

CHAPTER EIGHT: SPECIAL PLACES

The nurturing, expansion, and celebration of places and spaces that make Brookfield unique and fulfilling are key components of the City’s vision and approach for community development. “Special places” include parks, natural areas, historic places, entertainment venues, and a host of other publicly and privately operated venues.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the City’s approach to developing and enhancing “special places” in Brookfield. It focuses particularly on future approaches to Targeted Investment Areas (TIAs)—key centers of activity and gathering in the community. The chapter also puts forth the City’s strategy towards the preservation of historic places and buildings, which help define Brookfield’s culture and identity.

There is a close relationship between this chapter and others in the Plan, particularly Chapter Two: Land Use and Chapter Five: Natural Resources and Recreation. Parks and natural areas are clearly special places to Brookfield residents; their relative absence from discussion in Chapter Eight should not be viewed as anything but an effort to avoid repetition.

While the idea for TIAs originated with the 2020 Master Plan, and there was a somewhat related chapter on culture in that earlier plan, there was no chapter specifically devoted to identifying and cultivating special places in the community. Further, unlike this Comprehensive Plan, the 2020 Master Plan did not address historic preservation in a detailed manner.

Special Places Principle (Goal)

Brookfield celebrates its vibrant civic district; memorable gathering places such as the Wilson Center; and its unique heritage and places such as the Ruby Farms homestead.

Special Places Objectives

1. Support a variety of family-friendly cultural events, places, and learning opportunities for residents and visitors.
2. Position TIAs as special places within the community, through a combination of public and private investments and venues designed to create unique experiences.
3. Support the preservation and context of City’s finest historic places, after careful evaluation of the inventory of historic resources consideration of each site utilizing the 2008 inventory of historic structures.
4. Support those special places which particularly exhibit or embrace Brookfield’s character as a “Garden City.”

Special Places Policies

1. Continue to encourage and focus redevelopment and new activity within TIAs to support continued economic, fiscal, and community vitality.
2. Make and support urban design enhancements in TIAs through infrastructure improvements and streetscaping investments, such as street trees and decorative high-efficiency street lights.

3. Encourage development of existing and new cultural venues to create more options for Brookfield residents and visitors to learn, play in, and experience the community, such as a botanical garden.
4. Further enhance and brand Brookfield as a “Garden City,” building on public and private investments in landscaping and the greenway system.
5. Implement the City’s park and greenway trail plans, and incorporate features within such plans aimed to establish unique experiences and identities through the City’s park and greenway network.
6. Take a supportive approach to historic preservation including educational and persuasive (not coercive) efforts, and at all times supporting the rights of property owners.



Events like the Brookfield Farmers’ Market provide unique places to gather and emphasize Brookfield’s image as a “garden city”

Special Places Programs and Initiatives

The City intends to pursue the following initiatives in support of its vision for special places:

Pursue Refinements and Implementation of Existing TIA Plans

Based on the advice in the City’s 2020 Master Plan, the City has prepared plans for nine of the ten existing TIAs. To ensure that these plans remain useful guiding documents and the City’s 2035 Vision can be realized, the City intends to consider the following refinements to plans (and their implementation) for certain existing TIAs over the next ten years. The TIAs are depicted on Figure 6, at the end of the Vision chapter of this Plan and Figure 11 at the end of this Chapter provides a summary of each TIA.

Northwest Gateway TIA

The plan for this area was recently adopted, but plan changes are needed at this time. The City intends to position the Northwest Gateway as a sustainable business/industrial park, focused on attracting technology- and innovation-based businesses. This was not included in the adopted plan. To create an attractive environment for the desired range of businesses, the City may also explore approaches to providing power supplies that are redundant and that minimize “spikes” in power output (e.g., on-site energy generators) and to support the latest technologies in high-speed telecommunications (e.g., T-1 internet service). Further development in the Northwest Gateway area should also lead in stormwater infiltration and environmental sensitivity, especially given the location of this TIA along the Fox River. The City may consider creating a new tax increment financing (TIF) district around this area, and using TIF funding to extend infrastructure and build in sustainable components.

Village Area TIA

The advancement of high-speed, intercity rail plans (see Chapter Nine: Transportation), the range of opportunities rail service may create, and the relatively general nature of the existing Village Area plan suggest a need to update that plan. Particularly if rail plans advance to implementation, the City will prioritize update of the Village Area plan, in order to:

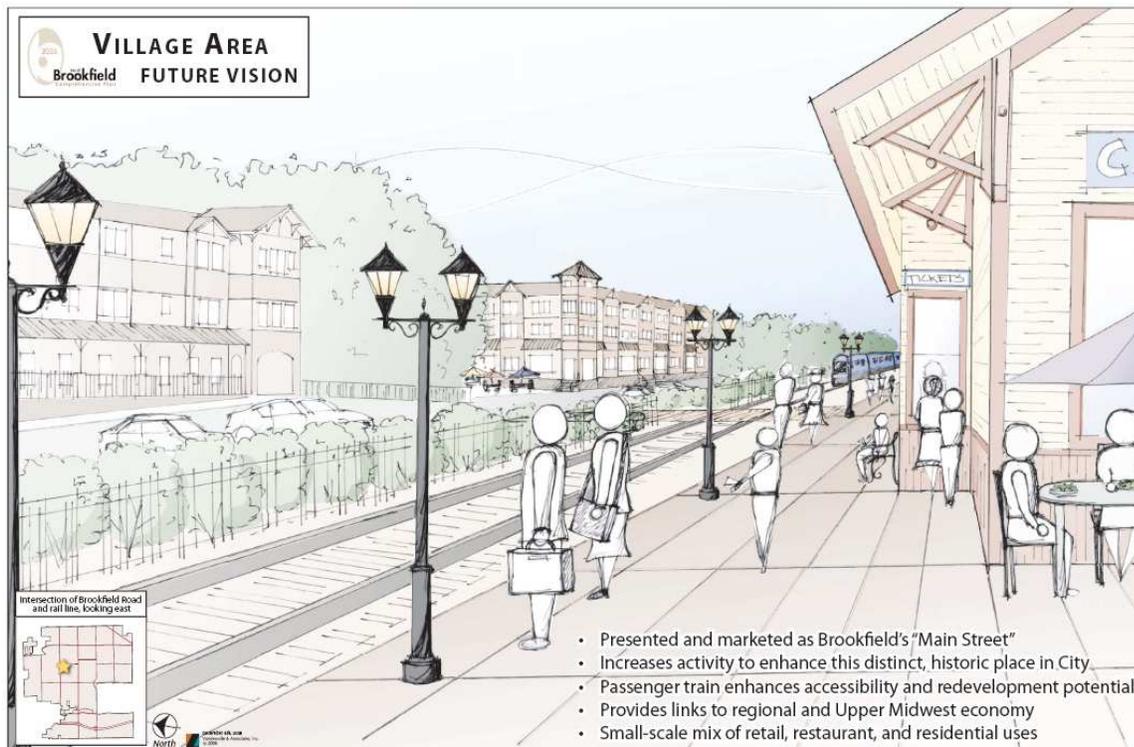
- Identify what types of services rail users might require (car rental? gas station?), and whether there is land to accommodate these uses in the vicinity;
- Explore the opportunity for “satellite” small-scale offices for larger corporations in other metro areas;
- Plan for a multi-modal transportation node, including a trailhead and formal or informal transit service to other business districts in the City;
- Identify economic development benefits and unique infrastructure needs associated with the rail initiative;
- Prepare a cost-benefit analysis of different redevelopment scenarios, including those with a particular emphasis on energy-efficiency and environmental sensitivity;
- Evaluate the significance of historic buildings that have commercial zoning and attempt to balance redevelopment and preservation objectives, given that the Village Area contains the largest single collection of older buildings in the City;
- Explore whether existing activities could also occur within the Village Area (e.g., extension of 4th of July parade route) or a new event should be promoted there, as a way to increase its profile and use in the community;
- Identify supplemental funding sources for public improvements, rail station operation and maintenance, and and/or private development incentives;
- Identify the relationships between future investment in this TIA and recent and planned investments in the nearby Northwest Gateway and Brookfield-Capitol TIAs, as well as the nearby Brookfield Academy;
- Evaluate the impacts of new development and activity in this TIA on Brookfield Road and other infrastructure and neighborhoods in this vicinity;
- Consider the feasibility of a TIF district in this area, perhaps in combination with a new district for the Northwest Gateway area. There may be opportunities for a single TIF district covering both areas, or two separate districts with key relationships, including a donor/recipient relationship if warranted; and
- Consider if the Village Business District zoning district needs to be refined into some type of transit oriented development (TOD) zoning district, or whether a TOD development pattern option should be with the Modified Suburban Overlay District, particularly regarding parking



The railroad and former depot in the Village in Brookfield

supply requirements. TOD is a development form that emphasizes concentrated activity that supports and facilitates transit ridership. Development generally includes multi-use buildings in a compact, mixed-use development setting. Land uses usually are complementary to the nearby transit stop and its daily flow of travelers, often including a transit station; parking; well-aligned retail, commercial, and public services; multi-family housing; and employment opportunities.

The update of the Village Area plan would become a lower priority if the high-speed rail initiative is not approved for implementation by state and federal governments.



A conceptual drawing of the future high speed passenger rail stop in the Village

Calhoun Road South TIA

The Calhoun Road South Neighborhood Plan, adopted in 2001, remains a relevant guide for this TIA and is consistent with the City's 2035 Vision. To address the redevelopment recommendations in this Neighborhood Plan, the City will consider establishing a new Transit Oriented Development (TOD) zoning district, or a TOD development pattern option for the Modified Suburban Overlay District, and implementing that zoning district or tools in at least parts of the Brookfield Square/Executive Drive area which is a subarea of the overall TIA plan (TOD is defined earlier in this Chapter).

Based on Task Force evaluation and suggestions made during the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, the City will also analyze, as a longer-term option, the potential for increases in density and building height allowances on lands in this TIA that are near the Moorland/I-94 interchange, beyond those densities/heights advised in the currently-adopted Neighborhood Plan (as of December 2009). The area where such density and building height increases may be considered would be limited to lands closest to the Moorland/I-94 interchange, generally south of the Brookfield Square Mall (but including the Sears parcel) and east of a line extending south along the

west property line of the Mall to the Interstate 94 right-of-way. Such analysis will need to consider how possible higher densities in this area might relate to traffic volumes, road and utility capacities, and recent investments by area businesses, such as Brookfield Square Mall and the Sheraton Hotel. The Task Force discussion regarding this recommendation is summarized on page 40 of the Phase I Community Vision Report, adopted December 16, 2008.

Civic Center TIA

This TIA is the geographic and civic heart of the community. The City intends to collaborate with the School District of Elmbrook and others explore strategies to increase community activity in this area, potentially including:

- Opening the Brookfield Central High School gym for additional community recreational use;
- Expanding civic events, including a possible expansion of the successful Farmers' Market earlier and/or later in the year (i.e., indoor market);
- Identifying if, how, and when public building expansions could take place;
- Considering additional public art displays and/or demonstrations of community sustainability (e.g., rain garden);
- Extending a new public road—Oak Grove Road—from the medical clinic area along North Avenue (near Brook Springs Drive) south into the heart of the public spaces of the Civic Center;
- As a need-based and longer-term option, reconfiguring the public Civic Center buildings and space to 2 to 4 story buildings and possible infill with additional public or private buildings, in order to create a more sustainable center, maximize use of space, and possibly create additional private investment opportunities where none exist today.

Lilly Road and Capitol Drive TIA

The plan for this small TIA is sound and current. The City will, however, need to determine appropriate future uses for the old fire station site; it could potentially be combined in a mixed use development concept already envisioned for the site to the north that fronts onto Capitol Drive.

Launch New TIA Initiative for the North 124th Street Corridor

The planning process revealed a need to continue and expand focus along the North 124th Street corridor for a number of reasons. First, the City has yet to complete a node/neighborhood plan for the “Phase 3” planning area of this TIA—the last of the original TIA plans to be completed. Second, Wauwatosa has an assertive redevelopment vision east of North 124th Street, and coordination between the two cities is timely and desirable to maximize value on both sides of the road. Third, Brookfield policy makers identified a need for new attention to redevelopment potential near the intersections of Burleigh Road and North 124th Street and of North Avenue and North 124th Street.

As a result, the City intends to direct new attention to the North 124th Street corridor, between the northern City limits and North Avenue. This initiative ideally would be accomplished through a new intergovernmental planning and implementation effort. Besides the City of Wauwatosa, the City of West Allis, the Villages of Butler and Elm Grove, and the two counties could be invited to participate.

The several regional destinations that influence the corridor, including the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center and Mayfair Mall, will need to be considered in this study. Additionally, it will be important to consider the traffic impacts of new development and redevelopment, particularly given

the fact that 124th Street does not extend all the way south to Bluemound Road and Greenfield Avenue at the present time.

The planning context and preliminary opportunities for this section of the North 124th Street corridor are illustrated in Figure 10 and briefly described as follows:

- **Adopted 124th Street & Capitol Drive Neighborhood Plan Area:** This area is envisioned as a “Home Gallery District” with regionally-scaled retail and industrial uses that will complement the larger scale developments in the City of Wauwatosa on the other side of North 124th Street. This could be revisited as the market place found this concept not practical due to land costs. The City encourages higher quality design and building materials, building on the modern industrial character of the Northeast Industrial Area.
- **Adopted 124th Street & Lisbon Road Neighborhood Plan Area:** In recent years, the City concluded that existing property values are too stable and approaching standard commercial market values, making it unaffordable to create public incentives for private sector redevelopment. Therefore, the City moved towards improving infrastructure in this area, particularly road design and alignments. The City will continue to work to reconcile potential road improvements to pre-existing site design issues, mainly building orientations and setbacks.
- **Innovation Cluster - Small Business Incubator/Accelerator:** This area, as illustrated on Figure 10, largely overlaps with the adopted 124th Street & Lisbon Road Neighborhood Plan Area. It contains innovation-based companies like Milwaukee Tool; modern incubator space in the Gateway East buildings; and older, affordable spaces for business start-up and acceleration. The City increasingly recognizes the value to the community in having some lower cost industrial “incubator” space in the community, which will influence any decision to reconsider its earlier direction not to promote extensive redevelopment of area.
- **Phase 3 124th-Capitol Planning Area:** As represented in Figure 10, these are actually two distinct geographic areas that have yet to be “planned for” in the existing 124th-Capitol Planning Area. The northern Phase 3 area is anchored by Milwaukee Tool and some commercial development of more recent vintage along the North Side of Capitol Drive. Opportunities and desire for change in this area may be somewhat limited. The southern Phase 3 area contains over 50 separate principal buildings in mainly industrial use. This area should be evaluated for infrastructure and appearance enhancements, particularly along North 124th Street. Large-scale redevelopment would be financially challenging and of questionable desirability, as this area provides affordable opportunities for small business development and properties seem to be stable and not of significant decline.
- **Burleigh Road Mixed Use Redevelopment Analysis Area:** This area includes properties with frontage on, or which are visible from, Burleigh Road. Per Wauwatosa’s comprehensive plan, much of this proposed analysis area extends into Wauwatosa. Brookfield’s greatest redevelopment opportunities appear to be in the southwest quadrant of the intersection. Still, site assembly will be a challenge in this area given the small lots under individual ownership. As part of a new TIA plan, the City would intend to conduct a cost/benefit analysis of development options for this Burleigh Road area.
- **North Avenue Mixed Use Redevelopment Analysis Area:** This small area is located at the southern edge of the proposed new or expanded North 124th Street TIA. Again, the southwest quadrant of this intersection appears to present the greatest opportunity for redevelopment, and again site assembly will be a challenge. Developments at three of the four corners of the intersection are in fair to poor condition, creating a low-quality community entryway experience

for all three communities (City of Brookfield, City of Wauwatosa, and the Village of Elm Grove). The City would intend to conduct a cost/benefit analysis of development options for this North Avenue area.

- **Existing Activity Center:** This area of existing new and/or viable uses and buildings includes the Elmbrook Plaza shopping center and the YMCA in Wauwatosa. It could act as a possible model for other redevelopment in the North Avenue Mixed Use Redevelopment Opportunity Area.
- **Neighborhood Investment Opportunity Area:** Nearby neighborhoods west of this corridor where purposefully included in this proposed TIA as areas the City wants to analyze in order to identify strategies that will protect and enhance its single family characteristics. See the related initiative in Chapter Three: Housing and Neighborhoods for potential approaches. The City could collaborate on these approaches with Wauwatosa for the neighborhoods east of 124th Street in this vicinity.
- **North 124th Street Corridor:** The overall appearance of the 124th Street corridor is good, particularly for a street acting as the dividing line between two cities and two counties. Still, the City would work with Wauwatosa and area property owners to enhance the look and feel of the streetscape. Gateway features at key intersections, improved pedestrian crossings, and completion of the sidewalk system on both sides of the street for its full length are possible projects. The City plans to install sidewalks from Burleigh Road to North Avenue in 2012 as part of the 5 year Capital Improvements Program.

Establish a Systematic Approach for Aging Retail Areas

Over the past several years, the City has proactively prepared plans for the TIAs and continues to implement them. However, some areas are more challenging than others. Of particular challenge is how to address sites that contain aging retail centers (i.e., older “strip malls” and similar uses). At the national level, there are significant shifts in the retail and commercial service marketplace, including shifting retail activity to mixed use settings focused on creating “experiences,” in part to compete on a different level with on-line retailers. These phenomena often lead to vacancies and disinvestment (due in part to lower rents) in the older retail centers first.

These circumstances sometimes suggest the need for redevelopment—in other words, removing the existing building(s) and constructing new ones. Other times, reinvestment in the existing building(s) seems more appropriate. Further, when redevelopment seems the appropriate course, the economics of redevelopment often lead to a private interest in seeking public financing support, usually via TIF, as a means to close funding gaps.



Strip development along 124th Street

The City will use the following questions to determine whether rehabilitation or redevelopment more closely aligns with its overall vision, as practiced either as part of cost/benefit analyses of development options in TIAs, or when individual development proposals are brought forward. The City has the responsibility to be reasonable in the application of this recommendation by taking input seriously from developers and property owners regarding market viability and financing conditions of implementing this analysis.



Vacant development along 124th Street

- How large is the site? If relatively small, shallow, or narrow, how likely could the site be combined with adjacent sites for a larger (and usually more economically viable) redevelopment proposal?
- What are the reasonable reuse expectations if redevelopment were pursued? For example, if the site is on a busy street, is a mixed use development incorporating housing viable or not?
- Would the project meet the City's vision, comprehensive plan standards, and ordinance requirements without the need for significant flexibility in zoning standards?
- What is the current condition and occupancy of property? What would it take to bring the existing building(s) and site up to community standards rather than tearing down and starting over?
- Is the building(s) or site historically or architecturally significant? If so, is redevelopment acceptable or is remodeling sensitive to this significance? Sometimes there will be conflicting values and a historic site of building, if zoned commercial, may need to be relocated or other sensitively addressed in order to achieve other goals such as accruing a critical mass of development characterizing a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) District.
- What is the impact of the proposed approach on adjacent properties and the actual or predicted reaction of neighbors?
- Is the project seeking public assistance (e.g., through TIF), and what would be the City's risk and payback period if assistance were offered (assumes a TIF district exists in area)?



"EDGE CITY" EXAMPLES

How have other Edge Cities worked to transition aging commercial, office, and industrial areas?

Southfield, MI (population 71,895) is certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC). RRCs are generally defined as cities with a significant pool of redevelopment sites that are ready to follow RRC Best Practices to engage in an efficient and predictable redevelopment process.

Lakewood, CO (population 143,157) formed the Lakewood Reinvestment Authority, which encourages private reinvestment within targeted areas of Lakewood to enhance, preserve, and restore the City's vitality and quality of life.

Bloomington, MN (population 82,521) prioritizes redevelopment based on a variety of factors including, level of blight, bang for the buck, level of impact on surrounding uses, level of visibility, and the ability to spur further privately financed redevelopment. Bloomington is currently developing extensive district plans to create a clear vision for three distinct mixed use areas. These plans will help to determine what capital improvements are needed to accommodate future growth, establish a financing mechanism and schedule to ensure the improvements are made in a coordinated fashion, and ensure that the City's regulatory tools support the vision.

Clayton, MO (population 16,088) as a completely built-out community, redevelopment of key sites has been a priority. Establishment of Transit Development Districts (TDD) and Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NID) have prompted strategic redevelopment in the City. As a result, Clayton has had continued success in recruiting businesses to the community. Until recently, Clayton has not had to provide incentives for redevelopment due to its central location in the St. Louis Metro area, transportation access, and high quality of life; however, due to the current national economic climate, the City is exploring options for development incentives, including TIF.

Work to Establish a Unique “Brookfield Experience”

The City intends to further distinguish Brookfield as a unique place in the region and among “edge cities.” The following strategies, based on the City’s high quality built environment and cultural and identity enhancements, may be pursued:

- Consider branding/marketing Brookfield as a “Garden City,” building off the City’s abundant “green” characteristics including public and private landscaping and the greenway network. For example, the City will continue to incorporate generous landscaping in private developments and public projects (e.g., boulevards) as a signature characteristic.
- Work to establish a unique identity for each of the TIAs and each interested neighborhood. See Figure 11 at the end of this Chapter and Chapter Three: Housing and Neighborhoods for additional ideas.
- Support additional “third places”—formal and informal, public and private opportunities for interaction—focusing on those identified most frequently in the community survey. These included natural gathering spots such as a botanical garden (which was strongly supported by participants in the planning process) and informal entertainment venues, such as places for indoor live music (e.g., jazz club).
- Support locally owned businesses through City efforts to assist local small business development, including help in negotiating the development approval process, business management training, and location assistance.
- Coordinate on a unique, business-sponsored event, such as the Chamber’s “Shop Local Campaign” to supplement existing community events.
- Promote awareness of community events through the City’s website, local media, and a community calendar.
- Encourage public art installations in TIAs, particularly in the Civic Center TIA, and identity enhancements in the greenway network (see Natural Resources and Recreation chapter).



Examples of public and private landscaping design that contributes to Brookfield’s image as a “garden city”



Outdoor dining options on Bluemound Road provide “third places” for residents to gather

Support Historic Preservation

Recognizing the importance of its historic sites and buildings, the Common Council specifically directed community planners to craft an acceptable and effective approach for historic preservation in Brookfield. Before completion of this Plan, the City's historic preservation decisions were typically made in an ad hoc manner, without reference to an overall vision or approach.

In general, the City intends to take a supportive approach to historic preservation including educational and persuasive (not coercive) efforts, and at all times supporting the rights of property owners. The following efforts will be considered to carry out this overall approach:

- Develop an annotated map of historic sites/buildings listed on the City's 2008 Historic Inventory Update, as a means to increase awareness of the locations and significance of this resource in the community.
- Develop a "Know your House" program to educate citizens about the history of their homes. Notify property owners of buildings listed on the City's Historic Inventory of the significance of their structures, technical resources available to them to preserve or restore their building's historic significance, and opportunities to mark their properties if they so choose.
- Work with the Elmbrook Historical Society on efforts to continue its activities and celebrate the presence of historic properties in the City, potentially including a voluntary historic property marker system.
- Consider the design and installation of interpretative signs that would celebrate the City's geologic, natural, and built history along the City's greenway trail network (see more complete description of this potential initiative in the Natural Resources and Recreation chapter).
- Ensure that Community Development Department staff have, obtain, or refer interested parties to those with the appropriate expertise to provide professional advice on the restoration or preservation of historic structures.
- In interactions with property owners and developers, encourage the adaptive use and renovation of historic buildings wherever practical.
- Consider incentives as a means to secure the preservation of historic buildings elsewhere on the site and to retain some measure of their historic context (e.g., the density bonus offered to the developer of Ruby Farms by the City in order to retain Ruby Farm buildings).



The Dousman Stagecoach Inn Museum is the only building in Brookfield on the National Register of Historic Places

- Include a historic analysis and recommendations regarding historic preservation in all applicable new and updated node/neighborhood plans for TIAs.
- Specifically, as part of the recommended effort to update the node/neighborhood plan for the Village Area TIA, consider whether some measures of protection of the modest collection of historic buildings in this area would be appropriate and identify how preservation and



The historic train depot in the Village area provides reference to the City's past and possible future rail heritage

- redevelopment objectives in this area can be reconciled. Sometimes there will be conflicting values and a historic site of building, if zoned commercial, may need to be relocated or other sensitively addressed in order to achieve other goals such as accruing a critical mass of development characterizing a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) District.
- Consider enactment of a zoning approach that would assign future protections to properties listed on the City's Historic Inventory, and map that district only where mutually agreed by both the property owner and the City. Sometimes there will be conflicting values and a historic building, if zoned commercial, may need to be relocated or other sensitively addressed.
- As a next step towards interpreting the significance and developing approaches for the properties listed on the Historic Inventory, work with the Elmbrook Historical Society, State of Wisconsin Historical Society, property owners, and members of the interested public on a historic resources management plan. That plan may identify a handful of the most significant buildings and sites for preservation prioritization (e.g., potential listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places) and those properties that are most at-risk for demolition, developing unique approaches for each property.

Figure 10: 124th Street Corridor Context and Preliminary Opportunities

Figure 11: A Summary of Targeted Investment Areas