

CRITICAL AREA / MNRRA

Purpose

The Purposes of the Critical Area Plan were set forth in Executive Order 79-19 and are as follows (Municipal Code 118-167):

1. To protect and preserve a unique and valuable state and regional resource for benefit of the health, safety, and welfare of citizens for state, region, and nation;
2. To prevent and mitigate irreversible damage to this state, regional, and national resource;
3. To preserve and enhance its natural, aesthetic, cultural, and historic value for public use;
4. To protect and preserve the river as an essential element in national, state, and regional transportation, sewer and water and recreational systems; and
5. To protect and preserve biological and ecological functions of the corridor.

The City intends that the goals and objectives set forth in the Policy Plan will further the purposes of the Critical Area and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA).

Historical Context

Critical Area Legislation

Under authority of Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 116G, the State of Minnesota, in 1976, established the Mississippi River Corridor as a critical area. Governor Albert Quie reaffirmed and continued the designation of the Mississippi River Critical Area via Executive Order 79-19. This order repealed the previous Executive Order 130, which was effective for only three years. Later in 1979, the Mississippi River Corridor was made permanently a Critical Area by action of the Metropolitan Council. Minnesota Rules, part 4410.8100 et seq., established the rules for the Critical Area Planning Process.

The City of South St. Paul has participated in the Critical Area Program since 1981 when it prepared its Critical Area Study. Several subsequent amendments and ordinance changes to the plan have been approved since its original approval. This Critical Area/MNRRA Plan is not intended to replace the previous studies, but update and document changes that have occurred since the original plan was completed. The previous plans and amendments are incorporated by reference. Critical Area policies are located in the Policy Plan chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, located under the Critical Area/MNRRA and Parks, Trails, and Open Space headings.

The City has adopted many of the policies required by the Critical Area/MNRRA Plan directly into the zoning ordinance. Regulations for site plan review, barge fleeting, utility crossings, and erosion control can be found in Section 118-167 of the City Code.

Mississippi National River Recreation Area (MNRRA)

Mississippi National River Recreation Area

The Mississippi National River Recreation Area (MNRRA) was established as a unit of the National Park Service by Congress in 1988. The park area is 72 miles long and begins at the confluence of the Crow and Mississippi Rivers at the north and ends just south of Hastings on the south.

The purpose of the park system is to:

1. Protect, preserve and enhance nationally significant resources in the Mississippi Corridor through the Twin Cities metropolitan area,
2. Coordinate government programs in the corridor, and
3. Provide a management framework to assist the state of Minnesota and its units of local government in the development and implementation of integrated resource management programs for the corridor to ensure orderly public and private development in the area.

The Secretary of the Interior appointed a 22 member Mississippi River Coordinating Commission to assist various jurisdictional authorities in developing and implementing a comprehensive management plan for the park.

The jurisdictions which regulate activity within the Critical Area/MNRRA Corridor include: the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Natural Resources, Metropolitan Council, Dakota County, and the City.

Critical Area/MNRRA Purpose

The Mississippi River Coordinating Commission developed, with public input, several purpose and vision statements to guide development of the Comprehensive Management Plan and which guided South St. Paul in the development of its own goals and objectives stated earlier. Only the purpose statements are listed here:

1. Preserve, enhance, and interpret archeological, ethnographic, and historic resources.
2. Enhance opportunities for public outdoor recreation, education, and scenic enjoyment.
3. Preserve, enhance, and interpret natural resources.
4. Provide for continued economic activity and development.
5. Improve the public's understanding of the river and promote public stewardship of its resources.

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6. Recognize and strengthen people's relationships with the river as a dynamic part of our heritage, our quality of life, and our legacy for future generations.

American Heritage Rivers

In 1997, President Clinton announced his American Heritage Rivers Initiative, a separate program and not related to the Critical Area/MNRRA, is designed to support communities in their locally-based efforts to restore and protect America's rivers. The purpose of the program is to support community revitalization and provide federal programs and services more efficiently. In 1998, the stretch of Mississippi River as it flows through South St. Paul received one of ten designations from the President.

LAND USES

Boundaries within South St. Paul

The Critical Area/MNRRA boundary located within the City was established in 1976 as part of Executive Order 130. The boundaries of the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area and those of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) are the same. The legal descriptions may be found in Executive Order 79-19, Appendix A. In general, the boundary follows the Mississippi River bluff line from the northern City boundary, south to the southern City boundary. The approximate location of the Critical Area/MNRRA boundary within the City is shown on (**Map 23**).

Existing Land Uses

Land uses within the Critical Area/MNRRA corridor include: residential, commercial, industrial, and public, as indicated on (**Map 26**). The acreage breakdown by use is:

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(TABLE 8.01)

Existing Land Uses in MNRRA		
Land Use	Area (in acres)	Percent
Residential		
Single Family Attached	9.16	0.52%
Single Family Detached	140.23	7.89%
Mixed Use Residential	1.22	0.07%
Multifamily	19.95	1.12%
Manufactured Housing Parks	4.18	0.24%
Commercial		
Retail and Other Commercial	95.56	5.38%
Office	18.73	1.05%
Extractive	27.07	1.52%
Industrial		
Industrial and Utility	568.46	31.99%
Mixed Use Industrial	40.86	2.30%
Institutional		
Park, Recreational, or Preserve	26.51	1.49%
Undeveloped	138.54	7.80%
Major Highway	264.13	14.86%
Railway	71.13	4.00%
Water	51.79	2.91%
Total in MNRRA	280.97	15.81%

In addition to the above uses located on land, use of the river for barge fleeting and recreational enjoyment are also permitted within the City’s stretch of the river. Current ordinances limit barge fleeting within the City limits to two locations.

The Critical Area/MNRRA corridor is greatly affected by the presence of the Southern Pacific Railroad rail yard. Their main line exits South St. Paul to the south adjacent to the Mississippi River levy. The available large parcels of vacant land are zoned industrial and were the sites of the Armour and Swift Meat Packing plants. The Housing and Redevelopment Authority has spent millions of dollars acquiring and remediating these sites.

Since the completion of the original Critical Area Plan completed in 1979, the land uses have changed dramatically within the corridor. The Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) has actively acquired and removed a number of blighted buildings and unsuitable businesses from the corridor. The focus of these activities has been the stockyards areas of the corridor. Through these activities, the City and the HRA have created the Bridge Point Business Park. New companies with higher aesthetic standards have been constructed within the corridor area. The Business Park will continue to be an area for new industrial/commercial development and the expansion of existing businesses.

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There are, however, a number of problems and opportunities within the corridor that must be overcome in order to fulfill the City's vision, and particularly for Concord Street. The zoning standards outside of the industrial district do not require extensive landscaping or beautification of properties, and some uses within the corridor, while permitted, may not help to implement the City's ultimate vision for the corridor.

Public access to the water itself is greatly restricted by the presence of flood control structures. Access is limited to the DNR boat launch south of the Interstate 494 bridge. The flood control structure also prevents the construction of industry within the Bridge Point Business Park that requires access to the water. South of Interstate 494, there are opportunities for industrial development that could access the river. Sites close to the river, however, have been identified for future recreational use or the preservation of river habitat and vegetation. Said future recreational uses shall be designed to create minimal alteration, protect existing vegetative and wetland areas, promote re-vegetation, and require additional landscaping, consistent with habitat and vegetation for the Critical Area/MNRRA Corridor.

Natural Features

The Critical Area/MNRRA Corridor within the City is highly manipulated and urbanized. There are very few natural features remaining within the corridor (**Maps 1 & 24**). The remaining natural features are those areas along the river that have been unsuitable for development due to the presence of water and the ravines with their slopes exceeding 15%.

The City is interested in preserving these natural areas. A general inventory of natural feature locations has been complete, however, it is unknown if any of these areas house critical habitat or unique plants/animals that should be protected. A more formal study needs to be completed to identify these elements. The City is greatly interested in developing additional recreational opportunities that could impact these environments.

In some areas the City is working to repair/restore damage that has been done to its natural features. In 1999, the City commenced a project to restore the northern most ravine, identified as Simon's Ravine. This project reduced the effect of storm water runoff from the adjacent highway and built areas in West St. Paul. This project, in addition to restoring the ravine, also provided recreational opportunities.

The City will strive to improve the natural state and condition of the ravines within the City. The improvements will include the retention and re-establishment of the original slopes, the acquisition of property within the ravines for preservation and passive recreational activities, and the maintenance and re-establishment of natural vegetation and habitation.

Scenic Overlooks

There are a number of sites along the bluff that allow for viewing the river: Grandview Park, Kaposia Landing park, the DNR boat launch and fishing pier, bluff access at Marie Avenue, and the pedestrian overpass at Grand Avenue. 118-167 of the City's zoning

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ordinance requires preservation of views to the river from properties and the public right of way.

Future Land Uses

Future land uses within the corridor will continue to be commercial and industrial in nature, with the addition of river recreational areas (**Map 27**). The Future Land Uses within the MNRRA area are based on the overall land use plan noted in the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan (**Map 8**). The City's Future Land Use plan would have more intensive types of industrial uses (exterior storage, manufacturing, processing, etc.) being located away from the actual riverfront and away from Interstate 494.

As discussed in the Land Use chapter, the City has placed a renewed emphasis on the redevelopment of Concord Street and on the type and aesthetics of uses in the 494 Corridor. Other objectives identified as part of this goal include placing overhead power lines underground, uniform streetscaping, landscaping, and improved sidewalks and trails.

The Critical Area is the key to the City's economic well-being. Industrial and Commercial development opportunities are located within the corridor. The City's zoning (**Maps 7 & 28**) allows commercial and industrial development of many types to occur within the corridor. It is anticipated by the City that the future commercial/industrial expansion area will not be dependent upon river usage. Because the City is aggressively promoting a regional park and trails system along the riverfront, the City will not promote the development of businesses that are dependent upon river access and usage. It is the City's position that current barge fleeting areas are sufficient, and thus, there is no need to encourage fleeting intensification. Any greater intensification could be detrimental to the river corridor.

Transportation and Utility Facilities

Within the City boundaries, there are two transportation and one utility crossing. Interstate 494 crosses the river at the Wakota Bridge. The bridge is being expanded with an additional four lanes and should be completed in the summer of 2010. Included in the proposed expansion will be a pedestrian crossing that will connect to the Mississippi River Regional Trail (MRRT). While a MnDOT project, the City has actively participated in the design process to improve aesthetics and to minimize impacts to existing businesses and roadways.

On the north end of the City, the Union Pacific rail line crosses the river to the north and east on a metal swing bridge. It is unknown at this time if the railroad will expand or improve this bridge within the planning window.

The single utility crossing is located near Interstate 494 and contains high voltage power lines owned by Xcel Energy. Section 118-167(j) regulates utility crossings. It is the City's understanding that Xcel will be upgrading the standards supporting the lines within the next several years. The City intends to work with Xcel to maintain the aesthetics of

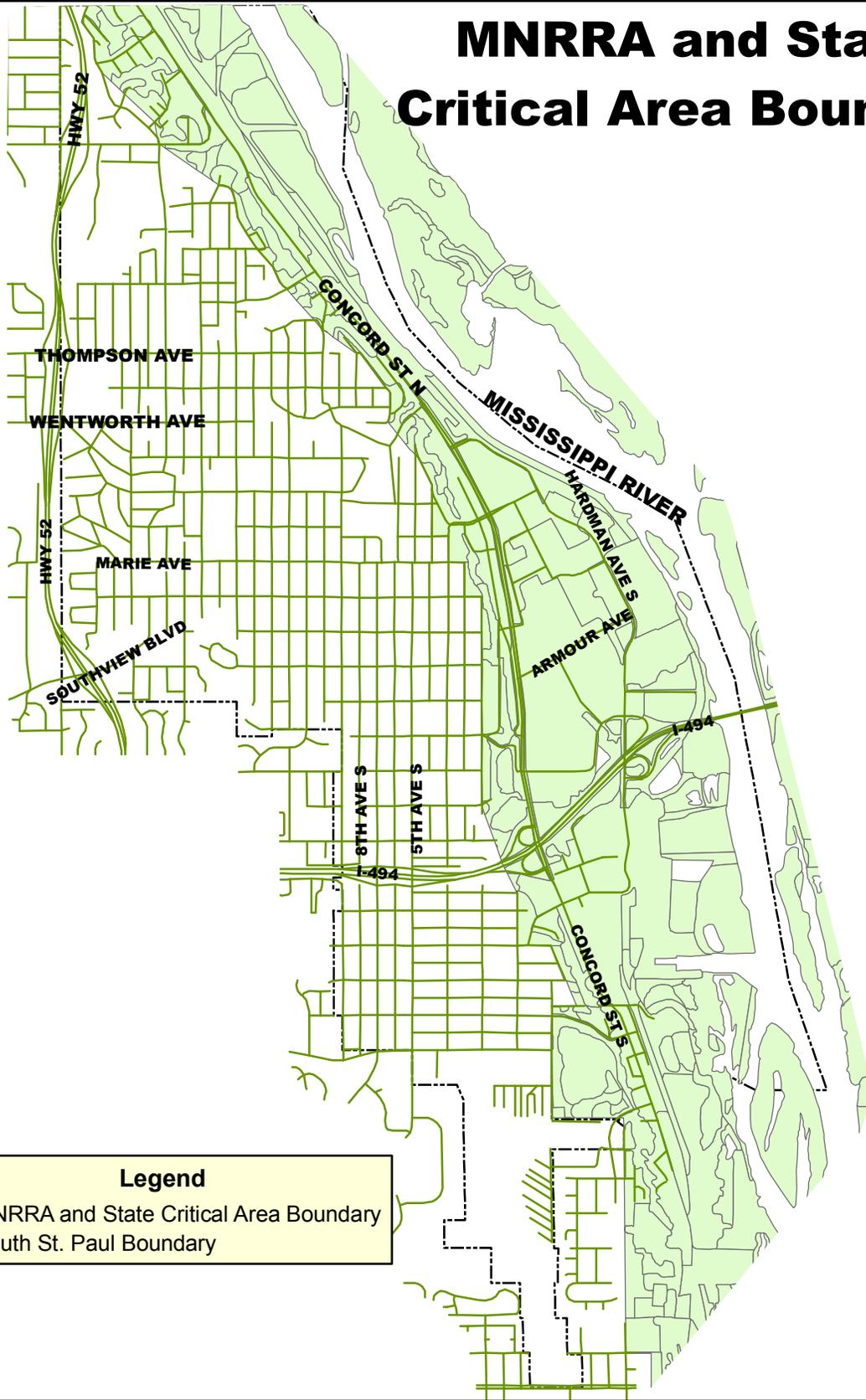
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the corridor by enforcing its standards.

The City will effectively work to minimize any negative impacts of transportation and utility crossing expansions. In order to effectively accomplish this, the City will adopt and undertake the following policies:

- Encourage the utilization of existing crossings.
 - In the planning and review process for any public transportation facilities, the City will give careful consideration to protecting and enhancing the following:
 - * scenic overlooks,
 - * safe pedestrian crossings and facilities
 - * public access to the river
 - * reasonable land uses
 - All new or modified transportation and utility facilities shall complement the planned land and water uses and shall not stimulate incompatible development.

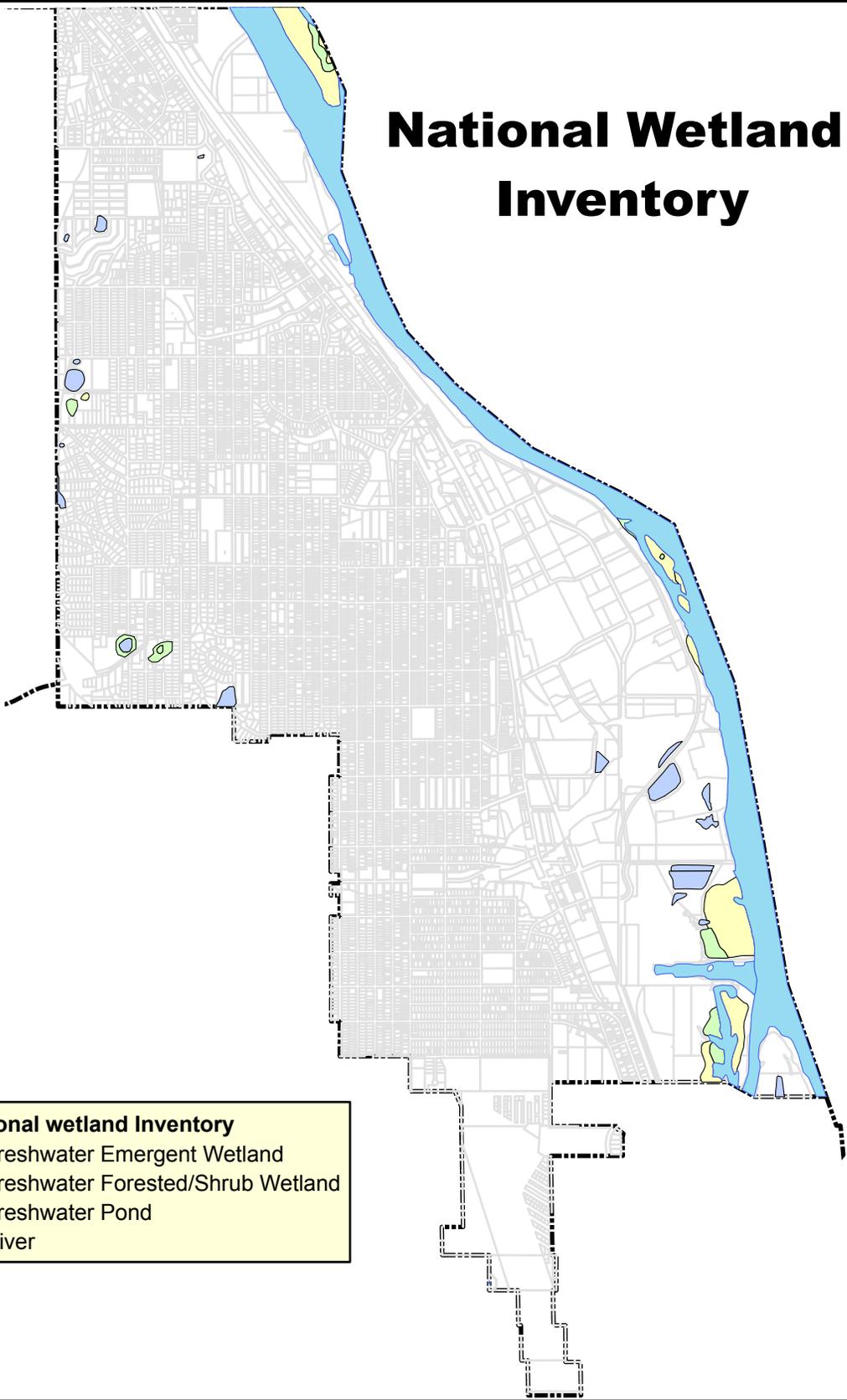
MNRRRA and State Critical Area Boundary



South St. Paul
Comprehensive Municipal Plan



National Wetland Inventory



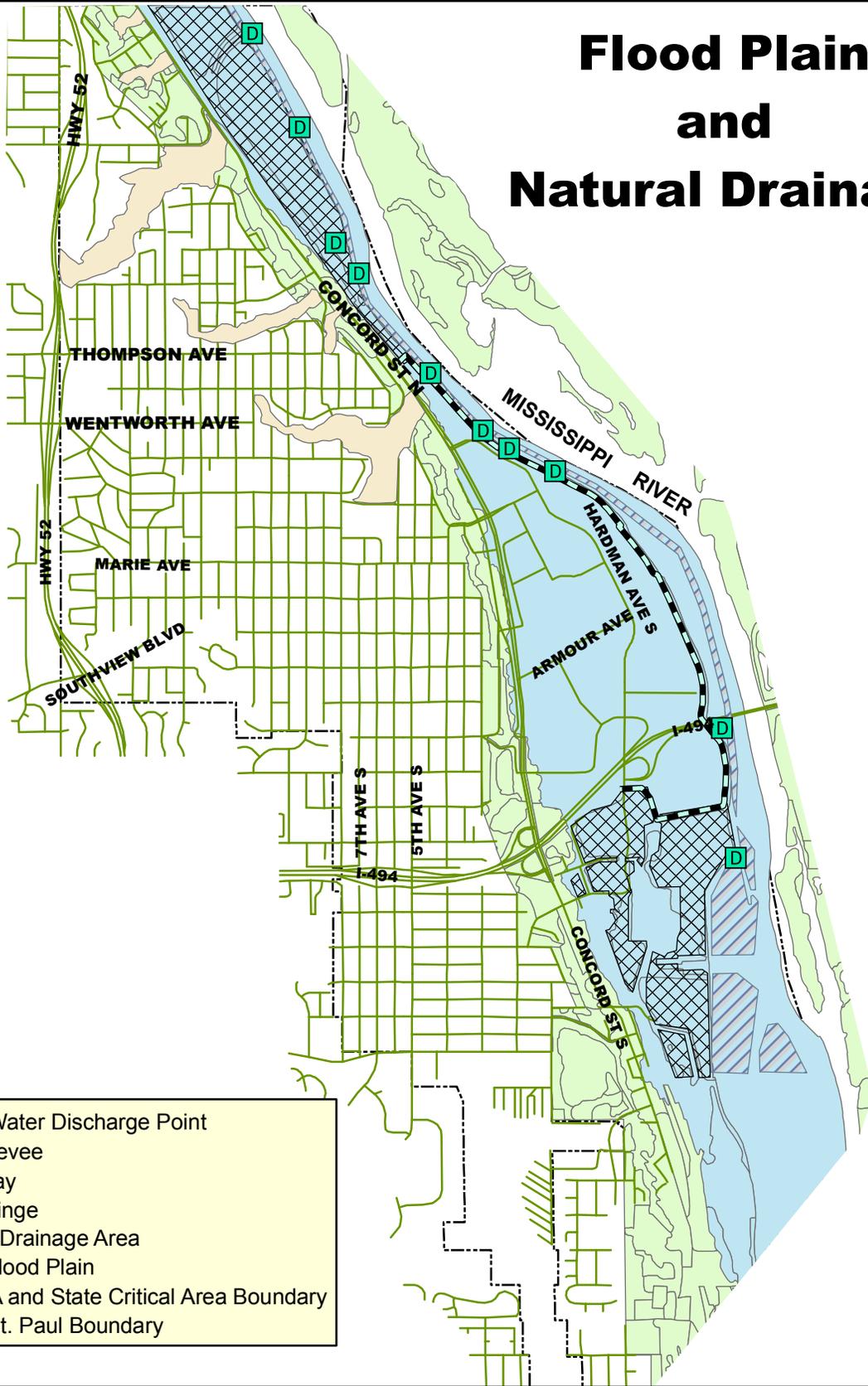
- National wetland inventory**
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
 - Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
 - Freshwater Pond
 - River

South St. Paul

Comprehensive Municipal Plan



Flood Plain and Natural Drainage



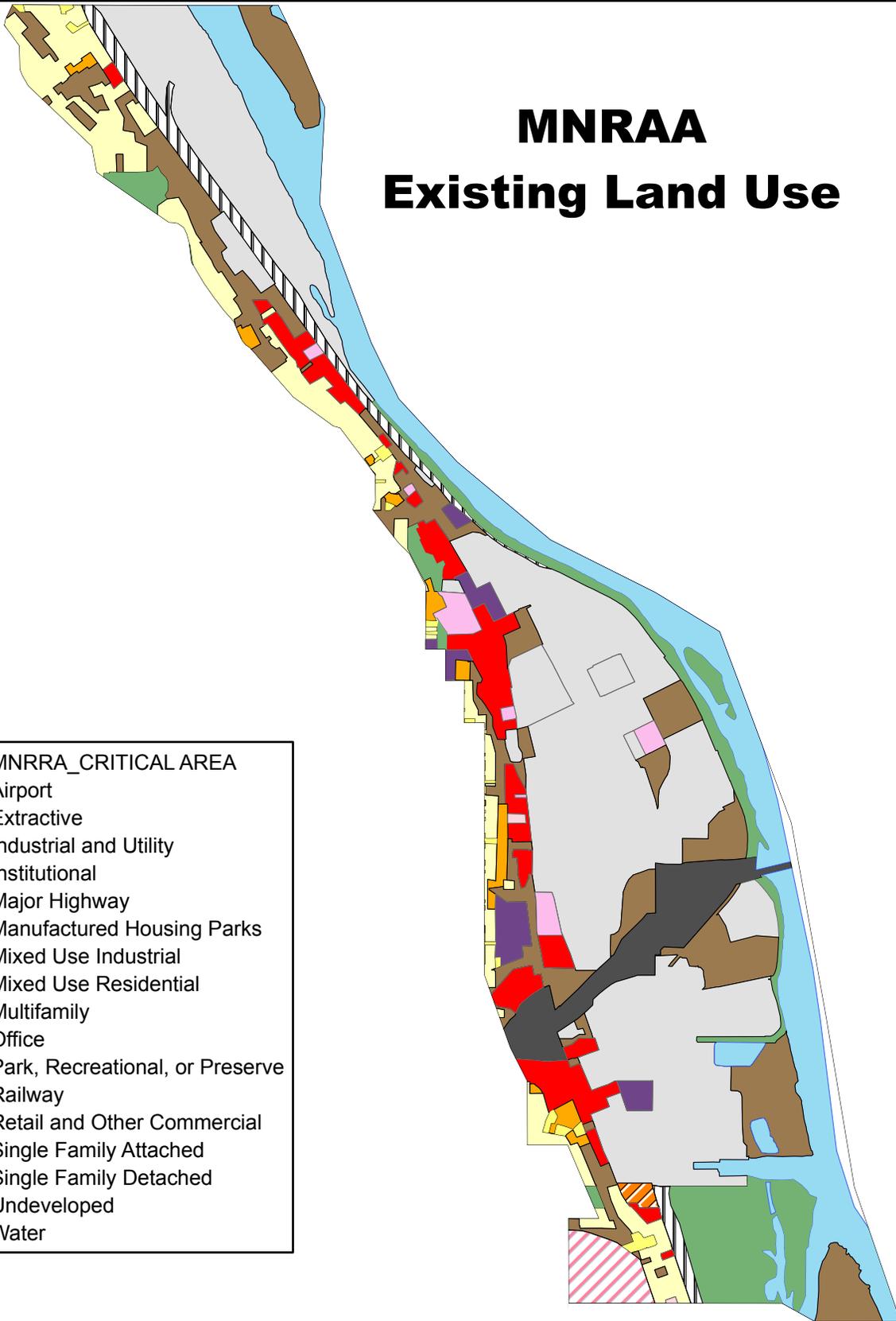
- Storm Water Discharge Point
- Flood Levee
- Floodway
- Flood fringe
- Natural Drainage Area
- Fema Flood Plain
- MNRRRA and State Critical Area Boundary
- South St. Paul Boundary

South St. Paul
Comprehensive Municipal Plan

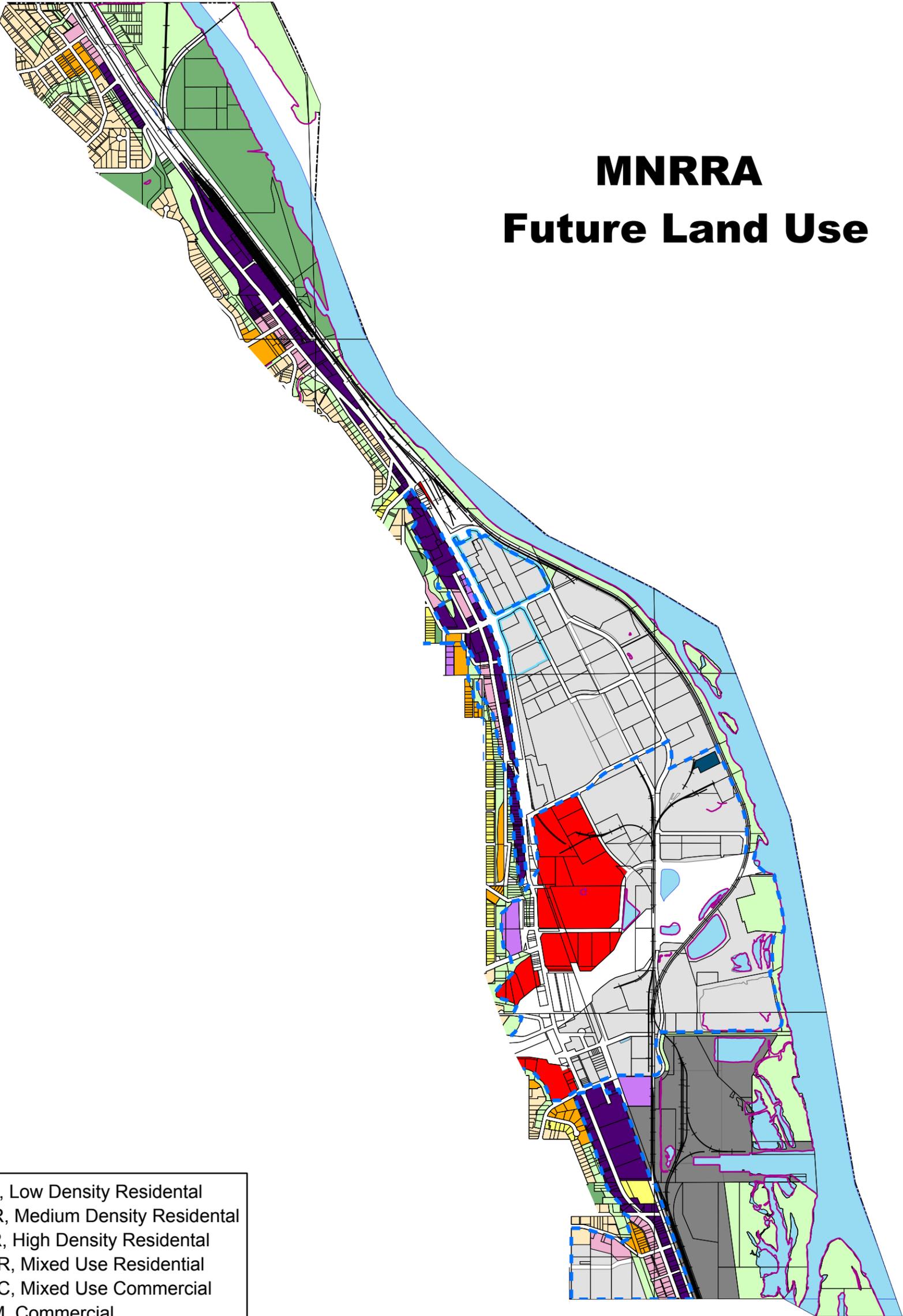


MNRAA Existing Land Use

-  MNRRA_CRITICAL AREA
-  Airport
-  Extractive
-  Industrial and Utility
-  Institutional
-  Major Highway
-  Manufactured Housing Parks
-  Mixed Use Industrial
-  Mixed Use Residential
-  Multifamily
-  Office
-  Park, Recreational, or Preserve
-  Railway
-  Retail and Other Commercial
-  Single Family Attached
-  Single Family Detached
-  Undeveloped
-  Water

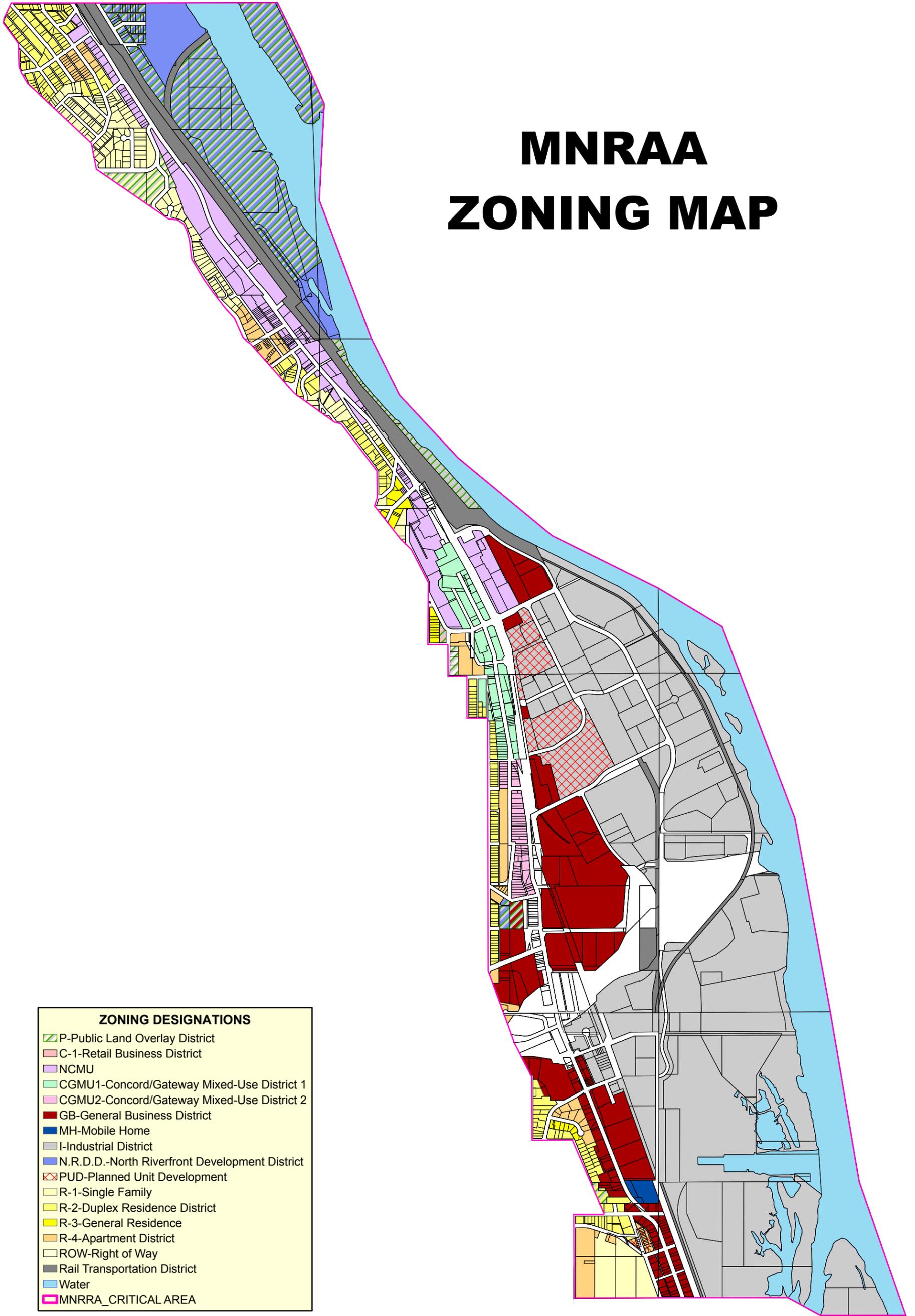


MNRRA Future Land Use



-  LDR, Low Density Residential
-  MDR, Medium Density Residential
-  HDR, High Density Residential
-  MU-R, Mixed Use Residential
-  MU-C, Mixed Use Commercial
-  COM, Commercial
-  OR, Office/Research
-  LI, Light Industrial
-  I, Industrial
-  IN, Institutional
-  P, Parks and Recreation
-  OS, Open Space
-  AIR, Airport
-  UTL, Utility
-  WAT, Water
-  ROW, Right of Way
-  Railroad
-  Future Development

MNRAA ZONING MAP



ZONING DESIGNATIONS	
	P-Public Land Overlay District
	C-1-Retail Business District
	NCMU
	CGMU1-Concord/Gateway Mixed-Use District 1
	CGMU2-Concord/Gateway Mixed-Use District 2
	GB-General Business District
	MH-Mobile Home
	I-Industrial District
	N.R.D.D.-North Riverfront Development District
	PUD-Planned Unit Development
	R-1-Single Family
	R-2-Duplex Residence District
	R-3-General Residence
	R-4-Apartment District
	ROW-Right of Way
	Rail Transportation District
	Water
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