

Constraints and Opportunities

The Upper River corridor presents a daunting array of obstacles to the planning objectives. While the barge-using, bulk-material-handling industries on the west bank would seem to present the greatest challenge, the development of continuous trails and an improved Marshall Street on the east bank is also confronted by a number of constraints. A section-by-section exploration of existing land uses and associated issues will provide an understanding of both the constraints and opportunities.

West Bank

Interstate 94

Access to the river on the west bank is restricted by both existing transportation infrastructure and existing land uses. The most obvious constraint is Interstate 94, which limits access from north Minneapolis to the river. Crossings are available at overpasses spaced roughly every 6 blocks (two-thirds of a mile) at: Plymouth Ave., Broadway Ave., 26th Ave. N., Lowry Ave., Dowling Ave., 41st Ave. N., 42nd Ave. N., 49th Ave. N., and 53rd Ave. N. At Broadway and Plymouth access is available to the river bank. At 41st, 49th, and 53rd overpasses connect to the new North Mississippi Regional Park, with an additional underpass at 45th Ave. N. However access to the riverbank is denied at 26th, Lowry, and Dowling, with the Camden Bridge at 42nd crossing high over both the interstate and river. Thus the whole reach of river opposite north Minneapolis, south of 41st to Broadway, has no public access due to current land uses. Between I-94 and the river, heavy truck traffic on Washington Ave. and 2nd St., and multiple-track railroad spurs offer additional obstacles.

West River Road, Plymouth Avenue to BN Bridge

The area between Plymouth Ave. north to the Burlington Northern (BN) railroad bridge is a major success for the MCDA and the City's North Washington Industrial Park. The riverbank is owned by the City of Minneapolis, with minimal landscaping and maintenance by the Public Works Department. This open space provides public access to the river. A median on this stretch of West River Road contains power transmission lines. One- and two-story offices, laboratories, and light-industrial structures front on West River Road. Broadway Pizza and the Riverview Supper Club suggest the potential for increased hospitality uses in the area. The area presents an opportunity for park programming, including landscaping and trails, with few impediments.

BN Bridge to Lowry Avenue, railroad corridor to the river

The segment north of the BN Bridge to Lowry Ave. presents the most difficult challenges to major land-use changes. Just north of the railroad bridge and BN spur are CAMAS, selling sand and gravel aggregates (formerly Shiely), and Lafarge Corporation, a supplier of dry bulk cement. Shiely Sand and Gravel was relocated from the Central Riverfront to the site by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board in 1988 as part of the City's ongoing riverfront revitalization efforts. CAMAS has the second highest barge tonnage total on the Upper River, and is therefore an important factor in keeping the Minneapolis locks operating.

With just a short spur to cross the river, Lafarge is the only customer for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) on the west bank and the only user of the BN Bridge. The BNSF spur presents a major obstacle to extending West River Road because of curved tracks and constant use as a place to store railcars. However, an easement across the Riverview Supper Club parcel was included in the deed when the MCDA sold the site, which was retained for the express purpose of extending West River Road when feasible.



River Access Denied to Bicyclists on Pacific St.



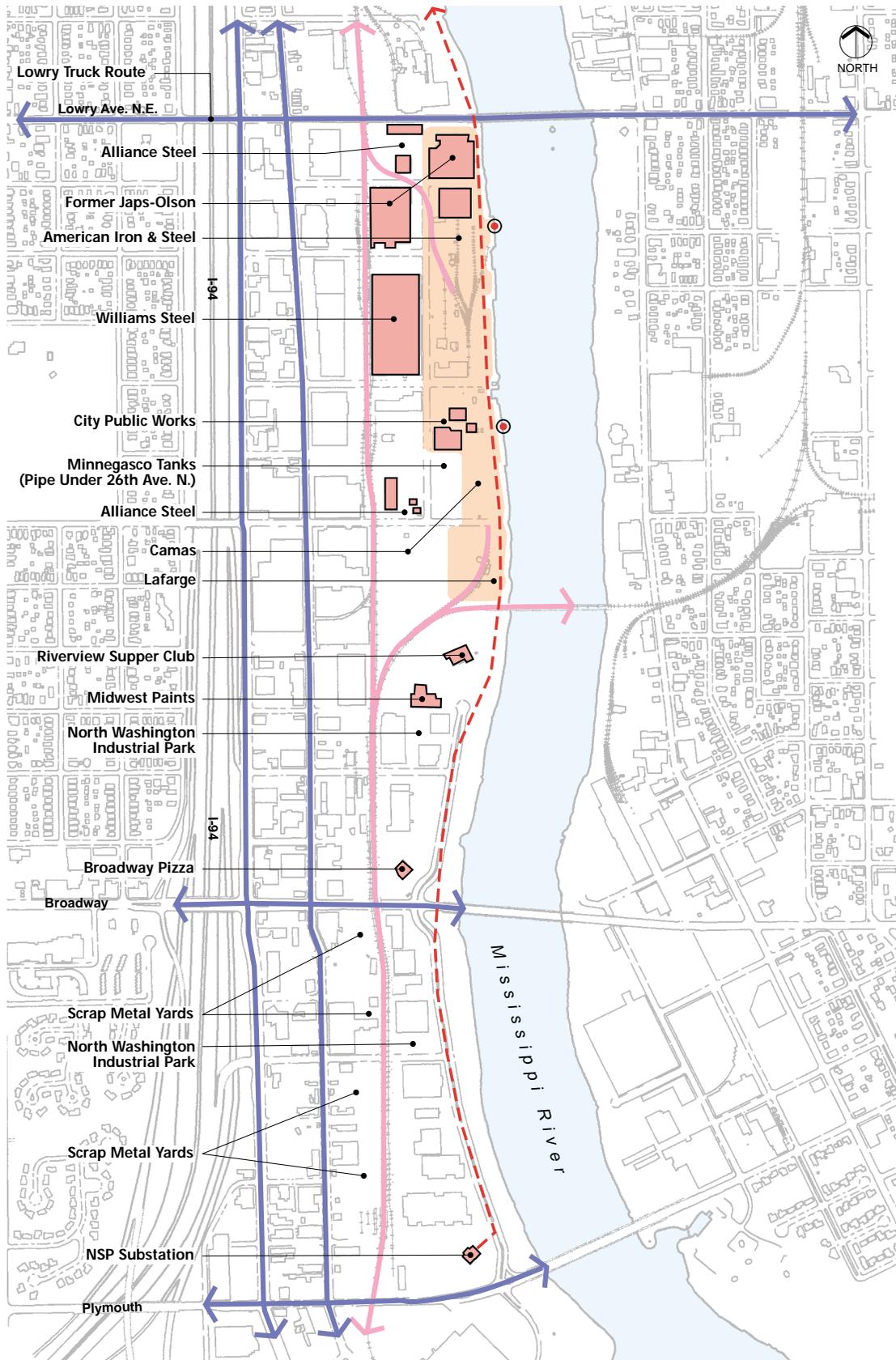
West River Road



CAMAS



BNSF Spur



- Property with River Access Restricted
- Power Transmission Towers and Lines
- Truck Route
- Railroad Spur
- Barge Dock

West Bank — South of Lowry Avenue Constraints



Lafarge



Public Works



Minnegasco



American Iron



Former Japs-Olson



Skyline View

The Lafarge site is well-maintained, with grass lawns and no open storage of materials. Although on a riverfront parcel, the Lafarge operation does not have a barge terminal. Given the relatively low impact of the dry cement storage and loading, the operation could be moved to another site in the area with rail and truck access.

The City owns property on the riverfront between 27th and 28th Ave. N., where the Public Works Department operates a garbage truck fueling, cleaning, and storage facility. CAMAS currently leases a portion of this property along a riverfront bulkhead to off-load barges. This Public Works facility could be relocated off the river, to the west of the railroad corridor or elsewhere, through action of the City Council.

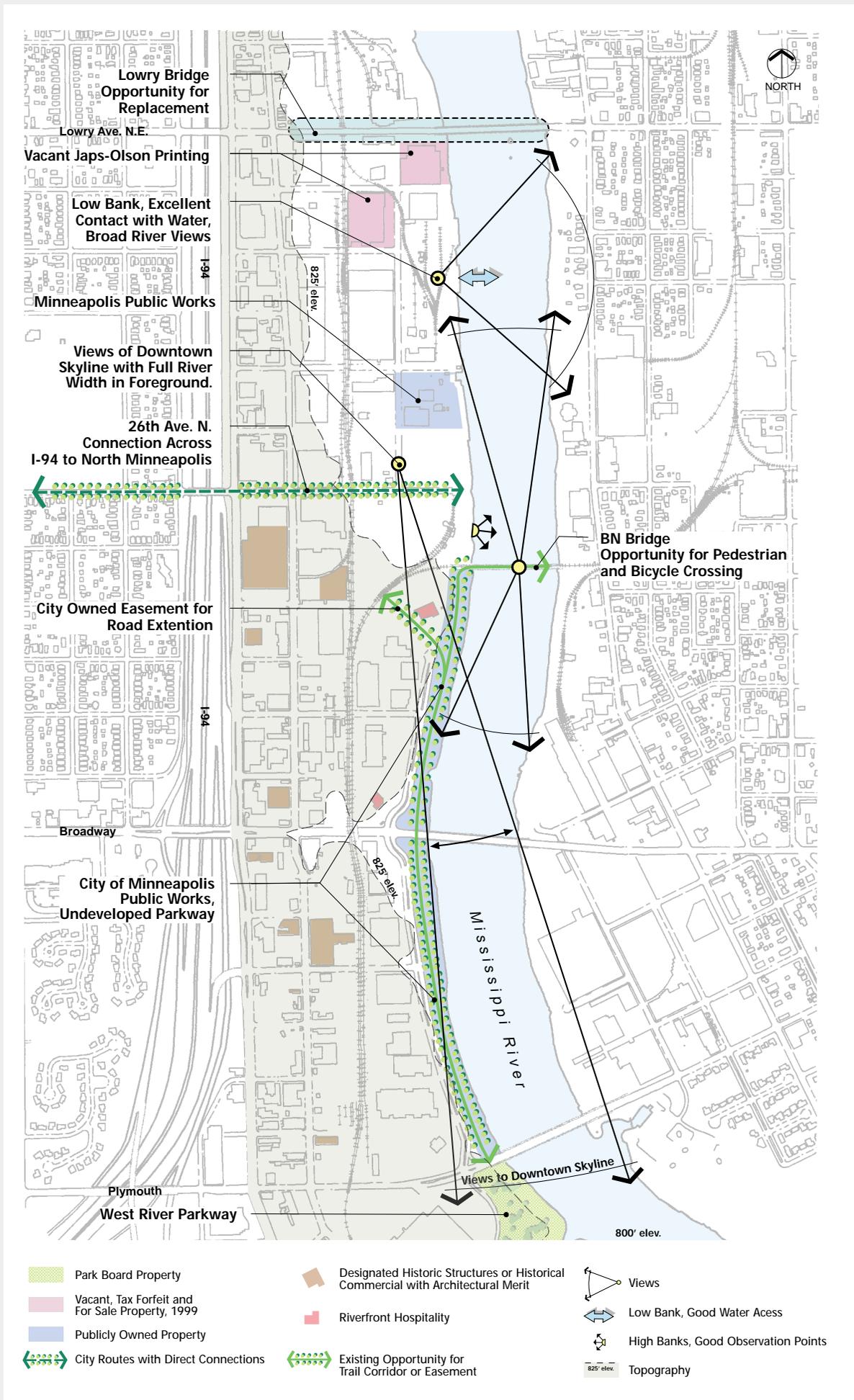
At the corner of Pacific and 26th Ave. N., Minnegasco owns a tank farm that operates as a “peak shaving facility,” supplying extra heating fuel during peak demand in bitter cold winter weather. Propane stored in the tanks is mixed with air and natural gas, with the majority serving residential customers in north Minneapolis through a pipeline under 26th Ave. N. The tank facility was built in the 1940s at a key distribution point. Any relocation is likely to require public assistance in the siting of a new facility, and would by necessity still need to be within a short distance of the pipeline under 26th Ave. Given the age of the facility, relocation to the west of the railroad corridor and construction of a new underground storage system might be of mutual benefit to Minnegasco and the redevelopment effort.

In the area defined by the Canadian Pacific railroad corridor to Pacific St., and 26th Ave. to Lowry, two businesses operate: Alliance Steel acquires scrap metal products for shipment to recycling plants outside the study area and Williams Steel and Hardware shapes and distributes new metal products. Alliance owns properties at the north and south ends of this rectangle, with Williams Steel in between. American Iron and Supply (AIS) owns a riverfront parcel between 28th and 31st Ave. N. AIS barges scrap metal from this riverfront site to recycling plants outside the study area. Prior to and during the study period, AIS and the City of Minneapolis were opponents in a lawsuit regarding the issuing of a permit to AIS to allow construction of a large metal shredding machine, known as the “Kondirator,” on this site.

Expansion of scrap metal operations on the Upper River would present a significant impediment to the stated planning objectives. Due to the extreme difficulties associated with relocating scrap metal yards as a local land-use issue, as well as the variety of transport options of barging, trains, or trucks on the existing sites; relocation of these uses present the single most difficult impediment to land-use change. In addition to the difficulties associated with relocating businesses along Pacific, most of the area is classified as a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency site, requiring expensive cleanup of soil contaminants to effect land-use changes.

Just north of AIS, along the river to the Lowry Bridge, is a building that formerly contained Japs-Olson, a printing plant, vacant since 1997. These buildings are in good condition and may find another use before implementation of the plan addresses this site.

While the area between the BN Bridge and Lowry Ave. present real challenges to land-use change, the topographic relationship between the river and bank is one of the most enticing in the City of Minneapolis. In general the bank is low, allowing intimate contact with the river if access were available. At the Riverview Supper Club, and adjacent sites of CAMAS and Lafarge, truly magnificent views of the downtown skyline unfold, with the skyline along the horizon and a long view of the Mississippi in the foreground. This view is created by the river’s slight bend to the west at the BN Bridge and then back to the east after the Broadway Bridge—the bridge also framing the skyline view. This site where the supper club and cement facilities sit is also elevated above the surrounding land. The supper club was built on top an old railroad roundhouse foundation due to poor quality soils in the area. Word of mouth reports claim that the elevated land may in fact be a pile of fill, with former roundhouse sites usually presenting



West Bank – South of Lowry Avenue Assets & Opportunities



CP Rail Corridor at UHT



Ambassador Press



Former Bardwell, Robinson & Co.
Sash, Door & Blind Factory



Lowry Bridge



Lowry Bridge at Pacific St.



GAF

additional soil contamination difficulties.

The Canadian Pacific railroad corridor could provide a buffer between uses to the east and west. Land-use changes to the east of the tracks along the riverfront would relocate most current users of this spur, with the exception of the *Star Tribune* printing plant at the end of the line. While total abandonment might be considered, the rail corridor holds excellent views to downtown and also provides opportunities for future transit as well as other infrastructure such as power transmission lines, telecommunication cables, and sewers. Future freight customers might also be found in the adjacent light-industrial areas.

Plymouth Avenue to Lowry Avenue, I-94 to railroad corridor

Over the last 25 years the MCDA has worked to bring about development of light-industrial businesses on sites north of Plymouth that were previously used for open storage of scrap metals. Three businesses continue to sell scrap metals from sites west of the railroad corridor, and south of Broadway. Soil remediation efforts by the MCDA have prepared vacant sites for redevelopment and attracted new construction along 2nd St., including a new printing plant and a new warehouse. As this cleanup and redevelopment proceeds, the area will present a more favorable environment, with new landscaping and structures reaching a threshold that will transform the area from one of blight to that of a modern industrial park.

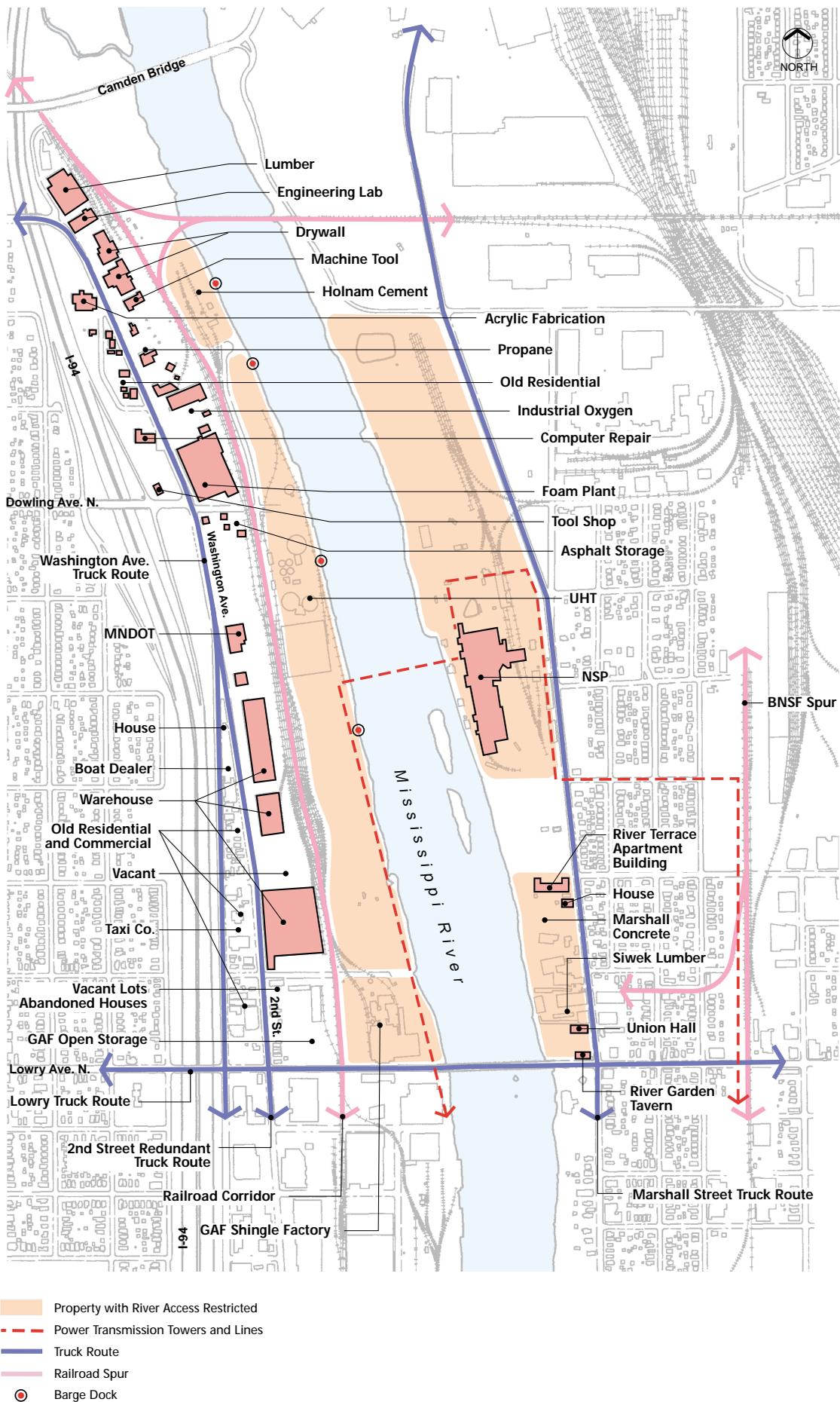
Opportunities in the area include a number of older commercial structures that retain attractive brick facades. In addition, portions of the area are now vacant and await new development. Opportunities may present themselves to relocate businesses in accordance with the master plan onto sites south of Broadway. Showrooms, graphic arts offices, printing plants, metal fabricators, and other businesses present a more favorable image for the area north of Broadway. These businesses pose no impediment to the overall redevelopment efforts and would, in fact, benefit from park development along the river.

Lowry Bridge area

The existing Lowry Bridge is an obstacle to realizing the planning objectives; however, the eventual replacement of this bridge offers a real opportunity for large-scale redevelopment on the western approach. Hennepin County owns the Lowry Bridge and considers it adequate for the next 20 years. While some admire the bridge as an interesting landmark with more style than new highway bridges, its narrow lanes and very narrow pedestrian facilities present difficulties in crossing, especially for bicyclists. In addition, the open metal deck vibrates when vehicles cross and the resulting noise can be heard blocks away. A ramp with concrete crib wall, which lifts the western approach, creates a barrier to passage under the bridge from the railroad corridor to the water. As time passes the bridge is likely to be seen as an indicator of neglect, with calls for its replacement increasing. When the bridge is replaced, the whole western approach can be included in a redevelopment area.

Lowry to North Mississippi Regional Park

Just north of the Lowry Bridge an asphalt shingle factory sits on the riverfront. This facility owned by GAF, Inc. is a major employer on the west bank. The facility is one of the more complex in its industrial engineering and is the only manufacturing plant on the west side riverfront; however, the plant does not use barges. Openly stored product covers the site, while the odor of asphalt and other chemicals permeates the surrounding area. The anticipated difficulty in relocating this shingle factory is the major obstacle to change north of Lowry.



East and West Banks – North of Lowry Avenue Constraints



UHT

Immediately west of GAF between Lowry and 33rd Ave. N. is a row of old houses fronting 2nd St., some occupied, and some abandoned tax-forfeit and vacant properties. The Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT), owned by the City of Minneapolis and operated by River Services, Inc., stretches along the riverfront from 33rd Ave. N. to 39th Ave. N. This 48-acre facility is a terminal for loading and unloading barges. A large portion of the site is used to store dredge spoils (river sand), coal, and road salt. The City of Minneapolis is required to provide a place for storage of dredge spoils under an existing agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers.



3500 Block 2nd St. N.

In its present use the terminal is a major barrier to river access, yet its ownership by the City of Minneapolis also makes this land the greatest opportunity in the whole study area. The environmental investigation completed for this report does not show any major known contamination on the UHT site. While this issue requires further and more extensive investigation, the site may be one of the largest and cleanest on the west bank. Just north of the UHT on 1st St. N. is Holnam Cement, an active barge user on a three-acre site.



Natogas

Between 2nd St. and the UHT are three windowless warehouse structures, occupied by a variety of businesses. A 300-foot square parcel of land lies vacant along 2nd St. between two of these warehouses. Along Washington Ave. and the west side of 2nd St., is a mix of old houses and commercial buildings. A taxi company operates from this area. The Minnesota Department of Transportation owns a maintenance facility where Washington and 2nd join south of Dowling. An asphalt storage facility leased by Koch Materials, on land that is part of the UHT, is at the corner of Dowling and Washington.

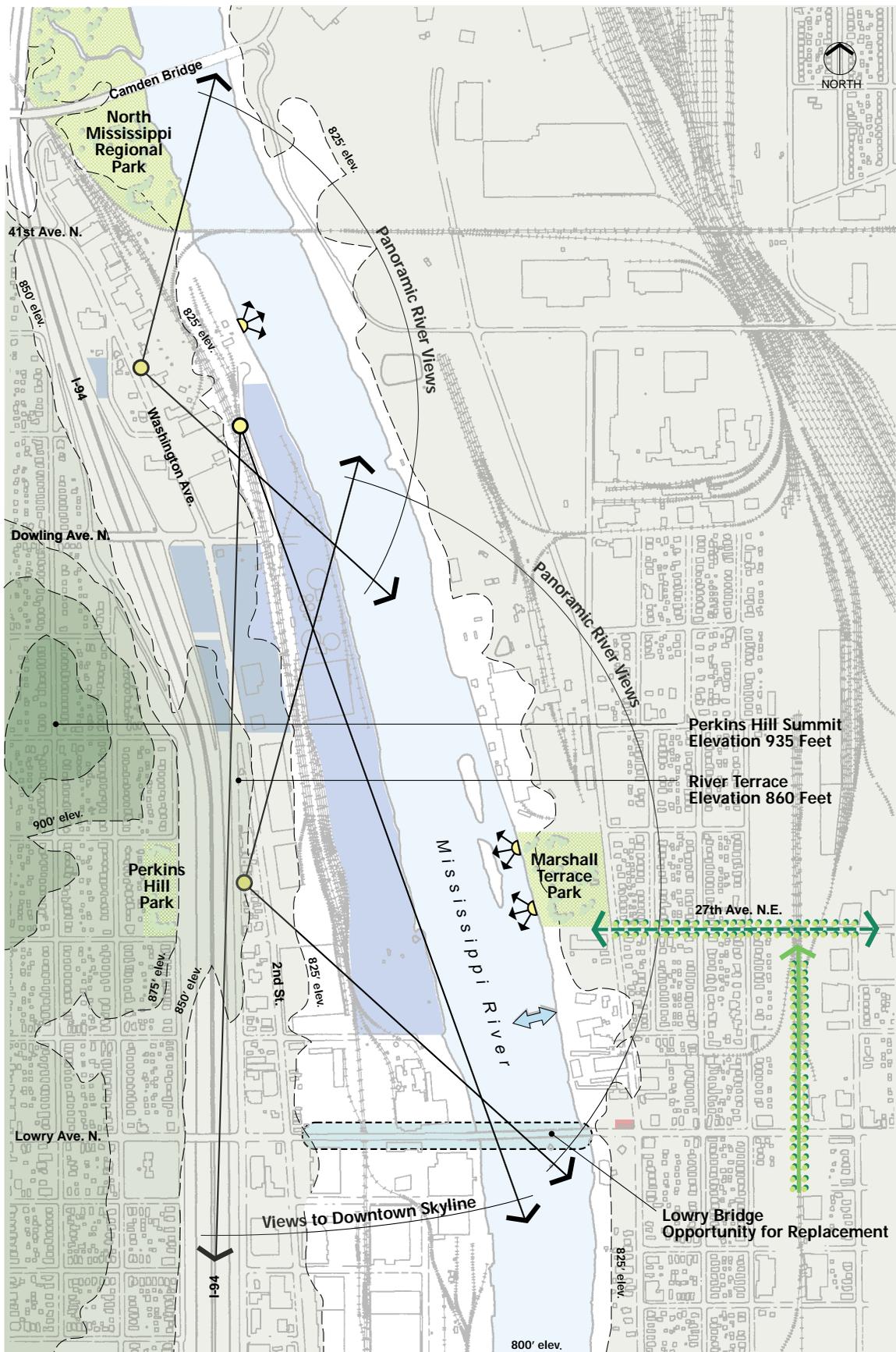
North of Dowling, on the east side of Washington, are the following types of businesses: foam products manufacturer, industrial oxygen supply, propane supply, machine tool shop, drywall supply, engineering lab, and lumber supply. Between Washington and the interstate is a materials fabricator, computer repair shop, plumber, and a number of older houses in poor condition. A new tool shop is on the northwest corner of Washington and Dowling.



Terrace in Three Levels

The opportunities north of Lowry are inherent in the large amount of land in existing public ownership, as well as excellent river views. The topography of the land between Lowry and Dowling is a terrace in three levels from Washington to the river, which continues the slope that creates the Perkins Hill summit to the west of the interstate. This terrace presents an excellent site for future development with views to the river. Views of the Northern States Power Riverside plant, and especially its coal piles, are the main draw back to potential redevelopment.

The majority of structures fronting Washington and 2nd are obsolete, and many could be considered blighted. Relocation of machine tool shops and materials fabricators is not problematic from a land-use standpoint. Likewise, distribution businesses in the area require only good truck access. It is the number of businesses north of Dowling that presents the major impediment, rather than their land-use impacts on new sites. In contrast, the overall density of businesses between Dowling and Lowry is lower, with large parcels that could conceivably be assembled into a sizable redevelopment site, sloping to new riverfront parks. North of Lowry only the UHT and Holnam Cement use barge terminals, for all the rest of the businesses the river is unrelated to their location.



- Park Board Property
- Publicly Owned Property
- City Routes with Direct Connections
- Existing Opportunity for Trail Corridor or Easement
- Views
- Low Bank, Good Water Access
- High Banks, Good Observation Points
- Topography
- Riverfront Hospitality

East and West Banks – North of Lowry Avenue Assets and Opportunities



Power Lines and Towers

Power Transmission Towers and Lines

Currently Northern States Power owns and maintains power transmission towers and lines on both sides of the river. On the west bank the lines cross over the river opposite the Riverside plant just south of Dowling onto the UHT site. Siting of the towers varies in relationship to the river edge. At the UHT the towers are roughly 150 feet from the river, then at the Lowry Bridge the tower actually sits on a sheetpile pad that extends from the bank. The towers and lines hug the riverbank from Lowry south to the BN Bridge, where the tower sits within 50 feet of the bank just east of the Riverview Supper Club. South of the BN Bridge the towers are located within the median along West River Road, continuing to a substation at the northwest corner of the intersection with Plymouth Ave.

In order to maximize the potential for river views on parcels adjacent to the new parks, relocation of these towers and lines may be necessary. Two corridors are available for tower relocation: either the railroad corridor, or the west side of Washington Ave. along the interstate. While the railroad corridor may be adequate for portions of the redevelopment area, placement of the lines along the interstate would clear views for all redevelopment areas.



Scherer Bros. Lumber

East Bank

Impediments to accomplishing the planning objectives are far fewer on the east bank of the river than on the west. In fact, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board already owns four large parcels on the riverfront. The issue then is one of connecting these park areas, and improving Marshall St. as a north-south thoroughfare and eastern boundary to a continuous park.



Graco

Boom Island Park to the BN Bridge

Just south of 8th Ave. N.E. (Plymouth Ave. on the west bank) is Boom Island Park, a major park development success assembled from former industrial sites during the 1970s and 1980s, and still undergoing programming and landscaping. A connection to Boom Island is an important component of a future trail system for the east bank. Just north of 8th Ave. on the riverfront are Scherer Bros. Lumber and Graco, Inc., a light-manufacturing plant. This lumberyard with millwork and the light-industrial plant to its north show opposite treatments regarding the riverbank. The lumberyard extends its open storage all the way to the water's edge, with a riprap bank denuded of vegetation. In contrast, the manufacturing plant is set back from the bank, which is vegetated and bermed.



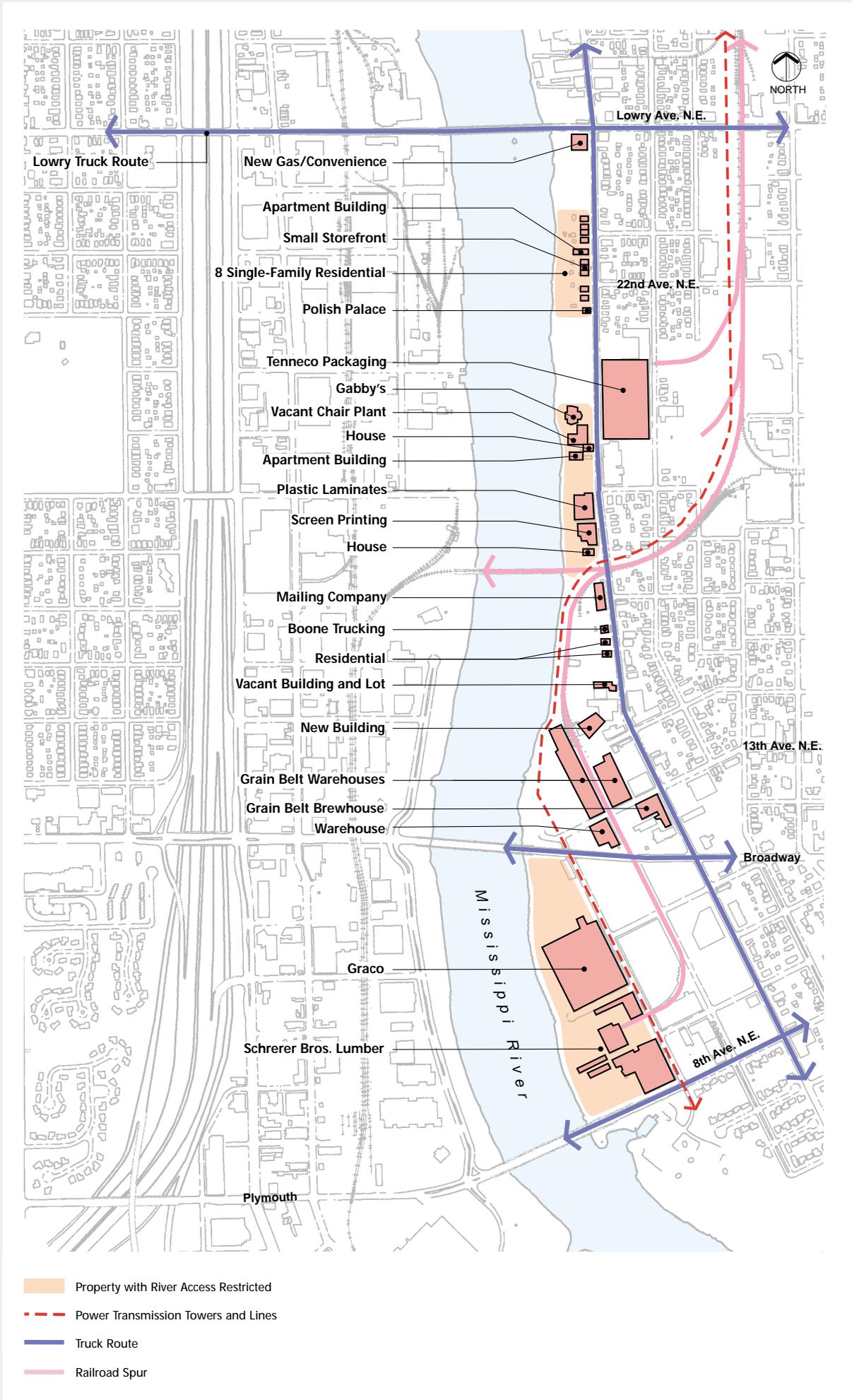
Grainbelt Brewery

In order to connect trails along the river from Boom Island to new parks north of 8th Ave., either relocation of the lumberyard or an easement along the bank is necessary. During the study period Graco announced plans to relocate its headquarters to this Minneapolis riverfront site, and indicated a willingness to consider easements along the bank for trail development. Trail passage under the Broadway Bridge may be possible at the riverbank, providing direct access to newly acquired Park Board property behind the former Grain Belt Brewery complex.



Grainbelt Warehouse Renovation

The MCDA owns the Grain Belt Brewery complex and has restored the exteriors of the former brewhouse and associated smaller buildings. Currently, space in the complex is rented, except for the brewhouse itself, which presents a number of challenges to renovation. The sheer size of the brewhouse is one challenge, as is the interior which was constructed on a number of different levels for the brewing operation. Facing Marshall St. the brewhouse is one of the treasures of northeast Minneapolis—its massive limestone foundation and cream-brick façade designed in four sections with distinct architectural styles to represent the four companies that united to form the Minneapolis Brewing Company in 1890. The complex is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and has seen a number of redevelopment proposals fail since the brewery closed in 1977.



**East Bank – South of Lowry Avenue
Constraints**

This master planning process has sparked new interest in the Grain Belt by setting any reuse into the context of an area-wide park development project. The recent acquisition and demolition by the Park Board of an old foundry occupying the riverbank behind the Grain Belt is also likely to increase the potential for reuse. In the meantime, artist's studios have brought new life to the associated historic warehouses at the complex. An industrial building behind the brewhouse on Ramsey St., utilized as a warehouse by Scherer Bros., detracts from the overall area, with demolition an option for any Grain Belt redevelopment project. Given its location and status as a local landmark, reuse of the Grain Belt is essential to making the Upper River a regional destination.



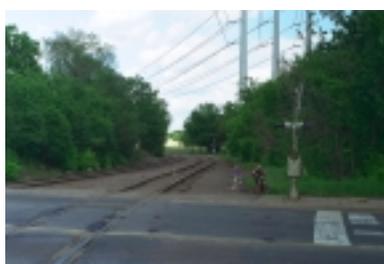
Water Ski Show Spectators at Grain Belt



BN Bridge



Private Road



BNSF Spur at Marshall St.

The Broadway Bridge blocks views to the downtown when at the river's edge behind the Grain Belt; however, the upper floors of the brewhouse offer exciting opportunities to create views to the west and downtown, including a potential rooftop patio area. **Also evident at the Grain Belt site is the potential for a close relationship between the two banks of the river between Broadway and the BN Bridge.** The impressive historic structures of the former brewery on the east bank are one attraction, while on the west side outstanding views of the river and downtown skyline are the draw. Spanning the river, and potentially linking these two elements, is the Burlington Northern Bridge. This wide railroad bridge was built for two tracks, one of which has been removed. If the remaining spur to the west bank were no longer needed, the bridge could be re-decked as an appealing pedestrian and bicycle facility. With attractions developed on both banks, a trail loop from Broadway to the BN Bridge would focus attention on and around the river.

BNSF Spur

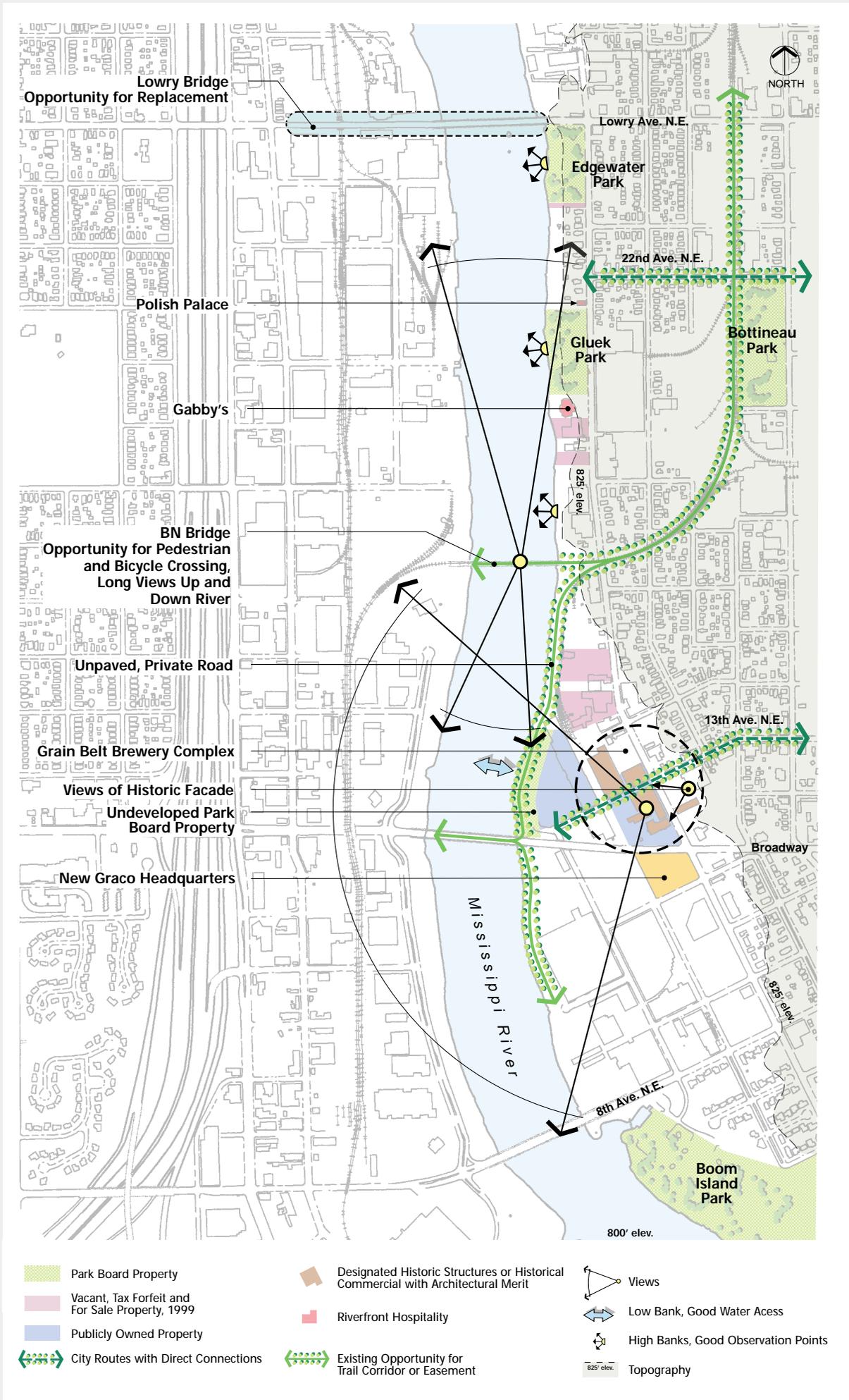
Proceeding north of the Grain Belt, an unpaved private road owned by the BNSF Railway leads along the bank to the BN Bridge. This road lies between the river edge and a railroad spur serving Scherer Bros. Lumber, with NSP power transmission towers and lines in the same corridor. Relocation of the lumberyard would allow removal of this spur. But even without removing the tracks, this private road is an existing opportunity for trail development between the Grain Belt area and the BN bridge.

At 14th Ave. N.E. and the west side of Marshall, a new structure built for a now defunct video studio awaits reuse. Other businesses between the Grain Belt and the BN Bridge, on the west side of Marshall—such as a vacant shingle-roofed shed with adjacent surface lot, and Boone Trucking rubbish removal—present an image problem for the overall area rather than a physical impediment to a continuous recreational trail. However, if a wider park or trail corridor is desired, or redevelopment to support the Grain Belt project, then relocation of these businesses will be necessary. Just south of the BN Bridge are a mailing service in a commercial building and two residential properties.

As previously mentioned, the BNSF Railway serves Lafarge Corp. via the BN Bridge on the west bank and Scherer Bros. Lumber via a spur on Ramsey St. From the BN Bridge this spur continues east and then swings north, with side spurs serving Tenneco Packaging between 18th and 20th avenues. An opportunity exists to develop trails in this corridor leading to the river crossing. However, if such a trail was developed an actualized signal would be required to allow safe crossings of Marshall St.

BN Bridge to Gluek Park

Immediately north of the BN Bridge sits one older house on a deep parcel that slopes from Marshall down to the riverbank. North of this house is a commercial building containing a screen printer, a plastic laminates plant, a vacant and tax-forfeit lot, a newer 6-unit apartment building and adjacent single-family dwelling, a vacant chair manufacturing plant, and Gabby's Saloon and Eatery.



East Bank — South of Lowry Avenue Assets and Opportunities



2204 Marshall St.



Marshall Concrete



Siwek Lumber



Heavy Industry and Residential

Gluek Park to Edgewater Park

Between Gluek Park (site of a former brewery) and the undeveloped Edgewater Park (site of a former riverbank restaurant) there are 8 single-family dwellings and a 24-unit apartment building. The Polish Palace, a tavern that is something of a local landmark, sits immediately north of Gluek Park. At the midpoint of this residential block is a small commercial storefront, currently occupied by a studio. A vacant lot just south of Edgewater Park was for sale by Minnegasco in September of 1999.

The eight houses on the 2100, 2200, and 2300 blocks of Marshall date from the 1890s and 1900s. Three of these houses are larger Victorians with some Queen-Anne-style detailing. The rest are more ordinary vernacular representatives of the construction period. The noticeable up keep and decorative period fencing in front of the larger houses helps this group of houses to stand out from other properties along heavily trafficked Marshall. Clearly a weighing of values and options, including house moving, will be necessary to decide the fate of these structures if the short stretch between Gluek and Edgewater parks is to be connected.

Lowry Avenue to Marshall Terrace Park

While the approach to the Lowry Bridge on the west bank is long, including an embankment to clear the railroad corridor and raise the bridge to meet the higher bank on the other side, the bridge simply meets the eastern bank at grade. Even with a new bridge, this alignment is unlikely to change. Lowry and Marshall meet only 275 feet from the bridge, creating an intersection with the heaviest traffic in the study area. Such an important intersection produces the necessary market for commercial development. On the southwest corner a newer gas station with convenience store serves this traffic. Across Marshall is a liquor store and car wash on opposite corners, and on the northwest corner is Tony Jaros River Garden, a local tavern.

Construction of a new bridge may allow the development of trails under Lowry at the immediate edge of the bank, however this would probably require a trail to hang below the bridge and necessitate ramps below current grades on each side. Edgewater Park wraps around the gas station providing continuous park to Lowry, yet trails may need to be brought back to the signalized intersection to cross. North of Lowry, the River Garden tavern is an asset to the development of a destination hospitality and retail node, and can be retained without significant interruption of the riverfront park. Continuing up Marshall, a union hall is located north of the tavern. Two larger parcels are occupied by Siwek Lumber & Millwork and Marshall Concrete Products.

Siwek, like Scherer Bros., is a remnant and reminder of the Upper River's historic use as a lumber milling area. As a land use, lumberyards require large parcels and truck access. Relocation of Siwek off the riverfront, for instance to the nearby Shoreham Yard, seems an achievable goal. Marshall Concrete produces cement for poured applications as well as finished blocks. A large number of trucks enter and exit the site, which is completely filled by the operation. The riverbank along this cement mixing plant seems to have been excavated, almost to river level, which contrasts with the generally higher bank on the east side. Interior portions of the site are also well below the grade of Marshall. Any potential expansion of the cement operation is constrained and, therefore, the business might benefit by relocation to a larger site.

One of the jarring land-use conflicts apparent in the study area is present in the placement of a lone single-family dwelling and a large apartment building, called River Terrace, between the heavy-industrial use at Marshall Concrete and Marshall Terrace Park.

NSP to St. Anthony Parkway

North of Marshall Terrace Park is the Northern States Power (NSP) Riverside Plant. This coal-fired power plant supplies electricity to the region. NSP representatives state that the aging plant can continue to operate for 30 to 40 years. Relocation of such an operation is virtually impossible given its vast infrastructure of transmission lines and huge capital investment in plant. Deregulation of the electric utility industry may have some effect on the competitiveness of the Riverside plant, but it may also allow NSP to integrate electric production at Riverside into a much larger sales area. Currently NSP reserves the capability to use an existing barge terminal on the site, but actually coal never has been off-loaded to the plant. In the past, coal was loaded from rail *onto* barges for shipment down river. The issue of barging capabilities leading to a better rail freight rate was discussed during the study; however, this effect is probably insignificant considering the western sources far from navigable rivers and vast amounts of coal purchased by NSP.

While some consider the visibility of the Riverside plant an impediment to redevelopment on the opposite, west bank, the older part of the plant is relatively handsome with its classic red brick industrial facades. The northernmost smokestack is twice the height of the original stacks and connects to a newer metal and concrete-sided addition. The large piles of coal and this addition create the negative visual impact. The coal piles are well hidden by high landscaped berms along Marshall St.; however, given the topography, it is difficult to hide the coal from view on the west bank. The actual river edge, north of the barging bulkheads and in front of the coal, is vegetated with a few trees and grasses, and is not as denuded as other banks in the study area. Perhaps enough space is available to continue a river side trail from Marshall Terrace Park on NSP's property, if issues of safety and liability can be satisfied. These are not small issues given the nature of the operation, but an easement might be arranged. Such a trail would connect to existing trails along St. Anthony Parkway, eventually connecting to trails along the river in Anoka County.

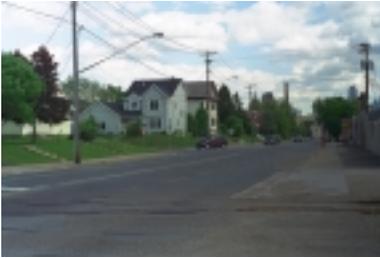
Between NSP and the Camden Bridge, there are two large sites backing on St. Anthony Parkway that have potential for development. This area is bisected by the Soo Line Bridge, with the new Bureau of Engraving building taking the eastern half of the northern site and a fly ash depot occupying much of the southern site. Development is constrained by wet soils behind the Bureau site and by the storage of fly ash on the other. Fly ash is a product of the power plant and is likely to remain. If NSP ever decided to convert the Riverside plant to natural gas, the associated areas with piles of coal and fly ash would become prime redevelopment sites with western exposure and river views.



NSP Riverside Plant



NSP



Marshall St.



Bicyclist on Marshall Sidewalk



Bicyclist on Marshall Sidewalk



Tenneco

Marshall Street

In addition to the goals of continuous parks and recreation trails, improvements to Marshall St. are also desired. Marshall St. is a major north-south route in northeast Minneapolis leading north to communities in Anoka County. It is currently designated as Hennepin County State Aid Highway 23, and its design must meet state aid standards. Hennepin County has indicated a willingness to discuss the eventual redesignation of the route as a City-owned street, yet this possibility will not change the realities on the ground of heavy traffic, including commercial trucks. Any redesign that constrains traffic would lead to impacts on University and Central avenues, which would be unacceptable from local resident and traffic movement points of view. There is no denying Marshall's geographic location and overall place in the transportation system.

The current right of way owned by Hennepin County is 66 feet wide north of 14th Ave. N.E., and 80 feet wide in front of the Grain Belt. Four drive lanes occupy 44 feet between the curbs, including the gutter pan. Parking is allowed in the outside drive lanes, but is disallowed during rush hours on the inbound lane in the morning and outbound lane in the evening. A 7-foot sidewalk is located on each side, beginning at the curb with no planting strips. The visible infrastructure of asphalt, curb, and sidewalk then is 58 feet wide, with the County owning an additional 4 feet between the sidewalk and the private lot. In some areas this additional right of way abuts structures.

The appearance of Marshall is harsh, with heavy traffic, no planting strips for street trees, and local power lines and poles, street signs, and hydrants punctuating the sidewalk area. Bicyclists are usually on the sidewalk, rather than risk riding in high-speed drive lanes. Much of the asphalt, curb, gutter, and sidewalk is in need of replacement. Local residents have organized to plan for new investments, but real improvements are stymied by the lack of useful right of way and adequate setbacks for structures. Yet a redesign is possible and can work in conjunction with other planning objectives of riverfront parks and trails. The necessity of increasing the right of way adds impetus to any eminent domain taking of private property between Marshall and the river.

Properties on the east side of Marshall

A number of properties on the east side of Marshall are past the point of probable reinvestment and renovation under current conditions. One of the justifications for public investment in an extensive new riverfront park system is the expectation that private investments will follow. This is the hope for the east side of Marshall St., as well as areas on blocks within walking distance of the new parks. Properties, such as the one currently owned by Tenneco Packaging may become enticing redevelopment opportunities following completion of the parks. The Tenneco site, located between 18th and 20th, is interesting in that it has residential uses to the north and south and Bottineau Park to the east. A linking of Bottineau Park to the riverfront parks might be a key feature of a future residential redevelopment project. The focus of public action though must remain on the riverfront parcels for the foreseeable future, with benefits to the overall social and economic conditions in northeast Minneapolis to accrue as the riverfront park is realized.

Summary Note

The stated planning objectives for the Upper River Master Plan are confronted by historical inertia that has favored industrial uses in the area, capital sunk in public and private infrastructure, family histories of ownership of riverfront properties, and conflicting values regarding the best use of riverfront parcels. The narrative provided in this report is only a summary that can not capture the intricate knot of issues, personal sensibilities, and business decision imperatives that will prove formidable barriers to accomplishing the planning goals. The summary *does* show some of the potential in a truly beautiful stretch of the Mississippi River in the City of Minneapolis and some of the possible soft points where barriers to implementation might be breached, for instance: the Upper Harbor Terminal, the BN Bridge, Grain Belt, Graco, and a new Lowry Bridge. **It should not escape notice that public agencies currently own over 50 percent of the linear riverfront along the Upper River.** Opportunities exist to expand these public lands, with no less than five riverfront parcels on the east bank for sale in September of 1999, while beneath the Lowry Bridge the former Japs-Olson site sits vacant and available.



Riverfront Property for Sale, 1999