

## WATSON ROAD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN

### 2005 Amendment

#### INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Crestwood Planning and Zoning Commission, assisted by city staff and the city's planning consultant, Peckham, Guyton Albers & Viets, Inc. (PGAV), has developed this update to the *Watson Road Development Plan*. The *Watson Road Commercial District Plan* is the city's comprehensive plan for the Watson Road Commercial District, which is the City's single largest source of revenue garnered primarily from sales and utility taxes and business license fees. It is important to periodically update the Plan because its recommendations guide the City in many decisions concerning Watson Road such as infrastructure investment and proposed development and redevelopment efforts. This Plan also supports the City's efforts to pursue grant funding to improve this commercial corridor with streetscape enhancements and various roadway projects to improve pedestrian and vehicular accessibility along Watson.

The *Watson Road Commercial District Plan*<sup>1</sup> was originally created in 1984 through a cooperative effort between city officials and the Crestwood business community. The 1984 Plan established strategies for enhancing the appearance and function of Watson Road, as well as the utilization of key properties along the corridor. The Plan was updated in 1998 to reflect the implementation of many of the 1984 Plan's recommendations and to incorporate new ones. A more extensive summary of the 1984 Plan and 1998 Amendment is located in **Appendix C** of this report.

The purpose of the 2005 Amendment is to reevaluate priorities for improving the Watson Road Commercial District based on what's been accomplished so far, as well as an assessment of what strategies are needed to ensure the long term vitality of Crestwood's primary commercial corridor. The Plan is *not* intended to control exact land usage through specific zoning regulations or the use of eminent domain, but to serve as a general guide to development in the City.

#### 2005 AMENDMENT

**Plate 1** entitled *Proposed Land Use – 2005 Amendment*, located in the **Appendix A** of this report, depicts the proposed future land uses of the Corridor and identifies various key property areas. The land use and development recommendations for certain

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<sup>1</sup> The 2005 Amendment changes the Plan's name to the "Watson Road Commercial District Plan". This document refers to the 2005 Amendment by its new name or simply the "Plan". Previous plan names include "Development Plan, Watson Road Commercial District" (1984), and "Development Plan, Watson Road Commercial District – 1998 Amendment" (1998). These versions of the Plan will be referred to in this document as the "1984 Plan" and the "1998 Amendment".

properties discussed later in this document are the result of continued evaluation of the Corridor by the City and PGAV as well as the impact of recent development trends along Watson Road within the City and in adjoining communities. Likewise, market and economic trends in commercial, retail and residential development have also impacted the market viability of development opportunities along the Corridor, and therefore, have some influence on the future potential environs of the Watson Road Commercial District.

**Plate 2** entitled ***Existing Land Use – 2005 Amendment*** depicts the existing land uses proposed for the Watson Road Commercial District and is intended to serve as a reference for comparison purposes with Plate 1. The boundaries of the District are described by a solid black line and follow the boundaries of the District contained in the 1998 Amendment, with the following noted exceptions. These 1998 Amendment boundaries have been extended to the north following properties contiguous to or accessed by Watson Industrial Park Drive. This area is generally referred to as Watson Industrial Park. In addition, two properties east of Old Sappington Road and immediately south of the 1998 boundary have been included in the 2005 Amendment boundary.

In the context of a land use or development plan for the District, **Plate 1** entitled ***Proposed Land Use - 2005 Amendment*** is intended to depict the City's vision for future land use within the District. Proposed future land uses include many existing land uses as well as some proposed land uses for the various parcels comprising the District. The map depicts the following land use categories:

- **Single-Family Residential** – A small number of single-family housing units are still within the boundaries of the District.
- **Mixed Commercial** – These parcels contain buildings that house more than one tenant that are retail, office, and/or service businesses.
- **Office Commercial** – This land use category is indicated on parcels that contain office buildings and where such buildings do not contain retail uses.
- **Retail & Service Commercial** – Parcels that contain freestanding buildings devoted exclusively to retail or service commercial uses are shown in this category. It should be noted that service commercial uses are those where a service is sold to the public. These include dry cleaners, video rental establishments, beauty shops, etc.
- **Industrial** – This land use category is indicated on parcels that are devoted to buildings permitted to house industrial uses.
- **Planned Commercial**– These are larger properties that are mixed-use commercial uses but were developed according to a unified site plan using special procedures and regulations contained in the City's zoning ordinance. In addition, unlike the other properties designated Mixed Commercial, these developments are comprised of more than one parcel. In most instances, these developments contain "outlot" parcels that contain other retail or service commercial businesses such as restaurants or banks.

- **Planned Residential**– These are larger properties that are residential uses developed according to a unified site plan using special procedures and regulations contained in the City’s zoning ordinance.
- **Planned Mixed-Use**– These are larger properties that are mixed-use commercial uses but were developed according to a unified site plan using special procedures and regulations contained in the City’s zoning ordinance. These developments are comprised of more than one parcel. In most instances, these developments contain a combination of retail, commercial and residential uses.
- **Public & Semi-Public** – These are parcels that contain uses of an institutional or governmental nature such as the City’s new Public Works facility (formerly a Metropolitan Sewer District maintenance facility) on Pardee Lane. Also in this category is the Queen of the Holy Rosary School located at the northeast corner of Grant and Watson Roads.
- **Vacant** – Lots within the District boundaries that have no color designation on the Development Plan map are vacant and have no current use, structure, or other type of improvement. In each instance, this vacancy is the result of parcel size or physical constraints that generally make the parcel difficult (if not impossible) to develop.
- **Key Property Areas** – The land use designation for these parcels is shown in one of the categories listed above to indicate the use that is intended for the properties in the future. However, these parcels also carry a diagonal line pattern overlaying the underlying color and are labeled as Sites A - D. Each of these parcels has specific future development and land use recommendations outlined later in this Plan amendment.

In many instances, the land use designation for a parcel or group of parcels depicts the existing land use and thus **Plate 1** entitled **Proposed Land Use - 2005 Amendment** is simply affirming that the future land use is intended to be the same as the current land use. However, there are several instances where the 2005 Amendment makes specific recommendations for a new use of certain parcels. As discussed above, these parcels are designated as key property areas. The recommendations for these sites are discussed below. A summary of the key property recommendations is included in **Appendix B** of this report.

#### Site A

This site contains six parcels and is generally referred to as Watson Plaza. The shopping center was developed in the latter half of the 1980’s. Some of the buildings on the site were developed simultaneously, while others were developed at later stages. This center was designed as a so-called “community shopping center”. By its very definition, the occupants of such a center are those businesses that cater to the

everyday retail and service commercial of a community. This typically means that they are anchored by a grocery store and other retailers and small businesses catering to a smaller market area. Watson Plaza was always different in that regard in that it was anchored by Service Merchandise. This retailer was unique, and until recently, was alone in the St. Louis market (and maybe nationally) as a “catalog showroom retailer”. The liquidation of the Crestwood Service Merchandise is a reflection of the inability of “catalog showroom retailing” to compete with recent developments in retailing.

In the years after Watson Plaza (The Center) was built, the nature of retailing and the design of shopping centers began to change dramatically. Retailing began to be dominated by major regional or national chains using big stores to sell merchandise in two ways. One involves sales of merchandise in more discrete categories. These so-called “category killer” merchandisers target their markets very carefully and carry items only within certain retail segments. The size of “category killer” stores typically range from 20,000 to 50,000 square feet. The other category called “big box” retailers fall into two subgroups. One of these is the discount department store (Wal-Mart, Target Greatland, etc.). The other is the home improvement retailer (Home Depot and Lowe’s). These “big box” retailers occupy buildings of 120,000 to 170,000 square feet. In neither of the category of retailers discussed previously, is the grocery store. The typical grocery store footprint today for any of the St. Louis area grocery retailers involves a store of between 60,000 and 65,000 square feet.

Watson Plaza’s problem is that it is designed in such a way that cannot easily be converted to accommodate the newest retail building concepts without significant demolition of existing improvements. The Center, as designed, has more than half its space (51.6%) most suitable to small tenants. The Center’s east and west wings have a front to rear depth of only 80 feet (average) – a dimension too small for many of the larger retailers interested in locating in Crestwood. Most of the larger, national retailers want a floor plan for their space that is squarer and with a greater front to rear store depth. For example, if a typical “category killer” retailer were to locate in Watson Plaza, they would need one entire wing of the center (about 25,000 sq. ft.). This would mean their space configuration would be long and narrow. This type of retailer simply will not accept this configuration. In today’s retailing environment, there are simply fewer, very small, local business-type tenants to fill Watson Plaza. Therefore, there are sizable spaces in the Center that have been vacant. In addition, the current tenants represent professional service related businesses (i.e. dentist, eye wear center, computer repair, etc.) which is another indication that the original layout of the facility is outdated for today’s retail climate.

The Center’s out parcel pads in their current configuration, plus the out-dated physical layout of the Service Merchandise building, have resulted in excessive vacancies at this site. The Center has therefore become an economic liability to the City and ad valorem taxing jurisdictions. As a result of the conditions impacting Watson Plaza, the City investigated redevelopment alternatives for this property through dialogue with the current property owners and through the issuance of a request for proposals to redevelop the area. As a part of these investigations, the City has also reviewed the various redevelopment programs that it has at its disposal via State statutes to provide

redevelopment assistance in the event that a project is encumbered by extraordinary redevelopment costs.

This 2005 Amendment recommends the redevelopment of the site as a Planned Commercial development with a unified site plan. The primary uses to be accommodated should be retail. This reflects the consistent recommendation of many developers with whom the City has had discussions regarding commercial development. The redevelopment of the adjacent properties (Site A in the 1998 Amendment and now a Kohl's store) provides an opportunity to increase the accessibility and viability of this location as a retail destination. Cross-access between the Kohl's site and the Watson Plaza location should be encouraged to improve vehicular access for visitors of either location.

### **Site B (Sites B1 and B2 in the 1998 Amendment)**

This site contained two properties in the 1998 Amendment. The 2005 Amendment has expanded the site to six properties. The area includes a muffler repair shop on the northeast corner, two multi-tenant retail centers, two residential properties and a vacant lot.

The 1998 Amendment concluded that the two parcels contained in Sites B1 and B2 were not in significantly better condition than they were at the time they were considered for inclusion in the 66 Drive-In redevelopment program (1988). During that ten-year period nothing substantially improved other than bringing the area's signage into code compliance. Between 1998 and 2003, the muffler repair shop property has continued to physically deteriorate and the odd parcel sizes of both lots have impacted traffic safety in the area. The 1998 Amendment also noted that the ability to attract new retail development is constrained by the size of the two parcels identified at that time.

A current evaluation of the physical and market conditions of the six properties within this site indicate that there is a need for unified redevelopment of a larger site at this location. This site contains multiple ingress/egress points along Watson Road and Old Sappington Road that create hazardous traffic conditions. The residential properties show signs of dilapidation and are incompatible land uses with the commercial properties to the north (the former Drive-In site), the east (the previously identified commercial properties along Watson) and the south. There is no accessibility to the vacant lot. The platting of the properties in the area is obsolete for contemporary development standards. The expansion of this site for redevelopment consideration will enhance the lot depth and improve the ability to safely accommodate vehicular access in such close proximity to a highly trafficked intersection (Watson and Old Sappington).

This 2005 Amendment recommends the complete redevelopment of the site as a Planned Commercial development with a unified site plan. The primary uses to be accommodated should be retail commercial. Within the Crestwood retail shopping area, there has been significant retail development and redevelopment resulting in the attraction of "Class A" and Class "B" retailers, and "category killer" retailers, to

the market in an effort to meet current retail standards (i.e. highway visibility, increased layout size and format). These retailers have generally located to the west of Crestwood Plaza, thereby shifting the retail center of the market area further west along Watson Road. Retail traffic is now being concentrated at the western end of Crestwood, as well as at the Lindbergh and Interstate 44 intersection in Sunset Hills and Kirkwood. As a result of the shifting market conditions, Site B (as well as Site A) is situated in a highly visible and opportune location to compliment the retail shopping traffic generated by Crestwood Plaza as well as the Kohl's store.

### **Site C**

This site contains seven parcels including the vacant Circuit City location and adjoining strip mall, a realty company, retail and office uses and an apartment complex. The size and layout of each of the parcels in the area are irregular. The apartment complex parcel has limited frontage along Watson Road that is barely wide enough to accommodate an entrance and exit to the development. Several other parcels have very limited depth and are covered with site improvements and buildings. The shopping center parcel has a very narrow width for contemporary development standards.

The layout, physical and functional obsolescence, and physical condition of several of the buildings in the area have led to the underutilization of these properties, and in some cases, increased vacancy. Circuit City, once a primary tenant of the shopping center, vacated in 2003. The remaining tenant mix in the strip commercial portion of the power center consists primarily of office and service commercial uses, a tenant mix representative of the decline in this center's ability to attract retail tenants.

Generally, the size, layout and orientation of each of the properties within Site C contributes to poorly designed internal traffic circulation, excessive curb cuts along Watson Road, and obstructed sightlines of ingress/egress points to the properties along Watson Road. The current topography of the area precludes providing "cross access" between properties and further contributes to the internal traffic circulation issues and necessitates the number of curb cuts on Watson Road. Likewise, the topography contributes to storm water drainage issues impacting the apartment complex location since that property is significantly lower than the northern parcels fronting Watson Road.

Issues such as parcel size and layout, topography, physical and functional obsolescence impede the ability to redevelop the individual parcels to modern development standards and/or fully address and eradicate these limitations. Therefore, for redevelopment to occur, it will be necessary to redevelop the area in a unified and comprehensive manner that addresses these issues while also fully utilizing the site.

This 2005 Amendment recommends the complete redevelopment of the site as a Planned Mixed-Use development with a unified site plan. The primary uses to be accommodated should be a mix of retail commercial, neighborhood commercial and residential. If market conditions are favorable, office uses should also be incorporated.

The frontage of this site along Watson Road should remain commercial in nature and market conditions suggest that smaller retail commercial and neighborhood commercial development would compliment the current retail and commercial mix along Watson Road. The southern edge of the site should be converted to a higher density residential use to provide a buffer between the commercial uses and the single family neighborhood to the south. Redevelopment should incorporate a grid street system within the development, be designed to accommodate both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and whenever possible link both to adjacent properties. Market conditions for new residential development in Crestwood are favorable for this type of development. Based on discussions with developers, demographic trends in the St. Louis metropolitan region, and residential development patterns, there is considerable opportunity for the development of new housing in Crestwood. This new housing could provide additional alternatives to new or existing residents for residential living. These alternatives may include senior living residences, loft or condo units, villas or town homes. A diversified housing mix would address an “underserved” consumer market in the Crestwood area. An aging population will require senior living residences or a “downsizing” of residential living quarters. Younger residents are seeking unique living units such as loft or condo residences that offer the “urban” feel in a suburban environment. These alternatives are limited or do not currently exist in Crestwood and should be encouraged when possible.

#### **Site D**

This site contains two parcels. The smaller parcel is approximately 1 acre and comprises a 16,500 square foot, two-story multi-tenant, multi-use building. The larger parcel contains a “big box” retail building currently occupied by a discount department store and a multi-tenant “strip” retail building.

Since the initial construction of the buildings on the site occupied by the discount retailer, there has been difficulty in maintaining tenancy. In fact, the strip building has never been fully occupied from its initial construction (in 1985). The larger, single-tenant building was initially built to house a K-Mart Department Store. A short time after opening, K-Mart vacated the building and it was subsequently occupied by Builders Square (a home improvement retailer that was merged with a competitor (Home Quarters). Builders Square occupied the building for a few years and then relocated to a newer, larger building a short distance west on Watson Road. Again, the building sat vacant for a period of time before Value City occupied the space. In addition, there are two expanses of vacant land that are part of the larger parcel occupied by the discount department store and the multi-tenant strip building. This vacant land was intended to be developed with typical out-parcel uses often found in association with major retail stores. To date, this land remains vacant.

When originally constructed, the “anchor box” of the retail strip center was expected to become a local power center anchored by a “Class A” or “Class B” retailer, with the remaining strip center spaces filled with sales tax generating retail uses and supporting service commercial uses. Today, the anchor tenant space of the retail strip center is currently used by Value City and is considered by the commercial real estate development community to be a “Class C” retailer based on shopper

desirability and community image. The retail center's decline to a "Class C" anchored center has multiple causes. Changes in retailing have impacted the size, layout, amenities, and locations desired by "Class A" or "Class B" retailers. Within the Crestwood retail shopping area, there has been significant retail development and redevelopment resulting in the attraction of "Class A" and "Class B" retailers, and "category killer" retailers, to the market in an effort to meet current retail standards (i.e. highway visibility, increased layout size and format). As previously noted in the 2005 Amendment, these retailers have generally located to the west of Crestwood Plaza, thereby shifting the retail center of the market area further west along Watson Road and away from Site F. Retail traffic is now being concentrated at the western end of Crestwood, as well as at the Lindbergh and Interstate 44 intersection in Sunset Hills and Kirkwood.

In addition, the department store property suffers from a sloped parking area with deteriorated parking drive aisles and parking spaces. Internal traffic signage is damaged or non-existent. There is no "cross access" between the two parcels located within Site D, resulting in motorists entering Watson Road or Grant Road to navigate between properties.

The two-story multi-use building located on the northwest corner of Site D has undergone a rehabilitation program that will bring it into compliance with many of the code and maintenance issues that the property has suffered from such as deteriorating walkways, peeling paint, driveway cracks and potholes. Issues of concern remain however. The one-acre parcel has three vehicular access points, as well as multiple curb-cuts providing ingress and egress to the property resulting in hazardous traffic conditions along both Watson and Grant Roads as well as increased traffic congestion at the southern part of the Watson and Grant intersection. These conditions also jeopardize the safety of vehicular and pedestrian traffic within the parcel. The combination of a lack of cross-access between the two parcels, and the multiple curb cuts along both Watson and Grant Roads encourages the "cut through" of traffic to avoid the intersection thereby increasing the potential for traffic accidents.

This 2005 Amendment recommends the complete redevelopment of Site D as a Planned Mixed-Use development with a unified site plan that incorporates both parcels. A combination of higher density residential as well as non-residential uses would be considered appropriate for Site D. In particular, the City should encourage higher density, high quality residential uses, as there is significant opportunity and demand to support this type of development in Crestwood. High quality residential development would create a positive gateway for the City. It would also attract new residents with higher than average incomes to Crestwood, as well as provide residential options to retain existing residents. In addition, residential development at this location would help to strengthen the market for Crestwood's existing commercial base. The City should consider the use of available redevelopment mechanisms to encourage residential development at the site.

As an entryway into the city from the east, this site's role as a defining point in Crestwood should be considered during improvements to existing development, as

well as during any future redevelopment. Unified site and building design elements as well as integrated pedestrian and vehicular access throughout Site D should be included in any future development or redevelopment plan. Also in connection with future redevelopment, special consideration should be given to compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods, as well as to this site's connectivity to Grant's Trail and surrounding commercial developments to ensure safe and effective pedestrian access.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

At the western end of the Corridor, there are two single-family houses located south of Watson Road on Watson Ridge Drive. These houses are located behind the Sylvan Learning Center building and face the side of the Crestwood Bowl building. The St. Paul Book & Media Center borders these properties to the east. These single-family houses may begin to lose value for single-family residential use. Under these circumstances, the property owners often cease to reinvest in their property and begin to allow the units to deteriorate. Given the location of these properties, it would not be unusual for the City to receive a request to convert these residences to commercial use. As noted in the 1998 Amendment, it is recommended that the City not allow such conversions. As is noted in the 1984 Watson Road Plan and the 1998 Amendment, the most ideal development scenario for these properties would be redevelopment as a unified whole that would include the Sylvan Learning Center site. This would create a single parcel with fairly narrow frontage to Watson Road, but would provide a parcel size capable of supporting a small, modern commercial building. In the absence of a proposal to combine these parcels, it will be important for the City to observe these properties for signs of deterioration and code violations.

Westfield Crestwood Shoppingtown (the mall) is also an area of concern. Currently, Westfield Corporation is contemplating redevelopment and/or rehabilitation of a portion of the mall that is experiencing declining retail sales, high vacancy rates and low rents. A market feasibility study is recommended to assess the feasibility of redevelopment and/or rehabilitation of the mall and provide a clear picture of the demographic and market trends that would influence any project Westfield may propose in the future, particularly in relation to other competing districts in Crestwood's commercial sub-market trade area. The City should continue to work with Westfield representatives to insure the long term viability of the mall, which historically has generated a significant portion of the City's total sales tax revenues. The 2005 Amendment recommends the City give further consideration to some type of redevelopment/rehabilitation program at the mall following the completion of the market feasibility study and based on its recommendations.

The 2005 Amendment recommends continued strict adherence to the City's landscape regulations. Additionally, the City has recognized the need to promote other aesthetic enhancements to the Watson Road Corridor in an effort to improve the visual appearance of Watson Road properties and Watson Road. This 2005 Amendment recommends that the City continue to pursue a comprehensive program to promote a unified streetscape program for the Watson Road Corridor. As selective redevelopment of properties along Watson Road occurs, the elements of the streetscape program should be incorporated into the unified site plan for each target area. The City should also consider the establishment of a transportation development district (TDD) or

Community Improvement District (CID) along the Corridor to assist the City and encourage property owners in investing in streetscape enhancements. Other communities have applied for and received grant funding to improve transportation corridors and these sources of funding should also be pursued as they become available, by Crestwood. The City should also consider partnerships with Sunset Hills and Webster Groves to unify the streetscape effort along Watson Road. The City should investigate the implementation of an access management along Watson Road in order to improve traffic safety by eliminating excess curb cuts. A comprehensive program for Watson Road should also include improving signage and constructing additional roadway improvements when necessary.

In early 2004, the City's Public Works Department initiated a proactive code enforcement program for Crestwood's commercial properties. Each commercial property is to be inspected annually in an effort to maintain compliance with building and property maintenance codes. Following inspection, the City's Commercial Code Enforcement Officer contacts each property owner or business representative either to inform them their property is in compliance, or that violations exist. When violations are present, the business is provided with information to help them remedy any deficiencies and is given ample time to obtain compliance. This program has proven to have a positive impact on the Watson Road Commercial District, both in terms of maintaining the appearance of the corridor as well as improving and increasing communication between the City and Crestwood businesses and property owners. The 2005 Amendment recommends the continuation of this program.

### **General Recommendations Summary**

1. Develop a streetscape plan for Watson Road to promote a unified streetscape program for the Watson Road Corridor.
2. Establish a Transportation Development District (TDD) or Community Improvement District (CID) to assist the City and property owners in investing in streetscape enhancements and transportation improvements.
3. Update the City's sign ordinance. Seek input from the city's businesses and property owners throughout the process.
4. Investigate an access management program for Watson Road, and throughout the Watson Road Commercial district.
5. Continue proactive code enforcement of commercial properties within the Watson Road Commercial District.
6. When opportunities arise and as redevelopment occurs, encourage the assembly of parcels to better provide for the types of commercial development that would be appropriate for and attracted to the Watson Road Commercial District.

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# APPENDIX

## (A) SUPPORTING MAPS

## **(B) Key Property Recommendations Summary**

### **Site A**

This site contains six parcels and is generally referred to as Watson Plaza. Redevelopment of the site as a Planned Commercial development with a unified site plan is recommended. The primary uses to be accommodated should be retail. Cross access between the Kohl's site and Watson Plaza should be encouraged to improve vehicular access for visitors of either location.

### **Site B**

This site contained two properties in the 1998 Amendment. The 2005 Amendment has expanded the site to six properties, including a muffler repair shop on the northeast corner, two multi-tenant retail centers, two residential properties and a vacant lot. Site B is situated in a highly visible and opportune location to compliment the retail shopping traffic generated by Crestwood Plaza as well as the Kohl's store. The 2005 Amendment recommends the complete redevelopment of the site as a Planned Commercial development with a unified site plan. The primary uses to be accommodated should be retail commercial.

### **Site C**

This site contains seven parcels including the vacant Circuit City location and adjoining strip mall, a realty company, retail and office uses and an apartment complex. The 2005 Amendment recommends the complete redevelopment of the site as a Planned Mixed-Use development with a unified site plan. The primary uses to be accommodated should be a mix of retail commercial, neighborhood commercial, and residential. If market conditions are favorable, office uses may also be incorporated. The frontage of this site along Watson Road should remain commercial in nature and market conditions suggest that smaller retail commercial and neighborhood commercial development would compliment the current retail and commercial mix along Watson Road. The southern edge of the site should be converted to a higher density residential use to provide a buffer between the commercial uses and the single family neighborhood to the south. Redevelopment should incorporate a grid street system within the development, be designed to accommodate both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and whenever possible link both to adjacent properties.

Based on discussions with developers, demographic trends in the St. Louis metropolitan region, and residential development patterns, there is considerable opportunity for the development of new housing in Crestwood. This new housing could provide additional alternatives to new or existing residents for residential living. These alternatives may include senior living residences, loft or condo units, villas or town homes. A diversified housing mix would address an "underserved" consumer market in the Crestwood area. An aging population will require senior living residences or a "downsizing" of residential living quarters. Younger residents are seeking unique living units such as loft or condo

residences that offer the “urban” feel in a suburban environment. These alternatives are limited or do not currently exist in Crestwood and should be encouraged when possible.

#### **Site D**

This site contains two parcels. The small parcel comprises a 16,500 square foot, two-story multi-tenant, multi-use building. The large parcel contains a “big box” retail building currently occupied by a discount department store and a multi-tenant “strip” retail building. The 2005 Amendment recommends the complete redevelopment of the site as a Planned Mixed-Use development with a unified site plan. The City should consider the use of available redevelopment mechanisms to implement the redevelopment of the site.

## (C) Plan History (Summary of the 1984 Plan and 1998 Amendment)

Late in 1983, the City of Crestwood completed a development plan for the Watson Road Commercial District. The plan, entitled *Development Plan, Watson Road Commercial District*,<sup>2</sup> was the result of a 12-month planning effort with input from and participation by a variety of parties including:

- A group called the Watson Road Development Committee comprised of representatives of the businesses from the City's Watson Road business corridor within the City and certain members of the Board of Aldermen;
- The Mayor and Board of Aldermen;
- The Planning and Zoning Commission;
- The City Administrator and the Director of Public Works; and
- Representatives of various public agencies including the Missouri Department of Transportation, Union Electric; Laclede Gas; and others.

The principal recommendations of the *Watson Road Development Plan* are contained in the last three sections of the document (not including the Appendix). These sections are entitled:

- Development Strategies;
- Development Plan; and
- Implementation Tools.

The text and map graphics and other illustrations are contained on Pages 37 through 54. A synopsis of the *Development Strategies* and *Development Plan* sections is contained in the following subsections of this update.

In 1998, an amendment to the Plan<sup>3</sup> was completed by the City. The 1998 amendment updated the text of the sections of the Watson Road Development Plan entitled *Development Strategies* and *Development Plan* and the map entitled *Development Plan*

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<sup>2</sup> The document is typically referred to as the "Watson Road Development Plan" and therefore, the remaining references in this document will refer to it by that name or simply as the "Plan".

<sup>3</sup> Herein referred to as the 1998 Amendment.

that follows Page 42 in the original Plan report. The following is a synopsis of the *Development Strategies* and the *Development Plan* sections of the Watson Road Plan.

## **Section II - Development Strategies Plan Component (1984)**

The *Development Strategies* section of the Watson Road Plan made a variety of recommendations to improve the appearance of the Watson Road “streetscape” and to improve the utilization of key properties along the Corridor. These recommendations included:

- Design and construction of entrance signage for the various major street entries to the City;
- Development of a plan for installing street trees along the Watson Road frontage;
- Landscaping improvements at the U-Turn Loop at the western end of Watson Road;
- Street lighting improvements to provide nighttime identification for the area. The method chosen was to change the existing fixture heads to high-pressure sodium lamps that project a gold color light.<sup>4</sup>
- Suggested ways to improve the exterior appearance of buildings along the Watson Road;
- Installation of block numbers on the traffic signal mastheads and encouragement of the installation of exterior address numbers on buildings to aid shoppers and patrons looking for businesses along the street;
- Development of systematic program for working with businesses and property owners to achieve better and more economically beneficial use of the property in key locations along the corridor.

## **Section III – Development Plan Component (1984)**

In conjunction with the recommendations in Section II – *Development Strategies*, Section III of the Watson Road Development Plan outlines a recommended development/redevelopment program for a total of 15 separate parcels or combination of parcels referred to as “Sites”. The Sites are identified by either numbers or letters on the Development Plan map in Section III.

Over the years following its adoption, the City in cooperation with the various property owners and developers has very carefully implemented nearly every streetscape element and site development component of the Watson Road Plan. This program

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<sup>4</sup> This type of lighting was very new at the time and afforded, at least for a period of time, a very distinctive nighttime appearance to the Watson Road corridor. These types of lamps are very common today.

resulted in one of the most successful transformations of a suburban strip-commercial area in the St. Louis area.

### **1998 Amendment**

The 1998 Amendment provided recommendations for the improvement of key properties along the Corridor and provided an update to general recommendations contained in the original Plan. These recommendations were based on input received from the Crestwood 2000 Commission and the City's Watson Road Committee. Each of these entities was convened in 1996 and 1997 to review and discuss the conditions and issues relative to the current conditions and future health of the Watson Road Commercial District. Additionally, ongoing review of the land use patterns and property conditions in the Corridor by the City's planning consultants (Peckham Guyton Albers & Viets) were considered. Each of these groups emphasized the importance of maintaining the economic viability of the City's commercial base. **Plate 1** entitled **Existing Land Use – 1998 Amendment** and **Plate 2** entitled **Development Plan – 1998 Amendment** are located in the 1998 Amendment **Appendix** for reference. Key properties in the 1998 Amendment include:

#### **Site A**

The 1998 Amendment identified this target site as an area in need of complete redevelopment as a Planned Commercial Development with a unified site plan. At the time of the 1998 Amendment the site was comprised of three parcels containing a multi-story office building with retail and service commercial uses on the first floor; and a separate single-story, strip-type building containing Abeyta's restaurant, a shoe repair facility, a Mattress shop, and the former Schnuck (and subsequently National) grocery store that was vacant. The primary recommended uses to be accommodated via redevelopment were recommended as retail commercial. In both the 1984 Plan and the 1998 Amendment, the recommendation was made to consider tax increment financing (TIF) as an available redevelopment tool to be employed in redeveloping the site.

In accordance with the 1998 Amendment, the City issued a request for proposals for redevelopment of Site A. In addition, the City established a TIF redevelopment area to support the extraordinary costs of redeveloping the location. The retail development contains a Kohl's store (which opened in fall of 2003) which greatly enhances the aesthetic appearance of this highly visible corner along Watson Road, as well as improves traffic safety at the busy intersection of Watson Road and Sappington Road.

#### **Sites B1 and B2**

These two properties are located on the south side of Watson Road immediately east of Old Sappington Road. In 1998, the corner site use was a muffler shop. A strip building to the east contained a variety of small commercial tenants. These properties were discussed due to the interrelated vehicular access and because they form the visual image of a "pair" at this corner.

These parcels were initially included in the Chapter 353 Redevelopment Area that the City created for the redevelopment of the 66 Drive-In property due to the need for site improvements of these parcels such as the repair of parking surfaces and lighting standards. The buildings were also demonstrating signs of age and exterior deterioration. These parcels were removed from the redevelopment area prior to its adoption.

The 1998 Amendment noted that the total redevelopment of these properties may be ideal, but the size of the parcels is a constraint to attracting new retail development. In addition, it was stated, that it is important that the City continue to have some buildings that can accommodate smaller retail and service businesses at lower lease rates. Therefore, the 1998 Amendment recommended that the City continue to observe these parcels for further deterioration and aggressively pursue any code violations that are noted. Sites B1 and B2 have had some notable changes to signage, but the overall problems previously identified have not changed since 1998.

### **Site C**

This property (identified as Site F in the 1984 Watson Road Plan) is a property that underwent some rehabilitation and outward visual improvement shortly after the Watson Road Plan was adopted. The 1998 Amendment reiterated many of the 1984 Plan's recommendations. The 1998 Amendment concluded that as long as the present business remained viable there is not likely to be a change in this use as a result of normal commercial real estate conditions and the City should follow the same course for this property that is recommended for Sites B1 and B2 above.