



**City of North St. Paul
Redevelopment Master Plan Review
Regular Meeting Agenda**

**December 27, 2021
6:30 PM**

The Redevelopment Master Plan Review Meeting will be conducted on **December 27, 2021** at 6:30 p.m. The meeting location is the Sandberg Room at City Hall, located at 2400 Margaret St., North St. Paul.

The Redevelopment Master Plan Review will also be meeting by interactive TV under Minn. Stat. 13D.02. Members of the public are permitted to attend the meeting in person, however, it is encouraged to participate in the meeting remotely. Instructions can be found below.

The **December 27, 2021 Zoom meeting can be accessed via:**

<https://tinyurl.com/NSPMasterplan>

(from a PC, Mac, tablet, iPhone or Android device)

or by phone at 1 301 715 859, webinar ID: 880 5661 7628 Passcode: 732537

The Redevelopment Master Plan Review Zoom meeting will be 'open to the public' to listen in, but will be muted from contributing at all times with the exception of a Public Hearing and open to the public forum.

Please join the meeting early to test your audio and video settings. If you join via a device and your audio is not working, you may need to use the dial-in phone number option in order to be heard.

I. Committee Business & Action Items

- A. Review Draft Chapters
- B. Discussion

II. Adjournment

The next regularly scheduled Redevelopment Master Plan Review meeting is January 31, 2022

North St. Paul Redevelopment Master Plan Update

Task Force Draft – December 27, 2021

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Chapter 1: Project Background

Introduction

Originally drafted in 2012, the initial Redevelopment Master Plan was prepared as a joint effort by the City of North St. Paul and the Economic Development Authority (EDA). The project was funded through the Metropolitan Council's Livable Communities program to identify barriers to redevelopment and position projects within the downtown area for implementation. The 2012 plan focused on the downtown area, which is the traditional commercial hub of North St. Paul. It identified key redevelopment sites and focused on improving connectivity between those sites, the Gateway Trail, and regional transit systems and community facilities. Many projects and initiatives have been completed under the guidance of the 2012 plan; however, many more revitalization opportunities exist. Thus, in summer 2021, the EDA and Planning Commission determined that an update to the Redevelopment Master Plan would be prudent to ensure that previously expressed goals and objectives are still applicable ten years later and to identify areas for continued investment.

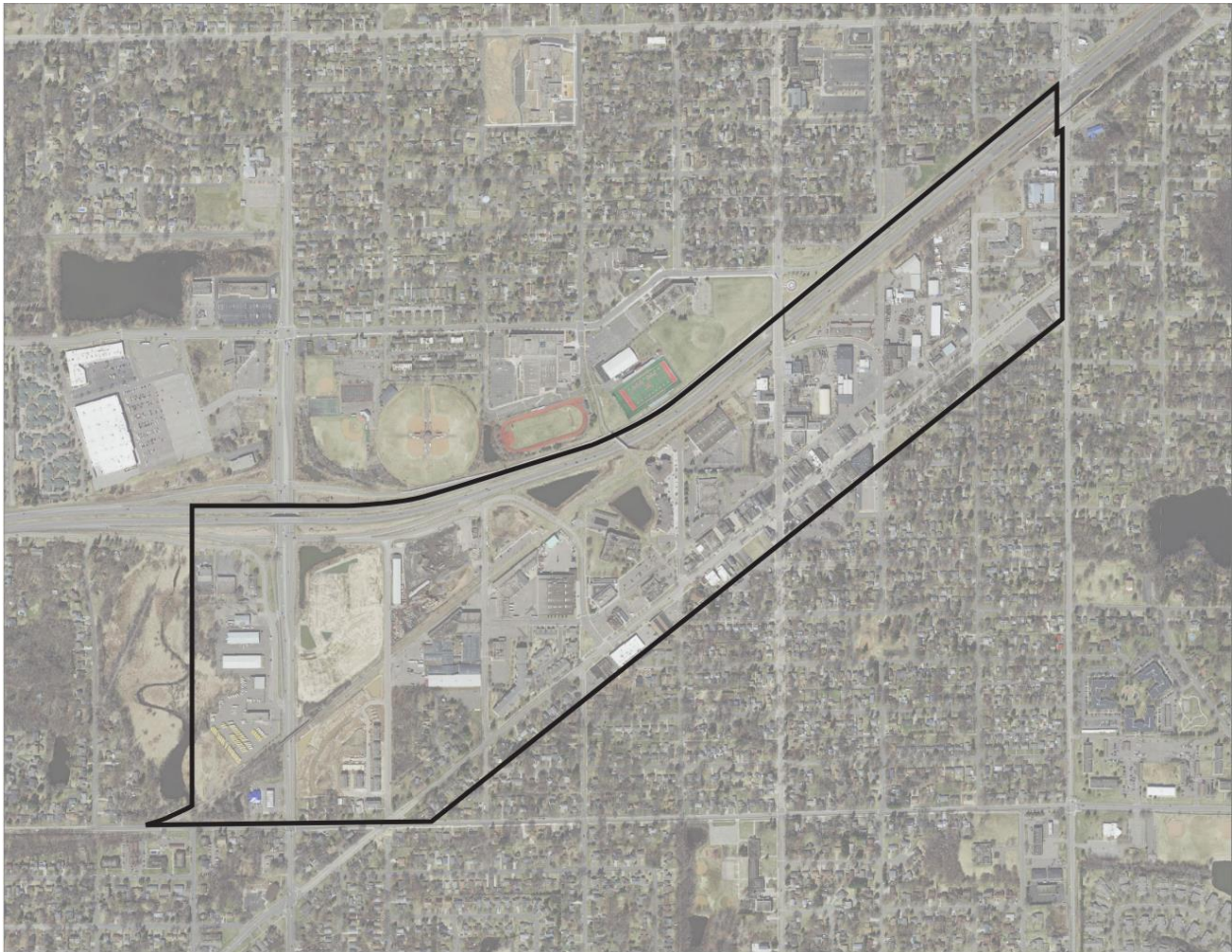
Project Approach

This plan is about revitalizing the traditional commercial hub of North St. Paul. As a fully built out city, the focus of this document is on redevelopment and reuse of land in the city's core. Revitalization can encourage denser development; it also requires creativity to fit new pieces into the existing fabric of the community. This plan will explore priority areas for reinvestment, both public and private. The planning process for the 10-year update was led by a task force with representatives from City Council, Planning Commission, and the Economic Development Authority. This group evaluated the successes that have occurred since 2012 and noted inconsistencies between the 2012 plan and activities that have taken place. The task force took a fresh look at the downtown area and identified potential priority areas for reinvestment, both public and private, considered which land uses are appropriate within the study area, and identified opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian connections. The task force engaged residents, businesses, and property owners to ensure the plan update is in alignment with the local mindset. This plan is intended to demonstrate the vision for the area to residents, businesses, and developers and can assist in catalyzing reinvestment.

Downtown Redevelopment Study Area

The downtown redevelopment study area is bounded by Highway 36 on the north, property adjacent to 7th Avenue E. on the south, Division Street on the east, and generally the Urban Ecology and Environmental Learning Center on the west. The Gateway State Trail passes through the study area which connects downtown to St. Paul and Stillwater. The study area includes the Highway 36/McKnight Road and Division Street interchanges; both are primary gateways into the City of North St. Paul.

Figure 1: Study Area



Historical Context

According to the North St. Paul Historical Society, the city was planned by Civil War veteran Henry Castle as a “workingman’s community with industries and housing in a resort atmosphere.” The city was connected to St. Paul and Stillwater by the Twin City Lines streetcar that is now Seppala Boulevard. The Wisconsin Central Railroad also connected the city to the region, and it became a burgeoning manufacturing hub. Some of the city’s first industries included furniture manufacturers, farm implement fabricators, and brick makers. Berwald Roofing was founded in 1936, at which time the company primarily installed shingles and siding. In 1958, T. A. Schifsky and Sons built an asphalt plant along the former rail corridor which spurred investment to the downtown commercial area. Both companies remain in operation today and are among the largest landholders in the study area. Neumann’s Bar is another historic link unique to the city; it was built in 1887 and it claims to be the oldest bar in continuous operation in Minnesota.

One of the benefits and challenges facing the study area is its historical context in the Twin Cities metro. North St. Paul originally developed as a distinct and separate community from Minneapolis/St. Paul. Dissimilar to other Twin Cities neighbors, when the metropolitan area grew, communities like

Maplewood and Oakdale developed as suburbs with auto-oriented character. Retail centers developed around high traffic corridors in high visibility areas, which competed with North St. Paul's historic downtown. However, development trends and desires have shifted away from cookie-cutter and toward authenticity; the historic character, diagonal streets, and greenway connection with the Gateway State Trail make this downtown a unique destination for those seeking a non-suburban environment.

[Call out box]

In 1972, Lloyd Koesling built the iconic snowman that sits along Margaret Street. The sculpture recalls the Snow Frolics celebrations where the North St. Paul Jaycees would build a large snowman downtown. The snowman was adopted as the city logo and the sculpture serves as a welcome to North St. Paul.

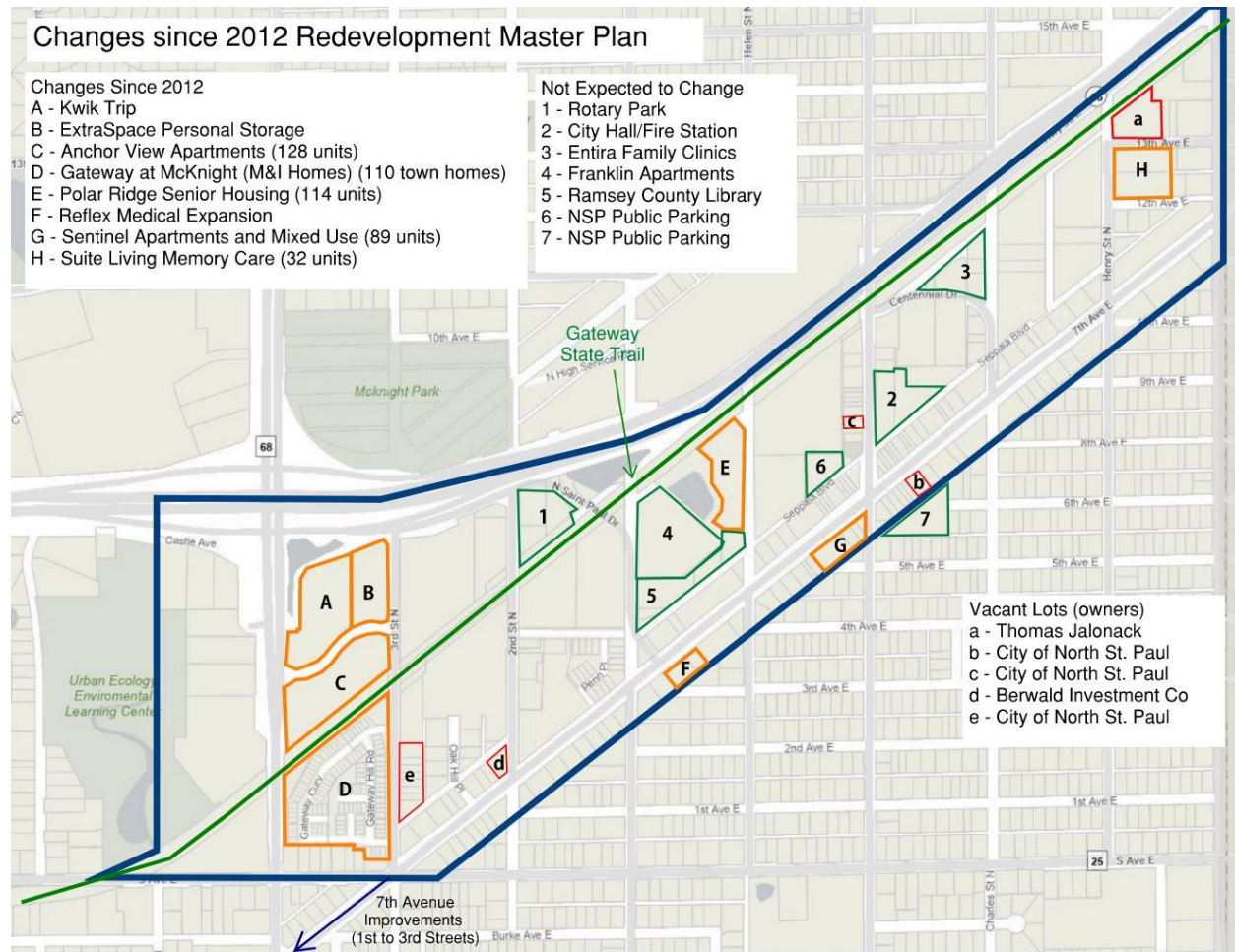
Changing Conditions

Significant investment has occurred in the downtown since the 2012 plan was adopted. Polar Ridge senior living facility was completed in 2015. The facility has 39 units of senior independent living, 54 units of senior assisted living and 21 units of memory care. The site formerly known as Anchor Block has redeveloped into Anchor Commons with Kwik Trip, Extra Space Storage, and Anchor View Apartments. The combined taxable value of these improvements is \$33.5 million. In 2021, M&I Homes completed construction of Gateway at McKnight, a 100-unit townhome neighborhood with direct access to the Gateway Trail and walking distance to downtown amenities. Most recently, the three-story Sentinel Building has been constructed on the former City Hall site and adjoining parcels. This 89-unit, market-rate apartment building includes a 3,000 square foot mixed-use space at the corner of 7th Avenue and Margaret Street. Suite Living senior facility opened in 2020 with 18-units of senior assisted living and 14-units of memory care. The facility is located on the site formally occupied by the ISD 622 bus garage. This project was made possible by a \$700,000 environmental remediation grant through Ramsey County.

In addition, Reflex medical expanded their facility and countless new tenants have opened on main street (7th Avenue). Streetscape improvements have occurred along 7th Avenue to the southwest of the study area; similar improvements are anticipated to continue to the northeast within the study area. Additionally, the city updated its comprehensive plan in 2019 and overhauled the zoning ordinance in 2014.

[Note – this figure is a placeholder]

Figure 2: Redevelopment Activities Since 2012



Planning and Regulatory Framework

In addition to being a stand-alone document, this plan builds on the foundation of other local planning efforts and must recognize regulatory constraints. The following is a brief summary of planning and regulatory documents that relate to the study area. North St. Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan sets city-wide goals and policies. It was developed with community feedback in mind. Guiding factors of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan as it relates to this Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan include the following.

- Improve/revitalize the downtown, including mixed-use development.
- Build more housing in and near downtown, within walking distance of businesses.
- Locate support services near senior and lower income housing.
- Create public gathering spaces into new development opportunities as they arise.
- Connect commercial and employment centers to amenities and residential areas.

- Provide the necessary infrastructure to retain and attract businesses, such as parking, technology, and multimodal facilities.

North St. Paul Strategic Plan

In 2013, the city engaged in a strategic planning effort that developed organizational goals and a clear and strategic direction for the community. The plan is grounded in the following major themes:

- Promote community stewardship through an involved and informed citizenry.
- Preserve neighborhood value with diverse and maintained housing and active neighbors.
- Creative placemaking that fosters an environment of economic and employment opportunity.
- Build transportation systems that connect people to places and promote active lifestyles.
- Provide innovative and high-quality customer service with a personal touch.
- Integrate collaborative thinking and personal values to employ a productive and pioneering workforce.

Diversified District Plan

The study area lies within the Diversified District, which is located between Highway 36 and 7th Avenue E., between McKnight Road and Century Avenue/Division Street. The Diversified District is intended to encourage more intense, mixed land uses and facilitate high quality redevelopment. Redevelopment in this area should elevate both the tax base and identity of North St. Paul.

Design Manual – Downtown North St. Paul

The downtown design manual was developed to illustrate portions of the North St. Paul city code to depict the desired built environment within the downtown district.

Living Streets Plan

The 2011 Living Streets Plan was a partnership between the City of North St. Paul and the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District (RWMWD). This plan details the water-quality issues facing North St. Paul and how they can be alleviated with implementation of stormwater best management practices that are an integral component of living streets. This plan recommends specific features for living street design solutions based on street classification. For example, residential streets, which is the most prevalent street type in North St. Paul, could include street trees, raingardens, sidewalks, curb/gutter, public art/artful design.

Margaret and 1st Street are designate as north/south collector streets that because of their status as either a state or state aid road, they must adhere to Ramsey County and MnDOT design standards. Design features for these should include street trees, rain gardens, bike lanes on both sides of the street, sidewalks on at least one side of the street, parking where needed by adjacent property owners (otherwise no on-street parking), two 10-foot driving lanes.

South Avenue is an east/west arterial/collector street, which is a higher-traffic street that connects North St. Paul to schools, commercial districts, and adjacent cities. Design features on this street should include street trees, raingardens, bike lanes on both sides of the street, sidewalks on one side of the street, parking on one side of the street, and two 10-footdriving lanes.

Helen Street is designated as a parkway that is intended to function as a green spine to safely link walkers and bikers to primary destinations within the community (schools, parks, and the downtown).

The parkway will include the same design features as the collectors, but it will be inherently quieter because it runs through residential neighborhoods.

Note that this plan does not address 7th Avenue because of its unique challenges as the main downtown street. It is covered in the 7th Avenue North St. Paul Urban Design, described below.

[Note – the master plan map will include locations of proposed bike lanes and sidewalks per this Living Streets document.]

7th Avenue North St. Paul Urban Design: Downtown Revitalization Plan

This plan to establish the visual quality and design preferences for the reconstruction of 7th Avenue, from McKnight Road to Division Street. The plan also includes a segment of Margret Street, extending from the 7th Avenue intersection to the south edge of the bridge going over Highway 36. The planned project includes approximately 1.5 miles roadway within the city limits of North St. Paul, including the two blocks that make up North St. Paul’s historic downtown. This plan focuses on the aesthetics of the new roadway.

MnDOT Highway 36 Corridor Study

This 2014 study was developed to address safety and mobility issues along Highway 36, with a focus on the segment between Highway 120/Century Avenue and Hadley Avenue. This segment of Highway 36 contains the only remaining at-grade intersections west of I-694. The study identified major interchange improvement projects at both interchanges. The preferred design concept at the Highway 36 and Century Avenue interchange includes an overpass at Century (Highway 36 underneath) with roundabouts at the on/off ramps. Additional roundabouts will be located the 7th Avenue E. and 17th Avenue E. intersections Century Avenue. Construction on the Hadley interchange commenced in 2019. The Century Avenue interchange is not currently funded, but completion of this interchange project is anticipated in the future.

[Note – this is a placeholder for informational purposes. The proposed design for this interchange will be included in the master plan map.]



Other plans

The 2012 planning effort reviewed the following additional plans, studies, and design guidelines and incorporated into the original redevelopment plan.

- North Brook Redevelopment Study (2011)
- North Brook Redevelopment Feasibility Plan (2012)
- Living Streets Plan (2011)
- Draft Bicycle and Sidewalk Plan (2011)
- Downtown North Saint Paul Housing Study (2011)
- Downtown Design Manual (2005)
- Numerous Commerce Park Redevelopment Plans (2010, 2011, 2011)
- Metropolitan Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan
- MNDOT Metro District and Statewide 20 Year Highway Investment Plans

Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

Land Use

The study area contains a mix of very different land uses, ranging from high density residential to a heavy industry asphalt and recycling plant. Some of the mixes work well together, such as offices and retail, while the combinations of others create significant conflict.

Civic/Institutional

The downtown is the civic center for the City of North St. Paul. Over the past 20+ years, many significant public investments have occurred within the downtown, including a new City Hall and fire and police station along Margaret Street. Other civic uses include a community center at Seppala and North St. Paul

Drive, the U.S. Post Office, the North Star Museum of Boy Scouting and Girl Scouting, American Legion, and the North St. Paul Historical Society Museum. North High School lies just north of the study area across Highway 36 and the school district operates bussing from a new facility next to the North St. Paul Urban Ecology Center.

Commercial

The majority of commercial uses in the study area are situated downtown on 7th Avenue between 1st Street and Division Street as well as Margaret Street between 7th Avenue and Highway 36. Most of the stores are independent retailers, providing a mix of services ranging from restaurant and bars to auto parts and services to antiques. The district has also built up a base of health care providers including medical doctors, physical therapy, dentistry, psychology, and chiropractic professionals. Other professional offices exist throughout the neighborhood, including the newer three-story Gervais Court Building on the south side of 7th Ave at Charles Street. It is also worth noting that Target anchors a retail area northwest of Highway 36 and McKnight interchange.

Industrial

Light and heavy industrial uses are situated between Highway 36 and Seppala Boulevard. This area still retains some of the industrial character established by the railroad focused businesses in the late 19th century. The uses vary greatly and include high tech light industrial such as Aetrium semiconductor manufacturing, T.A. Schifsky & Sons' asphalt and recycling plant, Sheltertech Corporation, Anderson Cabinet, Inc., to Berwald Roofing & Sheet Metal.

Residential

Residential uses are located throughout the study area at a mix of densities and conditions. Older single-family homes exist along South Avenue, portions of 7th Avenue, and in the Commerce Park area. This is also the land use that defines the area immediately south of the study area. As mentioned previously, many new higher density housing developments have been built in the past ten years including Polar Ridge Senior Housing, Anchor View apartments, Gateway at McKnight townhomes, Suite Living senior and memory care, and Sentinel Apartments.

Zoning

The City of North St. Paul updated its zoning ordinance in 2016 to create mixed use districts. Figure 2 depicts the existing zoning within the study area.

The majority of the study area is zoned MU-3 Corridor Mixed use, which was established to “encourage the development or redevelopment of mixed-use centers that combine new or existing retail development with a variety of housing, offices, studios, live-work space, civic building, employment activities, research, limited industrial and other complementary uses which combine to create a lively environment.”

The traditional downtown area, 7th Avenue and Margaret Street, is zoned MU-1 Downtown Mixed Use which is intended “to sustain and enhance the viability of the downtown in terms of preserving its small-town and pedestrian-friendly atmosphere while encouraging development and redevelopment.” Buildings in the MU-1 district shall give due regard to the standards in the Downtown Design Manual.

The primary differentiator between the MU-1 and the MU-3 districts is that the MU-3 requires a minimum front yard setback of 25 feet, which creates a more suburban environment than the downtown area where buildings are not required to be setback from the property line.

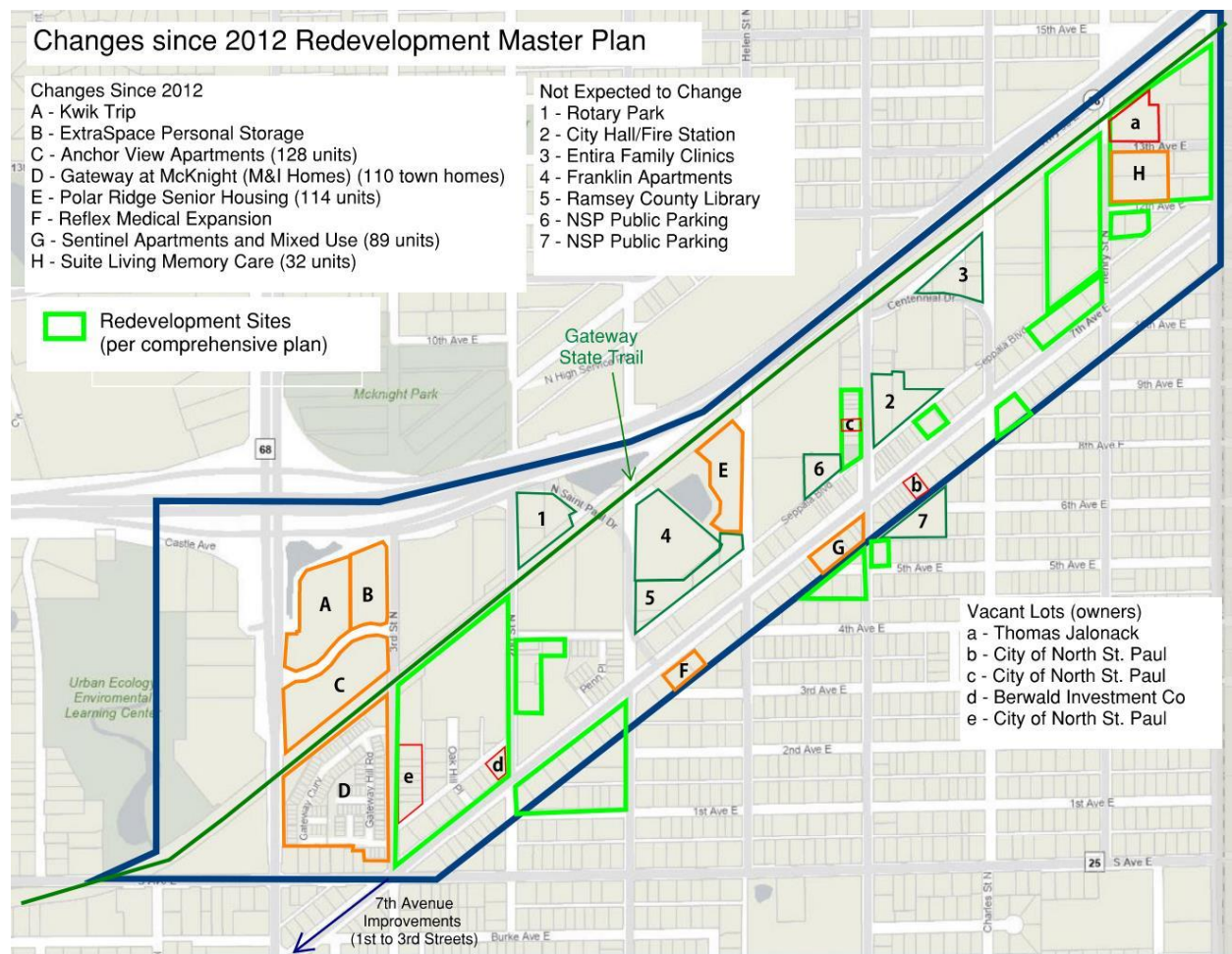
Redevelopment Sites

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan identified numerous sites in the study area as “likely to redevelop” based on the following three criteria:

- **Vacant land:** These areas were highlighted by participants in public engagement efforts as needing attention, revitalization, change, or intensification of uses.
- **Underutilized sites:** Some sites were identified as “under-utilized”, meaning that they have an excessive amount of parking that could be used for other uses, or there are vacant portions of a site that could be built out.
- **Areas with redevelopment potential:** These areas were highlighted by participants in public engagement efforts as needing attention, revitalization, change, or intensification of uses.

The redevelopment sites are depicted in the figure on the following page.

Figure 3: Redevelopment Sites *[Note – this is a placeholder for informational purposes.]*



Transportation

Highway 36 and the Study Area Roadway Network

Highway 36 at the north end of the study site functions as the regional connection for much of North St. Paul, as well as other suburbs such as Mahtomedi and Stillwater. South of Highway 36, 7th Avenue East serves as the “Main Street” for the city. Rather than follow the traditional grid along the cardinal directions, 7th Avenue mirrors the old railroad line that used to run through town at a diagonal, which creates some access and connectivity challenges for the area, such as a three-legged intersection at 7th Avenue/South Avenue E/3rd Street. The major roadways include McKnight Road on the west, Century Avenue/Division Street on the east, and South Avenue to the south. Seppala Boulevard is a unique street in that it provides loading and access to many of the buildings that front on 7th Avenue like an alley, but it also functions as a street. Streets continue to follow the north/south grid that defines much of the city, while many of the east/west avenues are halted before reaching 7th Avenue.

Margaret Street and 7th Avenue Improvements

In 2020, 7th Avenue underwent reconstruction from 3rd Street N to 1st Street N. Improvements included street reconstruction, concrete curb and gutter, sidewalks, medians, sanitary sewer rehabilitation, water main replacement, storm sewer improvements, street lighting, and street trees and landscaping.

Improvements to the Margaret Street and 7th Avenue area were completed in 2021 that included installation of new utilities (sanitary sewer, water main and storm sewer), concrete street surfacing, sidewalks, and a new traffic signal. Landscaping and streetscape amenities (i.e., street lighting, benches, street trees and a variety of plantings) will be installed in 2022.

Public Transit

Metro Transit serves as the main form of public transit in North St. Paul. Route 64 is an east-west route that connects the study area to downtown St. Paul and the Maplewood Transit Center. Route 219 runs north-south along Division Street. While no direct express options exist from the area, the Metropolitan Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan projects Highway 36 as a transitway with potential BRT/LRT/Commuter Rail service.

Gateway Trail

The Gateway Trail runs through North St. Paul and the study area connecting to St. Paul and Stillwater. In North Saint Paul, the trail follows the old railroad line. The North St. Paul Trailhead sits off 2nd Street and provides interpretive signage, temporary restrooms, and parking.

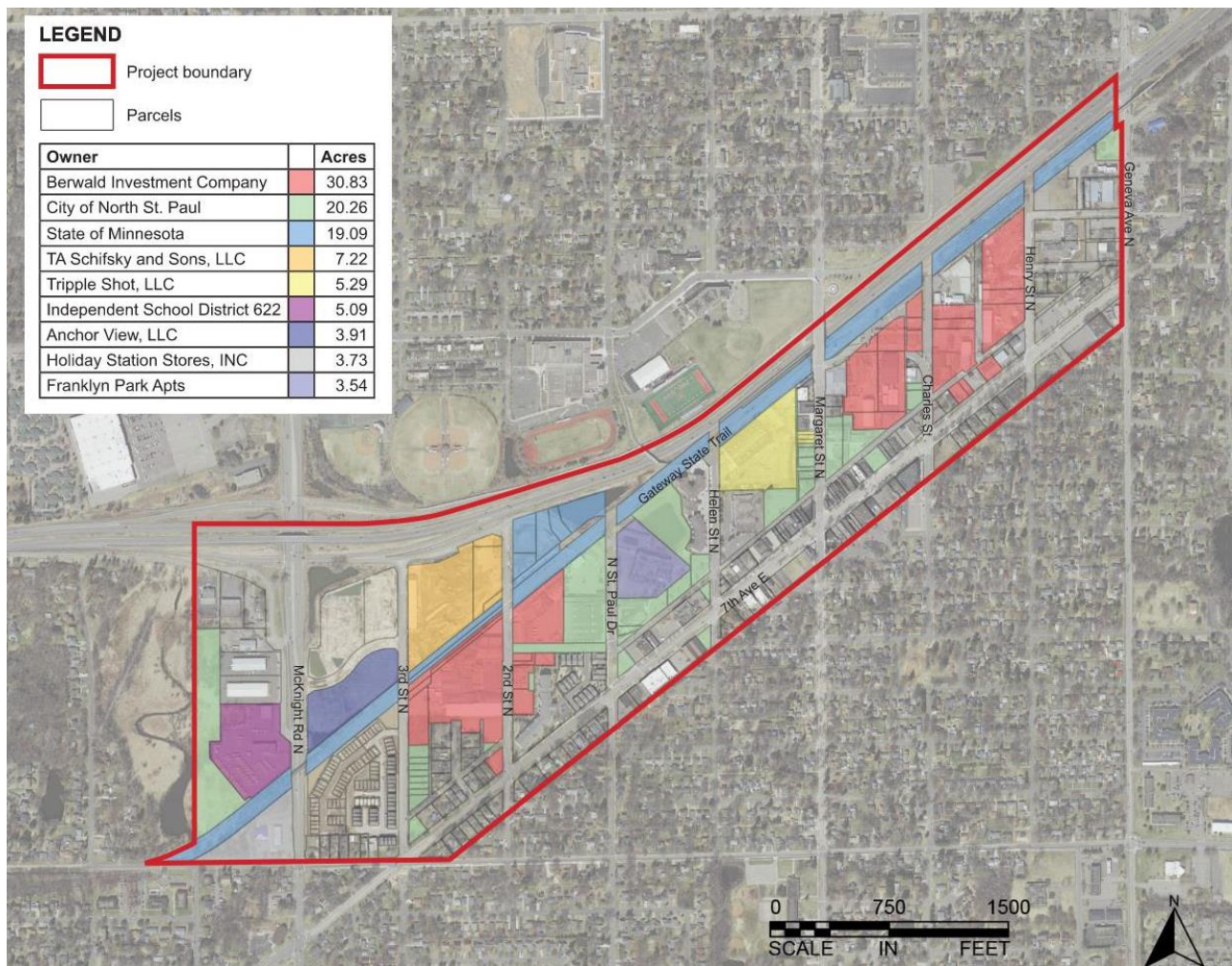
Market Summary

To be completed

Study Area Landowners

Major landowners are depicted in Figure 4, below. Berwald Investment Company owns the largest share of property within the study area at 30.83 acres. The City of North St. Paul presently holds 20.26 acres, and the State of Minnesota holds 19 acres primarily related to the Gateway State Trail. Most of the larger vacant parcels have been redeveloped since the 2012 plan; those that remain are of a smaller scale (1.5 to less than 1-acre) and scattered throughout the study area.

Figure 4: Major Landowners



Chapter 3: Vision and Guiding Principles

The Master Plan is dynamic. It is not a set of strict “rules” but instead, a flexible framework that guides decisions about redevelopment. The plan addresses both “public” infrastructure and “private” redevelopment initiatives. It supports and shapes regulations; it accommodates dreams and aspirations; it recognizes reality; it prioritizes projects and ideas; it holds the community accountable; it tells the North Saint Paul story; and it communicates what is desired. The plan is a valuable tool that is intended to be embraced and actively used by the community.

The vision for this project is drawn from past comprehensive planning and master planning efforts. It defines what the community is to become. It provides a basis and a framework from which the plan and supporting strategic actions can be identified. The vision suggests a way of thinking about possible directions for the community while a set of guiding principles helps establish a path that results in a plan that “fits” North St. Paul.

Guiding principles can be used on an ongoing basis as a yardstick - a primary filter for determining what is appropriate. Together with the vision statement, the guiding principles become the critical tools for ongoing measurement and assessment of initiatives and results.

Vision and Guiding Principles for North Saint Paul

What do they mean?

- They orient the community to the future, even to a future that is twenty years distant.
- They require imagination, recognizing that the direction it sets will be the reality of the future.
- They look to current conditions and community traditions for clues to the appropriate future.
- They are based on a shared understanding of what the community desires for itself.
- They will be used as tools for evaluation of proposals, projects, ideas, and future directions.
- They will be an anchor during conflict, a way of finding common ground and shared values.
- They become a basis for coordination and cooperation.
- They are a source of energy and enthusiasm for maintaining a commitment to the future of North Saint Paul.

Vision

We say North St. Paul is “An extraordinary small town in the cities!”

Identity

We are a town of 3.1 square miles with a six block long Main Street. A small industrial village turned first-ring suburb, we embrace our small-town feel but also recognize we are part of a larger region. With 125 years of history, we are a tight-knit community with bonds to our town, our neighbors, and our shared past. But we are also a town that looks to the future, embracing technology and seeking new ways to capture the next wave of innovation and ingenuity to propel our community forward.

Image

Our community has the appearance and feel of a small town as evident in the architectural character of our main street, our safe and peaceful neighborhoods, our appreciation for parks and open space, and our thriving community events. Although we seek to become more “urban” by investing in progressive

infrastructure improvements and more compact development, we will strive to preserve our small-town atmosphere by ensuring that future projects adhere to our design standards and aesthetic character.

Enduring

We are a town in which quality development contributes to a lasting quality environment. The proper density and mix of development helps build and, more importantly, sustain our public infrastructure system, community facilities, and public spaces. Development projects are planned and constructed in a manner that lasts over time, using quality building materials and innovative site design. Our development is not overly dependent on any single economic sector or type of energy resource so that we endure both physical and economic challenges.

Quality of Life

With an abundance of city parks, schools, churches, a quaint downtown district, and peaceful neighborhoods, North St. Paul is a town with a great quality of life. We are connected to a thriving metropolitan region, and we appreciate how this enhances our residents' access to a diversity of jobs, cultural and recreational opportunities, quality health care, and higher education opportunities. However, looking to the future, it is important for North Saint Paul to offer this same diversity closer to home. We must be forward-thinking about our land use and continue to explore new ways to transform uses that have moved on or that could better contribute to realizing our vision.

Guiding Principles

- Create coordinated and harmonious development of functionally related uses including high density residential, office, commercial, entertainment / recreation, quality industrial and public facilities.
- Redevelopment should endeavor to be cohesive with quality design and minimize adverse effects to neighboring uses.
- Provide adequate provisions for open space.
- Develop a diverse transportation network that supports transit, creates strong pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- Enhance and improve the image of the City in Downtown, along the Highway 36 Corridor and within the residential neighborhoods.
- Possess a progressive image for redevelopment while maintaining a sense of the community heritage.
- Consider new forms of housing such as condominiums, senior housing, townhomes, villas and live / work.
- Grow the community's tax base.
- Integrate public art as appropriate throughout the downtown study area.
- Concentrate development on 7th Avenue between 1st Street and Division Street and compress commercial / retail development near the intersection of 7th Avenue and Margret Street.
- Utilize financial incentives to maintain downtown's viability, such as a revolving loan fund, special service districts and other economic incentives.
- Transform Seppala Street to a functionally and aesthetically pleasing "business lane" to accommodate loading and service needs and secondary pedestrian circulation.
- Maintain and upgrade infrastructure in the Downtown (roads, walks, utilities, streetscape, and public realm enhancements.)
- Create new landmarks and gateways to better signal the arrival into downtown.

- Redevelopment along the Highway 36 corridor should include a mix of uses rooted in today's market reality.

[Note: those that are highlighted would be better placed in the implementation section, rather than in the guiding principle list.]

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Chapter 1: Project Background

Purpose Introduction

Livable Community

In 2011 the City of North Saint Paul applied for a grant to the Metropolitan Council through the Livable Communities program. This grant program is designed to help cities with pre-planning activities that remove barriers and position redevelopment projects for implementation. The grant application highlighted the importance of master planning to identify ways to improve the connection between potential redevelopment sites, downtown North Saint Paul, the Gateway Trail, regional transit systems and community facilities. Upon completion of the planning process, key redevelopment sites will be identified, studied, and better positioned for implementation.

Throughout the planning process, the goals of the Livable Communities Act have been considered and integrated into the Final plan. The City recognizes the shared goals of the program with the City's own vision for the area.

Originally drafted in 2012, the initial Redevelopment Master Plan was prepared as a joint effort by the City of North St. Paul and the Economic Development Authority (EDA). The project was funded through the Metropolitan Council's Livable Communities program to identify barriers to redevelopment and position projects within the downtown area for implementation. The 2012 plan focused on the downtown area, which is the traditional commercial hub of North St. Paul. It identified key redevelopment sites and focused on improving connectivity between those sites, the Gateway Trail, and regional transit systems and community facilities. Many projects and initiatives have been completed under the guidance of the 2012 plan; however, many more revitalization opportunities exist. Thus, in summer 2021, the EDA and Planning Commission determined that an update to the Redevelopment Master Plan would be prudent to ensure that previously expressed goals and objectives are still applicable ten years later and to identify areas for continued investment.

Project Approach

Revitalization

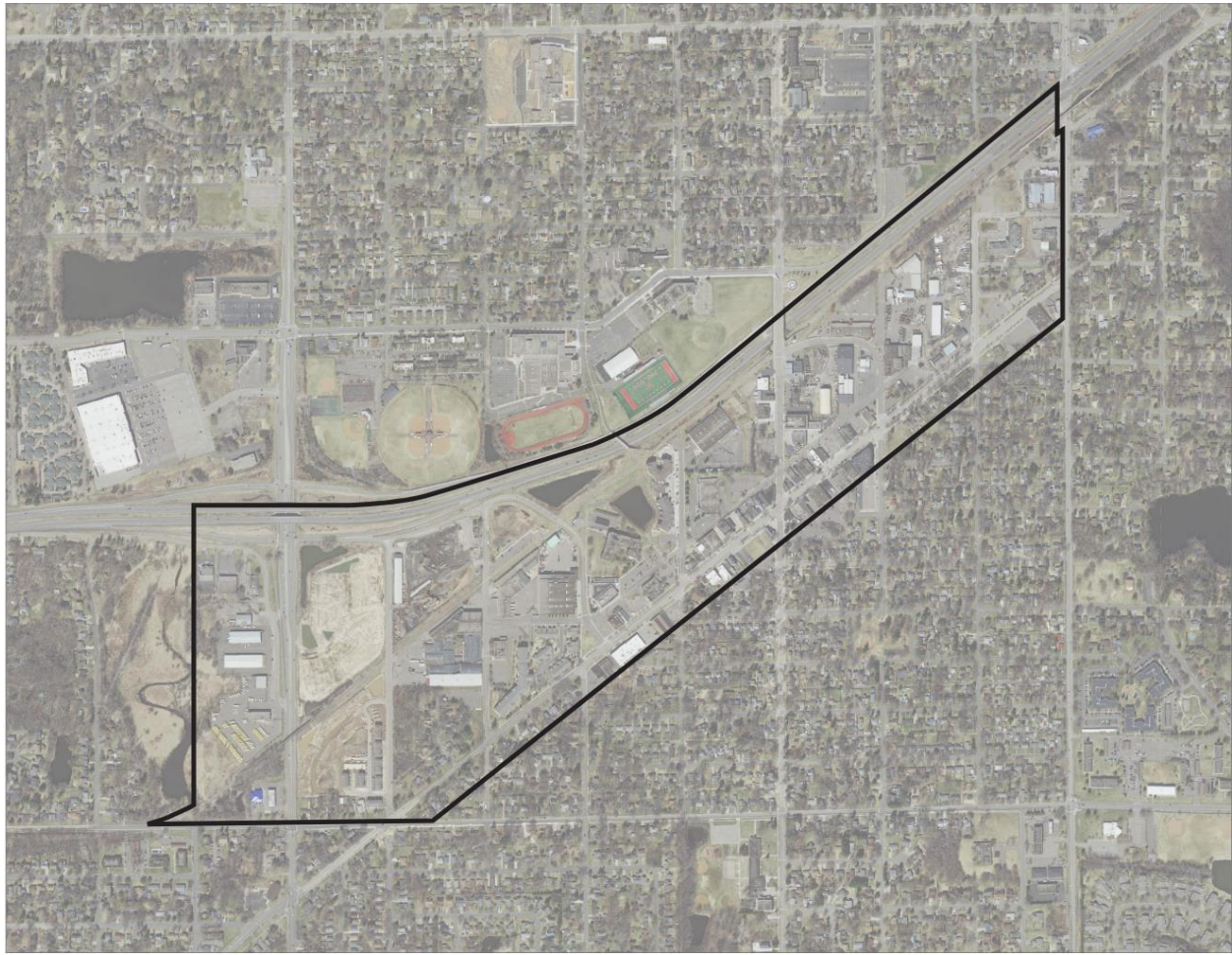
This plan is ~~also~~ about revitalizing the traditional commercial hub of North St. Paul. As a fully built out city, The city is fully built out and the revitalization the focus of this document is on ~~the~~ redevelopment and reuse of land in the city's core. Revitalization can encourage denser development; ~~it, but~~ also requires creativity to fit new pieces into the existing fabric of the community. This plan will explore priority areas for reinvestment, both public and private.

The planning process for the 10-year update was led by a task force with representatives from City Council, Planning Commission, and the Economic Development Authority. This group evaluated the successes that have occurred since 2012 and noted inconsistencies between the 2012 plan and activities that have taken place. The task force took a fresh look at the downtown area and identified potential priority areas for reinvestment, both public and private, considered which land uses are appropriate within the study area, and identified opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian connections. The task force engaged residents, businesses, and property owners to ensure the plan update is in alignment with the local mindset. This plan is intended to demonstrate the vision for the area to residents, businesses, and developers and can assist in catalyzing reinvestment.

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Figure 1: Study Area



Historical Context

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One of the benefits and challenges facing the study area is its historical context in the Twin Cities metro. North St. Paul originally developed as a distinct and separate community from Minneapolis/St. Paul. Dissimilar to other Twin Cities neighbors, when the metropolitan area grew, communities like

Maplewood and Oakdale developed as suburbs with auto-oriented character. Retail centers developed around high traffic corridors in high visibility areas, which competed with North St. Paul's historic downtown. However, development trends and desires have shifted away from cookie-cutter and toward authenticity; the historic character, diagonal streets, and greenway connection with the Gateway State Trail make this downtown a unique destination for those seeking a non-suburban environment.

[Call out box]

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Changing Conditions

~~Part of the challenge facing the area is the changing regional context that surrounds North St. Paul. The city originally developed as a small railroad town. As the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metropolitan region grew, suburbs such as Maplewood and Oakdale developed with more of a suburban character. Development in these cities was oriented around the automobile. Retail centers developed around high traffic corridors in high visibility areas, competing with North Saint Paul's downtown.~~

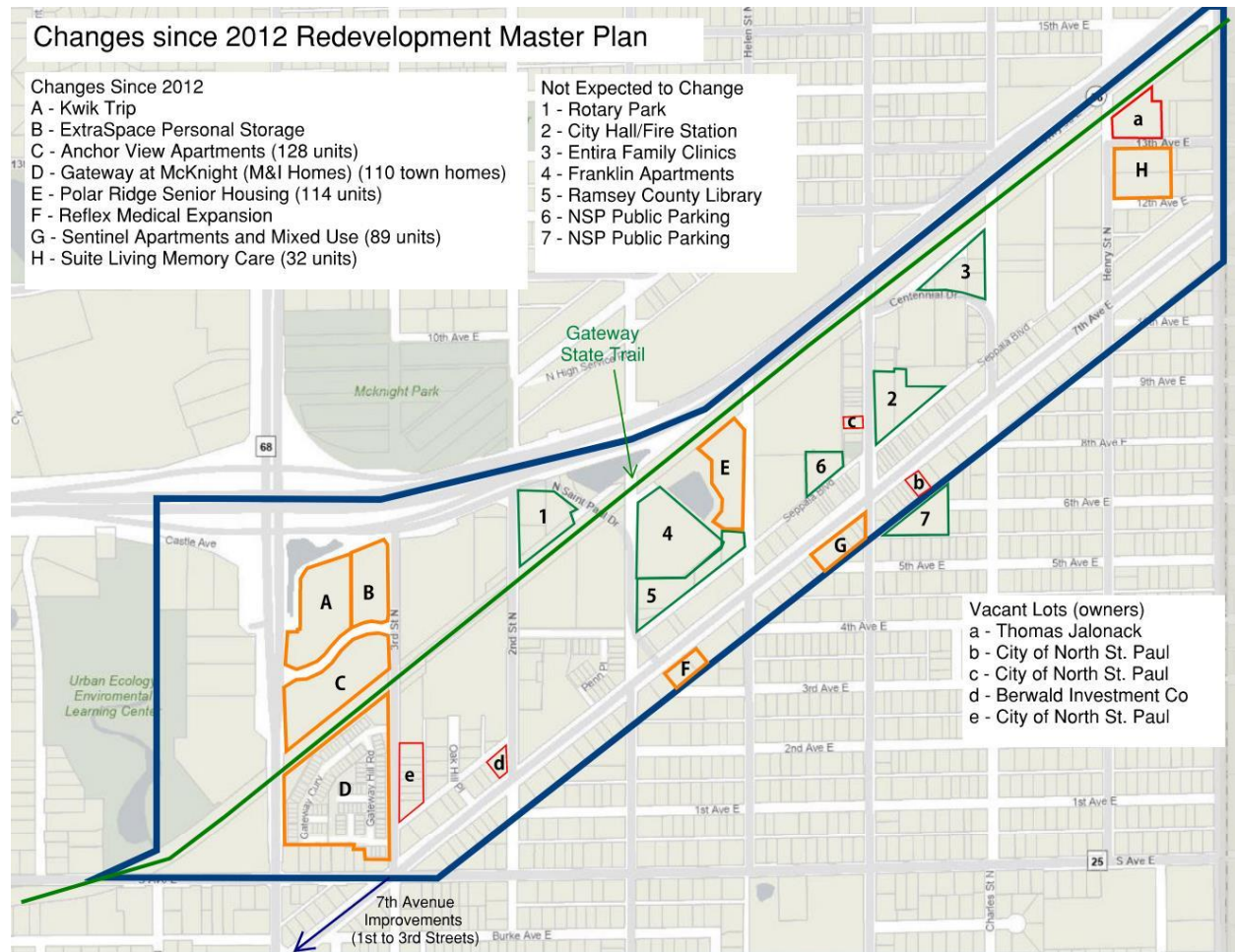
~~Not all changes have been challenges for North St. Paul, however. Increased interest in bicycling and active living are bringing new visitors to North St. Paul through the Gateway Trail Corridor. The city has also put significant investments into downtown, with the new City Hall, the Police and Fire Station, and adjacent streetscaping enhancements along Margaret Street. These public investments create opportunities to leverage private development and attract new investment to North St. Paul.~~

Significant investment has occurred in the downtown since the 2012 plan was adopted. Polar Ridge senior living facility was completed in 2015. The facility has 39 units of senior independent living, 54 units of senior assisted living and 21 units of memory care. The site formerly known as Anchor Block has redeveloped into Anchor Commons with Kwik Trip, Extra Space Storage, and Anchor View Apartments. The combined taxable value of these improvements is \$33.5 million. In 2021, M&I Homes completed construction of Gateway at McKnight, a 100-unit townhome neighborhood with direct access to the Gateway Trail and walking distance to downtown amenities. Most recently, the three-story Sentinel Building has been constructed on the former City Hall site and adjoining parcels. This 89-unit, market-rate apartment building includes a 3,000 square foot mixed-use space at the corner of 7th Avenue and Margaret Street. Suite Living senior facility opened in 2020 with 18-units of senior assisted living and 14-units of memory care. The facility is located on the site formally occupied by the ISD 622 bus garage. This project was made possible by a \$700,000 environmental remediation grant through Ramsey County.

In addition, Reflex medical expanded their facility and countless new tenants have opened on main street (7th Avenue). Streetscape improvements have occurred along 7th Avenue to the southwest of the study area; similar improvements are anticipated to continue to the northeast within the study area. Additionally, the city updated its comprehensive plan in 2019 and overhauled the zoning ordinance in 2014.

[Note – this figure is a placeholder]

Figure 2: Redevelopment Activities Since 2012



Approach

The approach to this plan followed an established series of tasks that have yielded positive results in similar redevelopment planning efforts.

- Organize the Effort
- Define the Context
- Understand What is Desired
- Explore the Possibilities
- Prepare the Master Plan
- Agree to Move Forward

This approach works, using analysis to generate alternative options. Those alternates are honed to create a single plan that is further developed and refined. Finally, direction is given to begin implementing the plan.

Multi-disciplinary approach

The study area is a complex set of sites, each with their own individual characteristics and potential. In order to understand and address the many moving parts of the area, a multi-disciplinary approach was necessary. The planning process included a team of professionals from a wide range of disciplines. Planners understand the regulations and help define the vision and goals of the process. Landscape architects contributed urban design work and principles, developing and translating the vision into site design. Market research consultants provided insight into the current market conditions, emphasizing what developments are feasible. Engineers assisted in measurement and design of the infrastructure, especially focusing in places where existing infrastructure inhibits redevelopment possibilities because of access or capacity limitations. Finally public finance experts clarified the options for funding these improvements.

Issues and Opportunities Context Report

The first step in the process was to analyze the existing conditions. Understanding the current status of the district helps to inform the rest of planning process. By recognizing the issues, we can identify and prioritize necessary actions taken by the plan. The analysis also provided insight into the opportunities for redevelopment. We begin to get a clearer picture of where immediate efforts should be focused in order to leverage those initial investments into longer term, sustained transformation.

Planning and Regulatory Framework Prior Plans

In addition to being a stand-alone document, this plan builds on the foundation of other local planning efforts and must recognize regulatory constraints. The following is a brief summary of planning and regulatory documents that relate to the study area.

North Saint Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan sets city-wide goals and policies. It was developed with community feedback in mind. Guiding factors of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan as it relates to this Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan include the following.

- Improve/revitalize the downtown, including mixed-use development.
- Build more housing in and near downtown, within walking distance of businesses.
- Locate support services near senior and lower income housing.
- Create public gathering spaces into new development opportunities as they arise.
- Connect commercial and employment centers to amenities and residential areas.
- Provide the necessary infrastructure to retain and attract businesses, such as parking, technology, and multimodal facilities.

North St. Paul Strategic Plan

In 2013, the city engaged in a strategic planning effort that developed organizational goals and a clear and strategic direction for the community. The plan is grounded in the following major themes:

- Promote community stewardship through an involved and informed citizenry.
- Preserve neighborhood value with diverse and maintained housing and active neighbors.
- Creative placemaking that fosters an environment of economic and employment opportunity.
- Build transportation systems that connect people to places and promote active lifestyles.
- Provide innovative and high-quality customer service with a personal touch.

- Integrate collaborative thinking and personal values to employ a productive and pioneering workforce.

~~In 2008, the City completed a comprehensive plan for 2008-2030. The plan outlines directions and policies to guide North Saint Paul toward the community's vision. One of the key directives is derived from the city's vision: "An extraordinary small town in the cities." North Saint Paul is a place where people can live, work, shop and recreate; "an extraordinary small town." North Saint Paul is also part of a larger metropolitan area, connected to a number of communities by the Gateway Trail and Highway 36, drawing visitors from all over for car shows and museum tours, and providing a quality home for businesses and residents that rely on the greater region, thus "in the cities."~~

Diversified District Plan

~~As part of the Comprehensive Plan, the City updated~~The study area lies within the Diversified District Guide Plan, which is located between Highway 36 and 7th Avenue E, between McKnight Road and Century Avenue/Division Street. ~~The~~ Diversified District is intended to encourage more intense, mixed land uses and facilitate high quality redevelopment. Redevelopment in this e-Diversified District ~~area~~ should elevate both the tax base and ~~the~~ identity of North ~~St. Paul~~ Paul.

Design Manual – Downtown North St. Paul

The downtown design manual was developed to illustrate portions of the North St. Paul city code to depict the desired built environment within the downtown district.

Living Streets Plan

The 2011 Living Streets Plan was a partnership between the City of North St. Paul and the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District (RWMWD). This plan details the water-quality issues facing North St. Paul and how they can be alleviated with implementation of stormwater best management practices that are an integral component of living streets. This plan recommends specific features for living street design solutions based on street classification. For example, residential streets, which is the most prevalent street type in North St. Paul, could include street trees, raingardens, sidewalks, curb/gutter, public art/artful design.

Margaret and 1st Street are designate as north/south collector streets that because of their status as either a state or state aid road, they must adhere to Ramsey County and MnDOT design standards. Design features for these should include street trees, rain gardens, bike lanes on both sides of the street, sidewalks on at least one side of the street, parking where needed by adjacent property owners (otherwise no on-street parking), two 10-foot driving lanes.

South Avenue is an east/west arterial/collector street, which is a higher-traffic street that connects North St. Paul to schools, commercial districts, and adjacent cities. Design features on this street should include street trees, raingardens, bike lanes on both sides of the street, sidewalks on one side of the street, parking on one side of the street, and two 10-footdriving lanes.

Helen Street is designated as a parkway that is intended to function as a green spine to safely link walkers and bikers to primary destinations within the community (schools, parks, and the downtown). The parkway will include the same design features as the collectors, but it will be inherently quieter because it runs through residential neighborhoods.

Note that this plan does not address 7th Avenue because of its unique challenges as the main downtown street. It is covered in the 7th Avenue North St. Paul Urban Design, described below.

[Note – the master plan map will include locations of proposed bike lanes and sidewalks per this Living Streets document.]

7th Avenue North St. Paul Urban Design: Downtown Revitalization Plan

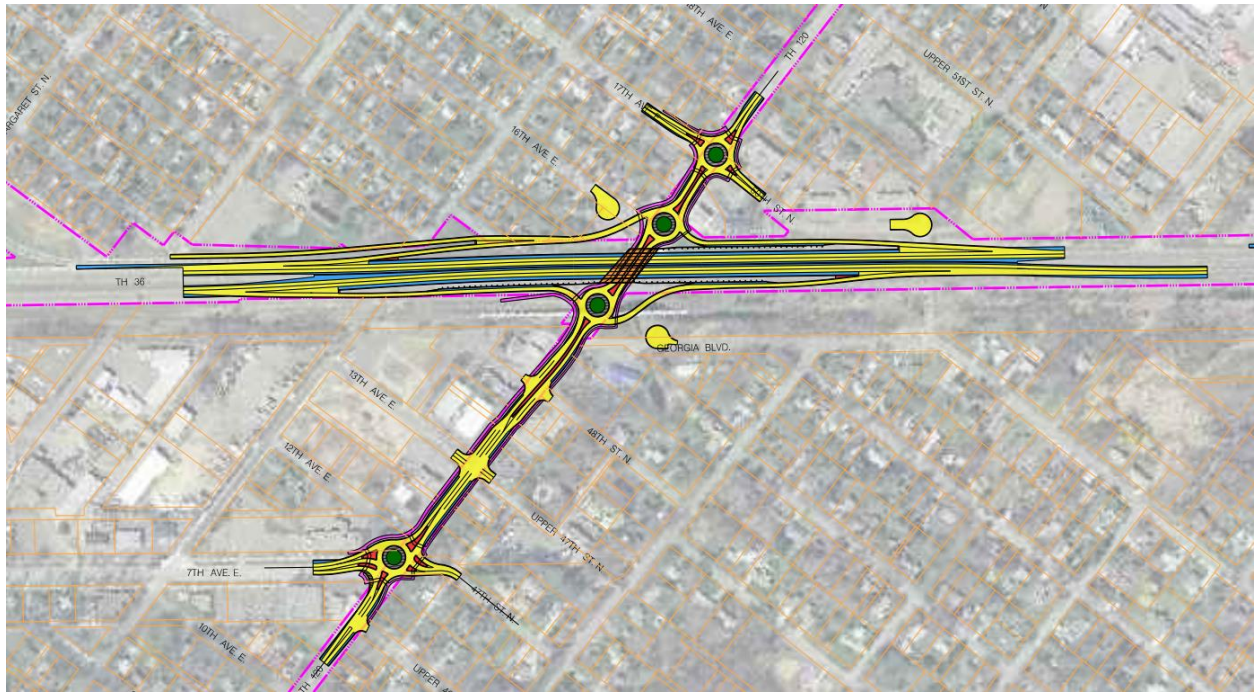
This plan to establish the visual quality and design preferences for the reconstruction of 7th Avenue, from McKnight Road to Division Street. The plan also includes a segment of Margret Street, extending from the 7th Avenue intersection to the south edge of the bridge going over Highway 36. The planned project includes approximately 1.5 miles roadway within the city limits of North St. Paul, including the two blocks that make up North St. Paul’s historic downtown. This plan focuses on the aesthetics of the new roadway.

MnDOT Highway 36 Corridor Study

Part of the vision discusses balancing development and land uses along McKnight Road and Century Avenue/Division Street while retaining the strong Main Street character along 7th Avenue. The illustrative master plan envisioned large scale office development on the western third of the district and a hotel/entertainment focused area as a gateway from Division and Highway 36, both of which are not feasible in the marketplace today. Residential densities are planned to increase and develop west of McKnight and retained in existing locations. e plan includes placemaking principles, considering views from offices and homes, building plazas, and developing stormwater management as an amenity.

This 2014 study was developed to address safety and mobility issues along Highway 36, with a focus on the segment between Highway 120/Century Avenue and Hadley Avenue. This segment of Highway 36 contains the only remaining at-grade intersections west of I-694. The study identified major interchange improvement projects at both interchanges. The preferred design concept at the Highway 36 and Century Avenue interchange includes an overpass at Century (Highway 36 underneath) with roundabouts at the on/off ramps. Additional roundabouts will be located the 7th Avenue E. and 17th Avenue E. intersections Century Avenue. Construction on the Hadley interchange commenced in 2019. The Century Avenue interchange is not currently funded, but completion of this interchange project is anticipated in the future.

[Note – this is a placeholder for informational purposes. The proposed design for this interchange will be included in the master plan map.]



Other plans

The 2012 planning effort reviewed the following additional ~~Numerous other~~ plans, studies, and design guidelines ~~and incorporated into the original redevelopment plan.~~ ~~addressing the project area, either in part or as a whole, include:~~

- North Brook Redevelopment Study (2011)
- North Brook Redevelopment Feasibility Plan (2012)
- Living Streets Plan (2011)
- Draft Bicycle and Sidewalk Plan (2011)
- Downtown North Saint Paul Housing Study (2011)
- Downtown Design Manual (2005)
- Numerous Commerce Park Redevelopment Plans (2010, 2011, 2011)
- Metropolitan Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan
- MNDOT Metro District and Statewide 20 Year Highway Investment Plans

- MNDOT Highway 36/Division Interchange Study (estimated 2013)

These documents have been studied and incorporated into the North Saint Paul Redevelopment Master Plan. (More detailed summary of the plans can be found in the Context Report in the Appendix). Currently, MNDOT's Highway 36/Division Interchange Study is looking at the interchange between Highway 36 and Division/Century. It has not been completed but will have significant effects on the northeast portion of the study area. When the study is completed, the Redevelopment Master Plan may need to adapt in this area based on the transportation recommendations.

Identifying Redevelopment Opportunities

In addition to examining previous planning efforts, it was necessary to evaluate property within the area for redevelopment potential. Moving forward on a 20-year plan can appear daunting without a place to start. By finding the "low hanging fruit" it was possible to identify locations that make sense as starting points.

Part of the process for identifying priority sites (Figure 1.1) was an attribute-based evaluation of the properties within the study area. By assigning points based on characteristics of all the parcels, the consultant team was able to get an initial view of where to focus redevelopment efforts. ese characteristics included vacancy, age, land and building values, land use, size, ownership, location, and visibility. is evaluation produced an initial framework (seen at right) to begin identifying redevelopment parcels.

Because the model could not take every variable into account, and because different redevelopment types have different needs, further analysis was conducted on a case-by-case basis, examining the physical characteristics, market realities, and other redevelopment demands of individual and combined sites.

Adjacencies

One of the issues that became immediately clear regarding potential redevelopment, was the need to understand the relationships between proposed redevelopment projects and existing land use adjacencies. Because of the externalities associated with some of the industrial land uses (noise, truck trac, appearance), other uses such as residential or office are less likely to develop until mitigation measures (buffering, rerouting of truck trac) are in place or a change in land use occurs. These adjacencies were examined as part of the master planning effort, and the phasing strategy in the implementation chapter reflects these relationships in the context of redevelopment timing.

Identifying Immediate Projects - Catalysts

Currently the City of North St. Paul has numerous land holdings (Figure 1.2) in the study area, which combined with the Anchor Block site present opportunities for immediate redevelopment in the study area. Publicly owned and already cleaned land shall be leveraged to showcase desired development and to create momentum for subsequent phases of development.

Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

History

In the mid-1880s, with St. Paul booming as a railroad hub, Henry Castle recognized the opportunities for a manufacturing town to capitalize on the increasing national rail-based trade occurring in the area. He purchased and developed land south and east of Silver Lake, including land around the newly laid Wisconsin Central Railway Line (in the same location as Highway 36 today). Castle and others worked to recruit industry to the new town and succeeded in bringing in manufacturers along the rail line. Some of the first industries included furniture manufacturers, farm implement fabricators, and brick makers. In conjunction with industrial expansion, a number of residential lots were platted and built, with new residents attracted by the offerings of factory jobs.

Throughout a number of ups and downs in the first half of the 20th century, North Saint Paul continued to grow with manufacturing and industry at its base. Starting in the 1930s although not completed until 1955, Highway 36 was built alongside the rail line, connecting North Saint Paul to Minneapolis by highway, with a pedestrian overpass at Margaret Street. During the post-war era, the expansion of the highway system allowed many suburban communities to grow. While North Saint Paul expanded, so did neighboring communities such as Maplewood. At the same time, industrial activity declined in the area, with few of the original factories remaining. As early as the 1950s and 60s, efforts to promote and pursue manufacturing and commercial activity were in place. T. A. Schifsky and Sons started in 1959 and the city improved the downtown commercial area. This time period represented a shift towards a city that was part of a regional system of economics, social activity, and transportation. While this transition created challenges, it allowed the city to distinguish itself as a great place to live in the region.

In 1972 the city decided to build the iconic snowman that sits along Margaret Street. Created by resident Lloyd Koesling, the sculpture recalls the Snow Frolics celebrations where the North Saint Paul Jaycees would build a large snowman downtown. The snowman was adopted as the city logo and the sculpture serves as a welcome to North Saint Paul.

Land Use

The study area ~~as it sits today~~ contains a mix of very different land uses, ranging from high density residential to a heavy industry asphalt and recycling plant. Some of the mixes work well together, such as offices and retail, while the combinations of others create significant conflict.

Civic/Institutional

The downtown ~~district~~ is the civic center for the City of North St. Paul. Over the past 20+ years, many significant public investments have occurred within the downtown, including a gone-into-the-new City Hall building and the fire and police station along Margaret Street. Other civic uses include a community center. The library is integrated with a civic building at Seppala and North St. Paul Drive, and the U.S. Post Office is in the downtown along 7th Avenue, e. Beyond the government buildings, the North Star Museum of Boy Scouting and Girl Scouting, American Legion, and the North St. Paul Historical Society Museum both sit along the south side of 7th Avenue on either side of Henry Street. North High School lies is just north of the study area across Highway 36 and the school district operates bussing from a new facility next to the North ~~St. Paul~~ Paul Urban Ecology Center.

Commercial

The majority of commercial uses in the study area are situated downtown on 7th Avenue between 1st Street and Division Street as well as Margaret Street between 7th Avenue and Highway 36. Most of the stores are independent retailers, providing a mix of services ranging from restaurant and bars to auto parts and services to antiques. The district has also built up a base of health care providers including medical doctors, physical therapy, dentistry, psychology, and chiropractic professionals. Other professional offices exist throughout the neighborhood, including the newer three-story Gervais Jarvis Court Building on the south side of 7th Ave at Charles Street. It is also worth noting that Target anchors a retail area northwest of Highway 36 and McKnight interchange.

Industrial

Light and heavy industrial uses are situated between Highway 36 and Seppala Boulevard. This area still retains some of the industrial character established by the railroad focused businesses in the late 19th Centurycentury. The uses vary greatly and include, from high tech light industrial such as Aetrium semiconductor manufacturing, to T.A. Schifsky & Sons' asphalt and recycling plant, Sheltertech Corporation, Anderson Cabinet, Inc., to Berwald Roofing & Sheet Metal.

Residential

Residential uses are located throughout the study area at a~~exist with a~~ mix of densities and conditions. Older single-family homes exist along South Avenue, portions of 7th Avenue, and in the Commerce Park area. This is also the land use that defines the area immediately south of the study area. As mentioned previously, many new higher density housing developments have been built in the past ten years including Polar Ridge Senior Housing, Anchor View apartments, Gateway at McKnight townhomes, Suite Living senior and memory care, and Sentinel Apartments.

~~Zoning Newer townhomes and high density housing have been built between 2nd Street and Helen Street, and a new senior housing development is planned to be constructed along Helen Street in 2013.~~

The City of North St. Paul updated its zoning ordinance in 2016 to create mixed use districts. Figure 2 depicts the existing zoning within the study area.

The majority of the study area is zoned MU-3 Corridor Mixed use, which was established to “encourage the development or redevelopment of mixed-use centers that combine new or existing retail development with a variety of housing, offices, studios, live-work space, civic building, employment activities, research, limited industrial and other complementary uses which combine to create a lively environment.”

The traditional downtown area, 7th Avenue and Margaret Street, is zoned MU-1 Downtown Mixed Use which is intended “to sustain and enhance the viability of the downtown in terms of preserving its small-town and pedestrian-friendly atmosphere while encouraging development and redevelopment.” Buildings in the MU-1 district shall give due regard to the standards in the Downtown Design Manual.

The primary differentiator between the MU-1 and the MU-3 districts is that the MU-3 requires a minimum front yard setback of 25 feet, which creates a more suburban environment than the downtown area where buildings are not required to be setback from the property line. ↴

Vacant

Some of the redevelopment opportunities are on land that is already vacant. This land exists throughout the study area, but key vacant sites include the Anchor Block property, Commerce Park property and the former location of City Hall. All three are in various stages of development. All are cleared, graded, and have access to utilities.

Redevelopment Sites

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan identified numerous sites in the study area as “likely to redevelop” based on the following three criteria:

- **Vacant land:** These areas were highlighted by participants in public engagement efforts as needing attention, revitalization, change, or intensification of uses.
- **Underutilized sites:** Some sites were identified as “under-utilized”, meaning that they have an excessive amount of parking that could be used for other uses, or there are vacant portions of a site that could be built out.
- **Areas with redevelopment potential:** These areas were highlighted by participants in public engagement efforts as needing attention, revitalization, change, or intensification of uses.

The redevelopment sites are depicted in the figure on the following page.

Figure 3: Redevelopment Sites [Note – this is a placeholder for informational purposes.]

~~3 Redevelopment Areas~~

Changes since 2012 Redevelopment Master Plan

Changes Since 2012

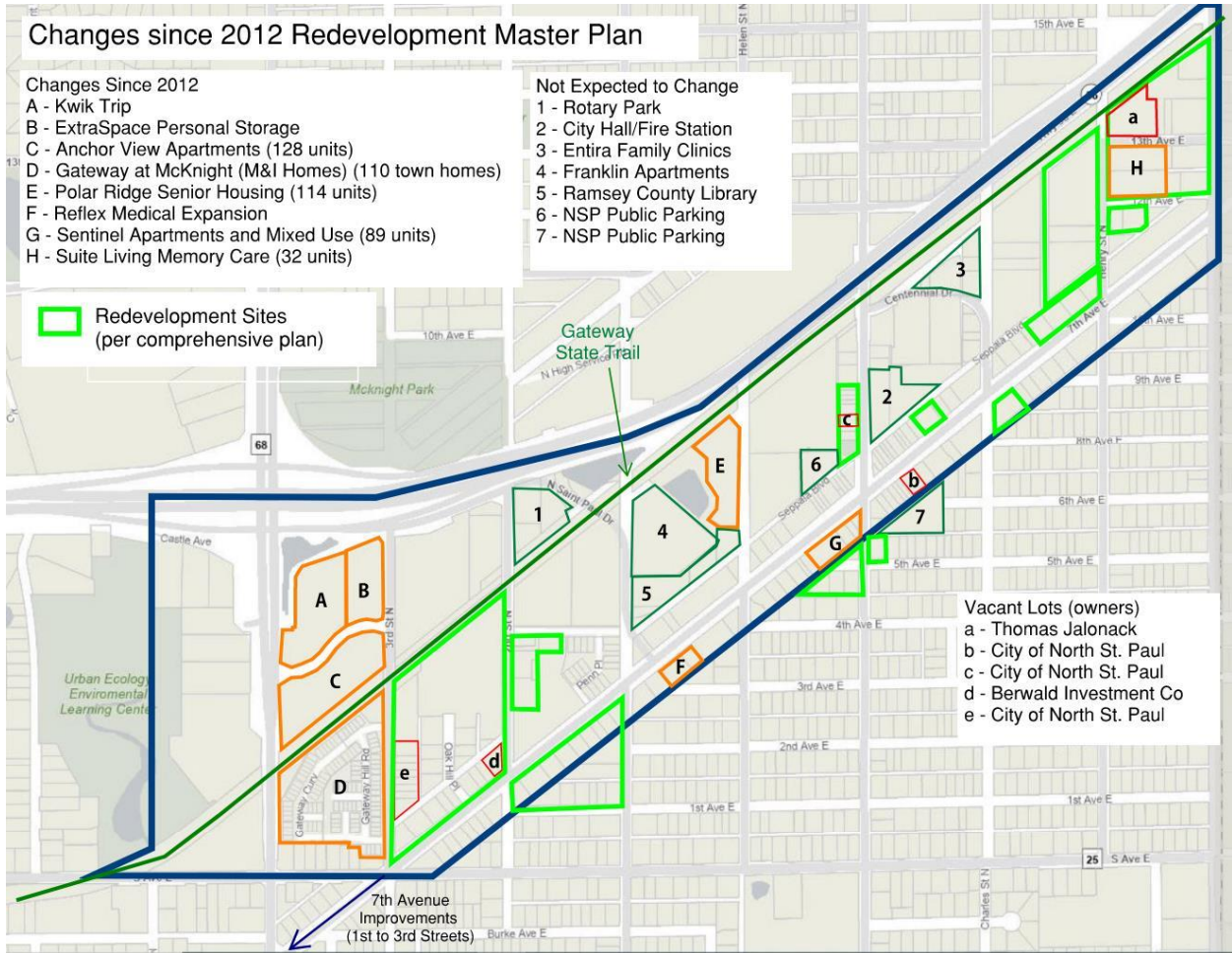
- A - Kwik Trip
- B - ExtraSpace Personal Storage
- C - Anchor View Apartments (128 units)
- D - Gateway at McKnight (M&I Homes) (110 town homes)
- E - Polar Ridge Senior Housing (114 units)
- F - Reflex Medical Expansion
- G - Sentinel Apartments and Mixed Use (89 units)
- H - Suite Living Memory Care (32 units)

Not Expected to Change

- 1 - Rotary Park
- 2 - City Hall/Fire Station
- 3 - Entira Family Clinics
- 4 - Franklin Apartments
- 5 - Ramsey County Library
- 6 - NSP Public Parking
- 7 - NSP Public Parking

Redevelopment Sites
(per comprehensive plan)

Gateway State Trail



Vacant Lots (owners)
 a - Thomas Jalonack
 b - City of North St. Paul
 c - City of North St. Paul
 d - Berwald Investment Co
 e - City of North St. Paul

7th Avenue Improvements
(1st to 3rd Streets)

Transportation

Highway 36 and ~~The~~the Study Area Roadway Network

Highway 36 at the north end of the study site functions as the regional connection for much of North St. Paul, as well as other suburbs such as Mahtomedi and Stillwater. South of Highway 36, 7th Avenue East serves as the “Main Street” for the city. Rather than follow the traditional grid along the cardinal directions, 7th Avenue mirrors the old railroad line that used to run through town at a diagonal, which creates some access and connectivity challenges for the area, such as a three-legged intersection at 7th Avenue/South Avenue E/3rd Street. The major roadways include McKnight Road on the west, Century Avenue/Division Street on the east, and South Avenue to the south. Seppala Boulevard is a unique street in that it provides loading and access to many of the buildings that front on 7th Avenue like an alley, but it also functions as a street. Streets continue to follow the north/south grid that defines much of the city, while many of the east/west avenues are halted before reaching 7th Avenue.

Margaret Street and 7th Avenue Improvements

In 2020, 7th Avenue underwent reconstruction from 3rd Street N to 1st Street N. Improvements included street reconstruction, concrete curb and gutter, sidewalks, medians, sanitary sewer rehabilitation, water main replacement, storm sewer improvements, street lighting, and street trees and landscaping.

Improvements to the Margaret Street and 7th Avenue area were completed in 2021 that included installation of new utilities (sanitary sewer, water main and storm sewer), concrete street surfacing, sidewalks, and a new traffic signal. Landscaping and streetscape amenities (i.e., street lighting, benches, street trees and a variety of plantings) will be installed in 2022.

Public Transit

Metro Transit serves as the main form of public transit in North St. Paul. Route 64 is an east-west route that connects the study area to downtown St. Paul and the Maplewood Transit Center. Route 219 runs north-south along Division Street. ~~Public transit options exist in North St. Paul. Route 64 runs from downtown St. Paul to the Maplewood Mall, running through North St. Paul along East 7th Avenue and Margaret Street. Route 219 travels from the Sun Ray Mall and I 94 to Century College and Maplewood Mall, stopping along East 7th Avenue.~~ While no direct express options exist from the area, the Metropolitan Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan projects Highway 36 as a transitway with potential BRT/LRT/Commuter Rail service.

Gateway Trail

The Gateway Trail runs through North St. Paul and the study area connecting to St. Paul and Stillwater. In North Saint Paul, the trail follows the old railroad line. The North St. Paul Trailhead sits off ~~of~~ 2nd Street and provides interpretive signage, temporary restrooms, and parking.

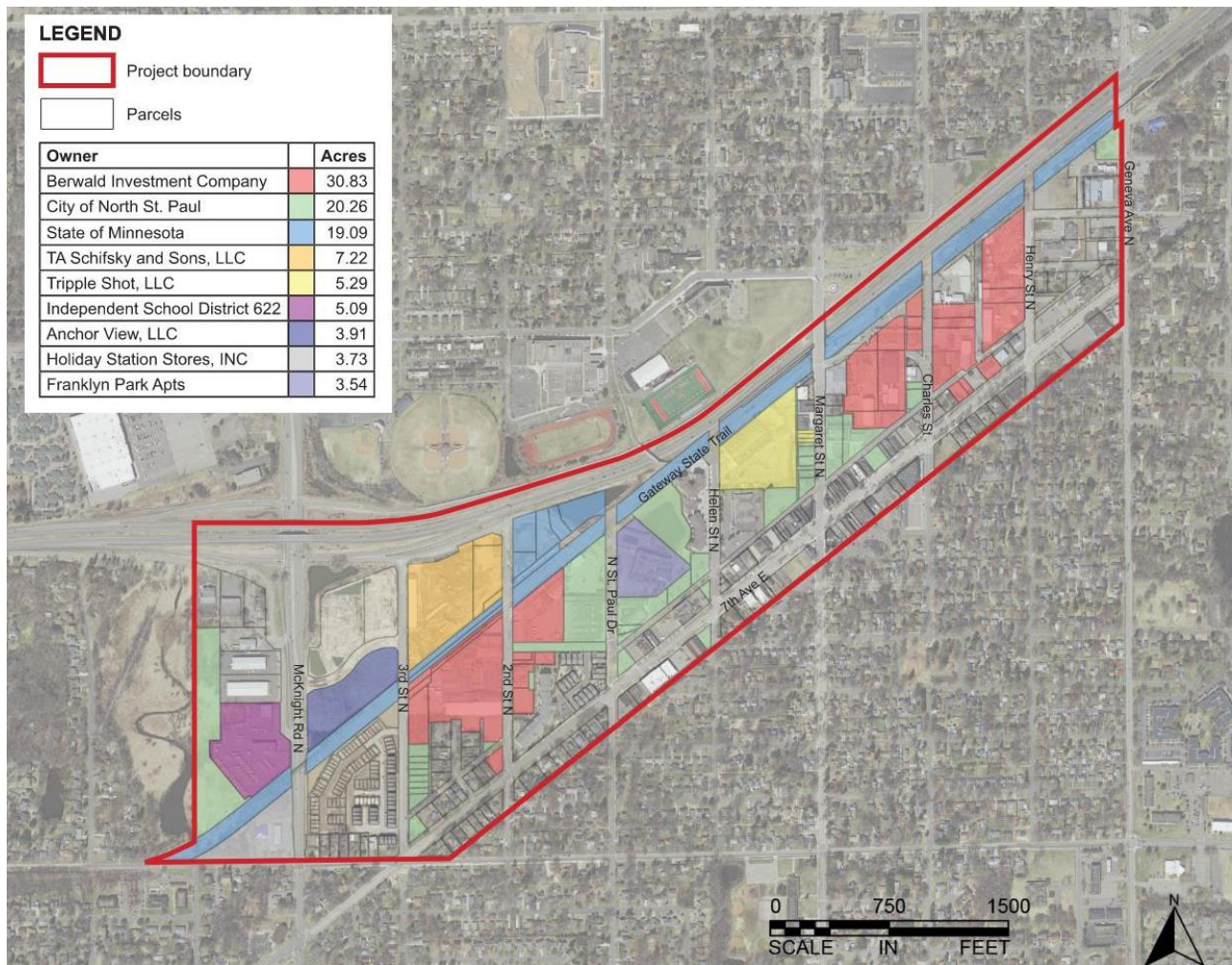
Market Market Summary

To be completed

Study Area Landowners

Major landowners are depicted in Figure 4, below. Berwald Investment Company owns the largest share of property within the study area at 30.83 acres. Currently, The City of North St. Paul presently holds 20.26 acres, and the State of Minnesota holds 19 acres primarily related to the Gateway State Trail. has numerous land holdings (Figure 1.2) in the study area, which combined with the Anchor Block site present opportunities for immediate redevelopment in the study area. Publicly owned and already cleaned land shall be leveraged to showcase desired development and to create momentum for subsequent phases of development. Most of the larger vacant parcels have been redeveloped since the 2012 plan; those that remain are of a smaller scale (1.5 to less than 1-acre) and scattered throughout the study area.

Figure 4: Major Landowners



|

Chapter 3:- Vision and Guiding Principles

The Master Plan is dynamic. It is not a set of strict “rules” but instead, a flexible framework that guides decisions about redevelopment. The plan addresses both “public” infrastructure and “private” redevelopment initiatives. It supports and shapes regulations; it accommodates dreams and aspirations; it recognizes reality; it prioritizes projects and ideas; it holds the community accountable; it tells the North Saint Paul story; and it communicates what is desired. The plan is a valuable tool that is intended to be embraced and actively used by the community.

The vision for this project is drawn from past comprehensive planning and master planning efforts. It defines what the community is to become. It provides a basis and a framework from which the plan and supporting strategic actions can be identified. The vision suggests a way of thinking about possible directions for the community while a set of guiding principles helps establish a path that results in a plan that “fits” North St. Paul.

Guiding principles can be used on an ongoing basis as a yardstick - a primary filter for determining what is appropriate. Together with the vision statement, the guiding principles become the critical tools for ongoing measurement and assessment of initiatives and results.

Vision and Guiding Principles for North Saint Paul

What do they mean?

- They orient the community to the future, even to a future that is twenty years distant.
- They require imagination, recognizing that the direction it sets will be the reality of the future.
- They look to current conditions and community traditions for clues to the appropriate future.
- They are based on a shared understanding of what the community desires for itself.
- They will be used as tools for evaluation of proposals, projects, ideas, and future directions.
- They will be an anchor during conflict, a way of finding common ground and shared values.
- They become a basis for coordination and cooperation.
- They are a source of energy and enthusiasm for maintaining a commitment to the future of North Saint Paul.

Vision

We say North St. Paul is “An extraordinary small town in the cities!”

Identity

We are a town of 3.1 square miles with a six block long Main Street. A small industrial village turned first-ring suburb, we embrace our small-town feel but also recognize we are part of a larger region. With 125 years of history, we are a tight-knit community with bonds to our town, our neighbors, and our shared past. But we are also a town that looks to the future, embracing technology and seeking new ways to capture the next wave of innovation and ingenuity to propel our community forward.

Image

Our community has the appearance and feel of a small town as evident in the architectural character of our main street, our safe and peaceful neighborhoods, our appreciation for parks and open space, and our thriving community events. Although we seek to become more “urban” by investing in progressive

infrastructure improvements and more compact development, we will strive to preserve our small-town atmosphere by ensuring that future projects adhere to our design standards and aesthetic character.

Enduring

We are a town in which quality development contributes to a lasting quality environment. The proper density and mix of development helps build and, more importantly, sustain our public infrastructure system, community facilities, and public spaces. Development projects are planned and constructed in a manner that lasts over time, using quality building materials and innovative site design. Our development is not overly dependent on any single economic sector or type of energy resource so that we endure both physical and economic challenges.

Quality of Life

With an abundance of city parks, schools, churches, a quaint downtown district, and peaceful neighborhoods, North St. Paul is a town with a great quality of life. We are connected to a thriving metropolitan region, and we appreciate how this enhances our residents' access to a diversity of jobs, cultural and recreational opportunities, quality health care, and higher education opportunities. However, looking to the future, it is important for North Saint Paul to offer this same diversity closer to home. We must be forward-thinking about our land use and continue to explore new ways to transform uses that have moved on or that could better contribute to realizing our vision.

Guiding Principles

- Create coordinated and harmonious development of functionally related uses including high density residential, office, commercial, entertainment / recreation, quality industrial and public facilities.
- ~~Redevelopment should endeavor to be cohesive with~~ Ensure quality design and ~~superior aesthetics of development.~~
- ~~m~~Minimize adverse effects ~~to~~ neighboring uses.
- Provide adequate provisions for open space.
- Develop a diversified and legible transportation network ~~that supports including~~ transit, ~~creates~~ strong pedestrian ~~and bicycle connections.~~ ~~networks and links to the downtown.~~
- Enhance and improve the image of the City in Downtown, along the Highway 36 Corridor and within the residential neighborhoods.
- Possess a progressive image for redevelopment while maintaining a sense of the community heritage.
- Consider new forms of housing such as condominiums, senior housing, townhomes, villas and live / work.
- Grow the community's tax base.
- Integrate public art as appropriate throughout the downtown study area.
- ~~Maintain a pedestrian friendly environment along streets throughout the community.~~
- Concentrate development on 7th Avenue between 1st Street and Division Street and compress commercial / retail development near the intersection of 7th Avenue and Margret Street.
- ~~Establish a theme for the downtown to provide long-term economic viability.~~
- Utilize financial incentives to maintain downtown's viability, such as a revolving loan fund, special service districts and other economic incentives.
- Transform Seppala Street to a functionally and aesthetically pleasing "business lane" to accommodate loading and service needs and secondary pedestrian circulation.

- Maintain and upgrade infrastructure in the Downtown (roads, walks, utilities, streetscape, and public realm enhancements.)
- ~~Enhance pedestrian and vehicular circulation throughout the district.~~
- Create new landmarks and gateways to better signal the arrival into downtown.
- Redevelopment along the Highway 36 corridor should include a mix of uses rooted in today's market reality.

[Note: those that are highlighted would be better placed in the implementation section, rather than in the guiding principle list.]

A Collection of Districts

The redevelopment Master Plan organizes similar land uses and urban design relationships by a series of districts. These districts (The Downtown District, Commerce Park Redevelopment District, Core Employment & Reinvestment District, West End Housing & Redevelopment Area, and the McKnight Employment Center) all have distinctly similar characteristics. Many of the proposed development projects are of similar use, size and scale and overall aesthetics. The following is a summary of the unique characteristics each district exemplifies:

Downtown District

- Focus on commercial / retail redevelopment and reinvestment at the core.
- Create an intentional compression of retail / commercial uses at the core with more mixed use transition blocks at the edges of downtown.
- Continue to invest in the pedestrian realm along 7th Avenue and Margaret Street.
- Allow for increased residential development on 2nd and 3rd stories.
- Convert Ssepela Boulevard to pedestrian-friendly, multi-functional corridor.
- Maintain alley / service functions for 7th Avenue businesses.
- Develop a downtown park / square feature as a community destination and gathering space.



Figure 4.2 - Land Use and Urban Design Districts Map

Commerce Park Redevelopment District

- Redevelop convenience retail near the Highway 36 intersection.
- Develop office, flex or light industrial internalized and focused on Henry Street.
- Utilize high quality building materials on sites along the perimeter of the district.
- Design roadways with enhanced streetscape and district identity.
- Make a stronger connection to the Gateway Trail.

McKnight Employment Center

- Develop light industrial / office flex, office warehouse, limited production on the northern portion of the Anchor Block Site.
- Utilize a combination of redevelopment and reinvestment for select areas west of McKnight for office / office flex / and commercial uses.
- Plan for long-term redevelopment of Schifsky Site, but recognize and mitigate the impacts on immediate and short term development.
- Investigate a potential educational component (trade school / vocational school) as a potential user and integrate the environmental learning center.
- Strengthen connections to new live/work district to the south and to the regional trail.

West End Housing & Redevelopment Area

- Maintain recent, existing quality housing (apartments & townhomes).
- Balance housing redevelopment across all phases of redevelopment based on market conditions.
- Develop a neighborhood park as an amenity for surrounding residential
- Create a strong connection to downtown along a newly created parkway and enhanced 7th Avenue

Core Employment Reinvestment District

- Redevelop the McPhillips site to more intensive office / medical employment.
- Continue reinvestment and adaptive re-use on Berwald Roofing Site.
- Continue reinvestment and adaptive re-use on Aetrium site.

The following pages of the Redevelopment Master Plan overview the various systems (Parks and Open Space system, Stormwater System, Transportation System) as well as break down the allocation of Commercial, Employment and Residential uses in the study area.