

III. BACKGROUND ANALYSIS OF STUDY AREA

A. Development History and Zoning

In 1950, the highway corridors that are the subject of this study were very different from the roadways that exist today. Aerial photos from 1953 show that many of the major roads in the area, including Bellefontaine, Chambers, Columbia Bottom, Halls Ferry, Parker, and Redman were already in existence. However, the original road that is now known as Highway 367 was a smaller two-lane thoroughfare named Highway 99. What later became Interstate 270 was called the Route 66 By-Pass. At that time, West Florissant Avenue north of Interstate 270 and the Interstate 270 Bridge over the Mississippi River did not exist. The Chain of Rocks Bridge, which is now used as a bicycle path and pedestrian walkway, provided vehicular access across the Mississippi River.

The 1950s

The northeast portion of St. Louis County, including the areas where Highway 367 and Interstate 270 are currently located, was largely a rural area until the 1950s. Some residential subdivisions, however, did appear prior to the 1950s in Castle Point, south of Chambers Road, and in the Jennings area.

During the 1950s, most of the construction in the corridor consisted of residential development south of the present-day Interstate 270. Neighborhoods such as Bissell Hills, Castle Point, Glasgow Village, and Hathaway Manor were largely built at this time. North of what would become Interstate 270, a smaller number of homes were constructed in Northgate Estates and in the Highway 367 corridor north of Parker Road, near Norma and Nob Hill Lanes. Little commercial development occurred within the study area in this decade.

The 1960s

The early 1960s brought even more housing development to northeast St. Louis County. Along the Highway 367 corridor, new subdivisions including Hidden Lake, Northaire, and Parkmont Estates were built. Further west along Interstate 270, residential expansion consisted of further plats of Hathaway Manor north of the interstate and Northland Hills south of the interstate.

In 1965, St. Louis County adopted its Zoning Ordinance, applying new zoning designations to properties in unincorporated areas of the County. It should be noted that, within the study area, the area north of I-270 is unincorporated, while most of the area south of the interstate lies within various municipalities. In 1965, most properties on either side of Highway 367, from Interstate 270 northward to the Missouri River, were residentially zoned in relatively low density districts. Beyond Lindbergh Boulevard to the county line, properties were zoned in the NU Non-Urban District, requiring a three-acre minimum lot for a single-family home.

Along the Highway 367 corridor, north of Interstate 270, the limited commercial zoning was concentrated at the intersection of Highway 367 and Redman Road and on the southwest corner of Highway 367 and Parker Road. Although these areas were zoned to allow highway services, such as restaurants, hotels/motels, and repair facilities, all of the commercially developed properties were occupied by service stations. Later in 1965, more than twelve acres on the northwest corner of Highway 367 and Parker Road was rezoned for commercial uses,

authorizing the development of Paddock Forest Shopping Center. In 1967, property in the northeast quadrant of the intersection was rezoned for an automobile dealership. Leader Chevrolet is located on the southern portion of this property. In 1968, the 16.3 acres surrounding an existing service station on the southwest corner of the intersection was rezoned for commercial uses, and authorized the development of the Mayfair Plaza shopping center.

In the Highway 367 corridor, south of Interstate 270, the first major development was the Lewis & Clark Tower and adjoining retail, which was constructed in 1964. Just north, across Chambers Road, the K-Mart shopping center was developed in 1969.

Along the north side of Interstate 270, the majority of properties were residentially zoned. However, small areas of commercial and industrial zoning were also present. Commercial zoning was in place at the northwest corner of Dunn Road and Old Halls Ferry Road (the former Target store), at 1795 Dunn Road (the GEM store), and at the intersection of Dunn and Bellefontaine Roads (Schnucks). Noteworthy commercial developments south of Interstate 270 at this time included the Central City Shopping Center (now the Crossings at Halls Ferry) between Old and New Halls Ferry Roads, and Ackerman Buick on the southeast corner of Pershall Road and Trask Drive. Industrial zoning along Interstate 270 was present at the northwest corner of Dunn Road and the Burlington Northern Railroad, and at the southeast corner of Lilac Avenue and Dunn Road. Despite this significant increase in residential development, other current-day commercial centers along West Florissant Avenue and New Halls Ferry Road were still farms and forests in the late 1960s.

The 1970s

While single-family residential growth in the area south of Interstate 270 was virtually complete prior to 1970, significant residential construction continued in the 1970s in the more northern portions of the study area. Neighborhoods along the Highway 367 corridor that were constructed during that decade include Country Village, Country Village Hills and Foxwoods. Along the Interstate 270 corridor, large multi-family developments such as Raintree, Sierra Vista and Sugartree were built in this decade.

Made possible by a rezoning in 1971, the largest retail center in far North County, Jamestown Mall, opened in 1973. Situated on Lindbergh Boulevard at Old Jamestown Road just west of Highway 367, Jamestown Mall's opening signified that retail development had followed residential growth out to the suburban fringe of St. Louis County. As wealthier households moved into newer portions of North County, aging neighborhoods and shopping centers in the southern portion of the Highway 367 corridor became less attractive to suburban residents.

In 1973, Christian Hospital Northeast, a major institutional landmark was constructed in the northwest quadrant of Interstate 270 and Highway 367. Originally made possible by a rezoning in 1972, several subsequent rezoning petitions have allowed the facility to expand to its current size of over 45 acres.

By 1975, West Florissant Avenue had been extended north of I-270, opening new areas for development. By the mid-1970s, commercial zoning was in place for the first tier of properties along Dunn Road between West Florissant Avenue and New Halls Ferry Road, and continued to expand northerly along New Halls Ferry Road. The former Venture store (now K-Mart) at the intersection of Dunn Road and West Florissant Avenue is an example of commercial development in the area at this time. Further east along the corridor, the northeast corner of Lilac Avenue and Dunn Road was rezoned for a neighborhood shopping center in 1973. A U.S.

Post Office currently occupies the site. Along the Highway 367 corridor, the Mayfair Plaza shopping center was completed in 1975 on the south side of Parker Road at Highway 367. By the late 1970s, much of the residential and retail development in both the I-270 and Highway 367 corridors was complete.

The 1980s and 1990s

During the 1980s and 1990s, the emphasis of development shifted towards smaller projects, in-fill construction, and rehabilitation, with the exception of the West Florissant Avenue area, which continued to see commercial development of significant size. Although almost 23 acres in the southwest quadrant of Lindbergh Boulevard and Highway 367 was zoned for all permitted C-2 Shopping District uses and a bank with a drive-through facility; and a 2.42 acre parcel fronting on Lindbergh Boulevard west of Highway 367 was zoned for a fast food restaurant with drive-through, a service station and a convenience store and car wash, no development has occurred as a result of these zoning petitions.

Commercial construction in the Highway 367 corridor consisted of projects such as the Highway 367 Business and Professional Park between New Jamestown and Parker Roads, the Walgreen's drugstore and U-Haul truck rental facility at Parker Road, the QuikTrip and Jack in the Box restaurant at Redman Road, and the out lot strip retail center on the west side of Highway 367 north of Chambers Road.

The western end of the Interstate 270 corridor saw three major developments at this time which utilized tax increment financing (TIF) to assist in paying for infrastructure and development costs. The first of these was the Clocktower Plaza shopping center at the northeast corner of Dunn Road and West Florissant Avenue. Built on the site of the former 270 Drive-In Theatre, Clocktower was constructed in 1987. It is anchored by a Dierberg's grocery store. The second TIF-assisted development is the North County Festival shopping center on the west side of West Florissant Avenue south of I-270. This shopping center's anchor stores are Sam's and Wal-Mart; it was constructed in 1989 on the site of former farms and large lot homes. The third TIF development is the Crossings at Halls Ferry shopping center between Old and New Halls Ferry Roads on the south side of I-270. It was formerly the location of the Central City shopping center, whose main tenant was a hardware store of the now defunct Central Hardware chain. TIF funds were used to demolish the old shopping center, make drainage improvements, and provide new entrance signalization for the Crossings at Halls Ferry. The new center is anchored by a Home Depot and Shop 'n Save grocery store. The Crossings at Halls Ferry was completed in 1998.

Many small commercial developments also took place in the West Florissant Avenue/Seven Hills Drive area north of Interstate 270, including Greystone Plaza (1980), Afshari Center XXV (1983), Educational Employees Credit Union (1986), and Cerame Lincoln Mercury (1997).

Of note in the eastern end of the I-270 corridor is the St. Louis Christian Center Church. The church acquired almost thirty acres of land on the south side of Interstate 270, between Lilac Avenue and Riverview Drive in 1995. The St. Louis Christian Center Church occupies a building on the site that had a long history prior to its current use. Made possible by a commercial rezoning in 1972, the building was originally a dinner theater. In the early 1980s, it was used by Hope Baptist Church of Castle Point for a church, chapel, classrooms, and an office; and in the early 1990s, it was used as a restaurant/nightclub/lounge. When the church acquired the property in 1995, they filed for, and were granted a rezoning reverting the property back to its NU Non-Urban District designation.

2000-2002

Relatively few developments occurred in the corridors from 2000-2002. A Missouri Emissions Testing Center and Storage USA facility were constructed on West Florissant Avenue between New Halls Ferry Road and Seven Hills Drive in 2000. Dunn Road Manor apartments on the north side of Dunn Road between New Halls Ferry Road and West Florissant Avenue were completed in 2001.

Along Highway 367, north of Interstate 270, residential zoning continues to predominate while commercially-zoned areas are found at the highway's intersections with Highway 67, New Jamestown Road, Parker Road, Redman Road, and Interstate 270. Along the 270 corridor, the entire area along Dunn Road from West Florissant Avenue to Old Halls Ferry Road is now commercially zoned, as is the area near Bellefontaine and Larimore Roads. A mixture of commercial and industrial zoning exists along Lilac Avenue north and south of Interstate 270, while the eastern limits of the corridor remain residentially zoned.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study area experienced significant residential development in the 1950s and 1960s. Rezoning of residential properties for commercial development followed, primarily in the 1960s and 1970s. Some infill and redevelopment of previously zoned commercial sites occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Little new commercial zoning or redevelopment has occurred in 2000 and beyond.

The transition of certain commercial properties from their original retail and industrial uses to alternative uses or vacancy is a trend of concern. While some commercial buildings have successfully transformed to new uses, such as the St. Louis Christian Center, other attempts at conversion have failed. The former Target store on Dunn Road has not been converted to use as a church center. Some large retail spaces, including the former GEM store on Dunn Road and Builders Square on West Florissant Avenue, have also failed to find new occupants. An overabundance of small strip centers suffering from poor design and substandard construction has over time led to deterioration and vacancies.