



Minnesota

Advisory Services



# LITTLE CANADA RICE STREET CORRIDOR

A ULI Minnesota Technical Assistance Panel for the  
City of Little Canada, Minnesota

June 4 & 5, 2024

# CONTENTS

<b>ABOUT THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABOUT ULI MINNESOTA</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ULI ADVISORY SERVICES: NATIONAL AND GLOBAL PROGRAMS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANELS (TAPS)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PANELISTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CONTEXT/BACKGROUND</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>STUDY SITES</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PANEL QUESTIONS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>THE PROCESS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SURVEY</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED NEXT ACTIONS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>PANELIST BIOS</b>	<b>29</b>

## ABOUT THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 48,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific region, with members in 81 countries. ULI's extraordinary impact on land use decision-making is based on its members' sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns. Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. Drawing on its members' work, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at [uli.org](https://uli.org). Follow ULI on [X](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

## ABOUT ULI MINNESOTA

ULI Minnesota was founded in 2001 to serve the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region and the state of Minnesota. Our members are involved in all aspects of the development and city planning process — private, public, and non-profit. Membership in ULI Minnesota includes the research and resources of the oldest and largest network of cross-disciplinary real estate and land use experts in the world.

We are led by our local membership and work to engage public and private sector leaders to foster collaboration, share knowledge, and influence meaningful strategic action in the responsible use of land to create and sustain thriving communities. The mission of ULI Minnesota is made possible by the generous contributions of time and talent made daily by our membership.

### ULI Minnesota District Council Leadership

**Lynette Dumalag, Founder/Broker, Sitio Purok**

District Council Chair

**Megan Flanagan**

Executive Director

## ULI ADVISORY SERVICES: NATIONAL AND GLOBAL PROGRAMS

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics.

An additional national offering is the project analysis session (PAS) offered at ULI's Fall and Spring Meetings, through which specific land use challenges are evaluated by a panel of volunteer experts selected from ULI's membership. This is a conversational format that lends itself to an open exchange of ideas among diverse industry practitioners with distinct points of view. From the streamlined two-hour session to the "deeper dive" eight-hour session, this intimate conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving.

Learn more at [americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services](https://americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services).

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANELS (TAPS)

The Urban Land Institute harnesses its members' technical expertise to help communities solve complex land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues. Drawing from its professional membership base, ULI offers objective and responsible guidance on various land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions.

"ULI brings together diverse practitioners with real world, local experience and a fresh eye. ULI Minnesota has a tremendous record of helping cities realize their potential, and their work on the Bottineau Corridor Blue Line Extension is another excellent contribution."

- **Marilee Utter**, CitiVenture Associates, LLC

## PANELISTS

### Panel Co-Chairs

**Beth Elliott, AICP**  
Stantec

**Julie Wischnack, FAICP**  
City of Minnetonka

### Panelists

**Gretchen Camp, AIA, LEED AP, NCARB**  
ESG Architecture & Design

**Peter Deanovic**  
Buhl Investments

**Erin Lonoff**  
HR&A Advisors

**Max Musicant**  
The Musicant Group

**Jesse Symynkywicz, ASLA**  
Damon Farber Landscape Architects

ULI ADVISORY  
SERVICES IDENTIFY  
CREATIVE, PRACTICAL  
SOLUTIONS FOR  
COMPLEX LAND USE  
AND DEVELOPMENT  
CHALLENGES.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Little Canada engaged ULI Minnesota Advisory Services for a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to provide recommendations regarding the best use for three city-owned parcels, while also offering guidance on placemaking and development in the surrounding areas.

Key themes from stakeholder interviews and a community survey emphasized residents' desire for mixed-use development, a "Town Center" destination, increased local activations, and a stronger city identity. Respondents also expressed a need for enhanced walkability and pedestrian safety within the city.

The TAP, guided by principles of catalytic development, pedestrian connectivity, identity establishment, and economic support, focused on three city-owned sites:

- ▶ **0 First Bank Drive:** The panel recommends creating a vibrant gathering space to serve as a testing ground for community activity which could potentially support the establishment of a permanent plaza. The panel suggests advocating for relocating the BRT station adjacent to this site to enhance connectivity and energy.
- ▶ **2750 Rice Street:** Given its small size and the future Rice Street reconstruction, the panel suggests strategically holding the lot until the Rice Street work is complete. Post-reconstruction, the site could be sold, potentially in conjunction with neighboring parcels, for commercial redevelopment with a focus on pedestrian connectivity to new sidewalks along Rice Street.
- ▶ **2828 Condit Drive:** This large parcel offers multiple opportunities. The panel proposes two concepts: a restaurant/grocery incubator inspired by successful models like Asia Mall and Malcolm Yards, or a townhome community, leveraging the site's proximity to residential areas and trails.

### Recommended Priorities:

- ▶ **Prioritize Placemaking and Walkability:** Develop a design workbook with standards (and specifications if possible) for the public realm to guide new development along Rice Street and Little Canada Road. Standards would guide both public and private installations of these amenities.
- ▶ **Focus on Top Infrastructure Priorities:** Continue building sidewalks, improving trails, and implementing site preparation work on the Condit site. Leverage transit and transportation investments for economic development, including advocating for the BRT station relocation and reconsidering planned traffic engineering near the Condit site.
- ▶ **Focus on Key Programmatic Priorities:** Target funding to support commercial growth through initiatives like a facade improvement program, small business/entrepreneurship support, and district marketing.

### Recommended Next Actions:

- ▶ **Create a Station Area/Small-Area Plan** for the First Bank Drive area, focusing on the public realm, programming improvements, and a public-private partnership framework.
- ▶ **Develop design standards** for Rice Street and Little Canada Road.
- ▶ **Develop a Small-Area Plan** for the 2828 Condit site, including infrastructure investments to prepare the location for future development.

The panel believes that these recommendations, if implemented strategically, can contribute significantly to Little Canada's goals of increased economic activity, enhanced community identity, and improved quality of life for its residents.

## CONTEXT/BACKGROUND

The [City of Little Canada](#) engaged ULI Minnesota Advisory Services for a Technical Assistance Panel to provide recommendations on the best use for three city-owned parcels, as well as providing recommendations on placemaking and guiding development in the surrounding areas.

Little Canada is a unique, historic community located in Ramsey County, just north of the state capitol of St. Paul. The first white settlers were French Canadians, beginning with Benjamin Gervais, who claimed land in 1844. The first school was established in 1850, with lessons in French. The Catholic Church of St. John the Evangelist was built in 1852; its cemetery was the second to be established in Minnesota. In 1858, Little Canada became a township; it incorporated as a village in 1953, and a city in 1974.

The city is 4.34 square miles, with a population of 10,819 (2020 Census). Its citizens are proud of their French Canadian heritage, with the annual Canadian Days festival drawing thousands of attendees.

## Strategic Planning

In recent years, leadership has taken a more proactive view of planning for the city's growth. In 2019, the City Council initiated a strategic planning process that established a [practical vision for the community](#). With many of the initial initiatives completed by 2022, the city [updated the plan that year](#).

In alignment with the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan, city staff have taken the next steps in efforts to enhance development and redevelopment opportunities within the city.

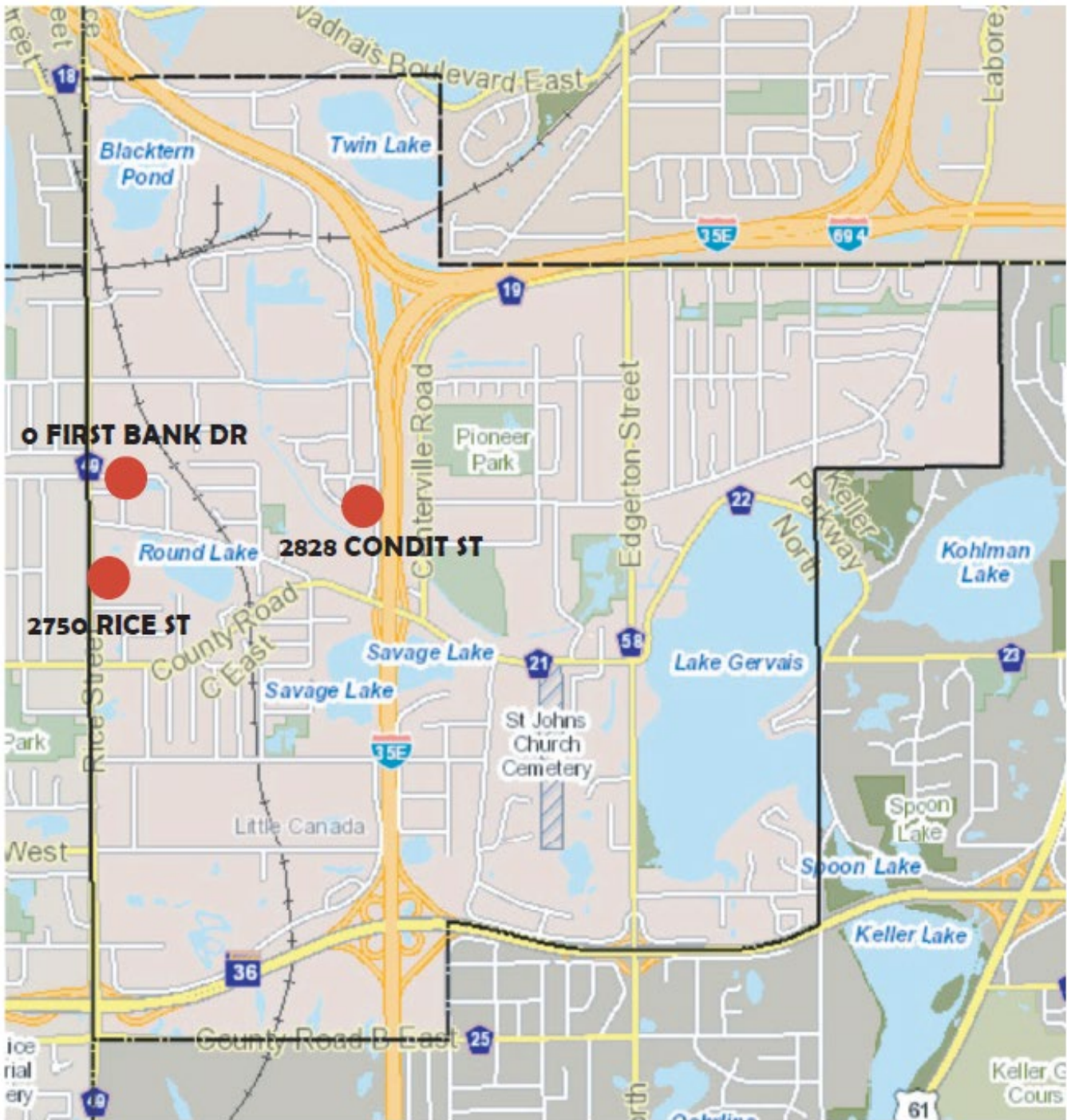
- ▶ *Land Use Optimization:* Determine the best use for city-owned parcels and adjacent areas, considering a mix of uses to enhance community gatherings and create cohesion between the east and west sides of the city divided by I-35. A key component of the vision for 2025 is revitalized commercial corridors.
- ▶ *Placemaking and Corridor Enhancement:* Strategize ways to increase placemaking and enhance the Rice Street corridor, focusing on green spaces, walkability, and incorporating main street values in commercial and transit-oriented developments.
- ▶ *Guiding Future Development:* Develop a comprehensive plan to guide future development in the targeted areas, embracing higher densities, mixed uses, and community values to foster a vibrant, inclusive, and connected city.

## Infrastructure Investments

Upcoming infrastructure projects in the area include a 4-to-3 lane conversion project on County Road C from Little Canada to Lexington Avenue that will reduce traffic speeds and enhance pedestrian safety, scheduled in 2026. Also, the complete reconstruction of Rice Street from County Road B2 to South Owasso Boulevard is included in the Ramsey County transportation improvement plan (TIP) for 2027, which will include sidewalks and trails on both sides of Rice Street.



## STUDY SITES





## 0 First Bank Drive

This 0.6 acre parcel, owned by the city since 2006, is flat, shovel-ready, and zoned Commercial within the C-2 Corridor Mixed District, which also permits residential use. It is ideally situated near one-story retail establishments, restaurants, office buildings, a US Bank branch, and existing senior housing, making it a prime location for future development. There is also development potential in the surrounding underutilized lots.

### **Project Area: 0 First Bank Drive, 2850 Rice Street, 0 Little Canada Road**

**Area: 2.93 acres**



## 2750 Rice Street

Acquired by the city a few years ago, this 0.2 acre parcel, formerly home to a pawn shop, has since been cleared for redevelopment. Situated adjacent to a liquor store, it is part of a mapped area that highlights opportunities for coordinated redevelopment. The parcel is zoned Commercial; however, this section of Rice Street lacks cohesive pedestrian infrastructure, with disconnected sidewalks and limited pedestrian amenities.

### **Project Area: 2750, 2760, 2768 RICE ST**

**Area: 1.37 acres**





## 2828 Condit Drive

This parcel, recently purchased by the city, is currently zoned and designated for commercial use. The site contains an existing home and is adjacent to existing residential and office/commercial uses. The property slopes to the south as it meets up with the trail. With adjoining city-owned parcels, the area available for redevelopment is 4.55 acres.

### **Project Area: 2828 Condit Drive and five additional parcels**

**Area: 4.55 acres**



The land was acquired in part to facilitate a rerouting of Country Drive as part of an overall traffic infrastructure plan that also includes a pedestrian bridge across 35 E.







## PANEL QUESTIONS

The city asked the panel to address the following questions:

1. What is the best use for the city-owned parcels and the areas surrounding them?
2. How could the city best increase placemaking and Rice Street corridor enhancements?
3. How can the city guide future development in these areas?

## THE PROCESS

The panel's process began with advance review of key briefing materials. On June 4, the panelists toured the three sites and then had informal conversations with members of the community during a reception at Cardigan Ridge. The next morning, city staff gave a presentation focusing on the three sites as well as area history and goals. The panel conducted stakeholder interviews and spent the rest of the day discussing and formulating recommendations. The findings were shared at the June 12, 2024 City Council meeting.



*Panelists tour the 2828 Condit site with city staff.*



## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SURVEY

The panel conducted small group interviews with community members and other local stakeholders and had informal conversations with several members of the community during the June 4 reception.

Several key themes emerged from these stakeholder interactions:

- ▶ Residents want a mix of commercial and residential development with a focus on identity, walkability, and community.
- ▶ There is a need to create a “City-Center” type destination with additional retail and commercial development to attract people to the community.
- ▶ Stakeholders want to see more access to activities for people who live in the area.
- ▶ Citizens would like to see more focus on city identity to enhance their sense of local pride and attract customers.
- ▶ Local businesses would benefit from more attention to the area and would like to see intense development to bring more people; residents want to support local businesses.

In advance of the TAP, the city surveyed residents; during the survey period of May 20 to June 4, 2024, 115 residents completed the questionnaire. The survey results reinforced the messages articulated during stakeholder interviews. Walkability and pedestrian safety were key themes. The panel was struck by the percentage of respondents who leave Little Canada to purchase food, both groceries and restaurant meals.

- ▶ 81% of respondents leave Little Canada for eating and dining.
- ▶ 79% of respondents leave to purchase food and groceries.
- ▶ 56% of respondents named enhanced walkability as their top enhancement priority.
  - ▶ Comments repeatedly called for safe, walkable pathways.
- ▶ 43% of respondents cited the “small town, community feel” as the top-quality Little Canada should be known for.

The residents of Little Canada clearly love their community and want it to succeed. They would like to see more investment in supporting their local businesses – by attracting additional residents to be a larger customer base, by creating a sense of destination that will attract visitors, and by being more intentional about marketing the city. Both the stakeholder interviews and the Community Feedback survey demonstrated affection for the small town feel that Little Canada offers.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As deliberations began, the panel set guiding principles to inform their work.

- ▶ **Use city-owned sites as catalysts for surrounding properties.** This is a key principle especially for cities that haven't done significant reinvestment and redevelopment on public-owned sites. Public-owned sites have the advantage of allowing cities to pursue ideal scenarios; while the market must work, the city can somewhat shape the market. This will start to influence further development.
- ▶ **Prioritize improved pedestrian connectivity** from each site to nearby amenities and residences for a safe and walkable environment. The process of providing that connectivity may be publicly or privately created.
- ▶ **Establish an identity or long-term vision** that is emblematic of the character of the community, including branding, tagline, and visual cues.
- ▶ **Capture activity on each site that supports the local economy**, including but not limited to tax base, diverse commercial services, and increased households.



*Panelists deliberate on recommendations.*

## PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings are based on the panel's independent opinions and analyses as real estate, planning, design, finance, placemaking, and development professionals. While the panel considers these ideas and suggestions sound, they are not directives. There is no substitute for developers with motivation and vision, and the city is encouraged to review proposals that meet their goals.

### 0 First Bank Drive

While several stakeholders suggested housing, the panel's opinion is that housing is not viable on this site.

Residents have affinity for retail establishments and want to add activity in way that supports them. This site is a space that the city controls, that can be anchored with investment to catalyze nodes of commercial engagement.

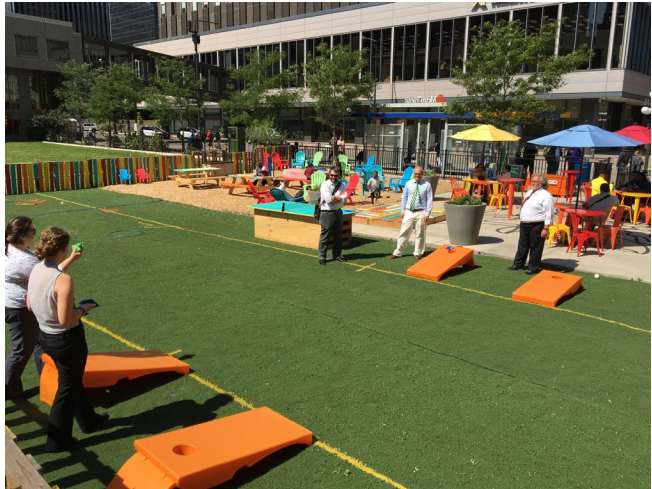
While there's not an obvious, immediate commercial use for this plot, it can be a testing ground to demonstrate value and potential. Residents have discussed the desire for a destination that draws people, supporting the nearby businesses. Additionally, nearby business representatives interviewed by the panel emphasized value in this area for more commercial activity to support their own sites. Strategic use of this site can offer proof of concept on the impact of an activated public space and a determination of what activations resonate with the community.

The city should create a gathering space that supports social and commercial vitality, building on the sense of community already achieved during Canadian Days. The first step will be to create a space that can be enjoyed at all times first, followed by adding programs. Weekly and one-off programs for this space could include activities in conjunction with the nearby Farmers Market, schools, and arts organizations. Its location adjacent to Culvers creates a natural audience for gathering while they enjoy their food. Simple site amenities can include:

- ▶ Movable seating
- ▶ Games
- ▶ Shade features
- ▶ Fire pits
- ▶ String lights
- ▶ Dog run
- ▶ Play features
- ▶ Food truck parking
- ▶ Onsite signage



# Activation Examples - Summer and Winter



Two activations of formerly vacant sites - Popsups at Central Station, St. Paul; Winter Market at Lyndale Gardens, Richfield. Photos courtesy of Musicant Group.



Testing can include the impact of an activated plaza in the commercial center on customer attraction and behavior, and whether that increases interest from developers and businesses in the area. The city can note which activations make the most impact, and determine whether this location is the right place for a permanent plaza if these efforts are successful. Wild success would be a highly utilized space that generates new demand for businesses and redevelopment in the surrounding blocks, with future development proposed to orient toward the activated space/plaza in a pedestrianized way.

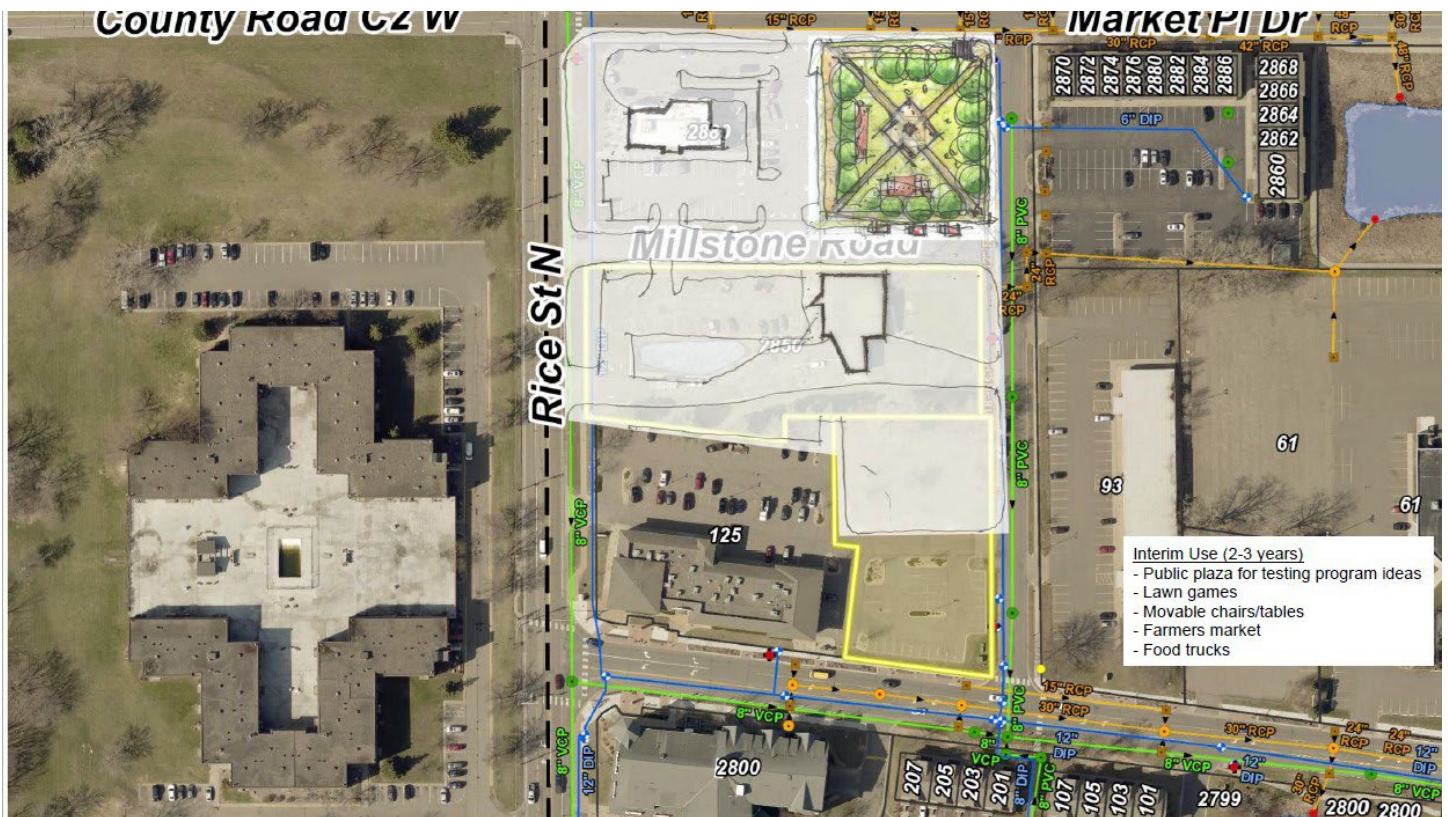
With the upcoming BRT station, the city should create a Station Area Plan, building up the BRT connection and using temporary activation before the route arrives.

The panel suggests advocating to move the BRT Station to this site (it can still have its terminus down the road). This would bring more energy and activation, starting to create a Town Center. This is a more logical and visible connection to Little Canada Road and could spur further densification in the immediate area.

The panel also suggests adding on-street parking and considering closing Millstone Road to cars. On street parking would slow down traffic and increase the likelihood that future development would include buildings closer to the street, rather than behind parking lots. With successful activation, the surrounding buildings will naturally orient themselves toward the active space.

**The Barbell Mindset**

One panelist suggests thinking of successfully activated places like a barbell – two active nodes of critical mass with a connection between.



An illustration of an interim use, over the next 2-3 years, with a public plaza for testing program ideas. Suggestions include lawn games, moveable chairs and tables, a market, and food trucks. If Millstone Road is closed to cars, a plaza is created that could feature gateway flags and market stalls, extending the public space and creating a walkable area.



Over the next 2-5 years, the panel recommends the city view this site as a long-term investment, focusing on activation and programming in this parcel, along with development of a Station Area Plan. The Metropolitan Council is currently providing funding for station area plans. In the long term, form-based zoning or design criteria for the site along with an RFP informed by the results of the testing could be used to meet city priorities for the area.

### Why not housing?

Though several stakeholders suggested housing for this plot, the panel determined that housing is not financially viable. Today's market dynamics make building new housing difficult. The below cost analysis shows that townhome projects are currently viable, but apartments are not. This site is not conducive to townhomes, though another site considered in this TAP could be.

#### Affordable vs. Market Rate Housing

Little Canada's median household income is \$63,000 (Source: MN DEED, 2020). Housing positioned as affordable is the market rate for this community.

In developing housing, a critical mass of units is necessary because of costs associated with infrastructure. This site is too small to support enough housing to offset the fixed expenses. An average monthly rent of \$2.91 would be required for viability for market-rate housing, above the current market rents. Townhomes and Income Restricted Units funded by bonds are the most viable housing options.

## Housing Rent Viability

### Multifamily Cost Analysis

Land Price per Unit		20,000
Cost of Construction		250,000
Total Cost Basis		270,000
Expected Profit Margin	20%	54,000
Total Basis		324,000

### Sample Townhome Sales

304 Manitoba	355,000
2786 Quebec	403,000

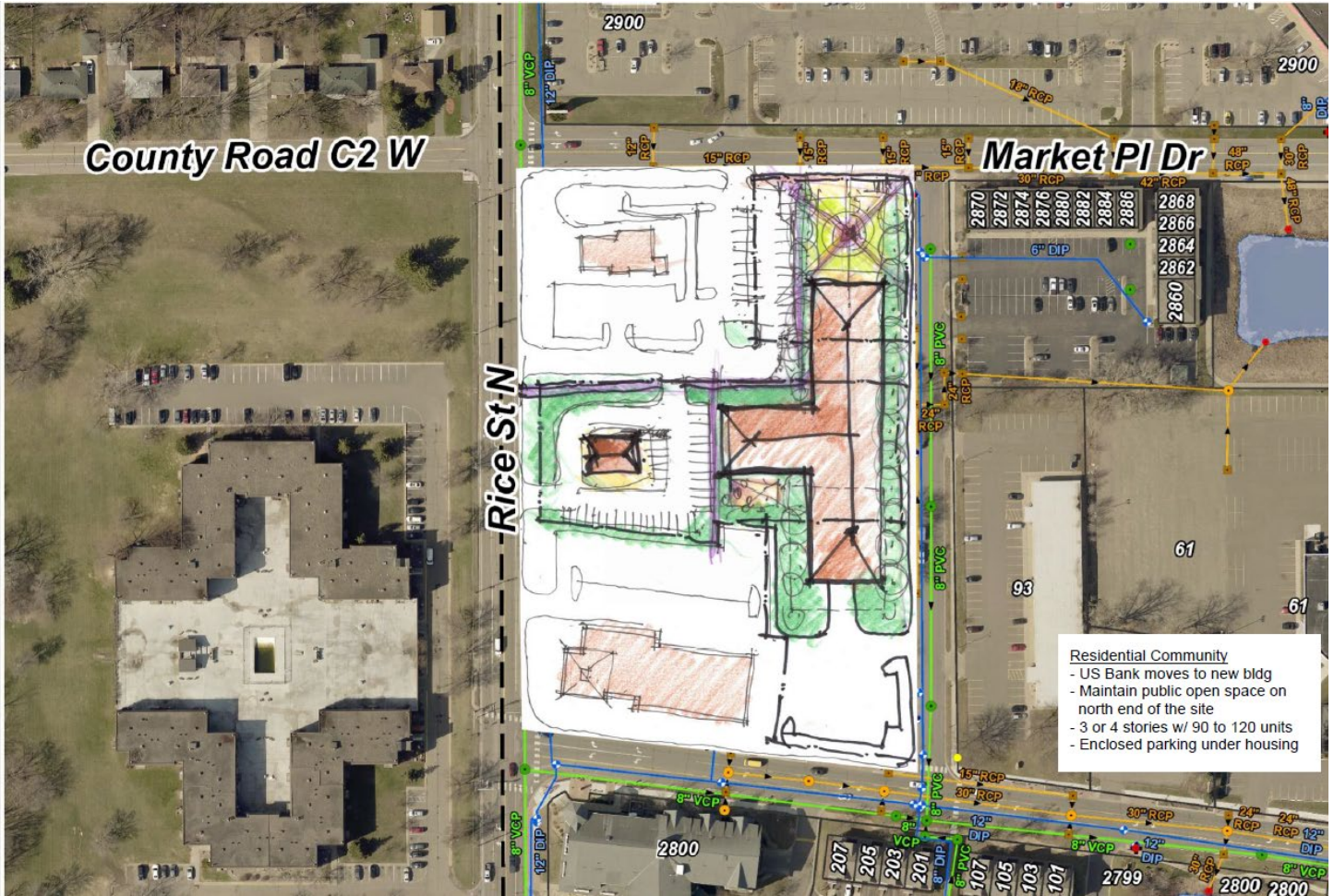
### Apartment Income Analysis

Expected Return on Cost	7%
Required Rent per Unit	22,680
Per month	1,890
Average Rent PSF Required	2.91

### Current Market Rents

Ansel Rents	2.73
McMillan Rents	2.28
Bujold Projected New Rents	2.00

Based on this information, the panel believes the best use of this site would be creating a strong, commercial barbell node and enhancing the pedestrian connection between the site, Rice Street, and Little Canada Road.



**Residential Community**  
 - US Bank moves to new bldg  
 - Maintain public open space on north end of the site  
 - 3 or 4 stories w/ 90 to 120 units  
 - Enclosed parking under housing

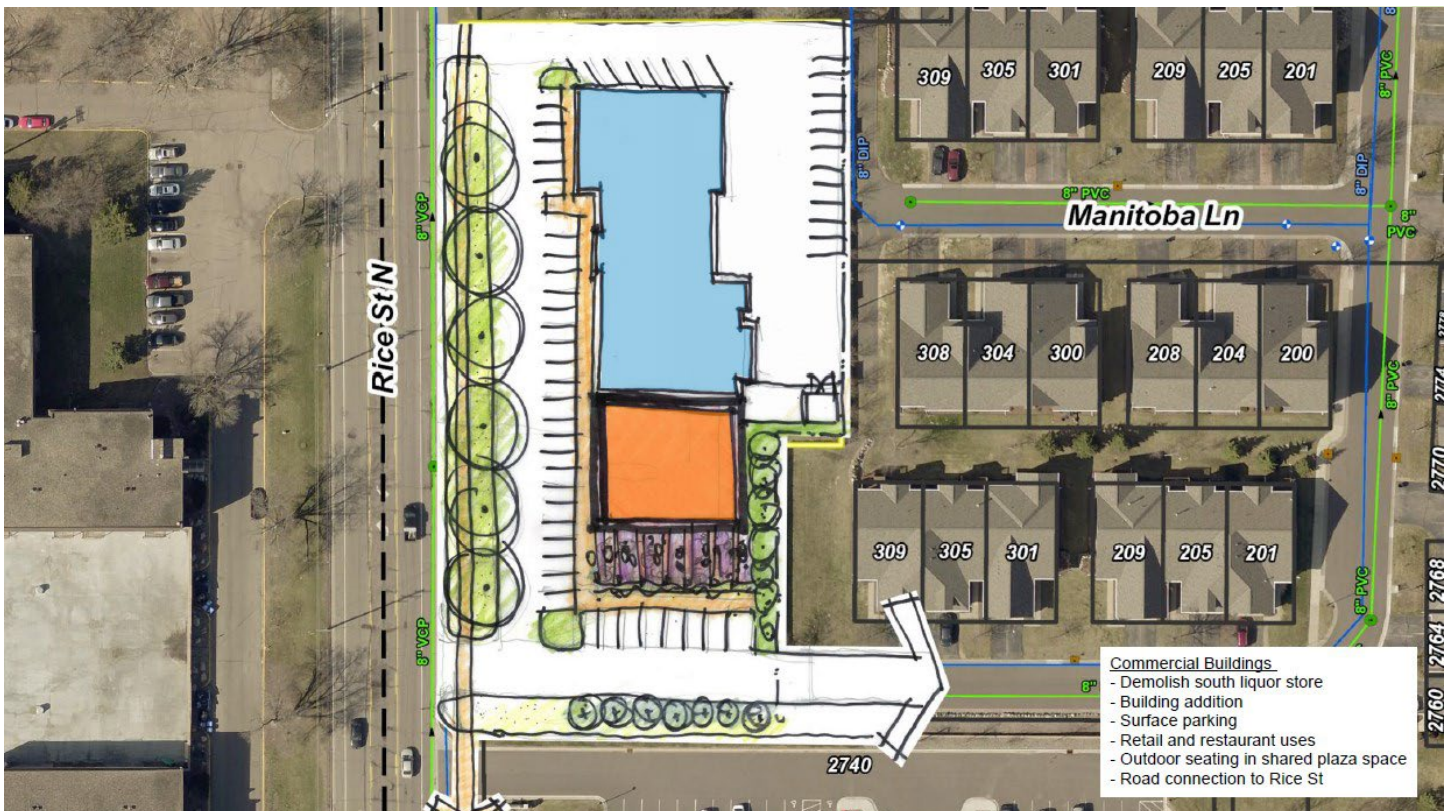
*An illustration of potential housing in the area, maintaining a public element and parking lot for the Village. This concept would require moving the US Bank location to a smaller building. This offers 90 to 120 units, but underground parking would be cost prohibitive.*



## 2750 Rice Street

This small parcel, known colloquially as the “pawn shop site,” presents challenges due to its very small size and the upcoming Rice Street reconstruction. The panel’s suggestion is that the city plan to hold on to this site until after the Rice Street reconstruction. To more effectively use the space in the short term, the panelists recommend investigating a short term use agreement with the next door business. This would allow that business to use the site (i.e. for truck parking or activations) and remove the maintenance of the space from the city’s responsibility, while potentially building a stronger relationship between the city and the neighboring property owner.

Following Rice Street reconstruction, the city could offer the space for sale. If a positive relationship has been maintained with the neighboring owner, there could be potential for a developer to purchase a larger plot. Future development in this area is likely to be focused on commercial use and should include a focus on pedestrian connectivity; this site would connect well to the Bank Drive site and Little Canada Road. The panel recommends not putting a road or sidewalk to connect to the townhome road prior to development of the parcel, as this would likely prevent the space from being reused for other purposes in the future.



*This illustrative concept uses several nearby buildings to create a more active use for the area, including a potential restaurant with an outdoor seating plaza.*





*The idea for a restaurant with plaza was inspired by the Texa-Tonka project in St. Louis Park, which offers a compelling atmosphere for gathering. Photos courtesy of Paster Properties.*



## 2828 Condit St

This site represents an exciting opportunity, as it is a large parcel that presents several options. With its prime location and the orientation of the road connection, thoughtful planning here has the opportunity to reenergize development in the area.

This site offers a soft transition into the adjacent R1 area and serves as an important connection point to the land south and the bike trail. With foresight, this trail can connect all the way through Little Canada with complementary uses around it. The lack of a sound barrier from the Condit site to the intersection is a benefit, as it allows the opportunity to think about how building structures can help manage sound as it moves into the residential zoning. The visual opportunity off of I-35 can attract business investment. This area is also home to a cherished destination in the Porterhouse restaurant; this node has real promise.

It is important to remember that this location exists within a larger surrounding area, and the panel had some thoughts on the surrounding infrastructure. Because one of the questions concerned placemaking, the panel looked at the larger picture through that lens.

One of the principles of placemaking is to not negatively impact unique places that already exist. During the stakeholder interviews, the panel heard many people talk about how much they appreciate their local businesses, like Porterhouse, Gordie's, Donut Hut, and Qamaria Yemeni coffee. When considering infrastructure in this area, the panel recommends not focusing on moving cars quickly through the community, but instead thinking about how to encourage people to see and experience the local businesses that Little Canada residents cherish. This also fits in with the repeated feedback from residents for pedestrian safety, walkability, and connection.

There is potential for a complementary commercial node at County Road C and County Drive that could be mixed-use and multi modal (i.e. accommodating walking, biking, and driving). Developer investment could enhance grant-funding viability for pedestrian and bike connections between the eastern and western portions of Little Canada. This broader infrastructure project will enable a larger plan that makes use of best VPD intersection for commercial investment. The city is urged to orient investment to protect and enhance the current community assets and to revisit the road concepts with economic development in mind, rather than traffic movement.

Cyclist and pedestrian safety on the bridge is another important issue. While there are currently efforts in place to secure funding for a pedestrian bridge, there are interventions such as simple barricades and jersey barriers that can increase safety in the short term.

One suggestion for the 2828 Condit Street site was a hotel. The panel likes the idea of a hotel, as Little Canada currently does not have one, but would not put it on this site, but rather near the Porterhouse. This would also offer an opportunity for that local business to be the outsourced food & beverage provider for a hotel.



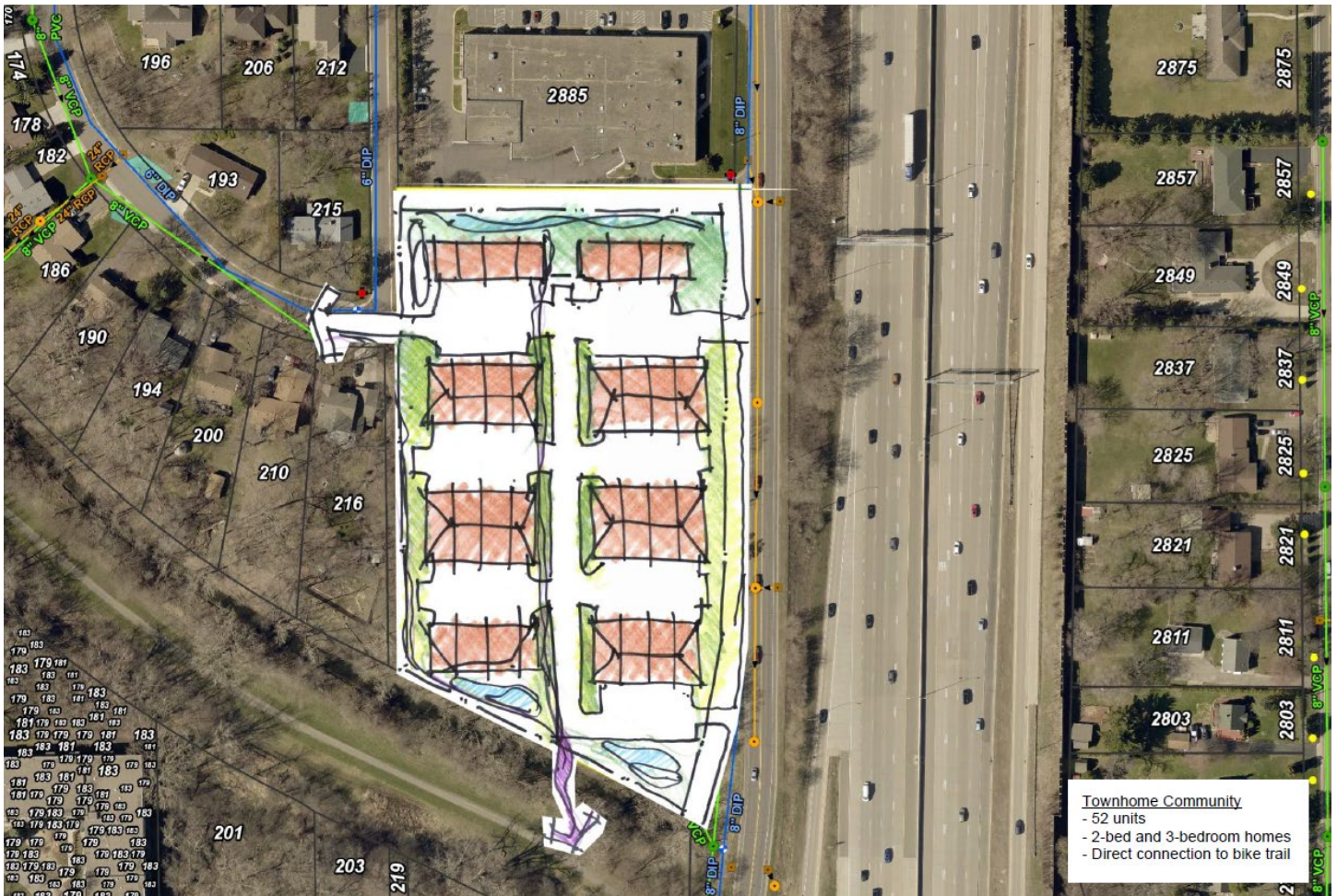
## CONCEPT ONE: RESTAURANT/GROCERY INCUBATOR



Community feedback suggested the desire for both business incubator space and for ethnic grocery stores and restaurants. This concept is inspired by Asia Mall and Malcolm Yards, providing a restaurant incubator, space for specialty retail, and/or a food hall. It includes 30,000 square feet, with 75+ parking stalls and green amenities.



## CONCEPT TWO: TOWNHOME COMMUNITY



The second recommendation is for a townhome community. As previously noted, townhomes are economically feasible and would fit in well with the residential area. The trail connection especially makes this a desirable residential area. The panel's analysis shows that 52, 2- and 3-bedroom homes could be located on this parcel.

## RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES

- ▶ **Prioritize Placemaking and Walkability.** The panel recommends the city create a design workbook with standards (or specifications) for the public realm to guide new development along Rice Street and Little Canada Road. More specifically, the workbook would detail street elements as well as private improvements. Over time, this will lead to visual and connective transformation through the private sector. Elements of the workbook could include:
  - Sidewalks and landscape buffer (all new projects should be required to include both) along right of way and to any buildings that are set back from the street
  - Streetlights (including providing a lighting plan to detail the proper placement and look of streetlights. Thought should be given to market accessibility for lights and long-term maintenance.)
  - Street furniture (consideration should be given to organic ways to provide street furniture rather than typical benches).
  - Trash facilities (determine responsible party for maintenance).
  - Building facades
  
- ▶ **Focus on top Infrastructure Priorities.** The city should continue building sidewalks and improving trails where applicable. The panel also recommends implementing site prep work on the 2828 Condit Site, especially district (area) stormwater, to make it more attractive to developers. There are significant opportunities to leverage transit and transportation investments for economic development, including:
  - Advocating to Metro Transit to move the BRT station to the 0 Bank Drive lot
  - Reconsidering rights of way to create developable sites
  - Improving walkability and the public realm through infrastructure investments
  - Unlocking new development potential as a result of transportation improvements
  - Creating wayfinding and branding
  - Encouraging transit-oriented development interest from the private sector.
  
- ▶ **Focus on Key Programmatic Priorities.** Recognizing that funding sources are limited, they should be targeted to support commercial growth through initiatives like:
  - Facade or art improvement program to improve older commercial retail properties. Art on buildings can sometimes help elevate a place, particularly if a temporary situation is expected.
  - Experimentation with adding activities, events, and small scale furnishing on city owned sites and other locations.
  - Small business/entrepreneurship technical support to increase business growth in the city (like “open to business” or similar programs).
  - District marketing for businesses along Little Canada Road and Rice Street.

The city can also convene a regular business roundtable to support collaboration and district problem solving; the model developed by the Larpenteur Alliance is an effective format.



City-owned land should be used for development that otherwise would not happen in the private market; city-owned parcels should not compete with or undercut the private market. The city should view the ROI on their land through the lens of fiscal growth and indirect benefits.

Design standards for new development should prioritize the residents' desired walkable environment and density (multi-story buildings).

## RECOMMENDED NEXT ACTIONS

- ▶ **Create Station Area/Small-Area Plan for the Town Center.** This plan should focus on the public realm, with programming improvements and a focus on development potential. The plan should include a public-private partnership framework, outlining what the city is able to offer to a private developer to facilitate desired development. As part of the small-area planning process, pilot activation initiatives on the 0 First Bank Drive lot.
- ▶ **Develop design standards for Rice Street and Little Canada Road.**
- ▶ **Develop a Small-Area Plan for the 2828 Condit Site.** This should include a framework for public realm improvements and a public-private partnership framework.



A panelist sketches concept illustrations.

## CONCLUSION

The City of Little Canada is at a pivotal juncture, with opportunities to leverage its unique assets and address its challenges through strategic development and use of the city-owned parcels. The recommendations provided by the Technical Assistance Panel, if implemented thoughtfully, can serve as a roadmap for achieving the city's vision for elevating its already vibrant, connected, and economically thriving community.

Prioritizing placemaking and walkability, with a focus on design standards and public realm improvements, will enhance the city's appeal and foster a stronger sense of place. Strategic infrastructure investments, particularly in sidewalks, trails, and site preparation, will lay the groundwork for successful development. Targeted programmatic priorities, such as facade improvement programs and small business support, will further bolster economic growth.

By creating Station Area and Small-Area Plans, and engaging in public-private partnerships, Little Canada can effectively guide future development in a way that aligns with community values and aspirations. This comprehensive approach, combining physical improvements with strategic initiatives, will not only enhance the city's physical environment but also contribute to a higher quality of life for its residents.

The panel is confident that, by embracing these recommendations and working collaboratively with stakeholders, Little Canada can achieve its goals and realize its full potential as a thriving and desirable community in the Twin Cities region.



## PANELIST BIOS

### Beth Elliot, AICP

### TAP Co-Chair

---

**Principal**

**Stantec**



Beth Elliott is a Principal with Stantec and manages the Midwest Planning & Design Team while continuing her work with the national Urban Places practice. Her role includes coordinating the day-to-day work of the Midwest planners and landscape architects, planning and designing livable communities throughout the nation, and leading Stantec's downtown revitalization initiative. Prior to her current position, she spent 14 years as a planner for the City of Minneapolis, including 11 years as the Principal Planner for Downtown Minneapolis. She has managed complex short- and

long-term projects related to comprehensive planning, community revitalization, zoning and other regulatory frameworks, transit-oriented development, downtown in-fill redevelopment, and creative engagement methods. Beth has a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. She is certified through the American Institute of Certified Planners.

### Julie Wischnack, FAICP

### TAP Co-Chair

---

**Community Development Director**

**City of Minnetonka**



Julie has been involved in local government for over 25 years. As a city planner and community development professional, she has experience with all types of development in various jurisdictions. She is currently the community development director for the City of Minnetonka. Prior to joining Minnetonka in 2006, Julie served as planning director for the city of Hutchinson and city planner for the city of Minnetrista. She exhibits her leadership and expertise in regional organizations and as a frequent speaker on challenging issues like affordable housing, light rail, and development negotiations. Julie makes it her personal mission to ensure that people

are included, that cities are well planned, and that positive community assets are the result.

She sits on the I-494 Commission, is Co-Chair of the Hennepin County Community Works LRT Technical Implementation Committee, is on the board of the MN Chapter of Lambda Alpha International, is on the management committee of ULI Minnesota and chairs the Housing Task Force for the League of Minnesota Cities. She previously served as the Co-Chair of the ULI Community Development Council and was the former chair of the Metro Cities Housing and Economic Development Policy Committee. Additionally, Julie spends time adjunct teaching real estate finance at the Carlson School of Management at the University of MN.

# Gretchen Camp, AIA, LEED AP, NCARB

---

**Principal**

**ESG Architecture & Design**

---



Gretchen is an architect and Principal at ESG Architecture & Design in Minneapolis, MN. She has over 20 years of experience in the architecture industry, collaborating on innovative projects and contributing to iconic structures that shape the urban landscape of the Twin Cities. Gretchen helps lead business development efforts at ESG, fostering client relationships and identifying opportunities for multifamily and mixed-use projects. Her expertise in project management and strategic planning helps guide clients and teams during the early design phases of a project. She holds a Masters in Architecture from the University of Minnesota and is a board member of the Twin Cities Housing Alliance and Tumnai Education.

# Pete Deanovic

---

**Founding Principal**

**Buhl Investors**

---



Pete is a founding principal of Buhl Investors. His responsibilities encompass many phases of the investment process, including acquisitions, financings, and dispositions. Prior to joining Buhl, Pete was one of four investment managers that directed North American Real Estate investment activity for CarVal Investors. His commercial real estate experience spans multiple markets and product types. Pete holds a B.B.A. in Real Estate and Urban Land Economics from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. He is an active board member of the Wisconsin Real Estate Alumni Association and currently sits on the Investment Committee at GHR Foundation. Deanovic is a former speaker at IMN's Real

Estate Private Equity conference and a former board member of Young Ambassadors for Opportunity, an international micro-finance organization.



## Erin Lonoff

---

**Principal**

**HR&A Advisors, Inc.**

---



Working at the intersection of the public and private sectors, Erin leverages her experience with real estate, urban planning, and economics to contribute to the vitality of cities and the public realm. Her work includes leveraging transit development plans for inclusive economic growth and dense, resilient development, creating large-scale, long-range master plans that will have critical economic and fiscal benefits for communities, and developing funding, financing, and governance strategies for open spaces and parks. Recent work includes supporting UW-Madison's West Campus Innovation District Plan, leading the financial analysis and guiding the overall vision and partnership strategy on behalf of the university; leading the master planning and real estate strategy, and managing the design and engineering teams for the development a 600-acre site in Greenville, SC; managing the City of Saint Paul's Anti-Displacement and Community Wealth Building Plan; and developing economic impact analyses on behalf of developers seeking public-private partnerships and entitlements for unprecedented development projects.

Erin holds a Master in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Carleton College.

## Max Musicant

---

**Founder and Principal**

**The Musicant Group**

---



Max Musicant is the Founder and Principal of The Musicant Group, an award-winning placemaking firm dedicated to transforming underutilized spaces into great places where people want to be. The firm has pioneered a holistic approach to the creation of place that integrates design, events, and management systems all through the lens of the user experience. Since its inception in 2012, The Musicant Group has transformed places as varied as Class A office buildings to front yards, from urban main streets to suburban strip malls, from block parties to bus stops. Through these and other projects the firm has demonstrated that community and commercial interests all benefit from more humane, inviting, and lively places for people. Max holds an M.B.A. from the Yale School of Management and a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin — Madison.

## Jesse Symynkywicz, ASLA

---

**Principal Landscape Architect**

**Damon Farber Associates**



Jesse Symynkywicz is a Principal Landscape Architect at Damon Farber Associates, a 20-person landscape architectural firm in Minneapolis, Minnesota. With 30 years of experience, he is appreciated for his dedication to sustainable design and his ability to deliver unique, contextually sensitive design solutions. A graduate of North Dakota State University, Jesse has been instrumental in advancing his firm's commitment to sustainability, working closely with his team to identify and implement the most effective sustainable initiatives. His approach ensures that each project is not only environmentally responsible but also aesthetically pleasing and functional.

Throughout his career, Jesse has demonstrated exceptional proficiency across all phases of the design process, from conceptualization to construction. He excels in coordinating with clients and consultants to ensure seamless project execution, maintaining a focus on quality, cost-effectiveness, and buildability. His comprehensive expertise in aesthetic and functional design, coupled with his skills in graphic and verbal communication, construction materials and methods, and understanding of natural systems and human dimensions, ensures the success of projects in today's complex building environment. Jesse's ability to integrate natural and economic sustainability principles further enhances the value and impact of his work, making him a pivotal figure in modern landscape architecture.