



City of Duluth  
Planning Division

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 5, 2014  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** John Kelley, Planner II  
**SUBJECT:** Gary-New Duluth Small Area Plan Draft Recommendations

This plan followed a process similar to the ones used successfully in the City's previous small area plans. A Steering Committee representing a range of perspectives met monthly and served as the main advisory group to staff. The small area plan will detail and build on the goals, policies, and implementation strategies in the City's comprehensive plan. Technical advisors—agency and city contacts such as the City Engineering and Parks and Recreation Departments also provided input on the plan. The Minnesota Department of Health, in collaboration with City planning and economic development staff, conducted a health impact assessment (HIA) on the small area plan to explore how the plan would impact the neighborhood's health.

The Small Area Plan (SAP) process began in June of 2013 with a joint meeting of the SAP steering committee and the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Both Committees held monthly meetings to discuss the plan objectives. Public meetings were held in November 6, 2013 and January, 2013. A plan web site was updated regularly with meeting presentations and project updates, and provided a place for people to submit comments and sign up for meeting notices.

A Gary-New Duluth Community survey was conducted as part of a health impact and quality of life assessment being done by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the City of Duluth. The responses collected are helping to determine the health issues analyzed in the Health Impact Assessment of the community and the development of a Small Area Plan for the neighborhood.

The attached SAP recommendations are the culmination of the data, information and input analyzed during the planning process.

# DRAFT

## **Gary-New Duluth Small Area Plan**

### **Draft Recommendations List**

#### **Goal 1.**

**Guide new development opportunities that complement existing development while minimizing potential negative impacts.**

#### ***Rationale***

The Gary-New Duluth neighborhood area has been in a state of transition for a number of years since the closure of the US Steel and the Cement Plant. The facilities were two of the largest employers of the study area and the region. Commercial and residential development activity has been slow over the years to return to the area. The commercial corridor along Commonwealth Avenue contains existing businesses that are long standing in the community but the corridor is lacking in shopping and services that will promote and foster a vibrant neighborhood. The former cement and steel plant sites have available development area that is currently being marketed for new industry.

The surrounding residential neighborhoods are stable with well-maintained homes and the potential for infill housing. The anticipated commercial and industrial development will prompt the need for additional residential workforce housing. A mix of housing types will be needed to meet the income level and living needs of residents.

#### ***Recommendations***

##### **Commercial**

- A. Local Businesses should establish an Association and evolve into a business improvement district.
- B. Establish a working relationship with economic development groups such as Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA) to recruit business and industry to the area.
- C. Compile available land inventory for commercially zoned property.
- D. Revitalize blighted properties including renovation of existing structures and/or removal of blighted buildings, and the site prepared for new development.
- E. Establish entry monument features at entry points into the neighborhood:
  - 1. North end features should be located at Becks Road and Commonwealth Avenue and designed to face Becks Road and Grand Avenue. [see Map 1]
  - 2. South end features should be located at Commonwealth Avenue and State Highway 23 and East McCuen Street and Commonwealth Avenue. [see Map 1]
- F. Encourage building designs and storefronts to be consistent with the existing building character of the commercial corridor along Commonwealth Avenue.

II.1

**Residential**

- A. Encourage residential infill on vacant lots within the developed portions of the neighborhood and available lands for housing within the study area. [see Map 2]
- B. Identify housing needs for current population and for future workforce.
- C. Encourage a mix of Market Rate housing stock including single-family and multi-family.
- D. Tax forfeited properties to be sold at fair market value.

**Goal 2.**

**Change zoning map designation to better reflect existing land use while minimizing potential negative impacts to surrounding area.**

***Rationale***

The Gary-New Duluth neighborhood contains one of two manufactured housing communities in Duluth. The site currently has split zoning with four zoning districts Residential Traditional (R-1), Urban-Residential (R-2), Mixed-Use Business (MU-B) and Industrial-General (I-G). The use as a manufactured housing community is not a permitted use in any of the zone districts and is considered to be a legal non-conforming use. The use can continue but not be expanded.

***Recommendations***

A. Rezone that portion of the Vintage Acres manufactured housing community zoned MU-B and I-G to a zoning designation that is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The future land use for this area is traditional Residential which could support a rezoning to R-1 or R-2 zone districts. The area recommended to be rezoned is shown on Map 3.

**Goal 3.**

**To improve and enhance the natural environment.**

***Rationale***

The Gary-New Duluth neighborhood area has significant natural features including creeks, forested area and open space that make up its physical environment. These natural features are part of the fabric of the neighborhood and are what attracts people to the area. As new development occurs within the study area it will be important to preserve and protect these natural features.

***Recommendations***

- A. Minimize adverse impacts on the natural environment through leadership and policy, and address impacts of past practices where feasible.
- B. Motivate individuals, businesses, and community organizations to protect the environment; and provide opportunities for the community and visitors to practice stewardship, and enjoy Gary-New Duluth's natural features.

- C. Require conservation design for any residential developments occurring in areas covered by the Sensitive Lands Overlay designation in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
- D. Encourage individuals, businesses and community organizations to work with the St. Louis River Alliance to protect, restore and enhance the health of the St Louis River through public awareness and community action.
- E. Encourage redevelopment of Brownfields identified in the study area.

**Goal 4.**

**Provide safe and convenient motorized and non-motorized transportation options throughout the study area.**

➤ **Rationale (Motorized)**

Vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian and other modes of travel utilize the existing streets and sidewalks in Gary-New Duluth. The primary routes for vehicular travel are on Neighborhood Streets and along Commonwealth Avenue. Future growth and development in the area will warrant the need for increased efforts to ensure safe vehicular transportation. Long term solutions require changing the behavior of motorists. This may be done by effectively reminding drivers to slow down, changing travel patterns, or instituting physical changes which limit the speed at which a motorist may comfortably drive.

**Recommendations**

- A. Promote safe and comfortable travel in the neighborhood.
  - Establish a neighborhood traffic safety group to monitor traffic speeds and driving behavior.
  - Consider lowering posted speed limits in school zones and on local streets throughout the neighborhood area.
- B. Work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to install warning signage for the narrowing of Grand Avenue onto Commonwealth Avenue at the CN railroad bridge.
  - Signs alerting drivers to the changing road ahead.
  - Warn drivers to Slow Down and look around for other cars.
- C. Encourage the use of traffic calming treatments along Commonwealth Avenue and neighborhood streets including changes in street alignment, installation of barriers, and other physical measures to reduce traffic speeds and improve street safety.
  - Evaluate bump-out configuration at the intersection of West Stowe Street and Commonwealth Avenue.
  - Improve street design and install barriers to reduce traffic speed and turning movements at the intersection of 101<sup>st</sup> Avenue West and West Carterett Street.
  - Consider the installation of a landscaped center median/boulevard along Commonwealth Avenue from Reis Street to McCuen Street.
- D. Encourage streetscape features, such as trees, landscaping, and street furniture that will contribute to the livability and unique character of Commonwealth Avenue and the entire neighborhood.
  - As discussed in Goal 1, the recommended Business Association should work with business owners and the City to install interpretive display boards along Commonwealth Avenue promoting the natural and cultural history of the area.
  - Install flower planters, in conjunction with City planting program, in front of businesses along Commonwealth Avenue.

- Improve appearance of street frontage along Commonwealth Avenue with benches and street art.

E. City Council adopted Resolution 13-0602R requesting City staff to review the feasibility of opening City trails for All-Terrain Vehicle Use.

F. Where potential trail corridors are planned and not located on City property, work with adjacent property owners to secure appropriate easements.

➤ **Rationale (Non-motorized)**

Pedestrian and bicycle travel can be enhanced by improving the existing sidewalk conditions, providing safe and well signed bike routes, and creating a neighborhood recreational trail system to facilitate multi-use pedestrian and bike pathways. Sidewalk installation and the linking of pedestrian routes to transportation stops and major corridors should always be a priority. Trail systems create vital connectivity, sustain property values and enhance tourism business. Additionally, trails provide common space for social interactions, improve overall community safety, and encourage healthy lifestyles.

**Recommendations**

A. Encourage the City to establish a sidewalk repair program.

- Work with residents on cost share for sidewalk repair.

B. Improve existing sidewalk conditions to create a comprehensive safe and convenient network.

- Work with City Engineering to allow for alternative walking surfaces/design in problematic areas to preserve the integrity of a natural or cultural feature.
- Focus sidewalk repair and reconstruction in priority areas: Stowe Elementary School, Neighborhood Streets, Commercial corridor along Commonwealth Avenue

C. Establish a network of recreational trails within the neighborhood to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel.

D. Encourage Minnesota Department of Transportation to consider installing a designated bike lane along Commonwealth Avenue.

E. Create opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle linkages to the St. Louis riverfront to provide greater access to this community amenity.

F. Link trails to adjacent neighborhoods, community facilities such community centers, parks, schools, and the commercial and retail activity along Commonwealth Avenue.

G. Where potential trail corridors are planned and not located on City property, work with adjacent property owners to secure appropriate easements.

H. Improve pedestrian and bicycle wayfinding throughout the study area.

- Install directional signage for bike and pedestrian wayfinding throughout the study area as trail and bike routes are established. The directional signage will be part of a larger sign program that will be used throughout the City. Directional signage will be aligned with information provided city wide bicycle and pedestrian trail map.

II. 4

**Goal 5.**

**Facilitate a park planning process for park improvements.**

***Rationale***

The revitalization of the Gary New Duluth Recreation Area into a fully functioning Community Center and Recreation Area will provide a activity hub for people from "5 to 95". The revitalization is an integral component of the overall Small Area Plan. The values provided by a functioning park include, but are not limited to:

- Strengthening the "sense of community"
- Effective use of currently designated park property for the benefit of the community
- Improvement in health
- Reducing impacts of stormwater
- Improvement in property values
- Increased tourism

***Recommendations***

- A. City to develop an agreement with GND Development Alliance for park operations.
- B. GND Development Alliance to follow City sanctioned process for review of the proposed plan.
- C. City to support the GND Development Alliance on grant opportunities.
- D. City to provide guidance and expertise to the GND Development Alliance project team
- E. Promote the project on the City's website and by other appropriate means.

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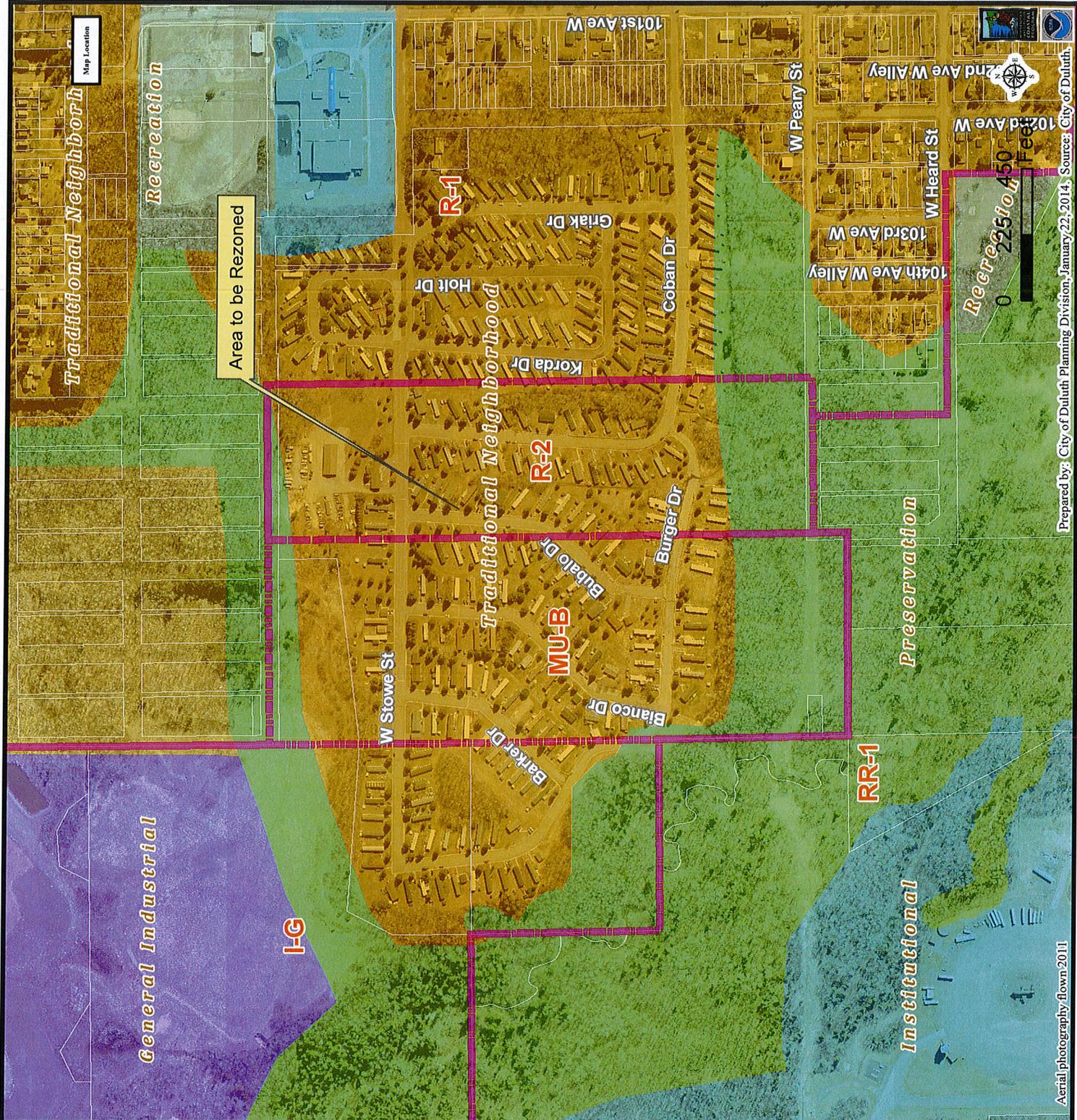




**City Planning  
Gary-New Duluth  
Small Area Plan  
Map 3**

Legend	
	Zoning Boundaries
	Future Land Use
	Preservation
	Recreation
	Rural Residential
	Low-density Neighborhood
	Traditional Neighborhood
	Urban Residential
	Neighborhood Commercial
	Neighborhood Mixed Use
	General Mixed Use
	Central Business Secondary
	Central Business Primary
	Auto Oriented Commercial
	Large-scale Commercial
	Business Park
	Tourism/Entertainment District
	Medical District
	Institutional
	Commercial Waterfront
	Industrial Waterfront
	Light Industrial
	General Industrial
	Transportation and Utilities

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Aerial photography flown 2011

Prepared by: City of Duluth Planning Division, January 22, 2014. Source: City of Duluth.

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