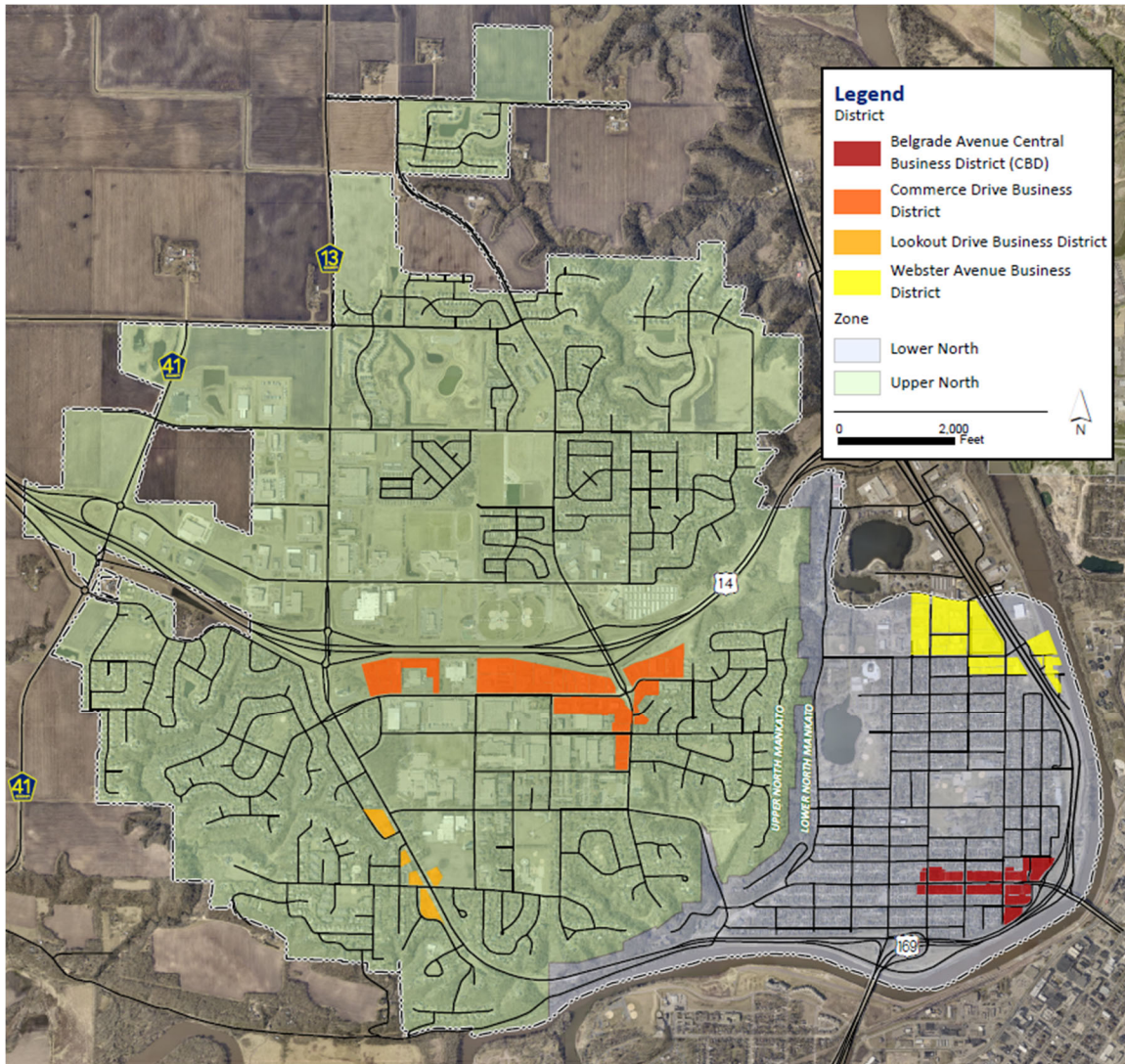


# Chapter 9: Business District Redevelopment

## INTRODUCTION

The City of North Mankato has several business districts in the community as depicted in **Figure 9-1**. While all districts provide important retail and service amenities for residents and visitors, the most prominent are the Central Business District (CBD), or downtown, and the Commerce Drive Business District. These business districts provide the main locations for retail and service amenities in Lower and Upper North Mankato respectively.



**Figure 9-1. North Mankato Business District.**

The initial 2015 Comprehensive Plan provided a chapter on Downtown Redevelopment, looking only at the CBD and efforts completed to strengthen and guide that location. However, all business districts require planning and have been added to this discussion.

This chapter discusses redevelopment/revitalization opportunities for each district. It also considers locations where future business districts are anticipated to grow in the future.

## CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD)

North Mankato's CBD is a vital community asset with combined elements of a traditional, historic downtown and some more modern architecture. The CBD is in the southeast part of the City along Belgrade Avenue extending from Highway 169 to properties on the west side of Center Street. Belgrade Avenue has been a key commercial corridor within the City for many years. There are numerous established businesses that serve the commercial needs of area residents, as well as a variety of housing densities. The higher density nature of the CBD provides for a more naturally walkable environment by having numerous residents and businesses within close proximity. The CBD serves as a gathering place for annual community events such as Blues on Belgrade, Bier on Belgrade, Bells on Belgrade, Oktoberfest, and the CityArt Walking Sculpture Tour among others.



**Figure 9-2. 200 Block of Belgrade Avenue in the Central Business District.**

As a major gateway to North Mankato, Belgrade Avenue provides visitors with a first impression of the community. Therefore, a healthy downtown is critical for developing a successful image of the city, as well as a strong sense of place. The future downtown should be memorable, vibrant, attractive and welcoming to pedestrians.

### Previous Planning for the CBD

There has been significant redevelopment in the CBD since the adoption of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan undoubtedly spurred by the Plan and subsequent planning efforts focused on downtown redevelopment and revitalization and traffic improvements. Through these efforts, the City can confirm that North Mankato residents share a vision for a memorable, vibrant, attractive, and welcoming downtown as mentioned. The City will need to revise and update these plans as redevelopment/revitalization takes place in the CBD.

The ideas expressed in this chapter apply to the area identified on **Figure 3-2: Future Land Use Map** designated as the Central Business District.

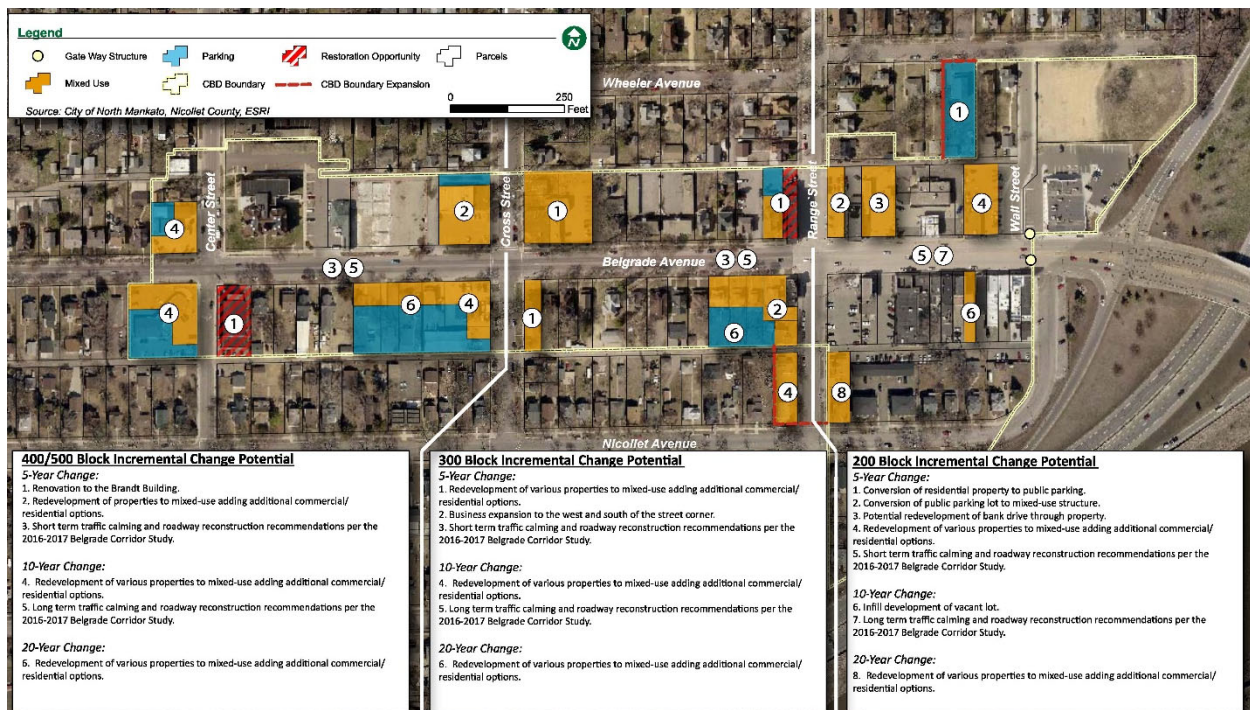


### A. Downtown Planning Study (2012)

This Plan provided a vision for downtown and a framework for the future buildout of the CBD, offering design concepts, façade and streetscape improvements, and parking enhancements. This Plan provided a beginning framework for the Belgrade Avenue Master Plan.

### B. Belgrade Avenue Master Plan (2016)

The Belgrade Avenue Master Plan process examined major issues and themes occurring in the CBD and also provided a 5-, 10-, and 20-year outlook for redevelopment/revitalization along the corridor. Design guidelines were also part of the Belgrade Avenue Master Plan process. This updated Comprehensive Plan aims to emphasize the themes that evolved from that Plan and other public processes completed for the downtown (**Figure 9-3**).



**Figure 9-3. CBD Implementation Plan for 5, 10, and 20 years referenced from the Belgrade Avenue Master Plan (2016).**

### C. Belgrade Avenue Corridor Study (2017)

The City of North Mankato and the Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO), in partnership with MnDOT, completed the Belgrade Avenue Corridor Study to identify a long-term vision for Belgrade Avenue including initial and long-term recommendations for changes to the transportation infrastructure. The City continues to explore options for implementing improvement recommendations from that plan.

### D. Public Art Ideas Plan (2017)

This Plan provides a public ideas bank that can be used by the City as a guide to integrate public art into downtown planning initiatives. This Plan defines policy and procedure around current public art projects and assets.

### **CBD Existing Conditions**

The CBD is mostly one- and two-story buildings, many of which date back to the early part of the 20th century which are in various states of physical condition. Some can accommodate modern uses while others remain vacant and may require redevelopment and/or revitalization to enhance commercial and residential presence of the CBD. Several modern buildings are also mixed within. The downtown currently has a very healthy mixture of neighborhood serving uses including restaurants, drinking establishments, offices, retail stores, service businesses, and both single- and multi-family residential uses.

The 200 block of Belgrade Avenue contains the highest concentration of businesses and is predominantly commercial on both sides of the street, although upper levels of some buildings are used as apartments. The 300 and 400 blocks contain more single-family homes, apartments, and some larger commercial uses. As the CBD has grown, numerous single-family homes along Belgrade Avenue have been converted for commercial use.

The development pattern and many of the existing buildings provide a sense of community, which residents value. Most buildings are built close to the street or sidewalk and have parking located in the rear or side of the building. Throughout the downtown sidewalks are provided on both sides of the street. These qualities contribute to making the downtown pedestrian friendly and could be incorporated in new development to maintain the existing downtown character. Some existing characteristics such as large storefront windows, awnings, facade details and unique signage also contribute to an engaging pedestrian atmosphere.

### **Key Issues and Opportunities**

The following provides an overview of the key issues and opportunities pertaining to the CBD.

#### **A. Attractive Pedestrian Realm**

An attractive, safe, and walkable downtown is a key element for any community and is desired by residents in North Mankato. Elements of an inviting downtown include various streetscape features such as boulevard trees and plantings, outdoor seating and gathering areas, plazas, signage, fountains, decorative lighting, wide sidewalks, safe pedestrian crossings, sidewalk pavers, and other pedestrian amenities. Planning efforts such as the Belgrade Avenue Master Plan, Belgrade Avenue Corridor Study, and Public Art Ideas Plan provide streetscape design and art recommendations that can be implemented.

Where possible in the CBD, sidewalks should be widened to accommodate pedestrian flow. The sidewalk should be kept free of potential barriers such as utility poles or street signs. Through previous planning efforts, residents have stated that pedestrian crossing of Belgrade Avenue are seen as lacking or unsafe, specifically in the 200 Block. The Belgrade Avenue Corridor Study considered options for lane reduction in the 200 Block of Belgrade in the CBD from four lanes to three with a center turn lane and mid-block crossing. This type of improvement has potential to improve pedestrian movement and increase safety along and across Belgrade Avenue in the heart of the CBD. The City continues to explore options for lane-reduction based on this planning effort.

The City should continue to work with businesses in the CBD and future developers to encourage attractive storefronts, ground level facades, and appropriate public art pieces that attract and engage pedestrians. Design guidelines were developed through the Belgrade Avenue Master Plan that have given the City a tool to encourage attractive and cohesive development in the CBD, a trend that should continue. The City should also continue to work with property owners of older buildings to ensure their upkeep and prevent any deterioration.

Belgrade Avenue is a major gateway into the community that provides a first impression to visitors. Therefore, the importance of the appearance and impression of Belgrade Avenue should not be understated. An attractive and unified public realm can enhance the branding for North Mankato, making it memorable and reflecting a positive image for the City.

#### **B. Business Mix**

The CBD provides area residents with a variety of businesses that serve many daily needs. This is desirable and allows residents the opportunity to meet different commercial needs near one another. It is also desired that new businesses will locate in the CBD to increase the area's draw, including both neighborhood serving and destination type businesses. Making the downtown desirable to potential businesses will depend on several factors, including zoning, upkeep and appearance of surrounding buildings and the streetscape, and available parking, which are all addressed in this chapter and other portions of this plan.

The physical state or conditions of some buildings in the downtown may result in those buildings no longer being desirable to potential commercial tenants. The City will need to continue to explore where redevelopment should occur by updating planning efforts such as the Belgrade Avenue Master Plan. For cases of redevelopment, mixed use buildings are encouraged to support an increase in the downtown residential population, while also providing additional commercial opportunities; however, standalone residential or commercial uses are also supported. Older buildings that are in good condition and remain desirable for commercial use should be preserved to maintain some of the historic feel to the downtown.

The 200 Block of Belgrade tends to be the focus of most developer interest. This is likely due to its characteristics as a more traditional "Main Street" downtown with buildings fronting the street and density of businesses. However, residents have expressed a desire for some redevelopment to be focused on the 300, 400, and 500 Blocks of Belgrade throughout the extent of the CBD. The City should encourage such redevelopment as stated in the Belgrade Avenue Master Plan moving forward.

As the economy changes and new types of businesses are created, it is important to review existing zoning standards and regularly update the zoning code. The list of permitted and conditional uses should be updated to include any desirable uses that may not currently be permitted. In addition, the list of performance standards should be regularly reviewed to ensure that businesses are not unnecessarily constrained by zoning requirements. An up-to-date zoning code can have a significant impact on the development potential of a community.



### C. Parking

Development patterns typical of most downtowns tend to provide mixed opinions about the availability of parking. In many downtowns, it is typical to incorporate a variety of different parking strategies to achieve an adequate supply of parking such as on-street parking, shared parking and municipal lots. Several businesses currently have parking in the rear or side of their property. On-street parking is currently allowed along most of Belgrade Avenue throughout the downtown, with the exception of the north side of the 200 block.

CBD planning studies have found that, although there is a perceived shortage of parking, the supply is generally sufficient for the existing uses during most times of the day. However, some of the available parking may be perceived as inconvenient and may lack visibility. Improved way-finding signage could help visitors and residents make better use of the existing parking supply.

Parking supply will need to increase as new businesses and residential units are added. This will likely occur through a combination of parking provided on-site, on-street parking and shared parking lots. The City has purchased and converted several lots to public parking and has plans for expansion as the need arises.

However, as the downtown grows and new businesses and residential units are added, the parking supply will also need to increase. The City should look to identify property that could be developed for future parking lots specifically designated for downtown businesses.



#### Vision for the CBD

The North Mankato Central Business District is a growing and safe district characterized by cohesive architectural design, pedestrian friendly streetscapes, and new destinations all contributing to a beautiful, thriving, and inviting area serving as the core for community convention.

## COMMERCE DRIVE BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Commerce Drive Business District provides a key retail and service district for residents in Upper North Mankato. With commercial and industrial development beginning around Commerce Drive in the 1970's, the Commerce Drive Business District differs from the CBD in Lower North. Where portions of the CBD have characteristics of a traditional downtown with dense structures in a mostly walkable environment, Commerce Drive has been developed to be more auto oriented with large lots and ample parking. The District is also not designated in the City's Zoning Map or land use map as a special or "Central" business district like the CBD. Nonetheless, it serves that role for Upper North Mankato.



Figure 9-4. Commerce Drive Business District.

### Previous Planning for the Commerce Drive Business District

#### A. Commerce Drive Area Development Plan (2018)

The Commerce Drive Area Development Plan was developed as a precursor to the 2019-20 resurfacing of Commerce Drive. This improvement provided an opportunity for the City to rethink the streetscape and implement improvements that promote vehicle and pedestrian safety and area beautification. Through the Commerce Drive Area Development Plan, residents expressed the desire to re-envision this core business district as a community destination with an enhanced business presence, improved transportation facilities, and enhanced area design.

The Plan succeeded in laying the framework for many initiatives that were completed in concurrence with the resurfacing project including conversion of a narrow sidewalk to a multi-use path, property access re-alignment for improved traffic flow, safer pedestrian crossings, and seating nodes infused with public art. This Plan also recommends redevelopment alternatives that could be considered in the future as opportunities arise.

Another Plan initiative included the encouragement of businesses to develop a business association. The Connecting Commerce Business Association was created shortly after the planning process and has brought together businesses to host area events and provide customer incentives that benefit and strengthen the district as a destination.

### B. Highway 14 Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study (2022)

This study focused on developing alternatives for a safe and efficient pedestrian crossing of U.S. Highway 14 in upper North Mankato. The study was developed from guidance and collaboration between the MAPO, the City of North Mankato, and MnDOT. The study team looked at previous planning efforts associated with enhancing multimodal opportunities in upper North Mankato to gauge what's been done and understand needs and concerns of the public.

### Commerce Drive Business District Existing Conditions

The Commerce Drive Business District is located on the eastern end of Commerce Drive surrounding its intersection with Lor Ray Drive. It includes a mix of area serving retail amenities including a drug store, various restaurant type establishments, two gas stations, a hotel, banks, two gas station/convenience stores, and a lumber yard, among other businesses.

New businesses have come to the area in the past few years, strengthening the district's commercial offerings including new restaurants and coffee shops. Properties seen as not serving their highest and best use have been recently redeveloped, which were identified as opportunities in previous planning efforts. The City should continue to look for redevelopment opportunities in the future as properties come up for sale and redevelopment recommendations identified in previous planning efforts can be revisited and potentially implemented.

### Key Issues and Opportunities

The following provides an overview of the key issues and opportunities pertaining to the Commerce Drive Business District.

#### A. Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections

Improvements stemming from the Commerce Drive Area Development Plan have improved pedestrian safety and area connections. This includes the multi-use sidewalk on the south side of the roadway and improved pedestrian crossings stemming from the Plan and implemented through the resurfacing project in 2019-2020. The new trail addition connects to the Bluff Valley Trail in the northeast quadrant of the Commerce Drive/Lor Ray Drive intersection, trail and sidewalk on Lookout Drive, and area on-street facilities.

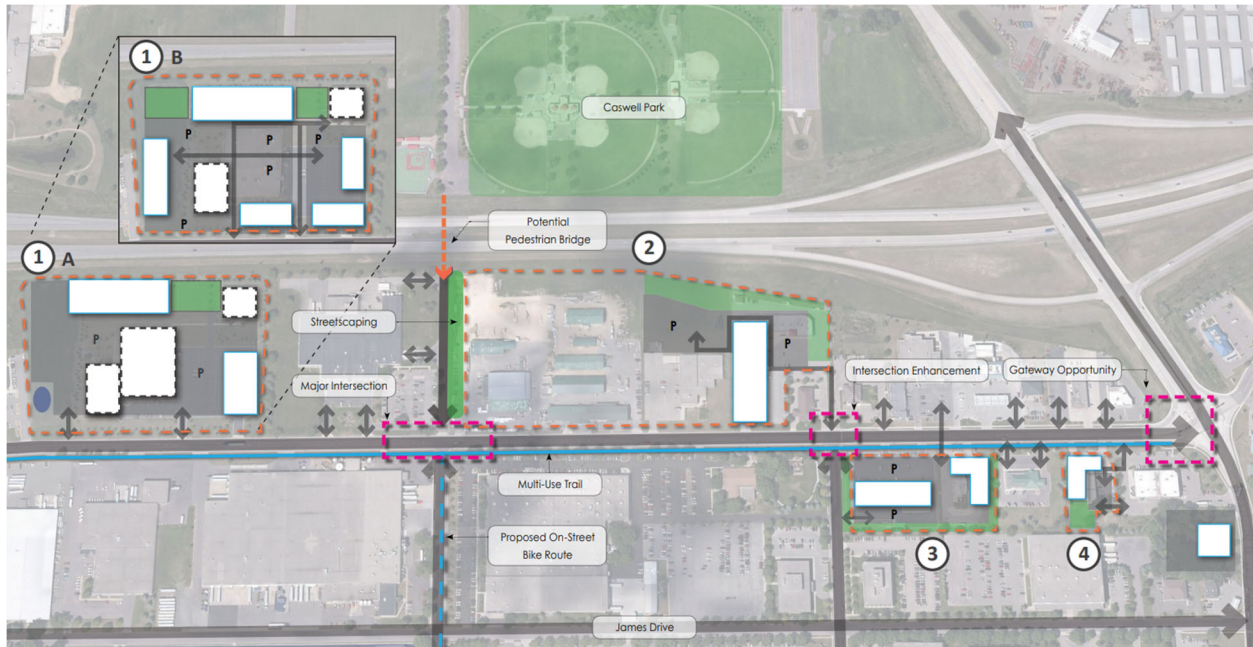
The City may consider constructing a pedestrian bridge over Highway 14 to enhance the connection from Commerce Drive to the Caswell Sports Complex where many regional softball tournaments are held. There are also plans for an indoor recreational facility that will serve the area at the Complex. This bridge will provide a needed north/south pedestrian/bicycle connection in Upper North Mankato. The City should continue to seek funding to implement this connection.

#### B. Redevelopment Opportunities

The Commerce Drive Area Development Plan recognizes that all the businesses currently located along Commerce Drive are valued contributors to the local economy and overall corridor vitality. It is anticipated, however, that there will be changes over time that create additional opportunities for redevelopment that could increase the potential for additional retail uses to locate in the district. After significant discussion with property owners, a conceptual



redevelopment vision was created and included in the Plan. The City should revisit Plan initiatives and keep open dialog with property owners to continue to guide the district.



**Figure 9-5. Commerce Drive Improvements Conceptual Plan. Source: Commerce Drive Area Development Plan (2018).**

#### C. Housing

The Commerce Drive Business District borders higher-density housing east of Lor Ray Drive. However, there is currently no housing among the businesses in the district. The Commerce Drive Area Development Plan identifies goals for incorporating housing options in mixed-use redevelopment along with targeting more commercial uses to serve potential residents. The City should revisit these goals as redevelopment opportunities present themselves in the future.

#### D. Area Design

Commerce Drive is often viewed as an area lacking design consistency. Participants in the visioning process for the Commerce Drive Area Development Plan expressed that the corridor could offer much more than it does today and asked what options exist to enhance buildings and the streetscape. Commerce Drive is not a downtown “Main Street” environment and wasn’t planned to be, given the aforementioned “auto-oriented” design with large lots with ample parking and on-site vehicle circulation. However, residents would like to improve the character of the corridor by creating a more cohesive, themed design. The streetscape has improved significantly since the 2019 resurfacing project; however the City should consider methods for encouraging private investment in the business facades in the district and design guidance for any new buildings constructed through redevelopment.

### Vision for Commerce Drive Business District Redevelopment

The Commerce Drive Business District is a growing and diverse community destination supporting many uses that provide livability for area residents and a major employment sector for North Mankato’s workforce, while also providing a safe and efficient vehicle and pedestrian environment including connections to area recreation facilities.

## WEBSTER AVENUE BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Webster Avenue Business District includes businesses surrounding the intersection of Webster Avenue with Highway 169. This is a much smaller business district with limited existing amenities. However, it does have significant potential for future redevelopment given its proximity to the highway, regional recreation amenities, and major redevelopment occurring just to the north in Mankato, along with its position as one of the major gateways into North Mankato.

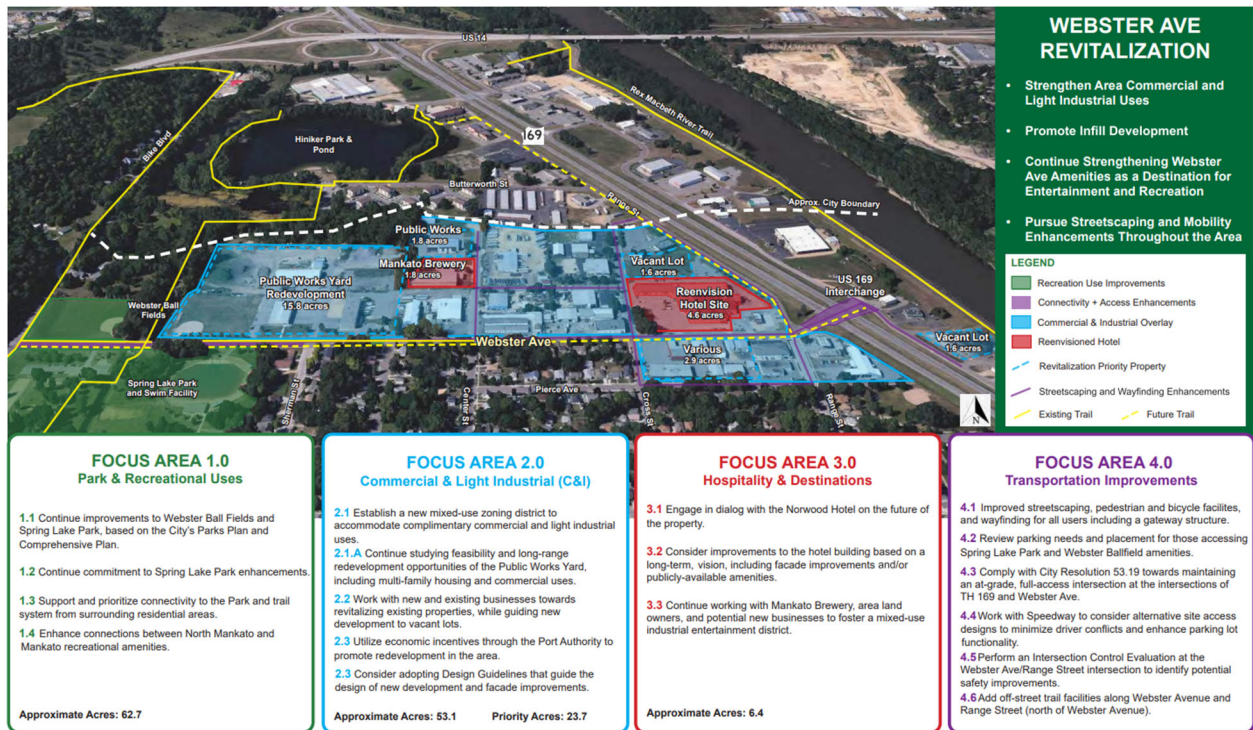


Figure 9-6. Webster Avenue Revitalization Plan. Source: Webster Avenue Area Plan (2021).

### Previous Planning for the Webster Avenue Business District

#### A. Webster Avenue Area Plan (2021)

The Webster Avenue Area Plan was developed to supplement the Highway 169 Corridor Study being undertaken by the MAPO and its partners. The study examined land uses surrounding Webster Avenue and identified redevelopment and revitalization opportunities while defining a shared vision for the area.

#### B. Highway 169 Corridor Study (2022)

This study was undertaken by the MAPO and its partners in conjunction with MnDOT who examined Highway 169 traffic and developed improvement options. The ultimate recommendations from the study support the continuation of the Webster Avenue/Highway 169 intersection as an “at-grade”, full access intersection. The findings removed uncertainties surrounding the future of the intersection and the future of businesses relying on the access to the highway. This assurance has high potential to spur redevelopment.

## Webster Avenue Business District Existing Conditions

The Webster Avenue Business District's proximity to a major highway interchange combined with its access to downtown North Mankato makes this a prime location for businesses. The small business district extends both east and west of Highway 169. West of the highway uses include small-scale commercial, a restaurant, a gas station, a liquor store, and a hotel adjacent to light industrial uses that are oriented heavily around trucking, shipping, and vehicle repairs. Present commercial uses provide some services to the low-density single-family residential neighborhood in Lower North Mankato. East of the highway uses include some restaurant type uses, and car sales. Both east and west have vacant properties.

## Key Issues and Opportunities

The following provides an overview of the key issues and opportunities pertaining to redevelopment opportunities in the Webster Avenue Business District.

### A. The Norwood Inn (former Best Western Hotel)

At the time of this Comprehensive Plan update, the structure formally known as the Norwood Inn (previously Best Western) was under the ownership of the North Mankato Port Authority. The City was leasing the facility to HyLife Foods; owners of a pork processing plant in Windom, MN who used the facility to house migrant workers. The City took ownership of the hotel and entered into a two-year agreement with the company after previous ownership allowed the building to go into disrepair. This was a strategic move by the City to remove previous ownership and use the two-year timeframe to formulate a strategy for the structure moving forward.

This location is the most prominent site in the district with high visibility from the highway and significant space onsite. The structure functioned quite well in the past as a Best Western, offering a good hospitality experience, a popular function hall, and pool facility used not only by visitors, but area residents alike. The building will need significant renovation to bring it back to that level of functional state.

The property just north of this was also vacant at the time of this Plan update. A market analysis completed as part of the Webster Avenue Area Plan included the results of interviews with developers asking if they had interest in the locations as redevelopment opportunities. Many stated that the uncertainty of the future of the Webster Avenue intersection was a barrier to investment in the properties and that, once removed, the area would be more appealing for long-term redevelopment decisions.

Since the adoption of both the Webster Avenue Area Plan and the Highway 169 Corridor Study, the City has been speaking with interested developers to gauge interest in redevelopment at this location. The City should continue to actively pursue redevelopment of this location, or refranchising of the hotel, and consider offering incentives to developers to build interest.

### B. Vacant Properties

As mentioned, the property north of the Norwood Inn was vacant at the time of this Plan update. If the hotel is refranchised and this property is not included in a larger redevelopment project, the City should continue to actively seek interested developers to develop.

One other property located on the east side of Highway 169 remains vacant after containing a



landscaping company for some years. This is also an opportunity for future development that the City should steer development toward.

**C. Area Design and Revitalization**

Many participants in the public process for the Webster Avenue Area Plan stated that the structures in the Webster Avenue Business District could benefit highly from revitalization as many are lacking cohesive architectural design and desirable aesthetics. To grow its tax base and promote infill development, the city should coordinate opportunities for revitalizing existing buildings, look for incentives, and attract new commercial businesses along Webster Avenue.

**Vision for Webster Avenue Business District Redevelopment**

The Webster Avenue Business District contains a variety of businesses that serve the needs of local residents and visitors with retail and hospitality amenities.

## **LOOKOUT DRIVE BUSINESS DISTRICT**

The Lookout Drive Business District is located primarily at the intersection of Lookout Drive and Marie Lane in Upper North Mankato. This is a small district, and, like the Commerce Drive and Webster Avenue business districts, there is no special zoning designation delineating the district. This area is centrally located along Lookout Drive with no immediate access to a major highway. However, there is anticipated growth near this location and plans that provide a revisioning of how Lookout Drive serves the community. These factors may influence the future of this district.

**Previous Planning for the Commerce Drive Business District**

**A. Lookout Drive Area Plan (2022)**

The Lookout Drive Area Plan was completed in conjunction with the Lookout Drive Corridor Study to inform future roadway improvements. Area businesses and residents were engaged to help develop a vision for future area development.

**B. Lookout Drive Corridor Study (2022)**

This study was undertaken by the MAPO and its partners who examined Lookout Drive traffic and developed alternative options for lane configuration and intersection control with a focus on improved pedestrian movements along and across Lookout Drive. Study recommendations serve as guidance for the City to effectively plan for the future of the roadway as needs and opportunities arise with any development/redevelopment.

**Lookout Drive Business District Existing Conditions**

The Lookout Drive Business District includes a gas station/convenience store, some financial planning businesses, an auto repair shop, a dentist, a health clinic, a laundromat, and a clothing apparel store. The district is in close proximity to a substantial number of low- and medium-density residential neighborhoods as well as the South Central College Campus and the Hoover Elementary School. This is an auto-oriented district on a five-lane roadway; this is not a walkable business district environment.

**Key Issues and Opportunities**

The following provides an overview of the key issues and opportunities pertaining to redevelopment opportunities in the Lookout Drive Business District.

#### A. Development of Vacant Properties

There are two large vacant properties in the northeast quadrant of the intersection. The southernmost is zoned *R-4 Multiple Dwelling* and the northern is zoned *I-1 Planned Industrial*. South Central College is also nearby. The possibility of new multi-family residential uses occupying the area may open up opportunities for increased retail and service amenities in a mixed-use development. The City's future land use plan (seen in **Figure 3-2**) identifies the conversion of a portion of the vacant property and residences adjacent to Lookout Drive on the east side to commercial uses in the future. The City will need to monitor development in this location to ensure it meets the vision set forth in the Lookout Drive Area Plan as opportunities arise and developers gain interest.

#### B. Redevelopment

Several houses north of the intersection of Lookout Drive and Marie Lane are guided for future commercial development. These properties are currently zoned I-1 Planned Industrial.

#### C. Walkability

The Corridor Study found that the five-lane configuration of Lookout Drive in this location is problematic for pedestrians wishing to cross the roadway. Improvements to crossings of Lookout Drive will be necessary if a walkable business district is desired in the future.

### Vision for Lookout Drive Business District Redevelopment

The Lookout Drive business district provides area serving commercial-retail amenities and innovative housing options in an area that is inviting and creatively designed.

## PLANNING FOR FUTURE BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Trends show that the City of North Mankato will continue to grow which inevitably will require careful planning for new business districts to serve newly developed areas. The City has attempted to stay ahead of this with planning efforts such as the Northwest Growth Area Study and the Future Land Use Plan seen in **Figure 3-2**. These plans suggest that commercial development is guided for much of the area surrounding the Highway 14/CSAH 41 interchange, which is a likely location given highway access.

Participants in the public process for previous planning efforts have repeatedly requested the addition of additional retail amenities in Upper North Mankato, specifically a grocery store and more hotels. A market analysis completed as part of the Northwest Growth Area Study concluded that the area could support a small grocery store currently. The City has also been able to attract a hotel in Upper North along Commerce Drive.

The City will continue to work with developers to target locations for additional amenities as opportunities arise in the future, using the findings and recommendations from previous planning efforts to guide those discussions.

## BUSINESS DISTRICT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following is a series of goals for all business districts followed by a series of objectives and policies intended to influence future land use decisions in a direction that is aligned with Vision Statements.

**GOAL 1: Expand the number and variety of businesses and residential varieties in all business districts where possible.**

**Objective 1.1:** Redevelop underutilized parcels or outdated and deteriorating buildings.

Policy 1.1.1: Work with property owners and businesses to determine which buildings are no longer well suited or marketable for commercial use to identify redevelopment areas.

Policy 1.1.2: Actively recruit and match entrepreneurial start-up businesses with underutilized buildings.

Policy 1.1.3: Pursue state and federal grants which aid in the revitalization of business districts.

Policy 1.1.4: Assess the potential for creating tax increment financing (TIF) districts to aid in business district revitalization.

Policy 1.1.5: Work with property owners and explore “outside-the-box” solutions for accommodating businesses that wish to expand their business.

Policy 1.1.6: Work with property owners that have deteriorating buildings and connect them to resources for making improvements.

**Objective 1.2:** Increase the number of businesses and residents in business districts.

Policy 1.2.1: Update market studies to determine commercial and residential needs, existing capacity and areas for growth within business districts.

Policy 1.2.2: Incorporate principles that support a “live, work, play” mentality for all business districts as applicable.

Policy 1.2.3: Identify locations for small public spaces which will attract residents and provide greater visibility for businesses.

Policy 1.2.4: Explore opportunities for new events and festivals to expand the branding of North Mankato business districts and increase awareness of businesses in each district.

Policy 1.2.5: Regularly review the list of permitted and conditional uses for business districts to ensure that an ideal mix and type of uses are allowed.

Policy 1.2.6: Review the list of performance standards for business districts and remove any standards that may unnecessarily constrain existing or potential future businesses.

Policy 1.2.7: Support the transition of residential homes to commercial uses along Belgrade Avenue and Lookout Drive.



**Objective 1.3:** Ensure adequate parking for all businesses.

Policy 1.3.1: Assess and where necessary amend the parking requirements for commercial uses in business districts.

Policy 1.3.2: Consider establishing parking districts to create a revenue source for future parking improvements.

**GOAL 2: Create a safe and inviting pedestrian realm.**

**Objective 2.1:** Improve safety for pedestrians

Policy 2.1.1: Pursue intersection improvements recommended in district-relevant plans and studies where conditions may be dangerous for pedestrians crossing the street and implement improvements at those intersections.

Policy 2.1.2: Provide adequate pedestrian facility lighting in all business districts at night.

Policy 2.1.3: Adhere to the implementation plan identified in the North Mankato Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan for the removal of obstructive barriers from the pedestrian realm.

Policy 2.1.4: Incorporate wide sidewalks where possible.

**Objective 2.2:** Improve the appearance of the streetscape and façades in business districts.

Policy 2.2.1: Implement streetscape policies consistent with the improvements called for in district-relevant plans and studies.

Policy 2.2.2: Encourage and work with businesses to allow them to place items in the pedestrian realm that enhance their storefronts such as planter boxes, seating, public art, sandwich board signs, etc.

Policy 2.2.3: Using district-relevant Design Guidelines, encourage façade characteristics that enhance the pedestrian realm such as large storefront windows, awnings, architectural detail at the ground level, and interesting signage.

Policy 2.2.4: Develop a streetscape plan to promote a positive and unified image for business districts to meet their respective Vision Statements.

Policy 2.2.5: Consider implementing design standards for business districts outside of the CBD.

**Objective 2.3:** Pursue key trail construction that will connect businesses districts to other destinations in the community.

Policy 2.3.1: Secure funding from local, state, and federal sources to construct trail facilities that will bring pedestrians and bicyclists to North Mankato business districts such as the Highway 14 from Commerce Drive to the Caswell Sports Complex and/or a grade-separated pedestrian/bicycle crossing of Highway 169 from Webster Avenue to the Minnesota River.

**GOAL 3: Ensure smart and effective small-area planning continues for new business districts in North Mankato.**

**Objective 3.1:** Proactively plan for new business districts as development occurs in North Mankato growth areas.

Policy 3.1.1: Develop small area plans to guide new business district development in ways that avoid issues identified in previous planning initiatives.

Policy 3.1.2: Ensure roadways are effectively planned for a walkable environment in new business districts moving forward.