

SMALL AREA PLAN

Central Entrance -  
Miller Hill



**CERTIFIED COPY OF RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DULUTH, MINNESOTA**

RESOLUTION 09-0581

ADOPTED: SEPTEMBER 14, 2009

RESOLVED, that the city council finds the following:

(a) The city council adopted the Duluth comprehensive land use plan on June 26, 2006, via Resolution 06-0491, which outlined the desired arrangement of land uses for the next 20 years and identified sub-areas of the city to be studied in more detail; and

(b) The city planning division has prepared and recommends approval of the Central Entrance-Miller Hill small area plan, a land use plan for one of the sub-areas identified in the comprehensive land use plan; and

(c) The city planning division, in the Central Entrance-Miller Hill small area plan, proposes six amendments to the comprehensive land use plan - future land use map; and

(d) The city planning commission has reviewed the small area plan and the proposed six future land use map amendments, conducted a public hearing on August 11, 2009, at their regular planning commission meeting and recommends adoption of the small area plan and the proposed future land use map amendments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Duluth comprehensive land use plan is hereby amended by adding to it the Central Entrance-Miller Hill small area plan as identified in Public Document No. 09-0914-20.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the adopted comprehensive land use plan - future land use map, is amended as identified in Public Document No. 09-0914-20 and shown as map amendments #2, #3, #4, #5, #6 and #7.

Resolution 09-0581 was unanimously adopted.

Approved September 14, 2009

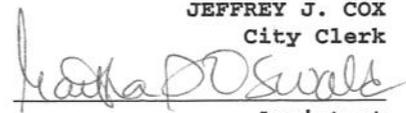
DON NESS, Mayor

I, JEFFREY J. COX, city clerk of the city of Duluth, Minnesota, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing resolution passed by the city council on the 14th day of September, 2009, with the original in my custody as city clerk of said city and that the same is a true and correct transcript therefrom.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the corporate seal of said city of Duluth, this 16th day of September, 2009.

JEFFREY J. COX  
City Clerk

by



Assistant  
CITY OF DULUTH, MINNESOTA

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Mayor

Don Ness

## City Council

Greg Gilbert, President

Jeff Anderson

Tony Cuneo

Gary Eckenberg

Todd Fedora

Jay Fosle

Sharla Gardner

Garry Krause

Jim Stauber

## Planning Commission

Mike Akervik, President

Mindy Appold

Henry Banks

Joan Barrett

Katelyn Blazevic

Drew Digby

Mindy Granley

Frank Holappa

Joan Morrison

Heather Rand

David Sarvela

Jim Stebe

John Vigen

## Plan Committee

Garry Krause, City Council

Joan Barrett, City Planning Commission

Diane Knudson, Resident

Jennifer Wutz, Resident

Gayle Ankarlo, CMRA Realty

Gordon Grant, Dairy Queen

Tracy Hansen, Daisies n' Daydreams

Ben Martin, Miller Hill Mall

Earl Richards, Property Owner

Tom Stender, Property Owner

Andy Peterson, Chamber of Commerce

Ron Chicka, Metropolitan Interstate Council

Dennis Johnson, MN Dept. of Transportation

R.C. Boheim, Soil and Water Conservation District

## City Planning Division Staff

Kyle Deming, Planner II (Project Planner)

Cindy Petkac, AICP, Land Use Supervisor

John Judd, Senior Planner

Jenn Reed Moses, Planner II

## Market Study Consultant

MXD Development Strategists, LLC

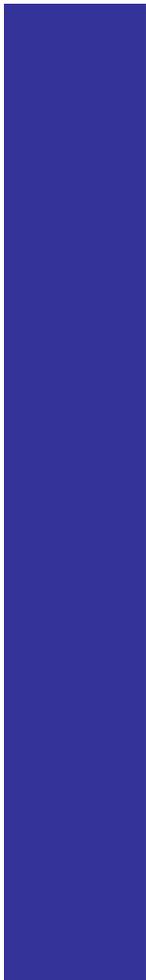


# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	1
Assessment	
Purpose .....	2
Plan Objectives .....	2
Study Area Boundaries and Sub-Areas.....	3
Plan Committee .....	3
Plan Process.....	3
History/Background.....	3
Past Planning Efforts.....	5
Demographics.....	8
Land Use/Zoning/Public Lands .....	10
Transportation.....	14
Utilities .....	20
Environmental Characteristics .....	20
Comprehensive Land Use Plan Principles.....	22
Market Analysis .....	23
Plan Recommendations	
Vision Statement .....	32
Recommendations 1 .....	33
Recommendations 2.....	34
Recommendations 3.....	35
Recommendations 4.....	38
Recommendations 5.....	38
Recommendations 6.....	39
Implementation Plan	
Land Use Map Amendments .....	41
Unified Development Code (UDC) Recommendations .....	42
Place-Making Recommendations.....	43
Transportation Recommendations.....	44

# LIST OF MAPS, TABLES, & CHARTS

<b>Map:</b> Study Area Boundaries.....	4
<b>Table:</b> Selected Businesses and Year of Construction.....	5
<b>Map:</b> Comprehensive Land Use Plan – Future Land Use Map.....	7
<b>Table:</b> Figure 1; Persons and Households in Duluth Heights, 1940-2000.....	8
<b>Table:</b> Figure 2; Median Number of Persons Per Household, 1950-2000.....	9
<b>Table:</b> Figure 3; Owner- & Rental-Occupied Housing Units, 1940-2000.....	9
<b>Chart:</b> Figure 4; Age of Persons in Duluth Heights in 1960.....	9
<b>Chart:</b> Figure 5; Age of Persons in Duluth Heights in 2000.....	9
<b>Chart:</b> Figure 6; Study Area Existing Land Use.....	10
<b>Map:</b> Existing Land Use.....	11
<b>Chart:</b> Figure 7; Study Area Zoning.....	12
<b>Map:</b> Land Use Regulations.....	13
<b>Map:</b> Road Network and Annual Average Daily Traffic Counts.....	15
<b>Map:</b> Improvements to Miller Hill Roadways 2008 & 2009.....	16
<b>Table:</b> Transit Boardings on Central Entrance.....	17
<b>Map:</b> Transit Routes and 10-Minute Walking Area.....	18
<b>Map:</b> Natural Features.....	21
<b>Table:</b> Projected Market Absorption & Land Allocation 2015-2025.....	28
<b>Map:</b> Development Site Priorities from the Market Study.....	30
<b>Map:</b> Plan Recommendations.....	31



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planning is about setting a vision today for tomorrow's future. It was for this reason that the City's Planning Division undertook the Central Entrance-Miller Hill Small Area Plan and worked with the community to define the future of this area.

The vision for Central Entrance is of a more attractive and walkable place with wide sidewalks on both sides of the street and businesses that front the sidewalks with inviting storefronts. The motoring public will enjoy traveling to and through the district as the roadway is redesigned to provide better access to businesses. Central Entrance will regain its previous function as the "main street" of Duluth Heights.

The vision for the Miller Hill area is for it to continue as the region's regional retail destination by expanding its offerings to include more "fast-casual" restaurants, adult fashion stores, a specialty food market, and an outdoor recreation store that will anchor a new type of development called a "Suburban Town Center." This new mixed-use "center" for the Miller Hill area will build on the strengths of the existing mall and surrounding businesses and offer a different shopping experience for Duluthians with businesses, offices, and upper floor residential units surrounding a public amenity such as a small park or fountain in a pedestrian-friendly environment.

The vision for Central Entrance and Miller Hill described above was prepared with the assistance of a 14-member Plan Committee and presented to the public at two open house gatherings. The need for this study was identified in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and was conducted at this time because of the recent improvements to Miller Trunk Highway and surrounding roads.

The planning process began by identifying objectives such as encouraging the continued viability of the Miller Hill business district as a regional retail destination, improving the function and appearance of the Central Entrance business district, planning for business growth and redevelopment in a way that minimizes potential negative impacts to surrounding residential neighborhoods, and considering pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users in the future business districts.

Early in the process, a nationally-recognized firm was hired to conduct a market analysis to guide our land use planning efforts. In the market study, MXD Development Strategists forecasted that the Miller Hill area will grow at an annual average increase of 27,000 square feet of space, roughly adding retail space similar to a Target store every five years. MXD strongly recommended that Duluth pursue the "place-making" strategies described above in an effort to consolidate the sprawling land use pattern through infill, densification, and redevelopment of sites in the study area.

For many of the place-making recommendations to be implemented, it will be helpful for the businesses in the area to organize themselves into a merchants association and then into a business improvement district. Significant changes are needed to the development standards for the area and the City's new Unified Development Code will incorporate plan recommendations relating to building and parking placement and other design enhancements to improve the appearance and walkability of the area. When funding is available, transportation improvements to Central Entrance will be necessary to balance the needs of motorists with those of pedestrians and transit users through the redesign of the street with a "Context Sensitive Solution." And changes to the designation of land uses in order to focus development on the core areas will require amendment of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan – Future Land Use Map. Adoption of this plan will set the ball in motion toward accomplishing this new vision for Central Entrance and the Miller Hill area.



# ASSESSMENT

## Purpose of the Plan

The Central Entrance business district, Miller Hill business district, and the area surrounding each are the first places of the city to be studied by the City's Planning Division using the "small area plan" format (see description at right). The purposes for conducting the plan are:

1. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan, adopted in June of 2006, recognized that there were areas of the City where uncertainty about market conditions, ownership patterns or infrastructural capacity was particularly high, and that those areas would require additional study to guide possible modifications to the future land use map. Central Entrance was one of the areas identified for additional study.
2. Current changes and improvements to Miller Trunk Highway, including the extension of Burning Tree Rd and new connection to Sundby Rd, realignment of W. Maple Grove Rd and elimination of access at Miller Trunk Highway, and connection of Joshua Ave to W. Maple Grove Rd, will result in new traffic patterns and changes to existing land uses. Therefore, it is necessary for the City to study the area in greater detail to determine if any new areas that have opened up for development, as well as any changes in market conditions, would require modifications to the future land use map.

***A small area plan is a plan that is developed for a clearly defined area and gives more detailed recommendations than would be provided in a comprehensive plan. A small area plan does not replace the comprehensive plan but rather serves to augment it. The small area plan builds on the goals, policies and implementation strategies in the comprehensive plan to provide a finer level of detail.***

## Plan Objectives

Early in the planning process the following objectives were identified:

1. To guide new development opportunities that compliment existing development while minimizing potential negative impacts to surrounding residential neighborhoods.
2. To encourage the continued viability of the Miller Hill business district as a regional retail destination.
3. To determine the commercial function of the Central Entrance business district and plan for its future.
4. To improve and enhance the natural environment.
5. To provide safe and convenient non-motorized transportation options throughout the study area.
6. To enhance the appearance of the area.



## Study Area Boundaries and Sub-areas

The study area includes an approximately three mile long stretch along Central Entrance and Miller Trunk Highway from Pecan Avenue to Haines Road (see Study Area Boundaries map on the next page). It includes adjacent and nearby properties designated on the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map as auto-oriented and large scale commercial, neighborhood mixed use and urban residential. This study area contains two sub-areas:

1. Central Entrance district – From Pecan Avenue to Anderson Road,
2. Miller Hill district – From Anderson Road to Haines Road.

## Plan Committee

A committee was assembled for this study and met to assist the Planning Division in the development of the small area plan. There were 14 members, including:

- 1 – Planning Commission member
- 1 – City Councilor
- 4 – Business owners
- 2 – Residents
- 2 – Property owners
- 1 – Chamber of Commerce staff rep.
- 1 – Environmental rep.
- 2 – Transportation reps. (MIC and MN-DOT)

## Plan Process

The planning process took place between November 2008 and August 2009. As part of the process the City contracted with a consultant to conduct a market study. From January through April 2009, MXD Development Strategists assessed the supply and demand for retail, residential, office, hotel land uses in the study area, and prepared a land use allocation strategy and fiscal benefits summary. The Plan Committee met three times in February, April, and July. Public meetings were held in March and July to

review information and plan recommendations. See Appendix B for agendas, meeting notes and comments.

## History/Background

*The following is excerpted from the 1980 Miller Hill Corridor Plan:*

“The formation of the Duluth Heights neighborhood began in 1891 when the area was annexed to the City of Duluth and a street car line was constructed allowing residents to settle the area on small lots. The street car trip took 25 minutes to get downtown via Orange Street to the Incline Railway that was constructed on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue West. The neighborhood focused on the Basswood Avenue-Central Entrance intersection consisted of about 125 homes in 1902. In the 1920s Upham Road and Swan Lake Road were constructed connecting Duluth Heights to downtown and in 1934 the current alignment of Central Entrance was constructed.

“Small commercial areas formed at Central Entrance and Stroll Avenue and the point where Miller Trunk Highway intersects Trinity Road, Maple Grove Road and Haines Road. The City’s first zoning plan in 1927 formalized this pattern of “strip” development by establishing commercial use districts in six locations along Central Entrance and Miller Trunk Highway. The 1958 Comprehensive Plan expanded this to include 345 acres of “C-2 Highway Commercial” and “M-1 Manufacturing” zoning.

“In 1964 a sanitary sewer line was constructed along Miller Creek to serve the Duluth Air Base. This stimulated additional commercial development with Target opening in 1962 (anticipating the sewer extension) and



the Miller Hill Mall opening in 1973. A nucleus of commercial development had formed which has caused the additional spin-off commercial and office developments that exist today.”

Business	Year Permitted
Target	1962
Miller Hill Mall	1973
K-Mart	1974
Village Mall	1976
Super One	1984
Sears expansion to the mall	1986
Burning Tree Plaza	1987
Stone Ridge Shopping Center	1988
Village Mall West	1988
Hampton Inn	1993
Kohls	1994
Pan-o-Gold addition	1994
Best Buy expansion	1996
Checker's Auto Parts	1996
Central Village Center	1997
Home Depot	1999
Super One renovation	2000
Wrazidlo's Meats	2000
Target expansion	2000
Tires Plus	2001
Schneiderman's (Decker Rd)	2003
McDonalds reconstruct	2005
Krenzen expansion	2005
Walgreens	2006

## Past Planning Efforts

With all of the public discussions that have occurred over the years regarding the Mall and Central Entrance districts, it is surprising to note that this study is only the fourth time in history that the City Planning Division has reviewed the land uses in this part of the city. Studies completed by other agencies have focused on the transportation issues in the area.

### Land Use Plans:

#### *1958 Duluth Comprehensive Plan*

The first planning for the area occurred in 1958 as part of the City's Comprehensive Planning Effort. This plan recommended M-1 zoning of the area on both sides of Miller Trunk Highway between Sundby Road and Haines Road. A small area of C-2 zoning was also established near the Miller Trunk Highway/Maple Grove/Decker Road intersection.

#### *1979 Miller Hill Corridor Plan*

The second planning effort began in 1978 and concluded in 1979 with the City Council adoption of the Miller Hill Corridor Plan.

This planning effort was undertaken to address two major issues relating to the in-

crease in commercial development in the corridor, 1) severe flooding that occurred several times in the mid-1970's, and 2) a significant increase in traffic congestion in the area.





The Miller Hill Corridor Plan had 6 goals:

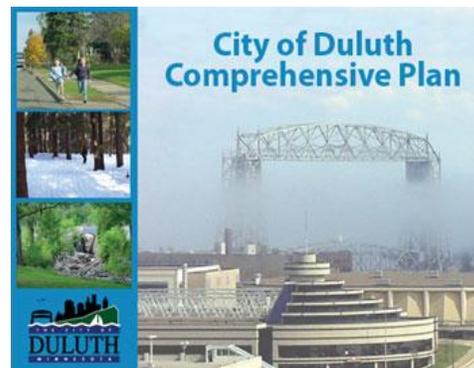
- ◆ Future development and improvements should be directed towards making the plan area attractive to residential uses,
- ◆ The viability of existing commercial and light industrial developments within the plan area should be maintained,
- ◆ The irreversible alteration of critical natural resources within the plan areas should be prevented,
- ◆ A pattern of land use which does not necessitate excessive expenditures should be encouraged,
- ◆ Property within the plan area should be protected from flood damage,
- ◆ Improvements within the plan area should reduce traffic congestion and increase traffic safety.

### ***2006 Duluth Comprehensive Land Use Plan***

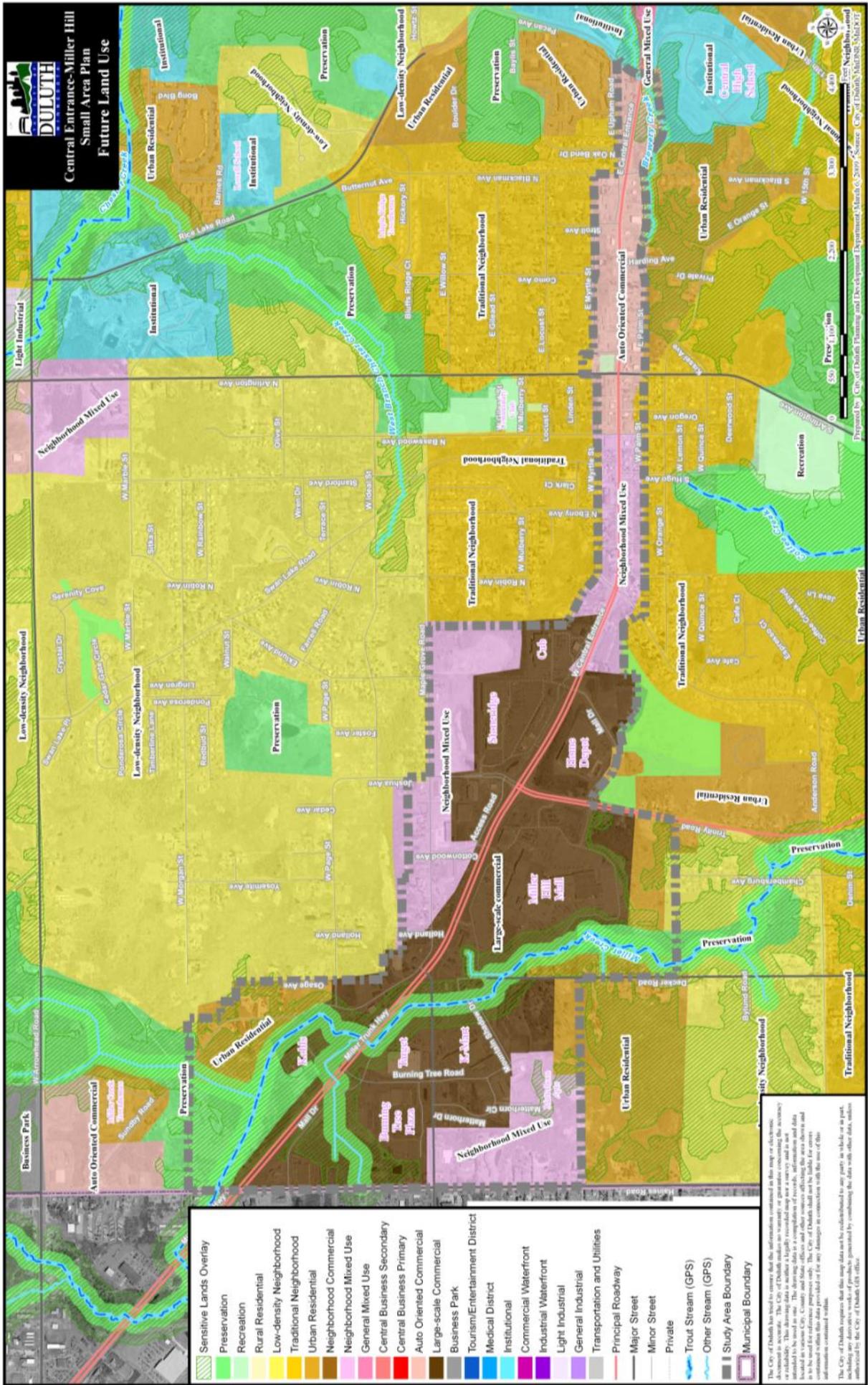
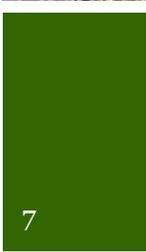
The most recent land use plan affecting the study area and the entire city, it sets forth the vision, principles, policies and recommended strategies to guide development and preservation of land over the next 20 years. A key part of the document is the Future Land Use Map (see map on the next page), which shows geo-

graphically the arrangement of land uses that the city desires to achieve over the next 20 years. In the Central Entrance-Miller Hill Small Area Plan study area, the five Future Land Use categories that predominate include:

- ◆ Large-Scale Commercial is the designation for areas of mall and big box retail developments with buildings typically exceeding 50,000 square feet in area with the possibility of allowing limited office use,
- ◆ Auto-Oriented Commercial includes commercial and office uses focused primarily on the needs of motorists with buildings typically less than 50,000 square feet in area,
- ◆ Neighborhood Mixed Use is a transitional use between more intensive commercial uses and purely residential neighborhoods with commercial uses oriented to neighborhood or specialty retail markets,
- ◆ Urban Residential includes medium- to high-density residential developments located adjacent to activity centers and allowing only very limited commercial uses to serve the neighborhood,



- ◆ Preservation future land use placed on high value natural resource or scenic land and it is intended to substantially restrict the use and development of land to protect those values.
- ◆ In addition to the Future Land Use categories above, much of the undeveloped land in the study area is covered by the “Sensitive Lands Overlay” defined as high resource value lands that may be developed under conservation design standards, transfer of development rights, or low-impact performance standards.



## Transportation Studies:

### *1992-2006 Metropolitan Interstate Council studies*

In addition to the City sponsored plans listed above, the Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) has studied the transportation system on several occasions, including the 1992 Miller Trunk Highway Corridor Traffic Analysis Study, the 1995 Miller Hill Corridor Traffic Study and a 1998 status report on the 1995 study. The MIC also conducted the Duluth Heights Traffic Circulation Study (2006) to document cut through traffic and identify solutions to those problems in the Duluth Heights neighborhood.

### *2002 Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan*

In December 2002, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MN-DOT) completed the Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan which focused on building from the past planning efforts, applying updated data, and enhancing previous recommendations with new actions to address congestion, safety, access, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit issues in the Central Entrance and Miller Hill corridor. The study was adopted by MN-DOT, Saint Louis County, Duluth, Hermantown, and ARDC.

The plan proposed many of the roadway improvements that have been made in the Miller Hill area in 2008 and 2009 as well as the widening of Trinity Road to five lanes that was done in 2006. For Central Entrance the plan recommended, in the long term, pursuing one of two alternatives. Either develop a one-way road system using Central Entrance for westbound traffic and Palm Street for eastbound traffic or make more moderate changes to Central Entrance such as installing raised medians and turn lanes at Blackman Avenue, Arlington Avenue, Basswood Avenue, and Anderson Roads as well as making improvements to local streets, such as Palm Street, to give more options for vehicle circulation.

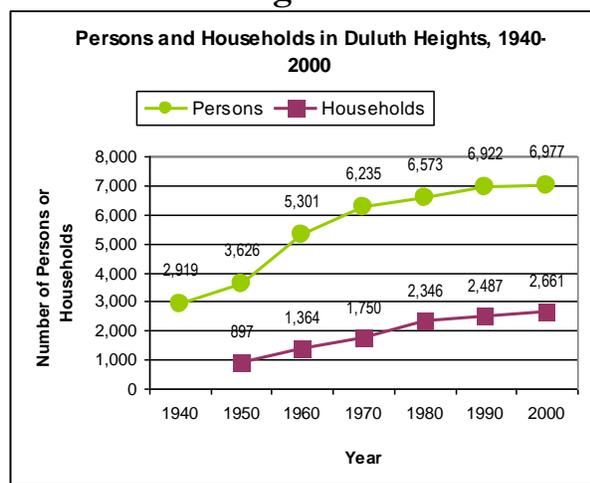
## Demographics

### Population and Households

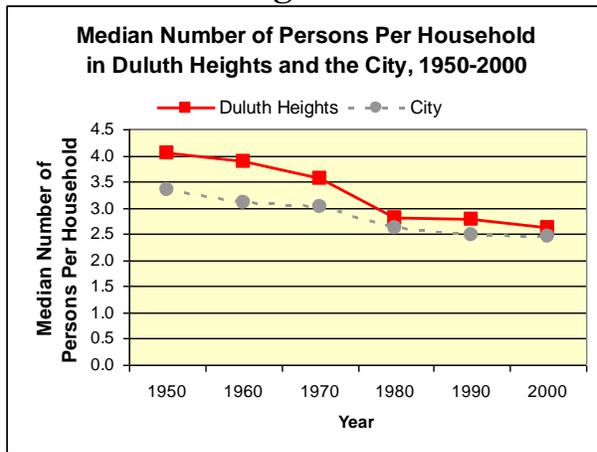
The small area plan study area is situated in the Duluth Heights neighborhood. An analysis of U.S. Census statistics was conducted examining data for Census Tract 3 (see map in Appendix A), an area that has roughly the same boundaries as the Duluth Heights neighborhood. A summary of the analysis is presented below and additional information can be found in Appendix A.

From 1950 to 1970, Duluth Heights grew rapidly, increasing 72% from 3,626 to 6,235 persons (see Figure 1). This was during the post World War II era when households were composed of multiple children and many new housing units were constructed in Duluth Heights. In fact, the number of housing units in Duluth Heights nearly doubled during this time from 897 to 1,750 (see Figure 1). Households living in Duluth Heights at that time were larger with a median of four persons per household, as compared to today when median household size is 2.6 persons per household (see Figure 2). Many of these household residents were children as 39% of all Duluth Heights residents were under age 18 in 1960 (see Figure 4).

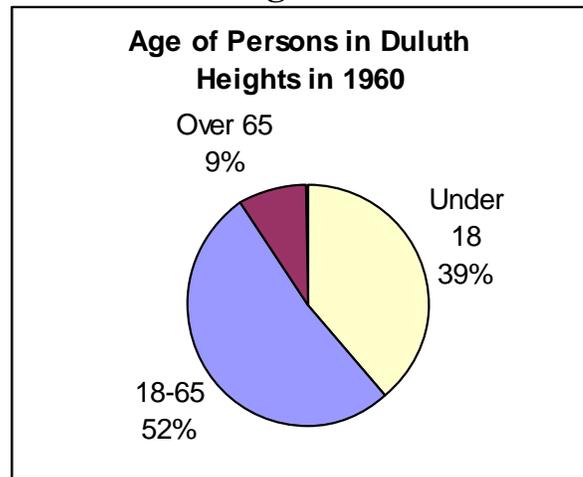
Figure 1



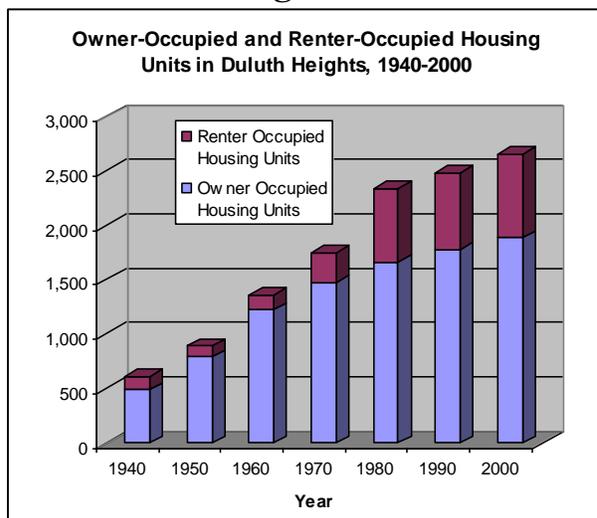
**Figure 2**



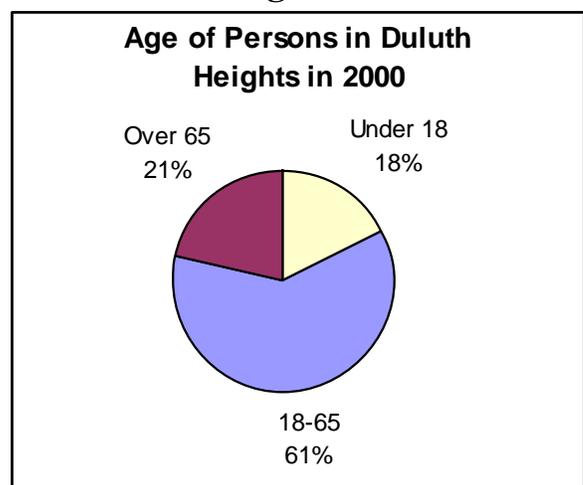
**Figure 4**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 5**



The 1970-2000 period saw continued population increase for Duluth Heights, though at a slower pace while housing was still being constructed in the neighborhood, though the makeup of the housing began to change around 1980 when more rental housing was constructed (see Figure 3). The housing mix went from being 89% owner occupied in 1950 to 71% owner occupied in 1980, where it has remained. By way of comparison, 64% of housing units in Duluth are owner occupied, a number that has largely remained steady for the past 30 years.

There are more older Duluth Heights residents today than there were in 1960 and fewer children. In 2000, 21% of Duluth Heights residents were age 65 and over, compared to only 9% in 1960 (see Figure 4 and 5). Many of these persons over age 65 continue to live in single-family

detached housing, though some are choosing to locate in many of the new housing options geared for persons age 55 and over that have been constructed in Duluth Heights over the past 20 years. As mentioned previously, household size has decreased to 2.6 persons per household which is also an indication of the number of Duluth Heights residents living alone or in smaller households with fewer children (see Figure 2). Persons under age 18 now make up only 18% of Duluth Heights residents.

There is no population forecast available specifically for Duluth Heights, but the population forecast used by MDX in the market study (see Appendix C), which came from Claritas data, shows that the population of the Duluth market area is forecast to grow 2% between 2010

and 2020, that the age 65 and over population will increase 30% during the decade, and that the under age 18 population will remain constant.

In summary, Duluth Heights has changed over the past 60 years from being a neighborhood consisting of larger households living in owner-occupied housing units to consisting of more persons over age 65, in much smaller households with fewer children, and that the make up of housing units now includes nearly 30% rental units.

### Income

Median household income for Duluth Heights in 2000 was \$34,534, which is just slightly above the median household income for the Duluth overall. Duluth Heights is ranked 15<sup>th</sup> of the 39 Census Tracts in Duluth. Neighborhoods with median household incomes similar to Duluth Heights include Lower Kenwood, Bayview Heights, Gary-New Duluth/Fond du Lac, and Denfeld. The market study prepared by MXD Development Strategists found that, comparatively speaking, Duluth’s incomes are slightly lower than average for the nation, but that Duluth’s disposable income is slightly higher than the average due to the low cost of living in the area. See the “Location Analysis” section of the market study (Appendix C) for more information about the composition of households.

### Home Sales Price

According to the Duluth Area Association of Realtors, Duluth Heights’ median home sale price in 2008 was \$168,900, which ranked fourth in Duluth behind Park Point (\$290,000), Congdon (\$215,000) and Hunters Park (\$192,750). Sixty-five homes sold in Duluth Heights in 2008 with homes on the market an average of 59 days, which was just slightly longer than the 57 days average for Duluth overall.

### Number of Automobiles Per Household

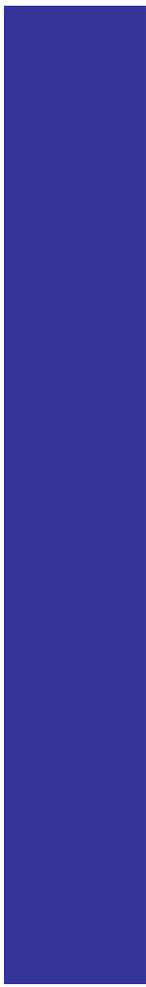
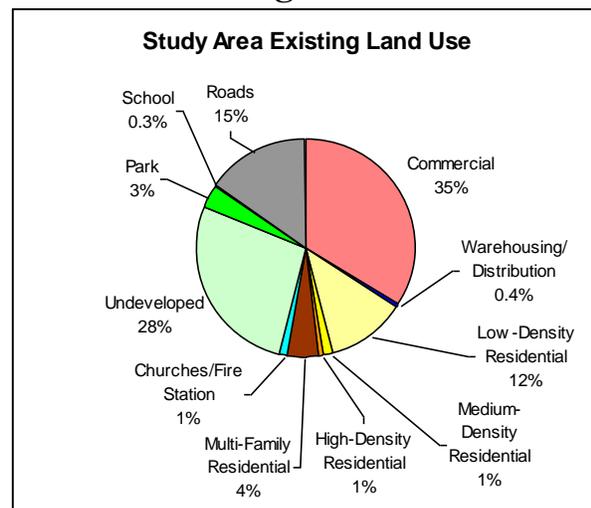
An interesting statistic to note is that the number of automobiles per household in Duluth has increased significantly from 1960-2000. In 1960, more than half of the people had only one car and roughly one quarter had no car at all. In 2000, roughly one third had one car, one third had two cars, and 14% had three or more cars, while 14% still had no car. This is a large reason why traffic has increased throughout Duluth and in the study area.

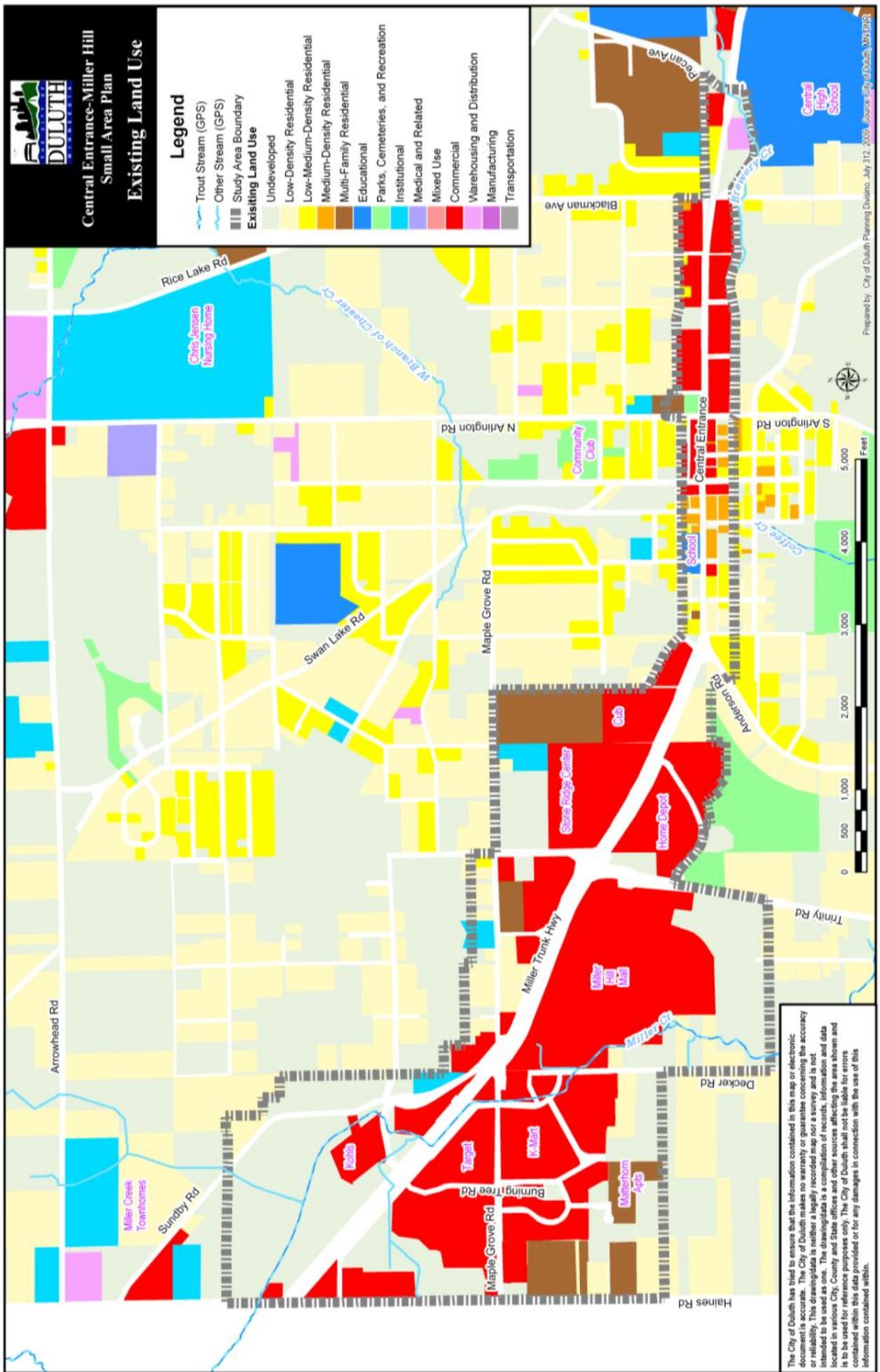
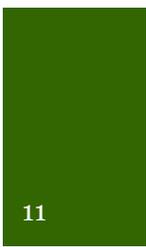
### Land Use/Zoning/Public Lands

#### Existing Land Use

An analysis of the current uses of land in the 766 acre study area was conducted (see Figure 6 and Existing Land Use Map on next page). It found that the greatest amount of land is currently “Commercial” land use (258 acres or 35% of the study area), which is evident to most people who visit the study area. What is not as obvious is the large amount of “Undeveloped” land (210 acres or 28% of the study area) in the study area. However, much of this land envi-

Figure 6





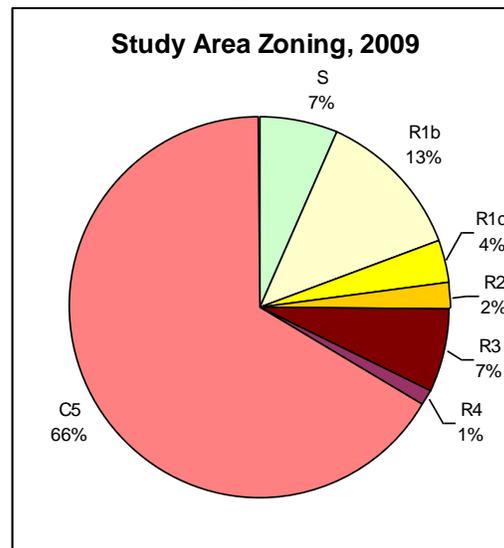
ronmentally challenged containing many wetlands, flood plains, and steep slopes. It is interesting to note that, when all residential land uses categories are combined, they make up 18% (141 acres) of the study area which is slightly more land than is used for road right-of-way (118 acres, 16%).

## Zoning

Land allocated to individual zoning categories was analyzed and is presented in Figure 7. Zoning is one form of land use regulation and a map showing all Land Use Regulations can be found on the next page. The study area is basically zoned for four kinds of land uses. The largest amount of land, 66% of the study area, is zoned C-5 Planned Commercial, which amounts to 509 acres. The next largest zoning type is single-family residential (R1b, R1c, R2) amounting to 143 acres and 19% of the study area. There are 64 acres of land zoned for multifamily residential (R-3 and R-4), which amounts to only 8% of the study area. And finally is S-Suburban zoning with 51 acres of land (7% of the study area), most of which is wetland area “behind” Kohls.

In addition to zoning, the Land Use Regulations map also shows Shoreland Management Zones that further regulate land uses on properties within 300 feet of streams. Shoreland zones are established for streams of differing character with regulations that primarily require buildings and parking lots to be placed a minimum of 50 to 150 feet away from the stream and setting at 30% the maximum

Figure 7

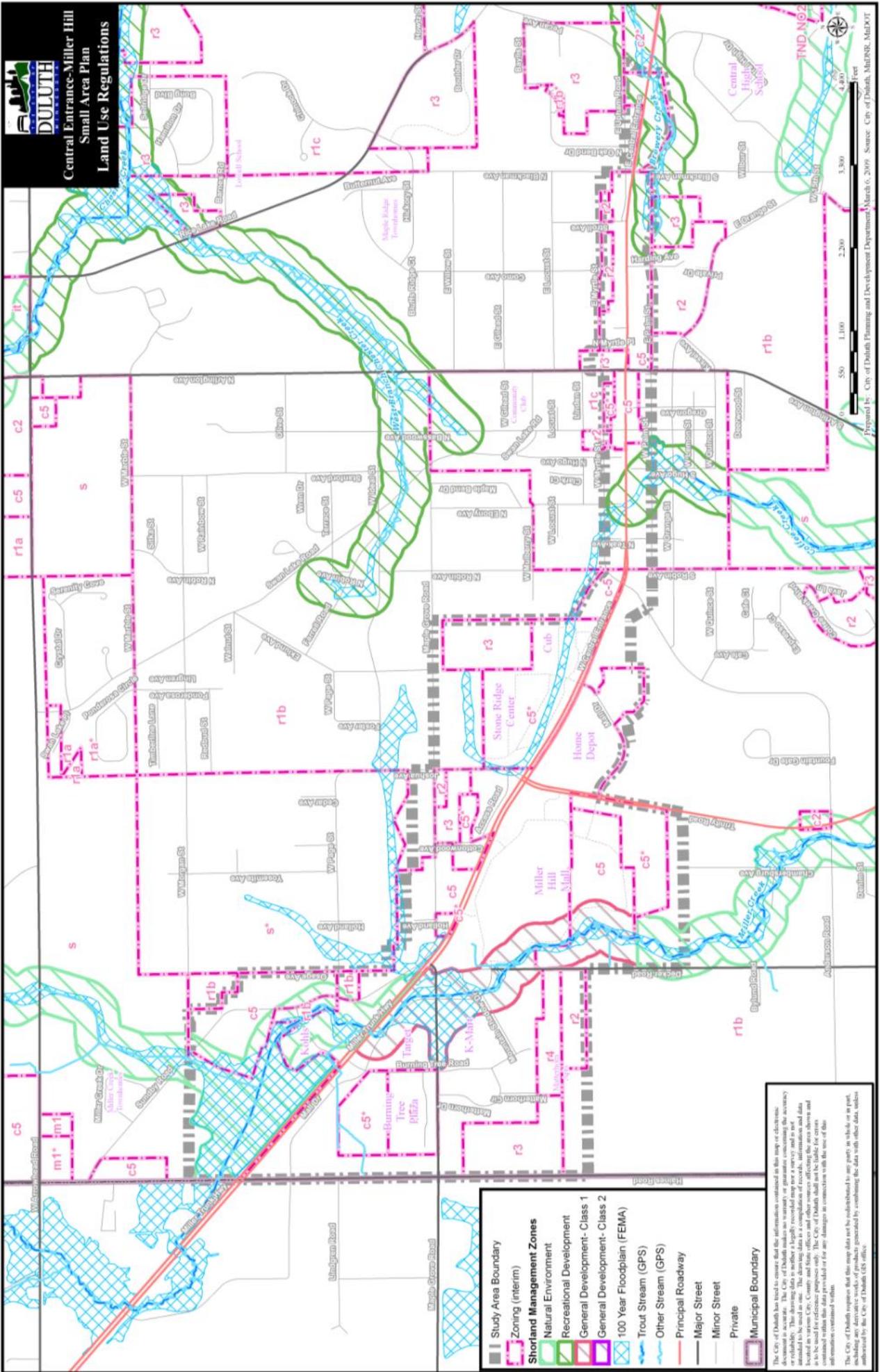


amount of impervious area allowed on a site. Natural Environment Shoreland Zones are the most restrictive (parts of Miller Creek are in this zone), Recreational Development Shorelands are moderately restrictive (Coffee and Brewery Creeks are in this zone) and General Development - Class One Shoreland Zones are the least restrictive (part of Miller Creek near Target and Miller Hill Mall is in this zone).

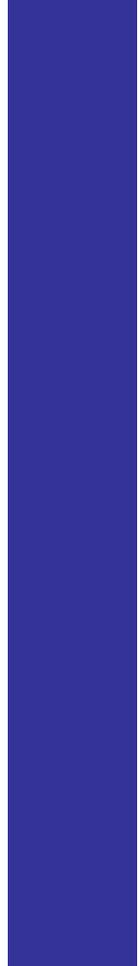
## Public Land

There are 79 acres of public land in the study area that are not part of the road right of way. The larger pieces include 45 acres that the City owns along Miller Trunk Highway “behind” Kohls, 6.5 acres of land that Duluth Housing and Redevelopment Authority owns for the Matterhorn Apartments behind the Village Mall West, and 16 acres of tax forfeited land. The rest are scattered lots that the City owns throughout the study area.





Central Entrance - Miller Hill Small Area Plan



# Transportation

## Roadways

The study area is defined by its transportation infrastructure, namely Central Entrance (Minnesota Trunk Highway 194) and Miller Trunk Highway (U.S. Highway 53). They provide the “backbone” of vehicle mobility for this study area and the traffic that utilizes these roadways are one of the largest reasons why many of the businesses have chosen to locate here. A map showing the study area road network and average annual daily traffic counts for the main roadways can be found on the next page.

Roadways function in different ways according to the amount of through-vehicle mobility they provide and the amount of access they provide to adjacent properties. This system of classifying roadways is called “functional classification.” The Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) reviews the functional classification of roadways in the Duluth-Superior metro area and the functional class of study area roadways can be found on the next page.

In the study area, Central Entrance, Miller Trunk Highway, and Trinity Road are classified as “principle arterial” streets because they provide the highest level of vehicle mobility with somewhat limited access to adjacent properties. Central Entrance is constructed as an undivided urban arterial through most of the study area with a posted speed of 30 MPH from Pecan Avenue to Anderson Road. It is situated in a right-of-way that varies between 80-86 feet in width. The 2002 Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan (MTHIP) described in the “Past Planning Efforts” section of this plan identified 69 curb cuts in the section of Central Entrance from Blackman Avenue to Anderson Road, a number that the MTHIP recommends reducing by one-half. Central Entrance extends westward as a divided, urban arterial to Trinity Road where it is joined by Miller Trunk Highway, a section with a posted speed of 40 MPH and containing only 10 curb cuts. An additional 13 curb cuts were found on Miller Trunk Highway between Trinity Road and Haines Road (an urban divided arterial) at

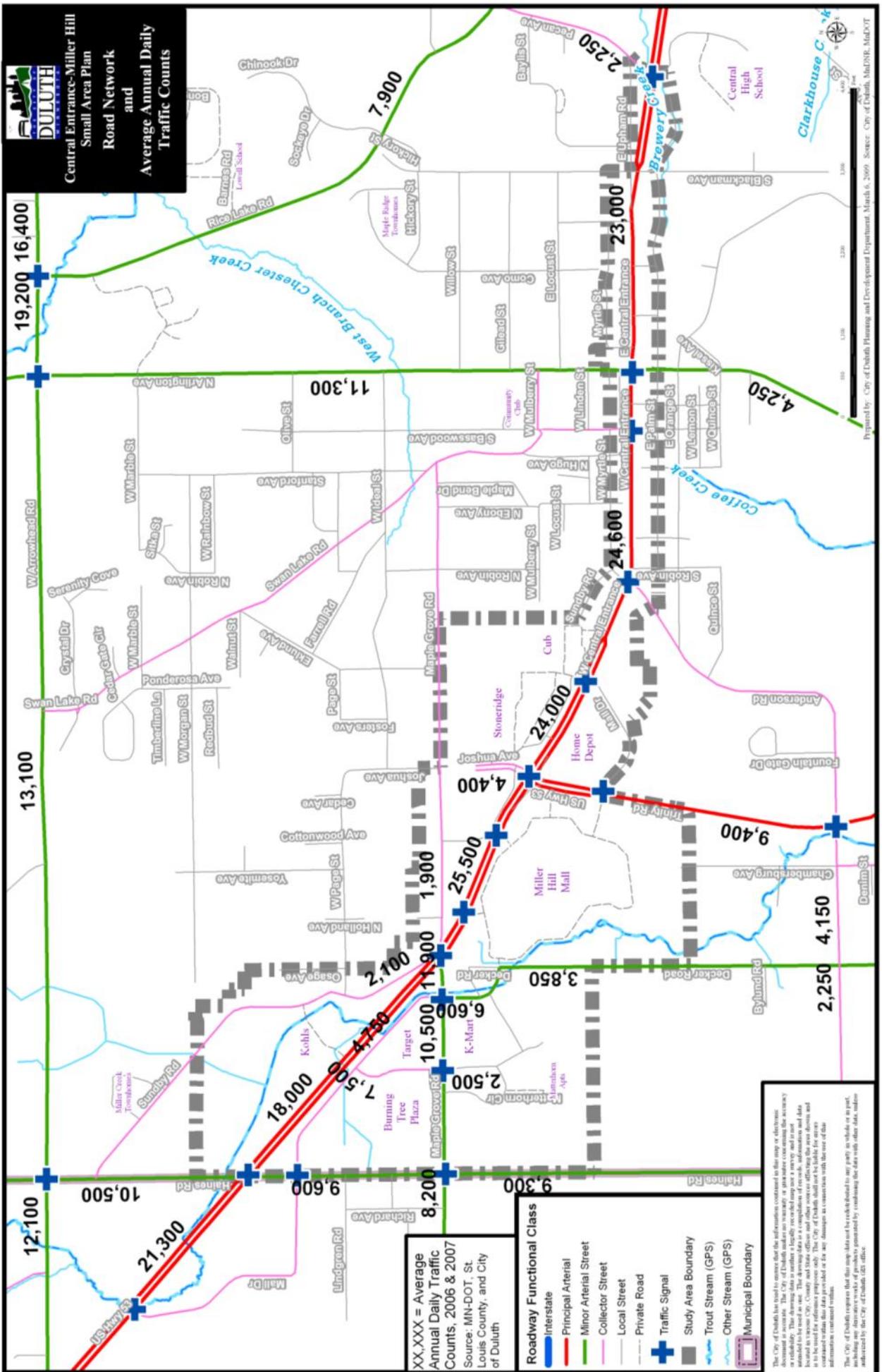


the time of the MTHIP, however that number will be reduced by the highway improvements currently under construction and described later in this section.

Roadways classified as “minor arterials” linking to Central Entrance and Miller Trunk Highway include Blackman Avenue, Arlington Avenue, Maple Grove Road (west of Miller Trunk Highway), Haines Road and Decker Road. These roadways are in 66 foot wide right-of-ways. Minor arterials provide a moderate level of both vehicular mobility and access to adjacent properties. Roadways classified as “collector streets” provide a moderate level of mobility and a high level of access to adjacent properties. They include Pecan Avenue, Basswood Avenue, Anderson Road, Maple Grove Road (east of Miller Trunk Highway), Sundby Road, and Mall Drive all existing in 66 foot wide right-of-ways.

The Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan (MTHIP) provided the impetus for application for funding to construct many of the improvements listed in the MTHIP. The Minnesota Department of Transportation, St. Louis County, and the City of Duluth have all provided funding for the roadway improvements that have been made in the Miller Hill area in 2008 and 2009. These include adding a signalized intersection at Burning Tree Road and Miller Trunk Highway, building a new roadway connecting this new intersection to Sundby Road, and rebuilding many of the other roadways in the Miller Hill area. A map showing the layout of these improvements can be found on the page 17.





Central Entrance - Miller Hill Small Area Plan



Vehicle traffic volumes in the study area is considerably high with the “Average Annual Daily Traffic” count hovering around 25,000 vehicles per day along sections of Central Entrance and Miller Trunk Highway. By comparison, Maple Grove Road west of Miller Trunk Highway and Haines Road see about half the volume of traffic. High traffic volumes can be handled by certain roadway designs and the improvements being made in the Miller Hill area in 2008 and 2009 are designed to handle the traffic volume today through 2025. Traffic volumes on Central Entrance today are acceptable, with the exception of vehicles attempting to access the roadway from Blackman Avenue and left turning movements from eastbound Central Entrance at Arlington Avenue and westbound Central Entrance at Anderson Road, according to the background research conducted for the Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan.

Even with the considerable traffic volumes on Central Entrance and Miller Trunk Highway, traveling these roadways is quite safe as evidenced by vehicle crash rates being below the statewide average on all segments. Data gathered for the Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan show the 1998-2000 crash rates for Central Entrance between Blackman Avenue and Anderson Road as 1.8 crashes per million vehicle miles per year compared with 5.9 for roadways of a similar type statewide. Also low was the crash rate for Central Entrance/Miller Trunk between Anderson Road and west of Maple Grove Road where only 1.5 crashes occurred per million vehicle miles per year compared with the statewide rate of 2.1



## Transit Service

The Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) operates a transit hub at the Miller Hill Mall between Sears and Old Navy (Mall Door #8). Buses utilizing this hub serve the study area with connections (see map on the next page) to the Downtown transit hub via Route 10 (hourly off-peak service, 1/2 hourly peak service), Spirit Valley/ Lincoln Park via Route 5 (hourly service), the Duluth Heights neighborhood via Route 14 (hourly peak service, no off-peak service), and the airport (hourly service). On weekends, buses are routed differently to make it more convenient for people from many Duluth neighborhoods to arrive at the mall without transferring to another bus downtown. The Mall Area Connector (MAC) circulates every 30 minutes between the Mall, K-Mart, Burning Tree Plaza, Target, and then back to the K-Mart and the Mall, though this route will change when the roadway improvements are completed.

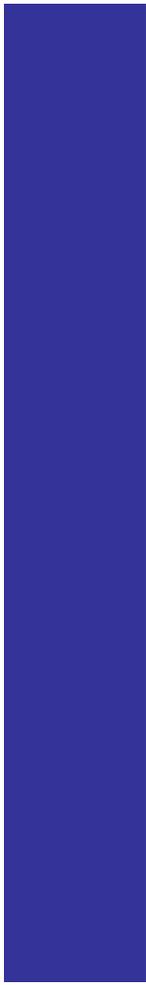
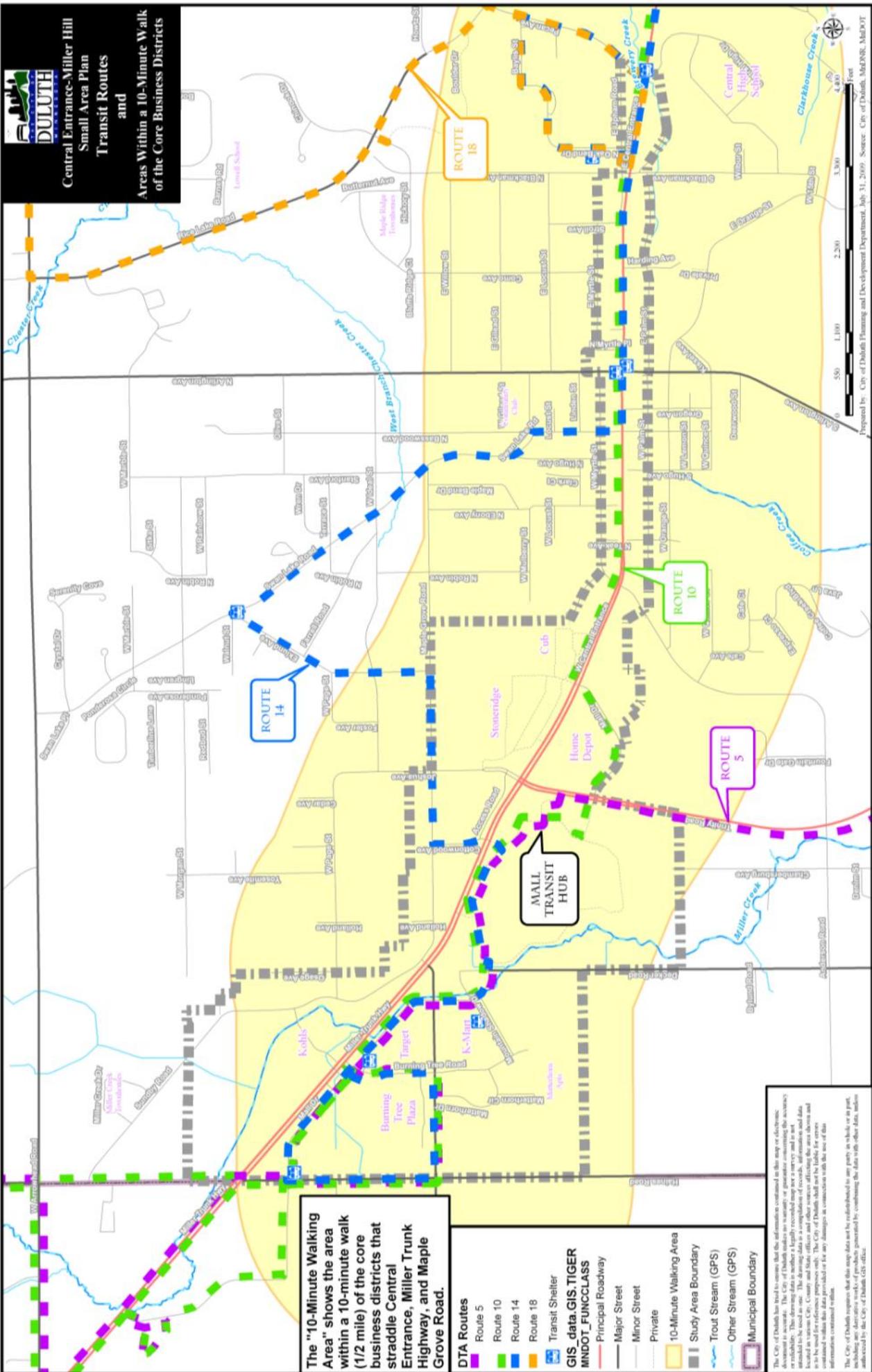
There is weekday hourly service to the UMD transit hub but riders must transfer to Route 18 at Central Entrance and Pecan Avenue, though the schedules have been coordinated to reduce wait times between buses. Transit shelters can be found in the study area at Central Entrance and Pecan Avenue, Central Entrance and Arlington Avenue, Mountain Shadows Drive (Bridgemans), Burning Tree Road (Super One), Haines Road (Krenzen), and at the Miller Hill Mall Door #8.

Persons boarding or exiting DTA buses on Central Entrance has declined steeply over the years (see Table below) in spite of increasing the number of bus trips to the area. The Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan points out that “sidewalks, bus stops, crosswalks, and shelters are limited or non-existent at key locations throughout the corridor. Limited access to bus stops is con-

DTA Boarding on Central Entrance	
Year	Passenger Boardings Per hour
1984	538
1996	368
2002	249
2008	152



**Central Entrance-Miller Hill  
Small Area Plan  
Transit Routes  
and  
Areas Within a 10-Minute Walk  
of the Core Business Districts**



sidered to be one factor in a significant decrease in transit ridership over the past 20 years.”

DTA Route 10 provides the most direct and frequent service to the Central Entrance and Miller Hill business districts. It largely traverses the two business districts core areas. The Transit Route map on the previous page shows a shaded polygon that represents the area within ½ mile of the business districts and transit routes, an area from which a typical person would likely walk to access businesses and transit, the “10-minute walking area.” From this map it is evident that much of the Duluth Heights neighborhood is within a 10-minute walk of the Central Entrance and Miller Hill business districts and frequent transit service.

### Bicycle Routes

The Metropolitan Interstate Council prepared the MIC Bikeways Plan in 1994 and published the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Bike Route Map in 2003. From these documents, two primary bike routes are found in the study area. There is a signed on-street route that follows Palm Street to Orange Street and then on to Anderson Road where Decker Road provides a connection to the mall area. This route is connected to an off-street bike path that parallels Palm Street east of Arlington Avenue past Central High School and into the Harbor Highlands neighborhood (formerly Harborview Homes). There is also an unsigned on-street bike route that follows Mulberry Street to Swan Lake and on to Maple Grove Road where it then follows Cottonwood Avenue to the Miller Hill Mall. Bicycling on Central Entrance and Miller Trunk Highway is “not recommended” by the 2003 Bike Route Map.

### Pedestrian Facilities

Pedestrian facilities in the study area are incomplete, inconvenient, and often uncomfortable for people to use. The Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan found that “pedestrian and transit movement is a major problem throughout the corridor.” The rebuilding of TH 53 in the mall area will improve the situation somewhat by adding sidewalks on streets that previously had none. Unfortunately, sidewalks will only be added to one side of the streets. There are existing sidewalks along one side of Palm Street, Arlington Avenue, Trinity Road, Mountain Shadows Drive, Matterhorn Circle, and Decker Road. The off-street bicycle path along the south side of Palm Street from Arlington Avenue east to Central High School and Harbor Highlands can also serve pedestrians.

Central Entrance has a sidewalk only on the south side of the street from Pecan Avenue to Arlington Avenue with a +/- 5 foot wide paved boulevard separating it from the driving lanes. There is a sidewalk on both sides of Central Entrance from Arlington Avenue to a block short of Anderson Road where the sidewalk ends on the south side of the street, but continues on the north side. A sidewalk will be constructed in front of the Residence Inn between Anderson Road/Myrtle Street and Midas Muffler. As is the case in many locations in the study area, an existing well worn path connects the end of the sidewalk to the Stoneridge Shop-



ping Center via Midas Muffler's parking lot. There is also a well worn path on the north side of Central Entrance from Blackman Avenue to Arlington Avenue, indicating significant demand for pedestrian facilities.

Throughout the study area, speed and volume of traffic often makes it difficult to cross principle and minor arterials. People can often be witnessed darting across the street mid-block. Another significant problem is the lack of pedestrian facilities on existing commercial sites. Many of the shopping centers and large commercial sites were developed without consideration to pedestrian travel.

## Utilities

Municipal potable water, sanitary sewer, and natural gas utilities are available throughout the study area with the exceptions of the Sundby Road area north of Page Street and the interior area between Haines Road and Decker Road south of the Schneiderman's Furniture store.

According to the City Engineering Division, water service within the study is generally good with acceptable pressure and volume for normal domestic or commercial use. Fire flows within certain areas are less than desirable due to small mains and lower pressures. The City intends to construct a new elevated water storage tank in 2011 that will increase both fire supply and pressure to remedy this situation.



Overall sanitary sewer capacity within the area is acceptable. However, sanitary sewers within this area are upstream from documented sanitary sewer overflows, therefore, minimal development restrictions are in place. For developments with wet weather wastewater flows less than 10,000 gallons per day (gpd), there are no restrictions. For developments with wastewater flows greater than 10,000 gpd, the developer is required to remove sources of infiltration and inflow within the system equal to 3 times the estimated average wet weather flow. The infiltration and inflow removal can generally be accomplished by paying for installation of sump pumps in private residences or replacement of private leaking sanitary sewer laterals.

## Environmental Characteristics

In addition to the human-made features and characteristics outlined in the sections above, the study area also contains important natural features (see Natural Features map on the next page). The study area straddles three watersheds, Brewery Creek, Coffee Creek, and Miller Creek, the latter two are designated "trout streams" by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. This means that the streams are, or have been in the past, able to support populations of trout. A watershed is the entire geographical area drained by a creek and its tributaries.

Miller Creek is listed as an "impaired waterway" by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency due to the temperatures reached in the stream and its impacts on trout populations. Because of this listing, a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study must be conducted to determine the maximum amount of pollutants that Miller Creek can receive and still safely meet federal water quality standards. This study is underway and is expected to be completed this year. After the completion of the study, an Implementation Plan will be written as guidance for how to achieve the TMDL. The Implementation Plan might include anything from where to





plant more trees to new storm water discharge standards.

Stream water quality is linked to impervious surfaces, which heat up in sunlight and transmit that heat to streams during rain events. Uncontrolled or poorly controlled runoff from impervious surfaces flowing at high rates tends to erode stream channels and carry pollutants, which affect streams.

Undeveloped sections of the study area contain numerous wetlands, many associated with the trout streams above. Stream water quality is linked to wetland quantity and quality because wetlands give rainwater a place to slow down and cool off before some of it is discharged into streams.

Each stream has an area prone to flooding, called a flood plain. Most new developments are designed to stay out of flood plains. However, it is interesting to note that the Target and K-Mart parking lots are both within the 100-year flood plain of Miller Creek.



## Comprehensive Land Use Plan Principles

The 12 Governing Principles adopted in the 2006 Comprehensive Land Use Plan provide the fundamental concepts guiding all of the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations. They provide direction when details of the plan itself are insufficiently clear to resolve issues or make decisions. It is these principles that provide the context for many of the recommendations in this small area plan. The 12 Governing Principles are:

1. Reuse previously developed lands,
2. Declare the necessity and secure the future of undeveloped places,
3. Support Duluth's traditional economic base,
4. Support emerging economic growth sectors,
5. Strengthen neighborhoods,
6. Reinforce the place-specific,
7. Create and maintain connectivity,
8. Encourage a mix of activities, uses and densities,
9. Support private actions that contribute to the public realm,
10. Take sustainable actions,
11. Include considerations for education systems in land use actions,
12. Create efficiencies in delivery of public services.



## Market Analysis

It is important for a land use plan, such as this small area plan, to be grounded in reality concerning the supply and demand for each type of land use in the marketplace. Early in the study process, a request for proposals was widely distributed and, from the contractors who submitted proposals, MXD Development Strategists was selected to conduct a market study for the study area. Specifically, they were hired to assess the supply and demand for retail, residential, office and hotel land uses in the study area, and to prepare a land use allocation strategy and fiscal benefits summary. The complete market study can be found in Appendix C. Following is the executive summary of the market study prepared by MXD.

### Central Entrance - Miller Hill Mall Corridor

#### *Context Summary & Implications*

A review of Miller Hill's regional setting, local context (particularly the sensitivity to the well-being of Downtown Duluth) and site qualities, results in several recommendations:

- ◆ The Central Entrance – Miller Hill district is the dominant retail hub in Duluth, itself the most important regional hub in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. As it is primarily a retail corridor, future development should build upon this critical mass and momentum of shopping, dining and entertainment as the basis of its further development.
- ◆ A new type of development format is required to provide a better sense of place in the area, so critical to success in today's real estate market.
- ◆ Where possible, residential uses should be introduced to the area, particularly on the periphery, to provide a more multi-purpose Town Center setting.
- ◆ Office uses should continue to be focused in the Downtown, although smaller boutique office space, particularly oriented to local

professional services (lawyers, insurance, etc.) would be an important function to round out the corridor.

- ◆ Additional Hotel/Motel accommodation could be a good addition to the corridor, subject to sufficient demand.
- ◆ A public gathering space should be integrated into the overall strategy from which to center the entire corridor.
- ◆ Existing land uses are fragmented and dispersed, so the highest priority should be given to inner locations to fill in the gaps in the corridor before concentrating on expanding the core retail activity.
- ◆ The competitive effect of Hermantown and its critical mass of retail needs to be mitigated by an effective districting strategy. Specifically, priority should be given to development sites that are located away from the city boundary, as this will serve to contain the level of cross-shopping and sales leakage from Duluth.
- ◆ Evening activity is lacking in the area. Uses such as Entertainment (Cinema and other Family Entertainment) could ideally fulfill this role.

Retail concepts which have thrived in the Study Area are large format "big box" stores and the Miller Hill Mall, both of which provide an internal retail experience and effectively turn their backs to the streets surrounding them.



However, American shoppers, already reporting “mall fatigue,” are increasingly being enticed by new pedestrian-friendly, multipurpose places, such as Lifestyle Centers and Suburban Town Centers. As a consequence, such multipurpose, pedestrian-friendly places are being introduced throughout the country.

Based upon the Location Analysis, it is recommended that Miller Hill be transformed over time to include such a “place.” This should form part of a wider strategy to concentrate activity within the area, and round out its commercial offering, while also introducing potential residential uses to round out its sense of activity during off-peak hours.

Mixed-use development would provide a number of solutions to the challenges faced by the Study Area. Mixed-use development provides a sense of place so missing in the area. It also provides a natural “center” and public gathering place, which is also needed. Such a multipurpose development could include housing (subject to Demand Analysis) and/or office space, as well as accommodation.

### ***Supply Summary & Implications***

The evaluation of Duluth’s retail environment relating to competitive forces, merchandise voids, sector performance and supply metrics reveals some key findings and resulting opportunities for the Central Entrance – Miller Hill Corridor.

Miller Hill is the dominant force in the regional marketplace for retail anchored regionally by the Miller Hill Mall. The current inventory of the Miller Hill Mall area is estimated at 2.16 million square feet (sf) (excluding auto dealerships and auto servicing). This represents approximately 58% of the total City of Duluth retail inventory (3.74 million sf). The current vacancy rate for Miller Hill (4.0%) is below the City average and at a healthy level, suggesting there is demand for retail in the Corridor, but more in the Miller Hill area than along Central Entrance, which has developed into a pedes-

trian unfriendly, highly fragmented, highway strip retail core dominated by fast food and auto services

The City of Duluth retail inventory does not include the retail west of Haines Rd in the City of Hermantown. In recent years however, the role of Hermantown has increased significantly to a point whereby Hermantown has now become a major player in attracting commercial developments, such as Wal-Mart, Sam’s Club, Menards and Gander Mountain. Consequently the approximately 685,000 sf of large format retail located within a 3-minute drive time of the Miller Hill Mall has contributed to likely sales outflow from Duluth to Hermantown and is a primary reason why the City is facing development pressures for non-commercially zoned lands.

Much of the retail along the Corridor, and in particular around the Miller Hill Mall is value oriented and in some cases, as evidenced by the relocation of Gander Mountain, is obsolete retail space for new-to-market tenants or tenants wishing to relocate to the Miller Hill area. Average lease rates for the majority of retail space in the Miller Hill area (excluding the Miller Hill Mall) is in the \$10 - \$15 per square foot (psf) range, which represents a challenge for any new developers wishing to create a newer modern retail environment, given current construction costs.

Miller Hill is the dominant shopping area for Duluth, but the scattered pattern of historic development has created a position whereby larger areas of contiguous developable land have become perceived as scarce, which is why neighboring Hermantown has been so successful in luring tenants (and corresponding retail sales tax revenue) away from Duluth. Miller Hill is too important a corridor to further allow this outflow to occur and therefore infill, densification and redevelopment should be looked at as solutions to creating a cohesive, more compact environment.



One void in the local market is a Suburban Town Center that does not compete with Downtown, but instead provides a core for people living in this area of the city. Such a Suburban Town Center typically works well with entertainment concepts, particularly a cinema, and restaurants and could potentially attract an investor based on the lack of strong competition in the area. While it is acknowledged there was a cinema at Miller Hill Mall and the Lakes 10 Cinema is located in Hermantown, this facility is isolated from the core population and retail concentration. Therefore, the City of Duluth could look to pursue a more modern multiplex Cinema that would be a more suitable fit for the market and contribute to higher retention of spending in Duluth given the adjacency of compatible retail functions.

In the immediate Miller Hill Mall area, there is a clear need to mix automobile-oriented big box spaces (that afford wide vistas of the whole area) with smaller, intimate and more contemplative spaces geared towards pedestrians. This infill would promote not only a critical mass of retail, but more importantly a critical mix of retail. Among the targeted retail functions are Outdoor Sporting Goods, Casual Restaurants and more adult-oriented Fashions.

The impact of Miller Hill's evolution over the past 30 years has been evidenced in the challenges faced in Downtown Duluth. Therefore, local retail tenants, specialty fashion stores and urban grocery concepts should be left for Downtown Duluth to pursue, which will always have an advantage in stimulating an eclectic retail mix. In this way, the tenant mix allocation of the Miller Hill area could be 70% National/Regional to 30% Local, while Downtown could evolve to become 70% Local to 30% National/Regional. Popular Downtown restaurants, may also potentially want to open a second location "over the hill" to garner evening patronage as well.

The overall supply of office space along the Central Entrance – Miller Hill Corridor is very limited and largely comprised of older Class B

& C office space targeting local professional services. There are no defined office campuses along the corridor and the two most recent development proposals, namely the Sande Office Project on Central Entrance and the Arrowhead Crossing on Haines Road have both been impacted by limited demand, which has affected their development and/or construction status. With regard to the Sande Office Project, its location may well become an important site in the future, but the project itself is likely ahead of its time for that area, given the adjacency of uses and demand.

In general, the majority of quality office space for larger users should continue to be focused in the Downtown area, while the Central Entrance – Miller Hill Corridor should pursue opportunities for smaller local and professional services integrated within a mixed-use development format. For example, boutique office space for small firms, particularly individuals seeking a work space close to home, kids' schools etc, and who would not necessarily benefit from synergies downtown. Potential smaller office space would be particularly attractive if amenities located very close by (shopping, dining, services, pub, etc.).

In terms of hotel/motel supply, it is currently in balance with demand. Since 2001, Duluth has averaged an occupancy rate of between 62% and 64%. Duluth's 2007 average occupancy was 63.9%, which was over one percentage point higher than the National average (62.7%). Average Daily Room Rates (ADR) (\$84.35 in Duluth) are lower than the national average. From a revenue perspective, the lower ADR suggests lesser potential revenues which may result in lower demand by hoteliers, given the current economic downturn. The Miller Hill Corridor has a ratio of Tier 1 to Tier 2 weighted more towards a more value-oriented price point. Given the slow growth in supply in the market, and the current trend to upgrade Downtown/ Canal Park properties, the most likely scenario for accommodation would be additional Tier 2 development over a long time horizon.

## Demand Summary & Implications

A Demand Analysis was undertaken to identify and quantify the various potential markets for retail, office, residential and hotel/motel uses within the Miller Hill corridor. The findings, coupled with the Supply Analysis findings, provide the foundation of the Land Use Allocation Analysis undertaken in the next Section.

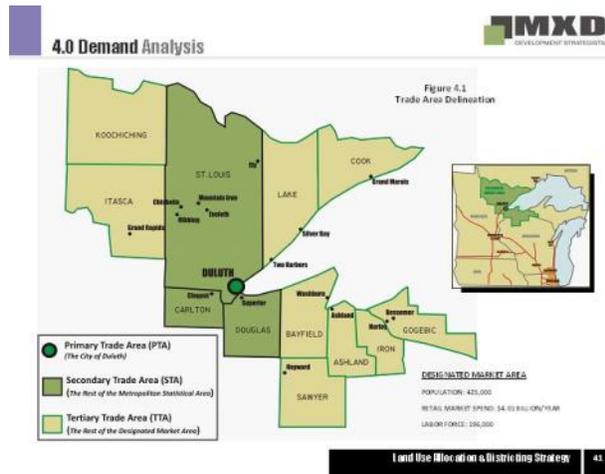
A Trade Area was delineated for the Miller Hill Corridor. This region includes the City of Duluth (Primary Trade Area), the rest of the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area (Secondary Trade Area), and a Tertiary Trade Area comprising the remainder of Duluth's designated market area (DMA).

Approximately 425,000 people currently reside within the entire Trade Area. This is stable market, which is growing at 0.23%, well below the national average of 1.03%. However, the number of households is growing at a quicker pace of 0.55% due to the aging population base.

The Trade Area's income profile is slightly lower than the national average. However, disposable income is slightly higher than average, due to the low cost of living in the area. Given this level of disposable income, and the heavily value-oriented nature of retailing in the Miller Hill corridor and the rest of Duluth, the lack of retailing positioned above value-oriented is notable.

This mismatch is further indicated by the per capita retail spending profile of Duluth area residents. Retail categories associated with mall shopping, particularly fashion categories, are lower than average in this market, and likely indicate a lack of quality retail options.

The Miller Hill corridor has access to a \$4.01 billion per year retail market that is growing 1.87% per annum as a result of increases in households, per capita income and tourism in the local area. By 2020, approximately \$5 billion annually will be spent on shopping, dining and entertainment.



A Demand Analysis for Office was also undertaken. However, given the primacy of Downtown Duluth for office uses, as well as the City's intent to maintain the status quo in this regard, only smaller uses were considered for Miller Hill. The focus was on the smaller "boutique" office tenant that is seeking a convenient work space close to home. It is estimated that approximately 80,000 sf of commercial office space will be absorbed annually by the Duluth market, and that 10,000 sf of this total could be developed along Miller Hill annually without adversely affecting Downtown, due to a different positioning of high amenity suburban space targeting smaller, locally-based companies.

A Demand Analysis for Hotel/Motel further supported the findings in the Supply Analysis that this is not a major development opportunity in the Miller Hill area. Although tourism to Duluth is growing at a steady pace, the majority of these tourists are destined to the Downtown and Canal Park areas and as such it is not expected that tourists will play as significant a role in the evolution of Miller Hill or Central Entrance for retail or hotel/motel perspectives as they would on the enhancement of the Downtown Core.

A Residential Demand Analysis points to two key markets to pursue: The first is the "Lock & Leave" crowd of retirees and semi-retirees, who are increasingly turning to the convenience of condo living, a housing format that frees them to travel. This target market frequently has a



second condo in a Sunbelt state. The second group is the “Local Downsizer” market, who are also older, but not as affluent as the Lock & Leave set. This second group also is seeking the convenience of condo living but for the entire year.

Both residential demand segments value access to nature, health care and amenities such as coffee shops, fitness facilities and grocery stores. This group increasingly has driven sales at mixed-use projects built above retail in a pedestrian-friendly village-type setting. Such a development in the Miller Hill corridor could position itself at the heart of the consumer market.

### ***Land Use Allocation Summary & Implications***

A Land Use Allocation analysis was applied to the locational, supply and demand conditions for each of the retail, office, accommodation and residential land uses along the Central Entrance – Miller Hill study area. The following projections were calculated:

- ◆ Retail demand is expected to grow at an average annual increase of 27,345 sf over the next decade. As such by 2015 approximately 150,000 sf of new retail could be absorbed and by 2020, 302,000 sf, followed by an additional 150,000 sf by 2030.

- ◆ Based upon the retail void analysis and a target tenant profiling analysis, this amount of square footage is expected to constitute a number of fast casual restaurants, adult fashion stores, an outdoor recreation “mini-anchor” as well as a smaller specialty food market. The recommended retail mix is considered achievable if the right kind of development format was introduced along the study area, namely a strategically-located Suburban Town Center.
- ◆ Office space is recommended for at most 10,000 sf a year based upon the City’s intention to concentrate business activity in the Downtown Core. The recommended amount of space would be targeted at smaller companies seeking work space close to homes and schools, particularly in high amenity settings close to a number of convenience and food & beverage opportunities.
- ◆ Support for additional Accommodation is anticipated to grow slowly over the coming years, particularly based on the likely completion of the Residence Inn. Based upon current projections, it would likely be 2021 at the earliest before sufficient demand warranted additional accommodation facilities within the study area.
- ◆ For-sale multi-family residential demand is estimated at approximately 162 new units by 2015 and 235 by 2020. An additional 41 rental multi-family units are projected to be absorbable by 2015 and 59 by 2020.



Excelsior and Grand, in St. Louis Park, is an example of a Suburban Town Center.



Land Use Allocation & Districting Strategy 100

## ***Districting Strategies Summary & Implications***

The forecasted rates of absorption illustrate a more pragmatic and slower rate of growth whereby, short term (2010 to 2015), development priority is allocated to infill and intensifying the immediate area west and north of the Miller Hill Mall. Over the period 2015 to 2025 development will transition to infill east along Central Entrance joining up with Miller Trunk Hwy at Anderson Road.

### *Miller Hill – Duluth Heights Land Allocation*

The Miller Hill Area is forecast to absorb approximately 300,000 sf of retail, 35,000 sf of office and 300 units of multi-family residential (including 50 rental units) and 80 hotel rooms over the ten year period 2010 to 2020.

### *Central Entrance Land Allocation*

Over the interim period 2010 to 2020 it is not projected that significant demand will be absorbed along Central Entrance. Properties may, however, be slowly put on the market and acquired over time.

Between 2020 and 2025, Central Entrance could potentially absorb up to 40,000 sf of additional retail space comprised largely of smaller independent retail formats, 25,000 sf of office space, which could be as a freestanding cluster or as units above a retail streetfront and approximately 150 multi-family residential units.

### *Fiscal Benefit*

The approximate 300,000 sf of retail could result in annual retail sales tax revenue for the

City of approximately \$720,000 by the year 2020. By 2025, this could further increase to approximately \$825,000 per year with the addition of 40,000 sf along Central Entrance.

The commercial nature of the corridor as it exists today dictates that the majority of future land use absorption is likely to be driven by retail development. However, the integration of residential and office functions both within and adjacent to some of these development parcels would represent an important departure from historic development patterns and would further help to infill and densify sites along the corridor.

### *East Central Entrance*

In the short to medium term, the development in and around the Miller Hill Mall area is more clear to define. Conversely, the Central Entrance corridor from Pecan Avenue to Anderson Road is much more complex, given slow demand forecasts, current composition of merchandise categories and traffic issues.

The longer term vision (2020 to 2025) sees the east end of Central Entrance becoming a pivotal gateway location. Here, a catalytic development could materialize with either an office development or an economic development strategy that could include a satellite academic campus. An educational component could stimulate an eclectic mix of shops and professional services as well as potential student housing. This gateway location could ultimately lead to the optimal infilling and introduction of a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, where buildings are brought closer to the sidewalks, with fewer curb cuts and parking/access relocated to the rear of buildings.

### **Projected Market Absorption and Land Allocation 2010-2025**

	Retail Space (square feet)	Office Space (square feet)	Multi-family Residential Units	Hotel Rooms
Miller Hill	300,000 sf	35,000 sf	300 units	80 rooms
Central Entrance	40,000 sf	25,000 sf	150 units	none



### *Central Entrance Transition “Flex” Area (Anderson to Basswood)*

The area between Anderson Road and Basswood Avenue could ultimately be a “flex” zone in which demand can either be accommodated for residential, retail or office or a combination of these uses as demand warrants in the future.

The transition area between Anderson Road and Basswood Avenue should ultimately be the last pieces of the puzzle. Otherwise growth along the corridor will undoubtedly continue to be fragmented and lack the compact form and cohesion necessary to stimulate optimal development.

Central Entrance represents a longer term development/redevelopment horizon. Though demand for short term development along Central Entrance is very limited, other place-making strategies should be examined to begin establishing and promoting the transition of the area.

Until such time that market demand and/or economic development initiatives create an opportunity for a physical manifestation of the area, strategies such as gateway statements, form-based building codes and identity creation should be developed.

#### ***Districting Place-Making Strategies***

The most vibrant commercial streets blur the line between inside and outside with outdoor cafes, imaginative store windows and merchandise that spills right onto the sidewalks, newsstands, food carts and other amenities that foster a spirit of excitement day and night. Small and local shops, rather than larger formats, create an eclectic and lively image for commercial streets.

In addition to an organic retail composition, recommended streetscape improvements should include the following:

- ◆ Work with MnDOT for a preferred transportation improvement that prioritizes the introduction of a landscaped central me-

dian and forces the elimination of curb cuts to ease traffic flow, while at the same time enhancing safety.

- ◆ New development should require that a building’s frontage be brought closer to the street edge (e.g. within 20 ft), with primary parking and access located at the rear of the buildings.



- ◆ Sidewalks should be widened (e.g. 5 ft) and pushed further back from the curb (e.g. 5 ft) to allow for a wider gravel-type landscaped area that would accommodate winter snow removal without impeding sidewalk safety.
- ◆ Overall character of the Central Entrance corridor should evoke a neighborhood mixed-use feel. It is not expected that demand will warrant a full scale revitalization of the area in the short term, but specific infill areas could be targeted for redevelopment, such as the intersection of Blackman Avenue and Central Entrance.
- ◆ The longer term outlook for Central Entrance is for more local, independent retail, smaller boutique office and professional services.
- ◆ Multi-family housing, either above retail or as terraced townhomes should also be encouraged with similar design requirements for proximity to street edge with parking and access from the rear.

## Final Summary & Recommendations

The MXD evaluation of the Central Entrance – Miller Hill Corridor reveals a sprawling land use pattern lacking connectivity and concentration of functions.

From this Market Analysis, infill, densification and redevelopment sites should be prioritized to avoid further unnecessary sprawl and promote more compact urban development. A more pragmatic approach to development will help encourage better vehicular, pedestrian and transit connectivity and access along the Central Entrance – Miller Hill Corridor (see map titled “Central Entrance-Miller Hill Development Priorities” on the next page).

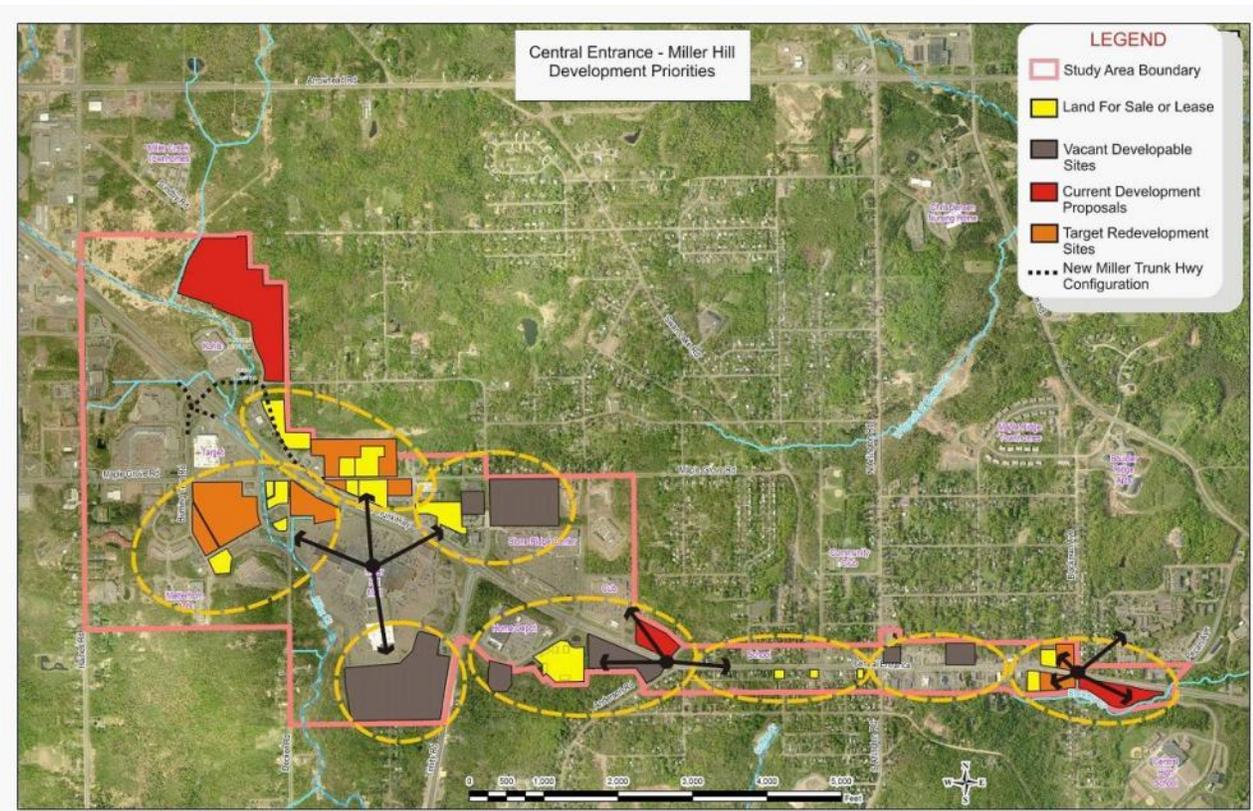
Concentrated nodes of development would encourage better vehicular, pedestrian and transit connectivity, while also reducing infrastructure and servicing costs when compared to creating new additional nodes.

Similarly, redevelopment would act as a catalyst for improvements to surrounding properties, consistent with the City of Duluth’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan Governing Principles.

Furthermore, by targeting redevelopment ‘greyfield’ sites as opposed to larger new ‘greenfield’ sites, supply can be kept in balance with demand for retail space.

The amount of new retail space added to the Corridor should be “right-sized” to avoid impacting other important City nodes, such as Downtown or West Duluth.

The Central Entrance – Miller Hill Corridor does not require additional new commercially zoned land, but rather more intense use and efficient utilization of existing commercially zoned lands. Future development should place an emphasis on existing lands that can accommodate potential tenant requirements and future growth, without exerting unnecessary pressure on non-commercially zoned land.



Source: Central Entrance-Miller Hill Corridor Market Analysis, MXD





# PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

## Vision Statement

Through good land use planning, reasonable transportation solutions, place-making and business district organization, the Central Entrance business district will regain its focus as the “main street” for the Duluth Heights neighborhood and the Miller Hill business district will strengthen its core function as a regional retail destination.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to accomplish the Plan Objectives identified at the beginning of this study. Please consult the Recommendations map on the previous page for the location of the recommendations listed below which are followed by a map reference in [brackets].

The recommendations are presented for each of the plan objectives and organized by implementation area as follows:



- ◆ **FUTURE LAND USE** - Recommendations affecting the Comprehensive Land Use Plan are listed under this heading. It is intended that with the adoption of this plan that the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map be amended with the changes listed in these recommendations.
- ◆ **UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE** - Recommendations to be addressed in the development of the Unified Development Code (UDC) are listed under this heading. The UDC will translate many of the provisions in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan into land use regulations by bringing together all of the City’s development and zoning related land use regulations into one simplified, unified document. The new code will also include a streamlined development review and approval process. The City has hired Clarion Associates to draft the UDC and the final code is anticipated to be presented to the City Council in early summer 2010.
- ◆ **PLACE-MAKING** - Recommendations that further the goal of giving the business districts a stronger identity are listed under this heading.
- ◆ **TRANSPORTATION** - Recommendations for improving and enhancing of the transportation system are found under this heading.

Before each group of recommendations is a “Rationale” section that explains the reason for the recommendations and provides facts from the Assessment section of the report.

# 1. To guide new development opportunities that compliment existing development while minimizing potential negative impacts to surrounding residential neighborhoods.

## ***Rationale***

To inform land use decisions, the City contracted with a consultant to conduct a market analysis. MXD Development Strategists considered the existing supply of each land use and the forecasted demand over the next 20 years and found that, overall, retail demand is expected to grow at an average annual increase of 27,345 square feet over the next decade. As such, by 2015 approximately 150,000 square feet of new retail could be absorbed and by 2020, 302,000 square feet, followed by an additional 150,000 square feet by 2030. The study area is expected to absorb 10,000 square feet of office space annually. And for-sale multi-family residential demand is estimated at approximately 162 new units by 2015 and 235 units by 2020. An additional 41 multi-family rental units can be absorbed by 2015 and 59 units by 2020.

The market study found that the study area is fragmented and dispersed providing many opportunities for infill development. MXD recommended that priority should be given to redevelopment of previously used sites and filling in the gaps in the core commercial corridor before expanding the retail activity beyond the core area. Land use changes should happen at strong human-made and natural features such as wetlands, steep slopes and roadways that serve as buffers. The recommended Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map changes provided below accomplish this. Where residential and non-residential land uses are in close proximity, good site design must be incorporated to protect the residential uses.

The market study suggested that mixed-use development would provide a number of solutions to the challenges faced by the study area. Mixed

-use development provides a sense of place so currently missing in the area. It also provides a natural “center” and public gathering place, which is also needed. Such a multipurpose development could include ground floor retail, housing (subject to demand analysis) and/or office space.

## ***Recommendations***

### *Future Land Use*

- A. Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) to Urban Residential (UR) on the east side of Haines Road south of the properties fronting on Maple Grove Road to the study area boundary. This area is developing into an apartment/condo residential area and this use should continue. [see 1-A on the Recommendations Map]
- B. Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) to Urban Residential (UR) between Cub Foods and Maple Grove Road east of Eklund Avenue in order to better protect the residential neighborhoods north and east of the area. [see 1-B on the Recommendations Map]

### *Unified Development Code*

- C. Where residential and non-residential land uses are in close proximity, good site design must be incorporated to protect the residential uses, including fencing, landscaping, downcast and lower levels of lighting.



## 2. To encourage the continued viability of the Miller Hill business district as a regional retail destination.

### **Rationale**

The MXD market study estimated that the Miller Hill Area is forecast to absorb approximately 300,000 square feet of retail, 35,000 square feet of office and 300 units of multi-family residential (including 50 rental units) and 80 hotel rooms over the ten year period of 2010 to 2020. Based upon retail profiling analysis, this amount of square footage is expected to constitute a number of fast casual restaurants, adult fashion stores, an outdoor recreation “mini-anchor” as well as a smaller specialty food market. The recommended retail mix is considered achievable if the right kind of development format was introduced in the study area, namely a strategically-located “suburban town center,” a multi-story, mixed-use development that contains ground floor retail and office space with housing on upper floors surrounding a public amenity such as a small park or fountain in a pedestrian-friendly environment. These developments typically work well with entertainment concepts, such as restaurants and a cinema. Investors may be attracted to this development concept due to the lack of strong entertainment competition in the immediate area. Examples of these types of projects are described in detail in the “Case Studies” section in the back of the market study found in the Appendix.

The MXD market study concluded that the Miller Hill district is primarily a retail corridor of regional significance and future development should build upon this critical mass and momentum of shopping, dining and entertainment as the basis of its further development. However, they advised that a new type of development format is required to provide a better sense of place in the area, so critical to success in today’s real estate market. The American public is increasingly seeking new multipurpose, pedestrian-friendly places. The market

study recommended that Miller Hill be transformed over time to include such a place. This should form part of a wider strategy to concentrate activity within the area, and round out its commercial offering, while also introducing potential residential uses to round out its sense of activity during off-peak hours.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Future Land Use*

- A. Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Urban Residential (UR) to Central Business Secondary (CBS) on both sides of Sundby Road from Page Street to the stream crossing near Miller Creek Townhomes [see 2-A on the Recommendations Map]. CBS is defined as an area adjacent to and supporting the primary central business area or a stand-alone area providing a similar mix of destination land uses but at a lower intensity than the primary central business area. It includes mixed regional and neighborhood retail, employment centers, public spaces, medium density residential, and public parking facilities. The CBS designation will be an appropriate transitional land use to “step down” the development intensity from the more intensive Large Scale Commercial district at the mall to the Low Density Residential neighborhoods north and east of Sundby Road.
- B. Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Urban Residential (UR) and extend Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) on both sides of Decker Road down to the study area boundary. This will allow commercial uses to expand on this plateau and results in the change in land use occurring at the wetland corridor that exist in the low area along the study boundary, a better natural buffer. [see 2-B on the Recommendations Map]
- C. Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) to Large Scale Commercial (LSC) on the south side of Maple Grove



Road from Cottonwood Avenue to Miller Trunk Highway. This will strengthen the nucleus of commercial uses that exist around the mall by allowing them to expand directly across the street from the mall. This site, though fragmented in ownership, has excellent visibility from Miller Trunk Highway and the mall. [see 2-C on the Recommendations Map]

### *Unified Development Code*

- D. Create and enforce development standards in the Unified Development Code that include the following:
1. All sides of buildings should be constructed of durable materials and have architectural details to break up the massing of large facades.
  2. Building signs should not be allowed to project above the average roof elevation.
  3. Sites should be designed to provide pedestrians a separate and convenient access to the main entrances to the building from the public streets.
  4. Require parking lot landscaping standards that provide sufficient space for canopy trees to provide shade which results in cooler rainwater runoff.
  5. Encourage and/or require landscaped berms or other design elements to screen parking lots from streets and other public areas.

### *Place-Making*

- E. Encourage the development of a “suburban town center,” a multi-story, mixed-use development that contains ground floor retail and office space with housing on upper floors surrounding a public amenity such as a small park or fountain in a pedestrian-friendly environment. The center may be anchored by a cinema and contain multiple restaurants and other entertainment venues.
- F. Businesses should organize themselves into a merchants association and evolve

into a business improvement district (see Objective #6).

- G. Establish entry monument features at:
1. Haines Road and Miller Trunk Highway, [see 2-G-1 on the Recommendations Map]
  2. Trinity Road south of Mall Drive. [see 2-G-2 on the Recommendations Map]

### *Transportation*

- H. When streets are reconstructed or new streets are added, sidewalks should be constructed on both sides of the streets.

## **3. To determine the commercial function of the Central Entrance business district and plan for its future.**

### ***Rationale***

The MXD market study found that the Central Entrance business district has two functions:

- ◆ The study area east of Basswood Avenue (including the businesses just west of the Basswood Avenue/Central Entrance intersection) is currently an auto and fast food oriented corridor and those uses are likely to continue over the near future but with a longer term outlook for more local, independent retail, smaller boutique office and professional services.
- ◆ The study area west of Basswood Avenue (with the exception of the businesses just west of the Basswood Avenue/Central Entrance intersection) is a transitional area in which there is demand for residential, retail, office or a combination of these uses.

The market study estimated that, between 2020 to 2025, Central Entrance could potentially absorb up to 40,000 square feet of additional retail space comprised largely of smaller independent retail formats; 25,000 square feet of office space, which could be as a freestanding cluster or as units above a retail streetfront;

and approximately 150 multi-family residential units.

Central Entrance from Pecan to Anderson Road should become the “main street” for the Duluth Heights neighborhood. It should become a distinctive place rather than a collection of stand-alone businesses lining a highway. An identity for the district should be created and the businesses should be organized to further this identity and take “ownership” of Central Entrance. The Urban Land Institute in its 2001 guide “Ten Principles for Reinventing America’s Suburban Strips” recommends that such organization be a public/private partnership separate from governmental agencies, a non-profit development corporation or a business improvement district, or a combination of the two.

The MXD market study stated that the most vibrant commercial streets blur the line between inside and outside with outdoor cafes, imaginative store windows and merchandise that spills right onto the sidewalks, newsstands, food carts and other amenities that foster a spirit of excitement day and night. Small and local shops, rather than larger formats, create an eclectic and lively image for commercial streets. With each site’s redevelopment the multi-modal function and attractiveness of the business district should be reinforced. When Central Entrance is reconstructed, it is critical that the context of the street as a walkable, urban thoroughfare be respected and the design solution permit comfortable use of the street by pedestrians and transit as well as vehicles.



## **Recommendations**

### *Future Land Use*

- A. As sites in this area develop, the alleys north and south of Central Entrance should be vacated to allow development sites to extend all the way to Palm Street and Myrtle Street. [see 3-A on the Recommendations Map]
- B. Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Auto Oriented Commercial (AOC) to Central Business Secondary (CBS) for the area east of Basswood Avenue (including the businesses just west of the Basswood Avenue/Central Entrance intersection). [see 3-B on the Recommendations Map]

### *Unified Development Code*

- C. Create and enforce development standards in the Unified Development Code for Central Entrance that include the following:
  - 1. Buildings should be encouraged to locate near the street through the use of minimum and maximum building setbacks.
  - 2. Buildings should be oriented to the street with a sidewalk leading from the front door to the public sidewalk.
  - 3. Parking should be limited between the street and the building entrance. Parking should be located to the side and rear of the building.
  - 4. Encourage businesses to develop shared parking agreements to reduce the amount of parking in the district.
  - 5. Buildings should be required to have a percentage of their street façade consist of windows in order to encourage pedestrian activity.



### *Place-Making*

- D. Businesses should organize themselves into a merchants association and evolve into a business improvement district (see Objective #6).
- E. Establish entry monument features at both ends of the business district:
  - 1. West end features should be located at Anderson Road. [see 3-E-1 on the Recommendations Map]
  - 2. East end features should be located at Pecan Avenue. [see 3-E-2 on the Recommendations Map]

### *Transportation*

- F. When Central Entrance is reconstructed, do not pursue the option listed in the Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan that designates Central Entrance and Palm Street as “one-way” streets.
- G. When Central Entrance is reconstructed, pursue a “context sensitive solution” as identified in the Institute for Transportation Engineers document “Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities.” The context should be a walkable, urban thoroughfare that permits comfortable use of the street by pedestrians and transit users as well as vehicles.
- H. Encourage site designs that limit curb cuts on Central Entrance, where possible, through requiring shared driveways and only allow “right-in, right-out” driveways where necessary.
- I. To provide for good vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle circulation in the Central Entrance business district, the following are recommended depending on funding availability:
  - 1. When the area on the south side of Central Entrance between Home Depot and Anderson Road redevelops, explore the possibility of creating a “backage road” to connect Anderson Road to Mall Drive (near Home De-

pot). This street should be designed for pedestrian and bicycle travel in addition to vehicles and it should be signed as a bike route. [see 3-I-1 on the Recommendations Map]

- 2. Extend Palm Street west of Robin Avenue to intersect with Anderson Road and close Robin Avenue access to Central Entrance to vehicular traffic. Design this street extension to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel. This should be done in conjunction with the redevelopment of the area along Anderson Road. The bike route that diverts to Orange Street should be relocated to this new street. [see 3-I-2 on the Recommendations Map]
- 3. Plan to have Palm Street west of Arlington Avenue function as a “backage road” providing circulation for the redeveloped sites along Central Entrance. This street should be designed to serve bicycles and pedestrians. [see 3-I-3 on the Recommendations Map]
- 4. Create a “right-in, right-out” intersection at Ebony Avenue, as necessary for development, including signalization of a full intersection (when warranted) to allow for better vehicle circulation to sites on both sides of Central Entrance and to provide another crossing point for pedestrians and bicycles. A median at the intersection will also allow a pedestrian refuge. [see 3-I-4 on the Recommendations Map]
- 5. Create a “right-in, right-out” intersection at Harding Avenue, as necessary for development, including signalization of a full intersection (when warranted) to allow for better vehicle circulation to sites south of Central Entrance and to provide another crossing point for pedestrians and bicycles. A median at the intersection will also allow a pedestrian refuge. [see 3-I-5 on the Recommendations Map]



#### 4. To improve and enhance the natural environment.

##### **Rationale**

Two trout streams flow through the study area. Coffee Creek is considered healthy at this time, but Miller Creek is on the State “impaired waters” list and suffers from rising temperatures, high sediment and turbidity levels, elevated levels of chlorides (from road salt). Many of the undeveloped sites in the study area contain wetlands which function to detain and cool storm water before slowly releasing the water into the trout streams. It should be a priority to preserve wetlands when sites are developed.

##### **Recommendations**

###### *Unified Development Code*

- A. Create and enforce development standards in the Unified Development Code that include the following:
  - 1. Priority should be given to avoiding wetlands in the study area and replacing any wetlands impacted within the immediate watershed.
  - 2. Maintain sufficient space adjacent to streams to allow for infiltration of rainwater and vegetation to shade the streams. Minimize the amount of impervious surface.



- 3. Require conservation design for any developments occurring in areas covered by the Sensitive Lands Overlay designation in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
- 4. Require an increased level of landscaping on new and redeveloped sites.
- 5. Require new and redeveloped sites to treat storm water for temperature as well as other pollutants, which may require additional vegetation planting adjacent to storm water ponds or underground detention basins.
- 6. Look for opportunities to set aside green space for passive recreation when developing properties.

###### *Transportation*

- B. When streets are reconstructed, look for opportunities to include space for trees and other vegetation that will shade pavement.
- C. Create a pedestrian trail along Miller Creek south of the mall. [see 4-C on the Recommendations Map]

#### 5. To provide safe and convenient non-motorized transportation options throughout the study area.

##### **Rationale**

The transportation system in the study area is heavily weighted toward providing mobility for vehicles, often to the detriment of pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users. People are increasingly interested in utilizing other modes of transportation for health reasons, to reduce dependence on foreign oil and to reduce global warming. To plan for these non-automobile modes, space must be given within public rights-of-way for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users and sites must be designed to be inviting of these transportation modes.



The Urban Land Institute guide cited previously says “too much traffic, or poorly planned traffic, can strangle the [commercial] strip. When traffic counts reach 20,000 to 30,000 or more per day, visibility of stores will be high and merchants will be happy, but access becomes increasingly difficult, and the [commercial] strip is at risk. To ensure continued mobility, traffic planning and design must resolve the inherent conflict between through-traffic and traffic whose destination is the strip itself. In other words, traffic must be tamed and managed so that the goose that laid the golden egg is not killed.”

To make the Central Entrance business district more accommodating of all modes of transportation, vehicular traffic will need to be “tamed” and intersections redesigned to favor pedestrians. An anecdotal travel time study was conducted by Planning staff; they found that travel time between downtown and the Trinity Road/Miller Trunk Highway intersection was nearly identical when utilizing I-35 and Trinity Road (12 minutes) compared to utilizing Mesaba Avenue and Central Entrance (11 minutes). This is because the design speed of I-35/Trinity Rd is 55 and 45 miles per hour with fewer signalized intersections versus Mesaba Ave/Central Entrance with a posted speed of 30 miles per hour and more signalized intersections.



## **Recommendations**

### *Transportation*

- A. Establish (when warranted) signalized intersections at the following locations on Central Entrance in order to give pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users more places to safely cross the street:
  1. Ebony Avenue, [see 3-I-4 on the Recommendations Map]
  2. Harding Avenue, [see 3-I-5 on the Recommendations Map]
  3. Blackman Avenue, [see 5-A-3 on the Recommendations Map]
- B. Given the right of way constrictions on Central Entrance and the existing signed bike route on Palm Street, a bike lane on Central Entrance may not be necessary.
- C. Sidewalks must be provided on both sides of all bus routes in the study area in order to accommodate transit users accessing and departing buses.
- D. Acquire additional right of way in strategic locations where bus shelters are needed.

## **6. To enhance the appearance of the area.**

### ***Rationale***

Central Entrance and Miller Hill have evolved into a collection of stand-alone businesses and strip malls that some people find unattractive due to excessive lighting and signing from properties competing for attention, the lack of site landscaping due to cost and maintenance concerns, and the “sea of parking” effect with little planning for alternative transportation modes. Often the buildings themselves are viewed as unattractive due to being in a state of disrepair and/or having few architectural details. This may be due to Central Entrance and Miller Hill being developed primarily in an era when buildings were (and are) often constructed with a short usable life to match the short time that many building users expect to use the proper-

ties. This results in the use of lesser quality building materials to match the short perceived life of the building's user.

The Urban Land Institute guide cited previously points out that “diverse, well-conceptualized developments in a coordinated, entertaining, and lively environment are worth more in real estate value than stand-alone buildings in a sea of parking. This difference in value is called the ‘design dividend.’ It is no surprise that such places also maximize retail spending and rents and, as a consequence, capital value.”

The Miller Hill area is Duluth's largest and most popular shopping destination, drawing people from the entire region. It should reflect the care and concern of Duluthians through appropriate and attractive site design.

## **Recommendations**

### *Unified Development Code*

- A. Create and enforce development standards in the Unified Development Code that address the following for the entire study area:
  - 1. Building materials;
  - 2. Building and parking lighting;
  - 3. Access for non-vehicular users;
  - 4. Shared parking;
  - 5. Refuse storage;
  - 6. Landscaping; and
  - 7. Storm water management



### *Place-Making*

- B. Construct and maintain entry monument features, including possible “overhead” elements, at the Miller Trunk Highway/Haines Road intersection, Trinity Road near Mall Drive, Central Entrance/Anderson Road intersection, and Central Entrance/Pecan Avenue intersection. [see 2-G-1, 2-G-2, 3-E-1, and 3-E-2 on the Recommendations Map]
- C. Install and maintain business district signs including banners and distinctive lighting.
- D. Businesses should organize themselves into a merchants association, perhaps one for each business district or a single entity for both. The association could conduct joint marketing of the business district(s), plan events (grand openings, annual celebration, etc.), encourage business networking and improvement.
- E. The merchants association(s) described above should evolve into a business improvement district (BID) to cover the cost for the installation and maintenance of landscape improvements in the rights of way of the business district. The BID could also establish and operate a storefront loan program to improve the appearance of businesses in the district.

### *Transportation*

- F. Install and maintain landscaping in medians on Central Entrance and Maple Grove Road in order to reduce the amount of hard surfaces and to “soften” the environment.
- G. Construct and maintain additional plantings in strategic locations throughout the study area.



# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The following table contains all of the Plan Recommendations organized by type of action needed to implement them, entities identified to implement the recommendations, and a suggested timeline for implementation.

## Future Land Use Map Amendments

Recommendation Reference	Plan Recommendations	Entity Proposed to Implement	Timeline for Implementation
1-A	Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) to Urban Residential (UR) on the east side of Haines Road south of the properties fronting on Maple Grove Road to the study area boundary.	City Planning Division/ Planning Commission/City Council	September 2009
1-B	Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) to Urban Residential (UR) between Cub Foods and Maple Grove Road east of Eklund Avenue.	City Planning Division/ Planning Commission/City	September 2009
2-A	Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Urban Residential (UR) to Central Business Secondary (CBS) on both sides of Sundby Road from Page Street to the stream crossing near Miller Creek Townhomes.	City Planning Division/ Planning Commission/City	September 2009
2-B	Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Urban Residential (UR) and extend Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) on both sides of Decker Road down to the study area boundary.	City Planning Division/ Planning Commission/City	September 2009
2-C	Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) to Large Scale Commercial (LSC) on the south side of Maple Grove Road from Cottonwood Avenue to Miller Trunk Highway.	City Planning Division/ Planning Commission/City	September 2009
3-A	As sites in this area develop, the alleys north and south of Central Entrance should be vacated to allow development sites to extend all the way to Palm Street and Myrtle Street.	City Planning Division/ Planning Commission/City	September 2009
3-B	Amend the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map from Auto Oriented Commercial (AOC) to Central Business Secondary (CBS) for the area east of Basswood Avenue (including the businesses just west of the Basswood Avenue/Central Entrance intersection)	City Planning Division/ Planning Commission/City Council	As sites develop

# Unified Development Code (UDC) Recommendations

Recommendation Reference	Plan Recommendations	Entity Proposed to Implement	Timeline for Implementation
1-C	Where residential and non-residential land uses are in close proximity, good site design must be incorporated to protect the residential uses, including fencing, landscaping, downcast/lower levels of lighting.	City Planning Division/Planning Commission/City Council	As UDC is developed in 2009-2010
2-D	<p>Create and enforce development standards in the UDC that include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All sides of buildings should be constructed of durable materials and have architectural details to break up the massing of large facades.</li> <li>2. Building signs should not be allowed to project above the average roof elevation.</li> <li>3. Sites should be designed to provide pedestrians a separate and convenient access to the main entrances to the building from the public streets.</li> <li>4. Require parking lot landscaping standards that provide sufficient space for canopy trees to provide shade which results in cooler rainwater runoff.</li> <li>5. Encourage and/or require landscaped berms or other design elements to screen parking lots from streets and other public areas.</li> </ol>	City Planning Division/Planning Commission/City Council	As UDC is developed in 2009-2010
3-C	<p>Create and enforce development standards in the UDC for Central Entrance that include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Buildings should be encouraged to locate near the street through the use of minimum and maximum building setbacks.</li> <li>2. Buildings should be oriented to the street with a sidewalk leading from the front door to the public sidewalk.</li> <li>3. Parking should be limited between the street and the building entrance. Parking should be located to the side and rear of the building.</li> <li>4. Encourage businesses to develop shared parking agreements to reduce the amount of parking in the district.</li> <li>5. Buildings should be required to have a percentage of their street façade consist of windows in order to encourage pedestrian activity.</li> </ol>	City Planning Division/Planning Commission/City Council	As UDC is developed in 2009-2010



# Unified Development Code (UDC) Recommendations continued

Recom- mendation Reference	Plan Recommendations	Entity Proposed to Implement	Timeline for Implementation
4-A	<p>Create and enforce development standards in the UDC that include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Priority should be given to avoiding wetlands in the study area and replacing any wetlands impacted within the immediate watershed.</li> <li>2. Maintain sufficient space adjacent to streams to allow for infiltration of rainwater and vegetation to shade the streams. Minimize the amount of impervious surface.</li> <li>3. Require conservation design for any developments occurring in areas covered by the Sensitive Lands Overlay designation in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.</li> <li>4. Require an increased level of landscaping on new and redeveloped sites.</li> <li>5. Require new and redeveloped sites to treat storm water for temperature as well as other pollutants, which may require additional vegetation planting adjacent to storm water ponds or underground detention basins.</li> <li>6. Look for opportunities to set aside green space for passive recreation when developing properties.</li> </ol>	City Planning Division/ Planning Commission/ City Council	As UDC is developed in 2009-2010
6-A	<p>Create and enforce development standards in the UDC that address the following for the entire study area: building materials, building and parking lighting, access for non-vehicular users, shared parking, refuse storage, landscaping, storm water management.</p>	City Planning Division/ Planning Commission/ City Council	As UDC is developed in 2009-2010

## Place-Making Recommendations

Recom- mendation Reference	Plan Recommendations	Entity Proposed to Implement	Timeline for Implementation
2-E	<p>Encourage the development of a “suburban town center,” a multi-story, mixed-use development that contains ground floor retail and office space with housing on upper floors surrounding a public amenity such as a small park or fountain in a pedestrian-friendly environment.</p>	DEDA and other City staff work at attracting a private developer	When market conditions warrant
2-F/3-D	<p>Miller Hill and Central Entrance businesses should organize themselves into a merchants association and evolve into a business improvement district (see 6-E below). The association could conduct joint marketing of the business district(s), plan events (grand openings, annual celebration, etc.), encourage business networking and improvement.</p>	Businesses with assistance from the Chamber of Commerce and City	2009-2010 merchants association, 2010-2015 business improvement district

Recom- mendation Reference	Plan Recommendations	Entity Pro- posed to Im- plement	Timeline for Implementation
2-G-1/ 2-G-2	Establish entry monument features at Haines Road/Miller Trunk Highway intersection and on Trinity Road south of Mall Drive	Business im- provement dis- trict	2010-2015
3-E-1/ 3-E-2	Establish entry monument features at both ends of the Central Entrance business district (Anderson Road and Pecan Avenue).	Business im- provement dis- trict	2010-2015
6-C	Install and maintain business district signs including banners and distinctive lighting.	Business im- provement dis- trict	2010-2015
6-E	The merchants association(s) described above should evolve into a business improvement district (BID) for Central Entrance and Miller Hill to pay for installation and maintenance of landscape improvements in the rights of way of the business district. This BID could also establish and operate a storefront loan program to improve the appearance of businesses in the district.	Businesses with assistance from the Chamber of Commerce and City	2010-2015

## Transportation Recommendations

Recom- mendation Reference	Plan Recommendations	Entity Proposed to Implement	Timeline for Implementation
2-H	When streets are reconstructed or new streets are added, sidewalks should be constructed on both sides of the streets.	MN-DOT/ County Public Works/City En- gineering	On-going
3-F	When Central Entrance is reconstructed, do not pursue the option listed in the Miller Trunk Highway Implementation Plan that designates Central Entrance and Palm Street as “one-way” streets.	MN-DOT	Unknown
3-G	When Central Entrance is reconstructed, pursue a “context sensitive solution” as identified in the Institute for Transportation Engineers document “Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities.” The context should be a walkable, urban thoroughfare that permits comfortable use of the street by pedestrians and transit users as well as vehicles.	MN-DOT	Unknown
3-H	Encourage site designs that limit curb cuts on Central Entrance, where possible, through requiring shared driveways and only allow “right-in, right-out” driveways where necessary.	City Planning Division/ Planning Com- mission	On-going
3-I-1	When the area on the south side of Central Entrance between Home Depot and Anderson Road redevelop, explore the possibility of creating a “backage road” to connect Anderson Road and Mall Drive (near Home Depot). This street should be designed for pedestrian and bicycle travel in addition to autos and it should be signed as a bike route.	City Planning require dedica- tion of ROW when developed/ City Engineering on street design	When redevelop- ment occurs



# Transportation Recommendations continued

Recommendation Reference	Plan Recommendations	Entity Proposed to Implement	Timeline for Implementation
3-I-2	Extend Palm Street west of Robin Avenue to intersect with Anderson Road and close Robin Avenue access to Central Entrance to vehicular traffic. Design this street extension to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel. This should be done in conjunction with the redevelopment of the area along Anderson Road. The bike route that diverts to Orange Street should be relocated to this new street.	City Planning require dedication of ROW when developed/ City Engineering review on street design	As redevelopment occurs
3-I-3	Plan to have Palm Street west of Arlington Avenue function as a “backage road” providing circulation for the redeveloped sites along Central Entrance. This street should be designed to serve bicycles and pedestrians.	City Engineering Division	When Palm Street is reconstructed
3-I-4	Create a “right-in, right-out” intersection at Ebony Avenue, as necessary for development, including signalization of a full intersection (when warranted) to allow for better vehicle circulation to sites on both sides of Central Entrance and to provide another crossing point for pedestrians and bicycles. A median at the intersection will also allow a pedestrian refuge.	MN-DOT/City Engineering Division	When warranted and funding is available
3-I-5	Create a “right-in, right-out” intersection at Harding Avenue, as necessary for development, including signalization of a full intersection (when warranted) to allow for better vehicle circulation to sites south of Central Entrance and to provide another crossing point for pedestrians and bicycles. A median at the intersection will also allow a pedestrian refuge.	MN-DOT/City Engineering Division	When warranted and funding is available
4-B	When streets are reconstructed look for opportunities to include space for trees and other vegetation that will shade pavement.	MN-DOT/ County Public Works/ City Engineering	When streets are reconstructed
4-C	Create a pedestrian trail along Miller Creek south of the mall.	City Planning acquire easement when development occurs/City Parks	On-going

Recom- mendation Reference	Plan Recommendations	Entity Proposed to Implement	Timeline for Implementation
5-B	Given the right of way constrictions on Central Entrance and the existing signed bike route on Palm Street, a bike lane on Central Entrance may not be necessary.	Metropolitan Interstate Council/City Engineering	When bike route plan is updated
5-C	Sidewalks must be provided on both sides of all bus routes in the study area in order to accommodate transit users accessing and departing buses.	MN-DOT/ County Public Works/City Engineering	On-going
5-D	Acquire additional right of way in strategic locations where bus shelters are needed.	City Planning during site redevelopment	On-going
6-F	Install and maintain landscaping in medians on Central Entrance and Maple Grove Road in order to reduce the amount of hard surfaces and to “soften” the environment.	Business improvement district	As funding becomes available
6-G	Construct and maintain additional plantings in strategic locations throughout the study area.	Business improvement district	As funding becomes available

