retrenchment of manufacturing, technical and administrative elements of the Quadion Corporation. The parcel's reuse for multi-family housing is consistent with the City's need for additional housing types including units for empty nesters, seniors and market-rate higher-density. Quadion's close proximity to transit facilities would also suggest a transit oriented development (TOD) influence. Redevelopment of the Quadion site will abut existing single-family housing adjacent to Oxford Street and Alabama Avenue. Therefore, a gradation in density from low-density townhouses to medium- and high density (south to north) on the Quadion site should be considered.

Low-density townhouses are located on the north side of Oxford Street should be of a form, style and material selection that complements the remainder of the Elmwood single-family housing stock. Higher residential densities within the mid and northern portions of the site would provide other architectural opportunities. Their densities would assist in the redevelopment's financial feasibility.

Pechiney Plastic will likely continue to be an industrial use in the foreseeable future. However, medium-density multi-family housing should be considered an alternate use if the site is redeveloped. The development character should be of a scale and material selection that complements the adjacent traditional single-family neighborhood.

Jorvig Park, situated adjacent the railroad corridor, has historic significance for both the neighborhood and community. It also provides precious park and open space. Jorvig Park should be preserved intact and expanded if possible. Its future use should be scrutinized consistent with the needs of the existing and future neighborhood.

### **West 36th Street (South)**

Parcels south of West 36th Street are currently a mix of retail, commercial and industrial uses. Redevelopment is likely on an incremental basis given increasing land values, potential vacations by the Quadion Corporation and reuse of the VFW site. The retail center currently occupied by Burlington Coat Factory and Micro Center has strong regional access and highway visibility that suggest a more intense use.

Future building first-floor frontages on West 36th Street should contribute to the retail/service needs of the neighborhood. As a mixed-use development, residential and/or professional office uses should be vertically mixed on the upper floors. Parcels fronting TH 100 including the VFW site and retail center (Burlington Coat Factory/ Micro Center) will likely be reused as they provide a large contiguous parcel. Their use should be high-end (Class A) high-density office potentially connected with medical service or medical providers. Structured parking should be incorporated as a part of the office development and may serve a broader need as a part of the neighborhood managed parking concept.

### **B. CIRCULATION CONCEPT PLANS FOR STREET NETWORK**

Street, roadway and highway improvements are recommended to support potential land use changes within the Elmwood Study Area and adjacent edge parcels. These recommendations are made in support of the following objectives:

1. Street and public infrastructure should support land use patterns and development configurations.
2. Regional access should be improved strengthening parcels that are currently restricted.
3. Regional access should also improve roadway capacity and give drivers alternative choices, thereby reducing traffic congestion and strengthening the overall roadway network.
4. Local street improvements should emphasize efficient connections with regional access rather than encourage pass through traffic within residential areas.
5. Provisions for non-motorized uses (pedestrian and bicycle) should be fundamental to any street or roadway improvement.
6. Street and streetscape improvements should reinforce LRT and bus circulator systems.
7. Primary streets should provide a positive image and reinforce the neighborhood's appeal.

### **Regional Access**

Parcels north of West 36th Street may be partially visible from TH 100 but difficult to access. Mn/DOT is currently planning for TH 100 improvements north of West 36th Street as a part of a broader corridor improvement program. Alternative concepts have been examined to improve regional access to and from TH 100 at West 36th Street or Wooddale Avenue extended. Revisions to Wooddale Avenue extended are preferred over the West 36th Street alternatives due to weaving and merging requirements onto TH 100 at both TH 7 and Minnetonka Boulevard, north of the study area.

Figure 10a depicts recommended improvements to the Elmwood area based on proposed reconstruction of the current TH 100 access to Wooddale Avenue. A revised geometric would improve southbound access to Wooddale Avenue by increasing sight distance, stacking distance and stopping distance. Additional right-of-way would be required from the Micro Center parking lot. Traffic entering southbound TH 100 would also benefit from a revised geometric to improve sight distance, acceleration and weaving movement with the collector/distributor roadway.

Movements into the Elmwood area from TH 100 or to TH 100 would be controlled at a four-way stoplight located at the intersection of Xenwood Avenue and Wooddale Avenue. Xenwood Avenue, if extended northward, would expedite access to parcels, such as Hoigaard's and other land uses north of West 36th Street. Xenwood Avenue would also serve as the primary access for high-density office, which is recommended for the Burlington Coat Factory/ Micro Center site.

Wooddale Avenue will continue to serve as an important connection between TH 7 and TH 100. Reconstructed as a boulevard, the street should provide traffic capacity as well as pedestrian and bicycle movement in an attractive landscaped corridor. Wooddale Avenue would also serve as the primary access for adjacent parcels.

Additional capacity would also be realized with a new bridge crossing over TH 100. The south leg of the Xenwood Avenue/Wooddale Avenue intersection would connect land uses east of TH 100 such as the Park Nicollet campus, and nearby retail/ commercial uses. This new roadway segment and bridge structure would also provide the Elmwood area with improved inter-neighborhood connections rather than sole reliance upon the Excelsior Boulevard Corridor. The new bridge and roadway should be designed to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian movement.

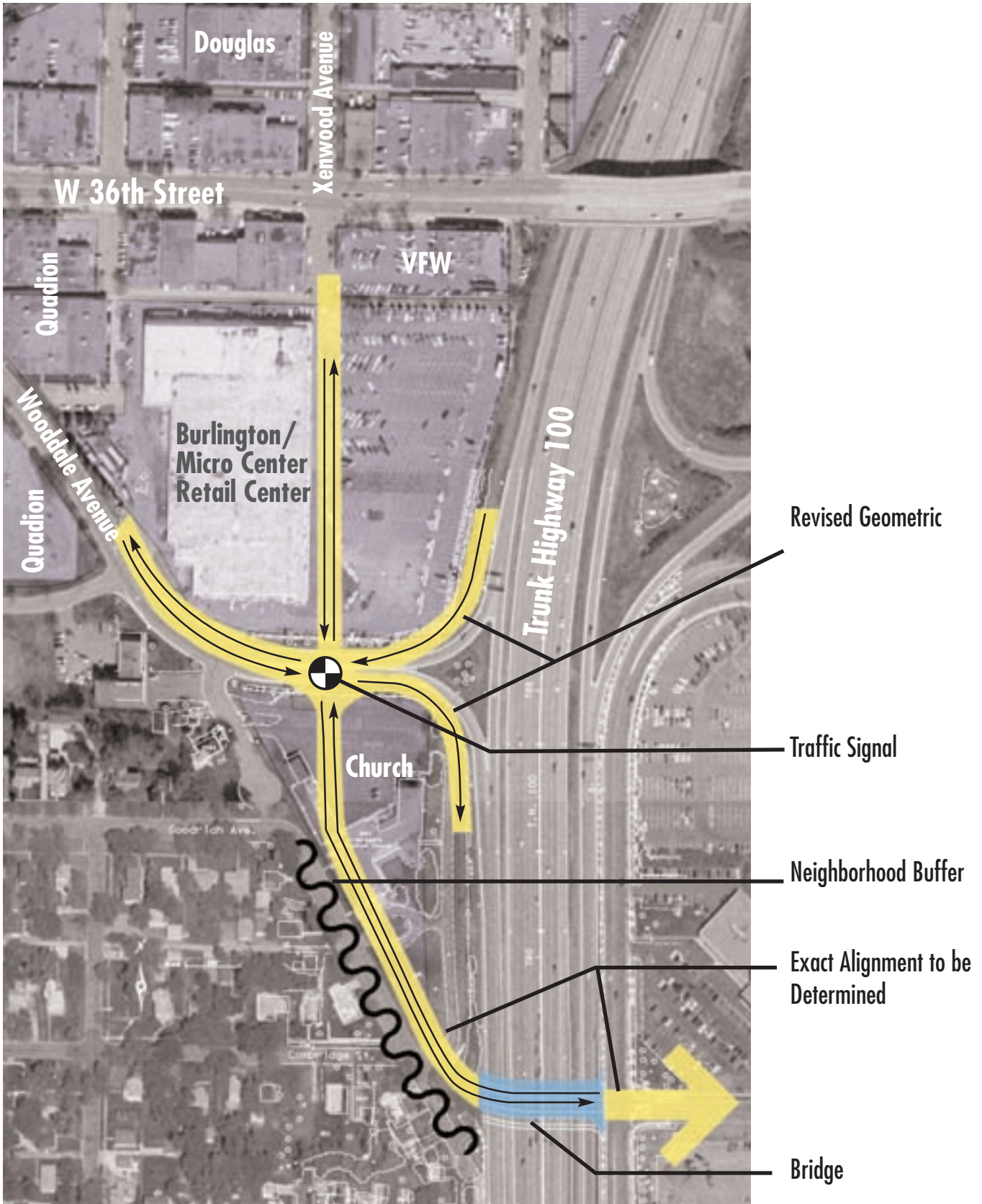
Construction of a connecting road and bridge crossing TH 100 will require additional study to verify the concept's validity and its implication for the adjacent church and the neighborhood edge. Feasibility studies will examine roadway and bridge profiles and geometrics in context with existing sites conditions.

Buffering of the residential edge will be desirable to offset potential visual, noise and security concerns. Figure 10b illustrates several approaches to establishing a physical buffer, separating the roadway and bridge from adjacent homes. Buffering could incorporate a number of techniques including:

- An earthen berm would break sight lines and reduce noise.
- Landscaping to provide an attractive separation and provide seasonal interest. Coniferous and deciduous species should be employed.
- An architectural fence to buffer sight lines and provide security. The fence could also incorporate sound deadening for noise reduction. Typical materials include wood, masonry and composites.

The above techniques can be combined to respond to the variety of conditions likely encountered such as available space, changes in grade, location of adjacent homes and maintenance considerations.

Feasibility plans should anticipate and incorporate buffering measures as part of the project planning. Illustrative plans will assist policy makers in obtaining the best possible design.

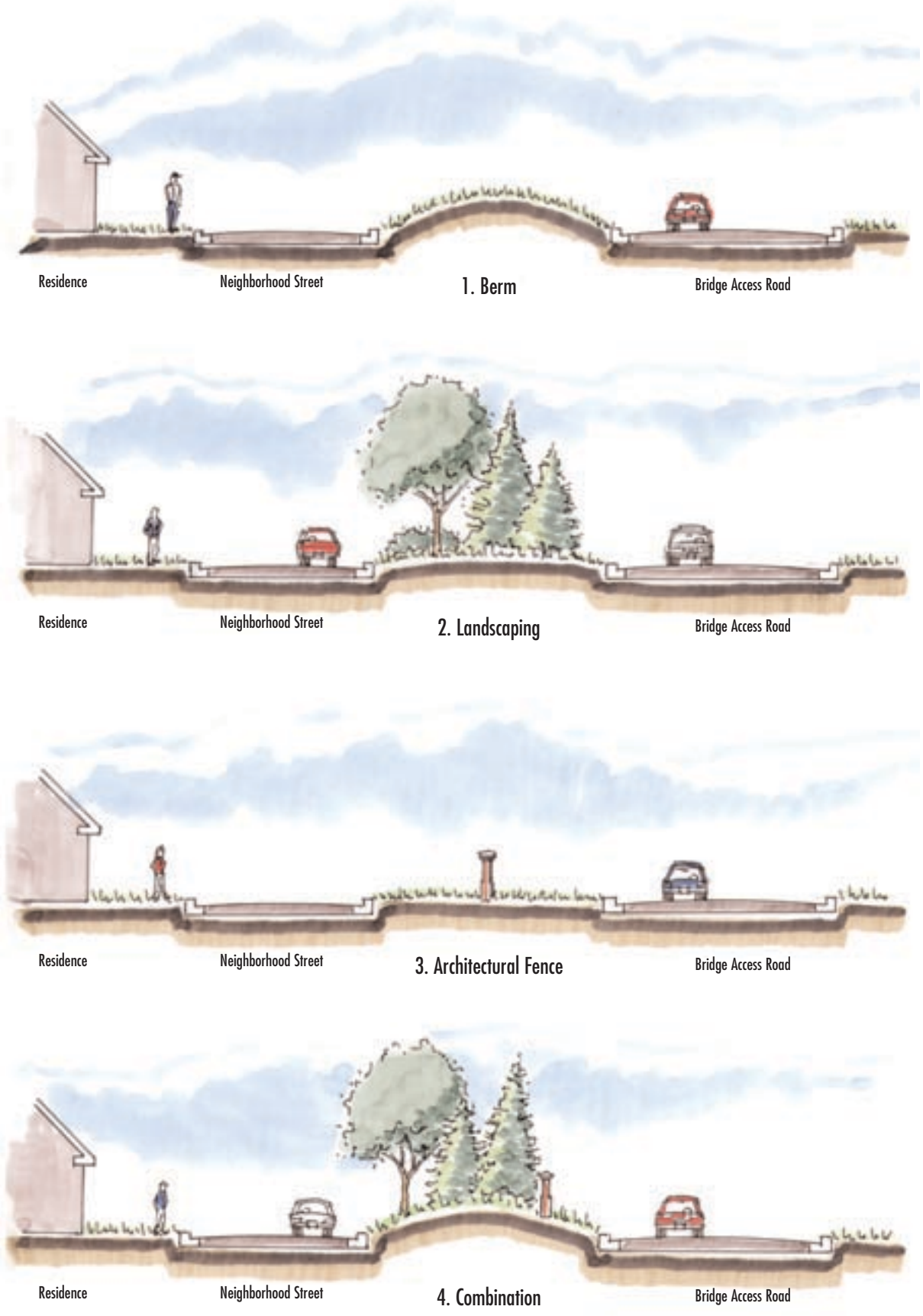


**TH 100 ACCESS CONCEPT ALTERNATIVE**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 10A**





**OPTIONS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD BUFFERING -  
NEW ROADWAY / BRIDGE CROSSING**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 10B**

## **Other Street Improvements**

Although exact alignments have not been determined, several other street improvements within the Elmwood Study Area would assist in future land use changes, define redevelopment parcels, and create needed pedestrian connections north of the Southwest Corridor. An extension of Xenwood Avenue between Wooddale Avenue and the railroad corridor would provide convenient access to adjacent parcels. Xenwood Avenue would also extend north to provide a grade separated crossing beneath the rail corridor. Benefiting parcels include the Cityscape Apartments, future multi-family residential and office. This connection is especially desirable given peak hour traffic constraints on Wooddale Avenue between TH 7 and West 36th Street.

Realignment of the TH 7 Frontage, east and west of Wooddale Avenue, would serve many benefits. By pushing the frontage roads further away from TH 7 and toward the rail corridor, vehicle stacking and turning movements can be better accommodated. The resulting development parcels between TH 7 and the Frontage Road should serve as gateway elements flanking Wooddale Avenue. (Example images of gateways are included in Figure 11.) Access to these parcels should be limited to the frontage road rather than Wooddale Avenue. Figure 12 shows a concept for realigning the TH 7 Frontage Road.

## **Transit Facilities**

Ongoing planning will determine future use of the Southwest Corridor for transit purposes. This study assumes that LRT will occur within the corridor with a center-loaded LRT platform located immediately east of Wooddale Avenue. This station would serve not only the Elmwood commercial and residential areas but also neighborhoods north of TH 7.

A multi-modal transit facility should be developed in the northeast quadrant of Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street to serve as an interface between the LRT platform and local circulator buses or walk-to patrons. As shown in Figure 13, the parcels should be developed as a multi-use facility and include retail or service elements complementary to transit patrons on the first level, fronting on West 36th Street. Bus service to and from the transit station would have curbside drop-off/pick-up areas on West 36th Street. Transit patrons could also be dropped off or picked up by passenger cars in the same location. Such a transit station could exist as a combined venture between Hennepin County, St. Louis Park, Metro Transit, other public agencies and private businesses with interest in tenancy or patron services.

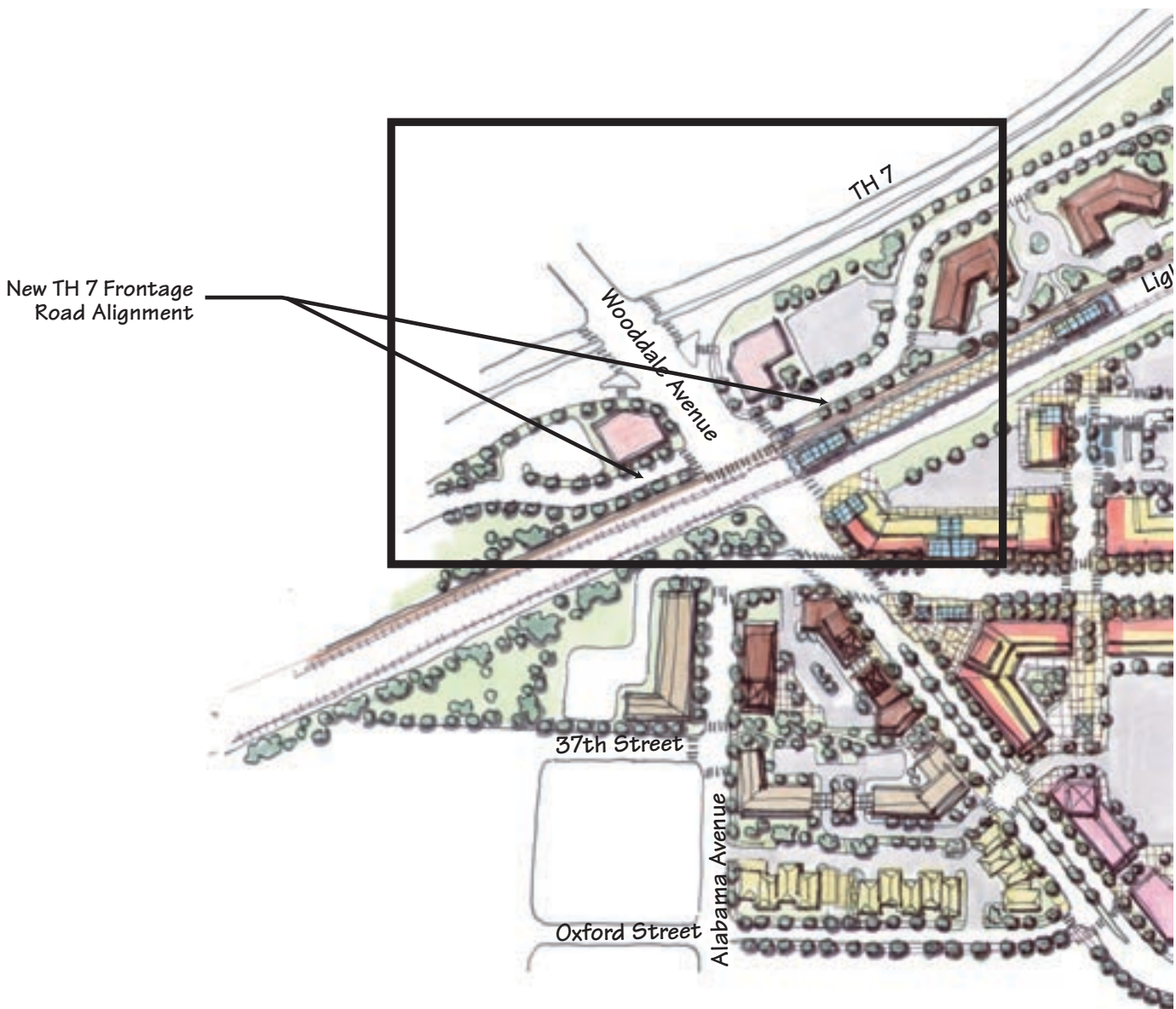
When LRT is operational, further analysis will need to be conducted by the County and City to accommodate transit-oriented parking that minimizes impacts to the residential neighborhood. The parcel in the northeast quadrant of Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street could ultimately be used as part of a district parking facility in conjunction with other adjacent parcels. Transit-oriented parking could also occur in structured parking located behind and in close proximity to mixed-use development and the Southwest Corridor. Assuming freight rail is abandoned, additional right-of-way could be reused as a part of the parking component.



**EXAMPLES OF GATEWAYS**

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Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

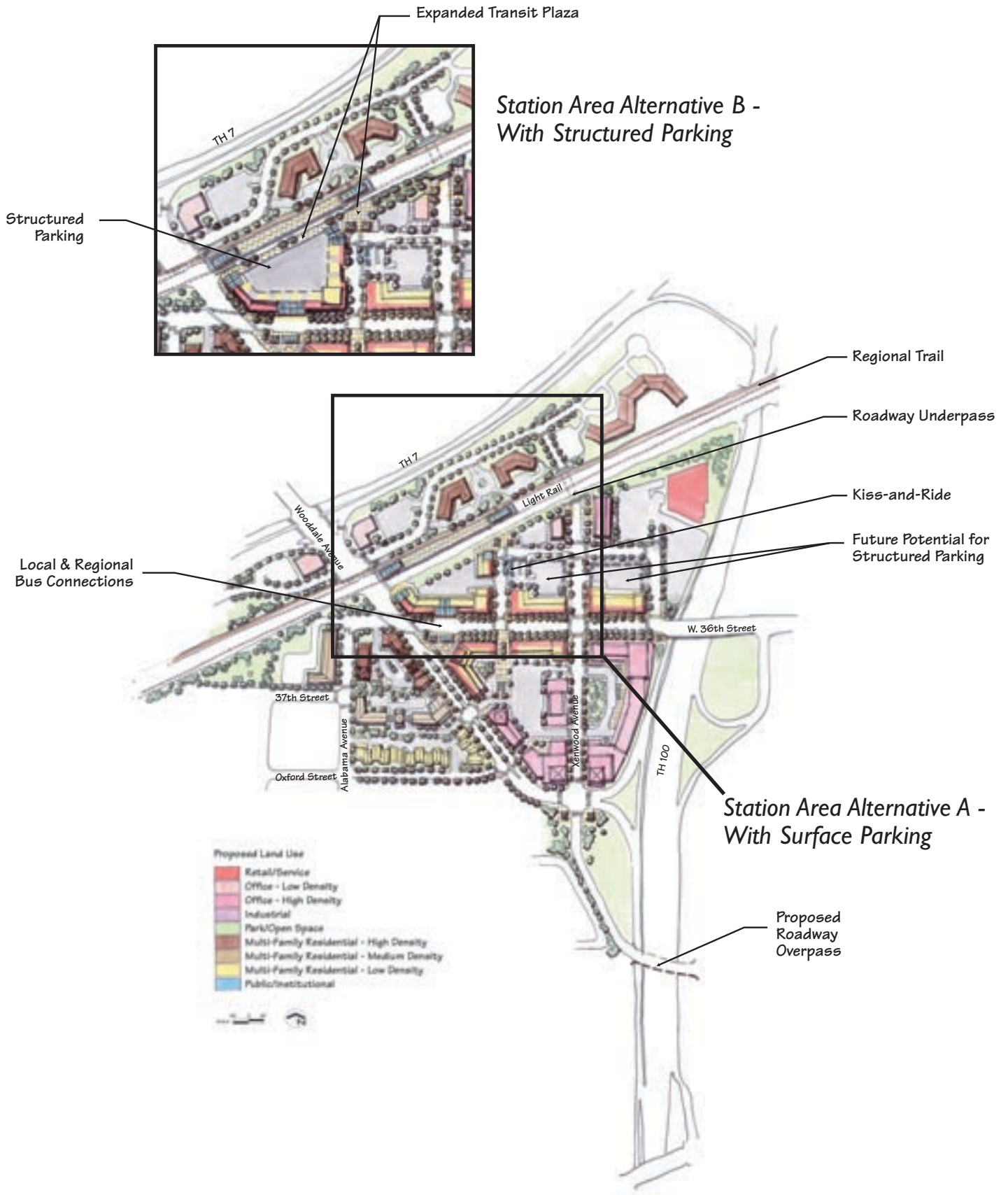
**Figure 11**



**TH 7 FRONTAGE ROAD CONCEPT**

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City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 12**



**TRANSIT STATION AREA ALTERNATIVES**

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 Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
 City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 13**

## **Streetscape Improvements**

The image and walkability of the Elmwood area will contribute to the community's livability characteristics. To that end, streetscape and urban design improvements should be applied to each of the local streets but particularly to Wooddale Avenue, West 36th Street and Xenwood Avenue.

Wooddale Avenue should be reconstructed as a landscaped boulevard, similar to what is shown in Figure 13. Two lanes of traffic in each direction separated by a landscaped median and edge treatment will help affirm Wooddale Avenue as an address for adjacent residential and retail/commercial uses. On-street parking, lighting, landscaping, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and other urban design measures should be included in Wooddale's reconstruction between TH 100 and TH 7.

West 36th Street, from Alabama Avenue east to TH 100 should become the neighborhood retail and service corridor like that shown in Figure 14. The scale and treatment of the street should take into consideration the mixed-used development comprised of, multi-family and retail/commercial uses that are planned nearby. Theme lighting, trees, sidewalk surface and other urban design elements would affirm West 36th Street as the commercial center for the neighborhood.

Xenwood Avenue from Goodrich Avenue to the railroad corridor will serve as the primary access for adjacent mixed use and office development. The street and adjacent sidewalk treatment should be pedestrian friendly, tree lined and provide a positive image for adjacent land uses. Figure 15 includes several additional images of example streetscapes.

## **Civic Space**

Civic, park and open space is limited within the Elmwood area. Its value, however, is significant to the neighborhood quality of life and property values. Increasing land use densities and changing demographics will place greater value on civic space.

Jorvig Park will continue to serve as the neighborhoods' cornerstone park. Its historic significance should be preserved. However, the site's park value may require reinvestment for additional facilities. Linear space adjacent to the rail corridor could also be incorporated to expand Jorvig Park. Additional expansion could include Brunswick Avenue right-of-way if Pechiney Plastics is redeveloped.

Urban civic space should play a role in the redevelopment of the neighborhood. For example, a small "pocket" park or plaza could occur in the southeast quadrant of Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street, similar to what is depicted in Figure 16. This visible parcel has significant value due to area transit, high-density residential, mixed-use development and retail/service uses. The civic space should become a focal point of the neighborhood, one that represents the area's quality and vitality.

Private open space should be integrated into higher-density developments. Multi-family land use within the Quadion site should incorporate green space to help offset the residential density. Its use should be focused upon resident needs including those of senior citizens. High-density office, developed west of TH 100, should also incorporate landscaped urban space. Plazas, motor courts or similar devices not only strengthen the office complex quality but also serve to compliment public realm amenities.



**EXAMPLES OF STREETSCAPES**

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Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 15**



**EXAMPLES OF PLAZAS AND POCKET PARKS**

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Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 16**





**STUDY AREA ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
 Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
 City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 17**

## 6.0 PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Planning principles should play an important role as the Elmwood neighborhood evolves and changes. The principles can:

1. Establish a framework for decision-making.
2. Provide direction and focus for reinvestment in the public realm.
3. Clarify “if/then” scenarios.
4. Be used as evaluation criteria in reviewing private sector development initiatives.
5. Help affirm land development and infrastructure priorities, sequencing and phasing.
6. Establish a common expectation amongst decision makers, policy makers, property owners, tenants, etc.

Figure 17 shows an illustrative plan for the Elmwood Study Area based on these principles. This figure represents a flexible concept for redevelopment and is likely subject to change.

### A. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Although each development parcel has specific challenges, the following principles respond to specific neighborhood issues regarding future land use changes.

#### **Quadion (west of Wooddale Avenue)**

- Residential density should transition from low to high, increasing from south to north. Owner-occupied housing should be encouraged.
- Irregular land use patterns between single family and other land uses should have clear distinct edges.
- Low-density townhouses on the north side of Oxford Street should have an architectural character and scale that compliments the residential neighborhood’s scale and character.
- Residential density should capitalize upon future transit oriented development (TOD) principles, such as pedestrian access to a transit station and higher density development.
- Primary multi-family vehicle access should be from Wooddale Avenue to reduce traffic conflicts with the Elmwood residential neighborhood.
- Development in the southwest quadrant of Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street should incorporate complimentary retail/service on the building’s first floor edge, adjacent Wooddale.
- Age-restricted housing should be considered as a development component, responding to neighborhood and community needs.
- “Green” space should be integrated into medium- and high-density residential.
- High quality landscaping should be integral to any residential uses.



**STUDY AREA ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
 Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works, and Transit  
 City of St. Louis Park

**Figure 17**

### **Pechiney Plastics**

- Development configuration should compliment Jorvig Park.
- Primary vehicle access should be to West 36th Street.
- Interior green space should be strived for.
- Medium-density residential should compliment the neighborhood scale and architectural character.

### **West 36th Street Multi Use**

- Building character should embrace the street right-of-way edge to provide a traditional “Main Street”.
- Buildings should accommodate a vertical mix of land uses with neighborhood retail/services on the first floor with residential within the upper floors. Professional office space could be considered on upper floors within select locations.
- Resident vehicle parking and access should occur from the building rear. Short-term parking should occur on West 36th Street. Long-term plan for structured parking.

### **Dworsky/Soomek Rug**

- Land use should focus on low-density office use.
- Tenant mix should desire high visibility with convenient access and low traffic generation. Parking for tenants and customers should occur on this site.
- Architectural style and massing should provide a neighborhood gateway.
- Extensive landscaping should be a mandatory project element.
- Redevelopment should accommodate the realignment of the TH 7 Frontage Road.

### **Burlington Coat Factory/Micro Center**

- Parcel use should be high-density office seeking regional image and access. Structured parking should be integrated into the building complex, preferably below grade.
- Urban plaza or civic space should occur as a motor court, entrance plaza or similar.
- Building material and design quality should be emphasized.

## **B. CIRCULATION**

The following principles provide guidance to motorized and non-motorized circulation elements and their implementation.

### **TH 100 Access**

- Focus improved TH 100 access at Wooddale Avenue extended
  - Prudent alternatives should be examined and evaluated for geometrics or inbound and outbound ramp revisions, traffic control at Xenwood Avenue and related traffic measures.
- Examine viable geometric alternatives for a new Wooddale Bridge crossing TH 100
  - Evaluate options to minimize neighborhood impact and intrusion to Methodist Church
  - Identify means to mitigate physical impacts to the neighborhood through berming, landscaping or architectural separation
  - Evaluate roadway connections into Park Nicollet Campus and related traffic network.
  - Include pedestrian accommodations.

### **TH 7 Frontage Road Revisions**

- Frontage Roads should be realigned to parallel to rail corridor near its crossing of Wooddale Avenue.
- Frontage Roads should define development parcels and clarify parcel access.

### **Rail Corridor Crossing**

- Crossing of the rail corridor at Xenwood Avenue extended should occur as a sub-surface (grade-separated) connection. (See Figure 14.)
- Bicycle/pedestrian accommodations should be included.

### **Bicycle/Pedestrian Accommodations**

- Sidewalks should be incorporated to all street and roadway improvements.
- Multi-use trails should make logical connections consistent with the City's comprehensive trail and sidewalk plan.
- Connections should be made to the Southwest LRT Regional Trail, the new Wooddale Avenue bridge, and Xenwood Avenue extended.

### **Transit**

- Land use planning and circulation should anticipate implementation of LRT within the rail corridor.
  - Planning should assume a center loaded transit patron platform east of Wooddale Avenue
- A multi-modal transit station should be sited within the northeast quadrant of Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street.
  - The transit station should accommodate patron connections to the rail corridor, bus circulator systems and walk to traffic.

- Parking related to transit patrons should be limited to specific parcels or structures
  - Parking impacts to adjacent neighborhoods should be limited by strict enforcement and management procedures.
- Transit-oriented development, land use patterns and building configurations, should be considered within a five-minute walk of LRT loading platforms.

### **West 36th Street**

- Corridor should serve as the neighborhood’s “Main Street”.
- Pedestrian provisions and walkability should be strived for.
- Streetscaping should include lighting, landscaping, furniture and identity elements.
- On-street parking should be accommodated.

### **Wooddale Avenue**

- Corridor should be reconstructed with landscaped median and streetscape features.
- Vehicle access should occur to adjacent development parcels.
- Sidewalk areas should include lighting, landscaping and identity elements.
- On-street parking should be accommodated.

### **Xenwood Avenue**

- Extend Xenwood as north-south spine; flexibility should exist as to exact alignment.
- Promote pedestrian use through lighting, landscaping and sidewalk areas.
- Promote as a major access to area.

### **Parking**

- Provide structured parking to support new development; avoid single-story buildings with surface parking.
- Manage neighborhood parking on a district basis including both on-street and off-street spaces.
- Integrate district-parking provisions into parking structures where development allows.
- Promote shared use of parking between compatible land uses.
- Manage transit related parking to minimize the impact on adjacent land uses and residential areas.
- Provide for a hierarchy of parking needs including short term, long term and resident.

### **Freight Rail Right-of-Way (CP Freight Rail)**

The future of the rail space committed to freight railroad use is subject to change with additional study.

- Current freight rail right-of-way should continue to accommodate freight railroad use until such time that public policy determines otherwise.
- If freight rail is eliminated, right-of-way east of Wooddale Avenue should be used initially for transit-related surface parking. At such time that land use can intensify, the right-of-way should be used for transit station structured parking, mixed land use structured parking, or mixed land use development.
- If freight rail is eliminated west of Wooddale Avenue, the right-of-way should be considered to increase open space by expanding Jorvig Park and/or implementing linear open space.

### **C. OPEN SPACE/STORMWATER**

Planning principles should help guide provisions for park, open space and storm water provisions.

#### **Park and Open Space**

- Evaluate park and open space needs as residential densities increase and community demographics evolve.
- Preserve and augment existing public open space including Jorvig Park through the redevelopment process.
- Supplement public open space with private development green space.
- Establish new civic space, such as pocket parks or plazas, through the redevelopment process.
  - Identify specific locations in close proximity to the transit station.
- Seek additional green space at or near Southwest Corridor as a compliment to regional trails and greenways by vacating streets or reusing rail corridor.

#### **Regional Greenways/ Stormwater**

- Meet or surpass watershed district and municipal criteria for rate control and water quality.
- Enforce best management practices (BMP) for both public realm and private development areas.
- Pursue low-impact development (LID) principles for stormwater management and treatment.
- Employ remnant right-of-way, as available, for stormwater purposes.
- Reduce stormwater runoff with impervious surface concepts.
- Located stormwater and treatment areas in close proximity to runoff sources.
- Preserve and strength neighborhood historic resources including Jorvig Park.

## 7.0 FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

The financial feasibility analysis examined the Elmwood Study Area by dividing it into five separate geographic components for each land use scenario, as shown in Figure 18. These five components include:

- A. Quadion Corporation
- B. Pechiney Plastics
- C. Burlington/VFW/ Quadion
- D. North of 36th Street to Rail Corridor
- E. North of Rail Corridor

Two land use scenarios were examined to show the impact of differing land uses on project feasibility for each of the five geographic areas. One land use scenario was proposed by the Elmwood Neighborhood Association as part of the Neighborhood Position Statement. This statement and illustration of the proposal can be found in Appendix E. The scenario is referred to as the “Neighborhood Scenario”. The second land use scenario, referred to as “Study Recommendations” follows what was described in Chapter 5 and depicted in Figure 8.

Redevelopment projects were then determined for each component through an exercise, which overlaid land use and maximized site density. Tax impacts were calculated, including an analysis of using tax increment financing to subsidize the projects. The full financial feasibility report is attached in Appendix G, which also includes a figure comparing the two project scenarios. A summary of the results of the analysis for each of the projects follows.

### A. QUADION

#### **Neighborhood Scenario – Project 1**

The Neighborhood Scenario for the Quadion area included all of the Quadion-owned parcels, both east and west of Wooddale Avenue. This consisted of redeveloping the south parcel closest to the Elmwood residential neighborhood to single-family housing; the parcel immediately north of this to multi-family housing; and the parcel east of Wooddale Avenue to office.

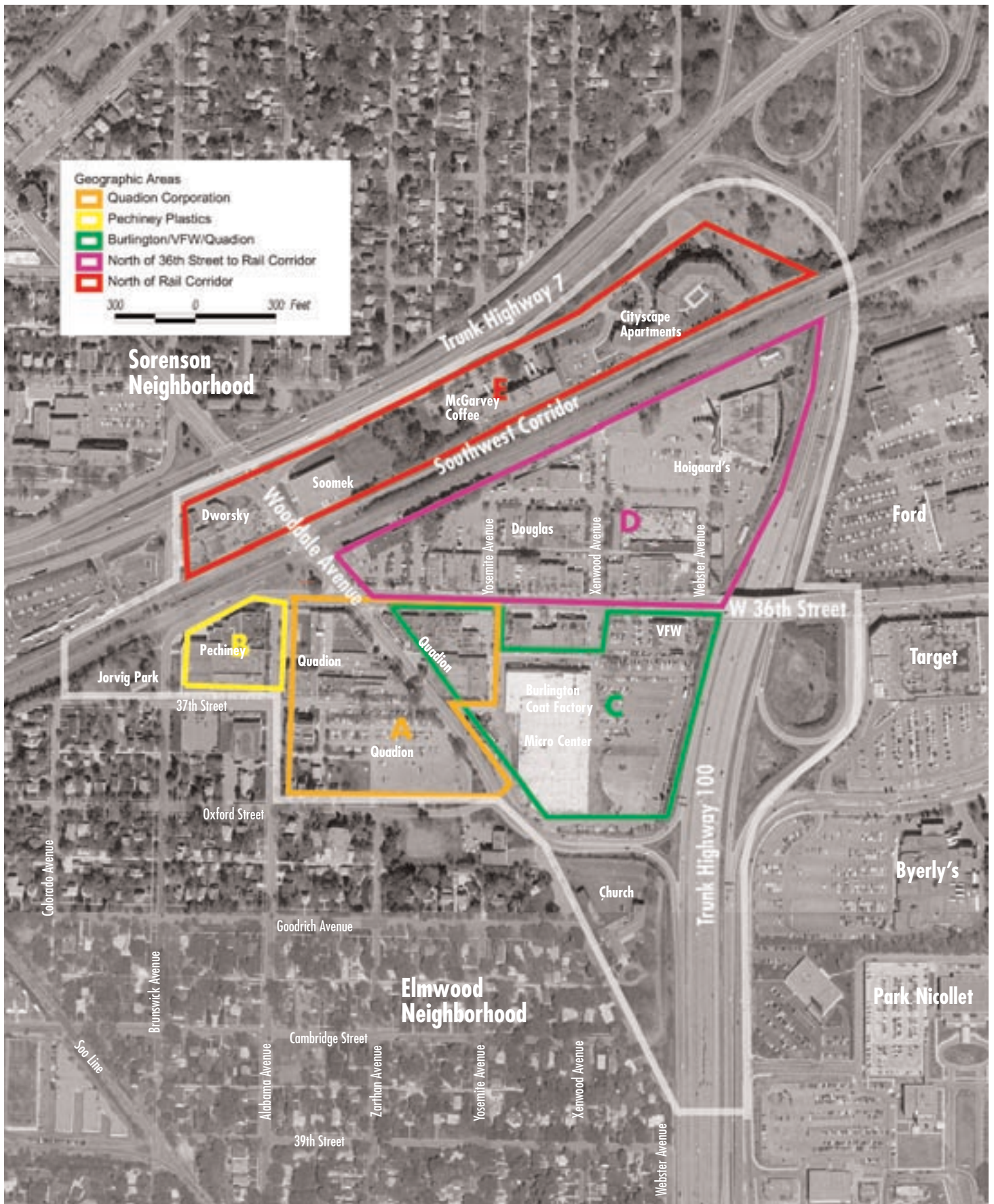
Total project costs would be 131 percent of new market value. Even if all tax increment financing generated were dedicated to the project, it would still require equity not in keeping with industry standards. This project is not considered feasible due primarily to the following reasons:

- Costs in excess of new market value.
- Inclusion of single-family owner occupied housing (not investment property).
- Equity requirement (26 percent).

#### **Study Recommendations – Project 1A**

The Study Recommendations for this project included parcels owned by Quadion on the west side of Wooddale Avenue only. The proposal included redeveloping the parcels in low, medium, and high density housing, with density increasing south to north. The total project costs are 106 percent of new market value. This project is considered potentially feasible for the following reasons:





**GEOGRAPHIC AREAS FOR FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS**

Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study  
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**Figure 18**

- Dedicate 100 percent of increment.
- Increase development density.
- Sale of TIF bonds.

B. PECHINEY

**Neighborhood Scenario – Project 2**

The neighborhood proposal includes redeveloping the Pechiney site to single-family housing. Total costs for this project would be 139 percent of new market value. Sources and uses show equity needed above industry standards, even with the provision of 100 percent of tax increment financing. If acquisition was used and demolition and related environmental costs were completely eliminated, the total new market value would still be in excess of total costs by about 20 percent. This project is not considered feasible project, due primarily to the following reasons:

- Costs in excess of new market value – acquisition, demolition and related environmental costs are equal to \$266,552 per unit. This does not include the cost of new construction.
- Single-family owner occupied housing (value will increase for homeowners, but initial property developer will not see long-term appreciation of investment).
- Not significant increment generation.
- Twenty-six percent equity required.

**Study Recommendations – Project 2A**

This scenario proposes to either leave the Pechiney site as industrial or reuse it for multi-family housing. If redeveloped, the total project costs would be 119 percent of new market value. If acquisition and demolition and related environmental costs were completely eliminated, the total new market value would then be in excess of total costs by about 21 percent. This project is not considered financially feasible at this time due to the following reasons:

- Costs in excess of new market value – acquisition, demolition and related environmental costs are equal to \$32,806 per unit.
- Not enough density.
- Not significant increment generation.

C. BURLINGTON / VFW / QUADION

**Neighborhood Scenario – Project 3**

The neighborhood proposal recommends office use on the Quadion parcels, continued retail use at the Burlington Coat Factor/ Micro Center site, and office or retail use at the VFW site. Total project costs would be 110 percent of new market value. This project is considered potentially feasible, depending upon the market for office/retail space at the time of the development. The project will likely require 100 percent of increment pledged to project and sale of TIF bonds.

### **Study Recommendations – Project 3A**

This scenario proposes a mix of retail and multi-family use adjacent to West 36th Street and high-density office use on the current Burlington Coat Factory/ Micro Center site and VFW property. Total project costs would be 98 percent of new market value. Twenty percent equity will be required which will reduce the amount of conventional financing. The project is likely feasible, depending upon the market for office/retail at the time of the development. The project will likely require 100 percent of increment pledged to project.

#### **D. NORTH OF 36TH AVENUE TO RAIL CORRIDOR**

##### **Neighborhood Scenario – Project 4**

This proposal includes office or retail use adjacent to West 36th Street with retail remaining on Hoigaard's site and industrial use in the center. The total costs for the project would be approximately 132 percent of new market value, with a twenty-seven percent equity requirement, even with a full increment pledge of more than \$2 million. The project is not considered feasible due to the following:

- Costs in excess of new market value – acquisition and related costs.
- Reduce acquisition costs by removing the transit parcels from the TIF district.
- Not enough density.
- High equity required.

##### **Study Recommendations – Project 4A**

A transit station/civic use is proposed in the northeast quadrant of Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street; a mix of office and multi-family housing is proposed adjacent to West 36th Street with Hoigaard's remaining as a retail use. Total project costs would be 105 percent of new market value. Twenty percent equity will reduce the amount of conventional financing. This project is potentially feasible due to the following:

- Dedication of 100 percent of increment.
- Increase in development density.
- Reduction of acquisition costs by removing the transit parcels from the TIF district.
- Sale of TIF bonds.

#### **E. NORTH OF RAIL CORRIDOR**

##### **Neighborhood Scenario – Project 5**

This scenario proposed transit oriented parking on the current site of McGarvey Coffee and the Soomek Rug site; Cityscape Apartments are to remain and the Dworsky properties are to stay retail uses. Total project costs would be 154 percent of new market value, with forty percent equity required. The project is not considered feasible for the following reasons:

- Costs in excess of new market value – acquisition and related costs.
- Not enough density - mostly tax exempt public parking.
- High equity required.

### **Study Recommendations – Project 5A**

Proposed is low-density office for the properties on either side of Wooddale Avenue adjacent to TH 7. Cityscape Apartments are to remain. In the event that the McGarvey Coffee site can be redeveloped, this would become multi-family high-density housing. Total project costs are 99 percent of new market value. Twenty percent equity will be required which will reduce the amount of conventional financing. The project is considered feasible due to the following:

- Dedication of 100 percent of increment.
- Sale of TIF bonds.

### **F. CONCLUSIONS**

Anticipated redevelopment project will likely require some form of public subsidy and city resources. Outside sources of funding, extraordinary reduction of anticipated acquisition costs or positive changes in the development market would reduce the need for such subsidy. Detached owner-occupied single-family housing is not a feasible redevelopment alternative given the assumptions contained in this report. Increasing the development density will increase the tax increment generation, which will assist in its feasibility depending on the extent such an increase is dedicated to the project. Unknown potential costs, such as underground environmental, relocation, and infrastructure costs will add further cost to the projects thereby making them even more challenging.

## 8.0 STUDY CONCLUSIONS

The *Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study* is intended to cast a long-term 30-year vision and integrate land use and transit guiding for both public and private sector activities. During the planning process, it became apparent that many factors will influence the exact timing and significance of changes brought to the Elmwood area. Therefore, conclusions reached by the study are intended to provide a framework for ongoing decision-making. This document should be consulted on a regular basis and updated as the policy and physical environment affecting the Elmwood Study Area continues to evolve.

### A. PROJECT TIMING, SEQUENCING AND PHASING

This study addresses a wide array of both public and private sector changes that are likely to occur within the next 30 years. It is impossible to accurately identify a schedule to guide these changes or to determine their exact phasing. However, the following table provides a logical sequencing for near-term, mid-term and long-term improvements. This sequence is subject to change with the timing of major influencing factors, such as development of transit within the Southwest Corridor, regional access improvements to TH 100, expansion of the Park Nicollet and Methodist medical facilities, and market and financial factors.

**Table 2: Elmwood Study Area Improvement Priorities**

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#### **Near-term Initiatives (0–10 Years)**

- Amend Official Map to protect new/realigned corridors, public space, such as the TH 7 South Frontage Road, Wooddale Avenue, Xenwood Avenue, and pocket plaza locations, and the transit facility.
- Amend Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Plan Map to respond to redevelopment initiatives and reflect study recommendations.
- Reguide the area proposed for the transit facility.
- Construction of new TH 100 Bridge (Wooddale Avenue extended), assuming feasibility study completion and City approval
- Reconstruction of Wooddale Avenue as a boulevard
- Quadion redevelopment (west of Wooddale Avenue)
- Park Nicollet/Methodist Hospital Campus expansions
- TH 7 Frontage Road realignment and reconstruction
- Redevelopment of Dworsky Family and Soomek Rug parcels

#### **Mid-term Initiatives (11–20 Years)**

- Development of LRT within the Southwest Corridor
- Construction of transit facility (northeast quadrant of Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street)
- Redevelopment of the Burlington Coat Factory/Micro Center parcel
- Reconstruction of West 36th Street and related streetscape improvements
- Construction of a new north-south street system (Xenwood Avenue extended)
- Initial implementation of district parking management

#### **Long-term Initiatives (21 Years and Beyond)**

- Transit oriented development (TOD) land use
- Infill and redevelopment of parcels north of West 36th Street
- Construction of Xenwood Avenue grade-separated rail crossing
- Redevelopment of McGarvey Coffee site for high-density multi-family use
- Construction of district parking structures
- Redevelopment of Pechiney Plastics as medium-density multi-family use

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Source: SRF Consulting Group, Inc.

## B. LAND USE GUIDE PLAN CHANGES

This study has examined current land use patterns, market opportunities and financial feasibility as the basis for making land use recommendations. Future steps may be taken by the City of St. Louis Park that would affect municipal land use guide plan changes and subsequent zoning changes to assist implementation of the recommended development. Land use guide plan changes could be enacted with input from parcel owners, tenants and the broader neighborhood. Table 3 identifies potential land use guide plan categories for each of the primary affected parcels within the study area. These recommendations are contingent upon actual development configuration. The timing of land use guide plan changes should be carefully reviewed as a tool to assist both the public and private sectors, and the neighborhoods in guiding redevelopment. Zoning changes should follow by complimenting any modifications to the guide plan.

**Table 3: Land Use Guide Plan Recommendations**

Property	Current Land Use	Current Zoning	Existing Guide Plan	Guide Plan Recommendations
Dworsky	Retail/ Commercial	Mixed Use	Civic Mixed Use	Office
Soomek Rug Site	Warehouse/ Showroom	General Industrial	Industrial	Office
McGarvey Coffee	Industrial	General Industrial	Industrial	High Density Residential
Hoigaard's	Retail/ Commercial	General Commercial	Commercial	Commercial
Douglas Corp	Industrial	Industrial Park	Industrial	Commercial OR Medium Density Residential
Pechiney Plastics	Industrial	General Industrial	Industrial	Industrial OR Medium Density Residential
Quadion Corp (east of Wooddale)	Office and Industrial	Industrial Park	Industrial	Commercial OR Commercial Mixed Use
Quadion Corp (west of Wooddale)	Office and Industrial	General Industrial	Industrial	High Density Res. (north portion); Medium and Low Density Res. (south portion)
VFW	Civic/ Institutional	Industrial Park	Industrial	Office
Burlington/ Micro Center	Retail/ Commercial	General Commercial	Commercial	Office

Source: SRF Consulting Group, Inc.

## C. TRANSPORTATION IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE LAND USE

The timing and character of potential transportation changes will have significant implications for actual development opportunities and land use character. Separate studies are currently examining the feasibility and physical character of LRT within the Southwest Corridor. The *Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study* has assumed that LRT will occur within the Southwest Corridor and that circulator bus routes would be used to support a station near the rail crossing on Wooddale Avenue. Implementation of LRT will have a positive affect on adjacent parcels by providing a catalyst for redevelopment and an opportunity for mixed land uses within a neighborhood environment. It is likely, however, that actual transit-oriented development influence will be realized only after transit has been developed.

Access changes to the TH 100 corridor by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) will also have implications for land use. Mn/DOT is currently planning for reconstruction of TH 100, north of West 36th Street within approximately the next ten years. Regional access changes could occur simultaneously or independently of TH 100 reconstruction. Access and capacity changes to and from TH 100 would allow better access for parcels abutting the highway, which would compliment their prominent visibility. Therefore, land use intensification will likely follow regional access improvements.

Other changes to the street system recommended by this study should result in better traffic flow, access and opportunities for bicycle and pedestrians, and discourage cut-through traffic. These street revisions should also incorporate urban design and streetscape measures to strengthen the neighborhood's image and identity. The timing of these street improvements should coincide with redevelopment of adjacent parcels.

#### D. PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE ROLES IN REDEVELOPMENT

Changes to Elmwood land use, transit and transportation elements will require both public and private sector initiatives. The initiatives will occur on an incremental basis, as public funding, market opportunities and financing become available. LRT and regional highway access can be used as a catalyst to stimulate private redevelopment. Some public assistance may be required to prepare parcels for redevelopment. The current St. Louis Park City Council has established a position of accommodating—rather than prompting—redevelopment within the Elmwood Area. This position would suggest that improvements within the public realm should compliment and support private sector reinvestment as it occurs on a phased basis.

Reinvestment by the private sector will occur as market and financial opportunities present themselves. It is likely that increasing land values may help stimulate land use changes. In addition, changing business conditions, such as those on Quadion, Dworsky and Soomek Rug parcels, will encourage redevelopment.

Since future changes within the Elmwood Study Area will be based upon a balance of public and private sector initiatives, ongoing communication between the City, County, property owners, business tenants and neighborhood residents must continue as a means of seeking the best interest of all parties involved.