

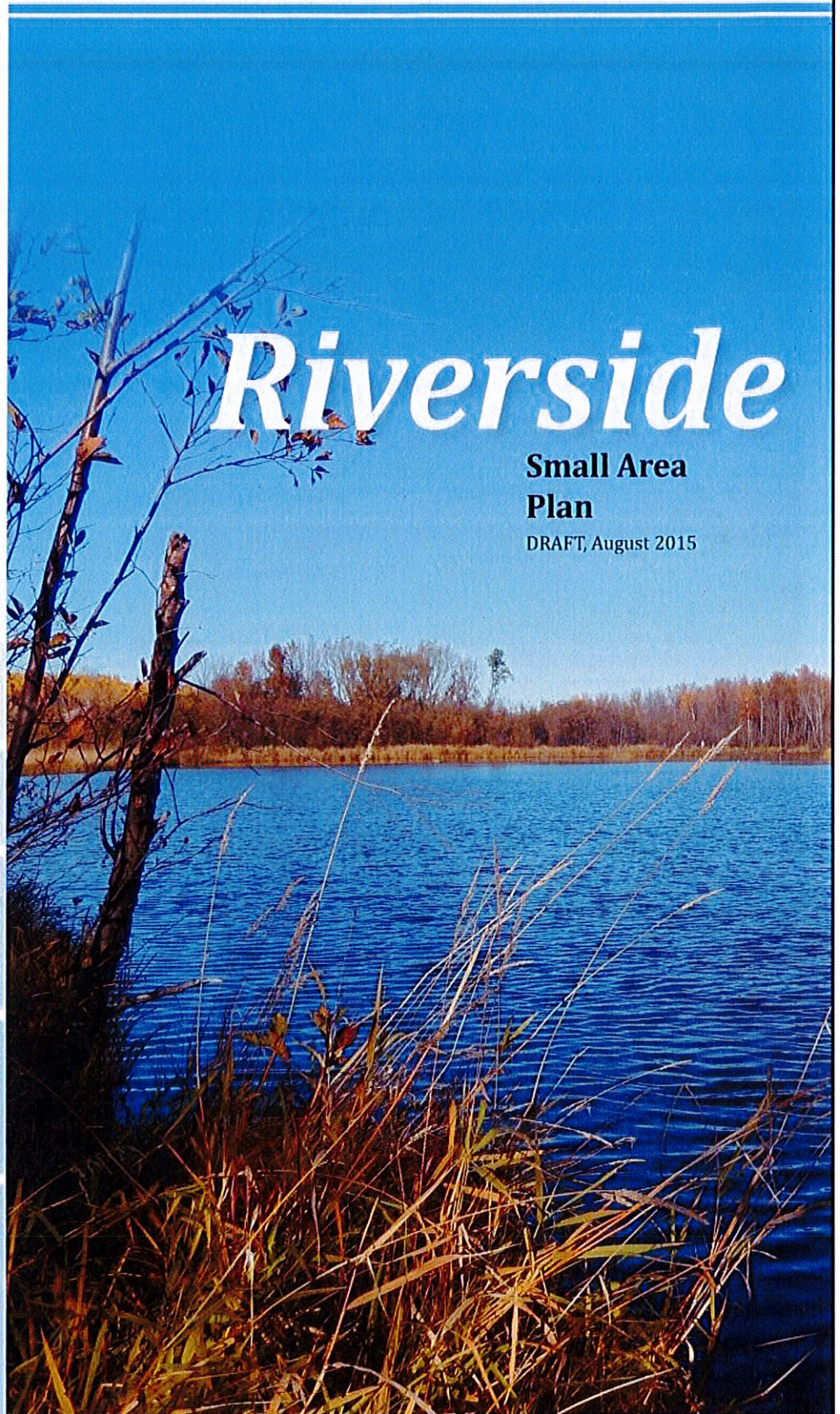


DRAFT

Riverside

**Small Area
Plan**

DRAFT, August 2015



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Riverside Small Area Plan



Chapter 1: Assessment

Purpose of Plan

The City of Duluth has commissioned a planning study to provide guidance for the Riverside area that will influence future developments. Through a series of community engagement events, analysis of the history of the neighborhood, review of past and current planning efforts, and an analysis of the current demographics, the planning team has gained an intimate understanding of the current community context, as well as its present challenges, and future opportunities.

The small area study will reveal areas of opportunity surrounding land use and housing, businesses, and economic development to strengthen recreational amenities as well as recreational amenities in the neighborhood.

The study reveals areas in which investments should be made in the existing housing stock and where new housing should develop in a way that will blend with the historical character of the neighborhood. The small area plan is a framework to guide the future development of the Riverside community, offering tangible implementation action items to make connections between short-term actions that will help shape the long-term visions articulated by residents and community members who live and work in the neighborhood.

"There's no question that if not for Lake Superior, Duluth would be defined as a river city. Duluth should be defined by both the world's greatest lake AND the world's largest fresh water estuary. By doing so, we open up many possibilities along the River." - Mayor Don Ness

Project Area Defined

The Riverside Small Area Plan project area is defined as that area between Lenroot Creek and Knowlton Creek, and from the base of Spirit Mountain to the St. Louis River. Neighborhoods located within this area are Riverside and a portion of Smithville. This area is shown graphically below. Specific areas within the project area include Spirit Mountain, Spirit Lake Marina, Riverside Community, Tate & Lyle Plant, and USDA Forest Service Center. Grand Avenue, which will see a major street reconstruction in 2016, is the backbone of the area running northeast to southwest through the planning area. Recreationally the project area includes the Duluth Winnipeg & Pacific Trail, Willard Munger State Trail and Western Waterfront Trail. Additionally, the St. Louis River is a large asset to the project area and is currently seeing a large amount of restoration due to its identification as a federal "area of concern." However, with the cleanup underway, the river is expected to be de-listed by 2025.



Demographics

Background:

The population of the Riverside Small Area Plan project area has remained stable around 700 residents. The demographics of the project area mirrors very closely with the City of Duluth with the exception being the 18-24 year old range classification. While twenty percent of the City's population is represented by the 18-24 year range, just 8% of the project area's population is represented by this demographic. The City's effort to achieve a population of 90,000 by 2020 is focused on the attraction of young professionals because of a high quality of life and unmatched recreational amenities. However, this project area has 12% less residents in the 18-24 age range likely due to its low availability of rental housing and aging overall housing stock.

Total Population and share of City's population (2008-2012 ACS)				
Sex and Age	Riverside Project Area		City of Duluth	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	359	51%	42,243	49%
Female	349	49%	44,022	51%
Under 5	43	6%	4,798	5%
5 - 9 years	39	5%	4,296	5%
10 - 14 years	36	5%	4,010	5%
15 - 17 years	27	4%	2,853	3%
18 - 24 years	60	8%	16,877	20%
25 - 34 years	103	15%	11,523	13%
35 - 44 years	72	10%	8,676	10%
45 - 54 years	114	16%	11,117	13%
55 - 64 years	103	15%	10,249	12%
65 - 74 years	56	8%	5,473	6%
75 - 84 years	34	5%	4,067	5%
85 years and older	21	3%	2,326	3%
17 Years and younger	145	20%	15,957	18%
18 - 64 years	452	64%	58,442	68%
65 years and older	111	16%	11,866	14%

The following table depicts the ethnic makeup of the Riverside Small Area Plan project area and its comparison to the ethnic makeup of the City of Duluth. This data provides a window into understanding where the project area stands with respect to its racial diversity.

Total Population and share of City's Population (2008 – 2012 ACS)				
Race/Ethnicity	Riverside Project Area		City of Duluth	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	675	94%	77,968	90%
Black	4	<1%	1,988	2%
American Indian	18	3%	2,134	2%
Asian	4	<1%	1,293	1%
Pacific Islander	0	0%	29	<1%
Some Other Race	1	<1%	224	<1%
Population Reporting Two or More Races	11	1%	2,629	3%
Hispanic	12	1%	1,305	1%

Past and Current Planning Efforts Involving the Riverside Project Area

2006 City of Duluth Comprehensive Plan

The City completed a comprehensive plan to help guide the orderly development of the City in 2006. This was the first completed comprehensive planning process the City had undertaken since the original comprehensive plan in 1927. That comprehensive study aided the City in addressing a number of land use decisions for the more than 43,000 acres (67 square miles) encompassed within the City. The Comprehensive Plan identified existing land uses in the project area, which included Park, Cemetery, Recreation, Low Density Residential, Low-Medium Density Residential, Manufacturing, Undeveloped, and Commercial. It also set forth future land use designations which included Preservation, Recreation, Traditional Neighborhood, Low-density Neighborhood, Neighborhood Commercial, General Mixed Use, and Commercial Waterfront.

City of Duluth Natural Systems Profile

The City has completed a comprehensive natural systems profile which provides an analysis of the existing state of Duluth's natural resources and systems. The profile explores the City's geology, topography, soils, climate, water resources, and terrestrial resources. The profile identifies goals, and policies to protect the City's natural systems as land use scenarios are considered. The plan specifically can enforce or encourage the following:

- Development design alternatives (e.g., conservation design)
- Protection of areas through natural buffers
- Private actions during development such as stormwater management and habitat protection to contribute to the public natural resource realm
- Incentives to landowners in the management of their private lands for natural resource protection
- Best management practices for all types of development in an effort to protect and preserve Duluth's natural resources.

St. Louis River Corridor – From Vision to Action

In its effort to environmentally, recreationally, and economically enhance western Duluth, the City has identified a number of public improvement projects to take place between 2015 and 2017, some of which have already been implemented. These improvements include the extension and improvements of

a number of trails, improvements to the Wade/Wheeler Stadium, and the addition of many recreational opportunities.

Spirit Mountain Water Line

Spirit Mountain is currently installing a waterline that will pump water from the St. Louis River to provide a water source for the creation of artificial snow that can be made to establish an early season snow base and hopefully assist in maintaining snow cover during those years when the region receives a light cumulative snowfall. In spring, melt water will flow through the waterline from Spirit Mountain and back into the St. Louis River. This consistent snowpack will aid in the development of Spirit Mountain as a recreation hub for the City of Duluth.

Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel for Kayak Bay – Spirit Mountain Area

In a volunteer effort, a number of professionals who are members of the Urban Land Institute analyzed the planning area to help guide its future and assist the City in its planning effort. The panel identified that if a small area plan was deemed necessary that the zoning should be flexible and not so specific that it restricts development creativity. In addition that a focus be placed on the Spirit Mountain access drive as a central node from which to build development momentum. The volunteer panel conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats/Challenges) analysis of the area. A key strength was its natural beauty and proximity to outdoor recreation. A key weakness was the status of Grand Avenue and the overall lack of identity or branding as "Kayak Bay". The name in and of itself was noted to be too subtle. A specific opportunity was that a critical mass of land has been acquired by one development team allowing for the potential for a unified development project. The natural amenities of the area also reduce the need for larger lots and offer the opportunity for smaller lots and higher density housing which is connected to public recreational amenities. Threats or challenges identified included the perception of the area as an "industrial company town" with a lack of updated housing and low visual curb appeal.

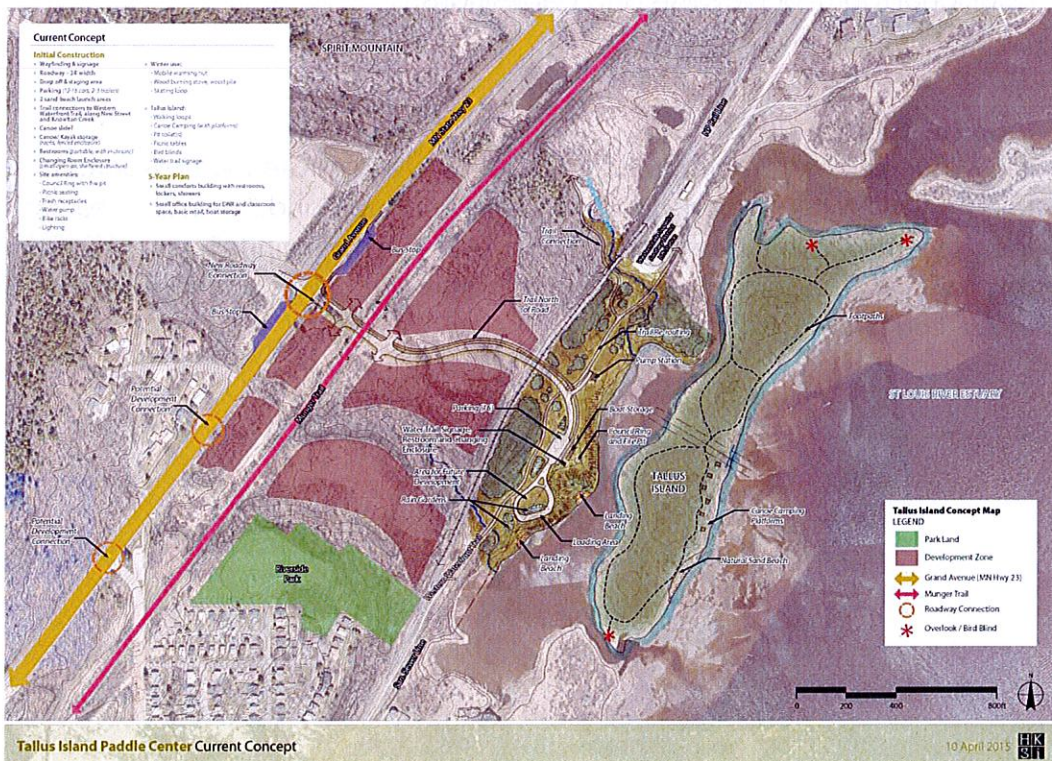
St. Louis River Corridor Strategic Action Plan

The City has engaged a consultant, WSB & Associates, to analyze the St. Louis River Corridor to identifying nodes of importance which will play a key role in the identification of areas which have the capacity to improve water quality in the St. Louis River. This is being done in a way to help the effort to have the St. Louis River delisted by 2025 by the EPA as an Area of Concern (AOC). In addition to

the identification of the nodes of importance, a development suitability analysis will be completed for the corridor, and a transfer of development rights district will be drafted.

Tallas Island Paddle Center

The City has engaged a consultant, HKGi, to develop a concept plan for a paddle center. The exact project and programming details remain to be decided. However, this project will play a key role in the way recreational development takes shape east of Grand Avenue.



Grand Avenue Nordic Ski Center

The vision for the Nordic cross country ski trail includes 3.3 km in trails which are augmented with the ability to produce artificial snow with state-of-the-art snowmaking technology which is much quieter than previous technologies. While the trails will be lit to provide for extended skiing hours in the mornings and evenings, the lighting will be unobtrusive to local residences. The expansion of recreational opportunities and its possible effect on local residences in this area was discussed and the City will work with those residents to provide a buffer that minimizes local impacts. It is intended that this project will become a regional

center for cross country skiing and provide the area with an amenity for all to use. The project is halfway through its public engagement process, with construction authorization planned for the winter of 2016 and actual project construction to take place from May 2016 to October 2016.

Grand Avenue / Highway 23 Improvements

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) will be conducting a road improvement project in 2016 through the project area that will include road resurfacing, intersection improvements, shrinking of lanes, and the inclusion of additional room for bicyclists and pedestrians.

½ and ½ Tourism Tax

The Minnesota Legislature authorized the City to reinstate the half-percent sales tax at will. The tax is applied to hotel stays and food and beverages served in the City. The tax is expected to generate \$1.4 million annually and will be spent on projects in western Duluth meant to bolster the area's economy and revitalize the St. Louis River corridor.

Comprehensive Plan

Background:

The City of Duluth adopted its most recent Comprehensive Plan in 2006. That Comprehensive Plan is meant as a guidance tool to promote a unified land use vision for the entire City. The twelve governing principles that are listed below were adopted at the beginning of the 2006 Comprehensive Land Use Plan process. They were created to provide the foundation and fundamental concepts by which physical planning in the City should take place and were a primary guide to development of the Future Land Use Map.

It will be important that guiding principles of the Riverside Small Area Plan reinforce these overarching principles to promote planning clarity and unity throughout the City. The twelve governing principles are:

1. Reuse previously developed lands
2. Declare the necessity and secure the future of undeveloped places
3. Support traditional economic base
4. Support emerging economic growth sectors
5. Strengthen neighborhoods
6. Reinforce the place-specific
7. Create and maintain connectivity
8. Encourage mix of activities, uses and densities
9. Support private actions that contribute to the public realm
10. Take sustainable actions
11. Include consideration for education systems in land use actions
12. Create efficiencies in delivery of public services

The future land use categories located in the existing Future Land Use plan include the following:

Low Density Neighborhood – Single-family housing with city utilities located on curvilinear streets with parcels having the longer side parallel to the street. The density of this district is 3-4 units/acre.

Commercial Waterfront – Waterfront dependent commercial uses sometimes mixed with residential or adjacent to higher density residential land uses. These areas include tourist or recreation oriented uses and can be adjacent to industrial waterfronts or abut other commercial, recreation, and preservation uses. Accesses to these areas are expected to have water and regional arterial access.

Neighborhood Commercial – Intended for commercial and office development focused primarily on needs and convenience of the

motorist, without losing pedestrian access and connection. No residential uses are located along arterial roads. Building footprints are expected to be less than 50,000 sq. ft.

Neighborhood Mixed Use – Purpose is to provide a transitional use between more intensive commercial uses and purely residential neighborhoods. This use includes conversions of houses to office or live-work spaces and aesthetically, the appearance should maintain a largely residential building character.

Preservation – Characterized by lands with substantial restrictions due to high natural resource or scenic value, or severe development limitations. These lands are primarily public lands and include most city parklands, shoreland, rivers, streams, wetlands, and floodplains. Uses include water access for passive use such as fishing, canoe/kayak with limited parking.

Recreation – Intended to provide areas for park and open space areas dedicated to active recreation, such as neighborhood parks, community centers, downhill ski areas, playgrounds, ball fields, water recreation, and associated facilities such as parking. This district is expected to receive higher human impacts than preservation areas.

Rural Residential – Areas of single-family lots of at least five acres in size and which limit the extension of municipal utilities for new development. This district includes existing rural density areas with lots as small as an acre now served by municipal utilities but not planned for further subdivision. Conservation development is encouraged and in some instances required of this designation.

Traditional Neighborhood – Characterized by grid or connected street patterns with houses oriented with shorter dimension to the street and detached garages, some with alleys. Limited commercial, schools, churches, and home business are located within this district. This district includes many of Duluth's older neighborhoods, infill projects and neighborhood extensions. The density of this district is 4-8 units per acre, and form standards and conservation development is an option.

General Mixed Use – This category has the broadest mix of uses which includes light industrial, office, commercial, and residential uses but ensures compatibility with adjacent land uses. For large sites, master planning is suggested to allow for appropriate separation of uses.

Urban Residential – Greatest variety of building types including medium to high densities. Areas may include live/work unities, and include limited

neighborhood retail. Generally connected or adjacent to parks and open space.

Historic Resources Overlay – Identifies high resource value of cultural/historic areas and buildings. Redevelopment focuses primarily on adaptive reuse and new development is based on design standards which require a design review.

Sensitive Lands Overlay – Characterized by high resource value lands or natural resources that may be developed under conservation design standards, transfer of development rights program designs, or low-impact performance standards.

Chapter 2: Land Use



Public Input on Land Use:

Community priorities identified during public engagement included the following:

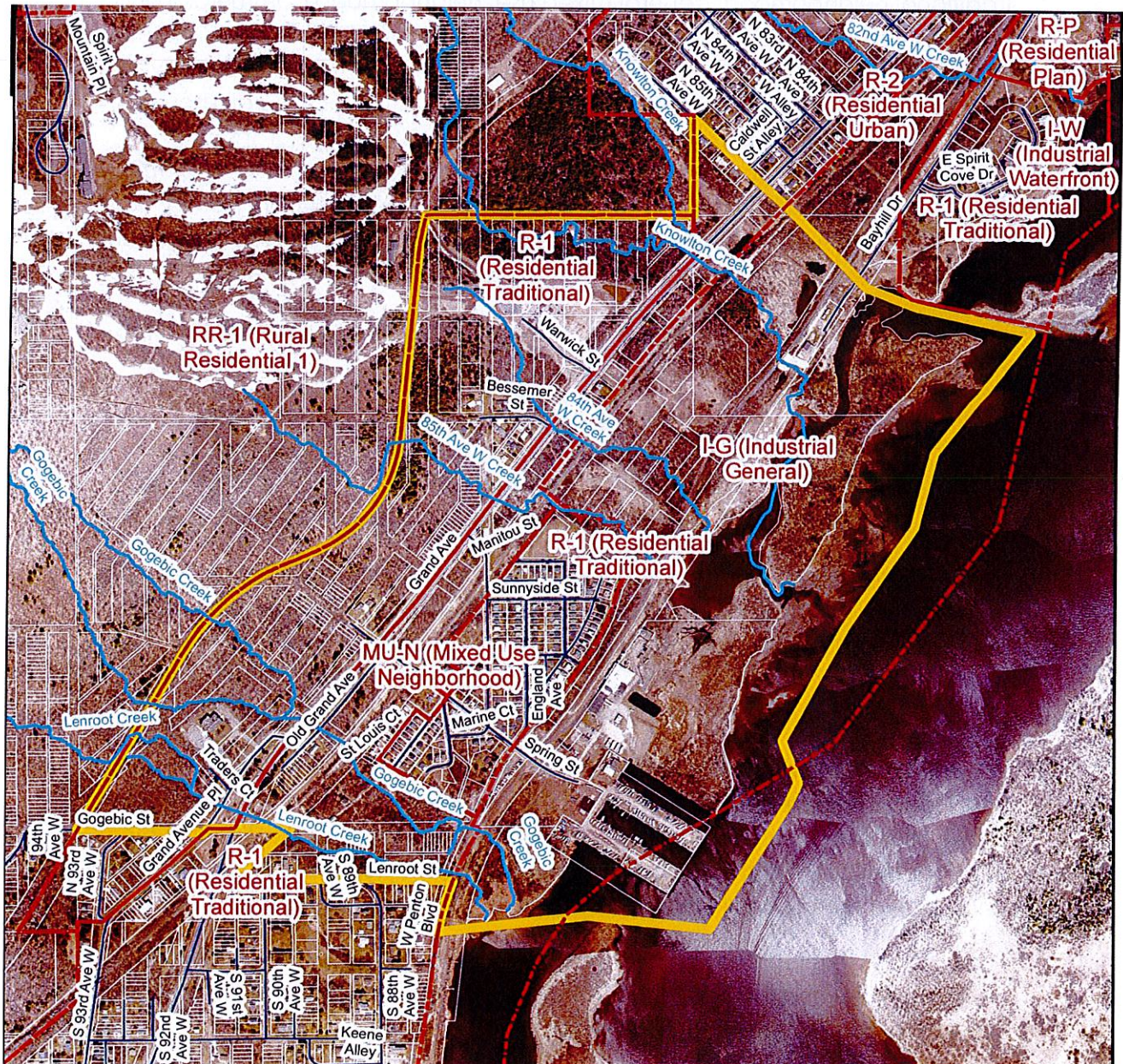
- Utilize developed areas for redevelopment to protect riverfront
- Enhance residential areas which include buffering of natural areas
- Mixture of tax base (restaurants, light commercial, mixed use)
- Rustic simple development tailored to recreation

Vision:

Land use should provide opportunities for the strategic locating of residential and commercial development and redevelopment while also protecting and buffering from natural areas.

Background:

A variety of zoning districts are found in or immediately adjacent to the planning area, including Mixed Use Neighborhood (MU-N), Residential – Rural 1 (RR-1), Residential – Tradition (R-1), Residential – Urban (R-2), and Industrial – General (I-G). R-1 properties can be found along both sides of Grand Avenue with a small injection of R-2 and MU-N districts. Areas south of Grand Avenue adjacent to Tallas Island are primarily zoned I-G for industrial uses. Areas north of Grand Avenue adjacent to and surrounding Spirit Mountain are primarily designated as an RR-1 district.



Uses found within the Rural Residential (RR-1), Residential Traditional (R-1), and Residential Urban (R-2) zoning districts are residential homes at varying degrees of densities. Uses found within the Mixed Use Neighborhood (MU-N) zoning district include residential homes, but also include commercial uses which both provide a service and are compatible to area residences. The general industrial (I-G) zone is meant for general industrial uses which include the Tate & Lyle plant.

The City's current comprehensive plan guides lands in the project area for commercial waterfront, preservation, recreation, neighborhood mixed use, traditional neighborhood, general mixed use, neighborhood commercial and low-density neighborhood. In addition, lands surrounding and including Spirit Mountain are designated with a sensitive lands overlay district. The sensitive lands overlay is used to identify high resource value lands or natural resources that may be developed under conservation design standards, transfer of development rights program designs, or low-impact performance standards. Spirit Lake Marina and the lands surrounding it are guided for commercial waterfront which is the same designation given to a portion of land along canal park. The riverside community is guided for traditional neighborhood.

Through the community visioning and engagement process land use priorities were identified including the following:

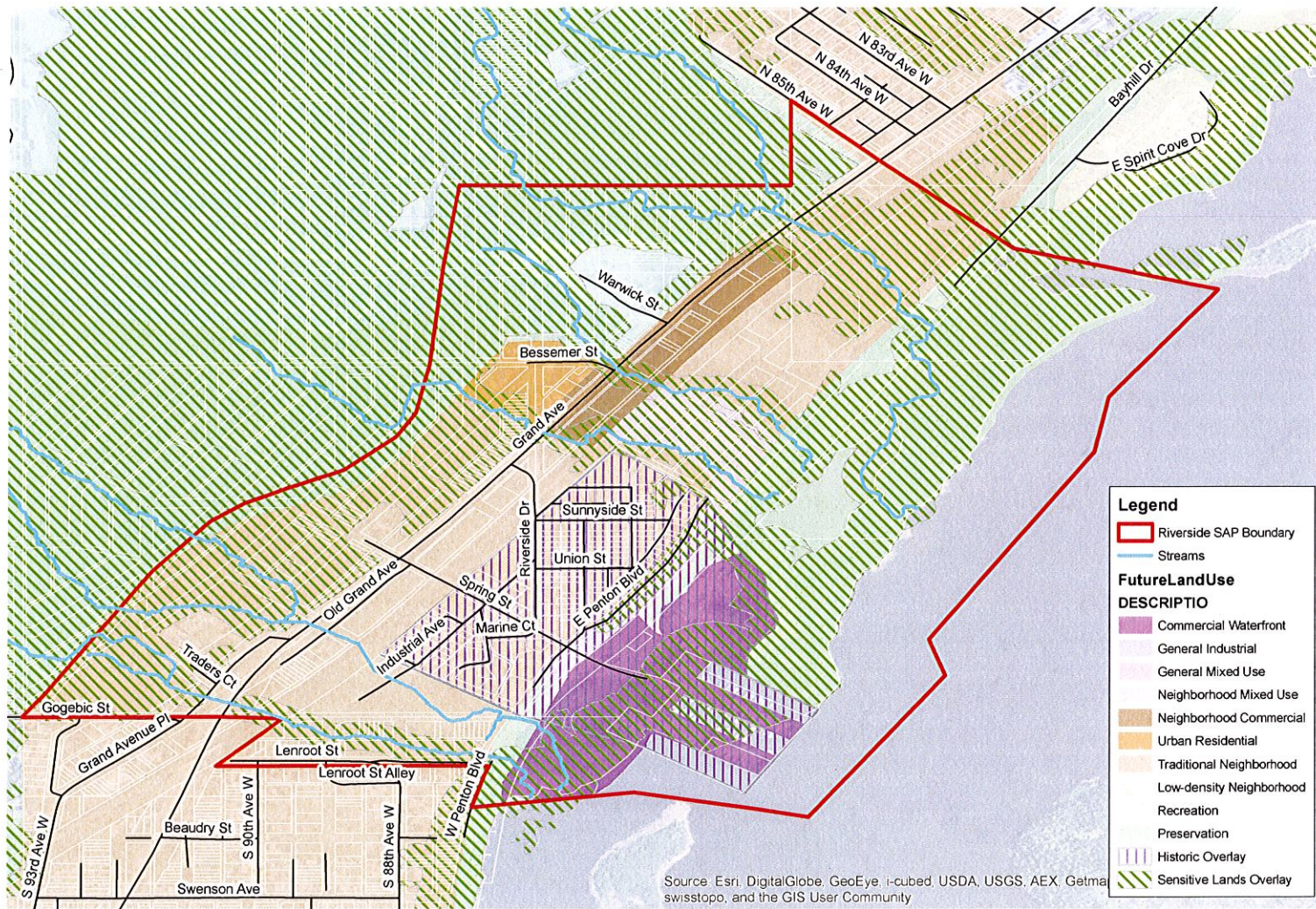
- Utilization of previously developed areas along the river to protect existing natural riverbanks.
- Enhancement of current residential areas.
- Current lack of local restaurants and light commercial or retail space

Those in attendance of the May 7th public visioning session took part in a citizen driven future land use mapping activity. The activity allowed for tables of residents to utilize either markers or play-doh to identify what types of land uses they would like to see located in their community. Provided on the following pages are ideas that some groups had regarding future land use guidance.

In addition to the land use exercise, property owners in the area have begun to bring together development concepts. This concept and concepts brought forth at the public visioning session have a number of similar qualities including the desire for additional housing, commercial support for recreational amenities, and passive recreational opportunities that buffer ecologically sensitive areas.

Through the development of these land use scenarios, discussions with residents in attendance, and property owners in the area, a number of themes were identified which included the following:

- Desire for additional housing opportunities
 - Preservation of environmentally sensitive areas
 - Need for commercial enterprises to support local families and recreational amenities
 - Maintenance and expansion of local recreational assets.
-

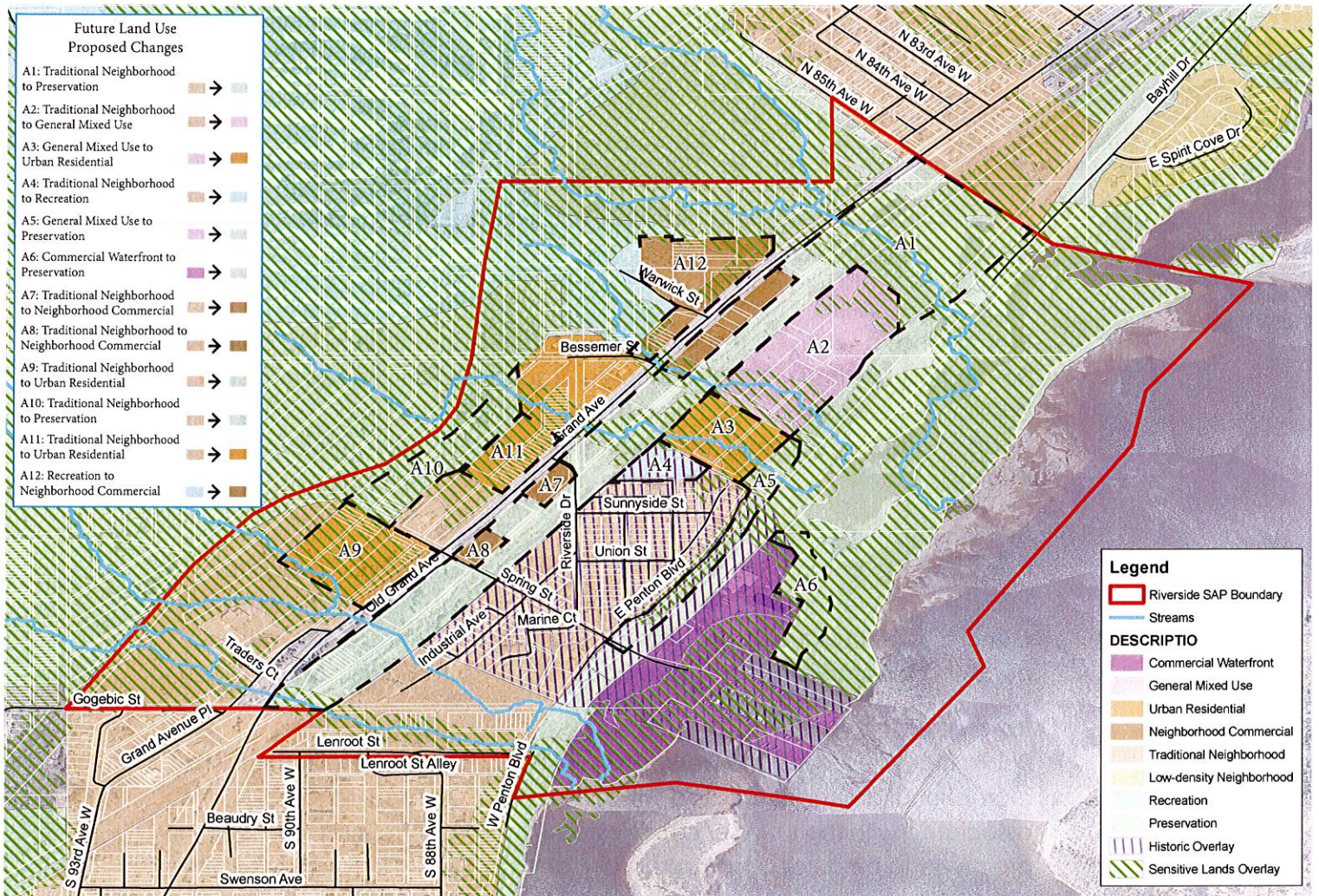


Existing Future Land Use Map

Riverside Small Area Plan

0 500 1,000 Feet





Proposed Future Land Use Map

Riverside Small Area Plan

0 500 1,000 Feet



Alterations to the existing Future Land Map were identified through information collected at public meetings, online engagement tools, and through the citizen advisory committee. Some information gathered was provided by the public in a very spatial format in mapping exercises, other input was gathered in a text format and was applied spatially. Conversations with property owners identified the desire for additional housing opportunities, commercial space to support the local neighborhoods needs and the needs of local recreational amenities. In addition, stakeholders identified the need to attract more families to the area.

Neighborhood Commercial:

Property at specific nodes along Minnesota Highway 23/Grand Avenue were identified as appropriate for additional commercial activity. Access to these properties will be a challenge due to the depth of the lots; however, is believed to be achievable.

Urban Residential:

Property has been included for guidance to urban residential to promote housing density that will preserve larger tracts of open space while still providing necessary population density to aid the area in achieving its goals to attract new families and attracting additional commercial services.

General Mixed Use:

In response to community feedback, additional property between the Munger and Western Waterfront trail has been proposed to be guided for General Mixed Use to allow for commercial and residential uses with performance standards to ensure compatibility and buffering.

Recreation:

Public input described the desire to build upon the strength of the existing recreational amenities located within that area. As such, lands associated with the Munger and Western Waterfront Trails have been proposed to be guided for Recreation, and additional lands between the two trails have been proposed to be guided for recreation to provide the opportunity for recreational synergies between the two trails.

Preservation:

The importance of ecological preservation is at the forefront for many local stakeholders. As such lands associated with Tallas Island remain to be guided for preservation. Land guided for preservation is done with the intent for that land to be used for low intensity uses such as trails, and passive water access including fishing, canoeing, and kayaking.

Sensitive Lands Overlay:

The Sensitive Lands Overlay is proposed to remain intact as it currently exists as it provides important oversight to environmentally sensitive locations within the project area.

Historic Overlay:

The Historic Overlay is proposed to remain intact to ensure important historic characteristics of the neighborhood are retained. The inclusion of the Riverside Neighborhood into a Historic Preservation district was a point of discussion for community members and the consideration for that zoning is a suggested implementation strategy.

Goals

1. Preserve and enhance the existing and future recreational opportunities in Riverside area by exploring a "recreation destination" for Duluth residents and the Greater Duluth area.
2. Enhance residential land use opportunities and allow for infill-housing opportunities to cluster residential density that will allow for more open green space elsewhere.
3. Utilize previously developed areas for redevelopment to protect the riverfront.
4. Promote mixed land uses that provide recreational synergies between commercial and residential land uses.

Implementation Strategies:

1. Review buffering standards required between land uses in the Unified Development Code.
2. Amend the Land Use Map to allow for a mixture of housing including single, duplex, mixed use, and low rise buildings to allow for necessary density, as outlined on the Land Use Map.
 - a. Guide area identified as A1 from Traditional Neighborhood to Preservation
 - b. Guide area identified as A2 from Traditional Neighborhood to General Mixed Use
 - c. Guide area identified as A3 from General Mixed Use to Urban Residential
 - d. Guide area identified as A4 from Traditional Neighborhood to Recreation
 - e. Guide area identified as A5 from General Mixed Use to Preservation
 - f. Guide area identified as A6 from Commercial Waterfront to Preservation
 - g. Guide area identified as A7 from Traditional Neighborhood to Neighborhood Commercial

- h. Guide area identified as A8 from Traditional Neighborhood to Neighborhood Commercial
 - i. Guide area identified as A9 from Traditional Neighborhood to Urban Residential
 - j. Guide area identified as A10 from Traditional Neighborhood to Preservation
 - k. Guide area identified as A11 from Traditional Neighborhood to Urban Residential.
 - l. Guide area identified as A12 from Recreation to Neighborhood Commercial.
- 3. Consider language used to define "Preservation" and what infrastructure is appropriate within land with this land use guidance.
 - 4. Consider inclusion of the Riverside Community to Duluth Historic Preservation district.
 - 5. Coordinate with the local visitor's bureau to encourage tourism expansion into the Riverside area and to enhance the existing and proposed recreational assets in the area. Refer to the goals and strategies in this small area plan when conducting pre-application reviews with interested property owners and developers.