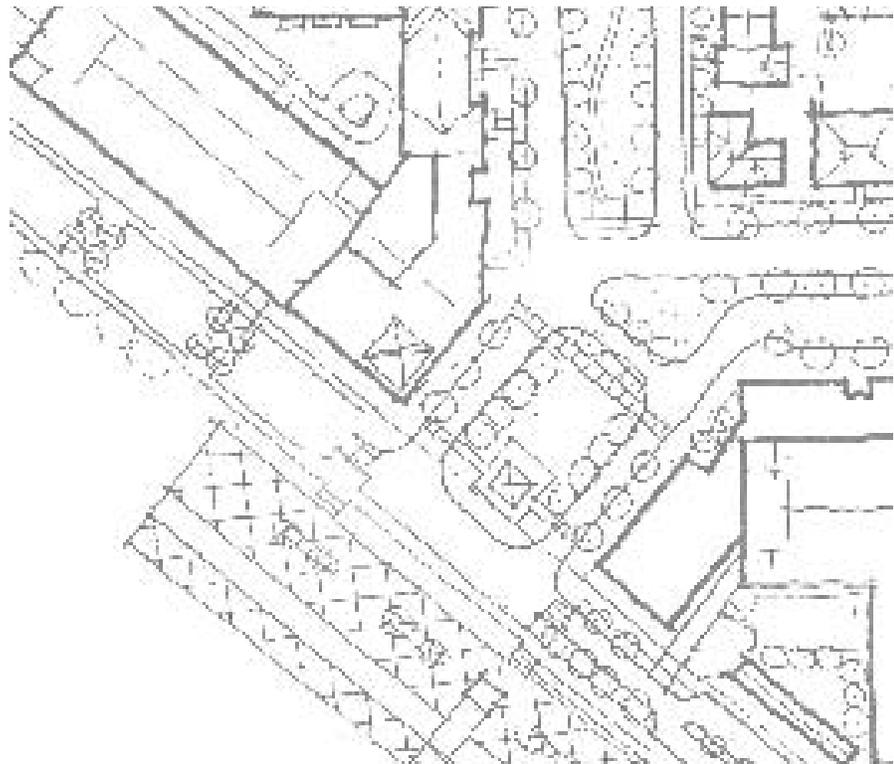


**Riverdale Station Area Transit Oriented
Development Design Guidelines**
Coon Rapids, Minnesota
November 27, 2007



Riverdale Stations Transit Oriented Development Design Guidelines

Coon Rapids, Minnesota

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A special thanks to all those, not named on this page, who gave their time and energy to this important effort.

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1. Executive Summary

Background

In Spring 2009, Northstar Commuter Rail will begin operations with passenger service between downtown Minneapolis and Big Lake. The downtown Minneapolis station will be located in the Warehouse District and integrated with the new Twins Ballpark and the Hiawatha LRT station. The Northstar Commuter Rail will have measurable impacts and benefits to the entire region, specifically to the communities between St. Cloud and Minneapolis. Some impacts will be immediate and direct. By providing a viable and cost effective option for traveling to downtown Minneapolis, the Northstar Commuter Rail will decrease congestion on area highways and decrease travel times to downtown Minneapolis.

However, full and long-term benefits of the Northstar Commuter Rail can be realized only if local municipalities recognize the connection between land use policies and transportation investments, and adjust their expectations (ordinances, policies, and redevelopment practices) accordingly.



Transit Oriented Development

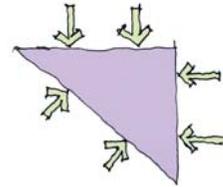
The Riverdale site in Coon Rapids represents one of the most significant redevelopment opportunities in the city and along the entire Northstar Commuter Rail Line. In the next several years, the property owners of the Riverdale site (Anoka County) and City of Coon Rapids will solicit development proposals for development of the Site. The purpose of this document is to articulate Coon Rapids' expectations by establishing design guidelines and site considerations. Parties interested in developing this site will use this document as a representation of the City's expectations.

Coon Rapids envisions the Riverdale site as a signature, high quality, regionally significant Transit Oriented Development (TOD). The City wants to fully leverage the market and placemaking opportunities as the site's dynamics change in the coming years.

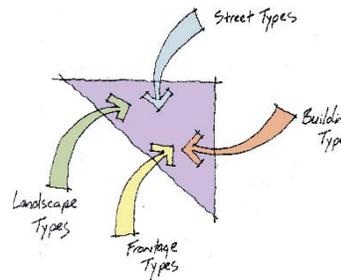
Cities throughout the country are experiencing the transformative effect of transit investments. After a half century of consuming land at accelerating rates, developing a relatively narrow range of housing options, and separating land uses so employment is, by design, distant from housing, cities are realizing the need to diversify their offerings, mix their land uses, and improve their transportation options. Several cities, transit agencies, municipalities, and development communities have come together to fill these needs by creating TODs that have become signature developments.

Organization of this Document

This document is organized in five sections. The first section, “Site Analysis,” provides background information on the site and its regional and local context. The second section, “Site Considerations,” provides information on how the immediate surroundings of the site impact the eventual development of the property. This section addresses issues of scale, the edges of the site, access, and views. The third section, “Design Guidelines,” offers a palette of street types, building types, frontage types, and open space types. The document offers this “kit of parts” as a means of assuring the development is varied, unique, and incremental. The fourth section, “Alternatives and Scenarios,” outlines the strategic phasing necessary to implement a high quality TOD on the Riverdale site. The final section, “Concepts and Scenarios,” illustrates a possible design and development scenario that achieves the standards set forth in the previous sections.



Site Considerations



Kit of Parts



Concept/Scenario

Organization of this Document: This document considers external factors affecting the site (top) and how they inform solutions and applications for successful development of the site (middle). Finally, the document provides some alternative development scenarios and explains how they respond to site conditions and the design guidelines (bottom).

Expectations

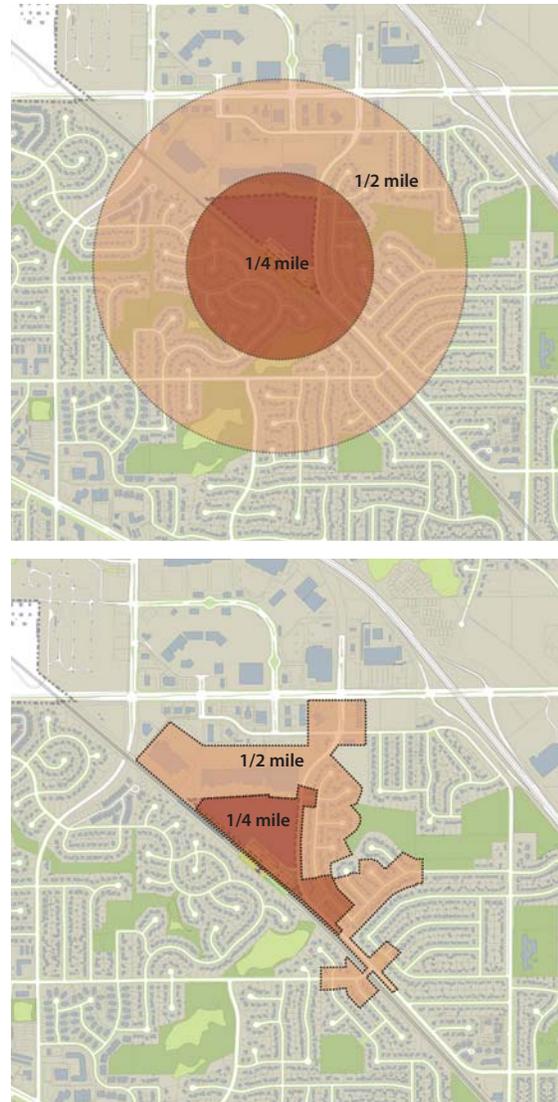
The Riverdale site should be developed with a mix of uses that include residential, retail, and employment buildings and uses. Land uses should be pedestrian-friendly, encouraging and supporting pedestrian use and access. With the exception of the Park and Ride, auto-dependant uses (such as drive-through restaurants) are discouraged. The mix of uses should respond to other planned uses on the site and the City's long-term needs. The mix of uses should not respond exclusively to current short-term market conditions. Developing land uses that share customers (such as housing and day care) will increase "internal capture" thereby reducing automobile trips and increasing pedestrian activity and public safety. The land use mix should also create ridership demand (as both an origin and a destination) for the Northstar Commuter Rail whether it is housing, employment, or a public destination venue such as a library or arts center.

1. A Place, not just a Platform

All high quality and successful Transit Oriented Developments are recognizable and memorable because they contain a prominent public space that organizes the station area and surrounding development. Typically, the signature public space is related to the station area and contains uses that draw patrons to and from the station. The future Transit Oriented Development on the Riverdale Site should orient public space (park or plaza) around the station area.

2. Improved Access

Access to the Riverdale site is lacking. The single existing curb cut is poorly located and there is limited bicycle, transit, or pedestrian access to the site. It is bound on only one side by public streets. New streets must penetrate the site from Northdale Boulevard. Over time, these streets should extend through the site and connect to the adjacent properties when they are redeveloped. Pedestrian access to the Site should be improved with trail and sidewalk connections to Northdale Boulevard and



Access & Connectivity: Access to the station from a 1/4 and 1/2 mile distance is shown as the crow flies (above) and as a person actually walks (below). The inability to cross the tracks restricts access to households that are adjacent to the site.

along the south side of the retail tracks to connect to the adjacent neighborhood. Improving access to the site will increase its draw and accessibility.

3. Think Beyond 15 Acres

The size of the Riverdale site is approximately 15 acres. Whereas the immediate impact of the Northstar Commuter Rail will be seen on those 15 acres, the impacts will extend to a 1/2 mile from the station over time. The retail developments north of the Riverdale site were designed and built approximately 20 years ago. The typical economic life of a suburban shopping center is approximately 30 years. Therefore, it is likely that the properties north of the Riverdale site will undergo significant change in the next decade. Design and development of the Riverdale site should therefore plan for the eventual redevelopment of these sites and create opportunities for integration by extending streets north to 124th Street NW and Main Street NW.

4. Meet Community Needs

Most of Coon Rapids was developed over the past 50 years. The City is transitioning from a place comprised of suburban greenfield developments to one that redevelops existing areas. The rapid mid to late-century development resulted in a narrow range of housing options. As the City matures, the Riverdale site, together with the investments in the commuter rail station present an opportunity to fulfill some needs that were unfulfilled during

the rapid growth period. Immediate opportunities include condominiums, townhouses, small offices, live/work opportunities, small scale locally owned retail establishments, and community services such as child-care.

4. Integrate the Park and Ride

Integrating the park and ride with the Riverdale site is essential to the success of the development. The 15 acre development site and the station platform are separated by a 7.7 acre park and ride that holds approximately 475 cars. Whereas the park and ride delivers riders (and revenue) for the commuter rail, its presence as a surface parking lot inhibits development potential of the Riverdale site and the ability for the site to generate additional ridership (and revenue). This document therefore recommends that the owner of the 7.7 acre park and ride partner with the developer of the Riverdale site to “repackage” the park and ride into a multi-use, shared parking structure, which will free land for development and the creation of an attractive station area.

6. Multi-Modal and Connected

The part of the Riverdale site adjacent to the park and ride and station area should be a multi-modal environment. It must accommodate buses, shuttles, bicycles, pedestrians, and cars. Each of these modes will deliver riders to the station and patrons to the uses around the station. Therefore the streets to the station will have to accommodate the demands of such users. Consideration should be given to bus (and shuttle) drop off and pick-up, kiss and ride, and bicyclists.

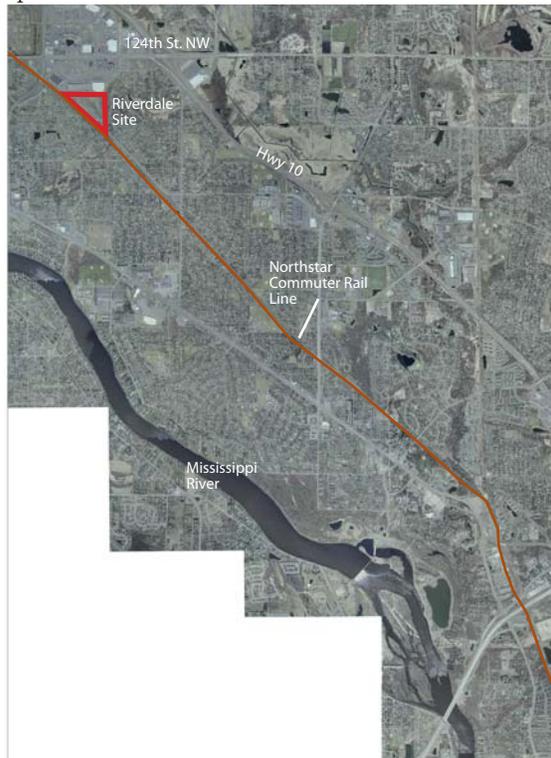


2. Analysis

Regional Context

Coon Rapids is situated along the Mississippi River, approximately 20 miles north of the Twin Cities. Although Coon Rapids is located beyond the 694 Belt line, it retains a strong connection to downtown Minneapolis. In addition to this connection, Coon Rapids is part of the Highway 10 corridor that parallels the Mississippi River and I-94, connecting the Twin Cities to Anoka, Elk River, and St. Cloud.

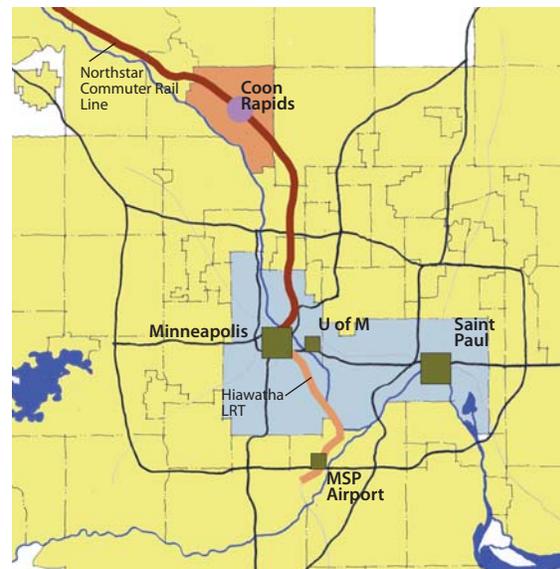
Coon Rapids was settled in 1847 and incorporated in 1959. Since then, Coon Rapids has grown in population from 14,000 to 61,500, and is primarily a suburban community with a diversity of employment opportunities and a range of housing options.



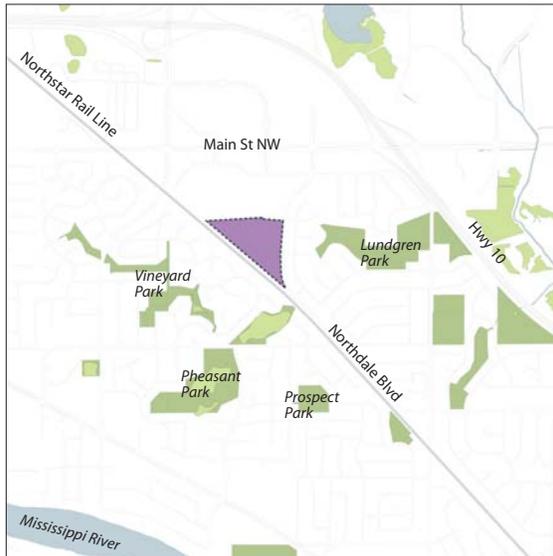
Northstar Rail

The Northstar Rail Line will be the Twin Cities region's second major rail investment. The Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) connecting the airport to downtown Minneapolis began operations in 2003; the Northstar line will begin operations in 2009. The Northstar line will connect downtown Minneapolis and Big Lake. A future phase will extend the line to St. Cloud.

The Coon Rapids Riverdale Station will be the second stop from downtown. Five trains will run from Big Lake to Minneapolis with one reverse trip during weekday mornings. During weekday afternoons and evenings, five trains will run from Minneapolis to Big Lake with one reverse trip. Each weekend day, trains will make three round trips with possible additional service for special events.



Local Context



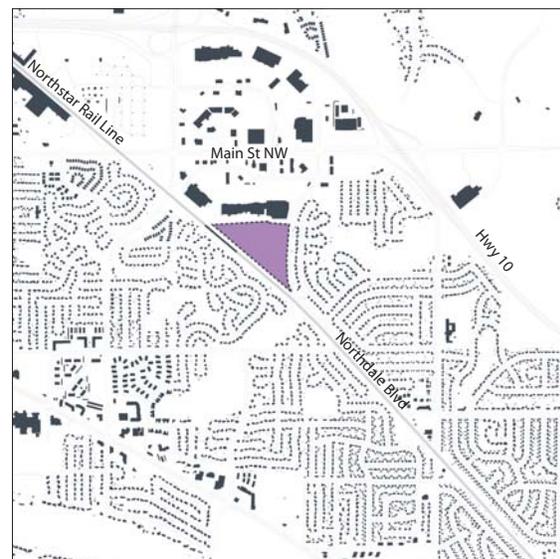
Parks & Open Spaces: An established, well-connected open space system surrounds the site. The system is comprised of wetlands, parks, and fields, each of which are linked by an extensive trail system. The site is not connected to the system.



Highways: A major highway passes through the area and connects to two arterial roads. These two intersections exist within a short distance of the site, offering strong connections and convenient access to the metropolitan region.



Arterials & Local Streets: The street pattern is dis-connected containing dead-ends and subdivisions with limited access. Local streets connect to arterials via collector roads like Northdale Boulevard, which is the only road connected to the site.



Buildings: Buildings of different sizes surround the site and form different patterns. Small residential buildings are situated close together and define the street, while large commercial buildings are spread apart and are defined by parking areas.



Commercial Land Uses: Several commercial areas occupy areas near the site. Riverdale Shopping Center and Riverdale Plaza together form the largest contiguous piece, which extends from the site to the Highway 10.



Residential Land Uses: Residential uses comprise most of the area surrounding the site, especially to the south. These low-density areas form a strong pattern of established single-family houses developed in the past 50 years.

The Riverdale Site



The Site: The Site consists of two separate parcels, totalling approximately 23 acres. A 70' wide power easement is located on the southern edge of the site.



The Site

Building Scale

Buildings that vary in use, and scale surround the site. To the north, single story retail buildings with large floor-plates sit at the edges of vast parking lots. To the south, one- to two-story single family houses define the edges of streets.

This means that the site occupies an area that, when developed, should offer a sensitive transition between these different uses, and scales.



Building Scale: Development should create a transition between different uses, and scales of surrounding buildings.

A mixed-use development that provides a range of building types is essential. Size and use should relate to the context; specifically, development along Northdale Boulevard should match the scale of houses across the street, and should steadily increase in height and density across the site toward the proposed stair tower and station platform. In addition, uses should offer benefits to those living to the west, south, and east, as well as to those visiting and working in the areas to the north.



Building Scale: Existing buildings illustrate commercial and residential uses and how they differ in scale.

Edges

Three different conditions define the edges of the site. Riverdale Shopping Center parking and loading areas border the north edge, residential back yards and fences across Northdale Boulevard define the east edge, and residential back yards, fences, a heavy rail corridor, and a mature tree stand about the west edge.

The three sides present three different edge conditions, but are in one sense similar: each turns its back on the site. New development should respond with three different edge treatments that integrate the site into the surrounding fabric.

New development on the site's north edge should respond to existing parking and loading conditions

by abutting its own parking and loading program toward the retail center to create a back-to-back arrangement. The blocks on the north edge of the site should accommodate potential future street connections to the Riverside Mall Site.

The east edge along Northdale Boulevard is the site's front door. New development should not mirror the existing back yard pattern. Instead, it should face Northdale Boulevard with front and side entrances.

New development along the railroad tracks should use the mature tree stand and proposed rail platform as a front yard and should face this edge. Creating a new face and frontage onto the station platform is important because it will increase public safety, access, and marketability of the station area.



Edges: Development should respond to existing edge conditions by creating front doors along Northdale Boulevard and the rail line, and by presenting new back doors to existing back doors along the rear side of Riverdale Shopping Center.



Edges: Existing conditions show (clockwise from top left) the rail line and mature trees to the west, rail line and residential backyards to the west, Northdale Boulevard and fences to the east, and commercial parking and loading areas to the north.

Open Space Connections

Part of the well-connected Coon Rapids open space system is located near the site. To both the southwest and the east are well-used wetlands, parks, and trails to which new development should connect.

New development should also incorporate a public open space and a network of sidewalks and

street trees. These amenities can offer additional connections within the site and to the established open space system via sidewalks, paths, trails, and bike lanes.

By using the proposed stair tower to cross the tracks and some rail right-of-ways to connect to Pheasant Park, a viable addition can be made to the existing open space network. Coon Rapids should work with the site developer, BNSF Rail, and the Rail Authority to facilitate this connection.



Open Space Connections: The proposed stair tower will offer the opportunity to connect to Pheasant Park and the existing trail system.



Open Space Connections: Existing conditions show locations of current and potential new connections. The proposed stair tower (bottom right) can facilitate a new connection over the rail line.

Views

Primary public views of the site are from both north and south on Northdale Boulevard. A secondary, less prominent public view is from Northdale along the east edge of the site. In addition, there are private views across Northdale from houses and backyards.

New development should highlight and frame these views with appropriate artistic and architectural

elements. These elements include entire buildings as well as articulated building edges, corners, and details. Public spaces and public buildings are also important to highlight with prominent views and landmark features.

Corners are ideal places to capture views from outside of, as well as within, the site. New streets and buildings should be situated to take advantage of opportunities for framing, directing, and terminating views.



Views: Development should frame, direct, and terminate views both outside and within the site. Buildings, spaces, and landmarks can capture views.



Views: Existing conditions show opportunities for directing views. Landmark features terminate views (bottom left) and strong corners frame and capture them (bottom right).

Access

Current site access is limited to one entrance. This entrance is located on the south corner of the site, where visibility of northbound Northdale Boulevard traffic is poor.

New development should move this access point north 200 feet and should create an additional access point approximately 600 feet north of this.



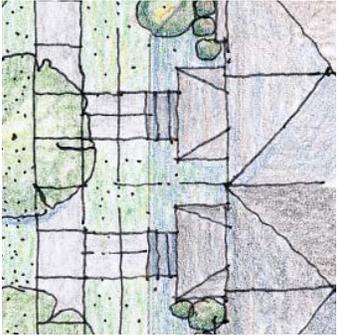
Access: The current south access point should be moved north, and an additional access point should be added just south of the Riverdale Shopping Center.

New development also should be arranged to accommodate future access points to areas north of the site, when Riverdale Shopping Center redevelops.

Within the site, access and connectivity are essential. This can be achieved through the development of a multi-modal street network, or connected streets that accommodate cars, cyclists, and pedestrians.



Access: Existing conditions pose access and traffic challenges. Existing access should be converted to transit only with a traffic signal.



4. Design Guidelines

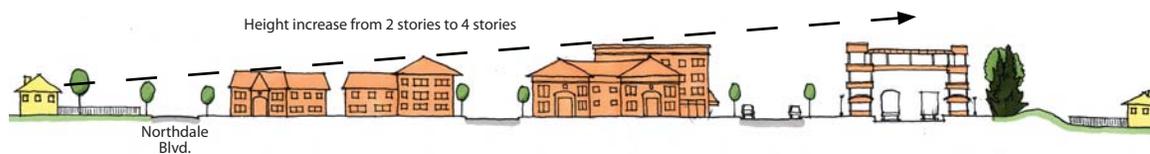
Guidelines Framework

This section will introduce the Guidelines Framework and will describe how it informs and guides use of the “kit of parts” (street types, building types, frontage types, landscape types, and architectural details) section.

Guidelines Framework sub-categories will discuss internal site applications of building scale transition, edge conditions, open space connections, views, and access described and detailed in the previous section. This kit of parts is intentionally varied, containing both suburban types and urban types.



Guidelines Framework: New streets and blocks will orient development towards the Station.



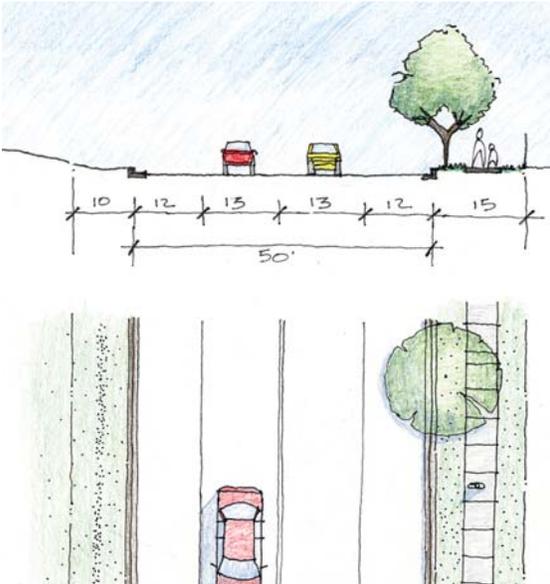
Building Scale Transition: New buildings on the Riverdale site will increase in height between Northdale Boulevard and the proposed station platform and stair tower.

Street Types

Collector Street (Northdale Boulevard)



Northdale Boulevard: The existing street is a wide, two lane road that is missing a sidewalk and street trees on the west side, and lacks a bicycle lane or path on both sides.



Existing Street Section & Plan: Northdale Boulevard is striped as a two lane road with wide shoulders.

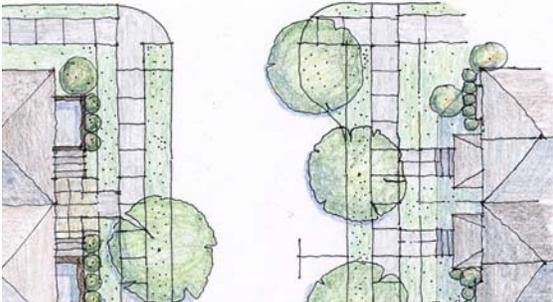
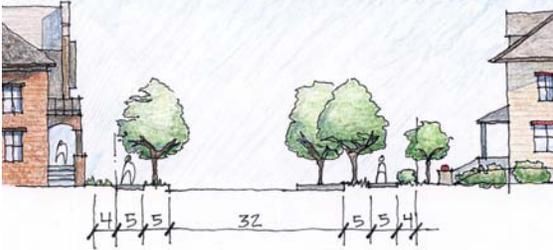


Potential Street Section & Plan: Northdale Boulevard may be re-striped and reprogrammed as a multi-modal street that accommodates bicyclists and pedestrians.

Residential Street



Residential Streets: Residential streets are narrow and include on-street parking, street trees, sidewalks, and porches or yards.

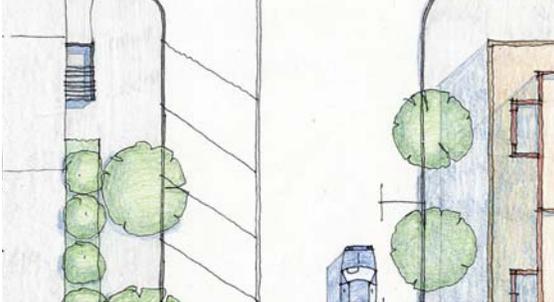
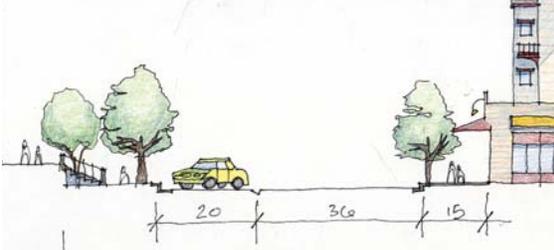


Proposed Street Section & Plan: New residential streets should be relatively narrow, with 11 foot lanes and parking on one side of the street.

Station Street



Station Streets: Station area streets provide different kinds of street parking as well as a pedestrian friendly sidewalk. This street type is the most urban, and should be used selectively only in conjunction with mixed-use buildings around the station area.



Proposed Station Area Street: The streets around the station area should provide parking for visitors to the area and the station. Diagonal parking will maximize on-street parking.

Building Types: Residential

Townhouses

Townhouses are single family units with a common or shared wall dividing them from adjacent units. Townhouses are typically two to two and a half stories in height.



Apartments/Lofts

Apartments and lofts are buildings containing multiple residential units, typically accessed from a common entry and a common hallway. Small apartment buildings, also called “mansion apartments,” are no larger than a big house and contain four to nine units.



Live/Work Buildings

Live/work buildings are similar to townhouses; however, they have two entries: one to the ground floor and another to the residential unit above. The ground floor unit is typically used for small scale retail, gallery, or service retail uses. Live/work buildings create effective transitions between the station area and the residential areas.



Accessory Buildings

Typically located behind primary buildings, accessory buildings are independent structures that increase the density without increasing the height of buildings. Accessory buildings can include flats atop garages, carriage houses, or rear living quarters.



Building Types: Other

Mixed-Use Buildings

Mixed-use buildings accommodate a range of uses. Typically they contain retail or other active uses at grade, and residential (rental or ownership) or small offices on the upper floors. Community uses such as a day care or small medical offices can also be located in mixed-use buildings.



Parking Buildings

Parking buildings are designed with the same architectural detailing and intent as other high-quality buildings. They may contain retail uses at grade or may have a multistory liner building containing offices or residential uses.



Special Buildings

Special buildings are public or semi-public buildings such as libraries, arts centers, park buildings, or theaters. These buildings typically are located in accessible, viable, and prominent locations.



Frontage Types

Storefronts

Storefronts are typical on mixed-use buildings. Storefronts provide activity and animation on the street. Storefronts should be used only around the station area, and are located directly on the sidewalk.



Porch Yard

Porch yards are narrow (less than 10 feet) yards containing raised porches. Porch yards are typically landscaped as gardens or patios. Porch yards are typical on townhouses and along the ground floor of apartment buildings.



Common Entry

Common entries are well signed, accessible entry ways for mixed use buildings, apartments, or lofts.



Parking Lots

Parking lots that are visible to the street should contain a defined edge that partially masks the view of the parking lot. Parking lots adjacent to the street should be no longer than one bay wide (60 feet).



Landscape Types

Parks

The Riverdale site should contain a single signature park space adjacent to the Station Area. The park should be designed for informal gathering and relaxing.



Playgrounds & Fields

The site should contain some programmed open space such as a playground or a play field. These spaces can be either publicly or privately owned and operated.



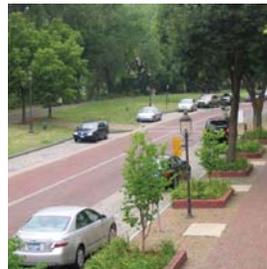
Plazas & Patios

Plazas and patios are typically adjacent to and integrated with mixed-use buildings in the station area. Plazas and patios can be used for commerce or informal gathering.



Streetscapes

Streetscapes should be designed as places to live and walk in addition to being designed as places for cars. All streets should contain sidewalks, street trees, and a planting boulevard. Where possible, streets should also contain bike lanes and on-street parking.



Public Art

Public art should be incorporated into new building sites around the station area. The plaza in front of the station should also contain public art in the form of sculpture, murals, or other installations.



Architectural Details

Entries

The site should incorporate a variety of entries ranging from simple doorways and stoops to courtyards. Entries should clearly define their function, be visible from the street and sidewalk, and be in scale to people and surrounding buildings.



Materials

The site should contain a variety of high quality materials such as masonry, brick, stucco, hardiplank siding, and stone. Vinyl and EIFS are prohibited.



Roofs

All residential buildings should have pitched roofs. Mixed-use buildings can have flat, pitched, or mansard roofs. Dormers and projecting bays are encouraged, especially on larger and longer roofs.



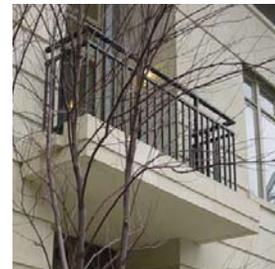
Windows

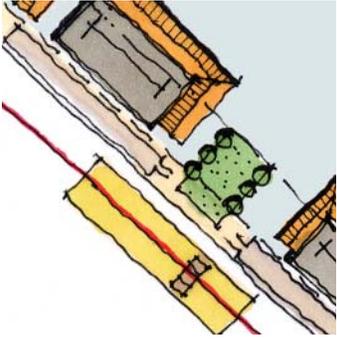
In general, windows should be vertically proportioned and in scale with the buildings. Windows should vary in size.



Balconies & Porches

Balconies and porches are critical to the public realm. Balconies and porches should be designed to be outdoor rooms, extending the functions and activities of the home to the outdoors. All porches and balconies should face the sidewalk and street.





5. Implementation

Implementation

Partnerships

It is critical for the City of Coon Rapids to partner with Anoka County, the property owner, to create a signature Transit Oriented Development. Together, the parties should market the site, issue an RFP, and solicit development proposals.

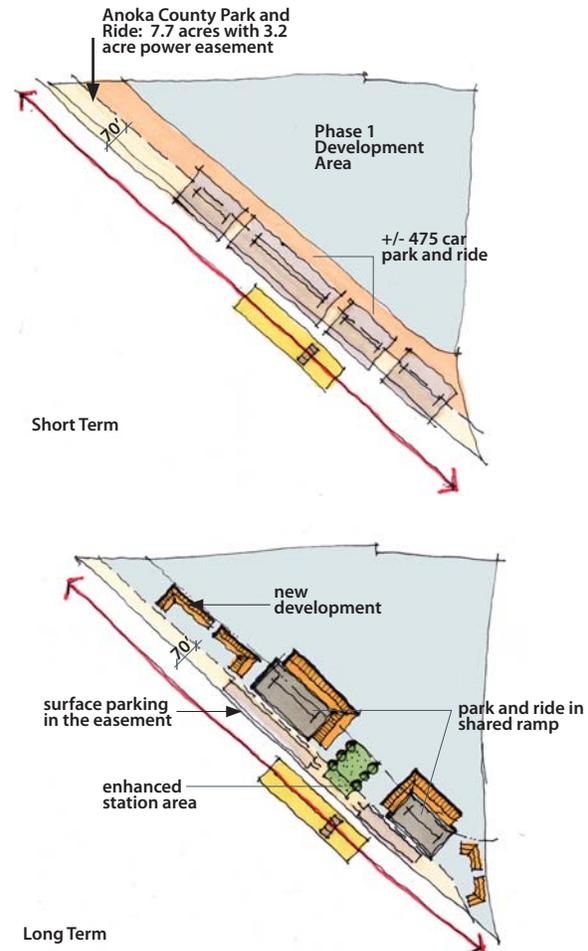
Implementation will likely be phased incrementally according to market demand and resolution of land assembly issues. It is recommended that any development plan incorporate the eventual development of the 7.7 acre property owned by Anoka County adjacent to the rail station. It is likely, however, that this will be a second phase of the project to be completed after much of the original 15 acres are developed. Development of the additional 7.7 acres should accommodate the park and ride in a shared parking structure (or two).

Infrastructure

The City is encouraged to participate in construction of infrastructure for the development of the site. Streets through the site should be public. In addition, the City is encouraged to make off-site access improvements such as connecting sidewalks and trails. Finally, the City is encouraged to modify Northdale Boulevard such that it becomes a multi-modal street with bike lanes, pedestrian routes, attractive landscaping, and perhaps even on-street parking.

Financing

The City has several financial tools at its disposal to assist in the development of the Site. They include tax increment financing (TIF), tax abatement, as well as regional and State grants targeted for such projects to assist in infrastructure, site remediation and other expenses typically associated with urban redevelopment projects. Additional tools may also be made available for transit and TOD projects through recently proposed state legislation, such as transit improvement centers (TIC) and TOD TIF districts. The City should take an active role in supporting such legislative initiatives.



Park & Ride: The park and ride should be incorporated into new development.

Regulatory

Currently, the density and mix of uses proposed in this plan are not permitted in the local code. Immediate actions should include the review and appropriate revisions to Title 11 of the Coon Rapids City Code in order to enable the implementation of a Transit Oriented Development. There are several ways in which this can happen, including adding a text amendment, creating an overlay zone, establishing one or more new zoning districts, or making amendments to existing Planned Unit Development code.



6. Concept/Scenario

Concept/Scenario

This section of the report illustrates how the design guidelines and the kit of parts described in previous sections of this report can be applied to create a Transit Oriented Site Plan. The Site Plan presented on the following pages is not the recommended plan for the site. It is simply one option. Developers and Designers are expected to present site plans and development concepts that meet their specific programmatic needs and product mix, while achieving the expectations stated in this document. The following pages represent one such scenario.



Concept / Scenario

Concept/Scenario: Phasing



Phase 1

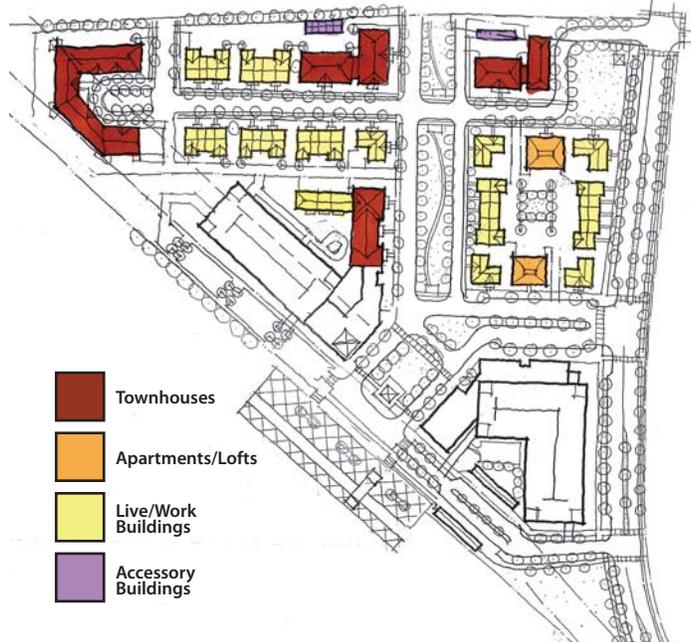


Phase 2



Station Area:

Building Types:
Residential



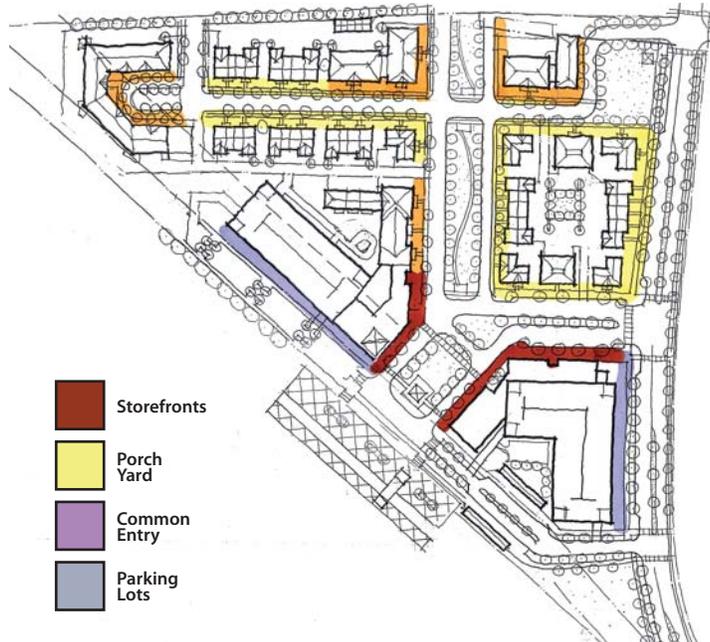
Building Types:
Other



Street Types



Frontage Types



Landscape Types

