



Mississippi Connections

REDEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

A LONG-RANGE VISION FOR THE 400-ACRE CORE OF ELK RIVER

Prepared for:
City of Elk River, Minnesota

Prepared by:
Redevelopment Framework Task Force
DRAFT September 4, 2012

Executive Summary

Mississippi Connections Redevelopment Framework Plan

...“To develop a comprehensive plan that will redefine the “greater downtown area” to preserve its historical character while promoting the future viability of the community”... (Excerpt from the Task Force Mission Statement)

The downtown area of Elk River is the oldest part of the City and has long been considered the heart of the city. This area, the businesses in particular, have seen shopping patterns change, impacting the success of their businesses. Further, the downtown businesses, and the residential neighborhoods surrounding it, will be impacted by expected changes to Highway 10 in the next 2 decades. Highway 10 will evolve to an urban freeway in the future. It is not known when this will occur, but we know that it will further alter traffic patterns and impact businesses and homes in the area. Unaddressed, these changes can be devastating to fragile neighborhoods and businesses that are important to the Community of Elk River.

This document is intended to provide guidance to property owners, stakeholders, and community leadership to position the area in such a way that strengthens the area to survive the impacts of time and change; methods to reestablish the downtown area as a destination; a desirable address to do business, live, and enjoy the diversity of uses in a character rich downtown amid the hustle and bustle of a growing community.

The Plan was prepared by a City Council appointed task force comprised of 18 members representing a variety of community interests. Deliberations took place over a period of eleven meetings which covered a one year time period in 2006 and 2007.

The task force adopted the following vision statement to guide the formation of the plan: “The Mississippi Connections Study Area is the cornerstone of the community. The Redevelopment Framework **provides the blueprint for creating an environment and culture that encourages private reinvestment.** This environment will be characterized by a robust business climate, strong affordable residential neighborhoods, diverse recreational opportunities, an agreed upon transportation framework, recognition of its historical place, and enhancing opportunities for connections with the community.”

It soon became evident that expected changes to Highway 10 (originally identified during as part of the 2002 Inter-Regional Corridor Plan) would have a far greater impact to the downtown core than originally thought. To gain a better understanding of these changes, the City Council tabled the Task Force in 2007, and worked with MnDOT on a more defined Highway 10 plan through the City. That plan was approved in late 2008.

The task force was reconvened in 2011, adding more resident and business representatives. Over 10 months starting in 2011, the Task Force reviewed the plan, updating it to address new information and goals. This Plan represents both the approved

Highway 10 planned improvements and the task force's response to those changes.

This vision, albeit appearing idealistic in form, is a long term plan that allows the City to guide its own fate as development and redevelopment opportunities present themselves to the community.

The nature of a redevelopment framework plan demands imagination, a strong vision, and patience. The framework is both a strategic and tactical description of how a community will address complicated issues such as changing markets, commitments to a process and defining an ultimate vision for the future.

The following is a summary of the Task Force's philosophy behind the framework, some of the key

planning elements, and comments regarding its implementation. The mission and vision statements, as shown at the top of this section, drove the formation of this plan.

1. 20-Year Vision- the redevelopment framework is designed by necessity to have a long term horizon for completion. However, this reality should not serve as deterrence to either starting the plan or waiting for ideal market conditions. The framework's "Implementation Priorities" articulate, in detail, tasks needed to be done within the first three years of plan initiation followed by long term objectives. Working hard in the first three years to establish momentum and excitement will serve to propel the vision forward with commitment and conviction.

The collection of small projects builds more momentum from property owners, stakeholders, and other interests.

2. "Redefine"- the strongest operative words found within the mission statement is...'*redefine the "greater downtown area"*.... The word "redefine" carries with it both the most controversial aspect of the redevelopment framework (physical change) but it also explicitly conveys the hope and vision of the plan. The intent of the framework is to respond to time and market changes that have already occurred, and to redefine a context for present and future development/redevelopment opportunities, offering guidance and opportunity for the area to survive these changes, many of which establish a development pattern much different from what the area was formed under. "Redefine" becomes both the vision and the intrinsic value of recognizing the need for careful and guided change.

3. History- the greatest challenge to the Task Force was creating a framework that balanced future changes with the area's history and environmental assets and opportunities. The framework anticipates saving major core downtown block of buildings at Jackson and Main, the water tower, reinvigorating the single family neighborhoods, re-establishing the Mississippi and the Elk Rivers as a commemoration to past history, by constructing interpretive signage and venues that tells the "Elk River Story". The framework envisions, in part, the creation of a new history committed to attracting the community as a whole to enjoy this area's uniqueness and opportunities. Building on our rich history will take time and patience but this objective is a critical tenant of the plan.

4. **“Core Downtown”**- the Task Force’s vision is based on a future market that will seek rehabilitation and redevelopment opportunities, especially for properties situated along the Mississippi River. The plan seeks to establish the “Brick and S. Main Blocks” as the center for historical rehabilitation and creates a path to determine the economic viability of this objective. Lastly, the plan attempts to provide opportunities to draw people to the core downtown. Festivals, markets, music events, in addition to physical connections to the river to promote the core as a destination, a characterization that will be more and more important as travel patterns evolve away from the direct access currently employed.

5. **Single Family Neighborhoods**- the redevelopment framework’s philosophy started with the premise of preserving the single family neighborhoods, some for the rich asset of affordability and other sectors for their historical quality. A goal of the plan is that the commercial redevelopment and reinvestment successes on both sides of Highway 10 will translate directly into reinvestment interest by residential property owners.

6. **“North of Highway 10”**- the area of most significant change is the 5 block area north of Highway 10. The Task Force envisions that as market dictates, this will evolve into a destination neighborhood. An “employment center” (e.g. office, medical, institutional) to bring daytime users that support the core downtown commercial is envisioned. Additionally, a higher density residential component should be located abutting Lions Park, coupled with a greenway and strategically located storm water assets. This Study Area also creates the greatest challenge for redevelopment due to the type of existing buildings, number of buildings, limited inherent physical assets, and no immediate strong market

demand. All of which will be necessary in order to create the magnitude of real estate value that would make redevelopment feasible. While market driven, any redevelopment of this area will likely require taxpayer assistance, in the form of financial incentives and assistance, regulatory changes, and land acquisition.

7. **Commitment to Implement**- no redevelopment framework has value until commitment to implement is agreed upon by all affected parties; this community consensus is only initiated by the City Council’s adoption of the Plan. With this consensus, an agreed upon set of priorities and a work plan is established to begin the process of creating the foundational steps of the Plan.

8. **Financial Commitment**- due to the economics of redevelopment and revitalization, no vision can be implemented without a major financial commitment by the City. Some of the redevelopment costs will realistically have to be absorbed through the use of tax increment, tax abatement and other forms of public/private participation. In addition, taxpayers should anticipate the City may have to capitalize rehabilitation related funds and commit to significant capital improvements involving open space and other infrastructure costs.

In conclusion, the *Mississippi Connections* Redevelopment Framework serves as a collection of prioritized tasks and goals. Elements of the framework may have to be altered over time but the commitment to start the implementation inherently to pursue the redevelopment objectives vigorously should translate into making this part of Elk River strong and sustainable.

Acknowledgements

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Dana Anderson	Planning Commission
John Anderson	Resident Representative
Keith Holme	Business Representative
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Lance Lindberg	Heritage Preservation Commission
Molly Nadeau	Resident Representative
Mike Niziolek	Park & Recreation Commission
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

I. Introduction

Background
Task Force Mission Statement
Mississippi Connections Vision Statement
Study Area Defined
Statutory Authority

Summary of Existing Conditions

II. Illustrative Master Plan

Goals

Policies

Specific Area Strategies

III. Implementation Priorities

Figures

Study Area Map I.8

Focus Areas Map	I.9
Retail Shift Map	I.11
2-5-mile Radius Competition Map	I.12
Elk River in the Next 10 Years Map	I.13
Land Use Chart	I.14
Land Use Map	I.15
Zoning Map	I.16
Year Built Map	I.17
Market Value expansion	I.19
Previous relevant studies	I.21
Market Demand Summary	I.29
Primary Redevelopment Sites	I.30
Illustrative Master Plan	II.4
Recreation Opportunities	II.9
Core Downtown	II.12
Highway 10 Corridor	II.16
North of Highway 10	II.18
Residential Neighborhoods	II.22
Proctor and Quinn Avenues	II.26

IV Appendices

- Strengths/Weakness/Opportunities/Threats Analysis
- 2006 Planning Process
- Public Comments (placeholder)
- Task Force Resolution (placeholder)

I. Introduction

This document describes the formation of the Downtown Task Force, and their development of an Illustrative Master Plan (Plan) for the long-range vision for the 432-acre core of the City of Elk River. The purpose of this Plan is threefold: to serve as a blueprint for the City to respond to private investment proposals, and as a work plan for the City to create and maintain an environment in a manner consistent with the community's vision. Lastly, the plan is intended to communicate to property owners and those interested in the area the City's long term goals for the area.

This document consists of four sections:

1. Summary of Existing Conditions provides the background information used to shape the Plan.
2. The Vision and Illustrative Master Plan provide a visual representation and description of the type and character of desired development. This section references the summary of public input used to shape this Plan. The Goals and Policies set forth community aspirations for the study area and were used as a guide to follow in designing the long-range vision.
3. The Specific Area Strategies section contains the guide for public and private investment to occur over the 20-year timeframe.
4. The Implementation Priorities section presents proposed public actions and investments needed to realize the desired changes in the study area. Implementation will be

an evolutionary process which will occur over time and not overnight. The City hopes that public involvement, as exemplified by this Plan, will attract new private investment to Elk River.

a. Background

The City Council created a Task Force on October 2, 2006 for the purpose of creating a Plan for the "greater downtown area" and to provide direction and frequent feedback to the Technical Advisory Team made up of city staff and consultants.

The Task Force paused in late 2007 to allow for the completion of the Highway 10 plan as it routes through the downtown area. Following completion of the Highway 10 plan in early 2009, and the review of the Highway 10 plan at the Federal level, the Task Force reconvened in November 2011.

This Plan was developed based closely on the desires and vision of the Task Force members, representing various interests throughout the City.

b. Task Force Mission Statement

Following City Council's appointment, the Task Force developed and adopted the following mission statement which describes their role in the creation of this Plan:

Mission Statement –

To develop a comprehensive plan that will redefine the "greater downtown area" to preserve its historical character while promoting the future viability of the community.

Maximum public input will be gathered to create and assess alternatives resulting in a formal redevelopment plan with a combination of a master vision, working policies, specific area recommendations and implementation priorities.

Vision Statement –

The Mississippi Connections Study Area is the cornerstone of the community. The Redevelopment Framework provides the blueprint for creating an environment and culture that encourages private reinvestment. This environment will be characterized by a robust business climate, strong affordable residential neighborhoods, diverse recreational opportunities, an agreed upon transportation framework, recognition of its historical place, and enhancing opportunities for connections with the community.

c. Mississippi Connections Redevelopment Framework Vision Statement

The following vision statement summarizes the end objective, purpose and intent of the Plan:

d. Study Area Defined

The Task Force identified the study area boundaries starting from the “historic” core downtown area and expanded outward to include the adjacent areas which have tangible and intangible interrelationships with the health and vitality of the core downtown area. This “greater downtown area” is what is referred to herein the Plan as the “Study Area”.

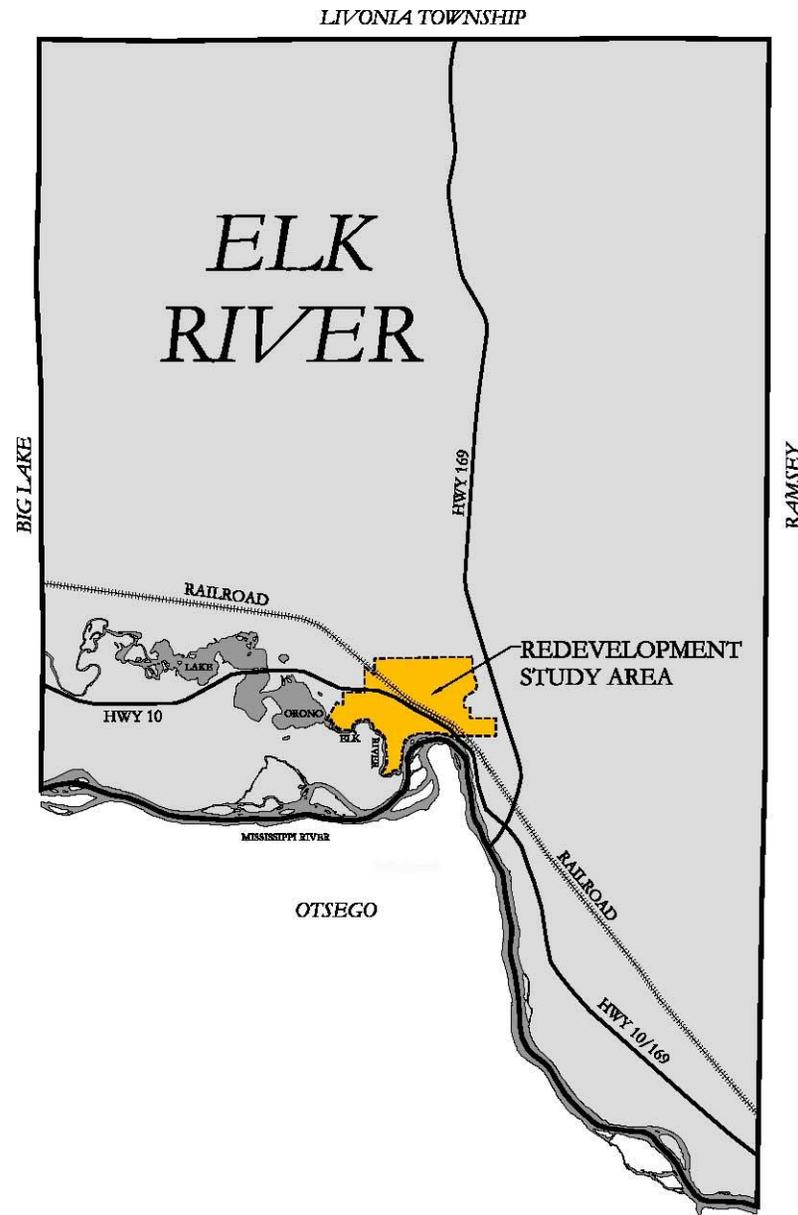
The Study Area encompasses the 432-acre south central core of the City of Elk River and includes a variety of land use components.

The Plan divides the study area into five “Focus Areas”. These areas allow for a more detailed discussion of the opportunities and approaches for key locations in the Study Area.

The Focus Areas are:

- Core Downtown
- Recreational Opportunities (Mississippi and Elk Rivers, Handke Stadium, River’s Edge Commons and Lion’s Park).
- Residential Neighborhoods
- North of Highway 10 (Mixed use redevelopment opportunity)
- Proctor and Quinn Avenues

The Study Area stems west, north and east of the core downtown area and is bisected in half by east/west transportation corridors – U.S. Highway 10 and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad.





e. Statutory Authority

Formally established by the City Council in 1980, the Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) in and for the City of Elk River was formed under the public purposes identified in Minnesota State Statutes Sections 469.001 to 469.047 (Housing and Redevelopment Authority Act).

The Housing and Redevelopment Authority Act grants municipalities the authority to designate redevelopment areas within the boundaries of the municipalities. Within these areas, the municipality may adopt a redevelopment plan and establish a project consistent with the municipality's public purpose. The projects as contemplated by this plan are consistent with the definition of a "Redevelopment Project" as defined in Section 469.002, Subdivision 14. Essentially a "Redevelopment Project" includes any work or undertaking:

- 1) To acquire blighted areas and other real property for the purpose of removing, preventing, or reducing blight, blighting factors, or the causes of blight;
- 2) To clear any areas acquired and install, construct or reconstruct streets, utilities and site improvements essential to the preparation of sites for uses in accordance with the redevelopment plan;
- 3) To sell or lease land so acquired for uses in accordance with the redevelopment plan;
- 4) To prepare a redevelopment plan, and to incur initiation, planning, survey and other administrative costs of a redevelopment project, and to prepare technical and financial plans and arrangements for buildings, structures, and improvements and all other work in connection therewith; or
- 5) To conduct an urban renewal project. The term "urban renewal project" may include undertakings and activities for the elimination or for the prevention of the development or spread of slums or blighted or

deteriorating areas and may involve any work or undertaking for that purpose constituting a redevelopment project or any rehabilitation or conservation work.

Assuming that redevelopment will occur in multiple phases, the HRA and City Council have previously adopted a series of incremental redevelopment plans within the greater downtown area in order to satisfy Statute 469.028, which requires the HRA to adopt a redevelopment plan prior to accepting a development proposal.

Phase I - In November 2004 the HRA and City Council adopted a Downtown Phase I Redevelopment Plan in conjunction with Tax Increment Financing District No. 21. Phase I is known as Granite Shores and Jackson Place project, which resulted in a total of 67 for-sale condominium units, 32 rental units, and approximately 20,000 square feet of commercial lease space and underground parking. The original name of Granite Shores was The Bluffs of Elk River.

Phase II – In November 2006 the HRA and City adopted a Redevelopment Plan which allowed the HRA to secure a contract for deed on property in order to potentially expand the King Avenue parking lot in the future. The property consisted of two contiguous buildings, 716 Main Street and 720 Main Street, commonly known as "Main Street Mall".

Phase III - The *Illustrative Master Plan* is considered the next phase of the City's redevelopment planning process. Although this Plan is not in reaction to a specific development proposal, it serves to satisfy the statutory requirement for the City to adopt a redevelopment plan prior to accepting and undertaking development proposals within the study area.

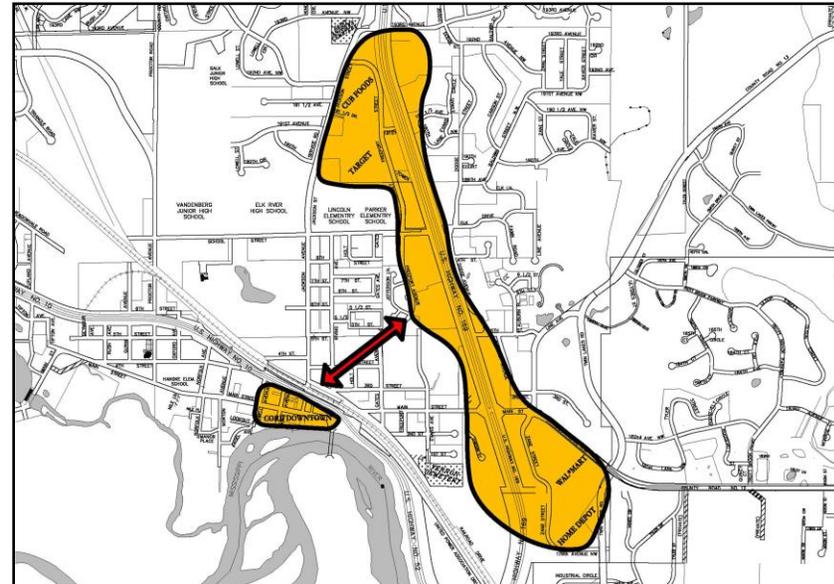
II. Summary of Existing Conditions

The Plan grew out of information collected and considered by the Task Force over several months. This section of the Plan highlights some of the key data sources that contributed to the planning process.

The Changing Face of Downtown

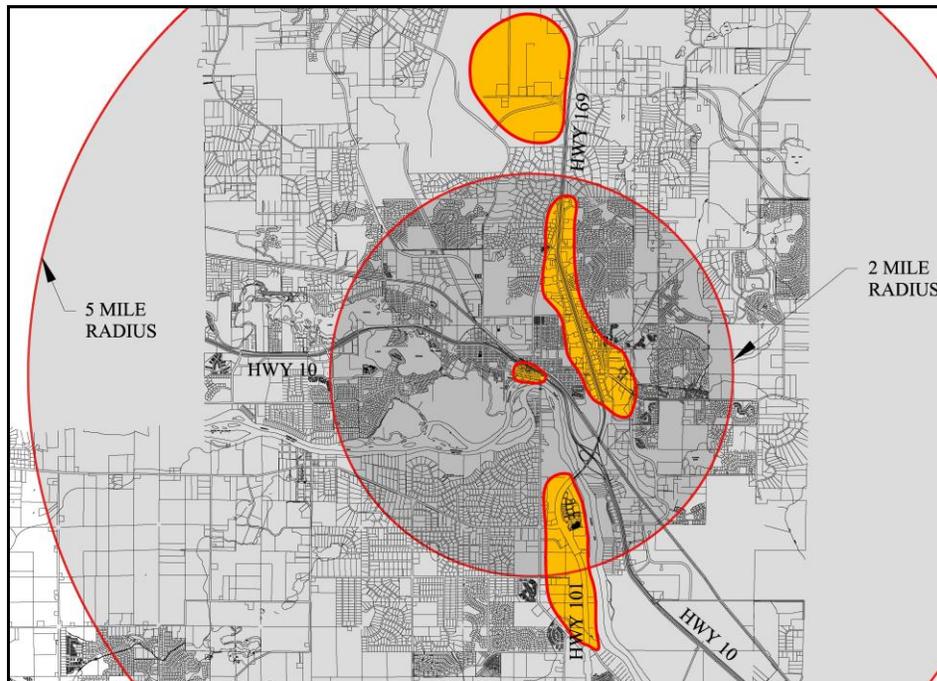
Historically, Elk River was a “freestanding community” (characterized by distance from the metropolitan area, self-contained economy, and limited transportation routes). An essential element of all freestanding communities was a core downtown area that served a highly agrarian economy. As is the case with many cities that are on the edge of the metropolitan area, the form and function of our downtown has changed based on a series of factors, these being:

- Incorporation of the City of Elk River and the Township in the late 1970’s started the process of land development through public utility extensions.
- As part of this process, the TH 169 corridor opened to commercial development ultimately creating competition for the downtown area, starting in the early 1980’s.
- Over the past thirty years, shopping habits have shifted to larger complexes of value and destination shopping.
- Loyalty to shopping areas has been replaced by value attached to location and accessibility.
 - As retail moved out of our downtown area it has been replaced with office uses. Less retail starts the chain of other retail uses not having a significant synergy to exist and in turn, seeking other market areas.
- The economic downturn starting in 2008 has hampered ability of smaller businesses from opening or continuing businesses. It is these businesses that are the primary market for a downtown area of our size.

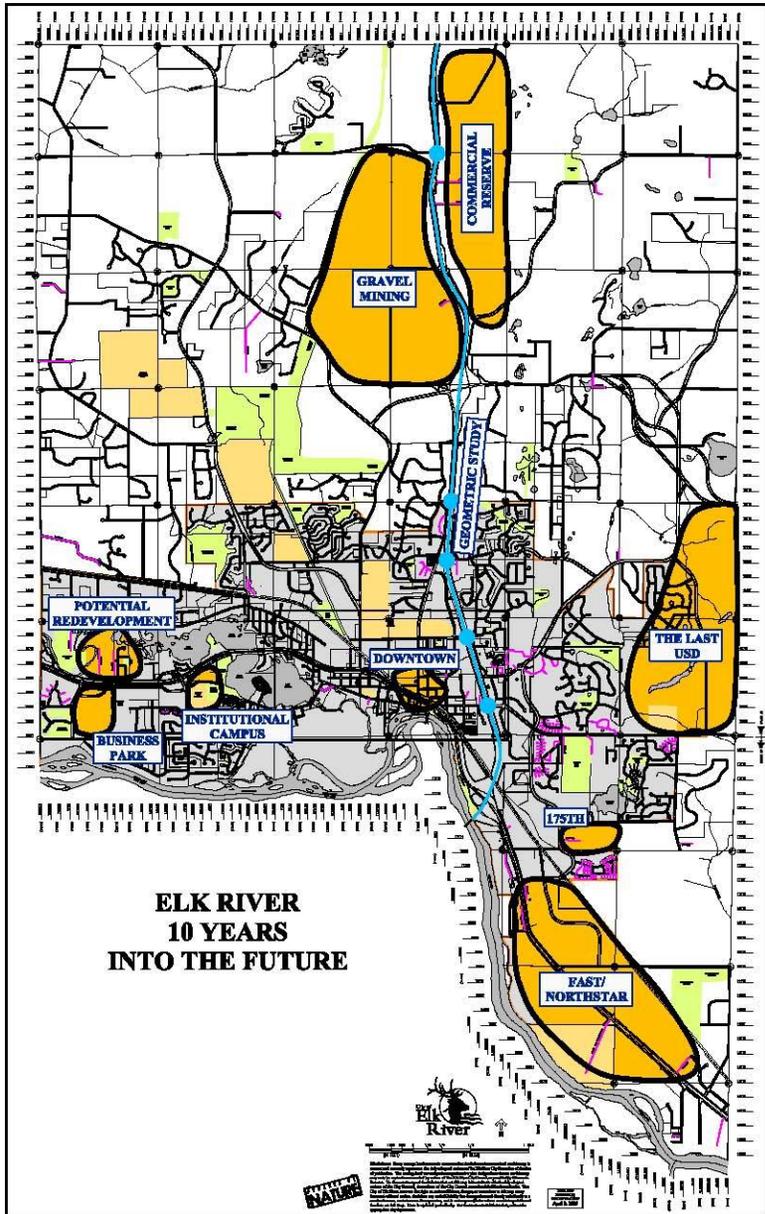


Some of the challenges for the downtown area will include:

- The Natures Edge Business Center and the Northstar Corridor will challenge market share from the downtown area
- CORE (Ramsey) and Waterfront East (Otsego) provide greenfield development opportunities for businesses and housing not unlike those necessary for the vitality of the study area.
- The loss of direct access from Highway 10 will hinder some businesses that rely on convenience sales.
- The lack of privately owned parking suggests a perception that there is not enough parking downtown, hampering business traffic.
- Future commercial development in the gravel mining.
- Limiting the City's population to 35,000 reduces the need for expanded commercial services



Commercial Radius



10 Year Projections

Land Use

The study area contains the following current land uses based off of tax classification information registered with Sherburne County.

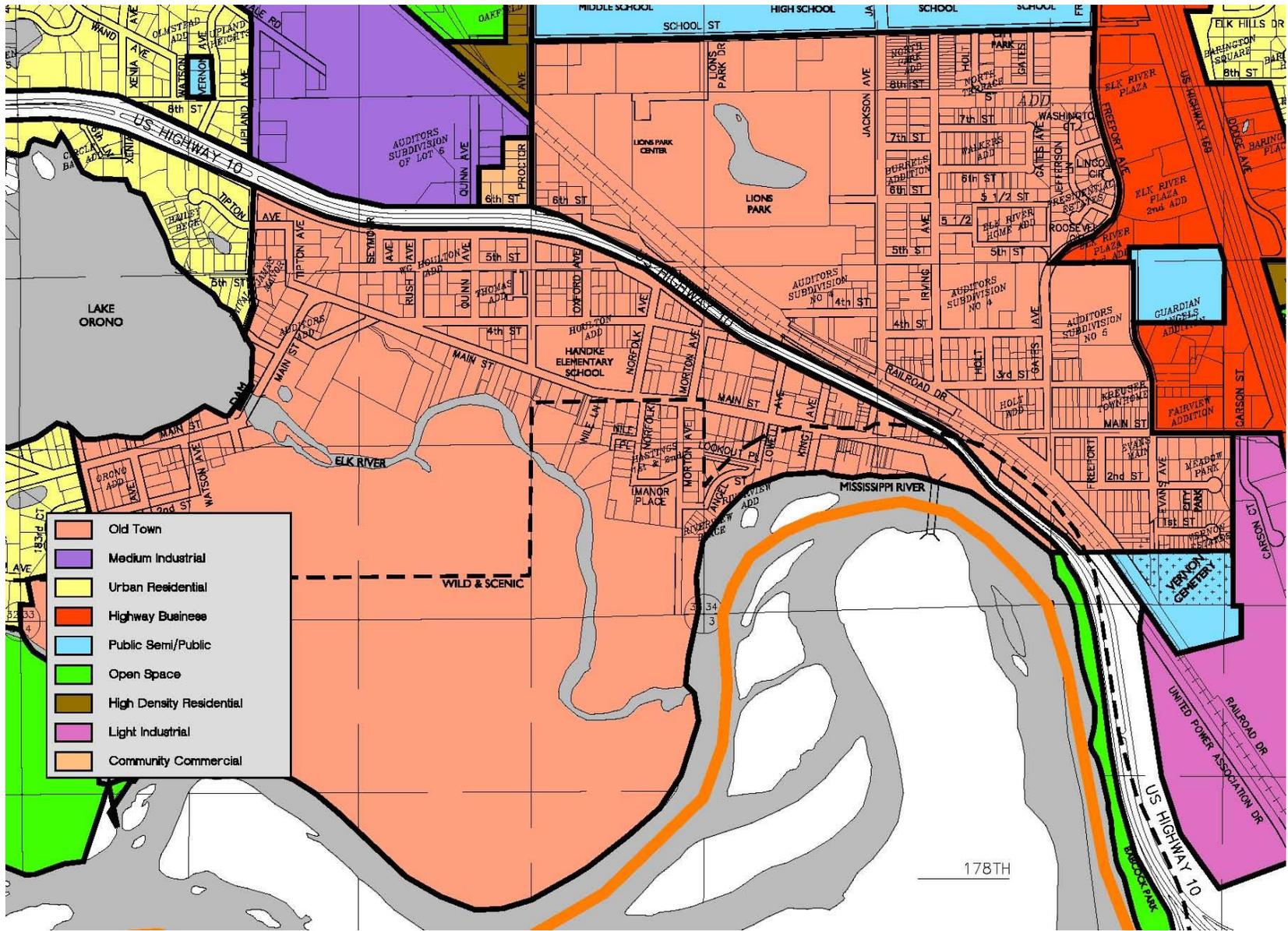
Tax Classification	Acreage	Square feet*	# of parcels
Single Family Residential	193.71	481,516	511
Apartments (4 or more units)	10.34	293,376	15
Low Income Rental	0.46	92,516	2
Residential (2-3 units)	5	n/a	9
Charitable Institutions	0.8	3,381	2
Church Properties	5.15	128,093	19
Commercial	87.38	547,520	102
Commercial (over 150K)	6.37	88,311	20
County Public Prop.	1.62	3,000	3
Industrial	1.69	58,744	6
K-12 Private School	5.9	n/a	1
K-12 Public Schools	2.22	49,950	7
Municipal	23.32	69,302	40
Public Utility	1.47	n/a	2
Agricultural	0.25	n/a	1
Other	2	n/a	6
Totals	348	1,815,709	745
* Building square feet estimated			

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the City Council on August 16, 2004 included a land use category identified as “Old Town”. The Plan recognized that the Old Town area was a diverse blend of uses, styles, and characters, and further, a focused study was necessary to identify, preserve and protect that diversity. The following image indicates the Study Area in relationship to the Old Town area.

The Old Town area, as defined in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan includes several differing land uses, including high, medium, and low density residential, Highway, Central and Office Commercial.

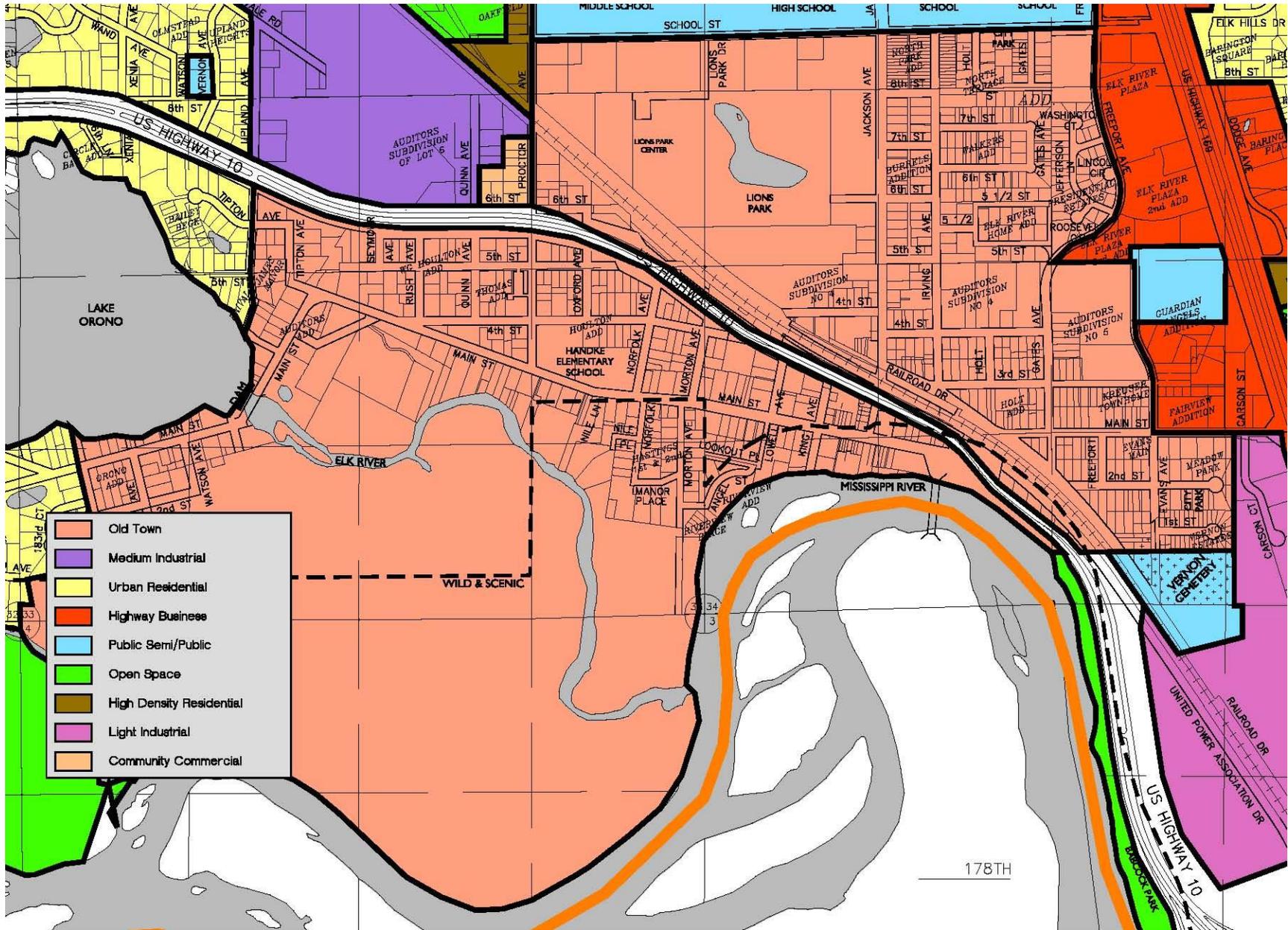
The Plan is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan in that the mix and balance of uses within the area are maintained, although some realignment of infrastructure is necessary to ensure that the land is developed to its highest and best use.



Land Use Map - Partial

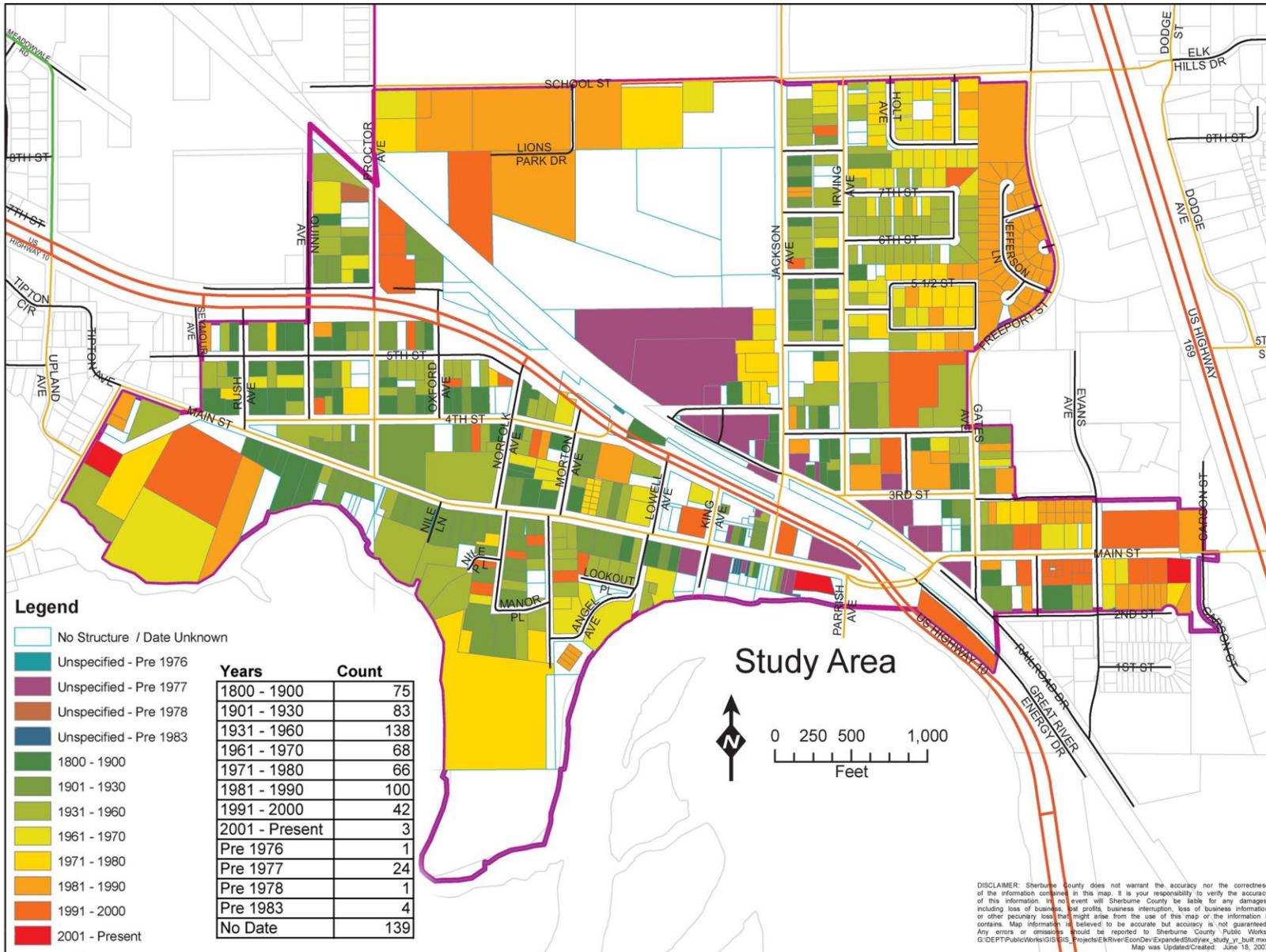
Zoning

Zoning designations show the current land use controls that apply to property in the Study Area. The Study Area includes a variety of zoning districts as indicated on the following image.



Year Built

Based on building permit issuance, the following image depicts the age of each primary structure and/or any improvements made to properties located the Study Area.



The Need to Redefine

To evaluate the need for redevelopment, the Task Force completed a series of exercises and small group discussions.

Characteristics of “Downtown” Exercise

The first exercise asked Task Force members to define the “Components of a successful downtown” and describe “What downtown means”. Their responses included the following in no particular order:

What makes a downtown successful?

- ❖ “Heart” or center
- ❖ Nostalgia
- ❖ Authenticity
- ❖ Unique/traditional (sets us apart from suburban development)
- ❖ Past, present and future planning
- ❖ Shopping/eating

Why do you come downtown?

- ❖ Diversity of activity
- ❖ Destination
- ❖ Tradition
- ❖ Special events/ entertainment

How do you know when you are downtown?

- ❖ Mass of historic buildings
- ❖ Signage

What does downtown mean to you?

- ❖ Vitality
- ❖ Interest, not necessity
- ❖ Commercial, retail and service
- ❖ Connectivity, transition, cohesive

- ❖ New residential
- ❖ Accessibility
 - Pedestrians
 - Traffic flow/access points
 - River
- ❖ History
- ❖ Activities/amenities
- ❖ Aesthetically pleasing
- ❖ Balance of old and new
- ❖ Charm, pleasant feel
- ❖ Brick and south Main Blocks

What should downtown have that it doesn't

- ❖ Embellishments (flags, plantings, color)
- ❖ Specialty businesses
- ❖ Signage
 - Directional
 - Informative

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Exercise

The second exercise involved a discussion of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, a summary of which is provided in the Appendix.

It was a result of this exercise in which the Task Force reached consensus that “Downtown Elk River” has already changed, as a result of time and market, to a point where it is no longer the thriving commercial center it was 50 years prior. Further, consensus was that “Downtown Elk River” needs to reinvent itself as the historical, cultural, and energetic core of community. With the core established and strengthened, the service and office uses will reemerge in the area, even when changes to Highway 10 require more destination driven trips.

Recent Public & Private Investments

There have been a number of significant private improvements to the area in recent years.



First National



Bank of Elk River

- First National Financial Center Building (Year 2000)
- The Bank of Elk River Expansion (Year 2005)

These private investments contribute significantly to increase the city's taxable market value and maximize the benefit of public investments as shown in the table below:

Market Value Expansion

Project	Market Value <i>Before</i>	Estimated Market Value <i>After</i>	Add'l tax payable 2012
Granite Shores	\$833,225	\$9,241,600	\$89,963
Jackson Place	\$175,800	\$3,221,800	\$36,092
The Bank of Elk River Expansion Project	\$1,395,600	\$4,239,300	\$56,874
	\$2,606,100	\$13,902,900	\$182,929



Before



After – Granite Shores



Before - Jackson



After - Jackson

In 2001, the Elk River Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) determined that downtown Elk River's long-term vitality should be a community goal. At the same time, several key parcels along the riverfront became for sale, which prompted the HRA to solicit development proposals from approximately 100 developers in order to form a public/private partnership to revitalize downtown Elk River. After receiving five development proposals, the HRA and City Council selected MetroPlains Development to further refine their development concepts.

Five years later, concepts turned into reality and Granite Shores and Jackson Place redevelopment projects were constructed. The projects added approximately 20,000 square feet of space for new businesses and over 100 new residents to the downtown.

As a result of these private investments, the City was able to expand the King Avenue parking lot and construct the long-awaited River's Edge Commons Park.

In 2010, the City purchased the parking lot behind the Sunshine Depot block. This purchase retained approximately 70 parking spaces in public ownership.

In 2012, the Elk River Lutheran Church began redevelopment of the former 1st National Bank building into their new worship center. Included in the improvements was an easement to provide a trail along the river, a landscaped refuge center near Main Street, and a community room overlooking the river.

In 2012, the HRA, due to poor building conditions and rising maintenance costs, removed the Main Street Mall at 720 and 716 Main Street. In their place, a 28 stall parking lot was added.

As part of its exploration and understanding of the study area, the Task Force considered the following conditions and issues:

- Previous Relevant Studies
- Natural, Cultural and Recreational Amenities
- Market Conditions
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Historic Context

Previous Relevant Studies

Over the years the City has conducted several studies of the area in an effort to continue to encourage redevelopment and revitalization of downtown.

The objectives identified by these studies remain relevant thirty-five years later. These objectives demonstrate the long-term nature of redevelopment planning. The 2007 Redevelopment Framework Plan validates many of these objectives, as summarized below:

1970 – Elk River Central Business District Report

Prepared by Nason, Wehrman, Knight & Chapman, Inc.

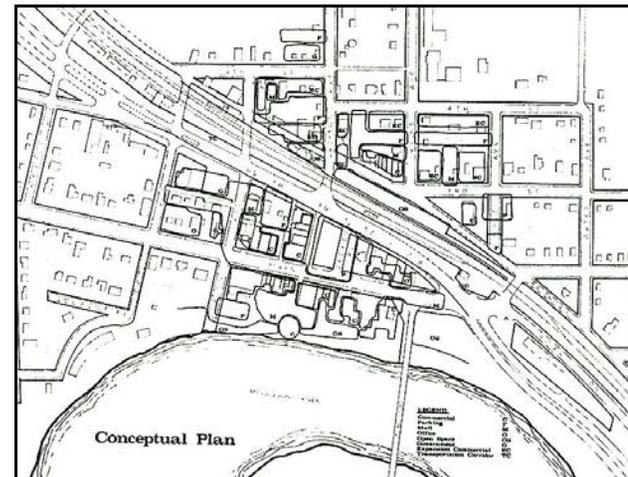
The report established general guidelines for the physical appearance, movement patterns and development potentials for a 20-year timeframe.

Primary objectives included:

- Unify existing and new buildings for the districts unique character
- Remove traffic conflicts (e.g. Hwy 10 overpass to connect north and south areas)
- Provide adequate parking (e.g. parking ramp)
- Utilize natural setting of the Mississippi River (e.g. restaurant)



1970



1970

1982 – Elk River Downtown Redevelopment Plan

Prepared by Zack Johnson & Associates, Inc.

The plan established a guide to evaluate physical improvements, develop zoning policies, and establish a Capital Improvements Program. The plan identified priority improvements and redevelopment opportunities.

Primary objectives included:

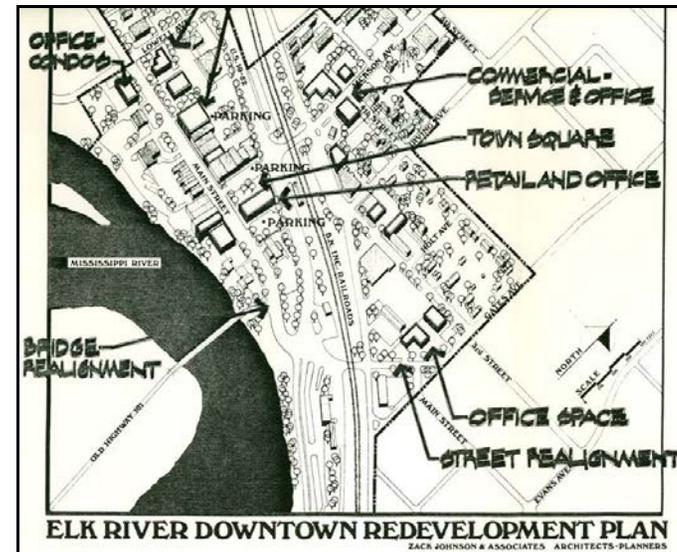
- Rehabilitate architecturally and historically significant buildings (e.g. design standards)
- Concentrate retail/office land uses south of Hwy 10
- Concentrate service businesses north of Hwy 10
- Concentrate high-density residential west of Lowell Avenue
- Identified priority redevelopment areas:
 - Town Square (known as Jackson Square)
 - King Avenue & Main Street
 - Former Star News building to former Cinema building.

1986 – Governor’s Design Team

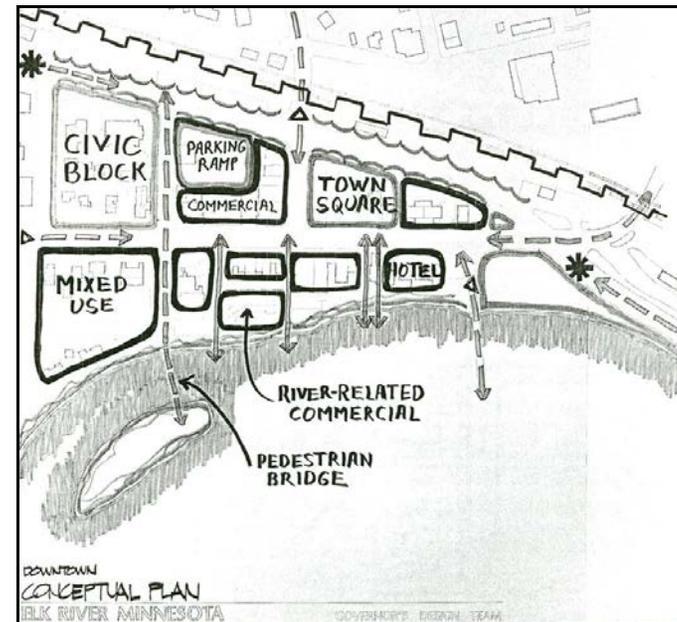
Prepared by a team of professionals and active community participation, an overall plan was developed for the city’s Central Business District (CBD).

Primary objectives included:

- Promote downtown as a “unique historic river town”
- Link downtown to the community through open space and a trail system
- Utilize the Mississippi River with a restaurant, hotel or community center uses
- Consider a parking ramp for heavy traffic areas (e.g. King Avenue area)



1982



1986

1988 – Elk River River-walk Project

Prepared by Brauer & Associates Ltd.

The report created a river-walk design and outlined the financial feasibility for a new building on the former Hardware store site at the south intersection of Jackson Avenue and Main Street.

Primary objectives included:

- Create more retail/service traffic via a restaurant
- Generate more interest in the Mississippi River via a boardwalk trail
- Develop design standards for rehabilitation and new construction

- Develop design standards for signage, façade improvements, interior improvements and new construction.
- Develop activities and events (e.g. Heritage festival, winter festival, mural event)
- Conduct a market analysis to assist business recruitment

1994 – Mississippi River-walk Pathways Plan

Prepared by Hoisington-Koehler Group, Inc.

The planning process utilized a local committee to establish a vision and cost estimate for developing the river-walk.

Primary objectives included:

- Create an interpretive walking/biking trail along the river that depicts the early transportation history of the region

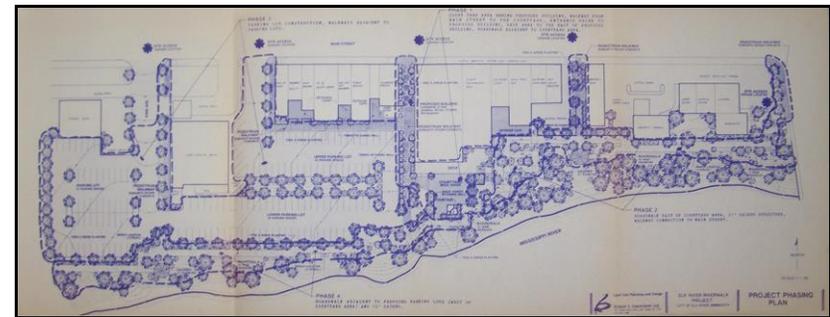
1998 – Central Business District Action Plan

Prepared by Theresa Washburn

The plan created the foundation for developing a downtown master plan, and completing activities through working committees.

Primary objectives included:

- Utilize the river, an arts center, pedestrian pathways and a beautification plan



1988



1994

2002- Historic Context Study

Prepared by Landscape Research, Carole Zeillie

This study reviewed the history of select downtown commercial properties in the context of historical, architectural and landscape architecture features and themes.

23 properties south of 10, north of main street, east of King Avenue, and west of Jackson were inventoried and evaluated in these contexts. The study found that none of the properties appear to be eligible for the National Register, although five properties along Jackson street, recognized for their local significance, were recommended for further study. In particular the Kemper drugstore was recognized as locally significant as a well conserved example of an early 1960's retail building.

More discussion of the Historic Context Study can be found on page 36 of this document.

Natural, Cultural and Recreational Amenities

Mississippi River

The Mississippi River through Elk River is classified by the Minnesota State Wild & Scenic Rivers Program as a “Recreational River”. The area is classified as a Recreational River because it has undergone some impoundments and/or diversions in the past and has adjacent lands which are considerably developed, but are still capable of being managed.

The City of Elk River adopted the Wild & Scenic River Ordinance to regulate the subdivision, use, and conservation of the shorelands to preserve and protect the existing natural, scenic, historical, scientific, and recreational values. The regulations also reduce the effects of overcrowding and poorly planned development of adjacent lands, prevent pollution, preserve a natural beauty and quietude, maintain proper relationships between various land use types, and prohibit new uses that are inconsistent with the statewide standards and criteria.

Public access to the Mississippi River is under-utilized; limited largely by private property ownership along the shorelines and topographic constraints. Island areas are owned and controlled by the MN Dept of Natural Resources (DNR), except with one major island in private ownership.

Elk River

The Elk River is classified as an “Urban River” through Elk River. The area is classified as an Urban River because it flows through an incorporated area. The city has a 300 foot shore land overlay district along the river to provide for wise development, to preserve and enhance the quality of the surface waters, and to preserve the economic and natural values of the shore land area.

The Mississippi and Elk riverfronts are significant assets for the entire community. It is an authentic amenity for the community, and potentially the region, but it has to be connected to where people are and easily accessible from the community as a whole.



Mississippi River



Elk River south of Dam

Historic Elkhi Stadium

Most commonly referred to by locals as Handke Stadium, due to its location next to the original Handke High School, the Elkhi Stadium is one of the landmarks of downtown Elk River. On May 26, 2004 Elkhi Stadium was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Built in the 1920's when volunteers turned a slough in a natural amphitheater into a playing field, the stadium was the place for a variety of high school athletic games over the years. During the winter, kids sledged down the hills and skated on the village's only ice rink.

Over the years the stadium aged and fell into disrepair. The stone warming house that was added in the 1930's by WPA crews was rebuilt in 2000-2005 with funds raised by the Elk River Rotary Club. The club completed additional restorations as well, including: a gas fireplace addition to the warming house, the stone wall was replaced, the steps were repaired, a stone plaza containing the original Handke High School bell was built at one of the entrances to the stadium and the area was landscaped.

Today the beautifully restored stadium is used for recreational hockey, ice skating and other events.



1920's - Construction



2007



Bell Tower



Ice Skating

Rivers Edge Commons Park

Rivers Edge Commons Park, completed in June 2007, is located at the intersection of Main Street and Jackson Avenue and extends from Main Street to the Mississippi River.

The City acquired the parcel for the purpose of future park space in the late 1980's following the fire of a local hardware store. Over the years the City considered design enhancements to develop the site as the central plaza with a boardwalk trail, or "river-walk", which would extend along the river through the downtown area. Due to the cost of the park improvements the project was postponed until further private investment in the downtown area justified the large public expenditure.

In 2006, as a result of over \$30-million of private investment with the addition of The Bluffs of Elk River, Jackson Place and The Bank of Elk River expansion, the City commenced construction of the park improvement project. The park includes a street-level plaza, splash fountains, a natural amphitheater and a gazebo at the river level.

The Park is currently home to the Riverfront Concert series, a very popular program drawing hundreds of music fans to the downtown area on Thursday evenings in the summer month.

Lions Park

The 34-acre Lion's Park is located at the northern portion of the study area, just south of School Street. Amenities included are 4 picnic shelters, paved trails, hockey rinks, a sliding hill, a 9-disc golf course, a skateboarding park, playground equipment, and a band shell. A majority of the improvements have been funded over the years by the local Lion's Club.

Lions Park is home to many of the City's recreational programs.



Rivers Edge Commons



Lions Park



Lions Park

Market Conditions

Market research provides a context for redevelopment planning. This research examines the type, form and quantity of new development that could occur in downtown Elk River. The market research helps to direct the type and scale of new development to locations where new investment provides the greatest positive effects.

2001 Market Analysis

In April 2001, Maxfield Research, Inc. was retained by the HRA to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the market potential for redevelopment for Elk River's downtown. The research included an analysis of the existing supply and market conditions of housing, retail and office in the area. Growth trends and demographic characteristics were analyzed to consider the impact on the potential to develop various land uses in the study area.

The analysis identified 3 distinct areas in the study area based on current land uses and physical barriers, opportunities and challenges. The report recommendations focused on development potential for each area and strategies to enable the areas to compliment one another.

The three areas are:

1. Core Central Business District – *south of railroad, east of King Avenue*
The analysis cited this area as best suited for specialty retail and for-sale multi-family housing.
2. Northern Area – *north of railroad*
The analysis cited this area as best suited for service businesses, such as office and institutions, along with rental and senior housing.
3. Western Transition Area – *south of railroad, west of King Avenue*
The analysis cited this area as best suited for multi-family housing.

November 19, 2012

The market analysis report quantified demand for additional housing, retail and office space in the downtown area for the period 2000 to 2010.

Demand Summary Downtown Elk River Redevelopment Area 2000 to 2010	
Housing	
For-Sale Multifamily	95-115 units
Market Rate Apartments	300-360 units
Market Rate Senior Housing	60-70 units
Office	19,000-39,000 sq. ft.
Retail*	14,000 sq. ft.
* Demand through 2005	
Source: Maxfield Research Inc.	

Prior to use of public funds to facilitate redevelopment, it is suggested that the market analysis be updated.

In addition, the report identified sites that have the greatest potential for redevelopment based on the positive impact it would have on the downtown.

2007 Adjusted Market Analysis

The table below reflects the remaining balance of demand available after reducing the initial demand by the recent development activity that has taken place within the Study Area. These recent developments include:

Housing:

Granite Shores for-rent multi-family 67 units
 Jackson Place apartments 32 units

Office:

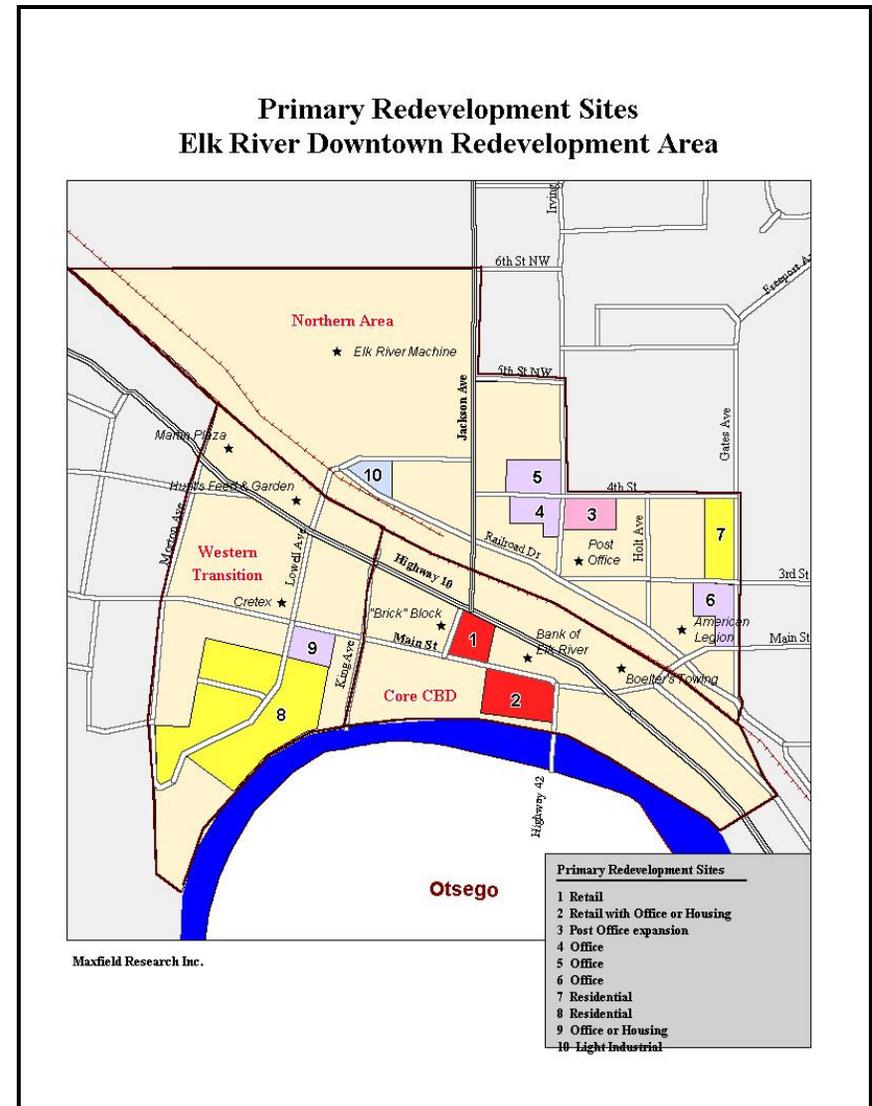
The Bank of Elk River expansion 20,000 sf

Retail:

The Bluffs commercial 10,000 sf
 Jackson Place commercial 10,000 sf

The balance indicates remaining housing demand to 2010. Redevelopment proposals that exceed the indicated demand during that time shall be supported by an up to date market analysis.

Demand Summary Downtown Elk River Redevelopment Area 2007 to 2010	
Housing	
For-Sale Multifamily	48 units
Market Rate Apartments	300-328 units
Market Rate Senior Housing	60-70 units
Source: Maxfield Research Inc. & City of Elk River	



Transportation and Infrastructure

Railroad

The railroad has right-of-way moving approximately 77 trains per day through the area on two sets of tracks. The line carries passenger and freight trains.

Vehicle and pedestrian crossing concerns may be alleviated if Railroad Drive, which runs adjacent to the railroad, is removed as a frontage road eliminating close access to Highway 10.

U.S. Highway 10

2003-2023 Statewide Transportation Plan

No improvements are planned for Highway 10 through the downtown area for many years, according to the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MnDOT) 2003-2023 Statewide Transportation Plan.

Interregional Corridor Management Plan

MnDOT completed several Interregional Corridor Management Plans in 2001 and early 2002, one of which included the stretch of Highway 10 from approximately Highway 101 to Proctor Avenue. The results of the Plan suggested that even if a \$21 million (2001 dollars) investment is spent on elevating Highway 10 through downtown, the level of service will not be improved from an "F" rating in peak times.

If funding were to become available to MnDOT District 3, the district in which Elk River is located, MnDOT would most likely fund improvements to Highway 169 in Elk River as opposed to Highway 10 since MnDOT rates Highway 169 as a "high

priority" highway, whereas Highway 10 is rated "medium priority".

On October 14, 2002, the Elk River City Council adopted Resolution 02-93 "Accepting, Supporting and Adopting the TH 10 Interregional Corridor Management Plan".

A major pivot point in the 2006 Task Force discussions involved the Highway 10 routing through the study area. These discussions, and the impact they had on the plan, led the City Council to table the process until the Highway 10 plan could be developed. Through their discussions, the Task Force developed a number of scenarios and sketches to visually understand the design implications Highway 10 improvements. These sketches are included in the appendix as they are important to the history of the planning process, and provide valuable information to the user in understanding the changes that are coming.

Future Highway 10 Issues

In 2008, MnDOT finalized a plan for improvements to Highway 10 as it routes through the study area, submitting it to the Federal Highway Administration for their review. This plan was prepared through the collaborative efforts of MnDOT, Sherburne County, the City of Elk River, and many others.

The proposed Highway 10 improvements represent a significant change to the downtown area, and a major impetus for this planning project. In summary, the plan shows Highway 10 evolving into a freeway through the study area. To accommodate the necessary speeds and capacity, the main line will shift to the north, requiring the Burlington Northern, Santa Fe rail line to shift to the north, in the area of present day railroad drive. Access to the study area from Highway 10 will be via interchanges at Proctor and south of Main street, with the

entrances to the off ramps many blocks away. Local circulation will be handled via a surface frontage road, the southern boundary of which is near the current southern curb of Highway 10 mainline. An underpass between present day Jackson and King will maintain the north south connection of Jackson.

Anticipating these access and visibility impacts, it is important that stakeholders work toward establishing the core area as a destination of sufficient strength that it can withstand these changes.

Historic Context

The study area encompasses the 432-acre core of the City of Elk River. This core includes many of the first generation homes and first platted neighborhoods in the City. In addition, it is the Mississippi River and the railroad, both located in the study area, which largely defines the historic development pattern of the City.

In 2002 the HRA and HPC commissioned an independent study of properties within the core downtown area, in response to concerns raised by the Heritage Preservation Commission regarding the then proposed Bluffs and Jackson Place developments. It was conducted by Carole Zellie of Landscape Research.

Part I of the study outlined six Elk River Historic Contexts for which to provide a framework with which to evaluate the historic, architectural, and landscape architectural significance of inventoried properties. The Elk River historic contexts identified in the study are:

- 1) Landscape Setting, 1848-1950
- 2) Agriculture, 1850-1950
- 3) Transportation, 1848-1950
- 4) Industry and Commerce, 1851-1950
- 5) Residential Architecture, 1851-1920
- 6) Schools, Churches, and Local Institutions, 1857-1920

Part II of the Historic Context Study included an inventory of 23 properties in the Elk River downtown commercial area. The study assisted in determining the significance of historic resources

in downtown Elk River and assessed their potential National Register of Historic Places eligibility.

The study concluded that none of the 23 properties appeared to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. However, 5 buildings on the west side of Jackson Ave were recommended for further preservation study as having significance as part of early twentieth-century downtown Elk River and retaining varying amounts of their historic facades. These buildings are commonly referred to as the “Brick and S. Main Blocks”.



Jackson Avenue – Brick Block “Then and Now”

In addition to review of the Historic Context Study, the Task Force considered an overview of historically significant properties as identified by the City's Heritage Preservation Commission and policy recommendations. It is the consensus of the Task Force that core downtown area contains much of the history of Elk River, and serves as the cultural foundation of the community. While the area may not be deemed historic from a national or statewide perspective, it is Elk River History, and important in that respect. Every effort should be employed to preserve these buildings to further communicate the link to the past that they represent.

II. Illustrative Master Plan

The planning process which resulted in the Illustrative Master Plan (Plan) consisted of the following three steps:

- 1) Task Force Visioning Process
- 2) Gathering of Public & Stakeholder Input
- 3) City Board and Commission Review

Task Force Visioning Process

The Task Force met over several months starting in 2006. In 2006, the planning process identified a number of variables dependent on completion of a Highway 10 geometric plan. After determining that these variables were too numerous and impactful, the City Council suspended the Task Force, pending resolution of the Highway 10 plans. This plan was completed in November 2008, the Task Force reconvened in November, 2011.

The 2006 Task Force members had developed a Plan that was nearing formal public comment. Upon reconvening, the 2012 task force, after spending some time identifying their goals, agreeing on assumptions, and developing sketches of key components of a successful downtown environment, broke into small design charrettes over several months to fine tune the Plan.

Recognizing that the triggers to major changes are not likely to surface in the near term, the task force focused on enhancing the quality and value of the core area, as it relates to the Elk River community. The Task Force believes that the downtown area serves as the community center. Visitors through and to the downtown area develop perceptions of the Elk River community based on these initial reactions. A vibrant, healthy downtown area strengthens the community by extension.

The Task Force felt that strengthening the perception of the downtown area was a priority. Introduction and expansion of amenities, support systems, and activity are necessary to encourage people to come downtown and businesses to locate in the area. The Task Force understands that the history and character of the study area, in particular the core downtown area, is not replaceable.

The Plan is a tool for shaping development in a manner consistent with the vision for the Study Area. The Plan uses a variety of illustrations to depict the potential redevelopment and revitalization of the Study Area.

The Plan is not a specific blueprint, but rather a series of priorities, goals, tasks, and opportunities that once completed, promote the area and the city toward sustainability. The actual design of each site will be determined through negotiations between the city and private parties seeking to invest in the Study Area. The designation of existing building(s) simply sets a basis for the initial strategy concept for a site, but should not preclude future redevelopment.

“The Plan is not a specific blueprint, but rather a series of priorities, goals, tasks, and opportunities that once completed, promote the city...”

The Plan seeks to reinforce and create a variety of connections between the Mississippi River, which is unique to the Study Area, and the rest of the Elk River community and region. The Plan establishes a development framework to guide the necessary relationships between areas of common and varied uses that are

important in the Study Area's form and function. The images incorporated within the Plan are intended to provide guidance toward the development of formal design guidelines and small area plans after the Plan's adoption.

Primary Elements of the Illustrative Master Plan

Greater Downtown Area – General

- ❖ *Identify opportunities to visually improve the Highway 10 corridor* by adding areas of landscaping, lighting, visual features and removing blight.
- ❖ *Maintain the integrity of single family neighborhoods* by encouraging opportunities for reinvestment.
- ❖ *Maintain historic character of the area* by:
 - Rehabilitation of the “Brick and South Main blocks”
 - Maintain the water tower at Jackson Ave
 - Designate historic single family residential areas
 - Commemorative signage
 - Establish design standards for new development that reflect characteristics of the past
- ❖ *Establish identifiable pedestrian corridors* to enhance traffic patterns and connections throughout the Study Area:
 - Main Street to Handke Stadium to Hwy 10 at Proctor
 - Main Street to the mixed use area
 - Jackson Avenue
- ❖ *Establish identifiable landscape corridors* to enhance traffic patterns and connections throughout the Study Area:
 - Main Street to Handke Stadium
 - Main Street/4th Street
 - Jackson Avenue

Recreational Opportunities

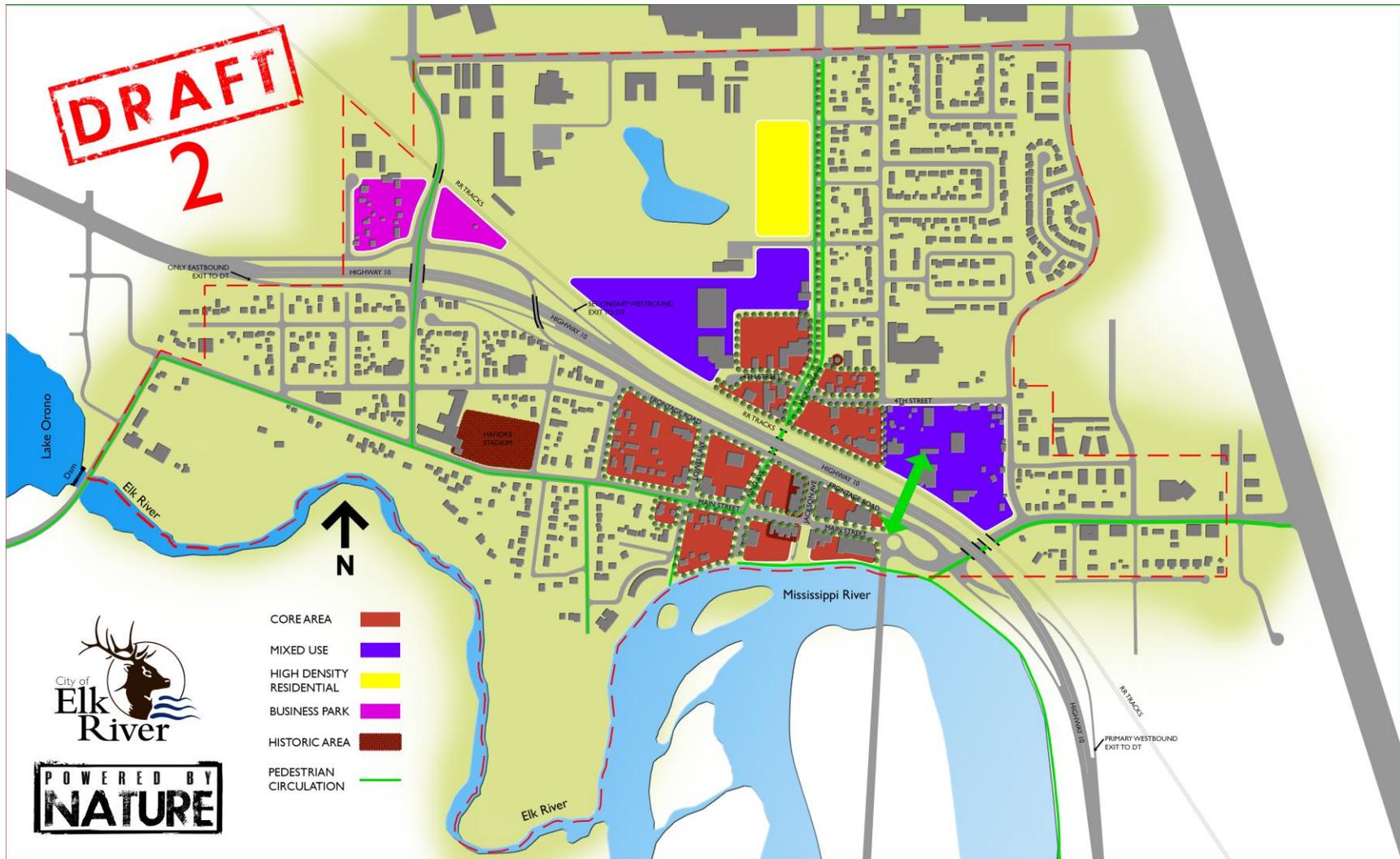
- ❖ *Identify appropriate locations along the rivers for public access.*
- ❖ *Work with Elk River Municipal Utilities to screen or relocate outdoor storage.*
- ❖ *Establish a trail system throughout the study area,:* Promoting connections to the rivers, parks, and activity venues.
- ❖ *Create interpretive signs to highlight historic occurrences and view sheds*
- ❖ *Promote people generating activities (farmers markets, festivals, concerts, sidewalk sales)* to expand and enhance citizen activity in the Study Area:

Core Downtown

- ❖ *Establish the Mississippi River as the significant recreational amenity* by creating a variety of public access opportunities, physical connections and activities within the Study Area.
- ❖ *Establish specialized commercial land uses in the core downtown* (e.g. hotel, restaurant, banquet facility).
- ❖ *Protect the large scale massing of buildings in the core downtown that establish the character of the core area*
- ❖ *Use structured parking in the core downtown* to provide parking necessary to support diversity of uses in the downtown area.

North of Highway 10

- ❖ *Reconfigure roadway patterns through the Study area to respect the Highway 10 future plan.*
- ❖ *Concentrate employment generating land uses (e.g. office/medical) north of Highway 10 to bring daytime users that support the core downtown commercial.*
- ❖ *Concentrate mixed uses in taller buildings at the intersection of Main Street and 4th Street to maximize views of the Mississippi River.*
- ❖ *Manage storm water drainage through a greenway concept that connects Lion's Park to maximize views of the Mississippi River.*
- ❖ *Establish higher density residential around Lion's Park to increase its value and desirability.*



Public Participation Process

Upon completion of defining the goals, policies and strategies and the creation of the Master Plan concepts for the area, the Task Force opened the plan for public inspection at two open houses. One held on September 13th was lightly attended. A second open house on October 22nd was more heavily attended, with approximately 30-40 people reviewing the plan and talking to staff and Task Force members. The purpose of the community open houses was to receive community feedback regarding the planning process and subsequent master plan concepts. This was also an opportunity to educate the public on the changes expected as part of MnDOT's improvements, and our reaction to those changes and gain public understanding for the plan.

A public comment period was opened on September 4, 2012 and formally closed on October 22, 2012. Notices for a September open house were posted on the city website, chamber newsletter, and Star News. Notices for an October open house were mailed to each property owner in the study area, in addition to the sources above. During that 6 week period, the Planning Commission, Park Commission, Heritage Preservation Commission, Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Economic Development Authority and City Council all received the plan. All written comments received during the month were reviewed by the task force at their meeting on October 22, 2012. These written comments are included in the appendix.

No significant redevelopment plan can be universally agreed to by all parties, but this plan does represent the consensus of those participating in the process based on the information known at the time.

In general, the comments heard and reviewed by the Task Force were separated into three themes. Some comments directed a change to the plan. These include suggestions to expand the downtown area to facilitate more opportunities for redevelopment, remove references to forming a Historic Preservation residential district, and add or remove trails throughout the plan, and complete a historic context study north of Highway 10.

Other comments were characterized by the Task Force as general beliefs; these comments voiced a concern over the viability of businesses in the area, the impact Highway 10 changes will have on them, and concern over the use of eminent domain. These comments were helpful in reaffirming the purpose behind the plan. Task Force did not make changes to the plan, but reiterated to the commenter the purpose behind the plan, and how the city intends to address these changes. Additionally, the Task Force received comments from property owners who would be impacted by the plan, but these impacts were not shown. It was recognized that as the plans become more and more detailed, impacts will be better understood. In the meantime, the user of the plan should be cognizant of these impacts as they develop over time.

Lastly, the Task force reviewed comments from property owners who voiced skepticism that the changes to Highway 10 would ever materialize, and that the plan is premature. Further, commenters expect changes to the Highway 10 plan, which will impact the Task Forces' Mississippi Connections framework. No plan is final; it is common, even expected, that as more information is known, modifications to a plan are necessary. This plan represents a solution to the impacts anticipated today. The Task Force suggested that a review of the plan occur in 10 years to see how new information might improve the plan.

Goals

Redevelopment Framework Goals

The following Goals are supported by various Policies and Specific Area Strategies within this Plan that will assist in implementing the long term vision for the Study Area:

1. Establish the core downtown area as an identifiable asset to current and future residents.
2. Create opportunities to identify the Study Area both as a gateway to the community and as a place of historical significance. (Historical photo sites)
3. Establish the Mississippi River as the significant recreational amenity to the community by increasing public access connections and activities to the river and the Study Area's other recreational amenities.
4. Maintain a philosophy that recognizes revitalization efforts respecting the Study Area's historic context with a vision for the future.
5. Encourage reinvestment in the single family residential areas while maintaining housing affordability.
6. Balance the future needs of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and accommodate a mix of parking opportunities.
7. Redefine the Study Area in order to increase its economic viability by introducing land uses that can be supported in the long term.
8. Maintain Highway 10 access and visibility to the core downtown area and create enhanced primary traffic corridors through the Study Area to strengthen its connection to the community.
9. Introduce new land uses for the area north of Highway 10 that complement the core downtown area.
10. Maximize long term public investments within the Study Area by encouraging a significant amount of private investment in a way that benefits the community as a whole.
11. Monitor the health of the multi-family inventory to ensure its sustainability.

Policies

The Task Force developed the following Policies to be used as a framework for the long term Plan and Specific Area Strategies:

1. Through the Task Force Mission Statement, it has been determined that the Study Area needs to be redefined and that substantial redevelopment efforts will most likely occur in the future as a response to the market. In order to respond to these changes, a comprehensive redevelopment framework is necessary to guide both private and public investment/reinvestment efforts to ensure that the goals of the community are met in the short and long term.
2. The Mississippi and Elk Rivers define downtown's uniqueness and history; these should be emphasized both as a recreational amenity and as an asset enhancement for redevelopment opportunities.
3. Explore opportunities for public access improvements and activity generation at the Mississippi River, Elk River, Handke Stadium, Lion's Park and River's Edge Commons Park in order to achieve a sense of place and connection to the community.
4. Achieve the preservation of historic character by a wide range of strategies, e.g. new construction design standards to appear traditional, rehabilitation, interpretive signage and special events.
5. Identify and agree as a community those buildings that best represent the historic nature of Elk River's past and promote programs that will assist in the rehabilitation of those residential and commercial buildings.
6. North of Highway 10 should not be an extension of the core downtown. The land uses on the north side should:
 - a. Not be in competition with the core downtown
 - b. Compliment the core downtown in terms of design, transportation, pedestrian movement and market opportunities, and
 - c. Include employment centers to bring daytime users and jobs (e.g. office/medical) to support the retail in the core downtown.
 - d. Include opportunities for draws; activity centers, plazas, etcetera that add visibility and identity to the area.
7. Responding to redevelopment opportunities are critical to the area. Recognizing that redevelopment is more costly and riskier than greenfield development, market triggered redevelopment should be encouraged and assisted.

8. Highway 10 is a physical barrier that will always create a challenge in providing an optimum redevelopment strategy to connect the north and south Study Areas. Although the Study Area does not depend on customer traffic from Highway 10, it is important for this area to be seen and accessed in order to maintain downtown's uniqueness and sense of place in the community.

9. In order to strengthen the Study Area's single family neighborhoods, multiple strategies should be implemented in order to encourage continuous reinvestment, e.g. rehabilitation, code compliance and building removal/rebuilding.

Specific Area Strategies

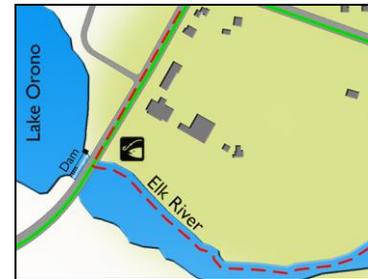
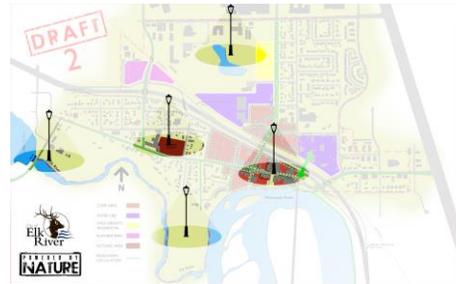
Recreational Opportunities

Objective Statement

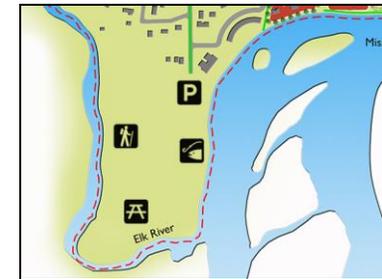
The unique recreational amenities located within the Study Area are the Mississippi River, the Elk River, historic Handke Stadium, Lions Park and Rivers Edge Commons Park.

One of the key findings of the community's 2011 branding process was the recognition that Elk River residents are physically active, and the area park amenities are known region wide. This recognition helps form the development of the community's *Powered by Nature* brand. The effective preservation and expansion of these recreational features will do more to establish the study area as the hub of the city than any development project devoted to commercial or residential uses of comparable expense.

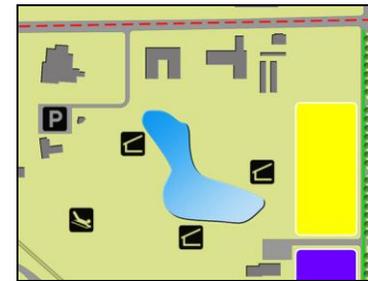
The Plan emphasizes the need to connect these amenities to provide the public a variety of venues to connect and experience the area's historic, cultural and natural environment. Initially, these connections will be found via the established routes, it is envisioned that as properties develop or redevelop, connections along the amenity will be added.



Elk River near the Dam



Elk River Meets Mississippi



Lions Park



Rivers Edge Commons Park



Handke Stadium

Strategies

1. Identify specific locations along the Mississippi River and Elk River, including the islands for certain types of public access opportunities (e.g. fishing, canoeing, boating, birding, etc.). Incorporate a variety of public access opportunities with improvements that allow the public to interact with and experience the rivers.
2. Work with Elk Rivers Municipal Utility Commission to relocate outdoor storage located along the Elk River.
3. Secure property immediately adjacent to the Mississippi River as a public access recreation and connection opportunity.
4. Establish an integrated trail system throughout the core downtown area, promoting connections to Babcock Park, the confluence of the Elk River, the dam, parks and shopping venues. Explore and access grant programs and local community service organizations to support the development of the trail connection. Explore opportunities to connect the trail to Otsego and regionally by initiating discussions with area communities about their plans.
5. Create interpretive signs to highlight historic occurrences and experiences along the trail system and throughout the Study Area.
6. Identify key parcels for archeological digs in partnership with landowners (e.g. mill site).



Fishing



Historical Signage

7. Actively promote the linkage between Lion’s Park and the Mississippi River through a greenway concept as illustrated in the Plan. Explore opportunities to provide safe, attractive pedestrian crossings of the railroad tracks and highway to connect the areas.
8. Promote a wide variety of people-generating activities (e.g. farmers market, concerts, street dances, sidewalk sales, etc.) in addition to the currently scheduled River’s Edge Commons Park activities.
9. Explore acquisition or use of Bailey point and Houlton Farm property as a way to expand the trail in the short term, and long term options to create a nature park that may include educational and interpretive amenities along the Mississippi and Elk Rivers.
10. Review and consider potential impacts of DNR Wild & Scenic River Standards on riverfront development in order to protect the integrity of the bluff.
11. Partner with the community’s “Elk River Area Arts Alliance” to explore a permanent arts center to be located within the Study Area.
12. Develop a long term capital improvements program that will guide public investment to complete the Plan’s recreational components.



People-Generating Activities

Core Downtown

Objective Statement

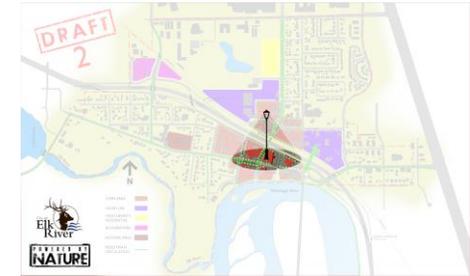
Due to the effects of time and market changes, the Core Downtown has evolved from being the retail heart of the City to an area that has shifted to office and service uses with the majority of retail moving to the Highway 169 corridor. Activities include specialized commercial/ service, and increased recreational opportunities. Additional residential units are necessary to support these businesses, especially when traffic patterns further evolve away from direct access.

For the downtown to succeed, Downtown needs to become more of a destination now, so that when access is vastly different, the businesses have already built up customer base.

Desired redevelopment should not only reflect the Plan elements, but be sensitive to the area's unique historic context, the pedestrian view sheds and public access opportunities to the Mississippi River.



Core Downtown
Residential, Office and Service



Granite Shores Project



Strategies

1. Expand the Core area to the north side of Highway 10. This will add additional properties for the expansion of the downtown marketplace, allowing for a greater complement of activities, uses, and businesses.
2. Develop and implement a way finding signage plan, as an added connection between the core downtown area and other neighborhoods in the study area. Transition existing regulatory and informative signage to the theme established by the signage plan.
3. Develop streetscape improvements (embellishments) throughout the study area, but centered in the downtown area that could include benches, banners, landscaping, lighting, all intended to communicate visitors' location as "in the downtown area"
4. As suggested by the 2002 Historic Context study, determine the financial feasibility of preserving the "Brick and South Main blocks" as both historical and economically viable assets. Efforts to achieve this result should include a structural survey to determine rehabilitation feasibility, agreement on façade restoration design and exploring options to ensure participation by all affected property owners.
5. Encourage maintenance and upkeep of the "Brick and South Main Blocks" through incentive programs for commercial building code, fire and façade restoration and rehabilitation. Explore incentive programs available through state and local resources (e.g. historic tax credits,

EDA loan program, etc.) and communicate information to property owners.

6. Develop design standards that embody the spirit and intent of the long range vision. Designs should reflect historical elements of the existing downtown structures maximize visual participation to the river, encourage proper mass, scale, and materials that balance new development with rehabilitated and preserved properties.



Downtown Character Through Design Details

7. Develop land use regulations that supports development of high density specialized commercial land uses and high density residential at all price points, provide appropriate density rights and/or other incentives to make projects financially viable.

8. Promote the Core Downtown’s unique identity as “Mississippi River Connections” within the Powered by Nature brand and establish a marketing design and theme to attract new residents, visitors and businesses to the area. Direct a portion of City marketing funds to assist in the recruitment of highly desirable businesses (i.e. hotel, fine dining, banquet/conference facility) to this area.
9. Establish the short and long term parking needs and recommendations as identified within the 2007 Downtown Parking Study, including a variety of options (e.g. ramp, underground, surface stalls, etc.). Explore the feasibility, design and economics of a parking structure with a built-in commercial component.
10. Review and establish parking code requirements in the downtown area, to allow for a mix of private and public parking areas, recognizing that an excessive surplus of parking is detrimental to the downtown character and its pedestrian friendly design.
11. Require a traffic and parking demand study for every major new project to determine if infrastructure improvements are needed and parking can be accommodated.
12. Communicate with the School District on long term plans for their office building. Consider reuse as office or an opportunity to expand the parking lot.



Embellishments



ISD 728 Facility

- 13. Explore mechanisms to continue to communicate the redevelopment/expansion successes created by Granite Shores, Jackson Place, The Bank of Elk River and River's Edge Commons Park and the reinvestment they represent.
- 14. Capitalize an HRA Redevelopment Fund annually and develop criteria for the selective acquisition of key redevelopment parcels.
- 15. Identify current property owners' interest in redevelopment efforts and assist them by working with the development community to achieve shared objectives.
- 16. Establish a special taxing mechanism to capitalize an improvement, maintenance, and incentive fund to support the downtown businesses and the infrastructure that supports them.
- 17. Consider a tax increment finance district(s), as appropriate, as a way to leverage private investment. The City will actively seek additional public and private funding sources to secure redevelopment objectives in the area.
- 18. The Historic Preservation Commission should explore a historic context study for the blocks on the north side of Highway 10, south of 4th street, west of Gates.

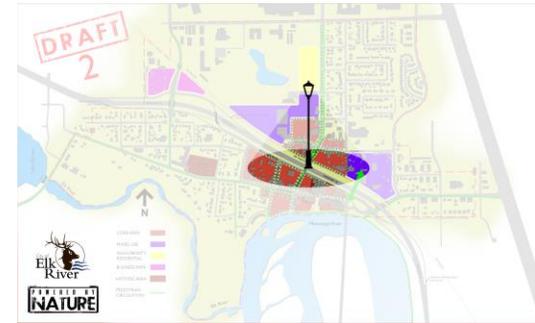


Highway 10 Corridor

Objective Statement

Highway 10 is a central transportation corridor through the City and also serves as the gateway to the core downtown area. Currently, a wide array of highway commercial land uses aligns this corridor and the greatest redevelopment challenge is that a number of existing structures have become marginalized.

The Plan recognizes that this corridor's image represents the community's health and vitality.



Strategies

1. Work with MnDOT to improve streetscape aesthetics (lighting, landscaping, banners, etc.)
2. The City will assist property owners to redevelop selective sites in order to improve the image of the corridor.
3. Review land use regulations that will promote the Highway 10 Corridor as the City's "front door", protect it from future incompatible land uses, and incorporates flexibility for final design changes to Highway 10.
4. Seek out beautification opportunities (landscaping, art, etc.) along the corridor.
5. Work with property owners to rehabilitate obsolete buildings.
6. Establish educational opportunities to encourage code compliance and improvements by property owners.
7. After City approval on a final design, enter into negotiations with MnDOT to secure an agreement on the implementation schedule and securing potential funding options.



Main Street and Highway 10

North of Highway 10 – Jackson Ave and 4th Street Corridors

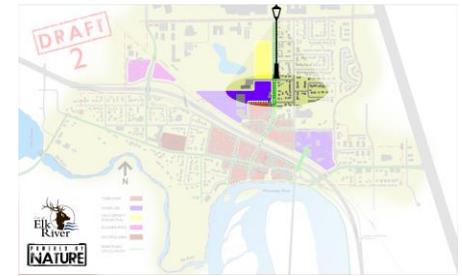
Objective Statement

While historically identified as part of “downtown”, the area north of Highway 10 has evolved over the years into different land uses (e.g. industrial and highway commercial) that no longer represent a traditional downtown market.

The Plan recognizes the opportunity to create an improved physical connection between the north and south areas of Highway 10, realignment of existing internal roadways, and introduces the concept of employment generators that bring daytime users with a wide range of salaries, and a significant residential component to this area that will complement and support the core downtown.

The Plan emphasizes transforming Jackson Avenue, and possibly Main Street, as a parkway that will serve as the central corridors and entrances to the core downtown’s commercial, cultural and recreational amenities and the rest of the community.

The Plan describes the area as “mixed use”. The goal with this designation is to identify the need for additional housing and employment options in an urban environment. Development and redevelopment of the area should emphasize a high level of design. Where possible, development should capitalize on area assets, including the Mississippi River, Lions Park, Highway 10 visibility and Highway 169 proximity. Downtown draws requiring large land area could be introduced to the area. Taller buildings with ground level plazas or gathering spaces are encouraged.



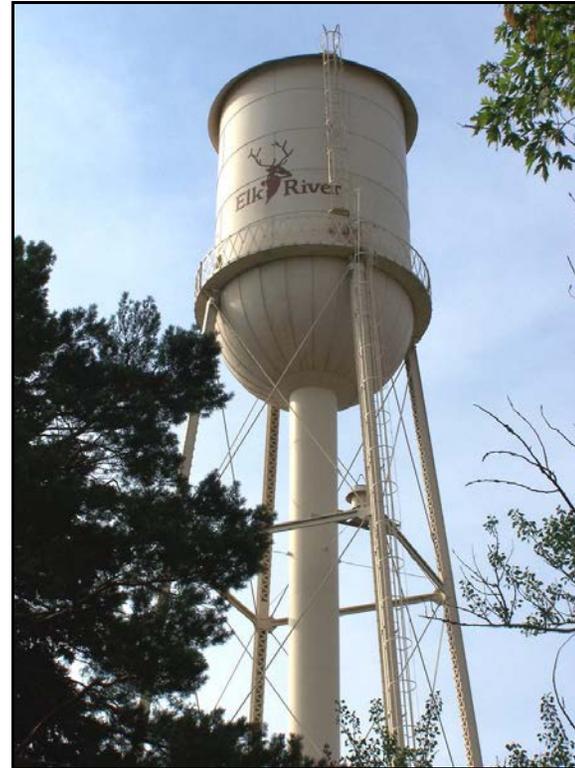
Jackson & 4th Street Improved Connections

Strategies

1. In order to create Jackson Avenue and 4th Street as primary corridors, as described in the Plan, an overall feasibility study should be completed in order to implement the following action steps:
 - a. Secure additional right-of-way (100 feet minimum) for Jackson Avenue to create an area sufficient for parking, trees, sidewalks/trails, lighting, and a center landscaped median.
 - b. Secure additional right-of-way for Jackson Avenue and 4th Street intersection and realignment modifications and improvements.
 - c. Vacate Railroad Drive between Main Street and Jackson Avenue to facilitate a safer travel corridor via 4th Street.
 - d. Identify necessary road and infrastructure improvements.
 - e. Incorporate roadway improvements into the City's Capital Improvements Program and Transportation Plan.



2. Identify parcels that can be assembled in order to create a significantly sized area for redevelopment as indicated on the Plan. Seek to acquire these parcels when they become available to facilitate redevelopment efforts.
3. Create an identifiable landscape corridor along Main Street/4th Street to enhance traffic patterns and connection to Highway 169.
4. Maintain the existing Jackson Avenue & 4th Street water tower as both a historical structure and as an identifiable asset and landmark for future redevelopment efforts.
5. Encourage, through design and zoning standards, multi-story office buildings for the Main Street and 4th Street area that can maximize the view sheds to the Mississippi River.
6. Review and modify existing land use regulations to prevent incompatible land use changes that may negatively impact the redevelopment potential of the area, including restrictions on single-family home conversions to businesses.
7. Modify land use regulations to support the development of employment generators such as medical facilities, office, and institutional uses along west Jackson Avenue and 4th Street/Main Street to further the overall objectives of the Plan.



Critical Land Mark



Railroad Drive Looking West

- 8. Incorporate high density housing options surrounding Lion’s Park to further define the urban character of the Jackson Avenue corridor. Housing shall utilize a wide range of styles and design, with a variety of ownership/rental opportunities, price points, etc. and shall be of significantly different design/style from the existing high density housing inventory.
- 9. Incorporate medium density urban style town homes along west Jackson Avenue to better define the Jackson Avenue parkway.
- 10. Initiate discussions with Sherburne County regarding the future, long term use of their highway administration building.
- 11. Promote opportunities to develop green ways and storm water retention areas both as an amenity and to treat storm water within and through the area.
- 12. Capitalize annually an HRA Redevelopment Fund to finance acquisition or control of key blighted properties that have negative impacts on the redevelopment potential and/or prevents the implementation of the Plan’s key objectives.



County Building



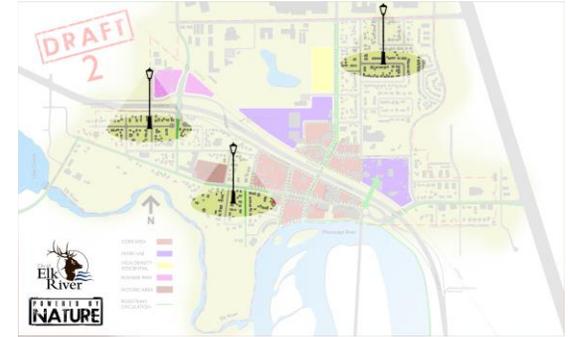
High Density Housing

Residential Neighborhoods

Objective Statement

The Study Area's diverse neighborhoods, largely single family in nature, are characterized by a variety of ages, styles, and price points. The health of these neighborhoods play a critical role in the success of the Plan and the collective Elk River Community.

The Plan focuses on two objectives: the first ensures that continuous reinvestment occurs to strengthen the stability of these neighborhoods, and secondly, identify and establish programs to preserve historical authenticity of selected areas.



Single-Family Strategies

1. Define the edge of the commercial businesses in the downtown area, prevent the migration of business into the adjacent residential areas.
2. Establish land use regulations that protect the areas from inconsistent land uses and provide buffers and transition zones that protect existing single family homes.
3. Analyze and designate, as appropriate, historic housing districts in the area and promote rehabilitation financing programs for continued preservation. Establish design guidelines in order to ensure that infill single family homes and remodeling “fits in” (e.g. similar design characteristics and scale) with the established historic housing district.
4. Encourage single family housing rehabilitation by promoting existing rehabilitation financing programs (e.g. Tri-County Action Programs, Central MN Housing Partnership and MN Housing Finance Agency) to property owners.
5. Explore opportunities to partner with established housing organizations to fund a program that supports a selective removal and rebuilding program of homes in which rehabilitation is financially and structurally infeasible. If programs are not available, the City should analyze the feasibility of establishing an internally funded project.
6. Examine zoning code provisions to allow home expansions while preserving the existing character of the area.
7. Establish educational opportunities to encourage code compliance and improvements by property owners.

8. Identify focus areas in which to pursue state and federal grant funds for housing rehabilitation.
9. Implement licensing of single family and duplex rental units.
10. Establish neighborhood groups to assist in promoting and encouraging coordinated housing improvements throughout the area.



Single Family Neighborhood

Multi-Family Strategies

1. Carefully analyze any development proposals that restrict either income or rent to ensure that the existing Study Area maintains a variety of housing options.
2. Ensure that all properties participate in crime-free and safety initiatives administered by the City.
3. Establish educational opportunities to encourage code compliance and improvements by property owners.
4. Develop a rental housing monitoring system that will serve as the basis for future program development.
5. Encourage multi-family housing rehabilitation by promoting existing rehabilitation financing programs (e.g. Tri-County Action Programs, Central MN Housing Partnership and MN Housing Finance Agency) to property owners.



Multi-Family Housing - Proctor Avenue



Multi-Family Housing – School Street

Proctor and Quinn Avenues

Objective Statement



The Proctor and Quinn Avenue area is a relatively small area with a variety of incompatible land uses including both residential and heavy industrial.

Highway 10 improvements will include Proctor Drive intersecting with Highway 10 via an overpass. This overpass will extend to the north, over the railroad tracks. This long elevated road will create a unique opportunity for the property in the area, altering visibility and access.

Due to the area's proximity to the train tracks and Highway 10 traffic, the Plan suggests business park uses and employment centers.



Future Redevelopment Opportunities – Proctor & Highway 10

Strategies

1. Work with the development community to identify and explore market opportunities and the feasibility of redeveloping the area as a whole.
2. Work with interested property owners in the development of a master plan prior to rezoning the parcels.
3. Establish opportunities to construct community directional signage and gateway signage along Proctor Avenue.



Adjacent Land Uses

III. Implementation Priorities

Implementation

The *Mississippi Connections* Redevelopment Framework Plan is intended as a framework for the evolution of the area as transportation, market, and use pattern shifts shape the area. The goal with this plan is to recognize these changes and guide them and the resulting development and redevelopment toward a preconceived vision.

It is recognized that the *Mississippi Connections* Redevelopment Framework Plan will not be implemented in its entirety immediately but will evolve over the next 20 years. Thus, the Plan should be viewed as a sound, yet flexible sequence of orderly developments within the Study Area to achieve the vision. Establishing priorities to create the environment that encourages private reinvestment helps guide the City's decision-making process and allocation of time and resources.

The sizes and shapes of the facilities illustrated are not meant as hard and fast rules. They are intended to be suggestions and points of discussion as to the intensity and options for development. Each structure must be an individual statement of architecture, yet fit into the general character of the study area.

Implementation Policies

Redevelopment is an ever-changing process and activity may occur outside the identified Priority Project strategies, therefore the City, property owners, and stakeholders should consider the following policies as a framework for decision-making and strategy as the City evaluates potential redevelopment projects and determines where to direct resources. These policies should serve as the basis for development of a work plan for the Housing & Redevelopment Authority.

- The availability of external resources (i.e. grants) and/or market conditions may create redevelopment opportunities outside of established short-term priorities. These opportunities may be pursued even if they are not part of the short-term priority list.
- The City and the Housing & Redevelopment Authority should examine the creation of a permanent redevelopment funding source(s) that will complement the resources traditionally available through tax increment financing and other forms of public financing assistance.
- The Goals and Policies within this Plan, which establish the framework for the Illustrative Master Plan, shall serve as the guiding principles for future City action.

Priority Projects

The following strategies are a reflection of the Task Force's consensus priorities.

Short Term (0 – 2 Years)

- After City approval on final design, secure an agreement with MnDOT regarding potential funding sources.
- Identify current property owners' and businesses' interest in redevelopment efforts both north and south of Highway 10.
- Identify and promote housing rehabilitation financing programs that are provided by other entities and applicable to the study area.
- Work with Municipal Utilities to relocate outdoor storage located along the Elk River and secure property to create a public access opportunity.
- Amend the City's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning ordinances to match the Illustrative Land Use Plan.
- Implement a Downtown District signage plan., including parking and directional signage
- Establish historical point of view context signage.
- Review and as necessary update strategies identified within the 2007 Downtown Parking Study.
- Work with State Historic Preservation Office to determine structural and financial feasibility to preserve the "Brick and S. Main Blocks" and if applicable for the blocks north of Highway 10.
- Conduct a survey of residential properties to identify and establish a historic residential neighborhood district.
- Create concept drawings for an integrated trail system and work with affected landowners an implementation strategy.
- Develop and promote a wide variety of people-generating activities in addition to current scheduled activities in River's Edge Commons Park.
- Identify key parcels for archeological digs along the riverfront in partnership with landowners.
- Develop design standards that embody the spirit and intent of the long range plan for new construction in the core downtown area.
- Communicate with School District on long term plans for their office building.
- Direct a portion of City marketing funds to assist in the recruitment of highly desirable businesses to the core downtown (e.g. hotel, fine dining, banquet facility).
- Create through the HRA a redevelopment policy regarding capitalizing a redevelopment fund and parameters for purchasing parcels.
- Establish educational opportunities to encourage code compliance and improvements by property owners within the entire study area.
- Establish educational opportunities to encourage code compliance and improvements by property owners within the entire study area.
- Identify a partner housing organization to fund and support a selective housing removal and rebuilding program.
- Analyze the need for a single family and duplex rental units licensing program.

- Establish neighborhood groups to assist in promoting coordinated housing improvements throughout the area.
- Conduct historic context study for blocks north of 10

Mid Term (3 – 5 Years)

- Create interpretive signs highlighting historic occurrences along the Mississippi River trail after trail is installed.
- Partner with Elk River Area Arts Alliance to explore funding concepts for an arts center within the study area.
- Establish a façade restoration financing program for maintenance and upkeep of the “Brick and S. Main Blocks”.
- Finalize roadway design for north Highway 10 and related intersection improvements. Start the implementation process to create new roadway improvements north of Highway 10.
- Develop a rental housing inventory and monitoring system that will serve as the basis for future program development.
- Explore alternative models for multi-family housing that serve as a catalyst for private development.
- Implement a trail system along the Mississippi and Elk Rivers.

On-going

- Based on demand, work with property owners and development community on redevelopment proposals.

- Create a roadway connection that links Jackson Avenue to Lion’s Park Drive.
- City partnering with property owners and the development community to implement redevelopment projects that meet the community vision.
- Expanded parks programming aimed at attracting residents to the area.
- Promote programs that encourage single family residential rehabilitation.
- Continue to assist in the recruitment of highly desirable businesses to the core downtown (e.g. hotel, fine dining, banquet facility).
- Continuously seek and secure opportunities to expand funding sources.
- Work toward full participation and renovation of the “Brick and S. Main Blocks”.
- Work with the City Council and City Boards and Commissions on continuous review and modifications to the Plan, as needed.

IV. Appendices

- Strengths/Weakness/Opportunities/Threats Analysis
- 2006 Planning Process
- Public Comments
- Task Force Resolution

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Task Force Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Neighborhood Schools ● River ● Businesses that are easily accessible ● Nice homes ● Churches ● Authentic small town character (buildings) ● Opportunity for individually owned businesses (affordable and non national chain) ● Personal Touch – Everyone knows your name ● Nostalgia/sentiment ● Identifiable location ● Variety of services ● Charm/Character (lights, streets, etc.) ● Local financial institutions (anchors) ● Safe environment ● Public gathering places (new park) ● Proximity to Otsego retail ● Heritage/history ● Connectivity (Highway 10, rail road and transportation) ● Public facilities in close proximity (City Hall, Library, future YMCA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small and limited geographic area ● Small critical mass ● Limited interest in going Downtown by people ● Everyone knows your name ● Age of existing real estate ● Lack of reinvestment ● Highway 10 and railroad divides area and people don't want to cross ● Limited access to River ● Parking ● No grocery store ● Lack of variety in businesses ● Not pedestrian friendly (snow issues, biking, etc) ● Traffic congestion ● Delivery trucks ● Lack of fine dining ● Lack of benches or places to sit outside ● New residents have an unfamiliarity with Downtown ● Limited connectivity of north and south areas ● Market saturation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New retail and business uses ● New customer base ● Rehabilitation of existing buildings ● More public gathering spaces for social activities ● Outdoor dining ● Blank slate north of railroad tracks ● More riverfront development ● More access to River ● Tie north and south areas together ● More residential development ● Moving west of Downtown to develop ● Enhance Handke Center ● Current redevelopment efforts lend credibility ● to outside investors ● North Star Rail and depot location ● Screen railroad tracks and create buffers ● Put in trail system along the River ● Promote an authentic Downtown ● Incubator businesses ● Corridor to cross Highway 10 and railroad tracks ● Attract more residents to live Downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Competing retail both locally (internal) and from surrounding communities (external) ● Lack of commuter rail stop in Downtown ● Possible bypass of Highway 10 ● Continued expansion of Otsego/Highway 101 area ● Traffic issues (congestion, increased traffic, crossing Highway 10, etc) ● Value of housing stock going down ● Land speculators (buying homes and renting them until they can put together large enough parcel to develop on) ● Economic fluctuations in general ● Noise (Highway 10 and railroad) ● Not leasing out existing retail in new redevelopment projects ● Land locked for River access/trail ● Market saturation ● Raising rents for existing businesses ● Through traffic ● Increasing land acquisition costs ● Changes in eminent domain laws ● Fear of change ● Lifestyle to support Downtown (convenience, price vs. nostalgia, lack of interest and lack of wanted/needed services) ● Cost to upkeep aging real estate ● Interest in viable business that wants to expand (no are to expand to Downtown or viability is no longer there since interest has moved elsewhere in the community)

2006 Planning Process

Initial Small Group Concepts - May 7, 2007 meeting

Group #1 Concept

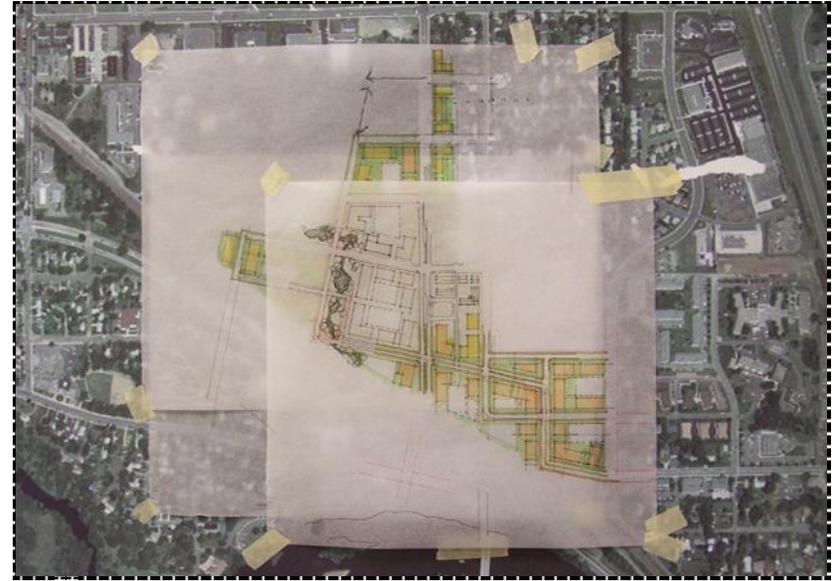
- ❖ Utilize Mississippi River views through “view shed” areas
- ❖ Utilize downtown park as a “people generator”, connect the park to Handke Stadium and the rest of the river via a trail
- ❖ Leave Highway 10 at-grade
- ❖ Use Babcock’s Point
- ❖ Leave Jackson Ave/Highway 10 intersection as the “prominent” downtown intersection
- ❖ Make Jackson Ave into a boulevard, connecting north and south sides of Highway 10 through prominent corridor design
- ❖ Provide employment opportunities north of Highway 10
- ❖ Protect single-family neighborhoods north and south of Highway 10
- ❖ Continue redevelopment west along Main Street in core downtown



Task Force Design Charette Sketches

Group #2 Concept

- ❖ Use Jackson Ave as a tree-lined “feeder” to core downtown
- ❖ Focus early redevelopment efforts north of Highway 10
- ❖ Provide river connections
- ❖ Consider options for intersections on Hwy 10, including leaving them “as is”
- ❖ Provide employment opportunities north of Hwy 10
- ❖ Provide transitions in land use that protect remaining single-family neighborhoods north of Hwy 10; protect existing single-family homes south of Hwy 10
- ❖ Use Babcock’s Point



Task Force Design Charette Sketches

Refined Large Group Concept – June 4, 2007 meeting

- ❖ Core Downtown
 - Maintain the “Brick Block” through rehabilitation
 - Allow for redevelopment of area between The Bluffs & First National/Dare’s
 - Proper scale, e.g. row homes, to buffer single-family homes and new developments
 - Main Street between Morton & Lowell should be considered a good transition area between new developments & single-family homes
 - First floor commercial to be based on market demand
 - Discourage “leapfrog” redevelopment
 - Utilize design standards to promote historic “look” for new buildings
 - Conduct traffic studies on a project-by-project basis to determine roadway improvements for certain land uses
 - Remove outside storage to incorporate a public access to Mississippi River (at Municipal Utilities building)
- ❖ East Jackson Avenue Corridor
 - Jackson becomes a tree-lined parkway design as primary corridor
 - Single family homes fronting east Jackson may be removed to accommodate live/work structures
 - Alley to serve as main access to buildings along Jackson/minimal setbacks along Jackson to obtain “urban feel”
- ❖ West Jackson Avenue Corridor Including the Current Industrial Area
 - High density residential abutting Lion’s Park
 - “Anchor” commercial/institutional land use needed on southwest corner of Jackson & School Street
 - Create roadway connection between Jackson & Lion’s Park Drive

- ❖ Highway 10 Frontage from Jackson Avenue to Gates
 - High scale commercial/office building at intersection of Main Street & Railroad Drive to maximize view of river
- ❖ East Main Street Connecting to Highway 169
 - Redevelop as commercial (office/service) rather than single-family residential
 - Alley to serve as main access to buildings along Main/minimal setbacks along Main to obtain “urban feel”
 - Continue tree-lined parkway along Main Street to Hwy 169
- ❖ Quinn Avenue Area
 - A separate redevelopment study of this area should be completed

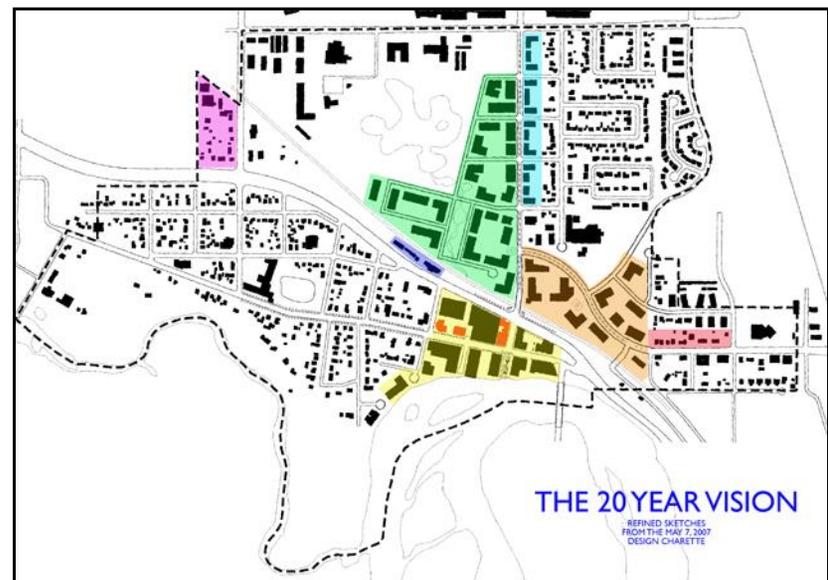


Figure A – Overall Land Use Concept

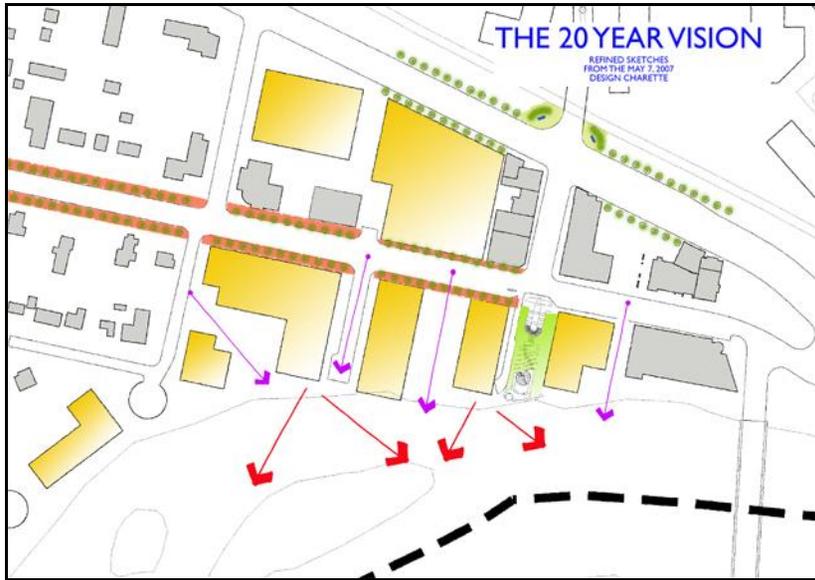


Figure B - Main Street View Sheds to Mississippi River

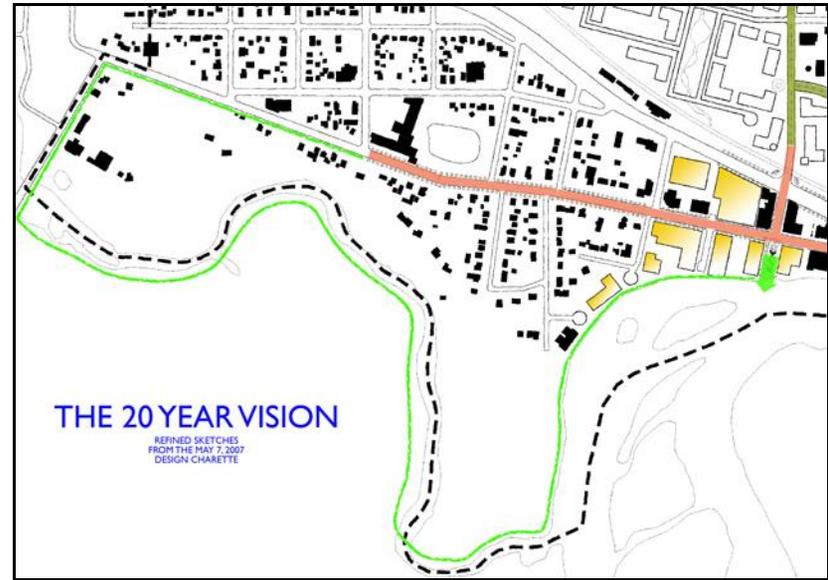


Figure C - Trail Loop and Pedestrian Connections

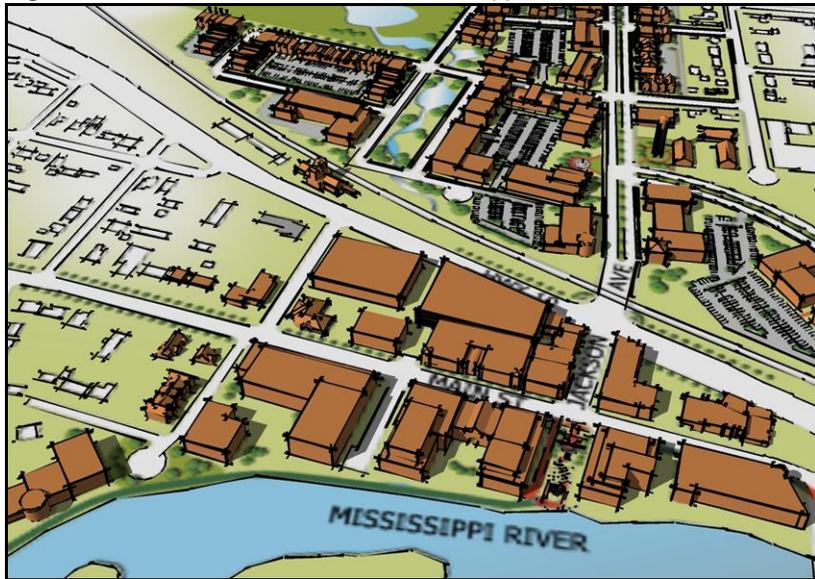


Figure D - S. Hwy 10 Looking North to Jackson Ave Parkway



Figure E - Main Street Detail Looking Southeast

Refined Large Group Concepts – June 4, 2007 meeting

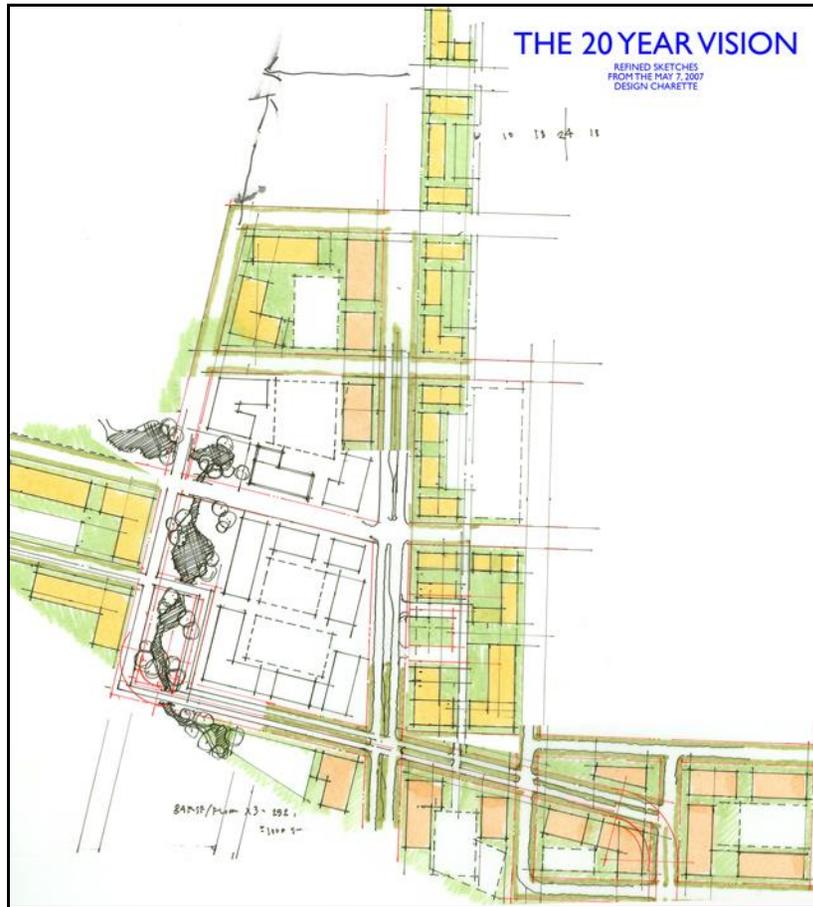


Figure F
North Hwy 10 – Jackson Ave & 4th Street Corridor Refined



Figure G
North Hwy 10 Looking South Along Jackson Ave Parkway



Figure H North Hwy 10 Looking North Along Jackson Ave Parkway

Public Comments

The following were the written comments received during the public comment period ending October 22nd.

What is the best aspect of this plan?

Great for moving traffic through town; terrible for the downtown businesses – have you no concern for them? *Business owner*

Nothing on our behalf. *Resident*

Turning Bailey Point into a nature park. *Resident*

Turning the Babcock's "Bailey Point" property to a nature park. *Resident*

Redevelopment of obsolete buildings. *Business operator*

What should the Task Force reconsider?

Downtown access, very limited, inhibiting growth. Retailers need visibility and immediate access, this plan eliminates immediate access. *Business owner*

I strongly urge the Task Force to explain their vision of "historic downtown" to include the 100+ year old buildings in the "mixed use" area north of Highway 10 between Jackson and Main Street. This area should be part of the "core" area. *Business owner*

Value of all property near road expansion/ramps. Great walls surround my property; wow – great! *Resident*

Making our neighborhood a "historic neighborhood." *Resident*

Making our neighborhood into a "historic" neighborhood. I own my home and property and would refuse to request permission from a committee to change my own home. I purposefully do not live in an "association". *Resident*

Mixed use areas – be careful of not too much residential because still close to tracks – doesn't attract upper end residential. *Business operator*

Bike trail from downtown to the train station. We have a unique opportunity to have a 3 – 4 mile loop heading north from the station and looping back to the downtown. With parking an issue and more people living downtown, this also encourages pedal power to reduce traffic. *Planning Commissioner*

General Comments –

With reduction of immediate access, traffic decreases, giving reduction of retail value in terms of sales and rents available to owners thereby reducing value of area. *Business owner*

This destroys property value – corner home with wall surround. Truly upset – by out some homes. *Resident*

Thanks for emailing postcards to keep people informed. On page 10, #2, Mississippi River should say Elk River. *Resident*

We will never go along with this plan and will paint our house with a bright polka dot design if necessary. *Resident*

I will never go along with this nor pay any fines. I will do everything in my power to speak against this and act against this in any and every avenue! Also, most homes in the neighborhood are not very historic to begin with. *Resident*

Git 'er done – it would invigorate all of Elk River! *Business operator*

1. I fully believe in the historical FEEL of the downtown area. That is more the result of the looks of the buildings (mostly brick) (design standards) and the close proximity than the actual structures themselves.

2. While the core downtown has a historical FEEL, I believe there is very little historical significance to the downtown itself. Yes, for some residents and former residents, it brings back memories (nostalgia), the future of the City is not in looking backward, it is in looking forward. Keep in mind the 1980 population was less than 7,000, in 1990 it was less than 12,000 and in 2000 it was less than 17,000. It is now about 23,000. Of the 7,000 who were here in 1980, I would guess less than half remain whether due to moving or death. So we're preserving "nostalgia" of the past for maybe 15% of our current population - a number that is ever decreasing. The Plan talks about "creating a new history." That won't occur holding onto someone else's past.

3. The Core Downtown Statement says to rehabilitate and redevelop - but it also discusses the Brick and S. Main Blocks as needing "historical rehabilitation". If those blocks are "off the table", that pretty much eliminates much of the potential redevelopment. When the Metro Plains developments were being considered, it was discussed that a Phase 2, encompassing the area from Granite Shores to the Cinema Building could be possible. Again, with proper design standards, I still see that as a viable redevelopment project.

4. The Plan doesn't really seem to discuss the viability of the businesses in the area. Having a mere "location" doesn't make the area "destination." How will the realignment of Jackson Street / King Street affect the Jackson Street buildings? What is the "hook" to get people to want to come to the downtown area - especially the core downtown? Maybe entertainment??

5. I believe the core downtown area is too small of a commercial area. I think it should be expanded (but not extremely) but with good "historical feeling" design standards. I don't believe the current size

really makes the area viable as a destination because the businesses don't complement each other well. Expanding the area will allow development of a new area the purpose of which could be better defined.

6. I'm not in favor of requiring the rehabilitation of homes that have exceeded their life expectancies. Times have changed. Energy efficiencies have improved greatly. Building materials and codes have changed. Styles have changed. Desired amenities have changed. To require someone to keep a style house favorable in the 1920s (or whatever period) is inefficient and will eventually cause blight. Yes, incentives might be possible now, but eventually, structures degrade to the point of being very cost inefficient and/or unsafe.

7. I do not favor retaining the Water Tower and will oppose the use of ANY city money to preserve it. I truly believe the effort to preserve it to this date was the result of the actions of a select few. In 2002, costs to repaint the tower were stated to be from \$50,000 to \$100,000. The cost to remove the tower would be less. Ownership was stated to be in ERMU and nearly all discussion went via ERMU and the HPC. Even ERMU voted to tear it down in 2002. Updates were not provided to the Council and no approval for the application for the National Register was requested of the Council. Then, just last month, it was disclosed during a budget session that it looks like the City is the actual owner and the cost to repaint would be close to \$400,000. Apparently, staff new this in December or before; however, it was never mentioned to the Council. It has been stated the painting will occur only if grants are received to pay for all of it. I have no objection to that, but I will not vote to approve the use of City funds. I am also hearing (but not from information provided to the Council), apparently, there may be concerns about the structural integrity of the water tower ... the cement at its base may be degrading.

8. The section "Previous Relevant Studies" should include a full discussion about the Historical Context Study. While the Context Study is discussed a bit several sections later, it provided an actual professionally prepared and researched account of why the area is really

NOT historically significant. Each building was individually researched. The Context Study was very critical of historical preservation in the core downtown. As included in the Downtown Task Force report, the entire context study is pretty much relegated to a statement that "The study concluded that none of the 23 properties appeared to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. However, 5 buildings on the west side of Jackson Ave were recommended for further preservation study..." No further study has ever occurred. Basically, the Task Force, because of it's bent on preserving the old, decided to pretty much ignore the Context Study.
Council Member

RESOLUTION 12-66

A RESOLUTION FOR THE CITY OF ELK RIVER

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

WHEREAS On October 2, 2006, the Elk River City Council authorized a redevelopment plan be prepared for the expanded downtown Elk River area and appointed a Task Force with the composition listed to complete the redevelopment plan:

- 4 HRA Commissioners
- 1 Heritage Preservation Commissioner
- 1 Planning Commissioner
- 1 Park & Recreation Commissioner
- 1 Economic Development Authority Commissioner
- 2 Business Representatives
- 2 Resident Representatives

WHEREAS in November 2006, the Task Force began a series of meetings to obtain background and education on various studies and issues to reach a similar level of understanding; and

WHEREAS the Task Force mission was to develop a comprehensive plan that would redefine the "greater downtown area" to preserve its historical character while promoting the future viability of the community; and

WHEREAS the draft Redevelopment Plan was designed as a framework, or pattern for redevelopment, which could be flexible to market responses in order to better manage change in the short and long-term; and

WHEREAS Task Force members who are also members of the City Council, Economic Development Authority, Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Park and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission, and Heritage Preservation Commission representing their respective Boards/Commissions; and

WHEREAS the Task Force learned that changes to Highway 10 will have a major impact to the "greater downtown area" and these impacts must be better understood prior to completing the plan; and

WHEREAS the City Council tabled the Task Force from July 2007 to November 2011 while the Highway 10 plan was completed by MnDOT; and

WHEREAS the City Council reconvened the Task Force with many of the original members plus some new members in November, 2011; and

WHEREAS the Task Force desired to gather maximum public input to create a formal redevelopment plan with a combination of a master vision, working policies, specific area recommendations and implementation priorities; and

WHEREAS in September 2012, the draft Redevelopment Plan was presented to the City Council, Economic Development Authority, Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Park and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission, and Heritage Preservation Commission for feedback; and

WHEREAS in September and October 2012, the draft Redevelopment Plan was open for public comment, including two open houses advertised publically to area stakeholders for feedback; and

WHEREAS in November 2012, the draft Redevelopment Plan was presented to the Housing and Redevelopment Authority for review; and

WHEREAS on November 19, 2012, the plan was approved by the City Council.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Elk River City Council that the Mississippi Connections Redevelopment Framework is hereby approved and that this Resolution shall constitute formal approval by the Elk River City Council.

Passed and adopted this 3rd day of December, 2012.



John J. Dietz, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tina Allard, City Clerk