



10. CRITICAL AREA PLAN

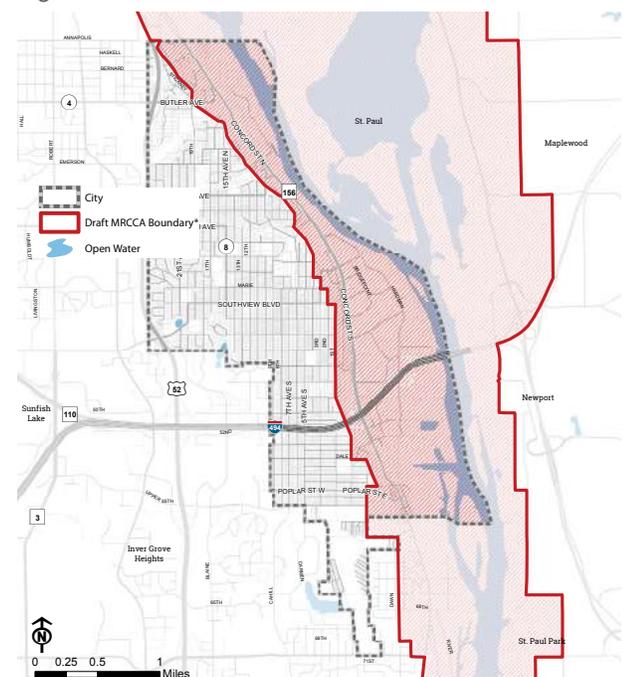
Introduction

History and Overview

The Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) is a land corridor along the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area governed by special land planning requirements and land development regulations. Throughout the Twin Cities, the MRCCA comprises 72 miles of river across 30 jurisdictions. In South St. Paul the MRCCA boundary follows the Mississippi River bluff line from the northern City boundary, south to the southern City boundary. These regulations protect and preserve the natural, scenic, recreational, and transportation resources of this section of the Mississippi River. Originally designated in 1976, local communities within the corridor are required to complete a MRCCA plan as a chapter of their Comprehensive Plan. The Critical Area Plan for South St. Paul is intended to serve as both a separate document and also as a part of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The MRCCA was designated by Governor's Executive Order in 1976, following the passage of the Minnesota Critical Areas Act of 1973. On January 4, 2017, Minnesota Rules, chapter 6106 replaced Executive Order 79-19, which previously governed land use in the MRCCA. The rules require local governments to update their MRCCA plans and MRCCA ordinances for consistency with the rules. The MRCCA is important because it contains many significant natural and cultural resources, including: scenic views, water, navigational capabilities, geology and soils, vegetation, minerals, flora and fauna, cultural and historic resources and land and water based recreational resources. The MRCCA is home to a full range of residential neighborhoods and parks, as well as river-related commerce, industry, and transportation. A brief timeline of the MRCCA history is as follows:

Figure 10.1: MRCCA in South St. Paul



Mississippi National River and Recreation Area established in 1988

The MNRRA shares the same boundary as the MRCCA, and the park's Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), signed by the Governor and Secretary of the Interior, incorporates by reference the MRCCA program for land use management. The MNRRA largely relies on the MRCCA to manage land use within the park. This reliance establishes a unique partnership and framework for land use management amongst the local, state and federal governments to protect the intrinsic resources of the Mississippi River Corridor.)

- » **1973** - Minnesota passes Critical Areas Act of 1973 (MN Statutes, Chapter 116G) Environmental Quality Board (EQB) adopts rules to implement Act (MN Rules, parts 4410.8100 – 4410.9910)
- » **1976** - Mississippi River and adjacent corridor designated a state critical area by Governor Wendell Anderson (Executive Order No. 130)
- » **1979** - Designation continued by Governor Albert Quie (Executive Order 79-19) Metropolitan Council acts to make designation permanent (Resolution 79-48)
- » **1988** - In 1988, the U.S. Congress established the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), a unit of the National Park System.
- » **1991** - MNRRA designated a state critical area per Critical Areas Act (MN Statutes, section 116G.15)
- » **1995** - Responsibility shifts from EQB to Department of Natural Resources (DNR) by Governor Arne Carlson (Reorganization Order 170)
- » **2007** - Legislature directs DNR to prepare report on the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (Completed January 2008)
- » **2009** - Legislature amends MN Statutes, section 116G.15 and directs DNR to conduct rule making for the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MN Laws 2009, Chapter 172, Article 2, Section 5.e.)
- » **2011** - DNR develops draft rule after participatory stakeholder process, but rule making authority lapses
- » **2013** - Legislature directs DNR to resume rule making process in consultation with local governments
- » **2017** - Rules become effective January 4.

Progress Towards the 2030 Plan

Since the completion of the original Critical Area Plan completed in 1979, the land uses have changed dramatically within the corridor. The Economic Development Authority (EDA) and its predecessor, the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), have actively acquired and removed a number of blighted buildings and unsuitable businesses from the corridor. The focus of these activities has been the areas of the corridor formerly occupied by the stockyards and meat packing plants. Through these activities, the City and the EDA/HRA have created the BridgePoint Business Park. New companies with higher aesthetic standards have been constructed within the corridor area. The Business Park will continue to be an area for new industrial/commercial development and the expansion of existing businesses.



Aspects of Sustainability:

- » Environment
- » Budget/Economy

Elements Shaping the Critical Area

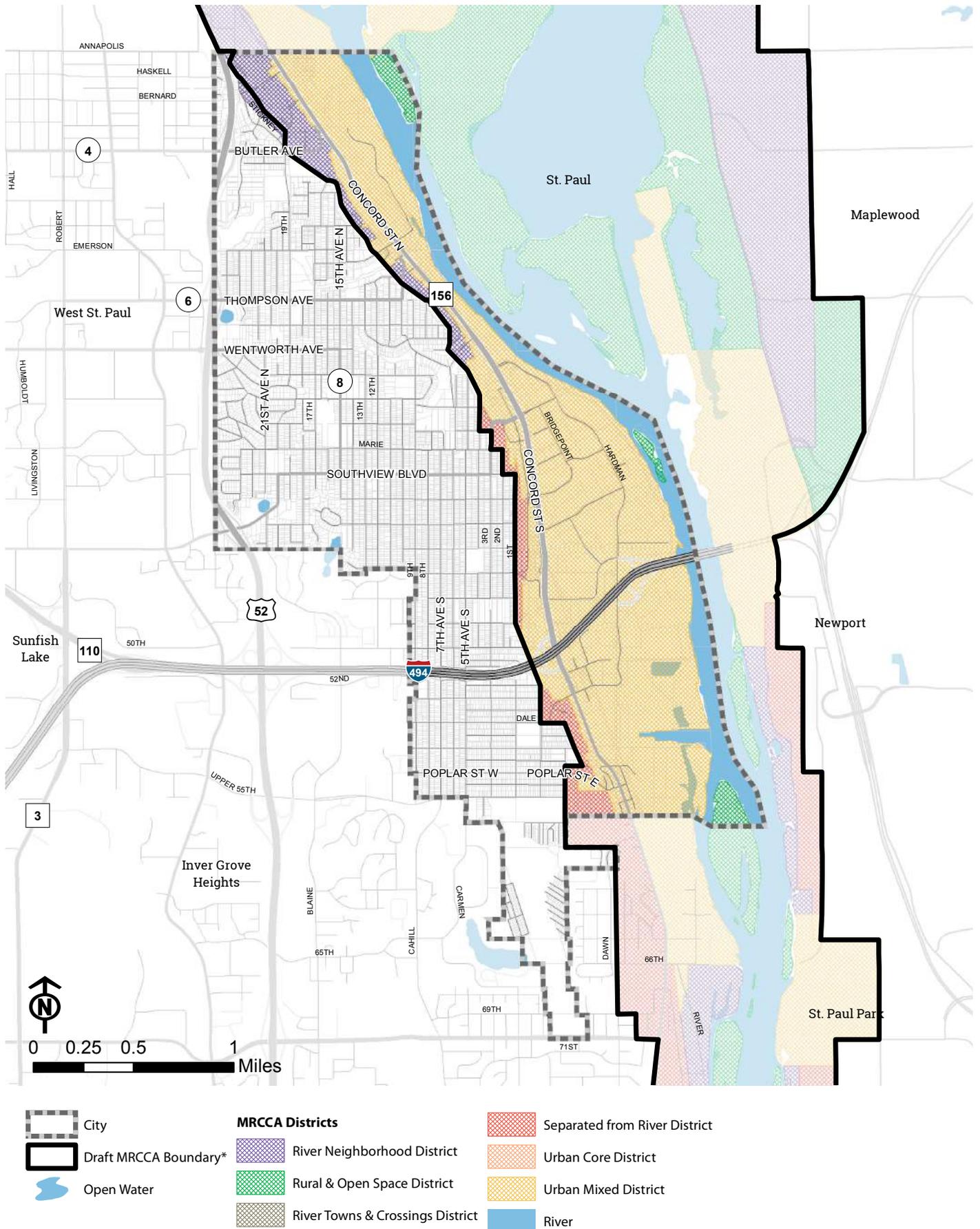
MRCCA Districts

Six districts are defined in the MRCCA rules. The districts are based on the natural and built character of different areas of the river corridor. Structure setbacks, height limits, and the amount of open space required for subdivisions vary by district. All other MRCCA standards apply uniformly throughout the corridor. The presence and diversity of the districts supports the different dimensional standards needed to enhance the corridor's character and to protect the resources and features identified for special protection.

The Critical Area Corridor map shows the boundary within South St. Paul. It can generally be described as the east 1,000 feet of the community bordering the river and including a portion of the Mississippi River. The Critical Area Corridor in South St. Paul is comprised of four districts: 1) Urban Mixed District, 2) River Neighborhood District, 3) Rural & Open Space District, and 4) Separated from River District. The description and management purposes of each of these districts is as follows:

- » **Rural and Open Space District:** The rural and open space district (CA-ROS) is characterized by rural and low-density development patterns and land uses, and includes land that is riparian or visible from the river, as well as large, undeveloped tracts of high ecological and scenic value, floodplain, and undeveloped islands. Many primary conservation areas exist in the district. The CA-ROS district must be managed to sustain and restore the rural and natural character of the corridor and to protect and enhance habitat, parks and open space, public river corridor views, and scenic, natural, and historic areas.
- » **Separated from River District:** The separated from river district (CA-SR) is characterized by its physical and visual distance from the Mississippi River. The district includes land separated from the river by distance, topography, development, or a transportation corridor. The land in this district is not readily visible from the Mississippi River. The CA-SR district provides flexibility in managing development without negatively affecting the key resources and features of the river corridor. Minimizing negative impacts to primary conservation areas and minimizing erosion and flow of untreated storm water into the Mississippi River are priorities in the district.

Figure 10.2: MRCCA Districts in South St. Paul



- » **River Neighborhood District:** The river neighborhood district (CA-RN) is characterized by primarily residential neighborhoods that are riparian or readily visible from the river or that abut riparian parkland. The district includes parks and open space, limited commercial development, marinas, and related land uses. The CA-RN district must be managed to maintain the character of the river corridor within the context of existing residential and related neighborhood development, and to protect and enhance habitat, parks and open space, public river corridor views, and scenic, natural, and historic areas. Minimizing erosion and the flow of untreated storm water into the river and enhancing habitat and shoreline vegetation are priorities in the district.
- » **Urban Mixed District:** The urban mixed district (CA-UM) includes large areas of highly urbanized mixed use that are a part of the urban fabric of the river corridor, including institutional, commercial, industrial, and residential areas and parks and open space. The CA-UM district must be managed in a manner that allows for future growth and potential transition of intensely developed areas that does not negatively affect public river corridor views and that protects bluffs and floodplains. Restoring and enhancing bluff and shoreline habitat, minimizing erosion and flow of untreated storm water into the river, and providing public access to and public views of the river are priorities in the district.

The land uses found within the Critical Area corridor within South St. Paul include small lot residential, commercial, industrial and park/public uses. In addition to the above uses located on land, use of the river for barge fleeting and recreational enjoyment are also permitted within the City's stretch of the river. Current ordinances limit barge fleeting within the City limits to three locations.

The Critical Area/MNRRRA corridor is greatly affected by the presence of the Union Pacific Railroad rail yard. Their main line exits South St. Paul to the south adjacent to the Mississippi River levy. The available large parcels of vacant land are zoned industrial and were the sites of the Armour and Swift Meat Packing plants. The Housing and Redevelopment Authority has spent millions of dollars acquiring and remediating these sites.

Future land uses within the corridor will continue to be commercial and industrial in nature, with the addition of river recreational areas (Figure 10.3). The Future Land Uses within the MNRRRA area are based on the overall land use plan noted in the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. The City's Future Land Use plan would have more intensive types of industrial uses (exterior storage, manufacturing, processing, etc.) being located away from the actual riverfront and away from Interstate 494.

As discussed in the Land Use chapter, the City has placed a renewed emphasis on the redevelopment of Concord Street and on the type and aesthetics of uses in the 494 Corridor. Other objectives identified as part of this goal include placing overhead power lines underground, uniform streetscaping, landscaping, and improved sidewalks and trails.

The Critical Area is the key to the City's economic well-being. Industrial and Commercial development opportunities are located within the corridor. The City's zoning allows commercial and industrial development of many types to occur within the corridor. It is anticipated by the City that the future commercial/industrial expansion area will not be dependent upon river usage. Because the City is aggressively promoting a regional park and trails system along the riverfront, the City will not promote the development of businesses that are dependent upon river access and usage. It is the City's position that current barge fleeting areas are sufficient, and thus, there is no need to encourage fleeting intensification. Any greater intensification could be detrimental to the river corridor.

Aspect of Sustainability:

» Environment



Primary Conservation Areas

Primary Conservation Areas (PCAs) are defined in the MRCCA rules as key resources and features that are given priority consideration for protection. PCAs include shore impact zones, floodplains, wetlands, natural drainage routes, bluff impact zones, gorges, areas of confluence, native plant communities, significant existing vegetative stands, tree canopies, cultural and historic properties, unstable soils and bedrock, and other identified resources.

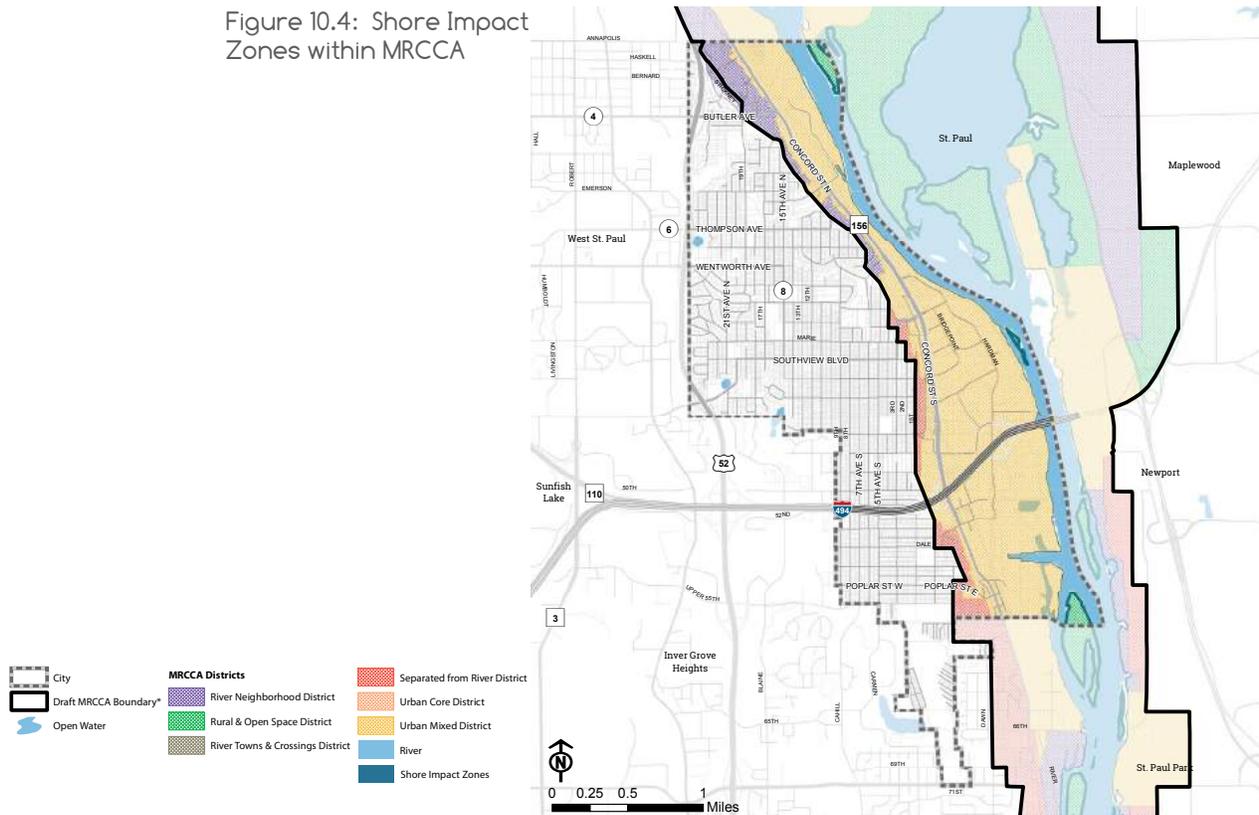
The Critical Area/MNRRRA Corridor within the City is highly manipulated and urbanized. There are very few natural features remaining within the corridor. The remaining natural features are those areas along the river that have been unsuitable for development due to the presence of water and the ravines with their slopes exceeding 15%.

Shore Impact Zone

The land along the water's edge is environmentally sensitive and needs special protection from development and vegetation removal. The shore impact zone is a "buffer" area between the water's edge and the area where development is permitted (see illustration at left as pulled from the [MRCCA Rules, 11](#)).

The shore impact zone along South St. Paul's boundary with Mississippi River varies in depth depending on the MRCCA District that it lies within. The shore impact zone is at its deepest depth within the Rural and Open Space District and narrowest within the Urban Mixed District. The shore impact zone does not lie within the Separated from River District.

Figure 10.4: Shore Impact Zones within MRCCA



Floodplains and Wetlands

Wetlands are transitional lands between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water. Floodplains are the areas adjoining a watercourse which have been or may be covered by large floods that typically occur on an average frequency in the magnitude of the 100-year recurrence interval.

The islands in eastern South St. Paul that are surrounded by the Mississippi River are all covered by the floodway and floodplain. Much the area within MRCCA south of I-494 is also covered by the floodplain. In the northern portion of South St. Paul the floodplain follows the railroad tracks and covers a small portion of land near the northern border.

Wetlands within the Critical Area are mostly found south of I-494 and east of the railroad tracks surrounding the industrial and barge fleeting areas.

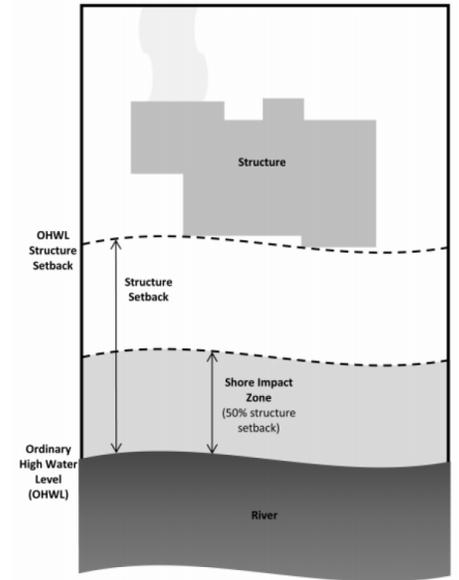
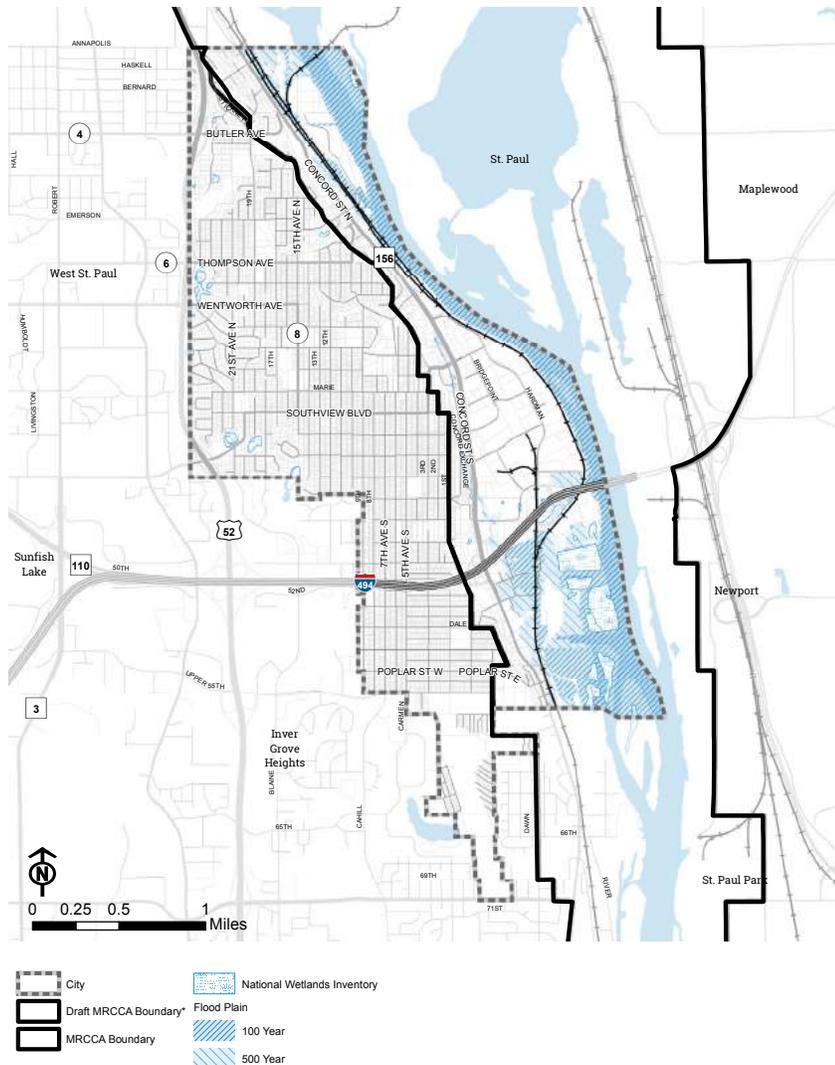


Figure 10.5: Floodplains and Wetlands within MRCCA

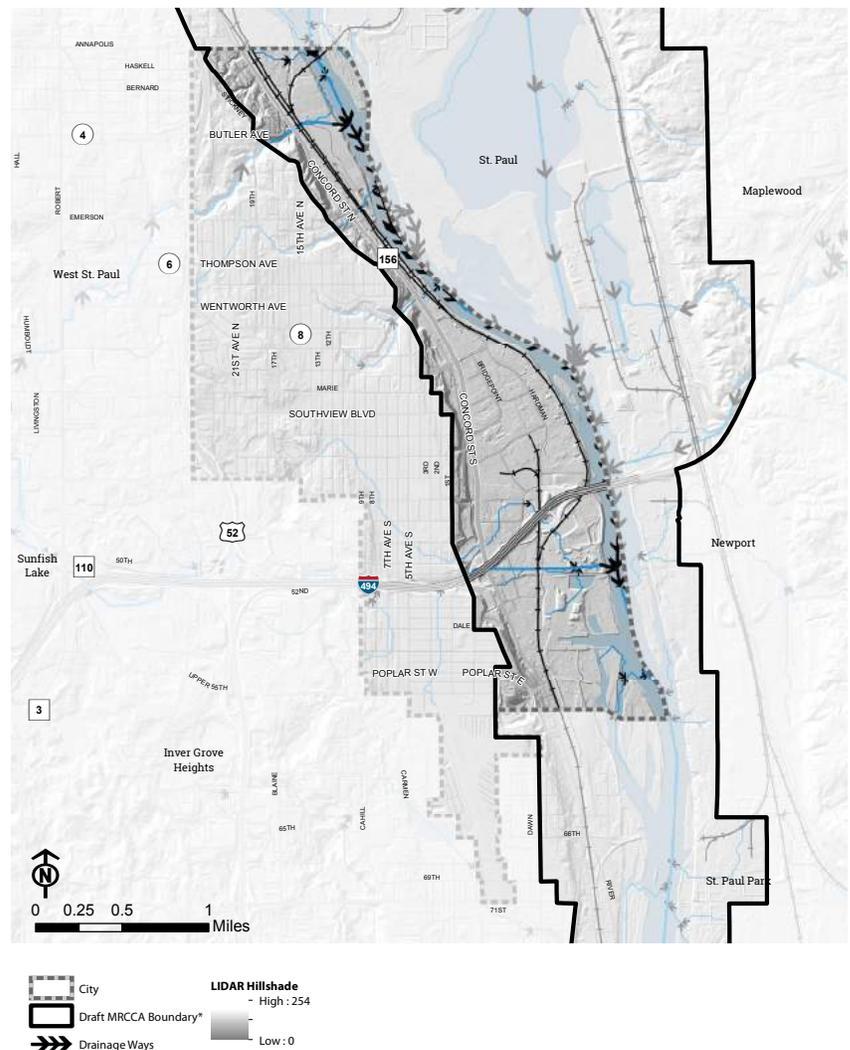


Natural Drainage Ways

Natural drainage ways are natural open linear depressions which function for the collection and drainage of surface water. They may be permanently or temporarily inundated. The liquids flow under the force of gravity.

Three distinct smaller seasonal drainage courses can be found in valleys of bluff topography within the MRCCA in South St. Paul. The most prominent follows the valley of Simon's Ravine. The other two are located north of Thompson Avenue and near Wentworth Avenue.

Figure 10.6: Natural Drainage Ways within MRCCA

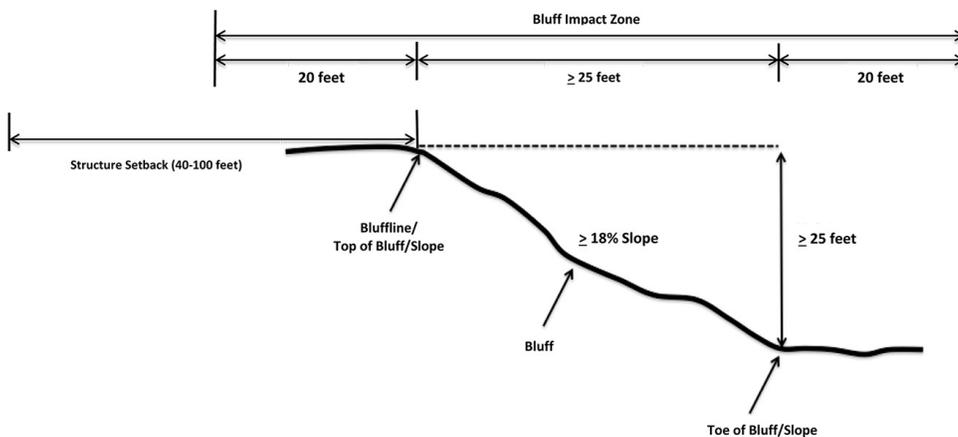
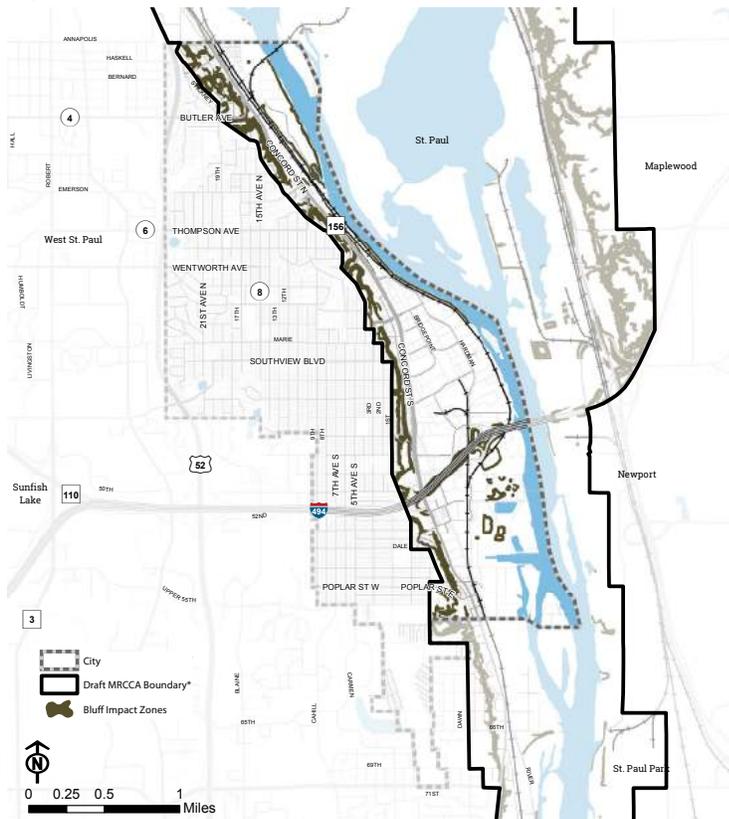


Bluffs & Bluff Impact Zones

MRCCA rules define a bluff as a natural topographic feature having a slope that rises at least 25 feet and the grade of the slope averages 18 percent or greater, measured over a horizontal distance of 25 feet. A bluff impact zone means the bluff and land within 20 feet of the bluff.

Generally, bluffs within the MRCCA in South St. Paul closely follow the MRCCA boundary. They separate the western part of South St. Paul from the riverfront, railroad, Concord St., and the commercial/industrial area. The bluff impact zone may have potential impacts on future development in South Concord, North Concord, and the Concord Gateway Mixed-Use District are due to shallow parcel depth and close proximity to the toe of the bluff.

Figure 10.7: Bluff Impact Zones within MRCCA



Aspect of Sustainability:

» Environment

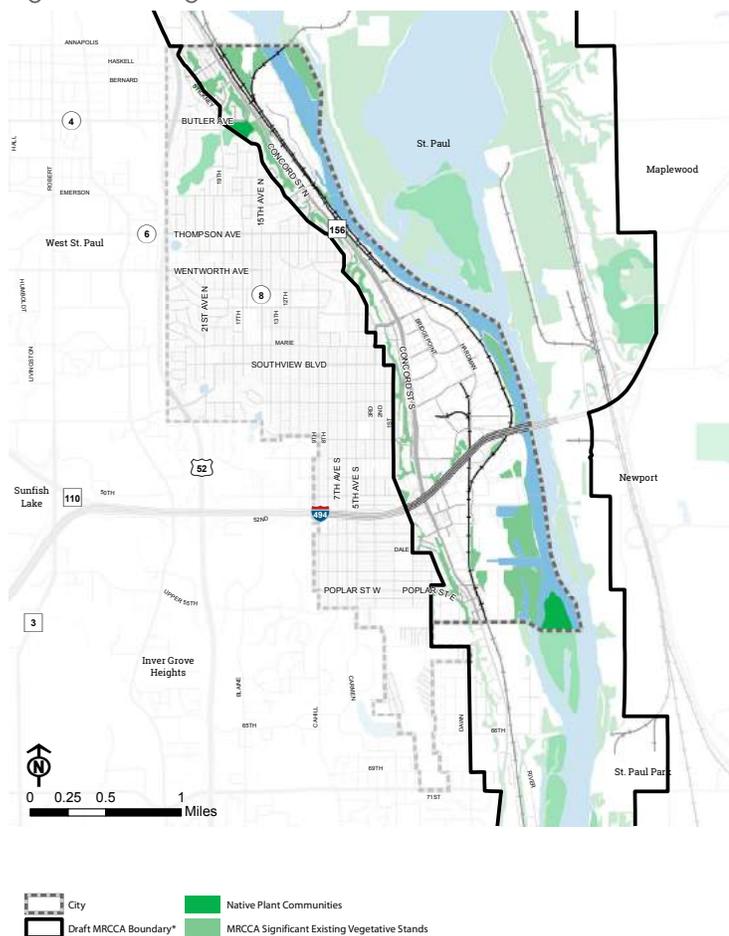


Native Plant Communities & Significant Vegetative Stands

Native plant communities are plant communities that have been identified as part of the Minnesota biological survey. They represent the highest quality native plant communities remaining in the MRCCA. Significant vegetative stands are plant communities identified by the National Park Service that are largely intact and connected and contain a sufficient representation of the original native plant community. Much of this vegetation contributes to the scenic value of the MRCCA.

Because of its fully developed nature, vegetation is limited within the MRCCA in South St. Paul. Besides the one located on the most southern island in the Mississippi River, the only identified natural plant community within South St. Paul exists within Simon’s Ravine. Other significant existing vegetative stands exist along the bluff areas and around the barge fleeting area south of I-494.

Figure 10.8: Vegetation within MRCCA



Cultural & Historic Properties

Historic properties are properties with features such as an archaeological site, standing structure, site, district, or other property that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the State Register of Historic Places, locally designated as a historic site, or are determined to meet the criteria for eligibility.

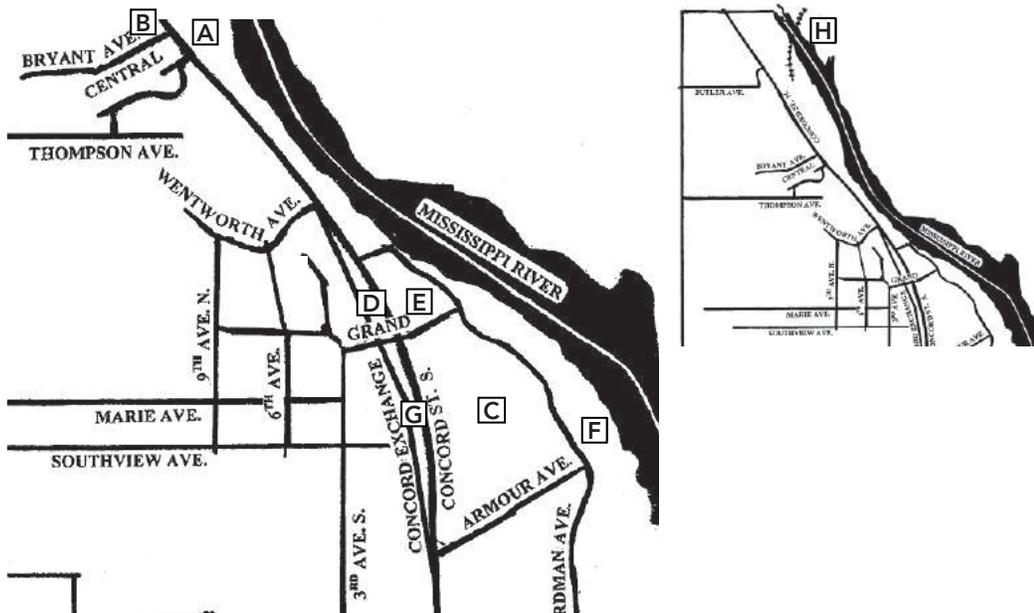
The City of South St. Paul has a rich history as a River City. The following structures and/or sites, identified by the Dakota County Historical Society and City of South St. Paul* (locations shown in Figure 10.9) have played an important role in South St. Paul's cultural and founding history:



Aspect of Sustainability:

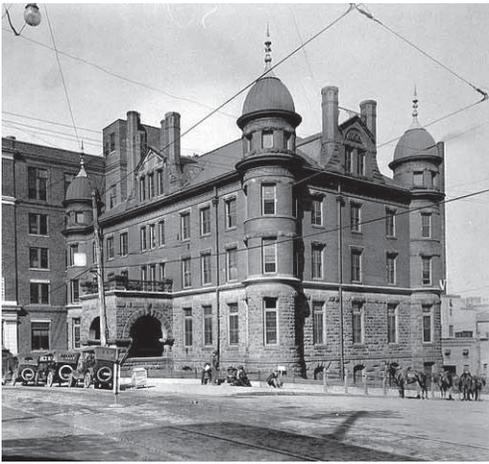
» Land Use/Buildings

Figure 10.9: Cultural and Historic Properties in MRCCA



- » **A - Village of Kaposia:** The Dakota Indian village occupied several sites within the city between 1826 and 1853.
- » **B - Bryant Block in South Park:** In 1886 C. W. Clark envisioned a planned community in northern South St. Paul, "South Park". The Odd Fellows Hall still stands as an apartment building.
- » **C - The Stockyards Location:** Located in the natural hub of one of the nation's most productive livestock and agricultural areas, South St. Paul's public market opened in 1886 and served as the pulse of the Northwest livestock economy. The location has now been transformed into a business park.
- » **D - Stockyards Exchange Building:** The Stockyards Exchange building is the only building within the MRCCA in South St. Paul that is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Stockyards Exchange building is a Victorian brick commercial building constructed in 1887 as base of operations for Minnesota's large meat-packing industry. It housed commission firms, railroad offices, banks, a post office, a radio station, and a temporary city hall.

* This information has been adapted from "Some memorable places in the history of the City of South St. Paul" prepared by W. G. Wolston and the Dakota County Historical Society in Cooperation with the City of South St. Paul.



Stockyards Exchange Building in 1928



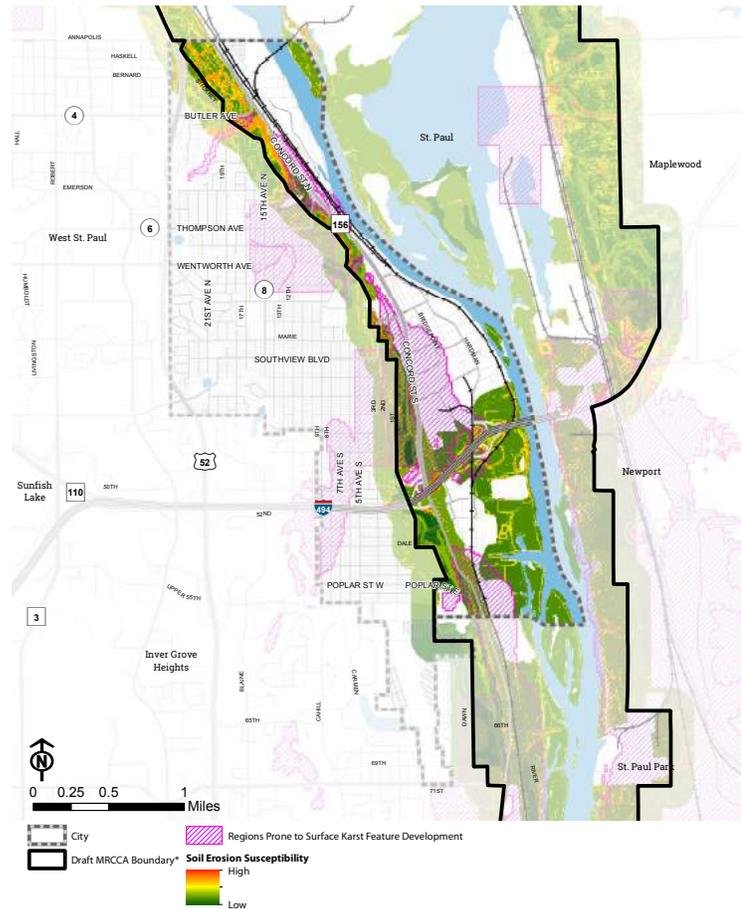
Stockyards Exchange Building Today (Located by marker "D")

- » **E - Swift and Co.:** Chicago's Swift & Co. established a meat packing plant in 1897.
- » **F - Armour & Co.:** The brick gates, which opened to the Armour & Company meat packing plant, were built in 1919 and are still standing. The plant was a state-of-the-art meat packing plant.
- » **G - Concord Street:** Concord Street is one of South St. Paul's most historic places. Some historic buildings survive today. Downtown South St. Paul was at Concord and Grand.
- » **H - St. Paul Bridge and Terminal Railway:** Built in 1907, this Mississippi River bridge and 5 miles of track provided essential stockyards services.

Unstable Soils & Bedrock

Soil is mixture of sand, gravel, silts, clay, water, and air. The stability of soil can be attributed to the mix of these ingredients and other factors that cause frost action, high saturation depth, steep slopes, low soil strength, ponding, high shrink-swell rates, subsidence and other soil stability issues. Bedrock is the lithified rock that lies underneath loose deposits such as soil or alluvium. Karst formations are a form of unstable bedrock and are areas where sinkholes, springs, caverns, and stream sinks may exist.

Figure 10.10: Unstable Soils and Bedrock within MRCCA



Soils within the MRCCA in South St. Paul are generally stable. The majority of soils with high erosion susceptibility exist along the bluffs following the MRCCA boundary in the northern portion of South St. Paul. Multiple locations within South St. Paul lie within a region prone to surface karst feature development. This particular karst area unit is the Prairie du Chien Group and the St. Peter Sandstone Group and is identified by the Minnesota Karst Lands map which defines areas underlain by carbonate bedrock with less than 50 feet of sediment cover. No known Karst formations have been identified in South St. Paul.

Public River Corridor Views

Public river corridor views (PRCVs) are views toward the river from public parkland, historic properties, and public overlooks, as well as views toward bluffs from the ordinary high water level of the opposite shore, as seen during the summer months. PRCVs are deemed highly valued by the community and are worth protecting because of the aesthetic value they bring to the MRCCA.

The views highlighted as a part of this plan were reviewed by the public during the draft plan feedback stage of engagement.

As part of Met Council's six-month adjacent community plan review process South St. Paul will consider comments from St. Paul (Ramsey County) and Newport (Washington County) about the views they valued looking across the river to bluffs in South St. Paul.

Views Toward the River from Public Places

There are a number of sites along South St. Paul that allow for viewing the river: Grandview Park, Kaposia Landing park, the DNR boat launch and fishing pier, various locations along the Mississippi River Regional Trail, and the pedestrian overpass at Grand Avenue. Section 118-167 of the City's zoning ordinance requires preservation of views to the river from properties and the public right of way.

The view towards the river shown in Figure 10.12 was taken from the southern end of Kaposia Landing Park (see Figure 10.11). This view from a public place looks south along the Mississippi River towards the former stockyards now turned business park. There are a number of factors that make this view valuable. First, this view features an up close shot of the river and barge fleeting locations along the Mississippi River. The fleeting locations remind visitors that the Mississippi is a “working” river, home to much of the region’s freight movement. Second, the bluffs located across the river in Newport provide a natural backdrop to the river.

Future changes that would negatively impact this view include large scale vegetative clearing of bluffs and shoreline across the river and the addition of major river crossings.

Figure 10.11: Map of View 1 Toward the River from a Public Place



Figure 10.12: View 1 Toward the River from a Public Place



The view towards the river shown in Figure 10.133 was taken from the Mississippi River Regional Trail near the Union Pacific Railroad yard office (near the intersection of Concord Street North and Hardman Avenue, see Figure 10.14). This view looks north along the Mississippi River towards the swing bridge crossing near the northern border of South St. Paul. This view is valuable because it is long and expansive and features an historic piece of railroad infrastructure. This bridge was built by the Saint Paul Bridge and Terminal Company and opened in 1910. Closer views of this bridge exist within Kaposia Landing Park, but this view provides an expansive context. Visitors can occasionally watch aircraft land at Fleming Field in St. Paul.

Future changes that would negatively impact this view include the removal of the swing bridge, vertical barriers along the Mississippi River Regional Trail, any type of infrastructure crossing the river between this location and the swing bridge.

Figure 10.13: View 2 Toward the River from a Public Place



Figure 10.14: Map of View 2 Toward the River from a Public Place

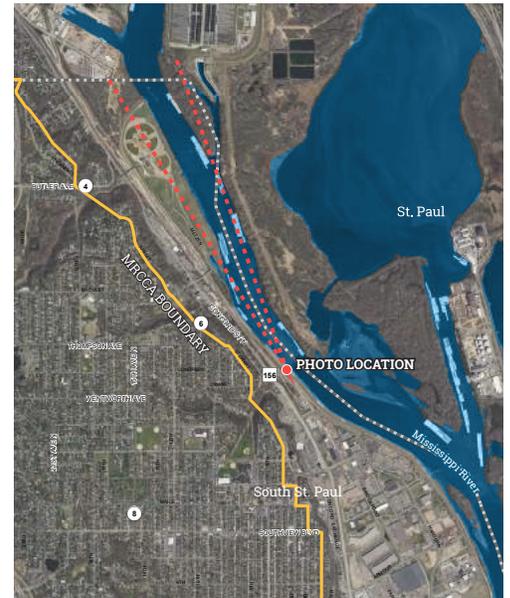


Figure 10.15: View 3 Toward the River from a Public Place



The view towards the river shown in Figure 10.15 was taken from the Mississippi River Regional Trail near the spiral bridge at Grand Ave. (see Figure 10.16). This view looks north along the Mississippi River towards downtown St. Paul. This view is valuable because the downtown St. Paul skyline is framed in this view by the natural island landscape to the east and the vegetated bluffs of South St. Paul to the west. The skyline rising above Kaposia Landing Park in this view reminds visitors how close they are to the urban environment even though they are surrounded by natural amenities.

Future changes that would negatively impact this view include the construction of structures (over 50') tall in Kaposia Landing Park, large scale vegetative clearing along the bluffs and/or islands, the addition of vertical barriers along the Mississippi River Regional Trail.

The view towards the river shown in Figure 10.17 was taken from the DNR boat launch area located just south of I-494 (see Figure 10.18). This view looks northeast across the river, underneath the Wakota Bridge (I-494). This view, while not as expansive as the others, is valuable because of the juxtaposition that is created between the immense, man-made bridge infrastructure investment and the natural

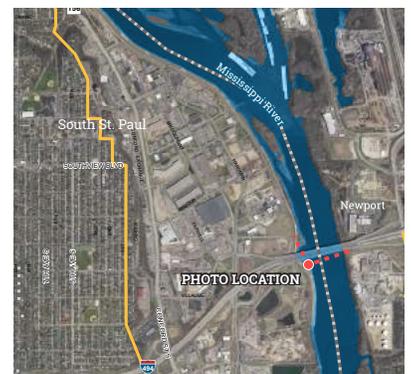
Figure 10.17: View 4 Toward the River from a Public Place



Figure 10.16: Map of View 3 Toward the River from a Public Place



Figure 10.18: Map of View 4 Toward the River from a Public Place



setting of the trees along the Mississippi River. The wide spans of the bridge allow for better views underneath the bridge.

Future changes that would negatively impact this view include large scale vegetative clearing along the shore of the river, the removal of the fishing pier at the boat launch, and any type of deferred/outstanding maintenance to the Wakota Bridge.

The view towards the river shown in Figure 10.21 was taken from Grandview Park (see Figure 10.20). This view looks northeast across the Mississippi River valley. This view is valuable because of its expansiveness and largely natural setting. Various man-made structures peek out of the vegetated horizon including 3M's world headquarters. Trains, trucks, cars, barges, and planes can all be seen from this overlook.

Future changes that would negatively impact this view include the addition of bulky/view obstructing structures along the Mississippi River shore line, large scale vegetative clearing along the shore of the river and the bluff line, and the addition of major river crossings at this location.

Figure 10.21: View 5 Toward the River from a Public Place



Views Towards Bluffs from the Ordinary High Water Line of the Opposite Shore

Access to the Ordinary High Water Line (OHWL) of the opposite shore is very limited. These views are primarily accessible by boaters, canoers, kayakers, and other river users. The primary location for seeing views toward the bluffs in South St. Paul from the opposite shore is shown in Figure 10.19. The bluff area in the north part of South St. Paul is highlighted.

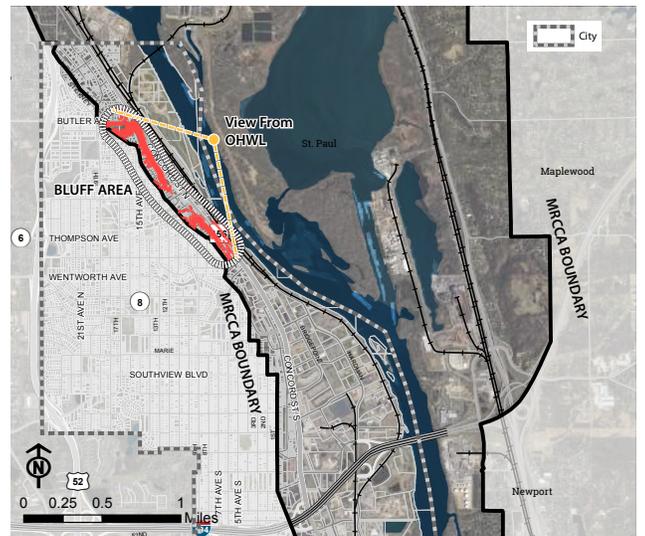
This particular view of bluffs in South St. Paul is valuable because it provides a natural backdrop to the historic buildings and industry of this Mississippi River community.

Changes that would negatively affect this view include extensive vegetative clearing of land along the bluffs and large scale utility or transportation crossing of the river.

Figure 10.20: Map of View 5 Toward the River from a Public Place



Figure 10.19: Location of View Towards Bluffs from the OHWL of the Opposite Shore



The Bryant/Concord area is planned for mixed use redevelopment which would be along Concord and the developable area on Bryant. Building heights are currently restricted with buildings taller than 50 requiring a CUP (min. is 24'). The most likely impacts in MRCCA are setbacks from the toe of the bluff (BIZ) but it's possible a building could be proposed that would exceed 50 feet. Existing vegetated bluff areas are not planned to be developed, just the area below the bluff and going up Bryant.

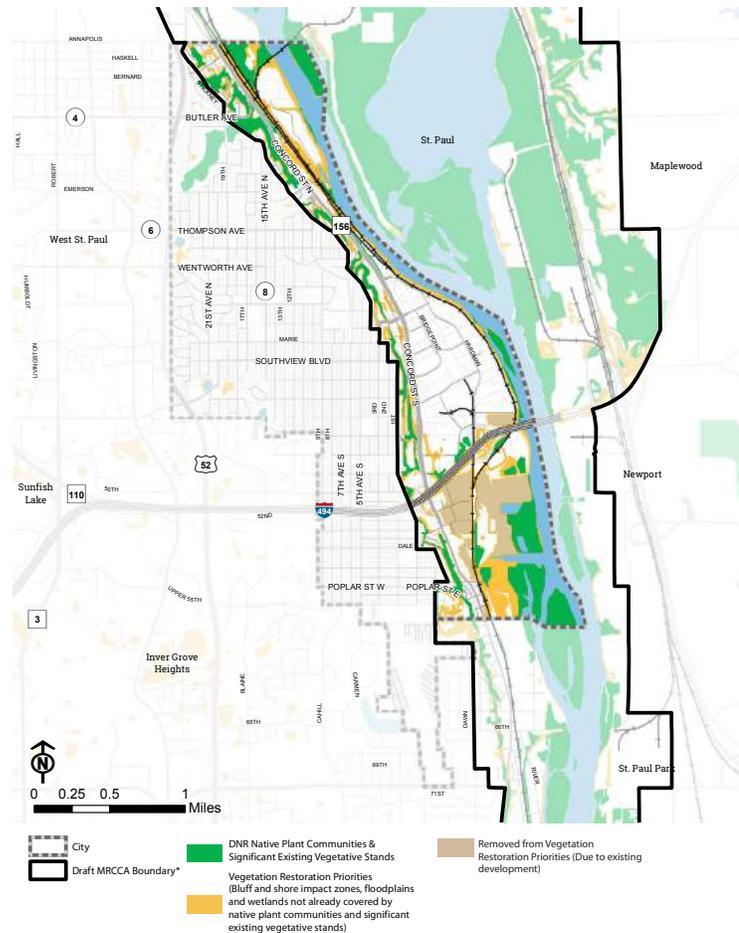
Priorities for Restoration

Vegetation restoration priority areas are areas where bluff and shore impact zones, floodplains, and wetlands exist, but are not already covered with native plant communities and significant existing vegetative stands. These areas represent opportunities to restore natural vegetation, prevent erosion, and stabilize slopes and banks. Restoration measures are often needed to maintain resource integrity and water quality.



Aspect of Sustainability:
» Environment

Figure 10.22: MRCCA Restoration Priorities



As shown in Figure 10.22, the largest, most contiguous area for potential vegetation restoration exists south of I-494 within the area covered by the flood plain. Most of the property in the BridgePoint area and south of I-494 is already developed. Currently within this area there is a mix of wetlands, industrial properties, and barge fleeting. There are opportunities for restoration near the river and future development/redevelopment could utilize native landscaping to prevent erosion and help development better blend into the riverfront setting. Other areas suitable for vegetation restoration include the area around Kaposia Landing in the north part of South St. Paul and the areas not covered by vegetation within the bluff impact zone.

Surface Water Uses

Surface water uses along the Mississippi River range from commercial and industrial to recreational and may include barge fleeting, marinas, boat tours, seaplaning, and paddle share. These uses provide both economic and enjoyment benefits as well as external impacts such as traffic, conflicting hours of operation, noise, and surface water use that need to be managed to minimize conflicts.

Potential surface water use conflicts that may exist within South St. Paul include the mixing of recreational water users arriving via the DNR public boat launch and the barges hauling freight up and down the river. Recreational and commercial uses have existed together on the river for centuries and have posed no major conflicts as long as both are operated responsibly. Both of these uses provide economic and recreational value to the river and are important to preserve. Posting barge traffic safety tips at all public and private boat launches can educate the public about responsible watercraft operation around barges and tow boats.

Barge fleeting is controlled by City Code (Chapter 118, Article V, Division III, [118-291 - 118-296]). Barge fleeting areas on the Mississippi within South St. Paul primarily exist in 3 specified locations within the City at the southern end of Kaposia Landing Park. Many other barge fleeting areas also exist on the opposite shore of the river, outside of South St. Paul city limits. No new barge fleeting areas are proposed within the City limits of South St. Paul. The existing barge fleeting areas have minimal impact on the primary conservation areas that exist within South St. Paul.

Water Oriented Uses

Water-oriented uses along the Mississippi River range from commercial and industrial to recreational and may include barge terminals, marinas, boat tour docks, and paddle share launch areas. These uses provide both economic and enjoyment benefits as well as external impacts such as traffic, conflicting hours of operation, noise, and surface water use that need to be managed to minimize conflicts.



Aspect of Sustainability:

» Budget/Economy

Planned Trailhead

The City of South St. Paul, in collaboration with Dakota County, is planning to construct The Wakota Trailhead and Overlook adjacent to the public boat launch and community garden at the DNR Boat Launch Site. The Wakota Trailhead and Overlook along the Mississippi River will provide picnic facilities, restrooms, water fountain, bicycle fix-it station, fish cleaning station, wayfinding, and interpretation. The existing parking lot will be improved with five additional stalls and the parking lot currently shared with the community garden will be paved and re-striped to efficiently park 44 vehicles.

The project includes native landscape restoration and improved site aesthetics. Trail improvements will include providing a new connection from the trailhead to the terminus of the existing trail off of the Interstate 494 Wakota Bridge that connects to Washington County. Currently, trail users trying to navigate between the Mississippi River Regional Trail (MRRT) and the Interstate 494 Wakota Bridge trail can only access the site by merging with motorized traffic onto Verderosa Avenue, a two-lane road, and crossing a shared railroad crossing. The project also includes a separate multi-use trail from the trailhead to the Mississippi River Regional Trail so users can avoid conflicts with boaters using the MnDNR Boat Launch.

Reconstruction and expansion of an existing overlook located approximately 0.25 miles south of the proposed trailhead will provide trail users with views of the river. Today, erosion is impacting the overlook's stability; replacement and stabilization of this amenity is needed for the continued use of the overlook. The improvements will also address ADA accessibility, with a widened trail and accessible-height railing at the overlook. Site interpretation and wayfinding will be replaced and improved to reflect recent plans for the Mississippi River Regional Trail.

The primary water oriented use within South St. Paul is the barge terminal facility located at the southern border of the City. This facility imports and exports a variety of goods and is accessed by semi-truck and rail for land transport. There is also a DNR boat launch in South St. Paul within the MRCCA located just south of I-494. The boat launch includes 38 truck and trailer parking spots (2 handicap), approximately 9 standard parking spots (1 handicap), a pier fishing area, and a barrier free concrete platform boat launch.

The barge terminal facility, owned by Kinder Morgan and known locally as Dakota Bulk Terminal, is important to South St. Paul because it is an integral part of South St. Paul's river economy. The Dakota Bulk property is approximately 93 acres (including the 13 acres of water/ barge slip) making it the second largest land use behind the South St. Paul Fleming Field Airport. The DNR boat launch in South St. Paul is important because of the public recreational access and connection it provides to the Mississippi River for South St. Paul residents.

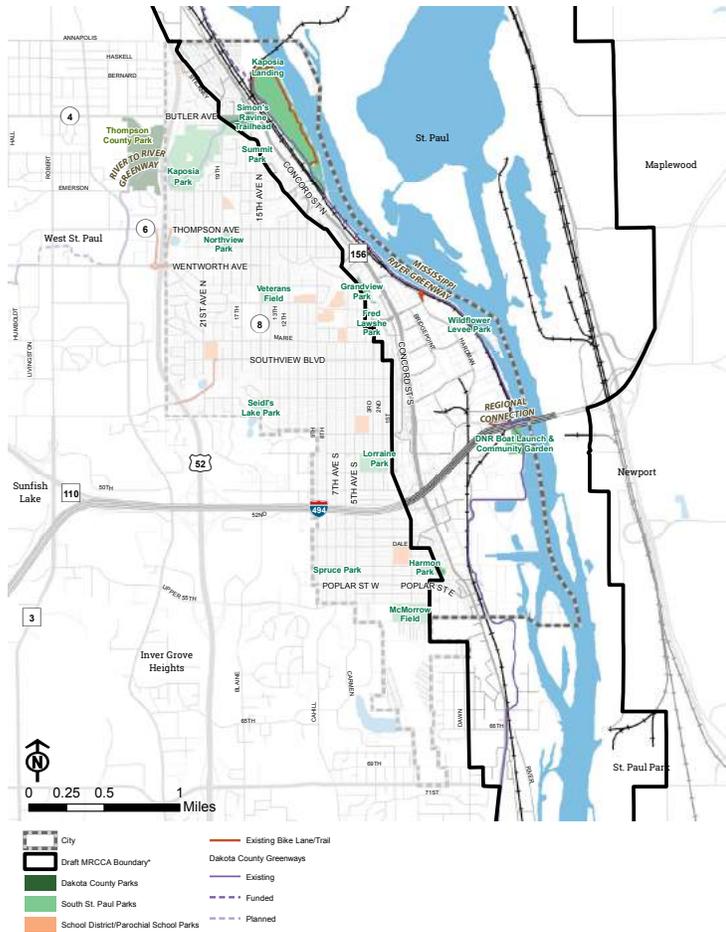
Open Space and Recreational Facilities

Open space and recreational facilities include features such as parks, trails, scenic overlooks, natural areas, islands, and wildlife areas. These features add to the quality of a community and increase opportunities for the public to access and enjoy the Mississippi River Corridor.

As seen in Figure 10.23, seven different parks and recreational facilities exist within the MRCCA boundary in South St. Paul. The largest facility is Kaposia Landing Park. This is South St. Paul's newest park, established in 2008. Kaposia Landing Park hosts a 6.3 acre off-leash dog area, river overlooks, and almost two miles of interior paved trails. In 2017, five new athletic fields for softball and baseball opened in addition to a centrally-located concession and restroom building on the north end of the park. Other parks within the MRCCA include:

- » Simon's Ravine Trailhead
- » Grandview Park
- » Fred Lawshe Park
- » Wildflower Levee Park
- » Harmon Park (eastern portion)
- » DNR Boat Launch

Figure 10.23: Open Space and Recreational Facilities within MRCCA



The Mississippi River Regional Trail runs along almost the entirety of South St. Paul's shore. This is a regional trail that connects South St. Paul with much of Dakota County and surrounding counties. A new trailhead is being planned for by the DNR Boar Launch. A northward expansion of the trail to connect South St. Paul with St. Paul is planned by Dakota County to begin work in 2019. The eastern portion of the River to River Greenway Trail is located within the MRCCA. This trail connects through Simon's Ravine to Kaposia Park, Thompson County Park, and West St. Paul. The completed trail would provide a loop trail for the northern Dakota County area connecting the River-to-River Greenway to the MRRT trail.



Aspect of Sustainability:

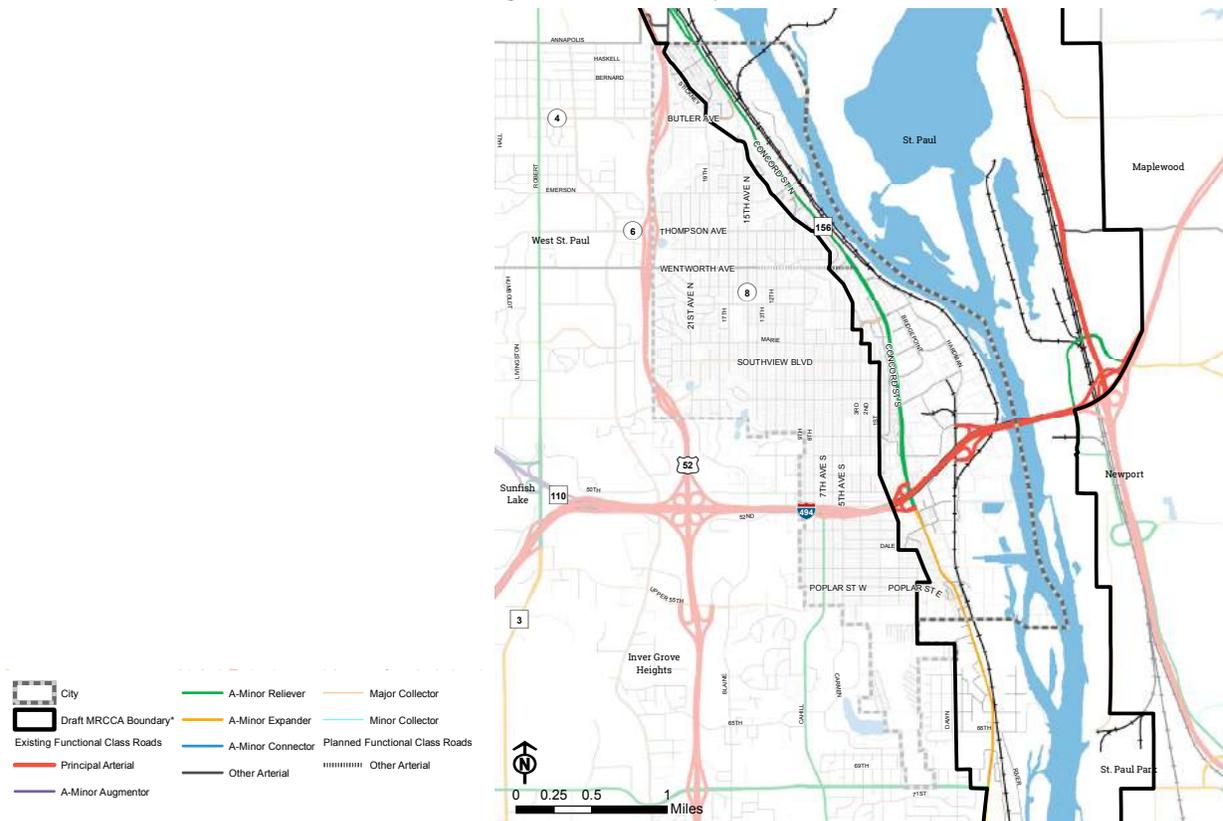
- » Environment
- » Energy

Transportation & Public Utilities

Transportation and utility facilities (electricity, gas, water, sewer, stormwater) can have negative impacts on scenic views and habitat and soil erosion. Proper development of these facilities can minimize their impacts on the MRCCA.

Within the City boundaries, there are two transportation and one utility crossing. Interstate 494 (seen in Figure 10.24) crosses the river at the Wakota Bridge.

Figure 10.24: Transportation Facilities within MRCCA



On the north end of the City, the Union Pacific rail line crosses the river to the north and east on a metal swing bridge. It is unknown at this time if the railroad will expand or improve this bridge within the planning window.

Access to Mississippi River Regional Trail (shown in Figure 10.23) is limited to four locations within South St. Paul because of its location along the levee, east of the railroad tracks. The trail can be accessed at Kaposia Landing Park, the spiral bridge at the end of Grand Ave., the DNR boat launch, and at the southern end of Hardman Ave. Any future expansion of South St. Paul’s non-motorized transportation network should improve access and connections to the regional trail network.

There are currently no planned future functional class roadways within the MRCCA in South St. Paul.

The single utility crossing is located near Interstate 494 and contains high voltage power lines owned by Xcel Energy. Section 118-167(j) regulates utility crossings. The City intends to work with Xcel to maintain the aesthetics of the corridor by enforcing its standards.

There are currently no existing or planned power generating facilities, including solar farms and wind generation, within the MRCCA in South St. Paul. However, there is City property just north of Kaposia Landing that the City may want to consider for future development or as a potential solar farm site. The property currently has no street access without going through adjacent properties located to the north or east, which have access from Barge Channel Road. The limited access and condition of the property may not immediately be suitable for development, but may be suitable for a solar farm as either a temporary or a permanent use. The solar farm concept would need more study to determine viability.

Essential services (including the generation and transmission of power) are allowed as a conditional use in all zoning districts in South St. Paul. Large scale/commercial electric power generation facilities are not addressed in the zoning code. Depending on their location, new power generating and power transmission uses can negatively affect the aesthetic quality of public river corridor views and impact primary conservation areas (such as vegetative clearing or bluff alteration). Careful consideration during the conditional permit review process will be given if these uses are introduced to the MRCCA.

Issues & Opportunities

There are a number of problems and opportunities within the corridor that must be overcome in order to fulfill the City's vision, and particularly for Concord Street. The zoning standards outside of the industrial district do not require extensive landscaping or beautification of properties, and some uses within the corridor, while permitted, may not help to implement the City's ultimate vision for the corridor.

Public access to the water itself is greatly restricted by the presence of flood control structures. Access is limited to the DNR boat launch south of the Interstate 494 bridge. The flood control structure also prevents the construction of industry within the Bridge Point Business Park that requires access to the water. South of Interstate 494, there are opportunities for industrial development that could access the river. Sites close to the river, however, have been identified for future recreational use or the preservation of river habitat and vegetation. Said future recreational uses shall be designed to create minimal alteration, protect existing vegetative and wetland areas, promote re-vegetation, and require additional landscaping, consistent with habitat and vegetation for the Critical Area/MNRRRA Corridor.

Critical Area (MRCCA) Goals and Policies

The future of the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area within South St. Paul will depend on community wide planning as well as those efforts specifically targeted for the corridor. The Comprehensive Plan establishes policies that attempt to better link the Critical Area to the rest of the community. The Critical Area Plan takes a more focused view, prescribing policies intended to meet the goals of Minnesota Rules Chapter 6106 as well as some that advance MNRRA plan goals.

Goal

Goal 10.1: Preserve and enhance the natural, aesthetic, economic, recreational, cultural, and historical values of the Mississippi River corridor within South St. Paul and protect its environmentally sensitive areas.

Policies

Land Use Policies

Policy 10.1.1: South St. Paul will guide land use and development and redevelopment activities within the MRCCA boundary to be consistent with the management purpose of the CA-RN, CA-SR, and CA-UM districts.

Primary Conservation Areas (PCA) Policies

Policy 10.1.2: South St. Paul will protect and minimize impacts from public and private development and land use activities to the existing Primary Conservation Areas which include floodplains, bluffs and bluff impact zones, shore impact zones, natural drainage ways, unstable soils and bedrock, and Native Plant Communities and existing vegetative stands.

Policy 10.1.3: South St. Paul will support mitigation of impacts to PCAs through subdivisions/PUDs, variances, Conditional Use Permits, and other permits.

Policy 10.1.4: South St. Paul will make restoration of removed Native Plant Communities and natural vegetation in riparian areas a high priority during development.

Policy 10.1.5: South St. Paul will support alternative design standards that protect South St. Paul's identified PCAs, such as conservation design, transfer of development density, or other zoning and site design techniques that achieve better protections or restoration of PCAs.

Policy 10.1.6: South St. Paul will make permanent measures (such as public acquisition, conservation easement, deed restrictions, etc.) that protect PCAs a high priority.

Aspect of Sustainability:

» Environment



Aspect of Sustainability:

» Environment



Public River Corridor Views (PRCV) Policies

- Policy 10.1.7: South St. Paul will protect and minimize impacts to PRCVs from public and private development activities.
- Policy 10.1.8: South St. Paul will protect and minimize impacts to PRCVs from vegetation management activities.
- Policy 10.1.9: South St. Paul will protect PRCVs located within the community and identified by other communities.
- Policy 10.1.10: The City shall ensure that the location and siting of new structures will keep bluffs and scenic overlooks in their natural state.

Restoration Priorities Policies

Sustaining and enhancing the ecological functions (habitat value) of vegetation is important for the MRCCA and is a goal for the restoration of new vegetation and existing degraded vegetation in South St. Paul.

- Policy 10.1.11: South St. Paul will protect native and existing vegetation during the development process and require its restoration if any is removed by development. Priorities for restoration shall include stabilization of erodible soils, riparian buffers, and bluffs or steep slopes visible from the river.
- Policy 10.1.12: South St. Paul will seek opportunities to restore vegetation to protect and enhance PRCVs identified in this plan.
- Policy 10.1.13: South St. Paul will seek opportunities to restore vegetation in restoration priority areas identified in this plan through the CUP, variance, vegetation permit, and subdivision/PUD processes.
- Policy 10.1.14: South St. Paul will evaluate proposed development sites for erosion prevention and bank and slope stabilization issues and require restoration as part of the development process.

Surface Water Uses Policies

- Policy 10.1.15: South St. Paul will seek to balance commercial and recreational surface water uses.
- Policy 10.1.16: Barge fleeting locations will continue to be controlled by City Code (Chapter 118, Article V, Division III, [118-291 - 118-296]) and will continue to have minimal impact on PCAs.

Water-Oriented Uses Policies

- Policy 10.1.17: South St. Paul recognizes the Mississippi River as a “working river” that is important to the economy of the Twin Cities metropolitan area and the Midwest.
- Policy 10.1.18: South St. Paul will seek to minimize potential conflicts of water-oriented uses with other land uses and surface water uses.
- Policy 10.1.19: Encourage the utilization of private marinas for public connection and access to the river.
- Policy 10.1.20: Enhance existing marinas and other water-oriented uses through site design improvements.

Open Space & Recreational Facilities Policies

- Policy 10.1.21: South St. Paul will encourage the creation, connection, and maintenance of open space and recreational facilities, including public access to the river.
- Policy 10.1.22: South St. Paul will provide a park and recreation system that offers physical and visual connections to the river, including connection of CA-SR district land to existing and planned parks and trails.
- Policy 10.1.23: South St. Paul will provide trail links to regional trail systems and trails maintained by adjacent municipalities.
- Policy 10.1.24: South St. Paul will encourage that land dedication requirements be used to acquire land suitable for public river access.

Transportation & Utilities Policies

- Policy 10.1.25: South St. Paul will minimize impacts to PCAs and PRCVs from solar and wind generation facilities, public transportation facilities, and public utilities.

Implementation Actions

Ordinance Updates

- Action 10.1: Amend existing MRCCA ordinance /overlay district for consistency with the goals and policies of the MRCCA plan and with Minnesota rules, part 6106.0070, Subp. 5 – Contents of Ordinances.
- Action 10.2: Amend zoning map to reflect new districts.
- Action 10.3: Incorporate specific design and placement conditions that minimize impacts to PCAs and PRCVs into local permits for solar and wind generation facilities and essential and transmission services.
- Action 10.4: Provide for water-oriented uses.

Ordinance Administration

Action 10.5: Establish procedures and criteria for processing applications to ensure compliance with MRCCA dimensional and design standards and to evaluate potential impacts to PCAs and PRCVs, including:

- » Identifying the information that must be submitted and how it will be evaluated,
- » Determining appropriate mitigation procedures/methods for variances and CUPs, and
- » Establishing evaluation criteria for protecting PCAs when a development site contains multiple types of PCAs and the total area of PCAs exceed the required set aside percentages.

Action 10.6: Develop administrative procedures for integrating DNR and local permitting of riprap, walls, and other hard armoring.

Action 10.7: Actively communicate with other communities to protect views they have identified in South St. Paul that are valuable and vice versa.

Action 10.8: Establish a vegetation permitting process that includes permit review procedures to ensure consideration of restoration priorities identified in this plan in permit issuance, as well as standard conditions requiring vegetation restoration for those priority areas.

Action 10.9: Establish a process for evaluating priorities for natural vegetation restoration, erosion prevention, and bank and slope stabilization, or other restoration priorities identified in this plan in CUP, variances, and subdivision/PUD processes.

Action 10.10: Develop a visual analysis approach for CUPs for additional height in the CA-UM district, as well as for proposed PUDs and variances.

Action 10.11: Develop a system for reviewing, tracking, and monitoring open space set-aside and/or dedicated as part of the subdivision/PUD process.

Education & Outreach

Action 10.12: Ensure that information on the new MRCCA districts and zoning requirements, and the location of PCAs, PRCVs, and restoration priorities is readily available to property owners to help them understand which ordinance requirements - such as setbacks, height, vegetation management, and land alteration permits - apply to their property for project planning and permitting. Specific actions may include:

- » Develop an outreach and communication strategy to alert MRCCA property owners of new districts and zoning requirements, and the location of PCAs, PRCVs, and restoration priorities.
- » In cooperation with Dakota County, develop web materials (mapping applications, FAQs, handouts, and other materials) to help property owners identify if their property is in the MRCCA and what regulations apply.
- » Provide information to residents and park and facility users that these facilities are in the MRCCA, including information on what the MRCCA is and ways in which the resources are being protected.

Capital Improvements

Action 10.13: Include facilities in the capital improvement program for parks and open space facilities and transportation facilities.

Land Acquisition

Action 10.14: Utilize the Comprehensive Plan as a guide for the acquisition, development, and redevelopment of park and recreation facilities.

Specific Planning Efforts, Projects, & Initiative

Action 10.15: Coordinate with regional, state, and national park planning efforts within the MRCCA.