

Excelsior Gateway

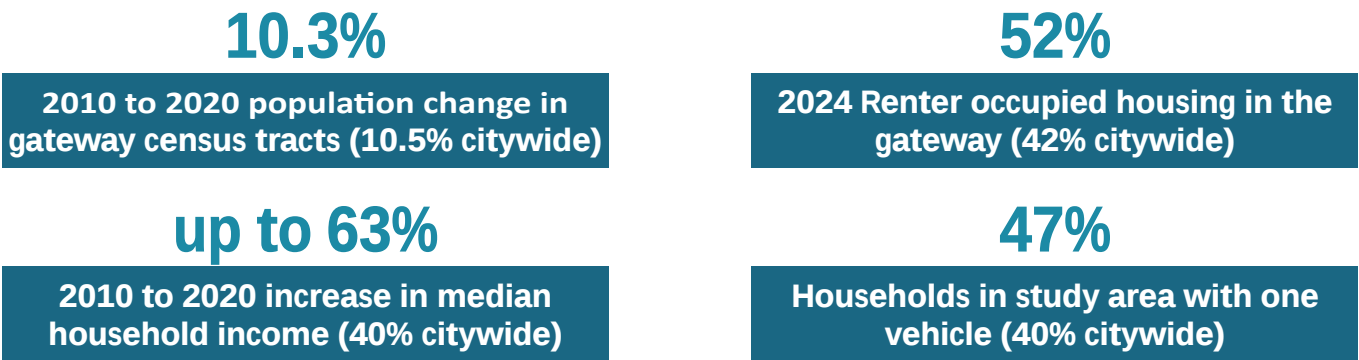
Excelsior Boulevard is located in the southeast corner of the City of St. Louis Park, serving as a regional transportation corridor that connects Hopkins and Minnetonka to Minneapolis and St Paul. The roadway is under the jurisdiction of Hennepin County, designated as County State Aid Highway 3. The county is responsible for any investments, upgrades, and maintenance of the roadway.

The Excelsior Gateway includes the commercial area surrounding West Excelsior Boulevard from Highway 100 to the western city limits. This area has a variety of commercial uses along the boulevard and then transitions into single family neighborhoods.

West Excelsior Boulevard is an existing commercial corridor, where redevelopment can sustain small businesses and bring positive changes to the area. The community recognizes the appeal of smaller, community-oriented, and neighborhood-scale developments in the corridor. Redevelopment can prioritize people over cars to ensure that vehicular traffic, access, and parking are efficient without negatively impacting visitors and nearby residents. Redevelopments can respond to local needs by providing new housing, amenities, and services that bring life to the corridor and complement nearby neighborhoods.

Excelsior Gateway current conditions

Demographics



Previous plan

West Excelsior Boulevard is a unique corridor without a dedicated guiding document in place, but The Design Guidelines for the South Side of Excelsior Boulevard (2015) serves as a valuable resource for East Excelsior Boulevard. The West Excelsior Gateway offers opportunities for reinvestment and redevelopment despite the lack of dedicated planning.

Potential key investment areas
- Redevelopment opportunities for the existing Jessen Press site. - Redevelopment opportunities at the Party City site. - Opportunities to improve safety and mobility, particularly for walkers and bikers, along and across West Excelsior Boulevard.

Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan supports continued investment in the Excelsior Gateway. Specific policies and concepts include:

Land use + development	Mobility + access	Parks + natural systems
The future land use plan supports the maintenance of commercial uses along West Excelsior Boulevard with some opportunities for higher density residential development.	Alabama/Brookside Avenue is identified as a future bikeway (2028) providing a north/south connection across West Excelsior Boulevard.	Support for investments in existing parks and connections to these resources. Specific strategies identified for the Meadowbrook Golf Course and Minnehaha Creek.

Excelsior Gateway engagement themes

The three phases of engagement included similar themes and concepts for the Excelsior Gateway. Overall, the community supports investments in multimodal mobility and safety, and recognizes the redevelopment potential in the gateway, with specific areas of support (green) and concern (red) identified below.



Excelsior Gateway vision statement

VISION

The Excelsior Gateway provides a key transportation connection between the cities of St Louis Park and Hopkins via Excelsior Boulevard. The corridor has supported a variety of smaller scale commercial uses and neighborhoods. Future investment within the gateway provides an opportunity to enhance the connection between the uses, supporting a vibrant neighborhood. Mobility and safety enhancements along Excelsior Boulevard would support investment in the community, including increased local street connections and multimodal infrastructure. The Excelsior Gateway vision embraces the following elements:



Excelsior Gateway illustrative plan





Brunswick Avenue + Zarthan Avenue access changes

This outcome includes access modifications to the west Excelsior Boulevard intersections with Brunswick Avenue and Zarthan Avenue to create right-in/right-out intersections that also support enhanced crossings.

Outcome features

Access modifications to the Brunswick Avenue and Zarthan Avenue intersections with west Excelsior Boulevard improve overall access management and provide enhanced pedestrian and bicycle crossings of west Excelsior Boulevard. These modifications also create opportunities to extend the landscaped median.

Intersection design

- » The right-in/right-out design will change vehicular access through the intersection, but will open opportunities for pedestrian crossings.
- » The side-street stop control should remain to control right-turn movements onto west Excelsior Boulevard.

Crossing features

- » Multiple crossing treatments can be explored, including crosswalks, signage, flashing signage, and other warning detection.

Landscaped median

- » The redesign of the intersection provides an opportunity to extend the median through the intersection.
- » The new median should include refuge accommodations for walkers and bikers to cross one direction of traffic.



Example: HAWK median crossing



Example: median crossing with refuge



Excelsior boulevard

What is the impact?

This outcome is intended to enhance crossings of west Excelsior Boulevard for walkers and bikers and calm traffic accessing cross streets. These multimodal improvements will enhance mobility, specifically for walkers and bikers crossing the roadway.

Race + equity impact

- » Crossing west Excelsior Boulevard today is uncomfortable and difficult for all users, the revised crossings create enhanced opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian crossings of west Excelsior Boulevard.
- » The enhanced crossings include features that make crossing safer, connecting neighborhoods and destinations on both sides.

Environmental impact

- » These improvements support multimodal movement and could support a reduction in vehicle miles traveled through the gateway.

Public infrastructure impact

- » These crossings would be constructed within Hennepin County right-of-way, but coordination must occur to include needed updates with local street connections.

Mobility impact

- » The access changes will impact north/south vehicle mobility along Brunswick Avenue and Zarthan Avenue, requiring through movements or left turns to use another roadway.
- » The access closure will improve the crossing experience for bicycles and pedestrians and provide much-needed north/south crossings of west Excelsior Boulevard for local and regional multimodal travel.

Land use + development impact

- » These enhancements decrease the physical barrier created by the roadway, creating opportunities for people to connect to destinations on either side.

Implementation actions

Action	Action type	Timeline	Complexity	Benefit	Community partners
Coordinate the closure of the full access points at Brunswick Avenue and Zarthan Avenue along Excelsior Boulevard. Support the construction of a raised median with enhanced pedestrian crossings.	Infrastructure	Near term			Community, Hennepin County

Strategic priorities

This outcome supports all five of the strategic priorities as it provides mobility options for all, creates opportunities to reduce vehicle miles traveled, is build from community input, and provides safer crossings to access destinations in the gateway.

Strategic priorities





Brunswick Avenue bikeway

This outcome includes the development of a bikeway on Brunswick Avenue with on-street bicycle infrastructure to connect to local and regional bike networks.



Example: roadway with sharrows

Outcome features

The need for dedicated multimodal infrastructure through the gateway and north to the Wooddale Gateway was identified in the 2040 Connect the Park Plan. Although the plan identified Alabama Avenue as the future roadway for this infrastructure, the Arrive + Thrive process identified Brunswick Avenue as the preferred alignment. Due to the existing design and vehicle volumes.

Regional connections

» This bikeway provides opportunities to connect the gateway to the southern edge of St. Louis Park and to the north into the Wooddale Gateway and beyond. This connection will provide both a regional and local bikeway option.

Bikeway design

- » Future bikeway improvements should align with existing City of St. Louis Park standards for on-street facilities.
- » Shifting planned bikeway facilities to Brunswick calls for the creation of a safe, enhanced north/south crossing for bikes and pedestrians at Excelsior Boulevard.

Brunswick Avenue features

- » Brunswick Avenue is a local two-lane roadway with on-street parking.
- » There are currently no sidewalks provided along the roadway within the Excelsior Gateway.
- » Brunswick Avenue has lower vehicle volumes than adjacent north/south roadways.
- »

What is the impact?

The identified connections were identified to support mobility improvements within and through the gateway. The multimodal improvements identified on Brunswick Avenue identify enhancements that not only connect destinations in the gateway, but also connect it to other neighborhoods.

Race + equity impact

- » The improved bike and pedestrian connections provide enhanced multimodal movement for all users within the gateway.

Environmental impact

- » These improvements support multimodal movement and could support a reduction in vehicle miles traveled through the gateway.

Public infrastructure impact

- » The connections include new and/or improved multimodal infrastructure within existing city streets and right-of-ways that must be considered within the maintenance cycle.

Mobility impact

- » The connections enhance multimodal infrastructure and connection opportunities within the Excelsior Gateway and connections to other parts of St. Louis Park.

Land use + development impact

- » Existing and future development will benefit from additional transportation options and connections.

Implementation actions

Action	Action type	Timeline	Complexity	Benefit	Community partners
Update the Connect the Park Plan to include a bikeway along Brunswick Avenue rather than Alabama Avenue.	Policy	Near term			Community, Three Rivers Park District
Modify the Capital Improvement Plan to include Brunswick Avenue as a future bikeway project in 2028 rather than Alabama Avenue.	Policy	Near term			Community, Three Rivers Park District
Coordinate regional trail planning and implementation with Three Rivers Park District.	Planning	Mid term			Three Rivers Park District, Community
Implement bikeway improvements along Brunswick Avenue.	Infrastructure	Mid term			Community, Three Rivers Park District, Hennepin County

Linked outcomes



The implementation of the Realignment of Methodist Hospital access is linked to two other outcomes:



Brunswick Avenue + Zarthan Avenue access changes



West Excelsior Boulevard roadway design

Strategic priorities

Bicycle infrastructure improvements support the mobility priority by enhancing options for all users and abilities, racial equity and inclusion by expanding access to these facilities, environmental stewardship by increasing access to people powered modes, and community engagement by engaging the community in the design process and creating opportunities for community connection.

Strategic priorities





Urban realm enhancements

This outcome includes plantings, public art, lighting, seating, and other public realm improvements with future street redesign and redevelopment activities.

URBAN REALM generally refers to the publicly owned physical and social spaces found in the urban environment including streets, pathways, parks, rights-of-way, and public buildings. Urban realm areas include those that are open to all and are generally the space of travel or socialization. For example, you are in the public realm as you drive or walk along a city street or as you socialize with a friend on a bench at a city park.

Outcome features

Enhancements to the urban realm can take many forms, including lighting, seating, landscaping and public art. There is a lack of urban realm or streetscaping enhancements along the corridor, but some investments have been made with plantings or outdoor seating along the sidewalks. Features that should be considered with this outcome include:

Location + mobility

- » Urban realm enhancements can occur on any public roadway and should be considered with any street rehabilitation or reconstruction work. Enhancements should be tailored to the users of the street, and standard typologies could be developed to inform future action. For example, a higher volume roadway with no sidewalks warrants a taller lighting design to support vehicle movement.

Design elements

- » Future installations within the Excelsior Gateway should align with or consider the investments that have been made to the East Excelsior Boulevard (east of Highway 100).
- » Existing standards are being updated for lighting and other city investments.
- » Elements can range from additional seating, public art, and lighting enhancements. Vegetation can also be incorporated, including opportunities to increase the tree canopy.



Public realm example



Public realm example

What is the impact?

Urban realm enhancements create opportunities to improve the sense of place and mobility experience. For example, pedestrian scale lighting can make walkers and rollers feel safer as they travel. Generally, urban realm improvements will have minimal impacts. On-going maintenance is on consideration that should be considered with implementation.

Race + equity impact

- » Public realm enhancements support a vibrant destination and sense of place, providing opportunities to showcase community culture and art.
- » Enhancements also provide opportunities for connection and gathering, with additional lighting, shade and seating.

Environmental impact

- » Minimal impacts are anticipated and benefits may be experienced with additional plantings or infrastructure enhancements.
- » Increased tree canopy will reduce the urban heat island effect.

Public infrastructure impact

- » Additional public realm enhancements will be constructed within public right-of-way and maintenance responsibilities must be considered during development.

Mobility impact

- » Future enhancements should be designed to enhance mobility for all users.

Land use + development impact

- » Improvements can enhance the overall identity of the gateway and enhance the sense of place, creating a unique district and experience.

Implementation actions

Action	Action type	Timeline	Complexity	Benefit	Community partners
Continue to invest in the urban realm along Excelsior Boulevard, including the implementation of corridor design standards, new furniture/refuge areas, lighting, etc.	Infrastructure	On-going	● ● ○	● ● ○	Property owner(s), Hennepin County
As replacement is needed, upgrade current lighting standards to the current lighting pallet.	Infrastructure	Near term	● ● ○	● ● ○	Community, Hennepin County

Strategic priorities

Enhancements with the urban realm align with three of the city's strategic priorities. Enhancements may consider green and/or blue infrastructure which could assist the city in forwarding the environmental stewardship priority. The mobility priority is supported by the overall design and security improvements that will improve the pedestrian experience. Finally, community engagement can be woven into the design and development process.

Strategic priorities





Party City redevelopment opportunities

This outcome identifies redevelopment of the existing Party City site with mixed use and medium density residential development.



Site rendering

Outcome features

The existing Party City site has been identified as a potential redevelopment site through the Arrive + Thrive process and previous inquiries. Future land use guidance supports mixed use development along Excelsior Boulevard that transitions to medium density residential. Future redevelopment should consider:

Mixed-use development

- » Ground floor commercial uses oriented to Excelsior Boulevard that provide amenities and services for gateway residents that also draw visitors to the gateway.
- » Residential development of various styles to support varied housing needs.

Medium density residential uses

- » Development of medium density at a density of 6 to 30 units per acre.
- » Support housing types that provide a transition from the station area to single family residential.

Building height

- » 3 to 6 story buildings for the mixed-use opportunities and support a transition to surrounding neighborhood uses with higher stories orienting towards Excelsior Boulevard.

On-site parking

- » Support shared parking structures across redevelopment to support resident and patron parking and reduce the impervious surface area of the site.

Street activation

- » Future development should look to activate the streetscape along the Excelsior Boulevard frontage.
- » Activation may include pedestrian connections from sidewalks and bikeways to ground floor uses and/or public realm design to enhance the pedestrian experience and amenity access.

What is the impact?

The redevelopment of the existing Party City site could serve as a catalyst project for reinvestment along the corridor. It is the largest redevelopment opportunity identified, and includes potential to bring in new commercial space and a variety of housing options.

Race + equity impact

- » Support varied multi-family residential development to promote housing diversity in the gateway.

Environmental impact

- » Redevelopment creates opportunities for increased green space that may manage stormwater and increase the tree canopy.

Public infrastructure impact

- » Increased utility needs with the potential for 39 to 155 new residential units and new ground floor commercial uses. Residential uses were not calculated as part of the utility analysis of the Comprehensive Plan, and the change in use will increase utility needs.

Mobility impact

- » Change of use will result in an increase in vehicles, with opportunities for varied modal use with access to transit and multimodal infrastructure. Time of travel will shift with the introduction of residential travelers.
- » Site circulation and driveway proximity to railroad will need closer examination

Land use + development impact

- » The 2040 Comprehensive Plan guides this site for future commercial development, adjacent to low density residential uses. Modifications to the future land use plan are needed to support future mix of uses.

Implementation actions

Action	Action type	Timeline	Complexity	Benefit	Community partners
Revised future land use plan and rezone the current Party City site to support mixed-use development, including ground floor commercial and upper floor residential.	Regulatory	Near term	● ● ○	● ● ○	Community, Property Owner(s)
Coordinate with the property owner(s) regarding Excelsior Boulevard redevelopment sites and support future actions, including a subdivision, development incentives for shared parking, affordable housing, etc.	Planning	Near term	● ● ○	● ● ○	Community, Property Owner(s)
Use identified economic development strategies to support commercial growth and investment along Excelsior Boulevard.	Planning	Mid term	● ● ○	● ● ○	Community

Strategic priorities

This outcome supports each of the identified priorities, creating connected and accessible housing options, reducing impervious surfaces, and creating opportunities for engagement through the development process.

Strategic priorities





Jessen Press redevelopment opportunities

This outcome identifies a combination of mixed-use development and medium density residential on the existing Jessen Press site.

Outcome Features

This site has been identified as an opportunity for mixed-use and medium density residential development. Previous development inquiries have explored mixed-use development opportunities for the site and adjacent sites. This process explored opportunities within the goals and context of this plan. Based on the existing access, site design, and surrounding context, opportunities for mixed-use and medium density residential development should consider:

Access + frontage

- » The site is accessed from Alabama Avenue without direct frontage on Excelsior Boulevard. Access and visibility from high traffic areas should be considered with the redevelopment.

Public parking

- » The city manages a municipal parking lot to the southeast of the site which will remain in operation. The parking lot is located in right-of-way dedicated to the city. This condition limits the ability to utilize the space for development due to the right-of-way vacation process.

Mixed-use development

- » Ground floor commercial uses that provide amenities and services for gateway residents that also draw visitors to the gateway
- » Residential development of various styles to support varied housing needs.

Medium density residential uses

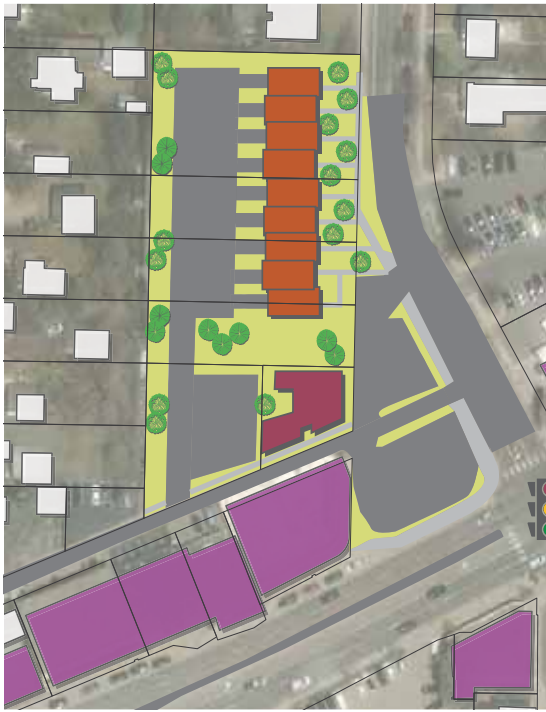
- » Development of medium density at a density of 6 to 30 units per acre.
- » Support housing types that provide a transition from the station area to single family residential.

On-site parking

- » Support shared parking structures across redevelopment to support resident and patron parking and reduce the impervious surface area of the site today.

What is the impact?

The redevelopment of the existing Jessen Press site creates development opportunity in the gateway. Specifically, it creates an opportunity to provide a transition between higher intensity uses along Excelsior Boulevard and the surrounding neighborhood.



Site rendering

Race + equity impact

- » Support mid-density residential development that promotes housing diversity in the gateway.

Environmental impact

- » Redevelopment will include a smaller building footprint than the existing buildings and increased landscaping that may manage stormwater and increase the tree canopy.

Public infrastructure impact

- » Increased utility needs with the potential for 13 to 56 new residential units and the maintenance of ground floor commercial uses. Residential uses were not calculated as part of the utility analysis of the Comprehensive Plan, and the change in use will increase utility needs.

Mobility impact

- » Change of use will result in an increase in vehicles, with opportunities for varied modal use with access to transit and multimodal infrastructure. Time of travel will shift with the introduction of residential travelers.

Land use + development impact

- » The 2040 Comprehensive Plan guides this site for future commercial development, adjacent to low density residential uses. Modifications to the future land use plan are needed to support future medium density residential uses and mixed use.

Implementation actions

Action	Action type	Timeline	Complexity	Benefit	Community partners
Rezone the current Jessen Press site to support a combination of mixed-use development, including ground floor commercial and upper floor residential, and medium density residential development.	Regulatory	Near term	● ● ○	● ● ○	Community, Property owner(s)
Coordinate with the property owner(s) regarding Excelsior Boulevard redevelopment sites and support future actions, including a subdivision, development incentives for shared parking, affordable housing, etc.	Planning	Near term	● ● ○	● ● ○	Community, Property owner(s)
Use identified economic development strategies to support commercial growth and investment along Excelsior Boulevard.	Planning	Mid term	● ● ○	● ● ○	Community

Strategic priorities

This outcome supports each of the identified priorities, creating connected and accessible housing options, reducing impervious surfaces, and creating opportunities for engagement through the development process.

Strategic priorities





Reuse opportunities + shared parking district

This outcome focuses on reinvestment potential of existing properties and opportunities for district parking arrangements.

Outcome Features

Off street parking is a requirement of many zoning districts, to ensure patrons and employees have access to their destination. Throughout the gateway, opportunities to reuse and enhance existing buildings can support reinvestment and redevelopment along the corridor. District parking should be explored as development and reinvestment occurs to support the best use of space. District parking can take many forms, from shared access points and off-street parking to parking ramps.

Parking structures

- » Parking structures should be considered with redevelopment activities to supply parking. Structured parking includes a higher development cost but provides varied opportunities for the site layout.
- » Ramps can provide parking for adjacent uses. The inclusion of parking for other developments can be used as a tool to provide development incentives in building height, frontage, density, etc. to support the district approach.

District parking

- » District parking is a concept that establishes parking requirements for an area that is shared amongst uses rather than site by site. This approach may include a combination of a shared lot, shared ramp and on-street parking. The creation of a parking district can be explored along the corridor.



Excelsior Boulevard



Example: Building reuse and activation

What is the impact?

This outcome supports both the reinvestment of properties throughout the corridor and the exploration of district parking arrangements, each including specific impact considerations.

Race + equity impact

- » Support commercial destinations that serve many audiences.

Environmental impact

- » Shared parking districts reduce the overall parking supply compared to individual parking requirements. Reduced hardscape and impervious surfaces.

Public infrastructure impact

- » Redevelopment along the corridor could include a variety of high density residential and commercial development, with opportunities identified on the existing Jessen Press and Party City sites.
- » On-street parking may be used as part of a district parking approach.

Mobility impact

- » District parking may require increased bicycle and pedestrian connections among sites and on-street parking to ensure access and connection for travelers.

Land use + development impact

- » Redevelopment aligns with the land use and economic development guidance of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
- » The 2040 Comprehensive Plan guides parcels along the corridor for high density residential and commercial development, supporting future investment.

Implementation actions

Action	Action type	Timeline	Complexity	Benefit	Community partners
Explore a district parking policy, and implement as development occurs.	Policy	Near term			Community
Utilize economic development tools to support the reuse and reinvestment of existing commercial buildings along Excelsior Boulevard.	Planning	Mid term			Community

Linked outcomes



The implementation of the reuse opportunities + shared parking district is linked to two other outcomes:



Party City redevelopment opportunities



Jessen Press redevelopment opportunities

Strategic priorities

This outcome supports each of the identified priorities, creating connected and accessible housing options, reducing impervious surfaces, and creating opportunities for engagement through the development process.

Strategic priorities





West Excelsior Boulevard roadway design

This outcome supports the identification of a community vision for the roadway that prioritizes safety, increases pedestrian access, improves public realm features, and narrows the roadway to slow traffic. Key features to be considered include enhanced crossings, wider sidewalks, landscaped medians, and priority for transit service.

Outcome features

West Excelsior Boulevard is an important regional connection serving a combination of local users and regional travelers in St. Louis Park. The roadway is under the jurisdiction of Hennepin County, who is responsible for future improvements and investments. The City of St. Louis Park has jurisdiction over the local roadways that intersect with the boulevard. Through the Arrive + Thrive process, a community vision for Excelsior Boulevard was established that supports the following:



Desired roadway features (example of Lyndale Ave in Minneapolis)

Reducing driving lanes

- » Reducing the number of lanes allows for the continued use of the roadway by all users, but will reduce the crossing distance and calm traffic through the area.

Sidewalks

- » Provide wider sidewalks that support a combination of pedestrian movement and public realm space.
- » There was little desire for dedicated bike facilities along the corridor with traffic volumes and overall space. Bikers could utilize driving lanes or walk their bikes on the sidewalks.

Landscaped median

- » There are currently paved and landscaped medians along some portions of the corridor. The continuation of these medians with enhanced landscaping and tree canopy is preferred.

Transit

- » Future roadway designs should include transit priority, providing space and access to transit stops and operations.

Crossings

- » Enhanced crossing opportunities along the corridor to improve comfort and safety.

Public Realm

- » Wider sidewalks create opportunities to enhance the public realm with various features including landscaping, shade, art and seating. These enhancements support the creation of a destination where people are comfortable and welcome.

What is the impact?

Safety, mobility and sense of place improvements are the focus of this outcome. The development of a future design for west Excelsior Boulevard should consider the following potential impacts:

Race + equity impact

- » The redesign supports infrastructure and safety enhancements to create a street that is safe and welcome to all users.
- » The revised design includes features that make crossing safer, connecting neighborhoods and destinations on both sides.

Environmental impact

- » These improvements support multimodal movement and could support a reduction in vehicle miles traveled through the gateway.
- » Opportunities to reduce driving lanes and add landscaped medians create pervious surface areas and increase tree canopy, reducing urban heat island effects within the corridor.

Public infrastructure impact

- » Excelsior Boulevard is a county roadway and will remain a county roadway following any updates.

Mobility impact

- » The roadway design includes features and considerations to facilitate the movement along and crossing of west Excelsior Boulevard.

Land use + development impact

- » Design features proposed respond to the existing and guided uses along West Excelsior Boulevard and activate the street frontage which supports businesses and increases opportunities for place-making and connection.

Implementation actions

Action	Action type	Timeline	Complexity	Benefit	Community partners
Support the redesign of Excelsior Boulevard through coordination with Hennepin County and support of future planning and design efforts.	Infrastructure	Mid term			Community, Hennepin County, CP Rail

Strategic priorities

This outcome centers around improved mobility for all users using a corridor vision that was established based upon community input gathered through this planning process. Future design also has the opportunity to support other connection and natural systems goals.

Strategic priorities

