7TH AVENUE
NORTH ST. PAUL URBAN DESIGN

Downtown Revitalization Plan
North St. Paul, MN
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Downtown Revitalization Plan

7th Avenue North St. Paul Urban Design

November 2018

PREPARED FOR

City of North St. Paul, MN
2400 Margaret Street
North St. Paul, MN 55109

PREPARED BY

WSB & Associates
We gratefully acknowledge the participation and assistance of the following groups and individuals in the preparation of this document:

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# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION
1.0 Purpose of the Downtown Visualization Plan
1.1 Project Background
1.2 Project Goals

## CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
2.0 Community Involvement
2.1 Planning Commission Review and Comments

## CHAPTER 3: CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT GRAPHICS
3.0 Master Plan Overview
3.1 Corridor Design Templates
3.2 McKnight - 3rd Street N.
3.3 3rd Street N. – 2nd Street N. & Roundabout Options
3.4 2nd Street N. - 1st Street N.
3.5 1st Street N. – Helen Street N.
3.6 Helen Street N. – Margaret Street N.
3.7 Margaret Street N. – Charles Street N.
3.8 Charles Street N. – Henry Street N.
3.9 Henry Street N. – Division (120)
3.10 Margaret Street N.
3.11 Plan Enlargements
3.12 Section Perspectives

## CHAPTER 4: COSTS
4.0 Estimated Cost Outline

## APPENDICES
A Visual Preference Survey Results
B Overall Downtown Master Plan
Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

The purpose of this Downtown Revitalization Plan (DRP) was to establish the visual quality and design preferences for the reconstruction of 7th Avenue, which travels through the core of North St. Paul extending from Division Street (Highway 120) to McKnight Road. The plan also included the segment of Margret Street, extending from the 7th Avenue intersection to the south edge of the bridge going over Highway 36. The planned project includes approximately 1.5 miles roadway within the city limits of North St. Paul, including the two blocks that make up North St. Paul's historic downtown. This plan focuses on the aesthetics of the new roadway. Though some assumptions were made, there will need to be further analysis of the existing conditions to determine the limits of replacement regarding utilities.

This DRP is written to document the design process to date, including important decisions about the project's overall planning and character as determined by the design team, City staff, City Council, and North St. Paul's residents. The DRP is also intended to be used as a reference document, meant to guide the stakeholders and professionals engaged in this project on how to proceed through final design and construction. The DRP serves two main purposes:

- To provide project background and context, as well as highlight the public decision-making process
- To identify minimum design requirements and objectives for the project associated with visual quality goals

This DRP has been created to be the guiding principal for professionals who are engaged in the final design and construction phase of this project, as well as a reference document for all stakeholders and project managers. The requirements and recommendations included in the DRP are primarily visual in nature. Therefore, the format of this document is based heavily on the graphic content that has been generated to communicate the design concepts and aesthetic character throughout the planning process.

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

In early 2015, the City of North St. Paul started the discussion of improving its downtown core and how that would translate along the overall corridor to improve the existing conditions from Century Avenue (Highway 120) to McKnight Road. The City wanted to revamp their historic downtown to improve the number of visitors as well as create an interesting stopping area for those traveling on the Gateway State Trail. It was determined that the City would do an extensive community outreach initiative to determine the desired outcome for Downtown. Based on those results, templates would be developed followed by design concepts that the City would be able to provide feedback on.
Infrastructure Repair and Improvement
The City of North St. Paul is aware that the existing utilities in the project area could be close to or past the age of operation. The City will need to do a more in-depth assessment of the aging network of utilities to determine what may need to be replaced. The extent of these replacements will directly relate to the amount of funding that will be allocated toward the aesthetics during the revitalization process.

In September of 2016, the City of North St. Paul decided to work jointly with a consultant (WSB & Associates, Inc.), 7th Avenue businesses, and the surrounding residents to shape their common interests, concerns and ideas to develop a master plan for the project.

1.2 PROJECT GOALS

- Develop an implementable plan with phasing options
- Refresh and modernize the look and feel of 7th Avenue
- Create a sense of place within the Downtown
- Create a pedestrian oriented environment
- Establish a unified look throughout the Downtown
- Support the business community in a unique and cooperative manner to enhance visibility and access
- Improve the ease of future state and local maintenance operations
Chapter Two: Preliminary Design Concepts

2.0 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The City of North St. Paul utilized community outreach to help develop the public’s desires into visual concepts for the new image of downtown. The input was received via Visual Preference Survey, public meetings, bus tours, booths at the City’s Friday Night Car Show, and online tools such as MySidewalk and Social Media. This variety of outreach allowed for different demographic groups to contribute to the design discussion.

**Bus Tours** – In the fall of 2015, the City hosted a group to tour two communities of similar population and size, Osseo and Anoka. The intent was to get people to express what they did and did not visually like in these communities, both of which have recently reconstructed their main street. The tour was attended by nine members of the public along with five City staff members and consultants. The tour began with visits to the two communities and concluded with a walkabout of downtown North St. Paul for comparative purposes.

Comments were organized into themes including Streets, Sidewalks, Streetscapes and Environment (feel and perception of the area). In some instances, a design element (such as pavers and stamped/colored concrete) received both positive and negative comment. The following feedback is based on the greater majority of the group.

**Street Design Elements:**

*Likes*

- Brick-defined crosswalks
- Narrow curb-cuts
- Depressed planting beds and/or cisterns under the roadway for irrigating planting beds and trees

*Dislikes*

- On-street parallel parking (Osseo)
- Wider, faster “main street” than North St. Paul (Anoka)
- No bike lanes (Anoka)
- Pavers in the street in Osseo (seen as very high maintenance and not friendly to handicapped individuals).
Sidewalk Elements:
Likes:
- Broom finish on concrete walks (Anoka)
- ADA access to businesses was generally handled via individual ramps (some of which were not up to code)
- Pervious pavers (Osseo) seen as both a good and bad thing – they do not look as well-maintained as regular pavers and also come with the texture issues associated with any paver; however, they do reduce runoff.
- Bollards with lighting
- Open areas for pedestrians to gather and rest
- Rain gardens

Dislikes:
- No bricks – just colored concrete (Osseo)
- Pavers/not giving trees ample room to grow in boulevard
- Planting too close to road (Osseo)
- Railing around trees
- Visible electric panels on trees
- Steps into entrances and significant locations (Anoka)

Streetscape Elements:
Likes:
- Uniformity and coordination of the streetscape elements in benches/trash receptacle/light poles (Anoka)
- Light poles with hanging baskets
- Clock at end of downtown district (Anoka)
- Historic panel at end of street (Anoka)
- Element that defines newspaper stands, etc. (Anoka)
- Art on pedestrian level
- Maintenance free plantings
- Bike racks are located downtown and are accompanied by trail maps/signs
- Old clock in the median
- Lighting on trees
- Historical marker
General Environment:

Likes:

- Monument/open space area in Osseo
- Have area for movies in the park
- Public area near river was beautiful (Anoka)
- Park/memorial on main street (Osseo)
- Off-street parking
- Stores “turn the corner” and continue down side streets
- Big box stores are located nearby, and yet the downtown businesses are still doing well
- All businesses embrace the theme ("Halloween Capitol") with window displays, merchandise, etc.
- Multi-functional memorial park/gathering space across from City Hall in Osseo

Dislikes:

- Parking lots next to sidewalks (Osseo)
- Open space/pocket park in Osseo – the space was broken up with walk ways and furniture so there was not a lot of open spaces for people to sit on the lawn

Issues and Opportunities for North St. Paul:

Issues

- Uneven sidewalks
- Mismatched colored concrete
- Keeping the angled parking
- City landscaping not maintained
- Trees are not planted correctly
- No rain gardens
- Ensuring that the car show can continue through construction process
- Phase construction/get the project done as soon as possible

Opportunities:

- Downtown North St. Paul has enough seating, but all the seating should match
- Liked seating in bump-outs
- Have signage for parking in the back (Sepalla)
- The old city hall site could have a park
• Determine maintenance plan for landscaping
• Educational Kiosks – place one near Rotary Park and other locations along the downtown
• Add bus shelter at the stop by the dental office
• Bring more families downtown
• Keep open spaces for active uses – kids and families
• The street reconstruction will be a reason for people to venture downtown
• Create something unique that builds on the character of North St. Paul like the Snowman, car show, and concert in the park
• Place utilities underground
• Make the streetscape elements all uniform
• Develop a consistent look and feel
  ▪ Pavement materials
  ▪ Planting bed materials and shapes
  ▪ Light fixtures
  ▪ Benches
• Create less impervious surface and integrate stormwater management
• Follow the principals of the Living Streets Plan
• Look at the City of St. Paul for a model grants program for businesses that are affected by construction

**Visual Preference Survey** – Following the bus tour, a survey was generated to receive additional comments from a larger group of people. A visual preference survey attempts to get feedback on design alternatives by presenting various images to individuals and allowing them to rank their preferences. The goal of the survey was to contribute to community conversations and help the City identify a vision for what the people want and expect from the downtown area. A number of public engagement activities related to the 7th Avenue reconstruction and overall Downtown Revitalization Project have been completed, including:

• 4/9/15: Listening session with Revitalize Downtown North St. Paul, local businesses and the general public
• 5/28/15: Community Conversation with Revitalize Downtown NSP and local businesses
• 6/11, 6/18, and 6/25/15: Targeted meetings with businesses by geographic area
• 7/9/15: Community Conversation with businesses and general public regarding priorities for the Downtown
• 2015 and 2016: "Pop-Up" booth at two car shows
• 10/24/15: Bus/walking tour of Anoka and Osseo
• 2/23/16: Meeting and work session with representatives from the City of Hopkins
• 5/5/16: Open House to kick off Visual Preference Survey

The survey generated 283 total responses, 181 of which were submitted via an online SurveyMonkey portal and the remaining 102 responses being submitted via a paper survey. Images were shown in clusters of three for each given design category, representing the three different design options within that category, and were meant to be compared with each other. For each image, survey respondents were asked to
indicate their numerical preference ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred, or to select “no preference”. Respondents also had the option to leave the response blank for any given image.

The compiled survey results indicated the following preferences in each design cluster, indicated by highest average score:

- Respondents via the online survey were 68% residents, 7% downtown business owners, 27% “person interested in Downtown North St Paul,” and 4% “other”.
- In general, the results indicate that respondents prefer a somewhat decorative downtown with antique style furnishings, textured walkways (either concrete or pavers), and landscaping that is native in style and that helps with stormwater management.
- As several participants noted in survey comments, design preferences should be balanced with budget considerations as the project moves into implementation.
- These results would be used to develop design concepts for the downtown area as the project moved forward.

**Design Review Commission (DRC) and City Council Workshop Meetings** – The consulting team attended two City Council Workshop Meetings and three DRC meetings throughout the development of the streetscape masterplan. The purpose of these meetings was to provide design updates based on past feedback from the public and provide updated graphics based on their feedback.

The graphic templates that were delivered in the early meetings are shown in **Chapter 3, Figures 3.1** with the final graphics shown in **Figures 3.2-3.12**.
2.1 PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW AND COMMENTS

The design team presented the final corridor plans and this document to the Planning Commission at the 2018 November meeting. This gave the commission members the opportunity to see the final plans and allowed for questions and comments. A brief overview of the process was discussed to show the commission members how the master plan came to fruition.

The following are the comments from the Planning Commission members:

- Add a bike lane on Margaret Street – Possibly remove parking on the south side of the street.
- Do further exploration of back-in angled parking during the final design phase to potentially allow for additional funding options.
- Add more seating areas, trash receptacles and bike racks along the corridor – not just the two downtown blocks.
- Add more mid-block crossings.
- Make sure to notify businesses and homeowners of potential driveway removals during the final design phase.
Chapter Three: Corridor Master Plan Development Graphics

3.0 MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

Once the public engagement process was complete and responses were tallied, the consulting team was able to develop corridor design templates which provided graphical examples of how specific districts along the corridor could be developed utilizing existing right-of-way limits (Figure 3.1). The corridor was broken up into three different zones: Residential, Historical Downtown, and Transitional (see Project Zoning Map on page 10). There were two options shown for each of the template areas, one with a center median and one without.

Following input from City staff, City Council, and the Design Review Commission (DRC), preferred templates were selected and used in developing the full streetscape master plan. A draft master plan was presented to staff, City Council, and the DRC for feedback. Using the feedback received, the final streetscape master plan and cost estimate was developed. Block by block enlargements of the final streetscape master plan are provided in Figures 3.2-3.15.
Template Option 1-Residential Area

Plan

**PROS:**
- Defined Parking
- Parkway Feel
- Traffic-Calming Median

**CONS:**
- More Urban Walkway
- Higher Construction Costs

*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes

Legend:
- Road
- Sidewalk/Trail
- Amenities

PROPOSED
*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes

EXISTING

Graphic Scale:
1" = 300'

Template Option 1-Residential Area

PROPOSED
*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes

Graphic Scale:
1" = 300'
Template Option 1 - Historic Downtown Area

ProS:
- Maximized Amount of Parking
- Traffic-Calming Median

Cons:
- State Aid Funding not available
- Smaller Amenity Zone

Legend:
- Road
- Parking
- Sidewalk/Trail
- Amenities

Graphic Scale:
0' 5' 15'
Template Option 1 - Transitional Area

PROS:
- Defined Parking
- Parkway Feel
- Sidewalk Adjacent to Parking
- Traffic-Calming Median

CONS:
- Higher Construction Costs

*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes

Legend:
- Road
- Parking
- Sidewalk / Trail
- Amenities

Exisiting 105' ROW

PROPOSED 105' ROW

*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes
Template Option 2 - Residential Area

**LEGEND**
- **ROAD**
- **SIDEWALK/TRAIL**
- **AMENITIES**

**PROS:**
- Defined Parking
- Parkway feel
- Buffered Multi-Use Trail
- Landscaped Boulevard
- Faster Vehicle Speed

**CONS:**

*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes

**EXISTING**

**PROPOSED**

*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes
Template Option 2 - Historic Downtown Area

**Plan**

---

**PROS:**
- Maximized Amount of Parking
- Larger Amenity Zone

**CONS:**
- State Aid Funding Not Available
- More Urban Feel

*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes*
Template Option 2 - Transitional Area

**PROS:**
- Defined Parking
- Large Amenity Zone

**CONS:**
- Faster Vehicle Speed

*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes

**EXISTING**

**PROPOSED**

*Additional Option: To include on street bike lanes

Legend:
- ROAD
- PARKING
- SIDEWALK/TRAIL
- AMENITIES

Graphic Scale: 1" = 300'

105' ROW
Alternate Layouts - Historic Downtown

**PROS:**
- Potential State Aid Funding Available
- Maximizes Street Parking
- Calming Traffic Median

**CONS:**
- New Parking Concept
- Reduced Amenity Zone for Business Owners

**ASYMMETRICAL LAYOUT**

**PROS:**
- Potential State Aid Funding Available
- Addresses Angled and Parallel Parking
- On-Street Bike Lanes

**CONS:**
- Reduced Amenity Zone for Business Owners
LOCATOR MAP

REFER TO ROUNDABOUT CONCEPTS ON PAGE 19

Chapter 3: Corridor Master Plan Development Graphics

Page 18
Refer to roundabout concepts above.
3.6 Helen St. N. - Margaret St. N.

3.7 Margaret St. N - Charles St. N.
TRANSITIONAL AREA

- ROW LIMITS
- MEDIAN PLANTINGS
- TRAIL
- ON-STREET PARKING
- ROW LIMITS
3.11 Plan Enlargements

DOWNTOWN CROSSING AREA

- RAISED PLANTER & SEATWALL
- BOULEVARD TREE
- LIGHT POLE

ROW LIMITS
- DECORATIVE CONCRETE RIBBON
- DECORATIVE PAVER TYPE I
- DECORATIVE PAVER TYPE II
3.11 Plan Enlargements

DOWNTOWN INTERSECTION

- TRASH
- SEATING
- PLANTINGS

ROW LIMITS

STANDARD CONC.

- TRASH
- BIKE RACK

PLAZA SPACE

- SEATING
- TRASH
- ROW LIMITS
3.12 Section Perspectives

**TRANSITION AREA CROSS SECTION**
- DEFINED PARKING
- PARKWAY FEEL
- SIDEWALK OFF OF PARKING
- TRAFFIC-CALMING MEDIAN

**DOWNTOWN CROSS SECTION B-B’**
- MAXIMIZED AMOUNT OF PARKING
- UNIFORMITY

**MARGARET STREET CROSS SECTION C-C’**
- DEFINED PARKING
- PARKWAY FEEL
- SIDEWALK OFF OF PARKING
- SIMILAR TO EXISTING
### Chapter 4: Costs

#### 4.0 Estimated Cost Outline

<table>
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<th>Pathway</th>
<th>Removals</th>
<th>Proposed Elements</th>
<th>Cost Range</th>
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<td>Walkways &amp; Trails, Landscaping</td>
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<td>McKnight Road- 3rd Street N. (South)</td>
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<td>Henry Street N. - Division/120</td>
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<td>LOW $2,300,500 HIGH $2,719,000</td>
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Visual Preference Survey - Pavement Types

Concrete
2.35

Decorative Concrete
2.58

Pavers
2.93

Please indicate your preference (1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred) or no preference.
Visual Preference Survey – Concrete Types

Pattern
2.54

Color
1.90

Texture
3.23

*Please indicate your preference (1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred) or no preference*
Visual Preference Survey Results Summary

Visual Preference Survey – Plantings

Formal 2.20  
Raised Planter 2.84  
Rain Garden 3.27

Please indicate your preference (1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred) or no preference.
Visual Preference Survey – Site Amenities

Antique
3.20

Modern
1.61

Custom
2.00

Please indicate your preference (1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred) or no preference
Visual Preference Survey Results Summary

Visual Preference Survey – Gathering Space

Open Lawn  
2.64

Pocket Plaza  
2.50

Downtown Plaza  
2.83

Please indicate your preference (1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred) or no preference

Gathering Space - Open Lawn

Gathering Space - Pocket Plaza

Gathering Space - Downtown Plaza
Visual Preference Survey Summary

Visual Preference Survey – Active vs. Passive Space

Active Play  
2.31

Active Water Play  
2.30

Passive Downtown Space  
2.92

Please indicate your preference (1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred) or no preference
Visual Preference Survey Results Summary

Visual Preference Survey – Corridor Appearance

Simple 2.17

Lightly Developed 2.60

Parkesque 2.33

Please indicate your preference (1 being least preferred and 5 being most preferred) or no preference.
The improvements appear well-planned, affordable & the design of pr was excellent. Spokespeople were well-informed & excellent.

Bring project map next time!

Water play (splash pad would be amazing. There is nothing like that nearby!)

Better parking options, better business options (restaurants), I'm a millenial! Get rid of junk (antique) stores, flags flags American flags like Lady & the Tramp (on the light posts) during Memorial through 4th of July.

I like plants! Hate potholes!

Put the Standard Oil sign back on the corner (for the car show). Replace the traffic signal and have Bob Betts provide design support.

ADA accessible! More parking.

The City should fix EXISTING STREETS other than downtown before starting on the main

Thanks for asking for public input.

Main Street should have combination brick pavers/concrete - these should also go up on Margaret to the lake. Antique lighting is preferred 7th & Margaret. A public square or plaza would be great for downtown across from post office or City Hall. Extend sidewalk out for patios for possible restaurant. Water features would be a nice touch. Signage would be good.

All the preferences would offer a fresh and desirable new concept to the city - great choices and great work!

Any and all improvements are welcome! Thank you so much for your hard & thoughtful work.

Understood that my preferences are potentially more design intensive. We need good design and not just grass and concrete. Spaces to live & play & meet.

Most excited and I feel the most needed part of this project for families is some kind of active play area that can help entertain kids when you come downtown for car shows or events, or shopping. It would be nice to see an amphitheater with this as well for concerts in the
park or movies in the park. All these items would really help bring people into downtown and keep them here longer to patronize the local businesses - a win/win for the community & residents.

Concerned about textured concrete getting dirty making it hard to maintain but I like the look. Active Passive space. I don’t think a playground works well downtown. But I like the idea of an active space using a variety of spaces and things that kids could climb on like ledges. Variation & features without it being a playground spaces for adults. Plantings can best be used to create variation in the space. Pavement: not too textured - consider ease for walkers/mobility devices. Plaza space: combine seating/lawn space/usage into one option. Plantings: could combine elements of each type. Parking needs: consider bicyclists.

Costs are of course an important issue. I like all the looks but the price tag will be needed to factor in.

More places to eat, inside and out.

Something more unique - but easy to clean & maintain. I like the antique & pavers.

We have a very unique downtown and many towns no longer have a downtown or have "manufactured" "planned" downtowns. Ours developed naturally thru the years so we should make it pleasing to attract people & businesses.

I would love to see a community center in NSP for youth. With indoor gym, pool tables, computers for homework. Possibly an outdoor skate park area.

Keep it simple; simple reduces maintenance & thereby cost.

Love the planted areas - rain garden/parkesque etc but who will maintain them? And at what cost?

Prefer parking remain angle as is - more spaces and people can get closer to the businesses they’re going to

Can’t wait to make downtown family friendly again