



CITY OF WEST ST. PAUL
1616 HUMBOLDT AVENUE, WEST ST. PAUL, MN 55118

OPEN COUNCIL WORK SESSION
MUNICIPAL CENTER
ADMINISTRATION CONFERENCE ROOM
August 8, 2016
Immediately Follows the EDA Work Session

1. Roll Call
2. Approve Agenda
3. Review The Regular Meeting Consent Agenda
4. Agenda Item(S)

4.A. Closed Session To Discuss Robert Street Two Easement Acquisitions
Estimated Time Required: 15 minutes

4.B. River To River Trail Crossing Study Discussion
Estimated time required: 30 minutes

Documents:

[COUNCIL REPORT - RIVER TO RIVER ROBERT ST. CROSSING STUDY.PDF](#)
[ATTACHMENT - TRAIL CROSSING.PDF](#)

4.C. Renaissance Plan Update Discussion
Estimated time required: 45 minutes

Documents:

[COUNCIL REPORT - RENAISSANCE PLAN.PDF](#)
[ATTACHMENT - REN. PLAN PAC COMMENTS.PDF](#)
[REN. PLAN PART 1.PDF](#)
[REN. PLAN PART 2.PDF](#)

5. Adjourn

Future Topics for Discussion & Consideration

- North Gateway Development
- Solid Waste Management Discussion (90 min.)
- Comp Plan (15 min.) Two applications received 7/8
- Redevelopment Financing Tools (JC/Bellows)

If you need an accommodation to participate in the meeting, please contact the ADA Coordinator at 651-552-4100, TDD 651-322-2323 at least 5 business days prior to the meeting

www.wspmn.gov EOE/AA

TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Matt Fulton, City Manager
Jim Hartshorn, Comm. Dev. Dir.
FROM: Ben Boike, Assistant Comm. Dev. Dir.
DATE: August 8, 2016
SUBJECT: River to River Robert St. Crossing Study



City of West St. Paul

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Representatives from Dakota County as well as the Consultant working on the study, Karl Weissenborn from SEH, will be in attendance to discuss findings and recommendations to date. In April of 2016, the County Board initiated the study with the following scope:

- Develop overall needs assessment for a grade separated crossing
- Review at-grade crossing as the regional trail crossing
- Develop two alternative grade separated underpass alignments with cost estimates
- Assess land use/fiscal tax impacts to the City of West St. Paul
- Obtain public input
- Determine role of Dakota County and City of West St. Paul in possible implementation

Study Findings to Date

The following information was provided by Dakota County. The findings to date along with graphic representation of the crossing options will be discussed and presented at the meeting.

The preliminary findings of the study identify Robert Street as a major barrier to people using the River to River Greenway. Its 4-lane design and heavy traffic levels (21,000 ADT) are a significant deterrent to many visitors, especially seniors and young children. An estimated 140,000 greenway users are projected to cross Robert Street at this location. The study identifies that the grade separated alternatives offer advantages over the at-grade crossing because they provide 1) a safer crossing option, 2) improve user experience consistent with the County's greenway vision, and 3) reduce delay to drivers on Robert Street.

Two grade separated options were evaluated. Both alternatives show the greenway being constructed in a 60' corridor to minimize impacts to surrounding land use. Alternative G can be accomplished using existing City owned property and right of way but would require the closing of Crawford Street. Alternative H would require the purchase of private property on the east side of Robert Street but allows Crawford Street to remain open.

Utilities were evaluated to determine whether they would need to be moved for an underpass project. Storm sewer, sanitary sewer, and a water main would need to be relocated, but the moves could be accomplished in a narrow corridor, minimizing impacts to the newly reconstructed Robert Street. A fiscal impact analysis was prepared to determine the potential loss of annual tax revenue to the City of West St. Paul in the area where the greenway is located. The annual loss of tax revenue is estimated to be less than \$7,000 at this location.

Next Steps

The next phase of the study will involve a public open house and meetings with landowners directly impacted by the project. Following the public input phase, a draft study will be prepared and presented to the Dakota Board and West St. Paul City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The County anticipates having cost estimates available at the meeting. Depending on the cost, the County is hopeful that the City can remain cost neutral with only providing the \$2M in approved bonding dollars.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss and provide comment to the County representatives and Consultant.

ROBERT STREET PEDESTRIAN CROSSING STUDY

Dakota County Greenway Guidelines

The 2010 Dakota County Greenway Guidebook provides a framework for design and development for county-wide greenways. One of the main design objectives is to create an interconnected system of greenways with a natural design signature that improves water quality, enhances wildlife habitat, provides first-class linear recreation, and increases mobility. Grade separated crossings are a critical component of the greenway system. They ensure safety, security, and to establish the greenway system as a truly special and high-quality destination.

Greenway Design Features

- ▶ Greenway has a consistent design with natural signature and high quality support facilities
- ▶ Trail is away from roads 80% of the time and is maintained as a year-round facility
- ▶ **Grade separated crossings at major roads**
- ▶ Greenway links recreation destinations and commercial centers
- ▶ Universally accessibility
- ▶ Wayfinding

Source: 2010 Dakota County Greenway Guidebook

The River to River Greenway Road Crossings

The River to River Greenway travels 8 miles from the Minnesota River to the Mississippi River through the communities of Mendota Heights, West St. Paul, and South St. Paul. In keeping with the Greenway Guidebook, the River to River Greenway Master Plan recommends grade-separated at all major intersections along the greenway. Grade separation promotes safety by reducing conflicts with motorized traffic and allows for more efficient and enjoyable trail experience for users of all abilities. Currently, there 19 road crossings; 5 are grade separated and 14 are at-grade. The Master Plan recommends two additional grade separated crossings at Robert Street and Dodd Blvd. If Robert Street becomes grade separated there will be no at-grade crossings of 4-lane or greater roadways. For comparison, the Gateway State Trail from St. Paul to Stillwater has 35 road crossings; 20 are grade separated and 15 are at-grade. There are no at-grade crossings of 4-lane or greater roadways along the Gateway Trail.

River to River Greenway Master Plan Grade Separated Crossing Recommendations

CROSSING RANK	LOCATION	AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC (VEHICLES)	STATUS
1	U.S. Hwy 52 - Lafayette Freeway	53,000	Existing
2	State Highway 3 - Robert Street	25,000	Future
3	State Highway 149 - Dodd Boulevard	9,600	In design, pending funding
5	State Highway 56 - Concord Boulevard	8,600	Existing
4	Charlton Avenue	4,300	Existing
6	Marie Avenue	3,300	Existing
7	19th Avenue	2,300	Existing

The table on this page details the existing and future grade separated crossings a recommended in the River to River Greenway Master Plan.

Robert Street Pedestrian Underpass

A grade separated crossing at Robert Street is important for the continuity of the regional greenway, providing a safe and enjoyable greenway experience. Robert Street is a State Highway with a traffic volume of 25,000 vehicles per day and posted vehicle speeds of 35 MPH. The existing at-grade crossing of Wentworth (CSAH 8) and Robert St. (TH 3) has a combined traffic volume of 35,000 trips entering the intersection. Currently Robert Street is seen as a barrier to some potential users of the River to River Greenway. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, more than half of all bicycle crashes nationwide occur at at-grade street crossings. Problems relate to motorists' expectations that crosswalk users will be traveling at pedestrian speeds rather than bicycle speeds. The Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual (2007) recommends grade separated crossings as a better choice than at grade, signalized crossings for roadways with ADT volumes over 9,000 and a posted speed of 30 MPH, particularly if the trail will be used for trips to school and if a large number of trail users will include children, seniors, or disabled people. This is important at Robert Street due to the River to River Greenway's proximity to the Wentworth Library, the YMCA, the West St. Paul Sports Dome, commercial destinations, and nearby parks. The overall goal of grade separated crossing is to provide safe user experience for all user levels and ages.

By 2030 it is anticipated the River to River Greenway will see more than 140,000 regional visitors annually.

Pedestrian crossings of Robert Street will increase significantly as the River to River Greenway develops introducing more conflict between pedestrians and automobiles.

Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual Guidelines for Grade Separated Crossings

Table 5-10: Recommended Bikeway Intersection Treatments

Motor Vehicle Speed	ADT	Bikeway Intersection Treatment
>80 km/h (>50 mph)	Any	Grade Separated (Good)
		Traffic Signal and 60 km/h (40 mph) Speed Zone (Satisfactory)
70 km/h (45 mph)	Any	Grade Separated (Good)
		Traffic Signals (Satisfactory)
60 km/h (40 mph)	>7,000	Grade Separated (Good)
		Traffic Signals (Satisfactory)
	<7,000	Traffic Signals (Good)
		Crosswalk + Median Refuge Island (Satisfactory)
50 km/h (30 mph)	>9,000	Grade Separated (Good)
		Traffic Signals (Satisfactory)
	5,000 to 9,000	Traffic Signals (Good)
		Crosswalk + Median Refuge Island (Satisfactory)
	<5,000	Crosswalk + Median Refuge Island (Good)
		Crosswalk (Satisfactory)

Robert Street

- ▶ 35 MPH
- ▶ 25,000 ADT
- ▶ 4 Lanes

Source: 2007 Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual, Section 5.4-2

River to River Greenway Annual Use Forecast

Use of the River to River Greenway is expected to increase by the year 2030 based on population growth, the popularity of trail based recreation, and increased connectivity of the regional trail network. By 2030 the population in the communities adjacent to the River to River Greenway is expected to increase by 13%, resulting in a projected annual visitation of 140,000. This number is conservative as it does not account for the increasing popularity of trail based recreation and the anticipated 2018 completion of the connection between Harriet Island Regional Park/Sam Morgan Regional Trail and the Mississippi River Trail. This link will connect the River to River greenway to Saint Paul's network and create a 14 mile biking loop featuring the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers which is expected to draw regional visitors (see attached map).

For comparison, in 2015, Dakota County's 5-mile Big Rivers Regional Trail drew 116,000 annual visits and the 4-mile Mississippi River Regional Trail attracted 110,000. The 3.5-mile Sam Morgan Regional Trail in Saint Paul, which will connect to Dakota County's trail network in 2018, drew 519,000 visits. Within the greater Metropolitan Area, use of trails in suburban areas is also high. In 2015, the 5-mile Rush Creek Regional Trail in Brooklyn Park had 284,000 annual visits and the 8-mile Dakota Rail Regional Trail in Hennepin County attracted 504,000 visits.

Participation, fitness walking, running/jogging, and biking are among the most popular and fastest growing recreational activities.

- Sports & Fitness Industry Association's 2015 Study of Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Participation

75% of trail visitors live within three miles of a trail

- Metropolitan Council



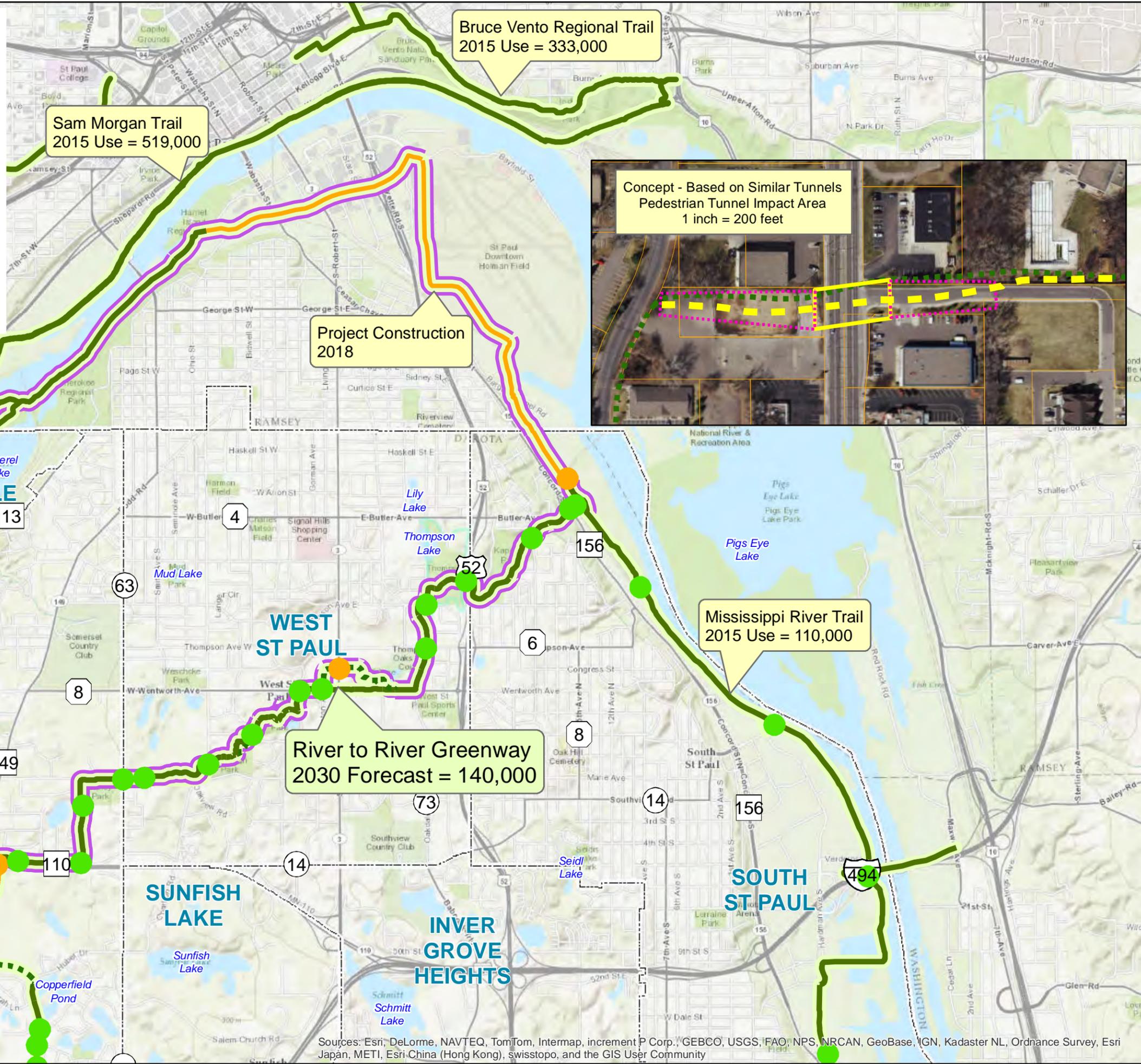
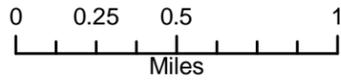
Recently completed River to River Greenway underpass at Charlton Avenue



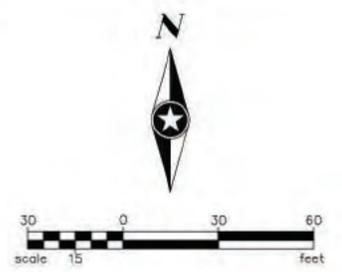
The River to River Greenway link important community destinations such as the library and YMCA

Regional Greenways Northern Dakota County 2016

-  Existing Trail
-  Funded Trail (2017/18)
-  Planned Trail
-  Existing Grade Separation
-  Funded Grade Separation
-  St. Paul River Loop (14 miles)



Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



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DESIGNER:	EB				
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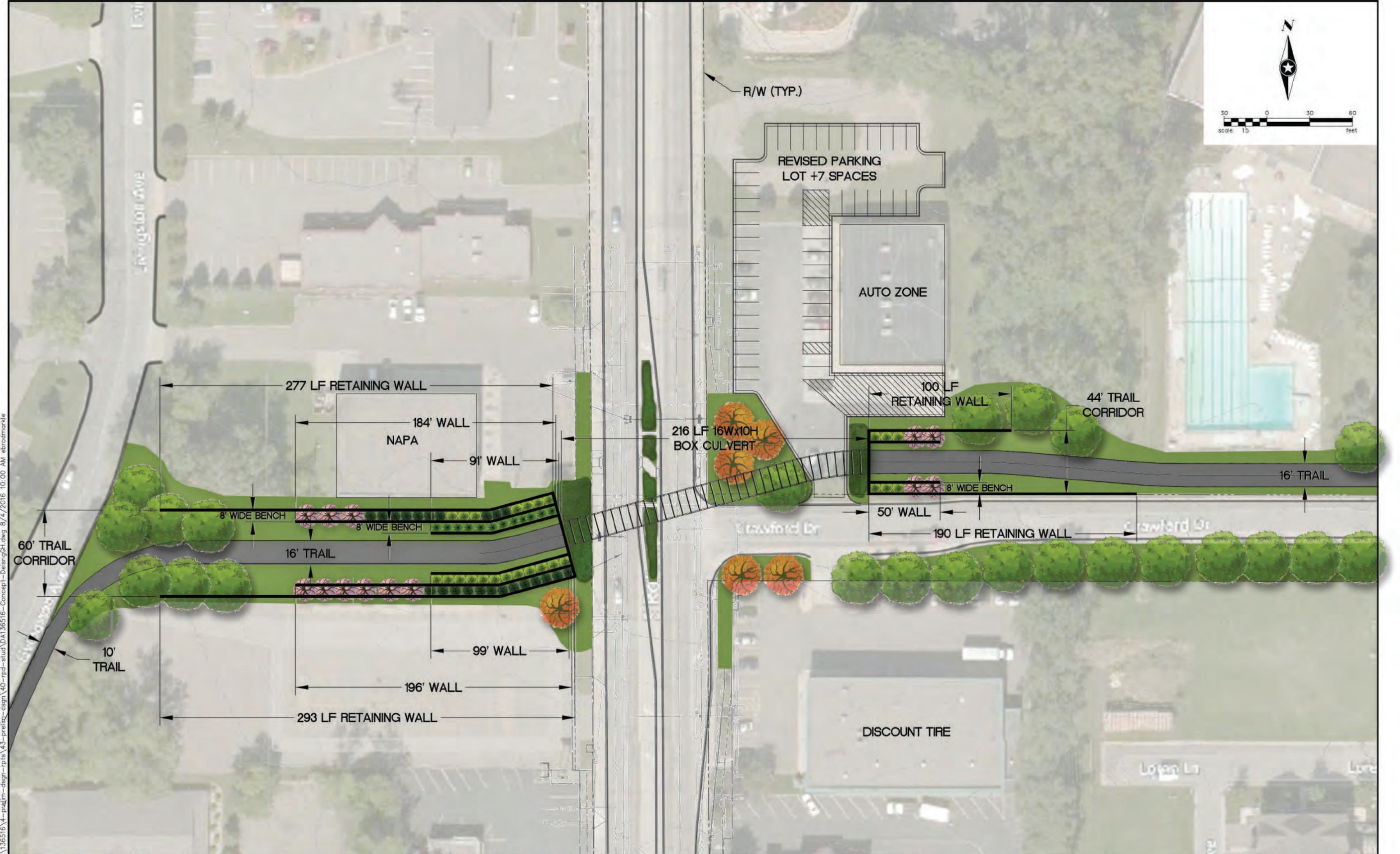
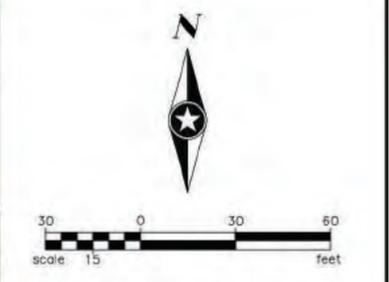
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAN WAS PREPARED BY ME OR UNDER MY DIRECT SUPERVISION AND THAT I AM A DULY LICENSED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA.
 SIGNATURE: **PRELIMINARY** Date: 8/4/16
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 PHONE: 952.912.2600
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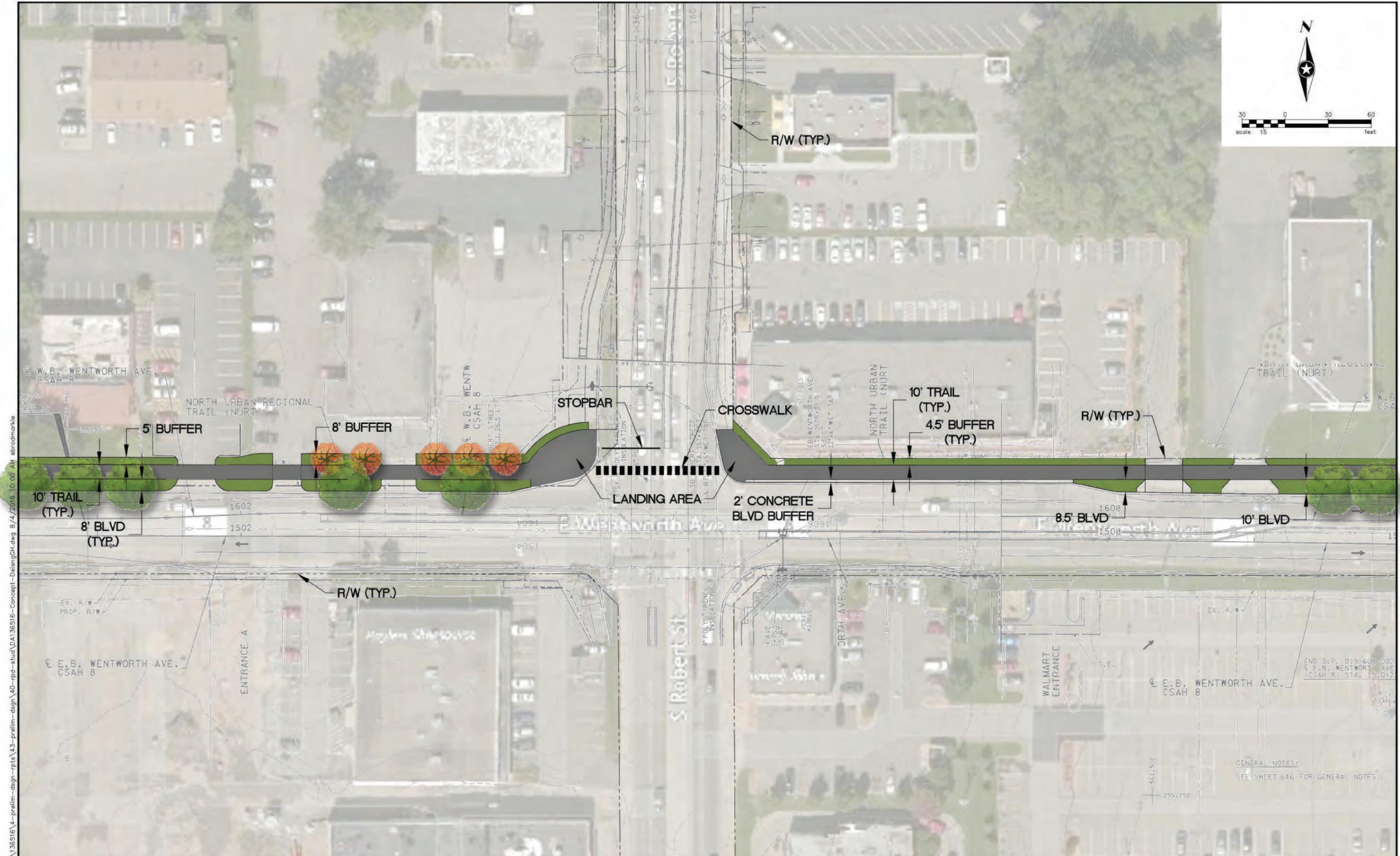
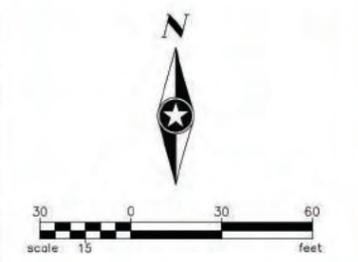
**SOUTH ROBERT STREET
 TRAIL CROSSING**

**UNDERPASS TRAIL
 ALIGNMENT OPTION G**

FILE NO.
 DA136516
 DATE:
 8/4/16
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**SOUTH ROBERT STREET
TRAIL CROSSING**

**AT GRADE CROSSING
OPTION I**

FILE NO.	DA136516
DATE:	8/4/16

GENERAL NOTES:
SEE SHEET 646 FOR GENERAL NOTES.

Name	Year Built	PID	TIF	2016 Total EMV	2016 Local Net Tax Capacity	2016 Fiscal Disparity Net Tax Capacity	2016 TIF Net Tax Capacity	2016 Total Property Tax	West St. Paul Portion	Lot size Sq/Ft	EMV / Lot Size	Gross Building Area (GBA)	EMV/GBA
DQ	1957	42-58700-00-141M	Y	\$367,100	(230)	2,283	4,249	\$12,219.40	-\$160.56	12,210	\$ 30	1,842	\$ 199
Starbucks	2005	42-02000-27-042	N	\$626,500	7,511	4,269		\$22,784.34	\$5,242.30	13,306	\$ 47	1,751	\$ 358
Burger King	1978	42-41000-01-022	N	\$770,000	9,291	5,281		\$28,460.60	\$6,484.66	34,437	\$ 22	3,131	\$ 246
KFC	1978	42-02000-43-016	Y	\$782,500	545	5,390	10,029	\$29,123.56	\$380.40	36,010	\$ 22	2,947	\$ 266
Pollo Campero	2010	42-71000-01-020	Y	\$793,900	558	5,522	10,274	\$29,453.02	\$389.46	27,392	\$ 29	2,518	\$ 315
LeAnnChin Rack Shack	1970	42-18604-01-020	N	\$817,600	10,064	5,720		\$30,506.22	\$7,024.18	34,653	\$ 24	5,360	\$ 153
Vacated Sonic	2008	42-64775-01-010	N	\$830,200	10,270	5,836		\$31,298.32	\$7,167.96	31,869	\$ 26	1,754	\$ 473
Taco Bell	1999	42-02000-51-040	N	\$833,000	10,224	5,810		\$31,331.40	\$7,135.84	31,999	\$ 26	2,903	\$ 287
Arbys	1978	42-15000-01-014	N	\$889,800	11,348	6,450		\$34,644.30	\$7,920.34	44,020	\$ 20	3,742	\$ 238
Culvers	2003	42-02000-62-020	N	\$1,019,000	12,695	7,215		\$38,463.26	\$8,860.48	40,292	\$ 25	4,630	\$ 220
Jimmy Johns Verizon	2004	42-02000-51-032	Y	\$1,073,600	(756)	7,480	13,918	\$39,874.70	-\$527.66	24,622	\$ 44	4,009	\$ 268
McDonalds	1989	42-21900-01-252M	N	\$1,346,800	16,204	9,210		\$49,144.26	\$11,309.60	79,940	\$ 17	5,786	\$ 233

Future Chik-Fil-A	2016	42-41601-01-020	N	\$780,500	9,953	5,657		\$30,104.46	\$6,946.70	75,967	\$ 10	4,009	\$ 195
Arbys Equivalent	2016	42-xxxxx-xx-xxx	N	\$1,275,000	14,505	8,245		\$44,116.93	\$10,123.76	75,000	\$ 17	4,009	\$ 318

The request was to show a fast food restaurant occupying the lot sites proposed for the walking path and how it would potentially affect the taxable base of West St. Paul. To try and keep it in scope, we found the very situation just north of the corner of Marie Ave and Robert St. on Parcel ID 42-41601-01-020. This is the site of a future Chik-Fil-A fast food restaurant that was purchased and split off of the parent parcel owned by Target Corp. for \$925,000. The payable 2016 Estimated Market Value is \$780,500 and the 2017 Valuation Notice has a Market Value of \$818,500. This example is ideal because when you measure out the proposed site of the walking path, the two parcels combined (old Blockbuster site & portion of Autozone Parking lot plus ROW) is about 75,000 Square feet. The total square footage of the lot for the future Chik-Fil-A restaurant is 75,967. Because they are so similar, I will base the example on the Chik-Fil-A site. I'll also create another example based upon a more relative GBA average, in this case Arbys, for the building value, and base it upon the relative sq footage example, McDonalds in this case, and come up with the "ideal" use of the space.

Various Statistics For Fast-Food Restaurants				
	MEAN	MEDIAN	MIN	MAX
Total Market Value	\$ 845,833	\$ 823,900	\$ 367,100	\$ 1,346,800
EMV Per Sq/Ft of Lot Size	\$ 28	\$ 26	\$ 17	\$ 47
Market Value Per GBA	\$ 271	\$ 256	\$ 153	\$ 473
Total Property Tax	\$ 31,442	\$ 30,902	\$ 12,219	\$ 49,144
WSP Property Tax	\$ 7,643	\$ 7,096	\$ 5,242	\$ 11,310
*Since proposed project area is not in a TIF district, only non-TIF totals used in WSP property tax averages.				

	Fiscal Disparity	Local TCAP	2016 Local Levy	2016 Tax Rate	% Change
S	2,273,945	14,171,562	\$9,890,916	69.794%	
*2016 WSP TCAPS If Exempt Path	2,271,597	14,167,430	\$9,890,916	69.814%	0.029%
2016 WSP TCAPS W/ Equivalent	2,282,190	14,186,067	\$9,890,916	69.723%	-0.132%

	Total NTC	Fiscal Disparity	Local TCAP	2016 Tax Rate	Current Net WSP Tax	Net WSP Tax W/ Path	Compared to Cur	Net WSP Tax W/ F-F Chain	Compared to Cur
\$300,000 Homestead	2798		2,798	Above	\$1,952.84	\$1,953.41	\$0.57	\$1,950.84	\$ (2.00)
\$300,000 Commercial Preferred	5250	-1,903	3,347	Above	\$2,336.01	\$2,336.69	\$0.68	\$2,333.62	\$ (2.39)
\$181,185 Homestead (Average)	1603		1,603	Above	\$1,118.80	\$1,119.13	\$0.33	\$1,117.66	\$ (1.14)
\$169,600 Homestead (Median)	1476		1,476	Above	\$1,030.16	\$1,030.46	\$0.30	\$1,029.11	\$ (1.05)

SUMMARY: Based on estimated loss of 40,000 square feet of developable fast food restaurant space the tax impact to City of West St. Paul is estimate at < \$4,000 annually

Chik-Fil-A impact is 75,000 square feet with and estimated \$7,000 tax impact to City of West St. Paul after factoring for fiscal disparities. Based on a \$818,000 market value.

TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Matt Fulton, City Manager
Jim Hartshorn, Comm. Dev. Dir.
FROM: Ben Boike, Assistant Comm. Dev. Dir.
DATE: August 8, 2016
SUBJECT: Renaissance Plan – PAC Recommendations



City of West St. Paul

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Renaissance Plan has guided private redevelopment within the Robert Street corridor over the past 15 years by incorporating a commercial site plan review process, including the development of requirements for building placement, building façade materials and design, landscaping, signage, etc. However, in response to changing development patterns, regional competition, changing demographics, and in lieu of the Robert Street Improvement Project, Council determined that an update of the plan was important.

As a result, Cunningham Group was hired by the City to lead the planning process for the update of the plan. The scope of the project includes two phases: 1) an update of the Renaissance Plan document including the development of three concept plans within the corridor, and 2) development of new zoning requirements to implement the plan. A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) consisting of property owners, business owners, residents and other local stakeholders was created to assist with the development of the plan update. The PAC had a total of six meetings between February 2015 and April 2016 providing valuable direction and feedback as the draft plan was developed. In addition, a public open house was held early on in the process to gather feedback from the general public.

PAC RECOMMENDATIONS:

The PAC was assigned with providing comment to Staff regarding their overall approval (or disapproval) of the draft plan. Staff received comments back from 12 of the 14 PAC members (the remaining two PAC members were minimally involved early in the process). Staff received 5 votes in favor of the draft plan as written, 6 votes that were not in favor of the draft plan as written and 1 vote with no specific recommendation either way.

Staff compiled submitted comments from the PAC members in the attached summary, including comments in support and comments not in support. Since Staff did not receive consensus from the PAC regarding a recommendation, the purpose of the work session is to review the recommendations provided by the PAC and discuss next steps as it relates to the plan. Cunningham Group will be in attendance at the work session to provide a brief presentation with discussion/feedback to follow.

FISCAL IMPACT:

		Amount
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Department:		
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

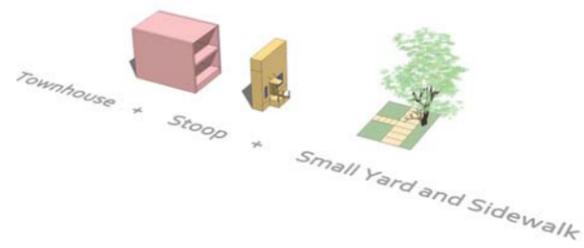
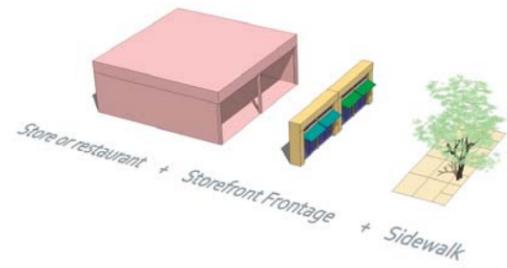
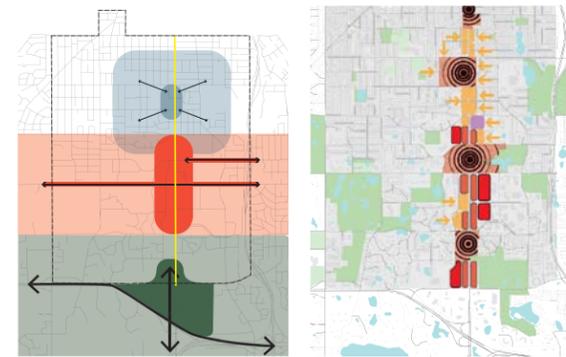
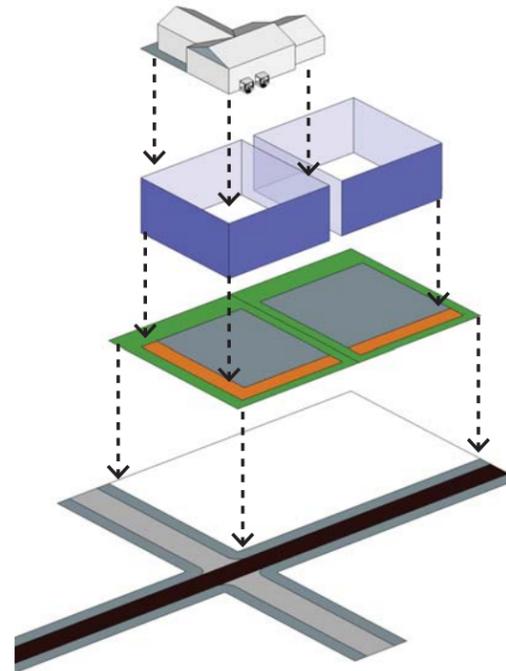
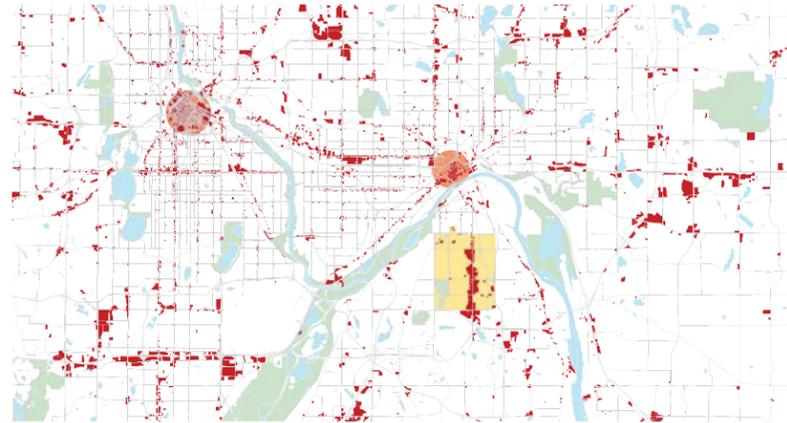
Review and discuss recommendations/next steps for the Renaissance Plan Update.

Comments supporting the plan:

- Addressing Signal Hills is important – “kicked down the road long enough” – could be a big tax generator
- The idea of form based zoning
- The concept of A & B streets with redevelopment.
- The concept of “mid-density housing” in the north gateway
- The redevelopment signal hills as shown in Alternative 1
- A safer at grade crossing of Robert for the trail.
- Support of YMCA presence in WSP
- Plan provides a good blueprint for where WSP can go if and when parcels become available - need to establish a “road map”
- The addition of residential development along Robert St.
- The plan is visionary and looks ahead which I believe is a good thing for WSP.
- Signal Hill’s owners have invested millions upgrading other metro properties and have left us with this degrading, disjointed and unattractive mess.
- I support the plan in its entirety.
- I support the plan. This is WSP’s plan and not a developer’s plan.
- The plan is merely a guide for where we would like WSP go in the future; it’s not static nor should it be.
- The voices of WSP residents should be the loudest and not overridden by developers desires to make a quick buck and leave town.
- Supports the vision and we can aspire to be a more attractive city.

Comments not supporting the plan:

- I feel like the plan has been manipulated by Cuningham and the City Manager to show some kind of urban utopia. Vision needs to be market based.
- How do we know if Millenials will want to live on Robert St. – Uptown, North Loop, Grand Ave, etc. are more desirable.
- Focus should be on supporting retail/services/restaurants that can support adjacent communities.
- Creative thought is wonderful, but the vision needs to be viable – needs to be market driven.
- Cannot support restrictive zoning for the 3 concept plans
- Cannot support the trail tunnel – would utilize valuable/taxable land.
- Cannot support “forced redevelopment” at the owners expense based on the city’s vision and not the owners (i.e. Signal Hills)
- Getting Signal Hills right in the plan is important for all parties including Signal Hills ownership. Need to account for all current business owners at Signal Hills.
- In regard to the Signal Hills full build out concept: plan is not realistic or market driven. Signal Hills is a neighborhood shopping center serving the needs of the neighborhood. Cannot support any zoning changes that might restrict the right of Signal Hills to continue as a retail shopping center.
- Cannot support the plan due to significant concerns regarding the viability of the plan using general principles based on private sector, market driven conditions as a basis for economic development activity.
- Concerned about how existing businesses will view the plan.



Robert Street Renaissance Plan Update

West St. Paul, Minnesota

June 6 2016

Prepared for:
City of West St. Paul, MN

Prepared by:
Cunningham Group Architecture, P.A.

Acknowledgements

City of West St. Paul

Matt Fulton - City Manager

Jim Hartshorn - Community Development Director

Ben Boike - Assistant Community Development Director, Planner

Steering Committee

Sandra Araujo - Postal Credit Union

Mark Aune - Augustana Lutheran Church

Del Gerdes - Resident, Former Planning Commissioner

Chris Gevara - Environmental Committee

Laura Gill - Christianson & Company

Tim Haubrich - Resident/Solid

Jennifer Juntilla - Sherman Associates

Joel Knoepfler - Resident

David Langer - Langer Real Estate

Renato Lombardi - Local artist

Tom Schuette - Signal Hills

Chris Simmons - Welsh Companies

Jill Skogheim - 5-8 Grill & Tap

Phil Stalboerger - Chamber of Commerce / MTM Inc.

John Zanmiller - Resident / Former Mayor

Consultants

Cunningham Group Architecture, P.A.

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary

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1. Executive Summary

Robert Street is the backbone of West Saint Paul.

It impacts all aspects of life in West Saint Paul – from how people move around to how they go about their daily activities of life to how they are perceived by visitors and investors. Not only does it run the full 2.5-mile length of the City, touching 9% of the City’s properties and comprising 15% of the City’s land, it drives the community’s tax base, its quality of life and both it’s internal and external identity.

As Robert Street goes, so goes West Saint Paul.

A Crucial Time for Robert Street

A healthy Robert Street is critical to a healthy West Saint Paul. With reconstruction of Robert Street to be completed in 2017, this is a crucial moment for the City. It is an opportunity to redefine the role of Robert Street in the City and an opportunity to use a “new” Robert Street as a catalyst for broader community improvements. In doing so, Robert Street can become a magnet for new investments that will strengthen the City’s tax base, regional competitiveness, and overall livability.

While the first Robert Street Renaissance Plan (2000) allowed significant progress in improved quality of development, much has changed. Larger demographic trends, proposed regional transit investments, and local projects are coalescing in a way that make it possible for new investments in the right places and in the right forms to greatly improve the character and strength of Robert Street - allowing the City to compete and succeed in ways that it is currently is not.

Robert Street Today

The Robert Street corridor is in transition. Once a popular and beloved regional commercial strip, Hwy. 52 and the growth of Woodbury, Eagan, and Mendota Heights had a profound impact on Robert Street and West Saint Paul. As often happens with retail, it either reinvents itself in its current location or it migrates to new areas of growth. In the past 30 years, regional retail dollars have dispersed and Robert Street is no longer the primary retail option in Dakota County.

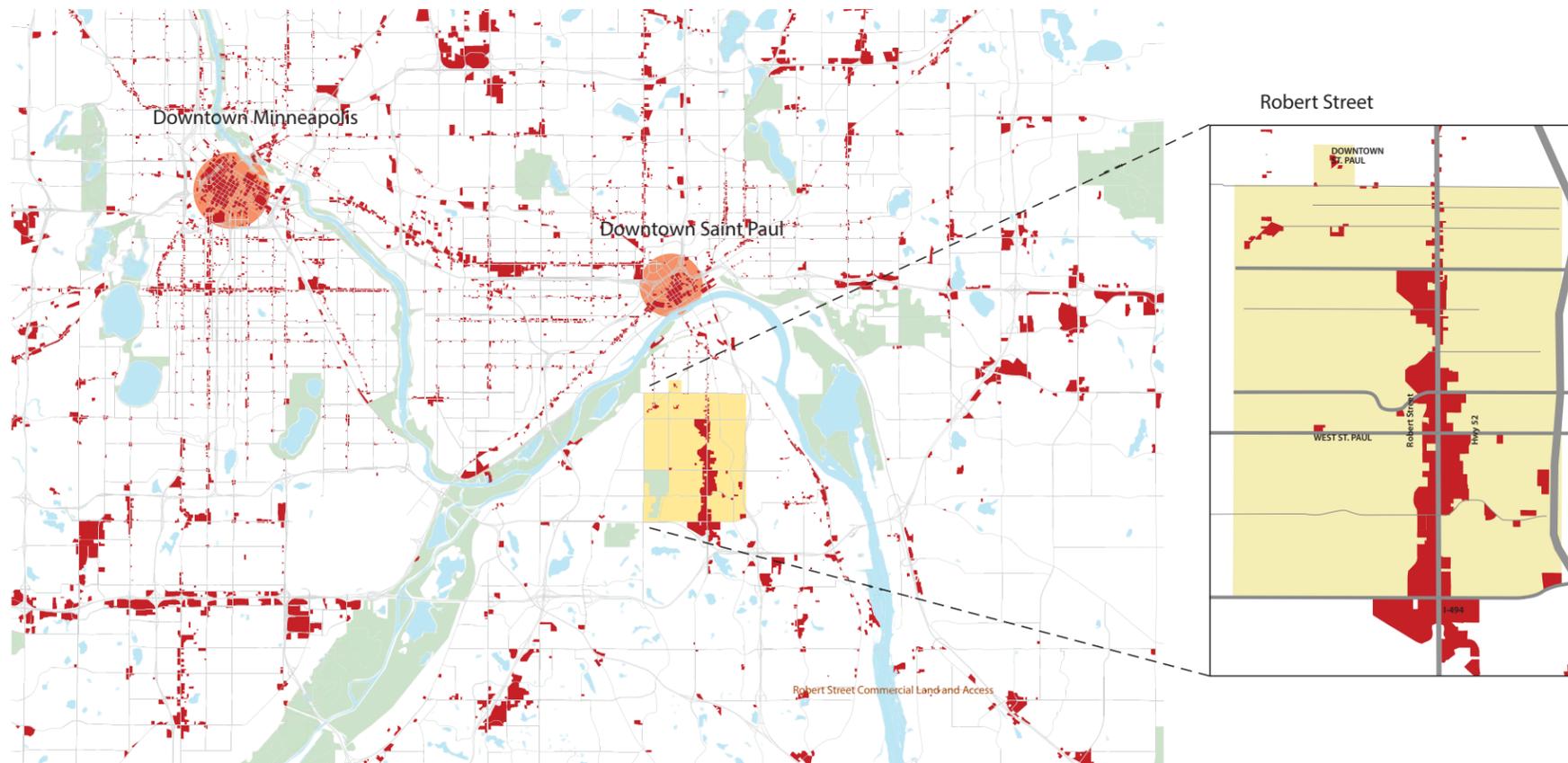
Robert Street is still a viable location for successful retail - however it has to reinvent itself. It has to become more condensed, defined and integrated into the fabric of the community. At the same time, Robert Street itself has to become more than a convenient place to shop. It has to re-establish itself in the community as a beloved place; a place in the community that exudes pride and respect.

While successful new development has occurred since 2000, large portions of Robert Street are suffering from disinvestment; they are slow to reinvent themselves. Not only are West St. Paul citizens not proud of how parts of the corridor look, they are concerned about how it will serve them in the future.

And yet, there is much potential. Robert Street has inherent advantages that position it well for a dramatic transformation:

- Robert Street itself is a direct regional connection to the economic hub of downtown St. Paul.
- The surrounding neighborhoods are made up of affordable single family housing that is turning over with remarkable speed.
- Numerous large parcels of underutilized land along the corridor make it a prime location for redevelopment.
- Important new investments, from both inside and outside forces, are headed to Robert Street: the improved streetscape in progress, upgrades to mass transit, plans for a new regional trail, and funding opportunities for much-needed urban housing.

How West St. Paul takes advantage of its assets and makes use of proposed investments along Robert Street will impact how successful they are in staying competitive in the upcoming decades.



Regional and National Trends

Strong urban growth in the Metro core and first-ring suburbs is projected to continue for at least the next 30 years, while growth on the outer fringes is slowing – a complete turnaround from the growth patterns of several decades prior to 2010. Offering lower cost housing than the core cities, first-ring suburbs all over the country are competing to attract this population influx, made up mostly of Baby Boomers and Millennials. These groups need and want different lifestyles than most suburban environments can offer: places where they can live, play, work, and stay throughout each phase of their life. This means providing a range of transportation options, employment styles, and housing types, as well as developing places with character not only for shopping but for gathering and entertainment opportunities as well. The communities that evolve to meet these needs will be those that are successful.

What this Plan Accomplishes

This Plan puts in place the necessary vision and supporting policies to help transform Robert Street from a useful place to a beloved place. The Plan:

- Supports apartment and condominium housing in the northern portion of South Robert Street. This will allow the neighborhoods to bridge the corridor and become a strong gateway into the City.
- Encourages full redevelopment of the Signal Hills site with a mix of housing types, retail opportunities, and transit connections. The 40 acre site is one of the most attractive in the region offering opportunities to create a transit oriented development in the middle of healthy neighborhoods.
- Provides direction for creating a Town Center between Wentworth and Thompson. By integrating a new regional trail, potential civic uses, redevelopment of the Golf Course, a and additional mixed use development, West Saint Paul will have a lively downtown that can become the civic and commercial heart of the City.
- Directs all new development along the corridor to present a positive face to the corridor, reinforcing City and States investment in the soon to be completed reconstruction of Robert Street.

The updated Robert Street Renaissance Plan will strengthen the City’s backbone by directing reinvestment along the corridor that will leverage the city’s positive qualities and spark redevelopment. The West St. Paul community has greater hopes and dreams for how Robert Street can look and function in the future – for how it can generate economic prosperity and be a place that people from around the region want to visit, to shop, and to live. The overall quiet, suburban character of the City will stay the same but investing in critical nodes and implementing new zoning will stimulate improvements that will bring new life to Robert Street and lift West St Paul into a competitive position. The next 30 years will bring massive change to the entire Metro; this Plan will help West St. Paul attract the developments and make the community investments necessary to create an attractive, healthy, livable corridor that can meet the needs of both today and tomorrow.

Goals



1. Create Identifiable Places

Identifiable places will help create a corridor that is memorable, recognizable, and organized. Without differentiation along the corridor, the corridor will not be unique and will not attract a range of investments.



2. Have a Balanced Mix of Retail and Housing

The Corridor needs a range of activities and uses to meet the increasingly diverse and varied populations of West Saint Paul.



3. Attract New Businesses, Residents, and Visitors

Attracting new residents and businesses to the community will keep West Saint Paul competitive and healthy. Growth is important to a strong tax base and high quality amenities.



4. Provide Places for Community Gathering and Entertainment

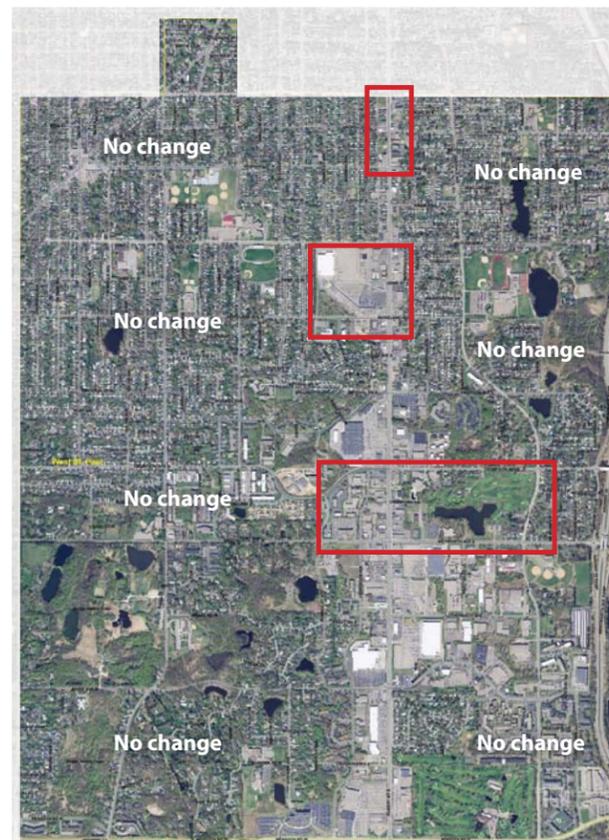
Providing places for gathering and entertainment helps create positive memories and strong social bonds. This will in turn increase loyalty to the community and help differentiate Robert Street from other corridors in the region.



5. Make it Safe and Attractive to Get Around on all Modes

A transportation system that allows more people more ways to access the businesses on Robert Street will support the creation of a strong local economy.

A Suburban Community with a few Urban Places



West St. Paul is a suburban community. Even with the Met Council’s growth projections, much of the community will retain its existing character with quiet streets and single family homes and small apartments. This Plan does not threaten the underlying land uses and patterns of most of the Community. Rather, it proposes a gradual transition of the Robert Street Corridor so it is more regionally competitive and locally responsive. More specifically, the Plan targets three locations along the corridor where the community can absorb growth, create a sense of place and provide a new housing and retail choices.

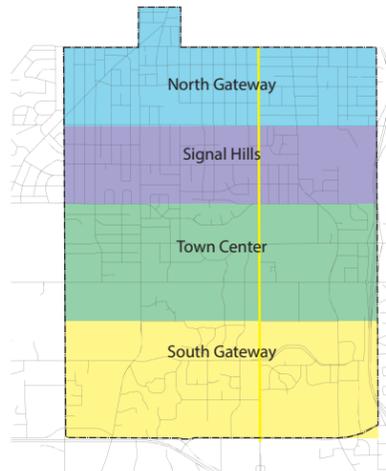
By directing growth to these locations, the Community will be able to both attract new residents and offer new amenities while at the same time preserving the quality of suburban community.

<u>Suburban</u>	→	<u>Urban</u>
Quiet	→	Lively
Predictable	→	Changing
Familiar	→	Cosmopolitan
Place to Stay	→	A place to try
Casual	→	Urbane

Overall Corridor Strategies

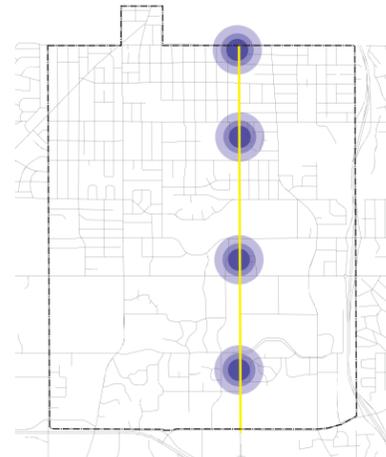
1. Create Four Neighborhoods

Creating four neighborhoods or character areas will lend clarity and direction for potential investors, sense of pride for existing residents and businesses, and improve wayfinding for visitors.



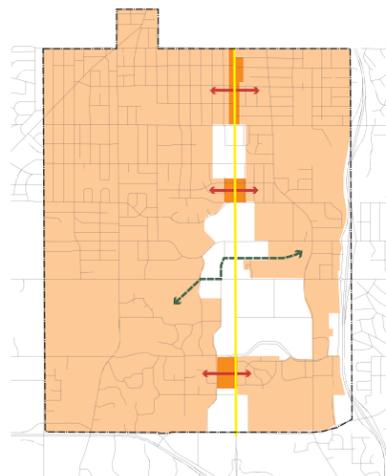
2. Mixed Use Places

Mixed use places that are served by transit, walkable, and have high quality public spaces and amenities will integrate housing and retail to create new amenities for the City.



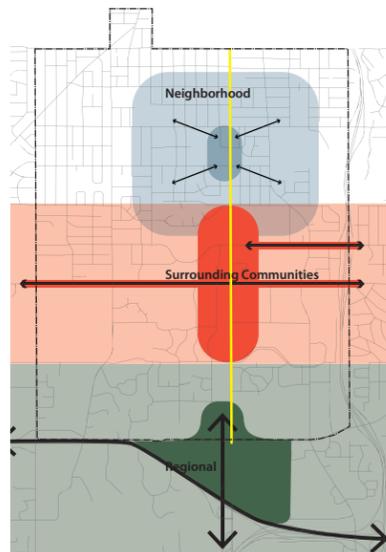
3. "Bridge" Robert Street

In order to connect across Robert Street and transform Robert Street from a barrier to a place that unifies the community, effort should be made to bridge Robert Street. This can happen in many places and many ways. Improved intersections, buildings that face each other, underpasses and overpasses in appropriate locations are some of the ways the City can "bridge" Robert Street.

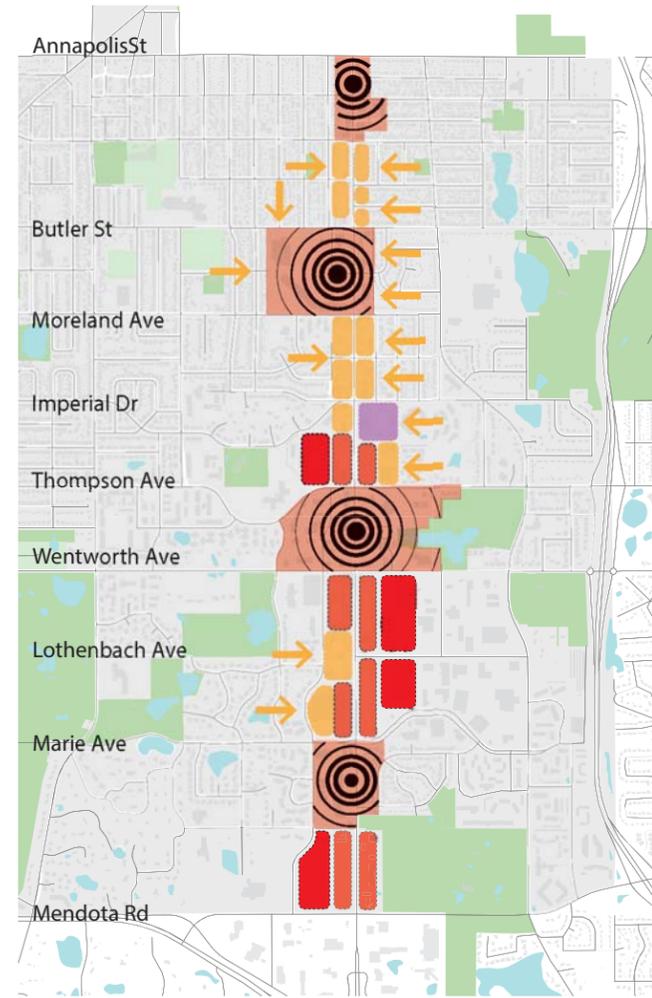


4. Organize and Reinvent Retail

In order to retain retail competitiveness, the Plan recommends a reinvention and reorganization of retail along the corridor so it is more responsive to the local and regional customer base. Retail uses along Robert Street should be organized so they complement each other and do not compete against each other.

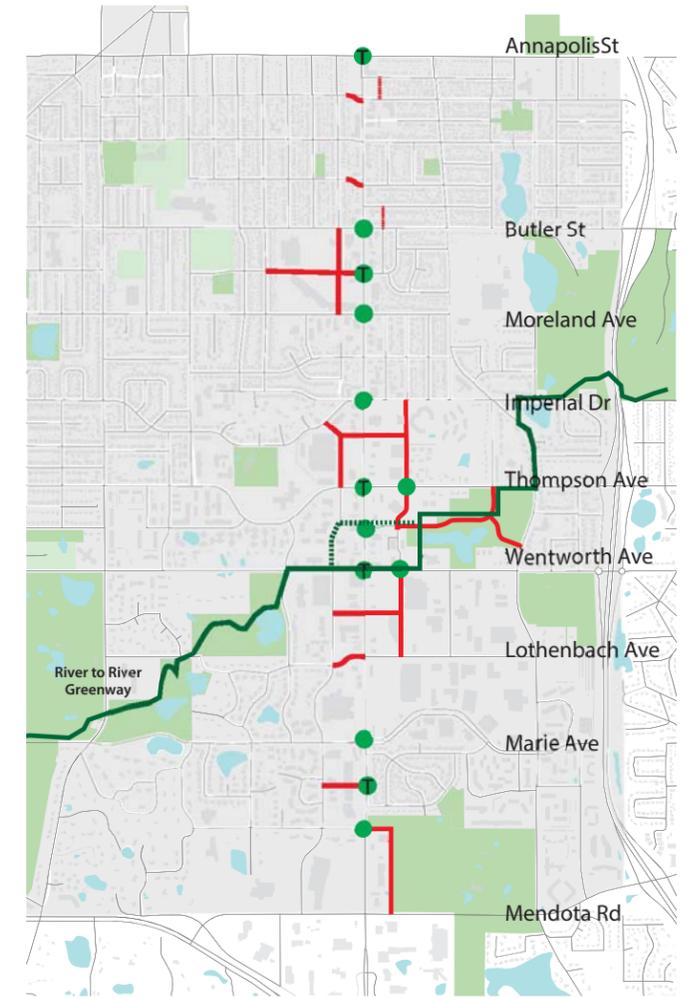


Land Use Recommendations



- Opportunities for mixed-use nodes that integrate retail, housing and public open space.
- Opportunities to introduce housing onto Robert Street.
- Opportunities to organize and condense retail so it is more accessible and pedestrian friendly.

Land Use and Circulation Recommendations



- Transit node
- Locations to improve pedestrian crossing of Robert Street.
- Approximate locations of new connections.

Specific Catalytic Interventions



North Gateway



Signal Hills



The Town Center



Features

- Medium Density housing that creates a comfortable walkable street.
- Limited retail or restaurant on the ground floor of a mixed use building at Annapolis.
- Potential realignment of Hurley Street to increase greenspace.

Features

- A redeveloped site brings retail closer to Robert Street and introduces housing and open space onto the site.
- A community park in the middle of the development for gathering and farmers market.
- High frequency, high quality transit integrated into the redevelopment at Orme and Robert Street.

Features

- Safe and comfortable trail crossing of Robert Street.
- Perpendicular views and access from the "lake to the hill".
- New development on Robert Street that creates a comfortable pedestrian environment.
- Crawford Street extended from Wentworth to Thompson.

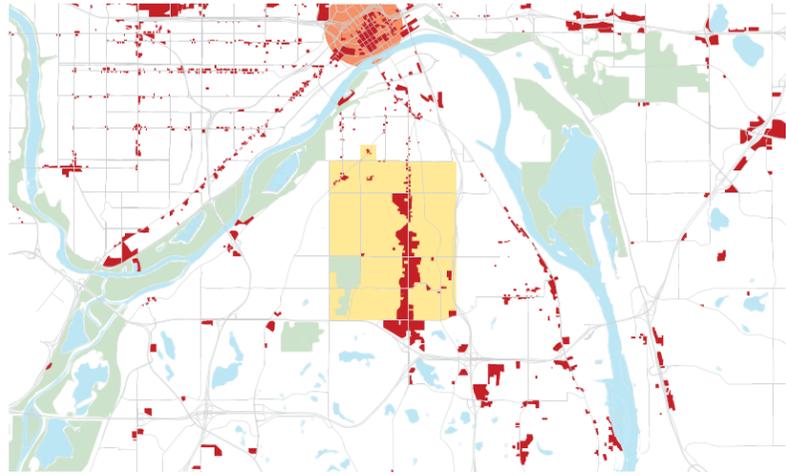
What does this Plan say about private property

The purpose of this Plan is to guide, not dictate development. Images throughout the Plan depict potential development on both public and private property. They are not development proposals, but rather ideas about how concepts in the Plan can be realized with potential new developments.

It is important to note that the Plan relies on private property owners, developers, the City of West Saint Paul and other partners working together to bring investment to the City. Very few of the ideas in this Plan (especially on this page) can be realized without several parties coming together. The ideas on this page can be considered a strong starting point for potential partnerships.

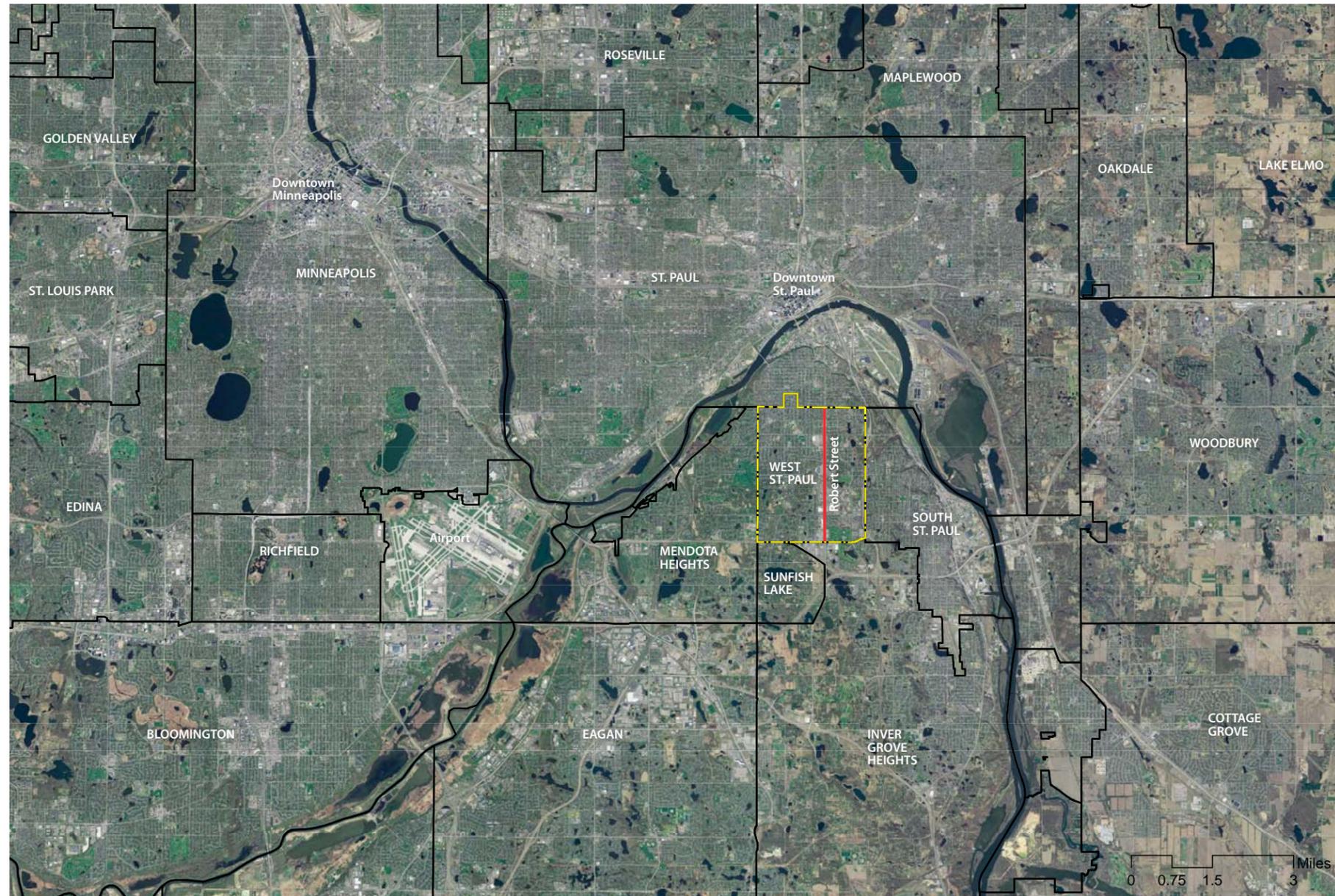
Private property owners will maintain control of their property throughout the life of this Plan. This Plan does not advocate use of eminent domain or any form of property takings. Instead, the Plan encourages redevelopment that is more human scaled, walkable, transit friendly and aesthetically appealing than what currently exists throughout parts of the corridor. The purpose of encouraging such development is to create an environment that residents of West Saint Paul can be proud of.

note: the images on this page illustrate one A alternative for North Gateway, Signal Hills and Town Center. Please refer to Section 4 for more detailed descriptions of all three areas.



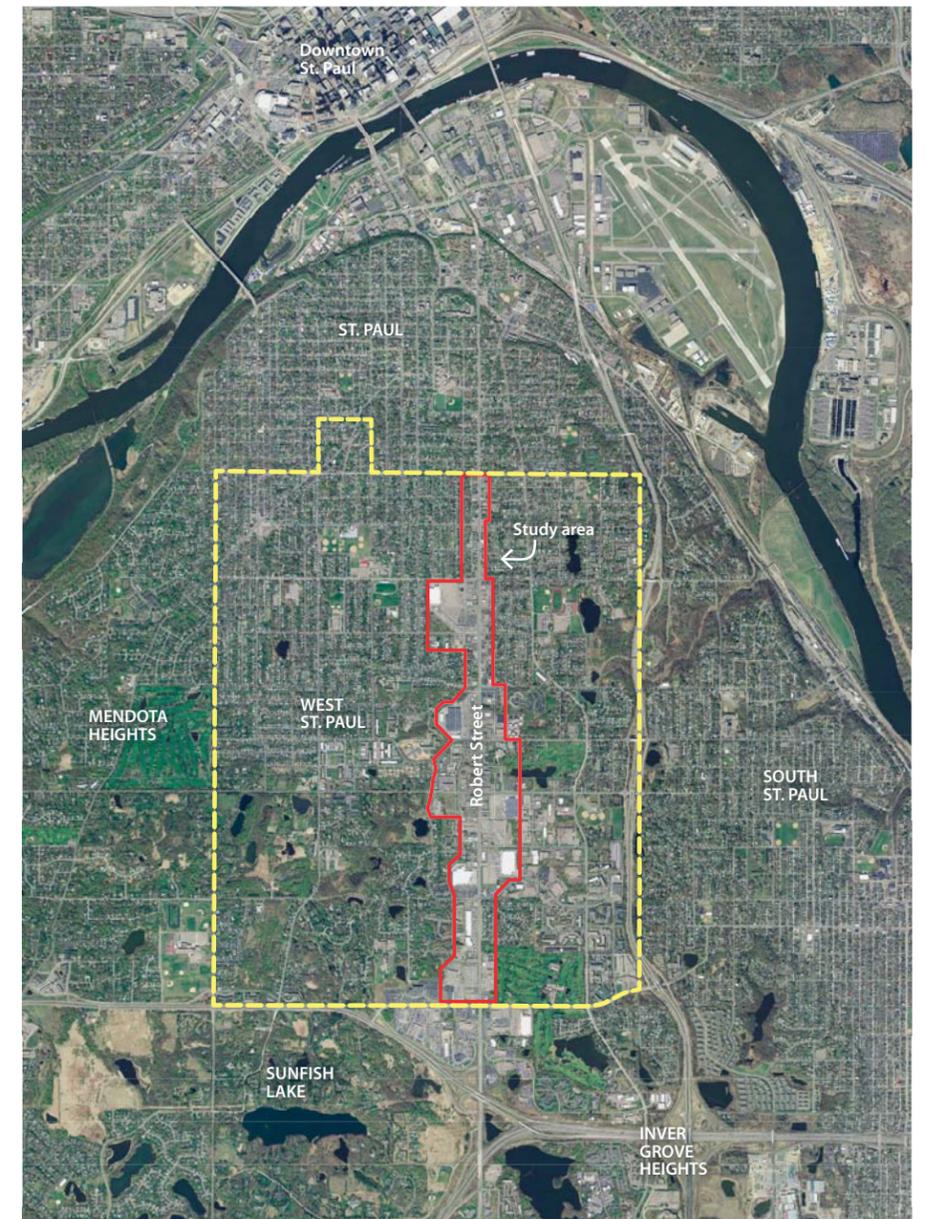
2. Project Background

Site Location



Location of West St. Paul and Robert Street within the Twin Cities Metro Region

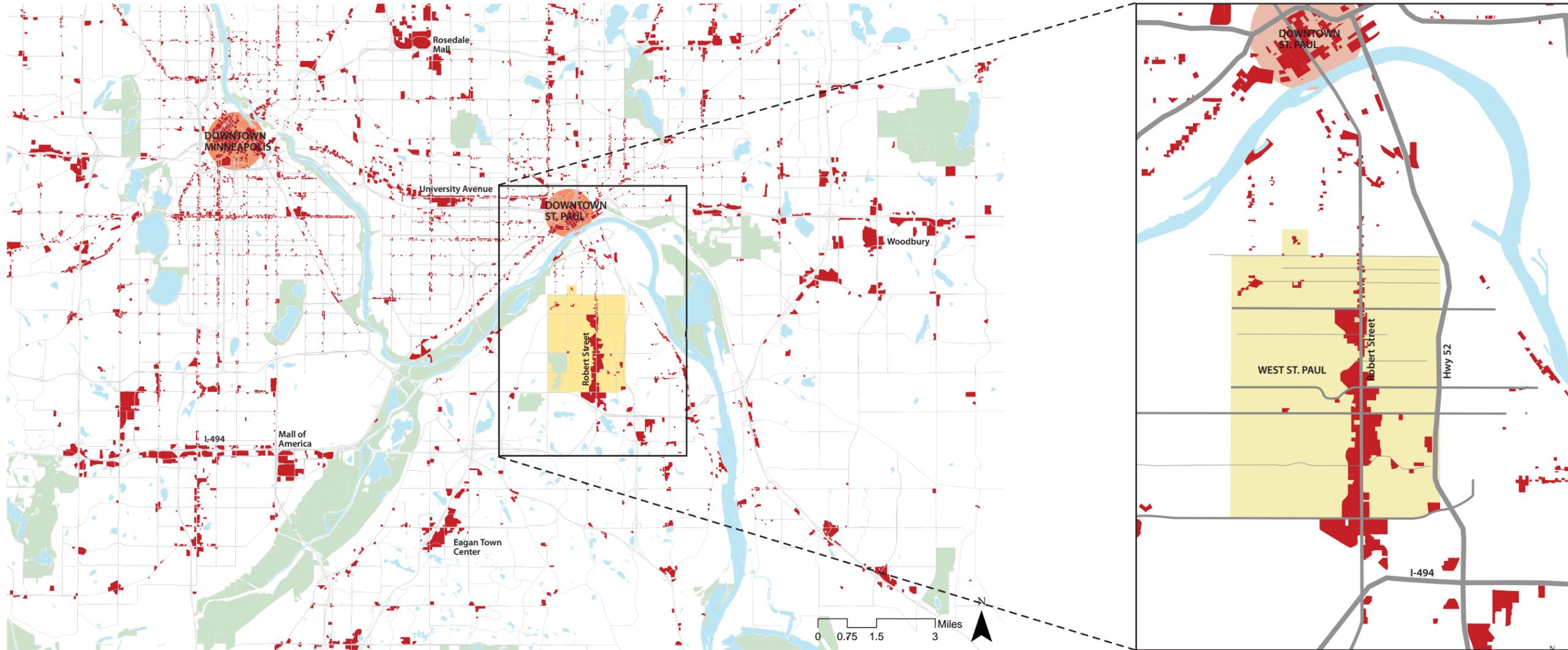
The City of West St. Paul is a first-ring suburb located immediately south of the capitol city of St. Paul. Robert Street runs the entire 2.5-mile length of the city and it a direct link from the outer suburbs to downtown St. Paul, a hub for employment.



Robert Street Study Area within West St. Paul

Robert Street is the backbone of West St. Paul, comprising 85% of commercial land in the city. The study area includes all parcels touching the street, as well as other significant portions of land that are considered to be a part of the corridor.

Site History & Context



Commercial Land in the Twin Cities Metro

Robert Street Commercial Land and Access

Robert Street is one of many commercial corridors in the Twin Cities metro region. With 800,000 square feet of retail, it is a significant land use in the City of West Saint Paul and, as indicated on the map above, has a noticeable footprint in the region.

As Robert Street developed since it was a country road in the late 1800s, it took different forms to meet the changing needs of its citizens and customers. The northern portion dates to the streetcar days, which is evidenced by its small

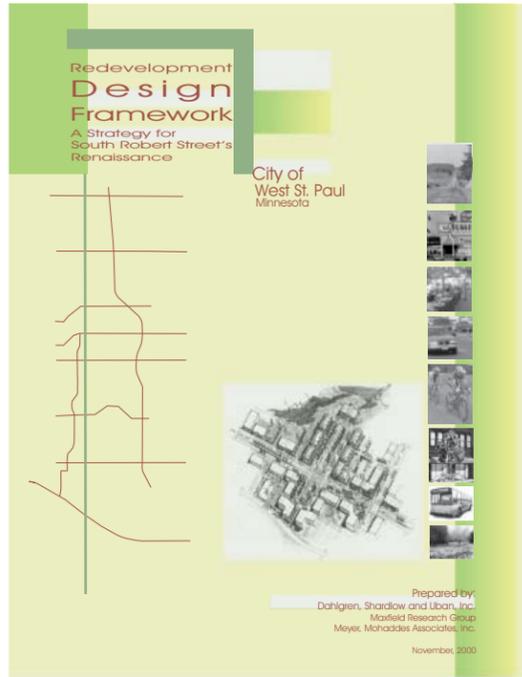
parcels, narrower right-of-way, and neighborhood feel. The middle portion, highlighted by the Signal Hills mall, developed during the 1950's when private car ownership exploded and "the strip" was the desired development pattern. In the 1960's and beyond, the car-oriented development continued to increase in extent and scale to accommodate the ever-increasing dependence on vehicles. During this time, Robert Street was a popular regional shopping district. But by the early 1990s, with the construction of Hwy 52 and the subsequent development of the communities

further out from the city center, Robert Street lost its place to newer shopping centers like Eagan Town Center and the Mall of America.

While commercial use on Robert Street takes up a significant land footprint, it does not have the draw that it once did. Now, rather than attracting customers from the larger metro region, it serves mostly West St. Paul residents and the immediately surrounding communities.

But the city is in the right position to make itself competitive in the region once more. Its immediate connection and close proximity to downtown St. Paul makes it a potentially attractive place for new residents who want an easy commute.

What the First Robert Street Renaissance Plan Accomplished

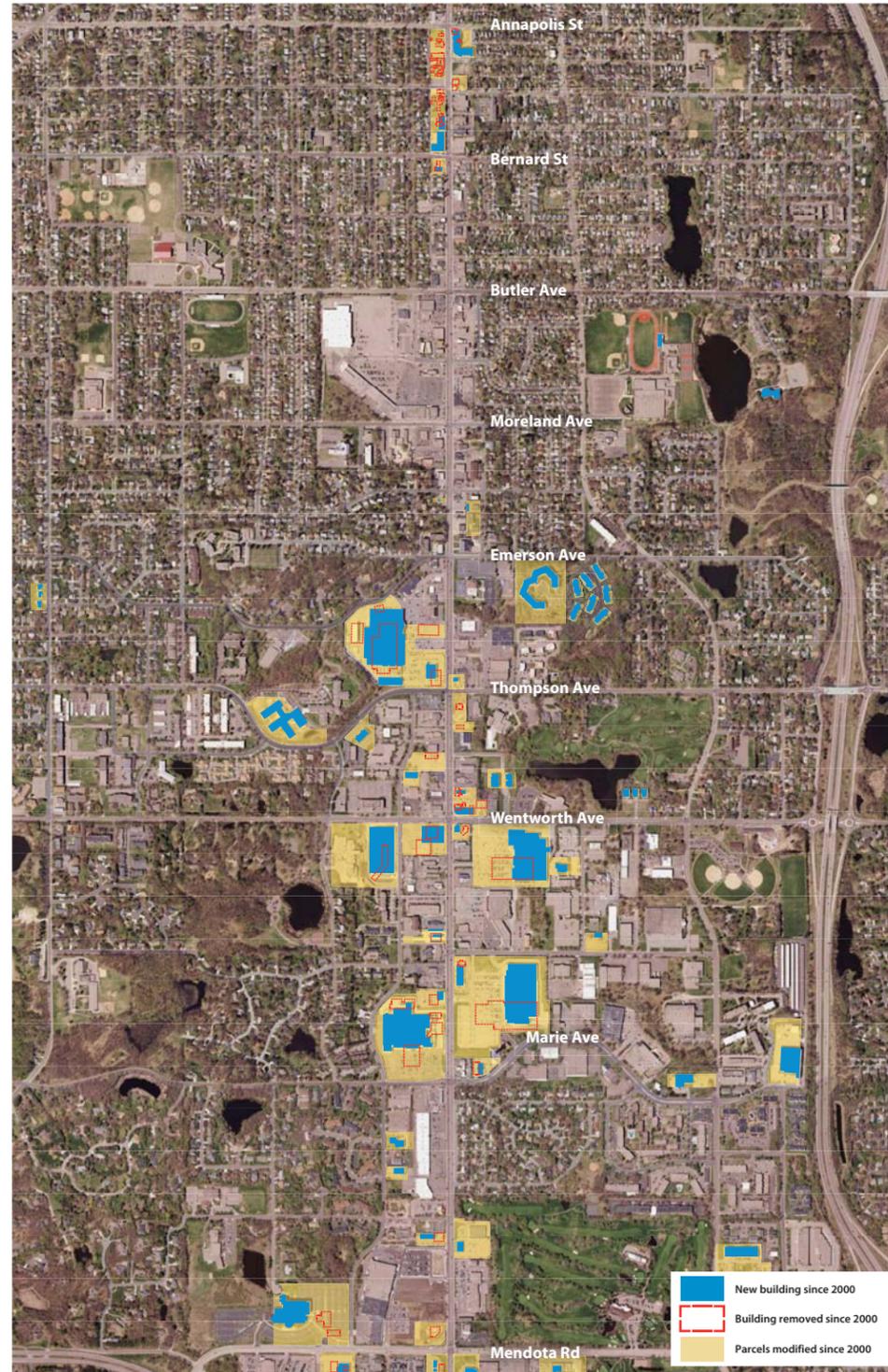


The original Robert Street Renaissance Plan, adopted in 2001, provided two major recommendations. 1) rebuild Robert Street 2) improve the building and site plan standards.

At the time of this writing, Robert Street is in the process of rebuilding the right-of-way to complete this vision. The project will include planted medians, consolidated access to businesses, new lighting, pedestrian amenities, and street trees.

After completion of the Renaissance Plan in 2001, the city incorporated building and site plan standards into city policy. This included changes to the Zoning Ordinance, the addition of a formal site plan review process, and higher standards for building materials and siting, landscaping requirements, and signage type.

While the original Renaissance Plan resulted in many positive changes, this Plan will build on these improvements and offer further adjustments to code and policy.



Changes on the Robert Street Corridor since 2000



Parcels cleared for new development on north end



New multi-family housing on north end



Commercial buildings closer to the street



Improved material standards



Improved sign standards (monument, not pylon)



Outlots ready for development



On-going street reconstruction (Image by SRF)



Landscaping standards

Why an Update is Needed

Changing Trends

The purpose of this Plan is to prepare the community for increased demand to invest in properties along Robert Street as soon as the street reconstruction is completed in 2017. Investment has been holding back, yet demand to invest in the inner ring communities has been building since the Great Recession in 2008.

Much has changed since the original Renaissance Plan in 2001.

Demographics

Baby Boomers and Millennials (two of the largest generations) are driving many of the changes we already see in the region. As our population grows from 2.9 million today to 3.7 million in 2040, residents older than 65 yrs of age and younger than 24 yrs of age will grow from 34% of the population to 42% of the population.

Lifestyles

Our lifestyle decisions are becoming more complex as our cost decisions are being co-mingled with time and health decisions. As we can find low cost goods on-line, this affords us more opportunity to spend our dollars on enhancing our health, enjoyment, and experiences.

Transportation

With oil prices fluctuating, and time becoming a more valuable commodity, we are simply choosing to spend less time on our commutes. Overall miles driven, across the country have been declining since 2002 - indicating choices to use transit, bicycles, and our own feet to make those trips that were once reserved for the car.

Smarter Regional Growth Policies

The region recognizes these changes and has been investing heavily in new transit and alternative transportation infrastructure such as bicycle trails and lanes. Since 2001 the Region has built 2 LRT lines and in the next 10 years will likely have two more completed as well as over half a dozen BRT lines.

Jobs

Our Region will continue to grow with an additional 500,000 jobs by 2040. The nature of our economy is also changing. Large companies will still fueling much of the growth, however increasingly the "freelance" economy will provide job opportunities for workers of all ages. Office space will not increase significantly despite job growth because individual workspaces are getting smaller and employers are more efficient with their space needs. In addition, the freelance economy will utilize semi-public spaces as their offices by popping open their laptops in coffee shops, libraries, and hotel lounges.

Retail

The internet has profoundly changed how we shop and the retail landscape has changed accordingly. With more dollars being spent on-line, fewer retail goods are being purchased along commercial strips like Robert Street. The retail that has survived is either the bricks and mortar complement to a successful on-line enterprise, a or a retailer who provides exceptional experience or service that cannot be found on-line. The rise of "experience retail" has found synergies with restaurants eating establishments - other enterprises that can not be duplicated on-line.

Rebirth of First-Ring Suburbs

With the second and third waves of suburban expansion between 1970 and 2000 inner ring communities like West Saint Paul saw either flat or negative growth as they were bypassed with new greenfield development on the ever expanding fringes of the metropolitan region. The original streetcar suburbs peaked in the 1970's as tight knit and proud communities. But with most new growth occurring on the fringes, the inner ring communities struggled to maintain their retail districts, public amenities, and revenue base.

Since 2000, many in the investment community have looked back in towards the core and at the inner ring communities as golden opportunities for growth. Communities like West Saint Paul are more affordable, and better located than communities further from the core.

With land originally developed in large parcels (as the first wave of suburban development), redevelopment can be significantly simpler than urban in areas because larger properties are under single ownership. Furthermore their redevelopment potential places them in a strong strategic position to attract regional transit investments.

The most progressive of inner ring communities foreshadowed these trends and have been reinvesting in themselves for over a decade. They have maintained their generally leafy suburban residential communities while carefully inserting areas of urban vitality in declining commercial areas or transitioning industrial areas. These urban nodes have allowed suburban communities to attract new residents, as well as provide new options for existing residents. This has helped bolster tax base which allows them to reinvest in public amenities.



How Other Communities Are Responding

Communities across the Twin Cities have been responding aggressively to the changing demographics and their oncoming challenges by retrofitting outdated patterns with:

- A Mixed of uses.
- Better Quality Public spaces.
- More Walkable environments.
- Improved Transit service.
- A wider range of housing choices.
- Redevelopments that are closely connected to surroundings.



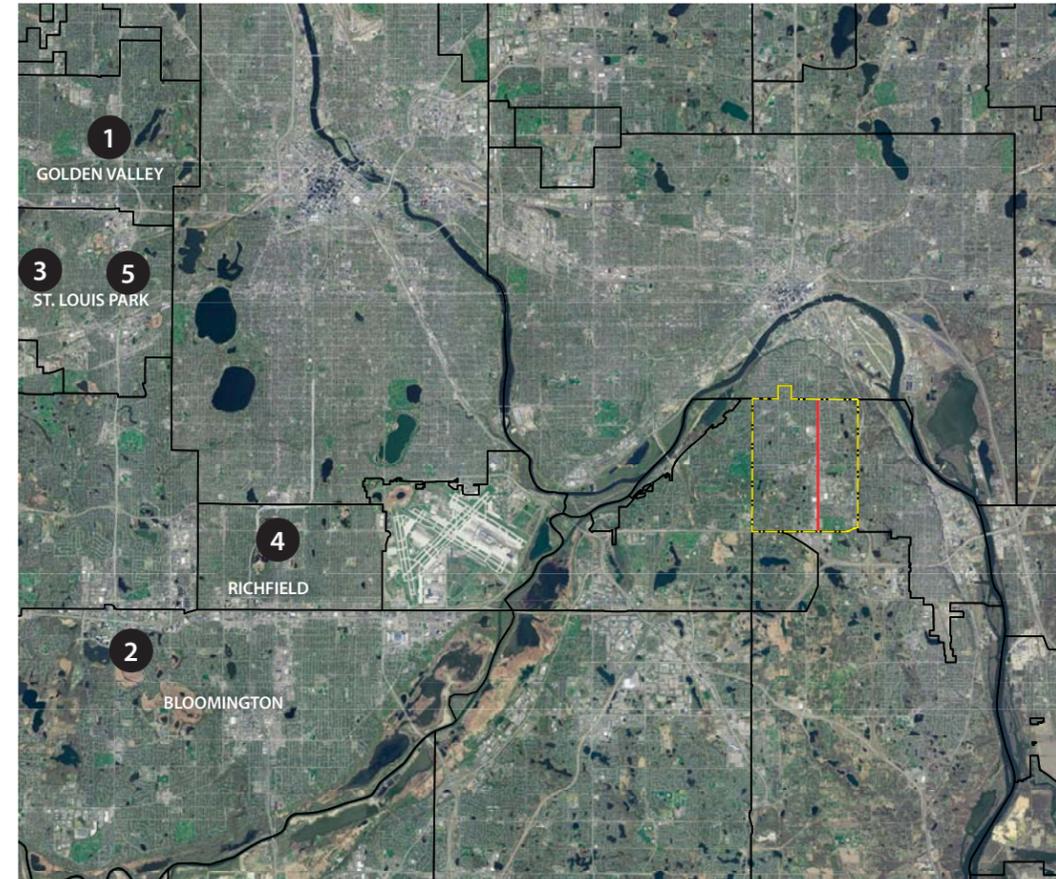
Town Square in Golden Valley



Figure 5.16 American Boulevard - Future Enhancements Concept



American Boulevard in Bloomington

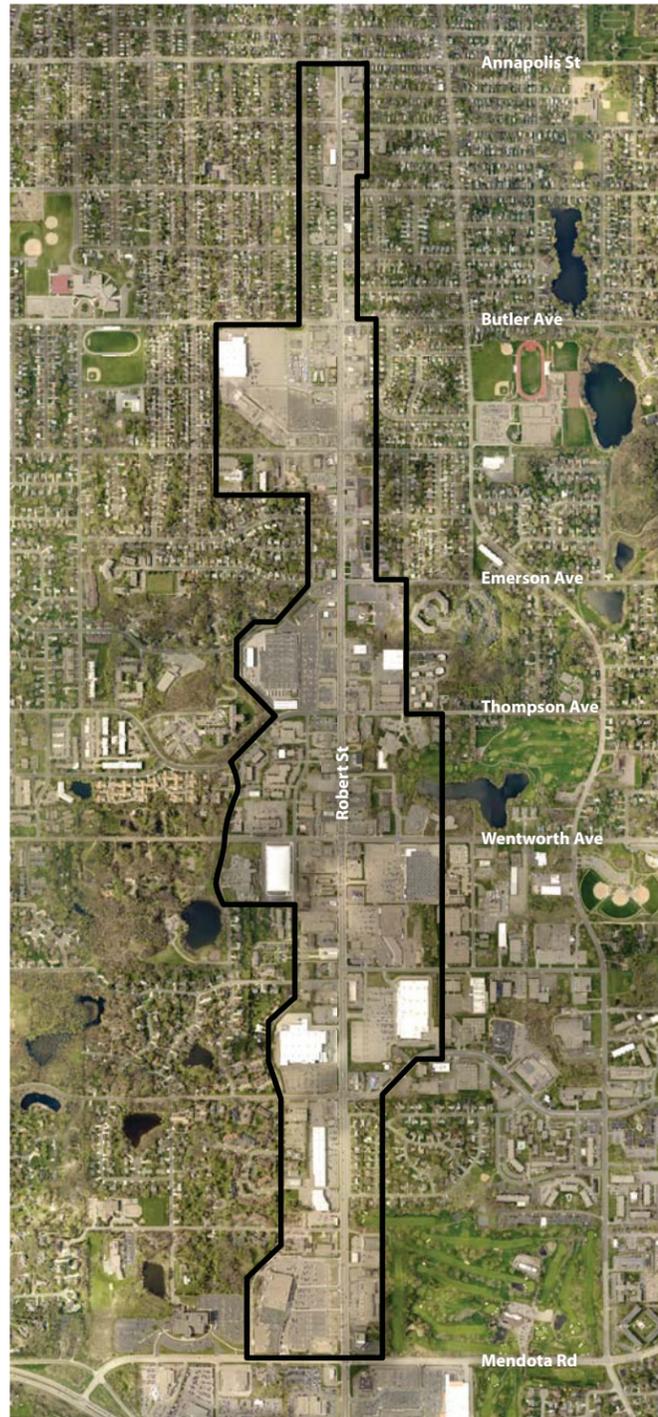


Excelsior & Grand in St. Louis Park

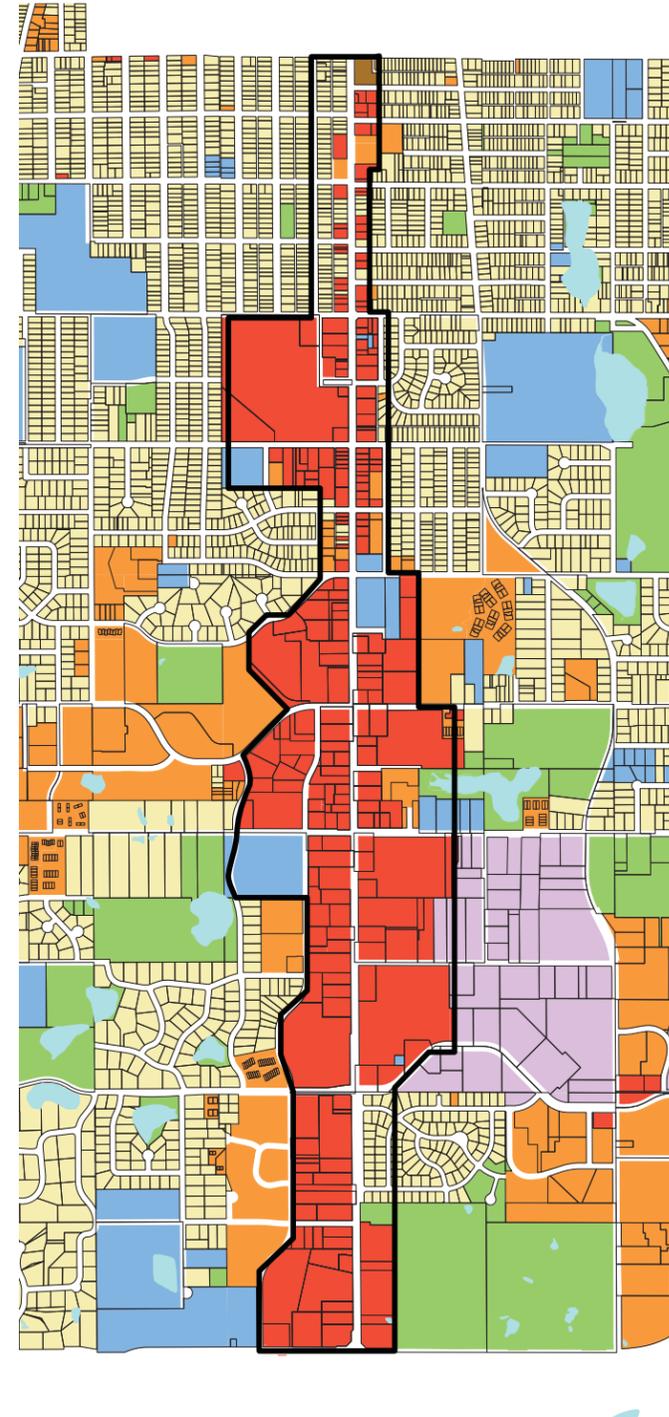


66th and Lyndale in Richfield

Site Layers



Aerial



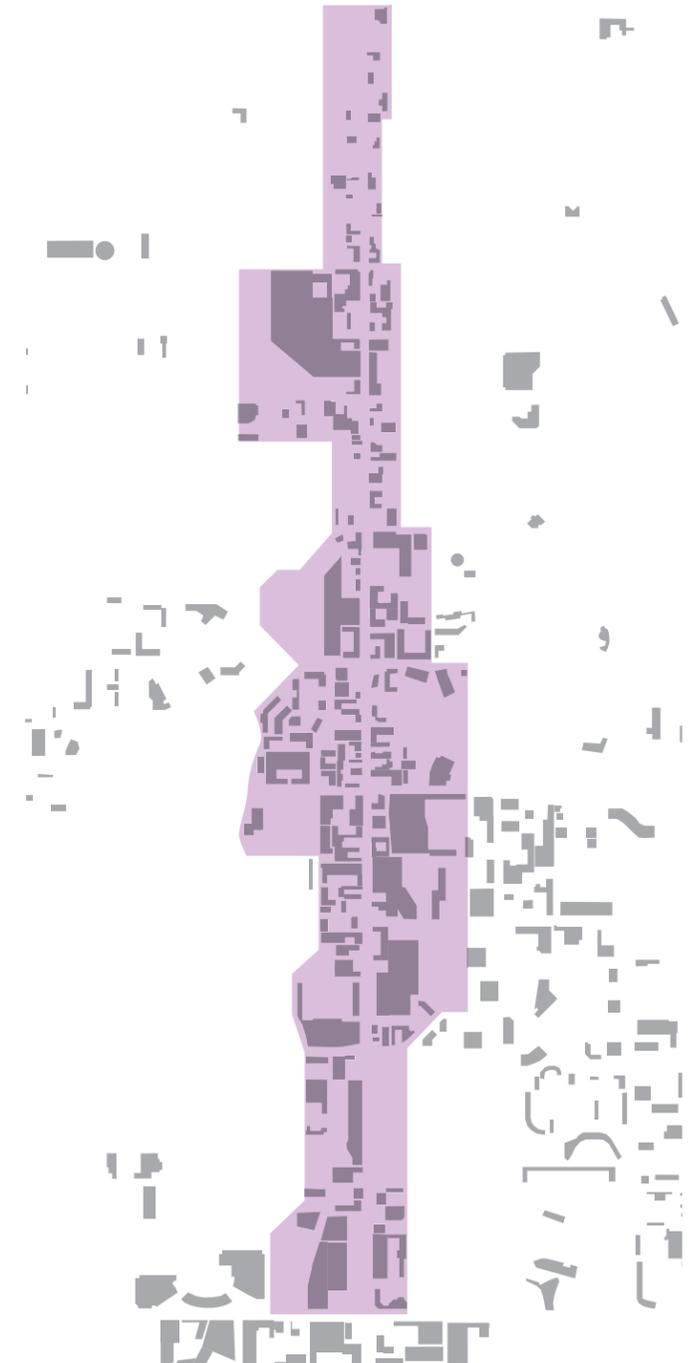
Existing Land Use

85% of commercial land in the city is within two blocks of Robert Street. Most communities have about 5% of their land designated for commercial use; West St. Paul has 9%, which indicates that it is likely over-retailed. Indeed as one drives the length of the corridor, vacant properties and buildings can be found.



Buildings

Buildings along Robert Street are a loose arrangement of buildings that vary greatly in scale and pattern. Some buildings relate closely to their residential neighborhoods they abut, but others create an abrupt edge

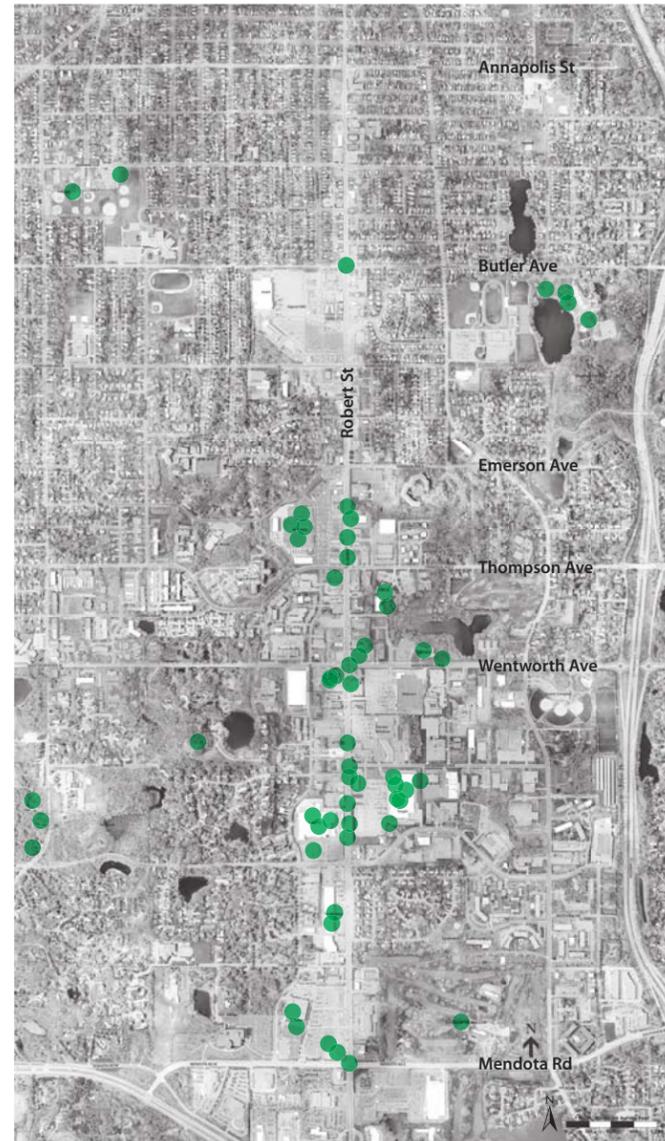


Parking Lots

Most of Robert Street was designed in an auto-oriented pattern. As a result, parking is the dominant land use. This pattern, while sometimes convenient for drivers, creates a hostile and unpleasant environment for others.

Community Perception of Site

The West St. Paul community was engaged in two public meetings in the planning process. At the first meeting, participants were asked to identify the corridor's areas of strengths, weaknesses, and priorities on maps with colored dots. The Project Advisory Committee was also asked to take part in this exercise; the consolidated results are shown to the right.



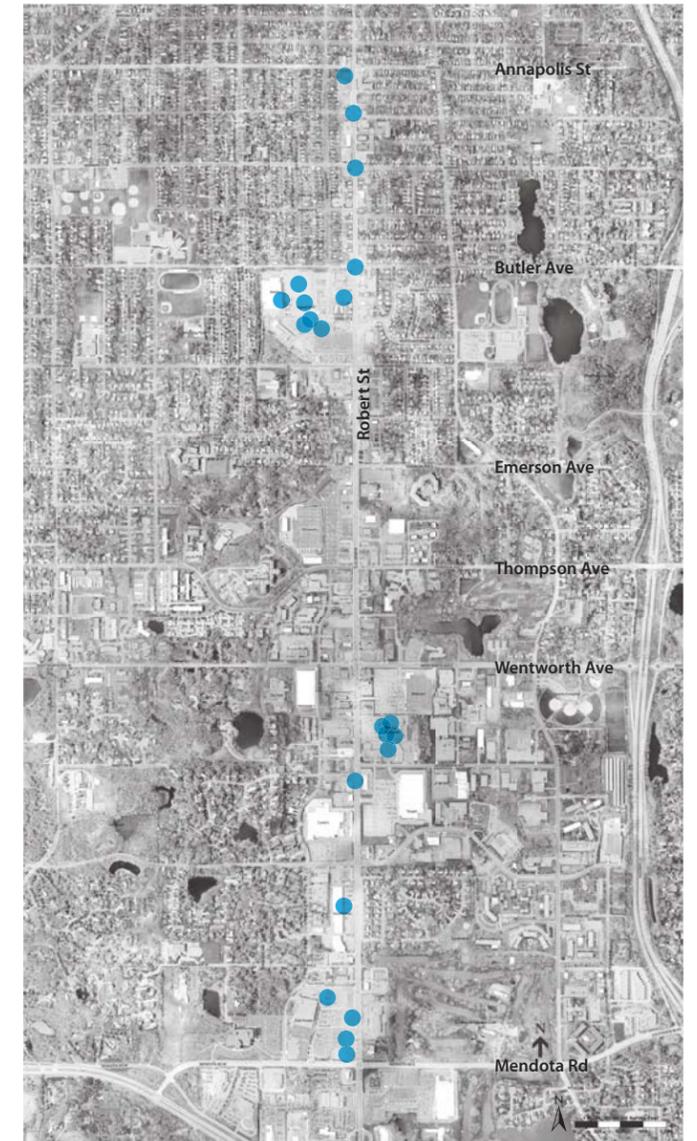
Strengths

Participants were asked to place green dots on places that they feel work well, are liked, or are assets to the community. The majority of strengths were identified within the lower half of the corridor, which corresponds to areas of recent development. In addition, the city's parks and open spaces were identified as strengths.



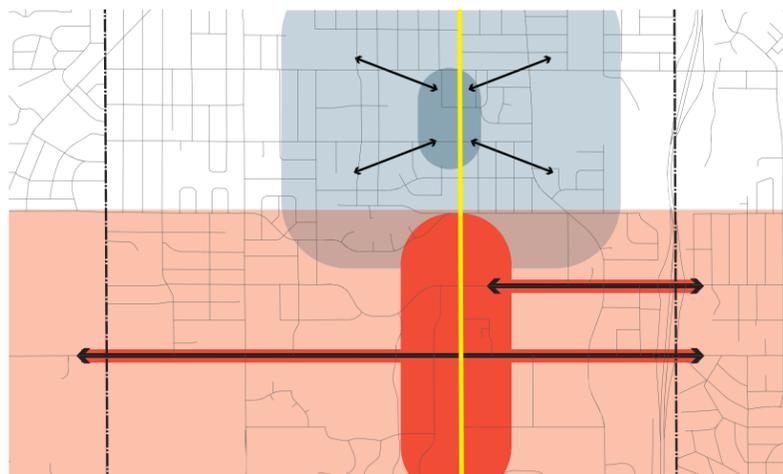
Weaknesses

Red dots were placed in locations that were seen as liabilities to the community, do not work, or are disliked. Weaknesses identified by the groups were more scattered along the length of the corridor but tended to focus around a few key areas: the northern few blocks, where a number of empty lots currently sit; on the Signal Hills shopping center; on the recently-vacated Rainbow Foods grocery store; and on the empty lots on the southern-most end of the corridor.



Priorities

In areas that are judged to be needing the most attention, or what should be top priorities for the community to improve, the participants placed blue dots. These closely aligned with those places previous judged as weaknesses.



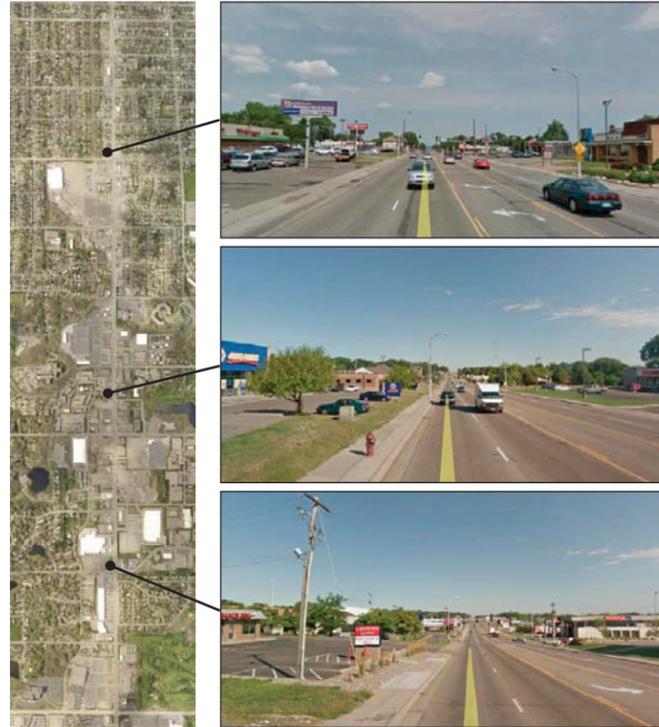
3. Framework Plan

Primary Issues

1. The Corridor Lacks Identity

West St. Paul has a number of memorable places that people identify with the city: the Wentworth Library, Dakota Lodge, and the Dodge Nature Center. These are places where the community can gather and celebrate. The Robert Street corridor, by contrast, has no places of significance of which citizens can be proud. Signal Hills Mall, prior to alterations to its layout in the late 1990s, was a beloved community place.

In addition, while it is obvious that certain portions of the corridor were built during different eras, there are no indicators that identify districts, nor are there distinguishable characteristics that create a cohesive look. Development looks much the same along the length of the corridor. Not only does this make it difficult for visitors to navigate, it does not inspire them to return.

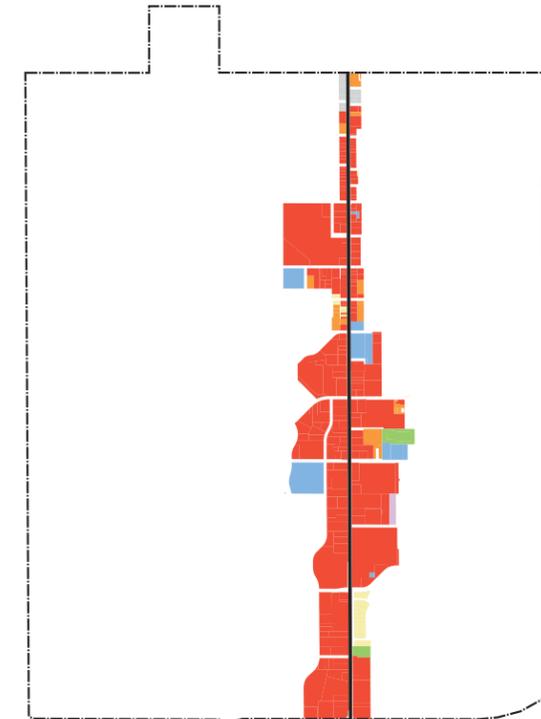


2. The Corridor is Over-Retailed and Lacks Business Diversity

West St. Paul has 9% of its land designated as commercial. Much of that land is retail. This presents a risk to the community because retail land use is notoriously volatile as the retail industry tends to reinvent itself every 10 years.

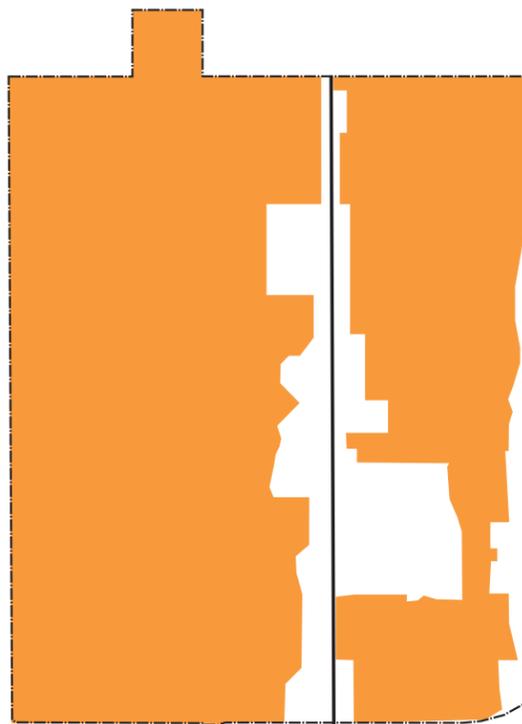
In addition, Robert Street lacks a balance of retail types; currently there is an over-abundance of some types of businesses (for example, auto parts shops) and a lack of others (such as sit-down restaurants). Because of this, residents must do some of their shopping in other communities. This is not only an inconvenience to citizens, it is also a missed opportunity for the City's economy.

The Plan creates a variety of environments along the corridor by adjusting land use patterns and introducing different amenities. These different patterns, will encourage a greater diversity of business.



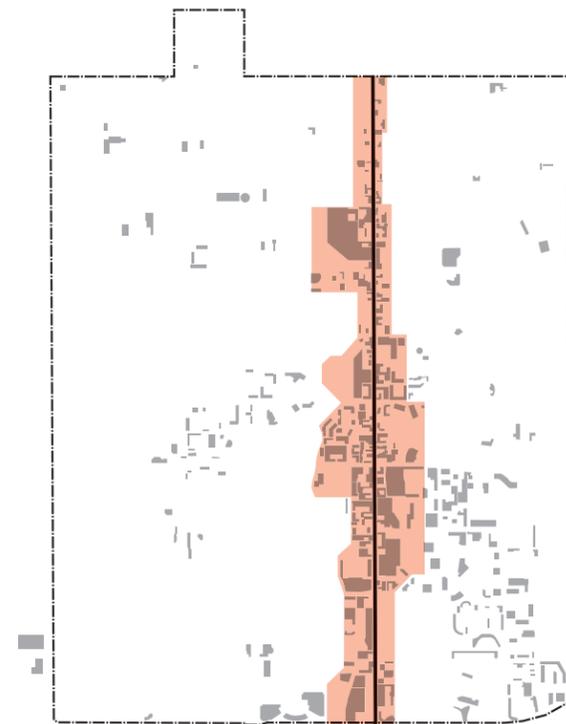
3. The Corridor Physically Divides the City

Large tracts of single-use (retail) land physically divides the two halves of the City. The short distance between the two sides of Robert Street is exaggerated by the wide road, large properties, and infrequent signalized intersections. This makes it difficult for residents on one side of the City to enjoy the amenities on the other side.



4. The Corridor is Designed for Cars

The corridor was designed and built out at a time when most people used their personal car to get to daily activities of life. As a result, the current environment does not accommodate or encourage biking, walking, or transit use. Today's population demands more choices and an environment where one does not need a personal car to get around.



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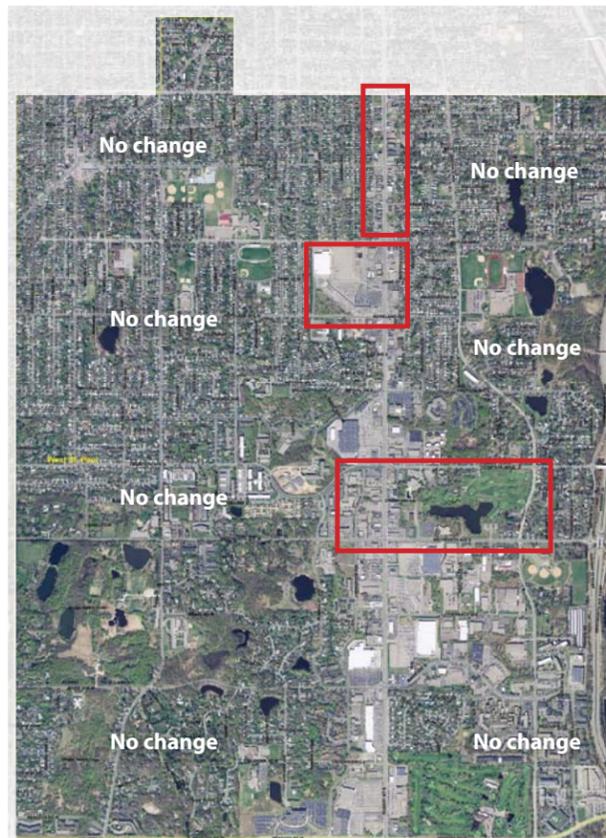
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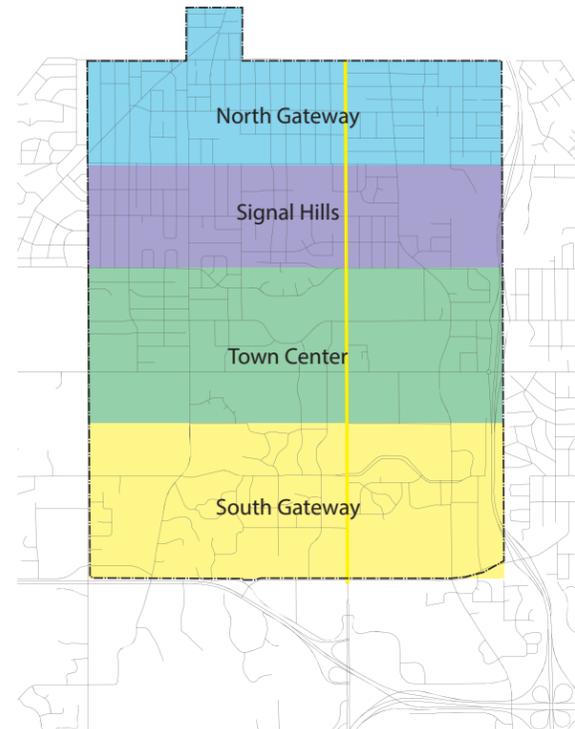
By directing growth to these locations, the Community will be able to both attract new residents and offer new amenities while at the same time preserving the quality of suburban community.

<u>Suburban</u>	→	<u>Urban</u>
Quiet	→	Lively
Predictable	→	Changing
Familiar	→	Cosmopolitan
Place to Stay	→	A place to try
Casual	→	Urbane

Frameworks

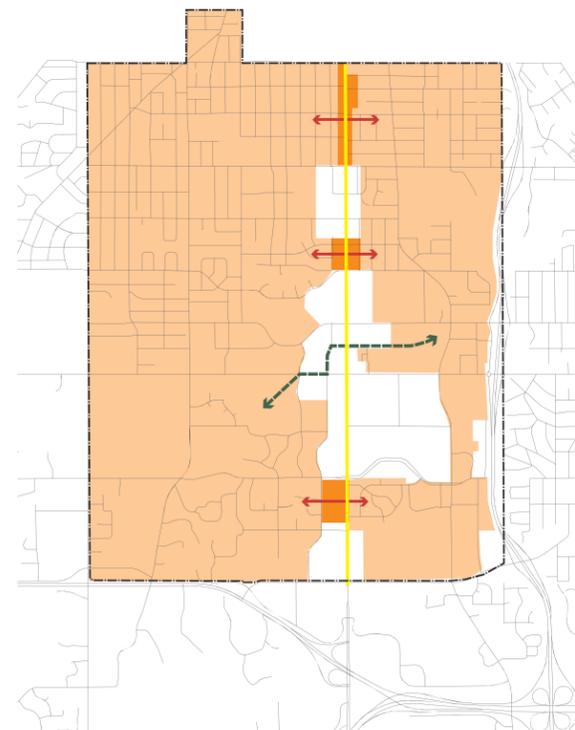
1. Four Neighborhoods

The Plan recommends creating four different neighborhoods along the length of the corridor. The neighborhoods would have distinct names, characters, boundaries and identities. This will offer clarity and direction for potential investors. Residents will develop ownership and affinity towards their specific portion of Robert Street and visitor will have an easier time navigating the corridor because it will become more legible and memorable.



3. "Bridge" Robert Street

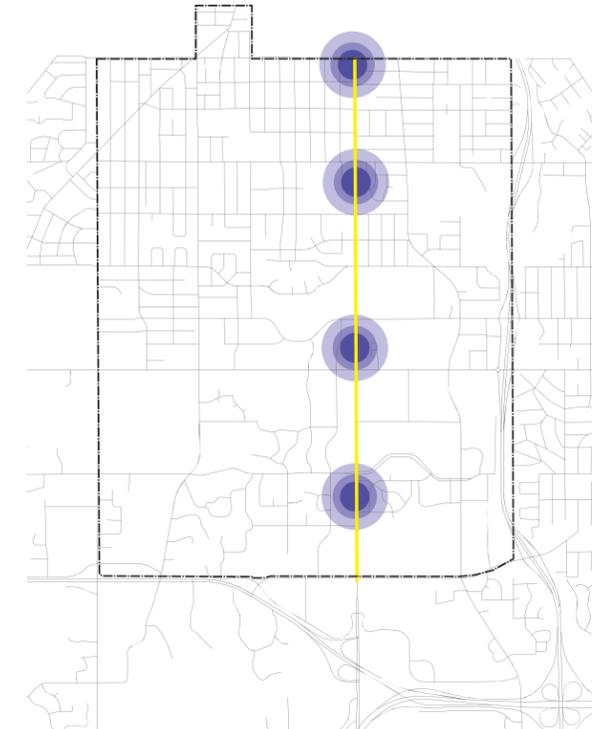
In order to connect across Robert Street and unify the community every effort should be made to bridge Robert Street. This can happen in many places and many ways. Improved intersections, buildings that face each other, underpasses and overpasses in appropriate locations are some of the ways the City can "bridge" Robert Street.



2. Mixed Use Places

As West Saint Paul grows, the Plan recommends 4 locations where the City can develop mixed use places that are served by transit, walkable, and have high quality public spaces and amenities. These four places will contain a mix of uses and each would have a different character and customer base.

These four specific interventions will represent significant departures from the current pattern of development. They will require a change in development regulations, and active public participation and investment. They will be responsive both to the current population of West Saint Paul as well to the potential future population of West Saint Paul.



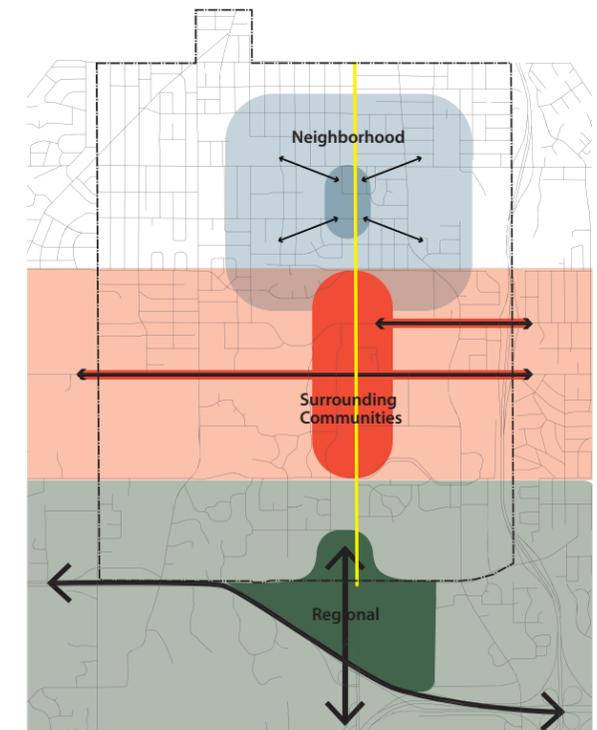
4. Organize and Reinvent Retail

In general, to remain competitive all retail has to reinvent itself every 10-20 years. This is true of an individual store as well as an entire district. If it does not reinvent itself to meet the rapidly changing demands and preferences of customers (locally and regionally), it eventually dies.

This Plan recommends a reinvention and reorganization of retail along the corridor so it is more responsive to the local and regional customer base. Retail uses along Robert Street should be organized so they complement each other and do not compete against each other. The northern portion of Robert Street will have a limited amount of retail and will be primarily locally oriented.

In the mid-section, retail should serve the community but it can also draw customers from surrounding communities (Mendota Heights, South Saint Paul) via the cross streets of Wentworth and Thompson Avenues.

The south third of the corridor has excellent access to regional roadways such as 110 and I-494. This portion of the corridor should attract regional retailers that draw from all of Dakota County.



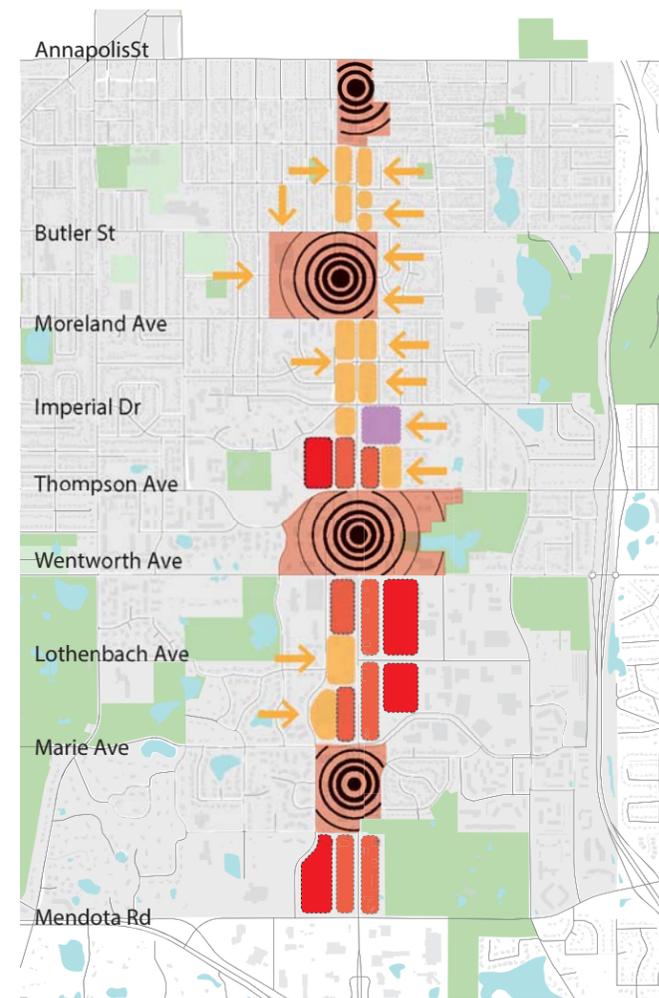
Overall Structure of the Corridor

This Plan recommends minor and major adjustments to the development patterns along Robert Street. The Avenue developed over the past 50 years as the backbone of the community. With reconstruction of the street itself to be completed in 2017 it is a critical time to look at how the corridor functions and to ensure the future development patterns along the corridor are in alignment with the aspirations of the community and potential of the marketplace.

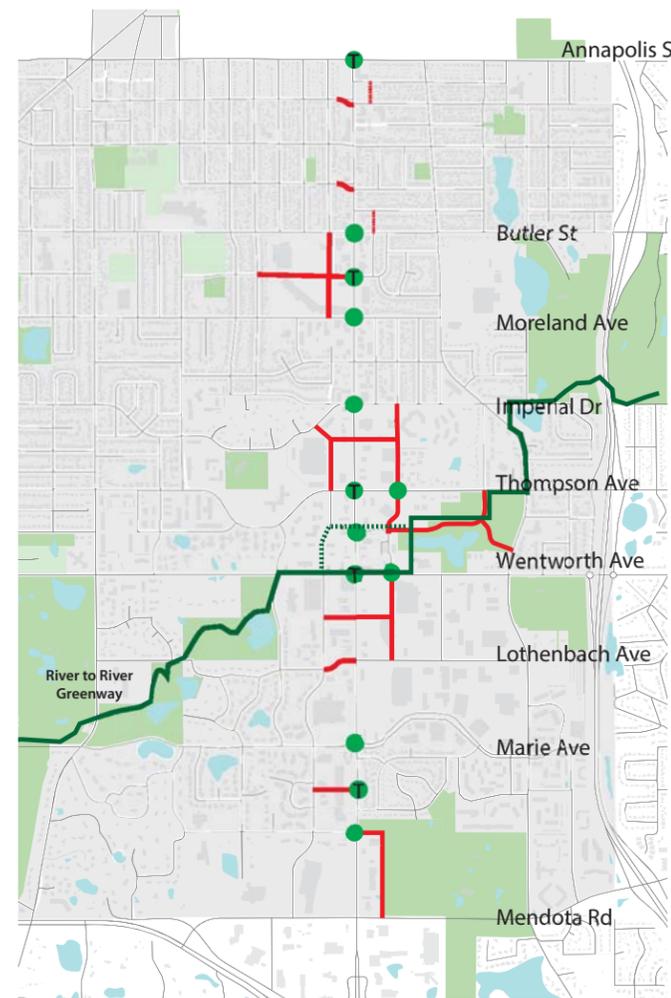
The Plan recommends consolidating and condensing retail at key locations, introducing residential along the corridor and creating mixed use nodes where larger redevelopments occur.

Robert Street should remain the primary street, however it is critical to support Robert Street with additional street and alley connections that will allow the properties along Robert Street to redevelop in a more consistent manner. The plan recommends several important street links as well as priority areas for developing improved pedestrian connections across Robert Street. These occur primarily at the locations designated as nodes.

Development Patterns and Land Use



Transportation and Access Improvements



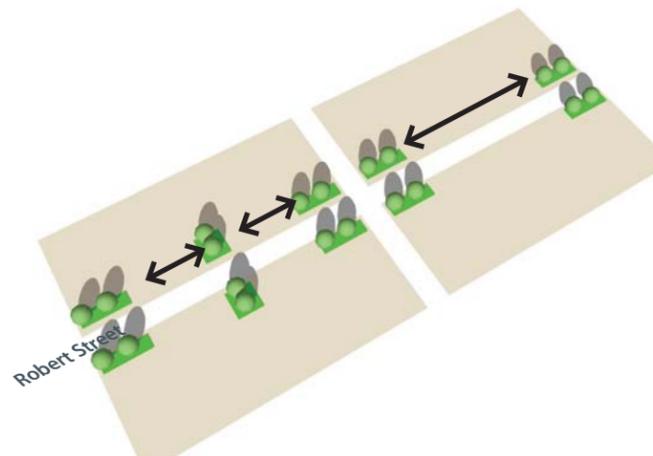
-  Opportunities for mixed-use nodes that integrate retail, housing and public open space.
-  Opportunities to introduce housing onto Robert Street.
-  Opportunities to organize and condense retail so it is more accessible and pedestrian friendly.

-  Transit node.
-  Locations to improve pedestrian crossing of Robert Street.
-  Approximate locations of new connections.

Design Principles to applied throughout the Corridor

1. Create Pedestrian Refuges along Robert Street

Robert Street will remain a heavily travelled street. It will also remain a street that has parking lots facing the sidewalk along much of it's length. Given this condition, the goal should be to break up the auto dominated environment with refuges along Robert Street. By reducing the exposure of the parking lots to the sidewalk and creating comfortable places on each end of the parking lot, the pedestrian experience can be greatly improved.

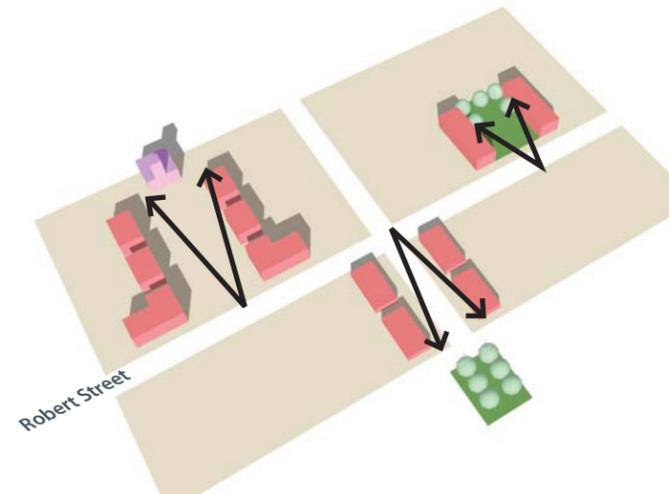


A Zoning Code can implement these principles by:

- Requiring parking lot exposure to sidewalks to be no greater than 180' on Robert Street and 60' on other Streets.
- Requiring high quality screening/buffering along the edges of parking lots.
- Requiring plazas or similar spaces at the ends of parking lots and in front of buildings.
- Requiring sidewalks to be a minimum of 10' wide and for them to be protected.
- Requiring a certain amount of the front lot line to have storefronts that activate the sidewalk.

2. Create Windows into the Community

New development along Robert Street should seek opportunities to create perpendicular views from Robert Street into the community and into new developments. This can be accomplished through streets, parks, or courtyards. While Robert Street remains a busy but improved street, more human scaled and active spaces that are sheltered from Robert Street can be created along these perpendicular axis.



A Zoning Code can implement these principles by:

- Limiting the size of the block face along Robert Street.
- Requiring perpendicular streets to have a public space purpose.
- Defining a street type for new developments in which mixed-uses are permitted.
- Requiring sites greater than a certain size to have a certain amount of usable public space.

3. Provide streets that effectively transition from the neighborhoods to Robert Street

The neighborhoods and Robert Street have been developed as separate places without connections between them. The approach has been to create buffers between the two areas, not connections. Whereas buffers are important at times and in locations, by integrating the two areas more carefully residents will be better able to access the retail and commercial services and the business will be able to better cater to the needs of residents.. A new transition zone that integrates single family neighborhoods and retail oriented to Robert Street can include small neighborhood services and retail as well as housing for people who want good access to transit and to walk to businesses.

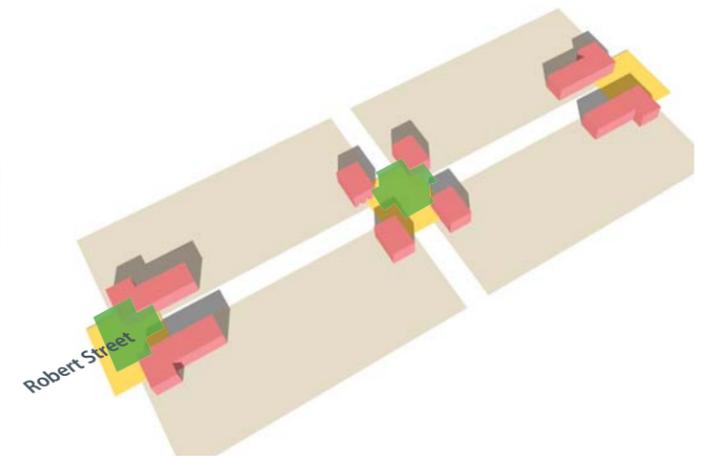


A Zoning Code can implement these principles by:

- By defining new street types that allow a mix of uses.
- By creating maximum block size or block perimeter.
- By requiring that new developments do not preclude the possibility of future neighborhood connections.

Anchor the Corners

New development along Robert Street should anchor the corners of each block. Main corners are the most visible and accessible locations for pedestrians because they have controlled and safe street crossings. New Buildings that anchor the corners will also help create a rhythm to the street which will in turn help people orient themselves and navigate the corridor to landmarks.



A Zoning Code can implement these principles by:

- Mapping build-to zones at key corners on a regulating map.
- Requiring buildings to be a minimum height at corners.

Site and Building Design

The Plan recommends organizing development patterns by emphasizing form of the development over the use of the site. Use remains a consideration, but the design and form of the project should take precedence since it has a more direct relationship to how the public experiences the site and how the site impacts the community.

Form can be managed by defining Street Types, Building Zones, Major / Minor Facades, and Building Types and Articulations.

Street Types

Street Types are defined in two ways. Firstly, they have specific dimensional considerations. These dimensional considerations include lane widths, landscape areas, sidewalks, and other elements that the public is responsible for in the right of way. The Plan recommends a thorough review of existing municipal guidelines and standards of public streets. New Streets in West Saint Paul (primarily those built on larger sites during redevelopments) should adhere to these standards. This is an opportunity for the City to ensure that new streets are designed to balance the needs of all users.

Secondly, Street types are defined hierarchically as either A Streets or B Streets. "A Streets" are those that will and should have the most pedestrian traffic on them. This informs how a particular site is designed and developed. If a property has frontage along an "A Street" greater attention should be given to creating a pedestrian - friendly design by regulating driveway and parking locations, building placement, landscaping, building design, location of front door, etc. "B Street" are secondary streets. They have a greater service and vehicular access role than "A Streets." There should be more flexibility with their location and design.

"C Streets" are similar to alleys or private through lanes. Their primary role is to provide access and service to properties. They are the preferred location for driveways, dumpsters, service entries, back doors, and mechanical equipment. "C Streets" are typically narrow and have very little pedestrian traffic on them.

Build to Zones and Yards

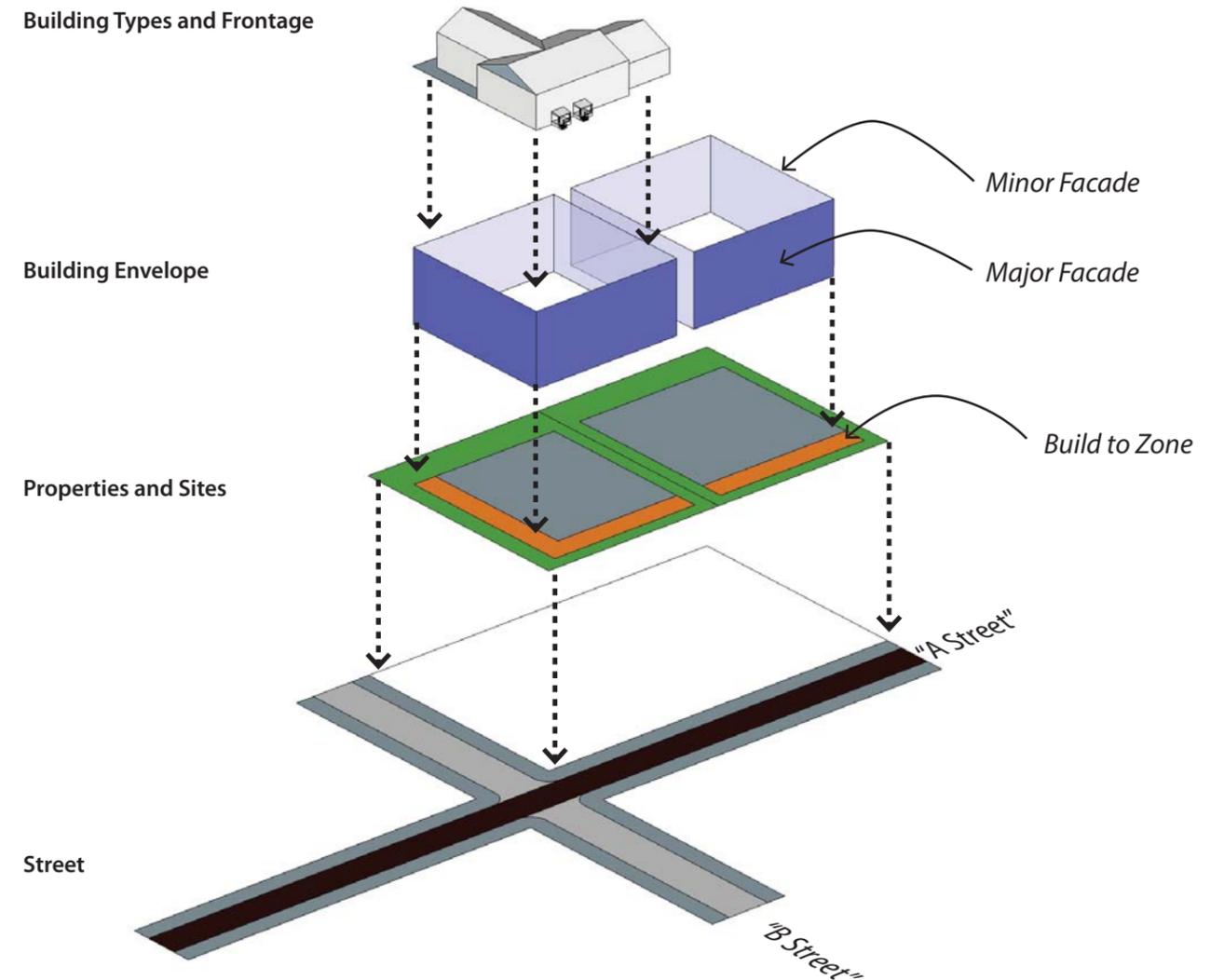
"Build-to Zones" are established to ensure a coherent and predictable built environment. They govern the location of building facades and open spaces. Build-to Zones are the areas of a site, relative to the property lines, that a building facade must occupy. Build-to Zones help create enclosure of the public realm by ensuring the vertical plane of a building is in appropriate location.

Yards and Frontages are the parts of a site that create a deliberate transition from private buildings to the public property line. Yards have a specific (range of) dimensions and are also used to manage location of parking, mechanical equipment, etc. Frontages are the architectural component of transitioning from building to sidewalk.

Major / Minor Facades

Each building will have one or more Major Facade and several Minor Facades. Similar to A Streets and B Streets, the designation of Major and Minor facades creates an intentional hierarchy that regulates aspects of the building design such as materials, windows, amount of transparency, etc.

Defining Major and Minor Facades allows designers and developers to direct their attention and value on the parts of the building that most directly impact the public realm.



Street Types and Vehicular access

The Streets and Access Plan on this page designates existing and future streets and alleys. The purpose of the Street Plan is to prioritize certain streets to be more pedestrian friendly than others. This is accomplished by using the street designation to organize elements such as vehicular access, frontage standards, and parking lot location/size.

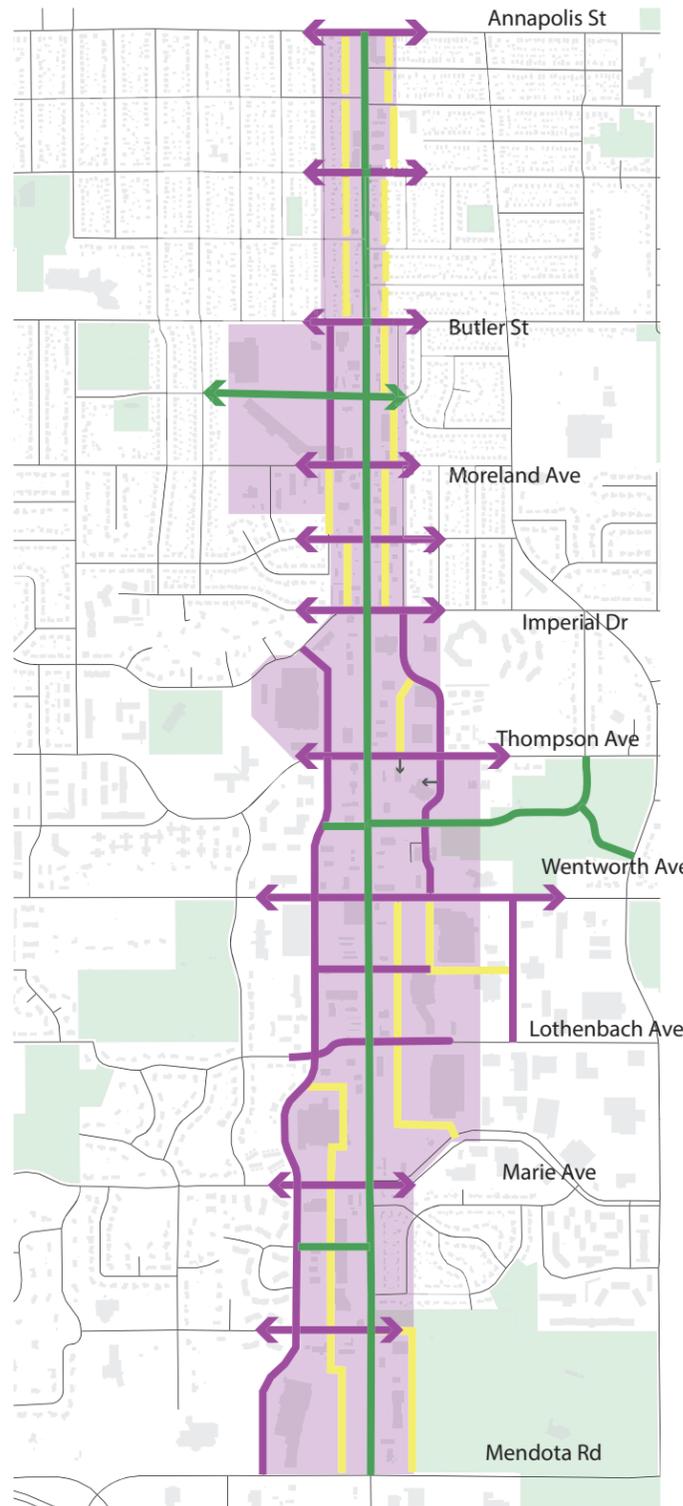
In general, parking lots should be accessed from alleys or an internal rear drive wherever possible. If a property does not have access to an alley then primary vehicular access must be on a "B Street". In order to reduce the amount of pedestrian interruptions, driveways should not be spaced closer than 400' on any street. Where possible, driveways should be shared between adjoining commercial properties. In addition, commercial parking lots should be connected on their north and south sides to adjacent commercial parking lots.

If a property has no B Street or alley access then one vehicular access is permitted on the A Street Frontage. This access should be designed as a driveway with the pedestrian sidewalk extending across it.

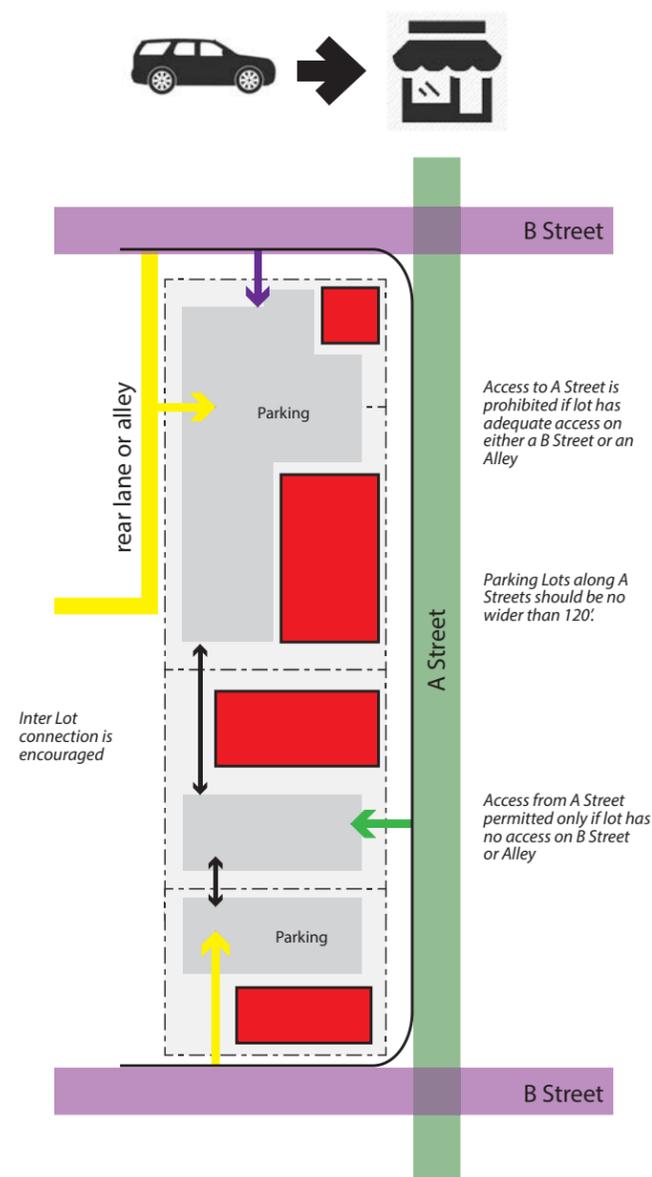
Driveways should be no greater than 24' in width.

Inter Lot drives between two parking lots are highly encouraged as a way of connecting commercial properties. This will reduce the conflicts on the public streets while still providing efficient access between properties

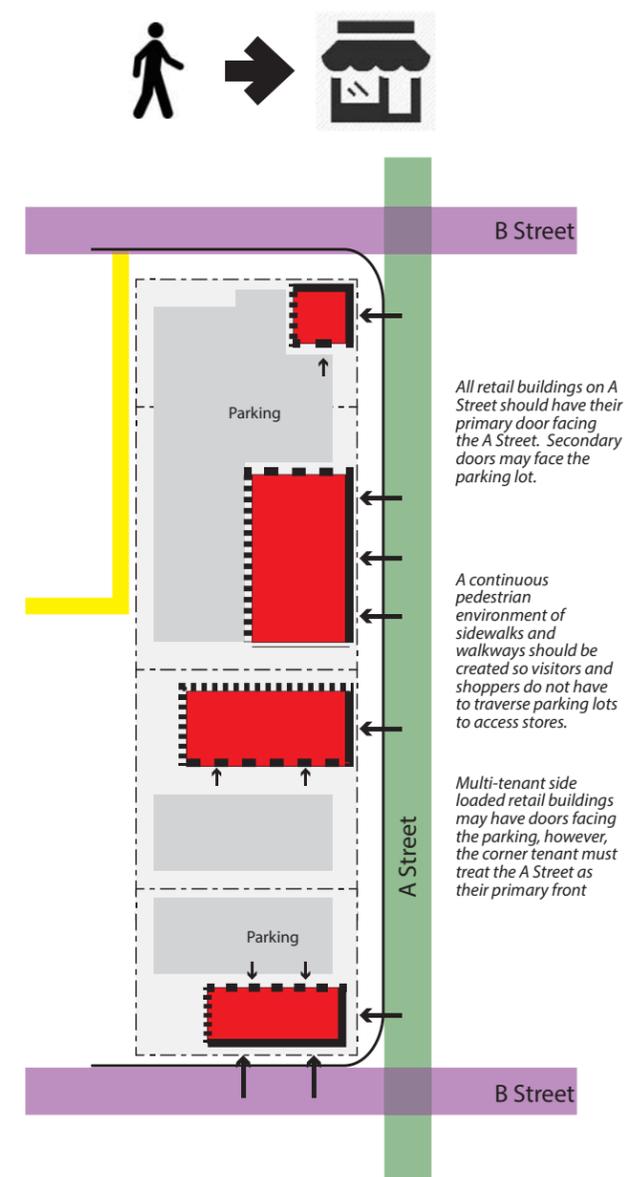
	A Street	Vehicular driveways discouraged, pedestrian access encouraged
	B Street	Vehicular driveways encouraged Pedestrian access permitted, but not encouraged
	Drive lane or Alley	Vehicular driveways encouraged Pedestrian access discouraged



Vehicular Access to Retail Parking Lots



Pedestrian Access to Retail Stores



Facades and Materials

Building designs on Robert Street should be durable, simple, and human scaled while always enhancing the pedestrian experience throughout the corridor.

Simple - buildings they should be well organized and easy to understand through repetition, regularity, and clear hierarchy. The underlying structural bay should be expressed in the composition of the building. They should have a single dominant material and a limited palette of accent materials that provide interest and pleasing compositions.

Durable- Buildings should be built with a life expectancy of at least 30 years by using contemporary materials that are proven to withstand the climate in West Saint Paul. Careful attention should be given to assembly of materials, water protection, salt impacts at the base and other conditions that tend to degrade the quality of a building over time.

Human Scaled - All buildings should be scaled for people. Whereas visibility from a distance may be necessary for some buildings along the corridor, the design of the ground floor of all buildings should defer to maximizing the comfort of people on foot. New buildings, adjacent to single family homes, should be designed to minimize potential negative impacts from shadowing.

Materials

In order to simplify building design and ensure it's durability,



each building should have a single major material that covers at least 60% of its facade (not including windows and doors). This material should be either stone, brick, architectural metal panels for non residential buildings. Wood clapboard or hardiplank is acceptable as a major material for residential buildings.

The remaining 40% of the facade (not including windows and doors) can be covered with minor materials such as fiber cement, concrete masonry units, cast stone, vinyl for trim and soffits, curtain wall, and cement based stucco.

Windows and Doors

Windows and doors have a major impact on both the composition of a building and its performance as a pedestrian friendly object. They offer a human scale element tot the building and can convey the function and use of a building. In addition, doors and windows on the ground floor offer the opportunity to animate the public realm with human activity. This creates "eyes on the street" and supports basic public safety.

The facades of Non-residential buildings facing "A Streets", should be composed with as much transparency as possible. No less than 60% of the ground floor of any building adjacent to a sidewalk should be comprised of transparent windows and doors.

Awnings

Awning are critical to creating a comfortable pedestrian environment on a retail or mixed use street. They provide weather protection for pedestrians, they defend against glare, and they offer opportunity for integrated signage.

All storefronts and retail windows should have awnings that are functional and are integrated with the design of the building. Like the building, they should be durable - made of metal or canvas.



Storefront Frontage



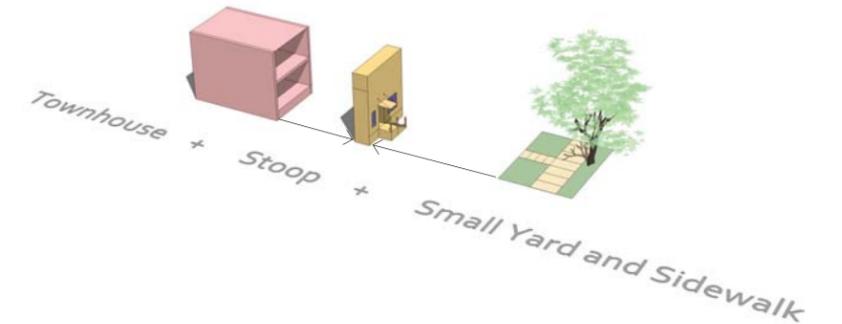
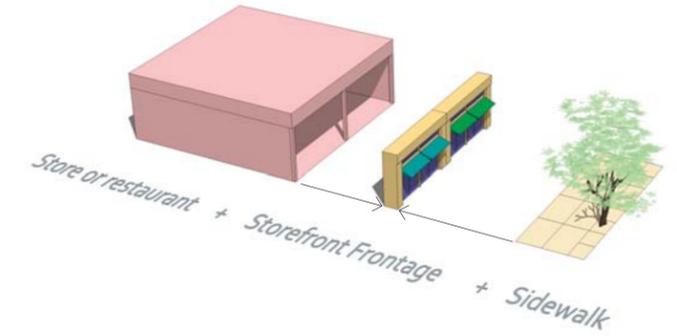
Stoop Frontage



Common Entrance Frontage



Forecourt



Site Development Standards

Clear pedestrian connections from surrounding streets to the fronts of all buildings.

Landscaped islands to provide shade and/or manage stormwater

Parking lots on Robert Street a maximum of 120' wide
Pedestrian refuges at each side of the parking lot to make a comfortable pedestrian experience

Clear pedestrian connections from surrounding streets to the fronts of all buildings.



Perpendicular views into the site terminated with prominent architecture

10' of landscaping between sidewalks sides of buildings

Continuous drive aisle that connects to adjacent parcels and streets

Parking lots designed as rooms with well defined edges

10' of landscaping between parking lots and sidewalks

Residential uses set back 15' from sidewalk but

Retail outbuildings built close to the front property line with commercial storefronts facing the perimeter of the site

Same Buildings Different Results

Townhouses



- Doors at grade, and no transition to the sidewalk.
- Less durable materials and no distinction between the base and the middle of the building.



- Front door raised slightly onto a stoop.
- Clear transition from the door to the sidewalk. Durable building materials .
- and clear distinction between base middle and top.

Side Oriented Retail



- Building is set at the level of the rear alley, not the A Street.
- No direct pedestrian access from the Street to the doors of the retail shops.



- The building is set at elevation of the A Street.
- Outdoor space is closely connected to the indoor space and it creates a "pedestrian refuge" in front of a parking lot.

Conventional Strip Shopping Center



- Drive aisle in front of stores is a fire lane with no parking for customers.
- Sidewalk is too narrow for two strollers to pass.
- Singular architecture relies on signage and awnings to distinguish stores.
- Most durable material (brick) is applied only to the front of the pilasters.



- Convenient parking in front of the store.
- Generous sidewalk can be used for sitting, and landscaping.
- Buildings vary in width and material to create a human scale environment. Durable materials throughout the entire building.



4. Character Districts and Target Areas

North Gateway: Annapolis to Butler

Existing Conditions

The North Gateway is located at the north edge of West Saint Paul, The area borders Saint Paul to the north. Most of the area was developed over 50 years ago. The development pattern is relatively urban - with a regular pattern of blocks and streets that extends to and across Robert Street. Originally this area had a mix of retail and housing that served the surrounding community. However, over time, the properties and buildings declined. Retail was replaced by new developments further south and housing declined due to the impacts of an ever increasingly busy and heavily trafficked street.

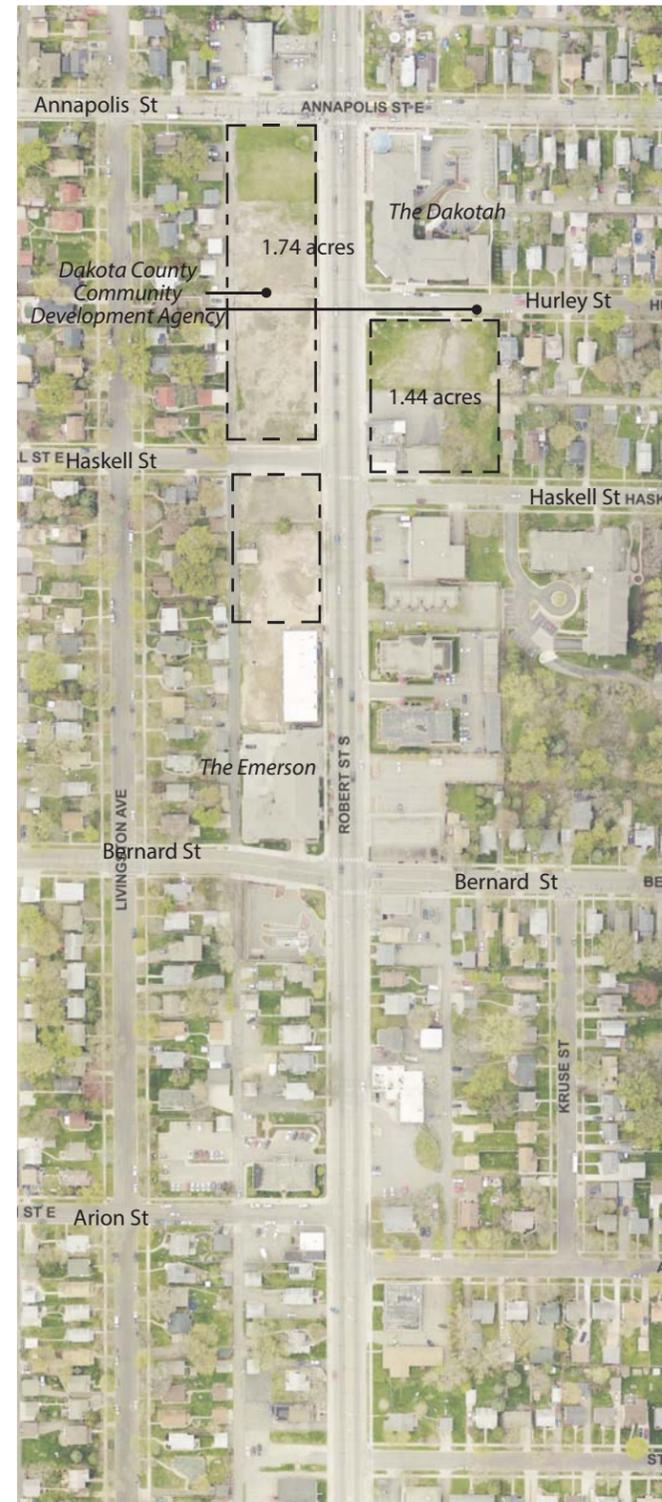
Over the past ten years, the Dakota County Community Development Agency purchased several properties along Robert Street. Today the properties are vacant and being prepared for development.

Since 2000 the North Gateway has had a few successful redevelopments. The Dakota is a 59 unit senior housing project at Annapolis Ave and Emerson Hill is a 35 unit property located at Bernard St. and Robert Street.

Currently, Robert Street is under reconstruction. The new Robert Street will be 4 lanes with no on-street parking. A continuous median will restrict left turns at Hurley St. and Stanley St. and Haskell St. will be realigned to a more appropriate 4 way intersections.

Robert Street is not flat in this location. Robert Street drops approximately 20-25 ft. from Bernard St. to Annapolis St. This slope does not render redevelopment impossible, but it is a consideration when creating human scaled and pedestrian friendly developments.

A continuous alley runs behind properties on the west side of Robert Street. Most of the properties on the east side of Robert Street have direct access to their respective side streets.



Existing Conditions



Aerial View looking southwest



Eye level view on Robert St. looking towards vacant parcels between Annapolis St. and Haskell St.



Eye level view on Robert Street looking south towards Annapolis

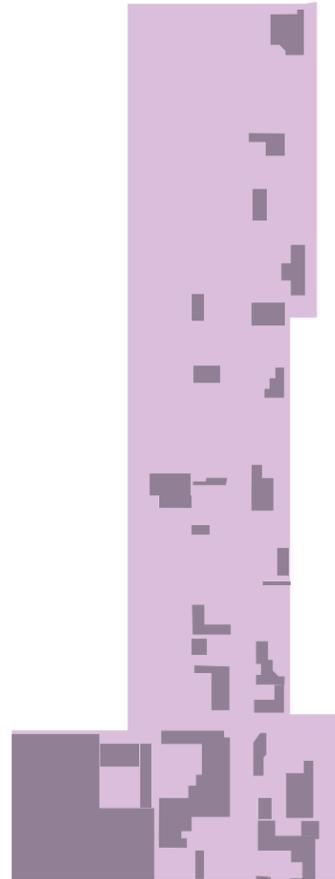
North Gateway (cont'd)

Analysis



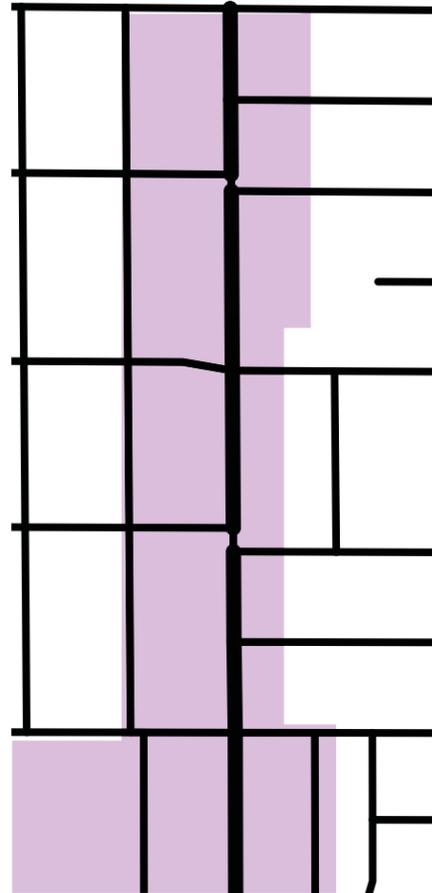
Land Use

Due to the area being in transition, the land uses along the corridor are not consistent. Small commercial uses are scattered amongst housing.



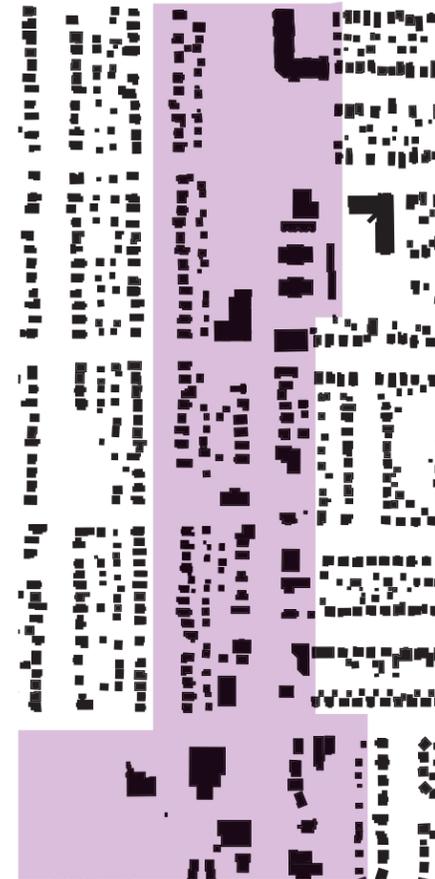
Parking

Parking lots are generally small and disconnected, and facing Robert Street.



Streets

The surrounding street grid extends across Robert Street creating regularly spaced intersections.



Buildings

The area has generally been developed with small single family detached homes. Along Robert Street there are a few retail service buildings as apartment buildings.

Market Summary

Multi Family Housing

- Area is centrally located with relatively easy access to the regional highways and downtown Saint Paul.
- Reconstruction of Robert Street will create a safer pedestrian environment and a more appealing environment to invest in housing.
- Traditional target markets for multi-family housing (larger <35 yrs; > 65) are growing rapidly.
- Met Council forecasts most new growth to occur in the core and first ring suburbs.
- Vacancies are very low (<3%) and rents have been rising steadily in response to constrained demand.
- The market area has not experienced the same housing construction boom as others in the region. As a result many of the competitive properties are dated and lack many of the amenities desired.
- Ownership forms of multifamily housing are starting to recover, but would need to recover more in order to support new construction.
- There is demand for multi-family housing through 2020 for 70 units of market rate rental, 200 units of affordable housing and 50 units of townhouses / condominiums.

Retail

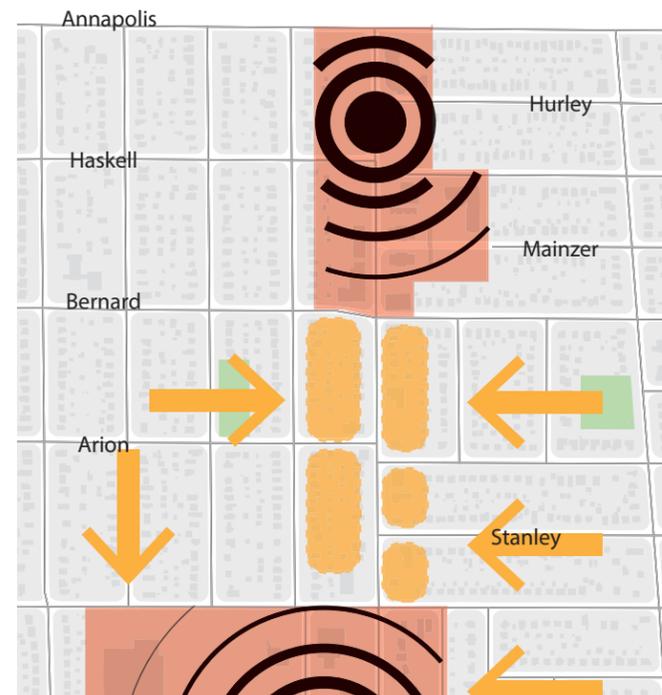
- Properties on Robert Street are 140' deep which creates a challenge for on-site parking.
- The Gateway area is accessible by foot and bike, but it's trade area is relatively small due to low volumes of traffic on the cross streets.
- Recent attempts to fill retail in the Gateway area have been unsuccessful.
- The success of large scale retail south on Robert Street suggests small scale retail that serves local customers may be supportable.
- Incomes in the retail trade area are nearly 30% below the metro average. But density is generally higher than other parts of the community.
- If the pedestrian environment can be improved and the area can be amenitized the trade area can support up to 12,000 sf of new retail.
- Any new retail should be located at an intersection so it can capture cross traffic.

North Gateway (cont'd)

Corridor Recommendations

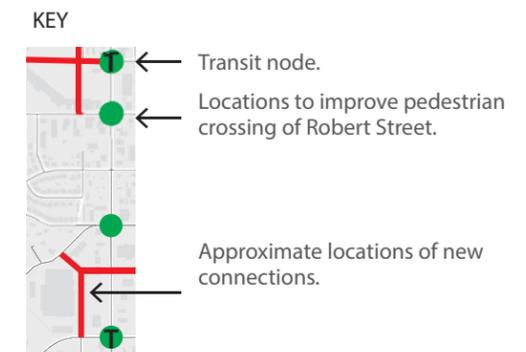
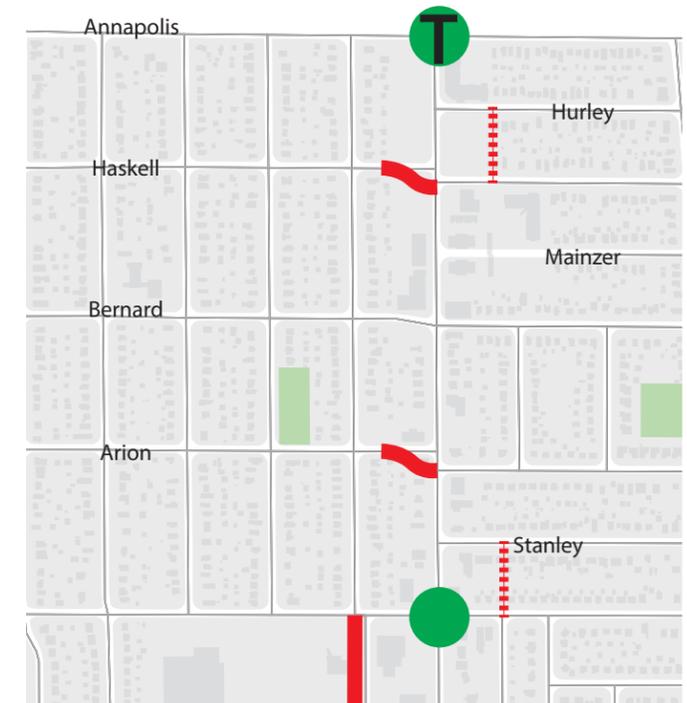
Land Use and Urban Design Recommendations:

- Transition land uses along both sides of Robert Street to primarily mid-density housing (3-5 stories) that face Robert Street and create a favorable pedestrian experience.
- Target new housing to residents of West Saint Paul who are looking to move out of their single family homes or relocate within the City.
- Pay special attention to the scale of new housing on Robert Street and how it transitions to the neighborhoods to the east and west.
- Focus retail / restaurant uses at one location - the corner of Annapolis and Robert Street. Discourage retail elsewhere until it succeeds at Annapolis. Locate additional retail next to successful retail. Coordinate parking in the rear of the lot.



Transportation and Access Recommendations

- Align Haskell and Arion across Robert Street to improve connectivity between neighborhoods on both sides of Robert Street.
- Create a continuous alley behind properties on the east side of Robert Street between Haskell and Bernard.
- Create safe pedestrian crossings of Robert Street at Haskell and Arion.
- Encourage new developments to provide small strategic greenspaces in their developments. These can be located at the terminus of streets, in the rear of buildings, or as courtyards. They should be properly managed as private open spaces.
- Consider diverting Hurley and Stanley to Bernard and Butler respectively. If possible convert the right of way that is not used for cars to additional greenspace.



North Gateway (cont'd)

Target Area Recommendations

- Develop mid scale housing (3-5 stories) facing Robert Street.
- Carefully design housing so it is set back from the rear lot line, thereby not impacting the housing behind it.
- Design housing that carefully steps down the hill and creates a comfortable pedestrian experience.
- Cluster housing around a small park on Robert Street at the end of Hurley St.
- Consider adding green space at the end of Hurley St. and re-routing Hurley St. to the north to connect to Bernard St. Careful consideration should be given to maintaining access and parking for nearby housing.
- Create a gateway at Annapolis through public art or architecture.
- Locate a maximum of 10,000 sf retail at the corner of Annapolis and Robert Street.
- Reconfigure Annapolis to have diagonal parking to support retail at the corner.
- Create a small seating area or space for public art at the corner of Annapolis and Robert Street.



Illustrative Plan:
Hurley not extended to Robert Street



Aerial View of Robert Street looking south west



Alternative Illustrative Plan:
Hurley extended to Robert Street



Precedents

New developments on Robert Street should carefully step down the hill, maintain a pedestrian scale, and minimize their impacts on the housing behind them.

Signal Hills: Butler to Emerson

Existing Conditions

The Signal Hills Area extends from Butler to Imperial Drive. The area is dominated by Signal Hills Mall, built in 1959 as one of the first enclosed malls in the country. Over the years it has played an important role in West Saint Paul and in the success of businesses on Robert Street. In its early years it was a strong anchor for development along Robert Street as it served the neighborhood and the surrounding communities. While primarily a shopping center, Signal Hills has also been an important gathering place for the community over the years as it has been home to the farmers market, movie theater.

In mid 1990's Signal Hills was rebuilt and the enclosed mall was removed and it was replaced with a conventional suburban strip retail center and an anchor store : K Mart.

in front of Signal Hills, between Livingston and Robert Street is a block with housing and retail. The housing units are 1 bedroom condominiums as well two apartment buildings.

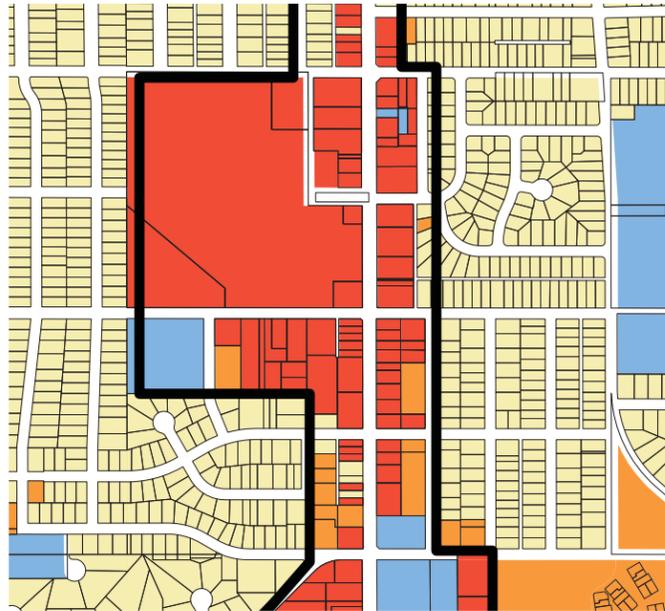
Much of the remainder of the area between Butler and Imperial is small site single story retail. Some of it backs up to a residential street, however other parts are accesses through an alley that serves as a useful buffer to the housing.



Existing Conditions: Signal Hills Shopping Center

Signal Hills: Butler to Emerson

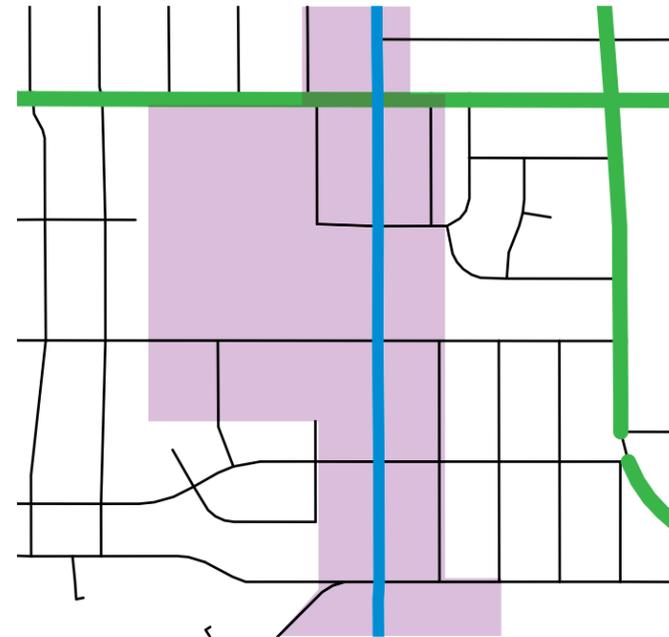
Analysis



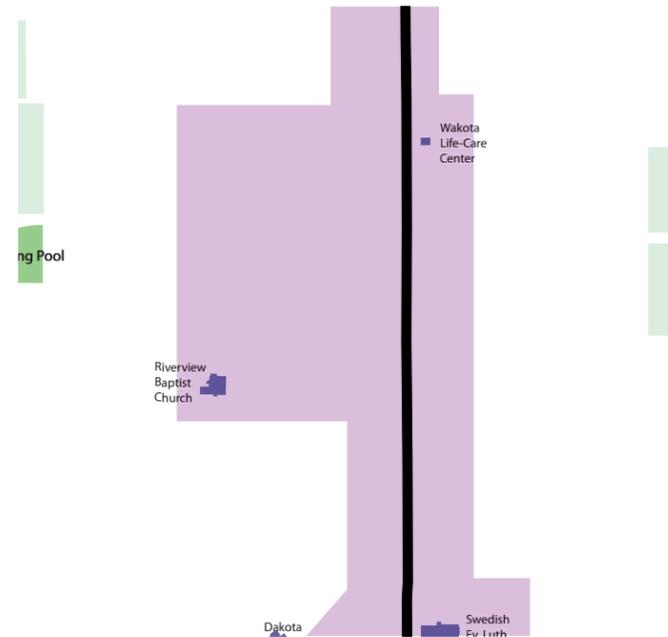
Land Use:
With the exception of a few small one bedroom condominiums and two apartment buildings built on Robert Street the entire Signal Hills Shopping Center is commercial. In addition just about all properties on both sides of Robert Street between Moreland and Imperial are commercial.



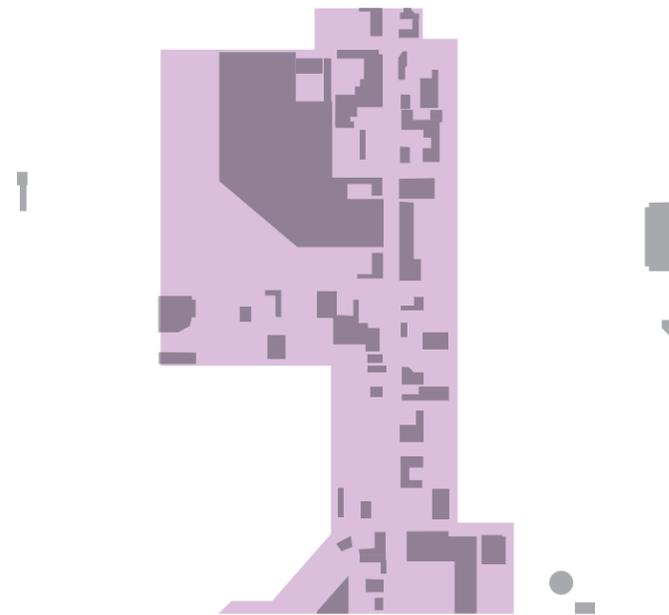
Buildings
Both the K-Mart building and the strip shopping center are one-of-a-kind. They are larger and longer than any building in the area.



Streets
Signal Hills Shopping Center has no strong connection to its surrounding neighborhood. It is an interruption in the street grid.



Parks
There are two large schools/parks just a few blocks off Robert Street. Since Robert Street is difficult to cross, the schools / parks are not as accessible to residents that live on the opposite side of Robert Street.



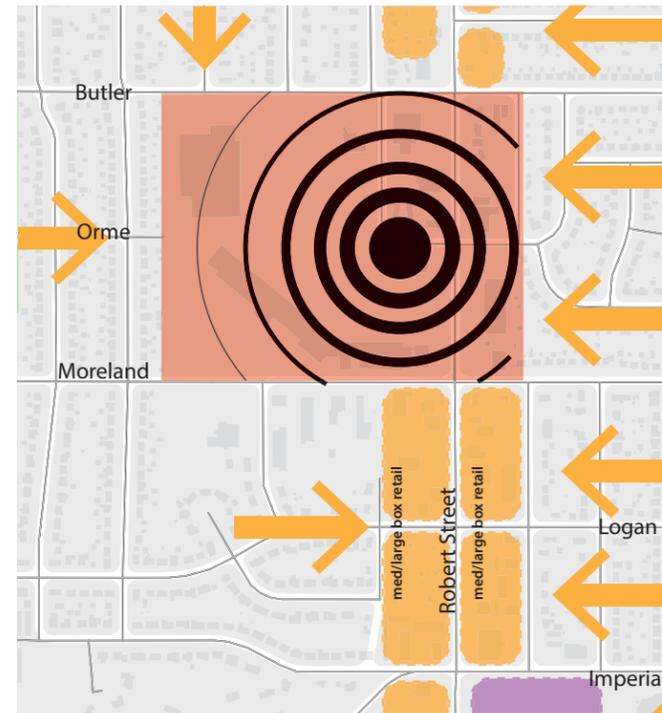
Parking
Most of the site is used for surface parking. This creates large spaces in between buildings that make it difficult to connect from one property to another.

Signal Hills: Butler to Emerson

Corridor Recommendations

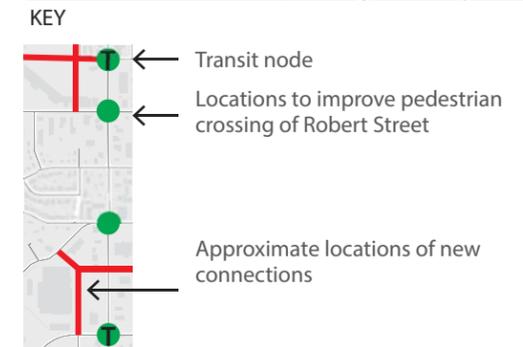
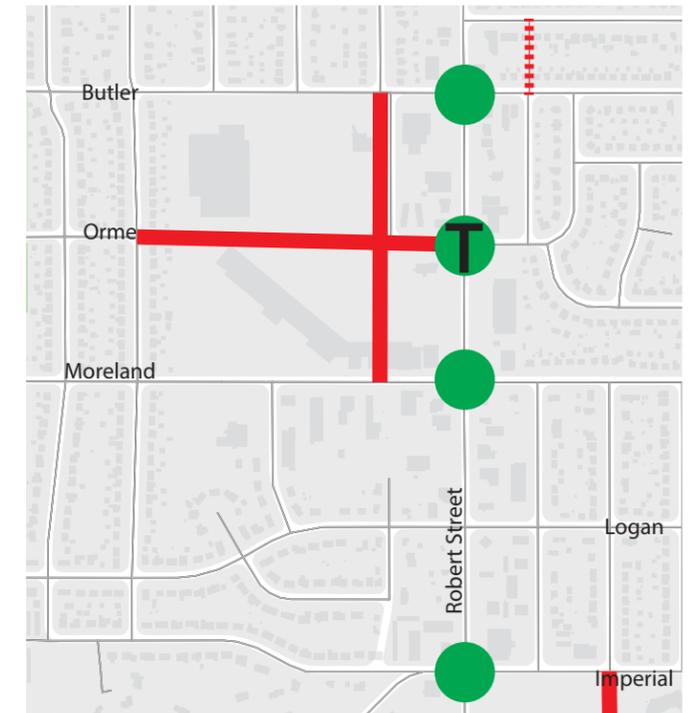
Land Use and Urban Design Recommendations:

- Work with the property owners of Signal Hills to create a prominent mixed-use transit-oriented development. The redevelopment should maintain retail towards Robert Street but should introduce medium - density housing on the west half of the Site.
- Redevelop the east side of Robert Street between Butler and Orme with multi story buildings that have retail or commercial uses on the ground floor.
- Introduce Housing on Robert Street between Moreland and Logan. Prioritize sites closer to Logan because they are better connected to residential neighborhoods to the east and west.



Transportation and Access Recommendations

- Connect the street grid through the Signal Hills redevelopment site. In particular extend Orme to Robert Street and Livingston from Butler to Moreland. Redevelopment of the site should have additional streets to create a series of small redevelopable blocks.
- Improve pedestrian crossings at Orme, Butler and Moreland.



Signal Hills Focus Area

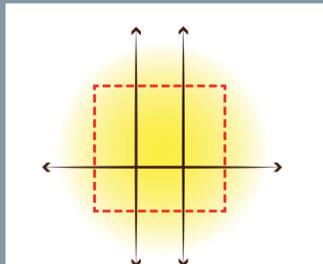
Precedents & Lessons Learned

While large and unique in the region, there are several precedents around the country similar to Signal Hills in size and type. The team chose three projects to look to as examples: Rosedale and Birkdale Village in Huntersville NC, and Kentlands in Gaithersburg, VA. Each of these three projects have been built in the last 15 years, each are fully built out and each provide lessons to be applied at Signal Hills.



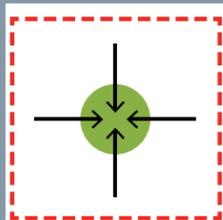
A Variety of Housing, A Variety of Retail

Providing variety allows the development to attract a variety of customers which in turn creates a more public and inclusive environment. Variety also offers choices that may not currently exist in the community.



Connect to the Surrounding Neighborhood

Developments that connect to their surroundings attract both a local and a regional market. Direct connections enhance the neighborhood feeling and offer an opportunity access the place by foot and by bicycle.



Incorporate Public Space

Public Space allows a development to become more than a shopping mall because it sends a message that visitors are citizens, not just consumers. The Public Space can be small and simple, as long as it is designed to allow interaction and a variety of activities.

Rosedale, Huntersville, NC

Rosedale in Huntersville is a horizontally mixed use project located on a major arterial. The project has many of the typical single story suburban building pieces: grocery store, out lots, medical buildings, franchise restaurants, and surface parking lots. There are several aspects of this project that are noteworthy, however.

- The grocery store is located on a public street, not on a commercial drive aisle. Customers park on that street or in a suburban scaled parking lot across the street. The street is designed for customers to easily bring shopping carts back and forth.
- The parking lot is broken down into separate rooms with adequate landscaping.
- A few small buildings are located on the arterial, but the project maintains visibility to the anchor stores with are located on a parallel street.
- Service retail and office buildings are located adjacent and behind the retail, but are connected with walkways and streets.
- Multi family housing is also located adjacent to the retail, but it well connected with sidewalks and streets.



Birkdale Village, Huntersville, NC

Birkdale is a compact multi and mixed-use project located on a main arterial. The Birkdale project differs from Rosedale primarily because it is more dense it mixes uses vertically, not just horizontally. Other features include:

- A long green park in the middle of the retail area. The park serves as a place to have lunch and relax.
- A theater anchoring the retail street / park. The theater borrows parking from adjacent offices that empty in the evening.
- Parking ramps tucked behind multi-use buildings.
- Larger retail buildings are visible form the main arterial with large surface lots in front. Smaller retail tenants are located towards the interior with ample surface parking.



Kentlands, Gaithersburg, VA

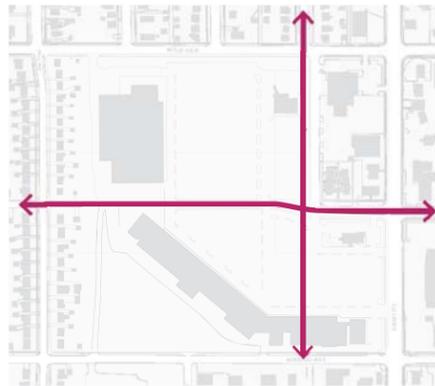
The Kentlands is one of the earlier and most successful New Urbanist communities designed in the late 1980's. It is considerable larger than Signal Hills as it consists of several residential neighborhoods and one town center (approximately the size of Signal Hills). Features of Kentlands include:

- A Main Street with small shops and live / work buildings that is integrated on one side with large box retailers and the other with a walkable neighborhood.
- The town Center has a small square / park that is used a variety of ways : for parking, performances, gathering, farmers market, etc.
- The large box retailers are located where they have visibility to the highway; the Main Street is tucked into the neighborhood away from the large arterail and highway.
- The project has approximately 8,000 residents and 1 million sf of retail / office.



Signal Hills Focus Area

Design Principles



1. Connect to the Neighborhoods

It is critical that both Orme and Livingston streets extend through the site as public streets. By doing so, circulation will be improved and the development will feel a part of the surrounding neighborhood.



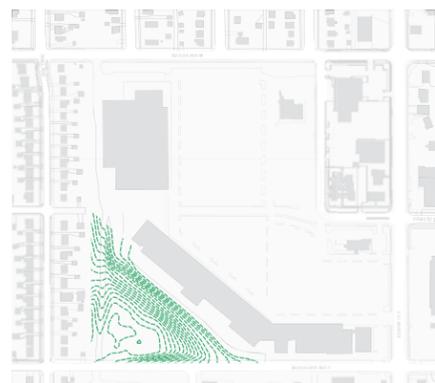
2. Develop in Phases

Given the current land ownership and lease arrangements, redevelopment of the Site will likely have to be done in phases. Each quadrant must be self-sustaining as they are redeveloped or as they remain in operation while other quadrants redevelop.



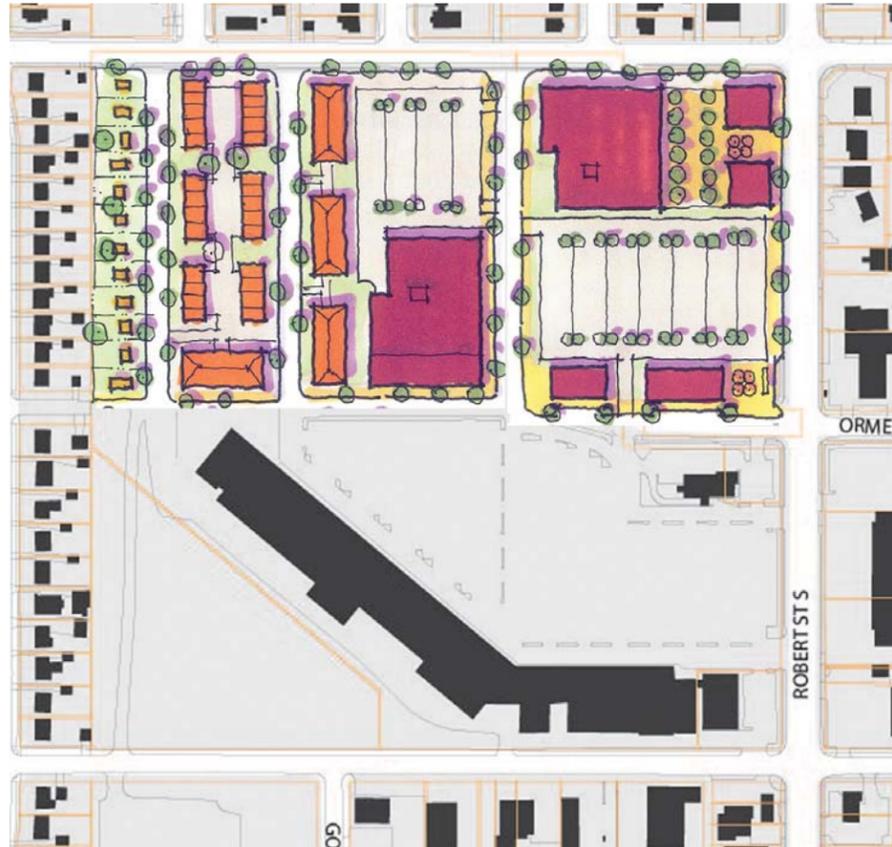
3. Retail in Front, Housing in Back

Redevelopment of the Site should move retail uses as close to Robert Street as possible so it is fully visible and accessible by transit. Housing should occupy the west half of the site and should help manage the transition between existing community and Robert Street.



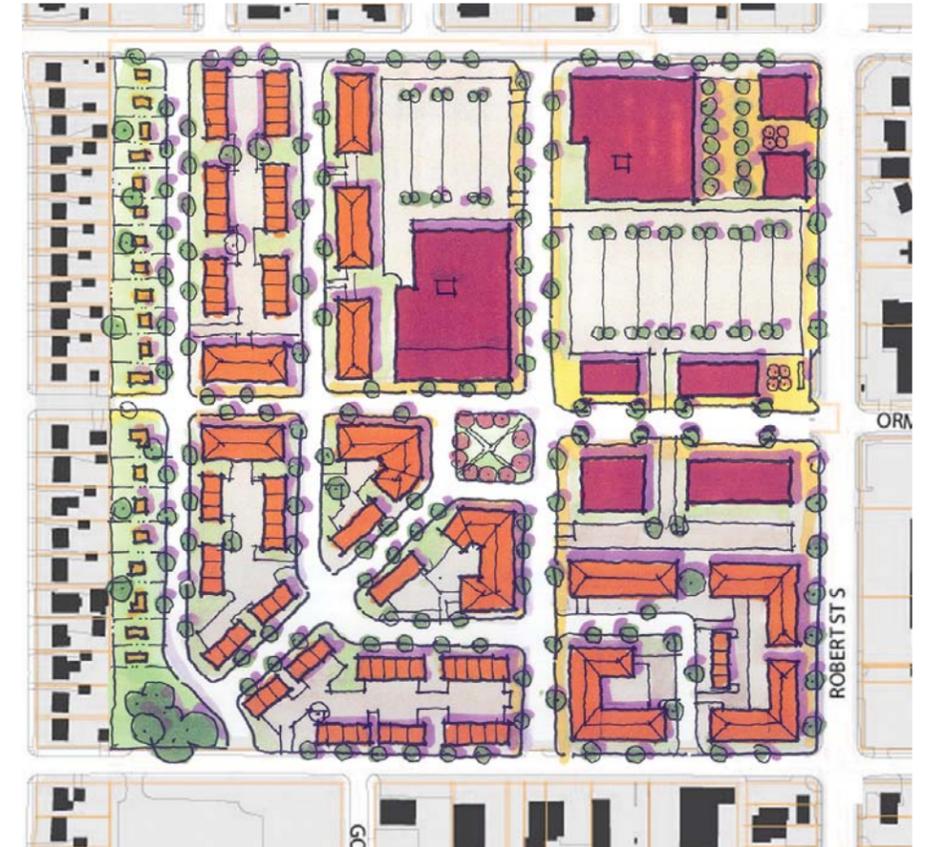
5. Celebrate the Hill

The original Signal Hills Mall altered the topography of the site to create flat building pads for large buildings. The top of the hill and its large trees remain a feature on the site. Redevelopment of the Site and restore some of the hill-like qualities of the site with smaller buildings and roads that work with the topography.



Illustrative Master Plan: Alternative 1:

This alternative allows the current property owner to redevelop north of Orme, while maintaining the existing strip shopping center south of Orme. Orme is extended through the site and the northwest corner of the site transitions to housing.



Illustrative Master Plan: Alternative 2

This alternative rebuilds the site entirely, over time. Retail uses are moved closer to Robert Street and new housing transitions the site to the west to connect to existing housing. This scenario shows an anchor retail tenant, but overall there is less retail than what is currently on the site today.

Recommendations

- Extend Orme and Livingston through the site to create connectivity.
- Create a high quality transit area for users to access the site and neighborhood residents to use to get up and down the corridor and to Downtown Saint Paul.
- Develop the west edge of the site as a transition (not a buffer) between existing single family homes and medium density housing.
- Develop the east edge of the site with retail and mixed-use.
- Provide a public space that can be used for farmers markets, small gatherings, and other civic uses.
- Ensure the development has a coordinated parking strategy so users of the site can park once and walk from one destination to another.

Signal Hills



Alternative 1: Aerial Perspective Illustrating Redevelopment of Signal Hills north of Orme Street.
This scenario allows the existing shopping center to remain intact. Orme can be extended through the site, but Livingston cannot be extended through.

Alternative 2: Aerial Perspective Illustrating potential build out of Signal Hills



Aerial Perspective Illustrating a New Development on Robert Street and Orme Street

Town Center: Imperial to Lothenbach



Existing Conditions

The Town Center Area is located in the geographic middle of West Saint Paul, between Emerson and Lothenbach.

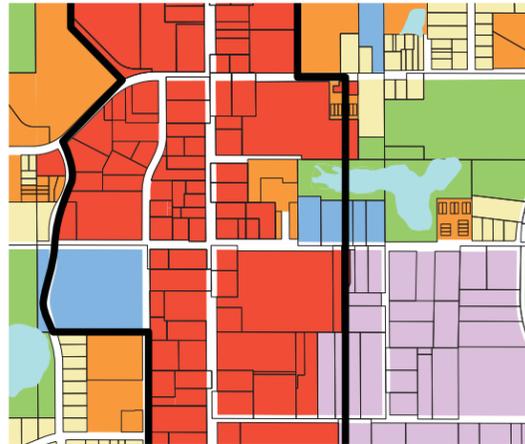
The area has a mix of uses (office, civic, retail) that distinguishes it from other parts of the corridor. However the uses are not coordinated and the area lacks amenity. There has been some recent retail redevelopment projects in the area that have brought new customers and visibility to the area. The new projects have followed the improved design standards of moving buildings closer to the street so they are accessible by the sidewalk. Most of the new projects have transitioned from having parking in the front between the building and the street to locating the parking on the side of the building.

There are several “moving parts” that this Plan seeks to coordinate to create a Town Center.

- The YMCA, a major landowner, and important community amenity is contemplating what to do with their property. It is one of the oldest in their inventory and in need of an upgrade.
- Dakota County is planning the River to River Greenway across West Saint Paul. It is currently in place east of Robert Street. The County has been in talks with the City about how to cross Robert Street and extend the trail to the west.
- The City owns the former Blockbuster Site on the west side of Robert Street
- Developers have expressed interest in assembling properties north of Wentworth for a new redevelopments
- The Thompson Oaks Golf Course is not performing well and has been considered for redevelopment.
- The City needs to invest in their current City Hall, built in 1969. The City Council has had preliminary discussions about relocating the City Hall.

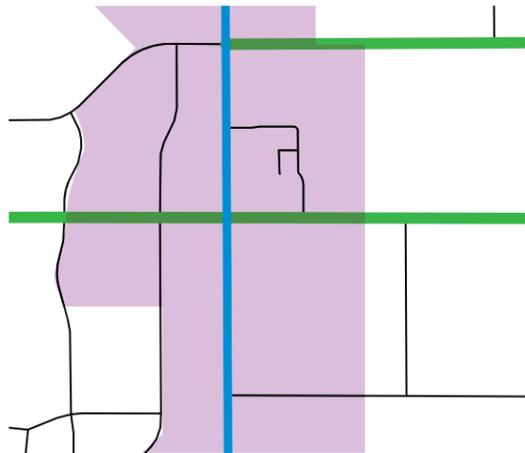
Town Center: Imperial to Lothenbach

Analysis



Land Use

Robert Street is dominated by small, medium and large retail uses. However between Wentworth and Thompson there are several civic, office, recreational and residential uses that give this area more activity than other parts of the corridor.



Streets:

The Town Center is well served by Robert St, Wentworth and Thompson Ave. Livingston St on the west side of Robert Street creates an important parallel street that helps circulation. The east side of Robert Street needs additional roads if it is to redevelop.



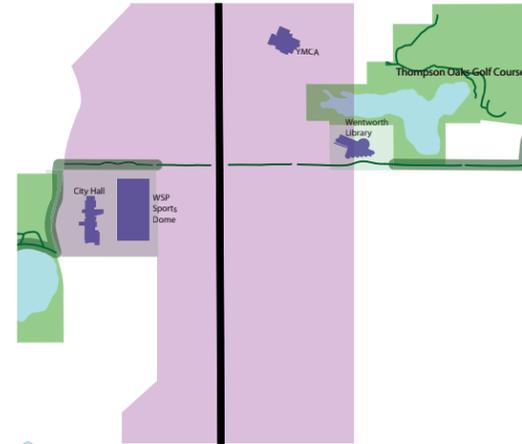
Buildings:

The buildings in the town Center are not large because the rolling topography of the area is not conducive to large floor plates.



Parking:

Parking is the dominant land use in the Town Center area on both sides of Robert Street. The parking lots are all located on Robert Street - some in front of buildings, and some to their side.



Parks:

The Town Center area is located where the River to River Greenway crosses Robert Street. The Thompson Oaks Golf Course and Lake is a key property.

Market Summary

Retail

- The Town Center area is in a good location to capture future retail development. It is centrally located, has strong traffic counts, is visible from Robert Street and already has several strong anchor businesses.
- Reconstruction of Robert Street will improve overall circulation patterns.
- There is very little amenity in the area to draw interest from visitors for reasons other than shopping at a particular store.
- The trade area is well established and with recent investments by large retailers such as Target it will remain competitive in the foreseeable future
- The trade area is slightly older and less wealthy than the regional average, however it is expected to grow significantly over the next 10-15 years with the addition of 2,500 new households by 2020 - many of whom will be aged 25-44.
- Vacancy rates are low; therefore there is limited availability to introduce new retailers without natural attrition.
- There is potential to support an additional 135,000 sf in the trade area today and an additional 141,000 sf by 2020.
- Given the lack of public amenities the area, new development will likely follow the existing pattern, namely one dominated by highly separated auto oriented uses.
- The identified store categories with the strongest opportunities for growth (restaurants, leisure goods, apparel) respond to amenitized environments that value place making, experience and public interaction.

Office

- Office space needs are changing and employers are offering less space per employee. This is decreasing the overall demand for office space.
- The office market in the area is dominated by small users who seek retail locations that are closest to their customers.
- Office vacancy in north Dakota County has been climbing recently.
- The Downtown Saint Paul Office market is soft. With office building owners offering concessions downtown, there is a hole in the Class B and C market.
- Based on forecasted employment growth among office based occupations, the demand for office space is not strong - up to 35,000 sf by 2020.
- Office space could be developed on the upper floors of retail / restaurant if the on-site surface parking can be shared; however mixed-use developments will need substantial amenities.
- Market rents in the area are \$1.30-\$1.40 / sf. This is below what would typically be needed to support structured parking .

Multi Family Residential

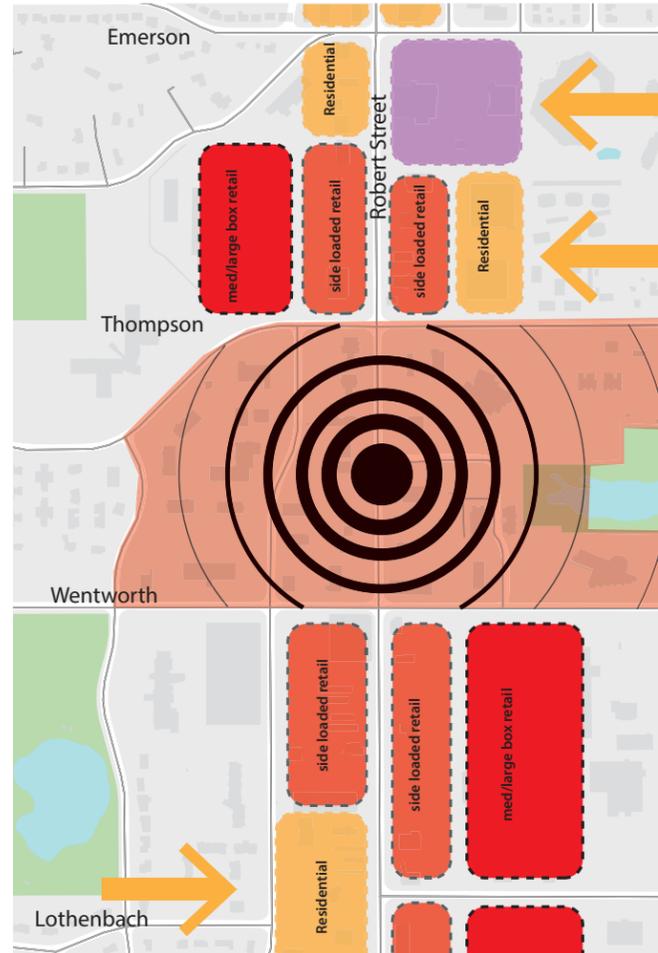
- Demand for multi-family housing is strong due to low vacancy, rising rents, and favorable demographics.
- Strategic parcels should be protected for multi-family housing with proximity to Transit and retail.

Town Center: Emerson to Lothenbach

Corridor Recommendations

Land Use and Urban Design Recommendations:

- Organize retail in front of Menards with a continuous rear drive aisle that connects parking lots. Gradually redevelop retail buildings closer to Robert Street and move parking from in-front of the buildings to the side of the building.
- Redevelop the south west corner of Robert and Emerson with housing.
- Expand housing on the east side of Robert Street between Augustana and Thompson.
- Use all the assets (lake, redevelopment potential, YMCA, Library, and potential new City Hall) to create a Mixed-Use Town Center in between Thompson and Wentworth.
- Continue to intensify the office uses on the west side of Livingston to provide valuable day time population for the Town Center.
- Organize retail between Wentworth and Lothenbach with a continuous rear drive aisle that connects parking lots.
- Improve pedestrian connections between Robert Street and retail buildings in front of Target and the vacated Rainbow.

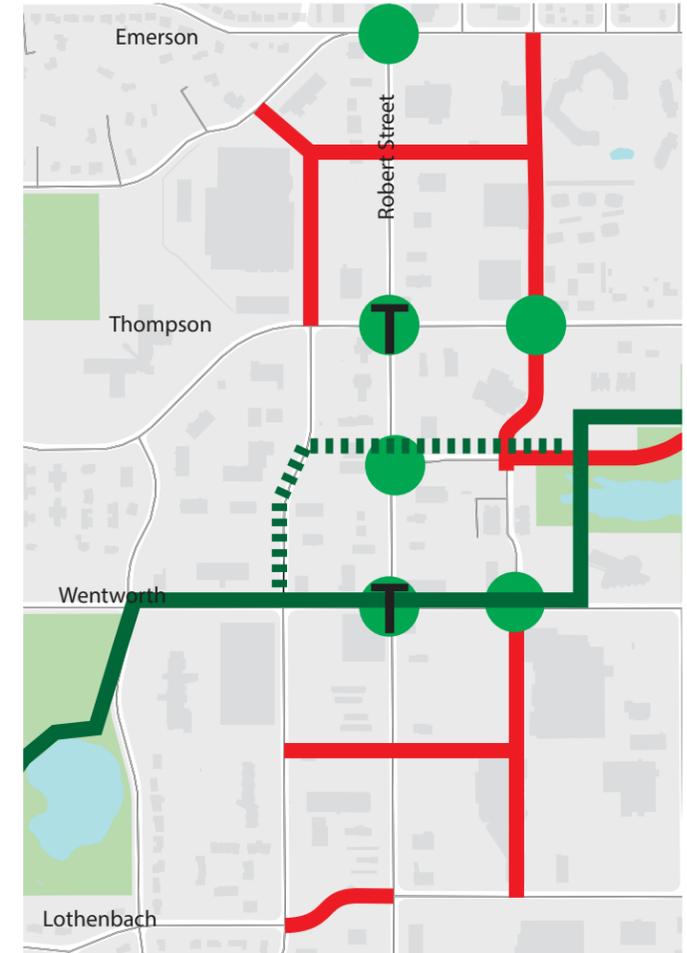


KEY

- ← Opportunities for mixed-use nodes that integrate retail, housing and public open space
- ← Opportunities to introduce housing onto Robert Street
- ← Opportunities to organize and condense retail so it is more accessible and pedestrian friendly

Transportation and Access Recommendations

- Extend Crawford north to connect to Emerson.
- Extend a connection from Crawford, across Robert Street to Emerson Drive.
- Create a connection in front of WalMart between Lothenbach and Wentworth.
- Extend a connection across Robert Street in between Lothenbach and Wentworth.
- Complete the River to River trail connection across Robert Street. Integrate the trail into the Town Center.
- Connect Lothenbach to Robert Street.
- Improve pedestrian crossings of Wentworth and Thompson east of Robert Street.



KEY

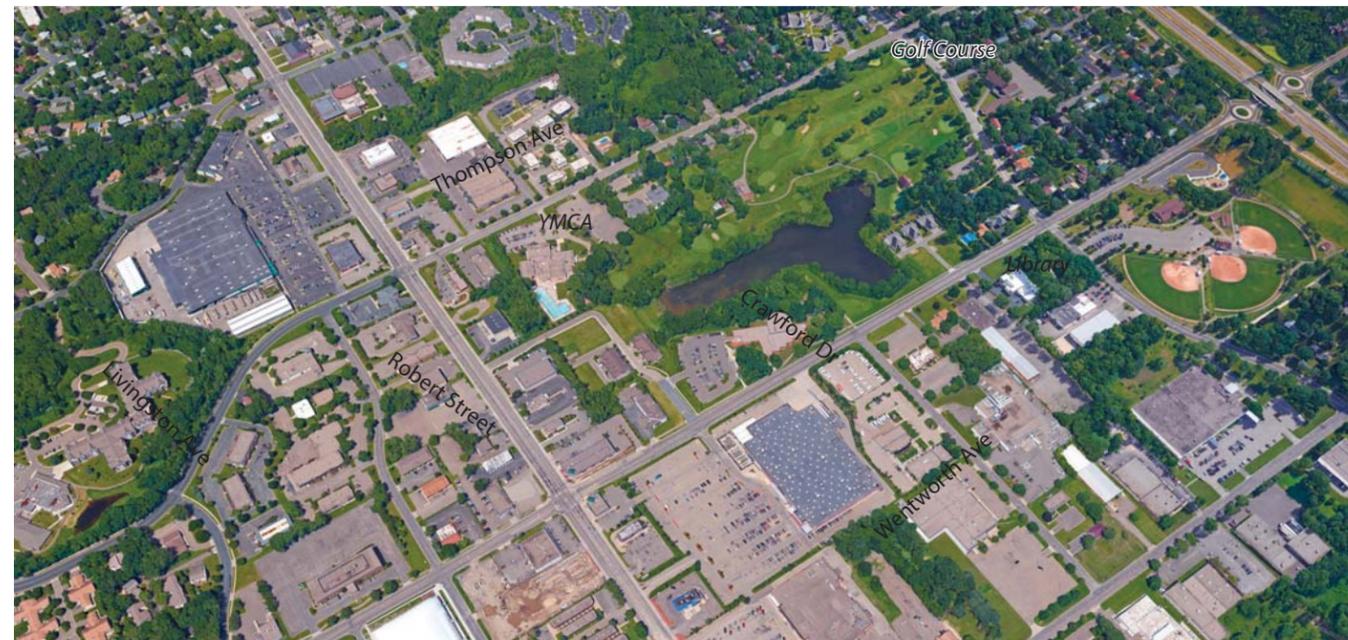
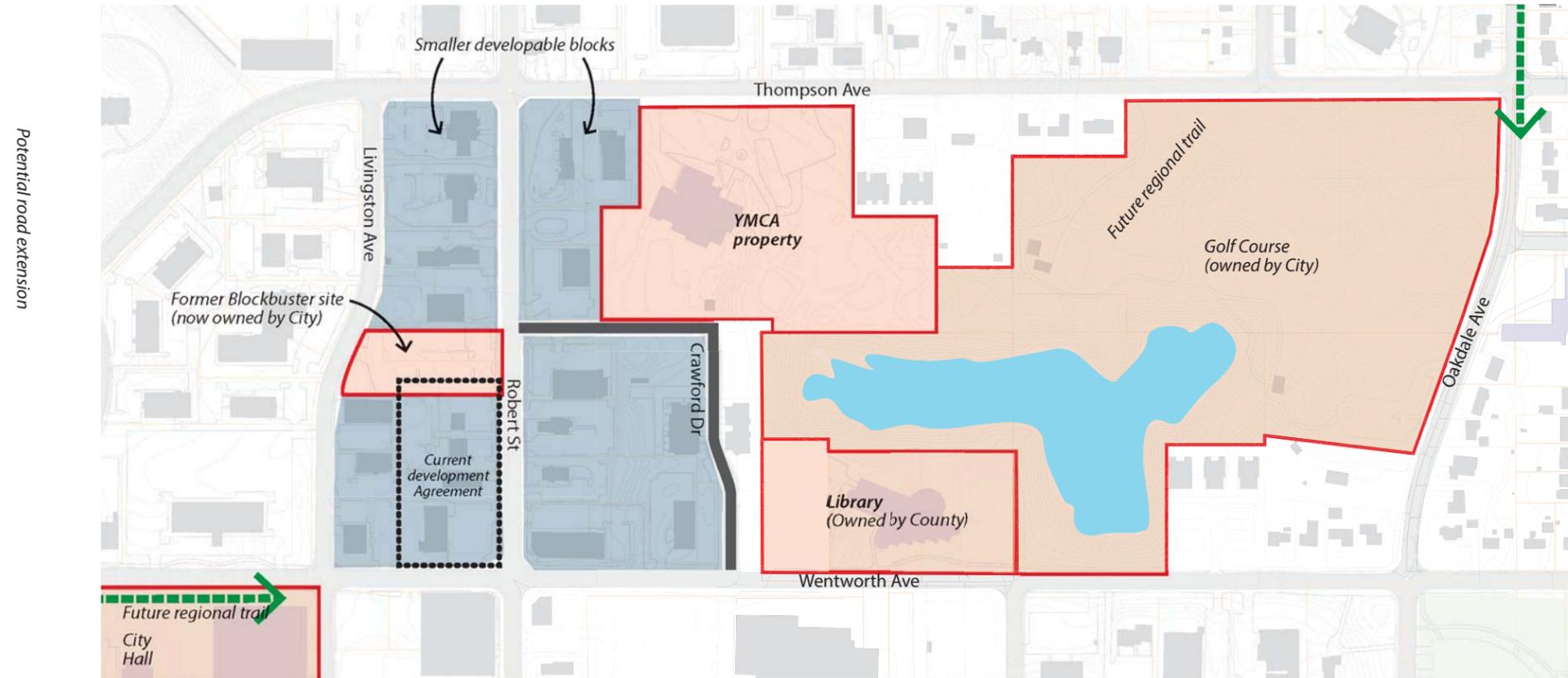
- ← Transit node
- ← Locations to improve pedestrian crossing of Robert Street
- ← Approximate locations of new connections

Town Center Focus Area

Existing Conditions

There are several “moving parts” that this Plan seeks to coordinate to create a Town Center.

- The YMCA, a major landowner, and important community amenity is contemplating what to do with their property. It is one of the oldest in their inventory and in need of an upgrade.
- Dakota County is planning the River to River Greenway across West Saint Paul. It is currently in place east of Robert Street. The County has been in talks with the City about how to cross Robert Street and extend the trail to the west.
- The City owns the former Blockbuster Site on the west side of Robert Street.
- Developers have expressed interest in assembling properties north of Wentworth for a new redevelopment
- The Thompson Oaks Golf Course is not performing well and has been considered for redevelopment.
- The City needs to invest in their current City Hall, built in 1969. They have had preliminary discussions about relocating the City Hall.



Moving Parts:

The Town Center area has a lot of property in play. Decisions made in the next few years will determine whether this area can redevelop into a Town Center. This Plan provides direction for integrating these parts.

Aerial Photo:

The Robert Street properties between Wentworth and Thompson resemble others along the corridor, but directly to their east and west are potential amenities that can be leveraged to create a new Town Center.

Town Center Focus Area

Precedents: Civic Centers

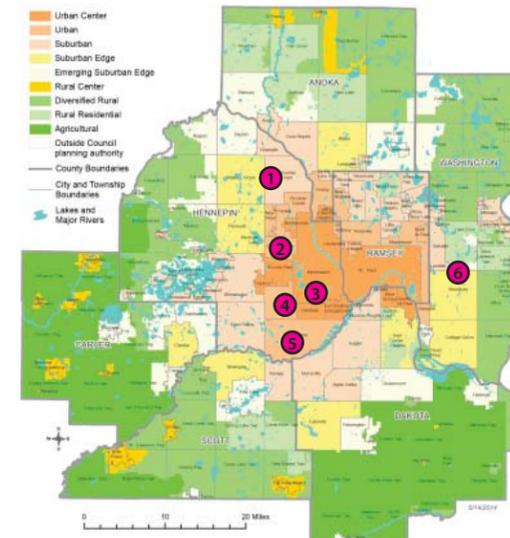
A deliberate clustering of civic uses can help create daytime activity and give a sense of place for the community. Towns across the region have been investing in public facilities as a way of creating pride in their community. There are economic benefits of clustering public facilities as well. If combined in an urban environment, the parking can be shared and users of one facility can be customers of nearby retail and restaurants.



Precedents: Mixed Use Centers

Communities throughout the region are investing in mixed-use redevelopment projects as a way of creating a sense of place. Mixed-use developments fill an important niche in communities that were developed primarily in a suburban pattern because they complement and don't compete with the existing residential and retail base of the community. Mixed-use developments tend to attract new residents as well as offer options to existing residents as they move through their own phases of life.

Projects that combine mid-rise housing with retail and offices offer opportunities that do not currently exist in the community yet are increasingly in demand because they put a premium on walkability, transit access, and convenience. In addition, the higher density of housing next to or atop the retail / restaurants provides an immediate customer base for local businesses. If designed carefully, with generous sidewalks and parking behind buildings, the resulting environment can be walkable, pleasant, and lively.



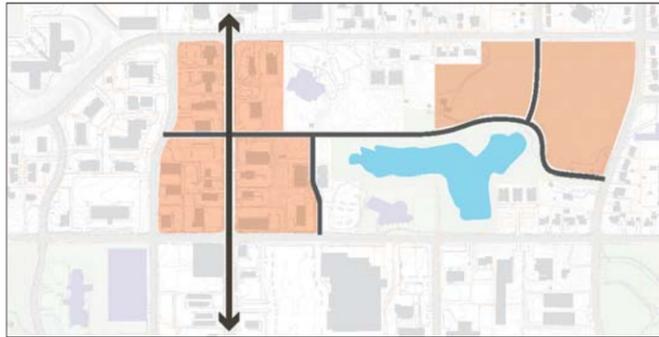
- ① Shingle Creek, Brooklyn Park
- ② Excelsior and Grand, Saint Louis Park
- ③ Lyndale/66th, Richfield
- ④ Americian Blvd, Blomington
- ⑤ Heart of the City, Burnsville
- ⑥ Woodbury, MN



Excelsior and Grand, Saint Louis Park

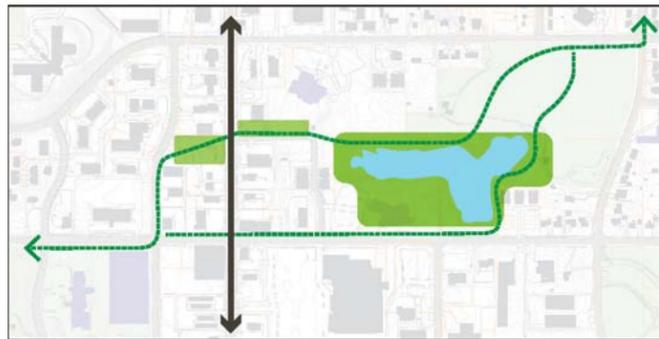
Town Center Focus Area

Design Principles



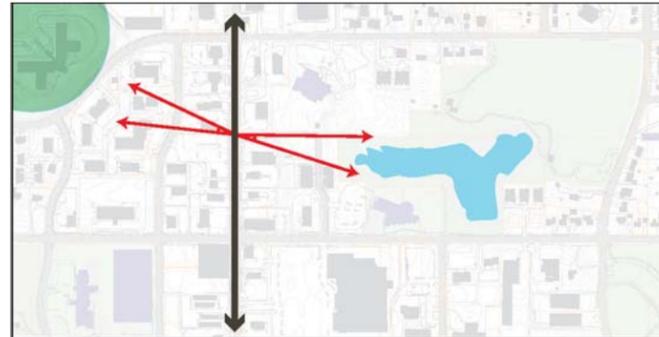
Introduce new infrastructure to create smaller, walkable blocks

The existing block and street network was developed at a time when access by transit, bicycle, and foot was not highly valued. Today, connectivity and access by these means is more important and crucial to creating a Town center.



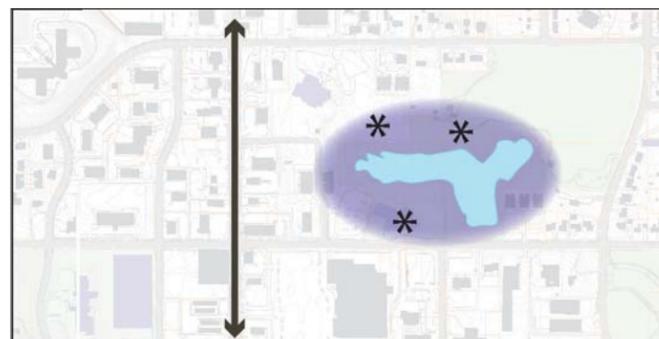
Integrate the Trail into Public Space

The River to River Greenway should be integrated into public space allowing users of the trail to access public and private amenities and destinations in the Town Center.



Create views from Robert Street to Hill and Lake

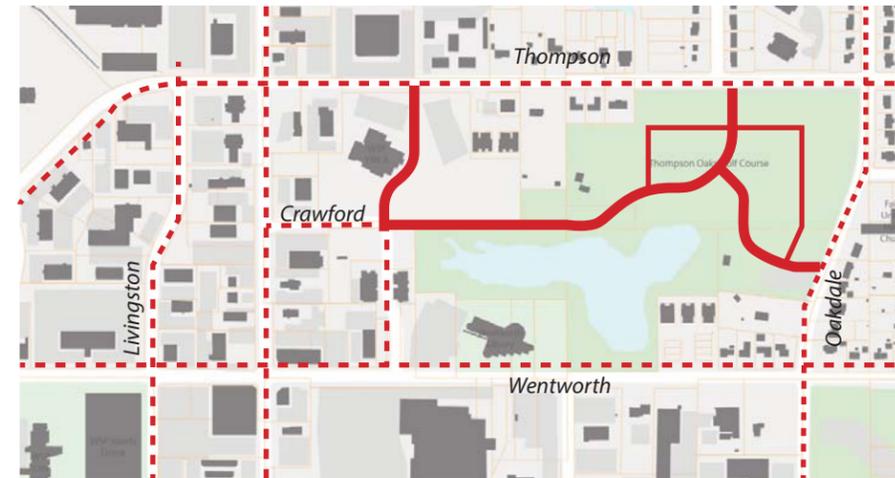
New streets and building orientations can create windows into the community from Robert Street. A "window" in between Wentworth and Thompson can open up views to the Lake and the Hills - both unique features of West Saint Paul and of the Town Center.



Create a civic campus around the Lake

With new infrastructure and a new City Hall, the Lake can be opened up to greater public use and enjoyment.

Circulation and Land Use



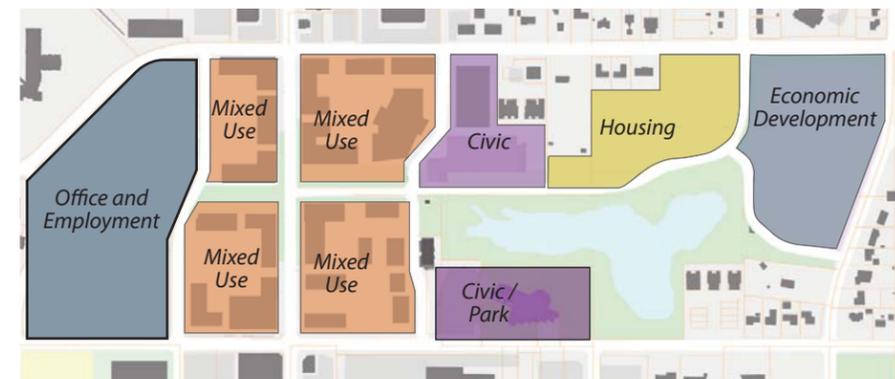
Streets

A new network of streets will create smaller blocks that are permeable and pedestrian scaled. Smaller blocks and additional streets will also improve the circulation and access throughout the area.

— New Street
- - - Existing Street



Land Use Alt. 1

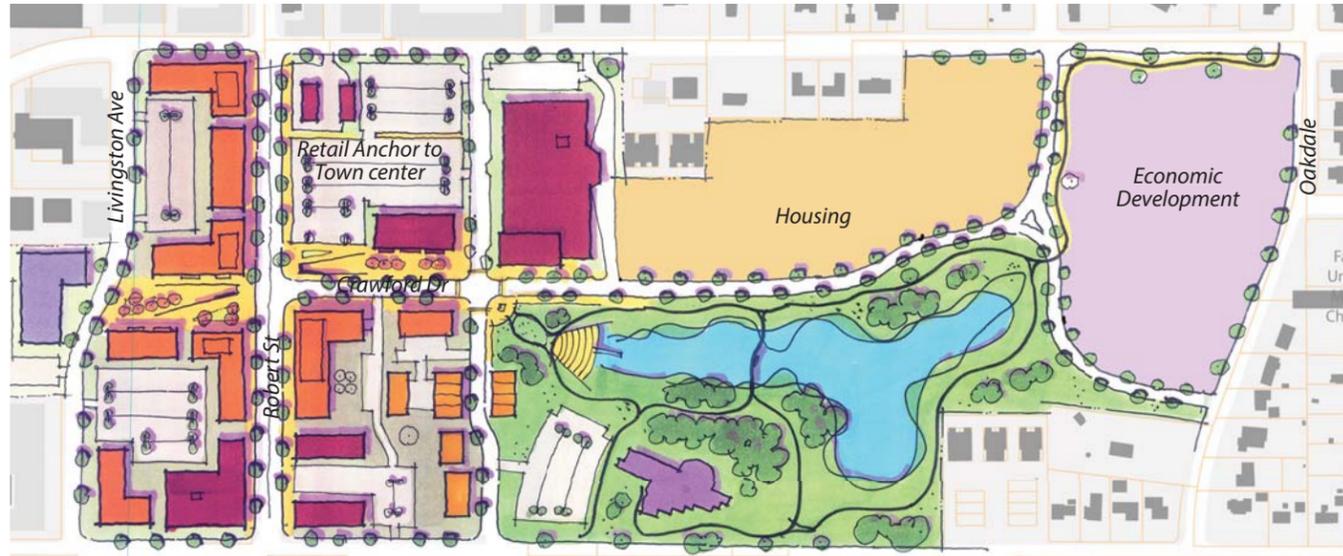


Land Use Alt. 2

Land Use

The Town Center should redevelop with a mix of uses that support each other. The blocks on Robert Street can have vertically mixed use housing/retail. The balance of the golf course can be redeveloped with housing and employment uses. In Alternative 2, Civic Uses are clustered around the Lake

Town Center Focus Area



Town Center:
Commercial uses as the anchor to the Town Center



Alternative Town Center:
Civic Uses clustered on the west side of the Lake



Recommendations

- Extend Crawford Street to Thompson Ave to create a developable block with four sides.
- Redevelop the Golf Course with a mix of uses that center on the lake as a primary public amenity.
- Consider relocating the City Hall to the Town Center to enhance the daytime population of the area and support local restaurants and businesses.
- Create high quality park around the lake consisting of trails and paths, gathering spaces, small performance area and other amenities that draw residents to the park throughout the day and the year.
- Provide a centralized public parking structure that serves all users of the Town Center.
- Attract retailers and restaurants that benefit from pedestrian transit and bicycle access and proximity to the lake - a new high quality public amenity.
- Work with Dakota County to create a safe and comfortable trail crossing of Robert Street. Integrate the trail into public space as much as possible. Carefully design the trail so it provides access to destinations in the Town Center.

Town Center Focus Area

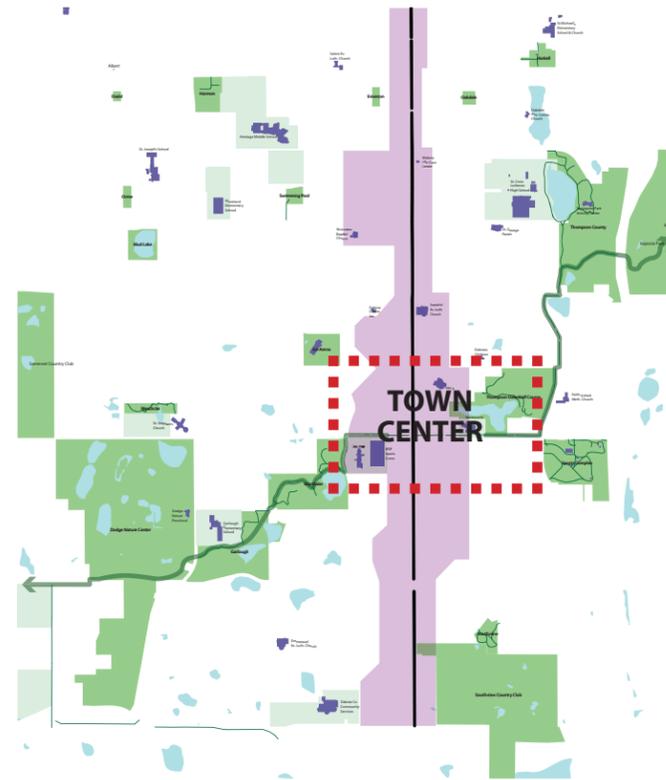
Regional Trail Crossing

Dakota County is planning and building a River to River Greenway (formerly named the North Urban Regional Trail, NURT) through West Saint Paul - connecting the West Saint Paul to the river and surrounding communities of Lilydale, Mendota Heights and South Saint Paul. It is being designed as a long distance trail that will serve riders of varying abilities. The trail will meet the regional standards and provide amenities such as benches, trailheads, bike racks and cultural and environmental interpretive stations to support recreational use and nonmotorized transportation.

The Trail will go through the Town Center but designs for how it will traverse the Town Center are not completed. It is critical that crossing Robert Street is comfortable and safe for all users so residents of West Saint Paul can realize the full benefits of the trail. In addition the trail presents an opportunity to connect the two sides of Robert Street in a way that can only happen here in the Town Center. If done well, the connection can enhance the sense of place and allow the entire Town Center to function as a single place, not as two separate sides of the street.

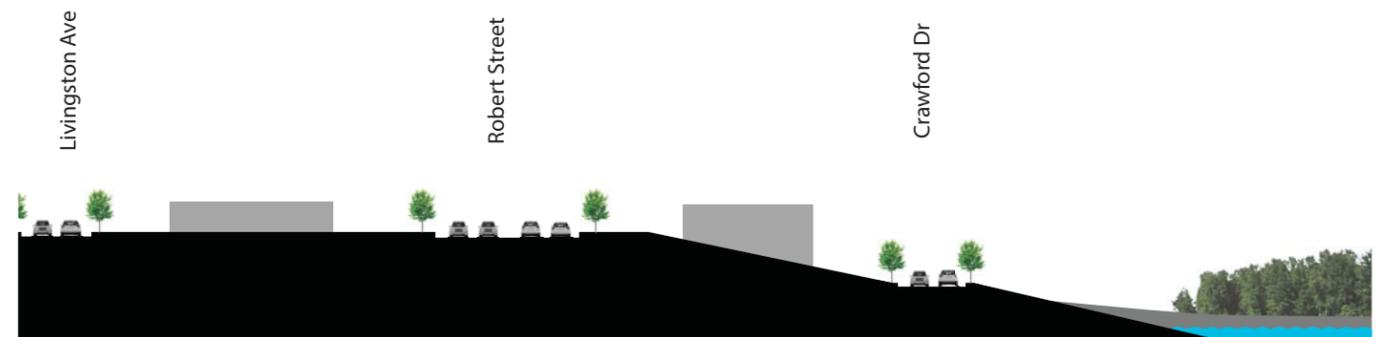
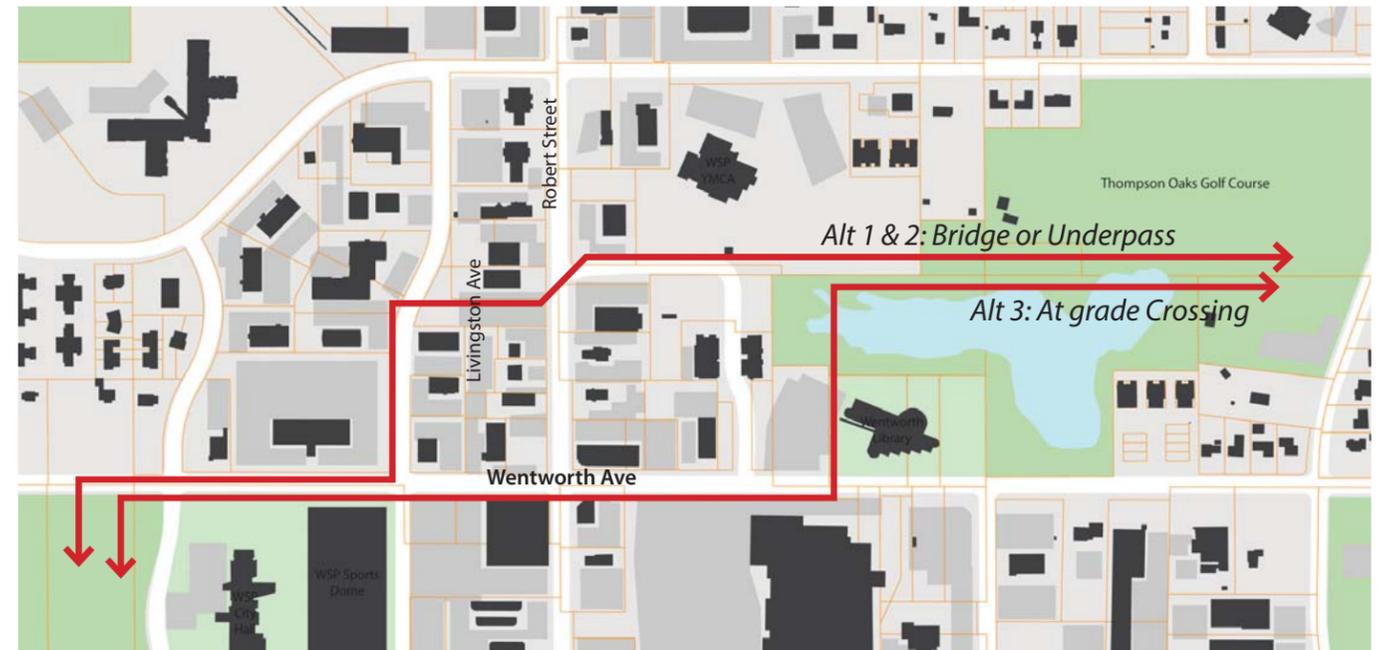
This Plan recommends three alternatives. The least costly option is to cross Robert Street on Wentworth Avenue - at grade. The intersection would have to be modified slightly and the trail would likely be either mixed with traffic or buffered on Wentworth east and West of Robert Street for a few blocks.

The other two options include a grade separated crossing of Robert Street. Initial feasibility studies for an overpass have been completed - but were completed without consideration for how it would best fit into a new Town Center. This Plan recommends further study of an underpass because there are some opportunities that arise due to the grade change from Livingston to Crawford Drive. In particular, the trail could be well integrated with a plaza on the west side of Robert Street with the lake on the east side.



The River to River Greenway

The River to River Greenway will link important natural and social destinations in Dakota County: the Minnesota River, Valley Park in Mendota Heights, Village at Mendota Heights, Henry Sibley High School, Dodge Nature Center, Garlough Park Elementary School, Marthaler Park, the West St. Paul Sports Dome, Robert Street commercial district, the Wentworth Library, the YMCA in West St. Paul, Thompson Oaks Golf Course, Thompson County Park, Kaposia Park, and the Mississippi River Trail.

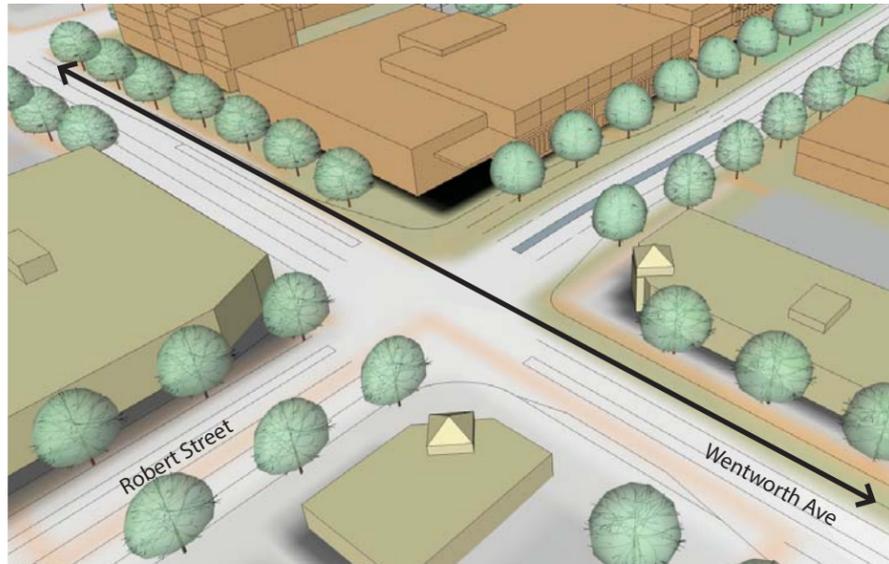


Robert Street: Existing

Town Center Focus Area

Regional Trail Crossing

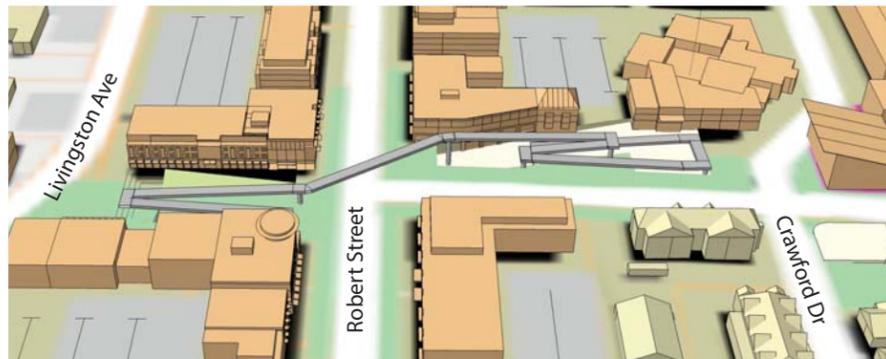
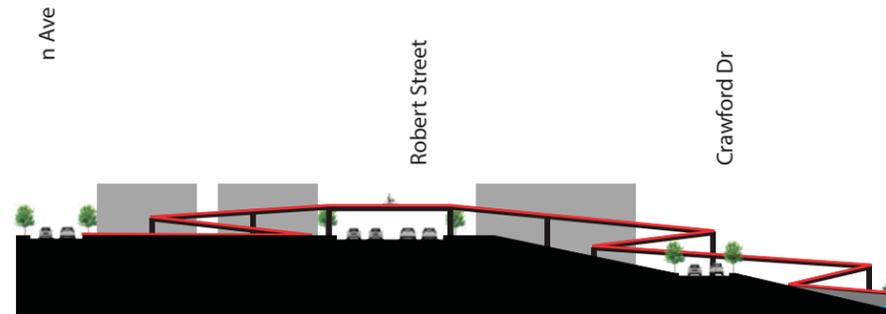
Regional Trail Crossing: Option 1: At Grade Crossing



Trail Crossing At Grade along Wentworth:

One option for crossing Robert Street would be to keep the trail at-grade and to extend the trail along Wentworth. This would keep trail riders on the street and would require improvements to the intersection to make it safe for cyclists of all abilities. Ideally the trail would be a buffered and protected bike lane along Wentworth and the traffic signal at Robert Street would be adjusted to ensure safety.

Regional Trail Crossing: Option 2: Overpass

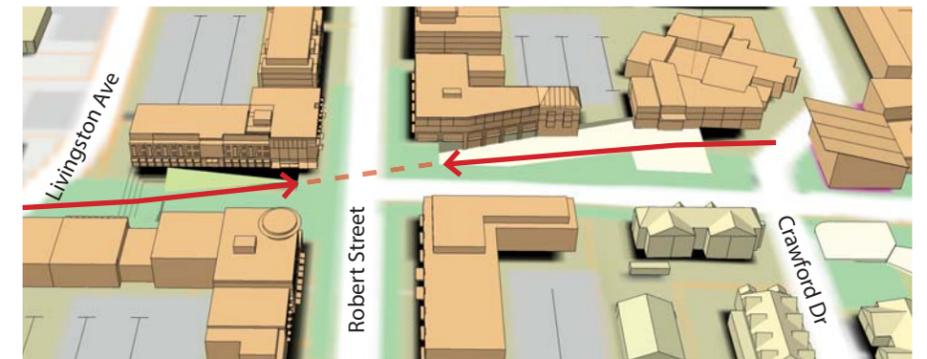
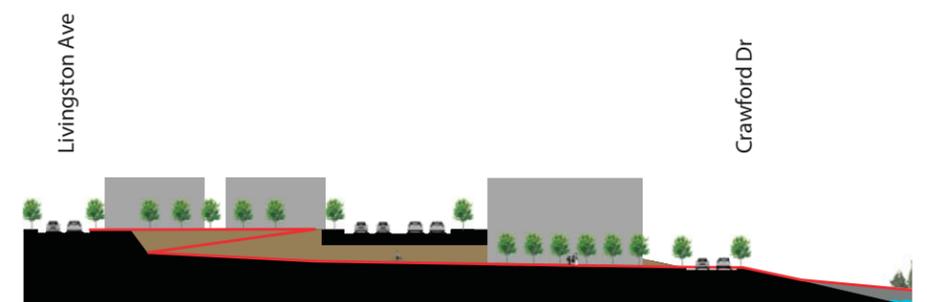


Aerial perspective of bridge



Aerial photograph of regional trail connection and bridge in Columbia Heights, MN

Regional Trail Crossing: Option 3: Underpass



Aerial perspective of underpass



Photographs of underpass in Boulder CO