



LESTER PARK GOLF COURSE LAND USE STUDY & VISION PLAN

**FINAL REPORT PRESENTATION
PLANNING COMMISSION AUGUST 4, 2026**

PROJECT SUMMARY

FINDING A FUTURE FOR LPGC

City Council authorized a land use study for the Lester Park Golf Course (LPGC) via a resolution passed in October 2025.

Since January 2026, city staff from Planning, Economic Development, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, and Natural Resources have begun working with a consultant partner to:

- Assess current site conditions
- Create potential land use concepts
- Identify a preferred future land use vision for the site



PROJECT SUMMARY

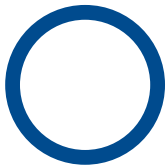
STUDY INTENT

This LPGC Land Use Study will identify a future land use vision for the site by seeking a balance of natural resource preservation, outdoor recreation, and development that supports a complete neighborhood.

This study does not commit to or guarantee a specific development, but rather will set the guardrails for what can be built, where, and how it will relate to possible natural resource preservation and continued outdoor recreation options.

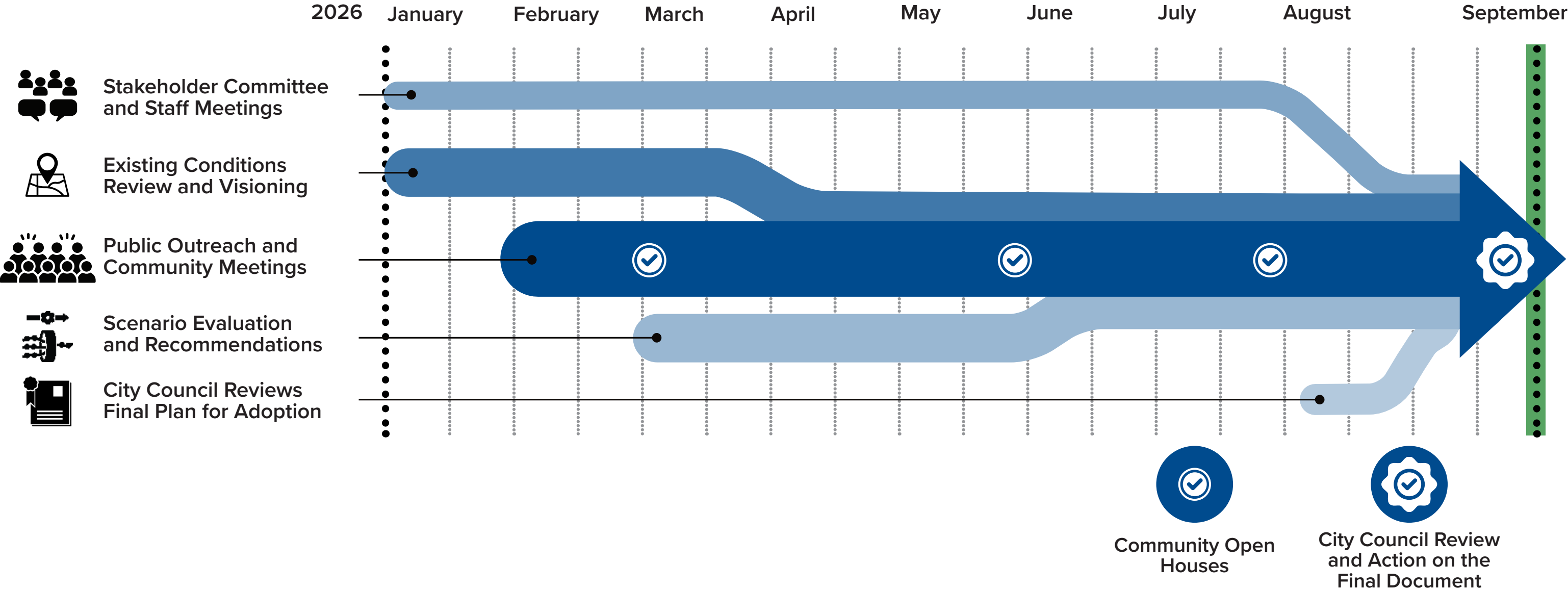


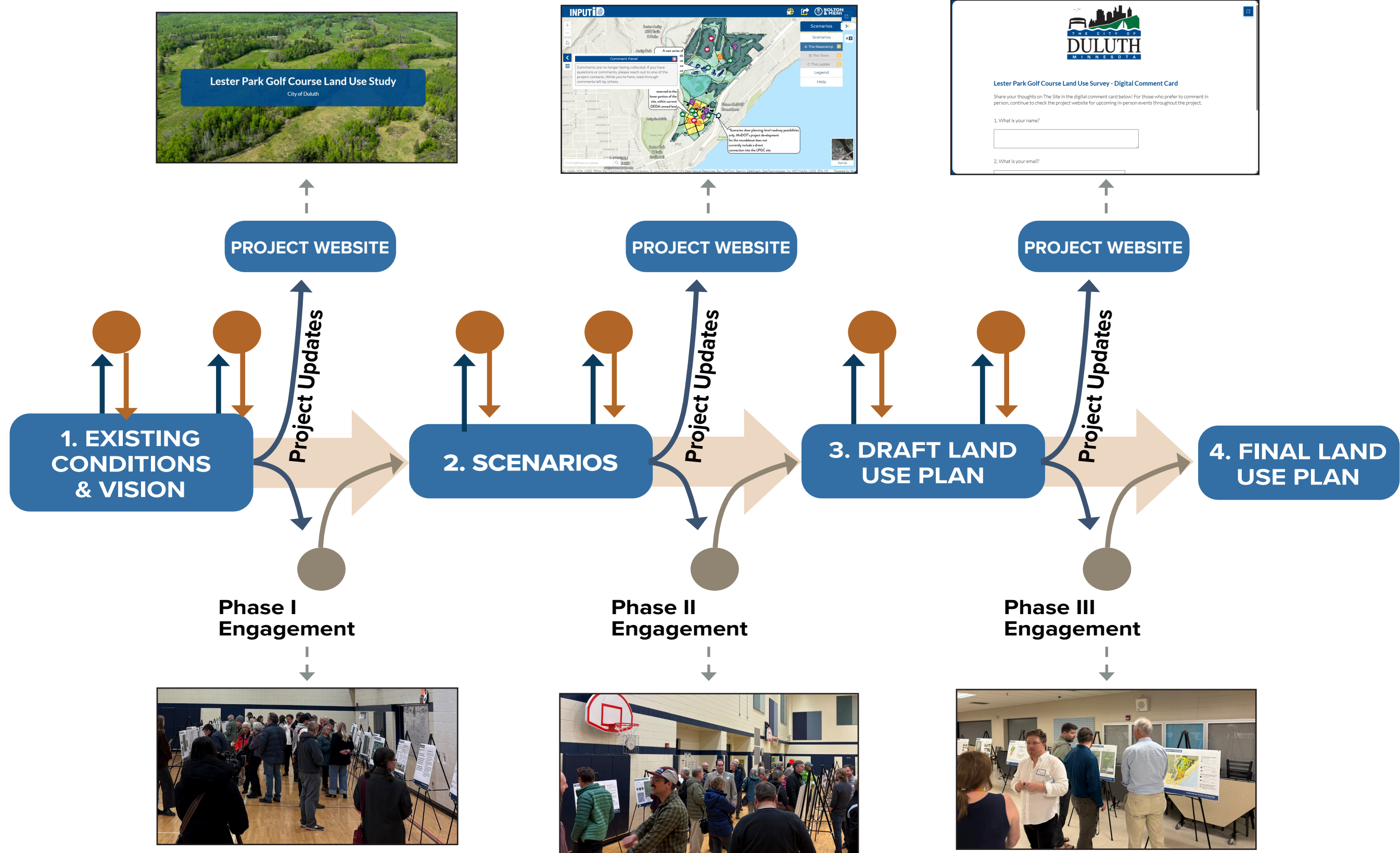
PROJECT SUMMARY



	LAND USE STUDY	DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL/ APPLICATION
 WHAT IS IT?	A big picture, values-driven plan that will inform if and how the study area could change.	A specific proposal for what a developer wants to build on a specific site.
 WHAT IS INCLUDED?	• Analysis of land uses and functions • Evaluation of potential change scenarios • Consideration of community contexts and needs • Identification of the impacts of potential changes • Outline of next-steps for policies related to the study area.	Site plan details and required forms and documentation on a developer would build on the site if the project were approved.
 WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED?	The study does not grant anyone permission to build at LPGC	The developer is only authorized to build specifically what they state and show in their proposal.
 WHAT DOES “APPROVAL” MEAN?	The City Council agrees to a shared vision for the area that will guide future development.	The City approves what a developer proposes to build on the site, as allowed by local and state regulations.

SCHEDULE



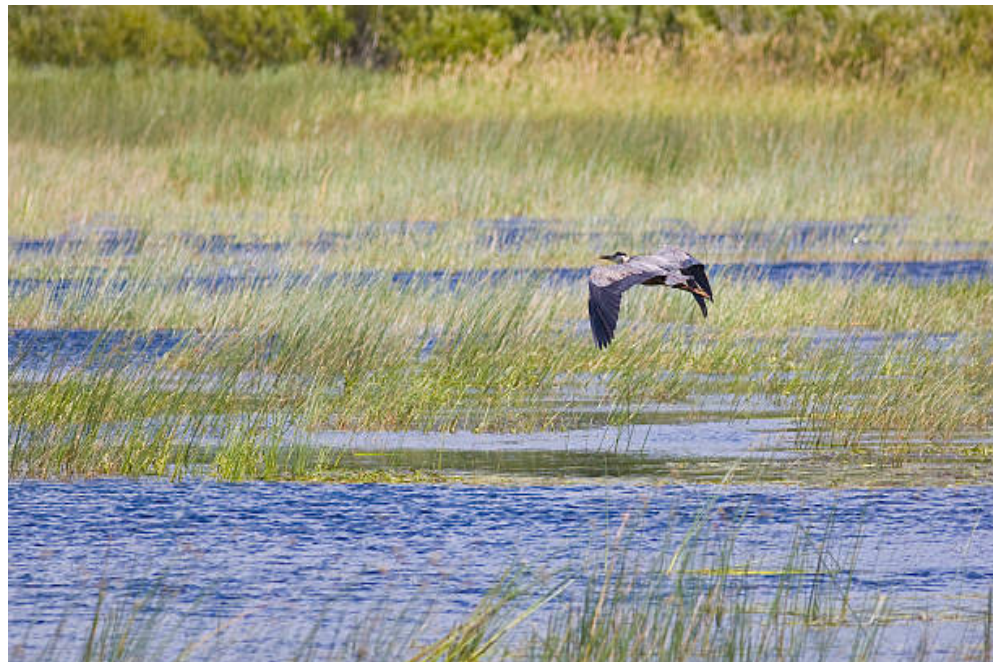


FINDING BALANCE AND HARMONY

NATURAL RESOURCES

The LPGC property is abundant with vegetation, water, and plant and animal habitats.

- How much of the site should be preserved, or restored, as natural resources space?
- What natural resource restoration priorities should be pursued?
- How might restoration be blended with other uses?



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Duluthians have used this 270-acre area for recreation for decades, primarily for golfing and related activities.

- How much of the site should be used for recreation? Where should recreation occur within the site?
- What types of outdoor recreation can, or should, be here in the future?
- How might recreation be blended with other uses?



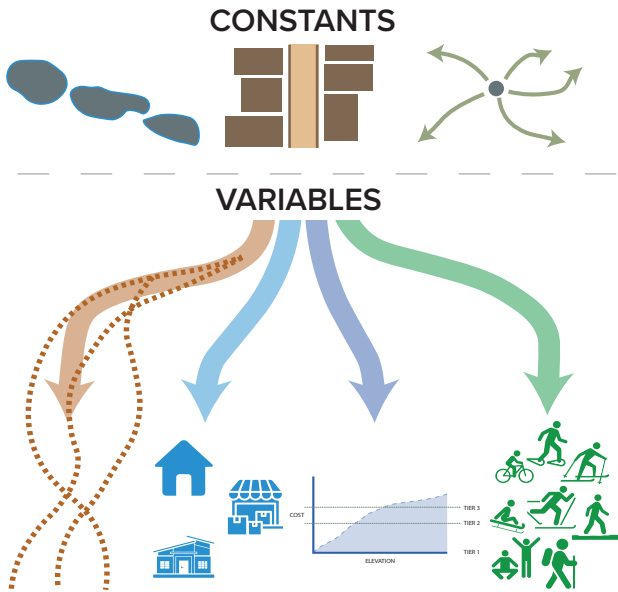
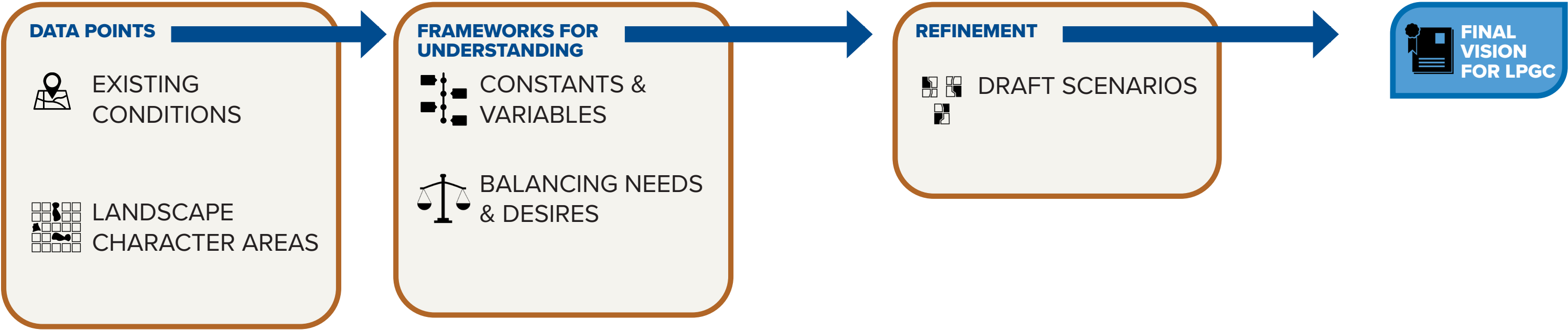
DEVELOPMENT

The city has a need for more housing options, which are most successful when built as complete neighborhoods.

- How much of the area is practical and feasible to develop?
- What types of residential, commercial, or other development should be allowed here?
- How might development be blended with other uses?



DEVELOPING THE RECOMMENDED VISION



SUMMARY OF KEY SITE ANALYSIS FINDINGS

 GREEN ISN'T ALWAYS NATURAL

Though it is very green, the site has been significantly altered over time for use as a golf course and is not in a “natural state.”

 SUPERIOR VIEWS

Views of Lake Superior are increasingly scenic as you as move up hill across the site.

 GREAT CONNECTIONS TO LEVERAGE

The site has incredible potential for connections to public assets and parks — Lester Park and Amity Park to the west, and Brighton Beach to the south.

 HELPING MEET CITY-WIDE NEEDS

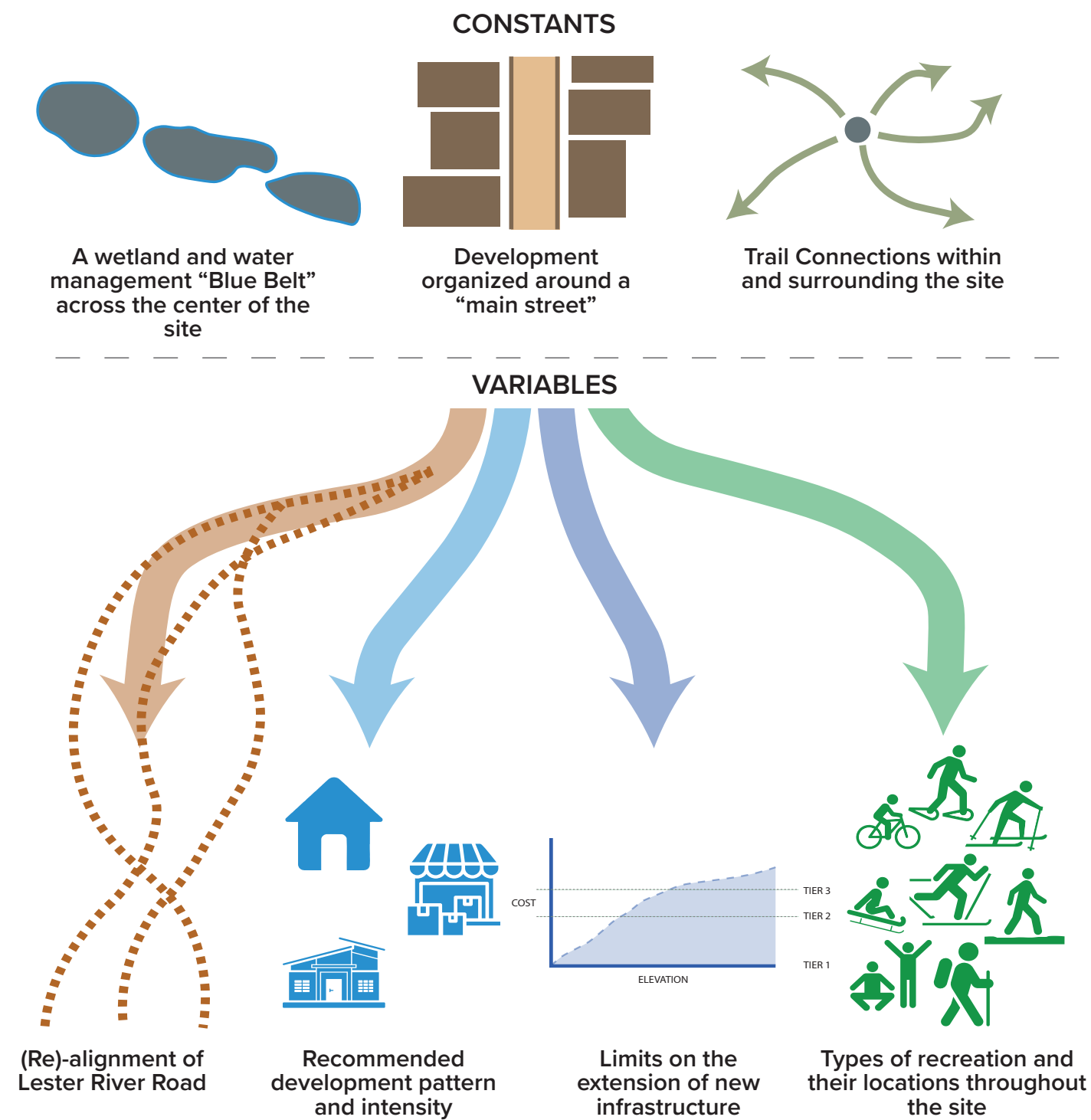
Any developable areas on the site could serve to meet a portion of city-wide housing demand.

 UP-HILL WATER DISTRIBUTION

Any development in the central and northern portions of the site would require significant additional infrastructure.



CONSTANTS AND VARIABLES



SCENARIOS

SCENARIO A | THE BASECAMP



Natural Areas	218 acres (80%)	Parcels owned by DEDA
Recreation Areas	28 acres (11%)	Land already zoned Mixed-Use Development
Development Areas	24 acres (9%)	
Total Land Area	270 Acres	
Anticipated Infrastructure Needs*	\$\$\$\$\$	

SCENARIO B | THE TOWN



Natural Areas	155 acres (57%)	Parcels owned by DEDA
Recreation Areas	38 acres (14%)	Land already zoned Mixed-Use Development
Development Areas	77 acres (29%)	
Total Land Area	270 Acres	
Anticipated Infrastructure Needs*	\$\$\$\$\$	

SCENARIO C | THE LADDER



Natural Areas	140 acres (52%)	Parcels owned by DEDA
Recreation Areas	73 acres (27%)	Land already zoned Mixed-Use Development
Development Areas	57 acres (21%)	
Total Land Area	270 Acres	
Anticipated Infrastructure Needs*	\$\$\$\$\$	

**A utilities cost-estimate for the recommended scenario is provided in The Vision Plan.*

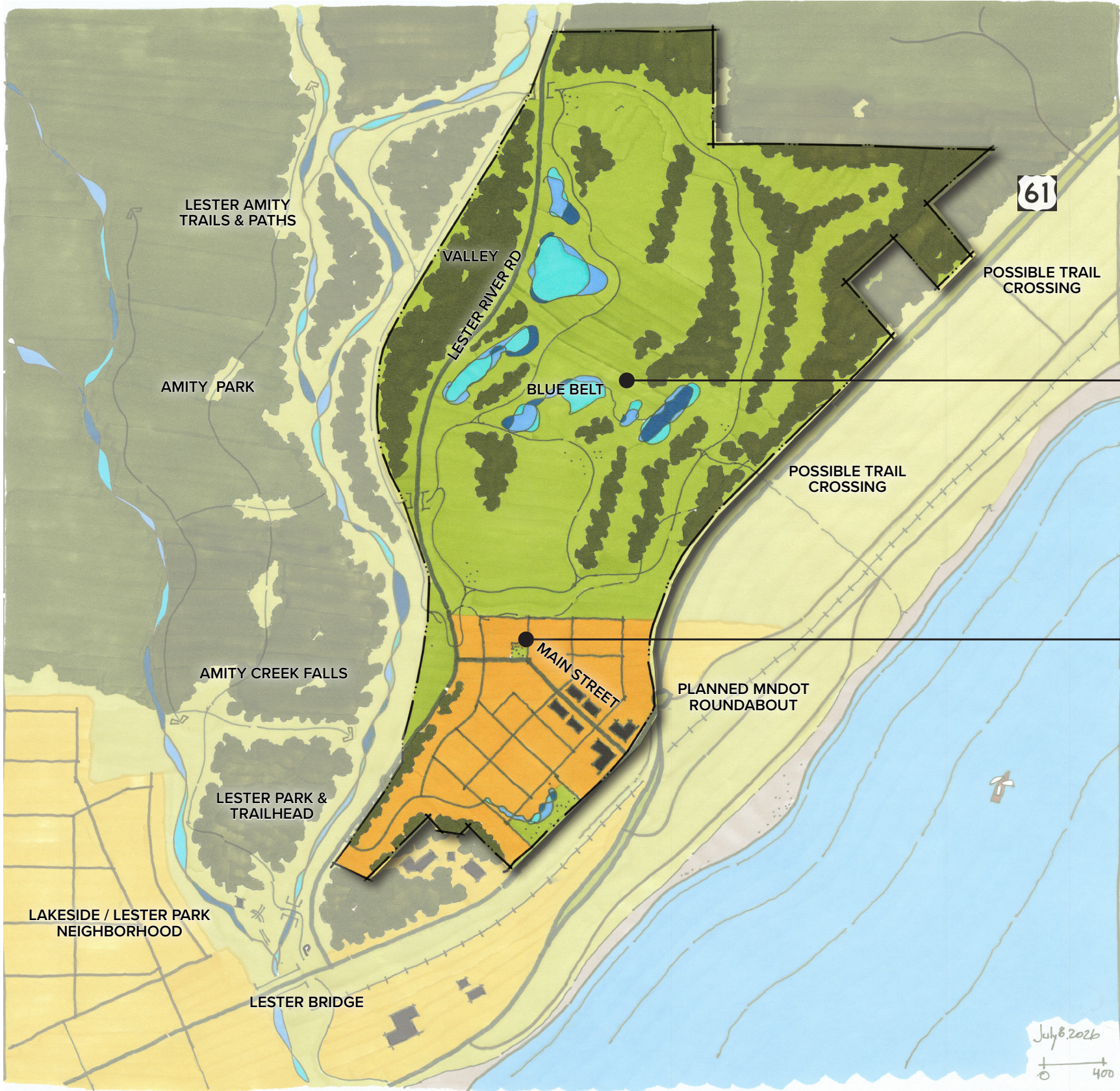
THE VISION FOR LPGC

VISION STATEMENT

Duluth’s former Lester Park Golf Course will be an enduring neighborhood that embodies Duluth’s identity of stewardship while inspiring balanced, thoughtful growth.

Through an integrated approach to natural resource restoration, outdoor recreation, and well-designed neighborhood development, the site will honor its scenic and ecological assets while meeting city-wide needs of creating environmental, social, and economic value.

The vision will serve as a model for responsible, financially sustainable land use while fostering a legacy of belonging, exploration, and pride for current and future generations.



The northern three-fourths (3/4) of the site remain undeveloped, presenting an opportunity for unique recreation offerings amidst restored landscape and habitats

Development is concentrated in the southern portions of the site, offering a highly walkable new neighborhood oriented around a main street, with nature and recreation integrated throughout.

THE VISION FOR LPGC



ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

LAND USE BALANCE

	Natural & Recreation Areas*:	207 acres (77%)
	Development Areas:	63 acres (23%)

** Future parks planning will determine final natural and recreation programming across the site*

DEVELOPMENT YIELDS

	Housing:	700-900 units**
	<i>** Unit estimates based on a mix of housing types, and accounting for an estimated net developable acreage</i>	

	Near-term commercial:	1-2 restaurants or retail stores (5-year estimate)
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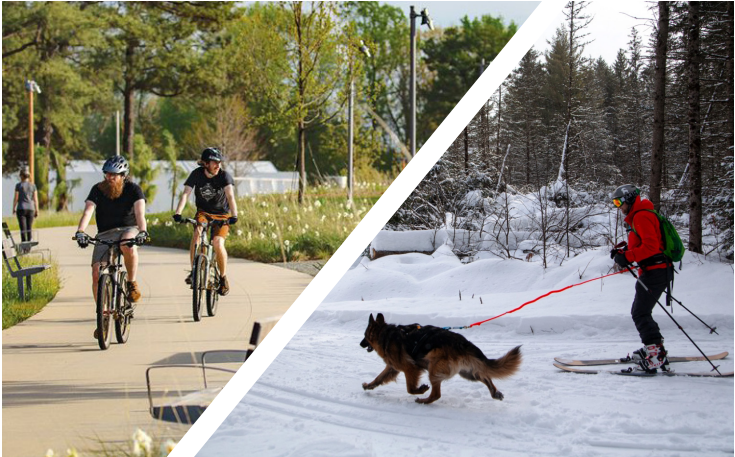
ESTIMATED CORE INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

	Core streets (including water, sanitary, and storm mains)	
	Main Street:	\$1.2M–1.5M***
	Sanitary system capacity upgrades	
	Sanitary Collector Tanks	\$1.4M–1.6M***

**** These are planning-level estimates for large public infrastructure investments only. Additional infrastructure will be needed, but costs will depend on final development layout, phasing, and funding sources. These will be determined during future planning, and as development proposals are submitted.*

COST CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARK PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

	Additional resources are needed for the planning and management of the 207-acre natural and recreation area north of the neighborhood. See Implementation Section for details on next steps and funding planning.
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RECOMMENDED LAND USE AND OWNERSHIP CHANGES

TODAY (CURRENT)



RECOMMENDED CHANGES



FUTURE



RECOMMENDED LAND USE AND OWNERSHIP CHANGES



OPEN SPACE

High natural resource or scenic value, with substantial restrictions and development limitations. Primarily public lands but limited private use is anticipated subject to use and design controls. Examples include: city parks and recreation areas, camping, primary viewsheds, shorelands of the lake and streams, wetlands and floodplains, and high-value habitat

DENSITY / INTENSITY / DESIGN

- Low intensity uses such as trails and recreation
- Viewshed protection and access
- Water access, with some parking and support facilities

	Total lands to be guided as Open Space	207 acres
	<i>Land already guided for Open Space</i>	<i>200 acres</i>
	<i>Land to be re-guided from Rural Residential to Open Space</i>	<i>7 acres</i>

NEIGHBORHOOD MIXED-USE

A transitional use between more intensive commercial uses and purely residential neighborhoods. May include limited commercial-only space oriented to neighborhood or specialty retail markets.

DENSITY / INTENSITY / DESIGN

- Site design should maintain a largely residential building character
- Commercial-only uses should be adjacent to non-residential or other mixed-use areas

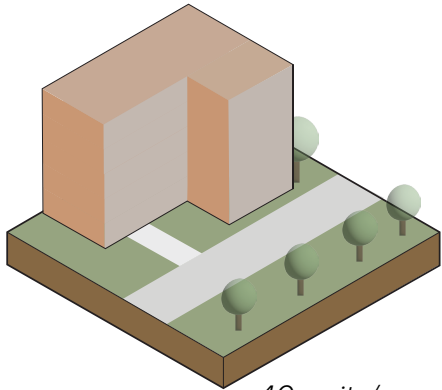
	Total lands to be guided Neighborhood Mix-Use	63 acres
	<i>Land already guided for Neighborhood Mixed-Use</i>	<i>48 acres</i>
	<i>Land to be re-guided from Open Space to Neighborhood Mixed-</i>	<i>13 acres</i>
	<i>Land to be re-guided from Low-Density Residential to</i>	<i>2 acres</i>

DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE



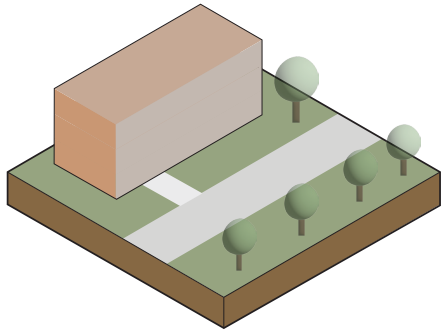
HOUSING TYPE AND DENSITY REFERENCE

MEDIUM-SCALE
APARTMENTS



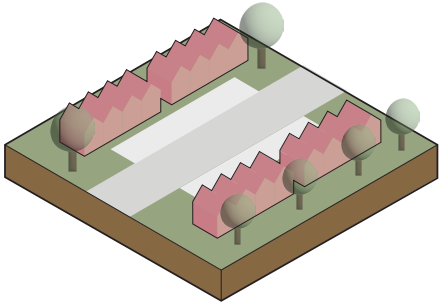
40 units/acre

SMALL-SCALE
APARTMENTS



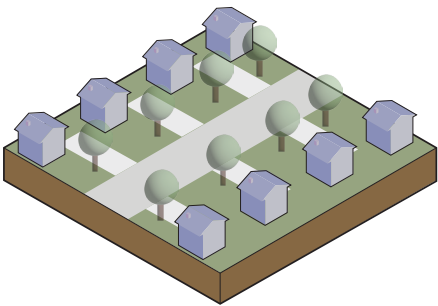
25 units/acre

TOWNHOUSES



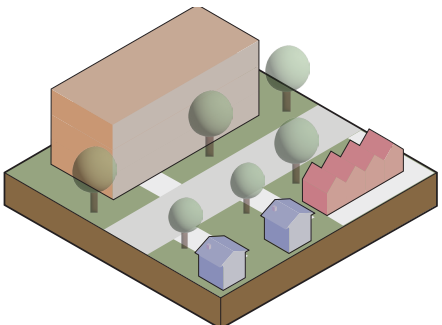
15 Units/Acre

SMALL-LOT, SINGLE-
FAMILY HOUSES



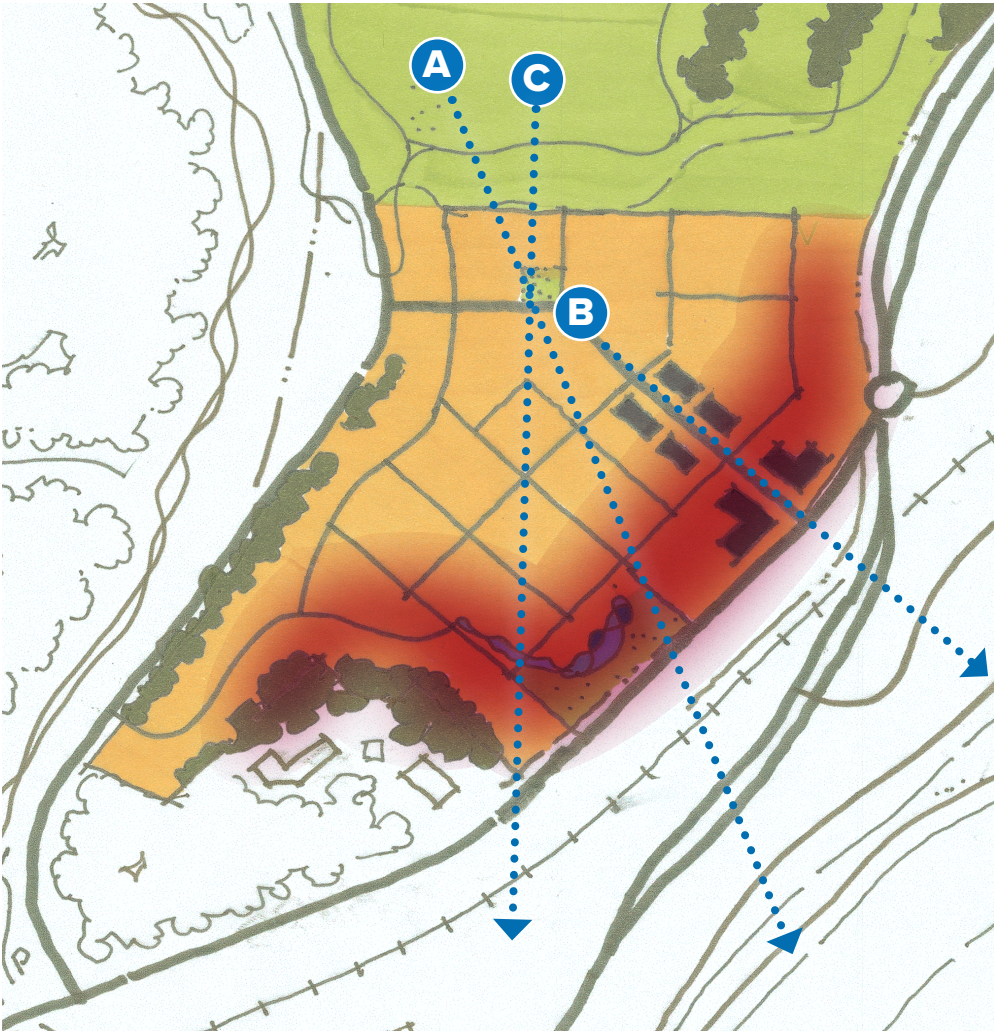
10 units/acre

MIXED-USE

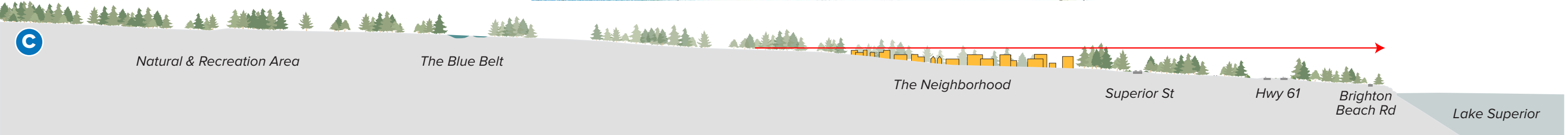
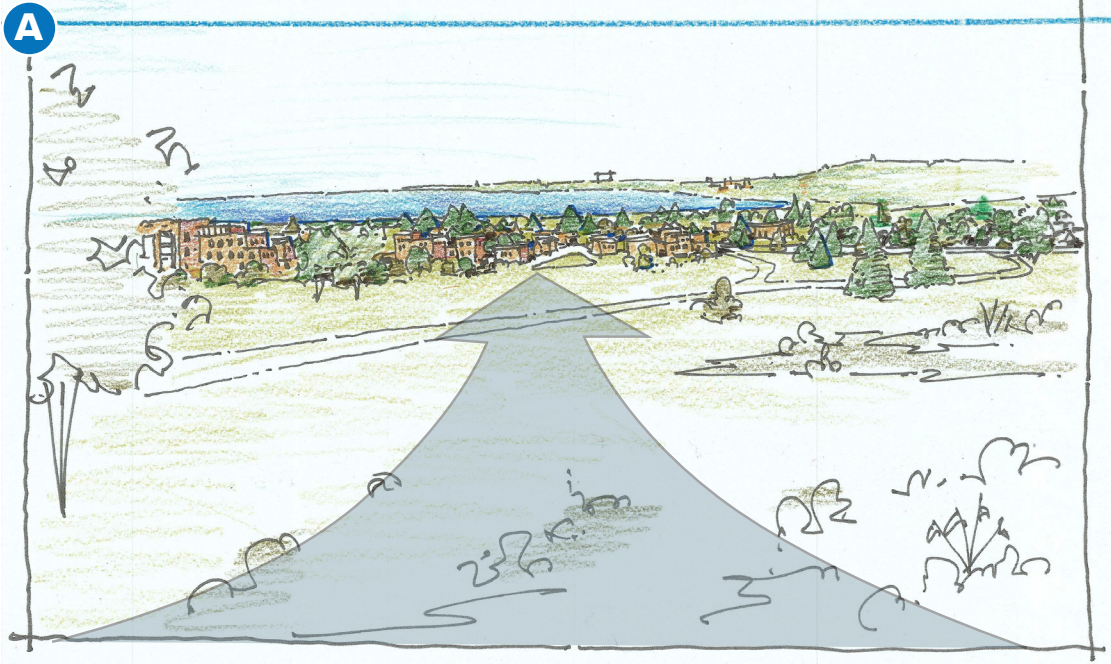


22 units/acre

DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE



Height concentration area



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

NATURAL RESOURCES



NATURAL RESOURCES PRINCIPLES



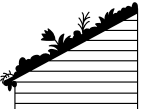
Maintain contiguous open spaces, green corridors, wetlands, and forests to support healthy biodiversity, improve air and water quality, and provide recreational and cultural benefits



Restore resource systems to withstand and adapt to a changing climate, through strategies like plant species selection.



Utilize the Blue Belt to integrate stormwater strategies that replenish groundwater, protect wetlands, and minimize flood risks. Explore additional wetland banking opportunities in the Blue Belt.



Integrate nature-based design solutions to manage stormwater, reduce heat islands, and improve water quality. Example solutions include green roofs, bioswales, and more.



Prioritize reforestation and restoration efforts on the edges of the site, where they are adjacent to healthy and intact ecosystems.



Preserve and celebrate key views across the site of the lake by protecting light touch clearings and view corridors.

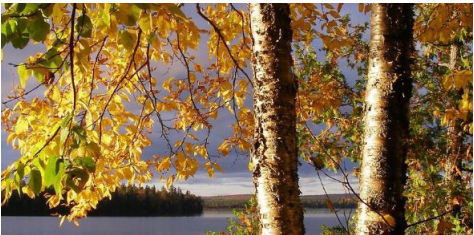


Any natural and/or green corridors that extend into the neighborhood should connect directly to neighborhood parks, greenspaces, or public spaces. These connections should be formalized through the establishment of ROW or easements.

PUBLIC-EXPRESSED PRIORITIES FOR NATURAL RESOURCES



Forest Restoration



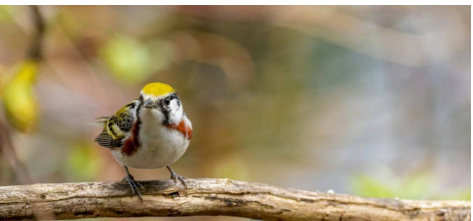
Climate Resilient Species Planning



Wetland Restoration



Pollinator Habitat



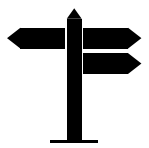
Bird Habitats

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

RECREATION



RECREATION PRINCIPLES

-  Through a park planning process, identify ways to maintain and grow year-round recreation options available to the public.
-  The site is positioned to offer unique recreation opportunities that are either limited, or not available, elsewhere in the city.
-  Any recreation uses that extend into the neighborhood (such as trails) should be formalized through the establishment of rights-of-way or easements.
-  Recreational offerings, such as trails, that can be co-sponsored or co-developed by partner entities could have a home in the site.
-  Recreational offerings complement surrounding natural areas and the neighborhood, and are well connected to nearby parks and open spaces — notably, Lester Park and it's exceptional offerings.
-  The northern edge of the neighborhood provides direct public access to possible recreation uses throughout the rest of the site, through offerings such as public parking, an outfitter, a trailhead, etc.
-  Recreational types and activities are appropriate to their setting, and accessible to all ages and abilities. For reserve-ahead activities like camping, the program should be self-sustaining and revenue-neutral.
-  As recreation planning occurs, the city and its partners should commit resources necessary to maintain any future recreation offerings.

PUBLIC-EXPRESSED PRIORITIES FOR RECREATION



Camping



Disc golf



Off-Leash Dog Park



Skiijoring



Trails for Hiking, Biking, and Skiing



Bike park / pump track

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

DEVELOPMENT



DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES



Concentrate non-residential uses along a central, highly walkable main street, and near the Superior Street / Highway 61 intersection.



Guide height, including 4- to 5-story apartments, to locations where topography and grade can off-set heights, and where view corridor impacts from the northern natural areas is minimized.



The upper-most portions of the neighborhood will be most conducive to 2- to 3-story buildings, to protect views from the north while maximizing water pressure capacity.



Blend recreation uses such as off street trails, pocket parks, and public green spaces throughout the neighborhood, offering direct connections for residents and visitors.



Require development follow best-practices for migratory flyway building design, such as bird-safe window glazing, limited and shielded night lighting, limited uninterrupted glass facades, and native site landscaping.



Orient the street grid to protect and provide publicly accessible view corridors to Lake Superior.



Recognize the benefits facilitated by mixed-use development patterns, but don't necessarily require a mix of uses in new projects.



The neighborhood can differentiate itself by establishing a commercial and recreation hub — possibly becoming a regional destination that anchors current and future surrounding recreation.

PUBLIC-EXPRESSED PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT



Cluster and co-housing



Small-scale apartments



Modest single-family homes



Townhouses / walkups

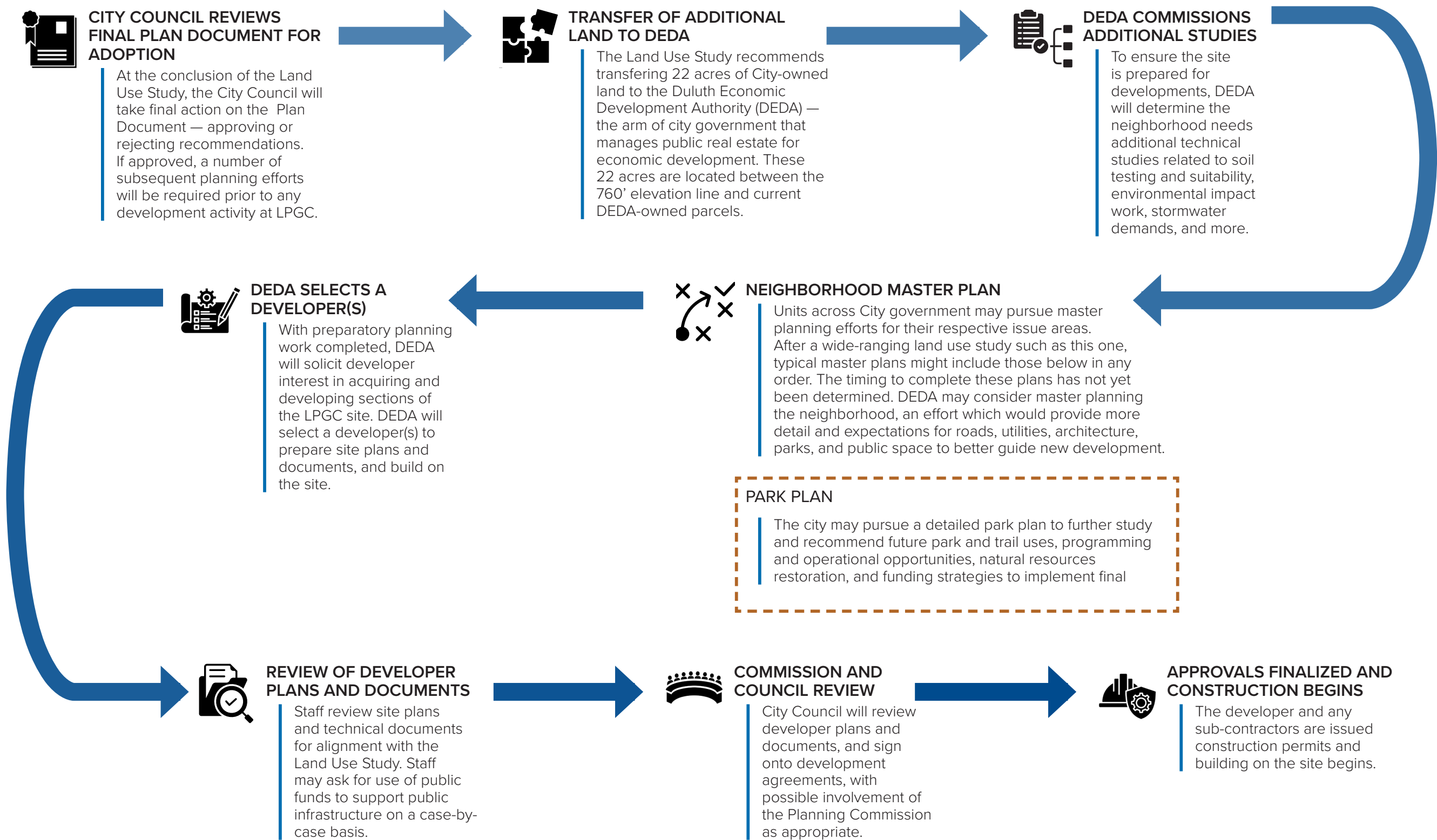


Dining



Retail

ANTICIPATED NEXT STEPS AFTER THE LPGC STUDY



ACTION REQUESTED



An aerial photograph showing a multi-lane road intersection with several cars. The road is surrounded by dense green trees and grass. In the background, a large body of water (likely a lake) is visible under a cloudy sky. The text "THANK YOU!" is overlaid in the center of the image.

THANK YOU!

LESTER PARK GOLF COURSE LAND USE STUDY & VISION PLAN

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