

CHAPTER 4: Issues & Opportunities

This chapter outlines various issues and opportunities related to urban agriculture and land use. It is organized to address and support the broad goals established by the project steering committee at the beginning of the planning process. In some cases these goals address issues beyond those that can be addressed through land use regulation, but they provide important context. As mentioned, a table cross referencing the Homegrown Minneapolis land use recommendations, the Comprehensive Plan policies, and the steering committee goals can be found in Chapter 5.

THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

The broad goal of promoting and supporting the local food system captures many efforts. While this plan is primarily limited to land use recommendations, land use decisions can influence the ability to create a robust local food system.

Planning for efficient land use and opening up opportunities for creative partnerships can bolster the local food system. For example, by creating opportunities for people to grow and process food within close proximity, the distance that must be traveled to provide food and food products can be greatly reduced. If a local grower can grow tomatoes for profit and supply them to a local salsa producer who markets local stores and restaurants, a complete process can take place without capital leaving the city.

The development of the local food system should be encouraged by supporting and promoting community gardening, farmers' markets, commercial urban agriculture, and small enterprise or value-added agriculture in all city neighborhoods. Reducing regulatory barriers and providing access to business funding are two actions the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development can take to enhance the local food system.

LAND AVAILABLE FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE

Finding affordable land for community gardens and farmers' markets is a large obstacle. As a result, most community gardens and farmers' markets operate on land owned by other organizations as described in Chapter 3. These arrangements result in an inability to ensure that a location is permanent. In addition, there has been new interest from individuals in finding land on which to grow food. Many people interested in establishing small agriculture related businesses or just producing more local food are looking beyond the space provided in their yards.

The Homegrown Minneapolis Report recommended that the City “develop an overarching policy framework that establishes a city-wide vision and support for urban agriculture (i.e. urban food production and distribution); inventories public and private land available and suitable for urban agriculture or food distribution; and makes readily available land more accessible for these purposes.”

An important issue to note is that public land is owned by a variety of agencies with varying missions. For example, the City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department (CPED) owns land, but its mission is to promote physical redevelopment. Public Works also owns land for the purpose of providing infrastructure. Some of Public Works' land is in the form of regular parcels while other land is right-of-way in and along roadways. In addition to the City's Public Works Department, Hennepin County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation own right-of-way. As mentioned in the Existing Conditions Chapter, the

Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board holds some land for gardens and gardens can be found on Minneapolis School Board property.

In many cases urban agriculture and the mission of the organization that owns the land can co-exist. For example, fruit trees can be grown along roadways or around Public Works facilities. In some cases the agency may own more land than is necessary and the holding/maintenance cost could be offset by leasing or selling the land.

As mentioned in the Existing Conditions Chapter, the City currently leases just over one acre of City-owned land for community gardens. The Community Garden Pilot Program initiated in spring of 2010 made 18 new CPED owned parcels available for lease, adding potentially another 1.5 acres of land for growing. CPED has also routinely sold remnant parcels that are not buildable.

On map 4-1 (page 33), vacant parcels currently held by the City of Minneapolis are identified (note that the majority of vacant land is privately owned). The map shows that the City holds a large number of parcels in North Minneapolis, some scattered parcels in Northeast, and a cluster of parcels just south of downtown. The City owns almost no property in Southwest Minneapolis, indicating that any land for urban agriculture in that area will likely have to be associated with a private land lease or redevelopment project.

To address the issue of land availability the City should review its land inventory and its land sale policies to explore opportunities for supporting urban agriculture. Opportunities for incorporating urban agriculture into development projects should be a priority particularly in areas where the vacant public land is in short supply. Land can also be pursued through the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and School Board programs. Lastly, urban agriculture on private land can be better supported through zoning changes.

Land Capacity Analysis

An issue that is often raised is the potential conflict between using land for urban agriculture uses and redeveloping land within the city. To explore the potential conflict of using public land for urban agriculture uses versus promoting its redevelopment a Land Capacity Study was conducted.

Community Attributes International, a land planning firm that specializes in regional and local economics, was hired in the summer of 2010 to examine the demand for land within Minneapolis. They examined forecasted residential and job growth, recent development patterns, and land supply (vacant and under utilized land) and land demand.

The analysis drew from existing parcel data and growth forecasts to frame future estimates of land demand and supply. Population, household and employment forecasts published by the Metropolitan Council and adopted in the City of Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan were used to determine land demand from 2010 to 2030. Parcel level attribute data from the City of Minneapolis Assessor and Community and Economic Development Departments was used to determine the supply of developable lands available to accommodate growth. The full land capacity analysis can be found in the appendices.

Community Attributes International's primary finding was that Minneapolis has more than enough developable land (public and private land) to accommodate forecasted growth for at least the next 20 years. This means that both development and urban agricultural uses can be accommodated without competition.

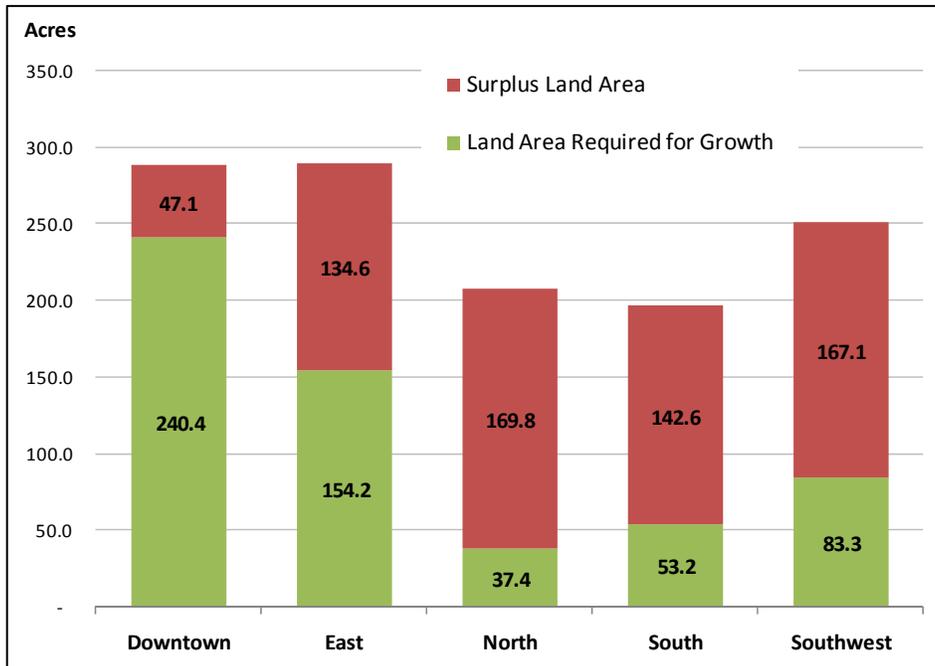
Of course, there are some areas of the city that have attracted more development and have higher property costs, which can force out community gardens and farmers' markets. Conversely, there are other areas of the city that have a much larger amount of vacant land than others and lower market value. However, policy can be shaped to ensure that all areas of the city have access to freshly grown foods.

Community Attributes International also found that generally speaking when all land use applications are considered as a whole, the city is not being built out to the capacity allowed by the zoning code. By building up, rather than out, and by reducing the amount of land used for parking, more land can be left as open space for potential growing. Chart 4-1 below shows the projected amount of surplus land based on recent development trends.

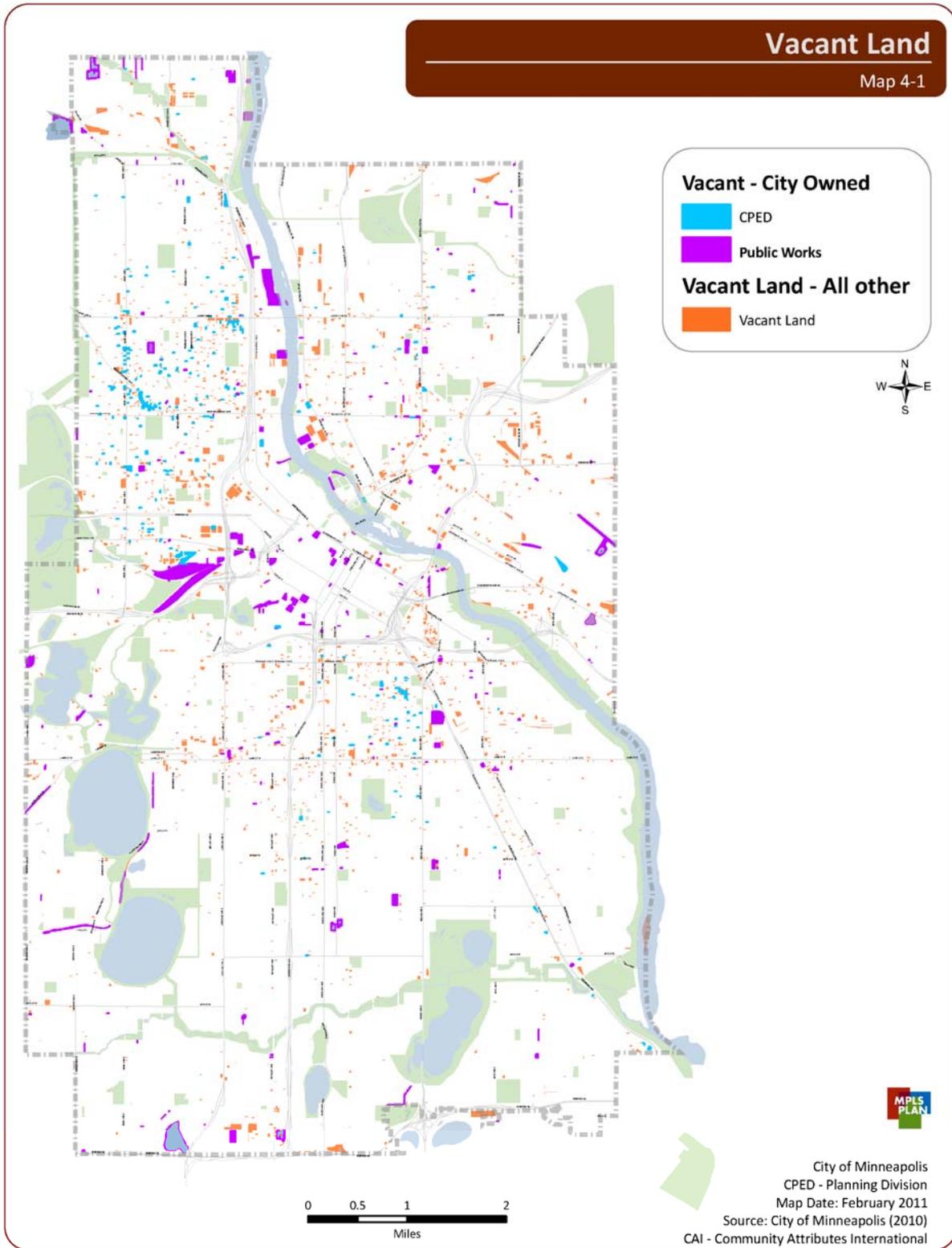
On the following pages a series of maps show the land capacity findings. Map 4-2 shows where surplus land may be found based on the amount of vacant land or underutilized land. All vacant properties and underutilized land within various areas of the city are identified on map 4-1 (Note that a large amount of vacant land is privately owned. City owned land was show in Map 4-1). Lastly 4-3 shows where land is in relatively high and relatively low demand based on recent development trends.

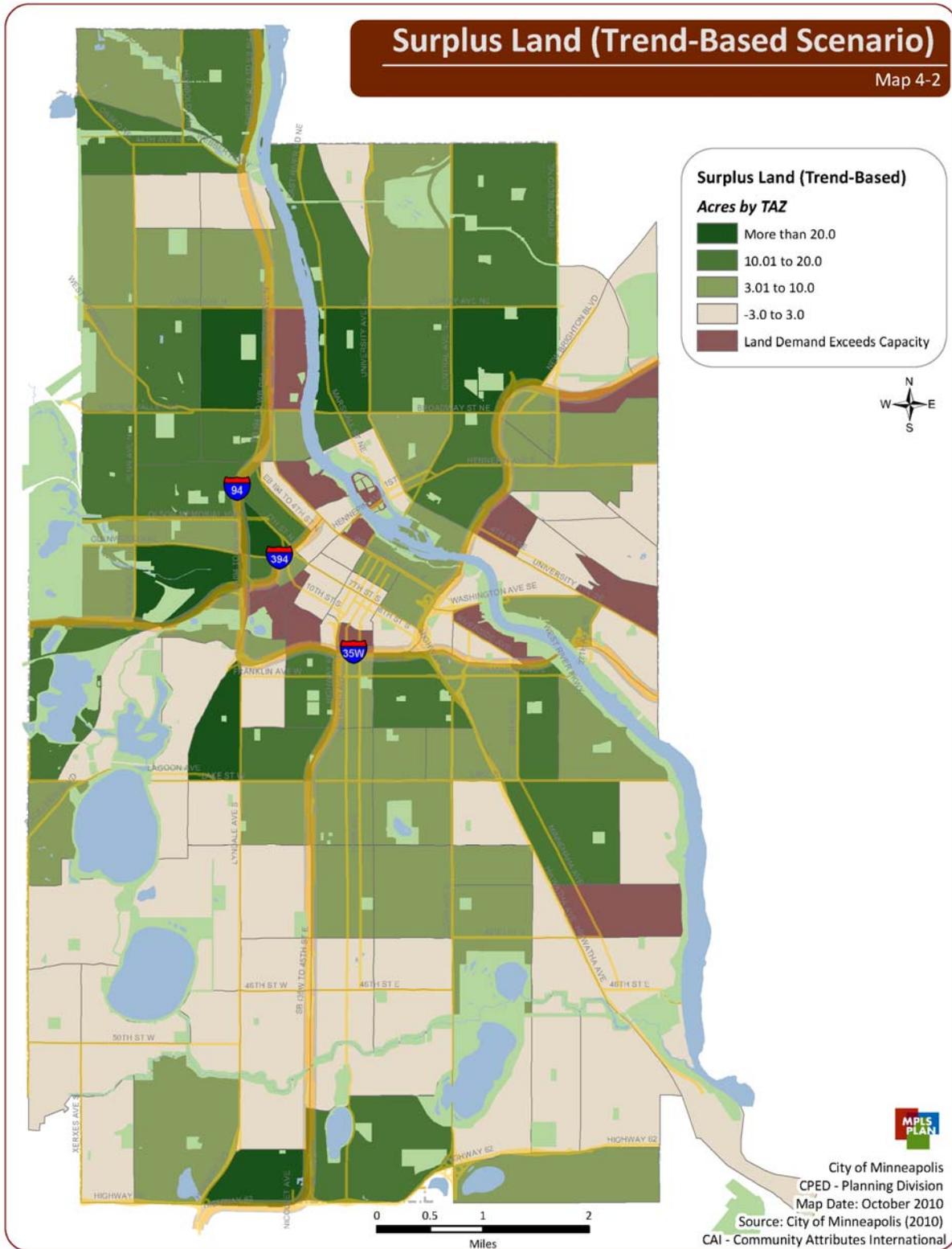
Together these maps show that there is low demand and high surplus of land in much of North Minneapolis and portions of South Minneapolis. This will be compared with other variables to show which parts of the city should be a focus for the potential release of more public land for urban agriculture use or for the encouragement of private accommodations for community gardens and farmers' markets.

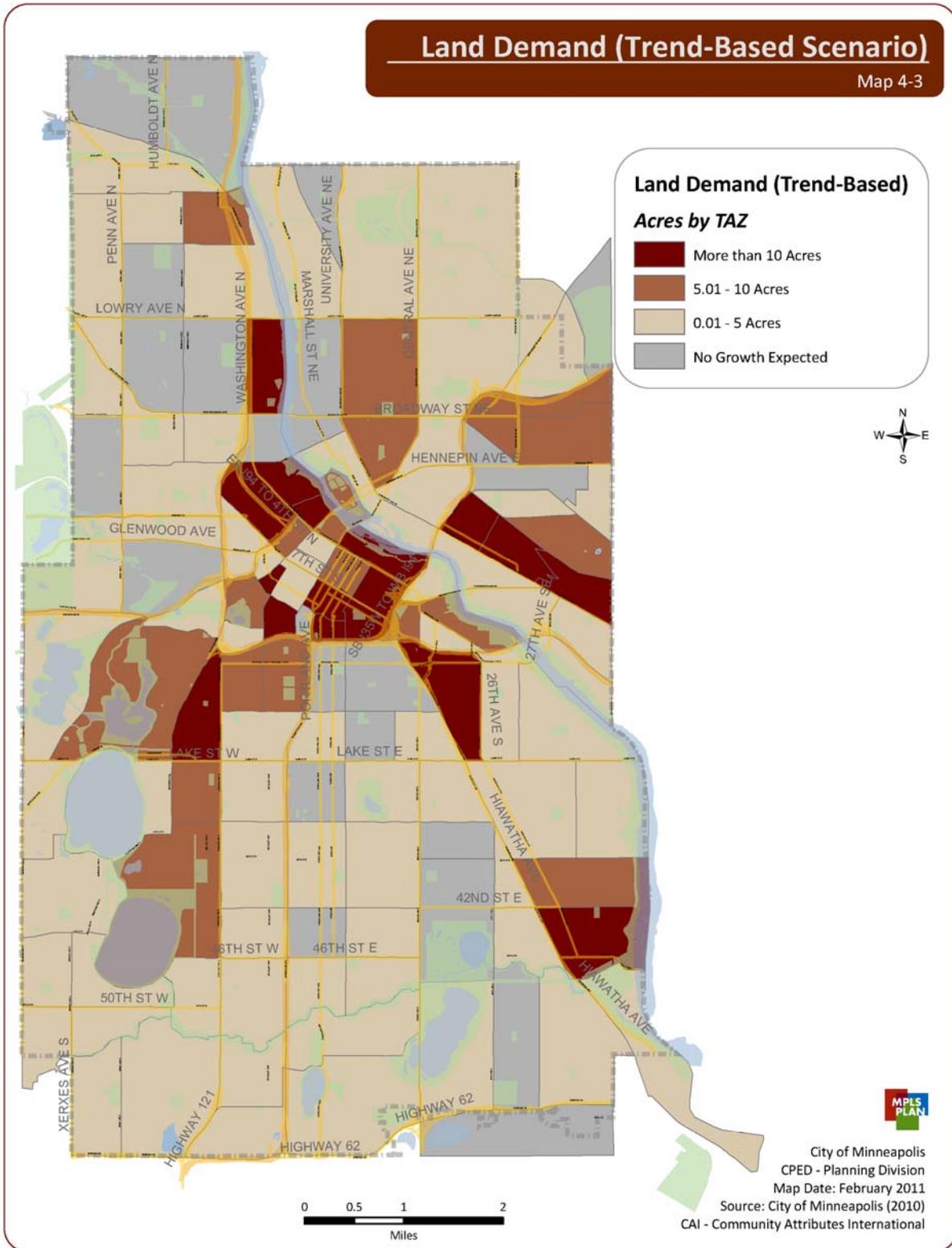
Chart 4-1: Land Demand Required and Surplus by Planning Sector through 2030



An example of under utilized land. Development at a more dense level with less room for parking could make room for urban agriculture uses.







EQUAL ACCESS TO LAND FOR GROWING AND TO FRESH FOOD SOURCES

Equal Access to Land

Land availability and demand was discussed above. The primary purpose of looking at access to land for urban agriculture activities is to help ensure that residents have access to fresh food sources. Making more land available for growing and markets where there are gaps should be a priority.

The Minneapolis Homegrown Report recommended that the City “identify and help secure 5-6 sites for the permanent establishment of several existing farmers’ markets and the additional establishment of a farmers’ market(s) in an area currently underserved” and “integrate farmers’ markets into the City’s development plans”

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development Department can assist with site selection for any business and assist with funding in some situations. The City can also explore opportunities to integrate farmers’ markets into development plans. Doing so could happen in two different ways, both of which would be context specific. The City can encourage the development of farmers’ markets when small area plans (area specific future land use plans) are created and it can request that farmers’ markets or other urban agriculture activities be explored when a Request for Proposals for the development of CPED-owned parcels are solicited, much like what was recently done for the Midtown Farmers’ Market when the Minneapolis School Board property that was leased for the Midtown Market was put up for sale.

When thinking about public support (in the form of purchasing land) of farmers’ markets, one has to decide whether farmers’ markets are businesses or public resources, like parks. CPED works to support many types of businesses and non-profits, but does not supply land directly to a business venture, nor does it typically purchase land for stand alone amenities such as parks. Instead, a Request for Proposals for a site as described above are typically sought.

Access to land for community gardens was discussed previously. The City has made more land available for community gardens and the MPRB is willing to hold land for citizen groups that meet certain criteria (described in Chapter 3) so that they can establish a community garden. The Minneapolis Public School system is also willing to provide land for community gardens created and maintained by an organization that is qualified as a community partner under the school district policies.

Being able to ensure long term availability of land will continue to be a challenge. There is some public land that could be potentially sold or leased, but the larger supply of vacant and underutilized land is in private control (see Maps 4-1 and 4-3). A land trust might be the best option for purchasing or stewarding parcels for farmers’ markets and community gardens. Such a non-profit land trust might be able to obtain grants and work with government agencies to secure long term leases or low cost sales.

Equal Access to Healthy Food Sources

As mentioned, the reason to look at where urban agriculture could take place is to make sure there is equal access to healthy food sources. It is important to understand where there are barriers to access so that land use change can be focused on areas of need.

In terms of how land use and development policies can promote such access, this plan first addresses geographic proximity and transportation access to fresh food destinations.

The Homegrown Minneapolis Report recommended that the City “*improve motorized and non-motorized transportation options to increase utilization of and access to markets*”. On map 4-4, urban agriculture and transportation routes are overlaid on a map that shows population density. As illustrated by this map, urban agriculture related land uses are generally clustered in the middle of the city with a higher concentration just south of downtown. These areas, for the most part, are in zoning districts that allow for a range of uses, including commercial uses (e.g. grocery stores), institutional and public uses (e.g. community gardens) and residential uses (including mixed use and higher density residential uses). In other parts of the City, such as north Minneapolis, there are fewer urban agriculture land uses and transportation options. As infrastructure improvements are proposed, access to farmers’ markets should be a priority.

Map 4-5 illustrates which parts of the city are forecasted to grow in population and which areas are forecast to lose population. Often when an area loses population, it also loses stores, potentially reducing access to fresh food.

In broader discussions about access to healthy foods, other issues such as personal choice, income, and the specific type of food people have access to come into consideration. This broader question is outside the purview of this study, but this plan does address how existing conditions in the built environment may hinder access to healthy food and where there are opportunities to promote access through land use and development policies and regulations.

In terms of providing equal access to healthy food, poorer people often have fewer transportation options and may be more reliant on local food sources than those with easy access to automobiles. Areas with higher concentrations of poverty are frequently the same places where you find concentrations of people of color, higher obesity rates, lower rates of car ownership and fewer healthy food establishments. On the following pages there are a series of maps that illustrate these conditions in Minneapolis (Maps 4-4 through 4-9). Overlaid on each map are locations of urban agriculture land uses.

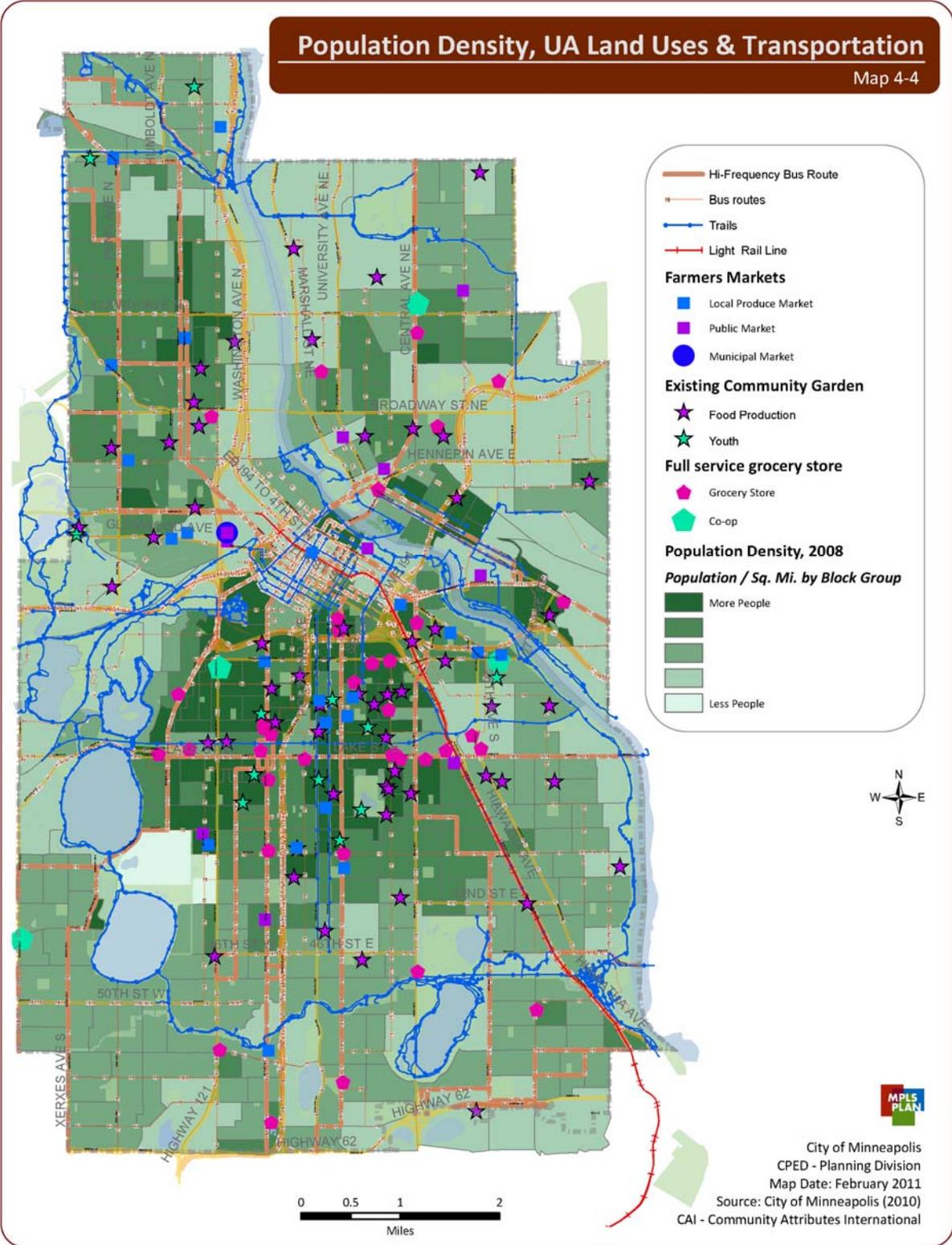
The maps show a variety of uses in order to give a broad picture of the existing conditions, but it should be noted that in some cases where fresh produce is available barriers such as affordability still exist. Some of the uses, such as community gardens, provide a variety of benefits such as building community and providing some food for participants, but increasing broader food access is not the primary benefit. In addition, sources such as soup kitchens and meal delivery are specialized services and services like CSA drop-off areas can move with little notice. In terms of access to food, grocery stores and farmers’ markets provide the most direct access to fresh food. Convenience stores and other small stores are not shown because, while some provide healthy food options, not all do. It should also be noted too that most farmers’ markets have limited hours and that can affect the ease of access to fresh food.

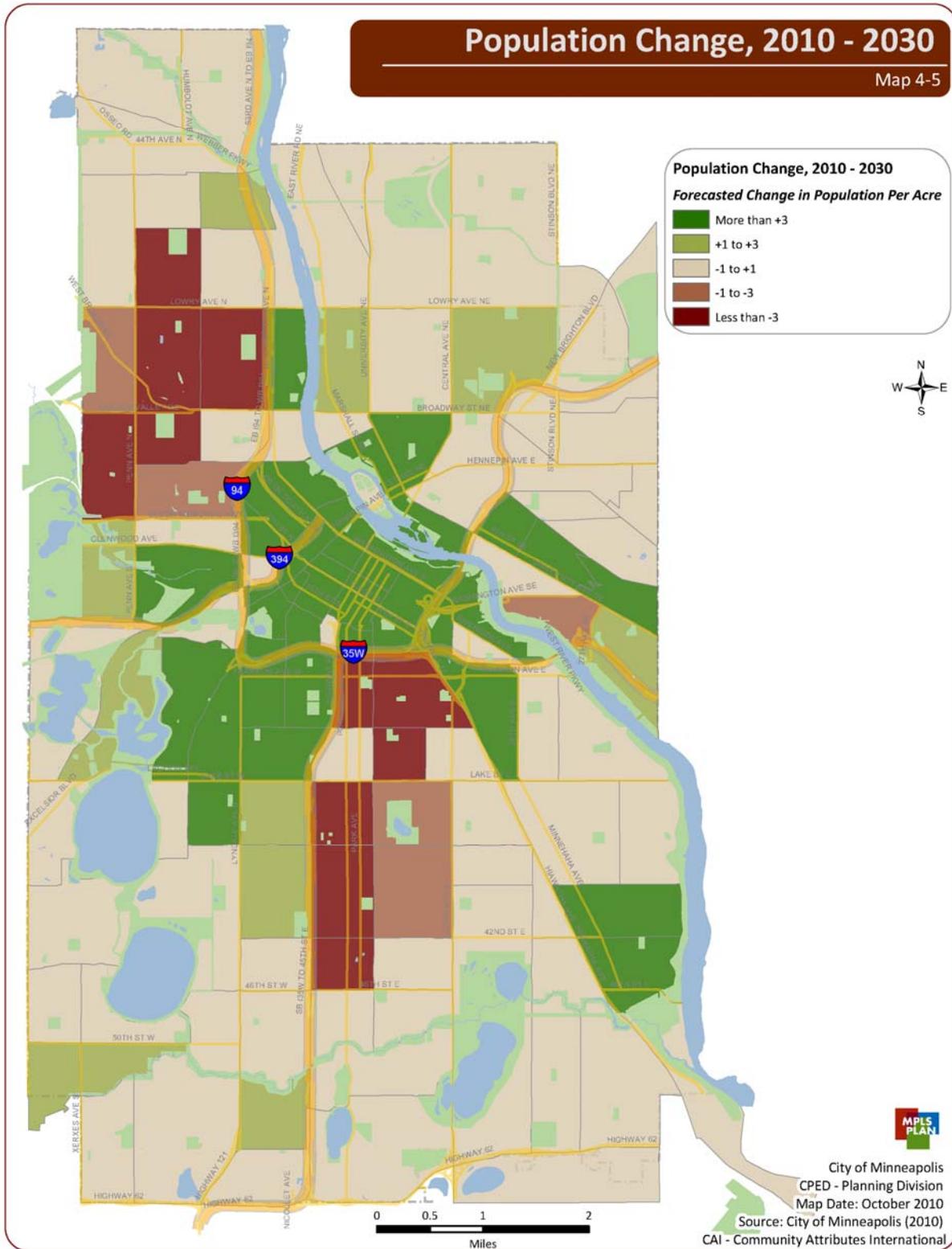
Food Access Throughout the Year

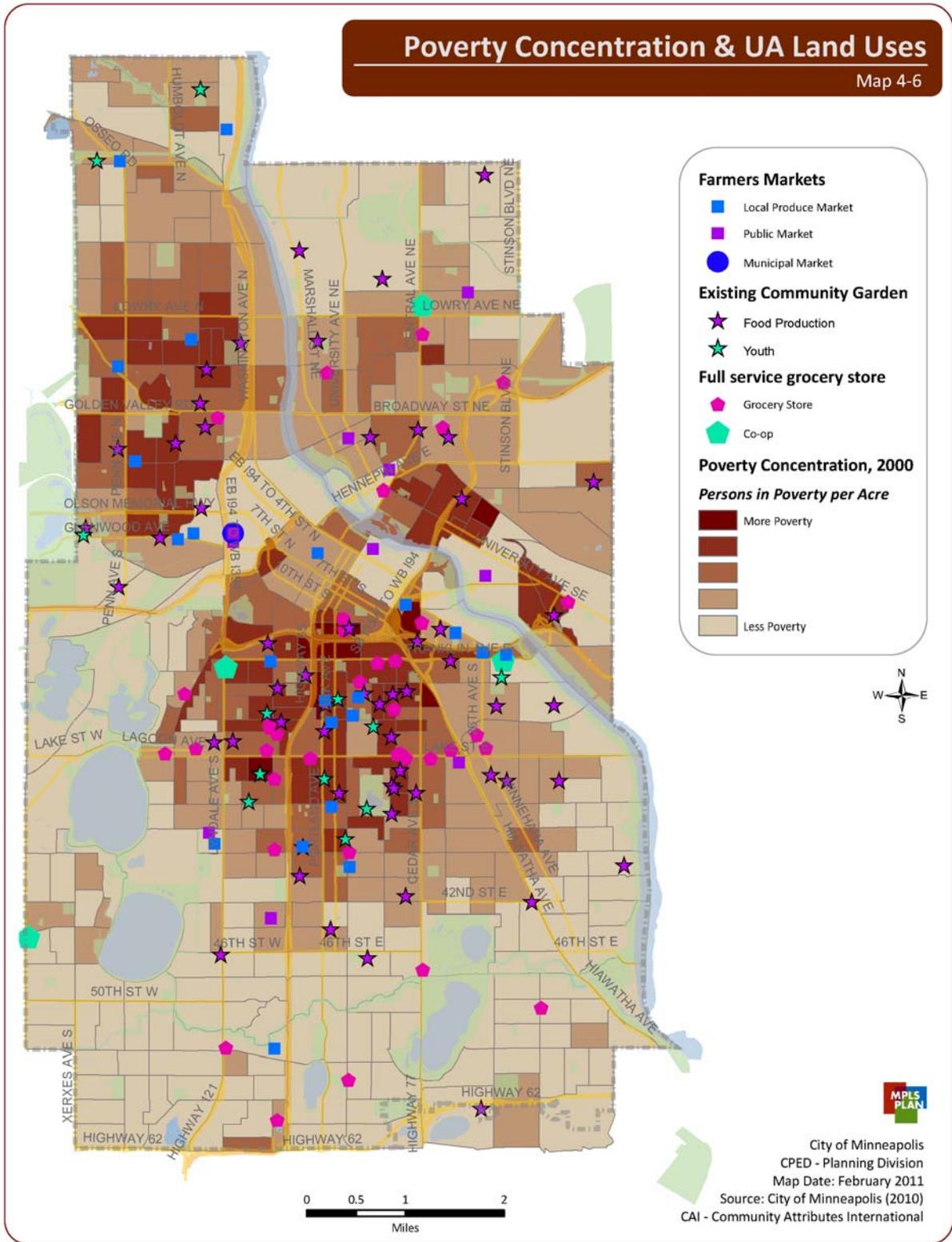
Access to fresh food throughout the year is also an issue in northern climates. As mentioned farmers' markets are not open year round, and obviously the growing season comes to a close in the fall. Preserving food and extending the growing season through the use of structures are important efforts that help provide locally grown food year round.

The Minneapolis Department of Health and Human Services has completed an inventory of community kitchens. The locations of community kitchens available to the public for canning and other food preservation can be found in the Existing Conditions Chapter. Use of community kitchens for food preservation is one way of ensuring availability of local food year-round.

Another mechanism for addressing produce availability in northern climates is the use of hoop houses to extend the growing season. Hoop houses vary in design and size and can be permanent or temporary structures. They are typically made out of plastic over supportive hoops. Currently hoop houses are allowed in private back yards as long as the overall size of the structure, combined with all other accessory structures (e.g. garages, sheds, etc.), doesn't exceed 676 square feet. Some community gardeners have expressed interest in larger hoop houses in community gardens and this will be addressed in the recommendations chapter. A temporary hoop house can be erected as an accessory structure provided it is accessory to the main use on a lot and is in place for not more than 180 days. A permanent hoop house is subject to building code and site plan review requirements in addition to the accessory use requirements.

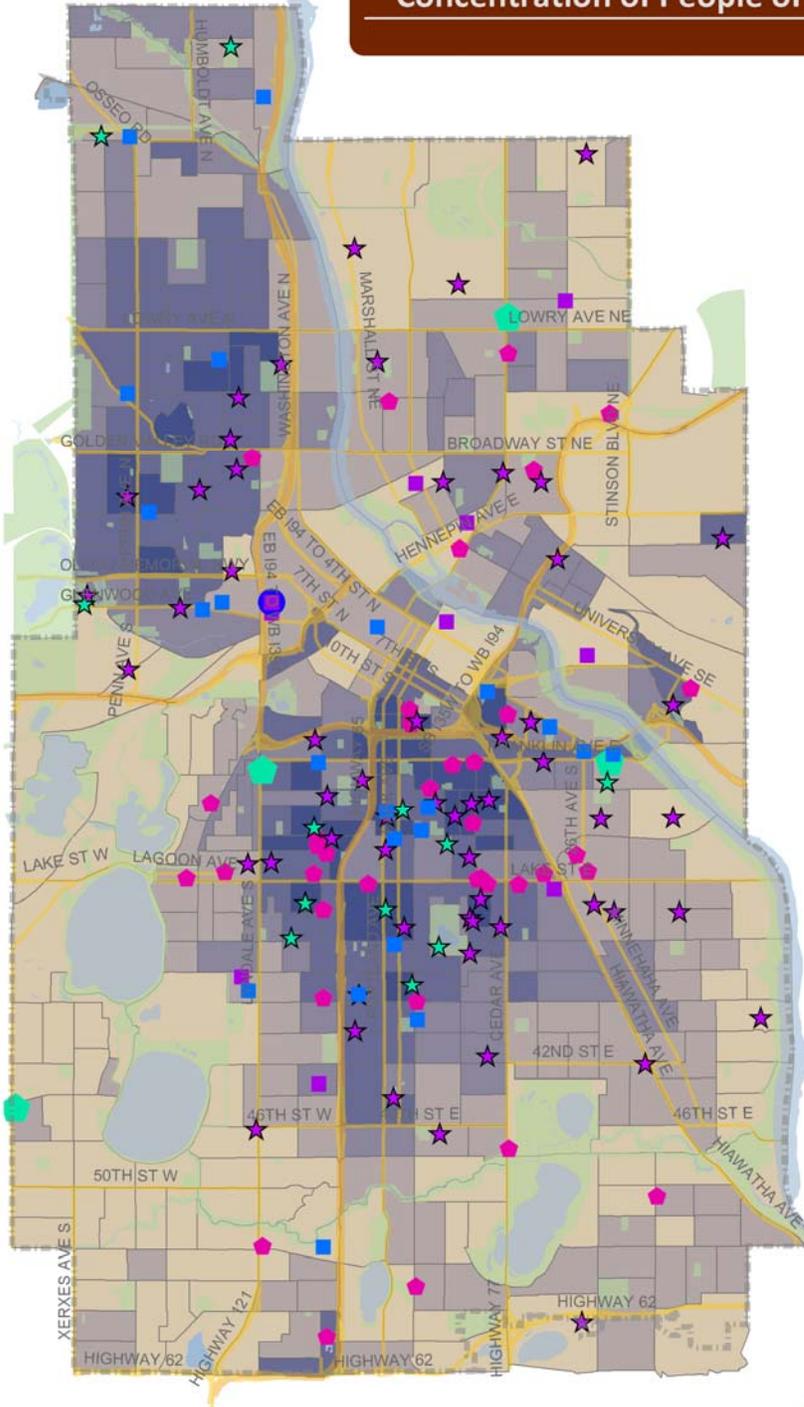






Concentration of People of Color & UA Land Uses

Map 4-7



Farmers Markets

- Local Produce Market (Blue square)
- Public Market (Purple square)
- Municipal Market (Blue circle)

Existing Community Garden

- Food Production (Purple star)
- Youth (Green star)

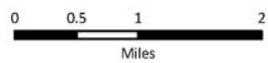
Full service grocery store

- Grocery Store (Pink pentagon)
- Co-op (Green pentagon)

Non-White Population

Non-White Population Per Acre

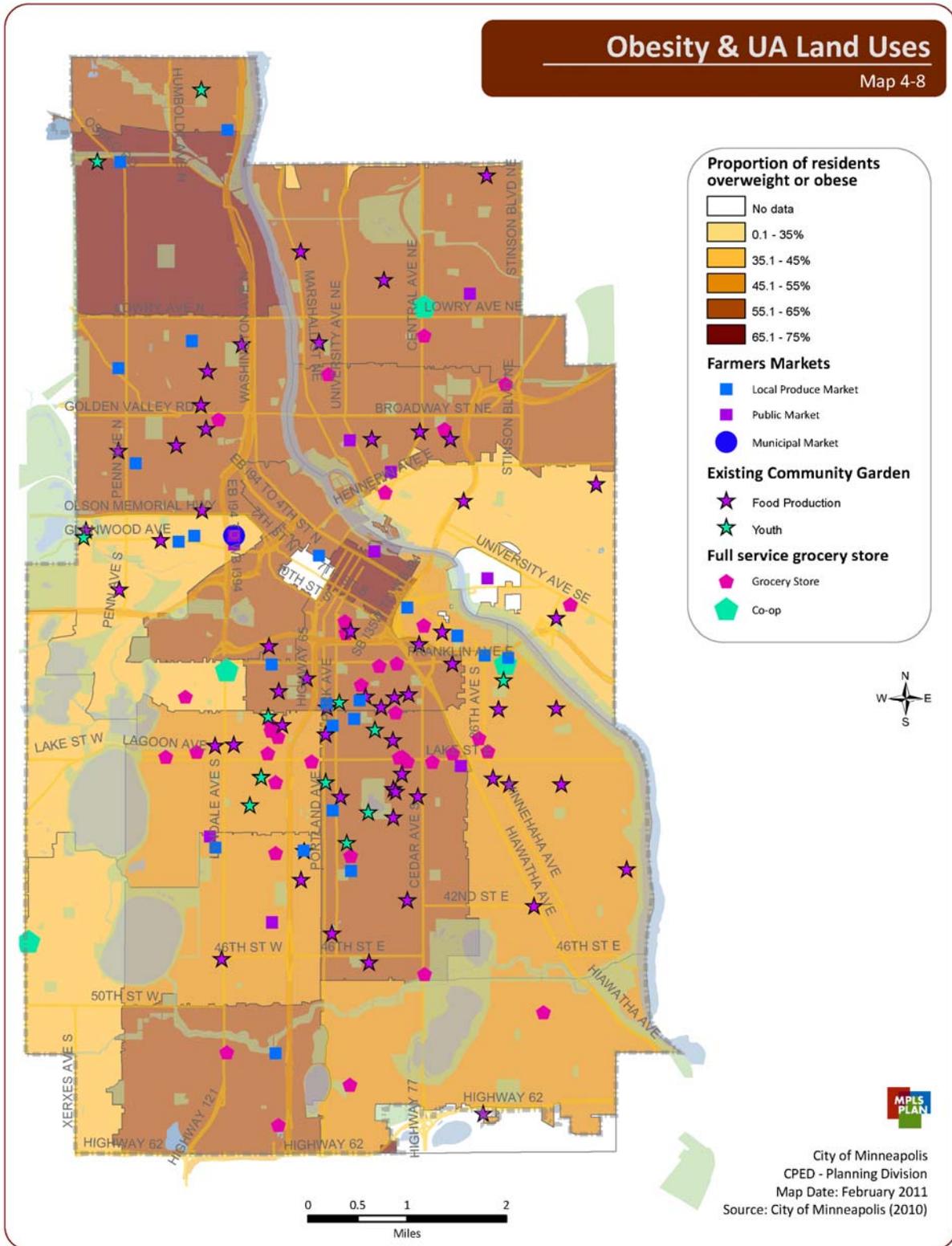
- More People (Dark blue)
- Less People (Light tan)



City of Minneapolis
CPED - Planning Division
Map Date: February 2011
Source: City of Minneapolis (2010)
CAI - Community Attributes International

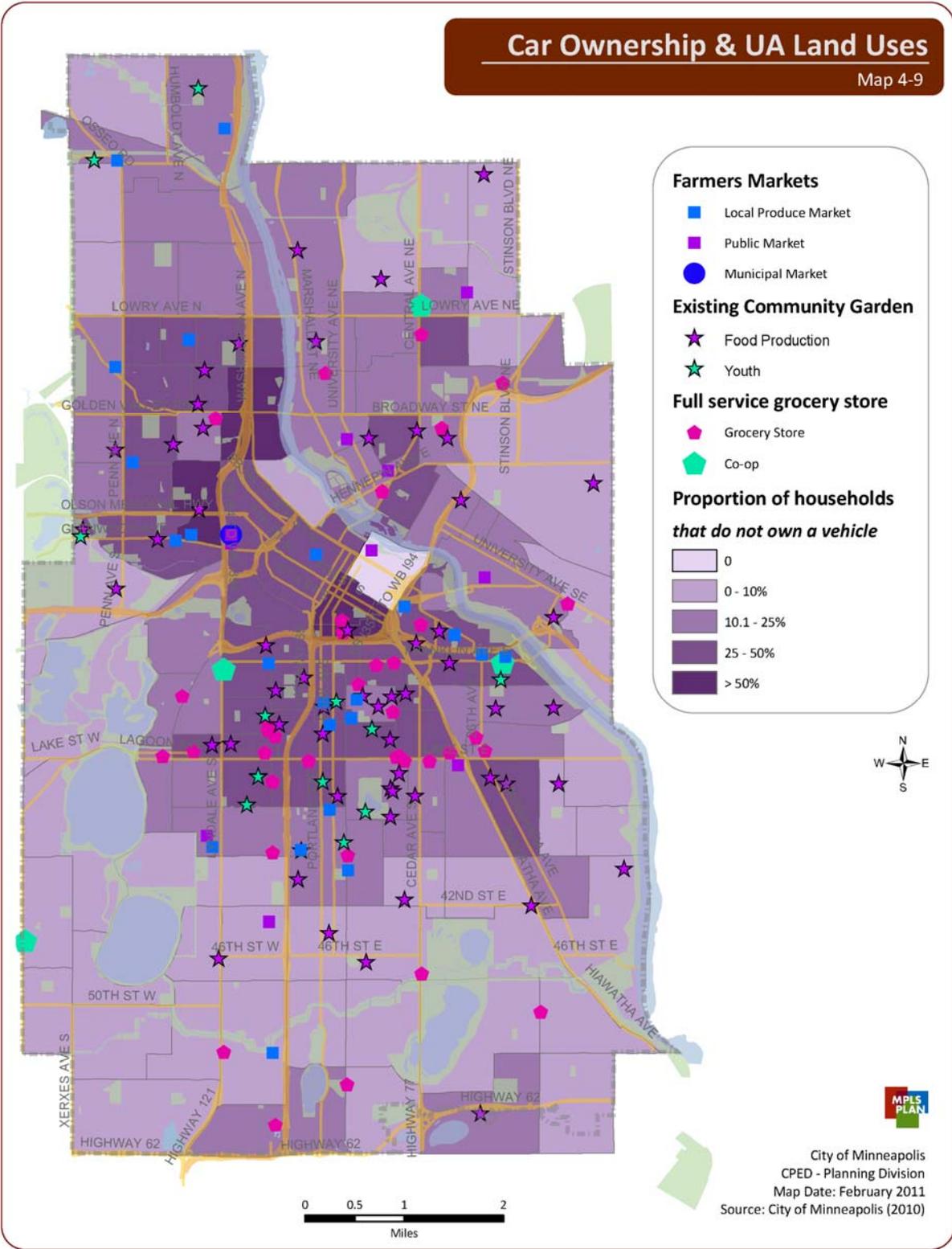
Obesity & UA Land Uses

Map 4-8



Car Ownership & UA Land Uses

Map 4-9



Focus Areas

The series of maps shown on the previous pages demonstrate that there are some areas in the City that are underserved in terms of geographic proximity. In particular, there are noticeable gaps in north Minneapolis, south and southwest Minneapolis, and the area northeast of the University of Minnesota (UMN). Often certain areas of large cities have fewer sources for healthy foods, resulting in people with fewer resources having a hard time finding fresh, healthy food. The area north of the UMN is primarily industrial land where these types of land uses would not typically be located. The areas in south and southwest Minneapolis are primarily in lower density zoning districts where there is limited land available for uses like community gardens. North Minneapolis stands out as an area that is underserved both in terms of geographic proximity as well as access to transportation. In particular the area lacks places where residents can purchase healthy foods such as full service grocery stores, farmers' markets or through a CSA drop-off location. These areas also have higher proportions of overweight or obese residents, concentrations of poverty and concentrations of people of color.

This information informs the recommendations to focus future land use and development decisions around urban agriculture in these underserved areas. While this plan focuses primarily on land use and opportunities to amend the zoning code to allow for a greater variety of urban agriculture uses throughout all city neighborhoods, whenever the City does play a role in locating or financing specific urban agriculture land uses, priority should be given to these underserved and disadvantaged (i.e. by race, ethnicity, economic class, health status, etc.) areas.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWERS, PROCESSORS, AND DISTRIBUTERS OF LOCAL FOOD

Community gardens, urban farms, and local food processors can provide skills training, jobs, and business opportunities. A variety of youth farms exist to teach young people the skill of farming. In addition, many small agriculture businesses are emerging in the city creating a new job niche. For example, some individuals are interested in growing produce in their yard to supply local restaurants and others are providing vegetable gardening as a service to homeowners. Small batch manufacturing of locally grown food products also offers new economic opportunity.

There are existing food broker, food handler and food processors and manufacturing businesses located within the City. Although these businesses are not necessarily dealing in local foods currently, there may be opportunities for local food growers to connect with these existing businesses for distribution and processing their goods. On Map 4-11 food broker, wholesale food handlers and wholesale food processors and manufacturing establishments licensed through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's food handler license are identified. A food broker is a person who buys and sells food and who negotiates between a buyer and a seller of food, but who at no time has custody of the food being bought and sold. Wholesale food handlers are persons who sell to others for resale. Wholesale food processors or manufacturers are persons who process or manufacture raw materials and other food ingredients into food items, or who reprocess food items, or who package food for sale to others for resale, or who commercially slaughter animals or poultry* (note, slaughtering animals or poultry is not permitted in the City of Minneapolis).

The City of Minneapolis will soon launch a pilot program called the Homegrown Business Development Center to connect food production and small business in a way that supports urban farmers' and local food processors.

The Homegrown Business Development Center will assist current and aspiring small batch manufacturers to develop and expand business ventures that will promote sustainable agriculture and food production.

The Center will provide matching, low-interest loans of up to \$10,000 for businesses based in Minneapolis. Loan recipients will need to match the Center's loans on a dollar-for-dollar basis with their own funds. In addition to providing financing, the Center will also coordinate a team of technical assistance providers assist with the individual needs of the business venture.

Loans will be available for business projects that involve the production, distribution, marketing and manufacture of food products that include a minimum of one ingredient grown within 100 miles of Minneapolis. During its pilot phase, the Center will provide assistance for up to 24 business projects. The assistance is intended to enable participating business to move their project to the next level of development.

INNOVATIVE DESIGN FOR FOOD GROWING

Great opportunities exist to not just think of urban agriculture as a series of stand alone gardens or markets or processing centers, but instead to think of how all these uses can be joined with others. By encouraging community gardens and farmers' markets to be integrated parts of new development, access to fresh food can be much more direct. Moreover, the growing of produce can be part of our common landscape.

At the Kensington Park development in Richfield, Minnesota, vegetables and fruits are part of the landscaping around the development. On the roof, produce is grown to supply a local restaurant. With a design like this, residents and businesses could access produce on site.

The Homegrown Minneapolis Report recommended that the City “identify policies and incentives to encourage/require developers to include space for food production and distribution and composting in new developments.” In Minneapolis developers of Planned Unit Developments can get exemptions from some zoning regulations by providing public amenities. One of the specified amenities that developers can get “points” for is the provision of growing space and/or greenhouse space. More opportunity exists to



Rooftop garden at Kensington Park, Richfield, Minnesota

encourage space for growing in other development as well. As with Kensington Park, produce can be considered part of the required landscaping. Space for growing could even be part of the building itself.

Another concept is to use lots that are slated for development for urban agriculture on an interim basis. With the proper agreements this could potentially be done on private and public lots. Occasionally private development projects become stalled. San Francisco has allowed entitlements to approved land uses to be extended if the parcel is used for urban agriculture in the interim.

The Homegrown Minneapolis Report also recommended that the City “identify additional policies and incentives to encourage the establishment of new green roofs and the adaptation of existing roofs for food production.” The City does currently encourage green roofs. However, the development of roof top gardens is more complicated.

City of Minneapolis Construction Code Services (CCS) is charged with enforcement of the Minnesota State Building Code. The building code requires two points of access, a safety wall, and

an elevator for access for persons with disabilities for any roof top where people will be doing anything more than routine maintenance. Depending on what site is proposed for rooftop gardening, the zoning code may also present an obstacle in its current form. The zoning code does not presently allow for any commercial operations in residential zones. Thus, if a commercial rooftop garden or farm were proposed in a residential zone, the use would not currently be allowed.



Strawberries as landscaping at Kensington Park

Construction Code Services is willing to work with individual proposals for rooftop growing, and potential zoning changes could eliminate the conflict of having a commercial growing operation in a residential zoning district.

UNNECESSARY REGULATORY BARRIERS AND BETTER REGULATION

Zoning is the city's primary tool for regulating land uses. The zoning code divides the city into different districts: residential, office-residential, commercial, industrial and downtown. Within each zoning district, there are land use controls that regulate what can be built on individual parcels of land. Currently the Minneapolis Zoning Code has few accommodations for urban agriculture.

Community gardens are allowed in most zoning districts and farmers' markets are regulated. However, commercial gardening/farming, roof top farms, gardening as a home occupation, and various design issues are not clearly addressed. As a result, *The Homegrown Minneapolis Report*

recommended that the City *"review, and revise when necessary, city zoning codes to support local food production and distribution, including urban agricultural land uses and related infrastructure."*

Through some of the topical discussions that were held as part of the planning process for this effort, a variety of zoning related issues were raised. The issues raised during the topical discussions primarily focused on what uses are permitted in the city, where they are located, home occupation regulations, community garden development standards, permitted obstructions and accessory structures (see more detail below). The current status of regulation is problematic for growers, small business, and the City alike. In response, a series of zoning changes are proposed in the Recommendations Chapter.

"Health issues were one of the major concerns that led to the development of zoning in the early 1900's. Thus, it's natural that we try to improve public health through zoning today."

- Karen Nikolai, Community Design Liaison for Hennepin County

In addition, in the fall of 2010 an effort was undertaken by the City of Minneapolis Regulatory Services Department to update food licensing and farmers' market regulations. The results of that work will be brought forward through a separate process.

Permitted uses: Whenever an application or proposal contains a use not included in the zoning ordinance, the zoning administrator reviews the proposal, finding that the use either is substantially similar in character and impact to a use included in the zoning ordinance or that the use is not sufficiently similar to any other use regulated in the zoning ordinance and is therefore not permitted.

Because some of the urban agriculture uses discussed in this plan, such as market gardens and urban farms, are not included in the zoning ordinance, proposals have to be considered individually, which creates confusion and unpredictability.

Home Occupations: Existing home occupation standards prohibit any activity associated with the home occupation from occurring outside of the dwelling. This means that any commercial growing in the yard or in an accessory structure is prohibited.

Community Garden Development Standards: The existing development standards for community gardens limit the garden to a single, non-illuminated, flat sign of four square feet or less. Gardeners have requested larger signs to allow more visibility of the garden, to share information and to provide information in multiple languages. The standards also prohibit retail sales unless the garden can meet the temporary use standards for a short-term farmers market, which most gardens cannot.

Farmers Markets: The existing sign regulations do not allow temporary farmers' markets (local produce markets) to have permanently installed signs on site.

Permitted obstructions, trellises and accessory structures: Some accessory uses and structures and projections of the principal structure are permitted in a required yard. Several accessory structures and uses associated with urban agriculture are not included in the zoning code, such as raised planting beds or hoop houses. Because these accessory uses are not included in the zoning code they are regulated by the general accessory use and structure standards.

ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

Eating local food has the potential to enhance our ecological sustainability in many ways: it can reduce the miles that food is shipped; result in better land management; and be part of a full natural system including soil preparation, growing, and composting.

Transforming poor soils into areas fit for growing and potentially turning paved surfaces into permeable ones (either through the addition of raised beds) or by removing pavement can remediate past damage and reduce future water run-off. In addition, replacing lawns with produce can cut down on chemical use and run off. While the state, not the City, regulates pesticide use, efforts can be made to encourage "best practices" for growing without pesticides and chemical fertilizers. By allowing more land to be used for growing (rather than maintaining lawns in rights-of-way and on vacant parcels) the City can better support ecological sustainability.

Composting and urban agriculture complement each other by diverting waste from landfills, reducing the need to collect and transport wastes and can help remediate soils by recycling nutrients. Composting is encouraged and permitted under current regulations. The allowable size and the number of containers is based on the size of the property where the bins are located. Composting is allowed as an accessory use in the zoning code; other regulations fall under the purview of the Housing Maintenance Code. As urban agriculture land uses are furthered developed efforts to coordinate composting at different scales will help to support these land uses and advance better soil conditions.

THE ROLE THAT ANIMALS PLAY IN THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

Interest in urban agriculture goes beyond just the growing and processing of produce. There is also interest in the community in raising small hoofed animals and fish in the city. Fowl and bees are already allowed and can provide fresh eggs and honey. The addition of small goats in particular could allow for the production of some dairy products. However, the licensing and management of hoofed animals is not something that Animal Control is ready to take on at this time.

More needs to be understood about the potential impacts of hoofed animals and new regulation would need to be crafted to address issues such as waste, soil impacts and run off, and humane care. From a land use stand point, the addition or expansion of animal pens or shelters would need to be regulated.

The practice of raising fish typically falls under aquaculture and aquaponics facilities. Aquaculture, also referred to as fish farming, involves the cultivation of fish populations under controlled conditions, typically in a re-circulating system. Aquaponics combines aquaculture with hydroponics and is the method of growing crops and fish together in a re-circulating system without any discharge or exchange of water. Both systems can be small or large in operation and can be conducted indoors or outdoors. Similar to other urban agriculture land uses described previously, aquaponics and aquaculture uses are not currently included in the zoning code and each proposal must be reviewed to determine if the use is substantially similar in character and impact to a use included in the zoning ordinance.

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