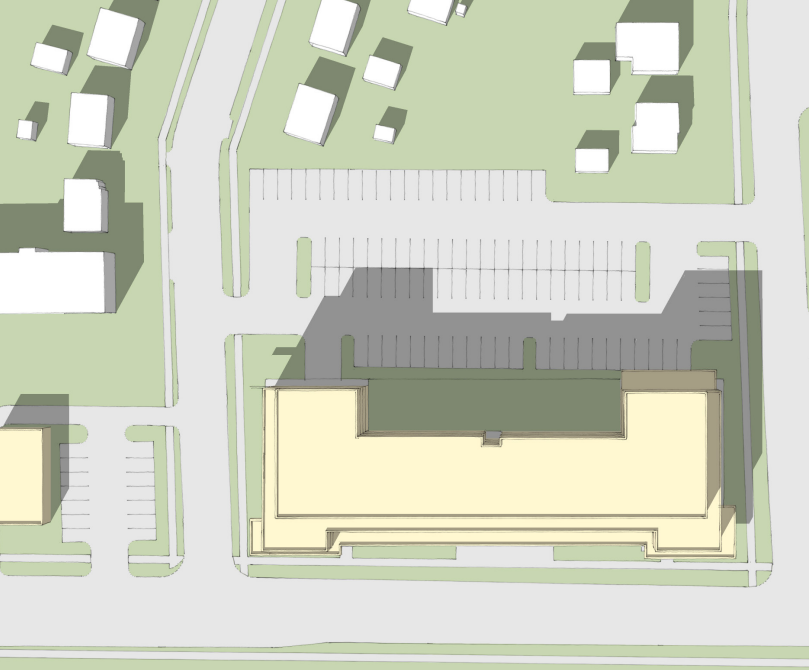
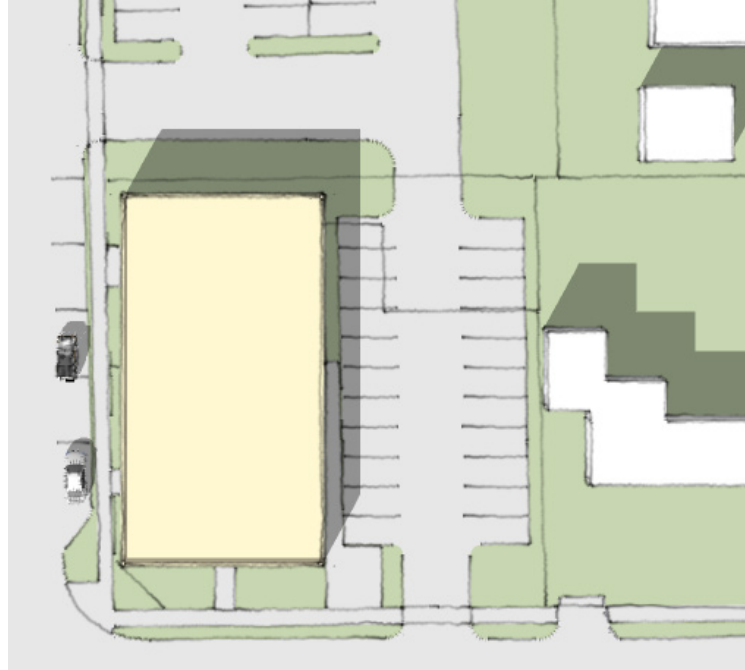
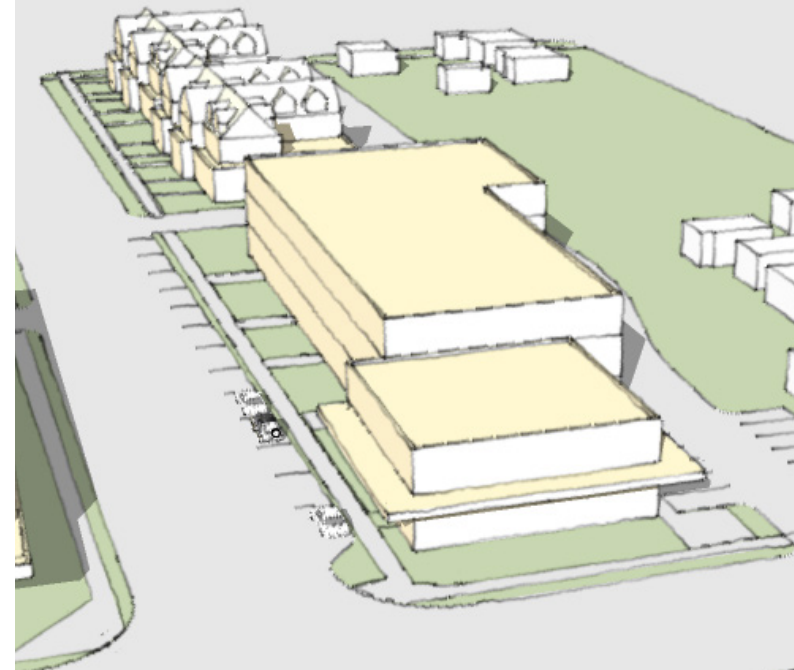
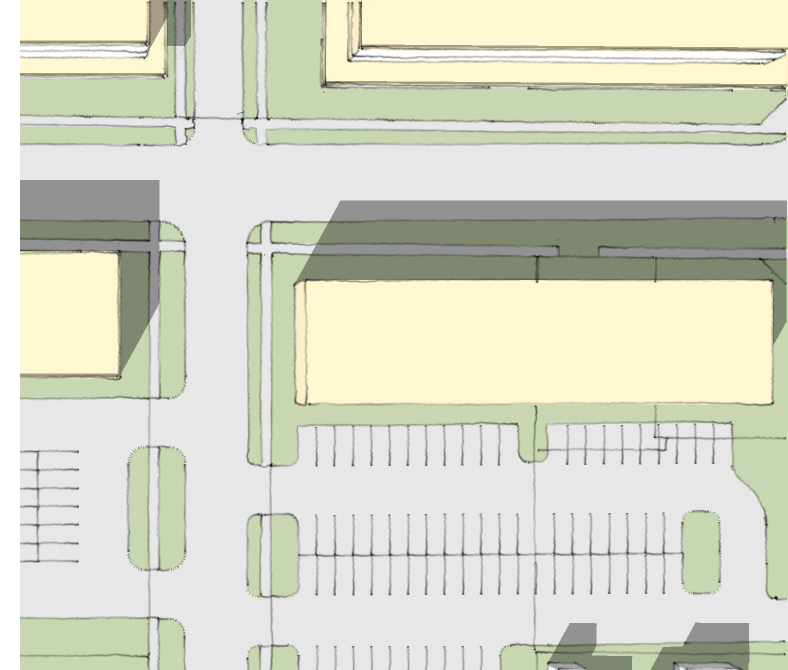
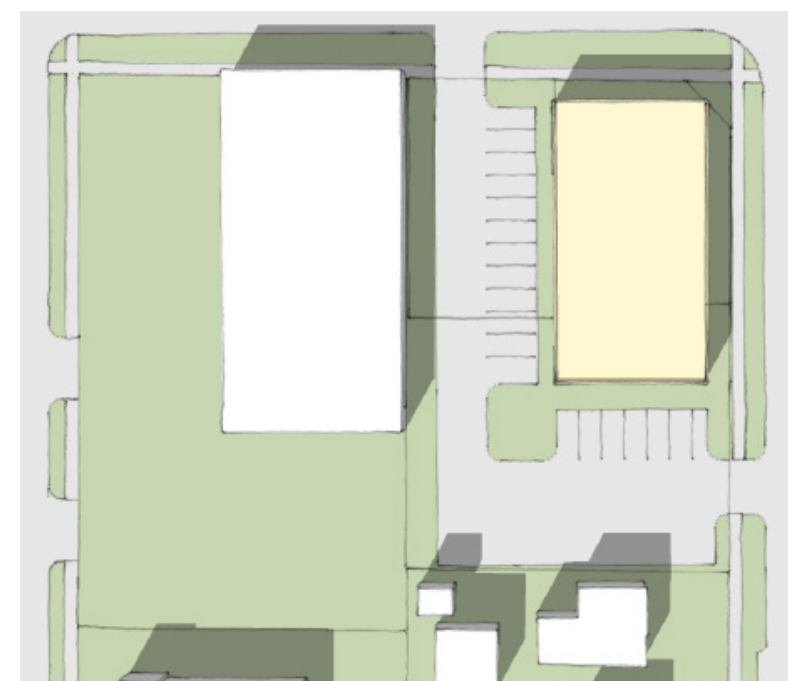
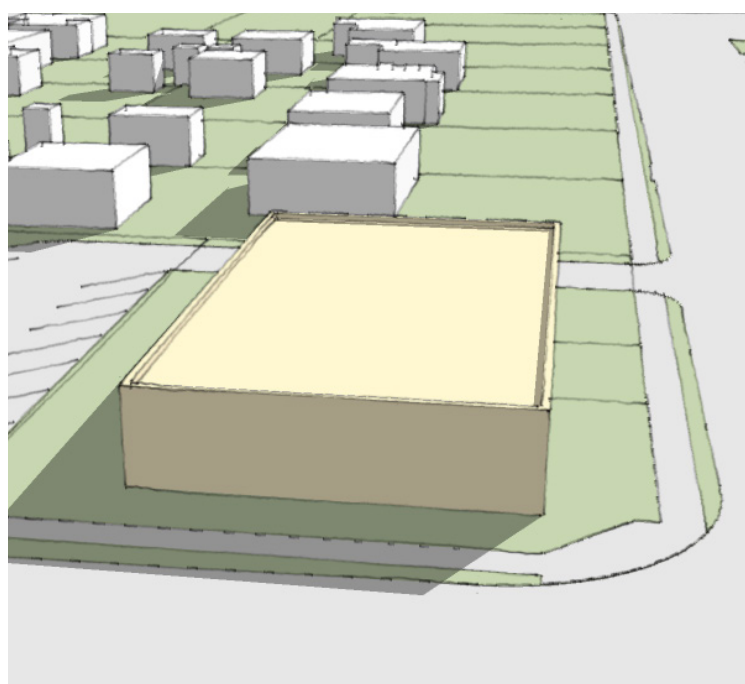
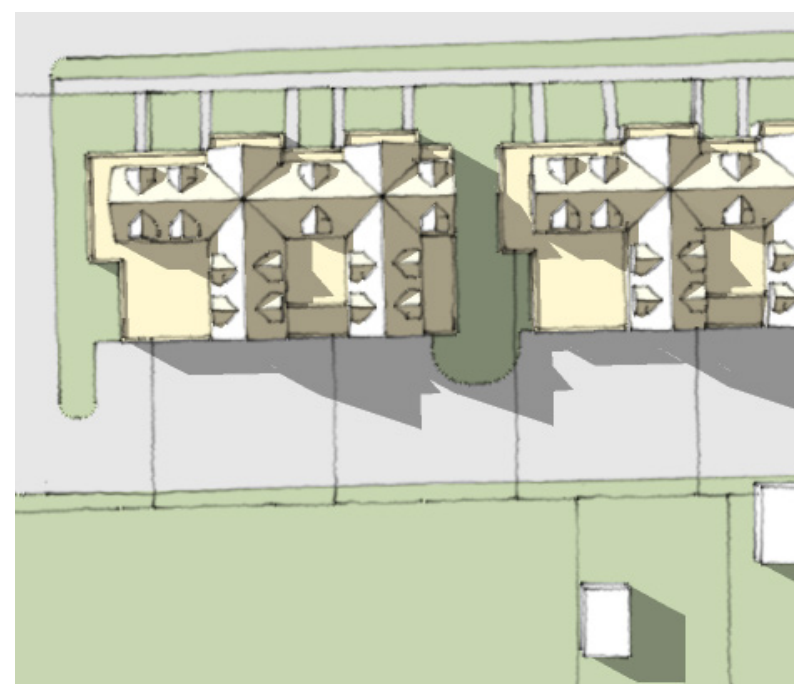
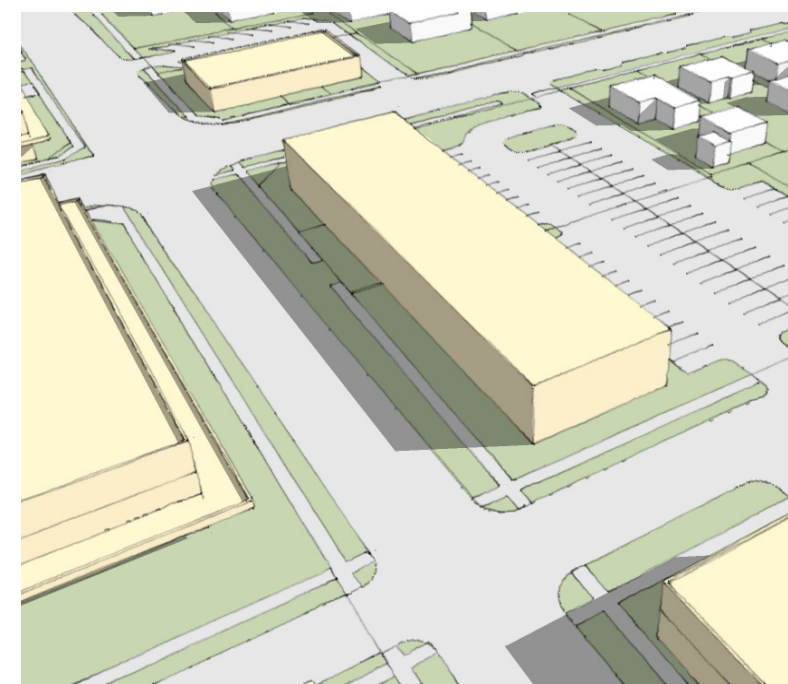




The logo for St. Louis Park, Minnesota. It features a stylized graphic of three parallel, slanted blue lines to the left of the text "St. Louis Park" in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font. Below "St. Louis Park" is the word "MINNESOTA" in a smaller, blue, all-caps sans-serif font.

St. Louis Park

MINNESOTA



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Plan completed January 24, 2020

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SMALL AREA PLAN SUMMARY

The Texa-Tonka neighborhood commercial node has served the surrounding neighborhood for many years. Past vacancies and general disinvestment over the past few decades have led to greater interest in how this node may improve in the future, serving local residents and others that come to the area for specific reasons. This Small Area Plan is intended to help the public and private sectors anticipate and effectively manage future changes within Texa-Tonka today and into the future. Specifically, the plan:

- describes existing demographic, market and physical conditions
- identifies community concerns and preferences
- provides illustrated plans, images and descriptions for redevelopment and building and site renovation
- provides design guidelines for preserving and strengthening Texa-Tonka’s distinct mid-century modern design aesthetic
- an understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with potential intersection improvements
- recommendations for enhancing and enlivening sidewalks, parking lots, and building sites

This Small Area Plan was prepared using an inclusive, interactive program of community engagement over an eight-month period with assistance from an 11 member citizens committee, online community surveys, public workshops, pop-up meetings, a project web site, and guidance from City staff. Community concerns revolved around 4 key themes: existing buildings and parking areas, new buildings and parking areas, variety of uses, and sidewalks, streets, and gathering.

Key Themes from Engagement

Theme	Summary
 Existing Buildings and Parking Areas	Numerous vacancies - empty spaces Lack of landscaping
 New Building and Parking Areas	Preference for 1-3 stories Appreciation and preference for mid-century modern architectural style
 Variety of Uses	Preference for locally owned, operated businesses Additional cafes, restaurants, coffee shop
 Sidewalks, Streets, + Gathering	Minnetonka Blvd crosswalks should be improved / enhanced Desire for streetscape enhancement: trees, furnishings and lighting

Samples of key comments provided by the public

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC



In-person events allowed the public to share their experiences and ideas for improving the Texa-Tonka area



Online survey participants provided their ideas on future development

OVER 2,800



Project Advisory Committee Meetings were hosted to help guide the Small Area Plan process

3



A comprehensive vision statement describing Texa-Tonka’s successful revitalization was prepared using input from the first community survey and interactive workshop.

The Texa-Tonka community members developed a vision for a more vibrant commercial node with useful, locally-owned shops and restaurants accessible from a network of landscaped sidewalks and safe roadway crossings.

The Plan organizes recommendations for revitalization and enhancement into **THREE KEY AREAS:**

- 

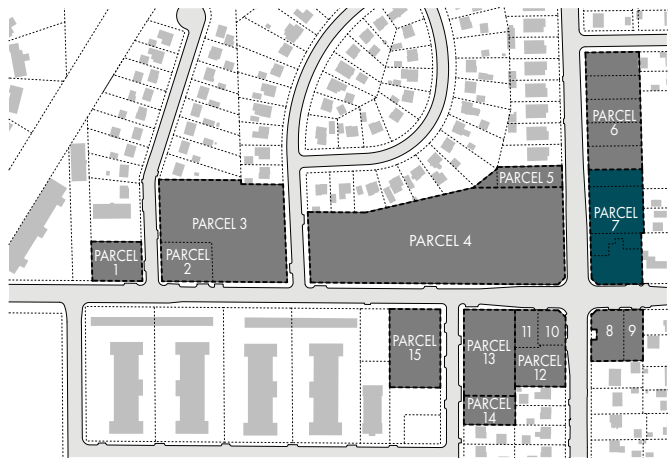
Revitalization and Redevelopment, which focuses on the massing and siting of new buildings and the renovation and reuse of existing buildings, vacant and or underutilized sites, and design.
- 

Greening and Gathering, which describes locations and designs concepts for informal enhancement and activation of sidewalks, bus stops, cross walks and parking areas.
- 

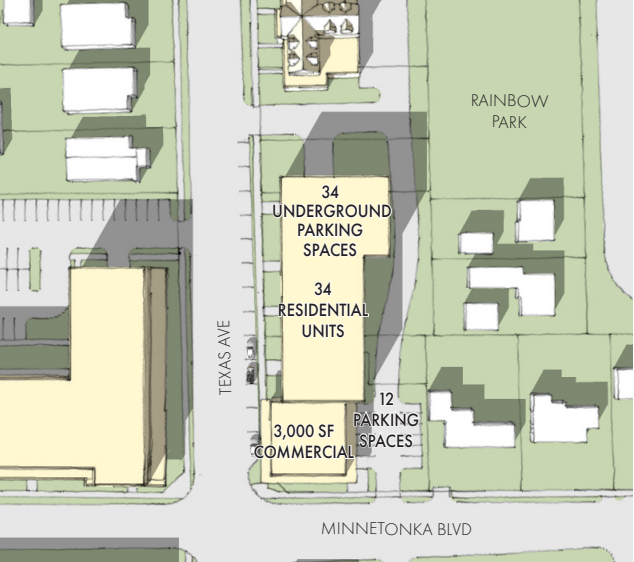
Movement and Circulation, which includes an analysis of future traffic operations, consolidation of multimodal site access and relocation of parking resources.

Revitalization + Redevelopment

Community members made it clear throughout the process of this Plan that redevelopment should be incremental, gradual, and focused on creating a place that serves the local community. Therefore, this Plan recommends respecting the existing parcel and platting pattern. Doing so will allow smaller buildings and smaller spaces to enhance Texa-Tonka area as it evolves. Instead of a single master plan that creates uniformity, consistency and larger gathering places, this Plan recommends parcels develop on their own or aggregated in a limited manner, each with its own opportunities for landscaped, semi-public space.



C-2 General Commercial Option 2 potential for Parcel 7, northeast corner of Texas Ave and Minnetonka Blvd



Plan View 2-story commercial/3-story residential and surface



REVITALIZATION + REDEVELOPMENT - DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Plan provides illustrative design options for redeveloping parcels balancing community preferences with current zoning and market research.

Building Form + Character

Intent

Buildings in Texa-Tonka should vary in scale and character while maintaining a contemporary and modern approach that creates an overall human scaled and pedestrian friendly environment – both on site and in the public realm.



Building Facade Design

Intent

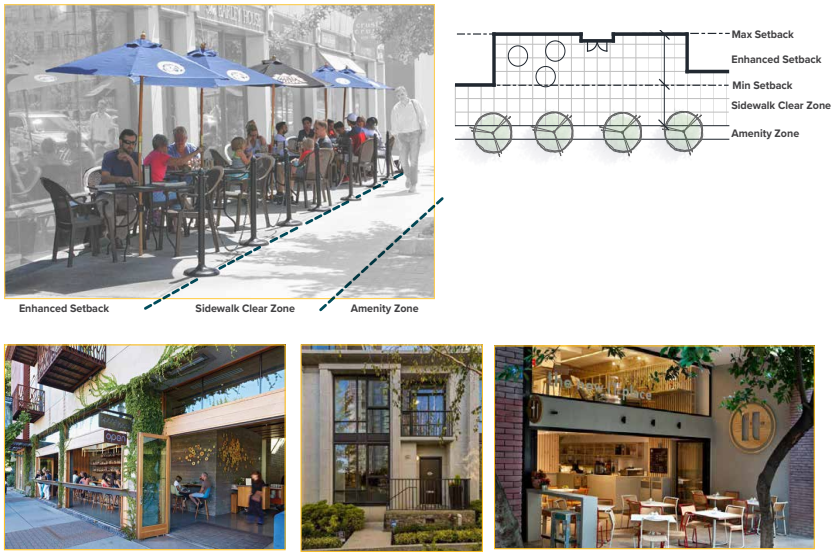
Building façade design in the district should define a unique character for the Texa-Tonka neighborhood. Buildings should incorporate changes in plane, materials, texture, and color to create visual interest and contribute to a sense of liveliness on the street.



Street Frontage

Intent

The manner in which buildings address the sidewalk and street edge has a strong bearing on the comfort of the public realm. Buildings close to the edge of the sidewalk help create a well-defined public realm. Therefore, buildings within Texa-Tonka are encouraged to relate closely to the sidewalk while also making room on their site for usable pedestrian areas.



Site Design

Intent

Landscaping, orientation, and access to outdoor spaces is fundamental to improving the character and quality of the public realm within the Texa-Tonka district. Therefore, landscaping and outdoor amenities should be designed to enhance the comfort, safety, walkability, and human scale within Texa-Tonka to create an enjoyable environment.

Plant Species
Boulevards are tough sites known for dry, poor soil and salt from the winter. The following plants have the ability to live and flourish in these difficult urban conditions:

- Yarrow (Achillea)
- Aster
- Milkweed (Asclepias) *
- Coneflower (Echinacea)
- Daylily (Hemerocallis)
- Hosta
- Bearded Iris
- Blazing Star (Liatris)
- Bee Balm / Bergamot (Monarda) *
- Catmint (Nepeta)
- Russian Sage (Perovskia atriplicifolia)
- Ribbon Grass (Phalaris arundinacea)
- Garden Phlox (Phlox paniculata) *
- Daisy (Rudbeckia fulgida)
- Salvia
- Sedum
- Lamb's Ear (Stachys byzantina)
- Speedwell (Veronica)

Snapshots of design guidelines shown on the following pages

GREENING AND GATHERING

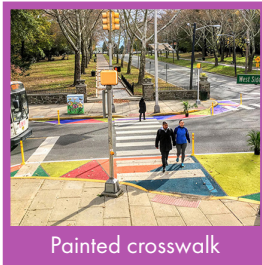
A range of community-led greening and gathering enhancement opportunities are described in the Plan.



Outdoor eating space



Outdoor seating



Painted crosswalk



Painted crosswalk



Planters



Parklet



Farmers Market



Temporary playground

Parking lot amenity

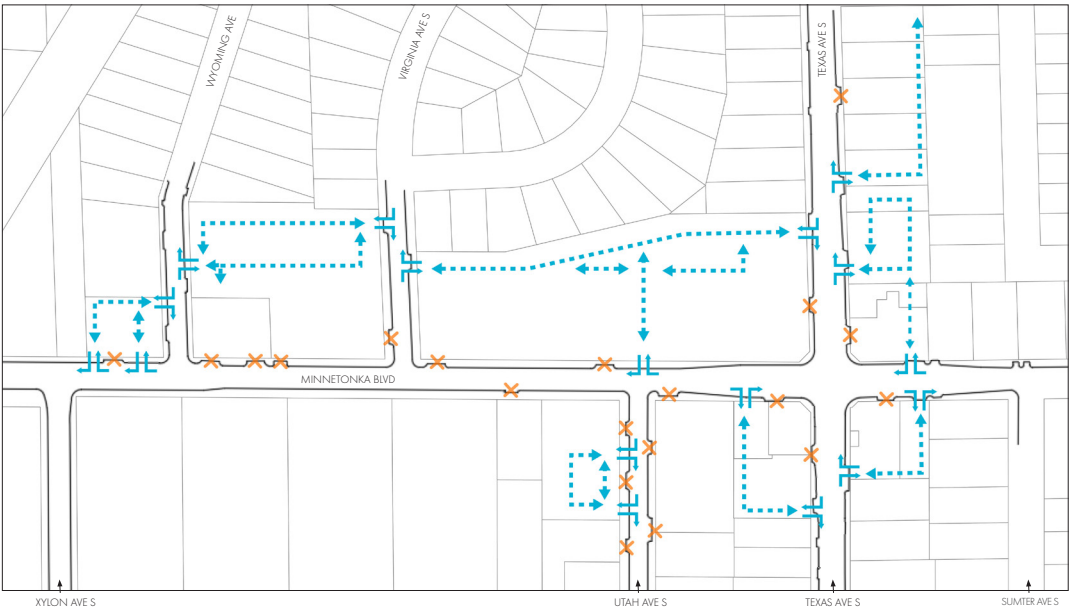
Street amenity

Sidewalk amenity

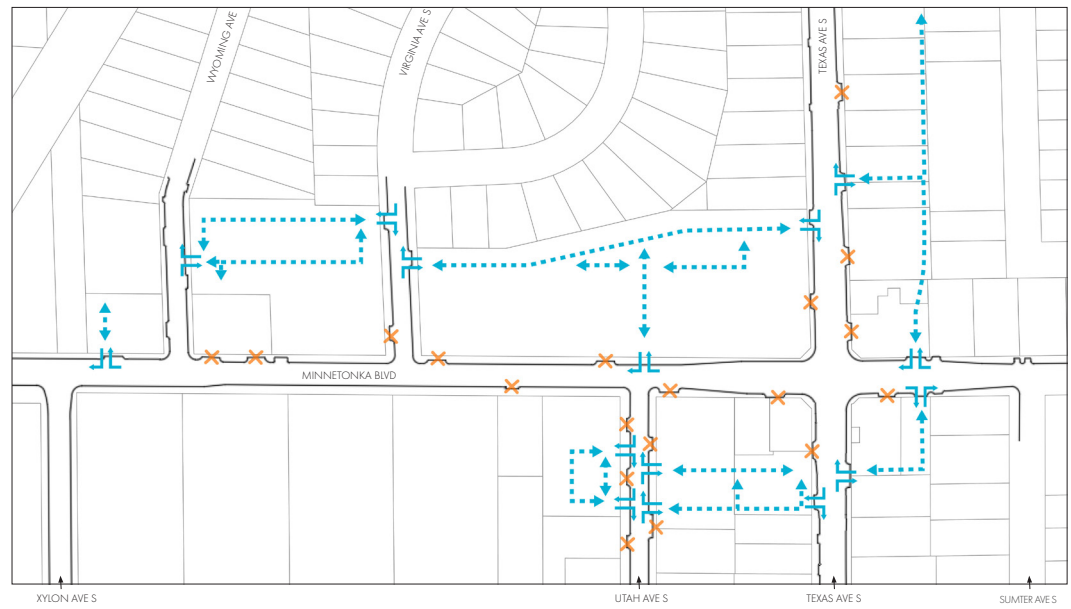
Event/activity

MOVEMENT AND CIRCULATION

As redevelopment and revitalization proceed, site access can be consolidated, improving wayfinding and safety. Discussions with business owners and community members indicated there is an adequate supply of parking within Texa-Tonka and that additional parking is currently not required. Therefore this Plan recommends maintaining a similar balance between commercial development and parking supply into the future.



Proposed Option 1



Proposed Option 2

Legend

- Proposed Circulation
- Curb Cut
- Removed Curb Cut

Reduction in curb cuts along Minnetonka Blvd and Texas Ave S can improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety

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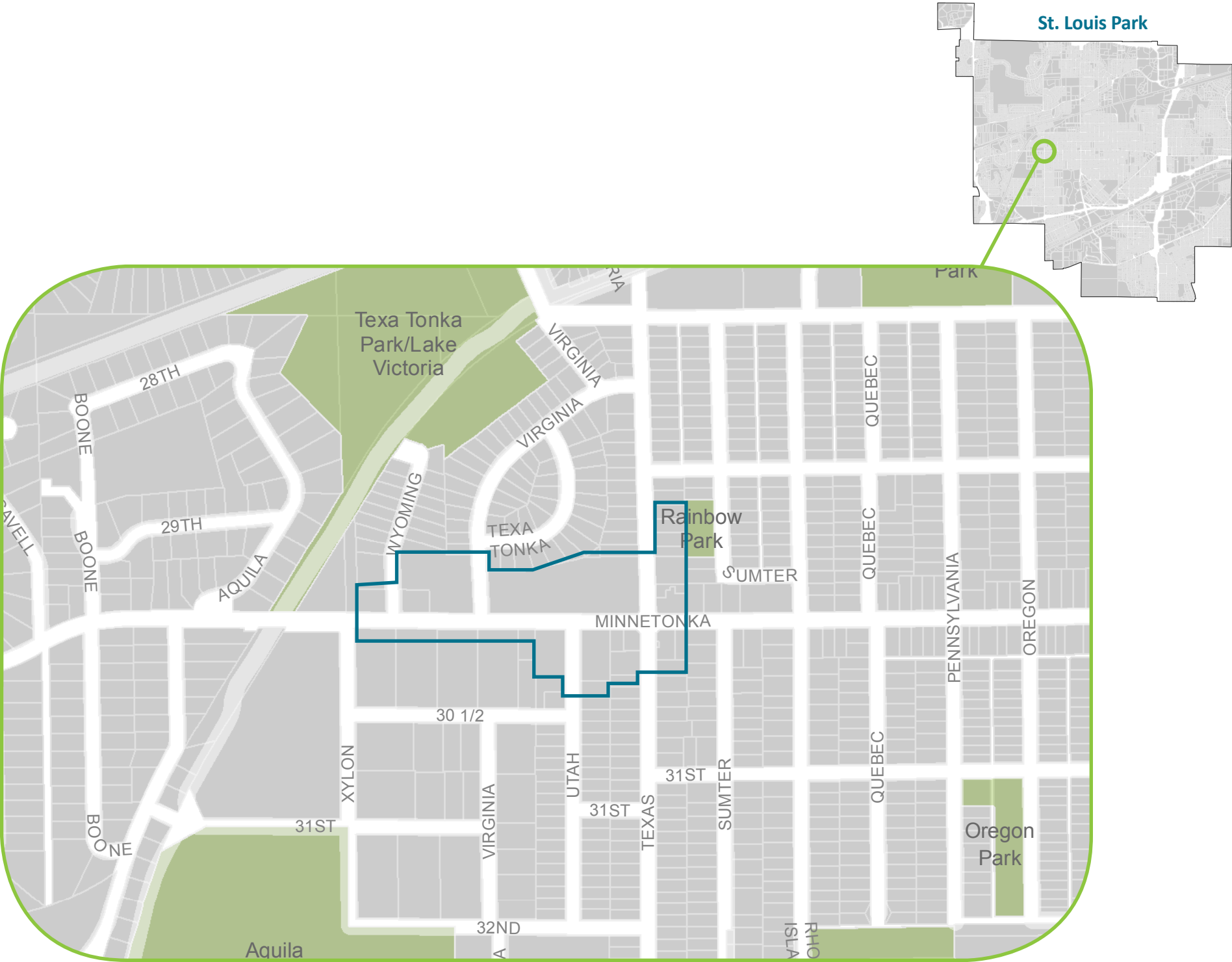


CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

WHY PREPARE A SMALL AREA PLAN?
INFLUENTIAL PLANS, STUDIES, + REGULATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Texa-Tonka neighborhood commercial node is centrally located within the city along Minnetonka Boulevard / County Road 5 between Texas Avenue and Xylon Avenue. While attributed to the city’s Texa-Tonka neighborhood, the node sits at the northern edge of the Aquila and Oak Hill Neighborhoods and routinely serves residents within those and other adjacent neighborhoods.



Texa-Tonka Small Area Plan Project Area

WHY PREPARE A SMALL AREA PLAN?

This Small Area Plan is intended to help the public and private sectors anticipate and effectively manage future changes within the Texa-Tonka neighborhood commercial node. Specifically, the plan:

- describes existing demographic, market, and physical conditions
- identifies community concerns and preferences
- provides illustrated plans, images and descriptions for redevelopment and building and site renovation
- provides design guidelines for preserving and strengthening Texa-Tonka's distinct mid-century modern design aesthetic
- establishes an understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with potential intersection improvements
- recommendations for enhancing and enlivening sidewalks, parking lots, and building sites

INFLUENTIAL PLANS, STUDIES, AND REGULATIONS

This plan is informed and underpinned by several existing plans, studies and regulations including:

- 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Plans by Neighborhood, 2018
- St. Louis Park Vision 3.0, 2017
- Connect the Park Sidewalks, Trails and Bikeways, 2018
- Minnetonka Blvd / County Road 5 Design Plan, 2008
- St. Louis Park Zoning Code, 2019



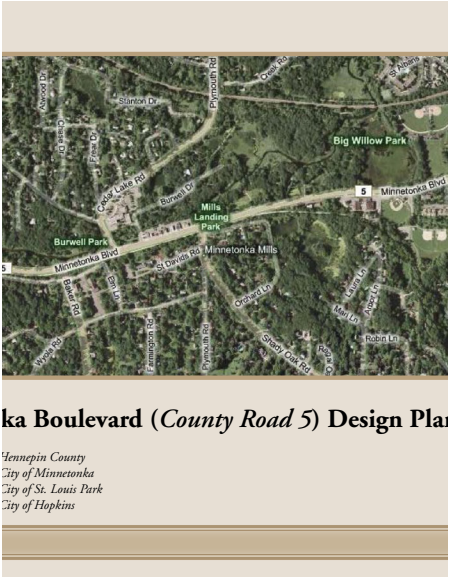
Vision 3.0

This project focused on engaging local stakeholders to identify community needs and aspirations. Key themes from engagement included: diverse and affordable housing, transportation and mobility, environmental stewardship, and inclusion and equity.



2040 Comprehensive Plan

The Plan establishes the City’s goals and guidelines for future development. It also sets expectations for neighborhood redevelopment to become more attractive for residents, investors, and business and property owners.



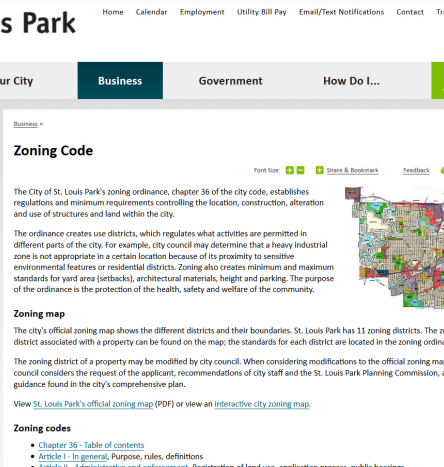
Minnetonka Blvd / County Road 5 Design Plan

This Design Plan evaluated amenities, streetscaping, and traffic conditions along Minnetonka Blvd. The Plan outlines recommendations to improve walking and biking mobility, streetscaping, and traffic safety.



Plan by Neighborhood

This Project provides recommendations for development and growth in each city neighborhood. The Plan highlights the prioritization of mixed-use development in the Texa-Tonka area.



City Zoning Ordinances

Zoning ordinances guide the way neighborhoods can redevelop and invest. Zoning ordinances define specific types of housing and commercial uses that are allowed and dictate how buildings are built on site.



CHAPTER 2 YESTERDAY AND TODAY

1950'S-60'S COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
EXISTING CONDITIONS

1950's-60's COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Texa-Tonka neighborhood commercial node derives its name from Texa-Tonka Shopping Center which was built by St. Louis Park resident Adolph “Bob” Fine. According to information posted to the St. Louis Park Historical Society’s web site, the first of two sections of the shopping center opened in 1951 and was expanded to its present size (approx.. 56,000 SF) in 1959. The wide of variety of shops including Penny’s Grocery, Ben Franklin 5 and 10 and Our Own Hardware along with ample free parking made the center a success with shoppers from Minneapolis to Minnetonka. Additional commercial properties were built along Minnetonka Boulevard and Texas Avenue through the 1960’s which make up the buildings under consideration of this Small Area Plan. As was common for the time period, buildings were set back from the street to allow for surface parking, while loading was located to the back along a service alley.

Today, Texa-Tonka continues serve an important neighborhood commercial function offering a variety of goods, services and entertainment options. Additionally, features such as the Cedar Lake Regional Trail, Aquila Park, Aquila Elementary School and Minnetonka Boulevard bike lanes strengthen the area’s accessibility and quality of life. As a part of this Small Area Plan, a targeted assessment of the Texa-Tonka area’s social, economic, and physical characteristics was conducted.



Historic photographs of Texa-Tonka’s commerce. Photos by Emory Anderson

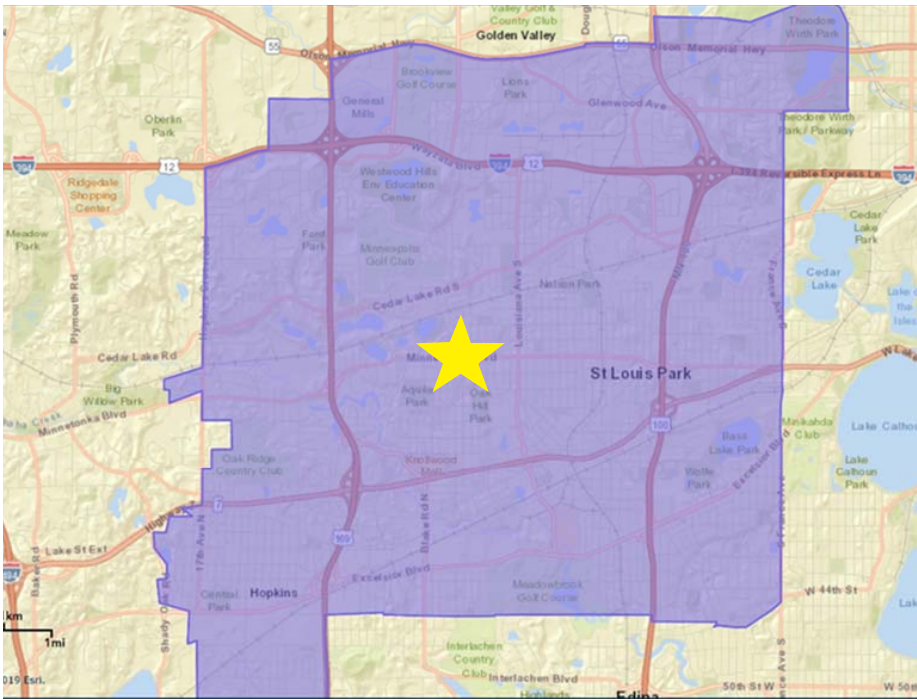


Figure 3.1. Map showing the Primary Map Area (PMA)

Future Growth

The Texa-Tonka commercial node has served the surrounding neighborhood for many years. Past vacancies and general disinvestment over the past few decades have led to greater interest in how this node may improve in the future, serving local residents and others that come to the area for specific reasons. Texa-Tonka’s current mix of specialty and neighborhood-oriented businesses reflects the ability of local businesses to maintain a niche in a rapidly changing retail environment. New ownership of the shopping center with a long-term focus on retail is anticipated to reduce turnover and support targeted reinvestment.

For this Small Area Planning effort Maxfield Research was engaged to provide insights into the current market and growth potential over the coming decade. As a part of this work a Primary Market Area (PMA) was established to provide relevant data. The PMA was identified as an aggregation of census tracts which includes all of St. Louis Park in addition to portions of the adjacent communities of Minnetonka, Golden Valley and Hopkins, and includes data evaluated from within the identified geographic boundaries (Figure 3.1).

Texa-Tonka’s capture rates of projected growth within the PMA were calculated for four market sectors:

- residential ownership at 5%,
- residential rental at 10%,
- commercial at 3%
- office at 2%

This translates into future market demand over the coming decade for:

- new, additional retail space: 11,000 and 18,000 square feet
- new, additional office space: 7,000 square feet
- new, additional rental apartments: 278 dwelling
- new, additional single family, for sale housing: 93 dwellings
- new, additional multi-family, for sale housing: 173 dwellings

It’s most likely that medium to high-density multifamily, ownership and rental products would be developed in the node as the area lacks suitable space for single-family housing. This new housing would be mixed with other commercial uses to create a more pedestrian-oriented environment while increasing the potential customer base to area businesses. Some businesses may decide to upgrade or relocate and depending on redevelopment opportunities, new businesses may enter to capture additional demand. (A complete summary of the market assessment is provided in the Appendix).

In assessing population characteristics and growth potential for Texa-Tonka the market study looked closely at households within the PMA. Households represent occupied housing units and household growth trends are a good indicator of housing demand as households represent occupied dwelling units. Retail demand is also, to a degree, predicated on the spending patterns of households versus individuals. 2030 projections indicate that population and households will continue to grow in the Primary Market Area and that growth will occur at an accelerating rate from the previous decade:

- 10.1% growth for households
- 10.4% growth for population

YESTERDAY AND TODAY EXISTING CONDITIONS

Over the next five years, the number of people age 65 to 74 and 75 to 84 are projected to exhibit the highest increases, growing by 15.1% and 31.7%, respectively.

Medium and high-density housing development activity in the PMA has the ability to attract more households in the young to mid-age years, ages 25 to 44, as well as the age groups 55 to 74, which would also bolster retail demand.

In addition to growth projections within the PMA, population, age and household income characteristics were extracted from aggregating census tracts specifically for the Texa-Tonka project area (Figure 3.2). This information was compared with characteristics for Saint Louis Park as a whole to provide a snapshot of current project area demographics (Figure 3.3).

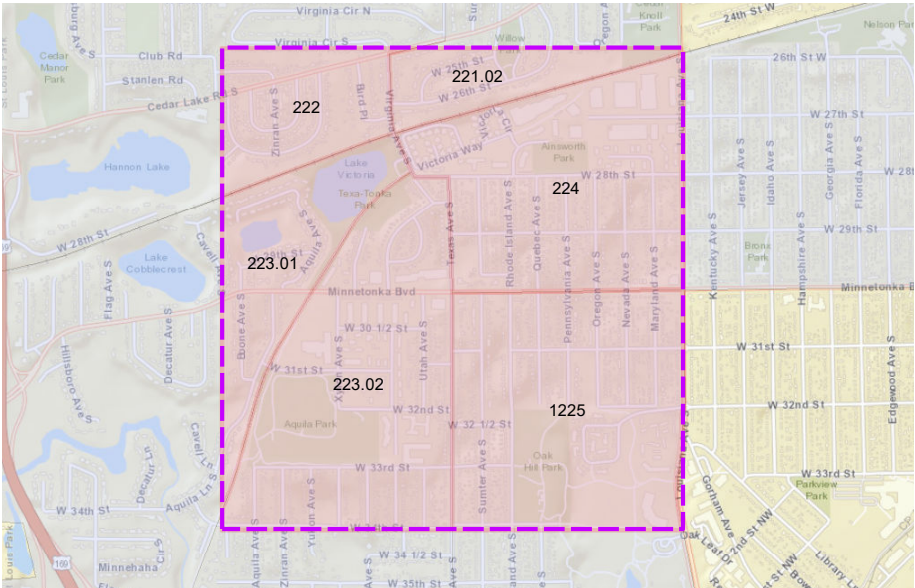
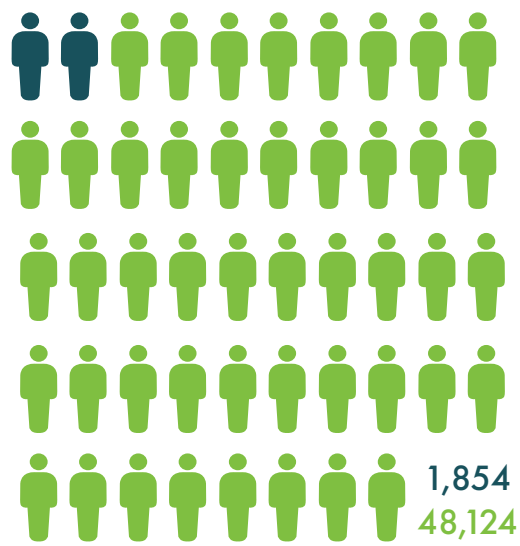
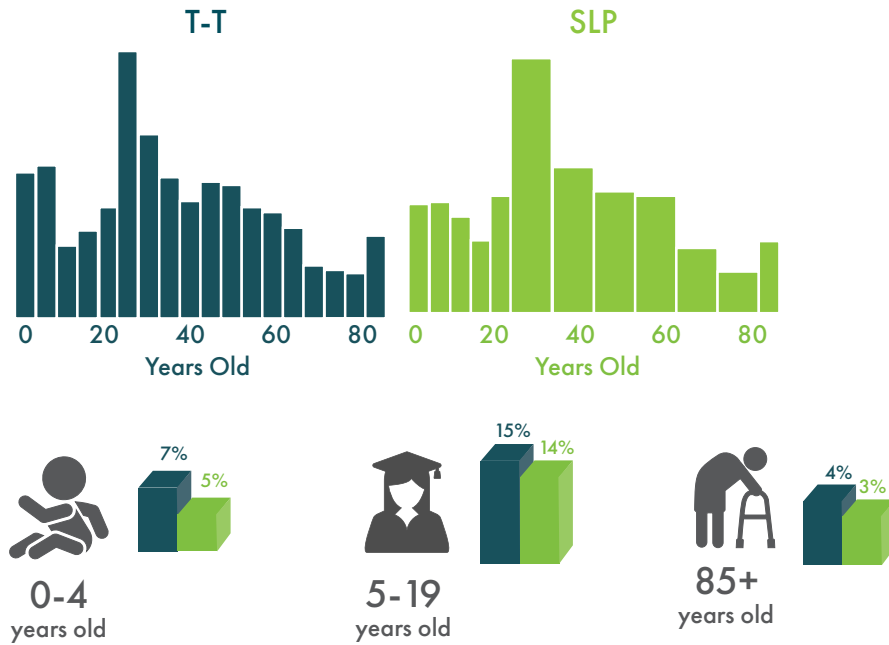
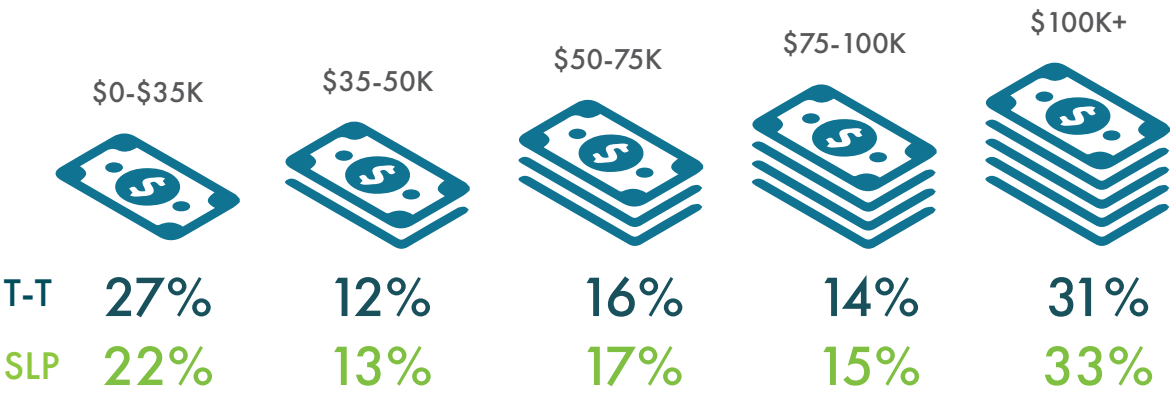


Figure 3.2. Image shows how Census tracts within the Texa-Tonka project area were used to extrapolate demographic data

POPULATION



HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Texa-Tonka has a higher percentage of low income households (0-\$35,000) and lower percentage of high earners (\$100,000+)

Figure 3.3. Texa-Tonka’s age, population, and household income distribution compared to the City of St. Louis Park. Texa-Tonka information is in dark blue and St. Louis Park information is in light green

Movement and Parking

The project area is well served by a network of streets, sidewalks, and trails.

A walkshed map (Figure 3.4) illustrates the variety of parks accessible within a 5 and 10 minute walk. Additionally, the Shoppes at Knollwood regional shopping mall, which includes a large Cub Foods grocery store, are less than 20 minute walk or 10 minute bike trip from the Texa-Tonka neighborhood commercial node.



Photo of resident running on Minnetonka Boulevard

WALKING AROUND

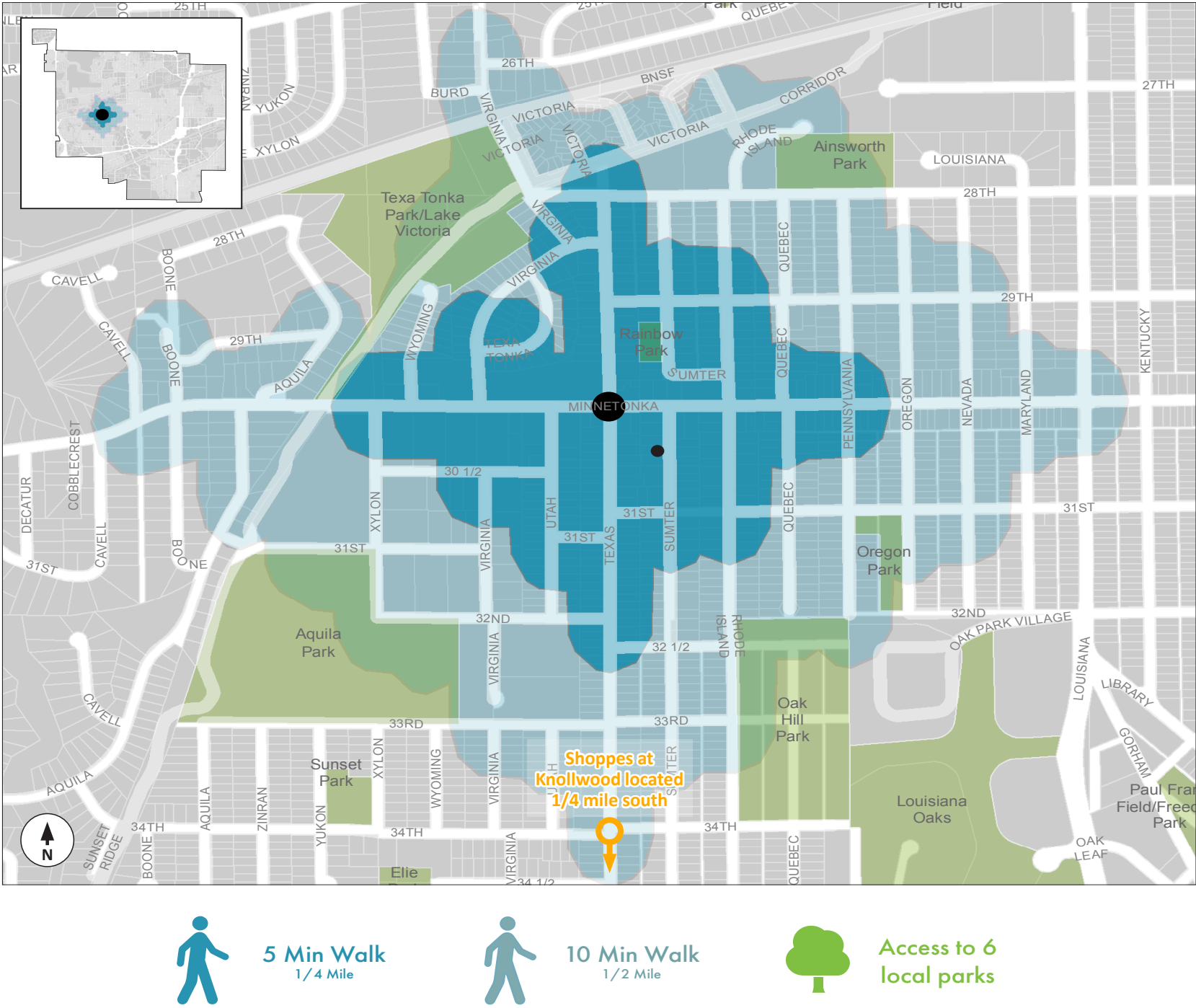


Figure 3.4

YESTERDAY AND TODAY EXISTING CONDITIONS

While the City continues to fill gaps in the sidewalk system along local streets in the project area, the east side of Xylon Avenue South remains unserved. Walkability and connectivity within the project area (Figure 3.5) is compromised due to the prevalence of driveways, surface parking lots, limited crosswalks, lack of amenities and embankments / steep slopes.



Photo of asphalt walkway along Minnetonka Blvd that needs maintenance and updating to be more welcoming

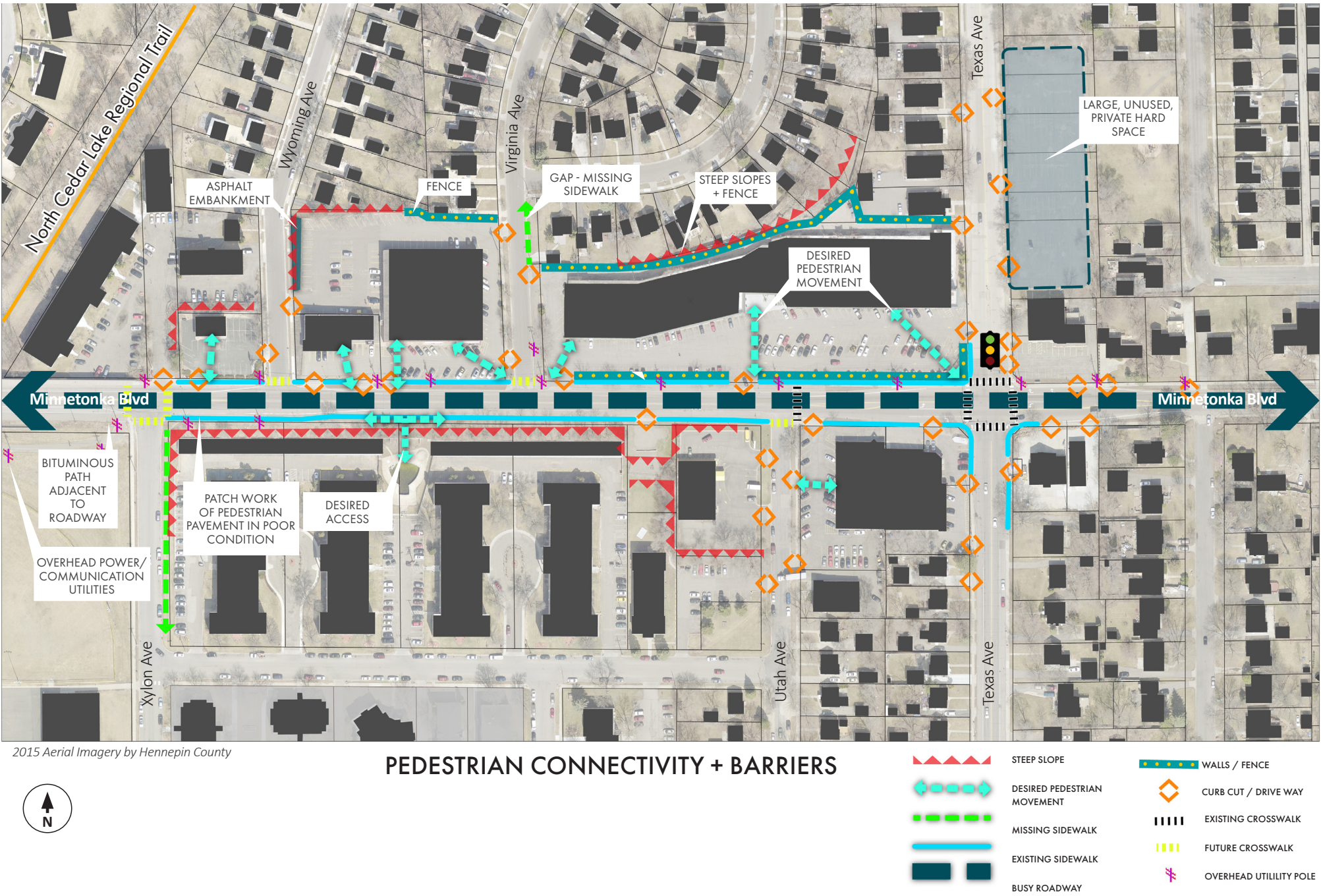


Figure 3.5

Existing sidewalks within Texa-Tonka provide basic services but lack pedestrian amenities such as benches or street trees. Many of the areas’ sidewalks interface with private parking lots many of which lack landscaping as currently required for new commercial facilities. (Figures 3.6 and 3.7)



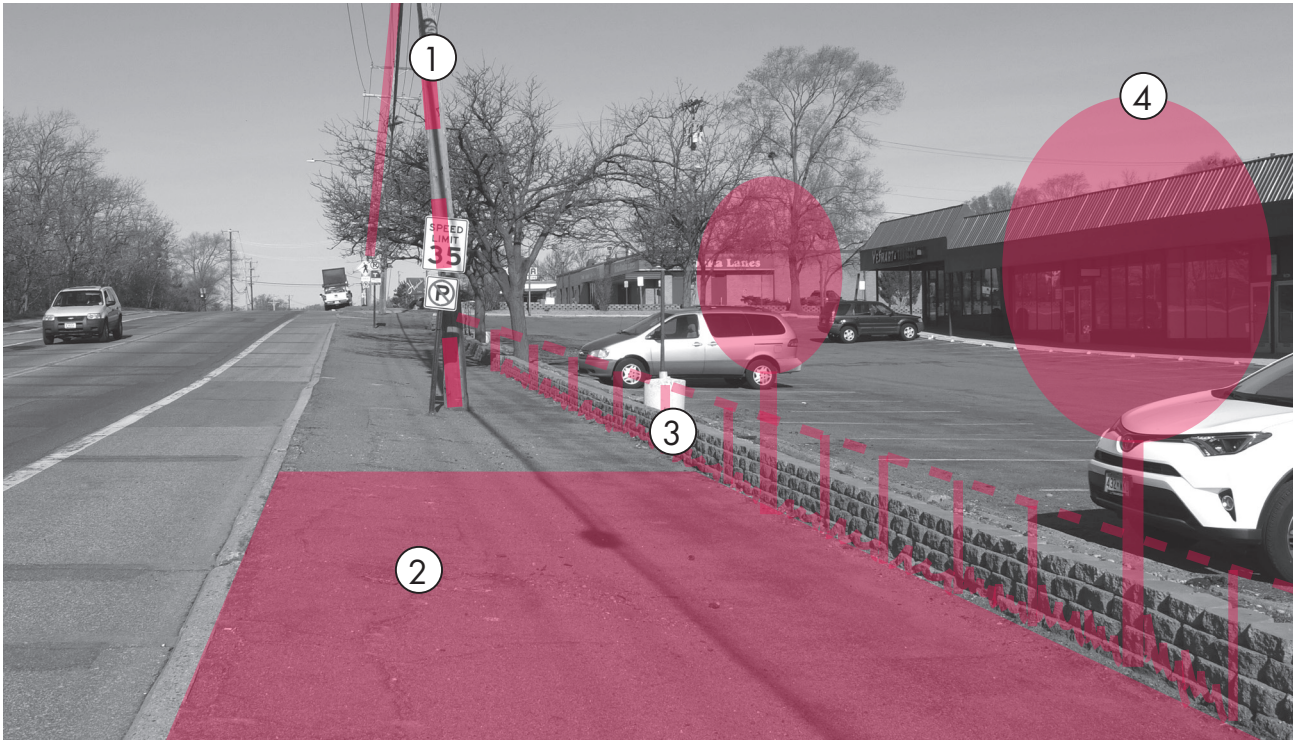
ISSUES - Challenging Pedestrian Crossing Environment

1.

Long crossing distances create stressful environments for pedestrians and increase risk of accidents
2.

Unmarked crossing areas reduce awareness of pedestrians for drivers

Figure 3.6



ISSUES - Utilitarian Public Realm and Off-Street Parking

1.

Overhead utility lines and poles are visually unappealing and restrict tree planting
2.

Bituminous walkway is unattractive, looks like roadway, is hot in summer. The coarse texture and uneven surface is difficult for seniors and people with disabilities
3.

Open, unscreened parking lots are unattractive and detract from district character and experience
4.

Lack of plantings creates a harsh environment, contributes to rain water runoff and detracts from urban character and experience

Figure 3.7

BIKES + LRT

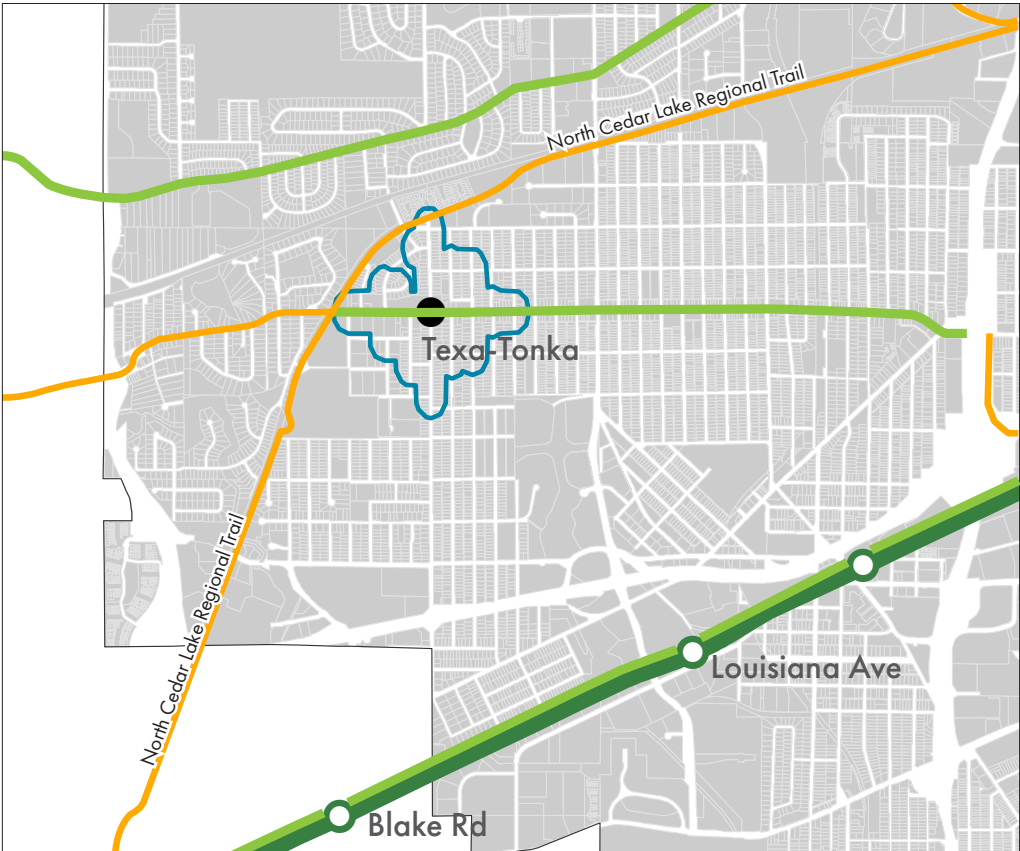


Figure 3.8

Striped bike lanes are provided through the project area along Minnetonka Boulevard and Texas Avenue. The North Cedar Lake Regional Trail provides recreational and commuter biking facilities with connections to Minneapolis and to the north east and connections to multiple regional trails to the south west (Figure 3.8).

According to 2017 data from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the major roadways in the Texa-Tonka District (i.e. Minnetonka Boulevard and Texas Avenue) had an average of 14,100 vehicle trips per day (2016) on Minnetonka Boulevard and 8,200 vehicle trips per day (2013) on Texas Avenue, south of the Boulevard and 4,900 trips per day north (2013). The much smaller number of trips per day north of the intersection reflect an interrupted street pattern.

Current transit service is provided by Express Route 667 and Route 17. The area will be within 2 miles of the Green Line LRT’s new Louisiana Avenue and Blake Road stations by around 2023 (Figure 3.9).

PUBLIC TRANSIT

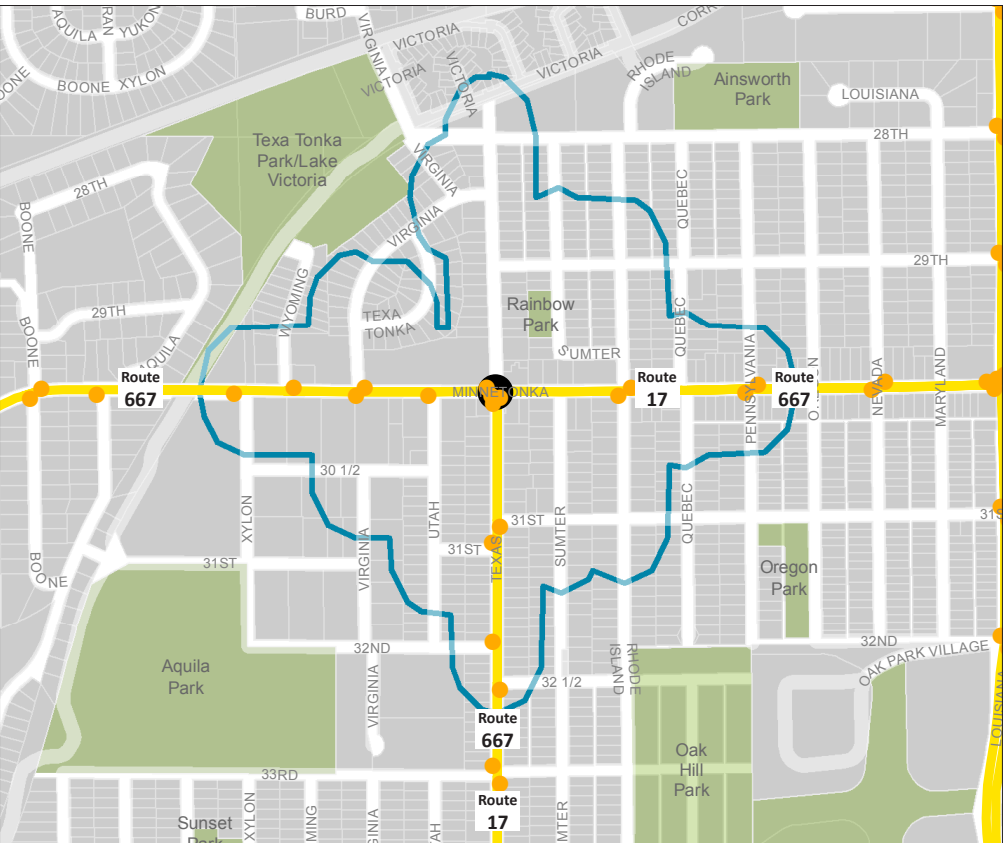


Figure 3.9.

Express Route 667

Serving Minnetonka, Saint Louis Park and Minneapolis

Eastbound service in the AM and Westbound service in the PM

15 min Frequency

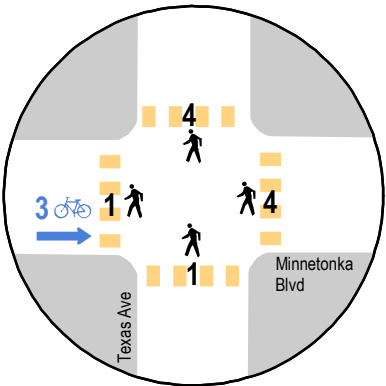
— 5 Min Walk Boundary
— Fixed Transit Routes
● Fixed Transit Stops



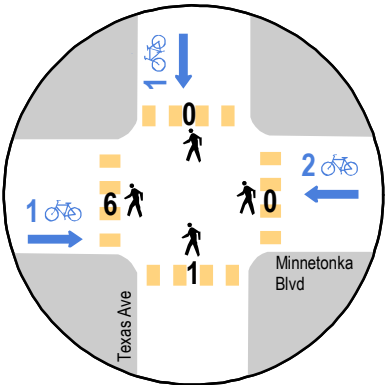
Photo of transit stop along Minnetonka Boulevard

Existing traffic activity for walkers, bikers and motorists was collected in May 2019 and reviewed to establish a baseline for comparing growth and redevelopment (Figures 3.10 and 3.11).

PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC



AM Turning Volumes



PM Turning Volumes

Bike volumes are generally low, but most of the bikes use the roadway shoulder rather than the sidewalk

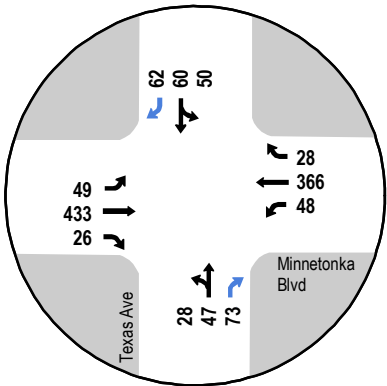
Pedestrian volumes are also generally low

It was observed that pedestrians cross Minnetonka Blvd all along the project corridor, not necessarily at marked crosswalk locations

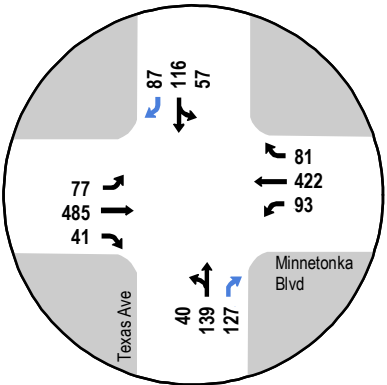
Between 2013 and 2015 there were two pedestrian crashes in the project area, both at the intersection of Minnetonka Blvd/Texas Ave

Figure 3.10

VEHICLE TRAFFIC



AM Turning Volumes



PM Turning Volumes

Everything is operating very well today with LOS of A or B. Some movements are at LOS C, but there seems to be plenty of capacity for added trips.

During peak times, taking a left turn onto Minnetonka Blvd may have higher delays, but these delays are still reasonable (LOS C)

Between 2013 and 2015 (most recent crash data easily available) there were 14 crashes at the intersection of Minnetonka Blvd/Texas Ave. However, the crash rate is only about half of the critical rate, so there is no sustained crash issue at this intersection

Of the 14 crashes, 5 were rear end crashes and 3 were left turn crashes

Figure 3.11

YESTERDAY AND TODAY EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are numerous parking facilities located throughout the Texa-Tonka neighborhood commercial node as illustrated in Figure 3.12. The project area currently provides parking for 523 vehicles in 9 surface lots. With an approximate total building area of 123,000 square feet, the parking ratio for the project area is approximately 4.3 spaces per 1,000 square feet.

Discussions with business owners and community members indicated there is an adequate supply of parking within Texa-Tonka with the occasional exception of parcel 13 which includes the popular restaurant Wok in the Park. This parking lot includes 42 spaces that are shared between four businesses. The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner and serves sit-down and carry-out patrons which results in significant parking activity by vehicles as well as pedestrians. Utah Avenue provides some relief parking during times of high demand.

Vehicular access is prohibited to the 63 space parking lot located along the east side of Texas Avenue, north of Minnetonka Boulevard (parcels 6 and 7) and the lot has been in disuse for several decades. There is strong community support for redeveloping these parcels within the parameters of current residential and commercial zoning.

Observations and business owners, and community member discussions indicate that parking resources are informally shared between businesses without significant inconvenience or incident and that additional parking is currently not required. Additionally, there has been strong community interest expressed for improving Texa-Tonka’s walking and biking infrastructure as a means to promote healthy living and reduce auto dependence.



Photo of commercial parking lot that is shared by multiple businesses in the Texa-Tonka area



Figure 3.12. Map highlights off-street parking lot capacities and commercial building square footage along Minnetonka Boulevard and Texas Avenue

Land Use and Zoning

Existing land uses established in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code include Commercial, Mixed-Use and Low-Density Residential. The most prevalent land use in the project area is surface parking.

For purposes of this Small Area Plan properties within the project area were numbered 1-15 (Figure 3.13). Zoning designations for the fifteen parcels include thirteen parcels as C-2 General Commercial, 1 parcel (shopping center) as MX Mixed-Use and one parcel (parking lot) as R-3 Two-Family Residence (Figure 3.14).

Zoning Comparison at a Glance

	C-2	MX	R-3
Allowable Uses	Retail less than 20,000 SF, office, service	Commercial on ground level, residential above	Single family and twin homes
Conditional Uses	Residential on upper levels	Liquor store, entertainment, others	4-plex and row house
Maximum Floor Area Ratio	2.0	1.5	.25
Maximum Building Height	6 levels / 75 ft. max	60 ft. or 30 ft. when adjacent to residential	3 levels / 35 ft. max
Housing Density	50 units/acre	50 units/acre (up to 75 units/acre by providing extra features	11 units/acre
General Parking Requirements	4 spaces / 1,000 SF	4 spaces / 1,000 SF	1 space / bedroom

A more detailed review of the impact of current zoning regulations on parcel redevelopment potential is provided in the appendix.

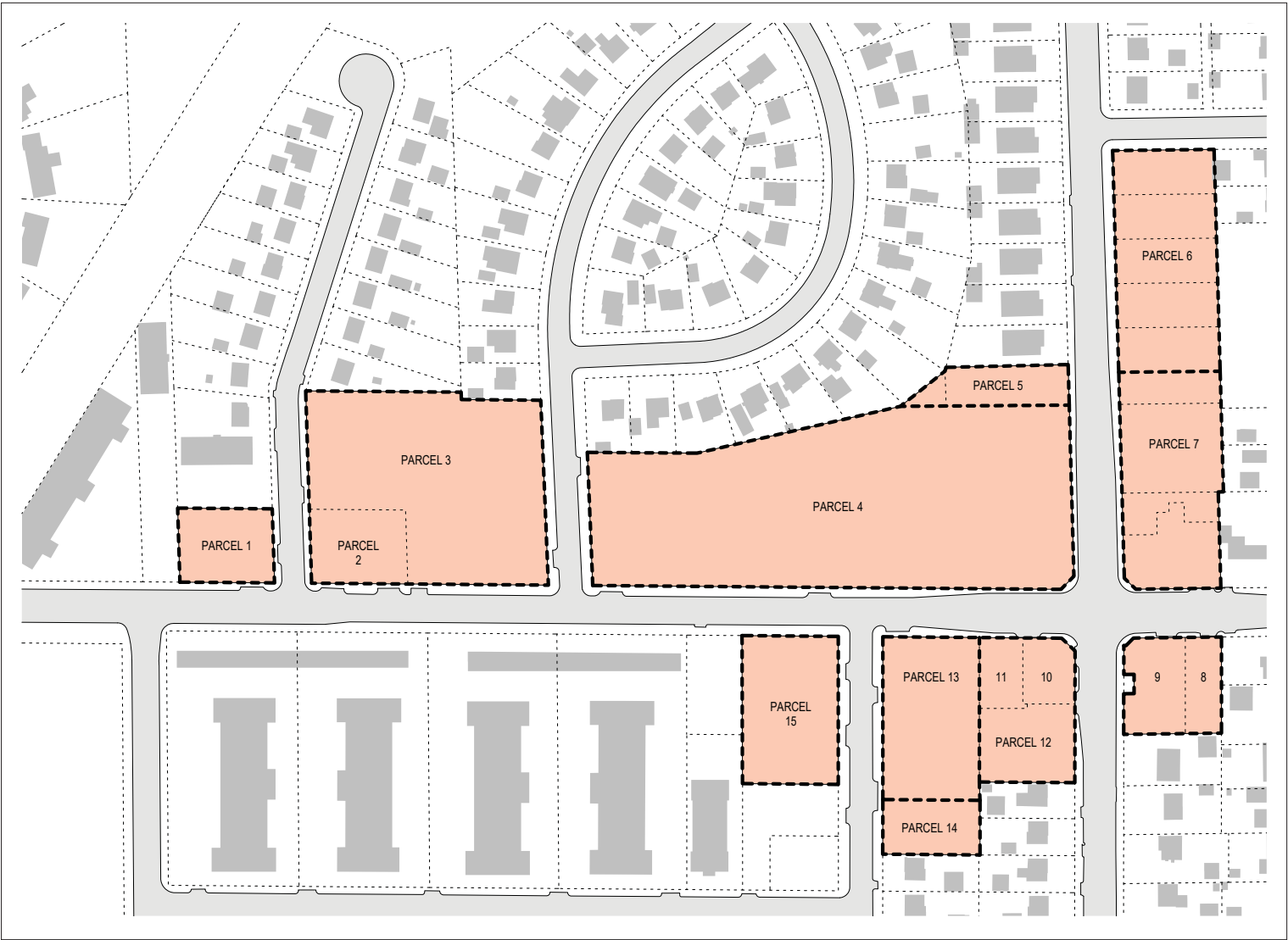


Figure 3.13. Map displays property parcels numbered for the purpose of this project

ZONING

- Parks and Open Space
- R-2 Single Family Residence
- R-3 Two-Family Residence
- R-4 Multiple-Family Residence
- R-C High-Density Multiple-Family Residence
- M-X Mixed Use
- C-2 General Commercial

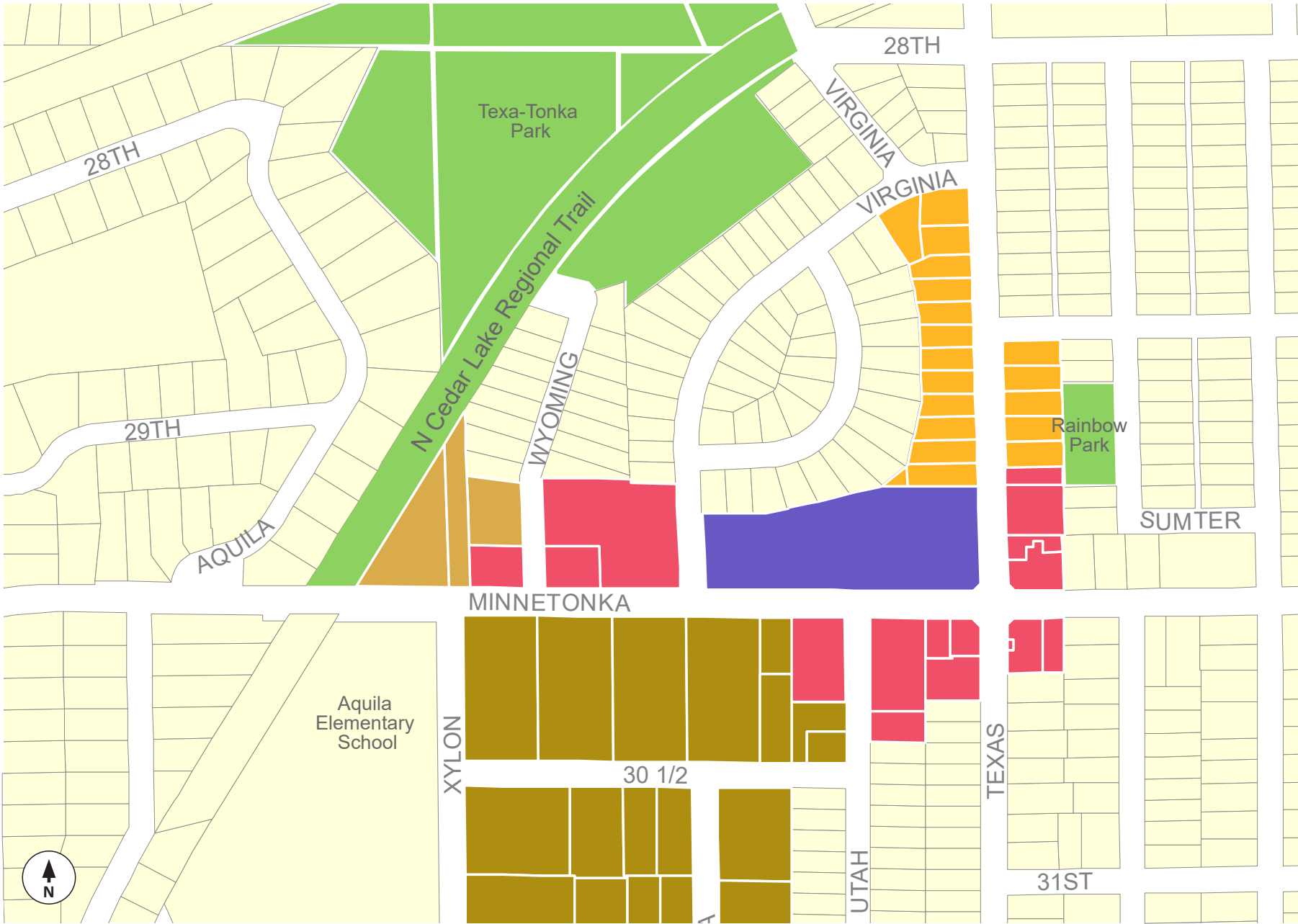


Figure 3.14. Map shows existing zones and planned changes to zoning within the project area

Buildings and Urban Design

As an area that was developed between the mid 1950’s and mid 1960’s Texa-Tonka has several buildings that embody a modern aesthetic and approach to design – which in recent years has been redefined as timeless. While not high-style or overly expressive, many of the buildings are simple, unadorned, modern buildings that express honesty and function. The massing tends to be simple rectilinear forms, not highly articulated shapes. The materials tend to be human scaled and commonly used commercial components such as masonry, metal and glass, not wood or custom fabricated. The proportions tend to be horizontal, not vertical. Roofs are predominantly flat and entries are often protected by horizontally projecting canopies and located within horizontal runs of display windows. (Figures 3.17 and 3.18)

MODERN BUILDINGS

Functionality; form follows function

Uncluttered and sleek lines
Both organic and geometric forms

Minimal ornamentation

An exploration of materials

Unique materiality

Juxtaposition of different, and sometimes contrasting materials

Clear and celebrated entry sequence

Designed spaces between building and street

Mid 50's to 60' In Texa Tonka



1955



1963



1955

Expressive Modern



Simple TexaTonka Modern



Figure 3.17

QUALITIES OF GOOD TOWN / URBAN BUILDINGS

Durable lasting materials

High ground floor transparency

Framed openings

Tall ground floors

Personalization

Protection from weather & glare

Not too long

Space for socializing



Figure 3.18

Texa-Tonka Small Area Plan | 17

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CHAPTER 3

EXPLORING AND ESTABLISHING THE VISION

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND KEY THEMES
VISION STATEMENT
PLANNING PRINCIPLES

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

5

In-person events allowed the public to share their experiences and ideas for improving the Texa-Tonka area



OVER
2,800

Online survey participants provided their ideas on future development



3

Project Advisory Committee Meetings were hosted to help guide the Small Area Plan process



Workshop participants discussing visions for the Texa-Tonka area

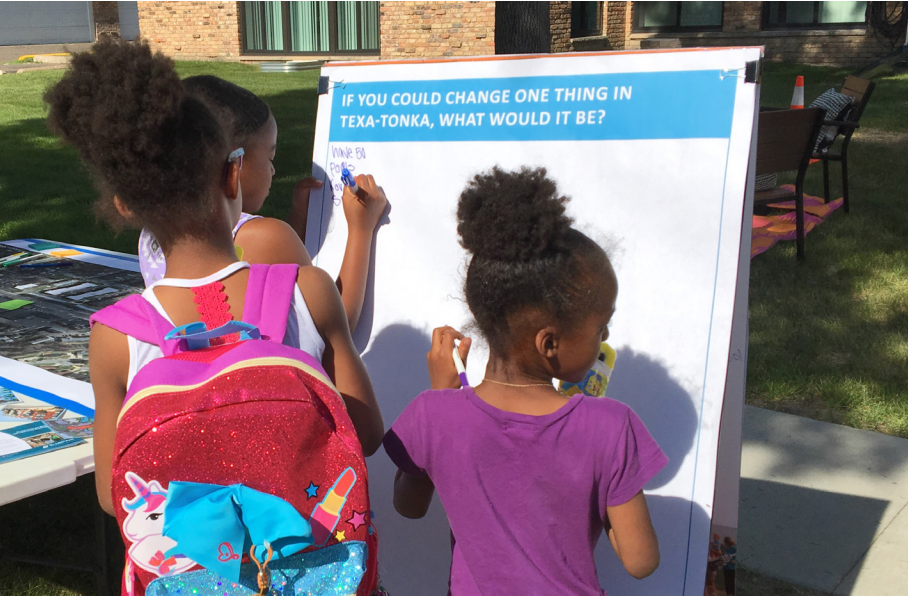


Workshop participants identifying areas for activation and greening

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND KEY THEMES

Development of this Small Area Plan was built upon an inclusive, interactive program of community engagement including:

- **A Project Web Page**
- **4 Project Advisory Committee Meetings** with 11 members
- **Project Area Walking Tour** with Project Committee and Elected Official
- **3 Targeted Interviews** of business, property owners and elected official
- **2 Community-wide Online Surveys** with over 2,800 participants
- **2 Interactive Community Workshops** with over 70 participants
- **2 Pop-Up Meetings** with over 50 participants
- **1 Community Open House** with online review opportunities



Children participating at a pop-up workshop hosted at apartment buildings within the project area

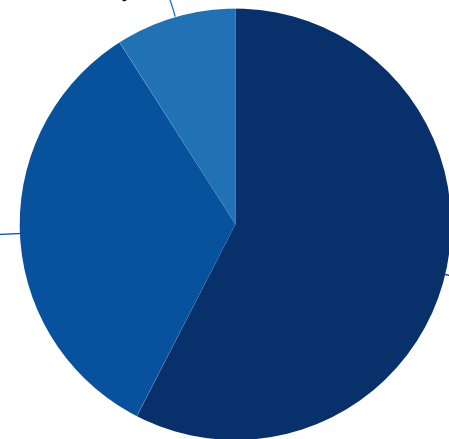
11. Do you support the ideas pictured here? (Option 2 for Parcel 7)

BUILT FORM OPTION 2 FOR PARCEL 7



9% If no, please tell us why?

33% No



58% Yes

Figure 3.1. Screenshot showing summary of online survey #2 question regarding residential housing development

Engagement activities provided key information to community members and project planners during the planning process and helped establish project goals, vision, guiding principles, identify issues and opportunities, and guide recommendations.

Additionally, city staff helped guide the plan-making process and provide insights and information on city governance procedures, development and growth policies, and zoning regulations.

Input expressed by community members during engagement activities was categorized into 4 key themes: existing buildings and parking areas, new buildings and parking areas, variety of uses, sidewalks and streets (Table 3.1).

8. What would you like to see more of in the Texa-Tonka area?

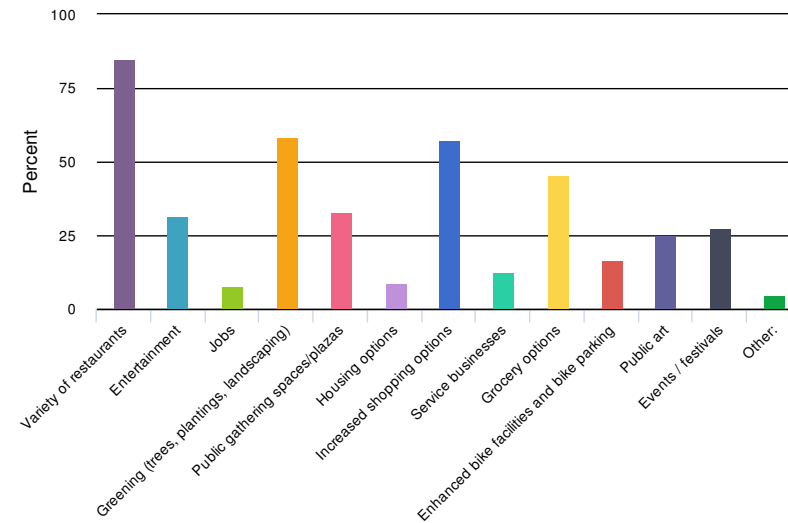


Figure 3.2. Screenshot showing summary of online survey #1 question to identify amenities the public would like to see more in the Texa-Tonka area

Key Themes from Engagement

Theme	Summary
 Existing Buildings and Parking Areas	Numerous vacancies - empty spaces
	Run down, poor appearance
	Out of date and unattractive signs
	Lack of landscaping
	Poor condition of plantings, fences, planter walls, etc.
 New Building and Parking Areas	Outdated, inefficient lighting
	Preference for 1-3 stories
	Preference for multiple, smaller buildings
	Acceptance for parking in multiple locations: back, side and limited amount in front
	Balance parking requirements and development intensity - avoid over parking
 Variety of Uses	Desire eco-friendly, well maintained site and parking lot landscaping
	Appreciation and preference for mid-century modern architectural style
	Preference for locally-owned, operated businesses
	Additional cafes, restaurants, coffee shop
	Neighborhood-scale grocery / market
 Sidewalks, Streets, + Gathering	Community gardens - local food growing and market
	Services: barber shop, nail salon, pet grooming, day care
	Moderate interest in mixed use and residential
	Minnetonka Blvd. acts as a barrier for walkers
	Minnetonka Blvd crosswalks should be improved / enhanced
 Sidewalks, Streets, + Gathering	Need sidewalk improvements: fill gaps, widen, replace
	Desire for streetscape enhancement: trees, furnishings and lighting

Table 3.1

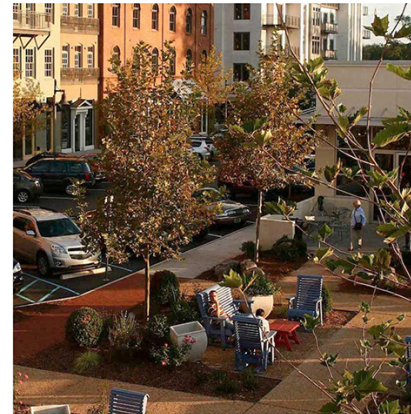
VISION STATEMENT

Texa-Tonka’s vision statement was developed through an interactive exercise during the second community workshop. Together with the guiding principles, the vision statement is intended to serve residents, property and business owners, and City staff and elected officials in evaluating the applicability of future revitalization and enhancement proposals.

VISION

The Texa-Tonka commercial node is a vibrant, welcoming place that offers a mix of small, local, useful shops, restaurants, services and housing options. Its attractive places and spaces are connected by a safe, accessible network of landscaped streets, sidewalks and plazas where people of all ages and abilities can meet their daily needs by foot, bicycle, transit and auto.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



1. Encourage a mixed use node where people can shop, dine, live and play
2. Support a vibrant, small business economy within the node
3. Complement existing housing with new housing options
4. Enhance and showcase the area's mid-century modern heritage and aesthetic
5. Provide for a range of temporary and permanent landscaped spaces where people can socialize and celebrate
6. Enhance beauty and ecological function of the public realm
7. Strengthen and enhance walking and biking as safe and convenient transportation options
8. Raise the bar on quality and authenticity of the built environment
9. Balance creative vision with market reality
10. Address current opportunities while planning for an ever-changing future
11. Embrace and engage Texa-Tonka's diverse community

Input and guidance from the local community and City staff helped craft guiding principles that will help shape future revitalization and redevelopment of the Texa-Tonka neighborhood commercial node.

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CHAPTER 4

DESCRIBING THE VISION

PLANNING FRAMEWORK APPROACH
REDEVELOPMENT OPTIONS
DESIGN GUIDELINES
GREENING AND GATHERING

DESCRIBING THE VISION

The overall framework for the Texa-Tonka Small Area Plan is built upon the recognition that the function and role of the neighborhood commercial node is centered on serving the daily needs of area residents. While many of the area’s existing buildings continue to adapt to shifting trends in commerce, such as Erik’s Bike and Board Shop occupying the former Penny’s Grocery, trends for stacking uses such as housing over businesses require removing existing single story buildings and full scale redevelopment. A multitude of factors from real estate economics to community preference to city policies and regulations influence if and in what manner a particular property will be renovated or redeveloped. Based upon an analysis of current conditions and discussions with area business and property owners, it’s most likely that Texa-Tonka will include a combination of renovations and redevelopments and that these activities will occur at measured pace over the coming ten to twenty years.

This Small Area Plan organizes recommendations for revitalization and enhancement into **THREE KEY AREAS:**



Revitalization and Redevelopment, which focuses on the massing and siting of new buildings and the renovation and reuse of existing buildings, vacant and or underutilized sites, and design.



Greening and Gathering, which describes locations and designs concepts for informal enhancement and activation of sidewalks, bus stops, cross walks and parking areas.



Movement and Circulation, which includes an analysis of future traffic operations, consolidation of multimodal site access and relocation of parking resources.

REDEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

As Texa-Tonka continues to evolve, it should do so with its own type of urbanism and design consisting of simple modern buildings (1-4 stories), compact spaces that encourage social interactions, parking along-side, behind and occasionally in front of buildings, and a pedestrian and bike friendly environment (Figure 4.1).

The purpose of guiding the area this way is to ensure it continues to reflect community preferences and is compatible with surrounding context. Texa-Tonka has its own discernible qualities that should continue to influence its evolution as a unique, distinct, and contextually responsive place.

In addition to guiding the individual style of buildings the community expressed a desire for the area to evolve in such a way that the development patterns (not just the buildings) reflect the unique qualities of the neighborhood. The Texa-Tonka community made it clear throughout the process of this Plan that redevelopment should be incremental, gradual, and focused on creating a place that serves the local community. Therefore, unlike many redevelopment projects, this Plan recommends maintaining (or even disaggregating or subdividing) the existing platting pattern.

Doing so will allow smaller buildings and smaller spaces to redefine the area as it evolves. Instead of a single master plan that creates uniformity, consistency and larger gathering places, this Plan recommends each lot develop on its own, each with its own opportunity for semi-public space. Instead of district systems to manage parking, stormwater, and open spaces, the Plan encourages the continued evolution of a unique pattern resulting from organic and opportunistic interventions.

This approach is novel in that it does not focus on maximizing development in terms of square footage and density. It embraces the underlying patterns and aesthetic of the community, and seeks to maximize the community and social value of the area by emphasizing

pedestrian-scaled design, small social spaces, and contextual design. The community recognizes and appreciates the uniqueness of the area, and wants it to remain unique, while still evolving in an organic and gradual manner.

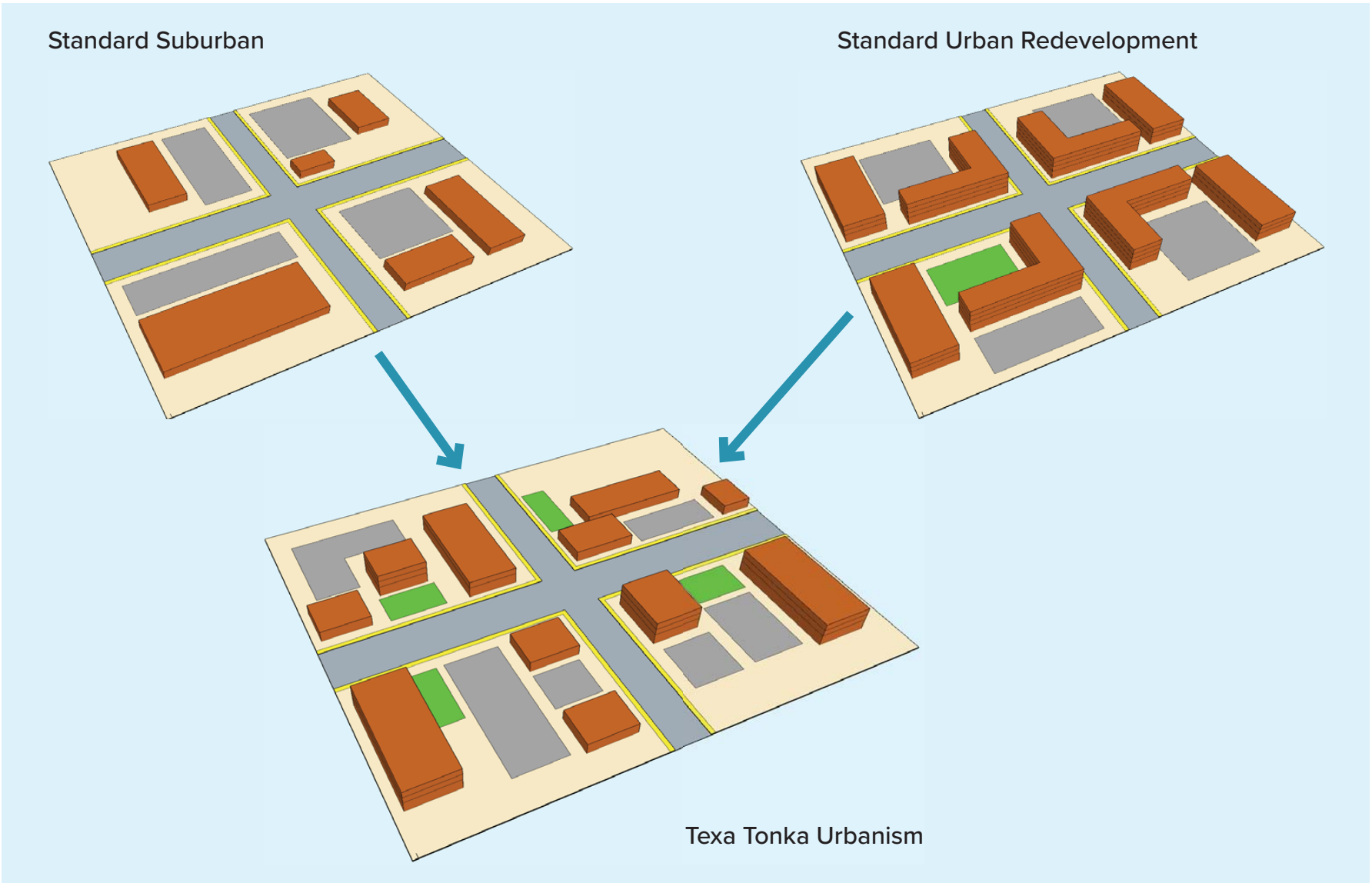


Examples of commercial development with landscaped outdoor gathering spaces and front yard areas

TEXA-TONKA URBANISM

Neither Suburban nor Urban. Hybrid, Both / And

As Texa Tonka continues to evolve, it can develop it's own unique pattern of urbanism. By combining the best qualities of both suburban development and standard urban development, Texa Tonka can become a unique place in Saint Louis Park.



NO

- Standard Suburban**
- Single story buildings set back from roads to allow for generous parking
- Standard Urban Redevelopment**
- West End / Excelsior and Grand
 - Multistory buildings (4-6 stories) set up to the sidewalk with parking behind and beneath.

YES

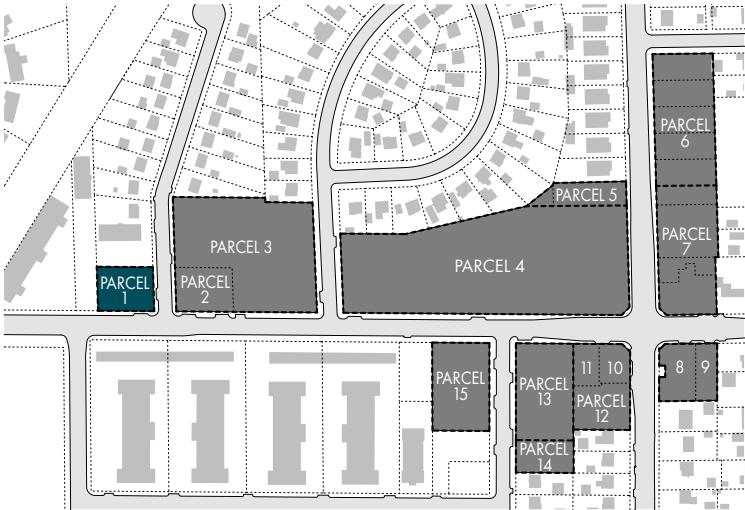
- Texa Tonka Urbanism**
- Series of small/medium buildings ranging from 1-4 Stories
 - Parking behind and along side of building, but also in front in modest amounts.
 - Series of small open spaces for informal socializing, closely related to buildings.

Figure 4.1

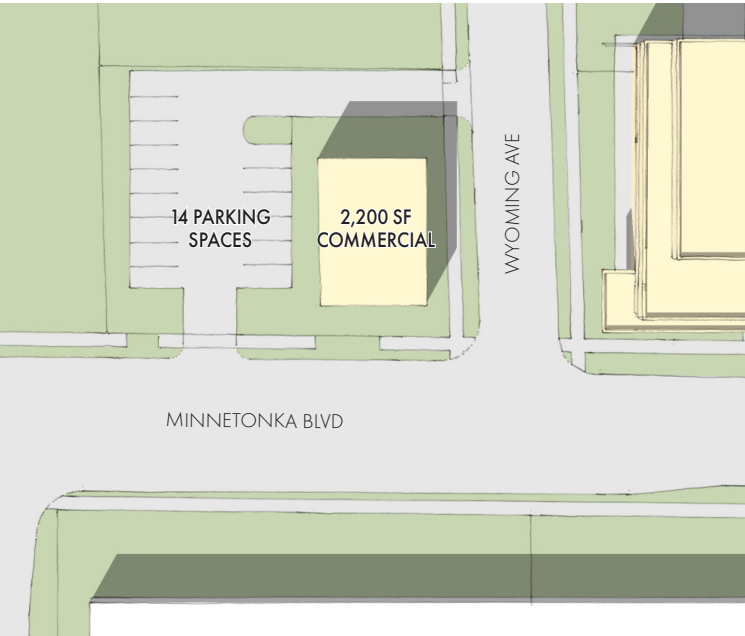
The Plan identifies various concept plans for the sites within the study area. The built form, density, massing, scale, and layout illustrated in the 10 options are informed by existing zoning and community input. Inclusion of upper story residential uses on C-2 zoned parcels would require a conditional use permit. For simplicity’s sake, parking provisions were calculated using simplified ratios of 4 spaces minimum per 1,000 sq. ft of commercial space and 1 space per residential dwelling unit rather than the more complex provisions set forth in each of the specific zoning districts.

The redevelopment concept for parcel 1 (Figure 4.2) looks at replacing the existing 1,300 sq. ft. hair salon and parking lot with a 2,000 sq. ft. modern single-story commercial building that holds the corner of Minnetonka Boulevard and Wyoming Avenue rather than sitting toward the back of the parcel. This allows direct pedestrian access from adjacent sidewalks. Parking is situated to the west side of the building.

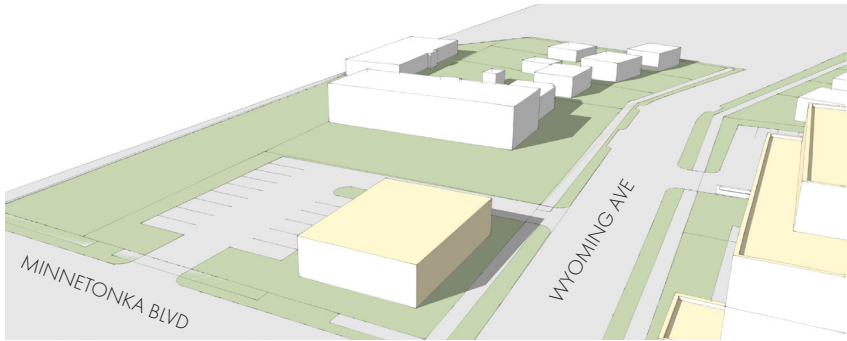
BUILT FORM PARCEL 1



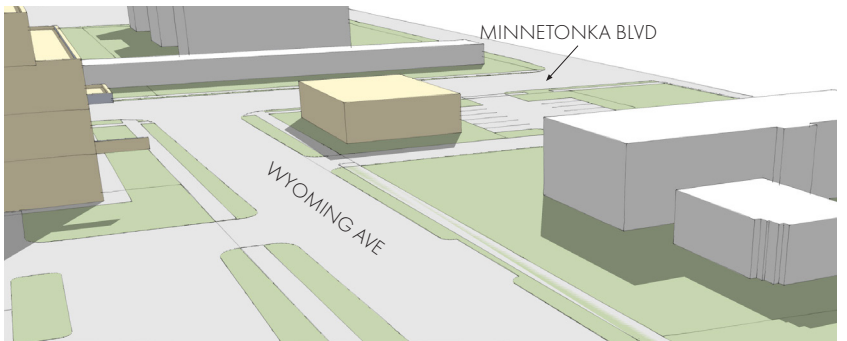
C-2 General Commercial Redevelopment Option 2 for Parcel 1, northwest corner of Wyoming Ave S and Minnetonka Blvd



Plan View Single-story commercial with surface parking



Frontage View Relationship of single-story commercial to existing residential



Backage View Relationship of single-story commercial and surface parking to neighboring multi-family residential

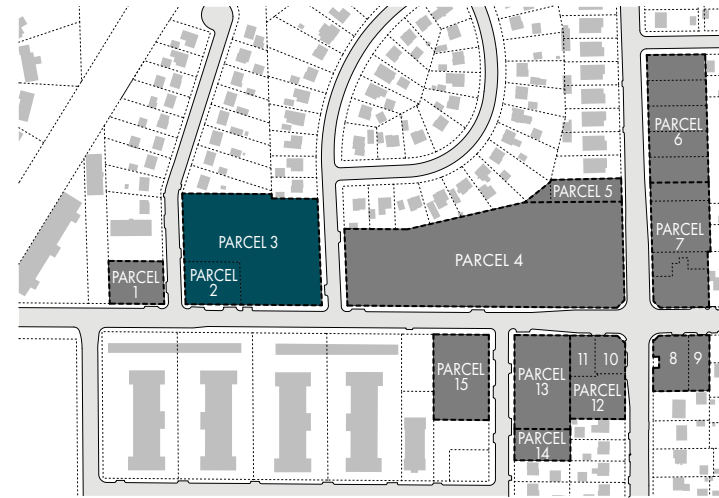


Precedent Image
Single-story commercial

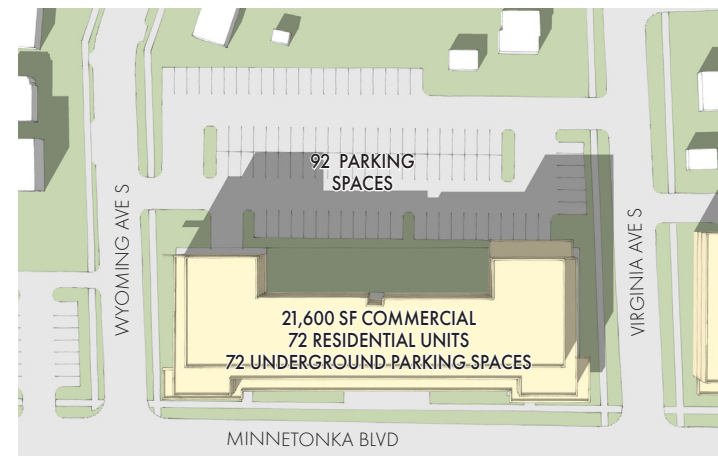
Figure 4.2

The redevelopment concept for parcels 2 and 3 (Figure 4.3) looks at the opportunity to replace Texa-Tonka Liquors and Texa-Tonka Lanes with a 4-story mixed use commercial building that features 72 residential units atop 21,600 sq. ft. of ground floor commercial uses. The new building fronts Minnetonka Boulevard and its top story steps back along the frontage to provide an upper level terrace while also reducing visual impact along Minnetonka. Residential parking is provided in the lower level and commercial and visitor parking are sited to the back of the site.

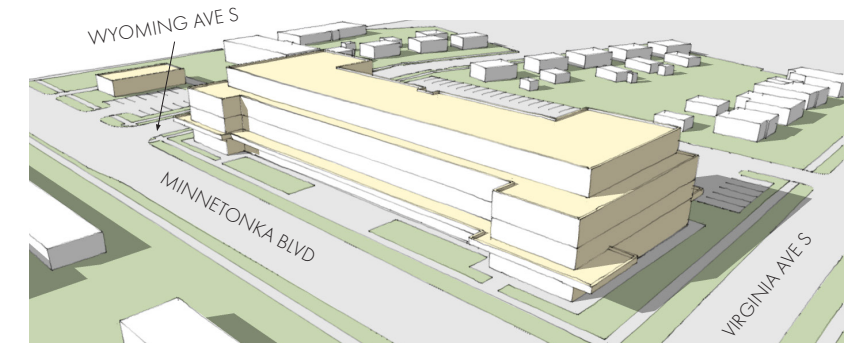
BUILT FORM PARCEL 2+3



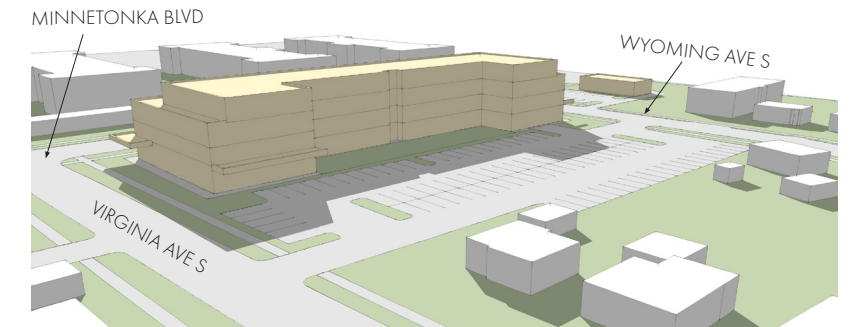
C-2 General Commercial Redevelopment option for Parcels 2 and 3, between Wyoming Ave S and Virginia Ave S and Minnetonka Blvd



Plan View 4-story mixed-use building (1 story of commercial with 3 stories of residential)



Frontage View Relationship of 1-story commercial with 3 stories of residential above (4th story step-back)



Backage View Relationship of 4-story mixed commercial/residential and surface parking adjacent to existing residential



Precedent Image
4-story building with commercial on first floor and step-back on fourth floor

Figure 4.3

BUILT FORM PARCEL 4

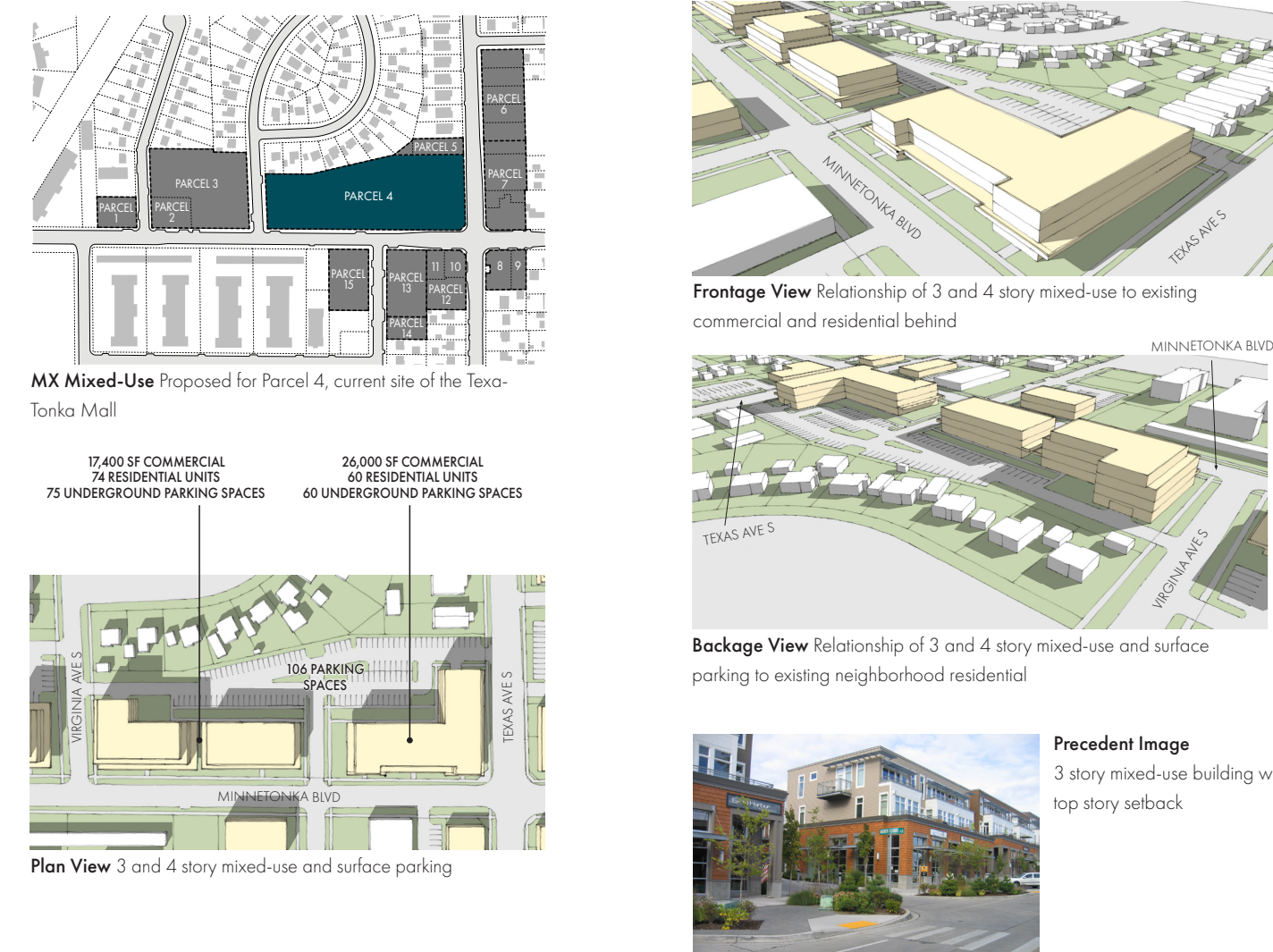


Figure 4.4

At 3.4 acres and approximately 660 feet of frontage, parcel 4 (Figure 4.4) is the largest property in Texa-Tonka and is home to the Texa-Tonka Shopping Center. It is the only parcel zoned MX Mixed-Use and the redevelopment concept illustrated for the site adheres to this zoning while also reflecting community preference for multiple, smaller buildings with heights no taller than 4-stories. The design includes 134 residential units above 43,400 sq. ft. of commercial space. 106 commercial and visitor parking spaces are provided to the back of the site and 135 residential parking spaces are located in the lower levels.

BUILT FORM PARCEL 6



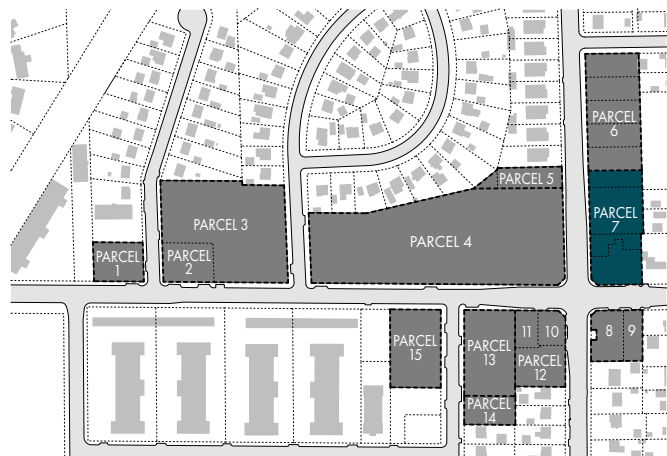
Figure 4.5

Access from Minnetonka Boulevard has been relocated to align with Utah Avenue which should improve overall traffic flow for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

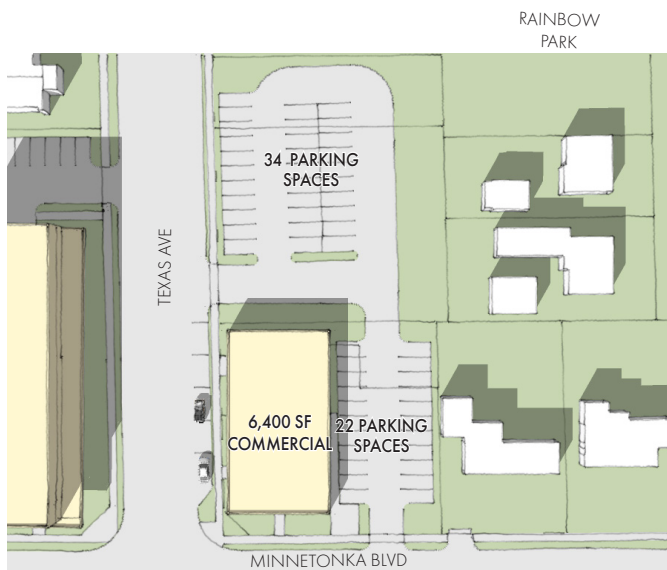
The redevelopment option for Parcel 6 (Figure 4.5) illustrates sets of row-houses, each with five dwelling units. Row houses or town-homes would require a conditional use permit as compared to single and two-family homes which are permitted by right.

Two redevelopment options are illustrated for parcel 7 (Figure 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8); a 1-story commercial building with parking to the side and back and a multi-story, mixed-use building consisting of a 2,000 sq. ft. 2-story commercial facility at the corner of Minnetonka Boulevard and Texas Avenue and a 34 unit, 3-story residential facility to the north along Texas Avenue Commercial parking is provided to the side with access off of Minnetonka Boulevard and residential parking in the lower level.

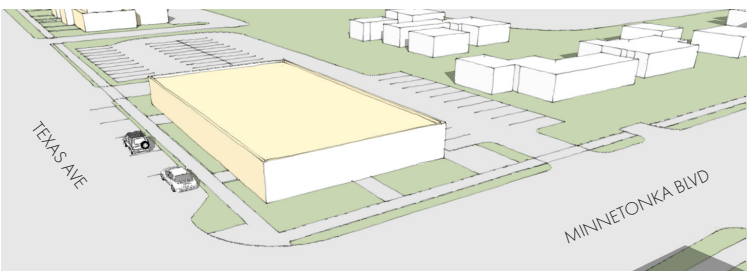
BUILT FORM OPTION 1 FOR PARCEL 7



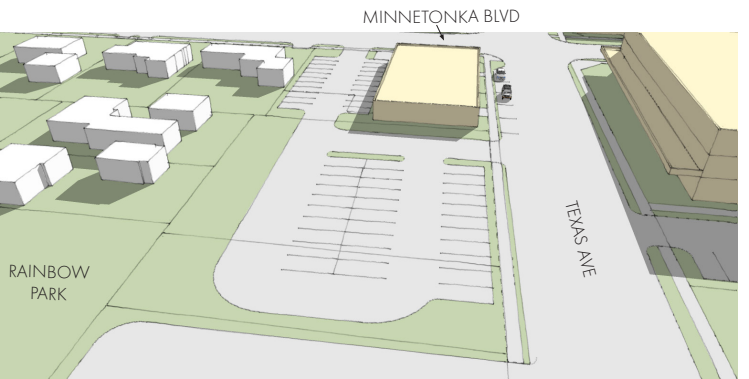
C-2 General Commercial Option 1 potential for Parcel 7, northeast corner of Texas Ave and Minnetonka Blvd



Plan View Single-story commercial and surface parking



Frontage View Relationship of single-story commercial to existing residential



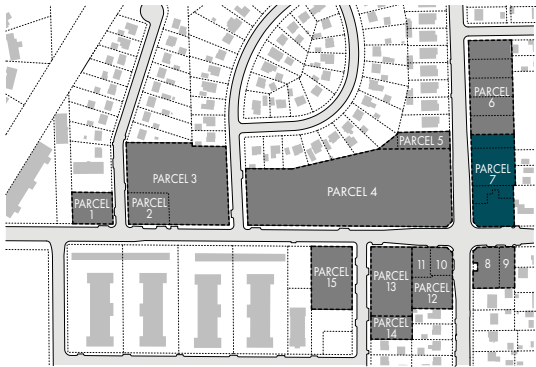
Backstage View Relationship of single-story commercial and surface parking to adjacent residential and park



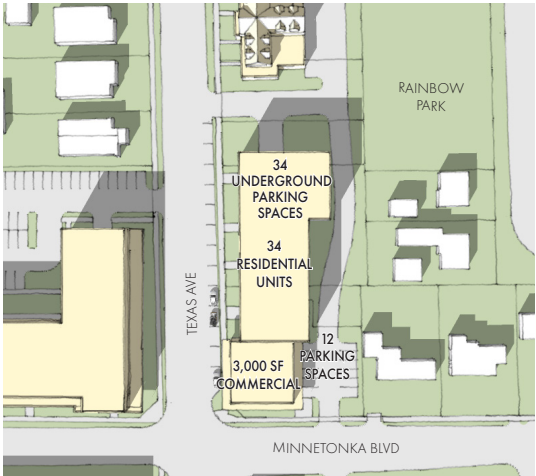
Precedent Image
Single-story commercial

Figure 4.6

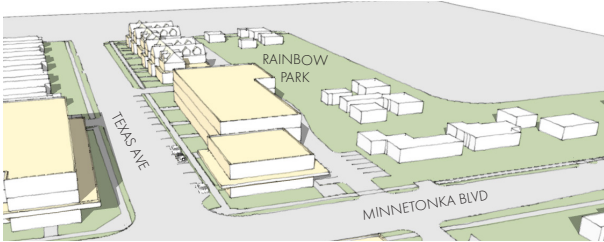
BUILT FORM OPTION 2 FOR PARCEL 7



C-2 General Commercial Option 2 potential for Parcel 7, northeast corner of Texas Ave and Minnetonka Blvd



Plan View 2-story commercial/3-story residential and surface parking



Frontage View Relationship of 2-story commercial/3-story residential to existing residential



Backstage View Relationship of 3-story residential and surface parking to neighboring residential and park



Precedent Image 2-story commercial

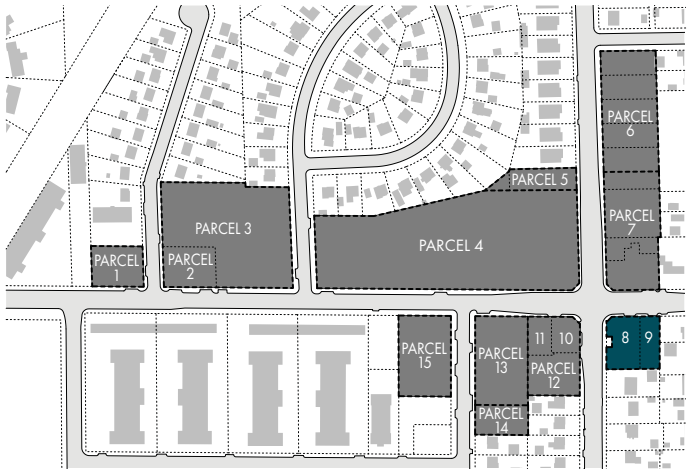
Figure 4.7



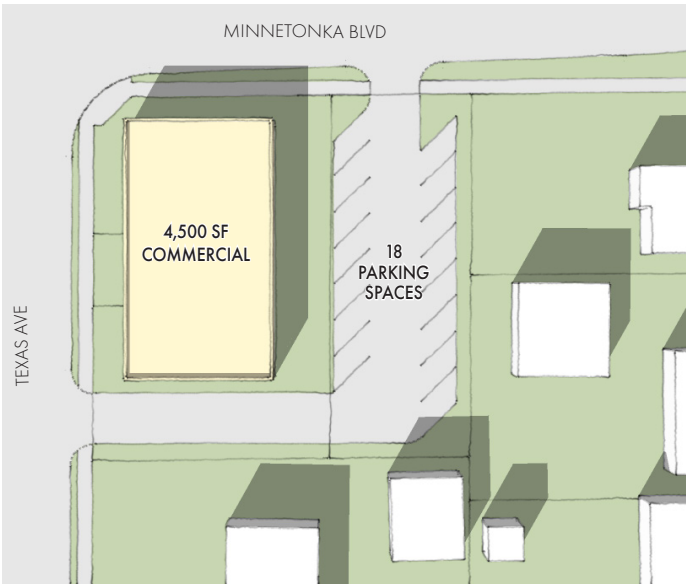
Figure 4.8

The redevelopment option for the southeast corner of Texas Avenue and Minnetonka Boulevard combines parcels 8 and 9 (Figure 4.9) to replace 2 small buildings with one 4,500 sq. ft. 1-story commercial building placed near the corner allowing people direct access to the building without walking through parking. An 18 car parking lot is located to the east and the existing western access along Minnetonka Boulevard has been removed and replaced with a new parking lot driveway approximately 100 feet from the intersection.

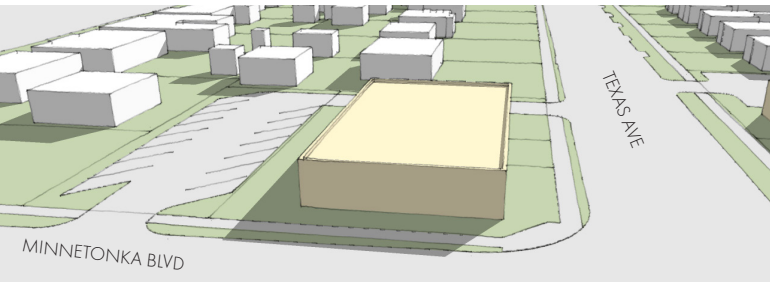
BUILT FORM PARCEL 8+9



C-2 General Commercial Potential for Parcels 8 and 9, southeast corner of Texas Ave and Minnetonka Blvd



Plan View Single-story commercial and surface parking



Frontage View Relationship of single-story commercial to existing residential



Backage View Relationship of single-story commercial and surface parking to neighboring residential



Precedent Image
Single-story commercial

Figure 4.9

BUILT FORM PARCEL 10, 11, + 12



Figure 4.10

Two redevelopment options are illustrated for parcels 10, 11, and 12 (Figure 4.10 and 4.11). The first illustrates replacing the assemblage of existing mixed commercial buildings with a 6,000 sq. ft. 1-story commercial building located to the corner allowing people direct access without walking through parking. 28 parking spaces are provided to the side and back with driveways off of Minnetonka Boulevard and Texas Avenue. Existing driveways within 50 to 70 feet of the intersection have been removed.

BUILT FORM PARCEL 10, 11, 12, + 13



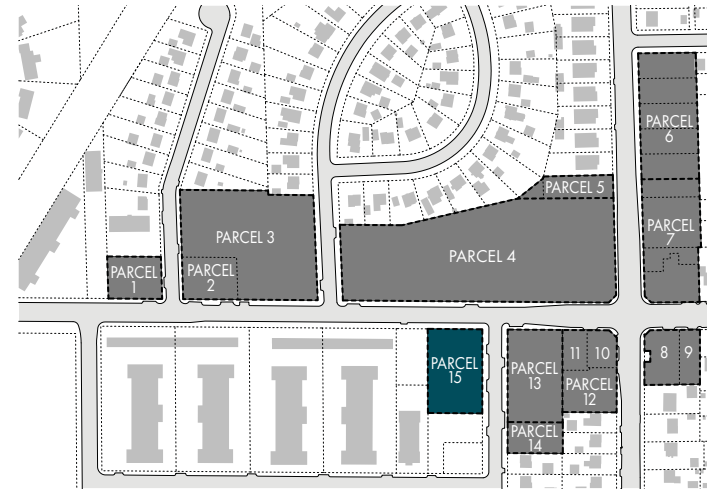
Figure 4.11

The second option combines all four parcels and illustrates a 13,200 sq. ft. 1-story commercial building fronting Minnetonka Boulevard with up to 72 parking spaces accessible from Utah Avenue and Texas Avenue. This parking lot could be managed to serve the existing commercial building that currently houses Dreamers Cards and Games on parcel 14.

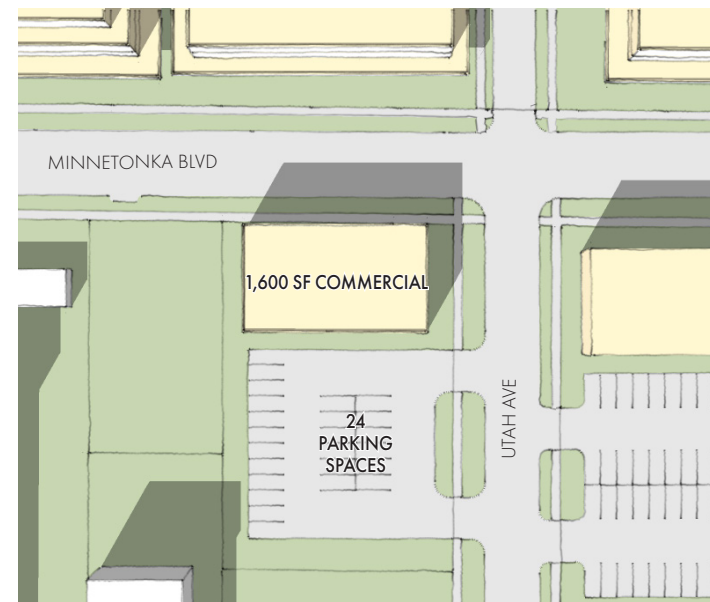
The redevelopment option for parcel 15 (Figure 4.12) illustrates a 3,600 sq. ft. multi-level commercial building that responds to site topography with 1-story along Minnetonka Boulevard and a 2-story walk-out configuration to the back and side along Utah Avenue. A 24 space parking lot is located to the back of the building with access from Utah Avenue.

Note: For purposes of this Small Area Plan redevelopment options were not explored for parcels 5 and 14. The dental office on parcel 5 is zoned residential and cannot be commercially redeveloped without a change in zoning. The building on parcel 14 has attractive, mid-century modern qualities and can be adapted and or renovated to support a variety of commercial uses.

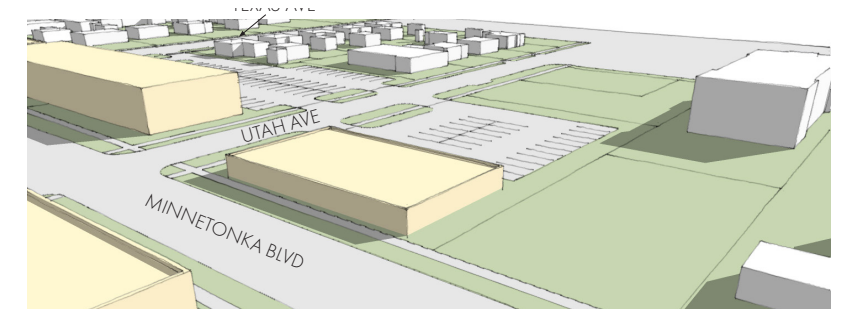
BUILT FORM PARCEL 15



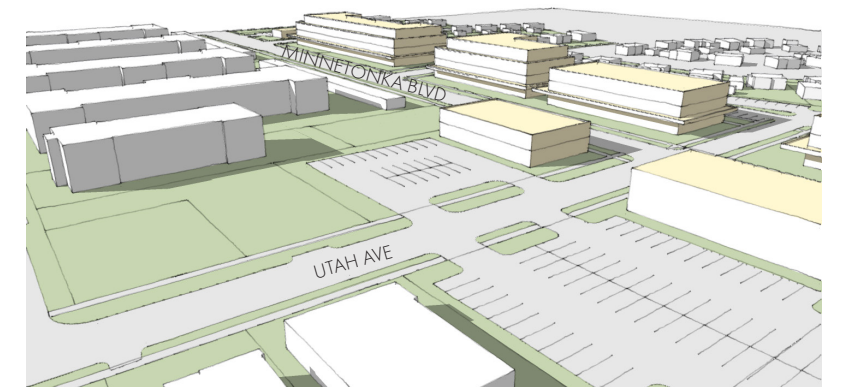
C-2 General Commercial Potential for Parcel 15, southwest corner of Utah Ave and Minnetonka Blvd



Plan View 2-story commercial and surface parking



Frontage View Relationship of 1-story commercial to existing multi-family residential



Backage View Relationship of single-story (two-story walk out) commercial and surface parking to neighboring residential



Precedent Image
Single-story commercial

Figure 4.12

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design guidelines for renovations and new development in Texa-Tonka are intended to supplement the city-wide zoning code and other policy documents that inform the city’s built environment. As guidelines, they are recommendations, not requirements. These guidelines together with those regulations and policies, will ensure the area develops in a unique and contextual way.

Though none of its buildings are masterpieces of modern design, together they represent a collection of buildings that are unique to the city and the region. This Plan recommends that future buildings in Texa-Tonka should consider the qualities of modern timeless design that is prevalent in Texa-Tonka and employ them in contemporary ways.

The guidelines focus on four areas – building form and character, building facade design, street frontage, and site design.

Building Form and Character (Figure 4.13) contains recommendations for guiding building scale and massing.

Building Facade (Figure 4.14) guidelines offer direction for building materials and elements, proportioning, and overall image of the buildings.

Street Frontage (Figure 4.15) focuses on how buildings should interface with the public realm – specifically how the space between buildings and the sidewalk should be designed.

Site Design (Figure 4.16) offers guidance for ways in which landscaping, parking, and other site elements can contribute to the overall vision of the area as it evolves.

Building Form + Character

Intent

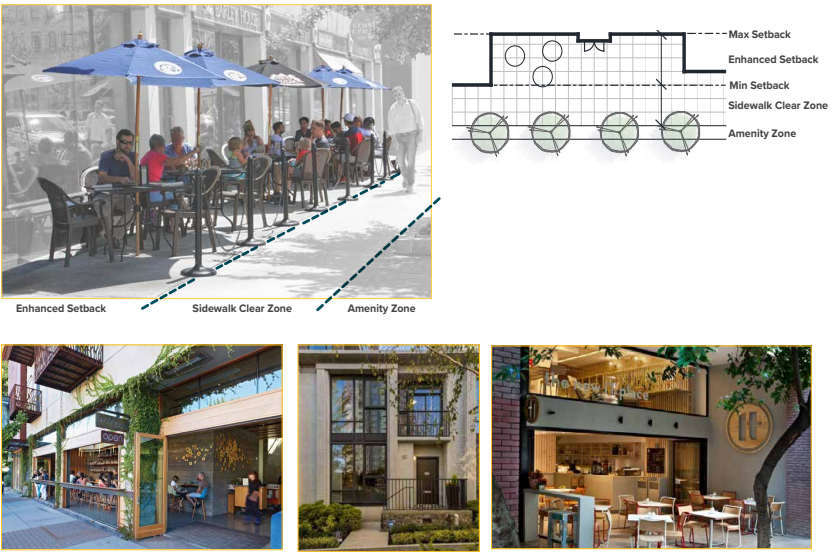
Buildings in Texa-Tonka should vary in scale and character while maintaining a contemporary and modern approach that creates an overall human scaled and pedestrian friendly environment – both on site and in the public realm.



Street Frontage

Intent

The manner in which buildings address the sidewalk and street edge has a strong bearing on the comfort of the public realm. Buildings close to the edge of the sidewalk help create a well-defined public realm. Therefore, buildings within Texa-Tonka are encouraged to relate closely to the sidewalk while also making room on their site for usable pedestrian areas.



Building Facade Design

Intent

Building façade design in the district should define a unique character for the Texa-Tonka neighborhood. Buildings should incorporate changes in plane, materials, texture, and color to create visual interest and contribute to a sense of liveliness on the street.



Site Design

Intent

Landscaping, orientation, and access to outdoor spaces is fundamental to improving the character and quality of the public realm within the Texa-Tonka district. Therefore, landscaping and outdoor amenities should be designed to enhance the comfort, safety, walkability, and human scale within Texa-Tonka to create an enjoyable environment.

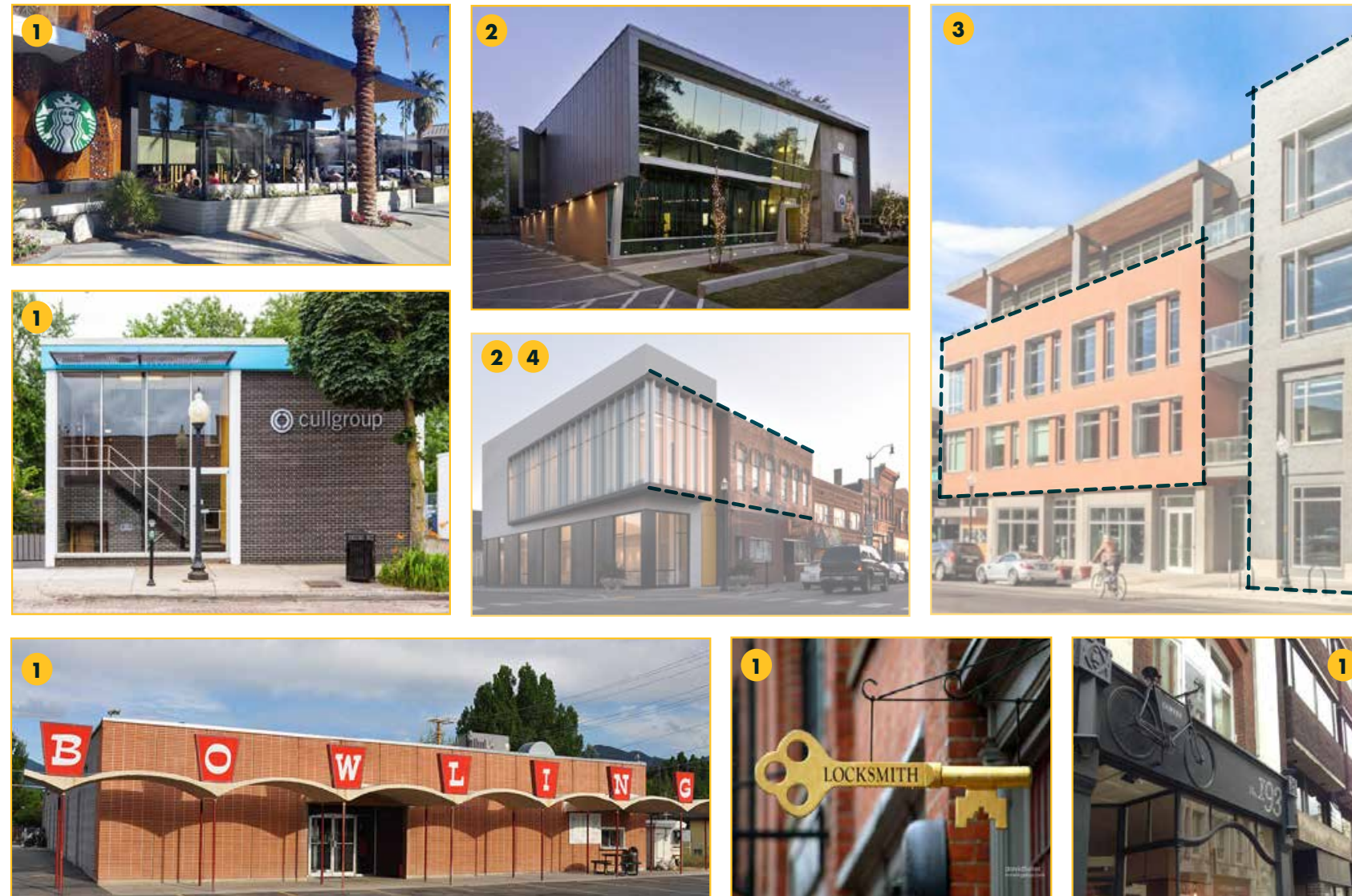


Snapshots of design guidelines shown on the following pages

BUILDING FORM & CHARACTER

Intent

Buildings in Texa-Tonka should vary in scale and character while maintaining a contemporary and modern approach that creates an overall human scaled and pedestrian friendly environment – both on site and in the public realm.



Guidelines

- 1 Building Character**
 Buildings in Texa-Tonka should complement, but not mimic, mid-century modern design traditions in terms of building and roof forms, materials, clean lines, and minimal ornamentation. Standardized “franchise” style architecture is discouraged; instead design and materials that provide a unique identity and a sense of authenticity is encouraged. Unique architectural features should be used in conjunction with signage to convey the unique personality and character of building tenants.
- 2 Transitions**
 Buildings and sites in Texa-Tonka should carefully address their transition to nearby residential buildings or other sensitive edges. Building should position taller portions of a structure away from neighboring buildings of lower scale, step back to align building setbacks of neighboring buildings, and provide appropriate buffering.
- 3 Massing**
 Building massing in Texa-Tonka should vary across the district with each block supporting architectural variety. Typical buildings should be simple volumes, or interlocking volumes if they exceed 80’ in length to reduce the overall scale of the building mass from the street.
- 4 Scale**
 Buildings in Texa-Tonka should establish a sense of human scale. Vertical and horizontal articulation can be used to reduce the apparent scale of larger buildings and create visual interest. Adjacent buildings of varying heights and styles should align design features to express a scale relationship between the two buildings.

Figure 4.13

BUILDING FACADE DESIGN

Intent

Building façade design in the district should define a unique character for the Texa-Tonka neighborhood. Buildings should incorporate changes in plane, materials, texture, and color to create visual interest and contribute to a sense of liveliness on the street.



Guidelines

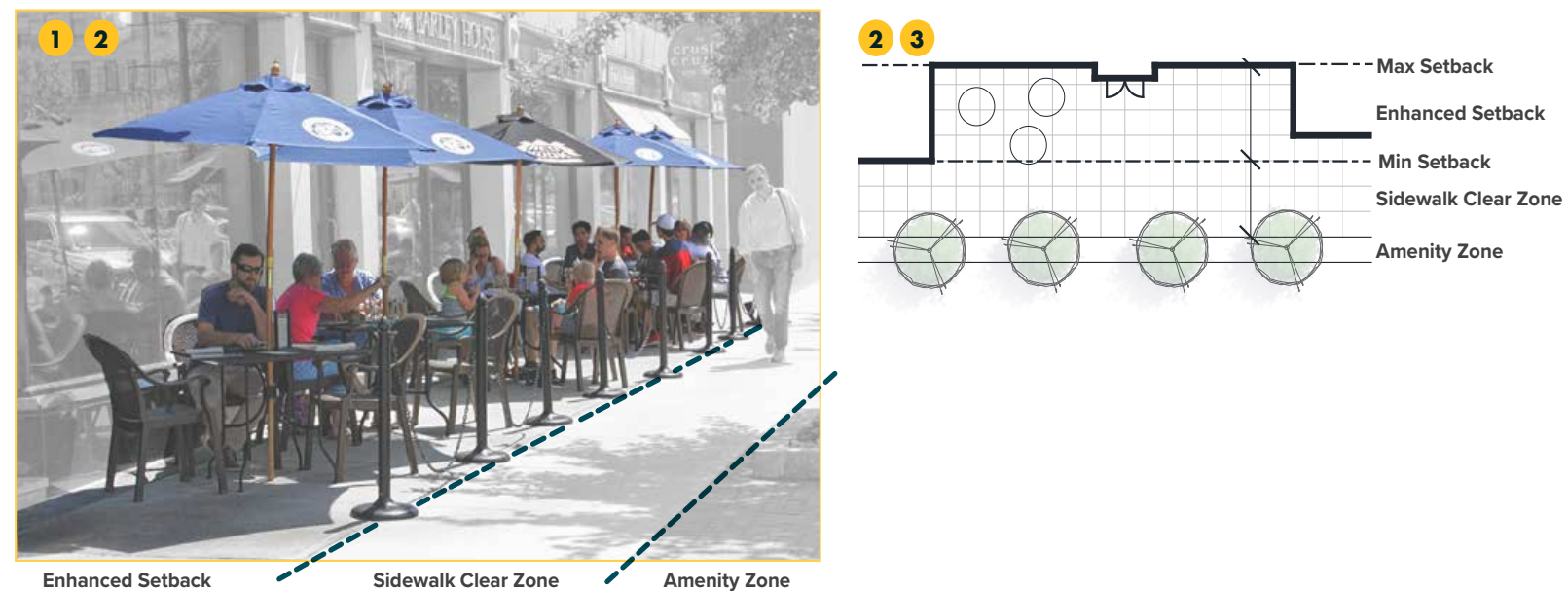
- 1 Composition**
Building facades should be symmetrical or balanced. They may consist of repeated bays which are common in traditional buildings, or a balanced composition which are common in many modern buildings. Large expanses of solid facades are discouraged on the ground floor.
- 2 Horizontality**
As is common with many modern buildings, horizontal proportioning and expression is encouraged. Overall massing, deep overhangs, fins, ribbon windows and corner windows are some techniques that can be used to emphasize the horizontality of a building. Use horizontal expressions, a change in material, or an offset in the wall plane at lower floor heights to establish a sense of scale.
- 3 Materials**
Building materials and detailing should be used to brand building tenants. Historically, the palette of building materials was rather limited in Texa-Tonka, with brick being the predominant material. Materials in their natural form should be highlighted, imitation materials are discouraged. Patterning and ornamentation through the use of repeated materials, clean lines and simple design features is encouraged. Use of applied ornamentation should be kept to a minimum.
- 4 Awnings and Canopies**
Sheltering elements such as a canopy, awning, arcade or portico should be used to shelter walkways, outdoor spaces and to shade windows. They should be in character with the building design, and can be used as horizontal expressions and to signify the primary entrance to a building.

Figure 4.14

STREET FRONTAGE

Intent

The manner in which buildings address the sidewalk and street edge has a strong bearing on the comfort of the public realm. Buildings close to the edge of the sidewalk help create a well-defined public realm. Therefore, buildings within Texa-Tonka are encouraged to relate closely to the sidewalk while also making room on their site for usable pedestrian areas.



Guidelines

- 1 Ground Floor Transparency**
 Generally, the ground floor of buildings should relate both visually and physically to the sidewalk through generous use of transparency and frequent openings. Views both into and out of buildings enrich the urban experience for pedestrians and building occupants alike, while also improving safety through natural surveillance. To help accomplish this, semi-public uses such as building lobbies, exercise rooms, etc, should be located on the ground floor with generous windows.
- 2 Building Placement & Setbacks**
 All new buildings are encouraged to provide an “enhanced setback” that offers public amenities and semi private space for residential units. They can range in size from modest setbacks for pedestrian movement to larger areas with outdoor seating, landscaping or other amenities. Enhanced setbacks can also be used to mitigate the impact of exceedingly long buildings.
- 3 Entry Location and Types**
 Public building entrances should be clearly identifiable, and directly accessible from the adjacent sidewalks. Commercial entrances should be level with the adjacent sidewalk; locate residential entrances no more than a couple of feet above the level of the adjacent sidewalk.
- 4 Open Space**
 Building placement should create outdoor spaces that serve a variety of public, private, passive and active uses. Open spaces on site are encouraged near primary building entrances, between the building and the sidewalk. Open Spaces may consist of an enhanced setback, a small courtyard, side or entry plaza that enhances the entry sequence to the building.

Figure 4.15

SITE DESIGN

Intent

Landscaping, orientation, and access to outdoor spaces is fundamental to improving the character and quality of the public realm within the Texa-Tonka district. Therefore, landscaping and outdoor amenities should be designed to enhance the comfort, safety, walkability, and human scale within Texa-Tonka to create an enjoyable environment.

Plant Species

Boulevards are tough sites known for dry, poor soil and salt from the winter. The following plants have the ability to live and flourish in these difficult urban conditions:

- Yarrow (Achillea)
- Aster
- Milkweed (Asclepias) *
- Coneflower (Echinacea)
- Daylily (Hemerocallis)
- Hosta
- Bearded Iris
- Blazing Star (Liatris)
- Bee Balm / Bergamot (Monarda) *
- Catmint (Nepeta)
- Russian Sage (Perovskia atriplicifolia)
- Ribbon Grass (Phalaris arundinaceae)
- Garden Phlox (Phlox paniculata) *
- Daisy (Rudbeckia fulgida)
- Salvia
- Sedum
- Lamb's Ear (Stachys byzantina)
- Speedwell (Veronica)



Guidelines

- 1

Access

Safe and convenient pedestrian access should be provided to all building entrances. Provide a continuous, level and clearly delineated pedestrian walkway across driveways to encourage drivers to yield to pedestrians by applying the same materials across these vehicle access points as the sidewalk. Pedestrian connectivity and shared vehicular access between adjacent properties should be encouraged.
- 2

Parking

To minimize the visual impacts of parking within Texa-Tonka, surface parking lots should be located to the side or behind buildings with the buildings fronting the primary streets and sidewalks. Locating Parking within yard setbacks should be discouraged. Existing buildings that have park-ing in front of them are encouraged to improve their relationship to the sidewalk by reclaiming parking spaces for usable outdoor space, and creating safer and clear connections between sidewalks and the front door. Structured parking on the ground floor should be lined with active uses. Provide trees and plant materials in interior parking lot islands to reduce the visual impacts of parking lots and to reduce the heat island effect.
- 3

Landscaping

Trees and landscape areas play an important role in breaking down a space to the human-scale, by contributing to a sense of enclosure, providing shade, and adding needed softness in an urban environment. Due to the urban nature of Texa-Tonka and limited space available for plantings within the Minnetonka Boulevard right-of-way, plant species that are columnar in shape and adaptable to urban environments should be used in the district.

Figure 4.16

Building Rehabilitation and Exterior Improvements

The Texa-Tonka Liquor Building, located on parcel 2 (Figure 4.3), is a typical early 1960's commercial building with many of the qualities common in well-designed buildings of that era, such as corner windows, horizontal proportions, roman bricks, portico, and minimal ornamentation. Over time, however, changes to the building have resulted in deviations and some disrepair. Figure 4.17 illustrates how this building and site can be improved through applying the guidelines to restore / enhance the modern qualities of the building while improving the pedestrian relationship to the site.

POTENTIAL REMODEL OF TEXA-TONKA LIQUORS

Contextual approach to renovation

Many of the buildings and sites in Texa-Tonka are in need of investment and design attention. Without wholesale redevelopment, smaller investments can have a big impact. Attention should be paid to modernizing the buildings and sites so they highlight the Texa-Tonka modernism" while also becoming more pedestrian-friendly.



- 1 De-cluttered windows highlights horizontal mullions and activity inside the building
- 2 Clear and simple, pedestrian scaled sans serif signage
- 3 Ornamental railing and panel door with repeated pattern
- 4 Integrated trash enclosure
- 5 Clear entry sequence with walkways to both sidewalks

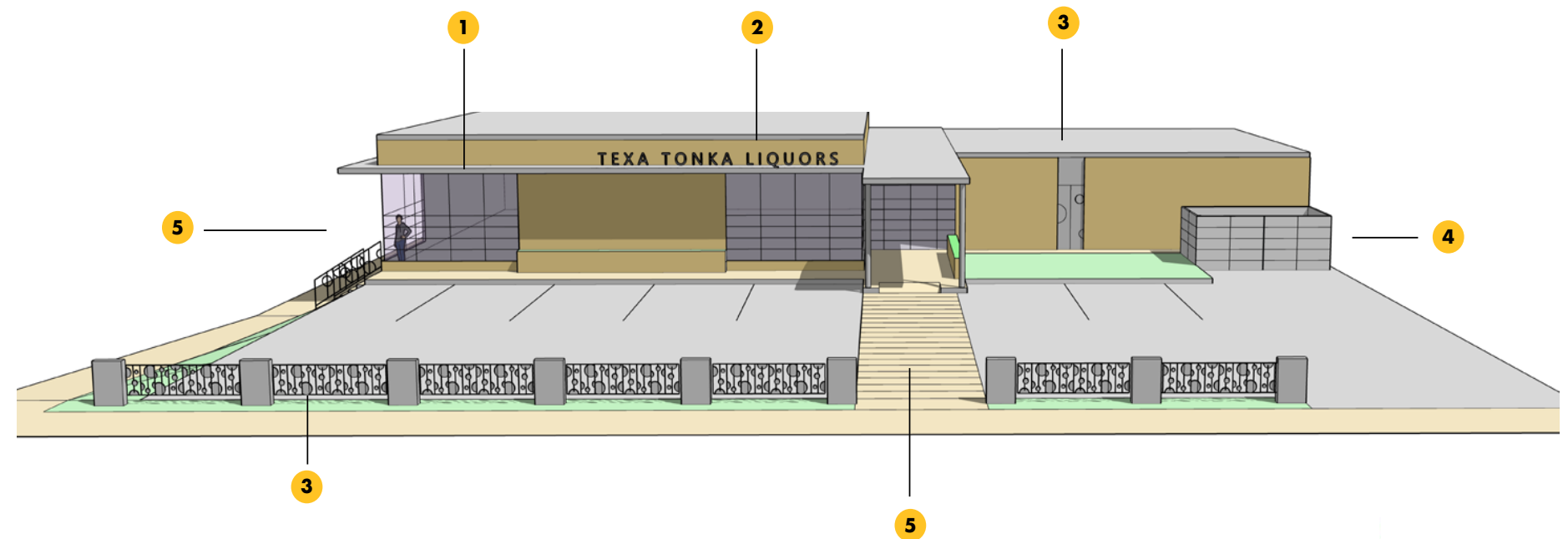


Figure 4.17

Potential Redevelopment Concept

Figure 4.18 illustrates characteristics of a new Texa-Tonka building by applying the design guidelines, zoning parameters and design preferences gleaned from community input during the small area planning process:

- The corner building is articulated as several simple masses of separate heights and materials
- The building matches the height of adjacent buildings at the edges of the property
- The setback gradually increases from 5’ at the corner to 15’ at the north property edge
- The commercial portion of the property uses an “enhanced setback” to create a space that is semi-public: a patio for dining.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TEXA-TONKA BUILDING

“Texa Tonka Modern”

- 1 Interlocking or distinct volumes to break down the scale of longer buildings
- 2 Celebrated entrance experience with plaza and portico
- 3 Ribbon and corner windows to express horizontality
- 4 Simple and few materials
- 5 A modest setback that is enhanced with features such as planter walls, landscaping, and plaza.

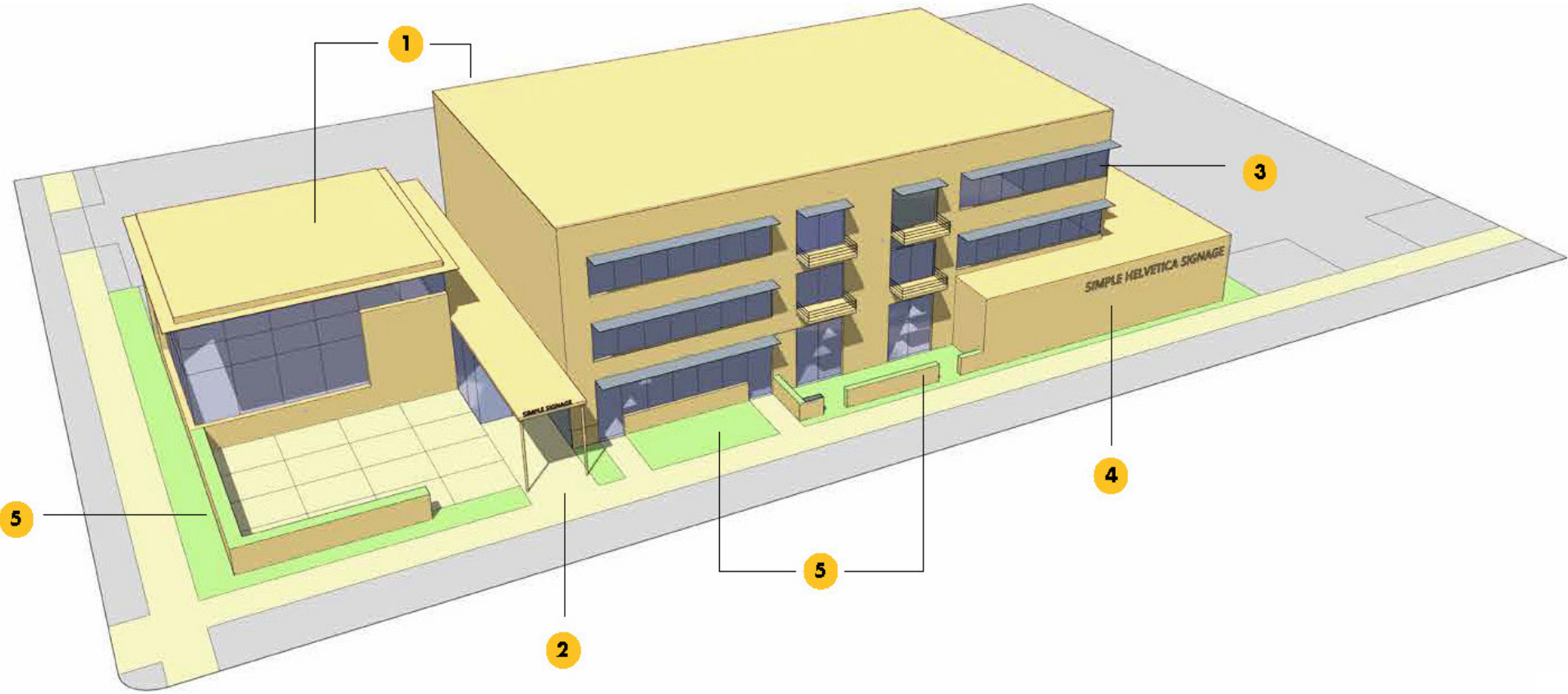


Figure 4.18

GREENING AND GATHERING

During the planning process participants expressed strong interest in improving the function, quality and character of Texa-Tonka’s sidewalks, streets and parking areas with plantings, furnishing, public art, and other amenities. Typically these types of enhancements are undertaken and maintained through the establishment of a SSD (Special Service District) such as in the city’s Excelsior and Grand or West End business areas. Unfortunately, the small size of the Texa-Tonka Neighborhood Commercial Node doesn’t provide a sufficient number of business to establish a viable SSD.

A second, less formal option for improving the public realm is to support volunteer activities and partnership efforts from residents, non-profit organizations, businesses, and the city. Often referred to as tactical urbanism, these efforts could include low-cost, do-it-yourself (DIY) initiatives for creating new public amenities, such as creating wooden platforms/boxes that can be arranged to form seating areas, repurposing storage containers as planters or painting colorful crosswalk designs. Planning and hosting neighborhood activities within these newly enhanced locations would also help strengthen neighborhood cohesion and foster greater resident-business relations.

Additionally, as building renovations and redevelopment occurs, city requirements for parking lot and site landscaping will come into play. Together these efforts can improve visual appearance, and quality of life, as well as contribute to economic vitality.

Community workshop participants worked with consultants to identify enhancement and activation or programming ideas that could be implemented by Texa-Tonka area residents and business or property owners (Figure 4.19). Figure 4.20 illustrates places identified within Texa-Tonka for applying enhancement and activation ideas.

ACTIVATION & INFORMAL ENHANCEMENTS



Outdoor eating space



Outdoor seating



Community garden

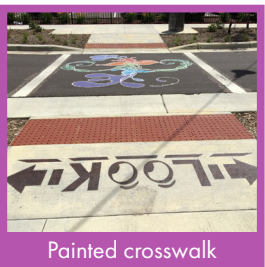
Parking lot amenity



Painted crosswalk



Painted crosswalk



Painted crosswalk

Street amenity



Planters



Parklet



Planters

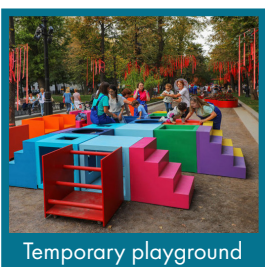
Sidewalk amenity



Open streets



Farmers Market



Temporary playground

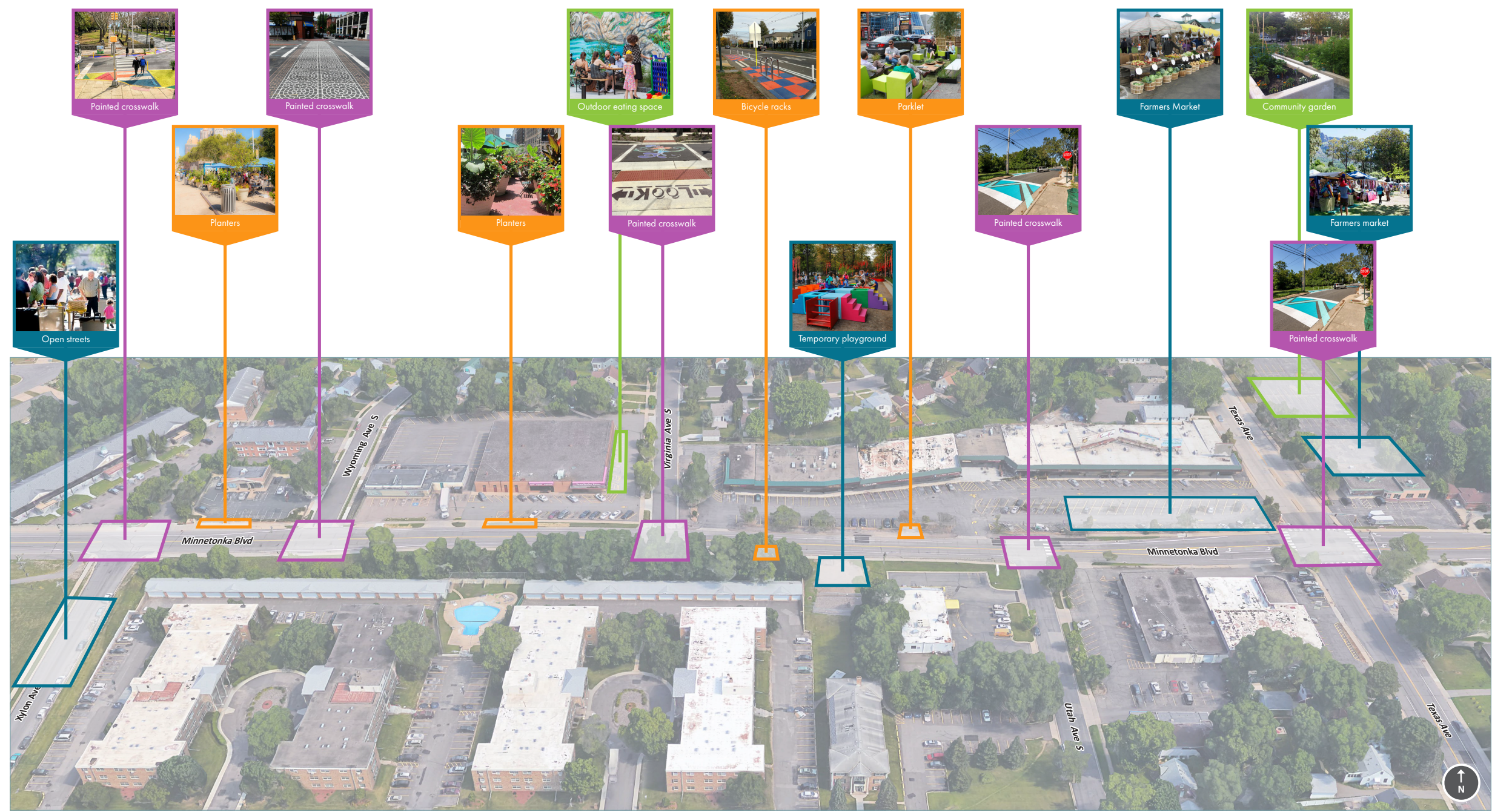


Farmers market

Event/activity

Figure 4.19

ACTIVATION & INFORMAL ENHANCEMENTS



This map documents ideas generated by workshop participants for activating and enhancing outdoor areas with community and business owner generated / supported events and arrangements of plantings, furnishings and public art for residents and visitors to gather, socialize, relax, and play.

- Event/activity
- Parking lot amenity
- Sidewalk amenity
- Street amenity

Figure 4.20

Movement and Circulation

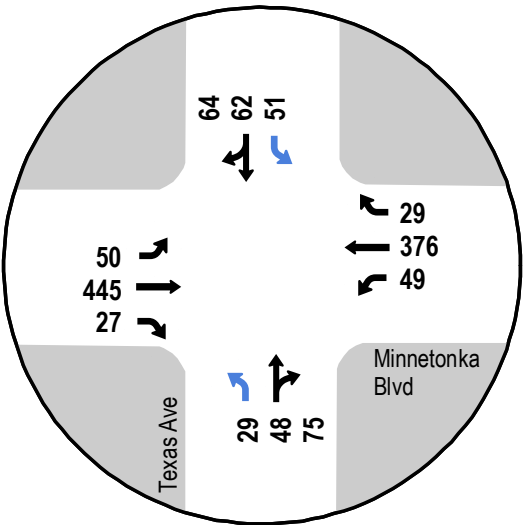
This Small Area Plan seeks to address the needs of pedestrians, bike riders, transit patrons, and motorists in and around Texa-Tonka. The plan is inspired by the vision of a more attractive, safe, accessible and connected neighborhood commercial node. Recognizing Texa-Tonka’s auto-oriented history the plan looks to Connect the Park (Complete + Living Streets policies), Capital Improvements Plans and land development regulations for strengthening walkability within a city-wide multi-modal transportation system.

A traffic study (modeling, analyzing) related to the full redevelopment (all illustrated options) of Texa-Tonka was undertaken to understand potential impacts on the existing street network and identify if future modifications may be needed. Key findings include:

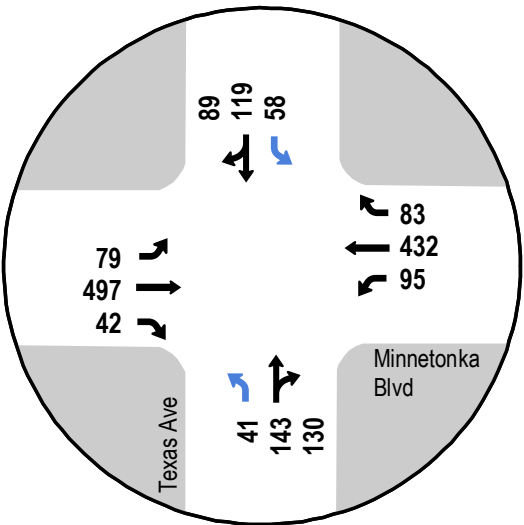
- Intersections are expected to operate acceptably without any geometric changes to study area roadways (Figure 4.21 shows expected vehicle traffic at the intersection of Minnetonka Blvd and Texas Ave).
- Redevelopment plans propose numerous site access reductions (closures) along Minnetonka Boulevard which result in an increase in vehicles turning onto/off of minor streets to access relocated parking facilities. If Minnetonka Blvd remains as a 2-lane roadway the increases in left hand turns associated with this increased activity may create a safety issue (potential rear end collisions) as vehicles turning left do not have their own turn lane. Traffic operations modeled for the total redevelopment of the project area would be best supported by the 3-lane cross section for Minnetonka Boulevard suggested in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan as this would provide the safety benefits of a center turn lane.”

See appendix for complete traffic study.

2030 EXPECTED VEHICLE TRAFFIC
Intersection of Minnetonka Blvd and Texas Ave



AM Turning Volumes



PM Turning Volumes

Figure 4.21

Minnetonka Blvd. and Texas Ave. Intersection

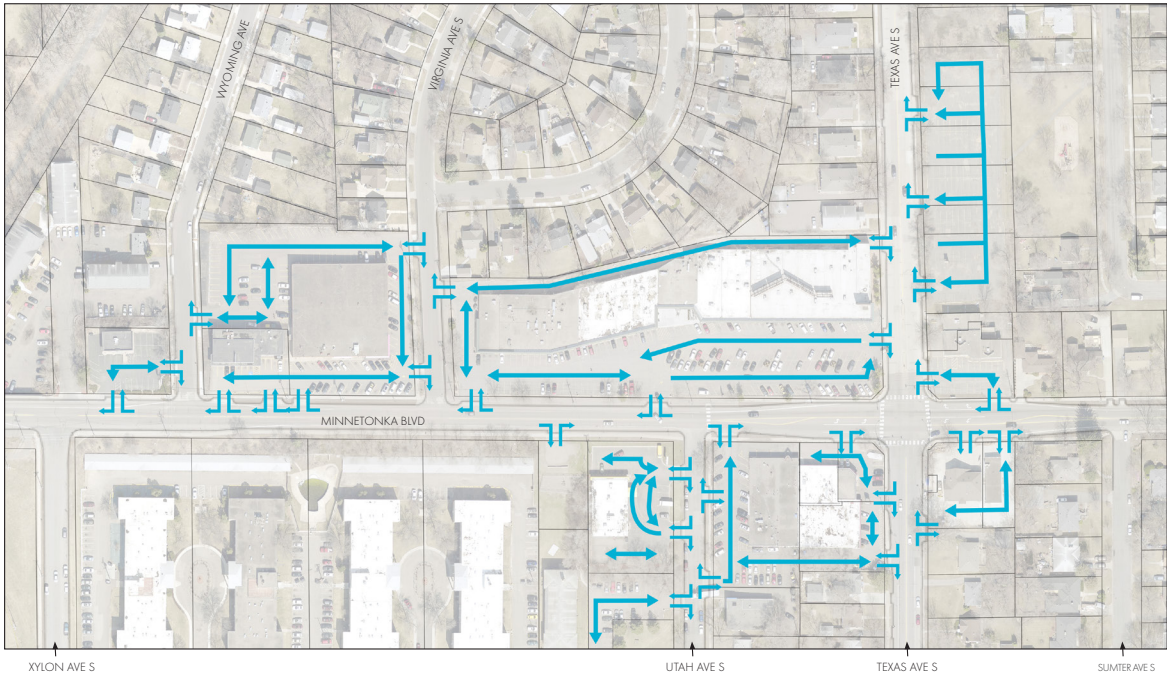
Hennepin County and St. Louis Park have discussed reconstructing the intersection of Minnetonka Boulevard and Texas Avenue at a lower elevation (approx. 4 ft.) due to concerns with sight lines and traffic safety. The Texa-Tonka consultant team performed a concept-level review of potential impacts that lowering the intersection elevation by four feet would have on adjacent properties. The review was conducted using available aerial photography superimposed with 2 foot contour interval topographic data. Given the change in elevation, existing driveways closest to the intersection as well as four mature shade trees would need to be removed. Additionally, if existing facilities remain as they are today (no redevelopment), several modest height retaining walls (2-3 ft.) would be required in areas closest to the reconstructed intersection on the northeast, southeast and southwest properties. Existing raised planters in the parking lot of the Texa-Tonka Shopping Center (northwest of the intersection) currently provide elevation transition so it’s unlikely there would be discernible impacts to these associated parking facilities.



Aerial image of intersection at Minnetonka Blvd and Texas Ave. Driveways are highlighted in red

DESCRIBING THE VISION GREENING AND GATHERING

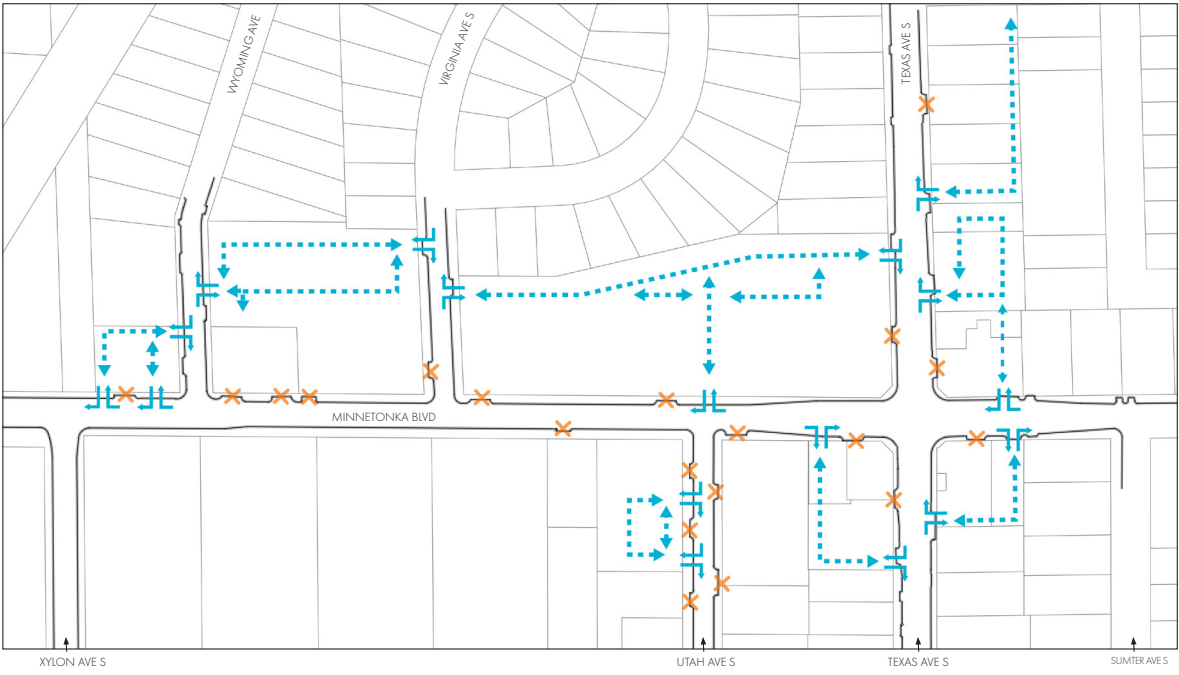
As of the writing of this Plan, the intersection reconstruction project is not included in the County’s 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). If the improvement were included in the County’s 2025 CIP it’s possible they could be implemented around 2026-27.



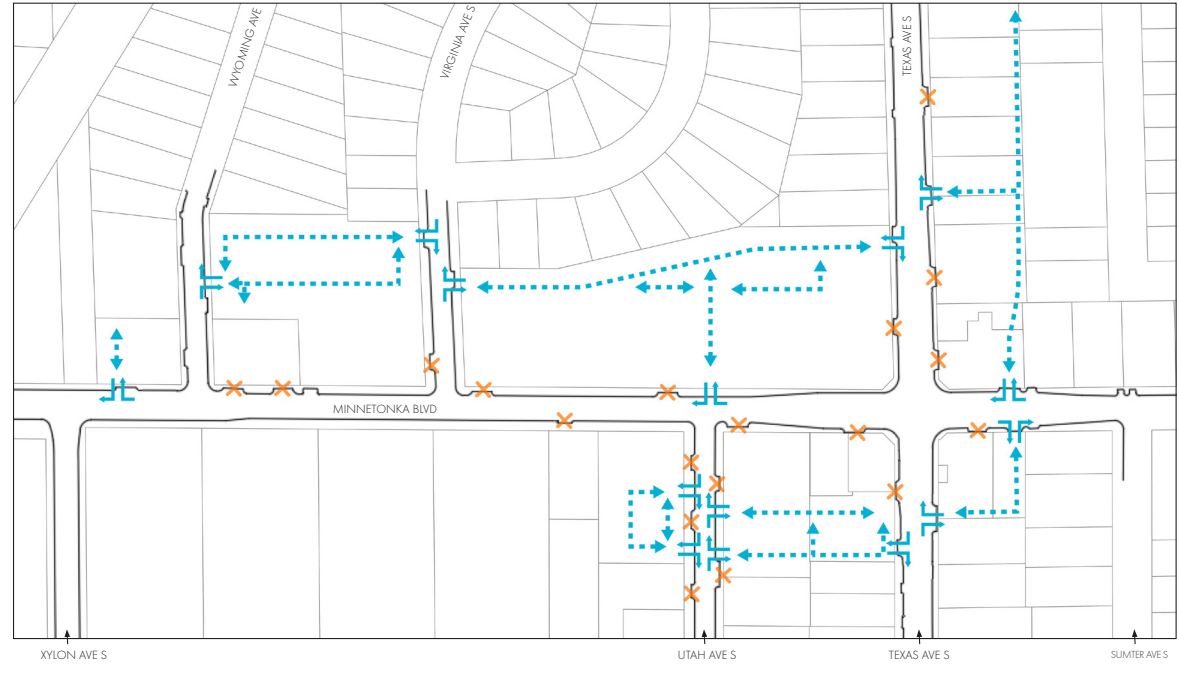
Existing

- Existing Curb Line
- Parcels
- Existing Circulation
- Proposed Circulation
- Curb Cut
- Removed Curb Cut

Reduction in curb cuts along Minnetonka Blvd and Texas Ave S can improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety



Proposed Option 1



Proposed Option 2

Figure 4.22



CHAPTER 5

ACHIEVING THE VISION

IMPLEMENTATION
PARTNERSHIPS

IMPLEMENTATION

The Texa-Tonka neighborhood commercial node has the potential to accommodate new residential, commercial, and office uses, as well as revitalization and expansion of existing facilities. This new investment and growth can increase patronage and prosperity for existing and future local businesses, as well as support enhancement and activation of the area’s public realm. While the city does not officially adopt Small Area Plans, it does rely upon them for guidance in matters of land use, zoning and redevelopment. To that end this Plan was crafted to support St. Louis Park’s existing community development goals, policies, strategies and regulations.

The implementation of the ideas and options described in this Plan takes both public and private sector interests into consideration as well as an understanding of strategies necessary to overcome potential barriers, and capitalize on identified opportunities.

THIS PLAN’S SUCCESS DEPENDS ON
THREE KEY FACTORS:

- 

Development of **comfortable and welcoming people-centered spaces**
- 

Improvement of the **local walkways, streets and parking lots**
- 

Sustained **public and private partnerships** over the coming decade

Public financial support for realizing many of the ideas described in this Plan may be secured through grant programs offered by the city, Hennepin County, and others:

- Neighborhood Revitalization Program**
<https://www.stlouispark.org/home/showdocument?id=12992>
- St. Louis Park Family Services Collaborative Grant**
<https://slpfamilyservices.org/grants>
- St. Louis Park Arts & Culture Grants**
<https://www.slpfota.org/artsandculture>
- St. Louis Park Community and Youth Development Fund**
<http://www.slpcf.org/>
- Healthy Living Grant Program**
<https://www.stlouispark.org/our-city/tings-to-do/health-in-the-park/healthy-living-grant>
- Arts & Culture Grant**
<https://www.stlouispark.org/our-city/arts-and-culture-grant-application>
- Hennepin County Environmental Education Grants**
<https://www.hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/green-partners-enviro-ed-prog>
- Community Development Block Grant Program**
<https://www.hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/federal-housing-programs>

DIY Greening and Gathering

As described in Chapter 4, Greening and Gathering there are a range of do-it-yourself (DIY) style projects or events that could be undertaken at modest costs (as compared to permanent public improvement projects) by groups of motivated and organized volunteers.

Basic steps to follow when undertaking informal, do-it-yourself public realm enchantments are described in Figure 5.1.



Interim design strategies are tools and tactics that communities can use to improve their roadways and public spaces in the near term. They include low-cost, interim materials, new public amenities, and creative partnerships with local stakeholders, which together enable faster project delivery and more flexible and responsive design.



St. Louis Park
MINNESOTA
Experience LIFE in the Park

TEXA TONKA Small Area Plan

Idea worksheet!

Let's start planning:



Got an idea?



Who is your team?



Plan out your project.



Talk to agencies or local business that will be involved.



Fundraise and gather materials.



Throw a block party to get people to come help build the project.

Celebrate!

And make plans to use the space on a regular basis so it becomes part of the community.



Figure 5.1. Informational poster to help residents brainstorm and launch informal DIY projects for public realm enhancements

Examples of DIY community-based projects

REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

While the Small Area Plan will serve as a guide for Texa-Tonka’s future revitalization, enhancement, and redevelopment, it is a policy document. As such, it cannot require that the vision will be maintained and realized over the long-term or that community needs will remain the same. Those assurances are only available with the application of regulating documents such as zoning and building codes with special considerations to future mixed-use development. Specifically, the appropriateness of the existing C-2 General Commercial zoning designation was explored and debated during the planning process due to its allowance of 6-story buildings and inclusion of residential as a conditional use. **This plan recommends rezoning the existing C-2 General Commercial parcels to C-1 Neighborhood Commercial in order better align regulations with community preferences.**

In addition to a change in zoning, the Texa-Tonka-specific design guidelines for commercial and mixed use renovations and new developments recommended in this Plan are intended to serve as an implementation tool for the public and private sectors. The experience of many communities involved in similar initiatives has shown that establishing clear expectations for the quality and design of new development is essential in areas targeted for reinvestment in order to support desired uses and reflect intended outcomes. This will also direct future development towards creating attractive, people-centered spaces.

Private and Public Investment

Comprehensive and area-specific planning initiatives such as this one come at a time when demands on local government are high and resources are limited. Regardless, they are essential for sustained growth and economic equality. As a fully-developed community, St. Louis Park has a long history of successfully planning for and encouraging redevelopment at a range of scales using a variety of programs and structures. For the purposes of this Small Area Plan, the private sector is expected to take the lead role in renovating, revitalizing, and redeveloping existing commercial facilities in Texa-Tonka. This is already beginning to occur as evidenced by recently proposed expansion plans for Best Cleaners and changes in ownership and renovation plans for the Texa-Tonka Shopping Center (Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2. Rendering of renovation of the Texa-Tonka Shopping Center. Courtesy of Paster Properties

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St. Louis Park
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