

# E 38th Street

*Urban Design Assessment*



*“New programs for design emerge when design practice shifts its attention from formally solving perceived problems to identifying actions that support expressions of social life. These programs reveal and celebrate the new forms of urbanity emerging out of today’s political economy and its culture. Instead of mourning a lost urbanity, metropolitan urbanism opens up new territories for design consideration. It stakes out new methods of working and identifies new clients.”*

*Jacqueline Tatom  
Programs for Metropolitan Urbanism*

## Introduction

An *Urban Design Assessment* is an evaluation and inventory of the the urban fabric with special consideration of the public realm. The purpose of the Urban Design Assessment is to provide an analysis of existing site conditions within an identified boundary. It functions to identify and clarify assets and opportunities within a neighborhood. An Urban Design Assessment evaluates past plans and recommendations, surveys existing street use, function and programming, reviews existing building/structure character and relationships, identifies and depicts issues and concerns through mapping, modeling, and documentation, and provides an overview of existing land uses. The document functions to support future planning activities, provide a platform for coordination, and may identify development opportunities or issues.

The urban design assessment follows the proposed principles in the evaluation of the E. 38th Street corridor between Nicollet Ave S and Chicago Ave S. It evaluates corridor “livability,” access, connectivity, quality, identity, and equity. These principles support the assessment process while providing a platform for achieving short and medium term results. The UDA prioritizes the experience of people on the street and aims to enhance the experience of the user.

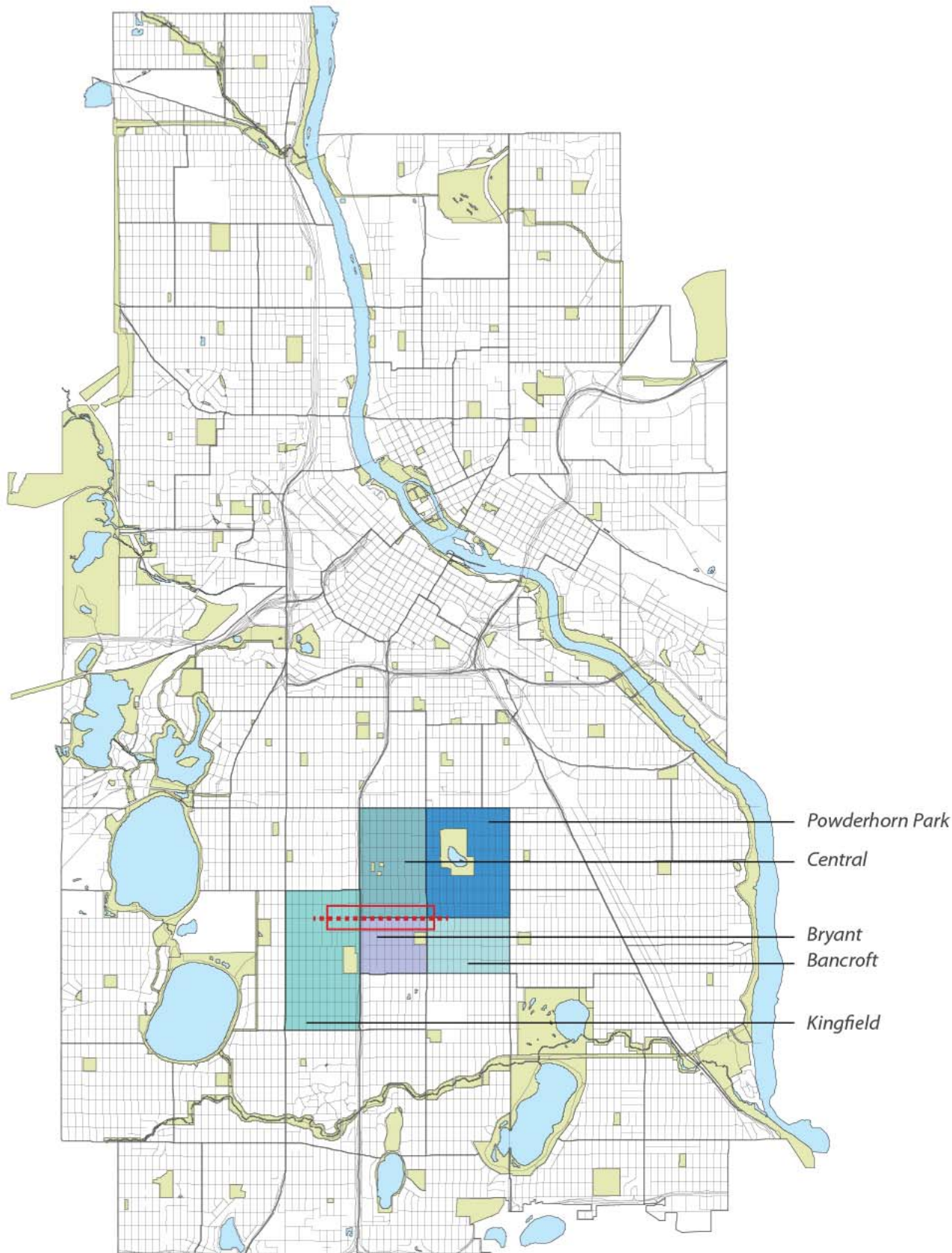
The E. 38th Street Urban Design Assessment is a cooperative process with Ward 8, Council Member Elizabeth Glidden, Minneapolis CPED and Public Works. The UDA is an assessment tool that will guide

and catalyse project visioning and implementation in the short and mid-term. The UDA is informed by prior planning initiatives, historic context and character, and existing site conditions. It is an important tool for identifying gaps and opportunities to improve the E. 38th street community corridor and connecting it to the larger network of amenities and assets in the city.

This study builds on and expands from the 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Small Area / Corridor Framework Plan adopted in 2008.

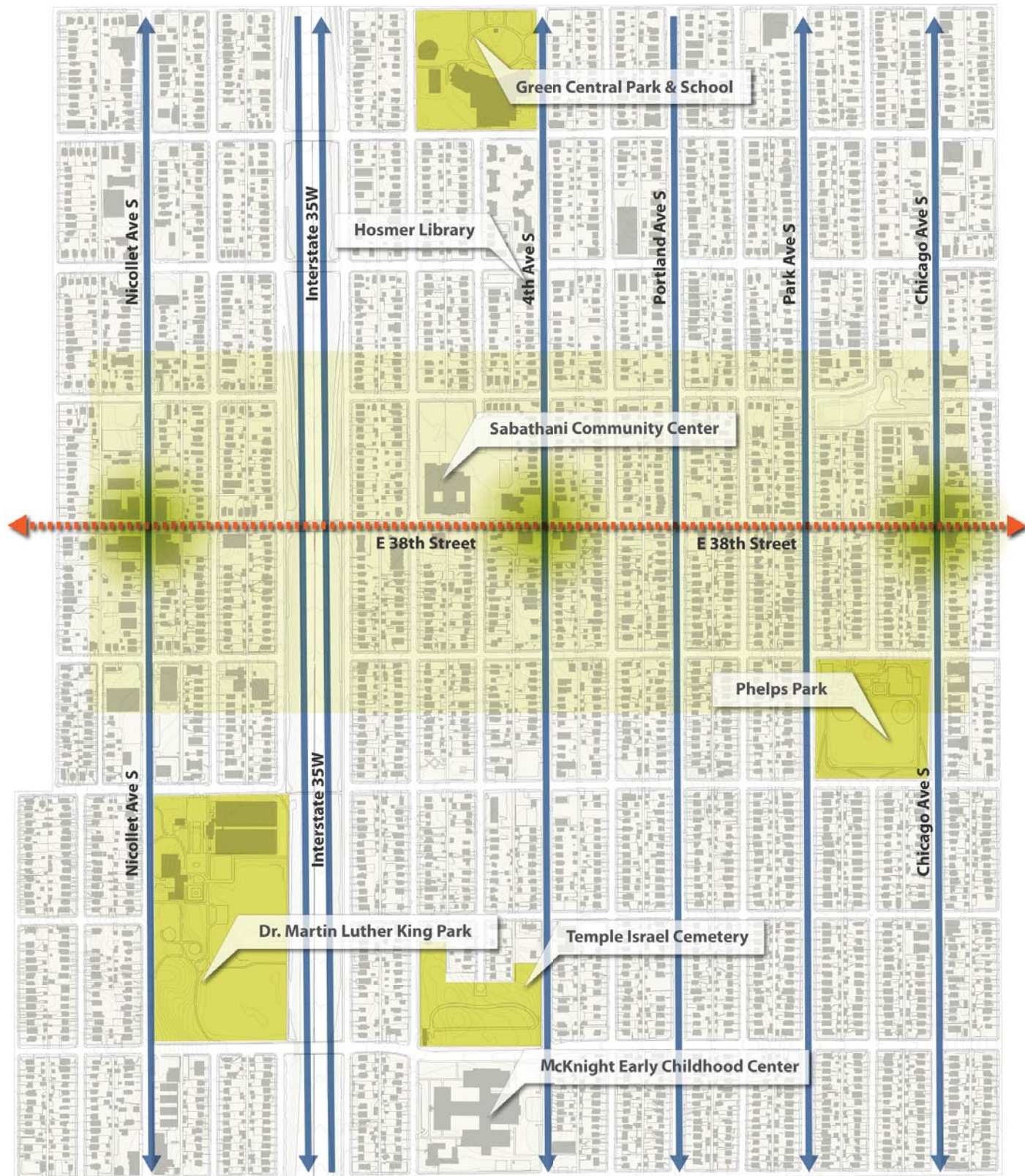
### Goals

- *Make the project area a more inviting place by fostering a sense of place and community.*
- *Improve the pedestrian orientation of our community and increase walkability*
- *Identify and evaluate potential development patterns and their impact on the public realm*
- *Improve economic vitality and quality of life*
- *Provide a tool for future policy making and neighborhood enhancement*



Study Area Neighborhood Context





Study Area



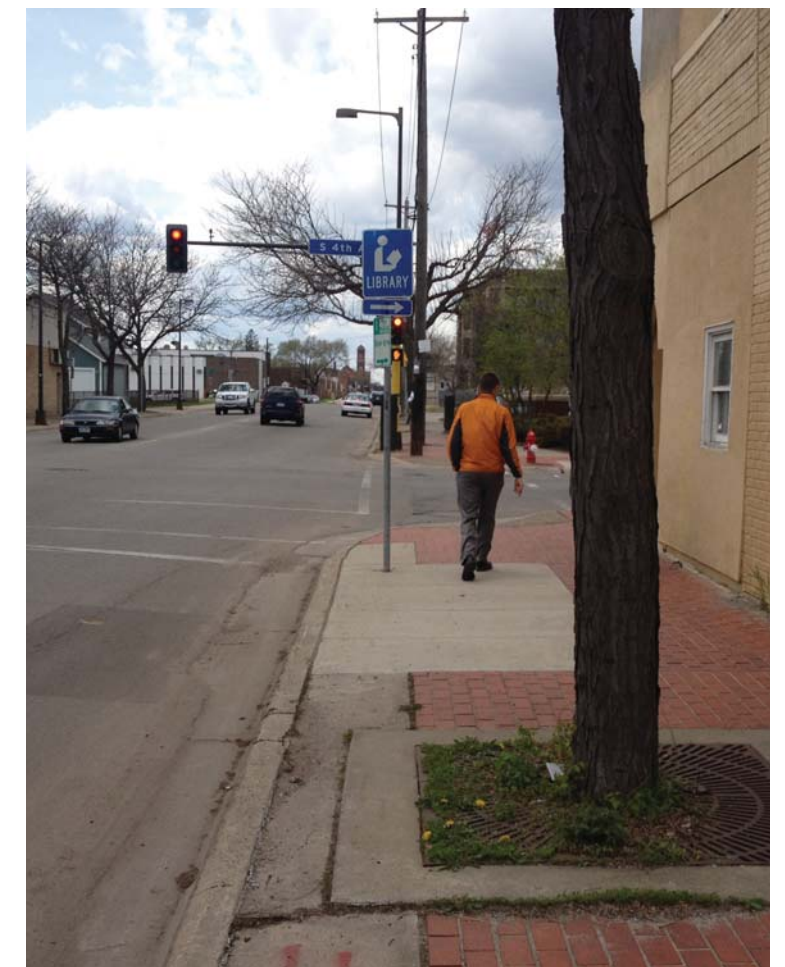
E 38th St and Nicollet Ave, The Aliveness Project

## Context

38th St has seen a lot of activity in recent years. Development, particularly at the Nicollet Avenue intersection, has been transforming many previously vacant storefronts into active small businesses including many new restaurants and shops attracting higher volumes of pedestrian traffic. Nicollet Ave was recently reconstructed making for a much more pedestrian friendly public realm on the west end of the corridor. East of 35W, the public infrastructure is in need of investment.

The Seward Coop has recently purchased and made plans for a second grocery store on the site of the Greater Baptist Missionary Church at 3rd Ave and E38th. This development promises to bring a significant increase in activity around the 4th Ave and 5th Ave intersections of 38th as well as on the interstate bridge. As other property owners contemplate development opportunities, these changes are likely to spur higher density housing and mixed use development along 38th.

The study area provides a unique cross-section of demographic groups and neighborhoods in the city spanning the significant divide of 35W and serving as a major East-West thoroughfare for the area.



E 38th Street at 4th Ave S



## Historic Context

The settlement of the “Southside” of Minneapolis began to take shape in the 1880’s. By 1880, heavy settlement had extended to Lake Street, with scattered homes as far as 34th Street. The area around East 38th Street was incorporated into the City of Minneapolis between 1883 and 1887.

During the same time, the largest wave of European Immigrants arrived into Minneapolis. In 1890, Minneapolis had about 60,000 foreign-born residents. By 1930, Swedes had become the largest foreign-born group in every section of Minneapolis, and were heavily concentrated in the area in and around 38th Street and Chicago. Much of the project area’s residential housing stock and commercial structures were developed as housing and businesses for these populations during the peak expansion of lumber, railroads and flour milling in Minneapolis.

The project area also includes one of two traditional population centers for the Minneapolis Black community. African American people now make up almost 20% of the Minneapolis population but in 1930 comprised just 4,176 residents. Minneapolis African Americans tended to concentrate in two areas – on the near North side of the city and on the South side near Fourth Avenue South and 38th Street. During the 1960’s these areas were also havens for those displaced from St. Paul’s Rondo neighborhood by the construction of Interstate 94.

Many important institutions serving Minneapolis’s Black community have had a long-term presence here, including the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder (first published in 1934), Sabathani Community Center (founded in 1966 as a small grassroots organization serving African American youth in South Minneapolis), and the Minneapolis Urban League (working since 1926 to assist African-American people in overcoming obstacles in employment, education, housing, health care and social services).



Plat Map of E 38th Street ca. 1892

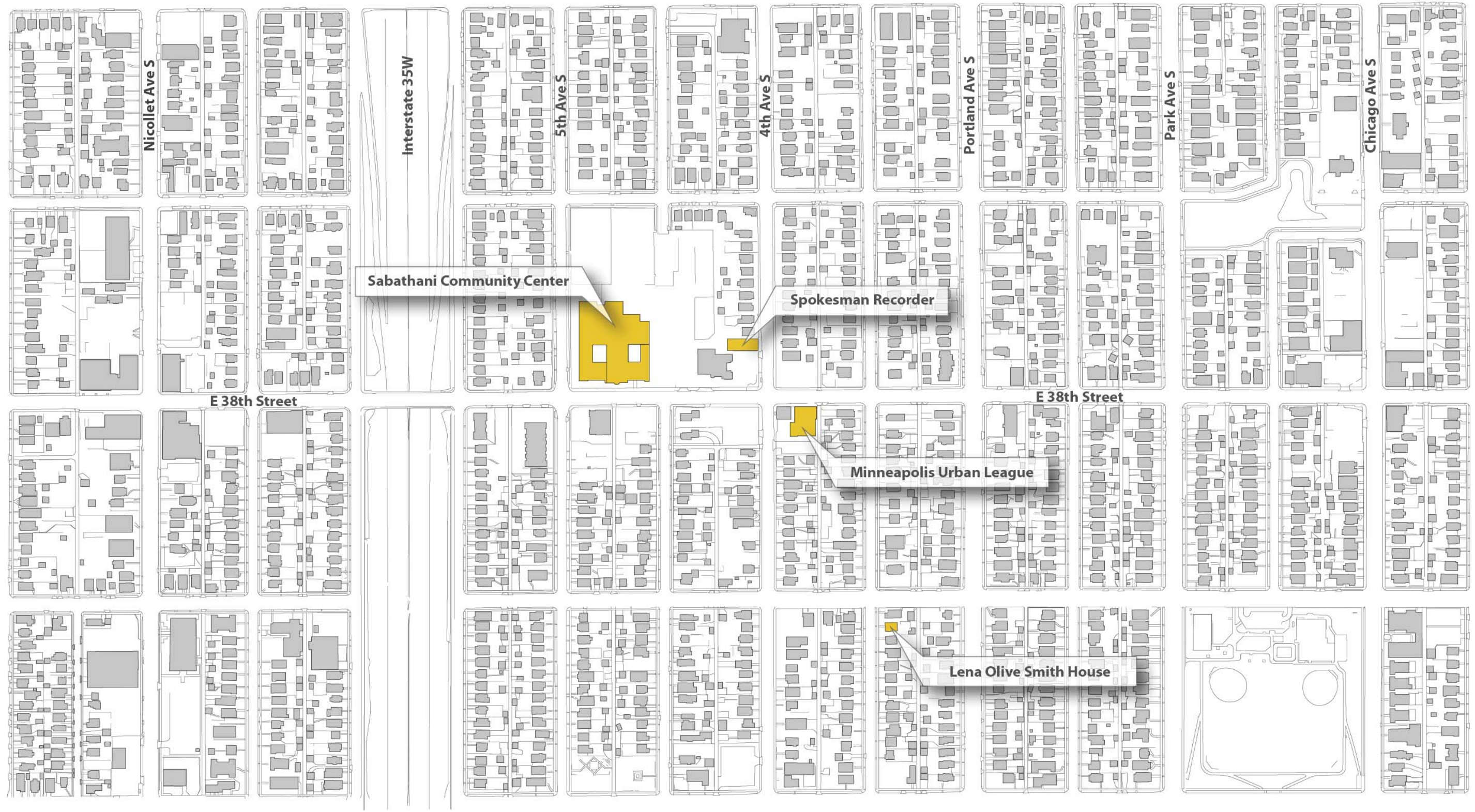


Nokomis Theater on Opening Day, 1929



Fire Arts Center, 2013

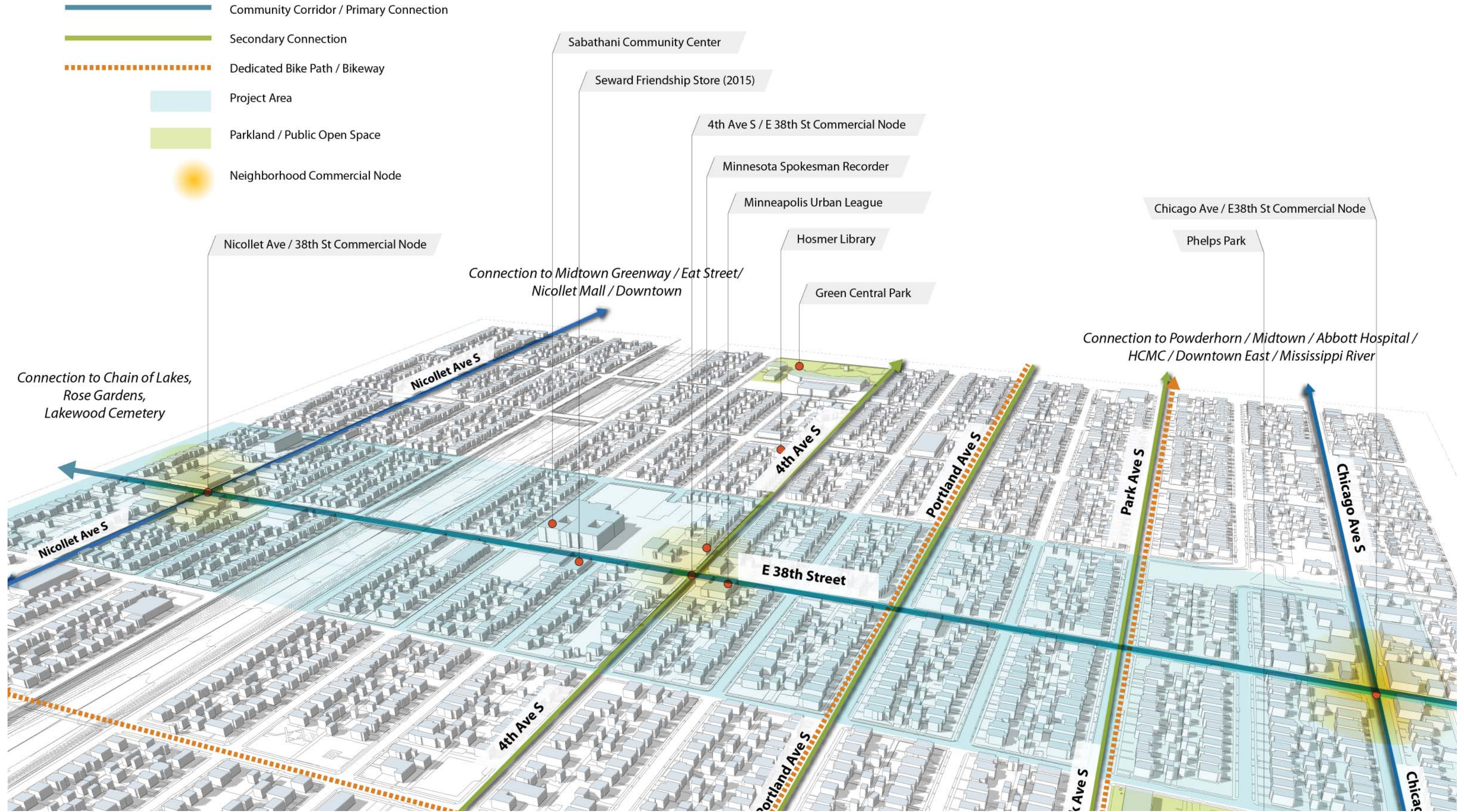




 Potential Historic Cultural Resource



# Community Assets and Connections





# Community Assets



## Sabathani Community Center

- Provides tenant space to social service organizations and small local businesses
- Provides services to the community including public health youth programming and seniors
- Community garden for local residents



## Seward Coop Friendship Store

- Cooperative grocery store specializing in local and organic produce and food products
- An expansion of the existing store at Franklin and 31st St in the Seward Neighborhood
- Includes a small community space



## Minneapolis Urban League

- Community-based non profit working to link African Americans with economic opportunities including employment, training, education and health and wellness.



## Phelps Park

- Neighborhood Park owned and operated by the Minneapolis Park and Rec Board
- Provides the following amenities:
  - Basketball Courts
  - Wading Pool
  - Football Field
  - Tot Lot / Playground
  - Soccer Field
  - Restrooms / Drinking Fountain
  - Tennis Court



## Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park

- Neighborhood Park owned and operated by the Minneapolis Park and Rec Board
- Provides the following amenities:
  - Baseball Field
  - Wading Pool
  - Football Field
  - Tot Lot / Playground
  - Picnic Area
  - Restrooms / Drinking Fountain
  - Basketball Court
  - Tennis Court



## Nicollet and E38th Street

- Active commercial node with several small shops and restaurants
- Served by the 18 and 23 Bus Line



## Chicago Ave S and E38th St

- Active commercial node with several small shops and art studios.
- Served by the 5 and 23 bus lines



## Minnesota Spokesman Recorder

- Oldest minority-owned business in the state of MN
- Newspaper committed to meeting the news and information needs of African Americans in the Twin Cities.
- Estimated 40,000 weekly reader and over 10,000 e-subscribers.



## Green Central Gym Park

- Neighborhood Park owned and operated by the Minneapolis Park and Rec Board
- Provides the following amenities:
  - Basketball Courts
  - Soccer Field
  - Wading Pool
  - Restrooms
  - Football Field



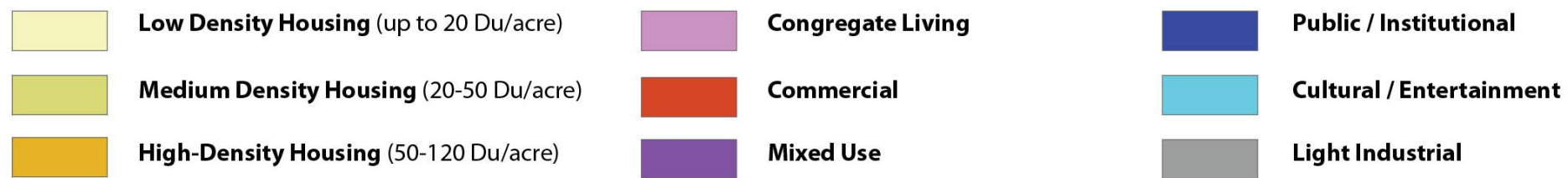
## Hosmer Library

- Neighborhood Branch Library of the Hennepin County Library System.
- Provides the following amenities:
  - Computer Training Lab
  - After school tutoring
  - Children's area
  - Fireside Reading Room

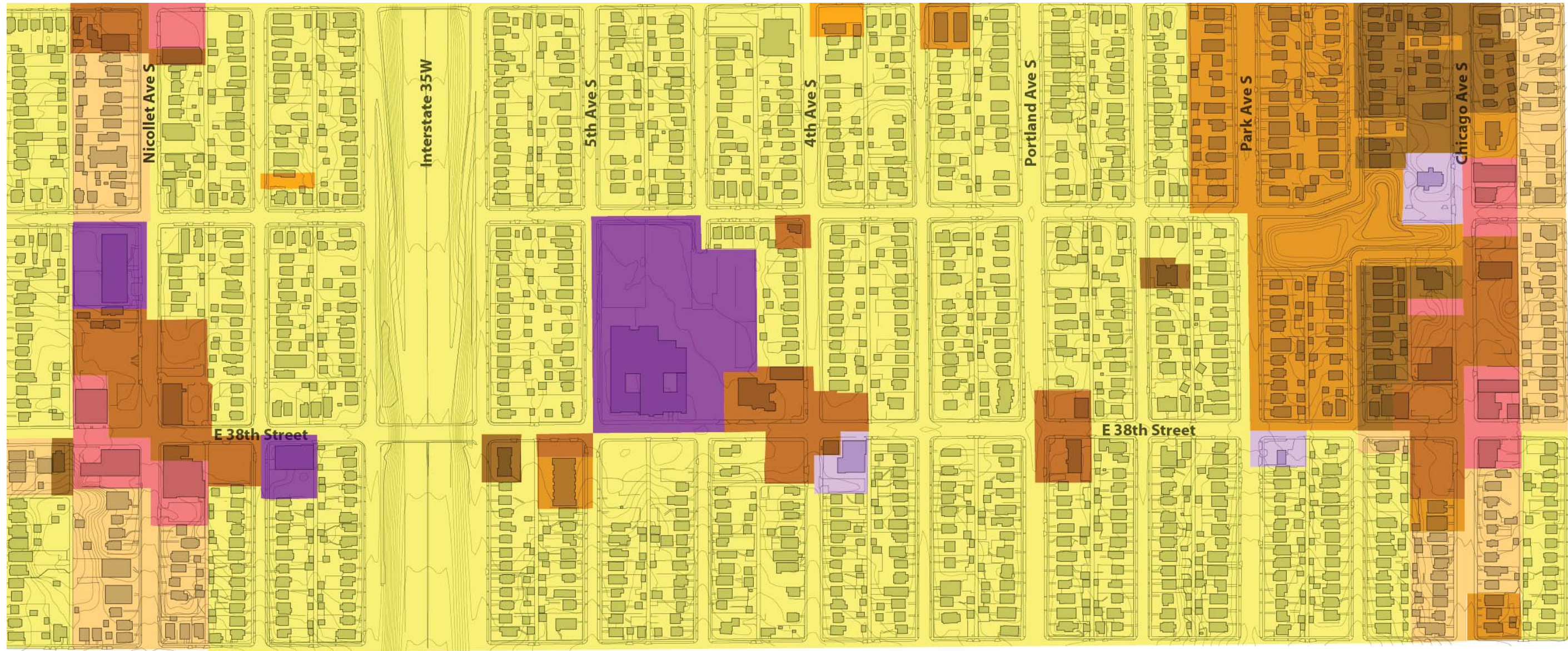







Existing Land Use







Zoning Area Map

- |  |                                      |   |   |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|
|  | <b>R1A - Single Family District</b>  |  | <b>R4 - Multiple Family District</b>                |
|  | <b>R2B - Two-Family District</b>     |  | <b>R5 - Multiple Family District</b>                |
|  | <b>R3 - Multiple-Family District</b> |  | <b>C2 - Neighborhood Commerical District</b>        |
|  |                                      |  | <b>OR1 - Neighborhood Office Residence District</b> |
|  |                                      |  | <b>OR2 - High-Density Office Residence District</b> |

## Land Use + Zoning

The study area has a mix of land uses including several commercial and mixed use nodes. Sabathani Community Center, located between Nicollet and Chicago Avenues serves as an institutional focal point and has a mix of uses occupying its tenant space. The vast majority of the study area is occupied by low and medium density housing, with the bulk of the medium density parcels located North of E 38th Street.

The 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Small Area Plan, adopted by the city in 2007, calls for some changes to the existing land use including updating many of the

commercial nodes to mixed use designations in an effort to spur higher density residential development with ground-floor commercial uses along transit corridors. Currently many commercial parcels are either vacant or underutilized based on allowed and recommended density. The plan also recommends specific heights for future development.

The current zoning configuration allows for much more density than is currently built, making this area a good opportunity for growth and development.





Land to Building Value Ratio

Land to Building Value Ratio  
 (Darker color = more attractive for redevelopment / currently underutilized based on land value)



## Development Potential

Analyzing the land to building value ratio can be a useful tool for predicting where development is likely to happen. Parcels where the building value is significantly lower than the land value tend to indicate that the property is underutilized from a market perspective.

the three commercial nodes. This would indicate that these areas may see an intensification of land use if the real estate market continues to support higher density housing development.

Applying this lens to the study area reveals that there are concentrations of under-utilized parcels in and around



# Infill Development

(Based on 2007 Small Area Plan and Long Range Planning Opportunities)



Potential Infill Development



## Community Voices



*"The neighborhood is much quieter now, than in years past. More clean, too. In 2005, 2006, there used to be a lot of guys loitering, doing drugs in front of the shop. Now, we barely see that."*

**--Dan Abushady, Mill City Auto Body**



*"I think its a pretty good neighborhood, especially with the community center. It's nice during the day--people are out skating and riding bikes."*

**--Maria Reynolds, Sabanathi Community Center**



*"I like to take a lot of shortcuts through the neighborhood going to Minnehaha Falls and the VA. Shade would be great along 38th Street. I think trees are needed more, everywhere."*

**--Peggy Jacobs, Minnesota Spokesman Recorder**

*"Everyone is really nice in the neighborhood. All of the business owners have been very friendly over the last year since our shop opened."*

**--Pema, APHO Restaurant**

*"We want to enhance the neighborhood through the mural alongside our business, which faces 38th Street."*

**--Marvin Scroggins, Minnesota Spokesman Recorder**

*"I would describe the neighborhood with one word: BORING. There's really nothing to do over here. Could use more stores, something entertaining, maybe a rec-room for kids."*

**--Maurice Davis, Minneapolis Urban League**

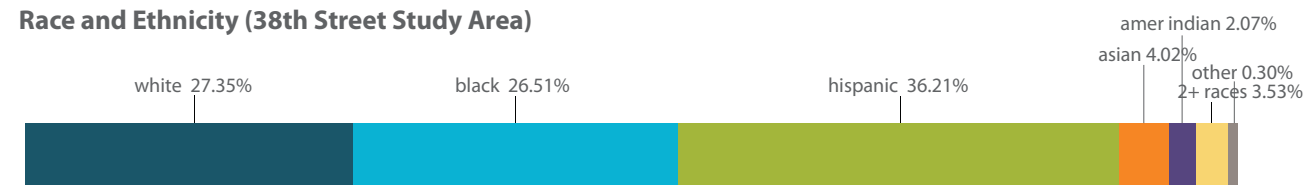


# Community Demographics

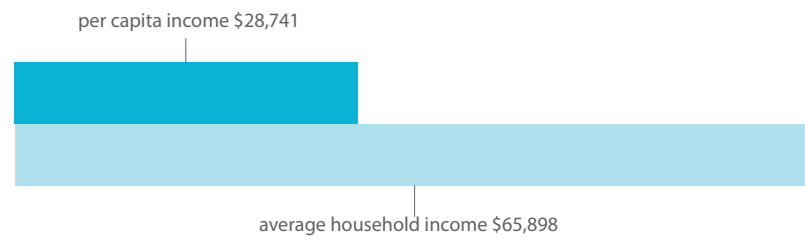
**Race and Ethnicity (Minneapolis)**



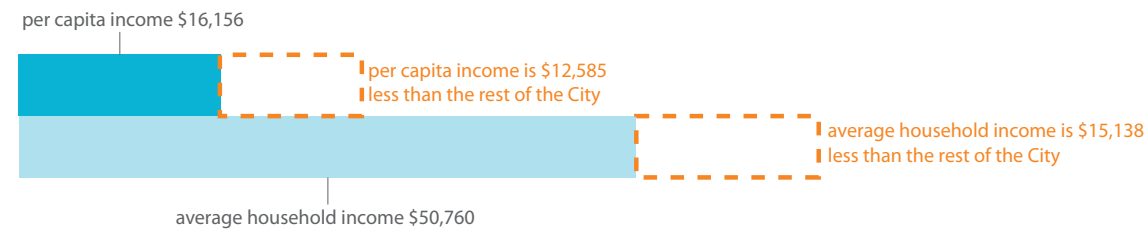
**Race and Ethnicity (38th Street Study Area)**



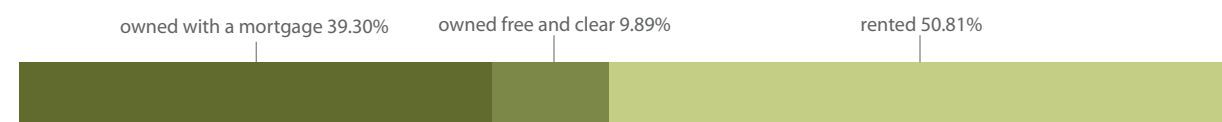
**2014 Income Levels (Minneapolis)\***



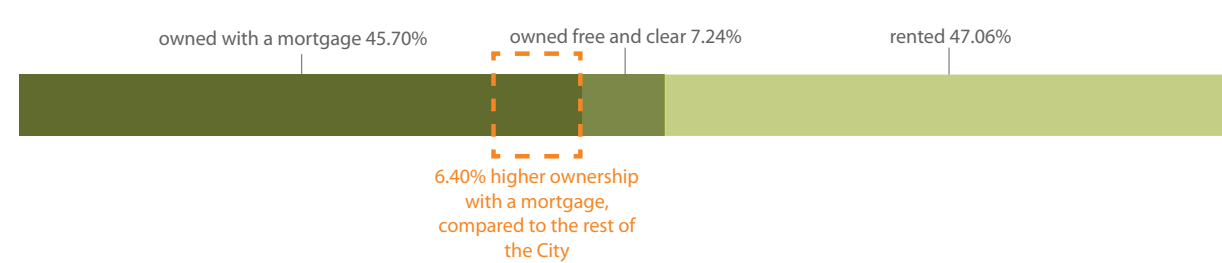
**2014 Income Levels (38th Street Study Area)\***



**Housing: Owned vs. Rented Units (Minneapolis)**



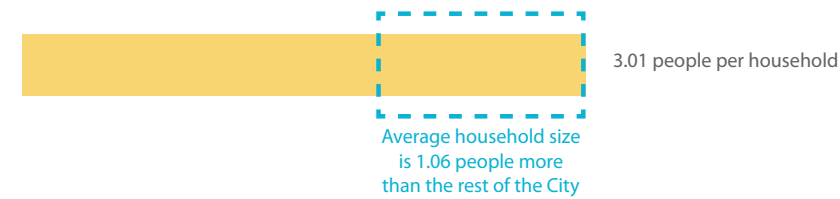
**Housing: Owned vs. Rented Units (38th Street Study Area)**



**Housing: Average Household Size (Minneapolis)**



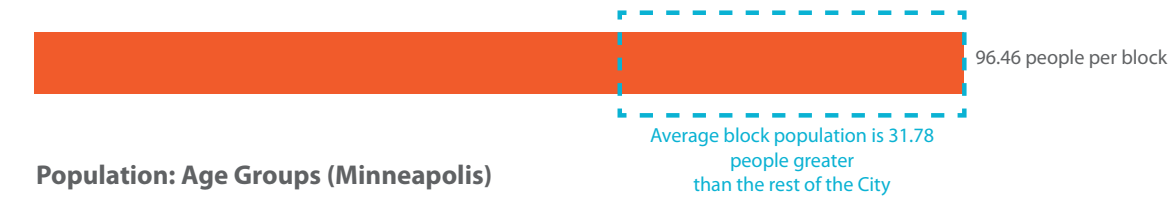
**Housing: Average Household Size (38th Street Study Area)**



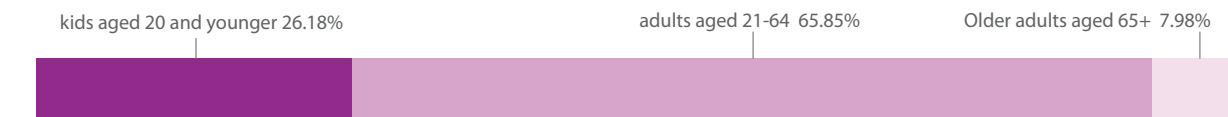
**Population: Average Population by Census Block (Minneapolis)**



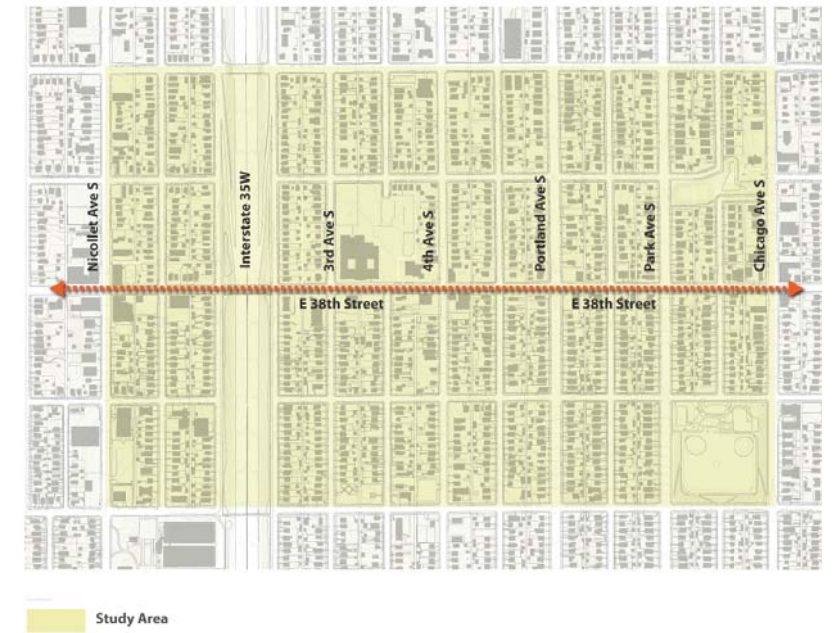
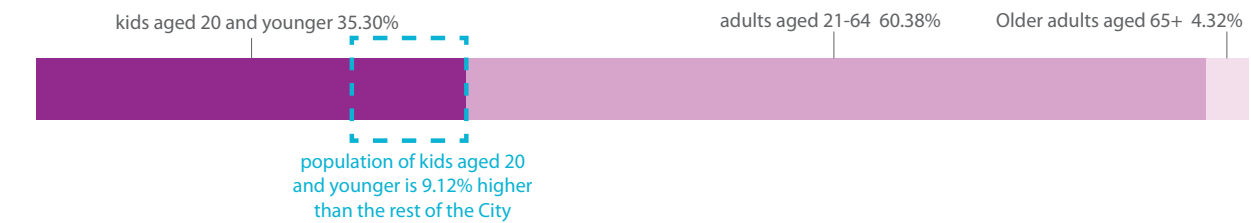
**Population: Average Population by Census Block (38th Street Study Area)**



**Population: Age Groups (Minneapolis)**

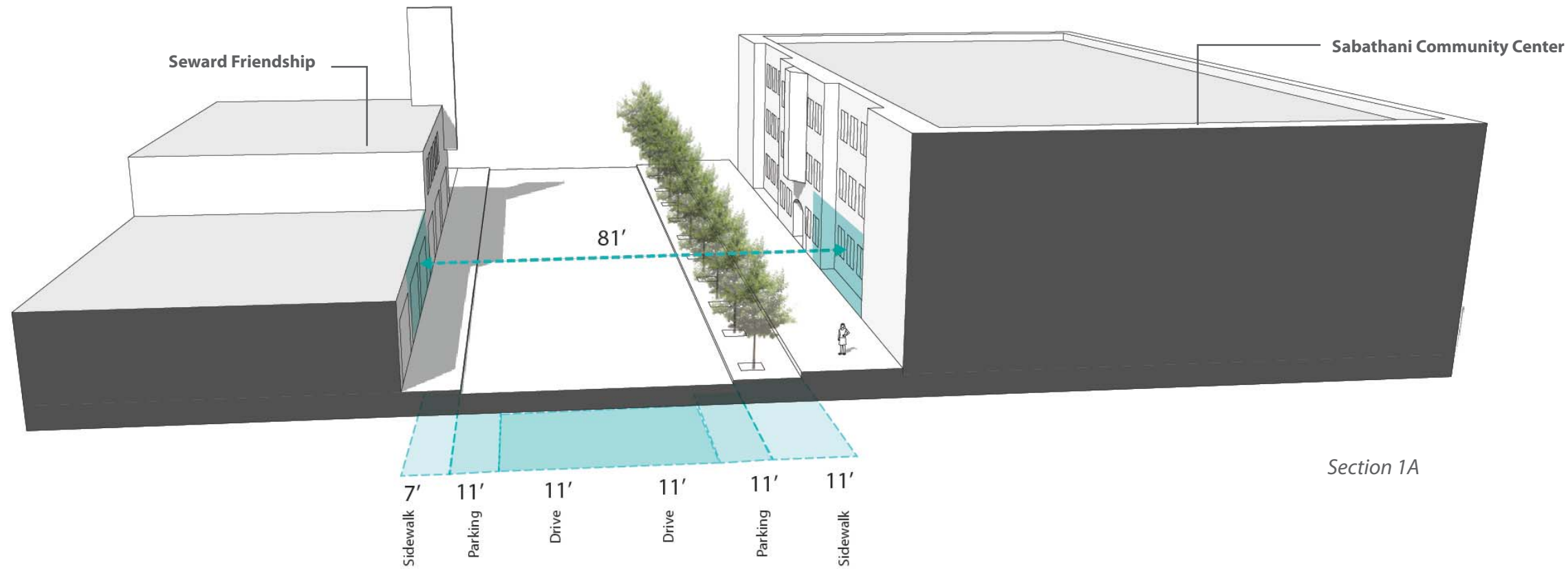


**Population: Age Groups (38th Street Study Area)**



\*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010, Esri forecast for 2014

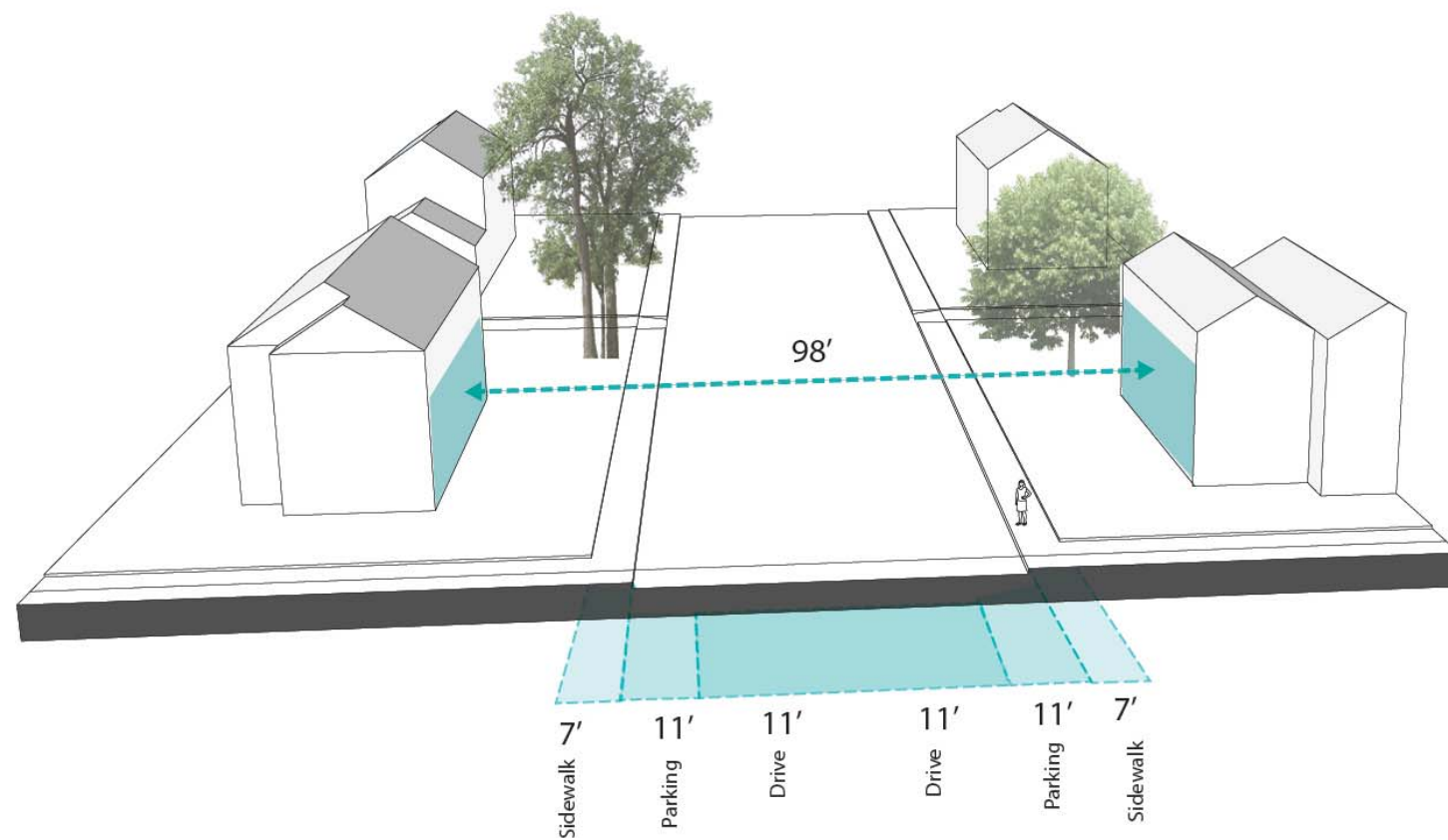




## Streetscape: *Street Design*

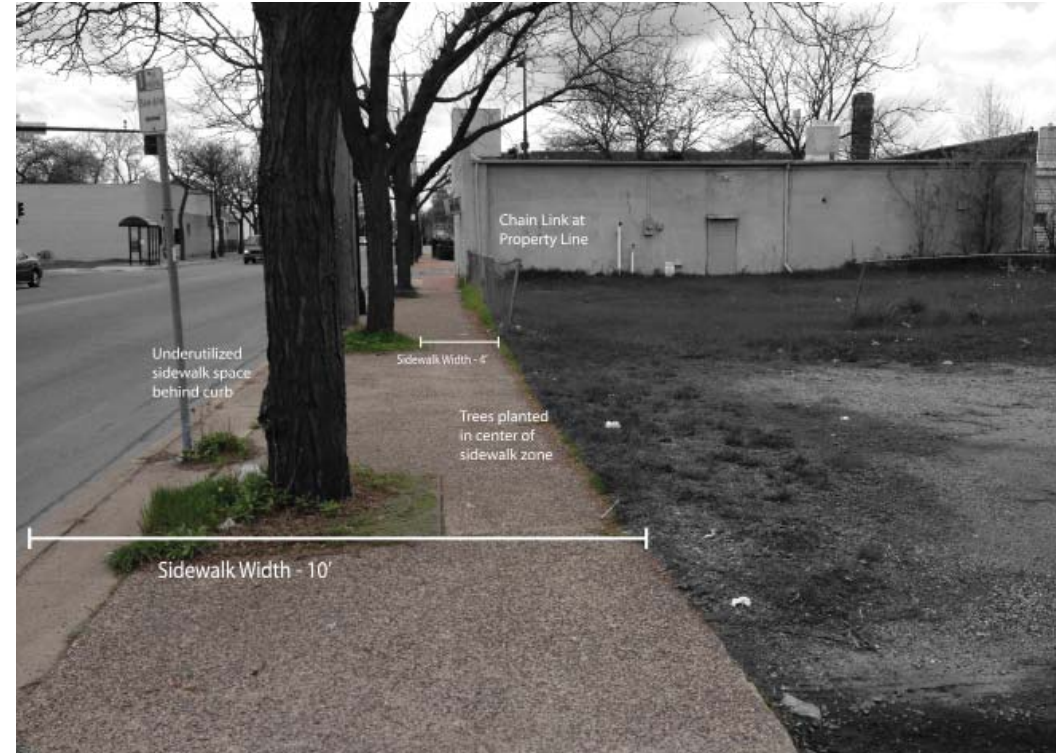
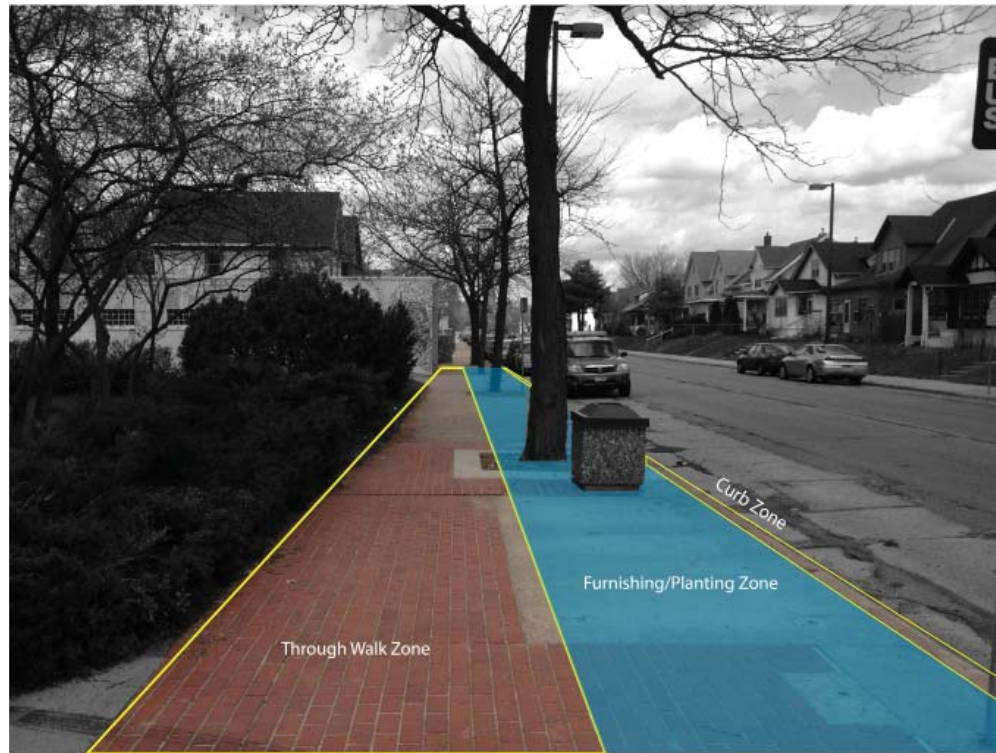
The extent of E 38th Street between Nicollet Ave S and Chicago Ave S presents many challenges and opportunities. Imminent development such as the Seward Friendship grocery store promises to bring more traffic to this street using all modes, including pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular users.

The current street configuration is typical of East/West connector streets in South Minneapolis. Many properties that line E 38th are oriented toward their respective North/South residential streets, exposing E 38th to the side-yards and backyards of many properties. This creates a discontinuity in the experience of the street-edge and creates challenges for coordinating a consistent and activated public realm. The street is designated in the Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan as a community corridor, and as such is expected to receive additional intensification of land use over time, including and especially around the existing commercial nodes at Nicollet and Chicago Avenues.



E 38th is configured as a two-way street with travel lanes in both directions with parking allowed on both sides of the street. Sidewalk width varies from 11 feet to 7 feet with a range of impediments often reducing clear path to tighter dimensions. The sidewalks are concrete with some brick and range in condition. There is some vegetative growth between sidewalk flags. The dimension of sidewalks restrict the ability to include tree plantings which are scarce and concentrated mainly at Sabathani Community Center and at the 4th Avenue intersection.





### Principals of a Great Streetscape for E. 38th Street

- Streetscape embodies the local neighborhood culture and exudes a sense of safety while striving to promote both economic and social development
- Clear delineation between modes. Pedestrian and vehicular separation is implied and readable by all users. Sidewalk, parking and roadway zones are delineated by clear visual cues.
- Visibility and Views. Cultural assets and neighborhood amenities/destinations are easy to find and legible. The corridor has a cohesive visual continuity.
- Street amenities are public, relevant and usable. These are to be well curated and create a balanced even approach.
- Vegetation is used to enhance space, soften and provide texture to a hardened environment improving the perceived and actual quality of the street. Landscaping should be varied and maintained meeting the minimum requirements of maintenance partners.
- Elements in the E. 38th Streetscape

Pavement and landscaping are the two main features dominating the streetscape. Secondary elements include street furniture which includes garbage cans, mailboxes, seating, bike racks, newspaper stands, bus shelters, traffic control devices, street and pedestrian scale lighting.

These and other features populate a typical block and create a rhythm along the corridor. The siting, function and arrangement of these elements is crucial to creating a sense of place.

There are many additional elements that will impact the streetscape that impact operation, function and feel along the corridor. These include: Driveways, existing utilities, traffic signals, street signs, building entrances, public spaces adjacent to the sidewalk, air conditioning units and building signage.

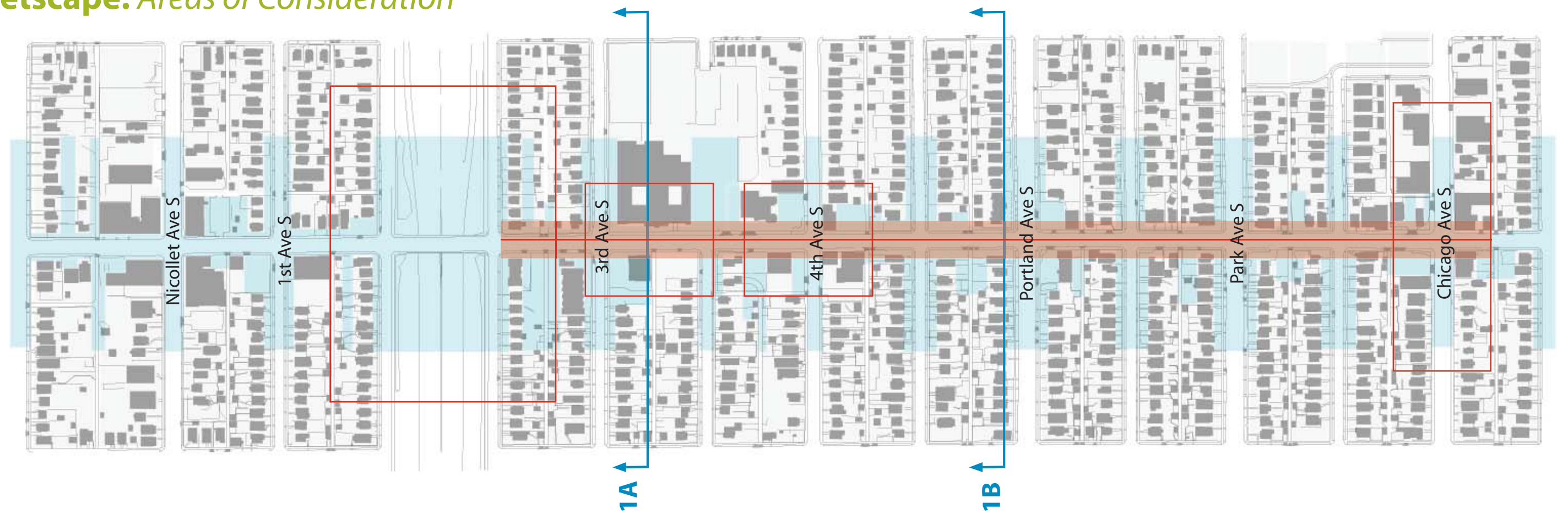


# Streetscape: Amenities and Challenges





# Streetscape: Areas of Consideration



**E 38th Street Bridge over 35W**

The current bridge is slated to be re-decked in the near future. Currently the lane configuration provides for inadequate pedestrian space and no defined bicycle facilities. At the ends of the bridge, sound walls create site line barriers and potentially dangerous intersections between pedestrians and vehicles exiting the interstate. The chain-link fence does not provide for any noise mitigation or comfort on the bridge deck.



**Seward and Sabathani Community Center**

The block which will house the future Seward Coop will see a significant increase in all modes of traffic. This will create new tensions between pedestrians, cars and bikes, particularly at entrances and exits to the grocery store site. Attention will need to be paid to coordination of these users in the public right of way.



**4th Ave S and E 38th St Intersection**

The intersection at 4th Ave presents some unique challenges. The paving and curb structure is inconsistent with the rest of the corridor and is in considerable disrepair. Tree plantings are currently obstructing the pedestrian right of way and do not provide for general tree health and vitality. On the northern side of the street a conflict between power lines and tree planting is negatively affect tree health and pedestrian experience.



**E 38th Street Pedestrian Right of Way**

The stretch of E 38th between 4th Ave S and Chicago Ave S is designated as a community corridor. The pedestrian right of way is notable here for its lack of street trees and it's failure to provide any kind of buffer between roadway and sidewalk, reducing real and perceived safety for pedestrians.



**E 38th St and Chicago Ave S Intersection**

E 38th Street at Chicago Avenue has the potential to see an intensification of land use over time. Currently the pedestrian realm contains no street plantings and very few public amenities..



# Streetscape: Street Wall



Nicollet Ave S



3rd Ave S

4th Ave S



Portland Ave S

Oakland Ave S

Park Ave S





1st Ave S



Stevens Ave S

2nd Ave S



4th Ave S

5th Ave S

Portland Ave S



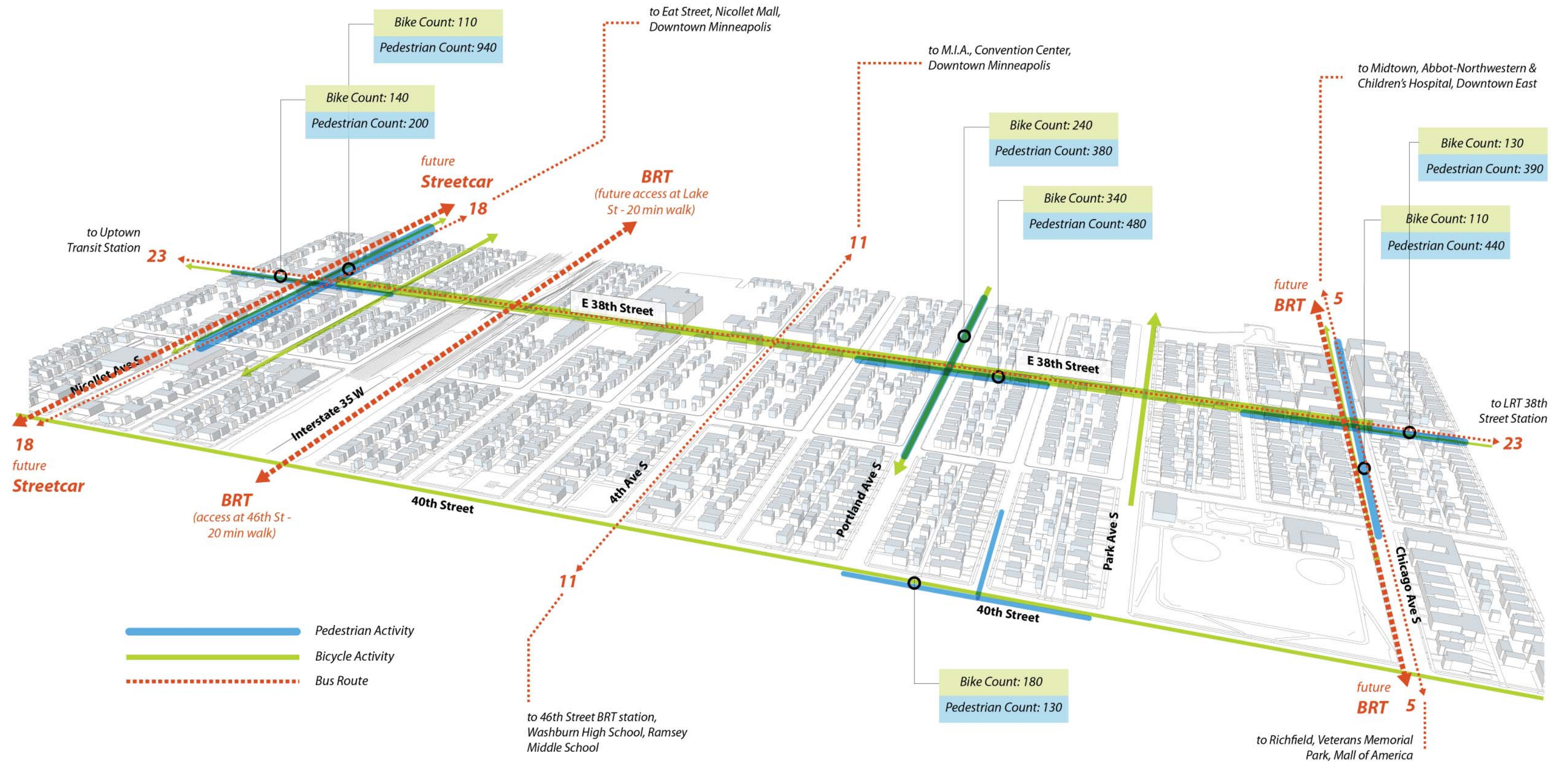
Park Ave S

Columbus Ave S

Chicago Ave S

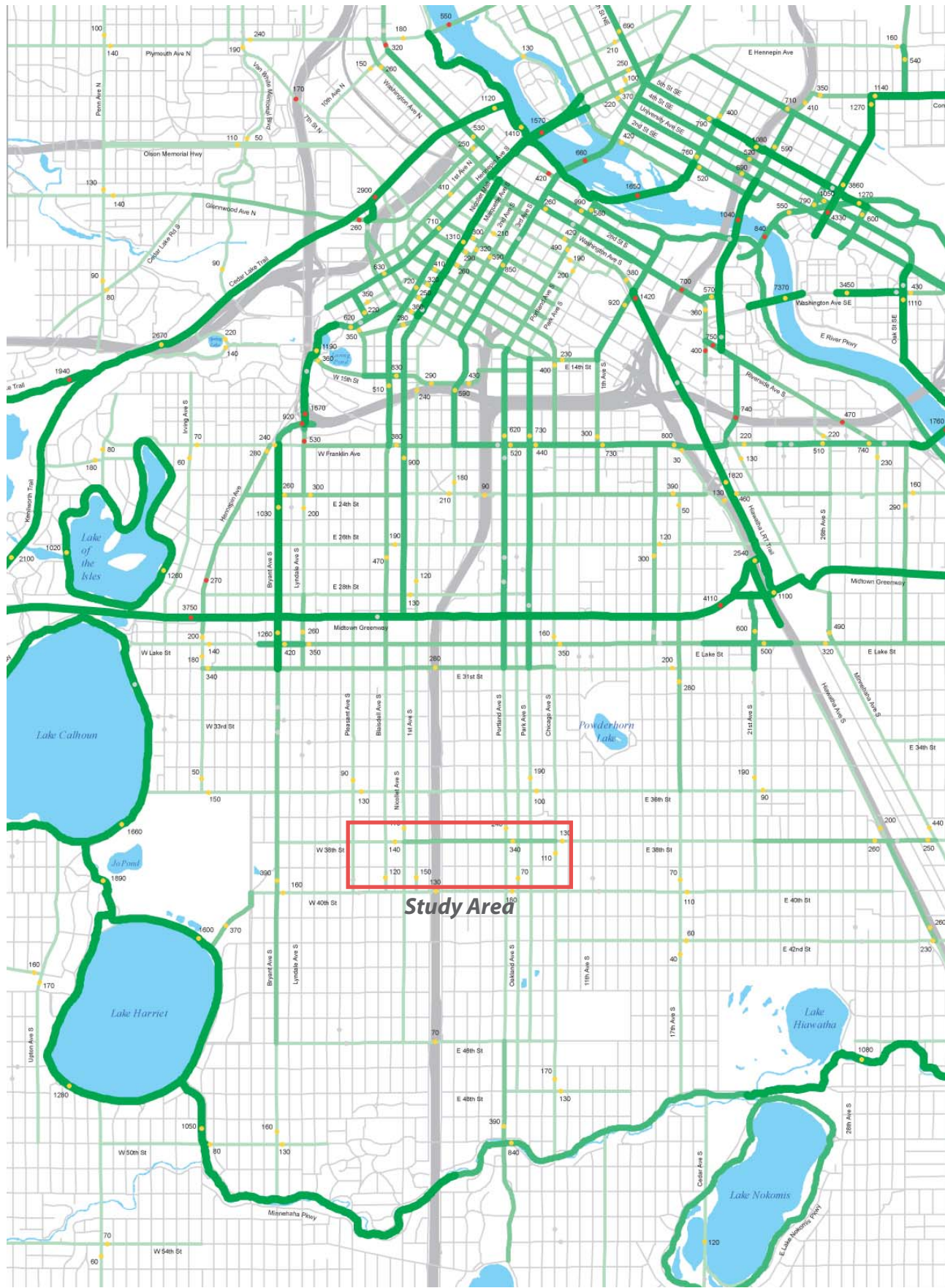


# Transit Connections and Activity

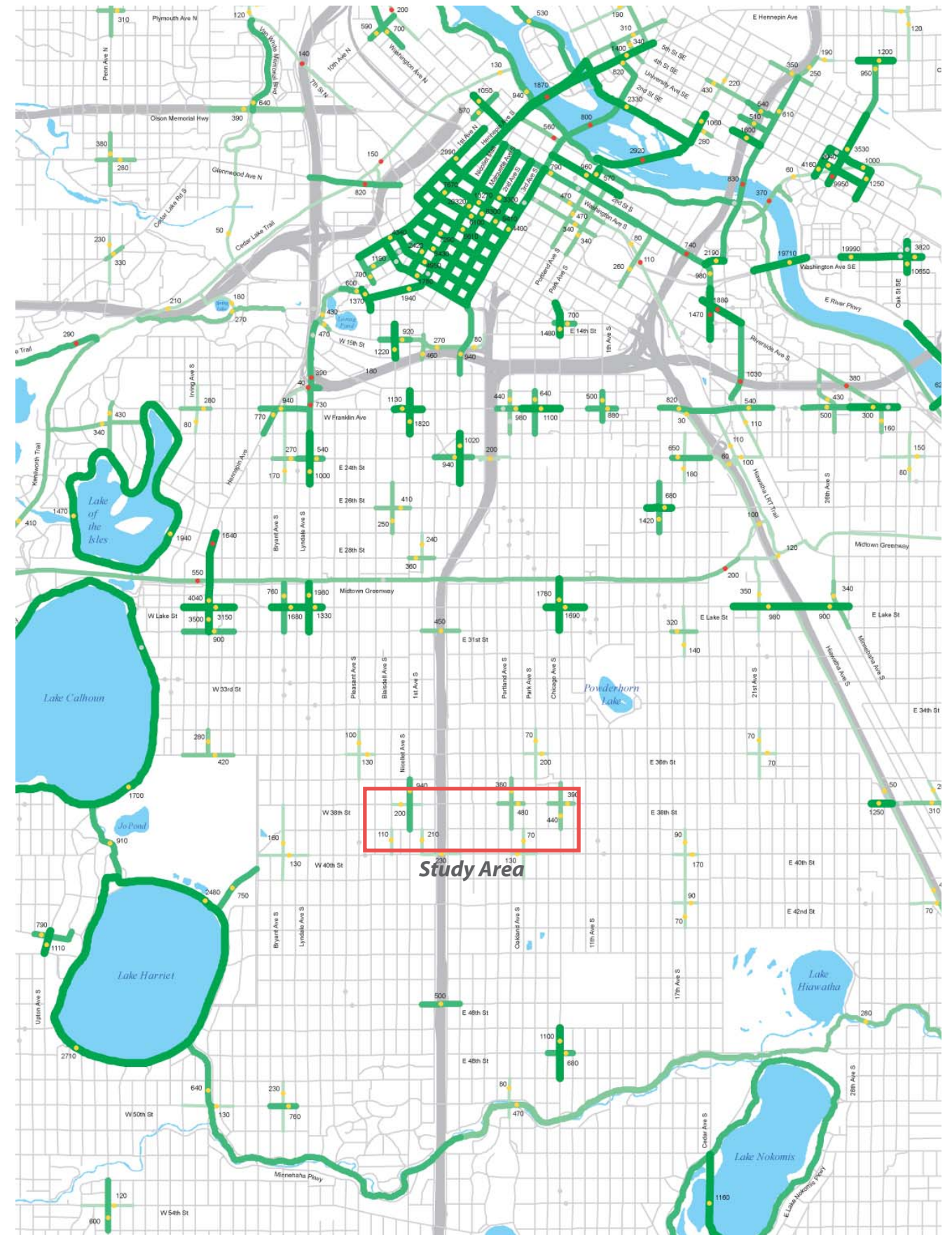


Transit Connections and Activity





Bicycle Counts and Activity for South Minneapolis



Pedestrian Counts and Activity for South Minneapolis



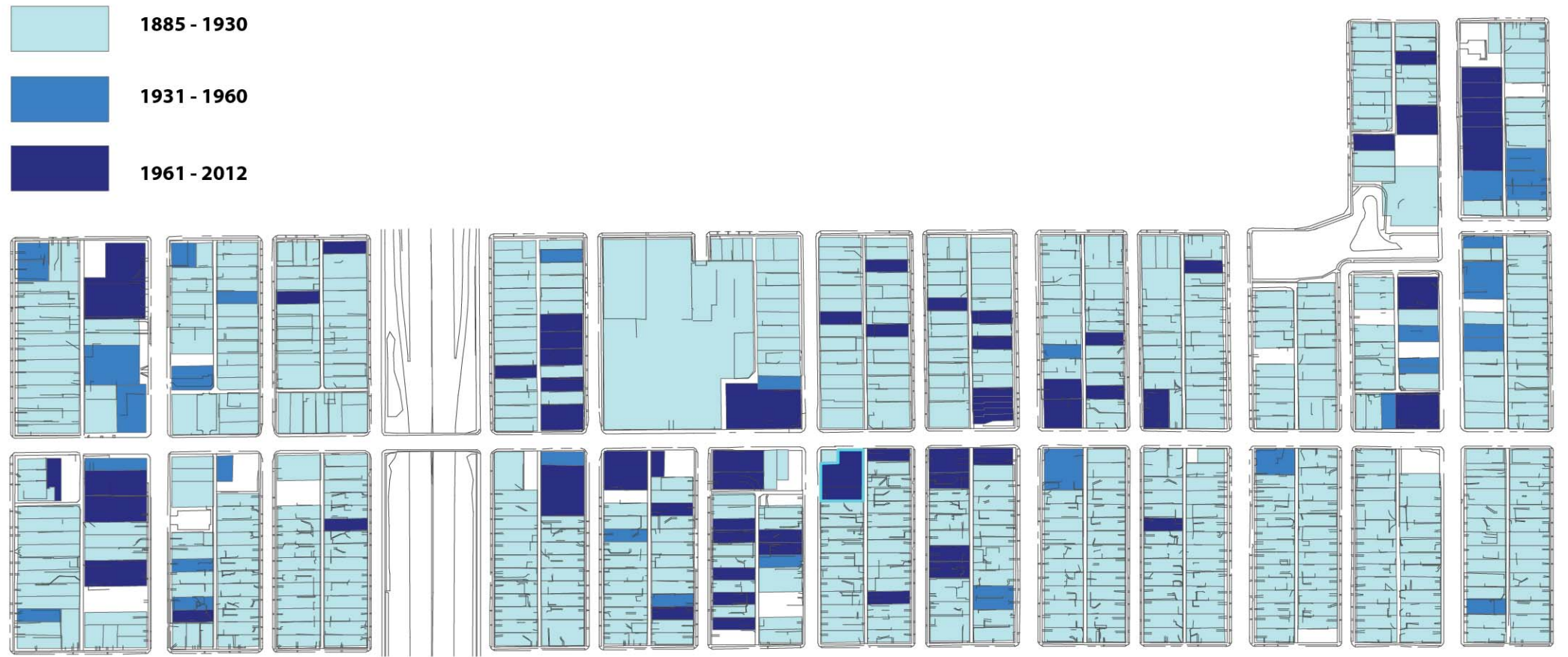
# Architectural Design and Character

## Single-Family Housing

The architectural character of the study area is defined in large part by its single family housing stock. The South side of Minneapolis was settled primarily between 1880 and 1930, and many of the houses typify the architectural style of that time. Houses built before WWI tended to be in the Victorian farmhouse style with 2.5 stories, pitched roofs and front porches. After WWI in the 1920's and 1930's the bungalow style became prolific in South Minneapolis. These homes tended to be smaller, 1.5 stories with craftsman style woodwork.

Scattered throughout the study area are some homes built between 1930 and 1960. The era around WWII produced a different housing stock that was more modern in style, smaller and cheaper to build. These homes tended to be low-slung one or 1.5 story homes with hipped roofs and lacking a traditional front porch.

There has also been a significant amount of construction in the latter half of the 20th century particularly in the area around Sabathani Community Center where much of the housing has been built within the last 25 years. These homes tend to be a mix of historical and modern styles.



1907



1957



1992



## Commercial

The study area contains 3 commercial nodes at Nicollet Ave S, 4th Ave S and Chicago Ave S. All 3 nodes contain a significant number of traditional storefront commercial buildings dating from the early 20th century when these nodes served as transit stops on the Minneapolis streetcar lines. They are typically one or two stories with storefront glazing along much of the first floor facade and smaller independent retailers and office spaces.

Along E38th street there are several smaller commercial parcels that contain a broad range of architectural styles from more modern mid-century structures to quirky Tudor style commercial buildings. This lends E 38th st an eclectic air and has given birth to some unique local businesses.

The commercial node at 38th and Nicollet has seen some significant updates in recent years that accompanied a complete reconstruction of Nicollet Avenue. Several new restaurants and shops have moved into the node. E 38th Street and Chicago Ave has also seen some recent renovation of commercial architecture.

