

Mall Area Housing



**Report Created by: City of Duluth Planning &
Development Department**

March 2004

Mall Area Housing

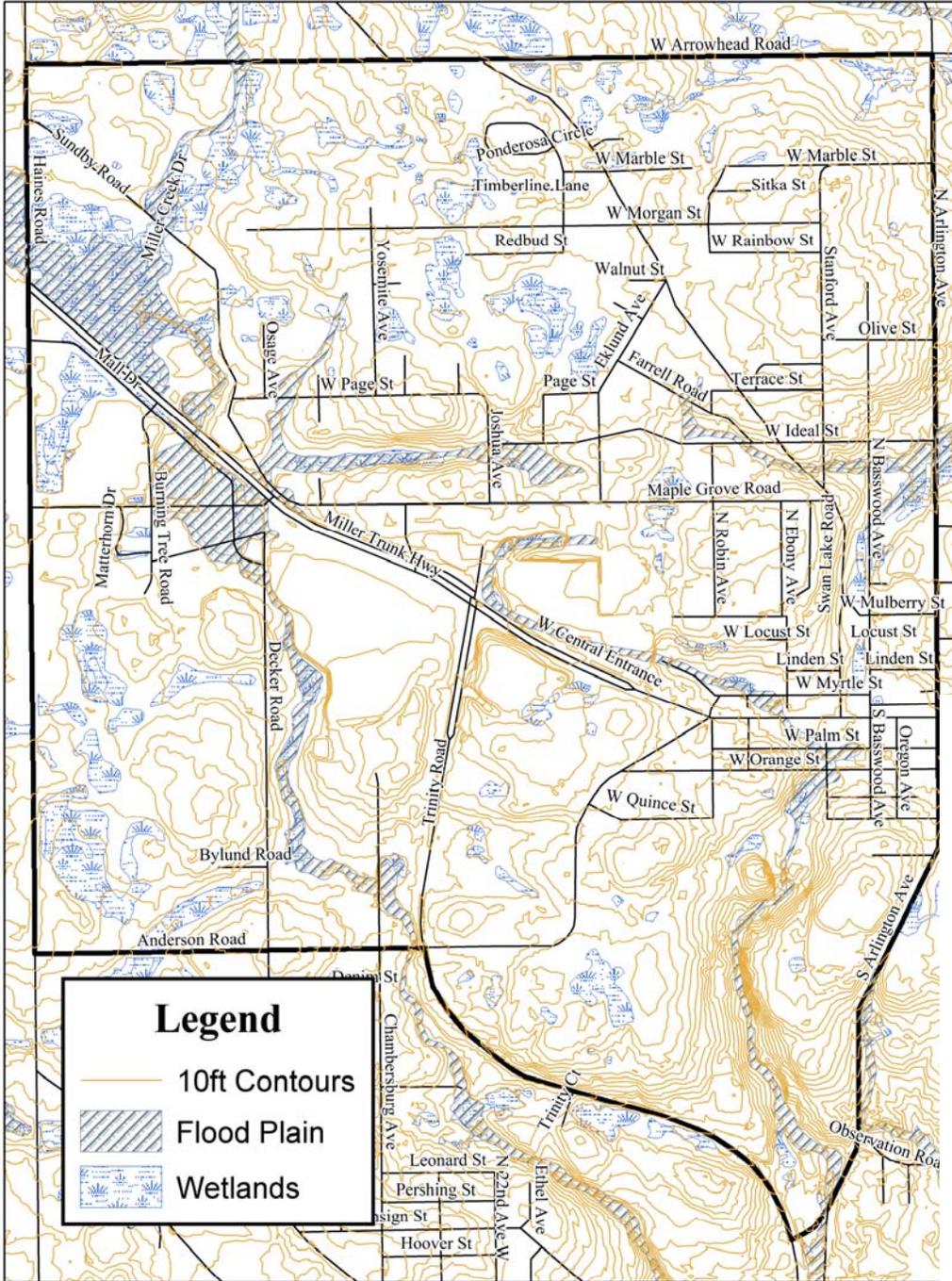
Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Environmental Features	3
Existing Infrastructure	4
Housing Age & Value.....	5
Zoning.....	6
Land Use & Community Facilities	7-8
Residential Development	9
Potential New Mall Area Housing Development	10
Potential Buildout	11
Conclusion	12



Environmental Features

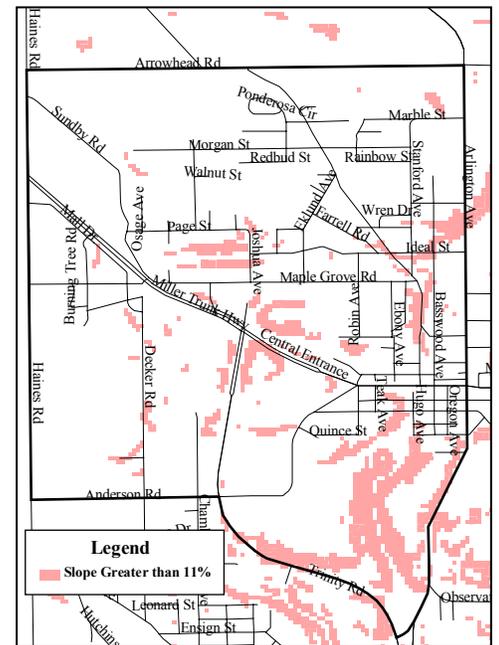
Wetlands are one of the area’s major distinguishing natural features. They play an important role as natural controllers of floods. During heavy rainstorms or snow melts, wetlands store water and slow the rate of runoff with dense, deep-rooted vegetation. Historically, development in the Miller Hill Corridor has included the filling of wetlands. For example, the development of the Target site involved the filling of a major wetland. The development of wetlands requires additional costs of constructing environmental soils and special foundations, therefore, the land that does not contain wetlands have tended to be developed first.



Wetlands account for 279.6 acres or approximately 10% of the land, while floodplains cover 178.2 acres. However, in many places wetlands and floodplains overlap and in total, both are found on 389.8 acres in the study area (almost 14% of the total land).

The study area is comprised of generally rolling or flat ground. There are steep slopes (defined as 12% or greater) located throughout, shown on the map below.

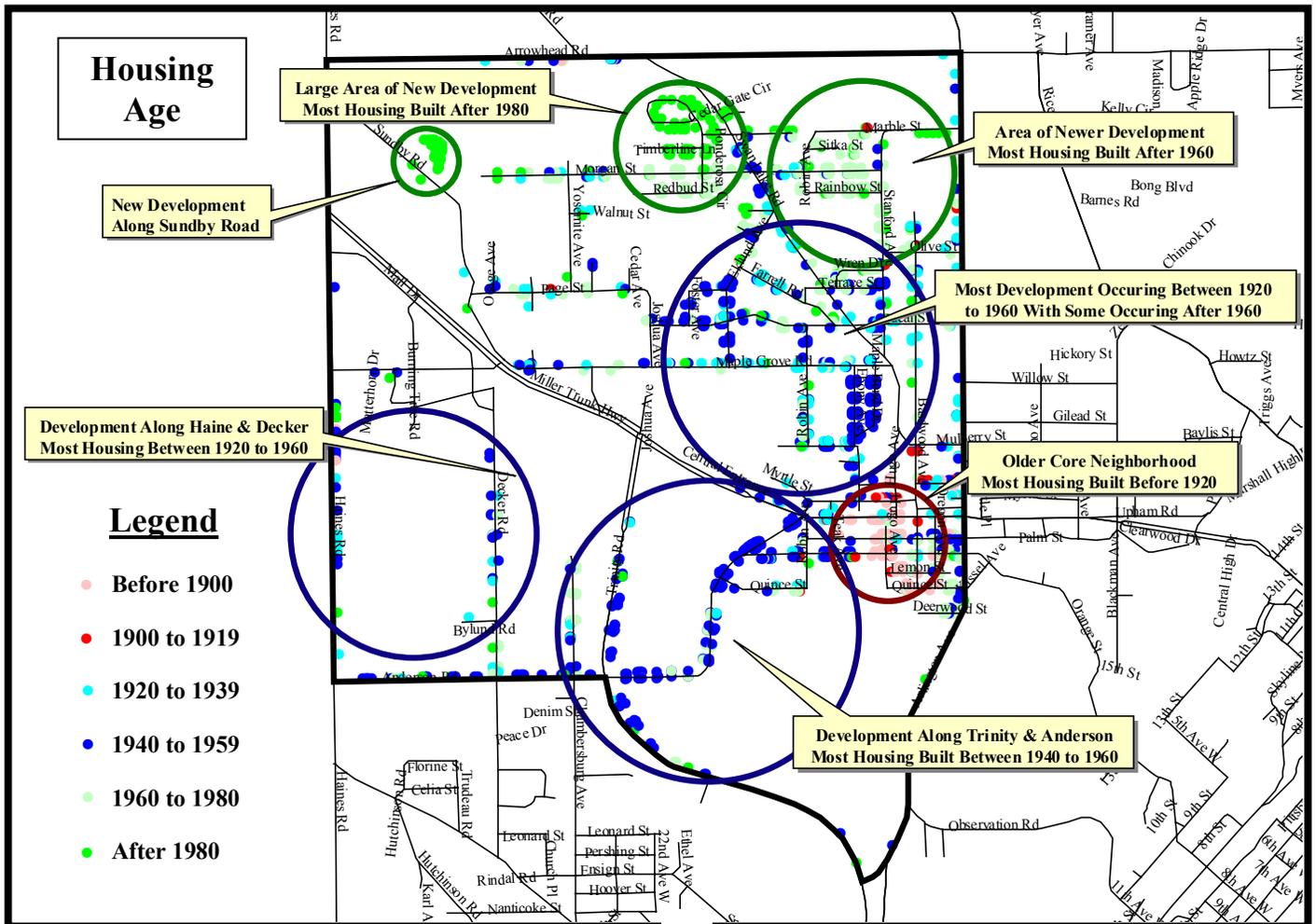
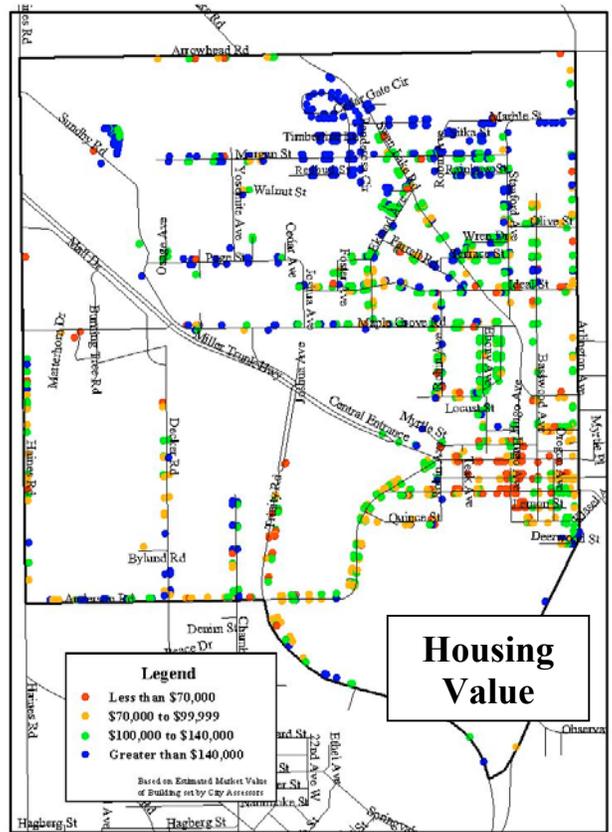
Steep Slopes



Housing Age & Value

The map on the bottom of the page shows the age of housing within the study area and really shows the progression of development over time. The development starts with the core Duluth Heights neighborhood, and then spreads slightly north and to the southwest of the core neighborhood. The latest development has been occurring in the northern section.

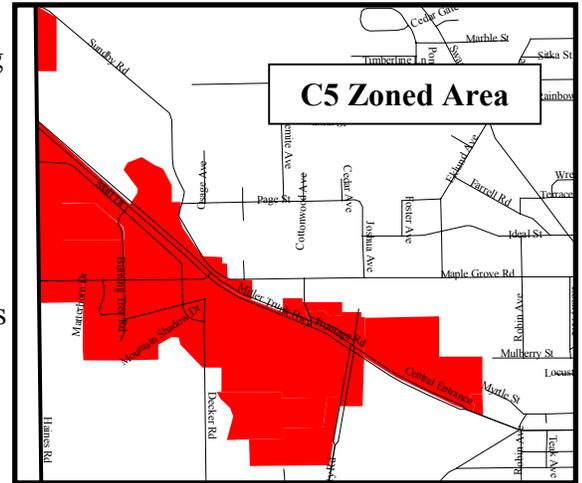
The map to the right shows housing values based on City Assessors records. Not surprisingly, the older houses have lower values and the newer housing has higher values.



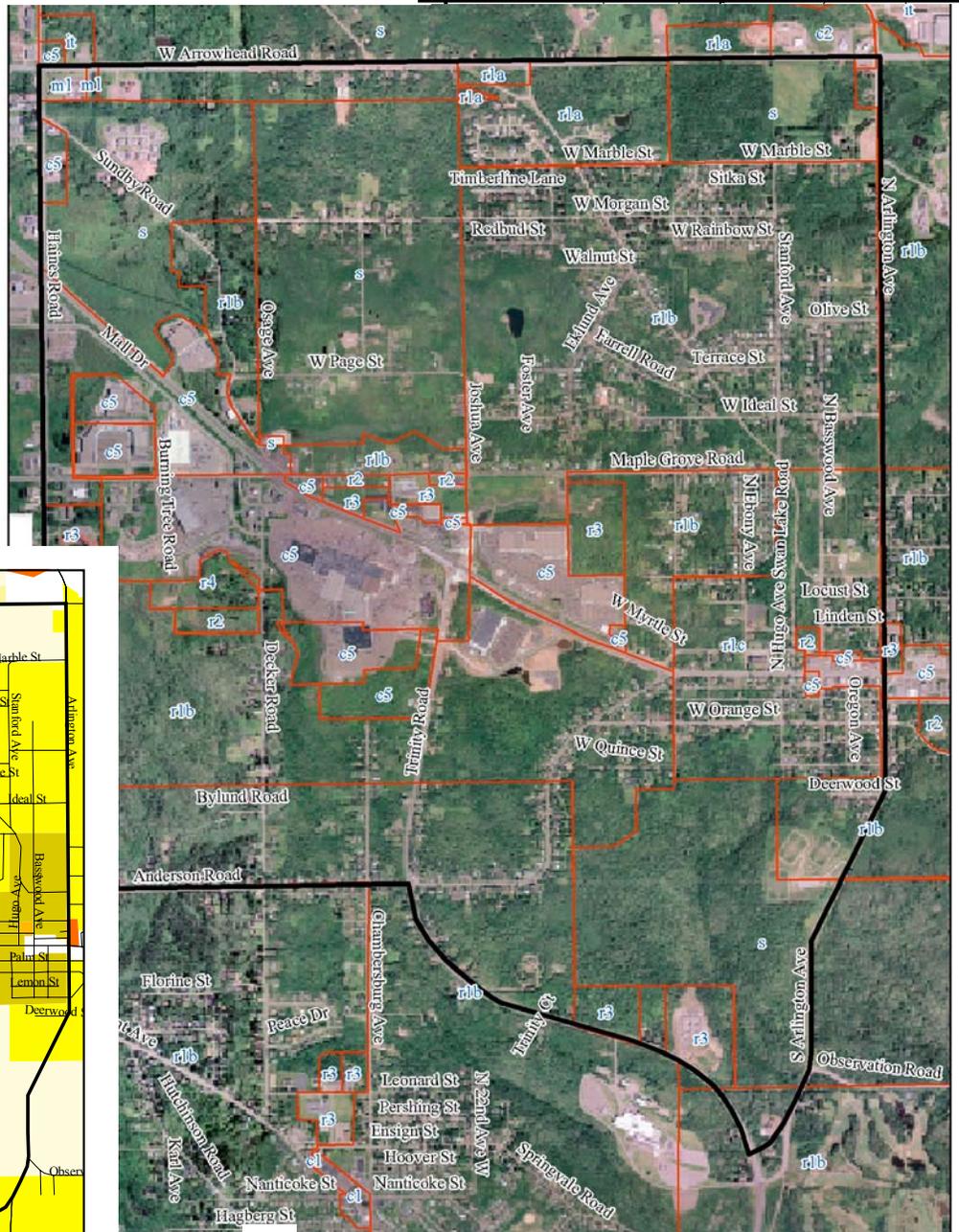
Zoning

Zoning	% of Area
S	25.6%
R1a	2.9%
R1b	47.1%
R1c	6.6%
R2	0.5%
R3	2.8%
R4	0.5%
C2	0.1%
C5	13.6%
M1	0.2%
IT	0.1%

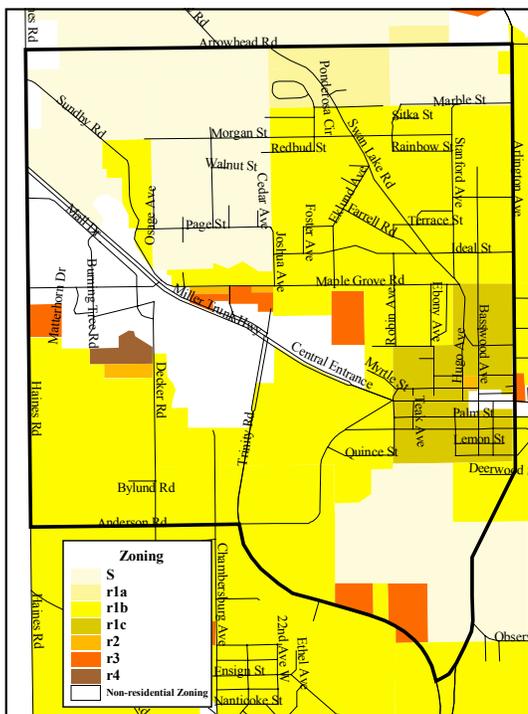
C5 zoning, or planned commercial zoning, takes up 13.6% of the study area. The C5 area is mainly concentrated along the northwest section of the Miller Trunk Highway, which includes the Miller Hill Mall, Stoneridge Shopping Center and Burning Tree Plaza. There is a smaller C5 section located along the southeast section of the highway, which includes some smaller retail businesses. Since this data was collected, the Planning Commission has expanded the C5 zone around the mall, taking land away from a high-density residential land use.



The land that is not zoned C5 is zoned residential, with nearly half R1b. R1b allows for single family homes with a minimum lot size of 7,000 square feet. The next largest land area is zoned S (suburban), which allows for single family homes with a minimum lot size of 5 acres. Only 3.8% of the study area is zoned for multi-family use, compared to 10% for the City as a whole.



Residential Zones

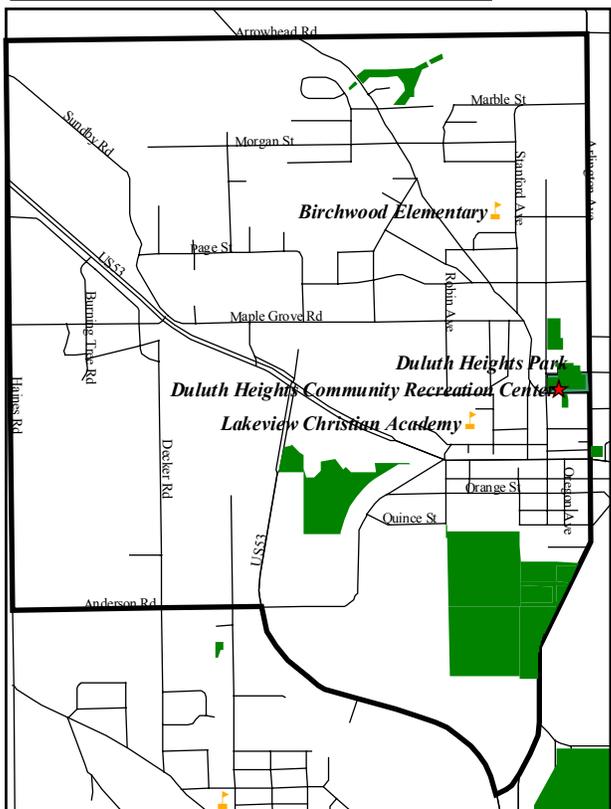


Land Use & Community Facilities

Land Use	% of Area
Undeveloped	37.0%
Low-Density Single Family Residential	27.0%
Streets	11.0%
Office and Commercial	9.3%
Parks	6.0%
Medium-Density Single Family Residential	6.0%
Institutional	1.9%
Multi-Family Residential	0.8%
Educational Facilities	0.7%
High-Density Single Family Residential	0.3%
Medical and Related Facilities	0.3%
Warehousing and Distribution	0.3%

As noted above, only 6% of the study area is taken up by park space. These park spaces are noted in the map below. All of the parks are concentrated along the eastern half of the study area with only one containing any type of recreational equipment, Duluth Heights Park. Also, the only Community Recreation Center is located here. These facilities serve 3,717 residents.

Mall Area Community Facilities

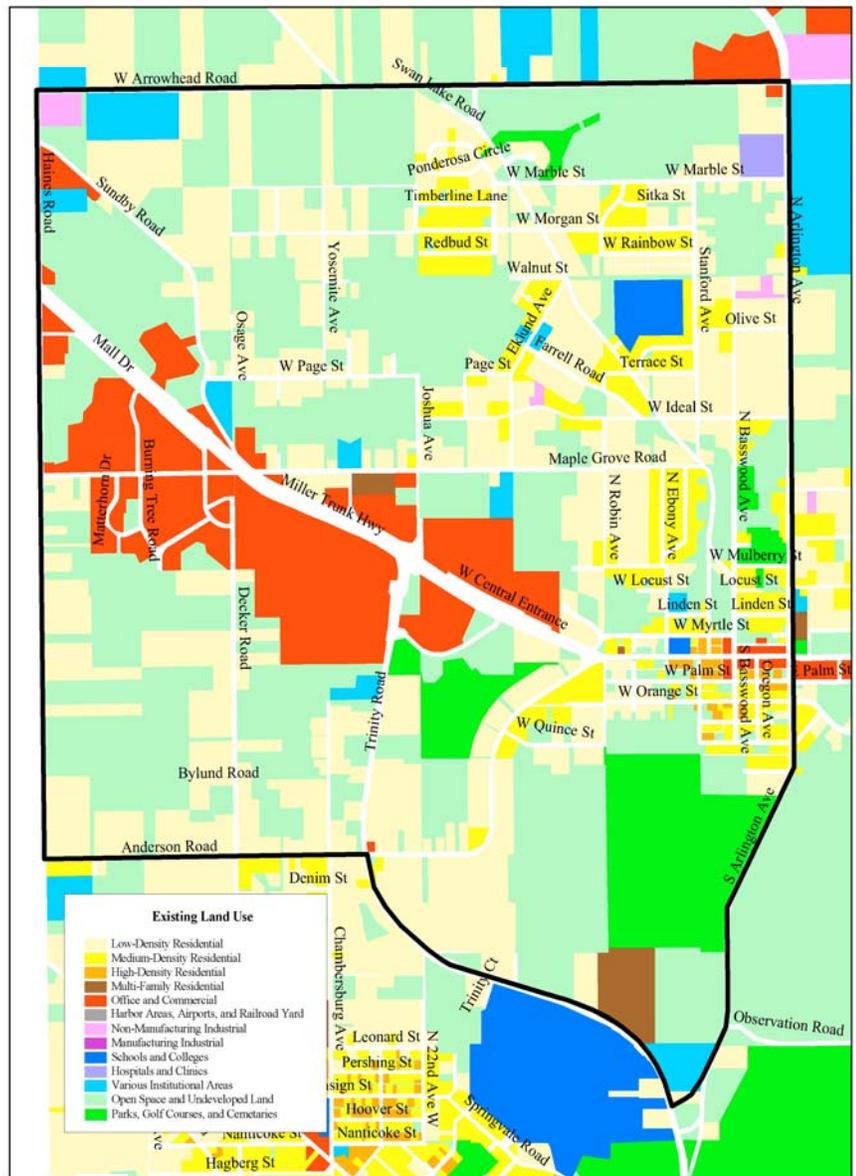


The majority of the land use (37%) is undeveloped. The other major use besides residential is a large amount of land being used for office and commercial (9.3%). Almost all of the commercial activity is located along the Miller Trunk Highway.

Land designated for parks and recreational facilities is sparse. Such land consists of slightly over 159 acres (out of the 2,831), most of which is located in the southeast corner of the study area. Large areas of vacant land partially compensate for this lack of public space.

Birchwood Elementary, the one public school in the study area, has since closed, and if residential growth continues as it has in the past, then new schools may need to be considered in the area.

Mall Area Existing Land Use

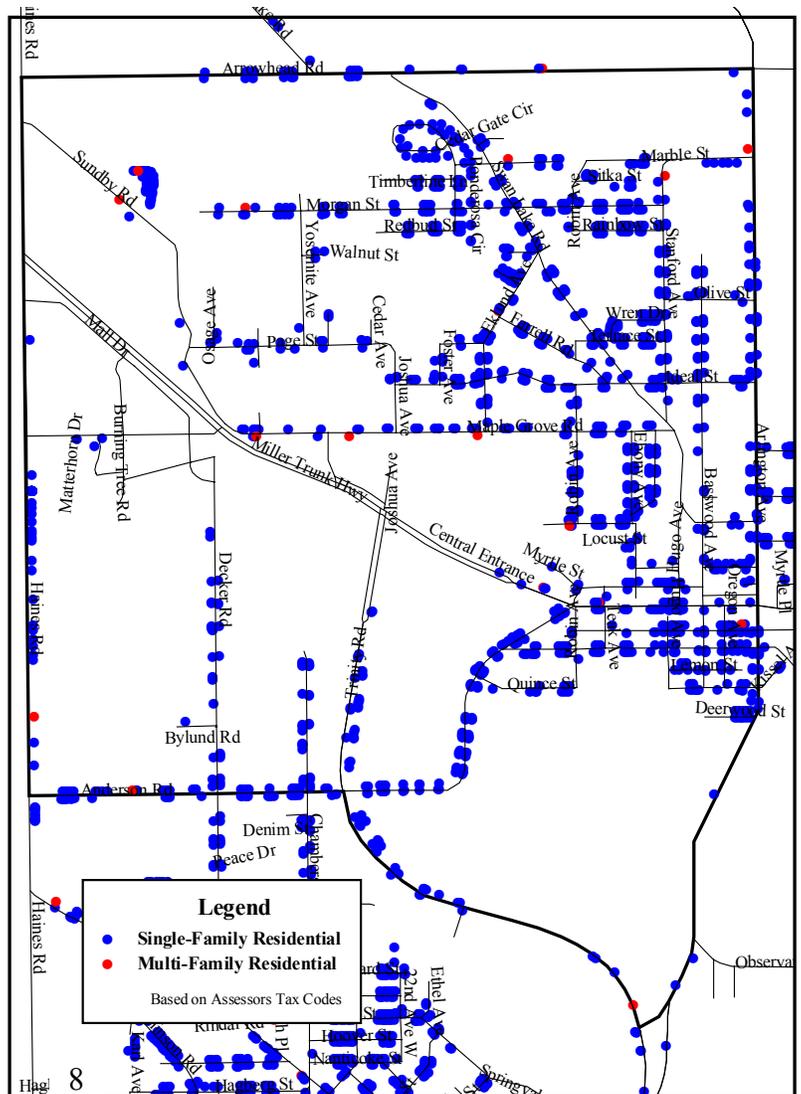
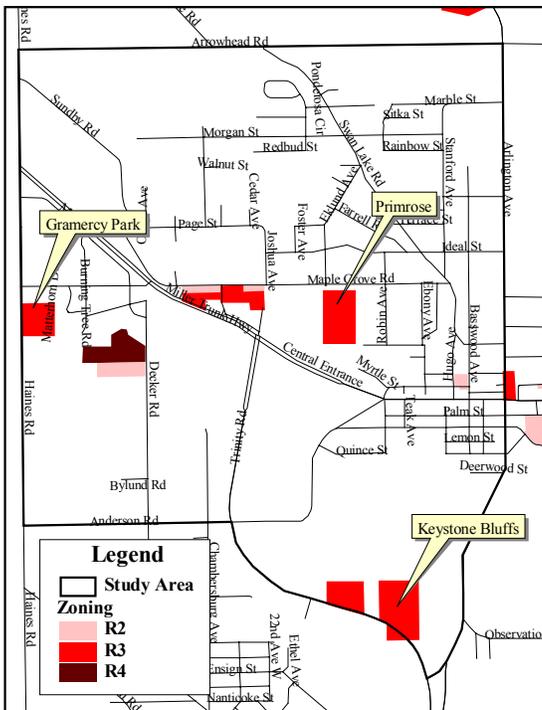


Residential land uses currently take up over a third of the land area (34.1%). However, an overwhelming majority of that is low-density single family residential, which equates to less than 2 housing units per acre. The overall housing density is 0.56 housing units per acre, which is slightly lower than the city as a whole (0.86). An amazingly low percentage of land is utilized for multi-family residential (0.8%) and only 6.3% is considered medium to high-density single family residential. This is a very inefficient use of land and is often found in rural or sprawling suburban areas.

The relative absence of multiple family dwellings is noteworthy. According to the map, multiple dwellings are limited to a few buildings of which most have been built in the last few years. Of the 1,573 housing units in the study area, 1,364 are owner occupied, while 193 are renter occupied. The remaining 16 units were vacant at the time of the 2000 Census. The homeownership percentage then calculates out to 87%. These statistics are consistent with the zoning for multiple family dwellings, since only 3.8% of the land area is zoned R2, R3 or R4.

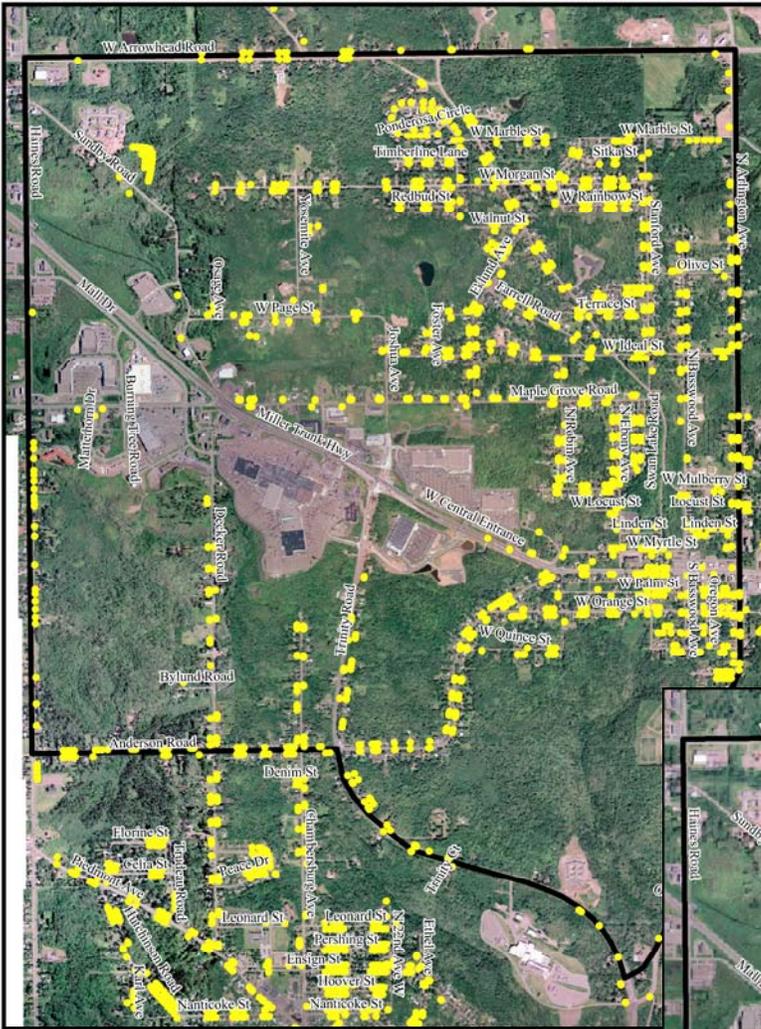
In allowing single-family houses to be built on large lots we are tying up large amounts of land for a few people to occupy. By increasing the density, we are able to preserve more open space, lower the cost of infrastructure, increase public transportation options, and create a more walkable and livable neighborhood with more retail options. In Duluth, the average household size has decreased, the percentage of single-person households has increased dramatically, as well as the number of elderly households. These trends are expected to continue. For the most part, these households are not the stereotypical ones demanding traditional, large, single-family homes, and therefore it makes sense to expand different types of housing options.

The map to the right shows the relative absence of multi-family dwellings compared to single-family units. The map below shows the areas that are currently correctly zoned to support multi-family residential developments, and it also highlights the latest three multi-unit dwellings to be built.



Residential Development

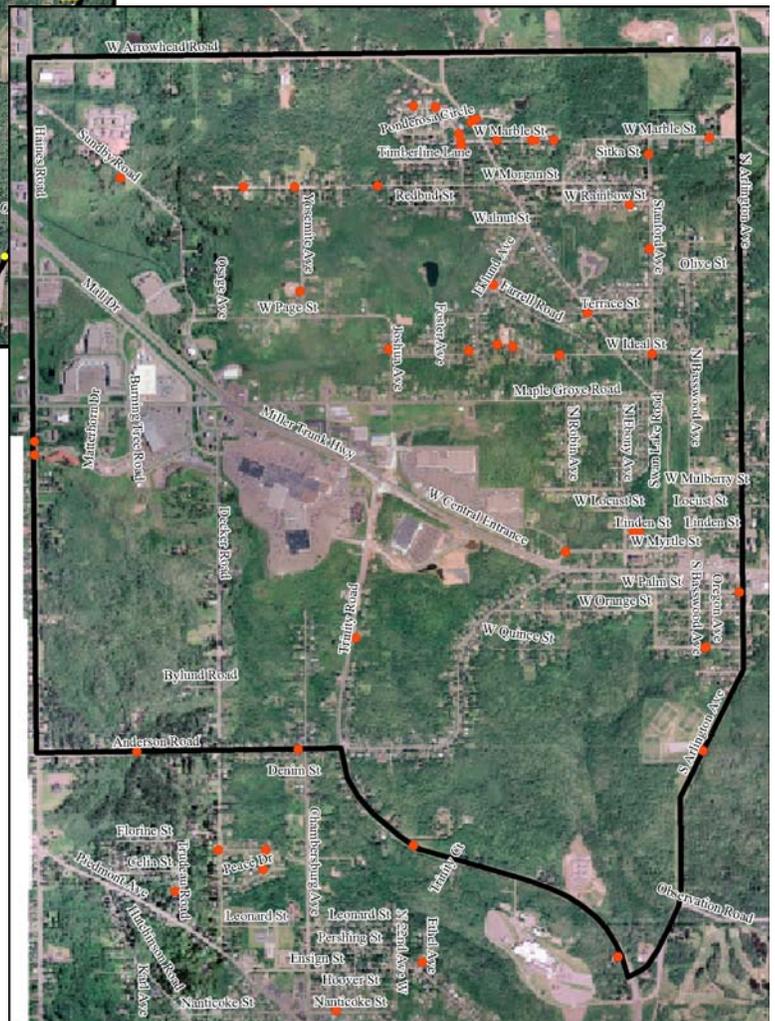
Existing Residential Structures



The map to the left shows the overall housing development pattern of the study area.

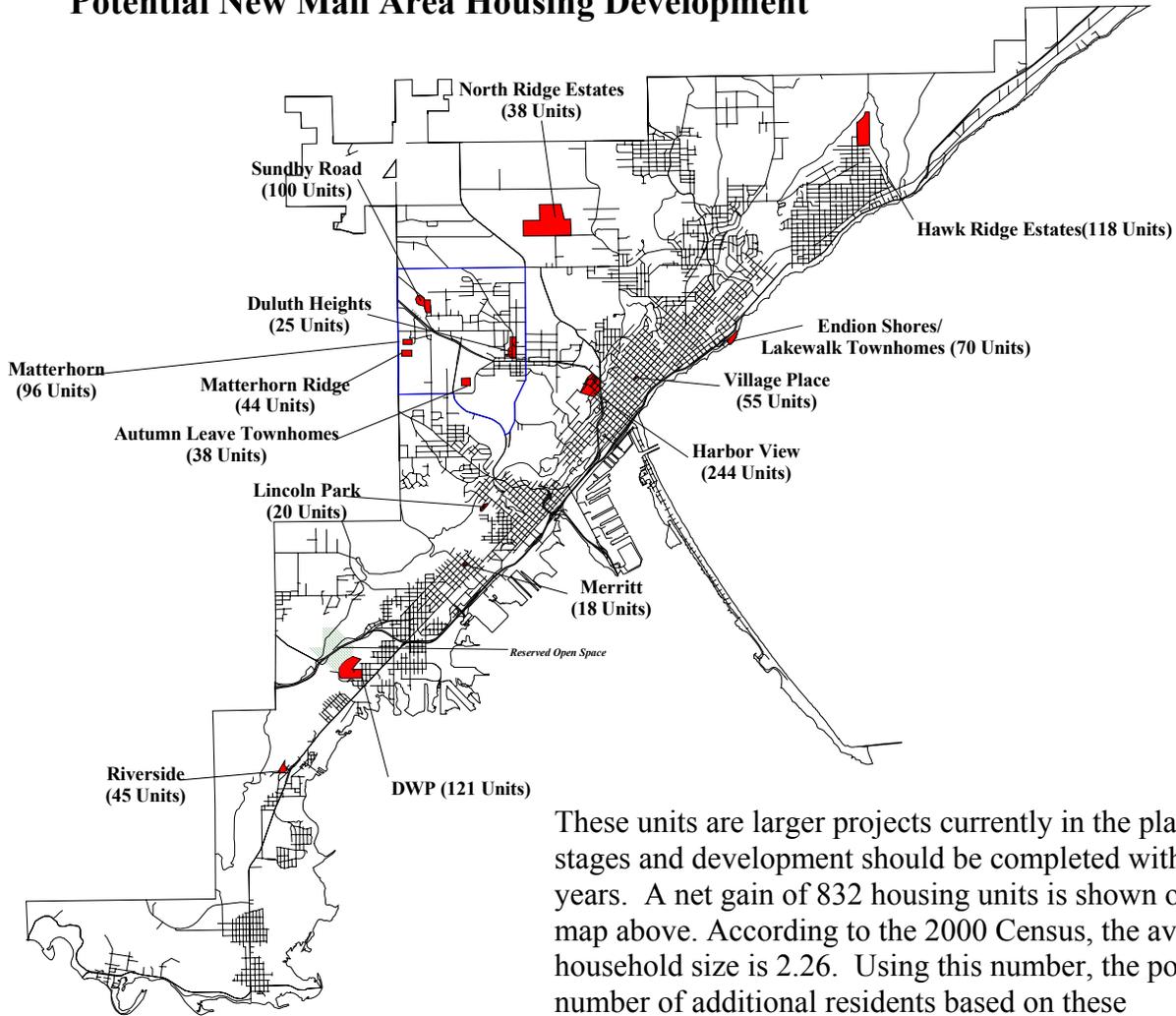
According to the 2000 Census, from 1990 to 2000 the number of housing units increased from 1,399 to 1,573, an increase of 174 units. The city as a whole only increased the number of housing units by 3%, while this area increased by 12.4%. The city added 972 units to its housing stock, and this area accounted for 18% of that growth while only accounting for 6.5% of the City's land area.

New Residential Structures (1996 to August 2003)



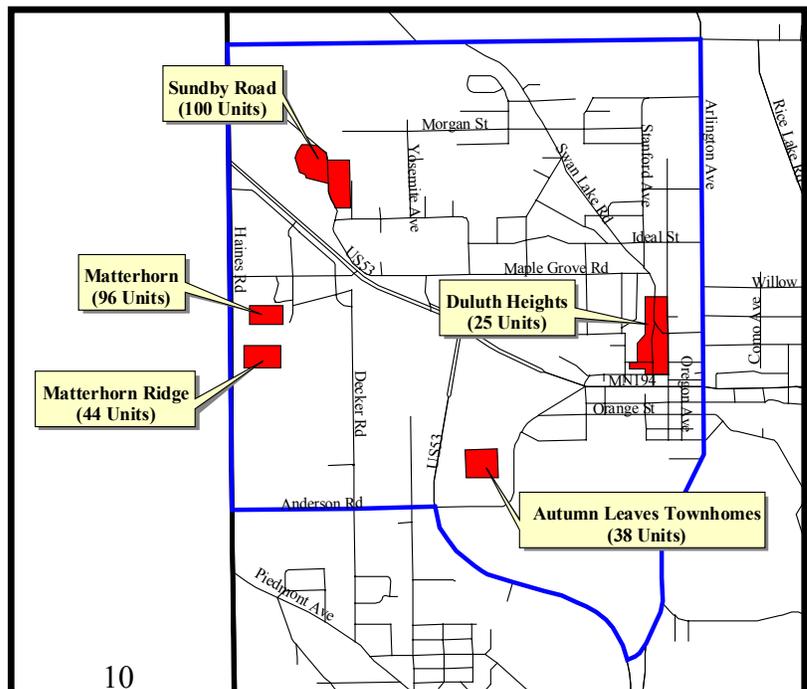
Since 2000, many more housing units have been added. The map to the right shows new residential structures from 1996 to August 2003, according to the City's Building Safety Division. These records show 245 units have been constructed since 1996. During that same time period, the records indicate that a total of 1,333 housing units have been added to the whole City. This area accounted for over 18% of all new additional housing units in Duluth in the past seven years.

Potential New Mall Area Housing Development



These units are larger projects currently in the planning stages and development should be completed within 5-10 years. A net gain of 832 housing units is shown on the map above. According to the 2000 Census, the average household size is 2.26. Using this number, the potential number of additional residents based on these developments would be 1,880 people.

Focusing just on the mall study area, 303 of the 832 units fall within the boundary (over 1/3 of the units). This is a large portion of the units for such a relatively small section of Duluth. Using the same formula as applied above, this would equate to 685 new people. However, Matterhorn Ridge and Sundby Road are senior housing, which would significantly reduce the number of persons per unit.

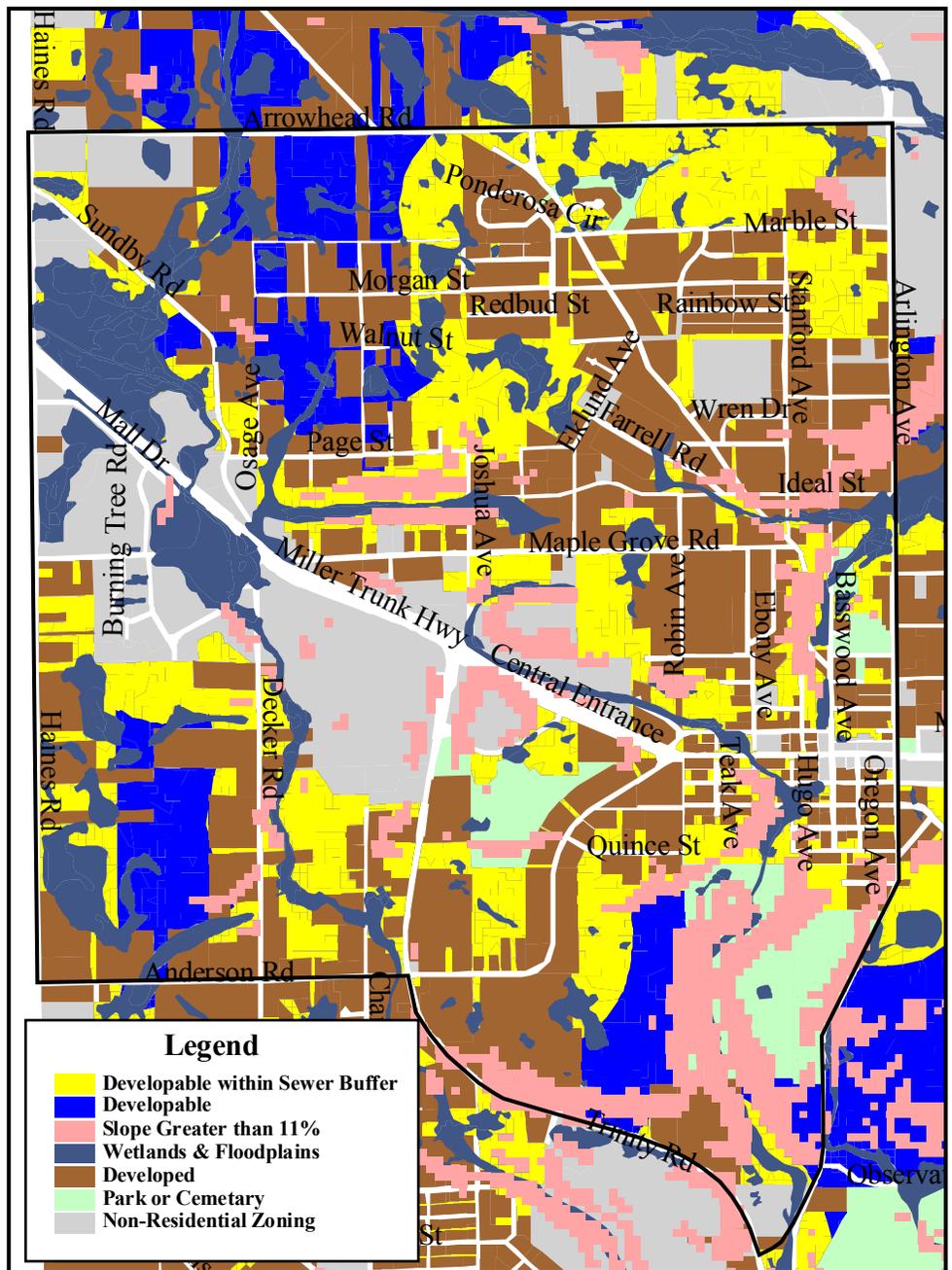
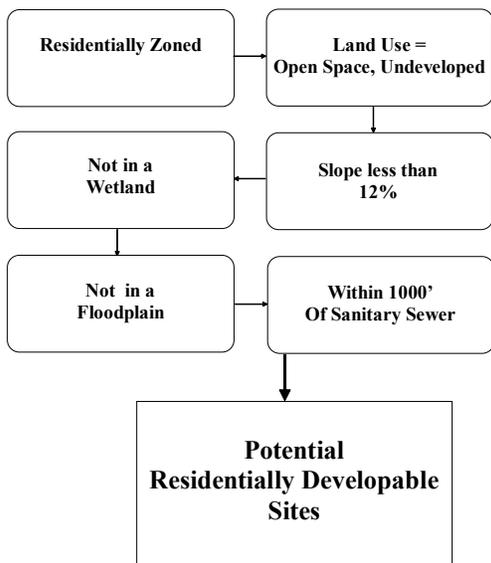


Potential Buildout

The amount of available land naturally affects potential housing starts. In October of 2002, the City of Duluth completed an analysis titled Housing Development Sites as part of its Comprehensive Planning process. This map and graph show the results of that analysis. Keep in the mind the sites highlighted by this analysis may not all be buildable and may not be desirable for residential land use in the future. This is a first step in discussing future residential land uses in the City.

The areas in yellow on the map went through the following criteria:

Residential Development Analysis



As the analysis points out there is a considerable amount of land in the study area that could potential be developed for housing. A little over 17% of all land in the area and nearly half (46%) of the undeveloped open space in the area was found to be developable within the sewer buffer.

	Acres
Developable	672.2
Developable within Sewer Buffer	484.6

Conclusion

A significant amount of private and public development has occurred within the study area in recent years. This development has been considered on an individual basis – one private development at a time and one public improvement at a time. Since a major function of planning is to coordinate private development and public services, the first step should include a discussion of future land use activities in this area. As noted in the report, the mall area is seeing a large percentage of the overall development occurring in Duluth. This concentration of growth raises some questions

- Are informed decisions being made about development of this area?
- Should rapid development continue in this area?
- How much land should be developed?
- What types of development should occur?
- Are there enough community facilities to support the current and future population in this area?

Highlights from the report:

- Wetlands are a major presence in the area and account for approximately 10% of the land area. If floodplains are included, 14% of the total land area is affected.
- The area is well served by existing utilities, and in many places utilities would not have to be extended much over 500 feet for new development.
- Much of the housing development is occurring in the northern third of the study area.
- Only 3.8% of the study area is zoned for multi-family use, compared to 10% for the city as a whole.
- Land designated for parks and recreation is sparse. Park land consists of slightly over 159 acres out of 2,831 acres in the study area.
- From 1990 to 2000, the City added 972 units to its housing stock. The study area accounted for 18% (174 units) of that growth while only accounting for 6.5% of the City's land area.
- Of the larger residential projects in the planning stages throughout the city of Duluth, over one third of the units (303 of 832) are planned to be developed within the boundaries of this study area.