

# CHASKA

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

"Downtown Plan For the Future"

**FINAL**

Approved February 6, 2012

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# CHAPTER 1: executive summary

## Vision

### ***Chaska's Community Vision***

"To be the Best Small Town in Minnesota"

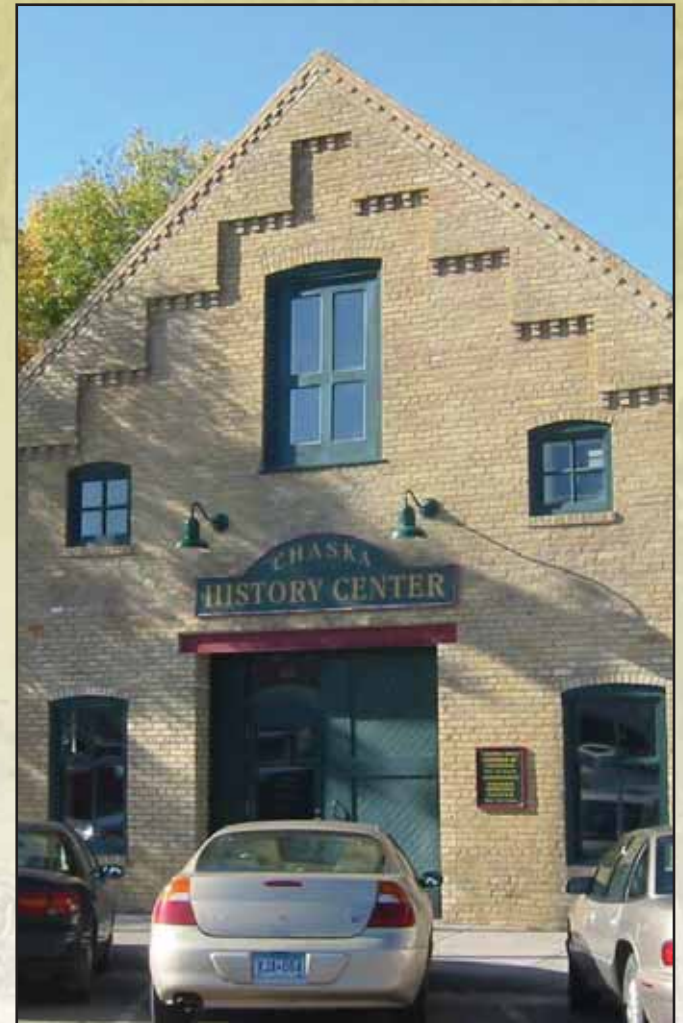
Chaska's mission statement "To be the Best Small Town in Minnesota" is the foundation of the Chaska Downtown Master Plan. Chaska citizens view downtown as the heart of the community and physical embodiment of Chaska's historic and unique small town character. The community strives to maintain its small town character and sense of community while supporting well-planned future growth. Throughout much of its history, Chaska's character was that of a freestanding small town in the Minnesota River valley. The entire city was located below the river bluff at the crossroads of the river, rail lines and highways. The river bluff served as the community's edge. For much of Chaska's history, today's "downtown area" was the entire town. In recent decades, the Twin Cities metro region has grown and expanded outward to Chaska. As Chaska has evolved into a community within the metro region, it has experienced significant growth in population and land area. The city has expanded beyond the river valley with more of the community's residents now living above the river bluff than below the bluff and the Chaska Greenbelt serves as the community's edge.

### ***Chaska's Downtown Vision***

"Revitalize downtown Chaska as the hub of community destinations and gathering places that reflect and celebrate our historic character, traditional small town atmosphere and values."

The downtown vision encompasses five main elements which are:

- » Community Gathering Places
- » Vibrant Main Street District
- » Historic Small Town Character
- » Thriving Anchor Institutions
- » Attractive Neighborhoods



*Chaska City Hall, History Center, Library and City Hall Plaza continue to be important destinations and gathering places in downtown Chaska.*





*Historic City Square, with its gazebo and surrounding historic buildings, is viewed as the center of downtown.*

## Downtown Guiding Principles

- » Enhance the community's pride and historic sense of place in downtown
- » Reinvigorate the variety and vitality of downtown's main street destinations
- » Create signature community gathering places
- » Preserve and strengthen downtown as the hub for community institutions
- » Expand downtown's role as an employment center
- » Enhance downtown's neighborhoods and housing options
- » Create inviting downtown streets, sidewalks and trails
- » Strengthen downtown partnerships to achieve common goals

## Purpose of the Downtown Plan

The purpose of the Chaska Downtown Master Plan is to establish a holistic, long-term vision and plan for the downtown area. The purposes of this plan are to:

- » establish a big picture framework for clarifying and strengthening downtown's place in the community and the region;
- » build upon the City's prior planning initiatives and downtown project successes to identify the next steps in moving forward with downtown revitalization;
- » provide a guide for future reinvestment efforts by the public sector, private sector, and non-profit organizations in downtown over the next ten years;
- » create a fully functional downtown area with traditional small town character that is valued and used by Chaska citizens, employees and visitors.



*Chestnut Street is viewed as Chaska's "Main Street" although it's "Main Street" character is challenged by its current regional highway role as MN Highway 41 and a major crossing of the Minnesota River.*



## Legacy of Downtown Revitalization Efforts

In support of the community's mission to be the best small town in Minnesota, the City has consistently made downtown revitalization a community priority. Chaska has a strong legacy of downtown revitalization efforts over the years. These revitalization efforts include renovation of City Square, development of the new city hall/library building, street improvements, historic preservation, site assembly and redevelopment, housing development, and storefront rehabilitation loan program. Downtown revitalization efforts have involved the public sector, private sector, and non-profit agencies. However, the City's leadership, commitment and participation have been critical to downtown's revitalization successes thus far. For example, in the 1980s, the City made the critical decision to build a new city hall and library building in downtown rather than relocate it outside of downtown. The preparation of this Downtown Master Plan, the City's first, is the next big step in the City's legacy of downtown revitalization efforts.

The community's legacy of downtown revitalization includes the following efforts (not a comprehensive list):

- » Flood control project, including raising the levee and adding creek diversion channels
- » Addition of the levee trail
- » Renovation of City Square
- » Designation of historic buildings and the Walnut Street Historic District
- » Creation of the Downtown Preservation Design Manual and Historic Context Study
- » Restoration and reuse of Brinkhaus Livery Stable as the Chaska History Center
- » Reconstruction of streets: First St, Hickory St, Fourth St
- » Second St stoplight on MN Hwy 41 (federal economic stimulus funding)
- » Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41 streetscape enhancements: street median, corner bulbs (federal economic stimulus funding)
- » City's land subsidy and site/building design partnership for City Square commercial building redevelopment project in Walnut Street Historic District
- » Expansion of the Carver County License Center facility
- » Renovation of the Athletic Park grandstand structure
- » Storefront Loan Program renovations – more than 25 projects
- » Renovation of historic residences
- » City involvement in successful site redevelopments
- » New downtown housing added over past 20 years – approximately 600 units
- » Christmas in May house improvement projects



*Development of the new city hall and library building in the 1980s is part of the City's downtown revitalization legacy.*

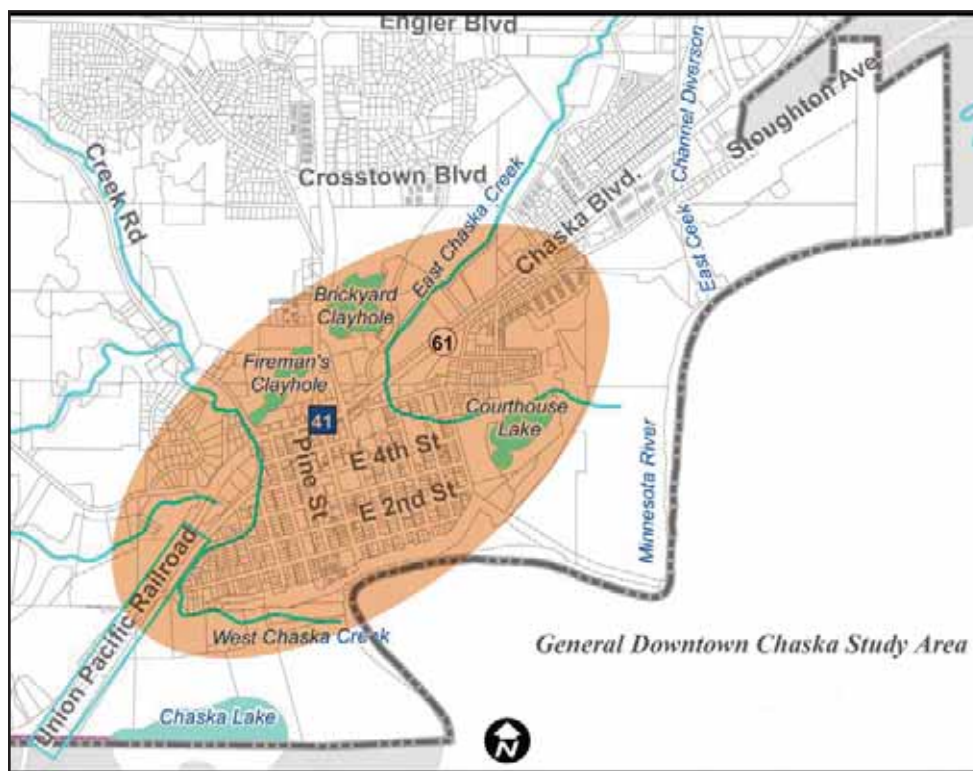


*Following a major fire, the historic Philip Henk building was entirely renovated by the building's new owner and now is home to a coffee shop with offices above. The project used the City's downtown preservation design manual and storefront loan program.*





*Chaska's downtown area is shown in the aerial photo above and the map below generally as the area between the Minnesota River and the river bluff, which encompasses the historic downtown area south of the railroad and Chaska Boulevard/CSAH 61 as well as the area just north of Chaska Boulevard/CSAH 61.*



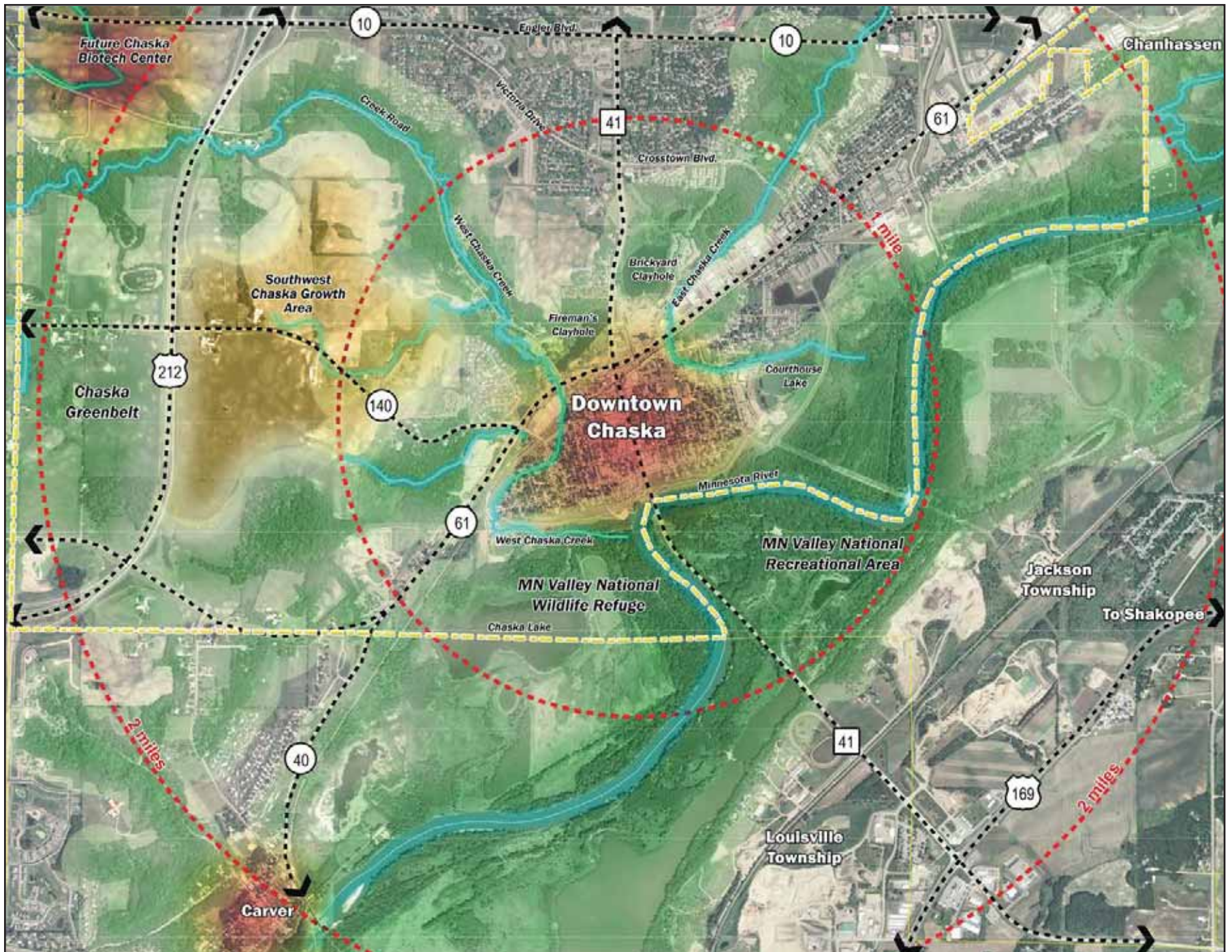
## Defining the Downtown Area

City Square is viewed as the center and strongest attribute of downtown. Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41, is viewed as Chaska's "Main Street". Although the historic downtown commercial area was south of Chaska Boulevard (old U.S. Highway 212) and the rail line, today's downtown commercial area has expanded to the north side of Chaska Boulevard. As shown in the aerial photo and the map to the right, the boundaries of today's "downtown area" are generally the river valley to the south and east, Chaska Boulevard/Cty Rd 61 to the west, the river bluff to the north, and Crosstown Boulevard to the northeast.

While the plan is focused on the downtown area, identifying and understanding the downtown's regional context is also very important. The map on the opposite page shows downtown's regional context, including the areas within a one-mile and two-mile radius of downtown. Major areas include the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge, MN Valley State Recreation Area, new U.S. Highway 212 corridor, Chaska Biotech Center, Southwest Chaska Growth Area, Downtown Carver, and Shakopee.

The geography of downtown Chaska is dominated by its origins as a small river town on the Minnesota River, which cuts a wide riverbed with lakes and wetlands between Chaska and developed areas in Scott County to the south. Within the City of Chaska, downtown is located at the south end of the community, further away from the center of the metro region than the rest of the community. The downtown commercial area is complemented by other economic centers in the community, including the community commercial center above the bluff at Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41 & Pioneer Trail, as well as small neighborhood commercial nodes and Chaska Boulevard East highway commercial areas. As an employment center, downtown is complemented by the Jonathan industrial area (MN Hwy 41 & Lyman Blvd), Chaska Blvd & Audubon Rd, and the developing U.S. Highway 212 corridor, including the Chaska Biotech Center. In the larger context of the southwest metro, downtown Chaska competes most directly with downtown Chanhassen and Eden Prairie.





Regional market and context area for downtown Chaska includes significant growth areas to the west (Carver County) and south (Scott County), MN River greenbelt, and potential changes to the regional highway system.





*Chaska has existing commercial and historic buildings along portions of its downtown commercial streets that give downtown its traditional yet unique character.*



*Potential redevelopment sites exist in downtown that could strengthen its draw as a community destination for retail, services and restaurants.*

## Downtown Market Positioning

### ***Downtown's Strongest Market Assets***

Chaska's most effective market positioning strategies for downtown will capitalize on downtown's strongest assets. From a market and development perspective, downtown Chaska's strongest assets are its: continuing demographic growth, historic & traditional downtown ambience, and high traffic counts through downtown.

### ***Downtown Market Positioning Objective & Primary Strategies***

Based upon Chaska's overall vision for downtown and this market analysis, the downtown market positioning objective is to establish downtown Chaska as the primary community destination and gathering place for the Chaska community and its environs, including a "Main Street"-oriented business district.

The primary market strategies for strengthening downtown's business environment consists of:

- » Expanding Retail for an Underserved Market
- » Creating a Downtown Niche for Restaurants
- » Targeting a Mix of Independent as well as "Chain" Businesses

### ***Secondary Market Positioning Strategies***

- » Expanding Downtown Industry/Employment
- » Retaining Anchor Institutions and Critical Uses
- » Preserving and Using Historic Buildings

### ***Market Positioning Priorities***

In summarizing the market-based findings related to downtown Chaska revitalization, the key elements are an underserved local retail market, disconnected downtown destinations, and existing businesses, institutions and historic sites, which give rise to the following priorities:

- » Promote and support unique retail/restaurant redevelopment catalyst projects along Chestnut Street, Chaska's "Main Street", at Fireman's Park and City Square West sites;
- » Create a more cohesive, compact and convenient downtown district, strengthened by amenities, connections, parking and clear orientation;
- » Encourage industrial employment growth opportunities for redevelopment sites on the edges of downtown, as a means for generating additional customers for businesses in the downtown core and strengthening downtown as an employment center;
- » Retain key downtown businesses, institutions and historic buildings, which are important existing assets of downtown's economy and character.

## Market Opportunity Focus Areas

**Concentration in Downtown Core:** In pursuing an objective of efficiency, revitalization efforts should focus on a more concentrated, walkable area, encompassing an area of roughly 10 blocks along Chestnut Street from Second Street on the south to the Fireman's Clayhole and Brickyard districts on the north.

**Clear Connections & Orientation:** The downtown core should feature clear signage, physically visible cues and directories, safe crossings, and pedestrian amenities. In creating a clear sense of orientation, downtown Chaska's key connections must clearly link Second Street, the blocks surrounding City Square Park, and the intersection of Chestnut Street (MN Hwy 41) and Chaska Boulevard (County Road 61).

**Priority Catalyst Redevelopment Sites:** In addition to needing market support, the feasibility of future downtown revitalization opportunities relies on the availability of suitable, competitive locations. This market analysis recommends two priority catalyst redevelopment sites: Fireman's Clayhole District and City Square West Block.

*The Potential Revitalization Opportunities map to the right shows vacant sites, as well as potential sites for redevelopment, property improvements, or historic building renovations.*



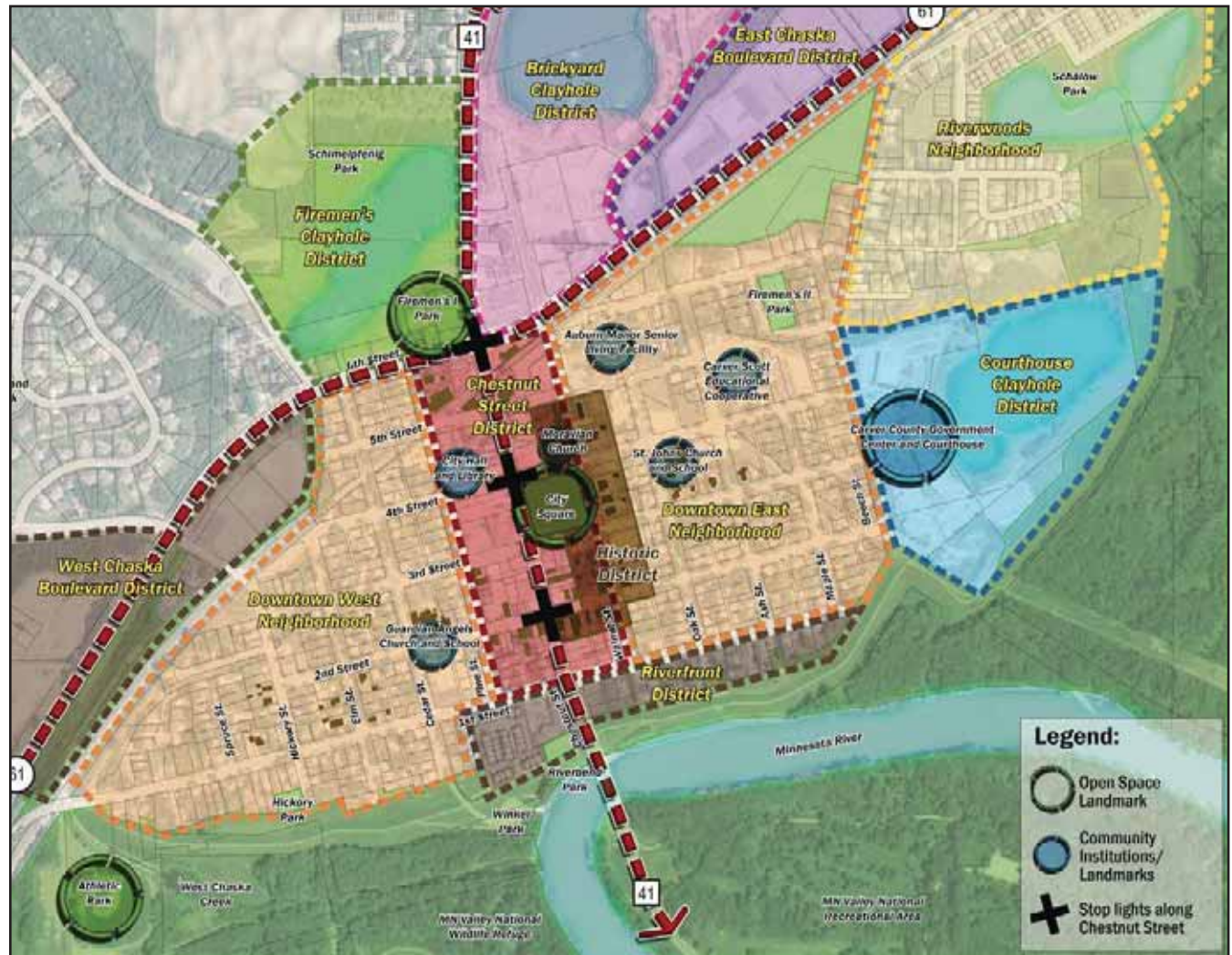


## Downtown Districts and Neighborhoods

As Chaska has grown significantly over the past 50 years, both in size and population, Lower Chaska or Old Chaska has evolved into today's Downtown Chaska area. The various sub-areas of downtown have the potential to be integral yet unique downtown districts and neighborhoods. Primarily based on major land use patterns, landscape features, and circulation routes, the Downtown Master Plan establishes seven (7) downtown districts, three (3) neighborhoods and the Chaska Greenbelt, as follows:

- » Chestnut Street District
- » Riverfront District
- » Fireman's Clayhole District
- » Brickyard Clayhole District
- » Courthouse Clayhole District
- » Chaska Greenbelt
- » East Chaska Boulevard District
- » West Chaska Boulevard District
- » Downtown West Neighborhood
- » Downtown East Neighborhood
- » Riverwoods Neighborhood

To better guide future changes and improvements to downtown Chaska, the Downtown Master Plan identifies the desired identity, development character and design features for each downtown district and neighborhood.





## Downtown Plan for the Future

The Downtown Plan for the Future envisions downtown as home to a wide variety of destinations. In order to attract people downtown, there needs to be a concentration or critical mass of destinations. These destinations need to be woven together and complement each other in order to restore downtown as the community's main gathering place. As a traditional small town, Chaska's downtown should be centered on City Square and "Main Street" – Chestnut Street - as its heart and spine. The Chestnut Street district should function as a series of "Main Street" destinations from the southern riverfront gateway to the historic Chestnut & Second St commercial node to the historic City Square node to the City Plaza node to the Chaska Boulevard node to the northern downtown gateways of Fireman's Clayhole district and Brickyard Clayhole district. In particular, the Downtown Plan for the Future provides guidance for improving downtown's built environment, connections (streets, sidewalks, trails and alleys), and parks/open spaces.

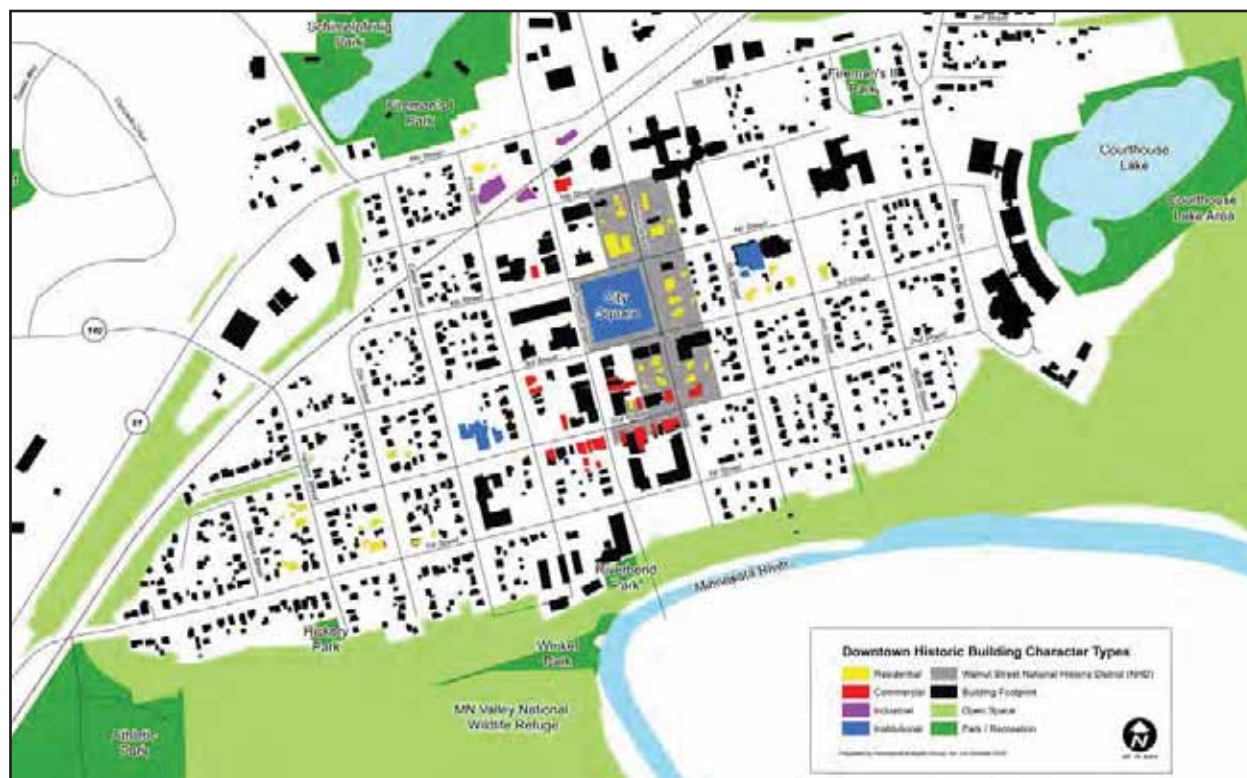
### Built Environment

Downtown's future built environment should celebrate its historic and traditional character yet embrace additions and improvements that enhance the functionality, attractiveness, and experience of downtown to meet the needs of today's economy and lifestyles. Although downtown contains some potential redevelopment sites, it is not a redevelopment area in general.

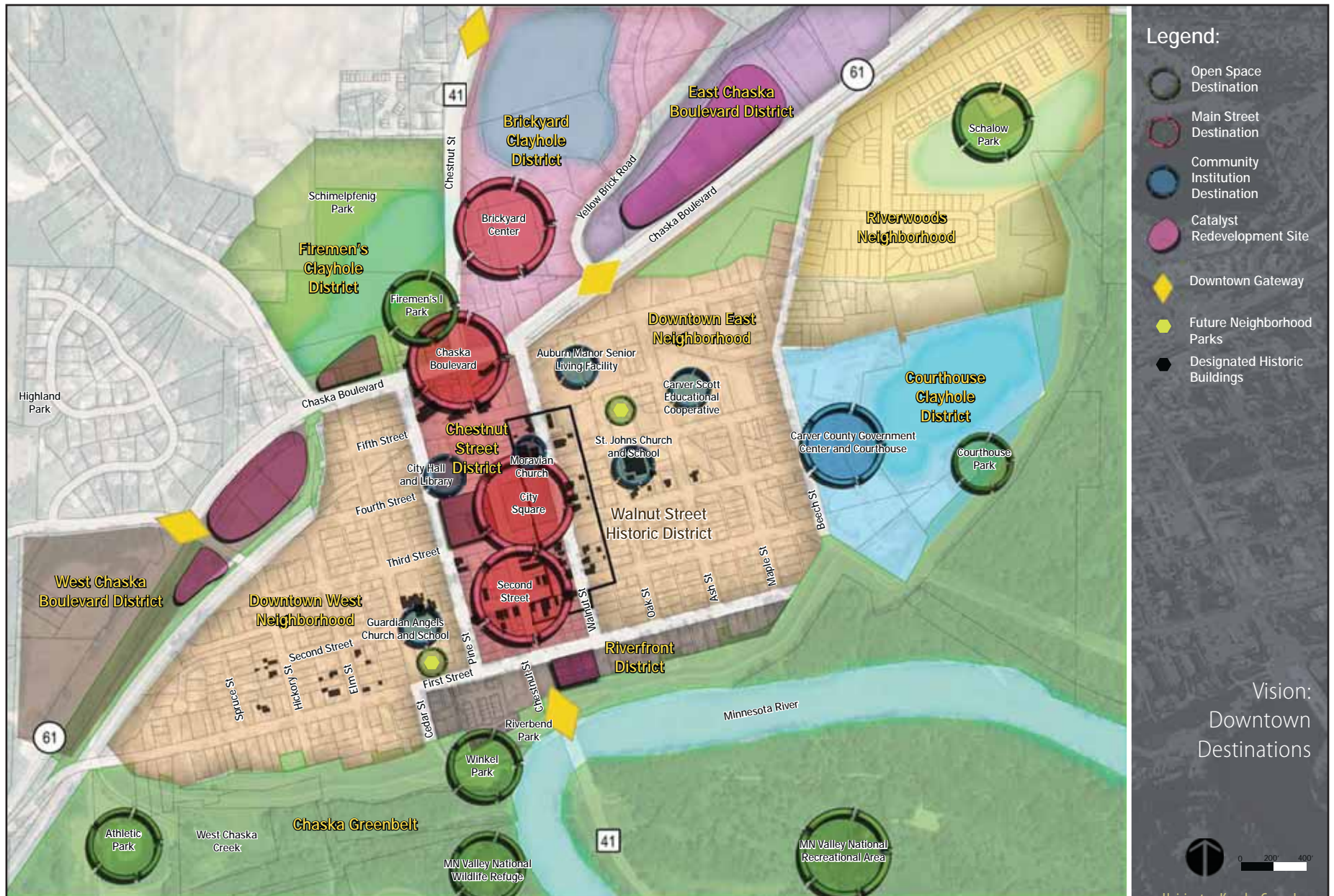
- » Minnesota's Brick City - Since, literally, no other downtown in the world has this unique Chaska brick building character, any future changes in downtown should complement and enhance the unique character of its Chaska brick buildings. Revitalization of downtown Chaska should capitalize on downtown's unique potential as "Minnesota's Brick City".
- » Traditional Small Town Character - To strengthen the traditional small town character of downtown, some key revitalization initiatives will be to increase street network connections, particularly in the northeast quadrant, maximize on-street parking options and limit off-street parking lots that front onto streets, ensure heights and widths of new "Main Street" buildings fit with the traditional downtown scale, and place new buildings up to the sidewalk.



*The City Square office building on Walnut Street involved a public-private partnership to redevelop this strategic downtown site.*



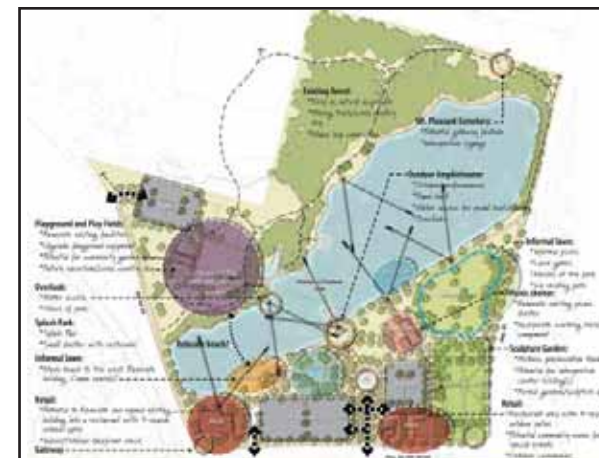




The Downtown Master Plan establishes a long-term Vision of Downtown Destinations.

Additional off-street surface parking options should be discouraged from harming the traditional character of side-by-side buildings along downtown core streets.

- » **Future Land Use Patterns** - In general, future downtown land use patterns should be dominated by mixed-use blocks along Chestnut Street, business/industrial employment redevelopment on downtown's edges, and additional higher density residential along the riverfront and near the downtown core.
- » **Convenient Parking** - To support the success of existing downtown businesses and attract new businesses, downtown parking needs to be managed wisely for ensuring adequate quantity, convenience and quality of parking areas. A key strategy for a successful downtown parking program is to have a Downtown Parking Management Plan that is used, maintained and enforced. The parking plan should include designating on-street parking areas for customers/clients vs. business owners/employees, improving and expanding short term (two-hour) parking areas, increasing the quantity of on-street parking spaces by converting some parallel parking areas to diagonal spaces, setting up shared parking agreements between businesses, developing public off-street parking lots, improving signage for parking, and negotiating with MN DOT to redesign Chestnut Street (MN Hwy 41) with on-street parking on both sides.
- » **Catalyst Redevelopment Sites** - Three sites were identified for further study for redevelopment opportunities. Each site represents a significant opportunity for visible and positive change that can catalyze new interest and the revitalization of downtown Chaska. The three catalyst redevelopment sites are Fireman's Clayhole District (the north gateway into downtown), the Riverfront District (the south gateway into downtown), and City Square West, which is the block west of City Square in the heart of downtown. The Downtown Master Plan provides multiple redevelopment scenarios to help the City move forward with the redevelopment process.



Fireman's Clayhole District catalyst redevelopment site.



Riverfront District catalyst redevelopment site at Block 53 where Chestnut Street "Main Street" meets the river (Note: Blocks 50, 51 and 52 are seen as long-term potential sites for adding new housing options in downtown, if and when the City determines that it is critical to the success of revitalizing downtown and reconnecting to the river.



City Square West catalyst redevelopment site.





*Future changes to the MN Highway 41 river bridge and a potential reroute around downtown to connect to new Highway 212 will have major impacts on downtown.*

## Connections

Because streets occupy the most amount of space in the public realm, they have a significant impact on how people experience downtown Chaska. Since streets are shared by drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and parked vehicles, the design of the streets should address the needs of all users. “Complete streets” are roadways designed and operated to enable safe, attractive and comfortable access and movement for all users. The streets in downtown Chaska should be thought of as a system of complete streets.

The Downtown Master Plan identifies the various street design types envisioned for downtown Chaska and defines the function, character, scale, and design elements included with each street design type. The downtown street design types consist of the following:

- » Town Center Streets
- » Commercial Edge Streets
- » Signature Streets

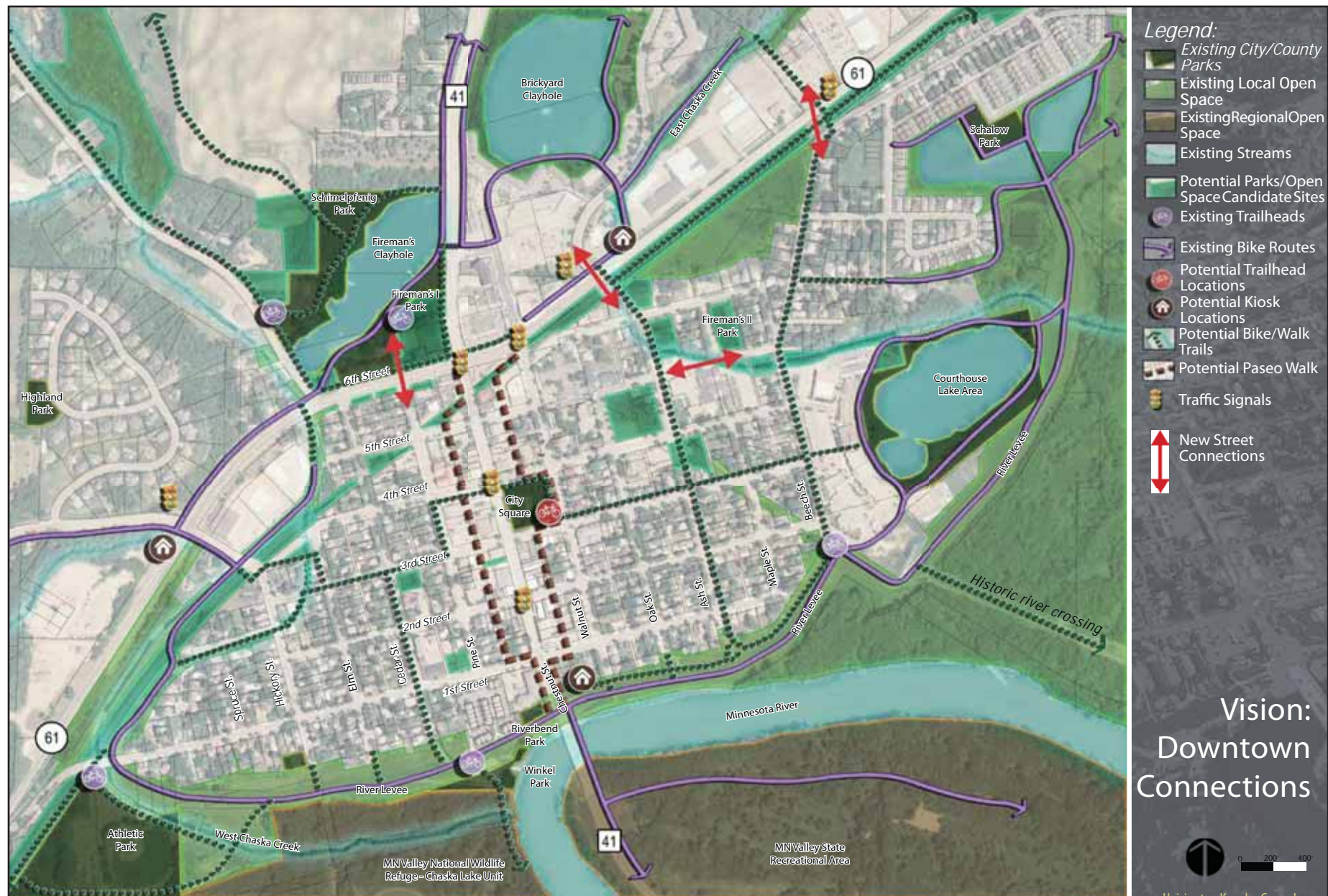


- » Trail Streets (two types)
- » Residential Streets
- » Levee Lanes
- » Brick City Paseos
- » Future Chestnut Street as “Main Street”

The Downtown Streets System Concept (map to the left) designates all streets within downtown as a particular street design type. Since most streets in downtown are slated to be reconstructed over the next ten years, the street type designations are intended to guide the design and reconstruction of downtown streets in the future. The Vision of Downtown Connections map on the following page identifies improvements to the connectivity of streets and trails in downtown.

*Downtown Streets System Concept.*





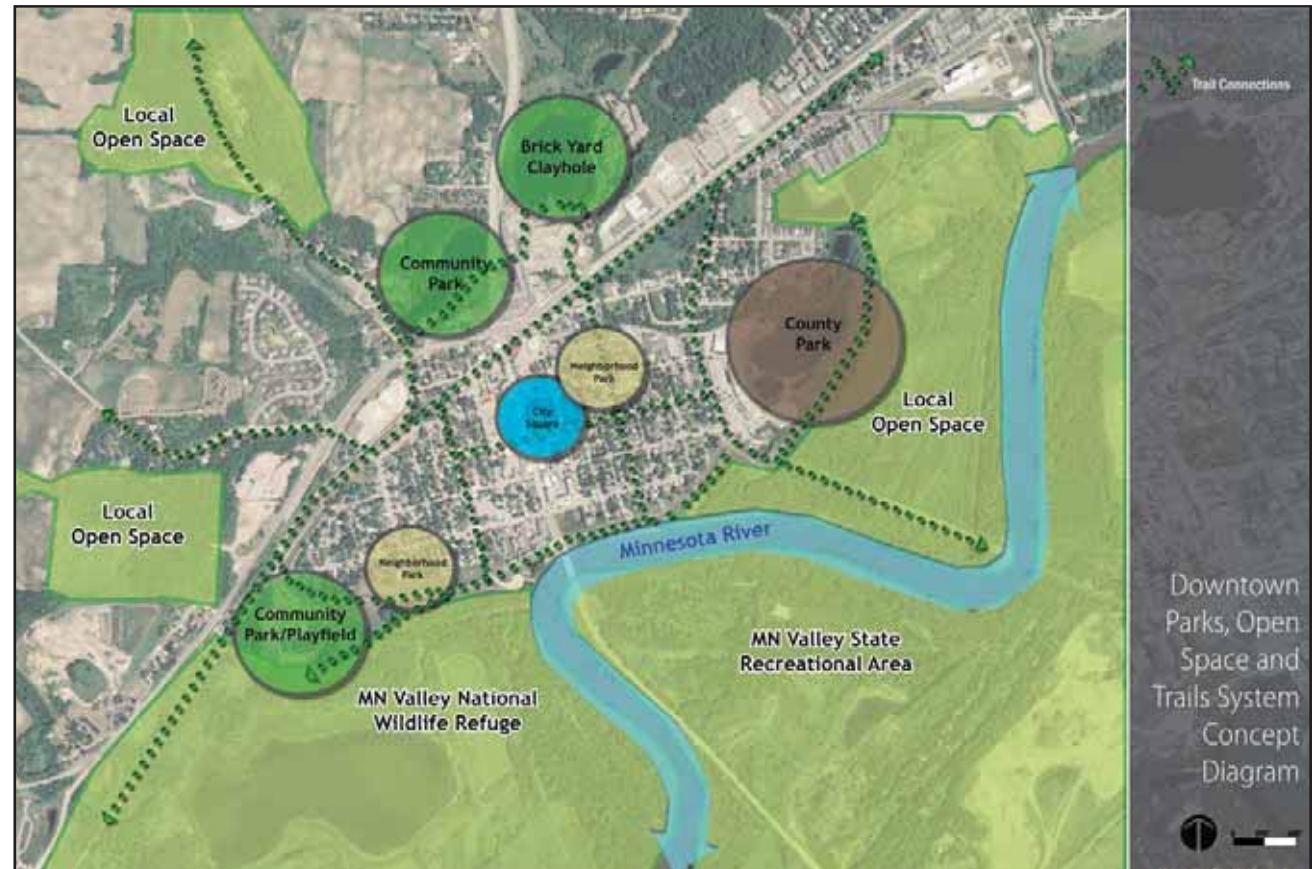
The Downtown Master Plan establishes a Vision for Downtown Connections, significantly improving the connectivity of both streets and trails.



## Parks and Open Spaces

Downtown has a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on its existing parks and open spaces assets, including historic City Square, Athletic Park's historic town ballfield, Fireman's Park, three clayhole lakes, Minnesota River Valley, the Chaska Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and the river levee trail. The Minnesota River Valley is part of Chaska's planned greenbelt.

- » Trails & Connections - The Downtown Master Plan proposes additions to the trail and trailhead system within downtown as well as connections to outlying areas and regional trails surrounding downtown. There is a tremendous opportunity to create a regional recreational destination in downtown as the "gateway" into the Minnesota River Valley and its nature-based recreational offerings including hiking, bird-watching, paddling sports, fishing and bicycling.
- » Athletic Park - Complete a park master plan for this historic town ballfield that enhances the traditions and experience of townball as well as incorporating other recreational uses for the recently expanded park space, better linking the park to both downtown and the Chaska greenbelt.
- » Fireman's Park - Enhance this park as downtown's signature park and an expanded community park that serves as a downtown gateway, visual landmark, gathering place, trailhead and major community destination.
- » Special Feature Parks - Enhancements to City Square, Winkel Park and Riverbend Park.
- » Neighborhood Parks - Partner with other downtown institutions to identify and build a neighborhood park in the two neighborhoods on each side of Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41.
- » Mini-Parks & Plazas - In conjunction with downtown street reconstruction, identify and build unique mini-parks and plazas to enhance downtown's public realm.







The Downtown Master Plan establishes a vision for a connected downtown parks, open spaces and trails system.



# Implementation

## **Next Steps**

Implementation of the Chaska Downtown Revitalization Plan is not a single project or action. Implementation is a collection of public and private actions that occur over a period of years. Based on the anticipated needs, impacts and feasibility of all of these recommended implementation actions, the following next steps or priorities are identified to jumpstart downtown's revitalization efforts.

- » *Adopt the Downtown Revitalization Plan as a Sector Plan per the Implementation Chapter of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan*
- » *Update the City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance to reflect the directions of the Downtown Revitalization Plan*
- » *Develop schematic designs for all of the downtown street types, including the Brick City Paseo, prior to street reconstruction*
- » *Redesign and reconstruct Second Street, including off-street parking improvements and upgrading the adjacent downtown core alleys as the beginning of the Brick City Paseo*
- » *Establish Chaska Main Street Program to provide downtown-focused staff resources (public/private) to coordinate efforts with City Staff and the Chaska Downtown Business Alliance relating to downtown organization, design, marketing, and economic development*
- » *Establish downtown building signage design guidelines and revise sign ordinance*
- » *Establish Downtown Building Design Guidelines for non-historic building improvements, new buildings and residential structures in downtown*
- » *Retain, improve and expand downtown grocery store*
- » *Develop a Heritage Preservation Plan*
- » *Re-establish downtown parking management plan and provide adequate public parking options:*
  - *On-street parking - restriping from parallel to diagonal*
  - *On-street parking – street reconstruction*
  - *Off-street parking lot – Second St E/Chestnut St (Block 37)*
  - *Strengthen Two Hour Parking program*
  - *Establish parking management plan for business owner & parking*
- » *Fireman's Clayhole District - Create site master plan for new downtown gateway park and retail/restaurant businesses, including a developers' forum*

- » *City Square West Block - Explore financial & political feasibility of redeveloping as a mixed-use “Main Street” block, including potential public library, public parking structure, retail, office, residential, Brick City Paseo connection and transit park & ride facility, working with property owners, Carver County, and SW Transit*
- » *Riverfront District – Redevelop with a gateway building at entrance to downtown and the community*
- » *Redesign and improve Athletic Park, Winkel Park, and Riverbend Park as Downtown West Greenbelt, including connections to the Minnesota River and National Wildlife Refuge*

These next steps or priorities should be reviewed, discussed and updated on a regular basis. The City, in partnership with the Chaska Downtown Business Alliance, should create an Annual Downtown Action Plan as a means of maintaining the focus on current actions to be taken. The Annual Downtown Action Plan should include the following elements:

- » *Review of progress made over the past year*
- » *Identification and prioritization of steps to be taken in the next year*
- » *Assignment of responsibilities for guiding each implementation step*
- » *Determination of budget, funding needs, and possible funding sources*





## CHAPTER 2: introduction

Downtown Chaska, as it is known today, essentially encompasses much of the area below the Minnesota River bluff and is frequently referred to as Lower Chaska or Old Chaska. Today's "downtown" area was once the entire town of Chaska – a freestanding small town strategically located along the Minnesota River at the cross-roads of railroad lines and highways. Historically, the downtown Chaska area has consisted of a traditional mix of small town activities, including a civic core adjacent to City Square, a "Main Street" commercial & entertainment district, industries, residential neighborhoods, and community institutions.

As Chaska and the Twin Cities metro region have grown over the past two decades, both in size and population, Lower Chaska has evolved into the community's downtown area. Chaska's transition from a freestanding small town to a fast-growing metro community has presented great opportunities as well as challenges to the community. Other major trends impacting downtown Chaska include more large-scale retail competition, online shopping, expanding regional traffic and highways, physical reinvestment needs for buildings and infrastructure, demographic shifts, changing housing needs/preferences, recreational preferences, historic preservation, and interest in community identity.

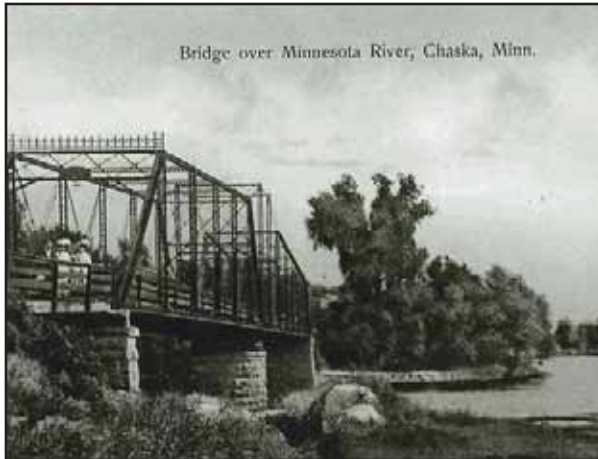


### Growing Need for Downtown Plan

Downtown has experienced some growing pains in conjunction with Chaska's transition from a freestanding town to a larger community within the Twin Cities metro region. Originally, downtown was located at the geographic center of Chaska. As the community has grown, the new neighborhoods and business areas have primarily developed north of downtown and above the river bluff. Downtown is now located on the edge of the community and farther from the center of the metro than the rest of the community. Today a large portion of Chaska is located above the bluff with downtown being the only area below the bluff. Community and metro growth has also resulted in competing business areas, downtown expansion, increased traffic, and an expanding regional highway network. As the oldest part of the community, downtown is in great need of reinvestment to make it competitive within the community and surrounding areas. These reinvestment needs include public infrastructure (streets, utilities, storm water management), housing, commercial buildings, parks and trails. For example, downtown's streets are generally in poor condition and the City plans to reconstruct all downtown streets over the next ten years.







Bridge over Minnesota River, Chaska, Minn.



At the national level, downtown business districts have found it increasingly difficult to remain viable as regional shopping malls, big-box stores, national franchises, and online shopping have grown in popularity. The smaller locally-owned businesses in downtowns struggle to compete with these other retail options. As downtown retail businesses close or relocate, offices and service-oriented businesses often replace them which in turn weakens downtown as a strong retail destination. While downtown Chaska possesses many unique assets, in total it does not currently provide an important commercial destination for the overall community or the expanding population of Carver County.

In 2008, U.S. Highway 212 was relocated from the downtown area below the bluff to a new freeway above the bluff which is projected to increase traffic substantially on MN Hwy 41. Mn DOT continues its study to explore options for a future flood-proof highway crossing of the Minnesota River Valley in the vicinity of existing MN Hwy 41 to address traffic capacity issues for some time.

The City identified the need for a downtown master plan several years ago. In 2009, as a result of a two-day strategic planning retreat attended by City Council members and City Department Heads, the City Council adopted 10-Year Visions and 5-Year Goals to guide the City's strategic planning. One of the 10-Year Visions was "Chaska has a historic downtown with a vibrant commercial district that is 'the' Twin Cities destination". Most of the other 10-Year Visions also related to downtown revitalization. One of the 5-Year Goals was "Promote Chaska's 'Small Town' Image" with one of the action items being to create a downtown master plan. With the update of the City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan, completed in 2010, the City formally established development of the downtown master plan as a priority. This need was also identified by the City's Commitment to Community Task Force in its 2009 report and the Chaska Downtown Business Council, now the Downtown Business Alliance, in its 2009 report Historic Downtown Revitalization Goals.

## Purposes of the Downtown Master Plan

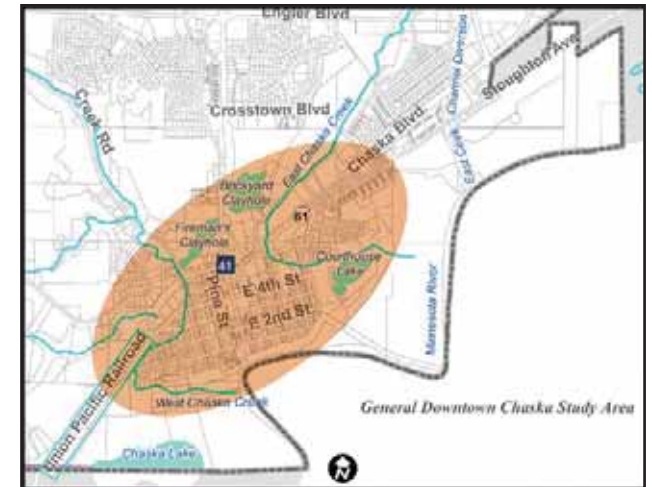
To address these significant issues, the City recognizes that it needs a long-term holistic vision for downtown with a plan that guides and prioritizes future public investment and private redevelopment efforts. The purpose of the Chaska Downtown Master Plan is to establish a holistic, long-term vision and plan for the downtown area. The purposes of this plan are:

- Establish a big picture framework for clarifying and strengthening downtown's place in the community and the region;
- Build upon the City's prior planning initiatives and downtown project successes to identify the next steps in moving forward with downtown revitalization;
- Provide a guide for future reinvestment efforts by the public sector, private sector and non-profit organizations in downtown over the next ten years;
- Create a fully functional downtown area with traditional small town character that is valued and used by Chaska citizens, employees and visitors.

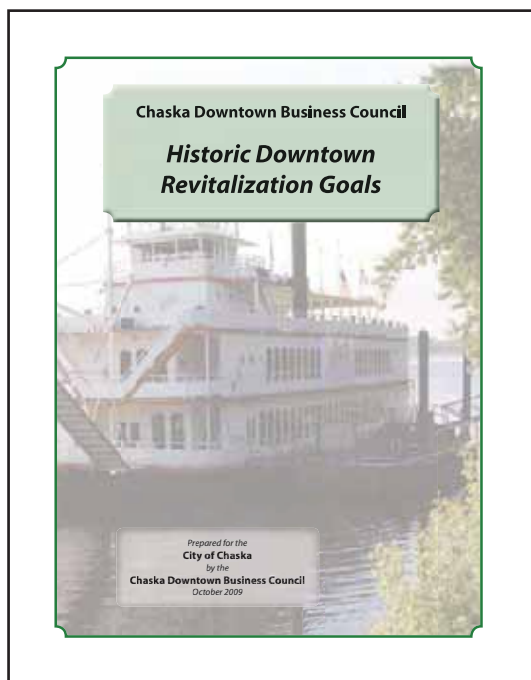
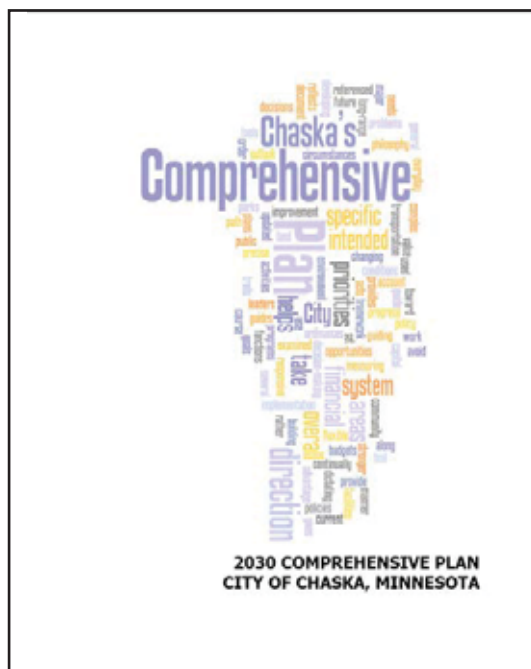


## Defining the Downtown Area

As shown in the aerial photo below and the map to the right, the boundaries of today's "downtown area" are generally the river valley to the south and east, Chaska Boulevard/ County Road 61 to the west, the river bluff to the north, and Crosstown Boulevard to the northeast. Although the downtown commercial area was historically south of Chaska Boulevard (old Highway 212) and rail line, today's downtown commercial area and residences have expanded to the north side of Chaska Boulevard. This expansion of downtown occurred in the 1990s with the redevelopment of the Klein Brickyard to a mixed-use area reflecting and complementing downtown's historic character. With the addition of this substantial retail area, the historic downtown area transitioned to more of service-oriented district. This major downtown change strengthened downtown Chaska's role as a trade center in Eastern Carver County but created new challenges for the historic downtown commercial district.







## Recent and Concurrent Downtown Planning Efforts

A number of plans and studies have addressed various downtown issues and opportunities over the years. Although the City has a history of downtown planning efforts, up to now the City has never established a holistic vision and master plan for downtown. Recent planning efforts that are relevant to the Chaska Downtown Master Plan include the following:

- Chaska Athletic Park Master Plan (2011) – This plan creates an exciting vision for Athletic Park with the primary goal of preserving and strengthening the character of the ballpark while also promoting a more diversified and inviting park experience for non-ballpark activities.
- 2030 Chaska Comprehensive Plan Update (2010) – Downtown is addressed most directly within the Land Use chapter, including the establishment of seven (7) downtown land use policies and identification of the need for a Downtown Area Master Plan.
- Trunk Highway 41 Minnesota River Crossing Study (2010) – Mn DOT has been exploring options for a flood-proof highway crossing of the Minnesota River Valley in the vicinity of existing Highway 41 to address traffic capacity issues for some time. In 2007, Mn DOT issued the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that identified and analyzed six (6) river crossing alternatives as well as the no-build alternative. Mn DOT has identified alternative alignment C-2 as its preferred route. The City of Chaska’s preferred route is alternative alignment W-2. Mn DOT is currently working on the Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).
- Historic Downtown Revitalization Goals (2009) – The Chaska Downtown Business Council developed this report, which recommends a downtown vision, goals and tasks for downtown revitalization.
- Chaska Commitment to Community Task Force Report (2009) – This group’s final report recommends five (5) community priorities with one of them being “Create a Destination Downtown”.
- 2030 Retail and Services Space and Land Demand Study (2008) – The County completed this study as part of updating its 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Based on trade area households, future population growth, and potential competitive developments, the study estimates future downtown development potential between 2008 and 2030.
- Brick City Paseo Concept Plan (2007) – This concept plan offers planning analysis and design solutions for a two-block portion of downtown that is anticipated to redevelop in the future. The concept includes mixed-use retail, residential and office, as well as a unique “Paseo” mid-block walkway and outdoor urban design amenities.
- Chaska Historic Context Study (2006) – This study provides a “framework” document that establishes the overarching themes or “contexts” of Chaska’s historical development as a tool for the City to organize and evaluate its historical resources.

- Downtown Chaska Design Guidelines Manual (2004) – This manual provides the City’s design guidelines for historic building storefronts in downtown and the primary design criteria for the City’s Storefront Rehabilitation Loan Program.
- Downtown Street Design Master Plan (2003) – City Staff established a vision, guiding principles, and street design types to guide planned reconstruction of all downtown streets. This master plan also recommended improvements to the City’s street functional classifications, street network connections, and traffic control.

## Downtown Master Planning Process

### **Project Phases**

The Downtown Master Plan planning process consisted of seven (7) major phases:

Phase 1 – Organize the Effort

Phase 2 – Prepare Downtown Physical Inventory and Market Opportunity Analysis

Phase 3 – Evaluate Downtown Transportation and Parking Needs

Phase 4 – Create Preliminary Downtown Master Plan

Phase 5 – Create Downtown Market Positioning Strategy

Phase 6 – Establish Implementation Strategies

Phase 7 – Prepare and Approve Final Downtown Master Plan

### **Project Team**

The Project Team consisted of City Staff (including the City Administrator, Assistant City Administrator, Director of Planning & Development, City Engineer, Public Works Superintendent, Director of Parks & Recreation and City Planner), Hoisington Koegler Group Inc. (HKGi) planning consultants, and W-ZHA market consultants. The Project Team worked closely with the Project Task Force, a 16-member group that was appointed by the City Council. Task force members were selected to represent key stakeholder groups within the community which resulted in a larger task force than originally planned. In total, there were eight (8) task force meetings from February 2010 to April 2011.

### **Community Meetings**

The project’s planning process occurred primarily during 2010. Kickoff meetings with City Staff, City Council and the Commissions (Planning, Parks/Arts/Recreation, Heritage Preservation, Human Rights) took place in December 2009. Three (3) joint City Council & Commissions work sessions, which were open to the general public, were held during the process. These work sessions were designed to







encourage dialogue regarding downtown's issues, opportunities, and project recommendations.

- December 21, 2009 – Kickoff Meeting, Project Overview, Community Input
- December 8, 2010 – Analysis of Downtown's Physical Environment and Market Opportunities
- January 19, 2011 – Downtown Vision, Guiding Principles and Strategies

A community open house was held for the Downtown Master Plan project on Wednesday, February 16, 2011 at the Chaska Community Center. The meeting sign-in sheet showed 84 signatures, but actual attendance was estimated at over 100 people including those who did not sign in. Comment forms were available and 24 completed comment forms were received from attendees. The comment forms requested input regarding six (6) aspects of the proposed Downtown Master Plan: Vision, Guiding Principles & Revitalization Strategies, Market Position Strategies, Revitalization Opportunity Areas, Downtown Streets Network & Concepts, Downtown Community Gathering Places. This community input is included in the appendix to the master plan.

### ***Key Downtown Institutions Interviews***

Individual meetings between the Project Team and key downtown institutions took place in Oct/Nov 2010 including Carver County Government Center, Carver County Library, St. John's Church & School, Guardian Angels Church & School, Moravian Church, Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative School, Auburn Manor Homes and Southwest Transit.

### ***Downtown Development Interviews***

Dick Paik, market consultant with W-ZHA, conducted individual interviews with a representative group of downtown development stakeholders, including existing business owners, property owners, potential developers, realtors, and major Chaska employers.

## **Organization of the Downtown Master Plan**

The Downtown Master Plan is organized into eight (8) chapters:

### ***Chapter 1: Executive Summary***

This chapter provides an executive summary of the Chaska Downtown Master Plan.

### ***Chapter 2: Introduction***

This chapter describes the needs and purposes for the Chaska Downtown Master Plan; defines the downtown planning area; recent and concurrent downtown planning efforts; the Downtown Master Plan planning process; and the organization of this document.

### ***Chapter 3: Downtown Chaska Today***

This chapter provides a brief overview of downtown Chaska today, its existing conditions and context. This overview includes existing land uses, development patterns, natural landscape, parks, trails, streets, parking and historic assets.

### ***Chapter 4: Vision and Guiding Principles***

This chapter presents the long-term vision for downtown Chaska, including the five (5) main vision elements - community gathering places, vibrant main street district, historic small town character, thriving anchor institutions, attractive neighborhoods - and the eight (8) guiding principles.

### ***Chapter 5: Downtown Market Positioning***

This chapter establishes the City's market positioning objective, primary strategies, secondary strategies, and priorities as it positions downtown as a more vibrant community destination. It also identifies downtown's market-based assets, challenges and potential opportunities.

### ***Chapter 6: Downtown Districts, Neighborhoods & Greenbelt***

This chapter establishes and describes the seven (7) downtown districts, three (3) downtown neighborhoods and Chaska Greenbelt that make up the larger downtown Chaska area.

### ***Chapter 7: Downtown Plan for the Future***

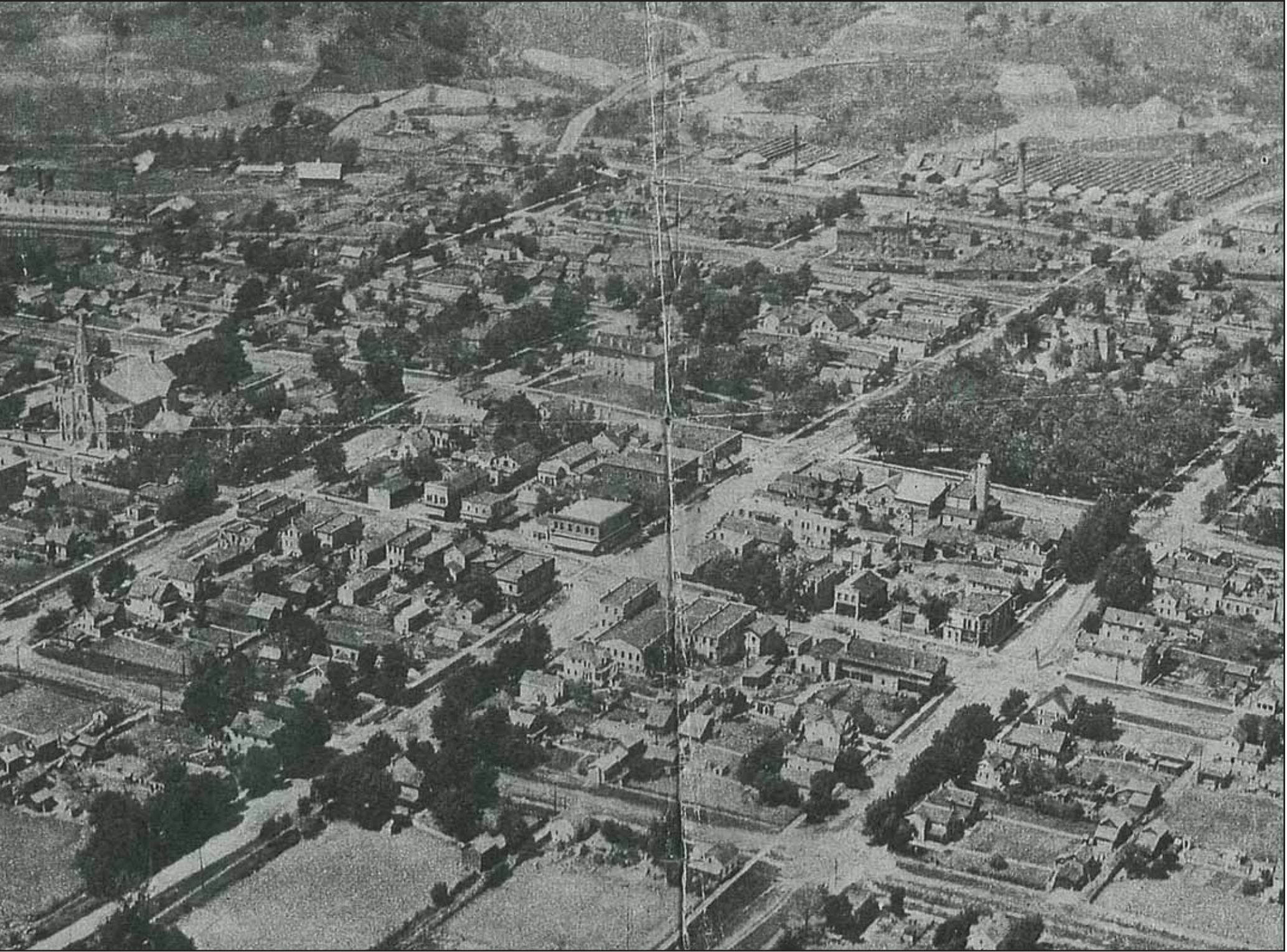
This chapter presents a strategic framework for revitalizing downtown as critical mass of destinations woven together to restore downtown as the community's main business district and community gathering place. This framework's multi-faceted approach is organized around three key downtown elements: built environment, connections, and parks/open spaces.

### ***Chapter 8: Implementation***

This chapter lays out the recommended strategies for implementing the vision, guiding principles and strategies of the Downtown Master Plan. It is organized around the following topics: city policies and regulations; recommended implementation actions; partnership and financial considerations; and next steps.

The appendix contains Task Force Meeting Notes and Community Input.







## CHAPTER 3: downtown chaska today

Chaska's downtown occupies a unique and strategic site along the Minnesota River where the natural resources of the Big Woods, which covered much of central Minnesota, met up with the transportation possibilities of the Minnesota River. The river also was the source of the deep clay deposits that enabled the city's dominance in the brickmaking industry. Chaska's historic development as a traditional town, county seat, and Minnesota's Brick City has created a downtown with unique history, character and opportunities.

This chapter provides an overview of downtown Chaska today - its existing conditions, context and a brief history. Downtown's existing land uses, development patterns, street grid, natural features, parks, trails, and historic assets are described and analyzed within this chapter. The Downtown Master Plan is intended to build upon downtown's unique and historic development patterns to create a desirable and vibrant downtown environment for the Chaska community and its surrounding areas.

### Brief History of Downtown Chaska

Chaska's downtown area has a long and rich history. Prior to Anglo-European settlement of the downtown area beginning in 1851, it was an area of Native American settlements. There is significant evidence of mounds in the downtown Chaska area. Often times mounds were located along river valleys. Three Native American burial mounds remain in City Square today, which is a designated historic site. The primary band of Native Americans that settled in the downtown area was the M'dewakanton band of the Dakota (Sioux) tribe. The name "Chaska" is derived from a Dakota word meaning "first-born son".

In 1851, the Treaty of Traverse de Sioux was signed between the U.S. Government and the Dakota tribe, which officially made almost 24 million acres of land in southern and western Minnesota Territory, Iowa and Dakota Territory open for Anglo-American settlement. Land speculation and platting commenced in the downtown area almost immediately following after the signing of this treaty. The downtown area was originally platted in 1854. With its designation as the Carver County Seat in 1856, the town was re-surveyed and platted to facilitate the development of streets, public buildings and other city services. City Square was dedicated "for the purpose of a common park" in perpetuity at this time. Chaska incorporated as a village in 1871. By special legislative action in 1891, the village of Chaska was designated a city.

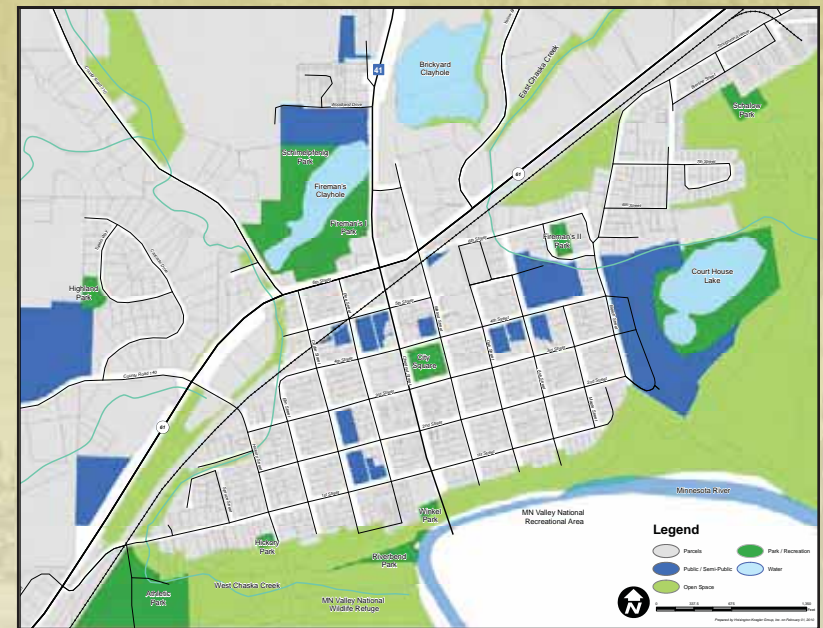


Figure 3-1. Map of the downtown study area.



The area around First St and Walnut St was the first to develop, beginning in the 1850s, with the the Linenfelser & Faber Building at Second St & Walnut St being the oldest remaining business building in downtown Chaska. Development soon stretched up Walnut St, along Second St and Chestnut St, and then up the hill to Pine St. By the time Chaska incorporated as a village in 1871, downtown's development pattern was in place.

Chaska's brickmaking industry began in 1857 with Lucius Howe's brickyard producing bricks for building construction in Chaska. When Chaska's brickmaking industry reached its peak near the turn of the century, there were eleven brickyards in the city. These brickyards were located on the edges of the historic downtown area. At its peak production levels, Chaska accounted for 30% of all the brick made in Minnesota. Brickmaking was the city's largest industry for 80 years, declining after WWII, and finally ending completely in 1971. The resulting clayholes, which have been turned into lakes, provide visual evidence of the city's past brickmaking industry.

Downtown's boom years generally coincided with its brickmaking industry boom, from the 1880s to the 1920s. The brickyards employed up to 20% of the City's population at its peak. Most of downtown's buildings were built during this time period. The brickmaking industry enabled complementary industries, such as metal foundries, machinery shops, and livery stables, as well as retail and services to prosper in the downtown area. In addition, many of downtown's buildings were constructed of Chaska Brick.

Chaska's downtown is modest, yet historically significant, because of its relatively early development in Minnesota and the smaller scale of its buildings - it developed as a village rather than a small city. "Most buildings in Chaska reflect



Figure 3-2. 2009 aerial photo of the downtown area.

a more simplified, modest character that many people would regard as more practical than high-style. Instead of being influenced by architectural high-styles that applied ornament decoratively, most of Chaska's commercial buildings are more honest and straightforward in using familiar materials in ways that were well-understood by the craftsmen who constructed the buildings." [Chaska's Downtown Preservation Design Manual, page 9] Many of downtown's commercial, civic and residential buildings were constructed of Chaska Brick. This concentration of Chaska Brick buildings makes downtown Chaska a truly unique place. Other somewhat unique features of downtown Chaska are the presence of spaces between and behind commercial buildings for exterior porches/balconies and the rail ornamentation that often protrudes out from the second story of historic commercial buildings.

Chaska experienced somewhat of a lull in population growth and development during the middle decades of the 20th century from the 1930s through the 1960s. Unfortunately, a substantial number of downtown's historic buildings were also lost during this time period, especially civic and commercial buildings. The 1970s brought the Jonathan New Town development, including residential and industrial development, and the onset of suburban expansion from the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Downtown has experienced a substantial amount of redevelopment and revitalization over the past two decades. In 1979, Congress authorized a major flood control project for Chaska; however, construction did not begin until 1989 with the final stage of the project completed in 1998. The new levee and creek diversion project provided flood protection for all of downtown, so properties previously located in the floodplain no longer needed flood insurance. State and Federal restrictions on expanding and remodelling buildings were also lifted, enabling property owners to safely consider reinvestment in both commercial buildings and homes in the downtown area. This flood protection project represents the City's most significant reinvestment in downtown's revitalization.

The 1980s and 1990s brought a major transition and expansion to the historic downtown area. The downtown was essentially expanded to include the former Klein brickyard area north of Chaska Boulevard (old U.S. Highway 212) and along Chaska Boulevard to the northeast. The City targeted the historic downtown area as more of a service-oriented district and the redevelopment area north of the highway as more of the convenience retail district. The Klein Brickyard Redevelopment project is the largest redevelopment effort undertaken by the City to

date. The focus of the project was to create a mixed-use area (retail, office and residential) that reflects and complements the character of the historic downtown, and also presents a positive image from both Chestnut St (MN Hwy 41) and Chaska Boulevard (County Road 61). This area includes a mix of retail businesses today, both in vertical mixed-use buildings and freestanding buildings, offices, and high-density residential buildings. The buildings are oriented toward the two highways as well as the extension of Walnut St that directly connects this expansion area to the historic downtown.

Other downtown redevelopment projects that have occurred relatively recently include the City Hall/Library/City Hall Plaza, River Gables mixed-use building (housing with retail at street level), Riverbend hotel and town homes, Werner Arcade office and commercial building, expansion and renovation of the movie theater, expansion of the Moravian Homes elderly care and housing facilities, and the City Square office building (Walnut St & Fourth St).

### ***Recent Downtown Revitalization Efforts:***

- » Flood control project
- » Addition of the levee trail
- » Renovation of City Square
- » Designation of historic buildings and the Walnut Street Historic District
- » Creation of the Downtown Preservation Design Manual and Historic Context Study
- » Restoration and reuse of Brinkhaus Livery Stable as the Chaska History Center
- » Reconstruction of streets: First St, Hickory St, Fourth St
- » Second St stoplight on MN Hwy 41 (federal economic stimulus funding)
- » Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41 streetscape enhancements: street median, corner bulbs (federal economic stimulus funding)
- » City's land subsidy and site/building design partnership for City Square commercial building redevelopment project in Walnut Street Historic District
- » Expansion of the Carver County License Center facility
- » Renovation of the Athletic Park grandstand structure
- » Storefront Loan Program renovations – more than 25 projects
- » Renovation of historic residences
- » City involvement in successful site redevelopments
- » New downtown housing added over past 20 years – approximately 600 units
- » Christmas in May house improvement projects



# Land Uses and Development

## Existing Land Use Patterns

Downtown's existing land uses include a balanced mix of commercial, public/semi-public, residential, park/recreation, open space, and industrial, as shown in the map to the right.

The commercial land uses are located predominately along Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41 ("Main Street"), Second Street, and Chaska Blvd/County Rd 61. Downtown's historic commercial area is located along Chestnut Street, between First Street and County Rd 61, with most businesses concentrated in a two-block strip between Pine and Walnut Streets. Within this historic commercial area, most stores are small, independent establishments. The retail mix in this core area largely excludes stores such as clothing stores and consumer electronics stores, which typically seek locations in suburban malls and shopping centers.

A small number of franchise commercial businesses are located on the edges of downtown along Highways 41 and 61; the largest concentrations of such stores is located in the Brickyard Shopping Center and other properties in the northeast quadrant of the intersection of Highways 41 and 61. Restaurants occupy roughly 60,000 square feet, but most of this space is located outside the downtown core area.

Public/semi-public land uses are generally clustered along Fourth Street, downtown's "institutional corridor", including City Hall, Chaska Library, Police Dept., Carver County Government Center, Moravian Church, St. John's Church, and Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative School. The Chaska License Center is oriented to Pine Street but near the Fourth Street institutional

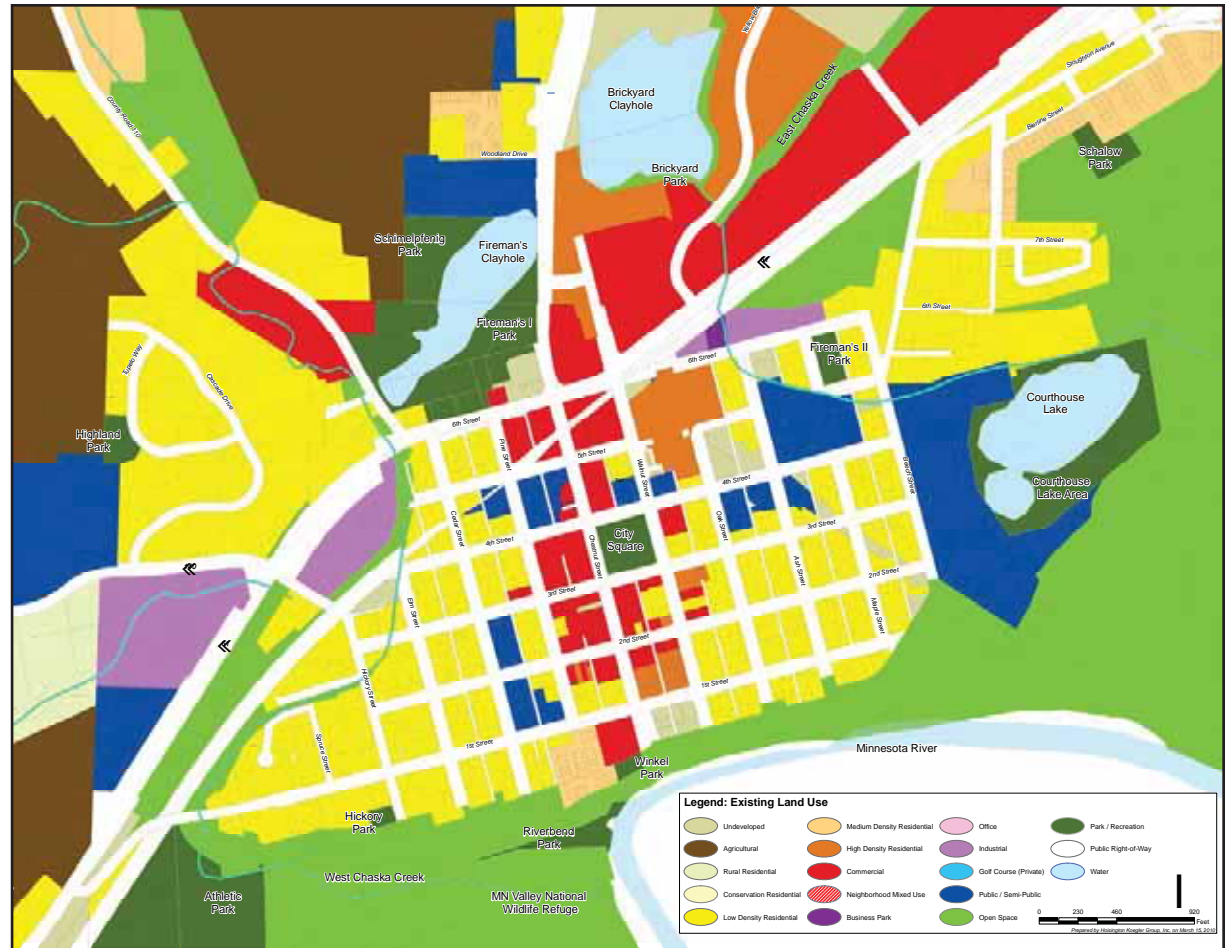


Figure 3-3. Map showing existing land uses in the downtown area.

corridor. Guardian Angels Church and School is oriented to Second Street, just west of the Second Street commercial area.

Downtown contains a broad range of residential land uses, including single-family houses, townhouses, apartment buildings, and senior housing facilities.

Park/recreation land uses include a community park (Fireman's I Park), community playfield (Athletic Park), special feature parks (City Square, Winkel Park and Riverbend Park), mini-parks (Hickory Park and Fireman's II Park), and a County park (Courthouse Clayhole Lake Area). Open spaces consist of the Chaska Greenbelt area along the Minnesota River (south and east of downtown), the river levee trail area, West Chaska Creek, East Chaska Creek, and a significant wetland area northeast of downtown.

## 2030 Planned Land Use Patterns

The City completed a major comprehensive plan update in 2010 resulting in its 2030 Comprehensive Plan. This update included a review, analysis and updates of the land use categories and the city-wide Planned Land Uses Map, shown to the right. Two (2) new land use categories were established which were Downtown Mixed Use and Business Park. The new Downtown Mixed Use category was applied to the blocks at the south end of Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41. The large industrial site west of downtown, at the corner of Chaska Blvd/County Road 61 and County Road 140, was re-guided for High Density Residential land uses. The City refrained from additional downtown land use plan changes during the update process with the intent to use the Downtown Master Plan as the basis for any future land use changes in downtown.

The 2030 Planned Land Use Map shows commercial land uses stretching along both Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41 and the eastern portion of Chaska Blvd/County Road 61, including expansion of commercial to the NW corner of the 41/61 intersection (adjacent to Fireman's Park). The map currently guides three areas for mixed use: south end of Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41, north end of Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41, and the redevelopment sites along West Chaska Blvd/County Rd 61.

Most of the downtown area south of Chaska Blvd/County Road 61 guided for residential is Medium Density Residential. The 2030 Comprehensive Plan does not expand High Density Residential land uses much beyond existing high density residential buildings, which are primarily senior housing. Expansion of high density residential is guided for large sites on the edge of downtown, north/west of Chaska Blvd/County Road 61.



Figure 3-4. Planned Land Use Map from 2030 Comprehensive Plan for the downtown area.

Public/semi-public land uses are planned to remain as a significant part of downtown's land use pattern with some institutions anticipating expansion in the future.

The map shows significant planned areas for future residential development to the west (Heights of Chaska) and north (Hammers land and along Yellow Brick Road) of the downtown area.

It is anticipated that the Downtown Master Plan will provide direction for modifying the Planned Land Use, such as expansion of Downtown Mixed Use, adding High Density Residential areas, and adding Business Park areas along Chaska Blvd/County Road 61.



## Existing Street Level Uses

Since one of the main purposes of the Downtown Master Plan is to revitalize downtown as a vibrant “Main Street” district and community gathering place, existing street level uses were inventoried and analyzed in the downtown core area as part of the downtown master planning process. The map to the right shows the existing downtown land use patterns at street level.

As the map illustrates, retail and restaurant uses are fairly scattered along Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41, Second Street, and Chaska Blvd/County Road 61. While Chestnut Street contains mostly commercial land uses, it is dominated by service uses. The largest concentrations of retail and restaurant businesses are the Brickyard Shopping Center, followed by East Second Street, and City Square Center. These three areas lack any connectivity with each other and none of them are oriented to Chestnut Street, Chaska’s “Main Street”. In general, the Brickyard and City Square shopping areas are more auto-oriented than pedestrian- or “Main Street” oriented. Neither of these two retail/restaurant areas faces “Main Street”.

At street level, most downtown core streets are dominated by service and office uses. Only a few streets have “Main Street” storefronts up to the street on both sides: Second Street East, Second Street West, Third Street West, and Chestnut Street (between Second St and Third St). However, the Werner Arcade building, a 1990s redevelopment, on the Chestnut St has only one street entrance and is designed as an internal arcade rather than “Main Street” building at street level. Each of these “Main Street” character streets are just one block in length.

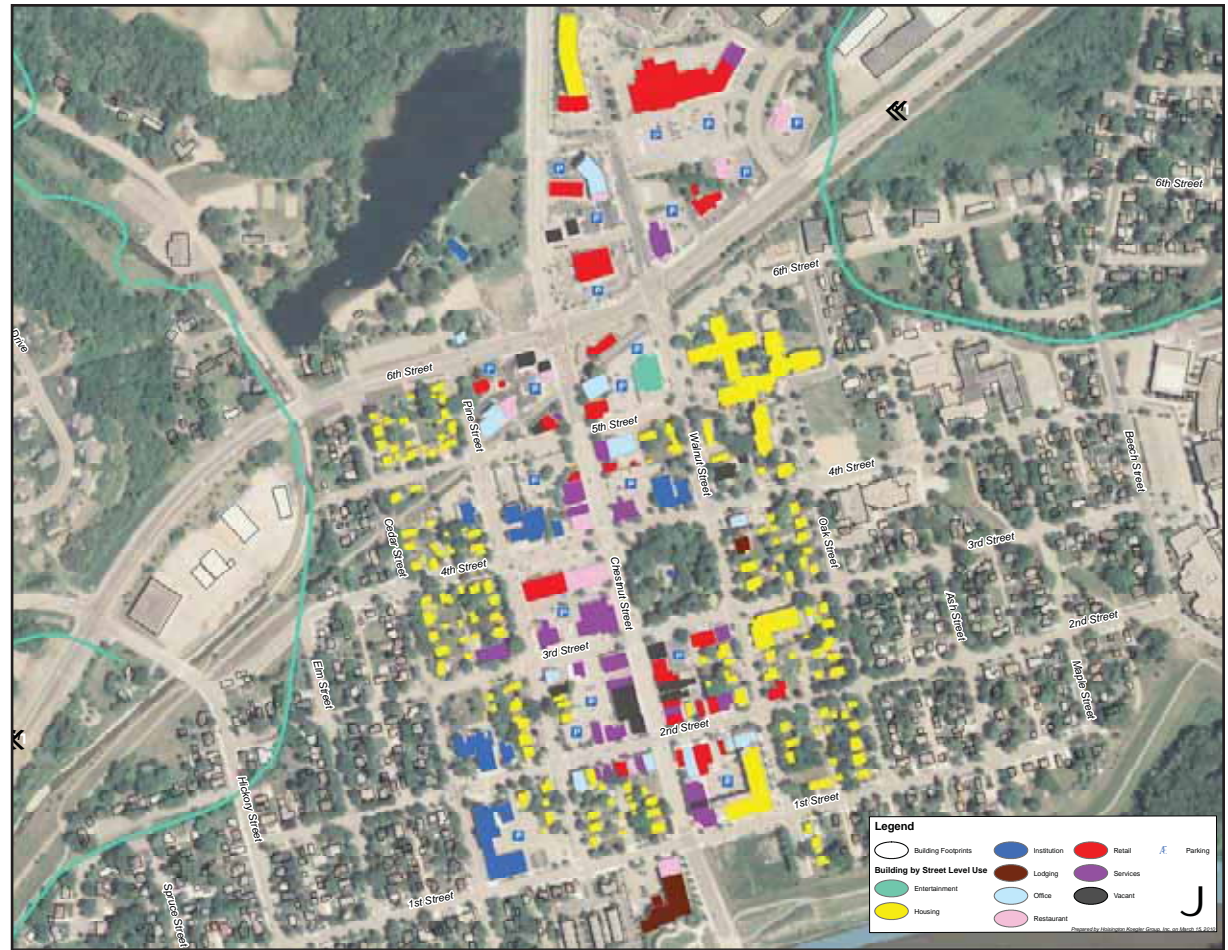


Figure 3-5. Map shows the existing pattern of land uses at street level in the downtown core area.

Other street level uses include institutions, entertainment, and lodging. The only entertainment land use is the movie theater. Within the core downtown area, institutional uses are oriented to Fourth Street and Second Street.

At the south and north ends of Chestnut Street, redevelopment projects have included commercial uses in the street level of multi-story mixed-use buildings.

# Historic Assets

## Designated Buildings, Places and a District

Downtown is home to a wealth of historic assets, including City Square, numerous buildings, several places, and one district. Downtown contains both locally and nationally designated historic sites, as shown in the upper right map. The City has officially designated approximately 45 historic resources within the downtown area. Downtown currently contains seven (7) sites that are also individually listed on the NRHP.

The City has officially designated the City Square/Walnut Street area as the Chaska Historic District. The Walnut Street National Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), nearly matches up with the city-designated historic district. The NRHP identifies 29 “contributing properties” within the 3-4 block Walnut Street National Historic District.

In 2006, seven (7) additional downtown buildings/sites were designated by the Chaska City Council as local historic resources, including the three (3) brickyard clayholes. In 2007, the Mn DOT TH41 River Crossing Study identified ten (10) downtown properties that are “eligible” for NRHP listing, including Athletic Park, Guardian Angels church, the train depot, and seven residences. In 2009, the City designated Chaska Athletic Park as a local historic site.

## Types of Downtown Historic Sites

Downtown’s designated historic sites include a broad range of building types, including commercial, industrial, residential and institutional, as well as civic, recreational, and open space sites. As shown in the lower right map, historic commercial buildings are primarily located on Second Street with a few others scattered on Chestnut, Third, Pine and Fourth Streets. Historic institutional buildings consist of the three churches in downtown - Guardian Angels, St. John’s, and Moravian. Historic homes are clustered primarily on Walnut St, Third St East, and the southwest corner of downtown. There are three historic industrial buildings, including the train depot, located where the railroad intersects with Chestnut Street. City Square, Athletic Park, and the three (3) clayhole lakes are civic/recreational/open space historic sites.

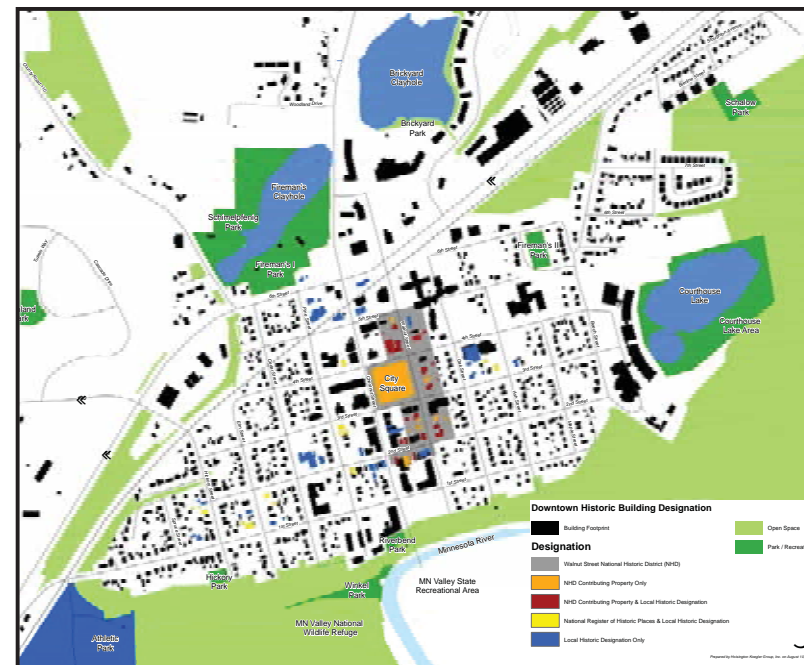


Figure 3-6. Historic building designations in the downtown area.

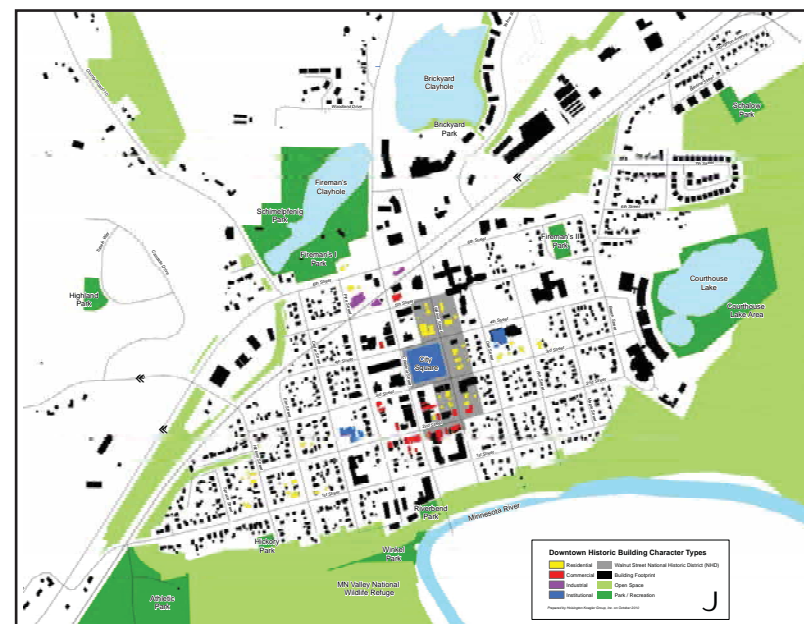


Figure 3-7. Map showing types of existing designated historic sites in the downtown area.



# Circulation System

## Streets and Highways

Most of downtown's streets are under the City's jurisdiction; however, Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41 is under Mn DOT's jurisdiction and Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 is under Carver County's jurisdiction. Prior to new U.S. Highway 212 being completed in 2008, Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 was U.S. Highway 212. Consequently, the design of Chaska Blvd today still reflects its past function as a state highway and it has the potential to be redesigned as a result of its turnback from Mn DOT to the County. Traffic volumes have increased substantially on MN Hwy 41 since the opening of new U.S. Highway 212.

From a functional perspective, Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41 is classified as a Principal Arterial and Chaska Blvd/County Road 61 as a Minor Arterial. Fourth, Second (east of Pine), Walnut, Pine, and Beech/Stoughton are classified as Minor Collectors. All other downtown streets are classified as local streets.

Downtown's streets are generally in poor condition and the City is planning to reconstruct all downtown streets over the next ten years. For example, the current downtown streets lack storm water drainage infrastructure.

Mn DOT continues its study of options for a future flood-proof highway crossing of the Minnesota River Valley in the vicinity of existing MN Hwy 41 to address existing and long-term traffic capacity issues.

## Trails and Sidewalks

South of Chaska Blvd/County Road 61, the existing downtown trail system consists of the levee trail, the National Wildlife Refuge trail, and the MN Hwy 41 bridge trail. North of Chaska Blvd/County Road 61, there are existing trails within Fireman's Park, along Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41 (north of Fireman's Park), around Courthouse Clayhole Lake and Brickyard Clayhole Lake, and west along Chaska Blvd/County Road 61 and County Road 140.

A majority of downtown streets contain sidewalks on both sides of the street, particularly south of Chaska Blvd/County Road 61.

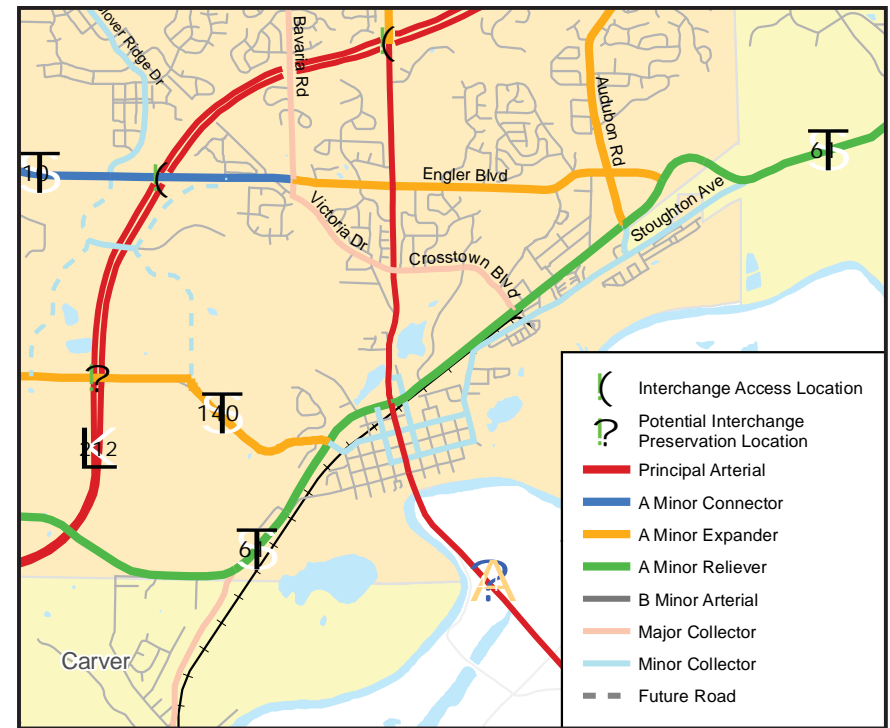


Figure 3-8. Future Street Functional Classification System in downtown area.



Figure 3-9. Trails map for downtown area from 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

## Existing Parking Options

Chaska's downtown provides a number of parking options, including on-street and off-street parking. As shown in the map to the right, many of the core downtown streets offer diagonal on-street parking while the rest of the streets offer parallel parking. Currently, Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41 provides parallel parking spaces on the street's east side only and Chaska Blvd/County Road 61 does not provide on-street parking. In total, there are approximately 620 public on-street parking spaces in the downtown core area today. In addition, the City manages downtown parking availability by limiting on-street parking to two hours on some streets, including Second Street East, Second Street West, Third Street West, Fourth Street West, Fifth Street East, and Fifth Street West.

Off-street parking in downtown is provided by both public and private surface parking lots. Public parking lots are provided within the City Hall block and within the 200 block on the west side of Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41 (behind the Werner Arcade building). Currently, there are approximately 100 public parking spaces between these two parking lots. There are approximately 450 parking spaces provided by the private sector in the downtown core area south of Chaska Blvd/County Road 61. In total, there are approximately 550 private parking spaces in the downtown core area today.

As part of the Downtown Master Planning process, a high-level parking analysis was undertaken that looked at four quadrants in the downtown core area, as identified in the map to the right, with Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41 and Third St as the dividing lines. This parking analysis, which is summarized in the table to the right, was based upon the City's parking space requirements by square feet and the actual square footage of existing buildings. The analysis found that all four quadrants have sufficient parking available to meet the needs of existing development, however, the southeast quadrant has a tighter parking situation than the other quadrants. Other findings were issues with business owner/employee vs. customer parking needs, inadequate signage/enforcement of Two Hour Parking program, additional diagonal parking opportunities, and lack of parking on west side of Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41.



Figure 3-10. Map showing existing parking options in the downtown area.

Quadrant	Existing # of Parking Spaces	Estimated # of Required Parking Spaces	Excess or (Shortage) of Parking Spaces
NW	392	329	63
NE	335	185	150
SW	264	214	50
SE	238	230	8
Total	1,229	958	271

Table 3-1. Downtown core area parking analysis by quadrant.



## Parks & Open Spaces

Downtown's existing park system includes two community parks, a community playfield, a County park, three special feature parks, and two mini-parks. Located in the heart of downtown, City Square is a historic and quintessential town square. A passive park, it hosts downtown events and is home to Native American burial mounds.

Fireman's Park and Schimelpfenig Park surround Fireman's Clayhole Lake, located on downtown's northwest edge. The two parks complement each other to form the primary family "active use" park for the entire community, including a swimming beach, shelter buildings, fishing piers, and recreational facilities. Fireman's Park is more open, flat and lakeshore-oriented, while Schimelpfenig is more wooded and hilly.

Four downtown parks are located adjacent to the Minnesota River Valley, including Athletic Park, Courthouse Clayhole Lake, Winkel Park and Riverbend Park. Chaska Athletic Park is a community playfield that is the home of the Chaska Cubs, an amateur town baseball team. In 2009, the City designated Athletic Park as a local historic site as a classic 1950s town team ball field. Located within the river valley floodplain in downtown's southwest corner, Athletic Park is disconnected from the rest of downtown. Riverbend Park is essentially a boat launch area while Winkel Park is a small river overlook park. Located on downtown's east edge, Courthouse Clayhole Lake is a Carver County park that offers fishing and trails.

Downtown does not have any neighborhood parks today; however, it does have two mini-parks (Hickory Park and Fireman's II Park). The original and larger Fireman's II neighborhood park was eliminated in the 1990s for the expansion of the Carver County Government Center.

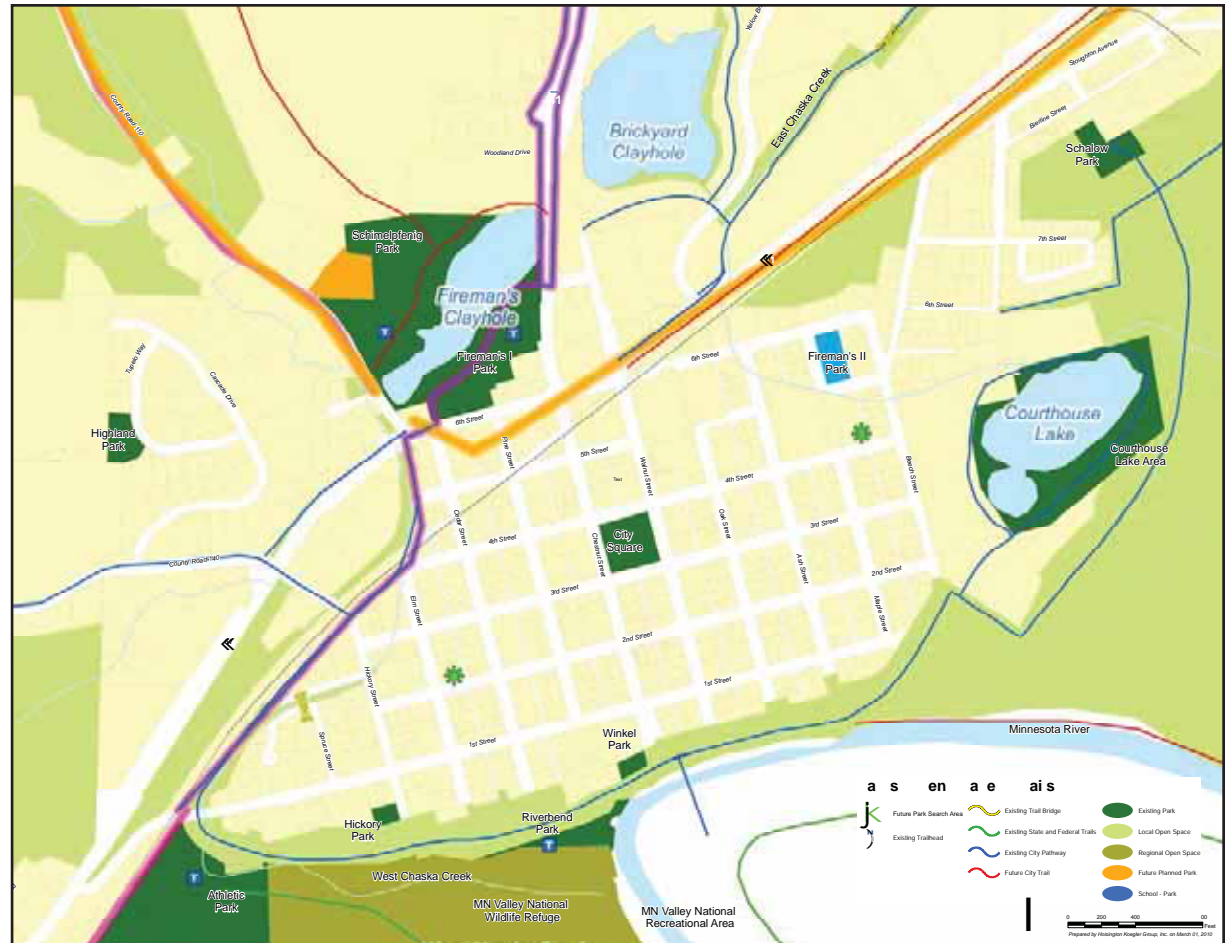


Figure 3-11. Map showing existing parks and open spaces in the downtown area.

Downtown's open spaces consist of the Chaska Greenbelt area along the Minnesota River (south and east of downtown), the river levee trail area, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge, West Chaska Creek, East Chaska Creek, and a significant wetland area on the northeast edge of downtown. The MN Valley State Recreational Area is located across the river.

Analysis of downtown's existing park and open space system identified the following issues and opportunities: lack of downtown neighborhood parks; lack of connectivity between downtown and the Chaska Greenbelt including the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge; opportunities for enhanced river-related open spaces; lack of connectivity, identity and visibility of Fireman's Park; and opportunities for creating downtown plazas and greens.

## Community Input

As part of the planning process for this Downtown Master Plan, the City incorporated a community input process that engaged community members throughout the duration of the project. In order to achieve significant and committed involvement from the community, the City assembled a Project Task Force of 16 members that were appointed by the City Council. Project Task Force members were selected to represent key stakeholder groups within the community, which resulted in a larger task force than originally planned. In total, there were eight (8) meetings with the Project Task Force from February 2010 to April 2011. The Project Task Force meetings were very well attended and provided a significant amount of input to the project. In fact, additional task force meetings were added to the planning process to accommodate adequate presentation, dialogue, and input opportunities for the task force. The Project Task Force's input is included in the Appendix of the Downtown Master Plan in the form of meeting notes.

Community input opportunities were also provided through three (3) Joint Work Sessions with the City Council and Commissions (Planning, Parks/Arts/Recreation, Heritage Preservation, Human Rights), which were open to the general public. A Community Open House for the Downtown Master Plan was held in February 2011 at the Chaska Community Center. This meeting was well attended with an estimated 100-plus people in attendance. Input from the Community Open House is included in the Appendix to the Downtown Master Plan.

Another important source of community input was individual meetings between the Project Team and key downtown institutions, including Carver County Government Center, Carver

County Library, St. John's Church & School, Guardian Angels Church & School, Moravian Church, Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative School, Auburn Manor Homes and Southwest Transit.

From a market opportunities perspective, the project's market consultant also conducted individual interviews with a representative group of downtown development stakeholders, including existing business owners, property owners, potential developers, realtors, and major Chaska employers.

As part of the City's approval process, the Downtown Master Plan was reviewed and recommended for approval to the City Council by the following City Commissions:

- » Park Board on January 9, 2012
- » Planning Commission on January 11, 2012
- » Historic Preservation Commission on January 24, 2012.

The final Downtown Master Plan was approved by the City Council on February 6, 2012.

### **Project Task Force Members:**

- » City Council - Rick Ford (& Downtown Business Council)
- » Planning Commission - Mike Huang (& Commitment to Community)
- » Heritage Preservation Commission - Debbie Boe
- » Parks, Arts & Recreation Board - Dave Roan
- » Chaska Commitment to Community Task Force - Kevin Norby (& Downtown Council)
- » Chaska Downtown Business Council — Dan Keyport (& Planning Commission)
- » Resident (Downtown Chaska) - Adella Pollack (& Human Rights Commission)
- » Resident (Downtown Chaska) - Greg Swan (& PR — Miller Shandwick)
- » Resident (Upper Chaska) - Brian Betlock (& Downtown Chaska Wells Fargo)
- » Resident (Upper Chaska) - Stacey Harding (& Attorney, small business owner)
- » Development Community (SuperValu) — Jim Hornecker
- » Upper Chaska Business (Ridgeview Medical) — John Prondzinski
- » Downtown institutions (Auburn Manor) — Mike Senden
- » Faith Based Community (Guardian Angels) - Gary VanEyll (former Mayor)
- » Faith Based Community (St. John's) — Bob Roepke (former Mayor)
- » Youth — Max Shinn







## CHAPTER 4: vision and guiding principles

### Downtown Vision:

**“Revitalize downtown Chaska as the hub of community destinations and gathering places, which reflect and celebrate our historic character, traditional small town atmosphere and values ”**

As Chaska continues to grow and evolve as a community, downtown will continue to be the heart of the community and its enduring small town character. As “Minnesota’s Brick City”, downtown Chaska will be a thriving historic downtown that preserves and celebrates its unique heritage, physical historic assets, small town values, and strong sense of community. As a traditional downtown that brings together a diverse and healthy mix of activities and community destinations, downtown will be designed as a place that offers authentic small town character. The downtown plan envisions a multi-faceted and sustainable revitalization of downtown that enhances its unique historic small town character and recaptures its former vitality as the place to be in Chaska. The downtown vision encompasses five major elements: a vibrant main street district, community gathering places, thriving institutions and employers, desirable neighborhoods, and attractive street, sidewalk and trail connections.

### **Vibrant Main Street District**

Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41 is downtown’s “Main Street”. The main street district encompasses Chestnut Street and the cross-streets from Second St to Chaska Boulevard/County Rd 61. Downtown’s main street business district will be a vibrant hub of commercial and civic activities, including a unique mix of specialty retail and service businesses, restaurants, and offices in a traditional downtown environment that is friendly, aesthetically pleasing, and has an urban character unique to Chaska’s downtown heritage. The main street district will be a series of connected community destinations including the Second St & Chestnut St node, City Square node, Chaska Boulevard & Chestnut St node, as well as connecting to the Brickyard Clayhole district, Fireman’s Clayhole district, and Riverfront district.

In order to truly function as “Main Street” in the future, Chestnut St should be redesigned and reconstructed to better accommodate walkers, bicyclists and drivers visiting downtown businesses. Working with Mn DOT, the redesigned “Main Street” should provide parking on both sides of the street, wider sidewalks/pedestrian zones, and improved street crossing facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

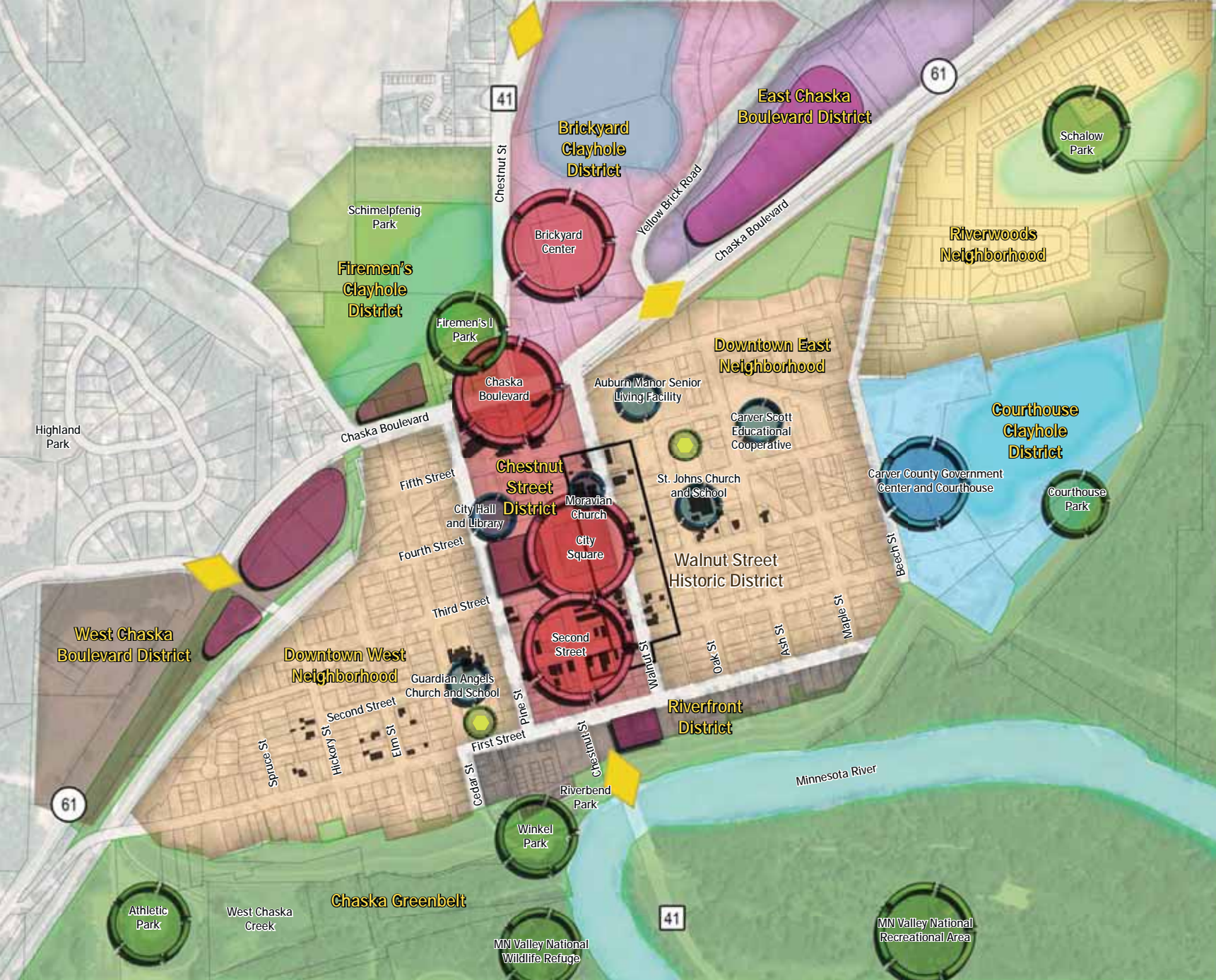


*View of a historic downtown Chaska landmark, Guardian Angels Church with newer townhouses in the foreground.*



*Restoration of the Philip Henk historic building on Second Street East added a full window storefront at street level with offices above.*





- Legend:**
- Open Space Destination
  - Main Street Destination
  - Community Institution Destination
  - Catalyst Redevelopment Site
  - Downtown Gateway
  - Future Neighborhood Parks
  - Designated Historic Buildings

Vision:  
Downtown  
Destinations



Hoisington Koegler Group Inc.

ZHA Inc.

# CHASKA

## DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

MAY, 2011

Figure 4-1. Vision of Downtown Destinations.



“Main Street” will be complemented by attractive “Town Center” cross-streets, as well as the Brick City Paseo paralleling it to the east and west. “Town Center” streets will be improved as traditional downtown streets with wider sidewalks, streetscape amenities, corner plazas, and diagonal parking on both sides. Parking options for main street businesses will be proactively managed by the public and private sectors via a downtown parking management plan. Public parking, including on-street and off-street, will be a major component of downtown parking in order to retain the downtown’s traditional and historic character of side-by-side commercial storefronts located up to the sidewalk.

### **Community Gathering Places**

As part of the original platting of downtown, City Square, which is literally the heart of downtown, was dedicated as a common park for the community in perpetuity. Throughout the community’s history, City Square has functioned as the most important community gathering place in downtown as well as the community. As the community’s civic heart, City Square was originally surrounded by civic buildings and stately homes. Many of these landmarks are gone. As sites and buildings surrounding City Square are revitalized in the future, they should be designed as landmarks “fronting” onto City Square.

In addition to City Square, downtown will be home to a variety of other community gathering places from Fireman’s Clayhole Lake & Park to Athletic Park and the downtown riverfront greenbelt, including community and neighborhood parks, playfields, plazas, sidewalks, trails, natural open spaces, and indoor facilities. As a downtown gateway and downtown’s only community park, Fireman’s Clayhole Lake & Park will be redesigned as a unique recreation destination for the community that integrates the site’s natural features with its heritage as a former brickyard and its potential for linking new retail or restaurants with enhanced recreational amenities. Historic Athletic Park will be improved as a historic town ball park as well as integrated with the surrounding components of the downtown greenbelt, including the river levee, the MN River National Wildlife Refuge, Winkel Park, and Riverbend Park. The enhanced downtown greenbelt and its trailhead/connections with the national wildlife refuge will create a unique and conveniently accessed natural area right next to downtown, for residents, workers, and visitors. The downtown parks and open spaces will be connected by a downtown trail system that provides convenient connections between downtown and recreation areas.

At the level of downtown districts and neighborhoods, downtown will be enhanced with two neighborhood parks (Downtown East and Downtown West neighborhoods) as well as urban plazas in the Chestnut St district. Building upon City Hall Plaza, the Chestnut St district should be enhanced with small plazas in conjunction with site redevelopment and street/alley reconstruction projects. For instance, redevelopment of the City Square West block should incorporate the Brick City Paseo concept and potentially a small outdoor plaza that would overlook City Square. Street reconstruction projects, particularly “Town Center” streets could incorporate corner plazas.

Other important downtown gathering places include civic, faith-based, education and cultural institutions, such as the City Hall, library, County Gov’t. Center, schools, churches, and movie theater.



*The Chaska History Center in the restored livery stable on Fourth Street West created a unique community gathering place in downtown.*



*Historic City Square should remain the heart of downtown and the community as downtown is revitalized.*





*Chaska Herald historic building on Second Street West is one of the oldest continuing businesses in downtown Chaska.*



*Chaska City Hall on Fourth Street West, which was completed in 1989, complements the character of downtown's historic buildings.*



*Historic Chaska brick houses dot the downtown neighborhoods.*

### ***Thriving Institutions & Employers***

An important component of a vibrant downtown is having a significant concentration of anchor institutions within and adjacent to downtown that draw people downtown on a regular basis. Civic, cultural, social, educational and employment institutions also help support downtown businesses during the day. As the County seat, downtown Chaska has a long history as a center for civic institutions, including the Carver County Courthouse & Government Center, City Hall, Chaska Library, Chaska History Center, police, and license center. City Square was the historic focus of civic institutions with the City Hall, Carver County Courthouse, library, fire station, and history center all located around City Square in the past. Although most historic civic buildings are gone today, City Square and Fourth Street have the potential for being the center for civic institutions in the future. Other anchor institutions are the three downtown churches, affiliated schools, the Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative School, and the Auburn Manor senior living campus. Downtown revitalization should encourage and support the expansion of existing anchor institutions within downtown. Redevelopment of vacant/underutilized sites on the edge of downtown, such as along Chaska Boulevard/Cty Rd 61, offer valuable opportunities for accommodating the growth of businesses and employment in downtown.

### ***Desirable Neighborhoods***

Downtown Chaska is also home to traditional small town neighborhoods east and west of the Chestnut St main street district. While these two downtown neighborhoods retain their traditional small town character, they are enhanced in the future with amenities that increase their livability. These amenities include reconstructed streets, improved walk/bike crossings of highways, completion of a downtown trail network, addition of neighborhood parks, more neighborhood-oriented businesses in downtown, and funding assistance programs for downtown housing improvements. With the completion of the levee and creek diversion channels in the 1990s, which removed downtown properties from the floodplain, many downtown houses are ripe for reinvestment. As redevelopment and revitalization occurs, new housing options are encouraged in downtown, such as higher-density riverfront housing, housing above retail in mixed-use buildings, and townhouses.

### ***Street, Sidewalk and Trail Connections***

The downtown area in the future will have a well-connected network of streets, sidewalks and trails for residents, employees, and visitors. As part of the City's plan to reconstruct most of downtown's streets over the next ten years, street redesign will create a more attractive, safe and convenient downtown street network. Streetscapes and sidewalks will be redesigned to better balance the needs of walker, bicyclists and drivers. In line with the impressive network of trails in the rest of Chaska, a network of downtown trails will be completed that facilitates good connections between downtown and the rest of the community, as well as connections to the regional recreational trail network.





Figure 4-2. Vision of Downtown Connections.



## Guiding Principles

Eight guiding principles establish the foundation of the downtown master plan. They are intended to support and provide clarity for achieving the plan's vision. They should also provide a means for guiding and evaluating improvements to the key elements of the plan, such as business development, jobs, streets, parks, trails, historic preservation, etc. As the community is pursuing downtown revitalization in the future, it should look to these guiding principles when evaluating efforts and proposals for reinvesting, redesigning and redeveloping in downtown.

### ***1. Enhance the community's pride and historic sense of place in downtown***

Downtown should serve as the community's priority location for major activities, celebrations, and creating a sense of community identity. Downtown's future character and improvements should physically reflect Chaska's unique historic character, traditional small town design and values. Downtown's rich heritage and remaining historic assets should be preserved, enhanced and celebrated as major assets of the revitalized downtown and its unique character. Enhancement of community pride and historic assets will benefit from interpreting and celebrating downtown's unique character and features through public art, wayfinding signage, and heritage preservation.

Known as "Minnesota's Brick City", downtown will be revitalized as the physical and visual embodiment of the community's unique heritage of brickmaking and community building. The prevalence of Chaska brick buildings remaining in downtown significantly contributes to a visually unique downtown environment. Chaska brick commercial buildings in downtown are not only of similar scale and form, they are also very similar in color. An important component of downtown's revitalization will be to enhance and expand the unique character of Chaska brick buildings in downtown. Existing Chaska brick buildings should be restored to highlight their Chaska brick character and new buildings should be designed to complement the scale, form and color of Chaska brick buildings. Existing and new buildings will be encouraged to design their storefronts with large window openings, individual street level entrances, and located up to the sidewalk. The focus will be on attracting more retail, restaurant, entertainment and service businesses to both renovated and new street level storefronts.

### ***2. Reinvigorate the variety and vitality of downtown's main street destinations***

Downtown's economy and vibrancy as a community destination needs to be revitalized by attracting more retail, restaurant and entertainment businesses to the main street district in existing storefront buildings as well as infill redevelopment projects, particularly along Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41, Second Street, and Chaska Boulevard/Cty Rd 61. The main street district should be reconnected as a series of destinations, including the Riverfront District, historic Second St & Chestnut St node, City Square node, Chaska Boulevard node, Fireman's Clayhole district, and Brickyard Clayhole district.

Downtown parking should be provided and managed to meet the needs of existing businesses and institutions as well as support significant future economic development in downtown. Future parking options for downtown businesses will need to be proactively managed by the public and private sectors via a downtown parking management plan.

### ***3. Create signature community gathering places***

An expanded network of high quality community gathering places should be created in downtown to attract and accommodate a wide variety of uses by residents, workers, and visitors, including Fireman's Clayhole Lake/Park, Athletic Park, Winkel Park, Riverbend Park, neighborhood parks, plazas, sidewalks, trails, Brick City Paseo, natural open spaces, and indoor facilities. The historic downtown core and downtown neighborhoods should have stronger connections to the natural assets of the Chaska Greenbelt in downtown, including the Minnesota River, river levee trail, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and MN Valley State Recreation Area.

#### ***4. Preserve and strengthen downtown as the hub for community institutions***

Downtown should continue to serve as the primary hub for community institutions, both public and semi-public, including City and County government facilities, schools, churches, library, history center, arts and culture, social services, and senior living facilities. The City should develop collaborative relationships with these important community institutions to ensure their continuing success and support their future expansion needs.

#### ***5. Expand downtown's role as an employment center***

Employment opportunities should be expanded in downtown through appropriate adaptation and expansion of existing buildings and redevelopment of underutilized sites. In particular, large underutilized sites along Chaska Blvd/Cty Rd 61 on the edge of downtown should be considered for redevelopment to land uses that increase the number of jobs downtown rather than new commercial uses that may compete with commercial in the downtown core district. Pursue employment growth through attracting new industries and with expansion of existing major employers.

#### ***6. Enhance downtown's neighborhoods and housing options***

As the community's oldest neighborhoods, the Downtown East and Downtown West neighborhoods have the strongest small town character. Due to the age of the downtown neighborhoods and that some areas were in the river floodplain in the past, they are ripe for housing reinvestment and neighborhood enhancements. Revitalization of existing housing and addition of new housing options is encouraged to strengthen downtown as a complete neighborhood with desirable housing options and amenities. The City should initiate public improvements and assistance programs that target revitalization of downtown's neighborhoods to become great places to live.

#### ***7. Create inviting downtown streets, sidewalks and trails***

Downtown's streets and sidewalks should be designed and reconstructed to create a desirable and balanced environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers, creating a Complete Streets network in downtown. Convenient street and trail connections should be created between downtown and surrounding areas. Working with MN DOT, the City should advocate for a route and design of a potential new MN Highway 41 river crossing that ultimately provides the greatest benefit for Chestnut St to function as downtown's "main street" and minimizes any negative impacts on downtown.

#### ***8. Strengthen downtown partnerships to achieve common goals***

The City cannot achieve successful revitalization of downtown's districts and neighborhoods on its own. It is imperative that strong downtown partnerships are established that enable the City to identify common goals with other downtown stakeholders and leverage their resources. These partnerships will involve public and private entities.





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Rita Linnell  
PHOTOGRAPHY

Hair & Beyond  
952-448-2454



# CHAPTER 5: downtown market positioning

## Purpose of Downtown Market Positioning

This chapter identifies the market-based priorities for the City of Chaska as it positions downtown as a more vibrant community destination that better serves and attracts more of the community's residents, workers and visitors. To pursue the community's objective of revitalizing downtown Chaska as a stronger community destination, the basic components of a public-sector market positioning strategy involve:

1. *Identifying downtown's market-related assets, challenges and potential opportunities;*
2. *Defining the community's market positioning objective and strategies;*
3. *Prioritizing the steps that can achieve progress toward the community's market positioning objective.*

The steps recommended in this chapter are limited to those related to market or development issues. Other steps related to design, infrastructure, and physical amenities are addressed in separate components of the Downtown Master Plan. Also, the City should not regard these market positioning recommendations as all-inclusive, but rather, as a prioritization that should not preclude additional public actions.

In prioritizing public actions for revitalizing downtown, the City of Chaska should weigh three primary criteria:

1. *Effectiveness: public measures must target actions that are likely to achieve positive results;*
2. *Efficiency: While a strategic measure may be effective if it leads to successful improvements, efficiency is equally important: public actions -- rather than simply promoting developments -- should seek to leverage additional private investments and generate additional positive impacts, thereby stimulating rather than competing with other developments.*
3. *Compatibility: Downtown's historic character provides a key asset for downtown Chaska. Therefore, the City should not give high priority to public actions that directly compromise this character.*





## Downtown's Existing Business Mix

Chaska's historic core downtown area is located between Chaska Boulevard (County Road 61) and the Minnesota River. With Chestnut Street (MN Hwy 41) as downtown's six-block "Main Street", most businesses are concentrated within the blocks directly adjacent to Chestnut Street between Pine and Walnut Streets. Downtown Chaska's businesses are primarily small, independently owned and operated businesses. A small number of franchise or "chain" businesses are located on the edges of downtown along Highways 41 and 61; the largest concentration of franchise or "chain" stores is located in the Brickyard Shopping Center and other properties in the northeast quadrant of the intersection of Highways 41 and 61.

While retailers occupy a broad range, for the most part, they generally serve one of two broadly defined niches.

- » *"Convenience Retailers" offer the most convenient location for goods and services (e.g., drugs, groceries, gasoline). For businesses in this niche, customer choices are driven not by product selection, aesthetic character or other such amenities, but primarily by high visibility and easy access. Where such businesses can offer the most convenient access to a customer, competition is limited. In serving the local market in and around downtown Chaska, for convenience-oriented retailers such as grocery stores, liquor stores and drugstores, a rough definition of the primary market trade area extends to the Minnesota River on the south, new U.S. Hwy 212 on the north, MN Hwy 101 on the east and up to five miles to the west. Beyond these approximate limits, households making routine purchases will most likely have more convenient alternatives to stores in downtown Chaska.*
- » *"Shopping Experience Retailers" derive success from product selection, store ambiance, personal service, amenities and the overall quality of experience. Such businesses often thrive on their location within the historic district, and do not necessarily require high traffic locations. Many of these businesses serve as destinations for customers outside of Chaska and its immediate surroundings. Trade areas for such businesses vary greatly. Some retailers in Chaska draw regular clientele from beyond State boundaries; others identify clientele from throughout the southwestern Twin Cities metro area; others believe that they compete not as specific products or destinations, but as components of an overall downtown district that competes with other such destinations in and around the Twin Cities region.*

Downtown Chaska's retail is approximately 125,000 square feet with the business mix dominated by convenience retail, including grocery stores, meat market, convenience market, bakery, pharmacy, liquor, and hardware stores. There are also some small gift and consignment shops. Chaska's downtown retail mix largely excludes stores such as clothing stores and consumer electronics stores, which typically seek locations in suburban malls and shopping centers. Downtown's retail businesses are primarily clustered at Chestnut St & Second St East and the Brickyard district. There are not many retail stores along Chestnut Street, which is Chaska's "Main Street".



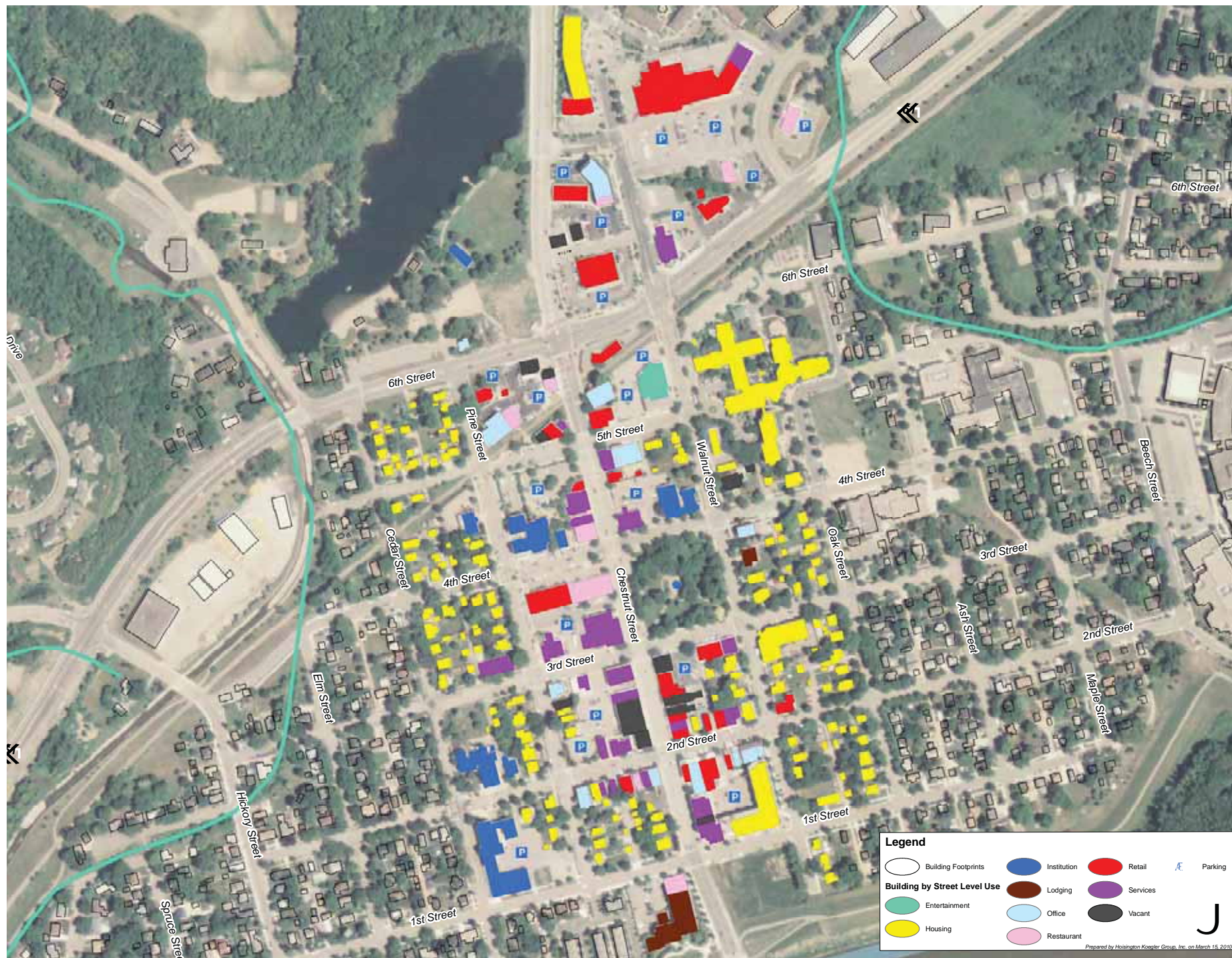


Figure 5-1. Map above shows existing mix of businesses in downtown at street level.



Restaurant businesses occupy roughly 50,000 square feet, but these restaurants are scattered around downtown with many of them located outside the downtown core area. Downtown’s mix of eating places includes primarily small casual restaurants (pizza, Chinese, Mexican, fast food chains), bars, an ice cream shop, and a coffee shop. Currently, downtown does not have a concentration of restaurants that create a destination restaurant area.

Table 5-1: Current Non-Residential Property Uses in Downtown Chaska	
Use	Space (Square Feet)
Retail	125,000
Restaurant	51,000
Entertainment/Recreation	16,000
Service	84,000
Office	111,000
Lodging	58,000
Institutional	51,000

Source: City of Chaska; Hoisington Koegler Group, Inc., W-ZHA, LLC

Downtown is home to a broad range of service businesses including medical (dental, eye, mental, chiropractor, veterinarian), banks, post office, laundromat, hair salons, nail salons, day spa, fitness, photography studio, printing, money exchange, and staffing services. Services represent a substantial share of Chaska’s downtown businesses, perhaps reflecting the City’s past focus on downtown being a service-oriented district more than a retail-oriented district. In general, service businesses are concentrated more in the historic downtown area and less so along Chaska Boulevard and the Brickyard district. Chestnut Street, which is Chaska’s “Main Street”, is dominated by service businesses.

Downtown has a significant office presence with approximately 110,000 square feet, with roughly half of the office space being above street level. While there are a few multi-story office buildings, office tenants typically occupy less than 1,000 square feet each. In general, office uses are not located at street level along Chestnut Street.

Based on 2010 City data, estimated building square footages indicate that downtown Chaska currently contains the following mix of businesses:

Among this mix of businesses, downtown Chaska’s strongest prevailing business niches are:

1. Convenience-oriented goods, such as groceries and everyday household goods (e.g., pharmacy, ice cream, liquor) and services (e.g., personal care, cleaning, postal, municipal) serving a relatively tightly defined market that generally extends less than two miles in most directions. To the west, there is a more expansive trade area, encompassing communities such as Carver, Dahlgren and Cologne.
2. Independent, shopping experience-oriented goods, serving customers drawn in part by Chaska’s historic character from within a broadly defined market that extends beyond 10 miles – and beyond the Twin Cities metropolitan area in many instances.

In spite of these strengths, downtown Chaska does not provide an important commercial destination for the overall Chaska community, or for the expanding suburban population throughout Carver County. Thus, at this time downtown Chaska does not fully capitalize on its ongoing demographic growth, one of its strongest assets.

## Downtown's Strongest Assets

Chaska's most effective market positioning strategies for downtown will capitalize on downtown's strongest assets. From a market and development perspective, downtown Chaska's strongest assets are its:

1. ***Continuing demographic growth***, which features relatively high local growth rates, high regional (e.g. County-wide) growth rates, and high household income levels.

*The City of Chaska anticipates its recent rapid growth to continue. Over the last decade, the City's population increased from roughly 17,500 to 24,000 people, growing at a rate of 3.6 percent per year. Households increased at a similar pace of 3.7 percent per year, from 6,100 to more than 8,400. Over the next five years, this growth is expected to continue at annual rates of 2.35 percent per year.*

*Carver County has exhibited similar patterns, with population and households achieving annual growth rates of 3.2 and 3.4 percent, with growth continuing at roughly 2.3 to 2.35 percent over the next five years.*

*In addition to high growth, Chaska features a high-income profile, with median household income estimated at \$81,081. In addition, the City features relatively high percentages of educated, professional workers: among workers age 25 or older, nearly 35 percent have earned bachelors' degrees, and 55 percent work in professional occupations.*

*Notwithstanding its rapid growth, more rapid growth (on a percentage basis) is forecasted for smaller communities such as Victoria and Waconia, as well as the larger city of Shakopee; many of the surrounding communities feature higher incomes, home values, and educational and occupational indices.*

*What's more, over a long-term time frame, growth is expected to focus increasingly on the western parts of Carver County and other more outlying areas. As shown below, while Chaska's growth rate is expected to slow somewhat, growth is expected to accelerate in other such areas.*

*From 2000 to 2010, Carver County's employment growth is expected to achieve a rate of 3.3 percent per year. This far exceeds corresponding rates in Hennepin County or the overall Twin Cities area. Moreover, this is projected to continue, and this projection is supported by Carver County's abundance of relatively inexpensive land, good access – via the new Highway 212 – and its high-income demographic growth.*

*Within Carver County, Chaska's location in the eastern part of the county, along the new Highway 212 – positions it to capture the largest share of this growth. In any event, downtown Chaska will derive increased opportunities from strong employment growth in Chaska and its surroundings.*



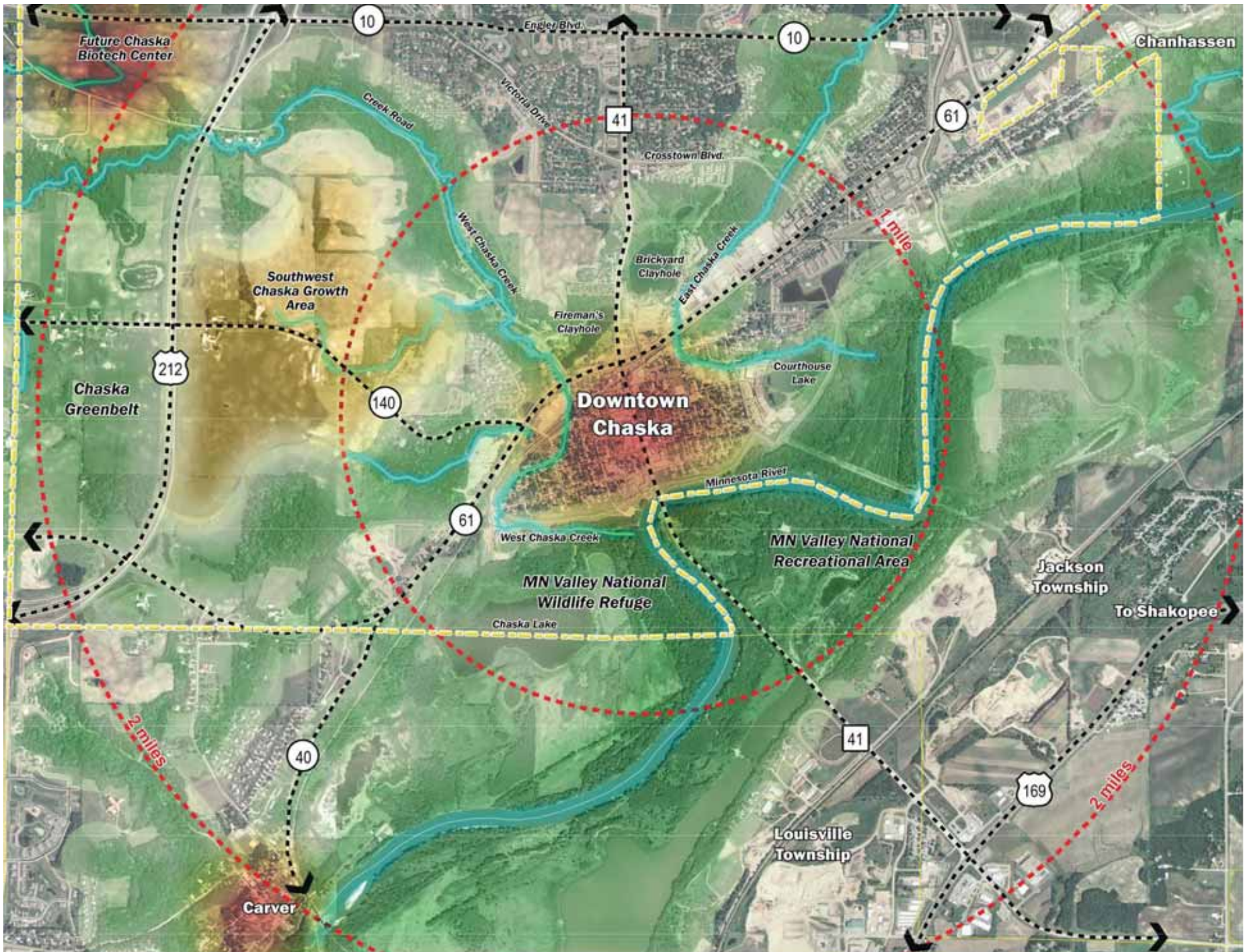


Figure 5-2. Context Diagram above shows downtown's market context, including the one-mile & two-mile radius area surrounding downtown.



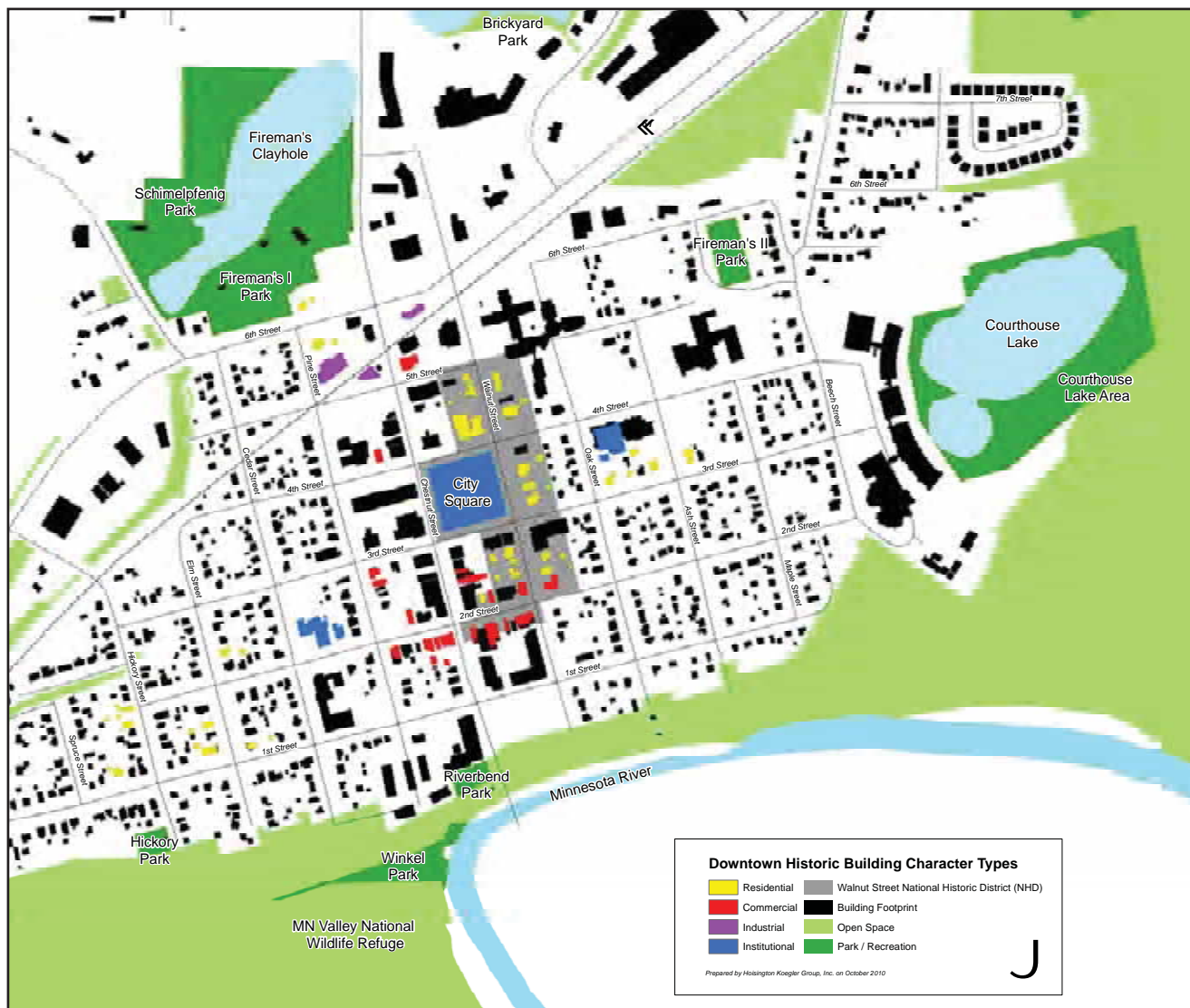


Figure 5-3. Map above shows downtown's historic buildings by character type: commercial, industrial, institutional, residential, and park.

2. **Historic and traditional downtown ambience**, which is augmented with recreational amenities including City Square Park, Fireman's Park, Athletic Park, and the river levee trail. Downtown Chaska has retained its original street grid and many historic buildings, including "Main Street" mixed-use and retail storefront buildings, stately residential mansions, simple homes, churches, mills, and a train depot. In particular, the concentration of Chaska brick buildings in downtown makes it a unique and memorable downtown environment.

3. **High traffic counts** of roughly 40,000 average daily trips (ADT)<sup>1</sup> at the intersection of Highway 41 (Chestnut Street) and Highway 61 (Chaska Boulevard); these are comparable to those at other desirable commercial locations in Carver County and the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

<sup>1</sup>Minnesota Department of Transportation. Most recent available traffic counts are as of 2007, prior to the opening of the new Highway 212. Since the opening of 212, traffic patterns have changed, with higher volumes on highway 41 and lower volumes on Highway 61 (former 212).



# Downtown's Potential Market Opportunities

## **Retail Market Opportunities**

Retail development in downtown Chaska faces constraints that will shape new business and development opportunities. New space can be provided in either existing buildings or new buildings.

- » **Existing Buildings:** In Chaska's historic downtown core area, existing buildings offer mostly small spaces (e.g. less than 2,000 square feet) and may not offer high visibility, preferred configurations, or off-street parking. Nonetheless, they may be able to offer historic character and – in some cases – inexpensive rents. These spaces do not necessarily offer preferred locations for retailers seeking to derive business from the convenience of their locations. Rather, these spaces will appeal to businesses seeking to capitalize on the character of the experience provided in their establishment and in the downtown Chaska environment. Such properties offer potential opportunities for businesses seeking an environment in an historic small-town setting. Much of this activity will consist of small-scale businesses, and this will be consistent with the scale of the downtown buildings and blocks.
- » **New Buildings and Development Formats:** While existing buildings define the character of downtown Chaska, many retailers that might be attracted to downtown Chaska may require new retail space. Within the context of the street grid in the historic core, however, new developments face challenges involving parking, building size, and visibility.

In general, developers and tenants are familiar – and comfortable with – standardized, suburban-model developments located close to shopping destinations or highways. In pursuing small-scale retail developments of this nature, developers face relatively few obstacles in constructing new space with ample off-street parking on small “strip” lots near suburban thoroughfares.

In downtown streetfront environments, however, even small development projects (e.g., 15,000 square feet) must pursue land assembly, demolition, parking arrangements,<sup>2</sup> and other such issues. As a result, rather than pursuing downtown redevelopments, developers typically pursue simpler opportunities involving standard strip retail developments.

Consequently, in creating new retail space on downtown streetfronts, in recent years multi-family residential projects have provided the most efficient vehicle, with new dwelling units situated above ground-floor retail space. Thus, while some stand-alone retail development may be feasible and easily constructed on large lots near Highways 41 and/or 61, new retail space in the historic core will most likely rely on a multi-family residential development component.

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<sup>2</sup>Parking issues will be specifically addressed in a subsequent part of this Master Planning process. For the purposes of the present discussion, it is noted simply that, while it should not be necessary for every business to provide its own off-street parking lot, retailers would benefit if they can identify accessible, reliable and convenient parking arrangements for their customers.

### ***Office Market Opportunities***

While downtown Chaska is not likely to attract large-scale corporate office tenants, as the City and County continue to grow, small-scale businesses (typically occupying 1,000-3,000 square feet) are likely to seek an increased supply of office space in downtown Chaska.

Office space in downtown Chaska currently features ample vacancies and low rates; at this time the market is not likely to support new office development downtown.

Despite this, as Chaska and Carver County grow – and as downtown revitalization proceeds – professional service businesses serving new households and businesses will increase as well. If downtown Chaska can provide an attractive environment, with services for office tenants as well as destinations such as City Hall and the County Courts, such businesses are likely to supply an increased supply of office space. While large-scale office developments (e.g., 50,000 square feet or more) will most likely seek sites in corporate office parks, small business tenants are likely to seek space in renovated existing buildings as well as new buildings in the downtown core.

### ***Residential Market Opportunities***

**Multi-Family Residential Opportunities:** Revitalization of downtown Chaska will offer opportunities for multi-family residential development. Downtown Chaska’s prospects will improve over time, but downtown does not currently offer a value premium over other locations.

Notwithstanding the current economic slump, over time, Chaska’s anticipated demographic and employment growth (discussed previously) is likely to support ongoing housing development.

In downtown Chaska, market-rate apartment buildings near downtown report high occupancies – generally in the range of 95 percent – with rents ranging from approximately \$800 to \$900 for one-bedroom and \$900 to \$1,050 for most two-bedroom units.

These rent levels, however, fall below those at some newer properties located outside of downtown. In addition, brokers report that for apartments as well as for-sale homes, downtown Chaska does not command premium price points. At the same time, downtown Chaska does not contain a substantial supply of large historic warehouses or other such buildings that offer historic (or other) character sufficient to create their own premiums.

In addressing the absence of a “value premium” in downtown Chaska, the Downtown Master Plan recommends a wide range of improvements involving the physical environment (pedestrian amenities, streetscape amenities, traffic issues, reconfigured properties, etc.). The market potential for more retailers provides an opportunity for downtown to provide an identifiable concentration of desirable stores that collectively create the value premium. The means for capitalizing on this potential and overcoming various development challenges is addressed in the Implementation Strategy chapter.



In the context of the historic downtown core area, some form of public sector assistance would be required for prospective multi-family development to overcome substantial challenges involving site assembly and parking.

Absent a substantial “value premium” for locations in Chaska’s historic downtown core, prospective multi-family developers will find it easier and more profitable to build on undeveloped land outside of downtown. In pursuing such development, the City must consider two countervailing factors:

- » *Multi-family residential development may offer the best means for creating new street-front retail space.*
- » *On the other hand, as revitalization proceeds, downtown Chaska can gain the “value premium” necessary to support higher-end multi-family development. The City should not preclude such higher-end development by promoting less desirable developments on its prime redevelopment opportunity sites.*

## Downtown Market Positioning Objective & Primary Strategies

Based upon Chaska’s overall vision for downtown and this downtown market analysis, the downtown market positioning objective is to establish downtown Chaska as the primary community destination and gathering place for the Chaska community and its environs, including a “Main Street”-oriented business district.

The strongest market strategies for strengthening downtown’s business environment consists of the following:

- » ***Expanding Retail for an Underserved Market:*** *Given the existing and future household growth and affluence throughout Chaska and eastern Carver County, Chaska is currently underserved by the retail market. Expanding downtown’s retail market offers the strongest opportunity for attracting new development in downtown.*
- » ***Creating a Downtown Niche for Restaurants:*** *The overall City of Chaska – and much of Carver County – is also relatively underserved by businesses offering leisure-oriented goods and services – most notably restaurants. This business gap is most pronounced in downtown Chaska, which offers few establishments providing casual or moderately upscale dining experiences. Moreover, no business district in all of Carver County has established itself as a significant eating and drinking destination. This niche represents a major opportunity for downtown and should be a focus of the City’s downtown revitalization efforts.*
- » ***Targeting a Mix of Independent as well as “Chain” Businesses:*** *Despite the underserved market, several restaurants have failed in recent years. While these failures are most likely attributable to a broad range of factors, the City’s demographics and growth outlook are sufficient to attract and support businesses targeting the relatively affluent “mainstream” suburban market. Downtown Chaska is likely to attract and support recognized regional chains, and some “casual dining” national chains, as well as unique, independent restaurants. Introducing established, recognizable businesses can play a key role in establishing successful, sustainable restaurants downtown, and more importantly, in attracting local customers to downtown Chaska.*

## Market Opportunity Focus Areas

### ***Concentration in Downtown Core***

Chaska's downtown area, as defined today, occupies approximately 50 city blocks with a traditional street grid. The City does not envision this entire area becoming a thriving commercial district. Due to downtown's relatively large spatial size, no single project, building or block will be able to exert substantial impacts on the entire downtown area. In pursuing an objective of efficiency, revitalization efforts should focus on a more concentrated, walkable area, encompassing an area of roughly 10 blocks along Chestnut Street from Second Street on the south to the Fireman's Clayhole and Brickyard districts on the north.

### ***Clear Connections & Orientation***

In general, when businesses are physically or visually isolated from one another, they cannot generate positive synergies. In a downtown district, connections and pedestrian orientation must be clear and convenient, so that a collective district is unified; new successes within the district can benefit the whole. This approach is similar to the benefits that retailers derive from locations in malls, or along the skyway system in downtown Minneapolis. In Chaska, the downtown core should feature clear signage, physically visible cues and directories, safe crossings, and pedestrian amenities. In creating a clear sense of orientation, downtown Chaska's key connections must clearly link Second Street, the blocks surrounding City Square Park, and the intersection of Chestnut Street (MN Hwy 41) and Chaska Boulevard (County Road 61).

Public improvements that enhance the sense of orientation and connectivity include:

1. Aesthetic treatments (e.g., pavers, streetscaping);
2. Public safety improvements (major road crossings, traffic lights, sidewalks);
3. Wayfinding amenities (e.g., signage, maps);

It should also be noted that the key downtown blocks are large enough to accommodate several of the small-scale buildings that characterize downtown Chaska. In creating a pedestrian-friendly environment, block-interior circulation (i.e. alleys) can enhance the connectivity of the district while creating additional store-front opportunities. The above-listed types of improvements as well as parking located in the blocks' interior alleys can thus enhance connections as well as the density of commercial opportunities in the district.



### ***Priority Catalyst Redevelopment Sites***

In addition to needing market support, the feasibility of future downtown revitalization opportunities relies on the availability of suitable, competitive locations. In downtown Chaska, opportunities for targeting new development for recognizable mainstream retailers must at a minimum offer high visibility and access for vehicular traffic. In addition, to create a feasible development opportunity, developers must be able to gain control of developable properties without extending unreasonable efforts. Downtown Chaska offers several such sites for new development or redevelopment as shown in Figure 5-4.

Given downtown's strong retail market potential – based on current retail undersupply and future community/regional household growth – and given suitable sites, redevelopment of priority catalyst sites provides an effective strategy for strengthening downtown's business environment as a vibrant community retail destination for local (Chaska and its surroundings) households, and thereby drawing more customers downtown.

The City should prioritize these types of projects. The typical catalyst redevelopment process requires the following steps:

1. *Select preferred uses;*
2. *Identify site(s);*
3. *Gain control over the site;*
4. *Set forth conceptual development guidelines; and*
5. *Solicit a developer and reach a public/private development agreement.*

This market analysis recommends two priority catalyst redevelopment sites:

- » *Fireman's Clayhole District*
- » *City Square West Block*



Figure 5-4. The Potential Revitalization Opportunities map above shows vacant sites, as well as potential sites for redevelopment, property improvements, or historic building renovations.



## Fireman's Clayhole District

**Site(s):** Fireman's Clayhole District offers downtown Chaska's strongest location for attracting the regional and/or national tenants that high-profile developers will target. This site lies close to the central downtown core, offers a high visibility location, leverages a key water/park amenity, would not disrupt the fabric of established historic blocks.

**Site Control:** In addition to its amenities and strategic location, Fireman's Park provides assembled, undeveloped and readily transferable land. This distinguishes the site from other well-situated properties in the general region.

**Development Guidelines:** The prospective development should seek to integrate the park as a recreational asset with compatible commercial uses. This integration should result in a unique, "signature" destination park. While some developers may prefer a single commercial building on the corner, the site's potential would be maximized by integrating commercial with recreational uses.

Notwithstanding its assets, the site will face competition (for development interest) from other locations along Highway 212 and at other high-traffic intersections in nearby growing communities. To distinguish the area from competitive locations, the City's ownership of the park land provides a key advantage. Examples of beneficial arrangements made possible by City ownership involve:

- » *Land costs:* In conveying a portion of park land for development, the City can explore alternative land conveyances such as leasing, seller financing with low initial payments, options, etc.
- » *Public property arrangements:* In addition to the private development footprint, the City may permit the park's businesses to lease adjacent public lands and facilities (e.g. stage areas, waterfront boardwalks, etc.) for outdoor seating or for their own programmed entertainment. The City may also arrange to reserve, lease or license such properties to cart vendors as well as other downtown (or other) businesses and private groups.
- » *New property:* The City and/or private developer or business could create new usable property over the existing lake; such property could be used for outdoor seating, entertainment, or other amenities.

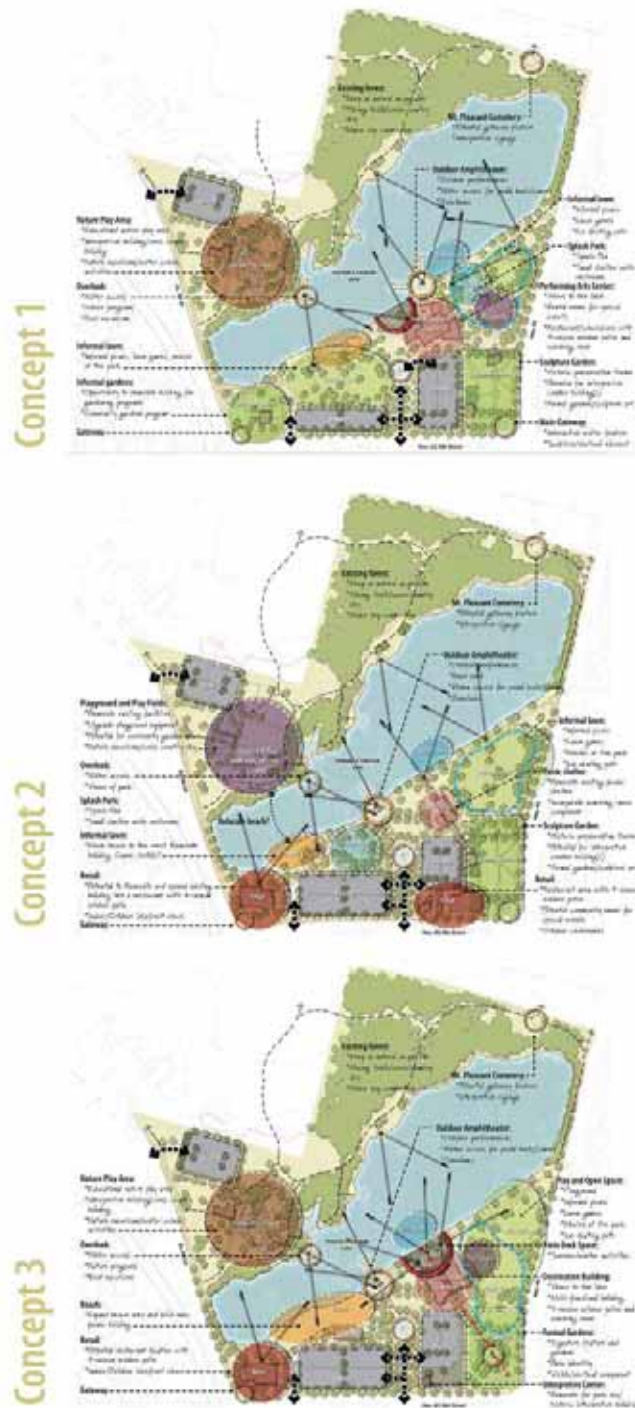


Figure 5-5. Illustrative redevelopment concepts for Fireman's Clayhole District.

**Developer Solicitation:** In order to secure an appropriate developer(s), the City's outreach to the development community typically involves developer forums, developer solicitations (requests for proposals, or RFPs), and/or broker contacts.

Among the various forms of outreach, in an RFP the City must contact a selected list of developers, present desired development concepts, and set forth rules, guidelines and deadlines. While successful in some contexts, the RFP process is not recommended for the Fireman's Park development. This is because this project must invoke unique visions and creative approaches. The magnitude of the opportunity will not likely attract institutional investors and national-profile developers; at the same time, its uniqueness will limit its appeal to innovative developers that are interested in pursuing new and potentially complex issues.

Consequently, the City must engage in a process that will enable it to identify a select range of potentially interested developers. These parties should then be engaged in discussions – individual meetings and/or organized forums – to explore concepts such as amenities, parking needs, orientations, and other such concepts. This approach enables the private development community – as well as the City – to gain information in a relatively informal, low-pressure context. It also provides time for information to circulate within an expanding pool of brokers and developers. In conducting this type of event(s), the City should first target innovative developers throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area. While Chaska is most familiar within southwest suburban Minneapolis-St. Paul, the City should not focus simply on local developers, but rather, on developers interested in creative concepts in unique, downtown environments.



## **City Square West Block**

Like Fireman's Park, the historic City Square is situated on the City's "Main Street" and the primary traffic street in the downtown core, and serves as the City's traditional community gathering place. In seeking to capitalize on this amenity, the site adjacent to the park on the west offers the following attributes:

- » **Strategic location:** in addition to its high-traffic location along Chestnut Street and the adjacent park amenity, this property sits midway between historic Second Street and potential commercial activity centers at Sixth Street. A vital redevelopment at this location would serve as a link between the north and south ends of the downtown core.
- » **No historic structures:** Catalyst projects seeking substantial amounts of new space would be able to proceed without disturbing Chaska's existing small-scale historic buildings.
- » **Limited number of property owners:** In seeking control over a potential redevelopment site, just two property owners control this block, covering sufficient area for a substantial building footprint as well as parking areas.

Given these attributes, the block to the west of City Square offers another good location for a potential commercial catalyst redevelopment project.

In preparing development guidelines for this prospective catalyst redevelopment site, the following issues arise:

- » **Library Amenity:** The potential for a new County library building on this site substantially augments redevelopment potential. This would serve the needs of the growing community and create a new, strategically located amenity and traffic generator. In general, a catalyst development involving a new library – like the Fireman's Park catalyst – could provide a mixed-use development that draws on significant public amenities to enhance commercial development prospects and thereby generate additional leisure-oriented visitation from within Chaska and its environs.
- » **Library Financing Issues:** a new County library facility would require the public sector to participate in development and contribute to development costs. Other development possibilities might involve the Carver County Land Trust. While such possibilities will have to be explored as issues arise, the Trust might play roles as a tax-favored conduit for securing, conveying and/or holding property.
- » **Library Development Concept:** Preliminary discussions between the City and the County indicate that a new state-of-the-art County library might occupy as much as 30,000 square feet. Ideally, this non-retail use should not occupy all of the building's prime street-level frontage on Chaska's "Main Street". As a redevelopment site with existing buildings, this site presents more challenges than the Fireman's Park site for attracting credit-worthy commercial tenants. Accordingly, the prospective library should serve as an amenity that can enhance market prospects for the prime high-visibility street-level spaces. Library uses should include some street-level space, but should mostly occupy upper levels.
- » **Site Control and Development Process:** Since this property is not owned by the City, the City's first steps are to engage current property owners in discussing transactions, as well as development potential and possible partnership arrangements. As noted, Carver County and/or the Carver County Land trust may also play a role.

While the City should begin site acquisition discussions at this time, the major efforts regarding this prospective project will most likely follow the Fireman's Clayhole District project. This is because (1) the Fireman's Clayhole District site offers some stronger retail locations and therefore offers stronger potential for success -- which can enhance future market prospects for this project; and (2) given the private ownership of this site versus the City-owned Fireman's Clayhole District site, development timing is more fortuitous for the Fireman's Clayhole District project.



Plan



Section

### Option 1: City Square West

- Parking ramp
- Retail/residential vertical mix - liner for parking ramp
- Plaza - between Bldg A and B
- Retail/library/post office/bank/restaurant/residential mix on Chestnut

#### Building A:

- Ground Story: Retail (14,600 sf)  
Library (4,550 sf)  
Post office (2,250 sf)  
Live/work (6 units)
- 2nd Story: Residential (34 units)
- 3rd Story: Residential (34 units)
- 4th Story: Residential (12 units)
- Underground parking: 56 spaces
- Courtyard parking: 14 spaces
- Parking requirement = 209 spaces

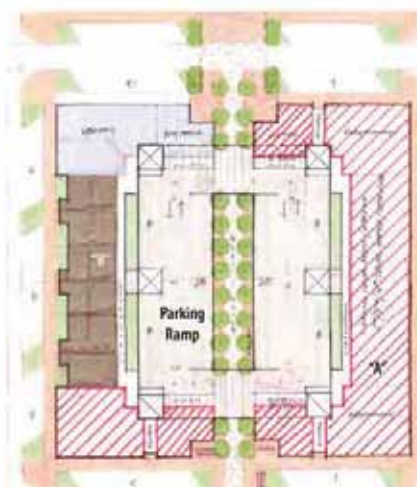
#### Building B:

- Ground Story: Retail (4,000 sf)
- Ground/2nd Story: Residential (2 st. townhomes) (10 units)
- 3rd/4th Story: Residential (2 st. loft apt) (10 units)
- Parking requirement = 46 spaces

#### Parking Ramp (part of Bldg B):

- Level 0 (below grade): 70 spaces
- Level 1: 70 spaces
- Level 2: 70 spaces
- Level 3: 70 spaces
- Level 4: 70 spaces
- Total spaces: 280 spaces

Surplus parking: 25 spaces (ramp)  
58 spaces (on-street)  
14 spaces (courtyard)



Plan



Section

### Option 3: City Square West

- Central parking ramp, split by plaza
- Library and post office at ground level facing City Hall
- Plaza/outdoor seating @ plaza
- Detached, free-standing ramp
- Retail/bank/restaurant along Chestnut Ave.

#### Building A:

- Ground Story: Retail (20,500 sf)
- 2nd Story: Office (19,900 sf)
- 3rd Story: Office (19,900 sf)
- 4th Story: Office (10,400 sf)
- Parking requirement = 257 spaces

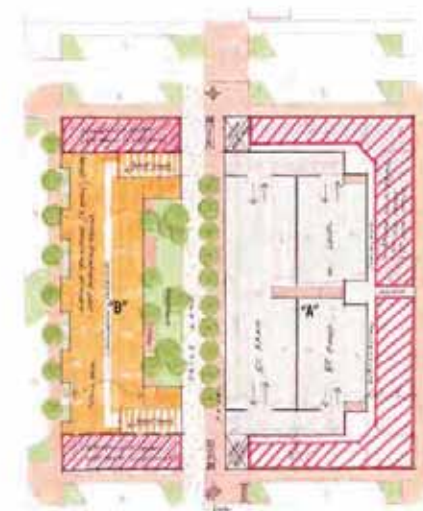
#### Building B:

- Ground Story: Retail (6,040 sf)  
Library (4,240 sf)  
Post office (1,800 sf)  
Residential (6 units)
- 2nd Story: Residential (14 units)
- 3rd Story: Residential (14 units)
- 4th Story: Residential (6 units)
- Parking requirement = 103 spaces

#### Parking Ramp:

- Level 0 (below grade): 106 spaces
- Level 1: 82 spaces
- Level 2: 106 spaces
- Level 3: 106 spaces
- Level 4: 106 spaces
- Total spaces: 506 spaces

Surplus parking: 146 spaces (ramp)  
50 spaces (on-street)



Plan



Section

### Option 2: City Square West

- Parking ramp
- Retail/office vertical mix - liner for parking ramp on Chestnut
- Restaurant/post office/bank
- Plaza - shifted west of alley centerline
- Residential on Pine Street - mix of housing types

#### Building A:

- Ground Story: Retail (15,100 sf)
- 2nd Story: Office (15,100 sf)
- 3rd Story: Office (15,100 sf)
- 4th Story: Office (7,200 sf)
- Parking requirement = 172 spaces

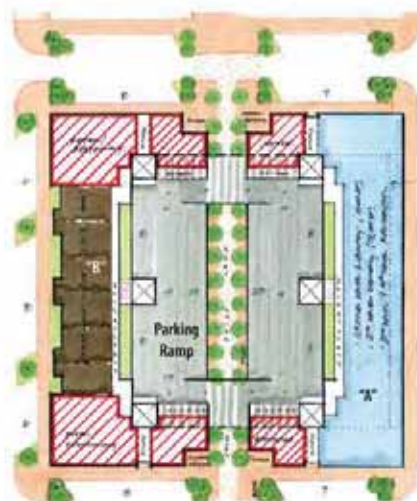
#### Building B:

- Ground Story: Retail (6,000 sf)  
Live/work (8 units)  
Residential (apts/townhomes) (14 units)
- 2nd Story: Residential (apts/townhomes) (14 units)
- 3rd Story: Residential (apts) (12 units)
- 4th Story: Residential (apts) (12 units)
- Underground Parking: 54 spaces
- Parking requirement = 174 spaces

#### Parking Ramp (part of Bldg A):

- Level 0 (below grade): 88 spaces
- Level 1: 72 spaces
- Level 2: 72 spaces
- Level 3: 72 spaces
- Level 4: 72 spaces
- Total spaces: 376 spaces

Surplus parking: 144 spaces (ramp)  
48 spaces (on-street)



Plan



Section

### Option 4: City Square West

- Central parking ramp, split by plaza
- Library and post office along Chestnut Ave.
- Plaza/outdoor seating @ plaza
- Detached, free-standing ramp
- Retail/post office/bank/restaurant

#### Building A:

- Ground Story: Library (15,500 sf)  
Retail (3,800 sf)
- 2nd Story: Library (15,500 sf)  
Residential (4 units)
- 3rd Story: Residential (24 units)
- 4th Story: Residential (12 units)
- Parking requirement = 180 spaces

#### Building B:

- Ground Story: Retail (12,200 sf)  
Residential (6 units)
- 2nd Story: Residential (24 units)
- 3rd Story: Residential (24 units)
- 4th Story: Residential (12 units)
- Parking requirement = 176 spaces

#### Parking Ramp:

- Level 0 (below grade): 106 spaces
- Level 1: 82 spaces
- Level 2: 106 spaces
- Level 3: 106 spaces
- Level 4: 106 spaces
- Total spaces: 506 spaces

Surplus parking: 210 spaces (ramp)  
50 spaces (on-street)

Figure 5-6. Illustrative redevelopment concepts for the City Square West block.



## Secondary Market Positioning Strategies

**Expanding Downtown Industry/Employment:** In addition to new restaurants and shopping experience-oriented businesses, the City of Chaska has an opportunity to re-establish downtown's position as a location for industry and employment. As noted previously, the entire "footprint" of downtown Chaska will not likely be filled with thriving commercial businesses. Therefore, the areas on the edges of the downtown core should be available for industrial uses, provided that they (1) do not exert noxious impacts on their physical surroundings or (2) are primarily industrial and do not emphasize inexpensive small-scale office space in competition with downtown locations. The resulting increase in local employment will help support local downtown businesses.

**Retaining Anchor Institutions and Critical Uses:** In addition to redevelopment and new tenants, critical existing businesses and uses in downtown Chaska include its: grocery store and its array of civic uses (including library, government offices, courthouse and court-related functions, post office), as well as any other single uses (cinema, drugstore) that can serve as "anchor" destinations for the overall district. At a policy level, the City must maintain a clear position that it will assist in retaining these businesses and amenities.

**Preserving and Using Historic Buildings:** Downtown's historic buildings provide a unique advantage that cannot be replicated in other districts. Continued profitable use is the key to preservation of these buildings. Where such buildings remain in use, they are more likely to be maintained and less likely to fall into disrepair. In maintaining and preserving these properties, historic preservation ordinances – for buildings as well as for districts -- are appropriate. In such ordinances, the City must consider:

- » *Scale: In addressing an overall district (as opposed to individual buildings), in addition to historic features, the scale of buildings and facades influences the character of the environment. Consequently, new buildings should present streetfront façades and storefronts that are consistent with the (primarily small-scale) character of the district's historic buildings.*
- » *Parking: The City should embrace parking in the interior portions of City blocks. Also, while the City need not require all small businesses and developers to provide off-street parking, new developments (as opposed to building rehabilitation projects) in the core area should be able to provide such parking in order to ensure that their customer parking does not compromise parking availability on nearby streets.*

## Market Positioning Priorities

In summarizing the market-based findings related to downtown Chaska revitalization, the key elements are an underserved local retail market, disconnected downtown destinations, and existing businesses, institutions and historic sites, which give rise to the following priorities:

- » *Promote and support unique retail/restaurant redevelopment catalyst projects along Chestnut Street (Chaska's "Main Street"), at Fireman's Park and City Square West sites;*
- » *Create a more cohesive, compact and convenient downtown district, strengthened by amenities, connections, parking and clear orientation;*
- » *Encourage industrial employment growth opportunities for redevelopment sites on the edges of downtown, as a means for generating additional customers for businesses in the downtown core and strengthening downtown as an employment center;*
- » *Retain key downtown businesses, institutions and historic buildings, which are important existing assets of downtown's economy and character.*

In general, while a broad range of downtown revitalization measures may prove useful, all should target the fundamental market positioning objective of establishing downtown Chaska as the primary community destination and gathering place for the Chaska community and its environs.





CHASKA MILL



## CHAPTER 6: downtown districts, neighborhoods & greenbelt

Our downtown area today was historically the entire town of Chaska – a traditional small town strategically located along the Minnesota River at the cross-roads of railroad lines and highways. The original town consisted of the traditional mix of a civic core area, “Main Street” commercial district, industrial areas, residential neighborhoods and major community institutions. In the context of today’s much larger Chaska community, our downtown area is often times viewed as a single place or destination. To be sure, the downtown area is a unique and identifiable place within our community for its traditional layout and historic character, in contrast to the more contemporary and suburban character of newer areas of the community.

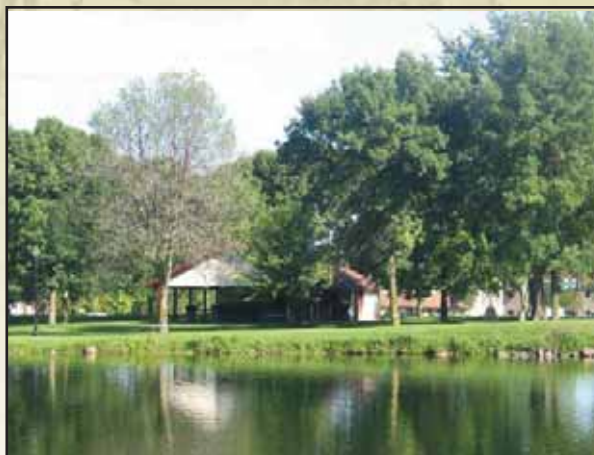
At the same time, the various sub-areas of downtown have the potential to be integral yet unique downtown districts and neighborhoods. The Chaska Downtown Master Plan establishes seven (7) downtown districts, three (3) neighborhoods, and the downtown Chaska Greenbelt, which are primarily based on major land use patterns, landscape features, and circulation routes. To guide future changes and improvements to downtown Chaska, it is helpful to identify the desired identity, development character and design features for each downtown district and neighborhood.



*Downtown East Neighborhood.*



*Riverfront District.*

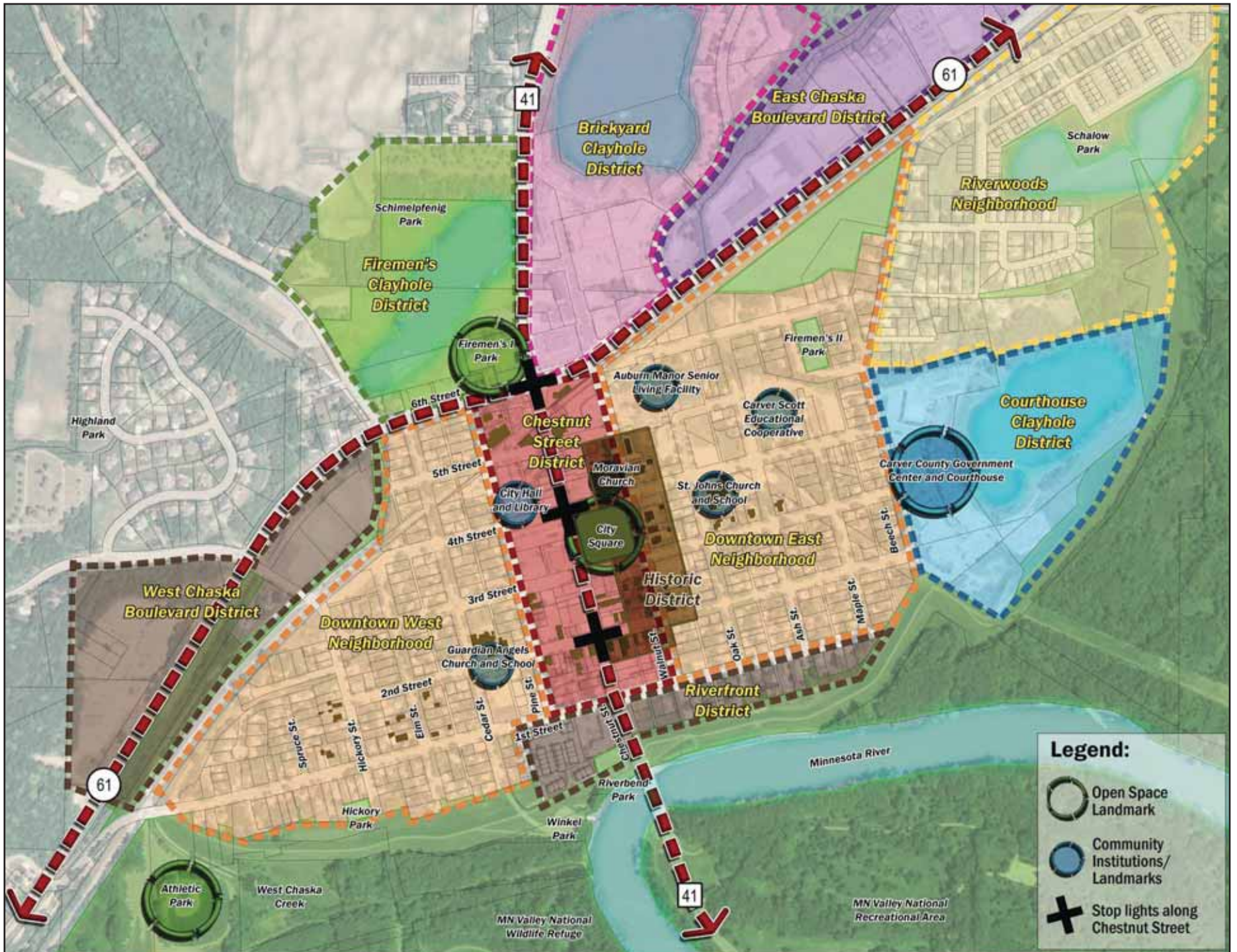


*Fireman's Clayhole Lake District.*



*Chestnut Street District.*







## Districts & Neighborhoods

- » Chestnut Street District
- » Riverfront District
- » Fireman's Clayhole District
- » Brickyard Clayhole District
- » Courthouse Clayhole District
- » Downtown Chaska Greenbelt
- » Downtown West Neighborhood
- » Downtown East Neighborhood
- » Riverwoods Neighborhood
- » East Chaska Boulevard District
- » West Chaska Boulevard District

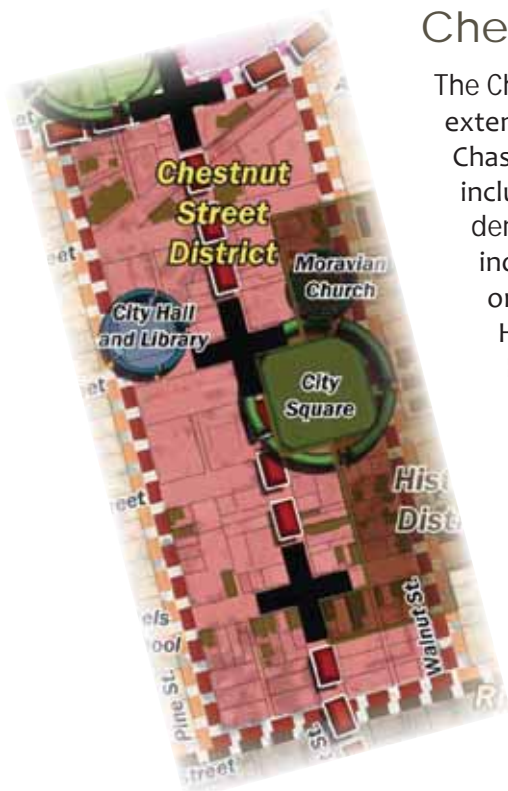


*Mix of "Main Street" commercial buildings along Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41.*

## Chestnut Street District

The Chestnut Street District encompasses the historic civic and commercial core of downtown Chaska. The district extends five blocks along both sides of Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41, which is Chaska's "Main Street", from Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 to First Street and from Walnut Street to Pine Street. The Chestnut Street District includes a broad mix of uses, including retail, services, entertainment, restaurants, offices, civic, religious, higher density residential, and single-family residential. This district contains all the designated historic commercial and industrial buildings in downtown with the exception of one historic mixed-use commercial/residential building on the east side of Walnut Street. In addition, this district contains a portion of the Walnut Street National Historic District. This district also contains most of the downtown civic institutions, including City Hall, City Police, Chaska History Center, County Library, and County License Center.

The Chestnut Street District is envisioned as a downtown mixed-use "Main Street" district dominated by traditional storefront buildings that complement downtown's historic character and scale. Due to the current negative impacts of Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41 on businesses and pedestrian movement, this district should be the priority focus for improving streets, sidewalks, alleys and mid-block passages that create a high quality and convenient pedestrian environment. This pedestrian network should be designed to create a more connected and cohesive downtown business, entertainment, civic and historic district. Historic City Square will continue to be the heart of downtown but stronger connections are needed to the surrounding civic institutions, historic commercial buildings on Second Street, the converted historic industrial district along the former railroad, and the Walnut Street National Historic District.





## Riverfront District

The Riverfront District is a unique district comprised of the five small blocks located along the Minnesota River before it turns southward – four blocks are east of Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41 and one block is west – between First Street and the levee. All of the properties east of Chestnut Street, which are all single-family houses today, are physically and visually separated from the river by the levee. The block to the west has been redeveloped with multi-story townhouses and a hotel that rise above the levee to take advantage of river views and access.

The Riverfront District's future identity should be one of riverfront housing in higher density residential buildings with convenient access to downtown shopping, services, entertainment, institutions, and natural amenities. Riverfront housing options should include townhouses, condos and apartments that are oriented to the river, adjacent open spaces, and future levee lanes. New housing should provide river views and optimize the extensive park, trail and open space system along the river. Mixed-use development would be appropriate at the intersection of Chestnut Street and First Street as the gateway corner to the commercial district along Chestnut Street. This district should be designed to provide public access points to the levee trail and connected open spaces via the levee lanes.



## Fireman's Clayhole District

The Fireman's Clayhole District encompasses the quadrant northwest of the intersection of Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41 and Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 that surrounds Fireman's Clayhole Lake. This area was the location of one of the major brickyards in Chaska and the clayhole lake is a remnant of this previous industry. This district contains two community parks – Fireman's Park south of the lake and Schimelpfenig Park north of the lake.

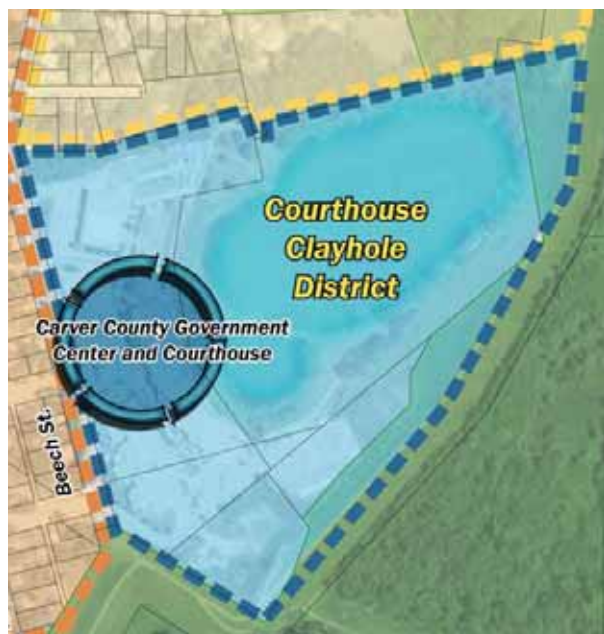
This district's future identity is envisioned as an expanded and enhanced signature downtown community park that serves as a downtown gateway, visual landmark, gathering place, trailhead and community destination with strong connections to Chestnut Street and the historic downtown commercial district. Fireman's Clayhole Park will be a major destination/trailhead on the future Southwest LRT Regional Trail, which is planned to run along Creek Road, looping around downtown via the levee trail to the south and connecting to Victoria to the north. Due to this district's strategic location at the intersection of two highways and downtown gateway potential, this district is envisioned to have complementary destination commercial businesses, preferably restaurants or entertainment, that have good highway visibility and connections to the park & lake amenities. The character of future development in this district should complement the surrounding development and celebrate the importance of this site to the City's brickmaking history.



## Brickyard Clayhole District

The Brickyard Clayhole District is the quadrant northeast of the intersection of Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41 and Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 and includes Brickyard Clayhole Lake. Its eastern border is Yellow Brick Road and East Chaska Creek. The Brickyard Clayhole District is a former brickyard's site that has redeveloped as an extension of downtown Chaska with higher density housing in both mixed-use buildings and townhomes, a mix of commercial businesses including downtown's grocery store, and some professional offices/services including the Carver County Community Development Agency. Much of the housing in the district overlooks the Brickyard Clayhole Lake.

The Brickyard Clayhole District's future identity is envisioned as a mixed-use downtown district that offers higher density housing options with convenient access to downtown shopping, services and natural amenities. This district has convenient access to both Brickyard Clayhole Lake and Fireman's Clayhole Lake/Fireman's Park. The Brickyard Clayhole District and Riverfront District are viewed as two ends of the downtown dumbbell that provides higher density downtown housing at each end of the Chestnut Street District's commercial and civic assets. As this district continues to redevelop, street connections should be enhanced, such as a new four-way intersection at Yellow Brick Road/Ash Street/Chaska Boulevard and an east-west street connection between Walnut Street and Yellow Brick Road. Similar to Fireman's Clayhole District, this district's strategic location at the intersection of two highways and downtown gateway potential create opportunities for destination commercial businesses along Chestnut Street and Chaska Boulevard.



## Courthouse Clayhole District

The Courthouse Clayhole District is located on the east side of downtown, between Beech Street and the levee, and consists of the Carver County Government Center and Courthouse Clayhole Lake. This district's future identity will continue to evolve as a major civic and employment district within downtown Chaska. This district is also part of the Chaska Greenbelt. As Carver County continues to grow in population, the Carver County Government Center will need to expand as well. The City will continue to partner with the County on exploring opportunities for enabling expansion of the Government Center within downtown Chaska, including additional/shared parking facilities, shared County/City downtown facilities, and nearby downtown redevelopment sites.

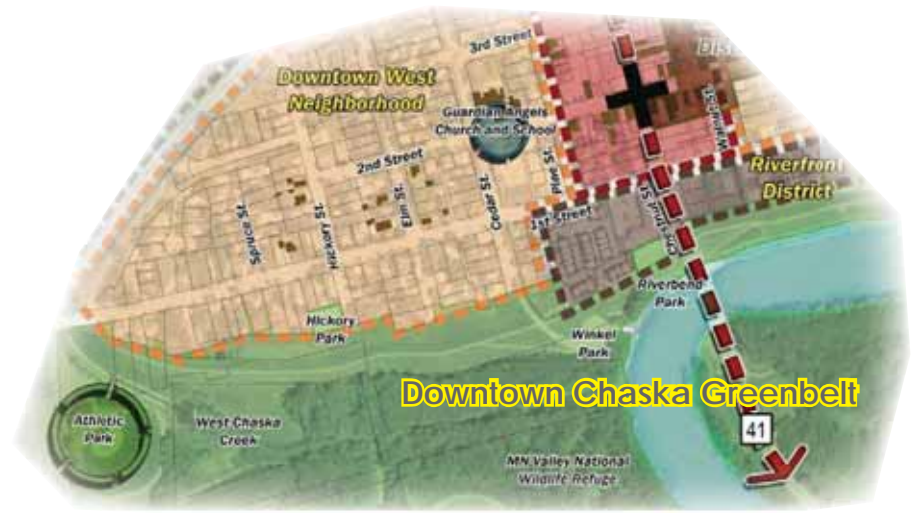
Courthouse Clayhole Lake is also a major recreational destination for fishing, boating, walking and biking. This open space recreation area is a hidden gem and should be better connected to downtown's park, open space & trail system via additional trail connections. Courthouse Clayhole Lake will also be a major destination/trailhead on the future Southwest LRT Regional Trail, which is planned to run along the levee trail connecting to Chanhassen to the east and Victoria to the northwest. Courthouse Clayhole Lake will continue to be a major feature of the Chaska Greenbelt in the downtown area and opportunities may be explored for better connecting this district to the large green open space between the levee and the river.



## Downtown Chaska Greenbelt

The Chaska Greenbelt within the downtown area encompasses the green open spaces between the Minnesota River and the levee; from the railroad corridor/County Road 61 (west) to the East Chaska Creek diversion channel (east). Major features within the downtown area of the Chaska Greenbelt include the Minnesota River, West Chaska Creek, Chaska Lake, the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Athletic Park, Winkel Park, Riverbend Park, Courthouse Clayhole Lake, East Chaska Creek, and the levee trail. The Southwest LRT Regional Trail is planned to run along the levee trail connecting to Chanhassen to the east and Victoria to the northwest. Just across the Minnesota River is the Minnesota Valley National Recreation Area.

The downtown area of the Chaska Greenbelt is envisioned to become a more connected open space destination for downtown residents, employees and visitors.

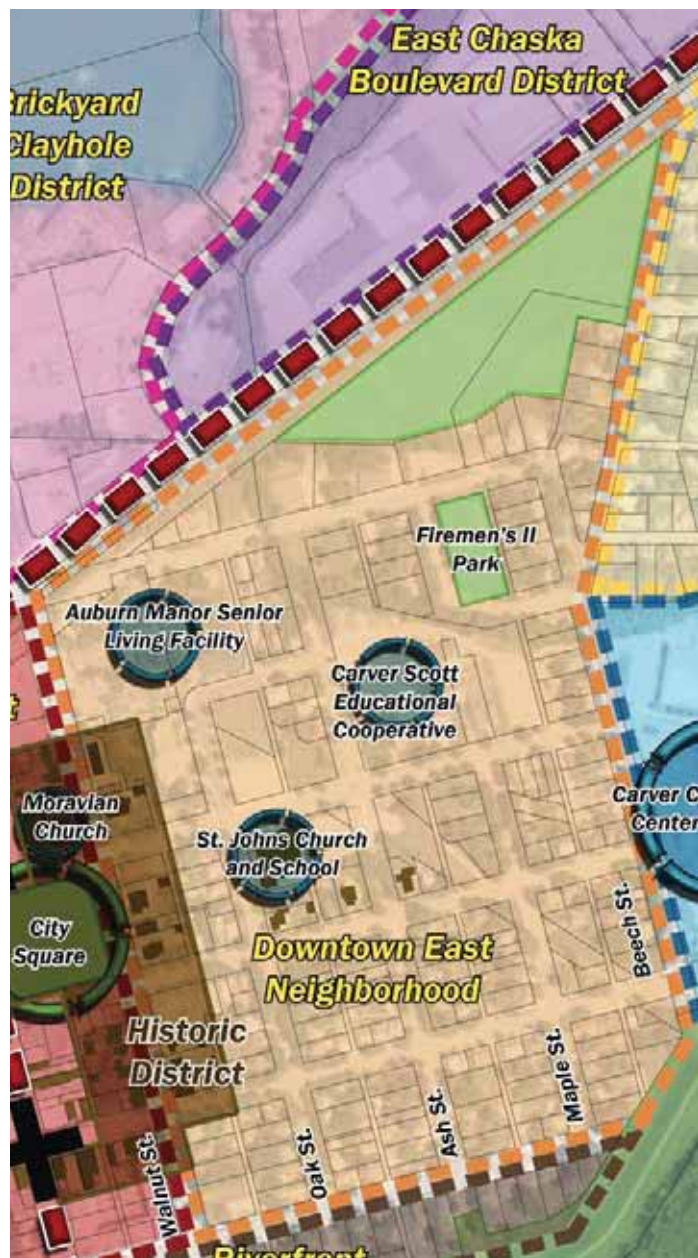


## Downtown West Neighborhood

The Downtown West Neighborhood encompasses the primarily residential neighborhood between Pine Street (east) and the levee/West Chaska Creek diversion channel (west and south) and Chaska Boulevard (north). The neighborhood's homes are exclusively single-family detached today, including eight (8) homes with historic designation, all located between First St and Second St. The neighborhood is also home to Guardian Angels Catholic church & elementary school, Carver County License Center, and a private funeral home. The Guardian Angels church and friary buildings are also designated historic buildings. Hickory Park, a mini-park/tot lot, is located at the south edge of the neighborhood.

The future identity of this downtown neighborhood is envisioned as a traditional small town neighborhood that celebrates its historic character, traditional mix of housing styles, connections to the river's natural open spaces, and convenient access to downtown's services and amenities. Building upon the existing mix of activities along Pine Street, future changes along Pine Street may include higher density housing or neighborhood-friendly businesses. Desired improvements to the neighborhood include the addition of a neighborhood park, trail connections between the neighborhood and the levee trail, street reconstructions, stormwater drainage, bike trail connections/loops (e.g. Cedar Street), and enhancements to existing community parks (Fireman's Clayhole, Athletic, and Winkel). Opportunities for shared park facilities between the neighborhood and Guardian Angels school will be explored.





## Downtown East Neighborhood

The Downtown East Neighborhood encompasses the neighborhood area between Walnut Street (west), Beech Street (east), First Street (south), and Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 (north). The neighborhood's development pattern has been influenced by the West Chaska Creek channel, the former railroad/current overhead power line corridor that bisects the neighborhood, and the large wetland in the northeast corner. The northern portion of the neighborhood is a mix of residential, institutional, and industrial land use. It is home to St. John's Lutheran church & elementary school, Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative School, Auburn Manor Homes (housing & services for seniors), and Carver County Community Social Services. Fireman's II Park, which is park owned by the Chaska School District, is located in the northeast corner of the neighborhood. The southern portion of the neighborhood is almost entirely detached single-family homes, including ten (10) homes that have historic designations. The properties on the east side of Walnut Street, between Fifth St and 2nd St, are part of the Walnut Street National Historic District. There is a mix of land uses along Walnut Street, including high density residential, single-family residential, retail and office.

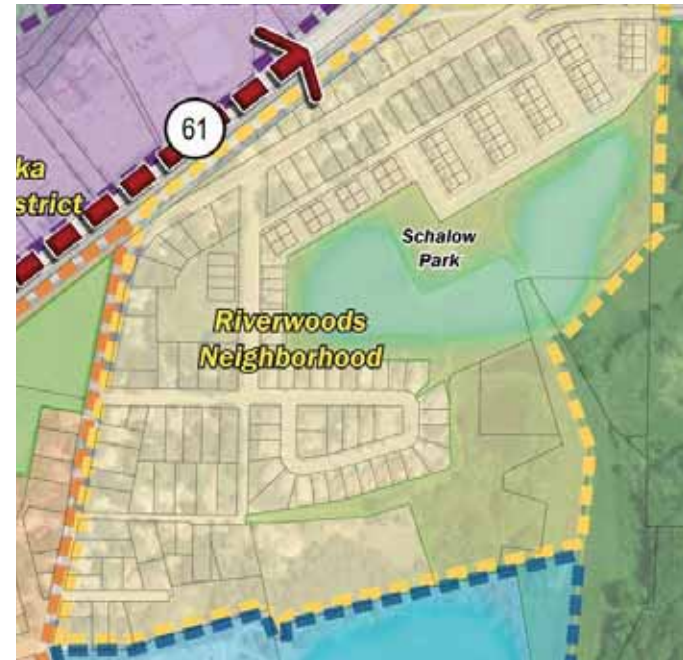
This neighborhood's future identity will continue to evolve into a downtown residential neighborhood with educational, religious and senior facilities at its core, strong historic character, traditional mix of housing styles, connections to the river's natural open spaces, and convenient access to downtown services and amenities. Significant changes in public infrastructure are anticipated that will enhance this neighborhood, such as discontinued use of the Union Pacific railroad line, relocation of the overhead power lines, and potential street connections to Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 at Ash Street and Stoughton/Beech. Building upon the existing mix of activities along Pine Street, future changes along Pine Street may include higher density housing or neighborhood-friendly businesses. Desired improvements to the neighborhood include the addition of a neighborhood park, trail connections between the neighborhood and the levee trail, street reconstructions, stormwater drainage, bike trail connections/loops (e.g. Ash Street and Third Street), and enhancements to existing community parks (Fireman's Clayhole, Athletic, and Winkel). Opportunities for shared park facilities between the neighborhood and St. John's school will be explored.



## Riverwoods Neighborhood

The Riverwoods Neighborhood consists of the neighborhood area between Stoughton Avenue (west), Zemble Street/levee (east), Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 (north), and East Chaska Creek (south). This neighborhood encompasses the older homes along Stoughton Avenue as well as the newer detached homes and townhouses south and east of Stoughton Avenue. Schalow Park, a new neighborhood park, and the surrounding wetlands are at the center of this neighborhood.

With its location on the eastern edge of downtown, this exclusively residential neighborhood is envisioned to be better connected to downtown and Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 in the future. New trails are envisioned for the Union Pacific railroad corridor, Stoughton Ave/Beech St, and 6th Street. In addition, the Southwest LRT Regional Trail is planned to run along the levee trail connecting to Chanhassen to the east and Victoria to the northwest. A new street connection to Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 is proposed at the west end of Stoughton Avenue to create an intersection with Fire Lane to the north.



## East Chaska Boulevard District

The East Chaska Boulevard District is the area east of downtown along the north side of Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61, between Yellow Brick Road (west) and Crosstown Boulevard (east), with East Chaska Creek as its northern boundary. This district has been developed with almost entirely commercial land uses today with the exception of a higher density housing development on Crosstown Boulevard. The current commercial uses are highway-oriented as a result of this corridor's long history as U.S. Highway 212, including three restaurants, gas station, car wash, auto sales business, and the Chaska Building Center/Hardware Store.

Now that new U.S. Highway 212 has been completed in central Chaska, this highway has been turned back to Carver County as County Road 61 and the City has renamed it Chaska Boulevard. In order to encourage the concentration and viability of healthy commercial businesses in downtown Chaska and provide opportunities for job growth near downtown, this district is envisioned to transition to more of an employment center. As this district redevelops, it is guided toward a mix of business park uses, such as light industries, offices, research and development services, and medical. The goal is to increase the diversity and concentration of jobs within the downtown area. Multi-story buildings may be appropriate to achieve higher jobs per acre and the needs of site redevelopment.





## West Chaska Boulevard District

The West Chaska Boulevard District is the area west of downtown along both sides of Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61, between the Chaska Historical Marker (west) and the levee/West Chaska Creek diversion channel. This district essentially consists of two large redevelopment areas immediately west of downtown. The area east of Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 is separated from the downtown core and neighborhoods by the levee and the former Union Pacific railroad corridor. Most of the area is currently used as the storage and maintenance site for school buses, while the site west of Hickory Street is a vacant residential site. The area west of Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 consists of a large auto salvage operation and a Carver County Public Works facility.

This district is envisioned as a major redevelopment opportunity area that could benefit the viability of downtown Chaska as a vibrant commercial district. The site east of Chaska Boulevard is guided for redevelopment to business park uses. Similar to the East Chaska Boulevard District, the goal is to increase the diversity and concentration of jobs within the downtown area. Multi-story buildings may be appropriate to achieve higher jobs per acre and the needs of site redevelopment. The site west of Chaska Boulevard is guided for redevelopment to higher density residential uses. This site's unique characteristics, including its elevation above downtown and the river valley, wooded bluffs to the west, attractive views, and convenient access to downtown's services and amenities make it a premium redevelopment site for downtown housing.





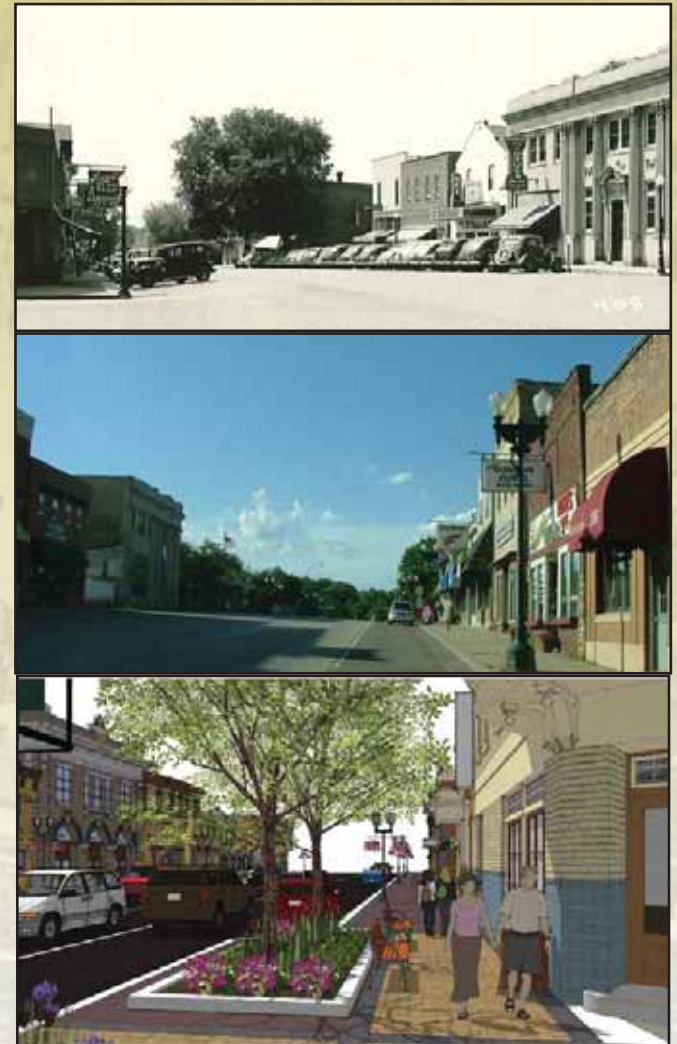


## CHAPTER 7: downtown plan for the future

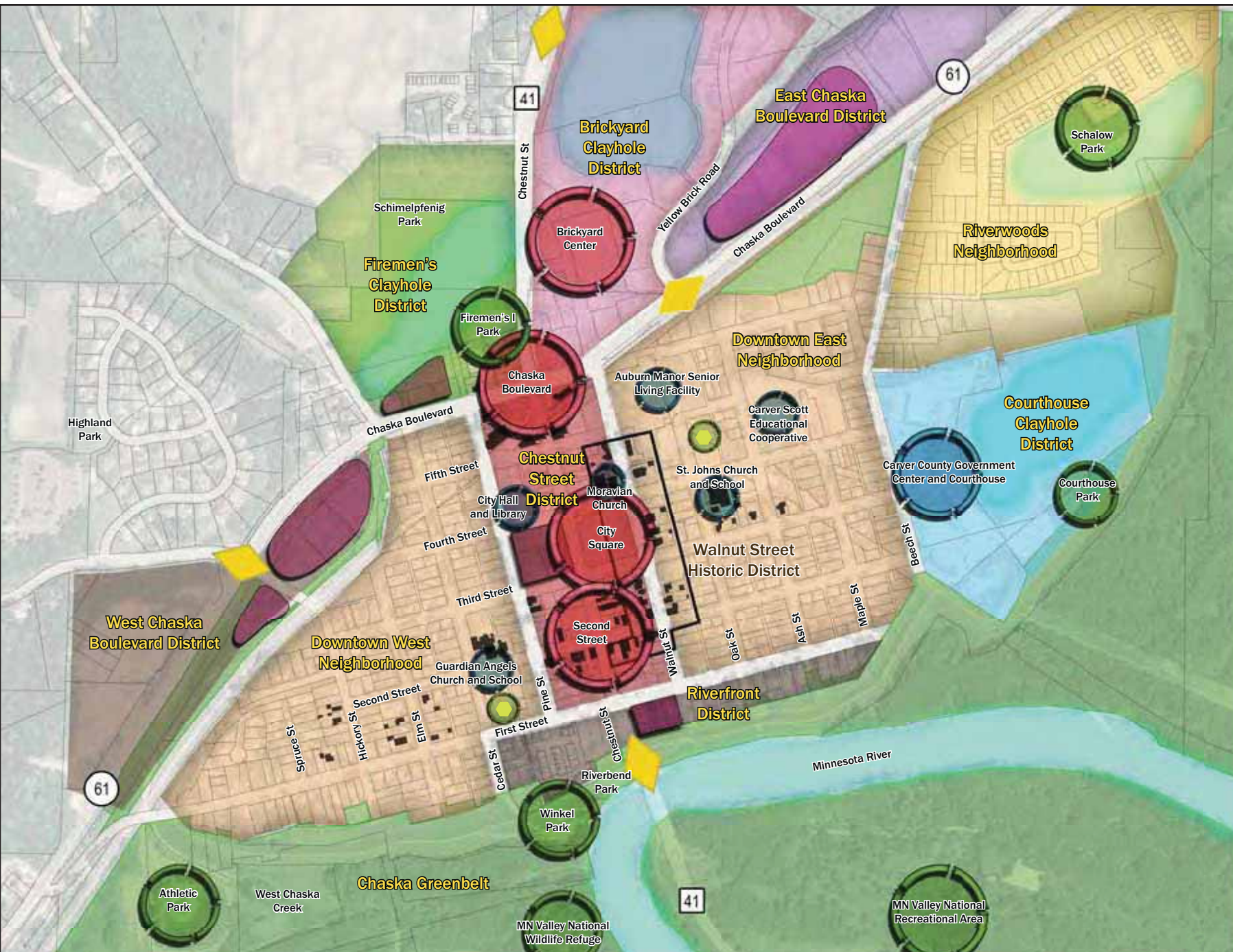
Building upon the future vision of Downtown Chaska that encompasses multiple districts and neighborhoods, the Downtown Plan for the Future envisions downtown as home to a wide variety of destinations. In order to attract people downtown, there needs to be a concentration or critical mass of destinations. These destinations need to be woven together and complement each other in order to restore downtown as the community's main gathering place.

As a traditional small town, Chaska's downtown should be centered on City Square and "Main Street" – Chestnut Street - as its heart and spine. The Chestnut Street district should function as a series of "Main Street" destinations from the southern riverfront gateway to the historic Chestnut & Second St commercial node to the historic City Square node to the City Plaza node to the Chaska Boulevard node to the northern downtown gateways of Fireman's Clayhole district and Brickyard Clayhole district. Beyond the downtown core are major community institutions, including the Carver County Government Center, Guardian Angels Church & School, St. John's Church & School, Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative School, Moravian Church and Auburn Manor senior living campus. As the centerpiece of downtown, the Chestnut Street district contains a wealth of historic buildings that should be sensitively preserved, reused, and celebrated as the key to retaining and enhancing downtown Chaska's unique sense of place.

Downtown will also become a destination for a wealth of recreational opportunities. As one of the most visible and accessible segments of the Chaska Greenbelt, the downtown greenbelt offers significant potential for creating a major natural and recreational amenity right next to downtown. Improvements to Athletic Park, Winkel Park, Riverbend Park, the levee trail/open space system, and the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge will build a one-of-a-kind downtown greenbelt for Chaska residents and







# Legend:

- Open Space Destination
- Main Street Destination
- Community Institution Destination
- Catalyst Redevelopment Site
- Downtown Gateway
- Future Neighborhood Parks
- Designated Historic Buildings

Vision:  
Downtown  
Destinations



Figure 7-1. Vision of Downtown Destinations.



visitors. Fireman's Park will be redesigned and enhanced as the signature downtown community park that integrates the site's natural features, including Fireman's Clayhole, with its heritage as a former brickyard and strategic location in the downtown gateway area. For downtown residents and community institutions, high quality neighborhood parks will be added to both neighborhoods. Development of a more complete downtown trail network, using the levee as well as streets, will create better recreational trail connections within downtown and links to the regional trail network.

Downtown's streets are in poor condition and are all planned to be reconstructed over the next ten years. Redesigning and reconstructing the streets to create a much more attractive, comfortable and safer environment for all users will attract more residents and visitors to downtown, whether driving, walking or biking. Working with MN DOT, it is critical that Chestnut St be redesigned as a more traditional and multi-functional "Main Street" that balances the needs of vehicles, pedestrians, and businesses.

## A. Built Environment

Downtown's future built environment should celebrate its historic and traditional character yet embrace additions and improvements that enhance the functionality, attractiveness, and experience of downtown to meet the needs of today's economy and lifestyles. Although downtown contains some potential redevelopment sites, it is not a redevelopment area in general.

### Minnesota's Brick City

Downtown Chaska's wealth of remaining historic buildings and sites is one of its strongest assets. Downtown's historic buildings and sites include a broad range of building types, including mixed-use, commercial, industrial, churches, hotel, train depot, livery stables, residential (stately mansions, single-family homes, and rowhouses), ball park, and clayhole lakes (former brickyard areas). These historic buildings and sites create a very strong sense of place in downtown. In particular, the concentration of Chaska brick buildings in downtown makes it a unique place. Historic Chaska brick commercial/mixed-use buildings are clustered along Second St and Chestnut St while former industrial buildings are clustered along the recently abandoned rail line. While historic Chaska brick residences line Walnut

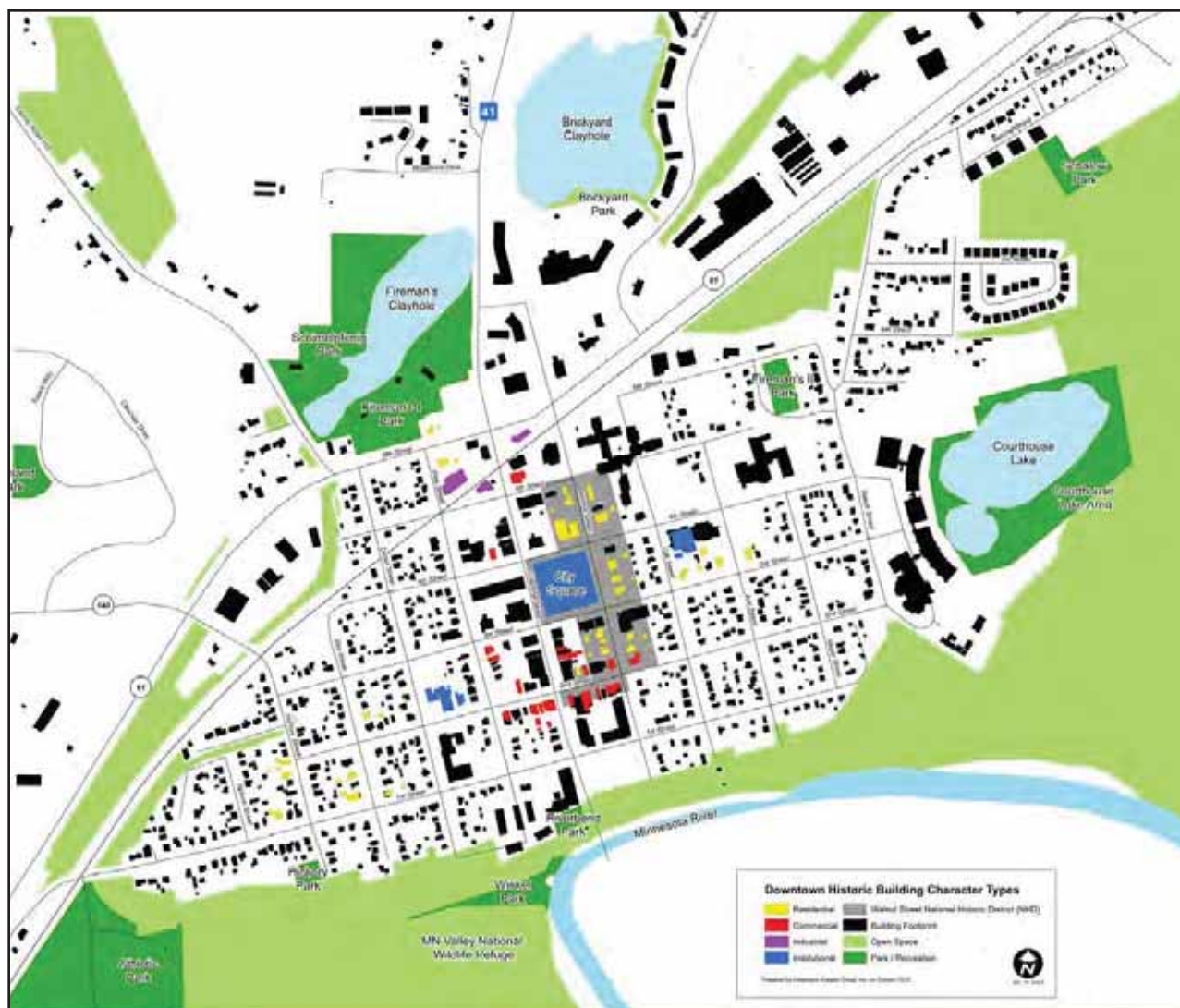


Figure 7-2. Map of downtown built environment including historic buildings by character type.



St, hence the designation of the Walnut Street National Historic District, they are also scattered along most other downtown streets.

In 1996, the City Council adopted a resolution recognizing and declaring the City of Chaska as “Minnesota’s Brick City”. Since, literally, no other downtown in the world has this unique Chaska brick building character, any future changes in downtown should complement and enhance the unique character of its Chaska brick buildings. Revitalization of downtown Chaska should capitalize on downtown’s unique potential as “Minnesota’s Brick City”. Preservation and enhancement of downtown’s historic character, including the Chaska brick building character, is especially important along Chestnut St, as Chaska’s “Main Street”, Second St, Walnut St, and surrounding City Square. Since these four areas have the strongest historic character, they offer the greatest opportunities for revitalization initiatives.

Downtown revitalization is two-pronged in regard to buildings: redevelopment of vacant/underutilized sites and reinvestment in historic buildings. A key initiative for restoring and expanding downtown’s unique character as “Minnesota’s Brick City” is to spur on rehabilitation of existing historic buildings in the Chestnut St district. A number of historic preservation success stories have occurred in downtown over the years. Since the true strength of downtown’s historic character is related more to the remaining clusters or streetscapes of historic buildings, rather than individual buildings, it is important that all buildings be restored on



Figure 7-3. The Potential Revitalization Opportunities map above shows vacant sites, as well as potential sites for redevelopment, property improvements, or historic building renovations.

a street with historic character. Downtown revitalization should provide for greater interpretation and connectivity between the variety of historic areas in downtown to create a more legible and intriguing historic context for downtown activities. For redevelopment sites, it is critical that new buildings be designed to complement the character of historic downtown buildings, particularly in the Chestnut Street district. Key elements of historic commercial/mixed-use buildings in downtown include Chaska brick exterior, two stories, modest architecture, large storefront windows, and second-story balconies.

## Traditional Small Town Character

Downtown Chaska's traditional small town heritage and character should be preserved and enhanced as part of future revitalization initiatives. From a city design perspective, the key elements of this traditional small town character include City Square, "Main Street", river town, a regular street grid oriented to the river, alleys, sidewalks both sides of streets, broad mix of land uses, primarily two-story mixed-use buildings on "Main Street", narrow side-by-side buildings with large window storefronts, on-street diagonal parking, and a variety of older homes on tree-lined residential streets.

To strengthen the traditional small town character of downtown, some key revitalization initiatives will be to increase street network connections, particularly in the northeast quadrant, maximize on-street parking options and limit off-street parking lots that front onto streets, ensure heights and widths of new "Main Street" buildings fit with the traditional downtown scale, and place new buildings up to the sidewalk. Future parking strategies should support economic development in downtown, however, additional off-street surface parking options should be discouraged from harming the traditional character of side-by-side buildings along downtown core streets.

## Future Land Use Patterns

If the goal is to create a great downtown, it's not enough to have a single land use that dominates the downtown area. The future land use plan for downtown should serve as a guide for increasing downtown's mix of land uses, including commercial, office, civic, residential, and park/open space. The Chestnut St district, which is the downtown core, should become a downtown mixed-use district that is dominated by commercial storefronts at street level with other uses above street level. Along Chaska Boulevard/Cty Rd 61, commercial land uses are envisioned to remain as this is a major gateway area for downtown.

Large downtown edge sites along Chaska Boulevard/Cty Rd 61 that are vacant/underutilized should be redeveloped with commercial/industrial land uses that will not directly compete with existing and future retail/restaurant land uses in the downtown core.

The Riverfront District should be guided for High Density Residential as these four half-blocks offer the only future potential for developing new housing that could take advantage of river views and connections. Higher Density Residential is also appropriate for the large potential redevelopment site on the west side of Chaska Boulevard/Cty Rd 61.

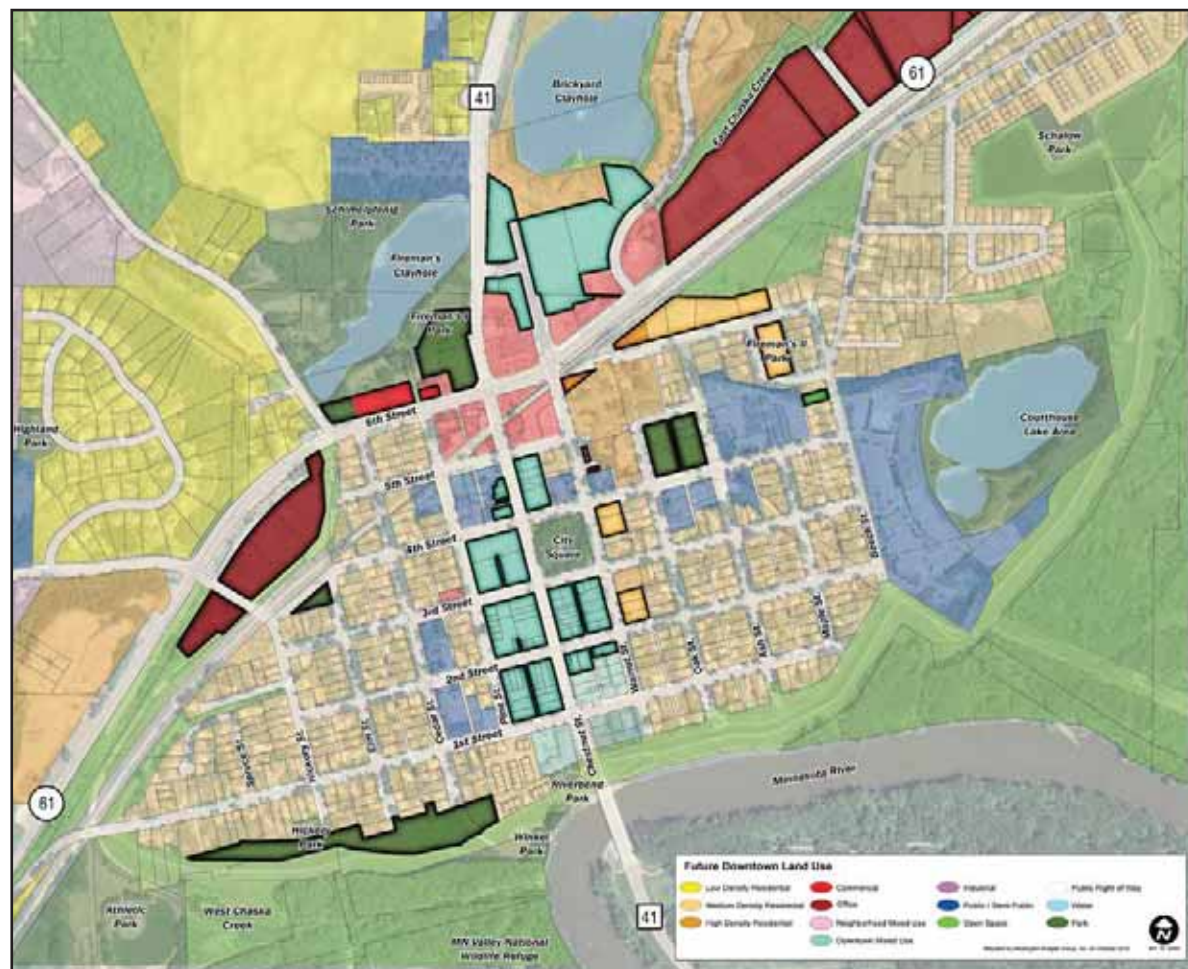


Figure 7-4. Map shows recommended future land uses for the downtown area with recommended land use changes outlined in black.



## Convenient Parking

To support the success of existing downtown businesses and attract new businesses, downtown parking needs to be managed wisely for ensuring adequate quantity, convenience and quality of parking areas. Chaska's traditional downtown character of side-by-side building storefronts located up to the sidewalk is primarily reliant on street parking rather than off-street parking for each building. Since the community's goal is to preserve downtown's historic character, future parking will continue to be primarily reliant on public parking. Downtown's future parking needs will be provided through a variety of types: on-street diagonal spaces, on-street parallel spaces, off-street surface lots (private, shared, and public), and a potential municipal parking ramp. While future off-street parking lots could be options, the location, size and design of off-street parking lots needs to be sensitive to the preservation of downtown's historic character of streets enclosed with building storefronts up to the sidewalk.

A key strategy for a successful downtown parking program is to have a Downtown Parking Management Plan that is used, maintained and enforced. The parking plan should include designating on-street parking areas for customers/clients vs. business owners/employees, improving and expanding short term (two-hour) parking areas, increasing the quantity of on-street parking spaces by converting some parallel parking areas to diagonal spaces, setting up shared parking agreements between businesses, developing public off-street parking lots, improving signage for parking, and negotiating with MN DOT to redesign Chestnut Street (MN Hwy 41) with on-street parking on both sides.



Figure 7-5. Downtown Parking.

## Catalyst Redevelopment Sites

Opportunity redevelopment sites were identified within the downtown area. These sites are vacant, owned by the City of Chaska, underutilized sites, or contain uses and structures that do not fit or support the context and development pattern of historic downtown Chaska. While the downtown area contains several opportunity sites as shown in Figure 7-3, three sites were identified for further study. Each site represents a significant opportunity for visible and positive change that can catalyze new interest and the revitalization of downtown Chaska. These catalyst sites, chosen for further study, include Fireman's Clayhole District (the north gateway into downtown), the Riverfront District (the south gateway into downtown), and City Square West, which is the block west of City Square in the heart of downtown.

Several revitalization scenarios were created for each catalyst site. Each scenario explores a theme, land use options, open space and parking strategies, and analyzes redevelopment potential. Revitalization scenarios explore ways to create new businesses, housing, civic institutions, parks and gathering spaces for downtown Chaska. They explore options for additional public parking facilities, restoring historic patterns of development, preserving community identity and enhancing a sense of place unique to downtown Chaska. The following provides a more detailed description for each scenario prepared for the three catalyst redevelopment sites.

### Fireman's Clayhole District

Fireman's Clayhole District encompasses the quadrant northwest of the intersection of Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41 and Chaska Boulevard/County Road 61 that surrounds

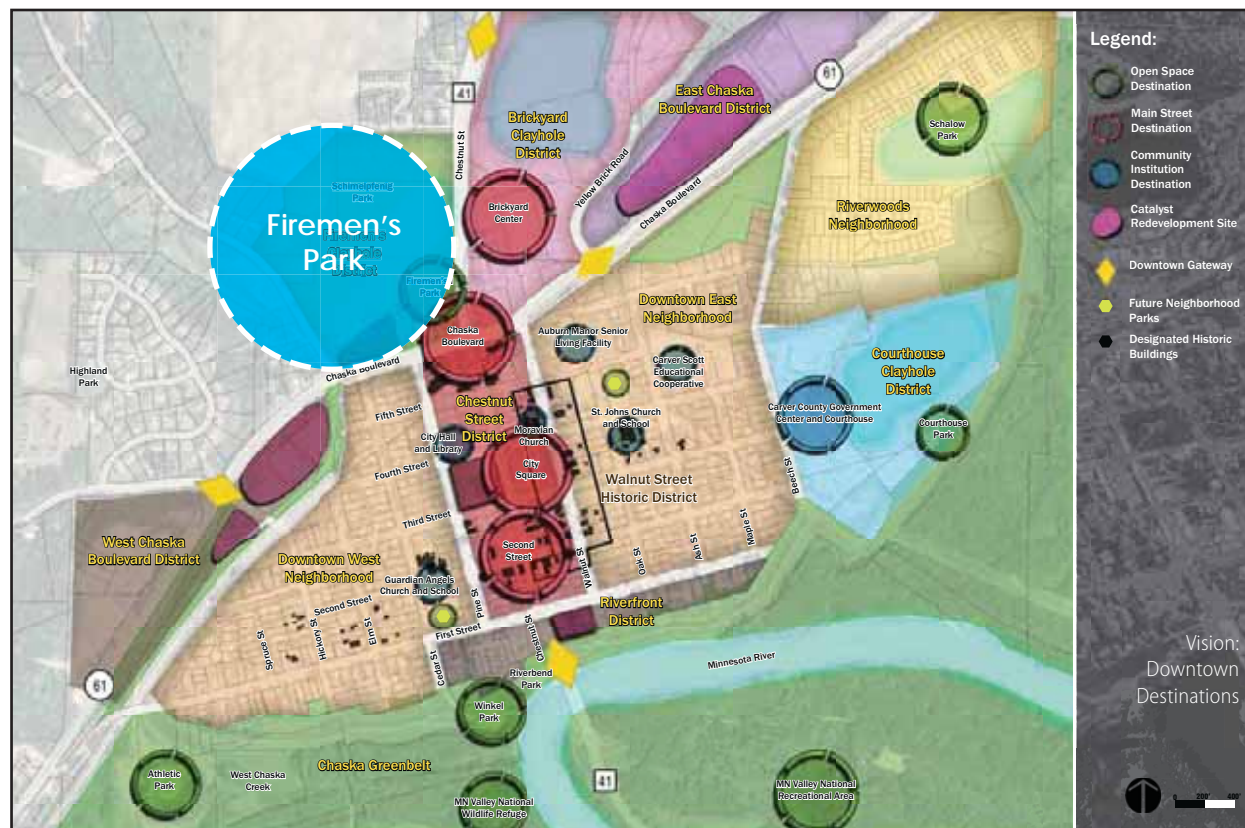


Figure 7-6. Fireman's Clayhole District catalyst redevelopment site.

Fireman's Clayhole Lake. This area was the location of one of the major brickyards in Chaska and the clayhole lake is a remnant of this previous industry. Fireman's Park rests on land donated to the City of Chaska in 1961 by Charles Klein for use as a public park. Many of the park's features were originally built by the Chaska Fire Department. The park's historical significance, visibility as a gateway into downtown Chaska, convenient access off Chaska Boulevard, and public ownership make it an excellent candidate as a site to catalyze revitalization and enhance community identity for downtown Chaska.

The site's future identity is envisioned as an expanded and enhanced signature downtown community park that serves as a downtown gateway, visual landmark, gathering place, trailhead and community destination with strong connections to Chestnut Street and the historic downtown district. The site is envisioned to include complementary commercial uses, preferably restaurants or entertainment, that have good highway visibility and a relationship to the park and lake amenities. The character of future development should complement the historic context of downtown Chaska and celebrate the importance of this site to the City's brickmaking history.

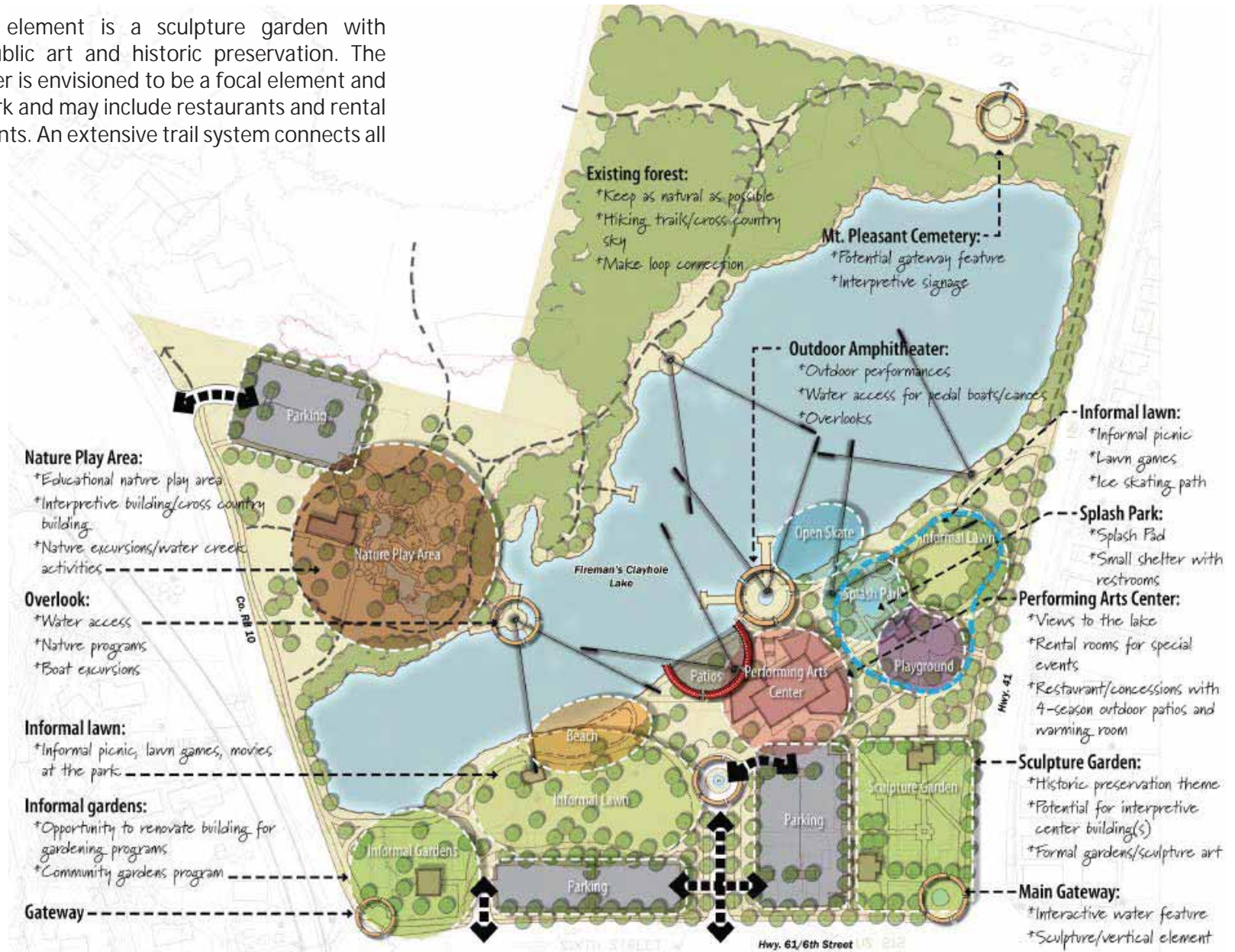


## Fireman's Clayhole District - Scenario A

Scenario A features a performing arts center on the lake, a splash park, sculpture garden, nature-based play area, playground, beach, gardens, patios and open lawn areas. Parking is provided on-site.

The main gateway element is a sculpture garden with opportunities for public art and historic preservation. The performing arts center is envisioned to be a focal element and destination of the park and may include restaurants and rental rooms for special events. An extensive trail system connects all park destinations.

Figure 7-7. Redevelopment scenario A for Fireman's Clayhole District catalyst redevelopment site.



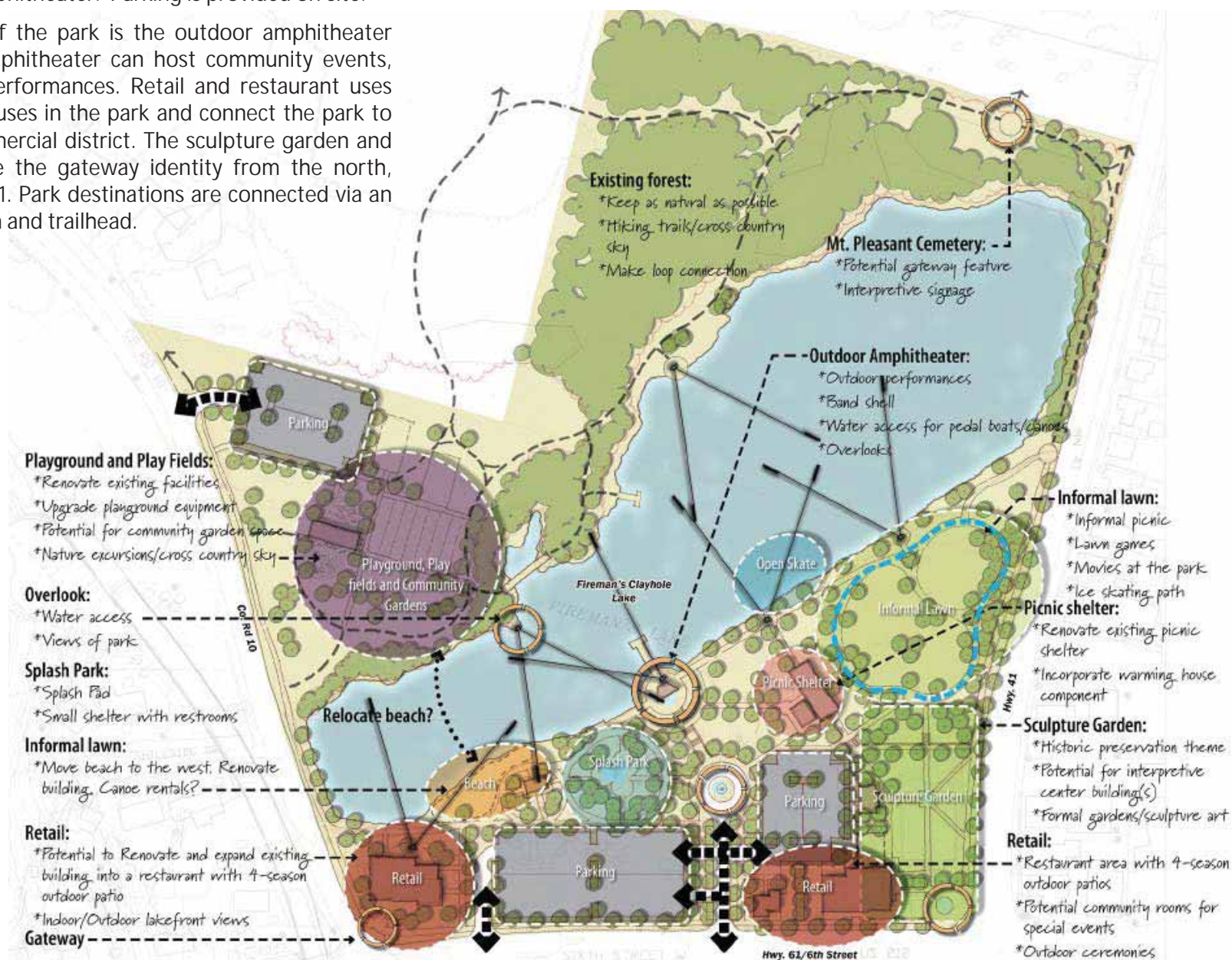


## Fireman's Clayhole District - Scenario B

Scenario B features a renovated picnic shelter, a retail/restaurant node along County Road 61, splash park, sculpture garden, beach, playground, play fields, community gardens, and a community amphitheater. Parking is provided on-site.

The focal element of the park is the outdoor amphitheater on the lake. The amphitheater can host community events, plays and musical performances. Retail and restaurant uses should complement uses in the park and connect the park to the downtown commercial district. The sculpture garden and informal lawn create the gateway identity from the north, along MN Highway 41. Park destinations are connected via an extensive trail system and trailhead.

Figure 7-8. Redevelopment scenario B for Fireman's Clayhole District catalyst redevelopment site.



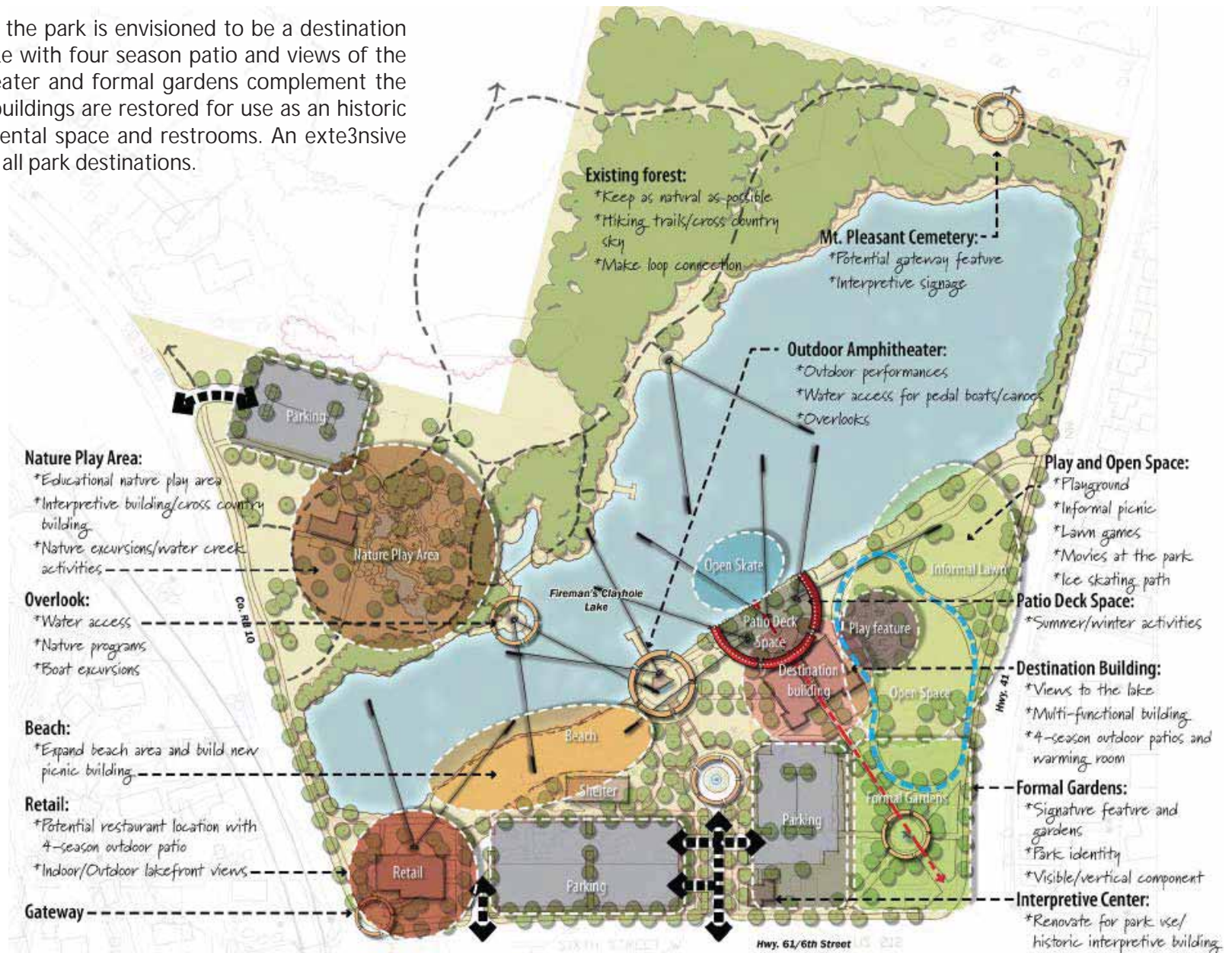


## Fireman's Clayhole District - Scenario C

Scenario C features a multi-use park building, interpretive center, outdoor amphitheater, large beach, nature-based play area, play features, formal gardens open lawns and outdoor patios on the lake. Parking is provided on-site.

The focal element of the park is envisioned to be a destination restaurant on the lake with four season patio and views of the lake. An outdoor theater and formal gardens complement the restaurant. Existing buildings are restored for use as an historic interpretive center, rental space and restrooms. An extensive trail system connects all park destinations.

Figure 7-9. Redevelopment scenario C for Fireman's Clayhole District catalyst redevelopment site.



## City Square West

The site entitled “City Square West” lies directly to the west of City Square Park, Block 27, located between Chestnut and Pine Streets, and Third and Fourth Streets. For several decades, the site was host to the Carver County Courthouse and County Library, a two-story, Italianate-style building that proudly fronted City Square Park, until it was replaced in 1966. Today the site contains a bank, post office, and a mix of various retail uses including restaurants, laundry mat and surface parking lots. The sites buildings are primarily one-story structures, oriented more toward the automobile (parking lots and drive-thru facilities) than the pedestrian (streets and sidewalks). This pattern of development is consistent with their period of construction but does not reflect the character or development patterns of historic downtown Chaska.

While the site contains shops and services that provide a positive contribution to downtown Chaska, the existing structures don’t contribute to the character, scale or identity of downtown Chaska. Nor do they contribute to the vitality of Chestnut Street as a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented commercial street. The opportunity exists at City Square West to create a mixed-use development more consistent with the character, scale and materials of downtown Chaska.

City Square West is envisioned as a mixed-use block containing retail, multi-family residential, civic and public parking facilities. Traditional storefront buildings that complement downtown’s historic character and scale are recommended. Buildings should orient themselves to the street to create interesting and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks surrounding the development. Every effort should be made to accommodate existing businesses in all redevelopment scenarios.



Figure 7-10. City Square West catalyst redevelopment site.



## City Square West - Scenario A

Scenario A features multi-story mixed-use buildings, parking ramp, and “paseo” treatment of alley. The buildings front the surrounding streets and register with the historic scale of downtown Chaska, creating a more interesting and pedestrian-friendly streetscape. The uses fronting Chestnut Street include a small library, bank, post office and ground level retail/restaurants. Residential uses are planned above. The scale of the residential uses fronting Pine Street are more compatible with the single family residential across the street (townhomes). The center of the block features a parking ramp and surface parking courtyard. The parking ramp and courtyard are envisioned to accommodate the uses on-site as well as public parking needs in other segments of downtown Chaska. The following is a breakdown of the proposed development program.

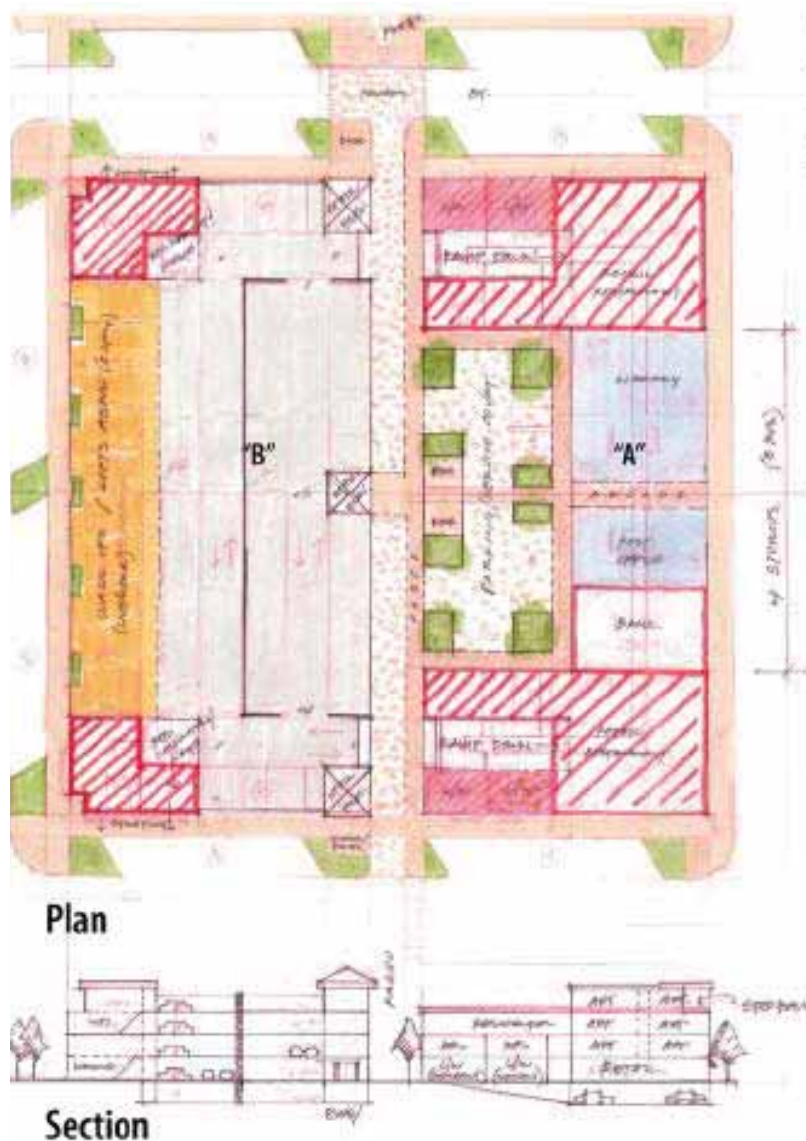


Figure 7-11. Redevelopment scenario A for City Square West catalyst redevelopment site.

Building A		Parking requirement = 209 spaces	
Ground Story:		Retail/Restaurant (14,600 SF) Library (4,550 SF) Post Office (2,250 SF) Bank (2,250 SF) Live/work (6 units)	
2nd Story:		Residential (34 units)	
3rd Story:		Residential (34 units)	
4th Story:		Residential (12 units)	
Underground Parking:		56 spaces	
Courtyard Parking:		14 spaces	
Parking Ramp (part of building B)			
Level 0 (below grade):		70 spaces	
Level 1:		70 spaces	
Level 2:		70 spaces	
Level 3:		70 spaces	
Level 4:		70 spaces	
Total spaces:		280 spaces	
Building B		Parking requirement = 46 spaces	
Ground Story:		Retail/Restaurant (4,000 SF)	
Ground/2nd Story:		Residential (10 units)	
3rd/4th Story:		Residential (10 units)	
Surplus parking:		25 spaces (ramp) 58 spaces (on-street) 14 spaces (courtyard)	

### City Square West - Scenario B

Scenario B features multi-story mixed-use buildings, parking ramp, and a shifted “paseo” drive lane. The buildings front the surrounding streets and register with the historic scale of downtown Chaska, creating a more interesting and pedestrian-friendly streetscape. The uses fronting Chestnut Street include ground level retail and restaurants. Office uses are planned above the retail. The building facing Pine Street is primarily residential, however, includes ground level retail facing 3rd and 4th Streets. The scale of the residential uses fronting Pine Street are more compatible with the single family residential across the street (townhomes). The center of the block features a parking ramp and a small planted courtyard. The parking ramp is envisioned to accommodate the uses on-site as well as public parking needs in other segments of downtown Chaska. The following is a breakdown of the proposed development program.

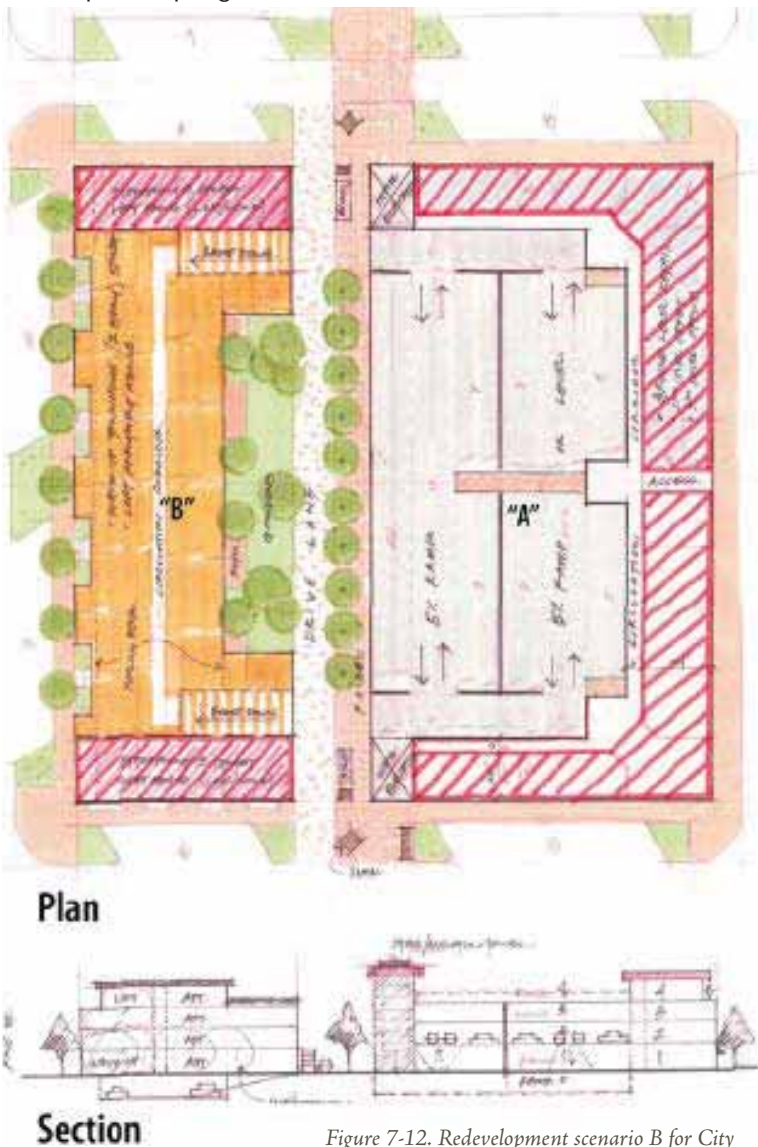


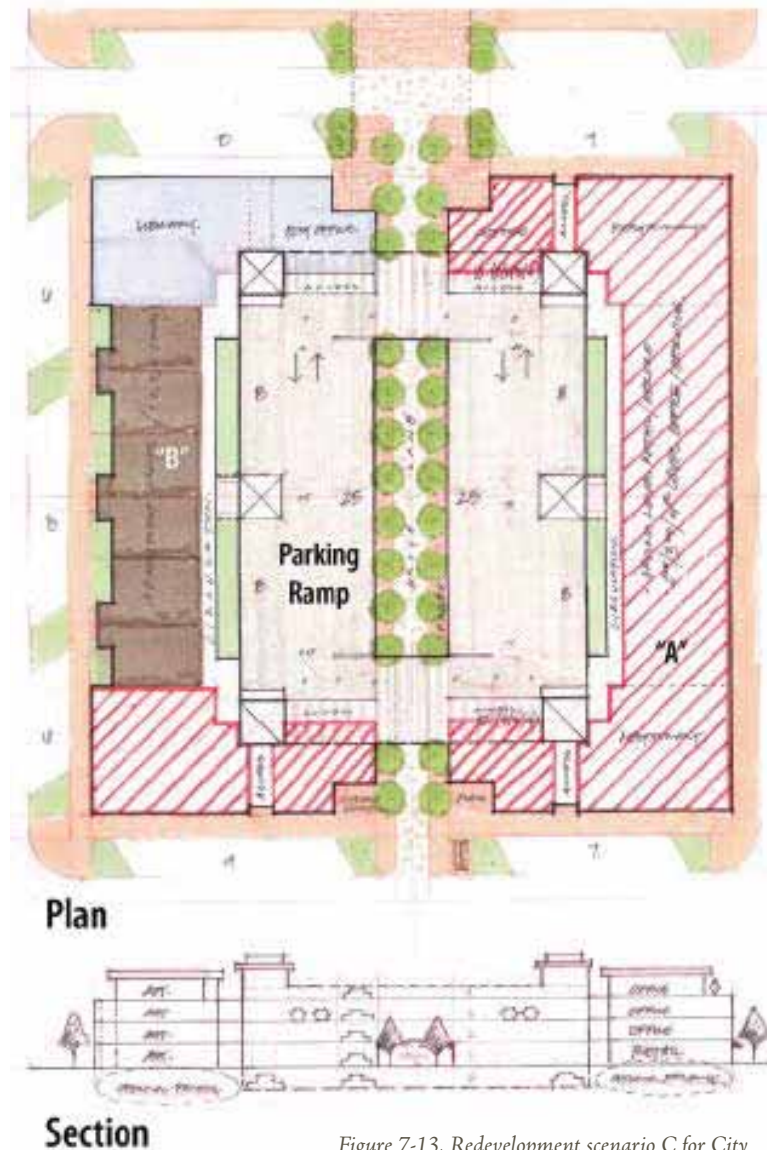
Figure 7-12. Redevelopment scenario B for City Square West catalyst redevelopment site.

Building A		Parking requirement = 172 spaces	
Ground Story:		Retail/Restaurant (15,100 SF)	
2nd Story:		Office (15,100 SF)	
3rd Story:		Office (15,100 SF)	
4th Story:		Office (15,100 SF)	
Parking Ramp (part of building A)			
Level 0 (below grade):		88 spaces	
Level 1:		72 spaces	
Level 2:		72 spaces	
Level 3:		72 spaces	
Level 4:		72 spaces	
Total spaces:		376 spaces	
Building B		Parking requirement = 114 spaces	
Ground Story:		Retail/Restaurant (6,000 SF) Live/Work (8 units) Residential (14 units)	
2nd Story:		Residential (14 units)	
3rd Story:		Residential (12 units)	
4th Story:		Residential (12 units)	
Underground Parking:		54 spaces	
Surplus parking:		144 spaces (ramp)	



## City Square West - Scenario C

Scenario C features multi-story mixed-use buildings and a detached central parking ramp, split by “paseo” treatment of alley. The buildings front the surrounding streets and register with the historic scale of downtown Chaska, creating a more interesting and pedestrian-friendly streetscape. The uses fronting Chestnut Street include ground level retail and restaurants. Office uses are planned above. The building facing Pine Street is also mixed-use but the scale of the residential uses fronting Pine Street are more compatible with the single family residential across the street (townhomes). The center of the block features a detached parking ramp. The parking ramp is envisioned to accommodate the uses on-site as well as public parking needs in other segments of downtown Chaska. The following is a breakdown of the proposed development program.



Building A		Parking requirement = 257 spaces
Ground Story:	Retail/Restaurant (20,500 SF)	
2nd Story:	Office (19,900 SF)	
3rd Story:	Office (19,900 SF)	
4th Story:	Office (10,400 SF)	
Parking Ramp		
Level 0 (below grade):	106 spaces	
Level 1:	82 spaces	
Level 2:	106 spaces	
Level 3:	106 spaces	
Level 4:	106 spaces	
Total spaces:	506 spaces	
Building B		Parking requirement = 103 spaces
Ground Story:	Retail/Restaurant (6,040 SF) Library (4,240 SF) Post Office (1,800 SF) Residential (6 units)	
2nd Story:	Residential (14 units)	
3rd Story:	Residential (14 units)	
4th Story:	Residential (6 units)	
Surplus parking:	146 spaces (ramp) 50 spaces (on-street)	

Figure 7-13. Redevelopment scenario C for City Square West catalyst redevelopment site.

## City Square West - Scenario D

Scenario D features multi-story mixed-use buildings and a detached central parking ramp, split by “paseo” treatment of alley. The buildings front the surrounding streets and register with the historic scale of downtown Chaska, creating a more interesting and pedestrian-friendly streetscape. The uses fronting Chestnut Street include ground level retail and restaurants. Office uses are planned above. The building facing Pine Street is also mixed-use but the scale of the residential uses fronting Pine Street are more compatible with the single family residential across the street (townhomes). The center of the block features a detached parking ramp. The parking ramp is envisioned to accommodate the uses on-site as well as public parking needs in other segments of downtown Chaska. The following is a breakdown of the proposed development program.

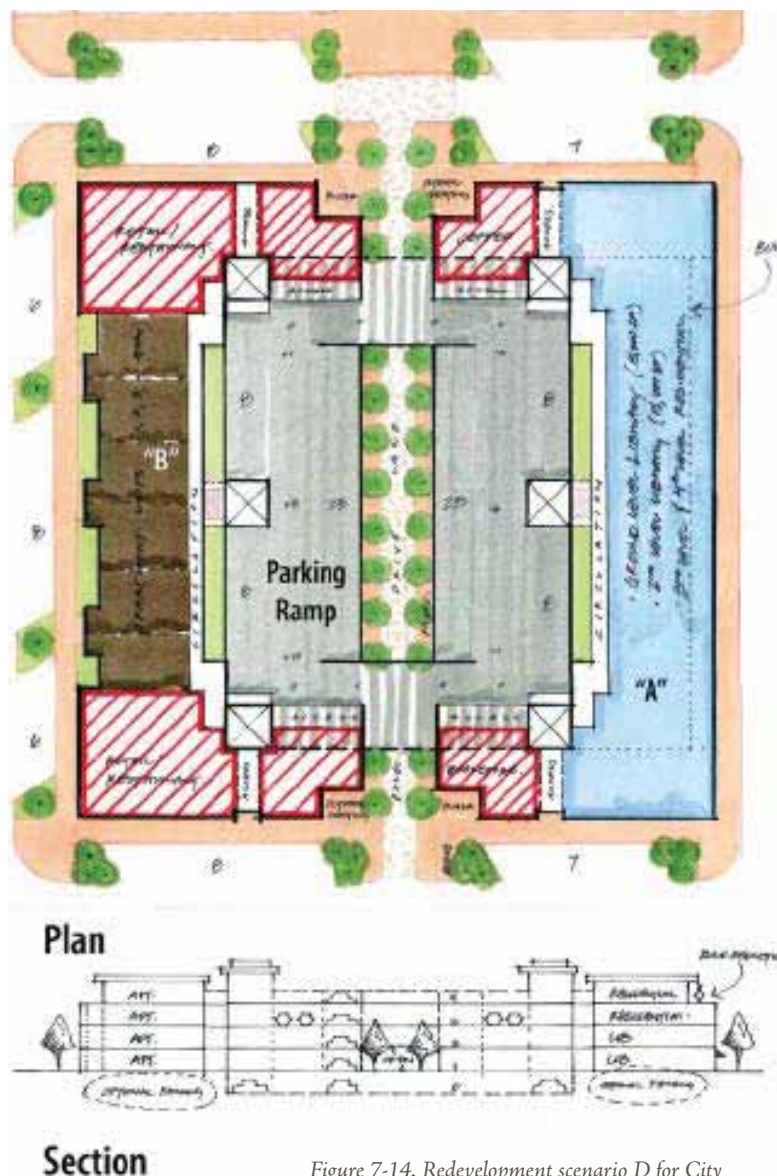


Figure 7-14. Redevelopment scenario D for City Square West catalyst redevelopment site.

Building A		Parking requirement = 180 spaces	
Ground Story:		Retail/Restaurant (3,800 SF) Library (15,500 SF)	
2nd Story:		Library (15,500 SF) Residential (4 units)	
3rd Story:		Residential (24 units)	
4th Story:		Residential (12 units)	
Parking Ramp			
Level 0 (below grade):		106 spaces	
Level 1:		82 spaces	
Level 2:		106 spaces	
Level 3:		106 spaces	
Level 4:		106 spaces	
Total spaces:		506 spaces	
Building B		Parking requirement = 116 spaces	
Ground Story:		Retail/Restaurant (12,200 SF) Residential (6 units)	
2nd Story:		Residential (24 units)	
3rd		Residential (24 units)	
4th Story:		Residential (12 units)	
Surplus parking:		210 spaces (ramp) 50 spaces (on-street)	



## Riverfront District

The Riverfront District catalyst site includes Blocks 50-53, located at the south gateway into downtown Chaska. Block 53, located at the intersection of Chestnut and First Streets, is vacant and has been the subject of prior redevelopment proposals including multi-story residential buildings. This block should be the highest priority in the district as it is a vacant and very significant site in the context of downtown Chaska. It presents a tremendous opportunity to celebrate community identity and create a positive gateway into downtown at the river's edge.

Blocks 50, 51 and 52 contain single-family houses which are physically and visually separated from the river by the levee. These blocks should be considered for future redevelopment if and when additional housing density becomes desired downtown and other sites have been exhausted. These blocks offer the opportunity to create more downtown residential density at the river's edge and create value by providing views of the river in taller structures.

The Riverfront District's future identity should be one of riverfront housing in higher density residential buildings with convenient access to downtown amenities and the river corridor. Riverfront housing options should include townhouses, condos and apartments that are oriented to the river. New housing should provide river views and optimize the extensive park, trail and open space system along the river. Mixed-use development would be appropriate at the intersection of Chestnut and First Streets as the gateway corner to the Chestnut Street commercial district. The district should be designed to provide public access points to the levee trail and connected open spaces via the levee lanes.

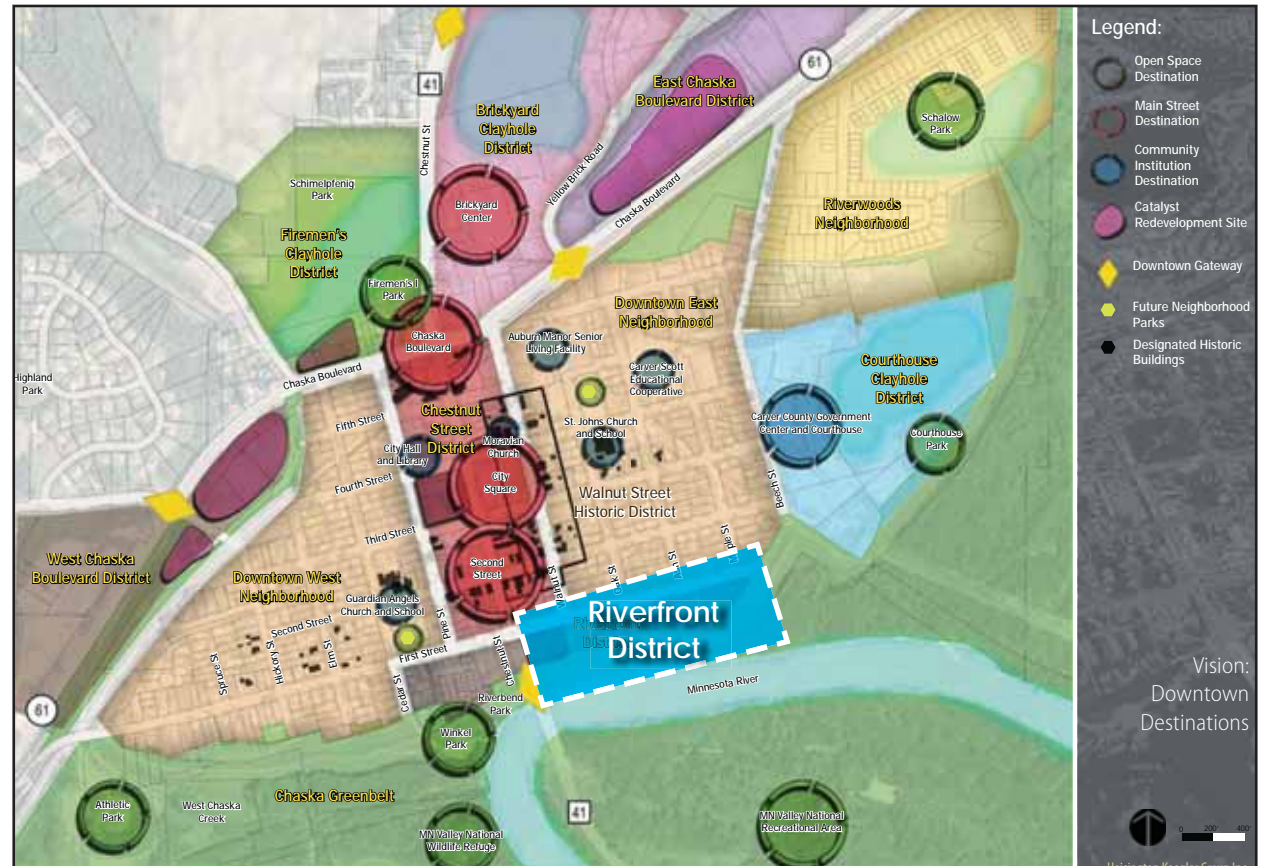


Figure 7-15. Riverfront District catalyst redevelopment site.

Riverfront District - Scenarios A & B

Both scenarios feature high density senior housing on block 53, walk-up townhomes on blocks 50, 51 and 52, and lower levee park improvements and connections. Block 53 could include ground level retail or restaurant uses at the corner of Chestnut and First Streets. The dead-end street segments (Levee Lanes) are envisioned to become less street-like and more plaza-like, with special (pervious) paving treatment. As previously mentioned, blocks 50, 51 and 52 are seen as long-term potential sites for future housing density in downtown Chaska, if and when the City determines that is critical to the success of revitalizing downtown and its relationship to the river. The following is a breakdown of the proposed development program.

Figure 7-16.  
Redevelopment  
scenario A for  
Riverfront  
District catalyst  
redevelopment site.



Scenario A (Block 53 only)	Parking requirement = 120 spaces
Ground Story:	Retail/Restaurant (8,000 SF) Parking 120 spaces
2nd Story:	Residential (40 units)
3rd Story:	Residential (40 units)
4th Story:	Residential (40 units)
Structured parking provided = 120 spaces	
On-street parking provided = 22 spaces	
Surplus parking = 22 spaces	

Figure 7-17.  
Redevelopment scenario  
B for Riverfront District  
catalyst redevelopment site.



Scenario B (Blocks 50, 51 and 52)	
Walk-up courtyard townhomes	Residential (60 units)
Parking	Included with each unit



## B. Connections

### Introduction

Because streets occupy the largest amount of space in the public realm, they have a significant impact on how people experience downtown Chaska. Streets provide access to businesses and homes, convey utilities, and form the identity of the downtown environment. Since streets are shared by drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and parked vehicles, the design of the streets should address the needs of all users. A well-designed and maintained street system can help revitalize downtown Chaska in several ways including some of the following:

- » *Create a greater sense of place and enhance community identity*
- » *Preserve and restore historically significant sites, buildings and streetscapes*
- » *Provide safer, more comfortable pedestrian routes to homes, schools, businesses and recreational destinations*
- » *Provide a more comprehensive and connected system of bike routes*
- » *Calm vehicle traffic*
- » *Provide additional on-street parking*
- » *Reduce greenhouse gas effects*
- » *Improve air and water quality*
- » *Enhance property values and create a more vibrant retail environment*



Figure 7-18. Downtown Streets System Concept showing street design types for each street.

### Complete Streets

In order to achieve the goals above, the streets in downtown Chaska should be thought of as a system of "complete streets". Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transit users of all ages and abilities should be able to safely and comfortably move along and across the streets. In order to ensure safety and accessibility, streets must become more complete. Complete streets are roadways designed and operated to enable safe, attractive and comfortable access and movement for all users. They have the added benefit of addressing stormwater needs and enhancing air and water quality by providing green space as part of the streetscape.

## Streetscape Zones

It is useful to understand the different zones that make up the street since these zones will be mentioned in subsequent sections describing the street types in downtown Chaska. Each zone plays a role in the functioning of each street in downtown Chaska. The zones that make up the street include the following:

### Pedestrian Zone

The pedestrian zone is the portion of the streetscape that accommodates walking. Important design elements of the pedestrian zone include pavement materials, adequate width for movement in both directions, and protection from the sun and rain. Typically, the pedestrian zone is located at the outside of the street right-of-way, away from moving traffic and near the adjacent land uses.

### Amenity Zone

The amenity zone is the portion of the streetscape where amenities are located to enhance the pedestrian experience. The amenities could be as simple as street trees with a grass strip or more elaborate to include pedestrian lighting, seating, signage, planters, banners, trash receptacles, bicycle parking and enhanced landscaping. Typically, the amenity zone is located between the pedestrian zone and the vehicular travel zones, providing a safety buffer between people walking and people driving.

### Parking Zone

The parking zone is the on-street parking bay alongside the street. It can include parallel or diagonal parking spaces. On-street parking plays two important roles. One, it provides necessary convenient parking in front of shops and services in the downtown. Two, it provides a buffer between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. The parking zone is typically located outside of the traffic lanes, at the curb and gutter on each side of the street.

### Travel Zone

The travel zone makes up the traffic and bike lanes on the street. These lanes should provide adequate space for the safe movement of vehicles and bicycles on the street, without dominating the street width. Typically, vehicular travel lanes are located in the center of the street, while bicycle lanes are located between the vehicular lanes and the on-street parking or curb and gutter.

### Median Zone

The median zone is included on some streets, but not all. Typically, this zone is reserved for special types of streets such as highways, parkways, and other types of green streets. Median zone width may vary from street to street. Medians typically include landscape treatment with street trees and groundcover, but they may also be paved areas. Medians are typically located within the center of the street right of way.



*Ped | Amenity | Parking | Travel | Median | Travel | Parking | Amenity | Ped*

*Streetscape Zones shown above for an example street with a median.*



## Street Types

A hierarchy of eight (8) different street types are envisioned in Downtown Chaska, including Town Center Street, Commercial Edge Street, Trail Street, Signature Street, Residential Street, Levee Lane, Paseo, and Future Chestnuts Street/Hwy 41.

Each street type functions in different ways. Some streets function to carry high volumes of traffic, such as Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41. Some streets carry local traffic to homes, schools and businesses. Other streets define the retail character of Downtown Chaska and cater to the needs of the pedestrian, such as 2nd Street. Each street type is described in terms of its function, character, scale, and design elements on the following pages.

### Town Center Streets

Town center streets include those streets located within the historic commercial core of Downtown Chaska that provide access and convenient parking to shops, businesses and civic facilities located on Chestnut Street, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Streets. These streets should be designed to balance the needs of automobiles and other modes of travel, with primary emphasis on the pedestrian environment. They should convey a sense of vitality and identity to the downtown retail environment and include a richly designed amenity zone. The following design considerations should be included in the design of the Town Center Streets:

- » *Historic character, scale and materials*
- » *Narrow travel lanes – 11 foot width is recommended*
- » *Diagonal on-street parking with permeable paving if feasible*
- » *Adequate width of the pedestrian zone – 10 ft. minimum width is recommended*
- » *Special paving in the pedestrian zone – brick or concrete pavers*
- » *Enhanced landscaping, raised planters, seating and signage at intersections*
- » *Bumpouts at intersections to decrease distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate limits of on-street parking*
- » *Pedestrian-scaled light pole fixtures*
- » *Street trees for shade where feasible*
- » *Trash receptacles and convenient bicycle parking*
- » *Building signage, awnings and shop windows*
- » *Minimal building setbacks*
- » *Small, informal plazas where feasible*



*Plan view of Town Center Street concept.*



*Bird's eye view of Town Center Street concept.*



*Ground level view of Town Center Street concept.*

## Commercial Edge Streets

Commercial edge streets are those streets that lie between the commercial core and the adjacent residential areas. This street type includes Pine and Walnut Streets in Downtown Chaska. They are unique in that they provide access to shops, businesses, civic facilities and residential properties. These streets should be designed to balance the needs of automobiles with the safety of pedestrians and other modes of travel. The commercial edge street should bump out at intersections to decrease the distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate the limits of on-street parking. The scale and design considerations on each side of the street should correspond to the adjacent land use. The commercial street edge should have a more urban character while the residential street edge should have a more residential character. The following design considerations should be included in the design of the Commercial Edge Streets:

- » *Historic character, scale and materials*
- » *Narrow travel lanes – 11 ft. width is recommended*
- » *Diagonal on-street parking (with permeable paving if feasible) on the commercial side of the street*
- » *Parallel on-street parking on the residential side of the street*
- » *Adequate width of the pedestrian zone – 10 ft. minimum width is recommended on the commercial side of the street with a 6 foot minimum width recommended on the residential side of the street*
- » *Special paving in the pedestrian zone (brick or concrete pavers) on the commercial side of the street*
- » *Enhanced landscaping, raised planters, seating and signage at intersections*
- » *Bumpouts at intersections to decrease distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate limits of on-street parking*
- » *Pedestrian-scaled light pole fixtures*
- » *Street trees for shade*
- » *Tree lawns on the residential side of the street*
- » *Trash receptacles and convenient bicycle parking on the commercial side of the street*
- » *Building signage, awnings and shop windows on commercial buildings*
- » *Minimal building setbacks on the commercial side of the street*



Ground level view of Commercial Edge Street concept.



Bird's eye view of Commercial Edge Street concept.



Ground level view of Commercial Edge Street concept.



## Trail Streets

Trail Streets coincide with the downtown trails plan. They include portions of Cedar St, Ash St, Beech St, Stoughton St, 3rd and 6th Streets. The trail streets are very unique, particularly within a small downtown urban environment. The trail street concept includes an 8 ft multi-use trail on one side of the street, with a standard 6 ft sidewalk on the other side. The multi-use trail offers residents the ability to walk and bicycle through downtown off-street. Trail streets are proposed to be narrowed from the existing 52 ft street cross section to 36 feet. The narrowing of the pavement section allows additional green space in the streetscape, which could be utilized to create raingardens to manage stormwater runoff. The trail street should bump out at intersections to decrease the distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate the limits of on-street parking. Multi-use trails should be distinguished from the standard sidewalks by using a different concrete color and/or pattern. They should also be maintained by City staff as they would become a part of the City's trails system.

There are two types of Trail Streets recommended for downtown Chaska. Trail Street A has on-street parallel parking on each side of the street, while Trail Street B has one side with on-street parallel parking and one side with on-street diagonal parking. Locations for each type are indicated on the Downtown Streets System Concept Diagram. Trail Street B offers the opportunity to include more on-street parking in areas where demand is higher, such as near Guardian Angels and St. John's. Basic design principles for each type are identical other than the parking configuration. The following considerations should be included in the design of Trail Streets:

- » *Historic character, scale and materials*
- » *Narrow travel lanes – 11 ft. width is recommended*
- » *Parallel or diagonal on-street parking (depending on type of Trail Street)*
- » *Adequate pedestrian zone – 6 ft. minimum width recommended for sidewalks*
- » *Sidewalks should be detached from the curb with a tree lawn in between*
- » *Multi-use trails – 8 ft. width recommended with identifiable color/finish on trail*
- » *Trail system signage*
- » *Enhanced landscaping at intersections*
- » *Pedestrian-scaled light pole fixtures at intersections*
- » *Street trees for shade*
- » *Bumpouts at intersections to decrease distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate limits of on-street parking*



*Plan view of Trail Street B concept.*



*Bird's eye view of Trail Street B concept.*



*Ground level view of Trail Street B concept.*





Plan view of Trail Street A concept with trail next to parking.



Plan view of Trail Street A concept with street trees between trail and parking.



Bird's eye view of Trail Street A concept.



Bird's eye view of Trail Street A concept.



Ground level view of Trail Street A concept.



Ground level view of Trail Street A concept.



## Signature Streets

Signature Streets in the downtown provide a sense of unique character, orientation and east/west movement between the east and west residential neighborhoods on either side of the Chestnut Street commercial corridor. This street type includes 2nd Street, west of Pine Street and east of Walnut Street. It also includes 4th Street, west of Pine Street and east of Walnut Street. These streets are unique in that they include a small planted and/or paved median. They connect the neighborhood churches/schools of Guardian Angels and St. Johns with other downtown destinations. At these institutions, the street should be adapted to allow safe and efficient bus loading/unloading and pedestrian traffic. The signature street should bump out at intersections to decrease the distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate the limits of on-street parking. The City has already begun a section of this concept on 4th Street, west of Pine Street. This should set the design tone for the rest of the signature street sections. The following design considerations should be included in the design of the Signature Streets:

- » *Historic character, scale and materials*
- » *Narrow travel lanes – 11 ft. width is recommended*
- » *Parallel on-street parking*
- » *Adequate width of the pedestrian zone – 6 ft. minimum width is recommended*
- » *Sidewalks should be detached from the curb with a tree lawn in between*
- » *Special paving in the high volume pedestrian zones – brick or concrete pavers, particularly at school and church crossings*
- » *Enhanced landscaping at intersections*
- » *Pedestrian-scaled light pole fixtures*
- » *Street trees for shade*
- » *Planted medians with ornamental trees and enhanced groundcover planting*
- » *Bumpouts at intersections to decrease distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate limits of on-street parking*



*Bird's eye view of the Signature Street concept.*



*Bird's eye view of the Signature Street concept.*



*Ground level view of the Signature Street concept.*

## Residential Streets

Residential Streets are the typical street in the residential districts of Downtown Chaska. They provide access to homes of downtown residents. Residential streets are proposed to be narrowed from the existing 52 foot street cross section to 36 feet. The narrowing of the pavement section allows additional green space in the streetscape, which could be utilized to create raingardens to manage stormwater runoff. Sidewalks should be detached from the curb and parallel on-street parking should be provided. The residential street should bump out at intersections to decrease the distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate the limits of on-street parking. The following design considerations should be included in the design of the Residential Streets:

- » *Historic character, scale and materials*
- » *Narrow travel lanes – 11 ft. width is recommended*
- » *Parallel on-street parking*
- » *Adequate width of the pedestrian zone – 6 ft. minimum width is recommended*
- » *Sidewalks should be detached from the curb with a tree lawn in between*
- » *Enhanced landscaping at intersections*
- » *Pedestrian-scaled light pole fixtures at intersections*
- » *Street trees for shade*
- » *Bumpouts at intersections to decrease distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate limits of on-street parking*



Ground level view of Residential Street concept.



Ground level view of Residential Street concept.



Plan view of Residential Street concept.



Plan view of Residential Street concept.



## Levee Lanes

Levee Lanes are those street sections south of 1st Street. Each is a dead end street and they may provide access to the levee park. The levee lane at Cedar Street provides access to the Minnesota River, so this may be a unique circumstance requiring a different approach, however since the rest of these streets carry very low volumes of automobile traffic, they should be thought of as a pedestrian domain, balancing the needs of pedestrians and auto traffic. Levee lanes should be as narrow as possible and include parallel parking on each side of the street. They should also include pervious pavement systems. The following design considerations should be included in the design of the Levee Lanes:

- » *Historic character, scale and materials*
- » *Narrow travel lanes*
- » *Parallel on-street parking*
- » *A street cross-section totaling 32 ft.*
- » *Adequate width of the pedestrian zone – 6 ft. minimum width is recommended*
- » *Sidewalks should be detached from the curb with a tree lawn in between*
- » *Street trees for shade*
- » *Pervious pavements should be considered if feasible*



*Bird's eye view of Levee Lane concept.*



*Bird's eye view of Levee Lane concept.*



*Plan view of Levee Lane concept.*



*Plan view of Levee Lane concept.*

## Paseos

Alleys in the commercial core, between Pine and Walnut Streets, should be considered as part of the pedestrian walkway system in downtown Chaska. These are referred to as a “Paseo”. They run north/south, parallel to Chestnut Street and provide alternative pedestrian routes off the street system, allowing safe and convenient walks from parking areas to businesses and shops. A paseo should be designed to add vitality and create interest along the alleyways. The following design considerations should be included in the design of the Paseos:

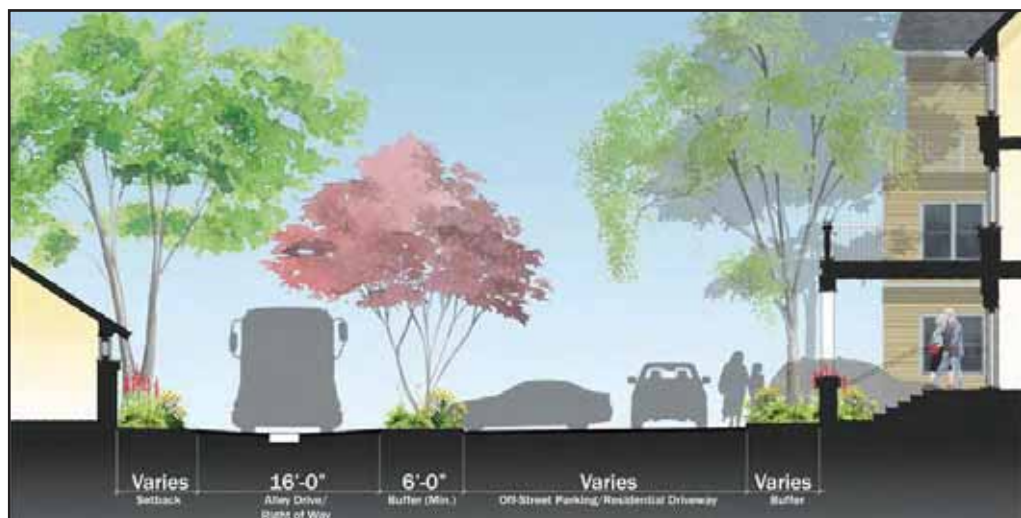
- » *Historic character, scale and materials*
- » *16 ft. alleyway for auto/pedestrian movement*
- » *Buffer plantings where feasible*
- » *Minimal setbacks*
- » *Special pedestrian lighting*
- » *Special pavement systems*
- » *Seating, trash receptacles and bicycle racks*



Precedent image of Paseo concept.



Precedent image of Paseo concept.



Cross section of Paseo concept.



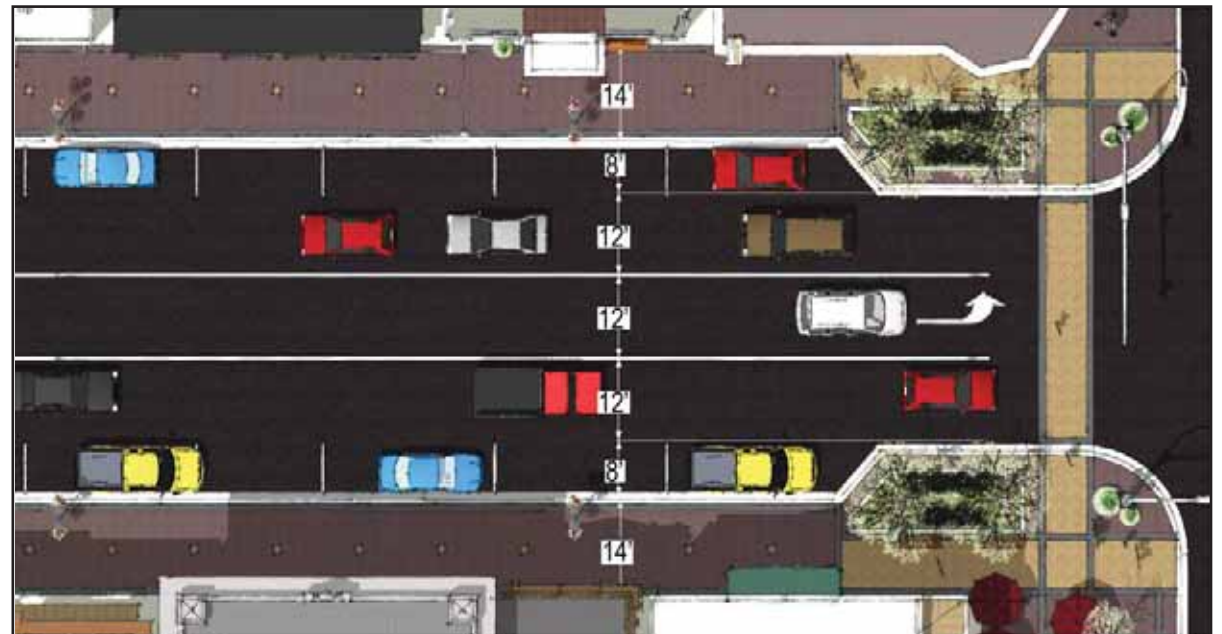
Cross section of Paseo concept.



## Future Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41

The desired future Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41 is contingent upon many factors, including MnDOT approval, a reduction in projected traffic counts due to a new MN Highway 41 river crossing, and a change in the type of traffic from regional (through traffic) to downtown destination type traffic. If the above occurs, the future design of Chestnut Street might offer a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape than currently exists. The concept is to reduce the travel lanes to three 12 foot lanes and include parallel on-street parking. This would allow more space in the amenity/pedestrian zones on both sides of the street. The results of the redesigned streetscape would make Chestnut Street a more vibrant environment for pedestrians and could enhance the downtown retail environment. The following design considerations should be included in the design of the future Chestnut Street/MN Highway 41:

- » *Historic character, scale and materials*
- » *12 foot travel lanes are recommended*
- » *Parallel on-street parking*
- » *Adequate width of the pedestrian zone – 14 ft. minimum width is recommended*
- » *Special paving in the pedestrian zone – brick or concrete pavers*
- » *Enhanced landscaping, raised planters, seating and signage at intersections*
- » *Bumpouts at intersections to decrease distance of pedestrian crossings and delineate limits of on-street parking*
- » *Pedestrian-scaled light pole fixtures*
- » *Street trees for shade where feasible*
- » *Trash receptacles and convenient bicycle parking*
- » *Building signage, awnings and shop windows*
- » *Minimal building setbacks*
- » *Small, informal plazas where feasible*



## C. Parks and Open Spaces

### Introduction

A strong park, recreation and open space system is integral to the high quality of life Chaska residents enjoy. While many socio-economic changes have taken place in recent years, the need for parks, recreation and open space conveniently accessible to Chaska residents has not changed. Indeed, increased leisure time and greater awareness of the benefits of maintaining good health has placed even more emphasis on recreation than in the past.

Changes in employment and living patterns are altering patterns of parks and recreation use and are creating more demand at new times of the day. Notable trends include a shorter workweek, flexible work hours, home offices, and two-income households. For example, use of parks during day hours by mothers with toddlers has decreased, but park use at day's end by young families has increased.

More and more, people are drawn to parks and trails, public gathering areas, tree-lined streets and sidewalks, special park features and sports facilities. Current trends indicate a preference for more trails, better connections to parks and more natural open spaces. Communities that preserve and enhance their scenic, ecological and recreational assets have a competitive edge over those that do not.

### Downtown Chaska Parks and Open Spaces

Downtown Chaska lies within the Minnesota River Valley and adjacent to the 14,000-acre Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the 5,400-acre Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area. The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is one of only a handful of urban national wildlife refuges in the nation, a place where coyotes, bald eagles, badgers, and beavers live next door to three million people. The Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area is a member of the Minnesota State Park system. Together, these open spaces offer unprecedented access to nature-based resources, trails and recreation.

Downtown Chaska is physically and visually separated from the river by a 30-foot high levee, constructed to protect homes and businesses downtown from seasonal flooding of the Minnesota River. An existing auto access, parking and public boat launch connects downtown to the river. Greater measures should be taken to physically and visually connect downtown Chaska to the river and the abundance of nature-based national and state resources and recreational lands.

Other significant natural and manmade features form parks and open spaces in downtown Chaska, including the town's historic clayholes and creeks. The areas around each clayhole have been preserved and/or designed as public parks and open spaces. Fireman's Park and Clayhole, together with Brickyard Clayhole, form an open space gateway into downtown from the north, along Highway 41. Fireman's Park and Clayhole has historic significance for both its brickyard past and its place in downtown Chaska as a public park.

Courthouse Lake, another clayhole/open space, located just east of the County Courthouse attracts







Figure 7-19. Chaska Downtown Parks, Open Space and Trails Sytem Concept.



downtown residents, workers and visitors to hike its trails and picnic in its open spaces.

Chaska's Athletic Park, located between the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the town levee, plays host to Chaska's premier ball park and home to the Chaska Cubs. The Athletic Park is currently being planned for additional park uses, circulation and parking improvements.

At the center of downtown lies Chaska's City Square Park. City Square Park lies along Chestnut Street, between 3rd and 4th Streets. It is one block in size and is historically significant. It contains several historic burial mounds from the "Mound Building" natives of the area. As Chaska's most significant public space, it is the place for annual social gatherings and events. The center of the park includes a gazebo. Large shade trees dot the park.

Downtown Chaska also possesses a few small neighborhood parks (Hickory Park and Fireman's II Park), however, these are difficult to find and are not adequate to serve downtown's current population. There is a need for additional neighborhood parks in both the west and east residential districts. The plan identifies a few options for these additional neighborhood park spaces.

The existing trail system in downtown Chaska includes trails and trailheads that provide access into the nearby wildlife and recreation areas and along the levee. The Downtown Master Plan proposes additions to the trail and trailhead system within downtown with connections to outlying areas surrounding downtown. There is a tremendous opportunity to create a regional destination in Chaska as the "gateway" into the Minnesota River Valley and its nature-based recreational offerings including hiking, bird-watching, paddling sports, fishing and bicycling.

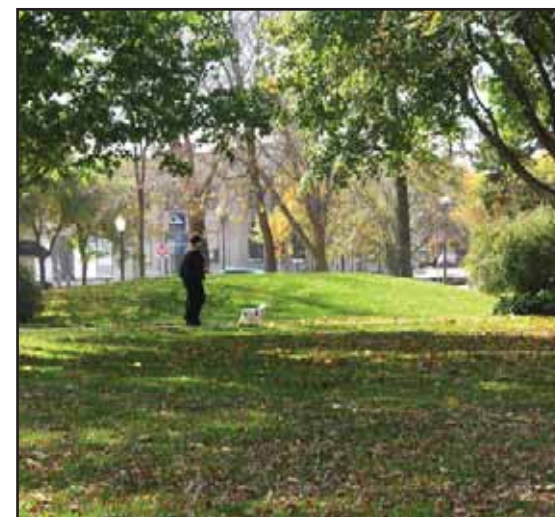
## Park, Recreation and Open Space Classification System

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has developed a classification system for specific kinds of parks, recreation and open space facilities. It addresses function, design, use, size, resource characteristics and preferred location.

Chaska has adapted a similar system to the NRPA's - one that more closely reflects the City's unique development patterns and needs. The following table describes the City's classifications for parks, recreation and open spaces according to use, service area, size, site attributes and site location.



Figure 7-20. Chaska Downtown Parks, Open Space and Trails System Concept.





COMPONENT	USE	SERVICE AREA	SITE SIZE	SITE ATTRIBUTES	SITE LOCATION
<b>LOCAL FACILITIES</b>					
Mini-Park	<i>Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens</i>	<i>Less than ¼ mile radius</i>	<i>Less than one acre</i>		<i>May be in residential neighborhoods or commercial centers that currently lack convenient access to a neighborhood park / playground or as part of a planned residential development</i>
Neighborhood Park / Playground	<i>Area for active recreational facilities such as field games, play court games, crafts area, play apparatus area, skating, shelter, open play area</i>	<i>¼ to ½ mile radius (neighborhood)</i>	<i>3-15 acres</i>	<i>Physical geography suited for intense development</i>	<i>Easily accessible to neighborhood population by foot or bike; centrally located with safe and convenient walking and biking access; may be part of a Community Park or Playfield</i>
Community Playfield	<i>Area for active recreational facilities such as athletic fields for youth and adult league use, and could include neighborhood park uses</i>	<i>3-5 neighborhoods or whole community</i>	<i>25 – 50 acres</i>	<i>Physical geography suited for intense development</i>	<i>Easily accessible by motor vehicle; edge of neighborhood or in non-residential area</i>
Community Park	<i>Area of natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking; could have some field and court games; could include neighborhood park uses</i>	<i>3-5 neighborhoods or whole community</i>	<i>25 – 50 acres</i>	<i>Affords natural features with varied physical landscape interest</i>	<i>Proximity to community facilities and natural resources</i>
County Park	<i>Area of natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking; could have some field and court games</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>25 – 50 acres</i>	<i>Affords natural features with varied physical landscape interest</i>	<i>Proximity to community facilities and natural resources and/or where natural resource occurs</i>
Conservancy Lands	<i>Area of natural quality such as water-courses and wetlands which are preserved for environmental or aesthetic benefits to the community, and/or because of the negative environmental or economic effects of development on them</i>	<i>Community and County</i>	<i>Variable, based on extent of natural resources</i>	<i>Natural resources that merit preservation and would be negatively affected by development</i>	<i>Where natural resource occurs</i>
<b>REGIONAL FACILITIES</b>					
Regional Park	<i>Area of natural or ornamental quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation such as picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping, and trail uses</i>	<i>3 – 5 communities *</i>	<i>200 – 500 acres (100 acre minimum)</i>	<i>Complete natural setting contiguous to water bodies or watercourses where possible</i>	<i>Where natural resource occurs – particularly water</i>
Regional Park Reserve	<i>Area of natural or ornamental quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitat, conservation, swimming, picnicking, hiking, boating, camping, and trail uses</i>	<i>County, multi-county area</i>	<i>1000 + acres; sufficient area to encompass the resource envisioned for preservation</i>	<i>Diversity of unique resources, such as topography, lakes, streams, marshes, flora, fauna</i>	<i>Where natural resource occurs</i>
<b>LOCAL OR REGIONAL FACILITY</b>					
Special Feature	<i>Area that preserves, maintains and provides specialized or single-purpose recreational activities such as golf course, nature center, marina, zoo, conservatory, arboretum, display gardens, arena, gun club, downhill ski area, and sites of historic or archeological significance</i>		<i>Specific standard applicable to desired feature</i>	<i>Appropriate to particular special feature</i>	<i>Where most advantageous for the special feature and the overall park system</i>

Table 7-1. Chaska Classification System for Park, Recreation and Open Spaces.

## Parks and Open Spaces Recommendations and Strategies

The following specific recommendations and strategies are intended to restore and enhance the quality of downtown Chaska's parks, recreation, trails and open space system.

### Key Recommendations/Strategies:

#### Fireman's Park

- » Enhance the community park at Chestnut Street/Hwy 41 and Chaska Boulevard/Hwy 61 including the area of Fireman's Park and Clayhole, and Schimelpfenig Park
- » Incorporate revenue generating land uses into the park for year-round interest, including restaurants, performing arts facilities, recreation and leisure uses.
- » Incorporate Chaska brick into the design of structures and park elements
- » Park and associated structures should address gateway/identity issues
- » Program events in the park for each season of the year
- » Design and programming should address historical aspects of the park and its place in the City's history
- » Design the park to accommodate large community gatherings and events
- » Program ideas include: ice skating, boat races, paddle boats, music in the park, plays/theater, restaurant, warming house, picnicking, beach, nature-based play areas, splash park, gardens, lawns, patios, parking, etc.

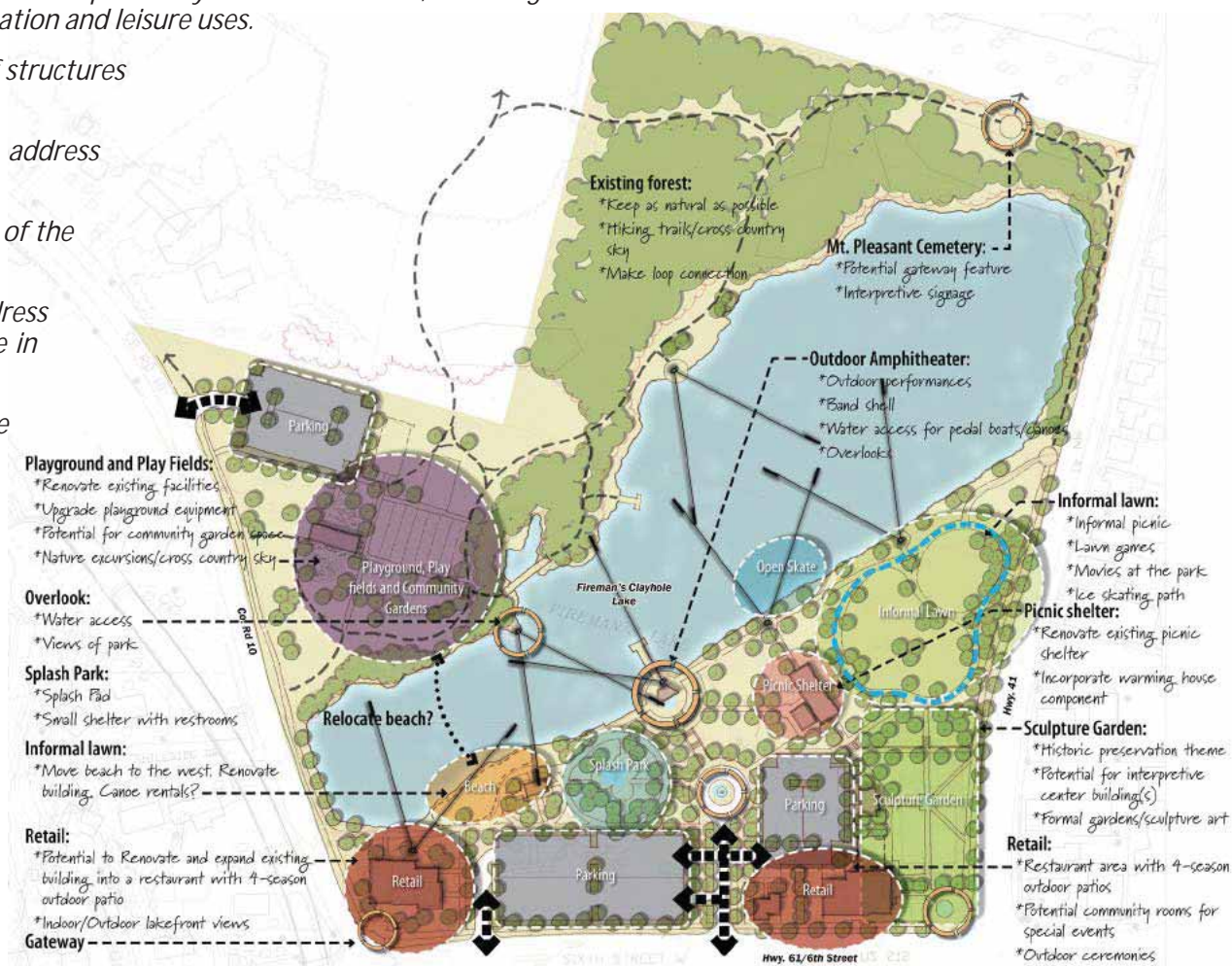


Figure 7-21. Fireman's Park Concept Scenario B.



## Athletic Park

- » *Develop a master plan for Athletic Park*
- » *Enhance the baseball experience*
- » *Include additional programmed park uses – utilizing additional site area*
- » *Improve site access/entry into park*
- » *Improve parking*
- » *Improve and enhance connections to surrounding open space and trails systems*



Figure 7-22. Athletic Park Master Plan Concept.





Figure 7-23. Chaska Athletic Park Master Plan - Alternative 1.



Figure 7-24. Chaska Athletic Park Master Plan - Alternative 2.



Figure 7-25. Chaska Athletic Park Master Plan - Alternative 3.



Figure 7-26. Chaska Athletic Park Master Plan - Alternative 4.



## Neighborhood Parks

- » Identify neighborhood park sites on the east and west sides of Chestnut Street (Hwy 41). Several candidate sites are identified on the plan.
- » Recommended park site east of Chestnut – north of St. John's Church and school, between 4th and 5th Streets and Oak and Ash Streets.
- » Recommended park site west of Chestnut – expand the Hickory Park and the River Levee into a single neighborhood park.
- » Develop a plan for each neighborhood park to address neighborhood park needs (i.e. games, play courts, play apparatus, skating, shelter, open play area, etc.)
- » Design clearer distinctions between public and private spaces on the River Levee site, between the levee and the homes that line the levee.



## Mini-Parks/Plazas

- » Identify potential mini-parks and city plaza sites. Several are identified on the Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan.
- » Mini-park and plaza candidate sites west of Chestnut:
  - Guardian Angels Church and School sites
  - Triangle site at 4th and Elm Streets
  - Plaza site on Chestnut between 2nd and 3rd Streets
- » Mini-park and plaza candidate sites east of Chestnut:
  - Site east of St. John's school site
  - Turned-back power line easement through neighborhood
  - Fireman's Park II

## Special Features

- » *Develop a trailhead facility at City Square (signage, parking, shelter, etc.)*
- » *Develop a plan for special features along the River Levee (i.e. community gardens, park shelters, seating, sculpture, etc.)*
- » *Develop a plan for Fireman's I Park that will include identity elements/structures that play on the history of the City of Chaska and this special site.*

## Trails/Connections

- » *Create a plan for off-street trails on Cedar, Ash and 3rd Streets*
- » *Improve connections between park destinations and other Downtown destinations via trails and sidewalks*
- » *Incorporate an alley (paseo) plan for alleys indicated on the plan*
- » *Convert the rail line to a trail system*
- » *Incorporate trailheads and information kiosks where indicated on the plan*
- » *Incorporate better signage and wayfinding to trail systems as part of the streetscape design work for downtown Chaska.*
- » *Develop a heritage walk/promenade along the levee.*







## CHAPTER 8: implementation

Implementation is an essential component of the Chaska Downtown Master Plan in order for the plan to be actionable and achievable. This chapter of the plan identifies the recommended strategies for implementing the vision, guiding principles and strategies of the Downtown Master Plan. The Implementation chapter is organized around the following topics:

- » *City policies & regulations*
- » *Recommended implementation actions*
- » *Partnership & financial considerations*
- » *Next steps*

### City Policies & Regulations

Implementation of the Downtown Master Plan will require updates to the City's policies and regulations, including the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and the Downtown Parking Management Plan. In addition, the City should consider establishing Downtown Building Design Guidelines for non-historic building improvements and new buildings in downtown, building upon the design guidelines for historic buildings contained in the Downtown Preservation Design Manual. The recommended City policy and regulation actions are as follows.

- 1. Amend the City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan to reflect goals of the Downtown Master Plan:**
  - a. *Amend Mission Statement and Core Strategies to incorporate downtown vision*
  - b. *Amend 2030 Land Use Plan map & tables*
  - c. *Potentially amend the Medium Density Residential LU category for Pine St and Walnut St "downtown edge" properties or guide them as DT-MU*
  - d. *Amend land use policies regarding downtown (e.g. mixed-use core, parking, street design types, catalyst redevelopment sites, parks, etc.); Chaska Blvd redevelopment sites; public facilities (e.g. potential expansions of library and faith-based institutions); and historic preservation*



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**2. Modify Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with & supportive of Downtown Master Plan:**

- a. *Update Zoning Map*
- b. *Create a Business Park zoning district*
- c. *Modify Downtown (C3) zoning district*
- d. *Modify parking requirements for downtown businesses*
- e. *Expand the Chaska Historic District boundaries (local) to include Chestnut Street and West Second Street commercial properties*

**3. Establish Downtown Building Design Guidelines for non-historic building improvements, new buildings and residential structures in downtown, building upon the design guidelines for historic buildings contained in the Downtown Preservation Design Manual**

**4. Create downtown building signage design guidelines and revise sign ordinance**

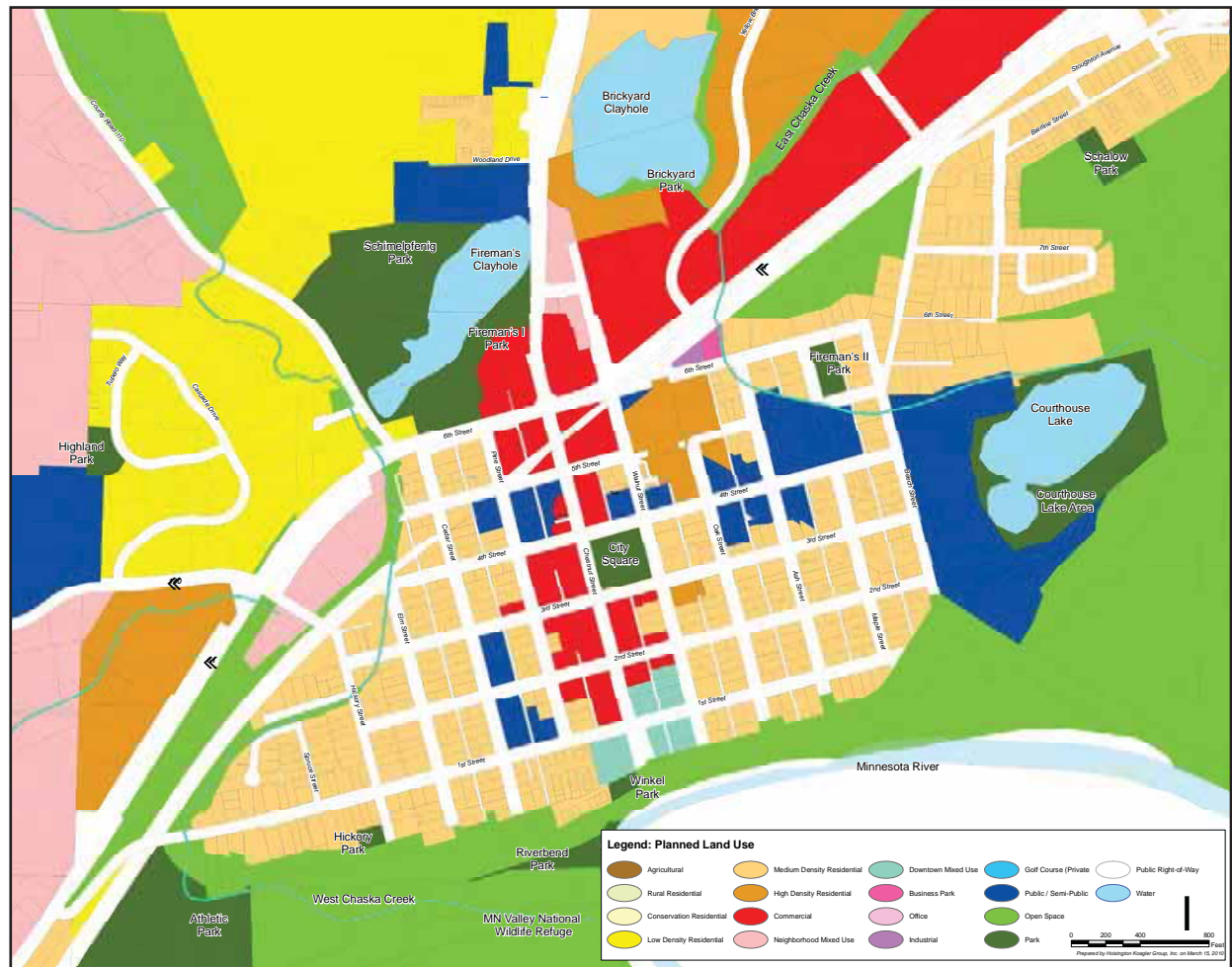
**5. Develop a Heritage Preservation Plan as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan that clearly links heritage preservation goals with economic development, public improvements, redevelopment, and placemaking**

**6. Designate additional eligible properties as local historic resources, e.g. all Chaska Brick buildings in downtown**

**7. Establish a stronger downtown parking management plan**

**8. Active police enforcement of parking regulations**

**9. Active/continual police enforcement of speed on MN Hwy 41**



## Recommended Implementation Actions

These implementation actions essentially serve as the community's "to do list" for revitalizing downtown over the next several years. Some of these actions will be clearly defined improvement projects that have a start and an end point. Other actions will be ongoing or recurring initiatives that will bring more incremental improvements to downtown. These recommended implementation actions encompass short-range (1-2 years), mid-range (3-5 years), and long-range (5 or more years) improvements.

- » *Business environment/development*
- » *Private properties/buildings*
- » *Public properties/buildings*
- » *Streets, sidewalks & trails*
- » *Parks & open spaces*
- » *Potential redevelopment sites*

## Downtown Business Development Actions

A primary focus of revitalizing downtown should be improving the overall downtown business environment in ways that would positively existing businesses and attract new businesses. These actions relate to such things as downtown organization, design (streetscape, signage, wayfinding, historic interpretation, etc.), branding, marketing, business retention & expansion, and business recruitment.

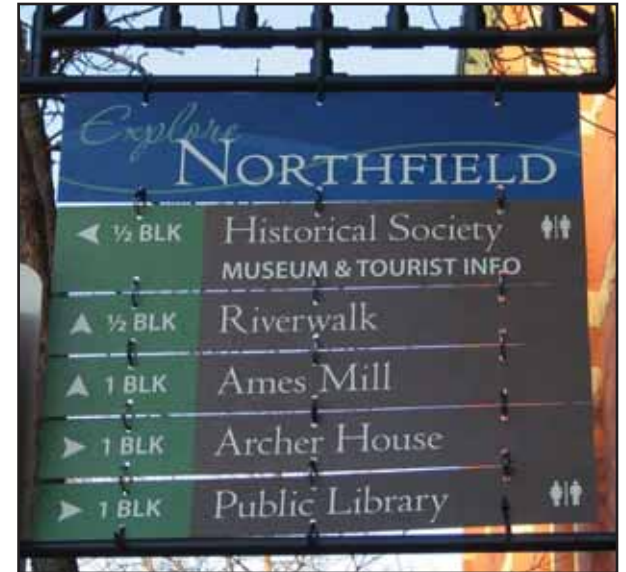
The recommended downtown business development actions are as follows:

1. **Establish Chaska Main Street Program to provide downtown-focused staff resources for coordinating efforts with City Staff and the Downtown Business Council/Southwest Chamber of Commerce relating to downtown organization, design, marketing, and economic development**
  - a. *Develop a downtown business retention & expansion program, e.g. downtown anchor businesses like the grocery store*
  - b. *Develop a downtown business recruitment program*
  - c. *Develop a downtown branding & marketing program, e.g. Chaska – Minnesota's Brick City*
2. **Re-establish downtown parking management plan and provide adequate & convenient public parking options:**
  - a. *Expand Two Hour Parking areas, signage & enforcement*
  - b. *Add on-street diagonal parking through street restriping and reconstruction*
  - c. *Strengthen the downtown parking management plan*
  - d. *Add public off-street parking lots where necessary in conjunction with the redesign and reconstruction of adjacent streets*
  - e. *Explore feasibility of developing a public parking structure*





3. Design and implement streetscape enhancements program, in conjunction with the street reconstruction program
4. Create a walking tour map of downtown historic buildings and sites
5. Develop a multi-faceted wayfinding program to guide visitors to and around downtown Chaska, within the southwest region level and within the City
6. Study potential for establishing a downtown business improvement district/special service district
7. Consider establishing a local lodging tax to help fund downtown promotion efforts
8. Consider establishing a Chaska downtown convention & visitors bureau
9. Expand the interpretation of downtown's historic resources, working with the Chaska Historical Society, the Heritage Preservation Commission and the Downtown Business Council
10. Develop relationships with the organizations and visitors associated with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, such as USFWS, MN DNR and Friends of the Minnesota Valley, to better link downtown's businesses, services, information and marketing to their needs





## Private Property Improvement Actions

The focus should be on creating awareness, assistance and incentives for improvements to private properties/buildings. It is critical that property/business owners have adequate awareness of and easy access to existing downtown programs, regulations and guidelines. To optimize the financial incentives for private property improvements, stronger and new loan/grant programs should be made available for downtown property/business owners.

The recommended private property improvement actions are as follows:

1. Consider strengthening and expanding the Downtown Storefront Rehabilitation Loan Program to become a stronger incentive for property owners, including a larger grant component, a matching funds component, and a technical assistance component, as well as including non-historic buildings and building interior improvements.
2. Recommend additional properties for national historic designation to make them eligible for federal & state historic preservation tax credits for building improvements, e.g. add Second Street West to historic district, locally designated properties that are not nationally designated.
3. Establish a downtown building signage replacement grant/loan program consistent with the recommendations of the upcoming downtown signage study.
4. Develop a downtown business resources program, such as dedicated staff (public/private), a resource guide and website that provides technical information and assistance for downtown businesses.
5. Identify funding sources and establish an incentive-based loan program for downtown residential property improvements.



## Public Property Improvement Actions

Since there is a fair amount of publicly-owned property in downtown, it is critical that the City take the lead on optimizing the use and design of its properties to contribute to the revitalization of downtown.

The recommended public property improvement actions are as follows:

1. Explore feasibility of expanding downtown library, including possible relocation
2. Reuse of City-owned Walnut Street historic mansions
3. Reuse of former railroad corridor
4. Conversion of overhead power lines to underground/creating utility corridors
5. Relocation of transmission line



## Streets, Sidewalks & Trails Improvement Actions

A key component to revitalizing downtown will be improving the streets, sidewalks and trails in the downtown area. Improving downtown's streets to be more attractive and safe for walking and as community gathering places should be the top priority. This goal needs to be balanced with the other uses of downtown's streets, including vehicle movement, vehicle parking, and bicycle movement. In conjunction with the street reconstruction projects, the downtown core alleys (blocks adjacent to Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41) and potential off-street parking lots should also be designed and constructed. Improving the comfort, safety and aesthetics of Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41, which is the community's "Main Street", is critical for downtown revitalization. Similarly, Chaska Boulevard/Cty Rd 61, formerly MN Hwy 212, is in need of improvements that provide more pleasant and safe crossings by pedestrians and bicyclists between the downtown districts north and south of this highway.

Connectivity and access in the downtown area will also be greatly improved by adding key street connections, primarily in the northeast quadrant of downtown and to Chaska Boulevard/Cty Rd 61. Like the improvements to downtown's street connections, several trail connections are also needed to create a more connected downtown trail network, including streets along trails and independent corridor trails.

The recommended actions for streets, sidewalks and trails are as follows:

1. **Develop schematic designs for all of the downtown street types consistent with the Downtown Master Plan Streets System Concept, including the Brick City Paseo, prior to street reconstruction.**
2. **Redesign and reconstruct downtown streets. In line with the City's Street Reconstruction Program, which includes reconstruction of all downtown streets over the next ten years, the focus should be on reconstruction of the Town Center Streets (east-west) first, all things being equal. Redesign of the Town Center Streets (Second, Third, Fourth & Fifth), Walnut Street and Pine Street should consider the addition of streetscape amenities, including trees, planters, lighting, bollards, banners, hanging baskets, benches, and alternative paving materials for streets and/or sidewalks. North-south streets will be constructed in segments as part of each east-west street reconstruction project.**
  - a. *Second Street*
  - b. *Third Street*
  - c. *Fourth Street*
  - d. *Fifth Street*
  - e. *Sixth Street (east)*



3. Redesign and reconstruct downtown core alleys (blocks adjacent to Chestnut St/MN Hwy 41) to create the Brick City Paseo, in conjunction with the street reconstruction project.
4. Partner with regional roadway agencies to redesign and improve downtown's Main Streets that are also regional highways:
  - a. Chestnut Street/MN Hwy 41 working with Mn DOT
  - b. Chaska Blvd/Cty Rd 61 working with Carver County
5. Work with Mn DOT to increase flood protection of MN Hwy 41 and develop alternate regional highway system improvements that will bring less regional traffic through downtown, attract more downtown destination traffic, and allow for implementation of a three-lane design on Chestnut St.
6. Increase downtown's street network connectivity/access in the northeast quadrant, to Chaska Blvd/Cty Rd 61, and to Brickyard Clayhole District:
  - a. Extend Ash Street from Fourth Street to Chaska Blvd/Cty Rd 61 and Yellow Brick Road, including a new signalized intersection (potential to shift Yellow Brick Road east to CBC site)
  - b. Add a street connection between Stoughton Ave/Beech St/Fire Lane and Chaska Blvd/Cty Rd 61, including a new signalized intersection
  - c. Connect Fifth Street East (north side of Carver-Scott Educational Coop) between Ash St and Stoughton Ave/Beech St
  - d. Add a street connection between Walnut St and Yellow Brick Road in front of grocery store



7. Add trail segments to create a more connected downtown trail network:
  - a. Cedar Street
  - b. Ash Street
  - c. Beech Street/Stoughton Ave/Fire Lane
  - d. Third Street East (and West?)
  - e. Fifth Street West/Drainage Channel
  - f. Fireman's Clayhole/Chaska Blvd/Creek Road
  - g. Downtown Greenbelt/Levee/Athletic Park
  - h. Former railroad corridor
  - i. Sixth Street East
  - j. Trail connections between the levee lanes and the levee trail
8. Ensure that any new Highway 41 river crossing benefits Chaska and minimizes visual and noise impacts to downtown and improves local access.



## Park & Open Space Improvement Actions

Downtown's park and open space improvement opportunities encompass two community parks/playfields (Fireman's Park, Athletic Park), three community feature parks (City Square, Winkel Park, Riverbend Park), and future neighborhood parks.

The recommended park and open space actions are as follows:

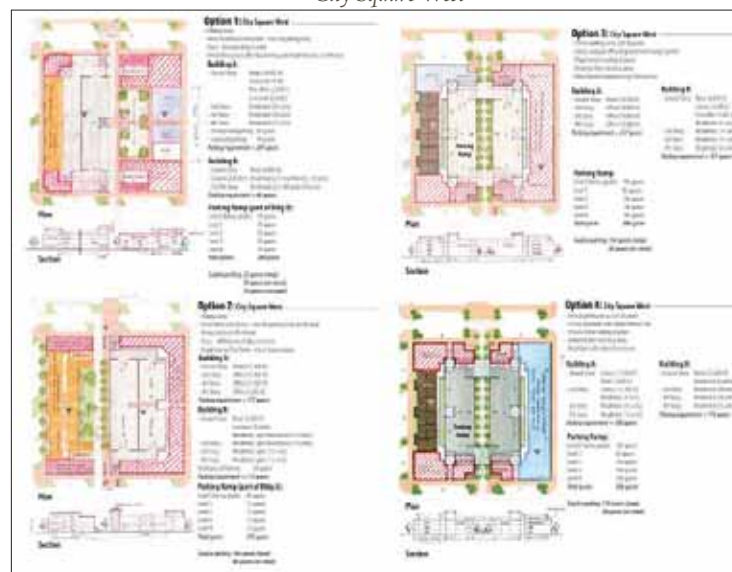
1. **Redesign and improve Athletic Park, Winkel Park, and Riverbend Park, including connections to the Minnesota River and National Wildlife Refuge. Redesign of these three parks within the Downtown West Greenbelt offer unique opportunities to better connect downtown to the Minnesota River, Minnesota River National Wildlife Refuge, and the Minnesota River State Recreation Area.**
2. **Redesign & improve Fireman's Park as downtown's community park and a unique signature park that integrates the natural features of the site – Fireman's Clayhole Lake and the wooded upland area – with the site's heritage as a former brickyard and the site's gateway location for downtown.**
3. **Add trailheads/kiosks to City Square, City Hall Plaza, Hickory St, Yellow Brick Road.**
4. **Identify locations and design two neighborhood parks:**
  - a. *Downtown west neighborhood park – partner with Guardian Angels church/school (would replace Hickory Park)*
  - b. *Downtown east neighborhood park – partner with St. John's church/school (would replace Fireman's II Park)*
5. **Designate and design vacant triangle site at Fourth St & Elm St as a mini-park in the downtown west neighborhood.**



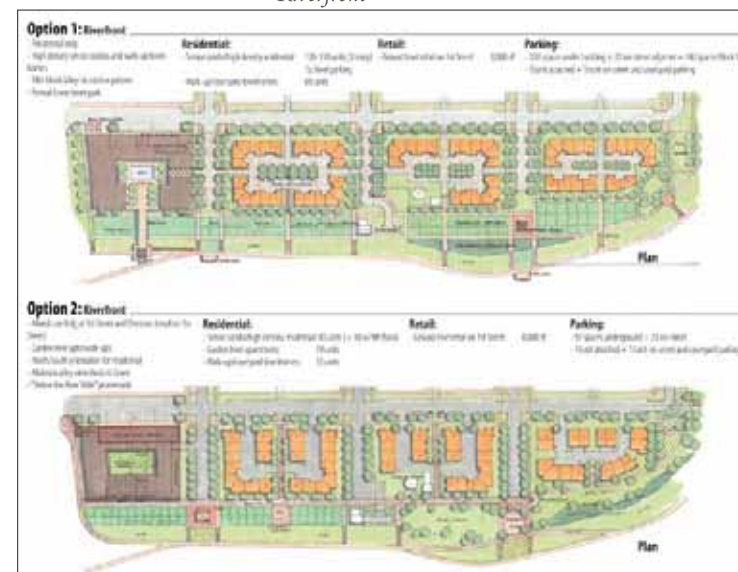
Fireman's Park



City Square West



Riverfront



## Potential Redevelopment Site Actions

The Downtown Master Plan identifies a number of potential redevelopment sites in the downtown area, both in the downtown core and the downtown edges. Although the City can have a major influence on how and when these sites redevelop, ultimately the timing of redevelopment is determined more by the market. Some of the redevelopment sites are publicly owned, so the City has more influence with those sites which include the Fireman's Clayhole district and the vacant block in the Riverfront district.

The recommended redevelopment site actions are as follows:

1. **Fireman's Clayhole district/site** - Create site master plan for new downtown gateway park and retail/restaurant businesses, including a developers' forum
2. **City Square West block** - Explore financial & political feasibility of redeveloping as a mixed-use "Main Street" block, including potential public library, public parking structure, retail, office, residential, Brick City Paseo connection and transit park & ride facility, working with property owners, Carver County, and SW Transit
3. **Riverfront block/district** - Redevelop with a gateway building at entrance to downtown and the community, potential redevelopment to the east should wait until downtown revitalization creates enough amenities to make this a value-added district for housing redevelopment
4. **Chaska Building Center site** – Amend land use designation & zoning classification for the property; collaborate with property owner on a redevelopment process by jointly marketing the site and establishing a TIF district
5. **Fireman's II Park** – At such time that an alternative park is identified and constructed in the Downtown East neighborhood, collaborate with property owner on a redevelopment process
6. **Former railroad corridor** – Collaborate with Carver County on the reuse of this land
7. **Overhead power line corridor/St. John's Church land** – Collaborate with St. John's Church on future land use and development of this land
8. **School bus barn site** – Collaborate with property owner on a redevelopment process



## Partnership & Financial Considerations

Although the City of Chaska will play a major role in implementing the Downtown Master Plan, the ultimate success of the plan will depend upon the City's partnerships and collaboration with both public and private downtown stakeholders. In addition to the City, key public sector stakeholders include Carver County, MN DOT, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), USFWS, MN DNR, and the Metropolitan Council. Key private sector stakeholders include the Chaska Downtown Business Alliance, property owners, business owners, residents, downtown institutions (faith-based, school, and senior housing/services), Chaska Historical Society, National Trust for Historic Preservation, community lending institutions, Friends of the Minnesota Valley, and others.

Within the City of Chaska, successful implementation of the Downtown Master Plan will require the collaboration of the City Council, Economic Development Authority, Planning Commission, Heritage Preservation Commission, Parks/Arts/Recreation Board, and Human Rights Commission.

One of the keys to successfully implementing the Downtown Master Plan is the ability to facilitate and finance the desired public improvements and leverage private reinvestments. The City has a variety of implementation policies, programs and tools in place to assist in downtown's revitalization.

### ***City's existing implementation policies, programs, and tools relevant to downtown:***

- » *Public ownership of property (e.g. Firemen's Clayhole District, Athletic Park, other park lands, Riverfront District block, Second St parking lot, historic buildings, abandoned rail corridor, etc.)*
- » *Economic Development Authority, e.g. levy authority*
- » *Tax Increment Financing (TIF)*
- » *Park dedication*
- » *Special assessments for street reconstruction, including public parking facilities and alley/Chaska Paseo improvements*
- » *Storefront Architectural Feasibility Grant program*
- » *Storefront Rehabilitation Low-Interest Loan program*
- » *State Historic Preservation Office - Certified Local Government (CLG) program*
- » *Local and national historic property designations*
- » *Community Land Trust*
- » *Christmas in May building rehabilitation program*
- » *Municipal State Aid (MSA) roadway program – Second St, Fourth St, Walnut St, Pine St, Beech St/Stoughton Ave*





- » *County State Aid Highway (CSAH) program – County is planning to widen Chaska Blvd (CSAH 61) to four lanes between Hwy 41 and Audubon Road*
- » *Carver-Scott Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) – trails & sidewalks*

The City also should consider enlisting additional implementation tools that are available, including the following.

### ***Potential implementation tools:***

- » *Minnesota Main Street Program (Preservation Alliance of Minnesota)*
- » *Small Cities Development Program (MN DEED)*
- » *Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)*
- » *Metro Council's Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LCDA) grant program*
- » *Business improvement/special service district for parking, streetscape and wayfinding improvements*
- » *HRA levy increase*
- » *Developers' Forums/RFPs*
- » *Federal historic tax credit*
- » *State historic tax credit*
- » *Preserve America Program*
- » *Convention & visitors bureau*
- » *Historic preservation sales tax*
- » *Watershed district funding initiatives*
- » *Local lodging tax*
- » *Local sales tax*
- » *MN Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund grants*
- » *Parking dedication or fee-in-lieu-of-parking program*
- » *MN DNR trails grants*
- » *Southwest Transit*



## Next Steps

Implementation of the Chaska Downtown Revitalization Plan is not a single project or action. Implementation is a collection of public and private actions that occur over a period of years. Based on the anticipated needs, impacts and feasibility of all of these recommended implementation actions, the following next steps or priorities are identified to jumpstart downtown's revitalization efforts.

- » *Adopt the Downtown Revitalization Plan as a Sector Plan per the Implementation Chapter of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan*
- » *Update the City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance to reflect the directions of the Downtown Revitalization Plan*
- » *Develop schematic designs for all of the downtown street types, including the Brick City Paseo, prior to street reconstruction*
- » *Redesign and reconstruct Second Street, including off-street parking improvements and upgrading the adjacent downtown core alleys as the beginning of the Brick City Paseo*
- » *Establish Chaska Main Street Program to provide downtown-focused staff resources (public/private) to coordinate efforts with City Staff and the Downtown Business Council/Southwest Chamber of Commerce relating to downtown organization, design, marketing, and economic development*
- » *Establish downtown building signage design guidelines and revise sign ordinance*
- » *Establish Downtown Building Design Guidelines for non-historic building improvements, new buildings and residential structures in downtown*
- » *Retain, improve and expand downtown grocery store*
- » *Develop a Heritage Preservation Plan*
- » *Re-establish downtown parking management plan and provide adequate public parking options:*
  - *On-street parking - restriping from parallel to diagonal*
  - *On-street parking – street reconstruction*
  - *Off-street parking lot – Second St E/Chestnut St (Block 37)*
  - *Strengthen Two Hour Parking program*
  - *Establish parking management plan for business owner & parking*
- » *Fireman's Clayhole District - Create site master plan for new downtown gateway park and retail/restaurant businesses, including a developers' forum*





- » *City Square West Block - Explore financial & political feasibility of redeveloping as a mixed-use "Main Street" block, including potential public library, public parking structure, retail, office, residential, Brick City Paseo connection and transit park & ride facility, working with property owners, Carver County, and SW Transit*
- » *Riverfront Gateway District – Redevelop with a gateway building at entrance to downtown and the community*
- » *Redesign and improve Athletic Park, Winkel Park, and Riverbend Park as Downtown West Greenbelt, including connections to the Minnesota River and National Wildlife Refuge*

These next steps or priorities should be reviewed, discussed and updated on a regular basis. The City, in partnership with the Downtown Business Council, should create an Annual Downtown Action Plan as a means of maintaining the focus on current actions to be taken. The Annual Downtown Action Plan should include the following elements:

- » *Review of progress made over the past year*
- » *Identification and prioritization of steps to be taken in the next year*
- » *Assignment of responsibilities for guiding each implementation step*
- » *Determination of budget, funding needs, and possible funding sources*



