

Higgins Road Corridor Plan

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For:
The City of Park Ridge, Illinois

July, 2010

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I. Corridor Context

The purpose of the “Higgins Road Corridor Plan” is to describe the City of Park Ridge’s vision for the future development of the Higgins Road Corridor and provide strategies for its implementation. Phase One of this planning process identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the corridor. Land use, streetscape, transportation and market issues were identified during Phase One.

Corridor Study Area

Figure 1: Study Area illustrates the location of the Higgins Road Corridor. The 1.2-mile corridor study area runs from Canfield Road on the east to Dee Road on the west and encompasses approximately 30 acres. However, the Park Ridge Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Hall on the corner of Higgins Road and Canfield Road is only partially within Park Ridge’s jurisdiction. The parking lot of the VFW Hall is in Park Ridge, while the building is in unincorporated Cook County. Further, the study area only runs along the northern boundary of the roadway; the south side of Higgins Road, abutting the expressway, is the City of Chicago’s corporate limits, while the north side is within Park Ridge.

Figure 1 also illustrates the different physical characters of the east and west sides of the corridor, which are referred to throughout this document as the East Side Character District and the West Side Character District. For the purposes of this Plan, the corridor is divided west of Cumberland Avenue and east of Cumberland Avenue, based on the different lot configurations along Higgins Road to the east and west of Cumberland Avenue. Only the Park Ridge side of the corridor is considered within the character districts.

Corridor Overview

The Higgins Road Corridor is of particular importance to Park Ridge because it is the City’s southern gateway and the first impression for those entering the community from the Kennedy Expressway (I-90). Also, in a City comprised primarily of single-family dwellings, the corridor provides a home for non-residential uses, as well as moderate density housing. The vision for the redevelopment of the corridor, including land use, urban design, streetscape and circulation elements, should allow for the continuance of these uses; office, commercial and higher density

housing within an attractive environment that is uniquely Park Ridge.

Higgins Road is not unified in character. The Park Ridge side of the corridor is home to a variety of land uses of different scales including offices, multiple-family residential, retail, personal services, and a garden center/landscape waste transfer business. The largest uses are the Dominick’s at the northwest corner of Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road, office buildings at 1030 and 1300 Higgins Road west of Cumberland Avenue, the Big Ten Conference office building at the intersection of Higgins Road and Dee Road, and the DiMonte & Lizak office building east of Cumberland Avenue. Other businesses along the corridor, especially in the East Side Character District, are primarily smaller-scale retail, personal service, medical office, professional office and a few restaurants. A few older single-family houses remain along the corridor that should be redeveloped to one of the non-residential uses that are appropriate for the corridor.

When this planning process was undertaken, there were two immediate redevelopment opportunities along the Park Ridge side of the corridor. The first was the vacant site of 0.73 acres, just east of Cumberland Avenue, formerly occupied by Budget Rent-A-Car. Since the beginning of the planning process a new single story commercial building has



The Mr. K’s Garden Center site is a significant future redevelopment opportunity within the Higgins Road Corridor.

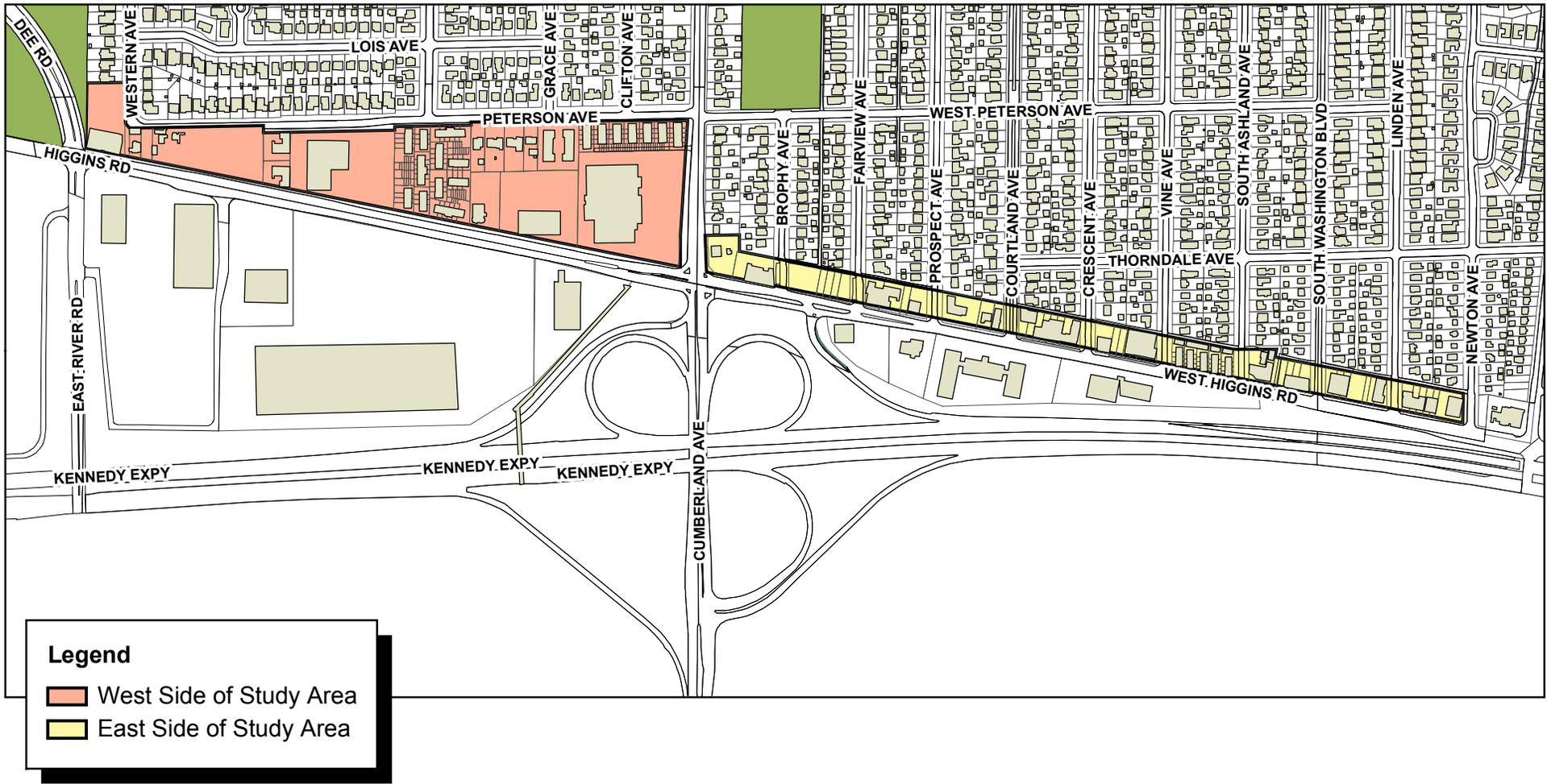


Figure 1: Study Area

been completed on this property greatly improving the character of this prominent site at the entrance to Park Ridge. Another site, in the West Side Character District is just over two acres in size and is currently occupied by Mr. K's Garden Center, a garden center and landscape waste transfer facility. This site may become available for future development in the next few years.

In order to understand the Higgins Road Corridor, five different elements of the corridor were studied. These elements influence the corridor's redevelopment. They are:

1. Existing Land Use
2. Zoning Regulations
3. Transportation Characteristics
4. Streetscape Character
5. Market Assessment

Existing Land Use

Figure 2: Existing Land Use illustrates the existing land uses along the corridor, including those on the south side of Higgins Road (in Chicago) for context. However, in the calculations that follow, only the land uses within Park Ridge are considered.



Office uses of various scales along both the east and west sides of the corridor are the most prevalent land use.

Office is the most prevalent land use along the Park Ridge side of Higgins Road. Total office use represents 10.5 acres or 34% of the corridor. The next largest land use is multiple-family at 8.09 acres,

or approximately 27% of land area, and the third is retail commercial at almost 21% or 6.2 acres. Within the East Side Character District and West Side Character District, the top three existing land uses are also office, multiple-family and commercial-retail. In both character districts, office uses comprise just over one-third of all land area. In the West Side Character District, multiple-family dwellings are another third of all land uses, while in the East Side Character District they constitute approximately 17% of the land area. Retail commercial land uses are almost 21% of all land uses on the west, and just over 17% on the east.

It is important to note the distinct physical character of these land uses in each character district. The difference in development size can be seen in the total acreage of each character district. The West Side Character District is 21.72 acres in size, comprised of large, deep parcels, and the East Side Character District, with small, shallow and relatively narrow parcels, is 8.46 acres. In the West Side Character District, the top three land uses are large-scale developments, such as the Big 10 Conference building, the multiple-tenant office buildings at 1300 and 1030 Higgins Road, the new townhouse development and Dominick's grocery store. In the East Side Character District, the three largest land uses are comprised of individual smaller-scale developments on shallow lots.

Another distinction between the East Side and West Side Character Districts is the types of land uses present outside of the three most common land uses that the districts hold in common. In the West Side Character District, the fourth largest land use is heavy commercial¹ – which is the 2.2 acre Mr. K's Garden Center site. The remaining land uses on the west side are commercial-restaurant and single-family. This is in contrast to the East Side Character District, which has no heavy commercial. The fourth largest land use on the east side is commercial-auto, which includes establishments like Park Ridge Auto and Jiffy Lube,

¹ Heavy commercial uses are considered retail, rental and/or service establishments that have permanent outdoor service or storage areas, or partially enclosed structures including, but not limited to, large-scale home improvement centers, landscape yards, lumberyards, heavy equipment rental and leasing, etc.

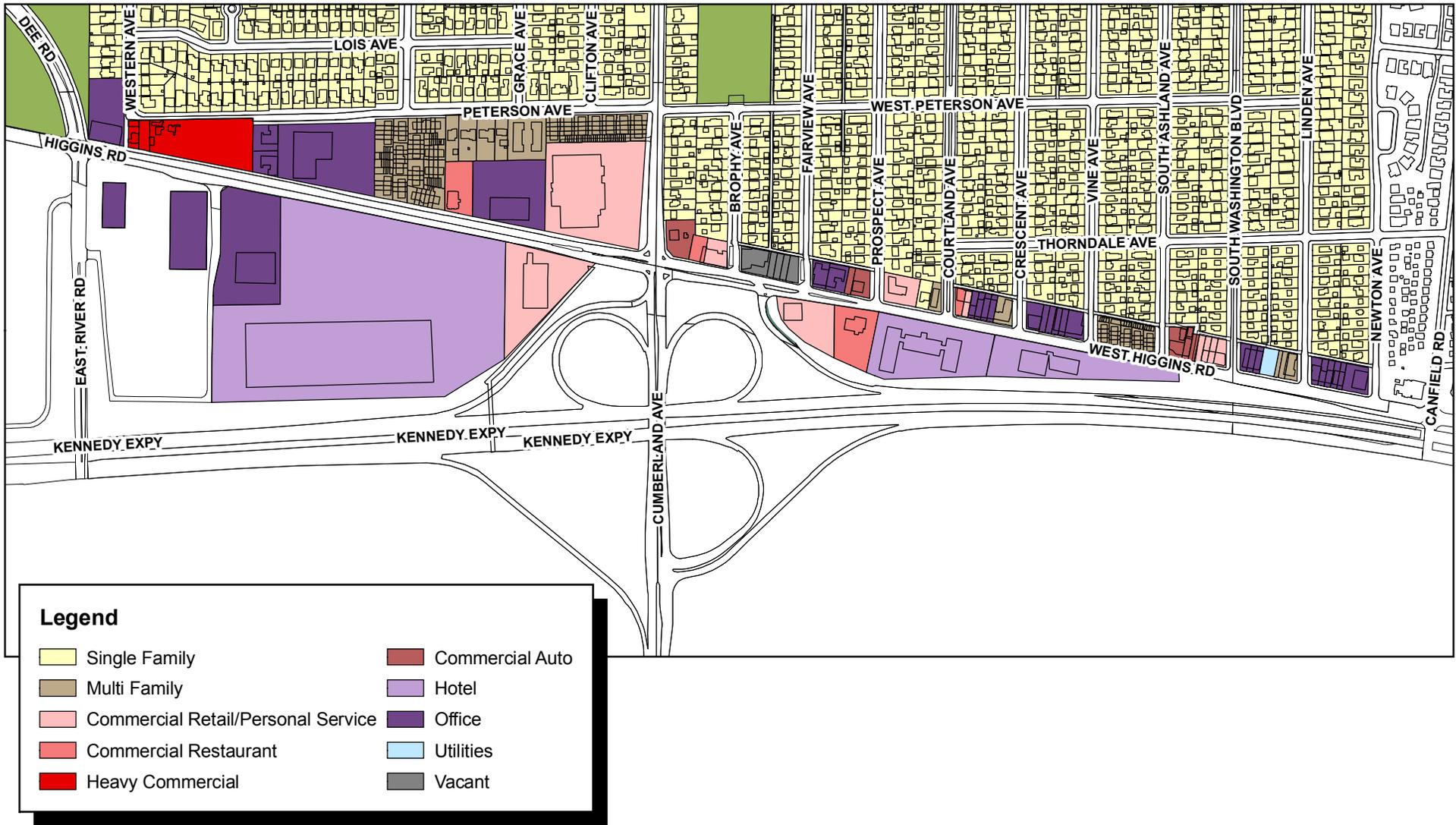


Figure 2: Existing Land Use



Land uses along the east side of Higgins Road are of smaller-scale than those on the west side.

Table 1: Study Area Existing Land Use, below, shows the breakdown of land uses within the corridor as a whole, as well as for the East Side and West Side Character Districts individually.

Zoning Regulations

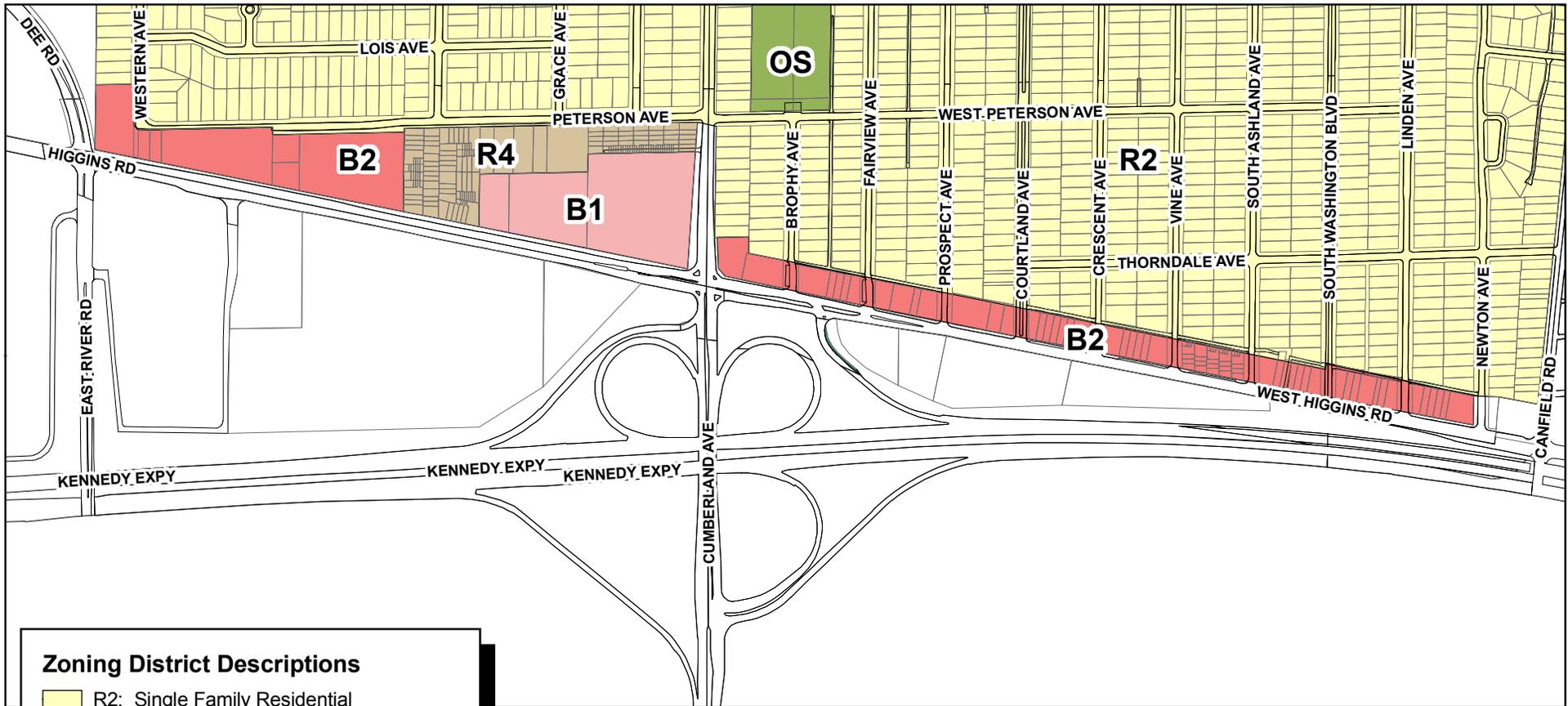
A majority of the zoning lots along the Higgins Road Corridor are zoned B-2 General Commercial District, which allows for a variety of commercial and office uses. The entire East Side Character District and approximately half of the West Side Character District is currently zoned the B-2 District. Other zoning districts within the corridor, which are found only in the West Side Character District, are the B-1 Retail and Office District and the R-4 Multiple-Family Residential District. The entirety of the corridor abuts the R-2 Single-Family District to the north. These zoning designations are shown in Figure 3: Zoning Map.

Generally these two districts are characterized as follows:

- Both permit office, retail, personal service and restaurant uses.
- Hotels are permitted within the B-1 and B-2 Districts by special use only.
- The B-1 District permits dwelling units above the ground floor, allowing for mixed-use development, while the B-2 District does not permit any type of residential.
- Both districts are limited to a 40-foot maximum building height, which generally translates to a structure of three to four stories.
- The B-1 and B-2 Districts require front and corner side yard setbacks. Neither district requires an interior side or rear yard unless the lot abuts residential, in which case, a five-foot interior side yard and 15 foot rear yard setback, are required. The rear yard requirement is particularly relevant because all land uses in the corridor abut single-family residential uses to the rear of their lots. Rear transition yards of ten feet, with specific planting requirements, are also required where a nonresidential district abuts a residential district.

while the west side does not contain any of these uses. The remainder of the land area on the east is distributed between commercial-restaurant, utilities (the Commonwealth Edison transformer) and single-family dwellings. In both the East Side and West Side Character Districts, the single-family land use occupies one parcel of land.

Table 1: Study Area Existing Land Use			
Land Use	Corridor Study Area Percent Land Use		
	Corridor	West Side Character District	East Side Character District
Office	36.32%	32.69%	39.95%
Multi-Family	23.85%	30.68%	17.02%
Commercial - Retail	19.51%	21.87%	17.14%
Heavy Commercial	5.73%	11.45%	--
Commercial - Restaurant	5.09%	3.31%	6.86%
Commercial - Auto	7.27%	--	14.54%
Single-Family	1.07%	--	2.13%
Utilities	1.18%	--	2.36%



Zoning District Descriptions

- R2: Single Family Residential
- R4: Multi-Family Residential
- B1: Retail and Office Development
- B2: General Commercial
- OS: Open Space Special Purpose District

Figure 3: Zoning Map

Both the East Side and West Side Character Districts have existing multiple-family developments but only the west side is zoned for multiple-family residential development (R-4 District). The east side has three multiple-family developments, which are all in the B-2 District and, therefore, legal nonconforming uses. In addition to multiple-family residential uses, both the East Side and West Side Character Districts have existing single-family residential uses. The current zoning of these single-family lots – both are in the B-2 District – make them legal nonconforming as well.

Transportation Characteristics

One of the corridor’s biggest assets is its accessibility. Bordered by the I-90 Expressway (Kennedy Expressway), there are exits to Higgins Road at both Cumberland Avenue and Canfield Road, and a link to the Tri-State Tollway (I-294) north of the Cumberland Avenue exit on the I-90 Expressway. O’Hare Airport is also located in close proximity to the corridor, and can be accessed easily by auto or public transit. The Higgins Road Corridor has direct access to the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Blue Line train at Cumberland Avenue, which travels between Chicago’s downtown and O’Hare Airport. Residents and employees can take public transportation to work and home via the CTA Blue Line at Cumberland Avenue or Metra, which has a stop located in Uptown Park Ridge.

However, easy accessibility also creates issues of traffic and congestion, especially during rush hour. Data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) reports an average daily traffic count (ADT) on Higgins Road of 22,900 cars east of Cumberland Avenue and 25,800 cars west of Cumberland Avenue. In addition, the two access points to the I-90 Expressway at Cumberland Avenue and Canfield Road can be difficult to navigate. In particular, the Cumberland Avenue exit is not at Cumberland Avenue itself, but rather just east of the intersection of Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road. This configuration requires a motorist to cross two lanes of eastbound traffic on Higgins Road in order to travel westbound on Higgins Road to get to the Cumberland Avenue intersection. These two north-south roadways are also heavily traveled. Cumberland Avenue has an ADT of 18,800 cars and Canfield Road has an ADT of 13,700 cars.

There are additional issues for pedestrians and CTA Blue Line train commuters. Access to the train stop is via a pedestrian path from the station over the I-90 Expressway to Higgins Road. The path is intended to guide transit users to the intersection of Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road, and cross at the lighted crosswalk. Many users take various shortcuts to enter into Park Ridge. Many cut through the Marriott parking lot and cross Higgins Road at various points between Cumberland Avenue and Dee Road to enter the City via the townhouse development or the Dominick’s parking lot. Transit riders find the pedestrian crossing at Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road to be daunting and dangerous. The “walk” cycle of the traffic control signal at the intersection is inadequate to completely cross Higgins Road.



Because of short “walk cycles,” pedestrians find crossing Cumberland Avenue at Higgins Road to be difficult.

The impacts of the high traffic roadway are also felt by the residents of the single-family neighborhoods behind Higgins Road. Residents have voiced concerns that future development may cause negative traffic impacts within the adjacent single-family neighborhoods. To the west of Cumberland Avenue, residents are relatively insulated because there is no access from Higgins Road to Peterson Avenue. Neighborhood residents expressed a strong desire that this be maintained. However, many on the west side perceive Greenwood Avenue as a new “mini-

Cumberland Avenue,” with motorists exiting northbound Cumberland Avenue for westbound Peterson Avenue, then using Greenwood Avenue as a north-south access way.

To the east of Cumberland Avenue, local north-south streets have direct access to Higgins Road. Residents to the north are concerned that auto commuters treat these local north-south streets as “cut-throughs,” creating issues of higher traffic and speeding. In addition, some drivers who work, or are doing business with the commercial or office uses along Higgins Road, park on these local neighborhood streets because parking is not permitted on the majority of Higgins Road; only at the easternmost end of the corridor, for approximately two blocks, are there on-street parking spaces available along Higgins Road. In most cases, the small parcels along Higgins do not allow room for off-street parking. Should more intensive redevelopment occur, there is concern that more on-street parking will find its way onto the local streets immediately north of Higgins Road.

Finally, in terms of larger circulation issues, on the west side of Higgins Road, Peterson Avenue narrows from two-lanes to one-lane and slows traffic circulation. This occurs approximately mid-block between Greenwood Avenue and Western Avenue, and is currently part of the Mr. K’s Garden Center zoning lot. If the Mr. K’s site were to be redeveloped, the City should negotiate for additional area to widen the road from one lane to two lanes.

Streetscape Character

A defining characteristic of any corridor is the streetscape. In the case of Higgins Road, the quality of the streetscape is quite varied. [Figure 4: Streetscape Conditions](#) illustrates the streetscape condition within the corridor, as well as on the south side of the roadway to provide context. In order to understand the existing conditions, the quality of the current streetscape was evaluated on the basis of three elements. First, the presence and condition of sidewalks were assessed. Sidewalks are key to pedestrian connectivity and are fundamental to a “walkable” corridor. Next, the presence or absence of a parkway was surveyed. The term “parkway” refers to the area between the sidewalk and the roadway, and can be either landscaped or hardscaped. Parkway are important because they help separate the pedestrian on the sidewalk from the automobile

on the roadway. Also, available street parking was documented, which serves as a separation between the pedestrian and auto traffic.

The East Side Character District has the most variation in streetscape quality. Beginning at Canfield Road and moving west to Cumberland Avenue, the following conditions were observed:

- Between Canfield Road and Washington Boulevard, sidewalks and parkways are in good condition and well defined. On-street parking is permitted, creating further separation between the pedestrian and the automobile.
- Between Ashland Avenue and Crescent Avenue are some of the worst conditions found along Higgins Road. In this area the parkway is so deteriorated that it is used for illegal on-street parking. This creates a dangerous environment for pedestrians that erodes the distinction between the automobile and pedestrian zones. The office building at the northeast corner of Crescent Avenue and Higgins Road does, however, have an established parkway and sidewalk.



Deteriorated parkways create a dangerous environment for pedestrians and encourage illegal parking.

- Between Crescent Avenue and Fairview Avenue, there is both a sidewalk and an established parkway. No on-street parking is allowed. In this area, however, there are two large lots – Park Ridge Auto and a lot in single-family use – that contain full lot width curb cuts, again not separating the pedestrian environment from auto traffic, and impairing connectivity with the larger sidewalk system.
- From Fairview Avenue to Cumberland Avenue, there is a sidewalk but no established parkway. While the pedestrian path is defined because of the sidewalk, pedestrians are walking closer to traffic than in other areas of Higgins Road. No on-street parking is permitted on the stretch of Higgins Road, eliminating a possible buffer between moving traffic and pedestrians using the sidewalk.

Within the West Side Character District, the streetscape character is more consistent. Starting at Cumberland Avenue and continuing west to Dee Road, the following conditions were observed:

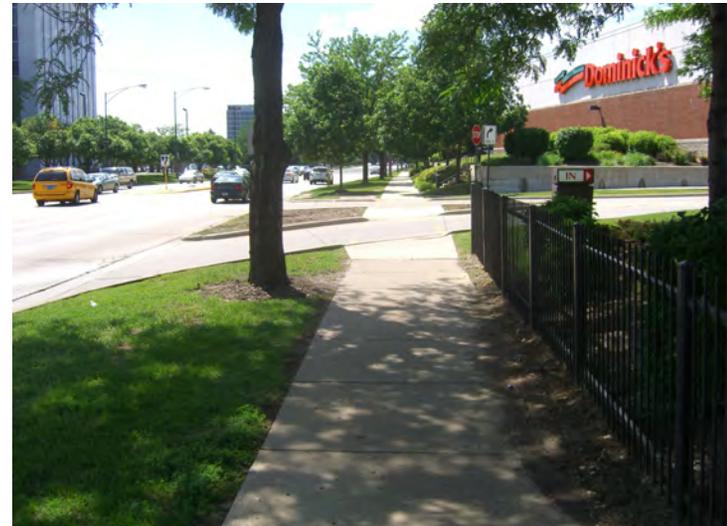
- For the entirety of the west side of the corridor, no on-street parking is permitted on either the north or south side of the roadway.
- From Cumberland Avenue to approximately mid-parcel of the 1300 Higgins office building, the streetscape has a sidewalk and a defined parkway in good condition. Much of this area has attractive landscaping in the front yard of developments.
- From the mid-parcel point of 1300 Higgins to the Mr. K’s property, there is a sidewalk, but no established parkway to separate the pedestrian from the roadway.
- Mr. K’s property has no sidewalk or parkway. The majority of the area in front of the property is in very poor condition; it is unpaved and without landscaping.
- The Big 10 Conference building located at the corner of Higgins Road and Dee Road has a sidewalk. During interviews with

property managers and owners, the Big 10 representative stated it would be beneficial to continue the sidewalk uninterrupted from their site east to the rest of the sidewalks along Higgins Road so that employees and visitors are able walk to restaurants and other businesses.

- On the south side of Higgins Road within the west side corridor study area, the Marriott hotel property maintains both sidewalk and a landscaped parkway along its property. To the east and west of the property, the establishments maintain the area between the property line and roadway with landscaping.

Market Assessment

Because of the high level of traffic on Higgins Road and the proximity to the I-90 Expressway, the market assessment focused on office and retail uses. The residential marketplace in Park Ridge has always been strong and will remain so over the long run. At the far east end of the East Side Character District where the traffic on Higgins Road is somewhat less than it is closer to the Cumberland Road intersection with Higgins Road,



Along the west side of the corridor, many properties maintain attractive landscaping. Sidewalks and landscaped parkways create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

there may well be future opportunities for new residential development. However, the vast majority of the properties along the Higgins Road corridor are better suited for office and retail use and the market studies for the purposes of this plan concentrated on those uses.

Office Market

The office buildings along Higgins Road within Park Ridge constitute approximately 260,000 square feet of office space and maintain a 92% occupancy rate. Buildings within Chicago and Rosemont on Higgins Road have lower occupancy rates of 86%, though their total space inventory is much higher. For comparison, the Chicago side of the corridor has 1.1 million square feet. The O'Hare office sub-market had an even lower occupancy rate of 83% as of the fourth quarter of 2007, which was slightly lower than that of the suburban Chicago office market as a whole. However, good quality office buildings tend to be well occupied in the O'Hare market and occupancy rates have increased steadily since 2002, and, specifically within Park Ridge, office tenants along Higgins Road are satisfied with their location.

There is a market for additional office space along Higgins Road in Park Ridge that could be met by new construction, especially at the larger Mr. K's Garden Center site. Smaller firms in the professional services, real estate, financial services, information sector or medical providers, interested in a convenient O'Hare location, would be attracted to a new office building on Higgins Road.

Retail Market

Higgins Road is not a significant retail area in Park Ridge. The Dominick's located at the northwest corner of Higgins Road and Cumberland Avenue, and the smaller businesses east of Cumberland Avenue are the main non-office commercial users within the corridor. Uptown Park Ridge, the "South Park" neighborhood along Devon Avenue, and Northwest Highway are the primary retail nodes in Park Ridge. In the redevelopment of Higgins Road, new commercial development should not compete with other commercial areas within Park Ridge. For reference, these existing Park Ridge commercial areas are:

1. Uptown Park Ridge is located at Touhy Avenue, Northwest Highway and Prospect Avenue. The mixed-use redevelopment

underway here will add about 71,000 square feet of commercial space. Tenants include Trader Joe's, Chico's, Jos. A. Banks, Noodles & Company, Houlihan's, Jason's Deli, Kriser's Pets and Scottrade. In addition, there are smaller independent stores on Prospect Avenue, Touhy Avenue, Main Street and Northwest Highway, and those within the Park Ridge Plaza and Park Ridge Summit shopping centers.

2. The largest retail concentration on Northwest Highway in Park Ridge is Village Green Shopping Center with 67,600 square feet of space occupied by Talbot's and J. Jill outlet stores, Famous Footwear, Kinko's, Blockbuster, Lou Malnati's and Subway. The center is well occupied and had a facelift two years ago which greatly improved its appearance.
3. The South Park area of Park Ridge is located along Devon Avenue east of Cumberland Avenue and has a variety of small, stores and banks. The largest retailers include Morningfield's and Walgreens. The storefronts in this business district are almost fully occupied.

In Rosemont, there are also a number of restaurants in the vicinity of River Road on either side of the Kennedy Expressway that cater to office employees and hotel guests, which can draw potential customers away from Park Ridge businesses. The largest nearby shopping center is in Rosemont at Mannheim and Higgins Roads, east of the Allstate Arena, with 209,000 square feet, anchored by Target and Office Depot. It also has several restaurants and fast food chains (Chili's, Subway, Gold Coast Dogs, Rosati Pizza) that do well during both lunch and dinner.

The overall occupancy rate for the retail space in Park Ridge citywide is very high - over 95% - and there is little vacant retail space currently available along Higgins Road. However, the retail space available within the corridor is low quality. Given the large day-time population in office buildings along Higgins Road and across the Kennedy Expressway on Bryn Mawr Avenue and Cumberland Avenue (estimated to be close to 20,000 people within one mile of Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road), over time, redevelopment could create opportunities for new retail, personal service and restaurant space. The resident population

within one mile is 21,300 and within two miles increases to 72,500, which is a sufficiently high density for retailers and restaurants. Nonetheless, one of the main constraints to this type of development to the east of Cumberland Avenue is that the sites are smaller and shallower, which makes accommodating off-street parking difficult.

II. Corridor Assets and Challenges

This section of the plan is an analysis of the existing conditions along the Higgins Road Corridor to assess current assets that can be built upon and challenges that will need to be addressed as redevelopment occurs.

Assets

Market Demographics

The Higgins Road Corridor is home to numerous office buildings and is a significant employment node. There are an estimated 19,661 employees in the 997 businesses within one mile of the Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road intersection, increasing to 55,045 employees and 3,559 businesses within two miles. In addition, the resident population within one mile totals 21,278, and 72,536 people within two miles. Finally, hotels on the south side of Higgins Road in Chicago offer additional customers for businesses located along the north side of Higgins Road in Park Ridge. These numbers indicate a large number of potential patrons for restaurants and convenience-oriented retail and personal service establishments.

Redevelopment Opportunities

The Mr. K's Garden Center in the West Side Character District is a significant redevelopment opportunity. A garden center/landscaping waste transfer facility is an inappropriate use in this primarily office area. The Mr. K's site is also a significant size – 2.2 acres – with the potential to expand the site by incorporating the older single-family homes to west of the site and the outdated office buildings to the east.

The Mr. K's Garden Center site is an appropriate location for an office or mixed-use development. This can be accomplished through either a single building that has ground floor commercial space with office uses above, or multiple buildings, such as an office building and a freestanding restaurant use. The site is large enough to accommodate multiple-story buildings and on-site surface or structured parking meeting the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. New development could be a single or multiple-tenant rental, office-condominium, or build-to-suit for a single owner-occupant. Tenants for a multiple-tenant building would typically be from small firms in industries such as financial services, including banks, real estate, professional and business services, technology and health care.

There are two large, Class A buildings proposed for Rosemont, but these will be very high end buildings that will not be in direct competition with a Park Ridge location. Generally, the Higgins Road Corridor is an appropriate location for additional office space. There has been very little new office space constructed in Park Ridge in recent years and much of the office space that exists is in lower quality Class C buildings. The easy access to the Kennedy Expressway, O'Hare Airport and the CTA Blue Line train make Higgins Road a desirable location for new office space.

Within the corridor as a whole, commercial establishments can be appropriate uses as sites redevelop. Restaurants in particular are able to serve the day-time population, guests at the hotels across the street and the nearby residents, with quick casual restaurants the most appropriate type of eatery. However, a mid-priced white tablecloth restaurant could also cater to nearby hotel guests and area residents. Higgins Road is unlikely to attract large retailers given the size and depth of the available sites, but convenience-oriented retail and personal services are feasible as they can cater to both local office workers and residents.

Accessibility

One of the corridor's biggest assets is its accessibility by interstate highway, public transit and air. Bordered by the I-90 Expressway (Kennedy Expressway), there are exits to Higgins Road at both Cumberland Avenue and Canfield Road. The I-90 Expressway also links to the Tri-State Tollway (I-294), just north of the Cumberland Avenue exit. The CTA station at Cumberland provides a mass transit option as well. The CTA Blue Line train, travels to and from O'Hare Airport with a stop at Cumberland Avenue.

Challenges

Multiple Jurisdictions

One of the difficulties of planning for the Higgins Road Corridor is that there are a number of different jurisdictions in control of the corridor. The north side of the corridor is under the jurisdiction of Park Ridge, while the south side of the corridor is in the City of Chicago. In addition, Higgins Road (the roadway) is under the control of the Illinois

Department of Transportation (IDOT). This creates a situation where the identity of Higgins Road in Park Ridge becomes a “one-sided” endeavor, while IDOT has its own agenda for the function of Higgins Road as a regional arterial highway.

Transportation

The good accessibility of the corridor also creates a number of challenges. Higgins Road is a high traffic arterial and congestion during morning and evening rush hours can be severe. Future redevelopment may produce incrementally more traffic that will have to be carefully managed, particularly at the morning and evening rush hour. The East Side Character District is particularly sensitive because the residential side streets offer opportunities for cut-through traffic.

One of the biggest assets – the connection to the I-90 Expressway – can also be problematic as the Cumberland Avenue exit from the I-90 Expressway is a difficult intersection. To get to Cumberland Avenue, drivers exiting I-90 from the westbound direction have to cross two lanes of eastbound traffic to reach the intersection. The Canfield Road exit from the I-90 Expressway is also considered difficult because of the angle at which cars exit the expressway.

In regard to alternate modes of transportation, there are also issues for commuters on public transportation, bicyclists and pedestrians. Essentially, the intersection of Higgins and Cumberland is not pedestrian or bicycle friendly. Public transit riders do not have a particularly safe route to follow from the station across Higgins Road to gain entry into Park Ridge. Many cut through the Marriott parking lot on the south side of Higgins Road or cross Higgins Road mid-block and continue through the townhouse development or the Dominick’s parking lot. They take the risk of the mid-block crossing creating a dangerous situation for themselves and motorists. This is due, in part, to the perception that crossing at the traffic signal at Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road is dangerous. This can become a barrier to connecting the East and West Side Character Districts.

For bicyclists, the corridor is not safe because of the high traffic on Higgins Road and lack of a bike path or bike lanes. The ability to access

the Blue Line train for commuters and the Forest Preserve by bike could significantly benefit these locations, as well as creating bicycle connectivity to the greater Park Ridge community. However, there are significant barriers to bicycle travel along Higgins Road. Bicycle travel might be made possible on the West Side Character District by widening the sidewalk and mark the surface for dual purpose pedestrian and bike movements. With the redevelopment of Mr. K’s and its signalized crossing, bike and pedestrian crossing could be made safe for travel to and from the Blue Line train stop at Cumberland Avenue.

Building Image

The architectural style and the signs of many of the buildings along the corridor are dated. Signs, especially within the East Side Character District, vary in size and design, creating an inconsistent and uncoordinated appearance. Because of the opportunity to transform Higgins Road into a southern gateway to Park Ridge, and to distinguish the community from Chicago, a more coordinated physical presence is needed for buildings within the corridor.

Corridor Activity

In interviews with stakeholders, the Higgins Road Corridor is perceived as “dead” on evenings and weekends when office workers are not present. Attracting non-office uses, such as restaurants and small-scale retail, will draw residents to the area on evenings and weekends when offices are closed.

Off-Street Parking

Throughout the entire corridor, on-street parking is essentially non-existent, requiring businesses to provide off-street parking per Zoning Ordinance requirements. This is easier to accomplish within the West Side Character District because of the larger lot configurations. On the east, where lots are small and shallow, accommodating off-street parking is difficult. Small parcel sizes with little room for off-street parking may well generate neighborhood opposition to new development on the grounds of parking spillover and increased traffic along residential side streets.

Streetscape

The existing streetscape along Higgins Road is severely deteriorated in



The architectural style of many buildings within the corridor are dated.



The Higgins Road corridor directly abuts residential neighborhoods to the north. Uses along Higgins Road buffer the neighborhoods from the noise and traffic of the roadway. Large-scale office users, such as this one, use rear yard landscaping to further buffer the neighborhoods from impacts.

some areas and lacks a consistent design throughout the corridor. Certain areas both east and west of Cumberland Avenue are not pedestrian-friendly or, in some instances, where cars are parked on the parkway, create major safety concerns. Improving the appearance of the corridor and creating a walkable environment requires coordination of the various streetscape elements: sidewalks, parkways and landscaping.

Use Compatibility and Intensity

Currently, the buildings along Higgins Road insulate residences from the noise and traffic impacts of both Higgins Road and the I-90 Expressway. The corridor backs up to single-family residential neighborhoods, so the height and density of, and traffic generated by, redevelopment are of concern for residents living immediately north of Higgins Road. Buildings that exceed typical residential heights are already located in the immediate environment. The office buildings and the Marriott Hotel on the Chicago south side of Higgins Road introduce substantial height into the context of these residential areas of Park ridge. Buildings of greater height than are currently located on the north side of Higgins Road west of Cumberland road could fit within the sight lines that already exist between the residences along Peterson Road for example, and the high rise buildings along the south side of Higgins Road in this area. Figure 5:

Cross Section of Building Sight Lines shows the sight lines that are now present in the area and how five to six story building could fit within those established sight lines.

Traffic control and buffering of the residential streets are also important to these neighbors. For residents behind the East Side Character District, where local streets can be accessed from Higgins Road, this will be of particular concern.



Figure 5: Cross Section of Building Sight Lines

III. Long Term Redevelopment Vision

The Higgins Road Corridor is the vibrant southern gateway to the City of Park Ridge. The corridor is characterized by modern office, retail and multiple-family residential developments that are compatible with the surrounding area. Mixed-use development enlivens the corridor. Neighboring single-family residential areas to the north of the corridor have been conserved and conflicts with past uses along the north side of Higgins Road have been mitigated. The proximity of the corridor to major transportation resources, such as I-90, the Blue Line of the Chicago Transit Authority and O'Hare Airport are reflected in the new use and development pattern along the corridor. Redevelopment of the corridor has been managed and designed to be a hallmark of sustainability for the City, be more attractive and provide a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclist. Streetscapes have been repaired and enhanced as fully as space and safe design permits. A variety of building design and architectural styles have been encouraged and now stimulate interest in and highlight contemporary solutions to the revitalization of the corridor as a multi-use pedestrian friendly environment.

The Higgins Road Corridor is fully built out and contains a variety of land uses that range from residential to a landscape waste transfer station. With the redevelopment of the parcel on Higgins Road between Brophy and Fairview avenues there is no longer any vacant or abandoned buildings along the corridor. There are of course a number of economically and physically marginal uses that detract from the overall character of the corridor.

Wholesale redevelopment of large sections of the corridor at one time is not likely to happen in the near future. However, in the long run, redevelopment is a distinct possibility. It is part of this plan for the Higgins Road Corridor to provide a vision for such long-term redevelopment – that is redevelopment that may occur ten or more years from the date of adoption of this plan.

The Project Area plans shown are of greater density than what now exist or what can be achieved under current traditional zoning regulations. Under the new recommended zoning policies in this plan, development of this intensity could be achieved but only in those areas that are covered by an overlay zoning district and only up to the limits allowed in each of the three overlay districts shown in the plan. It should also be noted that any development within the overlay districts would be put through a more rigorous site plan and design review process than would normally be the case for development in Park Ridge. This procedure would be specified in the overlay zoning districts language.

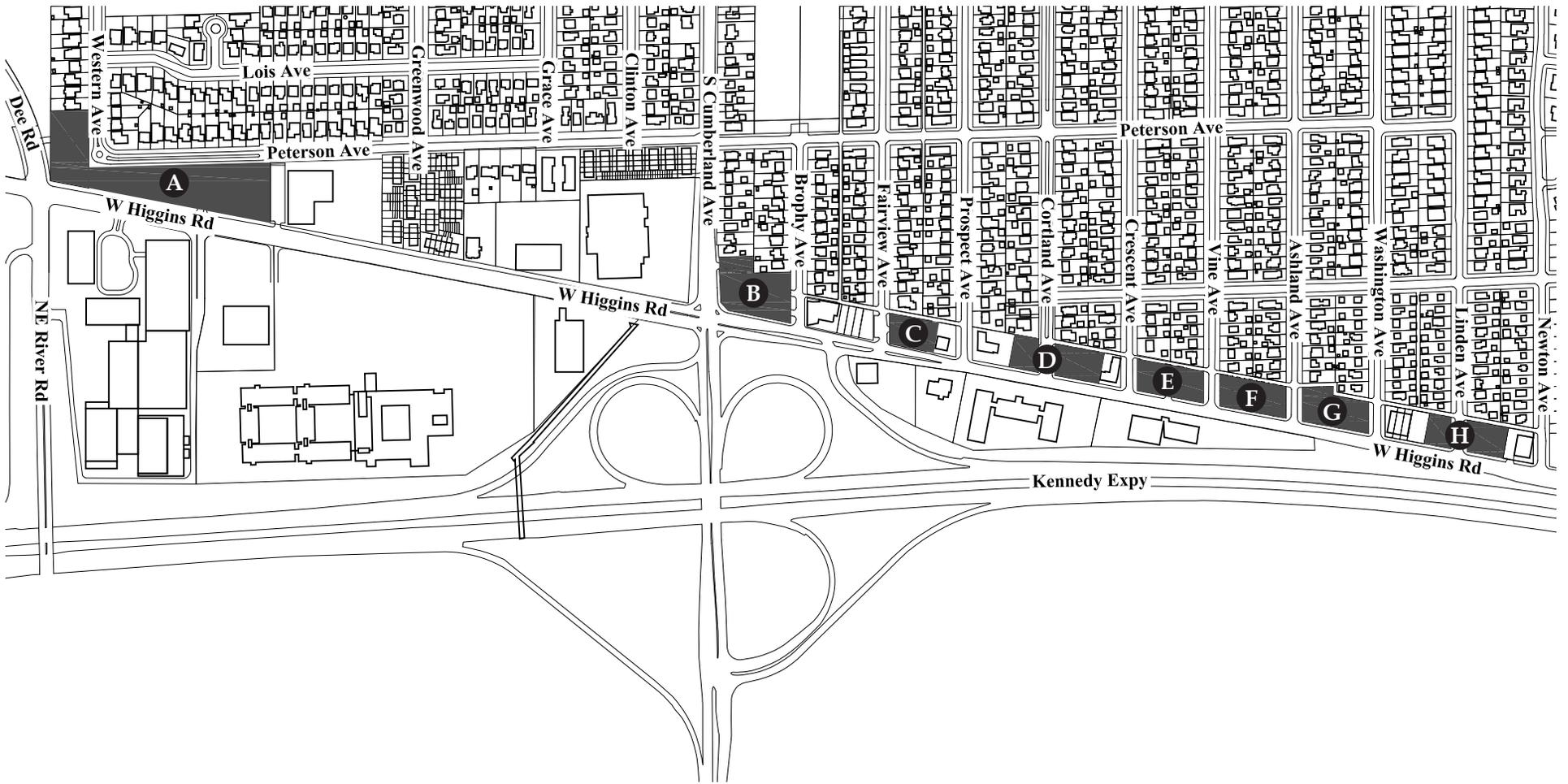
Along the West Side Character District there is a possibility to assemble land from Dee Road east to accommodate a large scale redevelopment given intervention and assistance by the City. The City may well have to become the sponsor that will cause the assembly of parcels over time and encourage through development controls and perhaps financial incentives a large-scale redevelopment project that otherwise would not happen.

At the intersection of Higgins Road and Cumberland Avenue, the long-term vision encourages a more signal development than the existing gas station, which generates a significant volume of business and has a prime location for the sale of gasoline. Should the gas station choose to

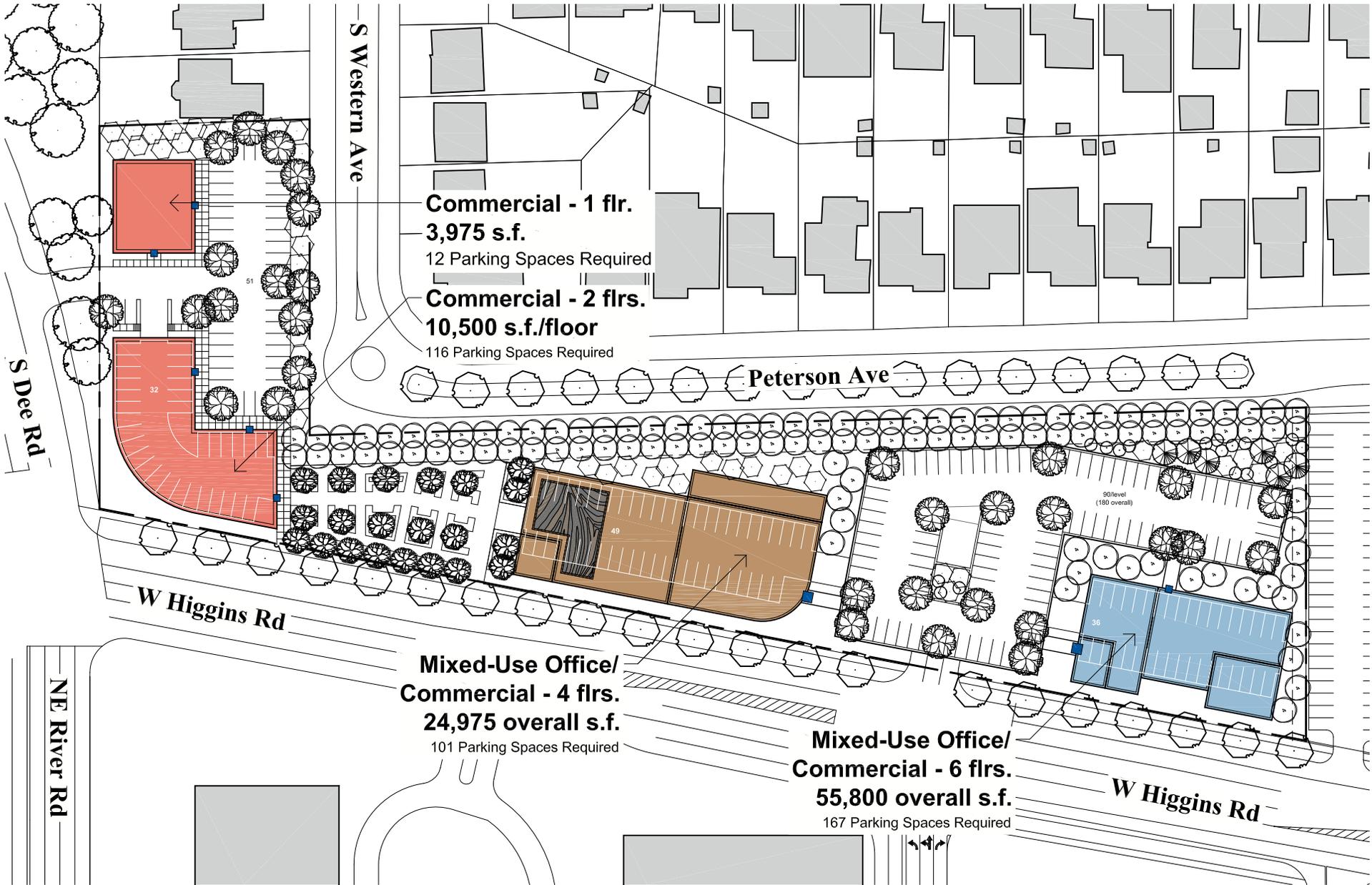
relocate elsewhere in the community it is expected that a use that makes a positive statement should be promoted at the entrance to this unique and special City in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. The vision for this corner site is a mixed use building that could include commercial, retail, with office and residential above the ground floor. It shows varying heights on different wings of the building in the Project Area. Another important part of the illustrative is the sensitivity of the building design to its location on the corner of Higgins and Cumberland.

The vision for residential townhomes and condominiums at the east end of the Higgins Road Corridor shows a different type of housing than what now exist along the corridor. These options reflect modern multiple-family housing designs that would appear to work well along the quieter eastern reach of the Higgins Road Corridor.

Long term redevelopment does not have to happen as one or a few major redevelopment projects. A series of smaller redevelopment projects following the same general vision can also have positive results.



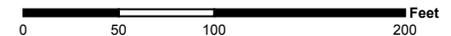
Project Area Location Map



Project Area A

Higgins Road Corridor Plan

Scale: 1"=100'



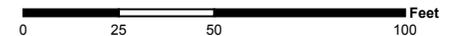


Project Area A - Higgins Rd & Dee Rd (*viewing southeast*)



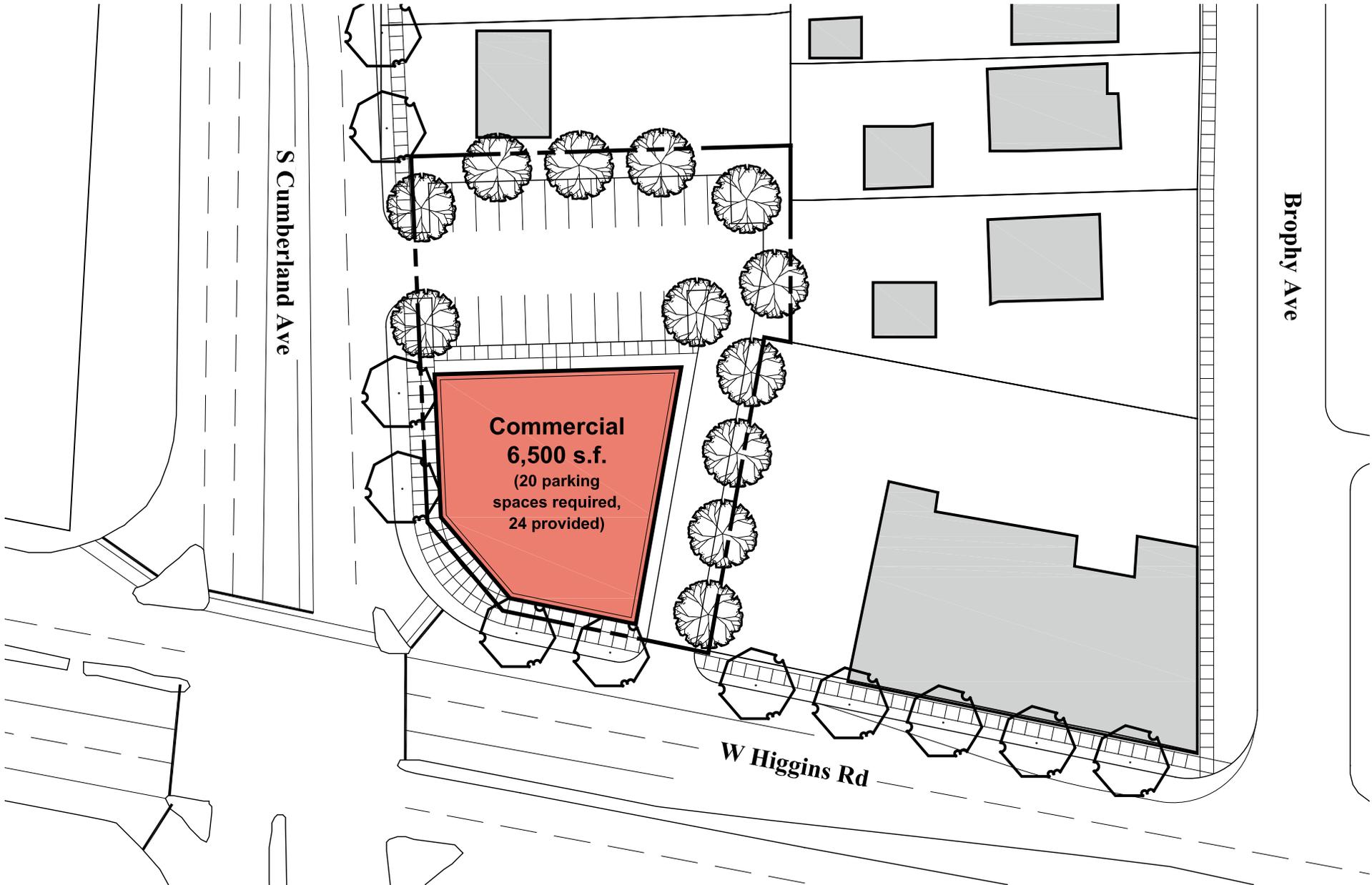
Project Area B (Opt 1) - Higgins Rd & Cumberland Ave

Scale: 1"=50'



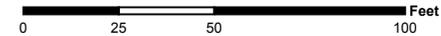


Project Area B (Opt 1) - Higgins Rd & Cumberland Ave (viewing northeast)



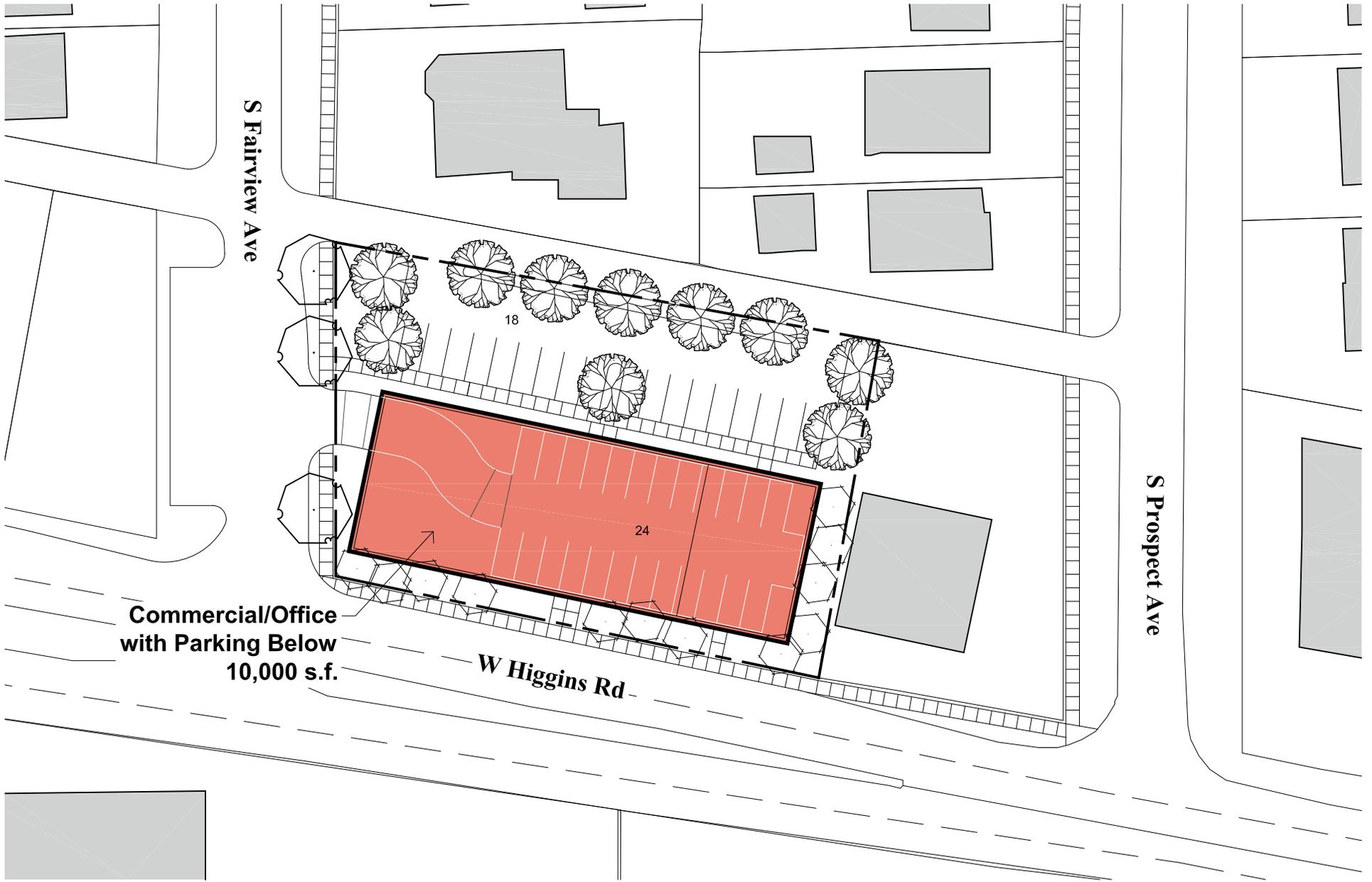
Project Area B (Opt 2) - Higgins Rd & Cumberland Ave

Scale: 1"=50'



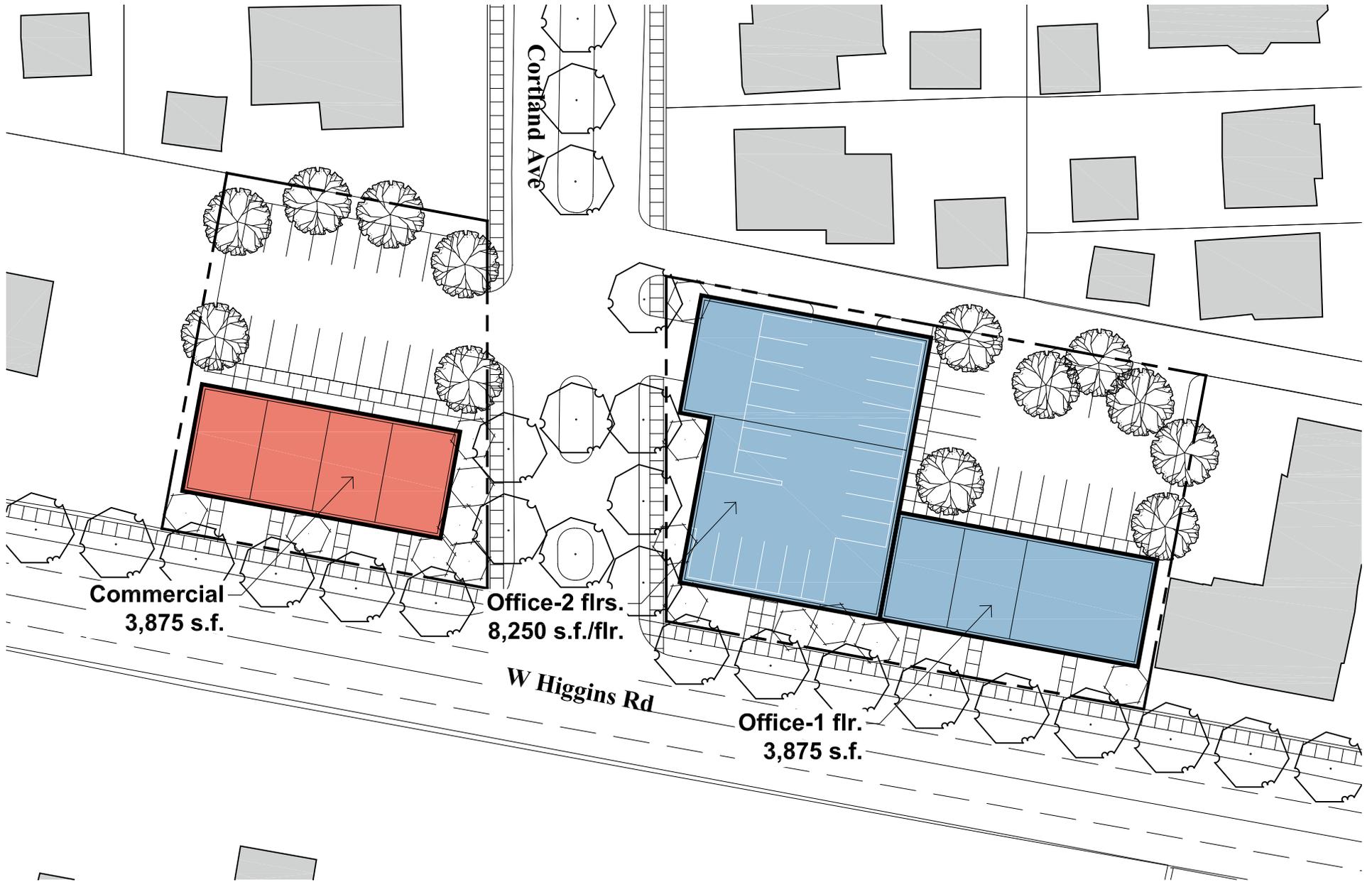


Project Area B (Opt 2) - Higgins Rd & Cumberland Ave (viewing northeast)



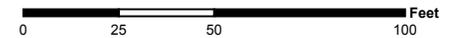


Project Area C - Higgins Rd (*viewing northeast*)



Project Area D - Higgins Rd & Cortland Ave

Scale: 1"=50'



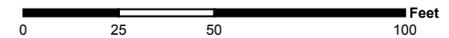


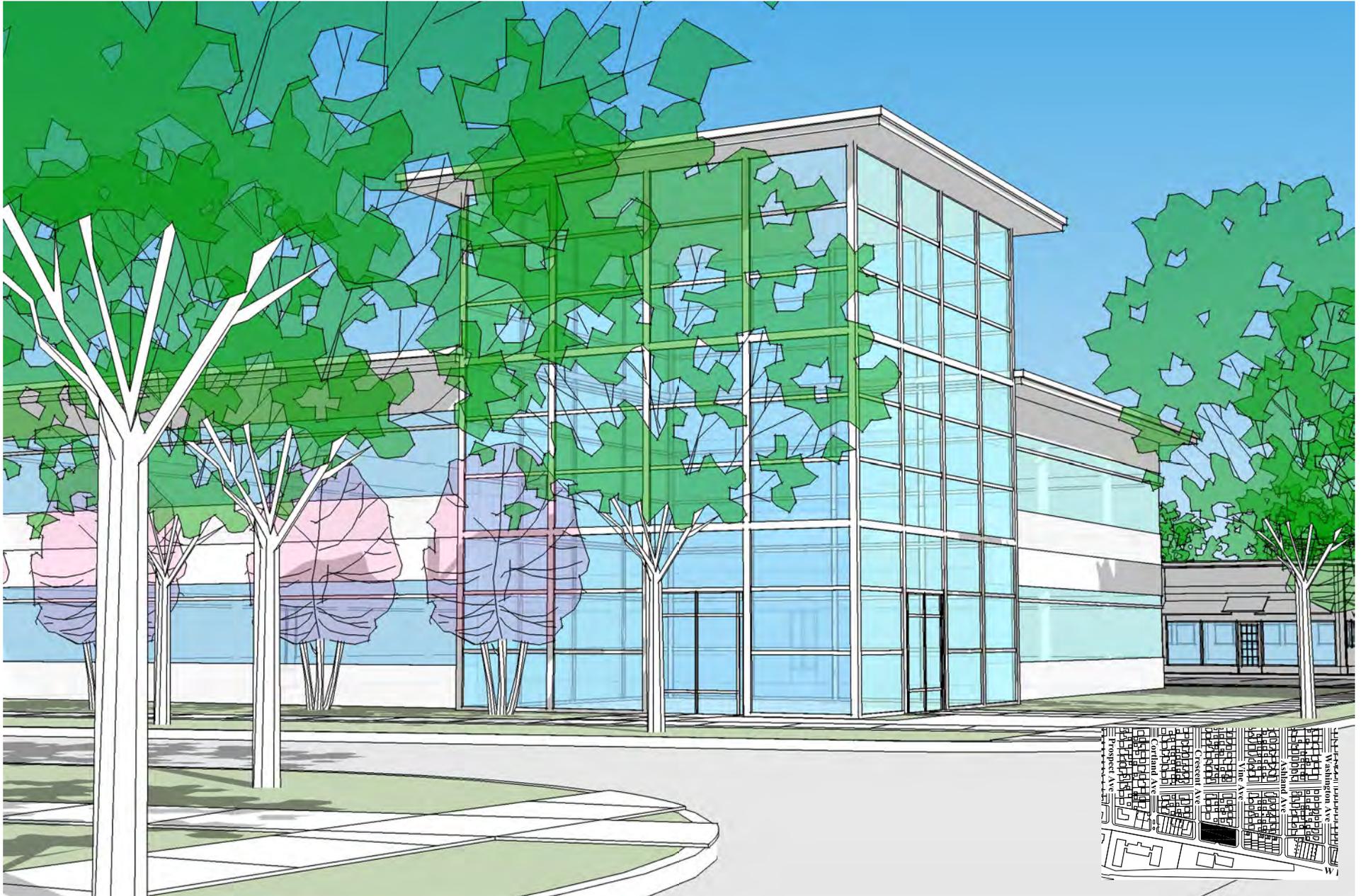
Project Area D - Higgins Rd & Cortland Ave (viewing north)



Project Area E - Higgins Rd btw. Crescent Ave & Vine St

Scale: 1"=50'





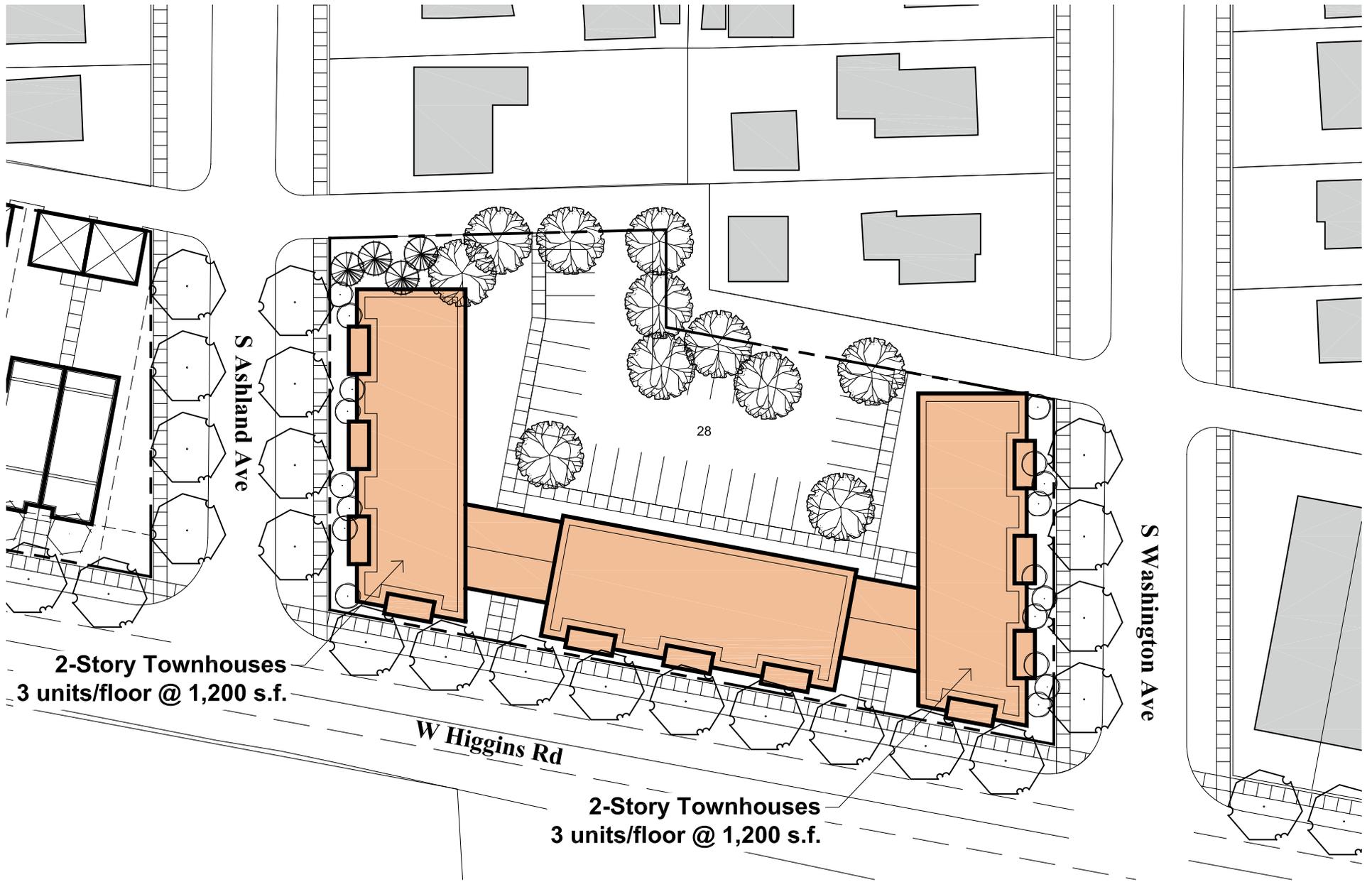
Project Area E - Higgins Rd (*viewing northeast*)



Project Area F - Higgins Rd btw. Vine St & Ashland Ave



Project Area F - Higgins Rd btw. Vine St & Ashland Ave (*viewing north*)

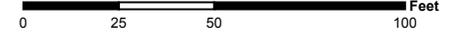


2-Story Townhouses
3 units/floor @ 1,200 s.f.

2-Story Townhouses
3 units/floor @ 1,200 s.f.

Project Area G - Higgins Rd btw. Ashland & Washington

Scale: 1"=50'



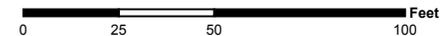


Project Area G - Higgins Rd btw. Ashland Ave & Washington St (*viewing east*)



Project Area H - Higgins Rd & Linden Ave

Scale: 1"=50'





Project Area H - Higgins Rd & Linden Ave (*viewing northwest*)

IV. Redevelopment Strategies

The Plan's Vision can be translated into redevelopment strategies for the following elements:

1. Future Land Use Policy
2. Zoning Ordinance Adjustments
3. Corridor Beautification and Gateway Treatment
4. Streetscape and Transportation Improvements

Each of these plan components are discussed in more detail below.

Future Land Use Policy

The City should continue to build upon and promote the corridor's identity and viability as an office and commercial corridor, with limited moderate density housing in select locations. The [Figure 6: Future Land Use Map](#) will serve as an effective tool to accomplish this, as all land use decisions, whether development approvals or map amendments, should be consistent with the future land use policy once it is adopted by the City Council.

As shown in [Figure 6](#), there are two distinct types of development planned for each character district. The West Side Character District is planned primarily for office development, though commercial uses integrated into an office development would be permitted, even desirable. Only the existing Dominick's grocery store and multiple-family development are indicated as purely non-office development. The office development in the West Side Character District is intended to be large to moderate in size, as exemplified by the existing office development at 1300 Higgins and the Big 10 Conference building at Dee Road and Higgins Road.

The East Side Character District is intended for a combination of retail, office and multiple-family residential uses both townhouses and condominiums. This plan would accommodate a variety of commercial developments, while encouraging mixed use in some new developments, including retail, personal service, restaurant, health care, multiple-family residential and small office uses. Existing multiple-family developments on Higgins Road between Vine Avenue and Ashland Avenue are joined by the possible future redevelopment of properties at the far east end of the East Side Character District for moderate density residential development

Zoning Ordinance Adjustments

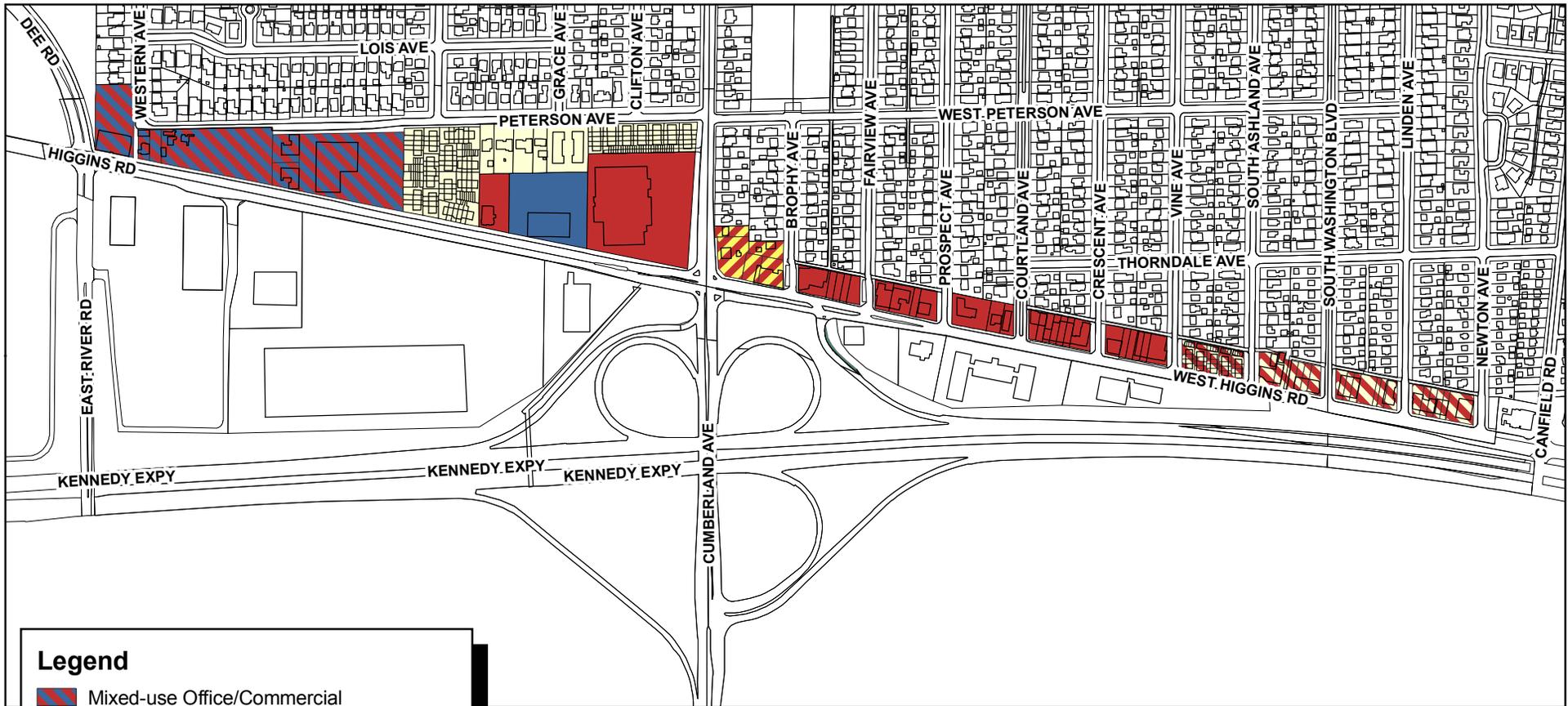
Current zoning within the corridor is primarily non-residential. However, there is a site zoned the R-4 District in the West Side Character District, which extends to Peterson Avenue and includes a combination of existing townhouse and multi-family housing.

The R-4, B-1 and B-2 Districts in place along the corridor can be characterized as follows:

- The R-4 District is a multiple-family zoning district that permits single and two-family houses, townhouses as well as moderate density multiple-family dwellings.
- Both the B-1 and B-2 Districts permit office, retail, personal service and restaurant uses.
- Hotels are permitted within both B districts by special use.
- The B-1 District permits dwelling units above the ground floor, allowing for mixed-use development, while the B-2 District does not permit any type of residential use.

Given the new vision for the Higgins Road Corridor, there is an opportunity to refine the zoning districts within the corridor to be more responsive to this future land use plan. In a few areas, however, existing zoning district will suffice to provide control over land uses that are not going to change in the foreseeable future. The site zoned for R-4 District in the West Side Corridor District is one such area. The Dominick's store at the corner of Higgins and Cumberland would be better zoned the B-2 District rather than the current B-1 District that it is now zoned.

Certain locations along both sides of the corridor would benefit by having new zoning. Any new zoning must be structured to control existing development in the short term, and have the flexibility to allow newer and more intense development that may come in the future as long as strict design standards are in place.



Legend

-  Mixed-use Office/Commercial
-  Mixed-use Commercial/Residential
-  Commercial or Residential
-  Commercial
-  Office
-  Multi-family (moderate density) Residential

Figure 6: Future Land Use Map

Hybrid Zoning System for The Higgins Road Corridor

The City should consider a hybrid system of zoning that combines traditional zoning techniques and the select application of Form-based Coding to replace the current bulk standards. The combination would work together to better coordinate municipal control over land use and urban design policies along Higgins Road.

As conceived, the hybrid system would have two parts; new base zoning districts to allow a wide variety of uses and to establish consistent bulk regulations. It would be augmented by three overlay zones - one each for the three areas the plan identifies as ideal for more intense development over the long term. The overlays would contain the Form-based Coding elements. Each of the three overlay districts would be slightly different depending on the design objectives and nearby uses that could be affected by more intensive development. These overlay districts would provide for mixed use, greater density and building height, and a detailed process to review any development proposal that seeks to take advantage of the additional allowances in the overlay district.

The overlay districts would contain provisions that are drawn from Form-based Coding principles. Form-based Coding is a system of land use control that emphasizes design principles more so than use. Under the hybrid system being proposed, land use would be carefully regulated by the underlying zoning district. In this manner, both use and design are considered.

Form-based Coding

Form-based Coding is concerned with the design of both the site and the building(s) on that site. Form-based Coding considers such components as off-street parking, landscaping buffers, driveways, the location of the building(s) on the site and architectural design details of the buildings themselves. Form-based Codes foster predictable design and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. Form-based Codes also address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale of the public streets it fronts - in this case Higgins Road.

In theory, the regulations and standards in Form-based Codes, which are presented in both diagrams and words, are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development rather than only distinctions in land-use types. This plan begins the job of designating the regulating plan to be used on the corridor. The balance of the regulating plan elements would be developed when the regulations are written. They would emphasize sustainable design of buildings and sites that are part of the vision for the corridor in this plan. This is in contrast to conventional zoning's focus on the segregation of land uses, and the control of development intensity and density.

The Form-based Coding elements would not attempt to dictate any particular architectural theme or style. Indeed, the Higgins Road Corridor is the one place in Park Ridge where new contemporary architectural styles should be welcome and are most appropriate since the corridor is so different a place than the Uptown area of the City with its traditional architecture.

An example of Form-based Coding controls is shown in [Figure 7](#) below for illustrative purposes. The new underlying base zoning districts and extent of the Form-based Coding overlay districts are shown on [Figure 8: Future Zoning Designations Map](#).

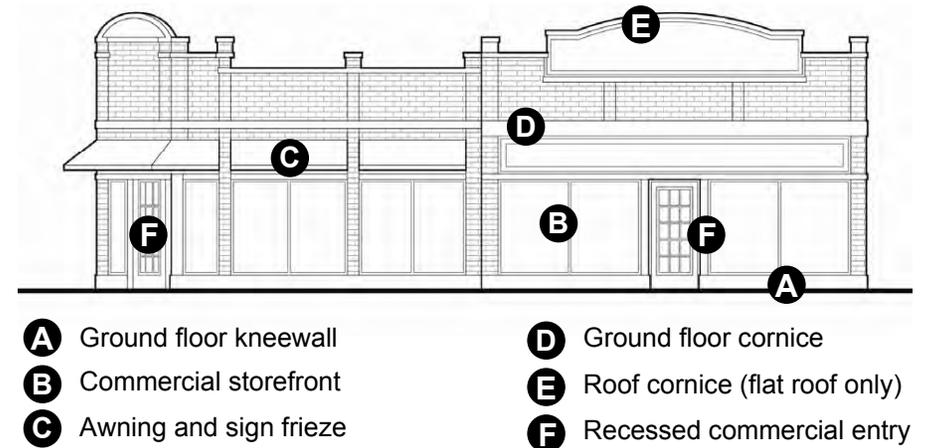


Figure 7: Required Commercial or Mixed-Use Façade Elements

The New Base Zoning Districts

West Side Character District

The predominant character of the west side is office. However, there are a couple areas within the West Side Character District that are not office uses. Currently there is a townhouse development zoned the R-4 District, which is an appropriate designation as long as it remains residential.

Secondly, the Dominick's grocery store is currently zoned the B-1 District. The B-1 District is oriented toward a mix of businesses accessed by both pedestrians and automobiles, and is intended to mix local establishments with larger retail uses. The B-1 District also permits dwellings above the ground floor, which are inappropriate for this location. The Dominick's is a more intensive commercial use with significant auto traffic, so it is more appropriate to zone the use as the B-2 District, which is more auto-oriented. The yard and bulk standards between the B-1 and B-2 Districts are identical, but the uses allowed within – and the purpose of – the B-2 District are more in line with the Dominick's grocery store.

Because redevelopment of the large parcels located within the area is envisioned to be office or mixed-use office-commercial, a new base zoning district would provide more latitude with land uses by encouraging mixed-use and allow for more appropriate yard, bulk and landscaping standards than those in the current B-2 District.

For identification purposes the new base district would be called the MUC-1 or Mixed Use Corridor-1 District for the purposes of this plan recommendation. (See [Figure 8: Future Zoning Designations Map](#)) The MUC district would contain a generic use list broad enough to allow for a wide range of mixed uses. It would also contain bulk regulations that are scaled to the large size of lots that make up the West Side Corridor District and have standard requirements for parking and landscaping.

The bulk regulation in the MUC-1 might allow for three-story buildings and fairly deep front yard setbacks. It would contain everything that would be necessary to set the parameters for high quality redevelopment along the sections of the corridor that are not subject to the hybrid zoning overlay districts. In other words, they can stand alone on their own without the overlay provisions and still set the framework for high

quality redevelopment. The hybrid overlay districts would be employed where greater intensity, density and/or building height are warranted. With that greater intensity, would go stricter or more stringent design requirements regulating form.

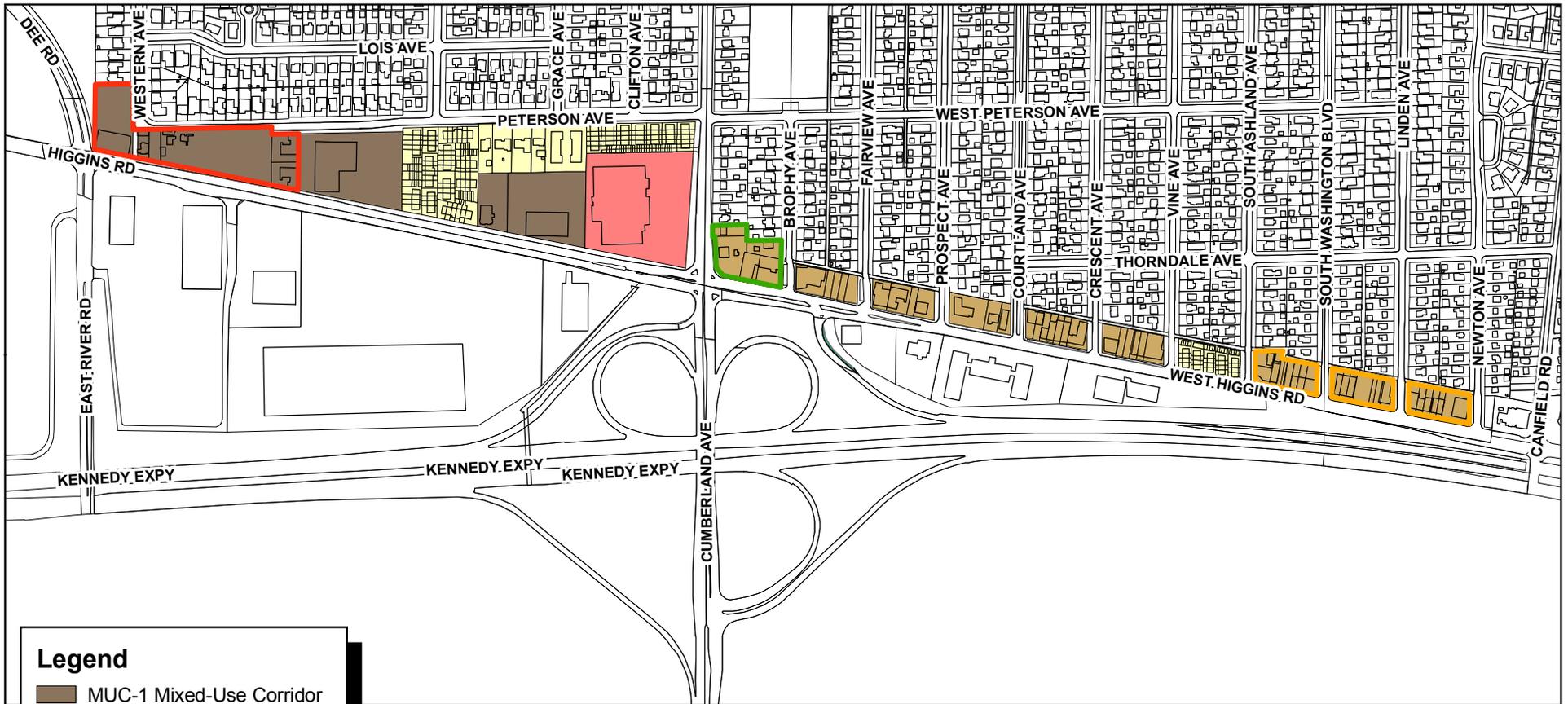
East Side Character District

The large multiple-family development located on Higgins Road between Vine Avenue and Ashland Avenue should be rezoned as an R-4 District, which would make zoning conform to use. In this case, conforming status is desirable because of both the significant size of the development and because it is in relatively good condition. Therefore, redevelopment in the near future is not anticipated. Nonconforming use status is not desirable for an existing, long-term use because it can complicate matters of building permit approval (i.e., variances may be required), as well as financing, even for simple repairs and renovations.

There is an additional multiple-family development within the East Side Character District at the corner of Higgins Road and Crescent Avenue that should be used for an office or other commercial use rather than multiple-family residential if the property becomes available for redevelopment. Therefore, it should remain within a non-residential zoning classification and continue as a legal nonconforming uses. As is the case in the West Side



The large-scale existing multi-family development on the east side should be rezoned as the R-4 District in order to make the use conforming.



Legend

- MUC-1 Mixed-Use Corridor
- MUC-2 Mixed-Use Corridor
- R-4 Multi-Family Residential
- B-2 General Commercial

Overlay Districts

- Overlay District A
- Overlay District B
- Overlay District C

Figure 8: Future Zoning Designations Map

Character District, the existing legal nonconforming single-family use on the East Side Character District should also remain nonconforming, as single-family uses are inappropriate anywhere along the Higgins Road Corridor.

As shown on Figure 3 above, the entire East Side Character District is zoned the B-2 District. However, the B-2 District is not tailored to the physical characteristics of this portion of the Higgins Road Corridor. For example, the B-2 District permits drive-through uses by-right, which can be problematic in this area because of the small, shallow sites that do not lend themselves to proper circulation. Drive-through facilities could further exacerbate traffic problems and adversely impact the single-family neighbors to the north. It is recommended that a separate new mixed use zoning district be applied to the those portions of the East Side Character District not recommended for R-4 zoning. This recommended district would be the Mixed Use Corridor-2 or MUC-2 for the purpose of this plan.

This new district can be designed to addresses issues specific to this corridor, such as a prohibition on drive-through uses, proper setbacks, corridor landscaping, parking issues and building design, among others.

The vision for the enhancement of Higgins Road anticipates a new building at the corner of Cumberland and Higgins across from the Dominick's. Should the current use of these corner parcels be redeveloped for whatever reason, the City's zoning should permit a single or mixed-use building that would anchor the south gateway to Park Ridge. The proposed new zoning district described in the section above and an overlay zoning district covering the property where such an iconic building could be built become then the zoning policy for this particularly important corner. The overlay zone would be similar to the one recommended for the West Side Character District with form-based components, expanded landscaping requirements, increased bulk allowances including height and a rigorous development and design review process to be applied to any proposal that may come along in the future.

At the far east end of the corridor, the opportunity exist for redevelopment

of properties from Newton to South Ashland for multiple-family residential use – either townhouses or condominium buildings that are no more than three stories in height. A third overlay zoning district is recommended for this area. It would be more restricted than the other two reflecting the residential nature of the use proposed.

As mentioned above, the lots within the East Side Character District are quite shallow. There is currently a requirement for a seven-foot front setback (B-2 District regulations), which can be onerous for sites that need to maximize their available developable area. In this area, the seven-foot front setback should be reconsidered and replaced by a five-foot front setback. Such a provision can create a more consistent street wall, in which case, a build-to line would be more appropriate. With a five-foot build-to line, there would be room within the front setback for some landscaping without sacrificing a significant amount of buildable land area.

Because the east side buildings are used to buffer the single-family neighborhood to the north from Higgins Road, a continuous street wall would be preferred. To supplement the build-to line, a minimum building height of two stories should be encouraged. A number of sites within the



Landscaping can soften the visual impact of large-scale buildings located along the corridor.

East Side Character District would not be large enough to accommodate a new two or three-story building with the required parking, so, in those instances, a minimum front façade height of eighteen feet can also accomplish the goals of defining the street wall and buffering the residents to the north.

Beautification

All development within the Higgins Road Corridor should meet standards for high quality building design, streetscape improvements and site character that match future public realm improvements. Standards should shape the physical character of new development and distinguish the north side of Higgins Road as being distinctly “Park Ridge.”

Building Design Guidelines

Because the corridor has two distinct character districts (east and west), different design standards are needed for each. In the West Side Character District, design standards are needed for large to moderate office developments. In the East Side Character District, design standards for small-scale development are necessary. There should also be appropriate standards in place for multiple-family development, if any of the existing multiple-family areas were to be rehabilitated or new residential developed at the fareast end of the corridor.

Office Development Design Guidelines

These site and building design guidelines apply to the West Side Character District:

- The following types of building materials are preferred for new office buildings: brick, natural or cast stone, tinted and/or textured concrete masonry units, and stucco.
- Each façade should have architectural features to avoid the appearance of blank walls. Examples include; changes in wall plane, reveals, windows and other openings, and changes in color, texture and/or material to add visual interest to the building elevation that addresses Higgins Road.

- Multiple-story buildings should be designed with a definable base, middle and top. Rooflines, cornice treatments and window designs are encouraged to divide larger buildings.
- Public entrances should face Higgins Road. Main entrances to the buildings should be well defined. Service doors must be recessed and integrated into the overall design of the building to the sides or rear of the buildings.
- If the first floor is a commercial use, 60 percent of the first floor façade should be display-type windows. A minimum 18-inch and maximum of 30-inch high knee-wall is required beneath the glazing to allow pedestrians to see into windows.
- For commercial uses on the ground floor, windows should be constructed of clear or lightly tinted glass (no tinting above 20 percent or reflective glass). For office developments, tinted glass would be permitted. Large expanses of highly reflective wall surface material and mirror glass on exterior walls should be prohibited to prevent heat and glare impacts on the adjacent properties and the public right-of-way.
- Nearly vertical roofs (A-frames) and mansard roofs used on portions of building perimeters only should be prohibited. Reflective surfaces that produce glare should also be prohibited as roof materials.
- Where overhead utility lines currently exist, new development should bury these utility lines, including those at the Mr. K’s site.

Commercial Development Design Guidelines

These design guidelines would apply mainly to the East Side Character District, where smaller scale commercial development would occur. The uses here are anticipated to be local retail goods establishments, personal service establishments, restaurants and small office uses.

- Multiple-story buildings should be designed with a definable base, middle and top. Rooflines, cornice treatments and window designs are encouraged to divide larger buildings.

- Windows should be set back into or projected out from the façade to provide depth and shadow.
- The ground floor of a commercial façade should maintain a transparency of 60 percent. Windows should be constructed of clear or lightly tinted glass (no tinting above 20 percent or reflective glass).
- Roofs should be designed as an integral part of the façade design. Mansard roofs should be prohibited. All parapet walls should feature three-dimensional cornice treatments or other shadow-creating detail elements along their tops.
- All buildings should have a public entrance from the sidewalk along Higgins Road.
- The following building materials are preferred: brick, natural or cast stone and stucco.

Multiple-Family and Townhouse Development Design Guidelines

Both character districts contain existing multiple-family developments. There is a potential for new multiple-family and townhouse development as well. If the existing sites are rehabilitated, or new residential built, the designs should match high quality, character worthy of Park Ridge.

- Large, flat facades should be avoided, which can be accomplished by articulating the building mass to create substantial shadows and visual interest. Windows, projected entrances and overhangs must be included on the Higgins Road façade to add variety and maintain a pedestrian-scale.
- When the sidewalls of multiple-family or townhouse developments face a street, building facades should be designed with elements of a front façade, including doors and/or windows.
- Façades should be designed to be viewed from multiple directions and, therefore, designed with consistent materials and treatment that wraps around all façades.

- Windows and doors should have raised elements to create shadow and articulation. In addition, three-dimensional elements, such as balconies and bay windows, should be incorporated to provide dimensional elements on a façade. Windows should be set back into or projected out from the façade to provide depth and shadow, vertical in orientation and of a consistent style.
- The following types of building materials are preferred for new office buildings: brick, natural or cast stone, tinted and/or textured concrete masonry units, and stucco.

Prohibited Building Materials

All new construction in the corridor should reflect sustainable design and contemporary form and must be built with quality materials in Park Ridge. Consequently, certain building materials should not be permitted. These include but are not be limited to the following:

- Plain concrete masonry units (CMU)
- Utility-sized brick
- Formstone
- Aluminum, steel or other metal sidings
- Metal wall panels
- Exposed aggregate (rough finish) concrete wall panels
- Exterior insulating finish systems (EIFS, “Dryvit”) on ground flr.
- Plastic
- Vinyl Siding
- Glass curtain walls
- T-111 Composite plywood siding.

Streetscape Improvements Plan

Streetscape improvements within the corridor should create an attractive and walkable environment, and delineate the realm of the pedestrian from that of the automobile. Businesses located along the corridor should be easily accessible to those who work in the corridor, residents of the City and visitors alike. Therefore redevelopment within the corridor should also strive to enhance the ability to safely access the corridor by auto, public transit or foot.

Sidewalks and Parkways

The most important enhancement of the streetscape along Higgins Road is to upgrade the quality of the sidewalks and parkways, especially those along the East Side Character District. As [Figure 4](#) illustrates, the quality of the current streetscape is variable. Parkways exist in some segments of the corridor but many stretches are in bad shape or do not exist at all. In certain areas along the corridor, the parkway is so deteriorated that it functions as on-street parking, albeit illegal parking. There are almost no sidewalks on the Chicago side of the corridor, leaving pedestrians with the sole option of using the sidewalks on the Park Ridge side or walking in the street, which is a very dangerous proposition. In addition to sidewalk and parkway improvements, the pedestrian environment could be enhanced with a coordinated streetscape program that addresses street lighting, wayfinding and parkway landscaping.

The streetscape plans presented in this section cover both the East Side Character District and the West Side Character District of the Higgins Road Corridor. [Figure 9: Overall Streetscape Plan](#), shows the possible streetscape improvements that could be made to Higgins Road assuming cooperation between the City of Park Ridge, the City of Chicago and IDOT.

The goals of the Overall Streetscape Plan are to; beautify the corridor while minimizing the impacts on existing infrastructure, enhance safe pedestrian movement between the north and the south side of the corridor and accommodate pedestrian and bicycle use of the corridor. The most aggressive approach suggested in this concept is the conversion of the center turn lanes into a planted median in select reaches that have adequate right of way to accommodate a median in order to introduce a tree lined character to the roadway and provide safe median landings for pedestrians who desire to cross Higgins Road.

West Side Character District:

The West Side of the Higgins Road Corridor has minimal physical limitations to implementing a unified streetscape program with few changes to the existing infrastructure. [Table 2: West Side Streetscape District](#) lists the impacts and opportunities shown in [Figure 9.a: West Side Streetscape District](#).

In [Figure 9.a: West Side Streetscape District](#), illustrates how street trees should be planted along the corridor, in the parkway planting strip, at 40 foot on center. Pedestrian access and safety enhancements are designed around signalized intersections and signalized pedestrian crosswalks to allow for safe north/south pedestrian crossing to and from office, hotel, commercial and restaurant uses on either side of the corridor. The details for this district are shown in [Figure 10: Streetscape Enlargement - Location A](#) and [Figure 11: Streetscape Enlargement - Location B](#).

[Figure 10: Streetscape Enlargement - Location A](#) is a section of the corridor identified on [Figure 9.a: West Side Streetscape District](#). This figure illustrates the design improvements that could occur to strengthen the utility, beauty and define the edge of the West Side Character District. This district has the required parkway depth needed to install a five-foot walk and a five-foot planting strip for streets trees, as identified in [Figure 9a: West Side Streetscape District](#). [Figure 9a](#) also shows the location of an enhanced signalized intersection and pedestrian crosswalk where the Mr. K's site exists now. Currently there is a three-way traffic light at the intersection. Under the streetscape concept significant pedestrian improvements would be made and the signalization would be upgraded to a four-way traffic light system.

Reducing the width of the travel and turn lanes along Higgins Road would create an opportunity to include “dedicated” bike lanes on both sides of the roadway. Reducing the lane widths will need further study and should these studies find it feasible, approval by the City of Park Ridge, IDOT and the City of Chicago.

Pedestrian Crossing

Many residents do not feel safe crossing Cumberland Avenue. Of major concern is the use of the crosswalk at Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road. Pedestrians proceed north from the CTA Blue Line station to destinations along the north side of Higgins Road or north into the adjacent neighborhoods. The pedestrian path to the CTA Blue Line station guides transit users to the intersection of Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road, to cross at the signalized crosswalk.

Many commuters take various shortcuts to enter into Park Ridge, avoiding the Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road intersection because it is a

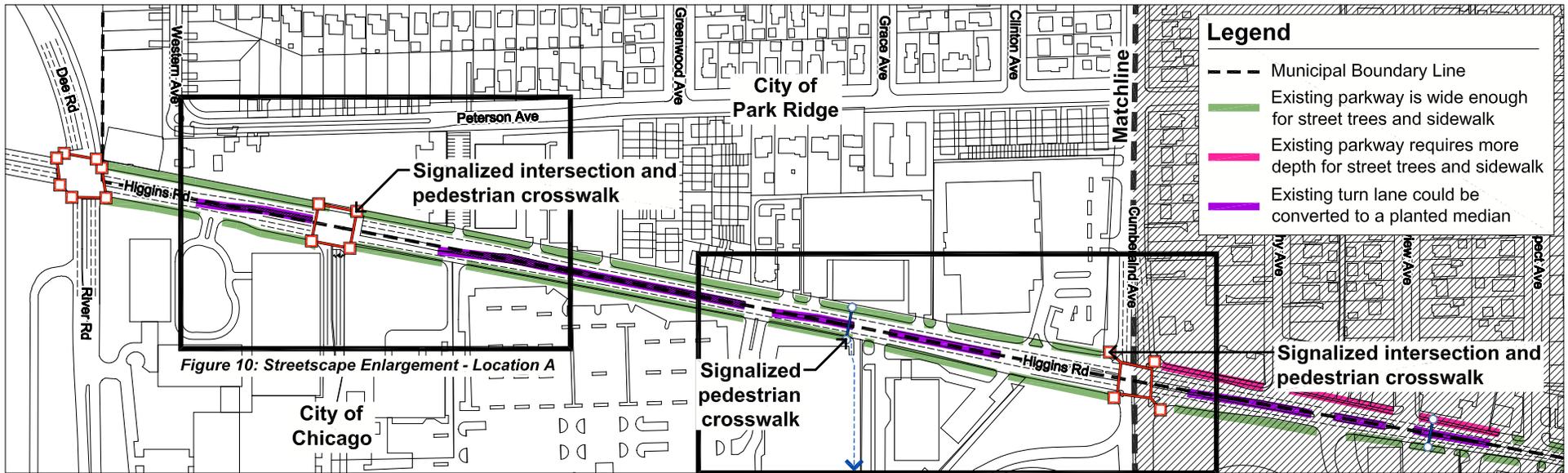


Figure 9a: West Side Streetscape District

Figure 11: Streetscape Enlargement - Location B

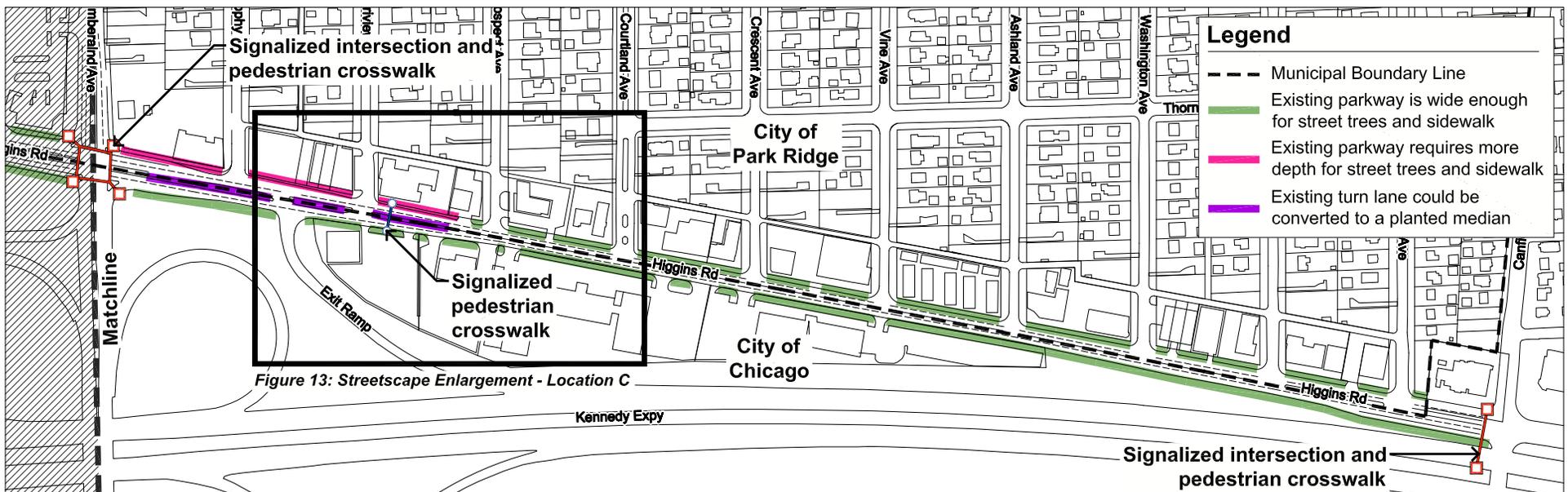


Figure 9b: East Side Streetscape District

Figure 9: Overall Streetscape Plan

difficult pedestrian crossing, with a short “walk” cycle for crossing six lanes of traffic. While the state has no planned improvements to the Higgins Road/Cumberland Avenue intersection at this time, the City should work with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to create a longer pedestrian walk cycle to alleviate some of the difficulties pedestrians face at this intersection. One short-term action that can improve this crossing is the addition of a pedestrian-countdown signal. Many pedestrians avoid the intersection by crossing Higgins Road mid-block. By doing so they are putting themselves in an unsafe situation. A first priority action is to make the crossing at the intersection of Cumberland Avenue and Higgins Road safer and less daunting. A second priority action might be the installation of a pedestrian-countdown signal at a mid-block crossing to help curtail this risky pedestrian behavior.

Table 2: West Side Streetscape District	
Impacts on Existing Infrastructure	Streetscape Elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain existing curb-to-curb • Reduce travel lane widths • Maintain existing R.O.W. dimensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street trees where the parkway meets the minimum depth requirement* • Planted median • Crosswalks safety improvements at signalized intersections • Crosswalks at non-signalized, mid-block locations in combination with enhanced median • Decorative lighting • “Dedicated” bike lane**

* Shade trees cannot be planted if the parkway dimension is less than five (5) feet in depth as measured from the edge of sidewalk to back of curb.
 ** The feasibility of a “dedicated” bike lane requiring a reduction of travel lane width and safety conditions must be analyzed.

Figure 11: Streetscape Enlargement - Location B is a section of the corridor that illustrates a proposed signalized pedestrian crosswalk. The planted median along the center of Higgins Road would create an opportunity for a signalized pedestrian crosswalk; see Figure 12: Signalized Pedestrian Crosswalk for an example. A planted median would provide a safety zone to facilitate safe pedestrian crossing. The location provided is based on the walking habits of current CTA riders as they are now.

Figure 11 also shows how the proposed bike lane along Higgins Road

would terminate at Cumberland Ave. This would provide the opportunity to connect the Higgins Road bike lane to existing bike routes within Park Ridge that run four blocks north of the corridor.

East Side Character District:

The opportunities for a unified streetscape on the east side are more limited due to existing physical constraints. The east side of the Higgins Road Corridor has several constraints without making changes to the existing infrastructure. Table 3: East Side Streetscape District lists the impacts and opportunities shown in Figure 9b: East Side Streetscape District.

Figure 9b: East Side Streetscape District illustrates how street trees should be planted along the corridor, in the parkway planting strip, at 40 foot on center. Pedestrian access and safety enhancements are concentrated at signalized intersections to allow for safe pedestrian crossing to and from commercial and restaurant uses on the north side of the corridor.

Figure 13: Streetscape Enlargement - Location C shows the benefits of converting the existing raised curb medians along Higgins Road, between Cumberland Ave. and Prospect Ave., into a planted median. The planted median provides the opportunity for a signalized pedestrian crosswalk located east of the building at 8303 W. Higgins Road. In this concept, the planted median provides a safety zone to facilitate the safe crossing of pedestrians along Higgins Road as shown in Figure 12: Signalized Pedestrian Crosswalk below.



Figure 12: Signalized Pedestrian Crosswalk