

CITY OF WEST ST. PAUL SOUTH ROBERT STREET REDEVELOPMENT DESIGN FRAMEWORK

DSU, INC.

Introduction

In 1880, South Robert Street was the retail and community hub of West St. Paul. Now, 120 years later, the 2.5-mile corridor is comprised of a profusion of big box retail, chain restaurants and local shops possessing enough square feet of retail to rival a regional mall. While the corridor is still considered the retail Main Street of the city, conventional automobile-oriented development patterns have created a nondescript identity typical to many suburban commercial strips.

Three distinct character districts have evolved along the corridor, each representing a progression in eras and development types from more traditional, compact development patterns in the north to post-1960s automobile-oriented uses in the south.

Purpose

The purpose of the South Robert Street Redevelopment Strategy is to provide a comprehensive framework for redevelopment to guide growth within the City in a manner that is sustainable, livable, economically viable and visionary.

Project Approach

The design process involved the community through a series of workshops, surveys, open houses, and representation on the South Robert Street Task Force. The process included a variety of tasks:

- Analysis of real market conditions.
- Survey of visual preferences
- Community design workshop
- Preparation of a corridor framework plan
- Preparation of town planning and design guidelines
- Preparation of an implementation strategy
- Development of three mixed-use zoning districts

Redevelopment Design Framework

The Redevelopment Design Framework Manual will serve as a supplement to the Zoning Ordinance. It will be used to evaluate development proposals and to visually communicate the intended character of the corridor.

Recommendations

- Rezone to mixed-use.
- Concentrate mixed-use development at primary crossroads.
- Establish a Town Center between Wentworth and Thompson Avenues.
- Define street improvement concepts.
 - Modify roadway cross-section to provide space for medians, boulevards, bike lanes and walks.
 - Consolidate driveways to create safer turning movements and to allow the installation of center medians.
 - Secure easements to provide additional width for transit, streetscape and parking lot improvements.
- Implement streetscape improvements.
- Infill with residential uses.
- Establish a hierarchy of open space.
- Encourage shared parking.
- Plan for incremental development and corridor evolution in phases.



Generosity Treatment at Mendota Road

Role of the Landscape Architect: The landscape architects were the primary consultants and authors of this document. They were responsible for a wide range of tasks.

- developing and facilitating the community design process, survey of visual preferences, and issues workshops
- research, analysis and inventory
- design and illustration of principles and design guidelines
- codifying the design guidelines into enforceable standards
- writing new ordinances for mixed-use in all three character districts
- developing implementation strategies
- making presentations to the Task Force, City commissions, and councils
- production of all graphic and written materials.

Impact of Landscape Architects: This project and process emphasizes the vital roles landscape architects play as facilitators, planners, educators and designers who can assist cities in redevelopment efforts and in shaping a strong sense of community.

As facilitators, the landscape architects created a process that fostered community involvement and a plan that reflects the values, spirit and vision of the community.

As educators, the landscape architects informed the community on the importance of balancing the needs to move traffic and creating a pedestrian-oriented setting that would improve South Robert Street's character and foster economic redevelopment opportunities.

As designers, the landscape architects reinforced positive elements of the corridor, and set forth strategies to improve livability and establish a climate for social interaction and sustainable commerce. The final document provides an easy-to-follow guide and framework to assist with future redevelopment decisions.

