Section I

Vision, purpose and background

This section presents the guiding vision for this work, describes the area over which the recommendations from this Plan are to be applied, and provides a brief overview of the history and current characteristics of the project area.

In this section:

1.1 - Vision and purpose
1.2 - Geographic area
1.3 - History and perspective
1.4 - Past planning efforts
1.5 - Demographic characteristics
1.1 Vision and purpose

Improving the area of 38th and Chicago has been an important priority for residents, businesses, neighborhood organizations and community leaders for many years. This Small Area / Corridor Framework Plan builds on the work that has already been carried out by these organizations and individuals, and presents new ideas and strategies with the aim of catalyzing and supporting the improvement and revitalization of this area.

Our vision

“38th Street and Chicago Avenue will be vital corridors and places in our City. They will be hubs for prosperous, inviting, healthy, safe and artful communities, unique places and destinations where people connect with each other and have the opportunity to grow and develop socially, artistically, economically and ethically.”

The purpose of this Plan

The purpose for this work is to support the ongoing improvement and revitalization of the area of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue by providing a clear guiding vision for our future.

This document prepares and proposes specific changes and elements for the future development of 38th and Chicago. Our goal is for the City of Minneapolis to adopt this Small Area / Corridor Framework Plan as official City policy guiding the evolution of this area.

What we value

This Plan seeks to attract and support development that:
- Furthers local economic development and wealth creation
- Enhances sustainability
- Recognizes and respects community diversity
- Encourages and supports pedestrian orientation
- Provides needed amenities
- Improves public safety and deters crime
- Includes the arts as a means for community connection
- Encourages safe and healthy lifestyles
- Fosters a sense of community

Vision is more than just a good idea - it is vocation and purpose in action.

Our goals

The recommendations included in this document will help us to:
- Strengthen commercial investment in the neighborhood
- Support new and existing businesses
- Attract housing improvement and development
- Retain and attract residents
- Improve public infrastructure and the quality of the built environment
- Promote connections with each other
- Build the assets of our community together

Our strategies and approach

- Use an asset-based approach; identify our assets and build on them
- Engage existing businesses, residents, and government partners
- Find a community consensus
- Craft a doable vision that responds to evolving community goals
- Identify incremental steps for improvement in the short, medium, and long-term
1.2 Geographic area

The work in this project is centered on the intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, extending along Chicago Avenue between 31st Street on the north and 40th Street on the south, and along 38th Street between 16th Avenue on the east and 2nd Avenue (adjacent to Interstate 35W) on the west.
Focus Areas and Framework

Six Focus Areas are identified in this Plan and are explored in greater detail in Section 2, where specific recommendations for each are presented. Three of those areas (shown with a star in the map above) are identified as “Neighborhood Commercial Nodes” by the Minneapolis Plan. The two principal nodes explored include the area around the intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, and the area around 38th Street and 4th Avenue South, near Sabathani Community Center.

Minneapolis Plan designations

The Minneapolis Plan is the comprehensive policy document guiding development in the City of Minneapolis. It identifies both 38th Street and Chicago Avenue as “Community Corridors,” and designates the area surrounding the intersections of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, 38th Street and 4th Avenue, and 38th Street and Bloomington Avenue as “Neighborhood Commercial Nodes.” The recommendations included in this Plan are meant to support and supplement those policies specified in the Minneapolis Plan.

Community organizations working in the project area

- Bryant Neighborhood Organization (BNO)
- Bancroft Neighborhood Association (BNA)
- Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization (CANDO)
- Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association (PPNA)
- The 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Business Association
- 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Task Force
1.3 History and perspective

Beginnings

The story of Minneapolis begins in a place called Gakaabikaang ("at the falls") by the Ojibwe people and Minirara ("curling water") by the Dakota - what we now know as Saint Anthony Falls. That name was given to the falls by Father Louis Hennepin, who in 1680 became the first European to view them.

The westward colonization and expansion of the United States led to the establishment of Fort Snelling in 1819, spurring the displacement of the area’s native population and the growth of nearby villages and towns. In 1822 a lumber mill serving the fort was built on the falls, and a more permanent settlement established in the 1840s. The village of St. Anthony grew on the northeast side of the Mississippi River, just outside of Fort Snelling’s jurisdiction.

Colonel John H. Stevens, who operated a ferry service starting around 1850, was the first person officially authorized to live on the river’s west bank. A few years later, the amount of land controlled by the fort was reduced by order of US President Millard Fillmore, and free European settlement of the area followed; the village of Minneapolis soon sprung up on the southwest bank of the river. The village of St. Anthony was incorporated by the Minnesota Territorial Legislature in 1855, and Minneapolis followed in 1856.

Minneapolis grew quickly during and after the Civil War, becoming a city in 1867 and merging with St. Anthony five years later in 1872. The city’s early growth was directed by the Mississippi River - most early streets were run parallel to the river to maximize the amount of land available for speculation and development. As the city continued to grow away from the river, a more traditional north-south/east-west orientation was adopted. Some streets, especially many of the older and more traditionally important ones, like Hennepin Avenue and Nicollet Avenue, have both orientations at different points along their course.

Following an initial burst of activity in the lumber industry the city’s economy developed around the processing of grain from the Great Plains. Minneapolis became the leading grain producer in the world (until about 1932), and was popularly known as the “milling capital of the world.”

DID YOU KNOW?
The thirty years between 1860 and 1890 were the most rapid period of growth in the history of Minneapolis. That period saw a sixty-four fold increase in population and a corresponding increase in the city’s boundaries: in 1872, the southern boundary for the City was near present day Franklin Avenue; by 1887, this boundary had moved past present-day 54th Street.
**Development of 38th Street**

Settlement of the “southside” of Minneapolis began in earnest in the 1880s. By 1890 heavy settlement had extended to Lake Street, with scattered homes as far as 34th Street.

The area around East 38th Street was incorporated into the City of Minneapolis between 1883 and 1887 - 38th Street was in fact the boundary between those two annexations, with the land north of 38th being included in the 1883 annexation and the land south of 38th being annexed in 1887. Houses were built just north of 38th Street in the 1890s and south of the street in the 1900s.

During this same time, the largest wave of European immigrants arrived into Minneapolis. Many were new to the United States, while others were the offspring of Scandinavian and German immigrant farmers moving to the city to seek their fortunes (about two thirds were Scandinavian and the rest German and Irish). Until the 1890s most immigrants to Minnesota came from northern and western European countries, while by 1900 many came from Italy and Greece, and Poland and other eastern European countries. In 1890 Minneapolis had about 60,000 foreign-born residents (close to 37% of the city’s total population).

By 1930, Swedes had become the largest foreign-born group in every section of Minneapolis, and were heavily concentrated in the areas of and around 38th Street and Chicago Avenue. Much of the project area’s residential housing stock and commercial structures were developed as housing and businesses for these populations during the peak expansion of lumber, railroads and flour milling in Minneapolis.

A unique aspect of the project area is that it includes one of two traditional population centers for the Minneapolis Black community.

African American people now make up about 20% of the Minneapolis population. However, in the early days of the city the situation was much different: in 1930 the total Black population of Minneapolis summed 4,176 people. Minneapolis African Americans tended to concentrate in two areas - on the near north side of the city and on the south side near Fourth Avenue South and 38th Street. This area was a strong magnet for African American families as they migrated to Minnesota, especially around the time of World War II and after. During the 1960s it was also a
haven to families displaced from St. Paul’s Rondo neighborhood by the construction of Interstate 94.

Many important institutions serving Minneapolis’s Black community have had a long-term presence here, including the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder (first published by Cecil E. Newman in 1934), Sabathani Center (founded in 1966 as a small grassroots organization serving African American youth in South Minneapolis), and the Minneapolis Urban League (working since 1926 to assist African-American people in overcoming obstacles in employment, education, housing, health care and social services).

A hot spot of African American culture and arts, the area has continued to welcome national and international immigrants. New arrivals include Latino, East African and Asian families, who, like those before them, are contributing their energies and talents to the vitality of this community.

**DECLINE ...**

Like many central city neighborhoods nationwide, the area of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue experienced a period of decline beginning in the 1950s. The causes are many, but most have to do with national policies that limited investments in the city while favoring suburbanization: redlining, freeway construction, and economic disinvestment all played a role in drawing out some of the economic and civic vitality of 38th and Chicago and nearby areas.

**... AND IMPROVEMENT**

Improvement, however, is just around the corner. Cities are in the midst of a renaissance as some of these damaging policies are corrected and funds are made available for addressing the damage that was done. More importantly, people are recognizing the value of cities as places for economic, civic and cultural interchange, for growth and connection, and for building the kind of society that recognizes the value and worth of all individuals and communities.

This Plan represents one more step taken to improve our community: a summary and articulation of the kind of place we want to create for ourselves, our children and our neighbors. Working together, it is possible to support and enhance what is working, to correct what is not, and to build a framework that will help us make our place a better place to live in, visit, and enjoy.

**THE ROLE OF TRANSIT**

Transit has always played an important role in the development and success of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street.

The intersection of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street was an important intersection and transfer point in the Minneapolis streetcar transit network. As a result, most of the initial commercial development in the project area took place adjacent to it (and to the 4th Avenue and Bloomington Avenue lines).

Today, the Chicago Avenue bus line, the Number 5, is the oldest bus line in Minneapolis and has the highest level of ridership of any line in the city.

The future also holds great promise: Chicago Avenue has been identified in the City of Minneapolis’ 10-Year Transportation Action Plan as part of a “Primary Transit Network” where buses will run at 15 minute frequencies for 18 hours every day. Additionally, the City’s recently completed Streetcar Feasibility Study is recommending the provision of a new streetcar line connecting Downtown to 38th Street along Chicago Avenue.

38th Street is also a vital connector. As one of the city’s original streetcar lines, 38th Street has always been a major east-west transit route, and today is positioned to play an important role linking the existing Hiawatha Light Rail station and a proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station on I-35W at 38th Street.
1.4 Past planning efforts

Community residents and leaders, business owners, neighborhood organizations and elected officials have been working, for several years, on making improvements to the area of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue. Several studies and plans have been completed in the past with this goal. Hundreds of people have, over the years, contributed their insights and ideas to these documents.

Some of the plans reviewed in the preparation of this document are listed here as they contain useful ideas and important contributions from citizens that participated in their preparation. They include:

**38th Street and Chicago Avenue Community Development Plan**
Community Design Group, March 2006
The 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Community Development Plan is the basis for the work included in this Small Area / Corridor Framework Plan.

This document presents a vision for improvement that includes and expands upon the earlier “Reimagining 38th and Chicago” work completed by Minnesota Renaissance Initiative. It includes specific strategies to:
- Expand economic participation of existing residents and businesses,
- Improve the physical realm of 38th and Chicago, and
- Prioritize improvements for the short, medium and long term.

Adopted by all four area neighborhoods and by the 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Business Association and the 38th and Chicago Task Force, the document summarizes a vision that has been in preparation for several years. The document also includes a set of urban design guidelines, a guide to loans and grants available to new and existing businesses in the area, and additional economic development resources.

**Corridor Housing Initiative**
Center for Neighborhoods, December 2006
The 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Community Development Plan was selected for the Center for Neighborhood’s Corridor Housing Initiative (CHI) in August 2006. The Corridor Housing Initiative

**From earlier plans: recurring issues and recommendations**
- Improve the physical realm
- Strengthen pedestrian orientation
- Support small business creation
- Revitalize economic activity
- Start a cooperative business
- Work with and involve young people
- Connect with parks and other assets
- Transit network is an asset
- Become a “place” or destination
- Promote affordable and market-rate housing
- Reclaim surface parking lots
- Promote infill and mixed-use development
Initiative, a partnership among neighborhoods, the City of Minneapolis, and development consultants, aims to support neighborhoods as they explore housing choices for a mix of incomes and households, with access to transportation options, retail amenities, parks, and job opportunities. CHI used the urban design guidelines developed as part of the Community Development Plan to illustrate and begin a conversation about ensuring inclusion of community goals as components of the development process.

**Reimagining 38th and Chicago**

*Minnesota Renaissance Initiative, March 2005*

This document gathered the comments and opinions of residents, business owners and civic leaders on some of the challenges and opportunities facing the 38th Street and Chicago Avenue intersection. Initially formed to look at issues of African American economic development in the area, the Initiative’s January 28 2004 kick-off meeting became the foundation for the development of a consensus-derived, widely held vision for improvement. Including consideration of physical improvement, economic empowerment and development, social connection and arts-infused community development, this vision document was adopted by Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association and Bancroft Neighborhood Association as the foundation for the 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Community Development Plan.

**East 38th Street Economic Enhancement and Urban Design Plan**

*Biko Associates, December 2000*

The East 38th Street Economic Enhancement and Urban Design Plan was prepared for the Bryant Village Initiative (BVI) and the four neighborhood organizations adjacent to 38th Street. Sponsored by Bryant Neighborhood Organization (BNO), the plan addressed revitalization and redevelopment along East 38th Street, and identified locations where residential and commercial development could occur. Additionally, it presented specific recommendations addressing transportation, the public realm, and urban design.

**East 38th Street Development Study**

*Gretchen Rapp, January 1999*

The focus of this study is the condition and potential of 38th Street in its entirety, as it moves from just east of the Lakes to the Mississippi River. The report pays special attention to the

---

**The Bancroft Survey**

Bancroft neighborhood residents participated in a survey in the summer of 2005 where they expressed their thoughts about the kind of changes they would like to see in their community.

Among their responses, residents indicated that they would like to have a hardware store, a drugstore, and a grocery store nearby.

Their top priorities for development within Bancroft include:
- Improving business exteriors
- Increasing police protection
- Improving sidewalks, boulevards and streetscapes
- Increasing youth and family programming

---

**At a Corridor Housing Initiative meeting in October 2006.**

**Members of the 38th and Chicago Business Association discussing ideas for improvement at a January 2005 workshop.**
commercial nodes along the street, and makes several important observations concerning assets and challenges for improvement of this corridor. It includes a number of resident, business, and neighborhood leader surveys, and presents a set of recommendations for improvement.

**38TH STREET MARKET STUDY**  
*Frances President-Allen, September 1998*

This study focuses on the potential and strategies for revitalization of the commercial node at 38th Street and 4th Avenue. Using the 1996 “Market Study of Neighborhood Commercial Areas and Nodes” by Economic Research Corporation (discussed below) and a 1996 feasibility study for a co-op grocery store at that location (“the Markham report”) as its departure point, it includes discussion of relevant characteristics from those documents, data from census studies and results from a number of resident surveys.

**PHILLIPS/CENTRAL/POWDERHORN PARK SMALL AREA PLAN**  
*Minneapolis Planning Department, January 1997*

Although the area covered by this plan is mostly outside of that covered by the 38th and Chicago Small Area / Corridor Framework Plan, some of the observations and implementation strategies outlined are applicable to this work.

**MARKET STUDY OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL AREAS AND NODES**  
*Economic Research Corporation, June 1996*

This study is one of the more comprehensive surveys of the state and circumstances of the City’s many neighborhood commercial nodes. The framework and observations in the report continue to have validity and influence over the planning decisions affecting our city today. The report draws many important conclusions, among which the following figure prominently:

- Neighborhood commercial areas need to be able to generate or attract sufficient dollars to remain viable. A trade area population of 10,000 people or more is needed to support the types and variety of neighborhood-oriented uses needed for a strong commercial area.

- A minimum of 40,000 square feet of convenience and neighborhood-oriented retail uses is needed to provide a good range of goods and services desired by neighborhood residents.

- A concentration of complimentary retail and service uses provides a synergistic effect and ends up attracting a larger number of people, who are able to combine activities and purchases in a single trip.

- Strong anchors such as supermarkets and drug stores attract the largest number of customers on a regular basis and have the potential of attracting customers from outside the immediate trade area.

- On-street parking provides the perception of convenience for a business’s potential customers.

- Security and safety concerns affect the development potential of many neighborhood commercial areas.

- Locations with high activity levels, traffic on the street, on-street parking, and good lighting attract new development.

**CHICAGO AVENUE CORRIDOR PROJECT**  
*Scott Wende Architects, December 1994*

Though more than ten years old, the observations contained in this report are helpful to understanding the condition and prospects of Chicago Avenue today. This study used a comprehensive approach examining issues of economic development, land use, urban design, transportation, and parks and open space, and included a listing of assets, goals and objectives to guide future development. It also included a block-by-block examination of Chicago Avenue from 24th Street to 40th Street and site-specific recommendations for improvement.

**OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS**

- The Minneapolis Plan: a comprehensive policy document guiding the City’s development.
- The Minneapolis Zoning Code of Ordinances: the primary tool used to implement the policies of the city’s Comprehensive Plan in a manner that protects the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of Minneapolis.
1.5 Demographic characteristics

The area included in this project lies inside the four neighborhoods surrounding 38th Street and Chicago Avenue: Bancroft, Bryant, Central, and Powderhorn Park. Given that a significant portion of those neighborhoods is included within a 1/4 mile (5 minute walk) and a 1/2 mile (10 minute walk) radius from the intersection and the corridors themselves, the demographic data presented here combines information for the four neighborhoods.

### SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic area</th>
<th>Project area</th>
<th>Minneapolis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total area (square miles)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks, lakes, and green space (square miles)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Project area</th>
<th>Minneapolis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>23,502</td>
<td>382,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>8,130</td>
<td>162,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>4,739</td>
<td>73,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (all individuals under 18)</td>
<td>7,477</td>
<td>84,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School age children, teenagers and young adults (ages 5 to 22)</td>
<td>6,838</td>
<td>89,597</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data source: 2000 US Census*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Project area</th>
<th>Minneapolis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>8,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7,354</td>
<td>68,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>4,659</td>
<td>29,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian and Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1,516</td>
<td>23,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>9,621</td>
<td>249,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total non-White</td>
<td>13,881</td>
<td>133,432</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data source: 2000 US Census*

**Census household or family?**
- A “household” is a person or group of people occupying a housing unit.
- A “family household” consists of a householder (the person who owns or rents the housing unit) and one or more people living together in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.
- A “non-family household” is a person living alone or a householder who shares the home with non-relatives only.
### Economics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project area</th>
<th>Minneapolis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median family income</td>
<td>$36,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$36,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families living below the poverty line</td>
<td>915 (19.0% of total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children living in poverty</td>
<td>2,351 (32.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed workers</td>
<td>854 (7.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data source: 2000 US Census*

### Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project area</th>
<th>Minneapolis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of housing units</td>
<td>8,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant units</td>
<td>448 (5.2% of total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied units</td>
<td>4,550 (56.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter-occupied units</td>
<td>3,580 (44.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data source: 2000 US Census*

A fact that might surprise some: the area around 38th Street and Chicago Avenue also includes blocks with some of the highest levels of income density in Minneapolis.

The map above shows household income density by Census 2000 block group, broken into quantiles (equal groups). Given the project area’s existing household density (the number of households per land area) there is more income available per block than in many other parts of our City. This is good news for attracting business development.