

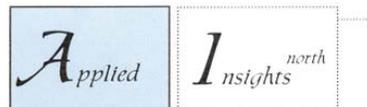
OPPORTUNITIES FOR REVITALIZATION:

THE IRVING SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION PLAN

Prepared for Spirit Valley Citizens Neighborhood Development Association
in cooperation with the residents of the Irving neighborhood
October 2010



Prepared by Architectural Resources, Inc. and Applied Insights^{north}



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Purpose

Two decades ago West Duluth created a redevelopment plan entitled “Opportunities for Change.” Two years ago that plan was updated with one of its action items being to prepare a specific revitalization plan for the Irving neighborhood. This document delivers on that recommendation.

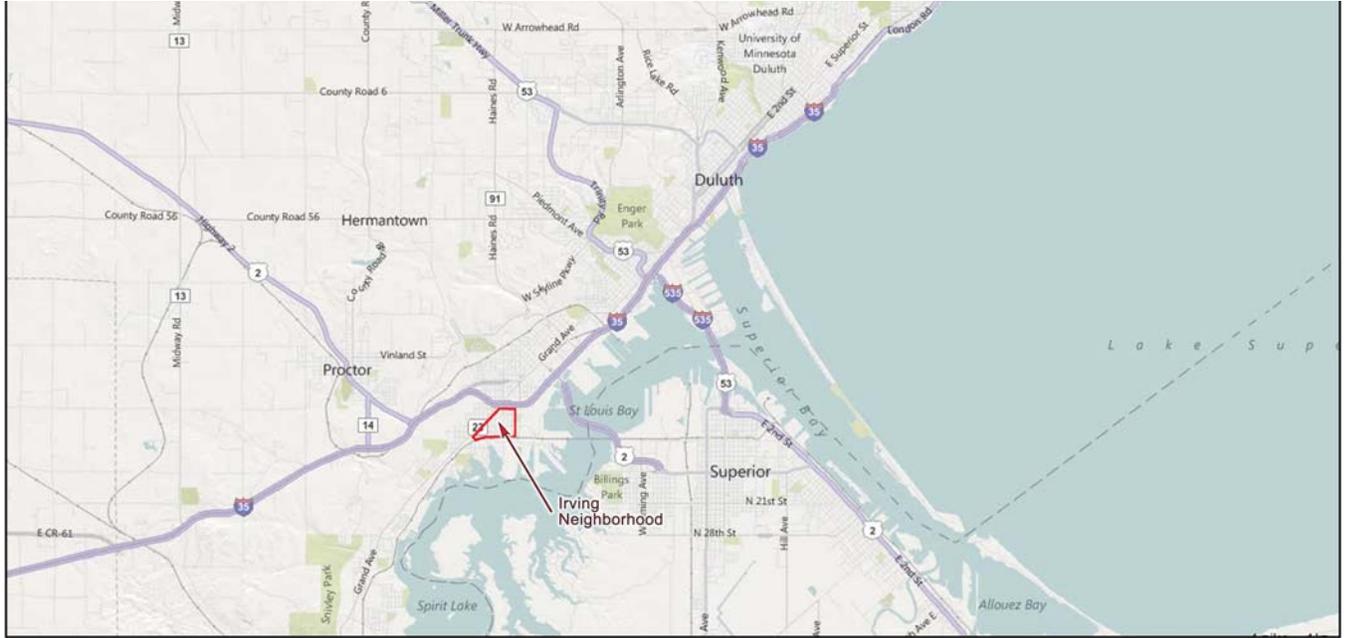
Irving began as a solid, blue collar neighborhood nestled alongside the waterfront industries where many early residents worked. It is a compact, well-defined community whose residents are proud of its history, attractive features, and potential for the future.

Crafted around “opportunities for revitalization” Irving’s plan reflects the residents’ forward looking optimism that creative efforts will insure that Irving’s best years lay ahead. This plan has been prepared by the Irving community, which will spearhead its implementation in cooperation with a wide range of partners including the City of Duluth, private sector interests, and non-profit service organizations.

Part 1: Welcome to the Irving Neighborhood

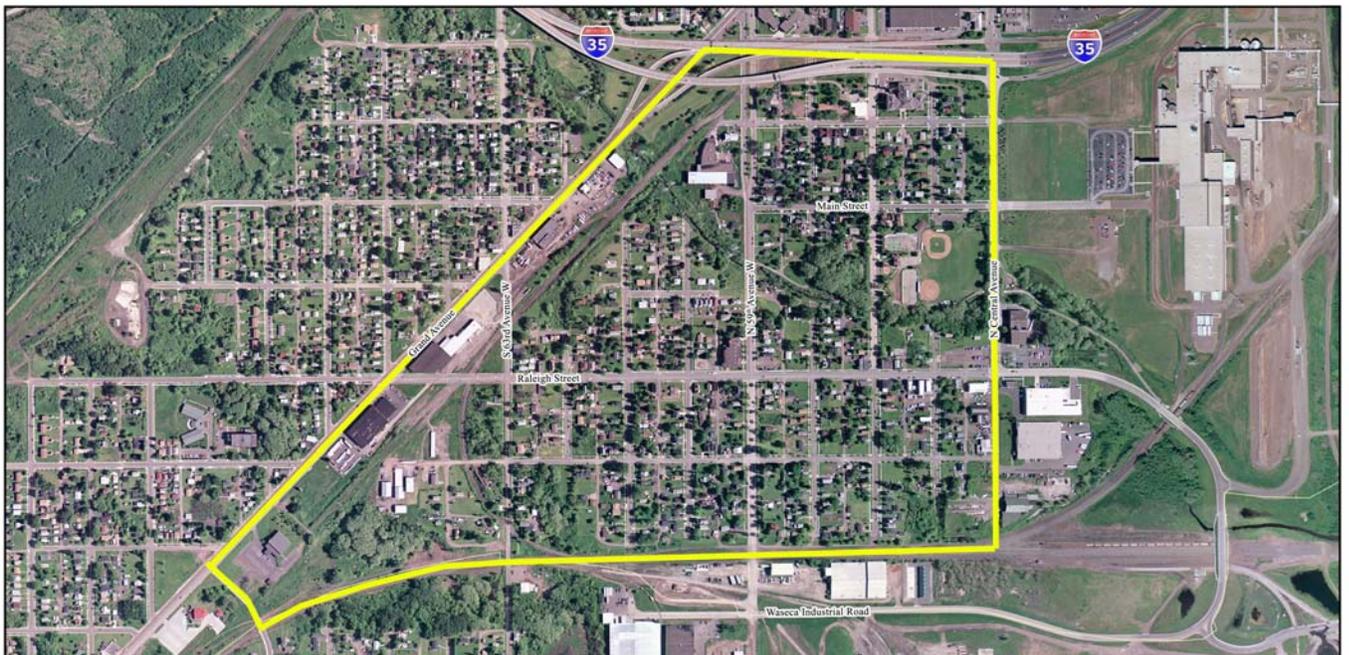
Plan Boundaries

Irving is a compact, well defined neighborhood situated between the St. Louis River and the West Duluth business district (see Map 1). While neighborhood boundaries are not always easy to definitively delineate, as shown in Map 2 Irving's are straight forward, easily conforming to most people's perception of the neighborhood. However, these boundaries are not hard edges firmly separating Irving from whatever lies beyond. Rather, they are seen as being permeable, creating essential opportunities for two-way flow across them that enhance both Irving and the adjacent areas.



Irving Neighborhood
Duluth, Minnesota

Map 1 - Location Map
Approx. 200 Acres



Irving Neighborhood
Duluth, Minnesota

Map 2 - Neighborhood Plan Boundary
Approx. 200 Acres



Neighborhood History

Although human settlement of what is now West Duluth began with American Indian tribes followed by European fur traders, the present day pattern of the community was established in the latter half of the 19th Century. The St. Louis River waterfront was the focal point for nodes of industrial development around which neighborhoods grew. Over time rail and then street systems connected the nodes and expanded development away from the water.

West Duluth was an unabashed blue-collar community. Men worked in the concentration of heavy industry and transportation transfer facilities. The bulk of the housing was two-story single-family homes built on small lots. Local business districts were vibrant and diverse. Neighborhood identity was strong. Nowhere was that neighborhood identity stronger than in Irving. Originally called Two Street, Raleigh Street became synonymous for tough and was the “main street” business area for Irving. Men worked in factories along Central Avenue and the waterfront. In 1905 Irving school, named after the American author Washington Irving, was built lending its name to the neighborhood. Later, in the 1930s, neighborhood women struggled against a reluctant city to successfully establish Irving Park; the park quickly became the hub of neighborhood activity. Long before the term gained cachet in urban development circles, Irving was and remains the quintessential “walkable” neighborhood.

During the late 1900s heavy industry began to disappear. Waterfront businesses were reduced in number and level of employment. The construction of I-35 carried mixed blessings for Irving – it created a physical barrier between Irving and the adjoining business district but it greatly improved the neighborhood’s access to the rest of the city and the larger region. Changing demographics resulted in the closure of Irving School but its conversion to apartments kept it a vital part of the evolving neighborhood. Some time later the private Edison Raleigh School opened to continue the neighborhood’s educational tradition.

In this same time period the West Duluth community banded together to form the Spirit Valley Citizens Neighborhood Development Association (SVCNDA), which became the driving force for a wide range of improvement projects and programs. Within Irving itself, the longstanding Irving Community Club and the newly minted Irving Recreation and Events Association (IREA) are vehicles for neighborhood specific activities and programs.

Soon after its formation SVCNDA prepared the first West Duluth redevelopment plan. That in turn led to a more detailed plan for the West Duluth business district that in turn spawned the Ramsey Village project that revitalized that residential area. Now the Irving effort continues this tradition of neighborhood-based planning and revitalization.

Neighborhood Attributes

This plan builds on opportunities for revitalization and those opportunities rest on a foundation of solid neighborhood attributes. Among these building blocks are:

Walkable, Attractive Neighborhood

- Flat, level terrain adjacent to the West Duluth business district combined with Irving Park as anchoring recreational area makes for an eminently walkable neighborhood.
- Many streets are dead ends ensuring little through traffic and creating safer streets.
- Irving Park, Keene Creek and tree-lined streets create a highly attractive residential neighborhood.
- The most significant drawback in this regard is the industrial truck traffic traveling through the heart of the neighborhood on Raleigh Street and 59th Avenue West.

Location & Connections

- Irving is as well-connected a neighborhood as any in Duluth: adjacent to West Duluth business district, Duluth's second busiest in terms of retail sales; direct access to City Center West complex; short easy connections to St. Louis River, zoo, and Spirit Mountain; and direct access to transportation links including I-35, DTA bus routes, and the to-be-built Cross City Trail.

Sense of Community

- Irving's rich history is the foundation for a strong sense of community that continues to this day.
- Neighborhood organizational strength is seen in the Irving Community Club, the newly formed IREA, the recently created Keene Creek Youth organization, involvement in SVCNDA, and the ongoing strength of the Edison Raleigh charter school.
- People like the area and want to live here. There is a high percentage of homeownership and houses sell quickly.

Some Facts about Irving

In 2000 the US Census recorded under a thousand (977) people living in the Irving neighborhood. There were about 450 total housing units of which nearly two-thirds were owner occupied and the rest occupied by renters. Outside of changes in average household size, which has been generally downward in Duluth and the state, there have been no major changes in housing stock or neighborhood conditions to suggest a significant change from those numbers a decade later.

The City's Community Development Office analyzed City Assessor's information on parcels in Irving neighborhood. While parcels do not equate to housing units, the analysis provides a reasonable understanding of the neighborhood's housing situation. Among the findings from the analysis are:

- Roughly 20% of the neighborhood's single-family structures (76 parcels out of 383) are non-homesteaded rental properties.
- One-quarter of apartment parcels are homesteaded, meaning that the owner lives on the premises.

This rudimentary analysis suggests several possible courses of action for the community:

- Rental single-family structures could be excellent targets for a focused program on conversion to ownership along with rehabilitation.
- Homesteaded rental units could be identified for rehabilitation and upgrading so as to retain this important component of the housing stock.
- The limited number of true apartment structures could be the focal point of rehabilitation and upgrading program to sustain this vital housing option.

Irving has several issues related to terrain and level of development.

- Irving is a compact, long-standing neighborhood that is essentially built out.
- Most undeveloped lots cannot readily be developed due to poor subsurface soil conditions such as improper fill and former river sediments.
- Keene Creek corridor is prone to flooding including at least one residence, a business and Irving Park. The creek, which is a designated trout stream, is a major stormwater conduit as well as being an outstanding natural resource. There is a need to protect the creek to insure its full ecological role is effectively functional as well as to make better use of it for recreational purposes.
- There is a half-block wide strip of undeveloped land owned by the NewPage paper mill on the west side of Central Avenue, which land the community desires to remain undeveloped and serve as an attractive entrance to the neighborhood.

Part 2: Plan Process and Context

Approach and Process

The Irving neighborhood revitalization planning process featured:

- Neighborhood leadership, in this case, by SVCNDA, Irving Community Club, and IREA.
- Foundation of existing plans and community efforts.
- Recognition of strong, ongoing neighborhood-based development efforts.
- Consistency with the City Comprehensive Plan.
- Consistency with other neighborhood revitalization plans, particularly the one covering all of West Duluth.
- Openness to alternative perspectives.
- Recognition of need for partnerships and coordination for implementation.
- Focus on practical implementation.

This plan was prepared through a process that was coordinated by SVCNDA with full participation by Irving residents. A consultant team was retained for the technical aspects of the effort while SVCNDA assumed control of securing active public participation. The plan was driven by discussions where Irving residents gave voice to their vision of their neighborhood's future. Milestones in the effort were:

- Public Meeting #1: May 19, 2010 – This session initiated the planning process; issues and opportunities were identified.
- Public Meeting #2: June 9, 2010 – At this meeting residents refined opportunities and fleshed out working understanding of the neighborhood's situation.
- Public Meeting #3: June 30, 2010 – This session was used to discuss opportunities for revitalization and set the stage for defining implementing actions.
- Public Meeting # 4: July 28, 2010 – Participants reviewed and refined the opportunities for revitalization and identified specific implementation actions.
- Public Meeting # 5: September 29, 2010 – Irving neighborhood meeting at which time the draft plan was reviewed and comments received. Specific changes to the Irving Park design were discussed.
- Public Meeting #6: October 18, 2010 – SVCNDA Board meeting at which the plan was endorsed for consideration by the City.

Plan Context

The Irving neighborhood revitalization plan has been developed within the context of several overarching documents and processes. It is nested within the framework of the West Duluth Community Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (2008), which in turn is nested within the City of Duluth Comprehensive Plan (2006).

Duluth's Comprehensive Plan is the foundation for all sub-city scale efforts. Its governing principles are the structure around which neighborhood level plans are built. The following table lists the city plan's governing principles and how they are applied in the Irving neighborhood plan.

Governing Principle	Application in Irving Neighborhood Plan
#1 / Reuse previously developed lands.	This principle is key to the entire Irving effort.
#2 / Declare the necessity and secure the future of undeveloped places.	The Irving plan features concepts that preserve and enhance existing open spaces including unbuildable lots within the residential area.
#3 / Support traditional economic base.	The walkable neighborhood aspect of the Irving plan is geared around retention and enhancement of industrial and retail economic activity in West Duluth.
#4 / Support emerging economic growth sectors.	The Irving plan supports mixed use redevelopment of the Western Riverfront area which is grounded in this policy.
#5 / Strengthen neighborhoods.	This is the keystone rationale for the Irving plan.
#6 / Reinforce the place-specific.	The Irving neighborhood's unique history and location-specific character underpin the plan.
#7 / Create and maintain connectivity.	The plan seeks to greatly upgrade connections between Irving and adjacent neighborhoods, especially the West Duluth business district, and to enhance city-wide connectivity efforts.
#8 / Encourage mix of activities, uses and densities.	The Irving plan fosters West Duluth's dynamic mix of uses within a relatively compact geographic area.
#9 / Support private actions that contribute to the public realm.	The plan emphasizes creating opportunities for private actions that work in concert with community needs and desires such as sustaining Irving Park.
#10 / Take sustainable actions.	This will be a goal of all implementation efforts.
#11 / Include consideration for education systems in land use decisions.	The Irving plan specifically addresses actions that augment educational opportunities at the neighborhood's charter school.
#12 / Create efficiencies in delivery of public services.	This policy is integral to the plan, especially regarding compact urban design and reuse of previously developed lands.

The more recent West Duluth plan specifically said that for Irving “A coordinated set of actions is required to upgrade this vital neighborhood so it provides a quality place for people to live and helps sustain the vitality of the nearby business district.” Further, the plan noted “specific areas requiring attention include housing (demolition, rehabilitation, infill), creating attractive and effective connection with business district, physically separating residential area from nearby industrial area, and upgrading Irving Park.” Clearly, the Irving neighborhood plan builds upon that directive.

In addition to working within the framework provided by those two plans the Irving effort coordinates with two ongoing processes that impact specific components of the neighborhood. One is the Cross City Trail Plan, which is identifying the exact route for a non-motorized recreational trail connecting western Duluth with the downtown area. This trail runs through Irving and both planning processes have provided substantive inputs to the other.

The other ongoing effort is the updating of Duluth’s Master Park Plan. Here the key point of overlap is Irving Park with secondary interest in potential trails connecting Irving to other west Duluth neighborhoods and the St. Louis River. The recommendations contained in this plan will conform to the principles of the master park plan.

Part 3: Opportunities for Revitalization

The foundation of the Irving Neighborhood plan consists of strategic opportunities for focused and mutually supporting projects that revitalize the neighborhood. Each opportunity builds upon and enhances one or more attractive attributes of the Irving neighborhood.

Waseca Industrial Road: Completing the Western Connection

- Road currently dead ends forcing Raleigh Street and 59th Avenue West to be used for truck traffic.
- Completing the western connection to Grand Avenue will strengthen industrial activity by providing better service to existing sites and opening up new opportunities along the route.
- Shifting truck traffic off Raleigh Street and 59th Avenue West eliminates a dangerous mix of traffic types and creates opportunity to restore Raleigh to a neighborhood level street.
- The connecting link could convert an existing rail spur corridor into an attractive roadway that would serve as a distinctive physical boundary with adjacent industrial riverfront area. Conversion of the rail spur would also free up space for existing businesses along Grand Avenue for provision of an access road and/or additional building area.

Irving Park

- Irving Park is the neighborhood's central identifying feature and serves as the community's gathering point.
- The park can be upgraded within the context city's emerging park master plan concept.

West Duluth Business District Connection

- Adjacency to the West Duluth business district is a critical attractive feature of Irving. The district offers retail sales, services, food and entertainment, and employment. It also has the City Center West complex that includes police offices, public library, and community center.
- Essential to fully making the West Duluth district an asset is to enhance access from Irving. Currently, the pedestrian routes are ill-lit, unattractive passages under the elevated I-35 road structure. All local streets connecting to the district need upgrading along with Roosevelt Street, which serves as an important cross way and Central Avenue, which needs safety improvements.

Keene Creek Corridor

- Winding through the neighborhood Keene Creek provides access to the St. Louis River via the Keene Creek trail system down to Grassy Point. An informal trail heads several blocks upstream from Irving Park. However, the full potential of the creek corridor is to afford direct, safe, and attractive access between the Irving and Fairmount neighborhoods. This route would also serve as an valuable connection between major east-west recreational trails in the city.

- Recreational development in the corridor could parallel efforts to restore and enhance ecological aspects of the creek system. Actions could include measures to control erosion and to provide shade and habitat for the trout stream.
- A final potential enhancement would be to remove development from flood-prone areas.

Housing

- The neighborhood's mature housing stock is in relatively solid condition but there are opportunities for targeted efforts to rehabilitate or demolish and rebuild specific housing units, both owner-occupied and rental.
- There is also an opportunity, given the nature of the housing stock, to target a number of single family structures for conversion from rental to homeownership.

Redruth Business Park

- The construction of the proposed Waseca Industrial Road western connection creates the opportunity to build upon an existing commercial / light industry area on the western edge of the neighborhood. This area could be expanded and enhanced into an attractive business park that would be a source of employment for residents.

Raleigh Street and a Walkable Neighborhood

- Construction of the Waseca Industrial Road western connection removes truck traffic from Raleigh Street. Raleigh then can be reconfigured as an unifying neighborhood feature with narrower road surface, attractive and safe crosswalks, and designated bicycle lanes.
- The repurposed Raleigh Street would be the basis for other walkable neighborhood actions such as upgrading sidewalks, providing sidewalks in crucial areas, build one or more footpaths across Keene Creek, and introduce lighting and streetscape features to help integrate the neighborhood.

Cross City Trail

- The Cross City Trail is conceived as a non-motorized transportation corridor for the entire city. As such, it will vastly increase Irving's connections eastward to the downtown for work and recreation and westward primarily for recreational purposes. It will become a tremendous asset for attracting residents to the area.

Riverfront Planning Area

- Although this area lies outside of the neighborhood planning boundary, what occurs there will impact Irving. The community wants to be assured that future development along the river enhances Irving in one or more ways including providing employment opportunities, recreational access to the St. Louis River or additional residential opportunities.

Part 4: The Irving Sustainable Neighborhood Action Plan

Goals

The overall goals of the Irving Sustainable Neighborhood Action Plan are:

- Enhance the neighborhood's attractiveness as a quality place to live that is close to employment, retail and services, recreation, and transportation links.
- Sustain neighborhood-defining historic values and traditions even as new ones are welcomed.

Strategies

This plan applies three strategies that leverage Irving's defining core assets to fully take advantage of the opportunities for neighborhood revitalization.

- Emphasize Irving as a prime residential neighborhood: Focus on actions that stress and enhance Irving as a quality residential area with upgraded housing, access to adjacent commercial and work areas, improved safety, educational and recreational functions, and life-cycle living opportunities.
- Strengthen Irving's neighborhood core: Undertake steps that improves Irving as a walkable residential neighborhood and highlights Irving Park as the key identifying feature.
- Enhance Irving's connections to adjacent neighborhoods and city: Initiate actions that significantly upgrade Irving's special and critical direct links to the West Duluth business district, to adjacent neighborhoods, to employment locations, and the rest of Duluth.

Revitalization Program

Revitalization strategies will be implemented through groupings of projects focused to take advantage of the Opportunities for Revitalization.

Waseca Industrial Road

The Waseca Industrial Road is to be extended to Raleigh Street utilizing the existing BNSF railroad corridor that loops just west of 63rd Avenue West. Between Central and 63rd Avenues a berm is to be constructed to physically and visually separate the residential neighborhood from the truck traffic route and the riverfront industrial area. Other aspects of this project include:

- o BNSF rail spur is to be replaced by the road extension as far as Raleigh Street. Above Raleigh Street the spur could be converted into an access road for businesses along Grand Avenue so as to eliminate turning motion conflicts, or, the land could be used for business expansion.
- o The proposed berm and the ravine along 63rd Avenue West will allow Waseca Industrial Road to create a defining edge to the neighborhood.
- o Raleigh Street east of the new intersection with Waseca Industrial Road will revert to a local, non-commercial truck traffic street.
- o Close 59th Avenue access to Waseca Industrial Road thereby eliminating another truck route through the neighborhood.
- o Design has to insure there is adequate stacking space for trucks along Raleigh between Grand Avenue and the new intersection with the Waseca Industrial Road.

Housing

Irving's strong residential assets are to be strengthened through structure-specific focused rehabilitation and redevelopment actions.

- o Target a limited number of specific structures for demolition and redevelopment as new residential units.
- o Undertake program to convert a number of single-family structures that are in rental situations to home ownership. This program would be combined with a rehabilitation effort. It could be linked to a first-time homebuyer or similar program to encourage young families, including those who may be currently renting the units, to reside in Irving.
- o Target owner-occupied and rental units for rehabilitation.

Connections to West Duluth Business District & Adjacent Neighborhoods

One of Irving's essential attractive attributes is its adjacency to retail and community centers. Strengthening links to these areas is critical to sustaining a revitalized Irving neighborhood. The primary focus will be to create direct, safe and attractive pedestrian connections to the City Center West complex and West Duluth business district.

- o 57th Avenue West is to be a major pedestrian access to the Spirit Valley Mall. In addition to streetscape elements this action will include reconfiguring the 57th Avenue West "back door" entrance to the mall as a better defined, highly attractive feature. A secondary route is to be created along the 56th Avenue West axis under I-35.
- o 58th Avenue West is to be the major pedestrian access to the City Center West complex of the police station, library, and community center. Again, in addition to streetscape elements along the avenue, this action is to include a direct route from 58th Avenue across Roosevelt Street into the heart of the City.
- o Roosevelt Street between 59th and 57th Avenues West is to be included in the pedestrian streetscape effort. This street is to provide lateral access through this area.
- o The main routes will be along 57th and 58th Avenues West. A connection along 56th Avenue West extended under I-35 is also a key route.
- o These pedestrian links to the business district are to incorporate the business district's streetscape design. Enhanced street level lighting, color such as vivid painting of the I-35 support structure, and other streetscape features are to be used to make these routes attractive and safe.
- o A four-way stop is proposed for the intersection of Central Avenue and the on/off ramps on the north side of I-35. This action is essential to providing safe pedestrian and bicyclist travel along this critical travel route to and from the Irving neighborhood, which route may be part of the Cross City Trail.

- o Keene Creek is to be utilized as a major recreational and environmental corridor connecting Irving to other neighborhoods. This multi-faceted action includes: restoring ecological functions along the creek such as vegetation to enhance trout habitat, creation of a pedestrian /biking trail running from Irving Park to Keene Creek Park, provision of opportunities for neighborhood children to fish along the creek, relocation of power line transmission towers from the creek bed and immediate river bank areas, and removal of structures (especially west of 59th Avenue West) that periodically flood and restoring this and similar areas as naturally functioning parts of the creek corridor.
- o Utilize the proposed Cross City Trail to enhance neighborhood access to sections of Duluth east and west of Irving.

Redruth Business Park

- o The area west of the proposed Waseca Industrial Road extension lying between Redruth and Sherburne Streets is to be designated as a light industrial business park to foster development of businesses and jobs easily accessible to Irving residents.
- o This area will have direct access to the Waseca Industrial Road
- o Several homes will have to be acquired and the families relocated to facilitate this project. These families could be included in one of the proposed housing programs to be undertaken elsewhere in the neighborhood.
- o o One possible tenant in the business park could be Duluth Steel Fabricators (DSF) whose current site is in a low-lying, flood-prone area along Keene Creek. A rail spur could easily be extended from the adjacent BNSF line to serve DSF and other park tenants.

Community Building

Continue Irving's long history of building a sense of neighborhood through community-focused activism across a wide range of fronts.

- o Sustain Irving Park Community Center as the programmatic and community gathering point for Irving and adjacent neighborhoods.
- o Sustain youth groups such as the Keene Creek Youth organization.
- o Support establishment of a tenants organization to foster tenant participation in the community.
- o Institute a block watch program to enhance the neighborhood's existing reputation for safety.
- o Undertake one or more community oriented festivals to encourage neighborhood identity and cohesiveness.
- o Work with Edison Raleigh School to integrate school activities into related neighborhood projects and programs.

Riverfront Development Area

Insure that ongoing development of this area adjacent to Irving is done in a manner that enhances Irving as a quality residential neighborhood.

Design Guidance

Figures 1 - 5 offer visual suggestions regarding three proposed aspects of the plan.

- Figures 1 and 2 provide “before” and “after” images of the proposed berm along the Waseca Industrial Road. The berm could be generally modeled after the one that separates the Menard’s parking lot from the adjacent homes in the Ramsey neighborhood.
- Figures 3 and 4 suggest how 57th Avenue West could be redesigned to enhance pedestrian access from Irving to the West Duluth business district including a more attractive passage under I-35.
- Figure 5 offers a cross-section of Raleigh Street after commercial truck traffic has been redirected from it and the street has been rebuilt as a more neighborhood friendly “complete street”.



Figure 1



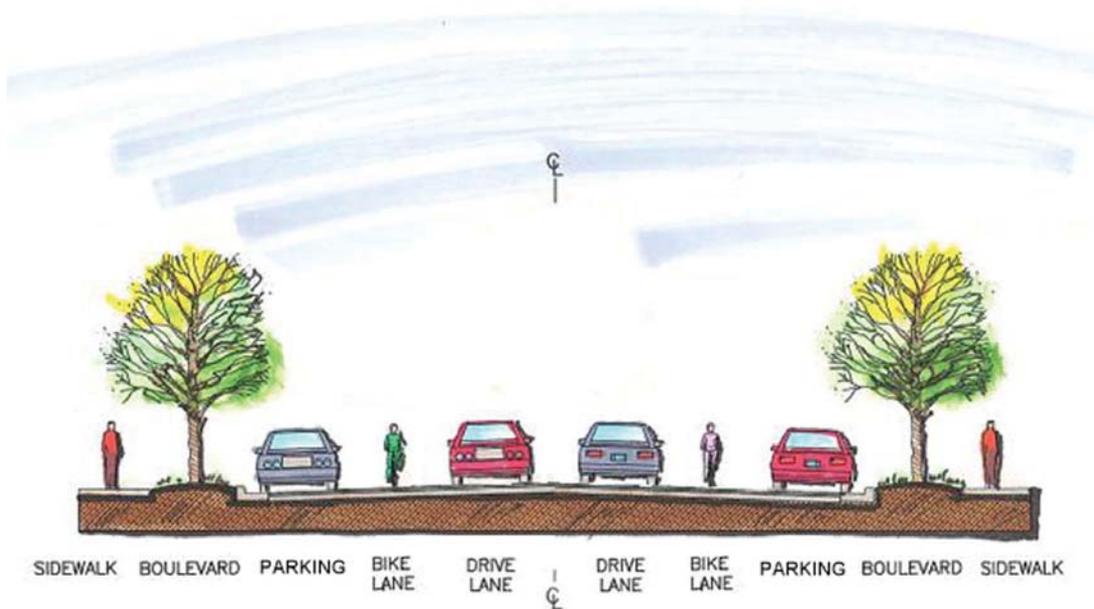
Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



*IMAGE MODIFIED FROM UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Figure 5

Part 5: Irving Park Redevelopment Plan

Irving Park is the neighborhood's keystone feature and primary community gathering point. Established 80 years ago, the park supports neighborhood oriented recreation, youth sports, community events, and provides links to facilities outside of the neighborhood such as Grassy Point.

As has been the case with many of Duluth's parks, Irving has been in flux over the past several years. One issue has been responsibility for maintaining the community center building. That has been partially resolved with the creation of IREA, a non-profit organization whose mission includes maintaining and operating the center along with undertaking programming at the site.

The City is preparing a Master Park Plan, which effort is underway as this revitalization plan is being prepared. The Master Park Plan will set forth a dramatically new course for the city's recreational facilities and responsibility for them. The cornerstone of the plan is the following set of principles [Duluth Master Park Plan, draft 2010]:

1. Provide safe, clean, fun and beautiful parks.
2. Ensure adequate and stable funding.
3. Build partnerships.
4. Ensure equitable access.
5. Connect the community.
6. Connect with nature.
7. Continue to meet evolving recreation needs.

The draft Master Park Plan sets forth a "nested" hierarchical system of facilities. Within these systems, Irving Park is considered a "secondary community center" (western Duluth's primary recreation center would be at Morgan Park). The draft document indicates that all secondary community centers may be subject to partnering, re-purposing, or removal.

The draft master plan also identifies a three tier system of facility maintenance and responsibility. Within that tentative system Irving Park is slated for "Tier 3 Limited Maintenance", which is: "Amenities are replaced/added with goal of minimal on-going maintenance needs and life-cycle costs. Landscaping is low maintenance and mowed areas are limited. Adopt-A-Park program or other volunteers are utilized for basic routine maintenance such as trash pickup and landscape maintenance wherever feasible."

Issues and Opportunities

Within the context of the community's need for a vibrant, diverse park and the city's unfolding master park plan, Irving Park was evaluated for the revitalization plan. Map 4 highlights the site analysis. Key statements from that analysis and interaction with other neighborhood needs and opportunities include: Provide handicapped accessible entrance.

- Improve, expand and relocate playground.
- Decide future of the second hockey rink.
- Expand passive recreation opportunities along Keene Creek.
- Opportunities for music and movies.
- Determine long-range status of community center building (e.g., maintain in place, expand in place, or build new in place or on new site).
- Improve site drainage.
- Consider fact that most of park is within floodway or flood fringe of Keene Creek.
- Expand parking.
- Concern regarding safety issues with vehicles parking alongside football field.
- Create an accessible playground.
- Expand recreation opportunities for all age groups.
- Decide which active sports facilities (e.g., hockey, football, baseball, soccer) should be located at the park.
- Develop access to site from Central Avenue.
- Improve northeast corner of the site by removing brush and making more inviting.
- Ensure that NewPage property just north of park along Central Avenue continues as green space.
- Consider expansion of passive recreation aspect of park to include the "bottoms" along Keene Creek on the west side of 57th Avenue West.
- Consider integration of enhanced trail system upstream along Keene Creek.

Issues and Opportunities



OTHER ISSUES

1. IMPROVE SITE DRAINAGE
2. EXPAND PARKING
3. ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND
4. EXPAND RECREATION ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGE GROUPS
5. DECIDE WHICH ACTIVE SPORTS FACILITIES SHOULD BE LOCATED AT THIS SITE, INVOLVE USER GROUPS.



ENSURE THAT NEW PAGE PROPERTY CONTIGUES TO BE GREENSPACE

IMPROVE THIS CORNER OF THE SITE, REMOVE BRUSH ECT.

DEVELOP SITE ACCESS FROM CENTRAL AVENUE

EXPAND PASSIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ALONG KEENE CREEK

PROVIDE HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCE
OPPORTUNITY FOR MUSIC & MOVIES IN THE PARK

IMPROVE, EXPAND AND RELOCATE PLAYGROUND

DECIDE FUTURE OF THIS RINK



10-035
09/01/10
DRAWN BY: JS

Map 4 - Issues & Opportunities

Park Design

As shown in Map 5, this plan proposes that Irving Park be redesigned as a neighborhood park in which most facilities are geared towards meeting the year-round recreational needs of residents of Irving and adjacent neighborhoods.



This level of park fits well within both the hierarchical system being established in the City's Master Park Plan and the desires of the Irving neighborhood. As noted in Map 5, elements of the proposed design include:

- o Retain main hockey rink and relocate second hockey rink (including boards and lights).
- o Enhance free skating area.
- o Develop a multipurpose field for football and soccer. The field would feature artificial turf to minimize maintenance and enhance its use for multiple purposes. It would also be lighted to allow night time use, especially during the fall.
- o Relocate and upgrade two separate play areas for young children and older children.
- o Provide informal ballfield area for pick up games.
- o Construct pedestrian bridge from 57th Avenue West to second story of community center building to provide access for disabled individuals. An elevator would be installed within the center to make the building fully accessible.
- o Create an outdoor patio to serve as outdoor classroom and site for special events.
- o Provide a portable stage that could be set up within hockey rink for concerts, events, and "movies in the park".
- o Provide space for such uses as horse shoe pits, bocce ball, fitness course, and disk golf.
- o Make improvements along Keene Creek including streambank stabilization, enhanced buffer space, and places for youth fishing.
- o Widen 57th Avenue West to provide angle parking on the west side.
- o Restore existing stairway and construct pedestrian bridge across Keene Creek at 56th Avenue West.
- o Create picnic area along Keene Creek.
- o Designate park as trail head for Cross City Trail and remodel community center to allow external access to bathrooms.
- o Build new access road off Main Street to serve rink storage building, retain access road off 57th Avenue, and eliminate the roadway through the park.

In addition, the Cross City Trail could be routed through the park to help keep the trail off city streets as much as possible.

It must be emphasized that the City is working through the process of implementing the recently adopted Unified Building Code, which replaced the previous zoning ordinance. As the new code becomes better understood, especially as it relates to activities in shorelands and floodplains such as Irving Park, the park design may be modified to meet the new code's requirements.

Several other actions are associated with the redesign of Irving Park as follows:

- Retain land owned by NewPage along Central Avenue as undeveloped green space that serves as attractive entrance to Irving. This property could serve as Cross City Trail corridor (trail would wind through Irving Park, run parallel to Central Avenue and then rise up and cross Main Street to run through NewPage green space).
- Support efforts by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and others to restore lower Keene Creek and maintain the Grassy Point natural area.
- Place into public ownership the area immediately west of Irving Park known locally as “the bottoms” and redevelop as a natural area. This could serve as an environmental study area for Edison Raleigh School and youth activities such as Keene Creek Youth organization.
- Encourage development of a recreational trail along Keene Creek upstream from Irving Park to Keene Creek Park on the other side of Grand Avenue. This would also include actions to enhance the environmental character of the stream and stream corridor.

Part 6: Implementation

Waseca Industrial Road	
Primary Project ►	<p>Complete construction of the Waseca Industrial Road by connecting the current western terminus to Raleigh Street following the corridor of the BNSF spur running from main line to Grand Avenue.</p> <p>This route utilizes an existing but unneeded rail corridor thereby minimizing disruption to the neighborhood or loss of land. It provides direct access to the Riverfront industrial area and NewPage with minimal traffic conflicts and removes conflicting industrial traffic on Raleigh from 59th to Central Avenues. It utilizes the existing signalized intersection at Raleigh and Grand. Finally, it provides access to the newly designated Redruth Business Park.</p>
Associated Actions ►	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate project with project design effort by the Metropolitan Interstate Council. • Acquisition of BNSF spur. • Close 59th Avenue West access to Waseca Industrial Road. • Investigate possible creation of an access road paralleling Grand Avenue using the abandoned rail spur east of Raleigh Street to provide safer access to businesses along Grand Avenue. • Construction of berm along Waseca Industrial Road from 63rd to Central Avenue. • Relocation of Duluth Steel Fabricators.
Partners ►	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SVCNDA • Irving Community Club • Duluth Economic Development Authority • Duluth Public Works Department • Existing business owners • Metropolitan Interstate Council

Irving Park

Primary Project ► Secure City approval for redesigned Irving Park and then initiate the program of improvements as defined in the Irving Park plan.

Associated Actions ►

- Coordinate park development with creation of the Cross City Trail.
- Establish sustainable funding mechanisms to support park development and maintenance.
- Assist City to acquire “bottoms” across 57th Avenue; develop as passive recreation area, possibly a riverine environment arboretum, natural area, study area for residents and Edison Raleigh school and Keene Creek Youth organization.
- Evaluate potential to designate a parking lane along Central Avenue.

Partners ►

- SVCNDA
- Irving Community Club
- IREA
- City Parks and Recreation Department

Walkable Neighborhood

Primary Project ► Construction of the Waseca Industrial Road triggers the effort to convert Raleigh Street into a “complete” neighborhood level street. While the ultimate design components will be determined through a project-specific effort, likely included in the project will be streetscape improvements, traffic calming measures, and provision of a bike lane.

Associated Actions ►

- Provide sidewalks where needed including the west side of 57th Avenue.
- Create a create four-way stop on Central Avenue at the on/off ramps of I-35 on the north side of I-35.
- Assist Edison Raleigh School to expand and enhance its school grounds.
- Construct a footbridge over Keene Creek at 58th Avenue.
- Provide wayfinding signs to key sites within and adjacent to neighborhood.
- Initiate a Safe Routes to School program for Raleigh Edison.

Partners ►

- SVCNDA
- Irving Community Club
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Duluth Public Works
- Edison Raleigh
- Metropolitan Interstate Council

Housing

Primary Project ► Undertake the Irving Neighborhood Housing Revitalization Project that would include:

- Expanded opportunities for young families to secure affordable housing. – focus on single family structures that are currently rental.
- Rehabilitation of rental properties and provision of new opportunities.
- Owner and rental properties targeted for rehabilitation.
- Selected structures targeted program of demolition and reconstruction.

Associated Actions ►

- Relocate homes from flood prone areas

- Relocate homes from Redruth Business Park

Partners ►

- SVCNDA
- Local Initiative Support Corporation
- At Home Collaborative
- Duluth Economic Development Authority
- Duluth Housing & Redevelopment Authority
- Existing property owners
- Churches United in Ministry

Neighborhood Connections

Primary Project ► The major project involves enhanced connections to the West Duluth business district and City Center West complex:

- City Center West Block / 58th Avenue & Roosevelt
- West Duluth Mall / 57th Avenue
- 56th Avenue pedestrian route to Mall
- Roosevelt Street streetscape from 57th to 59th

The second major project is establishing the Keene Creek Trail:

- Secure construction of trail underpass at Grand Avenue.
- Undertake cooperative project to restore stream corridor from Irving Park to Grand Avenue.
- Construct pedestrian / bicycling trail between Irving and Keene Creek parks.

Associated Actions ► Encourage and support redevelopment of City Center West block.

Partners ▶

- SVCNDA
- Irving Community Club
- IREA
- West Duluth Business Association
- Duluth Economic Development Authority
- Duluth Housing & Redevelopment Authority
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- St. Louis River Alliance
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Existing business owners

Redruth Business Park

Primary Project ▶

Designation of target area as a business park and redevelopment of area into attractive lots and streets for prospective businesses.

Associated Actions ▶

- Acquisition of existing residences and relocation of residents to housing within Irving (coordinate with a targeted housing rehab effort).
- Redevelopment of area with required infrastructure for business park. (acquire rest of land, plat-design-build infrastructure)

Partners ▶

- Minnesota Power
- SVCNDA
- Irving Community Club
- Duluth Economic Development Authority
- Duluth Housing & Redevelopment Authority
- Existing business owners

Community Building

- Primary Project ► Community building involves an array of initiatives including:
- Institute a formal Block Watch program.
 - Continue Irving Community Club as primary neighborhood organization.
 - Increase IREA's effectiveness at running Irving Park facility and making Irving Park a multi-neighborhood programmatic site.
 - Sustain and expand the Keene Creek Youth program.
 - Continue CHUM-initiated effort to organize neighborhood renters into an effective voice for tenants.

- Associated Actions ►
- Support expansion and retention of Edison Raleigh Charter School.
 - Consider instituting a community garden / farmers market.
 - Apply principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design to devise comprehensive neighborhood safety program focused on creating safe, attractive pedestrian travel corridors within residential neighborhoods and from them to business district.
 - Consider establishing one or more neighborhood-oriented festivals.

- Partners ►
- SVCNDA
 - Irving Community Club
 - IREA
 - Edison Raleigh School
 - Duluth Police Department
 - Duluth Parks and Recreation Department

Guidance for Related Implementation Actions

Several key implementation actions occur just outside the core Irving neighborhood but have crucial impacts on Irving and its residents. Each of these will require their own intensive site design processes. Because they are so critical to Irving's revitalization, Irving feels compelled to offer guidance from the neighborhood's perspective.

City Center West Block Redevelopment

- Irving's ongoing revitalization and attractiveness as a quality neighborhood demand direct, safe and attractive access to the West Duluth Police station and the City Center West complex. This access has to flow naturally and obviously along the 58th Avenue corridor.
- Expanded parking for City Center West is critical to its viability as a useful community center and gathering place.
- An existing light industrial use needs to be relocated in order to create pedestrian access from Irving, expand parking, and create space for neighborhood oriented commercial retail/service. If at all possible the business should be relocated to the Redruth Business Park or Waseca industrial area in order to retain local economic activity and jobs.
- Roosevelt Street needs to be remodeled into true pedestrian friendly corridor establishing an attractive linkage from 59th to 57th Avenues.

West Duluth Mall Enhanced Access

- Redesign the mall's "rear" entrance off 57th Avenue into an attractive and inviting pedestrian oriented access from the neighborhood.
- The concept of the enhanced mall access is to carry out to 57th Avenue and into Irving with attractive and safe streetscape. This would include an enhanced pedestrian / biking corridor to the 56th Avenue side of the Irving School apartments.

Western Riverfront Area

- Ongoing development of this area, whether a continuation of industrial activity or the addition of residential / commercial development oriented to the river must be done in way that enhances the overall attractiveness of Irving and does not detract from it as a quality neighborhood.
- Access to the St. Louis River by Irving residents needs to be enhanced through development or redevelopment of this area.
- If the area is to remain industrial in whole or part, a physical buffer between Irving and the industrial area is essential.
- If the area remains industrial, then development and uses must not create adverse impacts on Irving (e.g., noise, dust, night light).

Performance Outcome Measures

The following sets forth the anticipated achievements to be in place after one year and after five years of implementation effort.

Community Development

1-Year Outcomes

- Irving neighborhood tenants organized.
- City concurrence on pedestrian way improvements between Irving and West Duluth business district.
- Irving Park plan approved by City.
- Keene Creek trail included in Duluth Master Park Plan.

5-Year Outcomes

- Irving Park improvements underway.
- 4-way stop in place on Central Avenue / I-35 on-off ramp intersection.
- Keene Creek Trail underpass at Grand Avenue constructed.
- Pedestrian way improvements underway.
- Redesign of the City Center West block in process.
- Private land west of 57th Avenue West across from Irving Park in the Keene Creek corridor acquired by City.

Housing

1-Year Outcomes

- Home Rehabilitation Program underway with information to owners, program contacts in place, and applications in works.
- List of properties targeted for possible rehabilitation prepared

5-Year Outcomes

- 3 owner occupied homes rehabilitated.
- 3 rental properties rehabilitated.
- 4 single-family homes converted from rental to owner-occupied and rehabilitated.

Economic Empowerment / Job Creation

1-Year Outcomes

- Duluth Economic Development Authority concurrence with Redruth Business Park concept.
- City / MnDOT concurrence with Waseca Industrial Road concept.

5-Year Outcomes

- Waseca Industrial Road in City capital improvement program.
- Redruth Business Park designed and implementation schedule.
- Farmers market organized.

Other Actions

1-Year Outcomes

- Block Watch Program instituted.
- One new neighborhood festival.
- Keene Creek Youth group expanded.

5-Year Outcomes

- One additional new neighborhood festival.