

Minnetonka Western Glen Lake

Corridor Development Initiative

August 2014

Glen Lake

Located in a well-preserved pocket of the City of Minnetonka is historic Glen Lake. The Glen Lake area/neighborhood has a small town feel and sense of community, amidst a glorious natural setting. The neighborhood and commercial area located on Excelsior Boulevard at Eden Prairie and Williston roads is known as Glen Lake, named for the large lake located just southeast of that intersection.



In 1907, on the southwest corner of the intersection, Chris Kraemer set up a general store that sold food, sewing materials, hardware, animal feed and clothing. Electric streetcars and freight trains began traveling between Minneapolis and Lake Minnetonka on train tracks originally installed in 1881. The tracks ran through Glen Lake on the south side of Excelsior Boulevard and under a bridge for Eden Prairie Road, where a station was located. The line was discontinued in 1932 when buses became the primary mode of mass transportation. Traces of the line can still be seen just west of Glen Lake, especially at the entrance to Purgatory Park where a bridge traversed Purgatory Creek.

In 1958, Kraemer's store moved to the west end of a new shopping center, and by the 1980s, the business, now primarily a hardware store, occupied a new building across Excelsior Boulevard.

Today, the Glen Lake neighborhood is thriving commercial and residential area, with a hilly landscape and rich tree canopy. From the unique businesses along Excelsior Boulevard, to the recent residential investments, Glen Lake is a walkable and inviting destination.

ASSETS

The broader city of Minnetonka offers:

- A proud reputation of preserving its natural resources – residents can enjoy 42 community parks, more than 40 miles of trails and more than 1,000 acres of public open space, as well as natural scenery that includes mature trees, wetlands, and prairies.
- Eleven village centers located throughout the city offer a variety of focus points for retail and services.
- A wealth of community resources, including three public school districts and three private schools, two libraries, many churches, a variety of transportation options, utility companies and other community agencies.

Glen Lake offers:

- Natural amenities such as Glen Lake and Kinsel Point, nestled into a topography of rolling hills and wooded areas.
- A diversity of small businesses and housing options, including a spectrum of senior housing.
- A walkable community that is small and safe, enhanced by local parks.
- Schools and daycare services, athletic fields, and a skateboard park.
- A strong sense of history.

Development Guidelines: Western Glen Lake site

The western gateway to the Glen Lake neighborhood is poised for redevelopment. Nestled into a sloped topography, the site is in a prime location for a mix of residential, commercial, and office uses. The site offers the opportunity to enhance the walkability of the area, while incorporating additional neighborhood services (e.g. grocery, pharmacy) to support the vitality of the neighborhood.

The larger site includes 10 individual parcels, which presents a challenge for a coordinated redevelopment approach for the area. The City should consider establishing a long-term plan for the site to maintain a cohesive vision that would complement and enhance the surrounding neighborhood. To achieve the full potential of the site, the City will need to work proactively with developers (e.g. identify strategies for shared parking, coordinate uses, attract and retain needed retail and services, etc.).

The desire for a local grocery store continues, even as two attempts have failed. Perhaps a non-traditional solution could be identified, such as a food cooperative (e.g. Lakewinds) and smaller grocery store / pharmacy option. A recent market study conducted by the City revealed that a grocery store would in fact be viable in the area.

Recommendations for redevelopment of the site include:

Goal 1: Maintain the small town / community appeal of the Glen Lake neighborhood

- A. Any commercial and residential development or redevelopment design will seek to reflect and enhance the historic nature of the Glen Lake area.

- B. Create engaging pedestrian-friendly streetscapes that connect the commercial area along Excelsior Boulevard and the surrounding area.
- C. Enhance the walkability of the area, with attention to stronger connections to other commercial areas, parks, and Glen Lake.
- D. Design and site orientation must be respectful of residential and commercial uses.
- E. Consider impact on existing neighborhood character.
- F. Blend elevation of development into existing topography.
- G. Retain the existing post office if possible.
- H. Provide for a diverse range of housing options, promoting a mix of household size and incomes (young and multi-generational appeal).
- I. Manage traffic flow and parking needs of the site so that pedestrians (rather than cars) are the dominant focus.
- J. Consider elements that enhance transit and bike uses.
- K. Include elements that enhance the area as a unique and special place.

Goal 2: Capitalize on the natural setting and proximity to Glen Lake

- L. Create a stronger connection to Glen Lake through trails and way-finding.
- M. Utilize landscaping and streetscape amenities to create a stronger pedestrian district.
- N. Limit surface parking with new development by incorporating underground or structured parking.

Goal 3: Produce high quality development that enhances the livability of the area

Support was expressed for:

- Predominately residential development, with the option of small scale commercial / mixed use.
- Residential uses that diversify the community, and would appeal to younger families, creating a multi-generational neighborhood.
- Commercial uses that enhance surrounding businesses.
- The importance of a local grocery store or pharmacy to provide necessary conveniences for the community.
- Maintaining the post office in the area.
- Innovative commercial spaces that bring restaurants, retail, and places for people to gather.
- Medical offices or related services for the senior population.

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