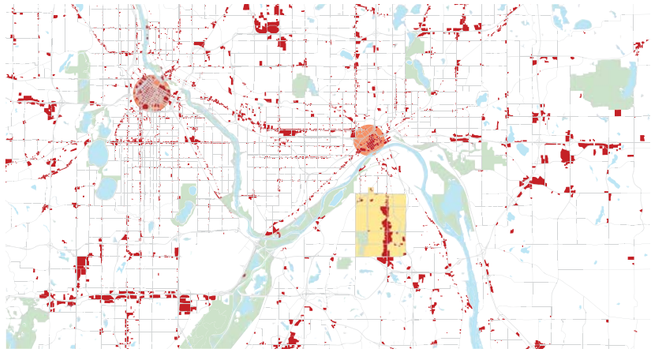

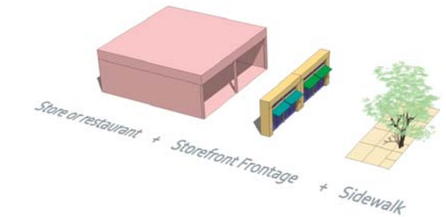

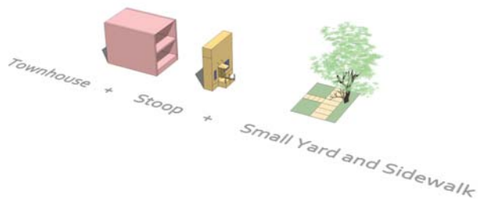

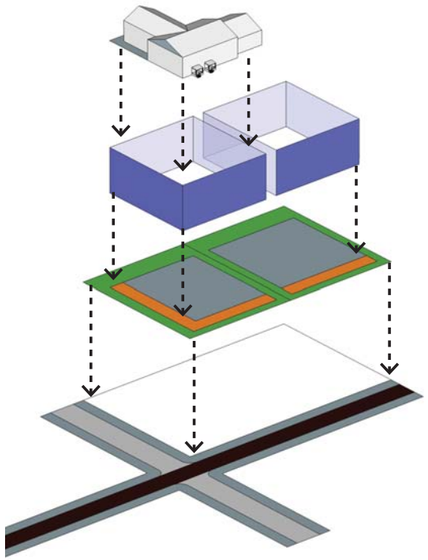

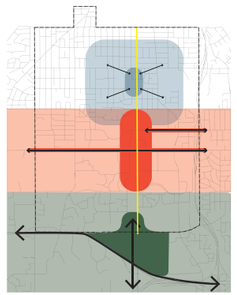

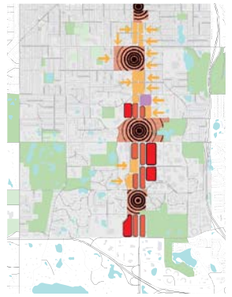

Robert Street Renaissance Plan Update

West St. Paul, Minnesota

June 6 2016

Prepared for:
City of West St. Paul, MN

Prepared by:
Cuningham Group Architecture, P.A.

CUNINGHAM
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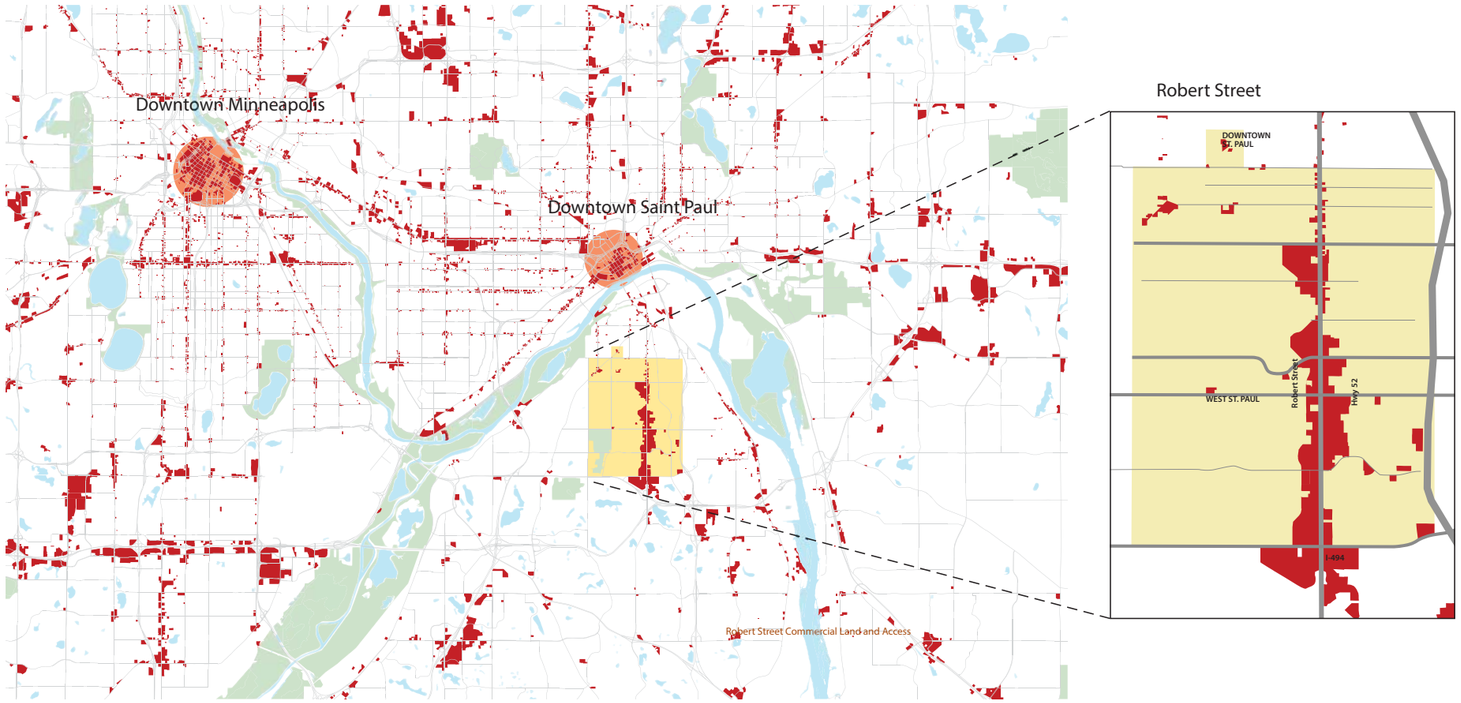
Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Project Background
3. Framework Plan
4. Character Districts and Target Areas

Robert Street is the backbone of West Saint Paul.

It impacts all aspects of life in West Saint Paul – from how people move around to how they go about their daily activities of life to how they are perceived by visitors and investors. Not only does it run the full 2.5-mile length of the City, touching 9% of the City's properties and comprising 15% of the City's land, it drives the community's tax base, its quality of life and both it's internal and external identity.

As Robert Street goes, so goes West Saint Paul.



A Crucial Time for Robert Street

A healthy Robert Street is critical to a healthy West Saint Paul. With reconstruction of Robert Street to be completed in 2017, this is a crucial moment for the City. It is an opportunity to redefine the role of Robert Street in the City and an opportunity to use a "new" Robert Street as a catalyst for broader community improvements. In doing so, Robert Street can become a magnet for new investments that will strengthen the City's tax base, regional competitiveness, and overall livability.

While the first Robert Street Renaissance Plan (2000) allowed significant progress in improved quality of development, much has changed. Larger demographic trends, proposed regional transit investments, and local projects are coalescing in a way that make it possible for new investments in the right places and in the right forms to greatly improve the character and strength of Robert Street - allowing the City to compete and succeed in ways that it is currently is not.

Robert Street Today

The Robert Street corridor is in transition. Once a popular and beloved regional commercial strip, Hwy. 52 and the growth of Woodbury, Eagan, and Mendota Heights had a profound impact on Robert Street and West Saint Paul. As often happens with retail, it either reinvents itself in its current location or it migrates to new areas of growth. In the past 30 years, regional retail dollars have dispersed and Robert Street is no longer the primary retail option in Dakota County.

Robert Street is still a viable location for successful retail - however it has to reinvent itself. It has to become more condensed, defined and integrated into the fabric of the community. At the same time, Robert Street itself has to become more than a convenient place to shop. It has to re-establish itself in the community as a beloved place; a place in the community that exudes pride and respect.

While successful new development has occurred since 2000, large portions of Robert Street are suffering from disinvestment; they are slow to reinvent themselves. Not only are West St. Paul citizens not proud of how parts of the corridor look, they are concerned about how it will serve them in the future.

And yet, there is much potential. Robert Street has inherent advantages that position it well for a dramatic transformation:

- Robert Street itself is a direct regional connection to the economic hub of downtown St. Paul.
- The surrounding neighborhoods are made up of affordable single family housing that is turning over with remarkable speed.
- Numerous large parcels of underutilized land along the corridor make it a prime location for redevelopment.
- Important new investments, from both inside and outside forces, are headed to Robert Street: the improved streetscape in progress, upgrades to mass transit, plans for a new regional trail, and funding opportunities for much-needed urban housing.

How West St. Paul takes advantage of its assets and makes use of proposed investments along Robert Street will impact how successful they are in staying competitive in the upcoming decades.

Regional and National Trends

Strong urban growth in the Metro core and first-ring suburbs is projected to continue for at least the next 30 years, while growth on the outer fringes is slowing – a complete turnaround from the growth patterns of several decades prior to 2010. Offering lower cost housing than the core cities, first-ring suburbs all over the country are competing to attract this population influx, made up mostly of Baby Boomers and Millennials. These groups need and want different lifestyles than most suburban environments can offer: places where they can live, play, work, and stay throughout each phase of their life. This means providing a range of transportation options, employment styles, and housing types, as well as developing places with character not only for shopping but for gathering and entertainment opportunities as well. The communities that evolve to meet these needs will be those that are successful.

What this Plan Accomplishes

This Plan puts in place the necessary vision and supporting policies to help transform Robert Street from a useful place to a beloved place. The Plan:

- Supports apartment and condominium housing in the northern portion of South Robert Street. This will allow the neighborhoods to bridge the corridor and become a strong gateway into the City.
- Encourages full redevelopment of the Signal Hills site with a mix of housing types, retail opportunities, and transit connections. The 40 acre site is one of the most attractive in the region offering opportunities to create a transit oriented development in the middle of healthy neighborhoods.
- Provides direction for creating a Town Center between Wentworth and Thompson. By integrating a new regional trail, potential civic uses, redevelopment of the Golf Course, a and additional mixed use development, West Saint Paul will have a lively downtown that can become the civic and commercial heart of the City.
- Directs all new development along the corridor to present a positive face to the corridor, reinforcing City and States investment in the soon to be completed reconstruction of Robert Street.

The updated Robert Street Renaissance Plan will strengthen the City's backbone by directing reinvestment along the corridor that will leverage the city's positive qualities and spark redevelopment. The West St. Paul community has greater hopes and dreams for how Robert Street can look and function in the future – for how it can generate economic prosperity and be a place that people from around the region want to visit, to shop, and to live. The overall quiet, suburban character of the City will stay the same but investing in critical nodes and implementing new zoning will stimulate improvements that will bring new life to Robert Street and lift West St Paul into a competitive position. The next 30 years will bring massive change to the entire Metro; this Plan will help West St. Paul attract the developments and make the community investments necessary to create an attractive, healthy, livable corridor that can meet the needs of both today and tomorrow.

Goals

1. Create Identifiable Places

Identifiable places are will help create a corridor that is memorable, recognizable, and organized. Without differentiation along the corridor, the corridor will not be unique and will not attract a range of investments.

2. Have a Balanced Mix of Retail and Housing

The Corridor needs a range of activities and uses to meet the increasingly diverse and varied populations of West Saint Paul.

3. Attract New Businesses, Residents, and Visitors

Attracting new residents and businesses to the community will keep West Saint Paul competitive and healthy. Growth is important to a strong tax base and high quality amenities.

4. Provide Places for Community Gathering and Entertainment

Providing places for gathering and entertainment helps create positive memories and strong social bonds. This will in turn increase loyalty to the community and help differentiate Robert Street from other corridors in the region.

5. Make it Safe and Attractive to Get Around on all Modes

A transportation system that allows more people more ways to access the businesses on Robert Street will support the creation of a strong local economy.

A Suburban Community with a few Urban Places

West St. Paul is a suburban community. Even with the Met Council's growth projections, much of the community will retain its existing character with quiet streets and single family homes and small apartments. This Plan does not threaten the underlying land uses and patterns of most of the Community. Rather, it proposes a gradual transition of the Robert Street Corridor so it is more regionally competitive and locally responsive. More specifically, the Plan targets three locations along the corridor where the community can absorb growth, create a sense of place and provide a new housing and retail choices.

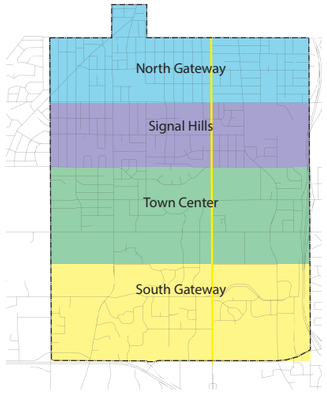
By directing growth to these locations, the Community will be able to both attract new residents and offer new amenities while at the same time preserving the quality of suburban community.

Suburban		Urban
Quiet	→	Lively
Predictable	→	Changing
Familiar	→	Cosmopolitan
Place to Stay	→	A place to try
Casual	→	Urbane

Overall Corridor Strategies

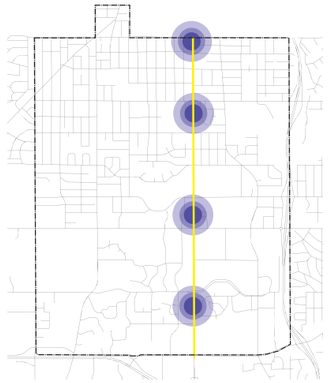
1. Create Four Neighborhoods

Creating four neighborhoods or character areas will lend clarity and direction for potential investors, sense of pride for existing residents and businesses, and improve wayfinding for visitors.



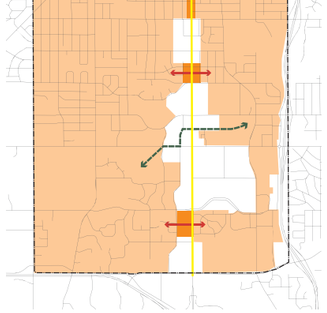
2. Mixed Use Places

Mixed use places that are served by transit, walkable, and have high quality public spaces and amenities will integrate housing and retail to create new amenities for the City.



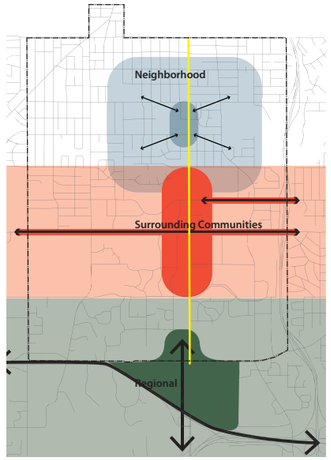
3. "Bridge" Robert Street

In order to connect across Robert Street and transform Robert Street from a barrier to a place that unifies the community, effort should be made to bridge Robert Street. This can happen in many places and many ways. Improved intersections, buildings that face each other, underpasses and overpasses in appropriate locations are some of the ways the City can "bridge" Robert Street.

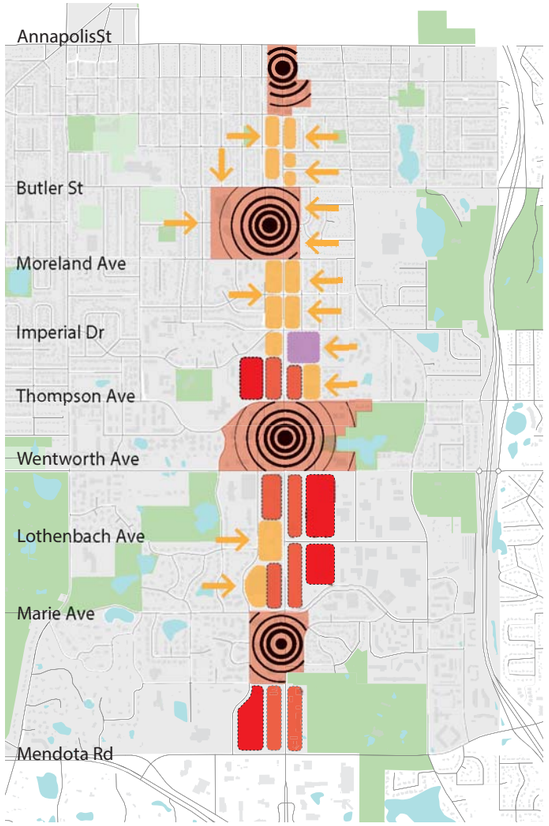


4. Organize and Reinvent Retail

In order to retain retail competitiveness, the Plan recommends a reinvention and reorganization of retail along the corridor so it is more responsive to the local and regional customer base. Retail uses along Robert Street should be organized so they complement each other and do not compete against each other.



Land Use Recommendations

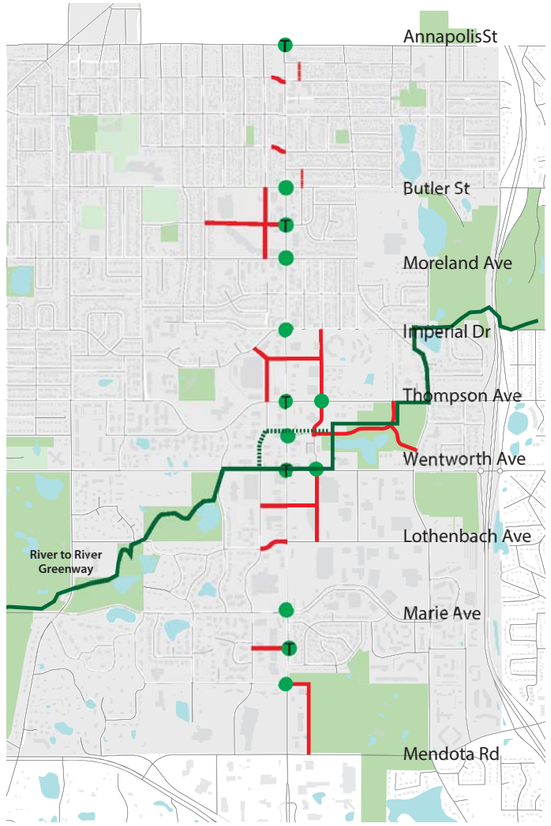


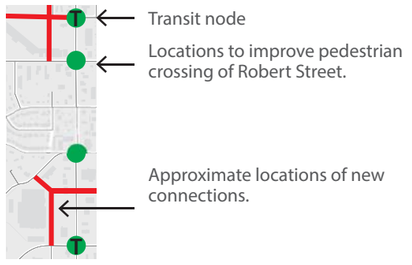
Opportunities for mixed-use nodes that integrate retail, housing and public open space.

Opportunities to introduce housing onto Robert Street.

Opportunities to organize and condense retail so it is more accessible and pedestrian friendly.

Land Use and Circulation Recommendations





Transit node

Locations to improve pedestrian crossing of Robert Street.

Approximate locations of new connections.

Specific Catalytic Interventions

North Gateway

Features

- Medium Density housing that creates a comfortable walkable street.
- Limited retail or restaurant on the ground floor of a mixed use building at Annapolis.
- Potential realignment of Hurley Street to increase greenspace.

Signal Hills

Features

- A redeveloped site brings retail closer to Robert Street and introduces housing and open space onto the site.
- A community park in the middle of the development for gathering and farmers market.
- High frequency, high quality transit integrated into the redevelopment at Orme and Robert Street.

The Town Center

Features

- Safe and comfortable trail crossing of Robert Street.
- Perpendicular views and access from the "lake to the hill".
- New development on Robert Street that creates a comfortable pedestrian environment.
- Crawford Street extended from Wentworth to Thompson.

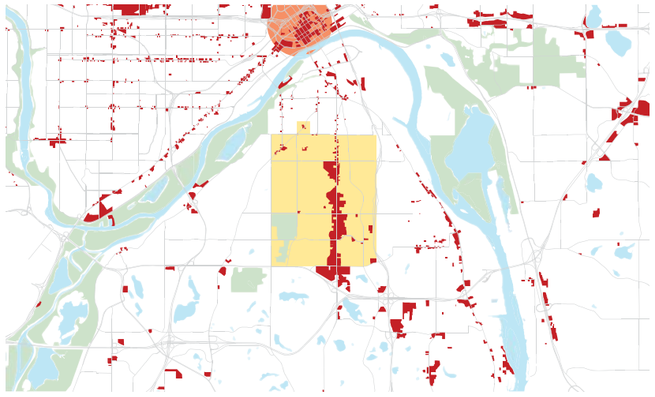
note: the images on this page illustrate one Aaternative for North Gateway, Signal Hills and Town Center. Please refer to Section 4 for more detailed descriptions of all three areas.

What does this Plan say about private property

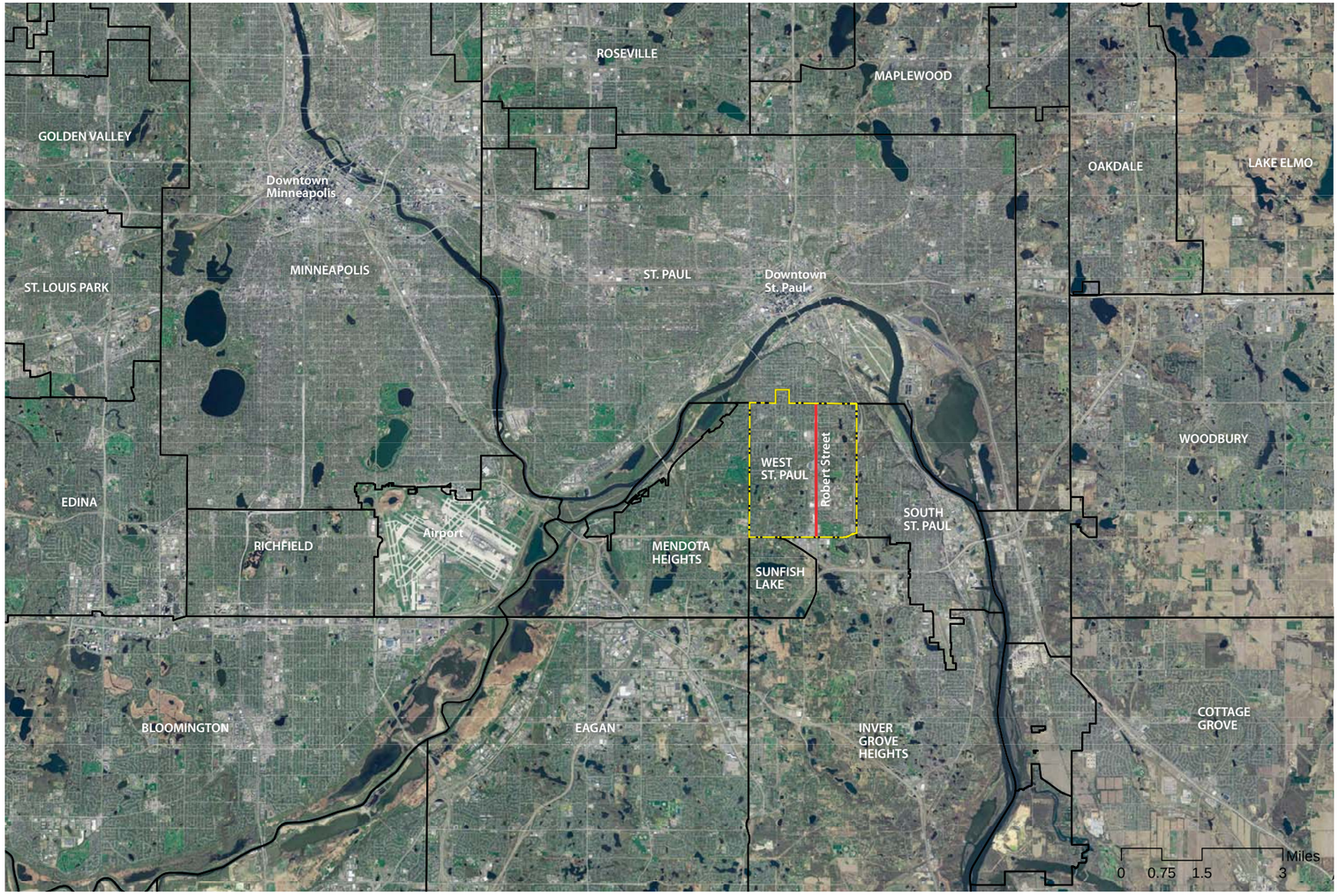
The purpose of this Plan is to guide, not dictate development. Images throughout the Plan depict potential development on both public and private property. They are not development proposals, but rather ideas about how concepts in the Plan can be realized with potential new developments.

It is important to note that the Plan relies on private property owners, developers, the City of West Saint Paul and other partners working together to bring investment to the City. Very few of the ideas in this Plan (especially on this page) can be realized without several parties coming together. The ideas on this page can be considered a strong starting point for potential partnerships.

Private property owners will maintain control of their property throughout the life of this Plan. This Plan does not advocate use of eminent domain or any form of property takings. Instead, the Plan encourages redevelopment that is more human scaled, walkable, transit friendly and aesthetically appealing than what currently exists throughout parts of the corridor. The purpose of encouraging such development is to create an environment that residents of West Saint Paul can be proud of.

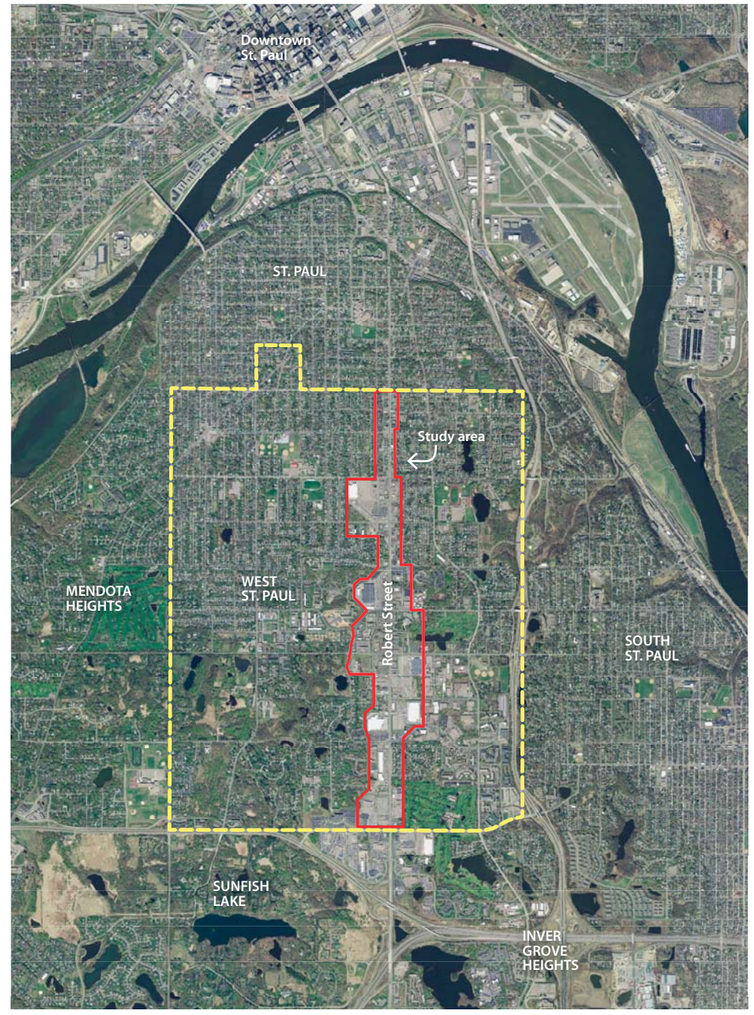


Site Location



Location of West St. Paul and Robert Street within the Twin Cities Metro Region

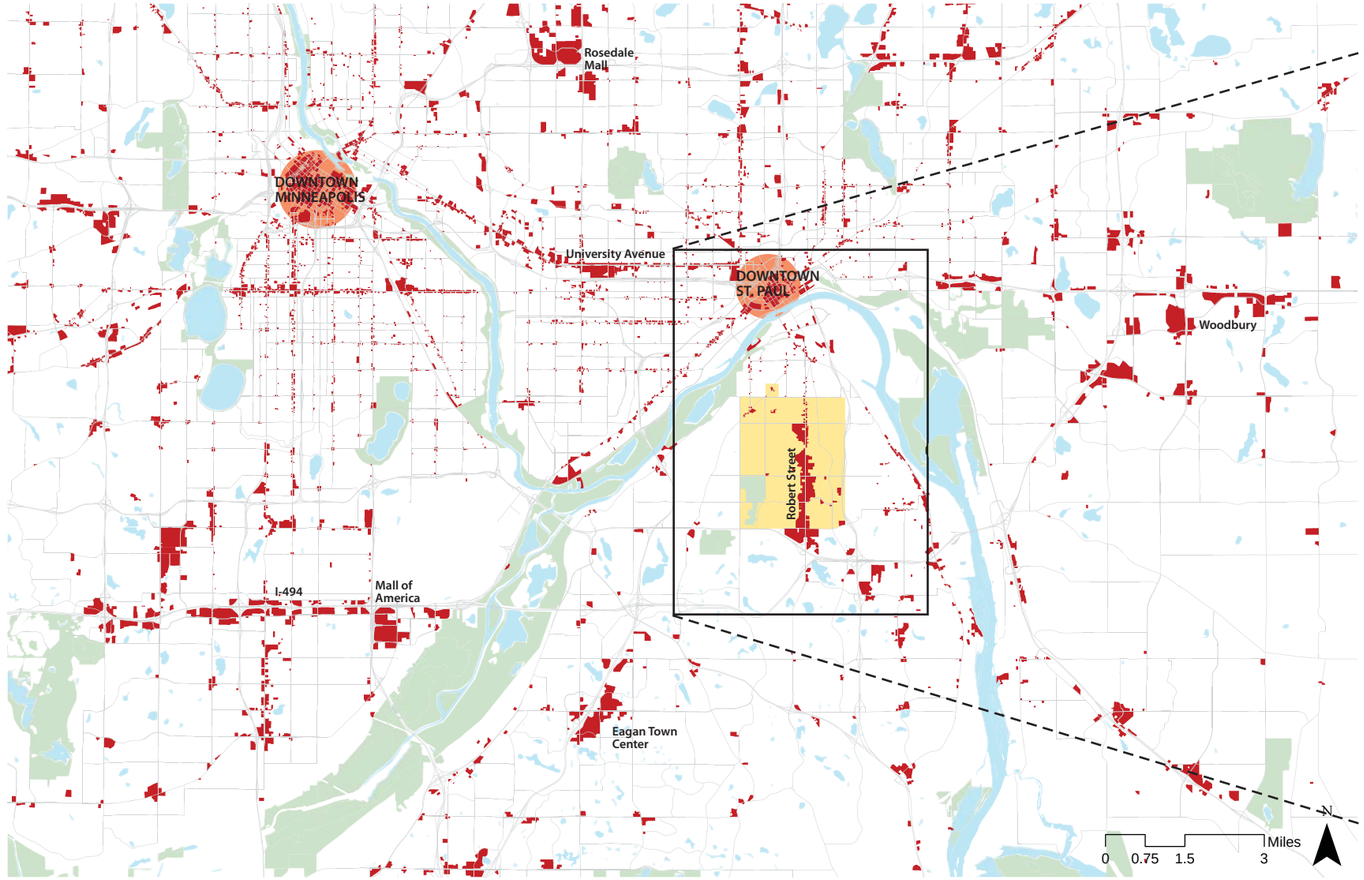
The City of West St. Paul is a first-ring suburb located immediately south of the capitol city of St. Paul. Robert Street runs the entire 2.5-mile length of the city and it a direct link from the outer suburbs to downtown St. Paul, a hub for employment.



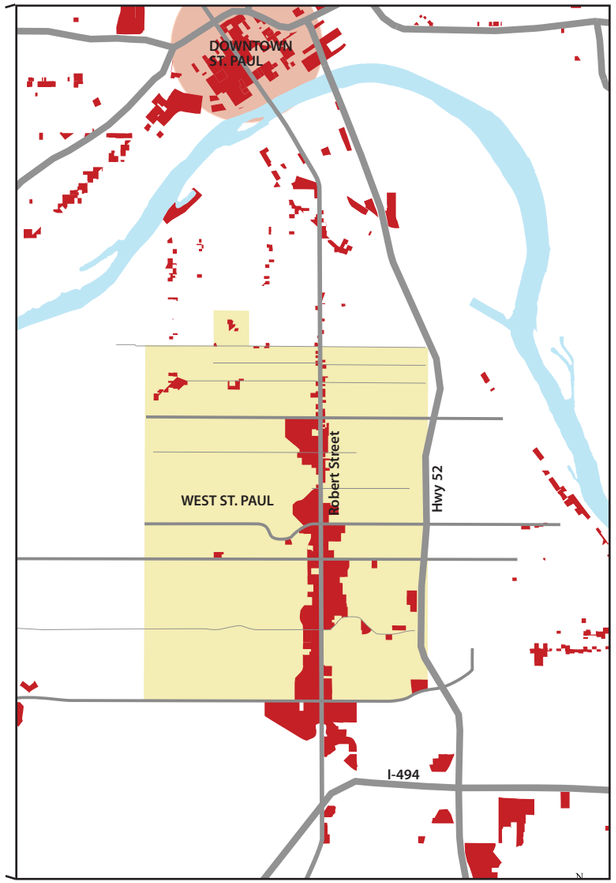
Robert Street Study Area within West St. Paul

Robert Street is the backbone of West St. Paul, comprising 85% of commercial land in the city. The study area includes all parcels touching the street, as well as other significant portions of land that are considered to be a part of the corridor.

Site History & Context



Commercial Land in the Twin Cities Metro



Robert Street Commercial Land and Access

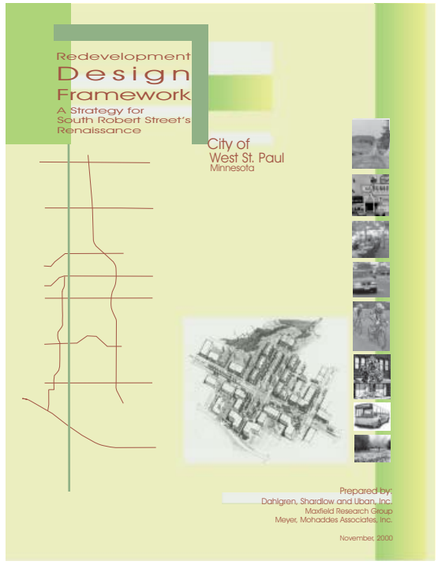
Robert Street is one of many commercial corridors in the Twin Cities metro region. With 800,000 square feet of retail, it is a significant land use in the City of West Saint Paul and, as indicated on the map above, has a noticeable footprint in the region.

As Robert Street developed since it was a country road in the late 1800s, it took different forms to meet the changing needs of its citizens and customers. The northern portion dates to the streetcar days, which is evidenced by its small parcels, narrower right-of-way, and neighborhood feel. The middle portion, highlighted by the Signal Hills mall, developed during the 1950's when private car ownership exploded and "the strip" was the desired development pattern. In the 1960's and beyond, the car-oriented development continued to increase in extent and scale to accommodate the ever-increasing dependence on vehicles. During this time, Robert Street was a popular regional shopping district. But by the early 1990s, with the construction of Hwy 52 and the subsequent development of the communities further out from the city center, Robert Street lost its place to newer shopping centers like Eagan Town Center and the Mall of America.

While commercial use on Robert Street takes up a significant land footprint, it does not have the draw that it once did. Now, rather than attracting customers from the larger metro region, it serves mostly West St. Paul residents and the immediately surrounding communities.

But the city is in the right position to make itself competitive in the region once more. Its immediate connection and close proximity to downtown St. Paul makes it a potentially attractive place for new residents who want an easy commute.

What the First Robert Street Renaissance Plan Accomplished

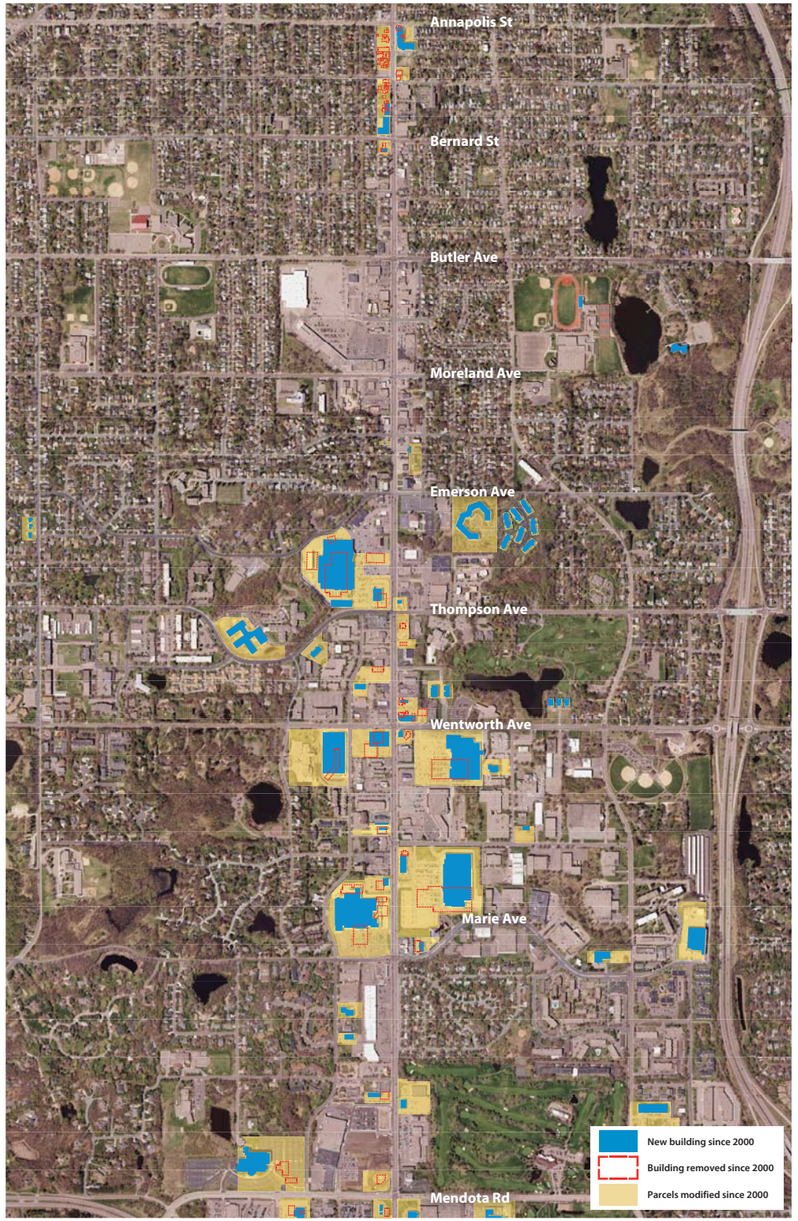


The original Robert Street Renaissance Plan, adopted in 2001, provided two major recommendations. 1) rebuild Robert Street 2) improve the building and site plan standards.

At the time of this writing, Robert Street is in the process of rebuilding the right-of-way to complete this vision. The project will include planted medians, consolidated access to businesses, new lighting, pedestrian amenities, and street trees.

After completion of the Renaissance Plan in 2001, the city incorporated building and site plan standards into city policy. This included changes to the Zoning Ordinance, the addition of a formal site plan review process, and higher standards for building materials and siting, landscaping requirements, and signage type.

While the original Renaissance Plan resulted in many positive changes, this Plan will build on these improvements and offer further adjustments to code code and policy.



Changes on the Robert Street Corridor since 2000

Parcels cleared for new development on north end

New multi-family housing on north end

Commercial buildings closer to the street

Improved material standards

Improved sign standards (monument, not pylon)

Outlots ready for development

On-going street reconstruction (Image by SRF)

Landscaping standards

Why an Update is Needed

Changing Trends

The purpose of this Plan is to prepare the community for increased demand to invest in properties along Robert Street as soon as the street reconstruction is completed in 2017. Investment has been holding back, yet demand to invest in the inner ring communities has been building since the Great Recession in 2008.

Much has changed since the original Renaissance Plan in 2001.

Demographics

Baby Boomers and Millennials (two of the largest generations) are driving many of the changes we already see in the region. As our population grows from 2.9 million today to 3.7 million in 2040, residents older than 65 yrs of age and younger than 24 yrs of age will grow from 34% of the population to 42% of the population.

Lifestyles

Our lifestyle decisions are becoming more complex as our cost decisions are being co-mingled with time and health decisions. As we can find low cost goods on-line, this affords us more opportunity to spend our dollars on enhancing our health, enjoyment, and experiences.

Transportation

With oil prices fluctuating, and time becoming a more valuable commodity, we are simply choosing to spend less time on our commutes. Overall miles driven, across the country have been declining since 2002 - indicating choices to use transit, bicycles, and our own feet to make those trips that were once reserved for the car.

Smarter Regional Growth Policies

The region recognizes these changes and has been investing heavily in new transit and alternative transportation infrastructure such as bicycle trails and lanes. Since 2001 the Region has built 2 LRT lines and in the next 10 years will likely have two more completed as well as over half a dozen BRT lines.

Jobs

Our Region will continue to grow with an additional 500,000 jobs by 2040. The nature of our economy is also changing. Large companies will still fueling much of the growth, however increasingly the "freelance" economy will provide job opportunities for workers of all ages. Office space will not increase significantly despite job growth because individual workspaces are getting smaller and employers are more efficient with their space needs. In addition, the freelance economy will utilize semi-public spaces as their offices by popping open their laptops in coffee shops, libraries, and hotel lounges.

Retail

The internet has profoundly changed how we shop and the retail landscape has changed accordingly. With more dollars being spent on-line, fewer retail goods are being purchased along commercial strips like Robert Street. The retail that has survived is either the bricks and mortar complement to a successful on-line enterprise, a or a retailer who provides exceptional experience or service that cannot be found on-line. The rise of "experience retail" has found synergies with restaurants eating establishments - other enterprises that can not be duplicated on-line.

Rebirth of First-Ring Suburbs

With the second and third waves of suburban expansion between 1970 and 2000 inner ring communities like West Saint Paul saw either flat or negative growth as they were bypassed with new greenfield development on the ever expanding fringes of the metropolitan region. The original streetcar suburbs peaked in the 1970's as tight knit and proud communities. But with most new growth occurring on the fringes, the inner ring communities struggled to maintain their retail districts, public amenities, and revenue base.

Since 2000, many in the investment community have looked back in towards the core and at the inner ring communities as golden opportunities for growth. Communities like West Saint Paul are more affordable, and better located than communities further from the core.

With land originally developed in large parcels (as the first wave of suburban development), redevelopment can be significantly simpler than urban in areas because larger properties are under single ownership. Furthermore their redevelopment potential places them in a strong strategic position to attract regional transit investments.

The most progressive of inner ring communities foreshadowed these trends and have been reinvesting in themselves for over a decade. They have maintained their generally leafy suburban residential communities while carefully inserting areas of urban vitality in declining commercial areas or transitioning industrial areas. These urban nodes have allowed suburban communities to attract new residents, as well as provide new options for existing residents. This has helped bolster tax base which allows them to reinvest in public amenities.

How Other Communities Are Responding

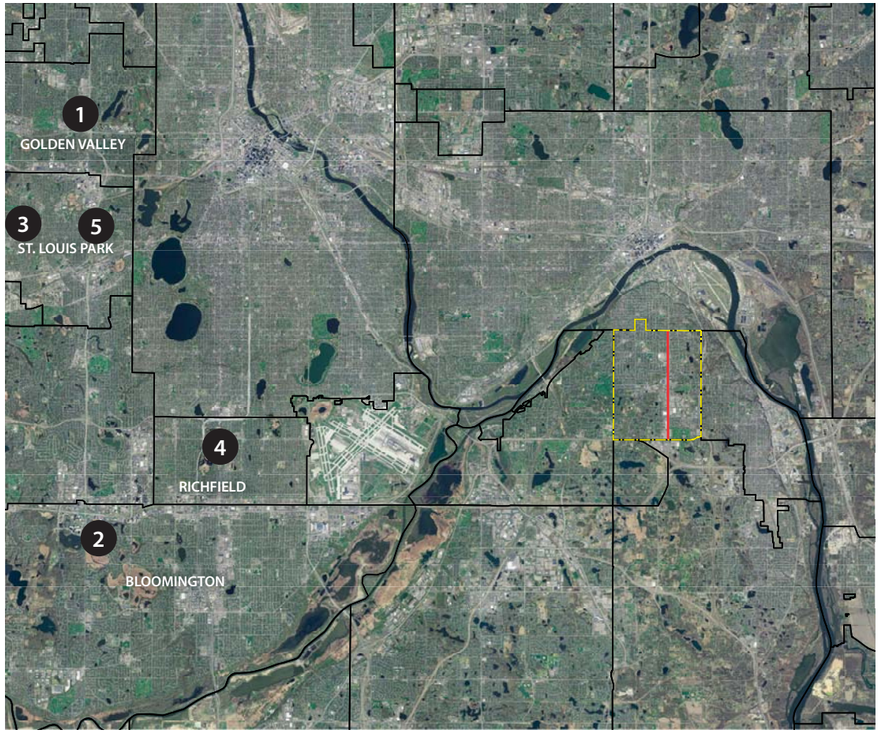
Communities across the Twin Cities have been responding aggressively to the changing demographics and their oncoming challenges by retrofitting outdated patterns with:

- A Mixed of uses.
- Better Quality Public spaces.
- More Walkable environments.
- Improved Transit service.
- A wider range of housing choices.
- Redevelopments that are closely connected to surroundings.

Town Square in Golden Valley

Figure 5.16 American Boulevard - Future Enhancements Concept

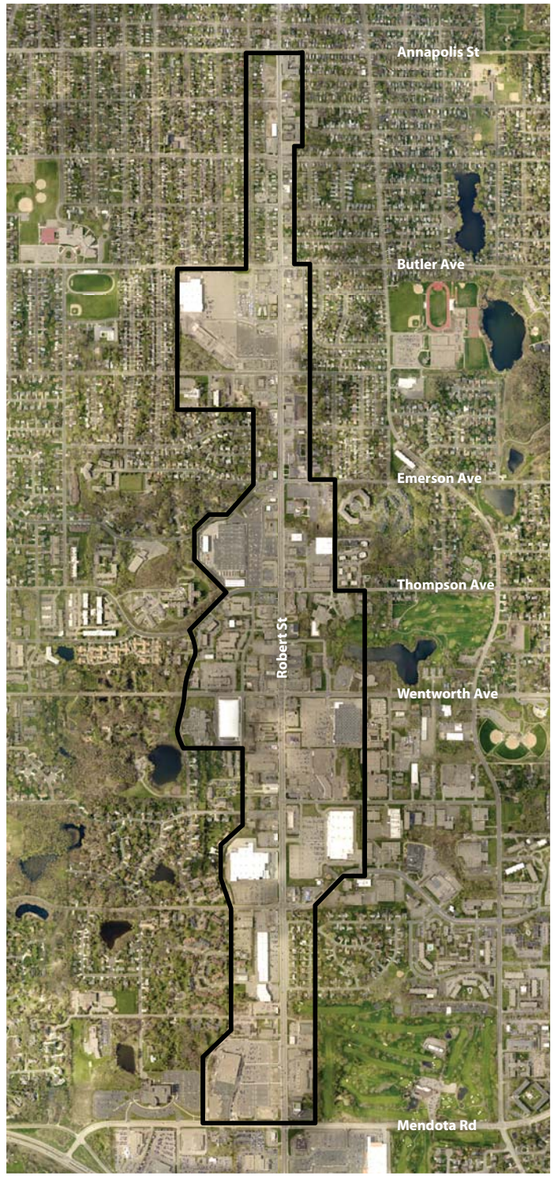
American Boulevard in Bloomington



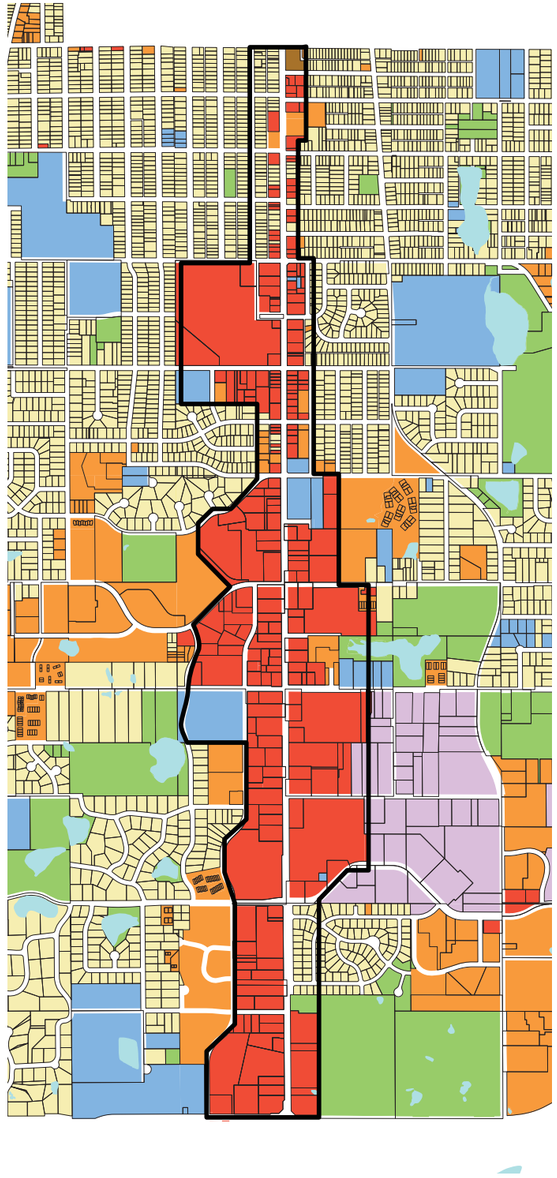
Excelsior & Grand in St. Louis Park

66th and Lyndale in Richfield

Site Layers

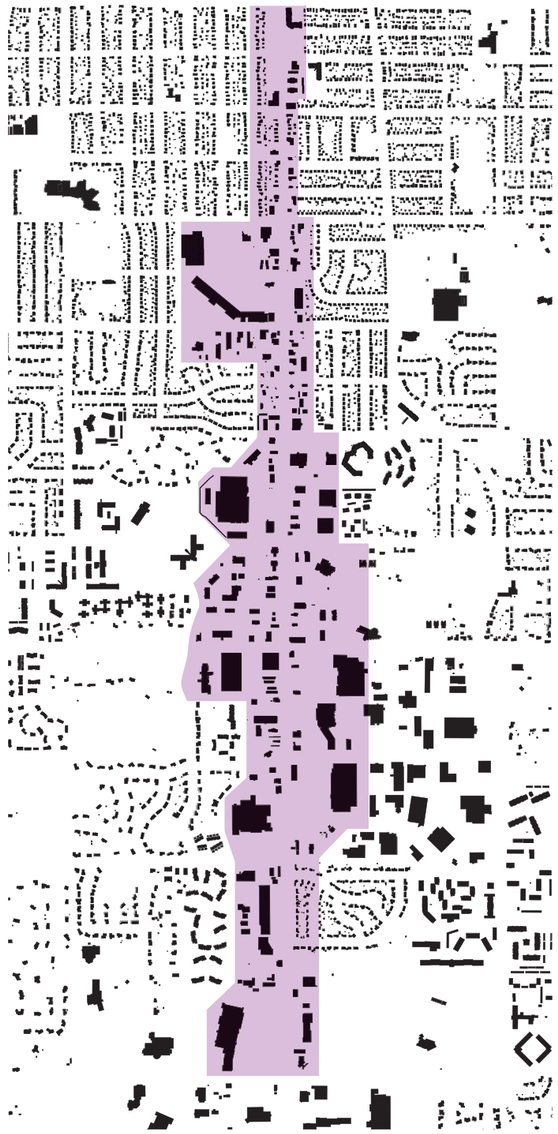


Aerial



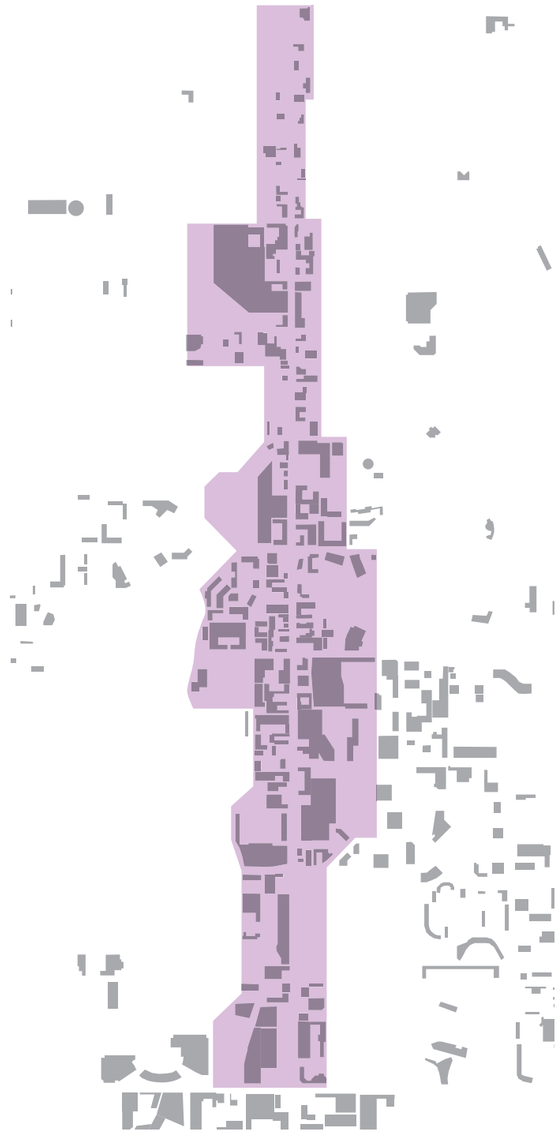
Existing Land Use

85% of commercial land in the city is within two blocks of Robert Street. Most communities have about 5% of their land designated for commercial use; West St. Paul has 9%, which indicates that it is likely over-retailed. Indeed as one drives the length of the corridor, vacant properties and buildings can be found.



Buildings

Buildings along Robert Street are a loose arrangement of buildings that vary greatly in scale and pattern. Some buildings relate closely to their residential neighborhoods they abut, but others create an abrupt edge

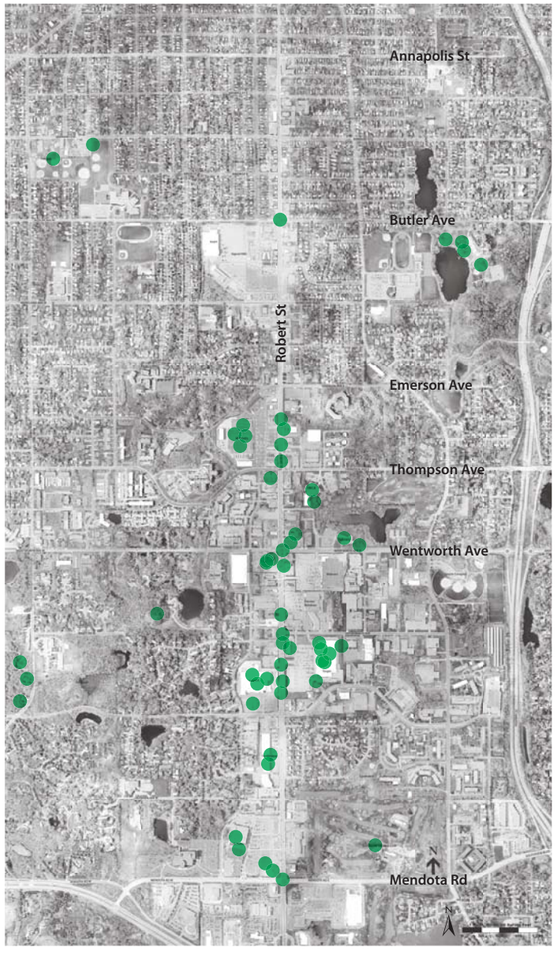


Parking Lots

Most of robert Street was designed in auto oriented pattern. As a result, parking is the dominant land use. . This pattern, while sometimes convenient for drivers, creates a hostile and unpleasant environment for others.

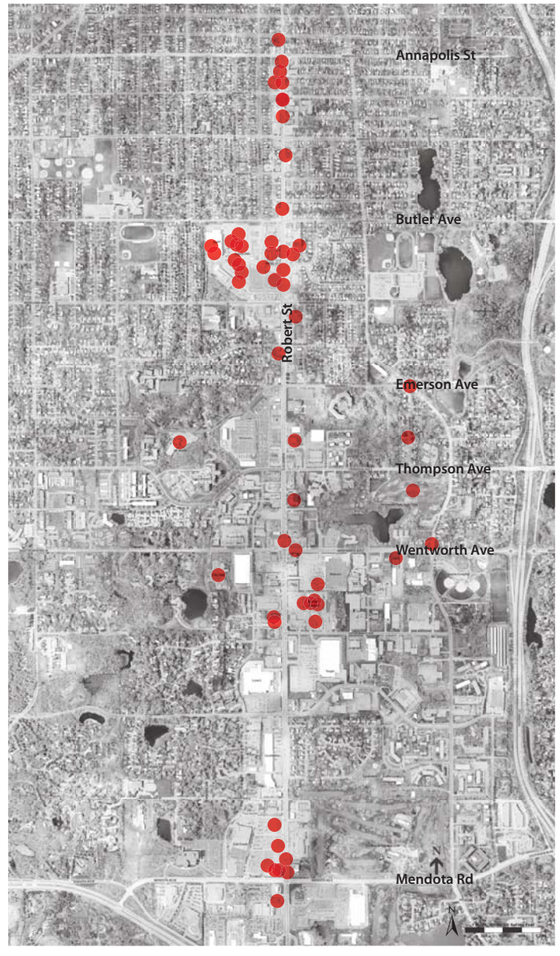
Community Perception of Site

The West St. Paul community was engaged in two public meetings in the planning process. At the first meeting, participants were asked to identify the corridor's areas of strengths, weaknesses, and priorities on maps with colored dots. The Project Advisory Committee was also asked to take part in this exercise; the consolidated results are shown to the right.



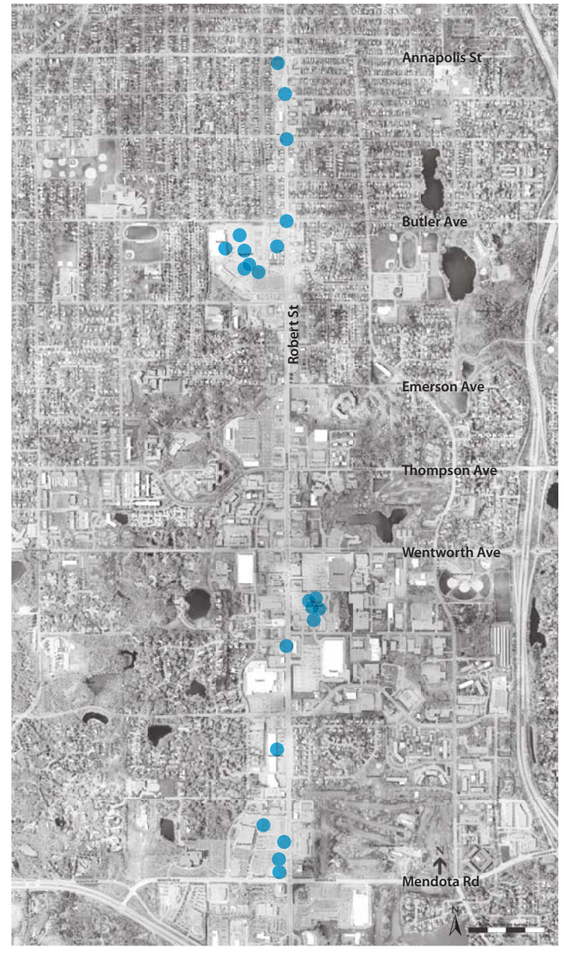
Strengths

Participants were asked to place green dots on places that they feel work well, are liked, or are assets to the community. The majority of strengths were identified within the lower half of the corridor, which corresponds to areas of recent development. In addition, the city's parks and open spaces were identified as strengths.



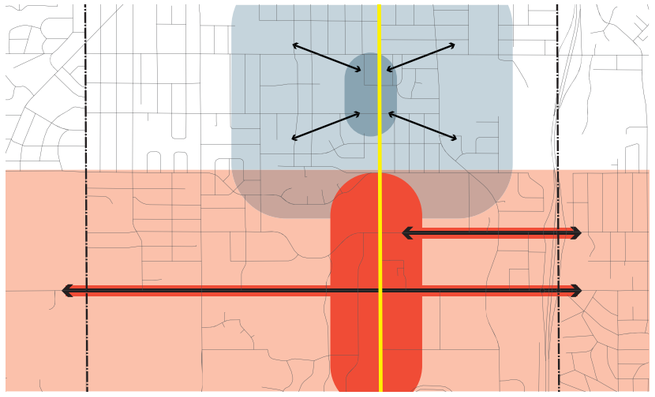
Weaknesses

Red dots were placed in locations that were seen as liabilities to the community, do not work, or are disliked. Weaknesses identified by the groups were more scattered along the length of the corridor but tended to focus around a few key areas: the northern few blocks, where a number of empty lots currently sit; on the Signal Hills shopping center; on the recently-vacated Rainbow Foods grocery store; and on the empty lots on the southern-most end of the corridor.



Priorities

In areas that are judged to be needing the most attention, or what should be top priorities for the community to improve, the participants placed blue dots. These closely aligned with those places previous judged as weaknesses.

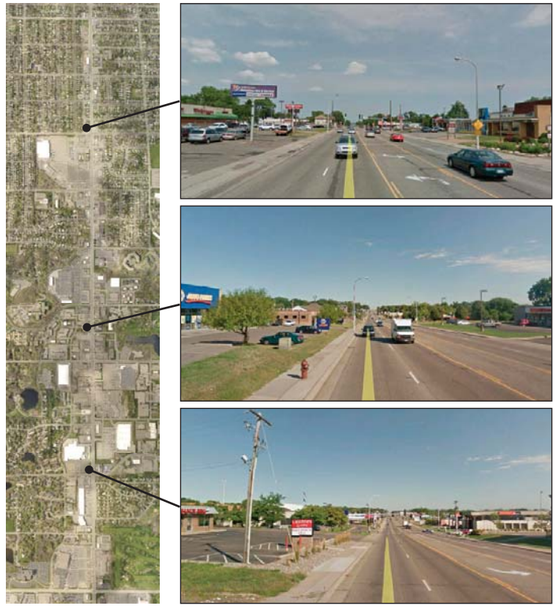


Primary Issues

1. The Corridor Lacks Identity

West St. Paul has a number of memorable places that people identify with the city: the Wentworth Library, Dakota Lodge, and the Dodge Nature Center. These are places where the community can gather and celebrate. The Robert Street corridor, by contrast, has no places of significance of which citizens can be proud. Signal Hills Mall, prior to alterations to its layout in the late 1990s, was a beloved community place.

In addition, while it is obvious that certain portions of the corridor were built during different eras, there are no indicators that identify districts, nor are there distinguishable characteristics that create a cohesive look. Development looks much the same along the length of the corridor. Not only does this make it difficult for visitors to navigate, it does not inspire them to return.

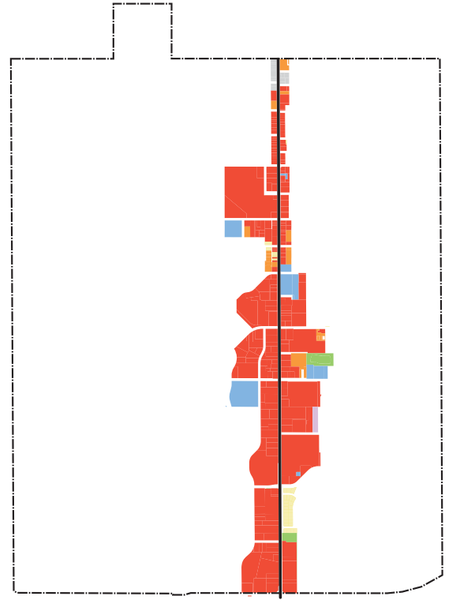


2. The Corridor is Over-Retailed and Lacks Business Diversity

West St. Paul has 9% of its land designated as commercial. Much of that land is retail. This presents a risk to the community because retail land use is notoriously volatile as the retail industry tends to reinvent itself every 10 years.

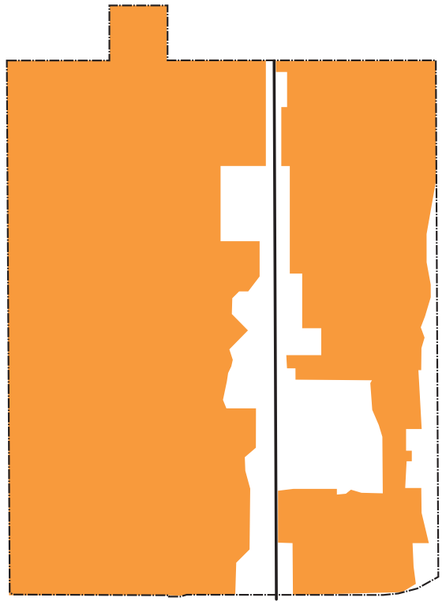
In addition, Robert Street lacks a balance of retail types; currently there is an over-abundance of some types of businesses (for example, auto parts shops) and a lack of others (such as sit-down restaurants). Because of this, residents must do some of their shopping in other communities. This is not only an inconvenience to citizens, it is also a missed opportunity for the City's economy.

The Plan creates a variety of environments along the corridor by adjusting land use patterns and introducing different amenities. These different patterns, will encourage a greater diversity of business.



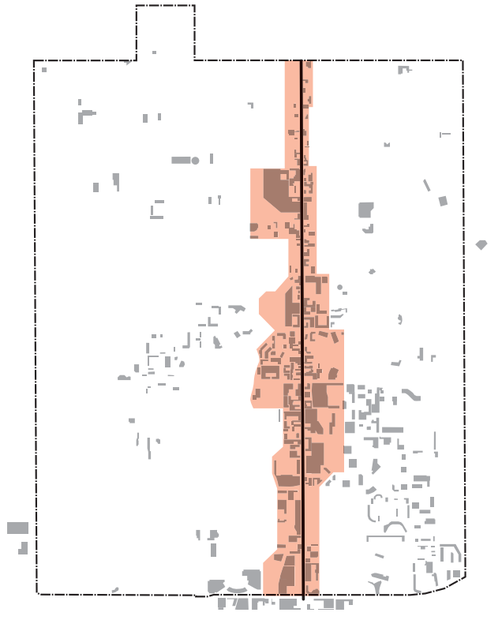
3. The Corridor Physically Divides the City

Large tracts of single-use (retail) land physically divides the two halves of the City. The short distance between the two sides of Robert Street is exaggerated by the wide road, large properties, and infrequent signalized intersections. This makes it difficult for residents on one side of the City to enjoy the amenities on the other side.



4. The Corridor is Designed for Cars

The corridor was designed and built out at a time when most people used their personal car to get to daily activities of life. As a result, the current environment does not accommodate or encourage biking, walking, or transit use. Today's population demands more choices and an environment where one does not need a personal car to get around.



Goals

1. Create Identifiable Places

Identifiable places are will help create a corridor that is memorable, recognizable, and organized. Without differentiation along the corridor, the corridor will not be unique and will not attract a range of investments.

2. Have a Balanced Mix of Retail and Housing

The Corridor needs a range of activities and uses to meet the increasingly diverse and varied populations of West Saint Paul.

3. Attract New Businesses, Residents, and Visitors

Attracting new residents and businesses to the community will keep West Saint Paul competitive and healthy. Growth is important to a strong tax base and high quality amenities.

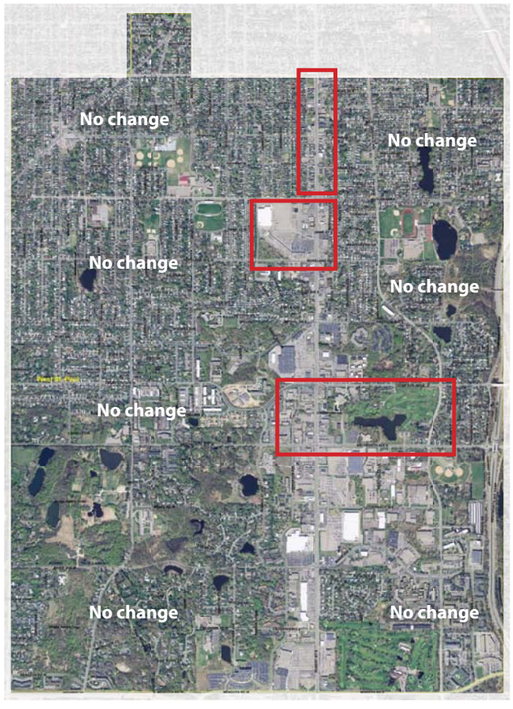
4. Provide Places for Community Gathering and Entertainment

Providing places for gathering and entertainment helps create positive memories and strong social bonds. This will in turn increase loyalty to the community and help differentiate Robert Street from other corridors in the region.

5. Make it Safe and Attractive to Get Around on all Modes

A transportation system that allows more people more ways to access the businesses on Robert Street will support the creation of a strong local economy.

A Suburban Community with a few Urban Places



West St. Paul is a suburban community. Even with the Met Council's growth projections, much of the community will retain its existing character with quiet streets and single family homes. This Plan targets three locations along the corridor where the community can absorb growth, create a sense of place and provide a new housing and retail choices.

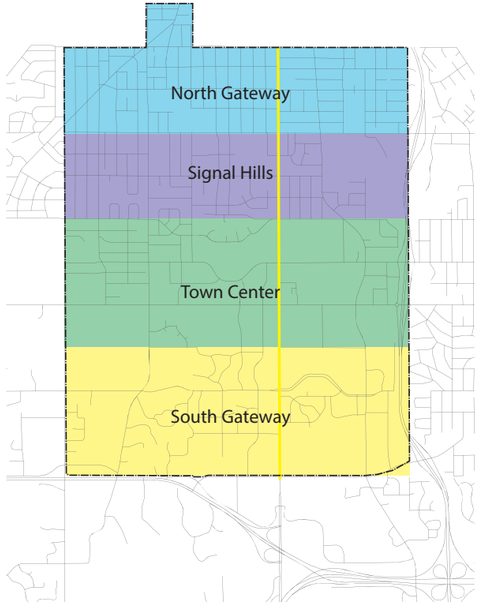
By directing growth to these locations, the Community will be able to both attract new residents and offer new amenities while at the same time preserving the quality of suburban community.

Suburban		Urban
Quiet	→	Lively
Predictable	→	Changing
Familiar	→	Cosmopolitan
Place to Stay	→	A place to try
Casual	→	Urbane

Frameworks

1. Four Neighborhoods

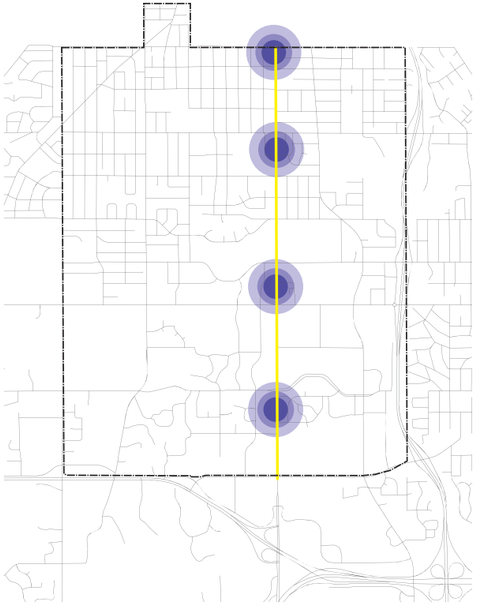
The Plan recommends creating four different neighborhoods along the length of the corridor. The neighborhoods would have distinct names, characters, boundaries and identities. This will offer clarity and direction for potential investors. Residents will develop ownership and affinity towards their specific portion of Robert Street and visitor will have an easier time navigating the corridor because it will become more legible and memorable.



2. Mixed Use Places

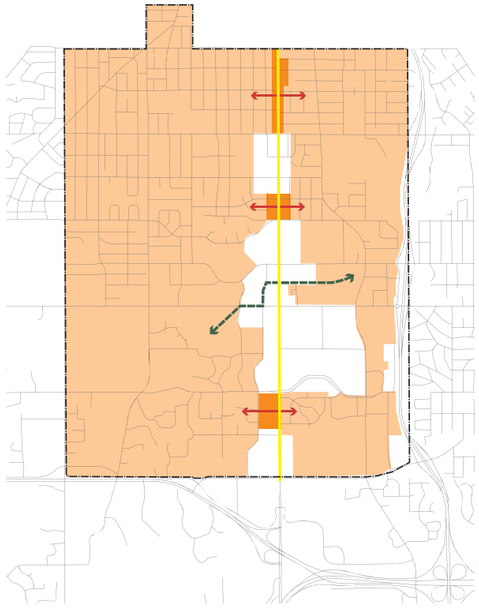
As West Saint Paul grows, the Plan recommends 4 locations where the City can develop mixed use places that are served by transit, walkable, and have high quality public spaces and amenities. These four places will contain a mix of uses and each would have a different character and customer base.

These four specific interventions will represent significant departures from the current pattern of development. They will require a change in development regulations, and active public participation and investment. They will be responsive both to the current population of West Saint Paul as well to the potential future population of West Saint Paul.



3. "Bridge" Robert Street

In order to connect across Robert Street and unify the community every effort should be made to bridge Robert Street. This can happen in many places and many ways. Improved intersections, buildings that face each other, underpasses and overpasses in appropriate locations are some of the ways the City can "bridge" Robert Street.



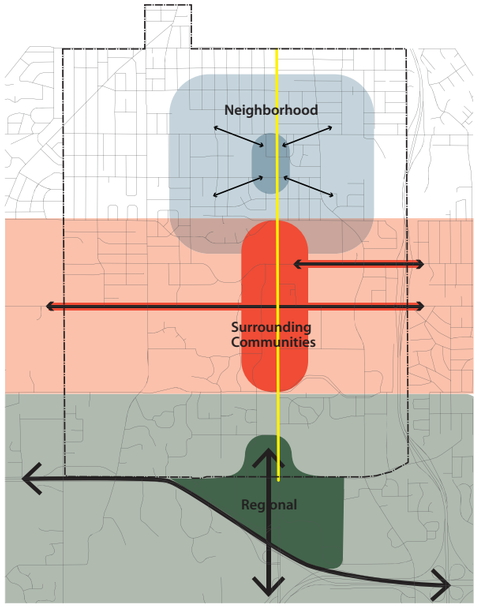
4. Organize and Reinvent Retail

In general, to remain competitive all retail has to reinvent itself every 10-20 years. This is true of an individual store as well as an entire district. If it does not reinvent itself to meet the rapidly changing demands and preferences of customers (locally and regionally), it eventually dies.

This Plan recommends a reinvention and reorganization of retail along the corridor so it is more responsive to the local and regional customer base. Retail uses along Robert Street should be organized so they complement each other and do not compete against each other. The northern portion of Robert Street will have a limited amount of retail and will be primarily locally oriented.

In the mid-section, retail should serve the community but it can also draw customers from surrounding communities (Mendota Heights, South Saint Paul) via the cross streets of Wentworth and Thompson Avenues.

The south third of the corridor has excellent access to regional roadways such as 110 and I-494. This portion of the corridor should attract regional retailers that draw from all of Dakota County.



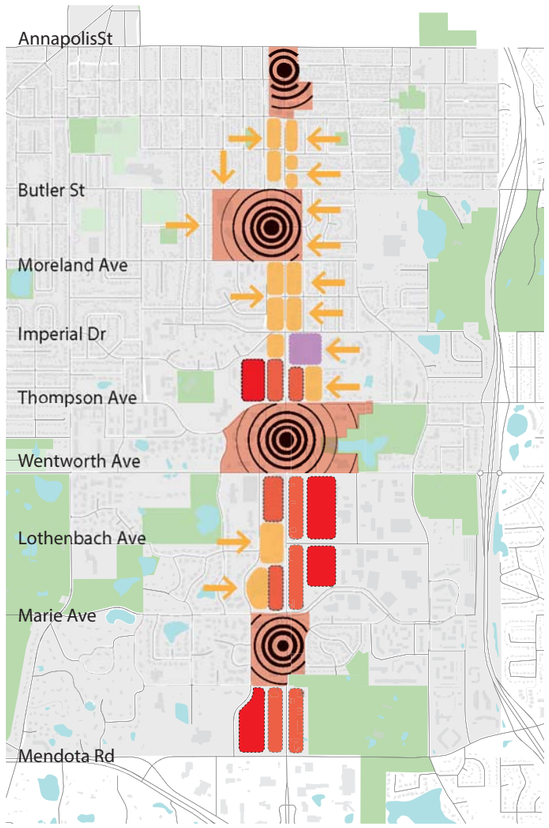
Overall Structure of the Corridor

This Plan recommends minor and major adjustments to the development patterns along Robert Street. The Avenue developed over the past 50 years as the backbone of the community. With reconstruction of the street itself to be completed in 2017 it is a critical time to look at how the corridor functions and to ensure the future development patterns along the corridor are in alignment with the aspirations of the community and potential of the marketplace.

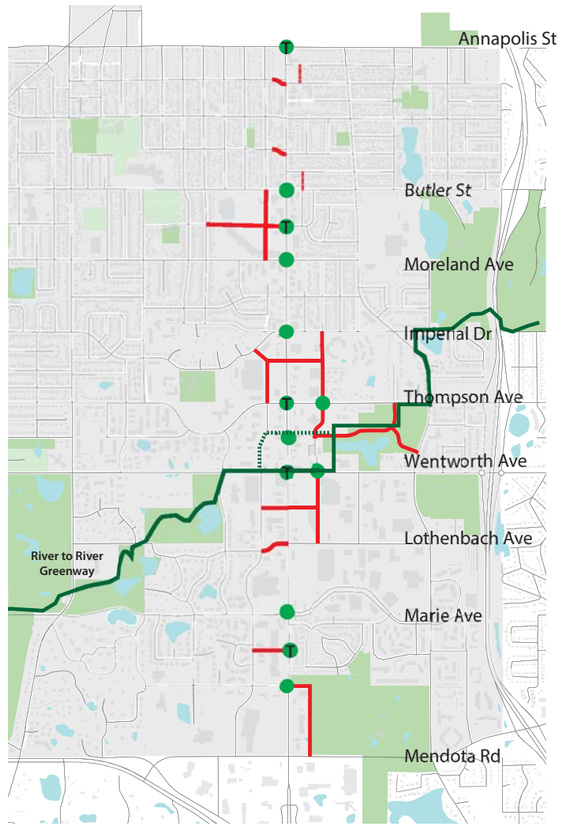
The Plan recommends consolidating and condensing retail at key locations, introducing residential along the corridor and creating mixed use nodes where larger redevelopments occur.

Robert Street should remain the primary street, however it is critical to support Robert Street with additional street and alley connections that will allow the properties along Robert Street to redevelop in a more consistent manner. The plan recommends several important street links as well as priority areas for developing improved pedestrian connections across Robert Street. These occur primarily at the locations designated as nodes.

Development Patterns and Land Use



Transportation and Access Improvements



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.

Transit node.

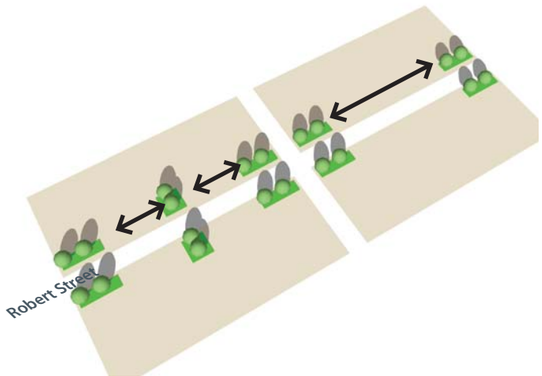
Locations to improve pedestrian crossing of Robert Street.

Approximate locations of new connections.

Design Principles to applied throughout the Corridor

1. Create Pedestrian Refuges along Robert Street

Robert Street will remain a heavily travelled street. It will also remain a street that has parking lots facing the sidewalk along much of it's length. Given this condition, the goal should be to break up the auto dominated environment with refuges along Robert Street. By reducing the exposure of the parking lots to the sidewalk and creating comfortable places on each end of the parking lot, the pedestrian experience can be greatly improved.

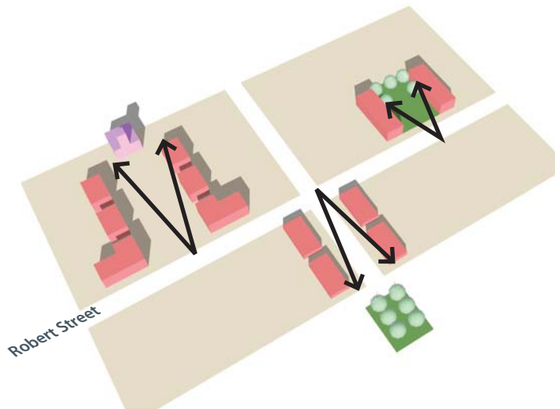


A Zoning Code can implement these principles by:

- Requiring parking lot exposure to sidewalks to be no greater than 180' on Robert Street and 60' on other Streets.
- Requiring high quality screening/buffering along the edges of parking lots.
- Requiring plazas or similar spaces at the ends of parking lots and in front of buildings.
- Requiring sidewalks to be a minimum of 10' wide and for them to be protected.
- Requiring a certain amount of the front lot line to have storefronts that activate the sidewalk.

2. Create Windows into the Community

New development along Robert Street should seek opportunities to create perpendicular views from Robert Street into the community and into new developments. This can be accomplished through streets, parks, or courtyards. While Robert Street remains a busy but improved street, more human scaled and active spaces that are sheltered from Robert Street can be created along these perpendicular axis.



A Zoning Code can implement these principles by:

- Limiting the size of the block face along Robert Street.
- Requiring perpendicular streets to have a public space purpose.
- Defining a street type for new developments in which mixed-uses are permitted.
- Requiring sites greater than a certain size to have a certain amount of usable public space.

3. Provide streets that effectively transition from the neighborhoods to Robert Street

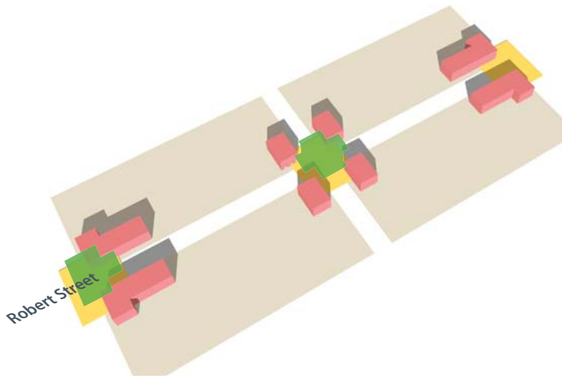
The neighborhoods and Robert Street have been developed as separate places without connections between them. The approach has been to create buffers between the two areas, not connections. Whereas buffers are important at times and in locations, by integrating the two areas more carefully residents will be better able to access the retail and commercial services and the business will be able to better cater to the needs of residents.. A new transition zone that integrates single family neighborhoods and retail oriented to Robert Street can include small neighborhood services and retail as well as housing for people who want good access to transit and to walk to businesses.

A Zoning Code can implement these principles by:

- By defining new street types that allow a mix of uses.
- By creating maximum block size or block perimeter.
- By requiring that new developments do not preclude the possibility of future neighborhood connections.

Anchor the Corners

New development along Robert Street should anchor the corners of each block. Main corners are the most visible and accessible locations for pedestrians because they have controlled and safe street crossings. New Buildings that anchor the corners will also help create a rhythm to the street which will in turn help people orient themselves and navigate the corridor to landmarks.



A Zoning Code can implement these principles by:

- Mapping build-to zones at key corners on a regulating map.
- Requiring buildings to be a minimum height at corners.

Site and Building Design

The Plan recommends organizing development patterns by emphasizing form of the development over the use of the site. Use remains a consideration, but the design and form of the project should take precedence since it has a more direct relationship to how the public experiences the site and how the site impacts the community.

Form can be managed by defining Street Types, Building Zones, Major / Minor Facades, and Building Types and Articulations.

Street Types

Street Types are defined in two ways. Firstly, they have specific dimensional considerations. These dimensional considerations include lane widths, landscape areas, sidewalks, and other elements that the public is responsible for in the right of way. The Plan recommends a thorough review of existing municipal guidelines and standards of public streets. New Streets in West Saint Paul (primarily those built on larger sites during redevelopments) should adhere to these standards. This is an opportunity for the City to ensure that new streets are designed to balance the needs of all users.

Secondly, Street types are defined hierarchically as either A Streets or B Streets. "A Streets" are those that will and should have the most pedestrian traffic on them. This informs how a particular site is designed and developed. If a property has frontage along an "A Street" greater attention should be given to creating a pedestrian - friendly design by regulating driveway and parking locations, building placement, landscaping, building design, location of front door, etc. . "B Street" are secondary streets. They have a greater service and vehicular access role than "A Streets." There should be more flexibility with their location and design.

"C Streets" are similar to alleys or private through lanes. Their primary role is to provide access and service to properties. They are the preferred location for driveways, dumpsters, service entries, back doors, and mechanical equipment. "C Streets" are typically narrow and have very little pedestrian traffic on them.

Build to Zones and Yards

"Build-to Zones" are established to ensure a coherent and predictable built environment. They govern the location of building facades and open spaces. Build-to Zones are the areas of a site, relative to the property lines, that a building facade must occupy. Build-to Zones help create enclosure of the public realm by ensuring the vertical plane of a building is in appropriate location.

Yards and Frontages are the parts of a site that create a deliberate transition from private buildings to the public property line. Yards have a specific (range of) dimensions and are also used to manage location of parking, mechanical equipment, etc. Frontages are the architectural component of transitioning from building to sidewalk.

Major / Minor Facades

Each building will have one or more Major Facade and several Minor Facades. Similar to A Streets and B Streets, the designation of Major and Minor facades creates an intentional hierarchy that regulates aspects of the building design such as materials, windows, amount of transparency, etc.

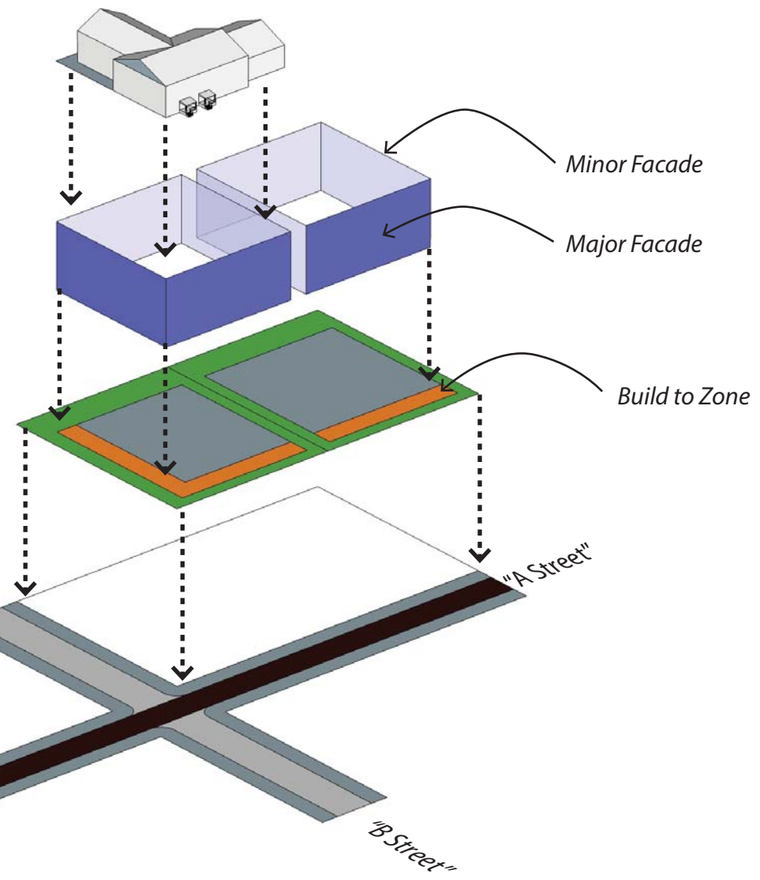
Defining Major and Minor Facades allows designers and developers to direct their attention and value on the parts of the building that most directly impact the public realm.

Building Types and Frontage

Building Envelope

Properties and Sites

Street



Street Types and Vehicular access

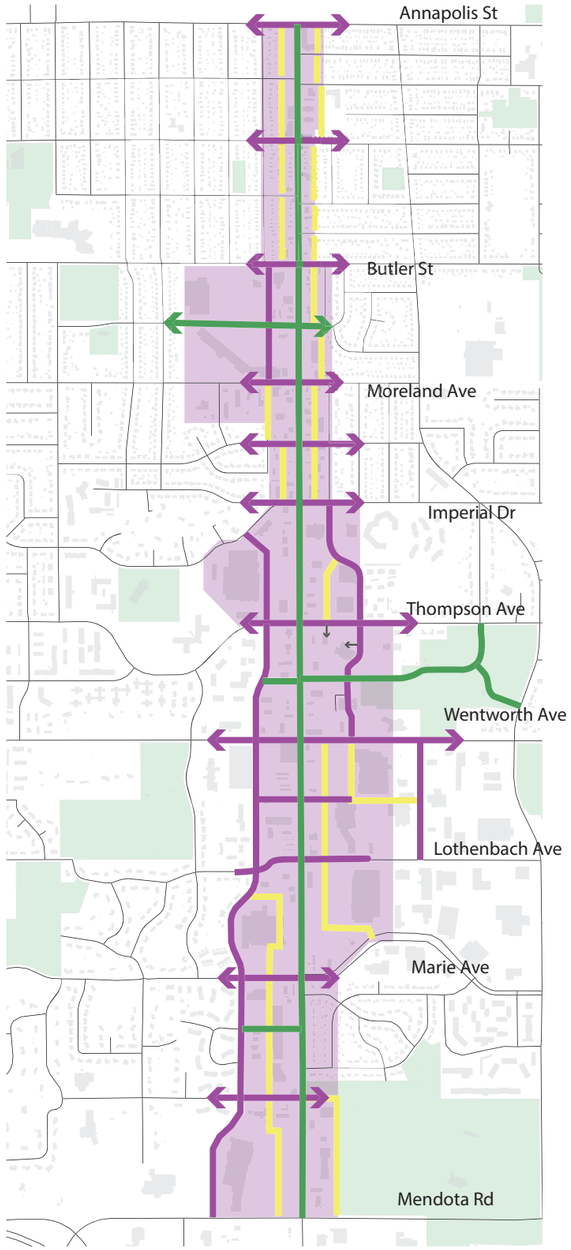
The Streets and Access Plan on this page designates existing and future streets and alleys. The purpose of the Street Plan is to prioritize certain streets to be more pedestrian friendly than others. This is accomplished by using the street designation to organize elements such as vehicular access, frontage standards, and parking lot location/size.

In general, parking lots should be accessed from alleys or an internal rear drive wherever possible. If a property does not have access to an alley then primary vehicular access must be on a "B Street". In order to reduce the amount of pedestrian interruptions,driveways should not be spaced closer than 400' on any street. Where possible, driveways should be shared between adjoining commercial properties. In addition, commercial parking lots should be connected on their north and south sides to adjacent commercial parking lots.

If a property has no B Street or alley access then one vehicular access is permitted on the A Street Frontage. This access should be designed as a driveway with the pedestrian sidewalk extending across it.

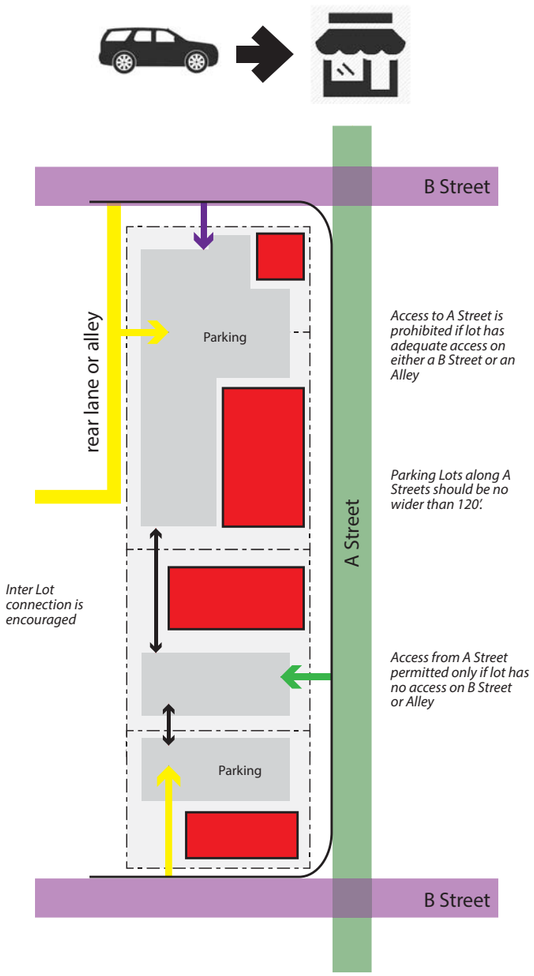
Driveways should be no greater than 24' in width.

Inter Lot drives between two parking lots are highly encouraged as a way of connecting commercial properties. This will reduce the conflicts on the public streets while still providing efficient access between properties

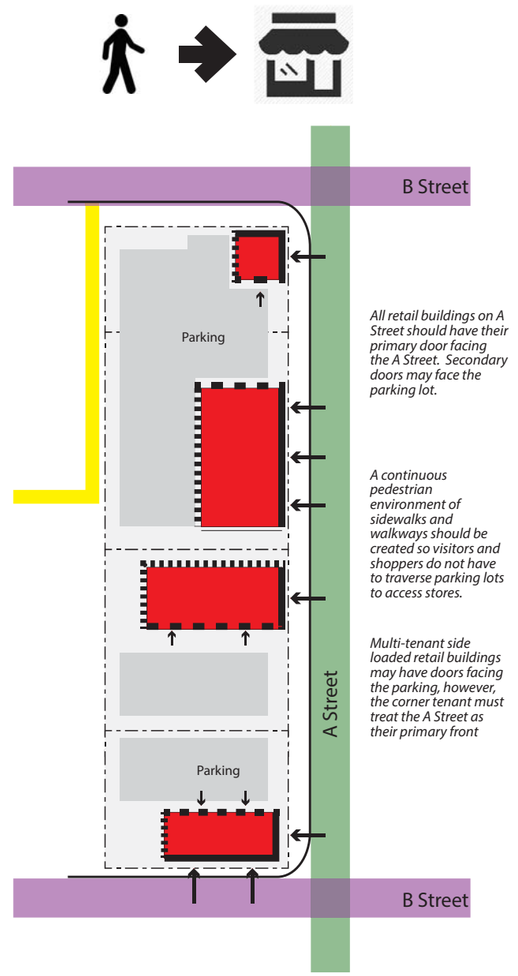


	A Street	**Vehicular driveways discouraged, pedestrian access encouraged**
	B Street	**Vehicular driveways encouraged Pedestrian access permitted, but not encouraged**
	Drive lane or Alley	**Vehicular driveways encouraged Pedestrian access discouraged**

Vehicular Access to Retail Parking Lots



Pedestrian Access to Retail Stores



Facades and Materials

Building designs on Robert Street should be durable, simple, and human scaled while always enhancing the pedestrian experience throughout the corridor.

Simple - buildings they should be well organized and easy to understand through repetition, regularity, and clear hierarchy. The underlying structural bay should be expressed in the composition of the building. They should have a single dominant material and a limited palette of accent materials that provide interest and pleasing compositions.

Durable- Buildings should be built with a life expectancy of at least 30 years by using contemporary materials that are proven to withstand the climate in West Saint Paul. Careful attention should be given to assembly of materials, water protection, salt impacts at the base and other conditions that tend to degrade the quality of a building over time.

Human Scaled - All buildings should be scaled for people. Whereas visibility from a distance may be necessary for some buildings along the corridor, the design of the ground floor of all buildings should defer to maximizing the comfort of people on foot. New buildings, adjacent to single family homes, should be designed to minimize potential negative impacts from shadowing.

Materials

In order to simplify building design and ensure it's durability, each building should have a single major material that covers at least 60% of its facade (not including windows and doors). This material should be either stone, brick, architectural metal panels for non residential buildings. Wood clapboard or hardiplank is acceptable as a major material for residential buildings.

The remaining 40% of the facade (not including windows and doors) can be covered with minor materials such as fiber cement, concrete masonry units, cast stone, vinyl for trim and soffits, curtain wall, and cement based stucco.

Windows and Doors

Windows and doors have a major impact on both the composition of a building and its performance as a pedestrian friendly object. They offer a human scale element tot the building and can convey the function and use of a building. In addition, doors and windows on the ground floor offer the opportunity to animate the public realm with human activity. This creates "eyes on the street" and supports basic public safety.

The facades of Non-residential buildings facing "A Streets", should be composed with as much transparency as possible. No less than 60% of the ground floor of any building adjacent to a sidewalk should be comprised of transparent windows and doors.

Awnings

Awning are critical to creating a comfortable pedestrian environment on a retail or mixed use street. They provide weather protection for pedestrians, they defend against glare, and they offer opportunity for integrated signage.

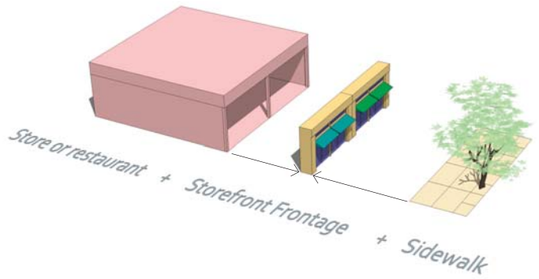
All storefronts and retail windows should have awnings that are functional and are integrated with the design of the building. Like the building, they should be durable - made of metal or canvas.

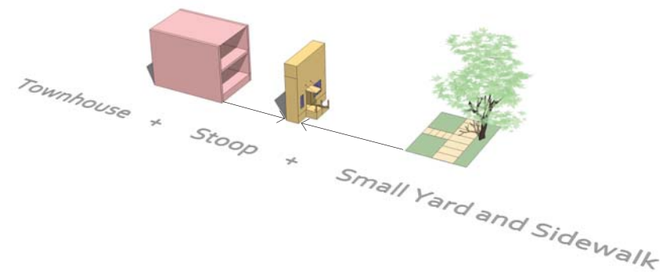
Storefront Frontage

Stoop Frontage

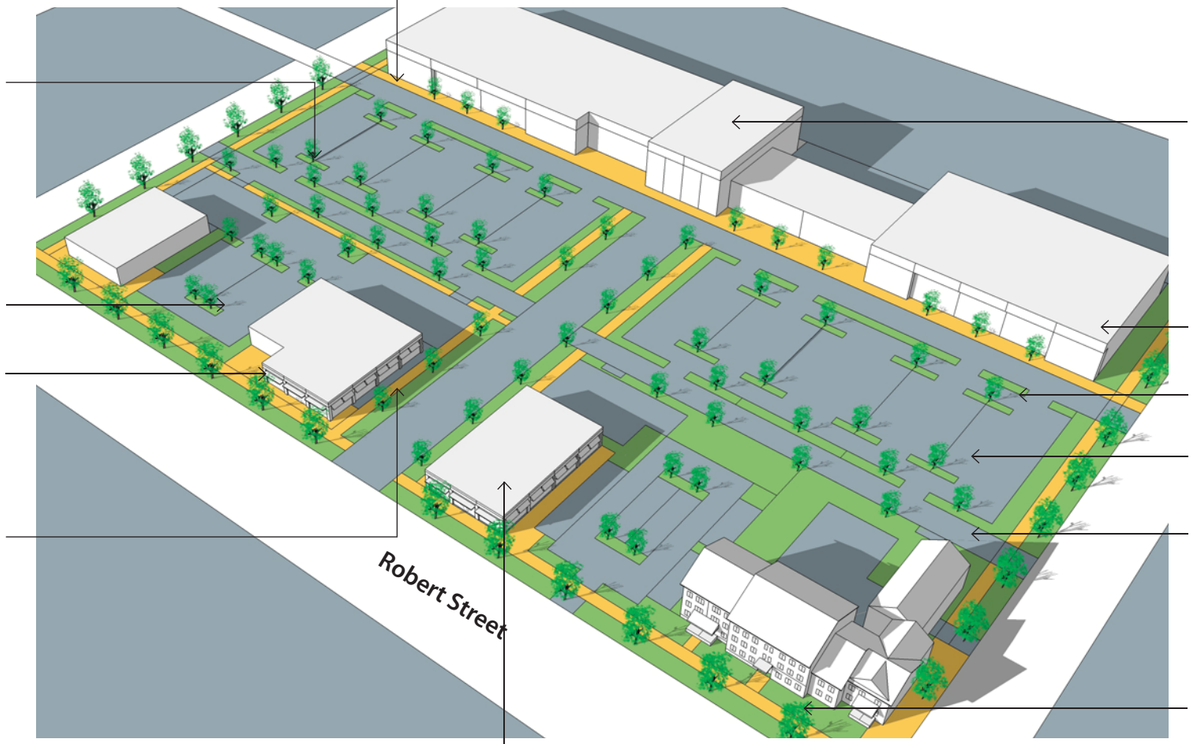
Common Entrance Frontage

Forecourt





Site Development Standards



Clear pedestrian connections from surrounding streets to the fronts of all buildings.

Landscaped islands to provide shade and/or manage stormwater

Parking lots on Robert Street a maximum of 120' wide
Pedestrian refuges at each side of the parking lot to make a comfortable pedestrian experience

Clear pedestrian connections from surrounding streets to the fronts of all buildings.

Perpendicular views into the site terminated with prominent architecture

10' of landscaping between sidewalks sides of buildings

Continuous drive aisle that connects to adjacent parcels and streets

Parking lots designed as rooms with well defined edges

10' of landscaping between parking lots and sidewalks

Residential uses set back 15' from sidewalk but

Retail outbuildings built close to the front property line with commercial storefronts facing the perimeter of the site

Same Buildings Different Results

Townhouses

- Doors at grade, and no transition to the sidewalk.
- Less durable materials and no distinction between the base and the middle of the building.

- Front door raised slightly onto a stoop.
- Clear transition from the door to the sidewalk. Durable building materials .
- and clear distinction between base middle and top.

Side Oriented Retail

- Building is set at the level of the rear alley, not the A Street.
- No direct pedestrian access from the Street to the doors of the retail shops.

- The building is set at elevation of the A Street.
- Outdoor space is closely connected to the indoor space and it creates a “pedestrian refuge” in front of a parking lot.

Conventional Strip Shopping Center

- Drive aisle in front of stores is a fire lane with no parking for customers.
- Sidewalk is too narrow for two strollers to pass.
- Singular architecture relies on signage and awnings to distinguish stores.
- Most durable material (brick) is applied only to the front of the pilasters.

- Convenient parking in front of the store.
- Generous sidewalk can be used for sitting, and landscaping.
- Buildings vary in width and material to create a human scale environment. Durable materials throughout the entire building.