

# MISSING LINK DEVELOPMENT STUDY REPORT

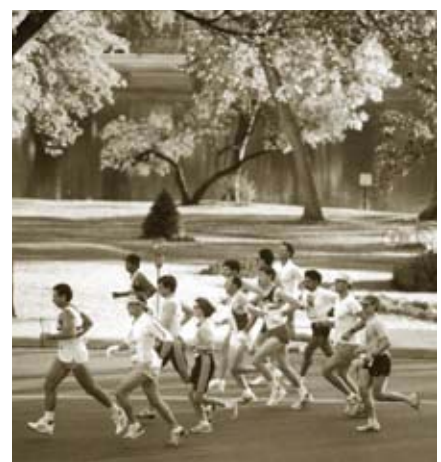
Minneapolis Park  
and Recreation Board

HNTB Corporation

Hoisington Koegler Group Inc.

Hess, Roise and Company

May 21, 2008



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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** continued

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Metropolitan Council, Park and Open Space Commission

University of Minnesota, Parking and Transportation Services

Mississippi Watershed Management Organization



**Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Directive  
to the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) and  
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)**

*To guide and assist staff and consultants in the review and selection of the alternative routes of the Missing Link. The CAC will also review and comment on open space opportunities and recommend site(s) for additional park land. Based upon the analysis and comments, the Committee will recommend a preferred design route for the Missing Link, along with open space recommendations, to the Park Board as part of the Board's Public Schematic Design approval process.*



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## **Citizen Advisory Committee**

### **Grand Rounds Scenic Byway/Missing Link**

April 28, 2008

Board of Commissioners  
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board  
2117 West River Road  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55411-2227

Dear Commissioners:

We are pleased to provide you with the final report of the Missing Link Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). This development study recommends a route and adjacent amenities to complete the three-mile missing link in the Minneapolis Grand Rounds parkway system. The report culminates a one-year process involving several public open houses, monthly CAC meetings, and informational tours. We received extensive public input. CAC members, staff, and consultants gave significant time and thought to this project.

Several principles guided the CAC's work. Committee members believe these principles reflect the best interests of Minneapolis citizens, as well as the best interests of the elected officials and organizations who appointed them. The guiding principles are listed below.

1. The Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway is a unique resource benefiting citizens and businesses at local, regional, and state levels. Completing the Missing Link will multiply the positive impacts of this signature amenity.
2. Involving citizens and stakeholders will increase the likelihood of a successful project. To that end, we increased the number of public open houses from two to five.
3. The east-side of Minneapolis lacks sufficient trails, neighborhood parks, and regional amenities. Completing the Grand Rounds will help balance recreational amenities within the Minneapolis park system.
4. When completing the Missing Link, we should attempt to minimize any negative impacts on residents, housing, businesses, and institutions.
5. Where appropriate, the Missing Link should integrate with existing infrastructure and with other planned public improvements.
6. The Missing Link should enhance the natural environment, improve mobility, and stimulate economic development.

After considering the above-listed principles, public input, and technical information, the CAC selected Route B/B2 as the preferred Missing Link route. In general, Route B/B2 follows the eastern-most path through the Southeast Como Industrial Area. Please note that Route A/B2 also received significant support from CAC members. On the final motion, Route B/B2 was chosen by near unanimous decision.

Board of Commissioners  
April 28, 2008

Page 2 In addition to selecting Route B/B2, the CAC voted to add four recommendations to this Development Study. The CAC believes that these recommendations are vital to achieving the full potential of the Grand Rounds.

1. The new Missing Link should be designed as a “Garden Route.” This route would be densely planted with trees, shrubs, and perennials. The route could have an identifying theme, similar to the cherry blossoms in Washington D.C. With this design, the route would have its own unique identity.
2. East River Parkway/Road should connect to Main Street S.E. and to Marshall Street N.E. This would create an inner parkway loop within the Grand Rounds Parkway System. An inner loop would complement several northeast neighborhoods.
3. The MPRB should work with the cities of St. Anthony, Lauderdale, and Saint Paul to connect park amenities.
4. The MPRB should provide significant opportunities for citizens, neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions, to participate in implementing the Missing Link plan.

As chair and vice-chair of the committee, we express our sincere appreciation to the CAC staff – in particular to Tom Johnson and his team and to Nick Eoloff. Tom worked above and beyond the contract for which he was paid. His dedication, thoughtfulness and professionalism are to be commended. Nick Eoloff ensured that the CAC stayed on task and supported all our efforts. He represented the Board well and was an excellent resource for our many questions.

Thank you for giving us and all CAC members the opportunity to serve on this committee. Although we had diverse opinions, we shared a common value, recognizing the importance of parks to our community. We have taken a first step to identify a route for the Missing Link. We believe that, with your leadership, this route is realistic and achievable in the near future.

Sincerely,

John Erwin  
Missing Link CAC Chair

George Puzak  
Missing Link CAC Vice Chair

# MISSING LINK DEVELOPMENT STUDY REPORT

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

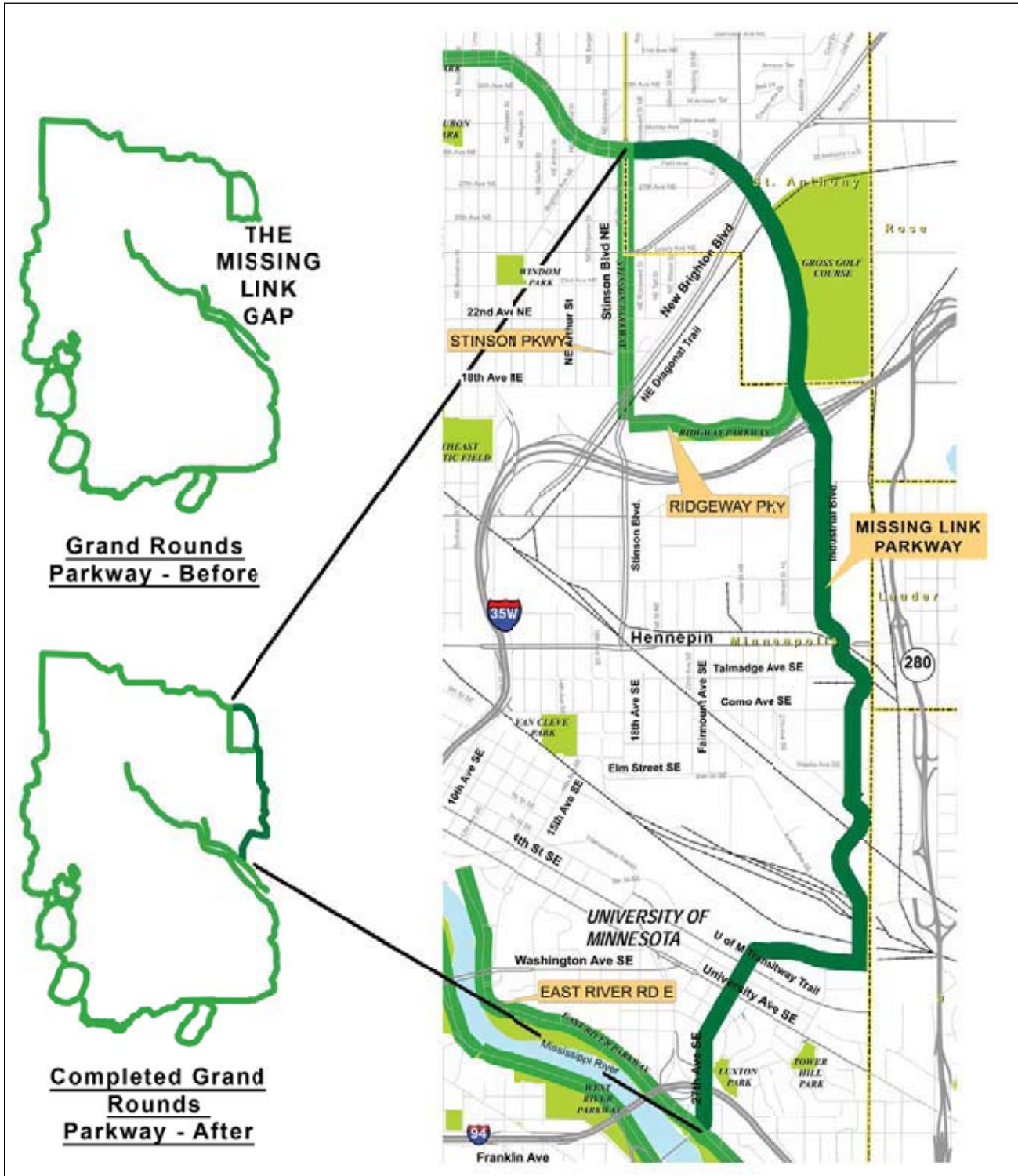


Fig. 1. Completing the Grand Rounds Parkway System



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the late 1880's, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has envisioned a park system that would link all sections of the city. The Missing Link of the Grand Rounds is the only segment of the over the 50 miles of parkway that exist today, that has not been completed. Approximately three miles of parkway are needed to connect and complete the parkway system. The Park Board is committed to “fulfilling the promise” that was once given by bringing the Missing Link to reality. Once the Missing Link segment is complete, the Grand Rounds will provide a contiguous system of parkway and trails that circumnavigate the City of Minneapolis.

To “fulfill the promise,” the MPRB established a Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC) of 21 members whose charge was to identify and select a route that would best connect St. Anthony Parkway with East River Parkway. The CAC, composed of neighborhood residents, business and University of Minnesota representatives, used several underlying principles that guided and shaped their decisions. Many hours were spent looking at a wide range of route options. Through the public participation process, input was received and surveys were collected. From this input and the criteria set forth by the committee, the least desirable routes were eliminated. Two route options remained attractive to the committee, however, one route, as identified in this report Fig. 1. Completing the Grand Rounds Parkway System was selected. This route best fulfills the committee’s criteria and charge.

The committee was given an additional charge – to identify areas for park and open space opportunities. The neighborhoods of northeast and southeast Minneapolis have been underserved in the area of parks and recreational facilities. Providing additional recreational amenities will help meet a need. Moreover, creating a ‘destination’ place or regional amenity will attract people from throughout the city and revitalize the area.

Several potential park sites were identified. The CAC selected a large area, currently utilized by industrial businesses that would create the desired regional amenity. Four schematic plans were presented showing a variety of recreational opportunities. The committee adopted the schematic plan of the ‘eco-business’ park, which incorporates business and economic development within a park setting.

To assist the CAC with the selection of the Missing Link route and the future park sites, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed by the MPRB. The TAC was composed of staff members from a variety of agencies including: the City of Minneapolis Departments of Public Works and Community Planning and Economic Development; Hennepin County; the University of Minnesota; and the Metropolitan Council. The TAC provided technical knowledge in analyzing the alternative routes and open space opportunities. The TAC also provided technical support and information requested by the committee, assisting their review and analysis. The CAC’s route selection and open space recommendations have been reviewed by the TAC.

The Citizen’s Advisory Committee has fulfilled its obligations and recommends the preferred Missing Link route along with the park amenity that will establish the final parkway segment and complete the Grand Rounds. While many challenges lie ahead, the opportunities to fulfill the vision that began over one hundred years ago have never been so great. The MPRB is committed to providing additional resources and investments to “fulfill the promise.”







## 2a. History of the Missing Link



The Grand Rounds is the nation’s largest urban scenic byway stretching 50 miles and circling three fourths of Minneapolis. The Grand Rounds contains a park-like road, biking and walking trails, and green open spaces. The Missing Link is between St. Anthony Parkway in Northeast Minneapolis and East River Parkway along the Mississippi River in Southeast Minneapolis.

In 1883, H. W. S. Cleveland went before the newly formed Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners to propose a series of parks and connecting parkways that would surround downtown Minneapolis. William Watts Folwell, the head of a special committee formed in 1891 to study park expansion to the north and east, first dubbed the parkway system the “Grand Rounds.” As Minneapolis Superintendent of Parks, Theodore Wirth took the components of Cleveland’s plan, the suggestions of the special committee, and the work of his predecessor William M. Berry, to further the creation of the Grand Rounds. Wirth envisioned a parkway system encircling Minneapolis that would connect parks, lakes, rivers, creeks, and neighborhoods. Through the vision and hard work of Cleveland, Wirth, and countless others, the Grand Rounds now includes East River Parkway, West River Parkway, Minnehaha Parkway, the Chain of Lakes, Wirth Parkway, Victory Memorial Parkway, and St. Anthony Parkway (Fig. 2. Grand Rounds Parkway System and the Missing Link Study Area Location).

The Missing Link is the one uncompleted section of the Grand Rounds Parkway System. Plans for completing the Missing Link were prepared in 1910, 1918, 1930, and 1939. Early construction of the Grand Rounds followed the key scenic areas of the Mississippi River, Minnehaha Creek, and the Chain of Lakes. The presence of wetlands in the Missing Link area deterred construction. A large and profitable gravel mine located south of what is now Gross Golf Course was also an obstacle to parkway development during the 1930s and 1940s. When gravel mining ceased in the 1950s, the area was developed with industrial uses. Active railroad lines and a major rail yard north of the University of Minnesota were also impediments.

The MPRB prepared a Comprehensive Plan in 2007. A major initiative of that plan is to complete the Missing Link. Completion of the parkway will fulfill the vision of having a “grand parkway” and green



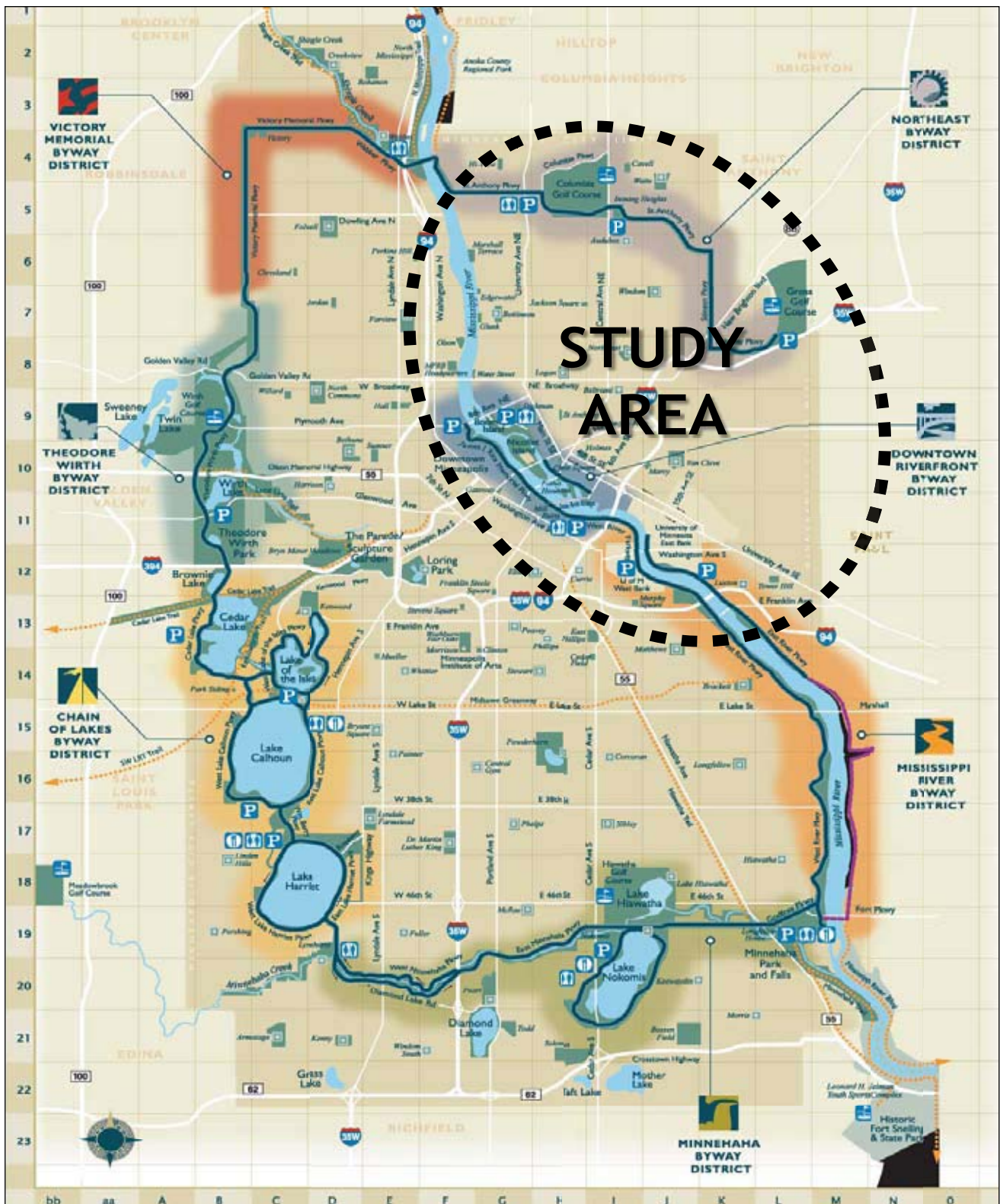
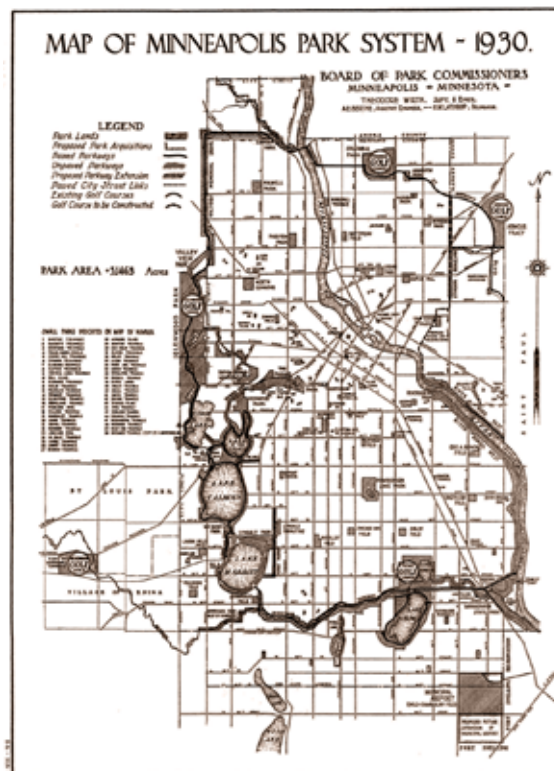


Fig. 2. Grand Rounds Parkway System and the Missing Link Study Area Location

“necklace” encircling the city and will provide Minneapolis and adjoining communities access to parks, trails, paths, and green space.

## 2b. Study Area Description

The Missing Link Development Study area is the portion of Minneapolis located north and east of the Mississippi River, south of St. Anthony Boulevard and west of St. Paul (Fig. 3. Missing Link Study Area). Interstate 35W bisects the area and Trunk Highway (TH) 280 is located just east of the study area. The East Bank Campus of the University of Minnesota is located in the southern part of the study area. Eighteen neighborhoods of Minneapolis and the southern portion of the City of St. Anthony comprise the study area. Due to the location of the gap between St. Anthony Parkway and East River Parkway, the Missing Link study efforts focused primarily on the east portion of the study area from I-35W to the Minneapolis – St. Paul border. The most viable parkway route alternatives and ultimately the preferred parkway route are in this area.





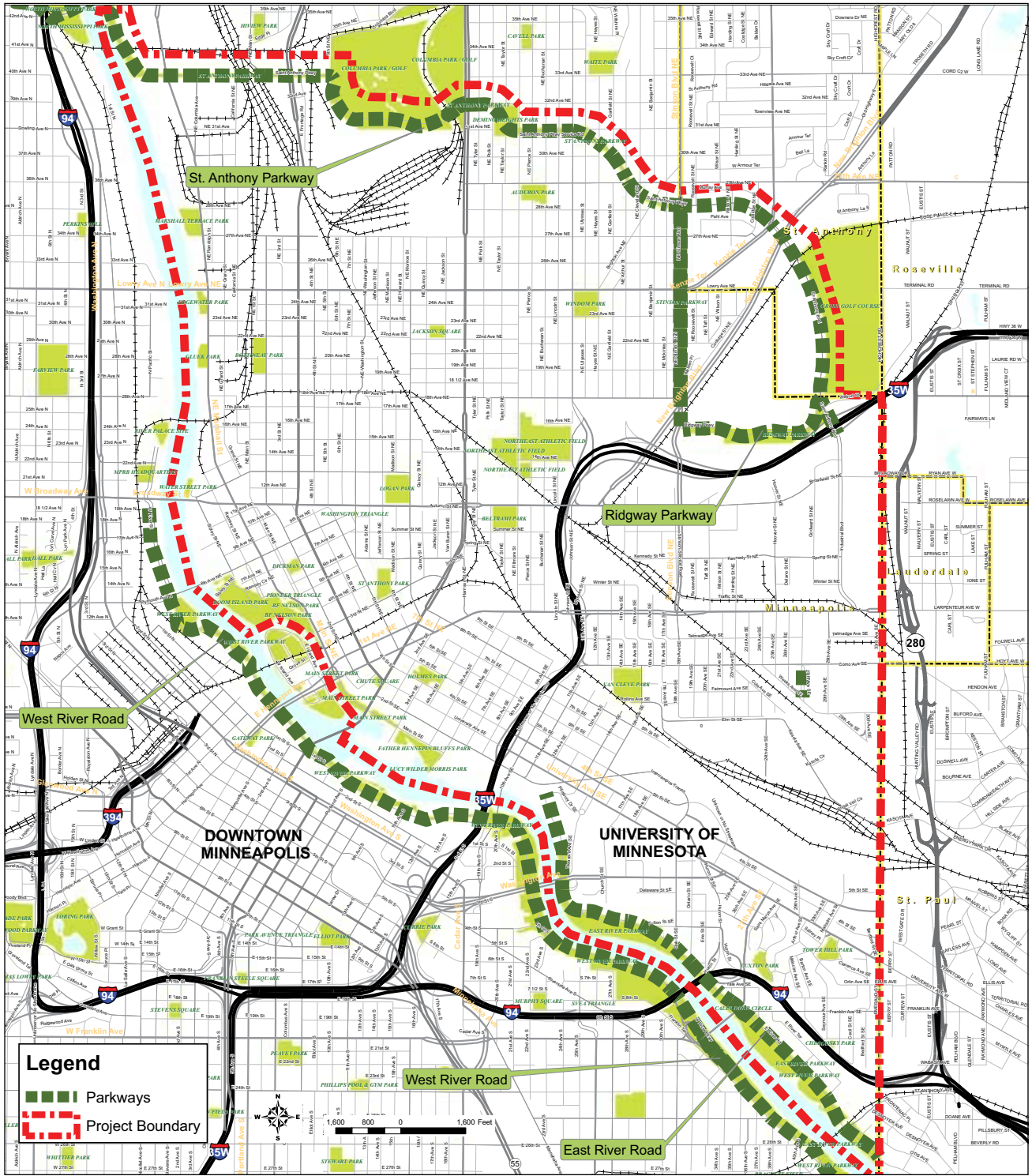


Fig. 3. Missing Link Study Area



## 2c. Neighborhood Character and Land Use

Minneapolis barely extended beyond St. Anthony Falls when Cleveland proposed the first park system. The Minneapolis area has greatly changed and grown. Today the study area is developed with a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, public, and institutional uses. Industrial uses are located south of I-35W and along railroad lines. Commercial and high density residential buildings are near the river and along major roadways, and the University of Minnesota is located in the southern portion of the study area.

The terrain varies from flat urban streetscapes to the scenic Mississippi River gorge. Much of the housing was built from 1900 to the 1940's. Industrial development occurred later in the 1950-1970's. Gross Golf Course, the Mississippi River, Ridgway Park, Deming Park, Columbia Golf Course and Hillside Cemetery are the primary green spaces within the study area. Bridal Veil Creek used to be a prominent feature with the creek moving through many wetlands, ponds and finally over the Bridal Veil Falls into the Mississippi River. Today the creek is almost completely underground in pipes and has pollution and water quality issues.

There are several complementary planning initiatives in this area. The following studies, in particular, had an influence on parkway planning here.

- *Southeast Minneapolis Industrial (SEMI)/Bridal Veil Area Alternative Urban Area-wide Review (AUAR) and Refined Master Plan* (2001). A vision and master plan for redevelopment of the areas north and south of the BNSF railroad yard.
- *Bridal Veil Creek Watershed History and Planning Study* (1996). Documented the natural history, the hydrologic, soil and vegetative conditions, and provides an analysis and recommended improvements for the area.
- *Industrial Land Use Study and Employment Policy Plan* (2006). Identified the importance of retaining key areas in Minneapolis for industrial use.
- *Marshall Street Studies and Plans* (2002). A series of planning efforts to ‘green’ Marshall Street by adding landscaping, trails and bike lanes.
- *Above the Falls Master Plan* (1999). A master plan for development of the Mississippi River corridor above St. Anthony Falls into a linear park.

## 2d. Challenges and Opportunities

**The construction of the Missing Link will fulfill a 120-year civic vision of creating a grand loop of green space and parkway through Minneapolis and the adjoining communities.** The Missing Link will connect the East Side of Minneapolis to the Mississippi River, Wirth Park, the Chain of Lakes, Minnehaha Park, and other amenities. It will bring needed recreation, park, and open space to the East Side of Minneapolis, and the adjoining communities. The parkway can also act as a catalyst for new neighborhood and commercial development. Studies show property located near green space has a higher value than similar property that lacks access to green space thus increasing the tax base. The Missing Link will also link the Minneapolis and St. Paul parkway systems, thus creating a multi-city network of parkway roads, trails, and green spaces.

**Portions of Southeast Minneapolis lack access to parks.** The MPRB's policy is to provide parks within a 6-10 block distance from residents. The addition of the final parkway segment would add parks to those areas which have been underserved with respect to park availability.

**The East Side of Minneapolis and adjoining communities lack access to natural resources.** The addition of the Missing Link will provide access to Bridal Veil Wetland, Bridal Veil Creek, and Kasota Pond, and enhance access to the Mississippi River. The proposed parkway would restore historic natural features such as wetlands and ponds in parks and green spaces to this area.

**Trails are the most desired recreation feature of the proposed Missing Link as they are used by people of all ages and abilities and accommodate walking, biking, running, in-line skating, dog walking, and socializing.** There is a shortage of trails in the East Side of Minneapolis and the adjoining communities. Due to the close proximity to the University of Minnesota, this area has a high volume of bike commuters.

**The addition of parks, parkways, paths, and open spaces can be difficult in a developed area and requires political vision and will, community commitment and a long-term strategy.** Acquiring private property for a public amenity can be controversial, but the community benefits of the Grand Rounds Parkway System are well known and will significantly enhance the area.



**Truck access and movement are important elements of industrial areas. Most parkways restrict truck access.** Since the Missing Link route will go through an existing industrial area the truck access policy will need to be examined on a site specific basis to decide if and where truck use of the parkway is appropriate.

**Vehicular traffic is a way of life in urban areas, but the Missing Link will need to be designed to minimize new traffic in residential neighborhoods.** Parkways are purposefully designed with lower speed limits and other measures to offer a slower, more pleasant driving experience. Also, parkways per se do not generate new vehicle trips, other than recreation users driving for pleasure. The use of existing streets, curving road alignments, and narrow road profiles can help assure the parkways do not have a negative traffic effect on surrounding communities.

**Existing roads in the area provide an excellent framework for the Missing Link route as there is significant public road right of way along much of the proposed parkway route.** For the most part, existing roads can be enhanced to parkway standards by adding landscaping, a trail and sidewalk to turn them into a parkway. In essence, much of the Missing Link work will involve “greening” existing roads and right-of-way.

**The railroads offer constraints and opportunities.** The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad line and the BNSF railroad yard run through the east central part of the study area. The Missing Link will need to cross them with underpasses and bridges, but the underutilized railroad yard land offers future development, park, and green space opportunities.



### 3. PROJECT GOALS





### 3a. Supporting Principles

The CAC adopted six overarching project goals to guide the study and aid in evaluation of Missing Link parkway and park land alternatives:

- 1) Provide parkway system continuity;
- 2) Enhance recreational opportunities;
- 3) Enhance or protect the environment;
- 4) Improve mobility;
- 5) Create economic benefits;
- 6) Be feasible and compatible.

Each of these “high-level” goals was supported by more specific and appropriate objectives. Further supporting information and more a detailed explanation of the Project Goals can be found in the Appendix.







## 4. HOW ROUTES WERE CHOSEN AND REFINED





#### **4a. Summary of CAC/TAC Process**

The CAC met monthly from June, 2007 until April, 2008. The CAC was charged with making recommendations to the MPRB – to review and recommend alternate Missing Link routes, parkway amenities and park land locations. Political leadership encouraged the CAC to be visionary and think boldly. A typical CAC meeting included presentations from project consultants and guest speakers, with the Chair or Vice Chair presiding over a parliamentary process with voting motions and decisions, inclusive round-table discussion and requested actions and/or information needed for the next meeting.

Participation throughout the process was excellent – several of the meetings had 100% of the CAC members present. Interaction and discussion between the CAC, project team, guest speakers, and occasionally the public, was never lacking. Citizens from adjoining neighborhoods also regularly attended meetings. The TAC also met monthly to provide the CAC with technical support and advice throughout the duration of the study process. Aside from the monthly meetings, CAC members were present at five community open house meetings, a bus tour of the study area, and at neighborhood meetings with adjoining communities.

Evaluation criteria were developed and adapted by the CAC early in the study process. These criteria were used as an objective basis for comparison and evaluation between potential parkway segments. Further information and the detailed evaluation criteria can be found in the Appendix.



Early CAC meetings focused on many topics, including historical context of the Grand Rounds, destinations and barriers, and existing condition of neighborhoods, land uses and the transportation network. Discussion also focused on local green-space needs, elements and characteristics of parkway design – minimum widths, roadway footprint, dedicated trails, natural landscape, etc, and natural amenity locations and opportunities. Fig. 4. Typical Parkway Cross Sections shows the range of parkway widths that were considered.

The CAC examined other parkways including Victory Memorial Parkway, St. Anthony Parkway and Summit Avenue, with attention focused on infrastructure cross section, right-of-way footprint,

and the range of linear parkway widths. The existing right-of-way widths within the study area ranged from 54' in the Prospect Park area to 200' along Broadway Ave. and Stinson Boulevard. While pieces of trails and bikeways are present within the study area of the East Side of Minneapolis, there is a lack of connectivity, especially off-street trails and across the various railroad barriers and industrial areas. The CAC also reviewed existing plans throughout the study area developed by the City of Minneapolis and others. Many of the graphics presented throughout the CAC study process can be found in the Appendix.



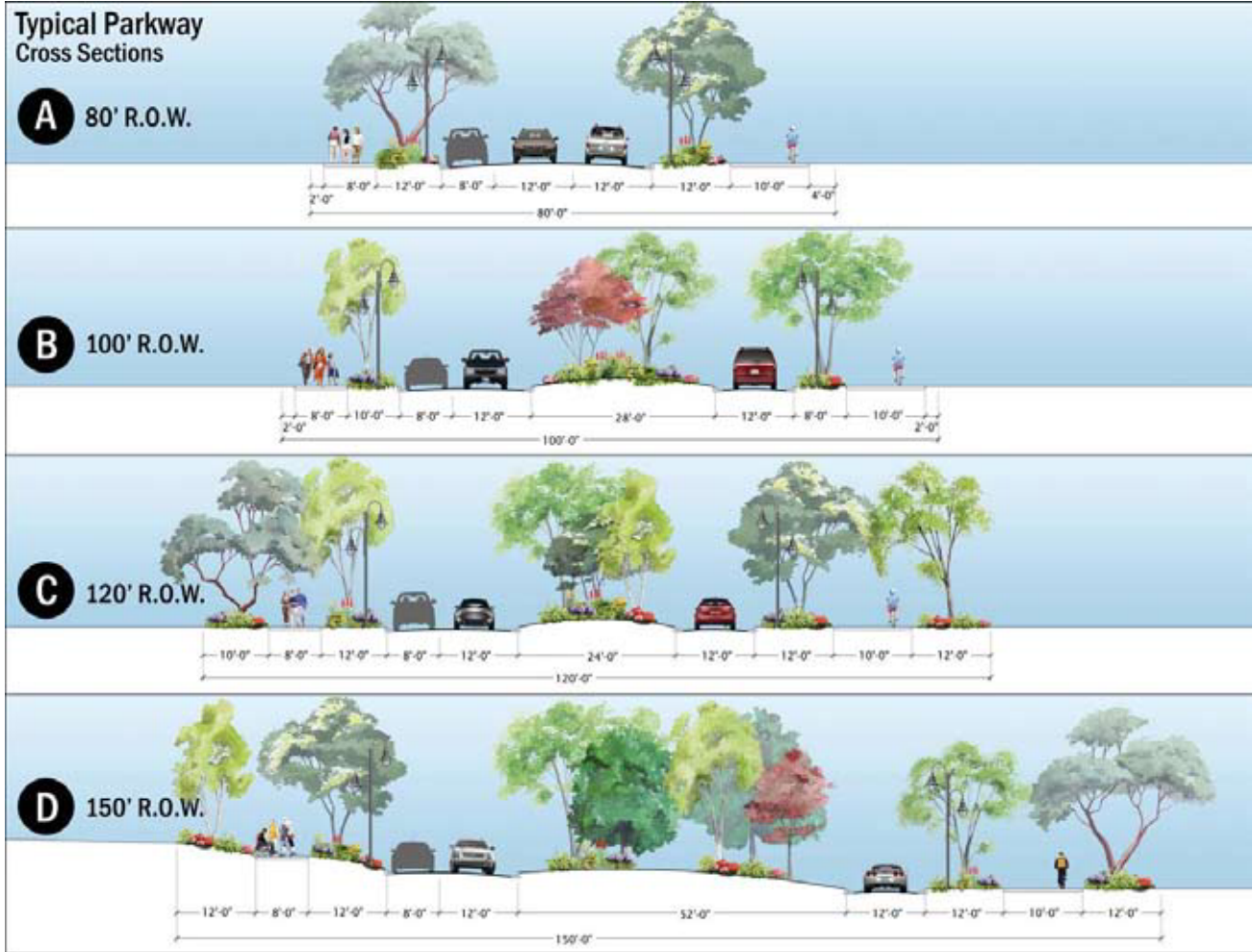


Fig. 4. Typical Parkway Cross Sections



## 4b. Early Route Segments

As a starting point for discussion in July 2007, ten potential north/south segments were identified within the study area. These segments ran between the existing Grand Rounds north terminus along St. Anthony Boulevard to the southern Grand Rounds terminus at East River Parkway, and included segments of Marshall Street, University Avenue, Central Avenue, Johnson Street, Stinson Boulevard, Oak Street, 27th Avenue SE and TH 280. (Fig. 5. Parkway Route Segment Options).

In late July, many CAC members attended a Saturday morning bus tour of the route segments. Comments were recorded and summarized for later discussion with the entire CAC and TAC. A take-home exercise was used to gather further information about special community features, significant destinations, recreational amenities, land uses and general impressions regarding the bus tour segment routes.

The tour revealed flaws for some segments, and during a post-tour lunch meeting, several segments were dismissed from further study. Each of the route segments were evaluated against the previously identified evaluation criteria. University Avenue, Central Avenue and Johnson Street were discussed at later CAC meetings, compared to the evaluation criteria, and subsequently dismissed from further study for various reasons (see Appendix). Through discussion and a vetting process, two north/south

corridor alignments in the eastern section of the study area emerged as prime candidates (Fig. 6. Potential Parkway Alignments):

- 1) Stinson Boulevard to Oak Street (or 15th Avenue SE through the University of Minnesota) to East River Parkway;
- 2) Industrial Boulevard to 27th Avenue SE to East River Parkway (with a half dozen mid-route options through the industrial area and across the BNSF railroad yard).

These two alignments were carried forward for further study and evaluation, and were presented to the public at the first set of Open Houses (two open houses) in September and October, 2007.

Marshall Street was recognized as a valuable parkway linkage opportunity, although the roadway and right-of-way foot print is not sufficient to complete the Missing Link. The CAC voted to unanimously support the City of Minneapolis' initiative to transform Marshall Street into a "green avenue" and recognize this route an important inner loop.





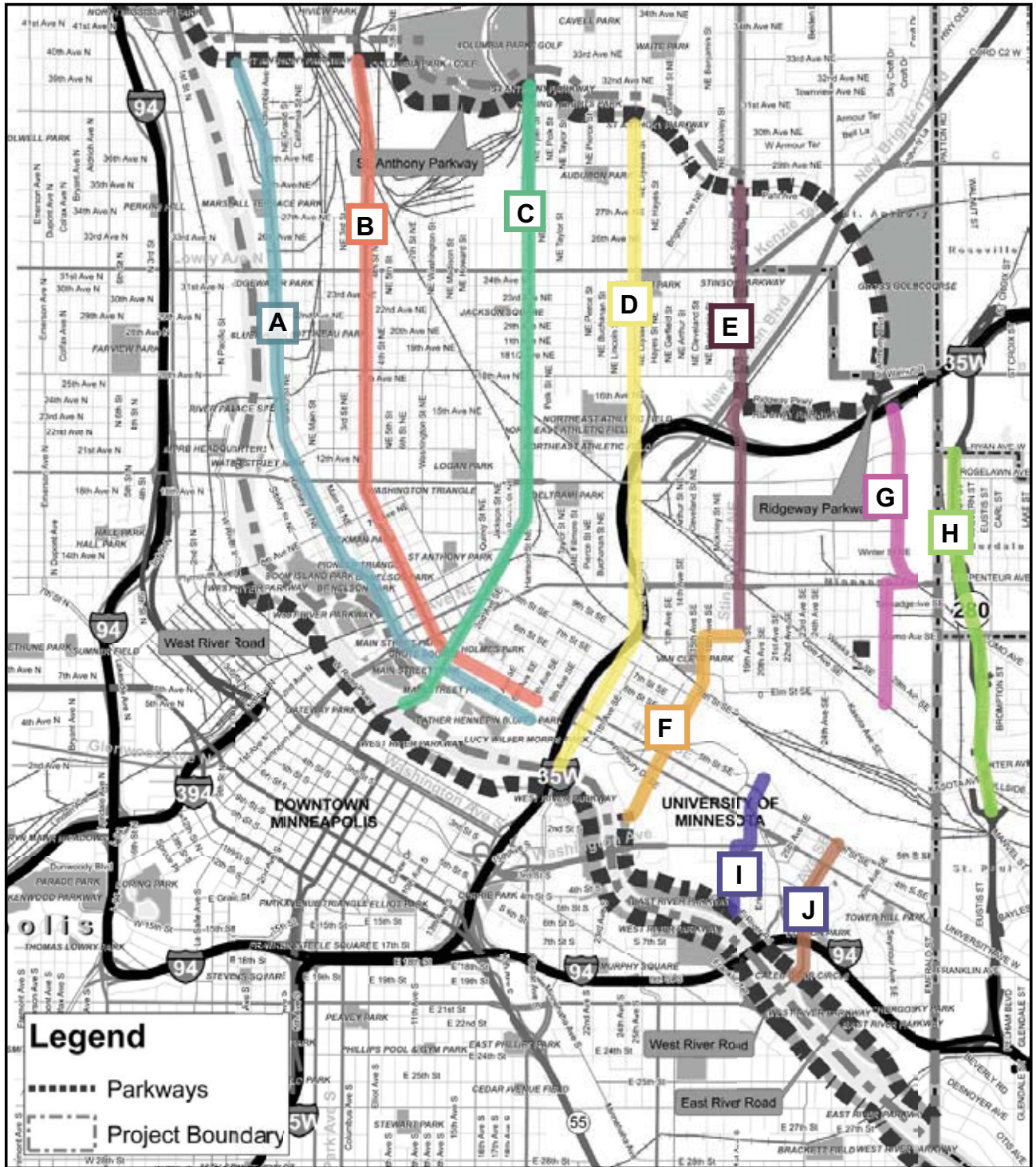


Fig. 5. Parkway Route Segment Options





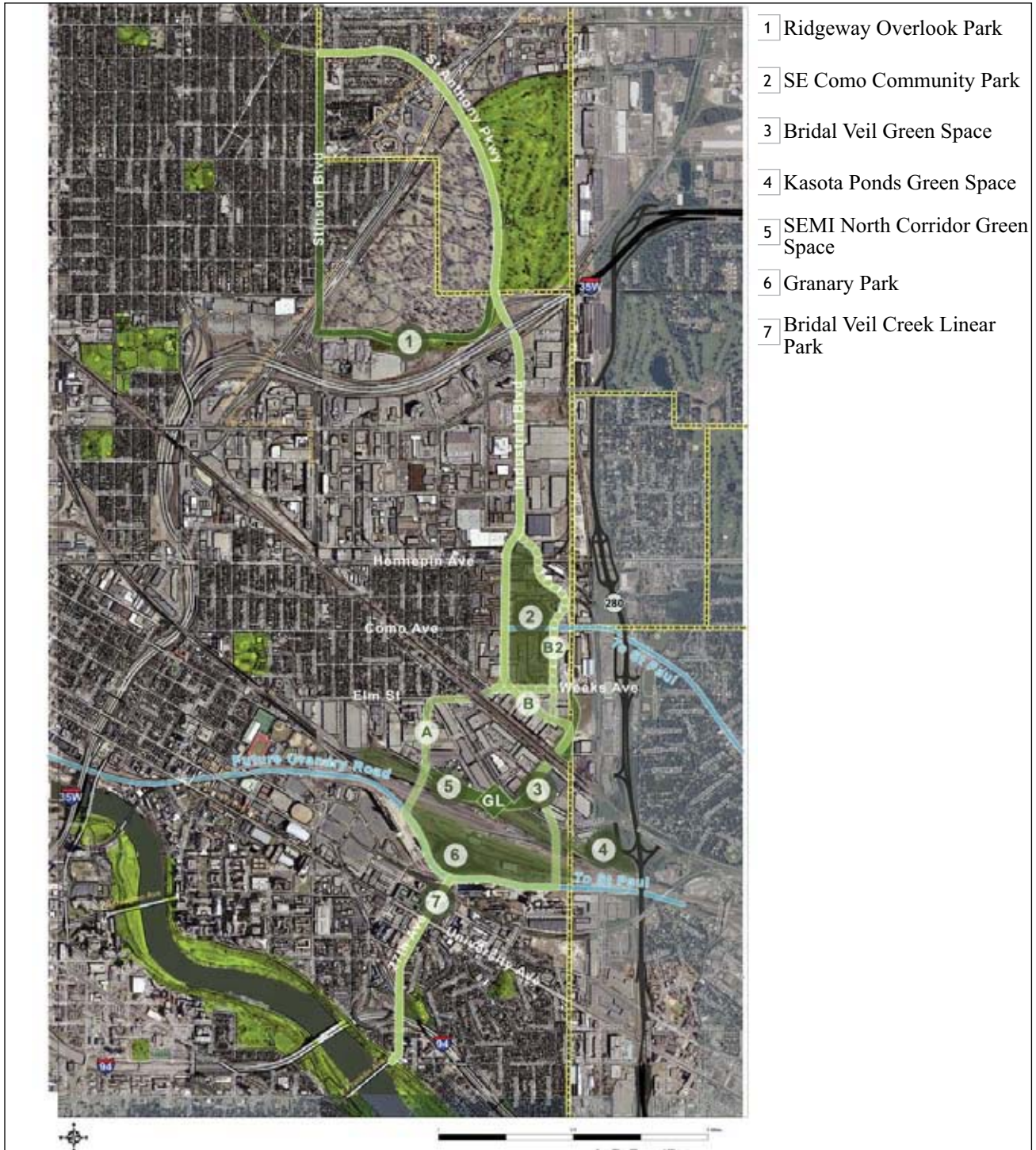


Fig. 6. Potential Parkway Alignments



## 4c. Open Houses and Public Engagement

A series of Open Houses were held beginning in September 2007. Initially two were planned, but the CAC added three more meetings in an effort to get as much public input as possible. CAC and TAC members were encouraged to attend to talk with residents and hear their input. All public meetings included informal interaction with the consultant project team and CAC members, followed by more formal presentations of the study progress and findings to date, and concluded with a question and answer session. Handout information explaining the study area, goals and objectives was also available. Each of the Open Houses was extremely well attended by neighborhood representative and people from the greater community. Written surveys were used to obtain information and opinions of various alignments, parkway features and park land locations as well. Open House presentation information was posted on the MPRB website.

### *Open House Schedule*

*September 18, 2007 Northeast Recreation Center*

*October 18, 2007 Windom Recreation Center*

*January 16, 2008 Luxton Recreation Center*

*January 17, 2008 Van Cleve Recreation Center*

*January 30, 2008 Windom Recreation Center*

The right-of-way impacts identified in the Stinson Boulevard to Oak Street corridor, and the impact of taking homes in the Como neighborhood area, were not favorably received by community representatives present at the Open Houses. Consequently, this route through the Como neighborhood was removed from further consideration by the CAC. The Industrial Boulevard to 27th Avenue SE alignments then received more thorough focus to find the Missing Link connection. Further detailed information, including a summary of Open House survey results, can be found in the Appendix.

Additional routes were developed and presented at a second round of three public open houses. Ultimately four hybrid route segments through the East Como Industrial Area were developed after public input and committee discussion. Among those routes, two routes had general support: B+B2 and A+B (Fig. 7. East Como Industrial Area Route Options). Between these two routes, one segment was ultimately





- 1 Ridgeway Overlook Park
- 2 SE Como Community Park
- 3 Bridal Veil Green Space
- 4 Kasota Ponds Green Space
- 5 SEMI North Corridor Green Space
- 6 Granary Park
- 7 Bridal Veil Creek Linear Park

Fig. 7. East Como Industrial Area Route Options



chosen (B+B2) by the CAC as the preferred route for the Missing Link. The preferred route is documented in Section 6a. below.

#### **4d. Public Support**

There are many public and neighborhood partners willing to participate in parkway, path, park, and community reinvestment. The Grand Rounds Parkway will provide recreation, community building, and transportation benefits to the city, region and state. In addition, the historic designation of the Grand Rounds provides additional stakeholders and funding resources. Taken together, the Grand Rounds/Missing Link will have access to many local, state and federal funding sources for acquisition and construction.





## 5. LANDMARK PARKS AND AMENITIES







One goal of the Missing Link Development Study is to enhance recreational opportunities through the addition of parks and open space. The park needs in this area are two-fold; to create recreation amenities along the future parkway route, and to enhance the underserved East Side neighborhoods.

### **5a. Desired Park Character, Features and Identified Locations and Options**

The recreation goals of the study area are to enhance recreational opportunities by:

- a. Adding recreational value and improve the quality of life in neighborhoods.
- b. Adding park and open space opportunities inside and outside of the selected byway corridor.
- c. Identifying a signature park and/or amenity that may be unique to Minneapolis and an addition to the Regional Park System.

With public feedback on various options, the CAC evaluated several areas for the addition of park land and enhancement of existing park space. The CAC felt that park and open space areas should be distributed along the route of the parkway instead of just one location, and identified seven park sites. The public was supportive of new park space and expressed a desire for walking and biking trails, a mix of natural areas, gardens, passive recreation space, and, to a lesser extent, sports fields and courts.

### **5b. Integration of Parks with the Neighborhoods**

Utilizing input from the neighborhoods, the CAC selected park sites that would provide attractions along the new parkway and provide needed park space for the East Side neighborhoods. The specific design of these park spaces would respond to the local needs of the neighborhoods while providing a variety of attractions for visitors. The study prepared concept plans for these seven parks spaces to illustrate ideas for how the park lands could be designed. As implementation moves forward, the MPRB will develop specific designs for the parks and seek additional future community input.







## 6. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS





## 6a. Preferred Missing Link Parkway Route

The recommended Missing Link route and associated parks fulfill the charge given to the CAC to identify a achievable route, provide new local park spaces, and identifies new regional park amenities (Fig. 8. Preferred Missing Link Parkway Route – Recommended Park Sites). North of I-35W, the recommended route begins at the intersection of St. Anthony Parkway and Stinson Parkway. It then follows St. Anthony Parkway east and south passing through a section of St. Anthony Village (on St. Anthony Blvd) where it borders Gross Golf Course and then intersects with Ridgway Parkway and I-35W. Once passing under I-35W, the preferred route continues south on Industrial Boulevard. to East Hennepin Avenue. South of Hennepin Avenue, the route leaves Industrial Boulevard. heading southeasterly on new roadway alignment through industrial properties between 29th Avenue SE and the Minneapolis City limits. Most of these industrial properties will need to be acquired for the purpose of fulfilling the Missing Link and for providing needed parkland.

As the route moves south past Como Avenue, it continues through industrial properties, intersects Weeks Avenue and then, via an underpass, travels beneath the BNSF rail line. It then enters the Bridal Veil Pond site, avoids the newly created wetlands and climbs above the proposed Kasota Road alignment, bridging the BNSF rail yard and intersects with future Granary Road. From there, the route follows the Granary Road alignment west to 27th Avenue SE, where it turns south, crosses over I-94 on the existing bridge, then intersects with East River Parkway at the Franklin Avenue Bridge. (Figs. 9, 9a. and 9b. are illustrations of the recommended Missing Link Parkway. Fig. 9. shows the entire parkway from St. Anthony Parkway to River Road. Figs. 9a. and 9b. are detailed views of the north and south halves of the Missing Link Parkway.)

While property is being acquired for the preferred route and adjacent parklands, 29th Avenue SE between East Hennepin Avenue and the BNSF line could be modestly improved to serve as an interim connecting link for the Grand Rounds Parkway. In this segment, the public right of way for 29th Avenue SE is just 54 feet in width, so properties to the east may need to be acquired and developed to safely accommodate vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Since some or all of this property will ultimately be needed for the preferred parkway route and adjacent park, the interim and long-range uses are not inconsis-





Fig. 8. Preferred Missing Link Parkway Route – Recommended Park Sites





Fig. 9.  
 Illustrated Views –  
 Recommended  
 Missing Link  
 Parkway Route







Fig. 9a. Illustrated Views –  
Recommended Missing Link Parkway Route





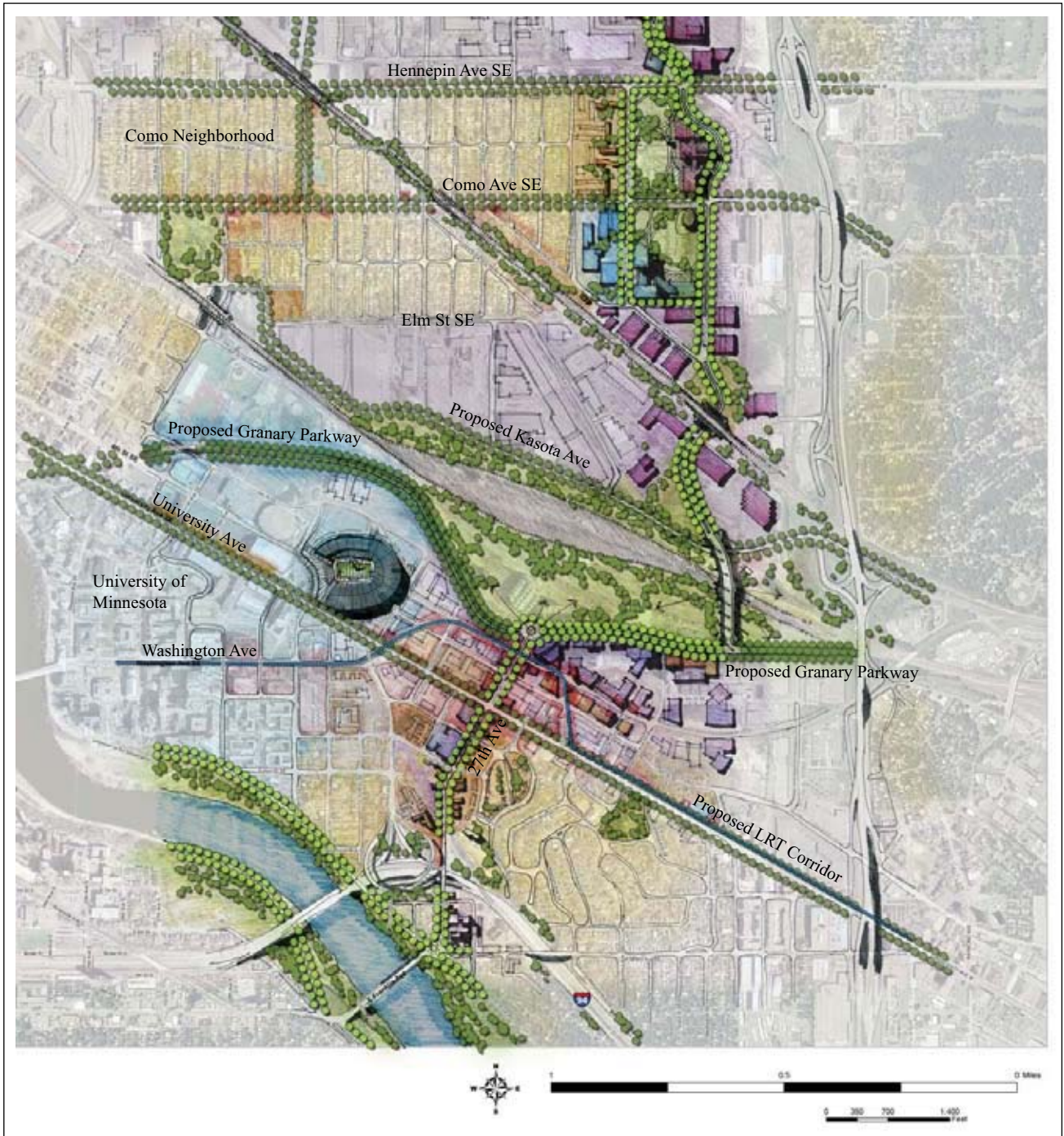


Fig. 9b. Illustrated Views –  
Recommended Missing Link Parkway Route



tent. Improvements along 29th Avenue SE would likely consist of signage, striping, a trail, and landscaping.

The north portion of the preferred Missing Link route, following today's St. Anthony and Industrial Boulevards to East Hennepin Avenue, nearly replicates the portion of St. Anthony Boulevard completed in 1924 by Theodore Wirth and used as part of the Minneapolis Parkway System from 1924-1932. It has a historical foundation as well.

## **6b. Missing Link Parkway Character**

The Missing Link will have a character consistent, yet unique, with the rest of the existing Grand Rounds Parkway System. (Fig. 10 illustrates the character and the amenities of the existing Grand Rounds Parkway System. Fig. 11 is a concept illustration of the Southeast Como Community Park and the Missing Link Parkway.) The CAC identified the entire Missing Link as a "Garden Route" making the parkway, itself, a unique amenity. As a Garden Route, the parkway is planted heavily the entire length with trees, shrubs and perennials with the involvement of the local communities.

Aside from plantings, there will be a separate bike trail on one side and a sidewalk on the other side. See the Appendix for before- and after-plan and cross section views of the proposed parkway at seven locations along the route. Where appropriate, there will be

off-street parking spaces parallel to the roadway. The parkway will have a 25 MPH speed limit consistent with the rest of the Minneapolis parkway system. The parkway will utilize existing roads except for the area between East Hennepin Avenue and future Granary Road. In this area, a new parkway road will be built along with a railroad underpass and a bridge over the railroad yard. A bicycle trail and landscaping will be added to the east side of existing 29th Avenue SE between East Hennepin Avenue and Weeks Avenue. When combined with the Missing Link trail to the east, it creates a pleasant 1.25 mile loop trail opportunity.

Signage and lighting will be consistent with the rest of the Grand Rounds Parkway System. Rest areas, including drinking fountains, seating, bike racks, portable toilets and screens, and information kiosks, will occur along the new parkway route.

The Missing Link will complete the Grand Rounds Scenic Byway, creating a continuous 53 mile green space loop around Minneapolis. The parkway will create a unique scenic landscaped corridor for a pleasant driving experience along with off-street trails and paths, parks, and green spaces.





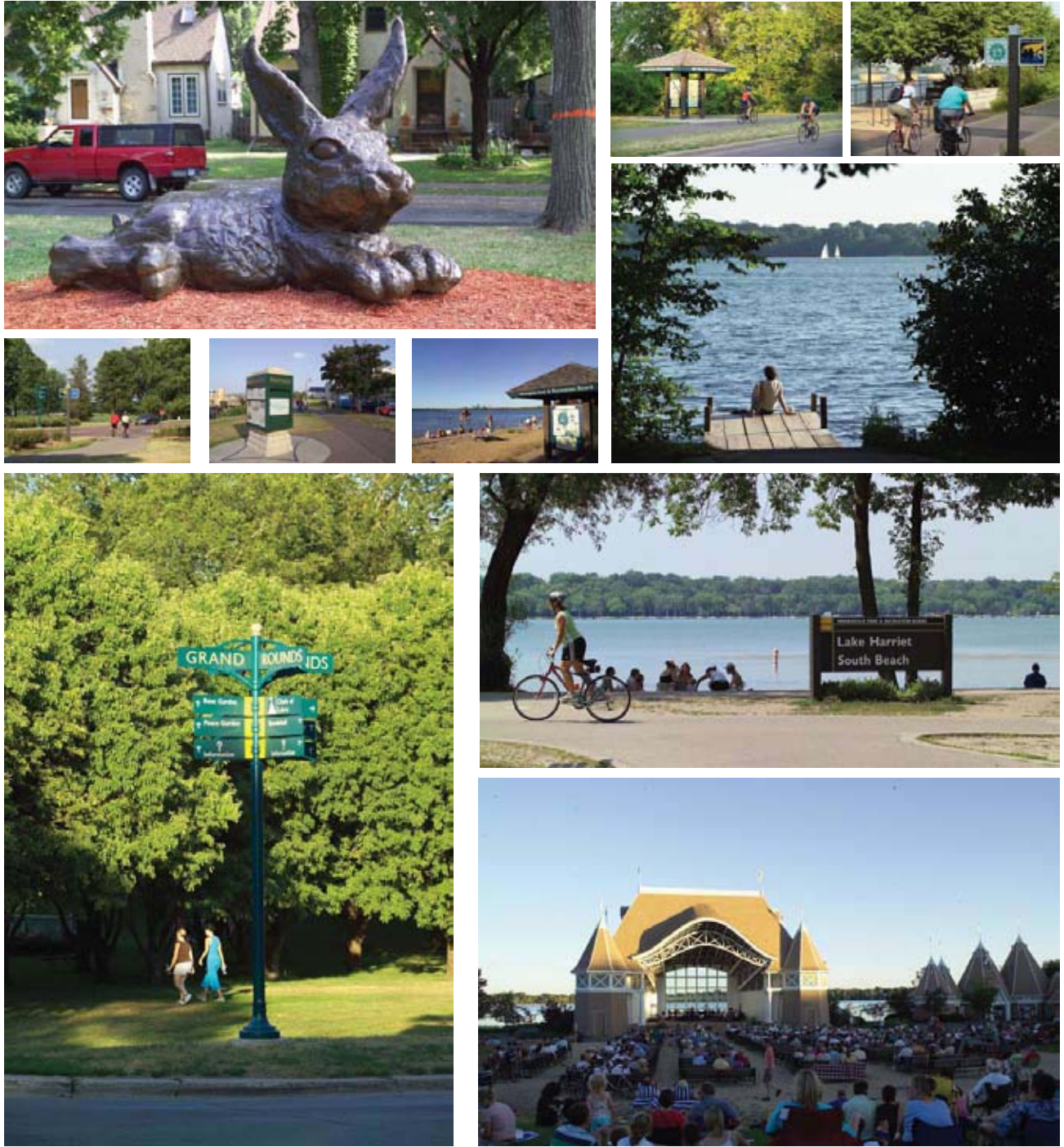


Fig. 10. Grand Rounds Parkway System Amenity Elements



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Performance Arts Shelter                  | 5. Shared Parking Facility                     |
| 2. Eco-Business Partnership with Green Roofs | 6. Playground with Picnic Shelters             |
| 3. Stormwater Ponds                          | 7. Open Play Fields                            |
| 4. Missing Link Parkway                      | 8. Public/Private Land Partnership Opportunity |



Fig. 11. Illustration – Southeast Como Community Park and Missing Link Parkway System.





## 6c. Parks and Open Spaces

The CAC recommends the addition and/or improvement of seven parks and green spaces to enhance the character of the Missing Link route and provide recreation opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors. Four of these areas would be new parks and three would be improvements to existing park and open space land (Fig. 8. Missing Link Parkway Route – Recommended Park Sites shows the location of park amenity areas). Plans for the seven parklands are shown in the Park Concept Plans in the Appendix. These plans represent initial ideas and options for development and enhancement of park lands. These concept plans were presented to the public and the CAC prioritized the importance of each of these parks. Concept plans for four parks (Ridgeway Overlook, SE Como Community Park, Granary Park and Bridal Veil Open Space) are shown in Figs. 12. and 13. Refined Concept Examples. The actual park designs will be determined through separate future processes with additional community input. The recommended park and open space amenities are:

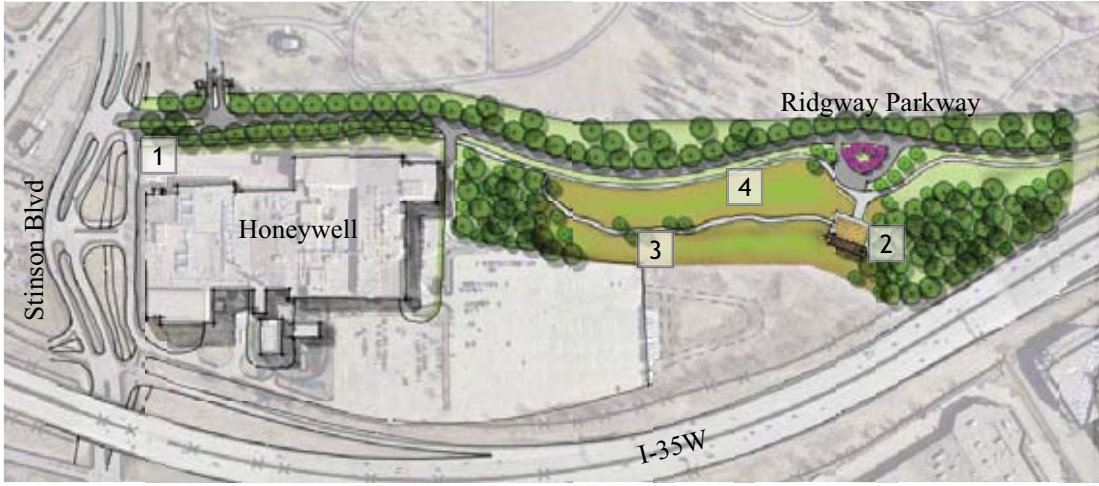
**Ridgeway Overlook Park** is existing MPRB land located on Ridgeway Parkway. Perched high above I-35W, Overlook Park has an exceptional view of downtown Minneapolis. The proposed improvements are to include a gazebo/picnic shelter, overlook terrace, trails and landscaping.

**SE Como Community Park** is proposed as a new ‘signature park’ for the region and neighborhood. It would be approximately 60-80 acre park located south of East Hennepin Avenue between 29th Avenue SE and the future Missing Link route to the east. The park site is currently used for industrial/warehouse purposes by private businesses and the University of Minnesota. The park is to include regional and neighborhood attractions. Four park concept ideas were prepared for the land. While each plan has a design theme, the common elements include trails, ponds, gardens, play equipment, a park shelter building, open play fields, and parking. The four concept plans are:

*Alternative Sports Park* – This plan has a focus on non-traditional sports activities such as indoor and outdoor skateboarding, and a BMX bike course along with traditional recreation features, such as children’s play equipment, turf play fields etc.

*Cultural Arts Park* – This concept has a focus on arts activities with an art center building, and a sculpture garden. A picnic shel-





1. Formal Entry Gateway
2. Addition of Pedestrian Overlook
3. Turf Trail Through Existing Prairie Restoration
4. Existing Trail

Ridgway Overlook Park Refined Concept Example



1. Large Wetland Restoration
2. Trails and Interpretive Boardwalks
3. Picnic Shelter
4. Stormwater Ponding
5. Parking
6. Lookout Tower - Viewing Guide to Point Out Various Minneapolis and St Paul Geographic Features, Railroad History, Wetland History and Ecology, Etc.
7. Bridge with Lookout Rest Stop for Recommended Route

Granary Park Refined Concept Example

Fig. 12. Refined Park Concept Examples







SE Como Community Park Refined Concept Example

1. Stormwater Ponding
  2. Redevelopment of light industry
  3. Redevelopment of Corporate Office Space/ Buffer from Adjacent Uses - Green Roofs
  4. Shared Open Space and Corporate Campus
  5. Picnic Shelter
  6. Play Area
  7. Open Play Field
  8. Shared Parking
  9. Amphitheater and Bridge
1. Parkway Alignment along side of Wetlands and Bridal Veil Creek
  2. Wetland Restoration
  3. Tunnel under Railroad Tracks
  4. Bridge Over Railroad Tracks



Bridal Veil Open Space Refined Concept Example

Fig. 13. Refined Park Concept Examples



ter, a restored wetland, play equipment and play fields are also included. A potential land bridge over Como Avenue is shown as an idea to extend the scope and feel of the park space.

*Eco-Business Park* – This concept illustrates integrating business development into a park to create an eco-business park. Eco-friendly businesses would take advantage of the view and access to the park. Environmental learning stewardship examples could occur in the park space. Park features could include a large pond, loop trails, a band shell, picnic shelter, play area and play fields.

*Formal Gardens* – This plan shows a formal park with reflecting ponds, gardens, a band shell, woodland restoration and large open lawn area. The plan also shows the park as a “cut and cover” land bridge extending the over a recessed Como Avenue.

Of these, the Formal Gardens and the Eco-Business Park had the greatest community and CAC support.

**Bridal Veil Green Space** is a recently restored wetland and pollution mitigation project where the former Bridal Veil Pond was located, just north of Kasota Avenue. The Missing Link would run along the east side of the wetland. There is an opportunity to create a loop walking path around the wetland and to add interpretive information about the history of the area and Bridal Veil Creek.

**Kasota Ponds Green Space** is an existing pond located in St. Paul next to the Kasota Avenue and TH 280 interchange. Community members value the wildlife, wetlands and open space benefits of this pond area. There is a desire to improve access to the pond through the use of natural surface trails. Any improvements would need to be coordinated with the City of St. Paul and the adjacent neighborhood. The St. Paul neighborhood of St. Anthony Park has concerns about the close proximity of the new parkway and bridge over the rail yard with the nearby Kasota Ponds wetlands. Proper and careful mitigation of stormwater is critical to preserving the ponds.

**SEMI North Corridor Green Space** is a new proposed linear park to be located on land that is currently the north edge of the BNSF railroad yard. The park would run from Kasota Ponds near TH 280 to approximately 30th Avenue SE, south of Elm Street. The park could act as a trail connector and landscaped greenway.

**Granary Park** is a proposed park to be centered on the historic Electric Steel Grain Elevators. The park would be located primarily on railroad property on the south side of the existing railroad yard. The SEMI Plan called for a park with storm water ponds to be located around the grain elevators. This proposal would expand the park to the north into the railroad yard. One concept plan for the park illustrates a nature oriented wetland park, with trails and use of the grain elevators as an observation area. The other concept shows smaller ponds linked by trails and suggest re-use of the elevators as a climbing structure and possibly for an elevated restaurant.





**Bridal Veil Creek Linear Park** is proposed to be a linear park/plaza flanking a day-lighted section of Bridal Veil Creek. The creek currently runs underground in pipes. This proposal would bring the creek back to the surface in a two block area, from Granary to University Avenue along the proposed Missing Link alignment (27th Avenue SE) as an amenity to enjoy.

## 6d. Trail Connections

The Missing Link will include a continuous off-street trail along with an off-street sidewalk from St. Anthony Parkway at Stinson Boulevard to East River Parkway. This trail segment will complete the 53 mile loop trail around Minneapolis that has been the vision of the City for over 120-years. This will connect the East Side of Minneapolis with the parks and attractions along the existing Grand Rounds. In addition to the parkway trail, the Missing Link study proposes other future trail additions to connect the city and add loop trail opportunities. Fig. 14. Missing Link Area Trail and Bikeways Plan is based largely on existing Minneapolis and St. Paul trail plans, with select additions reviewed by the CAC. The trail plan is designed to create a comprehensive network of off-street trails and on-street bike lanes for recreation and non-motorized transportation. In particular, the Missing Link trails are designed to create loop trail opportunities of various lengths and to connect the neighborhoods to other existing and planned trails and bikeways. Highlighted proposed Missing Link area trail additions are:

**Missing Link Trail** - A five mile off-street trail that will parallel the parkway road from Stinson Boulevard to East River Parkway. This trail will connect to the NE Diagonal Trail,

Como Avenue bike lanes, future Granary Road trail, the U of M Transitway bike trail, the future Central Corridor Light Rail Transit line, and the existing East River Parkway trail.

**Stinson Boulevard, St. Anthony Boulevard and Ridgway Parkway loop** - This proposed off-street 3.25 mile trail loop is bisected by the existing NE Diagonal trail which creates numerous trail loop options. Specific locations for the trails on Stinson, St. Anthony, and Ridgway would be determined with community input through a future planning and design process. The loop provides an additional amenity for the neighborhood, increases greening, completes the only missing section of parkway without a bike trail, and provides a connection between the local neighborhoods and Ridgway Park.

**SE Como Community Park loop trail** – A 1.25 mile off-street loop trail surrounding future SE Como Community Park and following portions of the Missing Link and 29th Avenue SE.

**Bridal Veil Wetland interpretive trail** - A loop walking trail around restored Bridal Veil wetland. The trail could include a history of the Bridal Veil watershed, and information about restoration, pollution mitigation and area history.

**Kasota Pond nature trail** (in St. Paul) - A natural surface loop trail around Kasota Pond with opportunities for wildlife observation.

**27th Avenue SE Bikeways** – The portion of the Missing Link on 27th Avenue SE will also include off-street bike lanes. These will connect East River Parkway to the University of Minnesota Transitway and form part of the University bikeways loop.





Fig. 14. Missing Link Area Trails and Bikeways Plan



**Granary Road/ Main/Marshall** – The proposed Missing Link would utilize part of future Granary Road near the U of M for a parkway route and trail. Ultimately, Granary Road is planned to connect to Main Street and Marshall Street, as well as east to St. Paul. Bikeways and trails have been contemplated for Main/Marshall and a trail would be part of Granary Road. The Main/Marshall route combined with St. Anthony Parkway and the Missing Link will create a 12 mile bike loop through the East Side of Minneapolis.

**Granary Road/Main Street to East River Parkway** – A 0.3 mile long trail segment is proposed to connect future Granary Road near Main Street to the north end of East River Parkway within the

East Bank Campus of the University of Minnesota. This trail segment would also provide a connection to the existing bikeway bridge across the across the Mississippi River.

**St. Paul connections** – The plan includes trail and bikeway connections to the St. Paul Grand Rounds Parkway system on Como Avenue and future Granary Road. The two routes will help connect the two city’s parkway systems into a larger integrated Grand Rounds parkway and trail network. (Fig. 15. Minneapolis and St. Paul Grand Rounds Connections.)

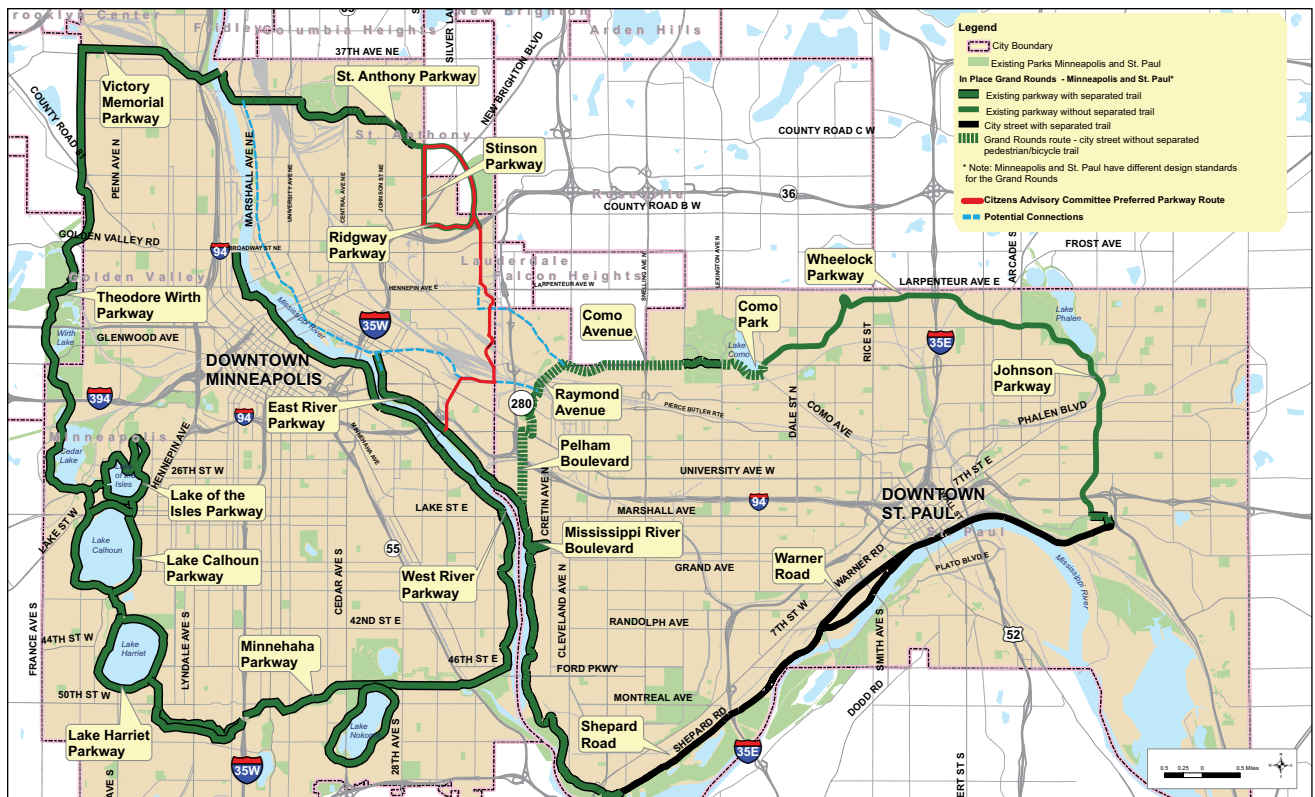


Fig. 15. Minneapolis and St. Paul Grand Rounds Connections





## 7. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES







Implementation of the Missing Link will require a number of strategies and steps. A number of partnerships and an adoption in public policy at all levels of government for the Missing Link will be needed. A first step to complete the Missing Link would be acceptance and adoption of this plan by the MPRB followed by its adoption by the Minneapolis Planning Commission and a recommendation for approval to the City Council.

The proposed St. Anthony Parkway section passes through the Village of St. Anthony, an independent municipality. The roadway from Stinson Parkway to Ridgway Parkway is St. Anthony's jurisdiction. Planning, design and funding for this section will require participation and cooperation with the citizens and government of St. Anthony. In addition, as one of the funding partners, and a jurisdiction with capital investments in the area, a request for action should be submitted to the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners to accept the route and open space commitments in the plan.

It is expected that most or all of the Missing Link will become part of the Regional Open Space System; therefore approval of the plan by the Metropolitan Open Space Commission should be sought. This approval will make it possible for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to seek funds from that source. Support from other agencies, such as the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, the State of Minnesota through its Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota's Resources, the Federal Highway Administration through its Scenic Byway office and others should be sought.

## **7a. Estimated Costs**

In order to estimate costs for constructing the Missing Link and future parks and open spaces a section-by-section evaluation utilizing parcel data obtained from the Hennepin County Assessor was done. Tax assessment values for 2007 were used to estimate acquisition costs. Relocation costs were not estimated. Standard practices for estimating engineering projects were used to generate estimates for public construction projects. Details are shown in the Appendix, a summary is included below.

The analysis shows an estimated total cost for the selected route and park improvements of \$105.1 million. Of the total cost, \$19.4 million is estimated for acquisition of right of way for the route, itself. An additional \$10.5 million is estimated for acquisition for park and open space land for a total acquisition cost of \$29.9 million.



Parkway construction and park development is estimated at \$75.2 million. Further detailed cost estimating information can be found the Appendix.

## 7b. Right of Way Acquisitions

The B+B2 Alternative may involve the acquisition of as many as 25 parcels as total or partial takings (Fig. 16. Parkway and Park Acquisition Map). During the Detailed Design phase, right-of-way requirements will be clearly delineated giving the MPRB an exact number of parcels to be acquired or otherwise affected by the project. Three parcels are owned by the University of Minnesota, the remaining are privately held. Four parcels are currently vacant; the predominant use of the 21 parcels with structures has been described as Industrial-Warehouse-Factory or as Commercial Workshop.

Hennepin County has placed a market value of \$29,916,620 on all 25 parcels in the year 2007. The eventual cost of acquisition for the project will depend on the number of parcels taken in total, or in part, and the year purchased. In each instance, appraisals will be secured by the MPRB providing an indication of Market Value for each parcel. Other costs such as relocation expenses, supplemental payments, storage, title transfer, etc. will also contribute to the final cost of each parcel acquired.

Based upon an approved Funding and Implementation Plan the MPRB will need to decide how it will proceed to acquire parcels determined necessary for the project. The speed by which parcels will be acquired will be dependent on the availability of funding and the willingness of owners to sell. While the MPRB has the authority to acquire property by using the laws of eminent domain and condemnation

proceedings, they may rather elect to purchase the needed property over time as they become available from willing sellers. The decision on when a particular parcel is needed will be influenced by the timing of the construction program and the amount of acquisition funding available at the time.

During their many deliberations, the CAC discussed the high cost and difficulty in acquiring the 25 parcels mentioned above. They also spent considerable time learning the consequences of an acquisition program of that size given the loss of jobs and property tax base. Information obtained from Hennepin County regarding the amount of property tax paid, per parcel, in 2007 and employment numbers were provided, in many instances, by the property or business owner.

The possible loss of jobs and tax revenue became a major issue for the CAC as they struggled to find an appropriate link for the Grand Rounds Parkway and sufficient property for the needed "Community Park." Many ideas were generated and alternate possibilities proposed in an attempt to minimize impacts. Suggestions were made right up until the last minute during their April 9, 2008 meeting when they made their final decision. The City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development members of the TAC and some area property owners expressed concern about job loss and property tax loss as a result of conversion of industrial properties located between East Hennepin Avenue and Weeks Avenue to parkway and park land.

The Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan policy is to retain this area of SE Minneapolis for industrial land use. A challenge is balancing the need





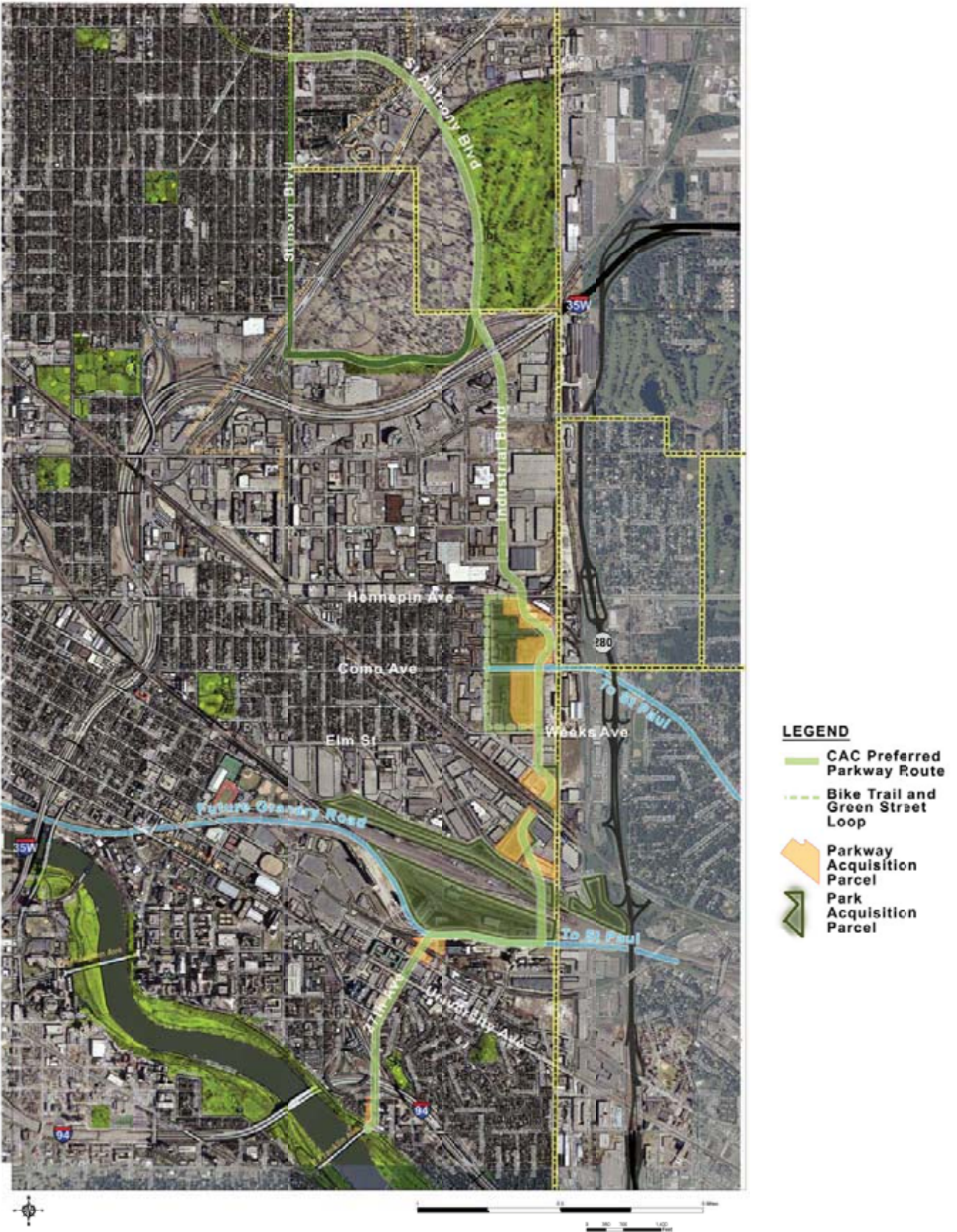


Fig. 16. Parkway and Park Acquisition Map



and desire for public park and parkway amenities and the desire for a vibrant employment and property tax base. Acquisition of some property is necessary in order to create new park and parkway space. Many alternatives were considered before selecting the preferred parkway alignment and park amenity space and recommended acquisition of property was purposely kept to a minimum. The preferred parkway route uses existing public road right of way to the extent possible.

The creation of a parkway and park space is viewed as an amenity and stimulus for development, redevelopment and revitalization of property. While some uses may be displaced, the net effect can be a stronger more vital commercial-industrial area. The parkway and park space can act as a catalyst for implementation of the Mayors' initiative on green manufacturing - Making it Green in Minneapolis Saint Paul. To that end a recommended park concept envisioned the proposed SE Como Community Park as an eco-business park combining green business and open space. This alternative could easily result in more jobs and higher property tax value than the current land use pattern.

In addition, city Department of Public Works staff had suggested staying on existing streets, providing a straight and direct connection between St. Anthony Parkway and East River Parkway, rather than the more typical parkway with horizontal and vertical curvatures. In the end, the CAC chose the B B2 alternatives because they most accurately reflected the project goals and selection criteria established early in the process – they were determined to provide the best linkage for the Grand Rounds System and the best possibility for establishing a Community Park.

Also discussed during the April 9, 2008 CAC meeting was the possibility of acquiring property in three phases starting with the University of Minnesota parcels and perhaps three that are currently privately held. The remaining parcels would be acquired in phases two and three of the acquisition program. An acquisition plan or schedule was not adopted by the CAC; they concluded that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board should adopt a funding plan and its own schedule for acquiring property from willing sellers or through the use of eminent domain.

In conclusion, the CAC voted to recommend a plan that, if implemented, would require the taking of a significant number of parcels at a high cost but the net value to the Citizens of Minneapolis and the Grand Rounds system for years to come was well worth the investment.

## 7c. Construction Phasing

The completion of the Missing Link and the addition of new parks and open space are likely to occur in phases over a period of years depending upon funding, construction sequence, coordination with other public projects, and availability of land. Fig. 17. Potential Phasing Options shows the potential ability to sequence construction by parkway segments (A through E) and park projects (1 through 7). The phasing options are listed in three groups (north, central and south). The construction sequence of the groups is flexible and the phases/segments as shown could be combined or separated as needed.





## North Group

The north parkway work extends the Grand Rounds Parkway from St. Anthony Parkway/Stinson Boulevard to East Hennepin Avenue by greening existing streets and adding walkways, a bike trail, parkway features and landscaping. Since construction of Segments A and B consists primarily of work within existing public road rights-of-way and involve little to no private property acquisition, they may be appropriate initial phases.

### *Parkway Segments*

- A. St. Anthony Parkway to I-35W and Industrial Boulevard from I-35W to East Hennepin Ave.

### *Park Project*

1. Ridgeway Overlook Park improvement

## Central Group

The central Missing Link area will connect from East Hennepin Avenue across the railroad line and railroad yard to future Granary Road. The Missing Link south of Hennepin to Granary Road will be on a new parkway corridor to be acquired across private property along with use of a segment of Bridal Veil wetland property.

This section includes a new underpass at the BNSF railroad line and a new bridge over the BNSF railroad yard to connect to future Granary Road. Granary Road is planned to eventually connect west to Main Street and east to the St. Paul Grand Rounds at Raymond Avenue. The Missing Link can also connect to the St. Paul Grand Rounds via Como Avenue. Two parkway segments and four park projects are shown for the central section. The construction

of SE Como Community Park, Bridal Veil green space, Kasota Ponds green space, and SEMI North Corridor green space is largely dependent upon the timing of land acquisition.

### *Parkway Segments*

- B. New parkway corridor from Hennepin to the BNSF railroad line.
- C. Railroad underpass at the BNSF railroad line and bridge over the BNSF railroad yard to future Granary Road.

### *Park Projects*

2. SE Como Community Park
3. Bridal Veil Green Space
4. Kasota Ponds Green Space
5. SEMI North Corridor Green Space

## South Group

The south part of the Missing Link utilizes a portion of Granary Road and connects from future Granary Road to existing East River Parkway using existing and expanded 27th Avenue SE. The south section includes two parkway segments and two park projects.

### *Parkway Segments*

- D. Granary Road from the new parkway Bridge to 27th Avenue SE
- E. 27th Avenue SE from Granary Road to East River Parkway

### *Park Projects*

6. Granary Park
7. Bridal Veil Creek Linear Park





Fig. 17. Potential Phasing Options





Construction phasing will always be predicated on the availability of both funding and right-of-way. In collaboration with an approved Funding Plan the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board should develop an Implementation Program for constructing the “Missing Link” segment of the Parkway and for the development of the park properties identified within this plan.

Regarding the recommended B-B2 route designated by the CAC on April 9, 2008; we suggest a development program moving from north to south. **Segment A** on the attached drawing begins at Stinson Parkway and then travels through a portion of the City of St. Anthony southward passing under I-35W to East Hennepin Avenue. Agreements have yet to be reached with St. Anthony but this should be obtainable in the future, especially given the history of this segment of the parkway. From a construction stand-point, this segment should be the easiest to implement given that the right-of-way width, while variable, is sufficient to support Parkway development. A narrow strip of right-of-way may need to be acquired south of I-35W, along Industrial Boulevard to East Hennepin Avenue. Building structures should not be affected.

**Segment B** begins at East Hennepin Avenue and ends at the BNSF rail line south of Weeks Avenue. This segment requires the acquisition of approximately 25 properties for the Parkway and the Southeast Como Community Park. Using the 29th Street Corridor for the development of the Parkway would avoid acquiring much of the Industrial property but would not result in a very satisfactory “parkway experience.” Given the cost of acquiring the property needed for the B2 alignment, it may be several years before the Parkway can be located there. As a result, it may be necessary that the Parkway is constructed in an interim location using a potential combination of 29th Street and the new right-of-way, or entirely on the new right-of-way, until it can be relocated to its permanent location on the B2 alignment.

**Segment C** extends from the BNSF rail line south, over the wider rail-yard, to the proposed location for new Granary Road. Here, some Industrial property would be required but this can be minimized during the detailed design. The route would pass over a portion of the Bridal Veil Ponds site that has recently been significantly altered by the state Pollution Control Agency as a mitigation measure for contamination resulting from Industrial waste disposal over decades some time ago. Bridging the rail yard would require a substantial bridge structure intersecting with an elevated Granary Road on the new location.



**Segment D** is an east-west portion of the proposed “Missing Link” traveling exclusively on new Granary Road. It should be built at the same time that the city’s Department of Public Works relocates and re-constructs Granary Road regardless of its timing with other segments, since cost-savings can be realized by installing the Parkway amenities at the same time that the road is built. It would be preferable to have the Parkway elements included in the design plans and construction contracts prepared by the City as a part of their project. Unfortunately, the City has not yet acquired funding for Granary Road and so it is not currently scheduled.

The final **Segment (E)** extends down 27th Avenue SE from new Granary Road to East River Parkway. Some right-of-way will be needed but, again, final design work may avoid a significant taking. The segment basically follows 27th Avenue SE although its width might present problems in providing a separate bike/pedestrian path.

## 7d. Traffic Engineering

The Grand Rounds serves as a circumferential corridor around the Minneapolis urbanized area, serving both motorized and non-motorized travel. The Missing Link will complete the Grand Rounds, allowing uninterrupted travel throughout the urban area. In order to meet the intent of the Grand Rounds, the Missing Link must adequately serve both the recreational user traveling the Grand Rounds as a touring facility along with the daily traveler going

from point to point in the Minneapolis area. Traffic information was contributed by the TAC in this section.

The Grand Rounds currently consists of roadways that terminate at either end of the study area. At the southern end of the study area, both the East River Parkway and West River Parkway are part of the Grand Rounds Parkway System. St. Anthony Parkway on the northern end of the study area is the opposing terminus of the Grand Rounds. The Missing Link will join these two existing termini to complete the Grand Rounds system.

The general study area of the Missing Link lies to the north of the Mississippi River. The transportation system is dominated by Interstate 35W to the north and west and Interstate 94 to the south. These interstates intersect just across the Mississippi River on the west bank. TH 280 connects the two interstate facilities and forms the eastern boundary of the study area. These three facilities provide high-speed, limited access facilities for regional traffic movements and collectively carry the vast majority of the auto and truck traffic in the study area. East-west corridor connections through the study area are provided by University Avenue, Como Avenue, East Hennepin Avenue and Broadway Street.

There are five roadway crossings of the Mississippi River including I-35W, I-94, 10th Avenue SE, Washington Avenue and Franklin Avenue. The Washington Avenue Bridge is proposed to be converted to serve Light Rail Transit to serve the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis campus.



The study area is also divided by two major rail facilities. The BNSF line bisects the study area. The rail line is primarily elevated, with grade separated crossings at I-35W and Johnson Street, the East Hennepin Avenue and Stinson Boulevard intersection, the 22nd Avenue SE and Como Avenue intersection, and TH 280. The BNSF line and associated switch yard just north of the University of Minnesota - Minneapolis campus is a major barrier, restricting north-south access. For pedestrians and bicyclists the barrier is a formidable approximate 3 mile span between Raymond Ave. in St. Paul and 15th Avenue SE in Minneapolis. The 15th Avenue SE crossing is on a heavy traffic street via a narrow underpass, often with standing water after a heavy rain. Although the Raymond Ave. bridge is modern (with striped bike lanes), the street itself is busy and narrow to the north and south of the bridge.

### **Phase One Analysis — Evaluation of Potential Alignments**

The first phase of analysis considered many potential corridors. Many of these corridors have flaws that have eliminated them from further analysis prior to a traffic screening process. The three general corridors that have been analyzed for traffic impacts are shown in Fig. 6 Potential Missing Link Parkway Alignments.

The western-most proposed corridor is in the Marshall Street alignment. The use of this corridor would enhance the existing Marshall Street cross-section to be most consistent with the Grand Rounds, but would not change the traffic patterns for daily travelers in the area. Any increase in vehicular touring travel resulting from the Grand Rounds designation would be anticipated to occur during non-peak times and to lower total traffic volumes than during

the peak times. As previously stated, the CAC supports the future study and development of Marshall Street as a parkway-like inner loop, but this route does not fulfill the Missing Link goals and objectives.

The central corridor is the Stinson Boulevard – 18th Avenue SE with southern termini along either the 15th Street SE or Oak Street corridors. Similar to the Marshall Street corridor, the Stinson corridor would not significantly change daily vehicular travel patterns, as the roadway exists today. The addition of a grade separated crossing of the BNSF rail line along the Oak Street corridor would provide a more direct route into the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis campus, and likely divert a portion of the daily travel demand from the existing two-lane underpass at 15th Street SE. As previously discussed, the CAC rejected this route from consideration due to numerous issues and concerns.

The eastern-most corridor is the Industrial Boulevard to 27th Avenue SE alignment. This alignment utilizes the existing Industrial Boulevard alignment north of East Hennepin Avenue. Unlike the other two corridors, approximately half of the Industrial Boulevard corridor is on new roadway alignment. A new grade-separated crossing of the BNSF railroad yard along the eastern portion of the study area would provide an enhanced connection for daily travelers. This new connection would provide improved north-south mobility, and would likely serve some local vehicle trips currently using TH 280. With the northern end of this alignment linking with St. Anthony Parkway, but not I-35W, this new facility would not be a significant regional corridor requiring more than the anticipated four-lane cross section.



**Phase Two Analysis —  
Preferred Missing Link Route**

The proposed completion of Grand Rounds Missing Link (as outlined above in this study) will have various impacts to the vehicular traffic within the area. Major north-south movements through the study area are already adequately served by I-35W, TH 280. However, the new grade-separated crossings of the railroad switchyard and railroad mainline will provide a more convenient route for local traffic. This will reduce traffic using the 15th Avenue SE underpass and TH 280.

The proposed alignment will utilize the 27th Avenue SE corridor to connect to the existing Grand Rounds to the south. Intersections of 27th Avenue SE will likely experience traffic growth. The intersection of 27th Avenue SE and University Avenue will likely have the highest impact, due to the large volume of traffic currently using University Avenue. The 27th Avenue SE and proposed Granary Road intersection will also require future traffic analysis, due to both the Missing Link project and the Granary Road connection. The intersection of the proposed Granary Road and Grand Rounds at the southern bridge terminus will require traffic analysis to verify intersection geometry such as a left turn bay for the eastbound to northbound movement.

The proposed alignment of the Grand Rounds is likely to include a connection to Kasota Avenue/Energy Park Drive via Bridal Veil Circle. Intersection spacing should be carefully considered to avoid vehicle queuing from one intersection into the other. Traffic volumes at both intersections may not warrant signalized control, but appropriately designed roundabouts

may be a viable option depending upon available right-of-way.

The recent closure of the TH 280 and Broadway intersection near the north end of the study area has resulted in a change in travel patterns in the area. Industrial Boulevard is carrying higher volumes of traffic between East Hennepin and Broadway. The current intersection operations of the Industrial Boulevard and East Hennepin Avenue intersection should be analyzed, as the proposed alignment of the Missing Link may facilitate movement of some vehicles through this intersection to continue in a north-south direction rather than utilizing TH 280 to cross the rail facilities to the south. This new routing option may increase the total demand within the intersection, but may actually improve operations by reducing the southbound to eastbound left turn movement and the corresponding westbound to northbound right turn movement at the Hennepin Avenue and Industrial Boulevard intersection.

A traffic analysis should be conducted on the following intersections to identify any traffic operations issues prior to final design of the Missing Link parkway:

- 27th Avenue SE and University Avenue
- 27th Avenue SE (Grand Rounds) and Granary Road
- Grand Rounds (south bridge terminal) and Granary Road
- Grand Rounds and Bridal Veil Circle
- Kasota Avenue and Bridal Veil Circle
- Grand Rounds/Industrial Boulevard and East Hennepin Avenue
- Industrial Boulevard and Broadway Avenue









Successful completion of the Missing Link will not only require a steadfast commitment by the MPRB and its citizenry, but also a strategy that can be applied in future years. Over the next 10 years the MPRB will need to maintain a very aggressive approach to acquiring and developing the route. The strategy can be divided in sections listed below.

**Funding** – funding for projects of this size and scope traditionally need financial support from all levels of government, particularly federal and state. The significance of the Grand Rounds Missing Link and its prominence as a National Scenic Byway should warrant significant funding consideration from the federal government. The Park Board should solicit federal support and seek funding through every available opportunity – namely, competitive grants and special appropriations requests. Because the Missing Link will be a regional amenity, support from state grants and appropriations should be sought.

**Partnerships** – building partnerships will also be critical to success of the Missing Link. Partnerships with the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, and other surrounding communities will increase opportunities for joint efforts and projects. For example, the Metropolitan Council’s Regional Open Space Systems Plan will need to identify the Grand Rounds Missing Link initiative as a high priority for completion. Additionally, Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis and the MPRB will need to adjust their planning programs to reflect the policy and funding requirements of completing the Grand Rounds System. Funding from each will be necessary to supplement federal and state funding and provide the required local match. Capital Improvement and Comprehensive Plans should be coordinated to provide for greater development impact.

**Private Funding** – private funds may be utilized for the project and are advantageous for two reasons:

- 1) They contribute to the overall funding requirement of the project;
- 2) They leverage the availability of funding from governmental sources.

The MPRB’s Foundation may be one source of private capital but other sources could be identified through partnerships with environmental organizations and the anticipated user groups (e.g. biking and hiking organizations).

The overall cost of the project has been estimated at approximately \$105 million. In developing a Funding and Implementation Plan, a schedule (Fig. 18. Preliminary Cost Estimate and Funding

Plan) needs to be prepared as a guide for capital expenditure planning and for submitting funding requests.

<b>Preliminary Cost Estimate</b>		
1	Land Acquisition	\$28M
2	Design, Engineering, Construction Administration	\$10M
3	Roadway Construction including parking bays and bridges	\$38M
4	Bicycle and Pedestrian Pathways	\$6M
5	Lighting and Signage	\$4M
6	Landscaping, Gateways, Public Art	\$3M
7	Park Construction/Amenities	\$12M
8	Contingencies	\$4M
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$105M</b>

<b>Funding Plan</b>				
<b><u>Fiscal Year</u></b>	<b><u>State</u></b>	<b><u>Federal</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>Other</u></b>
2009	\$2M	\$5M		
2010		\$15M	\$1M	\$0.5M
2011	\$7M	\$5M	\$1M	\$0.5M
2012		\$4M	\$1M	
2013	\$7M	\$4M	\$1M	\$0.5M
2014		\$10M	\$1M	\$0.5M
2015	\$5M	\$3M	\$1M	
2016		\$3M	\$1M	\$0.5M
2017	\$5M	\$3M	\$1M	
2018		\$6M	\$1M	\$0.5M
2019	\$5M	\$3M	\$1M	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$31M</b>	<b>\$61M</b>	<b>\$10M</b>	<b>\$3M</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>\$105M</b>	

Fig. 18. Preliminary Cost Estimate and Funding Plan



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- Fig. 2. Grand Rounds Parkway and the Missing Link Study Area Location
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- Fig. 6. Potential Parkway Alignments
- Fig. 7. East Como Industrial Area Route Options
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## **Appendix**

Parkway Concept Examples

Missing Link Parkway –  
Before- and After-Plan and Cross Sections



## Project Goals

Adopted by the  
Citizen Advisory Committee  
on July 12, 2007

### 1. Provide Parkway System Continuity

- a. Benefit the neighborhoods, City, Region and State in completing the Grand Rounds Parkway System.
- b. Provide connectivity to Neighborhoods and to existing and planned local and regional recreation and transportation facilities.
- c. Adhere to the historic and cultural integrity of the Missing Link consistent with the Grand Rounds system.

### 2. Enhance Recreational Opportunities

- a. Add recreational value and improve the quality of life in Neighborhoods.
- b. Add park and open space opportunities inside and outside of the selected by-way corridor.
- c. Identify a signature park and/or amenity that may be unique to Minneapolis and an addition to the Regional Park System.

### 3. Enhance or Protect the Environment

- a. Reflect responsible environmental, social, cultural, physical and economic sustainability through sound design principles.
- b. Designed as a scenic recreational parkway, and not a transportation route.
- c. Create additional green space including the re-vegetation of barren properties.
- d. Add scenic gateway character for Neighborhoods and the University of Minnesota.
- e. Limit surface water run-off through the provision of rain gardens and other environmentally acceptable measures.

### 4. Improve Mobility

- a. Multi-modal design for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and automobiles in accordance with existing Parkway System rules and policies.
- b. Enhance bicycle routes and connections.
- c. Improve connections between Neighborhoods, the Regional transportation system and the University of Minnesota.

### 5. Create Economic Benefits

- a. Optimize community benefits.
- b. Stimulate private investment along the new link.
- c. Enhance the Neighborhoods and City.

### 6. Feasible and Compatible

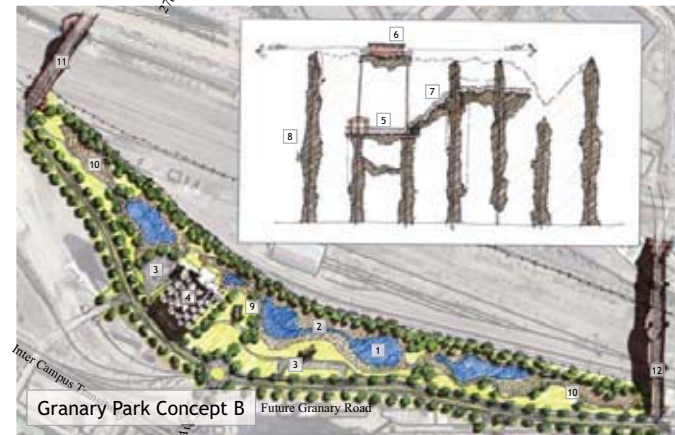
- a. Maximize Community benefits and minimize negative impacts.
- b. Compatible with Regional, City, Neighborhood and University of Minnesota plans.
- c. Fulfill the vision of previous generations and providing the City and NE/SE Minneapolis Neighborhoods with a lasting amenity.
- d. Obtain local support.
- e. Help promote community and neighborhood pride, ownership and identify.



1. Large Wetland Restoration
2. Trails and Interpretive Boardwalks
3. Picnic Shelter
4. Stormwater Ponding
5. Parking
6. Lookout Tower - Viewing Guide to Point Out Various Minneapolis and St Paul Geographic Features, Railroad History, Wetland History and Ecology, Etc.
7. Bridge for Route A
8. Bridge For Route B



Bridal Veil Green Space Concept A



1. Stormwater Ponding
2. Wetland Restoration
3. Parking
4. Indoor/Outdoor Climbing and Training Facility
5. Elevated Restaurant with Elevator/ Stair/ and Climbing Access - Views of Climbers and Minneapolis Skyline
6. Lookout Platform for Climbers
7. Adventure Walk for Restaurant Patrons
8. Ice Climbing During the Winter
9. Picnic Shelter
10. Trails
11. Bridge for Route A
12. Bridge For Route B

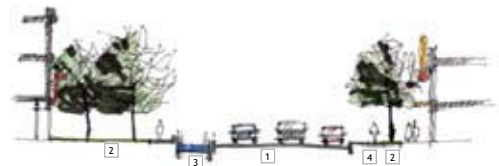


Bridal Veil Green Space Concept B



Ridgeway Parkway Overlook Concept

1. Formal Entry Gateway
2. Addition of Pedestrian Overlook
3. Turf Trail Through Existing Prairie Restoration
4. Existing Trail



1. Two-Lanes of Two-way Travel and One Auxiliary Lane for Parking and Turning
2. Street Trees and Boulevard Enhancements
3. Daylighting of Bridal Veil Creek
4. Multi Use Trail

Bridal Veil Creek Linear Park Concept

### Preliminary Park Concept Plans

(Note: Circulated prior to route selection.)



1. Wetlands and Stormwater Ponds
2. Alternative Sports Complex - Including: BMX, Skateboard Park, Indoor Skateboard Park, Vert Ramp, Etc.
3. Play Area
4. Parking
5. Picnic Shelter
6. Open Play Field
7. Large Wetland Restoration



1. Stormwater Ponding
2. Redevelopment of light industry
3. Redevelopment of Corporate Office Space/ Buffer from Adjacent Uses - Green Roofs
4. Shared Open Space and Corporate Campus
5. Picnic Shelter
6. Play Area
7. Parking
8. Open Play Field
9. Shared Parking
10. Amphitheater
11. Stormwater Ponding

Preliminary Park Concept Plans  
 (Note: Circulated prior to route selection.)



1. Parking
2. Cultural Arts Center
3. Stormwater Ponding
4. Reflection Pool
5. Sculpture Garden
6. Play Area
7. Parking
8. Picnic Shelter
9. Open Play Field
10. Large Wetland Restoration



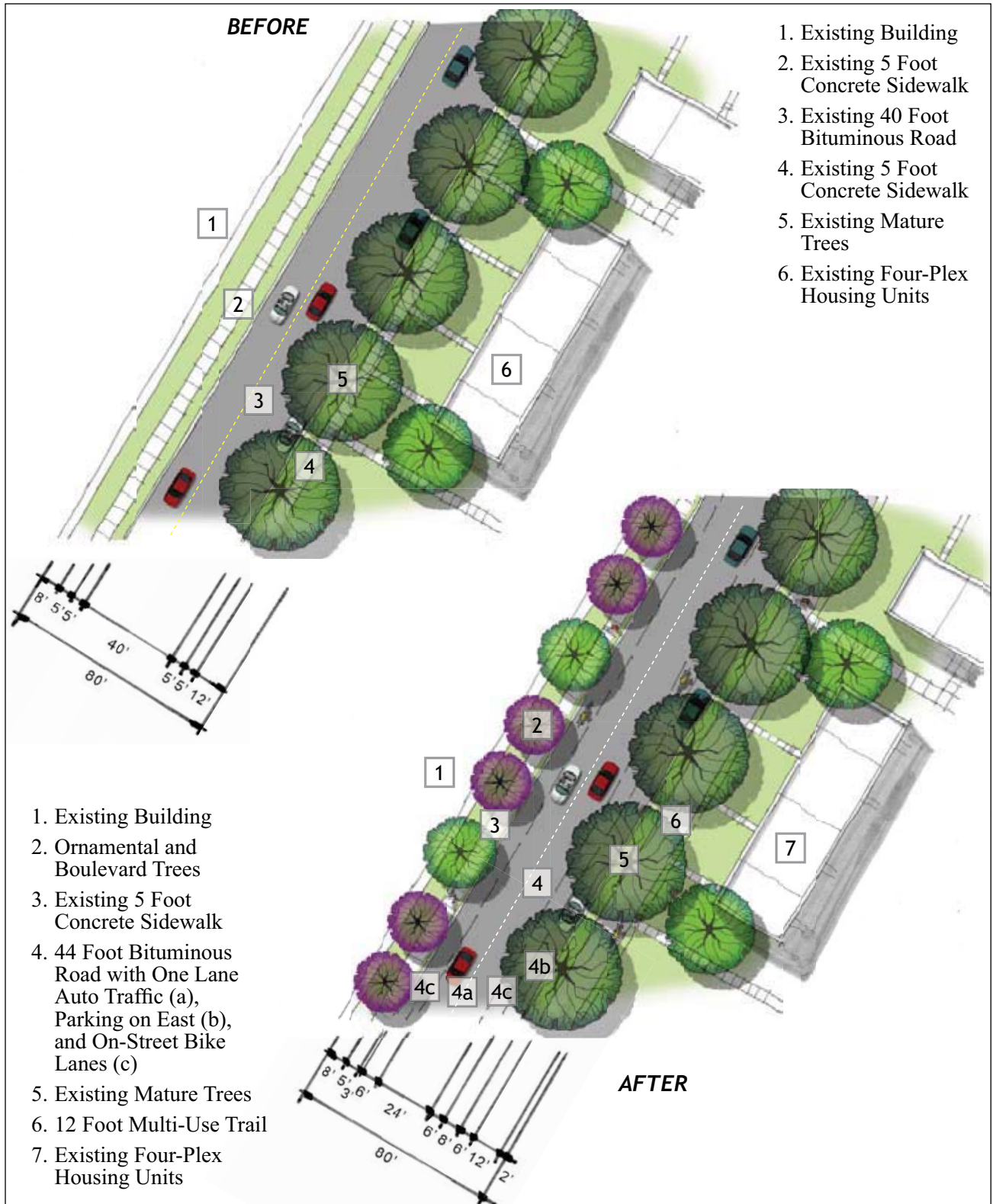
SE Como Community Park Concept B  
- Cultural Arts Park

1. Long, North/South Axial View
2. Reflection Pool
3. Large Central Water Feature/Sculpture
4. Parking
5. Open Fields
6. Tunnel Como Ave for Larger, more Continuous Open Space
7. Wetland Restoration
8. Woodland Restoration/ Buffer from Adjacent Uses
9. Great Lawn
10. Band Shell
11. Parking



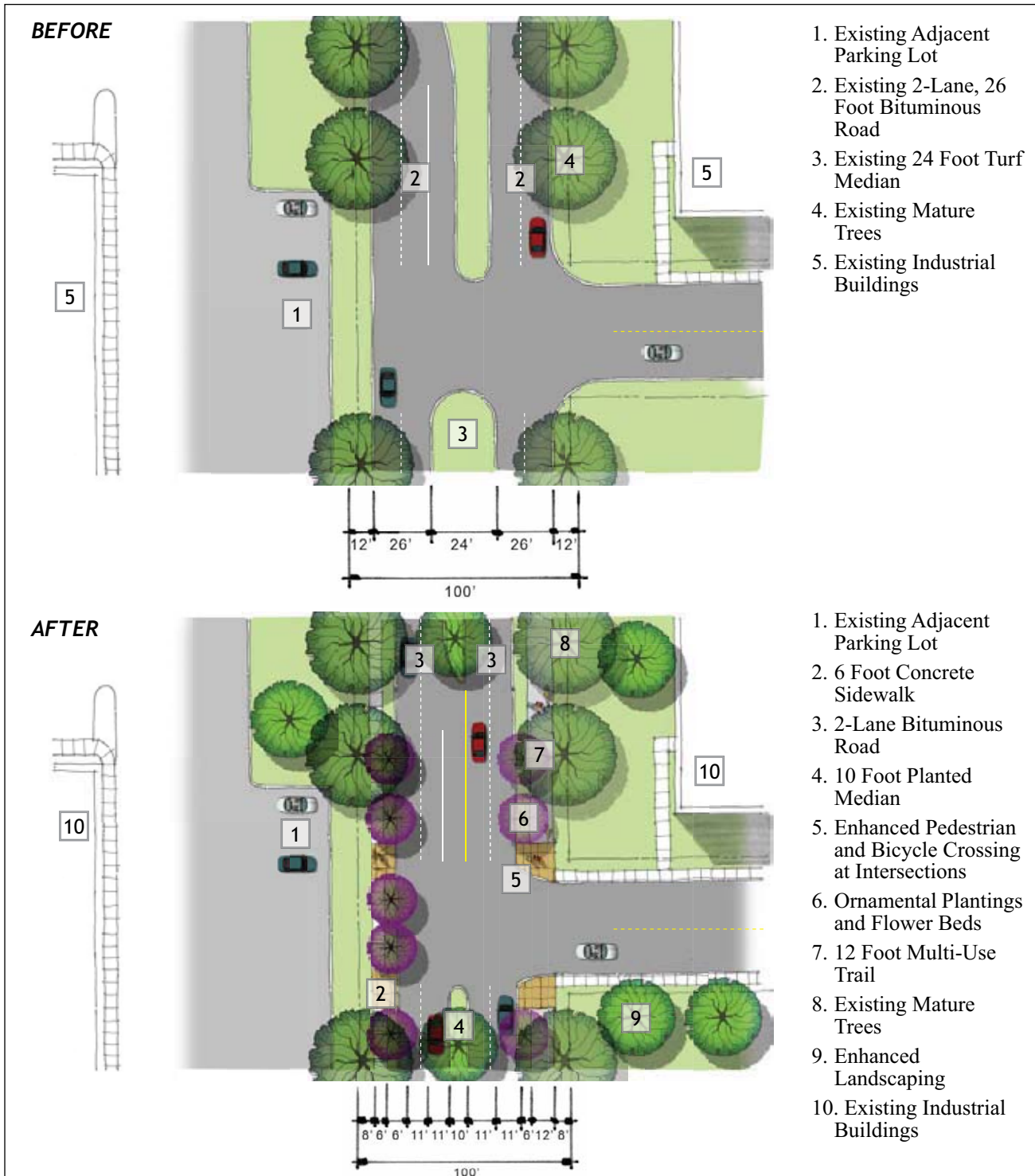
SE Como Community Park Concept D  
- Formal Gardens

Preliminary Park Concept Plans  
(Note: Circulated prior to route selection.)

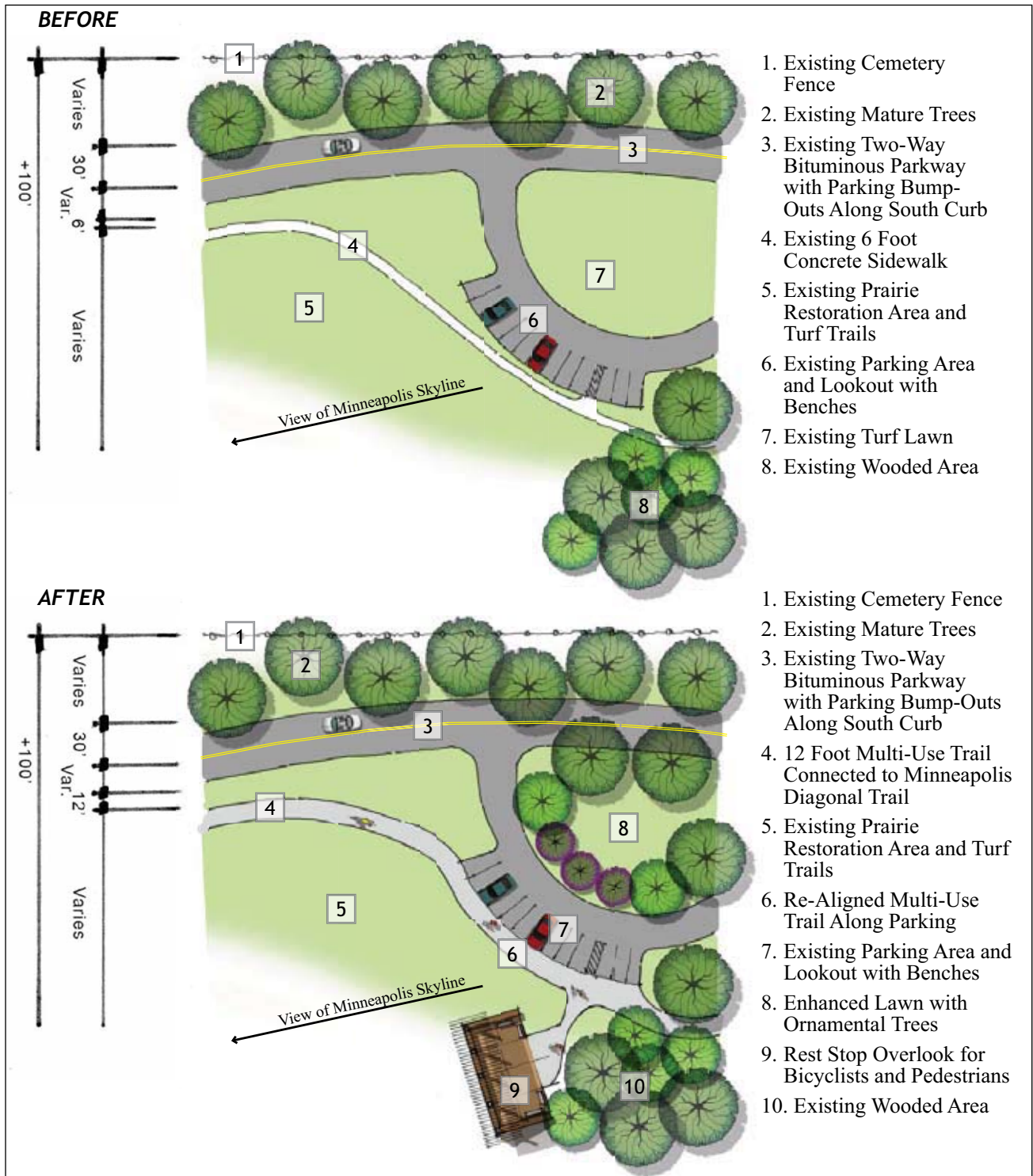


1. of 7. Parkway Plans Before and After



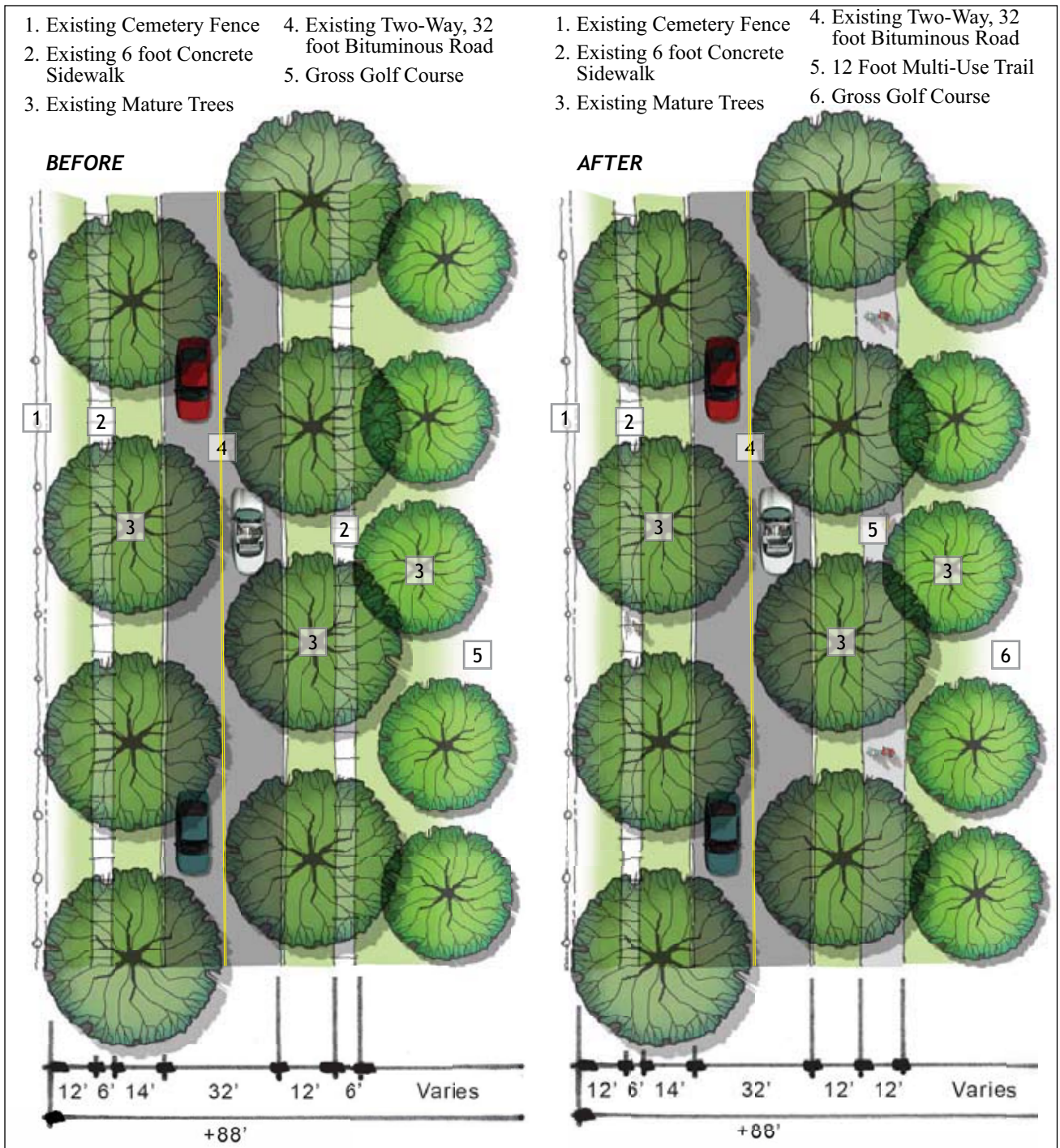


2. of 7. Parkway Plans Before and After

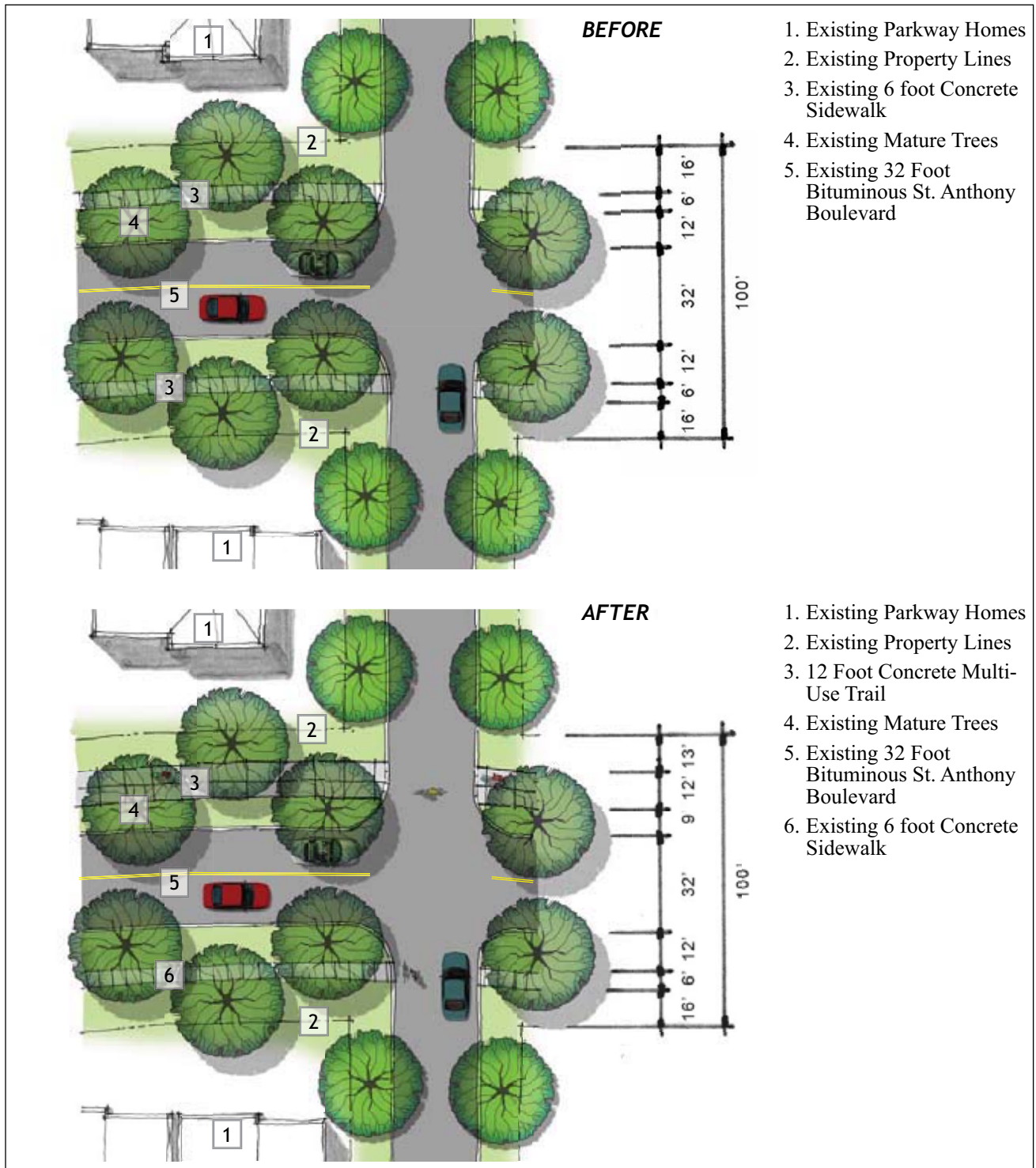


3. of 7. Parkway Plans Before and After



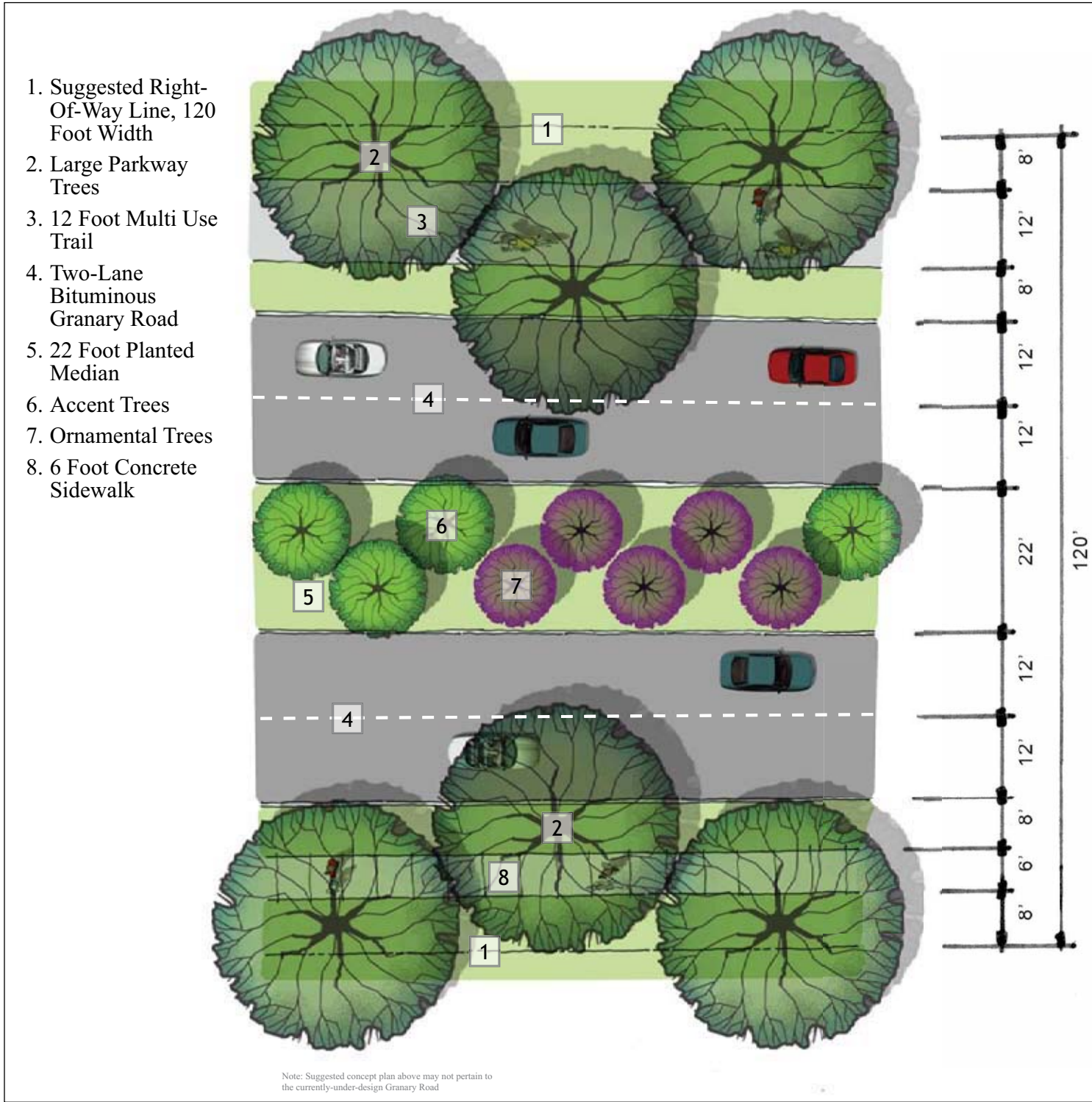


4. of 7. Parkway Plans Before and After



5. of 7. Parkway Plans Before and After





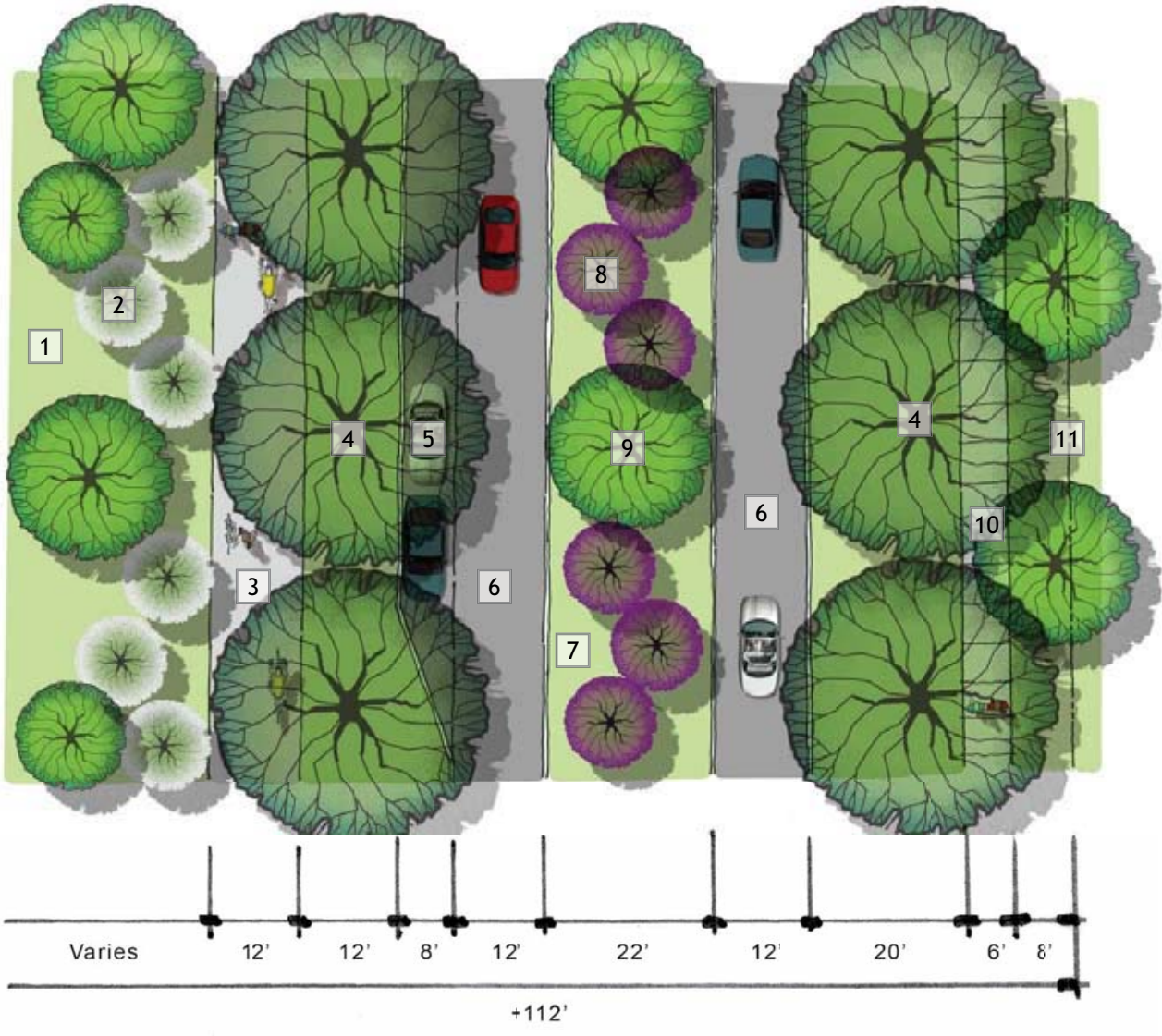
6. of 7. Parkway Plans Before and After



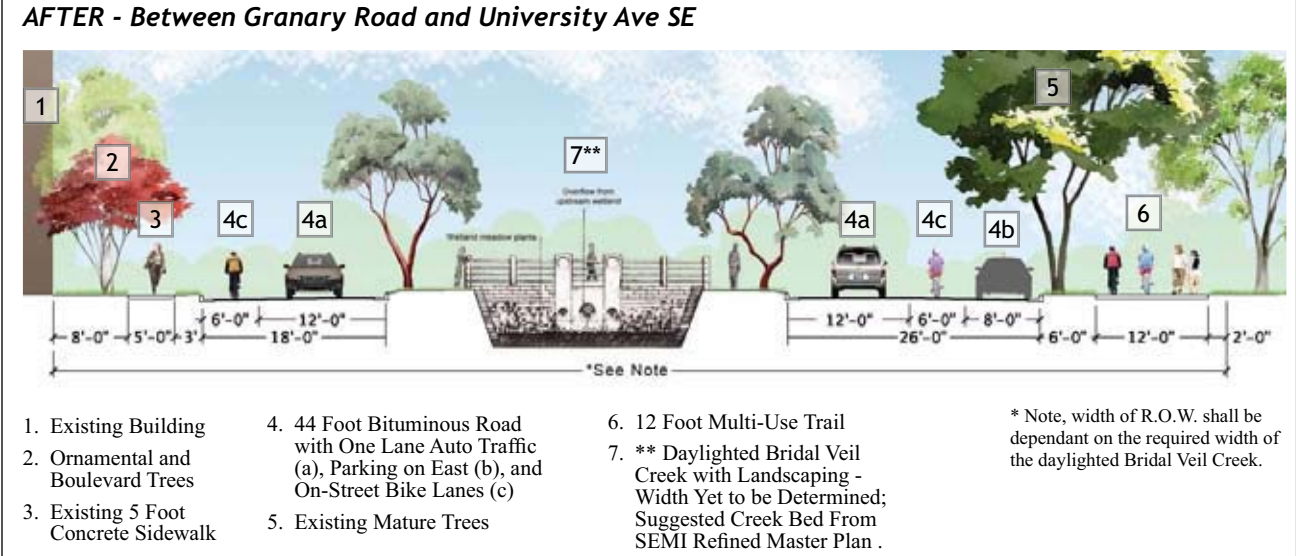
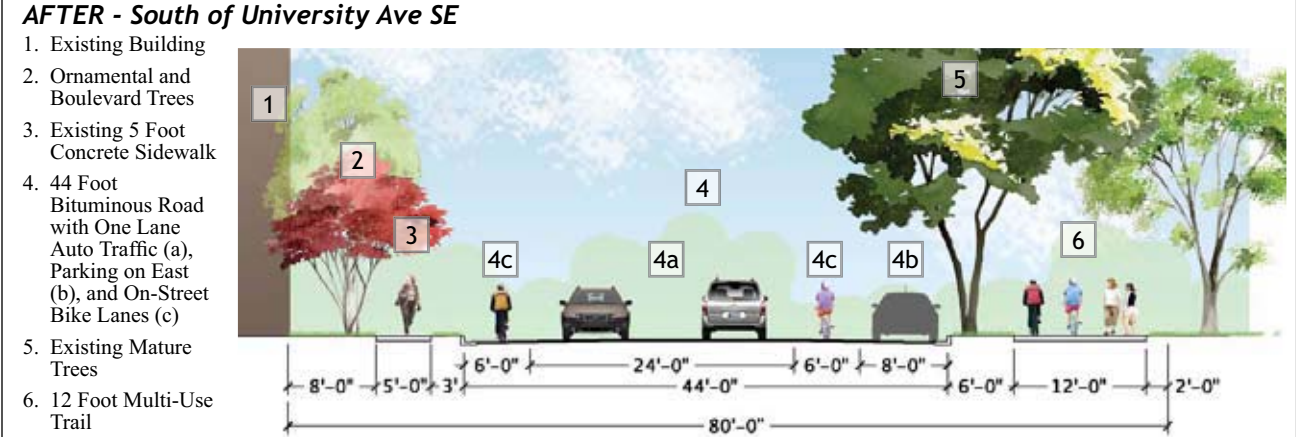
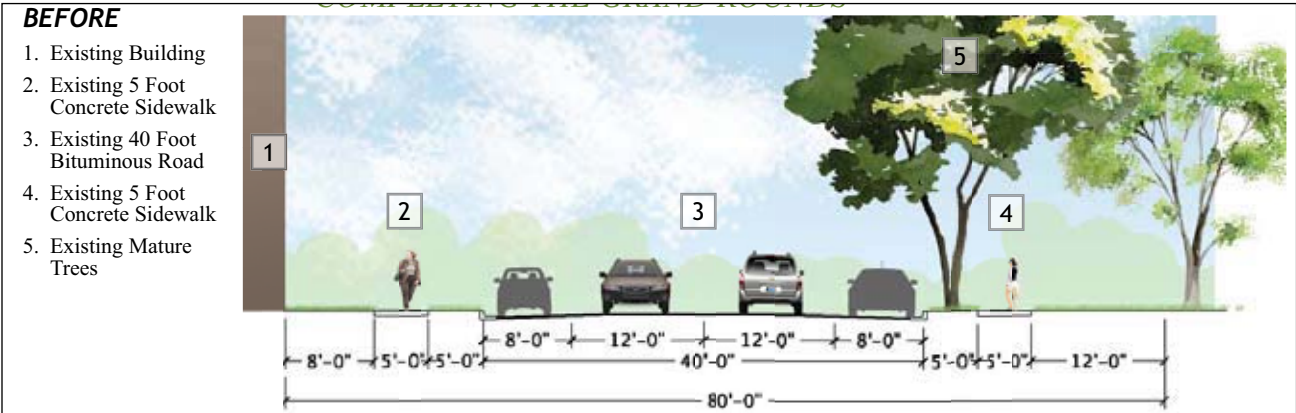
- 1. Suggested SE Como Community Park
- 2. Landscape Enhancements
- 3. 12 Foot Multi-Use Trail
- 4. Parkway Trees
- 5. 8 Foot Parking Bay

- 6. 12 Foot Parkway Drive Lane
- 7. 22 Foot Median with Enhanced Landscape Features
- 8. Ornamental Trees
- 9. Accent Trees

- 10. 6 Foot Concrete Sidewalk
- 11. Parkway Right-of-Way

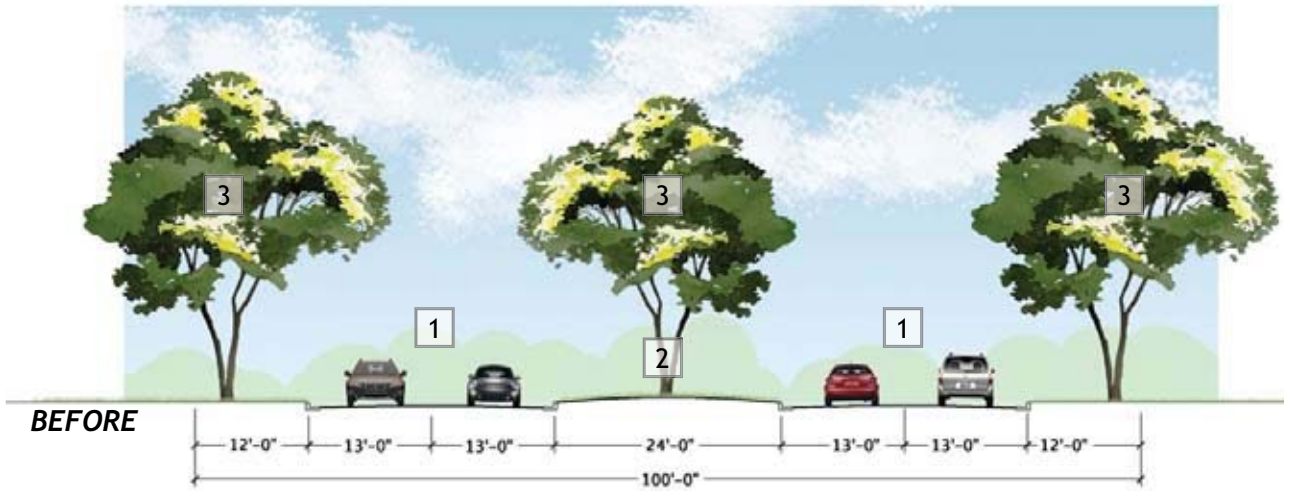


7. of 7. Parkway Plans Before and After

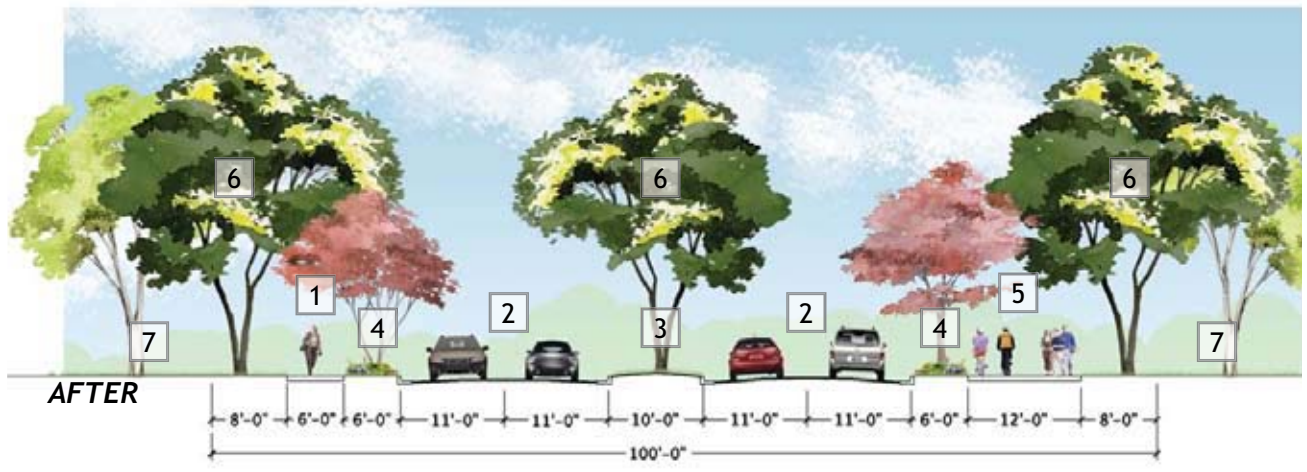


1. of 7. Cross Section Before and After



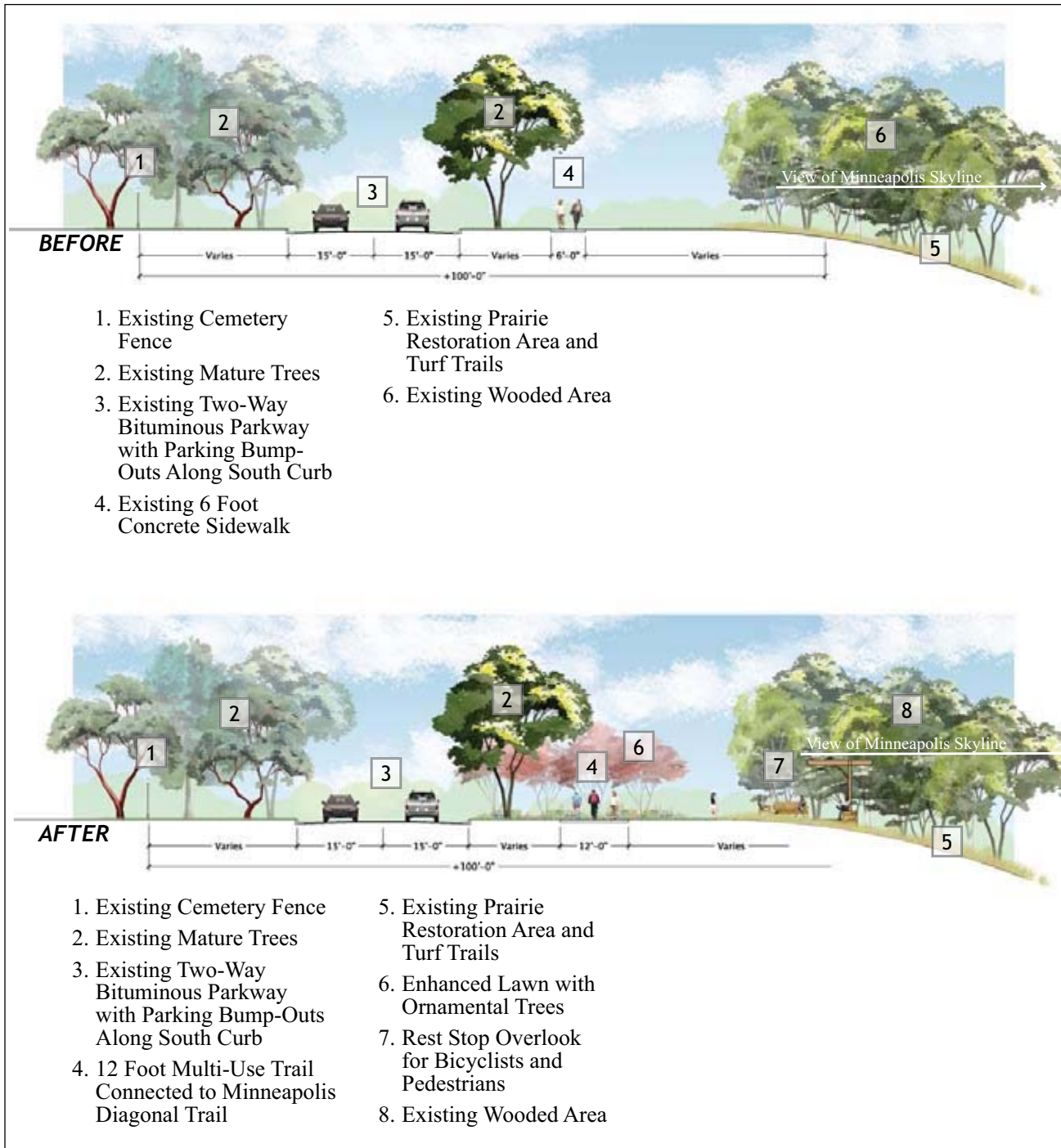


- 1. Existing 2-Lane, 26 Foot Bituminous Road
- 2. Existing 24 Foot Turf Median
- 3. Existing Mature Trees



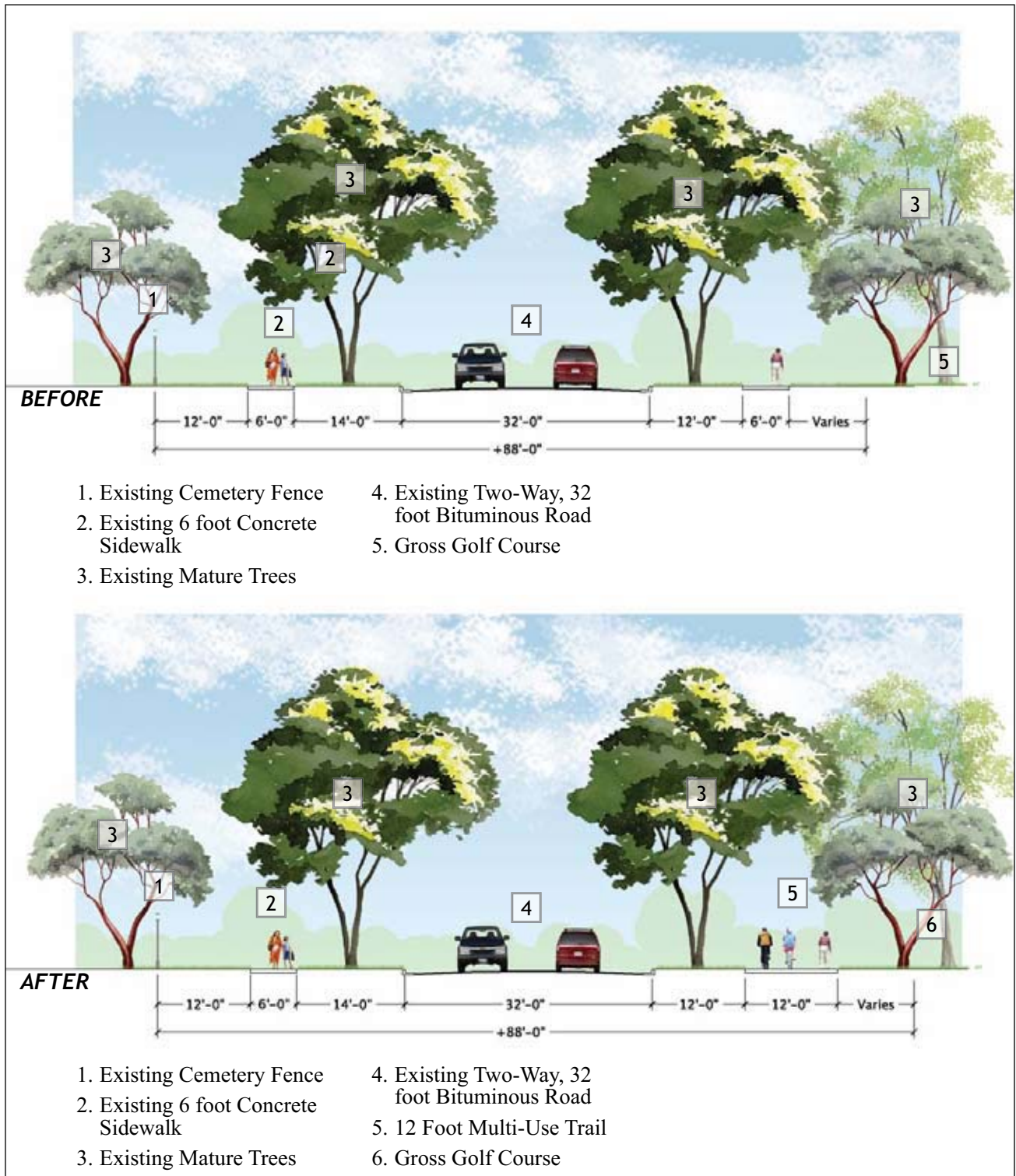
- 1. 6 Foot Concrete Sidewalk
- 2. 2-Lane Bituminous Road
- 3. 10 Foot Planted Median
- 4. Ornamental Plantings and Flower Beds
- 5. 12 Foot Multi-Use Trail
- 6. Existing Mature Trees
- 7. Enhanced Landscaping

2. of 7. Cross Section Before and After

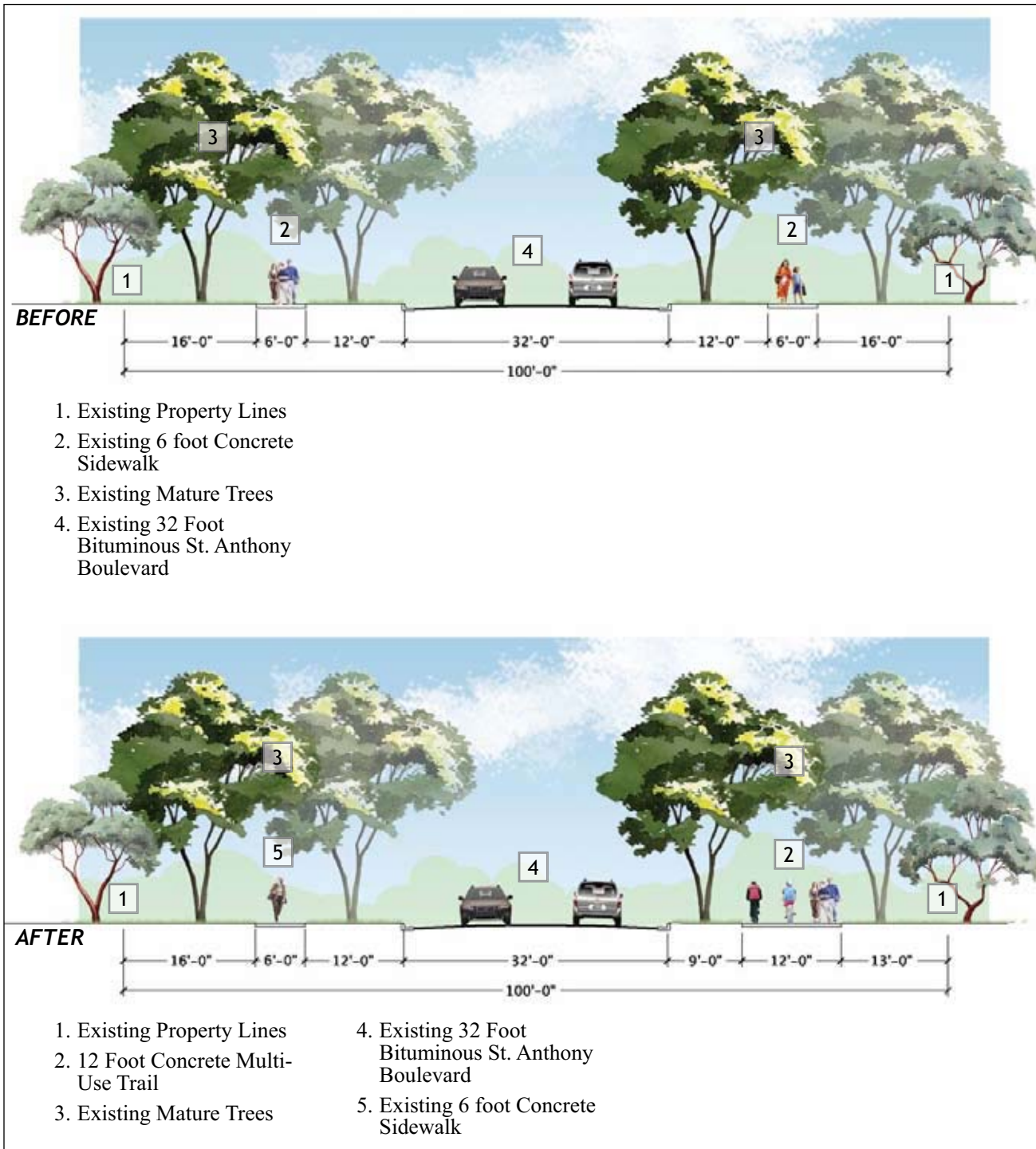


3. of 7. Cross Section Before and After

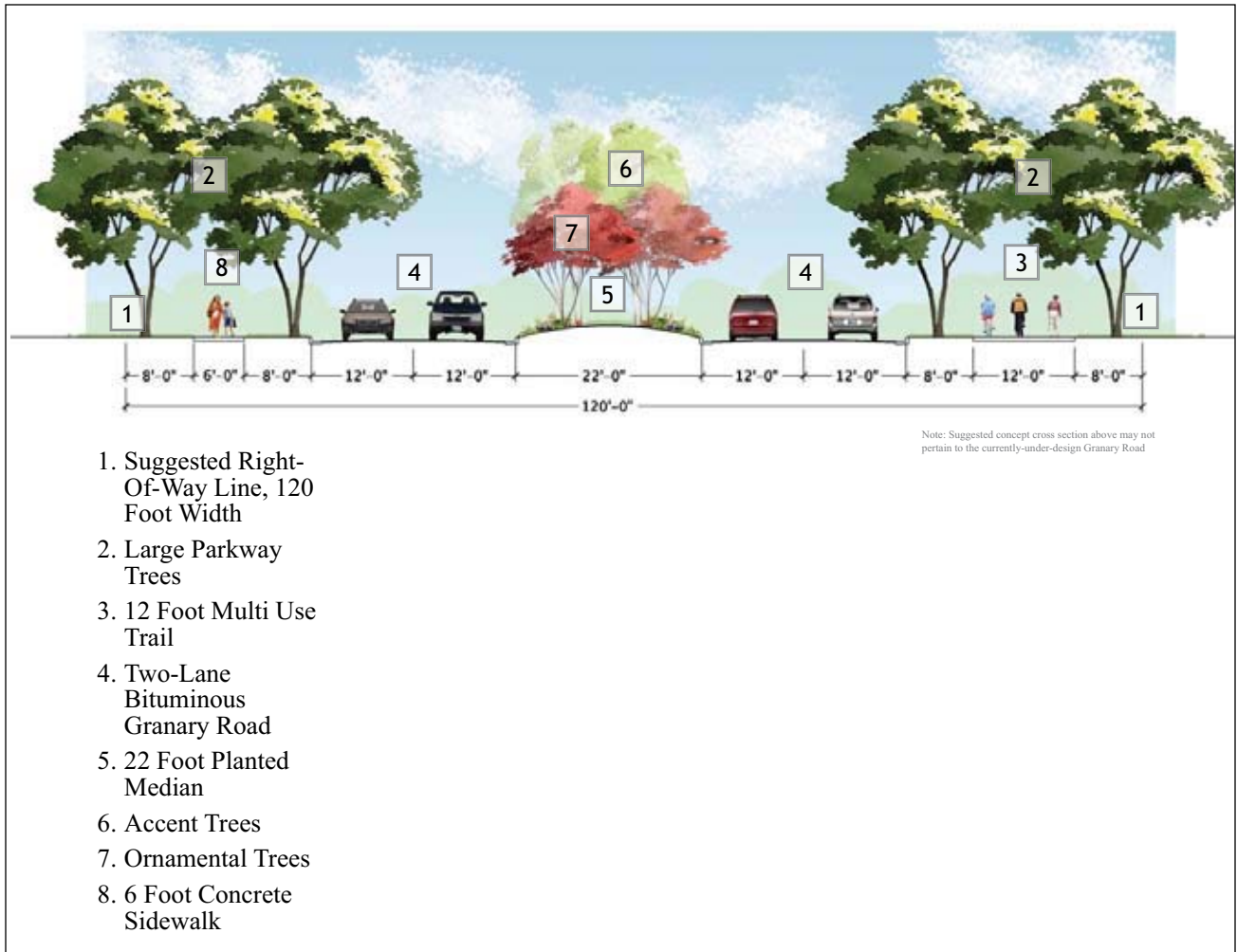




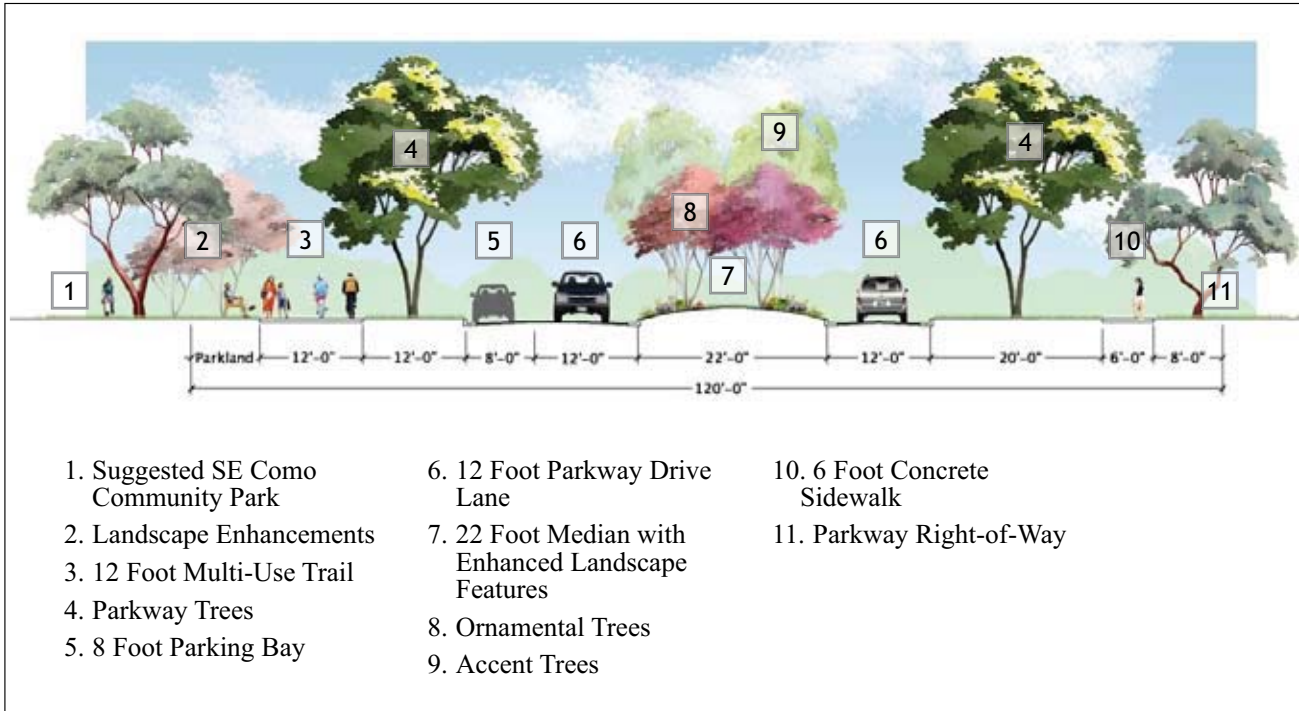
4. of 7. Cross Section Before and After



5. of 7. Cross Section Before and After



6. of 7. Cross Section Before and After



7. of 7. Cross Section Before and After