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"A New Species": Neighborhood and Community Shopping Centers in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, 1941 – 1956

By

Lauren Anderson

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts
History - Public History

At

The University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

May, 2017

Graduate Studies

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Dean of Graduate Studies

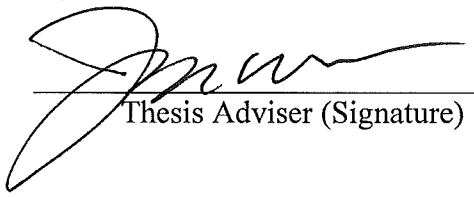
"A New Species": Neighborhood and Community Shopping Centers in St. Louis Park, MN, 1941 – 1956

By

Lauren Anderson

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2017
Under the Supervision of Dr. John Mann

This thesis examines a topic often overlooked by historians of suburbanization and consumption: the influence of neighborhood and community shopping centers in postwar suburban communities. Conceived during the 1920s and 30s, these centers became ubiquitous features of the American landscape during the postwar era. This thesis examines the neighborhood and community shopping centers developed in St. Louis Park, a suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota, between 1941 and 1956. Centers constructed in St. Louis Park largely mirrored national trends in shopping center development, confirming the limited research compiled by other authors. Using St. Louis Park as a case study, this thesis argues that the economic impact of neighborhood and community centers on preexisting forms of suburban retail was limited, suggesting that it was not until the development of regional shopping centers in the mid-1950s that shopping centers posed a serious threat to freestanding suburban retail.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank several individuals, without whom this thesis would not have been possible. I am indebted to Jeanne Andersen at the St. Louis Park Historical Society, who provided feedback on the rough draft of this thesis, access to valuable sources, and contextual information on the history of St. Louis Park. Thank you to Aaron Borken and other permit technicians at the Inspections Department of the City of St. Louis Park, to Nancy Sells in the city's Community Development Department, and to Melissa Kennedy, city clerk, for providing access to city documents. I am very grateful for the assistance of Dr. John Mann (thesis advisor), Dr. Andrew Sturtevant, and Dr. Ryan Weichelt, who reviewed thesis drafts and offered helpful advice. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to Ginny Way, architectural historian at the Minnesota Historical Society, who guided me through the process of conducting a property evaluation and who piqued my interest in midcentury shopping centers. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, who has provided the time and energy necessary to complete this project.

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INTRODUCTION

As of April 2017, there were 115,857 shopping centers in the United States. Ranging in size from the super-regional mall to the small convenience center, in 2016 U.S. shopping centers had a combined real estate value of 1.3 trillion dollars. Most of these centers are classified as community, neighborhood, and convenience or strip shopping centers, with no more than forty tenants and a targeted trade area between six miles and less than one mile.[1] So ubiquitous they hardly merit a second thought from contemporary shoppers, neighborhood and community shopping centers (sometimes referred to as "strip malls") have been common features on the American landscape since the middle of the twentieth century.[2] Yet, the existing scholarly literature on the history of these resources is limited. Authors have downplayed their existence in articles and books on suburbanization, consumption, commercial development, and community history; academic discussion focuses more on the history of large regional shopping centers than that of their more modest predecessors.[3]

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[1] "U.S. Shopping Center Impact," International Council of Shopping Centers, August 2016, accessed February 8, 2017, http://www.icsc.org/us-shopping-center-impact; ICSC Research and CoStar Realty Information, Inc., *U.S. Shopping-Center Classification and Typical Characteristics*, April 2017, accessed May 2, 2017, http://www.icsc.org/uploads/research/general/US_CENTER_CLASSIFICATION.pdf.

[2] Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920 – 1950* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), 221 – 224; Richard Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center in Washington, D.C., 1930-1941," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51, no. 1 (March 1992): 5-6, accessed July 26, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/990638; Richard Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center during the Interwar Decades," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 268, accessed July 26, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/991242.

[3] For examples of narratives of suburbanization that focus on regional centers and/or contain only brief mentions of neighborhood and community centers, see Peter O. Muller, *Contemporary Suburban America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1981); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985); Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820 – 2000* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2003); and Robert A. Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). For narratives of consumption and commercial development that follow similar patterns, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in America* (New

The primary exception to this general historiographical trend is Richard Longstreth. Perhaps the most knowledgeable architectural historian on the topic of shopping centers, Longstreth has discussed the circumstances by which these centers were created in the interwar years, the influence of these early centers on later commercial development, and the flourishing of neighborhood and community centers in the postwar era.[4] Matthew Manning, a graduate of the University of Georgia, has also made a substantial contribution to the literature with his master's thesis, in which he discusses the history, typology, and preservation of strip malls.[5] Anne Satterthwaite and Chester Liebs also include substantial information on these centers in their scholarship on consumption and forms of retail development, respectively. Yet, Liebs, Manning, Longstreth, and others like them have focused more on architecture and less on the impact that these centers had on the specific communities in which they were built. Scholars have viewed neighborhood and community centers as stepping stones in the history of retail, the outgrowth of other forms of commercial development and the

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York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003) and Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996): 1050 – 1081, accessed February 19, 2017, http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:4699748. For histories of the Twin Cities with similar patterns, see Ronald Abler, John S. Adams, and John R. Borchert, *The Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1976); John S. Adams and Barbara J. VanDrasek, *Minneapolis-St. Paul: People, Place, and Public Life* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Jodi Larson, Kyle Engelking, and Kren Majewicz, *The Story of the Suburbs in Anoka and Hennepin Counties* (Anoka, MN: Anoka County Historical Society, 2011); and Larry Millet, *Minnesota Modern: Architecture and Life at Midcentury* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

[4] See Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center;" Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*; Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center;" Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In, The Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914 – 1941* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

[5] Matthew Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls" (master's thesis, University of Georgia, 2009), 33 – 37, accessed April 7, 2017, https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/manning_matthew_j_200908_mhp.pdf.

forerunners of the regional mall. However, their influence on other aspects of history has not fully been explored.[6]

One such area of influence is the impact that these centers had on older commercial development. Most authors who have written about neighborhood and community shopping centers have not addressed how these shopping centers might have affected the survival of local businesses already existing on the Main Streets of small outlying towns or as scattered, isolated stores. The extent to which shopping centers within a particular suburb encouraged or discouraged individual businesses from locating within that suburb also has not (to this author's knowledge) been addressed in the current literature.

The purpose of this thesis is to fill a gap in the literature by means of a case study that examines the city of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. A suburb of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park is an ideal locale for the study of neighborhood and community shopping centers, since it exemplified the suburbanization that occurred in the postwar era. The city is known as a "first-ring" suburb of the Twin Cities, or a suburb that abuts the Twin Cities proper and quickly filled with residential development after World War II.[7] Because

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[6]. Chester A. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1985); Ann Satterthwaite, *Going Shopping: Consumer Choices and Community* Consequences (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall;* Avijit Ghosh and Sara McLafferty, "Guest Commentary: The Shopping Center: The Restructuring of Postwar Retailing," *Journal of Retailing* 67, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 253 – 267, accessed February 19, 2017, EBSCOhost. There are a couple of exceptions to this statement. Satterthwaite includes a small amount of information on the social role that these centers played (see Satterthwaite, *Going Shopping,* 53.) In addition, the article by Avijit Ghosh and Sara McLafferty provides a fairly limited amount of information on the connection between the decentralization of retail, chain stores, and shopping centers. However, neither of these works is a thorough examination of the influence that neighborhood and community shopping centers had on a specific community.

[7] Larson, Engelking, and Majewicz, *The Story of the Suburbs,* 9; Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis – St. Paul,* 103; Stephanie K. Atwood and Charlene K. Roise, *A Context for Suburban Development in Hennepin County, 1870 – 1970* (Minneapolis, MN: Hess, Roise and Company, 2010), 8; Rebecca Lou Smith, *Postwar Housing in National and Local Perspective: A Twin Cities Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at University of Minnesota, 1978), 17 – 19;

neighborhood and community centers were constructed rapidly in the postwar era, it is logical to look for these centers in suburbs that were growing during this same period.[8] Indeed, by 1955 four neighborhood and community shopping centers existed in St. Louis Park, providing several examples that can be compared and contrasted. Furthermore, all of these centers were developed before 1956, when Southdale Shopping Center appeared in the neighboring suburb of Edina, signifying the trend toward regional shopping centers.[9] Despite the relatively large number of shopping centers in St. Louis Park, there have been no studies focused on the development of those centers in this particular community, nor have authors examined the degree of similarity between centers in St. Louis Park and the national trends in shopping center development and design outlined by Longstreth, Manning and other authors. Thus, in addition to exploring the impact of

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Adams & VanDrasek, *Minneapolis – St. Paul,* 103. Although the term carries different colloquial meanings and is somewhat nebulous, academically "first-ring" or "first-tier" suburb usually refers to a portion of the Twin Cities proper located on the Cities' borders or a municipality abutting those borders. Larson, Engelking, and Majewicz provides the most thorough description of first-ring suburbs, although they limit their examples to Minneapolis suburbs. According to these authors, the characteristics of first-ring suburbs include: adherence to the grid pattern of Minneapolis streets, many small residential lots built in pieces by one builder over a period of time or by many builders, the presence of "large trunk roads that lead directly to the city center," and the presence of a variety of homes that range in size from 700 to 900 square feet and were built mostly between the 1920s and early 1950s. A list of Minneapolis suburbs that match this description include not only northeast Minneapolis and the extreme southern and northern portions of Minneapolis, but also the outlying municipalities of St. Anthony Village, Columbia Heights, Hilltop, parts of Fridley, Brooklyn Center, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley, St. Louis Park, Edina, and Richfield. Larson, Engelking, and Majewicz state that parts of Bloomington and Crystal could also potentially qualify for this list. Adams and VanDrasek define first-ring suburbs as those communities located at the ends of streetcar lines. Their list includes Richfield, Edina, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley, Brooklyn Center, Columbia Heights, Roseville, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul, as well as Highland Park and Lake Phalen within Saint Paul proper.

[8] Longstreth, *The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center,* 268; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32.

[9] "Knollwood is 13th Shopping Center In Area; Nine Others Are Planned," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 12, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota (hereafter cited as MNHS); Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company, 1956), 2 - 10; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth in the Twin Cities Area* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: April 1, 1957), 4 – 5; "Southdale Center: The First Indoor Shopping Mall: Overview," Minnesota Historical Society, last revised September 10, 2016, accessed August 16, 2016, http://libguides.mnhs.org/southdale.

shopping centers on existing suburban retail, this thesis examines the degree to which shopping centers in St. Louis Park adhered to national patterns in shopping center construction.

A survey of newspapers, census records, published reports on shopping centers in the Twin Cities, and other sources has confirmed the trends outlined in the existing historiography while providing a more thorough understanding of postwar neighborhood and community shopping centers than that which has been portrayed in the current literature. In terms of their physical characteristics, neighborhood and community centers in St. Louis Park largely mimicked the development of centers in other Twin Cities suburbs and throughout the country. In design, layout, tenant composition, and location, centers in St. Louis Park bore similarities to neighborhood and community shopping centers found throughout the United States in the 1940s and 1950s.

This case study of St. Louis Park also provides a more in-depth understanding of how neighborhood and community shopping centers affected neighboring businesses within that suburb. More specifically, St. Louis Park shopping centers developed before 1955 did not negatively affect the retail sales of Main Street businesses in nearby Hopkins; nor did these centers discourage freestanding commercial businesses from locating within the Park. The evidence from St. Louis Park suggests that larger, regional shopping centers developed in the mid- to late 1950s were more influential in drawing business away from pre-established Main Streets in outlying metropolitan areas.

Although this thesis stands on its own as a complete research project, it was designed to inform another project with more practical outcomes - a public history thesis practicum. The public history thesis practicum at the University of Wisconsin – Eau

Claire enables students "to develop a public audience for their original research and to develop working experience as a public historian."[10] The practicum project that accompanies this thesis is a property evaluation of Miracle Mile Shopping Center in St. Louis Park. This evaluation, located in the appendix to this thesis, is a means of reaching a broader audience with the results of original research; the completed property evaluation will be incorporated into the Minnesota Statewide Inventory managed by the Heritage Preservation Department of the Minnesota Historical Society and accessible to anyone who desires to view it.

Public history involves not only making history accessible to the public, but also applying the knowledge of the past to current problems.[11] A property evaluation utilizes knowledge of the past gathered from research to determine if a specific building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, based on the building's historical significance and retention of physical integrity.[12] According to the National Park Service's bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, historical significance is defined as belonging to buildings:

> A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
> B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
> C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

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[10] The University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, *2015 – 2017 Graduate Catalog: A Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire,* 27:77, accessed April 12, 2017, http://www.uwec.edu/Registrar/catalogs/upload/15-17-GRAD-CAT_20150629-3.pdf.

[11] James B. Gardner and Peter S. LaPagalia, *Public History: Essays from the Field,* rev. ed. (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2004), 32.

[12] U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service Cultural Resources, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (n.p: 1997), 1, accessed April 12, 2017, https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/pdfs/nrb16a.pdf.

D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.[13]

To be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, properties that display significance in one or more of these areas must also retain their physical integrity. According to the National Park Service, a property's integrity consists of "seven aspects or qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association."[14] The property evaluation accompanying this thesis evaluates both the significance and integrity of the Miracle Mile Shopping Center based on the historical context established in chapters one and two of the thesis, as well as research on the specific history of Miracle Mile. Taken together, the property evaluation and the thesis provide a fuller understanding of neighborhood and community shopping centers in the postwar era.

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[13] U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service Cultural Resources, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form,* 13.

[14] U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service Cultural Resources, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form,* 1.

CHAPTER ONE

SUBURBANIZATION AND THE SHOPPING CENTER

In order to understand the history of neighborhood and community shopping centers, it is necessary to understand the definition of the term "shopping center." Architectural historian Meredith Clausen defines a shopping center as

> a group of commercial establishments under a single ownership, planned, developed, and managed as a single unit, with off-street parking provided, and related to the area it serves in the size and type of its stores. Wholly planned and controlled, it differs thus from an ordinary retail street or district where independently owned stores are simply concentrated.[15]

Before the 1920s, the term "shopping center" simply referred to a concentration of businesses, which might be located either in cities or in outlying areas. After 1920, the term began to refer to a collection of businesses located in a complex owned by a single party, in which physical design and tenant selection were carefully managed to create a commercial outlet that catered to a specific audience. This definition was solidified by the end of World War II.[16] By the early 1950s, changes in shopping center development led to a classification of three different types of shopping centers: neighborhood, community, and regional. According to Clausen,

> three basic types were defined, based on size and scope of merchandise: the small neighborhood center on a 5- to 10-acre lot, with ten to 15 stores clustered around a supermarket and drugstore, and offering convenience goods and services to the immediate neighborhood; the somewhat larger community center on 20 to 25 acres, with 20 to 40 stores anchored by a junior department store and providing a broader coverage of merchandise; and the large-scale regional center on 35 or

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[15] Meredith Clausen, "Northgate Regional Shopping Center-Paradigm from the Provinces," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 43, no. 2 (May 1984): 146, accessed July 27, 2016, http://www.jstor.org.proxy.uwec.edu/stable/989902.

[16] Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall,* 145 – 146.

> more acres, with 50 to 100 or more stores, including at least one major department store, and offering a full representation of stores and services.[17]

These shopping centers, developed mainly on the outskirts of urban areas, represented a new form of retail concentration, different from earlier manifestations of commercial development. In the words of one trade study, shopping centers were "a new species."[18] To understand the impact of this "new species" on the community of St. Louis Park, it is first necessary to understand the recent history of commercial development and architecture in outlying areas of the United States, and the evolution of shopping centers within that context.

Beyond Main Street: Outlying Commercial Development before 1930

By 1900, much of the commercial activity in the United States took place along Main Street, which, according to architectural historian Chester Liebs, was "the corridor of business activity in the heart of most towns and cities."[19] Main Street was the center of each town, village, and city – the commercial and community hub.[20] Much of the roadside commerce located *beyond* Main Street developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the advent of the horsecar and then the elevated railway facilitated the expansion of urban areas. More importantly, the rise of the electric streetcar in the late 1880s allowed residential development to spread out from the city center to formerly outlying areas. Between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Great Depression, cities significantly increased their urbanized areas as housing sprang up within walking distance of streetcar lines.

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[17] Clausen, "Northgate Regional Shopping Center," 147.

[18] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 5; Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro, *Shopping Centers: Design and Operation* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1951), 4.

[19] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 8.

[20] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 8 – 9.

Accompanying this centrifugal movement of residential construction was commercial and retail development, which located along streetcar lines beginning in the late 1800s.[21] According to Liebs,

> these structures usually consisted of a single row of shop fronts, although some were capped by an additional story or two of lofts or offices. Since builders assumed that more concentrated urban settlement spreading out from the city center would eventually make land along the avenues valuable for more intensive development, they generally conceived of the structures as interim improvements designed to produce enough revenue to pay the taxes and hold the property for the future. Hence these buildings were often referred to as "taxpayers."[22]

Taxpayers were usually joined underneath a single roof to form a "taxpayer block" and contained a range of neighborhood or convenience store businesses, such as drug stores, grocery stores, and doctors' offices.[23] Although multiple businesses were thus physically connected, they were not managed as an integrated group.[24] Between 1900 and the depression, thousands of taxpayer blocks were erected along streetcar lines and roads, forming "taxpayer strips" along transportation corridors. These taxpayer strips had similar configurations to buildings on Main Street, except that taxpayers were shorter structures and spread out over longer distances. Both independently-owned businesses and chain stores located along the taxpayer strip and were patronized by shoppers arriving on foot, by streetcar, and increasingly, by automobile.

At first, automobile parking was limited to curbside parking. As increasing amounts of car traffic created a scarcity of parking space, some commercial buildings were set back from the road to allow cars to park perpendicular to the stores. Others went beyond that by creating parking lots in front of their businesses, a new concept in

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[21] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 10 – 12.

[22] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 12.

[23] Thomas W. Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy and the Shopping-Center Boom of the 1950s and 1960s," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996): 1088 - 1089, accessed August 2, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2169635; Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 12.

[24] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 133 – 136.

commercial site planning. This trend was most prominent in Los Angeles, where some taxpayer strips were constructed from the very start to serve the needs of motorists by providing off-street parking.[25]

Commercial development located in outlying areas before 1930 was not limited to the taxpayer strip. Beginning in the 1920s, the rise of automobile ownership and the creation of the national highway system resulted in more development along highways, beyond the taxpayer strips created during the streetcar era. Resorts and vacation destinations were key locations for this type of commercial development, but wayside businesses also grew up along highways in the countryside. In addition, businesses such as gas stations and motor courts developed along highway bypasses. The most common location for highway commercial development, however, occurred along highways at the outermost edges of cities. Liebs refers to these stretches of highway as "approach strips" and states that "during their formative years, between the mid-1920s and World War II, these strips developed into the city gates of the auto age."[26]

The creation of the drive-in market in the 1920s reflects the rising influence of the automobile on commercial development. According to Longstreth, Los Angeles' drive-in markets, developed in outlying areas of the city in the 1920s, were the "first retail facilities not devoted to car service itself to have their form and space fundamentally reorganized for the motorist's convenience."[27] Developed partially in response to new conditions fostered by the automobile and competition among food retailers, these

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[25] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 12 – 15.

[26] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 16 – 27.

[27] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* xv – xvi, 33- 37, 46; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 14. Longstreth states that these drive-in markets were themselves patterned off of super service stations – see chapter 1 of *The Drive-In* for more details.

structures capitalized on the desire of Los Angeles residents for convenience and wide merchandise selection.[28]

Drive-in markets were generally laid out in an "L-shaped" pattern and located on the corner of an intersection on a busy arterial road, "on the homeward-bound side of commuter routes." They included forecourts of parking separated from the street and were composed of a "loosely integrated organization" of tenants. In contrast to the monotony of taxpayer strips, drive-in markets were usually designed to emphasize either the corner of the "L-shaped" building or the ends of the structure. According to Longstreth, this design served to "enhance the market's attraction to the eye and underscore its function as a unified entity." Advertising was limited and unified. Finally, most markets contained between four and six food departments operated by different food retailers, and many added one or two non-food units such as flower shops, drug stores, cafés, and laundry call stations, as well as a filling station.[29] Although quickly surpassed in popularity by Los Angeles supermarkets, the drive-in market would exert a strong influence on the neighborhood shopping centers of the 1930s.[30]

Urban geographer Rodney A. Erickson's study of suburban employment between 1920 and 1980 provides a larger context within which to place these early twentieth-century changes in outlying retail development. According to Erickson, "the 1920s…marked a rapid acceleration of suburban economic expansion, especially in the commercial sectors."[31] According to Erickson, the years between 1920 and 1940 were characterized by "spillover and specialization" of suburban employment. During this

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[28] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 33 – 40.
[29] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 37 – 54.
[30] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 75, 148.
[31] Rodney A. Erickson, "The Evolution of the Suburban Space Economy," *Urban Geography* 4, no. 2 (April 1983): 95.

period, suburban employment in metropolitan areas "spilled over" the central city boundaries into suburbs along those boundaries. Most of these suburbs specialized in one type of employment, such as industry or commerce.[32] Manufacturing industries were the first to "spillover" into outlying areas; by 1920, much of this development was already located in the suburbs. Commercial businesses were slower to suburbanize.[33] According to Erickson, a large portion of suburban commercial development in the 1920s and 1930s was simply the result of an extension of highway commercial development into suburban areas. Erickson states that "by 1929, there were already a quarter of a million retail stores (31.2% of the metropolitan total) employing over 460,000 workers located in the suburbs." However, "the average [retail] establishment was only about half the size (in terms of employment or sales) of its central city counterpart."[34] Moreover, most suburban residents remained dependent on the commercial businesses of the central city, "a pattern which was not broken until the two decades following 1940."[35]

In summary, all of the pre-1930 commercial development mentioned above differed in some way from what we would today call neighborhood or community shopping centers. Although some forward-thinking Los Angeles developers and builders of taxpayer strip businesses may have included parking lots for their drive-in markets and buildings, Longstreth indicates that the primary form and structure of commercial development before 1930 (both in downtown and outlying areas) largely mimicked the commercial development found on Main Street.[36] In 1930, retail centers

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[32] Erickson, "The Evolution of the Suburban Space Economy," 96, 101.
[33] Erickson, "The Evolution of the Suburban Space Economy," 97 – 98.
[34] Erickson, "The Evolution of the Suburban Space Economy," 98.
[35] Erickson, "The Evolution of the Suburban Space Economy," 98.
[36] Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture,* rev. ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000), 15; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 5.

> varied greatly in size and scope of services, from the large downtown core to the modest node in a far outlying district. Yet the basic physical structure of these nucleations was the same, and it was rooted in longstanding traditions of urban growth. Buildings faced the street and occupied most of their respective lots. Most structures, generated by a free play of market forces, were erected on an individual basis. There was little or no coordination between the interests involved, in terms of appearance, siting, or nature of tenancy. Public transportation routes and the pedestrian movement they generated were the most immediate factors affecting both the location and the intensity of development.[37]

Even through the 1940s, Longstreth states that "traditional configurations – the legacy of 'Main Street' – continued to exercise considerable influence on retail development."[38]

Neighborhood and community shopping centers, first developed in the interwar years, would eventually popularize innovative alternatives to these established patterns of retail development. In 1930, developers in Washington, D.C. combined elements of the drive-in markets and the earliest neighborhood shopping centers to create the Park and Shop, providing a new paradigm for neighborhood shopping centers that proved influential as a local and national model. By 1941, the neighborhood shopping center represented a national, innovative trend in retailing.[39] During the postwar era, neighborhood and community shopping centers expanded in size and proliferated on the fringes of metropolitan areas, reinforcing this new form of commercial development, a form that continues to dominate the American landscape today.[40]

Shopping Centers: 1930 to the Present

The origins of the shopping center lie in the late nineteenth century, when the rise of the electric streetcar prompted centrifugal movement of residential and commercial

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[37] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 5.
[38] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 132.
[39] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 14, 17, 22, 31.
[40] Longstreth, *The Drive In,* 132 – 33, 162 – 163; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 5- 6, 32; Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268.

development from the central city to outlying areas.[41] As cities spread out across the landscape in the second half of the 1800s, contractors constructed comprehensively planned subdivisions and resort towns for the well-to-do. Accompanying some of these wealthy residential areas were store blocks featuring elaborate designs and a "quasi-domestic character."[42] These blocks were anchored by a market and contained between five and ten stores chosen to provide for customers' daily needs.[43] Late-nineteenth century attitudes held that commercial development was best located away from residential neighborhoods, but these centers proved that commercial buildings could be an asset, rather than an eyesore, to a residential community.[44]

After World War I, comprehensively planned communities became increasingly trendy as wealthy citizens sought a refuge from the haphazard growth fostered by the automobile, leading to a rise in the number of these neighborhood store blocks. Increasing automobile use in the 1920s also enabled well-to-do residents in previously isolated subdivisions to travel easily to other nearby retail development, such as the Main Streets of nearby towns or the commercial strips constructed along nearby highways. Store blocks began to function as not simply assets to residential communities, but as competition to nearby retail nodes, increasing their number of tenants and striving to provide the blend of services and goods necessary to attract more customers.[45] According to architectural historian Richard Longstreth, "it was this more or less "complete"

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[41] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 10 – 12.

[42] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 11; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 9-10.

[43] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268.

[44] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 8-9.

[45] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 9 – 10; Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 133; Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 26 – 27.

package of basic stores, selling food, pharmaceuticals, and other supplies...that emerged as a distinct type, the neighborhood shopping center."[46]

The increase in planned residential development just before and after World War I was also accompanied by the construction of larger shopping complexes containing multiple buildings. The most influential of these was J.C. Nichol's Country Club Plaza, created in the early 1920s to serve the wealthy Country Club District outside of Kansas City, Missouri.[47] Nichols carefully planned the Plaza's mix of tenants to ensure that residents of the Country Club District would not need to venture elsewhere for their shopping, and coordinated the physical appearance of his center to create a unified and visually-appealing exterior.[48] Nichols also tailored his complex to motorists, rather than pedestrians and streetcars, by limiting the possibility of automobile congestion and providing room for curbside parking (and eventually a free parking lot).[49]

Although the Plaza was certainly an inspiration to the few developers who built large shopping complexes in the years before 1945, the limited number of centers developed during the interwar years were not exact copies of Nichols' design. Experimental in nature, these complexes did not adhere to a dominant pattern, differing from each other in "size, layout, expressive qualities, location, and, to a certain degree, in tenant mix."[50] Some developers incorporated off-street parking lots into their facilities, while others limited parking to the curb; some opted to include both forms of parking.[51]

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[46] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 10.

[47] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 290n2. The Country Club Plaza was not the first community shopping center, however - Market Square of Lake Forest, Illinois was the first.

[48] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 270 – 271.

[49] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 272.

[50] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268, 273, 287.

[51] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 270 – 287.

In general, these complexes suffered from a shortage of parking.[52] Although these larger interwar centers differed from postwar community shopping centers, Longstreth states that developments such as the Plaza represented the first generation of community shopping centers and "proved crucial...to demonstrating the efficacy of integrated business development on a large scale."[53] In addition to offering more convenience goods, these community shopping centers provided specialty goods and a broader range of services to a larger target population than the smaller neighborhood centers.[54] In addition, community centers designed during the interwar era were often elaborate, and most "projected a highly idealized image of a preindustrial village."[55]

Neighborhood shopping centers constructed in the 1920s, while unique in comparison to other forms of early twentieth-century commercial development, also differed from their postwar counterparts. Unlike taxpayer strips, the first neighborhood shopping centers developed in the 1920s functioned as integrated facilities. In addition, almost all of these centers were included in planned residential developments.[56] However, neighborhood centers retained the basic form used by the unplanned taxpayer blocks - buildings abutted the sidewalk and parking space was often limited to the curb.[57]

The construction of the Park and Shop shopping center in Washington, D.C., in 1930 represented a notable change in the basic form of neighborhood centers. The Park and Shop enticed shoppers with automobiles by including a large forecourt of parking. More than simply accommodating the automobile, the Park and Shop's parking lot

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[52] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 287.
[53] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 269, 273, 287, 289.
[54] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268 – 270, 273.
[55] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 269, 289.
[56] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 133, 136; Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268 - 270; Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 12.
[57] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 133 - 136.

determined the arrangement of the entire site. Unlike earlier neighborhood shopping centers, the facility was *not* part of a planned residential subdivision or separated from other commercial development, but was developed to service both the old and new developments surrounding it.[58] Patterned after drive-in markets that had developed in Los Angeles in the 1920s, the center was positioned on a corner lot along a major thoroughfare, where it could attract motorists traveling from the city center to outlying areas. Its tenants included two chain markets, a bakery, a chocolate shop, a delicatessen/restaurant, a hardware store, a drugstore, a laundry call station, a beauty salon, a barber shop, and an automobile service facility. Its exterior was unified, and it lacked conspicuous signage. The center's "siting, layout, and appearance" were borrowed from the drive-in market, while its size and store types were largely borrowed from its pre-1930 predecessors.[59] The Park and Shop thus combined the characteristics of drive-in market with the characteristics of earlier neighborhood shopping centers to form a significant new paradigm for the shopping center, one that included off-street parking and independence from a single residential tract.[60]

Although Washington, D.C. contained the most examples, by 1941 many cities had their own neighborhood shopping centers, most constructed between 1939 and 1941 and largely patterned after the Park and Shop. Spurred on by the competitive value of combining off-street parking with an "integrated business structure," the shopping center, with its drive-in parking lot, was recognized as "a significant new trend in the field" by

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[58] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 11.

[59] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 11 - 14. The exception to this is the automobile service facility, which was not found in earlier neighborhood shopping centers.

[60] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 7.

1941.[61] After World War II, the shortage of commercial development in newly developed outlying residential areas and the flexibility of existing zoning laws, combined with the advantages of "integrated business development," contributed to the shopping center's ascendancy. Before World War II, some regions of the U.S. had built centers that differed from the Park and Shop model in areas such as parking and storefront design. After the war, however, the forecourt of parking and a unified façade became standard, as developers realized the advantages of a front parking lot and a unified appearance in attracting trade. By the early 1950s, hundreds of neighborhood centers "could be found in urban areas of almost every size throughout the country."[62]

After World War II, community shopping centers also sprouted up in large numbers, changing quickly and drastically from their interwar-era forms.[63] As supermarkets located in these centers during the 1950s, community centers increased in size, with larger and more numerous stores and increased parking capacity. In addition, department stores and chain variety and clothing stores became important tenants.[64] In the postwar era, developers of community shopping centers no longer valued uniqueness and aesthetic appeal. Rather, the centers' designs were characterized by uniformity and utility.[65]

The growing popularity of shopping centers in the postwar era was reflected in the subject matter of the 1948 Urban Land Institute's *The Community Builders Handbook.* The guidebook, designed to educate young professionals entering the field of

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[61] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 158 – 159.

[62] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32; Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 162.

[63] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268, 287, 289; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32.

[64] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 289; Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 162 – 163.

[65] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 289.

community development, laid out a series of best practices for shopping center design in its 1948 edition. These included recommendations that builders incorporate large front display windows, avoid entrance steps, ramps, and offset storefronts, and, in some cases, include canopies in their shopping centers.[66] The handbook encouraged "simple design along modern lines" and a "greater reliance…on proportion and form rather than embellishment." Although the handbook specifically condemned "the indiscriminate use of signs," this modern, simple architectural style prompted some developers to encourage the use of flashy, uncoordinated signage to draw the motorists' gaze to the shopping center.[67]

In his master's thesis, Matthew Manning (a graduate of the University of Georgia's historic preservation program) provides a succinct list of characteristics of postwar shopping centers. Although he uses the term "strip malls" to describe this building type, it seems that many, if not all, community and neighborhood shopping centers would fit the general description outlined by the list. Manning states that

> by the end of the 1950s, the strip mall was a uniquely recognizable and ubiquitous form of commercial development. The defining characteristics of the typical strip mall lay not just in the building alone, but also in the collection of parts that comprised the space between building and highway. Certain patterns and forms were present in the strip mall that distinguished it from other commercial typologies:
>
> - Single Ownership or Control
> - Designed and Built as a Planned Unit
> - Linear Arrangement of Building(s) (straight, curved, or angled)
> - Single Story
> - Building(s) Set Back from Public Road or Right-of-Way
> - Primary Parking between Building(s) and Road
> - Minimum 3:1 Ratio of Parking Area to Building Area

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[66] Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute, *The Community Builders Handbook,* rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1948), vii – ix, 157 – 158.

[67] Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute, *The Community Builders Handbook,* vii – ix, 157; Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 33 – 37.

- Single Front Facade Facing Parking
- Separate Rear Service Access
- Storefront Entrances Directly Accessible from Parking Area
- Covered Sidewalk along Storefronts (canopy, awning, arcade, etc.)
- Spaces for Multiple Tenants with Partition Walls between Stores
- Flexible Interior Space Customizable by Tenants
- Individual Exterior Signage for Each Storefront
- Signage Visible from Passing Vehicles [68]

By the mid-1950s, neighborhood centers were struggling to compete with community centers, which prospered due to the increasing demand for commodities in outlying areas, the desire for larger parking lots and bigger stores, and relatively low prices for large areas of land.[69] Shopping centers continued to increase in size with the introduction of the regional shopping center around 1949. Cameron Village in North Carolina, Northgate in Washington, and Shoppers World in Massachusetts were three of the earliest centers of this type. Each had over thirty stores (including one to two department stores and supermarkets) and a total square footage of over three hundred thousand feet. As late as 1955, however, these centers were still relatively rare, with less than two dozen in existence.[70] According to geographer Peter Muller, in the late 1940s and early 1950s "only modest-sized neighborhood and community shopping centers appeared."[71] Furthermore, the decentralization of retail to outlying areas was relatively slow through at least the early 1950s. Between 1945 and the late 1950s, commercial development (including shopping centers) was "consequent;" in other words, it followed (rather than led) residential development to outlying metropolitan areas.[72]

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[68] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 39.
[69] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32.
[70] Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy and the Shopping-Center Boom," 1090 – 1091.
[71] Muller, *Contemporary Suburban America,* 121.
[72] Muller, *Contemporary Suburban America,* 121 – 123.

In the mid-1950s, a combination of changes in the federal tax code, cheap land on the outskirts of cities, loose government zoning restrictions, and the greater convenience and amenities of regional centers (as compared to downtown stores) contributed to an increase in the number of regional centers. The federal government's subsidy of automobile travel through low gas taxes and the creation of the federal highway system also played a role in the type's ascendency.[73] In 1956 alone, twenty-five regional shopping centers were built in the U.S., more than doubling the amount of regional centers built between 1949 and 1955.[74] Designed to compete with downtown, regional centers were instrumental in shifting retail trade toward the suburbs.[75] Muller states that this sudden rise in regional shopping centers in the late 1950s was accompanied by a change in the role of suburban retail – rather than being "consequent," suburban shopping centers became "catalytic," drawing residential and other development to locate around these larger regional centers.[76] The world's first enclosed shopping center, Southdale, opened in Minnesota in 1956, symbolizing this new phase in shopping center development.[77]

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[73] Kenneth Jackson, "All the World's a Mall: Reflections on the Social and Economic Consequences of the American Shopping Center," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996): 1115-1116, accessed July 10, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2169636, 1115 – 1116; Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy," 1093 – 1095, 1097, 1098. The passage of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 had large implications for the creation of shopping centers. Including in this law were several tax breaks, one of which was, according to Hanchett, "an acceleration of the depreciation deduction." The law allowed owners of profit-producing real estate to receive more of the total tax deduction for the depreciation of their buildings earlier in the building's life than was previously allowed. This allowed building owners to claim more "losses" in depreciation than they had made in building profits, meaning that they did not have to pay tax on their property and could even reduce other income taxes by applying the extra "loss." In other words, real estate construction became a tax shelter. The impact of this law on the creation of shopping centers was significant. Because this new method of calculating depreciation only applied to new construction, investors rushed to build centers on the cheap, abundant land at the edges of urban areas. According to Hanchett, the 1954 law led to increased construction of neighborhood, community, and regional shopping centers.

[74] Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy," 1097 – 1098.

[75] Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy," 1091; Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall,* xiii – xiv.

[76] Muller, *Contemporary Suburban America,* 121 – 23.

[77] Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy," 1097.

Shopping Centers and Commercial Development in the Twin Cities

Commercial and retail development in the Twin Cities – including the development of shopping centers - largely followed national trends. Before the 1890s, much commercial activity in the area took place in St. Paul and Minneapolis proper, where shops were accessed on foot or via horsecar lines.[78] After the introduction of electric streetcars in 1889, major conglomerations of commercial development (including small department stores, medical and dental offices, and stores offering specialized products and services) located in outlying areas at the intersections of streetcar lines. At streetcar transit stops, one could find businesses purveying items and services of a more ordinary nature, such as grocery stores, bakeries, butcher shops, and pharmacies. Presumably, these streetcar-oriented businesses formed taxpayer strips like those described by Chester Liebs. Mom and Pop stores supplemented this commercial development by servicing residential neighborhoods located between streetcar lines.[79]

A new era of transportation and commercial development began in the 1920s as some residents of the Twin Cities began using automobiles for transportation. Although those with downtown jobs continued to commute to work via the streetcar system, wealthier Twin City residents increasingly used cars for shopping and recreational purposes.[80] This in turn led to the development of commercial districts along bus and streetcar lines that accommodated motorists in need of parking.[81] Farther out, beyond the

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[78] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis-St. Paul,* 109; Abler, Borchert & Adams, *The Twin Cities,* 33.

[79] Abler, Adams, and Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 33.

[80] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 98.

[81] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 84, 109.

streetcar and bus lines, commercial development located at the intersections of important roads, presumably forming what Liebs termed "approach strips."[82]

After World War II, new patterns in residential development and transportation once again produced new forms of commercial development in the Twin Cities. Across the United States, suburbanization and residential construction boomed in the late 1940s and the 1950s. This explosion in housing construction was fueled by a housing shortage, a problem compounded by soldiers returning home from overseas and starting families. A strong postwar economy (which led to greater purchasing power for members of the middle class), the increased mobility fostered by the automobile, and favorable federal government policies also contributed to the rise in suburban home ownership.[83] In the Twin Cities, suburbanites accounted for only twelve percent of all metropolitan residents in 1940. By 1956, one out of every three metropolitan residents lived in the suburbs. While the population of St. Paul and Minneapolis proper increased by about one percent annually between 1940 and 1956, the suburbs experienced average growth rates of ten percent (1940 – 1950), twelve percent (1950 – 1954), and fifteen percent (1954 – 1956).[84]

Postwar suburbanization in the Twin Cities was shaped by earlier patterns of suburban growth. Beginning in the 1890s, residential suburban development first stimulated, then followed, streetcar lines to areas both inside and outside the borders of St. Paul and Minneapolis, to both "outlying neighborhoods and nearby towns and villages."[85] This pattern produced "spoke-shaped" lines of growth, as housing followed

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[82] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 84.

[83] Larson, *The Story of the Suburbs,* 2; Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 90, 98.

[84] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 9.

[85] Abler, Adams, and Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 30, 32; Larson, Engelking and Majewicz, *The Story of the Suburbs,* 15 - 16; Adams & VanDrasek, *Minneapolis – St. Paul,* 98.

each streetcar line outward from the city.[86] The influence of streetcar lines (as well as interurban, trolley, and rail lines) contributed to the development of five such spokes in the Twin Cities. The largest "spoke" reached west from Minneapolis to Lake Minnetonka, one spoke traveled northeast from St. Paul to White Bear Lake, another spoke pointed southeast from St. Paul along the Mississippi River, another stretched south from Minneapolis through truck farm country to the Minnesota River, and the last one reached north along the Mississippi above Minneapolis.[87]

Postwar suburbanization continued along these same historic tracks of growth. To the north, south, and southwest of Minneapolis, high and medium density postwar subdivisions expanded to Brooklyn Center, Crystal, Richfield, eastern Bloomington, St. Louis Park, and Hopkins as residential development gravitated toward those areas with the highest amounts of paved roads and public utilities. This so-called "residential explosion" was made possible by increased automobile ownership, and commercial development tailored to the automobile expanded to the suburbs to serve the burgeoning population there.[88]

By 1940, developers in the Twin Cities were constructing shopping centers that catered specifically to motorists.[89] According to architectural historian Larry Millet, the likely candidate for the first "drive-up, suburban-style shopping mall...opened in St. Paul's still-developing Highland neighborhood" in 1939. Named the Highland Village Shopping Center, it contained a supermarket, drug store, and other retail establishments, and appears to have been a neighborhood center. After World War II, many of these

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[86] Abler, Adams & Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 30, 32, 53.

[87] Abler, Adams & Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 53, 55.

[88] Abler, Adams, & Borchert, The Twin Cities, 33, 53 – 55; Saleh Van Erem, Greg Mathis, Carol Ahlgren, and David Wilcox, *Single Family Residential Development of Robbinsdale, Hennepin County, Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: The 106 Group, October 2009), 13.

[89] Abler, Adams, & Borchert, *The Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis*, 33.

suburban shopping centers were built at the intersections of suburban roads in the metropolitan area. Similar to the placement of the Park and Shop, the first wave of these auto-oriented centers sprang up "at traffic intersections and in strips along well-traveled streets," mimicking the development patterns of the streetcar era. As a result, suburban shoppers patronizing these centers had to contend with congested intersections, as well as a shortage of parking.[90]

The first phase of postwar shopping center development was also inadequate to meet the needs of the exploding suburban population.[91] In Minnesota, suburban developers usually did not include planned commercial districts in their residential developments, which contributed to a shortage of shopping opportunities for suburbanites.[92] Furthermore, the rapid pace of residential construction led to an imbalance in the ratio of retailing and residents.[93] According to Richfield historian Frederick Johnson, the "downtown districts of both Minneapolis and St. Paul still dominated the retail shopping scene in 1950," as did many other downtowns nationwide.[94]

Consistent with national trends, shopping center development before the mid-1950s in the Twin Cities was largely limited to neighborhood and community centers. As

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[90] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 84, 109; Abler, Adams, and Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 33; Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* 22 -23.

[91] Stephanie Atwood and Charlene K. Roise, *Brooklyn Center, Minnesota: A Historical Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Hess, Roise and Company, January 2010), 11; Stephanie K. Atwood and Charlene Roise, *Richfield, Minnesota: A Historical Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Hess, Rosie and Company, February 2010), 14; Lisa Plank and Thomas Saylor, "Constructing Suburbia : Richfield in the Postwar Era," *Minnesota History* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 53, accessed June 8, 2016, http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/61/v61i02p048-061.pdf.

[92] Rebecca Lou Smith, *Postwar Housing in National and Local Perspective: A Twin Cities Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at University of Minnesota, 1978), 22; Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* 35 – 36.

[93] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 103.

[94] Frederick L. Johnson, *Suburban Dawn: The Emergence of Richfield, Edina and Bloomington* (Richfield, MN: Richfield Historical Society, 2009), 168; Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic,* 257 – 258.

the population of outlying areas increased in the 1950s, the number of these shopping centers also increased, especially in the fast-growing and wealthier southwestern suburbs (such as St. Louis Park, Richfield, and Bloomington; see figure 1). A listing of major shopping areas prepared by the advertising department of the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* in the summer of 1956 revealed twenty-three existing neighborhood and community centers and one small regional center in the Minneapolis metropolitan area, with the number of stores in each center ranging from eight to thirty-four.[95]

[95] Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* 22 – 23; Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 2 -10; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 2-7. The small regional center referred to is Knollwood, which was constructed in St. Louis Park in 1955. For evidence that Knollwood fits the definition of a regional center, see chapter two of this thesis.

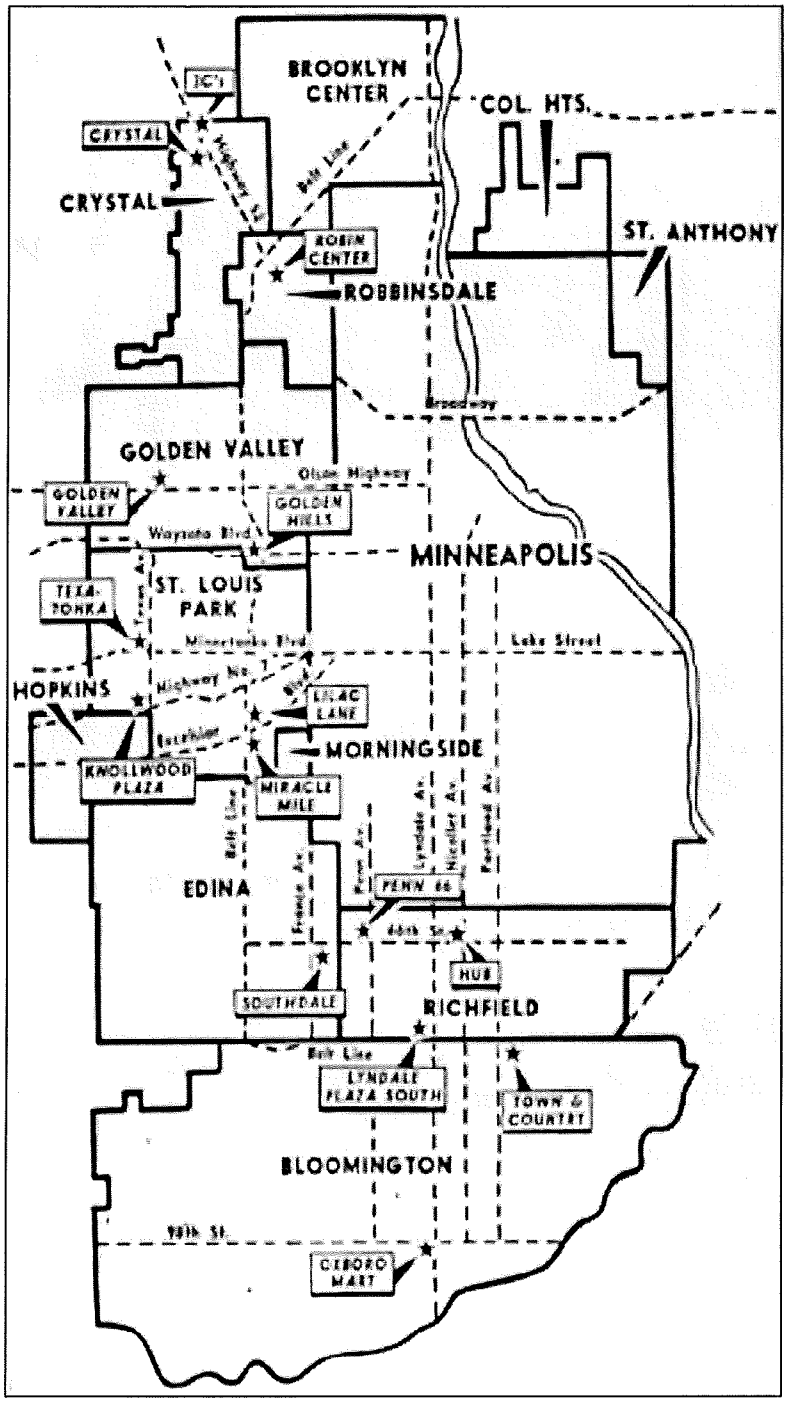

Figure 1. Extant and planned shopping centers, November 8, 1953. Map by John A. Wickland.[96] Of the shopping centers marked on the map, at least six were in the planning or construction stages in 1953.[97]

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[96] John A. Wickland, "Shopping Centers Dot Fast-Growing Suburbs" (map), *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, November 8, 1953, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/183415395.

[97] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 4-5.

According to urban geographer John S. Adams, "the full-flowering of the postwar auto-oriented shopping center occurred when Southdale mall opened in 1956, deep in the center of a superblock away from highway traffic and congested intersections and providing unlimited free parking."[98] The first enclosed regional shopping center in the United States, Southdale had two levels and seventy-two stores, and was located in the southwestern suburb of Edina.[99] Southdale was followed by Brookdale, Rosedale, Ridgedale, and other enclosed regional centers. Unlike their earlier counterparts, these second-generation postwar shopping centers contained large parking lots and were located away from busy intersections.[100] By 1976, there were eight major regional shopping centers located in Twin Cities suburbs.[101]

The growth of large shopping centers in the Twin Cities culminated in 1992 with the construction of the Mall of America (MOA), a super-regional shopping center in the metropolitan suburb of Bloomington. At 5.6 million square feet, MOA remains the largest shopping center in the United States. In addition to its more than 520 stores, MOA contains an indoor theme park, an aquarium, and other features that would have been inconceivable to the developers of the first Twin Cities shopping centers in the 1940s and 50s.[102] Yet, the basic concepts of combining an integrated business structure with off-street parking, pioneered and disseminated by neighborhood and community shopping

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[98] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 110.

[99] "Southdale Center: The First Indoor Shopping Mall: Overview."

[100] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 84, 110; Stephanie K. Atwood and Charlene K. Roise, *New Hope, Minnesota: A Historical Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Hess, Roise and Company, February 2010), 12.

[101] Abler, Adams, and Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 59.

[102] "25 Facts and Figures," Mall of America, accessed April 23, 2017, https://www.mallofamerica.com/about/moa/facts; "Overview," Mall of America, accessed April 23, 2017, https://www.mallofamerica.com/about/moa/overview; "Mall of America Visitor Information," Mall of America, accessed April 23, 2017, https://www.mallofamerica.com/visit/visitor-information; ICSC Research and CoStar Realty Information, Inc., *U.S. Shopping-Center Classification and Typical Characteristics*.

centers during the interwar and immediate postwar eras, remain at the core of the Mall of America and all modern shopping centers.

This chapter has surveyed the growth and proliferation of neighborhood and community shopping centers at the national and regional levels. To understand how neighborhood and community centers developed at a local level, we turn next to St. Louis Park, where developers constructed five shopping centers between 1941 and 1955. Examining the growth of shopping centers in this particular suburb both reinforces the arguments made by the current historiography and provides a specific history of commercial development in St. Louis Park.

CHAPTER TWO

ST. LOUIS PARK: A CASE STUDY

Patterns of shopping center development in St. Louis Park adhere closely to local and national trends of the 1940s and 50s. In location, size, tenant composition, layout, and architecture, the Park's shopping centers reflect developments occurring across the Twin Cities and the United States. Thus, St. Louis Park is an excellent example of shopping center development in the late prewar and the postwar eras.

A Brief History of St. Louis Park

St. Louis Park (the Park), located on the western border of the city of Minneapolis, was incorporated as the Village of St. Louis Park in 1886.[103] The impetus for its incorporation was the St. Louis Park Land and Improvement Company, a group of several men who planned to create a large, prosperous town in the area.[104] The village was named after the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad, which built a depot in the area sometime before 1886.[105]

Between 1890 and 1893, industry became the defining characteristic of the Park. Thomas Barlow Walker, a wealthy lumberman and the president of the Minneapolis Businessmen's Union, saw the fledgling community as an ideal location for an

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[103] City of St. Louis Park, "Citywide Map," accessed April 15, 2017, https://www.stlouispark.org/webfiles/file/ir/2016/citywidemap-24x24.pdf; Judith Poseley, *The Park: A History of the City of St. Louis Park* (St. Louis Park, MN: The City of St. Louis Park, 1976), 10.

[104] Poseley, *The Park,* 10 – 11.

[105] Norman F. Thomas, *St. Louis Park: A Story of A Village*, 1952, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, 81. *St. Louis Park* by Norman Thomas is also available electronically through the St. Louis Park Historical Society's website. The website version of *St. Louis Park* does not contain page numbers but is divided by chapters. Some of the following footnotes thus contain multiple references for information derived from *St. Louis Park*, when that information was derived from both the electronic and hard copy versions.

independent industrial suburb that would support the development of Minneapolis.[106] In 1890, Walker and several others founded the Minneapolis Land and Investment Company, which purchased the land already platted in the Park. Walker had this land re-platted to conform to his plans for designated industrial, commercial, and residential areas.[107] Several manufacturing companies moved to the Park in 1891 and 1892, and a commercial area was established on a two-block street called Broadway (now Walker Street). A streetcar line connected the fledgling village to Minneapolis.[108] A financial panic in 1893, however, upset Walker's plans for an industrial center in St. Louis Park. In 1913, industrial production still represented a means of employment in the Park, but market gardening and dairy farming had increased in importance during the early 1900s while industry had declined.[109]

The 1920s brought about a change in how Park residents viewed their hometown. Poseley states that "as the dream of the industrial suburb ebbed, residents, who held jobs in Minneapolis in increasing numbers, began to view the Park as a residential suburb."[110] Consequently, its residents passed zoning regulations, created a park board, and funded road improvements and gas main installations.[111] The Park was one of several so-called "first-ring" suburbs, communities abutting the Twin Cities that experienced development as residential suburbs in the 1920s and were often serviced by streetcars.[112] The streetcar

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[106] Thomas, *St. Louis Park,* 90, 94 – 97; Norman F. Thomas, "The Big Boom, 1890 – 1893," in *St. Louis Park: A Story of a Village,* 1952, SLPHS, accessed April 26, 2017, http://slphistory.org/nt-vi/.

[107] Poseley, *The Park,* 13 – 14.

[108] Thomas, *St. Louis Park,* 100 – 109; "Downtown St. Louis Park," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed March 22, 2017, http://slphistory.org/downtownslp/; Thomas, *St. Louis Park,* 110; Poseley, *The Park,* 15 – 16.

[109] Poseley, *The Park,* 21; Thomas, "An Age of Troubles, 1894 – 1900," in *St. Louis Park,* SLPHS, accessed April 26, 2017, http://slphistory.org/nt-viii/.

[110] Poseley, *The Park,* 30 - 31.

[111] Poseley, *The Park,* 32.

[112] Millet, *Minnesota Modern*, 30 – 31; Larson, Engelking and Majewicz, *The Story of the Suburbs*, 9; Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul*, 103; Atwood and Roise, *A Context for*

line into Minneapolis, the railroads, and major thoroughfares (Excelsior Blvd., Minnetonka Boulevard, Superior Blvd. [now Wayzata Blvd.], and the highways connected to them) facilitated an easy commute to jobs outside St. Louis Park, including jobs in Minneapolis.[113] These convenient transportation routes, however, may have contributed to the shortage of commercial facilities in the Park. By 1919, there were just seven retail stores in the village; the commercial area on Broadway never developed into a major retail center. Many Park residents traveled to Minneapolis and Hopkins to shop, where commercial establishments were more plentiful. In the 1920s, St. Louis Park had a decentralized population that divided itself into a handful of semi-autonomous neighborhoods. This geographic dispersal of people, in turn, led commerce to be decentralized and spread throughout the village.[114]

After World War II, St. Louis Park, along with other "first-ring" suburbs, experienced an enormous surge of growth as residential development followed paved roads and public sewer and water systems to areas bordering the Twin Cities.[115] The small lot sizes and large amount of undeveloped land in St. Louis Park made high volume construction profitable, and, as stated previously, several of its roads provided direct transportation to Minneapolis.[116] In 1955, the primary east-west arteries in the Park were Excelsior Boulevard., Highway 7, Minnetonka Boulevard., Cedar Lake Road, and Wayzata Boulevard.; Highway 100 [known as the Belt Line] was an important north-

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Suburban Development, 8; Smith, *Postwar Housing in National and Local Perspective*, 17 – 19. For examples of how streetcars influenced the development of some of these suburbs, see Van Erem et al., *Single Family Residential Development of Robbinsdale,* 9 – 15; Atwood and Roise, *Richfield, Minnesota,* 8; Bonnie Richter, "The Suburbs," *Architecture Minnesota* 7, no. 2 (April/May 1981): 98.

[113] Poseley, *The Park,* 31; Thomas, *St. Louis Park,* 197; "Wayzata Blvd. Buildings – North of I-394," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 26, 2017, http://slphistory.org/wayzatabuildingsnorth/.

[114] Poseley, *The Park,* 31.

[115] Abler, Adams, & Borchert, *The Twin Cities*, 53 - 55.

[116] Poseley, *The Park,* 41 – 42.

south thoroughfare (see figure 2).[117] In the postwar era, the Park's population exploded, expanding from 7,737 in 1940 to 22,644 in 1950 and 35,292 by 1955.[118] By 1953, the Park was the fourth largest community in the state.[119]

With increased residential development came increased commercial development, especially along Minnetonka, Wayzata, and Excelsior Boulevards.[120] By 1948, the United States Census of Business reported seventy-nine retail establishments (defined by the census as "establishments primarily engaged in selling merchandise for personal, household, or farm consumption") in the Park.[121] In 1954, the number of establishments was 160, and by 1958 the Park had 238 retail establishments.[122] According to a report published by the St. Louis Park League of Women Voters, in 1955 the Park had more than seven hundred businesses, a number which included "retail stores, industries, service-type firms and all others."[123]

The fact that St. Louis Park never contained a centralized area of commerce or a traditional Main Street may have contributed to the development of shopping centers in the village, since developers often avoided building shopping centers in established business districts and "centers of satellite communities" after World War II due to

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[117] Research Department, Community Welfare Council of Hennepin County, *Village to City: A Descriptive Analysis of Social Characteristics and Services: St. Louis Park, Minnesota; March, 1955* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: 1955), 4.

[118] League of Women Voters, *St. Louis Park: Its Appearance and Future* (St. Louis Park, MN: League of Women Voters, 1956), 4; Poseley, *The Park,* 43.

[119] "This Week In The Park," *SLPD*, November 12, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS.

[120] Poseley, *The Park,* 43.

[121] U. S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Business: 1948,* vol. 1, *Retail Trade – General Statistics,* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1951), IX, 1.51.

[122] U. S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Business: 1954,* vol. 1, *Retail Trade – Summary Statistics* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 1-111; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Business: 1958,* vol. 2, bk. 1, *Retail Trade – Area Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 23-10, 23-11.

[123] League of Women Voters, *St. Louis Park,* 2.

crowded conditions.[124] Lilac Way, a neighborhood shopping center constructed in 1941, was the first shopping center in the suburb, and likely the first shopping center outside of the St. Paul and Minneapolis city limits.[125] Miracle Mile (a community shopping center) and Texa-Tonka (a neighborhood shopping center) followed in 1951. Westwood shopping center (another neighborhood center) opened in 1954, and Knollwood, a small, regional shopping center, was constructed in 1955 (see figure 2 for the general locations of Park shopping centers).[126]

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[124] [St. Louis Park Chamber of Commerce?], *St. Louis Park Minnesota* (Encino, CA: Windsor Publications Inc., 1971), 4; "What, No Main Street?," *SLPD,* November 14, 1941, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov. 7, 1941 – Dec. 31, 1943," MNHS; Longstreth, *City Center,* 223-224.

[125] "Knollwood is 13th Shopping Center In Area; Nine Others Are Planned," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 12, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; Poseley, *The Park,* 43; Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* 22 – 23; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth,* 4 – 5. According to this report, Lilac Way was the oldest shopping center existing in the Twin Cities area. The shopping center built in 1939 mentioned by Millet (Highland Village Shopping Center) was (according to Millet) located inside St. Paul proper.

[126] "Knollwood is 13th Shopping Center In Area; Nine Others Are Planned," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 12, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; "New Westwood Shopping Center Opens This Weekend," *SLPD,* September 30, 1954, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; "Miracle Mile to Give Prizes," *SLPD,* November 8, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1950," MNHS; "2 Texa-Tonka Stores Open: Penny Market, Zoss Drugs Have Grand Openings," *SLPD,* November 29, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS.

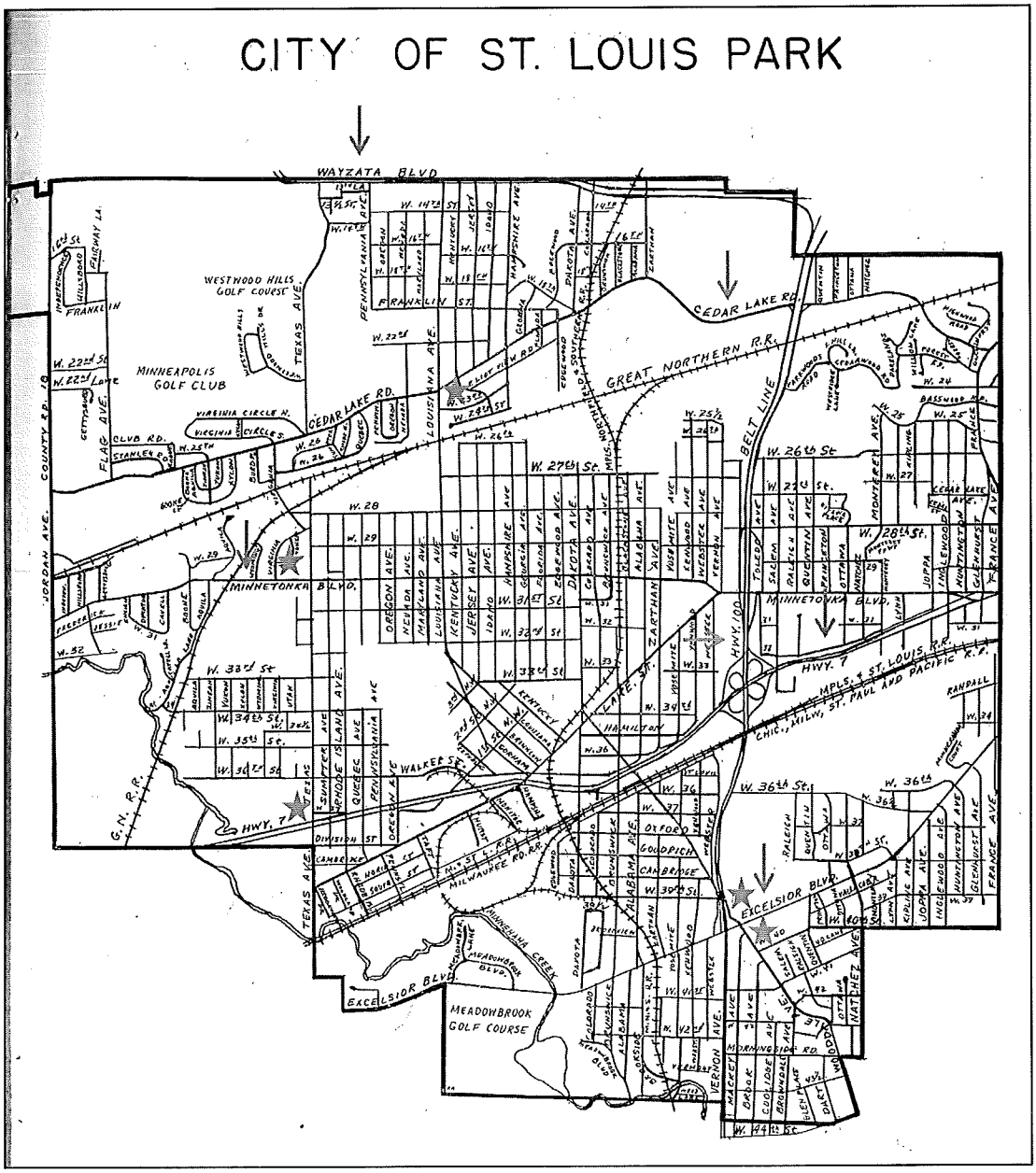

Figure 2. Map of shopping centers and major roads in St. Louis Park, 1955. Map by the Research Department of the Community Welfare Council of Hennepin County. Red arrows point to Highway 100, Wayzata Blvd., Minnetonka Blvd., Highway 7, Excelsior Blvd, and Cedar Lake Rd. Red stars mark the locations of shopping centers existing as of August, 1955.[127]

[127] "City of St. Louis Park," (map), Research Department, Community Welfare Council of Hennepin County, Minneapolis, MN, *Village to City: A Descriptive Analysis of Social Characteristics and Services: St. Louis Park, Minnesota; March, 1955* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: 1955), 3. Stars and arrows were added by this author to the original map taken from this source.

Evidence suggests that these were the only five shopping centers located in St. Louis Park in the mid-1950s. A *St. Louis Park Dispatch* (hereafter referred to as *Dispatch)* newspaper article published in August 25, 1955, written to announce the opening of Knollwood Plaza, identified these complexes as the five shopping centers existing in the Park at that time.[128] A 1956 summary of principal shopping centers in the Minneapolis metropolitan area, which lists these five centers as the sole shopping centers for St. Louis Park, confirms this idea. In addition, a 1957 survey of "Shopping Centers and Population Growth in the Twin Cities Area" does not list any additional centers in St. Louis Park.[129]

However, it is impossible to rule out entirely the existence of other centers in the Park during the 1940s and 50s. Vague references in newspapers and other sources to "shopping centers" often do not provide enough information to determine if these commercial developments had integrated management and an off-street parking lot, or if they simply consisted of multiple tenants renting units in the same building or a group of merchants located in the same geographic area. One such "shopping center," according to city council minutes, was located at Lake Street and Dakota Avenue in 1950.[130] However, "Lake-Dakota" is listed as a neighborhood shopping district in St. Louis Park in the 1956 *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas* survey, and is described as a "three block strip

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[128] "Knollwood is 13th Shopping Center In Area; Nine Others Are Planned," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 12, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[129] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 2 – 10; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth,* 4 – 5.

[130] "Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission of St. Louis Park: Arena Shopping District: Mr. A. Eaton," February 2, 1950, Minutes of the St. Louis Park Planning Commission, vol. 3, Community Development Department, City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota.

on Lake Street between Dakota and Louisiana Avenues" rather than as a shopping center.[131]

The most likely candidates for additional postwar shopping centers in St. Louis Park were developed by realtor Paul Resop in the early 1950s. In August of 1951, Resop obtained a building permit "to erect a store and office building...at 4217 – 25 Excelsior Blvd." The estimated value of the building was five thousand dollars. The building appears to have been constructed and to have contained at least three businesses, since the address of Resop's realty business was listed in another edition of the paper as 4221 Excelsior Blvd.[132] A newspaper article dated March 6, 1952 announced Resop's plans to build a "new Excelsior Building" on Excelsior Blvd. The article stated that "the 180-foot long structure will contain ten units, each 18 feet wide and 40 feet deep. There will be a full basement under the building, and front and rear parking space will be provided."[133] The Resop Brothers Company used the building until approximately 1963. Although the building contained multiple tenants, they were not traditional retail shops – the building appears to have functioned as an office building rather than a shopping center.[134] Finally, the June 28, 1950 edition of the *Dispatch* mentions "a commercial center" at Excelsior Blvd and Joppa Ave.[135] A 1957 aerial photograph does show a structure located at this

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[131] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Centers*, 13 – 14.

[132] "Week's Building Permits Are $43,450," *SLPD,* August 23, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; "Resop Plans New Excelsior Building," *SLPD,* March 6, 1952, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS.

[133] "Resop Plans New Excelsior Building," *SLPD,* March 6, 1952, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS.

[134] "4950 Excelsior Blvd.," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 15, 2017, http://slphistory.org/eb4950/.

[135] "Just a Bit of Encouragement," *SLPD*, June 28, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS.

intersection, but there is no conclusive information that it was managed as a shopping center.[136]

There also appear to have been at least two failed or delayed attempts to build additional shopping centers in the early 1950s. City planning commission minutes and newspaper articles document a proposed shopping center (also referred to as a shopping district) at the junction of West Lake Street and Minnetonka Avenue in 1950 that would consist of two large stores and five smaller stores. The city council rezoned the area for commercial uses to accommodate the proposed center, and a 1951 newspaper article reported that construction was almost complete on the first tenant unit.[137] However, an aerial photo taken in 1956 shows no development in that spot.[138] Similarly, in 1952 J.W. Held and F. J. Swenson petitioned the city council for the rezoning of a section of property from open development to commercial, to allow them to build a "retail shopping center" on the property.[139] However, once again historic photographs show no center on the site as of 1957.[140]

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[136] Aerial photograph of St. Louis Park, 1957, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer.

[137] "New Supermarket," *Minneapolis Star,* August 15, 1951, accessed April 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/187733434; "St. Louis Park Rezones for Shops," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune,* May 16, 1950, accessed April 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/181029323; "Council Approves Eaton Project For 'Y' Red Owl Shopping Center," May 17, 1950, *SLPD,* microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch, February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS; "Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission of St. Louis Park, Minnesota," January 5, 1950, Minutes of the St. Louis Park Planning Commission, vol. 3, Community Development Department, City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota; "Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission of St. Louis Park, Minnesota," February 2, 1950, Minutes of the St. Louis Park Planning Commission, vol. 3, Community Development Department, City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota.

[138] *HHJ – 227,* (aerial photograph), 1956, Minnesota Historic Aerial Photographs Online, John R. Borchert Map Library, accessed April 29, 2017, http://geo.lib.umn.edu/Hennepin_County/y1956/HHJ-227.jpg.

[139] "Action Deferred On Rezoning for Shopping Center," *SLPD,* June 12, 1952, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch, Jun 12, 1952 – July 23, 1953," MNHS.

[140] Aerial photograph of St. Louis Park, 1957, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer.

Since evidence for the existence of more than five shopping centers in St. Louis Park before 1957 is at best tentative, this thesis will focus on the shopping centers listed in the 1956 *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas* report – Lilac Way, Miracle Mile, Texa-Tonka, Westwood, and Knollwood. This chapter will discuss in more detail the characteristics of neighborhood and community shopping centers developed in the Twin Cities and the U.S. in the 1940s and 50s. Concurrently, it will discuss how the Park's four neighborhood and community centers - Lilac Way, Miracle Mile, Texa-Tonka, and Westwood - adhered or did not adhere to local and national trends in shopping center development. For the most part, neighborhood and community shopping centers constructed in the Park in the postwar era conformed to national and local patterns in location, layout, design, and tenant composition, although centers developed in the Park appear to be smaller than was usual for the period. Knollwood Plaza, as a small, regional shopping center, represents the surge in regional shopping centers in the late 1950s. While not the main focus of this thesis, the development of Knollwood in 1955 is important, as it signified the second phase of postwar shopping center development in St. Louis Park. An examination of Knollwood Plaza also helps to illuminate the distinctive features of neighborhood and community centers relative to regional centers. Taken together, the Park's five shopping centers acted as a microcosm of shopping center development in the United States in the 1940s and 50s.

A Prewar Shopping Center: Lilac Way

As St. Louis Park's only example of a shopping center constructed before the postwar era, the initial development of Lilac Way Shopping Center merits its own,

separate discussion. Although neighborhood and community shopping centers were not constructed in large numbers until after World War II, existing literature on the subject has identified several characteristics of shopping centers developed between 1930 and 1945.[141] Richard Longstreth's article on neighborhood shopping centers contains the most detailed explanation of these characteristics, although Anne Satterthwaite's book on consumption also provides some helpful information. Longstreth argues that neighborhood shopping centers in Washington, D.C., especially the Park and Shop, influenced shopping center development in other areas of the country between 1939 and 1941; thus, this chapter will compare Lilac Way with these Washington, D.C. shopping centers. For the most part, Lilac Way Shopping Center embodies the national trends presented by Longstreth and Satterthwaite.

[141] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32; Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268.

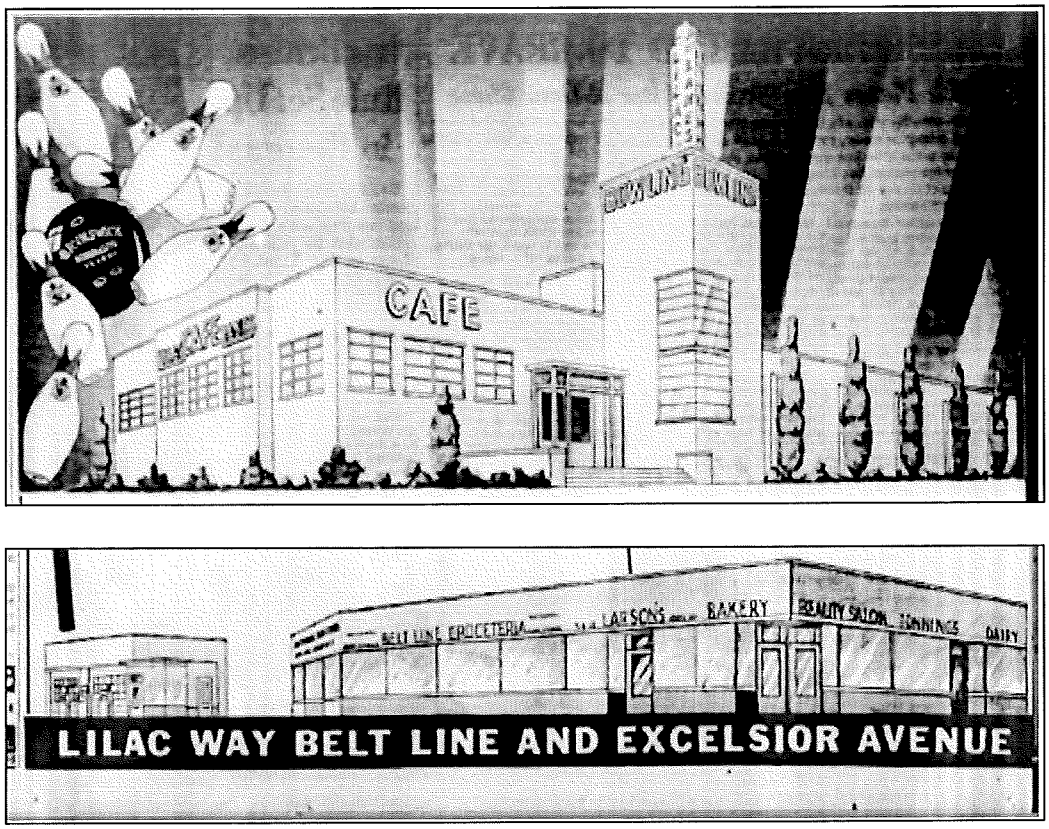

Figure 3. Lilac Way Shopping Center complex, December 26, 1941. Image taken from the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*.[142]

Lilac Way was constructed in 1941 at a cost of two hundred thousand dollars.[143] This construction date supports Longstreth's argument that many neighborhood shopping centers built in the U.S. during the interwar years were built between 1939 and 1941.[144] Lilac Way's location in St. Louis Park, now an older suburban area, fits with Satterthwaite's assertion that "[drive-in] shopping centers [were] built primarily between

[142] "Grand Opening, Lilac Lanes Recreation Bldg. and Lilac Way Shopping Center" (advertisement), *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, December 26, 1941, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/181852517.

[143] "Knollwood is 13th Shopping Center In Area; Nine Others Are Planned," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 12, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[144] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32.

1930 and World War II in what have become older suburban areas."[145] Owned by Nicholas E. Phillips and designed by the architect H. J. Scherer, the property on which Lilac Way stood was zoned originally for open development, until Phillips and Scherer successfully petitioned the city planning commission to rezone the area for commercial uses.[146] Built on the corner of Excelsior Boulevard. and Highway 100 (then referred to as the "Lilac Way" or the "Belt Line"), the center was situated along two major roads in the suburb. This was logical, given that most prewar centers developed along important metropolitan thoroughfares.[147]

Ann Satterthwaite states that prewar shopping centers consisted of a "line-up of stores facing the street with…a forecourt of parking."[148] Lilac Way's stores faced the street; however, the shopping center was not configured in a straight line (according to a 1947 aerial photograph of the center).[149] In fact, an announcement for the center's grand opening in a Minneapolis newspaper suggest that the shopping center was originally composed of three separate buildings - the Lilac Lanes Recreation Building, the Lilac

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[145] Satterthwaite, *Going Shopping,* 50 – 51. Satterthwaite does not clearly define the term "drive-in shopping center." At times, she seems to use this term to refer to both drive-in markets and shopping centers, but that fact that she states that drive-in shopping centers were built between 1930 and 1945 and her use of the Park and Shop as an example of a drive-in shopping center, makes it logical to infer that in this paragraph she is referring to neighborhood (and possibly community) shopping centers.

[146] "Thirty-fifth Meeting of the Planning Commission of St. Louis Park, Minnesota," July 11, 1940, Minutes of the St. Louis Park Planning Commission, vol. 1, Community Development Department, City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota; "Notes," December 2, 1941, Minutes of the St. Louis Park Planning Commission, vol. 1, Community Development Department, City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota; "Another Hardware Store to Open Here," *SLPD*, May 24, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS.

[147] "Lilac Way: All Roads Lead to the Lilac Way Shopping Center," (advertisement), *SLPD,* November 15, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; Satterthwaite, *Going Shopping,* 50 – 51; Mead and Hunt, *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921 – 1954): Historic Context and National Register Evaluation and Integrity Considerations* (DRAFT), revised February 2016, State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, 9.

[148] Satterthwaite, *Going Shopping,* 50.

[149] Aerial photograph of St. Louis Park, 1947, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer.

Way Shopping Center, and a filling station (see figure 3).[150] A 1951 aerial photograph shows the relative positions of the three buildings (see figure 4).

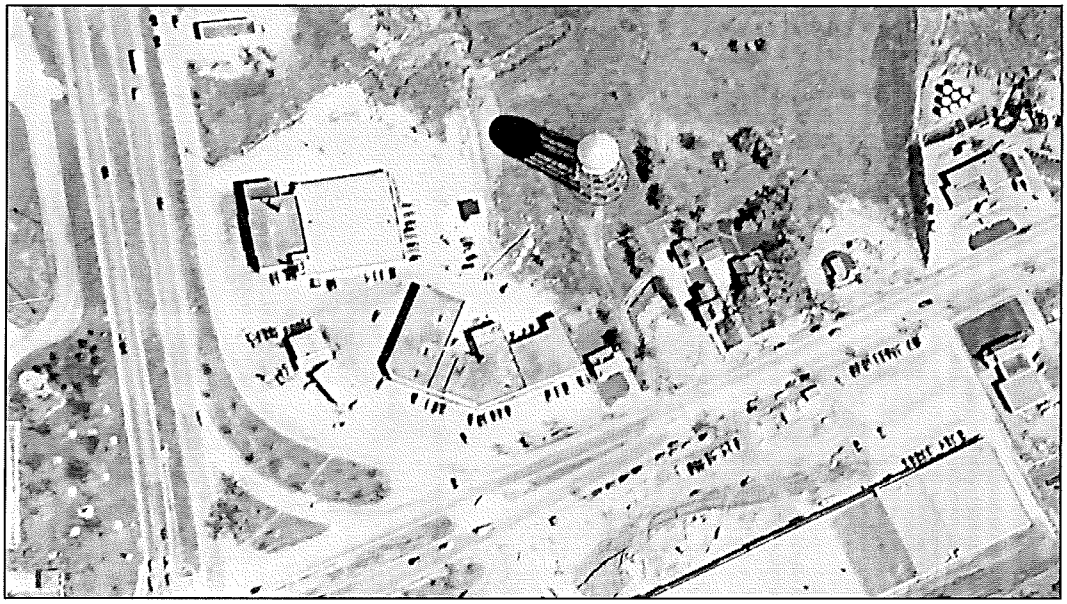

Figure 4. Aerial photograph of Lilac Way Shopping Center, May 8, 1951. The image in this photograph does not represent the center as it existed in 1941. Comparisons of 1947 and 1951 aerials reveal that an addition was added to the east side of the shopping center building sometime between those two dates. In addition, another building was constructed next to the gas station.[151]

The shape of the shopping center building, a convex "U" or "V" with its point facing towards the street, appears to have been a little unusual, given that none of the prototypical shopping centers created in Washington, D.C. during the interwar years and discussed by Longstreth in his article had this configuration. Most centers discussed by Longstreth were built as a straight line or concave "L" or "U" shape. Lilac Way's unusual structure and forecourt of parking may support Longstreth's argument that "during the

[150] "Lilac Way Shopping Center and Recreational Building" (advertisement), *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, December 26, 1941, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/181852517.

[151] Aerial photograph of Lilac Way Shopping Center, May 8, 1951, Section 22 Aerial Maps and Photographs, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

prewar period local patterns in commercial development" created a variety of shopping center configurations that differed from examples in Washington, D.C.[152] While it is not clear that Lilac Way's configuration was a reflection of local patterns, it is clear that its configuration differed from the strip formation of shopping centers built after WWII in the Park (as will be discussed in the next section of this thesis).[153]

Almost all of the shopping centers developed in Washington, D.C. during the interwar years included a forecourt of parking, and here Lilac Way seems to adhere to national trends.[154] Although the 1947 aerial of the center shows only one line of cars parked directly in front of the stores on either side of the "V" (and at the recreation building), there appears to have been room for at least one more row of cars in the lot. The 1947 photograph also indicates that the center contained some limited parking at its rear.[155]

At the time of its opening in 1941, Lilac Way contained a grocery store (by 1942 a National Tea store), a variety store, a bakery, a beauty shop, a dress shop, "a dairy," and a filling station, in addition to the café and bowling alley located in the Recreation Building.[156] The number of tenants in the center was a reflection of the fact that shopping centers constructed before WWII tended to be smaller than those built after the war.

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[152] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 31 -32; Aerial photograph of St. Louis Park, 1947, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer.

[153] Aerial photograph of St. Louis Park, 1947, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer.

[154] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 22.

[155] Aerial photograph of St. Louis Park, 1947, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer.

[156] "Grand Opening, Lilac Lanes Recreation Bldg. and Lilac Way Shopping Center" (advertisement), *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, December 26, 1941, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/181852517; "Lilac Way Shopping Center," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed March 29, 2017, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/. According to the St. Louis Park Historical Society, the National Tea store moved into the center in 1942. It is unclear which grocery store preceded it.

Longstreth states that centers in Washington, D.C. had an average of eleven store units, with most centers containing between seven and fifteen units; Lilac Way, while on the smaller end of the spectrum, conforms to this pattern.[157]

According to Longstreth, all Washington, D.C. shopping centers used food markets as anchors. In addition, towards the end of the 1930s, more chain stores began to locate in neighborhood shopping centers. As a national supermarket chain, the National Tea store in Lilac Way represented both of these trends.[158] Lilac Way's automobile service station, however, was rare among Washington, D.C. prototypes.[159] Although movie theaters became more common in Washington, D.C. shopping centers in the late 1930s, Longstreth only mentions one Washington, D.C. shopping center that contained a bowling alley.[160]

In design, Lilac Way appears to have adhered to principles of modern architecture, described by Manning as "pure simplicity and understated designs" (see figure 3).[161] Its design is thus compatible with Longstreth's statement that Washington, D.C. centers varied in their architectural styles, "with traditional and modernist sources tapped in more or less equal measure."[162] Lilac Way continued as a shopping center in the postwar era; thus, its design and characteristics will also be discussed in the next section on postwar shopping centers in the Park.[163]

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[157] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 20.

[158] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 20 – 21; *The Encyclopedia of Chicago* ([Chicago, IL?]: University of Chicago Press: 2004.), s.v. "National Tea Co.," accessed April 15, 2017, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/2790.html; John A. Wickland, "7-Million Dollar Knollwood Plaza to Open Wednesday," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* August 21, 1955, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/182973958.

[159] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 21.

[160] Longstreth, *Neighborhood Shopping Center,* 17 – 32.

[161] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 32.

[162] Longstreth, *Neighborhood Shopping Center,* 23.

[163] "Lilac Way Shopping Center," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed March 29, 2017, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/. Unfortunately, Lilac Way was demolished in 1988.

Postwar Shopping Centers: Lilac Way, Miracle Mile, Texa-Tonka, and Westwood

Neighborhood and community shopping centers extant during the postwar era in St. Louis Park reflect the movement of retail to the suburbs as the U.S. suburban population boomed after WWII. These shopping centers largely conformed to national patterns in shopping center development. The most complete source for general characteristics of shopping centers in the postwar era is Manning's master's thesis, "The Rise and Fall of the Great American Strip Mall." Although Manning does not use the term "neighborhood shopping center" or "community shopping center" in his thesis, he contrasts strip malls with shopping centers built around a pedestrian mall, a design used for "the largest and most prominent shopping centers."[164] Longstreth implies that pedestrian malls were associated with regional shopping centers.[165] Thus, by default, the term "strip mall" seems synonymous with most, if not all, neighborhood and community shopping centers. Neighborhood and community centers in St. Louis Park adhered to many of the characteristics outlined by Manning, as well as the local and national patterns outlined in the works of Liebs and Longstreth and in local histories of the Twin Cities.

Like prewar shopping centers, postwar shopping centers were located along important roads in suburban areas. In their history of the Twin Cities, Adams and VanPrasek state that "during the post-World War II housing boom that accompanied the freeway auto era, car-oriented shopping centers of every size and description appeared at intersections of suburban roads and highways…at traffic intersections and in strips along

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[164] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 27, 50.
[165] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 29.

well-traveled streets."[166] Liebs also states that U.S. shopping centers were located along sections of highway on the fringes of many cities – the "suburban strip."[167] Shopping centers in St. Louis Park adhered to this pattern. All four neighborhood and community centers were constructed along one or two major roads in the suburb: Lilac Way and Miracle Mile near the intersection of Excelsior and Highway 100, Texa-Tonka at the intersection of Minnetonka Boulevard and Texas Avenue, and Westwood at the intersection of Cedar Lake Road and Louisiana Avenue (see figures 1 and 2 above).[168] All were owned, or at least developed, by a single individual or company – Texa-Tonka by Adolph Fine, Miracle Mile by the Sheldon-Thomas Co., Westwood by Bruce Construction Co., and Lilac Way by Nicholas Phillips.[169]

In size, Miracle Mile best reflects national trends after World War II. According to Liebs, neighborhood shopping centers constructed after the war were larger, "with vastly expanded supermarkets, more attached stores, and bountiful parking."[170] While Liebs does not estimate the average size of these expanded centers, Longstreth states that by 1950 it was usual for neighborhood centers to have twenty different units.[171] This is in contrast to prewar neighborhood centers, which in Washington, D.C. contained an

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[166] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 84.

[167] Lieb, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 27 – 31.

[168] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 4-5.

[169] "New Shopping Center For Northwest Park Underway," *SLPD,* August 8, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; "Two-Block Shopping Center Construction Set for June," *SLPD,* May 10, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS; "New Westwood Shopping Center Opens This Weekend," *SLPD,* September 30, 1954, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; "Another Hardware Store to Open Here," *SLPD,* May 24, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS; "New Westwood Shopping Center," *Minneapolis Star,* May 7, 1954, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/187675346.

[170] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 30 – 31.

[171] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 162 – 163.

average of eleven units.[172] Of the St. Louis Park neighborhood and community shopping centers, Miracle Mile was the largest; by 1956 it contained twenty-six units. Texa-Tonka and Westwood were smaller, with fifteen and eight units respectively; Lilac Way contained twelve units. In this respect, Park centers seem to have been smaller than average, although it should be noted that Texa-Tonka, Westwood, and Miracle Mile contained medical and dental offices in addition to their retail units.[173]

Some of the larger postwar shopping centers with twenty to forty stores were in fact classified as community shopping centers. [174] These centers, designed to serve approximately 100,000 people, contained more specialized goods than neighborhood centers and (according to Longstreth) "were intended as equivalents to the commercial center of a sizable town."[175] In addition to providing a broader scope of goods than neighborhood shopping centers, community shopping centers sometimes contained offices for doctors and other professionals.[176] Miracle Mile's scope of goods, number of stores, and medical and dental offices identify it as a community center.[177]

Aerial photographs taken of Westwood, Lilac Way, Miracle Mile and Texa-Tonka in 1956 reveal that all four shopping centers had forecourts of parking (see figures 5, 6, and 7).[178] By 1956, some parking at Lilac Way took place along the west side of the

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[172] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 20.

[173] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 4, 10.

[174] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 163.

[175] Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall,* 222.

[176] Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers*, 10; Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute, *The Community Builders Handbook*, 204 – 205.

[177] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 4. The scope of goods offered by Miracle Mile is discussed below.

[178] Mark Hurd Aerial Surveys, Inc., aerial photograph of Texa-Tonka Shopping Center, November 23, 1956, Section 10 Aerial Maps and Photographs, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota; Aerial photograph of Westwood Shopping Center, May 7, 1956, Section 8 Aerial Maps and Photographs, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota; Aerial photograph of Lilac Way and Miracle Mile, May 7, 1956, Section 22 Aerial Maps and Photographs, St. Louis Park Historical

shopping center building, as well as along all four sides of the recreation building. In addition, photographs indicate that all centers contained some kind of parking lot or driveway in the rear. Miracle Mile contained a significant rear parking lot. Aerial photos of Westwood and Texa-Tonka taken in the 1950s show trucks using a narrow driveway behind the centers. Ground-level photographs of Westwood and Miracle Mile show that stores in these centers could be accessed from the rear, although these entrances were extremely utilitarian and probably intended mainly for employees and suppliers delivering goods.[179]

Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota. All information referencing Westwood, Texa-Tonka, or Miracle Mile in this section is derived from these photographs unless otherwise noted.

[179] Photo of rear elevation of Miracle Mile Shopping Center, c. 1953, "Excelsior Blvd. 4901 through Miracle Mile" collection, Street Photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, MN; Photo of rear elevation of Westwood Shopping Center, 7101 – 27 Cedar Lake Road, "Cedar Lake Road" collection, Street Photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, MN; "Miracle Mile Takes On 'New Look' With Improved Lighting, Parking," *SLPD,* July 26, 1956, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Dec 22, 1955 – Feb. 28, 1957," MNHS. A passageway for customers parking at the rear of the shopping center was installed in Miracle Mile in 1956, however.

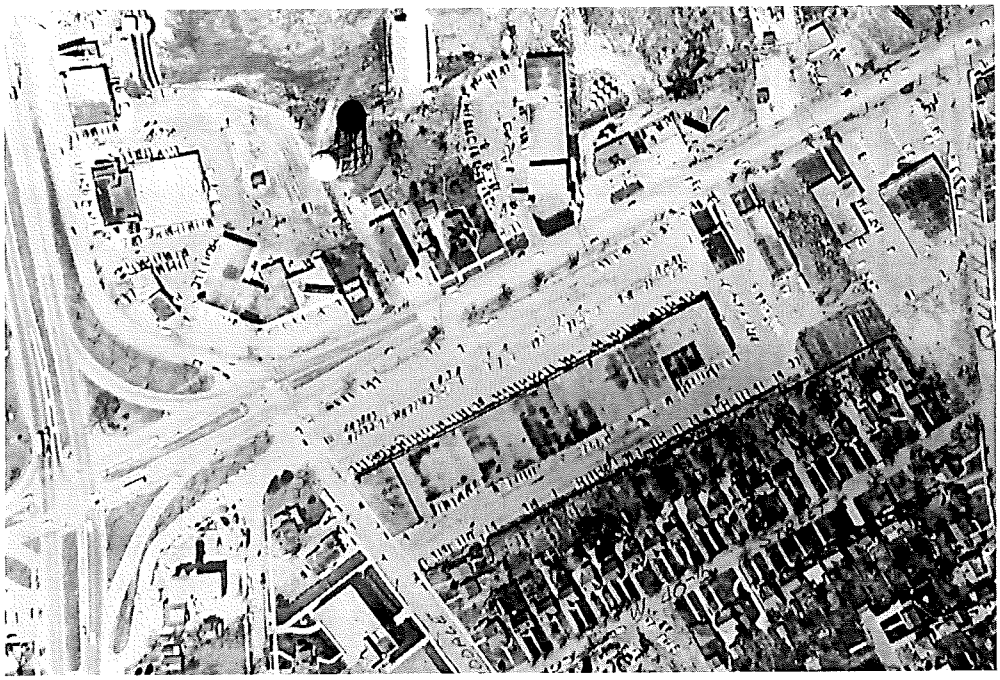

Figure 5. Aerial photograph of Lilac Way and Miracle Mile, May 7, 1956.[180]

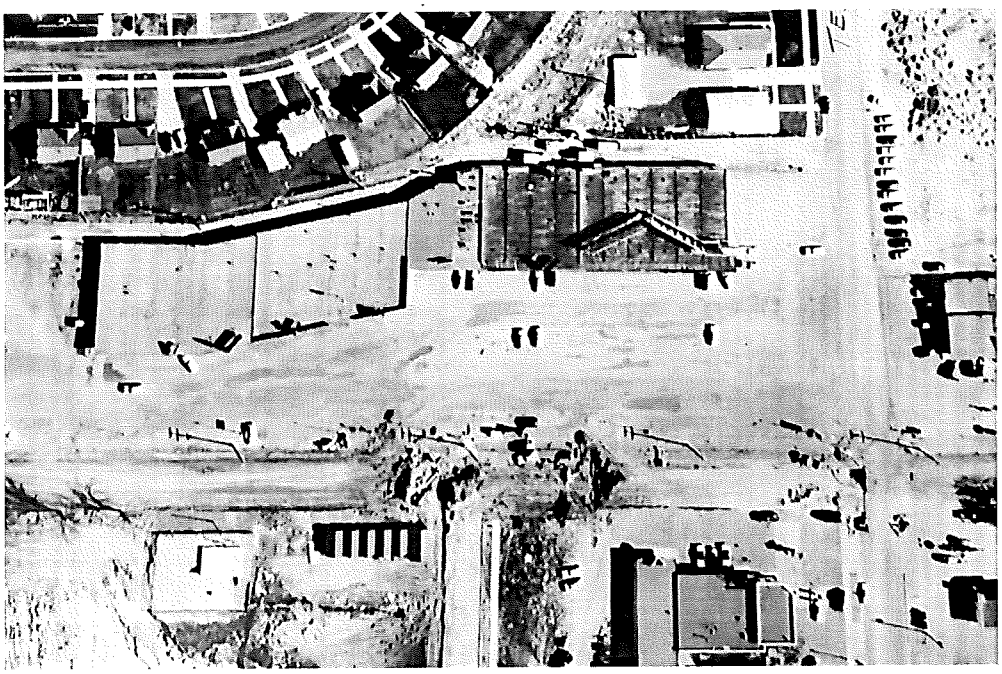

Figure 6. Aerial photograph of Texa-Tonka Shopping Center, November 23, 1956. Photograph by Mark Hurd Aerial Surveys, Inc.[181]

[180] Aerial photograph of Lilac Way and Miracle Mile, May 7, 1956, Section 22 Aerial Maps and Photographs, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

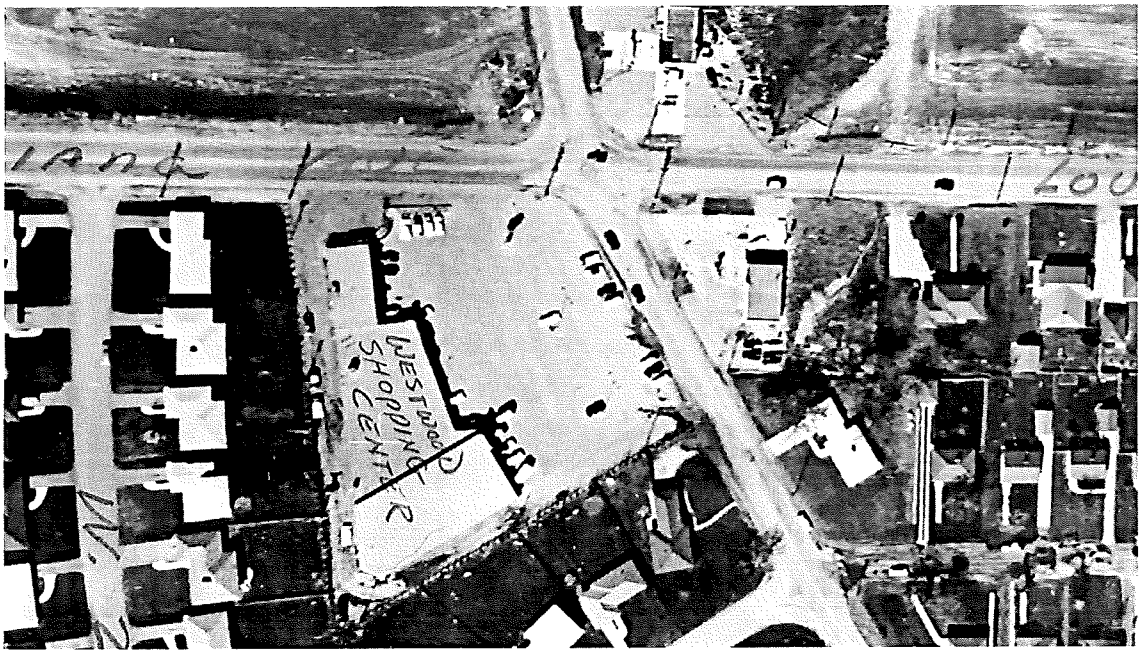

Figure 7. Aerial photograph of Westwood Shopping Center, May 7, 1956.[182]

With the exception of Lilac Way, all Park shopping centers consisted of a single strip of stores. Miracle Mile was aligned parallel to the street, while a portion of the Texa-Tonka center was set at an angle to the road. Aerial photographs show that the Westwood shopping center had a slanted façade. During the course of the 1950s and 1960s, all four shopping centers experienced significant additions. In 1947, Lilac Way was composed of three separate buildings; between 1947 and 1951 an additional building was constructed next to the filling station. During these years, an addition was also added to the east side of the shopping center building.[183] A large, two-story addition was added

[181] Mark Hurd Aerial Surveys, Inc., aerial photograph of Texa-Tonka Shopping Center, November 23, 1956, Section 10 Aerial Maps and Photographs, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

[182] Aerial photograph of Westwood Shopping Center, May 7, 1956, Section 8 Aerial Maps and Photographs, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

[183] Aerial photograph of St. Louis Park, 1947, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer; "Lilac Way Shopping Center," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed March 29, 2016, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/; Aerial photograph of Lilac Way Shopping Center, May 8, 1951, Section 22 Aerial Maps and Photographs, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, MN.

to Miracle Mile in 1953, while Texa-Tonka expanded sometime between 1957 and 1966.[184] In the early 1960s, the Westwood shopping center was expanded to include a second, separate building, located across from the original shopping center on Louisiana Avenue.[185]

Thus, the three Park shopping centers built in the postwar era - Westwood, Miracle Mile, and Texa-Tonka – incorporated several of Matthew Manning's defining characteristics of strip malls:

> Single Ownership or Control
> Designed and Built as a Planned Unit
> Building(s) Set Back from Public Road or Right-of-Way
> Primary Parking between Building(s) and Road
> Linear Arrangement of Building (s) (straight, curved, or angled)
> Separate Rear Service Access[186]

One of Manning's other identifying features, however, was not adopted by all St. Louis Park shopping centers. Manning states that many shopping centers consisted of a single story. This appears to have been true of Texa-Tonka, but Miracle Mile contained a second story with offices, and a 1957 photo of Westwood shows a portion of the center with two stories as well.[187] While Lilac Way's retail building appears to have been

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[184] Aerial photographs of St. Louis Park, 1957 and 1966, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer; "Miracle Mile Addition Is Nearly Ready," *SLPD,* Thursday, October 15, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS.

[185] "Westwood Shopping Center," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 29, 2017, http://slphistory.org/westwoodshoppingcenter/.

[186] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 39.

[187] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 39; Photograph of Westwood Shopping Center, February, 1957, 7101 Cedar Lake Road, "Cedar Lake Road" collection, Street Photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota; "Miracle Mile Addition Is Nearly Ready," *SLPD,* Thursday, October 15, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS; Photos of Texa-Tonka Shopping Center, April 5, 1960, "Minnetonka Boulevard North/Even" collection, Street Photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota; Emory Anderson, ed., *Lilac Way*, 1950, original photos probably held at the St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, accessed April 15, 2017, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/.

limited to a single story, the recreation center contained a second story at some point between 1956 and 1978.[188]

In addition to form and layout, existing secondary literature on shopping centers has identified some of the architectural characteristics and specific features of neighborhood and community centers constructed in the U.S. during the postwar period. As mentioned previously, Longstreth states post-WWII community shopping centers were often based on the principles of utility and unity; neighborhood centers were also designed with unified facades.[189] Millet's statement that shopping centers constructed in the Twin Cities in the early 1950s were "baldly utilitarian" suggests that utility was also a key feature of local shopping centers.[190]

Manning states that many postwar shopping centers were designed according to the principles of modernism, a style which emphasized "pure simplicity and understated designs."[191] The 1948 version of *The Community Builders Handbook* provided recommendations as to how this style should be applied to shopping centers:

> A considerable degree of unity is recommended. Many of the older successful centers went in for architectural styles including distinctive details such as towers, balconies, and other ornamental features. While these additional features have proved to be well worth their cost, the trend toward simple design along modern lines has the advantage of less cost and greater flexibility for present use and future adaptation to changing conditions. Greater reliance is put on proportion and form rather than on embellishment. Extreme "modernistic" designs should be avoided, however, as they may be quickly outdated and less acceptable than good period styles such as Colonial, Mission, English, Spanish, etc."[192]

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[188] "Lilac Way Shopping Center," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 29, 2017, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/.

[189] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 289; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32.

[190] Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* 82.

[191] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 30 – 37; Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute, *The Community Builders Handbook,* 157.

[192] Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute, *The Community Builders Handbook,* 157.

"Midcentury Modernism," as this style came to be known, was the prominent architectural design for all types of buildings between 1945 and the later 1960s. Based on the principles of "simplicity, functionality, and rationality," this style was cost-effective, making it a logical choice for building construction during the postwar era, including that of shopping centers.[193]

On its own, however, this modern, simple design was not enough to draw the gaze of potential shoppers as they drove past shopping centers in their vehicles. In order to attract attention, some developers supported the installation of flashy signage on their centers.[194] While uncoordinated signage was frowned upon by some developers, Manning argues that signs, along with parking lots, became distinctive elements of shopping center design. Developers and store owners relied on signs, rather than the building's architecture, to attract shoppers; thus, shopping center buildings sometimes lacked architectural ornament.[195] Indeed, Manning states that "ultimately, strip mall style was less a product of architecture than a result of graphic design."[196] Here, too, Millet confirms that these trends applied to the Twin Cities, stating that after WWII, "a brick pylon surmounted by a sign often served as the only real identifying feature" of Twin Cities shopping centers built in the early 1950s.[197]

St. Louis Park shopping center developers appear to have embraced utilitarian, modernistic design and varied signage. Photographs taken of each center in the late 1950s

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[193] Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* xi, 1.

[194] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 32 – 33.

[195] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 33 – 39; The Community Builders' Council, *The Community Builders Handbook,* 158; Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers,* 71. Baker and Funaro's *Shopping Centers* suggests that it would be difficult for developers to control the signage of chain stores, which were more attached to their trademarks than independently-owned businesses. Instead, they recommend allowing for varied signage but limiting all of signs to a specified width.

[196] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 39.

[197] Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* 82.

and early 1960s reveal that the shopping center buildings lacked architectural detailing (see figures 8, 9, 10, and 11). Signage, however, was often loud and bold. This was especially true of Texa-Tonka and Miracle Mile. At these centers, there was a lack of coordination between individual tenant signs. Some tenants mounted their signs on pylons perpendicular to the storefronts, while others attached signs directly to the edge of sidewalk canopies. Lettering and design varied from sign to sign. Texa-Tonka, Lilac Way, and Miracle Mile advertised their presence with large, rooftop mounted signs, while Westwood's parking lot contained a pylon with the name of the center.[198]

[198] Photograph of Texa-Tonka Shopping Center, April 5, 1960, "Minnetonka North/Even" collection, Street Photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, MN; Photographs of Westwood Shopping Center, March 1, 1960, "Cedar Lake Road" collection, Street Photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, MN; Photographs of Westwood Shopping Center, February 1957, "Cedar Lake Road" collection, Street Photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, MN; Photograph of Lilac Way Barber Shop, 1958, St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 16, 2017, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/; City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Lilac Way Shopping Center, 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 16, 2017, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/; photographs of Miracle Mile, "Excelsior Boulevard 4901 through Miracle Mile" collection, Street photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, MN; City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Miracle Mile Shopping Center, February 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 16, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/; Emory Anderson, ed., Westwood Shopping Center, 1957, original photos held at the St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota.

Figure 8. Miracle Mile Shopping Center, February 1960. Photo by City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor.[199]

Figure 9. Lilac Way Shopping Center, 1960. Photo by City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor.[200]

[199] City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Miracle Mile Shopping Center, February 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, accessed April 16, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

[200] City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Lilac Way Shopping Center, February 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, accessed April 16, 2017, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

Figure 10. Westwood Shopping Center, 1957. Panorama created by Emory Anderson. [201]

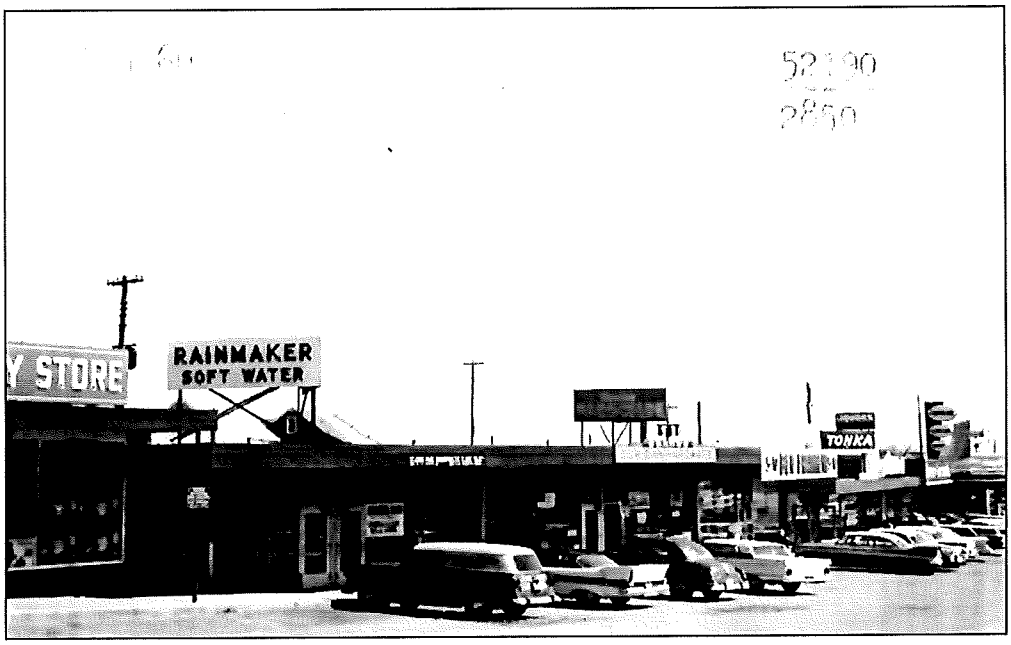

Figure 11. Texa-Tonka Shopping Center, February 8, 1960.[202]

In addition to modern building design and the presence of signs, Manning lists several other architectural characteristics of shopping centers. These included the presence of a single front façade facing the center's parking lot, the ability to access

[201] Emory Anderson, ed., Westwood Shopping Center, 1957, original photographs held at the St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota., courtesy of Emory Anderson and the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

[202] Texa-Tonka Shopping Center, February 8, 1960, "Minnetonka Boulevard North/Even" collection, Street Photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park Minnesota, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

storefronts directly from the parking area, and the presence of a covered sidewalk along the center's storefronts (such as a canopy or awning).[203] Here, too, St. Louis Park shopping centers conformed to national trends. All four shopping centers included covered walkways, and had front façades and entrances facing forecourts of parking. In addition, all four shopping centers contained large display windows, a characteristic not mentioned by Manning but recommended in the *Community Builders Handbook.*[204]

In terms of tenancy, postwar shopping centers in the United States contained more and larger stores than earlier centers.[205] In their study on the relationship between shopping centers and other changes in retail structure after WWII, Ghosh and McLafferty state that chain stores and franchises were increasingly prevalent in shopping centers beginning in the 1950s.[206] In addition, Longstreth states that national chain variety and clothing stores became important tenants in community centers after World War II.[207] Supermarkets, which had largely remained separated from shopping centers before WWII, now also became integral parts of these centers.[208]

In 1956, Miracle Mile, Texa-Tonka, Lilac Way, and Westwood all contained a supermarket. In addition to the supermarket, common store types included drugstores, hardware stores, and beauty salons – each of the centers had all three of these stores. The three largest centers (Lilac Way, Miracle Mile, and Texa-Tonka) had a bakery, a variety

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[203] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 39.

[204] Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute, *The Community Builders Handbook,* 157; City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Miracle Mile Shopping Center, February 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 16, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/; City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Lilac Way Shopping Center, 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 16, 2017, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/; Emory Anderson, ed., Westwood Shopping Center, 1957, original photographs held at the St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota; Texa-Tonka Shopping Center, February 8, 1960, "Minnetonka Boulevard North/Even" collection, Street Photos, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park Minnesota.

[205] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 162.

[206] Ghosh and McLafferty, "The Shopping Center," 254, 263-264.

[207] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 289.

[208] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 162 – 163.

store, and a shoe store. Westwood, Texa-Tonka, and Miracle Mile contained medical and dental offices as well as a dry cleaner.[209]

The stores listed above were common tenants in neighborhood shopping centers. *Shopping Centers: Design and Operation,* an important trade study written in 1951 by Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro, states that a neighborhood shopping center "will always contain a small supermarket and a drug store…in addition there will be several service stores such as a dry cleaner, a beauty parlor, shoe repair, laundry, barber; also possibly a variety store. If the supermarket has no satisfactory bakery department a separate bakery will be needed." Funaro and Baker's text also recommends that neighborhood shopping centers include a filling station.[210] Interestingly, hardware stores were not included on this list, yet all of the Park neighborhood shopping centers contained a hardware store.[211]

Baker and Funaro state that community shopping centers "will probably contain, in addition to the stores mentioned above, a service grocery with phone order and delivery service, florist, milliner, radio, children's shoes, gifts, candy, lingerie, liquor, women's apparel, restaurant, book store, children's wear and toys, haberdashery, [and] athletic goods."[212] The trade study authors recommended that a bank and post office should be included in the community center as well, if not available in the surrounding

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[209]Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 4, 10.

[210] Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers,* 10; Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 287.

[211] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 4, 10.

[212] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* 11th ed., s.v. "haberdasher," accessed April 23, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/haberdasher. According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, the term haberdasher refers to a men's clothing and accessories store, but it is possibly this term may have had a different meaning in the 1950s.

neighborhood. In addition, they suggest that doctors' offices and other professional offices might be added to these centers.[213]

Although Miracle Mile did not contain all of these retail and service establishments, in 1956 it did contain a children's shoe store, a gift store, a lingerie store, two candy stores (one of which was also a luncheonette), a children's clothing store, a photography and sporting goods store, a loan company, two men and boy's wear stores, and two other clothing establishments. These were in addition to the supermarket, hardware store, drugstore, variety store, dry cleaner, beauty salon, and bakery located in the center. Miracle Mile also contained a wallpaper and paint store, a fabric store, a jeweler, a meat market, and a TV and record shop.[214]

It is difficult to tell which stores in Miracle Mile were national chain stores. W.T. Grant's, a combination "variety store, dry goods center, home and hardware store and... fashion shop" was definitely a national chain, with 480 stores in 1951. Fanny Farmer, a candy store, and Red Owl supermarket were also large chains.[215] However, Cook's Apparel appears to have been the only clothing store in the center that could be identified as a chain, and it was not a national chain, but a local company with four stores. Fashion Beauty Salon, Snyder Drugs, and Warner Hardware were probably local chains as well.[216] Thus, neighborhood and community shopping centers in St. Louis Park adhered to some, but not all, trends in shopping center tenancy.

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[213] Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers,* 10.

[214] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 4.

[215] "W. T. Grant 'Four-in-One' Store Ready," *SLPD*, Wednesday, June 6, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; John A. Wickland, "7-Million Dollar Knollwood Plaza to Open Wednesday," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* August 21, 1955, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/182973958.

[216] "Miracle Mile Tenants," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 17, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemiletenants/; "Norton and Peel: An Inventory of Its Photographs and Records

Knollwood

As a shopping center that does not fit easily into the definition of one particular type of shopping center, Knollwood Plaza merits its own discussion. Knollwood, built in St. Louis Park in 1955, serves as an example of shifting patterns in shopping center development that occurred in the late 1950s. More specifically, Knollwood functioned as a stepping-stone between the community and the regional shopping center, foreshadowing the trend toward regional centers that began in the late 1950s.[217] Examining Knollwood not only clarifies the unique characteristics of Park neighborhood and community shopping centers developed during the early 1950s, but also reveals how St. Louis Park was a microcosm of the changing patterns in shopping center development between 1941 and 1956.

Definitions of regional centers, like those of neighborhood and community shopping centers, are somewhat subjective. According to Clausen, regional centers are located "on 35 or more acres, with 50 to 100 or more stores, including at least one major department store, and offering a full representation of stores and services." This is in contrast to her definition of community centers, which are located on "20 to 25 acres, with 20 to 40 stores anchored by a junior department store."[218] Baker and Funaro, authors of the *Shopping Centers* trade study, offer another definition, characterizing the regional shopping center as "a suburban equivalent of the existing downtown shopping center." In addition to the stores recommended for community shopping centers, the authors contended that regional centers should also contain "at least one department

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at the Minnesota Historical Society," Minnesota Historical Society, accessed April 17, 2017, http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/sv0000411.xml. The Norton and Peel photograph collection contains pictures of three different Warners Hardware stores, which suggests that it may have been a local chain.

[217] Peter Muller, *The Outer City: Geographical Consequences of the Urbanization of the Suburbs* (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Geographers, 1976), 121 – 123.

[218] Clausen, "Northgate Regional Shopping Center," 147.

store…backed up by a wide selection of women's apparel stores." Located on twenty to fifty acres, the regional center should be "placed in a thickly settled suburban area, and be easily accessible by a number of major highways." In addition, regional centers should be located within 30 minutes of 300,000 to 900,000 people.[219] Longstreth, who bases his definition of regional centers on several publications produced in the 1950s, agrees with Clausen that regional centers usually had more than forty tenants. He states that most regional centers had a target population of over one hundred thousand people, and that regional shopping centers contained "more specialty outlets" than community centers.[220] Perhaps the defining feature of regional shopping centers, however, was their pedestrian mall. Stores in regional centers did not face the street but were oriented inward, situated along a walkway designed for shoppers.[221]

Although Knollwood did not contain a pedestrian mall, nor include the fifty to one hundred stores of Clausen's archetypal regional shopping center, it possessed many of the other features of regional centers. Knollwood was constructed on thirty-five acres of land, at the intersection of Texas Avenue and Highway 7, where tenants could take advantage of traffic on nearby thoroughfares.[222] According to an article in the *Dispatch*, Knollwood occupied an ideal site. "Traffic counts show that 16,000 cars travel daily on Highway No. 7, main artery to the Lake Minnetonka area with a present population of around 50,000. Feeding in to the highway 2 ½ miles to the east is the city circling Beltline while within sight of the center to the west is the north-south Highway 18, going directly into Hopkins and servicing Bloomington and Eden Prairie to the south and an

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[219] Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers,* 10.

[220] Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall,* 222, 426 – 427 (n2).

[221] Clausen, "Northgate Regional Shopping Center," 144; Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall,* xiv, 271, 307 – 308; Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 31.

[222] "Humphrey, Freeman To Help Queen 'Open Plaza,'" *SLPD,* August 18, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

equally large and well-populated area to the north."[223] Knollwood was expected to serve 133,988 families located within a twenty-minute drive of the center; but was also expected to draw shoppers from farther away (see figure 12).[224]

[223] "Knollwood Plaza Brings Suburbs First 'Metropolitan Merchandising Services," *SLPD,* August 11, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[224] "Knollwood Builder, Park Man, Known Over Nation," *SLPD,* August 25, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

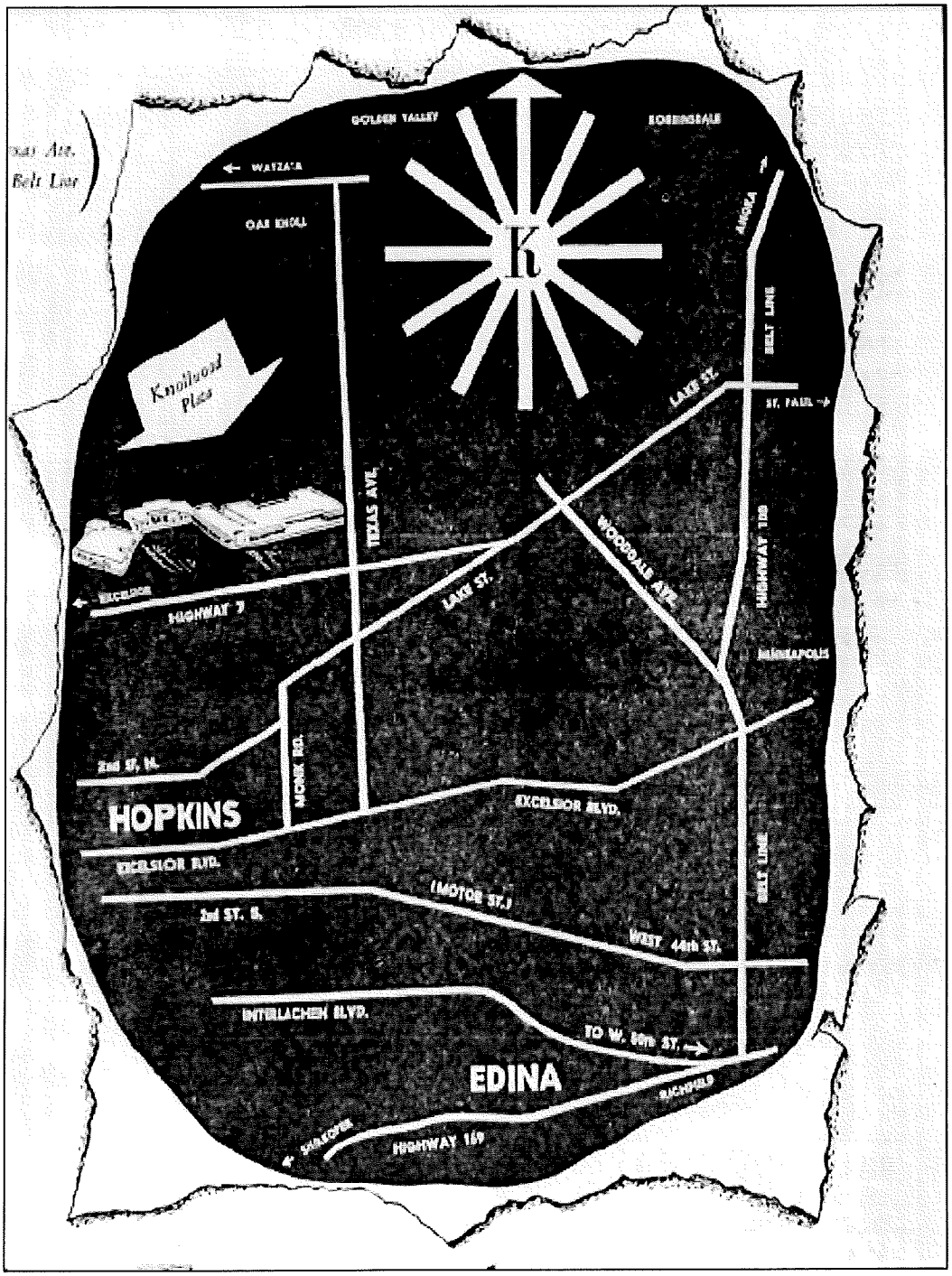

Figure 12. Roads to Knollwood Plaza, August 22, 1955. Map taken from the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*.[225]

[225] "Knollwood Plaza Is Closer Than You think!" (advertisement), *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, August 22, 1955, accessed April 23, 2017, http://www.newspapers.com/image/182977748.

One advertisement for Knollwood displays a map of the western metropolitan suburbs, showing the major roads that would carry residents from as far away as Richfield, Robbinsdale, Excelsior and St. Paul to the shopping center. The slogan at the top of the advertisement reads "Knollwood Plaza is closer than you think!"[226] Another ad lists the approximate travel times from these communities to Knollwood. Residents from White Bear, with an estimated travel time of fifty minutes, would have the longest commute; Minneapolis residents and Hopkins residents could expect to arrive at the center in four or five minutes.[227]

Knollwood certainly did draw shoppers from across the metropolitan area. Three separate license plate checks conducted by the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* in 1956 revealed that over half of all Knollwood shoppers came from outside the immediate geographical area. Although approximately forty-five percent came from St. Louis Park and Hopkins, the two closest suburbs, twenty-five percent traveled to Knollwood from Minneapolis, and about thirty percent came "from all over the Twin Cities and from outside the metropolitan area." [228] The size of Knollwood's parking lot, which contained space for 2,500 cars, suggests that the center's developer had learned from the mistakes of earlier Twin Cities shopping centers, which failed to provide sufficient parking for patrons.[229]

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[226] "Knollwood Plaza Is Closer Than You think!" (advertisement) *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, August 22, 1955, accessed April 23, 2017, http://www.newspapers.com/image/182977748.

[227] "All Roads Lead to Knollwood Plaza" (advertisement), *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, August 24, 1955, accessed April 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/182978777.

[228] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Report on the Shopping Habits of Hennepin County Women* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company, 1957), 33.

[229] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth,* 4-5; Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 84, 109; Abler, Adams, and Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 33.

According to an article in the *Dispatch*, Knollwood represented "the first large-scale venture of downtown merchants into Twin City suburbs" and was "the first in the Twin Cities' suburbs to house a complete department store." This is logical, given that Knollwood was the largest suburban shopping center in the metropolitan area when it opened in 1955 (both in terms of its square footage of floor space and number of units). Branches of downtown stores were prominent tenants at Knollwood. According to the *St. Louis Park Dispatch,* "the impressive list of stores...represented in the center includes many of the big names from Nicollet avenue and others nationally and internationally known." Downtown merchants who rented space in Knollwood included "Powers Dry Goods Co., J. C. Penney Co., Maurice L. Rothschild Young-Quinlan Co., Harold's, F. W. Woolworth Co., Three Sisters, Inc., Berland Shoe Store, Walgreen Co., The Richman Bros. Co., Jack & Jill Shops and Fanny Farmer Candy Shops, Inc." Several of these stores were also national chain stores. According to the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* "some of the country's largest chain stores will also have branches in Knollwood Plaza;" these included F. W. Woolworth Co., J. C. Penney Co., Sears, Roebuck and Co., Richman Brothers Co., Three Sisters, Kinney Shoes, Berland's Shoes, Walgreen Co., Fanny Farmer Co., Red Owl Stores, and National Tea Co. The center's "complete department store," Powers Dry Goods Co., occupied eighty thousand square feet of floor space on two floors at the west end of the center.[230]

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[230] "Humphrey, Freeman To Help Queen 'Open Plaza'," *SLPD,* August 18, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; "Knollwood is Suburbs First 'Metropolitan Merchandising Services," *SLPD,* August 11, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth,* 4-5; John A. Wickland, "7-Million Dollar Knollwood Plaza to Open Wednesday," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* August 21, 1955, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/182973958.

The goal of Knollwood's developer, Henry Shanedling Sons Corp., was to make Knollwood "as complete a one stop center for all types of consumer goods and services as possible."[231] At the center's opening in August of 1955, thirty-two stores were in place; by 1956, the center housed thirty-four. These included several apparel stores, one department store, two gift shops, at least one restaurant, two shoe stores, a bakery, a store selling cameras, an appliance business, a bank, a loan company, a barber shop, a "pet center," a dry cleaners, a paint store, a hardware store, a drugstore, and two supermarkets.[232] Although several of the stores listed in the Baker and Funaro *Shopping Centers* trade study were not included in Knollwood (such as a beauty parlor, liquor store, book store, lingerie shop, and florist), Baker and Funaro state that regional centers with smaller amounts of stores might consider including more women's clothing stores in lieu of a wider variety of shops.[233] Knollwood contained at least nine stores that sold clothing (including the Power's department store).[234] This list included the Three Sisters Shop, Harolds, and John W. Heller Sportswear, all of which catered specifically to women.[235]

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[231] "Knollwood Plaza Brings Suburbs First 'Metropolitan Merchandising Services," *SLPD,* August 11, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[232] John A. Wickland, "7-Million Dollar Knollwood Plaza to Open Wednesday," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* August 21, 1955, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/182973958; "Knollwood Plaza/Mall/Shoppes," Saint Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 18, 2017, http://slphistory.org/knollwoodplaza/; John Ewoldt and Rochelle Olson, "Dayton's scion Bob Dayton, who owned the Harold store, dies," *Star Tribune,* January 20, 2016, accessed April 18, 2017, http://www.startribune.com/dayton-s-scion-bob-dayton-dies-at-73-in-naples-florida/365932581/; Jennifer Steinhauer, "Woolworth Gives Up on the Five and Dime," *New York Times,* July 18, 1997, accessed April 18, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/1997/07/18/business/woolworth-gives-up-on-the-five-and-dime.html; Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 4; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth,* 8.

[233] Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers,* 11.

[234] "Knollwood Plaza/Mall/Shoppes," Saint Louis Park Historical Society, accessed http://slphistory.org/knollwoodplaza/; Ewoldt and Olson, "Dayton's scion Bob Dayton, who owned the Harold store, dies."

[235] "Knollwood Plaza/Mall/Shoppes," Saint Louis Park Historical Society, accessed http://slphistory.org/knollwoodplaza/; Ewoldt and Olson, "Dayton's scion Bob Dayton, who owned the

Knollwood also differed from neighborhood and community shopping centers in its general layout. Unlike earlier Park shopping centers, which were generally constructed as a strip of stores fronted by a forecourt of parking (and in some cases with limited parking in the rear), Knollwood was constructed as an island of stores surrounded by a sea of parking. A sketch of the center in the *Dispatch* showed that almost all of this parking was designated for patrons, with a small section in the rear reserved for employees (see figure 13).

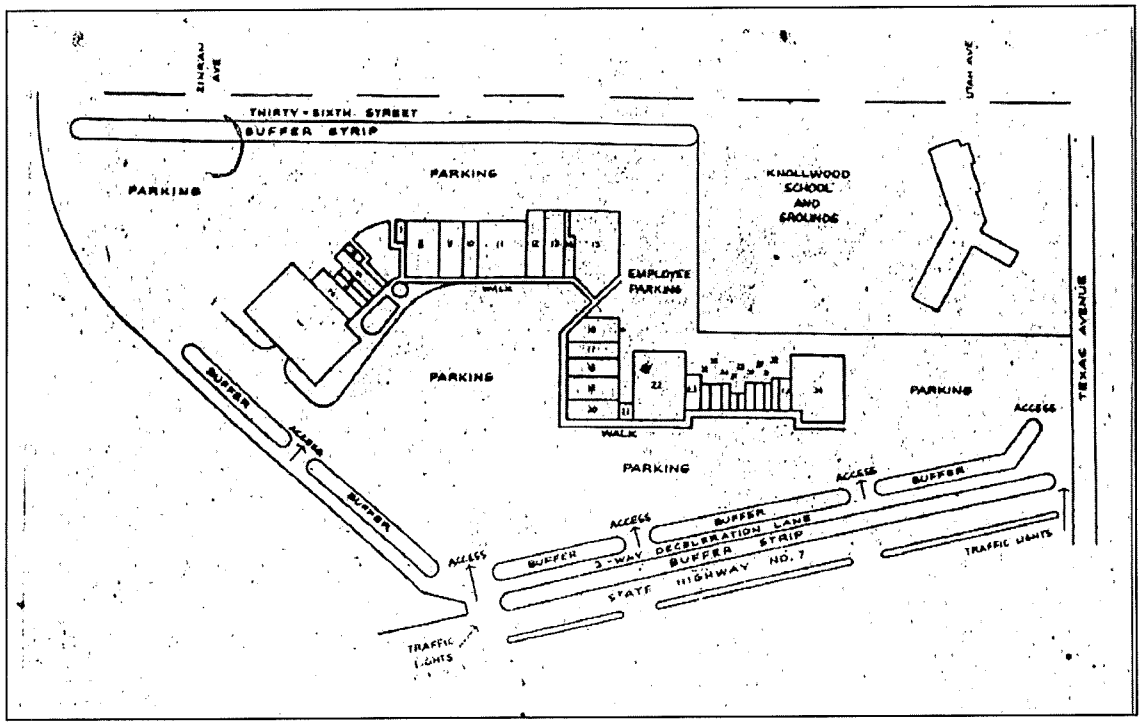

Figure 13. Drawing of Knollwood Plaza, August 25, 1955. Image taken from the *St. Louis Park Dispatch.*[236]

Harold store, dies; "Unique Front At 3 Sisters In Knollwood," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 12, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS. It is likely that J.C. Penney's also catered to women – see "From Single Store to Billion A-Year Business–Penney's," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 15, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[236] "Here Are Store Locations At Knollwood Plaza, Opening This Weekend" (advertisement), *St. Louis Park Dispatch*, August 25, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Longstreth states that regional shopping centers had "a generally even distribution of parking spaces around the complex," an innovation that shortened the distances between parking lots and stores while providing space for massive amounts of vehicles.[237] Moreover, the regional shopping centers "were perceptually disconnected from the street, creating their own environments instead. Buildings were set back and generally lack a strong distinguishing presence from the arteries that served them."[238] In its physical layout, Knollwood adopted these conventions as well (see figures 14 and 15).

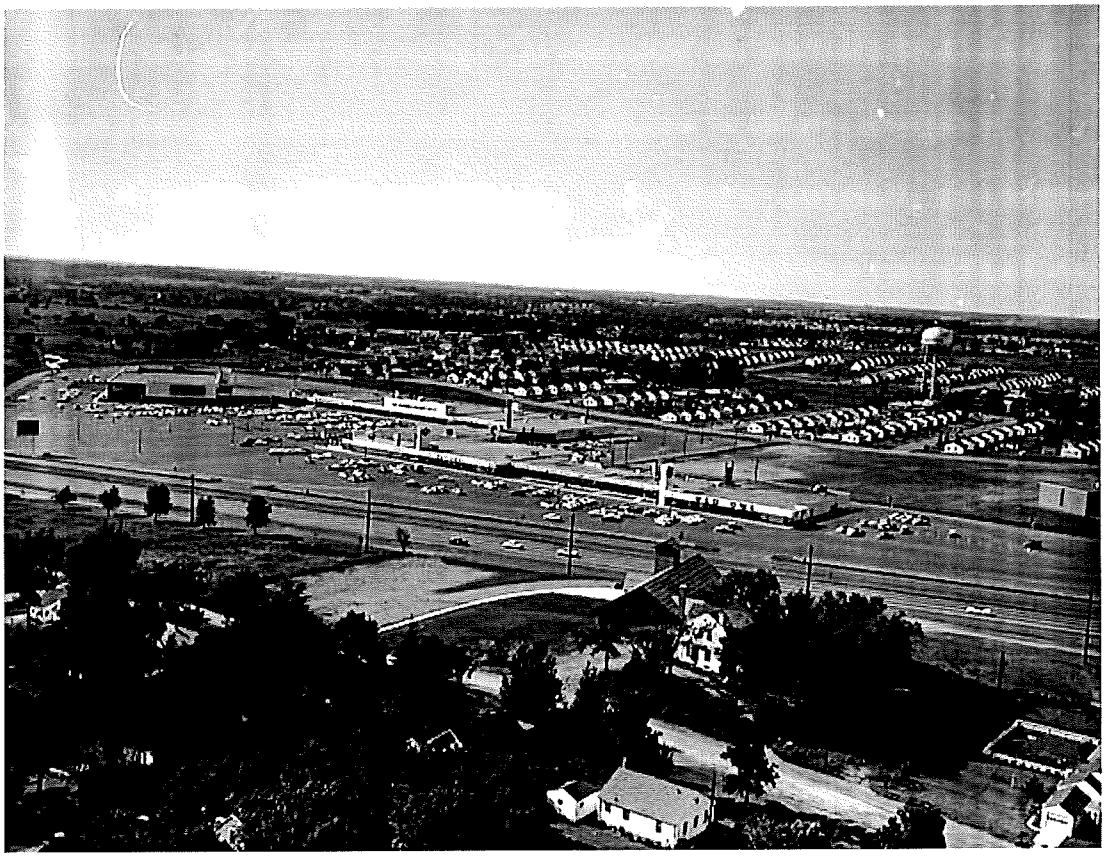

Figure 14. Aerial photograph of Knollwood Plaza Shopping Center, August 14, 1956. Photograph by the *Minneapolis Star Journal Tribune.*[239]

[237] Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall,* 311.
[238] Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall,* 307.
[239] *Minneapolis Star Journal Tribune*, *Knollwood Plaza Shopping Center, St. Louis Park*, August 14, 1956, Minnesota Historical Society, accessed April 30, 2017,

Figure 15. Ground level view of Knollwood Plaza, October 26, 1955. Photograph by Norton and Peel.[240]

In certain ways, Knollwood did not meet Clausen's definition of a regional shopping center. Rather than the forty or fifty to one hundred stores proposed by Longstreth and Clausen, Knollwood had thirty-four; it also lacked a pedestrian mall. When compared to Southdale, which contained sixty-five stores in 1957, it seems doubtful that Knollwood provided "a full representation of stores and services."[241] At the same time, the attempt to make Knollwood a comprehensive center, the expectation that the center would draw residents from surrounding areas, the center's expanded parking lot, its innovative layout, and its complete department store indicate that Knollwood was more than a community shopping center. Regardless of its technical classification,

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http://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display.php?irn=10816488&return=q%3Dknollwood, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

[240] Norton and Peel, *Knollwood Plaza, St. Louis Park*, October 26, 1955, Minnesota Historical Society, accessed April 30, 2017, http://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display.php?irn=10860764&return=q%3Dknollwood, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

[241] "Clausen, Northgate Regional Shopping Center," 147; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth,* 4-5.

Knollwood embodied the trend towards larger shopping centers that would come to characterize shopping center development in the late 1950s.

St. Louis Park is thus an excellent example of the changing patterns in shopping center development that occurred in the United States between 1941 and 1956. Admittedly, Lilac Way's configuration was unusual, when compared to Washington, D.C. neighborhood shopping centers, and the Park's postwar neighborhood and community shopping centers were smaller than those typically developed in the early 1950s. Nevertheless, the Park's shopping centers conformed to most national and local trends in location, tenant composition, layout, and architecture. Taken together, Lilac Way, Miracle Mile, Texa-Tonka, Westwood, and Knollwood serve as a microcosm of the evolution of shopping centers in the 1940s and 1950s. In other words, Park shopping centers reinforce the existing historiography on neighborhood and community shopping centers. These centers, however, also shed light on topics not addressed by the current literature; namely, the economic impact of shopping centers on other forms of suburban retail. It is to this topic that this thesis will turn next.

CHAPTER THREE

"SUBURBAN MERCHANTS UNDER THE GUNS:" THE INFLUENCE OF NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY SHOPPING CENTERS ON OLDER FORMS OF SUBURBAN RETAIL

A final area of evaluation regarding neighborhood and community shopping centers in the Park relates to their economic impact. As mentioned previously, this is a topic that has been somewhat neglected in the current literature. Most of the current scholarly literature on neighborhood and community centers has not explored the relationship between old and new forms of suburban retail. When historians and geographers do discuss the economic impact of these centers, it is most often in relation to the decentralization of retail from downtown.

As mentioned previously, many scholars point to the proliferation of regional shopping centers in the mid- to late 1950s as a turning point in the decentralization and suburbanization of retail. Historians imply that prior to the arrival of regional centers, suburban commerce was limited in its scope and unable to supply all the needs of suburbanites. Regional shopping centers, however, were comprehensive enough and large enough to provide an alternative to downtown shopping. Furthermore, regional centers were catalytic, causing other development to locate around them rather than following jobs and residential development out to the suburbs. Authors do not deny that neighborhood and community shopping centers played a role in the decentralization of retail; rather, they imply that regional centers were simply more influential.[242] According

[242] Muller, *The Outer City,* 29 – 30; Muller, *Contemporary Suburban America,* 121 – 123; Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 31; Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown : Its Rise and Fall, 1880 – 1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 384 – 386, accessed August 2, 2016, ProQuest ebrary;

to Liebs, "local shopping centers helped bring neighborhood business to the strip, but it was through the development of regional shopping centers and malls that Main Street was finally transplanted in entirety to the roadside."[243]

The purpose of this chapter is to examine whether the significance ascribed to regional centers in regard to decentralization holds true in the relationship between suburban retail and suburban shopping centers. In other words, did smaller shopping centers in St. Louis Park affect nearby retail in a significant, discernable way? Or were regional shopping centers more influential in this regard? This chapter will explore the influence of smaller and larger shopping centers in St. Louis Park on other forms of retail located in the suburbs; specifically, the Main Street businesses of Hopkins (located less than two miles from the border of Hopkins and St. Louis Park) and freestanding commercial development in the Park.[244]

Data drawn from the census of business, surveys of metropolitan shopping habits and shopping centers in the late 1950s, and articles in the *St. Louis Park Dispatch* suggest that neighborhood and community shopping centers developed in the Park before 1955 did not significantly alter established patterns of suburban retail in nearby Hopkins, nor did they negatively affect the development of other retail businesses in the Park itself. It seems probable, however, that the construction of Knollwood in 1955 and the construction of other Southdale in 1956 caused changes in suburban shopping habits, at least in terms of the retail business conducted in Hopkins.

Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall,* xiii – xv; Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic,* 257 – 259; Ghosh and McLafferty, *The Shopping Center,* 254 – 258.

[243] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 31.

[244] Aerial photographs of Hopkins and St. Louis Park, Minnesota, 1957, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer; Google Maps, map of Hopkins and St. Louis Park, coordinates: 44°56'06.3"N, 93°23'49.5" W, accessed May 7, 2017.

During the postwar era, St. Louis Park's shopping centers distinguished it from other suburban communities. By the end of 1951, the Park had three existing shopping centers, a greater number than any other suburb in the metro area.[245] By the summer of 1956, St. Louis Park had not only the most shopping centers but also the largest center in the Minneapolis metropolitan area. Knollwood Plaza, at 360,000 sq. ft., was 120,000 square feet larger than the next largest center in the Minneapolis.[246]

The Park's early and substantial shopping center growth (relative to other suburbs) was directly correlated to the timing and pace of its residential development. Suburban population growth between 1940 and 1950 was largest in the southwest quadrant of the Twin Cities, where St. Louis Park is located. Even before 1920, residents moving out from the Twin Cities had gravitated to the south, creating what was termed a "southwest surge."[247] After WWII, the region's glacial outwash plains made it easier to construct high density residential subdivisions in the area, contributing to the village's postwar development (see chapter 1 for more information on postwar suburbanization in the Twin Cities).[248] With a population of 7,737 people in 1940, 22,644 people in 1950, 35,292 people in 1954, and approximately 40,000 people in 1956, St. Louis Park was the second most populous suburb in the Twin Cities area in 1940, and the most populous from 1950 – 1956.[249] In 1957, a study completed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis concluded that "the chief factor behind the suburban shopping center expansion" was "the rapid growth of population in outlying areas, areas which became

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[245] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth,* 4 – 7.

[246] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 2 -10.

[247] Larson, *The Story of the Suburbs,* 16.

[248] Abler, Adams, and Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 53 – 55.

[249] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 1, 10 – 11.

increasingly remote from the older established trading centers as the home-construction industry pushed outward." In other words, residential development in suburban areas (areas which became ever farther removed from existing retail centers) directly spurred shopping center development. This statement is consistent with patterns in St. Louis Park, and confirms what historians have already concluded about the movement of retail in the initial ten or fifteen years after WWII; namely, that commercial development followed (rather than preceded) residential development to the suburbs.[250]

Hopkins, St. Louis Park's smaller, western neighbor, did not experience the same development patterns as the Park. In 1940, Hopkins was a village of 4,100 people. Between 1940 and 1950, Hopkins grew by 85 percent, while the Park grew by approximately 193 percent. In 1956, Hopkins' total population was only 12,000 people, compared to the 40,000 residents living in the Park.[251] Interestingly, both Hopkins and St. Louis Park contained roughly same number of retail establishments in 1948 (the Park had seventy-nine and Hopkins had eighty-two). However, in Hopkins many of these retail businesses were concentrated in the downtown area of the village – on Excelsior Blvd. – while St. Louis Park's commerce was scattered throughout the suburb.[252] Moreover, 1948

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[250] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 2; Muller, *Contemporary Suburban America,* 120 – 124.

[251] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 10.

[252] U. S. Bureau of the Census., *U.S. Census of Business: 1948*, vol. 3, *Retail Trade – Area Statistics* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 22.07; Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas,* 11 – 13. While there is no way to determine exactly what percentage of Hopkins' retail businesses were located along Excelsior Boulevard, the *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas* states that downtown Hopkins was more than a neighborhood shopping district – it was one of eleven "super shopping districts" in the Twin Cities. When the report was written in 1956, this ten-block section of Excelsior Avenue contained over 30 businesses.

retail sales in Hopkins (totaling 11,080 dollars) were higher than retail sales in the Park (totaling of 9,823 dollars).[253]

One might expect that the development of two shopping centers in St. Louis Park between 1948 and 1953 (Miracle Mile and Texa-Tonka) would tip the scales in the Park's favor. By 1953, St. Louis Park had three shopping centers, while Hopkins had none.[254] These shopping centers were built with parking lots designed to accommodate the automobile, whereas historic aerial photographs from 1947 and 1953 indicate that most businesses on Hopkins' main street lacked front parking lots.[255] Moreover, St. Louis Park had a larger population than Hopkins, a population that could patronize the new shopping centers.

However, in 1954, total retail sales for Hopkins' businesses remained higher than retail sales in St. Louis Park. Although both villages had more than doubled their retail revenue in those six years, Hopkins remained in the lead, actually coming out a little further ahead of St. Louis Park in 1954 than it had in 1948 – 22,198 dollars compared to the Park's 20,642 dollars.[256] Furthermore, during these six years the number of retail stores in St. Louis Park had increased by approximately 100 percent (from 79 to 160), while the number of retail stores in Hopkins had only increased by about 50 percent (from 82 to 118). Since Hopkins' retail sales doubled but its number of stores did not, it can be inferred that some businesses in Hopkins probably received even greater traffic in

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[253] U. S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Business: 1948*, vol. 3, *Retail Trade – Area Statistics*, 22.07.

[254] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 6 – 7.

[255] Aerial photographs of Hopkins, Minnesota, 1947 and 1953, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer.

[256] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Business: 1954*, vol. 2, bk. 1, *Retail Trade – Area Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 23-8.

1954 than they did in 1948. [257] The difference in retail sales between the two suburbs is more striking when one considers the relative demand for retail in each suburb: St. Louis Park's ratio of people to stores in 1954 was over twice as high as Hopkins, with approximately 221 people per store in St. Louis Park and 102 people per store in Hopkins.[258]

In other words, the addition of two shopping centers to St. Louis Park between 1948 and 1954 did not produce a noticeable increase in Park retail sales. Between 1948 and 1954, the populations of St. Louis Park and Hopkins increased by approximately the same percentage (fifty-six percent), but population increases translated into a much higher ratio of people to stores in St. Louis Park than in Hopkins. The high demand for goods and services this population increase presumably created, combined with the presence of convenient, auto-oriented shopping centers, should have led the Park to overtake Hopkins in retail sales, but this was not the case. The persistence of lower retail sales in the Park and higher sales in Hopkins suggests that the Park's three shopping centers were not influential enough to alter the shopping patterns of suburban residents in a noticeable way. At the very least, the influence these centers exerted was not enough to compensate for the pull of other retail establishments located inside and outside of St. Louis Park, including those located along Hopkins' main street (Excelsior Blvd).[259]

Why did these shopping centers fail to attract more business? The answer may be simply that the advantages of neighborhood and community shopping centers were not

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[257] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Business: 1954*, vol. 2, bk. 1, *Retail Trade – Area Statistics*, 23-8; U. S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Business: 1948,* vol. 3, *Retail Trade – Area Statistics,* 22.07.

[258] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Business: 1954*, vol. 2, bk. 1, *Retail Trade – Area Statistics*, 23-8.

[259] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth,* 4-7.

significant enough to change the existing patterns of suburbanites. The off-street parking provided by shopping centers was probably an attraction to shoppers, given that both the Park and Hopkins suffered from a lack of parking in the early 1950s. A 1953 article in the *Dispatch* asserted that "To say that [the parking problem] is pressing and menacing in Hopkins and St. Louis Park, and in the whole southwest suburban area, is to sadly understate the condition."[260] If editorials in the *Dispatch* are representative of public opinion, citizens in Hopkins and St. Louis Park believed that parking in both communities was a problem that needed to be addressed.[261] A lack of parking in downtown shopping areas was also seen as somewhat of an issue. In a survey conducted by the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* in 1955, 51 percent of Hennepin County women cited traffic, parking and congestion as a the chief disadvantage of downtown shopping, and 39 percent cited "less traffic" as the chief convenience of the shopping centers.[262]

Yet, some evidence suggests that the shopping center parking lots themselves were overcrowded. A 1956 article describing improvements to the Miracle Mile Shopping Center stated that the center was developing a new traffic flow pattern in the parking lot to "eliminate congestion."[263] Although advertisements for Miracle Mile and Texa-Tonka sometimes tout the presence of their parking lots, Twin Cities historians have stated that the first generation of postwar shopping centers often suffered from congestion and a shortage of parking. Indeed, a newspaper article from the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* written in 1953, stated that "some of the older [shopping] centers are

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[260] "Parking an Eternal, Universal Headache," *SLPD,* Sept. 3, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch, Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS.

[261] For example, see "Parking an Eternal, Universal Headache," *SLPD,* Sept. 3, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch, Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS and "Park Parking Traffic Hazard," *SLPD,* July 5, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch, February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS.

[262] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind,* 21.

[263] "Miracle Mile Takes On 'New Look' With Improved Lighting, Parking," *SLPD,* July 26, 1956, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Dec 22, 1955 – Feb. 28, 1957," MNHS.

losing business because of a scarcity of parking space and traffic jams…" This suggests that shopping center parking lots may not have been convenient or large enough to draw significant trade away from other businesses.[264]

Nearby retail – namely, the businesses located in downtown Hopkins – may have even offered an advantage that shopping centers did not. A promotional article in the *Dispatch* likened Hopkins' main street to "a complete, time-testing [sic], gigantic shopping center", stating:

> Picture a shopping center – self-sufficient, tried and anxious to be of service – stretching for 20 blocks. It offers everything from a blacksmith shop to automobiles and new homes, plus banking facilities to cash your checks, to afford advice on scores of matters and stores with every conceivable item of merchandise. If the buyer wants his car gassed, greased, oiled or repaired while shopping, that is available, too. Even more, this mammoth, deluxe shopping center offers "all" of these services in duplicate; they are competitive, if the buyer is unable to find the article sought in one store, there are others certain to have it.[265]

In the mid-1950s, downtown Hopkins contained at least twenty-nine retail businesses (including a theater) distributed along two sides of a ten-block strip on Excelsior Avenue. This was a greater amount of stores than was available at Texa-Tonka, Westwood, Lilac Way, or Miracle Mile individually. Moreover, as the article suggested, a number of these establishments offered the same items. In 1956, there were seven grocery stores, three drug stores, three furniture stores, and five hardware stores on Hopkins' main street. By contrast, in 1956 St. Louis Park shopping centers had a much

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[264] "Enjoy Starlight Shopping For Christmas at Red Owl" (advertisement), *SLPD,* November 26, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch, Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS; Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 84, 109; Abler, Adams, and Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 33; "Take a Good Look at These Low Prices!" (advertisement), *SLPD,* December 13, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch, Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; John A. Wickland, "Shopping Center Boom Continues," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* November 8, 1953, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/183415395.

[265] "Hopkins "Offers Everything" To Shopper, Dollar Days Committee Heads Declare," *SLPD,* June 10, 1954, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

more balanced mix of tenants. The only neighborhood or community shopping center with more than one store per retail category, Miracle Mile, contained six clothing stores and two candy stores, but only one hardware store, one supermarket, and one drugstore.[266] It is possible that shoppers appreciated the ability to compare prices and goods between stores in Hopkins, something that would not have been possible in most neighborhood and community shopping centers. In addition, one *Dispatch* article suggested that the customer service provided by experienced Hopkins' businesses was a key to their success, a larger attraction for shoppers than the modern architecture of shopping centers. In the words of the *Dispatch,* downtown Hopkins had survived through the "application of time tested methods of service" rather than "the architectural efforts of shopping center planners high in the skyscrapers of New York."[267] Finally, as mentioned previously, before the postwar era many St. Louis Park residents had done their shopping in nearby Hopkins. It is likely that this pattern set a precedent that proved somewhat difficult to break.

This evidence suggests that the parking, tenant mix, and modern architecture of shopping centers of the early 1950s were insufficient to change the established retail patterns of suburbanites. They also appear to have been insufficient to alter the growth of freestanding retail development in the Park. Data from the *Dispatch* reveals that new businesses opened in the Park in large numbers in the early 1950s. By the beginning of 1952, there were 332 commercial and manufacturing industries in the Park.[268] By the end of 1953, there were 533 firms (a number that reflects the closure of some businesses and

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[266] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Minneapolis Metropolitan Shopping Areas*, 4, 10, 12.

[267] "Hopkins 'Offers Everything' To Shopper, Dollar Days Committee Heads Declare," *SLPD,* June 10, 1954, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[268] "This Week In The Park," *SLPD,* January 17, 1952, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS.

the addition of 139 businesses during 1953), and by the end of 1954, there were 640 business firms.[269] According to the city assessor, by January 1956 the Park had 740 businesses "including retail stores, industries, service-type firms and all others," representing a gain of 153 businesses and 58 business closures or mergers. The number of establishments for each year encompassed all types of business and not simply retail; in addition, the numbers for 1955 (and presumably for other years) were inflated by the fact that "some of the larger firms such as department stores sometimes [were] assessed more than once" to reflect their multiple departments.[270] Nevertheless, this robust growth seems to indicate that suburban merchants in St. Louis Park were not noticeably hampered by shopping centers built in the early 1950s. In addition, a survey of suburban zoning in 1958 showed that St. Louis Park had the largest amount of land devoted to commercial uses of all the metropolitan suburbs. While businesses did not necessarily occupy the entire area allotted for commercial use, this information supports the argument that Park retail businesses grew unhampered by shopping centers throughout the 1950s.[271]

Threats to Hopkins' main street, however, appeared in the form of larger shopping centers developed in 1955 and 1956, namely, Knollwood Plaza and Southdale Shopping Center. As late as 1955, downtown Hopkins was still considered a major retail trade area. This is evident in an article in the *Dispatch*, which listed "Hopkins" as a "major shopping area for Suburbia," along with the shopping centers Knollwood, Southdale, and

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[269] "180 New Park Businesses Opened Doors Last Year," *SLPD,* January 6, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[270] "Park Gains 95 Businesses, 529 New Homes In 1955," *SLPD,* January 5, 1956, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Dec 22, 1955 – Feb. 28, 1957," MNHS.

[271] State of Minnesota Department of Highways in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Public Roads, *Twin Cities Area Transportation Study,* vol. 1, *Study Findings,*([St. Paul?]: May, 1962), 98, 99.

Northdale, as well as the suburb of Edina. A survey of metropolitan shopping areas in 1956 also lists Hopkins as a "super shopping district."[272] By the 1958 census of business, however, sales in St. Louis Park had jumped up to 49,540 dollars, approximately 13,000 dollars higher than sales in Hopkins.[273] While it is definitely possible that an increase in freestanding Park businesses contributed to the shift, Knollwood Plaza, built in 1955 near the border of Hopkins in St. Louis Park, and Southdale shopping center, built in 1956 in the neighboring suburb of Edina, likely bore some responsibility for the change in shopping patterns.[274]

In terms of floor space and number of stores, Southdale and Knollwood were the two largest shopping centers in the Twin Cities in 1957. With sixty-five stores, 800,000 square feet of floor space, and a parking lot capacity of 5,200 cars, Southdale was the first enclosed regional shopping center in the nation.[275] *Minneapolis Tribune* surveys in 1957 and 1959 reveal that Southdale attracted forty-seven percent and forty-six percent of suburban shoppers within a two-month period prior to each year. With the exception of Knollwood, which also drew forty-six percent of suburban women in 1959, Southdale had the highest percentages of any shopping center. Southdale also had the highest percentages of suburban women who visited the center within the year preceding the survey – sixty-two percent in 1957 and seventy-two percent in 1959. Knollwood was Southdale's closest competitor, drawing fifty-eight percent of suburban women in 1957

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[272] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Minneapolis Metropolitan Shopping Areas*, 11 – 12; "Multi-Million Question," *SLPD,* August 11, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[273] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Business: 1958*, vol. 2, bk. 1, *Retail Trade – Area Statistics*, 23-10 – 23 – 11.

[274] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 4 – 5.

[275] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 4 -5; "Southdale Center: The First Indoor Shopping Mall: Overview."

and sixty-one percent in 1959. In comparison, Miracle Mile attracted forty-nine percent (1957) and thirty-five percent (1957), Texa-Tonka attracted fifteen percent (1957) and three percent (1959), Westwood attracted eight percent (1957) and less than one percent (1959), and Lilac Way attracted thirteen percent (1957) and less than one percent (1959).[276]

In addition to Southdale's novelty as the first enclosed regional mall in the U.S., its prime location among the fast-growing, wealthier southwestern suburbs no doubt increased its popularity.[277] In the words of one newspaper article, Southdale was "in the very center of all highways and proposed highways serving the area south and west." The article's author states that Southdale (along with other nearby businesses) would serve "Edina, Richfield, Morningside, and South Minneapolis" and be "easily accessible to Golden Valley, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, and the entire suburban area from Minnetonka to St. Paul."[278] Thus, it seems logical that Southdale may have taken the business of shoppers who otherwise would have frequented Hopkins.

Data for Knollwood's impact on Hopkins is slightly more concrete. In a survey conducted in 1956 by the *Minneapolis Tribune*, the license plate numbers of Knollwood Plaza shoppers were recorded at three different points during the year, and then matched with car registrations to ascertain the shoppers' residences. The survey found that over half (fifty-five percent) of all shoppers were from places outside Hopkins and St. Louis Park, including twenty-five percent from Minneapolis. However, between fifteen percent and seventeen percent of the center's patrons were from Hopkins, and about thirty

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[276] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Second Report on the Shopping Habits of Hennepin County (Minneapolis) Women* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: [1959?]), 3.

[277] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth*, 3, 9.

[278] "A Modern Suburban Shopping Center Area: Southdale Center," *SLPD,* June 26, 1952, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 12, 1952 – July 23, 1953," MNHS.

percent were from St. Louis Park.[279] There is no way to ascertain exactly how many of these patrons would have otherwise conducted their shopping in Hopkins, but the fact that nearly fifty percent of Knollwood shoppers in 1956 were local area residents (and the fact that Knollwood was only five minutes away from the Hopkins main street) suggests that Knollwood influenced retail sales in Hopkins.[280]

Evidence for the impact of larger shopping centers on suburban retail can also be obtained by analyzing the retail strategies employed by Hopkins merchants in 1954 and 1955. At this point, plans for Southdale and Knollwood had already been announced; Knollwood was constructed by the end of August, 1955. Thus the actions of Hopkins' merchants were motivated probably not only by the previous development of neighborhood and community shopping centers but also by the competition posed by the new (or soon to open) regional shopping centers.[281]

In 1954 and 1955, Hopkins businessmen were sufficiently worried about shopping centers to adopt some of these centers' innovations. A 1954 article in the *Dispatch* stated that Hopkins businessmen "remain[ed] abreast of new things, modern trends, to compete aggressively and imaginatively with new, spacious shopping centers." One such "modern trend" was the addition of off-street parking lots to downtown Hopkins. The author pointed out that "more than $70,000 has been invested in off-street parking lots in downtown Hopkins this year, in the belief that the 1954 customer will

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[279] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind*, 33 – 34.

[280] "Suburban Merchants Under The Guns," *SLPD,* October 29, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch, Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS.

[281] "Suburbia Welcome's Dayton's," *SLPD,* June 26, 1952, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 12, 1952 – July 23, 1953," MNHS; "Suburban Merchants Under the Guns," *SLPD,* October 29, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS; "Thousands At Knollwood Opener; Big Center to Pay Gigantic Tax Bill," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 1, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

shop if he can park near the stores he frequents."[282] Hopkins merchants also pooled their resources to update the road facilities downtown, possibly in an attempt to imitate the new look of recently constructed shopping centers. According to the *Dispatch,* in June of 1954 Hopkins was "undertaking the most extensive, expensive "brightening" in its history, again to modernize the street so it will be second to none in beauty, services and customer conveniences."[283] This modernization included the "installation of new sidewalks, curb[s], gutter[s] and street lights."[284]

Hopkins businessmen also combated the competition posed by shopping centers by cooperating on at least a handful of promotional events.[285] For example, in August 1955, Hopkins businesses advertised a main street promotional event called "Dollar Days." An advertisement for the event in the *Dispatch* read:

> PARK ANYWHERE – METERS COVERED ALL 3 DAYS
> BIG SPACIOUS FREE MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT
> BRILLIANTLY LIGHTED STREETS
> MARVELOUS SHOPPING FACILITIES
> AIR CONDITIONED STORES
> QUALITY
> SELECTION
> VALUES[286]

Another ad for 1954 Dollar Days proclaimed: "FREE PARKING AND LOTS OF IT!" "Meters Covered all 3 Days;" "Big, New Lots To Use;" "Department Store Facilities;"

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[282] Ken Wakershauser, "Dollar Days in Hopkins Start," *SLPD,* June 10, 1954, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[283] "Hopkins "Offers Everything" To Shopper, Dollar Days Committee Heads Declare," *SLPD,* June 10, 1954, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[284] "Hopkins Street Program Moves Ahead," *SLPD,* July 15, 1954, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[285] "Knollwood Plaza Opens," *SLPD,* August 18, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[286] "Bargain Extra" (advertisement), *SLPD,* August 18, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

and " 'It's More Fun to Shop On Main Street in Hopkins.'"[287] These ads show the desire to attract shoppers through cooperative measures as well as to accommodate motorists by providing free parking. The comparison of Hopkins' main street to "a complete, time-testing [sic], gigantic shopping center," combined with the mention of "department store facilities," suggests that Hopkins businessmen believed that shoppers would be more inclined to visit Hopkins if they saw it as the equivalent to a regional shopping center.[288]

The responses of suburban residents (as expressed in the *Dispatch*) to the development of regional shopping centers also betray some apprehension about the impact of these larger centers on suburban retail. One editorial in the *St. Louis Park Dispatch* in 1953 warned of the dangers that large shopping centers posed to suburban merchants. In an article entitled "Suburban Merchants Under the Guns," the author argued that "new super shopping centers, complete with their new-fangled merchandising gimmicks and their acres and acres of FREE PARKING space" were threatening small suburban merchants not located in these centers. Pointing to Southdale Shopping Center and Knollwood Plaza, both still in the planning stages, the author stated

> The very lives of St. Louis Park, Edina, Richfield and Hopkins merchants are threatened. Does any suburban merchant suppose for one minute he can keep a single shopper of the suburbs away from these super shopping centers, once they open for business? Do the small merchants of the suburbs believe that home-town loyalty will ever cause the housewives of Hopkins, Park and Edina to keep on trading with them – or stop them from taking their patronage and pocket books to the nearby shopping centers once they open their doors for business?

What could small merchants do to stop this tide? The author argued that merchandizing, modernizing, and advertising were essential strategies. Moreover, the author urged

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[287] "Bargain Extra Hopkins Dollar Days Section" (advertisement), *SLPD,* June 10, 1954, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

[288] "Hopkins "Offers Everything" To Shopper, Dollar Days Committee Heads Declare," *SLPD,* June 10, 1954, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

Hopkins to construct more parking space, warning that if nothing was done, Hopkins' main street might "one day [be] reduced to the status of an emergency trading spot – a place where people go on Sundays and holidays and after hours to pick up that odd bottle of milk, can of beer, pack of cigarets [sic] or loaf of bread".[289]

Other *Dispatch* writers concluded that large shopping centers would actually help freestanding suburban retail. In an editorial following the announcement of the impending construction of Southdale, one author argued that Southdale would help existing businesses in the southwestern suburbs by drawing traffic from other metro areas. "The few calamity Johns to the contrary," the author stated, "Southdale Center will not mark the beginning of the end of the ordinary retailer of Richfield, Edina, Hopkins, South Minneapolis and St. Louis Park."[290] This was also the view of Russell Fernstrom, the mayor of St. Louis Park, who believed that Knollwood Shopping Center would provide St. Louis Park with "additional employment, new payrolls and higher volume of retail business."[291]

Yet another opinion was that the impact of Knollwood on local businesses would be mixed. An anonymous editorial dated August 1955 summarized the concern about Knollwood Plaza's impact on established suburban businesses this way: "Would Knollwood, with its $7,000,000 worth of modern retail facilities, squeeze the old timers out of business? Would it divert established channels of trade to the point where other suburban retail areas would become ghost towns?" This author contends that Knollwood would both help and hurt existing retail, stating that this outcome "has been the history in

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[289] "Suburban Merchants Under the Guns," *SLPD,* October 29, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS.

[290] "Suburbia Welcomes Dayton's," *SLPD,* June 26, 1952, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 12, 1952 – July 23, 1953," MNHS.

[291] "Humphrey, Freeman To Help Queen 'Open Plaza,'" *SLPD,* August 18, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

other metropolitan areas." "Some old timers will be hurt," the author states, "but they'll be hurt only because they can't adjust themselves to modern merchandising methods...Others will benefit from the added flow of traffic, from the new interest in suburban shopping facilities Knollwood Plaza will bring to this area." In other words, only the retailers who could adjust to new retailing techniques would be able to survive this new competition. The author points to a "back-to-school" promotional event organized by Hopkins businesses, stating that it was "the kind of cooperative promotion that has paid big dividends in the past and will continue to pay off in the future." The article also mentions a fall sale at Miracle Mile and a "business program" at Park Circle (a collection of businesses grouped at the intersection of Minnetonka Blvd. and Hwy. 7), implying that businesses that worked together had a better chance of thriving in this competitive market. Like the author of the 1953 editorial, the author of this article also implied that businesses needed to adopt "new sales and promotion techniques" in order to succeed.[292]

As discussed previously, 1958 census data indicates that the "calamity Johns" were at least partially correct in their predictions, since retail sales in Hopkins would fall behind those of the Park by that date. Whatever the effects of regional shopping centers, it is more significant that the newspaper articles and editorials discussed in this section were written *after* plans for Knollwood and Southdale had been announced, and some were even written as direct responses to the proposed development of those centers. This suggests that smaller shopping centers such as Miracle Mile, Texa-Tonka, Lilac Way, or

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[292] "Knollwood Plaza Opens," *SLPD*, August 18, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; "Be a Wise Shopper Do Your Buying at the St. Louis Park Circle" (advertisement), *SLPD,* August 18, 1955, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS.

Westwood did not worry suburban merchants as much as their larger counterparts. Furthermore, this conclusion echoes what other authors have argued about regional centers and the decentralization of retail. Not only did larger shopping centers have a greater impact on the decentralization of retail from downtown areas, but they also had a greater impact on older forms of retail already located in the suburbs. In other words, it was these centers, rather than neighborhood and community shopping centers, that placed suburban merchants "under the guns."

CONCLUSION

Given that neighborhood and community shopping centers in St. Louis Park did not have an immediate, distinguishable impact on other forms of suburban retail, it may be tempting to dismiss these centers as insignificant. Shopping centers in St. Louis Park were not substantially different from other centers in the United States in their locations, layouts, designs, and tenants; this too could be interpreted as an argument for insignificance. The conclusions of this thesis have complemented, rather than contradicted, the current historiography of shopping centers, a historiography which has viewed regional shopping centers as more effective at altering retail patterns than their smaller counterparts.

However, this does not mean that the neighborhood and community shopping centers developed in the Park were, or are, insignificant. Within the Minneapolis metropolitan area, St. Louis Park was a leader in shopping center development, developing both the earliest and largest shopping centers in the area by 1955. Moreover, the five Park shopping centers constructed between 1941 and 1955 demonstrated the evolution of the type during the 1940s and 1950s. These facts make Park shopping centers important in their own right. More broadly, neighborhood and community shopping centers remain in suburbs across the U.S. to the present day. While they may not have initiated radical, immediate change in suburban shopping patterns when they first appeared in postwar suburbs, their continued presence indicates the staying power of the small shopping center. Indeed, what was "a new species" of retail in 1950 has become an established feature of the American landscape.

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APPENDIX: PROPERTY EVALUATION OF MIRACLE MILE SHOPPING CENTER, ST. LOUIS PARK, MINNESOTA

Miracle Mile Shopping Center
5201 Excelsior Blvd., St. Louis Park, Minnesota 55416
HE-SLC-1096
Property Evaluation
Lauren Anderson
Advisor: Ginny Way, National Register Architectural Historian, Minnesota Historical Society
May 2017

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DESCRIPTION

Miracle Mile Shopping Center (Miracle Mile) is located at 5201 Excelsior Blvd. in the city of St. Louis Park, Minnesota.[1] Miracle Mile is situated in the southeast portion of St. Louis Park near the southeast corner of the intersection of Highway 100 and Excelsior Blvd. The center is part of a string of commercial development that stretches along Excelsior Boulevard both east and west of highway 100.[2] To the north of the shopping center, across Excelsior Blvd., there are several commercial buildings and a large medical center. On its south and east sides, the shopping center is surrounded by residential development. The west side of the shopping center directly abuts Wooddale Ave.; Highway 100 is located a couple of blocks to the west. A front parking lot wraps around the east side of the building and extends in a thin strip along the building's rear. Two additional buildings (both restaurants) are located within the northeast corner of this parking lot.

St. Louis Park, a suburb of Minneapolis, consists of approximately eleven square miles of land. Its eastern border is adjacent to the western border of Minneapolis, and its remaining borders abut other suburbs – Golden Valley to the north, Minnetonka to the west, Hopkins to the west and south, and Edina to the south. Founded in 1886, the village of St. Louis Park experienced enormous growth following World War II, one of several "first-ring" suburbs surrounding the Twin Cities proper that experienced similar growth during the postwar era. It was classified as a city in 1954, and currently has a population of 47,000.[3]

Miracle Mile Shopping Center, constructed between 1950 and 1953, is a one-and-two story rectangular building set behind a forecourt of parking. A wooden fence runs along the south and east sides of the shopping center parking lot, separating the center from residential development to the south and other commercial development to the east. The center is divided into three distinct sections: the eastern two-story section with 7 storefronts (including the entrance to the eastern section second-story offices), the central one-story section with 12 storefronts, and the western one- and two-story section, with 1 primary storefront and 1 entrance to the western section second-story offices. The building has a flat roof, and its façade is composed primarily of stone, brick, wood, and EIFS (exterior insulation and finish systems) wall cladding.[4]

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[1] "Property information search result," Hennepin County, accessed March 22, 2017, http://www16.co.hennepin.mn.us/pins/addrresult.jsp.

[2] Community Development Department, City of St. Louis Park, "Official Zoning Map," revised December 12, 2016, accessed April 24, 2017, https://www.stlouispark.org/webfiles/file/maps/zoning_map.pdf.

[3] Jodi Larson, Kyle Engelking and Kren Majewicz, *The Story of the Suburbs in Anoka and Hennepin Counties* (Anoka, MN: Anoka County Historical Society, 2011), 17 - 18; Judith Poseley, *The Park: A History of the City of St. Louis Park* (St. Louis Park, MN: 1976), 10, 40 – 42, 46; "St. Louis Park – Centrally Located and Business Friendly," City of St. Louis Park, October 6, 2016, accessed February 25, 2017, https://www.stlouispark.org/community-profile.html.

[4] Building permit no. 8321, July 20, 1950, microfiche sheet "5021 Excelsior Blvd. 1," Inspections Department, City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota (hereafter cited as SLPID); "Miracle Mile Addition Is Nearly Ready," *Saint Louis Park Dispatch* (hereafter cited as *SLPD*), October 15, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis

The Eastern and Central Sections

A covered front walkway runs the length of the eastern and center facades. The walkway has a pitched, metal roof designed to imitate clay tile and is supported by coursed rubble pillars. The underside of the walkway roof features exposed wooden rafters. Hanging from these rafters, perpendicular to the storefronts, are signs bearing the names of store tenants. Names of store tenants are also affixed to the wood fascia of the walkway roof, facing the parking lot. Three shed-roof dormers, spaced across the eastern and central facades and raised above the typical roofline, project beyond the canopy and emphasize three particular storefronts, creating open-air vestibules in front of the canopy-covered walkway. Aerial photos and building permits suggest that these dormers, as well as the shopping center canopy, were constructed during the center's 1980 remodel.[5]

Storefronts in the eastern and central sections are dominated by large display windows with black, anodized aluminum frames. On most storefronts, brick bulkheads and walls surround the fenestration, while the upper portions of the wall (above the doors and windows) are composed of EIFS. Most doors are single glass doors with black aluminum frames and have transom windows, also with black aluminum frames. There is, however, some variation in storefront design. Some storefronts have double doors, sidelights, and/or bulkheads and walls made of materials besides brick (such as stone or EIFS).

While united by the covered walkway, the eastern and central sections are differentiated from each other by their height. The eastern section of the shopping center is composed of one and two stories. The second story of the eastern section is constructed in a "U" shape. The bottom of the "U" is a wall (apparently constructed of EIFS) that faces the front (north) elevation of the shopping center. This elevation contains a row of single pane windows that overlook the front walkway roof. The eastern elevation of the eastern section also appears to be composed of EIFS, with nine single-pane windows set in the second story. One of the three shed-roof dormers mentioned previously is located on the front (north) elevation of the eastern section. Underneath this dormer is the entrance to the eastern section's second story offices, as well as five second-story windows.

From the rear of the eastern section, the "U" shape of the second story is visible. The exterior walls that make up the inside of this "U" appear to be composed of brick and EIFS. Clerestory windows line these walls and overlook the first story roof in the center of the "U". On the rear (south) elevation of the eastern section, there are nine metal doors and two glass doors on the first story, and six windows of various sizes on the first and

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Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota (hereafter cited as MNHS).

[5] Aerial photographs of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, 1979 and 1991, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer; Aerial photograph of Miracle Mile Shopping Center, April 25, 1999, Section 22 Aerial Maps and Photographs, SLPHS; Building permit no. 15483, May 20, 1980, microfiche sheet "MIRALCE MILE GENERAL BLDG. 1," SLPID. When this canopy was constructed in 1980, it stretched across the entire shopping center to the western edge of the western section. By 1991, there was also a fourth dormer at the western end of the western section. This dormer (as well as the western section's portion of the canopy) was removed by 2008.

second story facades. The western elevation of the second story (the elevation overlooking the central section of the shopping center) contains another clerestory.

The central section of the shopping center is composed of one story rather than two. Two of the shed-roof dormers mentioned previously are located on the front façade of this section. The rear (south) elevation of the central section is composed of painted brick and concrete blocks. The fenestration includes seventeen single doors, one double door, and one overhead door, most of which appear to be metal, as well as two 24-pane windows and one single pane window. There are also three concrete block enclosures attached to the rear of the central section, as well as a fourth concrete block enclosure with a roof; all of these enclosures include doors and gates.[6] A rectangular addition was added to the central and western sections of the shopping center sometime between May 1956 and May 1960. This addition filled in a recessed portion on the rear of the shopping center, and was probably installed during a 1956 remodel.[7]

The Western Section

The western section of the center, occupied by Hoigaards, is distinguished from the rest of the shopping center by its large size, irregular storefront, and tower, as well as by the absence of a covered walkway along its front façade. A tower with a steeply pitched, pyramidal roof and a front-facing gable dormer stands at the northwest corner of the unit. The word "Hoigaards" appears on the front façade of the tower, which is connected to the main building by a small covered walkway/ramp on the south side of the tower. The base of the tower has four arches, one on each side of the tower, which enable access to the tower's interior. However, the interior is currently used for storage and each arch is blocked off with a thin metal fence. This tower was mostly likely constructed during a 2007 remodel of Miracle Mile.[8]

The façade of the Hoigaards unit consists of a commercial storefront system covered by an awning and flanked by two large coursed rubble pilasters with wooden capitals. The wall above the awning is covered in wood siding. The remainder of the storefront in the western section is composed of two stories. On the first story, there are display windows with bulkheads and walls of coursed rubble stone. Also located on this façade is a single, glass door with sidelights; this door leads to second-story offices and is covered by an awning. In addition, a wooden pergola with a retractable awning extends over a portion of the front walkway. The second-story of this elevation is composed of EIFS and contains two sections of strip windows, as well as one single-pane window. All doors and windows on this façade have black, anodized aluminum frames.

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[6] Aerial photograph of Miracle Mile Shopping Center, April 25, 1999, Section 22 Aerial Maps and Photographs, SLPHS. These enclosures are mostly likely the ones constructed as part of Miracle Mile's 1980 remodel.

[7] Mark Hurd Aerial Services Inc., aerial photograph of Miracle Mile, May, 1960, Section 22 Aerial Maps and Photographs, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, MN (hereafter cited as SLPHS); Aerial photograph of Miracle Mile, May 7, 1956, Section 22 Aerial Maps and Photographs, SLPHS; Building permit no. 14537, May 25, 1956, microfiche sheet "5401 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLP ID).

[8] Building permit no. SL150690, applied date: 7/27/2006, address: 5425 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota (hereafter cited as Epermits), accessed April 26, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

The western elevation of the western section (the elevation fronting Wooddale Ave.) contains six groups of large single-pane square windows in its first and second stories, as well as three other windows. Awnings cover the first-story windows. Most of the western elevation appears to be composed of EIFS. An addition constructed of EIFS and concrete block was added to the southern (rear) elevation of the western section sometime between 2006 and 2009; most likely, this took place in 2006 as part of Hoigaard's renovation of the western section.[9] The western elevation of this addition contains another entrance to the building, a single glass door with a sidelight. A concrete ramp and a set of concrete stairs lead to this entrance, which is covered by an awning.

On the south (rear) elevation of this 2006 addition, there is one grouping of three windows with black aluminum frames covered by an awning. The addition also contains one metal door and three overhead doors, three of which are inset into the east elevations of the addition, and one of which is inset into the south elevation. One of these, a loading dock, is accessible by means of a descending ramp.

The second story of the western section's southern (rear) elevation appears to be composed of EIFS. There is one window on the south elevation of the second story. In addition, there are five clerestory windows on the eastern elevation of the second story; this elevation overlooks the central section of the shopping center.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Neighborhood and Community Shopping Centers

Before the 1920s, the term "shopping center" simply referred to a concentration of businesses, whether a collection of downtown shops or a group of neighborhood stores. After 1920, however, the term began to refer to a collection of businesses located in a complex owned by a single party, in which physical design and tenant selection were managed carefully to create a commercial outlet that catered to a specific audience. This definition was solidified by the end of World War II. [10] By the early 1950s, changes in

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[9] Aerial photographs of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, 2006, 2008, and 2009, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer; Building permit no. SL148958, applied date: June 2, 2006, address: 5425 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl. The description for this permit describes the project, valued at 1 million dollars, as an "addition/remodel."

[10] Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920 – 1950* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), 145 – 146; Richard Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center in Washington, D.C., 1930-1941," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51, no. 1 (March 1992): 6n3, accessed July 26, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/990638; Meredith Clausen, "Northgate Regional Shopping Center-Paradigm from the Provinces," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 43, no. 2 (May, 1984): 146, accessed July 27, 2016, http://www.jstor.org.proxy.uwec.edu/stable/989902. Architectural historian Meredith Clausen provides a slightly different definition of the shopping center than Longstreth. She states that a shopping center is "a group of commercial establishments under a single ownership, planned, developed, and managed as a single unit, with off-street parking provided, and related to the area it serves in the size and type of its stores. Wholly planned and controlled, it differs thus from an ordinary retail street or district where

shopping center development led to a classification of three different types of shopping centers: neighborhood, community, and regional. According to Clausen,

> three basic types were defined, based on size and scope of merchandise: the small neighborhood center on a 5- to 10-acre lot, with ten to 15 stores clustered around a supermarket and drugstore, and offering convenience goods and services to the immediate neighborhood; the somewhat larger community center on 20 to 25 acres, with 20 to 40 stores anchored by a junior department store and providing a broader coverage of merchandise; and the large-scale regional center on 35 or more acres, with 50 to 100 or more stores, including at least one major department store, and offering a full representation of stores and services.[11]

The emergence of neighborhood, community, and regional postwar shopping centers was a gradual process that occurred over multiple decades.[12] The origins of the shopping center lie in the late nineteenth century, when the rise of the electric streetcar prompted centrifugal movement of residential and commercial development from the central city to outlying areas.[13] As cities spread out across the landscape in the second half of the 1800s, contractors constructed comprehensively planned subdivisions and resort towns for the well-to-do. Accompanying some of these wealthy residential areas were store blocks featuring elaborate designs and a "quasi-domestic character."[14] These blocks were anchored by a market and contained between five and ten stores chosen to provide for customers' daily needs.[15] Late-nineteenth century attitudes held that commercial development was best located away from residential neighborhoods, but these centers proved that commercial buildings could be an asset, rather than an eyesore, to a residential community.[16]

After World War I, comprehensively planned communities became increasingly trendy as wealthy citizens sought a refugee from the haphazard growth fostered by the automobile, leading to a rise in the number of these neighborhood store blocks. Increasing automobile use in the 1920s also enabled well-to-do residents in previously isolated subdivisions to travel easily to other nearby retail development, such as the Main Streets of nearby towns or the commercial strips constructed along nearby highways. Store blocks began to function as not simply assets to residential communities, but as competition to nearby retail nodes, increasing their number of tenants and striving to

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independently owned stores are simply concentrated." Clausen, "Northgate Regional Shopping Center," 146. Longstreth, however, implies that off-street parking does not define the type, stating that some early examples of shopping centers did not provide off-street parking.

[11] Clausen, "Northgate Regional Shopping Center," 147.

[12] Richard Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center during the Interwar Decades," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 268 - 293, accessed July 26, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/991242; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 6.

[13] Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 10 – 12.

[14] Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 11; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 9 – 10.

[15] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268.

[16] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 8 – 9.

provide the blend of services and goods necessary to attract more customers.[17] According to architectural historian Richard Longstreth, "it was this more or less "complete" package of basic stores, selling food, pharmaceuticals, and other supplies...that emerged as a distinct type, the neighborhood shopping center."[18]

The increase in planned residential development just before and after World War I was also accompanied by the construction of larger shopping complexes containing multiple buildings. Experimental in nature, the larger complexes developed during the interwar period did not adhere to a dominant pattern, differing from each other (according to Longstreth) in "size, layout, expressive qualities, location, and, to a certain degree, in tenant mix."[19] Some incorporated off-street parking lots, while others limited parking to the curb; other centers included both forms of parking.[20] In general, these complexes suffered from a shortage of parking.[21] Although these larger interwar centers differed from postwar community shopping centers, Longstreth states that they represent the first community shopping centers and "proved crucial...to demonstrating the efficacy of integrated business development on a large scale."[22] In addition to offering more convenience goods, these community shopping centers provided specialty goods and a broader range of services to a larger target population than the smaller neighborhood centers.[23] In addition, community centers designed during the interwar era were often elaborate, and most "projected a highly idealized image of a preindustrial village."[24]

Neighborhood shopping centers constructed in the 1920s, while unique in comparison to other forms of early twentieth-century commercial development, also differed from their postwar counterparts. Unlike the unplanned commercial development found along streetcar lines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (referred to as "taxpayer" strips), the first neighborhood shopping centers developed in the 1920s functioned as integrated facilities. In addition, almost all of these centers were included in planned residential developments.[25] However, neighborhood centers retained the basic form used by the unplanned taxpayer strips - buildings abutted the sidewalk and parking space was often limited to the curb.[26]

The construction of the Park and Shop shopping center in Washington, D.C., in 1930 represented a notable change in the basic form of neighborhood centers. The Park and Shop catered to shoppers with automobiles by including a large forecourt of parking. More than simply accommodating the automobile, the Park and Shop's parking lot determined the arrangement of the entire site. Unlike earlier neighborhood shopping centers, the facility was *not* part of a planned residential subdivision or separated from

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[17] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 9 – 10; Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In, The Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914 – 1941* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 133; Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 26 – 27.

[18] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 10.

[19] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268, 273, 287.

[20] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 270 – 287.

[21] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 287.

[22] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 269, 273, 287, 289.

[23] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268 – 270, 273.

[24] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 269, 289.

[25] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 133, 136; Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268 - 270; Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile,* 12.

[26] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 133 - 136.

other commercial development, but was developed to service both the old and new developments surrounding it.[27] Positioned on a corner lot along a major thoroughfare, the center catered to motorists traveling from the city center to outlying areas. Its tenants included two chain markets, a bakery, a chocolate shop, a delicatessen/restaurant, a hardware store, a drugstore, a laundry call station, a beauty salon, a barbershop, and an automobile service facility. Its exterior was unified, and, like earlier neighborhood shopping centers, it lacked conspicuous signage.[28]

While the Park and Shop's size and store types were largely borrowed from earlier neighborhood shopping centers, its "siting, layout, and appearance" were borrowed from the drive-in market.[29] Longstreth states that Los Angeles' drive-in markets, developed in outlying areas of the city in the 1920s, were the "first retail facilities not devoted to car service itself to have their form and space fundamentally reorganized for the motorist's convenience."[30] Developed partially in response to new conditions fostered by the automobile and competition among food retailers, these structures capitalized on the desire of Los Angeles residents for convenience and wide merchandise selection. Drive-in markets were generally laid out in an "L-shaped" pattern and located on the corner of an intersection on a busy arterial road, "on the homeward-bound side of commuter routes." They included forecourts of parking separated from the street and were composed of a "loosely integrated organization" of tenants. In contrast to the monotony of taxpayer strips, drive-in markets were usually designed to emphasize either the corner of the "L-shaped" building or the ends of the structure. This design served to "enhance the market's attraction to the eye and underscore its function as a unified entity." Advertising was limited and unified. Finally, most markets contained between four and six food departments operated by different food retailers, and many added one or two non-food units such as flower shops, drug stores, cafes, and laundry call stations, as well as a filling station.[31] The Park and Shop thus combined the characteristics of drive-in market with the characteristics of earlier neighborhood shopping centers to form a significant new paradigm for the shopping center, one that included off-street parking and independence from a single residential tract.[32]

Although Washington D.C. contained the most examples, by 1941 many cities had their own neighborhood shopping centers, most constructed between 1939 and 1941 and largely patterned after the Park and Shop. Spurred on by the competitive value of combining off-street parking with an "integrated business structure," the drive-in shopping center was recognized as "a significant new trend in the field" by 1941.[33] After World War II, the shortage of commercial businesses in newly developed outlying residential areas and the flexibility of existing zoning laws, combined with the advantages of "integrated business development," contributed to the shopping center's

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[27] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 11.

[28] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 11, 12, 14.

[29] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 14. The exception to this is the automobile service facility, which was not found in earlier neighborhood shopping centers.

[30] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* xv – xvi, 33- 37, 46; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 14. Longstreth states that these drive-in markets were themselves patterned off of super service stations – see chapter 1 of *The Drive-In* for more details.

[31] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 33 – 54.

[32] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 7.

[33] Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 158 – 159.

ascendancy. Before World War II, centers constructed in certain regions of the U.S. had differed from the Park and Shop model in areas such as parking and storefront design. After the war, however, the forecourt of parking and a unified façade became standard, as developers realized the advantages of a front parking lot and a unified appearance in attracting trade. By the early 1950s, hundreds of neighborhood centers "could be found in urban areas of almost every size throughout the country."[34]

After World War II, community shopping centers also sprouted up in large numbers, changing quickly and drastically from their interwar-era forms.[35] As supermarkets located in these centers during the 1950s, community centers increased in size, with larger stores, more stores, and more parking spaces. In addition, department stores and chain variety and clothing stores became important tenants.[36] In the postwar era, developers of community shopping centers no longer valued uniqueness and aesthetic appeal. Rather, the centers' designs were characterized by uniformity and utility.[37]

The growing popularity of shopping centers in the postwar era was reflected in the subject matter of the 1948 Urban Land Institute's *The Community Builders Handbook.* The guidebook, designed to educate young professionals entering the field of community development, laid out a series of best practices for shopping center design in its 1948 edition. These included recommendations that builders incorporate large front display windows, avoid entrance steps or ramps and offset storefronts, and, in some cases, include canopies in their shopping centers.[38] The handbook encouraged "simple design along modern lines" and a "greater reliance…on proportion and form rather than embellishment." Although the handbook specifically condemned "the indiscriminate use of signs," this modern, simple architectural style prompted some developers to encourage the use of flashy, uncoordinated signage to draw the motorists' gaze to the shopping center.[39]

In his master's thesis, Matthew Manning (a graduate of the University of Georgia's historic preservation program), provides a succinct list of characteristics of postwar shopping centers. Although Manning uses the term "strip malls" to describe this building type, it seems that many, if not all, community and neighborhood shopping centers would fit the descriptions outlined on the list. Manning states that

> "by the end of the 1950s, the strip mall was a uniquely recognizable and ubiquitous form of commercial development. The defining characteristics of the typical strip mall lay not just in the building alone, but also in the collection of parts that comprised the space between building and highway. Certain patterns

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[34] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32; Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 162.

[35] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 268, 287, 289; Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32.

[36] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 289; Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 162 – 163.

[37] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 289.

[38] Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute, *The Community Builders Handbook,* rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1948), vii – ix, 157 – 158.

[39] Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute, *The Community Builders Handbook,* vii – ix, 157; Matthew Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls" (master's thesis, University of Georgia, 2009), 33 – 37, accessed April 7, 2017, https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/manning_matthew_j_200908_mhp.pdf.

and forms were present in the strip mall that distinguished it from other commercial typologies:

- Single Ownership or Control
- Designed and Built as a Planned Unit
- Linear Arrangement of Building(s) (straight, curved, or angled)
- Single Story
- Building(s) Set Back from Public Road or Right-of-Way
- Primary Parking between Building(s) and Road
- Minimum 3:1 Ratio of Parking Area to Building Area
- Single Front Facade Facing Parking
- Separate Rear Service Access
- Storefront Entrances Directly Accessible from Parking Area
- Covered Sidewalk along Storefronts (canopy, awning, arcade, etc.)
- Spaces for Multiple Tenants with Partition Walls between Stores
- Flexible Interior Space Customizable by Tenants
- Individual Exterior Signage for Each Storefront
- Signage Visible from Passing Vehicles [40]

By the mid-1950s, neighborhood centers were struggling to compete with community centers, which prospered due to the increasing demand for commodities in outlying areas, the desire for larger parking lots and bigger stores, and relatively low prices for large areas of land.[41] Shopping centers continued to increase in size with the introduction of the regional shopping center around 1949. Cameron Village in North Carolina, Northgate in Washington, and Shoppers World in Massachusetts were three of the earliest centers of this type. Each had over thirty stores (including one or two department stores and supermarkets) and a total square footage of over 300,000 feet. Regional centers, in contrast to neighborhood and community centers, were designed to compete with downtown retailing. As late as 1955, however, these large centers were still relatively rare, with less than two dozen in existence.[42]

In the mid-1950s, a combination of changes in the federal tax code, cheap land on the outskirts of cities, loose government zoning restrictions, and the greater convenience and amenities of regional centers (as compared to downtown) contributed to an increase in the number of regional centers. The federal government's subsidy of automobile travel through low gas taxes and the creation of the federal highway system also played a role in the type's ascendency.[43] The world's first enclosed shopping center, Southdale Shopping Center, opened as a regional shopping center in Minnesota in 1956, symbolizing this new phase in shopping center development.[44]

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[40] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 39.

[41] Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center," 32.

[42] Thomas Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy and the Shopping-Center Boom of the 1950s and 1960s," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996): 1090 - 1091, accessed August 2, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2169635; Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro, *Shopping Centers: Design and Operation* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1951), 10.

[43] Kenneth Jackson, "All the World's a Mall: Reflections on the Social and Economic Consequences of the American Shopping Center," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (Oct., 1996): 1115-1116, accessed July 10, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2169636.

[44] Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy," 1097.

Shopping Centers in the Twin Cities

By 1940, developers in the Twin Cities were constructing shopping centers that catered specifically to motorists.[45] According to architectural historian Larry Millet, the likely candidate for the first "drive-up, suburban-style shopping mall...opened in St. Paul's still-developing Highland neighborhood" in 1939. Named the Highland Village Shopping Center, it contained a supermarket, drug store, and other retail establishments, and appears to have been a neighborhood center.[46] After World War II, many of these suburban shopping centers were built at the intersections of suburban roads in the metropolitan area. Similar to the placement of the Park and Shop, the first wave of these auto-oriented centers sprang up "at traffic intersections and in strips along well-traveled streets," mimicking the development patterns of the streetcar era. As a result, suburban shoppers patronizing these centers had to contend with congested intersections, as well as a shortage of parking.[47]

The first phase of postwar shopping center development was also inadequate to meet the needs of the exploding suburban population.[48] In Minnesota, suburban developers usually did not include planned commercial districts in their residential developments, which contributed to a shortage of shopping opportunities for suburbanites.[49] Furthermore, the rapid pace of residential construction led to an imbalance in the ratio of retailing and residents.[50] According to Richfield historian Frederick Johnson, the "downtown districts of both Minneapolis and St. Paul still dominated the retail shopping scene in 1950," as did many other downtowns nationwide.[51]

Consistent with national trends, shopping center development before the mid-1950s in the Twin Cities was largely limited to neighborhood and community centers. As the population of outlying areas increased in the 1950s, the number of these shopping

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[45] Ronald Abler, John S. Adams, and John. R. Borchert, *The Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis* (Cambridge, Mass: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1976), 33.

[46] Larry Millet, *Minnesota Modern: Architecture and Life at Midcentury* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 25; Adams and VanDrasek, Minneapolis – St. Paul, 103. Although Highland Park was a neighborhood in the city of St. Paul and thus not a separate suburban municipality, John Adams and Barbara VanDrasek refer to the community as a first-ring suburb.

[47] John S. Adams and Barbara J. VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul: People, Place, and Public Life* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 84, 109; Abler, Adams, and Borchert, *The Twin Cities,* 33; Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* 22 -23.

[48] Stephanie Atwood and Charlene K. Roise, *Brooklyn Center, Minnesota: A Historical Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Hess, Roise and Company, January 2010), 11; Stephanie K. Atwood and Charlene Roise, *Richfield, Minnesota: A Historical Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Hess, Rosie and Company, February 2010), 14; Lisa Plank and Thomas Saylor, "Constructing Suburbia: Richfield in the Postwar Era," *Minnesota History* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 53, accessed June 8, 2016, http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/61/v61i02p048-061.pdf.

[49] Rebecca Lou Smith, *Postwar Housing in National and Local Perspective: A Twin Cities Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at University of Minnesota, 1978), 22; Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* 35 – 36.

[50] Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis–St. Paul,* 103.

[51] Frederick L. Johnson, *Suburban Dawn: The Emergence of Richfield, Edina and Bloomington* (Richfield, MN: Richfield Historical Society, 2009), 168; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America.* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 257 - 258.

centers also increased, especially in the fast-growing and wealthier southwestern suburbs (such as St. Louis Park, Richfield, and Bloomington). A listing of major shopping areas prepared by the Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company in the summer of 1956 revealed twenty-three existing neighborhood and community centers and one small regional center in the Minneapolis metropolitan area, with the number of stores in each center ranging from eight to thirty-four. At the time, thirteen more shopping centers, including at least two regional centers, were in the planning stages or under construction.[52] Between 1941 and 1956, five shopping centers were built in St. Louis Park: three neighborhood shopping centers, one community center, and one small regional center. Miracle Mile, the suburb's only community center, was constructed in 1951 and was in many ways a classic example of a postwar shopping center. The center's location, layout, design, and tenancy mirrored that of other shopping centers in the Twin Cities and those across the country.[53] At the same time, Miracle Mile was distinguished from the approximately two dozen shopping centers located in Hennepin County in the mid-1950s by its ability to attract shoppers from both Hennepin County suburbs and Minneapolis proper.

St. Louis Park

The village of St. Louis Park (the Park), located on the west border of Minneapolis,[54] was incorporated in 1886.[55] Developed by wealthy lumberman Thomas Barlow Walker between 1890 and 1893 as a planned industrial town, the economy of the Park shifted after the depression of 1893 from heavy to light industrial businesses, market gardening, and dairy farming. The 1920s brought about a change in how Park residents viewed their hometown. Poseley states that "as the dream of the industrial suburb ebbed, residents, who held jobs in Minneapolis in increasing numbers, began to view the Park as a residential suburb."[56] St. Louis Park was one of several "first-ring" suburbs in the metropolitan area, communities abutting the Twin Cities that experienced development as

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[52] Millet, *Minnesota Modern,* 22 – 23; Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company, 1956), 2 -10; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth in the Twin Cities Area* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: April 1, 1957), 2-7.

[53] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas,* 2 – 10; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, "Shopping Centers and Population Growth," 4-5.

[54] City of St. Louis Park, "The Metropolitan Area," City of St. Louis Park, revised January 3, 2017, accessed April 7, 2017, https://www.stlouispark.org/land-climate/the-metropolitan-area.html.

[55] Poseley, *The Park*, 10.

[56] Norman F. Thomas, *St. Louis Park: A Story of A Village,* 1952, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, MN, 94 – 109; Poseley, *The Park,* 13 – 14, 22, 30 – 31; Norman F. Thomas, "The Big Boom, 1890 – 1893," in *St. Louis Park: A Story of a Village,* 1952, SLPHS, accessed April 26, 2017, http://slphistory.org/nt-vi/; Thomas, "An Age of Troubles, 1894 – 1900," in *St. Louis Park,* SLPHS, accessed April 26, 2017, http://slphistory.org/nt-viii/. *St. Louis Park: A Story of A Village* by Norman Thomas is also available electronically through the St. Louis Park Historical Society's website. The website version of *St. Louis Park* does not contain page numbers. Thus, this footnote contains multiple references for *St. Louis Park: A Story of A Village*, since that information was derived from both the electronic and hard copy versions.

residential suburbs in the 1920s and were often serviced by streetcars.[57] A streetcar line connected St. Louis Park with Minneapolis, and residents of the Park could easily use the streetcars (as well as the railroads and several major roads that crisscrossed the Park) to commute to jobs outside the village.[58]

These convenient transportation routes may have contributed to the shortage of commercial facilities in the Park. By 1919, there were just seven retail stores in the village. Many Park residents traveled to Minneapolis and Hopkins (a village to the west of the Park) to shop, where commercial establishments were more plentiful. Bisected by several major roads and railroads, St. Louis Park had a decentralized population that divided itself between semi-autonomous neighborhoods. This geographic dispersal of people, in turn, led commerce to be decentralized and spread throughout the Park.[59]

After World War II, St. Louis Park, along with other "first-ring" suburbs, experienced a huge surge of growth as residential development followed paved roads and public sewer and water systems to areas geographically bordering the Twin Cities. To the north, south, and southwest of Minneapolis, high and medium density subdivisions expanded to Brooklyn Center, Crystal, Richfield, eastern Bloomington, St. Louis Park, and Hopkins.[60] The small lot sizes and large amount of undeveloped land in St. Louis Park made high volume construction profitable, and several of its roads – Highway 7, Excelsior Boulevard, Wayzata Boulevard, and Minnetonka Boulevard – provided direct transportation to Minneapolis.[61] The population boomed, expanding from 7,737 in 1940 to 22,644 in 1950 and 35,292 by 1954.[62] In 1953, the Park was the fourth largest community in the state.[63]

With increased residential development came commercial development, specifically along Minnetonka, Excelsior, and Wayzata boulevards.[64] The fact that St. Louis Park lacked a traditional Main Street may have encouraged the development of shopping centers in the village.[65] Lilac Way, a neighborhood shopping center constructed in 1941, was the first center to be constructed in the suburb and possibly the first

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[57] Several authors define first-ring suburbs as municipalities abutting the Twin Cities' city limits: Larson, Engelking and Majewicz, *The Story of the Suburbs,* 9; Stephanie K. Atwood and Charlene K. Roise, *A Context for Suburban Development in Hennepin County, 1870 – 1970* (Minneapolis, MN: Hess, Roise and Company, 2010), 8; Smith, *Postwar Housing in National and Local Perspective,* 17 – 19; Adams and VanDrasek, *Minneapolis – St. Paul,* 103. While the most complete definition of first-ring suburbs, offered in Larson, Engelking and Meajewicz, does not list streetcar service as a defining characteristic, streetcars served as the impetus for development for at least some of these suburbs. For example, see Saleh Van Erem, Greg Mathis, Carol Ahlgren, and David Wilcox, *Single Family Residential Development of Robbinsdale, Hennepin County, Minnesota* (St. Paul, MN: The 106 Group, October 2009), 9 – 15; Atwood and Roise, *Richfield, Minnesota,* 8; Bonnie Richter, "The Suburbs," *Architecture Minnesota* 7, no. 2 (April/May 1981): 98.

[58] Poseley, *The Park,* 31.

[59] Poseley, *The Park,* 31.

[60] Abler, Adams, and Borchert, *The Twin Cities*, 53 - 55.

[61] Poseley, *The Park,* 41 – 42.

[62] League of Women Voters, *St. Louis Park: Its Appearance and Its Future* (St. Louis Park, MN: League of Women Voters, 1956), 4; Poseley, *The Park,* 43.

[63] "This Week In The Park," *SLPD,* November 12, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS.

[64] Poseley, *The Park,* 43.

[65] Poseley, *The Park,* 43.

shopping center built outside of the Twin Cities proper.[66] Lilac Way was followed in 1951 by Miracle Mile (a community shopping center) and Texa-Tonka (a neighborhood shopping center). Westwood shopping center (another neighborhood center) opened in 1954, and Knollwood, a small regional shopping center, was built in 1955.[67]

MIRACLE MILE SHOPPING CENTER

Development: 1950 – 1956

The Miracle Mile Shopping Center (Miracle Mile) is locally significant in the area of commerce under Criterion A for its role as a community shopping center in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. In the early 1950s, it reflected national and local trends in shopping center development. At the same time, it was distinctive as a community shopping center patronized by not only residents of St. Louis Park but also those in the greater metropolitan area. Its period of significance is 1951 to 1956.

On May 10, 1950, the *St. Louis Park Dispatch* (the *Dispatch*) announced the plans of the Sheldon-Thomas Corporation to construct a shopping center at Excelsior Boulevard and Wooddale Avenue. The shopping center would be located directly across from the existing Lilac Way Shopping Center and situated near the intersection of Excelsior Boulevard and the "superhighway" known as Lilac Way (known today as the portion of Highway 100 located in St. Louis Park). Constructed between 1934 and 1941, Lilac Way was one of Minnesota's first "superhighways." Superhighways, which began to appear in the U.S. in the 1930s, were limited access highways designed for high-speed travel and constructed with multiple divided lanes, gradual slopes, and banked curves.[68] The selection of the intersection of Lilac Way and Excelsior Boulevard by the developers of Miracle Mile reflects the local and national trend of locating postwar shopping centers along main roads and at traffic intersections.

The building site (purchased from W. M. Livingston, a Minneapolis resident, and S. F. Carmean of St. Louis Park) was already zoned for commercial development with the exception of a 100-foot strip on the south side of the property; this strip was designed as a buffer for the residences that abutted the site. Construction plans for Lilac Way

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[66] "Knollwood is 13th Shopping Center In Area; Nine Others Are Planned," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 12, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, "Shopping Centers and Population Growth," 4-5; Lauren Anderson "'A New Species': Neighborhood and Community Shopping Centers in St. Louis Park, 1941 – 1956," (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2017), 41.

[67] "Knollwood is 13th Shopping Center In Area; Nine Others Are Planned," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 12, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and J.E. Hutchinson, "Shopping Centers and Population Growth," 4-5. See page ? for an explanation of Knollwood's classification as a regional center.

[68] Mead and Hunt, *Minnesota Trunk Highways (1921 – 1954): Historic Context and National Register Evaluation and Integrity Considerations* (DRAFT), revised February 2016, State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, 9.

called for "a two-block long shopping center providing a motion picture theater, commercial retail space and 12 suites of medical offices." The center would consist of "one and two-story buildings of brick and terra cotta design" and would contain "some 70,000 square feet of floor space" as well as an 180,000 square foot parking lot.[69] According to the *Dispatch* articles of subsequent weeks, the "million-dollar shopping center" would contain fourteen stores (four large establishments in the easternmost block and ten smaller stores in the western block) and the parking lot would hold approximately 400 cars. Plans also called for a heated bus station located beside Wooddale Ave.[70]

Construction by the building company Kraus Anderson Inc. began on the easternmost portion of the center (the two stores at 5015 and 5025 Excelsior) around July 20, 1950.[71] Construction began on four other units in August, and eleven units in October of the same year. M. O. Nathan was the architect for all three phases, which were estimated to cost 225,000 dollars.[72] Another building permit was issued in November 1950 for six more units, valued at 55,000 dollars.[73] In January, 1952, Kraus-Anderson obtained yet another permit to finish the second floor of the Miracle Mile building, a project the company estimated would cost 24,000 dollars.[74] An aerial photograph of the center, taken in 1953, shows that the second story was located directly over the westernmost portion of the center.[75]

By February 1952, the *Dispatch* described Miracle Mile as "a complete, one-stop shopping center made up of eighteen stores," suggesting that some of the addresses mentioned in building permits were filled with offices rather than retail businesses.[76] A 1953 aerial photograph shows Miracle Mile surrounded on its south and northeast sides by residential development. In addition, two land-use maps of St. Louis Park created in 1945 and 1956 indicate that the shopping center was situated amidst a strip of commercial development that fronted Excelsior Boulevard.[77]

The first store to open in Miracle Mile was Warner's Hardware, which opened on May 5, 1951. The one-story, red brick building was, according to the newspaper, "ultra-

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[69] "Two-Block Shopping Center Construction Set for June," *SLPD,* May 10, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS; Abler, Adams, and Borchert , *The Twin Cities,* 33.

[70] "Million Dollar Shopping Center Fate Hinges on Single Answer to Question," *SLPD,* June 21, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS, "Grants Will Open Miracle Mile Unit," *SLPD,* May 30, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS.

[71] Building permit no. 8321, July 20, 1950, microfiche sheet "5021 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[72] Building permit no. 8507, August 22, 1950, microfiche sheet "5101 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID, Minnesota; Building permit no. 8803, October 18, 1950, microfiche sheet "5201 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[73] Building permit no. 8916, November 15, 1950, microfiche sheet "5401 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[74] Building permit no. 10278, January 9, 1952, microfiche sheet "5407 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[75] Minneapolis Star Journal Tribune, *Shopping Center, aerial, St. Louis Park,* October 14, 1953, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

[76] "Merchants Form Association," *SLPD,* February 28, 1952, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS.

[77] League of Women Voters, *St. Louis Park,* 5; Poseley, *The Park,* 43; "Use District Map of the Village of St. Louis Park Minnesota," February 5, 1945, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota; Minneapolis Star Journal Tribune, *Shopping Center, aerial, St. Louis Park,* October 14, 1953, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

modern," with "larger, open-view windows across the front."[78] The W. T. Grant Co., a national chain store containing "a variety store, dry goods center, home and hardware store and a fashion shop," opened a month later. It too contained large windows - a "wide vision window" at the front of the store and display windows next to each entrance.[79]

Pictures taken in the early to mid-1950s reveal that Miracle Mile's exterior was devoid of much architectural detailing (see figures 3, 4, 5, and 6). Most storefronts in the center had large display windows. A canopy, broken in places, ran the length of the center, as did a walkway. Numerous signs in a variety of styles (including two signs mounted on pylons on the roof perpendicular to the building front) and slight variations in the height of the front wall above the canopy contributed to the center's utilitarian feel. The center contained a forecourt of parking as well as parking lots on its south (rear) and east elevations. The center's shops were accessible from the rear, but these entrances probably were intended only for store employees and owners, judging from the extremely utilitarian rear façade.[80] Miracle Mile's plain, modernist design, with its display windows, canopy, varied signage and forecourt of parking, largely imitated local and national trends in postwar shopping center development. In addition, the center displays many of Manning's characteristics of postwar strip malls. Applicable items from his list include:

- Designed and Built as a Planned Unit
- Linear Arrangement of Building(s) (straight, curved, or angled)
- Building(s) Set Back from Public Road or Right-of-Way
- Single Front Facade Facing Parking
- Separate Rear Service Access
- Storefront Entrances Directly Accessible from Parking Area
- Covered Sidewalk along Storefronts (canopy, awning, arcade, etc.)
- Individual Exterior Signage for Each Storefront
- Signage Visible from Passing Vehicles.[81]

Between May 5 and September 20, 1951, at least thirteen stores and one bank opened in the center. These included John Keefe (a clothing store for men and boys), Pink Pony (a gift store), First Federal (a bank), Kinney Shoes (a chain shoe store), Village Cleaners, Red Owl (a chain supermarket), York Stores (a national chain of women's apparel), Betz Tots-to-Teens (a store that sold children's clothing, accessories, and furniture), Snyder's Drug Store (a chain drugstore), Fanny Farmer's candy shop (a chain candy store), Chicago Hat Store, and Gabberts TV and Appliances, as well as W.T.

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[78] "Sparkling New Hardware Store: Warner's To Open Saturday," *SLPD,* Wednesday, May 2, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS.

[79] "W. T. Grant 'Four-in-One' Store Ready," *SLPD*, Wednesday, June 6, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS.

[80] "Miracle Mile History," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 8, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/; Norton and Peel, *The Miracle Mile Shopping Center on Excelsior Boulevard in St. Louis Park,* c. 1952, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, accessed January 27, 2017, http://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display.php?irn=10843871&return=brand%3Dcms%26q%3Dmiracle%2520mile; Minneapolis Star Journal Tribune, *Shopping Center, aerial, St. Louis Park*, October 14, 1953, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota; *Miracle Mile,* c. 1953, photograph, "Excelsior Boulevard 4901 through Miracle Mile" collection, Street Photos, SLPHS.

[81] Manning, "The Death and Life of Great American Strip Malls," 39.

Grants and Warner's Hardware. John W. Heller (a clothing store) was located in Miracle Mile by December 13, 1951 and Angelas (a store that sold jewelry, lingerie, sportswear, and cosmetics) was in the center by February 21, 1952.[82] It is logical that a Red Owl supermarket, W.T. Grants, and York Stores located in Miracle Mile, given the presence of chain supermarkets, chain variety stores, and chain clothing stores in community shopping centers after WWII.[83]

The number and type of stores located in the Miracle Mile Shopping Center in 1952 identifies it as a community shopping center. Architectural historian Meredith Clausen's definition of community shopping centers suggests that these centers contained between twenty and forty stores that provided a wide variety of goods and were anchored by a junior department store. Although Miracle Mile only contained eighteen stores in 1952, the presence of a variety of shops providing specialized goods (including a gift store, candy store, hat store, several clothing stores, and TV/appliance store) suggest that it qualified as a community shopping center. This classification is confirmed by *The Community Builders Handbook* (published in 1948) and *Shopping Centers: Design and Operation* (an influential 1951 trade study). These publications suggested that community centers contained at least fifteen stores and sometimes included offices for doctors and other professionals. Baker and Funaro's study suggests that community centers might contain gift stores, candy shops, milliners, lingerie stores, women's apparel shops, haberdasheries, and children's wear and toy stores, among other businesses; each of these businesses was represented in Miracle Mile.[84]

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[82] "Keefe to Open Doors Friday," *SLPD,* June 6, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; Pink Pony, "We're as Excited as a June Bride," (advertisement), *SLPD,* June 20, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; "First Federal Park Office to Open in 'Miracle Mile,'" *SLPD,* June 27, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; "Kinney's Store In Knollwood 346th For Firm In U.S.," *Knollwood Section,* August 25, 1955, 17, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jun 3, 1954 – Dec 15, 1955," MNHS; Kinney Shoes, "Grand Opening Today," (advertisement), *SLPD,* August 23, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; Village Cleaners, "Now Open... in the new Miracle Mile Shopping Center," (advertisement), *SLPD,* August 23, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; "Red Owl Opens New Park Store in Miracle Mile," *SLPD,* August 30, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; "Miracle Mile Welcomes York, Betz," *SLPD,* September 20, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; "4 New Stores Open Today in Miracle Mile Celebration," *SLPD,* November 8, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; "In Miracle Mile Shops," (advertisement), *SLPD,* December 13, 1951, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; "Angela's Opens in Miracle Mile," *SLPD,* February 21, 1952, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS; John A. Wickland, "7-Million Dollar Knollwood Plaza to Open Wednesday," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,* August 21, 1955, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/image/182973958.

[83] Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 289; Longstreth, *The Drive-In,* 162 – 163.

[84] Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers*, 10; Community Builders' Council of the Urban Land Institute, *The Community Builders Handbook,* 204 – 205; Clausen, "Northgate Regional Shopping Center," 147; Longstreth, "The Diffusion of the Community Shopping Center," 288; "Interactive Maps," Hennepin County, accessed March 22, 2017, https://gis.hennepin.us/property/map/default.aspx?pid=0702824220026. Clausen states that community centers were located on at least 20 acres of land, which Miracle Mile was not; however, the other characteristics appear to outweigh the importance of location size.

On October 27, 1952, the St. Louis Park city council granted two companies, Shopping Center Inc. and Wood Excel Co., permission to build an extension onto the east side of Miracle Mile. Once again, M. O. Nathan was enlisted as the architect; Kraus-Anderson was the general-contractor.[85] A building permit application dated December 16, 1952 lists the two-story building's dimensions as 175 feet wide by 125 feet deep and 24 feet high.[86] According to the Oct. 15, 1953 edition of the *Dispatch* (published a month before the so-called "Excel Building," was scheduled to be completed), offices occupying the second story would include "Industrial Molasses, Jensen and Nelson, advertising; Merrithem and Co.; W. R. Malecker Co.; Preferred Risk Mutual Insurance Co.; Foundry Supply Co.; Fairmont Foods Co.; A. F. Snyder, manufacturers' representative; Edward A Mullen Co.; Metzger and Co.; and professional offices."[87] By 1956, there were at least twenty-three stores in Miracle Mile, not including second-story offices. These included Abdallah's Lunch and Candies, Anderson Wallpaper and Paint, Angela's Apparel, Betz Tots to Teens, Colonial Inn Bakery, Cook's Apparel, Dell Fabrics, Dolbec's Meats, Fashion Beauty Salon, Fanny Farmer candies, Fox's Boys Wear, W. T. Grant, John Heller Apparel, Juvenile Shoe Store, John Keefe Apparel, Keller Bros. Sporting Goods, Don Leary TV and Records, Ostlund Jewelers, Pink Pony Gift Shop, Red Owl supermarket, Snyder Drugs, Village Cleaners, and Warner Hardware.[88]

Besides the major 1953 addition, several changes to the exterior of the shopping center occurred between 1951 and 1956. In 1951, both Red Owl and Snyder Drugs applied for permits to construct incinerators; Red Owl's was located behind the building.[89] In 1952, a permit application requested "the construction of sidewalk, curb & gutter and driveway apron... on [the] East side of Wooddale... in front of Snyders Drug Store."[90] In addition, on January 25, 1955, Kraus Anderson filed a permit to remodel the front of unit 5015 (the Red Owl store), a project that was estimated to cost four thousand dollars.[91]

In 1956, Miracle Mile's owners (listed in the *Dispatch* as Investors Diversified Service) made several changes to the shopping center building and parking lot area. Improvements included the installation of better parking lot lights in the front parking lot

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[85] "Village of St. Louis Park, Minn. Council Meeting October 27, 1952," October 27, 1952, microfiche sheet "5003 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; "Miracle Mile Addition Is Nearly Ready," *SLPD,* October 15, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS.

[86] Building permit no. 11383, December 16, 1952, microfiche sheet "5013 Excelsior Blvd 5015 1.," SLPID.

[87] "Miracle Mile Addition Is Nearly Ready," *SLPD,* October 15, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS.

[88] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 4; "Miracle Mile Tenants," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed May 3, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemiletenants/. The report which provided this list of stores also lists the Local Loan Co. as a business in the shopping center. However, the St. Louis Park Historical Society's website states that this business was located in the second-story offices.

[89] "Council Meeting," October 29, 1951, microfiche sheet "5021 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID; Red Owl Stores, Inc. to Richard H. White, assistant secretary to Council of the Village of St. Louis Park, October 29, 1951, microfiche sheet "5021 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID; Building permit no. 10174, November 9, 1951, microfiche sheet "5025 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 10173, November 9, 1951, microfiche sheet "5425 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[90] Permit no. 00045, June 6, 1952, microfiche sheet "5401 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[91] Building permit no. 13413, January 25, 1955, microfiche sheet "5021 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

and new parking lot lights in the rear parking lot, new curbing, "a center parking curb and walkway," and "a step-saving walkthrough for customers who wish to walk from the rear parking lot to the front of the shopping center" at the Don Leary store. A *Dispatch* articles stated that "additions furnishing more sales and storage area have been made to the rear of the following stores: John Keefe, Village Cleaners, Heller's Pink Pony and the former First Federal building." A permit filed in May 1956 suggests that this addition was twenty-five by eighty-eight feet. On July 18, 1956, a building permit for the construction of a sixteen by six garbage shed was granted to a builder working for the Red Owl store, and in August of the same year a permit to make unspecified alterations (costing 1,500 dollars) at unit 5313 was requested. In 1956, center's parking lot surface was also repaved and a new traffic flow pattern was developed.[92]

Local Influence: 1951 – 1956

In its location, layout, design, and tenancy, it is clear that Miracle Mile largely conformed to national and local trends in postwar shopping center development. The center was distinct from other Twin Cities shopping centers, however, in its ability to draw shoppers from around the metropolitan area in the early 1950s.

Miracle Mile's location at the intersection of two important roads (Excelsior Boulevard and Highway 100) no doubt enabled residents from surrounding suburban communities to reach the center easily. This is confirmed by a 1962 *Twin City Area Transportation Study* completed by the State of Minnesota Department of Highways and the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Public Roads. The study results include a map showing the relative volume of traffic on major Twin Cities roads in 1949, two years before Miracle Mile was built. The map shows a high volume of traffic on Highway 100, with the most traffic on the stretch running north-south through St. Louis Park, past Miracle Mile. This section attracted approximately twenty-five thousand cars per day.[93] Not only was Miracle Mile strategically located, it was also situated among several suburbs that lacked their own shopping centers. A listing of metropolitan shopping centers compiled by the Star and Tribune newspaper in 1956 reveals that there were no shopping centers in Hopkins, Edina, or Minnetonka in the summer of 1956. Two

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[92] "Miracle Mile Takes On 'New Look' With Improved Lighting, Parking," *SLPD,* July 26, 1956, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Dec 22, 1955 – Feb. 28, 1957," MNHS; Building permit no. 14537, May 25, 1956, microfiche sheet "5401 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 14768, August 14, 1956, microfiche sheet "5217 Excelsior Blvd. 1.," SLPID; Building permit no. 14702, July 18, 1956, "5021 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID. There are three other building permits from 1953 and 1954 in which the proposed work is unspecified. Their valuations are 2,000 dollars, 5,800 dollars, and 300 dollars: see building permit no. 12378, November 20, 1953, microfiche sheet "5013 Excelsior Blvd. 5015 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 12377, November 20, 1953, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 13269, November 8, 1954, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[93] State of Minnesota Department of Highways and the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Public Roads, *Twin Cities Area Transportation Study,* vol. 1, *Study Findings* ([St. Paul, MN?]: 1962), 68, fig. 56.

shopping centers existed in Golden Valley, but both of these were smaller than Miracle Mile.[94]

Statistics from a series of surveys conducted by the Minneapolis Star and Tribune between 1952 and 1959 provide strong evidence that Miracle Mile was a significant shopping center relative to the Minneapolis metropolitan area. The surveys were designed to reveal the shopping habits of the 211,000 women homemakers living in Hennepin County in the mid-1950s, specifically as they related to three major forms of retail in Hennepin County at that time: downtown Minneapolis, shopping districts (older commercial development at streetcar transfer points that had turned into major shopping areas), and shopping centers.[95] Of the 211,000 women homemakers living in Hennepin County, roughly 147,700 were city women, while approximately 63,300 lived in the suburbs.[96]

According to the report, Hennepin County retail sales outside of Minneapolis had increased 125 percent between 1948 and 1955, compared to a 26 percent increase in retail sales within Minneapolis; however, the "vast bulk of the sales volume" still occurred within the city proper.[97] City women, in particular, were much more likely to shop downtown than in the suburbs. About ninety percent of both city and suburban women living in Hennepin County (about 134,000 city women and 57,000 suburban women) shopped downtown in the year preceding an October 1955 survey, whereas ninety-four percent of suburban women (approximately 60,000 women) and fifty-two percent of city women (approximately 76,000 women) visited the shopping centers at least once within the year.[98] More frequent trips to shopping centers were even rarer for city women – the report states that fifty-eight percent of suburban women and just fifteen percent of city women shopped in the centers weekly in the mid- to late 1950s.[99]

More specific survey data revealed that Miracle Mile ranked among three of the most popular shopping centers in the Minneapolis metropolitan area in 1955. In the two months preceding a 1955 survey, more Hennepin County women had shopped at Miracle Mile (twenty-three percent) than at any of the other eighteen metropolitan shopping centers covered by the survey.[100] Furthermore, Miracle Mile ranked first in the percentage of city women it attracted for that same two-month period. The center drew sixteen percent, while the Hub, a shopping center in Richfield, attracted the next highest

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[94] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 2 -10.

[95] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Report on the Shopping Habits of Hennepin County Women*, ([Minneapolis, MN?]: Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company, 1957), 2 – 4.

[96] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Report,* 6.

[97] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Report,* 5.

[98] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Report,* 6 – 8.

[99] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Report*, 19. It is unclear if this data was drawn from the 1955 surveys or the 1957 survey.

[100] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Report,* 8. One of these 18 centers was Knollwood Plaza, a small regional shopping center, which opened in St. Louis Park in 1955. Data from Knollwood is not included here, however, since data for the 1955 two-month shopping period for Knollwood was apparently flawed; a later report published around 1959 lists the two-month Knowllood data as "unreportable because of coding error in the 1955 study." Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Second Report on the Shopping Habits of Hennepin County (Minneapolis) Women* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: [1959?]), 3.

percentage (thirteen percent). The sixteen percent figure is especially significant when considered against earlier statistics, which showed that far less city women than suburbanites visited the shopping centers on a regular basis. In terms of suburban women, Miracle Mile attracted forty percent within a two month period, while the next highest was again the Hub with twenty-four percent. To put this in perspective, none of the other shopping centers included in this particular report drew more than sixteen percent of suburban women within the same two-month period.[101]

In a survey conducted in October, 1955, Miracle Mile received the highest rating for the percentage of Hennepin county women who shopped at the center within the year – thirty-four percent. Knollwood Plaza, St. Louis Park's largest shopping center, received only twenty four percent. (However, given that Knollwood opened in August, 1955, only two months before the survey was taken, this data might not provide an accurate comparison of relative popularity.) The Hub again scored lower than Miracle Mile, drawing twenty-four of all surveyed Hennepin County women at least once within the year.[102] St. Louis Park's other shopping centers (Lilac Way, Westwood, and Texa-Tonka), none of which exceeded fifty percent of Miracle Mile's size, ranked far below Miracle Mile in their percentages of city and suburban shoppers.[103] In summary, Miracle Mile was one of the most popular shopping center destinations for suburban shoppers and city shoppers living in Hennepin county in the mid-1950s.

Additional survey data suggests that the center's popularity may have stemmed from its ability to provide convenient shopping with sufficient parking and minimal congestion. In a 1950s survey, fifty-one percent of all women cited "traffic, parking and congestion" as the chief disadvantage of downtown. Conversely, forty-one percent and thirty-nine percent of all women cited "more convenience" and "less traffic" as the chief advantage of the shopping centers, respectively. Seventeen percent of Hennepin county shoppers who shopped downtown less often in 1955 than in 1954 cited "neighborhood stores more convenient" as their reason for changing their shopping habits. (It should be acknowledged, though, that only four percent of women who answered this survey question cited "parking, traffic" as their reason for shopping downtown less often.)[104]

Congested conditions within St. Louis Park itself may have also increased the popularity of the center. Although an article in the *St. Louis Park Dispatch* dated April 12, 1950, stated that "Park merchants offer free, ample, convenient parking space without the trouble of fighting downtown traffic," an editorial written three months later contended that the Park's commercial zoning had created a traffic issue in the Park.[105] According to a 1953 *Dispatch* editorial, "to say that [parking] is pressing and menacing in Hopkins and St. Louis Park, and in the whole southwest suburban area, is to sadly

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[101] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind*, 8. Again, the data for percentages of city women and suburban women shopping at Knollwood is unreportable.

[102] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind,* 10.

[103] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 2 – 10; Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind,* 10.

[104] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind,* 21, 24.

[105] "Make Money Work Twice!" *SLPD,* April 12, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch February 18, 1949 – Nov. 8, 1950," MNHS; "Park Parking Traffic Hazard," *SLPD,* July 5, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS.

understate the condition."[106] The lack of off-street parking certainly applied to Excelsior Blvd, which struggled with this problem through at least the early 1960s.[107] Newspaper advertisements for Miracle Mile often advertised the large free parking lot available at the center. At the same time, there is evidence that suggests that Miracle Mile's parking lot was itself congested, so it is not clear to what extent off-street parking drew shoppers to the center.[108] A final factor that may have bolstered Miracle Mile's popularity was the fact that it was located in the southwestern section of the metropolitan area, a wealthier region of the suburbs.[109]

The construction of Southdale, Minnesota's first enclosed regional mall, in October 1956 appears to have lessened the popularity of Miracle Mile. A comparison of data before and after the construction of Southdale (from the 1957 *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* report) shows that the number of shoppers who visited Miracle Mile within a two-month period decreased by twelve percent (from twenty-three percent of all Hennepin County women to eleven percent).[110] Another summary of survey data published in 1959 by the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* reveals that Miracle Mile's decreasing popularity was part of a long-range pattern of decline. The number of city women who visited Miracle Mile within a two-month period in 1955 (sixteen percent) dropped to six percent by 1957 and five percent by 1959. By contrast, twenty-two percent of Minneapolis women visited Southdale in the same period in 1957 and twenty-nine percent in 1959. The percentage of suburbanites visiting Miracle Mile also declined from forty percent in 1955 to twenty-four percent in 1957 and 1959, with Southdale receiving visits from forty-seven percent and forty-six percent of suburban women in 1957 and 1959, respectively.[111]

Comparing the percentages of women who visited various centers at least one time per year in 1955, 1957, and 1959 reveals consistent declines in popularity for Miracle Mile with both city and suburban shoppers. In contrast, the percentage of women visiting Southdale, both suburban and city women, increased from 1957 to 1959. Knollwood Plaza experienced declines and gains in popularity with Minneapolis women and steady increases in popularity with suburban women. By 1959, Knollwood had clearly surpassed Miracle Mile in popularity with suburban women (see table 1).

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[106] "Parking an Eternal, Universal Headache," *SLPD,* Sept. 3, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS.

[107] "Park Parking Traffic Hazard," *SLPD,* July 5, 1950, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch February 18, 1949 – Nov 8, 1950," MNHS; City Planning Department, *Anatomy of the Boulevard: Report and Analysis of Excelsior Blvd.* (St. Louis Park, Minnesota: 1961), 1, 33.

[108] For examples of advertisements that mention Miracle Mile's parking lot, see "Enjoy Starlight Shopping for Christmas at Red Owl," (advertisement), *SLPD,* November 26, 1953, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch Jul 30, 1953 – May 27, 1954," MNHS; "Warners," (advertisement), *SLPD,* May 2, 1951, microfilm reel "St Louis Park Dispatch Nov 15, 1950 – Jun 5, 1952," MNHS. In a 1956 article discussing improvements to the shopping center, the author mentions that changes were made to traffic flow patterns "to eliminate congestion." For this information, see "Miracle Mile Takes On 'New Look' With Improved Lighting, Parking," *SLPD,* July 26, 1956, microfilm reel "St. Louis Park Dispatch, Dec 22, 1955 – Feb. 28, 1957," MNHS.

[109] The Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank and J.E. Hutchinson, *Shopping Centers and Population Growth in the Twin Cities Area,* 3.

[110] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind,* 10.

[111] Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Second Report,* 3.

Table 1. Percentage of Hennpin County Shoppers who visited Miracle Mile, Knollwood Plaza, and Southdale in 1955, 1957, and 1959

	Miracle Mile		Knollwood Plaza		Southdale	
Survey Year	**Minneapolis Women**	**Suburban Women**	**Minneapolis Women**	**Suburban Women**	**Minneapolis Women**	**Suburban Women**
1955	24	60	15	48	--	--
1957	16	49	19	58	38	62
1959	11	35	13	61	49	72

Source: Data adapted from Minneapolis Star and Tribune, *The Shopper Speaks Her Mind: A Second Report on the Shopping Habits of Hennepin County (Minneapolis) Women* ([Minneapolis, MN?]: [1959?]), 3.

By 1961, an analysis of Excelsior Boulevard completed by the city of St. Louis Park revealed that seventy-five percent of Miracle Mile's customers came from within a three-mile radius of the center. The authors of the report state that "this percentage (75% to 85%) holds consistently for shopping centers of the convenience goods variety," suggesting that Miracle Mile was performing as well as an average center of its type.[112] In any case, it seems likely that Miracle Mile's popularity was not what it had once been. In the summer of 1956, twelve shopping centers (in addition to Southdale) were in the planning or construction phases. Of these centers, at least five were 100,000 square feet or larger, and the average parking lot size was large enough to accommodate over 2,000 cars. Presumably, many of these had been constructed by the early 1960s, increasing Miracle Mile's competition.[113]

Miracle Mile: 1956 – Present

Various changes to Miracle Mile's physical appearance occurred between 1956 and the next major remodel in 1980. Between 1958 and 1980, many permits were filed for remodeling projects or alterations to various units of the shopping center, some of which do not specify the work being proposed.[114] One of the more notable permits was

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[112] City Planning Department, *Anatomy of the Boulevard*, 17.

[113] Minneapolis Star and Tribune Advertising Department, *Metropolitan Minneapolis Shopping Areas*, 2 – 10.

[114] Building permit no. 15829, March 3, 1958, microfiche sheet "5407 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID ; Building permit no. 15895, April 11, 1958, microfiche sheet "5407 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 15995, May 12, 1958, microfiche sheet "5407 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 16445, November 10, 1958, microfiche sheet "5407 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Incinerator permit no. 1030, August 30, 1963, microfiche sheet "5425 Excelsior Blvd. 1.," SLPID; Building permit no. 1523, exact date unreadable, 1963, microfiche sheet "5313 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 3169, January 2, 1966, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 3654, September 21, 1966, microfiche sheet "5011 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID; Building permit no. 3658, September 26, 1966, microfiche sheet "5013 Excelsior Blvd. 5015 1.," SLPID; Building permit no. 4633, April 11, 1968, microfiche sheet "5313 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 5038, October 23, 1968, microfiche sheet "5407 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID; Building Permit no. 7793, June 5, 1972, microfiche sheet "5013 Excelsior Blvd. 5015 1.," SLPID; Building permit no. 10260, June 25, 1975, microfiche sheet "5017 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 19623, September 29, 1975, microfiche sheet "5407 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID; Building permit no. 14870, September 17, 1979, microfiche sheet "5305 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID. The

filed in 1958, when a telephone booth was installed outside the W.T. Grant Co.[115] During this year, Red Owl also applied for a permit to construct a new masonry incinerator.[116]

An additional permit for a telephone booth was filed on January 1, 1962; this booth was constructed by "Rolo Const. Co."[117] That same year, a permit was filed for an alteration (apparently ten by eight feet) at 5425 Excelsior Blvd., but it is unclear whether this was an interior or exterior designation.[118] One of the more expensive permits was filed in May of 1965 for an eighteen-thousand-dollar alteration to Becky's Buffet.[119] The next year, one of the businesses in the center filed a permit for a nine-by-six-foot frame-and-stucco structure at 5017 Excelsior Blvd, but it is impossible to tell exactly where this was constructed.[120] In 1970, one permit application listed "exterior alterations" valued at 600 dollars; a 1974 permit application requested a 15,000-dollar metal bus station.[121] Another important permit, dated February 10, 1972, requested permission to construct a seven-by-ten-foot loading platform for the Red Owl building.[122] A permit filed on February 20, 1976 requested permission to complete unspecified alterations for unit 5425 at an estimated cost of 12,000 dollars, and another permit in 1978 proposed a 50,000-dollar project for unspecified alterations to unit 5313.[123] Permits for roofing projects are on file for 1971, 1974, and 1978.[124]

Pictures of the center from 1960 and 1973 (see figures 7 through 12) indicate that the façade most likely underwent a piecemeal transformation in the dozen or so years between those dates. The 1973 pictures show an eclectic façade, with several storefronts constructed in contrasting styles. As mentioned previously, building permit files often include permits or permit applications that do not list the scope of proposed work, making it difficult to identify the dates of exact changes to the building's exterior facade. Dozens of sign permits are on file at the St. Louis Park city offices, suggesting that signage changed often.

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latter permit application (no. 14870) was an application for alterations worth thirty thousand dollars; it's not clear if the scope of work contained in this application was to be completed as part of the 1980 remodel.

[115] "Outdoor Coin Telephone Booth," order #: I - 6644, June 17, 1958, microfiche sheet "5201 Excelsior Blvd. 1.," SLPID; Building permit no. 16105, June 25, 1958, microfiche sheet "5201 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[116] Building permit application (no permit number), April 2, 1958, microfiche sheet "5021 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[117] Building permit no. 752, January 2, 1962, microfiche sheet "5201 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[118] Building permit no. 1248, October 5, 1962, microfiche sheet "5425 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPD.

[119] Building permit no. 2790, May 10, 1965, microfiche sheet "5201 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[120] Building permit no. 3681, October 4, 1966, microfiche sheet "5017 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[121] Building permit no. 6172, February 26, 1970, microfiche sheet "5321 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID; Building permit no. 9228, April 5, 1974, microfiche sheet "5417 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID.

[122] Building permit no. 7519, February 10, 1972, microfilm sheet "5015 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID.

[123] Building permit no. 10865, February 20, 1976, microfilm sheet "5425 Excelsior Blvd. (2)," SLPID; Building permit no. 13575, October 9, 1978, microfiche sheet "5313 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID.

[124] Building permit no. 7187, August 31, 1971, microfiche file "5425 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 6172, February 26, 1970, microfiche sheet "5321 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID; Building permit no. 9197, March 5, 1974, microfiche sheet "5015 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID; Building permit no. 13192, June 6, 1978, microfiche sheet "5101 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID; Building permit no. 12824, January 31, 1978, microfiche sheet "5201 Excelsior Blvd. 3," SLPID.

By the 1970s, Miracle Mile had fallen into disrepair. Tenants in the center accused the management firm, Draper and Kramer, as well as the owner (Corrigan Properties), of ignoring their requests for maintenance.[125] In addition, a fire occurred in the Red Owl building in 1973, and one in the Swiss Chalet in 1975.[126] A permit dated October 8, 1974 shows a one hundred and fifty thousand-dollar remodeling project for the Red Owl building, presumably to repair fire damage.[127]

In 1980, the center underwent a remodel costing more than five hundred thousand dollars.[128] According to a special permit application for the remodel and a newspaper article, the center would receive new windows and roofing, as well as stucco siding. Plans included increasing the size of the front pedestrian mall and covering it with a canopy, and installing new signs with increased uniformity. The remodeling process also involved the creation of new landscaping, the renovation of the parking lot, the addition of approximately 140 new parking spaces, the construction of six enclosed trash areas behind the building, and the burying of all utilities. The special permit application also lists "area lighting changes" as included in the scope of work.[129] Finally, it appears that the shopping center received a new sign as part of the renovation process.[130] A description of the center's remodel after its completion describes it as "contemporary...with a Mediterranean background."[131]

Between 1982 and the present, dozens of additional permits were issued for miscellaneous alterations to the center. As with earlier permits, it is in many cases difficult to tell what exact alterations were proposed in each permit application; some permits with unspecified projects or vague descriptions and estimated costs over five thousand dollars are listed in the footnotes.[132] In 1982, a new retaining wall and stockade

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[125] David E. Early, "Manager Promises Improvement: Miracle Mile Merchants Hope for 'Prettying Up'," *Minneapolis Star*, June 2, 1974; Donald C. Schober, Electrical Inspector to Mr. Stanford Cox, Commercial Dept., Draper and Kramer Co., June 28, 1971, microfilm sheet "5003 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SPLID.

[126] "St. Louis Park Fire Department Basic Field Incident Report;" Incident No. 6128, May 18, 1975, microfiche sheet "5021 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Mickey Tibbits, "Miracle Mile celebrates 40 years of business success," *St. Louis Park Sailor*, September 11, 1991.

[127] Building permit no. 9839, October 8, 1974, microfiche sheet "5015 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID.

[128] Mickey Tibbits, "Miracle Mile celebrates 40 years of business success."

[129] "Application for special permit under the zoning ordinance," April 2, 1980, microfiche sheet "5003 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Jane Tschida, "Miracle Mile facelift nears final approval," *St. Louis Park Sun*, May 14, 1980.

[130] Sign permit no. 1845, December 3, 1980, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. (3)," SLPID.

[131] "State's first shopping center celebrates 30th birthday," unknown newspaper, "Miracle Mile" subject file, SLPHS. Building permits for 1980 and 1981 are as follows: Building permit no. 16261, December 17, 1980, microfiche sheet "5201 Excelsior Blvd. 3," SLPID; Building permit no. 15483, May 20, 1980, microfiche sheet "Miracle Mile General Bldg. 1," SLPID; Electric permit no. 17620, June 12, 1980, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID; Building permit no. 16077, October 9, 1980, microfiche sheet "5305 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID; Building permit no. 16620, May 13, 1981, microfiche sheet "5217 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID.

[132] Building permit no. 20960, June 3, 1985, microfiche sheet "5225 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. 21678, January 20, 1986, microfiche sheet "5321 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID; Harvey J. McPhee to the City Manager, August 27, 1987, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 5," SLPID; Building permit no. 6493, February 9, 1989, microfiche sheet "5007 ½ Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID; Building permit no. SL014637, applied date: June 14, 1990, 5007 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL059603, applied date: July 9, 1996,

fence were constructed, and in 1984, a permit was filed for another sign advertising the shopping center.[133] In April 1985, the general manager of the shopping center notified residents that a screening fence would be installed along the south of the shopping center property.[134] In 1987, a permit application was filed for a 13,900-dollar reroofing project, and another application was filed for an eight-by-fourteen-foot storage structure on the south side of Miracle Mile.[135] That same year, another permit application proposed unspecified alterations valued at eighty-five thousand dollars.[136] A new storefront was installed in 1988.[137]

In 1989, a thirty-thousand-dollar alteration to a one-story area of the shopping center (approximately 18 by 126 feet) was proposed.[138] An electrical permit indicates that the shopping center may have received a new sign in March of that year.[139] Also in 1989, several permits record a high number of unspecified alterations, valued at 2,300, 3,000, 6,000, 8,000, 10,900, 20,000, and 30,000 dollars.[140] In 1990, a permit application was

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5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL052741, applied date: September 13, 1995, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL061565, applied date: September 12, 1996, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL067038, applied date: May 19, 1997, 5101 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL082880, applied date: January 21, 1999, 5025 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL135628, applied date: November 24, 2004, 5007 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit SL139973, applied date: June 3, 2005, 5111 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL159348, applied date: July 26, 2007, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL003223, applied date: July 11, 1988, 5201 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[133] Ronald G. Blake, General Manager, to Loyd A. Beryer, James Buchkosky, C. Butt Cheever, Mary and Dick Fadell, and Helen Nord, March 19, 1982, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. (3)," SLPID; Building permit no. 17490, April 20, 1982, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. (3)," SLPID; Sign permit no. 2315, June 22, 1984, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 4," SLPID.

[134] Letter from Gordon A. Elleby, General Manager to list of residents at 5108, 5112, 5104, 5020, 5016, 5012, 5100 W 40th St, 9371 Wooddale, 4976, 4980, 5004, and 5008 W. 40th St, April 9, 1985, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 4," SLPID.

[135] Building permit no. 23160, May 11, 1987, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 4," SLPID; Building permit no. 23194, May 15, 1987, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 5," SLPID.

[136] Building permit no. 23113, April 28, 1987, microfiche sheet "5005 Excelsior Blvd. 1," SLPID.

[137] Building permit no. 3095, July 6, 1988, microfiche sheet "5201 Excelsior Blvd. 4," SLPID.

[138] Building permit no. 14870, September 17, 1989, microfiche sheet "5305 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID.

[139] Electrical permit no. 6684, March 5, 1989, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 5," SLPID.

[140] Building permit no. SL006204, applied date: February 1, 1989, 5007 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL006755, March 15, 1989, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. 9331, August 8, 1989, microfiche sheet "5313 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID; Building permit no. 14870, September 17, 1989, microfiche sheet "5305 Excelsior Blvd. 2," SLPID; Building permit no. SL010659, applied date: October 17, 1989, 5115 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl;

filed to "remove wood beam on building east & west." A handicap ramp at the west-southwest entrance to the building was constructed in 1991.[141] That same year, unit 5013 received a new storefront; a new "readerboard" was installed on a new pylon sign in 1992.[142] In 1992 and 1993, several large permits for unspecified alterations were filed. These included a 23,000-dollar alteration, a 28,000-dollar project, and a 40,000 dollar alteration.[143] In 1994, a twenty-five-foot pylon was installed and a 30,000-dollar project was completed.[144] The next year, a permit was filed for "new front glazing" and an "alteration" for the unit 5217, as well as a 36,830-dollar alteration for the 5009 address.[145]

Several reroofing permits are on file between 1991 and 1996.[146] In 1999, a permit application requested permission to "alter building" at a cost of forty thousand dollars.[147] Two major reroofing projects, valued at 161,000 dollars and 99,700 dollars, were completed in 2001 and 2002, respectively.[148] Finally, a permit was filed in March of 2005 for "tenant improvements" worth two hundred thousand dollars.[149]

In 2006, the sporting goods store Hoigaards moved into the westernmost unit in the center and changed the exterior of the unit extensively, removing the front canopy from the western section, adding an addition to the section's rear elevation, and installing

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Building permit no. SL011124, applied date: November 1, 1989, 5115 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL011629, applied date: December 8, 1989, 5025 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[141] Building permit no. 16800, October 1, 1990, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 5," SLPID; Building permit no. 22731, June 20, 1991, microfiche sheet "5425 Excelsior Blvd. (2)," SLPID.

[142] Building permit no. 024554, October 11, 1991, microfiche sheet "5013 Excelsior Blvd. (5015) 2," SLPID; Sign permit no. 29066, June 28, 1992, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 6," SLPID.

[143] Building permit no. 34777, May 18, 1993, microfiche sheet "5020 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID; Building permit no. SL030231, applied date: August 31, 1992, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit: SL030935, applied date: September 14, 1992, 5025 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl;

[144] Sign permit no. 42262, May 31, 1994, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 7," SLPID; Building permit no. SL043651, applied date: July 25, 1994, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[145] Building permit no. 51160, July 18, 1995, microfiche sheet "5217 Excelsior Blvd.," SLPID; Building permit no. SL053390, applied date: September 28, 1995, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[146] Building permit no. 023703, September 4, 1991, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 5.," SLPID; Building permit no. 35798, July 16, 1993, microfiche sheet "5009 Excelsior Blvd. 6," SLPID; Building permit no. SL061025, applied date: August 27, 1996, 5025 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[147] Building permit no. SL082995, applied date: January 28, 1999, 5025 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[148] Building permit no. SL101490, applied date: April 23, 2001, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL115302, applied date: September 17, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[149] Building permit no. SL137696, applied date: March 17, 2005, 5201 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

a tower at the center's northwestern corner.[150] In 2007, the shopping center underwent another remodel, changing its appearance in order to match the Hoigaards exterior.[151] According to a permit filed in March of 2007, this renovation cost at least four hundred and fifty thousand dollars.[152]

Despite the abundance of shopping centers in the Twin Cities today, Miracle Mile is apparently thriving as a commercial center in St. Louis Park. Newspaper articles from 1991 and the early 2000s claim the center has a low turnover rate, and attribute the center's success to its location, tenant mix, merchants' association, convenience, and the ability to park directly in front of stores.[153]

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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[150] Building permit no. SL150690, applied date: 7/27/2006, address: 5425 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota (hereafter cited as Epermits), accessed April 26, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL 148196, applied date: May 5, 2006, 5425 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL148958, applied date: June 2, 2006, 5425 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Aerial photographs of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, 2006, 2008, and 2009, Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed on February 24, 2017, https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer; Building permit no. SL150690 describes a "phase II tower addition." Since the tower is visible in a 2009 aerial photo of Miracle Mile but not in 2006, it is logical to conclude that the tower was constructed in late 2006 or early 2007, either during the Hoigaard's remodel or as part of the larger 2007 remodel. The Snyder drug store was apparently remodeled before Hoigaard's moved in – see building permit no. SL29313, applied date: April 28, 2004, 5425 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[151] "Miracle Mile History," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 8, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/; Building permit no. SL155599, applied date: March 14, 2007, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl. In recent years, three permits have been filed to reroof the center: Building permit no. SL201902, applied date: September 21, 2011, 5201 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL220888, applied date: August 21, 2013, 5201 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl; Building permit no. SL237691, applied date: February 25, 2015, 5201 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl. In addition, it appears that a new Miracle Mile pylon was installed around 2014: Building permit no. SL235768, December 12, 2014, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl. In addition, some work was conducted on the bus shelter in 2014: see public works permit no. SL232761, applied date: September 26, 2014, 5201 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[152] Building permit no. SL155599, applied date: March 14, 2007, 5009 Excelsior Blvd., Epermits, accessed April 23, 2017, https://epermits2.logis.org/search.aspx?city=sl.

[153] Mickey Tibbits, "Miracle Mile celebrates 40 years of business success;" Dan Wascoe, Jr., "1951 – built Miracle Mile shaming many newcomers," *Star Tribune,* July 1, 1991; "Miracle Mile is 41 years old," *St. Louis Park Sun-Sailor,* July 8, 1992; "The Miracle Mile Shopping Center, near the intersection of Excelsior Boulevard and Highway 100, has remained a vital retail destination for half a decade, making it the oldest shopping center still in business in Minnesota," unknown newspaper, September 12, 2001, Miracle Mile subject file, SLPHS.

Miracle Mile Shopping Center is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of commerce because it is has made a locally significant contribution to broad patterns of history. Its period of significance is 1951 – 1956, reflecting the five years between its construction and the development of Southdale in 1956. As a community shopping center, it represents a major shift in retailing patterns in the U.S. that began in the 1920s and 1930s, and blossomed during the postwar era. In many ways, it is a classic example of the postwar shopping center. In its location, layout, tenancy, and appearance, it conforms to many national and local trends in shopping center development. However, it is distinguished from the approximately two dozen shopping centers located in Hennepin County in the mid-1950s by its ability to attract shoppers from both Hennepin County suburbs and Minneapolis proper. Furthermore, although the center experienced a drop in popularity after the arrival of Southdale in 1956, it is today a thriving commercial center in St. Louis Park.

INTEGRITY

When evaluated against the seven aspects of integrity (location, design, settings, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association), Miracle Mile has not retained its overall integrity. It does retain its integrity of location and much of its original setting. The shopping center remains surrounded by a parking lot on its north, east, and south sides, and abuts Wooddale Avenue on its west side just as it did in 1951. There is still a fence separating the back of the shopping center from the residential neighborhood to its south. Additionally, the two buildings which shared a parking lot with the shopping center in 1956 still occupy their relative positions in the parking lot. Miracle Mile remains closely situated in residential development, with housing to the south and northeast of the shopping center as it was in 1956. Much of Excelsior Blvd. still contains commercial development on either side, although the demolition of Lilac Way Shopping Center and redevelopment of the site, as well as the expansion of Park Nicollet Medical Center across Excelsior Blvd., have somewhat changed the setting.[154] In addition, the apartment complex across Wooddale Ave. (to the west of the center) was recently constructed.

After multiple changes to storefronts in the 1960s and 1970s, the remodeling of the center in the 1980s, and another renovation in 2006 and 2007, much of Miracle Mile's design, materials, and workmanship have been lost. Aerial photographs reveal that the basic rectangular shape of the shopping center has remained almost the same since the Excel Building was constructed in 1953, with the exception of the two small additions (added around 1956 and 2006) and several storage enclosures constructed at the south (rear) elevation of the building (added as part of the 1980 remodel), as well as the tower constructed during the Hoigaards' remodel. However, much of Miracle Mile's original brick and terra cotta construction materials have long since disappeared or been obscured

[154] Aerial photograph of Miracle Mile, May 7, 1956, Section 22 Aerial Maps and Photographs, SLPHS; "Park Nicollet Medical Center/ St. Louis Park Medical Center," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 25, 2017, http://slphistory.org/parknicollet/; "Lilac Way Shopping Center," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 25, 2017, http://slphistory.org/lilacwayshopping/.

by new construction. The original store signs, pylons, and display windows have been removed. A strange blend of log cabin and Mediterranean styles, the center's original modern design is no longer visible. The additions of a bell tower on the west end of the center and a widened front walkway with a pitched tile roof and pillars in the 1980 remodel have changed the appearance of the center significantly. The façade, with its relatively inconspicuous signage, appears more uniform than it did in 1956, and the distinct, curved corner of the westernmost unit originally occupied by Snyder Drug store has been covered up by new façade materials.[155] The rear of the building, which consists mostly of painted brick and concrete block, appears to have retained the most original materials. Miracle Mile's second floor is still used for offices, but the center now has only nineteen first-floor store units, presumably due to the combining of tenant spaces.[156] Miracle Mile does not retain integrity of feeling, due to its lack of physical integrity. Thus, Miracle Mile lacks sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance and is considered not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

RECOMMENDATION

Although Miracle Mile is locally significant in the area of commerce under Criterion A as a mid-century shopping center in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, it lacks sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance and is, therefore, considered not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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[155] "Miracle Mile History," St. Louis Park Historical Society, accessed April 25, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/.

[156] As of May, 2017, one of these units is vacant.

FIGURES

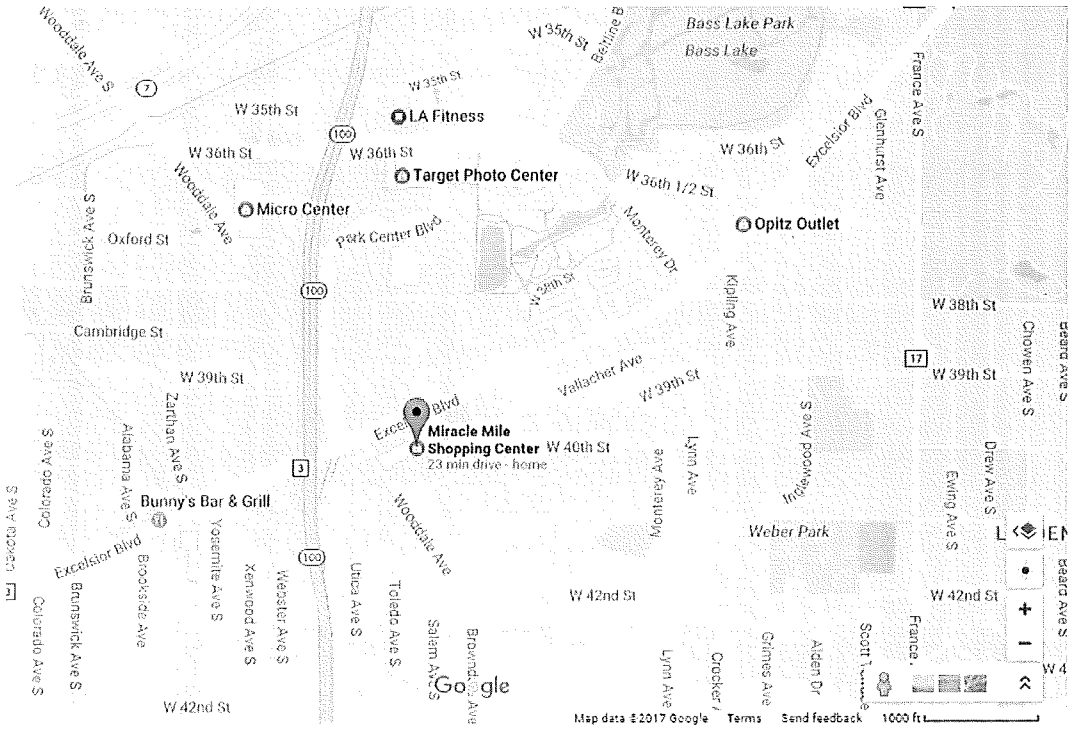

Figure 1. Google Maps, Miracle Mile Shopping Center, coordinates: 44°55'50.5" N, 93°20'47.0" W, accessed May 3, 2017.

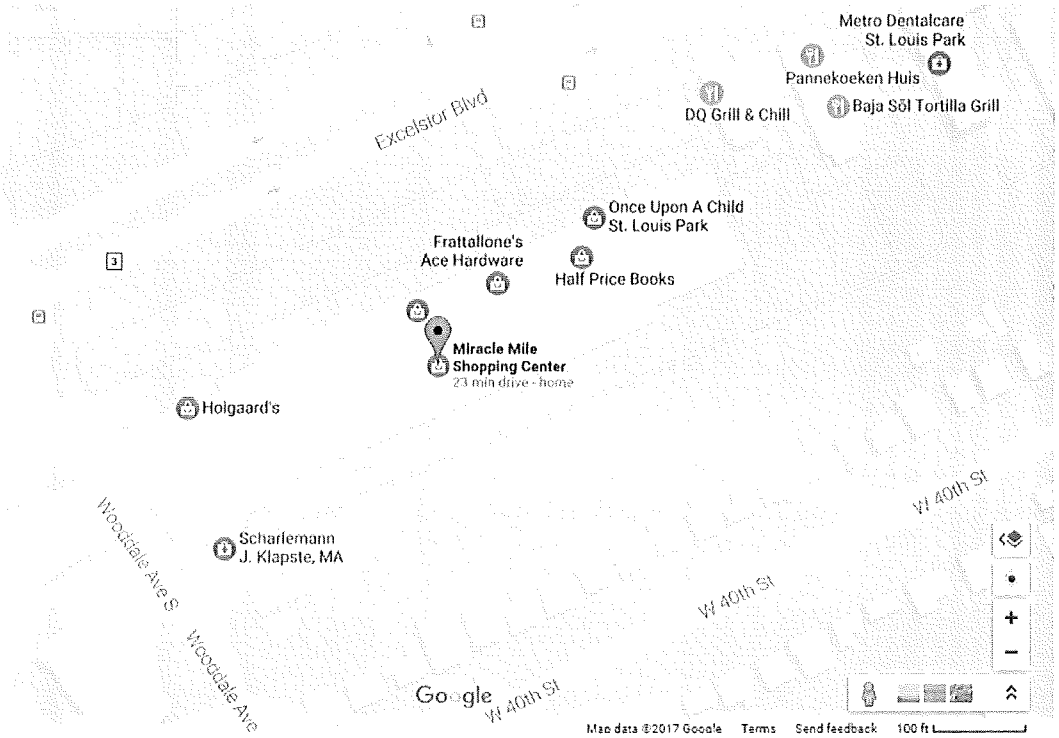

Figure 2. Google Maps, Miracle Mile Shopping Center, coordinates: 44°, 55'50.5" N, 93°20'47.0" W, accessed May 3, 2017.

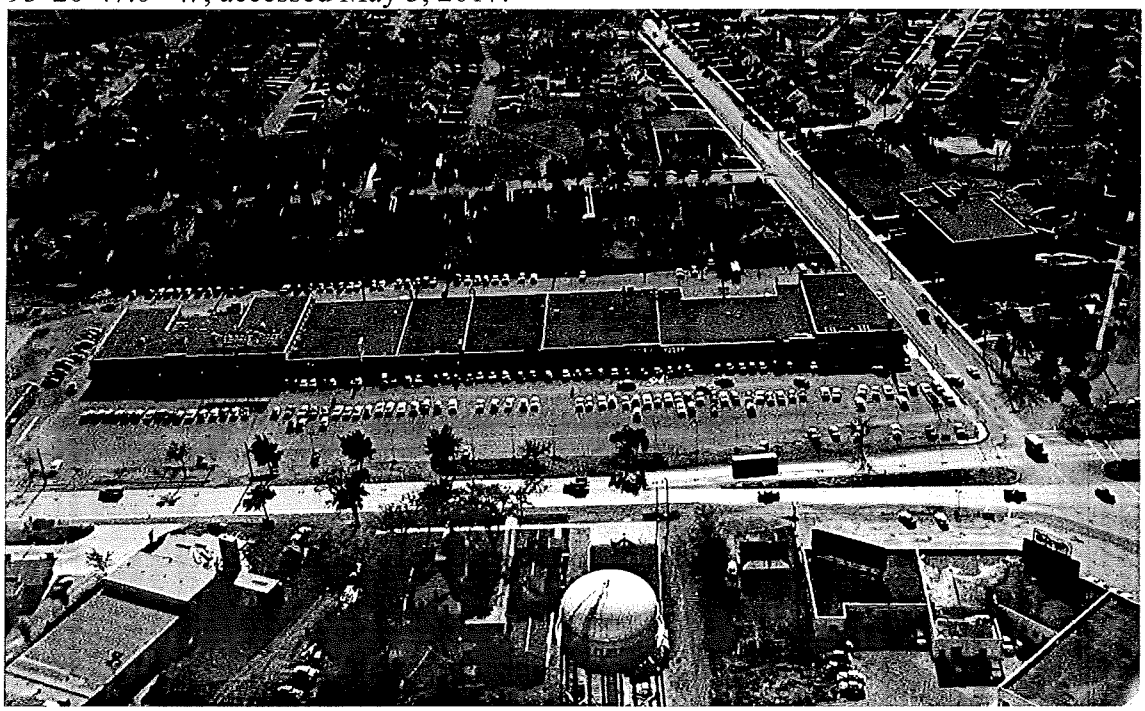

Figure 3. Aerial photograph of Miracle Mile Shopping Center, October 14, 1953. Photograph by the *Minneapolis Star Tribune.*[157] This photo shows the north elevation of the shopping center.

[157] *Minneapolis Star Journal Tribune, Shopping Center, aerial, St. Louis Park*, October 14, 1953, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

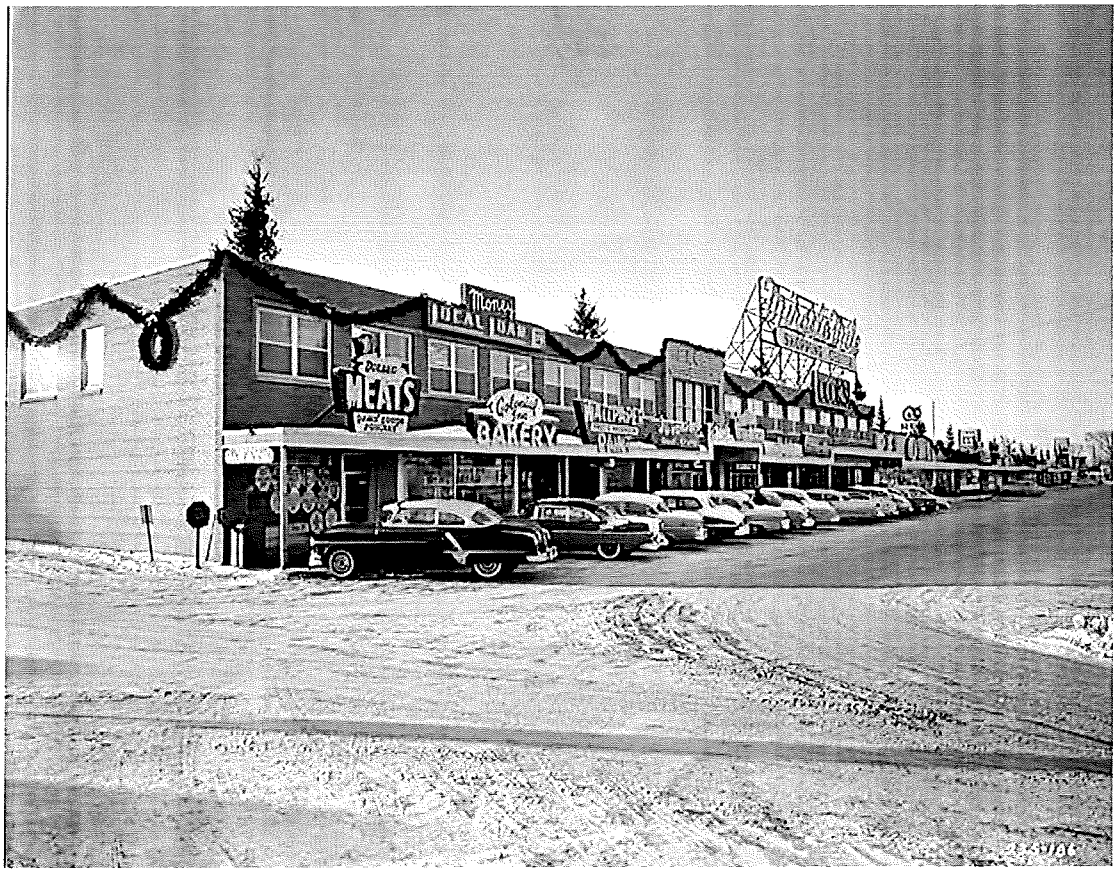

Figure 4. The Excel Building at Miracle Mile, December 29, 1955. Photograph by Norton and Peel. This is the northeastern corner of the shopping center. The photograph depicts the Excel Building, the portion of the center that was constructed between 1952 and 1953.[158]

[158] Norton and Peel, *Miracle Mile Shopping Center, Excelsior Boulevard and Highway 100, St. Louis Park,* December 29, 1955, Norton and Peel photograph collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, accessed April 11, 2017, http://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display.php?irn=10816482&return=brand%3Dmhs%26q%3Dmiracle%2520mile, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Figure 5. Storefronts at Miracle Mile Shopping Center, c. 1952. Photograph by Norton and Peel. This photograph depicts almost all of the shopping center as it existed soon after its construction. Note that the Excel Building, which by 1953 was located next to the Red Owl store at the far end of the shopping center, has not yet been constructed.[159]

[159] Norton and Peel, *The Miracle Mile Shopping Center on Excelsior Boulevard in St. Louis Park*, c. 1952, Norton and Peel photograph collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, accessed January 27, 2017, http://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display.php?irn=10843871&return=brand%3Dmhs%26q%3Dmiracle%2520mile, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Figure 6. Snyder's Drugstore, Miracle Mile, December 29, 1955. Photograph by Norton and Peel. This picture depicts the northwestern corner of the center, the former location of Snyder's Drugstore.[160]

[160] Norton and Peel, *Miracle Mile Shopping Center, St. Louis Park,* December 29, 1955, Norton and Peel photograph collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, accessed April 11, 2017, http://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display.php?irn=10860809&return=brand%3Dmhs%26q%3Dmiracle%2520mile, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Figure 7. Northwest corner of Miracle Mile, February, 1960. Photograph by the City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor.[161]

Figure 8. Miracle Mile storefronts, February, 1960. Photograph by the City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor.[162]

[161] City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Northwest corner of Miracle Mile, February 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, accessed April 11, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/. Courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

[162] City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Miracle Mile storefronts, February 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, accessed April 11, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

Figure 9. Warner Hardware, Dell Fabrics, Don Leary TV and Records, Betz Tots to Teens, and Angela's Apparel at the Miracle Mile Shopping Center, February 1960. Photograph by the City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor.[163]

Figure 10. Red Owl Store, Miracle Mile, February 1960. Photograph by the City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor.[164]

[163] City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Warner Hardware, Dell Fabrics, Don Leary TV and Records, Betz Tots to Teens, and Angela's Apparel at the Miracle Mile Shopping Center, February 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, accessed April 11, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

[164] City of St. Louis Park Tax Assessor, Red Owl Store, Miracle Mile, February 1960, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, accessed April 11, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

Figure 11. Miracle Mile Façade, 1973.[165]

Figure 12. Excel Building and Red Owl store in Miracle Mile, 1973.[166]

[165] Miracle Mile Façade, 1973, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, accessed April 11, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

[166] Excel Building and Red Owl store in Miracle Mile, 1973, St. Louis Park Historical Society, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, accessed April 11, 2017, http://slphistory.org/miraclemilehistory/, courtesy of the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

IMAGES

Image 1. Northwestern corner of Miracle Mile, March 25, 2017. Photograph by Lauren Anderson. The western section of the shopping center is visible in the forefront of this image.

Image 2. Northeastern corner of Miracle Mile, March 25, 2017. Photograph by Lauren Anderson. This is the eastern section of the shopping center, otherwise known as the Excel Building.

Image 3. Miracle Mile façade, March 25, 2017. Photograph by Lauren Anderson. This image portrays a portion of the central section of the shopping center.

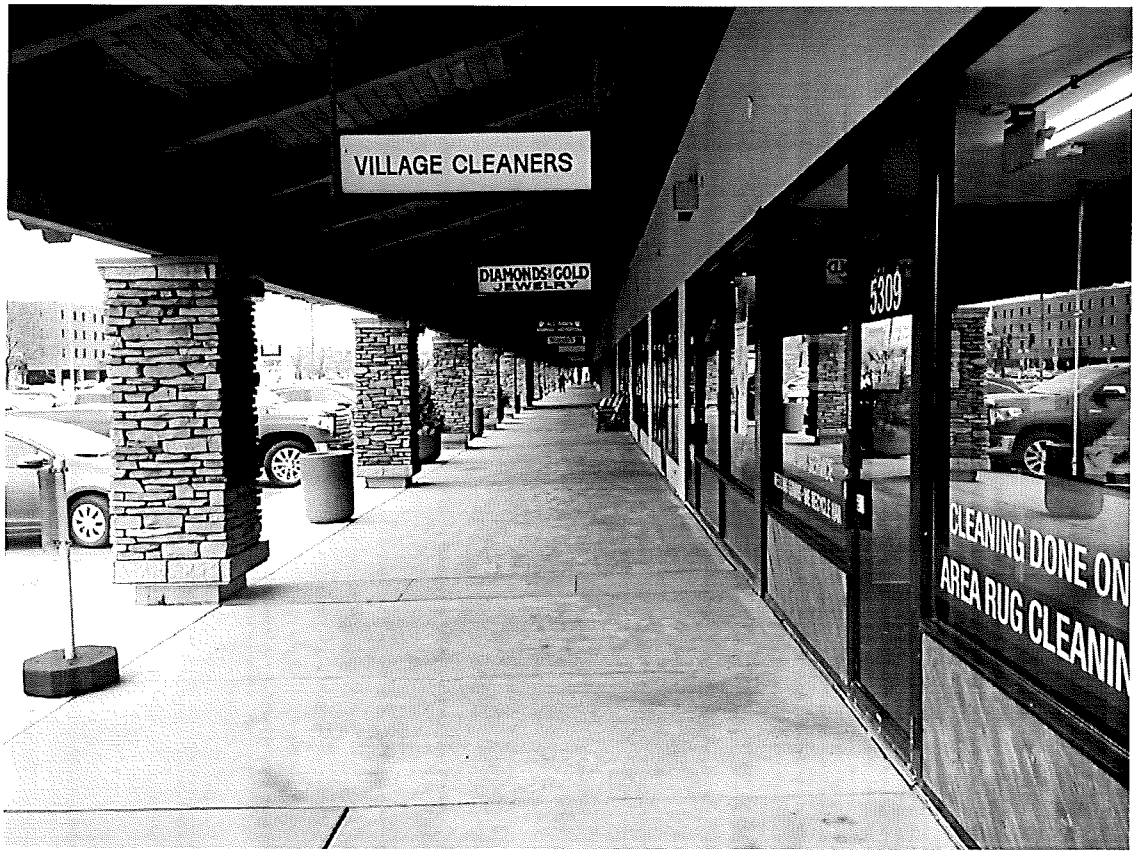

Image 5. Covered walkway at Miracle Mile, facing east, March 25, 2017. Photograph by Lauren Anderson.

Image 6. Sign at Miracle Mile, March 25, 2017. Photograph by Lauren Anderson.

Image 7. West elevation of Miracle Mile, March 25, 2017. Photograph by Lauren Anderson.

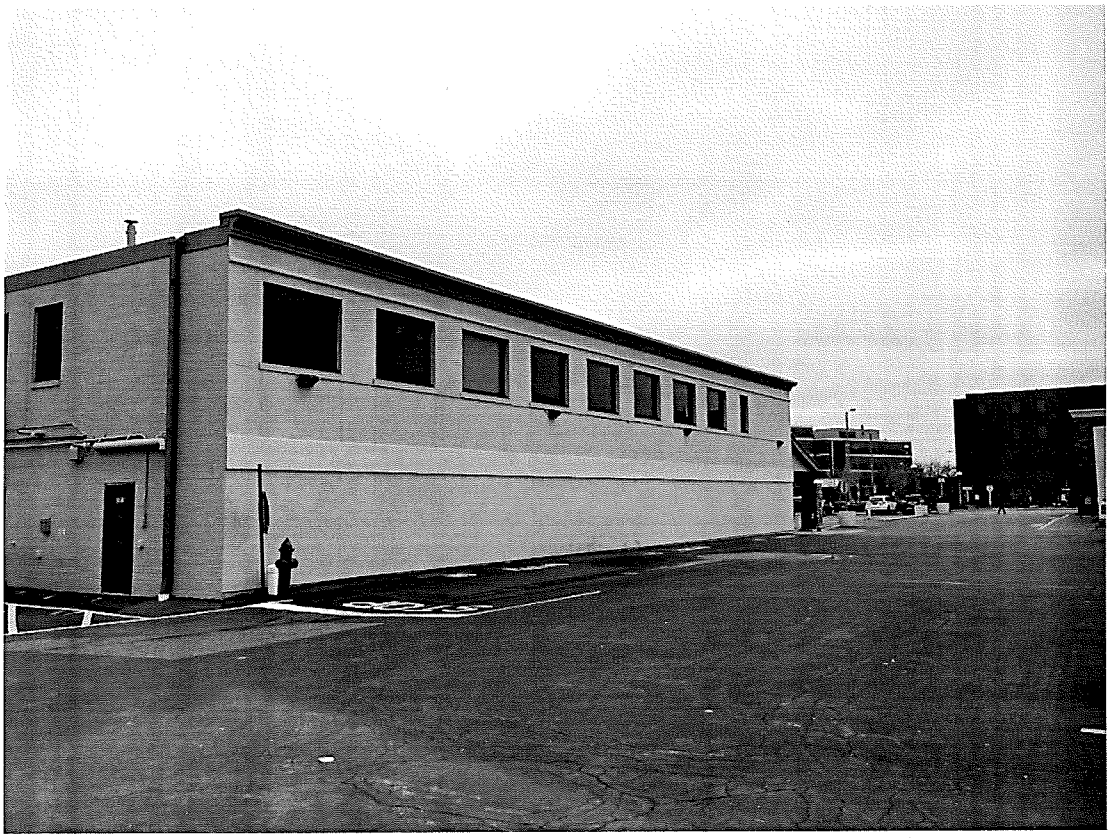

Image 8. East elevation of Miracle Mile, March 25, 2017. Photograph by Lauren Anderson.

Image 9. Rear elevation of Miracle Mile, March 25, 2017. Photograph by Lauren Anderson.

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