

ST. FRANCIS FORWARD

(re)Development Plans for the city of St. Francis

October 2017



Master Plan Project Manager:

Kate Thunstrom
Community Development Director
City of St. Francis
23340 Cree Street NW
St. Francis, MN 55070
Phone: 763-267-6191
Email: KThunstrom@stfrancismn.org

City Administrator:

Joe Kohlmann
City Administrator
City of St. Francis
23340 Cree Street NW
St. Francis, MN 55070
Phone: 763-235-2301
Email: JKohlmann@stfrancismn.org

www.StFrancisMN.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The St. Francis Forward planning team would like to extend a big thank you to the residents and business owners who have participated in creating this plan. Your input and insights have made this a better plan.

CITY COUNCIL:

Mayor Steve Feldman
Councilmember Robert Bauer
Councilmember Joe Muehlbauer
Councilmember Rich Skordahl
Councilmember Jerry Tveit

Images in this document are courtesy of the City of St. Francis

**THIS PLAN WAS ADOPTED BY THE CITY OF ST. FRANCIS ON
OCTOBER 16TH, 2017**



CONTENTS

- 01 ANALYSIS 1-1
 - INTRODUCTION 1-1
 - EXISTING PLANS, STUDIES, AND POLICY TOOLS 1-4
 - GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS 1-8
 - CURRENT EMPLOYMENT TRENDS 1-12
 - DEMOGRAPHICS AND ANTICIPATED GROWTH 1-13
 - PUBLIC OUTREACH AND INPUT 1-14
- 02 VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES 2-1
 - THE 25 YEAR VISION FOR THE CORE OF ST. FRANCIS 2-1
 - GUIDING PRINCIPLES 2-2
- 03 MASTER PLAN 3-1
 - EVALUATING OPTIONS 3-1
 - OVERALL MASTER PLAN 3-2
 - CONNECTING BRIDGE STREET AND HIGHWAY 47 3-4
 - RIVER ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT 3-6
 - COMMUNITY CAMPUS 3-8
 - HIGHWAY 47 INFILL 3-10
 - RESIDENTIAL INFILL 3-12
 - SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT 3-14
 - OTHER INITIATIVES 3-16
- 04 IMPLEMENTATION 4-1
 - HOW-TO: ACHIEVING THE VISION 4-1
 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES 4-2
 - PUBLIC FINANCE 4-3
 - GRANTS 4-5
 - PROMOTION 4-5
 - COLLABORATION 4-6
 - ACTION ITEMS 4-6
 - MEASURING 4-10



STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to develop a plan for the future development and redevelopment of the core of St. Francis. This is done through four actions:

- » Develop a Vision and set of Guiding Principles to guide future public and private investments.
 - *These are the driving forces that shape the master plan. The plan and proposed projects will help the City get closer to its vision.*
 - *When other potential projects arise, the vision and guiding principles should be the yardstick by which the projects are evaluated. Even if the proposed land use or development differs from what is shown in the plan, policy makers can ask, "does this project get us closer to our vision for St. Francis?" If the answer is yes, the project should be explored further.*
- » Provide a Master Plan to guide public and private redevelopment investments.
- » Establish "springboard" project ideas for key sites most ready for redevelopment or new development.
 - *Project ideas can help stimulate developers and see what a site could be. By preliminarily vetting them for financial and physical feasibility, there is a level of reassurance to the private sector that a project can be done.*
 - *By incorporating project ideas into a City's policy documents, developers know the City is willing and enthusiastic about supporting new projects.*
- » Identify and define key metrics that can be used to measure progress and the value of the master plan and planning process.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building upon previous planning efforts in St. Francis, the City launched the completion of a Redevelopment Plan for the “core” areas of the community in Fall 2016. The planning efforts provide a vision for the ongoing redevelopment and growth of the Bridge Street corridor on either side of the Rum River, the Highway 47 corridor, and adjoining and nearby areas of vacant lands and redevelopment opportunity in St. Francis. These areas comprise the heart of St. Francis, including the area traditionally considered “Downtown” and the main retail and commercial corridor, Highway 47 (also known as St. Francis Boulevard).

The community provided input through community meetings, stakeholder meetings, and online surveys as the planning effort progressed. The St. Francis community envisions Bridge Street as its “downtown” and expressed a desire for better community gathering places and amenities in this key district. Residents and other stakeholders expressed a desire for a wider range of retail, shopping, dining, and entertainment options in St. Francis, as well as housing options for various segments of the population. The community strongly embraced the idea of extending Bridge Street west to Highway 47, across the existing school campus. The community sees this move, previously discussed on several occasions over the last two decades, as a key move to link the east and west sides of St. Francis and to create a safer and more prominent intersection at Highway 47 and Pederson Drive / Bridge Street. Community members also expressed strong support for leveraging the redevelopment plan to attract new businesses and more jobs to St. Francis. The community believes that tying St. Francis to the Rum River and leveraging this key natural asset will help strengthen ongoing redevelopment efforts.

The overall master plan resulting from this effort reflects the general desire of the St. Francis community to reach for more transformative types of development in the heart of the community. The Downtown area, along Bridge Street, could include a civic campus including various uses, to draw more visitation and activity to the district. Retail redevelopment along Bridge

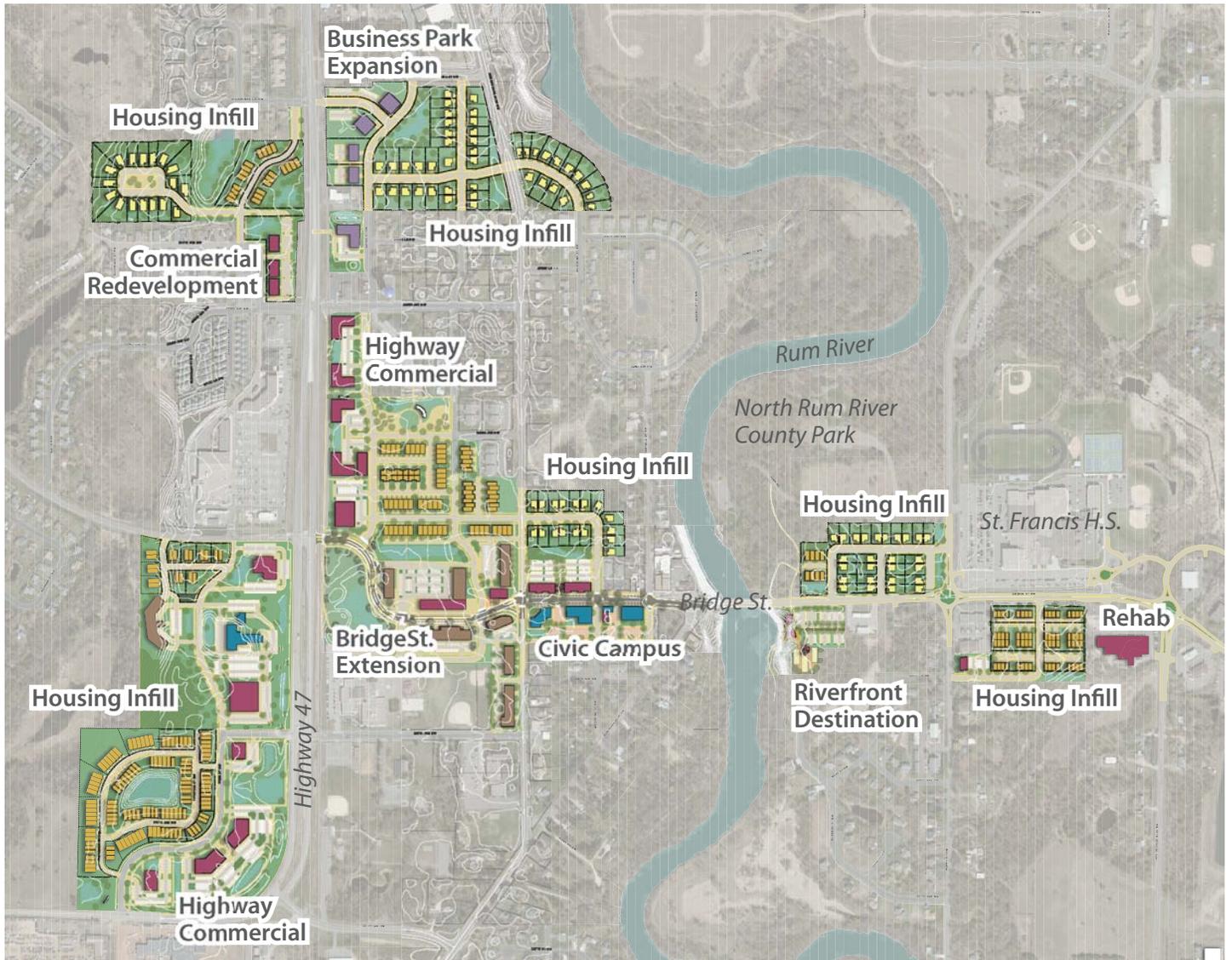
Street would also build the retail base in Downtown and establish it as a more prominent district in Anoka County. On the east side of the river, the City has the opportunity to market the City-owned property as a potential venue for a restaurant or entertainment facility, coupled with an outdoor recreation-oriented business (such as an outfitter offering fishing or kayaking along the Rum River). The extension of Bridge Street to Highway 47 would help link the current Downtown to the main north-south road in this part of Anoka County and create a key community entrance. Furthermore, if the school district elects to move the Middle School to a new facility at a different location, the Middle School campus could be redeveloped as a western extension of the “Main Street” orientation of Bridge Street, including attractive retail shops and eateries, and a mixture of residential housing types catering to a range of potential residents. This potential redevelopment has the potential to create a true, vibrant heart at the junction of the two major streets in St. Francis over time. Elsewhere, the master plan calls for the infill redevelopment of various parcels along Bridge Street and near Highway 47 as residential land uses of varying densities. It also calls for the infill development of vacant parcels along Highway 47 as a variety of retail and service uses.

The overall plan also articulates a range of additional elements that should enhance the quality of life and attractiveness of the core of St. Francis. Improved wayfinding and signage at key entrances to the community and at key junctions will help guide visitors to key destinations and amenities. Streetscape enhancements along Bridge Street and other key streets will enhance the attractiveness and marketability of the core of St. Francis to potential businesses and residents. Improvements to parks and enhanced linkages to the Rum River corridor will enhance the quality of life as well. The overall plan calls for the creation of higher quality public realm throughout the area, in order to create a community of quality.

The implementation plan outlines a range of action items the City should pursue in order to move the plan forward, over the short term and longer term. The City has a range of tools, including incentives and regulatory strategies that can assist the variety of potential projects outlined in this master plan. Importantly, the ongoing success of this plan will depend on strong leadership from elected leaders and city staff, and the pursuit and strengthening of working relationships and partnerships between City staff and St. Francis leaders and their counterparts in the school district, and at the county and state levels. Through ongoing efforts and the creation of some momentum over the next few years, St. Francis has the opportunity to create a great “heart” to its community over time.

Recognizing that the plan may change over time, and that portions of the plan may not be realized, the development as shown reflects the following numbers:

Residential	Single Family Residential: +/- 100 units Townhome: +/- 300 units Multi-Family Residential: +/- 175 units
Commercial (Retail and Office)	+/- 200,000 Square Feet
Industrial	+/- 50,000 Square Feet



The Master Plan envisions:

- » A Civic Campus on the south side of Bridge Street
- » Office Redevelopment on the north side of Bridge Street
- » A restaurant/entertainment anchor on the east side of the Rum River
- » Housing redevelopment between Bridge Street and Rum River North County Park
- » Housing redevelopment south of the High School
- » Industrial growth along Highway 47
- » Residential infill along Ambassador Boulevard
- » Residential infill off Highway 47
- » Redevelopment of Office/Commercial along Highway 47





01. ANALYSIS

Introduction

St. Francis sits at the northwestern edge of Anoka County, approximately 20 minutes north of the City of Anoka. The downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul are both about 40 minutes away.

The city is in a bucolic location at the transition zone between the coniferous forest biome that Minnesotans classify as “up-north” and the deciduous forest biome of the Twin Cities.

City of St. Francis

The City of St. Francis includes approximately 24 square miles with the main core of the city centered on the Rum River. The first people to homestead the area utilized the river for sawmills and grist milling. The river continued to be the major economic driver for the city until at least the 1930s.

St. Francis remained a rural village until the 1970s when the population began to grow, expanding from 897 people in 1970 to an estimated 7,327 in 2015.

Anoka County

Anoka County is largely developed in the southern part of the county, closer to the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Fairly contiguous development extends north to the suburbs of Ramsey, Andover, and Blaine. Beyond those cities, there is a mix of developed and rural land through Nowthen, Oak Grove, East Bethel, Ham Lake, Bethel, and St. Francis.

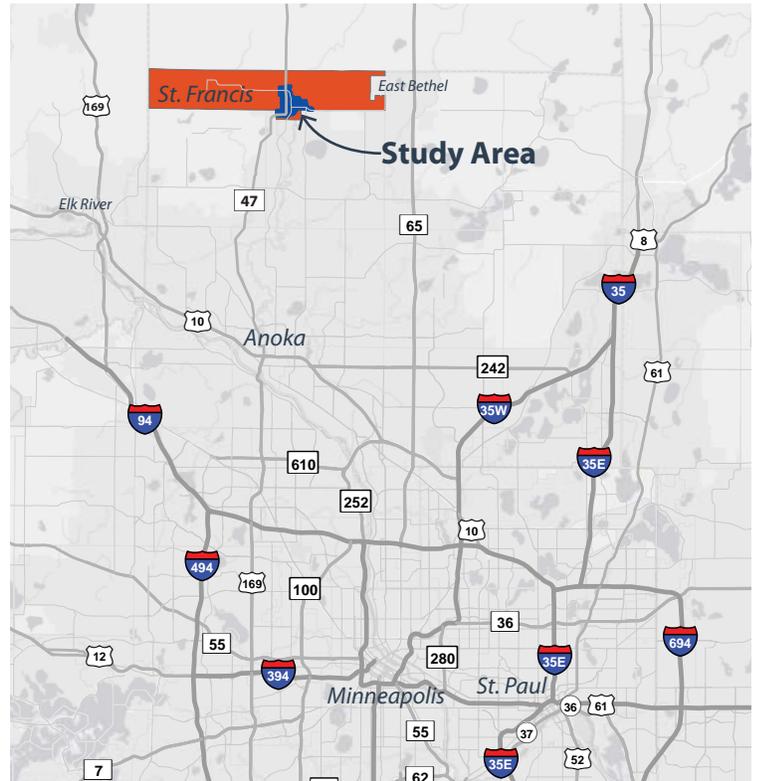


FIGURE 1.1 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD STUDY AREA

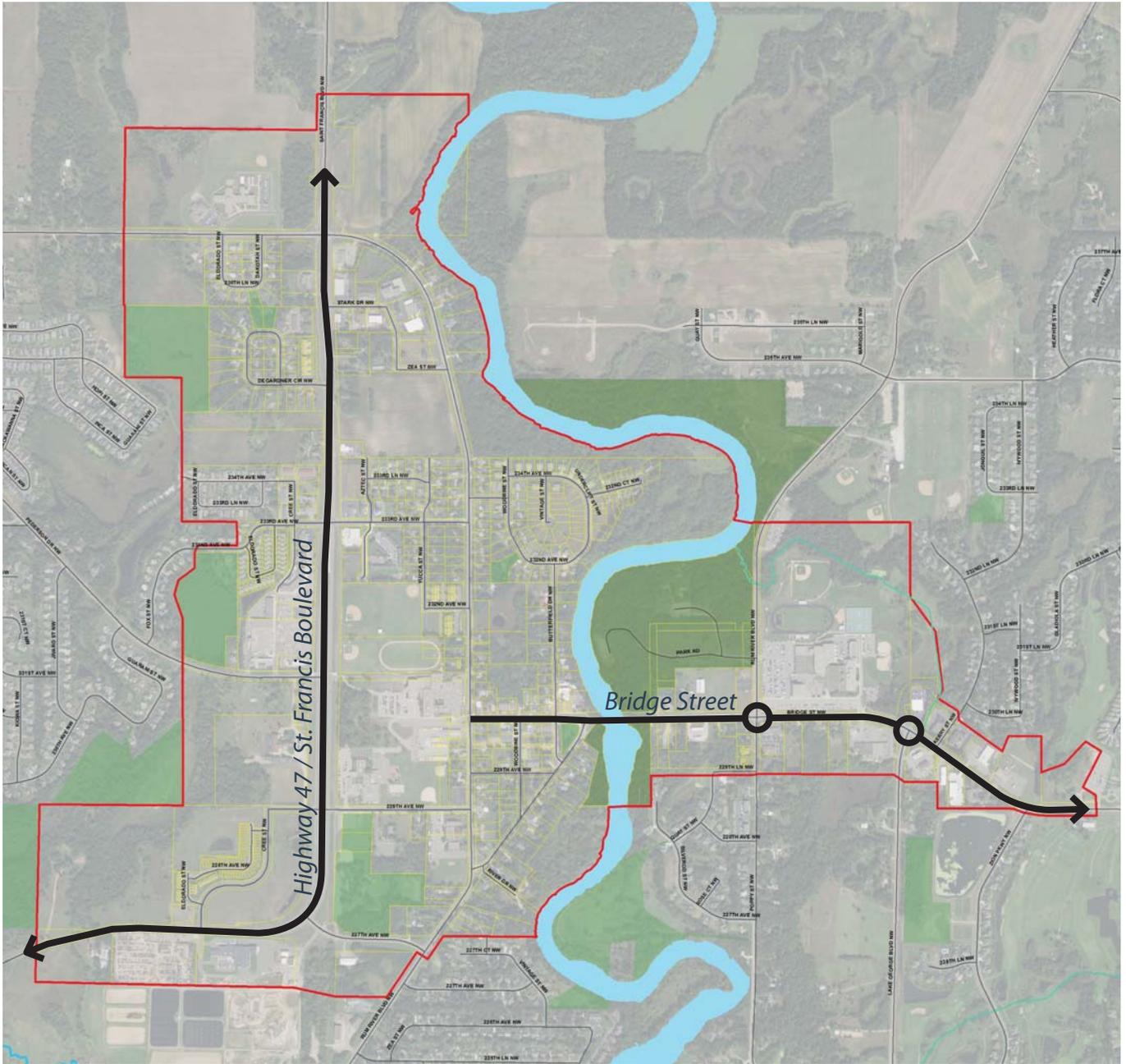


FIGURE 1.2 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD STUDY AREA

Study Area

The study area for this plan roughly follows the Bridge Street and Highway 47 Corridors. These are the two primary commercial corridors in St. Francis. Both have a mix of uses and potential for development and redevelopment.

It is also worth noting that although the study area encompasses a large area, existing development covers a large portion of the area, and therefore the plan focuses on specific opportunity sites. These sites are selected for their possibilities to affect change. Much of the land in the study area is private property, and will only be developed if supported by the landowner in a willing seller/willing buyer situation.

The aerials on the opposite page show the change in the City since 1991, and are a helpful reminder that the City has not always looked the way it does today. It will continue to grow, change, and mature in the future.

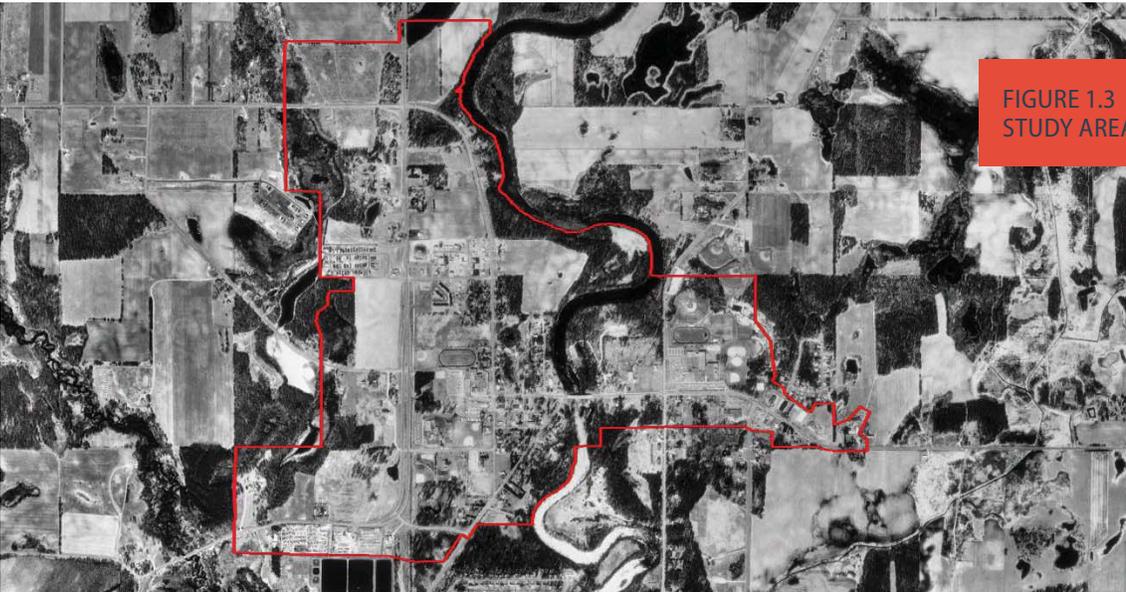


FIGURE 1.3 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD STUDY AREA - 1991



FIGURE 1.4 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD STUDY AREA - 2003



FIGURE 1.5 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD STUDY AREA - 2015

Existing Plans, Studies, and Policy Tools

As part of the planning process, the project team examined a number of city policies and previous planning efforts in St. Francis. The following provides a list and summary of the documents that have been considered as part of this process, with key takeaways relating to re/development planning along Highway 47/St. Francis Boulevard and Bridge Street.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2008)

Summary: The City of St. Francis completed the most recent comprehensive plan in 2008, covering land use, parks, water resources, transportation, and implementation strategies. St. Francis was classified as a Rural Center and a Diversified Rural Community by the Metropolitan Council, as part of this process. Much of the city is in agriculture with the largest concentration of residential and commercial development present along and near Highway 47/St. Francis Boulevard and Bridge Street. The 2008 Comprehensive Plan anticipated that ongoing growth would occur in the form of infill, in older parts of the community, as well as in greenfield areas in the northwest part of St. Francis.

Key Takeaways:

The City seeks to

- » Establish continuity between residential areas and downtown
- » Preserve its small town character
- » Focus more intense development, especially multifamily residential and commercial development, downtown and along Highway 47
- » Elevate the level of design quality (architecture, streetscape, etc.), especially in downtown
- » Improve pedestrian facilities
- » Enhance linkages to the Rum River
- » Address parking needs with the creation of centralized facilities to serve the downtown area

The City is currently completing an update to the Comprehensive Plan in conjunction and following this redevelopment planning process, and the outcomes of this plan will influence the components of the updated Comprehensive Plan.

2016 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Summary: This document analyzes the potential for economic development in the City of St. Francis. The plan examines demographics, location, access to highways, current job and commuting patterns, and market perceptions of St. Francis. The plan also identifies potential re/development sites within St. Francis and opportunities for industrial and commercial development.

Key Takeaways:

- » Based on population size and access to transportation corridors, St. Francis is not well positioned to compete with other cities at a regional level
- » Development that occurs in St. Francis will likely result from users that desire to be in St. Francis (as compared to finding a spot in the northern metro, or elsewhere in Anoka County)

- » The City does have tools to support development
- » The ability of the City to simplify and clarify the development process will aid potential development (including assisting with site preparation, the streamlining of regulations, and completing market studies, marketing efforts, and the estimating of potential project costs)
- » Residential growth and retail will support the needs of the local population and make St. Francis more attractive for other types of development
- » In addition to fostering residential growth, the City should be focusing on helping existing business grow

CSAH 24 (BRIDGE STREET) IMPROVEMENTS (2014)

Summary: Relocation of Highway and High School access, with roundabouts and trails added. The road was reconstructed during the summer of 2016.

Key Takeaways:

- » High School access moved off of Bridge Street.
- » Right In/Right Out access to mall, from Bridge Street
- » Full median installation between Rum River Blvd and Lake George Blvd
- » Improved biking and walking facilities

BRIDGE STREET EXTENSION STUDY (2005)

Summary: An examination of options for connecting Bridge Street to Highway 47/St. Francis Boulevard. Currently the two major roads in St. Francis, Bridge St. and Highway 47, do not connect as the middle school and elementary school campus are located at the western terminus of Bridge St. If the school campus was not there, a connection would be desired for improved traffic efficiency and economic development. School bus operations are located within this campus and the bus barn sits at the terminus of Bridge St.

Key Takeaways:

Options presented include:

- » A shift of the Bridge Street alignment to the south, intersecting Ambassador Drive in a roundabout. This option would avoid existing school buildings but would require the relocation of the existing bus facilities.
- » A shift of the Bridge Street alignment to the south, without a roundabout intersection at Ambassador Drive. This option would avoid existing school buildings but would require the relocation of the existing bus facilities.
- » A more direct connection from Bridge St, requiring substantial modification or relocation of the middle school building.

Options cost \$1,000,000 or more (in 2005 dollars), not including Right-of-Way acquisition and relocation of existing facilities.

A number of factors have impeded the completion of the Bridge Street connection over the last twelve years, including the project cost, the lack of establishing the project as a key priority, and other challenges.

NORTHERN ANOKA COUNTY RIVER CROSSING STUDY (2012)

Summary: An analysis of river crossing capacity for the Rum River in northern Anoka County (specifically St. Francis, Oak Grove, and Nowthen). CSAH 22/Viking Boulevard and CSAH 24/Bridge street provide the current crossing locations. The study considered various alternatives based on land use, the spacing of arterial locations, environmental issues, traffic projections, and safety and pedestrian issues.

Key Takeaways:

- » By 2030, CSAH 24 would be over capacity in a no-build condition
 - *Capacity 10,000 ADT*
 - *Projected at 12-15,000 ADT by 2030*
- » Expansion of CSAH 24 would lead to increased traffic volume on CSAH 24, as well as *CSAH 28, CR 72, and Rum River Boulevard*
- » A 4 lane configuration results in too many impacts (Right-of-Way, acquisition) to be considered as a final plan
- » Current Bridge Street reconstruction resulted in a reduction in the number of access points and a 2 lane roadway section.

A MARKET FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR ACTIVE ADULT SENIOR HOUSING AND AFFORDABLE GENERAL OCCUPANCY HOUSING IN ST. FRANCIS, MINNESOTA (2012)

Summary: An analysis of the demand for various forms of housing (including active senior and general occupancy, market and affordable). The market study examined numerous factors to determine demand for various housing products, including changing demographics, commute and economic patterns, and the location of a project along Bridge Street.

Key Takeaways:

The study anticipates that a market exists for the following real estate program elements:

- » 22 market rate, owner occupied, active adult units
- » 28 market rate, rental, active adult units
- » 43 affordable, active adult units
- » 24 affordable, rental, general occupancy units
- » The project is anticipated to draw from St. Francis, Nowthen, Oak Grove, and Stanford Township.

A senior housing project is underway along Bridge Street near the golf course that will meet some of the demonstrated demand.

BUSINESS SUBSIDY POLICY (2016)

Summary: The City of St. Francis and the Economic Development Authority provide business subsidies that meet a “public purpose” standard (although meeting the standard does not guarantee a subsidy). For businesses meeting the standards (outlined below), there are required application and reporting processes, in compliance with MN Statutes, Section 116J.993-116J.995.

Key Takeaways:

In order to remain consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and other plans and guides, projects receiving a subsidy in St. Francis must serve a “Public Purpose”, including:

- » Increasing in tax base
- » Notable job creation
- » Producing jobs providing wages at least twice the federal minimum wage
- » Other economic or redevelopment goals
 - *Creating a “multiplier effect” of increased business elsewhere in St. Francis*
 - *Providing for economic diversity*
 - *Contributing to a “critical mass” of business in the community*
 - *Providing goods/services not available in St. Francis*
 - *Increasing the range of goods available*
 - *Encouraging growth*
 - *Encouraging private re/investment to remove blight or pollution*
 - *Supporting the retention/re-use of historic buildings*
 - *Encouraging the full utilization of infrastructure*

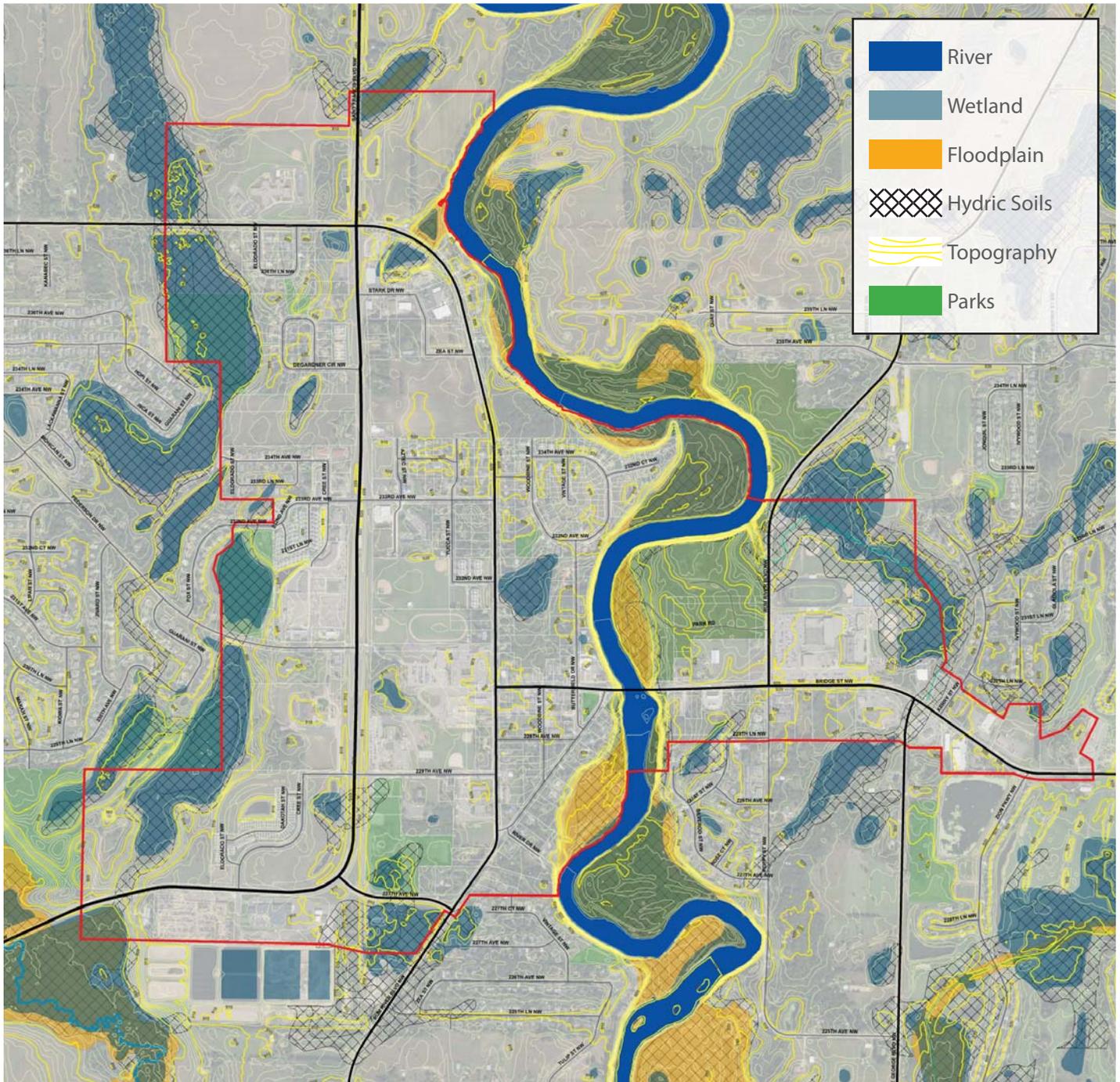
TIF POLICY (2016)

Summary: The City of St. Francis reserves the right to approve Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as permitted through MN Statutes 469.174-469.1794. The City may use TIF when desirable re/development would not occur but for the TIF assistance. TIF funds may be used for, in order of priority, 1. public improvement, legal, administrative, and engineering costs; 2. site preparation, site improvement, land purchase, demolition and environmental remediation; and 3. Capitalized interest, bonding costs.

Key Takeaways:

TIF is used to meet one or more of the following objectives:

- » Retaining or increasing jobs and wages
- » Coordinating with infrastructure improvements that provide value for the community
- » Encouraging additional private, unsubsidized development
- » Facilitating development that would not otherwise happen
- » Removing blight
- » Offsetting higher costs of redevelopment such as contamination cleanup
- » Creating affordable housing
- » Improving the quality of life in St. Francis by meeting unmet needs
- » Contributing to policies and goals of the City

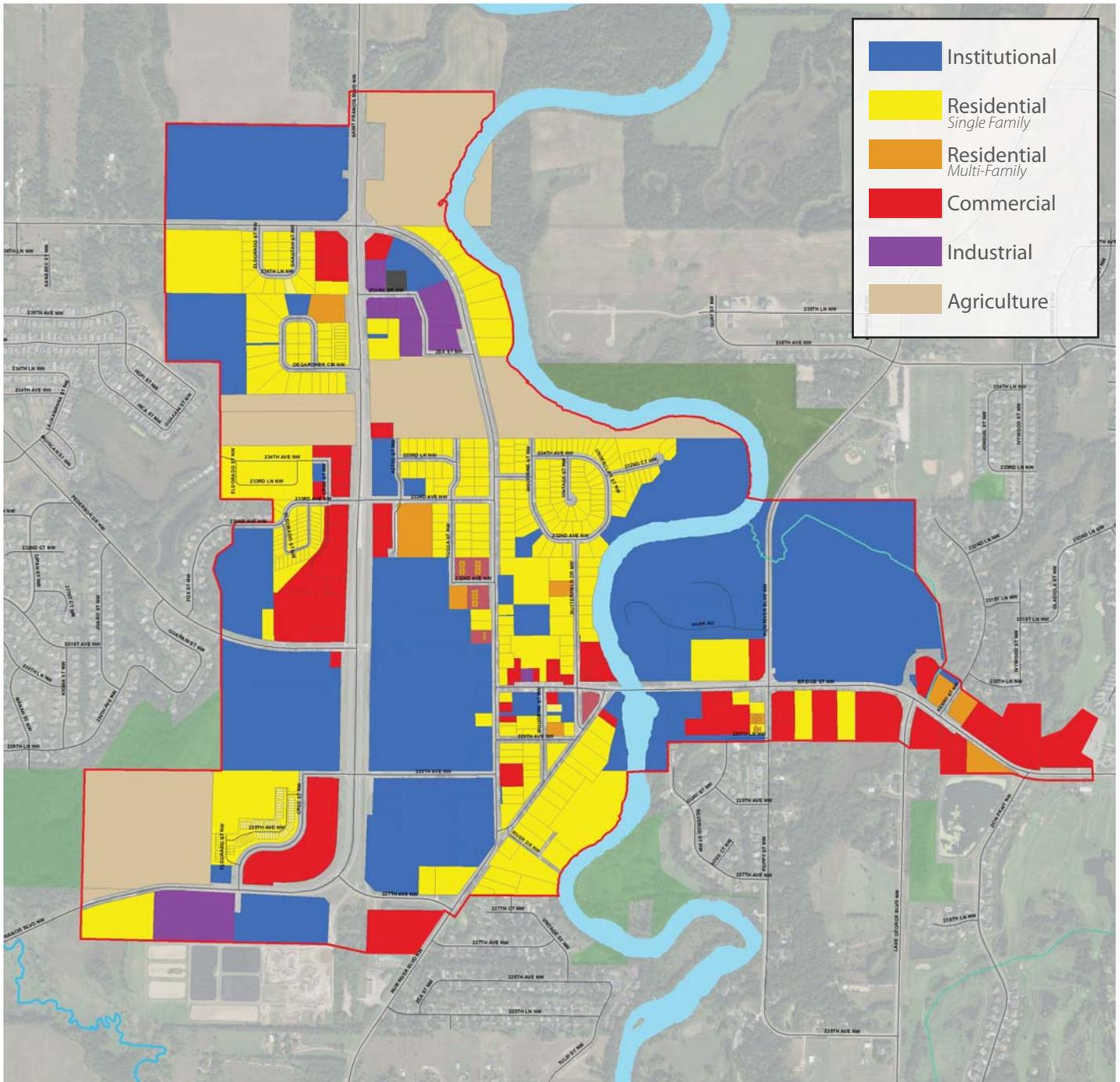


Data: Minnesota DNR

**FIGURE 1.6 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD
NATURAL FEATURES**

Natural features in St. Francis can both inhibit and enhance development. Elements such as the Rum River, ponds, and parks provide amenities for the community. These amenities can bring people to the area and serve as a selling point for development. The wild and scenic Rum River is a feature that few other cities have, and should be celebrated.

Conversely, these natural features can make transportation and connections more difficult, as well as restrict the developability of certain parcels. Given the availability of developable land, efforts should be made to discourage development in floodplains, and over wetlands and hydric soils.



Data: City of St. Francis

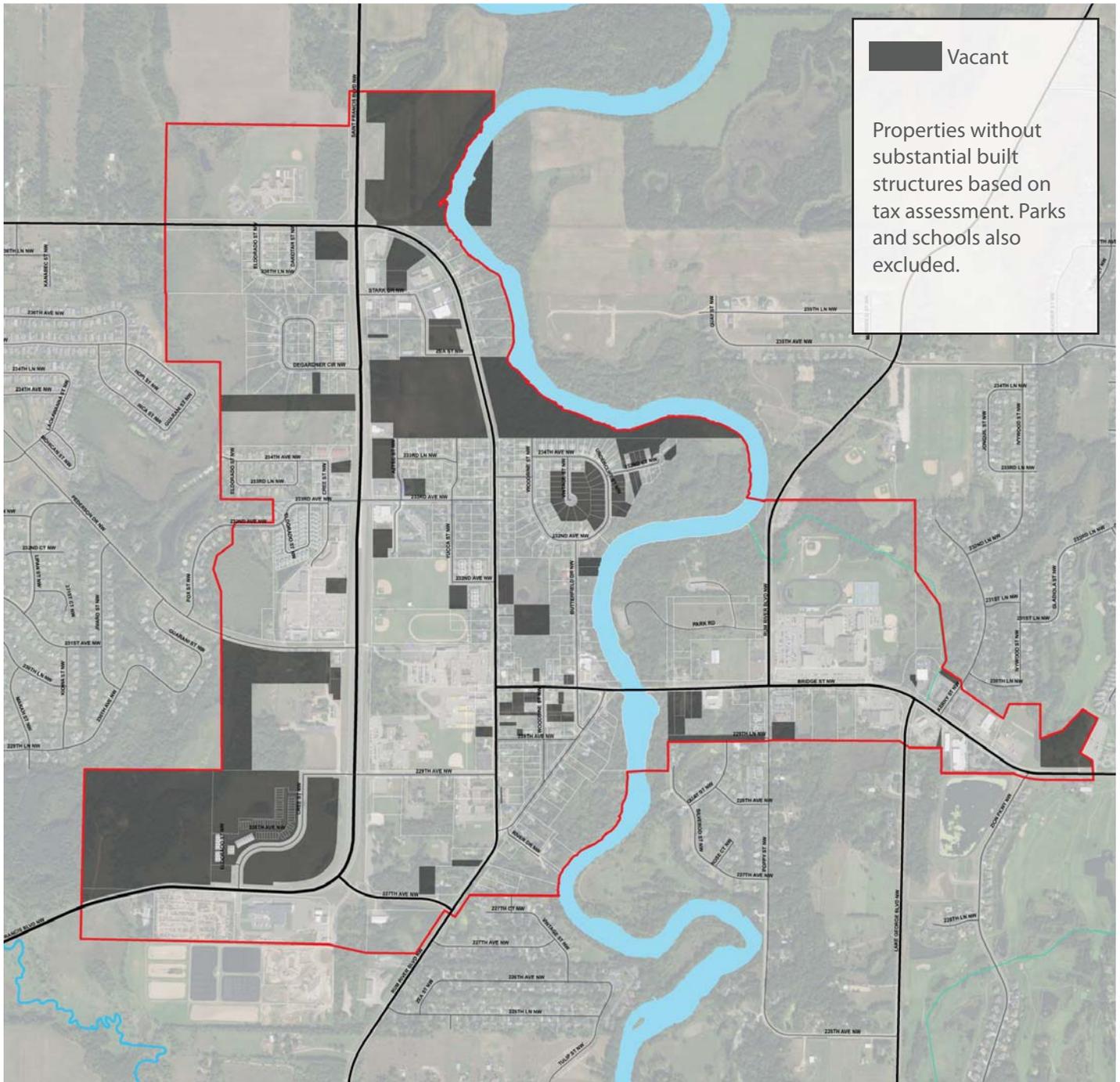
Land uses in the study area are as follows:

There are three main commercial areas: the Highway 47 Corridor, Bridge Street between the Middle School and the River, and Bridge Street from the River to the golf course.

Industry is mainly situated in the area to the south and east of Ambassador and Highway 47. This is the City's main business park, although other outlying areas do have industrial land uses.

The majority of the housing is single family, spread out throughout the study area. Medium density housing is present along the east end of Bridge Street and next to the Middle School along Ambassador Drive.

FIGURE 1.7 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD LAND USE

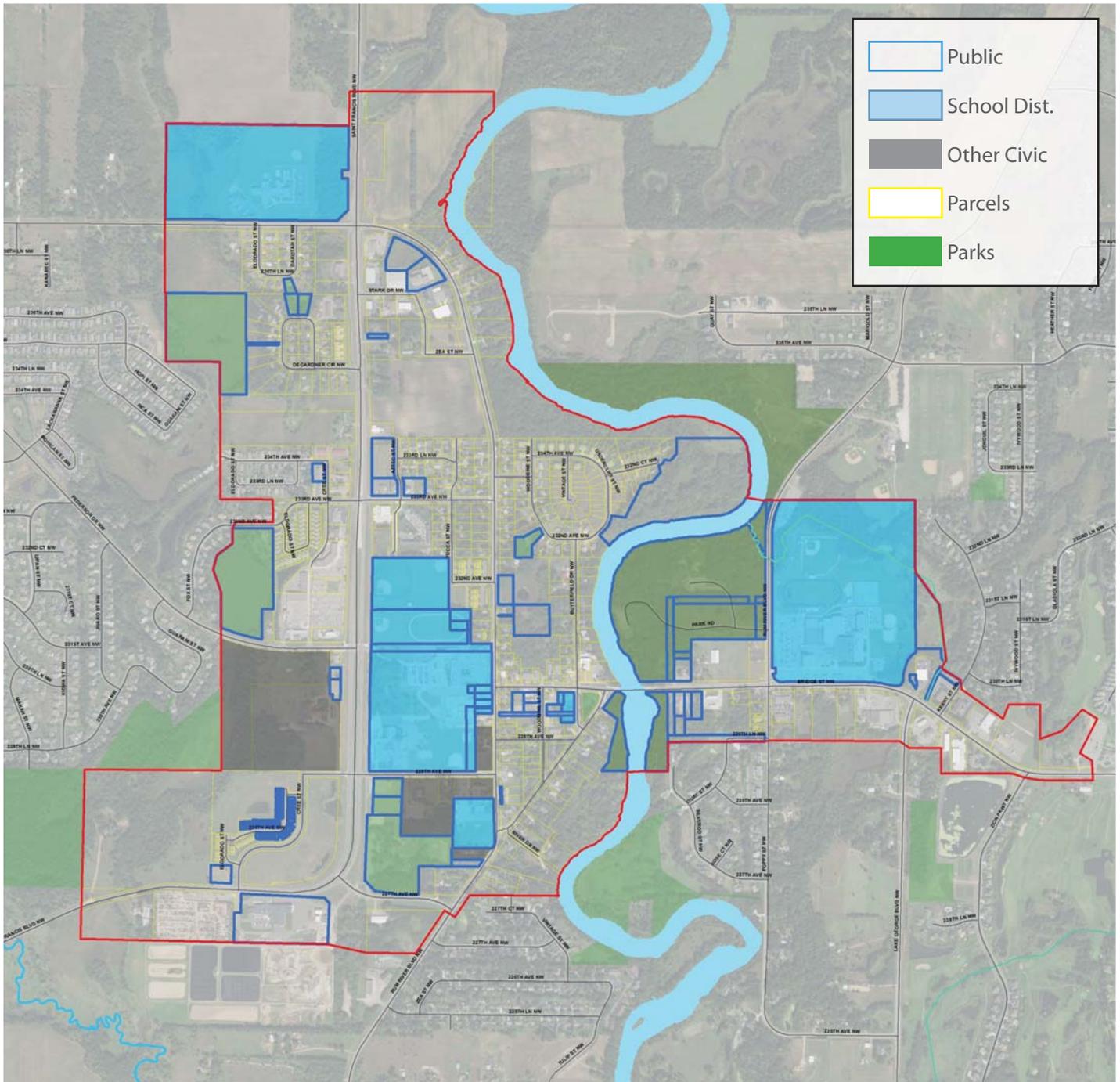


Data: Anoka County Assessor

FIGURE 1.8 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD UNBUILT PARCELS

An important element of the analysis considers the size and location of unbuilt parcels in the study area. This analysis considers properties with no significant structure according to tax assessor’s data. The analysis does not include parks, school buildings, or areas that are “underbuilt”, such as the farmstead located to the north of City Hall that could be more intensely developed in the future.

Large plots of land such as the property between the business park and residential areas, or next to the curve along Highway 47 are more logical potential redevelopment locations. Other key parcels, such as the City-owned property along the east side of the Rum River, or the various vacant parcels south of Bridge Street and west of the Rum River, are other logical candidates for development.



Data: Anoka County Assessor

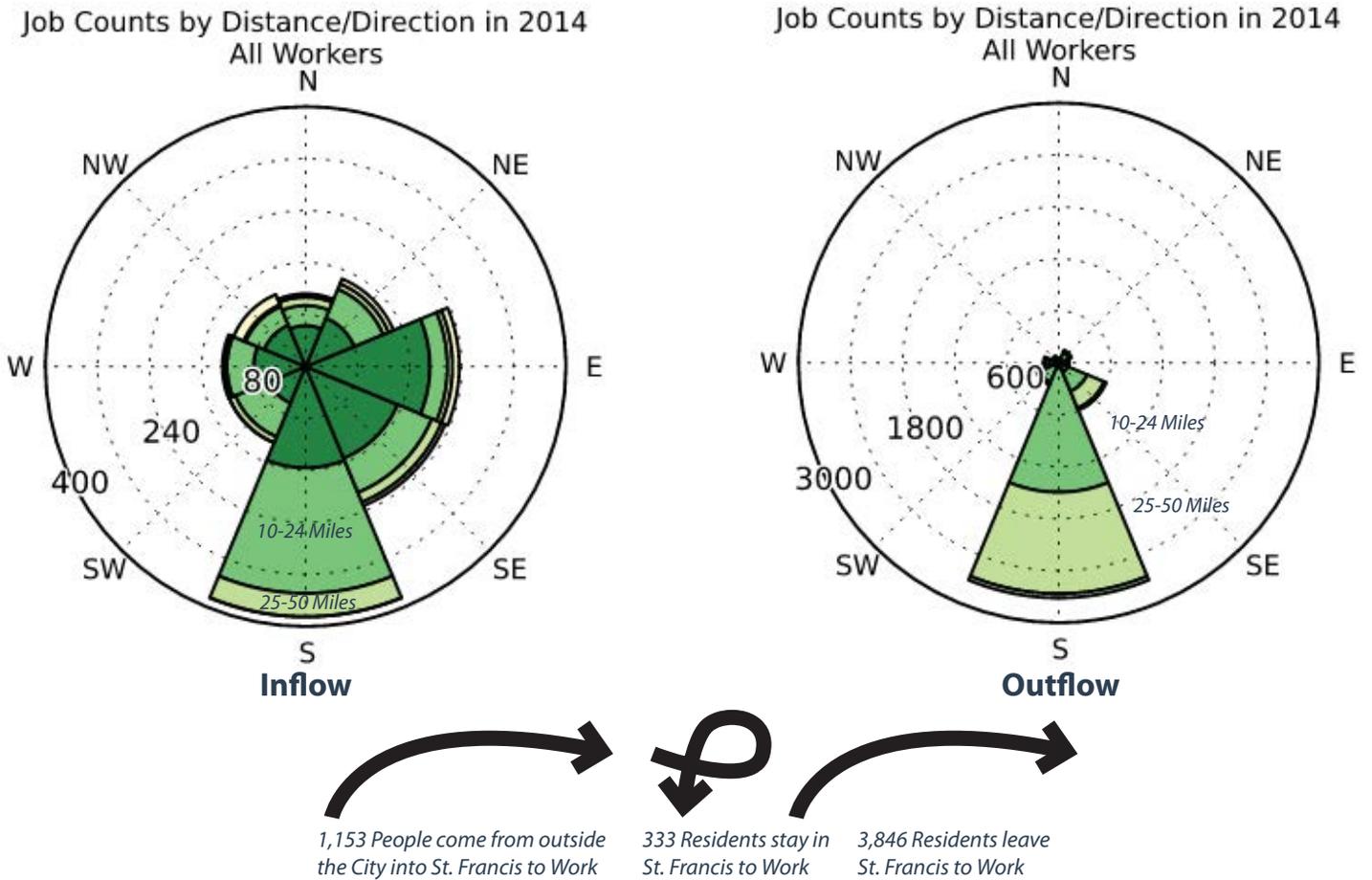
A significant amount of land in the downtown area is publicly owned or owned by private civic uses such as churches or other non-profits. As a result, the amount of land available for development in the core of the community is limited, and the tax base in the community has not been maximized.

Public ownership of land, however, does allow for development and redevelopment opportunities in some key locations. The City may be able to sell certain parcels to private developers with the conditions that new development meet the vision for the area. Likewise, the School District and churches may be able to strategically encourage development that can provide funding for or align with mission-based projects and initiatives.

FIGURE 1.9 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD PUBLIC & INSTITUTIONAL PROPERTIES

**FIGURE 1.10 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD
INFLOW AND OUTFLOW OF WORKERS**

Source: US Census "On the Map"



Current Employment Trends

The City of St. Francis employment trends illustrate a typical suburban/exurban pattern. From the City, more than 90% of workers who live in St. Francis leave the City and 70% of those workers head south to Anoka or the Twin Cities.

In 2014, the largest industries for St. Francis residents were educational/health/social services (21.1%), manufacturing (17.3%), retail (11.6%), and construction (8.7%). Compared with Minnesota as a whole, St. Francis has a larger percent of the population working in construction (1.6x), transportation/warehousing/utilities (1.6x) and manufacturing (1.3x), and a lower than average rate working in professional services (.7x) and educational/health/social services (.85x)

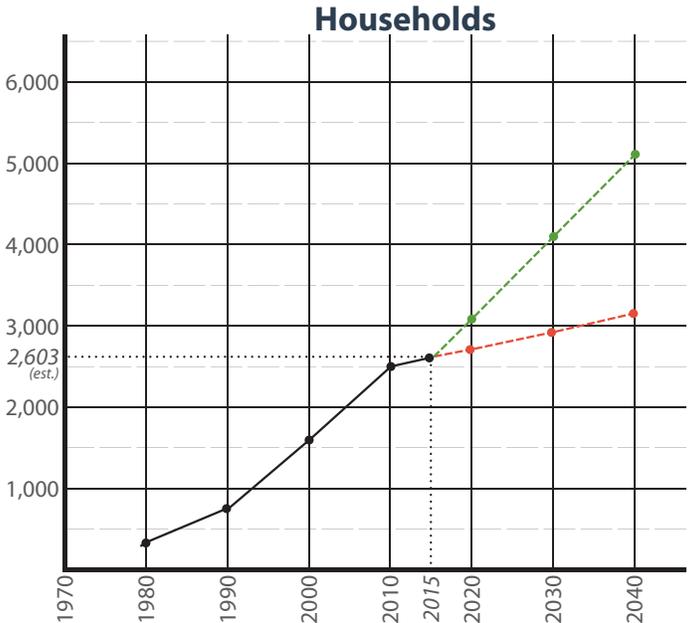
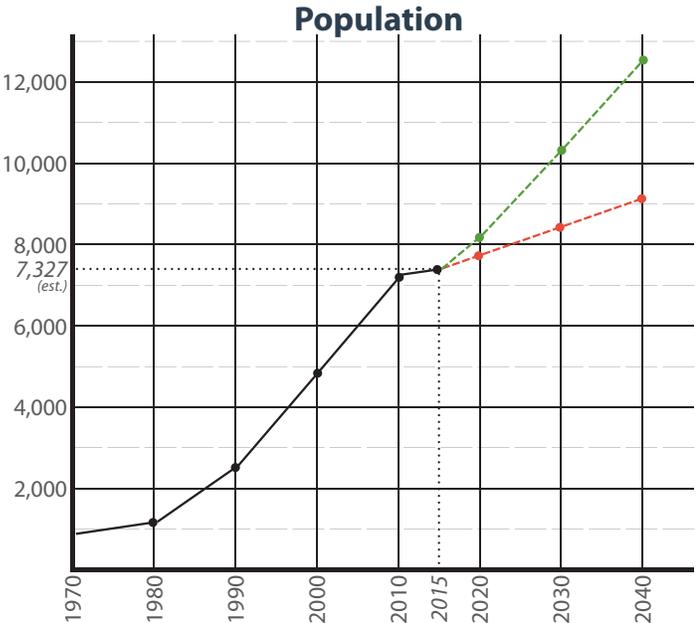
There are a number of people who live outside of the City limits and commute to St. Francis to work. The highest number come from the south, but residents from places to the southeast and east such as East Bethel and Oak Grove are also well represented.

Jobs in Located in St. Francis	
Jobs earning less than \$1,250/month	576
Jobs earning between \$1,250-\$3,333/month	435
Jobs earning more than \$3,333/month	475

Source: US Census "On the Map"

FIGURE 1.11 ST. FRANCIS FORWARD POPULATION & HOUSEHOLD GROWTH

Source: HKGi, Metropolitan Council



By 2030	Density	Conservative Estimates (from 2010)		High Growth Estimates	
		Population	Households	Population	Households
		1,000	400	3,182	1,580
All Single Family	3 du/acre	~135 Acres		~525 Acres	
All Townhome	10 du/acre	~40 Acres		~160 Acres	
All Apartment	20 du/acre	~20 Acres		~80 Acres	
Employment		350 Jobs		1,013 Jobs	
All Industrial	1 Job/500SF @ .2 FAR	~20 Acres		~60 Acres	
All Office/Retail	1 Job/250SF @ .3 FAR	~7 Acres		~20 Acres	

Source: HKGi, Metropolitan Council

Demographics and Anticipated Growth

Since the City's incorporation in the 1960s, St. Francis has grown dramatically. While the population growth slowed significantly starting with the last recession, the City is still growing, and may be poised to begin expanding in line with historical trends. That being said, the City is also cautious about relying too heavily on possible future growth to address issues facing the community today.

Recognizing the stop and start realities of future growth, and uncertainty about when regional growth will reach St. Francis again, projections consider two scenarios. A more conservative scenario looks at future growth if the City follows more recent trends. Another higher growth scenario illustrates what happens if the City follows historical trends for population. The likely reality is that growth will occur somewhere between these two scenarios.

While the two scenarios show different rates of growth, the master plan is compatible with either scenario. More rapid growth simply means more rapid change.

The table above illustrates the potential need for developable land, based on anticipated growth and varying levels of development intensity.

Public Outreach and Input

As part of the planning process, the St. Francis Forward team conducted various meetings and online surveys to learn from residents, other stakeholders, and developers. While the planning team brings technical expertise to the process, residents, business owners, and community leaders bring insider insights, information, and perspective that cannot be replicated.

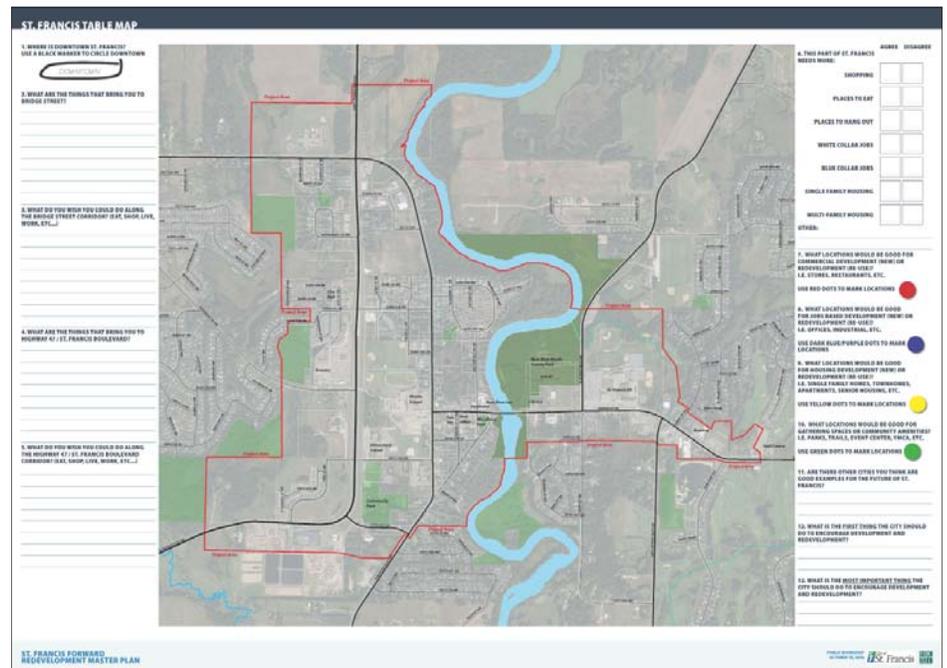
Ultimately the success of the plan depends on local interests making sure it is carried out, and is fitting with the community.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Fourteen stakeholders were interviewed in person or on the phone regarding specific elements of the study area, their role, and what they see changing. People interviewed included County officials and staff, local business and civic leaders, and local realtors and property developers.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #1

Approximately 25 attendees attended a kickoff meeting to help the planning team learn more about the city, understand the positives, challenges, and opportunities that exist for residents and business owners in St. Francis, and to hear about people’s vision for the City. Participants used a game-board of St. Francis to point out traffic problems, where they thought growth should go, and what they think of downtown.



ONLINE SURVEY #1

In addition to the Public Workshop, an online survey was created to get at similar questions asked in person. Nearly 800 people replied to the survey. Respondents envisioned Bridge Street as a place to eat, shop, and hang out and was most often cited as the City’s downtown. Highway 47 was envisioned more as a commercial corridor, with highway style places to eat and shop, but also as the place to work in both office and industrial jobs.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #2

The second workshop was a chance to evaluate and modify the vision and guiding principles, as well as evaluate plans showing different levels of change in St. Francis. Approximately 35 attendees provided feedback and direction.



ONLINE SURVEY #2

After the second workshop, an online survey was utilized to give people who had not been able to attend the meeting a way to be heard, and to give additional feedback. There were 165 responses. In both the open house and the online survey, there was a demonstrated desire for medium to large change in both the Bridge Street and Highway 47 corridors. Ninety percent of respondents favored Bridge Street Extension, with more than half of those people saying it is “a big priority” and should be done “as soon as feasible.”

DEVELOPERS ROUNDTABLE

In addition to the public meetings, the planning team also held a meeting with residential, mixed use, and commercial developers to better understand what they are seeing in the market, and what potential for development exists. It was also an opportunity for City staff and officials to meet with potential developers.

Key messages from the developers included:

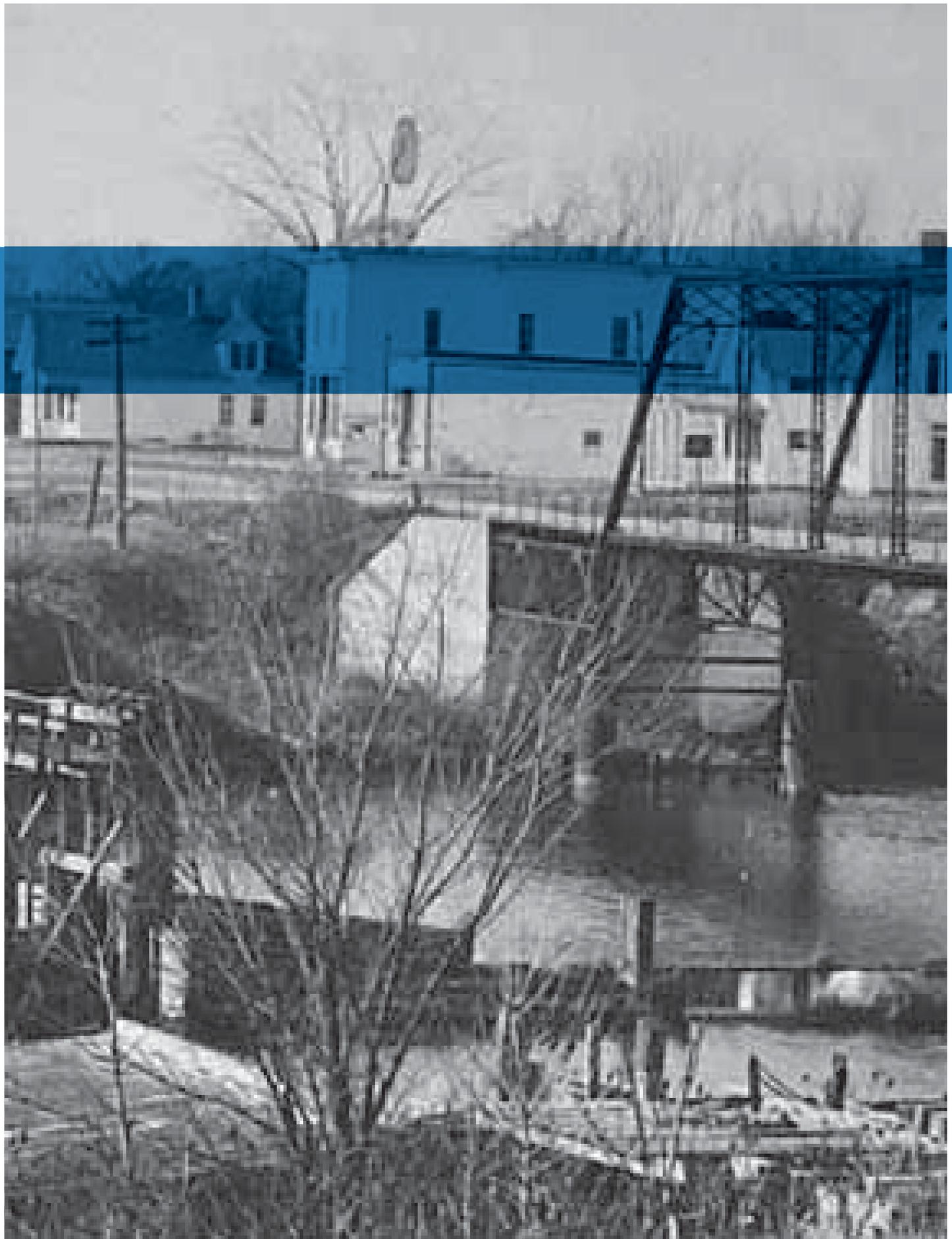
- » Capitalizing on St. Francis as an affordable place to buy a house
- » Developing trails as an amenity
- » Understanding the high development potential of a Bridge Street extension
- » Recognizing that the market will need to mature or additional financing may be necessary to make projects happen now.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #3

Approximately 35 people attended a third meeting to review a preferred master plan that generally aligns with the plan shown in this report. It was an opportunity to provide final feedback on the concepts.

ONLINE SURVEY #3

An additional 56 people provided responses to a third online survey reflecting the information shown at the third workshop. With both the survey and the meeting there is a large desire to see Bridge Street extended, opportunities to connect to the river as a local asset, and bring new businesses to town, while also making sure to supporting the ones that are here already.





02. VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The 25 year vision for the core of St. Francis:

Our vision for St. Francis is an active small town on the Rum River, enjoying a high quality of life that meets the day to day needs of residents, workers, and visitors.

Our commercial districts are vibrant and bustling. Businesses are growing. Residents can buy gifts, groceries, and any number of day-to-day goods. Visitors and those passing through make it a point to stop in St. Francis on their way.

While our proximity to Minneapolis and St. Paul provides our residents access to a diversity of jobs and activities within the region, residents of St. Francis have options for a variety of jobs locally.

A full range of households enjoy living in St. Francis. Families, empty nesters, and senior citizens can gather, learn, celebrate, move safely and conveniently around town, and obtain the services they need.

What is a Vision Statement?

A vision statement is an overarching description of where we are trying to go as a city.

The Vision statement, while rooted in the history and present of St. Francis, is not necessarily focused on reflecting the current conditions. Rather it has an orientation toward the future, and represents a statement that someone might use fifteen years from now to describe St. Francis.

The plan is drawn up and written to reflect a future that is consistent with the vision. Ideas, policies, and projects in the plan help bring the vision closer to reality.

What are Guiding Principles?

If the Vision statement is all about the destination, the Guiding Principles are about how we get there.

Guiding Principles help define the character, values, and priorities identified by the community.

Guiding Principles are also a tool for future decision making. As new projects arise, the City can use the Guiding Principles as a measuring stick to decide if a particular project moves the city closer to the Vision.

Guiding Principles:

CHARACTER/FORM

We will create buildings and public spaces that contribute to a high quality small town character and the sense that St. Francis is an important local destination.

- » Promote a vibrant and bustling downtown in St. Francis
- » Utilize the river for identity and as a destination for activities
- » Coordinate with the school district to strengthen St. Francis' identity and welcoming nature
- » Create new landmarks/gateways to welcome people to St. Francis
- » Enhance the image of St. Francis
- » Strengthen and establish community locations (including parks, community centers, and privately owned "3rd places")
- » Maintain the small town feel that many residents appreciate
- » Improve wayfinding to help people navigate St. Francis

BUSINESS

We will support and help expand the business community in St. Francis. We recognize the role that businesses play in building our jobs base and improving quality of life. We will support and pursue businesses that make St. Francis a better community, by providing employment, or goods or services desired by residents and visitors.

- » Pursue new businesses that enhance quality of life, by providing jobs or desired goods or services



- » Create a business-friendly environment, balancing taxes and fees and making it attractive to establish and sustain businesses in St. Francis
- » Expand the community’s tax base and support new development
- » Help redevelop underutilized locations and those in need of revitalization
- » Emphasize and support “home grown” businesses and create a culture of entrepreneurship
- » Pursue opportunities to provide desired goods and services for residents and visitors to St. Francis

INFRASTRUCTURE

We will strategically invest in infrastructure, in order to provide the greatest returns on this investment in supporting the viability and long term sustainability of businesses and the overall quality of life in St. Francis.

- » Improve all modes of connectivity, including roads but also trails and sidewalks
- » Connect Bridge Street to Highway 47 (through street connection, trails, and signage and wayfinding)
- » Provide infrastructure to serve existing and new development (water, sewer, etc.) efficiently as possible
- » Manage traffic to provide for the safety of people driving, bicycling, and walking
- » Decrease the speed of traffic flowing through St. Francis, to enhance the viability of retail shops and restaurants along the main arterials
- » Provide sufficient access to development parcels (new, or existing)

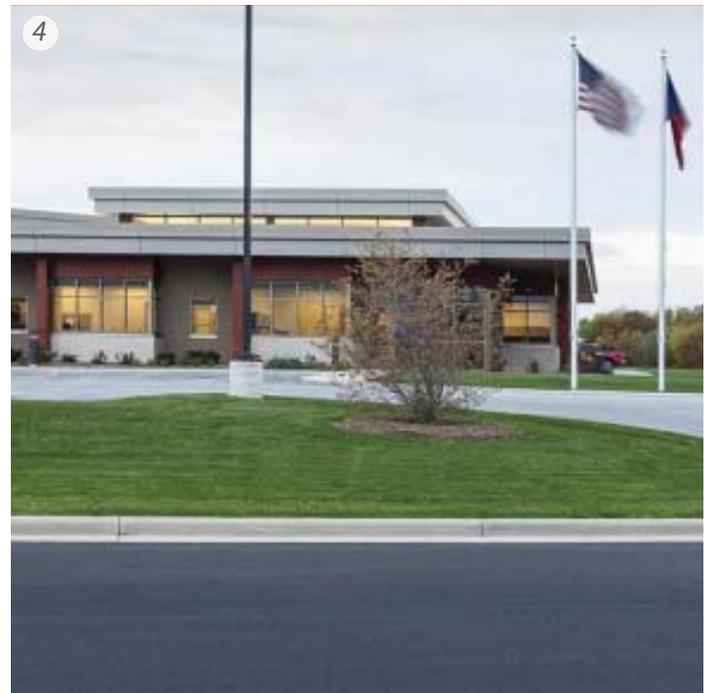
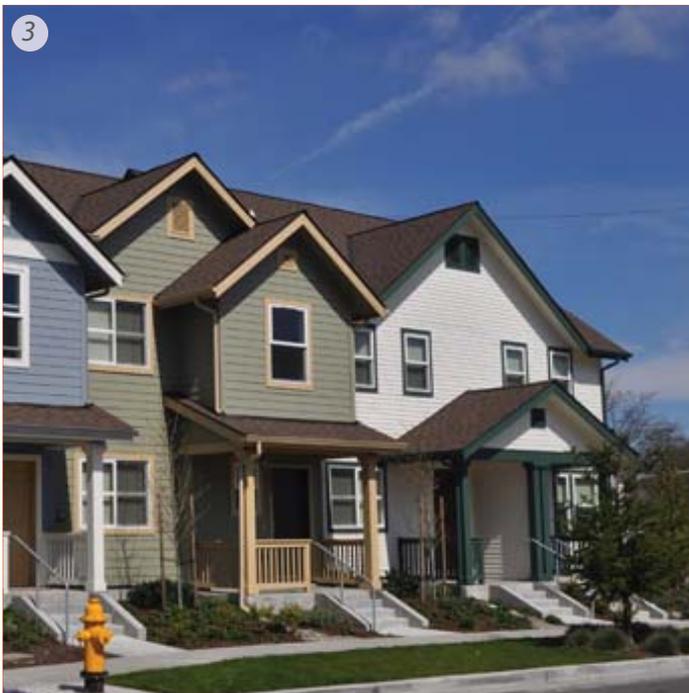
EXAMPLE IMAGERY:

1: Develop buildings that enhance a downtown feel with a good relationship to the street, high quality materials, and appropriate scale to the surrounding neighborhood.

2: Create and promote destinations within St. Francis, especially along the Rum River. Projects should draw residents and visitors to the City.

3: Create additional housing to grow the city, and facilitate other positive outcomes for businesses and the schools. Provide a mix of housing options including single family, townhomes, apartments, and senior housing. Allow people to live in St. Francis at all life points, including rentals, starter homes, move-up housing, and senior housing.

4: Facilitate new jobs by supporting the growth of new and existing businesses







03. MASTER PLAN

Evaluating Options

In order to arrive at the preferred master plan, the St. Francis Forward team developed a number of different concepts to be vetted with the public, city staff and officials, and the development community.

Any plan needed to fit into the existing fabric of the City, being thoughtful and strategic about where interventions would have the greatest impact. Existing districts (right) were respected and opportunities to grow them and enhance them were explored.

The variation in plans were all based on achieving the vision and guiding principles, albeit in different ways and with different magnitudes. Three main ideas were explored:

SURGICAL MOVES

- » Based more in policies
- » Market driven
- » Strategic sales of land

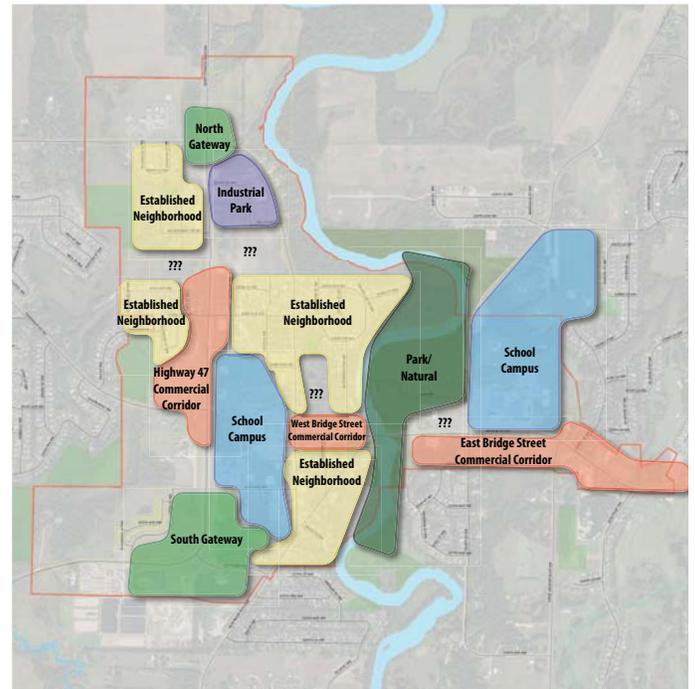
MIDDLE GROUND

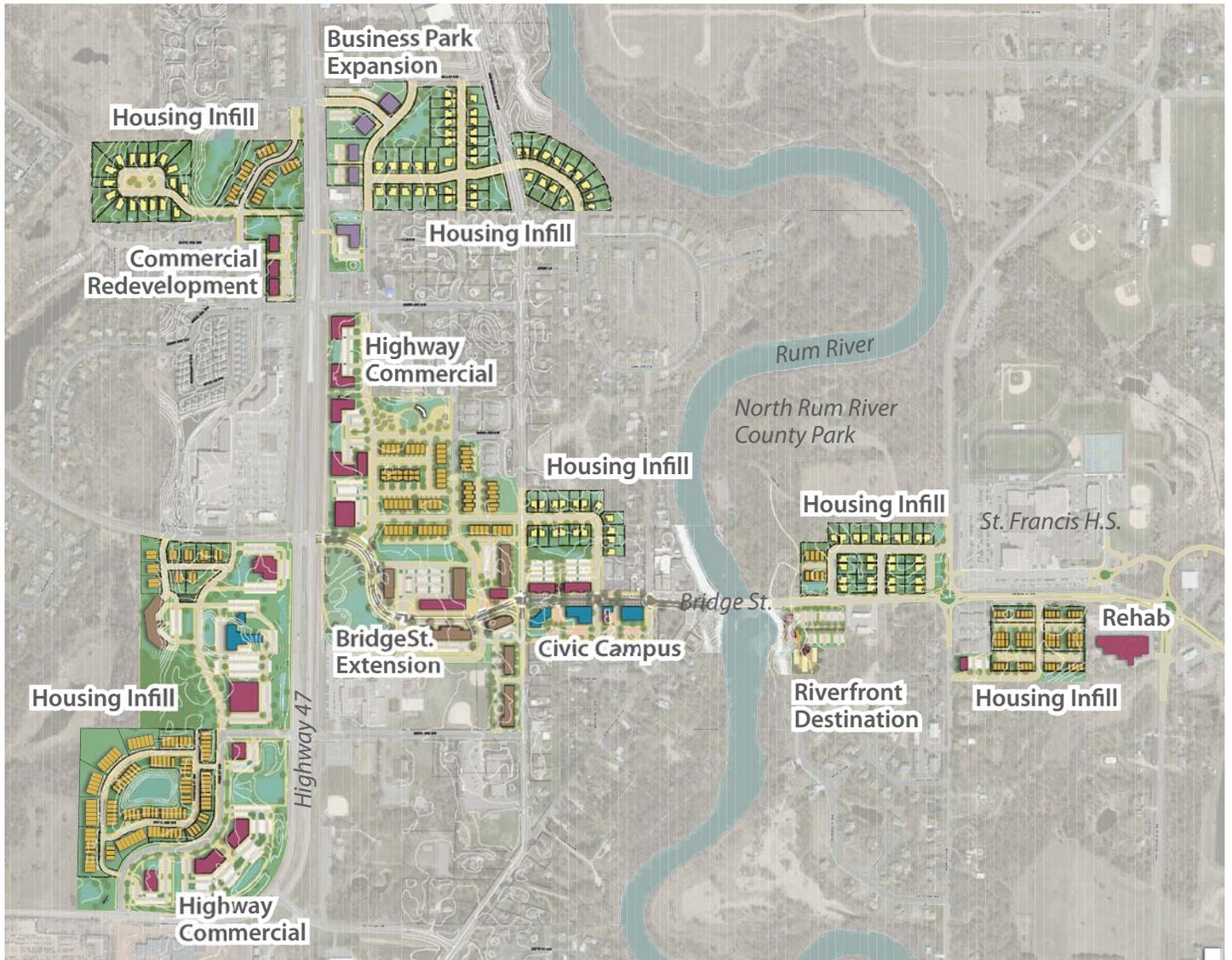
- » Focused on filling in the gaps in the city
- » Continuation of existing land uses and intensities already in the City
- » Some public investment

THE BIG IDEA

- » More intensive land uses
- » Aggressive investments by the public sector

The final plan reflects elements of all three ideas in different locations, but is primarily a hybrid of the Middle Ground and Big Idea concepts.





In order to accomplish these four points, the plan outlines key development and redevelopment sites:

- » A Civic Campus on the south side of Bridge Street
- » Office Redevelopment on the north side of Bridge Street
- » A restaurant/entertainment anchor on the east side of the Rum River
- » Housing redevelopment between Bridge Street and Rum River North County Park
- » Housing redevelopment south of the High School
- » Industrial growth along Highway 47
- » Residential infill along Ambassador Boulevard
- » Residential infill off Highway 47
- » Redevelopment of Office/Commercial along Highway 47

Connecting Bridge Street and Highway 47

EXAMPLE IMAGERY:

Top Left: Utilize streetscape elements such as islands, crosswalks, and plantings to calm traffic and create a safer pedestrian environment

Top Right: Work with MnDOT to install a stoplight on St. Francis Blvd/Highway 47 at the Bridge St extension to Pederson Drive to improve safety and give drivers an opportunity to better see stores.

Bottom Left: Install HAWK beacon along the Bridge Street extension to improve crossings between the middle and elementary schools.

Bottom Right: Use high visibility markings and signage at crossings near the schools.

Currently, St. Francis Middle School lies between the western terminus of Bridge Street and St. Francis Boulevard/Highway 47. This has the effect of disconnecting downtown from one of the most highly traveled thoroughfare in St. Francis, and many of the neighborhoods served by Pederson Drive. Bridge Street feels “hidden” and people traveling on Highway 47 pass by entirely unaware of the businesses, parks, and river on the other side of the Middle School.

A road connecting across the school properties will strengthen businesses on both the St. Francis Blvd/Highway 47 corridor and the Bridge Street corridor.

It will be important to design the road with safe routes for students to walk to and from school. A stoplight at the intersection with Highway 47 will greatly improve safety.

The design shown accommodates the existing school program and bus drop off, but requires the relocation of the bus barn elsewhere in the community. The City may be able to work with the School District to locate and secure a new location.

Keeping Bridge Street a local street may benefit the City and School District, as it may be easier to implement decreased speed limits at the school and the ability to install user-activated signals as-needed. This will have to be evaluated further as the plan moves forward.





Development Summary

Uses	New Roadway connection with trails and improved crossings. Bus Barn Relocation
Length of Road (As shown)	0.3 Miles
City Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop and execute a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the school district and other parties including the County and MnDOT, formalizing the preferred design for the Bridge Street connection. The MOU would ideally also articulate the expectations of each party with regard to funding and ongoing maintenance of the street extension project. The MOU may also articulate the location for the relocation of the bus facility and the funding source for this change in the bus facility. -Formally identify and secure funding for the street extension program, through a mixture (potentially) of TIF or other funds from the city, county, or state. -Complete detailed / final design documents and commence construction of the street extension, including the installation of a traffic signal at Highway 47.

River Entertainment District

EXAMPLE IMAGERY:

Top Left: Provide a dining/entertainment destination

Top Right: Capitalize on outdoor setting and develop outdoor seating, music/entertainment, and views to the river

Bottom Left: Incorporate outfitter/retail component into development

Bottom Right: Develop river access to support the outfitter concept

The City-owned property adjacent to the Rum River is envisioned as a restaurant with entertainment space. This development would complement the Rum River Inn to help develop more of a dining and entertainment destination in St. Francis along the Rum River. In addition to gaining business from St. Francis residents, it would also benefit from proximity to the High School and Middle School with athletic tournaments, concerts, and other events bringing people into the community. Based on resident feedback at public meetings and through online surveys, there is a desire for additional dining options, as well as “third places” (the spots other than work and home where people can gather, spend time, and find entertainment).

In coordination with the restaurant, an outfitter could benefit from the location, as a starting or ending point for kayak, canoe, or float trips on the Rum River. The area of slower current on the east side of the river, just south of the bridge, provides a safe launching spot for these excursions. As an interim step, the outfitter could utilize the North Rum River County Park as a starting point.





Development Summary

Uses	Restaurant/Entertainment Outfitter/Outdoor Retail
Square Footage (As shown)	Commercial: +/- 7,500 SF
City Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prepare marketing materials for the City-owned property on the south side of Bridge Street, using the language and message conveyed in this master plan document. -Prepare a package of incentives or tools the City is prepared to offer a prospective developer of the City-owned parcel. -Prepare and issue a City-led RFP for the property, communicating the expectations of the City for potential development concepts and outlining anticipated incentives available from St. Francis. -Formalize development agreements with the entity selected from the RFP process, for the City owned property.

Community Campus

EXAMPLE IMAGERY:

Top Left: Community space such as reservable rooms or a youth center should be integrated into the Community Campus

Top Right: When building new facilities, ensure the architecture is at an appropriate scale for the area. Project designs should bring buildings to the street, thereby creating a more traditional downtown feel.

Bottom Left: Make sure new civic buildings reflect a sense of pride in the community

Bottom Right: Enhanced streetscape can improve safety and bring a district feel to the area

Civic uses create a steady draw to an area. While the market for more commercial uses may take longer to mature and rely on residential growth, the City can work towards relocating civic uses to the south side of Bridge Street, building on some existing uses including the fire station, various school buildings, and the post office.

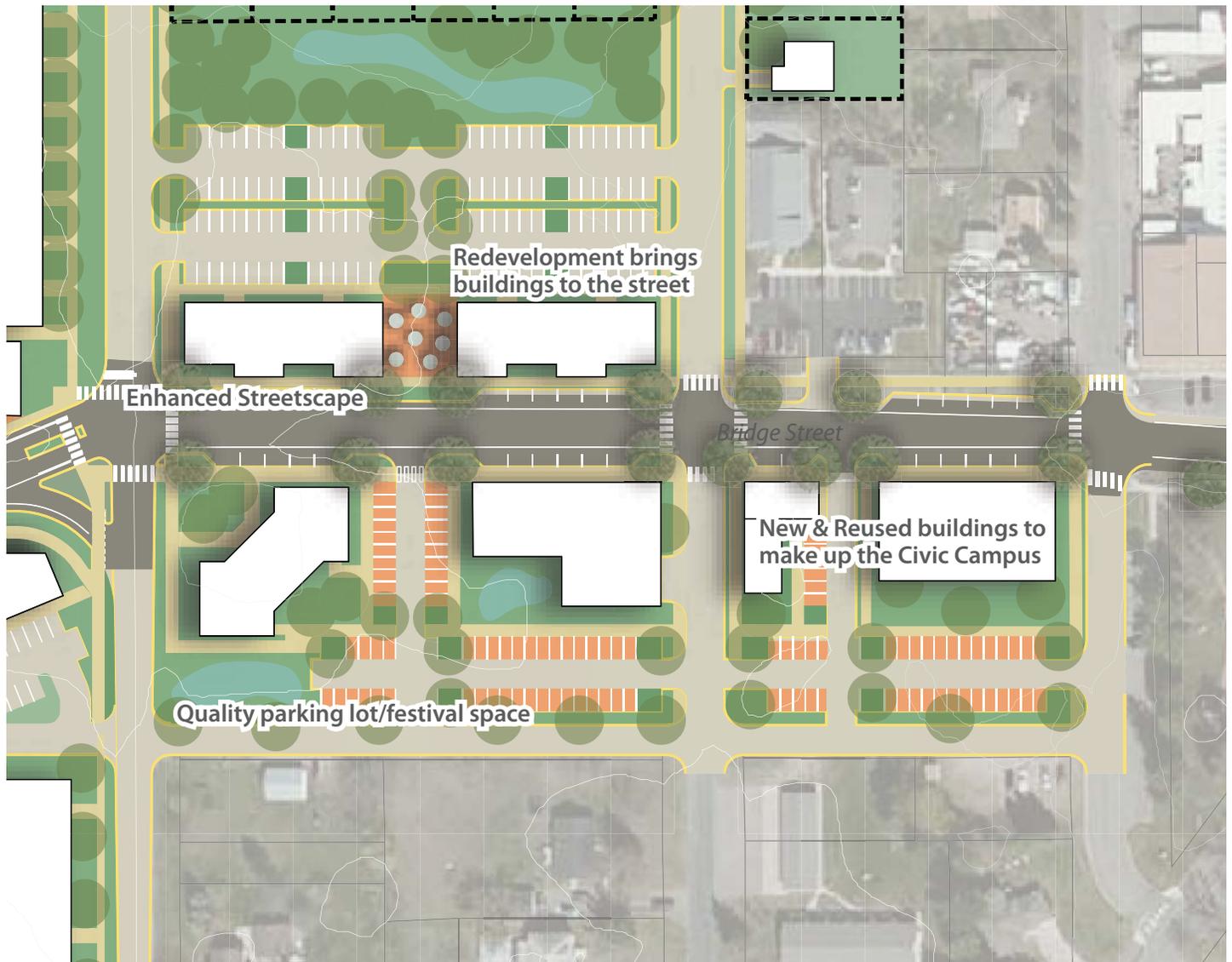
The Anoka County Library is reaching the end of its functional lifespan. The City should coordinate with the county to incorporate a new library into the Civic Campus area. As part of the relocation of the library, there is a desire for additional community space. This may take the form of a coffee shop linked to the library as well as community rooms, reservable space for meetings or gatherings, and an updated library program to reflect changing technologies and needs.

While there is not room for a large community/activity center as has been discussed with the school district or through the YMCA, there is an opportunity to incorporate a smaller youth center that would give nearby students a safe and fun place to spend time.

By moving civic uses to Bridge Street, the City sends the message that this area is an important place and the heart of the community.

If additional office or commercial space redevelops to the north, ensure the buildings contribute to a downtown feel and character.





Development Summary

Uses	Civic Uses: Fire Station, City Hall/Offices, Library, Post Office, Community Space
Square Footage (As shown)	Civic: +/- 36,000 SF
Key City Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Coordinate with the county to relocate the Library west of the Rum River -Develop a formal plan for future operations, incorporating uses into the Civic Campus concept. -Complete more formal plans for the Civic Campus components, in collaboration with the County and other partners. -Identify funding for the civic campus in the future Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). -Complete more detailed design of streetscape elements desired along Bridge Street, in order to be prepared to move forward with construction once funding is available. -Formally reach out to developers interested in redevelopment in the area (including retail and residential components, to the north of the Bridge Street corridor).

Highway 47 Infill

EXAMPLE IMAGERY:

Top Left: Retail with a nice street presence. May be appropriate as part of a potential longer term redevelopment at the corner of Bridge St and Highway 47/St. Francis Boulevard

Top Right: Commercial/Retail uses

Bottom Left: Industrial/Flex building with high quality architectural finishes

Bottom Right: Office building with appropriate scale and quality design

Development along Highway 47 will include a mix of service commercial and industrial/flex infill land uses. These land uses are more compatible with higher traffic/higher speed roadways. Commercial and industrial uses benefit from the increased visibility and access provided by major roadways.

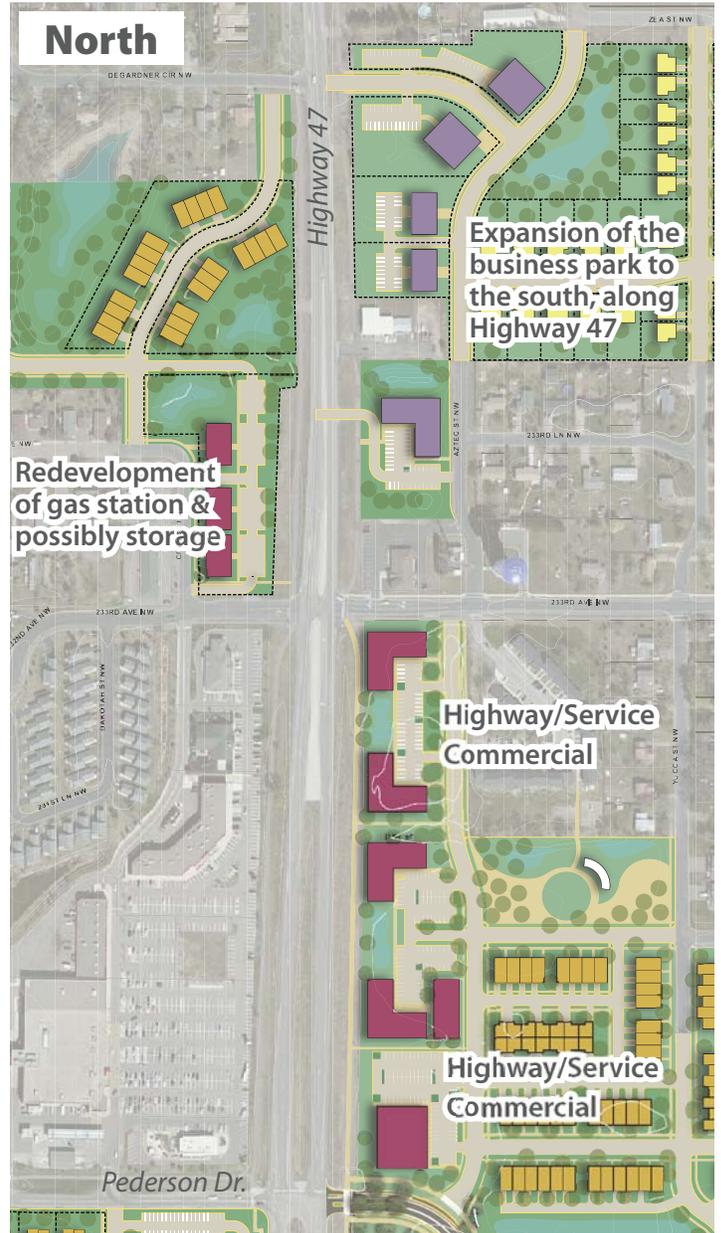
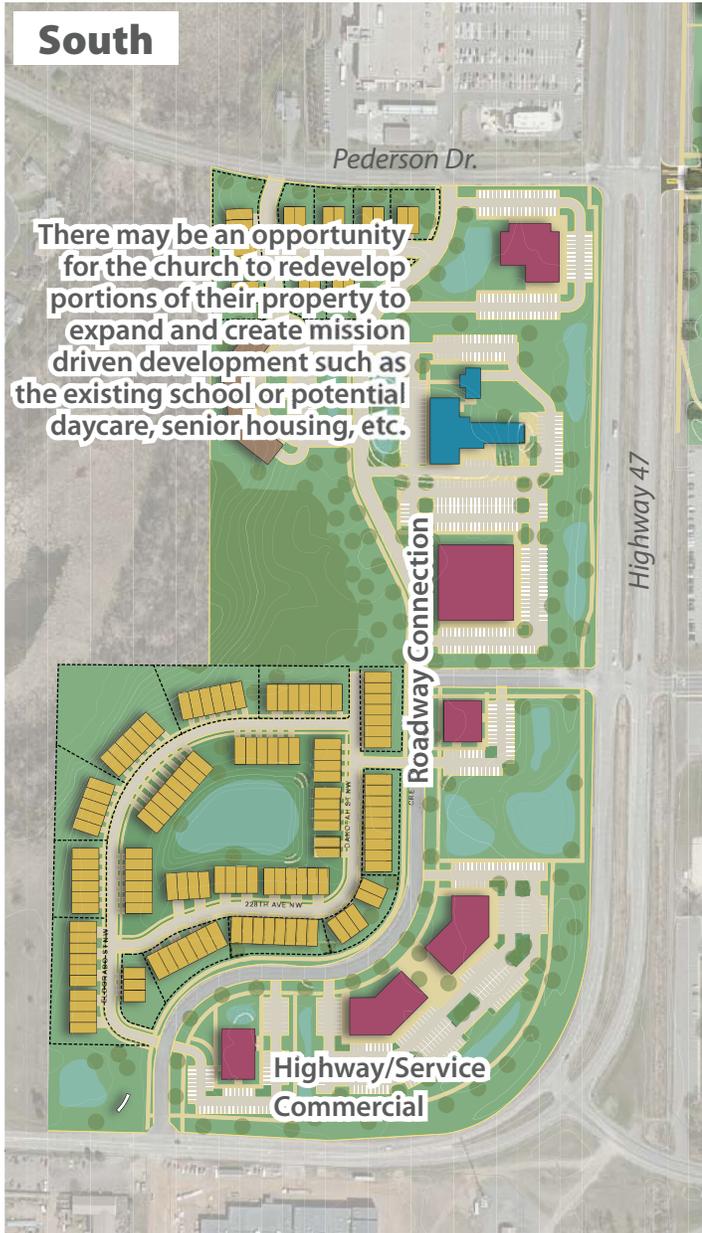
Commercial uses are envisioned to develop as convenience retail and service commercial uses. This could include in-line multi-tenant retail, stand alone pad sites, larger community scaled retail, pharmacy, office, and convenience retail.

The property in the corner where Highway 47 turns north has the potential to serve as a “gateway development,” welcoming people driving on the highway into St. Francis. Convenience retail and service commercial fits this site well, as it represents some of the first commercial buildings drivers along Highway 47 see after 10 miles of residential and rural landscapes when coming from the south.

If desired, the First Baptist Church has the opportunity to both expand their mission based land uses such as the school, and capitalize on their land, by extending Cree Street to Pederson Drive and developing more of the property. There is also City owned property in this area, south of Mansetti’s that could be incorporated into a development project.

Industrial development is anticipated to grow to the south of the existing business park, along Highway 47. Housing orientation and buffer space such as a park or natural area will improve the housing/industrial relationship along the edge of a completed Aztec Road.





Development Summary

Uses	Commercial Industrial
Square Footage (As shown)	Commercial: +/- 150,000 SF Industrial: +/- 50,000 SF
City Actions	-The City could proactively rezone parcels along and near Highway 47, to make entitlements of projects easier in the future. -The City should prepare a marketing package of properties and opportunities available along Highway 47. This information can be shared with prospective parties at local, regional, and national venues.

Residential Infill

EXAMPLE IMAGERY:

Top Left: Townhome products are being constructed off of Highway 47 and could be incorporated into other developments around St. Francis

Top Right: Smaller single family home lots may improve the feasibility of residential projects.

Bottom Left: In key locations, larger and higher quality housing may be appropriate, such as along the Rum River

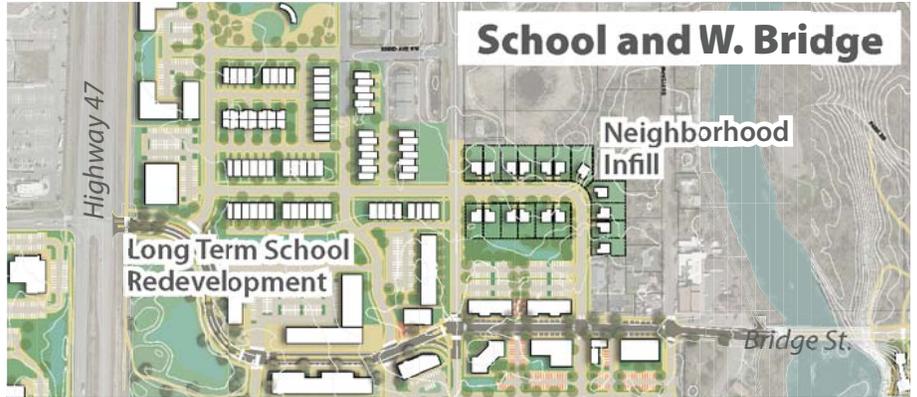
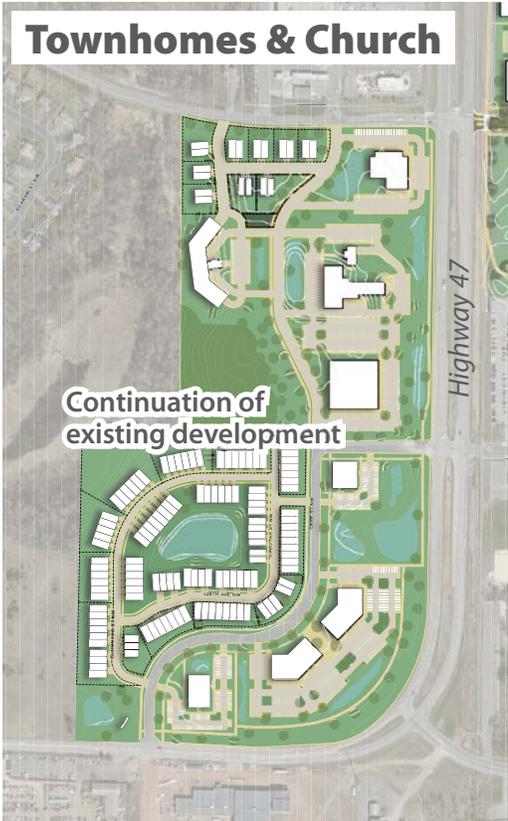
Bottom Right: Multi-family and senior housing fits into the community in certain locations, based on adjacent land uses.

Adding residents to the core areas of St. Francis will assist the community's overall efforts over the next several years. New residents provide spending to support existing and new businesses in the community, including grocery stores and other retail shops. New residential construction would provide additional property tax revenue to the city to fund various projects. Furthermore, the City currently has significant utility capacity, and the addition of more residential customers could help the City pay for previously completed utility improvements (including the new wastewater treatment plant). In addition, adding more residents in the core areas of the city would add to the overall level of vitality and activity in the Downtown area and along Highway 47, and would allow the city to add residents without incurring significant expenses related to the extension of major roads and utilities into new growth areas.

As illustrated in the graphics, residential infill could occur in various locations throughout the core of St. Francis. The areas on either side of Ambassador Drive, toward Highway 47, could include lower density single family houses. Areas west of Highway 47 and north of city hall could include medium density homes (such as townhomes). The Middle School campus could be developed into a mixture of apartment units and medium density housing (townhomes). The area between the existing Anoka County Library and the high school campus could primarily include medium density residential, as well as a few apartments. Areas to the east along Bridge Street would likely develop as higher density housing, including potentially senior housing. An infill area located north of Bridge Street and east of Ambassador Blvd could be developed with traditional single family homes.

The City of St. Francis has already experienced an increased interest in residential development in 2017, as the local housing market has continued to recover. The City should leverage the increasing strength of the local market to help encourage development of the various infill areas in St. Francis as residential, where appropriate.





Development Summary

Uses	Housing: Single Family, Townhomes, Multi-Family
Units (As shown)	SFR: +/- 100 TH: +/- 300 MFR: +/- 175
City Actions	<p>Rezone parcels appropriately to articulate the desired density of housing and the overall parameters for planning for various residential types.</p> <p>Proactively market potential residential infill parcels to residential developers from the Twin Cities and throughout Minnesota.</p> <p>Identify any incentives that could be used for residential projects (including, potentially, low income housing tax credits, and other affordable housing incentives)</p>

School Redevelopment

EXAMPLE IMAGERY:

Top Left: Commercial/Retail use at the corner of Bridge Street and St. Francis Blvd. Design and elements should introduce and strengthen the downtown Bridge Street Corridor.

Top Right: Commercial uses along the highway could benefit from increased visibility

Bottom Left: Apartments and/or condominiums with a strong street presence along Bridge Street

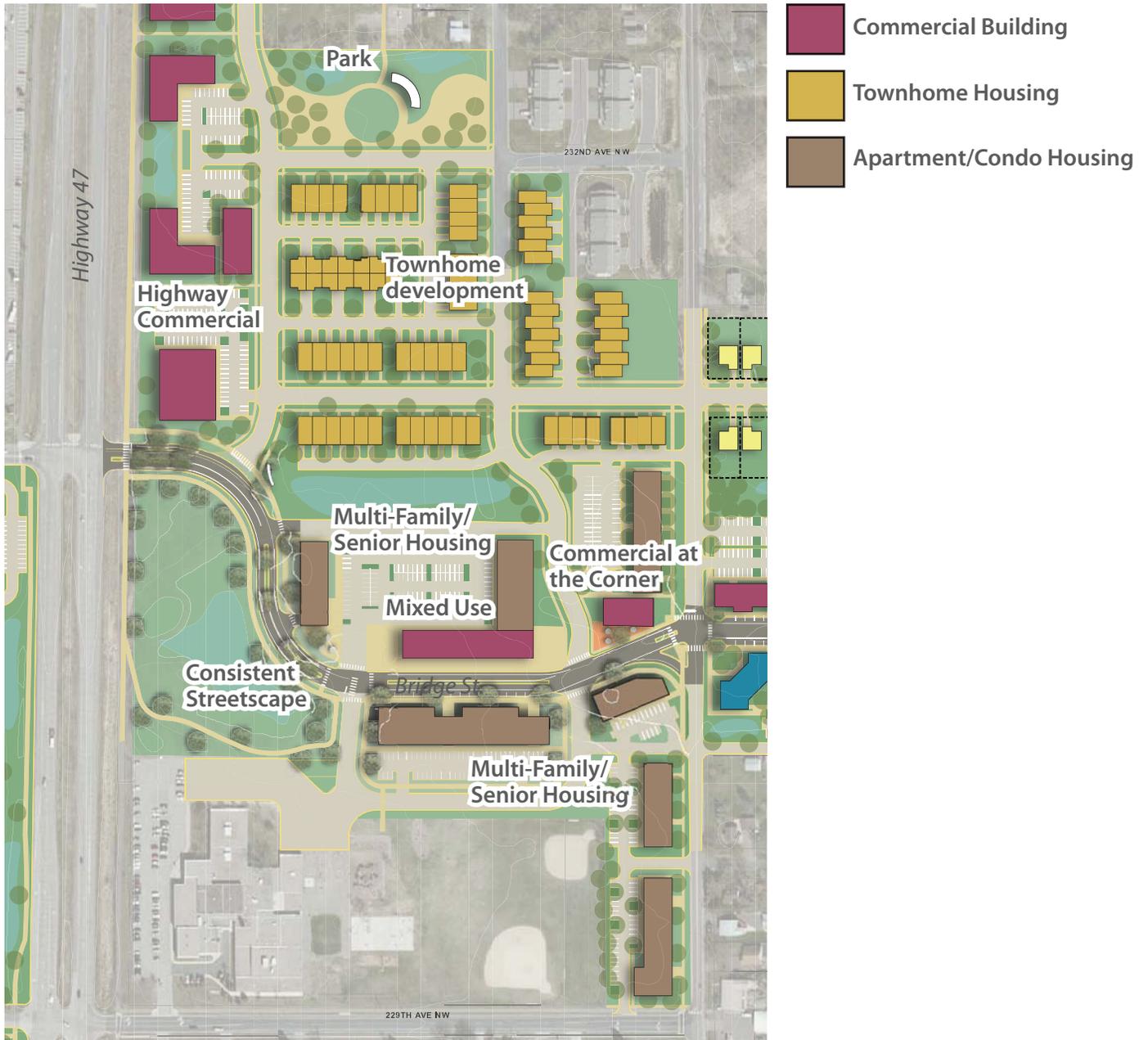
Bottom Right: Townhomes and single family homes

The Middle School campus, between Ambassador Blvd and Highway 47, could represent a key area for redevelopment in St. Francis in the future, in the event the school district elects to relocate the Middle School to a new location, rather than continue to maintain the middle school building. Parts of the existing facility are several decades old, and it may make more sense to construct a new building than to continue to retrofit an aging facility. In addition, redeveloping the Middle School site could provide the school district a significant windfall from the sale of the land to a prospective developer.

Under this scenario, the school district would likely work jointly with the City to refine plans for potential desired development at the Middle School site and then market the campus site to potential developers. Given the size of the parcel, the City and school district could market this opportunity to larger scale and more experienced developers at the regional or even national levels.

As illustrated in the graphics, potential redevelopment of the Middle School site could include a mixture of general retail uses fronting on to Highway 47 and Bridge Street, as well as a mixture of medium and higher density residential uses, located farther from Bridge Street. The redevelopment concepts call for the integration of land uses along Bridge Street in a "Main Street" orientation, in order to establish the development area as a "western extension" of the existing Downtown area to the Highway 47 corridor. Plans for future development at the middle school site should establish Bridge Street as a key entrance into the heart of St. Francis for visitors to the community. The integration of various residential types at the school campus site should add greater vitality to the development project and make the project more marketable to a variety of potential residents in the local area (including younger adults, Empty Nesters, and seniors).





Development Summary

Uses	Commercial, Mixed Use, Multi-Family residential, Senior Housing, Townhomes, Park
Square Footage/Units (As shown)	Townhomes: +/-80 units Multi-Family: +/- 175 units Commercial: +/- 70,000 SF
City Actions	<p>The City, along with the school district, may complete a formal RFP for development of lands on the school campus (in the event the middle school relocates). The RFP should communicate the expectations of the City regarding the quality and character of development desired.</p> <p>The City and school district may then complete formal development agreements with the chosen developer. The development agreement may formalize incentives offered to the project (including potentially abatements, public funding of infrastructure improvements, etc.).</p> <p>The City may then work with the developer jointly to market the project to prospective home builders and other development partners and tenants.</p>

Other Initiatives: Streetscape & Public Realm

Developing an attractive and safe streetscape for downtown St. Francis will help spur development, and demonstrate a commitment to investing in the area on the part of the City. More importantly, it will facilitate the safe movement of people around downtown and make it a more enjoyable place to spend time and money.

Bridge Street: Could build off of what has been started with the round-a-bout reconstruction and enhanced.

Bridge Street Extension: Creating a safe street will be paramount. The design should also be an extension of other Bridge Street elements to achieve a consistent “destination downtown” appearance.

Highway 47: Use design to distinguish the segment of the highway passing through the city. Provide visual interest to make drivers more aware of their surroundings.



Streetscape and public realm improvements can help create a district feel and identity, both in downtowns (above), and highway corridors (below)



Other Initiatives: Signage & Wayfinding

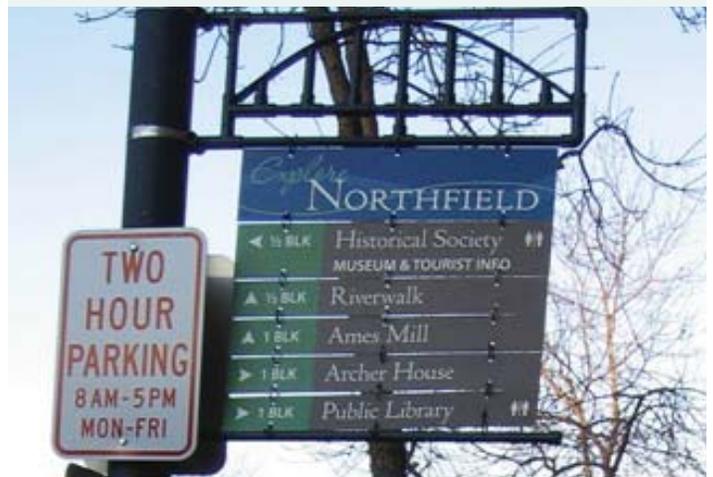
Gateway signage is the large signage that welcomes visitors to an area and helps show off the identity of a place. St. Francis should utilize signage at logical gateways into the city. These could include:

- » At the curve on Highway 47
- » At the intersection of Ambassador and Highway 47
- » Lake George Boulevard before the roundabout

In addition to gateway signage, wayfinding signage will help people move around the city and find destinations. This can be at either a pedestrian scale in walking districts, or at a vehicular scale when informing drivers where to go. This signage would be invaluable in showing people where to go to get from Highway 47 to Bridge Street and vice-versa. Destinations such as the schools, city facilities, parks, and the river should be shown.



Gateway signage (above) would go a long way to welcoming visitors. Wayfinding signage (below) will help them find their way around town once they are here.



Other Initiatives: Trails/Connect to the River

Residents are eager to capitalize on the Rum River as a unique feature and destination that few other cities can boast. In addition, residential developers have stated that trails are one of the amenities that their clients value the most. Efforts are already underway with the most recent Bridge Street improvements, and the City should continue to connect the trail networks to community destinations:

- » North Rum River County Park
- » Along the Rum River
- » Middle School and Elementary School
- » High School
- » Retail Destinations
- » Residential Neighborhoods

This could also include exploring the potential for public land along the river, especially in the floodplain where other development is not appropriate



Trails are one of the most sought after amenities when people are choosing where to live. This is consistent for people of all ages.



Other Initiatives: Promotion

The City should continue and grow efforts to promote St. Francis as a great place to live and do business.

This is a wide ranging set of initiatives:

- » Branding efforts
- » Events to bring people to town and raise awareness of St. Francis
- » Continue and strengthen the City's social media presence
- » Selling St. Francis to developers and real estate agents
- » Promotion to businesses (retailers as well as professional and industrial) looking to expand
- » Countering challenging stories with positive stories about the community.



The City should work to promote themselves both locally to potential residents and at a larger scale to developers and businesses



Las Vegas Convention Center & Westgate Hotel
Las Vegas, NV | May 20-23, 2018 | #ICSCRECon





04. IMPLEMENTATION

How-To: Achieving the Vision

The vision will take time, perseverance, hard work, cooperation, and tough decisions. But if it was easy, it would be done already...

PATIENCE

The project ideas will not come to fruition overnight. Some ideas will take time to proceed through a regulatory process, while others will need the market to mature somewhat before becoming reality. Continuing to promote the vision for St. Francis, while continually checking in with the plan to measure accomplishments, will provide results over time.

DEDICATION

Real and perceived roadblocks have stymied other projects in St. Francis, but there is a new and tenacious attitude in the City to “get stuff done.” This may mean “refusing to take no” for an answer. It may mean demonstrating a financial commitment to change. It may also mean holding potential projects to a higher standard.

PARTNERSHIPS

While the City will be the champion of the vision, there are many other entities that will need to be involved if it is to be accomplished. Public entities such as the ISD 15, Anoka County, MnDOT, and the City and County EDAs will need to be a part of the process of implementation, as well as private developers, property owners, businesses, and residents.

Roles and Responsibilities

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS

Moving forward, the City will be responsible for implementing this plan.

Managing new development and redevelopment will be the task of the City staff.

Community Development will lead the way when it comes to promoting the City's vision. Attracting new development, and supporting the growth of existing businesses, will be key tasks. This includes helping developers and business owners through the process:

- » Explaining and applying land use controls
- » Review of development plans and proposals
- » Coordinating with Public Works to ensure that infrastructure and other capital improvements are in place
- » Developing financial plans to incentivize development and fund the investments that are the responsibility of the public sector.

The Public Works Department will be responsible for ensuring the infrastructure needed to facilitate development is being provided to meet safety and future growth requirements. When public resources are going to support development, it will be done in an efficient and cost effective manner. Public Works staff will coordinate with MnDOT and Anoka County for infrastructure improvements.

Elected officials will be the public face of the plan. They will need to promote the vision. Having leaders and decision makers in the community that are excited about growth and development provides reassurance to developers looking at St. Francis.

Elected officials will also use the plan to evaluate new projects. When looking at whether to approve a project or not, provide public funding, or in negotiating with developers, the plan provides a direction and basis for defending policy decisions.

ST. FRANCIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (EDA)

- » The EDA has the potential to acquire parcels in the study area with potential for redevelopment and to sell these properties to prospective developers or entities from the private sector who can complete redevelopment projects.
- » The EDA will increase its efforts to promote existing businesses in the study area and to recruit new businesses and developers to the redevelopment area.
- » The EDA has the potential to serve as a limited financial partner, along with the private sector, in individual redevelopment projects.
- » The EDA has the potential to issue revenue bonds, general obligation bonds, or other credit enhancements or guarantees, to support redevelopment projects.

THE COMMUNITY

The community of St. Francis must continue to stay involved and active as development occurs. Knowledge and insights gained as part of this process help residents and business owners know where the city is headed. It also gives community members an informed point of view to offer additional support and critiques of potential development projects.

Public Finance

TIF (FROM THE CITY'S TIF POLICY)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a tool cities can use to support development. It does this by bonding for money that can be used for eligible project costs for projects that would not have happened but for the additional funds. The bonds are then paid off by the increase in property taxes that comes along with the new project.

The City of St. Francis has the power to utilize TIF as granted by the Minnesota Tax Increment Financing Act, Minnesota Statutes 469.174 through 469.1794, as amended. The fundamental purpose of tax increment financing in the City of St. Francis is to encourage desirable development or redevelopment that would not occur but for the assistance provided through TIF.

The City reserves the right to approve or reject projects on a case by case basis, taking into consideration established policies, project criteria, and projected demands on City services relative to the potential benefits from the project. Meeting policy criteria does not guarantee the award of business assistance to the project. Approval or denial of one project is not intended to set precedent for approval or denial of another project.

The City has the following objectives when considering whether or not to use TIF:

- » To retain local jobs and/or increase the number and diversity of jobs that offer stable employment and/or attractive wages and benefits. Preference will be given to higher paying jobs that also provide benefits such as health care coverage.
- » Projects that provide value in the forms of needed transportation and other utility infrastructure improvements that would be completed in conjunction with the project.
- » To encourage additional unsubsidized private development in the area, either directly or indirectly through "spin-off" development.
- » To facilitate the development process and to achieve development on sites which would not otherwise be developed but-for the use of TIF.
- » To remove blight and/or encourage redevelopment of commercial and industrial areas in the City that results in high quality redevelopment and private reinvestment.
- » To offset increased costs of redevelopment (i.e. contaminated site clean-up) over and above the costs normally incurred in development.
- » To create opportunities for affordable housing.
- » Projects that improve the quality of life in the City by providing a desirable good or service and addressing an unmet demand in the community.
- » To contribute to the implementation of other public policies, as adopted by the city from time to time, such as the promotion of quality urban or architectural design, energy conservation, and decreasing the capital and/or operating costs of local government.

For additional information on the City's requirements and policy, consult the City of St. Francis Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Policy (2016)

TAX ABATEMENT

The City of St. Francis may consider offering tax abatements for economic development within the study area. Minnesota statutes allow abatements to be used for the following purposes, related to the redevelopment plan:

- » General economic development
- » Construction of public facilities or infrastructure (such as streets or roads)
- » Redevelopment of blighted areas
- » Providing access to services for residents (including housing and retail)

The City (and EDA) may grant abatements no longer than 15 years in length, although the term can be extended to 20 years if only two of the three political subdivisions (city/town, county, and school district) grant an abatement.

The total amount of property taxes abated may not exceed the larger of 10 percent of the net tax capacity of the political subdivision, or \$200,000.

BUSINESS SUBSIDIES

The City of St. Francis along with the St. Francis Economic Development Authority (EDA) may, from time to time, consider offering subsidies to businesses in accordance with the City of St. Francis Business Subsidy Policy (2016) and complying with Minnesota Statutes, Sections 116J.993-116J.995 as amended.

The City has established the following criteria for considering business subsidies (although meeting criteria does not guarantee a business subsidy will be granted)

- » Increase in Tax Base
- » Job Creation
- » Creates an Increase in Average Wages
- » Economic or Redevelopment goals, including blight removal, providing goods and services not currently available, utilizing public infrastructure improvements, and/or adding to a critical mass of commercial or industrial development

STORMWATER UTILITY FEE AND OTHER STORMWATER INVESTMENTS

The City of St. Francis may offer rebates on stormwater utility fees, water bills, or other public utility costs to private sector clients, in exchange for installing rain gardens or other green building technologies.

The City of St. Francis may waive water and sewer access fees (known as WAC and SAC fees) in order to financially provide an incentive to new development or redevelopment within the study area.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

As the City moves forward with investments in infrastructure and incentives, it will be important that each of these is weighed carefully.

Grants

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL LIVABLE COMMUNITIES GRANTS

The Metropolitan Council maintains a series of “Livable Communities” grants:

- » The Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LCDA) provides grants that can fund basic infrastructure and site assembly when they link housing, jobs, services, and transportation.
- » Affordable housing is supported through the Local Housing Incentives Account. Money can go towards gap financing, demolition, site preparation, construction, and alterations/rehabilitation. This can include single family and multi-family residential projects.
- » The Tax Base Revitalization Account (TBRA) is used to investigate and clean up brownfield locations. Goals of the program include adding/preserving jobs, housing, and supporting redevelopment.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSISTANCE GRANT (THROUGH THE MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY)

Grants provided by MPCA each year for various aspects of promoting sustainable environmental practices

Examples from the last few years include the FY 2018 Sustainable Brewing and Distilling Environmental Assistance Grant and the FY 2017 Greater Minnesota Recycling Collection grants.

MINNESOTA INVESTMENT FUND

The Minnesota Investment Fund is a revolving loan fund that is awarded to cities (or other local units of government) to support expanding businesses. Businesses must meet job creation goals and contribute to the project as well.

Promotion

PERCEPTIONS OF ST. FRANCIS

Part of the strategy to improve the study area involves a community-wide effort to improve the overall perception of St. Francis in the Twin Cities region. These efforts may involve strategies to reduce drug use among youth and other age segments, and working with local media to promote positive activities in St. Francis (including festivals and other community events).

WORKING WITH DEVELOPERS

The City should work with developers to craft effective marketing messages for individual projects that articulate the positive aspects of particular projects along with the benefits of locating in St. Francis.

Collaboration

WITH THE COMMUNITY

The City should work with local community groups to promote potential redevelopment ideas and projects in the study area.

WITH ANOKA COUNTY

The City should partner with the County to help secure funding necessary for public improvements in the study area, and in particular should work with the County to coordinate improvements with the County road system.

WITH ANOKA COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The City should work with the county's EDA to secure grants and incentives for particular projects.

WITH ISD 15

It is important to remember that what is good for St. Francis will be good for the district in terms of residential growth and competing for employees. Likewise, the school district is one of the City's biggest employers and the tournaments, events, and even students getting lunch or grabbing a bite of food after school serve as major economic drivers for the Bridge Street corridor. ISD 15 will need to work with the City to organize the transfer of land for the Bridge Street connection, and to find a suitable location for a new bus garage.

WITH MNDOT

The City will need to collaborate with MnDOT to coordinate traffic signal improvements along Highway 47, including at Pedersen Drive, and to explore strategies to make the overall corridor safer for people biking and walking.

WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

There are opportunities to work with public institutions to study and accomplish some of the initiatives outlined in the plan.

At the University of Minnesota, The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), The Center for Rural Design (CRD), The Minnesota Design Center (MDC), and the Metropolitan Design Center may be partners on projects.

Action Items

LAND USE CONTROLS & COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is in the process of being updated. Following the update of the Comprehensive Plan, the City will update its Land Use Zoning to reflect the planned land uses outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning is the strongest tool cities have to shape development. Ensuring the zoning meets and allows the vision to be accomplished, without being so restrictive as to deter development, will be key.

ANNUAL DOWNTOWN PLAN REVIEW

Every year, the City should revisit the St. Francis Forward plan to measure and celebrate progress, set goals for the next year, and evaluate what changes need to be made. This will help keep the plan alive and everyone responsible for its implementation.

STREETSCAPE/PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

Improve the streetscape along Bridge Street, especially from the Rum River to the Middle School and beyond to the intersection with Highway 47. An attractive and high quality streetscape helps create a “destination downtown,” while improving safety (pedestrian and vehicular) and enhancing community image.

STOPLIGHT AT HIGHWAY 47 & PEDERSON DRIVE

Work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to secure a stoplight at Highway 47 and Pederson Drive. The traffic counts are nearing the standards that would warrant a stoplight. The potential Bridge Street connection would likely create the traffic conditions that would justify the installation of a stoplight.

SIGNAGE PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The City would benefit from improved signage to both greet and direct visitors. Monument signage at the corner of Highway 47 and Cree Street (either on the City owned parcel to the northeast, or at the Public Works and police station property) would welcome people to St. Francis. Similar signs could be used in other key locations in the City.

Likewise, wayfinding signage will help people find their way across town and to major destinations like schools, public facilities, parks, and the river.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Establish design guidelines for new construction in the area. Design elements such as build-to lines, plantings, enhanced materials, and parking locations will strengthen the built form.

PROMOTIONAL/MARKETING PLAN

Develop and implement a plan to market St. Francis. This could include targeting developers, business owners, and prospective residents. Promote the strengths of St. Francis.

STAY AWARE OF CHANGING TECHNOLOGIES

Changing technologies have the ability to affect how people are working and shopping. Some of these may have larger impacts on exurban places like St. Francis.

The online retail revolution with companies like Amazon makes many goods available to St. Francis residents from a home computer, tablet, or smart phone. The flipside of this means that St. Francis retailers are now competing with national and global suppliers.

Some jobs are also becoming less dependent on location. Employees who can work online may choose to live in a community like St. Francis where schools, lower housing prices, access to nature, and small town character don't have to compete with a longer commute.

Other future technologies such as driverless cars and alternative energy sources may have impacts on St. Francis as well, although it is too soon to tell what the effects will be.

Initiative	Action Item	Timing
Connecting Bridge Street and Highway 47	Develop and execute a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the school district and other parties including the County and MnDOT, formalizing the preferred design for the Bridge Street connection. The MOU would ideally also articulate the expectations of each party with regard to funding and ongoing maintenance of the street extension project. The MOU may also articulate the location for the relocation of the bus facility and the funding source for this change in the bus facility.	Short
	Formally identify and secure funding for the street extension program, through a mixture (potentially) of TIF or other funds from the city, county, or state.	Short/Mid
	Complete detailed / final design documents and commence construction of the street extension, including the installation of a traffic signal at Highway 47.	Short/Mid
River Entertainment District	Prepare marketing materials for the City owned property on the south side of Bridge Street, using the language and message conveyed in this master plan document.	Short
	Prepare a package of incentives or tools the City is prepared to offer a prospective developer of the City-owned parcel.	Short
	Prepare and issue a City-led RFP for the property, communicating the expectations of the City for potential development concepts and outlining anticipated incentives available from St. Francis.	Short
	Formalize development agreements with the entity selected from the RFP process, for the City owned property.	Short
Community Campus	Coordinate with the county to relocate the Library west of the Rum River	Mid
	Develop a formal plan for future operations, incorporating uses into the Civic Campus concept.	Short
	Complete more formal plans for the Civic Campus components, in collaboration with the County and other partners.	Short/Mid
	Identify funding for the civic campus in the future Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).	Mid
	Complete more detailed design of streetscape elements desired along Bridge Street, in order to be prepared to move forward with construction once funding is available.	Short/Mid
	Formally reach out to developers interested in redevelopment in the area (including retail and residential components, to the north of the Bridge Street corridor).	Short/Mid
Highway 47 Infill	The City could proactively rezone parcels along and near Highway 47, to make entitlements of projects easier in the future.	Short
	The City should prepare a marketing package of properties and opportunities available along Highway 47. This information can be shared with prospective parties at local, regional, and national venues.	Short
Residential Infill	Rezone parcels appropriately to articulate the desired density of housing and the overall parameters for planning for various residential types.	Short
	Proactively market residential infill parcels to residential developers from the Twin Cities and throughout MN.	Short/Mid
	Identify any incentives that could be used for residential projects (including, potentially, low income housing tax credits, and other affordable housing incentives)	Short

Initiative	Action Item	Timing
School Redevelopment	The City, along with the school district, may complete a formal RFP for development of lands on the school campus (in the event the middle school relocates). The RFP should communicate the expectations of the City regarding the quality and character of development desired.	Long
	The City and school district may then complete formal development agreements with the chosen developer. The development agreement may formalize incentives offered to the project (including potentially abatements, public funding of infrastructure improvements, etc.).	Long
	The City may then work with the developer jointly to market the project to prospective home builders and other development partners and tenants.	Long
Land Use Controls & Comprehensive Plan	Integrate land use recommendations from this plan into Future Land Use Map and the rest of the updated Comprehensive Plan document in 2018.	Short
	Update zoning classifications for various parcels in the study area based upon the recommendations of this plan document.	Short
Annual Downtown Plan Review	Conduct yearly review session by the City Council of the Downtown Plan for progress made and areas of further action.	Short
Streetscape/Public Realm Improvements	The City should complete detailed designs for streetscape and public realm improvements along Bridge Street, and coordinate these designs with County staff.	Short
	The City and County should secure future funding for streetscape and public realm improvements along Bridge Street.	Short
	The City and County should formally schedule for the completion of streetscape and public realm improvements, as part of future capital planning.	Mid
Stoplight at Highway 47 & Pederson Drive	The City should fund and complete a warrants study to examine the need for a stoplight at Highway 47 & Pederson Drive	Short
	The City should identify funding for the future stop light and include it in the City's Capital Improvements Program over the next few years	Short
Signage Plan and Implementation	The City should complete a signage and wayfinding plan to identify locations and types of signage and wayfinding features to be installed (at the edge of town, and at key locations).	Short
	The City should identify future funding for signage and wayfinding improvements and include them on the City's Capital Improvements Plan.	Mid
Design Guidelines	The City should complete a formal set of Design Guidelines to support private sector development as well as public sector improvements within the study area.	Short
Expand the trail network/Connect to the River	The City should coordinate with Anoka County to expand the trail network leading out of the county park and along the river where feasible. This should be included in the City's Capital Improvement Plan	Short/ Mid
Promotional/Marketing Plan	As plans for particular parcels within the study area continue to evolve, the City should work with local developers to complete a promotional package and marketing plan for the various areas within the study area. This plan will guide outreach by the City and others to the private sector and potential partners.	Short

Measuring

In preparation for the annual downtown plan review, city staff should evaluate the progress the City has made in the previous year.

METRICS

The table on the opposite page provides a tracking worksheet to measure the progress the City has made towards the plan. This can be a helpful tool when it comes to seeing where the City has done well and can celebrate achievements, as well as those spots where the City could improve and should redouble efforts. The items to measure are:

- » Identified Projects Accomplished: How many boxes were checked off on the previous page?
- » Residential Units Built (including by type)
- » Additional square footage added (in terms of office, commercial, and industrial space)
- » Vacancy rates for various property types
- » Jobs
 - *Jobs added at New Companies*
 - *Jobs added at Existing Companies*
- » Average hourly rate of jobs created
- » Property Tax Revenue
- » School district enrollment

SURVEYS

As part of the effort to keep residents and business owners engaged and to keep getting feedback, the City may choose to put out surveys from time to time to see how the efforts are being received. This could also happen in concert with surveying about how the City is doing in general. Options for surveys specific to the plan are:

- » Ongoing surveys of the community's perception of the redevelopment area
- » Periodic surveys gauging the community's interest in particular projects, over time

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Number of tasks accomplished from the action items table										
Residential Units Built										
Additional Square Footage added (office)										
Additional Square Footage added (commercial)										
Additional Square Footage added (industrial)										
Office vacancy rates										
Commercial vacancy rates										
Industrial vacancy rates										
Jobs added at new companies										
Jobs added at existing companies										
Average hourly rate of jobs created										
Property tax revenue										
School district enrollment										

