

The Shepard Davern Area Plan: an Update to the 2007 District 15 Plan

Recommended by the Saint Paul Planning Commission on _____

Adopted by the City Council _____

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Planning Background

The Shepard Davern area is at the southwestern-most edge of Saint Paul, just across the Mississippi River from the MSP International Airport and the Mall of America, and easily accessible from Downtown Saint Paul via Highway 5 / West 7th Street or Shepard Road. This strategic location has been the focus of many planning efforts, including a 1999 Small Area Plan, as part of the Fort Road Development Plan of 2005, a chapter of the District 15 Neighborhood Plan (also 2005), and as a component of the Great River Passage Plan (2013). Much of the Shepard Davern area are presently covered by two Overlay Districts that are part of the Saint Paul Zoning Code: the Shepard Davern Residential and Shepard Davern Commercial Overlay Districts (see map below).

The existing Shepard Davern Overlay Districts exclude a number of key commercially-zoned properties along West 7th Street, and do not include the full area discussed in the Shepard Davern Small Area Plan (1999). These districts also include certain standards that have made it difficult to attract development, and may be prohibitive to the redevelopment of some of the properties in the area.

Since the creation of these overlay districts, the City of Saint Paul has adopted new Traditional Neighborhood zoning districts which include many of the pedestrian-friendly qualities and design standards that are included in the Shepard Davern Overlay Districts. TN zoning districts may be a more straightforward and comprehensive replacement for these overlay districts.

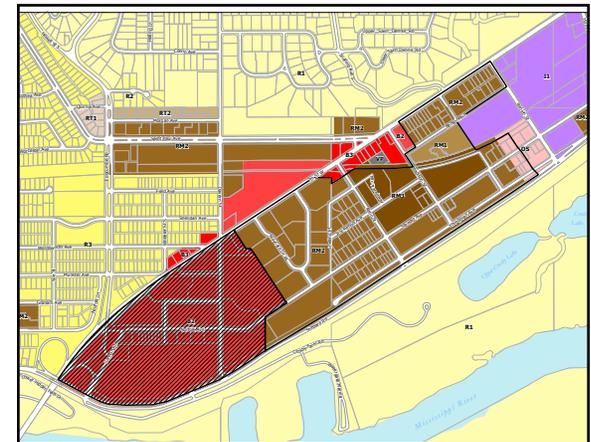
This plan addresses the key goals from past planning efforts to create a modern, relevant vision for the Shepard Davern area, develop goals for the neighborhood, and will inform the zoning study which will replace the Overlay Districts.

Purpose of Update

The 2005 Highland District Plan recommends rezoning the area to Traditional Neighborhood District 3, to “ensure that developers have not only the flexibility to be creative, but also the regulations to guarantee high-quality design.” In 2011, after an amendment to the Residential Overlay District, the Highland District Council requested that the existing small area plans be reviewed and updated, and that a zoning study be completed for the areas under both the Residential and Commercial Overlay Districts.

Format of Update

This plan update is intended to form a seamless part of the existing Highland District Plan from 2005, as requested by the Saint Paul Planning Commission. When adopted it will replace the 1999 Shepard Davern Gateway Small Area Plan, which will be decertified.



*Area zoning and Shepard Davern
Overlay Districts*

Study Area

The Shepard Davern area is centered on West 7th Street, a high-traffic, high-speed thoroughfare that bisects the area of District 15 between the Highland Bluffs and the Mississippi River. The area currently contains a variety of uses including a combination of multi-family dwellings and detached single-family homes, as well as airport-serving surface parking lots, strip malls, and light industrial uses. The Mississippi River provides a beautiful natural border on two sides of the area and its floodplain provides the location for some of the most scenic public parks in St. Paul.

The Shepard Davern area has the potential to be one of the most vibrant, attractive neighborhoods in Saint Paul. The area has numerous natural, locational and social assets that provide a base for a bright future. The area includes the majority of Highland Park's affordable housing and contributes substantially to the neighborhood's ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. Sibley Manor in particular provides an invaluable asset to Highland as a privately-operated source of affordable housing. For half a century, Sibley Manor has been an entry points for immigrant families in St. Paul. Without Sibley Manor and other properties in the Shepard Davern area, Highland and the City of Saint Paul would be a much less diverse place. It will be important, however, to assure that a mix of housing tenures and types are encouraged in this neighborhood, both to attract additional retail opportunities, and to capitalize on the other assets of the Shepard Davern area.

In addition to affordable housing and diversity, other assets in the area include: Crosby Farm Park and the Mississippi River, easy access to Downtown St. Paul and the Airport, the commercial visibility offered by West 7th Street, a substantial amount of underdeveloped land (mainly in surface parking lots) that is ripe for redevelopment, good transit access on West 7th Street and a mix of commercial, industrial and residential land use.

With the combination of locational, natural, and community assets, the Shepard Davern area is poised to become an even stronger community and commercial center than it is today. However, the area must also address some current issues and potential concerns. Among the most worrisome issues are: high traffic speeds on West 7th Street, lack of a connection to the Mississippi River and a lack of a pedestrian-friendly street environment.



*Sibley Plaza, photo by
City of Saint Paul 2013*



*Graham Place Apartments, photo by
City of Saint Paul 2013*

Study Area, continued

The concerns for the future are: that new development will be incompatible with the rest of the Shepard Davern area and Highland Park in scale or use, and that development will overshadow the natural environment along the Mississippi River.

The Shepard Davern Area will ideally become a place that capitalizes on its assets, effectively addresses its issues and minimizes the risk posed by external threats. The realization of this ideal will have to include an interconnected set of pedestrian-oriented and mixed-use urban villages. These urban villages replace most of the area's under-utilized land with new 3-5 story mixed-use buildings with a combination of first-floor convenience retail and affordable and market rate housing for people throughout the life cycle. The vision may include some hotels, but should avoid overly-tall buildings and large regional uses that would disrupt the character of the neighborhood and would not meet a local need. The majority of the existing single-family homes and light industrial uses will stay to support a diverse housing stock and jobs. The street environment will support pedestrian and bicycle travel as well as transit and automotive travel. The area will be an attraction for the neighborhood and the entire City.

The Shepard Davern neighborhood has been so named for a number of years. However, the intersection of Shepard Road and Davern Street is hardly the heart of the neighborhood, is not a widely recognized geographic point, and therefore does not brand the area well. There may be an opportunity to re-brand the neighborhood to better reflect the vision for the future of the neighborhood, rather than the past. For consistency, this plan uses the "Shepard Davern area" name.



Building types in Shepard Davern, photos by City of Saint Paul 2013



Land Use Goals

The Shepard Davern study area is a truly mixed-use district, with a range of land uses from light industrial to retail and office spaces, to both single- and multi-family housing. The mixed-use character is a strength, and provides local businesses and services for the many residents of the area as well as for those passing through the corridor. As the neighborhood's residential density increases, maintaining a balance between these land uses will be important, so that industrial uses fit into the character of the neighborhood, to strengthen the commercial businesses to serve new residents, and to retain single-family housing without dwarfing it in scale.

The area is a singular community, and signage, unifying streetscape, or other tools particularly identifying the community and the Gateway to Saint Paul will help visitors feel welcome to both the district and the city.

Land Use Objectives and Strategies

LU1. Attract more neighborhood serving businesses to the area, to better serve the needs of residents in the area.

LU1.1 Encourage mixed-use developments with first-floor retail spaces on primary roadways, particularly West 7th.

LU1.2 Work with developers to attract a mix of neighborhood serving businesses and regional businesses to create a strong retail base.

LU2. Work to address property crime issues in the neighborhood, making it a safer more attractive place to work, shop and live.

LU2.1 Increase police presence in the neighborhood, to address areas where criminal activities have been identified.

LU2.2 Work with crime specialists to address particular issues in the area, through methods that may include increased lighting, camera surveillance, and/or Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), particularly in reviewing retail area parking lot design.

LU3. Encourage public/private partnerships to create both vibrant open spaces and community gathering spaces that are welcoming to neighbors.

LU4. Encourage light industrial uses in existing industrially zoned areas and adjacent to existing industry, for example, light manufacturing and data processing.

LU5. Work with existing industrial businesses to create a more enticing area.

LU6. Through a community-driven process, come up with a new neighborhood name for a stronger neighborhood identity. Use this to strengthen the Gateway to Saint Paul.

LU6.1 Work with private property owners and local business associations to develop a branding and signage strategy for the "Gateway to Saint Paul" area, to create a cohesive neighborhood identity and welcome people to Saint Paul.

LU7. Commercial redevelopment in the study area should be designed to emphasize the significance of this important gateway into Saint Paul, particularly development within Neighborhood Centers and Mixed Use Corridors. New development in a Neighborhood Center or Mixed Use Corridor located on or adjacent to primary travel and transit routes should promote transit use, walking, and biking. Site Plans for new developments in Neighborhood Centers or Mixed Use Corridors will emphasize high-quality exterior building design and contain exterior landscaping and lighting plans that encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment. Blank exterior walls on commercial, residential, and civic buildings, should be avoided by incorporating non-tinted doors and window openings at a scale commensurate with the building facade viewable from arterial and collector streets. Architectural features and landscaping may also be considered if similarly and practically scaled.



Parks and Recreation

The Shepard Davern area is surrounded by parkland, not the least of which being Crosby Farm Park on the south side of Shepard Road, and including McDonough Park along Saint Paul Avenue. These parklands, however, are not well-used by residents in part due to their inaccessibility, but also because of the desire to keep these spaces natural. Access to these parks should be enhanced for residents of the area, but the need for more active park spaces should also be addressed to better serve the community's recreation and gathering-space needs.

Parks and Recreation Objectives and Strategies

PR1. Create a new neighborhood park between Shepard Road and West 7th to better serve both the elderly and the youth populations in the area. In particular, look for opportunities that are easily accessible to Sibley Manor.

PR1.1 Work with private developers to take advantage of parkland dedication and stormwater management requirements.

PR2. Look for opportunities for community gardening and/or urban agriculture in the area.

PR3. Maintain the natural areas adjacent to the river as a unique asset, in accordance with the recommendations of the Great River Passage Plan.

PR4. Enhance the river area to create a destination that will attract more regional visitors to the area. Include signage to help people move through the park, and work with schools to encourage more visits.

PR5. Improve neighborhood accessibility to the Crosby Farm Park and trails on the south side of Shepard Road.

PR5.1 Enhance access points through improved pedestrian crossings at the four points identified by the Great River Passage Plan: South Davern Street, Alton Street, South Madison Street and South Rankin Street.

PR6. Improve access to the Two Rivers Outlook on the south side of Shepard Road and the east side of West 7th Street.

PR7. Improve and maintain the appearance of City-owned land on the hill adjacent to West 7th Street north of Saint Paul Avenue (including McDonough Park), in particular to enhance the area and create a Gateway to Saint Paul.

PR8. Explore public uses for McDonough Park.



Great River Passage Plan, pg 106



Housing

The Shepard Davern area is unique in the mix of housing types and tenures. It is one of the most densely populated areas in Highland Park and the City of Saint Paul. The area has a high renter population and a relatively high density of low-income residents compared to the rest of the Highland District. The diversity of housing types and range of affordability is valued by the community, and efforts should be made to assure that one housing type or tenure does not dominate the marketplace. While this diversity is an asset to the Shepard Davern area, there should also be a concerted effort to create a sense of identity and community among the various populations that live there.

Housing Objectives and Strategies

- H1. Support a better balance of housing types, tenures and ownership models, including high quality housing that will serve as an amenity for the neighborhood.
- H2. Attract more neighborhood serving businesses to the area, to better serve the high density of residents in the area (see Land Use Objectives and Strategies).
- H3. Retain the existing clusters of single-family houses, particularly in areas where the single-family residential structure is the primary building type on a given block.
 - H3.1 Use zoning to protect the single-family character of these areas.
 - H3.2 Work with the Highland District Council and housing organizations to encourage and incentivize maintenance and rehabilitation of single-family dwellings in targeted areas as necessary.
- H4. Create new block clubs, and support existing block clubs, to foster sense of community.
 - H4.1 Work with the Highland District Council to raise the awareness of the block club system and to sign people up to organize block clubs.
 - H4.2 Work with apartment and rental property managers to set up block clubs for people living in multi-family structures.
 - H4.3 Create a stronger community connection to Highland Village.
- H5. Identify, promote and support social service organizations that serve the diverse populations living in the area.
 - H5.1 Create a resource list of service organizations available to property owners.
- H6. Assure that landlords are complying with housing and maintenance regulations and standards.
 - H6.1 Work with the District Council and pertinent City departments to identify and address problem properties.



The Regency Apartments, photo by City of Saint Paul 2013



Transportation

Shepard Davern is the first neighborhood of Saint Paul that people experience when coming into the city off the Highway 5 bridge. The area is well-connected to three major regional job centers (Downtown Saint Paul, the MSP Airport, and the Mall of America). And the Mississippi River area provides opportunities for recreation. Taking advantage of these three attributes through improved streetscaping, maintaining and widening public transportation options, and improving pedestrian access across both West 7th and Shepard Road, will improve the Shepard Davern neighborhood for residents, encourage patronage of local businesses, and bring more visitors to the area. Sidewalk improvements, lighting, and bicycle improvements including bike racks, could dramatically improve the district.

Transportation Objectives and Strategies

T1. Improve all transportation modes, including the walkability, of the area to better accommodate the high density of residents in the area.

T1.1 Work with City and County staff and other stakeholders during upcoming transportation studies to further the goals of the immediate community. Participate in public hearings, workshops, and open houses, and encourage neighbors to engage as well.

T1.2 Work to develop priorities to create Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) proposals for improvement projects.

T1.3 Initiate specific pedestrian and walkability improvements, with particular attention paid to both pedestrian safety and streetscape amenities.

T2. Slow the traffic coming into the city off the Highway 5 bridge onto West 7th, both to improve the safety of the pedestrian environment along West 7th, and to help create the feeling of a Gateway to Saint Paul.

T3. Maintain Shepard Road as a truck route.

T4. Improve the safe access to and safety of bus stops along the north side of West 7th Street.

T4.1 Work with Metro Transit, Saint Paul Public Works, and private developers of adjacent sites during redevelopment, to identify potential new shelter locations along West 7th.

T5. Improve pedestrian spaces and overall safety and condition of Davern Street.

T5.1 Improve the sidewalks and install bike lanes on Davern.

T5.2 Improve the condition of Davern at the CP rail crossing.

T5.3 Seek ways to reduce vehicle speeds on Davern north of West 7th Street.

continued on next page



Metro Transit Bus Rte 54, photo by City of Saint Paul 2013



Transportation, continued

Transportation Objectives and Strategies, continued

T6. Implement bicycle improvements throughout the area, as identified in the Saint Paul Bikeways Plan, to encourage bicycling as an affordable means of transportation for area residents.

T6.1 Install bike parking consistent with the bike parking design for Highland Village and the rest of the District.

T7. Make improvements at problematic intersections for the safety of all users (see map for identified areas). Use these opportunities to bring higher value and amenity to the neighborhood through streetscaping.

T8. Study the Canadian Pacific rail spur for bicycle and pedestrian trail use, and actively engage and seek meaningful input from neighborhood stakeholders, adjacent property owners and tenants. Community members should be active participants in the process.

T9. Use the Saint Paul Great River Passage Plan to guide streetscape and connectivity improvements, and to improve access through the neighborhood and to the river area. In particular, seek ways to implement the improvements identified in for Shepard Road.



Bus stop along West 7th, photo by City of Saint Paul 2013

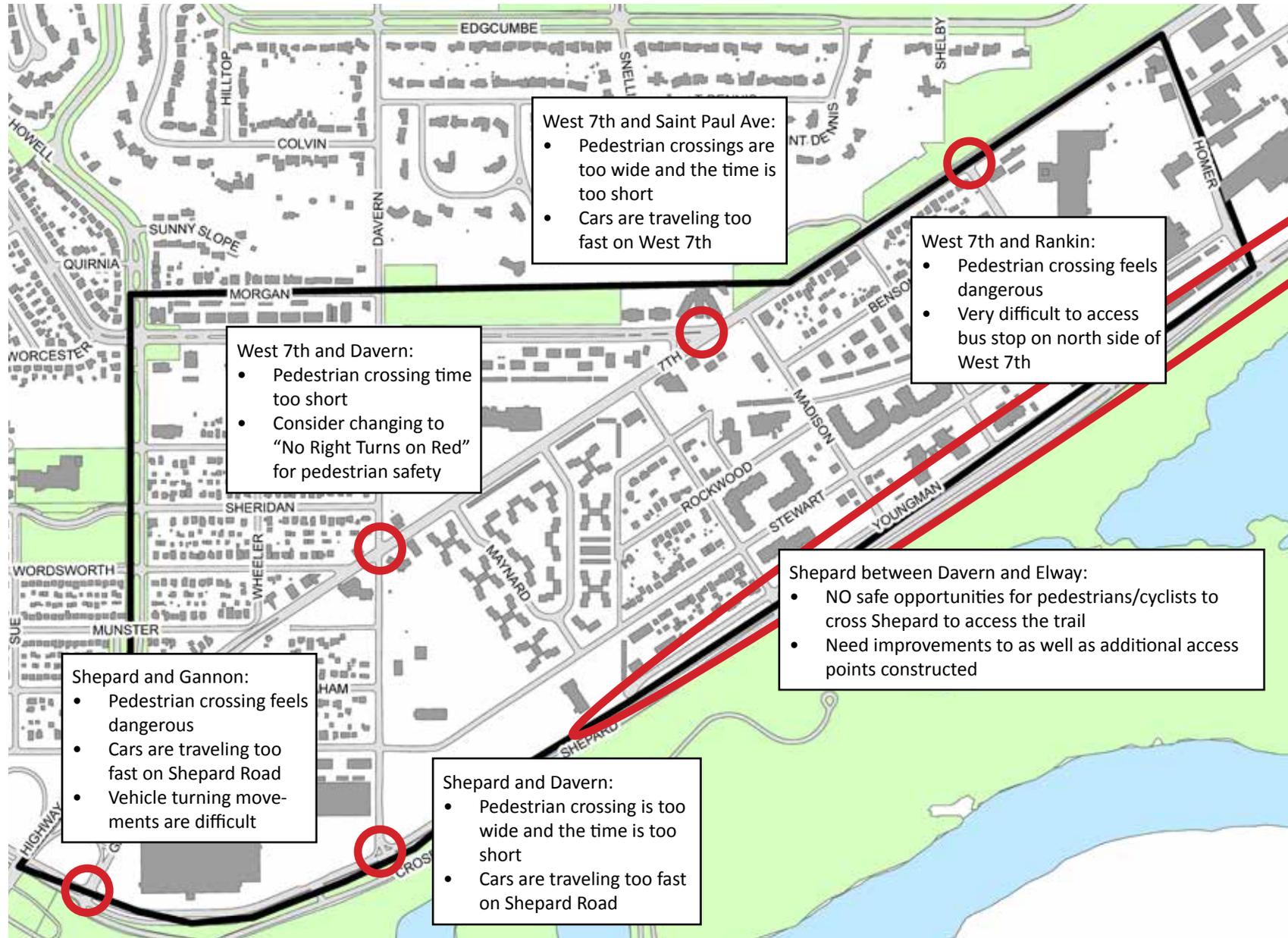


Ford/CP Rail spur, photo by City of Saint Paul 2013



Transportation

Key intersections for safety improvements



Implementation

Land Use Strategies			
#	Strategy Summary	Responsible Parties	Community Priority for Implementation
LU1	Attract neighborhood-serving businesses	PED	High
LU2	Address property crime issues, other safety concerns	PED, PW, Police	High
LU3	Create vibrant urban spaces	PED, HDC	Low
LU4	Encourage light industrial uses in I-zoned areas	PED	Medium
LU5	Improve industrial areas of neighborhood	PED	Low
LU6	Craft a new identity for the area with a new name	HDC, PED	Medium
LU7	High quality design in commercial redevelopment	Private developers, DSI	High

Parks and Recreation Strategies			
#	Strategy Summary	Responsible Parties	Community Priority for Implementation
PR1	New neighborhood park btwn W.7th and Shepard	Parks, PED	High
PR2	Community gardening opportunities	Parks, HDC	Low
PR3	Maintain natural river areas	Parks	Medium
PR4	Attract regional visitors	Parks	Low
PR5	Improve accessibility of Shepard Road trails and Crosby Farm Park	Parks, PW	High
PR6	Improve access to Two Rivers Park Outlook	Parks, PW	Medium
PR7	Improve appearance of parks along W. 7th	Parks, PW	High
PR8	Explore public uses for McDonough Park	Parks	Medium

Note: HDC=Highland District Council, PED=Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development, PW=Public Works, DSI=Department of Safety and Inspections

Implementation

Housing Strategies			
#	Strategy Summary	Responsible Parties	Community Priority for Implementation
H1	Better balance of housing types	PED	High
H2	Attract neighborhood-serving businesses	PED	High
H3	Retain existing single family housing areas	PED	High
H4	Create new block clubs	HDC	High
H5	Raise awareness of social services and other resources	HDC, PED	High
H6	Work with landlords and identify problem properties	HDC, PED	High

Transportation Strategies			
#	Strategy Summary	Responsible Parties	Community Priority for Implementation
T1	Improve transportation options, particularly walkability	PW, PED, HDC	High
T2	Slow traffic off Highway 5 onto W. 7th	PW, MnDOT	High
T3	Maintain Shepard Road as truck route	PW, MnDOT	Medium
T4	Improve bus stops on W. 7th	PW, MnDOT, Metro Transit	High
T5	Improvements to Davern Road	PW, PED	Medium
T6	Bicycle improvements	PW	Low
T7	Intersection safety	PW, PED, MnDOT	Medium
T8	CP rail spur study	PW, PED, RCRRA	High
T9	Great River Passage recommendations	PW, Parks, PED	Low

Appendix: Basic Census and Market Information

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1.
Esri forecasts for 2012 data.
2010 data unless otherwise noted.

Population

- Total Population: 5,465
- 59.3% White Alone
- 26.9% Black Alone
- 0.3% American Indian Alone
- 4.8% Asian Alone
- 0.0% Pacific Islander Alone
- 6.0% Some other race Alone
- 2.6% Two or more races
- 10.2% Hispanic Origin

Housing

- Households: 2,846
- Average Household Size: 1.91
- Housing Units: 3,187
- *Owner Occupied Units: 16.9%*
- *Renter Occupied Units: 72.4%*
- *Vacant Housing Units: 10.7%*
- Households with children: 17.9%

Income

- Average Household Income (2012):\$44,974
- Households with income <\$15,000: 26.4%

Data source: Esri and Dun & Bradstreet, 2012

Market Profile

- Total Retail Trade Demand(/Potential): \$48,427,107
- Total Retail Trade Supply (/Sales): \$11,671,773
- *Retail Gap: \$36,755,333*
- Total Food & Drink Demand: \$5,655,567
- Total Food & Drink Supply: \$11,041,826
- *Food & Drink Gap: -\$5,386,259*

Notable Gaps

- *Grocery Stores Gap: \$6,523,479*
- *Health & Personal Care Stores Gap: \$3,101,885*
- *Building Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores Gap: \$486,673*
- *Electronics & Appliance Stores: \$1,041,954*
- *Full-Service Restaurants Gap: -\$2,584,706*
- *Gasoline Stations Gap: -\$2,133,931*