



City Council Special Meeting AGENDA

**CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021
COUNCIL CHAMBERS/WEBEX
BLOOMINGTON CIVIC PLAZA
1800 W. OLD SHAKOPEE RD.
BLOOMINGTON, MN 55431
6:00 PM**

Mayor: Tim Busse

Councilmembers:

Jack Baloga

Dwayne Lowman

Jenna Carter

Patrick Martin

Nathan Coulter

Shawn Nelson

Mayor Tim Busse has determined it is not practical or prudent to conduct an in-person meeting at City Hall due to the global COVID-19 health pandemic as permitted by MS 13D.021. Some members of the City Councils may watch or listen electronically as permitted by law. For this meeting, due to the social distancing expectations, members of the public can watch or listen to the meeting electronically as permitted by law and due to the global COVID-19 health pandemic.

To watch online:

- 1) <https://logis.webex.com/logis/onstage/g.php?MTID=efa94ef909ae3658cd99a0b61f1a158e7>
- 2) By phone: 1-415-655-0001, access code 133 000 4985
 - A mobile phone is recommended to avoid a long-distance charge.
- 3) The meeting is not being live broadcast but the recording of the WebEx will be posted to the City Council meetings page on the City of Bloomington website (<https://reflect-bcit.cablecast.tv/CablecastPublicSite/gallery/12?channel=2>) by Friday, April 23rd to view at a later date.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS

2.1 Portland Legacy Project (CNU) Informational Update

3. ADJOURNMENT

BloomingtonMN.gov: A yearly meeting schedule, agendas, and the official minutes once approved are available. If you require a reasonable accommodation, please call 952-563-8733 (MN Relay 711) as soon as possible, but no later than 9:00 a.m. one business day before the meeting day.



Request for Council Action

Originator Planning	Item Portland Legacy Project (CNU) Informational Update
Agenda Section ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS	Date April 21, 2021

Requested Action:

Informational only; no action required.

Item created by: Julie Farnham, Planning

Item presented by: Sarah McColley and Tom Walsh - TWS Architects and Planners

Description:

In 2019, the cities of Richfield and Bloomington submitted a joint proposal to the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) to participate in their "Legacy Project" program. Legacy Projects pair local communities with national urban planning and design firms, who provide pro bono technical, planning, and design expertise aimed at enhancing or revitalizing an area. CNU selected the Portland Gateway proposal and paired the two cities with the national planning and design consulting firms TSW Architects and Planners (Atlanta) and Toole Design, who began work on the project in late 2019.

Legacy Projects are centered around an interactive design workshop (charrette) and plans were well underway for a four-day community design workshop in March 2020 when the pandemic forced everything to a halt. In early 2021, the cities and design team decided to move this project forward via virtual events and online interactive tools. The attached staff report provides a more thorough description of the project, outreach, and work completed by the consultant to date.

At the Special (concurrent) meeting of the two city council's, representatives from TSW and the cities will present the findings and preliminary recommendations for the Portland Gateway area. The consultant will consider all the input received as they work to finalize the plan, with the aim to complete it by early May. City staff will then bring the final plan back to our respective officials for final review and action.

Also attached is a compendium of emails received and staff responses.

Attachments:

[Staff Report - Portland Legacy](#)
[Portland Legacy draft excerpts](#)
[Email inquiries - compiled](#)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Request: Informational Update – CNU Portland Legacy Project

CHRONOLOGY

Community Meeting:	02/24/2021 – virtual community input meeting
Planning Commission:	03/25/2021 – project update – informational only
Special City Council Meeting:	04/21/2021 – project update – informational only

STAFF CONTACT

Julie Farnham, Senior Planner
952-563-4739
jfarnham@bloomingtonmn.gov

BACKGROUND

In fall 2019, the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) selected a proposal submitted in partnership by the cities of Richfield and Bloomington for the area around the Portland Avenue and I-494 interchange for a “Legacy Project”. CNU awards Legacy Projects to local communities in conjunction with their national conference, which was scheduled to be held in the Twin Cities in June 2020. The CNU pairs each Legacy Project with a national planning/urban design firm who provides pro bono technical and design expertise and identifies implementable strategies the community can pursue to enhance or revitalize an area. Legacy Projects are typically centered around a four-day community design workshop with an emphasis on face-to-face community participation.

The design team of TSW Architects and Planners out of Atlanta and Toole Design Group, was selected to assist on the Portland Legacy Project. Members of the design team conducted a reconnaissance trip in December 2019 during which several meetings were held with staff from the two cities and with key agencies, including: MnDOT, Metro Transit, and Hennepin County. This trip provided a strong foundation for the design team to understand local issues, opportunities, and challenges.

A four-day community design workshop was scheduled for late March 2020. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic forced postponement of the 2020 Portland Legacy Project activities. To revive and bring this project to fruition, the cities and design team decided to proceed using virtual methods. In February 2021, virtual meetings were held with stakeholders (developers, agencies, property/business owners). A virtual community meeting was held via Zoom on February 24th, during which, the design team presented a project overview and preliminary ideas for enhancing this area. The kick-off meeting was recorded and is available for viewing on the project website: blm.mn/plan/portland-legacy. The community was also invited to provide additional input using an interactive online platform, which remained open from February 24 to March 24. The consultant is currently compiling the results and will report key findings at the joint meeting. The project website includes more information about the project.

OVERVIEW OF DRAFT PORTLAND LEGACY PROJECT

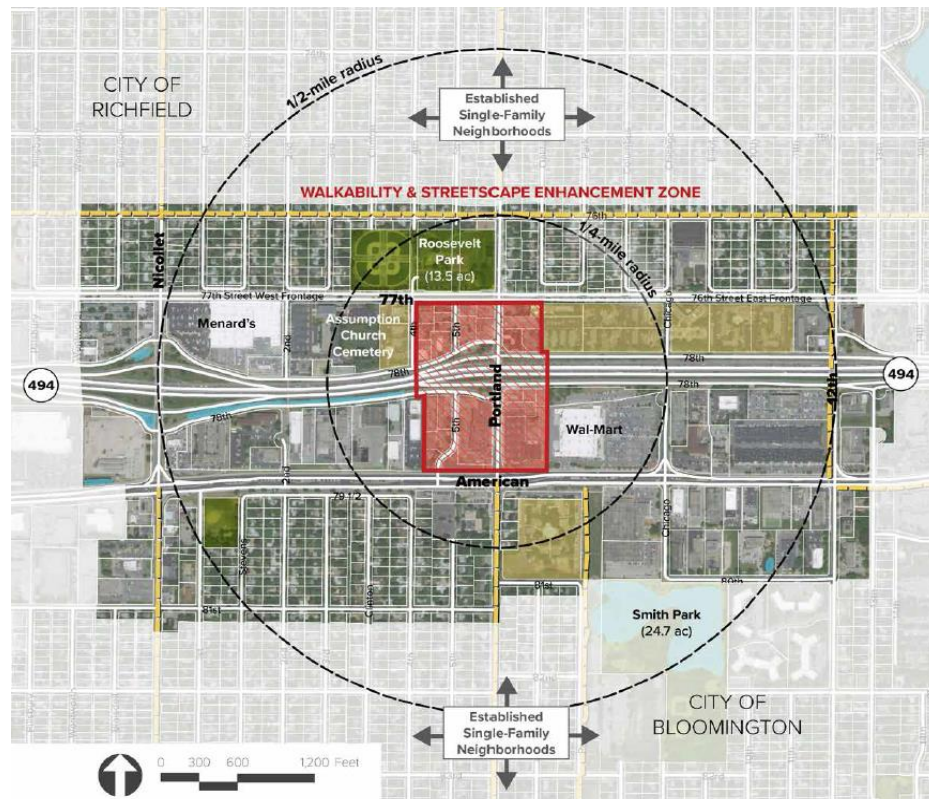
Some draft information regarding existing conditions and project goals and principles is included in the attachments. A brief overview is provided below.

Portland Legacy Project Goals and Principles:

- Transform this aging commercial area into an attractive gateway serving both cities that creates a sense of identity and better serves the area's changing demographics and community needs.
- Improve mobility for all modes of transportation and enhance connectivity between businesses and residents on either side of I-494.
- Preserve and provide affordable housing options in the area.
- Define replicable and sustainable redevelopment criteria for aging suburban strip centers.
- Enhance the public realm (sidewalks, streetscape, etc.) and access to area parks, open space, and trails.

The Project Area:

The Portland Legacy Project straddles Interstate 494, encompassing the area within a quarter to half mile of the I-494 and Portland Avenue interchange. This area serves as a major gateway to both Bloomington and Richfield. The focus on redevelopment is centered along Portland Avenue between 77th St. and American Boulevard. However the study area extends to Nicollet Avenue on the west and 12th Avenue on the east, where the primary focus will be on enhancing walkability and connectivity and improving the streetscape.



Why focus on the area around Portland and I-494?

This area was identified as a good candidate for a Legacy Project because it had been identified as a high priority redevelopment area in the Neighborhood Commercial Node study (2016) and two major transportation projects are underway that have the potential to significantly change the area. The Portland/494 interchange area also serves as a gateway entrance to both cities and should be designed to accentuate that function.

Revitalization: As older suburbs, both Bloomington and Richfield are taking steps to revitalize their aging commercial areas to create attractive, vibrant places that better serve their neighborhoods and changing demographics. The Portland Legacy Project area developed in the 1950s and 60s and many of the buildings are old with limited access and parking. While there is a significant amount of nearby housing, the area lacks safe, comfortable routes for pedestrians and bicyclists and many older properties

lack landscaping or other amenities. Key objectives of the Legacy Project are to make this gateway area more attractive, create a sense of identity, and improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and access between businesses and residents and to nearby parks.

Coordinate with Major Transportation Projects: Two major transportation projects are planned that will significantly affect properties and mobility in the area:

- **MnDOT I-494 Access Study** – MnDOT is evaluating access along I-494 that will result in substantial upgrades to the interchange at Portland Avenue and elimination of freeway access at Nicollet and 12th Avenues. This presents a unique opportunity to improve and coordinate streetscape and pedestrian and bicycle safety enhancements connecting the two cities.
- **D-Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** - Two D-Line transit stops are planned in the area: one on American Boulevard just east of Portland Avenue (by Walmart) and another at 77th Street and Portland in Richfield. The D-Line – which is expected to begin operating in late 2022 - will travel through the heart of the project area. There is an opportunity to improve pedestrian and bicycle access between the surrounding neighborhoods and businesses to the two planned transit stations in this area.

Draft Plan Guidance:

The Legacy Project will result in creation of a report that summarizes key opportunities and challenges in the study area and defines a set of strategies the two cities can use to guide decisions about redevelopment and infrastructure improvements. These will be shaped by the input received from area residents and business/property owners, as well from various agencies (MnDOT, Metro Transit, Xcel Energy, Hennepin County) and local developers via stakeholder meetings.

While the final plan is not the product of an extensive planning process, as is typical of our development district plans or the recent Lyndale Avenue Retrofit, this plan, akin to a small area study, is intended as a tool to provide guidance for revitalizing this area. Guidance will be provided regarding:

Mobility:

- Identify routes to prioritize for pedestrian and bicycle enhancements
- Identify opportunities to enhance accessibility and safety

Design Standards:

- Streetscape and landscaping (trees, sidewalk width, lighting, etc.)
- Building design (may suggest modifications or flexibility to current code requirements)
- Street furniture (benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, etc.)
- Creative placemaking opportunities

Policies and Initiatives to offset Redevelopment Barriers:

- Proactive rezoning – that the redevelopment focus area in Bloomington is mostly zoned B-2, which doesn't allow residential uses. Rezoning may be appropriate on some properties to foster mixed use, including residential.
- Land assembly – many of the parcels in the area are small and redevelopment may require several adjacent lots to be assembled to create a site large enough to support a financially viable redevelopment project.
- Remove process barriers – possible examples: expedited permit review, fee waivers.
- Fund Public Improvements – identify public projects to include in CIP and opportunities to seek grants/partnerships.

NEXT STEPS:

At the April 21 Special (joint) City Council meeting, the consultant will present an overview of the project and summary of input received from the virtual meetings and through the online interactive tools. Bloomington staff will present an informational update to the HRA on April 27. The consultant will then compile and incorporate input received from the community, property owners, agencies, and city officials as they work to finalize the plan report. The design team expects to finalize the report by early May, with the aim of having it complete for the 2021 CNU conference (May 19-21, 2021). Bloomington and Richfield staff will present the final report for approval by their respective city officials – likely in late May/June.

Once approved, the plan will provide high-level guidance regarding land use and zoning and public realm improvements. Some of those may be incorporated into the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and/or appear as projects on future Planning Commission annual work plans (e.g., proactive rezoning).

NOTIFICATION AND OUTREACH

A project webpage was created in late 2019 that provides background information and a link to a recording of the February 24 virtual community meeting. Website link: blm.mn/plan/portland-legacy.

Updates on the project were also provided in the City's monthly newsletter - The Briefing, and on the City's social media sites (FaceBook & Twitter). Staff from the City's Community Outreach and Engagement (COED) Division did some outreach with area BIPOC groups and schools. In 2020, prior to the 4-day design workshop (cancelled due to COVID-19), staff hand distributed a flyer to businesses in the focus area to make them aware of the project and invite them to participate.

To create awareness of the virtual community meeting (Feb. 24, 2021), a postcard – in English and Spanish - was direct mailed to 3,505 addresses in and around the larger study area. Notice of this meeting was sent via e-mail to registered users of the "City Council" E-Subscribe groups. Supporting information is also posted on the City's website.

As noted above, stakeholder meetings were held with: 1) area developers and 2) governmental agencies (MnDOT, Metro Transit, Hennepin County, and Xcel Energy) and one-on-one meetings were offered to all property owners in the area (one meeting requested and interview conducted).

RECOMMENDATION

Informational only; no action required.

Site Context

- Developed in 1950s and 60s
- Characterized by aging commercial buildings and strip centers, surface parking lots, and affordable rental housing
- Surrounded by established, single-family neighborhoods
- Commercial centers provide a variety of convenient retail, service, and food outlets
- Highly diverse and more economically challenged than other areas in Bloomington and Richfield

The Walkability & Streetscape Enhancement Zone (1/2-mile from Portland Avenue and I-494) considered for broader connectivity opportunities.

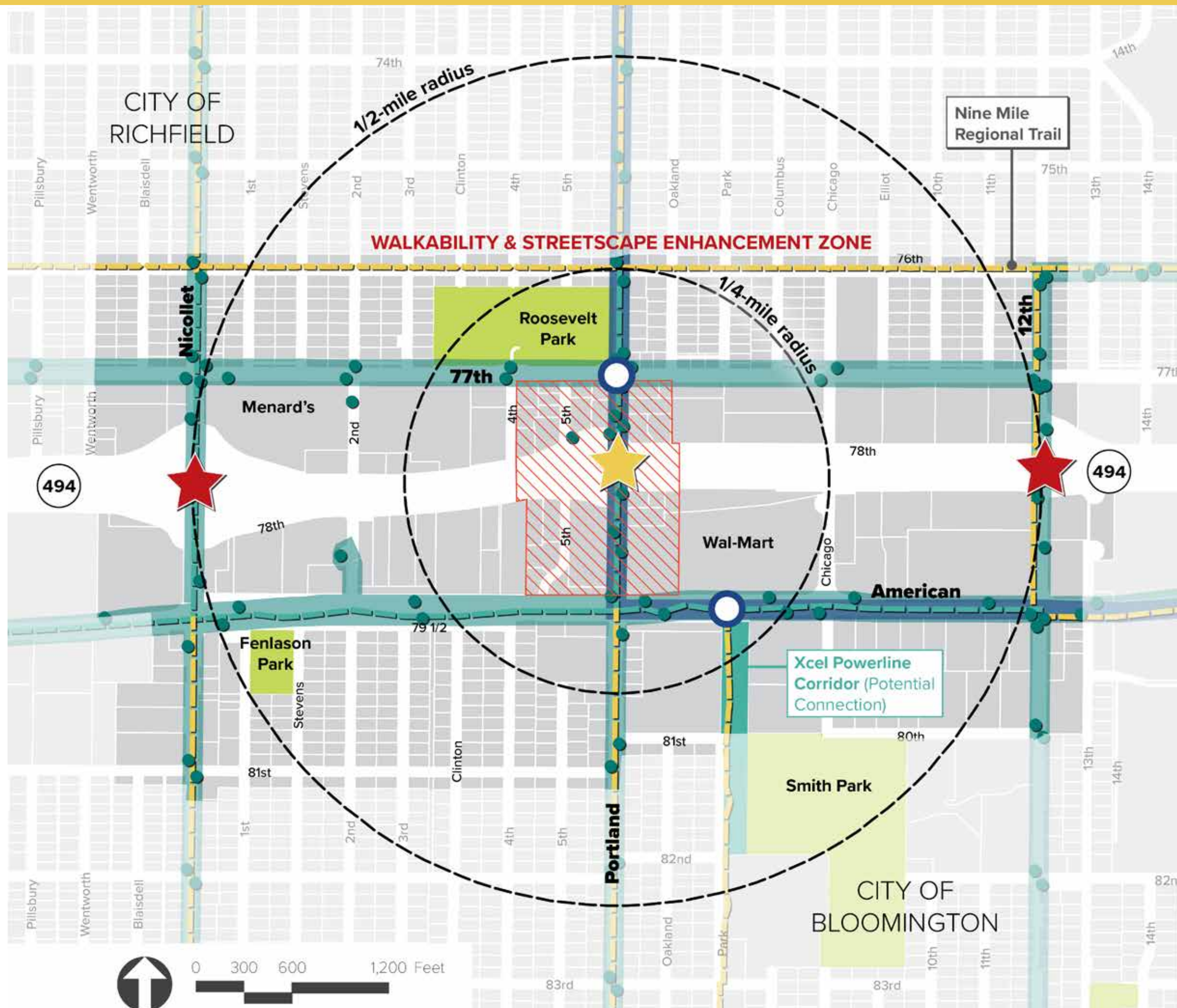
The Redevelopment Zone is the area for design and redevelopment criteria.



Connectivity

- Surrounded by **well-connected, established** single-family neighborhoods
- Connectivity **breaks down due to I-494**
- MetroTransit proposed D-Line BRT Route along American Boulevard and Portland Avenue w/2 stops
- Proposed bike facilities on Nicollet, Portland, and American
- MnDOT proposed interchange closures and expansions

- Proposed Bike Facilities (from previous plans)
- Existing Bike Facilities
- Proposed D Line Route (MetroTransit BRT)
- Current Bus Routes
- Existing Bus Stops
- Proposed D Line Station (MetroTransit BRT)
- ▨ Redevelopment Zone
- ★ Potential Closed Interchange (per MnDOT's proposed Vision Plan)
- ★ Potential Expanded Interchange (per MnDOT's proposed Vision Plan)

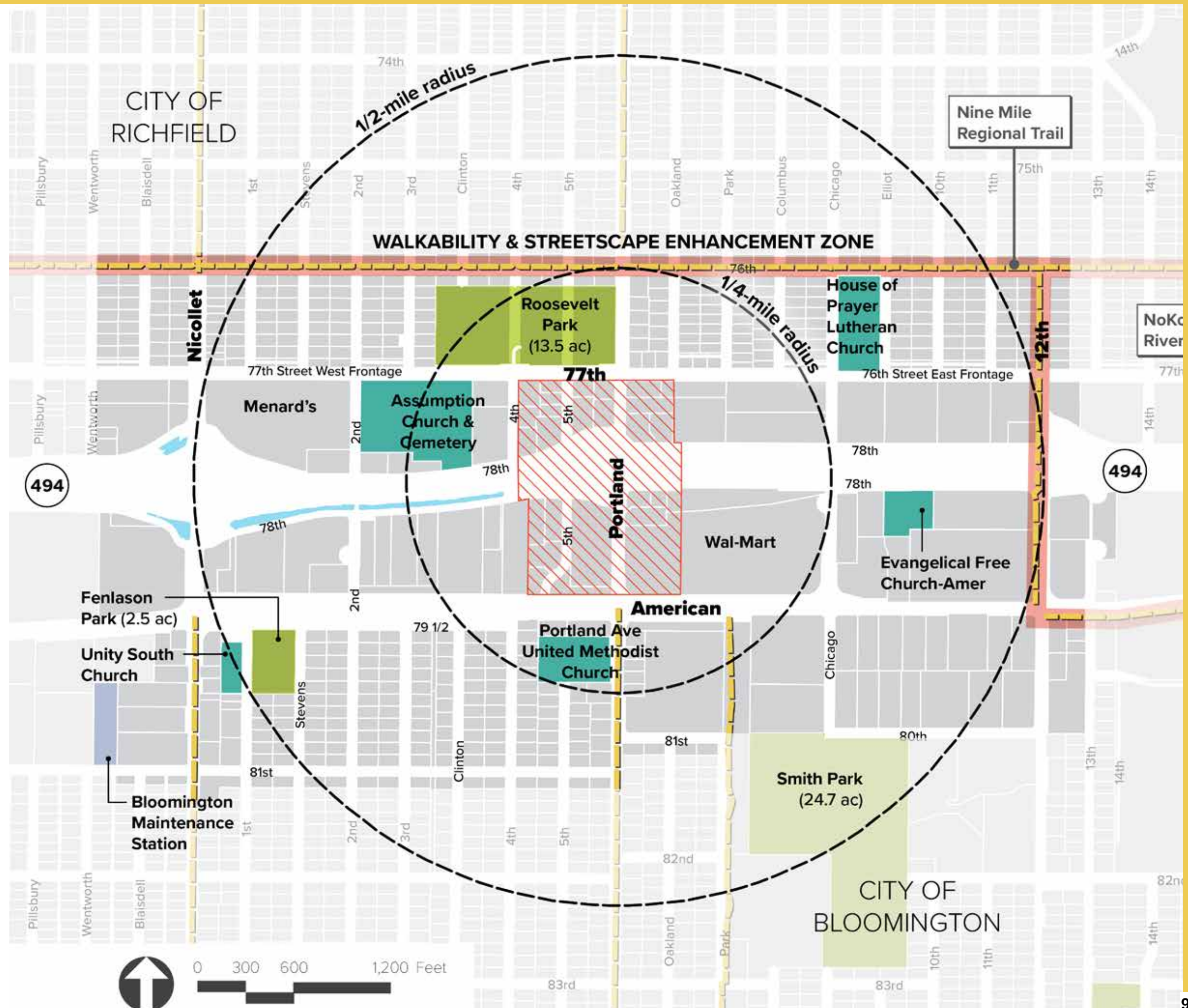


Resources

Public places / places that people gather.

- Five (5) places of worship
- 3 parks within the 1/2-mile radius, (40.7 acres total)
- City of Bloomington Maintenance Station
- Existing on-street or off-street bike facilities that connect the Portland Gateway to residential areas, but that do not connect destinations **within** the study area

- Existing Bike Facilities & Local Connections
- Regional Trails
- Redevelopment Zone / Portland Gateway
- Parks



Zoning

Bloomington

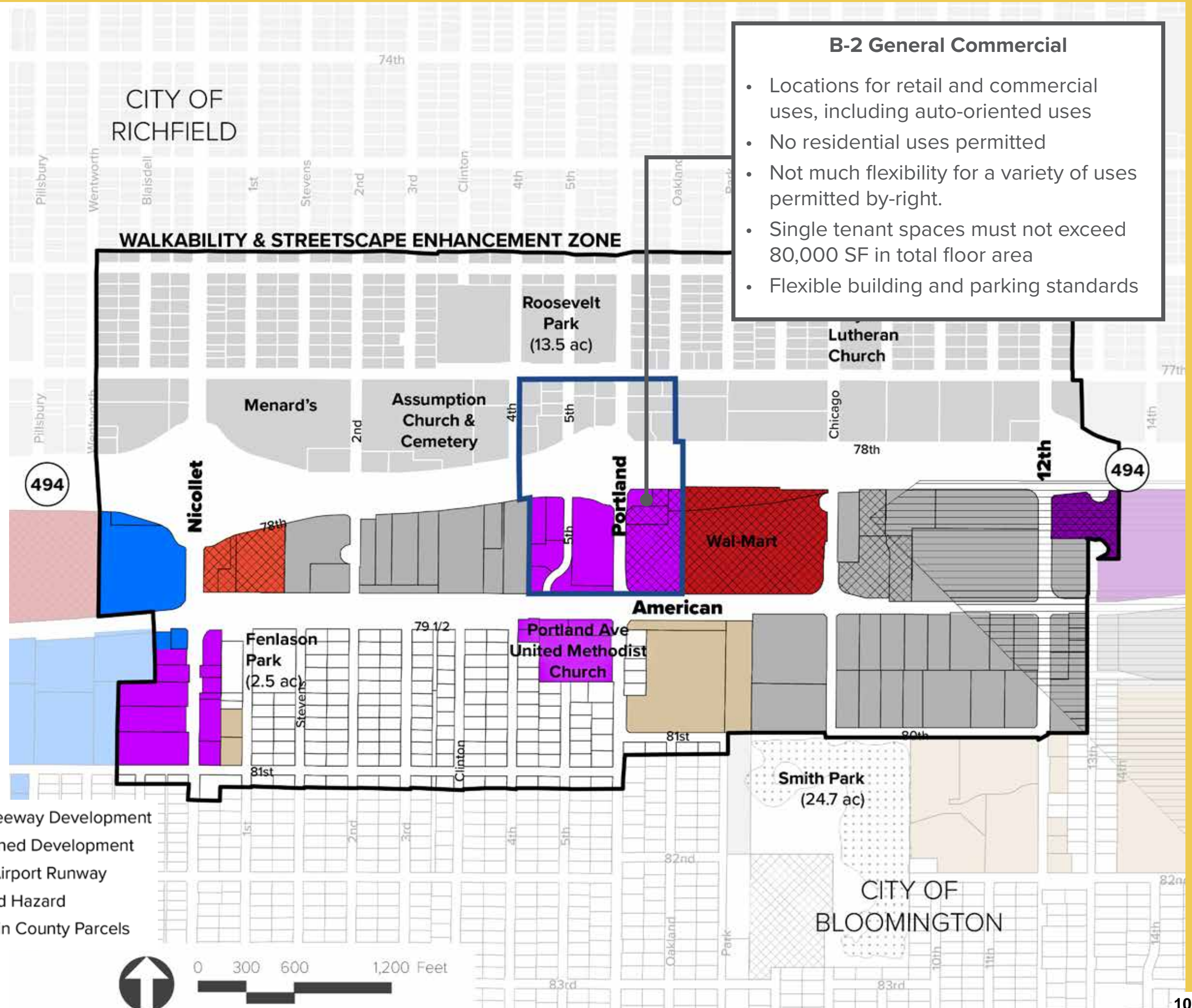
- Complicated zoning ordinance with multiple references
- Sites in the **Redevelopment Zone** are “**B-2 General Commercial**,” which does not allow residential (see right).
- Multiple “**Freeway**” **designations**, which include aging shopping centers and some industrial land uses.
 - Areas near freeway corridors and interchanges for medium-to large-scale development.
- **FD-2** is the majority of the land.

- Redevelopment Zone
- R-1 Single Family
- R-4 Multiple-Family Residential
- B-2 General Commercial
- C-2 Freeway Commercial
- C-4 Freeway Office
- CR-1 Regional Commercial
- I-3 General Industry

- FD-2 Freeway Development
- PD Planned Development
- AR-22 Airport Runway
- FH Flood Hazard
- Hennepin County Parcels

B-2 General Commercial

- Locations for retail and commercial uses, including auto-oriented uses
- No residential uses permitted
- Not much flexibility for a variety of uses permitted by-right.
- Single tenant spaces must not exceed 80,000 SF in total floor area
- Flexible building and parking standards

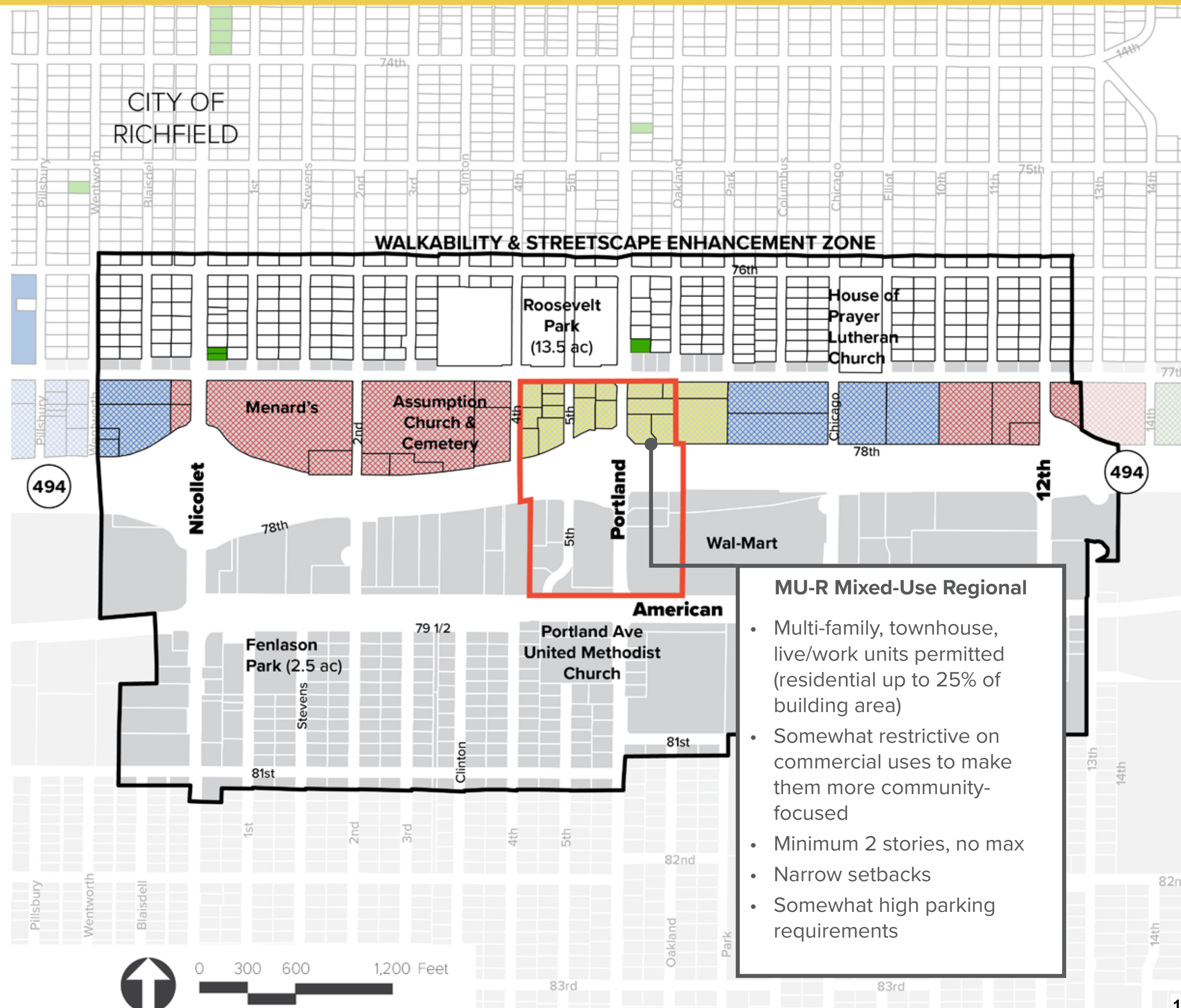


Zoning

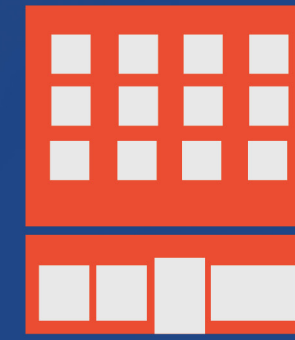
Richfield

- Multiple “Mixed-Use” designations that include the current shopping centers and apartment communities
- Single-Family residential makes up the northern part of the study area
- Sites in the **Redevelopment Zone** are “MU-R Mixed-Use Regional” (see right)

- Redevelopment Zone
- R Single Family
- MR-1 Two-Family
- MR-2 Multi-Family
- MR-3 High-Density Multi-Family
- PMR Planned Multi-Family
- C-2 General Commercial
- PMU Planned Mixed-Use
- MU-N Mixed-Use Neighborhood
- MU-C Mixed-Use Community
- MU-R Mixed-Use Regional
- Hennepin County Parcels



Goals & Principles



1► Create a mixed-use gateway that establishes a sense of identity

- Provide housing, retail, and office uses to create a vibrant mixed-use node serving the neighborhoods
- Integrate placemaking elements to accentuate the function of the area as a gateway
- Develop zoning amendments to achieve the desired mixed-use redevelopment

2► Provide redevelopment alternatives for aging commercial strip centers

- Enhance market viability of existing properties for redevelopment
- Minimize displacement of existing businesses
- Facilitate opportunities for redevelopment through potential parcel consolidation, public realm enhancements, and internal circulation

3► Preserve and provide affordable housing options

- Preserve existing affordable housing developments
- Preserve single-family neighborhoods
- Recommend a variety of new housing options that meet multiple price points

4► Improve mobility access for all modes of transportation

- Establish a network of connected streets that link to adjacent neighborhoods and I-494
- Improve the safety, walkability, and aesthetics of intersections and streets for all users
- Simplify access along major streets through driveway consolidation, side-street access for commercial properties, and use of alleys for loading
- Achieve vehicle capacity requirements
- Consider MnDOT's Nicollet, 12th, and Portland interchange reconfigurations in all mobility recommendations on connecting streets
- Integrate existing bus stops and future transit stations along MetroTransit's planned D-Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route in streetscape designs

5► Enhance parks, open space, and the public realm

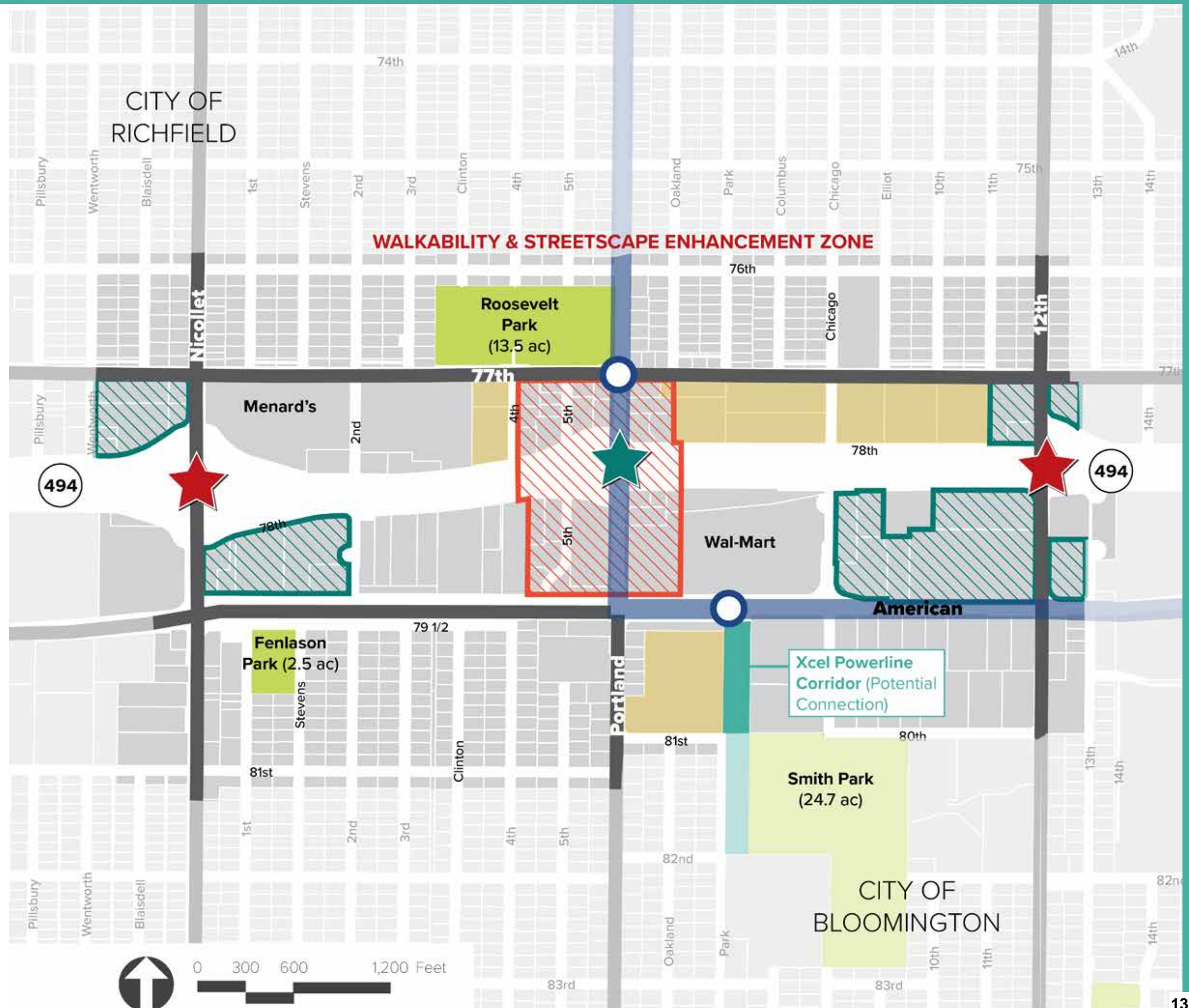
- Improve access to parks in and near the study area: Smith Park and Roosevelt Park
- Recommend additional parks, plazas, and open spaces
- Identify new multi-use trail connections
- Design streetscapes that accommodate all users and appropriately integrate sustainable infrastructure

Framework

The **Framework Plan** shows the **overall recommendations that meet the goals and principles**.

- Portland Redevelopment Zone is the **main focus**
- The Secondary Redevelopment Areas could potentially develop into **mixed-use nodes** if the interchanges are also changed
- Key streetscapes are improved with bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Affordable rental and senior housing stock should be preserved

- Proposed Streetscape Improvements
- Proposed D Line Route (MetroTransit BRT)
- Proposed D Line Station (MetroTransit BRT)
- ▨ Portland Redevelopment Zone
- ▨ Secondary Redevelopment Zones
- ★ Proposed Closed Interchange (MnDOT)
- ★ Proposed Expanded Interchange (MnDOT)
- Parks
- Affordable Rental Housing to Preserve



From: [Melissa Poehlman](#)
To: [REDACTED] [Farnham, Julie](#)
Subject: RE: Idea for Portland Avenue Legacy Project
Date: Thursday, March 11, 2021 3:01:04 PM

Hi Sally,

Thanks for your suggestion. While we don't have the power to actually add the coffee shop, we can certainly make sure that the codes allow and encourage these types of uses that will benefit the neighborhood! We will include this feedback with the other thoughts that we're getting from the communities.

Sincerely,
Melissa

Melissa Poehlman, AICP
Asst. Director of Community Development | City of Richfield
C 612.861.9766

-----Original Message-----

From: sally schlosser [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2021 1:38 PM
To: Melissa Poehlman; jfarnham@bloomingtonmn.gov
Subject: Idea for Portland Avenue Legacy Project

Hello Ladies,

Please consider adding a coffee shop like Caribou, Starbucks or Dunn Brothers as you work on this project. Other than the coffee shops at MOA and the Caribous by Target and the intersection of 66th and Lyndale in Richfield, there are no coffee shops in East Bloomington. There were rumors that Johnson's Hardware was to become a coffee shop. Unfortunately it became a dental office.

A coffee shop would be a great place to meet/visit with neighbors from Richfield and Bloomington. It would definitely add something not in either neighborhood.

Thank you for considering my suggestion, Sally

Sent from my iPad

From: [Farnham, Julie](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Portland Legacy
Date: Tuesday, February 16, 2021 4:26:35 PM
Attachments: [image003.png](#)

Hello and thank you for reaching out.

Unfortunately I don't have any specific answers for you. While the City sometimes partners with private property owners on redevelopment, the process is typically driven by the property owner. At this time, I am not aware of any redevelopment plans the property owner has for this shopping center. Our hope is that the Portland Legacy project will identify potential opportunities for private investment in the area, but moving ahead with redevelopment will be up to individual property owners.

Regarding relocation assistance – I am making some inquiries to other city staff who work more closely with such programs to see if the City offers this type of assistance. Or, if not, perhaps Hennepin County or the State have programs. I will let you know what I hear, but I wanted to get back to you as soon as possible to let you know that I did get your email.

Again, thank you for responding to the notice regarding the Portland Legacy project. I hope you are able to join the virtual meeting on February 24 to learn more.

Sincerely,

Julie

PS – thanks for the note about Bloomington water!!! You may know, we have won Best in Glass awards for our water!!!



JULIE FARNHAM, AICP

Senior Planner | Planning Division

Pronouns: (she/her/hers)

PH: 952-563-4739 **EMAIL:** jfarnham@bloomingtonmn.gov

1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, MN 55431

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From: Colleen Bertino [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 16, 2021 10:55 AM
To: Farnham, Julie <jfarnham@BloomingtonMN.gov>
Subject: Portland Legacy

Julie,

From: [Farnham, Julie](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Portland Legacy
Date: Thursday, February 18, 2021 4:22:36 PM

Hello again,

I wanted to circle back regarding your question about relocation assistance. I reached out to my colleagues and here's what I found out:

If a property is acquired by a public entity (e.g., MnDOT, City, County) that entity would need to provide relocation assistance to tenants with active leases. Tenants with expired leases don't qualify.

If a private owner decides to redevelop their property, the City does not have any relocation assistance programs. It's possible the State, through Dept of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) does, so you might want to check their website. In any case, such programs would only be available at the time redevelopment is imminent. As I mentioned in my previous reply, I am not aware of any plans to redevelop the shopping center. That decision would be made by the property owner.

Hope that provides a little more clarity to your questions.

Best,

Julie

From: Colleen Bertino [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 16, 2021 10:55 AM
To: Farnham, Julie <jfarnham@BloomingtonMN.gov>
Subject: Portland Legacy

Julie,

I have a business in the Town and Country Mall and have been there for 30 plus years now, I have known there is a target on the building since I first leased there.

What are the time frames for possible redevelopment of the site and what assistance in relocating will be given to the very viable businesses in the mall?

On a completely different matter, my office and warehouse is in Edina, but we are on the Bloomington water system and I have to say how much I love the city of Bloomington's water. Edina water is very icky, yes I typed icky because it's the best word for it.

Colleen Bertino
CEO/COO
FHG Inc

From: [Farnham, Julie](#)
To: [REDACTED] mpoehlman@richfieldmn.gov
Subject: RE: Portland Legacy Project
Date: Wednesday, February 17, 2021 4:29:03 PM
Attachments: [image003.png](#)

Hello Mr. Mosher,

Thank you for sharing your insights! We will add them to the comments we receive on this project and share with our respective city officials.

I expect you may have received either a postcard or letter regarding the Portland Legacy Project. We hope you can join us next Wednesday evening for a virtual meeting that will provide an overview of the project and how to access the interactive online maps and survey where you can tell us more about your hopes for this area. Here's the link where you can learn more about the Portland Legacy project and how to join the virtual kick off meeting: www.blm.mn/portland-legacy

Thanks again for reaching out.

Sincerely,

Julie



JULIE FARNHAM, AICP

Senior Planner | Planning Division

Pronouns: (she/her/hers)

PH: 952-563-4739 **EMAIL:** jfarnham@bloomingtonmn.gov

1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, MN 55431

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From: Lee Mosher [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2021 3:05 PM
To: Farnham, Julie <jfarnham@BloomingtonMN.gov>; mpoehlman@richfieldmn.gov
Subject: Portland Legacy Project

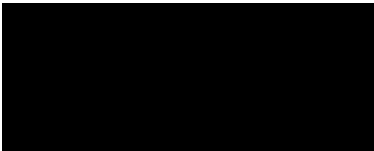
Dear Planners,

I am a real estate attorney with my office in Bloomington and my residence in south Minneapolis near Diamond Lake. For the past few years I have navigated through Richfield and Bloomington and have been frustrated by how many stop lights and delays there are in Bloomington and have been impressed by how much easier and pleasant it is to drive through Richfield with its upgraded roadways and roundabouts. I am also a regular user of 12th Avenue across 494. I hope that in the redesign of the 494 and Portland area that

you will consider green buffer spaces and the use of a larger than normal roundabout. I have driven a fair amount in Northwestern France and am impressed by how they use larger roundabouts and one-way roads to allow a more continuous flow of traffic and limit the use of stoplights, both in more dense urban areas and in more rural areas around freeways and toll roads. (I have also suffered the even greater delays of driving in Delaware, where my daughter is an Urban and Regional Planner.)

Thank you for your consideration.

Lee Mosher
Attorney at Law



Real Property Law Specialist Certified by
The Real Property Law Section of the
Minnesota State Bar Association

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Farnham, Julie](#)
Subject: Re: Inquiry re: Xcel Corridor
Date: Friday, March 19, 2021 5:06:52 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)

Thank you.

-----Original Message-----

From: Farnham, Julie <jfarnham@BloomingtonMN.gov>
To: [REDACTED]
Sent: Fri, Mar 19, 2021 4:31 pm
Subject: Inquiry re: Xcel Corridor

Hello Ms. Ness,

In response to your inquiry about the “potential connection” label on the map/graphic – this is an analysis map created as part of the Portland Legacy Project. It depicts existing conditions and potential opportunities for public improvements. With regard to the Xcel Corridor – there is an existing sidewalk in the powerline easement extending south from American Boulevard to Smith Park. The analysis map is suggesting that the existing sidewalk connection could be enhanced.

I hope this answers your question.

Thank you

Julie



JULIE FARNHAM, AICP

Senior Planner | Planning Division

Pronouns: (she/her/hers)

PH: 952-563-4739 **EMAIL:** jfarnham@bloomingtonmn.gov

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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Farnham, Julie](#)
Cc: [Busse, Tim](#); [Marohn, Amy](#); [Long, Julie](#)
Subject: Re: 494 Improvements - Portland/Nicollet/12th Avenue
Date: Friday, April 9, 2021 8:58:07 AM
Attachments: [image003.png](#)

Ms. Farnham - Thank you for your response and the helpful information. Also thank you for such a prompt response. It is much appreciated.

Gerry Holt

-----Original Message-----

From: Farnham, Julie <jfarnham@BloomingtonMN.gov>
To: 'Gerry Holt' [REDACTED]
Cc: Busse, Tim <tbusse@BloomingtonMN.gov>; Marohn, Amy <amarohn@BloomingtonMN.gov>; Long, Julie <jlong@BloomingtonMN.gov>
Sent: Thu, Apr 8, 2021 5:04 pm
Subject: RE: 494 Improvements - Portland/Nicollet/12th Avenue

Mr. Holt,

Thank you for reaching out with your questions. I am the correct contact for the Portland Legacy project, but not the MnDOT project. To address your comments and questions about the MnDOT project, I asked for input from Amy Marohn, one of our city engineers working closely on the 494 project. Her comments are provided further below.

Portland Legacy Project

First I want to say that your confusion is understandable as these two projects both address the area around Portland and 494. I apologize if our messaging has contributed to that confusion. I hope I can provide some clarity.

Project Timing: The Portland Legacy Project will provide high-level planning and design guidance for the area. It is the product of a short, but intensive, planning effort that paired the cities of Richfield and Bloomington with a national planning and design consultant to provide some guidance around challenges and potential opportunities to revitalize this area, which developed over 50 years ago. The project was timed to correspond to the annual conference of the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU), who had planned to hold their conference in the Twin Cities in June 2020.

As part of their annual conference, CNU awards a handful of "Legacy Projects" to local communities based on submitted proposals. Bloomington and Richfield submitted a joint proposal for this area, which both cities have identified a potential redevelopment area. Given there are also two major transportation projects underway that will change the area (494 project and Metro Transit D-Line Bus Rapid Transit), the Portland/494 area seemed like a good candidate for a Legacy Project. One of the key benefits of Legacy Projects is that, for a small stipend, we receive input and technical advice from a team with national design expertise who can provide us with a fresh perspective.

Project Focus/Scope: The final Legacy Project plan is not a specific redevelopment plan; rather, it will present a vision and strategies the two cities can use as they make decisions about redevelopment and modifications to roads, trails, and other public infrastructure – including the MnDOT project. Legacy Projects are typically the product of a week-long intensive community design workshop. We were set to hold our workshop in late March 2020, but had to postpone due to the pandemic. To move things forward in 2021, we decided to conduct virtual and online input

opportunities.

Your observation about the focus on urban design is correct. These projects do tend to focus on improvements to the public realm (streets, sidewalks, trails, parks) and general character and appearance of an area. This is largely due to cities having most control over public property.

Given the short duration of these projects (typ. one intensive week), they do not include deep analysis of traffic or other factors that might occur in a more traditional planning study. With regard to how the Portland Legacy project inter-faces with the MnDOT project; the intent is that the two cities can apply the guidance in the final Portland Legacy framework plan as they provide feedback to MnDOT on detailed plans they prepare for the Portland/494 interchange improvements.

Thanks again for your interest in these projects. If you have any more questions on the Portland Legacy Project, please feel free to contact me: Julie Farnham, Senior Planner at 952-563-4739 or jfarnham@bloomingtonmn.gov.

MnDOT – 494 Project

Thank you for your participation and feedback related to the MnDOT listening sessions for the development of the first build project. I agree that there was not a lot of detailed information available yet about the local street network, which is the primary area of interest for many of the people participating in the listening sessions. While the details for the layouts have not yet been finalized, the local partners (Richfield, Hennepin County and Bloomington) have been working closely with MnDOT to identify and mitigate the impacts of traffic and access changes to the local roadway network. Significant work has been done to model the traffic changes to the local network with the changes in regional access and operations. These new projected traffic volumes are being used to develop the roadway cross sections for all of the reconstructed bridges, and to identify locations on the local network that will need mitigation to address the traffic changes, such as Penn and 82nd Street where dual southbound lefts will need to be accommodated. We (MnDOT and local partners) are still working through details of how they will be addressed with the MnDOT project but are working to have these layouts ready to share at the next set of public engagement meetings at the end of this month. They will be presenting the results of the traffic modeling, as well.

Here are some responses to your specific questions:

- The new ramp from north bound 35W to westbound 494 seems promising until you hear about the changes in access to and from Penn Avenue and 82nd Street (which I do not totally understand). I am not sure the "BOX" can handle all the increased traffic movements to the shopping areas on Penn or the Best Buy complex. There are presently areas in the "BOX" where cars stack to make left turns and this would only increase with the changes. While the interchange project is not proposing to eliminate the ramps at Penn or at 82nd Street, the interchange changes will result in bridges/ramps that will make a few of the existing moves unreachable. The examples are that if you are traveling on 494 you will be able to use the Penn Avenue exit, but if you are traveling on 35W to 494, you will be entering 494 at a location that is past the Penn exit and will have to access Penn in advance of the interchange via 82nd Street (if coming from the south) or via 76th Street (if coming from the north). An example of the changes at 82nd Street is that you will be able to use the 82nd Street exits and entrances to exit or enter 35W, but if you are traveling from 494 you will be entering 35W at a point south of 82nd Street and will not be able to exit at 82nd Street and if you are entering 35W from 82nd Street you will lane on 35W past the interchange ramp for 494. I hope this helps clarify the changes. There are some intersections within the "Box" that will need modifications (i.e. added right turn or left turn lanes) to accommodate the traffic changes. There is also some anticipated traffic volume reduction on American Boulevard at times given that there will be less congestion on mainline 494 and therefore fewer drivers looking for alternate routes through the City.
- Closing access to Nicollet and 12th Avenues and focusing access at a remodeled Portland Avenue interchange makes sense for traffic flow on 494 but I am not sure how Portland will be able to handle all the

additional traffic. Specifically, I am concerned about left turns from Portland to get on the 494 entrance ramps and the increase in left turns at American Boulevard or 77th Street from people entering or exiting from 494. Also am concerned about how much traffic will the traffic flow south on Portland (now a 2 lane plus turn lane road) into Bloomington before using 82nd, 86th, or 90th to reach their neighborhood destination. The change/increase in traffic volume on Portland Avenue is a driving element in the design of the new Portland Avenue interchange. There will be modifications to the turn lanes, through lanes, etc. These details are being worked through currently to identify the best way to address the traffic and minimize other impacts. Additional turn lanes and storage capacity it a critical part of the design. Traffic flow changes – the traffic modeling does show some increases in traffic volumes on Portland Avenue south of American Boulevard, but not to the level that exceeds the capacity of the 3-lane cross-section of this roadway.

- Access changes will also impact trunk traffic from warehouses and retail stores along the corridor. Freight mobility is a strong consideration in the designs, as well.
- With the changes at 82nd, will there be increased traffic activity at 90th. It is possible that there could be some additional traffic from inside Bloomington that will utilize 90th Street to/from 35W. We would not anticipate that to be a significant change in volumes, but there will undoubtedly be people who are destined to 494 (east or west) from this area and will choose to access that via 35W/90th. Alternate options from within Bloomington near 35W will be via Lyndale/494 or Penn/494.

If you have additional questions at this time, please feel free to contact Amy Marohn, City of Bloomington Engineering, at 952-563-3421 or amarohn@bloomingtonmn.gov to discuss further.”



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From: Gerry Holt [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 7, 2021 7:26 PM
To: Farnham, Julie <jfarnham@BloomingtonMN.gov>
Cc: Busse, Tim <tbusse@BloomingtonMN.gov>
Subject: 494 Improvements - Portland/Nicollet/12th Avenue

Ms Farnham:

I am not sure of right contact at the City of Bloomington. I am reaching out to you since you are listed as a contact for the Portland Legacy project and were on the list of participants on the 494 listening meeting this evening. I listened to the presentation on the Legacy Project earlier this year and listened to the three presentation over the past week on the planned improvements on 494. I am very frustrated and confused.

I felt the Portland Legacy project seemed a little premature until decisions were made on the new Portland interchange with 494. However, I acknowledge it it time to think about what the area could become for in the future and assume time is needed for thoughtful discussion with property owners, planning and possibly getting grant money. However, I thought the discussion centered too much on urban design (pedestrians, bikeways, streetscape, landscaping, etc.) without any real consideration for vehicle traffic flow on local streets when you close access at Nicollet and at 12th Avenues.

The presentations by MNDOT were really awful in terms of what will happen to local streets and maybe that is not their concern. My conclusion is that MNDOT will accomplish its goal of improving traffic flow on 494 and 35W but will make traffic flow a mess on local streets. I am not sure who will be responsible for fixing this problem as the streets are a combination of city and county road. My concerns are:

- The new ramp from north bound 35W to westbound 494 seems promising until you hear about the the changes in access to and from Penn Avenue and 82nd Street (which I do not totally understand). I am not sure the "BOX" can handle all the increased traffic movements to the shopping areas on Penn or the Best Buy complex. There are presently areas in the "BOX" where cars stack to make left turns and this would only increase with the changes.
- Closing access to Nicollet and 12th Avenues and focusing access at a remodeled Portland Avenue interchange makes sense for traffic flow on 494 but I am not sure how Portland will be able to handle all the additional traffic. Specifically, I am concerned about left turns from Portland to get on the 494 entrance ramps and the increase in left turns at American Boulevard or 77th Street from people entering or exiting from 494. Also am concerned about how much traffic will the traffic flow south on Portland (now a 2 land plus turn lane road) into Bloomington before using 82nd, 86th, or 90th to reach their neighborhood destination.
- Access changes will also impact trunk traffic from warehouses and retail stores along the corridor.
- With the changes at 82nd, will there be increased traffic activity at 90th.

I think these changes are going to be a big problem in the future unless the city provides more insight or comments on what will happen on the local streets.

Thanks for listening.

Gerry Holt