



# Downtown 2040 Plan

City of Buffalo, Minnesota | April 2021

## Acknowledgement

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## Introduction



## Introduction

### Preface

The Downtown 2040 Plan replaces the 2007 plan and provides new strategies and recommendations for how the downtown will grow and change over the next couple of decades. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the context, setting and reviews existing conditions including identifying distinct ‘character areas’. Chapter 2 explores applicable issues and a variety of opportunities, most carefully discussed with the Stakeholder Group. Chapter 3 sets up the plan framework that organizes specific recommendations for each character area. Chapter 4 focuses on implementation and possible phasing for improvements. The Appendix includes early public engagement results and a range of supporting material.

### Purpose

The Downtown 2040 Plan has a two-fold purpose: to update the Downtown Buffalo Visions that was prepared and adopted in 2007; and to become an element of the Comprehensive Plan to be updated in 2021. The Downtown 2040 Plan includes key policies and recommendations that will guide the Planning Commission, Housing & Redevelopment Authority and City Council with future decision making. The Downtown Plan will be adopted by the City Council as official land use policy and will be added to the Comprehensive Plan by reference when it is updated and adopted.

### City Council Priorities

Three of the City Council’s priority goals for the community in their strategic plan address development:

- > Support commercial development opportunities;
- > Maintain focus on downtown revitalization and viability;
- > Maintain/increase focus on diversified housing.

### Goals

- > Enhance the amenity and relationship to Buffalo Lake; build on the value from the views and connections to the lake.
- > Support and position downtown as the next Buffalo neighborhood; insure a range of affordable and market responsive housing choices.
- > Protect and plan for the economic sustainability of downtown.
- > Embrace and build-on the unique retail and shopping culture of downtown and support a variety of businesses.
- > Make downtown more green and connected; plan for streets and open spaces that can also be multi-use outdoor venues.
- > Reinforce the safe and walkable qualities of downtown as a destination.
- > Recognize and promote the historic culture of downtown.
- > Create destinations and public spaces that support all ages and abilities.
- > Promote public engagement in the planning and the development approval process.

### Principles

- > Respond to Buffalo Lake as a highly valued open space; design and planning efforts should reinforce and connect to this amenity.
- > Design places for people; maintain a walkable scale of blocks and buildings.
- > Plan for and allow a mix of uses in the downtown.
- > Respect and respond to the local character and identity of downtown Buffalo.
- > Preserve the authentic design qualities of historic buildings and encourage reuse and reinvestment.
- > Buildings should front onto the public streets and direct its principal façade (doors, entries and windows) to define the public realm.

*The Downtown 2040 Plan is not one improvement or project that will single-handedly change downtown, but a City-guided vision that will be driven by developer investments to implement the goals and recommendations in the coming decades.*

## Introduction

### Downtown Buffalo Visions 2007

A community-based, guiding document was adopted in 2007 that provided the vision for how downtown should accommodate growth and change. Strong ideas for the downtown were defined, refined and eventually put into a plan that was adopted by the City Council. Many of the themes and recommendations are still applicable. For example, in 2007 the plan anticipated the Wright County government center moving out of downtown; by the summer of 2021 this transition will be complete so the reality of addressing this change now becomes a priority. In the next few years Hwy 25 will be rebuilt, another key theme that was a focus of the 2007 vision.

2007 Vision themes included:

- > Downtown Buffalo should maintain and improve its relationship to the lake—opening views, improving public spaces, and encouraging land uses that take advantage of this asset.
- > Traffic along Trunk Highway 25 needs to be slowed and truck traffic not destined for downtown should be diverted.
- > Downtown should feel more pedestrian-friendly, with easier street crossings, safer-feeling sidewalks and more plazas and places for people to gather.
- > There is great civic pride in downtown activities and these activities foster a sense of community and make downtown a lively and beautiful place to shop and meet neighbors.

- > More high- and medium- density housing could attract a wider variety of residents.
- > Restaurants, coffee shops, bakeries, ice cream stores, entertainment venues, and other retail uses that foster public gathering and street life should be attracted to downtown.
- > Building revitalization and maintenance is important to maintaining the quality of downtown.



Buffalo Downtown Visions, 2007

*“Downtown Buffalo could become many different kinds of places over the next years. It cannot, however, remain exactly as it is now—or turn back into what it was 50 or 100 years ago. Since change is going to happen, Buffalo should be prepared to answer the question ‘what kind of downtown do we want to become?’”*

Buffalo Downtown Visions, 2007



## Introduction

### A Look Back in Time

As we know, change is inevitable and has been a constant for much of the history of Buffalo's downtown. The center of downtown moved on several occasions before eventually settling where it is today. Two of these moves happened when the court house relocated from Grey Street (1st Street S) to courthouse square situated on Buffalo Lake and Lake Promenade (Lake Blvd NW). When the railroad came through town in 1886 businesses began locating around the station but gradually the downtown center consolidated on Division Street.



^ Image from: *City of Buffalo Historic Context Study Prepared for the City of Buffalo, MN by Patrick Smith Historic Preservation Consultant June 2011*



< The location of the business center shifted from the period 1868—1900 to four different locations before consolidating around Division Street (formerly Ackley Street). The different locations are shown in yellow highlights.

< The city was platted in a grid-like design, like most towns in Minnesota. The gridiron scheme generally ignored the specific features like Buffalo's hills and valleys. However, the original plat was laid out so that Buffalo Lake's shores were to be enjoyed by the public. In fact, TH 25's name in the original plat was "Lake Promenade," indicating that the founding fathers' intentions were for this road to be used for enjoyment of Buffalo Lake, not as a fast moving thoroughfare. Source: *City of Buffalo Historic Context Study*, by Patrick Smith Historic Preservation Consultant

## Introduction

### Downtown is Growing & Changing

A dozen plans, relocations and projects represent the dynamic change that is taking place in Buffalo's town center. These efforts create the energy and urgency to update the downtown plan so the city can proactively plan for the future. Each one of these projects will have a significant effect on the character, use and sustainability of downtown.

> Havenwood Senior Living and Alo Apartments, recently constructed, will add about 150 new residential units across multiple market segments.

> A new main fire station will provide needed updates for the department and, when, completed, will leave a site that could be an opportunity.

> Hwy 25 rebuild is proposed to include an alignment that will add more usable open space along the lakefront.

> The Wright County Government site will relocate its office and administrative population from downtown but will also provide the largest site for redevelopment on the lakefront.

> The community center has needs today and a "Friends of the Community Center" has plans for an expanded facility.

> The Post Office has been considering the need to relocate to a larger site to better handle large truck traffic.

> The city currently has a study going on for how to promote downtown more as an arts destination.

> Paving and streetscape improvements are needed in the central area as well as parking management and/or additional supply.

> The city HRA parcel on 1st Street S is a major redevelopment opportunity as is the city lot owned facing the lake next to Lakeview Antiques.

> The lakefront is seen as another opportunity to enhance the destination experience, add real estate value and improve direct connections to the lake.



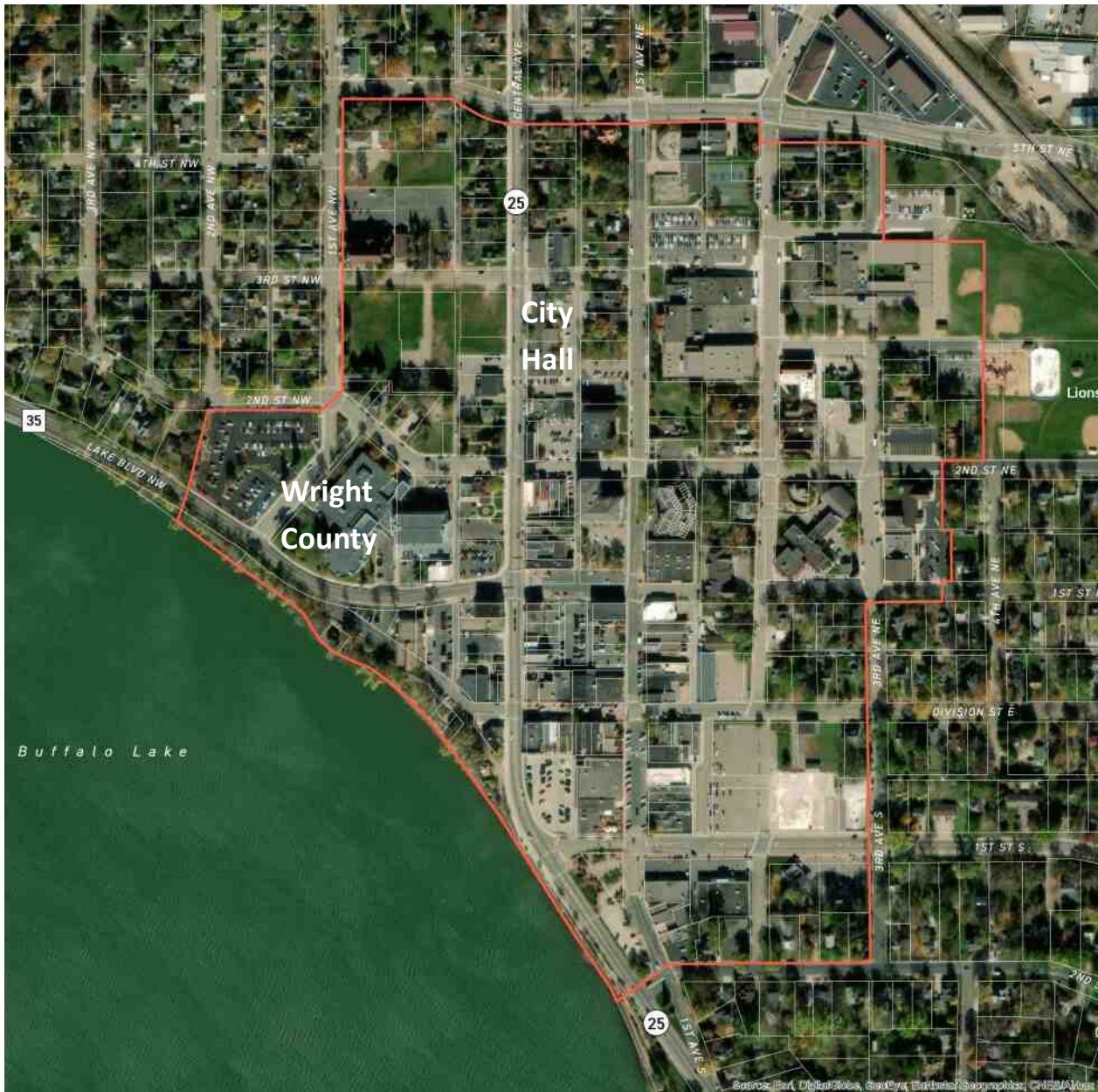


# Chapter 1

## Context & Setting



## Chapter 1 Context & Setting



### 1.1 Existing Conditions Analysis

Downtown is no longer the commercial center for the city as the Hwy 55 corridor now provides most of the daily needs of residents and shoppers. But there is no doubt that downtown is the “heart” of Buffalo. It is a unique, walkable small town main street situated on picturesque Buffalo Lake, a place that is very different from auto-oriented development and will always support a variety of shops and services. More recently downtown has become a more popular place to live which is a trend that will continue.

Existing conditions were studied using mapping and graphic analysis, historic data, key stakeholder interviews and a review of past market and demographic data. On the following pages are analytical maps that address the built form, street/block patterns, parking, land use, land ownership and other attributes. At the end of this chapter is a summary of findings that provides the basis for direction, recommendations and implementation. The study area boundary is shown in red outline.

< Exhibit 1: Aerial Photo

Chapter 1 Context & Setting



Exhibit 2: Location

Buffalo was sited in 1850 by the French fur trader Edmund Brissett and was platted in 1856 along the north-east edge of Buffalo Lake decades before the railroad was built (1886). It became the county seat in 1867.



Exhibit 3: Study Area Boundary

The study area totals approximately 100 acres of land that includes the city hall, two elementary schools, the county government center and core business district. Mn DOT Hwy 25 runs through town as Central Avenue and follows the lake edge for a few blocks.



Chapter 1 Context & Setting



Exhibit 4

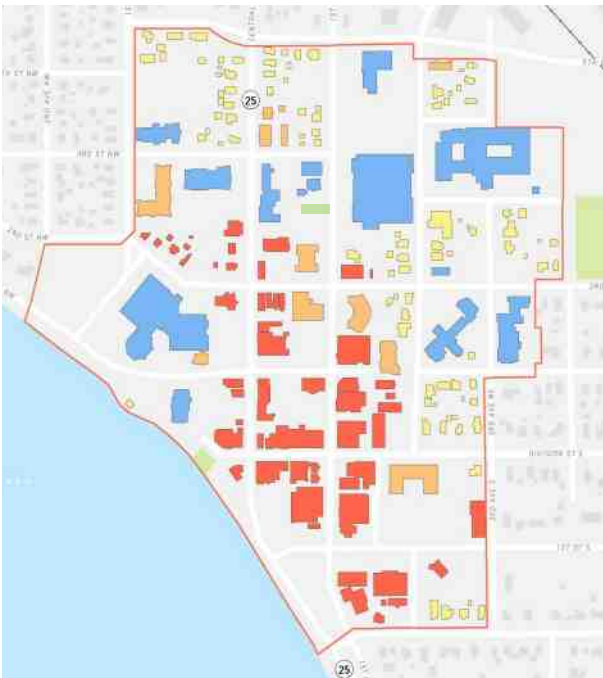


Exhibit 5



Exhibit 4: Land Ownership

Approximately 30% of downtown is in some form of exempt land use (land in public ownership and thus exempt from tax). The city/HRA own approximately 10.6 acres; another 16.6 acres are in other public/exempt ownership. Total tax value of the study area is over \$98 mil.

Exhibit 5: Building Use

Documenting building use provides a more accurate way to understand how use is arranged on a building by building basis. The following exhibits further examine specific use by building.



Chapter 1 Context & Setting



Exhibit 6

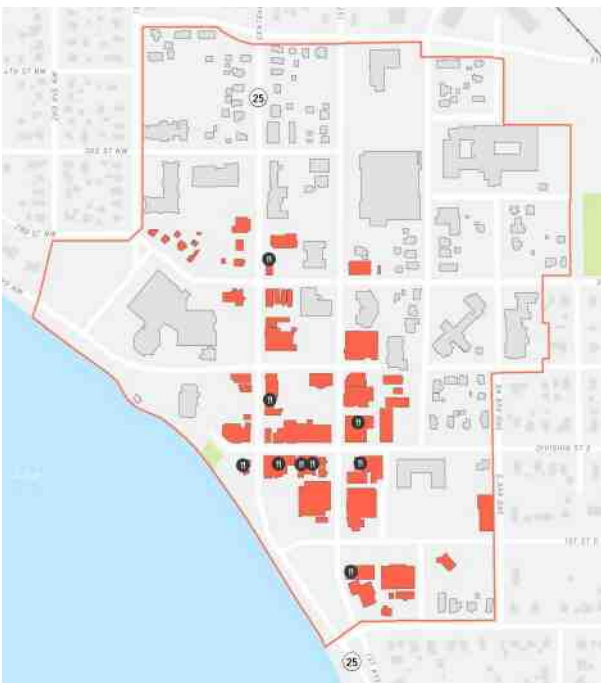


Exhibit 7



Exhibit 6: Residential Uses

Downtown contains a growing number of new residential units, including the Alo and Havenwood projects, two new developments that provide market rate rentals and new senior living options. The downtown includes a broad range of residential buildings and units, and at least a dozen apartments over retail buildings. Like many cities, downtown is becoming more of mixed-use neighborhood and a very popular place to live.

Exhibit 7: Commercial/Retail Use

Retail and commercial parcels make up about 9% of total commercial zoning in the city. There are nine food and beverage establishments and another half dozen shops that operate only the first Thursday thru -Sunday of the month. Several offices are occupied by lawyers, tax accountants and bail bonders that may be prone to relocation once the new Wright County campus is complete.

Chapter 1 Context & Setting

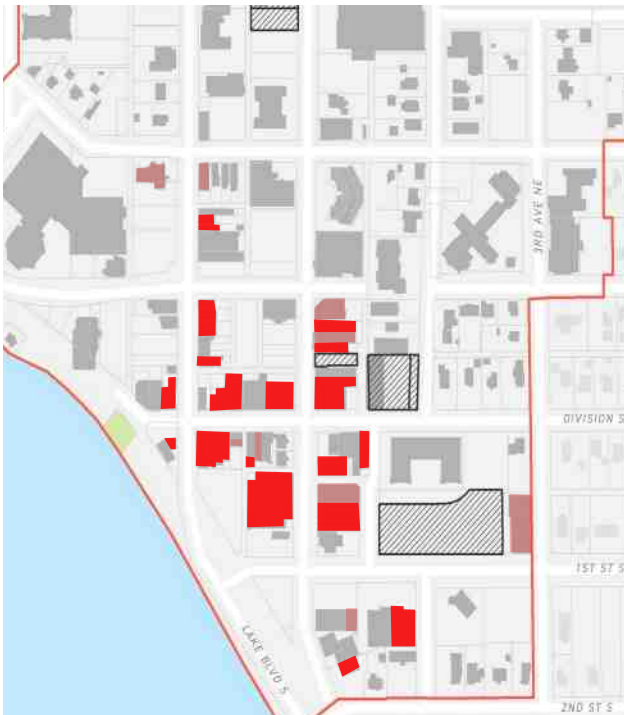


Exhibit 8

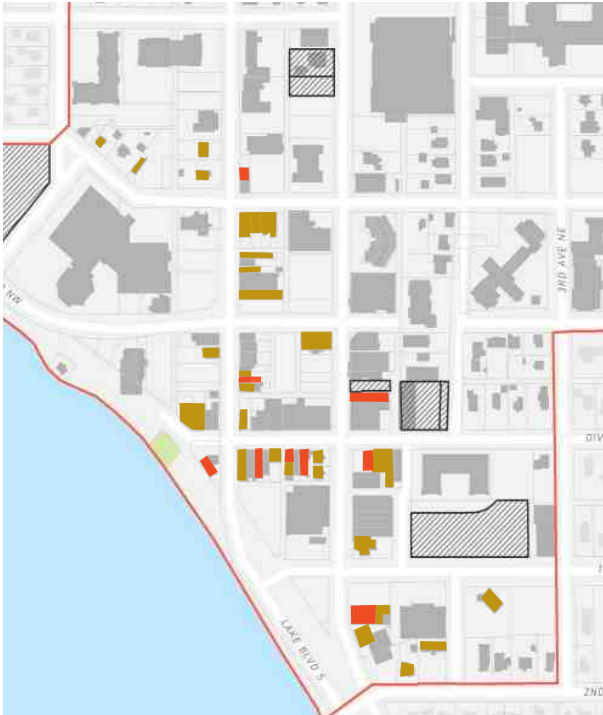
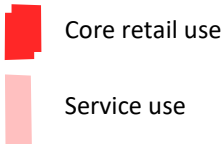


Exhibit 9

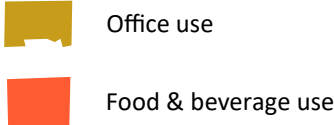


Exhibit 8: Core Retail Uses

The retail pattern is clustered around and near Division Street and is served by adjacent public parking lots north and south of Division, as well on on-street parking. The core retail uses (red) are clustered around Division Street and include a number of service uses (pink) such as dry cleaners, funeral home, fitness studios, health related businesses, etc.

Exhibit 9: Office, Food & Beverage Uses

The office uses (brown) include a number of attorneys, tax/accounting and bail bonding services. Food and beverage uses are shown in orange. Office uses are located in a much broader area than the core retail. Like the core retail, the food and beverage uses are clustered around and near Division. Daytime population and active employment uses support the viability of these complementary uses.

Chapter 1 Context & Setting



Exhibit 10

- Building Footprints
- Downtown Study Area
- Right of Way

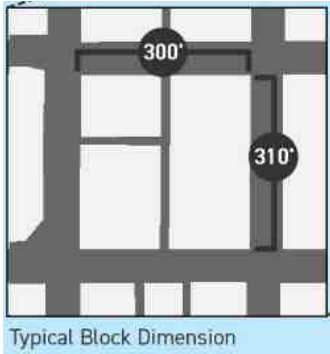


Exhibit 11

- Downtown Study Area
- On Street Parking (638)
- Major Off Street Parking (1,869)
- Parcel Outlines
- Building Footprints
- Lake
- Railroad

Exhibit 10: Street Network

The historic downtown street network is a traditional, orthogonalo block pattern with slightly over-square block dimensions. This layout supported the early speculative development market. Today it provides an incremental method of reinvestment and a very walkable pedestrian scale. The multi-use street network makes auto circulation more efficient and provides a convenient public parking supply.

Exhibit 11: Parking Supply

Downtown includes over 2,000 off-street parking spaces and over 600 spaces on-street. Supply does not appear to be major issue but parking access and management may need some attention. This will change dramatically with the move of Wright County when over 300 spaces will not be needed, however it is expected these sites will be redeveloped over time. A more detailed assessment of parking is addressed in Chapter 3.



## Chapter 1 Context & Setting



The downtown area contains a variety of built environment features such as the WPA (Works Progress Administration) wall at the lakefront overlook, landmarks, pedestrian friendly shopping streets, historic building renovations, and new senior living opportunities. Its character is highlighted by brick and masonry construction, vertically proportioned windows, transparent shopfronts, well-connected pedestrian streets, on-street parking and typically one and two story heights.



## Chapter 1 Context & Setting



### 1.2 Character Areas

An initial analysis organized the downtown into character areas; these are discussed and further refined in Chapter 3.

#### **A – Civic Campus**

This area has been home to fire, police and city hall for decades and also includes the community center, post office and chamber of commerce offices.

#### **B—Transitional Area**

This area contains several small office and service uses in buildings that are residential in character and scale.

#### **C—Emerging Redevelopment Area**

With the Wright County government center moving out of downtown this creates one of the biggest questions for a significant portion of downtown real estate on the lakefront.

#### **D— Upper Commercial**

This area contains a variety of shops and offices and includes three of the larger apartment buildings in the downtown.

#### **E—Core Commercial**

The downtown core includes the ‘main street’ shops and businesses on Division Street as well as shopfronts on Central and 1st Ave S.

#### **F—Lake Commercial**

This area has visibility and access to the lakefront; a number of changes have occurred here including Coborns grocery going out and the Havenwood development.

#### **G—Lakefront**

The lake front is the most significant physical asset of downtown Buffalo though is still an under-utilized asset that could be more prominently featured.

## Chapter 1 Context & Setting

### 1.3 Housing Plan, 2018 (excerpts)

The Housing Plan was prepared to examine housing market conditions in the City of Buffalo and understand how those conditions may impact upcoming housing decisions that the City is called on to make as development or redevelopment proposals are brought forward by the private market. ...The update was undertaken to establish a baseline of the current market, ...identify ways that the City can be best in a position to respond to those markets within the context of the community's overall land use policy, and ensure that ...the residential neighborhoods will continue to thrive.

All demographic segments of the housing market were affected during the recession (2008-2010) but two segments faced the greatest impacts: ...new household formation (typically the primary source for growth) ...and ...seniors who were looking to move out of traditional single family housing to down-size or find housing with services.

To gain an understanding of relevant real estate industry experiences in the current market, a short poll (6 questions) and a series of conversations were conducted with local Buffalo area real estate brokers and agents. Summarized results:

Question 1 asked about nature of inquiries—a majority of the responses were for detached single family priced at or below \$299k.

Question 2 asked about origin of inquirers—a majority were from Buffalo or Wright County.

Question 5 asked about what housing market is the most difficult to fill—top responses were townhomes and homes under \$250k.

Question 6 asked about what changes would best support the market—top responses were core center housing, single level townhomes, and entry level/patio homes.

In aggregate, the real estate professionals indicated that the bulk of their buyer contacts were from the local area.....were looking for housing in the lower price ranges.....many...were seeking attached housing ....several.....were looking for detached housing, indicating new household formation.

> The current marketplace has room for growth in virtually all demographic categories, but demand – for the time being – is most heavily concentrated in two categories: (1) entry level pricing (both attached and detached), and (2) senior-dedicated housing.

> The strength in the senior market is showing up (like the entry level market) in a variety of ways. The supplies of both attached and detached association-managed products are far below demand.

> With housing vacancy at a near historic low ....the market is somewhat constricted by lack of options....Thus, adding to the housing supply, regardless of category, supports the overall market directly or indirectly.

*“In sum, both affordable entry-level housing and new senior housing with services are becoming marketable. Buffalo’s new challenge is to provide opportunities for this revitalized residential growth, a key component of the economic engine that drives commercial and industrial development.”* *Buffalo Housing Plan, 2018*



*^ An example of a multi-unit apartment that is designed to be compatible to surrounding residential buildings.*



## Chapter 1 Context & Setting

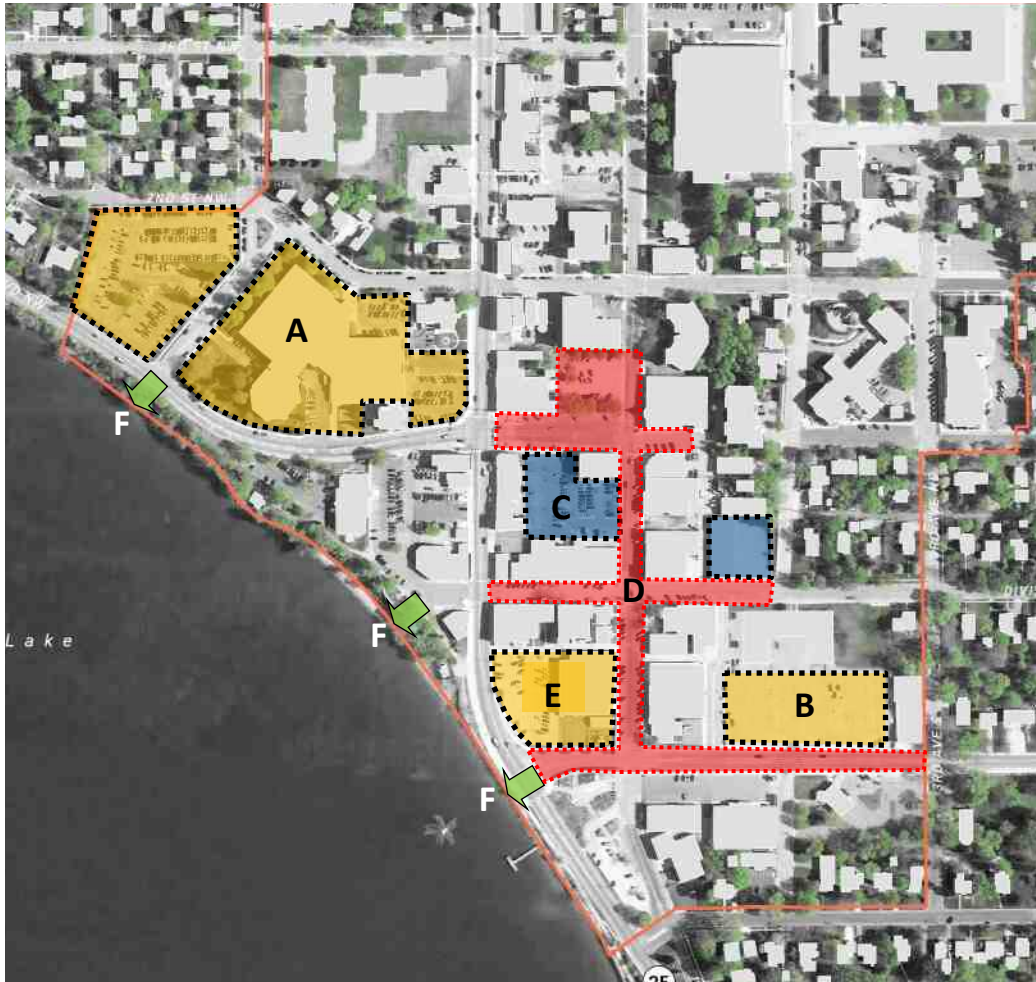


Exhibit 12

- Major redevelopment opportunities shown in yellow area
- Paving and streetscape improvements shown in red outline
- Parking supply improvements/opportunities shown in blue areas
- Potential lakefront views/connections shown with green arrows

### 1.4 Summary of Findings and Conditions

#### General

Downtown is experiencing a number of on-going and planned changes. One of the biggest changes is the relocation of the Wright County Government Center (A) and the loss of its daytime population. The move is expected to be complete by summer 2021. Overall, the study area contains about 100 acres of land valued at over \$98 million; almost 1/3 of the study area is in public/exempt status. Population growth was projected to increase by 0.9%/yr from 2016-2021, recent data suggest a growth rate of approximately 7+% in 2019. A number of 'character areas' can be defined including the civic campus, core commercial and lakeside commercial.

#### Housing

Residential use is the fastest growing, and largest, land use category in downtown. New residential development added about 150 units in 2020. The 2018 Housing Plan documented highest demand for senior-dedicated housing and entry level units.

#### Streets and Parking

Parking supply based on recent counts appears to be adequate though there may be issues with management, peak demands and convenient locations. The central parking supply has been identified as an issue [C]. Key downtown streets are in need of paving and potential streetscape improvements [D].

#### Development Opportunities

Two major sites (Wright County Government and the city HRA parcel) provide almost 10 acres of redevelopment opportunity [A], [B]. Other opportunities include the Lakeview Mall site [E] and adjacent HRA parcel [E] that currently provides parking for downtown businesses.

#### Parks and Open Spaces

The lakefront is less connected and utilized in the downtown area; more connections and views to the lakefront [F] were identified as desirable in the community survey, open house, stakeholder comments and past plans. The Hwy 25 rebuild proposed alignment would provide more usable land on the lakefront and could support activities and redevelopment along 1st Street S.

## Chapter 2

### Ideas & Opportunities





## Chapter 2 Ideas & Opportunities



### 2.1 Core Commercial Area

The core commercial area generated a lot of attention during the engagement process regarding parking, streets, streetscape/landscape, potential building reuse and public and private site redevelopment. Parking options considered included small parking structures, surface improvements, restriping, and land acquisition for additional surface parking. The city has also supported the reuse of the former Buffalo Theater (in private ownership) as part of a larger effort to promote downtown as an arts destination.



### 2.2 Lakeside Commercial

This area has a strong visual and physical relationship to the lake and contains multiple redevelopment parcels. MN DOT Hwy 25 is planned for a rebuild in the near future and a the proposed concept shifts the road alignment further east to provide more usable public space along the lakefront and reduce impervious surface. Major redevelopment sites include the HRA parcels on 1st St S that were considered for parking, residential, commercial and possible community center uses; and the current Lakeview Mall/ HRA site that could become a mixed use project with a lake-fronting outdoor patio/plaza area. Other considerations included residential development or a possible post office relocation on the former Wells Fargo bank site.



### 2.3 Emerging Redevelopment Area

The most visible redevelopment area in downtown is the Wright County Government site. The 2007 Downtown Plan anticipated this area being redeveloped but now this has become a reality with the new county campus almost complete. All departments will be relocated out of downtown by mid 2021. A number of options have been reviewed, most focused on turning the tax exempt parcel into multi-family housing and possible mixed use/office/retail uses. The site has a direct physical relationship to the existing neighborhood and lakefront real estate. Two other options explored locating a new community center on this site and the realignment of County 35 further north that would, if developed, would support a lakeside park.

## Chapter 2 Ideas & Opportunities



### 2.4 1: Civic Campus Area

A number of options were explored in this area including the idea for a new community center (also proposed in another character area) and redevelopment opportunities when the new fire station is complete. Beyond 5 years, a mid range option could see the Post Office relocating. From a long range perspective the potential for a new a new city hall, if needed, could be considered at multiple sites in downtown including rebuilding on-site.



^ A “pocket neighborhood” is a residential development organized around a central common green space and oriented to small households and seniors who may prefer one level living. This was considered as an option on the former bank site.



^ A “parking street” in River Falls, WI provides ample parking supply on both sides of the moving lane (note the compact left turn lane) in this pedestrian oriented commercial environment. This is an idea that is considered for 1st St S and Hwy 25 utilizing a mid-street “corral” design to provide an additional level of crossing safety.

## Chapter 2 Ideas and Opportunities



### 2.5 Summary of Character Areas

This page summarizes the four character areas and highlights the potential changes for each. At the June 24 Stakeholder meetings the Core Commercial, Lakefront/Lakeside Commercial and Emerging Redevelopment character areas were given the highest priority for the Downtown 2040 Plan.

#### 1. Core Commercial Area

- Near term improvements include street resurfacing (Division, 1st Ave S, and 2nd St NE (Wide St) with an emphasis on lower maintenance asphalt surface rather than pavers; suggest using reclaiming pavers to delineate the crosswalks in this area.
- Wide Street could be re-aligned as a typical street section that would provide shorter, safer crossing distances and allow more parking in the Farmers Market area while creating a flexible, special events surface.
- Streetscape improvements should include tree planting, appropriately sized landscape planters, and informational signage for parking and destinations.
- Parking improvements include re-striping the Farmers Market lot and central “core” lots to yield more usable parking spaces; an option would convert the former Napa parts store site into additional parking supply.

#### 2. Lakeside Commercial Area

- Near term improvements include MN DOT Hwy 25 rebuild that will provide additional lakefront open space and safer pedestrian crossing (including a possible pedestrian underpass) and possible addition of a lakeside marina for visitor boat parking.
- Add parking to the area by converting 1 St S into a ‘parking street’.
- Redevelopment opportunities include the HRA lot that could accommodate a new community center (or other uses); Lakeview Mall +HRA parking lot into a mixed-use building facing 1st Ave S with plaza/patio facing the lake.
- Potential for the former Wells Fargo bank site as a future post office location or residential redevelopment.

#### 3. Emerging Redevelopment Area

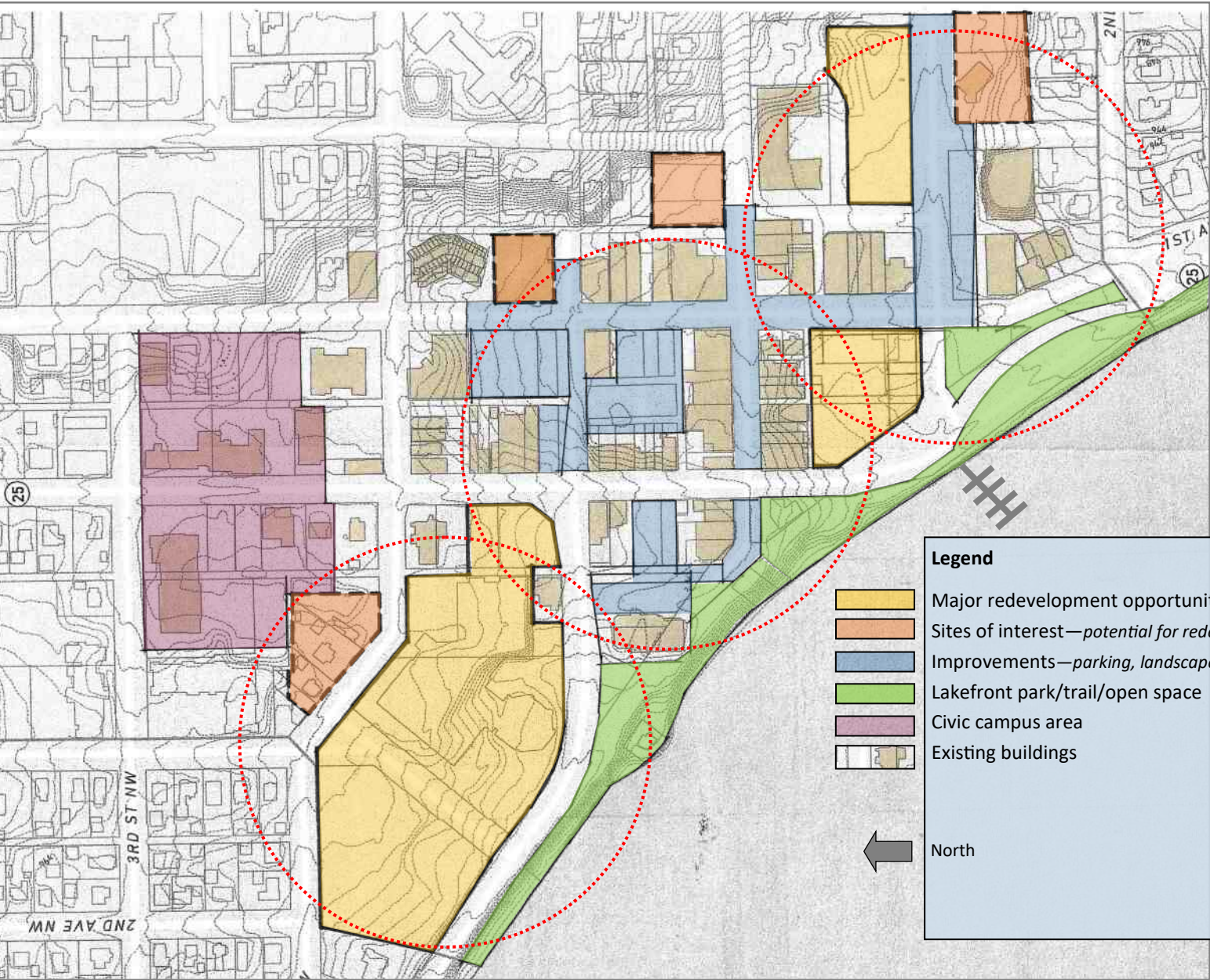
- Wright County site may be redeveloped with a focus on a mix of land use investments to support the downtown vitality and economy; the site could: a) accommodate lake-oriented development; b) could include a community center on a portion of the site; and/or c) support a mix of uses including residential, office and retail.
- When Wright County has moved, dedicate parking east of library for library patrons; convert west parking as part of larger lakefront linear park/open space; possibility to acquire the rental residential and House of Lo as part of the lakefront park/open space system.
- Various parcels northside of 2nd St NW are proposed to be redeveloped as medium density residential apartments or possibly other uses.
- Commercial/retail use on County parcel at NW corner of Co 35 and Central Ave.

#### 4. Civic Campus Area

- Maintain city campus of fire, police and administration buildings.
- Potential to relocate post office beyond 2027.
- Possibility to replace the community center in the future.
- Should the community center and city hall be relocated, those sites could be redeveloped



Chapter 2 Ideas & Opportunities



2.6 Framework Diagram

The Framework illustrates the key areas and opportunities which organize the broader strategies and recommendations discussed in Chapter 3. The Downtown 2040 Plan will focus on this framework as a guide to direct more specific details for the character areas, organization and implementation.



## Chapter 2 Ideas & Opportunities

### 2.7 Vision Statement

The Stakeholder Focus Group met over multiple meetings during the summer to review and consider a variety of ideas and proposals, eventually refining a clear direction for the plan. They also provided feedback on a number of key words that were used to craft a vision statement. Six descriptors were prioritized at the June 24 Stakeholder Group meetings.

**Connected** – physically to the lake (via a prominent public realm); socially to the city as a whole and pragmatically address the needs of all ages of the community.

**Vibrant** – new businesses and retail are supported; and the downtown will maintain a variety of goods and services.

**Active** – support a variety of events, services, and uses.

**Progressive** – plan will support modern standards, regulations and practices as well as consistent enforcement of current policies and regulations.

**Unique** – downtown is a regional destination (not Hwy 55) that will offer something for everyone.

**Charming** – downtown is the historic center of Buffalo; the plan seeks to reinforce and highlight its built environment strengths and opportunities

### Vision Statement

*Our downtown is a connected, active and unique place; as it grows it will become a more active neighborhood and a charming destination that will support residents of all ages, businesses of all types and visitors in all seasons.*



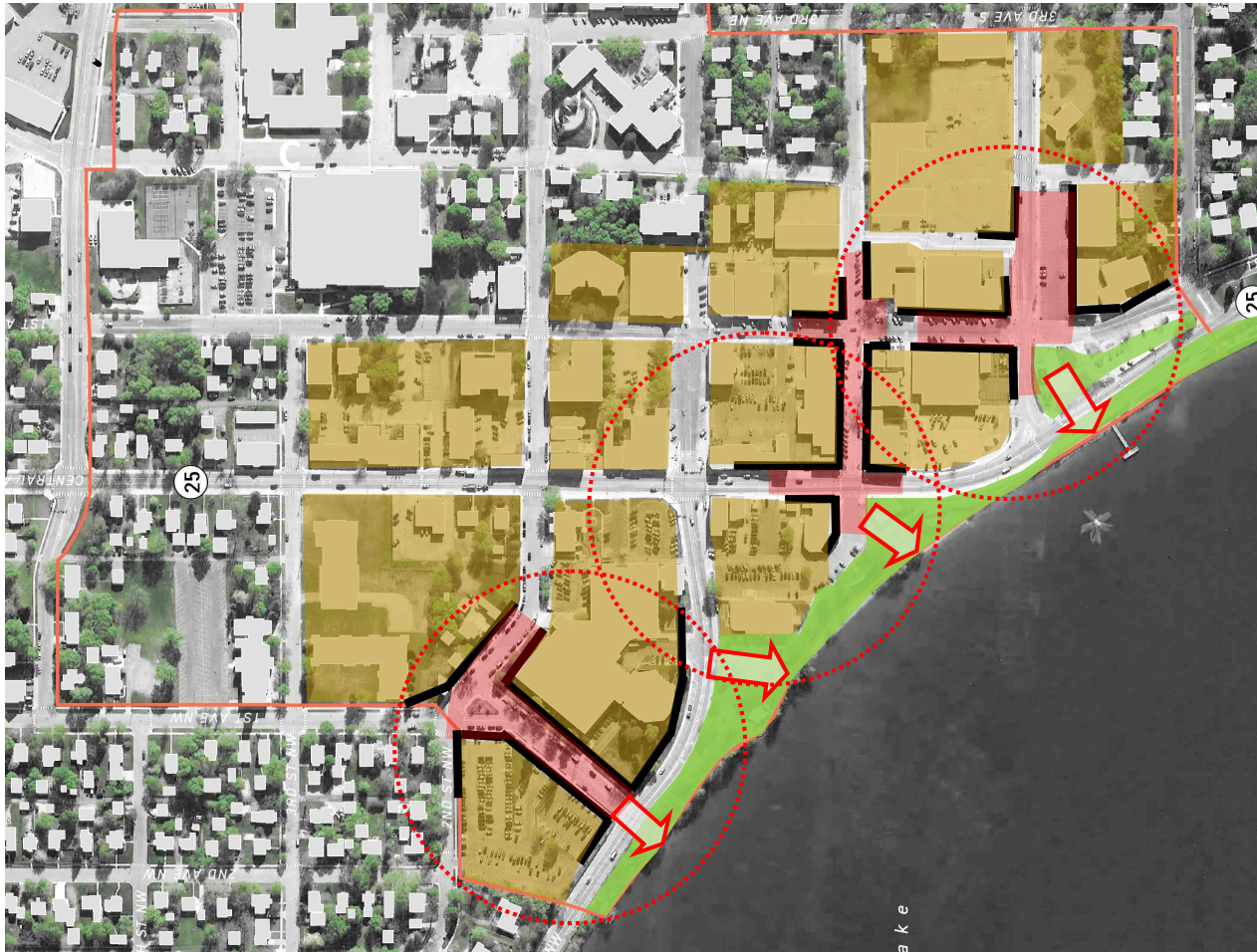
Credit: Buffalo Chamber of Commerce

## Chapter 3

### Planning Framework



## Chapter 3 Planning Framework



### 3.1 Land Use Concept—The Big Idea

The “big idea” that provides the organizing focus for the plan is a consistent lakefront corridor that features a more connected and usable public amenity. This would provide a prominent lakefront public space and physically reinforce Buffalo as a lakefront downtown. The land use concept represents a long term vision of how the downtown could possibly respond to development, reinvestment, growth and change. As an aspirational policy we realize not all recommendations will be realized. The Plan is not necessarily a program to spend public dollars. Its aim is to not compete with the market place but to guide and regulate private investment as it happens over time.



^ Today most of the highest valued sites along the lakefront or with views of the lake are used for surface parking (shown in red).



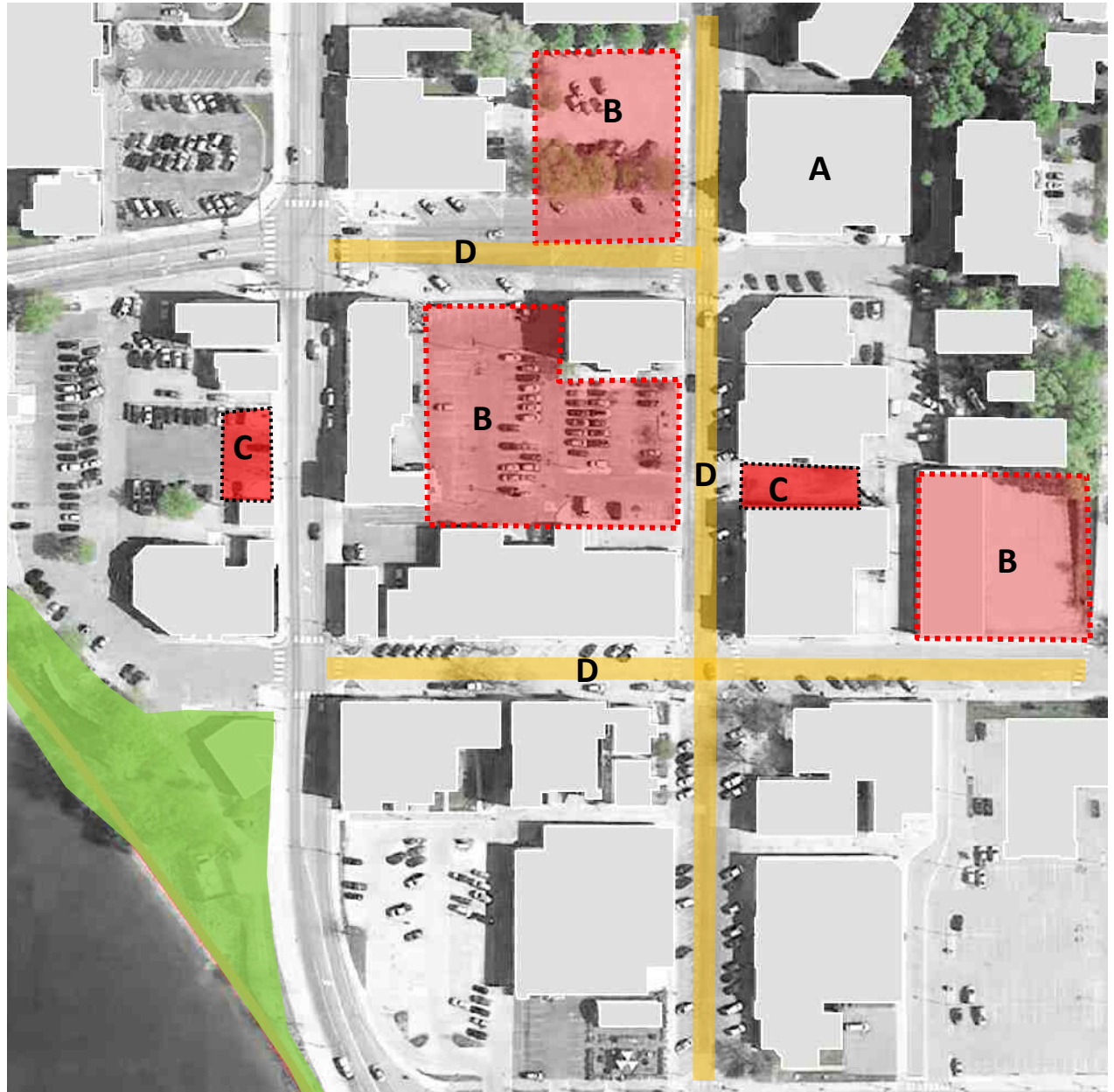
## Chapter 3 Planning Framework

### 3.2 Core Commercial Area

The land use concept is focused on maintaining and enhancing this environment through the use of phased street and streetscape updates, adding to the parking supply and promoting strategic infill opportunities. Key streets are due for resurfacing so this would be a good time to also update planters, furniture, signage, landscape and lighting.

An initial study to convert the former Buffalo Cinema has evolved into an effort to combine the interests of the Buffalo theater arts and supporters of a new community center. The former cinema building is privately owned and this plan does not propose a particular use; the owner and the marketplace will eventually determine a new use for this building

- A: Possible Buffalo Theater reuse
- B: Parking lot /supply improvement options
- C: Potential infill opportunities
- D: Street paving, crosswalks and streetscape



^ Shopfront on Central Avenue

## Chapter 3 Planning Framework

### Core Area Parking Analysis

Based on a more detailed analysis, it may be necessary to provide additional parking supply in the core area with the assumption that the City would lead this effort. Additional public parking should only be based on management best practices, including:

- Employees/employers should be strategic about parking, e.g. all downtown employees must park in designated locations (e.g. Farmers Market lot) during first weekends or other special events.
- Employers/employees should not park in front of or adjacent to their business location.
- City and Chamber could agree to designate required 'employee' parking lots such as the Farmers Market lot or the HRA site on 1st St S.

A: Farmers Market lot

B: Central lot

C: South lot

### Generalized Parking Requirements

1) Total building square feet (estimated) = 197,487 sf (within red boundary)

2) Parking required @ 4 spaces/1000 sf = 790 spaces \* (generalized per the zoning code)

3) Current spaces (on & off street) = 677 spaces

4) Difference:  $790 - 677 = 113$  spaces needed

\* parking calculation is based on general retail requirements of 1 space for every 250 gross square feet; restaurant and office space are calculated differently.





## Chapter 3 Planning Framework

### Farmers Market Lot

Today the Farmers Market lot contains approximately 40 spaces that are accessed from 1st Ave NE and the alley. It has a somewhat disconnected relationship to the core business area and isn't always a visibly recognizable choice for visitors parking in downtown. By re-configuring 1st St NE as a typical two way street and utilizing the full depth of the parcel dimensions the lot could be redesigned to: a) accommodate up to 75 spaces (a net of 35 spaces) and b) could become more visually and physically connected to the central parking area and nearby shops.

A—Existing trees

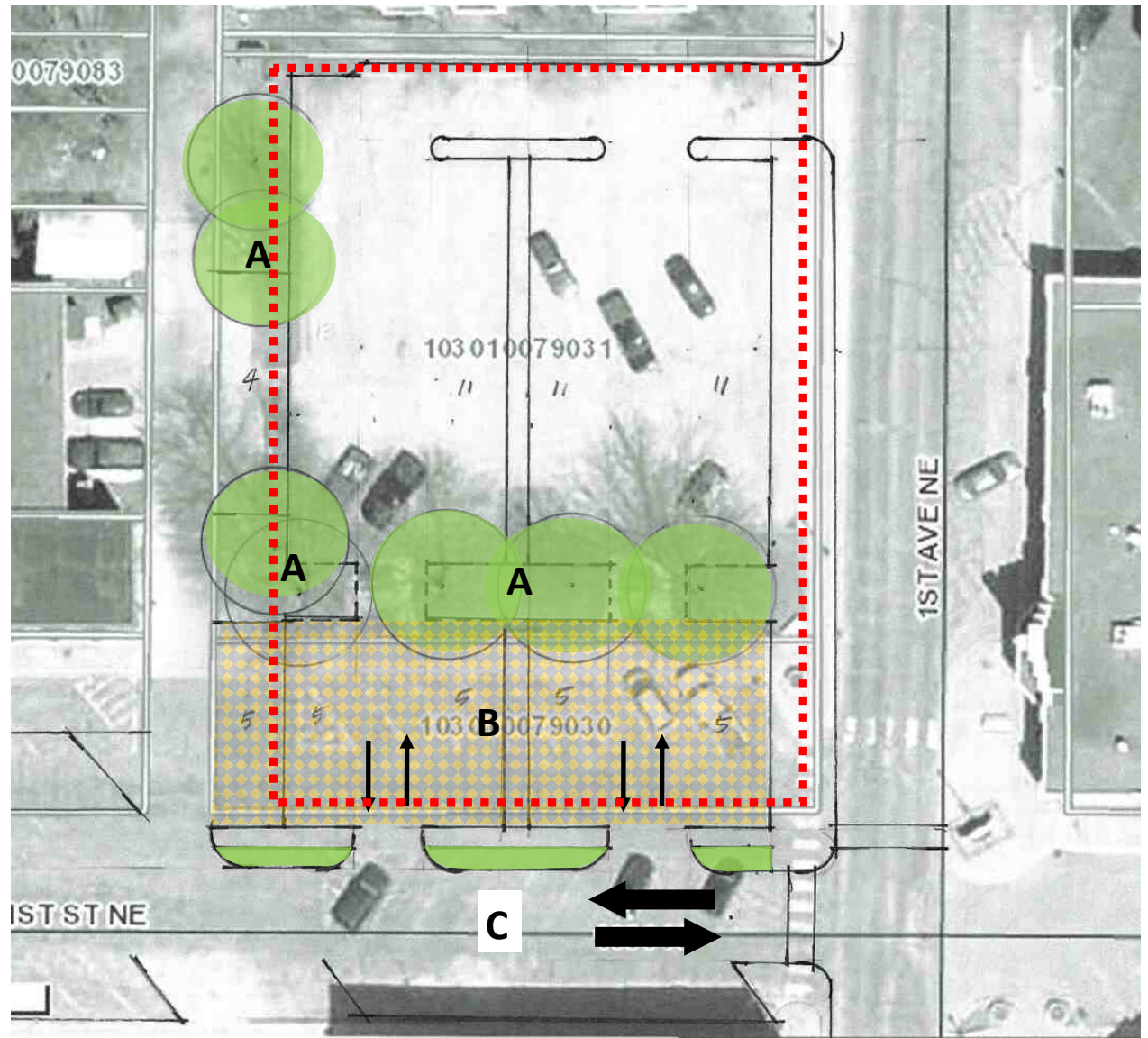
B—Special paving for events and markets

C—Re-align 1st St NE as typical as two 11' moving lanes

D—Potential 1 level parking ramp shown in red outline



^ A small, 1 level parking ramp in downtown Waconia (accessed at grade in front; the second level from the alley) could be a model for Buffalo.





Chapter 3 Planning Framework

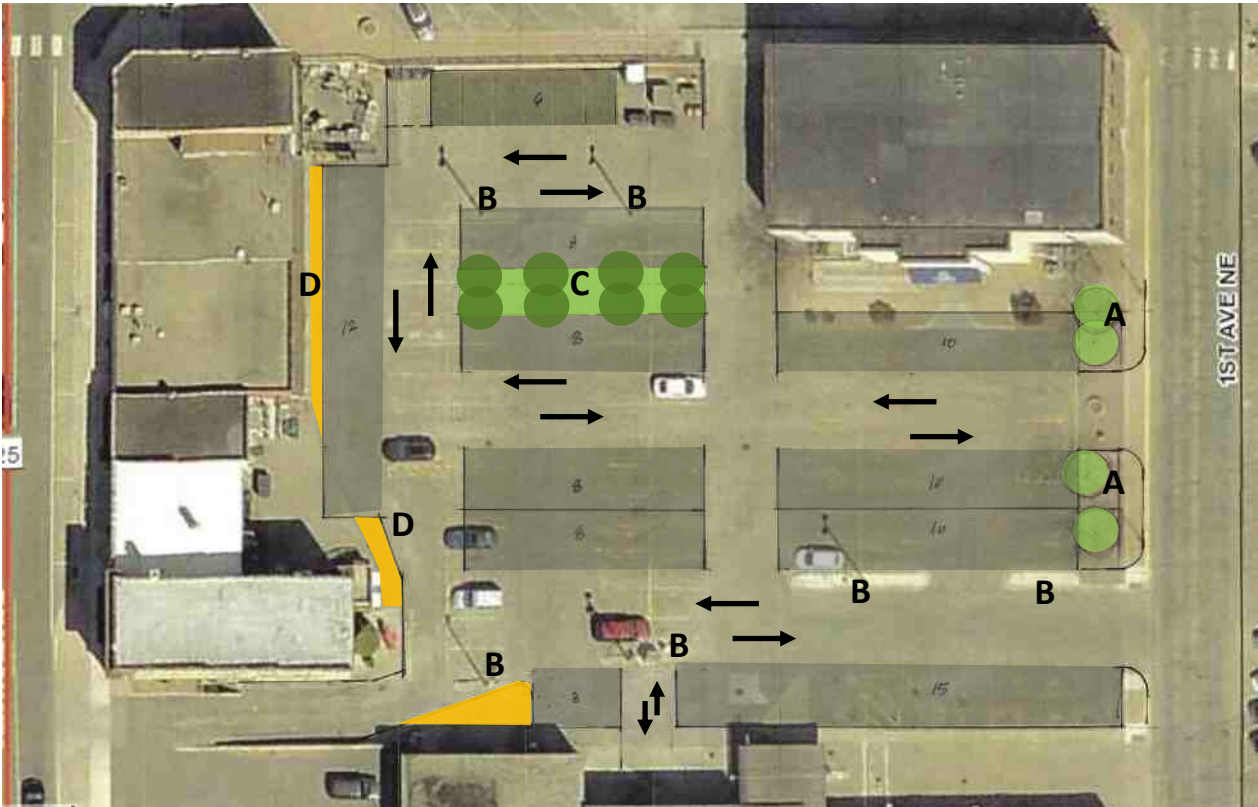
Central Parking Lot

The central public parking lot contains approximately 90 spaces. After a mill and overlay, a simple re-striping/re-organization could potentially add an additional 10 spaces for a total of 100 spaces. Some existing lighting standards and curbs would need to be relocated as well as electrical meters/equipment. A common area for additional landscape is also shown on the plan.

- A: Existing trees
- B: Lighting standards/curbs/equipment to be relocated
- C: Possible common landscape area
- D: Additional patio/sidewalk area (yellow area)



^ Discrete landscape plantings and furnishings can enliven a parking lot; overhead lighting should direct light downward toward the subject area.

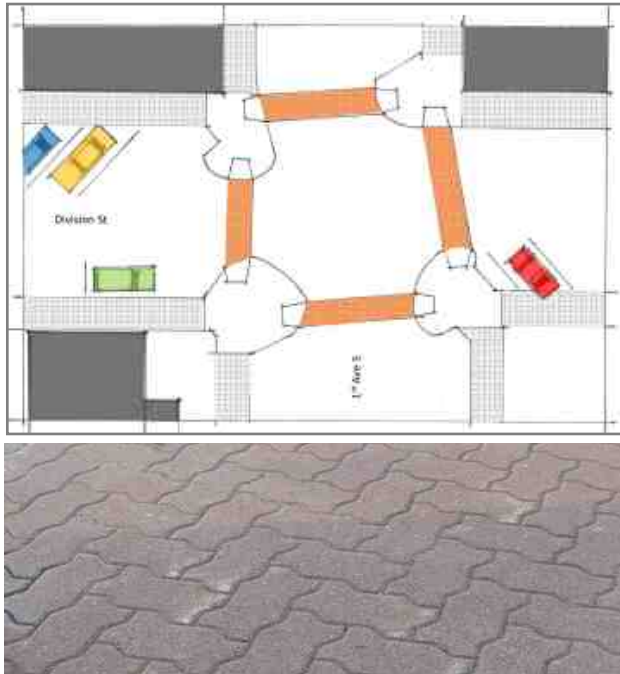


< A landscape enhancement study was prepared for the central lot. Source: Northwest Associated Consultants

## Chapter 3 Planning Framework

### Street Improvements

The plan focuses on maintaining and enhancing this environment through the use of street repaving consistent with the city's existing Pavement Management Plan. The idea would be to use a standard asphalt surface for the repaving project but highlight the pedestrian crossings with pavers as shown below.



^ One cost effective idea is to reuse the pavers from Division Street for highlighting crosswalks in downtown.





## Chapter 3 Planning Framework

### 3.3 Lakeside Commercial Area

This area has the most visibility and access to the lakefront in downtown and includes several development and redevelopment opportunities. The general land use idea is to take advantage of the visual and physical relationship to the lake with pedestrian & shopper friendly streets, addition of green space, public restrooms/welcome station and additional parking. Key sites are expected to be redeveloped over time. Some sites (C and D) identified for redevelopment are in private ownership and it will depend on these owners as to how and when these sites will change. And as has been the case in the past the HRA will look for willing buyers to develop their sites in response to the Plan and the marketplace.

Option A/B: Community Center or retail/residential

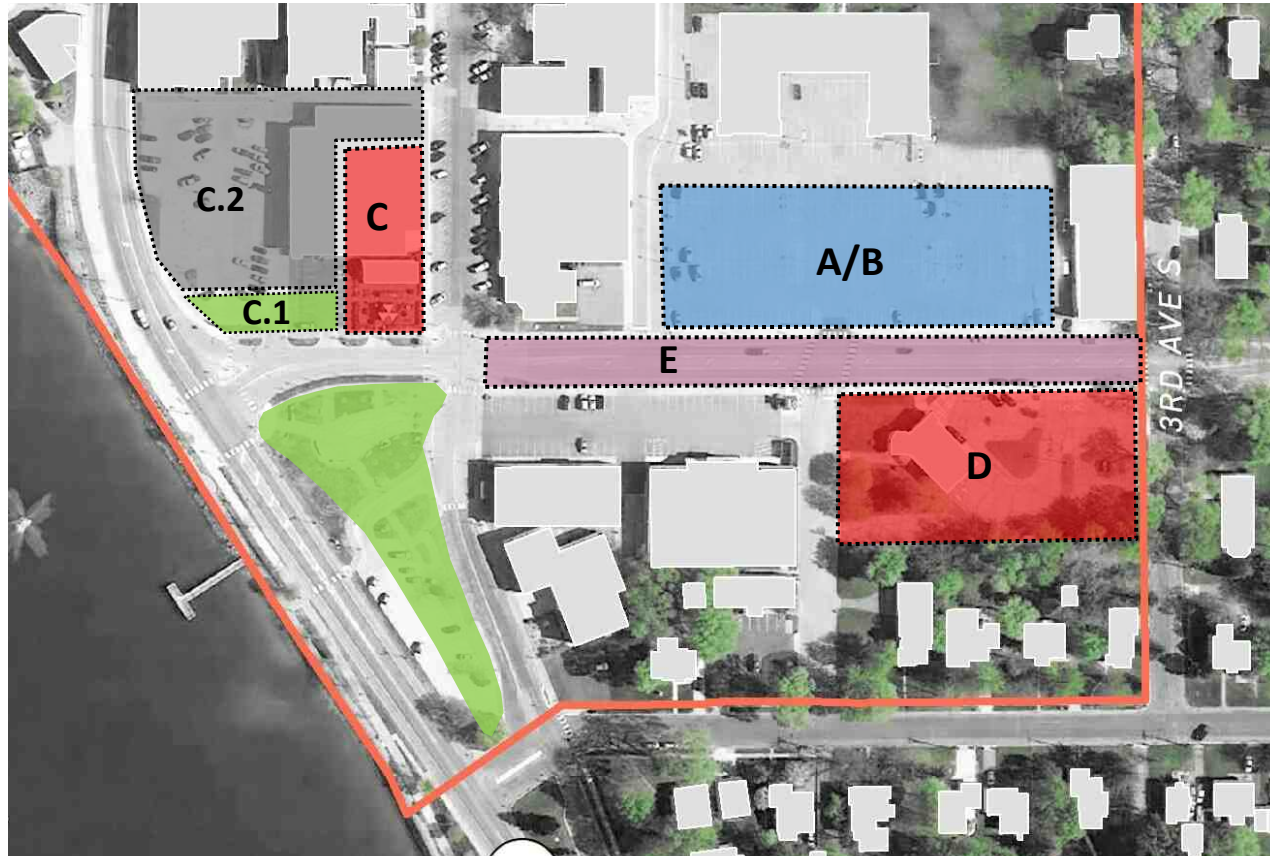
Option C: HRA+Lakeview Mall redevelopment area

Option C.1: Lakefront plaza/open space

Option C.2: Reconfigured surface parking

Option D: Former bank site

Option E: Parking Street



< Parking street arrangement in downtown River Falls, WI



## Chapter 3 Planning Framework

### Lakeside Commercial Development Options

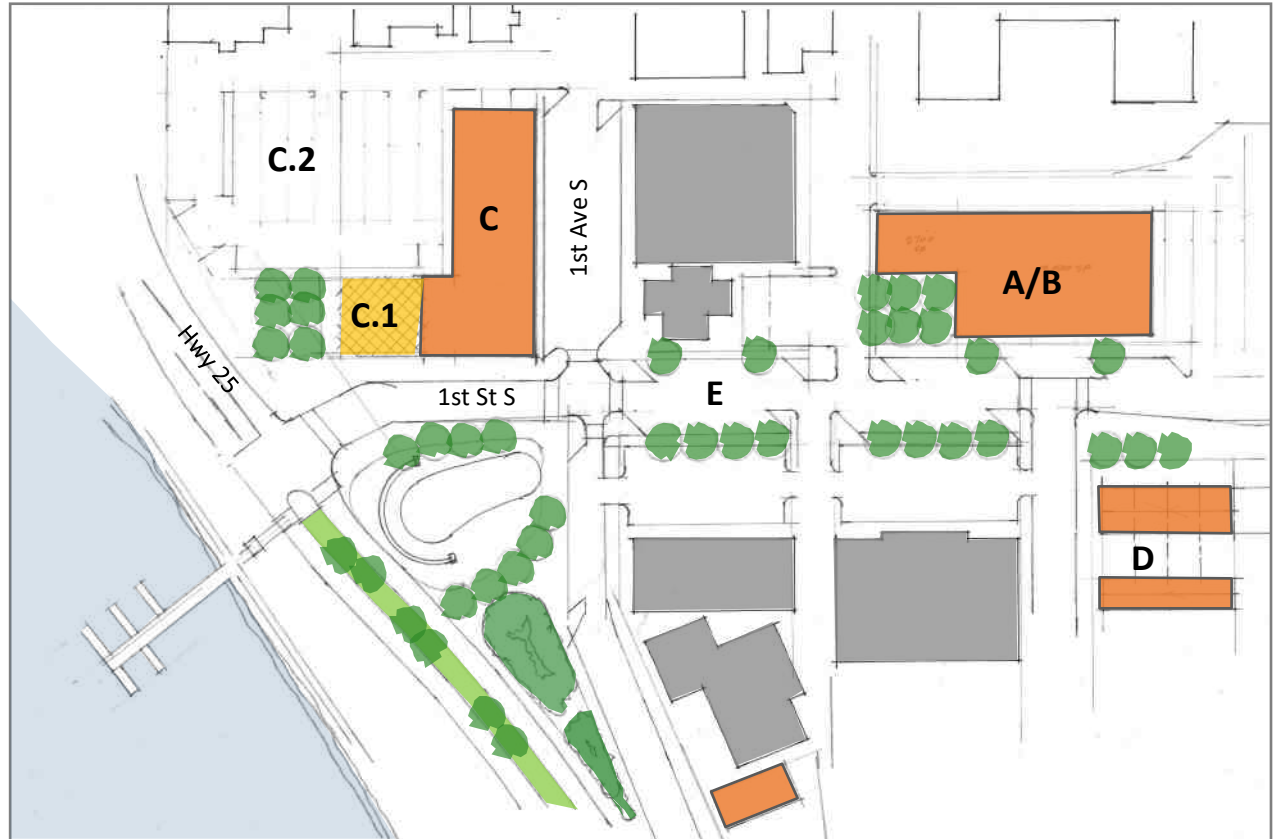
Option A: On the HRA owned site a Community Center program could be developed with some parking supply east of the building. The building could have gathering /event space with views of the lake looking out over a small public green.

Option B: A second option for this site is for a combination of commercial/residential use as a mixed-use building (if market supported) or a smaller commercial use and separate residential development.

Option C: The HRA+Lakeview Mall redevelopment would front onto 1st Ave S and turn the corner at 1st St S terminating with a lake-oriented plaza/patio [C.1] and reconfigured surface parking [C.2].

Option D: The former Wells Fargo site is somewhat under-utilized and could possibly be a location to accept the post office or as a residential site.

Option E: The parking street provides more diagonal parking supply in this area while adding additional streetscape plantings.



*Residential and mixed use building types  
would be appropriate for this area >*

## Chapter 3 Planning Framework



### 3.4 Emerging Redevelopment Area

The Wright County Government Center moving out of downtown creates an opportunity for new development on the lakefront and frontage on Central Avenue. Feasibility studies by the County indicate that the existing buildings are not considered a positive return on investment for the required deferred maintenance and necessary upgrades. The land use concept anticipates a full redevelopment that would include a mix of mostly tax-bearing uses and takes advantage of the desirable lakefront and lakeview parcels.

Four options are described on the following pages all of which have varying degrees of feasibility and all are subject to how the for-profit development market could support and implement.

[A] West parcel = 2.3 acres

[B] East parcel = 4.2 acres

[C] North lots (combined) = 1 acre

Chapter 3 Planning Framework



Land Use Option A

Multi-family & mixed-use focus. This option could support a higher density and unit count of multi-family residential as well as retail/office/commercial uses. The Wright County study showed yields of 394 to 489 units of housing and up to 18,000 SF of commercial/retail.



Land Use Option B

Residential with community center. Residential is the emphasis in this option but some of the land is focused on supporting a multi-use community center with views of the lake and ample parking.



Land Use Option C

Neighborhood scale development. This option includes a variety of residential development with a focus on neighborhood scale development facing the existing neighborhood residential. Neighborhood scale development can include attached units such as cluster housing, townhouse and rowhouse buildings.

**Land Use Legend**

Neighborhood scale residential

Multi-family residential

Public/community use

Open space

Commercial/retail



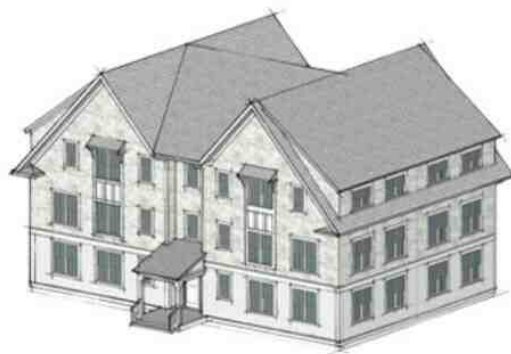
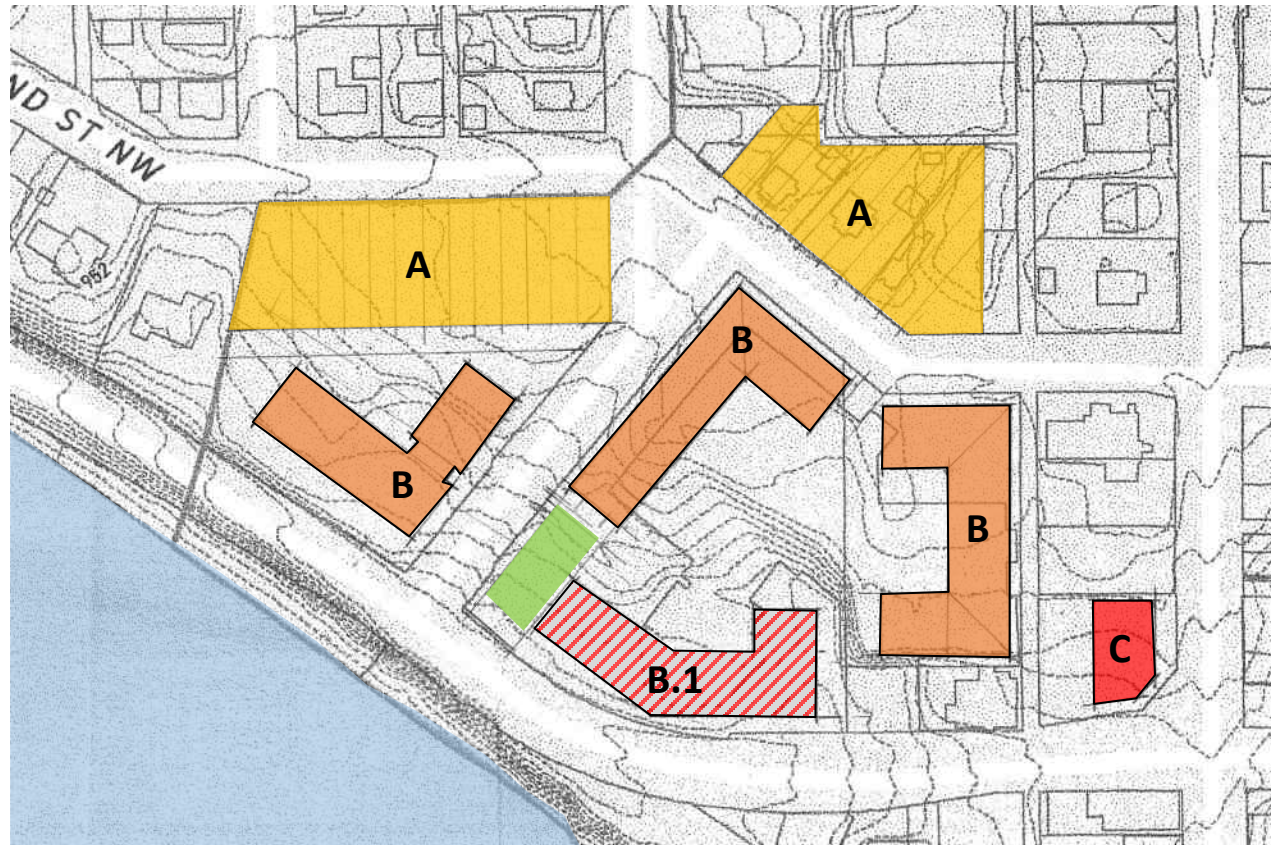
## Chapter 3 Planning Framework

### Land Use Option A

This option shows an emphasis on multi-family housing that takes advantage of highly visible and desirable lakefront real estate. A neighborhood friendly development (in scale and height) of attached single family units face the existing residential blocks. A small office and/or commercial building is shown at the corner of Central Ave and County 35.

The site occupies a desirable location with lakefront and lake-view parcels. New development should maximize this amenity so that public connections to the lakefront are maintained and views provide value for all property.

- A: Townhouse/rowhouse type
- B: Multi-family type
- B.1: Mixed use residential
- C: Commercial/office



< Design of multi-family and mixed-use buildings can relate to surrounding residential with pitched roofs, street fronting gables, dormers and porches as well as color and use of similar materials.



Chapter 3 Planning Framework

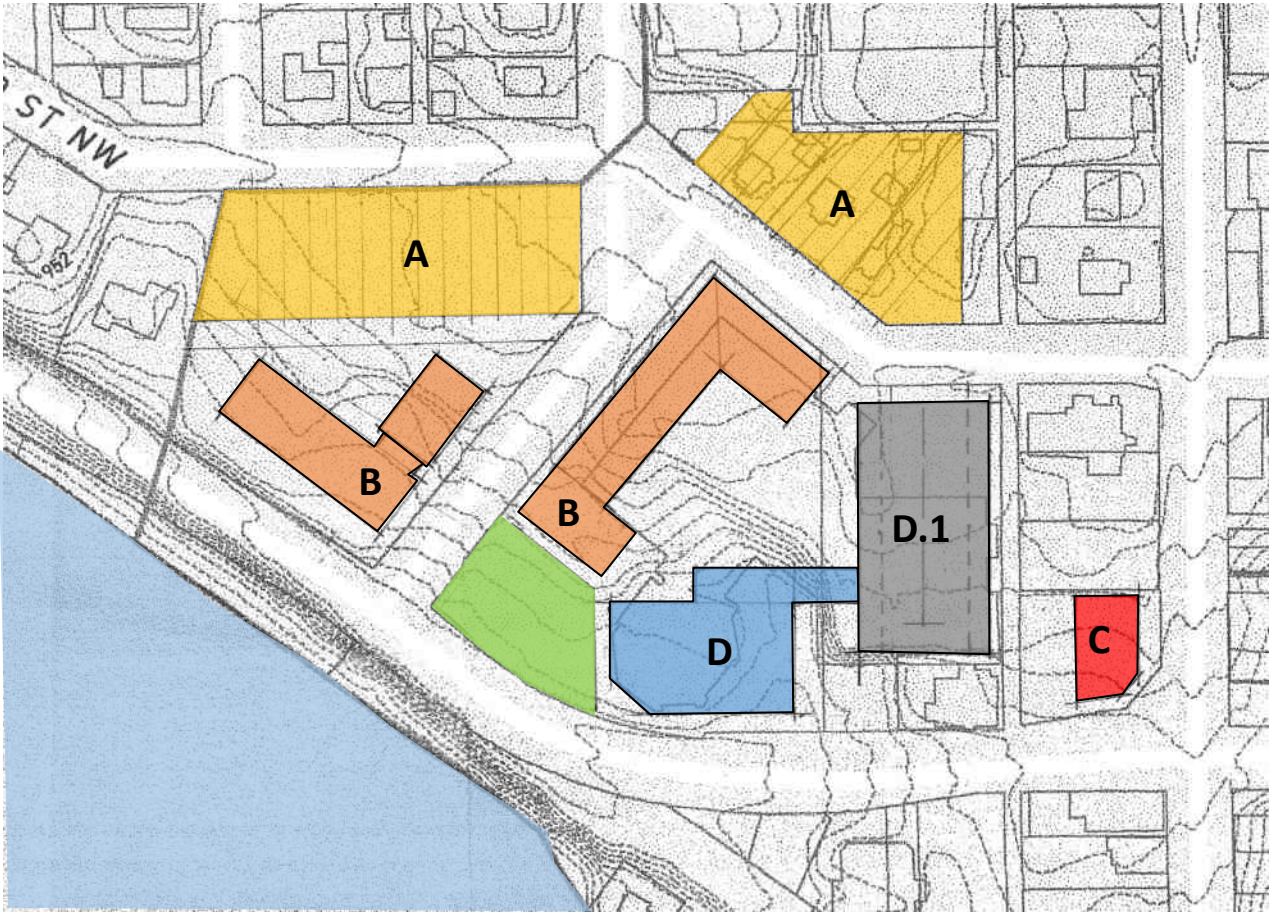
Land Use Option B

This option emphasizes multi-family housing and includes a new community center (with dedicated parking) on the south-side of the county government parcel. The public and private development programs are organized by a ‘lakefront’ park that maintains an existing open space on the site. Parking for the community center is located internal to the site and if built as two levels could supply about 200 parking spaces.

- A— Townhouse/rowhouse type
- B— Multi-family type
- C— Commercial/office
- D— Community Center
- D.1—Parking



^ Existing open space on the government center site.

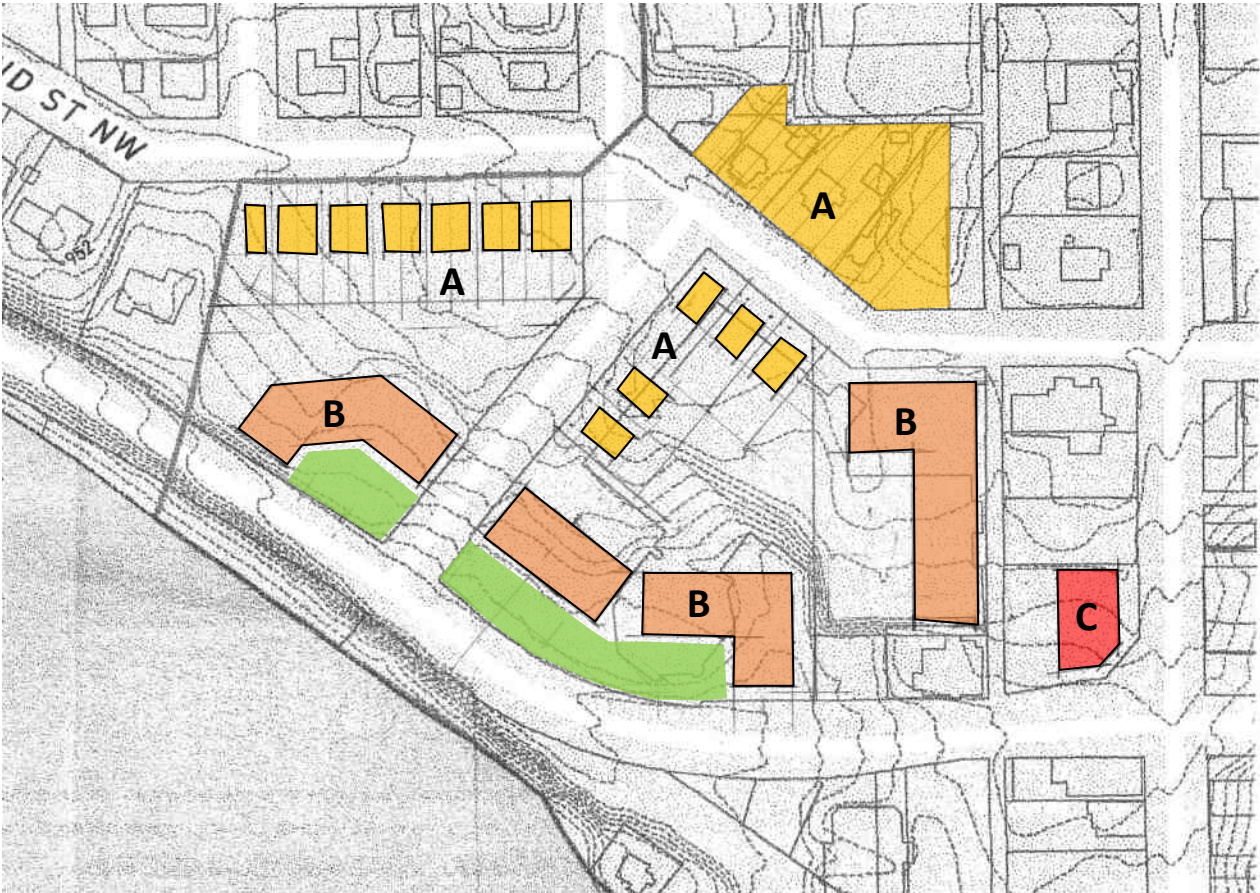




Chapter 3 Planning Framework

Land Use Option C

This option shows a proposed neighborhood scale residential development along 2nd St NW and multi-family uses facing the lake along County 35. New residential development should respond to the scale and character of the existing neighborhood.



- A— Townhouse/rowhouse type
- B— Multi-family type
- C— Commercial/office

^ Development of the site could recognize and respond to the existing character of the neighborhood including height, scale, roof forms, window proportion, porches, stoops and modest front yard setbacks.



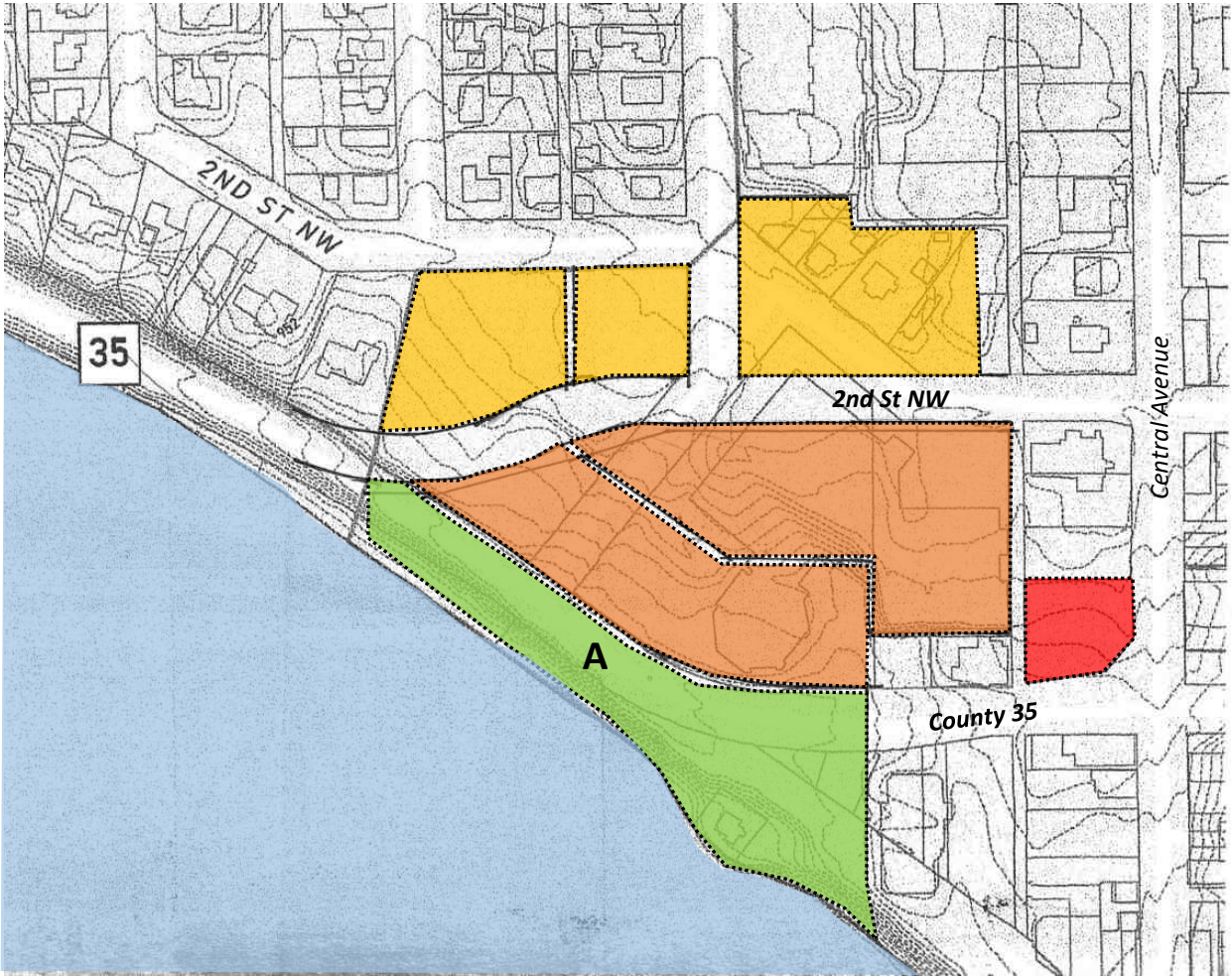
Chapter 3 Planning Framework

Land Use Option D: County Rd 35 Realignment

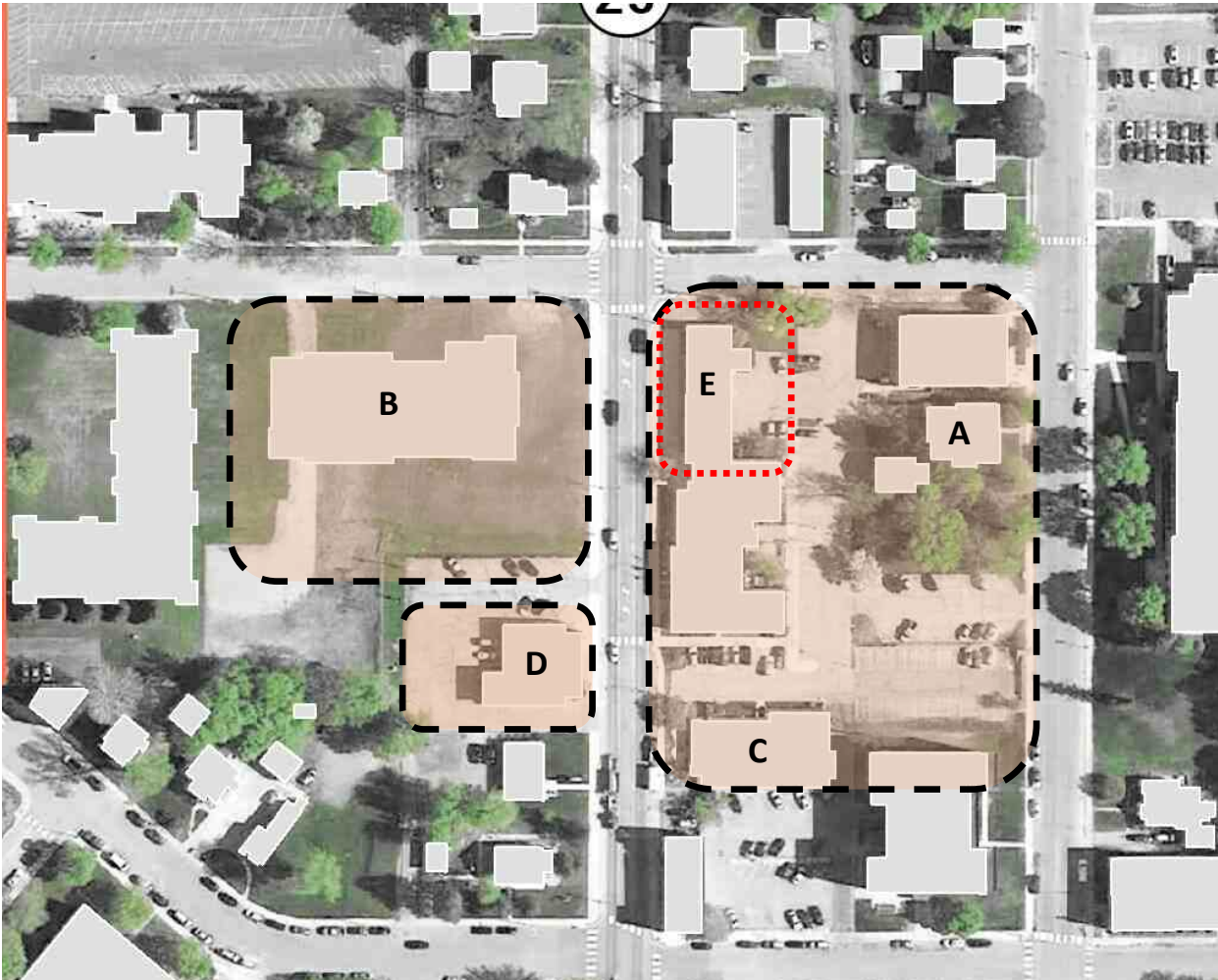
This is a compelling option proposed from the Stakeholder Group that shifts County 35 north from the lakefront and aligns with 2nd St NW and the Central Avenue intersection. This re-alignment creates the opportunity to have a significant new lakefront park [A], sort-of the western “bookend” to Sturges Park. A cost benefit analysis would need to be prepared to compare the implication of moving the road (including the signalized intersection) versus the value of additional developable land.

Land Use Legend

- Neighborhood scale residential
- Multi-family/mixed-use
- Public/community use
- Park/Open space
- Commercial/retail



## Chapter 3 Planning Framework



### 3.5 Civic Campus Area

This area has been home to fire, police and city hall for decades; the city has invested in the police department building, has acquired adjacent land for a possible additional parking [A] and is building the new fire station [B] on the west side of Central Avenue. This area also includes the community center, post office and chamber of commerce offices.

The land use concept is to maintain this area as a civic campus for the duration of the plan. If the community center were to move, this site would be available for redevelopment (probably as another community use or residential) [C]. There has been talk that the post office could move as well leaving a parcel for redevelopment [D]. One possibility is to relocate the post office into the Lakeside Commercial area on 1st St S.

The existing fire station site [E] can be considered for redevelopment in the future and as an interim parking in the mean time.



## Chapter 3 Planning Framework



### 3.6 Community Center Options

Two options for locating a new community center are shown. No decision has been made about this but the Downtown Plan suggests at least two locations that could support various programs.

A—This option would utilize a portion of the Wright County government center site with the potential to support a larger activity program and possibly include some spaces that have views of the lake. The City would need to negotiate with the County for the needed land area (an area for parking is shown in the gray rectangle).

B—This option utilizes the HRA owned site on 1st St S and though this site is limited in depth and dimension it does contain enough area to support a modest program that could feature a community gathering space as well as a variety of smaller class rooms, meeting spaces and some off-street parking.

Note: Later in this year the Downtown Arts group and supporters of a new community center combined resources and are now considering how to combine the needs of each into a single, joint-use facility. In any case the sites considered here could support a version of this combined program on either site.



## Chapter 3 Planning Framework



### 3.7 City Hall/Council Meeting Space Options

Should the city have the need to replace or modify the current city hall there are some options in and near the civic campus area that could potentially support the building program. These are just very preliminary ideas about possible site locations; facility use and programming would need to be studied before any decisions about a best location would be made. There is no timeline associated with this option.

A—This option would locate the city hall in the former fire station site. A benefit of this option is that the land is owned by the city and is adjacent to the current city hall allowing a phased approach that could replace some or all of the current facility. Parking would be carved out of the remaining site.

B—If the Post Office were to relocate at some point in the future the city hall could be built on this site, part of which is owned by the city. This option maintains a civic use in the area and could possibly incorporate the city hall spaces and the chamber offices. Parking might be tight but could be combined with the parking area of the new fire station.

C—This option would keep the city hall on Central Avenue in a visible location and utilizes a portion of the Wright County government center parcel. Though maybe a little tight, this corner location helps anchor the core downtown area and there is ample area for parking (shown in gray outline) west of the site.



## Chapter 3 Planning Framework

### 3.8 Building & Design Guidelines

Building features as well as deferred maintenance and shopfront appearances can be improved incrementally. Shopfront character, paint and regular maintenance can go a long way in signaling that visitors and residents are welcome.



^ Building improvements can highlight a historic building with proper color, materials, window types and shopfront glazing. The Adara Home Health building is a good example of how owners and operators invested in their facilities with help from the city.



Brick is a very common material in downtown and should be considered for most commercial and multi-family buildings. Use on older buildings typically highlights the structure (expressed pilasters) and ornamental work at the parapet. Note the brick window arch and vertically proportioned window.



Brick can be mixed with complementary materials as long as there is a dominant type and color; note the metal panel that is used strictly as a complementary/secondary material.



Avoid renovations and additions that conflict with the character and primary materials of historic buildings. Awnings and canopies should work with the authentic architecture of shopfronts, window proportion and detailing.



Two recent era buildings at Division and 1st Ave S include brick details but also have front yards that are out of place in this downtown location.



Chapter 3 Planning Framework



These hanging slab signs are appropriately scaled for the Division Street shopping environment and could be standard for the retail/commercial core.



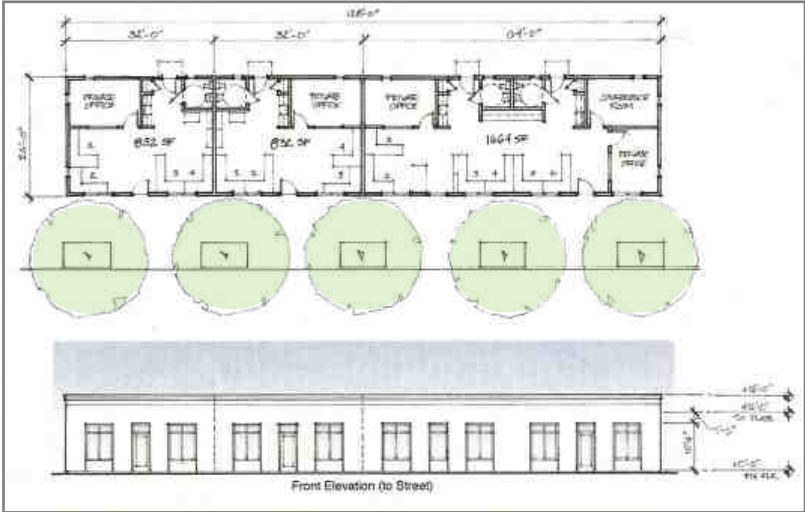
This vacant lot on 1st Ave S provides valuable opportunities for a liner building (see below), public restrooms, pop-up/seasonal uses, parking or improved as a green space in a downtown that has few such spaces.



The pedestrian sidewalk and crossing area need a more consistent physical treatment that is well designed, coordinated and works to improve the visual quality of the downtown environment.



Transparent shopfronts, visible entries, detailed cloth awnings and well proportioned sign band are all desirable examples for commercial/retail buildings. Image: Buffalo Chamber of Commerce



^ Shallow depth (26') "liner" building can easily fit into small lots or "line" a parking lot to provide incremental, affordable space.



Chapter 3 Planning Framework

Streetscape Details

Picking up on the black wrought iron of the Buffalo enclosure (at the former theater building) could be a theme to use for defining limited planting areas at street corners that would visually blend into the streetscape. This material could be used for benches, other street furnishings, outdoor dining boundaries and parking lot edges.



Signs & Wayfinding

Bolton & Menk have prepared wayfinding concepts that are ready to be implemented. Graphic: Bolton & Menk



## Chapter 4

### Implementation & Phasing



*Credit: Buffalo Chamber of Commerce*



## Chapter 4 Implementation & Phasing

### 4.1 Implementation

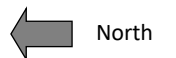
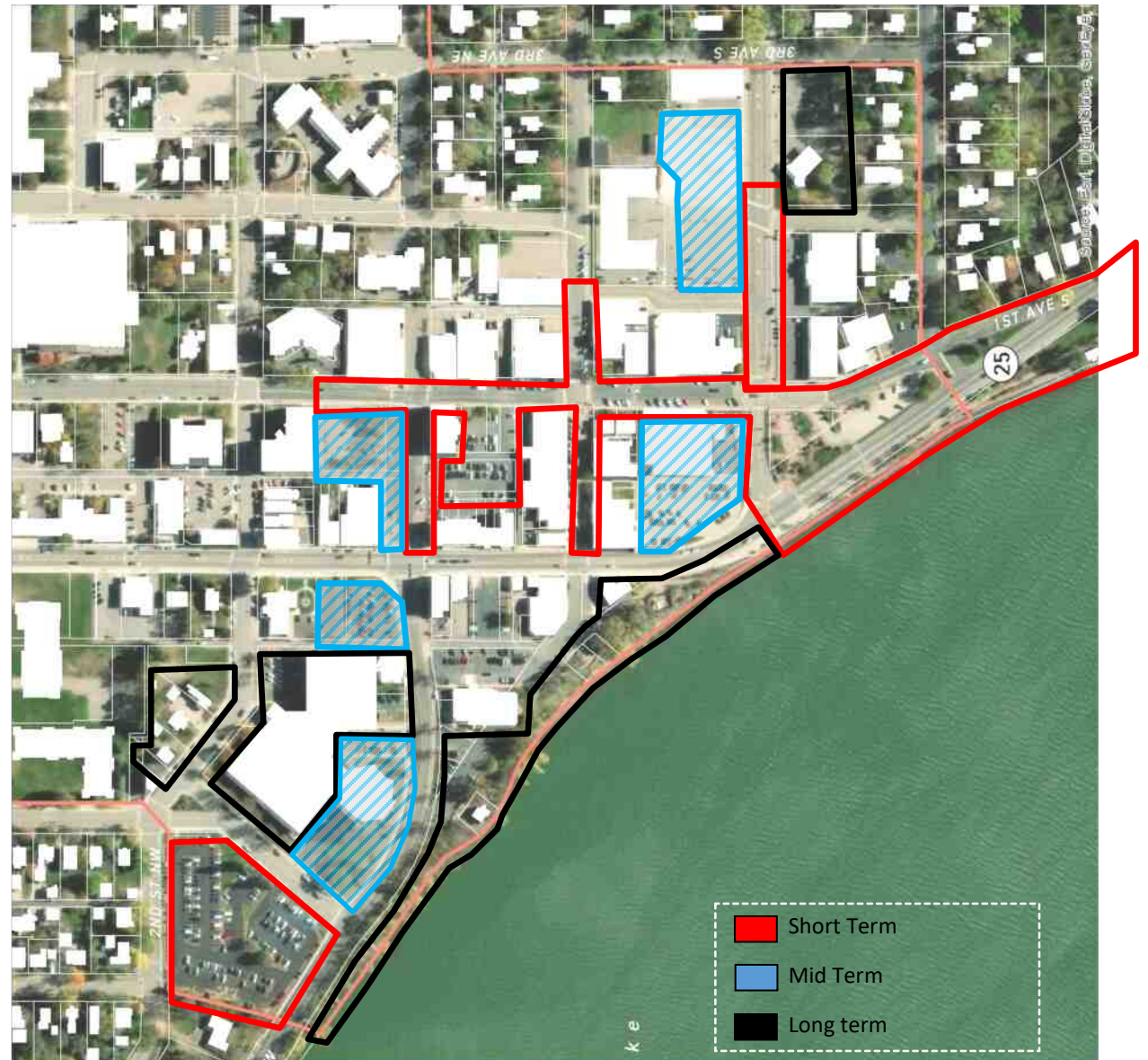
Implementation will be an on-going, month to month activity focused on guiding public and private investments to foster a residential and business supportive downtown. Building and maintaining a healthy and sustainable downtown requires a variety of tools, techniques and strategies. Key acquisitions, financial support, creative regulatory standards, redevelopment, best practices and regular maintenance are some of the key activities proposed to implement the 2040 Plan.

#### Generalized Phasing Diagram

**Short Term: Red Outline (0-5 years)** Public improvements in paving, parking, signage and streetscape in the short term will reinforce the destination qualities of downtown and support the private investment of businesses and services. This includes support for the Hwy 25 rebuild and investing in public improvements associated with the highway landscape and lakefront open space, trails and amenities. Downtown zoning could be revised and used as an incentive to support the first redevelopment on the Wright County site.

**Mid Term : Blue Outline (6-10 years)** Focus is on encouraging new investments such as a second phase of redevelopment for the Wright County site and the potential for one or more of the HRA sites to redevelop.

**Long Term: Black Outline (11-20 years)** Implementation will continue to anticipate additional new development on the Wright County site, a more complete realization of the consolidate lakefront and the possibility of operating a new community/arts center in downtown.

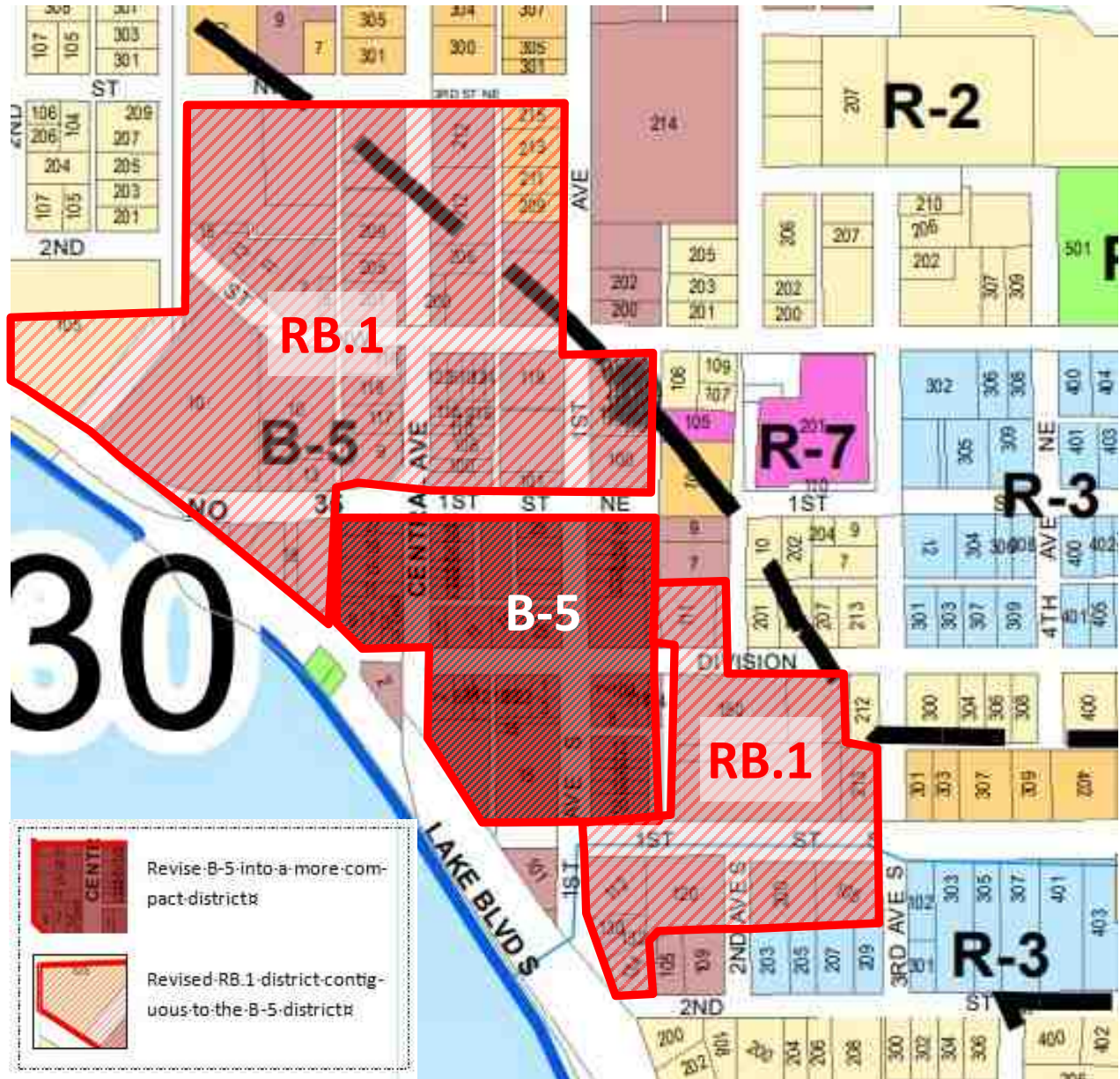




## Chapter 4 Implementation & Phasing

### 4.2 Initial Strategies

1. Revise the downtown B5 zoning into a more compact, commercial district and allow surrounding blocks to be zoned RB or some similar version (e.g., RB.1). This will indicate the city is ready for new investment, mainly residential near the core commercial district.
2. Consider preparing more performance based standards for the RB.1 in order to guide new multi-family buildings that are more in scale and character with downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.
3. Prioritize public investments including street repaving, pedestrian crosswalks and central parking lot improvements.
4. Work with businesses and the Chamber to put into place a parking management plan for employers and employees as a condition of the city making parking supply investments.
5. Work with the Chamber to find a suitable location for a public restroom facility in the core area and prepare a feasibility study that would look at a range of options.
6. Coordinate closely with MNDOT on the Hwy 25 project in order to deliver the best design and features that is supportive of the downtown businesses.
7. Prepare a more detailed downtown streetscape and street section design for core streets.
8. Maintain the Downtown Stakeholder Group and meet with them on a regular basis to coordinate implementation and celebrate key milestones.
9. Work with MN DNR and the local watershed organizations to understand current conditions of Buffalo Lake and to support studies and actions to make it more healthy and clean.



## Appendix

### Contents

Illustrative Diagram

Hwy 25 Concept Plan'

Community Center Study

Market & Economic Context: Grocery

March 10 Open House Summary

March 10 Participant Ideas

August 5 Stakeholder Summary



*Credit: Buffalo Chamber of Commerce*



## Illustrative Diagram

### Illustrative Diagram

#### Civic Campus Area

- 1 parking expansion on 1st Ave NE
- 2 decommission existing community ctr
- 3 expand city hall @ old fire station site
- 4 demo remaining city hall
- 5 new building on city hall site
- 6 add town square green space
- 7 new spec building

#### Emerging Redevelopment Area

- 10 neighborhood scale 2-unit bldg
- 11 multi-family development
- 12 multi-family development
- 13 multi-family development
- 14 commercial/office building
- 15 townhouse development
- 16 reuse county building/parking
- 16.1 redevelop as multi-family
- 17 potential acquisition for lakefront park

#### Core Commercial Area

- 19 install gateway monument signs
- 19.1 install info kiosk
- 20 repave/reconfigure Wide street
- 20.1 paver crosswalks
- 20.2 street trees
- 20.3 streetscape improvements
- 21 repave 1 Ave NE & S
- 21.1 paver crosswalks
- 21.2 street trees
- 21.3 streetscape improvements
- 22 repave Division St
- 22.1 paver crosswalks on Division
- 22.2 street trees
- 22.3 streetscape improvements
- 23 rebuild central parking lot
- 24 rebuild farmers mkt lot
- 25 potential acquisition for lakefront park
- 26 potential acquisition for public parking
- 26.1 parking lot improvements
- 27 infill development
- 28 infill development

#### Lakeside Commercial Area

- 30 parking improvements on 1st St S
- 31 lakefront improvements
- 31.1 boat dock
- 31.2 paths & trails



- 31.3 landscape & trees
- 32 community center
- 32.1 community center parking
- 32.2 HRA lot: parking only
- 33 redevelopment @ 25 & 1st St S
- 33.1 ground floor commercial/retail

- 33.2 market rate apartments
- 33.3 surface parking
- 34 infill @ Abundant Kitchen
- 35 redevelopment at Larson Building



## Hwy 25 Concept Plan



### Hwy 25 Concept Plan

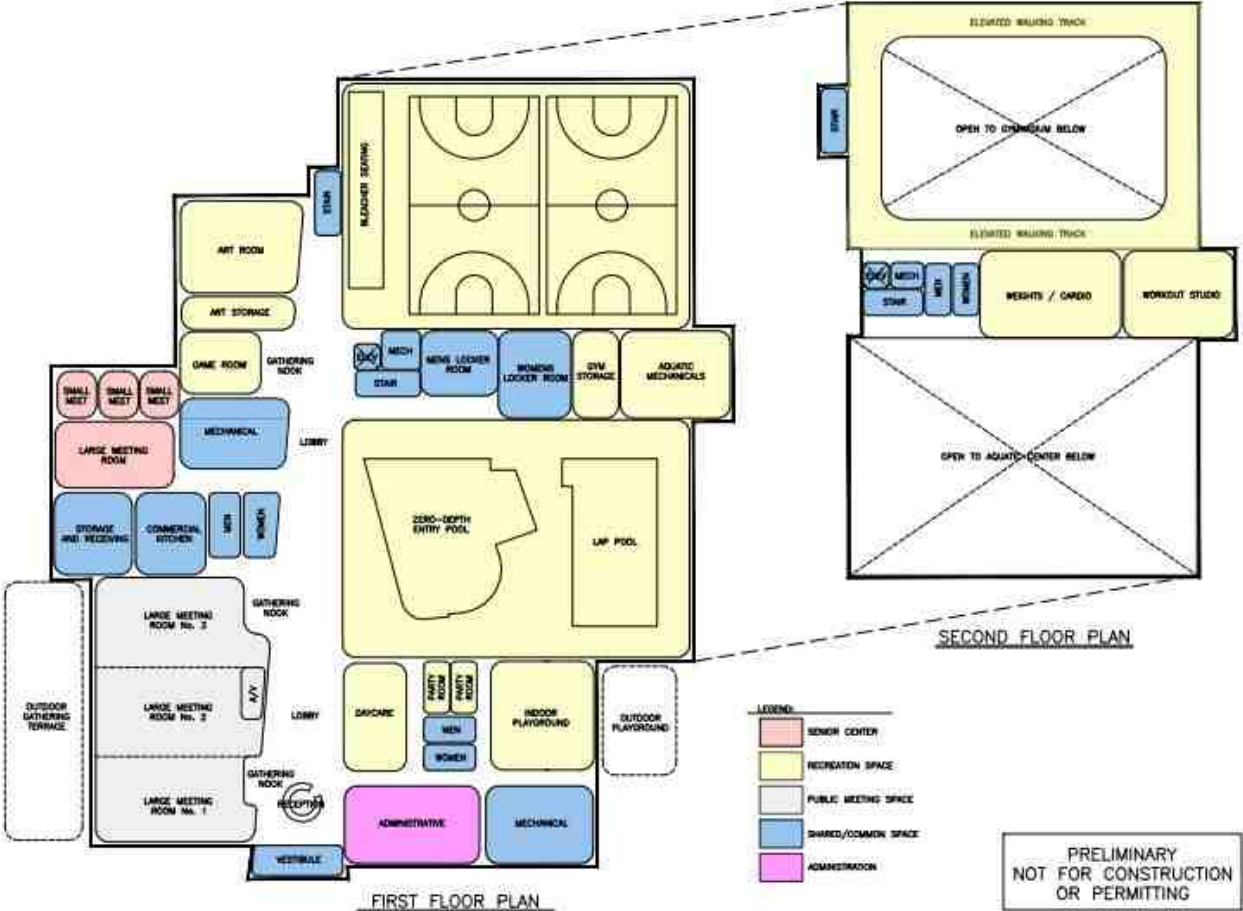
The Hwy 25 rebuild will bend the alignment east to allow for more useable open space on the lakefront and include a center planted median that would define safe pedestrian “corrals” for crossing the highway. Street trees will provide a sense of enclosure and help to slow traffic speeds. A possible pedestrian and bike underpass is shown just south of 2nd St S is still being evaluated for feasibility.

Community Center Study

Community Center Study

The idea of a new community center generated enough interest that the City Council commissioned a preliminary study that represents a broad “wish list” of uses and spaces. No decision has been made to-date about whether the City will move forward with a project; and a program or specific location has not been studied but the idea of a more extensive facility to support a community-wide range of ages and users would provide a significant destination to downtown.

A very preliminary study of a community center program included a broad range of activity spaces and recreational options. ➤





## Economic Context & Setting

### Market and Economic Context

A number of studies in the past few years have addressed market conditions, housing redevelopment and specialty grocery opportunities. The following pages provide summaries and excerpts from these studies with information that is more applicable to the downtown market.

#### 2016 Dakota Worldwide Grocery Store Study

In 2016 Dakota Worldwide prepared a market study for the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Buffalo that focused specifically on demand for a “fresh marketplace” (a grocery store that is heavily skewed towards perishables and convenience and thus captures a much higher percentage of sales from the food to go/prepared foods category as compared to a conventional stores).

Key findings of the study are as follows:

- > Physical attributes of the subject site were considered adequate for most grocery store concepts (e.g., availability of parking, nearby complementary uses, and ability to accommodate ingress and egress of the site).
- > The primary drawback of the site’s location is the limited traffic volumes along adjacent streets and roadways, which make capturing drive-by traffic or transient business challenging.
- > There are 12 competitive grocery stores in the Buffalo trade area. In particular, there are three stores in Buffalo (Cub Foods, Walmart, and Target) with a combined total of 168,000 square feet of grocery store space.

> Given the current and forecasted growth of households in the trade area (as of 2016) and the volume of sales captured by the competition, the study concluded that that a “fresh marketplace” concept on the site could generate approximately \$5-6 sales per square foot of space (the study noted ...that the average sales per square foot among trade area competitors was over \$11 per square foot).

> It was strongly suggested ... that any potential operator look closely at a pro forma to determine viability before making a decision to proceed.

> A natural food cooperative was not recommended for the site due to unfavorable trade area demographics.

#### 2017 Downtown Development Market Study (by HKGI)

The study analyzed demographics within a geographic area defined as a 15-minute drive from Downtown Buffalo. Market data for each land use type, such as total square footage, average vacancy, and average rents, was gathered and analyzed for the Downtown and the Highway 55 corridor in Buffalo. Key findings and conclusions:

- > The Coborn’s site is unlikely to attract another grocer.
- > Potential redevelopment of the downtown study area could include a small amount of retail (such as a coffee shop or a corner retail outlet), these parcels

are less likely to redevelop with “Main Street” retail, primarily due to their removed location, relative to the “heart” of downtown Buffalo and Highway 25.

> Downtown Buffalo will not be able to directly compete with the retail offerings found along the Highway 55/Highway 25 corridors.

> Downtown should position new retail offerings to provide something “different”, not found elsewhere in Wright County.

> Overall, the focus of the redevelopment of the parcels in the study area should center on residential land uses. Creating additional residential space in the Downtown area has the potential, if executed properly, to add energy and activity to the Downtown area.

#### Updated Conditions Since the 2016 and 2017 Market Studies

New or updated demographic and market data included in the previous market studies were reviewed to see if there has been a significant change in the conditions for supporting additional food-based goods and service in Downtown Buffalo.

##### *Population Growth*

The HKGI market study noted that the annual population growth rate for the trade area had averaged 0.8% from 2010 to 2016 and was projected to increase slightly to 0.9% from 2016 to 2021. Based on the most recent population estimates and projections from the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the rate of population growth has begun to slow down once again

## Economic Context & Setting

and will continue to slow-down through 2040. According to the State's data, Wright County's annual growth rate will decline from 0.7% in the early 2020s to less than 0.5% by 2040.

### *Downtown Employment*

During the 2016 and 2017 market studies, Wright County was one the largest employers in Downtown Buffalo and an important consideration in the potential to support retail businesses and, especially, food-based goods and services. With the phased relocation of the County's operations out of the Downtown over the next one to two years, this will have a significant impact on the Downtown. First, many small companies...will likely relocate; second, the number of visitors will dramatically decline; third, the employees who regularly ate or shopped downtown will dramatically decline.

### *Local Market Trends*

The HGKi study from 2017 noted that retail vacancy in Downtown Buffalo was generally on a downward trend and rents were on an upward swing. Since that time, vacancy in the downtown spiked briefly when the former Coburn's store was vacant, but then declined when the building was demolished and no longer part of the inventory. Rents have been stable since the 2017 market study. However, there has been limited leasing activity over the last two to three years, which makes it difficult to gauge whether this metric accurately reflects market conditions.

The vast majority of Buffalo's retail space is located along the Highway 55 and Highway 25 corridor. As the dominant retail district serving the City and the surrounding trade area, this area has experienced declining rents and increased vacancy in recent years. This is likely attributed to the slowdown in population growth. Many retailers invested heavily in Buffalo during the 2000s when population growth was exceptionally strong.

### *Findings and Conclusions*

Based on a review of recent market studies and the updated demographic and market data, we believe the conclusions from these previous studies remain relevant. Namely, that the potential support for food-based goods and services remains marginal in Downtown Buffalo over the near-term (one to three years) for the following reasons:

> The strong presence of a variety of food options along Highways 55 and 25 has a profound impact on the Downtown. The vast majority of the City's retail space (86%) is located along these highways, which are best suited to capture demand for everyday grocery and food needs.

> Population and household growth have slowed considerably for Buffalo and Wright County since 2010 and are projected to continue to slow down through 2040. Therefore, unlike the 2000s when rapid growth fueled investment in new retail spaces and offerings, new household growth in the trade area will be too

small to drive demand for additional groceries and other food-based retail.

> Latest statistics from CoStar indicate a weakening retail environment with a rising vacancy rate, a slowing down of rent growth, and negative absorption of retail inventory. A tempered real estate market will make it more difficult to attract investors and financiers.

> The relocation of Wright County's operations will have a significant impact on the potential to support new food-based goods and services. Employees, visitors, and other businesses tied to the County all contribute a regular stream of customers that support businesses. This loss of potential customers will reduce market demand in the short-term, especially for food-based businesses, like restaurants, bars, convenience stores, small grocers, and other specialty food markets. And though the Downtown will likely need to weather a period of higher vacancies, it can depend on leveraging its many strengths to attract new businesses. Its built environment is designed for and promotes socialization—the streets are walkable, the buildings are at a pedestrian scale, and there are often interesting spaces and places which to enjoy.

> Once the downtown market improves post-Wright County, Highway 25 is rebuilt and as demand warrants, small commercial space could be developed that would accommodate other businesses that could realize some synergies, particularly along 1st Street S where the city liquor store, brewpub, kitchen store and other uses are located near the vacant HRA parcel.



## March 10 Open House

The first Open House was held March 10 where the community was invited to review plans, projects and initiatives that are ongoing in the city. Mayor Lach-ermeier attended and participated in 'chat with the mayor'. Other activities included filling out the down-town survey, placing a dot where you live, and record- ing ideas for downtown improvements.

The first Stakeholder Focus Group meeting was held immediately after the open house in the same location. Between the two events over 100 people signed in and participated.

### Open House Activities

- ⇒ Sign-in (87 total)
- ⇒ Dot the spot (place dot on where you live)
- ⇒ Circle the spot (favorite place in downtown)
- ⇒ Fill out the survey
- ⇒ Chat with the Mayor
- ⇒ Q&A with staff and consultants



**DOWNTOWN VISION UPDATE**

**SHARE YOUR VISION!**

**HEAD TO DOWNTOWN**

**COME & TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!**

- Highway 25 Improvements
- New Multi-Family Investments
- Buffalo Fire Station
- Wright County Relocation
- Have a chat with the mayor!
- Take our online survey at one of the following websites:
  - [www.ci.buffalo.mn.us](http://www.ci.buffalo.mn.us)
  - [www.facebook.com/BuffaloMN](https://www.facebook.com/BuffaloMN)
  - [www.buffalochamber.org](http://www.buffalochamber.org)

**TUESDAY, MARCH 10TH FROM 4-6 PM AT 16 1ST AVENUE S IN DOWNTOWN BUFFALO**

For more information, contact Jennifer Nash at 763-684-5407 or [jennifer.nash@ci.buffalo.mn.us](mailto:jennifer.nash@ci.buffalo.mn.us)

## Participant Ideas



### Ideas for Downtown

Participants were asked to record their idea for Downtown. The results were organized by topic and ranked by priority (responses are summarized and paraphrased).

- ⇒ Grocery store/co-op (8)
- ⇒ Reopen theater/arts center (8)
- ⇒ New community center (6)
- ⇒ Restaurants/nice, not fast food (5)
- ⇒ Walkability/lake promenade (5)
- ⇒ Public restrooms (2)
- ⇒ Parking (2)
- ⇒ Other responses included: wood working workshop, clean up streets and storefronts, match architecture of historic buildings, makerspace, sky friendly lighting, welcome center, music in common areas, a destination, keep post office, “taste of Buffalo”, stormwater drainage, Hayes rooftop, ATM’s, housing with small town feel, housing for disabilities, hotel

Stakeholder Summary: August 5

Summary information from the past two Stakeholder Group meetings and provides more direction for how the plan should move forward into details for each of the character areas, implementation and organization. The group prioritized the character areas and then provided additional responses to questions and discussions about each. From that exchange edits and adjustments were made prior to a final review by the Stakeholder Group. Included here are revised goal statements, revised vision statement and key proposals for each of the character areas.

August 5 Stakeholder General Comments

- *Explore option of routing County 35 further north to intersect with 2nd St NE; provides a larger park/open space on the lake; feasible?*
- *Get buy-in from building owners*
- *New library on county site; convert library into green space on the lake*
- *Community center on Wright Co site along with upscale condos/retail/library (| |)*
- *Improve bike and walk ability*
- *Welcome center/public restrooms (| | |)*
- *Support thriving businesses*
- *Community arts in former theater building*
- *Short term: paving, music, florals, signage (|), storefronts*
- *Review zoning*
- *Clean up lake*
- *Don't block views of lake from Division St*
- *New facades should be a brick/stone theme*
- *Creating as much lakeside park area as possible—a continuous useable lakeshore experience*

Questions related to Character Areas

1 = least support | 5 = most support

**Average response 4-5**

Is streetscape and new paving a high priority for this area?  
Should more parking be added in this area?  
Would building guidelines be a benefit?  
Should the city/HRA encourage more commercial/retail development here?  
Build new community center in a new location downtown?  
Enhanced park/open space areas and better connections to the lake?  
Would this be a good location for a new community center?  
If residential, should it reflect the scale and character of adjacent neighborhood?

**Average response 3-3.9**

Should this area be redeveloped as mostly residential?  
Should this area include a mix of uses?  
Should parking be better managed in this area?  
Is more parking needed in this area?

**Average response 1-2.9**

Upgrade existing community center?  
Should this area include a new city park oriented to the lake?  
Should the city/HRA support more residential development here?



Chapter 2 Ideas and Opportunities

