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## 4. Character Districts and Target Areas

## North Gateway: Annapolis to Butler

### Existing Conditions

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

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

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

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

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

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



Existing Conditions



Aerial View looking southwest



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



Eye level view on Robert Street looking south towards Annapolis

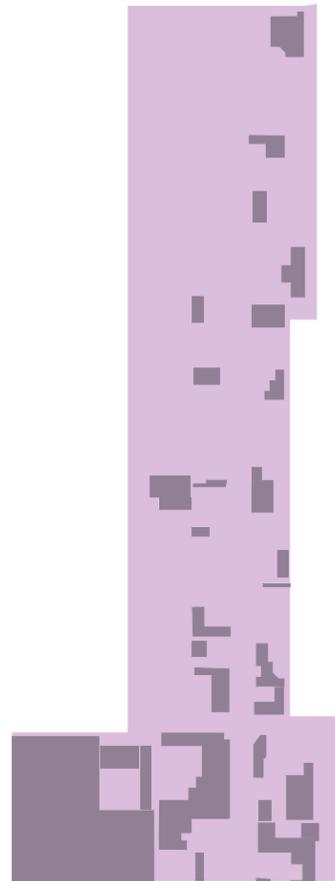
## North Gateway (cont'd)

### Analysis



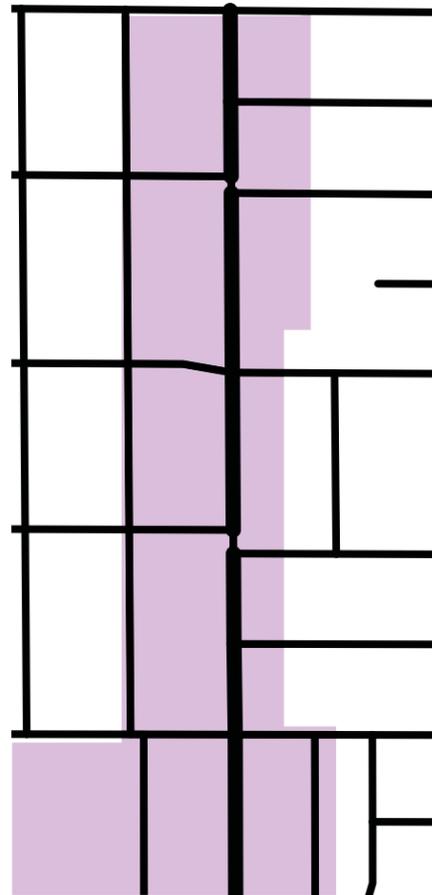
#### Land Use

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



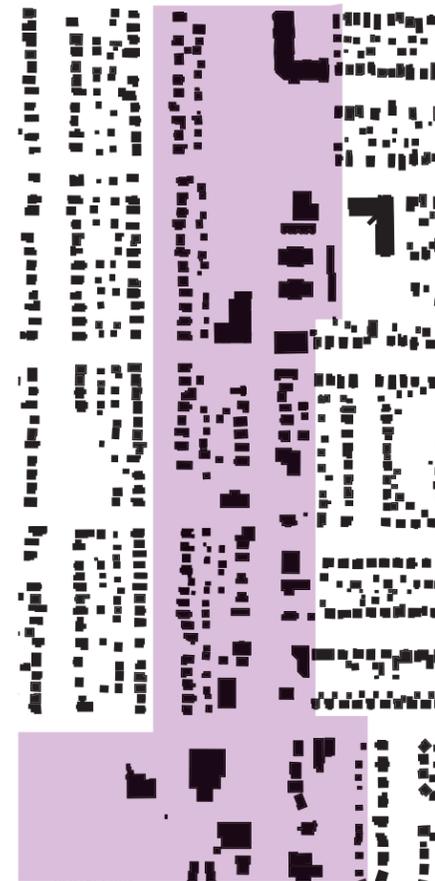
#### Parking

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



#### Streets

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



#### Buildings

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

### Market Summary

#### Multi Family Housing

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

#### Retail

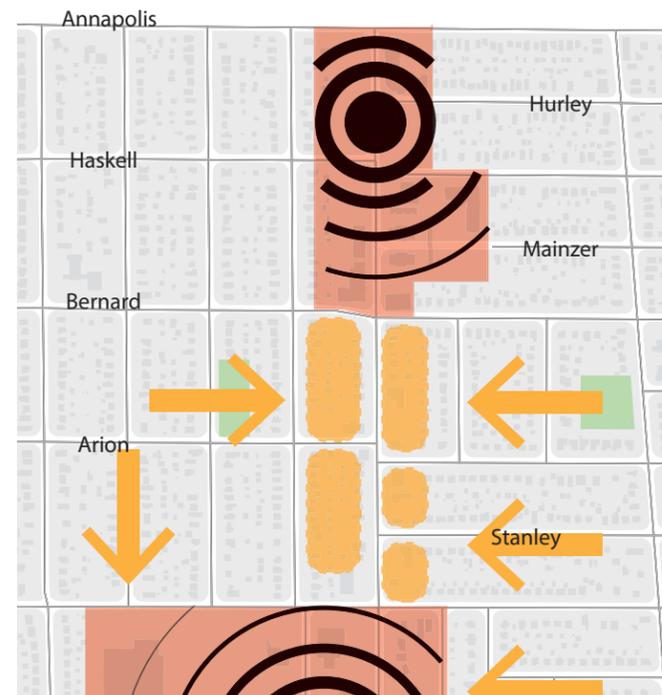
- Properties on Robert Street are 140' deep which creates a challenge for on-site parking.
- The Gateway area is accessible by foot and bike, but it's trade area is relatively small due to low volumes of traffic on the cross streets.
- Recent attempts to fill retail in the Gateway area have been unsuccessful.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

## North Gateway (cont'd)

### Corridor Recommendations

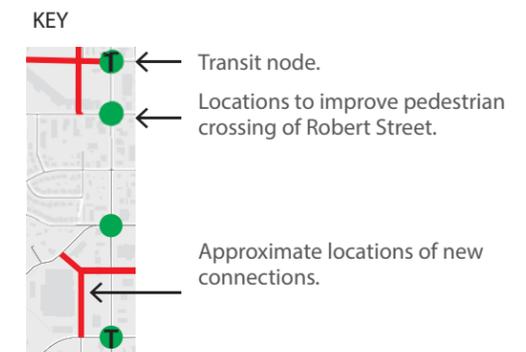
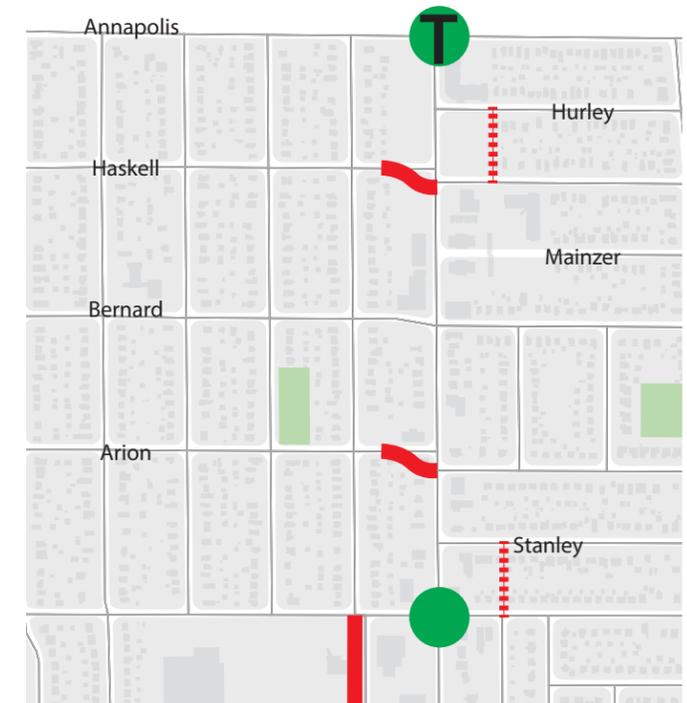
#### Land Use and Urban Design Recommendations:

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



#### Transportation and Access Recommendations

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



## North Gateway (cont'd)

### Target Area Recommendations

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



Illustrative Plan:  
Hurley not extended to Robert Street



Aerial View of Robert Street looking south west



Alternative Illustrative Plan:  
Hurley extended to Robert Street



### Precedents

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

## Signal Hills: Butler to Emerson

### Existing Conditions

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

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

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

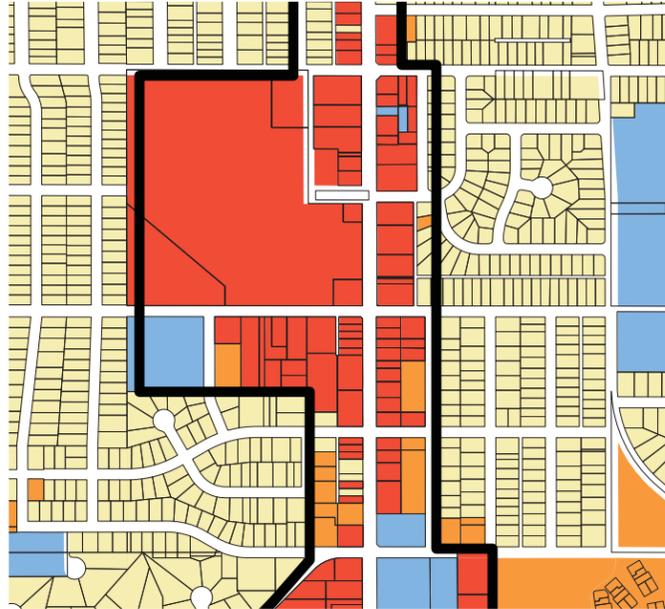
Much of the remainder of the area between Butler and Imperial is small site single story retail. Some of it backs up to a residential street, however other parts are accessed through an alley that serves as a useful buffer to the housing.



Existing Conditions: Signal Hills Shopping Center

## Signal Hills: Butler to Emerson

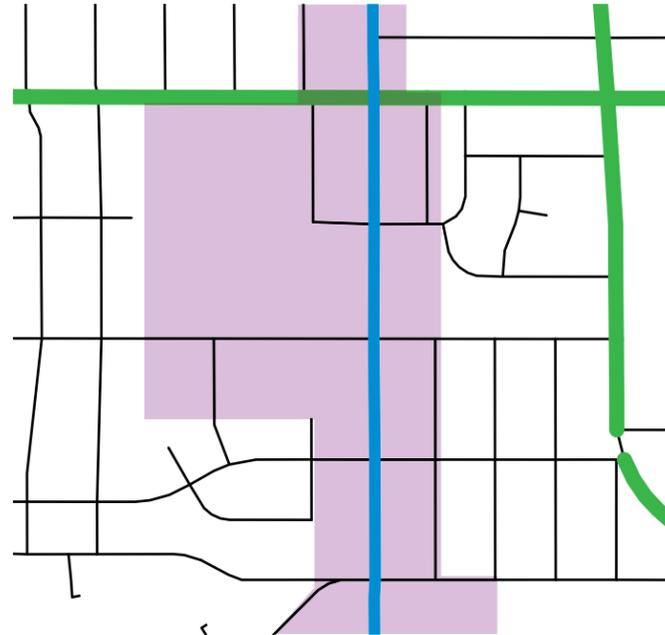
### Analysis



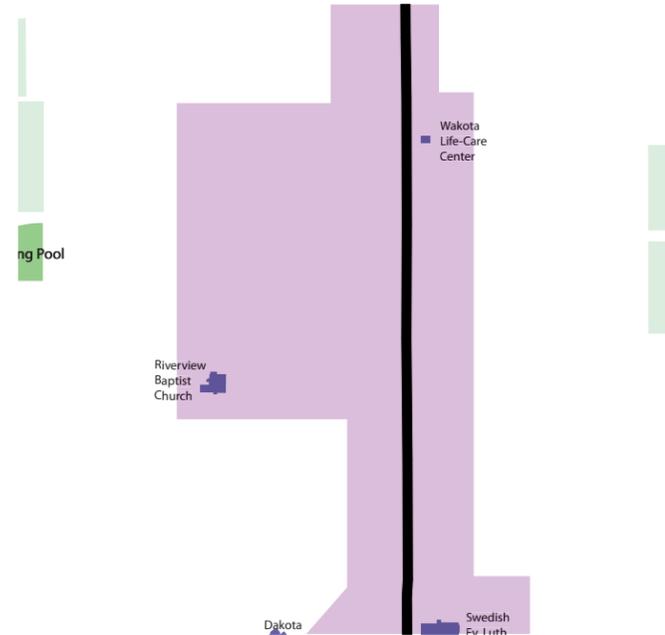
**Land Use:**  
With the exception of a few small one bedroom condominiums and two apartment buildings built on Robert Street the entire Signal Hills Shopping Center is commercial. In addition just about all properties on both sides of Robert Street between Moreland and Imperial are commercial.



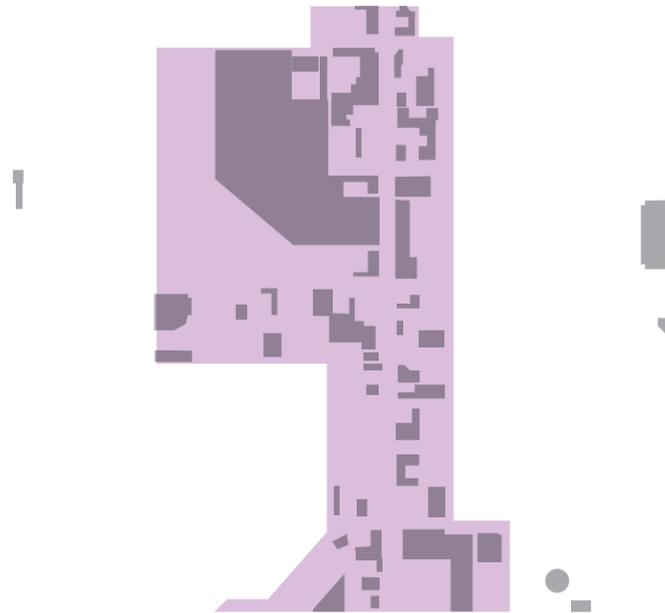
**Buildings**  
Both the K-Mart building and the strip shopping center are one-of-a-kind. They are larger and longer than any building in the area.



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



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



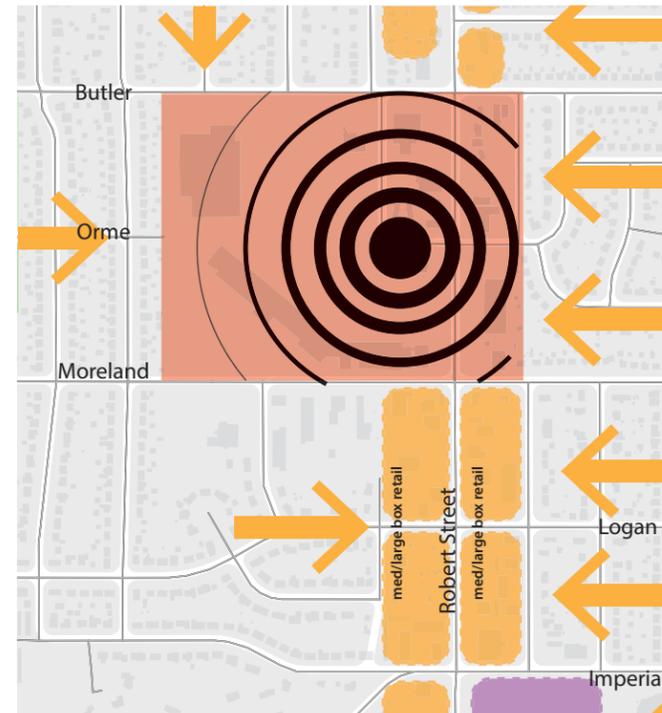
**Parking**  
Most of the site is used for surface parking. This creates large spaces in between buildings that make it difficult to connect from one property to another.

## Signal Hills: Butler to Emerson

### Corridor Recommendations

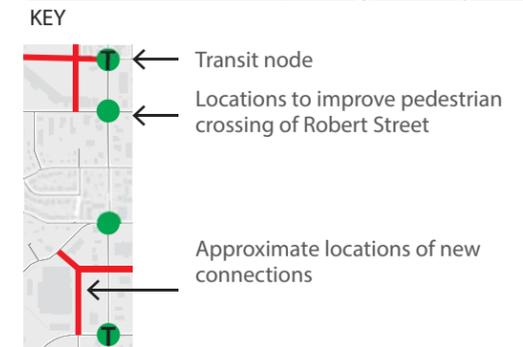
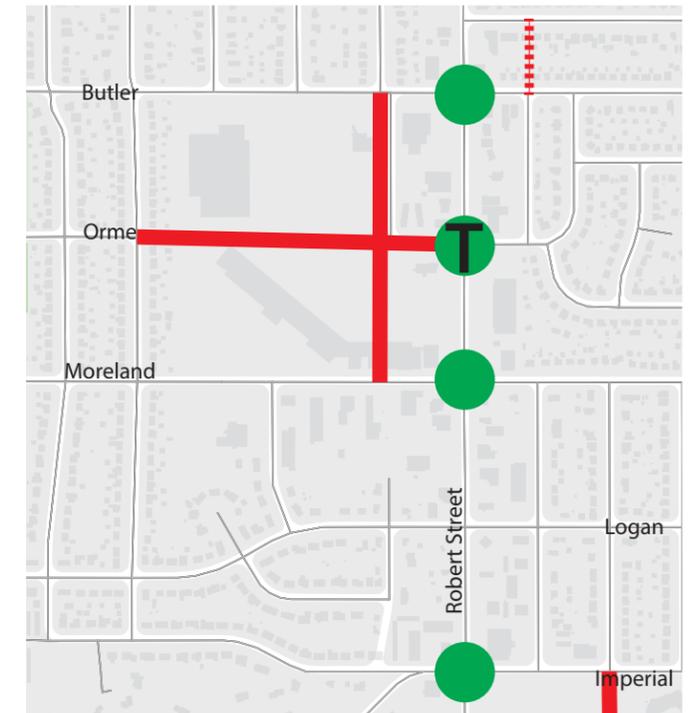
#### Land Use and Urban Design Recommendations:

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



#### Transportation and Access Recommendations

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



## Signal Hills Focus Area

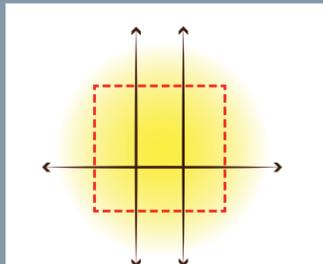
### Precedents & Lessons Learned

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



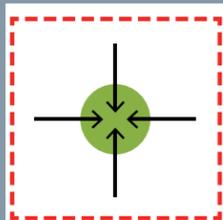
#### A Variety of Housing, A Variety of Retail

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



#### Connect to the Surrounding Neighborhood

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



#### Incorporate Public Space

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

### Rosedale, Huntersville, NC

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

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



### Birkdale Village, Huntersville, NC

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

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



### Kentlands, Gaithersburg, VA

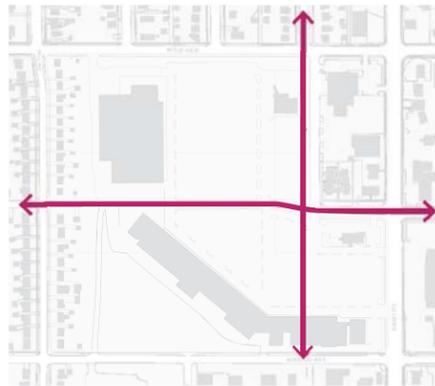
The Kentlands is one of the earlier and most successful New Urbanist communities designed in the late 1980's. It is considerable larger than Signal Hills as it consists of several residential neighborhoods and one town center (approximately the size of Signal Hills). Features of Kentlands include:

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



## Signal Hills Focus Area

### Design Principles



#### 1. Connect to the Neighborhoods

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



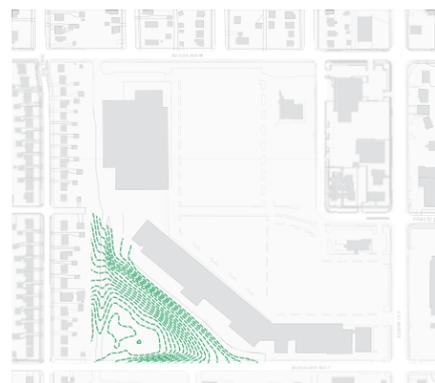
#### 2. Develop in Phases

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



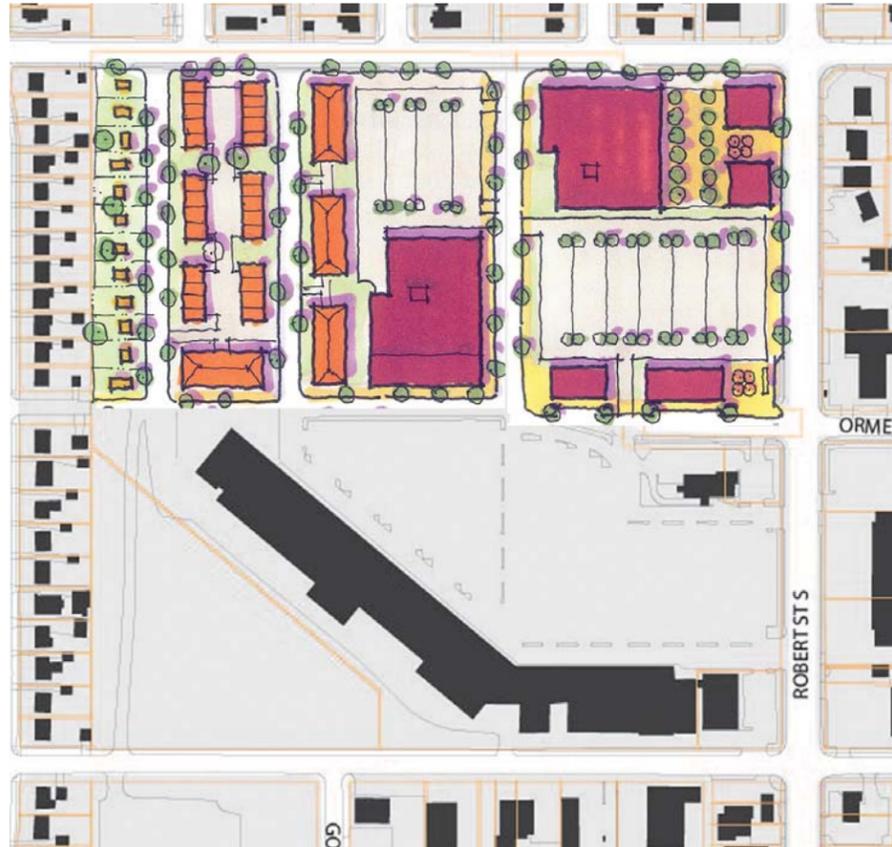
#### 3. Retail in Front, Housing in Back

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



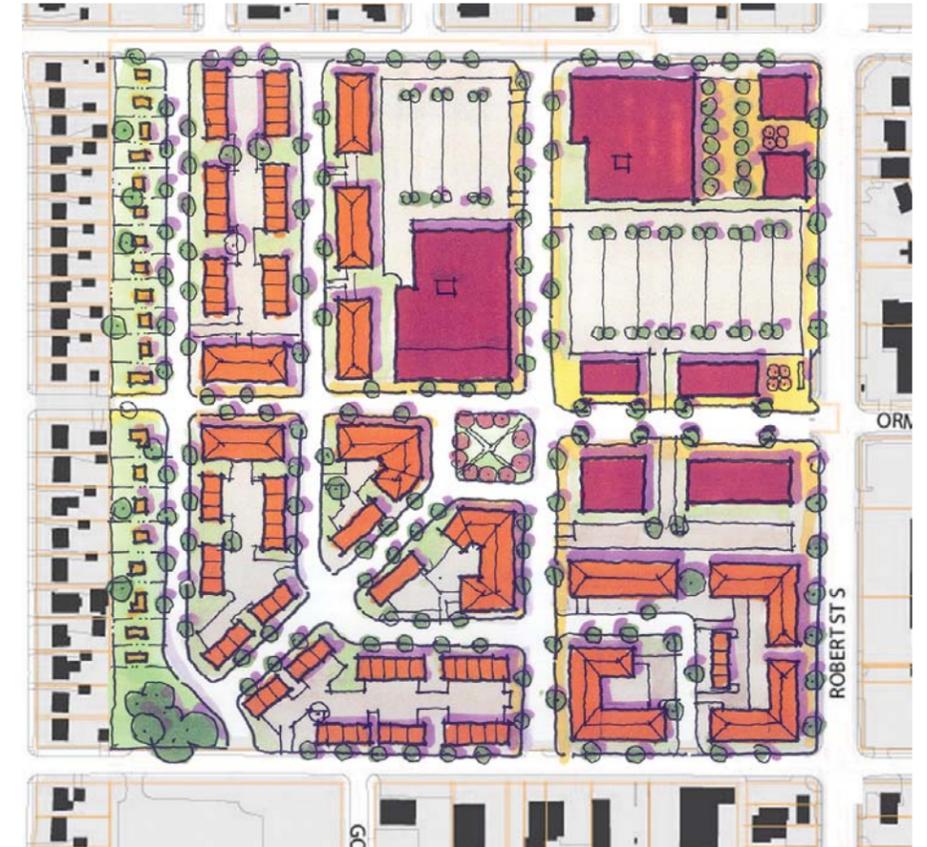
#### 5. Celebrate the Hill

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



#### Illustrative Master Plan: Alternative 1:

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



#### Illustrative Master Plan: Alternative 2

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

### Recommendations

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

## Signal Hills



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



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



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

## Town Center: Imperial to Lothenbach



### Existing Conditions

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

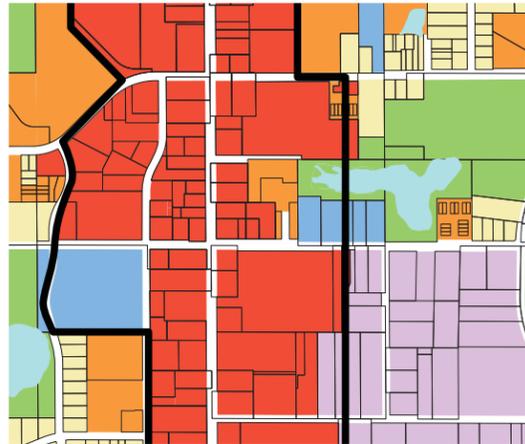
The area has a mix of uses (office, civic, retail) that distinguishes it from other parts of the corridor. However the uses are not coordinated and the area lacks amenity. There has been some recent retail redevelopment projects in the area that have brought new customers and visibility to the area.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

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

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

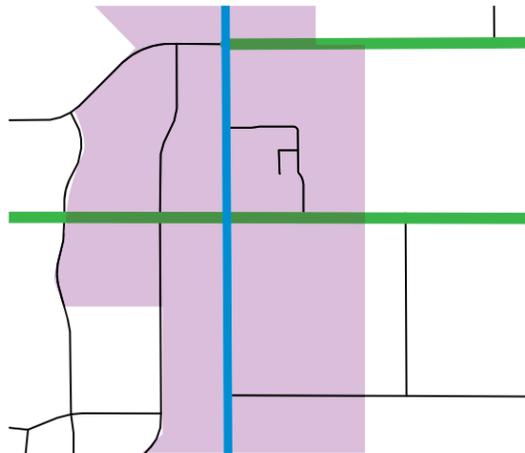
## Town Center: Imperial to Lothenbach

### Analysis



#### Land Use

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



#### Streets:

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



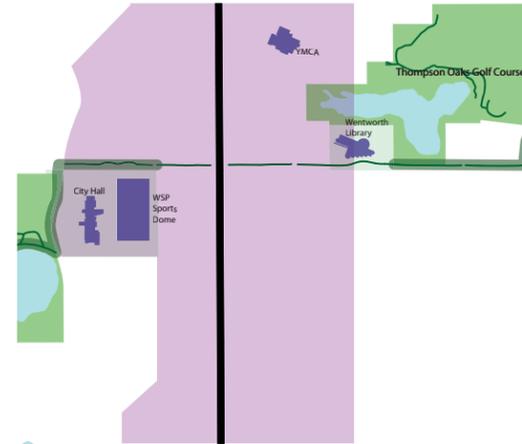
#### Buildings:

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



#### Parking:

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



#### Parks:

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

### Market Summary

#### Retail

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

#### Office

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

#### Multi Family Residential

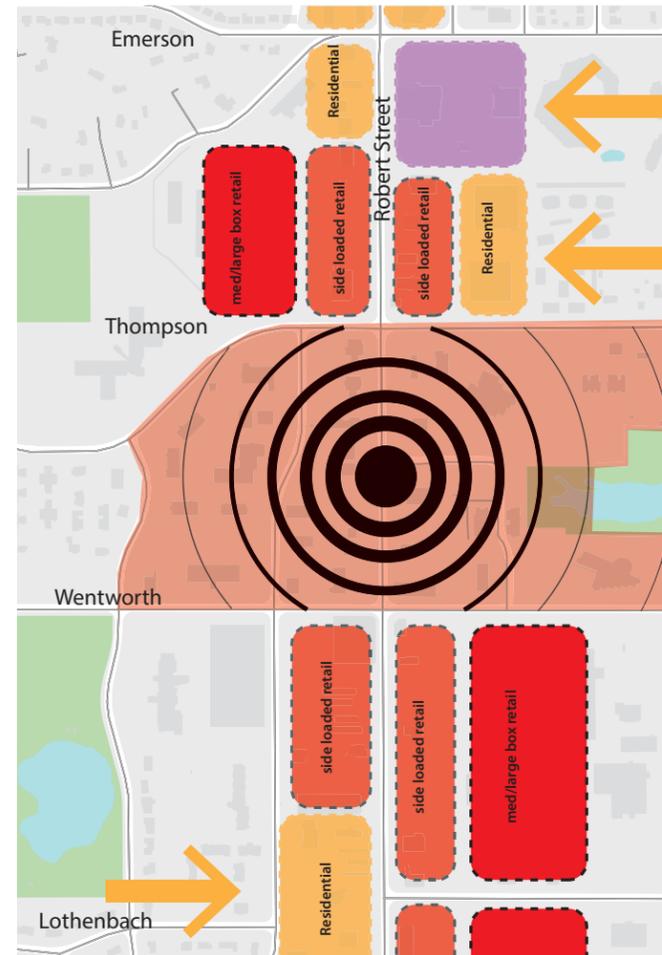
- Demand for multi-family housing is strong due to low vacancy, rising rents, and favorable demographics.
- Strategic parcels should be protected for multi-family housing with proximity to Transit and retail.

## Town Center: Emerson to Lothenbach

### Corridor Recommendations

#### Land Use and Urban Design Recommendations:

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

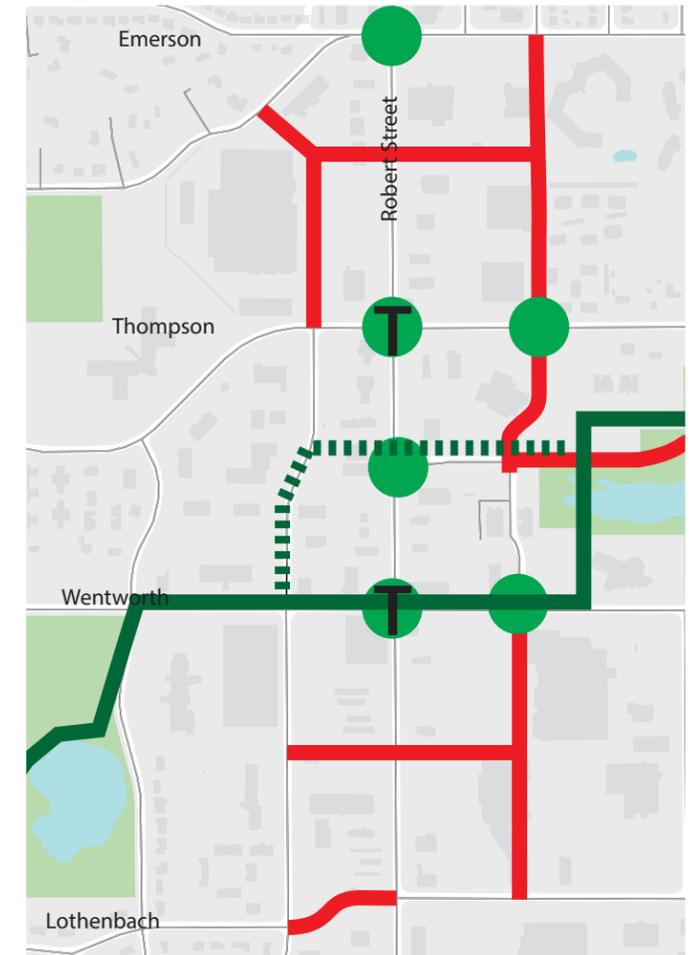


KEY

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

#### Transportation and Access Recommendations

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



KEY

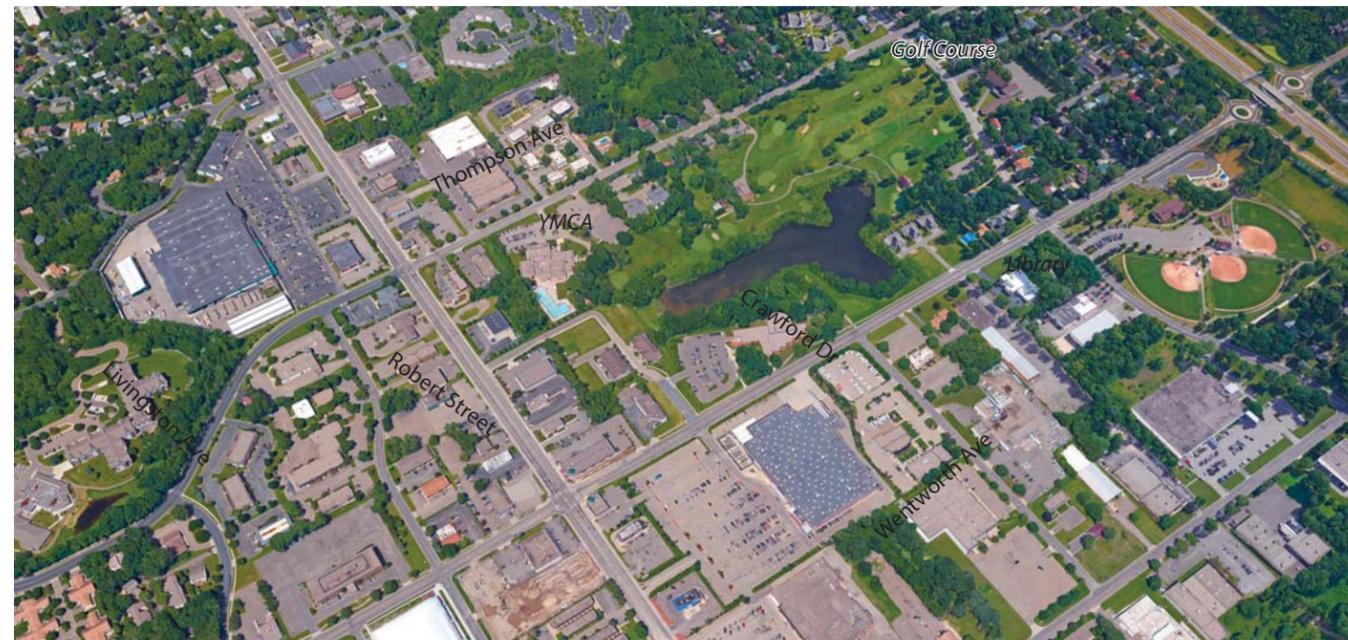
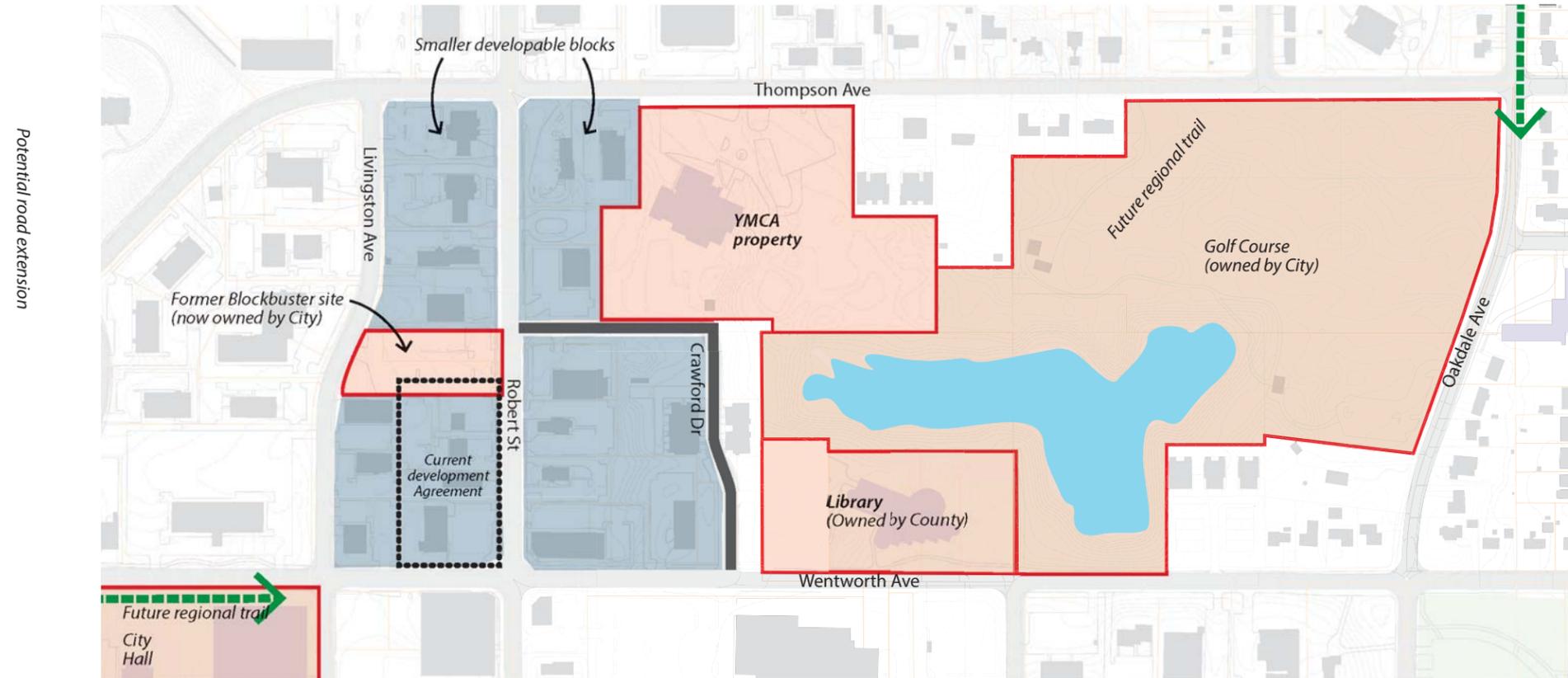
- ← Transit node
- ← Locations to improve pedestrian crossing of Robert Street
- ← Approximate locations of new connections

## Town Center Focus Area

### Existing Conditions

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

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



#### Moving Parts:

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

#### Aerial Photo:

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

## Town Center Focus Area

### Precedents: Civic Centers

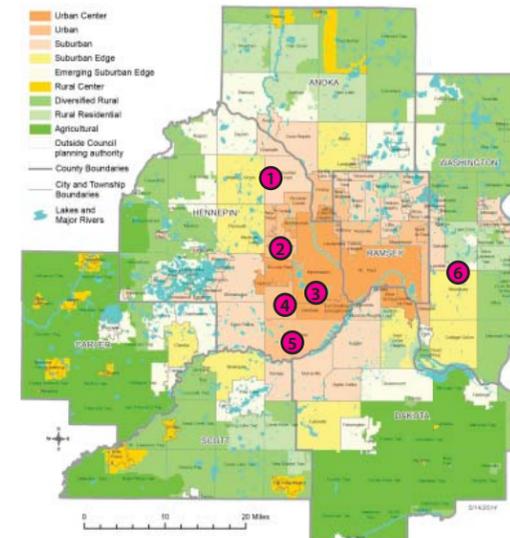
A deliberate clustering of civic uses can help create daytime activity and give a sense of place for the community. Towns across the region have been investing in public facilities as a way of creating pride in their community. There are economic benefits of clustering public facilities as well. If combined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



### Precedents: Mixed Use Centers

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

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



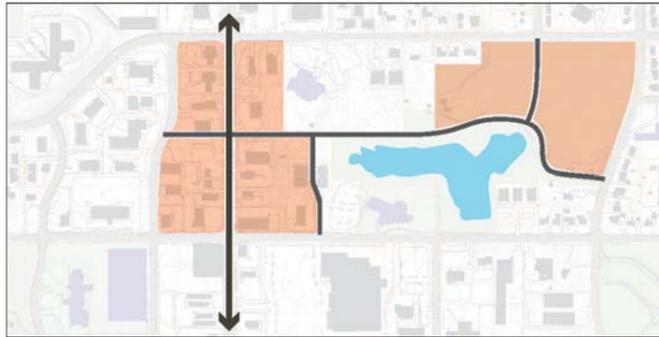
- ① Shingle Creek, Brooklyn Park
- ② Excelsior and Grand, Saint Louis Park
- ③ Lyndale/66th, Richfield
- ④ Americian Blvd, Blomington
- ⑤ Heart of the City, Burnsville
- ⑥ Woodbury, MN



Excelsior and Grand, Saint Louis Park

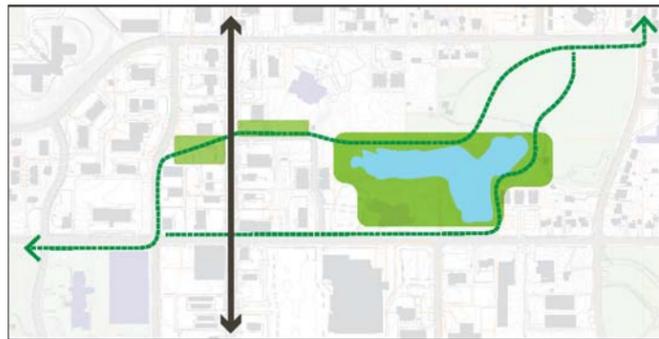
## Town Center Focus Area

### Design Principles



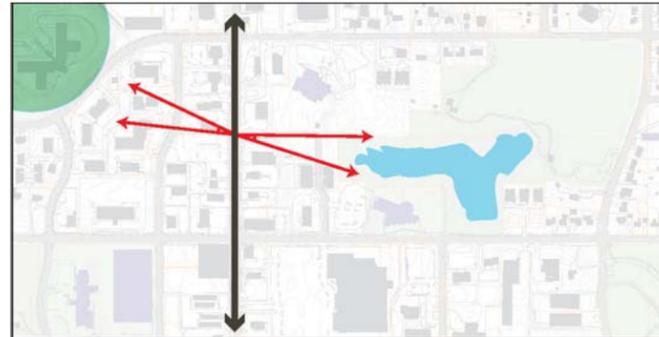
#### Introduce new infrastructure to create smaller, walkable blocks

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



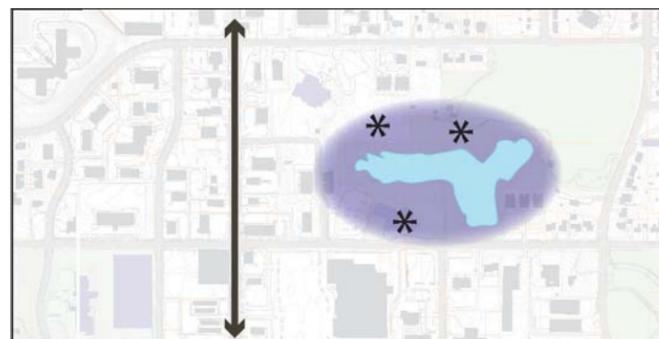
#### Integrate the Trail into Public Space

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



#### Create views from Robert Street to Hill and Lake

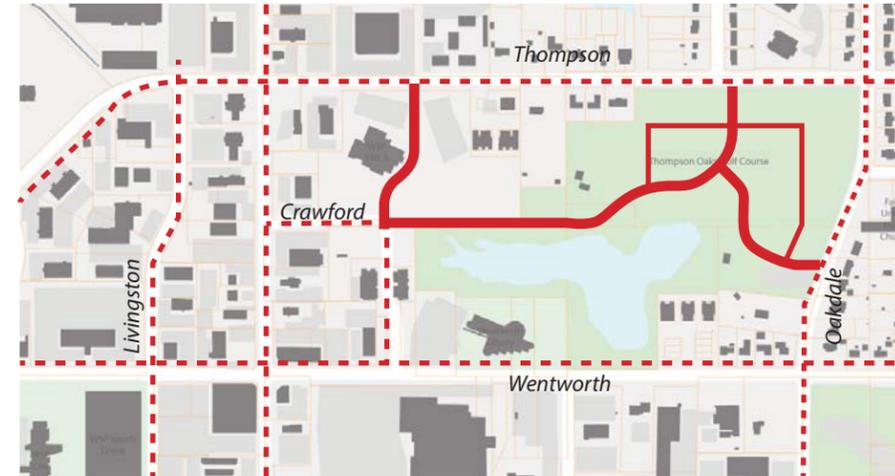
New streets and building orientations can create windows into the community from Robert Street. A "window" in between Wentworth and Thompson can open up views to the Lake and the Hills - both unique features of West Saint Paul and of the Town Center.



#### Create a civic campus around the Lake

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

### Circulation and Land Use



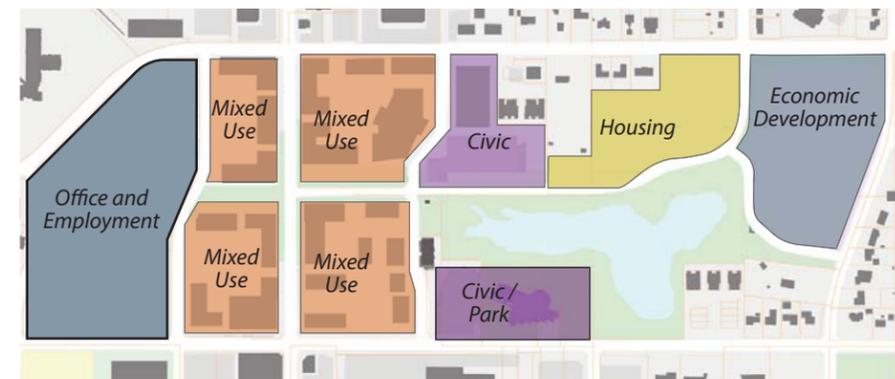
#### Streets

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

— New Street  
- - - Existing Street



Land Use Alt. 1

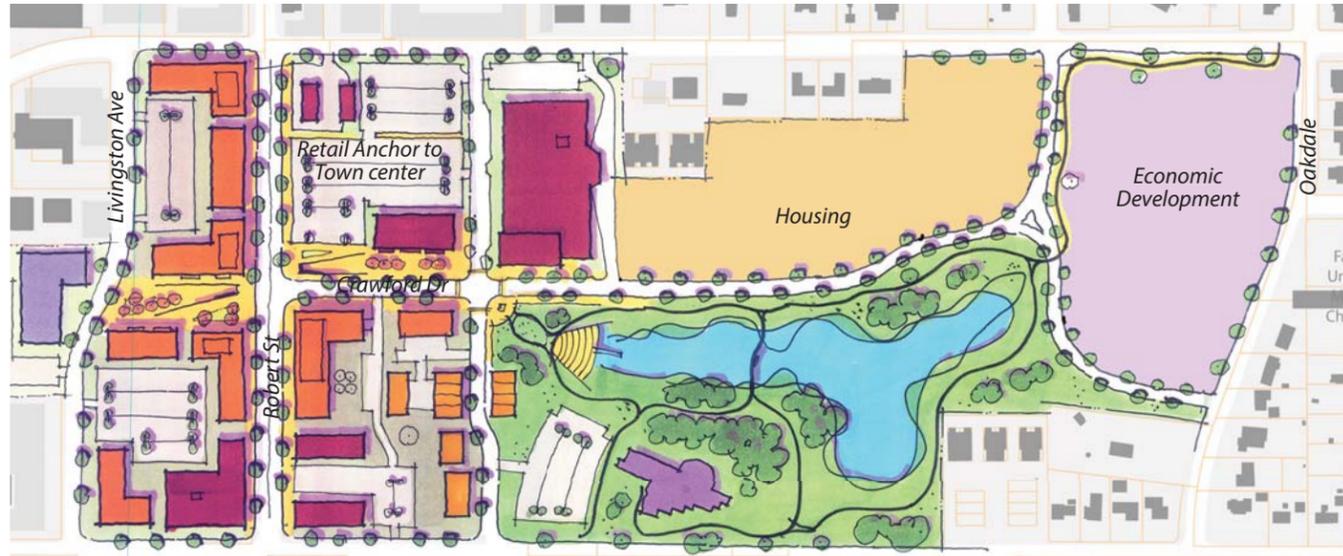


Land Use Alt. 2

#### Land Use

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

## Town Center Focus Area



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



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



### Recommendations

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

## Town Center Focus Area

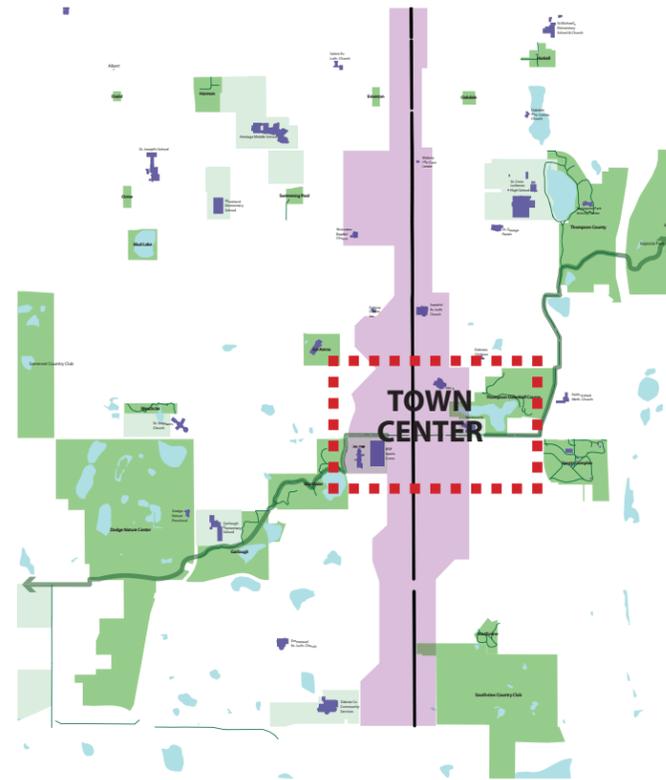
### Regional Trail Crossing

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

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

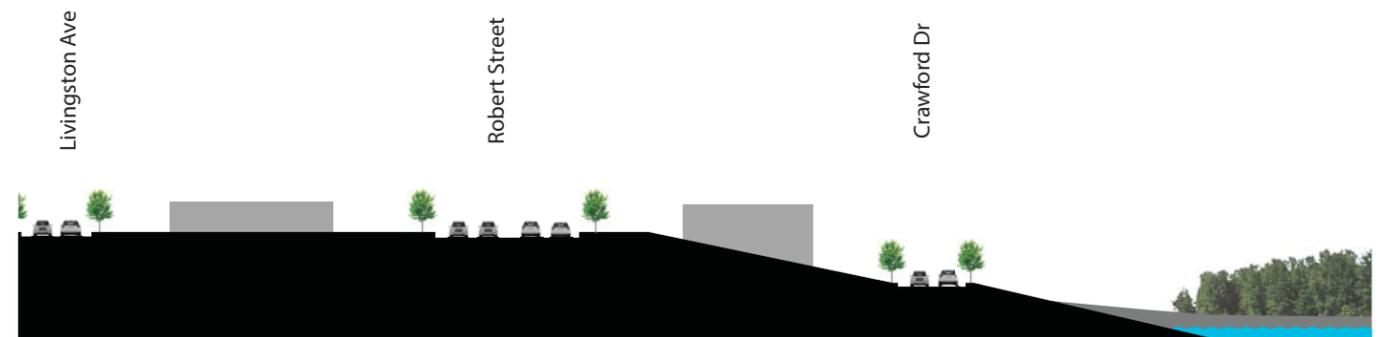
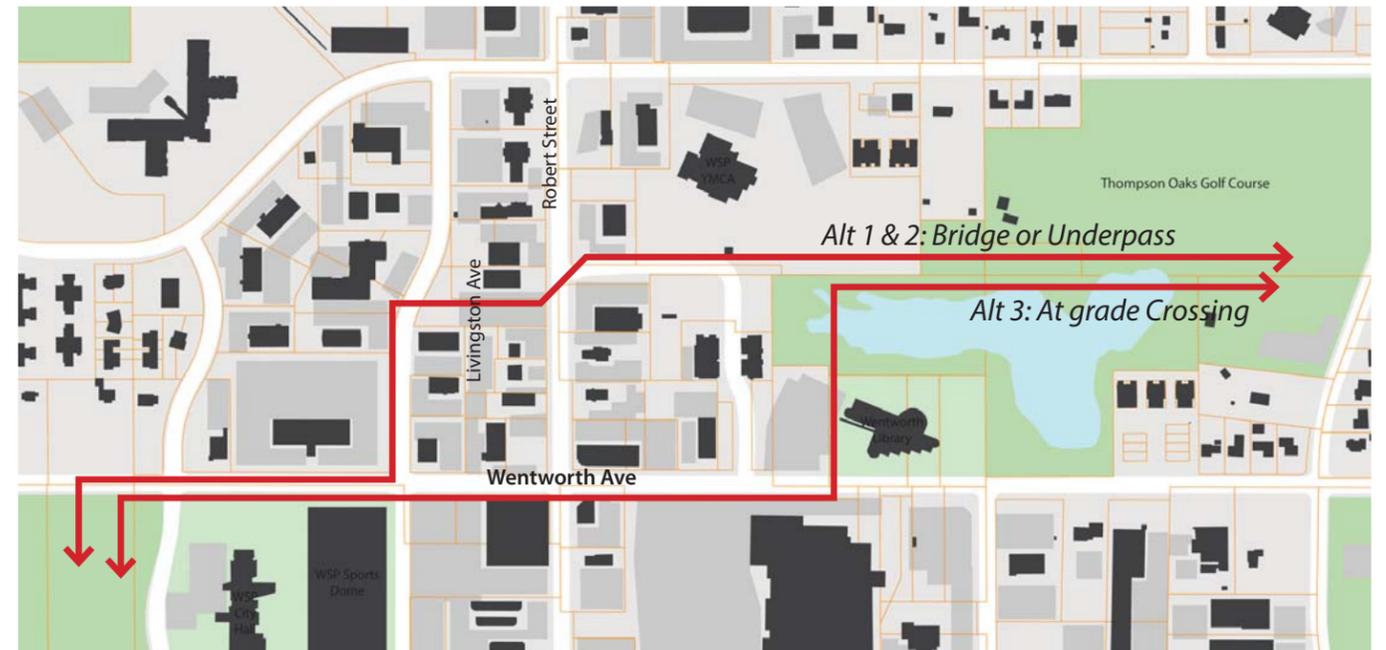
This Plan recommends three alternatives. The least costly option is to cross Robert Street on Wentworth Avenue - at grade. The intersection would have to be modified slightly and the trail would likely be either mixed with traffic or buffered on Wentworth east and West of Robert Street for a few blocks.

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



### The River to River Greenway

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



Robert Street: Existing

## Town Center Focus Area

### Regional Trail Crossing

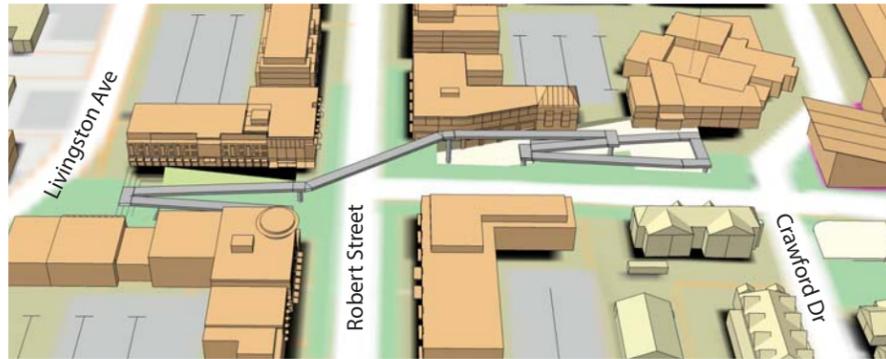
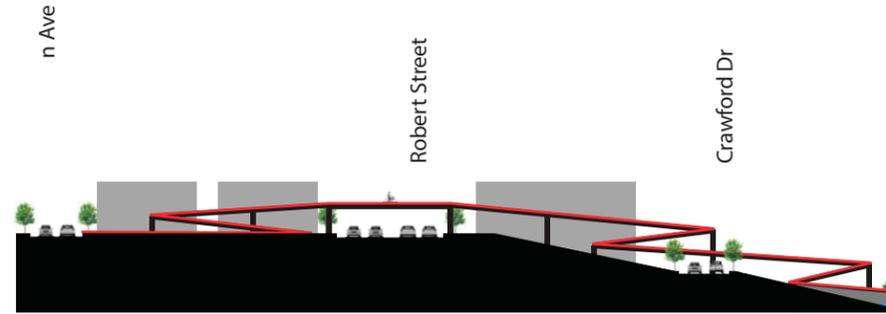
#### Regional Trail Crossing: Option 1: At Grade Crossing



##### Trail Crossing At Grade along Wentworth:

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

#### Regional Trail Crossing: Option 2: Overpass

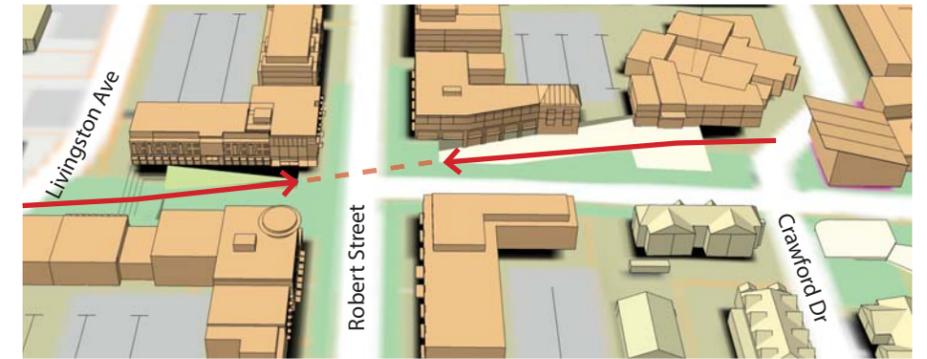
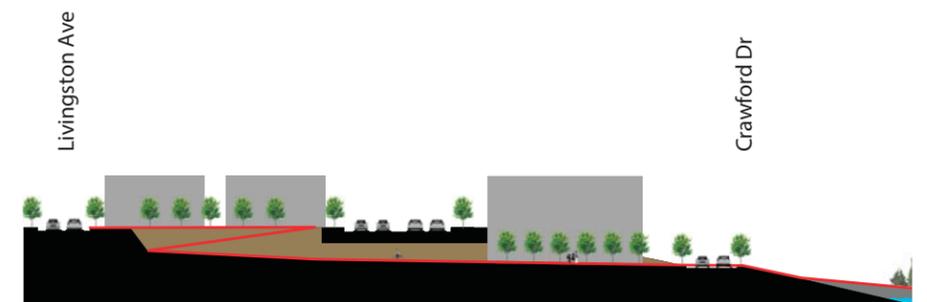


Aerial perspective of bridge



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

#### Regional Trail Crossing: Option 3: Underpass



Aerial perspective of underpass



Photographs of underpass in Boulder CO