

— THE — NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION PLAN

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City of Blaine





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Northtown District Vision Plan

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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City of Blaine

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**THANK YOU TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE CITY OF BLAINE AND ADJACENT CITIES
WHO TOOK THE TIME TO PROVIDE VALUABLE INPUT ON THIS PLAN!**



City of Blaine

Northtown District Vision Plan

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01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The City of Blaine initiated this study in order to identify redevelopment opportunities and create a plan with the overall goal to meet the market and community objectives. The Northtown District Vision Plan serves to guide decision-making, investments, and priorities for transforming the district into a feasible, vibrant mixed-use neighborhood.

We live in a world of constant change. Everything is changing: how we learn, communicate, and conduct business; how we move around from place to place; our growing awareness of our planet's fragility and our role in its fate. The convergence of so much change in such a short period of time, and our ability to adapt to that change, has become the defining challenge of our era.

The magnitude of this rapid transformation is daunting and, more and more now agree, will come to define how we live from this point forward. We now realize that a sustainable, equitable and livable world depends, in part, on holistic approaches to designing and building our communities, whether large or small, urban, suburban, or rural. Our communities and lifestyles will have to adapt to a dynamic, changing world.

The Northtown District reflects its era and the auto-centric, bricks and mortar approach to retail. It reflects a time when environmental concerns were just beginning to appear on the radar. It reflects a time when our communities were much more homogeneous. Today, we are becoming a sharing economy — multi-cultural and tech-savvy with vastly different needs and expectations. We are drawn to a place for a variety of reasons, retail being only one.

It is an interesting historic fact that Southdale, the nation's first indoor mall, was planned to be a mixed-use community, including the same mix of uses many malls nationwide are now working to integrate into their facilities, more than sixty years later. Northtown Mall, like most of its contemporaries, is an island in the familiar sea of parking. There is little to draw people into the mall other than retail, and many of those retail outlets can now be found elsewhere. The mall is completely oriented to the car; walking and biking and even the use of transit can be unsafe and unpleasant experiences.

The Northtown District Vision Plan provides a guide to transform the district into a mixed-use, vibrant, and forward-thinking destination. All systems — environmental, social, economic, physical — need to be considered together. The evolution of the mall area and its surrounding neighborhood from a predominantly retail environment to a more walkable and bikeable, fine-grained mix of uses — including retail, housing, employment, hospitality and public places — served by a variety of modes of movement and seamlessly integrating sustainable principles into its design, can become a model for adaptive reuse in a quickly evolving world.

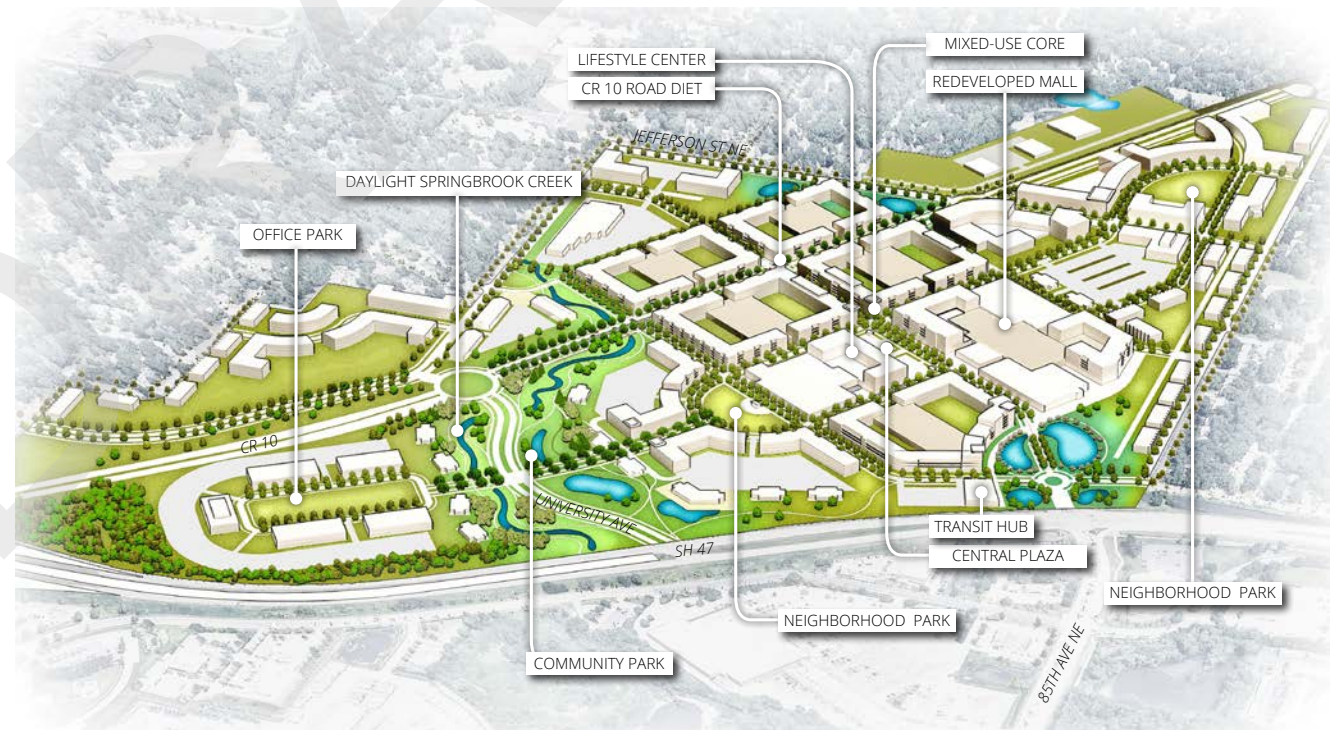
Most importantly for the Northtown Mall District, perhaps, is the imperative to act now to reimagine the mall area as a more diverse and inviting mixed-use marketplace that appeals to and attracts people from all walks of life to come to live, work, recreate, shop, and gather.

THE VISION PLAN

The Northtown District Vision Plan presents a long-range framework for redevelopment in the district, which includes the Northtown Mall and surrounding retail areas. Market-driven, the framework is designed to be flexible and nimble; it can respond to change in a myriad of ways, accommodating, for example, existing large-footprint stores while, over time, responding to retailers' changing needs and the impacts of new technologies on the shopping habits of clients.

More importantly, it envisions new, finer-grained development and housing mixed with retail uses, as well as other complementary uses such as parks, lodging, medical office, co-sharing work places, start-up offices, brew pubs and maker spaces — the elements that comprise emerging successful neighborhoods throughout the country.

FIGURE 1: PROPOSED NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION PLAN



PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The development of the Northtown District Vision Plan was based, in part, on direct input from landowners in the district, agency stakeholders, and the community at large. Outreach occurred in a number of ways: in-person meetings and direct phone calls to stakeholders and constituents, a City-managed website with frequent updates about the study, City Council workshops, listening sessions, and open houses for the general public. Through the use of preference surveys and other feedback loops, the Vision Plan is intended to reflect the goals and aspirations of a broad cross section of the Blaine and surrounding communities. It is hoped that community involvement will continue, evolving into an active role in helping the Vision Plan reach its potential.



Public Open House - December 2021

TRENDS

As we now recognize, traditional retail is undergoing a major disruption due to the advent of online shopping giants like Amazon. Yet some retailers, such as Home Depot and Cub Foods, appear to be weathering the storm and continue to be valued shopping destinations for community stakeholders. But they are the exception: many retailers are finding that the old business models simply don't match with demographic changes and the desire for experience-based retail and entertainment.

Millennials, between the ages of 22 and 37, comprise a major segment of the buying population. They are demanding a higher quality and more sensory buying experience; often times, they will visit a store to "touch the fabric" and then buy online at another time. Stores like Apple, sleek and modern, have distilled the buying experience to a fine art, where the salesperson can invoice you anywhere in the store and send you an electronic receipt. The Apple stores may be small, but their buyer-friendly approach and distinctive products put them in a class by themselves. Shoppers from other cultures may be comfortable in an open-air market (even if indoors) with small stalls offering diverse products. Today's retail environment should be informed by our increasingly multi-cultural population. All these trends point to the importance of a broader base of offerings, both within and outside of the mall.

ASPIRATIONS

The aspirations for the Vision Plan are to create new and constantly changing experiences that are responsive to the market and engaging to the community. There is a need for a mix of uses, appealing to the tastes and pocketbooks of a broad segment of the population. One thing appears to be as true today as it was when the mall first opened, anchored by three or four department stores with an array of smaller shops between: there is an important interdependence in the retail environment. A store's success can be traced to its location in a group of stores. In a small neighborhood commercial district, it is the mix of stores and the diverse character that brings customers in the door. Owners aspire to be in the right location and in the right mix.



Trends in Retail Point to the Importance of a Broader Range of Offerings

FIGURE 2: STUDY AREA AND REGIONAL CONTEXT OF NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION PLAN

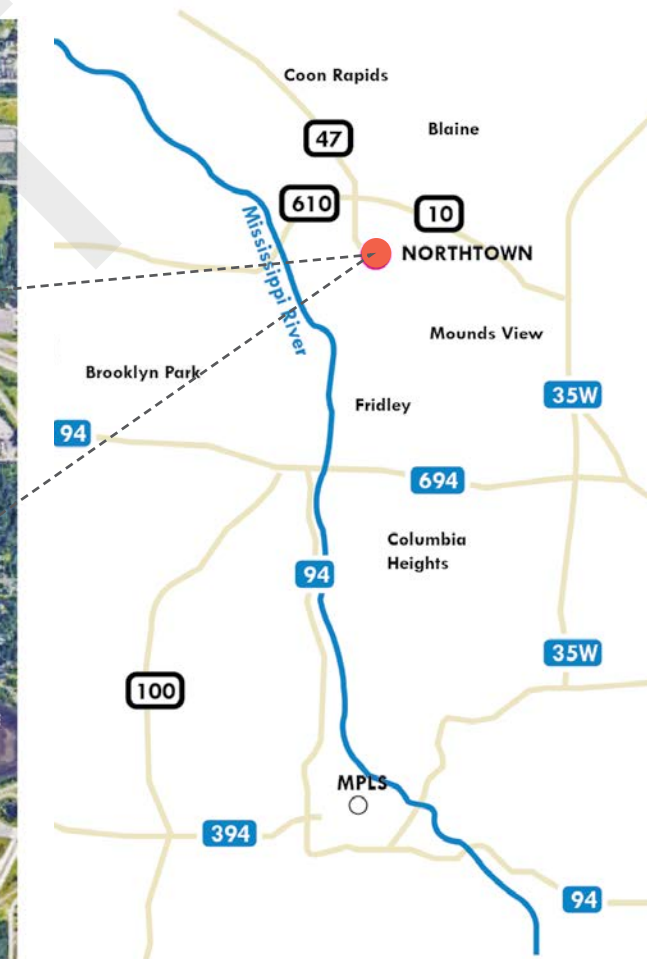
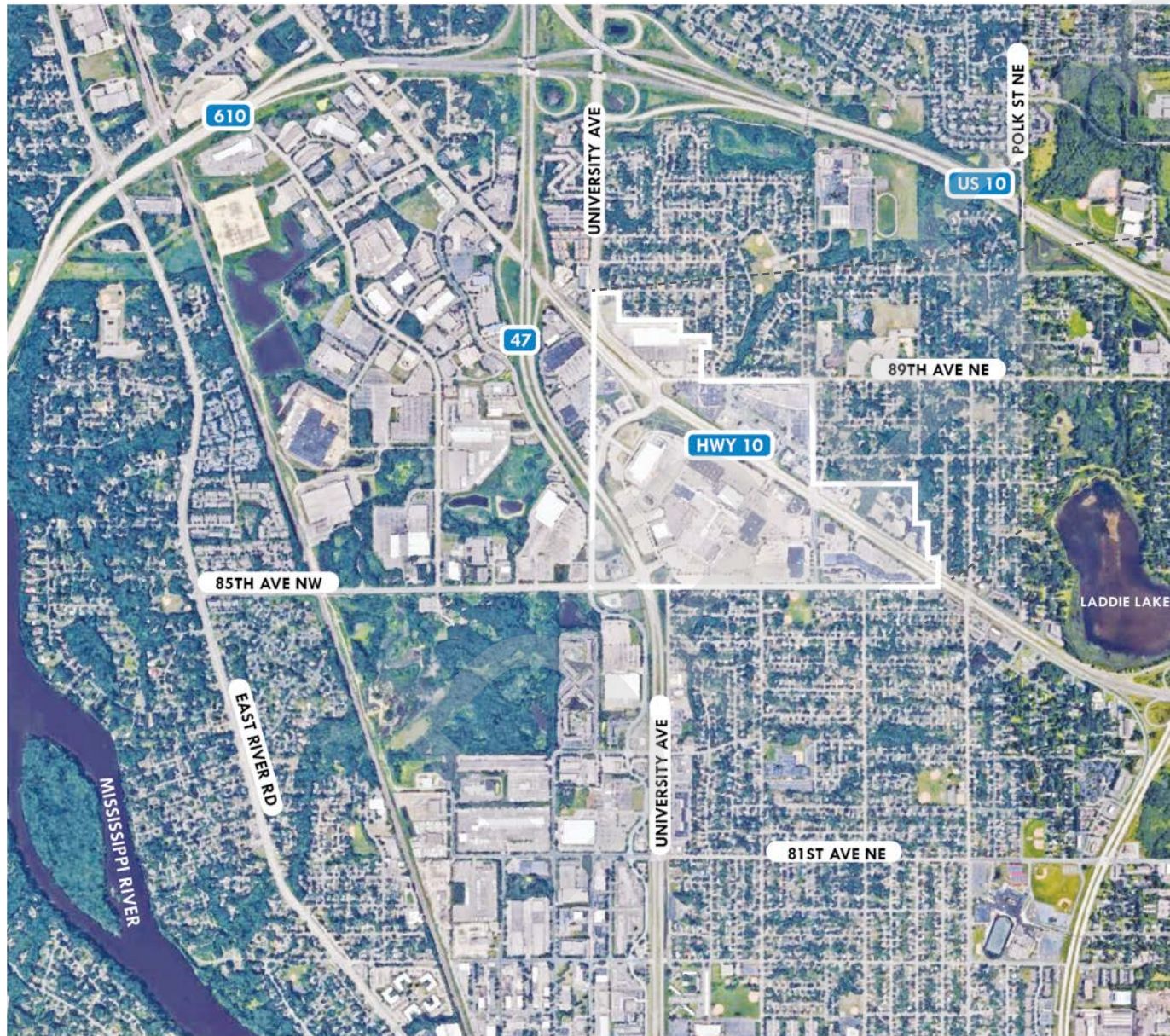


FIGURE 3: NORTHTOWN DISTRICT EXISTING CONTEXT



Existing Context

The Northtown District is located in the southwest corner of the City of Blaine, near the borders of Coon Rapids, Fridley, and Spring Lake Park. The district is generally bounded by State Highway 47/University Avenue to the west, Sanburnol Drive to the south, and several commercial parcels located along the northeast side of County Road 10. The Northtown Mall District is well-served by major arterial roadways (SH 47 and CR 10) and public transportation services (Metro Transit). At the center of the district is the Northtown Mall Shopping Center. The mall is surrounded by surface parking lots and other retail/commercial shops and services. To the north and west of the district lies more retail/commercial uses and to the west is the Springbrook Nature Center, accessible via 85th Avenue NW. Areas to the south and east of the district include single family neighborhoods located in Spring Lake Park and Blaine, respectively.

LAND USES

The Northtown District is dominated by community and regional commercial land uses, located in single story buildings. The northernmost sites in the study area are planned for high density residential land uses. Existing and uses located adjacent to the study area include low density residential to the northeast and south, and more community/regional commercial located to the north and west. There is a multi-story senior housing building located along Sanburnol Drive and Anoka County Library is located along CR 10, across the highway from the shopping mall.



Northcourt Commons

ROAD NETWORK

The Northtown District is served from the north and south by arterials SH 47, University Avenue, and CR 10. Access to the district is provided from the west by 85th Avenue NW, and from the east by 89th Avenue NE. The Northtown Shopping Mall is served by a private ring road. Site and traffic analysis as well as input received from stakeholders suggest that the roadway network is confusing and unsafe for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists. Large block patterns and limited roadways make it difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to negotiate the district, a shift from the smaller block patterns and gridded roadway network existing in the residential neighborhoods surrounding the study area.



View of Northtown Mall and adjacent road network

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The Northtown Transit Center, located at the Northtown Mall, provides a hub for public transportation riders at the center of the Northtown Mall District. Several Metro Transit local bus routes (10, 25, 805, 831), a limited stop bus route (824) and an express service bus route (852) provide public transportation service to local and regional destinations. Future Bus Rapid Transit (Metro F Line) is planned to serve the north metro area along the Central Avenue corridor, largely replacing Route 10 from downtown Minneapolis to the Northtown Mall via Central and University Avenues. The future transit station for the Metro F Line (BRT) is planned to replace the existing transit station, adding upgrades to station amenities and services.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CIRCULATION

Pedestrian and bicycle sidewalks and trails are very limited in the Northtown Mall study area and are almost non-existent on the mall property itself. While existing sidewalks and trails connect people to the district, there are very few sidewalks or trails within the district. Pedestrian crossings at major intersections are difficult and crash data indicates that some of those intersections are sites of severe and fatal crashes. Community input called for a much more connected district with enhanced pedestrian and bike connections along with safe and accessible roadway crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

There are few park or green spaces within the study area, with the exception of a small pond and green space near the Anoka County Library. However, there are parks adjacent to or nearby like the Springbrook Nature Center, and Sanburnol, Aurelia, Westwood, Little Bit and Laddie Lake parks. Stakeholders requested more green space in the district and better connections to existing green spaces.

COMMUNITY DESTINATIONS

The Northtown Mall Shopping Center is the primary community destination in the area. Other community destinations include the Mississippi River, Springbrook Nature Center, Anoka County Library, Sanburnol, Aurelia, Westwood, Little Bit and Laddie Lake parks, Westwood Middle School and several places of worship.



Northtown Transit Center



Northtown Mall

FIGURE 4: PARKS, OPEN SPACES, AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

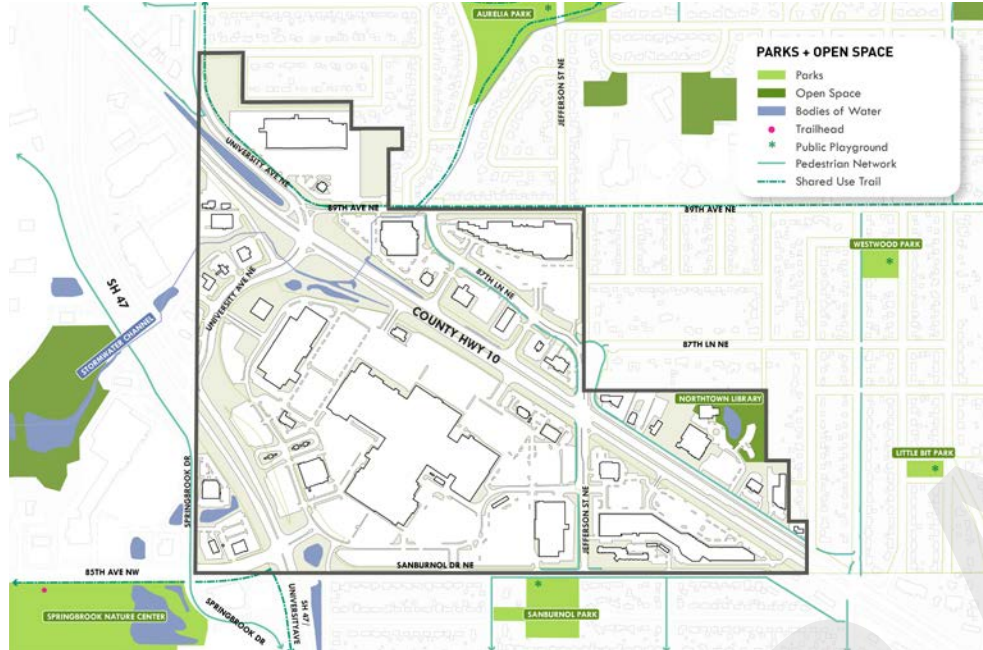


FIGURE 5: LAND USE AND BUILDING AREA

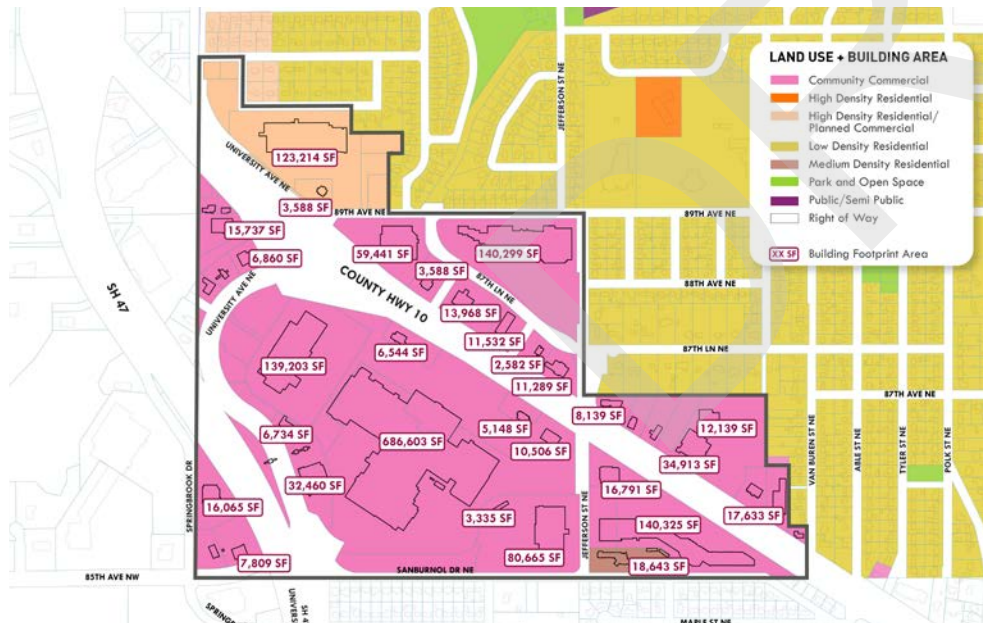


FIGURE 6: INTERSECTIONS AND CROSSINGS

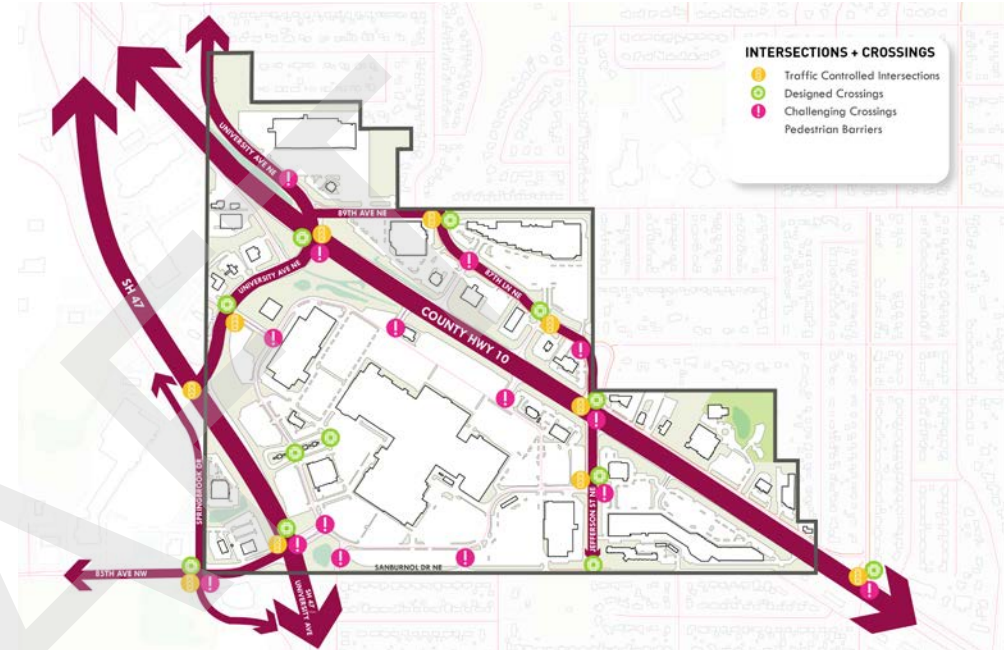


FIGURE 7: FIGURE GROUND AND BLOCK PATTERN

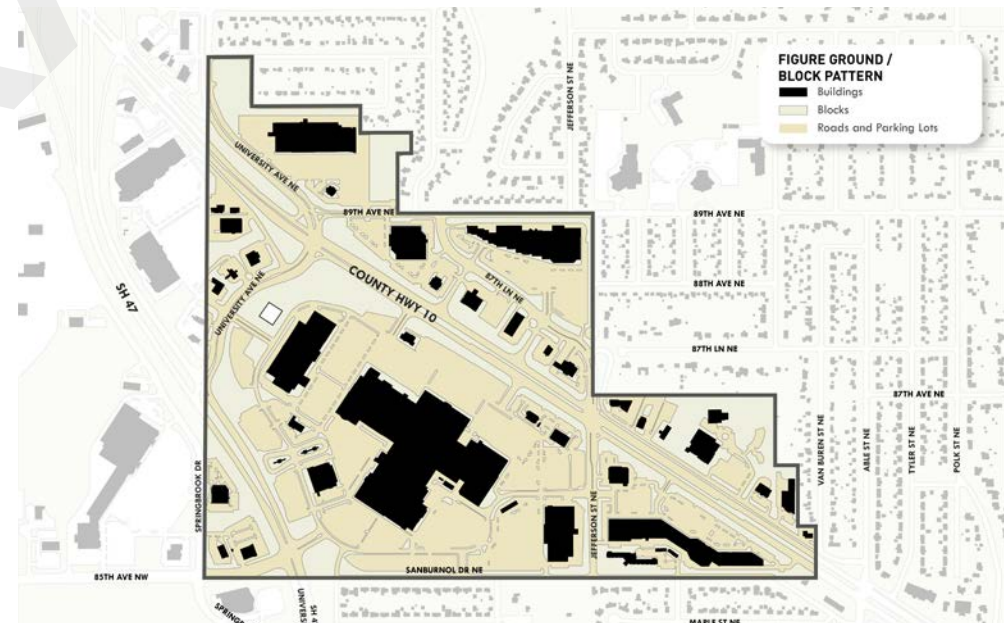


FIGURE 8: VIEWS OF EXISTING CONTEXT



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the timeline for the plan?

This is a long-term vision (25-30 years) for the area, requiring more detailed analysis, public improvements, and public/private partnerships. Early phases of public improvements and development are anticipated to begin within the next 3-5 years.

2. Who will pay for the changes in the area?

Redevelopment in the area will likely require financial partnerships and commitments between the City of Blaine, Anoka County, and other public agencies, along with the private development community.

3. What does this mean for the retail shops and restaurants in the area?

The vision plan for the area is to transform the district from a retail only district into a more mixed-use lifestyle center that includes retail shops, restaurants, housing, parks, and other uses. Retail will continue to be an important part of the overall mix of land uses and is key to creating a unique community destination here.

4. Does this mean Home Depot and Cub Foods are going to be redeveloped?

Home Depot and Cub Foods will likely remain in the area for many more years, until it makes economic sense to redevelop those sites into other uses. Even then, they could be integrated into the plans for the area.

5. What types of housing will be developed here?

The plan envisions a variety of housing types here, including senior, multi-generational, multi-family, market-rate, and affordable housing options. Exact types of housing will be determined in future redevelopment plans.

6. Will it be safer for me to walk and bike in the area in the future?

Yes, the plan calls for a comprehensive system of sidewalks and trails, as well as intersection improvements on busy corridors to enhance connectivity and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

7. Will there be more parks and open spaces here in the future?

Yes, the plan is organized around future parks, plazas, and open spaces, including the daylighting and celebration of Springbrook Creek.

8. Will public transportation options be provided?

Yes, a future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station is proposed at State Highway 47 and 85 th Avenue. This hub will provide BRT service to downtown Minneapolis and Saint Paul, along with local bus service to homes and other regional destinations.

9. How does the plan improve the roadway system in the area?

The plan includes several roadway changes and improvements, including safer intersection crossings and traffic calming measures along State Highway 47, County Road 10, and University Avenue. Future roundabouts are intended to resolve confusing intersections along these busy corridors.

10. How will this plan improve public safety in the area?

The future vision for the area includes uses that will create a more active, and vibrant district with more people living and working there and putting more eyes on the street, contributing to a safer place for everyone.

02

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

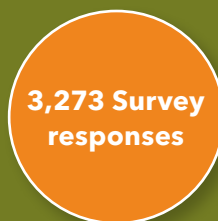
Overview

An extensive community outreach effort was conducted from September 2021 to April 2022 to help identify and understand the values, needs, and preferences of the community related to improvements in the Northtown District. Public outreach methods included community pop-up events, stakeholder interviews, an online community survey, and listening sessions. Some engagement activities were targeted to under-represented stakeholders to create welcoming opportunities for participation in the planning process.

Public engagement activities were held throughout the planning effort and in conjunction with the following project milestones:

- Design Charrette
- Preliminary Vision Plan Concepts Review and Approval

Engagement events and activities are shown in the timeline and have resulted in valuable information which will have influenced the Vision Plan recommendations and priorities to meet the objectives of the community.



Engagement Summary

COMMUNITY EVENTS

(125+ participants)

Three community events were held from September through December 2021 at the Blaine World Fest, a design charrette at City Hall, and a Public Open House. The purpose of these community events was to share project information, solicit community input on the Northtown District needs and opportunities, and to review the Vision Plan recommendations.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

(150+ participants)

The project team worked with staff to identify and reach out to Northtown area business and resident stakeholders. The purpose of this stakeholder engagement was to share project information, solicit stakeholder input on Northtown needs and opportunities, and to review Vision Plan recommendations. These engagement activities included a pop-up event, stakeholder interviews, and listening sessions.

SURVEY

(3,273 participants)

Online Survey

An online survey, intended to gather public input and feedback on planning efforts from the broader City of Blaine community, solicited 3,273 responses from September 2021 until February 2022. The survey solicited input on Northtown District needs, concerns and opportunities.

Website - Hub for Online Engagement

An interactive project website was the hub for the online engagement and provided communications, information about the project, and provided two main ways to engage with the Northtown District Vision Study, including the online survey.

CITY ENGAGEMENT

City Staff Meetings

The consultant team met on an as-needed basis with the City's project manager and any other necessary city staff to discuss project goals and needs, review progress on the planning effort, coordinate engagement efforts, respond to, and review requested information or deliverables.

Project Management Team (PMT) Meetings

The project team met regularly with PMT members, consisting of city staff representing various city departments. The goal for these meetings was to identify key stakeholders and issues, review proposed findings, discuss alternative solutions, establish plan recommendations and priorities.

Design Charrette

In October 2021, a 3-day collaborative workshop involving the consultant team, PMT, and key stakeholders took place to foster collaboration, review stakeholder input, site assessment, and market analysis finding, and explore potential futures for the Northtown District study area. The workshop provided a foundation for subsequent redevelopment/revitalization alternatives.

City Council Work Sessions/Meetings

During the planning process, the project team attended City Council Work Sessions to introduce the team and planning process, present the results of community input, review the draft plan and to gain final approval of the plan.

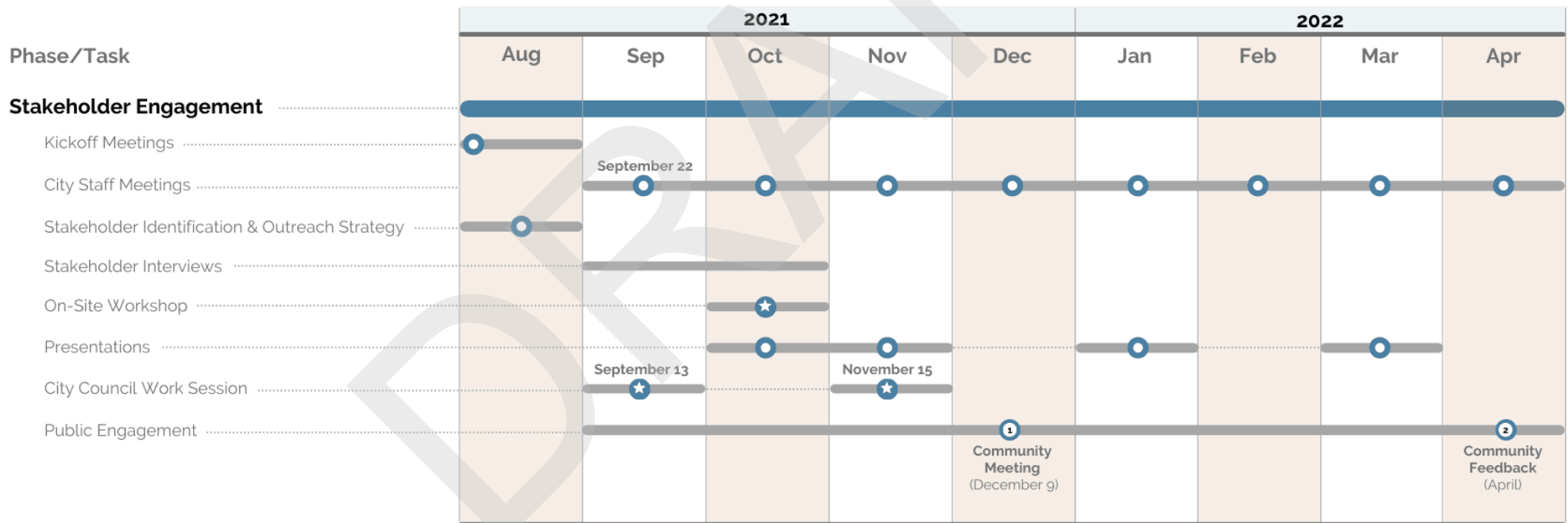
FIGURE 9: SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS



ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

Community engagement efforts spanned from September 2021 to April 2022. The process began by launching an online community survey on the project website and conducting stakeholder interviews. Targeted email blasts to stakeholder groups including a survey link and project information combined with in-person engagement opportunities occurred throughout the process.

FIGURE 10: ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE



Community Events and Stakeholder Input

Over 125 participants provided input to the Northtown District Vision Plan at the three community events:

- > Blaine World Fest in September 2021
- > Design Charrette - October 2021
- > Public Open House - December 2021

Image boards were used to engage and familiarize people with the Northtown District project and start conversations about what they envision for the future of the Northtown area (see *FIGURE 11*). Using color coded stickers, participants selected their highest priorities for future redevelopment of Northtown. A portion of the exhibit was dedicated for additional written comments, suggestions, and concerns.

The voting board events complemented the online survey and were essential for reaching alternative audiences.

Listening Sessions

The project team worked with city staff to determine appropriate forums, methods and/or events to facilitate engagement with typically underrepresented community members, including BIPOC, senior, and youth communities. A listening session took place at Spring Lake Park High School to engage the teenage/youth community. In addition, key informant interviews were conducted to gain a better understanding of potentially unmet needs, concerns, and aspirations related to the Northtown area. Paper surveys were also provided at multi-family and senior housing communities.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted with Washington Prime Group, property and business owners within the Northtown District, government agencies, neighboring cities, and cultural institutions.

FIGURE 11: IMAGE BOARDS AT PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE



Community Events And Listening Session

COMMUNITY EVENTS

SURVEY

STAKEHOLDER

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



What We Have Heard

FIGURE 12: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



Community Events And Listening Session - What We Heard

COMMUNITY EVENTS

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

SURVEY

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

STAKEHOLDER

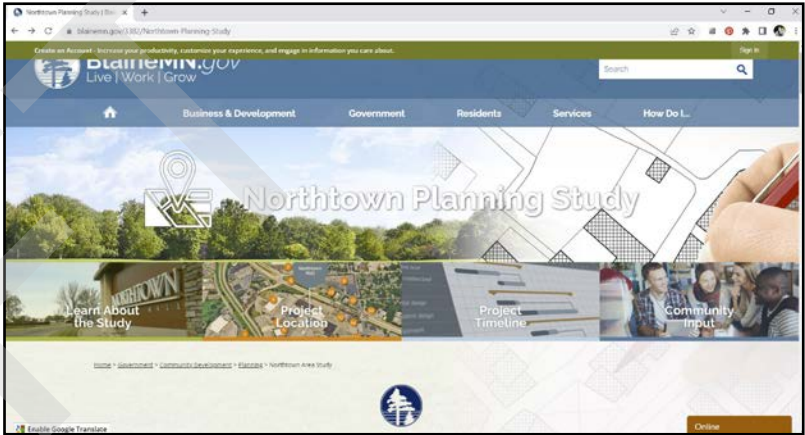
Survey

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 13: 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.



Project website - <https://www.blainemn.gov/3382/Northtown-Planning-Study>

FIGURE 14: TOP 3 CHOICES FOR WHAT RESPONDENTS LIKE MOST ABOUT THE NORTHTOWN STUDY AREA



FIGURE 15: HOW DO YOU TRAVEL TO AND FROM THE NORTHTOWN AREA?



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

FIGURE 16: TOP 2 PRIORITIES FOR CORRIDOR/STREET IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN THE NORTHTOWN STUDY AREA.

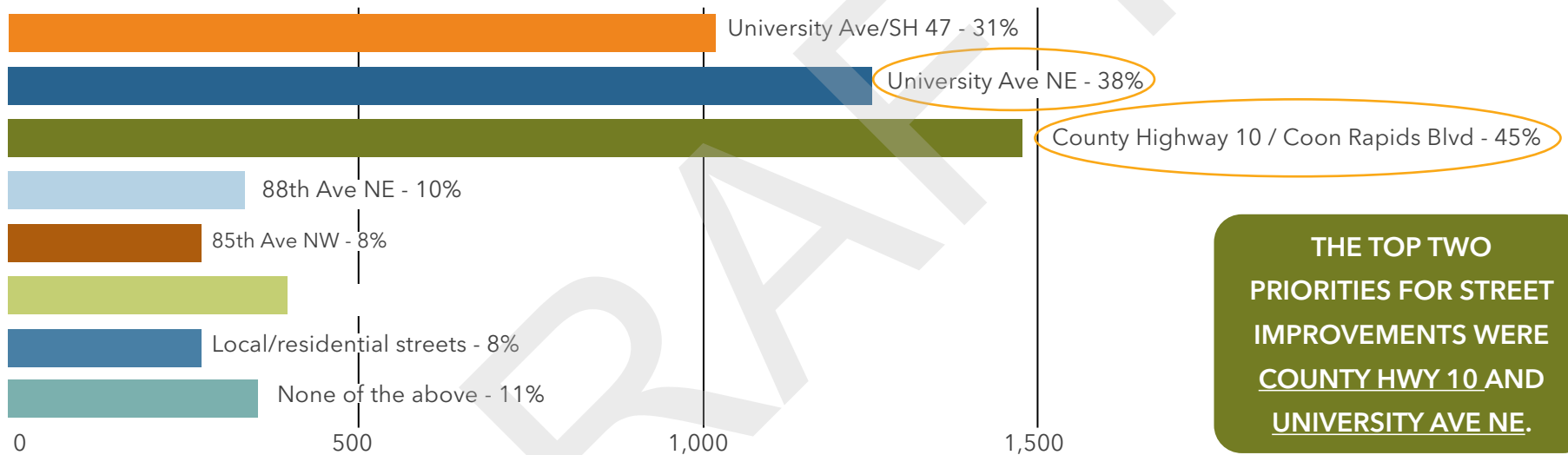


FIGURE 17: TOP PRIORITY FOR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN THE NORTHTOWN AREA

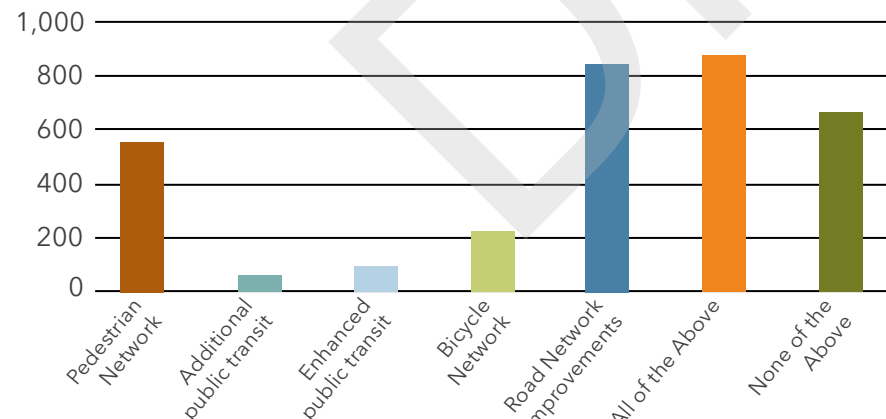


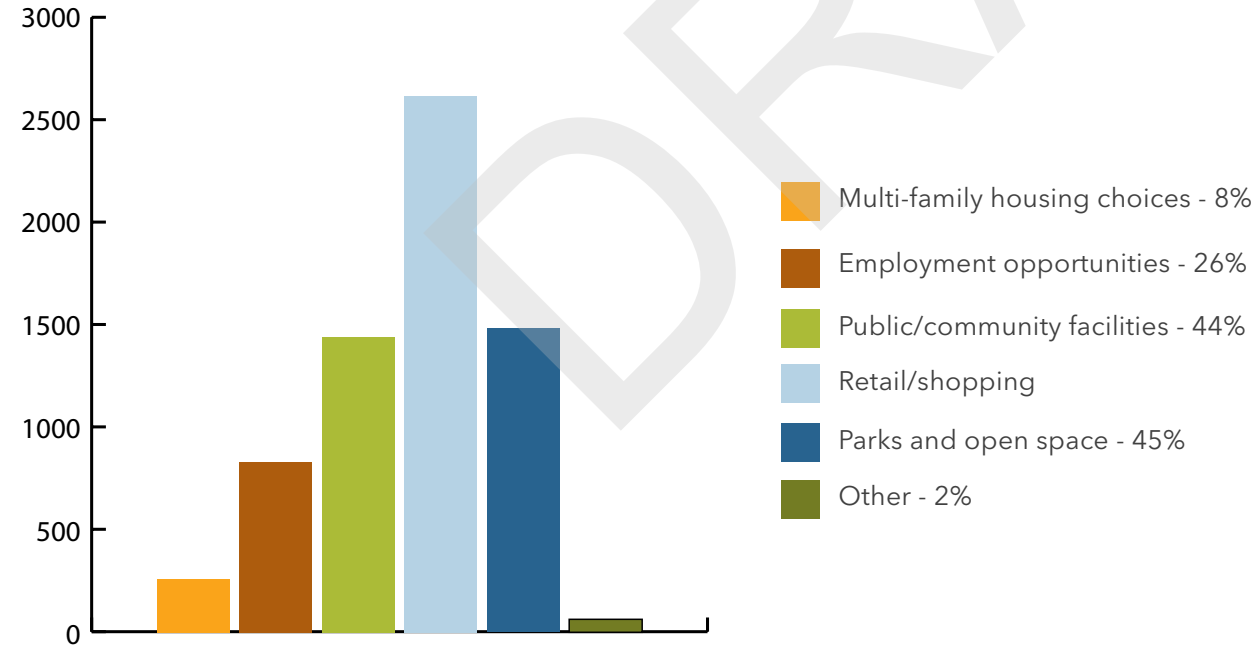
FIGURE 18: WHAT GOALS DO YOU THINK SHOULD GUIDE THE NORTHTOWN REDEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN?



FIGURE 19: TOP 3 CHOICES FOR TYPES OF ACTIVITIES OR FEATURES THAT WOULD DRAW MORE PEOPLE TO NORTHTOWN



FIGURE 20: WHAT LAND USES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF IN NORTHTOWN?



03

MARKET

Overview

The Northtown Mall and surrounding retail area has developed over the past 50 years from rural farm fields into the City of Blaine's primary retail destination. Many residents, business owners and retail tenants recall fondly the vitality of the district in the 1970's and 80's. At the time of its grand opening in October 1972, it was the third largest shopping center in the Twin Cities. The early success of the Northtown Mall spurred additional growth along the County Road 10 and State Highway 47 corridors alongside the mall.

The retail market has changed significantly since the heyday of the 1970's.. Other shopping destinations in the north metro area such as Rosedale Mall, located in Roseville, and Riverdale Village, located in nearby Coon Rapids, have taken market share. Retail is changing quickly and dramatically

throughout the country. Change is happening for a handful of key reasons:

- E-commerce is accelerating.
- Many markets are "over-retailed" - too much retail space has been built in the last fifty years and that space cannot be supported by consumer spending, causing significant closures of chain stores.
- Intense competition from discount retailers.
- Shifting consumer spending patterns: Millennials are buying less than previous generations and are focused on purchasing experiences over material goods.

Market Trends

The result of these trends over the past decade have resulted in less shopping activity at retail shops in the Northtown Mall and surrounding area, limited capital improvements in the area, and a growing list of deferred maintenance projects. Concern is growing from residents, retailers, and elected officials about what the future holds for this district.

Despite these challenges, the underlying market area remains relatively strong. The analysis of the market is based upon a five-mile radius centered at Northtown Mall. Major development types in the district (retail, housing, office) will compete for a share of demand (generated by population, employment growth, and other factors) in these large areas. This analysis defines the five-mile area as the “market area”.

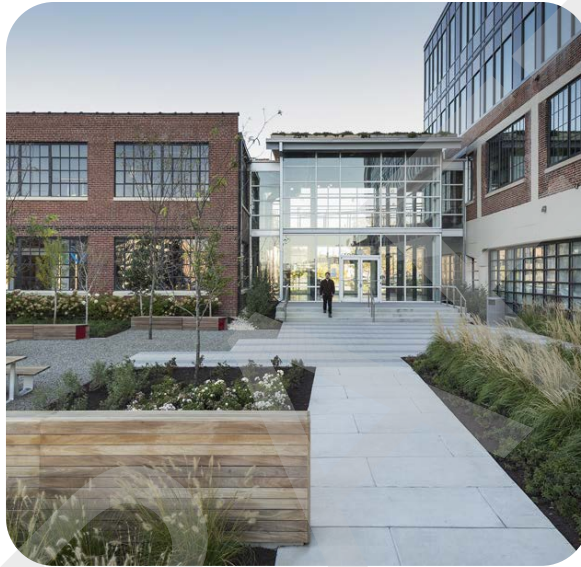
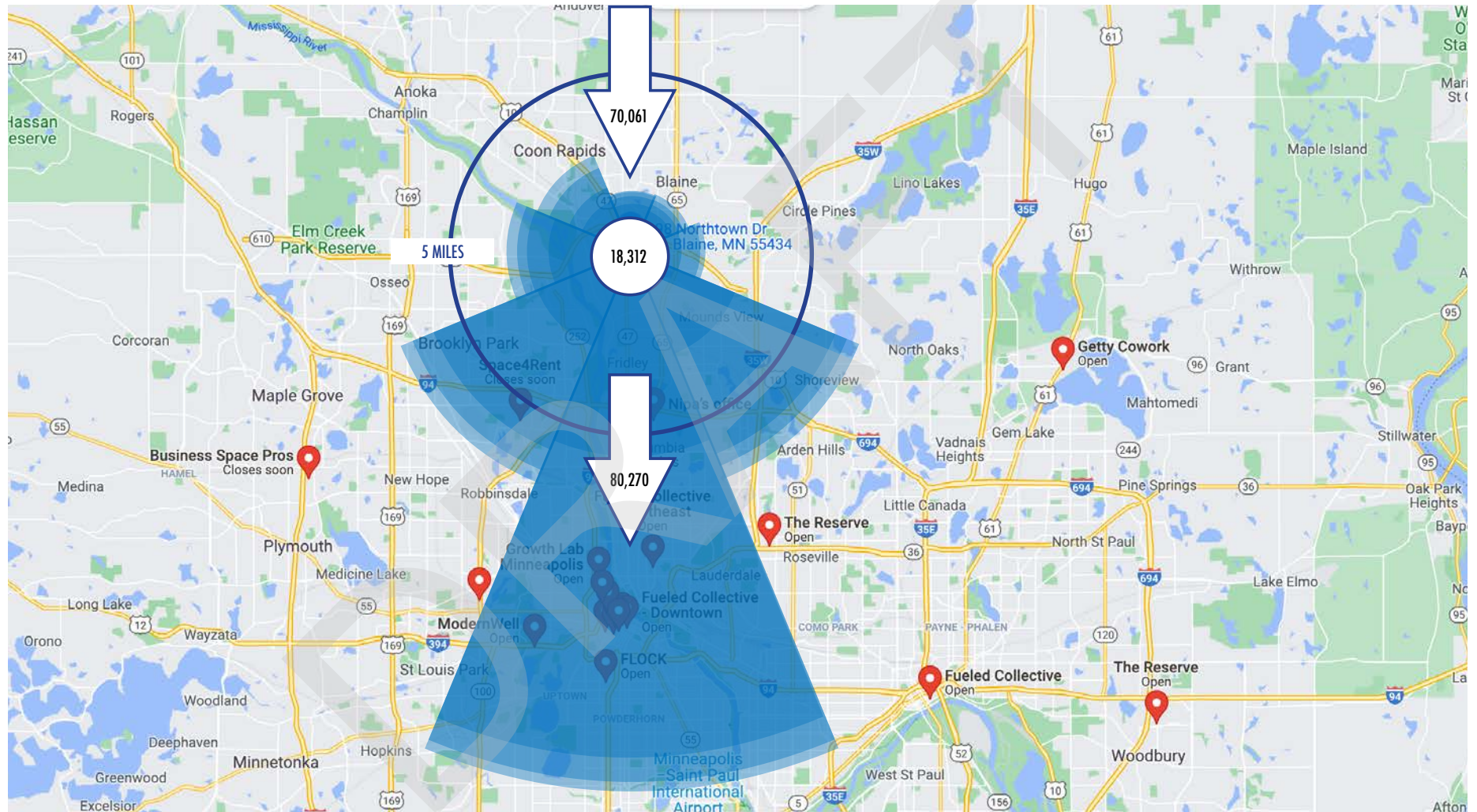


FIGURE 21: NORTHTOWN MARKET AREA



Housing

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 additional 425,940 SF of residential development.

Class A Definition

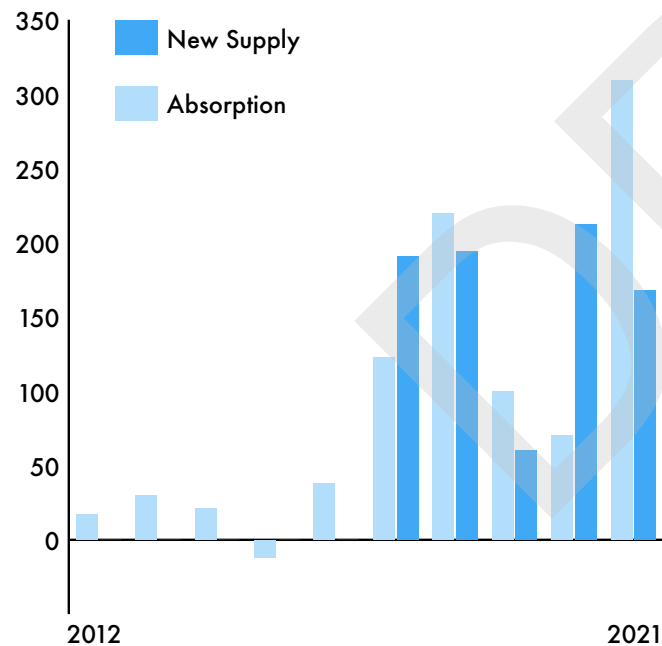
- Generally, product built within the last 10 years
- Properties with a physical age greater than 10 years but have been substantially renovated
- High-rise product in select Central Business District may be over 20 years old
- Commands rents within the range of Class "A" rents in the submarket
- Well 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.

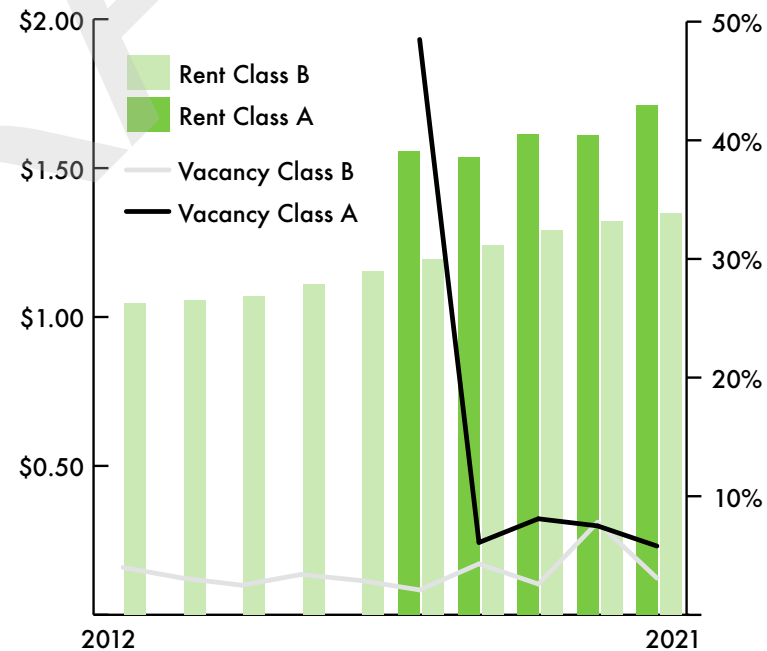
FIGURE 22: SUPPLY VS. DEMAND HOUSING CONDITIONS



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.

FIGURE 23: DEMAND FOR CLASS A HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES



Retail

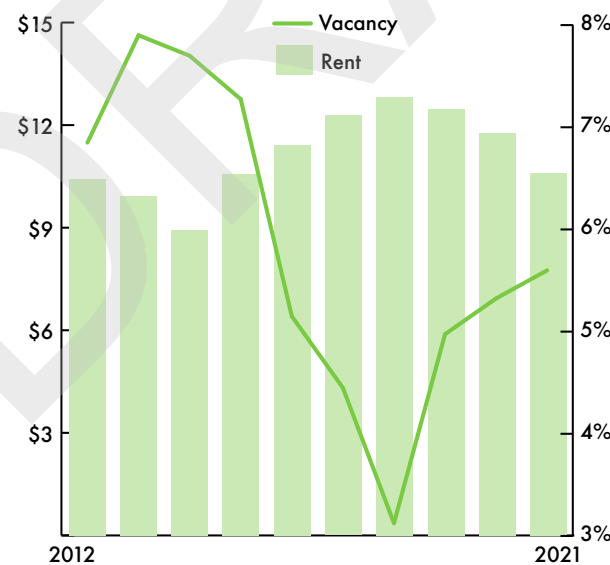
Retail development in the market is more about quality than quantity - there isn't a need for more retail, there is a need for better retail. The area is a destination for shoppers, capturing \$2B in spending while the aggregate demand from local residents is only \$1.5B. The dynamics encourage different 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 shop online or travel 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.

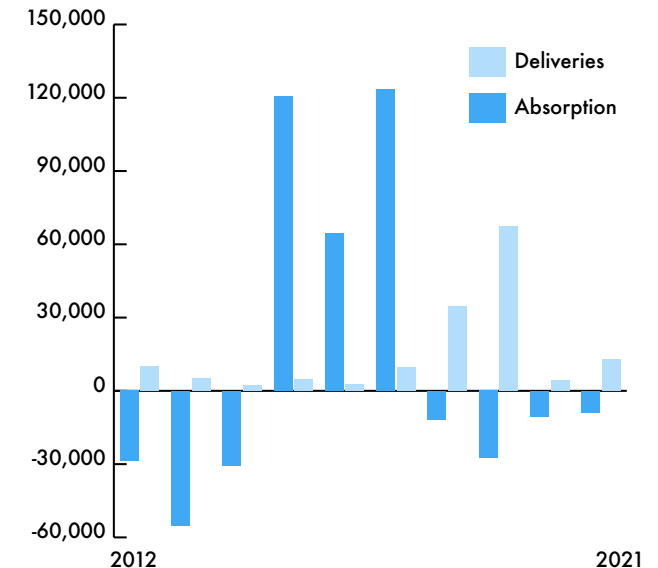
FIGURE 24: RETAIL MARKET STOREFRONT VACANCIES



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.

FIGURE 25: RETAIL MARKETPLACE TRENDS



Office

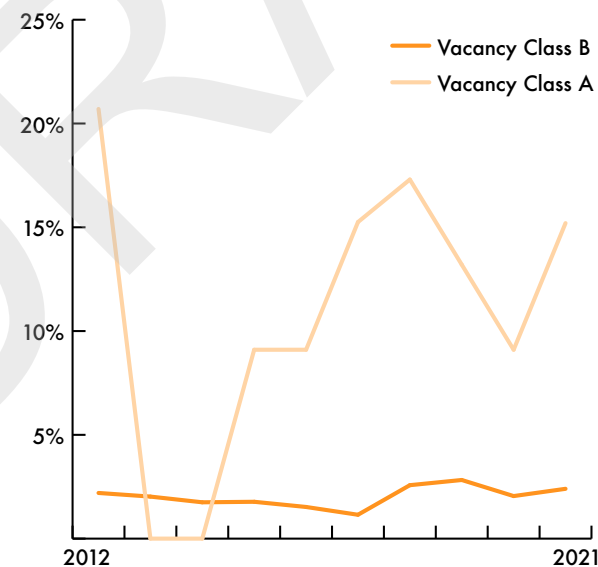
The office market in the study area is saturated with conventional product. No new product has been delivered to the market in the past ten years. The Class B market in particular has held remarkably steady. The data alone discourage office development for the current tenant mix, but emerging trends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

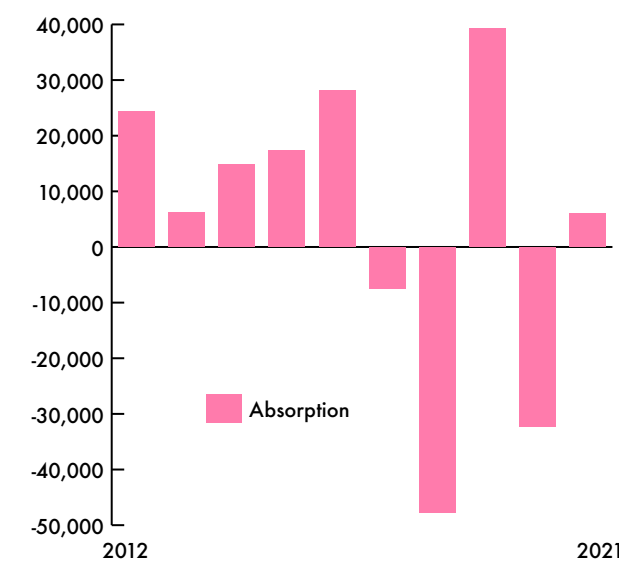
FIGURE 26: OFFICE SPACE VACANCIES



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.

FIGURE 27: OFFICE SPACE MARKET TRENDS





Office Space Precedents

04

DISTRICT PRINCIPLES

Overview

This set of Guiding Principles highlight the overarching goals for the transformation of the Northtown Mall District over time. As opportunities arise for public and private redevelopment or enhancements these principles should be integrated so that each project contributes to the betterment of a cohesive whole and supports the goals and aspirations of the Vision Plan. The principles are a means to convey the vision plan aspirations, provide a common language for discussion and oversight, and assist to validate the ability of proposed plans to meet the vision. These principles should be re-evaluated periodically and refined as needed to ensure that the evolution of the Northtown Mall District is viable and meets community goals and aspirations for the area.



District 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 by providing places for the community to gather
- Provide parks and plazas as places for community events and gatherings
- Create programming for all seasons and multi-generational opportunities to bring people together
- Embrace the identity of Blaine and welcome the Spring Lake Park, Coon Rapids, and Fridley communities into the fold



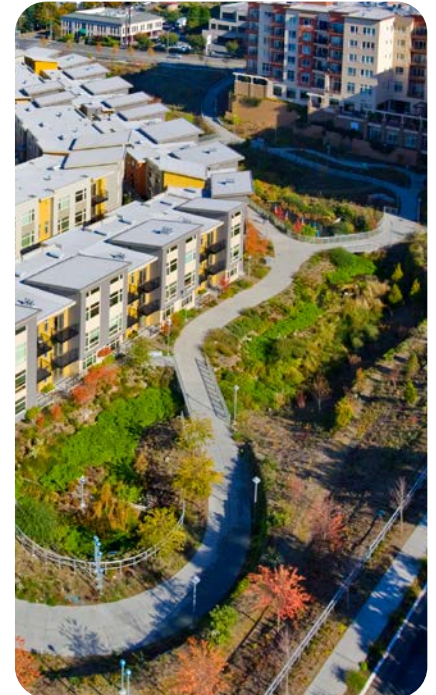
02 Welcome to All

- Develop places and activities that create an inclusive, welcoming environment for all people, including ages, genders, ethnic and religious backgrounds
- Create an inviting, vibrant district that welcomes all members of the community
- Create a greater sense of arrival into the district by enhancing gateways at the district edges
- Make the district feel safe and secure for everyone



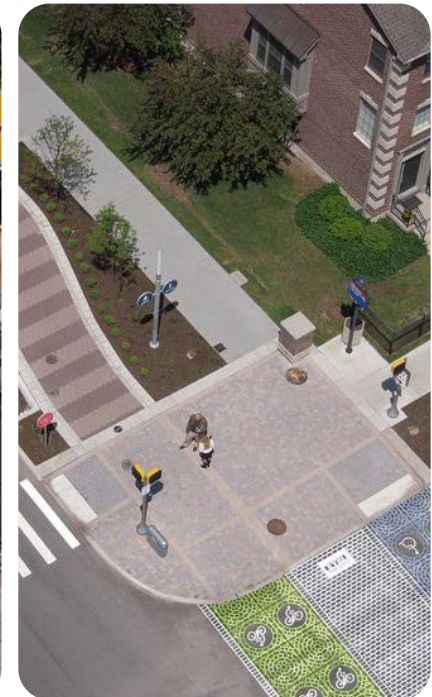
03 Gray to Green

- Integrate natural and resilient landscapes into areas currently dominated by empty surface parking lots
- Incorporate green infrastructure into the district as redevelopment occurs, including green streets and regional stormwater management strategies within the public right of way and green spaces
- Provide a variety of parks, plazas, and open spaces in the district to infiltrate stormwater, enhance air and water quality, while also providing places for people to gather and recreate



04 Barriers to Assets

- Connect what is not connected - develop a hierarchy of streets to create a more fine-grained environment that better connects the pedestrian and bicycle network to the surrounding area
- Untangle what is tangled - create an intuitive system of streets throughout the district
- Consider opportunities to implement roundabouts at key intersections along County Road 10 to better manage traffic flows in the area
- Provide safe and convenient active transportation connections across State Hwy 47 and County Road 10
- Integrate the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) transit center and re-envision as a mobility hub that features bike share parking, e-scooters, rideshare/TNCs, and carshare to improve accessibility to transit, shared mobility and active transportation
- Be innovative & forward-thinking - incorporate Universal Design, flexible spaces for delivery activities/rideshare pick-up/parking, integrate shared mobility options, electric vehicle charging stations and designated rideshare pick up and drop off areas



05 Complete the Streets

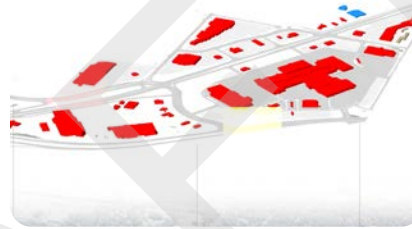
- Re-envision district streets such as County Road 10 to a complete street with an urban cross section, narrowed lanes, multimodal facilities and landscaping
- Provide dedicated, separate, comfortable/ low-stress and safe facilities for people walking, rolling, bicycling, taking transit and driving to use for transportation to and through the district
- Integrate sidewalks and bicycle paths throughout the district and connect them to the surrounding pedestrian and bicycle network and nearby amenities
- Integrate Best Management Practices (BMPs) including trees and landscaping to enhance the quality of the streetscape and increased comfort for active transportation
- Improve safety of pedestrian crossings with Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs), curb extensions to decrease crossing distance, and pedestrian refuge islands
- Create a mixed-use development centered around multimodal uses for which visitors or residents do not need to own a vehicle to access daily needs



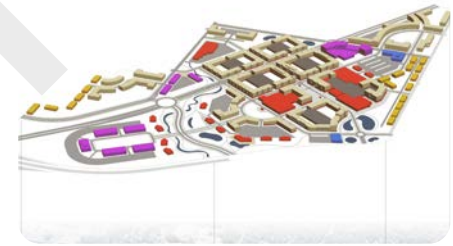
06 Strengthen the Mix

- Broaden the mix of land uses in the district to create a place where people can live, shop, work and recreate
- Promote more compact, dense development patterns that encourage a walkable environment
- Create a viable, long-term neighborhood and destinations for the surrounding community
- Make it unique - target investments that elevate experiences for people living, working, and visiting the district

EXISTING LAND USE

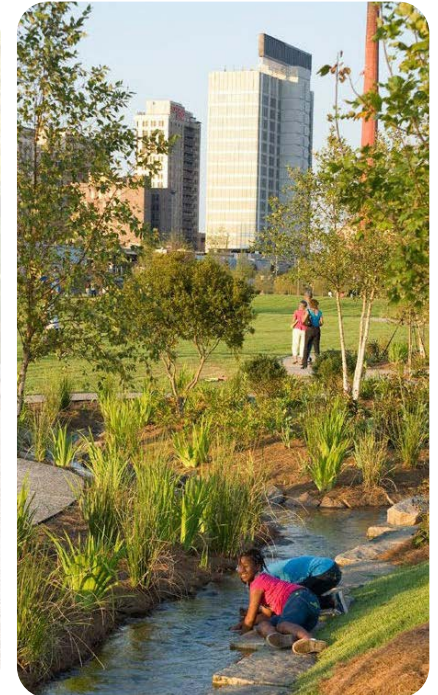


PROPOSED LAND USE



07 Celebrate Springbrook Creek

- Improve water quality through strategic improvements to Springbrook Creek
- Increase biofiltration capacity on site and mitigate current flooding issues by daylighting Springbrook Creek and expanding green space buffers along the creek
- Daylight and celebrate the Springbrook Creek as an amenity for the entire district to enjoy
- Integrate nature into the urban fabric of the district through the creation of a linear greenway along the creek



08 Move In

- Provide a diverse range of residential opportunities in the district - i.e. senior, multi-generational, multi-family, market-rate, and affordable housing options
- Integrate future development with surrounding neighborhood edges by transitioning the scale of new development adjacent to existing single-family residential neighborhoods
- 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 - consider district parking and shared parking models for parking demand/supply calculations and requirements
- Re-assess the true need for parking with an increase in ride-shares and future of mobility, right-sizing parking footprints and employing park once strategies across development
- Integrate electric vehicle charging stations throughout site
- Include locations for access/drop-offs for rideshares
- As part of planning incorporate rideshare and other shared mobility activity into the site planning and circulation process to eliminate conflicts and create desirable travel patterns



10 Unite the District

- Create a cohesive, unified district that integrates the Northtown District with the surrounding neighborhoods
- Connect adjacent neighborhoods and retail areas to this district with better wayfinding, public identity, and circulation opportunities
- Make it transparent - turn the commercial uses inside-out, creating a more welcoming district centered on "Main Street"



05

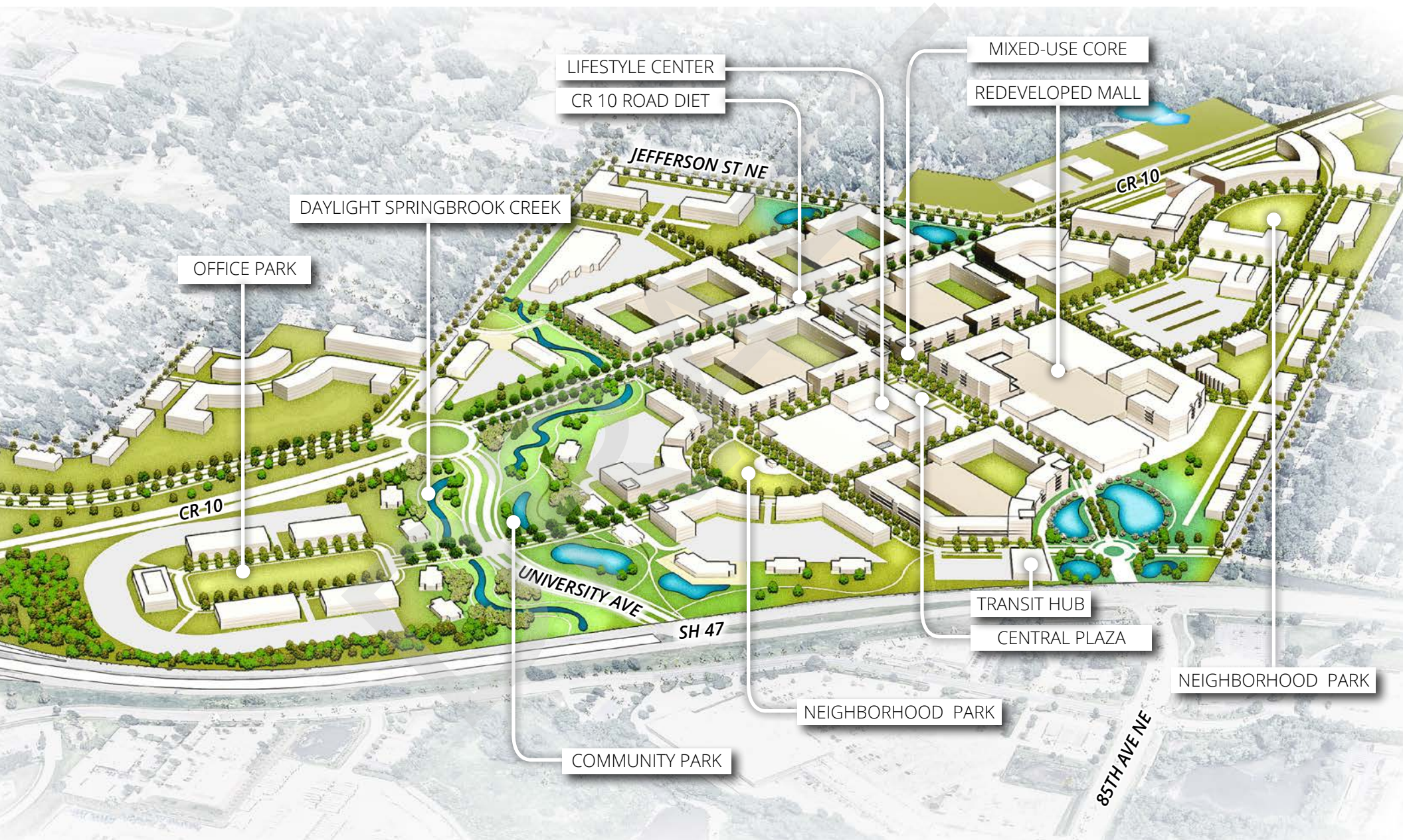
REDEVELOPMENT VISION

Introduction

The Northtown District Vision responds to multiple forces that are impacting retail areas across the country. With the advent of online shopping and downsized stores, an astonishing array of new technological breakthroughs, a more diverse cultural composition and the customer's desire for a more varied, stimulating and authentic experience, indoor malls have begun to externalize and urbanize, broadening their offerings by adding housing, hotels, civic uses, healthcare services, co-working spaces, plazas and parks, maker spaces, brew pubs, better transit access and traffic-calmed streets to the mix of attractions that create a more "complete" community.

The transformation from an entirely auto-centric, single-use district to a more sophisticated and balanced "place" takes many years to achieve. The Vision Plan is recommending an incremental path forward — much like the way cities have always evolved — recognizing that small successes are critical first steps towards realizing a sweeping vision. The following are building blocks that, together, comprise the Vision Plan.

FIGURE 28: NORTHTOWN MALL REDEVELOPMENT VISION



Key Components of the Plan

Several factors contribute to the transformation of the Northtown Mall into a more vibrant, mixed-use community. The following planning recommendations are key components to the plan:

1. The Mall is transformed from traditional suburban shopping mall to a more mixed-use, lifestyle center where people not only shop, but live, work and recreate too.
2. A variety of housing options, including rental, for-sale, affordable and senior housing alternatives will provide places for a diverse population to live in the district.
3. The plan illustrates smaller block and development patterns to better distribute traffic in the district while supporting a neighborhood scale and quality with an emphasis on a pedestrian friendly experience.
4. A variety of retail, dining, housing, office, lodging, and entertainment experiences are connected by roads, sidewalks, trails, parks, plazas and open spaces, to create a vibrant livable neighborhood.
5. Parking is right-sized and placed in structures when feasible to support the overall vision for the district as a more compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly neighborhood.
6. Transit and transit-oriented development is integrated into the redevelopment of the district to reduce the need for an automobile and promote alternative modes of transportation.

FIGURE 29: EXISTING VERSUS PROPOSED NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION PLAN

Existing Conditions



Proposed Conditions



FIGURE 30: PROPOSED NORTHTOWN MALL DISTRICT VISION PLAN

7. New outdoor parks and open spaces provide large and small gathering places for community events, festivals, and a variety of programmed and impromptu experiences.
8. A greater mix of land uses will provide the opportunity to create a more vibrant and economically viable district for the City of Blaine.



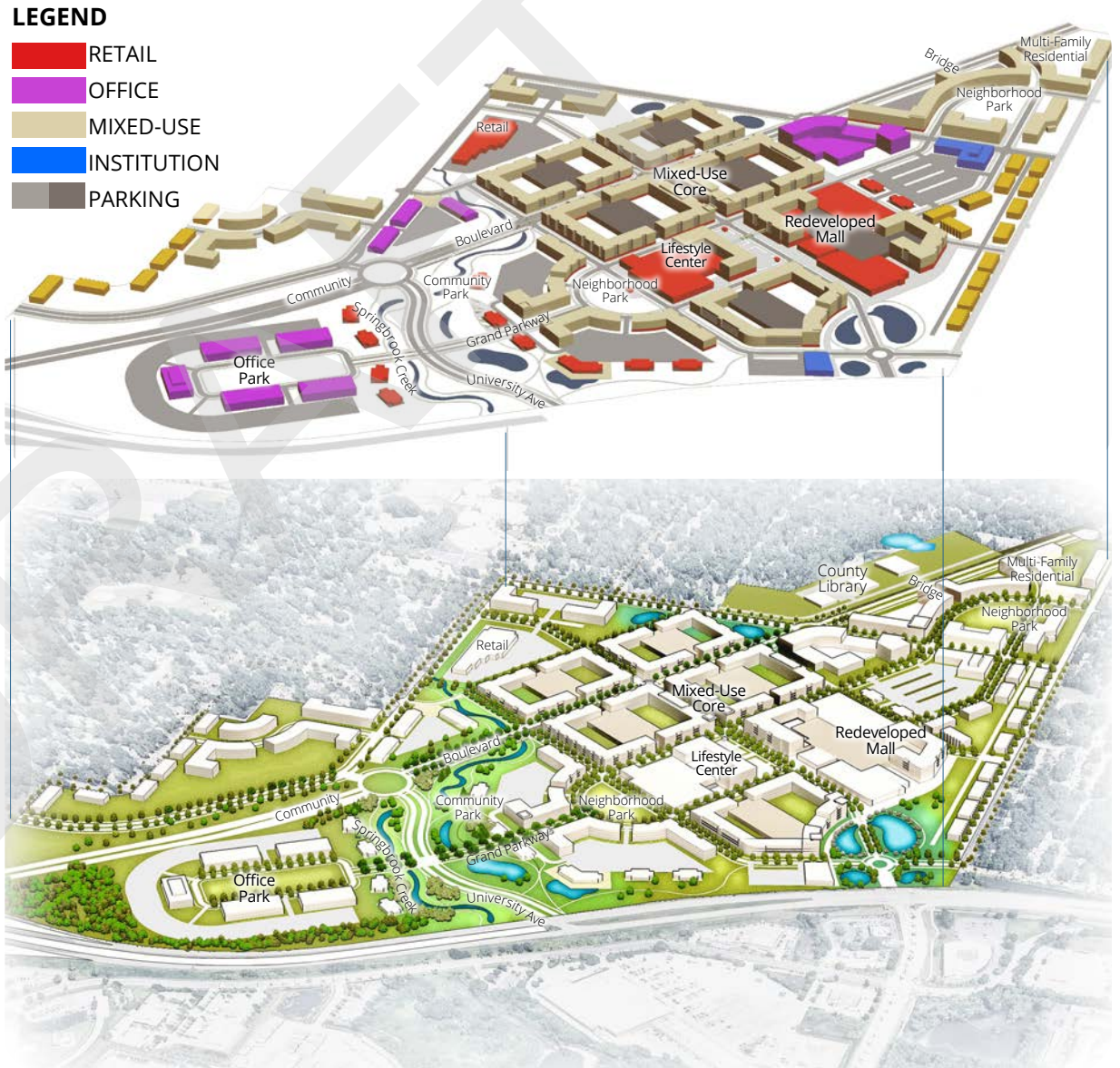
Land Uses

Mixed-Use District / “Lifestyle Center”

The Northtown District is defined primarily by commercial uses, large roadways and large parking areas. The proposed land use includes a mix of commercial, office, residential, civic, mixed-use, lodging, parks, and open spaces. Parking is incorporated into structures in both above ground and below ground or introduced along residential streets. The proposed mix of uses and compact, more dense development pattern will create a vibrant community that is active throughout the day. An interconnected system of parks, plazas, and open spaces will provide gathering places for residents and visitors.

A combination of factors, including changing demographics, real estate market, and slow economic recovery from the Great Recession are driving demand for high-quality, compact and walkable communities. Local governments need to plan for a diverse range of land uses and development to sustain a diverse economy. Mixed-use development can help the City of Blaine better respond to a growing market demand for walkable, vibrant communities with convenient transit linkages, proximity to jobs, and access to nearby public services and spaces and activity-oriented destinations.

FIGURE 31: FROM RETAIL TO MIXED-USE DISTRICT



The idea of a mixed-use district is not new or different. In the historic streetcar era, land use was shaped by transit. Land uses were mixed, with housing, clinics and offices above retail uses at transit crossings, and multifamily housing feathering back into less dense, single-family neighborhoods. Where older land use patterns failed, it was usually due to heavy industrial uses positioned adjacent to residential ones. The conflicts between the two were untenable. This led to new ideas about zoning, including the welcome idea of putting industrial uses off in their own quadrant, away from where people lived. The idea of separating land uses increased dramatically during the mid-twentieth century and was reflected in new zoning codes. As cars became the preferred way of moving around, it allowed us to separate land uses even more, to the point that it became impossible not to own a car in many places. To get from one place required the use of an automobile, often via a convoluted and disconnected route.

In recent decades, there has been a rediscovery of the benefits of mixing land uses and keeping them in much closer proximity to each other. The core cities retained that pattern, but now, more and more suburban communities are looking for strategies to mix land uses. The Northtown Mall District Vision wholly supports that idea, promoting a wide mix of land uses. The mix of new uses will create a complete, more self-sufficient, and safer community.

The plan calls for a mixed-use/"lifestyle center" at the core of the existing Northtown Mall site, retaining a few of the larger footprint retail anchor buildings, and the extension of 85th Avenue NW through the mall site to County Road 10, where more "fine-grained" retail establishments could locate, with housing uses located above. The move to extend 85th Avenue through the site will help to better distribute traffic into and through the area, but more importantly, it will provide the framework to create a mixed-use, "Main Street" like environment at the center of the district.



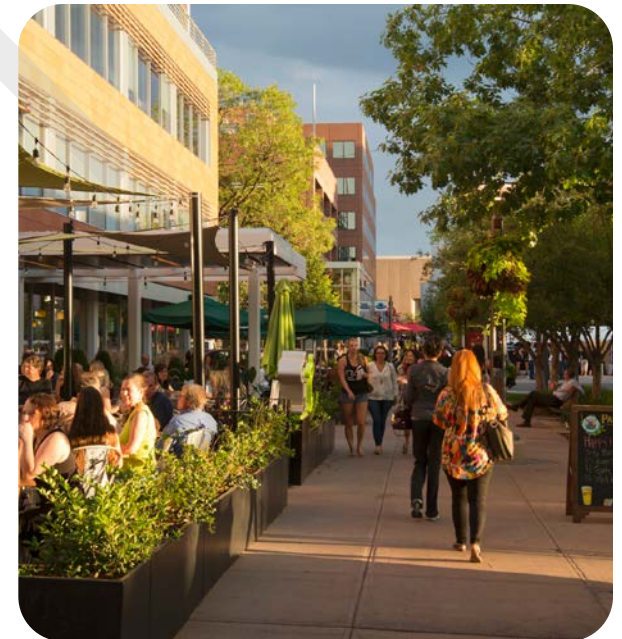
Compact Development

The Vision for the Northtown District promotes the idea of compact development through the redevelopment process. Compact development refers to development that uses land efficiently through creative and intensive site, neighborhood and district design. Examples include residential, commercial and mixed uses. This development style typically patterns the intensity of development that was typical of communities in the first half of the twentieth century, mixed-use residential neighborhoods within walking distance of commercial, retail, employment, school and institutional uses.

Typical densities in compact development neighborhoods tend to be greater than in most suburban developments. In commercial areas, multi-story buildings are typical, with building fronts right up to the sidewalk, and parking creatively located either behind and to the side of buildings, located underground or in structured parking ramps. Public spaces are typically included, providing opportunities for shopping, recreation, and socializing outdoors in all seasons. A range of housing and transportation options are supported, with

an emphasis on improving pedestrian and bicycle circulation, reducing necessary vehicle trips, and providing a variety of housing options, enabling people to live in one community throughout their lifetime.

Compact development can fulfill many community goals, including creating a traditional small-town character, providing quality places for families and mature adults to live, creating vibrant commercial places to shop and recreate, and supporting infill and revitalization of the Northtown Mall District.





TRANSPORTATION

Road Network

A new, more interconnected road network in the district will create the opportunity for a mix of new, smaller footprint buildings with housing, civic, co-working spaces, lodging and new retail uses. The vision for the road network in the district is to increase connectivity as redevelopment takes place. As redevelopment of the mall occurs, the plan proposes the introduction of a gridded network of more pedestrian-friendly streets throughout the district. Extension of 85th Avenue NW from State Highway 47 to County Road 10, through the heart of the mall site, will provide a catalyst for redevelopment of the mall into a mixed-use lifestyle center. It will also provide better access to and from the mall area and serve as a “Main Street” for the new community.

Discussions with community and transportation stakeholders suggest that traffic and wayfinding in the district is not only difficult to navigate, but several key intersections are very dangerous, leading to a high level of crashes and even fatalities. Resolving these transportation issues through a more intuitive road network and safer intersections was a high priority for stakeholders.

FIGURE 33: NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION ROAD NETWORK

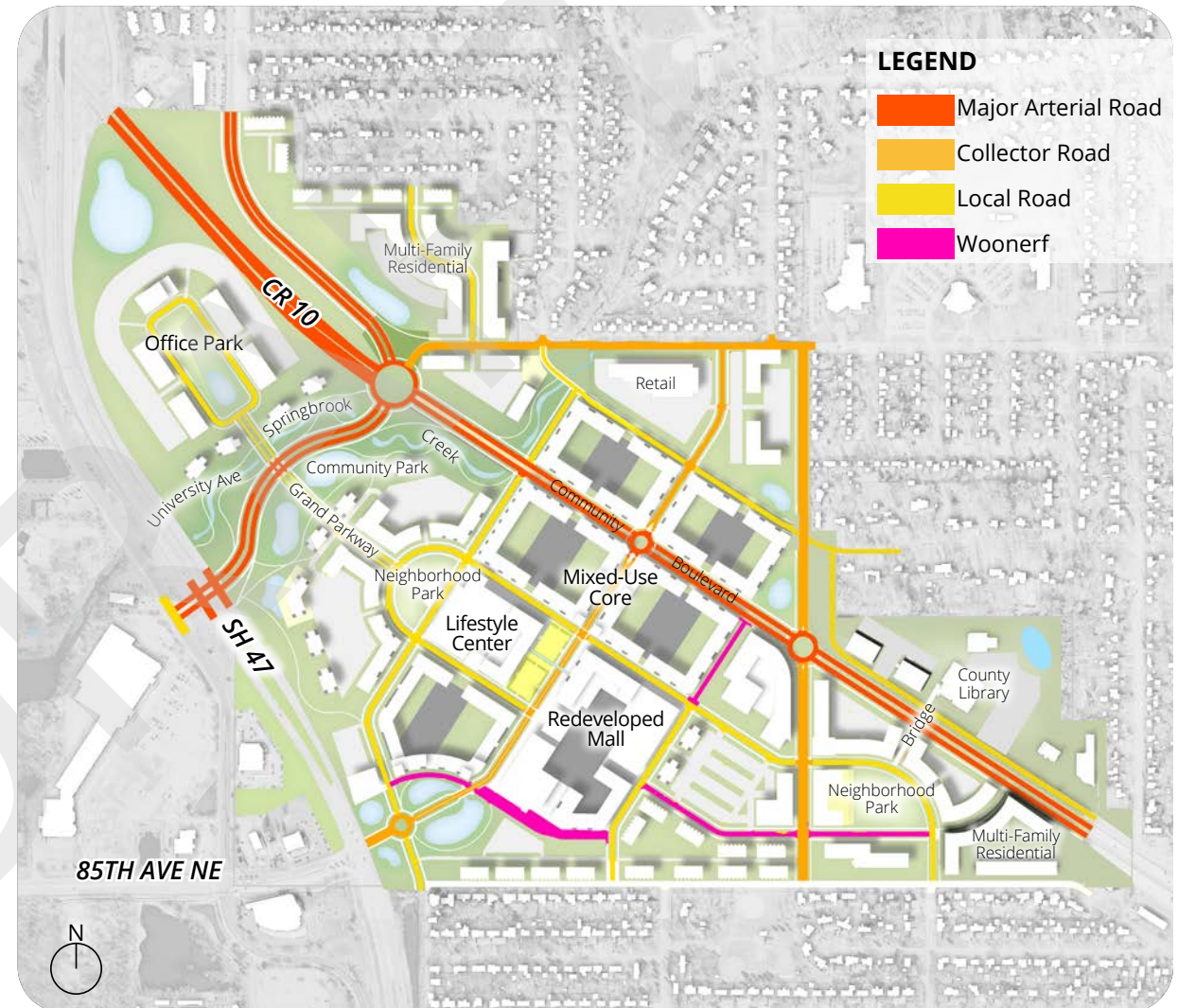
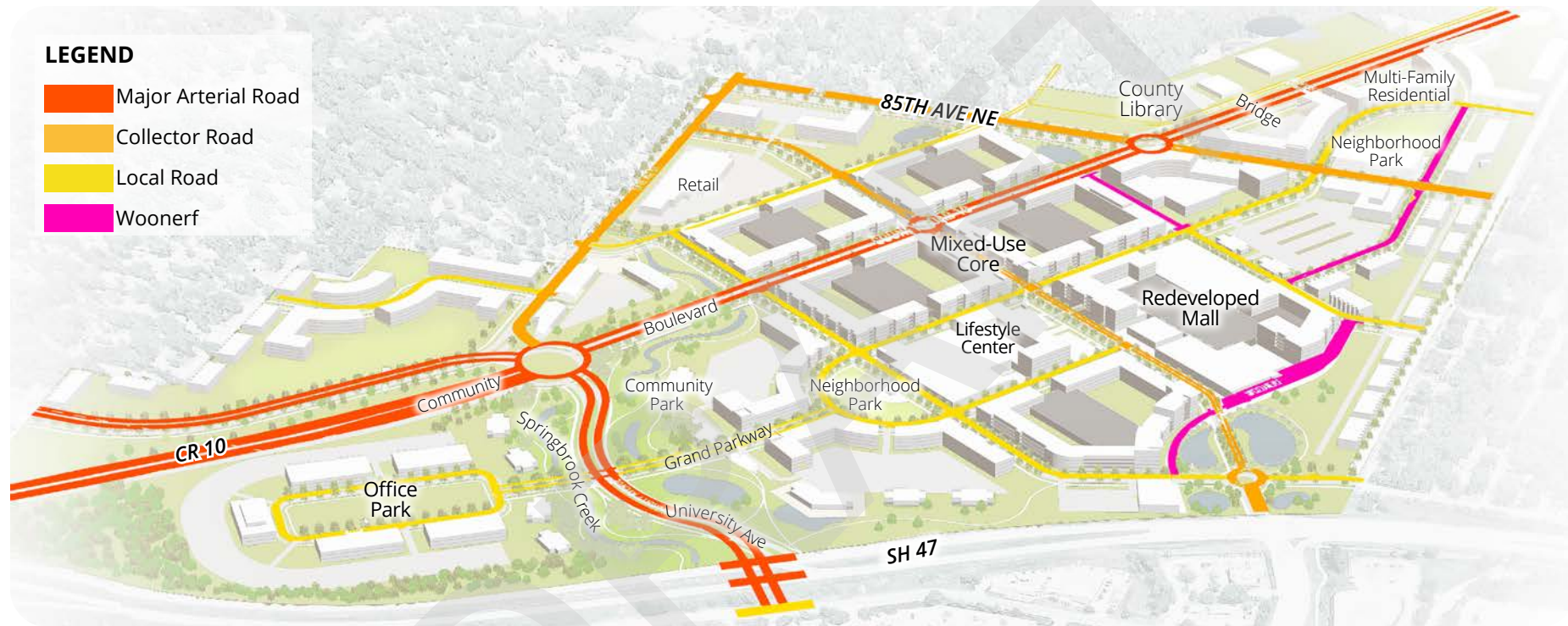


FIGURE 34: NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION CIRCULATION AXON



The plan proposes that 85th Avenue not only extend through the existing mall structure and connect to County Road 10 with a new roundabout, but continue north to 89th Avenue NE. This extension would increase the street frontage of the retail businesses in the district as well as increase the connectivity of the mall to surrounding neighborhoods. The plan also proposes a gridded network of local and collector

streets that create a finer grained system of blocks and development patterns in the mall area that connect to the existing system of local and collector streets in the area.

Traffic in the study area is already perceived to be heavy and additional development/ redevelopment in the area is likely to add vehicles to the road network. Therefore, a detailed

traffic study is recommended to determine the traffic modifications needed to support the redevelopment plan. Ongoing coordination with transportation stakeholders (Anoka County, MnDOT, and Metro Transit) will be needed to ensure that the transportation system is designed to handle existing and proposed traffic.

Reimagined County Road 10

Anoka County Road 10, which runs NW to SE across the study area, is an important arterial roadway, carrying traffic to, from, and through the Northtown Mall District. Originally designed to carry over 50,000 cars per day on the highway, currently it carries 19,000-20,000 cars per day, due primarily to the construction of nearby State Highway 610. The right of way for CR 10 is 225 feet wide, containing rural street sections with wide drainage swales on either side. Controlled intersections exist at Able Street, Jefferson Street, and University Avenue in the study area. Crash data indicates severe vehicular injury crashes at the Jefferson and University intersections, and several injuries to pedestrians trying to cross the highway at unsignalized crossings.



FIGURE 35: EXISTING COUNTY ROAD 10 SECTION

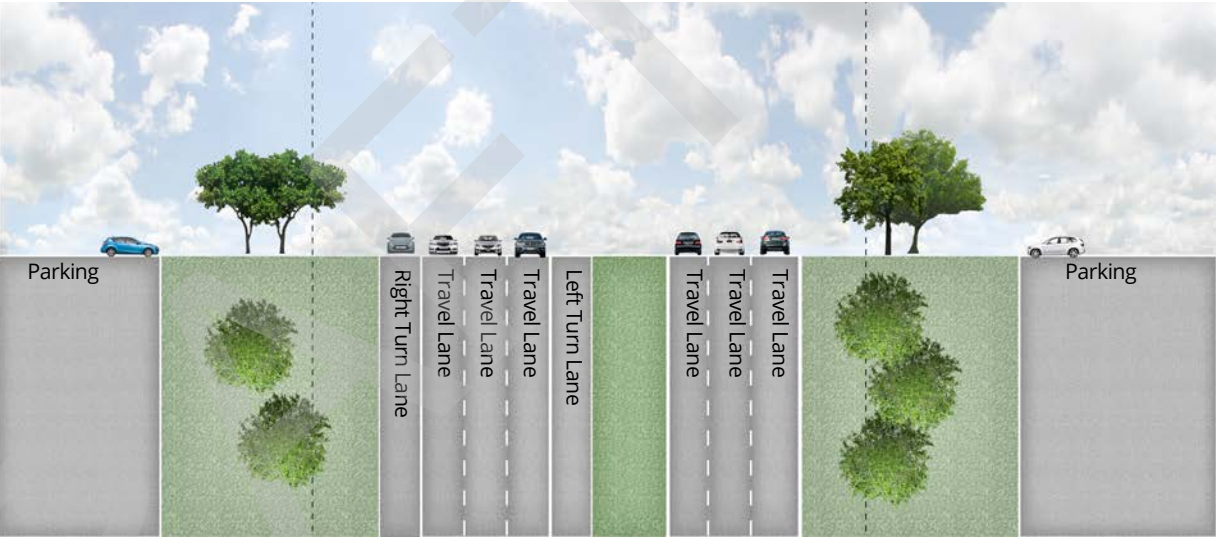


FIGURE 36: PROPOSED COUNTY ROAD 10 SECTION

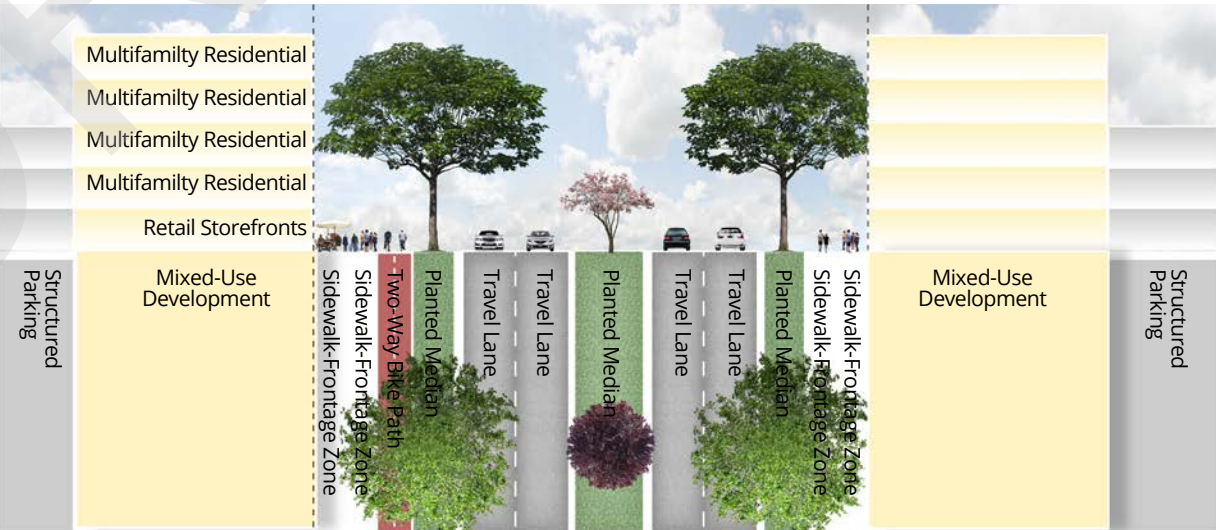


FIGURE 37: PROPOSED COUNTY ROAD 10 RENDERING



Community input reflected a great desire to address pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile safety at highway crossings and the ability to better connect the Northtown Mall Shopping Center to the neighborhood to the north, across CR 10. Stakeholders responded positively to the idea of reimagining the scale, character, and development patterns along CR 10. The proposed CR 10 would be scaled appropriately to accommodate existing and proposed traffic needs. Existing needs are far less than originally

design for, but increased development and activity in the area will likely require and increase in traffic numbers and patterns. A traffic study that takes into account existing and future traffic needs generated by future development, considers a future road network that can better disseminate traffic, and public transportation alternatives should be conducted to provide greater clarity around the potential to reduce the scale and change the character of CR 10.

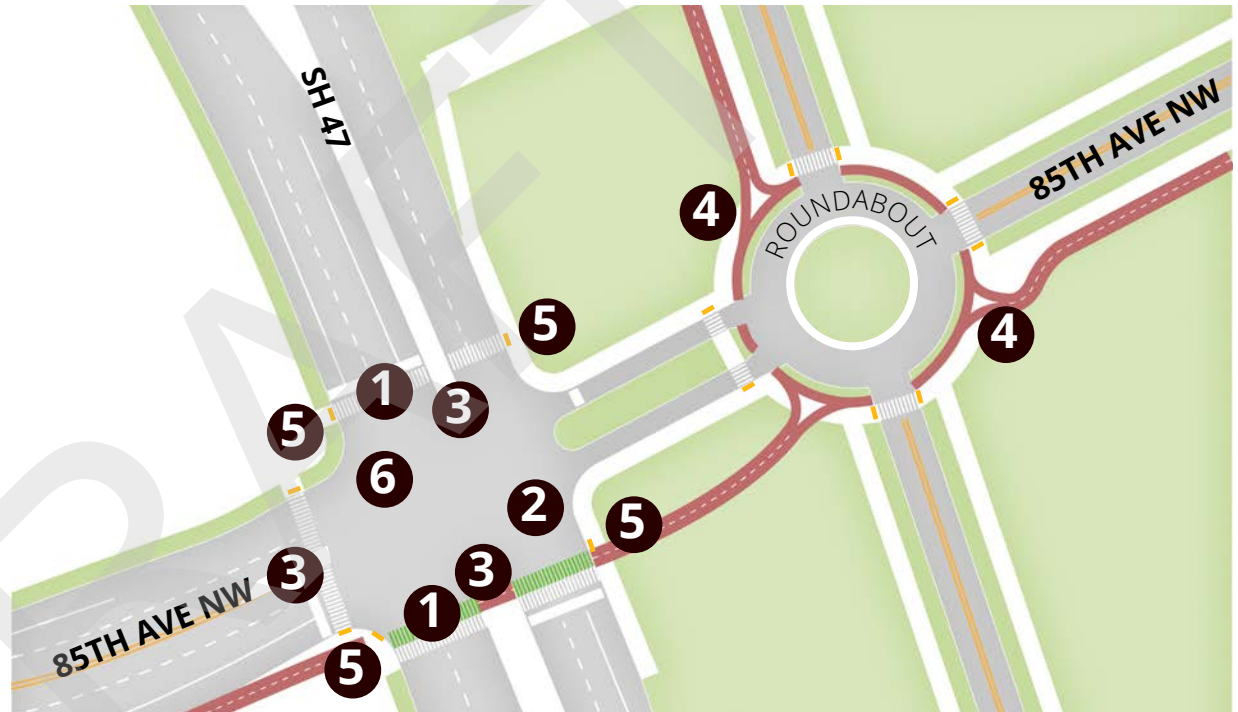
The plan envisions a narrower and more compactly developed CR 10, with more urban street fronts, wide pedestrian sidewalks and trails, tree plantings, lighting and signage similar to parts of downtown Anoka's Main Street. Buildings would front the street and contain active ground level uses, creating more vibrancy and a sense of arrival into the district. FIGURE 37 illustrates the future concept for County Road 10.

Intersection Improvements

Crash data for the Northtown Mall District identifies several unsafe and problematic intersections along SH 47/University Avenue and CR 10. Both corridors indicate above critical crash rates, several severe injuries and fatalities to motorists as well as pedestrians. SH 47/University Avenue and 85th Avenue NW is a particularly dangerous intersection. At the time of this writing the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) is planning for intersection improvements at this intersection.

The plan proposes the following intersection improvements along SH 47/University Avenue and CR 10:

FIGURE 38: SH 47 AND 85TH AVE INTERSECTION



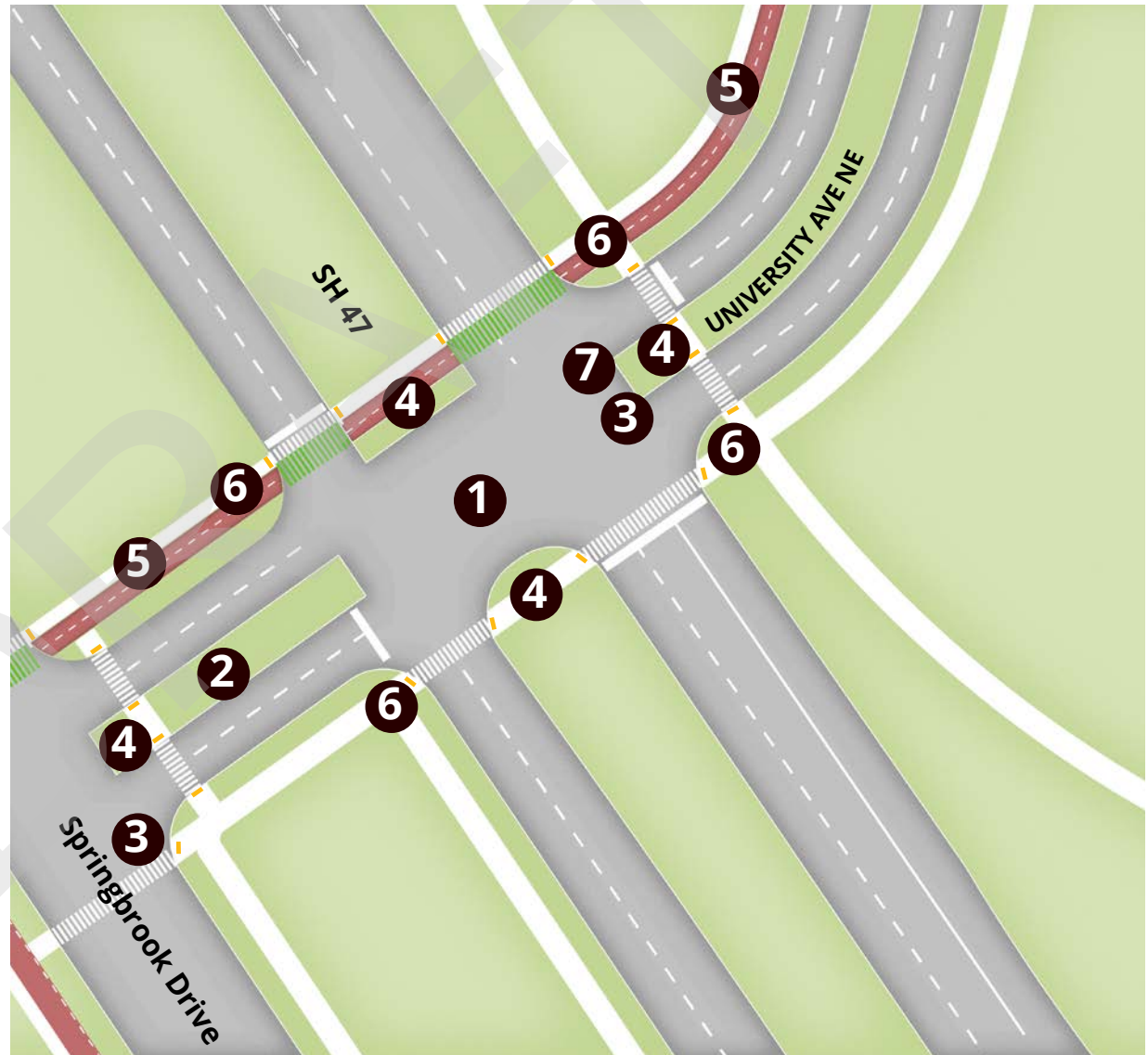
SH 47 AND 85TH AVENUE NW IMPROVEMENTS

- 1 Reduce the width of the crossings through road dieting and/or lane closure
- 2 Improve lighting, signage and roadway markings
- 3 Consider pedestrian refuge islands
- 4 Provide safe and ADA accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- 5 Provide ADA ramps and warning strips
- 6 Provide count-down timer signals

SH 47 AND UNIVERSITY AVENUE NE IMPROVEMENTS

- 1** Realign the intersection to be perpendicular with SH 47
- 2** Extend University Avenue across SH 47 to the frontage road (Springbrook Drive) to better connect the district across SH 47
- 3** Improve lighting, signage and roadway markings
- 4** Consider pedestrian refuge islands
- 5** Provide safe and ADA accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- 6** Provide ADA ramps and warning strips
- 7** Provide count-down timer signals

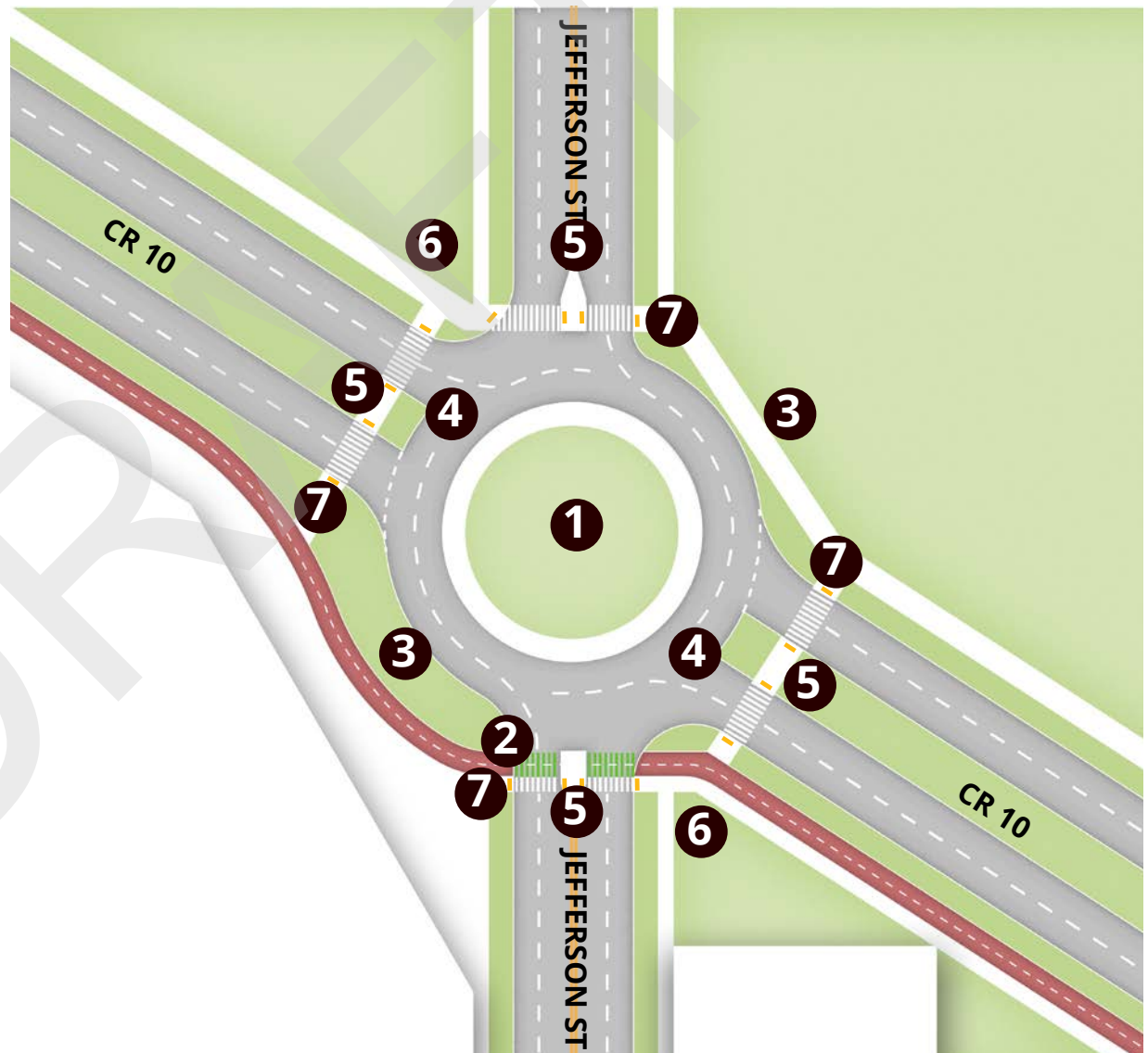
FIGURE 39: SH 47 AND UNIVERSITY AVE INTERSECTION



CR 10 AND JEFFERSON STREET NE IMPROVEMENTS

- 1 Provide a roundabout at the intersection of CR 10 and Jefferson
- 2 Design the roundabout to be multi-modal, prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle safety and access
- 3 Ensure that roadway lighting properly illuminates critical features at and along the roundabout, especially the pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- 4 Provide wayfinding signage and roadway markings
- 5 Consider pedestrian refuge islands
- 6 Provide safe and ADA accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- 7 Provide ADA ramps and warning strips

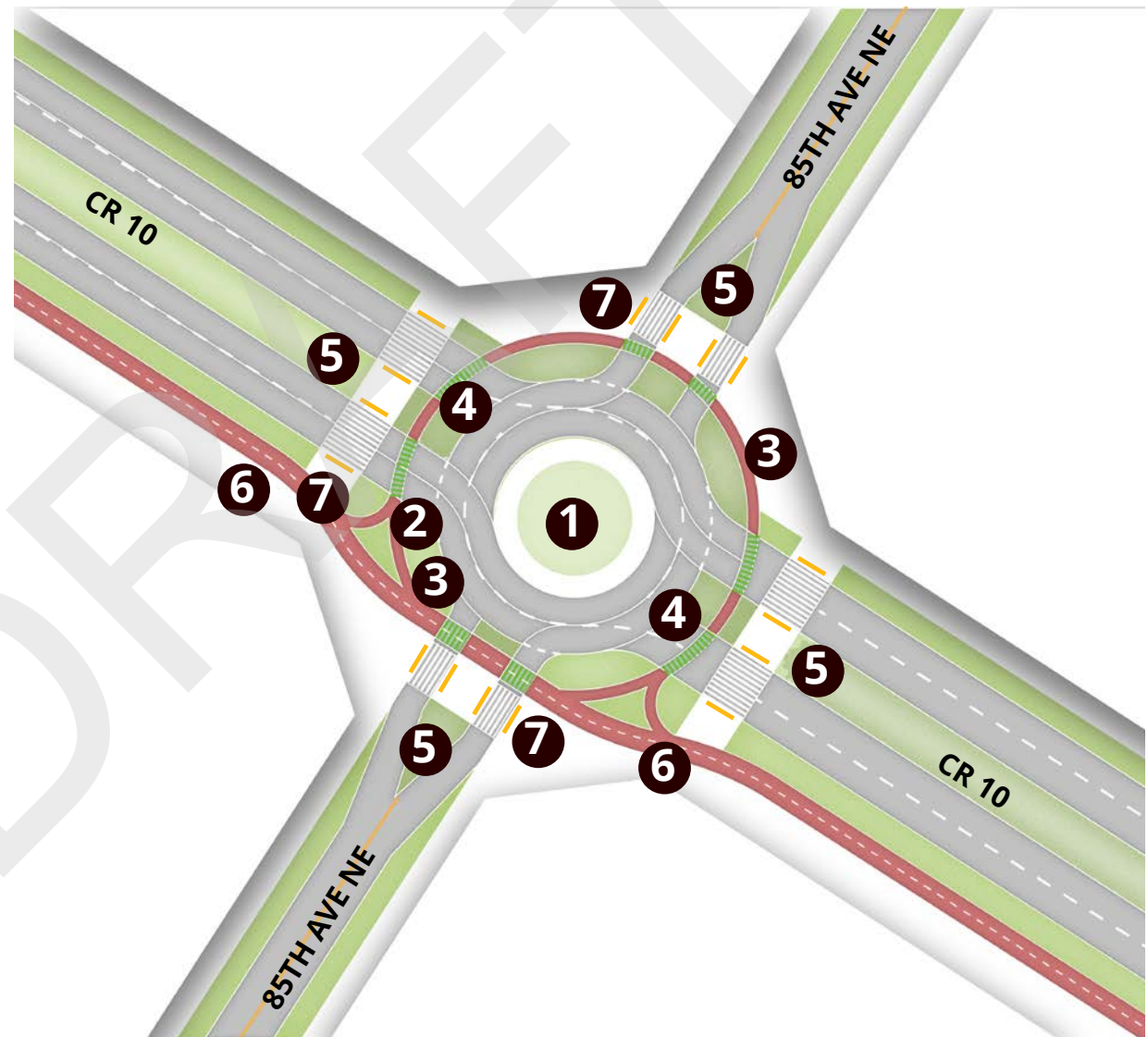
FIGURE 40: CR 10 AND JEFFERSON ST INTERSECTION



CR 10 AND 85TH AVENUE NE IMPROVEMENTS

- 1** Provide a roundabout at CR 10 and a future 85th Avenue intersection
- 2** Design the roundabout to be multi-modal, prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle safety and access
- 3** Ensure that roadway lighting properly illuminates critical features at and along the roundabout, especially the pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- 4** Provide wayfinding signage and roadway markings
- 5** Consider pedestrian refuge islands
- 6** Provide safe and ADA accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- 7** Provide ADA ramps and warning strips

FIGURE 41: CR 10 AND 85TH AVENUE NE INTERSECTION



CR 10 AND UNIVERSITY AVENUE NE IMPROVEMENTS

- 1** Provide a roundabout at CR 10, University Avenue, and 89th Avenue
- 2** Design the roundabout to be multi-modal, prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle safety and access
- 3** Ensure that roadway lighting properly illuminates critical features at and along the roundabout, especially the pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- 4** Provide wayfinding signage and roadway markings
- 5** Consider pedestrian refuge islands
- 6** Provide safe and ADA accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- 7** Provide ADA ramps and warning strips

FIGURE 42: CR 10 AND UNIVERSITY AVENUE NE INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

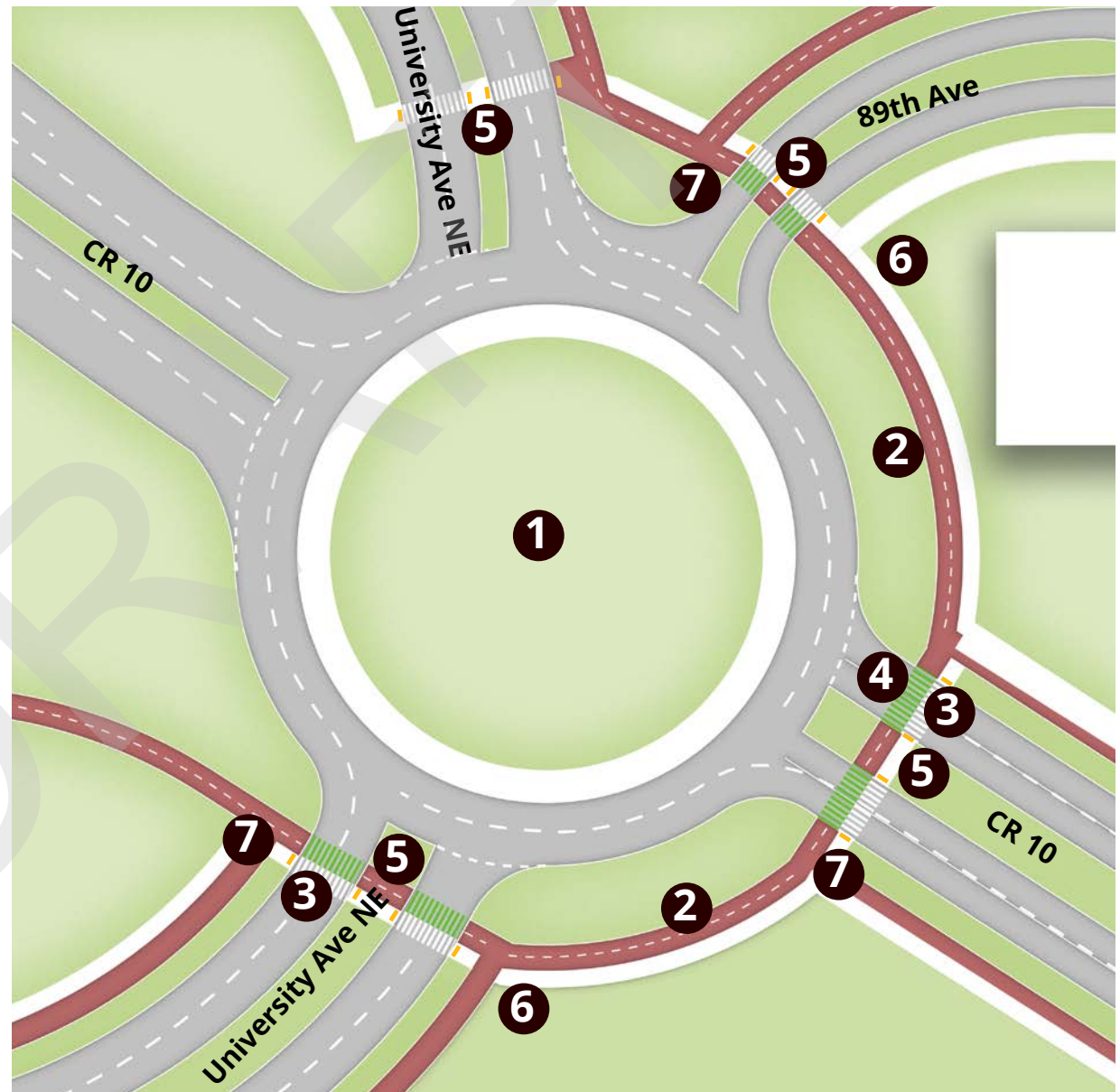


FIGURE 43: CR 10 INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

RIGHT IN/RIGHT OUT INTERSECTIONS - CR 10

- 1 Reduce the number of right-in/
right-out intersections between Able
Street and University Avenue NE



Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

Pedestrian and bicycle sidewalks and trails are very limited in the Northtown Mall study area and are almost non-existent on the mall property itself. FIGURE 44 illustrates the existing pedestrian and bicycle network in the study area. Community input called for a much more connected district with enhanced pedestrian and bike connections along with safe and accessible roadway crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The plan proposes a comprehensive network of sidewalks and trails to better connect the Northtown Mall District to surrounding neighborhoods, provide alternative modes of transportation to, from, and throughout the district, and enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety. Specific goals the plan proposes include:



FIGURE 44: NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION TRANSIT CIRCULATION PLAN

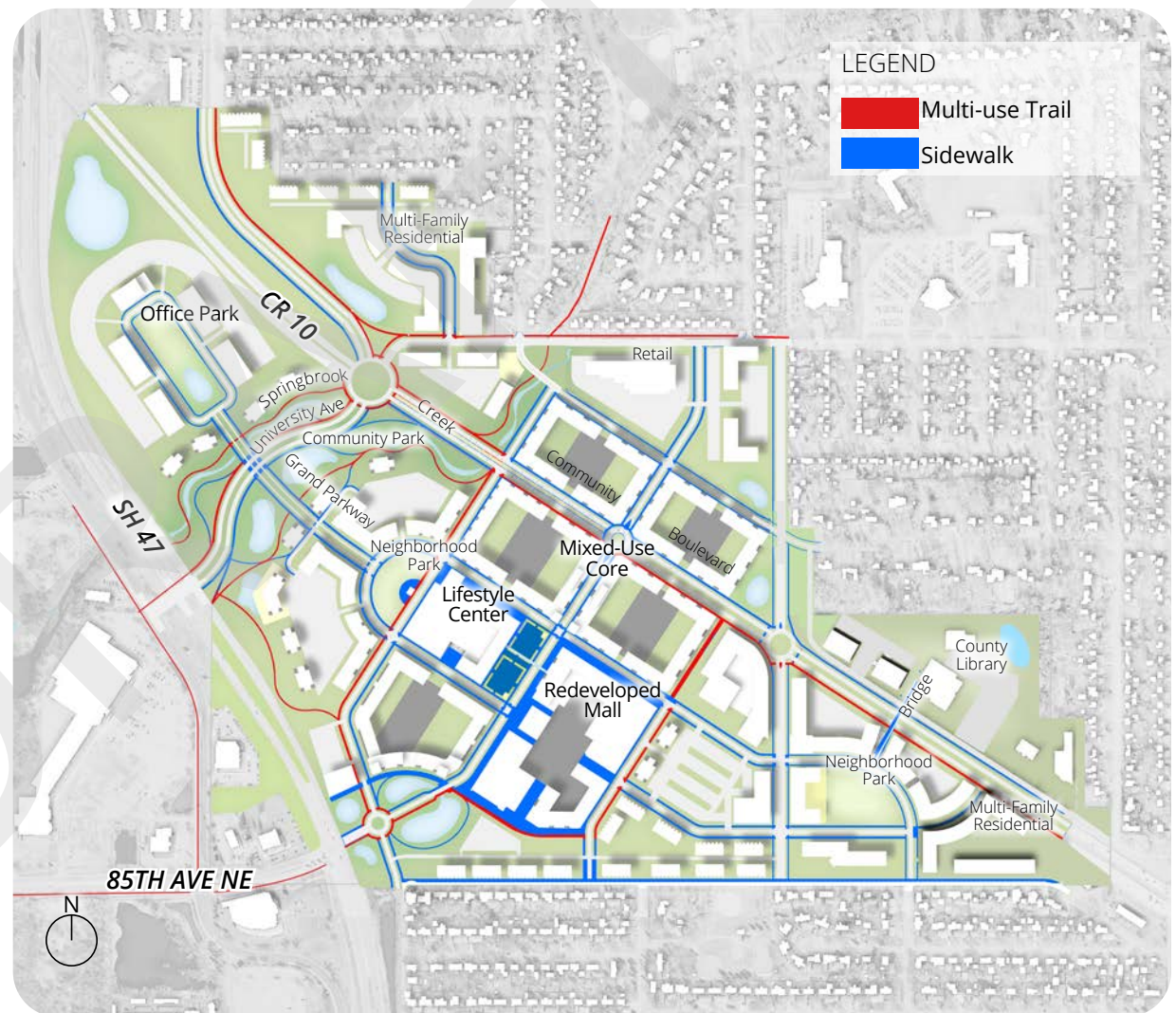
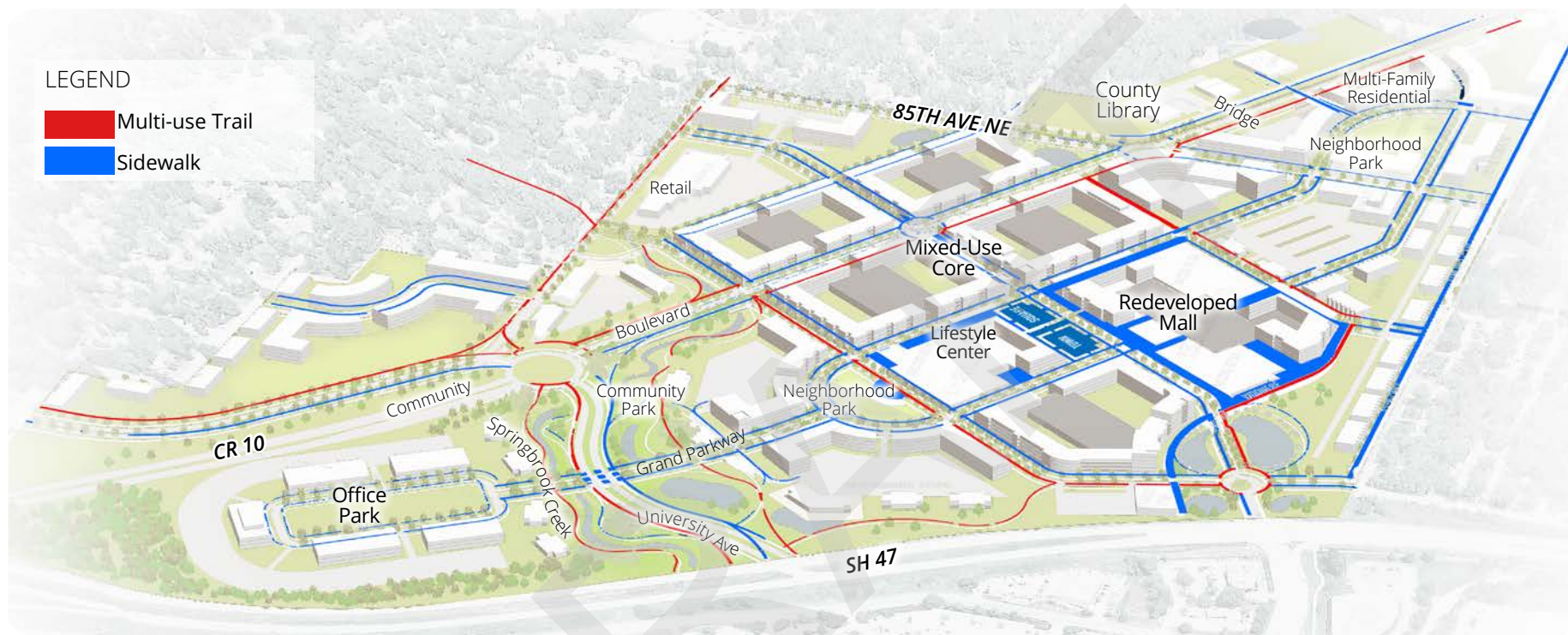


FIGURE 45: NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION TRANSIT CIRCULATION AXON



- Create safer roadway crossings at busy intersections, particularly on CR 10 and SH 47 (see Intersection Improvements)
- Prioritize accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the district
- As redevelopment occurs, provide a comprehensive system of sidewalks, multi-use trails, and on-street bike lanes
- Connect internal trails to existing nearby community and regional trails
- Connect pedestrians and bicyclists to nearby neighborhoods, parks, and community destinations
- Create a comprehensive wayfinding signage program to orient and direct pedestrians and bicyclists
- Provide bicycle facilities such as bike parking, pump and repair stations, lockers and showers
- Provide safe and accessible connections to transit facilities
- Provide active ground level uses to add vibrancy to pedestrian routes
- Provide ADA compliant pedestrian routes and crossings

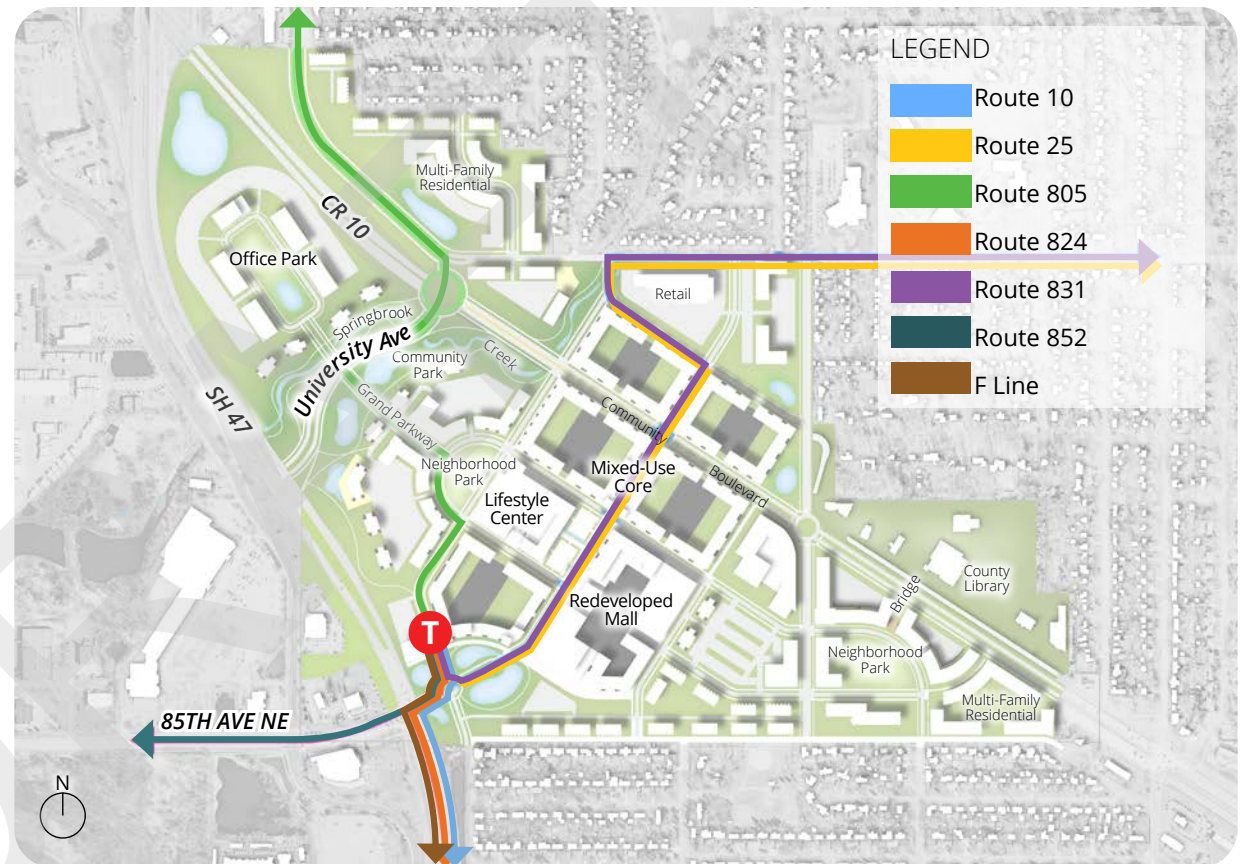
Public Transportation

The Northtown Transit Center, located at the Northtown Mall, provides a hub for public transportation riders at the center of the Northtown Mall District. Several Metro Transit local bus routes (10, 25, 805, 831), a limited stop bus route (824) and an express service bus route (852) provide public transportation service to local and regional destinations. Future Bus Rapid Transit (Metro F Line) is planned to serve the north metro area along the Central Avenue corridor, largely replacing Route 10 from downtown Minneapolis to the Northtown Mall via Central and University Avenues.

The future transit station for the Metro F Line (BRT) is planned to replace the existing transit station, adding upgrades to station amenities and services. The investment in the F Line provides an opportunity to capitalize on transit and incorporate transit-oriented development near the future transit hub. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) focuses compact growth around transit stops, capitalizing on transit investments by bringing potential riders closer to transit facilities and increasing ridership.

People who live in a TOD are five times more likely to commute by transit than other residents. Additionally, properties next to

FIGURE 46: NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION TRANSIT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN



transit can enjoy increases in land values of over 50 percent in comparison to properties located away from transit stops. TOD can also produce a variety of other local and regional benefits by encouraging walkable, compact and infill development patterns, reducing automobile

travel, and promoting sustainable urban growth. Adapting the auto-oriented Northtown Mall District to a more transit-friendly form can take place if city leaders plan for, and employ policies and strategies intended to encourage transit supportive land uses.

TOD draws on many of the same planning principles embraced by New Urbanism, Smart Growth, and the Livable Cities movement, including:

- Moderate to high density development in relation to surrounding development patterns
- A mix of land uses, horizontally and/or vertically
- Compact, pedestrian-oriented design and streetscapes
- Building design and orientation directed toward the street and transit facilities
- Small blocks and connected streets
- Parks and open spaces
- Limited and well-managed parking supplies



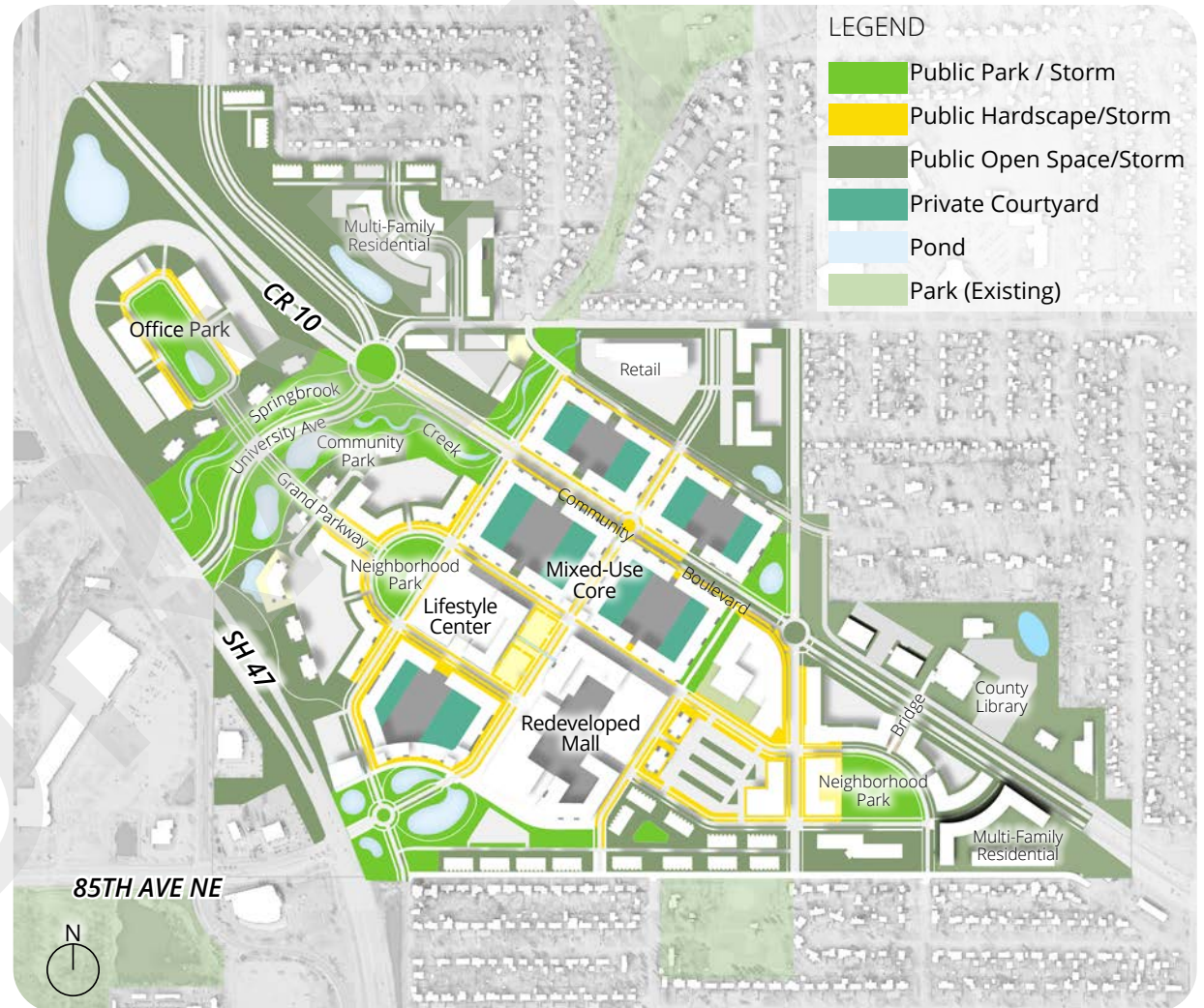
Public transportation improvements

PUBLIC SPACES

Public spaces are instrumental in creating community. Town squares, plazas, and pedestrian-friendly 'main streets' have long been and will continue to be the places where friends catch up with each other and community members gather for social events, festivals, and celebrations. Community input indicated that City of Blaine and surrounding community stakeholders greatly desire more green space and public places for recreation and community gatherings in the Northtown Mall District.

The Vision Plan proposes a much greener district, incorporating public (and private) green spaces, natural areas, parks, plazas, and streetscapes. The goal is that these spaces are truly public, accessible to people living and working in the district but also to people from elsewhere in the surrounding communities. These places may include water features, trees, creative stormwater management, and inviting places to gather, celebrate and play. Community scaled gathering spaces could support programmed festivals or special events and include large year-round events, farmers markets and unique offerings like ice skating, outdoor performances, movie nights, yoga, and outdoor classes – all promoting various aspects of social gathering and recreation.

FIGURE 47: PROPOSED PUBLIC SPACES IN THE NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION



Goals for the public spaces at the future Northtown Mall District include the following:

- Provide a variety of parks, plazas, and open spaces for community gatherings and events
- Incorporate more green space and stormwater ponds where stormwater can be managed
- Integrate stormwater management within complete street rights of way
- Daylight and celebrate Springbrook Creek as an amenity
- Integrate nature into the urban fabric

FIGURE 48: PROPOSED SPRINGBROOK CREEK IN THE NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION



Parks and Open Spaces

Parks and open spaces are the physical, social, cultural, and environmental “heart” of communities. They are the places of community identity, value, pride, and social interaction. They should be attractive, safe, and engaging with a range of experiences for gathering, relaxation and recreation so that they support the social and environmental well-being of the greater community. Parks and open spaces should be open and inviting to everyone. They should be centrally located and easily accessible - within a 10-minute walking distance - and link to street and other open space networks. Urban parks and open spaces should be well-defined and framed with fronting streets and buildings providing synergy of uses and making the space a focal point of a larger area or neighborhood.

The Northtown Mall District Vision Plan is organized around several key parks and open spaces equally distributed throughout the district, illustrated in FIGURE 47. Future parks and open spaces include an open space with stormwater ponds at the gateway/entry at 85th Avenue and SH 47, neighborhood parks located at the east and west ends of the future “lifestyle center”, a naturalized greenway along Springbrook Creek, and a park/green located at the center of a future office park, west of University Avenue, located on the Coon Rapids portion of the district.

FIGURE 49: PROPOSED PLAZA IN THE NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION



Plazas

Public plazas are places that bring economic and social value to the community through social interactions. They provide a venue for social gatherings and events. As development occurs in the district, city leaders and private developers should look for opportunities to create new plaza spaces that link physical, cultural, and natural features together to create a unique sense of place.

The Vision Plan identifies opportunities to create plaza spaces along the future 'Main Street' (85th Avenue extension) and within the future neighborhood parks. The plan envisions design features that will attract people to the public plazas and make them destinations or community focal points. Special features should be visible to invite people to use the space and create a unique and strong relationship between the plaza space and the surrounding uses to sustain activity throughout the day and week. Programming is essential to maintain activity in plaza spaces throughout the year.



Opportunities for public plazas

Streetscapes

The Northtown Mall District should be defined by consistent and high-quality streetscapes intended to enhance the appearance and function of the public realm. To the extent possible, streetscapes in the district should be designed to accommodate multiple modes of mobility (pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, public transit users), address pedestrian safety, incorporate stormwater management, and provide attractive plantings.

The future 85th Avenue extension (Northtown Mall's 'Main Street') should be well designed with active level ground uses facing the street.

It should include on-street parking and other traffic calming design strategies and design elements. Common streetscape amenities for main street and other signature streets in the district should include the following elements:

- Street trees and plantings
- ADA accessible walkways and ramps
- Pedestrian scaled streetlights
- Site furniture – benches, tables and chairs, litter and recycling receptacles, bicycle racks, and planters

- Banner poles and bollards
- Wayfinding signage and kiosks
- Gateway elements – public art, special plantings, etc.

Common amenities should reflect district identity and be designed with consistent materials, colors, forms, and surfaces. Ideally, they should reflect a family of parts that are well-coordinated.

FIGURE 50: VIEW OF PROPOSED 85TH AVENUE EXTENSION - NORTHTOWN MALL'S 'MAIN STREET'



Stormwater Management

Stormwater runoff is rain, snowmelt, or surface drainage that does not infiltrate into the ground. This includes precipitation which falls onto impervious surfaces like paved streets, parking lots, and rooftops. This water becomes more contaminated by picking up sediment and debris along the way. Current conditions in the Northtown Mall District represent a dilemma for stormwater management. The district is dominated by impervious surfaces including large parking lots and rooftops. Periodic flooding along CR 10 and University Avenue is experienced during high rainfall events. Sensitive nearby wetlands and waterways at Springbrook Creek and the Mississippi River corridor are negatively affected by stormwater runoff generated in the district during rainfall events.

Better management of stormwater in the district is possible through redevelopment and public space improvements. Compact, more densely developed sites that create more green space offer opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure and best management practices for managing stormwater runoff. In turn, creative stormwater management can function as amenity spaces and enhance user experiences.

FIGURE 51: IMPROVED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT WITH SPRINGBROOK CREEK IMPROVEMENTS



Stormwater management precedents



Best Practices

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are designed to capture runoff where it lands, infiltrate it into the ground, or slow it down allowing pollutants and sediment a chance to settle out before reaching nearby rivers or streams. BMPs may include but are not limited to rain barrels, soil quality restoration, rain gardens, bio-retention cells, permeable paver systems, and native planting buffers/swales. BMPs should be integrated into public spaces like streets, parks, and open spaces.

Green streets, parks, and open spaces promote health and habitat by helping clean and filter the air and water, keep places cooler, and contribute to community resilience by acting as green infrastructure. Bio-swales, rain gardens, conservation landscapes and porous pavers should be incorporated into streetscape, park, and open space designs to mitigate stormwater runoff.



BMP examples

FIGURE 52: VIEW OF PROPOSED DAYLIGHTING AND RESTORATION OF SPRINGBROOK CREEK



Celebrate Springbrook Creek

Springbrook Creek, otherwise known as Anoka County Ditch 17, runs through the study area. Some sections of the ditch are a daylighted stream, and other sections are piped. Over the decades, the alignment of Ditch 17 (Springbrook Creek) has been altered to accommodate development and infrastructure. The ditch eventually makes its way to Springbrook Creek in nearby Fridley, and flows to the Mississippi River. Portions of the ditch lie within the floodway and

during heavy rainfall events the waterway has been known to flood businesses near University Avenue and CR 10.

Springbrook Creek (Ditch 17) falls within the Coon Creek Watershed District authority. Meetings with the Watershed District, and feedback received from stakeholders on preliminary concepts to restore and celebrate the creek revealed a desire to daylight the creek, widen the buffer zones along it, and transform it into an amenity for the district.

The Vision Plans proposes to daylight and restore the meandering of the portion of the creek through the district, from 89th Avenue to SH 47, create a wide linear greenway along the creek, and expand the stormwater management capacity of the greenway through additional ponding and wetlands. The area also includes with new trails through the greenway. The greenway can be framed with businesses, restaurants and shops that take advantage of the proposed multimodal connectivity and views to the creek.

Parking

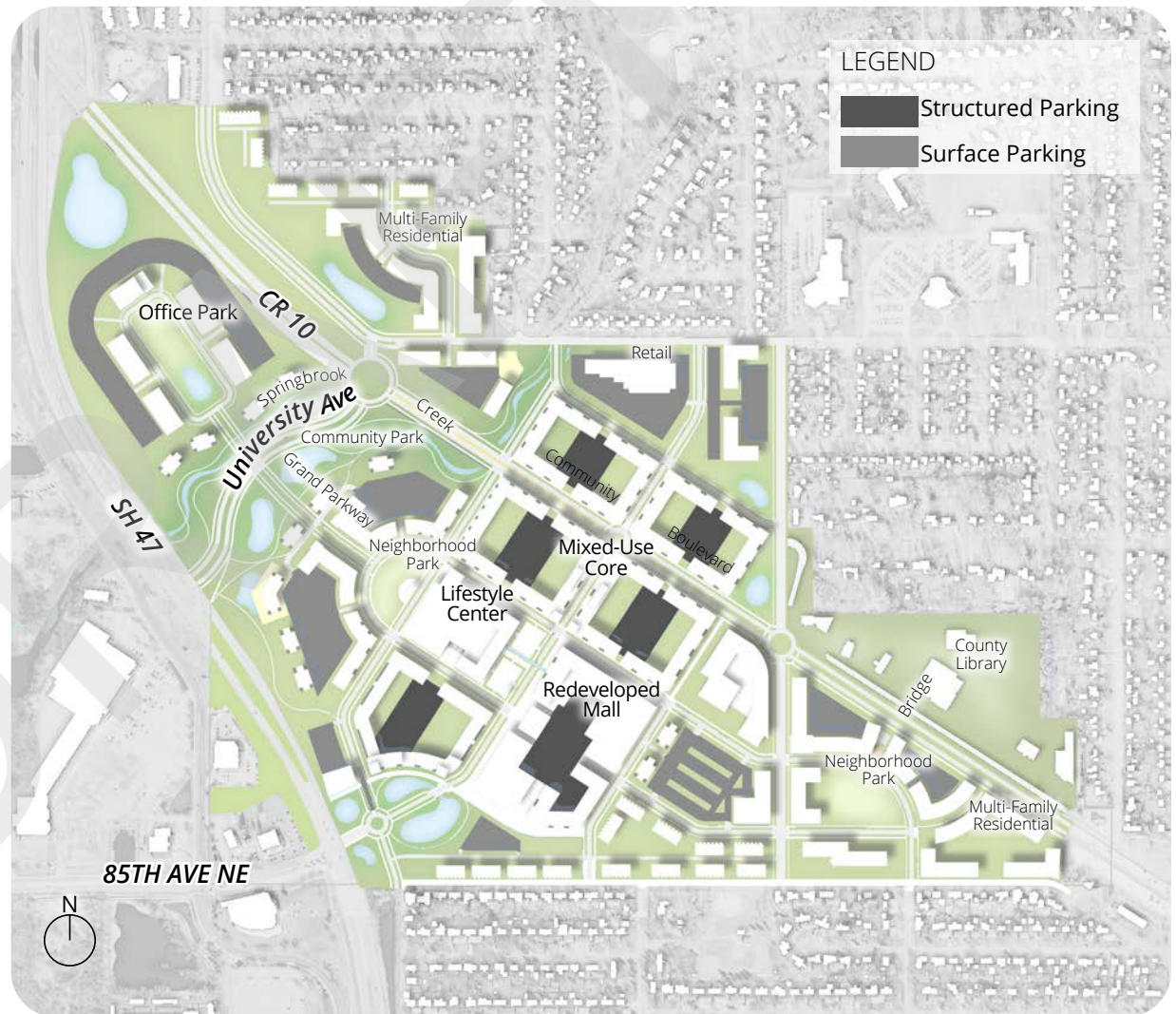
Reimagining Parking

The plan envisions a transition from a district with predominantly surface parking today toward structured parking over time, particularly in the core of the district, where higher density development is envisioned and warrants the construction of parking decks. Naturally vented decks are recommended for cost savings. Resident parking for new housing, office or hotel uses would be incorporated into new structures, with either above grade ramps or below-grade facilities. e grade ramps or below-grade facilities.

Shared Parking

Shared parking strategies should be considered in future redevelopment scenarios. Shared parking is a tool through which adjacent property owners share their parking lots and reduce the number of parking spaces that each would provide on their individual properties. Shared parking is not a new concept. It has been used extensively in traditional neighborhood commercial nodes and downtown settings for decades. In these locations, there are higher-density office or apartment buildings, with shops and restaurants lining the sidewalks. People often park in one spot and then walk from one

FIGURE 53: NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION PARKING STRATEGY



destination to another. The effect is that those various uses share the same parking spaces.

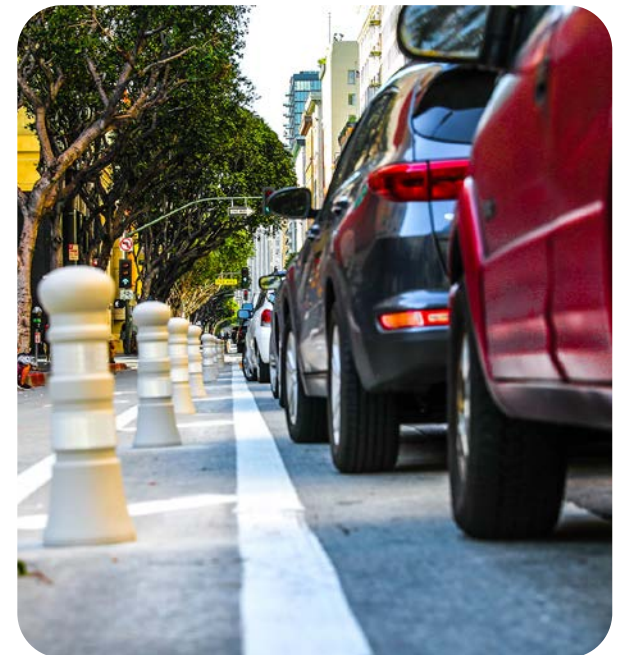
Shared parking is being used more and more in conjunction with new development. If adjacent land uses have different peak hours of parking demand, they can share the same parking spaces. Shared parking can reduce the amount of land needed for parking, creating opportunities for more compact development, more space for pedestrian circulation, or more open space and landscaping.

Structured Parking Solutions

By transitioning to structured parking solutions, the Northtown Mall District can transform underutilized surface parking lots into land dedicated to improving livability in other ways. Incorporating more compact, structured parking supplies will free up underutilized land for future redevelopment opportunities and greatly enhance property values in the district. Some of the newly vacated land could also be reused for public open space and stormwater management.



Reimagined Parking Solutions



UTILITIES

In addition to transportation infrastructure, the project team also analyzed the existing utilities in the study area for suitability to identify potential improvements required as the area redevelops. More in-depth analysis will be necessitated prior to development/redevelopment to ensure enough sewer, water, and stormwater infrastructure.

Water

Trunk watermain lines are located on 89th Avenue NE (14 inches), Jefferson Street (10 inches), and Sanburnol (6 inches), and a 12-inch watermain surrounds the mall. Distribution watermain lines will need to be relocated as redevelopment occurs in the study area. The existing trunk watermain lines are likely sufficient to serve existing and future needs.



Include integrated stormwater management strategies

Sanitary

Sanitary sewer infrastructure is available in the area and appears to be well-suited for development. The majority of redevelopment flows will be to the south at the MCES Interceptor located near 85th Avenue and SH 47.

Stormwater

The storm sewer system will need to be reconfigured to meet the requirements of local and regional stormwater treatment facilities. Any redevelopment that occurs in the district will require stormwater improvements. Innovative integrated stormwater management strategies are recommended to optimize the use of the land available as well as create a sustainable and welcoming environment.



Reconfigure storm sewer system



Include integrated stormwater management strategies

06

ACTION STEPS

Introduction

The Northtown Mall District Vision Plan is an ambitious plan that will require a long-term strategic partnership between the City of Blaine, the Northtown Mall owner, the community, and the many other stakeholders with interest in the district. Due to national changes in retail that are supported by changes in consumer preferences and demand, ongoing population growth in the market area, housing demand, public transportation and transit infrastructure, property that may be available for redevelopment, and an established Vision Plan, the Northtown District can transition from a singular retail district into a mixed-use destination.

It will take resolve and investments in community and infrastructure by the city and other stakeholders to achieve this outcome. Sustained city leadership and guidance will

be paramount to success for many years. However, the city cannot achieve its desired results alone. City leaders will need to seek complementary commitments from other parties including key Northtown Mall District property owners/developers, the Chamber of Commerce, and other government agencies including Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, Anoka County, Coon Creek Watershed District, State, and Federal agencies. Like the city, these agencies want to see their investments matched and support successful projects. This suggests that the transformation of the Northtown Mall District will take place via both public-private and public-public partnerships, which may be both ad hoc, and formally structured via development agreements, intergovernmental agreements, etc.



The tools and strategies that follow should be available to all stakeholders in the district. However, the initial focus should be on properties that have the most significant opportunity to effect change within the entire district for the benefit of all. We recommend in the near term that the city work with mall ownership to focus most of its efforts for real estate redevelopment towards the transformation of the Northtown Mall into a mixed-use lifestyle center. The input we received throughout the process made it clear that current mall ownership is interested in change and has developed preliminary plans supporting the goals outlined in this study. Efforts should be made for the City to partner with the mall owners and other interested property owners to catalyze change in the district and ensure this vision moves forward.



The Northtown District can transition from a singular retail district into a mixed-use destination

Short-Term Actions (1-5 Years)

TIF Feasibility Study and Special Legislation

Tax increment financing (TIF) is one of the most important tools to finance large redevelopment projects like this in Minnesota. Using TIF, municipalities typically divert future property tax revenue increases from a defined area or district toward an economic development project or public improvement project in the community. TIF subsidies are not appropriated directly from a city's budget, but the city incurs loss through foregone tax revenue. The cities of Minnetonka and Edina have both used TIF funding to build public-private partnerships, spur private investment and support physical improvements that enhance the districts surrounding Ridgedale and Southdale Malls.

Northtown District Transportation Study

The Northtown Mall District Vision Plan recommends a bold new mix of uses and a comprehensive network of streets, trails, and pedestrian facilities. It will be important as an early step to further refine the exact sequence and detail of elements for the transportation network proposed. Any improvements should be made with an eye towards the final vision,

but it will also be important to understand what development levels will trigger specific transportation improvements.

The Vision Plan recommends transformational change along CR 10, incorporating roundabouts at key intersections, narrowing the roadway, adding urban curb and gutter treatments, stormwater management treatment areas, and fronting the roadway with development. The plan also recommends improvements along SH 47, University Avenue and changes to the local roadway network.

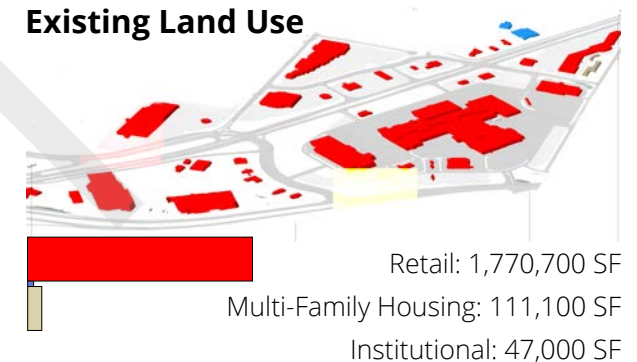
It is important that the Northtown District Transportation Study includes agency partners from Anoka County, MnDOT and Metro Transit to ensure all stakeholder needs and requirements are addressed and to align support for proposed future roadway improvements.

MnDOT Highway 47 – Planning and Environmental Linkages Study

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is developing a future vision for the 10-mile stretch of Highway 47 (University Ave.) and Highway 65 (Central Ave.) that extends from where they intersect in Northeast Minneapolis northward through Columbia Heights, Hilltop,

FIGURE 54: EXISTING VS PROPOSED LAND USES

Existing Land Use

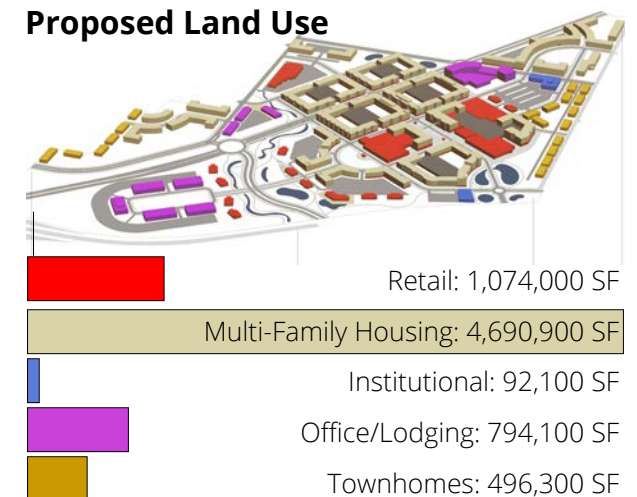


Total SF: 1,928,800 SF

Property Value: \$107,535,600

Annual Tax Generation: \$2,817,051

Proposed Land Use



Total SF: 7,147,400 SF

Property Value: \$1,193,616,000

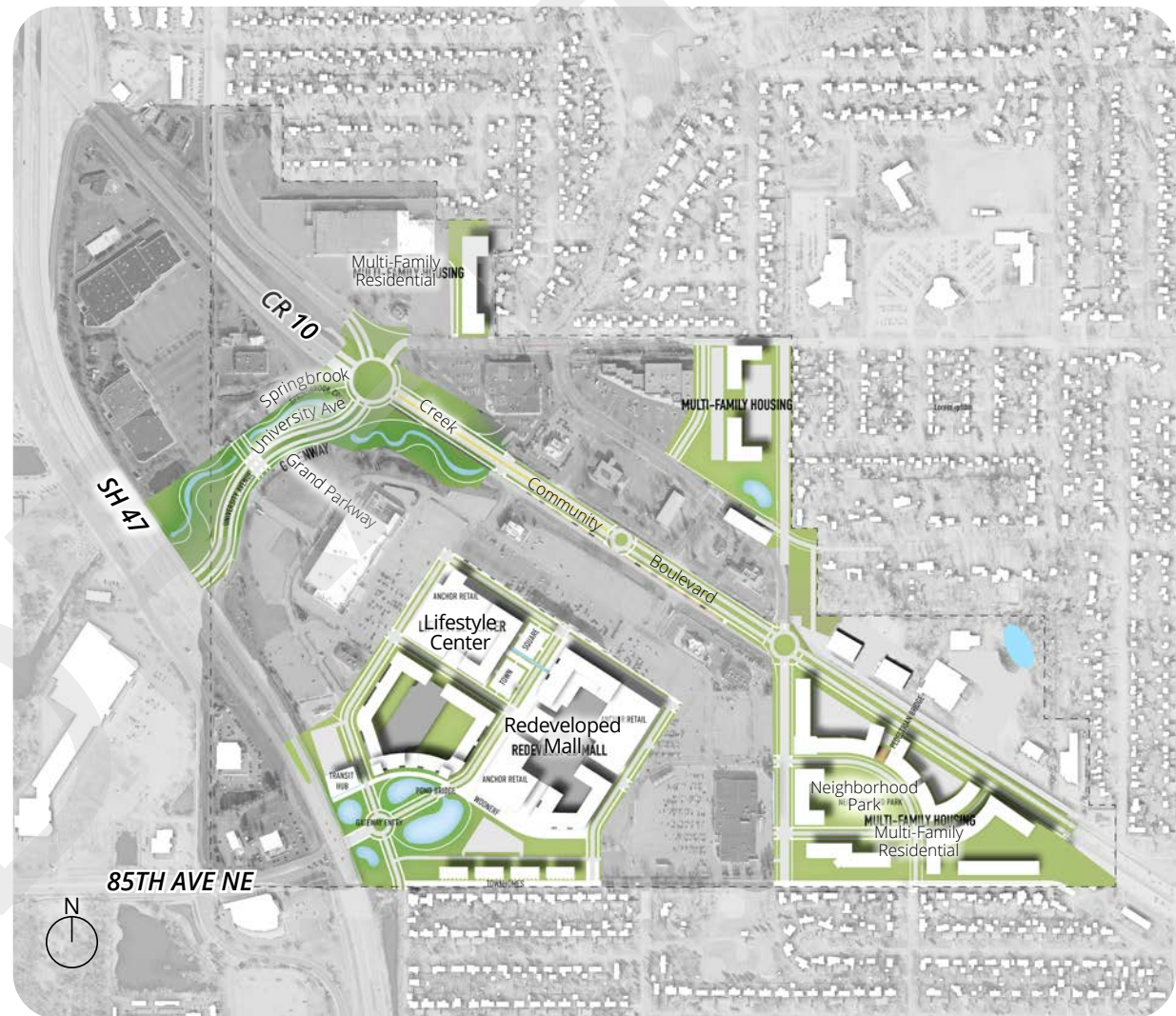
Annual Tax Generation: \$31,448,560

and Fridley to County Highway 10 in Blaine and Spring Lake Park.

The safety of all who use these roads is a growing concern. There are more accidents than average on segments of Hwy 47 and Hwy 65, and accidents that involve pedestrians and bicyclists are far more likely to result in death or serious injuries. As a result, MnDOT has been engaging the communities along Hwy 47 and Hwy 65 in a new study to better understand the needs of the different users of these roads, and what kinds of future improvements will help make conditions safer for all.

Through discussions with MnDOT representatives during this planning study, it was communicated that pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements are being planned along SH 47 through the study area, particularly at the 85th Avenue and SH 47 intersection. The city should continue to stay abreast of these improvements and coordinate/partner with MnDOT to confirm the improvements support goals of the Vision Plan.

FIGURE 55: NORTHTOWN DISTRICT VISION PLAN - PHASE 1





Environmental Assessment Worksheet and Environmental Impact Statement (AUAR)

The City of Blaine may use an AUAR to review anticipated impacts of the future residential and commercial development and associated infrastructure in the Northtown Mall District. Once an AUAR is complete, specific development proposals that are consistent with the development assumptions, and comply with the conditions of the mitigation plan, are exempt from EAW and EIS requirements. An AUAR update would be required every five years until all the development in the area has been approved.

Explore New Taxes and Sources for Funding Redevelopment

A variety of potential financing tools exist that would help to spur redevelopment. The city should work with a public finance consultant and local chamber of commerce to explore the most effective tools which would support improvements within the district. A local option sales tax has proven effective for other communities to fund large projects but can be viewed negatively from business/property owners. The chamber of commerce could be an important ally in achieving this for the good of the district. Other options include EDA (Economic Development Authority) and HRA (Housing

Redevelopment Authority) Levy's. These options will require additional discussion with each committee and your public finance consultant.

A more strategic sales tax approach could be the implementation of a lodging tax for economic development. This is a new idea under consideration in several cities. The Northtown Mall District Vision Plan creates a bold redevelopment plan intended to draw to visitors, workers and residents to this district. A successful Northtown Mall District will create new opportunities for hospitality in this district and the use of a lodging tax could be a more strategic approach to creating funds for economic development in the area.

Change Zoning to Mixed-Use

Existing zoning in the study area is predominantly defined as regional or community commercial. The city should act to change the zoning in the district to allow a greater mix of land uses, including residential, commercial, and civic. Under the current city zoning code, the zoning district that would allow a greater mix and density is the Development Flex (DF) District. The Development Flex District (formerly known as the Residential Flex District) is intended to provide greater flexibility in land use planning, maximize the choice of housing types and styles, and supports a combination of uses, including residential, commercial and civic.

Create City Implementation Team

One of the key roles for city staff is to advance conversations with developers and property owners towards successful redevelopment agreements. Many of the public finance tools mentioned above will become important tools for discussion with stakeholders to navigate project concepts into concrete redevelopment plans. This will take significant city staff time and a concerted effort to help move private investment forward. A visible and defined city Implementation team is an important step to seeing this plan from vision to reality.



Create a Special Service District

The district could benefit from improved landscaping, wayfinding, and maintenance in the district. One way for the City of Blaine to provide an increased level of service in the district is to create a Special Service District. The enhanced feel and look of the district coupled with incremental redevelopment will help to signify to the tens of thousands of people who drive by or to the Northtown Mall District every day that the area is alive and well, and headed toward a bright future.





Conduct a Springbrook Creek Improvement Study

Ditch 17/Springbrook Creek Improvement Study

Partner with the Coon Creek Watershed District, property owners, and stakeholders to conduct a study to make improvements to Ditch 17. This includes restoring the creek, daylighting more sections, restoring a water meander through the study area, stabilizing streambanks, and establishing wetlands and ponds to better manage stormwater. This will transform the existing ditch into an amenity for the district.

Establish Development Goals for EDA Properties and Issue RFP's

Based on an approved Vision Plan for the Northtown Mall District, city leaders should establish development goals for the properties owned by the Economic Development Authority (EDA) and issue Requests for Proposals to redevelop each site to support the overall goals of the Vision Plan.

Partner with Mall Owner to Transform Mall to Lifestyle Center

Mall ownership has communicated a desire to initiate change in the district, with plans to demolish portions of the mall, extend 85th Avenue through the existing Northtown Mall to CR 10, redevelop 3 of the existing anchors, build multi-family housing with ground level retail along 85th Avenue (Main Street), and build a centralized parking structure to support the proposed redevelopment. These improvements would be part of Phase 1 for the mall transformation from a shopping mall to a lifestyle center.

The mall owner will need to partner with the City of Blaine to help fund many of the improvements being contemplated. Public infrastructure improvements coupled with private development costs will require creative financing solutions. This is an opportunity to catalyze change in the district and success will depend on the ability of the city and mall ownership to forge a partnership in support of the overall goals of the Vision Plan.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Network Improvements

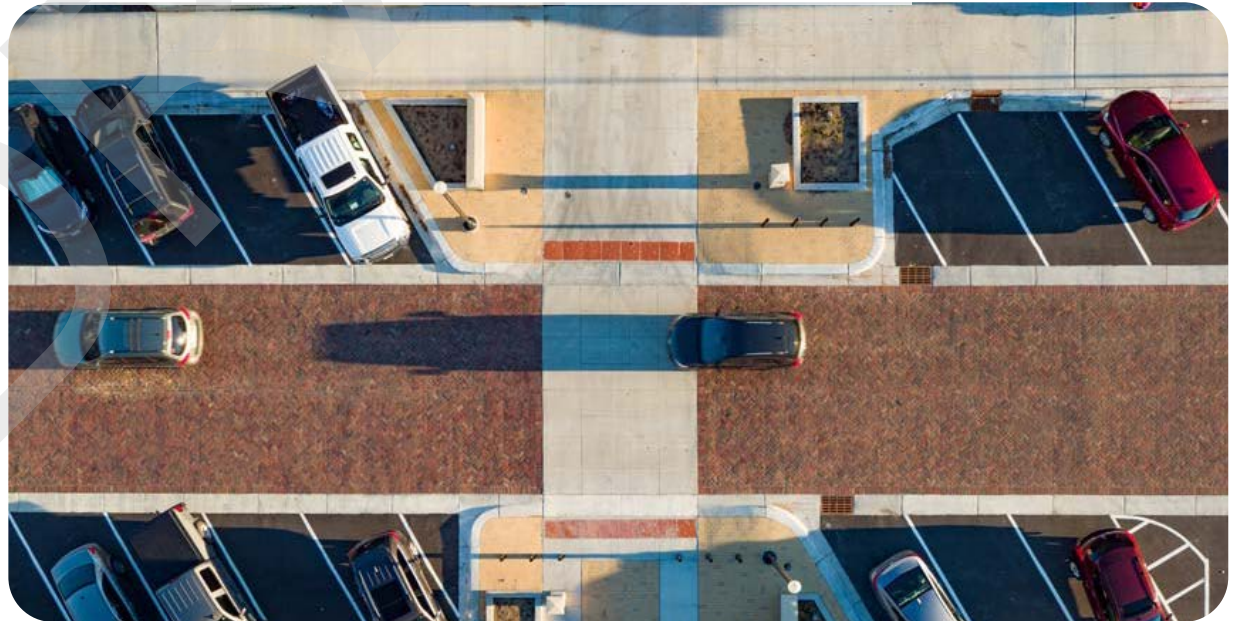
One way to begin making dramatic improvements to the district is to plan for, design, fund, and implement improvements to the pedestrian and bicycle network in the district. The city should begin by conducting a Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Study for the district that inventories existing conditions and provides a master plan with costs and phasing strategies provided. Improvements should begin with upgraded pedestrian crossings and a sidewalk/trail system integrated into the existing mall properties consistent with the Vision Plan.



Pedestrian and bicycle network improvements

Establish Shared Parking District

Many of the mall's existing perimeter surface parking lots are currently underutilized. This is land that could be redeveloped for other uses. Shared parking can reduce the amount of land needed for parking, creating opportunities for redevelopment, more space for pedestrian circulation, or more open space and landscaping. The city should work with mall ownership and other property owners in the district to better understand parking needs and opportunities to share parking. Establishing a policy to allow a shared parking will provide property owners the flexibility to rethink and right-size parking supplies.



Establish a shared parking district

Mid-Term Actions (6-10 Years)

F-LINE BRT – Make the Hub an Amenity

Metro Transit is expanding Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service to the City of Blaine on the F Line. The METRO F Line will serve the Central Avenue corridor, largely replacing Route 10 from downtown Minneapolis to Northtown Mall via Central and University Avenues. Pending full funding, the F Line would be constructed starting in 2025, and is planned to be operational by

2030. The Metro F Line station is planned near the intersection of 8th Avenue and SH 47.

The Vision Plan calls for improved access and visibility to/from the BRT station, station area amenities, and transit-oriented development near the station. The city should pursue opportunities to partner with Metro Transit and developers to capitalize on the BRT investment and promote transit supportive development adjacent to the future station.



Improve access and visibility to/from the BRT Station



Implement roadway improvements

Implement Roadway Improvements

Based upon the findings and outcomes of the Northtown District Transportation Study and MnDOT Highway 47 – Planning and Environmental Linkages Study, the City of Blaine should begin to implement roadway improvements in the district, pursuing opportunities to partner with Anoka County and MnDOT to implement proposed improvements to county and state roadways. Specific roadway improvements should include the following:



- Implement intersection design improvement such as proposed roundabouts along CR 10
- Transform County Road 10 ROW into a narrower, more urban roadway section
- Extend 85th Avenue from SH 47 to CR 10, making intersection improvements at SH 47 and CR 10
- Extend University Avenue Extension across SH 47 to Springbrook Drive (frontage road)
- Redesign/implement University Avenue improvements from SH 47 to CR10
- Integrate the proposed local street improvements as redevelopment occurs

Consolidate Parking at Northtown Mall

Work with mall ownership to look for opportunities to consolidate surface parking, build structured parking, and free up land for development around the edges of the mall property

Collaborate with Coon Rapids to Redevelop Northtown Village

City leaders should collaborate with the City of Coon Rapids to identify opportunities to redevelop the Northtown Village site, northwest of University Avenue, into a new office park or retail destination that supports the overall goals of the Vision Plan.

Collaborate with Kraus Anderson to Redevelop Northcourt Commons

City leaders should collaborate with Kraus Anderson to identify opportunities to redevelop the Northcourt Commons shopping strip with higher density, mixed uses such as multi-family residential and ground level retail uses that support the overall goals of the Vision Plan.

Implement Springbrook Creek Improvements

Based on the findings and outcomes of the Ditch 17/Springbrook Creek Improvement Study, city officials should identify opportunities to partner with Coon Creek Watershed District to implement Springbrook Creek improvements consistent with the goals established in the Vision Plan.

Create Incentives for Infill Redevelopment

City officials should create a toolbox of incentives to promote infill development, incorporating a greater mix of uses and higher densities in district. Infill development is the process of developing vacant or under-developed parcels within areas that are already largely developed. As populations fluctuate and the needs of a community transform, vacant land becomes increasingly common place. Instead of directing development outward, infill development helps replace existing vacant lots and promotes land conservation through the reduction of greenfield development. Successful infill development programs often focus on improving neighborhoods, creating more efficient mixes of jobs and housing, reducing blight, and reinvesting in the community.

Traditional barriers to infill development include neighborhood opposition, inflexible building codes and difficulty in land assembly. To address some of these barriers many communities have created incentive programs to make infill a more attractive option. Several strategies can be created to make infill development more feasible, such as establishing priorities, policies, and partnerships, and changing public perceptions. FIGURE 56 on page 91 offers a few strategies for consideration.



Implement Springbrook Creek Improvements



Create incentives to infill redevelopment

FIGURE 56: STRATEGIES TO MAKE INFILL DEVELOPMENT MORE FEASIBLE

POLICIES

- Expedite development review
- Set tiered impact fees
- Ease parking requirements in infill locations
- Adopt flexible codes
- Adopt an adaptive reuse ordinance
- Offer density bonuses in infill locations
- Locate public offices in infill locations

PARTNERSHIPS

- Seek state and regional partners
- Identify key anchor institutions
- Explore employer-assisted housing
- Engage philanthropic organizations
- Create a public sector-developer liaison
- Create a local developer capacity-building program

PERCEPTIONS

- Strengthen code enforcement
- Build complete streets
- Create a business improvement district
- Hold public events and festivals in infill locations
- Initiate a neighborhood identity campaign

Long-Term Actions (11-20 Years)

Transform Home Depot Site and Cub Foods

The Home Depot and Cub Foods tenants have long term agreements which make redevelopment on those sites more challenging in the near-term. Stakeholders agreed that while they would like to see transformational change in the district, they would like to see these two anchors stay for awhile longer. When the time is right, and momentum on the district has reached a peak, the city should work with landowners and tenants to transform these two sites into more mixed-use redevelopment sites consistent with the Vision Plan.



Funding Strategies

Success of the Vision Plan will require a multi-pronged strategy for funding key components of the plan while being responsive to emerging opportunities overtime. Leveraging private investments or providing matching grants from public and private sources will be a critical tool for redevelopment of the Northtown Mall District. In addition, public grants provide additional funding mechanisms for specific aspects of the plan including redevelopment, transit, housing, and community vitality. The following list of grants is not a complete list and further exploration and changing opportunities will require continued research to capitalize on available funding opportunities that align with project redevelopment goals. Staff time should be allocated for grant research and applications.

Capital Improvement Plans

City, County, Housing Authority, Transportation. Federal and State Transportation and redevelopment funds focus on transportation, economic development, infrastructure and transportation.

Tax Increment Financing (Tif)

The district may not currently satisfy requirements for a TIF district. Special legislation may be required to establish a TIF district and should be pursued in the next legislative session.

Hotel and Local Option Sales Tax

Hotel and local option sales tax are potential funding sources for public improvements that are essentially a user tax that allows the city to generate public infrastructure funding for the district by the people that use the district. Conversations with the chamber of commerce, hospitality and retailers should take place to better understand if this approach would be supported by the local stakeholders.

Tax Abatement

Tax abatement is a tool that can be used for economic development. Tax abatement can be used for purposes similar to TIF, a widely used development tool. If a TIF District is approved, the Tax Abatement tool cannot be used.

US Department Of Transportation

BUILD Transportation grants replace the pre-existing Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program. BUILD funding can support roads, bridges, transit, rail, ports or intermodal transportation.





MN Department Of Transportation (MnDOT)

Corridors of Commerce is a program of competitive state grants, augmented with local funding, that targets transportation routes identified as vital links for regional and statewide economic growth.

State of MN

Grants may be used to finance the capital costs of development or redevelopment projects to create jobs, increase the city tax base and enhance the city's attractiveness to private investment. Community Development Funding provide financial assistance to communities statewide for projects that help them stay vital and better position them for economic growth. Housing grants funds are allocated to local units of government, which, in turn, lend funds for the purpose of rehabilitating existing housing stock. Loans may be used for owner-occupied, rental, single-family or multiple-family housing rehabilitation. In all cases, housing funds must benefit low and moderate income persons.

Comprehensive Grants frequently include housing and public facilities. Projects may include an economic development activity, which consists of loans from the grant recipient to businesses for construction, rehabilitation related to facade improvements, code violation

amendments, and health and safety issues. The most common economic development activity is rehabilitation of local commercial districts.

Innovative Business Development - Public Infrastructure (BDPI) program focuses on job creation and retention through the growth of new innovative businesses and organizations, and provides grants to local governmental units on a competitive basis statewide. The amount of a grant may not exceed the lesser of the cost of the public infrastructure or 50 percent of the sum of the cost of the public infrastructure plus the cost of the completed eligible project.

Site Cleanup and Redevelopment offer funds for reclaiming and redeveloping contaminated and blighted properties. These programs are essential for communities to remain vital and in the best possible position to attract new commercial, industrial and residential growth.

Contamination Cleanup and Investigation Grant helps pay for assessing and cleaning contaminated sites for private or public redevelopment.

Cleanup Revolving Loan Program provides low-interest loans through the U.S. EPA to clean contaminated sites that can be returned to marketable use.



Redevelopment Grant Program helps communities with the costs of redeveloping blighted industrial, residential, or commercial sites and putting land back into productive use.

Demolition Loan Program helps with the costs of demolishing blighted buildings on sites that have future development potential but no current plans.

US Environmental Protection Agency

EPA's Brownfields Program provides direct funding for brownfields assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, environmental job training, technical assistance, training, and research. To facilitate the leveraging of public resources, EPA's Brownfields Program collaborates with other EPA programs, other federal partners, and state agencies to identify and make available resources that can be used for brownfield activities.

Assessment Grants

Assessment Grants provide funding for brownfield inventories, planning, environmental assessments, and community outreach.

Assessment Grants provide funding for a grant recipient to inventory, characterize, assess, and conduct a range of planning activities. Other uses include developing site-specific cleanup plans, and conducting community involvement related to brownfield sites. The performance period for these grants is three years.

A Site-specific Assessment Grant is appropriate when a specific site is identified, and the applicant plans to spend grant funds on one site only. An applicant may request up to \$200,000 to assess a site contaminated by hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants (including hazardous substances co-mingled with petroleum), and/or petroleum. An applicant may seek a waiver of the \$200,000 limit and request up to \$350,000 for a site contaminated by hazardous substances,

pollutants, contaminants, and/or petroleum. Waiver requests must be based on the anticipated level of contamination, size, or status of ownership of the site.

Additional Grants

Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grants provide funding to capitalize loans that are used to clean up brownfield sites.

Cleanup Grants provide funding to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites owned by the applicant.

Multipurpose (MP) Grants provide funding to conduct a range of eligible assessment and cleanup activities at one or more brownfield sites in a target area.

Area-Wide Planning Grants provide funding to communities to research, plan and develop implementation strategies for cleaning up and revitalizing a specific area affected by one or more brownfield sites.



Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) Grants provide environmental training for residents impacted by brownfield sites in their communities.

Technical Assistance, Training, and Research Grants provide funding to organizations to conduct research and to provide training and technical assistance to communities to help address their brownfields challenges.

Community Development Block Grant Program

Federal CDBG Program was established to develop viable urban communities, provide livable housing and create better living environments. CDBG funding furthers economic

development opportunities for low and moderate income persons and eliminates blight conditions. The CDBG Program provides grants through Anoka County to distribute to participating cities and townships.

Redevelopment Program

The CDA's Redevelopment Program provides staff expertise to assist cities with their redevelopment goals. The CDA has worked with cities on a wide variety of projects ranging from acquisition of affordable housing sites to redevelopment of commercial sites.



Anoka County Soil and Water Conservation District

This program works in partnership with the state, watersheds, local units of government, developers and landowners to provide education, technical and financial support to minimize the impact of stormwater runoff from new and existing development. These grants may provide opportunities for cost sharing of innovative stormwater management best management practices and landscaping for clean water.

Private Foundations

Can be another valuable source of funding for specific projects not eligible for other types of grants and can build community support through focused support other community work that may be important for the success of the vision plan.

Metropolitan Council Livable Communities Grant (LCA)

The LCA funds community investment that revitalize economics, create affordable housing, and link land uses and transportation.

The Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LCDA) funds innovative (re)development projects that efficiently link housing, jobs, services and transit in an effort to create inspiring and lasting Livable Communities. Grants are available to fund basic public infrastructure and site assembly.

Transit-Oriented Development TOD Grants (LCA-TOD) promote moderate to high density development projects located within walking distance of a major transit stop that typically include a mix of uses such as housing, jobs, restaurants, shops, and entertainment. Projects are eligible if they are located within a LCA-TOD-Eligible Area within one-half mile of LRT, BRT, commuter rail, or high-frequency express bus stations. Projects within one-quarter mile of high frequency local bus routes are also eligible.

Local Housing Incentives Account (LHIA) grants fund the expansion and preservation of affordable housing for rental and ownership to help municipalities meet their negotiated LCA housing goals. Grant funds cover gap financing costs.

