

Complete Streets and Property Values

Northfield, Minn. Env. Studies 255, 2011-12 Sean Hayford Oleary

Introduction

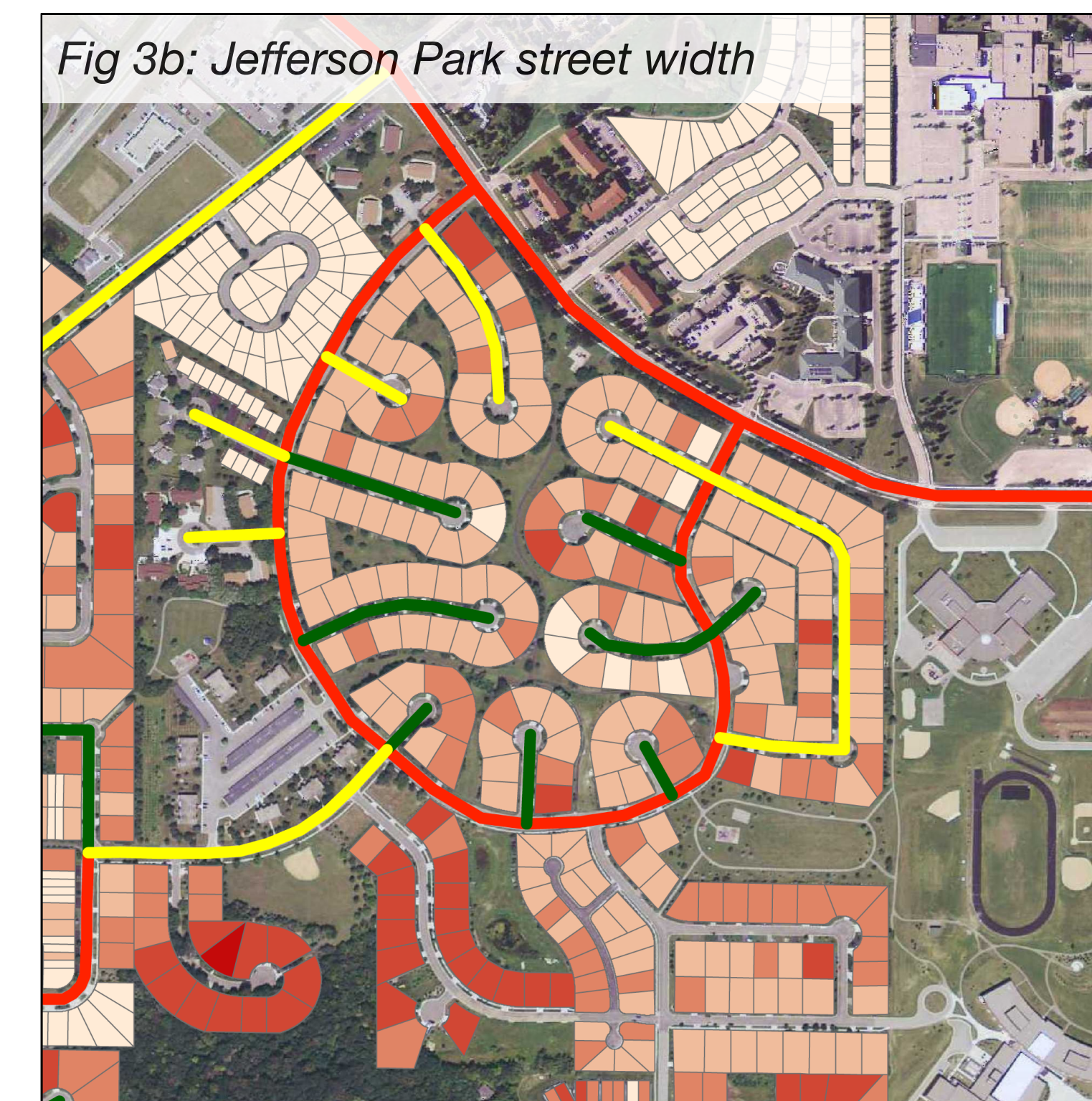
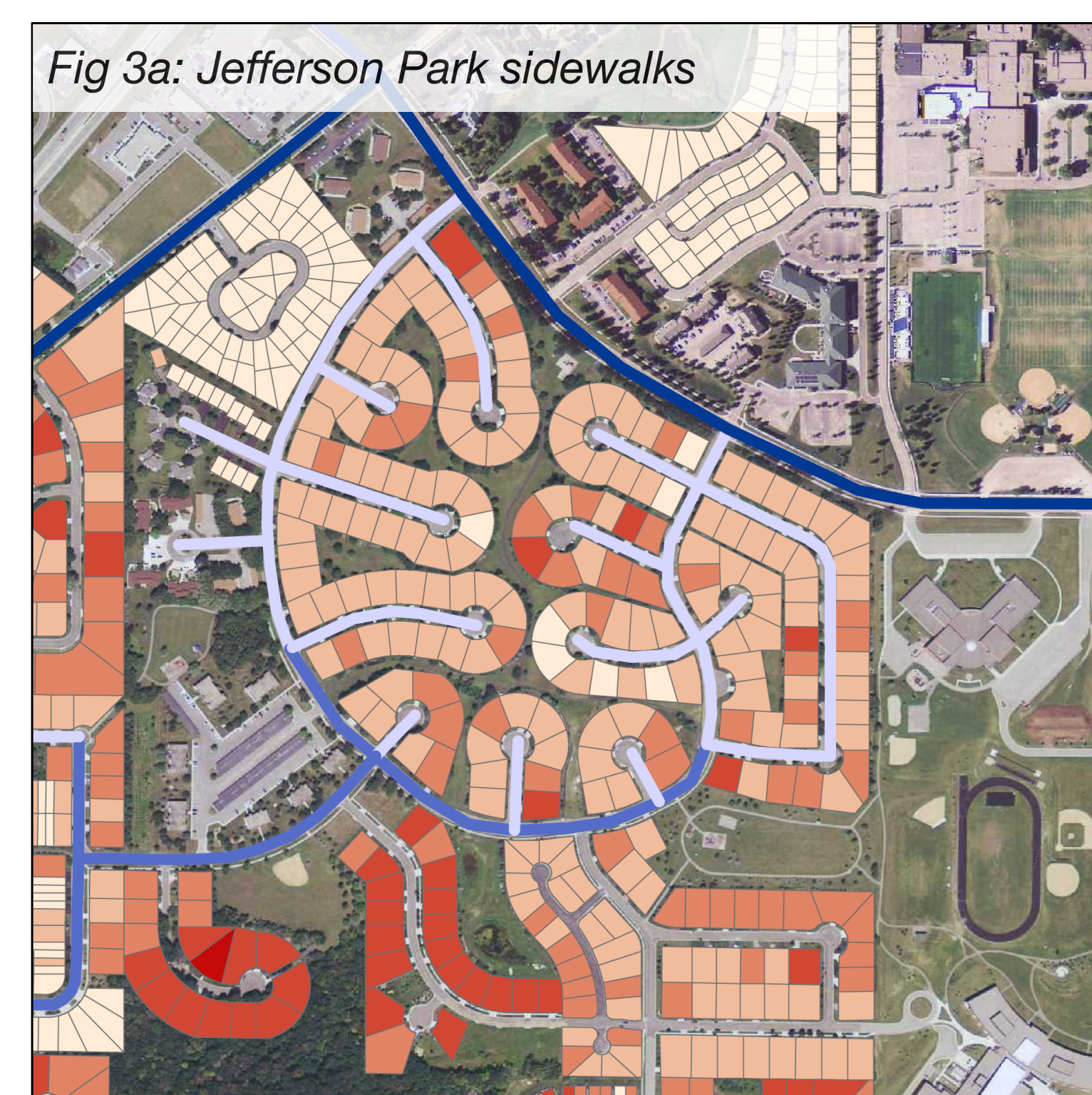
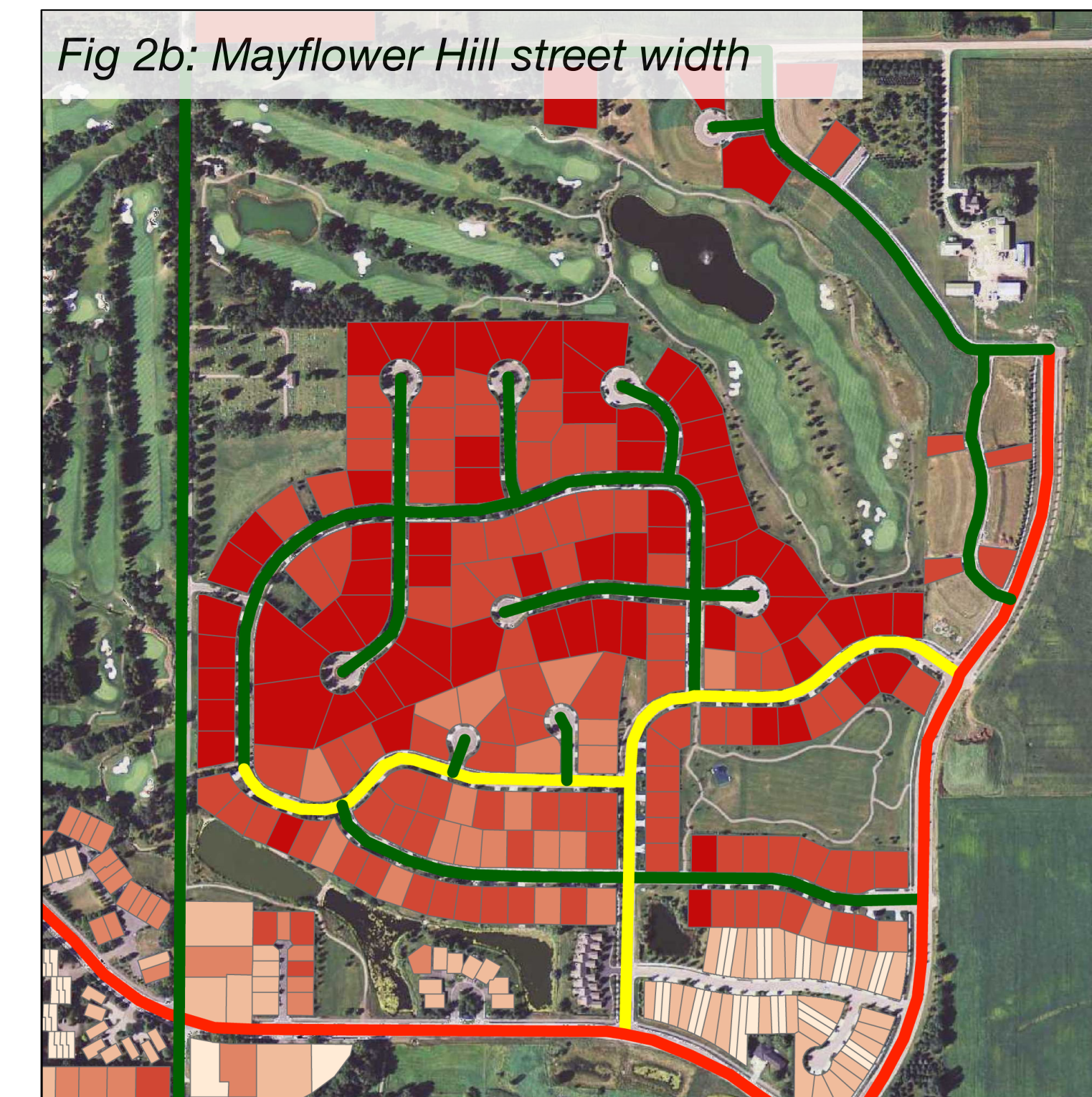
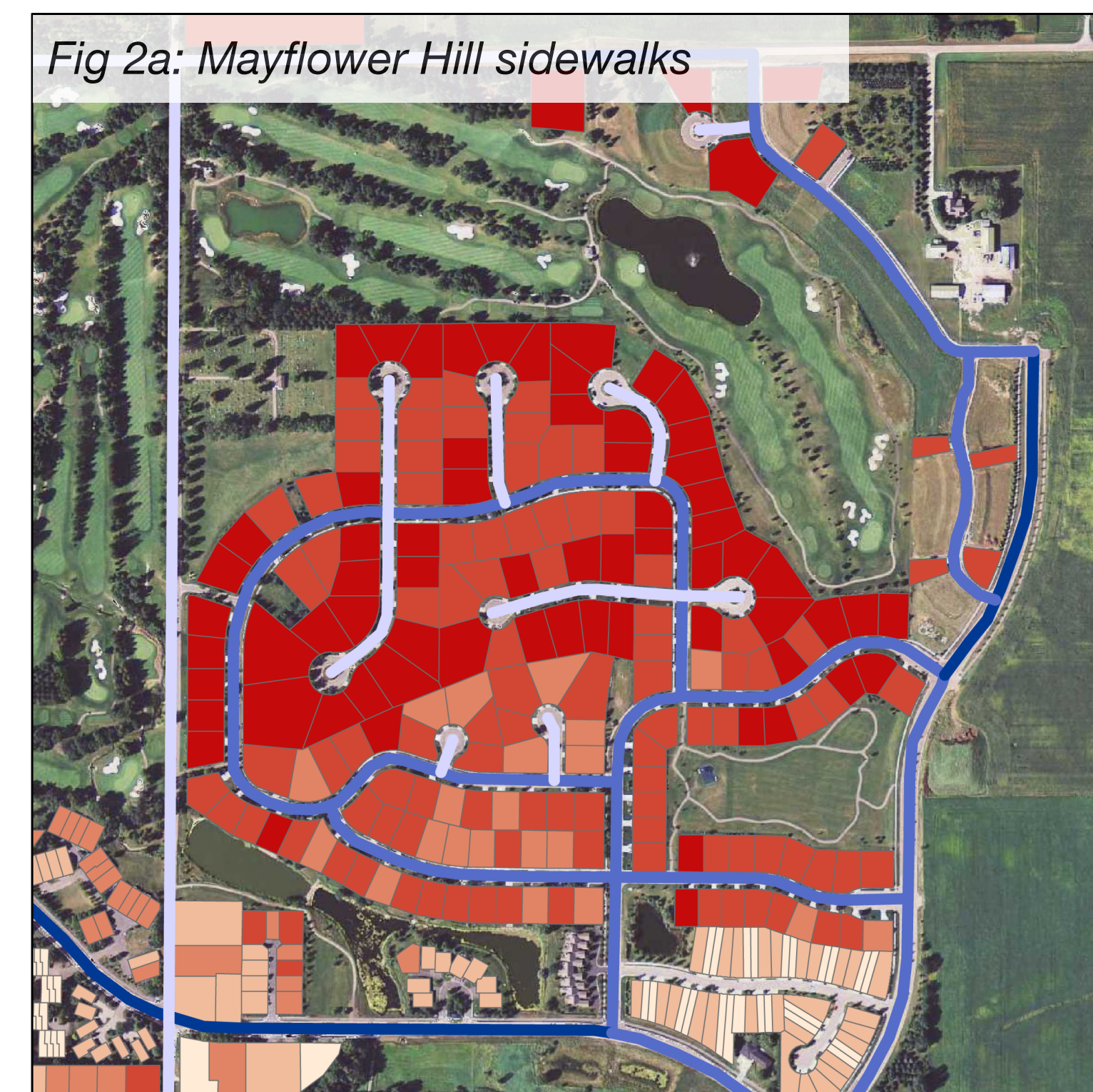
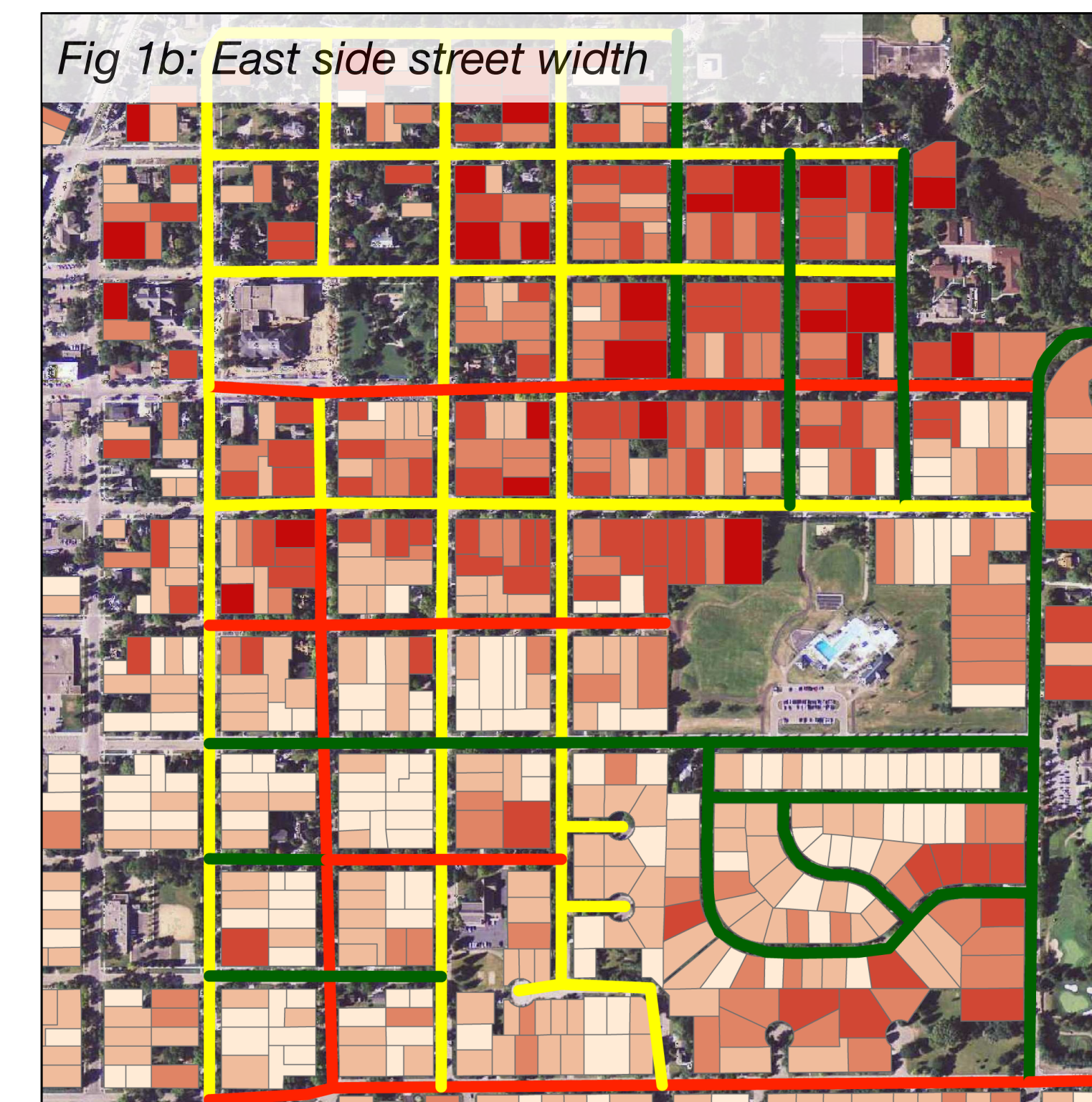
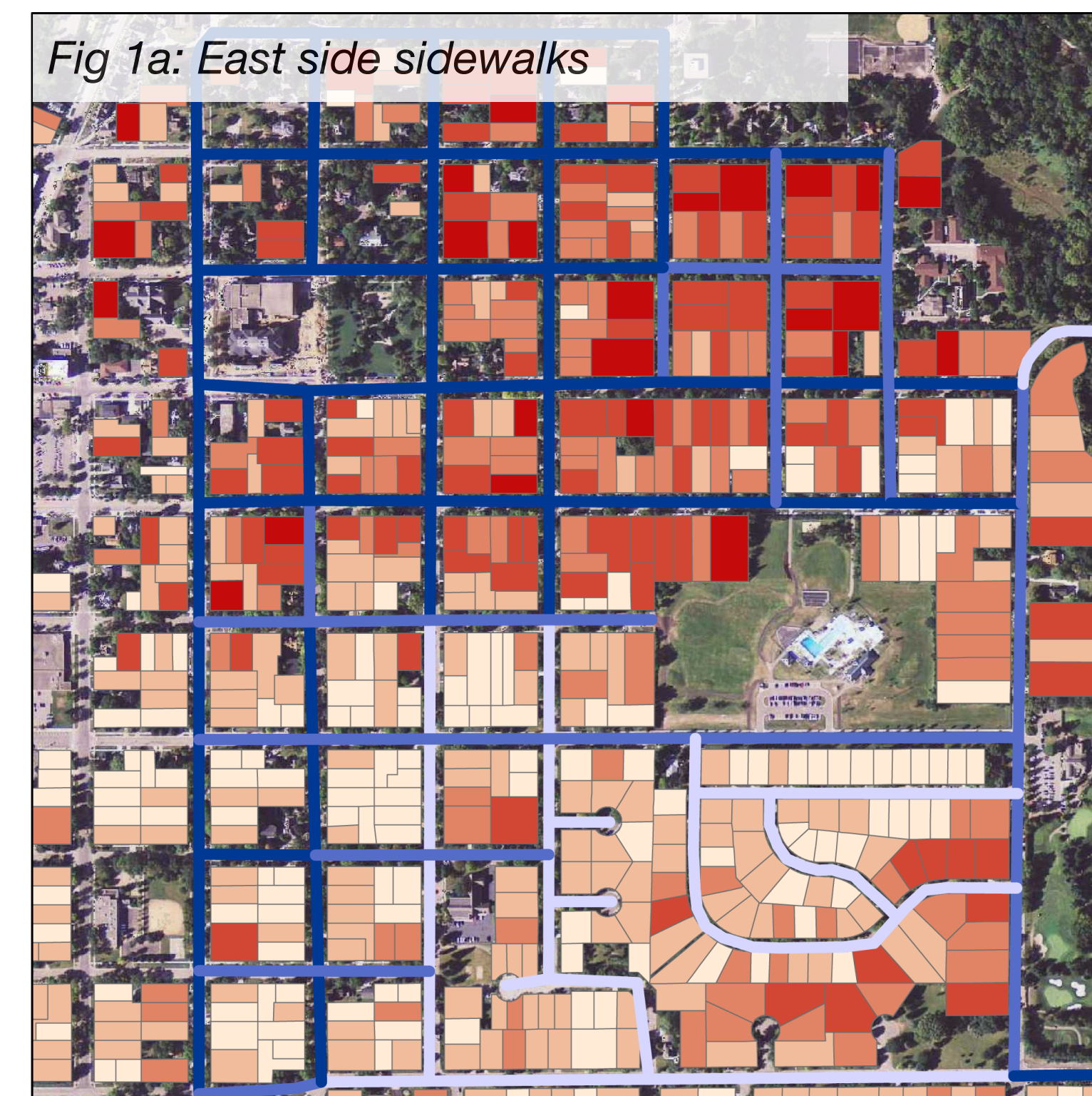
“Complete Streets” is a system of designing streets equally for pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles. There is no single definition, but it generally means:¹

- full sidewalk coverage
- narrow streets and driving lanes
- bike lanes where appropriate

While there are many community benefits to Complete Streets, one major concern to many homeowners on any redesigned street will be the effect on property values. Traffic safety advocates and urbanists have long claimed that sidewalks improve safety and access for pedestrians. Urbanists such as Andrés Duany² claim that narrow, traditional streets and town forms bring higher property values, by creating a more aesthetic and appealing space. This project attempts to apply these ideas to Northfield, by examining the overall correlation between home values and two aspects of Complete Streets: **sidewalk coverage and street width**.

Methods

- 2011 parcel data for the City of Northfield were obtained from Rice County.
- All properties other than single-family homes were excluded.
- 2010 imagery of Northfield from Dakota County was used; sidewalk presence was determined from this imagery.
- Sidewalk presence was discerned from imagery (see figs 1a, 2a, 3a).
- Street width was measured from imagery, and manually verified where ambiguous (see figs 1b, 2b, 3b).
- Property value was averaged in the whole study area; **averaged on those homes that had frontage on a street with at least one sidewalk**; and **averaged on those homes that had frontage on a street with a width of 32' or less** (see fig. 4).



0 75 150 300 450 600 Meters

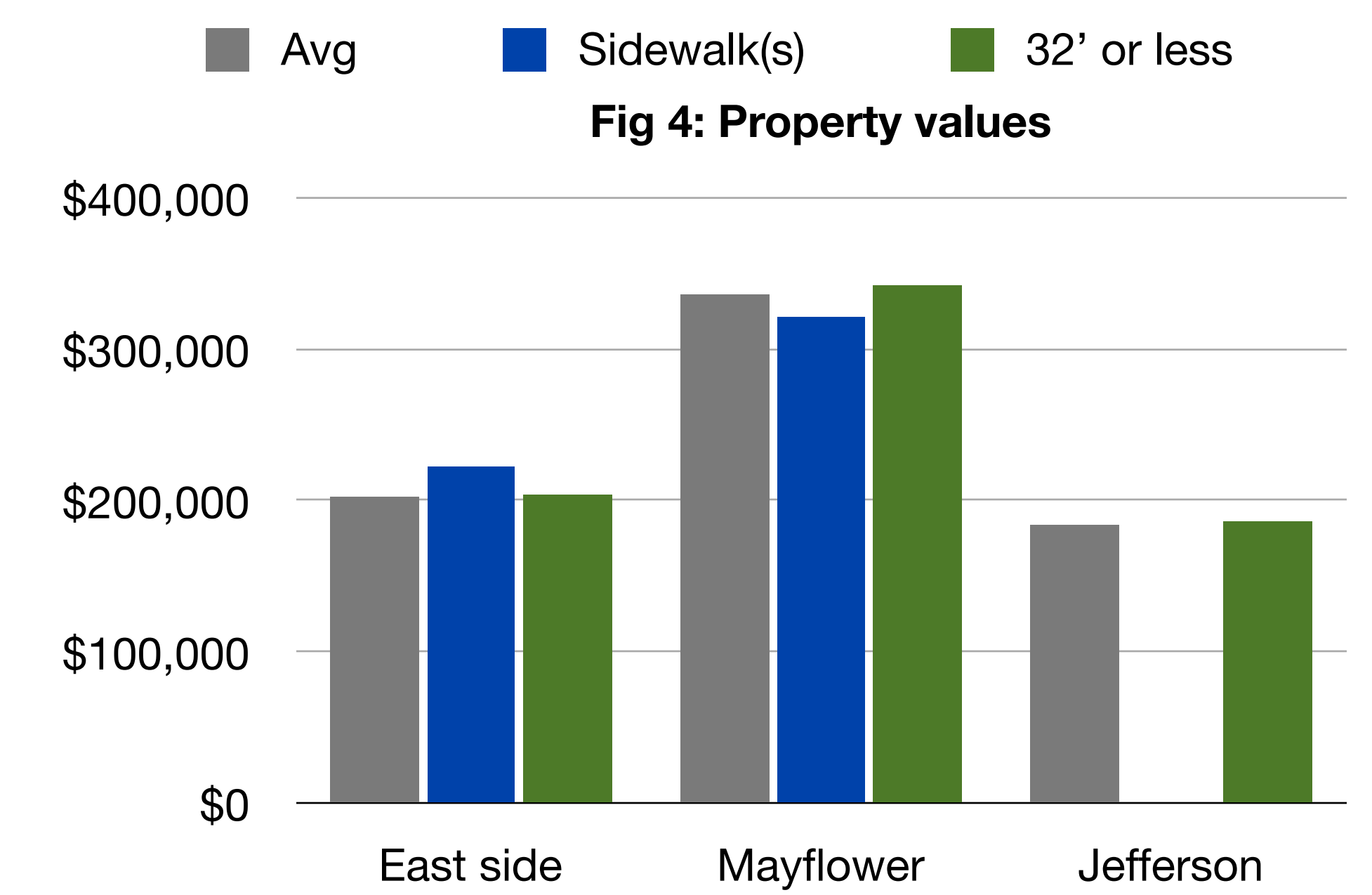
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Road
Sidewalk
 - No coverage (light blue line)
 - Partial/1-side (medium blue line)
 - Full/2-side (dark blue line)

Rice County parcels
Total property value (2011)
 - < \$150 000 (lightest orange)
 - \$150 000 - \$200 000 (light orange)
 - \$200 000 - \$250 000 (medium orange)
 - \$250 000 - \$350 000 (dark orange)
 - > \$350 000 (red)

Roads
Width
 - 32' or less (green line)
 - 34-38' (yellow line)
 - 40' or more (red line)

Results



Discussion

There was no overarching trend across the three study areas. Each of the areas had certain limitations for analysis: many of the high-value homes on the East side were adjacent to Carleton College, and many of the high-value homes in Mayflower Hill were adjacent to the Northfield Golf Club. The East side has significant on-street parking in its highest-value area (see Appendix A), and thus streets tended to be wider there. The highest-value homes in Mayflower Hill were on culs de sac, which had universally been built without sidewalks. In Jefferson Park, only 5 of 182 homes had sidewalk frontage, making that impossible to measure that relationship.

Since Northfield no longer permits culs de sac in new development,³ however, the East side area provides the most relevant information for sidewalk and street width installation in new development.

Literature cited

1. “Complete Streets: Supporting safe and accessible roads for everyone.” Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition. 2011. Web. 02 Dec 2011. <http://mncompletestreets.org/gfx/MnCSLocalGovtToolkit.pdf>.
2. Duany, André, et al. *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. New York: North Point Press, 2000. Print.
3. “City of Northfield Land Development Code.” City of Northfield. 02 Aug 2011. Web. 05 December 2011. <http://ci.northfield.mn.us/assets/f/FINAL--OF-LDC-8-2-20116.pdf>.

Details on map and parcel data are available in Appendix B.