

BRAINERD PLANNING COMMISSION

Wednesday, June 15, 2016

6:00 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers

1. Call to Order
2. Approval/Amendment of Agenda
3. Approval of minutes of the regular meeting of May 18, 2016
4. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Public Hearing – Request from David Hill for Variance at 1020 Ivy Street to construct a 560 sq. ft. dwelling on a conforming lot on which the minimum allowed dwelling size is 750 sq. ft.
 - b. Public Hearing – Request from John and Jennifer Berg for Variances at 15340 Russel Road to construct a metal panel sided accessory building with a ribbed metal roof
 - c. Public Hearing – Request from Benjamin Larson to Rezone 814 Front Street from a B-3 (Central Business) District to a B-4 (General Commercial) District
5. PUBLIC FORUM – Time allocated for citizens to bring matters not on the agenda to the attention of the Planning Commission – Time limits may be imposed
6. OLD BUSINESS
 - a. Off Street Parking Changes
 - b. S. 6th Street Zoning
7. Commissioners' Questions/Comments
8. City Planner's Report
9. Adjourn

Any individual needing special accommodations please call 218/828-2309

PLANNING COMMISSION
Wednesday, May 18, 2016

City Planner Ostgarden called the meeting of the Brainerd Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Noted present were Commissioners Antolak, Headley, Straw, Plantenberg, Parks, Turner and Pritschet. Also present were City Planner Ostgarden, Planning Intern Hermerding and 2 others.

#2 Approval/Amendment of Agenda

MOTIONED AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS PARKS AND PRITSCHET, DULY CARRIED, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

#3 Approve Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on April 20, 2016

MOTIONED AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS PRITSCHET AND STRAW, DULY CARRIED, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON APRIL 20, 2016.

#4 New Business

- a. Public Hearing Conditional Use Permit – Roundhouse Brewery, 1551 Northern Pacific Center, Brainerd, MN 56401 – for an exterior patio adjacent to the brewery for outdoor seating and alcohol service.**

City Planner Ostgarden reviewed the Conditional Use Permit requirements with the Planning Commission. The patio will be 600 sf and the Zoning Ordinance permits the patio to be twice as large. The aerial photo in the packet was used to depict the patio is not near residential property and is obscured from area residential property.

Eight picnic tables will provide patio seating and 2 trash cans will be provided. Patio security will be provided by a 4' tall aluminum rail fence. It will have a locked gate openable only from the patio side. The gate is an emergency exit so tables on the patio cannot obstruct the travel route from the taproom to the gate.

A 93 vehicle parking lot for customers and tenants is under construction adjacent to the taproom and patio. The patio will be constructed at the same level as the taproom providing handicapped accessibility.

The only staff concern about the request is that the gate latching hardware should be acceptable to the Fire and Building Departments.

The Public Hearing was opened at 6:07pm.

The Chair recognized Roundhouse Brewery President Mark Lelwica, who answered questions from the Commission relating to adjacent buildings.

The Public Hearing was closed at 6:08pm.

The following findings-of-fact were read into the record as follows:

1. The property is zoned MU (Mixed Use) District and patios and outdoor seating and alcohol service are permitted conditional uses in the district.
2. The NP Center is approximately 48 acres.
3. The patio is 50' x 12' = 600sq. ft. with a concrete floor. The taproom area is 98' x 43' = 4,214 sq. ft. The patio area can be up to 1,264 sq. ft.
4. The patio will be located in the NP Center court yard. It will be buffered from the residential areas to the south by a 500 ft. long 2 story NP Center building. The dwellings on the other side of the building are 630 away from the patio.
5. The patio is over 600 ft. from 13th Street S.
6. There is industrial property to the north, vacant land to the east and west.
7. The patio will only be accessible from within the building. A 4 ft. tall aluminum rail fence will be installed around the perimeter. The fence will have a security latch on the gate openable only from within the patio.
8. A patio layout identifies 8 picnic tables and 2 trash cans.
9. The patio egress is an emergency exit and provides a direct access to the gate is required. The patio table layout depicts a direct access to the gate.
10. A 93 space parking lot is under construction for use by NP Center visitors and staff.
11. The Comprehensive Plan Goals and Strategies support the Conditional Use:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: Support the development of a strong, diversified, and growing economic base and create a favorable climate for economic development and ongoing business activities.

Strategies

- Actively promote development and redevelopment within the community...
- Strengthen and maintain a diverse retail base...

LAND USE

GOAL #5: Support development that enhances community character and identity.

Strategy

Support the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned sites within the urban core.

12. The President of the Brewery was present at the meeting and answered questions of the Commission.

The following condition was added:

1. The perimeter fence gate security latch must be approved by the Fire Department and the Building Department.

MOTIONED AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS PRITSCHET AND PARKS, DULY CARRIED, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE CUP APPLIED FOR BY ROUNDHOUSE BREWERY, 1551 NP CENTER, BRAINERD, FOR EXTERIOR PATIO AND OUTDOOR SEATING AND ALCOHOL SERVICE.

b. Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Presentation – No Attachments

City Planner Ostgarden introduced Ms. Eleanor Burkett, Chair of the Walkable Bikeable City Committee who presented a PowerPoint on the Committee's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. The proposed Plan identifies areas of the City which the Committee recommends have sidewalks and trails added or extended to accommodate non-motorized transportation and safety. Recommendations for cross walk painting and bike routes were described. The Plan has recommendations in 3 tiers, 2017-2019, 2020-

2023 and 2024-2027 Ms. Burkett answered questions of the Commission and the Chair thanked her for her presentation.

c. Government Training Services Workshops

City Planner Ostgarden reported that the following two classes will be held at the Initiative Foundation office in Little Falls through the Government Training Service:

1. Planning and Zoning Basics – June 28th
2. Beyond the Basics of Planning and Zoning – September 22nd.

#5 PUBLIC FORUM

None

#6 OLD BUSINESS

None

#7 Commissioners' Questions/Comments

None

#8 City Planner's Report

City Planner Ostgarden reported that both CUPs for BIC were approved at Council level and that he will continue to meet with the owner, Mike Higgins, to discuss the screening requirement.

#9 Adjourn

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Ostgarden AICP
City Planner

STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

June 7, 2016

APPLICANT/LOCATION: David Hill, 15798 Jordan Road, Brainerd, MN 56401 for property at 1020 Ivy Street

PROPOSED USE: A Variance to permit a 560 sq. ft. dwelling on a conforming lot where 750 sq. ft. is the minimum dwelling size

LOT AREA: 150 ft. x 150 ft. = 22,500 sq. ft.

CURRENT ZONING: R-1 (Single Family) Residential

ADJACENT USES: North: Single family residential
East: Vacant
South: Vacant/Single family dwellings
West: Single family dwellings

ADJACENT ZONING: North: R-1 (Single Family) Residential
East: R-1 (Single Family) Residential
South: R-1 (Single Family) Residential
West: R-1 (Single Family) Residential

REPORT

David Hill has purchased the property at 1020 Ivy Street. He has demolished the condemned dwelling and plans to move into the city a 560 sf. ft. dwelling and locate it on the lot. The lot is conforming in width and area. Zoning Ordinance Section 515-54-9: Building Performance Standards for R-1 Districts specifies that the minimum dwelling size on a conforming lot is 750 sq. ft.

Criteria for Granting Variances

A. Variances shall only be permitted:

When they are in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance. Following is the Intent and Purpose section of the Zoning Ordinance:

- A. Protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community and its people through the establishment of minimum regulations governing development and use.*
- B. This Ordinance shall divide the City into use districts and establish regulations in regard to location, erection, construction, reconstruction, alteration and use of structures and land.*
- C. Protect neighborhoods.*
- D. Promote orderly development and redevelopment of land for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and public areas.*

- E. *Provide adequate light, air, and convenience of access to property.*
 - F. *Prevent congestion in the public right-of-way.*
 - G. *Prevent overcrowding of land and undue concentration of structures by regulating land, buildings, yards, and density of population.*
 - H. *Protect and preserve the natural environment of the City.*
 - I. *Encourage the protection of historic and aesthetic resources in the City.*
 - J. *Conserve energy through the use of alternative energy systems and conservation through the encouragement of energy efficient structures for commercial, industrial and residential uses.*
 - K. *Provide for compatibility of different land uses.*
 - L. *Provide for administration of this Ordinance.*
 - M. *Provide for amendments.*
 - N. *Prescribe penalties for violation of such regulations.*
 - O. *To define powers and duties of the City staff, the Planning Commission, the City Council and the Board of Zoning Appeals in relation to the Zoning Ordinance.*
- Placement of the dwelling is in harmony with the above highlighted Zoning Ordinance purposes.

When the variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

LAND USE GOAL #3: *Plan for the orderly, efficient and fiscally responsible growth of residential development in Brainerd.*

Strategies

1. Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly and compact manner so that new developments can be effectively served by public improvements and that the character and quality of the city's existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced.
2. Encourage compatible infill residential development throughout the developed portions of the city, to encourage the efficient use of land, the establishment of a strong tax base and the cost effective provision of city services.
3. Encourage housing rehabilitation and redevelopment in appropriate areas.

LAND USE GOAL #5: *Support development that enhances community character and identity.*

Strategy

1. Support the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned sites within the urban core.

- B. Variances may be granted when the applicant for the variance establishes that there are practical difficulties in complying with the Zoning Ordinance.

Subdivision 4. "Practical Difficulties", as used in connection with the granting of a variance means that:

- I. The property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the Zoning Ordinance;*

The dwelling that was on the lot was condemned and demolished. In looking at the age of surrounding dwellings, their condition and value, is it reasonable to expect that the property would be attractive for a larger more valuable dwelling?

- II. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner;*

The property has some unique circumstances

1. The dwelling on the lot was condemned and demolished.
2. It is located in a somewhat secluded area of the community.
3. The property is not readily visible to the public.

- III. The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality.*

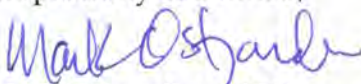
This is the section that most applicable to the placement of this building in this location. The dwelling will be similar in appeared as other houses and there are houses across the street similar in size. The street dead ends so no further construction can be anticipated to the east.

Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties. Practical difficulties include, but are not limited to, inadequate access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems.

PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL ACTION

The Planning Commission can consider a recommendation at its June 15, 2016 meeting and the City Council can receive the recommendation for consideration at its TUESDAY July 5, 2016 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Ostgarden-AICP
City Planner



Proposed Dwelling

Neighborhood Dwellings



Request for Zoning Ordinance Variance for a house structure to be located at 1020 Ivy Street Brainerd, MN

Background-

In October 2015, the foreclosed property at this address was sold on auction by the mortgage holder. Because the property had sat empty and received no maintenance for more than four years, it was condemned by the City of Brainerd. I purchased the property and immediately filed for, and was granted, a demolition permit. I worked closely with the City to arrange demolition as required by the Building Department. Because the winter weather prevented a timely demolition, an extension was granted and I completed the demolition, debris removal and site refurbishment in April 2016.

Permit Application-

I applied for a building permit April 22, 2016 to relocate an existing one bedroom house structure onto the property. Because moving an existing structure into the City requires that that structure meet all current building codes, I asked and obtained the guidance from Tim Caughey, Building Inspector. He visited the structure which is located in Baxter with me to determine if the house meets current codes. The current owner is selling the house because new hookups for sewer and water cost more than the owner wishes to spend, otherwise, the house is fully functional and needs no repairs. With Tim's verbal assent that the structure was new enough and had been built with acceptable materials and methods, I placed a \$500 earnest deposit on the structure and arranged with a licensed building mover to relocate the structure onto the lot.

Recently I received notification that my permit application was not approved because the structure does not meet the minimum square footage required for a single family dwelling. The City code minimum is 750 square feet and the structure measures 560.

Request for Variance-

I am requesting to be permitted to use the house structure I purchased and move it onto the lot.

In terms of practical difficulties, the house structure does not lend itself to expansion or modification. It is a one bedroom house that has a simple floor plan and would necessitate considerable expense to add 190 square feet of floor space to the structure. I also can not afford the cost of building a new house and I have not been able to find another larger structure to move onto the lot.

I have spoken to the two neighboring homeowners who are adjacent to the property. Andrew Philippi and Joel who told me that the size of my house was not important to them since most of the houses in the neighborhood are also quite small. Their concern is that it be in good repair and have an appearance that complements the neighborhood. I showed them pictures of the proposed structure and they both thought it was attractive and appropriate. They told me that the previous house was an eyesore and that its removal was long overdue. They appreciate my efforts in cleaning up the lot and arranging to build a nice home where a condemned one previously stood. They also noted that the house across from my lot at 1019 Ivy Street is empty, in very bad repair and poor appearance and detracts much more from the neighborhood than a smaller house on my lot would.

My objective is to establish an affordable rental property that will offer a one bedroom choice for a single person or couple who desire an energy efficient and comfortable residence. There is considerable demand for this size of rental housing. In every respect, the house will fit the appearance, character and style of this quaint, old neighborhood in north Brainerd. It will, in fact, be in much better condition and appearance than the other houses situated across the street from it. The lot is wooded with large, old trees and the house will be situated to offer a pleasing view of the soccer field for the occupant. In multi-family housing a one bedroom unit, Zoning requirements are a minimum of 520 square feet. This single person/couple structure exceeds that size, so it should be as comfortable and livable as a comparable one bedroom multi-family unit.

Thank you for your consideration, David Hill 2128.232.5583

NOTICE OF HEARING

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Notice is hereby given that David Hill, 15798 Jordan Road, Brainerd, MN 56401 has applied for a variance to construct a 560 sq. ft. dwelling on a conforming lot at 1020 Ivy Street, Brainerd MN 56401. The property is located in an R-1 (Single Family Residential) District.

Zoning Ordinance Section 515-54-9: Building Performance Standards for R-1 Districts specifies that the minimum dwelling size on a conforming lot is 750 sq. ft.

The property is legally described as:

LOTS 7 THRU 12 INCLUSIVE BLOCK 96 TOWN OF BRAINERD & 1ST ADDN TO
BRAINERD P.I.D. #09196096007Z009

The Planning Commission of the City of Brainerd will meet in the Brainerd City Hall Council Chambers, 501 Laurel Street, at 6:00 p.m., June 15, 2016, to consider the request for the Variance.

A copy of the application is on file for review at the City Planning Department, 501 Laurel Street.

Any individual needing special accommodations please call (218) 828-2309.

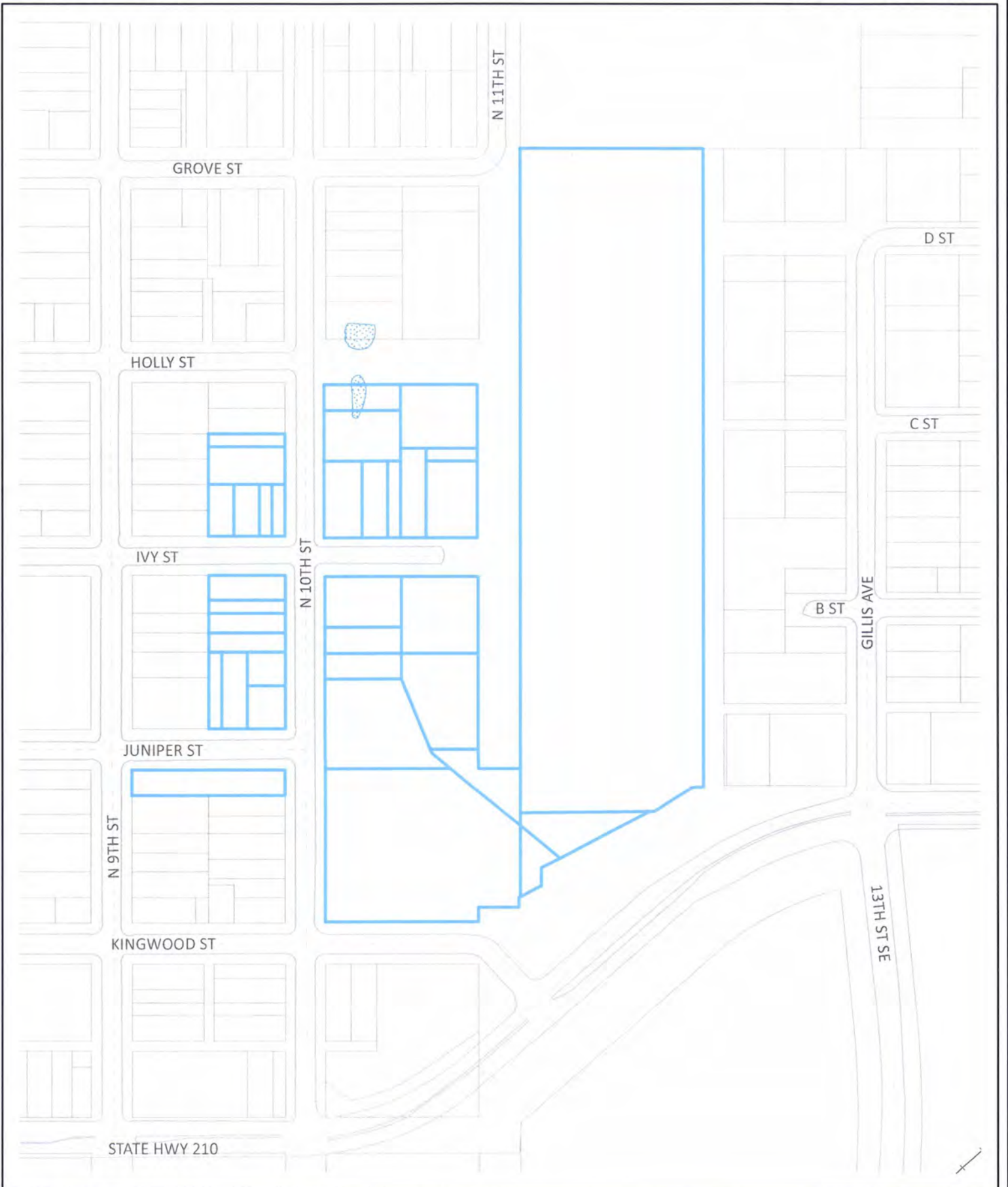
Dated this 31st day of May, 2016



Mark Ostgarden AICP
City Planner

Publication date: June 3, 2016

See the reverse side for a photograph of the proposed dwelling.



0 170 340 Feet

0 0.0375 0.075 Miles

22

VARIANCE - 1020 IVY STREET - NOH MAILING LIST

APPRCL	TXNAME	TXADR1	TXADR2	PHYSADDR
09196096019Z009	- ANDERSON, DANIEL J & AMY M	410 10TH ST N	BRAINERD, MN 56401	410 10TH ST N
09196098008Z009	- ARNOLD, AMANDA	419 10TH ST N	BRAINERD, MN 56401	419 10TH ST N
09196096021Z009	- ARTSPACE BRAINERD LIMITED PARTNERSH	250 THIRD AVE N SUITE 500	MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55401	
060251100AA0009	ARTSPACE BRAINERD LIMITED PARTNERSH	250 THIRD AVE N SUITE 500	MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55401	
09196082000A009	ARTSPACE BRAINERD LIMITED PARTNERSH	250 THIRD AVE N SUITE 500	MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55401	
09196144015Z009	- BRAINERD HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT AUTH	324 EAST RIVER RD	BRAINERD, MN 56401	
09196144019Z009	BRAINERD HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT AUTH	324 EAST RIVER RD	BRAINERD, MN 56401	1003 IVY ST
09196144013Z009	- CITY OF BRAINERD	501 LAUREL ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	
09196096017Y009	- CR PROPERTIES 2015 LLC	333 WESTCHESTER AVE SOUTH BLDG	WHITE PLAINS NY 10604	414 10TH ST N
09196096007Z009	- HILL, DAVID	15798 JORDAN RD	BRAINERD MN 56401	1020 IVY ST
09196144007Y009	- IND SCHOOL DIST, # 181	804 OAK ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	
09196082000Z009	IND SCHOOL DIST, # 181	804 OAK ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	1001 KINGWOOD ST
091050000040009	IND SCHOOL DIST, # 181	804 OAK ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	
060251100A00009	IND SCHOOL DIST, # 181	804 OAK ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	
09196096001Z009	IND SCHOOL DIST, # 181	804 OAK ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	
091960980100009	- JOHNSON, SABRINA D	421 10TH ST N	BRAINERD, MN 56401	421 10TH ST N
09196096013Y009	- KELLER, JOEL	420 N 10TH ST	BRAINERD MN 56401	420 10TH ST N
09196080011Z009	- KIRSCH, MARIE	323 N 10TH ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	323 10TH ST N
09196144001Z009	- OHlsen, CONSTANCE & CHRISTOPHER	22570 MURRAY ST	EXCELSIOR, MN 55331	1019 IVY ST
09196144019X009	OHlsen, CONSTANCE & CHRISTOPHER	22570 MURRAY ST	EXCELSIOR, MN 55331	
09196098011Z009	- OLSON, CODY RYAN	918 IVY ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	918 IVY ST
09196144001Y009	- PHILIPPI, ANDREW	1021 IVY ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	1021 IVY ST
09196144019Y009	- PUERINGER, DAVID F PUERINGER INVEST	616 1/2 FRONT ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	1005 IVY ST
09196142001Z009	- ROBECK, THOMAS	915 IVY ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	915 IVY ST
09196142005Y009	- SCHLIEK, DEAN R	26877 N STAR LN	BREEZY POINT, MN 56472-3252	515 10TH ST N
09196142001W009	SHAW, EDWARD R & MARY AEGERTER	722 6TH ST S	BRAINERD, MN 56401	923 IVY ST
09196098001Y009	- ST FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH	411 N 10TH ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	913 JUNIPER ST
09196098004Z009	ST FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH	411 N 10TH ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	411 10TH ST N
09196098001X009	ST FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH	411 N 10TH ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	921 JUNIPER ST
09196098001Z009	ST FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH	411 N 10TH ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	
09196098007Z009	ST FRANCIS CHURCH	411 N 10TH ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	415 10TH ST N
091961440080009	TAX FORFEITED	326 LAUREL ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401-3590	
09196142001Y009	- VERVALEN, WENDY	921 IVY ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	
09196142001X009	VERVALEN, WENDY	921 IVY ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	921 IVY ST
091961420080009	- YOUNG, ROBERT W & AMY L GIBSON	519 N 10TH ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401	



City Planning Department

City Hall – 501 Laurel Street
Brainerd, MN 56401
218-828-2309/Fax 218-828-2316
www.ci.brainerd.mn.us

Receipt # 2016-00026

Check # 8402

Date Paid: 5/18/16

CONDITIONAL USE/REZONING/VARIANCE APPLICATION

	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT	☐ (\$250.00)	☐ (\$400.00 + \$500.00 escrow deposit)
REZONING	☐ (\$300.00)	☐ (\$500.00)
VARIANCE	☒ (\$250.00)	☐ (\$400.00 + \$500.00 escrow deposit)

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 1020 Ivy Street Brainerd, MN 56401

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Lot(s): 7-12 Block: 096 Addition: 1 st Addition 09196096007Z009
(attach description if lengthy)

Property Owner Name: David Hill

Street Address: 15798 Jordan Road City: Brainerd State: MN Zip Code 56401

Phone Number: 218.232.5583 Fax: _____ E-mail: agyearbook@yahoo.com

Applicant Name: (If different than Property Owner) _____

Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Description of Request: Requesting permission to utilize an existing house structure that has
570 ~~500~~ square feet of floor space rather than the minimum requirement of 750. I am replacing
a condemned house (that was successfully demolished) on the same lot. Attached is a full
explanation of the circumstances that created the need for this variance request.

Property Owner Signature

David Hill

(Please print name)

May 20, 2016

Date

Applicant Signature

Date

(Please print name)

(OVER)

Hill

AGENCY REVIEW CHECKLIST

Your request may require review by one or more of the agencies listed below. The City of Brainerd will determine which agencies will need to review your application and provide that agency with the notice of public hearing regarding your application:

✓

BRAINERD FIRE DEPARTMENT

Attn: Fire Chief; 23 Laurel St; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-2312; fire@ci.brainerd.mn.us

✓

BRAINERD POLICE DEPARTMENT

Attn: Corky McQuiston, 225 East River Road; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-829-2805;
corky.mcquiston@ci.brainerd.mn.us

✓

BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES

Attn: Scott Magnuson, Supt.; P.O. Box 373; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-829-8726; smagnuson@bpu.org

BWSR (MN Board of Water and Soil Resources)

Attn: John Overland; 1601 Minnesota Dr; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-2383; john.overland@state.mn.us

CROW WING COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

Attn: Tim Bray, County Engineer; 16589 County Rd 142; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-824-1110/FAX 218-824-1111
tim.bray@crowwing.us

✓

CROW WING COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Attn: Melissa Barrick; 322 Laurel St-Ste. 13; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-6197/FAX 828-6095
melissa.barrick@crowwingswcd.us

CROW WING COUNTY SURVEYOR'S OFFICE

Attn: Mark Liedl; 322 Laurel St Ste 14.; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-824-1124/FAX 824-1126;
mark.liedl@crowwing.us

✓

HRA

Attn: Jennifer Bergman; 324 E. River Rd.; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-3705/FAX 828-8817;
jennifer@brainerdhra.org

MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS BOARD

322 Laurel Street Ste 5; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-824-1307/FAX 824-1104
mhb@mississippiheadwaters.org

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Attn: Mary Safgren; 7694 Industrial Park Rd.; Baxter, MN 56425; 218-828-5700; mary.safgren@state.mn.us

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Attn: Wade Miller; 1601 Minnesota Dr.; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-2605/FAX 828-6043;
wade.miller@state.mn.us

MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

Attn: Reed Larson; 7678 College Rd-Ste. 105; Baxter, MN 56425; 218-828-2492/FAX 828-2594
Reed.Larson@state.mn.us

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Attn: Jeff Koshak; 8896 E. Gull Lake Dr.; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-829-8402

STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

June 7, 2016

APPLICANT/LOCATION: John and Jennifer Berg, 13096 Timberlane Drive, Baxter, MN 56425 for property at 15340 Russell Road, Brainerd, MN 56401

PROPOSED USE: A Variance to permit a metal sided accessory building and a Variance to permit the accessory building to have a metal roof that is not standing seam design

LOT AREA: 1.6 acres

CURRENT ZONING: R-1A (Single Family) Residential

ADJACENT USES: North: Gilbert Lake
East: Large Lot Single Family Residential
South: Vacant Woodland
West: Large Lot Single Family Residential

ADJACENT ZONING: North: R-1A (Single Family) Residential
East: R-1A (Single Family) Residential
South: R-1A (Single Family) Residential
West: R-1A (Single Family) Residential

REPORT

The Bergs are purchasing the property at 15340 Russell Road, property located at the north end of the street on Gilbert Lake. The Berg's plan to demolish the existing house that has been vacant according to utility records since February 2016 and construct a new one in that location. They also plan to purchase the parcel to the south and construct a new accessory building on that parcel. The 2 parcels total approximately 1.6 areas.

The accessory building is planned to be 1,200 sq. with sheet metal siding and roof design. A site plan depicting the building location and a typical building elevation with the metal material shown is attached.

The City of Brainerd Zoning Ordinance SECTION 17-8: GENERAL BUILDING, USE AND DESIGN PROVISIONS Accessory Buildings, Uses and Equipment reads:

All buildings over one hundred twenty (120) square feet shall have the same or similar Finish as the neighboring buildings.... Metal roofs are allowed provided they are constructed with standing seams and concealed or exposed fasteners.

The proposed building is not the same or similar in appearance as neighboring buildings and the metal roof is not standing seam design.

This request has 2 variances to allow

1. Metal siding
2. A roof that is not standing seam design.

The variances can be discussed together however they should be voted on separately.

Criteria for Granting Variances

A. Variances shall only be permitted:

When they are in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance. Following is the Intent and Purpose section of the Zoning Ordinance:

- A. *Protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community and its people through the establishment of minimum regulations governing development and use.*
- B. *This Ordinance shall divide the City into use districts and establish regulations in regard to location, erection, construction, reconstruction, alteration and use of structures and land.*
- C. *Protect neighborhoods.*
- D. *Promote orderly development and redevelopment of land for residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and public areas.*
- E. *Provide adequate light, air, and convenience of access to property.*
- F. *Prevent congestion in the public right-of-way.*
- G. *Prevent overcrowding of land and undue concentration of structures by regulating land, buildings, yards, and density of population.*
- H. *Protect and preserve the natural environment of the City.*
- I. *Encourage the protection of historic and aesthetic resources in the City.*
- J. *Conserve energy through the use of alternative energy systems and conservation through the encouragement of energy efficient structures for commercial, industrial and residential uses.*
- K. *Provide for compatibility of different land uses.*
- L. *Provide for administration of this Ordinance.*
- M. *Provide for amendments.*
- N. *Prescribe penalties for violation of such regulations.*

O. *To define powers and duties of the City staff, the Planning Commission, the City Council and the Board of Zoning Appeals in relation to the Zoning Ordinance.*

Construction of the accessory building is in harmony with the above highlighted general purposes and intent of the Zoning Ordinance.

When the variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

LAND USE GOAL #3: *Plan for the orderly, efficient and fiscally responsible growth of residential development in Brainerd.*

Strategies

1. Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly and compact manner so that new developments can be effectively served by public improvements and that the character and quality of the city's existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced.
2. Encourage compatible infill residential development throughout the developed portions of the city, to encourage the efficient use of land, the establishment of a strong tax base and the cost effective provision of city services.

LAND USE GOAL #5: *Support development that enhances community character and identity.*

Strategies

1. Support the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned sites...

B. **Variances may be granted when the applicant for the variance establishes that there are practical difficulties in complying with the Zoning Ordinance.**

Subdivision 4. "Practical Difficulties", as used in connection with the granting of a variance means that:

- I. *The property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the Zoning Ordinance;*

In considering this request 2 factors to consider are area density and building visibility. This area for the community with larger lots with deciduous woods. The units per/acre is much less than the community south of the Mississippi River.

II. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner;

Synonyms for plight include dilemma, predicament and difficulty. There is no dilemma, predicament or difficulty the property owner would have in complying with Zoning Ordinance requirements for appearance and roof design.

III. The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality.

If granted, the variance should not alter the essential neighborhood character. The enclosed 2013 aerial photo identifies a 17 acre area between Riverside Drive, Gilbertview Estates, Gilbert Lake and the east side of Russell Road. There appears to be 7 single family dwellings in that area, which results in gross average density of 1 dwelling/2.42 acres.

Should the Planning Commission think the variances are warranted, it may want to condition approval on the building appearance be like the model shown in the submitted photo.

Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties. Practical difficulties include, but are not limited to, inadequate access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems.

PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL ACTION

The Planning Commission can consider a recommendation at its June 15, 2015 meeting and the City Council can receive the recommendation for consideration at its July 6, 2015 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Ostgarden AICP
City Planner



6/1/16

Dear Commissioners,

We are respectfully requesting a variance for the siding material and standing seam requirement on our accessory garage construction. We would like to use sheet steel material for the exterior construction. Brainerd zoning ordinance design standards allow for sheet steel construction on buildings 120 square feet or less. The ordinance currently states that siding material "shall have the same or similar finish as the neighboring buildings and be homogeneous in design." Our current house property has composite wood siding. We anticipate building a new home on the existing home site. The exact type of siding material for the new home is yet to be determined. We would like to construct the new garage prior to the new home construction. This would allow for storage of our personal property during the new home construction and provide the long term benefit of additional garage space.

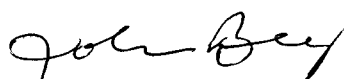
The garage would be located on parcel 09218000007X009 which is being consolidated with parcel 09218000008Z009. The garage would be constructed at a location that is accessed from the Russell Road easement. This is the same access for our home. We would place the garage in such a manner to minimize the visibility from the surrounding neighborhood property owners. The location is heavily wooded which will provide the benefit of decreased visibility. We would place the garage at least 30' from the property line. I have provided a photograph of the anticipated location where there is currently a steel storage shed.

We desire to use steel siding and roofing for several reasons. The location is heavily wooded and very shaded during the summer. Steel siding and roofing material would provide a virtually zero maintenance requirement and alleviate the need for periodical staining or painting of wood siding. Steel siding and roofing can be very aesthetic in appearance and superior in appearance to low cost wood laminate material and asphalt singles in our opinion. We would anticipate using a wainscoting design for aesthetic visual effect. The lack of standing seam roof construction would not change the mechanism of use that we anticipate. This requirement would increase the material and labor cost substantially. We would like to construct a 30' X 40" garage. Our property comprises 1.7 acres of land.

There is precedence for steel sided garages in the city of Brainerd. I am aware of at least one such building in the city limits. I have enclosed a photograph of a steel sided garage at 15468 McKay Road in the city of Brainerd.

We thank you for consideration of the variance.

Respectfully,



John Berg

Jenifer Berg

my wife is out of the country until 6/12/16. I will provide a letter with her signature at the time of the P+Z meeting

GILBERT LAKE
Lake No.: 18032600
Lake Classification: General Development (GD)

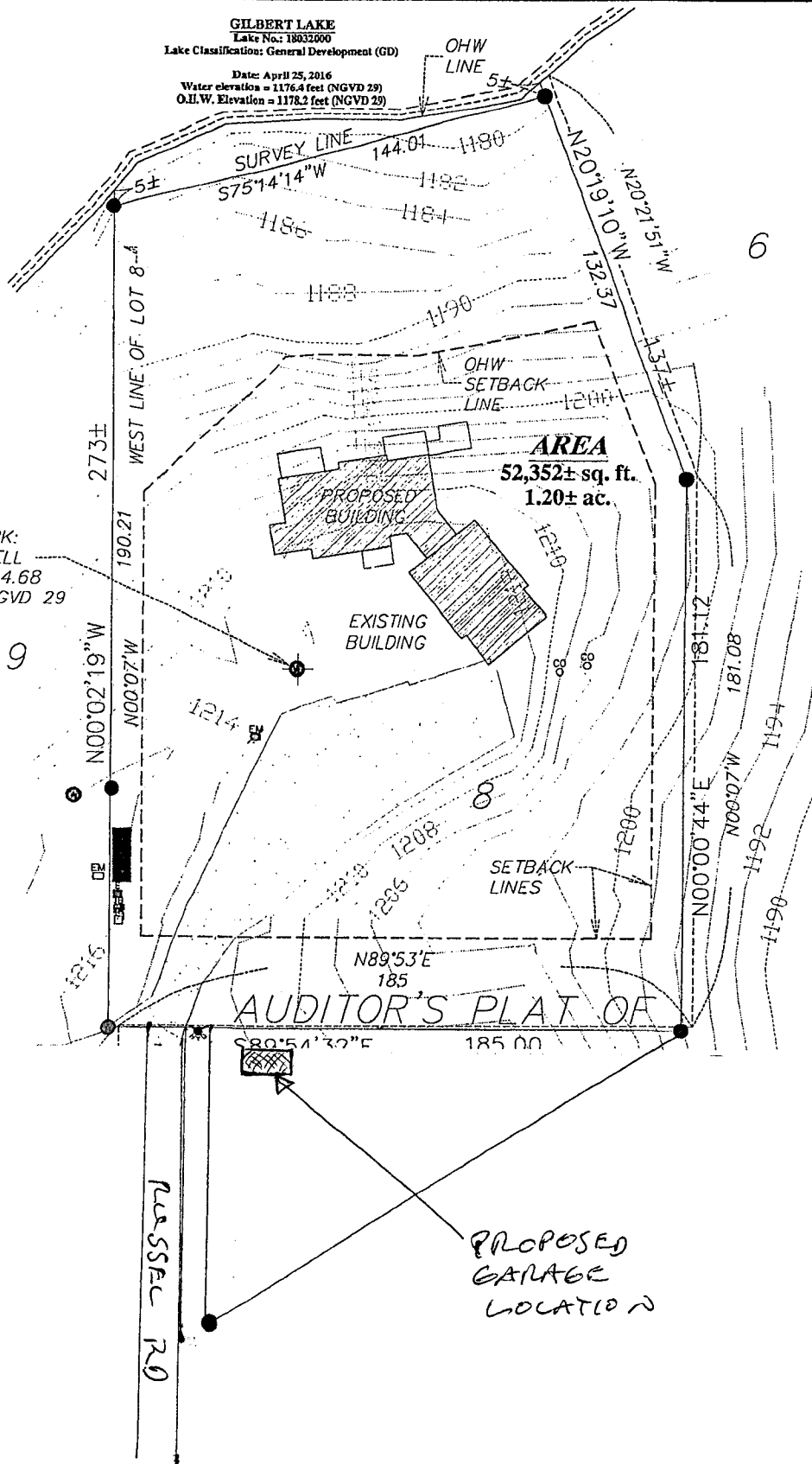
Date: April 25, 2016
Water elevation = 1176.4 feet (NGVD 29)
O.H.W. Elevation = 1178.2 feet (NGVD 29)

OHW
LINE

BENCHMARK:
TOP OF WELL
ELEV.: 1214.68
DATUM: NGVD 29

9

6



NOTICE OF HEARING

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Notice is hereby given that John and Jennifer Berg, 13096 Timberline Drive, Baxter, MN 56425 have applied for a variances to construct a metal panel sided accessory building with a ribbed metal roof at 15340 Russel Road, Brainerd, MN 56401. The property is zoned R-1A (Single Family Residential) District. The City of Brainerd Zoning reads:

All buildings over one hundred twenty (120) square feet shall have the same or similar finish as the neighboring buildings... . Metal roofs are allowed provided they are constructed with standing seams and concealed or exposed fasteners.

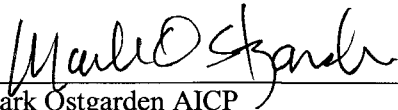
A metal panel sided accessory building is not the same or similar finish as the neighboring buildings and ribbed metal roof panels is not a permitted accessory building metal roof design.

The Planning Commission of the City of Brainerd will meet in the Brainerd City Hall Council Chambers, 501 Laurel Street, at 6:00 p.m., June 15, 2016, to consider the request for the Variances.

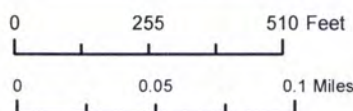
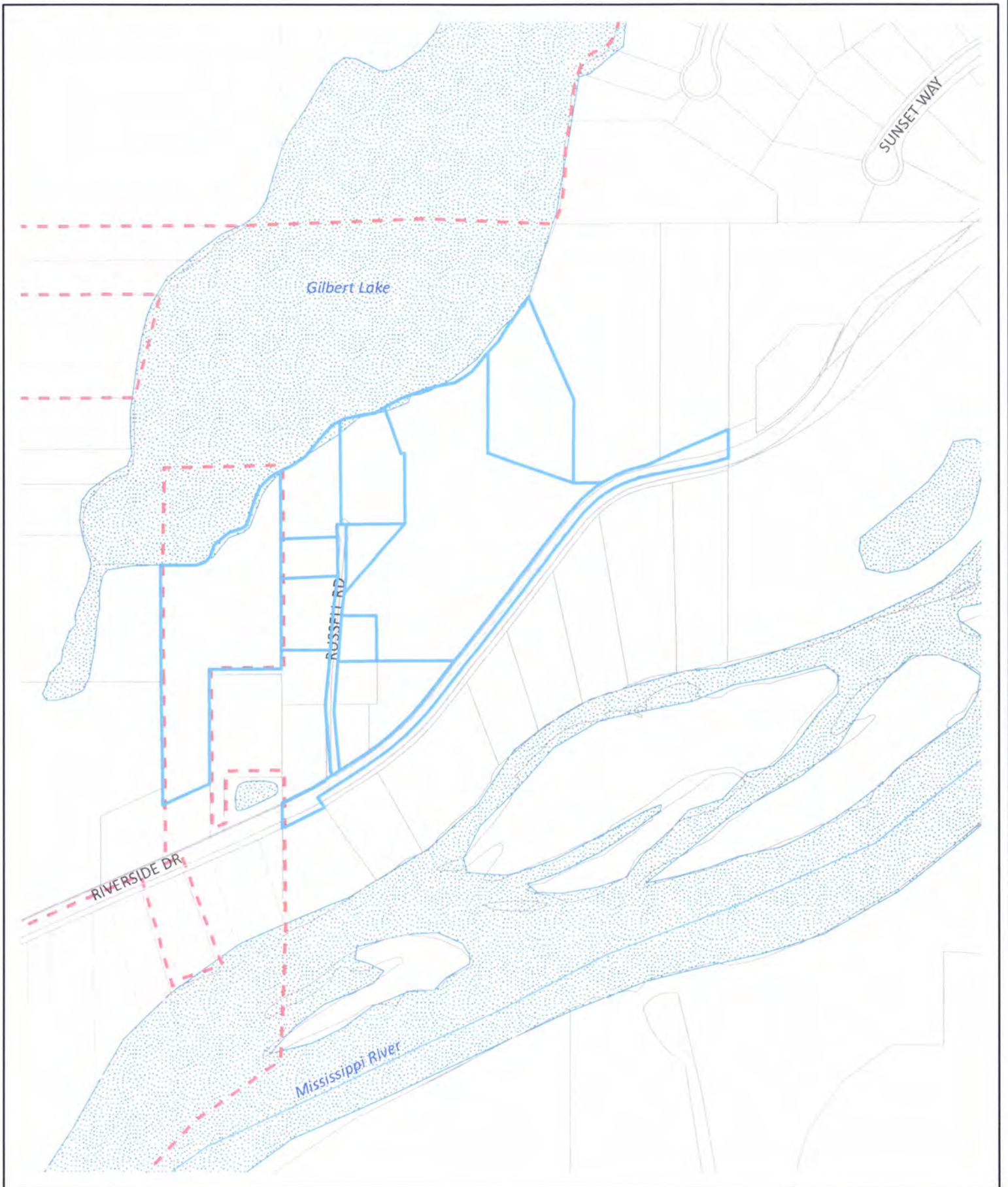
A copy of the application is on file for review at the City Planning Department, 501 Laurel Street.

Any individual needing special accommodations please call (218) 828-2309.

Dated this 31st day of May, 2016


Mark Ostgarden AICP
City Planner

Publication date: June 3, 2016



VARIANCE - 15340 RUSSEL RD - NOH MAILING LIST

APPRCL	TXNAME	TXADR1	TXADR2	PHYSADDR
09218000007C009	HAUKOS, BRITTANY M	15277 RUSSELL RD	BRAINERD, MN 56401	15277 RUSSELL RD
09218000007Z009	ENGELSTAD, SCOTT E	15311 RIVERSIDE DR	BRAINERD MN 56401	15311 RIVERSIDE DR
09218000007X009	FRASER, DALLAS JOHN	9170 DEGLER CIR	CHANHASSEN, MN 55317	
09218000008Y009	RUHL, MARK C & HIROMI K	15326 RUSSELL RD	BRAINERD, MN 56401	15326 RUSSELL RD
09218000008Z009	BERG, JOHN & JENNIFER	13096 TIMBERLANE DR	BAXTER, MN 56425	15340 RUSSELL RD
09218000005B009	NORCUTT, RANDALL C & ROXANNE MATSEN	15325 RIVERSIDE DR	BRAINERD, MN 56401	15325 RIVERSIDE DR
09218000007Y009	RUHL, MARK C & HIROMI K	15326 RUSSELL RD	BRAINERD, MN 56401	15299 RUSSELL RD
970343200LA0009	PIKULA, ERIC M & HEATHER E	15137 RIVERSIDE DR	BRAINERD, MN 56401	15137 RIVERSIDE DR



City Planning Department

City Hall - 501 Laurel Street
Brainerd, MN 56401
218-828-2309/Fax 218-828-2316
www.ci.brainerd.mn.us

Receipt # _____
Check # _____
Date Paid: _____

CONDITIONAL USE/REZONING/VARIANCE APPLICATION

	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT	☐ (\$250.00)	☐ (\$400.00 + \$500.00 escrow deposit)
REZONING	☐ (\$300.00)	☐ (\$500.00)
VARIANCE	☒ (\$250.00)	☐ (\$400.00 + \$500.00 escrow deposit)

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 15340 RUSSEL RD 092180000087009

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Lot(s): _____ Block: _____ Addition: PATCHEL CODES 092180000087009
(attach description if lengthy) TOWNSHIP 134 RANGE 28 SECTION 34

Property Owner Name: JOHN + JENIFER BERG

Street Address: 13096 TIMBERLAKE DR City: BAKTER State: MN Zip Code: 56425

Phone Number: 218-330-6923 Fax: _____ E-mail: bergie49@brainerd.net

Applicant Name: (If different than Property Owner) _____

Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Description of Request: VARIANCE OF SIDING MATERIAL, REQUESTING
STEEL SIDING FOR ACCESSORY GARAGE CONSTRUCTION.

John C. Berg
Property Owner Signature

6/25/16
Date

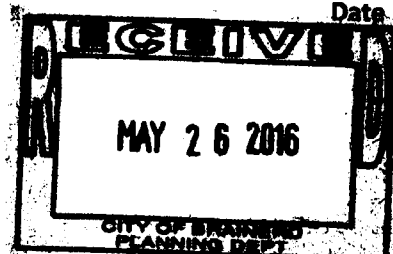
JOHN C. BERG
(Please print name)

Jennifer A. Berg
Applicant Signature

5/25/16

Jennifer A. Berg
(Please print name)

Date



(OVER)

STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

June 8, 2016

APPLICANT/LOCATION: Ben Larson, PO Box 300, Sartell, MN 56377 for property at 814 Front Street, Brainerd, MN 56401

PROPOSED ZONING: B-4 (General Commercial)

AREA: 12,805 sq. ft/ .29 acres

CURRENT ZONING: B-3 (Central Business) District

ADJACENT USES: North: Overhead door company
East: T-shirt company
South: Business uses and parking lot
West: Fire extinguisher company

ADJACENT ZONING: North: B-3 (Central Business) District
East: B-3 (Central Business) District
South: B-3 (Central Business) District
West: B-3 (Central Business) District

Ben Larson owns the property and operated the Sound Connection business at this location until May 2014 when he relocated the business out of the community. The building has been vacant since the relocation. He has received an inquiry to lease the building to individuals interested in using the property for automotive repair. Automotive repair is not a use listed in the B-3 District as one permitted by right or by Conditional Use Permit (CUP). I have advised Mr. Larson that should he B-4 zoning be approved, a CUP would be required to operate an automotive repair in the B-4 District.

PETITION EVALUATION

1. The proposed action's consistency with the specific policies and provisions of the official City Comprehensive Plan.

The Future Land Use Map identifies the property as future General Commercial Land Use. The site is adjacent to a small multifamily parcel identified as future Medium to High Density Residential Land Use and is zoned R-3.

LAND USE GOAL #5: Support development that enhances community character and identity.

Support the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned sites within the urban core.

2. The proposed use's compatibility with present and future land uses of the area.

With the exception of Sound Conduction leaving, land uses along Front Street and in the area have not changed in many years.

3. The proposed use's effect upon the area in which it is proposed.

All that is known is that the perspective leasee desires to operate an automotive repair business. To what extent is unknown. Automotive repair is a permitted CUP in B-4, however it does include a number of conditions listed in the Zoning Ordinance. They are:

Automobile and truck repair - major and minor (including body shops) provided that:

- 1. The entire area other than occupied by buildings or structures or planting shall be surfaced with bituminous or concrete which will control dust and drainage. The entire area shall have a perimeter curb barrier, a storm water drainage system and is subject to the approval of the City Engineer.*
- 2. All painting shall be conducted in an approved paint booth. All paint booths and all other activities of the operation shall thoroughly control the emission of fumes, dust or other particulated matter so that the use shall be in compliance with the State of Minnesota Pollution Control Standards, Minnesota Regulation APC 1-15, as amended.*
- 3. The emission of odor by a use shall be in compliance with and regulated by the State of Minnesota Pollution Control Standards, Minnesota regulations APC, as amended.*
- 4. All flammable materials, including liquids and rags, shall conform with the applicable provisions of the Minnesota Uniform Fire Code.*
- 5. All outside storage shall be prohibited except for customer automobiles and trucks awaiting repair.*

4. Traffic generation of the proposed use in relation to capabilities of streets serving the property.

The use will not generate traffic that would affect the area streets capability of serving the property.

5. The proposed use's impact upon existing public services and facilities including parks, schools, streets, and utilities, and its potential to overburden the City's service capacity.

See #4 above.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

The current and future owner desires the property to be rezoned for their interest, however rezoning should not be based on a desired use. A rezoning should stand on its own merits and a decision on rezoning should be based on all of the land use issues for the area being considered. If a desired use doesn't materialize, the rezoned area should be suitable for all the other uses allowed in the zone.

The Purpose of the B-4 District as stated in The Zoning Ordinance is to "allow more intensive commercial uses that require extensive highway access for customer contact". However, the B-4 District is used in parts of the city where extensive highway access does not exist.

Should rezoning to B-4 occur, off-street parking requirements for customers and employees (vehicle storage area is not included in this total) will need to be established for the property.

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map does identify the property as future Downtown Commercial. This area of the Downtown Commercial future land use area was zoned B-4 until 2011 when a B-3 District was expanded in an effort to create additional commercial area that is a mixed use, compact, walkable destination area.

The B-3 District Purpose and Intent reads:

...encourage the continuation of a viable, traditional downtown area by allowing retail, service, office and entertainment facilities and public and semi-public uses as well as the allowance of second-story dwelling units located above such uses.

Two issues the Planning Commission will need to address:

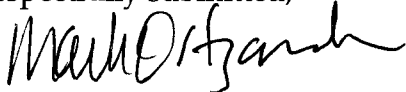
1. Is the area appropriate for automotive repair? If so is it appropriate to consider a larger B-4 District.
2. This is a one parcel zoning request. Does the Planning Commission want to continue considering zoning on a parcel by parcel basis, or is it going to uphold the decisions made in 2011 when a lot of thought was given to zoning in the entire community?

We should not lose sight of the importance of zoning in the community. Zoning changes should not be made based solely on the current needs of a property owner. Zoning is also about future predictability and trust. Parties interested in development need the confidence and trust that surrounding uses will not change parcel by parcel and there is the desire for predictability in what future uses can be anticipated.

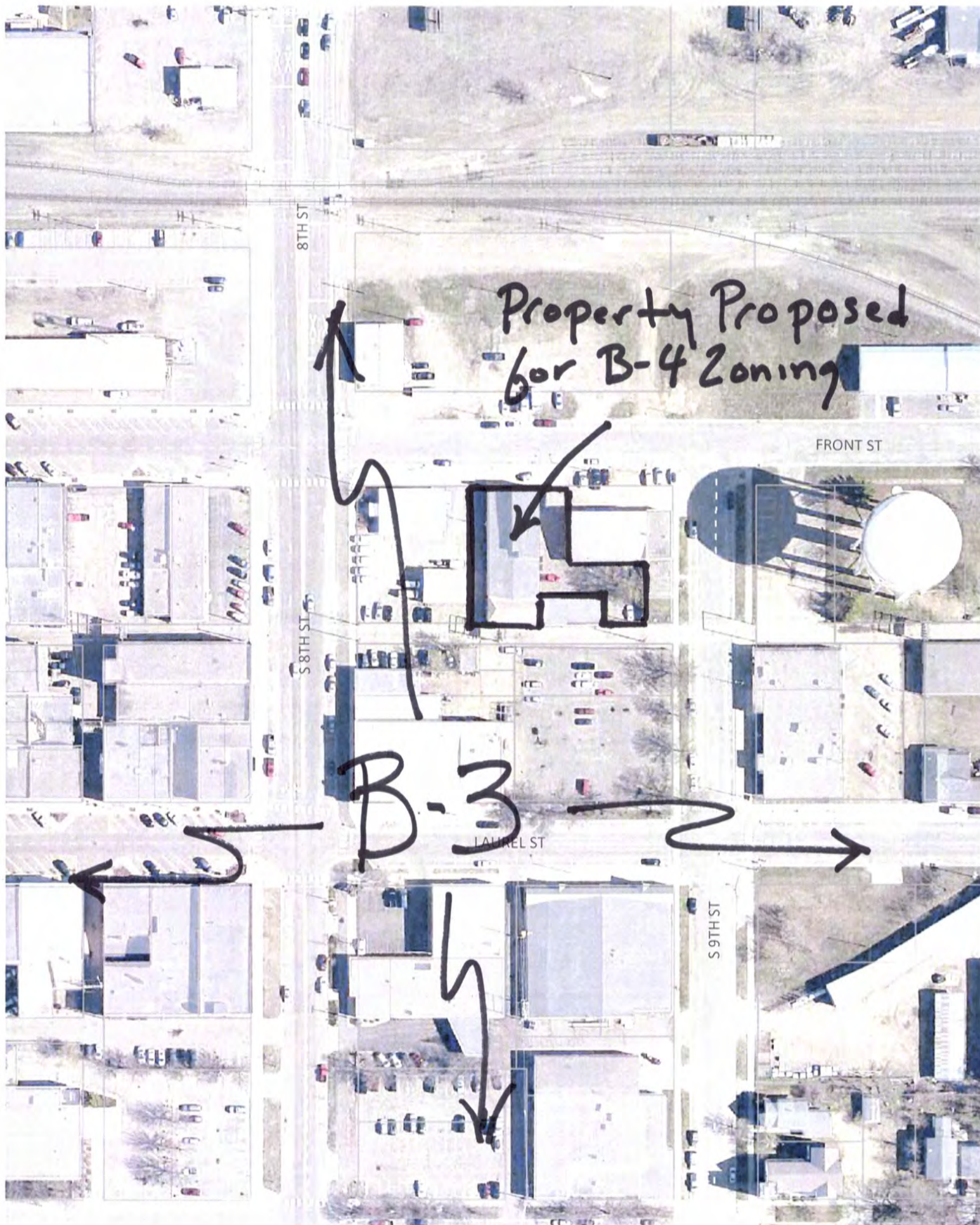
PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL ACTION

The Planning Commission can consider a recommendation on this request at its June 15, 2016 meeting. The City Council can receive the Planning Commission recommendation and can consider an Ordinance First Reading on June 20, 2016 and can consider the Ordinance Second Reading on Tuesday July 5, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Ostgarden AICP
City Planner



NOTICE OF HEARING

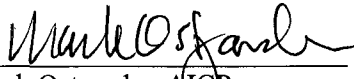
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Notice is hereby given that Benjamin Larson, PO Box 300, Sartell, MN 56377, has submitted a request to rezone the property at 814 Front Street, Brainerd, MN 56401 from a B-3 (Central Business) District to B-4 (General Commercial) District.

A Public Hearing will be conducted by Brainerd Planning Commission at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, June 15, 2016 in the Brainerd City Hall Council Chambers, 501 Laurel Street, to consider rezoning the property.

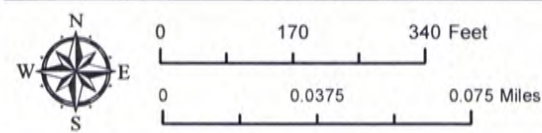
Any individual needing special accommodations please call (218) 828-2309.

Dated this 31st day of May, 2016



Mark Ostgarden AICP
City Planner

Publication Date: June 3, 2016



28

REZONE - 814 FRONT STREET - NOH MAILING LIST

APPRCL	TXNAME	TXADR1	TXADR2	TXADR3	PHYSADDR
09196039007Z009	- ANDERSON, GUY & TAMMY	4255 THESING RD	BRAINERD, MN 56401		214 9TH ST S
09196039007W009	- B & C 822 PROPERTY LLC	ATTN: BRADLEY W CARLSON	26610 PARKWAY DR	NISSWA, MN 56468	822 FRONT ST
09196037009Z009	- BENSON ENTERPRISES	% GARY BENSON	450 18TH AVE S	NAPLES, FL 34102	
09196037007Y009	- BENSON ENTERPRISES	% GARY BENSON	450 18TH AVE S	NAPLES, FL 34102	924 FRONT ST
09196037005Z009	- BENSON ENTERPRISES	% GARY BENSON	450 18TH AVE S	NAPLES, FL 34102	216 10TH ST S
09196039014Z009	- BENZ, ROBERT KEVIN	201 8TH ST S	BRAINERD, MN 56401		201 8TH ST S
091960190040009	- BJERGA FEED STORES, INC.	PO BOX 296	MOTLEY, MN 56466		
09196039005Y009	- BRAINERD 2014 INVESTORS LLC	1515 WEST MAPLE AVE	RED WING, MN 55066		
09196039001Y009	- BRAINERD 2014 INVESTORS LLC	1515 WEST MAPLE AVE	RED WING, MN 55066		
09196039022Y009	- BRAINERD 2014 INVESTORS LLC	1515 WEST MAPLE AVE	RED WING, MN 55066		223 8TH ST S
09196073013Z009	- BRAINERD B N CREDIT UNION	804 LAUREL ST	BRAINERD MN 56401		804 LAUREL ST
09196073015Z009	- BRAINERD B N CREDIT UNION	804 LAUREL ST	BRAINERD MN 56401		804 LAUREL ST
09196075013Z009	- BRAINERD BN CREDIT UNION	804 LAUREL ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401		301 9TH ST S
091960370190009	- BRAINERD LODGE #615 BENEVOLENT &	PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS	PO BOX 322	BRAINERD MN 56401	215 9TH ST S
091960410100009	- C & L MIDWEST LLC	PO BOX 341	BRAINERD MN 56401		718 FRONT ST
09196041011Z009	- C & L MIDWEST LLC	PO BOX 341	BRAINERD MN 56401		
09196037011Z009	- CITY OF BRAINERD	501 LAUREL ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401		WATER TOWER
09196039019Z009	- GUSTAFSON, GLEN A	9222 21ST SW	LAKE SHORE, MN 56468		213 8TH ST S
09196037007Z889	- KARNOWSKI, CHARLES P & CHERYL ANNE	208 S 10TH ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401		208 10TH ST S
09196041001X889	- KUHN, DANNY E	24549 COUNTY RD 3	MERRIFIELD, MN 56465		721 LAUREL ST
09196075005Y009	- LANOGA CORP, C/O UBC	C/O RYAN TAX COMPLIANCE SVCS LLC	16220 NORTH SCOTTSDALE	SCOTTSDALE AZ 85254	
09196039008Y889	- LARSON, BENJAMIN L	PO BOX 300	SARTELL, MN 56377		814 FRONT ST
09196041001Z889	- NJMS PHELPS BLOCK LLC	2200 PRINCETON AVE	ST PAUL MN 55105		715 LAUREL ST
09196041007Z009	- NLIJ JENSEN LLC	204 8TH ST S	BRAINERD, MN 56401		208 8TH ST S
09196039021Z009	- OLSON, CATHERINE	1901 WOODCREST RD	BRAINERD MN 56401		217 8TH ST S
09196071008X009	- PUERINGER, DAVID F PUERINGER INVEST	616 1/2 FRONT ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401		722 LAUREL ST
09196041001Y009	- ROBERTS, CHARLES C	9544 NORTHGATE LN	BRAINERD MN 56401		719 LAUREL ST
09196039020Z009	- RUDSENSKE, ROBERT	139 BELLE RAE CIR	BRAINERD MN 56401		215 8TH ST S
09196039007Y009	- SCHROEML, RONALD E & SHIRLEY J	11132 BONNIE RD	BRAINERD, MN 56401		212 9TH ST S
09196041004Z009	- SMITH, GREGORY A & MELODY A	14905 HOLLY DR	BAXTER, MN 56425		216 8TH ST S
09196041005Z889	- T & J PROPERTIES	722 6TH ST N	BRAINERD, MN 56401		214 8TH ST S
09196073007X009	- TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH OF BRAINERD	923 OAK ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401		824 LAUREL ST
09196073007W009	- TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH OF BRAINERD	923 OAK ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401		824 LAUREL ST
09196037001Z009	- WETHERELL, RICHARD B	915 LAUREL ST	BRAINERD, MN 56401		915 LAUREL ST
09196039009Z009	- YEAGER, KEVIN & MELISSA	325 BLUFF AVE	BRAINERD, MN 56401		820 FRONT ST
09196037003Z009	- YESTERDAY'S GONE LLC	15965 COUNTY ROAD 25	BRAINERD, MN 56401		LAUREL ST
09196037016Z009	- YESTERDAY'S GONE LLC	15965 COUNTY ROAD 25	BRAINERD, MN 56401		219 9TH ST S



City Planning Department

City Hall – 501 Laurel Street

Brainerd, MN 56401

218-828-2309/Fax 218-828-2316

www.ci.brainerd.mn.us

Receipt # 2016-00030
Check # 13234
Date Paid: 6-1-16

091960390084889

CONDITIONAL USE/REZONING/VARIANCE APPLICATION

	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT	☐ (\$250.00)	☐ (\$400.00 + \$500.00 escrow deposit)
REZONING	☐ (\$300.00)	☒ (\$500.00)
VARIANCE	☐ (\$250.00)	☐ (\$400.00 + \$500.00 escrow deposit)

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 814 Front Street

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Lot(s): 8-13 Block: 39 Addition: property # 091960390084889
(attach description if lengthy)

Property Owner Name: Ben Larson

Street Address: PO Box 300 City: Sartell State: MN Zip Code: 56377

Phone Number: 320-761-9095 Fax: _____ E-mail: ben@soundconnectioninc.com

Applicant Name: (If different than Property Owner) _____

Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Description of Request: Zone for Automotive repair use.

I have a tenant ready to move in and start generating revenue for the City and creating jobs.

Thanks Ben

[Signature]
Property Owner Signature

5/25/16
Date

Ben Larson
(Please print name)

[Signature]
Applicant Signature

5/25/16
Date

Ben Larson
(Please print name)

AGENCY REVIEW CHECKLIST

Your request may require review by one or more of the agencies listed below. The City of Brainerd will determine which agencies will need to review your application and provide that agency with the notice of public hearing regarding your application:

✓

BRAINERD FIRE DEPARTMENT

Attn: Fire Chief; 23 Laurel St; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-2312; fire@ci.brainerd.mn.us

✓

BRAINERD POLICE DEPARTMENT

Attn: Corky McQuiston, 225 East River Road; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-829-2805; corky.mcquiston@ci.brainerd.mn.us

✓

BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES

Attn: Scott Magnuson, Supt.; P.O. Box 373; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-829-8726; smagnuson@bpu.org

BWSR (MN Board of Water and Soil Resources)

Attn: John Overland; 1601 Minnesota Dr; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-2383; john.overland@state.mn.us

CROW WING COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

Attn: Tim Bray, County Engineer; 16589 County Rd 142; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-824-1110/FAX 218-824-1111
tim.bray@crowwing.us

CROW WING COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Attn: Melissa Barrick; 322 Laurel St-Ste. 13; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-6197/FAX 828-6095
melissa.barrick@crowwingswcd.us

CROW WING COUNTY SURVEYOR'S OFFICE

Attn: Mark Liedl; 322 Laurel St Ste 14.; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-824-1124/FAX 824-1126;
mark.liedl@crowwing.us

HRA

Attn: Jennifer Bergman; 324 E. River Rd.; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-3705/FAX 828-8817;
jennifer@brainerdhra.org

MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS BOARD

322 Laurel Street Ste 5; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-824-1307/FAX 824-1104
mhb@mississippiheadwaters.org

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Attn: Mary Safgren; 7694 Industrial Park Rd.; Baxter, MN 56425; 218-828-5700; mary.safgren@state.mn.us

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Attn: Wade Miller; 1601 Minnesota Dr.; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-828-2605/FAX 828-6043;
wade.miller@state.mn.us

MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

Attn: Reed Larson; 7678 College Rd-Ste. 105; Baxter, MN 56425; 218-828-2492/FAX 828-2594
reed.larson@state.mn.us

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Attn: Jeff Koshak; 8896 E. Gulf Lake Dr.; Brainerd, MN 56401; 218-829-8402

MEMO

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Mark Ostgarden, City Planner 

DATE: June 9, 2016

RE: Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – Off Street Parking

The Planning Commission has had discussion about changing off street parking requirements. Chairman Plantenberg, City Administrator Jim Thoreen and City Councilman Kelly Bevans and I met with a several business representatives for a discussion about changing the requirements. The consensus from that meeting is that we should move forward to change the requirements. The option that received the most support was removing the minimum requirements with no other changes at this time.

This is on the agenda for further Planning Commission review in hopes of reaching a conclusion on the change in hopes of moving towards a public hearing in July or August.

Chairman Plantenberg has expressed support for the minimum requirement removal; however she has a concern about removing the requirements near residential areas. If this is a concern of other members, we will need a decision about what is “near residential areas.” It is recommended that we not leave the restriction that broad and include language for a more exact restriction. Examples are:

1. Across the street from residential zoning.
2. Within 200 ft. of residential zoning.
3. On the same block front as residential zoning.
4. Other description

Removing the minimums in this manner would remove them in all zoning districts – residential, commercial and industrial. Does the Planning Commission desire to recommend that much change?

If the minimums were removed by zoning district the logical districts would be:

- B-4 – General Commercial
- B-6 – Washington Street Commercial

The Planning Commission discussion can include whether it wants to remove the minimums in any other districts.

This is scheduled as an aged item for discussion. It can be decided at the meeting whether to adjourn to a workshop for the discussion.

MEMO

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Mark Ostgarden, City Planner 

DATE: June 9, 2016

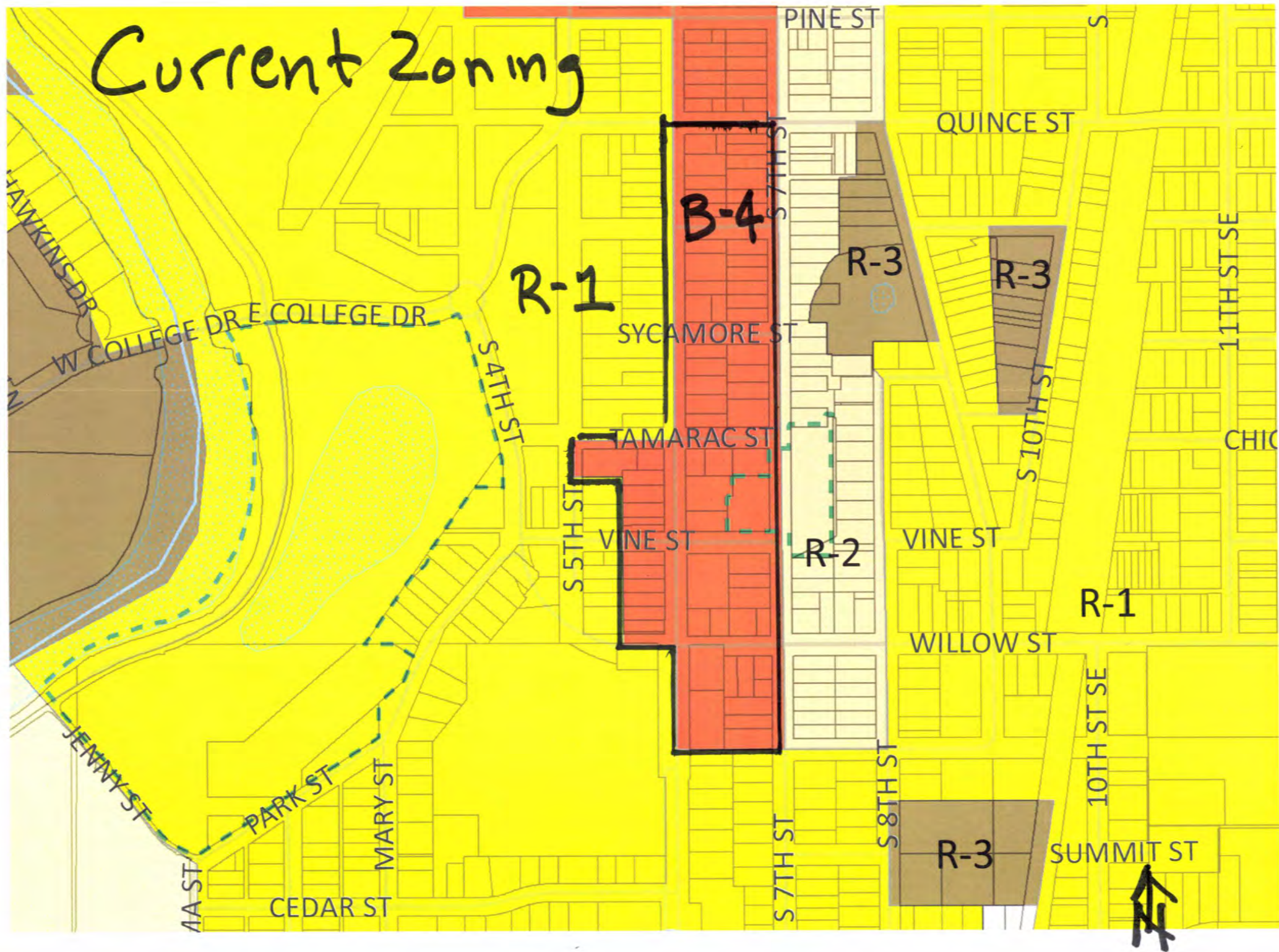
RE: S. 6th Street Rezoning

To bring everyone up to speed, in March 2016 the City Council approved amending the B-2 (Neighborhood Business) District language to permit residential uses. The next step in the S. 6th Street zoning issue was to have a public hearing to consider revising the B-4 District boundary south of Quince Street.

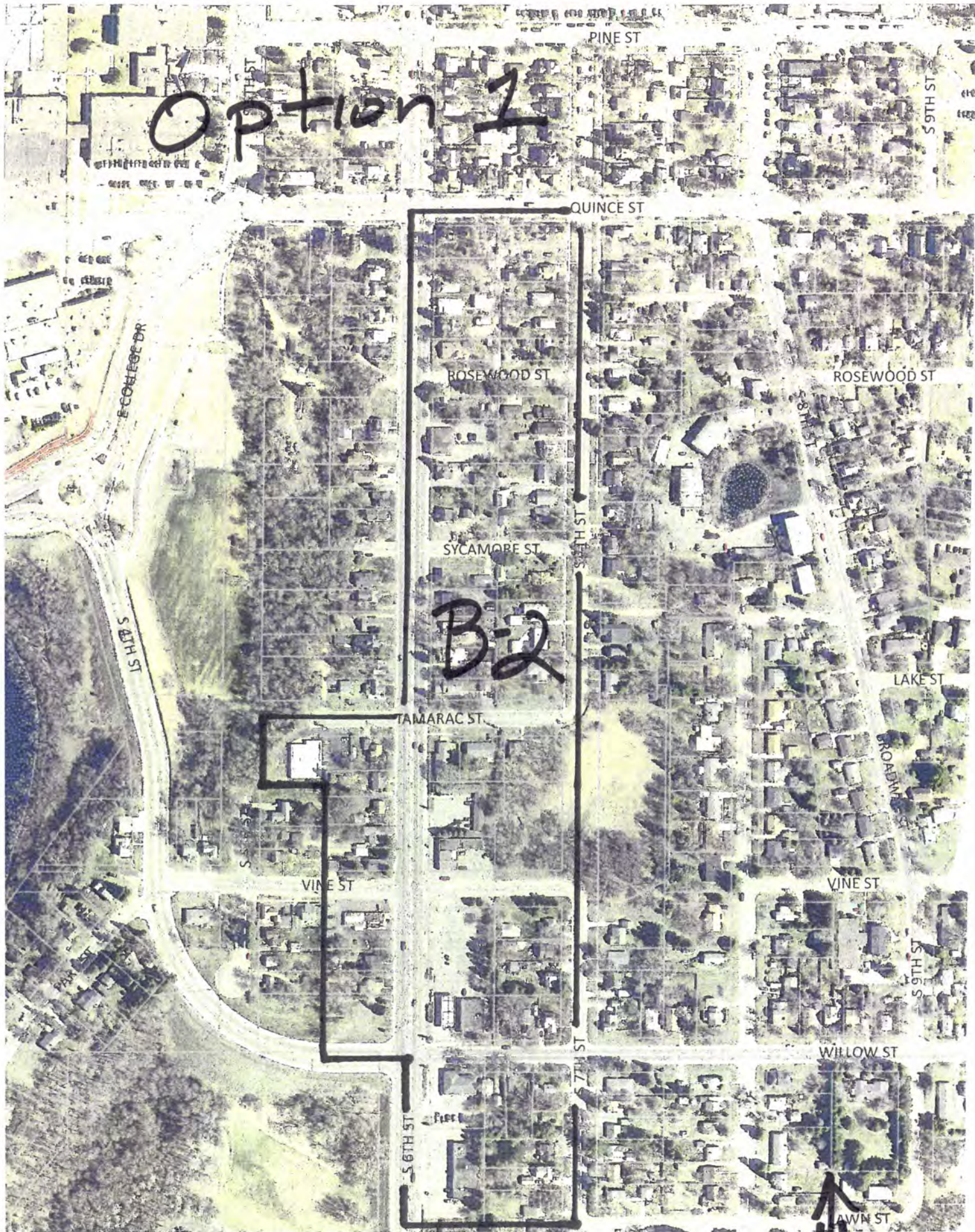
I reviewed Planning Commission minutes from earlier this year when we were discussing the text and boundary changes, however I could not find a final, recommendation on changing the B-4 district boundary.

I have attached 3 change options that have previously been submitted to the Planning Commission. Option 2 or Option 3 are the recommended Planning Department options. The residential uses along S. 7th Street should not have a commercial zoning classification. The B-2 and B-4 Districts permit the commercial uses in the B-4 Districts in Option 3. Meaning there is no difference in Option 2 and Option 3 for the existing uses.

Current Zoning



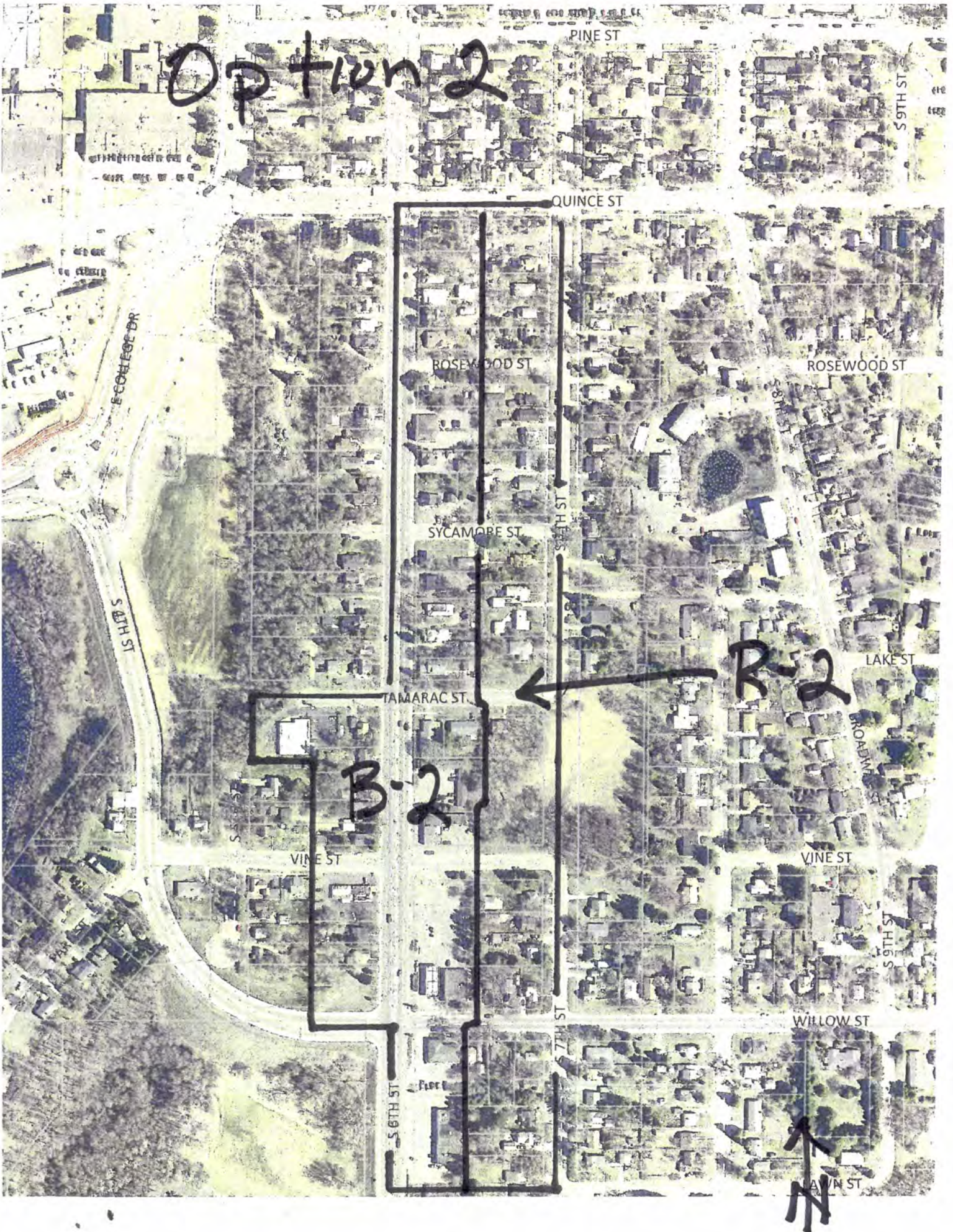
Option 1



B-2

N

Option 2



PINE ST

9TH ST

QUINCE ST

ROSEWOOD ST

ROSEWOOD ST

SYCAMORE ST

LAKE ST

TAMARAC ST

R-2

B-2

VINE ST

VINE ST

WILLOW ST

9TH ST

WILLOW ST



Option 3

B-2

B-4

B-2

R-2

B-2

B-4

PINE ST

QUINCE ST

S 9TH ST

ROSEWOOD ST

ROSEWOOD ST

SYCAMORE ST

S 8TH ST

TAMARAC ST

LAKE ST

VINE ST

VINE ST

S 9TH ST

WILLOW ST

DAWN ST

ECOLOGIST DR

S 10TH ST

S 10TH ST

S 10TH ST

S 7TH ST



Why Does America Hate Roundabouts?

Maps and data visualizations show the U.S. trailing much of the world when it comes to traffic circles.

JOHN METCALFE | [@citycalfe](#) | Mar 10, 2016 | [67 Comments](#)



[nacropa/Shutterstock.com](#)

Intersections in America are boring: Grind to a halt, go left, right, or straight. Why can't we be more like countries that forgo 90-degree angles for welcoming roundabouts, where drivers can ease into their exits or just circle repeatedly in automotive bliss?

[Damien Saunder](#), a geospatial designer at [Esri](#), recently found himself pondering this question. "I'm an Australian, and in Australia we have gone roundabout crazy!" he says. "Where I live now in California there are literally no roundabouts, so I set out to find if this was just a California thing or was it more widespread in the U.S.?"

What Saunder discovered, using data from Nokia's [2014 Here maps](#), was indeed a deficit of domestic roundabouts compared with countries like France, where motorists are 25 times more likely to curve through one than in America. He also noticed U.S. roundabouts are not spread evenly throughout the land, but amass in certain places like Florida (1,283 roundabouts) and virtually disappear in others like the Roundabout Bermuda Triangle of Wyoming/South Dakota/North Dakota (not even 50 among the three).

Here are some more of Saunder's findings, which he made into swell-looking visualizations. First, marvel at the huge number of angular intersections you must face before encountering a roundabout in the U.S.:

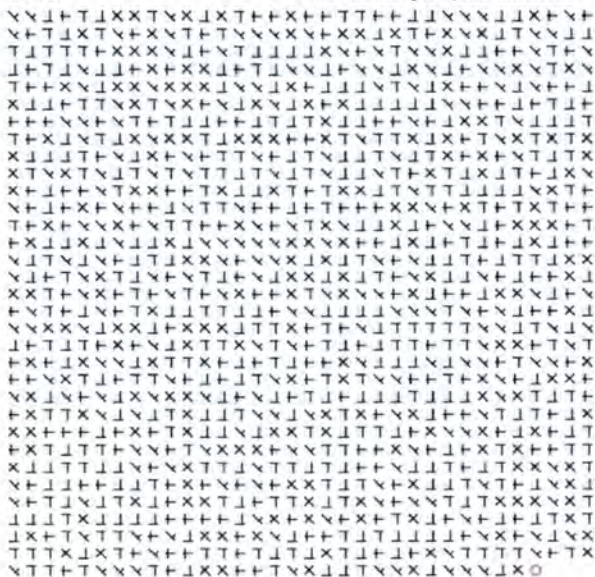
Roundabout : Intersection ratio

American drivers on average pass through 1,118 intersections before they encounter a roundabout.
In France you are 25 times more likely to pass through a roundabout than here in America.
Drivers from Australia, Spain, Great Britain and Germany also encounter roundabouts far more frequently than American drivers.

✚ Intersection
○ Roundabout

USA

1 roundabout per **1,118** intersections



Germany

1 roundabout per **313** intersections



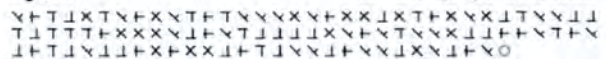
Great Britain

1 roundabout per **127** intersections



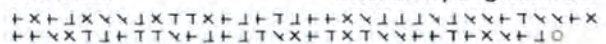
Spain

1 roundabout per **96** intersections



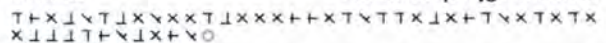
Australia

1 roundabout per **65** intersections



France

1 roundabout per **45** intersections

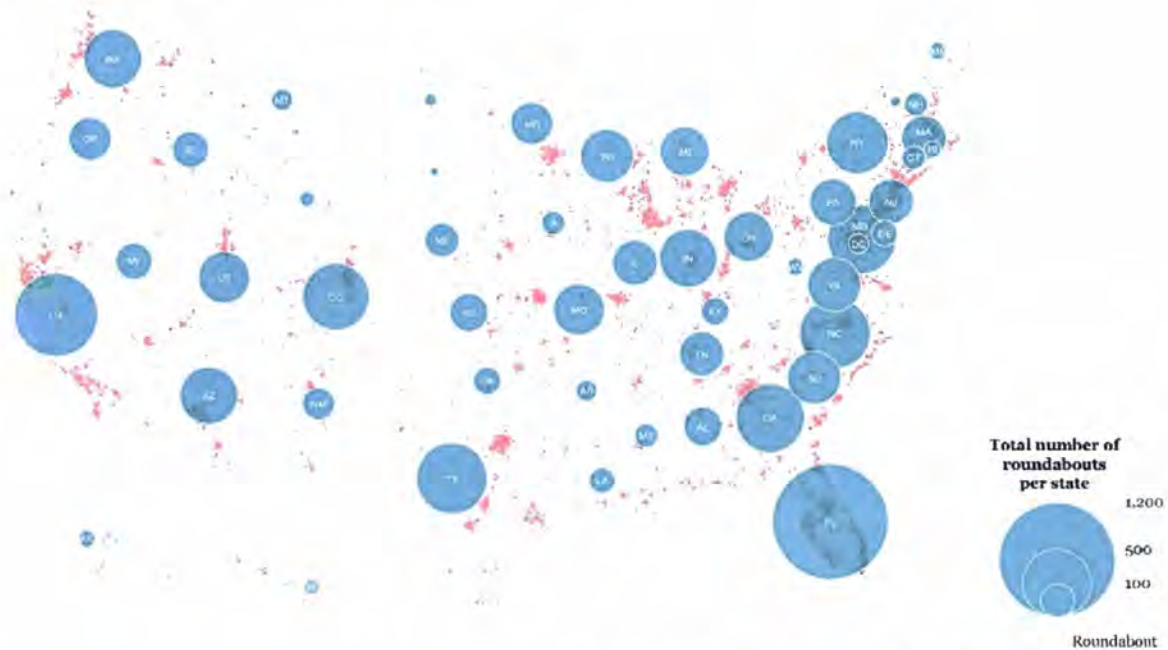


Sources: Esri / Here, Graphic: Damien Saunder

Saunders' intuition about California being a roundabout desert didn't pan out. It has the second-highest number of roundabouts in the country, behind Florida and ahead of Texas:

America's roundabouts

America's 10,341 roundabouts are spread far and wide. However, some states have embraced roundabouts more passionately than others. Florida is where you'll find the most roundabouts (1,283), with California (683) and Texas (487) rounding out the top three. South Dakota, North Dakota, and Wyoming share only 49 roundabouts total.

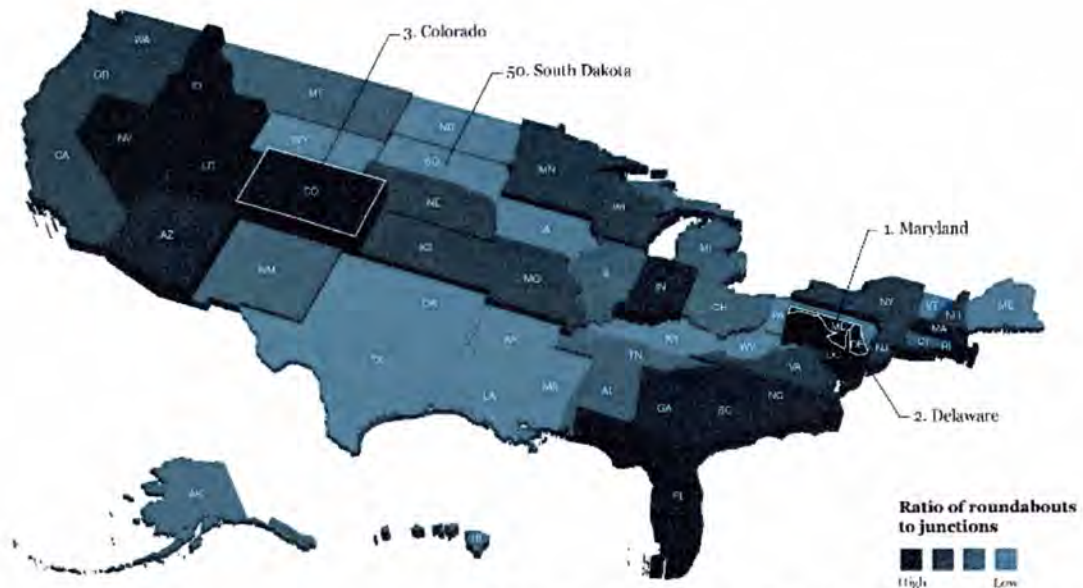


Sources: Esri / Here, Graphic: Damien Saunder

And here's where American drivers are most likely to stumble upon a roundabout. If you judge by concentration in a state's total intersections, it's Maryland that comes out roundabout king:

Where you're most likely to encounter a roundabout

Florida has the most roundabouts, but it's Maryland that has the highest concentration of roundabouts. There drivers are likely to pass through a roundabout once every 363 intersections. By contrast, South Dakota drivers will pass through on average 22,806 intersections before they ever reach a roundabout.



Sources: Esri / Here, Graphic: Damien Saunder

Some argue the primitive roots of the roundabout actually grew in the U.S. "It's widely accepted that William Phelps Eno was the bright spark who first devised the idea of a one-way rotary system in 1903, for Columbus Circle, New York City, USA," asserts the U.K. Roundabout Appreciation Society, an organization rabidly opposed to "[fascist, robotic traffic lights](#)." So why has the country fallen so far behind in deployment, given roundabouts' elegant simplicity and [proven safety benefits](#)?

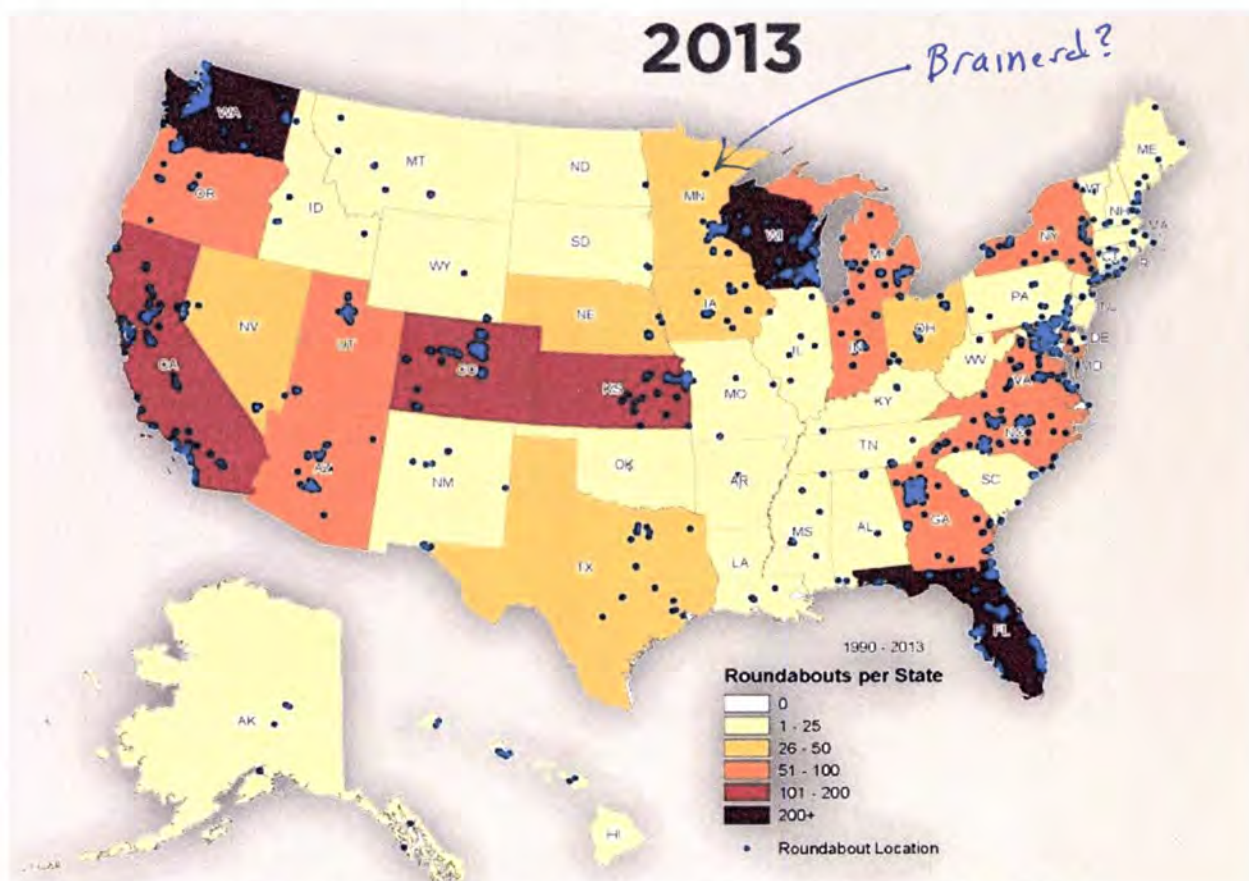
There are a lot of possible answers, says [Lee Rodegerdts](#), an international roundabout expert (yes, they exist) at the Portland transportation-engineering and planning group Kittelson & Associates.

"My guess is that the possible benefit of roundabouts wasn't widely known, and we had a long history of using traffic signals," he says. "It took some bold people—both on the elected-official side and on the transportation-professional side—to get the first ones installed, and they deserve a lot of credit for sticking their necks out there. This boldness had to be repeated a lot

around the U.S. during the [first] decade or two, given the skepticism of: 'Well, that might work *there*, but it won't work *here*.'

Rodegerdts qualifies that there are disparities between Saunder's analyses and those of transportation professionals, due to a difference in definitions. Saunder is using Nokia's terminology of a roundabout being a "contiguous loop with consistent one-way traffic ... that controls the traffic flow from converging roads" and a diameter (in most cases) wider than 82 feet. Rodegerdts prefers a stricter engineering definition given by the [National Cooperative Highway Research Program](#). He estimates there were roughly 3,200 roundabouts in the U.S. in 2013; Saunder turned up 10,341 in 2014.

"There are relatively few true roundabouts in Texas, for example, and many of the circular intersections in Florida use stop signs at the entry or have yield signs within the circulatory roadway, which are inconsistent with the accepted practice at roundabouts," says Rodegerdts.



A map that Lee Rodegerdts prepared using a stricter definition of "roundabout." (Lee Rodegerdts / Kittelson)

Using the narrower definition would only widen the roundabout gap between the U.S. and other nations. America's late start might be partly to blame. The U.K. had what are considered "modern" roundabouts by the 1960s, while America built its first one in 1990 in a Las Vegas subdivision, according to [RoundaboutsUSA](#).

"So some of the difference is due to a longer history," says Rodegerdts. "I believe the differences in the numbers may also be due to different levels of public investment in infrastructure, particularly with respect to addressing safety concerns where the roundabouts tend to perform quite well relative to other intersection forms."

There are other, more controversial theories. "The roundabout is said to have flourished in Britain because it requires the British virtues of compromise and cooperation," opines [journalist Stephen Beard](#)—who, no surprise, lives in Britain—writing in *BBC America*. "The U.S.'s more aggressive, confrontational culture may explain why the roundabout has not been more widely adopted by Americans."

But Americans shouldn't feel too bad about their cautious embrace of wonderful, whirling roundabouts, as other nations also lag behind. "For what it's worth, other advanced countries are very early in their development of roundabouts, such as Japan," Rodegerdts says. "They only have a few dozen roundabouts so far."

Top image: [nacropa/Shutterstock.com](#)

About the Author



John Metcalfe is *CityLab's* Bay Area bureau chief.

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The Real Source of America's Urban Revival

Millennials, housing costs, and shorter commutes are the usual explanations. But a careful new study points to another reason young college grads returned downtown in the 2000s.

ERIC JAFFE |  @e_jaffe | Feb 23, 2016 |  91 Comments



Robin Capper / Flickr

Something strange happened in U.S. cities circa 2000: people started to move downtown. Not all people. If you look at the top 100 metro areas between

2000 and 2010, only two downtowns grew faster than their outlying suburbs in terms of total population. *Two*. But among young college graduates—a key indicator of an area’s growth potential, in the eyes of urban economists—moving downtown became more the rule than the exception.

From 2000 to 2010, more college-educated professionals aged 25 to 34 moved downtown than to the suburbs in 39 of the 50 largest U.S. metros. For 35-to-44-year-olds, the same held true in 28 of the 50 largest metros. This revival was true in the places you might expect, like New York City or San Francisco, and in places you might not, [like Cleveland](#). It was true despite historical trend lines showing that, for the better part of a century, the wealthy typically moved one way when it came to cities: out of them.

“This is a huge reversal from decades of suburbanization of college graduates,” says urban economics scholar Victor Couture of UC-Berkeley. “Most large American cities experienced something like this rebound between 2000 to 2010. Over the last decade, broadly speaking.”

Where College Grads Moved in the 50 Largest U.S. Metros by Decade

■ Downtown ■ Suburbs

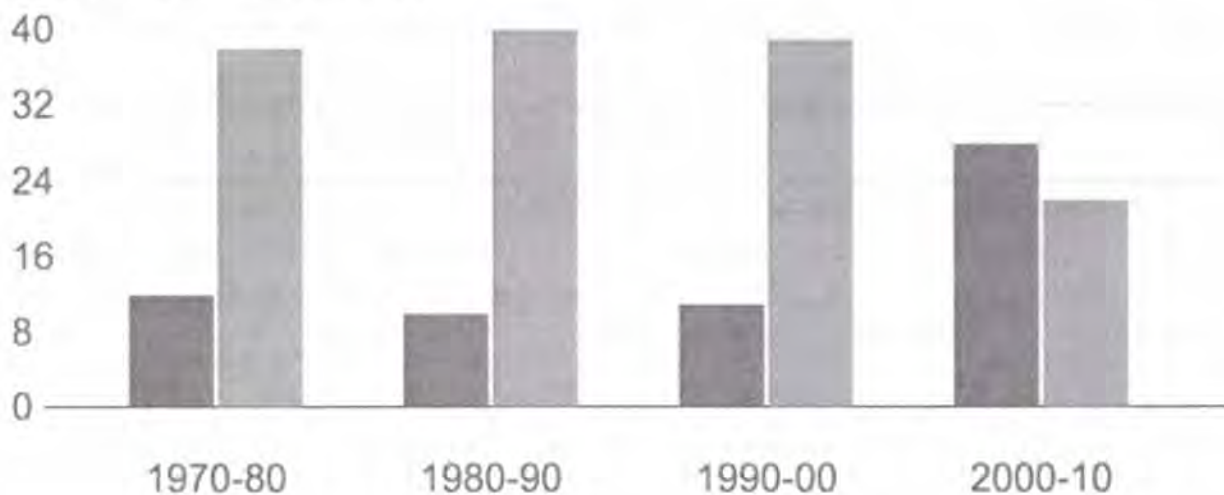


Photo Courtesy: Shutterstock

CityLab

That insight won’t surprise CityLab readers, but the precise reasons for it continue to be studied and debated in light of the equitable housing and

development challenges facing downtowns today. Couture and Jessie Handbury of the University of Pennsylvania think they've settled on an explanation in a new working paper that tracks America's urban revival as meticulously as any analysis to date. And it's not one of the usual suspects.

New living habits of Millennials and Baby Boomers, delays in starting a family, a tougher home-buying market, a hatred of long commutes—those social factors have all altered cities in recent years. But Couture and Handbury pin the return of downtown on a new fondness for service amenities: music venues, theaters, bars, gyms, and the like. Not the growth of these things but a fresh *taste* for living near them, a broad cultural shift that could make urban revival more durable.

"If this revival comes from a change in preference, then it could be a long-lasting phenomenon," says Couture. "We have ruled out various explanations based on temporary trends."

The preferences now favor downtown

To conduct their analysis, Couture and Handbury loaded up on tract-level population data from the 2000 census and the 2008-2012 American Community Survey. Then they piled on stats about job location, home prices, household formation, crime, and service amenities. The last tracked local availability of and proximity to 11 types of retail and cultural establishments—rolling these metrics into a "consumption amenities index."

Of all these factors, service amenities seemed to play the key role in explaining urban revival, at least as defined by the return of the college educated to downtown areas. (More on why the other variables failed to explain residential trends in the next section.) Over time, young professionals chose to live in areas where there had been higher densities of amenities in 2000, as well as in places that experienced growth in such amenities during the next decade.

Furthermore, the researchers believe that first trend—the initial density of amenities—was the bigger instrument of revival. If young people merely flocked to places adding amenities from 2000 to 2010, they would have gone

to the suburbs in greater numbers, since the suburbs actually experienced more amenity growth than downtowns did at that time. The fact that they went downtown, which had greater initial amenity densities in 2000, suggests to Couture that they'd developed a new *preference* for living near bars, restaurants, theaters, and the like.

Where College Grads Moved in the 50 Largest U.S. Metros, 2000-2010

■ Downtown ■ Suburbs



Source: Census Bureau, 2010

CityLab

"So what it seems is it's not that the environment has changed in a way that favors downtown," he says. "It's that the preferences of people have changed in ways that favor the downtown—in particular the preferences for these highly urbanized amenities, like in entertainment services." Couture acknowledges that the two trends aren't mutually exclusive; more preference for amenities may lead to more growth in amenities for an area over time.

Just why young college-educated professionals might prefer to live near consumption amenities more than they have in the past is tougher to explain. The researchers are looking into several possibilities: that the urban revivalists have more disposable income, that the rise of digital location-based technology makes service amenities more valuable, and that the quality of amenities is higher in modern downtowns. Testing these ideas will be a challenge.

"Maybe *Avenue Q* is funnier than *The Lion King*," says Couture, "but it's hard to measure."

Jobs and snake people can't explain it

There are obviously many reasons why a 25-to-44-year-old college grad might have moved downtown between 2000 and 2010. Couture and Handbury aren't saying that a new demand for proximity to bars and such was the only factor—just that it offered the best statistical fit with residential patterns during that period. The other explanations they considered, many offered by the popular media or previous research, proved relatively less powerful than the lure of amenities.

Job centralization. One common claim for downtown revival, with [strong evidence](#) and logic to back it, holds that a growing hatred of long commutes has led people to move closer to their jobs. But Couture and Handbury doubt that's the leading draw for college grads. If it were, there'd be a strong link between living near a central business area and working there; in fact, data on high-income professionals (age-based data weren't available for this metric) in the 10 largest metros show they're living downtown no matter where they work.

RELATED STORY



Why the Wealthy Have Been Returning to City Centers

There's no single reason, of course, but a hatred of long commutes might be a big one.

Take San Francisco as the most obvious example. One of the reasons for the city's affordable housing crisis is that high-income young college grads in the tech industry are moving downtown but [reverse commuting](#) out to Silicon Valley. That suggests many of them are living downtown for reasons that have little or nothing to do with job location—consumption amenities among them.

Baby Boomers or Millennials. Despite popular reports, the researchers didn't find

much evidence that Baby Boomers or Millennials were leading the revival movement, at least during the critical 2000-to-2010 years. The 45-to-64-year-old population, essentially Baby Boomers, was still suburbanizing during this time, with downtown college-educated growth outpacing suburban growth in just 21 of the top 100 U.S. metros. Millennials, the 18-to-24 group, were showing signs of heading downtown, but the cohort was too small to be a key force.

Contrast that with the city-bound movements of college grads age 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 during this period. In the 50 largest U.S. metros, populations for both of these age groups grew three times faster downtown than in the suburbs. For the 25-to-34 group, in particular, only two of the biggest 25 metros saw faster growth in the suburbs: Riverside, California, which lacks a true downtown, and Detroit, which is Detroit.

Other explanations

Families, housing, and crime—evidence for these explanations also didn't quite cut it for Couture and Handbury. In brief:

The impact of **household formation**—singles living alone, or couples waiting to have kids—was a mixed bag. That case makes sense for the younger cohort, 25 to 34, which from 2000 to 2010 was living solo or as a non-married couple more than the national average. But the same couldn't be said for the 35 to 44 group, which was actually more likely than average to have young children—a demographic that skews suburban.

Mortgage lending could also play a role. If homes are harder to purchase, people might move downtown and rent instead. And indeed, first-time home-buying has become more difficult since the housing crisis. But the timing is off, says Couture. The revival occurred from 2000 to 2010, and the Great Recession came toward the tail end. Additionally, he says, home-ownership rates among young college grads have actually increased during this full period.

As for **crime**, the researchers regard their analysis here as inconclusive. Urban revival and a decline in crime rates did coincide in large U.S. metros. But it's

hard to know what caused what: a safer city would no doubt appeal to college grads, but then again an influx of college grads would likely make a city safer. "All we can say is if we look at areas already safe in 2000, then this is not a precise predictor of urban revival," says Couture, who's hoping for better data.

Couture stresses that the research remains in a preliminary form (it hasn't yet been peer-reviewed) and that he and Handbury are doing additional tests using newer data. He also acknowledges that the type of modeling and analysis performed for the work, while sophisticated, isn't perfect. And again, even as the study submits proximity to service amenities as the main reason for urban revival, it doesn't suggest other factors didn't play a part.

Still, Couture believes the return of downtown America is critical to study and discuss, qualifiers and all. "We care about the implications of this trend," he says. "As an urban policymaker, as an interested citizen, it's something that has a lot of public interest."

About the Author



Eric Jaffe is the former New York bureau chief for CityLab. He is the author of *A Curious Madness* and *The King's Best Highway*.

ALL POSTS | [@e_jaffe](#)



The Graying of Rural America

As young people increasingly move to cities, what happens to the people and places they leave behind?

ALANA SEMUELS | [@AlanaSemuels](#) | 12:09 PM ET | [1 Comment](#)



Alana Semuels / The Atlantic

FOSSIL, Oregon—It can be a pretty depressing proposition to start counting the deaths in this tiny town set among the hills and buttes of central Oregon.

Sherian Asher, 74, began keeping track a few years ago, despite herself, until she realized the tally: four deaths a month, in a town of 450. Then she stopped counting.

Fossil, Asher said, is "just going to die out."

Businesses are disappearing, too. There used to be four gas stations, three grocery stores, three car dealers, and a lumber mill. Now, there's just one restaurant in town open at night. The nearest hospital is more than an hour away. The nearest city, Bend, is two-and-a-half.

"You look up the definition of fossil in the dictionary, you'll find it's something that's been dead for a long time," Asher told me, as she sat under a parasol in the hot sun at a one-table farmer's market she runs with three of her closest friends, the youngest of whom is 68.

Fossil is the seat of Wheeler County, where the median age is 56, which is the highest of any county in Oregon. By contrast, the median age of Multnomah County, where Portland is located, is 36.1. From 2000 to 2013, the median age in Wheeler County rose from 48 to 56.

"People just keep having birthdays," Larry Snyder, 74, a white-haired and jolly friend of Asher's, joked.

Wheeler is also Oregon's least populous county, with just 1,300 people, and its whitest (94.3 percent of its residents are white). Being three and a half hours from Portland doesn't exactly attract very many people, especially young or non-white ones. After the Kinzua lumber mill closed in 1978, the town began bleeding jobs—today, there are only 347 full-time jobs in the whole county, not counting self-employment. This is a 42 percent decrease in wage and salary employment since 1970, according to an analysis by Headwaters Economics, a Bozeman, Montana-based consulting firm.



Fossil's City Hall, fire department, and public library. (Alana Semuels/The Atlantic)

The school in Mitchell, a town in Wheeler even smaller than Fossil, has been able to stay open only because it recruited dozens of kids from foreign countries to study there and live in dorms for a semester or a year, boosting enrollment numbers. (Oregon's schools are funded based on enrollment.) The school in Fossil has opened a distance-learning program and many of its students live elsewhere and participate online. Some elementary-school classes have only a few students.

But Fossil is not unique. Over the past two decades, as cities have become job centers that attract diverse young people, rural America has become older, whiter, and less populated. Between 2010 and 2014, rural areas lost an average of 33,000 people a year. Today, just 19 percent of Americans live in areas the Census department classifies as rural, down from 44 percent in 1930. But roughly one-quarter of seniors live in rural communities, and 21 of the 25 oldest counties in the United States are rural.

Population decline in rural America is especially concentrated in the West. There's a lot of wide-open land there, but most people, and young people especially, live in the cities. Half the jobs in Oregon, for example, are now in

three counties in and around Portland, according to a study by Headwaters. Almost two-thirds of Utah's jobs are along the Wasatch Front, which runs from Salt Lake City to Provo.

“If we sold our house here, we’d have to live in a shack somewhere.”

The changing dynamics of the rural West have caused tensions; the standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Burns was just 200 miles south of here, in a county that, like Wheeler, had once prospered off the land. But while the Bundys had demands—they wanted the federal government to loosen restrictions on federal land—people in Wheeler County are a little less sure of what to do about their predicament. In fact, no one seems to have an answer for what's next as the county gets older and more sparsely populated.

This, not the attitude of the Bundys, is more typical of rural America. Those who live there tend to like it, but they're aging, and there aren't enough jobs to keep younger people around. So kids and grandkids move to the cities, coming back on holidays, inheriting their parents' homes and leaving them empty, wondering what will happen to the towns their parents say used to thrive. This is how rural America dies: not with a bang but a whimper.

* * *

When I met Adam Temple, he was watching water run down his alfalfa fields with a slightly befuddled expression on his face. His family has been farming this land for generations, but he's still learning how to keep the fields flat and when to plant the barley and peas and how a strike in Los Angeles can affect the hay market for the year.

Temple is not your typical Wheeler County farmer: He came back after leaving the area, living on the East Coast and serving in the Peace Corps. His grandfather needed some help around the farm, so he decided to give it a try.

Temple is one of a handful of multi-generational farmers still left in Wheeler County, though his farm looks different than his grandparents' did. They once had 100,000 acres and 12 employees—mostly cowboys—to herd cattle on the land. But the family sold most of its land back to the government, and now Temple has only about 1,000 acres, which he farms himself with the help of technology and a part-time hired hand. He recently started renting a house on his land via Airbnb to make some extra money. He's not sure what will happen to the land when he stops farming. His son likes to sleep in, and so probably won't become a farmer, Temple says.

Farming is just one of the industries in rural America that has changed dramatically over the past half-century. It is more automated than ever, and a farm can be run with far fewer people than ever before. In 1900, some 40 percent of the population worked in agriculture, a century later, only 2 percent did. Similar dynamics have overtaken logging, mining, and other resource-extraction industries. In some ways, rural America, more than much of the rest of the country, is the victim of productivity gains. And in rural America, fewer other opportunities materialize to replace the jobs the machines take.

"In a lot of the industries [rural areas] have traditionally been dependent on, technical developments have replaced a lot of the jobs," said Don Albrecht, the director of the Western Rural Development Center at Utah State University Extension, about communities in the rural West.



Wheeler County from Temple's airplane. (Alana Semuels/The Atlantic)

And as jobs automated and fewer people were needed to run farms and cut trees, one-time rural dwellers moved to the cities, where the pay was a lot higher and the opportunities were greater.

"They never came back," Albrecht said.

Shifting management of federal land has also changed the mix of jobs available, Albrecht said. The federal government owns [53 percent](#) of the land in Oregon, and has reduced the amount of timber harvesting and grazing allowed on its lands in the past few decades.

Temple took me up in the small prop plane he keeps next to his tractor, and as we flew over his farm and the acres and acres of government land, we could see buttes and rolling green hills and a few small farms. Much of the land is owned by the government, Temple told me. From the air, we did not see many signs of humans. Temple pointed out Wheeler County's three towns, all small clusters of homes and buildings surrounded by giant expanses of open land.

Then he flew over homes out in the country. People didn't live in most of them, he said, over the humming of the engine. They buy them as vacation homes and come out a few times a year from Portland or elsewhere, to hunt or to fish. Then they go back to the big city.

It's a big contrast to what Wheeler County used to be, he told me, when there were four brothels in town, according to his grandfather.

"It's not like young kids want to stay here," he said.

Temple introduced me to Jared Michel, a 19-year-old who moved back to Wheeler County to be near his father, Temple's sole employee on the farm. Michel hasn't been able to find a job except for some part-time work repairing fences. He's trying to figure out if he can stay in Wheeler County.



Mickey Dodd outside his empty restaurant. (Alana Semuels/The Atlantic)

Same with Mickey Dodd's son, who just got out of basic training and moved back to Mitchell. Dodd runs the Mitchell Stage Stop, an old-timey café on the town's main street, which looks like a run-down version of a Disneyland old-

West ghost town. There's a secondhand store, the Stage Stop, and a Feed n' Farm grocery store. Most of the town consists of the half-dozen buildings on the main street with for-sale signs in front of them, a banner emblazoned across the front in red, PRICE REDUCED.

"The young people have no chance whatsoever of making it here," Dodd, who is 61, told me. "That's why the smart ones, when they finish high school, they leave."

For those that do find jobs, they tend not to pay very well. Average earnings per job in the county fell 60 percent to \$14,614 between 1970 and today, according to Headwaters Economics. Wheeler County now has the lowest earnings per job of any county in Oregon.

But, while young people can't stay, old people can't leave. They own homes here, and as the population has dwindled, real-estate prices have dropped. If they sell their homes, the proceeds won't be enough to live in the cities, or buy a space in a nursing home or assisted-living facility.

"If we sold our house here, we'd have to live in a shack somewhere," the Fossil resident Roger Morehead, 74, told me.



Mitchell's town center. (Alana Semuels/The Atlantic)

Much of the money coming into Wheeler County these days is from government benefits like Social Security and from stock dividends. Non-labor sources of income—things besides wages—were 58 percent of total income in the county in 2013, according to Headwaters.

The ratio of old to young people is bound to be a growing problem going forward, for Wheeler County and places like it. Marj Sharp, who runs Haven House, the assisted-living facility in Fossil, told me they're always short-staffed. It's difficult to find someone who is qualified, can pass a drug test, and who wants to work with the infirm for the pay offered. Haven House has only Certified Nursing Assistant on staff, and getting new people certified is a challenge, since the nearest training is 90 miles away and costs about \$3,000. On the City of Fossil's website, there are two jobs listed. One is for a part-time on-call caregiver for Haven House. The other is for a part-time cook at Haven House.

"This is a good place to age. It's quiet and laid back," she told me. "But who is going to take care of you when you're here? That's always been a question."

* * *

The folks in Wheeler County have all sorts of ideas for how to stop their county's population from disappearing altogether. But many of those ideas revolve around restoring how things used to be—attracting a new lumber company or factory or whatnot.

"Older folks remember when it was a resource-based economy and they want it to stay that way," Anne Mitchell, a former county commissioner who now works for a rural economic-development consulting firm, told me.

But the county has had difficulty attracting small businesses, said Chris Perry, the county's judge. Wheeler is too far from major cities, it doesn't have broadband, and it barely has phone reception.

"We tried the low-hanging fruit, businesses with five to 10 employees or less, and even that's been a struggle," he said. "It's hard to keep an employee-base if there's no amenities like Walmart."



The main street of Mitchell, in Wheeler County. (Alana Semuels / The Atlantic)

Now, locals are being urged to start their own businesses. Since 1970, the number of self-employed individuals grew 178 percent, according to Headwaters's analysis. And this is during a period of incredible decline. Locals have started businesses like small handmade-salsa companies and microbreweries, Greg Smith, the head of the Wheeler County Economic Development Corporation, said.

"These folks are resilient," he said. "They're very self-sustaining, smart people, and they are going to make the decisions they need to make to continue living in frontier Oregon."

The tourism industry could create jobs in Wheeler, according to Chris Mehl, a Headwaters analyst, who says rural counties can turn protected federal land into tourism destinations. The John Day Fossil Beds National Monument in Wheeler County attracted more than 100,000 visitors in 2013, for instance, and Travel Oregon, the state tourism board, is promoting the Painted Hills, another Wheeler County landmark, in its Seven Wonders of Oregon campaign.

"When I look at it through rose-colored glasses, there's so much potential, all it takes is letting folks know they're truly open for business," said Ben Gordon, the stewardship director of the Oregon Natural Desert Association. His organization is supporting a bill to get a [part of Wheeler County](#) called the Sutton Mountain Wilderness area protected permanently by federal law (the area is currently categorized as a [wilderness study](#) area under control by the Bureau of Land Management).

But tourism is seasonal, and Oregon is full of areas with stunning natural resources that could draw tourists, not just far-off Wheeler.

Chris Mehl, of Headwaters, has another idea for how to grow Wheeler County's population. Property values are low, and so the county might be able to entice people living elsewhere to move to Wheeler County, where their money will go further. They'll pay lower property-tax rates here, and they'll have a nice, quiet lifestyle. They'll shop in the stores and hire plumbers and electricians and maybe even home-care aides.

Mehl is talking about a very specific population, of course, one that already exists in Wheeler County and much of rural America. He wants the region to become a mecca for the elderly.

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About the Author



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