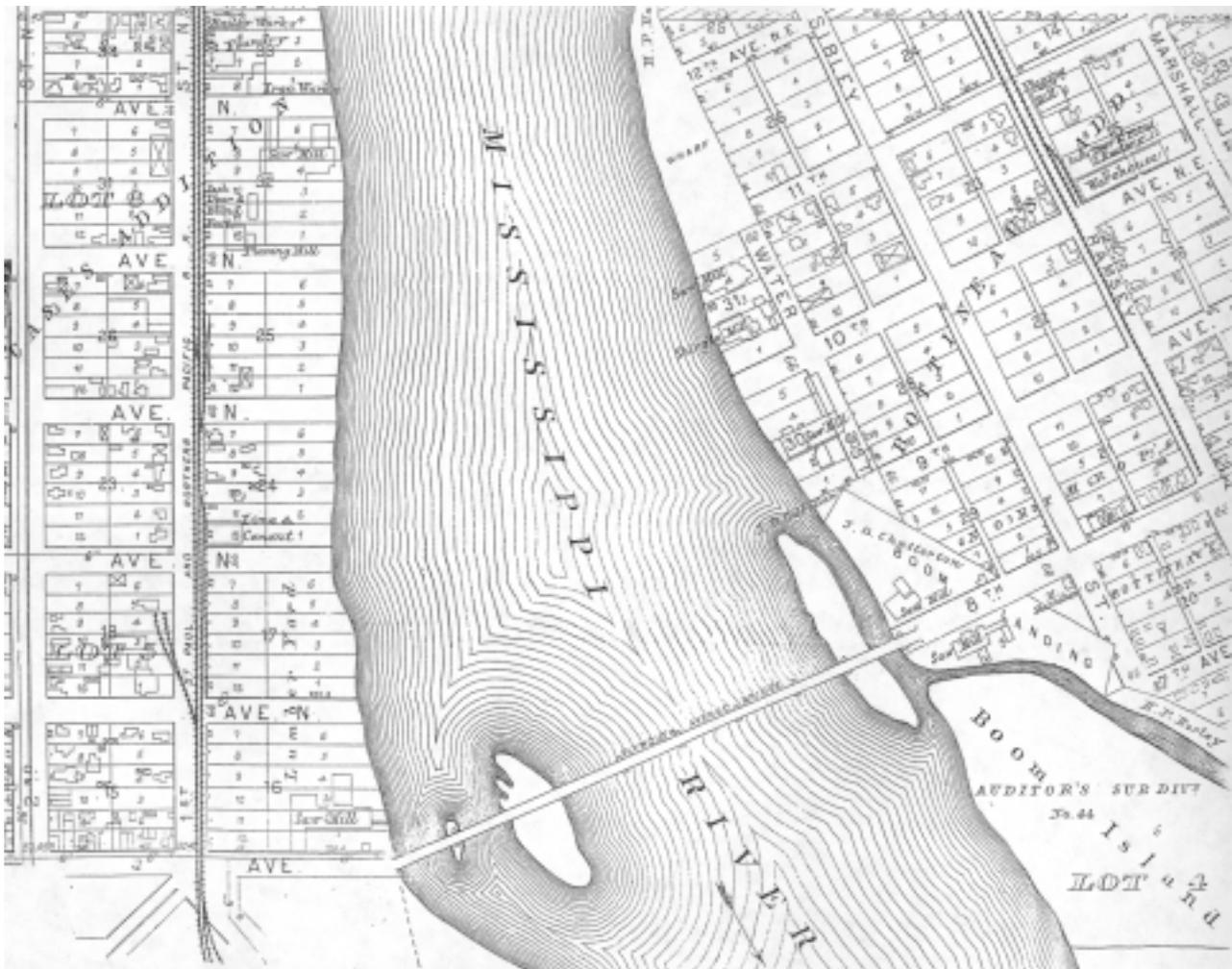


Land Use Plan

The Upper River Master Plan proposes a fundamental shift in public policy regarding land use along the Mississippi River north of the Plymouth Bridge. The Plan breaks with the conception of the river as a place for heavy industry, and embraces a new vision of the riverfront as a public amenity that will stabilize existing neighborhoods and act as a catalyst for new residential and business development. The Land Use Plan meets the planning objectives established for the corridor, including continuous public open space along both banks of the river, areas for new housing and commercial use, and light-industrial zones with increased employment densities. Implementation of the Land Use Plan will produce significant benefits for the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and the region.

A Fourth Era of land use

Since the time of the first introduction of steam-powered lumber mills and railroads to the area above St. Anthony Falls, land use along the Upper River has been in a relative state of flux compared to many other areas of the City of Minneapolis. A concentration on resource processing industries, such as sawmills, brick making, foundries, and breweries, led to the first large-scale land-use pattern of industry along both banks, with the boom leading inevitably to bust.



1892 Atlas

“Increasingly, sawmilling was centered along the river, from Boom Island north to the Northern Pacific Railroad bridge near 26th Avenue North—a mile-and-a-half long, unbroken strip of sawmills and lumber yards on the west side of the river, and a shorter but deeper belt on the opposite shore.”

– Dick Heath, “Minneapolis Growth and City Form”

A second phase of uses slowly filled the vacuum created when large parcels became vacant after the decline of lumber. As one historian has described it: “The once-active milling district along the north river reverted to vacant land, railroad yards or new open storage industry, and junkyards” (Heath). In 1912 an electric power plant was constructed on the Upper River, NSP’s Riverside plant, which took advantage not only of the river water and railroad access, but also available land for storing coal. Public policy to construct the Minneapolis locks and Upper Harbor Terminal reinforced a pattern of land use dominated by low-job-density, bulk-material-handling industries.

Yet, as is the case with large-scale change over decades of time, the current third era of land use, during which portions of the riverfront have been transformed to parks and light industry, overlaps with the period dominated by open storage of

materials. For instance, in 1966 the defunct Gluek Brewery was demolished and the site converted to a riverfront park by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Likewise, City policy directs the MCDA to promote the development of job-intense light industries out of areas abandoned by scrap metal operations in the North Washington Industrial Park, with West River Road as an example. The Upper River Master Plan proposes to extrapolate this third period of change, to a fourth, and more stable, era of land use along the Upper River.

Implementation of the objectives that mark the third phase of land use will proceed with the creation of riverfront parks, and redevelopment of parcels for light industries. However, a thorough investigation of the potential of land adjacent to new riverfront parks has led to the development of a Land Use Plan that seeks a much richer pattern

of land use along the river’s banks, including the establishment of new residential areas on the west bank, the creation of new urban riverfront hospitality destinations, business parks for professional offices, and new commercial nodes.

This recommended Land Use Plan can be conceived as the fourth era of land-use transformation, with the resulting development recognizing and celebrating the true potential of the Mississippi in Minneapolis. The introduction of new residential land uses on the west bank will stabilize the area from the boom and bust cycle of industries subject to the effects of global markets. A larger constituency will be created to promote the betterment of the Upper River area, including protection of the river’s water quality and riverbank ecology, as well as other community development goals.



Aerial photo from 1947 shows that a railroad yard replaced lumberyards and saw mills north of Plymouth Ave. along the riverfront. Scrap metal yards line 2nd St. N. Following abandonment of the railroad yard, development of West River Road brought the current light industry and open space to this land.

Brownfields over sprawl

The Land Use Plan promotes the concept of redeveloping a large portion of north Minneapolis from heavy industrial use, to a new riverfront community proximate to downtown. This transformation from a brownfield condition will have positive effects for the ecology of the riverfront and further goals to promote and grow the city. Real benefits will also accrue to the region by creating a more vibrant central city and slowing sprawl at the urban fringe by assembling land for construction of new residential units within easy reach of the central business district. Access to the downtown via shuttle transit service and commuter bicycle routes will preclude thousands of commuter trips on congested roadways.

Residential

The Upper River Land Use Plan proposes that substantial portions of the west bank be transitioned to residential use. Including the Planned Unit Development area south of Lowry and the Middle Density Residential area north of Lowry, approximately 90 acres will be made available for the construction of at least 2,500 new housing units. Fronting on new riverfront parks and a riverfront promenade, this new residential zone ensures a high level of use in the parks, thereby making them more secure and lively places. In addition, residential uses will support new commercial development included in the Plan by bringing increased buying power to north and northeast Minneapolis. A relationship is also expected between new residents and business starts in the area, especially entrepreneurs based in units designed for living and work.

Models for the west bank

The proposed patterns and densities of land use on the west bank can be conceived as both an extension of downtown up West River Parkway, and the advance of Camden to the riverfront. The 90 acres for residential are net acres, calculated after subtracting a percentage for public right of way; therefore the overall proposed residential density is between 25 to 30 dwelling units per acres. The Plan calls for the area south of Lowry to be higher than this average density, allowing lower densities north of Lowry, while still reaching the 2,500 unit goal. The relationship between floor-to-area ratio, building height, and ground plane open space is another consideration for all areas of new development. Taller structures can be constructed in selected areas with site plans that provide more open space on the ground level.

The proposed density of development along the river south of Lowry is very comparable to other neighborhoods surrounding the central business district, such as Stevens Square and Loring Park. The residential aspects of the proposed Planned Unit Development, at a recommended density approaching 50 dwelling units per acre, is very similar to the Loring Greenway development undertaken by the City and private investors during the 1970s and 1980s. A mix of mid- and high-rise housing surrounds the central greenway of a water

filtration park, with the added amenities of a new parkway and views of the Mississippi River. The highest density portion, south of 26th Ave., is comparable to the Riverplace apartments and condominiums.



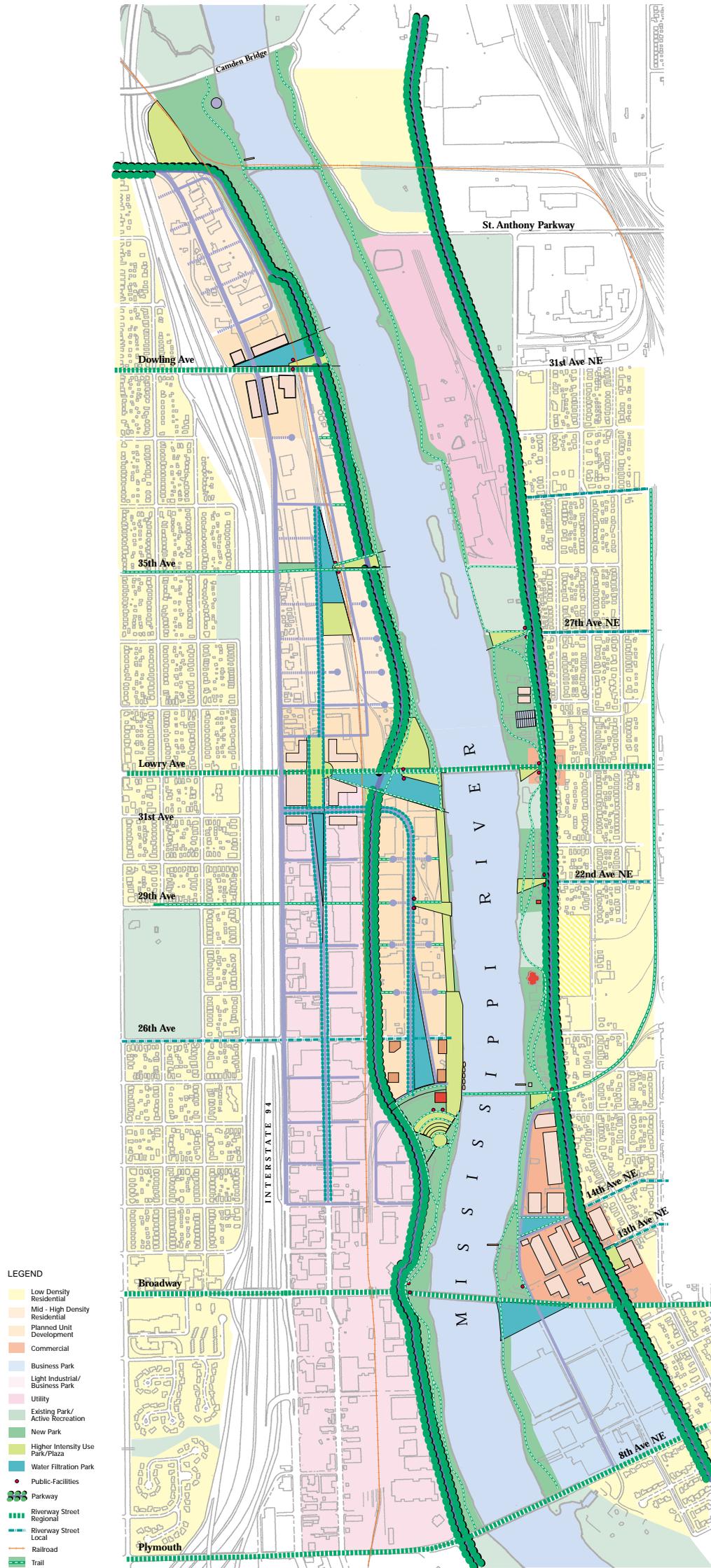
Loring Greenway

North of Lowry the new Mid Density residential neighborhood has a close relationship to the Camden community, just across the interstate. In fact, the Land Use Plan proposes to complete the work of connecting Camden to the riverfront begun with North Mississippi Regional Park. The inclusion of a substantial area for new housing construction will provide move-up housing for Camden residents, and other residents of the city and inner-ring suburbs, which is not currently available. Projects such as the Humboldt Greenway in far north Minneapolis are proving that the market will respond if redevelopment areas and amenities are provided. The new neighborhood will also attract some high-end units at townhouse densities similar to Sawmill Run and midrange, stacked townhouses like those at River Station, both projects filling up the last available land near the riverfront just south of Plymouth Ave.



River Station

Upper River Land Use Plan



Residential on the east bank

The Land Use Plan assumes that patterns and densities of residential use on the east bank will remain basically the same, with the exception of removing a small number of single-family detached and apartment units on the west side of Marshall St., and the potential redevelopment of the Tenneco Packaging site on the east side of Marshall opposite Gluek Park. Once a continuous park is created to the west of Marshall, the market and private owners may be encouraged to redevelop some properties on the east side.

The Tenneco site has potential because of its size, location between adjacent residential units, and the possibility for creating a master planned development that also includes a greenway connection from the riverfront to Bottineau Park. At a townhouse density averaging 15 units per acre, this 19-acre site could be developed to 285 units of new housing in northeast Minneapolis. As a low priority for public action, this potential land-use change is not included in the new residential count of 2,500 units.

Parks

The creation of continuous riverfront parks on the Upper River will bring a number of interrelated benefits. A primary rationale for creating over 90 acres of new parkland, as called for in the Land Use Plan, is to protect and restore the ecology of the Mississippi. The most important zone is where the river and land meet; the Plan provides needed space to stabilize banks and create new habitat for wildlife.

In addition, the plan provides approximately 16 acres for Water Filtration Parks, where stormwater run-off will be retained and filtered through constructed wetlands before entering the river. The existing urbanization has no established space for improving water quality. The Plan meets current standards for retaining stormwater. These water quality ponding areas are strategically located in relation to topography, planned development, and will also act as no-build zones to create view corridors to the river and downtown skyline.



North Mississippi Regional Park

In regard to new parklands, the Plan distinguishes between more passive and naturalized zones and Higher Intensity Use Parks. These higher intensity open spaces are located in areas where large numbers of users are expected, and should be programmed and constructed in a manner that best protects the riverbank zone from erosion.

While the planned parks will be a vast improvement to riverfront ecology, related benefits offer an additional rationale for action and a means to fund their creation. Property values in northeast Minneapolis will be increased by the new riverfront parks, and the parks will create a needed amenity and catalyst for new development in north Minneapolis.

Planned Unit Development

The Land Use Plan calls for Planned Unit Development (PUD) on the west bank at Dowling and Lowry avenues, and south of Lowry along the riverfront to the BN Bridge. City of Minneapolis zoning ordinances state that the intent of the PUD designation is to “provide for flexibility in the use of land the placement and size of buildings in order to better utilize the special features of sites and to obtain a higher quality of development which incorporates high levels of amenities and which meets public objectives for protection and preservation of natural and historic features, than might otherwise occur under the strict application of the zoning regulations” (Code 527.10).

Designation as a PUD will allow the flexibility to create a complex mix of land uses at each of the three planned areas. At Dowling and Lowry the emphasis should be on commercial uses including offices in a business park setting, and retail serving the local neighborhood and surrounding areas, but with the possibility of residential and institutional uses as well.

South of Lowry, high-density residential is the favored use, but inclusive of office, retail, and hospitality development. The Plan anticipates that market forces will seek the best use of land, however, the provision of a riverfront promenade is expected to encourage creation of a lively urban riverfront as a place of residence, entertainment, and work. Zoning of the area as a PUD will also allow consideration of variances for specific developments within the shoreland zone, as necessary to reach the level of vitality that is intended by the Land Use Plan and related urban design recommendations.

Light Industrial and Business Park

Implementation of the Land Use Plan, especially a continuous riverfront park and parkway on the west bank and related investments in streetscape along 2nd St. N., will be conducive to the ongoing development of the North Washington Industrial Park. The evolution away from bulk-material-handling industries will improve the area's overall competitiveness in the region and help to attract high-employment, high-wage light industries and businesses.

The planning process identified approximately 80 acres as potential business redevelopment areas. It is estimated that over 2,000 additional jobs can be created in the study area, with underutilized land developed for twenty-first-century industries in light-industrial facilities and business parks.



North Washington Industrial Park

Commercial

Much of the planned commercial development will occur within the PUD districts, however the Land Use Plan specifies two other areas on the east bank as commercial zones. The largest and most important is the redevelopment of the Grain Belt Brewery complex as an center of activity. The main opportunity is to reuse the historic architecture as an attraction for urban hospitality businesses, with the Plan suggesting a conference center, hotel rooms, and entertainment venues. An area of supporting development is planned north of the complex.

On the eastern approach to the Lowry Bridge, a small riverfront commercial zone is planned. This pattern recognizes the existing hospitality businesses, with the potential for more retail serving park users and the normal traffic at this crossroads.

Business Park

In addition to the areas marked for both Light Industrial and Business Park, a separate area of Business Park is shown on the Graco and Scherer Bros. Lumber sites south of Broadway. The distinction is only a matter of emphasis, since Graco operates an industrial plant on their site; and is included in recognition of the decision by Graco to construct a new headquarters office on their site. The plan also promotes the potential of the riverfront Scherer Bros. site for use as a high-density office development with excellent proximity to downtown.

Balancing new uses

The Upper River Land Use Plan proposes a complex mix of new land uses adjacent to a riverfront park corridor. During the planning process the Plan evolved from broad single-use zones—parks, light industrial, or residential—to a more integrated, balanced mix. The result is a Land Use Plan that contains over 90 acres of new parks, 90 acres of residential, and 80 acres to be redeveloped for light industry. The Plan challenges public agencies and the private market to develop interesting and exciting places on the banks of the Mississippi, for all aspects of urban life: home, work, recreation, shopping, and entertainment.

Land Use Plan Conclusions

The Upper River Master Plan proposes a major shift in City policy regarding the use of land adjacent to the Mississippi in north and northeast Minneapolis. The low-intensity use of land for storing and transferring bulk materials does not provide job or tax revenue benefits equal to the on-going public subsidies that make commercial navigation possible; in fact these land uses bring high costs in land-use conflicts, environmental degradation, and missed economic development opportunities. The Land Use Plan calls for a dramatic introduction of new land uses on the west bank, and a continuation of park development along the east bank to link parcels currently owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

From the starting point of a system of connected and continuous riverfront parks, the Plan follows a logic seeking the highest and best use of adjacent land. Given the necessary public investment to create riverfront parks—including the relocation of industries and environmental cleanup—redevelopment of adjacent land must return tax revenue to public coffers. The Plan states that development of medium- to high-density residential uses on the west bank will return the most in tax base and social benefits to the local and regional community. A primary consideration is that the Parks must have daily use by a resident population, who through their presence create a safer park environment for all visitors. The proposed neighborhood development will also increase the constituency monitoring the health of the river ecology and promoting implementation of the Plan's objectives.

The creation of riverfront parks will benefit the City in the areas of business attraction and retention in the North Washington Industrial Park. The Plan outlines a pattern of land use that seeks to balance a variety of needs and create a vibrant mix of different types of activity. The west bank is especially interesting as an urban location near to downtown and light industry, where home and work life will blend, with housing units designed for twenty-first-century lifestyles and the twenty-first-century, high-tech economy. The Land Use Plan responds to the inherent opportunities on the Upper River, bringing the city up to the river edge in the appropriate location, to promote development of hospitality and entertainment destinations, and setting development back to create generous open spaces. Areas for local neighborhood commercial nodes are included, as well as places for business park development.

Perhaps the most important result of the planning process is the concept of a new residential neighborhood on the west bank. The benefits to the city and region will be substantial. The Plan opens a large space, with a waterfront amenity, where 2,500 housing units can be developed in a variety of densities. The Metropolitan Council expects the City of Minneapolis to grow by 9,500 housing units by the year 2020—The Upper River Master Plan provides a Land Use Plan which can accommodate 26 percent of the forecast growth. Implementation of the Plan will make a land resource available to the city that will reduce pressure on existing residential neighborhoods to absorb the growth in housing units. Locating these units within easy bicycling and transit reach of downtown will further regional objectives for slowing growth on the urban fringe, and reduce the number of automobiles congesting expressways and arterial streets. The Land Use Plan is the essential component of the Upper River Master Plan, it meets the planning objective of balancing new land uses by presenting a bold vision for converting non-performing land uses to new riverfront parks and an exciting mix of new land uses.

Recommendations Summary

- Phase out heavy-industrial uses in Upper River corridor.
- Develop parcels between Marshall St. and the river, from the BN Bridge to Marshall Terrace Park, as parkland.
- Transition riverfront parcels between the North Mississippi Regional Park and the terminus of West River Road to parks and an urban riverfront promenade, and redevelop the remainder of parcels as residential, office, and hospitality uses.
- Transition land use adjacent to riverfront parks corridor to a mix of residential, office, light-industrial, and commercial uses.
- Develop new riverfront residential and mixed-use communities on west bank.
- Utilize the Planned Unit Development category of the zoning code to allow the predominately residential Mississippi Promenade District and Dowling Avenue area to include a mix of office, institutional, hospitality, and commercial uses.
- Seek an overall density of 25 to 30 dwelling units per acre in the residential redevelopment areas planned for the west bank, to create at least 2,500 units on 90 net acres of land.