MIDWAY PARKWAY-WEST COMO SMALL AREA PLAN

An Amendment to the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan

Approved by the Midway Parkway~West Como Small Area Plan Task Force
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Introduction

The Midway Parkway-West Como area is a gateway for millions of visitors to Saint Paul each year. About 2.5 million people annually visit the State Fair Grounds on the neighborhood's western boundary, and more than 2 million visitors come to Como Regional Park. Many of these people arrive and leave through the Midway Parkway-West Como area and gain their impression of Saint Paul as a whole from this small neighborhood.

The neighborhood has many strengths, including generally well-maintained buildings, a healthy housing market with a mixture of housing types and good diversity, strong institutional neighbors, and good access to both Minneapolis and Saint Paul downtowns. The neighborhood has the potential to compete better with new housing in the suburbs for middle income residents and to provide higher property values to build Saint Paul's tax base provided that issues raised in this plan are addressed.

The Midway Parkway-West Como Small Area Plan's east and west boundaries are Como Park and the Minnesota State Fair Grounds, respectively, Hoyt Avenue (city limits) on the north, and the north mainline of the Burlington Northern Railroad on the south. A two-block area of mixed land uses in the southwest quadrant of the Snelling-Como interchange is included in the study area. The 330-acre study area corresponds closely with Sub-District One of the Como Area Planning District. (See Map 1.)

This plan links housing improvements, public improvements, commercial development and industrial investment in a comprehensive effort to revitalize the neighborhood, improve its attractiveness to residents and businesses, and strengthen its competitive position.

Background

The District 10 Como Community Council officially requested that the Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED), "... begin work with the District Council on a Small Area Plan in the Midway Parkway/Como Area" in a letter dated June 17, 1992. Institutional expansion and the continuing traffic pressures from the State Fair and Como Park use, combined with the need to address the decline of the District's commercial area and improve neighborhood recreational facilities, precipitated the District Council's request for planning assistance. In October of 1993, the Saint Paul Planning Commission adopted Resolution 93-78 initiating the "Midway Parkway Small Area Plan and 40 Acre Study" and requesting that a neighborhood-based task force be established by the District Council to assist staff in plan development.

Como Regional Park is a major amenity offering open space and recreational opportunities, including a golf course, conservatory, and zoo, as well as ball fields and picnic areas. Community members are fortunate to be within walking distance of the park.

Immediately to the west is the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. While the greatest activity occurs in August during the State Fair, the fairgrounds are increasingly used year round. The State Agricultural Society, which operates the fairgrounds, generally tries to be a good neighbor, but problems sometimes occur. Spillover parking during the State Fair has been an issue for many years. Many neighbors make substantial sums of money by allowing fair goers to park on their lawns. Most of the conflicts surrounding this practice were resolved by city ordinance in 1989, with adoption of a special zoning district, the "State Fair Parking District." Remaining issues involve the best way to handle bus and pedestrian traffic, which, although brief in time span, does significant damage to Midway Parkway paving and lawn.

Goal and Strategies

The goal developed for this Small Area Plan is:
To conserve and strengthen the Midway Parkway-West Como neighborhood, enhancing its stability, property values, tax base, and attractiveness.

The following strategies will be used to accomplish the goal:

1. Conserve and improve neighborhood housing;

2. Improve and encourage relationships between District 10 institutions, businesses, and the community at large;

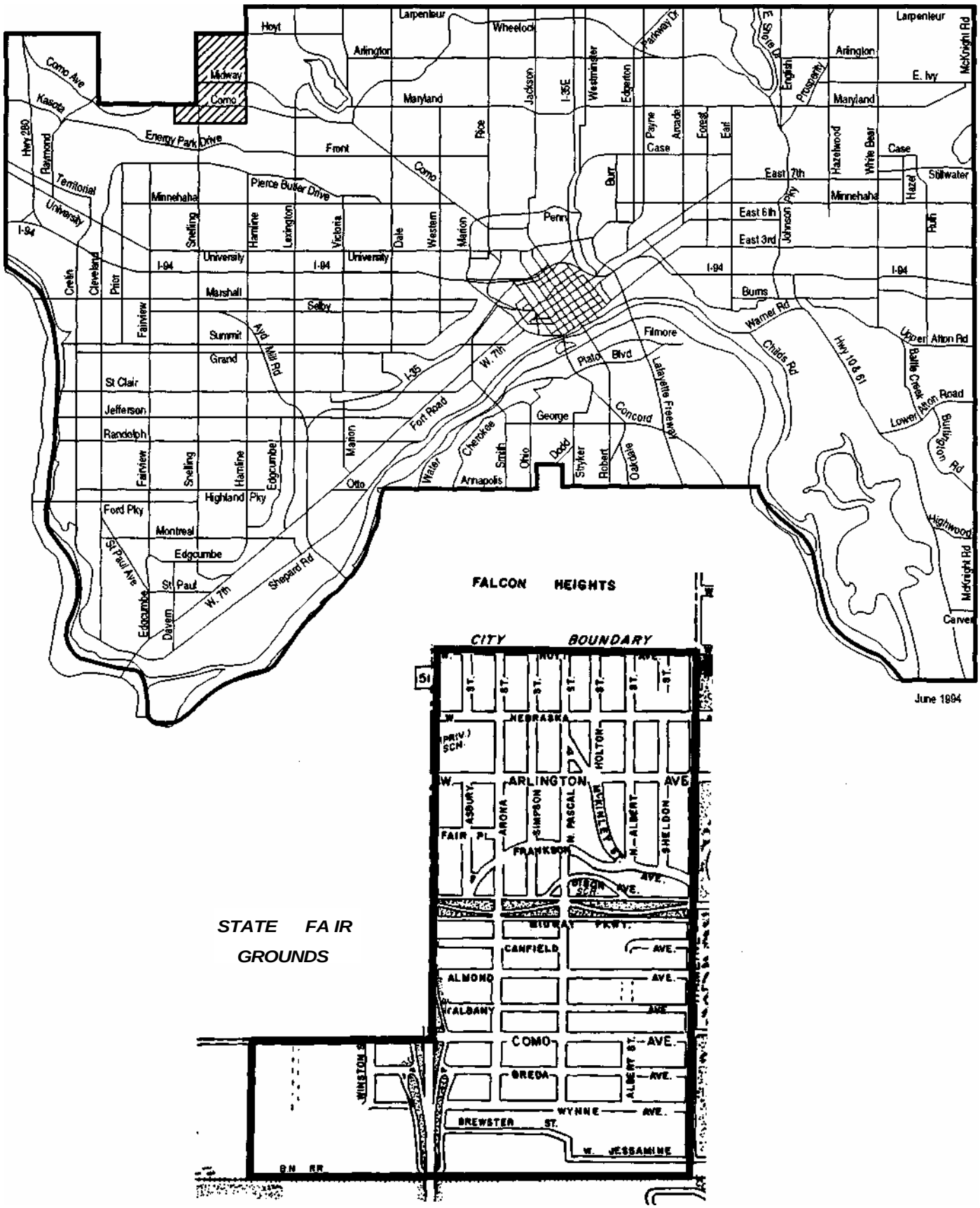
3. Improve public open space, including updating and incorporating parts of the *Midway Parkway Redevelopment Plan,* dated February 1989, as a part of this Small Area Plan;

4. Work with City agencies, Metro Transit, and others to provide appropriate infrastructure and full accessibility for area residents, employees, and visitors, with minimum adverse impact on the neighborhood.

5. Revitalize commercial property on the Como commercial strip, emphasizing a neighborhood business orientation; and

6. Revitalize the industrial property to the south and west with compatible new development.

MAP I: STUDY AREA



Strategy 1: Conserve & Improve Neighborhood Housing

Background

The dominant land use in the study area is single-family residential. (See Map 3.) In the area between Hoyt and Midway Parkway, there are 665 single-family homes, 16 duplexes, and two multiple-family buildings that contain a total of eight dwellings. In addition, there is an educational institution with dormitory housing for 180 students.

In the part of the study area south of Midway Parkway, there are 383 single-family homes, 108 dwellings in 59 duplexes, and 426 units of multi-family housing in seventeen structures. New construction recently completed at Lyngblomsten increased the number of apartments for seniors from 105 units to 165 units.

Although a few structures in the planning area were established well before 1900, most residential development in this part of Saint Paul occurred between 1900 and 1930. Nearly 60 percent of the total neighborhood housing stock was constructed before 1939. Most of the multi-family residential structures (those in the southeast corner of the study area) were built between 1960 and 1980.



The 1990 Census information for the study area indicates that most of the single-family dwellings in the neighborhood are owner-occupied. (Map 4 prepared by the Ramsey County Taxation staff displays "non-homestead" ownership.) Further, many area census respondents (47%) indicated that they lived in their present home five years before the census was taken. The majority (1041 of 1772 or 58.7%) of all households in the study area are "family households". Sixty-three

percent of all housing units in the study area are owner-occupied. Median family and median household incomes are above citywide medians, although below those of the metropolitan area.

The neighborhood stability depicted by these statistics is clearly reflected in the high level of exterior residential property maintenance, the structural condition of most area housing, and the strong feeling of community present in the study area. There are, however, a few properties that suffer from deferred maintenance.

Recommendation 1

Support and enhance neighborhood stability by working with owners of deferred maintenance residential property to improve their buildings. Work with area banks to provide home improvement programs in conjunction with upcoming street paving and lighting projects.

Encouraging improvements and greater investment in neighborhood housing through participation in a home improvement fair, a paint-a-thon program, block clubs, and home improvement loan programs, in conjunction with street paving and lighting projects, can bolster the stability of a neighborhood and should be considered. Absentee landlords should be included in these programs.

- Implementors: District 10 Como Community Council, in collaboration with area banks, City housing inspectors and housing rehabilitation programs

Recommendation 2

Improve the attractiveness of the neighborhood to growing families by encouraging homeowners to remodel and enhance existing housing.

The Midway Parkway-West Como neighborhood wants to attract and keep more homeowners than it loses in order to maintain neighborhood stability. A number of strategies can be tried to increase residents' commitment to the neighborhood, including a revolving loan fund, working with city housing staff and area realtors, timely and well-designed neighborhood public improvements, and working with area banks to provide special home improvement programs in conjunction with other efforts. The District Council will work with appropriate organizations in other neighborhoods, when mutually beneficial, to design and implement strategies and programs.

- Implementors: District 10 Como Community Council with assistance from area banks, PED's Northwest Quadrant Team, and realtors who work in the area

Strategy 2: Improve and Encourage Relationships between District 10 Institutions, Businesses, and the Community at Large

Background

The central location of this small neighborhood with respect to the metro area, one of its attractive assets for the institutions of the present, is somewhat serendipitous; all of the institutions were built in the area at a time when it was at or beyond the edge of the main community they served. The exception, the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center, is located on the former site of a small liberal arts college.



Institutions form the study area's second largest land use component, with a total land area of slightly more than 26 acres. The seven institutional uses situated in the study are:

- Como Park Lutheran Church at Sheldon and Hoyt
- Holy Childhood Church & School at Midway Parkway and Pascal
- Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center on Snelling between Arlington and Nebraska
- Shalom Home at Snelling and Midway Parkway
- Lyngblomsten Care Center, Lyngblomsten Apartments and the Heritage at Lyngblomsten, between Almond and Midway Parkway at Pascal
- Mount Olive Lutheran Church at Almond and Pascal
- Salvation Army Booth-Brown House Residence at Como and Pascal

Four of these institutions have components providing either "alternative" or "transitional" living arrangements for a significant number of community residents: the Humphrey Job Corps Center, the Lyngblomsten Care Center, The Salvation Army Booth Brown House, and the Shalom Home.

On average, 180 persons reside at the Humphrey Job Corps Center. In addition to the 165 apartments for seniors at Lyngblomsten, the Care Center, at full occupancy, provides nursing home services for 256 residents. The authorized capacity of the Shalom Home provides living accommodations for 285 persons, and Shalom Home typically operates at nearly 100 percent of its capacity. Booth Brown House was remodeled in 1994 and currently provides residential programming for 33 persons.

Age & Condition of Institutional Uses

Most institutional structures in the study area are maintained in good physical condition. At present, the outward appearance of buildings at the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center indicates that there are significant maintenance needs. While some buildings have been recently painted and the tennis and basketball courts have been upgraded, obtaining the necessary funding to make further needed physical improvements to this facility may prove to be difficult in the face of proposed federal budget cuts.

Recent significant new construction involving institutions includes the following:

- The Salvation Army Booth Brown House, the oldest of the neighborhood's institutional structures (1912), was renovated in 1994 to accommodate the needs of a changing program to assist 33 residents (adolescent children). The expansion included minor reconfiguration of the off-street parking facilities.

- Lyngblomsten Care Center removed the original rest home building to make space for the construction in 1994 of the Heritage building, with 60 new apartments for seniors.

- The Como Park Lutheran Church at Sheldon and Hoyt was also remodeled during the past year, expanding it slightly to bring it into conformance with Americans with Disabilities Act standards. No additional expansion can occur at this site without removal of adjacent homes.

No expansion of the Shalom Home is currently planned at this location. The Shalom Home has a suburban facility which has sufficient site area to expand for its future needs. No physical expansion plans have been identified by Mount Olive Lutheran Church as of this writing.

Institutions, properly operated by a responsible board of directors, maintain themselves at a standard that ensures continuing long term operation. It is apparent that the institutions of this neighborhood are typically operated in this manner.

Recommendation 3

Additional expansions of institutional uses-if and when they occur-

should involve early neighborhood consultation, high quality design that takes great care to prevent damage to the urban fabric surrounding and supporting these institutions, and continued communication to foster a good and continuous working relationship between the expanding institution, its immediate neighbors, and the community at large. Such communication and consultation with the community are vital to the long term health of both the neighborhood and the institutions.

- Implementor: District 10 Como Community Council will work with regional institutions located within the neighborhood to formulate ways in which to mitigate their impacts as well as enhance the institution:

  1. PARKING: In cooperation with the surrounding neighbors and the institutions, District 10 will work to take measures to decrease parking in the neighborhood, considering means such as off-site parking, bus passes, staggered shifts, car pooling, and volunteer parking in the driveways of residential homes.

  2. CHANGE AND GROWTH: Potential changes to neighborhood institutions that have the possibility of impacting the neighborhood will involve early consultation with the neighborhood via the District 10 Council.

     a. Programmatic changes which have the potential to affect the neighborhood will be presented to the community prior to implementation via the District 10 Como Community Council.

     b. Structural changes to institutions will involve District 10 in the early planning stages to enhance cooperation with homeowners and mitigate the impact on nearby residents and on the community.

     c. Additional expansion of institutional uses should occur only with early neighborhood consultation, high quality design, and minimal neighborhood impact.

Recommendation 4

Neighborhood residents should be informed about and encouraged to participate in institutional activities either as volunteers or by attending events. The District Council will assist the institutions in identifying volunteers as needs arise.

- Implementors: Institutional property owners, District 10 Community Council



Recommendation 5

Some of the neighborhood's older institutional structures are the Bethel College buildings situated on the Snelling Avenue side of the Job Corps Center site. These buildings, constructed prior to 1928 according to city plat maps, are the oldest of the original Bethel College buildings. The Humphrey Job Corps Center should be encouraged to maintain the structures in good serviceable condition, especially because their high visibility from Snelling Avenue reflects on the condition of the surrounding neighborhood.

- Implementors: Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center; U.S. Department of Labor

Strategy 3: Improve Public Open Spaces, including Midway Parkway

Como Park and the State Fair Grounds form the neighborhood's east and west boundaries. These facilities serve statewide and/or regional functions, which limits their use as neighborhood recreational resources. In addition, the neighborhood becomes a major parking and bus layover area during the twelve days of the State Fair each year.

Purely "neighborhood" public open space within the area is limited. Midway Parkway, which serves as both access to the neighborhood and a major connecting link between Como Park and the State Fair Grounds,

is also the largest public open space within the community. Including roadways, the total area of the parkway is slightly more than 12 acres. Tilden Park, located between Albany and Almond at Arona, is the only other park in the study area, although the recreation center at Ham line and Hoyt is just across the street and is actively used by neighborhood residents. This recreation center also schedules the ball fields at Como Park for neighborhood use. Other public spaces exist within street rights-of-way on McKinley, Frankson, and Buffalo. Enhancements to these spaces should be implemented as part of residential street paving. (See Recommendation 9).

Tilden Park

Tilden Park is a small half-block parcel that was formerly an elementary school. It contains a few picnic tables and a playground with unsafe, out-of-date equipment. Families would feel safer using the park if sight lines were improved to deter illegal activities.



Recommendation 6

Tilden Park, as the only purely local park in the area, should be upgraded with safe, modern play equipment and improved landscaping.

- Implementors: The District 10 Como Community Council will submit a proposal to upgrade Tilden Park play equipment to the next CIB process. If approved, the Division of Parks and Recreation will work with neighbors to determine needs, design and implement the upgrading.

Midway Parkway Improvements

Midway Parkway is a signature amenity for the Midway Parkway-West Como neighborhood. It gives the neighborhood identity as a special place, provides it with a focal point and central public place, and enhances surrounding property values. Midway Parkway is the primary western entrance to Como Park, connecting it to Snelling Avenue and the main entrance to the State Fair Grounds. It is also part of the Saint Paul Grand Round parkway system. This system, although never completed, was first envisioned over a century ago by park system planners and nationally prominent landscape architect Horace W. S. Cleveland to link almost all of Saint Paul's major parks. Improvements to Midway Parkway can be especially effective at improving the attractiveness of the neighborhood and enhancing its competitive position in the metro area.

Improvements to the north and south service roads along the one-half mile long parkway segment between Como Park and the State Fair Grounds took place as early as 1920. The central roadway was improved in 1928 and 1929, with grading, paving, seeding and tree planting taking place at that time. Beyond these improvements, only routine maintenance has occurred, with the exceptions of tree planting in 1986 and 1987 after loss of most of the elms that once lined the parkway and the realignment of the Snelling Avenue intersection in 1986 and 1987. The lantern style lighting and other decorative parkway treatments envisioned for Midway Parkway have never been completed.

For the thousands of visitors from all over the metro area, the state, and beyond who come to Como Park and the State Fair, Midway Parkway creates a visible and lasting impression of Saint Paul and the Midway Parkway-West Como neighborhood. During the fair, Midway Parkway is jammed with traffic and parked cars. The Midway Parkway entrance is one of the State Fair's busiest, with about 270,000 pedestrians using it each year to enter the State Fair. Tens of thousands of pedestrians stream down Midway Parkway sidewalks during the fair. The impression they get of Saint Paul and the neighborhood is not always the best. There are numerous accidents and near accidents at intersections where parked cars hamper visibility. The Parkway lacks adequate street lights and the sidewalks are uneven, with broken curbs and steep gutters, which creates hazards for pedestrians after dark. Buses chew up pavement not designed for their weight.

Area residents, along with the Division of Parks and Recreation, have long been anxious to improve this one-half mile section of Midway Parkway. They worked together to develop the *Midway Parkway Redevelopment Plan* in the 1980s and sought CIB funding for the project in 1989 and 1991. The project was put off, however, because of the



funding priority for street paving and lighting projects associated with sewer separation. With the citywide sewer separation project now complete, Midway Parkway improvements should be a top priority for CIB funding.

The *Midway Parkway Redevelopment Plan* included guidelines for street design, lighting and landscaping. Street standards in effect in the 1980s led to guidelines that were not totally consistent with some of the recommendations from the neighborhood. Today there is more of a realization that objectives for safe, efficient, and fast auto movement must be balanced with other objectives, such as safe pedestrian and bicycle access, protection of trees and natural areas, and livable communities. Standards have been revised and are more flexible. The following guidelines, based on those in the *Midway Parkway Redevelopment Plan,* reflect these recent changes in standards and are more consistent with neighborhood recommendations.

Recommendation 7

Make paving, lighting and landscaping improvements as soon as possible to the one-half mile section of Midway Parkway between Snelling Avenue and Hamline Avenue using the following guidelines:

Street *Design Guidelines*

1. The central parkway and the north and south service drives will be reconstructed at the same time, with new paving, curbs, gutters, and drainage structures. Wider, parkway-style curbs will be used on the central parkway only. Existing green space will be preserved to the maximum extent possible, consistent with the remainder of these guidelines. At corners, all streets should be narrowed to the width of the travel lanes only, thus making the no-parking zones at corners self-enforcing, improving sight distance for traffic safety, reducing the pedestrian crossing distances, helping to induce drivers to reduce their speed, and enhancing the parkway character.

2. Where there is no parking, including areas within at least 100 feet of intersections, the central parkway will be 30 feet wide from curb face to curb face and will follow the existing alignment. The remainder of the central parkway will be 36 feet wide from curb face to curb face, with parallel parking allowed on one or the other side, except as noted below. This will prevent harm to trees along the existing central parkway.

3. The parking bays along the central parkway will be staggered, some on the north side and some on the south side, to avoid obscuring views of the parkway with a wall of cars and to locate parking close to destinations served by the parking, while still maintaining the overall roadway width of 36 feet.

4. The block between Snelling and Arona will be treated as a special case because of the high demand for on-street parking by Shalom Home. On this block, the central parkway will have continuous parking bays on both sides and a width of 42 feet from curb face to curb face. There will be no parking within 100 feet east of Snelling and within 50 feet west of Arona.

5. Midway Parkway is a popular bike route to the University of Minnesota Saint Paul campus, provides bicycle access to and within Como Park, and is part of the Saint Paul Grand Round bicycle route. Striped bicycle lanes on Midway Parkway would make it clear to drivers they should expect bicyclists on this parkway, make it a safer route for bicyclists, and help to slow down traffic. The central parkway should be striped with 5-foot wide bicycle lanes, while maintaining a width of 30 feet where there is no parking, 36 feet where there is parking on one side, and 42 feet where there is parking on two sides. Bike lanes may be precluded, however, if Minnesota State Aid (MSA) funding is used for Midway Parkway and a variance of MSA standards is required.

6. The north and south service drives will be designated as one-way, the north drive being west bound and the south drive being eastbound.

7. The north and south service drives will be 14 feet wide from curb face to curb face where there is no parking (including areas within 30 feet of all intersections) and 18 feet wide where on-street parking is allowed. This is similar to the existing 1 7.5-foot to 18-foot curb to curb width and will help to avoid harming the large trees still bordering the parkway. This practice also provides more space for snow storage on the boulevards and clearly defines the service drives as one-way streets for local access. Driveways will not be blocked. Parking will be accommodated along the sidewalk side of the service

drives and will not *be* allowed on the parkway side. [This is a change from the 1989 *Midway Parkway Redevelopment Plan,* which would have reduced the amount of parking along the service drives and placed the parking in bays cut into existing green space on the parkway side of the service drives.] Parking along the sidewalk side of the service drives allows people to approach their cars without crossing traffic, and is particularly safer for children getting out of vans from the right side. The narrower service drives will encourage slower speeds and facilitate a canopy of trees over the service drives.

8. The south service drive between Snelling and Arona will be treated as a special case because of the high demand for on-street parking by Shalom Home. On this block, parking will be provided in bays on the parkway side of the service drive (only where possible without harming existing trees), as well as on the sidewalk side of the service drive. The service drive will be 25 feet wide from curb face to curb face where there is parking on both sides.

9. To avoid harming existing trees along the service drives, a minimum of one foot should be maintained between the back of curbs and the face of trees. Curbs will be hand-formed around trees where necessary.

10. Sidewalks along the service drives should be 5 feet wide and should be replaced in conjunction with the roadway improvements. The boulevards along the service drives should be at least 5 feet wide to provide enough space for trees and snow storage. One exception might be along the service drive in front of Shalom Home, since there is more daily pedestrian traffic, the existing sidewalk is 6 feet wide for the entire block, and the existing boulevard is 4 feet wide.

11. All crosswalks should be clearly marked, highly visible, and safe, making it clear to drivers that pedestrians have the right-of-way. Options for crosswalk treatments include "Continental" striping or brick crosswalks, similar to those used on Lexington Parkway (which would enhance its special parkway design and role as a major entrance to Como Park). A well-marked pedestrian crossing grid at the Midway Parkway - Pascal intersection near Holy Childhood School is particularly important to make it a safer intersection for children to cross.

Lighting Guideline

Saint Paul's lantern style street lights will be used exclusively along the entire length of the central parkway and service drives. Electric service will be installed underground.

Landscaping Guidelines

1. An overall landscaping plan will be developed for Midway Parkway. The parkway will include formal tree plantings as a major element, with the central parkway and service drives lined on both sides with a row of major overstory trees. All Midway Parkway improvements will be done with minimum disturbance to existing mature trees.

2. A major formal entry to Midway Parkway at Snelling will include architectural elements and materials (stone and brick) that relate to the established Como Park entrance theme and formal plantings.

3. A large variety of trees and shrubs will be used to offer seasonal variety and color. Formal garden areas, ideally including areas near the nursing homes, will provide the community with the opportunity to grow and maintain plantings that will provide color and beauty to the parkway.

4. The parkway will be planted with materials that attract and provide food for birds, in such a way as to define spaces such as seating areas and open spaces, and should be designed for safety.

5. Sitting benches will be provided for quiet enjoyment of the parkway. Benches, trash receptacles, and all street furnishings will be of a style consistent with the character of the parkway, neighborhood, and park furnishings currently in use by the Saint Paul Division of Parks and Recreation.

    - Implementors: District 10 Como Community Council, City of Saint Paul Department of Public Works, and Division of Parks and Recreation. The District 10 Council should submit a proposal for the 1997-1998 Capital Improvement Budget for funding. If the project is not funded in the next cycle, District 10 should continue to submit the project until it is funded.

FIGURE A: MIDWAY PARKWAY DESIGN DETAIL

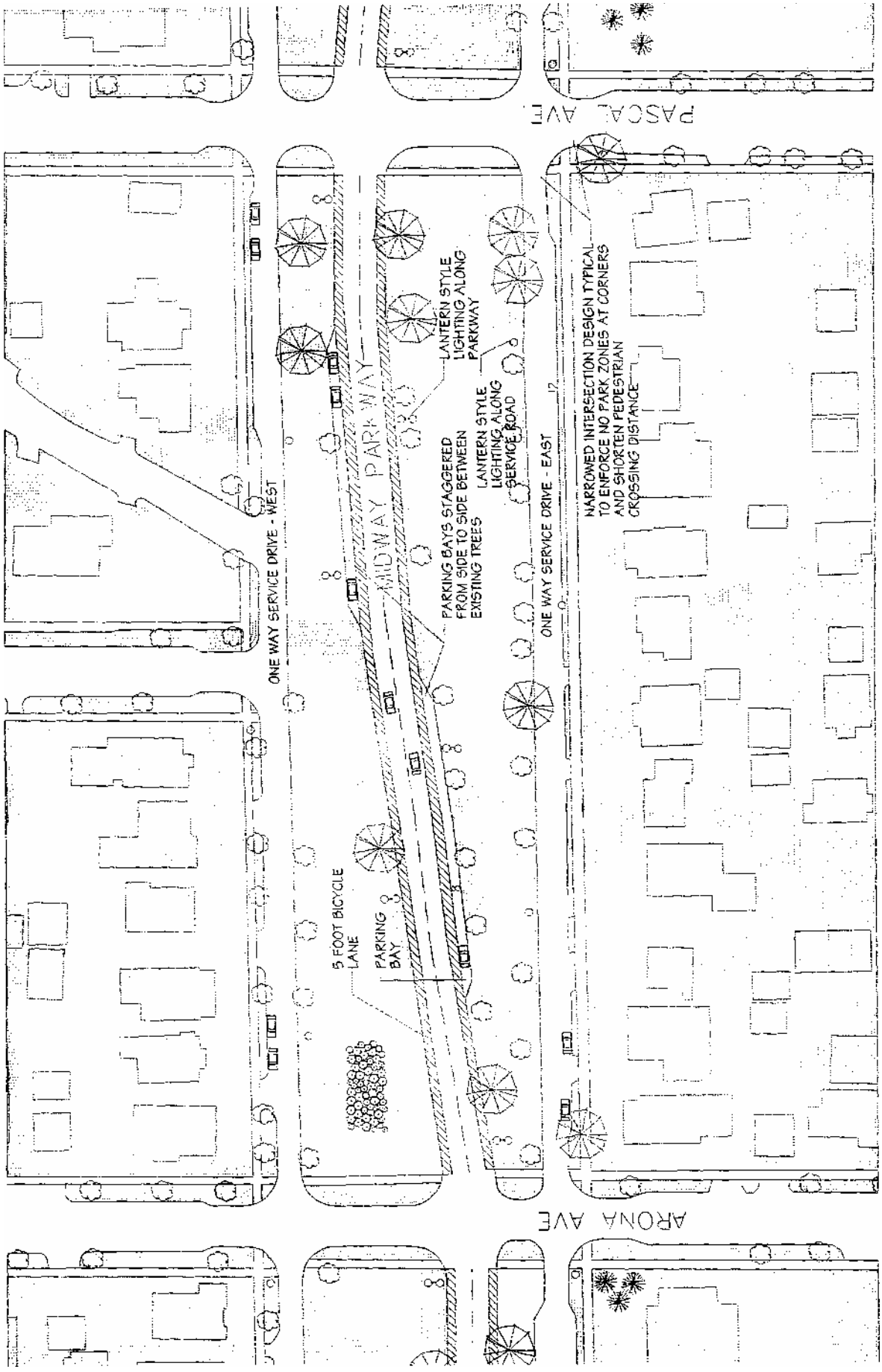
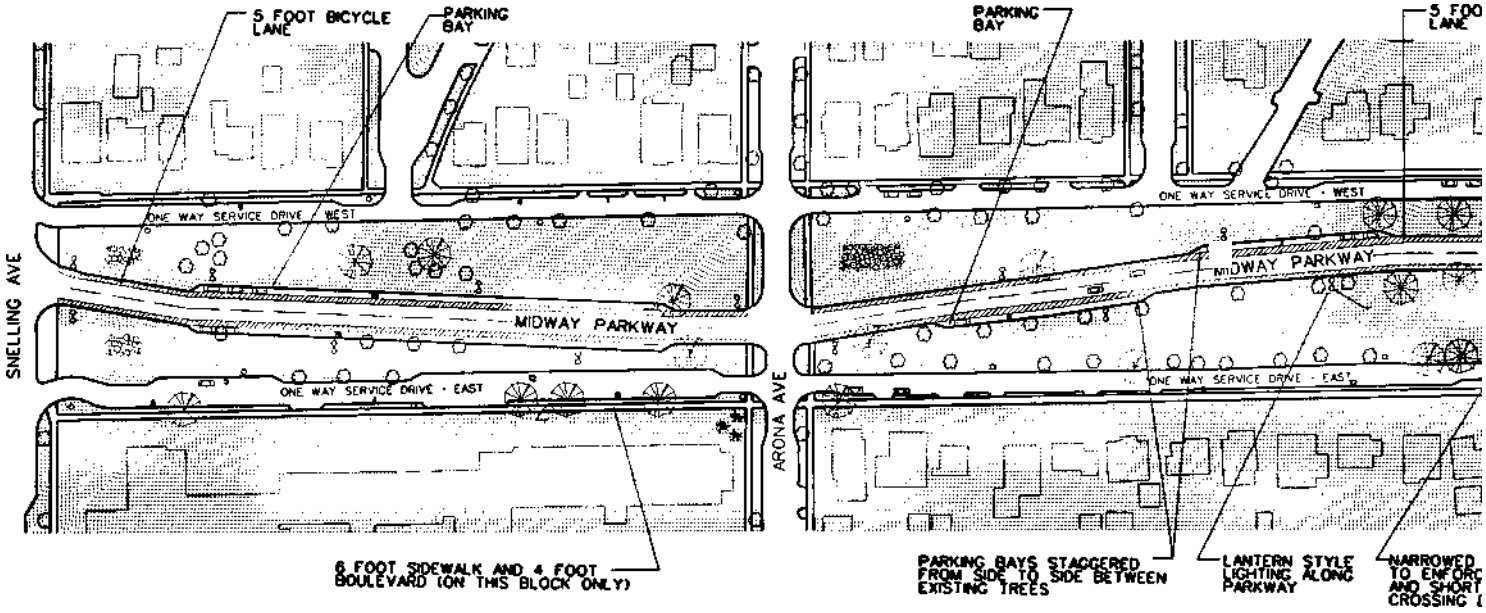
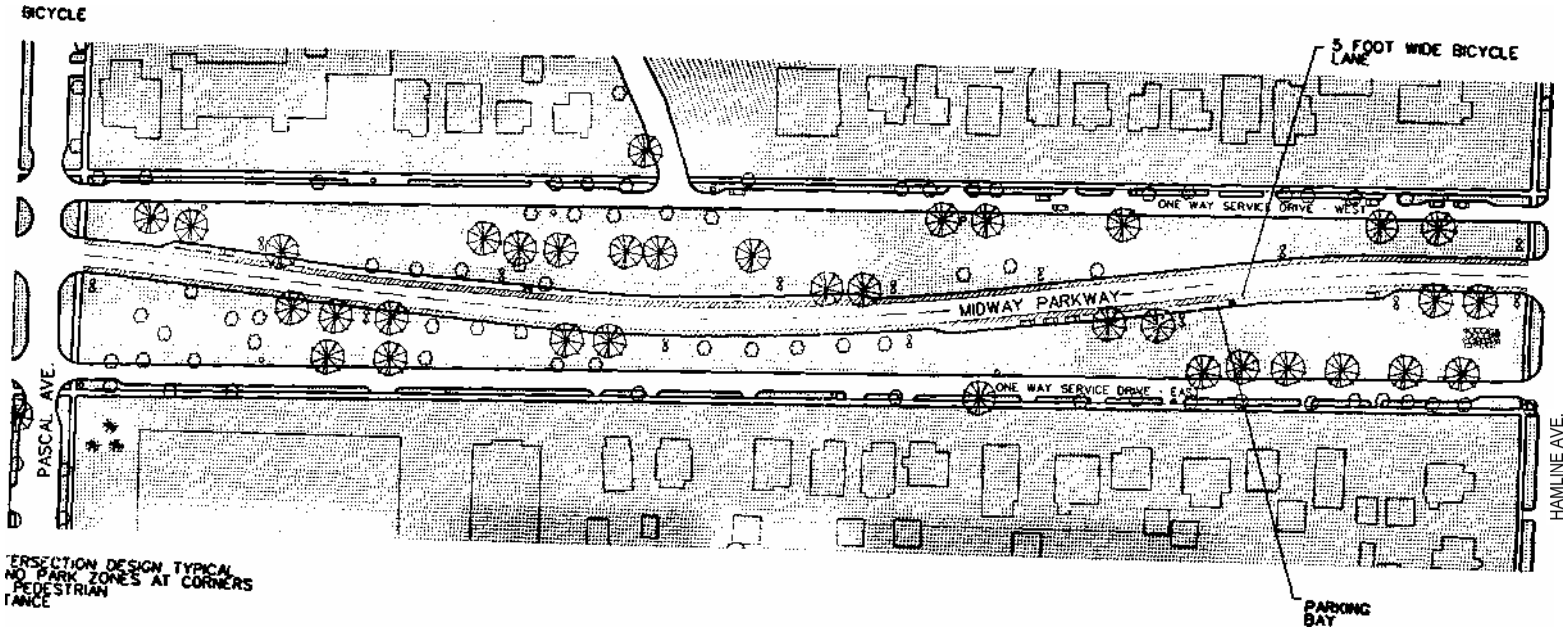


FIGURE B: MIDWAY PARKWAY DESIGN





TERSECTION DESIGN TYPICAL
NO PARK ZONES AT CORNERS
PEDESTRIAN
TANCE

Strategy 4: Provide Appropriate Infrastructure and Full Accessibility for Area Residents, Employees, and Visitors

Lead Water Service

Background

City records indicate that there are 248 "active" and 3 "inactive" lead water service connections in the study area. Approximately one in every four single-family homes in the study area has this type of water service connection. According to the 1990 Census data, 12.4 % of the population of the area are preschool children, compared to 7.3% citywide. Since children are most susceptible to the problems associated with lead poisoning, this problem needs to be addressed.

Recommendation 8

The District 10 Como Community Council will work with the Water Utility to educate affected households about the existence of lead water service and ways to alleviate the problem. The Water Utility should mail its "Let it Run and Get the Lead Out" information to affected households each year until the lead service is replaced.

- Implementors: District 10 Como Community Council, Saint Paul Public Works Department, and Saint Paul Water Utility

Local Streets

Street Layout and Condition

In the area north of Midway Parkway, the general orientation of residential blocks is north-south, with most homes facing east or west. The unusual curvilinear layout of streets between Arlington and Midway Parkway breaks up the typical grid pattern found in many early subdivisions in the City and lends character to the neighborhood through its sensitivity to the underlying landform. South of Midway Parkway a grid street pattern dominates the residential subdivision, with long blocks oriented east-west.

Snelling Avenue, a heavily traveled arterial street is a major north-south access corridor between greater Saint Paul, the neighborhood, and the north suburban communities of Falcon Heights, Roseville, and beyond. Como Avenue provides the primary east-west access to the neighborhood.

Streets in the study area are typically "oiled dirt" streets. These street surfaces are subject to frost heaves and "pot holes" during late winter and early spring. Such streets also tend to break down more quickly under heavy vehicle traffic. This is particularly true for Pascal Street and Arlington Avenue, which carry a Metro Transit bus route. There is some concern in the neighborhood that the poor condition of this street leads to greater deferred maintenance of homes along it. Paved streets serving the area include Snelling, Hamline, Como, the central portion of Midway Parkway, a section of Arona from Midway Parkway to the south, and Brewster/Jessamine. The local streets in the study area south of Como, along with a block on Albany and a block on Canfield, have been paved as part of the city's sewer separation project. More than six miles of the neighborhood's internal street network are oiled dirt (unpaved) streets.

The Residential Street Paving Program (RSPP), begun in 1996, is Public Works' next major neighborhood capital improvements program. Eighty-eight street paving projects, replacing nearly 200 miles of unpaved streets, will be completed in this fifteen-year program. Two of the RSPP projects cover the study area. As noted earlier, all remaining "lead water services" will be replaced during this program. The portion of the neighborhood north of Midway Parkway is ranked number 46; the area south of Midway Parkway is ranked 77th. If six projects are completed each year, the north area should be done in 2004 and the south area in 2009.

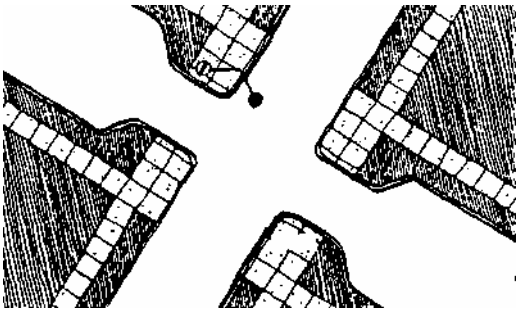
Timely, well designed public improvements are among the most effective tools the City has to influence the character, attractiveness, and private investment in a neighborhood. Street and lighting improvements can be especially effective in this neighborhood, which has great potential to compete better with suburban housing for middle income residents.

Recommendation 9

Complete residential street paving in a timely manner. The District 10 Council should review the current ranking of RSPP projects in the district with the Public Works Department to confirm or rearrange the schedule for work planned for 2002 and later. This work should be coordinated with improvements to Midway Parkway. In order to increase traffic and pedestrian safety, especially during the State Fair, residents and the City should strongly consider using the "choker" design for the standard 30 feet of no parking at intersections on all neighborhood streets. This narrowed intersection design (see Figure C, p. 20) improves sight distance for traffic safety, induces drivers to reduce their speed, and reduces pedestrian crossing distances. District 10 and area neighbors should also consult with Public Works on ways to enhance the green space islands in the public rights-of-way.

- Implementors: District 10 Como Community Council in consultation with the Department of Public Works

FIGURE C



Recommendation 10

The District 10 Council will work with area residents and businesses and the Department of Public Works and Division of Parks and Recreation to plan "gateway" treatments to the neighborhood along Snelling intersections at Como, Midway Parkway, and Hoyt. These treatments should include additional landscaping to buffer Snelling Avenue.

- Implementors: District 10 Council, private property owners, city departments as necessary

Traffic and Transit

Owing at least in part to its geographic centrality, the Midway Parkway-West Como Area is highly accessible from all directions. Snelling Avenue, the study area west boundary, is equidistant from the east city limits of Saint Paul and the west city limits of Minneapolis. However, transit service to Minneapolis is difficult, involving a major transfer at the western Saint Paul city limits.

With two major regional/statewide attractions (Como Park and the State Fair) at its boundaries, seasonal traffic and parking demands heavily impact the area. Thus the neighborhood's central location and high accessibility also beget some inconvenience.

Transit connections to the greater Metro area are available on Metro Transit Routes 4, 5, and 12. (See Map 4.)

North bound Routes 4B, 4D, and 4E enter the study area at Como and Snelling and traverse the neighborhood via Como, Pascal, Arlington, and Hamline to Hoyt. Weekday service along this route is quite frequent throughout the day and evening hours. Southbound services on Metro Transit Route 4 run the reverse route with a similar frequency. Route 4

buses make transfer point connections with the Route 12 buses at Hoyt and Hamline, and with Route 5 at Como Avenue.

All east and west bound Route 5 buses traverse the neighborhood on Como Avenue. Route 12 contact with the study area occurs at Hoyt and Hamline. Some Metro Transit buses ending their trips at or near this junction point travel through the neighborhood en route to the Snelling Garage.

Transit service for Como Park is also less than desirable. Options identified in a recent consultant report to improve service to the park include:

- realignment of Route 4 to the corner of Hamline and Midway Parkway;
- extension of some trips on Minneapolis Route 6 to Como Park; improved bus stops, perhaps including one or several bus shelters; and
- improved pedestrian facilities to link the bus stops with the park destinations.

Non-Metro Transit bus traffic is significant in the southern part of the study area where school buses enter and leave the motor pool at Snelling and Jessamine. Approximately 300 buses are maintained and operated from this facility. Typically, each bus will be used for two or more trips each day.

Recommendation 11

District 10 will investigate the effects of bus traffic in the neighborhood and address ways in which their impact can be mitigated. One possibility is to provide a neighborhood circulator for Energy Park, Saint Anthony Park, and Midway Parkway-West Como, with the Route 4 bus operating along Snelling Avenue. Recommendations will be coordinated with transit changes in Como Park. The task force's work should be completed before Residential Street Paving projects are programmed so that changes to bus routes can be accommodated.

- Implementor: District 10 Como Community Council in consultation with Metro Transit, bus users, and the Department of Public Works

Recommendation 12

Metro Transit, the City and the District 10 Como Community Council will explore options for improving the neighborhood's transit access to the University of Minnesota and downtown Minneapolis.

- Implementor: District 10 Como Community Council in consultation with Metro Transit, bus users, and the Department of Public Works

Bike ways

Bikeways can be an important part of the transit mix in the Midway Parkway-West Como neighborhood. The bikeways should be designed to accommodate commuters as well as recreational cyclists.

Recommendation 13

Priority bike routes to consider are:

1. Como Avenue (connect to U of M Transitway); 2. Hamline Avenue (includes bridge to Energy Park); 3. Snelling Avenue; 4. Hoyt Avenue (needs access through State Fairgrounds); 5. Midway Parkway (See Recommendation 7.)

- Implementors: City of Saint Paul Department of Public Works, Division of Parks and Recreation, and Bicycle Advisory Board

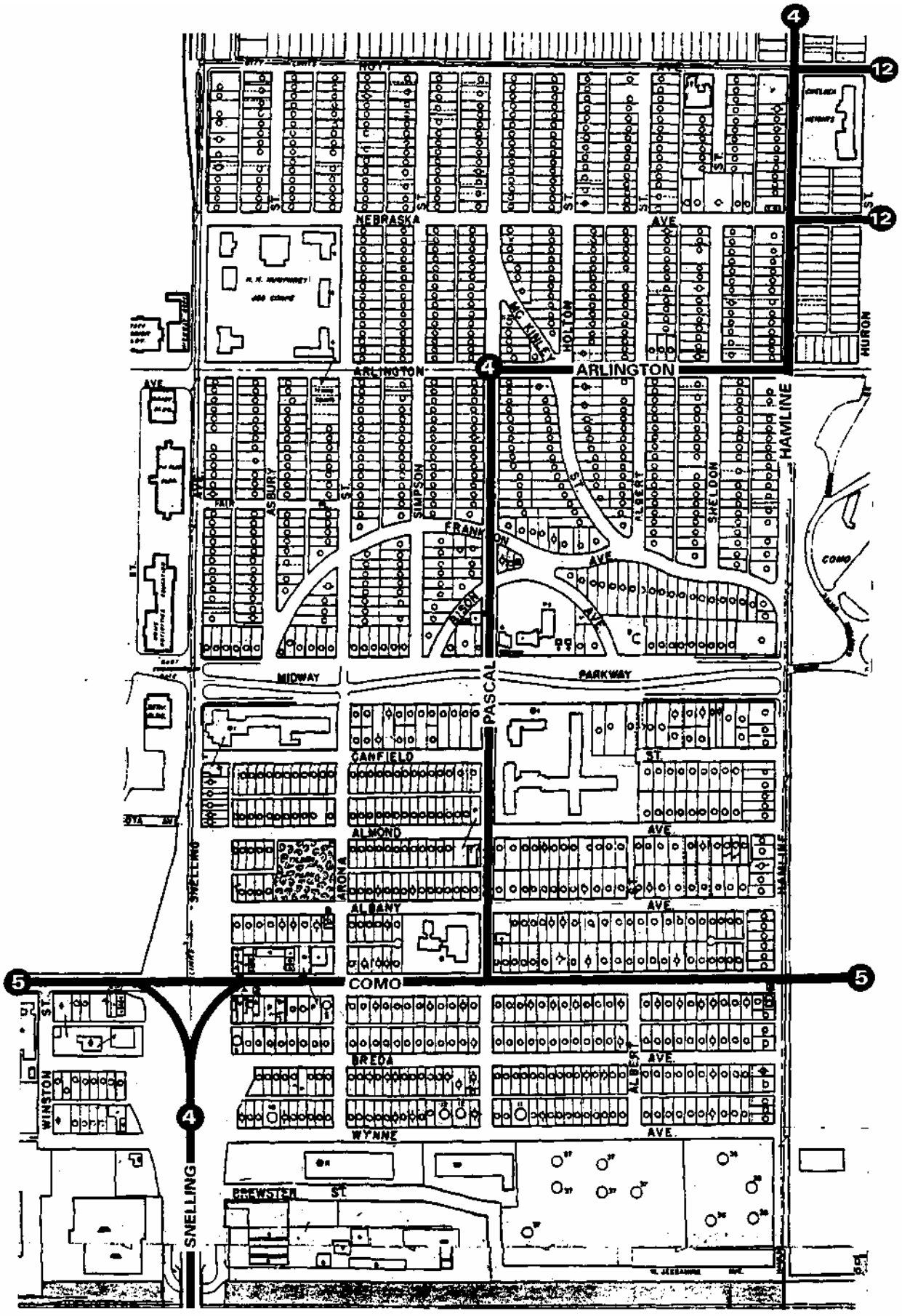
Strategy 5: Revitalize Commercial Property on Como; Emphasize Neighborhood Business Orientation

Background

Commercial properties are the smallest land use component of the Midway Parkway-West Como study area. A total of 2.4 acres of the study area are zoned for business, including two residential structures on the south side of Como Avenue. Since their existence predates the current zoning of this area, they are legal nonconforming uses. The remaining 2.1 acres of commercial land and about 1.5 acres of industrially-zoned land lying west of Snelling are occupied by commercial structures or uses.

Older commercial structures along Como Avenue date from the early 1900's when Como and Snelling Avenues were an intersection point for two street-car lines. The two story brick buildings at the northeast and southwest corners of the intersection, built prior to 1930, are reminiscent of that era. The Tom Thumb store on the south side of Como and the "L" shaped commercial structure on the north side of Como are typical of low cost, post-war, automobile-oriented commercial structures. The layouts of these buildings and sites marginally accommodate the automobile and largely ignore urban design. The grade separation of the Snelling-Como intersection removed about five block faces of developed property along Snelling Avenue. Much of the property consumed for the interchange was commercial property.

MAP 2: TRANSIT ROUTES



The commercial zoning classification for this area is B-3. (See Map 3.) This zoning classification reflects the history of the Como-Snelling intersection as a major commercial and transportation node; however, the grade separation of Snelling Avenue has changed the character of the intersection considerably. Residential uses are permitted on upper floors and one-half of the first floor area in all commercial zones.

While small, the remaining commercial area has some advantages:

- The area is highly visible from Snelling Avenue and is easily accessible with off and on ramps to and from Snelling in both directions.

- The area has good traffic volumes. In 1994, about 50,000 persons per day passed through this intersection. Average daily traffic on Snelling was just under 40,000 vehicles, and 8,000 vehicles use this section of Como Avenue on an average day.

- Properly arranged and designed, 30,000 to 35,000 square feet of commercial retail floor space could be supported on existing commercially zoned land, and a like amount could be supported on industrial lands that are partially occupied by commercial uses in the southwest quadrant of the Snelling - Como interchange.



Most commercial uses in the area, including all of those west of Snelling, are not "neighborhood-oriented". East of Snelling, only the Tom Thumb convenience store, the beauty salon, and perhaps Bascalli's restaurant are typical neighborhood businesses. The remaining "community-oriented" commercial uses must draw on a much larger area than the immediate neighborhood for survival. Although nearby residents may occasionally consume goods and services provided by these merchants, the greatest part of their business comes from outside the neighborhood. Significant commercial vacancy has been a continuing problem in this small commercial area.

The level of maintenance for commercial structures in the area is mixed. Aggressively-managed lease properties appear to be fully leased and show significant signs of recent investment in property maintenance. Similarly, properties owned and occupied by profitable business operations are maintained in good condition. In several instances,

problem commercial properties appear to be functionally obsolete, and/or in marginal physical condition, with significant evidence of deferred property maintenance. The lack of any unifying design theme among the collection of commercial structures at this intersection appears to have an adverse impact on the commercial vitality of the area.



Recommendation 14

Improve the aesthetics of the commercial area. Using a neighborhood STAR grant award, decorative, dual-lantern street lighting will be installed on Como Avenue, between Snelling Avenue and Arona Street, to distinguish the neighborhood commercial strip from the residential area to the east. Improvements such as trees, benches, trash receptacles, brick/exposed aggregate walkways and other improvements should be made to make the commercial area more pedestrian-friendly. Additional bus shelters should also be installed, as the intersection is a major bus transfer point.

- Implementors: Saint Paul Department of Public Works, Metro Transit, local businesses

Recommendation 15

Explore the development of a revolving loan fund to assist businesses in maintaining their property. When mutually beneficial, the District Council will work with appropriate organizations in other neighborhoods to design and implement programs such as this.

- Implementor: District 10 Como Community Council

Recommendation 16

Identify and actively recruit businesses and services appropriate to the needs of the neighborhood. Explore affiliating with an existing business

association or initiating a new business association for the commercial/industrial area at Como and Snelling.

- Implementor: District 10 Como Community Council

Strategy 6: Revitalize Industrial Property with Compatible New Development

Background

About 50 acres of the study area are zoned for industrial use. Slightly more than one acre of the 33 acres of industrially zoned land west of Snelling is used for eleven single-family dwellings and a residential structure that is presently operated as a place of business. Several community/regional commercial uses occupy the buildings on the south side of Como west of the West Snelling Service Drive. The remaining industrial land west of Snelling is occupied by a printing plant, two other small industrial operations, some contractor's yards and shops, a vacant office building, and some vacant land.

Approximately 16 acres of the industrial land lie to the east of Snelling. About ten acres of this are used for a school bus motor pool. The remaining area is occupied by a structure and parking facilities that were built for a sports & health club. Although this property has been periodically vacant, it is now occupied by Energy Park Studios, a film making studio.

Reuse of some industrial property in the study area is likely to be difficult, since the individual ownerships are too small for many industrial users and some existing structures were designed for specific uses that may limit their reuse potential. Several such structures are currently vacant and available. Acquisition, relocation, and demolition costs, added to the cost of replacement housing required under current redevelopment regulations, may make the public redevelopment of residentially used industrial land prohibitive. However, the current industrial zoning west of Snelling is generally appropriate and does not require change. The existing residential structures are well-maintained and have been enhanced by the street paving done in conjunction with sewer separation in the area. Industrial uses that may wish to locate in this area should be consistent with light, clean industrial uses.

Recommendation 17

The District 10 Council should work with the city's economic development agencies to make better use of this underutilized area, marketing this area to potential users, while avoiding the use of public funds that would require expensive relocation costs. The partners will

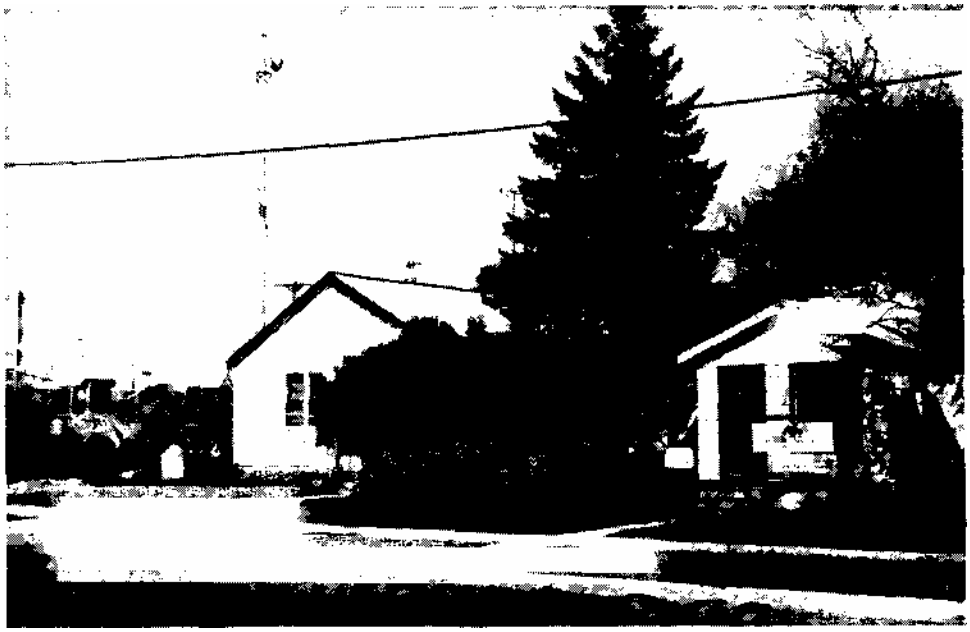
identify and actively recruit compatible light industrial development, particularly "green" uses, to industrially-zoned property in the area.

- Implementors: Saint Paul Port Authority and PED Business Resource Center

Recommendation 18

Industrially zoned land on the east side of Snelling is consistent with the uses there now. This site may be ideal for higher density commercial/industrial projects, if and when the bus motor pool is discontinued.

- Implementors: Saint Paul Port Authority and PED Business Resource Center



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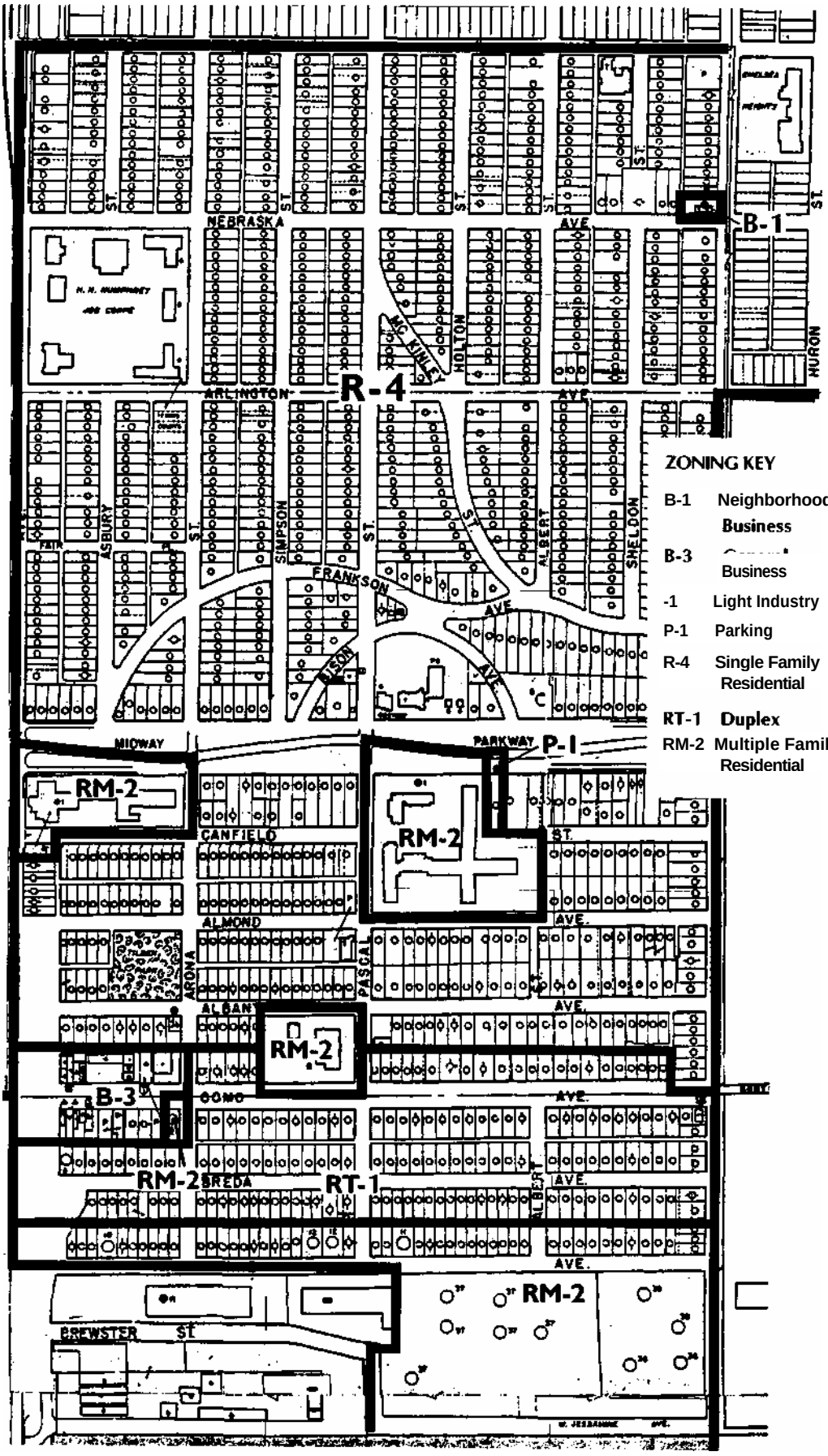
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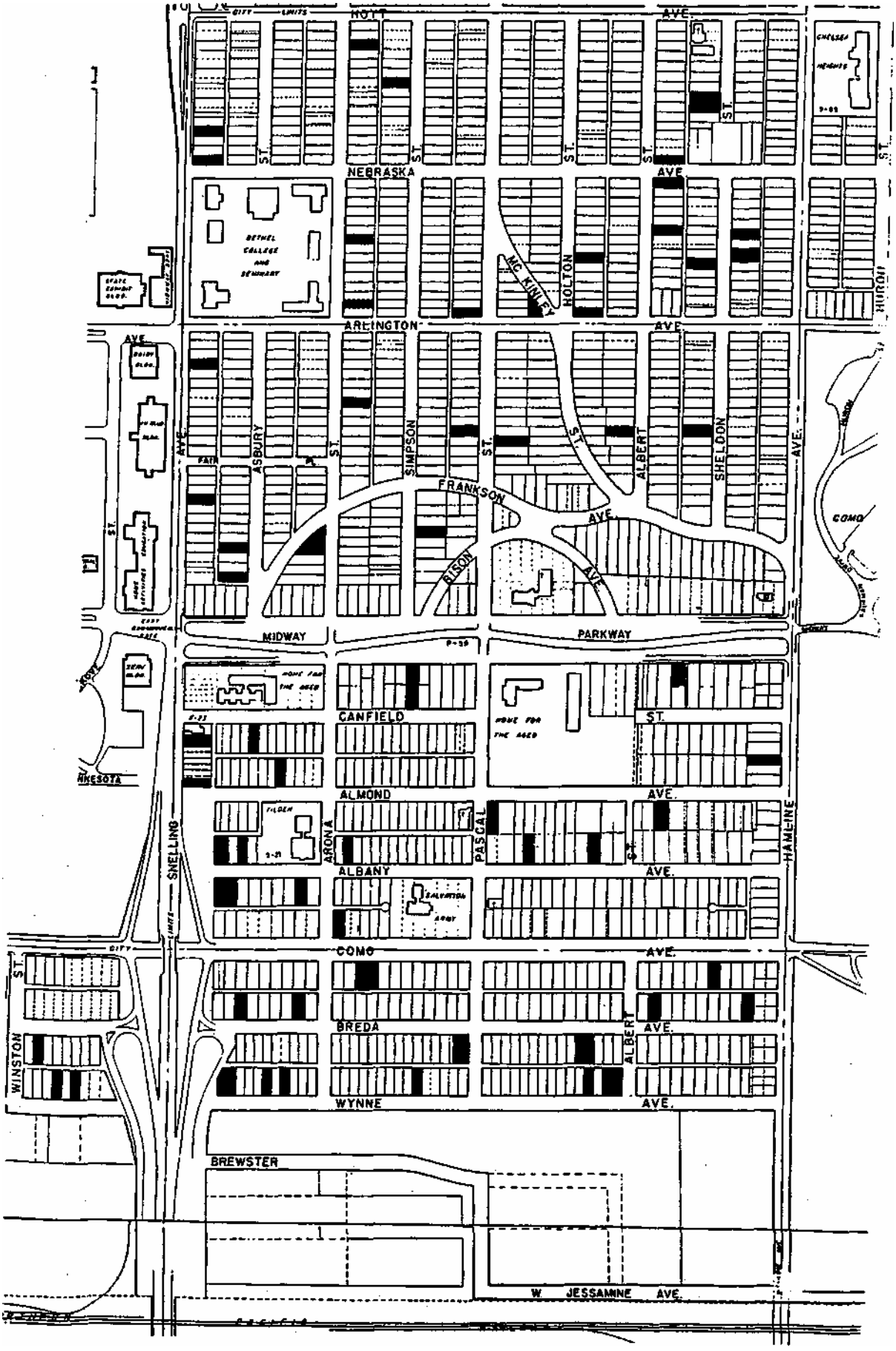
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MAP 4: NON-HOMESTEAD PROPERTY



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