



SOUTH COMMERCIAL STREET CORRIDOR PLAN

NEENAH, WI • OCTOBER, 2020



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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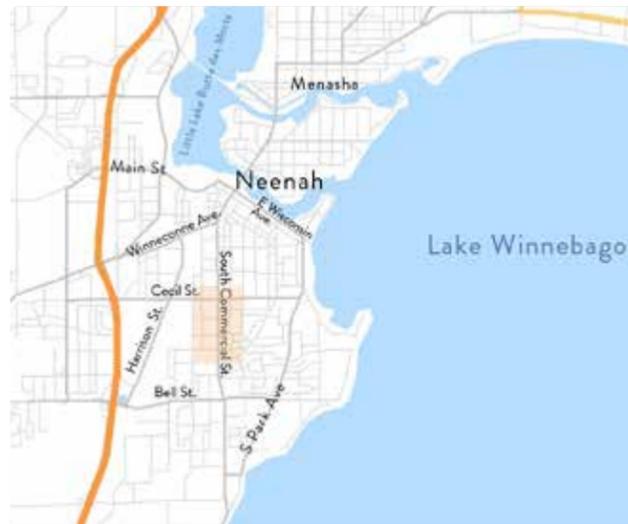
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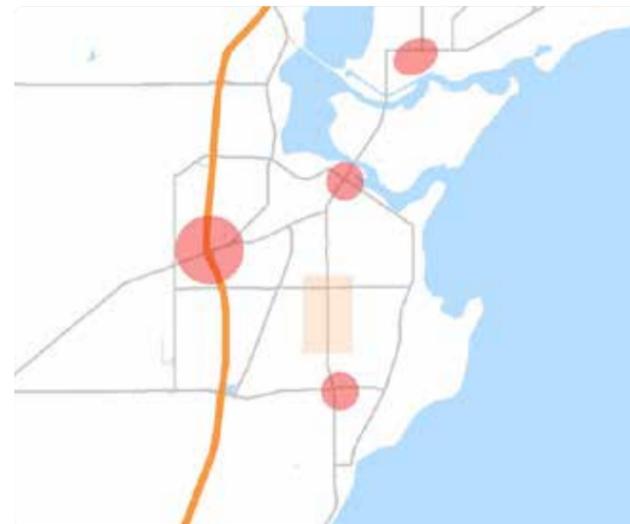
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Cecil Street provides access to the corridor from both the east and west. Its intersection with South Commercial Street is commercially successful and can serve as both a physical gateway to the district as well as an important anchor point for new development.



South Commercial Street competes with several nearby neighborhood and commercial districts.



Neenah straddles two metropolitan statistical areas, drawing employees and customers from throughout the region.



South Commercial Street serves multiple markets. These include a mix of commuters, neighborhood residents, students, and employees of area businesses.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

SOUTH COMMERCIAL STREET

Commercial Street in Neenah, Wisconsin runs south from downtown, through the city to Oshkosh. The corridor is located in the south-central part of the city, between the CN railroad and Interstate 41 to the west and Lake Winnebago to the east.

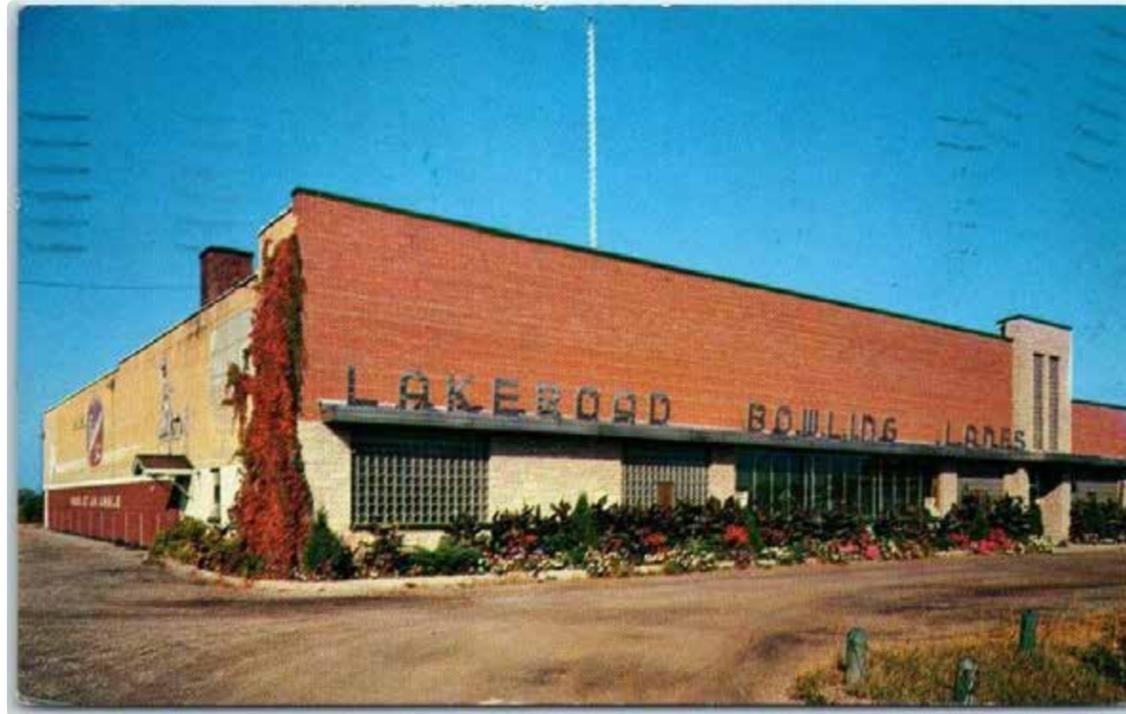
The South Commercial Street Business Corridor is the southern entrance into the City of Neenah, and has experienced modest investment in recent years. However, according to the City's Comprehensive Plan (updated 2017), the district struggles to sustain core businesses and faces the "challenge of maintaining a strong neighborhood retail shopping and dining experience."

Key Issues Identified:

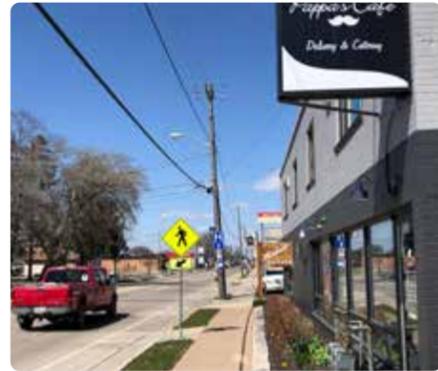
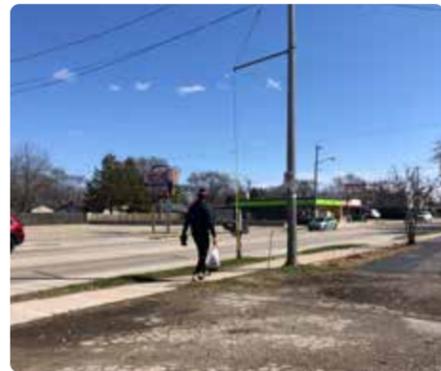
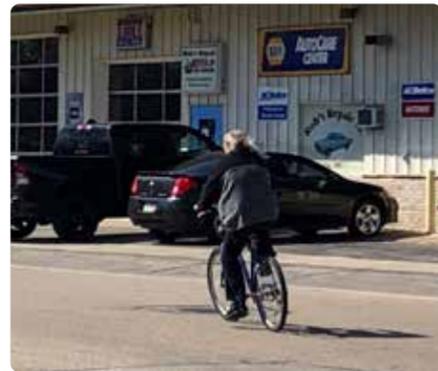
- Walkability
- Intersection safety
- Economic vitality
- Design standards
- Façade and site improvements
- Blight/environmental contamination
- District Identity
- Bicycle and pedestrian safety

Since 2017, the area has attracted investments, including a new microbrewery, a makerspace, and several other new businesses. In addition, since 2017, the City has acquired and demolished 3 blighted buildings within the corridor.

The purpose of this plan is to provide a more detailed vision for the corridor's future, including priority redevelopment sites and opportunities, landscape treatments, branding elements, façade improvements, and placemaking opportunities. The concepts identified in the study are intended to inform future planning and design efforts for South Commercial Street prior to its reconstruction, which may occur as early as 2024.



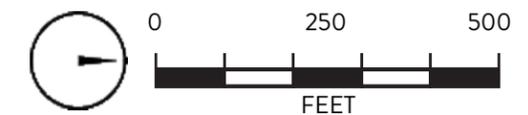
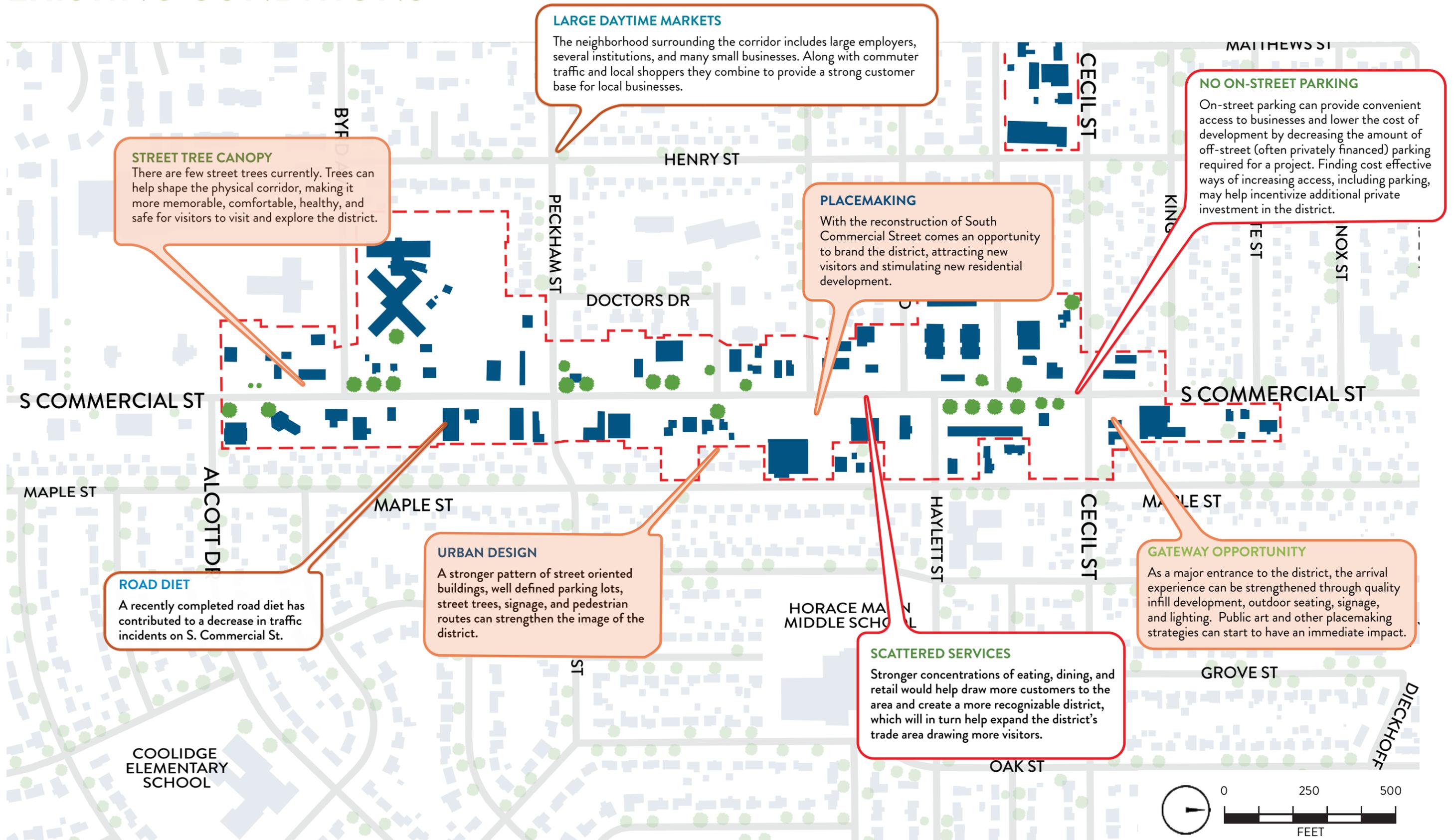
This historic aerial photograph of the corridor (looking north, 1957) illustrates a mix of residential and commercial land uses along the corridor.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

ISSUES + OPPORTUNITIES • PRIOR STRATEGIC PLANNING
LAND USE + BUILDING CONDITIONS • MOBILITY • MARKET CONDITIONS

EXISTING CONDITIONS



The City has analyzed the study area’s demographics, physical conditions, and market potentials. At meetings and on-line, stakeholders and the public have shared their own ideas for the corridor. One of the key findings so far in the planning process:

- **There is a strong desire to support continued commercial use within the corridor, while also adding new restaurants and services to meet the needs of local residents**

BACKGROUND REPORT SUMMARY + CONCLUSIONS

The following recommendations were identified in the Background Conditions report prepared by City staff.

1. Redevelopment along Commercial Street should focus not only on retail and service businesses, but also professional businesses that pay higher wages.
2. Given the low educational attainment and median incomes of residents living in Census Tracts 33 and 35, redevelopment along Commercial Street may provide opportunities for workforce development and training.
3. There are vast differences between housing values and ownership rates in the Census tracts surrounding the Commercial Street project area.
4. South Central Neenah is considered an underserved area of the city in terms of parks access. Incorporating greenspace and parkland into future development will help to create a more attractive streetscape and improve access to parks for these residents.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

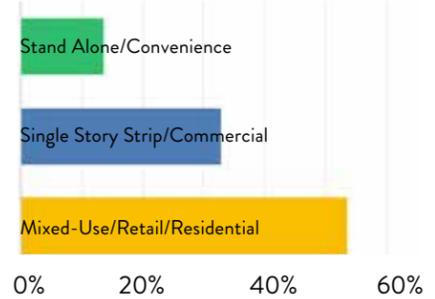
A community survey seeking public input received nearly 800 responses. Respondents would like to see a nicer looking, more walkable area with a mix of retail, restaurants, and residential uses.



Key Issues



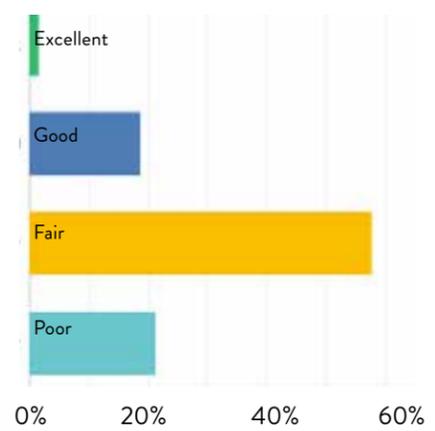
Desired Land Uses



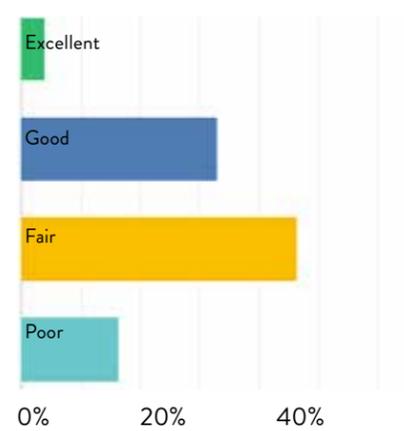
Desired Businesses and Land Uses



Quality of the District



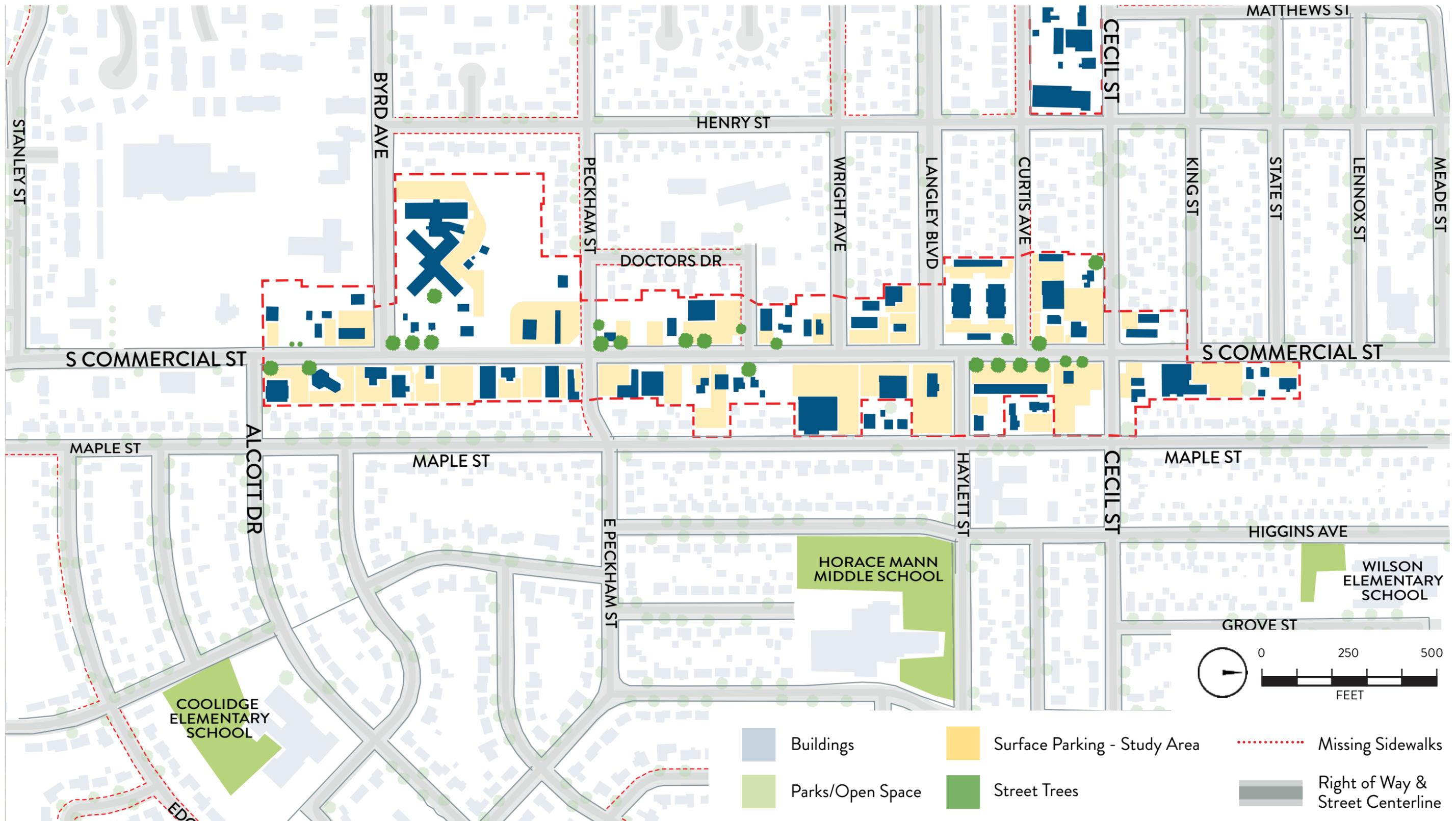
Walkability



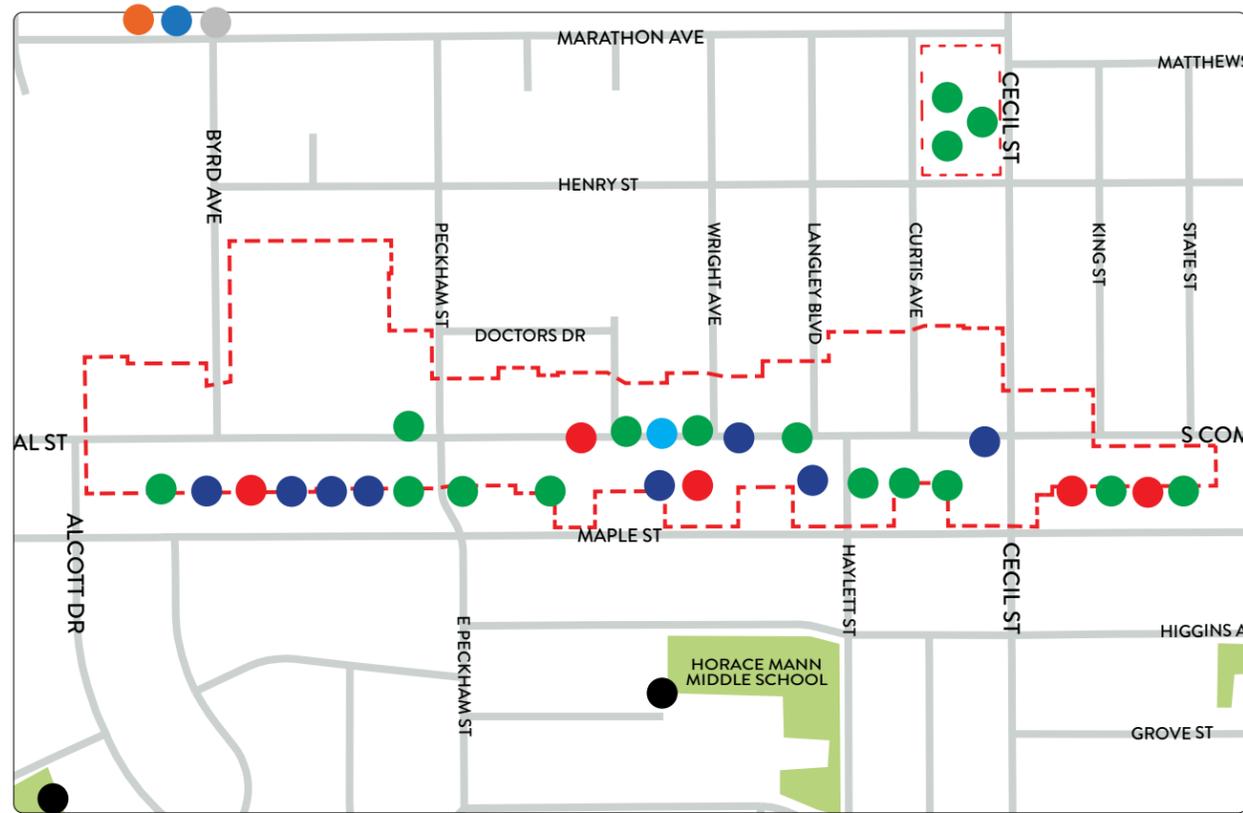
VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY



Survey respondents indicated a preference for wider tree-lined sidewalks (top left), art-inspired public spaces (top right), and street-oriented commercial development patterns (bottom left).



LAND USE + BUILDING CONDITIONS



- FOOD + BEVERAGE
- PLACES TO SHOP
- PERSONAL + REPAIR SERVICES
- POLICE STATION
- THINGS TO DO
- SCHOOL/LIBRARY/CIVIC
- DOG PARK
- COMMUNITY GARDEN

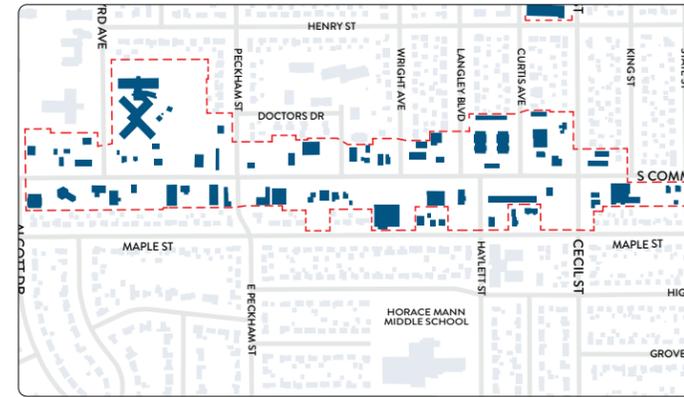
NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

The study area contains a mix of neighborhood oriented businesses including restaurants, maker-spaces, brew pubs, hair and nail salons, laundry, liquor stores, and auto repair establishments. The most dominant category of use is automotive related. There are two gas stations and several automotive repair businesses.

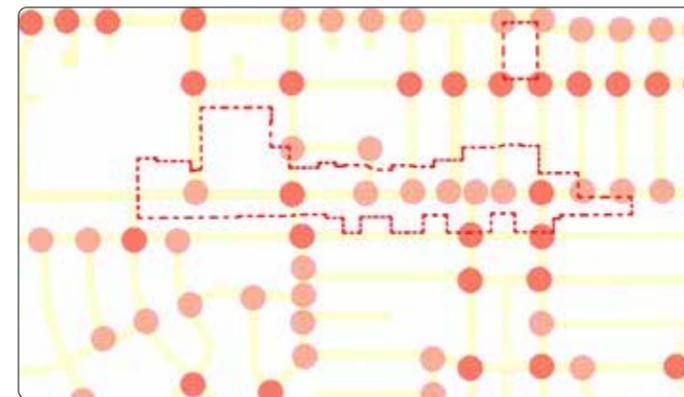
- There are relatively few places to shop.
- There are no centrally located civic institutions to help anchor the district.
- There is a strong concentration of eating and dining establishments.
- Restaurants are scattered throughout the corridor while drinking establishments are clustered near the southern end of the study area between Peckham St. and Byrd Ave.
- Potential service gaps for the neighborhood might include fitness, limited grocery, additional restaurants.

LAND USE + BUILDING CONDITIONS

SOUTH COMMERCIAL STREET CORRIDOR PLAN



ABOVE: Widely spaced buildings and empty spaces undermine the sense of enclosure and human scale which supports walkability.



ABOVE: The study area has a high concentration of intersections, which is an asset for promoting walkability and an opportunity for establishing compelling new developments.



ABOVE: The corridor is sandwiched between two neighborhoods and supported by a mix of diverse uses which generate customer traffic throughout different times of the day and week. West of the study area there is a stronger concentration of multi-family apartments but fewer parks and no schools.

Yellow/Orange=Residential; Blue=Institutional; Red=Commercial



ABOVE: The neighborhoods flanking the study area have a mixed block structure, including several larger blocks. New development should seek to strengthen linkages across the study area.



ABOVE: There are sections of missing sidewalk, primarily to the west of the corridor. Long blocks limit pedestrian access from the east.



ABOVE: The majority of the study area is zoned C1 Commercial (Red). Some cities have modified similar districts to facilitate development. Potential changes include: relaxing frontage strip requirements, front yard setbacks, off-street parking requirements and lot coverage maximums.



ABOVE: The study area is at the crossroads of several interconnecting active transportation facilities. The diagram above is a composite map which shows bus routes (dashed line), off-street trails (green), on-street bike lanes (red), and bike routes (blue).



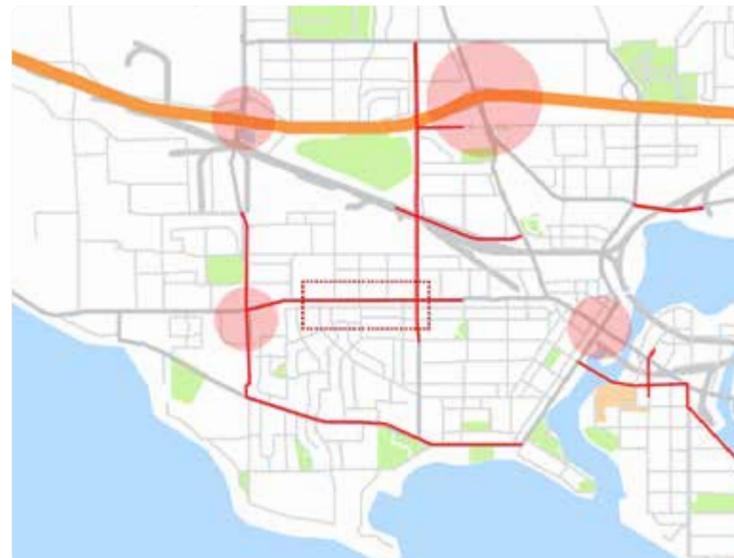
ABOVE: The study area's existing off-street bike facilities connect to several trail segments, making connections to Loop the Little Lake and other destinations.



ABOVE: Fox Valley Transit Line #31 travels the length of the corridor, linking several shopping, residential, and employment centers.

OBSERVATIONS

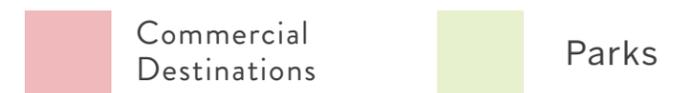
- Commercial Street is a three lane road, with one lane of traffic in each direction and a center left-turn lane. An average of 10,000 cars drive down the street every day.
- Parking is no longer permitted on the street.
- There are no medians along the street, though some segments have a planted terrace.
- Commercial Street features on-street bike lanes in both directions, from Cecil Street south through the study area.
- Adjacent streets, including Maple Street, Cecil Street, Marathon Avenue and Alcott Drive, also feature bicycle lanes or routes.
- Most transit stops along Commercial Street consist of a route sign on a utility pole.
- There is one bus shelter within the project area, located at Commercial Street and Professional Plaza, just north of Auto Zone. Future improvements to the streetscape and pedestrian environment along Commercial Street should consider improvements to bus stop infrastructure.



ABOVE: Bike lanes were added to South Commercial Street as part of its "road diet" several years ago. In commercial districts bike lanes can be a mixed blessing. On the one hand they provide access to businesses while contributing to the overall network. On the other hand they can leave little or no room for on-street parking, which is critically important for many small businesses and can alleviate the need for excessive amounts of surface parking lots.

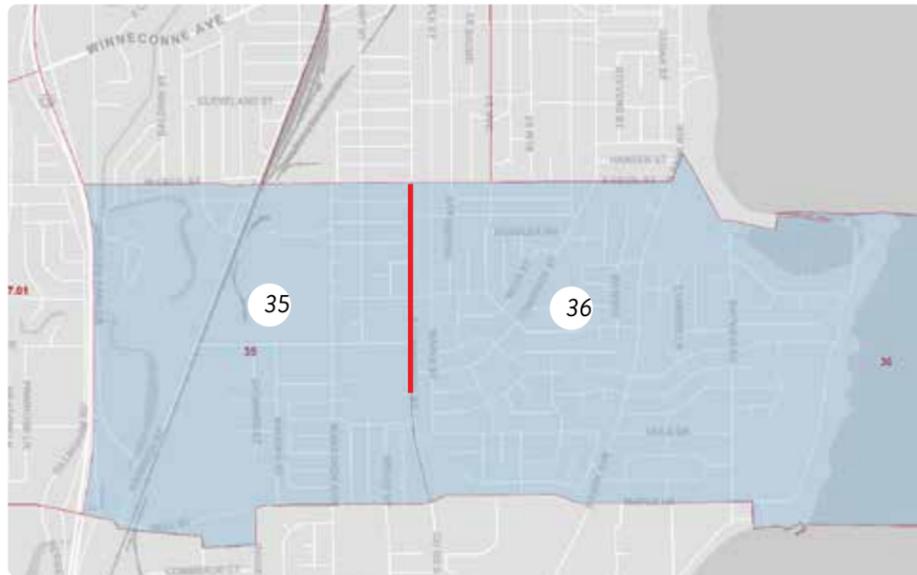


ABOVE: Maple Street is a designated bike route running parallel to South Commercial Street. The east side of the district has significantly more bike routes than the west side of the district.

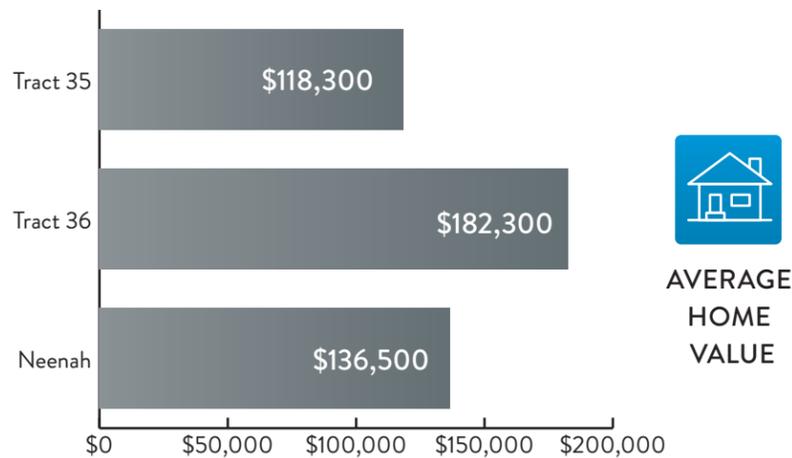


DEMOGRAPHICS

Housing and economic characteristics of those who live on the east and west sides of Commercial Street are dramatically different. The average home value in the neighborhood to the west, which includes Census Tract 35, is \$118,300. To the east, the average home value in Census Tract 36 is \$182,300. Approximately 1/3 of the housing stock in Census Tract 35 is renter-occupied, compared with a figure of 89% for Census Tract 36. The average household income in Census Tract 36 (\$130,000) is three times that of Tract 35 (\$44,000).



Census Tracts

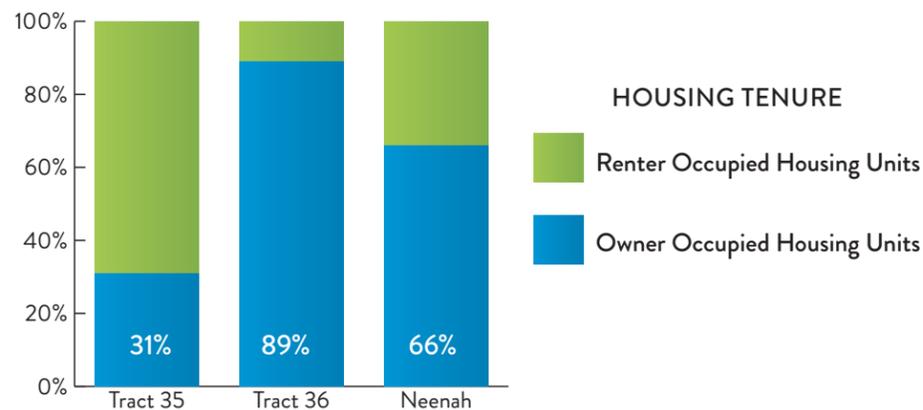


Source: 2018 5-Year ACS Estimates

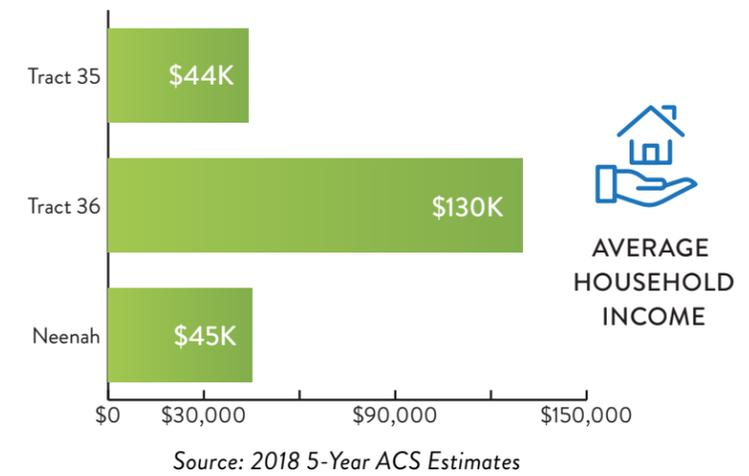
MARKET ASSESSMENT

1. Housing development is a reasonable option for South Commercial Street, particularly over the long run, since attracting new retail development to the corridor will be difficult, except in the very strongest locations.
2. There is reason to believe that a modern neighborhood retail development on Commercial Street could find a local market because quality, modern neighborhood retail is almost completely absent in the area and Commercial Street remains the center of a couple of neighborhoods. The higher income households that reside in some parts of the neighborhoods have purchasing power to support retail stores.
3. Challenges to new retail development are primarily about the blighted condition of properties in the area, the lack of unifying themes or character, and the absence of a high-quality place that can serve as a center of focus along the corridor.
4. These findings support the pursuit of neighborhood retail development on one of the quadrants of the Commercial/Cecil intersection. That location would provide the strongest possible environment from the perspectives of visibility and traffic volumes.

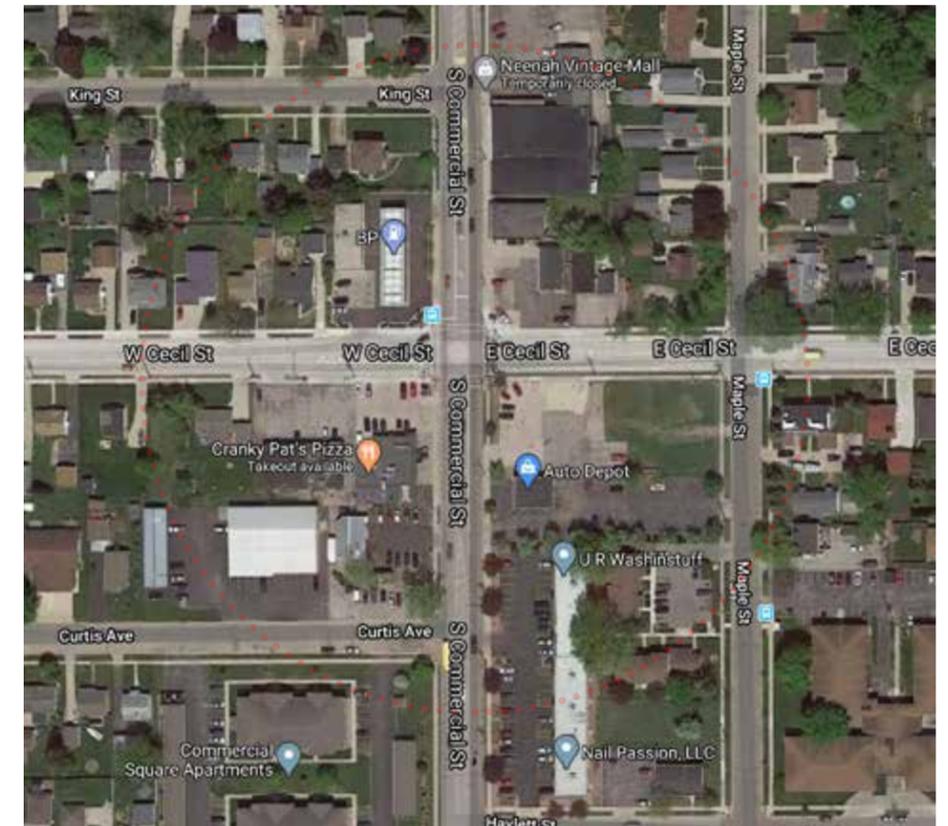
Source: 2016 South Commercial Street Market Analysis



Source: 2018 5-Year ACS Estimates



Source: 2018 5-Year ACS Estimates



ABOVE: The intersection of Cecil and Commercial streets may provide a good opportunity for a new development. The site has good visibility, transit access, strong nearby businesses, high traffic volumes, and good proximity to downtown Neenah.

MARKET CONDITIONS

SOUTH COMMERCIAL STREET CORRIDOR PLAN

CONCEPT PLAN

STREET CROSS SECTION ALTERNATIVES • POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT SITES
BICYCLE + PEDESTRIAN OPPORTUNITIES • PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS

CONCEPT PLAN

PLAN PRIORITIES

The consultant team, City staff, and stakeholder advisory committee met over the period March-September 2020 to review and discuss existing conditions within the corridor, as well as public feedback from the community survey. Overall, the stakeholder advisory group felt the corridor needed to become more of a destination in itself, as opposed to a place where people “drive through.”

Plan Objectives:

1. Identify South Commercial Street cross section alternatives
2. Identify strategies to improve walkability and bicycling conditions
3. Enhance parking conditions
4. Identify strategies to improve landscaping and building exteriors
5. Identify potential development opportunities including housing, retail, and office
6. Identify funding mechanisms to support economic development

KEY COMPONENTS OF CONCEPT PLAN

- **STREET CONFIGURATION ALTERNATIVES.** Several street cross section alternatives were identified. The two priority alternatives will require further study during the preliminary and final engineering phase of the project.
- **HOUSING.** Housing is critically important to thriving business districts, including a mix of appropriate housing types compatible with the neighborhood. The plan identifies new housing opportunities within each of the four potential redevelopment sites.
- **REDEVELOPMENT AREAS.** Identification of several potential redevelopment opportunities, including both short-term and longer term ones. Four primary redevelopment areas are identified. Conceptual site plans illustrate opportunities to enhance walkability, improve parking and access.
- **BICYCLE BOULEVARD.** A Strong North-South bicycle boulevard along Maple Street with convenient, well marked, attractive linkages to South Commercial Street is presented as an alternative, or as a complement to reinstalling bike lanes on South Commercial Street.
- **URBAN DESIGN + PARKING.** The redevelopment site plans identify parking lot improvements that will enhance the economic vitality of the district by facilitating customer visitation, as well as enhancing the aesthetic quality of the corridor. Attractive outdoor community gathering spaces attract neighbors and support local businesses.
- **STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.** Several suggested streetscape components are recommended including street trees, covered bus shelters, lighting, and flower pots. These will need to be explored and refined during the preliminary engineering design phase.
- **WAYFINDING + BRANDING.** The primary opportunity for branding the district will be at the Cecil Street intersection. The type and quality of development at the intersection can set the tone for the district as a whole. The concept presented will strengthen the neighborhood and set the tone for additional quality development within the district.
- **BUILDING APPEARANCE.** Many of the buildings in the study area have been improved over the past few years. This plan identifies several strategies to continue enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the corridor.



MARATHON AVE

BYRD AVE

W PECKAHAM ST

S COMMERCIAL ST

MAPLE ST

W CECIL ST

S COMMERCIAL ST

E CECIL ST

STREET CROSS SECTION ALTERNATIVES

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the City of Neenah are partnering together to rebuild South Commercial Street, which is scheduled to begin in 2025. The rebuild presents an opportunity for reconstructing the street that couples functional improvements with aesthetic enhancements to stimulate private investment. The scope of work includes reimagining the entire right-of-way, which includes the street, sidewalks, and grass terrace.

As part of this planning process, several street sections were explored for South Commercial Street. The right-of-way is 66 feet wide, resulting in limited real estate to capture everything that people desire, including wider sidewalks, ample landscaping, on-street parking, bicycle lanes, adequate travel lanes, and continuous left-turning movements. The concepts show possible alternatives along with a cursory review of each alternative's advantages/disadvantages.

While this planning exercise is not a streetscape concept, it provides context for more desirable scenarios moving forward. The next step towards implementation is completing a topographic survey for the corridor and preparing a schematic design that involves all stakeholders along the corridor.

- **Access Management.** South Commercial Street has many businesses with continuous curb cuts, which all represent conflict points that require some level of reconciliation for a highway corridor. The intent of the design concept is to minimize conflicts for customers while providing clarity to them where they can park to patronize businesses.
- **Sense of Destination.** The district needs a unified theme to create a sense that customers have arrived to their destination. An improved streetscape that has a family of features should be carried throughout the district. This includes lighting, landscaping, seating, and graphics. Improvements should compel property owners to reinvest in their businesses to match the public's investment into the corridor's future.
- **Customer Convenience.** The corridor should serve more than automobiles and make pedestrians and cyclists feel that they belong in the district. While parking is often available off-street, some parking should be considered for spaces that do not otherwise have convenient parking for customers.

STREET CROSS SECTION ALTERNATIVES SOUTH COMMERCIAL STREET CORRIDOR PLAN



Existing Typical Cross Section

66' Right-of-Way

49' Street (back-of-curb to back-of-curb)

3.5' Grass Terrace

5' Sidewalk



What Makes a Great Street (Allan Jacobs)

According to Allan Jacobs, there are eight design requirements which must be considered when planning and designing future streets. These components of street design encourage sociability, promote healthy living, support local businesses, and enhance the overall livability of the community.

1. Provide places for people to walk, gather, and socialize
2. Create a physically comfortable environment throughout the year
3. Establish a well defined street environment that encourages walking
4. Create an engaging experience (lighting, quality urban design)
5. Windows, doorways, and entries are inviting and provide transparency
6. Buildings compliment one another, creating a sense of order
7. Street trees, buildings, lighting, street surfaces well maintained
8. Quality construction and design



CONCEPT 1A:

3-Lane Street with Center Turn Lane
Protected Bike Lanes, and Street Trees

Evaluation

- + Bicyclists have a dedicated space, separated from moving vehicles
- + Provides a terrace separating road from sidewalk
- + Adequate space for street trees

- Significant amount of impervious surface that increases stormwater runoff
- Wider pathway may encourage motorists to speed
- More light spread



CONCEPT 1B:

3-Lane Street with Center Turn Lane
Protected Bike Lanes, and Permeable Pavers

Evaluation

- + Bicyclists have a dedicated space, buffered from moving vehicles
- + Adequate space for pedestrians
- + Permeable pavers and plantings help manage stormwater runoff

- Significant amount of impervious surface that increases stormwater runoff
- Wider pathway may encourage motorists to speed
- More light spread



CONCEPT 2:

3-Lane Street with Center Turn Lane
Cycle Track and Street Trees

Evaluation

- + Bicyclists have a dedicated space, separated from moving vehicles
- + Adequate space for street trees and turf
- + Unique concept to the valley

- Significant amount of impervious surface that increases stormwater runoff
- Wider pathway may encourage motorists to speed
- Potential confusion for users



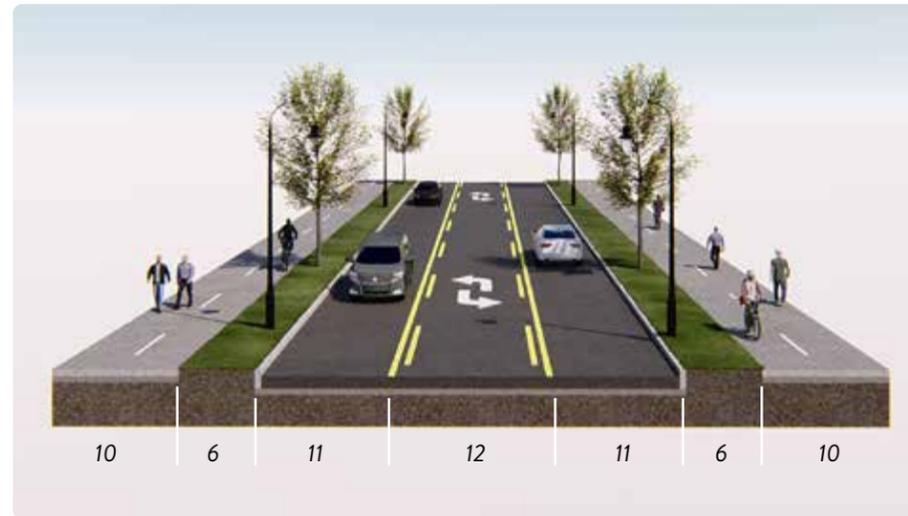
CONCEPT 3A:

3-Lane Street with Center Turn Lane
Grass Terrace and Side Path

Evaluation

- + Adequate space for street trees and landscaping
- + Potential to introduce on-street parking intermittently
- + More green space and more flexibility to add streetscape features
- + Pedestrians separated from moving lane by grass terrace
- + Shorter crossing distance
- + Higher probability for naturally calming traffic speed
- + Inexperienced bicyclists may feel more comfortable off the street

- Potential for cars entering street from businesses may block the side path
- Lack of parking, unless designed to be introduced intermittently
- Bicyclists sharing space with pedestrians



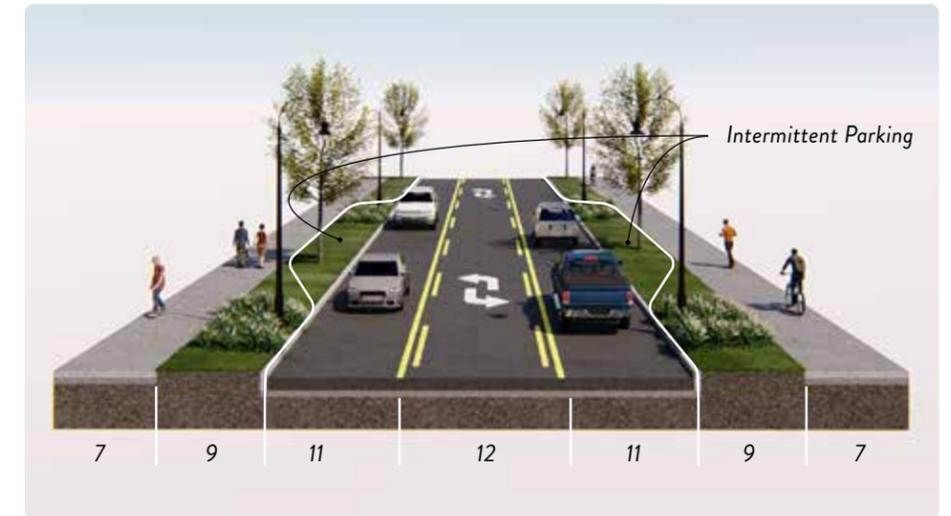
CONCEPT 3B:

3-Lane Street with Center Turn Lane
Grass Terrace and Wider Side Path

Evaluation

- + Similar to Concept 2
- + More space for pedestrians and bicyclists

- Similar to Concept 2
- Less green space.
- Lack of on-street parking possibilities



HYBRID CONCEPT:

3-Lane Street with Center Turn Lane
Wide Sidewalk and Grass Terrace with Scattered On-Street Parking

The Hybrid Concept includes a 7' sidewalk separated from the street by a 9' grass terrace. The zone for the grass terrace could be interrupted intermittently to allow for on-street parking. As the sidewalk path approaches driveways and intersections, it can shift to the curb to improve the visibility for the pedestrians.

Evaluation

- + Encourages slower speeds
- + Reduces need for off-street parking resulting in 'donut hole' development
- + While cyclists can use the corridor, through bicycle traffic is encouraged on parallel routes, like Maple Street.

- A potential setback to the hybrid model from advancing is the possible necessity that funding from Wisconsin DOT is dependent on bicycle facilities being incorporated into the design.

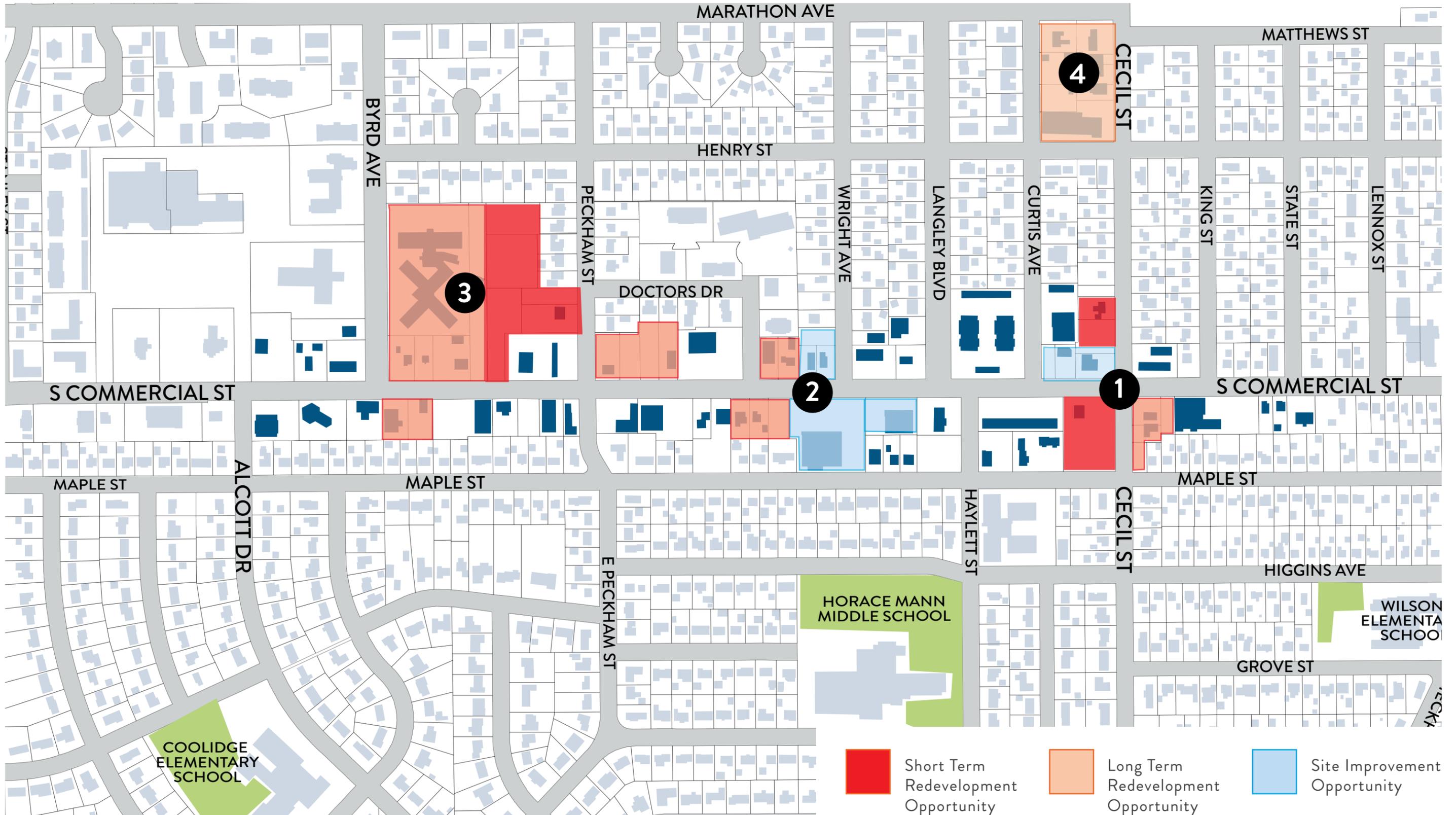


CECIL ST + S COMMERCIAL STREET

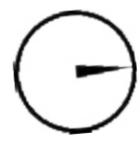
View of redevelopment opportunity site looking southeast toward Cranky Pats. Southwest corner of intersection provides an opportunity to introduce new housing and neighborhood oriented retail, eating, or dining.

This primary intersection creates an opportunity to reposition the district as a stronger destination within the City. New residential and retail infill strengthens the district economically, while enhancing the overall livability of the neighborhood by providing new venues for social gathering.





POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT SITES
SOUTH COMMERCIAL STREET CORRIDOR PLAN



- Short Term
Redevelopment
Opportunity
- Long Term
Redevelopment
Opportunity
- Site Improvement
Opportunity

1 KING STREET TO HAYLETT CONCEPT

The segment of South Commercial Avenue from King Street to Haylett Street is the gateway into the South Commercial Street Business District. Concepts for this area intend to enhance the arrival to the district, spotlight existing businesses and presenting new investment opportunities.

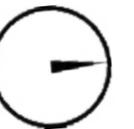
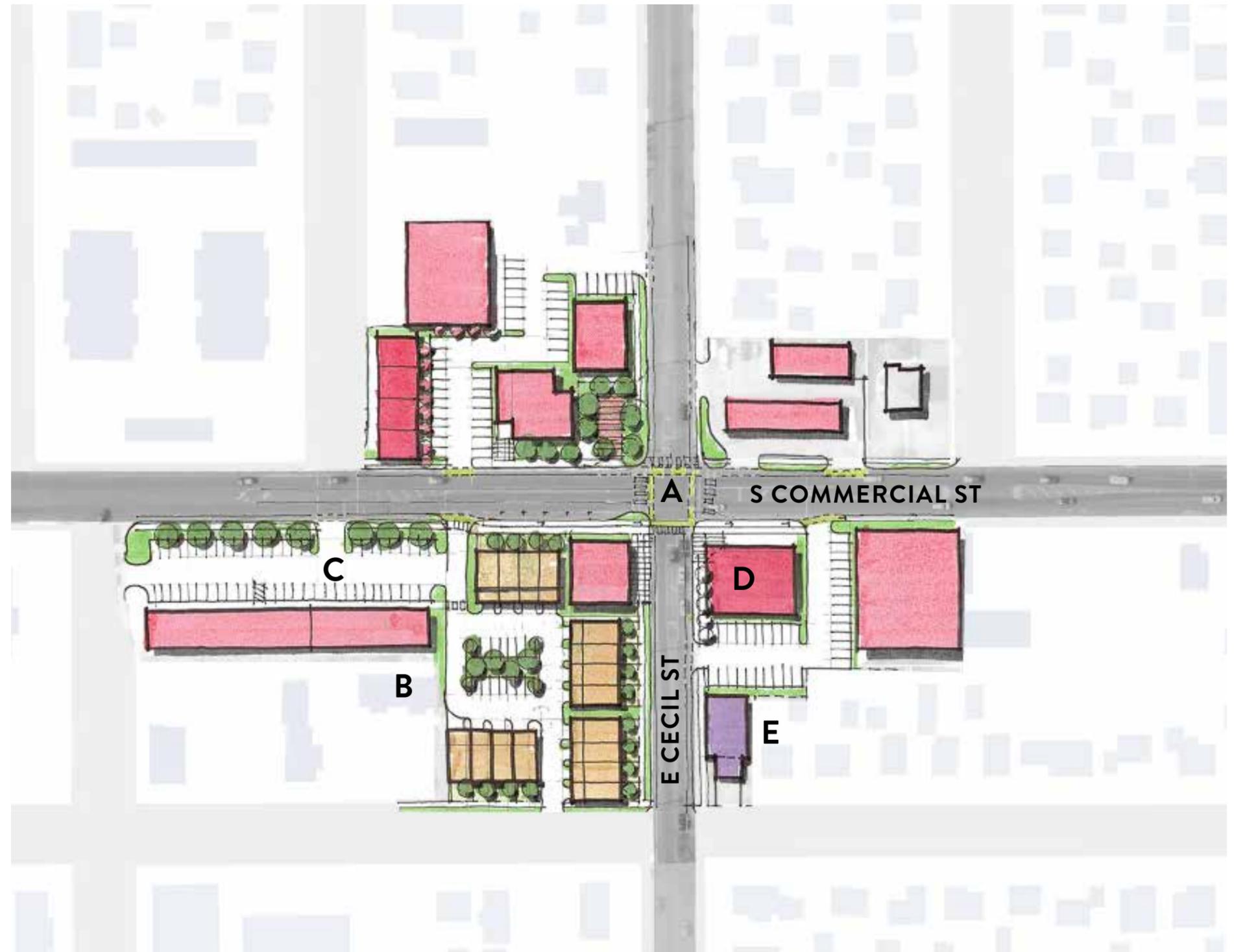
A. Gateway at Cranky Pat's Pizzeria. Concepts for the area around Cranky Pat's are intended to celebrate this iconic business by creating a signature space that can function for customers, while being a landmark space in the community. The concept transforms the gray concrete space into a plaza that attracts the attention of passersby. The design of the space could be a combination of outdoor dining, water feature (white noise to mask the traffic), lighting, and community art. The concept shows a new building flanking the plaza. The building could be an auxiliary space for Cranky Pat's, perhaps a new kitchen with bar service to support patrons sitting outdoors. Parking for the site would wrap the buildings, providing entrances set away from the intersection to allow easy access for customers to enter from either Cecil Street or South Commercial Street. It should also be noted that the proposed building location could also be used for parking, in order to support existing operations with expanded outdoor eating and dining.

B. SE Corner Redevelopment. Redeveloping the used car lot at the southeast corner of South Commercial Street and Cecil Street is a priority of the plan as its present use is marginal and located in a high-profile location that influences everyone's perception of the district. The redevelopment concept shows a new commercial building addressing the intersection. Redevelopment with parking available on-street and additional shared parking behind. The remaining balance of the lot shows townhouses facing the street with covered parking available from behind. Townhouses introduce a housing type that is limited in the neighborhood and provides prospective residents with more options. The concept responds to the growing interest in having low-maintenance homes with individual access and nearby neighborhood amenities.

C. Playa Plaza Parking and Landscaping. The concept shows the parking lot connecting to the redevelopment project to the north. As streetscape improvements are applied throughout the entire corridor, the landscaping along the sidewalk should adopt the overall image for the street.

D. NE Corner Redevelopment. The concept shows future redevelopment leveraging its presence at the crossroads of two important streets by bringing a 2+ story building, which could be mixed-use or commercial, closer to the intersection and providing parking behind.

E. Develop Vacant Lot The open lot at Maple Street and Cecil Street could be developed as a new home or a live/work space.



KING STREET TO HAYLETT STREET

F. Bicycle Facilities. The concept shows a scenario with bicycle lanes on South Commercial Street. As the cyclist approaches Cecil Street, the lane merges to above the curb where it crosses Cecil Street adjacent to the crosswalk. This provides the cyclist with more protection from turning traffic and the opportunity to have some on-street parking for businesses.

G. SW Corner Redevelopment Scenario. Under a scenario with a new kitchen for Cranky Pat's, the lot that's directly south of the restaurant could be redeveloped to provide new leasable tenant space with parking available along the street



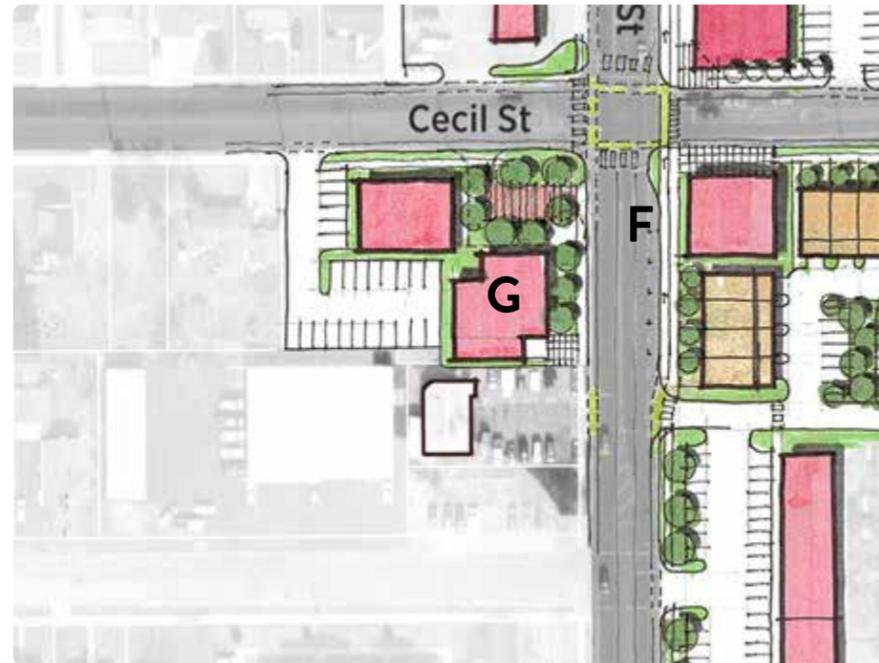
ABOVE: Residential infill possibilities



ABOVE: Mixed use infill possibilities



ABOVE: Residential infill possibilities



ABOVE: Plaza possibilities



ABOVE: Corner commercial development opportunity



ABOVE: Townhome opportunity



ABOVE: Mixed use infill opportunity



ABOVE: Vegetation screens outdoor seating area on busy street



ABOVE: Mixed-use concept for Cecil Street intersection



Gateway Feature and Plaza

Cranky Pat's is a signature business that could leverage its visibility at the crossroads of South Commercial Street and Cecil Street. Implementing the plaza could be a public/private partnership where the edges could be enhanced with elevated planters and a gateway feature to the district. Planters serve as force-protection and help deflect traffic noise.



POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT SITES



Integrating Parking and Protected Crossing

The streetscape design can integrate on-street parking at different locations. The concept shows the north bound bike lane merging with the sidewalk, allowing the bike lane to be separated from moving traffic by on-street parking and protecting the cyclist at the intersection.



2 WRIGHT AVENUE TO PROFESSIONAL PLAZA CONCEPT

A. Pedestrian Crossing. Establishing a crosswalk at Wright Avenue provides people with a dedicated space for crossing South Commercial Street. The pathway could continue to Maple Street, providing greater connectivity to the neighborhood. This project may create a precedent for continuing a new sidewalk for the south side of Wright Street, and ultimately create better walkability of the neighborhood.

B. My Place/CRE8 Lab Customer Parking. The concept changes the parking lot from a continuous curb with vehicles parked next to the building with a parking lot that has interior circulation. Conventional practice for designing customer parking discourages perpendicular stalls where the driver backs out immediately into the street. Drivers' visibility is obstructed when backing out and are occasionally blocked in by traffic. Also, the existing orientation interrupts the proposed crosswalk that attempts to create customer convenience to overflow parking across the street. Accomplishing the concept will require an extension of the curb into the Wright Avenue. Additional parking can be captured to the west of the building.

C. Redevelopment Possibility. The half-block south of My Place, which includes the automotive center, is subject to change in the future. Future redevelopment of the site should consider shared access with My Place. Continued redevelopment to the south, as a later phase, should maintain a drive lane that links to Professional Plaza.

D. Reserve Access. Redevelopment of the lot should reserve a drive entrance from Professional Plaza, not built a structure to prevent future access.

E. Parking Drive. The Parking Drive reorganizes the parking stalls between Morton Safety and Dollar General, and provides a through route to the neighborhood. This helps break up a long block.

F. Landscape Parking. Dollar General's parking lot could be reorganized to include a connection to Maple Street, providing more circulation options.

G. Townhomes. The concept shows townhomes that with individual access. The lot size limits the development potential for larger development projects, yet a larger project can be considered if the lots behind (and fronting Maple Street) were assembled into a larger project site. However, these homes are viable and support the street's neighborhood character.



POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT SITES

3

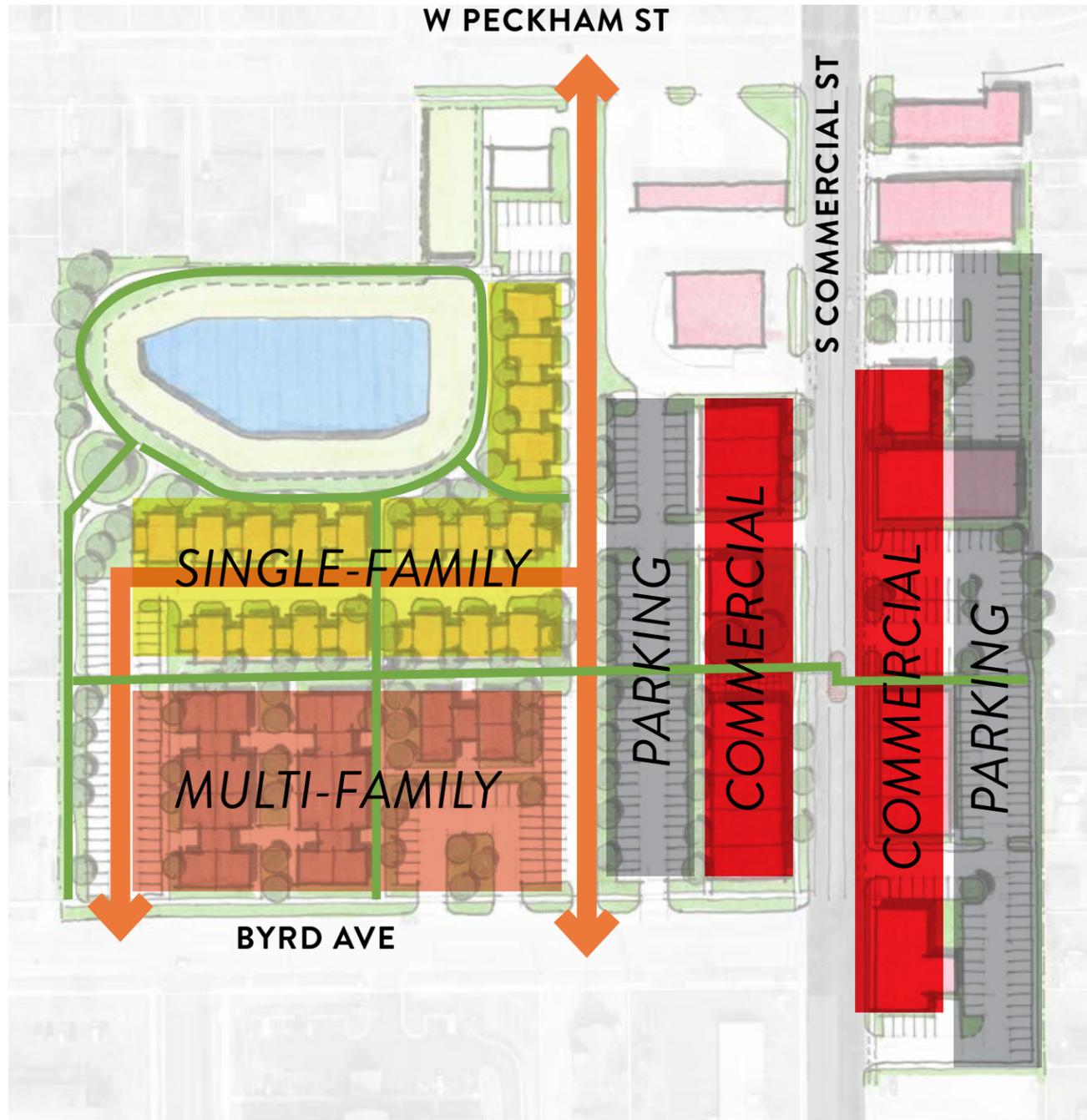
PECKHAM STREET TO BYRD AVENUE CONCEPT

The block north of Byrd Avenue is subject to change. The senior living facility, Atrium Post Acute Care, is permanently closed and rests on over 3.5 acres. To the north of that site is vacant land owned by the City of Neenah, which is reserved for a future stormwater management feature. The overall concept is designed to allow development to occur in phases that maximizes connections and show housing choices that appeal to different market segments. Features of the concept include:

- A. Pond and Recreation Path.** The pond become serves a functional purpose for retaining stormwater runoff from the area, and becomes a recreational amenity with walking trails and seating areas. If implemented appropriately, the feature can become a defining feature that makes the lots more marketable.
- B. Cottage Housing.** The semi-attached single family housing overlooks the pond. While the project can be developed as a continuous building, the concept shows splitting it to allow for greater pedestrian access to the recreation area. Also, the concept shows how buildings can be built incrementally to respond to market demand fluctuations.
- C. Multi-family Housing.** Multi-family housing along Byrd Avenue allows for higher-intensity uses on the site and a stronger yield of units that can support customers to the neighborhood.
- D. Commercial Development.** The property fronting South Commercial Street is reserved for commercial development with parking and common access available from behind. Continuity between projects is important to limit curb cuts. New development along South Commercial Street ties together adjacent businesses into a more cohesive district, encouraging greater pedestrian activity.
- E. Common Drive.** A new north/south road extends through the site to establish a transition between development projects.
- F. Walking Paths.** The concept shows a system of connecting pathways from the pond to the residential areas and South Commercial Street. Its implementation should ensure that access provides convenience from the multi-family areas, and not perceived as a private amenity.
- G. Pedestrian Crossing.** A pedestrian crossing is proposed along South Commercial Street to provide a refuge for pedestrians. Its placement should not interfere with left-turning movements.



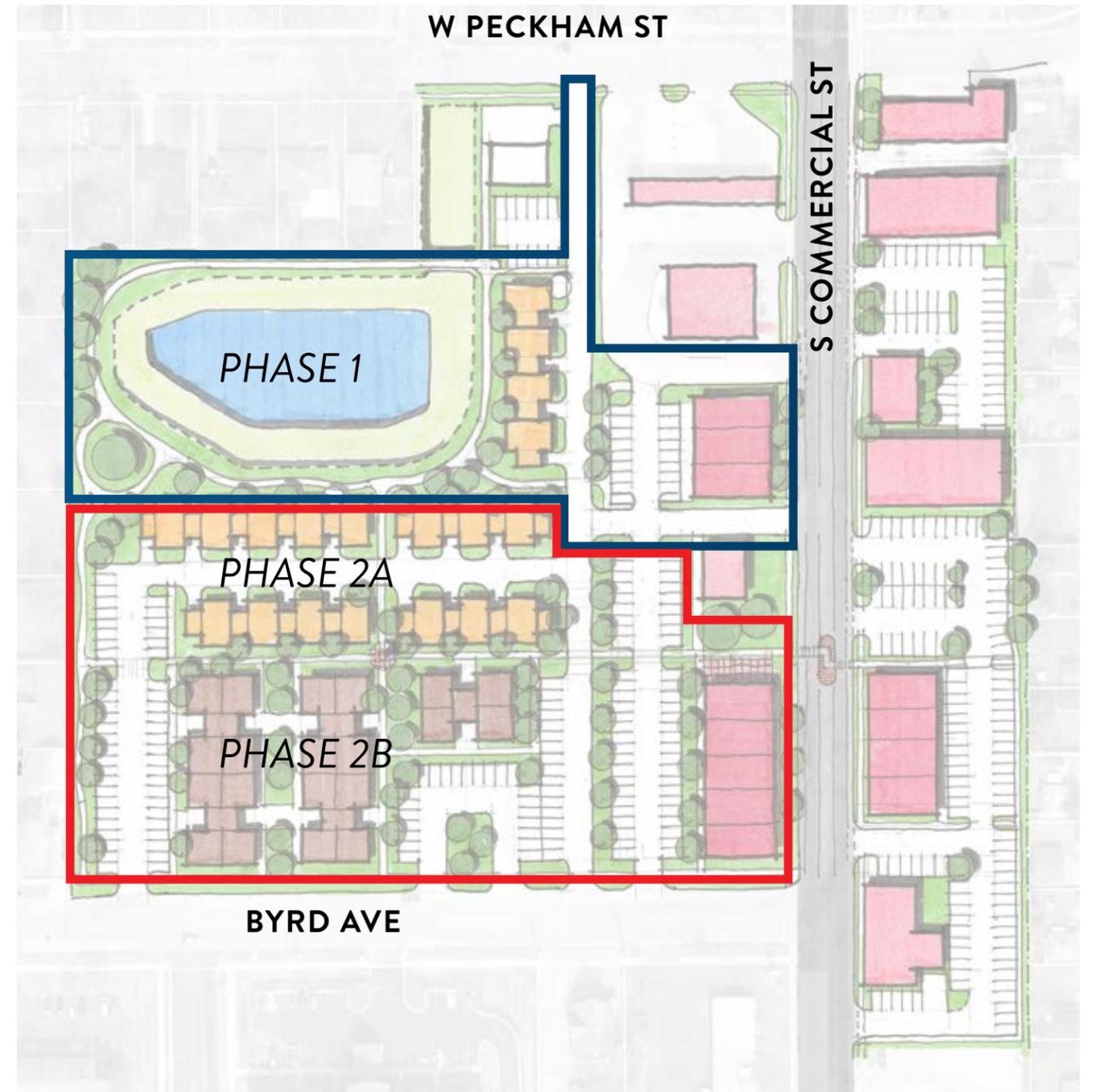
Land Use Configuration and Circulation Concept



- Ensure pedestrian connections
- ↔ Ensure vehicle circulation



Phasing Strategy



Project may be phased in over time.





ABOVE: Pedestrian connections link neighborhood



ABOVE: Pedestrian connections in residential neighborhood



ABOVE: Cottage homes in Omaha, NE



ABOVE: Row homes



ABOVE: Apartments overlooking Lake Winge, Madison, WI



ABOVE: Row home style apartments, Neenah, WI



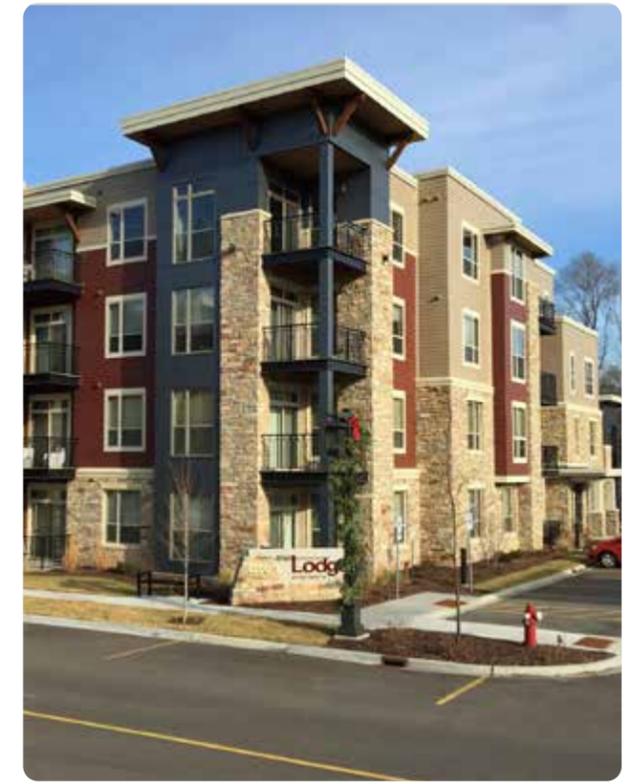
ABOVE: Commercial infill, La Crosse, WI



ABOVE: Single family cottage home, pocket neighborhood (Source: Ross Chapin)



ABOVE: Stacked Flats - rendering



ABOVE: Senior Housing, Middleton, WI

POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT SITES SOUTH COMMERCIAL STREET CORRIDOR PLAN

4 MARATHON AVENUE AND CECIL STREET CONCEPT

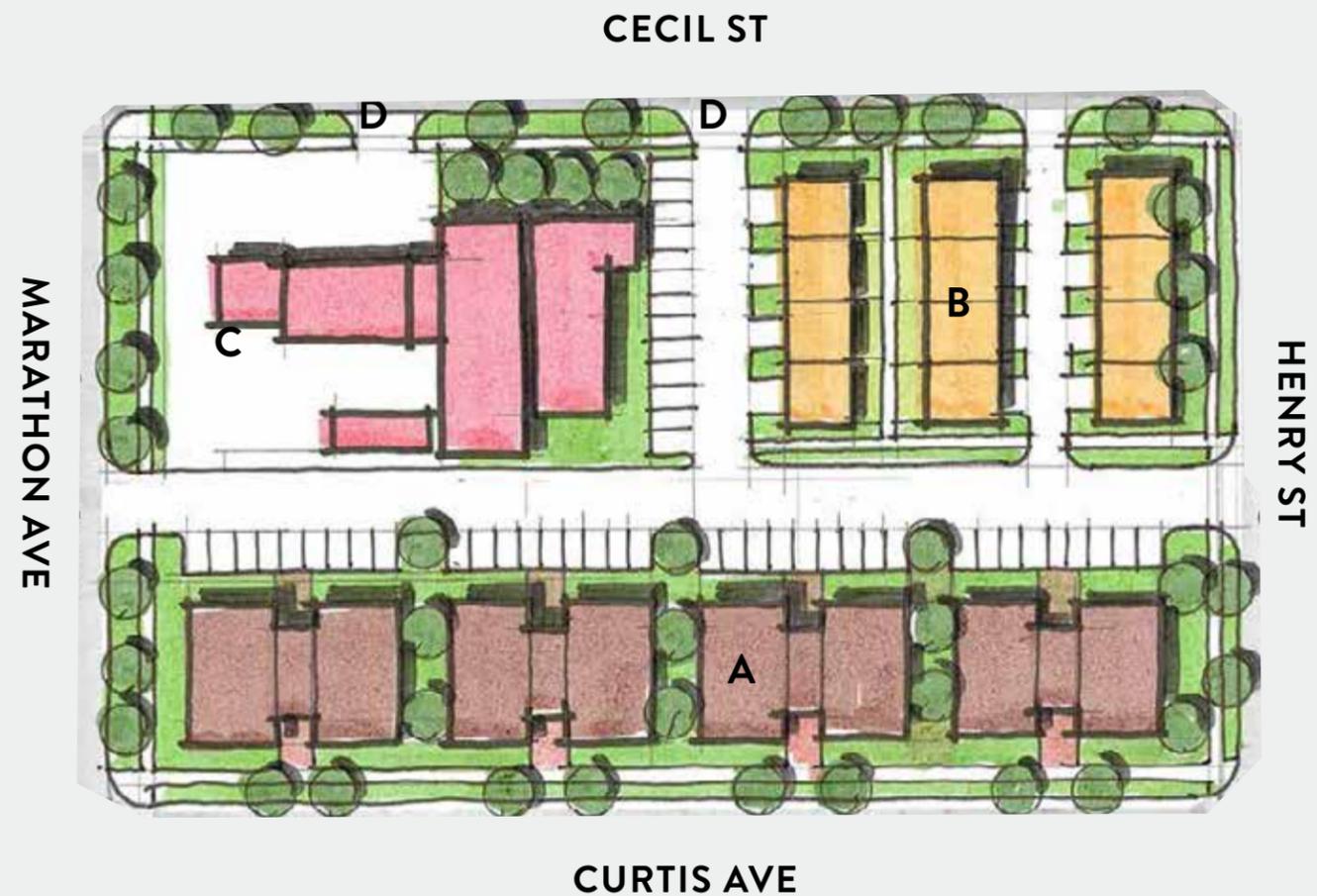
The block south of Cecil Street from Marathon Avenue and Henry Street may experience redevelopment pressure. This plan presents a concept that reinforces the character of the surrounding neighborhood and presents land uses that create a transition from single-family detached housing to commercial use at the intersection of Cecil Street and Marathon Avenue. Effectively, the plan replaces the auto-oriented and storage uses facing residential areas.

A. Multi-family Development. The plan shows 8-plex multi-family units facing Curtis Avenue, across from the existing duplexes. Parking can be serviced along the street and alley. Units should be setback from the street similarly as the housing to the east. The multi-family project steps the intensity of use from the duplexes to commercial businesses.

B. Townhomes. The plan shows side-loaded townhomes that provide a transition of uses between the commercial development and single-family homes to the east.

C. Automotive Center. While the plan retains the automotive center, the site could be redeveloped for either residential or commercial use.

D. Access Management. The plan eliminates the continuous curb cut for the automotive center to improve the safety for customers. Likewise, the parking in front of two tenant buildings (currently a tobacco store and pet store), is shown being relocated to the side of the buildings. Controlling access points reduces conflict points and improves customer safety.



THE GREEN LINE

Many communities plan and construct bicycle facilities that fall into one of three categories: off street trails, on-street bike lanes, and on-street shared lanes. Bicycle boulevards are on-street shared lanes that have been designed to create a low stress bikeway network. Bicycle boulevards are low-volume and low-speed streets that have been optimized for bicycle travel through treatments such as traffic calming and traffic reduction, signage and pavement markings, and intersection crossing treatments. They complement other bicycle facilities and strengthen the overall bicycle network.

Neenah's Maple Street has the potential to function as a successful bicycle boulevard, linking the existing trail segment to the north (the off-street trail that runs from Shattuck Park (3) along Walnut Street to Maple Street) with the Bill Miller (5) trail at the end of Maple Street to the south. Looking long-term, the bicycle boulevard could extend south from the Loop the Lake trail (1) along the path of the existing railroad bed past Shattuck Park, down Maple Street, along the existing off-street trail adjacent South Commercial Street south of Cecil Street all the way to South Park Avenue (6).

Regardless of whether or not bicycle lanes are incorporated into the next phase of South Commercial Street reconstruction, a bicycle boulevard could be a strong asset for the neighborhood and community, establishing strong bicycle and pedestrian connectivity north to south.

Benefits:

- Provide comfortable, safe biking environment
- Connect and strengthen existing trails, bike lanes, and bike routes across City
- Alternative to routing bicyclists along South Commercial Street using bike lanes

Potential Design Considerations:

- Speed management techniques to slow vehicles
- Volume management to lessen traffic volumes
- Major street crossing treatments at Cecil Street and Bell Street
- Minor street crossing treatments at Division and Alcott Streets Sources: Bicycle Boulevard Plan

SOURCES:

Bicycle Boulevard Planning and Design Guidebook
<https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/bicycle-boulevards/route-planning/>



ABOVE: "The Green Line" would establish a strong north-south bicycle route connecting to several adjacent neighborhoods using existing bicycle facilities.

- 1 Loop the Locks Trail / Trestle Trail Bridge.
- 2 Doty Island. (Future Rail-to-Trail segment)
- 3 Shattuck Park Plaza. Trail would utilize Neenah Riverwalk trail segment at western edge of park and connect south to the Walnut Street side path.
- 4 Maple Street and Cecil Street Intersection
- 5 Entrance to Bill Miller Trail at south end of Maple Street
- 6 Existing sidepath on west side of S Commercial Street south of Bell Street
- 7 Conservancy Walking Trail Park (South Park Avenue and South Commercial Street)



ABOVE: Minor street intersection - bike boulevard



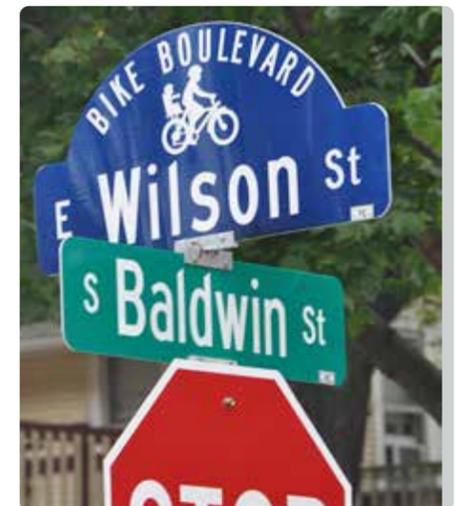
ABOVE: Major street crossing - bicycle boulevard



ABOVE: Bicycle parking at neighborhood coffee shop



ABOVE: Regional ECWRPC wayfinding guide



ABOVE: Bicycle boulevard signage, Madison, WI



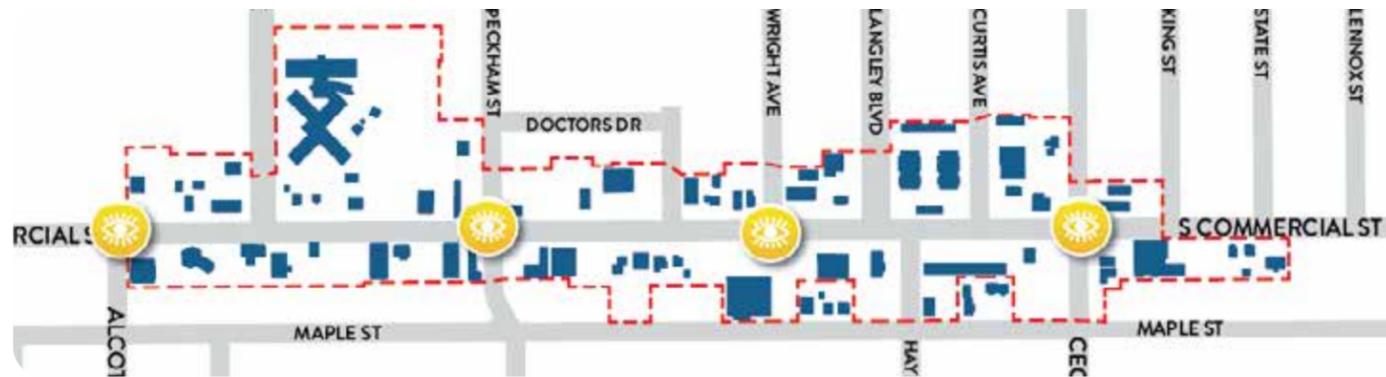
ABOVE: Existing bicycle wayfinding signage

FACADE ENHANCEMENTS + PUBLIC ART

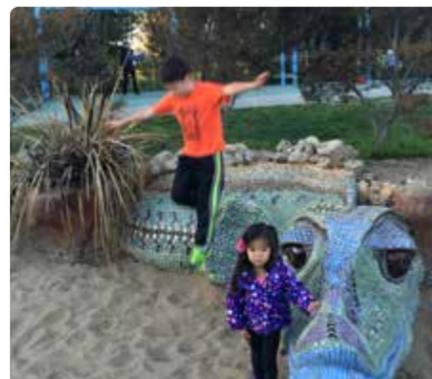
There are several different strategies to consider for continuing to improve storefront appearances and beautifying the corridor. Many of these components can be implemented outside the scope of the South Commercial Street reconstruction project directly by property and business owners. Other components may involve additional partners such as the City, Future Neenah, and the Neenah Area School District. Funding programs and changes to the zoning code can support these types of investments.

Examples

- Exterior Architectural Improvements (Painting, Windows, Siding)
- Exterior Landscape Improvements
- Signage
- Outdoor Seating
- Outdoor Music Venues
- Flower Plantings
- Sculpture
- Murals
- Other Public Art



ABOVE: Public Art Opportunities. The yellow circles are located at regular intervals along the length of the study area. Public art nodes at these locations will help visitors orient themselves to the district, and can serve as a focal point for future streetscape enhancements. Placemaking opportunities can showcase locally manufactured products from places like Neenah Foundry or Cre8 Lab, while simultaneously providing opportunities for local artists and designers to contribute.



WAYFINDING + BRANDING

The primary focus of wayfinding and branding should be on district gateways, with an emphasis on the Cecil Street intersection. The Cecil Street intersection concept contained in this plan will establish a strong gateway by itself. Additional landscaping, gateway signage, and public art can contribute to the attractiveness of the arrival experience for visitors to the district. Together, these interventions can establish a stronger identity for the district.

Outdoor seating areas/plazas can also help establish and reinforce the image of the district. They can be sited at regular intervals along the corridor at strategic locations near clusters of successful businesses, and can provide opportunities to incorporate public art. Collectively, they can help visitors mentally map the district while improving the aesthetic appeal of the corridor. More importantly, they will convey a strong sense of neighborhood which will attract patrons. Neenah's industrial heritage, including the paper industry and the Neenah Foundry, can be celebrated and explored through the choice of building materials used in outdoor patios, pocket parks, and beer gardens.

Vehicular wayfinding signage, while important, needs to be examined in the context of a city-wide and regional context rather than a sole focus on South Commercial Street. Prior to the engineering design phase, the City should consider doing a branding and wayfinding study, the results of which would inform the signage plan for South Commercial Street.

Finally, bicycle wayfinding signage can follow the design character of the Loop the Lake signage. Maple Street signage should route bicyclists and pedestrians to the district including through mid-block access points. See the Bicycle Boulevard section of this report for additional information.

Benefits:

- Create an attractive arrival environment
- Encourage bicycle and pedestrian visitation to the district
- Establish a sense of place while orienting visitors to the district

Design Recommendations:

- Focus design attention and resources on the Cecil Street intersection in order to create a strong image for the district overall
- Use public art nodes to establish a sense of place at focus areas along the district



Circles = Gateways; Green Arrows = Vehicular wayfinding signage; Bicycles = Bicycle wayfinding signage highlighting Maple Street as a bicycle boulevard.

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS

SOUTH COMMERCIAL STREET CORRIDOR PLAN

STREETSCAPE



Streetscape furnishings help contribute to the identity of the district in several different ways. During the design phase the City should consider a number of different strategies in order to establish a character for the district, promote walkability, enhance business competitiveness, and encourage high quality development. Potential streetscape components include: lighting, benches/chairs, flower pots, plantings, covered transit stops and public art. Trash/recycling receptacles may not be warranted at this time, except in conjunction with transit shelters.

Overall, the “family” of streetscape elements should be attractive, similar in style, and reinforce the identity of the district. One option is to continue to use the same or similar traditional “Main Street” style furnishings as are deployed in the downtown. The other options is to consider a more contemporary approach, incorporating wood and corten steel into benches, planters, and bicycle racks.

Neenah’s industrial heritage, including the paper industry and the Neenah Foundry, can be celebrated and explored through the choice of building materials used in streetscape furnishings.

Benefits:

- Enhance walkability and visitor comfort
- Create a place where people want to be, rather than a place people primarily drive through

Design Recommendations:

- Provide a mix of taller lighting fixtures and pedestrian scaled lighting fixtures. The use of pedestrian scaled lighting is recommended at key intersections rather than throughout the length of the corridor
- Plant taller tree species whenever possible (such as disease resistant elm species) to provide sidewalk shade
- If using the same style of lighting fixture deployed downtown, consider going with a different color to maintain the design intent but differentiate the district from the historic downtown



Bright green dots = new street trees; lighter dots = existing street trees



PARKING + URBAN DESIGN

The corridor contains large amount of surface parking currently. To encourage infill, the City should conduct a stress test of its zoning code to determine if the concepts identified in this plan are currently allowable. The following general principles and guidelines should be used to evaluate new infill and redevelopment opportunities within the corridor.

Outdoor Public Space

- Design planned stormwater pond with trail amenity
- Incorporate an Art park or Pocket park combined with public parking

Urban Design Principles + Guidelines

- Encourage use of high quality building materials
- Encourage outdoor eating and dining areas
- Buildings should maintain prominent building entrances
- Encourage use of awnings where appropriate
- Incorporate pedestrian scaled lighting into pedestrian nodes
- Position buildings toward front of lot

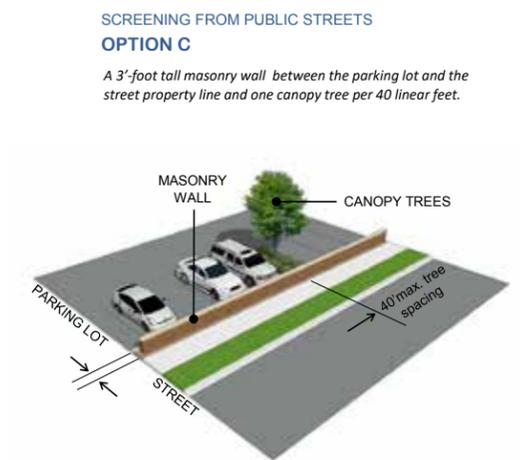
Parking Lot Design Considerations

- Locate parking to rear and side buildings
- Encourage shared use parking agreements
- Provide multiple parking lot design fulfillment alternatives
- Consider establishing a public parking lot to facilitate development

Retail Urban Design Principles

- **Easy-to-use, clean, well-lit parking is essential to the sustainability of shopping districts and their individual stores.**
- **New town centers should be planned with storefronts lining pedestrian-oriented streets that have convenient on-street parking.**
- **Whenever possible, new shopping centers should be modeled on walkable, urban environments where retail stores are built near the sidewalk edge and parking is within an easy walk.**

Gibbs, Robert J.. *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development*. Wiley. Kindle Edition.



Source: Landscape Design Guide, City of Milwaukee (2019)

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS

SOUTH COMMERCIAL STREET CORRIDOR PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

The following set of recommendations is intended to guide decision making over the five-year period 2021 through 2025. Short term recommendations can be implemented immediately, while long-term recommendations begin with the next phase of corridor planning, which is preliminary engineering.

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (2021-2022)

1. Publicize and promote the plan - build support
2. Conduct additional Bicycle Boulevard planning/data gathering to determine attractiveness of concept
3. Facilitate periodic corridor business networking events including property owners, business owners, and City staff
4. Reschedule Bizarre After Dark. Utilize the event as an opportunity to share the plan with the community and seek additional feedback.
5. Secure additional funding for project development including grants
6. Assemble properties for future development. Consider establishment of a new TIF to support new development and corridor enhancements. Prepare more detailed Master Plan(s) for larger sites to help guide future development.
7. Finalize scope of work for preliminary engineering design for South Commercial Street. Determine if the study should include any branding/wayfinding elements or if those should be addressed as part of a broader community wide study
8. Develop a program to assist businesses/property owners with landscaping, parking lot, and facade improvements
9. Market city-owned properties
10. Create a marketing brochure and digital marketing material to encourage new development and entrepreneurship opportunities

LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (2023-2025)

1. Prepare preliminary and final engineering design plans
2. Consider establishing a Business Improvement District to provide an additional funding source for corridor improvements and maintenance (BID)
3. Construct an outdoor community gathering space, possibly in conjunction with a shared parking lot to serve multiple businesses. The design could include features such as a pocket park, public art installations, green infrastructure, and outdoor eating/drinking opportunities.
4. Construct pedestrian + bicycle improvements (mid-block connections, etc.)
5. Strengthen residential connections between Maple Street and South Commercial Street
6. Encourage new infill development with strong residential component in order to support existing businesses and attract new ones
7. Explore opportunities to establish a distinct district identity for S Commercial Street.

LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase maximum height restrictions to 4 stories
2. Reduce 10' building fronting strip requirement adjacent R-O-W
3. Increase tree planting requirements from one tree per 40 feet to one tree per 30 feet
4. Increase maximum percent lot coverages to encourage walkability
5. Develop a neighborhood commercial zoning district which accounts for smaller lots (reduced setbacks, minimum parking requirements, etc)

APPENDIX

EXISTING BUSINESS MIX • FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

[Economic Development Administration \(EDA\)](#)

[Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#)

WI DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

[We're All In Small Business Grants](#)

OTHER SOURCES

[Fox Cities Senior Corp of Retired Executives \(SCORE\)](#)

[Future Neenah](#)

[Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Main Street America](#)

REDEVELOPMENT

WI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

[Brownfield Redevelopment Financial Assistance](#)

US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[WAM Contractor Services](#)

[Ready for Reuse Grants + Loans](#)

[Brownfields Grants Program](#)

[Site Assessment Grants](#)

[Community Brownfield Assessment Grants](#)

[Site Specific Brownfield Assessment Grants](#)

[Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund Grant \(Individuals + Coalitions\)](#)

[Brownfield Clean Up Grant](#)

BUILDINGS + INFRASTRUCTURE

WI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

[Community Development Investment Grant](#)

[Idle Industrial Site Redevelopment Program](#)

[Minority Business Development Revolving Loan Fund](#)

WISCONSIN HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

[Housing and New Markets Tax Credits](#)

US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD)

[Community Development Block Grant](#)

[HOME Funds](#)

TRANSPORTATION

WI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

[Transportation Alternatives Program](#)

[Transportation Economic Assistance](#)

PLACEMAKING + COMMUNITY IMPACT

[Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau](#)

[Arts Wisconsin Funding Resources](#)

[Wisconsin Arts Board](#)

[Fox Valley Community Foundation](#)

[Wisconsin Humanities Council](#)

[National Endowment for the Arts – Our Town](#)

[ArtPlace America National Grants](#)

[Neenah Foundry](#)

[National Association of Realtors Placemaking Micro Grants](#)

[IOBY](#)

[Home Depot Foundation](#)

[Amarcor Foundation](#)

[Plexus](#)

[Kimberly-Clark Foundation](#)

[Thedacare Foundation](#)