

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

WHAT IS ZONING?

Controls how land is used throughout the City and the physical character of buildings, neighborhoods, centers and districts. Standards regulate:

- Allowed uses
- Building location
- Building heights
- Building designs
- Parking, landscaping, fences and signs
- Process for development approvals

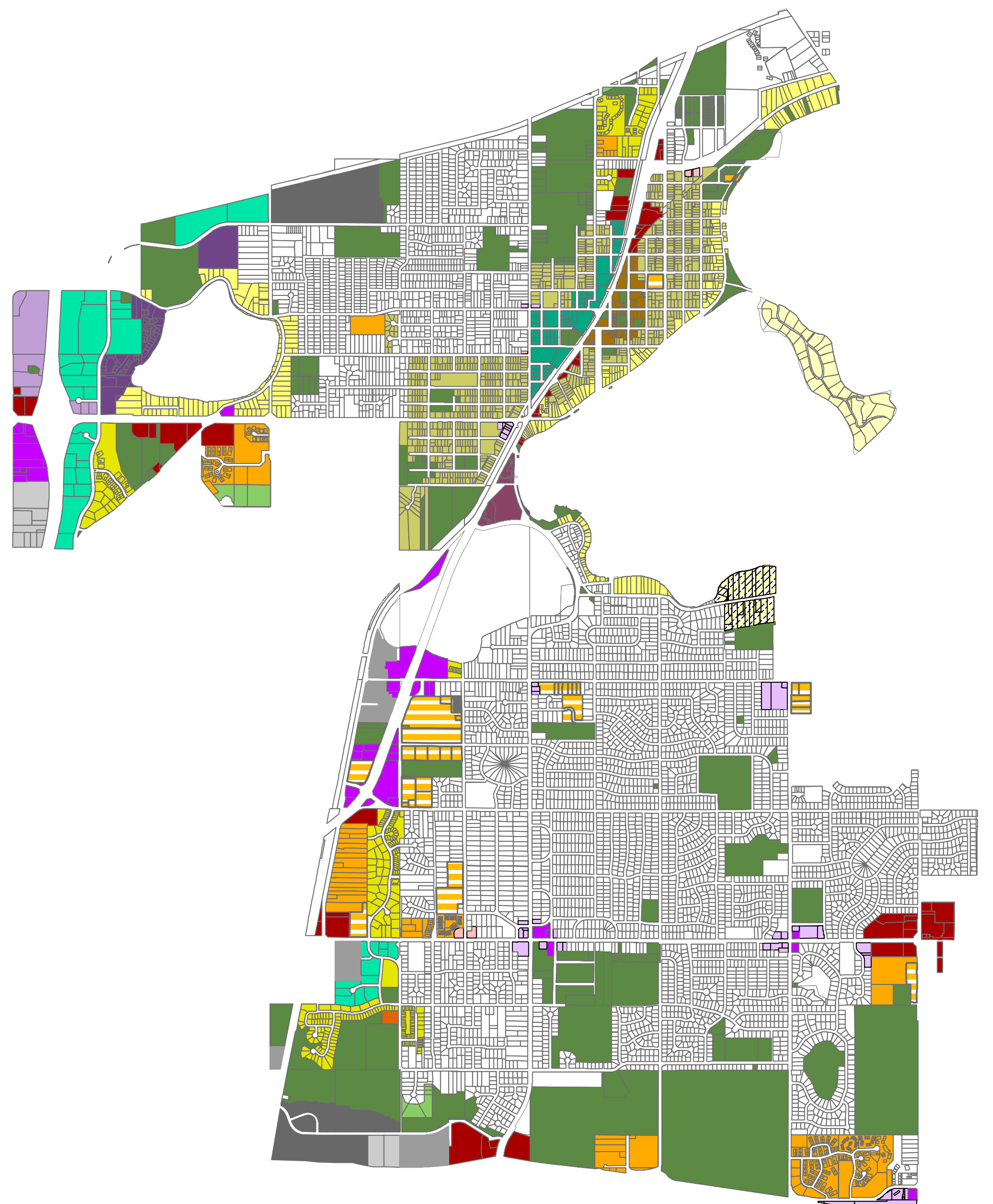
WHY UPDATE THE ZONING REGULATIONS?

Existing regulations have not been comprehensively reviewed and updated in decades

- The City's Comprehensive Plan establishes new policies for growth and development
- By law, regulations need to be fully aligned with the Comprehensive Plan
- Need to respond to and guide social and economic forces and public investments

GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW ZONING CODE

- Align regulations with Comprehensive Plan
- Balance preservation with adaptation and modernization
- Simplify and modernize



COMMERCIAL

- B-1: Neighborhood Business
- B-2: Limited Business
- B-3: Auto Oriented Business
- B-4: General Business
- B-5: Central Business
- BW: Business Warehouse
- DBD: Diversified Business Development
- DCB: Diversified Central Business

INDUSTRIAL

- I-1: Limited Industry
- I-2: General Industry

RESIDENTIAL

- R-2: Single Family Residential
- R-3: Single Family Residential
- R-4: Single Family - Two Family Residential
- R-5: Single Family - Two Family Medium Density Residential
- R-6: Medium Density Residential
- R-7: High Density Residential
- R-B: Residential Business Transition
- R1-I: Low Density Single Family - Island
- R1-S: Low Density Single Family - Shoreland



OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

PROJECT PURPOSE

In September 2023, the City of White Bear Lake launched an 18-month process to review and update its zoning regulations. This project is necessary because state law requires all metropolitan area cities to update their zoning regulations so they are consistent with the community's long range planning document—the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2021 and it sets the future vision and development goals for White Bear Lake. The zoning regulations are the legal tool to implement the vision and development goals found in the Comprehensive Plan.

Commonly, zoning regulations include two parts: (1) a zoning map which divides the city into various zones (generally residential, commercial, industrial or institutional), and (2) text which details the development standards for the various zones. The current version of the zoning regulations are available for review on the city's website by clicking [here](#). While White Bear Lake has made revisions and updates to the zoning regulations over the years, it has not done a full-scale review and update since the early 1980s and many of the City's review processes and development standards are out of date.

WHO?

Project Lead:
City of White Bear Lake

Jason Lindahl, Community Development Director
jlindahl@whitebearlake.org
651-429-8562

Project Consultants:

Bolton & Menk
Codametrics
Duncan Associates

Zoning Update Community Advisory Committee:

Kevin Edberg
City Council

Bill Walsh
City Council

Jim Berry
Planning Commission

Ken Baltzer
Planning Commission

Jan Johnson
White Bear Lake Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
County Road E Corridor Committee

Sara Markoe-Hanson
Executive Director White Bear Lake Historical Society

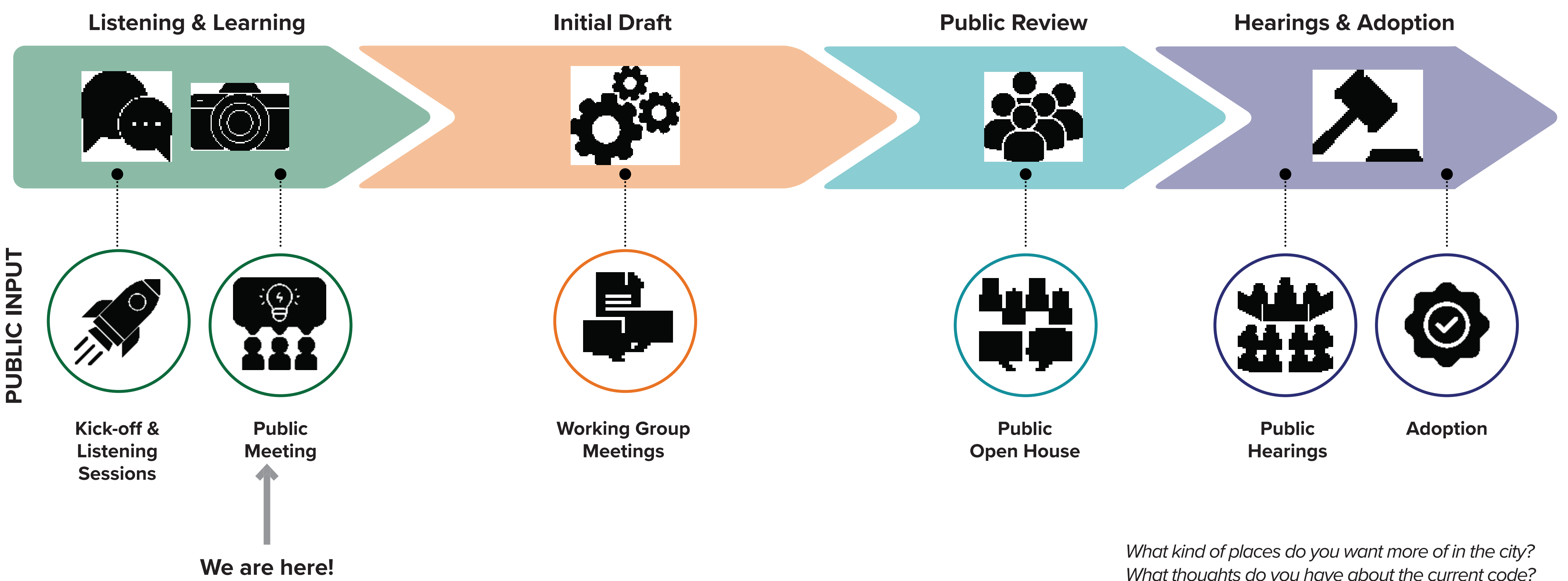
Chris Fry
Environmental Advisory Board
Housing Taskforce

Sharon Hanifl-Lee
Board Chair & Senior Advising Director Children's Performing Arts, Arts, Cultural & Educational (ACE) Area Study

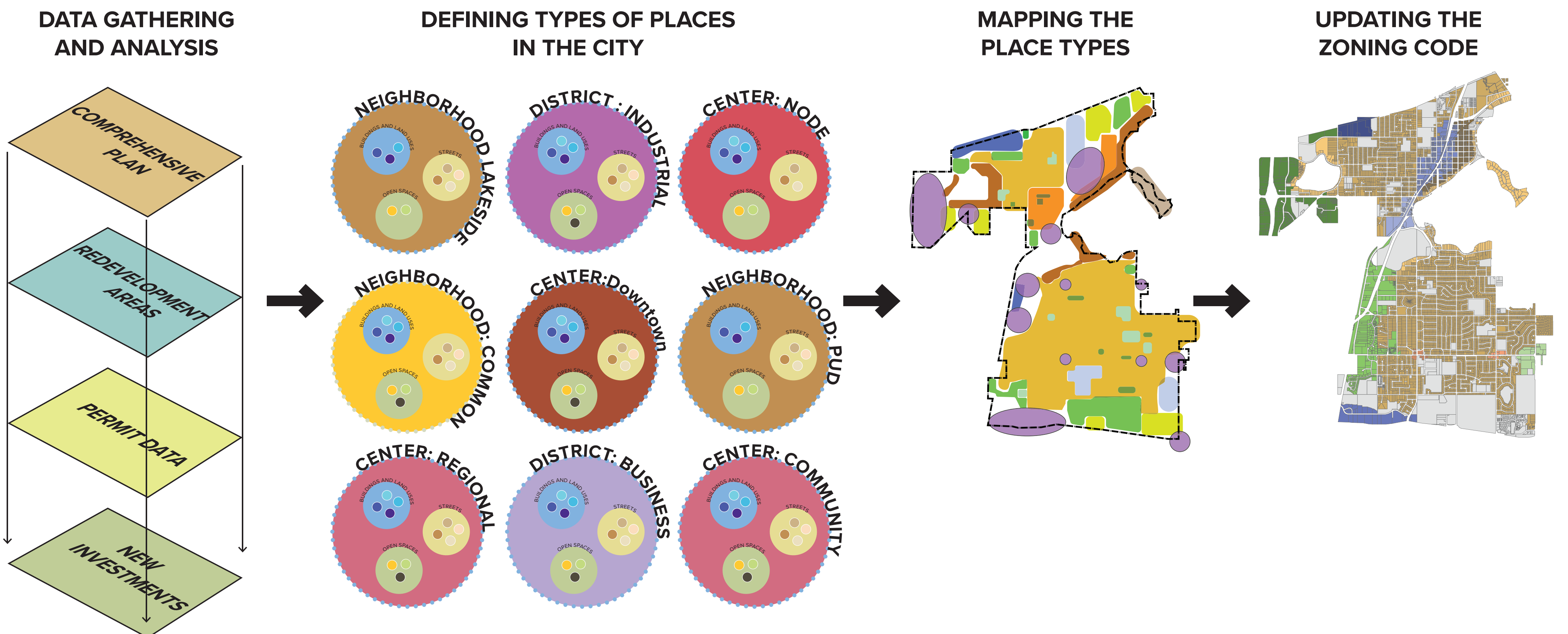
Mike Greenbaum
Executive Director at Newtrax

Nora Slawik
Century College Foundation

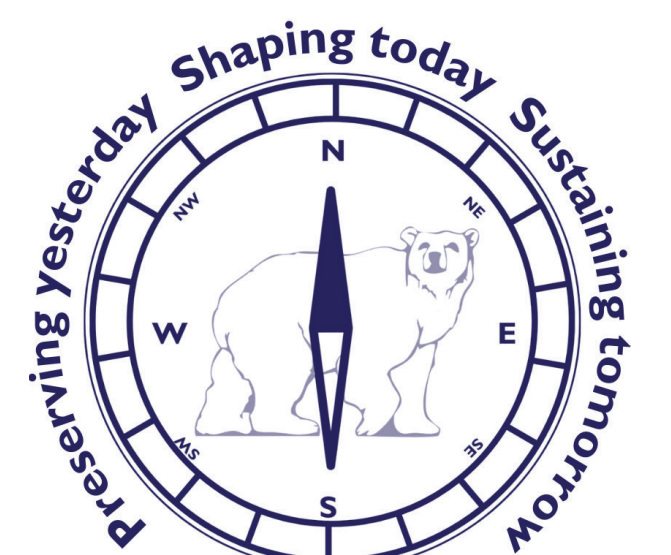
PROJECT TIMELINE



WHAT'S THE PROCESS?

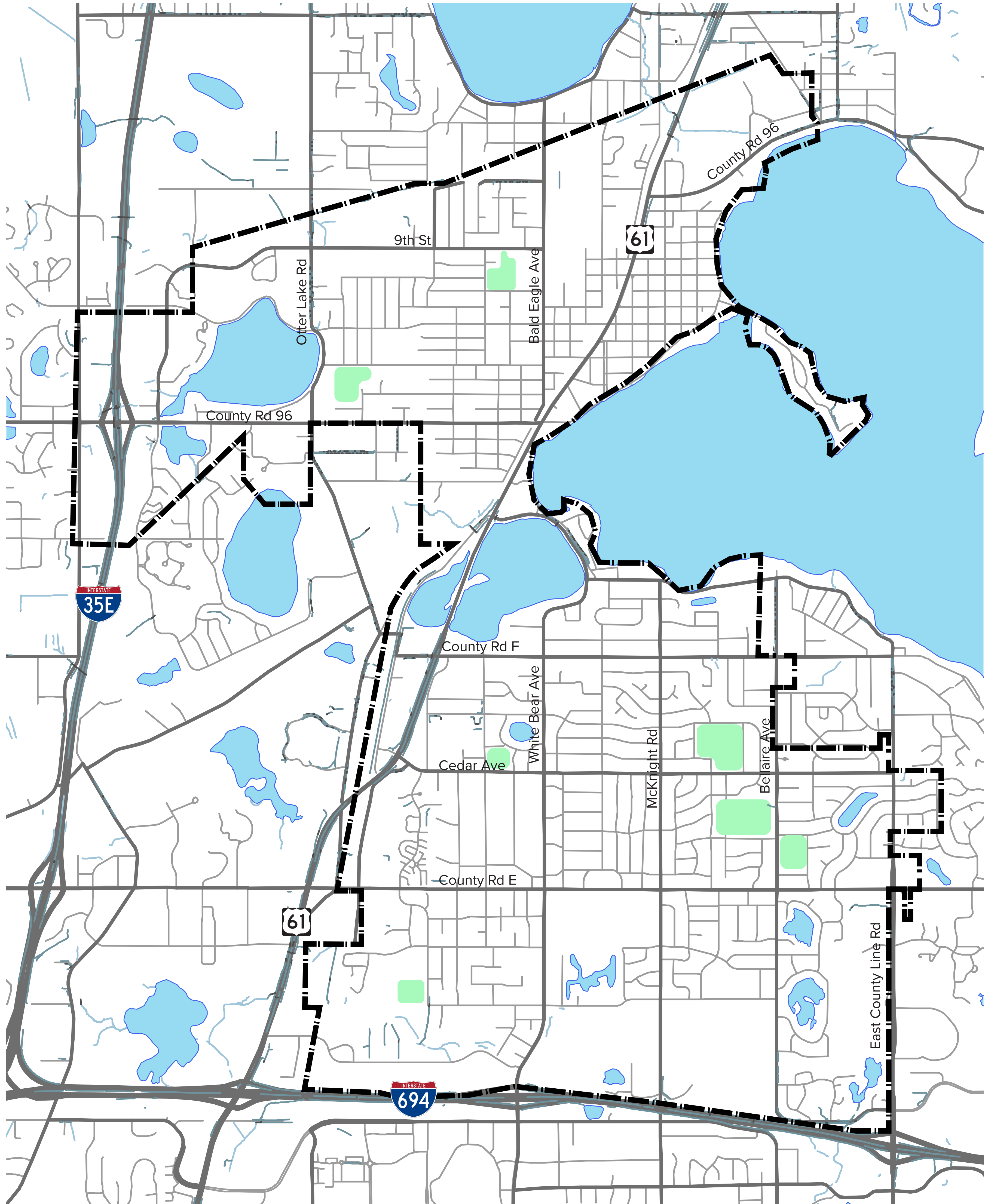


CITY OF WHITE BEAR LAKE : ZONING CODE UPDATE

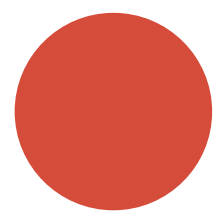


City of White Bear Lake
Zoning Code Update

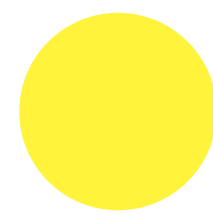
MARK YOUR LOCATION



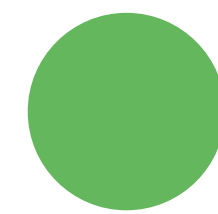
Where do you **WORK**?



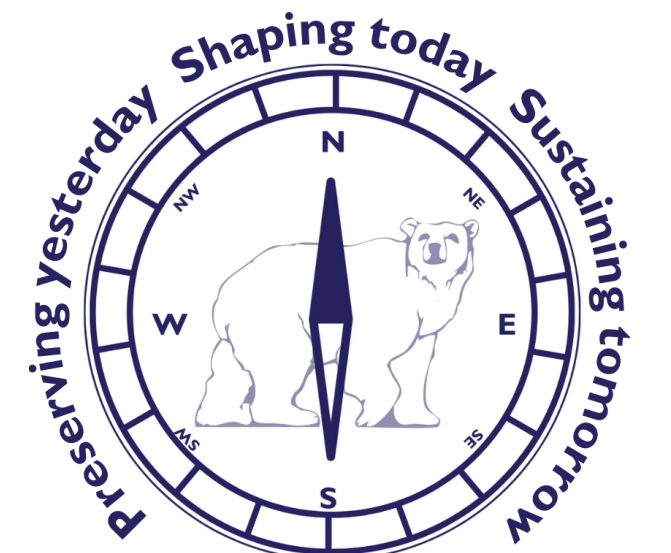
Where do you **LIVE**?



Where do you **VISIT**?

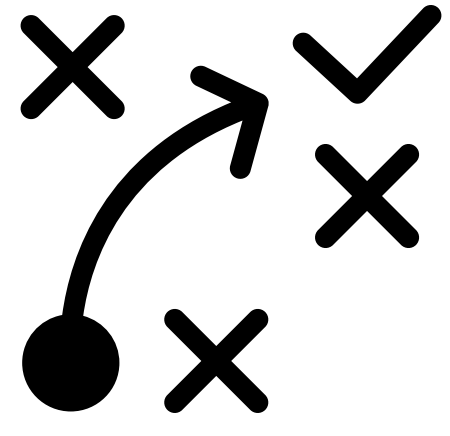


CITY OF WHITE BEAR LAKE : ZONING CODE UPDATE



City of White Bear Lake
Zoning Code Update

WHAT WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR



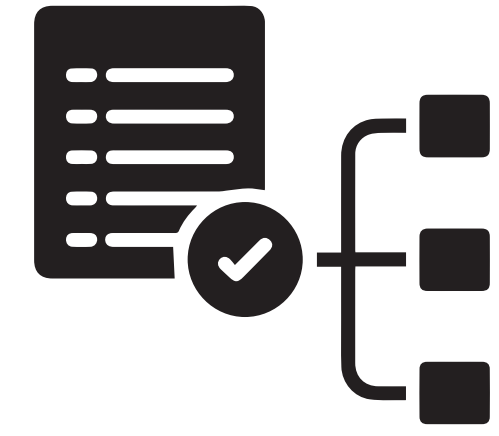
Protect and Strategically Grow White Bear Lake

The community is understandably proud of its Downtown and unique neighborhoods and wants to protect these special places. The zoning code should reconnect with the community's historical development pattern of compact, walkable, mixed-use places.



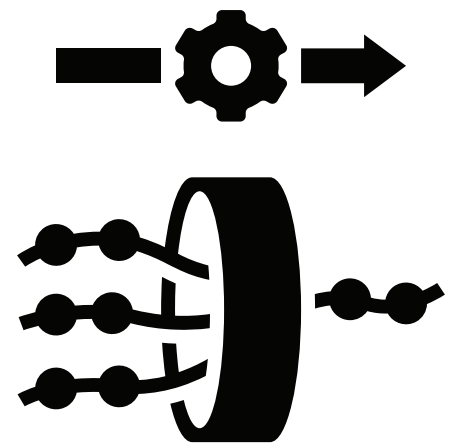
Strive for Balance

Seek to balance the need for reinvestment, modernization and growth with preserving what is special about White Bear Lake.



Enhance Clarity, Usability and Predictability

The zoning code should be clear, richly illustrated, and produce predictable results. The code should be easy to navigate for all users.



Make Procedures Clear

Processes should be streamlined and procedures should be written so citizens can understand how and when they can participate in decision-making.



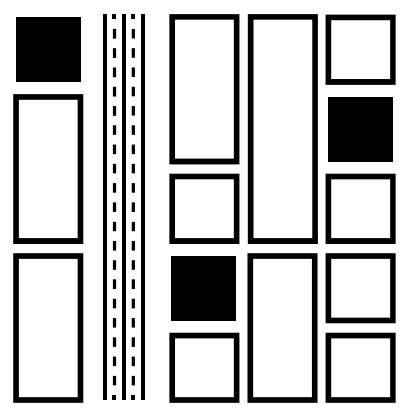
Enhance and Expand Place-Based Zoning

Modernize the Downtown place-based zoning standards and apply them to other targeted areas of the community.



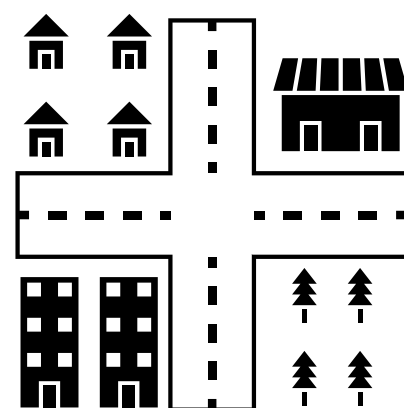
Arts and Culture

Arts, culture and community events are defining characteristics of White Bear Lake's identity. The zoning code should include a new Arts District designation to promote art in all its forms, enhance the community's culture, attract visitors, and promote economic development.



Protect Established Neighborhoods

Create appropriate transitions between new development and existing neighborhoods.



Respect Context

New infill redevelopment should fit in the context of the area which it is located.



Economic Development

The City's economic development goals, including expanding the tax base, retaining and attracting high-quality jobs, lifecycle housing and development site priorities, should help inform the zoning update, but expansion needs to be thoughtful and in context.



Reduce the Need for Variances

Nonconforming properties should be reclaimed for productive use and other standards that are a frequent subject of variance requests should be evaluated for possible adjustment.



Increase Housing Choice and Home Ownership

Ensure that zoning allows for a broad range of housing options to meet the needs of people at all life stages and income levels.



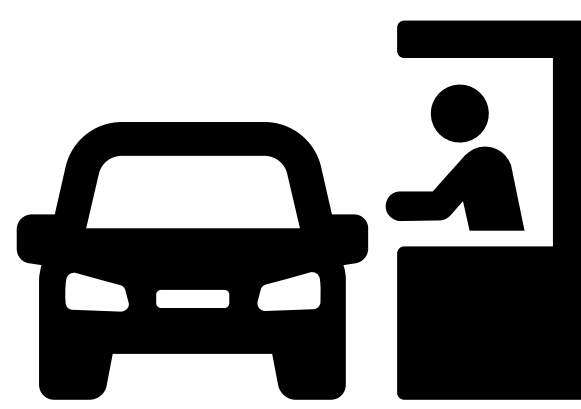
Rethink Parking

The zoning code should include modernized parking requirements that are "right-sized" for White Bear Lake and include standards for all modes of transportation, such as bicycle parking. Outdated parking requirements can be an obstruction to private investment, redevelopment and attainability.



Promote Sustainability

White Bear Lake and the community's other natural resources are defining features of the community and vital to the local economy and quality of life. The zoning code should include standards that protect, preserve, and enhance the community's natural environment.



Manage Auto-Oriented Uses

Drive-throughs and other auto-oriented uses that detract from the character of Downtown and existing neighborhoods should be addressed through zoning.



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DIAGNOSIS

Ensure Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

The 2040 comprehensive plan establishes a framework for guiding physical, social, and economic change. By law, the zoning code must be able to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

Modernize Use Regulations

White Bear Lake's current zoning code lists hundreds of residential, business, civic/institutional and other uses that may—or may not—be allowed in one zoning district or another. These “use regulations” and the way in which principal uses are classified and defined should be updated.

Address Accessory Uses and Structures

Accessory uses and structures are activities or structures that are subordinate to the principal use or building on the property.

The city's current accessory use regulations are relatively complex and scattered throughout various sections of the zoning code. As part of the update, all accessory use regulations should be consolidated and simplified to the extent possible.

Update Definitions

The updated regulations should include a comprehensive set of modern, easy-to-understand and illustrated definitions of specialized development-related terms.

Increase Reliance on Objective Standards

To the extent possible, the city's updated regulations should make greater use of clear, objective development regulations, which will, in turn, enable more efficient staff-level review and decision-making.

Simplify Lot and Building Regulations

“Lot and building regulations” refer to controls governing minimum lot size, setbacks, height, lot coverage, and dwelling unit density. These existing regulations will be reviewed and revised, as necessary, to promote better design and as ease of use and understanding.

Consolidate Zoning Classifications

With 30 zoning districts, the White Bear Lake zoning code appears to present an opportunity to clean-up and consolidate redundant and unused or under-used districts. The regulations will be supplemented as necessary to address emerging issues.

Eliminate Artificial Density Limits; Focus on Building Scale and Design

The zoning code's current “building density” limits—expressed as maximum caps on the number of dwelling units allowed per acre of land—represent an abstract metric with no real relationship to project design.

The current density limits should be eliminated in favor of regulations that more directly address building and site design considerations—which will help increase the supply of a wider variety of unit sizes and types.

Transition to Place-Based Regulations

The zoning and development regulations update project offers an opportunity to employ greater use of place-based land use controls (often referred to as “form-based” zoning). Such an approach would reap benefits in terms of greater predictability and promotion of desired urban design physical character.

Revamp “Planned Unit Development” Provisions

The updated zoning regulations should include a revamped version of the PUD tool that will retain flexibility, while at the same time ensuring that large-scale redevelopments result in an overall system of walkable streets and blocks, smaller-scaled open spaces, and a mix of uses and building forms.

Consolidate and Update Landscape Regulations

The city's landscape, buffer and tree regulations are scattered throughout various section of the zoning code. These regulations should be consolidated and updated as necessary to reflect the plan goals for mixed-use development patterns and to more clearly state expectations for on site landscape and right-of-way streetscape treatments.

Illustrate and Summarize Sign Regulations

White Bear Lake's sign regulations were last updated in 2017. They appear to be comprehensive in nature and follow a content-neutral approach consistent with established law. The code will be updated to include illustrations and tabular summaries of sign regulations.

Rethink Parking Requirements

White Bear Lake's minimum off-street parking requirements are similar to those found in many older codes. As can be expected for a code last updated in the early 1980s, the requirements are outdated. The zoning code update process will provide an opportunity to review the city's parking needs and suggest options to modernize and “right-size” the standards to fit White Bear Lake.

Consolidate and Clarify Procedures

Existing zoning and subdivision approval procedures are repetitious, verbose and overly complex. The update project will present multiple opportunities to reformat information in a more understandable and easy-to-follow manner.

Remove Application Fees from Codes

Both the zoning code and subdivision code specify required filing fees for various types of applications and permits. Codification of fee amounts within the codes is inefficient and restrictive. Instead a schedule of fees should be established by resolution of city council. Such an approach would make it far easier to amend fees in light of changes in the actual costs of administration and processing.

Expand Range of Eligible Administrative Variances

The inclusion of administrative variance authority is a recognized best practice and should be continued. Moreover, as part of the update, it will likely be possible to identify additional minor adjustments that would be reasonable to allow through the administrative variance process.

Unify and Simplify Nonconformity Regulations

“Nonconformities” are lots, uses, buildings, structures and other site features that complied with regulations in effect at the time of establishment, but that no longer comply with zoning regulations. Nonconformities should also be edited to address issues of clarity and revised to allow greater flexibility.

Reorganize

One important goal for the update project is to ensure that the city's updated zoning and development regulations are easier to use and understand than their present-day counterparts. Substantive regulations should be clear, comprehensive and internally consistent. Administrative and procedural provisions should be streamlined, consistent and easy to understand. The regulations should be logically organized, well-formatted and easy to use.

Include Tables and Illustrations

The existing regulations contain very few tables and lack explanatory graphics or illustrations. The new regulations should include illustrations and graphics—instead of just long passages of text—to help convey the meaning of regulatory concepts.

Update Format and Layout

Modern codes use distinct, variable-size typefaces for section and subsection headings, with indented or “nested” text to help indicate the hierarchical nature of code sections, subsections and paragraphs. Generous white space and illustrations should be used to enhance the document's visual appearance and improve its readability. Page headers and footers should be added to serve as navigational aids for code users.



COMPARING CONVENTIONAL AND FORM-BASED ZONING

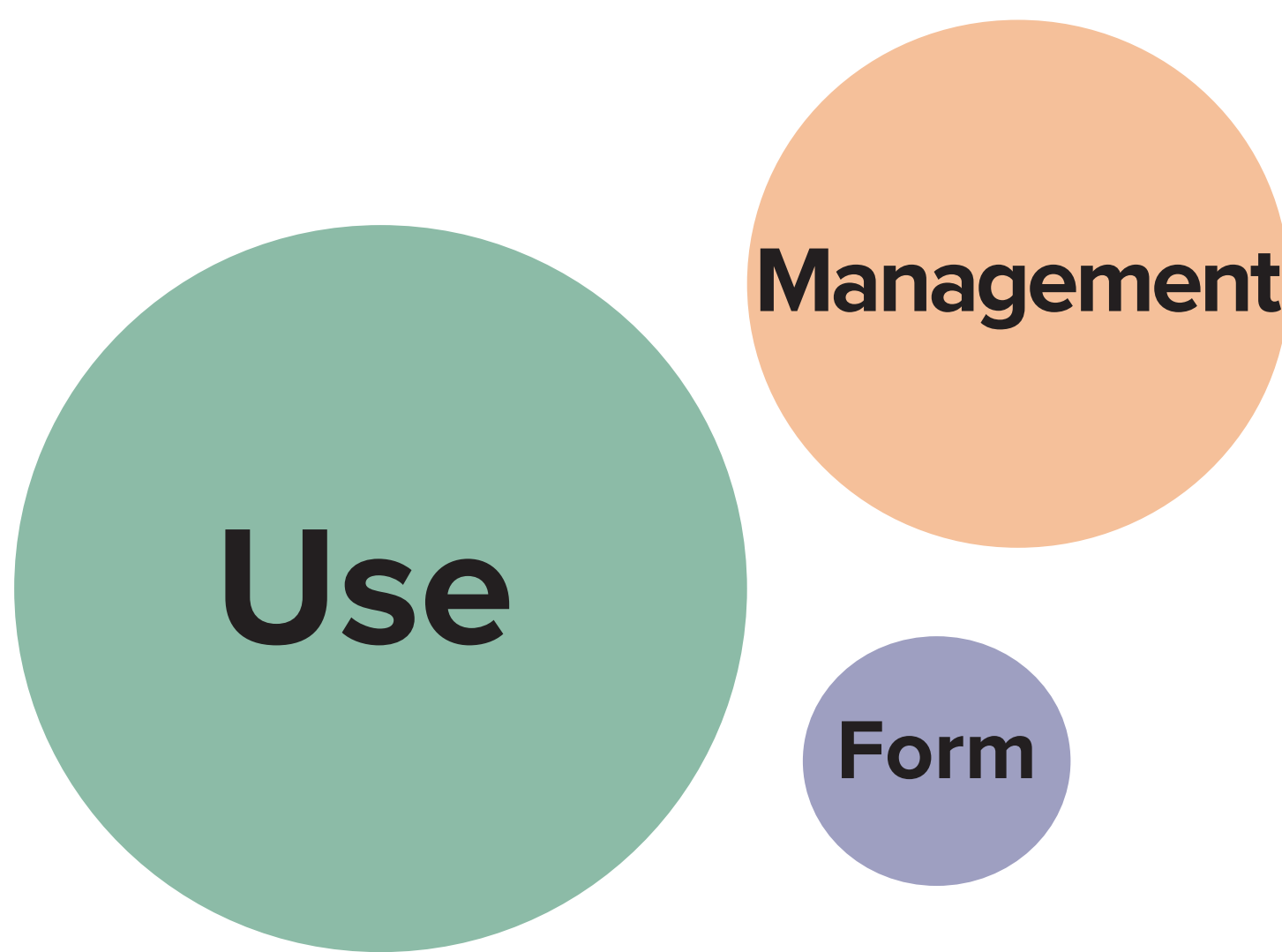
CONVENTIONAL APPROACH

- Use is the **ORGANIZING STRUCTURE** for the code
- Building setbacks and density are **UNPREDICTABLE**
- Typically text heavy with **LIMITED ILLUSTRATIONS**

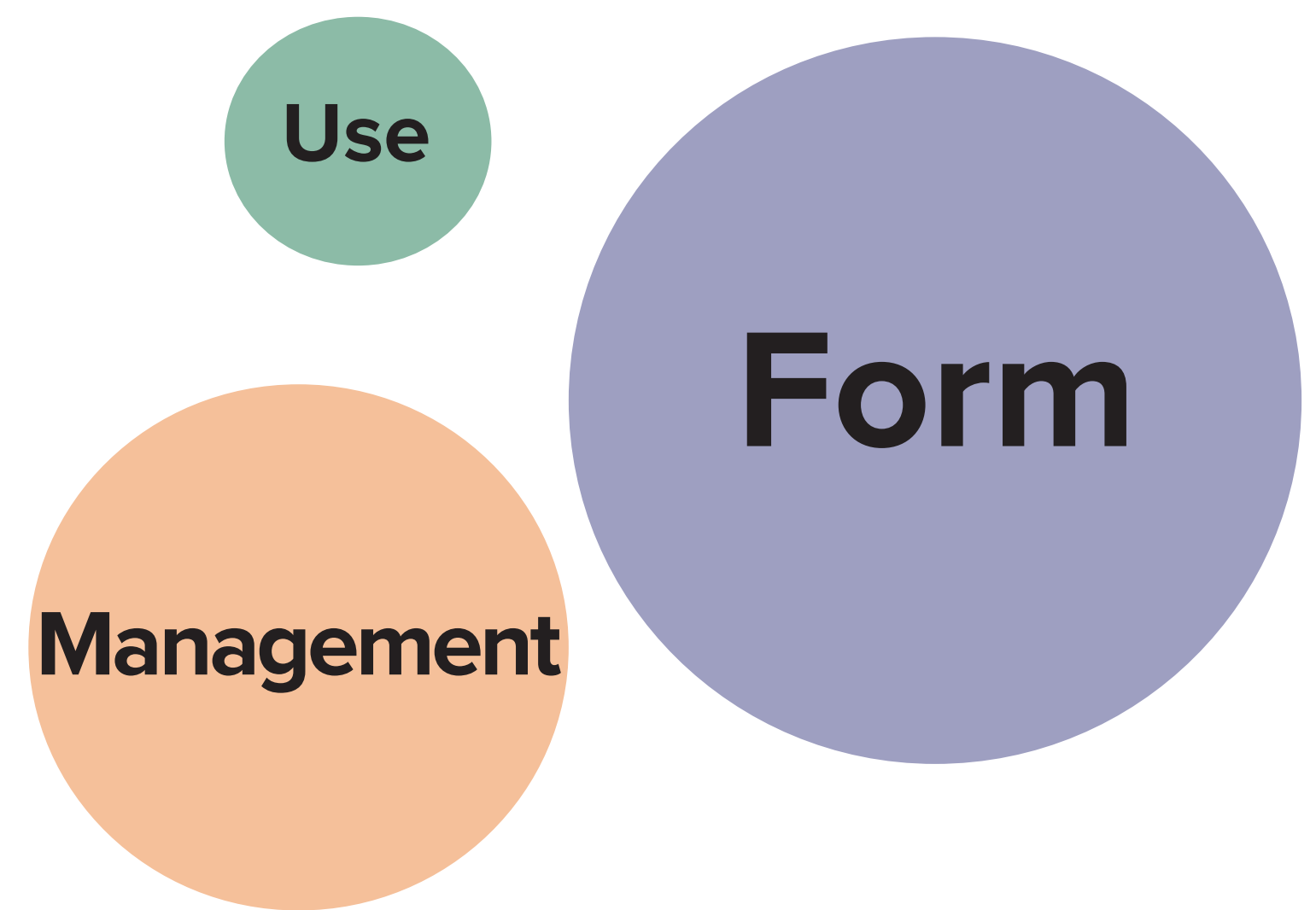
FORM-BASED APPROACH

- Physical form is the **ORGANIZING STRUCTURE** for the code
- Focus on a high-quality **PUBLIC REALM** with more detailed standards for items like building placement and facade design
- Results in a **PREDICTABLE** built form
- Objective **REGULATIONS**, not guidelines
- Heavy use of **ILLUSTRATIONS** to convey intent

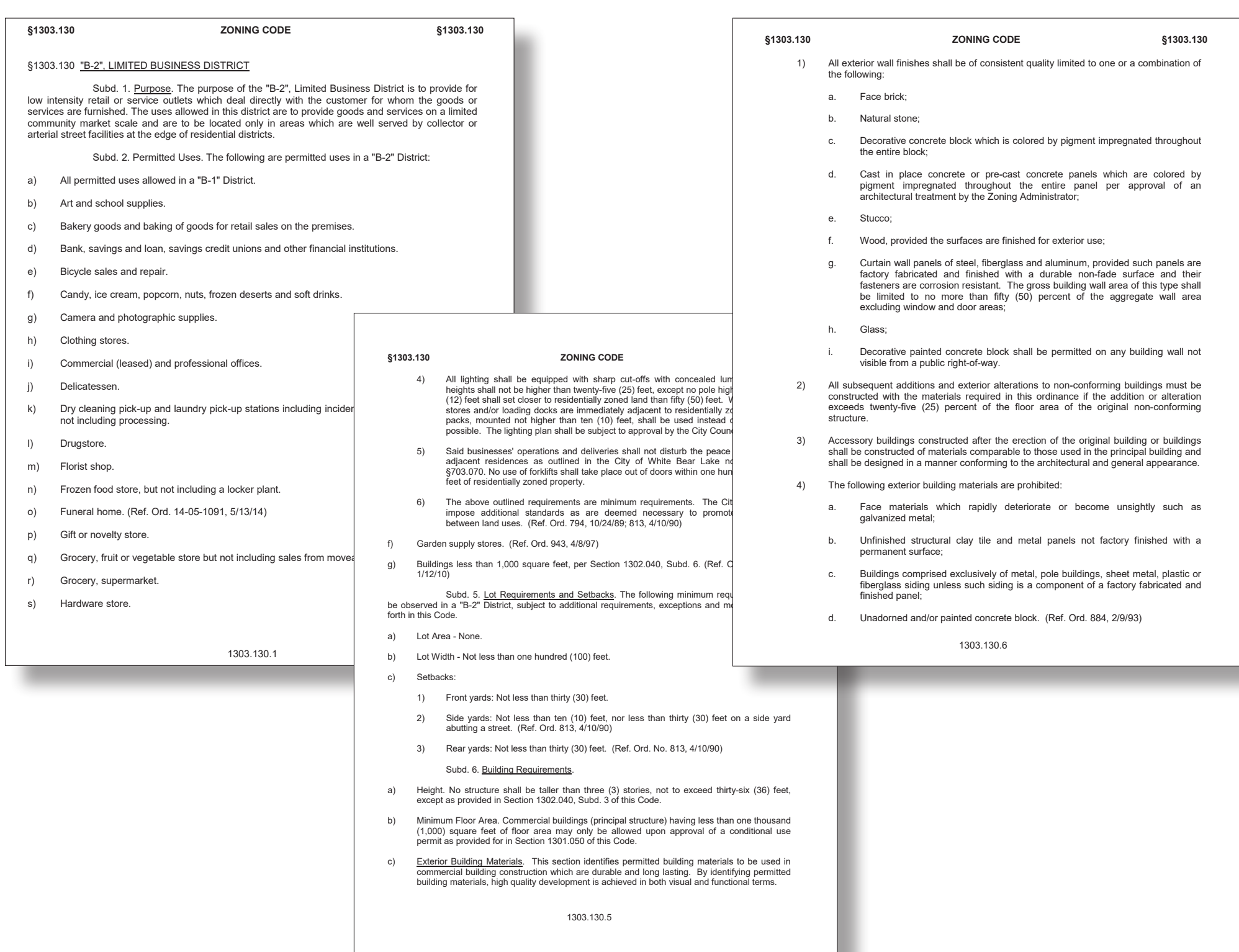
Conventional Zoning



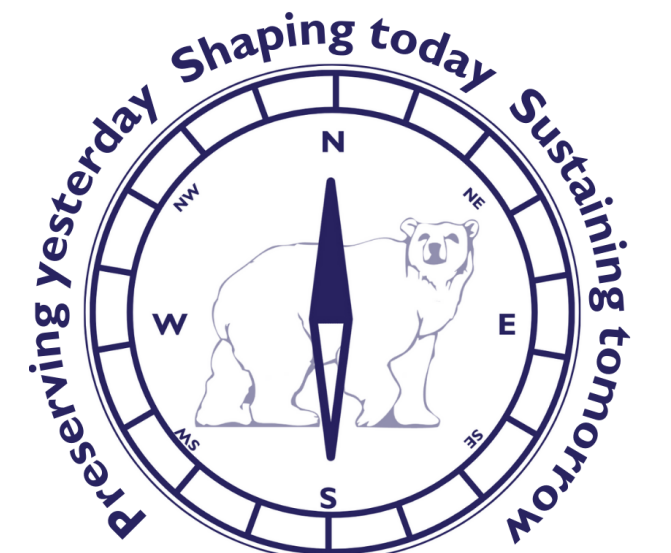
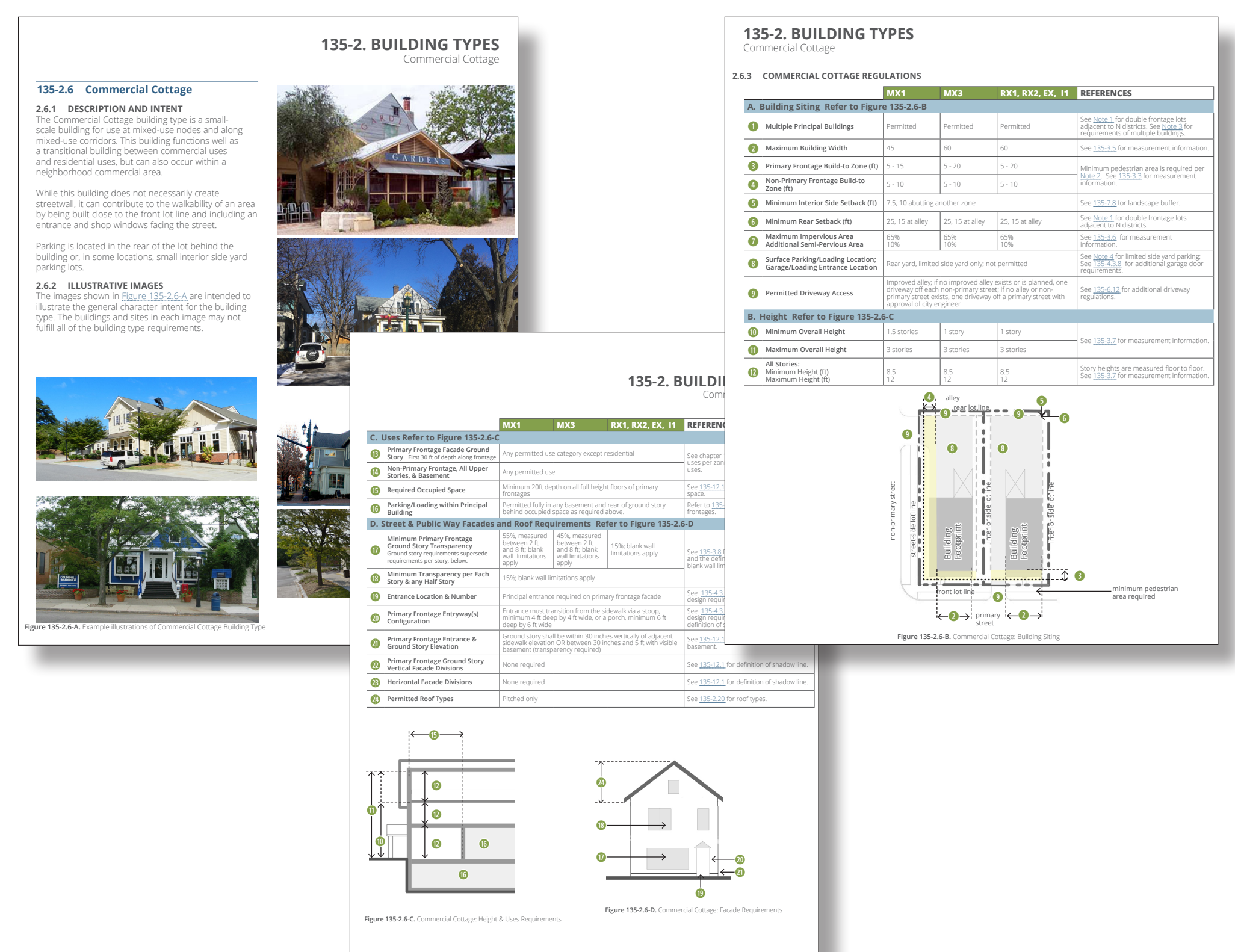
Form-Based Zoning



Sample pages from existing White Bear Lake Conventional Zoning Code

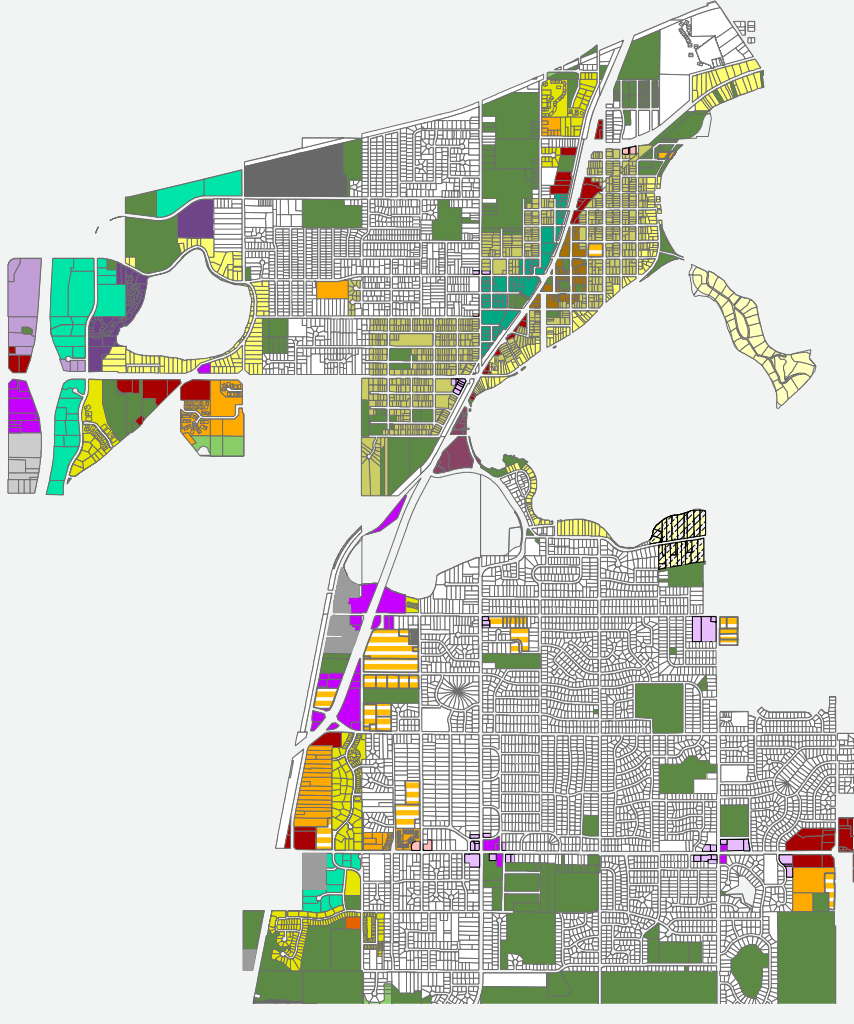


Sample pages from a Form-Based Code

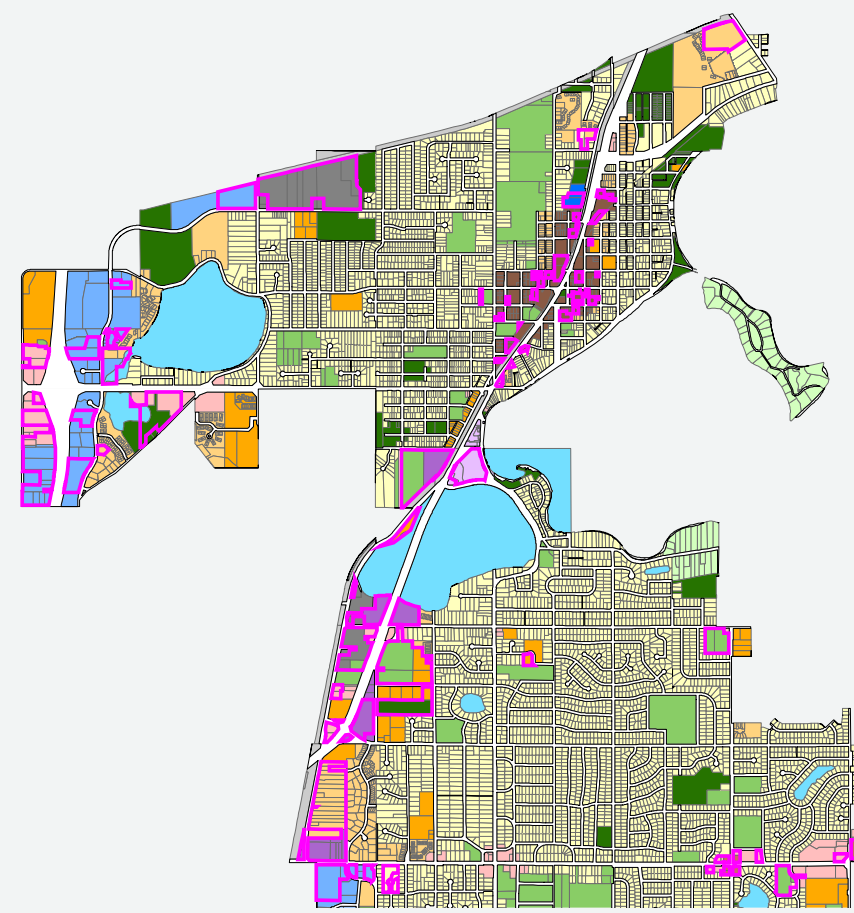


MAPPING PLACE TYPES

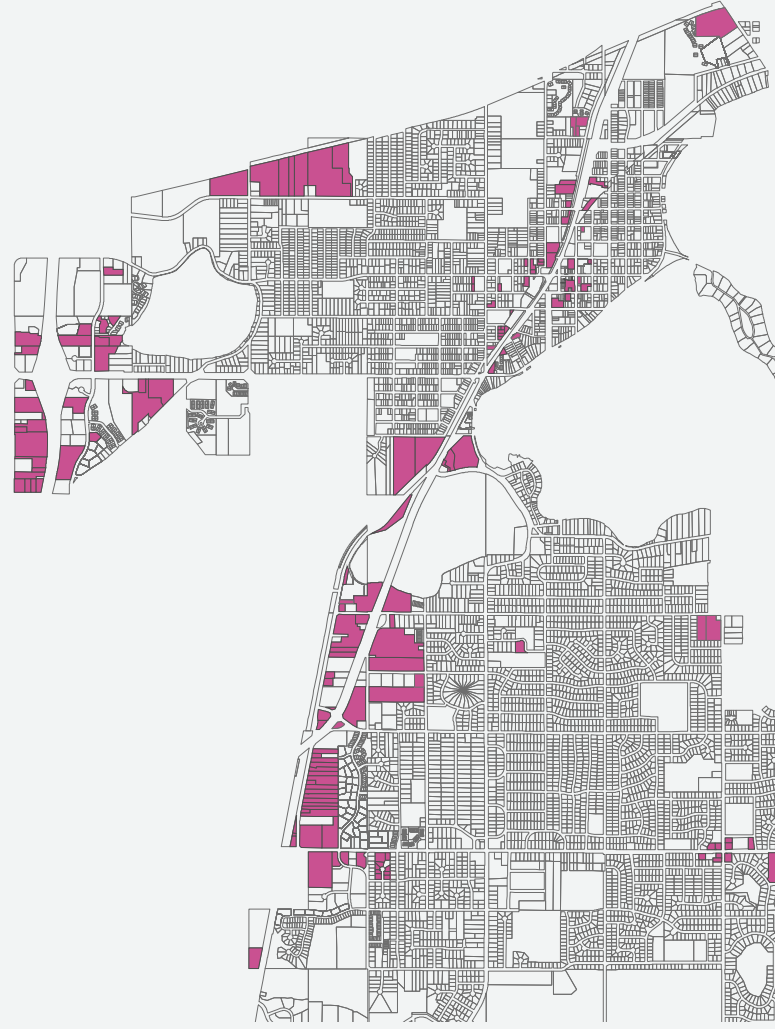
Existing Zoning



Comprehensive Plan
Land Use Guidance



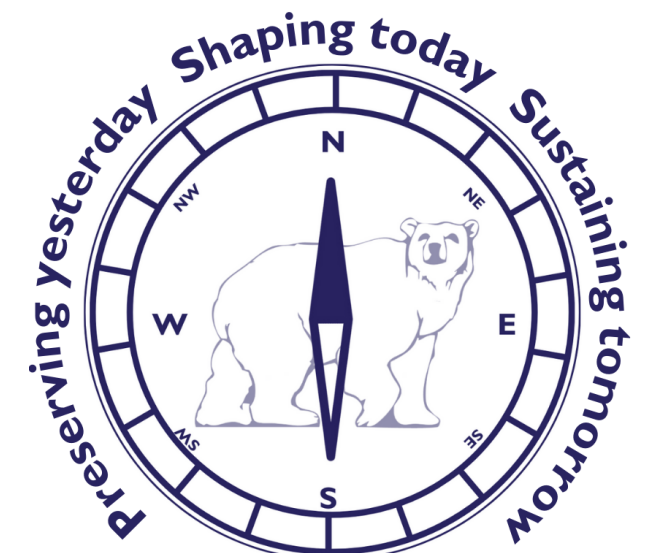
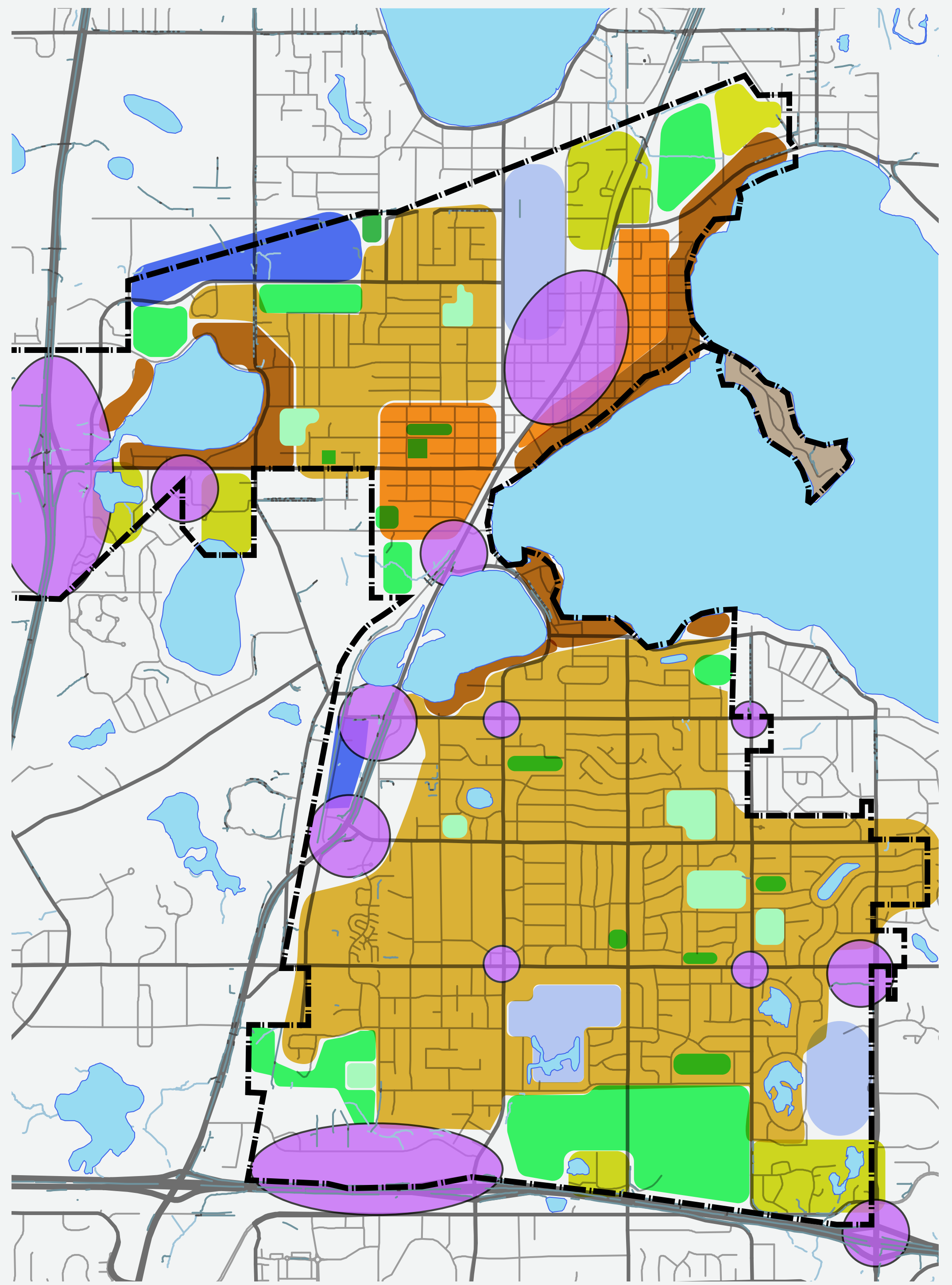
Identified
Redevelopment Sites



Field Work

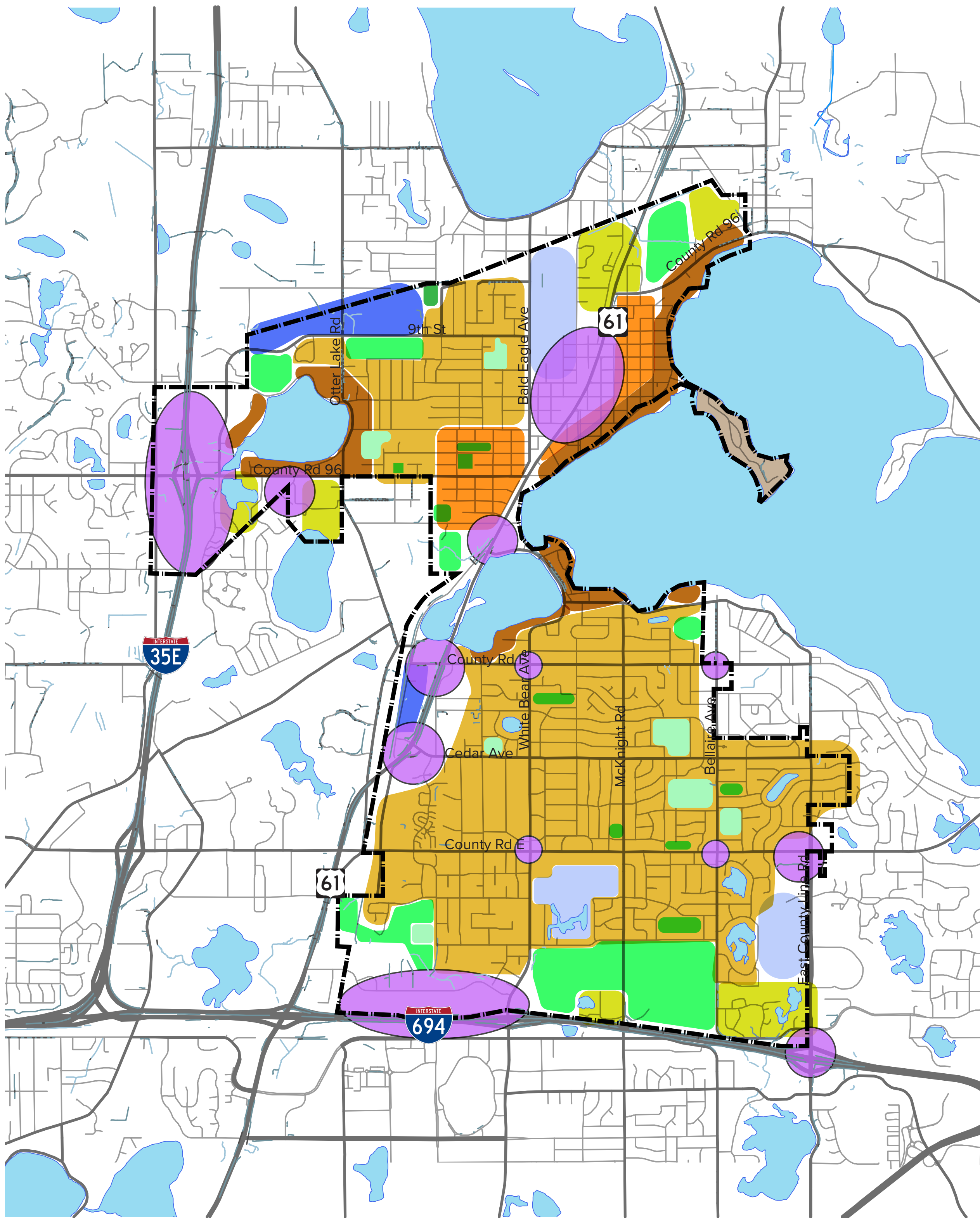


Place Types



MAPPING PLACE TYPES

While neighborhoods, centers, and districts are distinct places, together they support and define the overall identity and form of the community.



Step 1. Define the General Place Type

Is it a Neighborhood, District, or Center?

Step 2: Discovery OR Survey

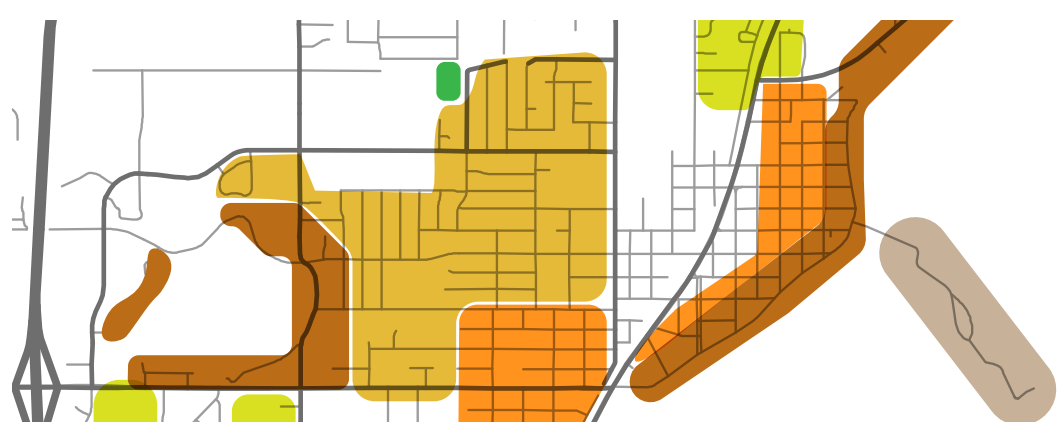
What currently exists, what is anticipated per the Comprehensive Plan, and what are the goals for the place type?

Step 3: Place Type Specific Standards

What, where, and how to manage the place type with zoning regulations?

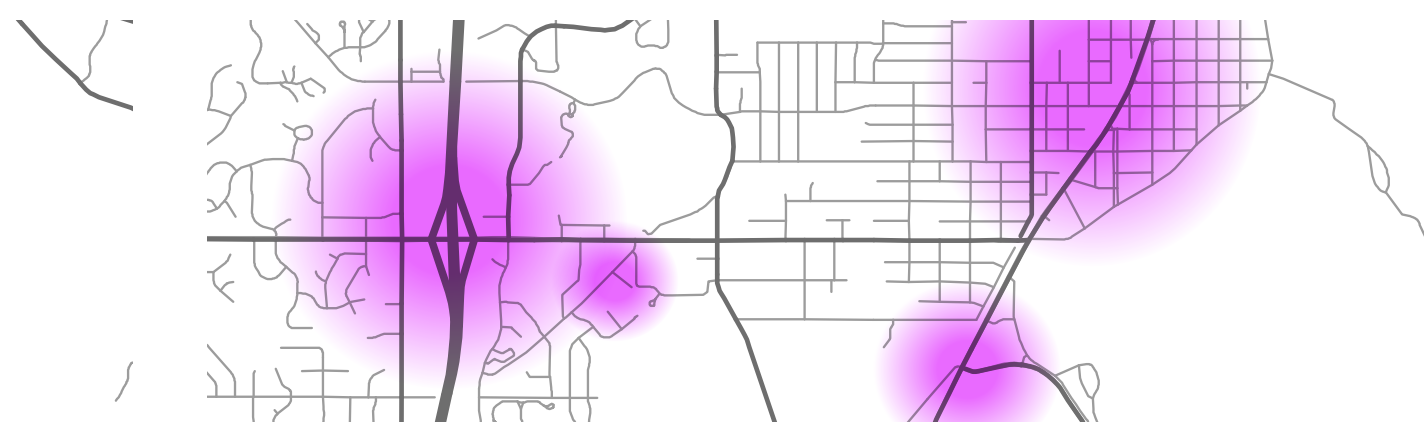
Neighborhoods

Places that are primarily residential—with houses, apartments, and other residential buildings. Often some smaller neighborhood supporting uses such as schools, small retail, and places of worship exist within some neighborhoods. Parks are often a key feature of a neighborhood.



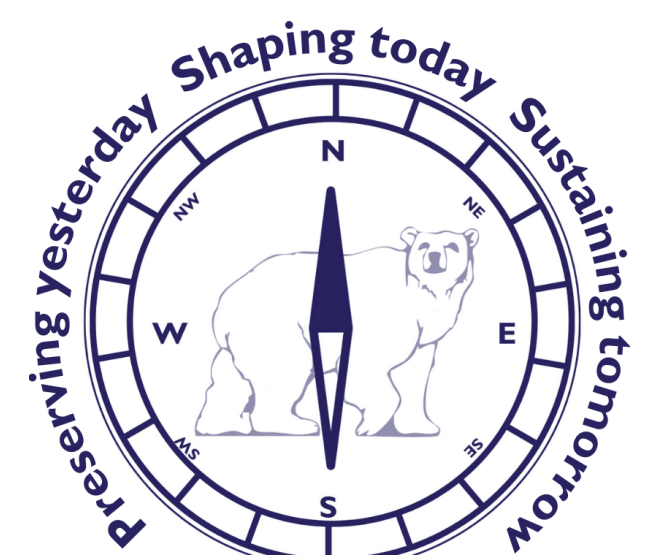
Centers

Centers are compact, mixed-use places providing shopping, dining, services, employment opportunities serving either adjacent neighborhoods, the city as a whole, or the region, depending on the scale and location. Centers have housing within them; however, it is not the dominant use.



Districts

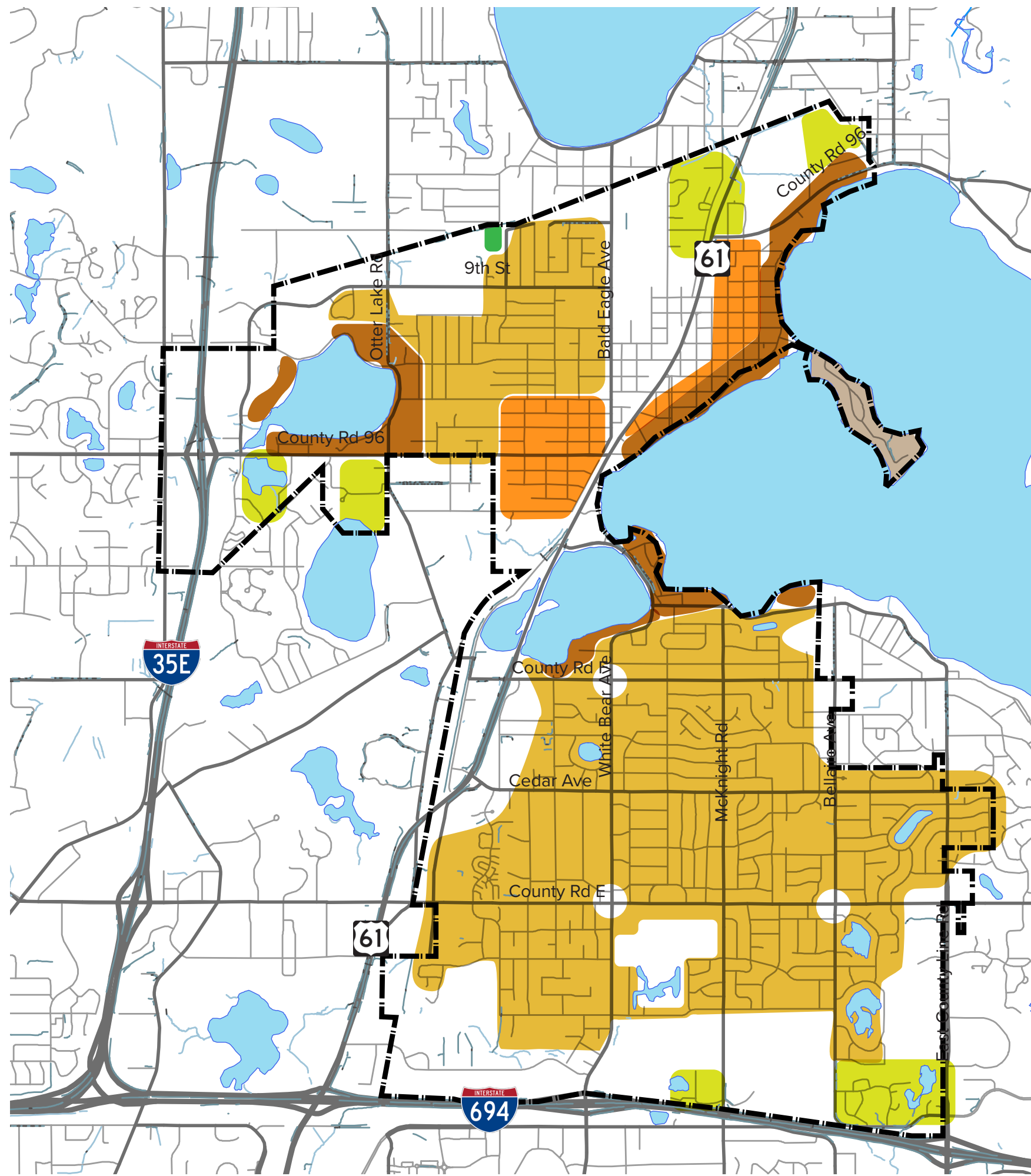
Larger single use areas of the city that are typically separated from other uses because they have specific needs to function—such as industry, or a large campus.



NEIGHBORHOODS

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Neighborhoods are places that are primarily residential - with houses, apartments, and other residential buildings. Often some smaller neighborhood supporting uses such as schools, small retail, and places of worship exist within some neighborhoods.

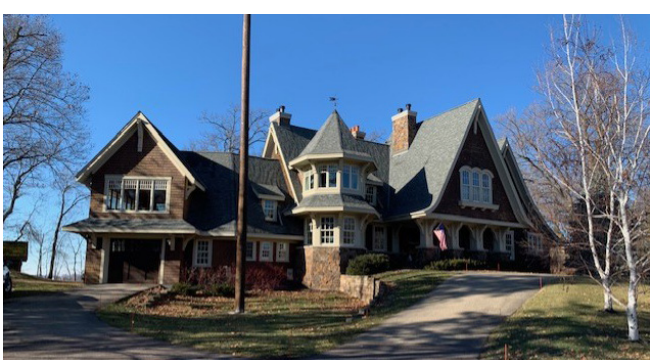


-  **Island Neighborhood**
-  **Lakeside Neighborhood**
-  **Traditional Neighborhood**
-  **Suburban Neighborhood**
-  **Multi-family Neighborhood**

Island Neighborhood

The Island Neighborhood is a private island with 30 homes. The lots are approximately 1 acre; each lot has lake frontage and many homes have accessory structures for boathouses, garages, swimming pools, tool houses, and boarding rooms. The island is zoned R1-L (low density single family).

The Island contains homes built across all eras. Approximately one-third were built before 1945, and half have been built since 1976.



Comprehensive Plan Issues & Policies

- » The Island Neighborhood is exclusively guided for single family homes.
- » The City does not anticipate significant growth within the Island Neighborhood however it is likely that homes will continue to grow and possibly be replaced.

Lakeside Neighborhood

The Lakeside Neighborhoods are located along the shores of both White Bear Lake, Goose Lake, and Birch Lake. The Lakeside Neighborhoods are guided for residential uses like the Island Neighborhood. The primary differences between the two neighborhood types are lot dimension and provisioning for averaging the front setbacks.

Some houses in the Lakeside District are located directly on the lake, and others have a public street between the house and the lake.



Comprehensive Plan Issues & Policies

- » The Lakeside Neighborhoods are guided for residential use.
- » The City does not anticipate significant growth within the Lakeside neighborhood however it is likely that homes will continue to grow and possibly be replaced.

Traditional Neighborhood

Located on both sides of the Downtown, the Traditional Neighborhoods contain a wide array of housing sizes, and styles—with most homes built prior to 1945. Generally, the area west of Downtown contains smaller homes and smaller lots, while homes on the east side of Downtown have experienced more investment and have become larger with additions and demolition/rebuild. Traditional Neighborhoods tend to have a grid street network allows for walkability.



Comprehensive Plan Issues & Policies

- » The Traditional Neighborhoods are guided Low Density Residential which allows for both single family attached and detached housing.
- » The Traditional Neighborhood includes a scattering of small multifamily, duplexes and accessory dwelling units.
- » The City does not anticipate significant growth within the traditional neighborhood however it is likely that homes will continue to grow and possibly be replaced.

Suburban Neighborhood

The Suburban Neighborhoods of White Bear Lake were largely developed around the same time in the middle of the 20th Century and have a very uniform character of mostly single-family homes on small to medium sized lots with a scattering of ADUs and duplexes.



Comprehensive Plan Issues & Policies

- » The Suburban Neighborhoods are almost exclusively guided for single family homes and guided for "low density residential."
- » The City does not anticipate significant growth within the suburban neighborhood areas and most redevelopment will take the form of reinvestment, and renovation of existing structures.
- » The Suburban Neighborhoods were largely developed in the middle of the 20th century and are somewhat homogeneous in architectural style and scale.
- » Accessory dwelling units are permitted as a conditional use
- » Grid street network has the potential to improve walkability.

Multi-family Neighborhood

The Multifamily Neighborhoods were developed primarily in the past 30 years and are located on the edges of the City, typically sharing a border with adjacent communities. They tend to be contained with a common building type - townhouse, four-plex or apartment buildings. These neighborhoods are zoned R5, R6, and R7.



Comprehensive Plan Issues & Policies

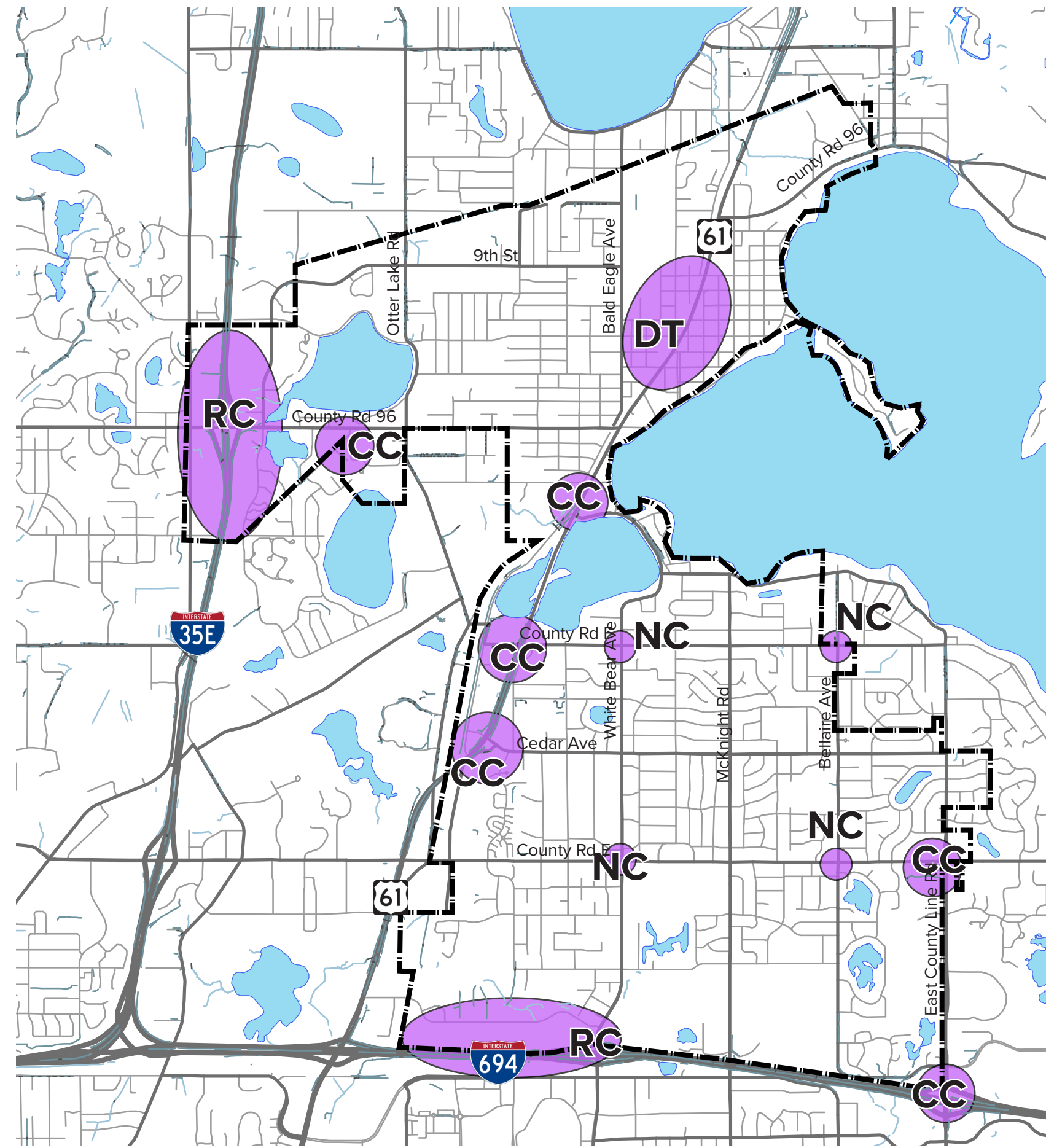
- » Much of the housing in these areas tend to be very stable and not likely to incur much change.



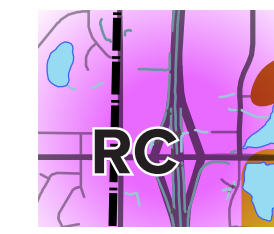
CENTERS

CENTERS

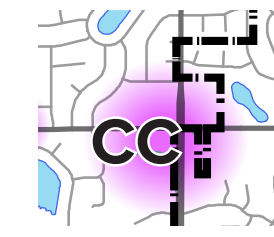
Centers are compact, mixed-use places providing shopping, dining, services, and employment opportunities, and serving either adjacent neighborhoods, the city as a whole, or the region, depending on the scale and location. Centers have housing within them, however they are not the dominant use.



Downtown



Regional Centers



Community Centers



Neighborhood Centers

Downtown

The Downtown Center is defined by a boundary within the comprehensive plan that expands beyond the traditional storefront core. Beyond the storefront area of Downtown, it contains supporting uses such as offices, multi-family housing, as well as an Arts District.

The goal is to direct growth to the Downtown while guiding its built form so it remains walkable and village scaled.



Traditional main-street style storefront buildings oriented to the pedestrian.



Pitched roof, cottage-like mixed-use buildings are scattered throughout the core, mimicking some of the houses converted to commercial uses.



Single-use, single-story storefront buildings in the Downtown with pedestrian access.

Regional Centers

Regional Centers tend to be developed as “horizontal mixed-use” places, where the different uses (commercial, residential, and employment) are located each in a separate pod of development with little connection between them.

There are two Regional Centers

- I-35E and Highway 96
- I-694 and White Bear Ave

The goal is to enhance these areas with additional housing and higher density employment uses while maintaining their service and retail functions and their connectivity.



Single-use commercial with parking lots in front and no pedestrian amenities.



Two-story medical office building adjacent to a gas station and drive-through restaurant building.



3-story apartment buildings with frontage along Centerville Road.

Community Centers

Community Centers are located at main intersections throughout the community, typically towards the edges of the city. They contain retail or services uses serving a market area extending across the city. Most buildings are one story in an auto oriented format. However, there are examples of multi-story office buildings and in some cases, newer 3 and 4 story apartment buildings.

The goal is to provide a compact mix of neighborhood compatible uses that serve the entire community. Housing should be introduced to these centers, typically located within existing parking lots, between commercial areas and existing neighborhood use, or through the redevelopment of existing buildings.



3.5 story apartment building that transitions to 2.5 stories facing the lake. Site includes a mix of residential, commercial, civic and open spaces

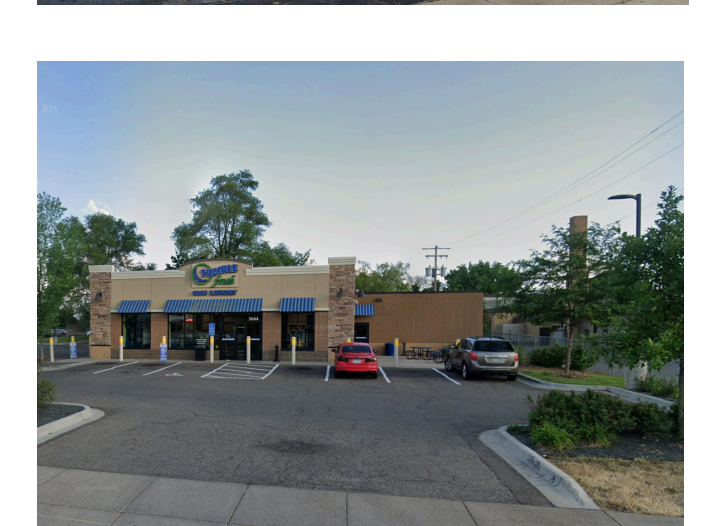


1 story strip commercial between Kowalski's and Boatworks.

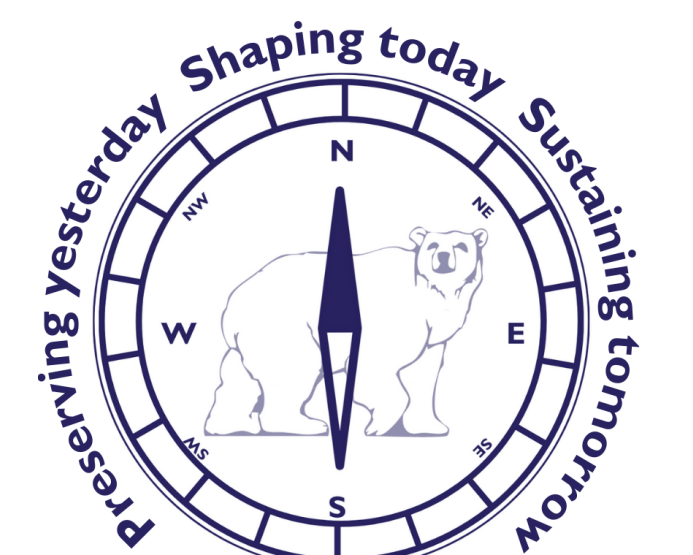
Neighborhood Centers

Neighborhood Centers are located in the southern portion of White Bear Lake at the intersections of high-capacity roads. They contain neighborhood serving commercial uses and positioned along the edges of surrounding neighborhoods.

The goal is to create pockets of highly walkable, accessible neighborhood shops and small- to mid-size apartments in locations along corridors and at crossroads. Neighborhood Centers should serve and help enhance the identity of the surrounding neighborhoods.



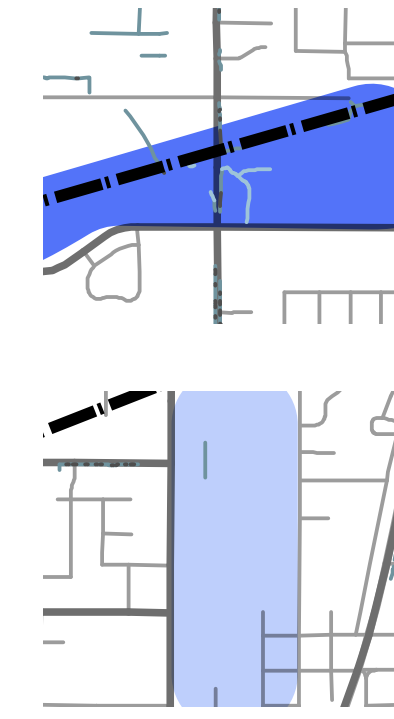
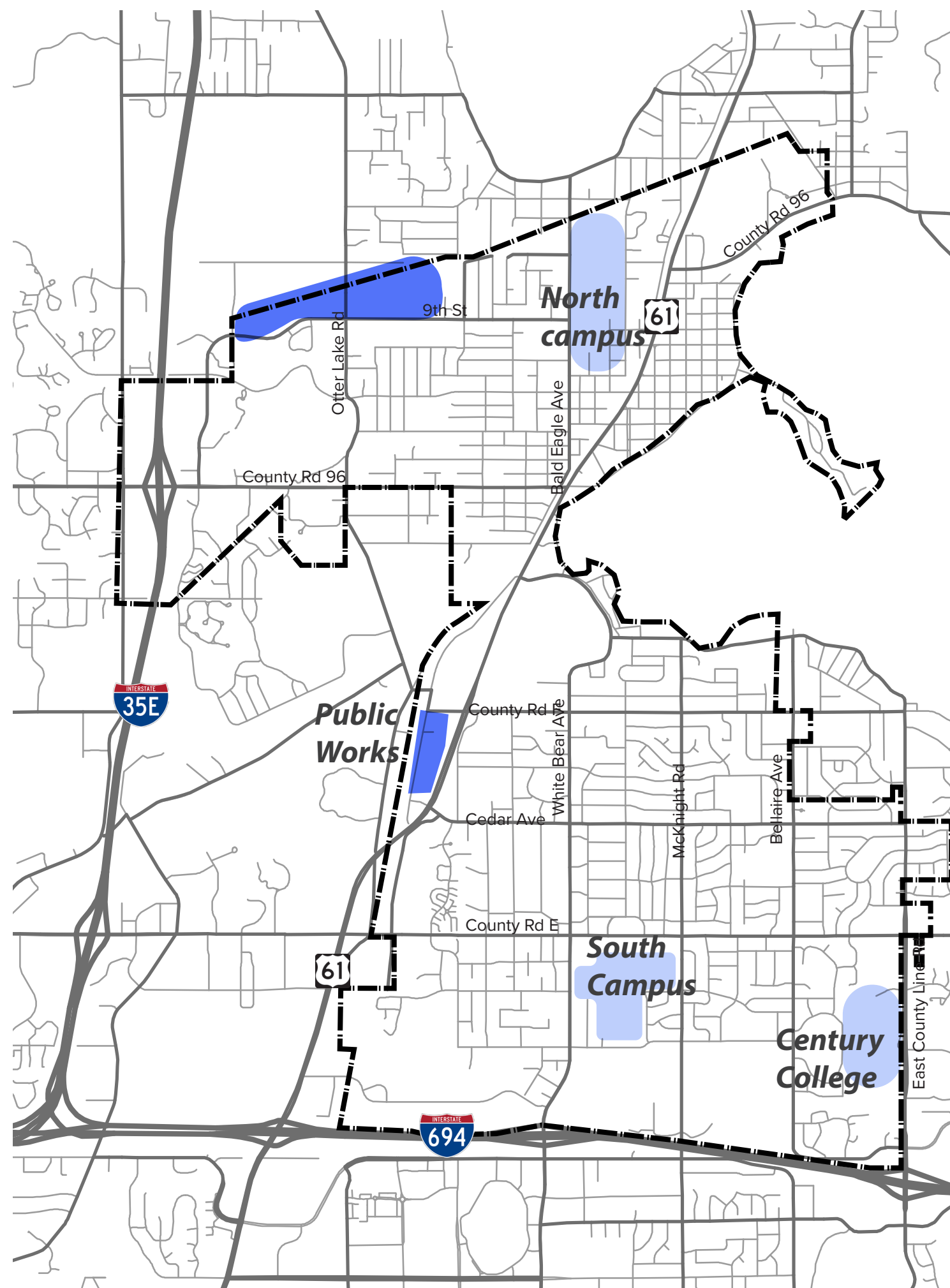
Typical neighborhood service in a one story auto oriented building at White Bear Ave and County Rd E



DISTRICTS

DISTRICTS

Districts are larger single-use areas of the city that are typically separated from other uses, because they have specific needs to function—such as an industrial district, or a large campus.



Industrial Districts

Campuses

Industrial Districts

Industrial Districts in White Bear Lake are intended for warehousing and industrial development. Though these uses are permitted today both in the northwest and southwest corners of the city, the Comprehensive Plan guides the southern area towards “business park”. Industrial areas require separation from residential uses due to their nature and the character of the activities on site.



Industrial District on the north edge of the City

Comprehensive Plan Issues & Policies

» This designation is meant for properties with uses such as manufacturing, warehousing, office/warehouse, shipping, and research and development. Limited outdoor storage or processing may occur with these types of uses

Campuses

Campuses are large areas of the city typically containing public educational uses. Campuses tend to host multiple activities on site (events, sports, classes) and have multiple buildings (sometimes linked).

Campuses draw users from the surrounding neighborhood, across the city and well into the region, so access for pedestrians, transit and automobiles are all important. As a result, Campuses have unique needs for access, circulation and parking.



Consolidate White Bear Lake School Campus



Century College Campus, White Bear Lake

Comprehensive Plan Issues & Policies

» Though not addressed in the comprehensive Plan, Campuses tend to grow and diversify over time - from a function that focuses only on education to one that is more diversified. They are self contained with a need to have coordinated internal operations. Yet as community assets, it is important for them to also have some integration with their surroundings while maintaining clear edges.
 » Century College extends into Mahtomedi.

