

**DRAFT**  
**NORTHTOWN**  
**REDEVELOPMENT**  
**MASTER PLAN**

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**



March 7th

**20**

**22**

**City of Blaine**

**DF/ DAMON FARBER**

**/ GENSLER / SEH**

# AGENDA

## CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

MARCH 7TH, 2022 - 6PM

- 01** Community Engagement Overview - Key Takeaways
- 02** Market Study - Key Takeaways
- 03** Planning Principles and Precedents
- 04** Redevelopment Master Plan
- 05** Action Steps - Near and Long Term
- 06** Next Steps - Draft Master Plan/Community Feedback

A woman in a dark blue top is standing at the front of a meeting room, pointing at a large projection screen. The screen displays a complex site plan or map with various colored lines and shapes. To her left is a whiteboard with two diagrams. The room is filled with people sitting in chairs, facing the front. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The word "ENGAGEMENT" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

# ENGAGEMENT

# SNAPSHOTS OF COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER INPUT

## WHAT WE'RE HEARING

### COMMUNITY EVENTS

+

**SURVEY**  
3,273 responses

+

### STAKEHOLDER/ COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

- Blaine World Fest - Sept. 11th
- Design Charrette - Oct. 26th-28th
- Public Open House - Dec. 9th

- **ONLINE SURVEY**

- **STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS/ENGAGEMENT WITH:**
  - 3 meetings with WPG
  - Property and Business Owners within the District
  - Government Agencies
  - Neighboring Cities
  - Cultural Institutions
- **Engagement with:**
  - Youth: High School Listening Session
  - Seniors / BIPOC: hard copies of survey at multi-family and senior housing



# COMMUNITY EVENTS AND LISTENING SESSION

## DESIGN CHARRETTE

October 26th-28th, 2021

~20 engaged



## OPEN HOUSE - AT SENIOR CENTER

December 9th, 2021

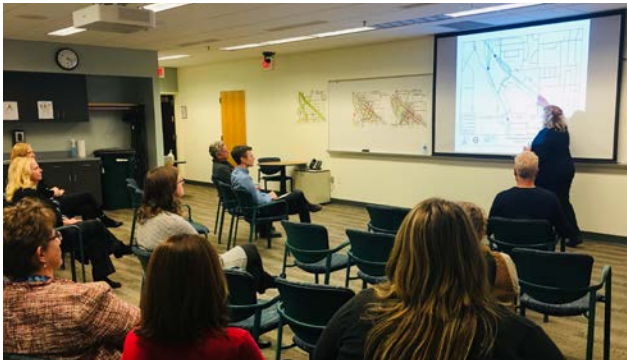
~60 engaged



## LISTENING SESSION - SPRING LAKE PARK HIGH SCHOOL

September 29th, 2021

~40 engaged



COMMUNITY EVENTS

SURVEY

STAKEHOLDER

# WHAT WE HAVE HEARD

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Thank you for doing this study.

I used to go to Northtown all the time, but I go to **Riverdale** and **Rosedale** now.

I don't feel safe in the Northtown Area.

I'd like to see more **green space** and **community gathering areas**.

The **road system** is confusing and dangerous.

SURVEY

I walk a lot and there are **no sidewalks or trails**.

More **restaurants and entertainment**

I'd like to see **more housing** in the district.

County Road 10 and Highway 47 are **tough to cross**.

The Mall **looks closed** from the outside.

STAKEHOLDER

# WHAT WE HAVE HEARD

## FEEL AND CHARACTER

- The Northtown Mall feels tired and in need of revitalization
- Many of the stakeholders interviewed would like to see transformational change in the study area
- Exterior of mall looks closed compared to interior
- Homelessness has become an increasing concern in the area and should be sensitively dealt with

## IMPROVE ACCESS & CONNECTIVITY

- The pedestrian and bicycle circulation in study area is unsafe or does not exist
- Many intersections are dangerous and need improving
- The transit station and changed bus routes are of concern
- Interior road network is confusing and frustrating
- Access to the district is good but the road network is confusing and difficult to negotiate

## BLUE AND GREEN

- University Avenue Extension floods on heavy rain events
- Water table is high in locations
- Ditch 17 needs improvement
- Need more green space in this area to make it feel more welcoming
- Desire for more public space to attract visitors

## LAND USE

- A greater mix of land uses is desired - housing, community uses, specialty retail
- More unique shops and restaurants are desired
- A variety of housing options should be considered, including affordable housing
- Concerns about transitions at the edges/ interface with single family residential, such as along Sanburnol Drive
- The Home Depot, Hobby Lobby and Cub Foods are valued and some would like to see remain

# SURVEY

A 14-question public survey was available to collect feedback and publicized through mailers, social media, and at events. Respondents could participate online or hard copies were available at local multi-family and senior housing, community events, and stakeholder engagement/listening sessions.

In total, over **3,273** people responded.

## FIGURE 1: DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

ALMOST **60%** OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS SHOP AND/OR EAT IN OR NEAR NORTHTOWN..

OVER **50%** LIVE IN THE CITY OF BLAINE.

ALMOST **23%** LIVE NEAR NORTHTOWN.

THE SURVEY MAINLY REACHED PEOPLE AGES **35 AND OLDER**.

OVER **73%** OF RESPONDENTS WERE WOMEN.

OVER **88%** OF THE RESPONDENTS WERE CAUCASIAN/WHITE.

## FIGURE 2: TOP 3 CHOICES FOR WHAT RESPONDENTS LIKE MOST ABOUT THE NORTHTOWN STUDY AREA



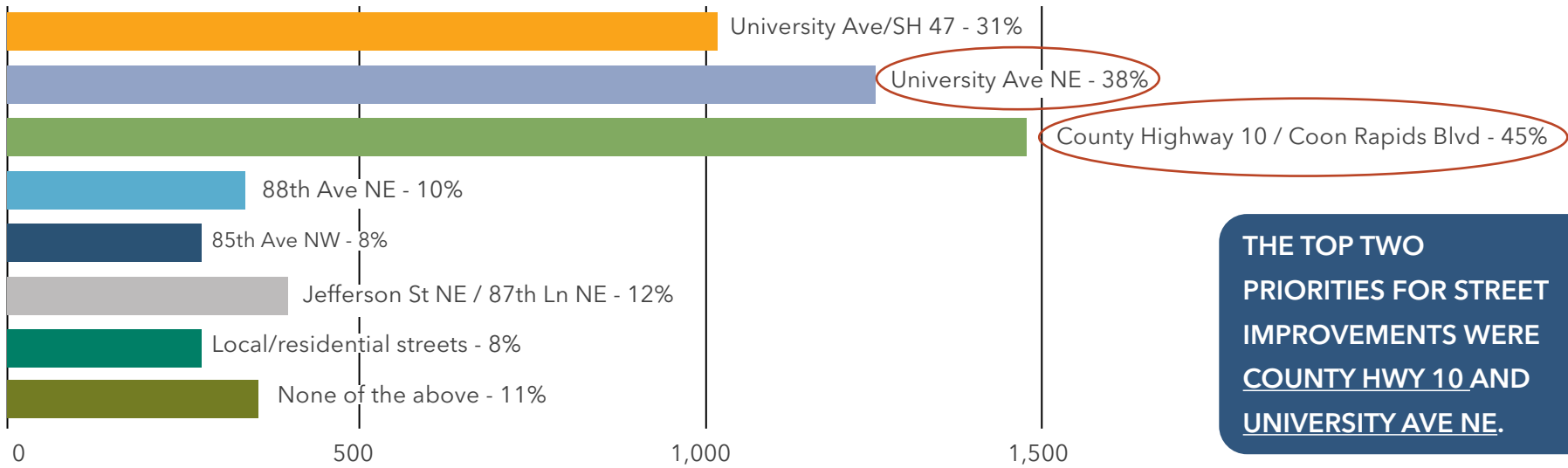


FIGURE 3: HOW DO YOU TRAVEL TO AND FROM THE NORTHTOWN AREA?



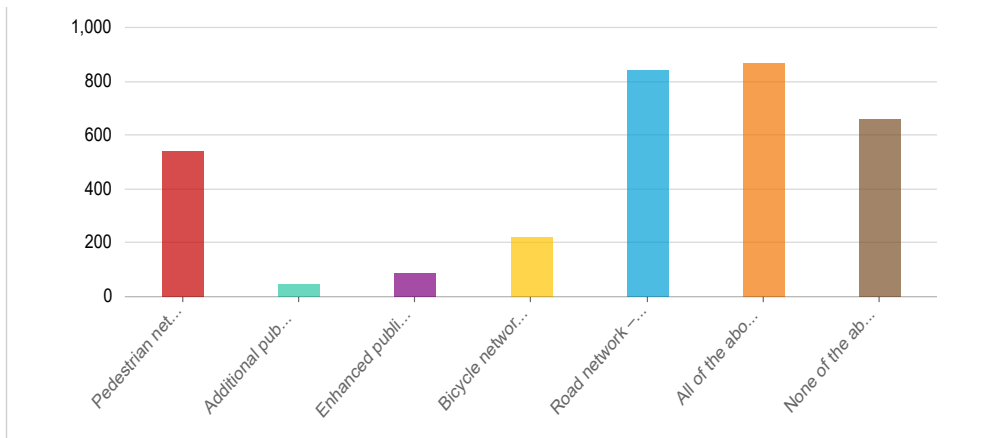
OVER 96% OF THE RESPONDENTS TRAVEL TO THE NORTHTOWN AREA BY AUTOMOBILE.

FIGURE 4: TOP 2 PRIORITIES FOR CORRIDOR/STREET IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN THE NORTHTOWN STUDY AREA.



THE TOP TWO PRIORITIES FOR STREET IMPROVEMENTS WERE COUNTY HWY 10 AND UNIVERSITY AVE NE.

FIGURE 5: TOP PRIORITY FOR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN THE NORTHTOWN AREA



PLACEHOLDER

COMMUNITY EVENTS  
SURVEY  
STAKEHOLDER

FIGURE 6: WHAT GOALS DO YOU THINK SHOULD GUIDE THE NORTHTOWN REDEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN?

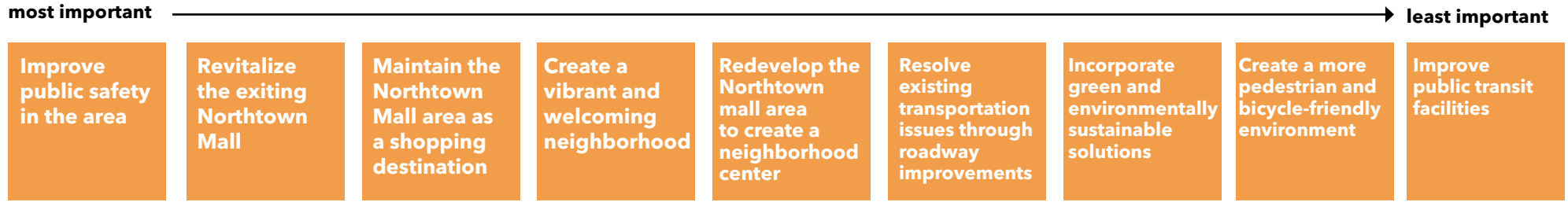


FIGURE 7: TOP 3 CHOICES FOR TYPES OF ACTIVITIES OR FEATURES THAT WOULD DRAW MORE PEOPLE TO NORTHTOWN

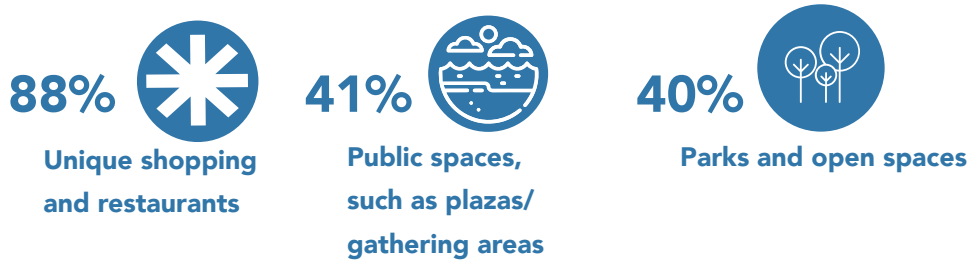
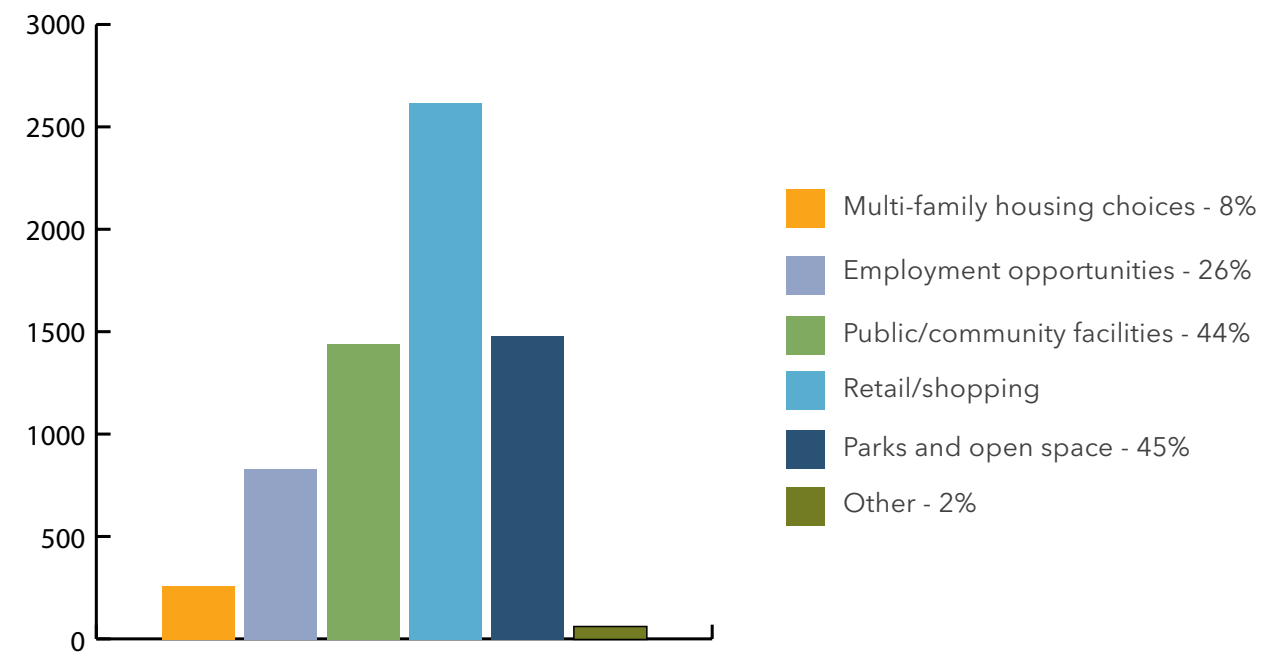


FIGURE 8: WHAT LAND USES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF IN NORTHTOWN?



COMMUNITY EVENTS  
SURVEY  
STAKEHOLDER

# MARKET

1. Tono
2. Baker
3. Peace
4. MNGI
5. Banfi
6. Gentl
7. Kirk
8. Spi
9. Culve
10. Erik
11. Rihm
12. Human
13. Grand
14. Goodw
15. Petoc
16. Warne
17. Broad
18. Mercy
19. Ice C
20. River



## Residential Market

The residential market shows a strong demand for Class A property. With only 927 units of Class A on the market - 15% of the total supply - Class A has been rapidly absorbed and vacancy rates for Class A and Class B have almost equalized.

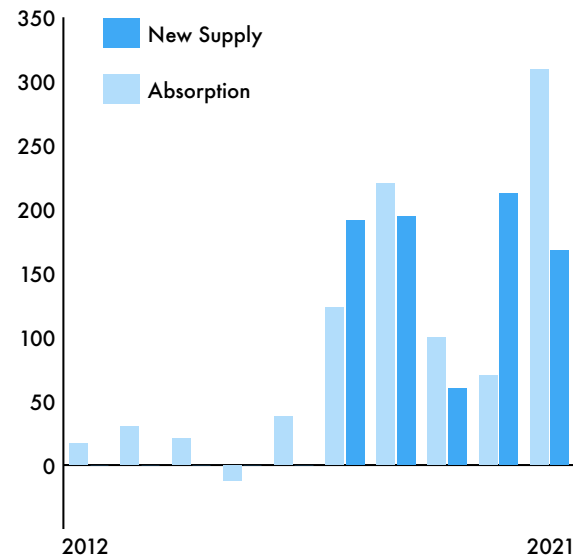
The local population is growing faster than the market can supply new units. On average, there are approximately 240 new households formed and only 165 new units, leaving a shortage of 75 units annually, or 750 units undersupply over the next ten years. The current pipeline only plans to deliver 285 units. There will be unmet demand in the market for an additional 465 units. At the average unit size for the market, that implies an 425,940 SF of residential development.

### Class A Definition

- Generally, garden product built within the last 10 years
- Properties with a physical age greater than 10 years but have been substantially renovated
- High-rise product in select Central Business District may be over 20 years old
- Commands rents within the range of Class "A" rents in the submarket
- Well merchandised with landscaping, attractive rental office and/or club building
- High-end exterior and interior amenities as dictated by other Class "A" products in the market
- High quality construction with highest quality materials

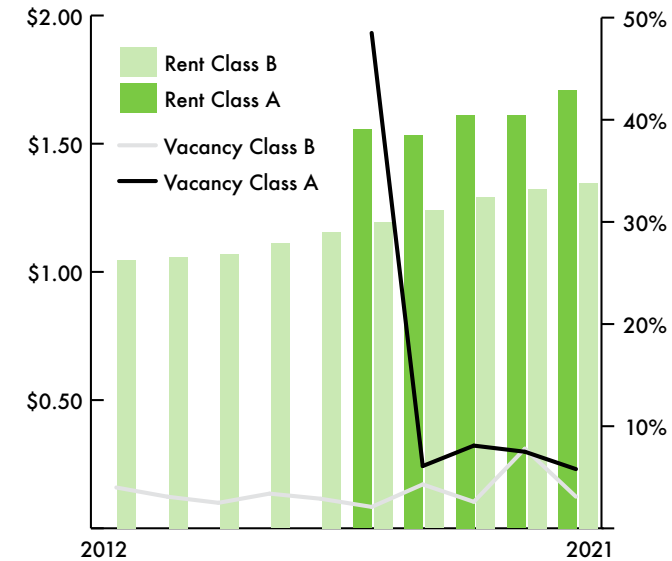
## Demand Exceeds Supply

The market is absorbing new residential supply faster than new residential product is brought to market. If the demographic and development patterns maintain their current trajectory, the availability and affordability of housing in the market will become severely constrained.



## Class A Premium

The Class A market represents a small percentage of the local market, but those properties command a premium. The premium is for quality, not size. Units are only 4% larger, on average, but rents are 27% higher per square foot. This implies the Class A market has room for growth.



## Office Market

The office market in the study area is saturated with conventional product. No new product has been delivered to the market in the past ten years. The Class B market in particular has held remarkably steady. The data alone discourage office development for the current tenant mix, but emerging trends in the geography and nature of work indicate some possibilities.

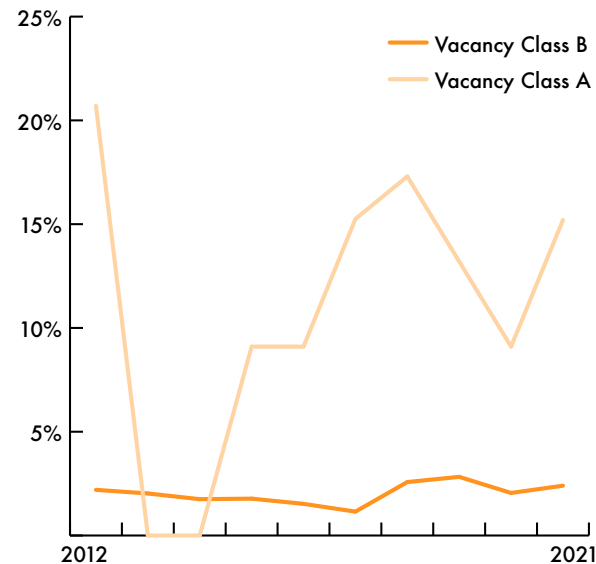
**Population Growth** - The market is expected to add more than 1,365 workers over the next ten years. At local standards, that workforce will require 340,000 SF of office, far beyond the current SF available. This might become a build-to-suit need for a regional HQ.

**Hybrid Work** - The remote work experiment introduced a new relationship with the office. Coworking in particular seems the early winner. As a gateway for commuters, in a market with zero coworking locations, a 20K - 30K SF coworking hub for surrounding bedroom communities is a real possibility.

**Medical Office Building** - One of the faster growing real estate uses, doctors, dentists, and even surgeons, are driving demand for medical office buildings outside acute care settings. With conservative growth estimates (8% of the total market and 4% annual growth rate), the demand is expected to exceed 100K SF over the next ten years.

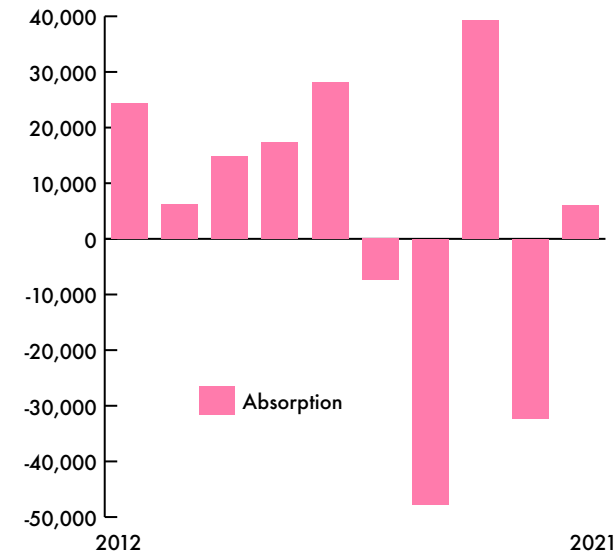
## Flight to Quality

In the last ten years, Class A properties have struggled to attract stable tenants in the submarket. This contradicts office trends in the surrounding market, where Class A is more desirable and commands a rental premium. The resistance to Class A rental rates - holding steady at \$20/SF, more than 67% higher than Class B - is reflected in the variance between Class A and Class B vacancy.



## Internal Movement

The absorption statistics provide a snapshot into the velocity of the office market. In the study area, there is limited internal movement - tenants moving between properties - but little indication of large tenants entering or leaving the market. This stability is concentrated in the office parks adjacent to the site and further south, in Fridley.





## Retail Market

Retail development in the market is more about quality than quantity - there isn't a need for more retail, there is a need for better retail. The area is a destination for shoppers, capturing \$2B in spending while the aggregate demand from local residents is only \$1.5B. The dynamics encourage different strategic decisions to increase traffic and spending on the site.

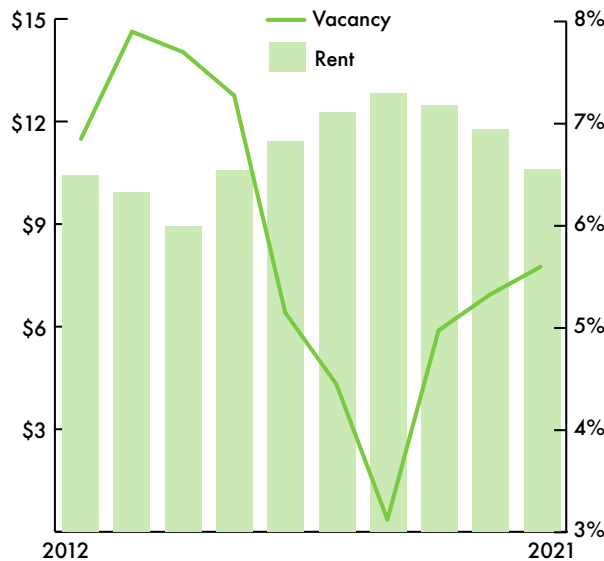
**Cluster** - Shopping centers assemble brands that serve more than one customer need. This strategy imagines bringing more general merch brands into the directory, graduating from a regional mall into a super regional center.

**Gap** - Not all residential spending is concentrated in the local market area. Residents shopping online or traveling to stores out of market to buy things they can't find locally. This strategy recognizes gaps in lawn and garden stores and luxury goods - the first is aligned with the psychographic segmentation, the second does not match the profile of the population.

**Lifestyle** - The population is active and engaged in a variety of activities. Some of these needs are met by the sports complex in Blaine and the bowling alleys and family fun centers in the area. An alternative retail strategy recruits national lifestyle brands like REI that blend retail, education, and play.

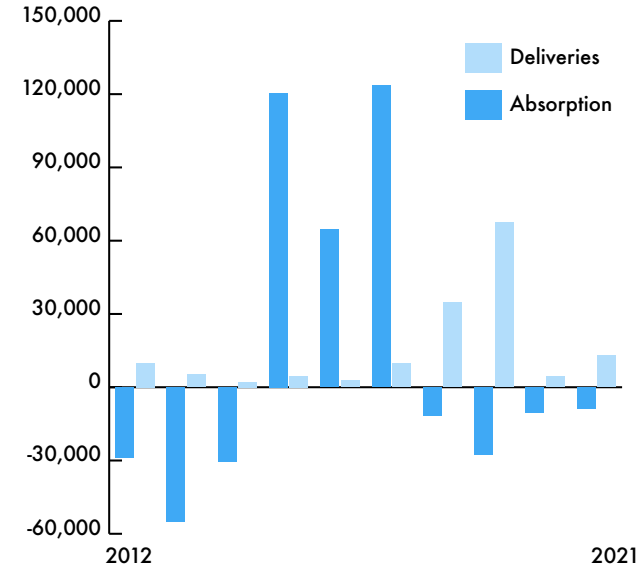
## Lead and Follow

Vacancy appears to respond to rent signals in the market. When the price drops, the demand increases, the vacancy plummets as the supply decreases, before rents increase again. After a decade of imbalance and structural changes, the retail market seems to be stabilizing with rent floors at about \$10 with vacancy rates between 5 and 6 percent.



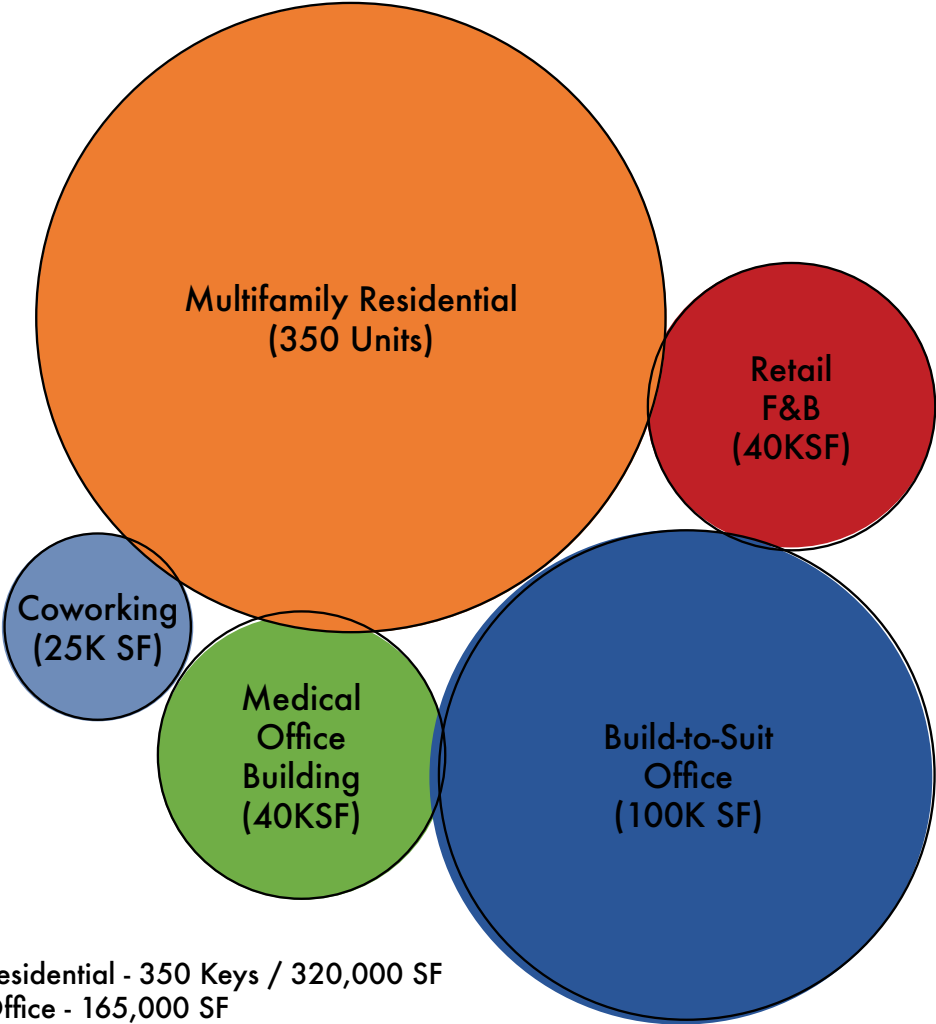
## Feast or Famine

The retail marketplace reflects larger trends in the industry - digital, big box, and dollar stores are rapidly growing sectors that suppress demand for main street retail and commercial centers. This demand pattern is reflected in the feast-or-famine deliveries and absorption data below. In banner years, large format stores lease large spaces, but outside of that activity, there is limited demand.



# PHASE 1 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (0-5 YEARS)

## Mixed Use Program



Residential - 350 Keys / 320,000 SF  
Office - 165,000 SF  
Retail - 40,000 SF

**Total - 525,000 SF**



# PRINCIPLES & PRECEDENTS



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

01

Restore the  
Hub



02

Welcome to All



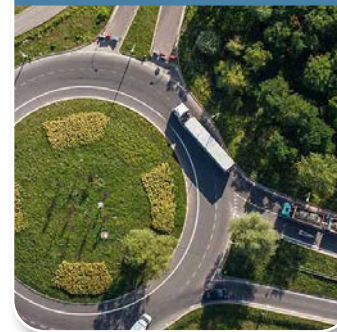
03

Gray to Green



04

Barriers to  
Assets



05

Complete the  
Streets



06

Strengthen the  
Mix



07

Celebrate  
Springbrook  
Creek



08

Move In



09

Mobility  
Forward



10

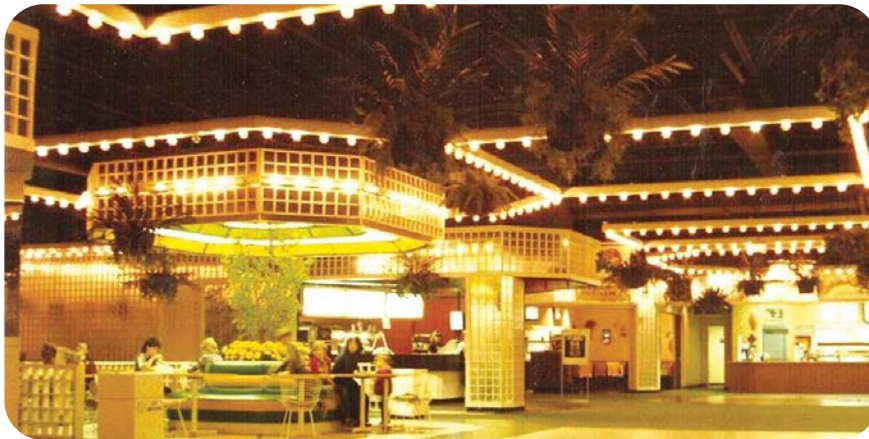
Unite the  
District





# 01 RESTORE THE HUB

- Community hub - honor the nostalgia of the past and celebrate the future
- Parks and plazas as places for community events
- Create programming for all seasons and multi-generational opportunities
- Embrace the identity of Blaine and welcome the Spring Lake Park, Coon Rapids, and Fridley communities





# 02 WELCOME TO ALL

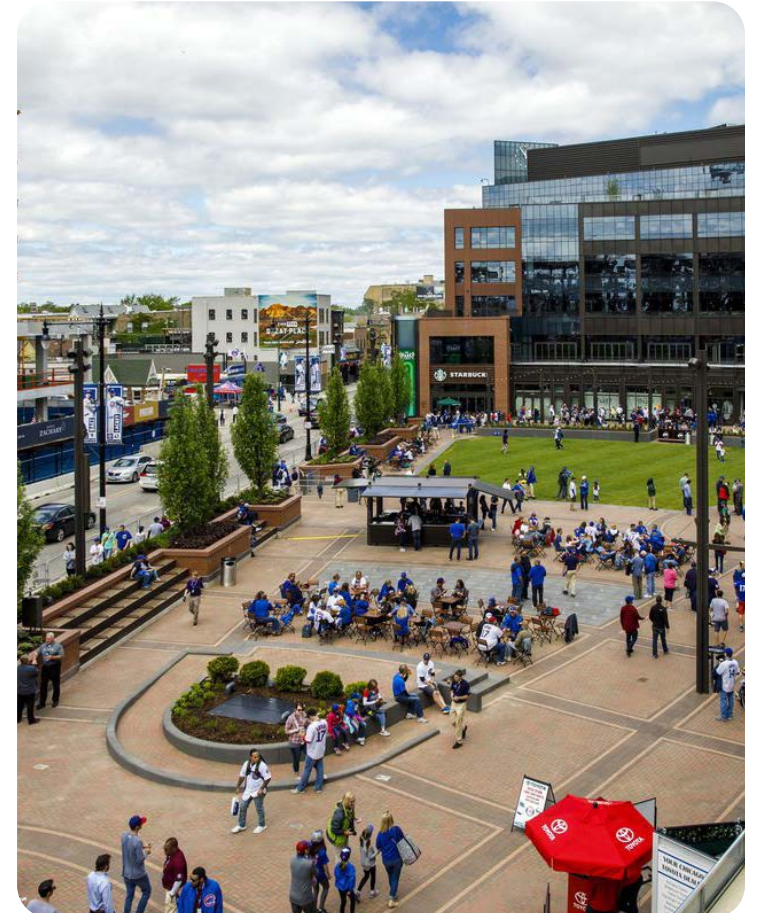
- Develop places and activities that create an inclusive, welcoming environment for all people, including ages, genders, ethnic and religious backgrounds
- Create an inviting, vibrant place with a sense of welcome
- Create a sense of arrival / gateways
- Make it feel safe for all





# 03 GRAY TO GREEN

- Integrate natural and resilient landscapes
- High performance infrastructure
- Provide a variety of parks, plazas, and open spaces





# 04 BARRIERS TO ASSETS

- Connect what is not connected - develop a hierarchy of streets to create a more fine-grained environment
- Untangle what is tangled - create an intuitive system
- Integrate transit center & re-envision as a multi-modal hub
- Be innovative & forward-thinking - remain flexible in the design to accommodate changing patterns of mobility & technology



# 05 COMPLETE THE STREETS

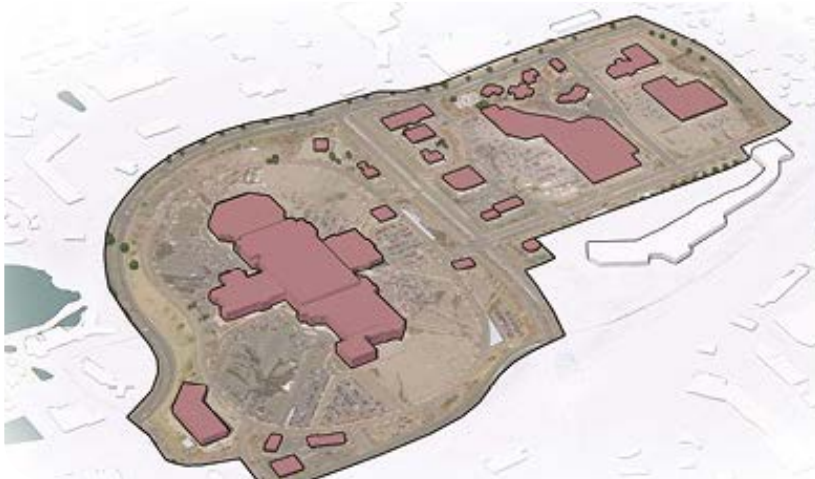
- Create multi-modal, complete streets
- Create safe crossings; prioritize accessibility and pedestrians
- Integrate stormwater management
- Create more equitable mobility options





# 06 STRENGTHEN THE MIX

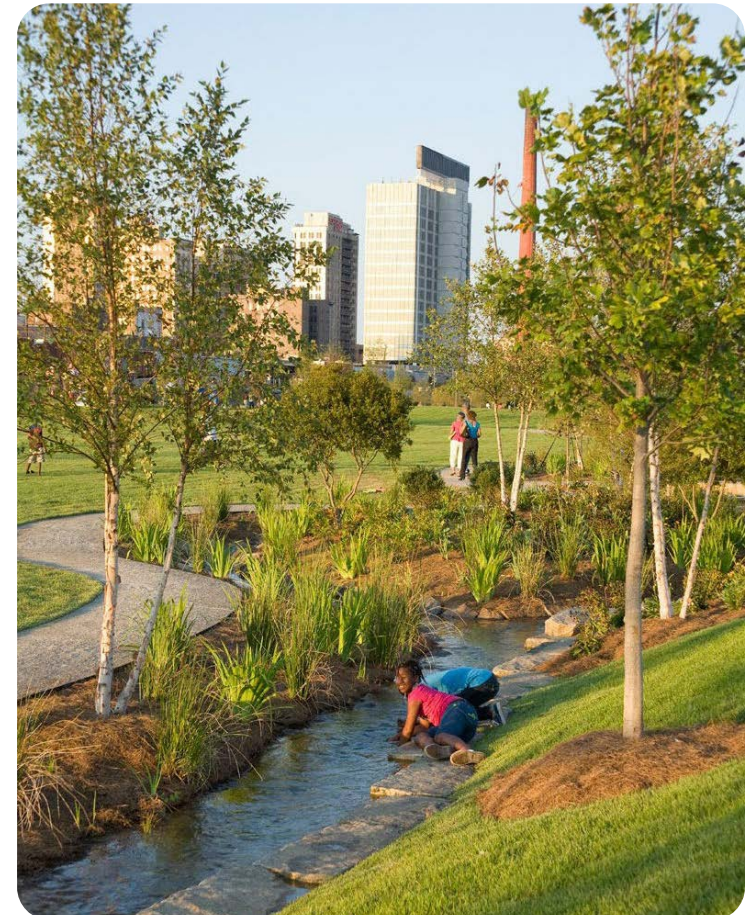
- Broaden land use to integrate a denser, mixed-use development pattern
- Rethink vehicular and pedestrian patterns to create denser parcilization
- Create a viable, long-term neighborhood and destination
- Make it unique - target investments that elevate experiences





# 07 CELEBRATE SPRINGBROOK CREEK

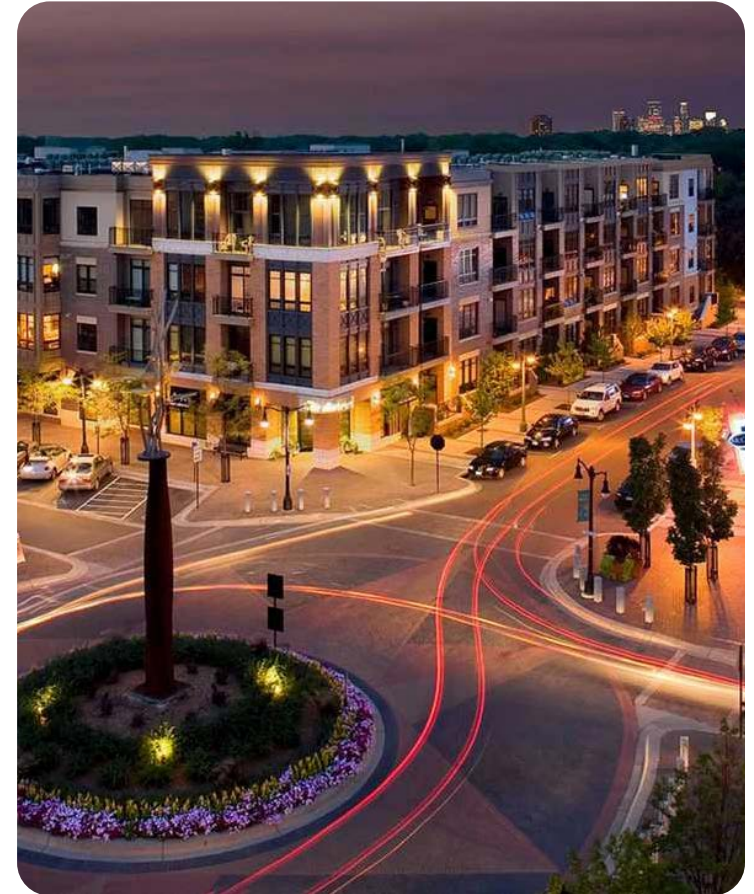
- Improve water quality
- Increase biofiltration capacity on site / mitigate flooding issues
- Daylight & celebrate the creek as an amenity
- Integration of nature into the urban fabric





# 08 MOVE IN

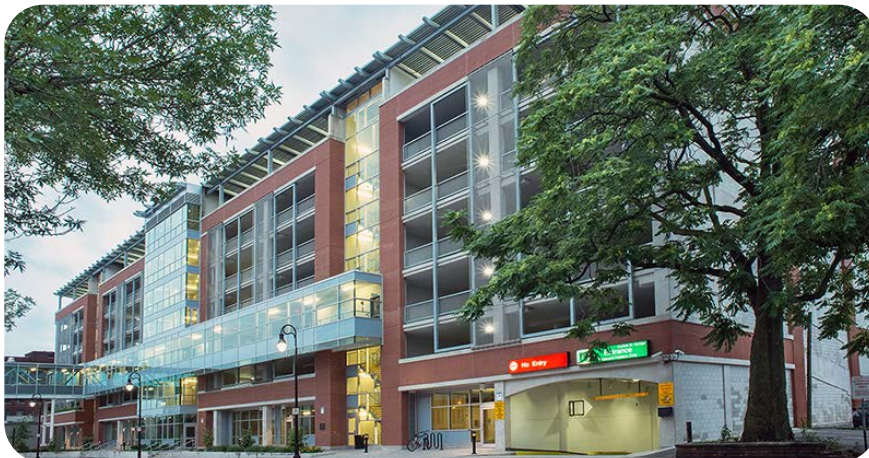
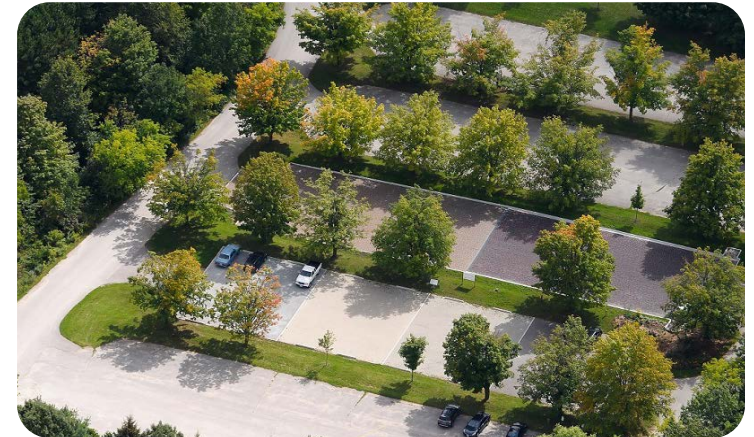
- Create a diversity of residential opportunities - i.e. senior, multi-generational, multi-family, market-rate, and affordable options
- Integrate with the neighborhood edges - transition the edges adjacent to single-family residential
- Meet the housing demand for rental and ownership and create an environment that is enticing to live, work, and play





# 09 MOBILITY FORWARD

- Be more efficient and forward-thinking with parking
- Re-assess true need for parking, with an increase in ride-shares and future of mobility
- Integrate electric vehicle charging stations throughout site
- Include locations for access/drop-offs for rideshares

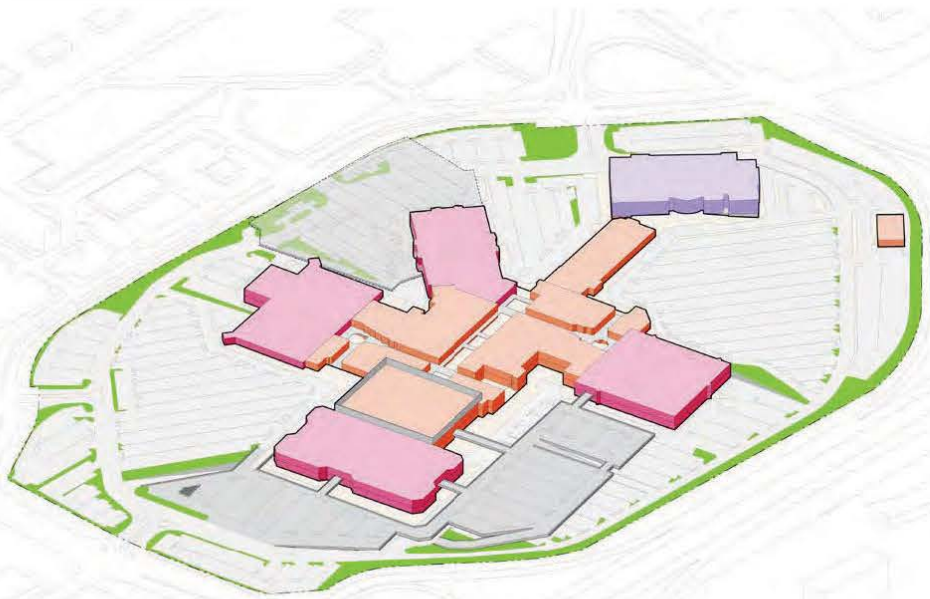






# PRECEDENTS

BEFORE  
& AFTER



FROM ROSEDALE **TO ROSEVILLE**



# PRECEDENTS







## Downtown Westminster

- 2-3 million square feet of office space
- 750,000 square feet of retail, entertaining and dining
- 2,300 residential apartments, condominiums, and townhomes
- 300 hotel rooms
- Cultural and civic uses
- 18 acres of parks and public spaces

Dynamic, vibrant, compact, and walkable – a place for employment, living and recreation



# PRECEDENTS

## LIFESTYLE CENTERS





The background is a watercolor-style architectural site plan. It features various building footprints, courtyards, and streets, rendered in shades of green, yellow, and brown. The style is artistic and hand-drawn, with soft edges and blended colors. The overall tone is a muted, earthy green.

# REDEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN



# CONCEPT MASTER PLAN



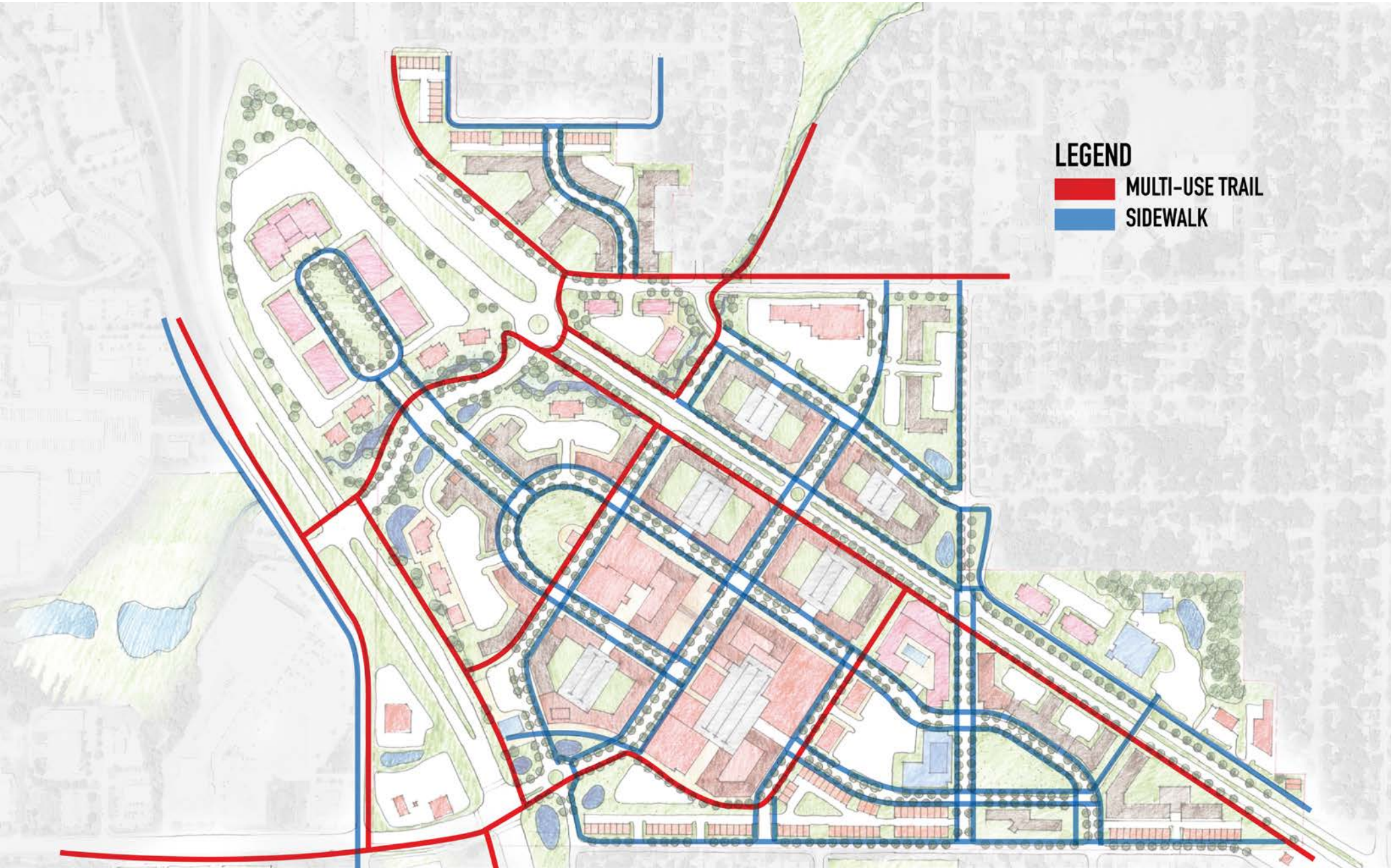


# ROADWAYS





# BIKES AND PEDESTRIANS





# OPEN SPACES





# PHASE 1

RESIDENTIAL INFILL

RESIDENTIAL INFILL

RESIDENTIAL/RETAIL INFILL

REBUILD CR 10

IMPROVE  
SPRINGBROOK CREEK

IMPROVE UNIVERSITY AVE

REDEVELOP MALL  
INTO LIFESTYLE CENTER

CREATE STREET GRID

MIXED-USE INFILL

PED. BRIDGE

REDEVELOP MALL

RESIDENTIAL INFILL

CREATE STRONG SENSE  
OF PLACE AT ENTRY

## LEGEND

- COMMERCIAL-RETAIL
- COMMERCIAL-OFFICE
- MIXED-USE
- MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
- TOWNHOMES
- CIVIC/INSTITUTIONAL
- PARKING STRUCTURE



Peet's Coffee

Peet's Coffee

# ACTION STEPS

STOP



# POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STEPS

TIF Feasibility Study and Special Legislation

MNDOT Highway 47 – Planning and Environmental Linkages Study

F-LINE BRT – Make the Hub an amenity

Northtown District Traffic Study

Environmental Assessment Worksheet and Environmental Impact Statement (AUAR)

Explore new taxes and sources for funding redevelopment

- Local option Sales tax
- EDA and HRA Levy
- Sales tax/lodging tax
- Explore Special Service District

Change Zoning to Mixed-Use to allow a greater variety of land use

Create City Implementation Team

Work with Twins Cities gateway to reattract visitors to Northtown District

Begin to transform Ditch 17 back to Spring Brook Creek

Begin to set development goals for EDA properties and issue RFP's

Improve pedestrian crossing on County Road 10

Work with WPG to create first phase transformational project, consolidate parking & improve mall

Extend 85th Avenue from Hwy 47 to County Road 10

Extend trail network to connect neighborhoods around the district and provide improved connectivity

## POTENTIAL MID-TERM STEPS

Implement roundabout at 89th and County Road 10 and University Avenue extension

Transform County Road 10 ROW

Continue connectivity improvements – Roads/Trails

Redesign/implement University Avenue improvements from SH 47 to CR10

Continue to consolidate parking at Northtown Mall and redevelop around mall edges

Collaborate with Coon Rapids to redevelop areas west of site – across from University Avenue

Daylight Springbrook Creek north of County Road 10

Create incentives for infill redevelopment and a greater mix of uses in district

## POTENTIAL LONG-TERM STEPS

Transform Home Depot Site and Cub Foods



# NEXT STEPS

DRAFT MASTER PLAN /  
COMMUNITY FEEDBACK - APRIL