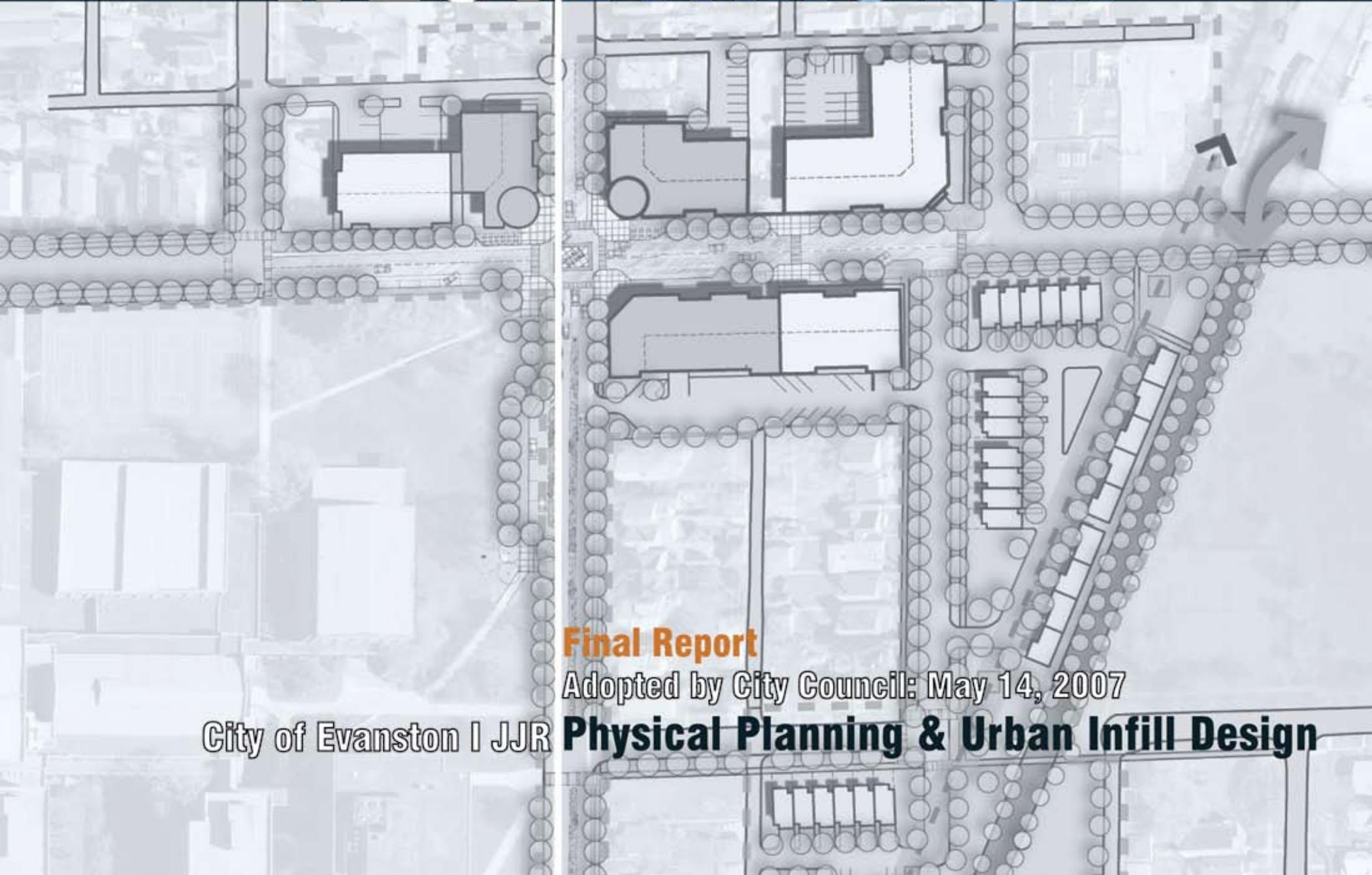


# TIF DISTRICT SUB-AREA #3 WEST EVANSTON



**Final Report**

Adopted by City Council: May 14, 2007

City of Evanston | JJR

**Physical Planning & Urban Infill Design**



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## West Evanston History

The West Side has a rich history as the center of much of Evanston's African-American community. Many current community residents can trace their families back several generations within the neighborhood, often within the same building. This cultural continuity has fostered a strong and proud sense of community. West Evanston has a number of important community anchors, notably the many neighborhood churches and the small retail and service establishments centered at the Church & Dodge intersection.

Over the past couple of decades, however, the retail node at the intersection of Church & Dodge has struggled, reflecting in part the broader economic and social challenges faced by the community. The City has long dedicated a substantial amount of community development and other funding to support the Church & Dodge retail node, and the needs of the West Evanston community.



## West Evanston Today

In late 2005, the City Council created the West Evanston Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District. Under Illinois law, TIF district designation allows the use of the incremental tax revenue generated within a TIF district to capitalize bonds that can pay for infrastructure-related and certain other allowable improvements. The boundaries of the TIF district were drawn along the diagonal spine of the abandoned Mayfair Railroad right-of-way, named for the railroad spur line that had served the industries that had once operated along it and provided a significant employment base for West Evanston residents.

For planning purposes, the TIF district was divided into a number of sub-areas from north to south. This breakdown into smaller sub-areas allows the City to prioritize between sub-areas and focus on several sub-areas simultaneously as needed. In the summer of 2006, the City hired JJR to provide Physical Planning and Urban Infill Design Services for Sub-Area #3. Specifically JJR was asked to conduct a community process, develop a preferred Neighborhood Plan, and draft development standards and zoning guidance that would lead to implementation of the Neighborhood Plan. At the same time, the city hired another firm to provide similar services for Sub-Areas #1 and #2 immediately north of Sub-Area #3. As these adjacent Sub-Areas share many stakeholders, the City coordinated the schedule between the two firms. Concurrent with the planning efforts, the firm Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates performed a unified real estate analysis to inform the process with market feasibility considerations.

Sub-Area #3 runs from the north side of Church Street on the north to the north side of Greenwood Street on the south. It incorporates the triangular area – excluding a small pocket of longstanding residential properties between Darrow and Dodge Avenues -- between the abandoned railroad embankment and Evanston Township High School (ETHS) that fronts Dodge between Church and Lake Streets, and runs west of Dodge to Brown Avenue between

Lake and Greenwood Streets. It also extends west along Church Street all the way to the edge of the North Channel of the Sanitary Canal that defines the border between Evanston and Skokie. The sub-area was drawn to include both sides of Dodge Avenue in order to include the entire Dodge and Church streetscapes leading to the Church & Dodge intersection.

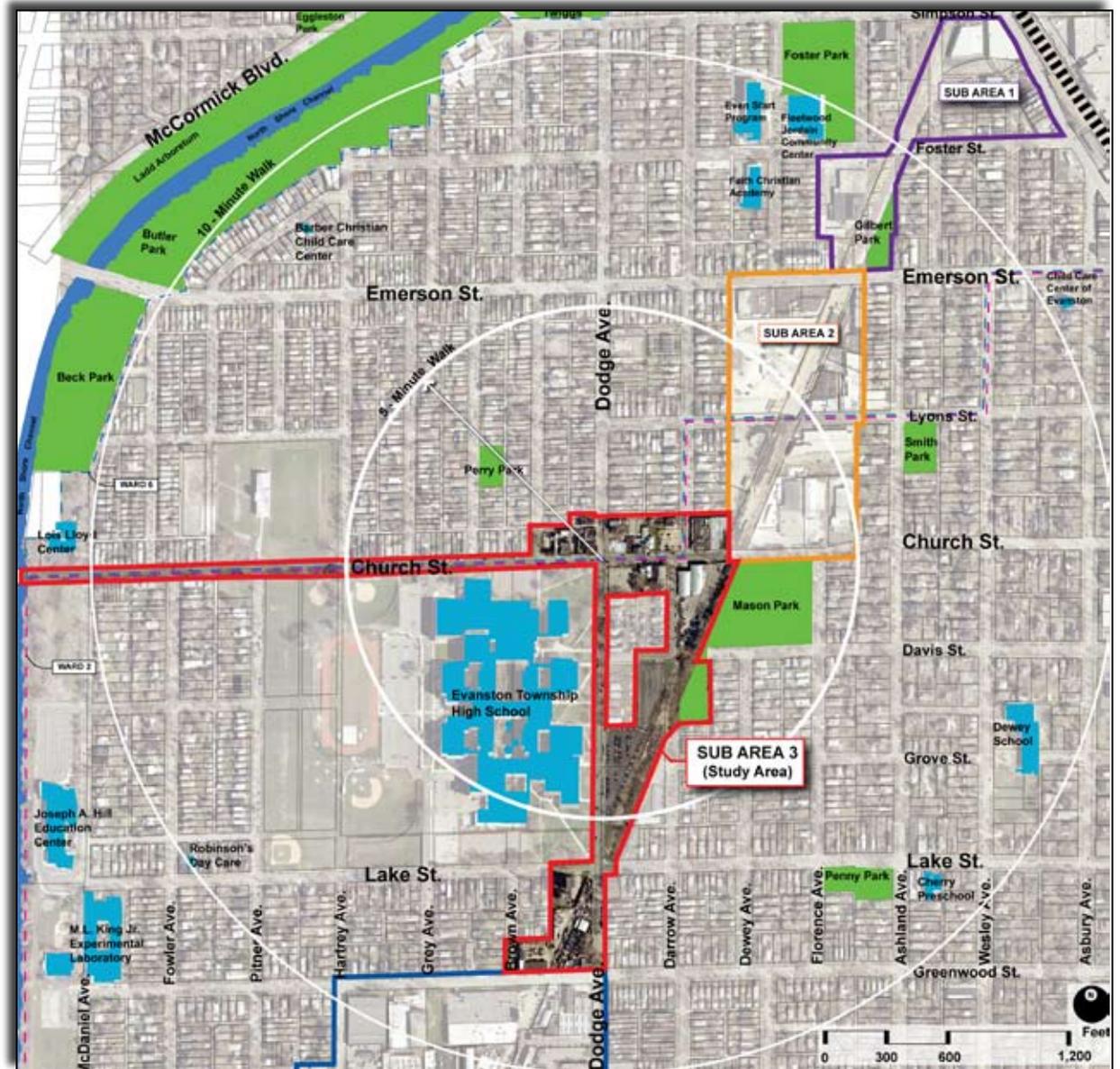


## Project Background / Context

For years, numerous stakeholder individuals and organizations have engaged in several planning efforts, including a widespread neighborhood planning process convened by the City in the early part of the current decade. As part of this recent Neighborhood Planning Process, Task Forces addressed issues related to Public Infrastructure and Services, Streets and Transportation, Public Safety, Housing, and Economic Development. The final Neighborhood Planning Report was adopted by the City Council in September, 2005. Many of the issues and priorities identified in these reports helped lead to both the formation of the West Evanston TIF District and the planning process of which this report is a part.

In recent years, the growth of Evanston's downtown only a few blocks to the east has begun directly impacting West Evanston. Rising commercial and office rents downtown have led certain types of professional service companies to seek more affordable and flexible elsewhere, including in West Evanston. In addition, real estate developers have shown increasing interest in new residential development opportunities within West Evanston. This activity, while embraced by some community members, has led others to concerns over gentrification and displacement.

Faced with these concerns, and wanting to encourage the development of specific plans for the TIF District sub-areas before significant redevelopment projects changed the social and physical landscape of the community, in 2005 the City imposed a development moratorium covering the West Evanston TIF District. This moratorium was extended beyond its original expiration date to allow for the completion of the sub-area plans.



Project Area Boundary & Context



### Community Process

The West Evanston Neighborhood Plan grew out of a vibrant community process that consisted of a series of stakeholder conversations and community meetings over just over a six-month period.

The conversations and meetings were designed to be informal and interactive, giving a platform for a diversity of input. The meetings utilized a range of verbal, graphic and photographic presentation materials in order to allow different participants to provide their input. In addition, the JJR team specifically did not attempt to steer the meetings towards any pre-conceived concepts, appropriate land use or building types, or residential density levels.

The meeting dates are listed below.

- Stakeholder Conversations – Summer and Fall 2006
- Community Meeting #1 – “Visioning” – August 31, 2006
- Community Meeting #2 – “Alternative Concepts” – September 21, 2006
- Community Meeting #3 – “Preferred Plan” – October 12, 2006
- Plan Commission presentations – November 8, 2006, December 13, 2006 and January 10, 2007
- City Council presentation – January 29, 2007

### Community Consensus Program

A number of specific themes evolved over the course of the community process. These themes comprise what may be considered a consensus program for the planning and design for West Evanston. While this consensus program represents widely-held community opinions and preferences; there is likely be a diversity of opinion about some of the of the consensus program elements.

#### General Comments

- Maintaining elements of the traditional social, cultural and historical character of the neighborhood is important
- The community should reflect a diversity of land uses, and universally-accessible building forms and designs
- The community should be welcoming to a mix of residents, including owners and renters, and reflecting a range of ages and socioeconomic circumstances
- The Neighborhood Plan will require the cooperation of numerous entities and property owners, and will require a phased implementation

#### Church & Dodge

- The vitality of the Church & Dodge retail node will be critical to the success of the Neighborhood Plan
- The Church & Dodge streetscape should be people-friendly, and should include curbside parking, widened sidewalks, and improved landscape and lighting
- Church & Dodge retailers should include a mix of local specialty retailers and non-local anchor retailers
- The Church & Dodge intersection should include

a collection of three and four-floor high, well-detailed mixed-use and residential buildings

- The Black History Museum and other important community anchors can become important elements of the Neighborhood Plan
- ETHS is an active stakeholder in the Neighborhood Plan, recognizing the strategic importance of redeveloping its Church & Dodge parking lot, while meeting its overall parking and access needs

## Connectivity

- The community desires well-lit people-friendly streetscapes that provide attractive arrivals and entries to the Church & Dodge intersection and the West Evanston neighborhood
- Providing generous greenways, trails, and landscaped buffers, and preserving existing & adding new open spaces are important to the community
- The Dodge Avenue streetscape needs to provide adequate traffic flow, safe drop-off conditions at the front of ETHS, and improved pedestrian crossings
- The abandoned Mayfair Railroad embankment should be entirely removed in order to reconnect the neighborhood on its two sides
- Once the railroad embankment is removed, Davis and Grove Streets should be reconnected as non-vehicular pedestrian connections, with the possibility of also allowing for future vehicular connections if this is seen as desirable by the community
- The Neighborhood Plan should include bicycle lanes and trails that link with the City's overall trail and bicycle path networks

## Real Estate Market Feasibility Considerations

The real estate analysis performed by Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates yielded the following key findings that factored into the planning process. The analysis focused on providing general planning guidance rather than determining parcel-specific development strategies or sales price points.

- The Sub-Area #3 retail market can absorb approximately 20,000 square feet of neighborhood convenience retail, and this retail should be concentrated within a ½-block of the Church & Dodge intersection rather than be scattered throughout Sub-Area #3
- There is a trade-off between density and residential sales prices – the higher the density, the lower the potential sales prices, and vice versa
- There is a good market opportunity for medium-priced residential units in multi-family buildings in the vicinity of Church & Dodge
- A mixture of for-sale and rental housing is desirable, but for logistical and other reasons not generally within the same building
- Because of high land costs, virtually any new rental housing within the neighborhood will be financially feasible only with some type of public financial assistance
- There is limited office potential in the neighborhood, and a concentration of street level offices or social service agencies should be avoided, as the focus of the Church & Dodge intersection is as a retail node



The JJR team attempted to translate the aspirations and concerns that comprised the Community Consensus Program into a set of planning and design principles. It is these planning and design principles that were used to develop the Plan Alternatives and Preferred Plan for Sub-Area #3. They include:

## The Church & Dodge Intersection

- The Church & Dodge node should consist of mixed-use and residential buildings that should be sited and designed to foster a sense of place
- The Church & Dodge node should be programmed with art, cultural and other elements that infuse it with the special character of the West Evanston community
- The residential density level should be highest at the Church & Dodge node, and should transition down from there to meet the prevailing neighborhood fabric
- The streetscapes at Church & Dodge should be designed to support its role as a retail node, and provide informal meeting and seating areas, and convenient and safe access and parking

## The Former Mayfair Railroad Embankment

- The remaining portions of the embankment should be removed and the land substantially regraded to match up with the adjacent surface grades and to allow for the development of a continuous greenway path that extends beyond the limits of Sub-Area #3
- The greenway should be at least 30 feet wide, should incorporate a non-vehicular bicycle and multiple use path that conforms to City standards, and be heavily landscaped in order to serve as a buffer between adjacent land uses
- The greenway should be programmed with art, cultural and other elements that infuse it with the special character of the West Evanston community

- With the embankment removed, Davis and Grove Streets should be re-connected with non-vehicular paths that facilitate through access and help to reconnect the two sides of the neighborhood

## The Triangular Area between the Embankment and Dodge

- The portion of this triangular area that fronts onto Dodge should continue to provide needed ETHS parking. This area should be reconfigured to become more efficient, adding compensatory parking for spaces removed elsewhere within the sub-area, and should incorporate a landscaped buffer along Dodge and other greening elements
- The portions of this triangular area that do not front onto Dodge should be transformed to residential uses, with units fronting onto existing public streets and alleys, and the newly created greenway
- The area should be planned and the residential units designed so as not to fall within the 40 wide no-build corridor under the overhead utility transmission line
- The area should be planned and the residential units designed so as not to fall within the vacated Darrow Avenue right-of-way south of Davis Street in case the community was to desire for Darrow to be reconnected south to Grove Street at some point in the future

## Between Dodge to Brown Avenues, and Lake and Greenwood Streets

- Opportunities should be explored that allow the relocation of certain existing land uses to areas in which they are more compatible, and foster the redevelopment of this area in a manner more in fitting with a significant entry point into West Evanston

- The southeast corner of this area could be explored as a potential location for a small cultural or other signature building for the West Evanston community. It is not a location suitable for retail or general office use.

- If further study determines that the existing ETHS power plant is obsolete, it should be explored as to its adaptive reuse or residential redevelopment potential

- The area should be planned and the residential units designed so as not to fall within the 40 wide no-build corridor under the overhead utility transmission line

## The Church & Dodge Streetscapes

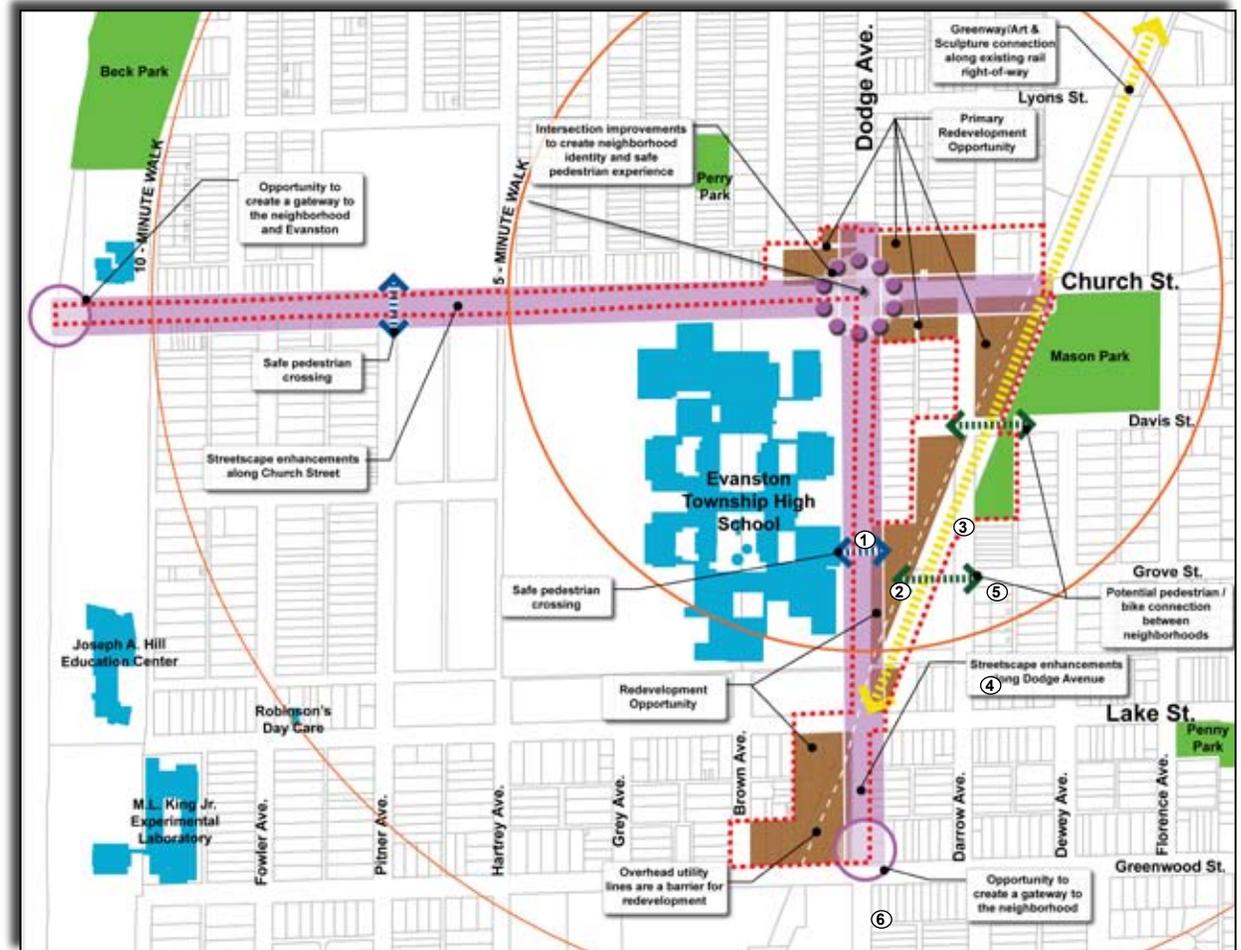
- The streetscapes throughout the limits of Sub-Area #3 and beyond should incorporate typical cross sections that conform to City standards, incorporate substantial landscaping and other greening elements, and pedestrian-scaled street lighting and furniture
- The streetscapes should incorporate and support the City's overall trail and bicycle path networks
- The streetscapes should be programmed with art, cultural and other elements that infuse them with the special character of the West Evanston community

## Building Architecture

- New buildings proposed for Sub-Area #3 should be designed and built subject to the revised zoning regulations that will accompany the Neighborhood Plan
- New buildings proposed for Sub-Area #3 should be designed and built in recognition of the important role that new buildings play in defining the future of their neighborhoods. West Evanston sees itself as a quality community of choice, and deserves such buildings

Sustainable Design/Greening

- New buildings and related infrastructure improvements proposed for Sub-Area #3 should be designed and built subject to the series of development standards and sustainable design best practices that will accompany the Neighborhood Plan
- All new development proposed for Sub-Area #3 should be designed and built in the spirit of sustainable development, and appropriate landscape, site design, materials, and energy and resource efficiency strategies should be investigated



Issues & Opportunities Illustration

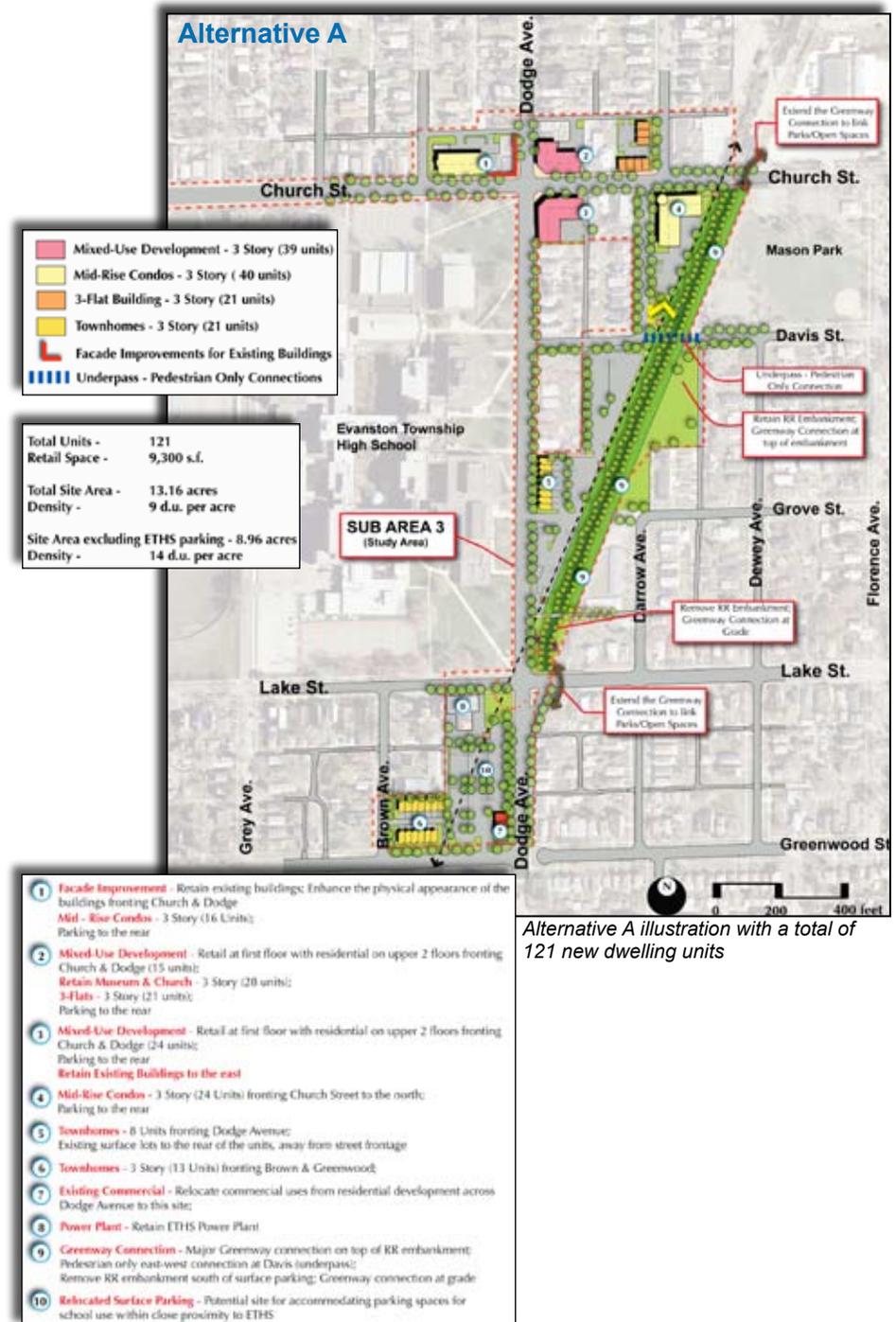


# 4 PLAN ALTERNATIVES

The three early Plan Alternatives reviewed by the community at the September 21, 2006 meeting grew out of a thorough review of existing neighborhood conditions and the community input received up to that point, and were presented as a mix-and-match set of redevelopment strategies that illustrated different options for key plan elements. At this point in the planning process, the community was not asked to support a particular Plan Alternative, rather to give feedback on key elements of all of the Plan Alternatives about which they felt either positive or negative. These key elements included:

- Building heights and configurations at the Church & Dodge intersection
- Various strategies for diminishing the impact of the abandoned railroad embankment, and
- Several levels of residential redevelopment within and along the abandoned railroad embankment

The Plan Alternatives contained new residential counts that ranged from 121 to 235 dwelling units and retail levels that ranged from 9,300 to 18,400 square feet.



Alternative A illustration with a total of 121 new dwelling units

Alternative B

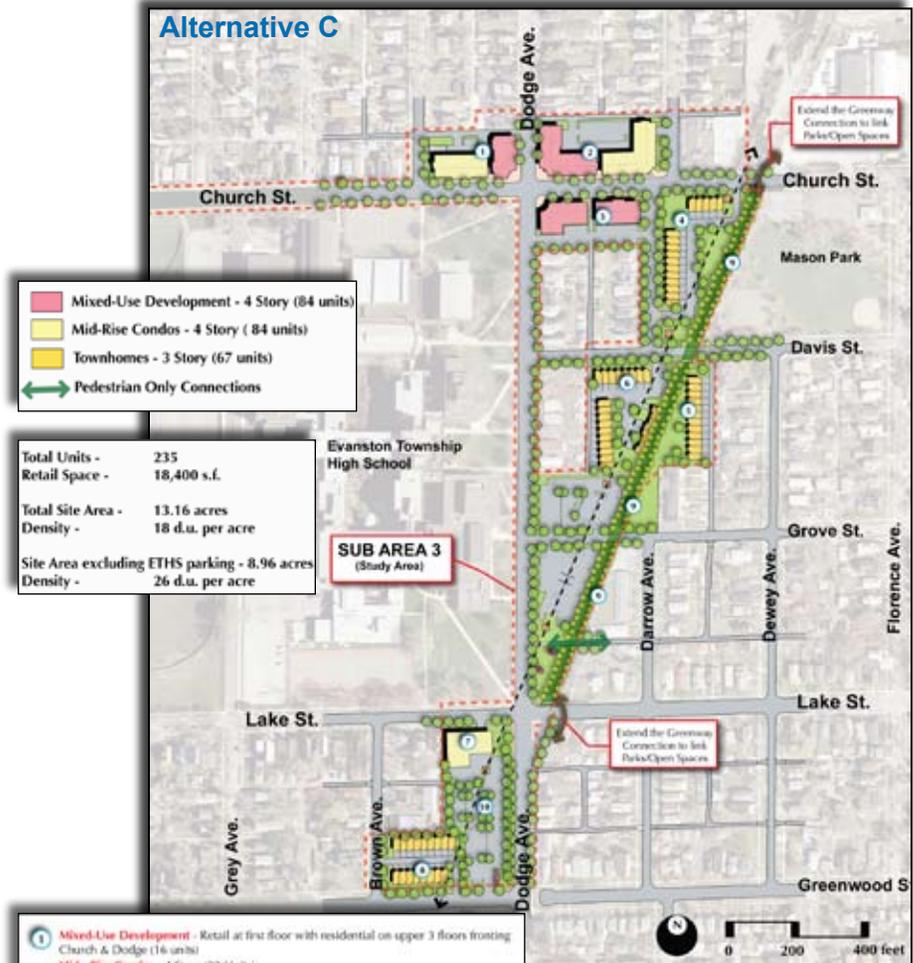


Total Units - 209  
Retail Space - 14,300 s.f.  
Total Site Area - 13.16 acres  
Density - 16 d.u. per acre  
Site Area excluding ETHS parking - 8.96 acres  
Density - 23 d.u. per acre

- 1 Mixed-Use Development - Retail at first floor with residential on upper 2 floors fronting Church & Dodge (18 units)  
Mid-Rise Condos - 3 Story (12 Units)  
Parking to the rear
- 2 Mixed-Use Development - Possible Location for Museum at first floor; Retail at first floor with residential on upper 2 floors fronting Church & Dodge (24 units); Mid-Rise Condos - 3 Story (28 units);  
Parking to the rear
- 3 Mixed-Use Development - Possible Location for Museum at first floor; Retail at first floor with residential on upper 2 floors fronting Church & Dodge (24 units);  
3-Flats - 3 Story (12 units);  
Parking to the rear
- 4 Townhomes - 25 Units fronting Church Street to the north and proposed greenway connection to the east
- 5 Townhomes - 16 Units fronting proposed greenway connection to the west and new pedestrian connection to the north
- 6 Townhomes - 16 Units fronting Dodge Avenue;  
Existing surface lots to the rear of the units, away from street frontage
- 7 Adaptive Re-Use - Retain ETHS Power Plant;  
Potential for Cultural Center, Planning & other compatible uses within existing building
- 8 Mid-Rise Condos - 3 Story (22 Units) fronting Brown & Greenwood;  
Parking to the rear
- 9 Greenway Connection - Major Greenway connection at grade level;  
Pedestrian only east-west connection at Davis & Grove Streets
- 10 Relocated Surface Parking - Potential site for accommodating parking spaces for school use within close proximity to ETHS

Alternative B illustration with a total of 209 new dwelling units

Alternative C



Total Units - 235  
Retail Space - 18,400 s.f.  
Total Site Area - 13.16 acres  
Density - 18 d.u. per acre  
Site Area excluding ETHS parking - 8.96 acres  
Density - 26 d.u. per acre

- 1 Mixed-Use Development - Retail at first floor with residential on upper 3 floors fronting Church & Dodge (18 units);  
Mid-Rise Condos - 4 Story (22 Units);  
Parking to the rear
- 2 Mixed-Use Development - Retail at first floor with residential on upper 3 floors fronting Church & Dodge (32 units);  
Mid-Rise Condos - 4 Story (36 units);  
Parking to the rear
- 3 Mixed-Use Development - Possible Location for Museum at first floor; Retail at first floor with residential on upper 3 floors fronting Church & Dodge (36 units);  
Parking to the rear
- 4 Townhomes - 16 Units fronting Church Street to the north;  
Potential for Mason Park expansion west of proposed greenway connection
- 5 Townhomes - 12 Units fronting open space & proposed greenway connection
- 6 Townhomes - 22 Units fronting extended Davis Street to the north & proposed greenway connection to the east
- 7 Mid-Rise Condos - Relocate / remove ETHS Power Plant;  
Potential for 4 story residential building (26 units);  
Parking to the rear
- 8 Townhomes - 17 units fronting Greenwood
- 9 Greenway Connection - Major Greenway connection at grade level;  
Pedestrian & limited vehicle access; new east-west connection at Davis & Grove Streets
- 10 Relocated Surface Parking - Potential site for accommodating parking spaces for school use within close proximity to ETHS

Alternative C illustration with a total of 235 new dwelling units

Based upon the feedback to the Plan Alternatives at the September 21, 2006 community meeting, a Preferred Plan was prepared and presented at the October 12, 2006 community meeting. The preferred Plan did not reflect any of the Plan Alternatives in their entirety rather it incorporated elements of several. After a series of additional public meetings, the Preferred Plan was approved by the Evanston Plan Commission and forwarded to the City Council.

City Council review and public input sessions began in January 2007. In the course of these deliberations, the Preferred Plan was amended to remove from redevelopment consideration a site containing a recently created unit of affordable housing. This reflected numerous citizen comments expressing concern that the plan would diminish the pool of existing low and moderate income housing units in this neighborhood and the city as-a-whole.

The Plan was also modified to reflect on-going discussions between the City and ComEd regarding the future use of its substation property on the northeast corner of Brown and Church Streets. As currently envisioned, the front portion of this site will be leased by an adjacent building owner to provide parking for his mixed use development. However, if ComEd were to relocate this facility and market this site for development, the City of Evanston would revisit the Master Plan's designation for this location.

The amended Preferred Plan or Final Plan was approved by the Council on May 14, 2007. The Final Plan contains 143 new dwelling units in several different multi-family building types, and 16,500 square feet of new retail. Its key elements include:

- A collection of two to four story-high, mixed-use and residential buildings that substantially redevelop three corners of the Church & Dodge intersection.
- Replacement of the completely eliminated railroad embankment with an at-grade continuous greenway that supports community redevelopment and allows for non-vehicular reconnection of existing streets and alleys.

**Mixed-Use Development**

- 1 3-Story; Limited Retail at first floor with residential on upper floors fronting Church & Dodge (8 units); Parking to the rear & On-street parking (30 spaces)
- 2 2-Story; Retail at first floor with residential on upper floor fronting Church & Dodge (7 units); Parking to the rear & On-street parking (30 spaces)
- 3 4-Story; Retail at first floor with residential on upper floors fronting Church & Dodge (24 units); Parking to the rear & On-street parking (52 spaces)

**Mid-Rise Condos**

- 4 3-Story (14 units); Parking to the rear & On-street parking (22 spaces)
- 5 3-Story (28 units); Parking to the rear & On-street parking (50 spaces)
- 6 3-Story (18 units); Parking to the rear & On-street parking (25 spaces)

**Townhouses**

- 7 3-Story (22 Units) fronting Church Street to the north & proposed greenway connection to the east; Attached garages to the rear
- 8 3-Story (13 Units); units wrap around central open space; proposed greenway connection pass through the central open space; preserve Mason Park and add open space; Attached garages to the rear
- 9 3-Story (9 units); fronting Greenwood Street & Brown Avenue Attached garages to the rear

**Buildings to be Retained**

- 10 Existing Museum
- 11 Existing Commercial along Church Street
- 12 ETHS power plant

**Greenway Connection**

- 13 Linear open space at grade level linking existing & proposed parks (R.O.W. varies from 30 feet to 50 feet); Potential for placing public art along greenway connection at ideal locations; Creates pedestrian connection & functions as buffer between existing residential to the east and ETHS parking

**Street Improvements/Parking**

- 14 Pedestrian friendly Church-Dodge intersection; Proposed median along Dodge; Tree-lined streets with sidewalks, pedestrian crossing at multiple locations, and bike lanes; Existing ETHS surface parking edge treatment with landscaped buffers; On-street parking at strategic locations
- 15 Proposed ETHS drop-off areas west of Dodge
- 16 Potential site for accommodating parking for school use within close proximity to ETHS (145 spaces)
- 17 Potential site for development

- A moderate level of residential development just west of the newly created greenway with units fronting onto existing public streets and alleys and the greenway.
- Enhanced parking, streetscape elements, a moderate level of residential development, and possibly a small signature cultural building south of Lake Street.
- Streetscapes that incorporate a number of different greening, street furniture, lighting and other elements appropriate to the various cross-sections.



Streetscape improvement - Green Street example



Streetscape improvement example



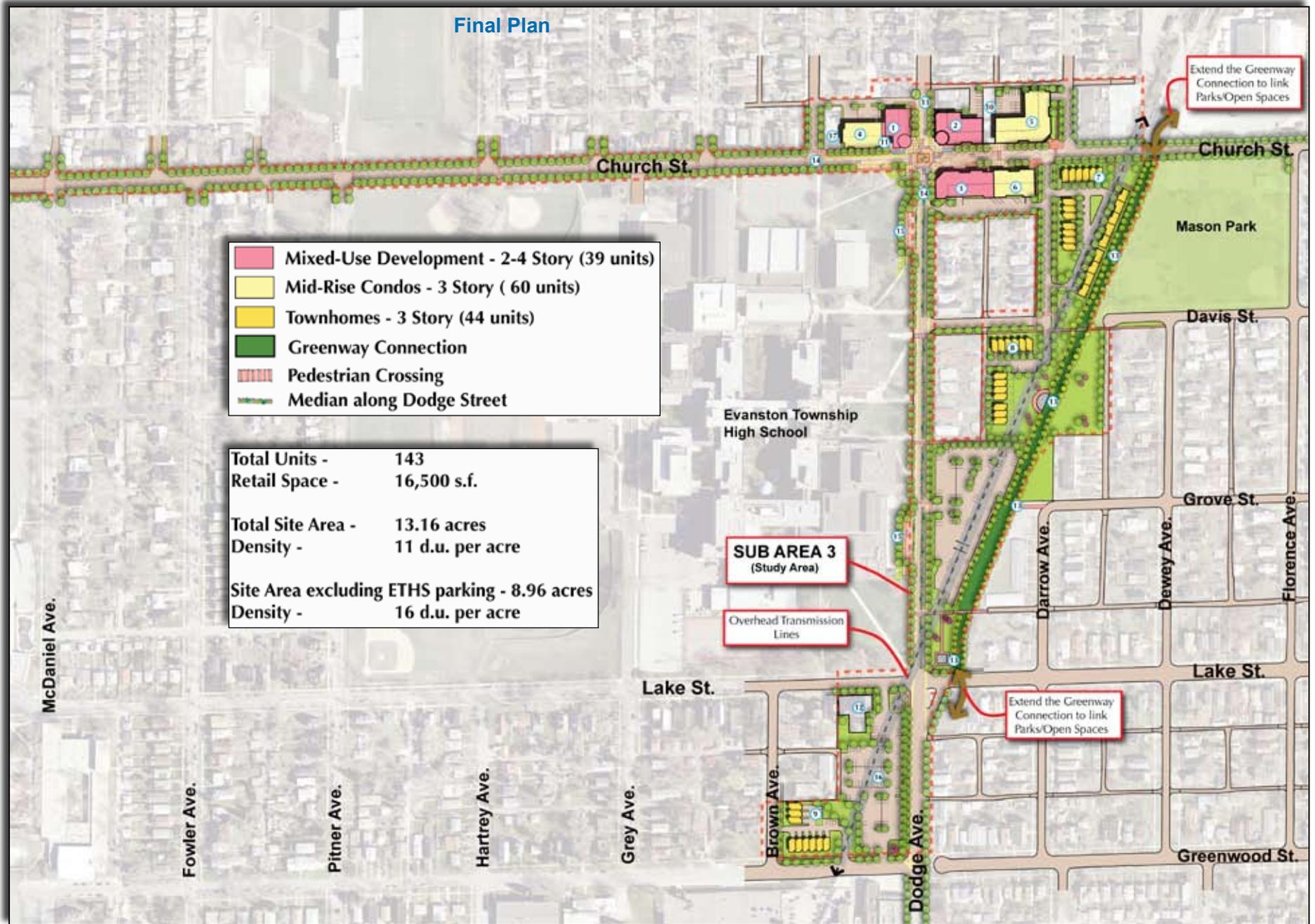
Streetscape improvement - intersection improvement example



Townhouses and mid-rise residential buildings examples



Mixed-use development example



Final Plan illustration with a total of 165 units



Final Plan perspective view looking north towards Church Street



Final Plan perspective view looking west along Church Street

## Building Massing Illustrations



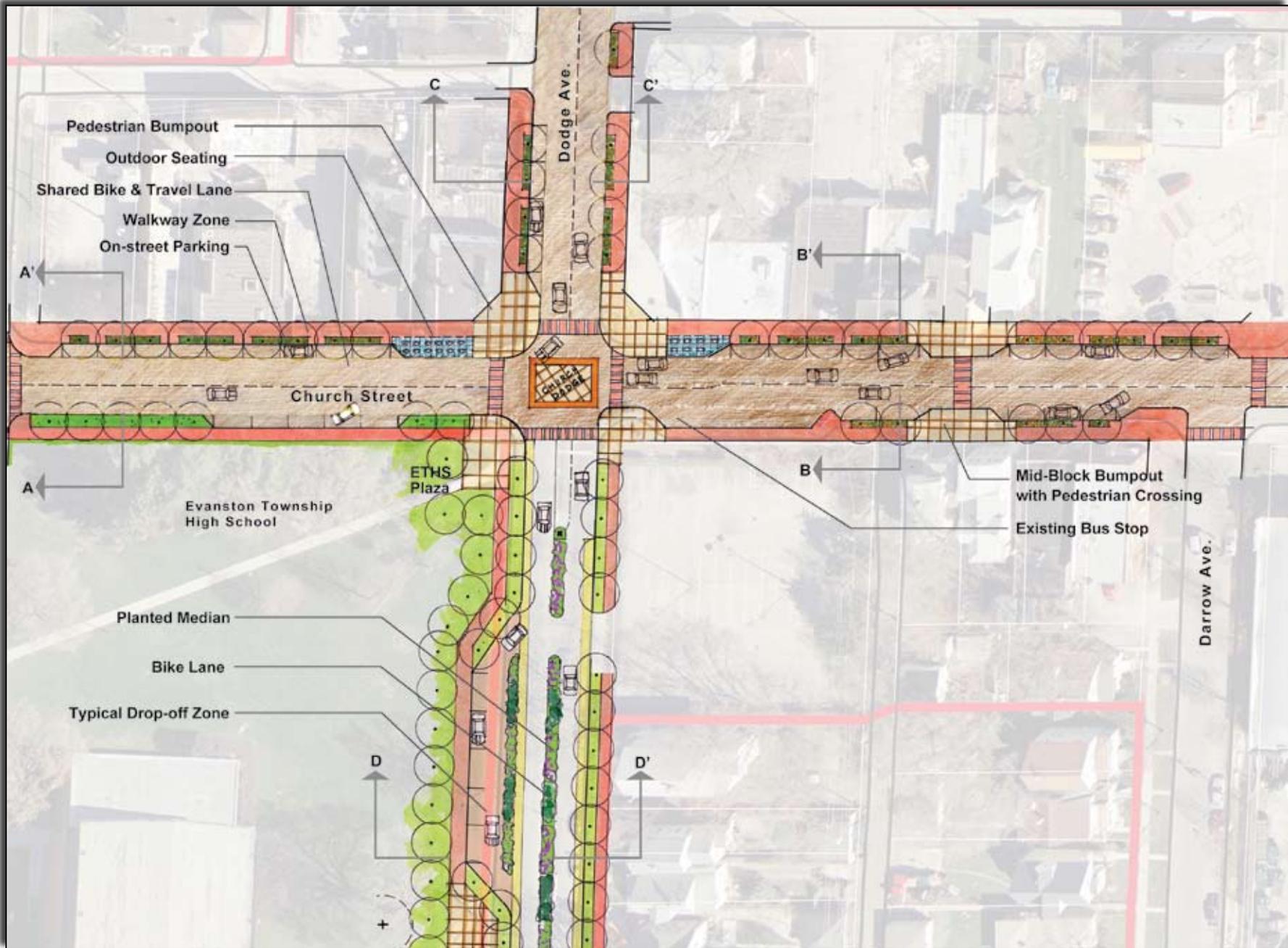
Final Plan illustration

These perspective illustrations are intended to give a three-dimensional indication of elements such as building heights, open spaces, and how buildings relate to streets, sidewalks, and one another. These illustrations are not intended to indicate specific building designs, colors etc.



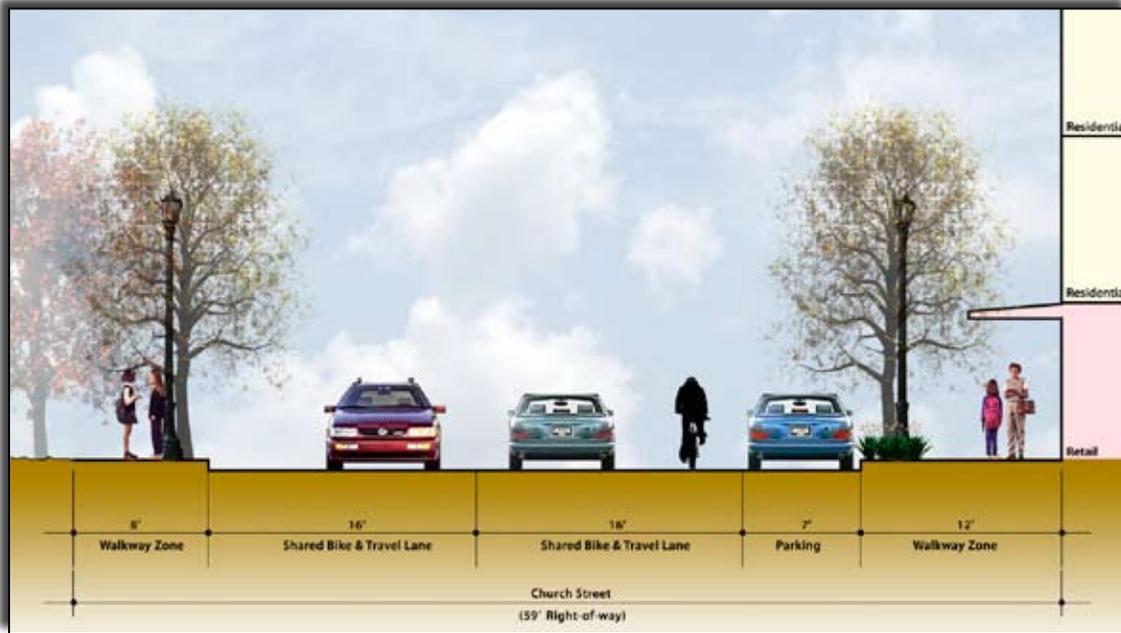
Final Plan perspective view looking east at Church & Dodge Intersection

Streetscape Improvement Concepts

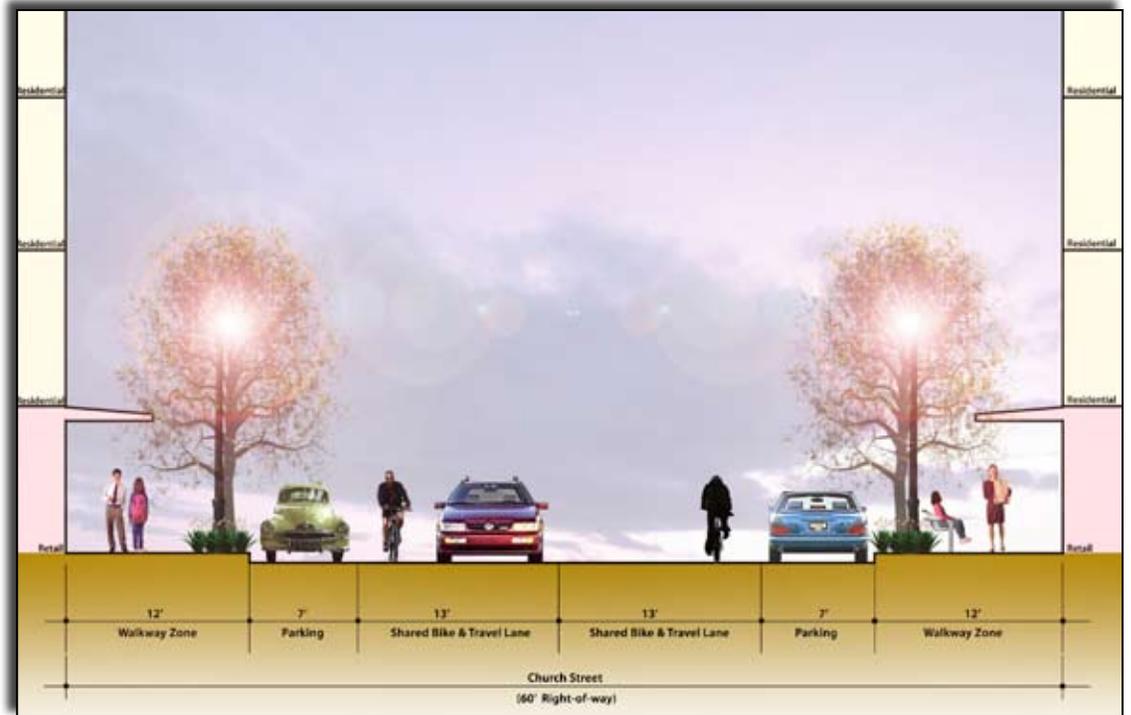


Streetscape improvement illustration at Church Street & Dodge Avenue

Church Street Concepts



Streetscape improvement illustration - Section AA' looking west

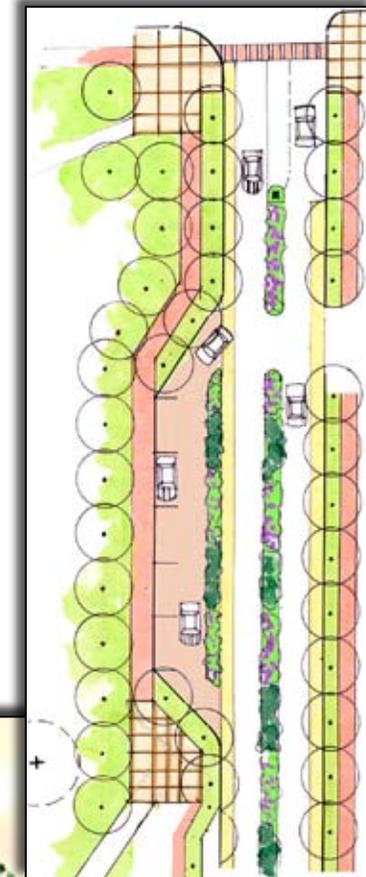


Streetscape improvement illustration - Section BB' looking west

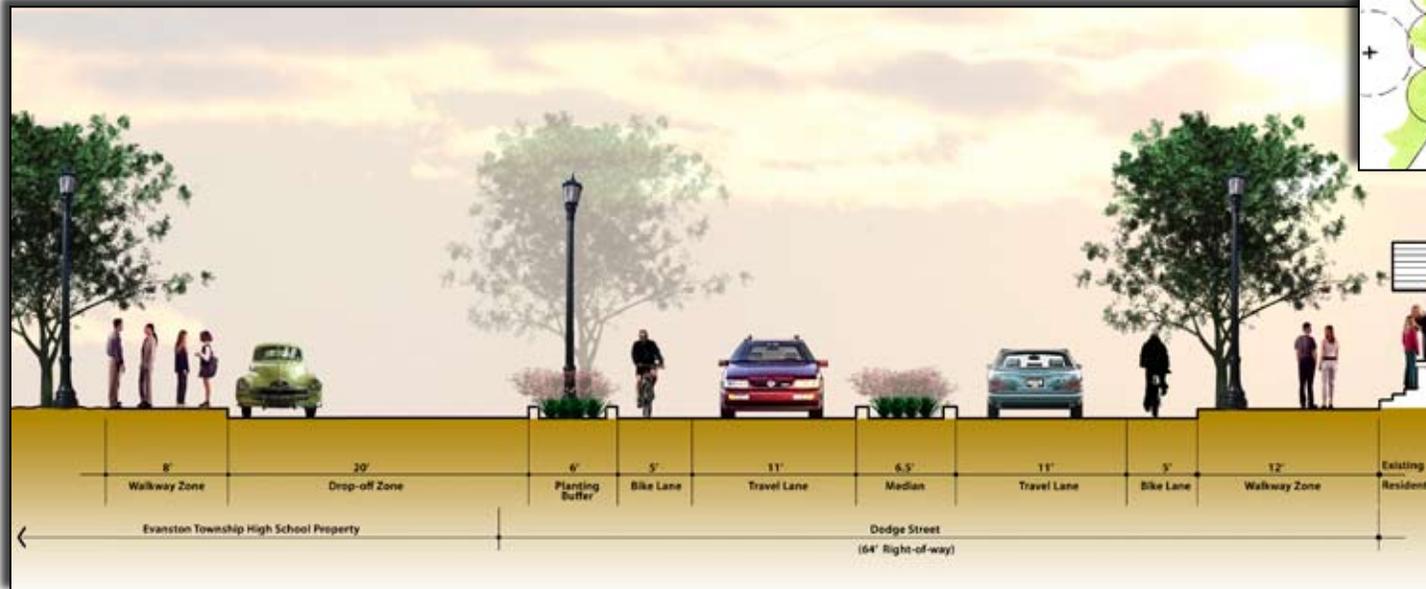
## Dodge Avenue Concepts



Streetscape improvement illustration - Section CC' looking north

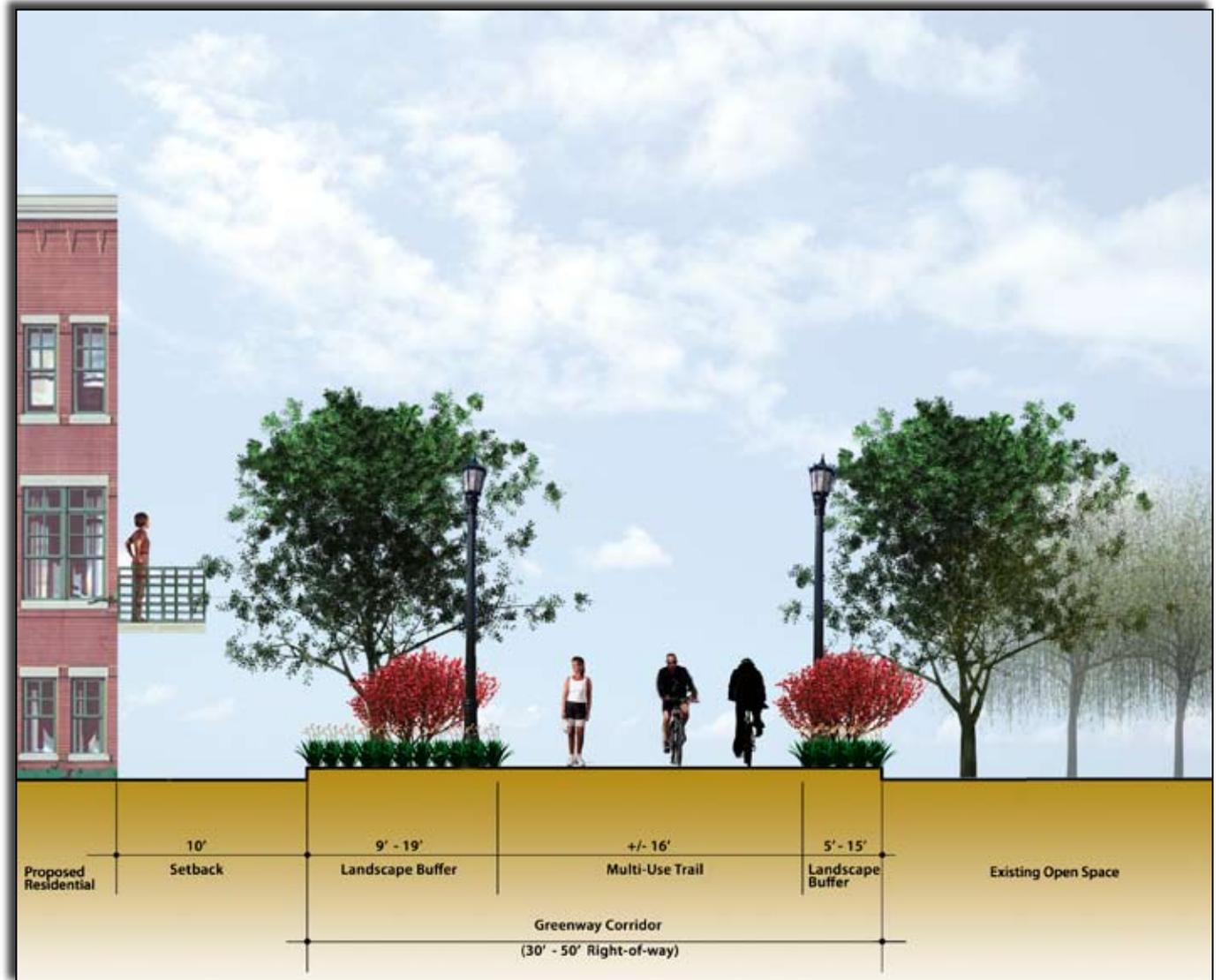


ETHS drop-off zone illustration



Streetscape improvement illustration - Section DD' looking north

Greenway Corridor Concept



Greenway Corridor illustration - Section looking north

## 6 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the Sub-Area #3 Neighborhood Plan will not take place overnight. It will require a phased implementation that will take place over time, particularly as many of the key parcels within the Sub-Area are privately owned. Plan implementation will therefore require the agreement and participation of numerous entities. In most instances, the redevelopment of specific sites can occur independently from all other sites.

In a few specific instances, however, the redevelopment of certain key parcels is linked to the redevelopment of other parcels. Most notably, the redevelopment of the existing ETHS parking lot at the southeast corner of Church & Dodge requires the replacement of its 40 parking spaces. These spaces can be recovered by the reconfiguration and expansion of the existing parking area that fronts onto Dodge, which is linked to the elimination of the abandoned Mayfair Railroad embankment. Also, the residential redevelopment of the portion of the ETHS parking area that does not front onto Dodge is linked to the replacement of the lost spaces in the area between Lake and Greenwood Streets.

The implementation of the Sub-Area 3 Neighborhood Plan will occur subject to revised zoning regulations that are under development and, upon their adoption by the City, will accompany the Neighborhood Plan. These regulations will address building envelope, siting and orientation, street type and location, landscaping and sustainable design.

- (A)** Independent Projects
- (B) (C)** Inter-dependent Projects



Phased Implementation Illustration

**City of Evanston****Mayor Lorraine H. Morton****Alderman Lionel Jean-Baptiste, 2nd Ward****Alderman Delores A. Holmes, 5th Ward****Julia Carroll, City Manager****Judy Aiello, Assistant City Manager****Rolanda B. Russell, Assistant City Manager****Jim Wolinski, Director of Community Development  
Department****Dennis Marino, Planning Division Director/  
Assistant Director of Community Development  
Department****Susan Guderley, Neighborhood Planner**

*Above all else, the JJR team would like to acknowledge the dozens of community stakeholders who enriched the planning process by contributing their visions, ideas, feedback, and passion. It is to them that this document is dedicated, as West Evanston is their community.*

**Consulting Team****JJR***In Association with***Studio C**

&amp;

**Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates, Inc.**