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Project
Leaders



West Nipissing Oquest

West Nipissing Land Use and Development Strategy

Final Report

APRIL 2023



West Nipissing Ouest

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APRIL 2023

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Figure 1: Historic Image from Highway 17

Executive Summary

In February 2022, a project team consisting of Re:public Urbanism and Colliers Project Leaders were retained to prepare a Land Use and Development Strategy for the Municipality of West Nipissing, Ontario. The project is intended to develop a vision and land-use plan for various municipally-owned lands located along the Highway 17 corridor in Sturgeon Falls. The lands are composed of two primary areas:

- Approximately 27 acres of land located on the north side of Highway 17, bounded by the Sturgeon River to the east and Ottawa Street on the west
- Certain vacant lots and unopened road allowances lying south of Highway 17

This document constitutes the Land-Use Development Strategy prepared for the subject site. This document will serve as guidance for the future planning and development of the site.

Introduction



1.1 A Public Riverfront Site

The Weyerhaeuser Site, also known as the Former Mill Site, has played a pivotal role in the history and culture of Sturgeon Falls. For over 140 years, the mill served as the major employer in the community, providing jobs for generations of residents and contributing to a thriving local economy. For many residents, the sound of the mill's machinery echoed across the Sturgeon River, and the sight of its bellowing smokestacks was a familiar one.

The closure of the mill in 2002 was a significant loss for many. Since its closure, most of the buildings have been demolished and cleared, and the site has sat vacant, save and except for the hydro-electric dam on the Sturgeon River. The purchase of the site by the Municipality of West Nipissing in 2020 offered a unique opportunity to breathe new life into this once bustling property.

A publicly owned riverfront can have a central role in re-connecting the residents to the Sturgeon River and the falls. The 27 acres of vacant lands provides a unique opportunity to establish a renewed vision of what Sturgeon Falls is and create a positive legacy on the site. The redevelopment offers possibilities for housing, commercial, retail, and parkland uses to stimulate tourism, recreation, and economic growth.

1.2 The Land Use Development Strategy

In 2022, the Municipality of West Nipissing decided to embark on the development of land use plan and development strategy which takes into account community needs, economic generation opportunities, the creation of housing, and the restoration of the natural environment.

Ultimately, the Land Use Development Strategy for the former mill site will form the basis for a vibrant and sustainable riverfront that contributes to the overall economic and social well-being of West Nipissing. The goal of the plan is to create a thriving place in the heart of Sturgeon Falls.

Legend

Subject Property Line

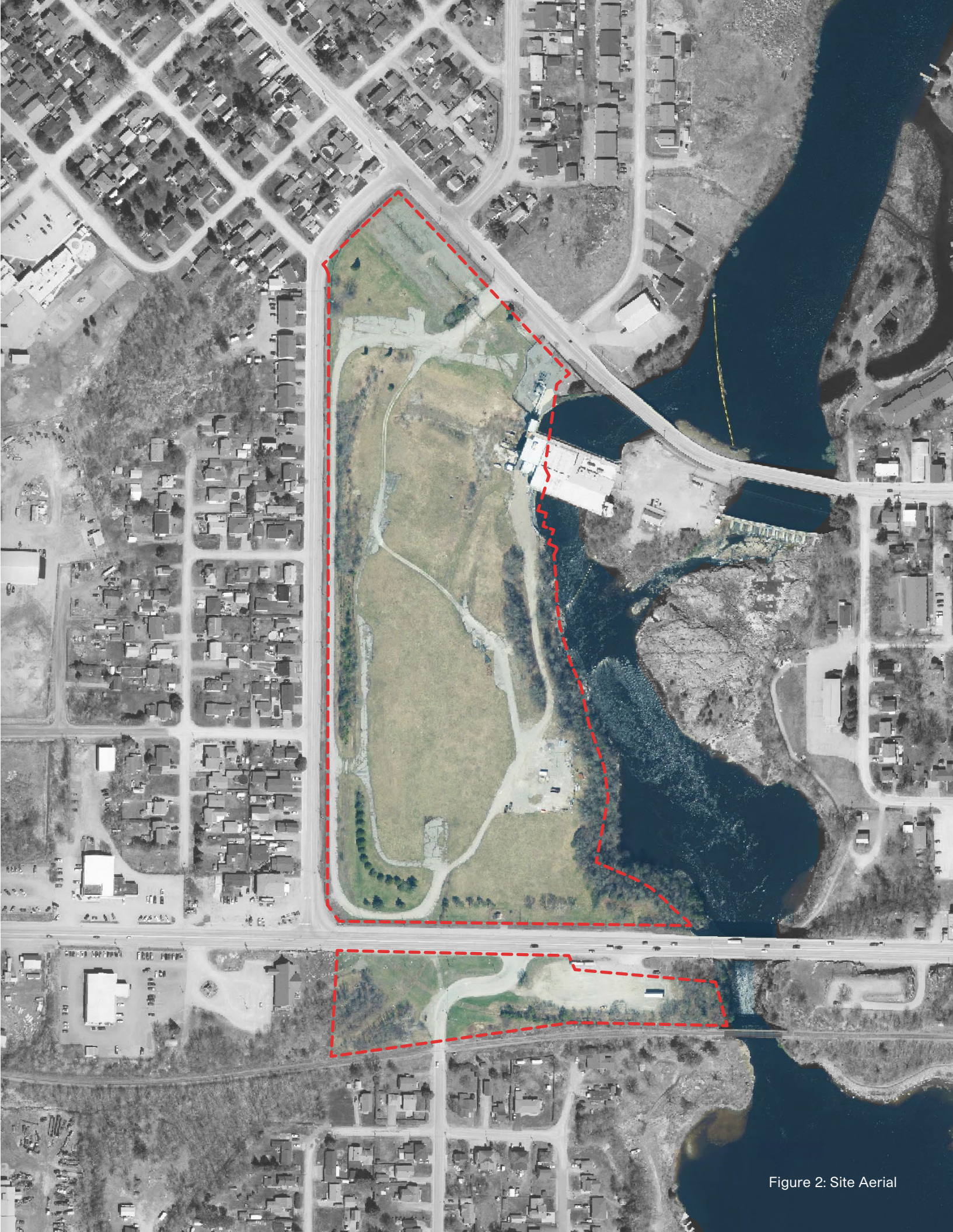


Figure 2: Site Aerial

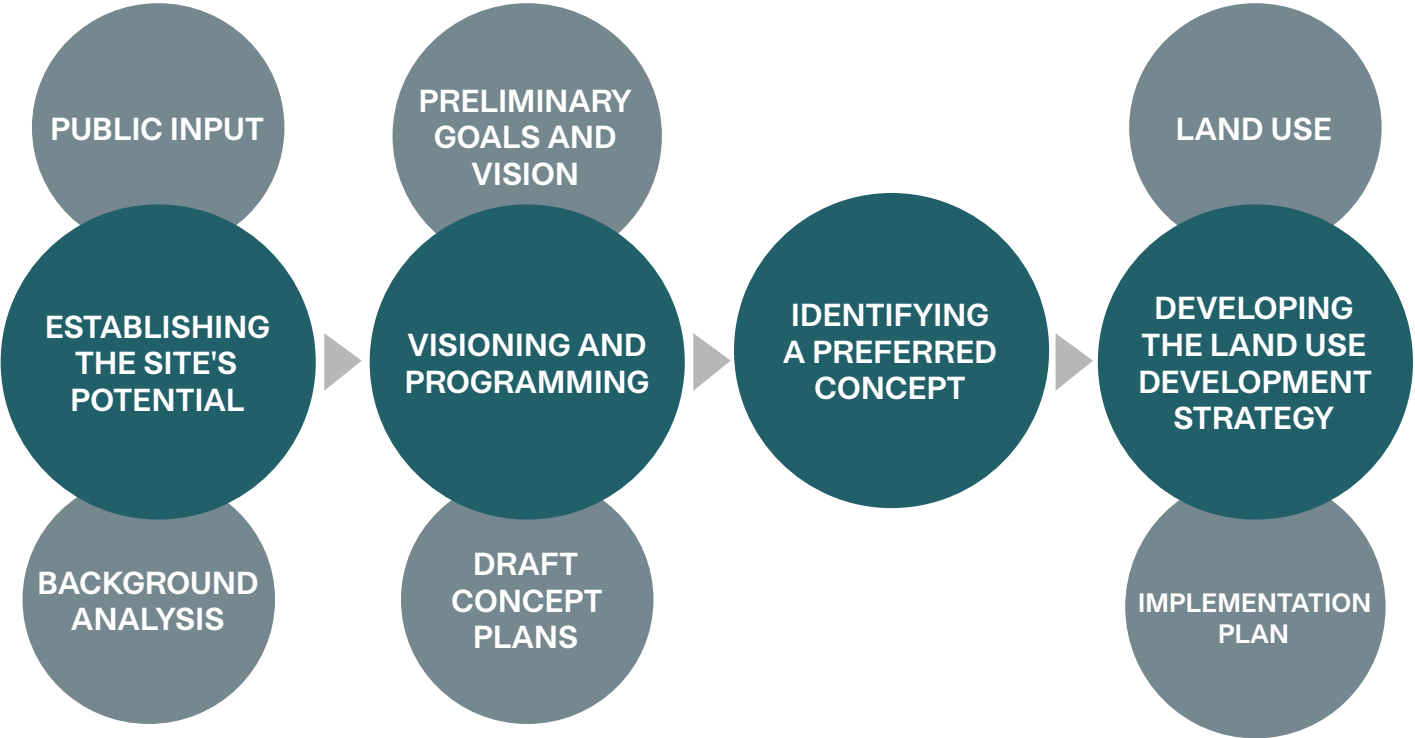


Figure 3: The Land Use and Development Strategy Process

1.3 The Land Use and Development Strategy Process

The development of the Land Use Development Strategy was based on a collaborative process between municipal staff, the consultant team, and the public over the course of 2022, following a 4-part planning and design process involving: establishing the site’s potential; visioning; establishing the preferred concept; and the development of the land use plan.

Establishing the Site’s Potential: This pre-concept phase was composed of the review and analyses of background information, plans, strategies, and other materials with the goal of understanding the site and its history, and previously planned projects. A diagnostic analysis established the analytical, economic, and design foundations for the development of the strategy, and were compiled into an existing conditions report.

During this phase of the project, the team undertook two public feedback sessions to guide the development of the Land Use Development Strategy. Firstly, a survey was made available to the general public, providing an opportunity to share what they appreciate about the site and what they envision for its future. The team was pleased to receive nearly 100 responses, which demonstrated the resident’s high level of interest and investment in the project.

The second session included an online public workshop where participants answered similar questions and were given the chance to elaborate on their visions and aspirations for the former mill lands.



Figure 4: Train Line to the South of the Site

Visioning and Programming: The visioning and programming phase utilized the findings from the existing conditions report to develop general directions and goals for the plan. This process resulted in the creation of two land use development concepts which were presented to the municipal team.

Identifying a Preferred Concept: Following the development of the vision, guiding principles, and preliminary concepts, the project team undertook a review of the concepts evaluating: infrastructure and servicing; transportation; development feasibility; phasing; cost; economic impact; and contribution to community, culture and recreation. Following internal review from municipal staff, a preferred option was chosen for the site.

Developing the Land Use and Development Strategy: With the site analysis, visioning, and conceptual programming finalized, the project team commenced the creation of the land use and development strategy based on the preferred concept plan, as outlined in Chapter 4 of this Report.

Site History

2

2.1 History



Early History - The Nbisiing Anishinaabeg, people of Ojibwe and Algonquin descent, have lived in the Lake Nipissing and Sturgeon Falls area since time immemorial.

In the 17th century, fur traders began to populate the area and a Hudson's Bay trading post was established on the river. The post closed in 1879, along with the arrival of the first permanent settler of Sturgeon Falls, James Holditch.



Canadian Pacific Railway – Sturgeon Fall's growth coincided with the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1882. The development of the community began with the arrival of railway construction teams and the opening of the first post office in 1881. The erection of sawmills and the rapid growth of the lumbering and pulp and paper industries further stimulated the development of the village and attracted many French-Canadian settlers to the area. Following the construction of the railroad, several residents settled in the downtown, populating the area with storefronts and amenities. From 1883 boarding houses and hotels appeared as well. In the spring of 1884, the town was developed with municipal services with streets, sidewalks, and drainage.

In 1895, with a population of about 850, the community was incorporated and officially named Sturgeon Falls, after the sturgeon populations that travelled up the river in large numbers to spawn. Francophones, became the majority when a temporary closure of the paper mill (between 1906 and 1912) led to an exodus of many Anglophones.



Wood Processing – In 1882 the Booth Lumber Company set up shanties for lumbering operations and Martin Russel's sawmill was the first sawmill at the falls run by a waterwheel and upright saws. By 1894 the dam was put in and the first pulp-mill was started by Paget, Heath and Co. of Huntsville. Later it passed to Lloyd's and then to Imperial Paper Co. of London, then to the Ontario Pulp where the mill closed in 1906. In 1912 the mill re-opened by the Spanish River Co. from which it was taken over by Abitibi Co. in 1928. In 1924, the Spanish River Pulp & Paper Company was said to be the largest paper company in Canada. In 1928, the Spanish River Company merged with the Abitibi Power and Company and the mill in Sturgeon Falls continued to make newsprint until November 1930 when it closed its doors for 17 years. In 1946 where they were re-opened by Abitibi Power and Paper.



Closure and Removal of the Mill – At its peak in the 1960s the mill employed 600, but production was steadily reduced over the years until its 2002 shuttering by Weyerhaeuser which acquired the mill in 1999. The mill was finally demolished in 2004 and acquired by the Town of West Nipissing in 2020.

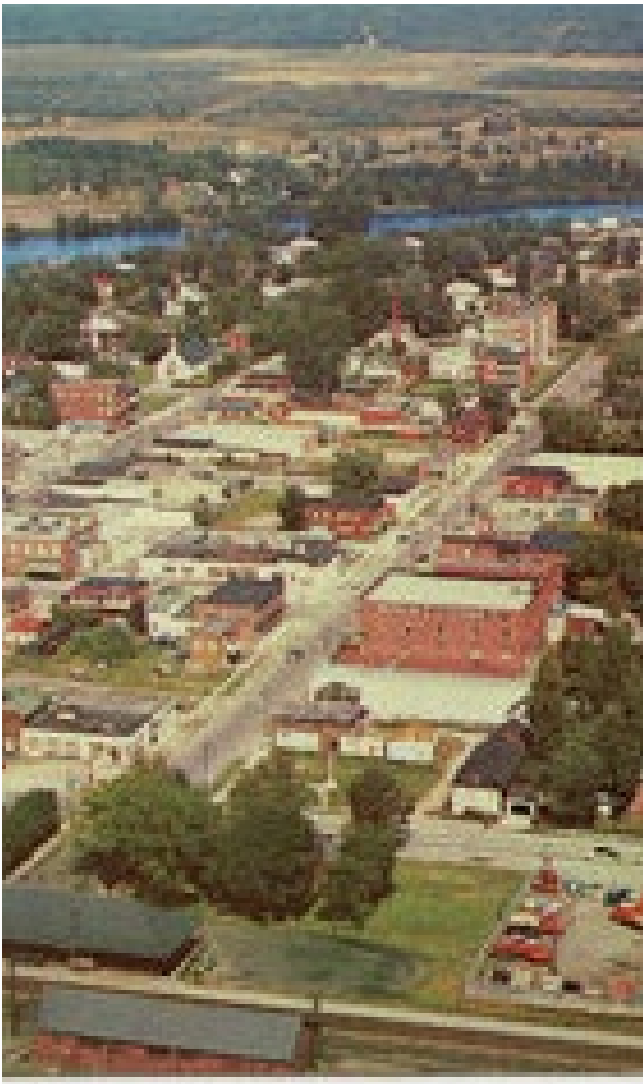


Figure 5: Historic Images of Sturgeon Falls



Figure 6: Historic Image of Subject Site

Developing a Vision for
Tomorrow

3



Figure 7: View from the eastern river bank

3.1 Developing a Vision for the Former Mill Site

Developing the vision and goals for the Land Use and Development Strategy was a collaborative effort involving municipal staff, the consultant team, members of the public, and key stakeholders. By bringing together public input, historical research, and spatial analysis, the vision for the site was able to reflect the needs and aspirations of the community while remaining grounded in practicality.

Public Aspirations: Public input played a critical role in shaping the vision for the former mill site. Through a series of feedback sessions, residents shared their thoughts and aspirations for the site's future, which included the need for a community park, a variety of housing options, and a range of commercial amenities such as restaurants and retail stores. The vision for the Land Use Development Strategy thoughtfully incorporated this feedback, ensuring that the resulting development would meet the needs and desires of the community. The resulting vision reflects the community's desire for a public space that fosters connection and offers a variety of recreational opportunities.

Economic Opportunity: In developing the vision for the site, generating economic opportunities was a top priority. By analyzing long-term trends and the needs of the community, the vision and goals for the site were carefully crafted to focus on economic growth and potential. Strategic land uses, intelligent incentives, and environmental site improvements were identified as key components in achieving this goal. The resulting vision and goals embrace these ideas and are centered around creating a thriving economic hub.

Overall Functionality: Any urban space, particularly those developed over time, will contain pinch points; nonfunctional and underutilized spaces; maintenance issues; and infrastructure and amenities nearing the end of their life cycle. Through the land use planning process, municipal staff, members of the public, and other stakeholders have been engaged with to better understand how changes to the existing site and the connective network can help the area function better in the future, with an eye to reducing operating costs and maintenance requirements.

3.2 The Vision

The development of the former mill site will re-establish a strong connection between the community and the Sturgeon River through the creation of a vibrant riverfront park and mixed-use urban space. Providing new opportunities for recreation and economic growth will breathe new life into these culturally and historically significant lands.

3.3 Goals for the Former Mill Site

The following goals were established as a result of community consultation and background review.



1. Develop a strong connection to the Sturgeon River and surrounding environment



2. Provide a range of housing options for the community



3. Celebrate the City's historical, ecological, and industrial heritage



4. Be sustainable, restorative, and resilient



5. Promote local entrepreneurship and business development



6. Be a catalyst for private development and investment



Figure 9: View from the WNPG Dam

3.4 Concept Development: A River Front Loop



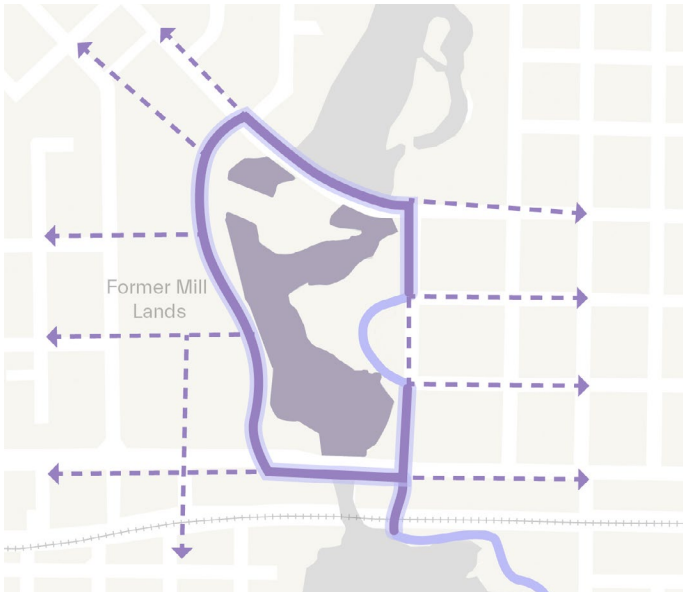
THE SITE TODAY: A DISCONNECTED RIVERFRONT

The Sturgeon Falls waterfront is a valuable natural asset, featuring picturesque views and a rich cultural history. However, much of the riverfront remains inaccessible to the public. As a result, the potential of this resource for tourism, recreation, and other economic opportunities has remained largely untapped.

While some existing trails provide access to the Sturgeon River at Minnehaha Bay, much of the waterfront remains hidden from view. The recent purchase of the former mill site by the Municipality is a significant step to providing greater public access to the waterfront area.

However, due to private land ownership and challenging topography to the north of Cache Bay Road and south of Highway 17, it is unlikely that a linear waterfront trail can be developed to connect an extensive pathway along the Sturgeon River.

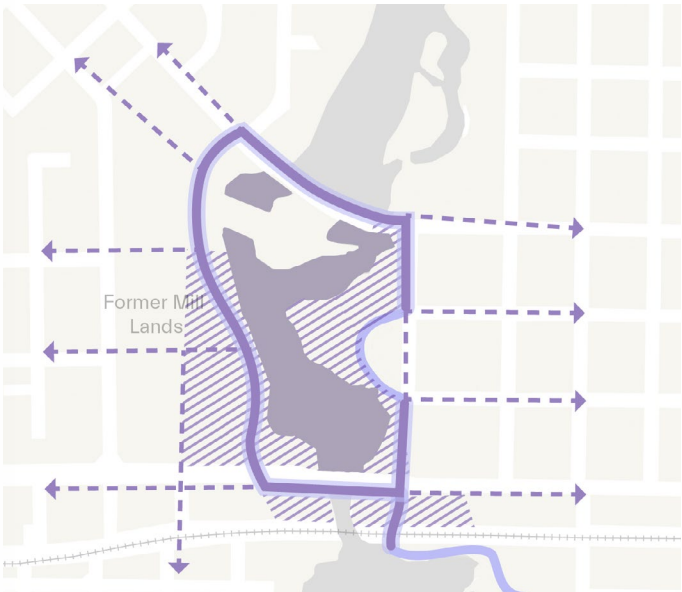
Therefore, it is crucial that existing trails and publicly owned sections of the waterfront are utilized to their maximum potential. In doing so, the river can be used for active transport, tourism, and recreation, unlocking the full potential of this valuable natural asset for the community.



THE POTENTIAL FOR A RIVERFRONT LOOP

Though the municipality is unable to develop an extensive trail network along the river, the former mill site provides an opportunity to develop an interconnected trail loop in the heart of the downtown.

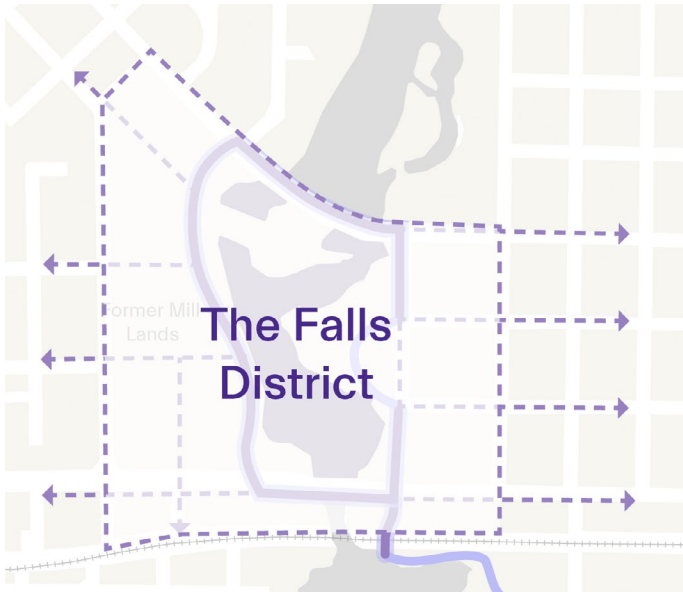
To promote public access to the riverfront, the team has developed a land use plan centered around a “Riverfront Loop”. This loop will connect the east and west sides of the river through a trail network, providing visitors with an immersive experience of Sturgeon Falls’ natural beauty. The loop will feature a multi-use trail network on the east and west side of the river. These trail networks will be connected to the existing paths to Minnehaha Bay, and to the downtown of Sturgeon Falls.



FIRST, A COMMUNITY PARK

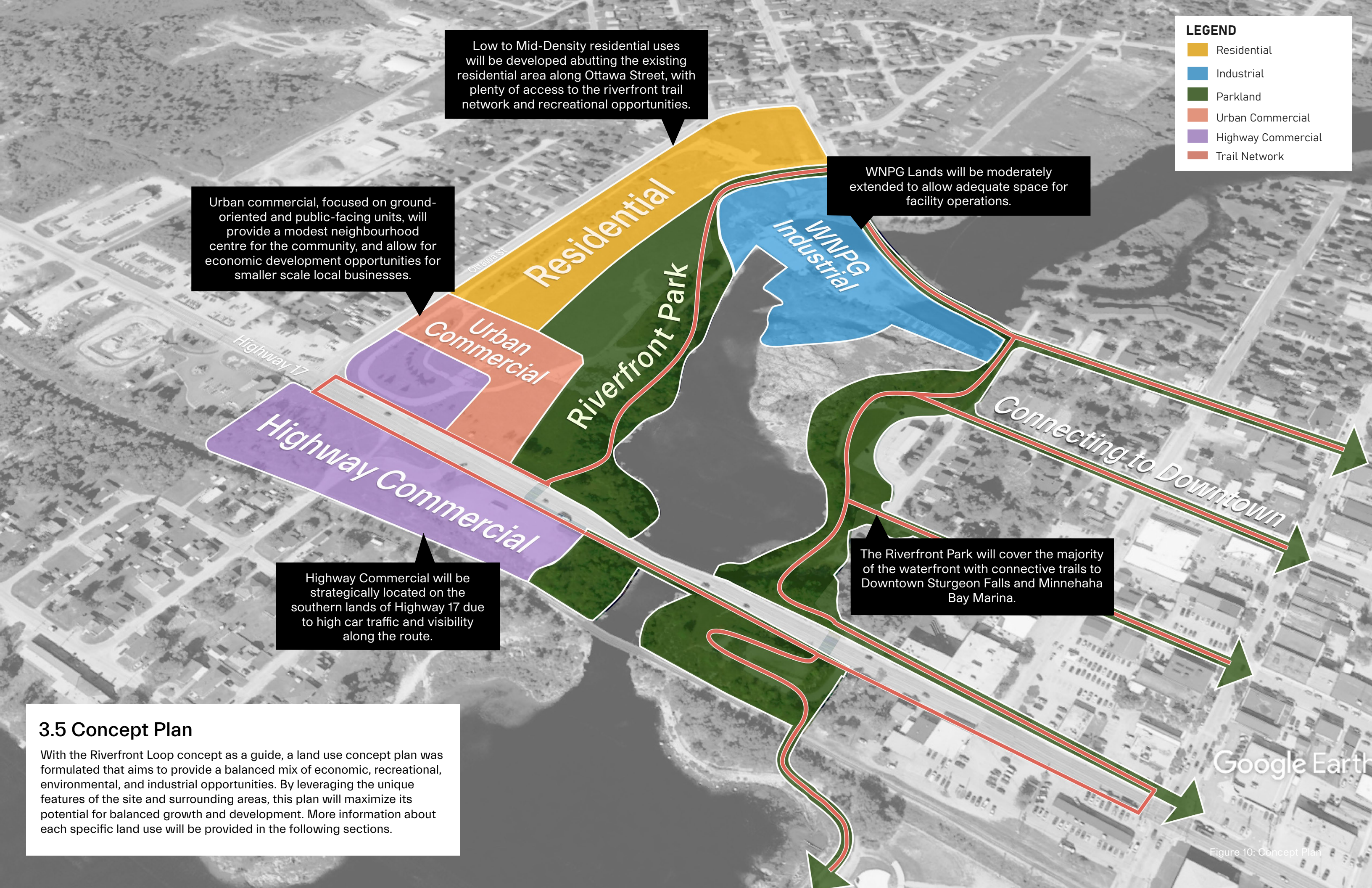
As part of our community consultation process, residents expressed a strong interest in the creation of a community park on the former mill site. In response to this feedback, the creation of the Riverfront Loop will be developed alongside a community park, where residents and visitors can enjoy a naturalized trail network with viewpoints along the water and rest areas in key locations.

The community park will provide opportunities for recreation, active transportation and enhance tourism and development opportunities for the surrounding lands. By establishing a strong trail network and community park, the Municipality will lay the groundwork for a vibrant and thriving waterfront area. With careful planning and community involvement, the Riverfront Loop has the potential to become a signature destination, drawing visitors and contributing to the economic and social vitality of the community.



DEVELOPING A DISTRICT

The creation of the Riverfront Park is the first step in a larger vision for the revitalization of the waterfront. With increased interest and activity on the site, the lands abutting the park will become “The Falls District”, an area prioritizing neighbourhood development focused on liveability, outdoor lifestyle, and sustainability. The Falls District will be a unique and vibrant neighbourhood emphasizing pedestrian connectivity, green spaces, and views to the natural beauty of the Sturgeon River.



LEGEND

- Residential
- Industrial
- Parkland
- Urban Commercial
- Highway Commercial
- Trail Network

Low to Mid-Density residential uses will be developed abutting the existing residential area along Ottawa Street, with plenty of access to the riverfront trail network and recreational opportunities.

Urban commercial, focused on ground-oriented and public-facing units, will provide a modest neighbourhood centre for the community, and allow for economic development opportunities for smaller scale local businesses.

WNPG Lands will be moderately extended to allow adequate space for facility operations.

Highway Commercial will be strategically located on the southern lands of Highway 17 due to high car traffic and visibility along the route.

The Riverfront Park will cover the majority of the waterfront with connective trails to Downtown Sturgeon Falls and Minnehaha Bay Marina.

3.5 Concept Plan

With the Riverfront Loop concept as a guide, a land use concept plan was formulated that aims to provide a balanced mix of economic, recreational, environmental, and industrial opportunities. By leveraging the unique features of the site and surrounding areas, this plan will maximize its potential for balanced growth and development. More information about each specific land use will be provided in the following sections.

Figure 10: Concept Plan

Land Use and
Development Strategy

4



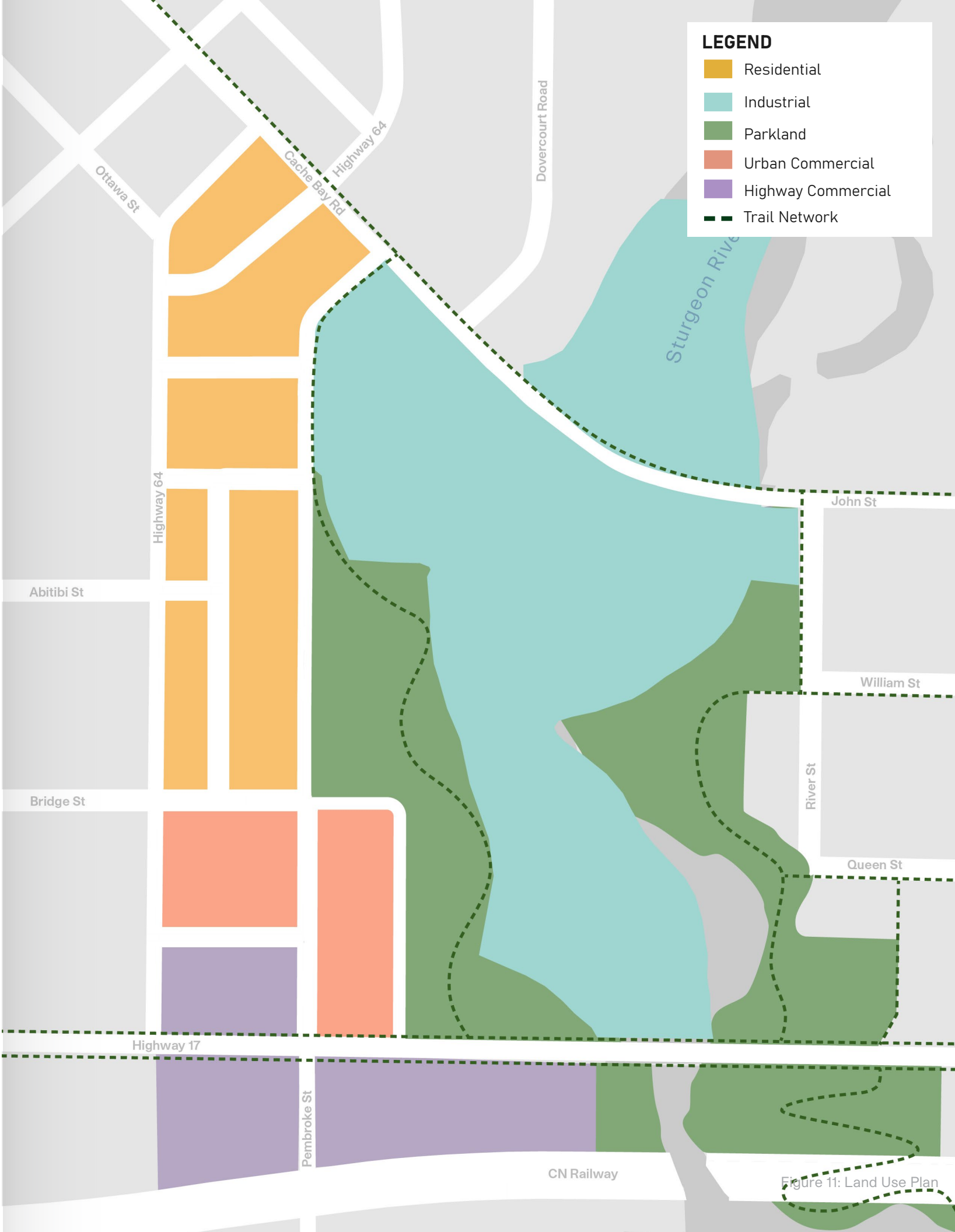
4.1 Land Use Plan

Following the identification of the preferred concept option for the former mill site, the project team has developed a comprehensive land use plan to guide the future development of the property. The site has been divided into five distinct land use areas, each serving a unique purpose:

- A Residential zone located to the north along Ottawa Street, providing a comfortable and livable environment for residents while maintaining a visual and physical separation from other land uses.
- A Highway Commercial area adjacent to Highway 17, well-suited to accommodate commercial activities such as restaurants, retail stores, and service stations.
- An Urban Commercial area in the central portion of the development, offering mixed-use development opportunities for a variety of commercial and residential uses in close proximity.

- A Parkland zone along the riverfront, providing a natural and peaceful oasis for visitors and residents with various recreational opportunities and scenic views.
- An Industrial zone surrounding the WNPG facilities, offering ample space for operations.

Overall, the land use plan has been thoughtfully crafted to ensure a cohesive and balanced approach to the site's development, while also taking into account the needs and preferences of the local community. The following chapter outlines the preferred approach to the development of each land use area.





RESIDENTIAL

Residential uses proposed for the site include a range of medium-density residential typologies from townhomes to low-rise apartment buildings primarily located along the Ottawa Street frontage of the site. These medium-density typologies are recommended for two primary reasons: Firstly, to address the gaps identified in the Municipality's Housing Strategy, which aims to provide a range of housing options to meet the needs of the community. By offering multi-unit housing types, the development can cater to a wider range of residents, including those who may not be able to afford or maintain a single-family home. Secondly, the proposed Land Use Development Strategy is designed to address the feasibility of development on the site. Contaminated soils on the property make lower density residential development economically unfeasible. By offering medium-density residential typologies, the development can maximize the use of the site while also being financially viable.

Residential land uses are structured around a grid-like road network that mirrors neighbouring residential areas and provides

direct connections for residents to the park lands and trail system located along the Sturgeon River. By prioritizing the use of materials, building layouts, and landscaping elements that reflect the unique historical and environmental features of Sturgeon Falls, residential development can seamlessly blend with the surrounding area and riverfront park. Incorporating exterior wood, porous paving, native trees, and a naturalized landscape can integrate sustainability and urban health for residents and visitors alike.

Guiding Principles

- Prioritizing affordability to ensure that widest range of the local population would be able to live in the redevelopment.
- Ensuring a diverse range of housing types and tenures to meet local needs .
- Building community through higher-density, close knit development centred around public spaces.
- Prioritizing liveability and accessibility to parkland and naturalized green space.

Precedent Imagery



Figure 12: Residential Reference Imagery



URBAN COMMERCIAL

Urban commercial uses are higher-order commercial uses intended to provide goods and services to households living in the immediate area of the site, as well as the travelling public. These uses are normally incorporated at ground-level in either single or mixed-use buildings and can include: restaurants, cafés, depanneurs, bakeries, hair salons, medical clinics, etc. that enliven the ground-level, create spaces for community gathering, and support local entrepreneurship. While more challenging to attract and sustain, these uses can be invaluable to fostering a sense of community. They also act as a transition from the exclusively commercial area along Hwy 17 to the exclusively residential area proposed in the middle and north of the site.

The urban commercial area runs along the central artery of the land use plan, creating a gateway space to draw in residents and visitors to gather. The urban commercial area will feature an attractive mix of uses which offers economic growth and tourism opportunities. In contrast to other common highway commercial uses, the urban commercial area should prioritize

enhancing the public atmosphere by providing outdoor public spaces, patios, and accessible storefronts.

Guiding Principles

- Being strategic about the type, amount, and location of urban commercial uses to ensure their success
- Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs with small format retail space
- Fostering community-centric lifestyles through local commercial uses and public space

Precedent Imagery

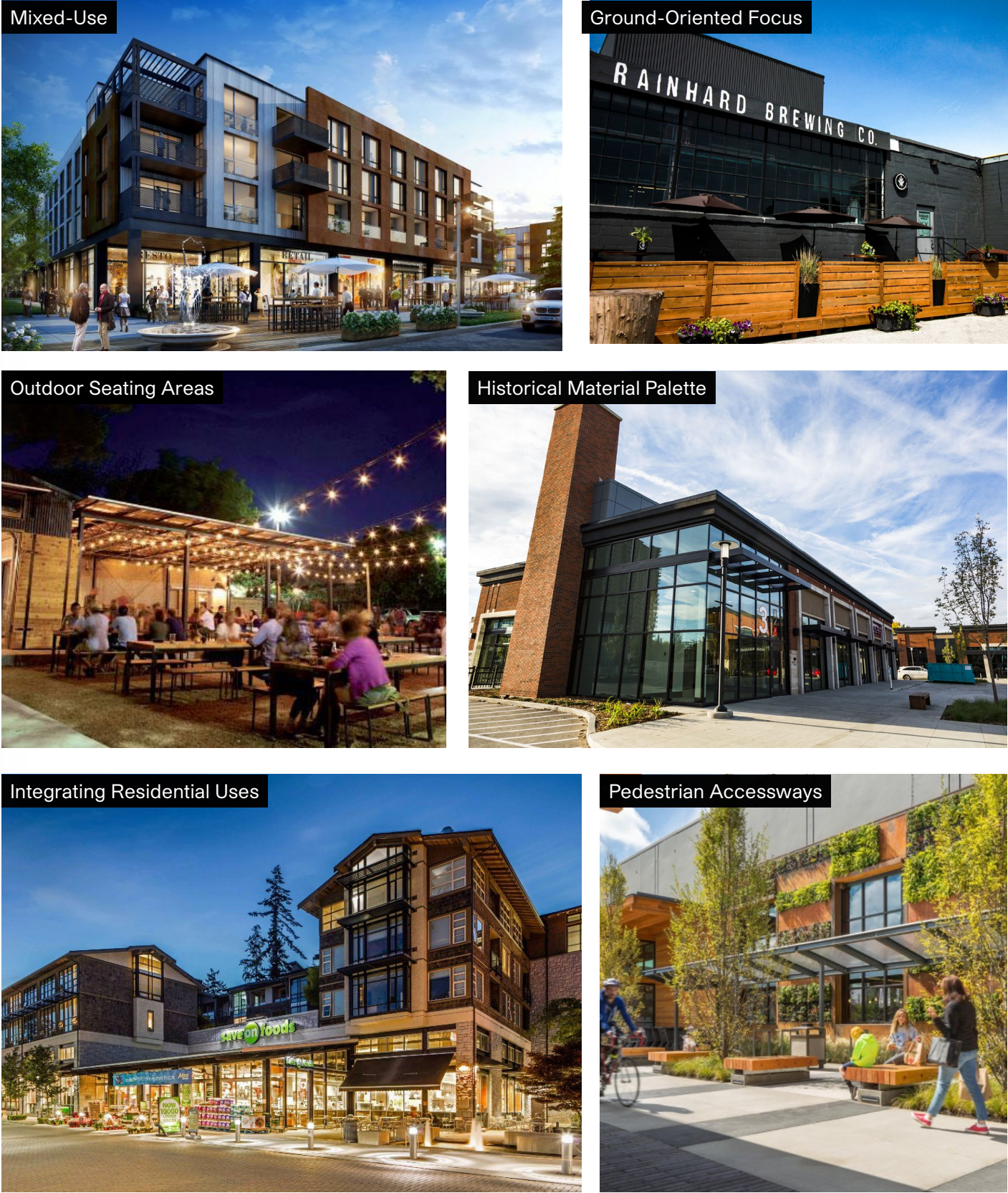


Figure 13: Urban Commercial Reference Imagery



HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL

Highway 17 is a major regional route connecting Sturgeon Falls to North Bay, Sudbury, and the rest of Ontario. It's also a major route for vacationers accessing Northern Ontario's cottage country and renown nearby provincial parks. An already well-established commercial corridor, highway commercial uses proposed along Hwy 17 include anchor large format retail, restaurants, and hotels. As a gateway to the Town and the Sturgeon River, a high level of site design and quality architecture should be required, specifically architecture that references the site's industrial past and indicative local building materials such as wood and stone should be used over standardized corporate architecture.

Guiding Principles

- Encouraging distinctive architecture that reflects the site's unique heritage
- Seeking out quality, stable anchor tenants that can provide long term revenue streams
- Creating welcoming commercial developments that encourage people to explore the site
- Developing a gateway site along Highway 17

Precedent Imagery

High-Standard Architectural Conditions



Small-scale Temporary Venues



Gateway development



Materials and Detailing



Figure 14: Highway Commercial Reference Imagery



PARKLAND

Located along the Sturgeon River, at the Sturgeon Falls, the site is blessed with extensive waterfrontage, stunning views, and natural beauty. River rapids on-site shield the area from outside noise creating a potentially immersive natural experience along the water's edge. This natural beauty is intended to be enhanced and protected through the site's redevelopment. In addition to the ecological services that the enhanced natural areas can provide, the site's parkland will also serve recreational and economic development purposes, with a looping trail system connecting the site to both destinations in the Downtown and Minnehaha Marina.

Guiding Principles

- Restore and enhance natural features and areas along the riverfront to improve environmental performance
- Support active and healthy lifestyles with multi-use trails and outdoor amenities
- Develop experiences for local residents and guests that showcase Sturgeon Falls and tell its history

Precedent Imagery

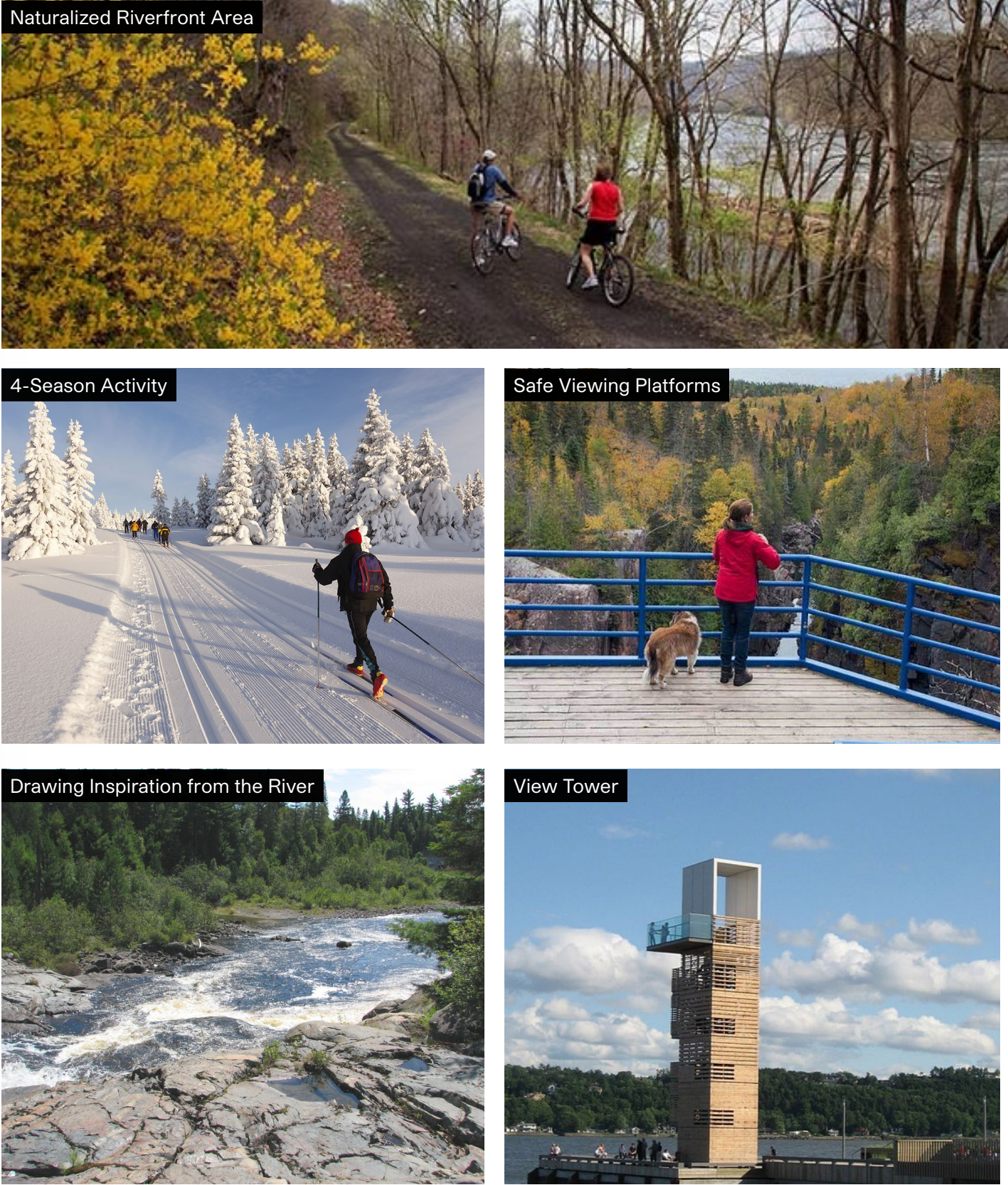


Figure 15: Parkland Reference Imagery



Figure 16: View of Dam from River's Edge

INDUSTRIAL

The site has been occupied by industrial uses, in one form or another, for the better part of 140 years. While the site's iconic paper mill has been shuttered for over 20 years, industrial uses continue on the site today with West Nipissing Power Generation's hydroelectric dam facility on the Sturgeon River. With respect to the redevelopment of the site, this facility requires particular attention to ensure that redevelopment does not negatively impact the dam's ability to operate efficiently and safely. The dam also provides exciting opportunities to explore a micro-grid for the redevelopment and / or additional power generation through wind and solar incorporated into the redevelopment.

Guiding Principles

- Ensure that dam operations are protected from negative impacts of new uses and can operate efficiently
- Encourage innovation by using the site as a test site for renewable energy generation
- Seek to integrate the dam operations into the overall development in a safe manner that allows residents and visitors to experience and learn about the operations



Figure 17: View of Dam from River's Edge

4.2 Vehicular and Active Transportation Network

Vehicular and pedestrian connectivity is a critical component of any Land Use Development Strategy. It plays a vital role in ensuring that people can move around easily and safely within a site, while also promoting accessibility and connectivity to surrounding areas. In the case of the former mill site, vehicular and pedestrian connectivity will be a key consideration in future development.

Providing a Gateway for Visitors: The redevelopment of the property presents a unique opportunity to create a new gateway to the community. The site's location on Highway 17, a busy thoroughfare that connects many communities throughout the region, means that the development must be designed to be welcoming and accessible to both drivers and pedestrians. This can be achieved through thoughtful planning and design that considers the needs of all users. It's crucial to strike a balance between providing adequate parking and attractive public spaces. While road allowances and parking must provide easy and safe access for vehicles, parking should be strategically located away from public frontages and pathways. There should be a clear pedestrian and cycling interface throughout the development to ensure safe and convenient access for non-motorized transportation.

The Local Network: In addition to its role as a gateway to the downtown, the former mill site should also be designed to support local traffic and connectivity. This will require a focus on slow and local traffic, with calming measures implemented throughout the site. By prioritizing local connectivity, the development can help to create a more walkable and bikeable community, reducing reliance on cars and promoting healthier, more sustainable modes of transportation.

Multi-use Path System: One of the key elements of the Land Use Development Strategy is the creation of a multi-use path system. This trail network will be designed to connect existing trail networks, waterfront viewpoints, and other amenities in the area. The path system will provide opportunities for people to walk, run, cycle, and enjoy the outdoors, while also promoting sustainable transportation options. The multi-use path system will create a loop around the west and east sides of the riverfront and continue on Cache Bay Road to the north, and the future pedestrian bridge located south of Highway 17.

Wayfinding Opportunities: To help people navigate the site and the surrounding area, there should be a range of wayfinding opportunities. These may include signage, maps, and digital resources, such as a mobile app or website. The wayfinding system will be designed to be user-friendly and accessible, with clear and concise information that helps people find their way around the site and discover all that Sturgeon Falls has to offer. These systems can help residents and visitors learn more about the rich history and culture of the site and of West Nipissing, and provide greater foot traffic to existing businesses and visitor locations.

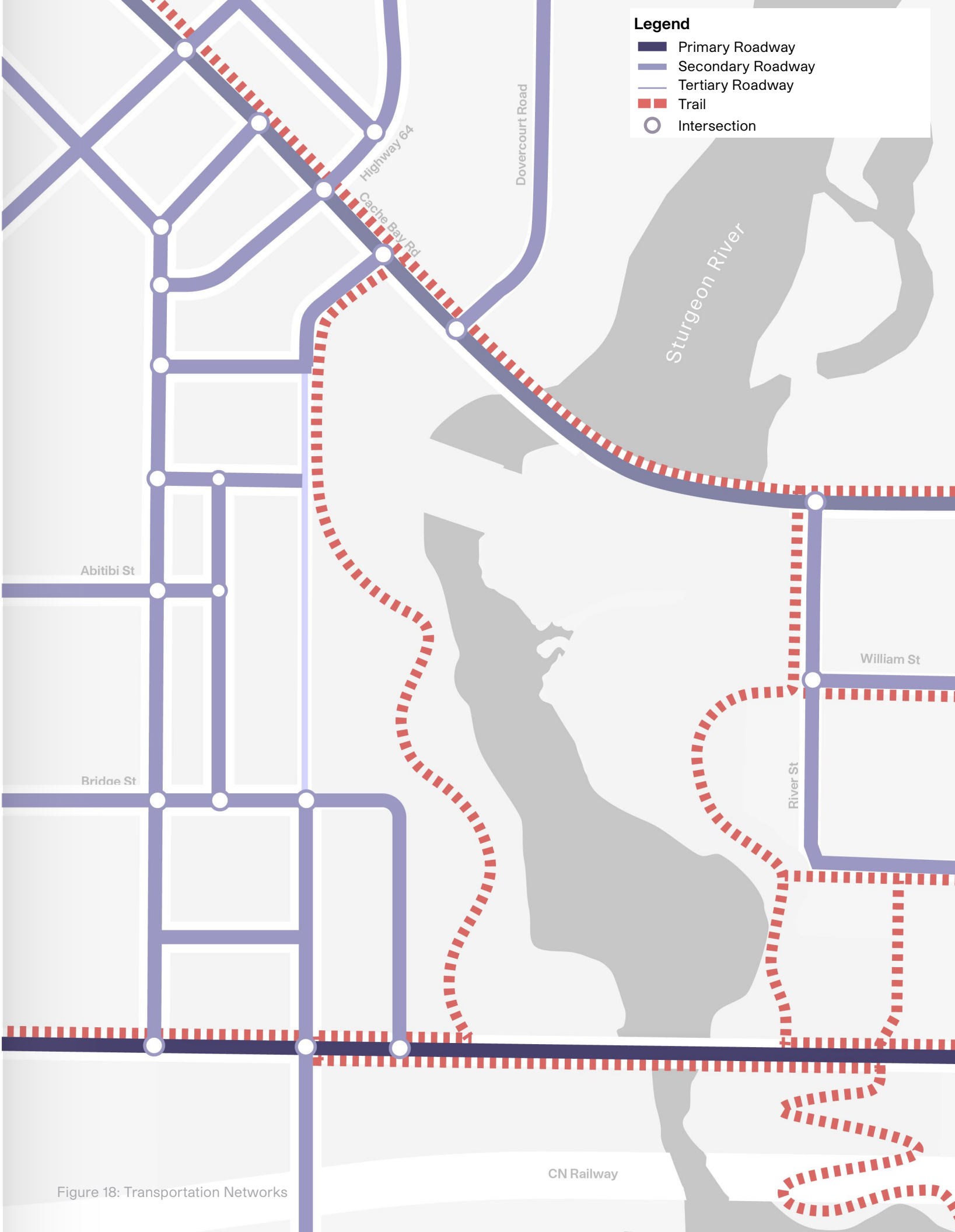


Figure 18: Transportation Networks

4.3 Theoretical Build-Out Scenario

In order to validate the land use concept and explore possibilities for the future development of the site, the theoretical build-out scenario provides guidance on the implementation of the Land Use Development Strategy.

This scenario envisions the development of a trail loop along the Sturgeon River, which connects to downtown and Minnehaha Bay, creating a network of recreational opportunities for visitors and residents. Along the trail, a lookout tower has been incorporated into Lookout Park, connected by a pedestrian trail. This lookout tower provides a unique and elevated vantage point from which visitors can enjoy scenic views of the river and the surrounding landscape.

To attract visitors to the site, the plan includes the development of Urban and Highway Commercial typologies branching out from Highway 17. These zones will feature a mix of retail and commercial uses, as well as moderate public spaces for people to enjoy and gather. These areas will serve as a gateway to the site, pulling visitors in and encouraging them to explore the surrounding area.

Low to mid-density residential housing will span the remaining area of the property, providing a comfortable and livable environment for residents. This zone will feature a mix of private, semi-public, and shared spaces along their edges. The residential area is intended to maintain a visual and physical separation from other land uses while providing a sense of community for residents.

To the east of the site, additional space has been allocated to WNPG to ensure their facilities can adapt to the new road network. This will allow WNPG to continue their operations in a more efficient and effective manner while integrating seamlessly with the overall development.

Overall, this build-out scenario has been thoughtfully crafted to ensure a cohesive and balanced approach to the site's development. The project team is confident that the implementation of this plan will result in a vibrant and successful development that will benefit both the local community and visitors to the area.

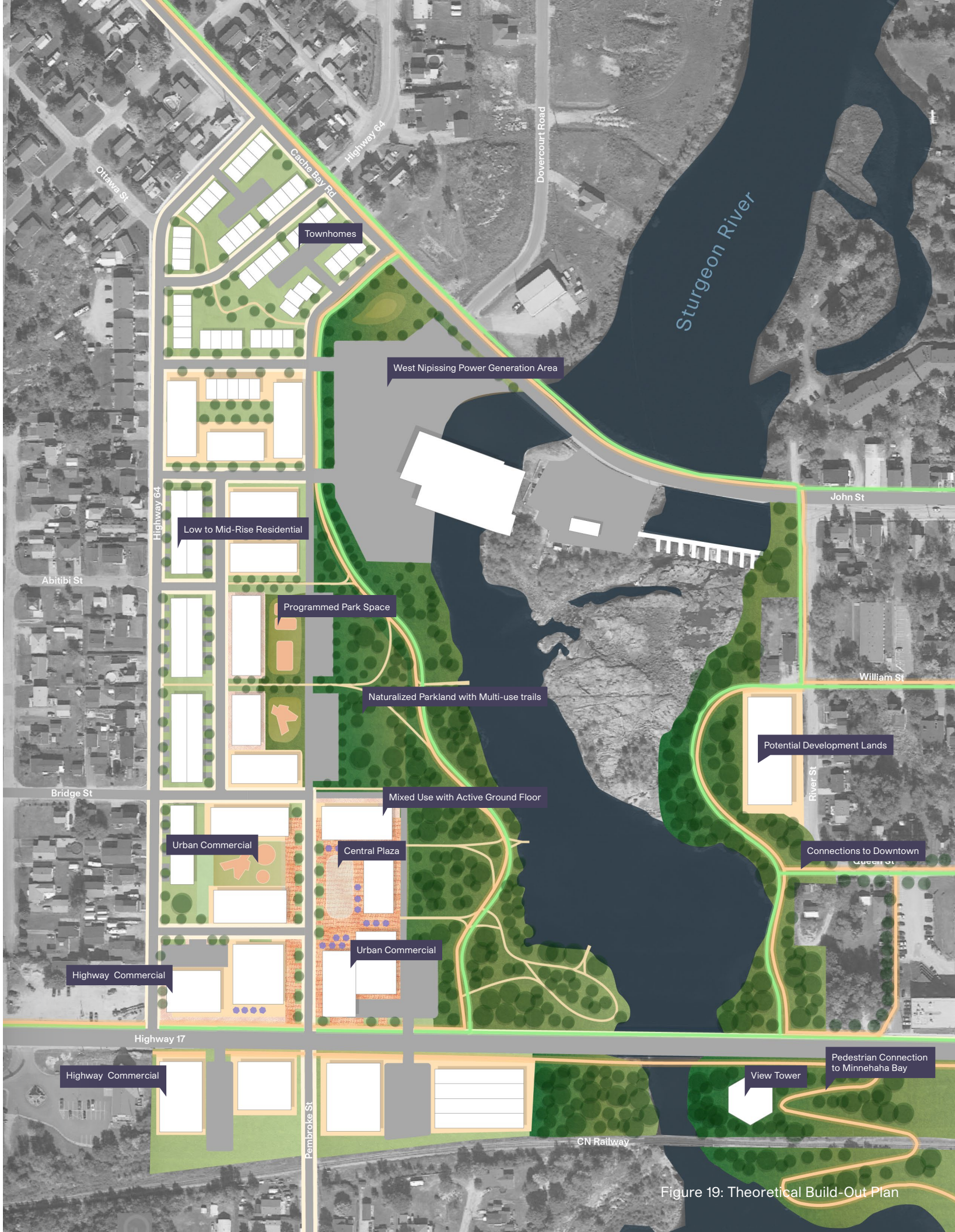


Figure 19: Theoretical Build-Out Plan

Building Type	Building Footprint (sq ft)	Storeys	Gross Square Feet	Cost
Townhouse	51,247	2	102,494	\$ 11,274,340
Mid Rise	122,495	3	367,485	\$ 55,122,750
Subsurface Parking	122,495	1	122,495	\$ 15,311,875
Commercial	138,100	1	138,100	\$ 16,572,000
Surface Parking	82,880	1	82,880	\$ 497,280
Road Network	Length (ft)			
Roads	6,056			\$ 19,984,800
Site Servicing	Number of Units			
Townhouses	54			\$ 1,036,800
Multifamily	366			\$ 2,964,600
Site Servicing	Area (sq ft)			
Commercial	220,980		220,980	\$ 883,920
Landscaping	Area (sq ft)			
Open Space & Naturalization	480,000		480,000	\$ 960,000
Grand Total				\$ 124,608,365

DEVELOPMENT COSTING PLAN OF THEORETICAL BUILD-OUT SCENARIO

As part of the planning process for the future development of the site, the project team has conducted a development costing analysis to gain a better understanding of the costs and potential returns associated with the theoretical build-out scenario. This analysis was carried out with the goal of identifying the long-term financial sustainability of the development.

It is important to note that this analysis assumes a "shovel-ready" site, meaning that it does not take into consideration any remediation that

may be necessary on the site. Additionally, the analysis is intended to provide a high-level estimate of costs and does not include detailed construction plans or pricing.

This costing is based on Altus Group's 2023 Canadian Cost Guide and represents estimated development and constructions costs for a remediated site.



Figure 20: Sturgeon River Provincial Park

Implementation Plan

5



Figure 21: Historic Logging Operations

5.1 Introduction

Based on the information collected in the background report, a specific development programme was developed for the site. This programme identifies key land use typologies that were identified as appropriate for the former mill site. The programme also includes full build-out metrics for the proposed typologies.

The goal of the background research was to inform a vision for redevelopment of the mill site that is grounded in market realities while recognizing that market dynamics can change over time. The development programme outlined here will serve as a foundation for what will be a flexible development strategy that could accommodate various types of new development in the future.

By taking advantage of the proximity to downtown Sturgeon Falls, access to walking trails and open space, and the growing population in the municipality, the market could likely support new residential development in a variety of formats including low-rise apartments (both rental and ownership tenures) in a mixed-use environment. For planning purposes there is a potential for up to 12,000 square metres (138,000 sq ft) of retail space. Additionally, depending on site layout, it may also be possible to include some light industrial development on the site in close proximity to the existing dam operation. improvements, a new multi-use trail system, and the creation of more defined gateways and access points.

5.2 Establishing Market Potential

Given the site’s size, location, and access to transportation corridors there are significant development opportunities for the site. However, these opportunities will be tempered by the site’s previous uses (and potential contamination); the hydro dam located on site; and the size and scale of the Sturgeon Falls real estate market. The following analysis outlines the market potential of the site as established by the project team.

Use	Existing Conditions	Potential
Residential	Vast majority of current permitting is for single detached dwellings and there is an existing demand for multi-family and rental	Given requirements for site works, multi-residential development is likely the most feasible form of residential development
	Most multi-family residential developments are found within close proximity to the downtown Sturgeon Falls	
Retail / Office	Site will require excavation and remediation prior to permitting any sensitive land uses on site	Tourism and hospitality uses (i.e. restaurants, hotels, service centres, etc.) will continue to dominate Hwy 17 corridor
	There is limited retail and office development in the pipeline in West Nipissing	
Industrial	Most permitting has been located on the Hwy 17 corridor in Sturgeon Falls	To create a ‘complete community’ local services (ie. grocery, cafés, hairdressers, etc.) have potential in close proximity to multi-residential development
	Retail typically follows residential development / demand, particularly for supportive uses (ie. grocery, cafés, etc.)	
Tourism / Recreational	Retail and office uses along Hwy 17 will likely continue to serve the traveling public and tourists traveling through Sturgeon Falls	Small scale light-industrial uses (ie. low impact) could be considered in proximity to existing dam operations
	There is limited industrial development in Sturgeon Falls, and it is primarily located along Hwy 17	
Industrial	The current trend in industrial development sees this form primarily occurring at 400 series highway locations and intermodal locations with access to major employment bases	Would potentially require some buffering from more sensitive land uses
	Site currently has an industrial operation (the dam and power generation) that will continue on-site	
Tourism / Recreational	Municipality is well positioned in Northern Ontario’s ‘cottage country’ with access to Lake Nipissing, and in close proximity to French River and Algonquin Provincial Parks	There is likely significant potential for the site to be developed for tourism and recreation purposes
	Most tourism and recreation uses in Sturgeon Falls are found on Hwy 17	
Tourism / Recreational		Lands fronting onto both Hwy 17 and the Sturgeon River provide greater potential

5.3 Market Potential: Residential

Residential Drivers: population growth; market demand; household socio-economics; and existing site conditions.

The projected population increases anticipated for Sturgeon Falls could likely support new residential development on the site. Given the pent-up demand for both multi-family residential development and rental tenure, as well as the site’s past contamination, denser forms of residential development are likely the most feasible. These new units would help accommodate households with varying housing preferences and budgets. While the total number of housing units that could be supported on the site will vary based on a variety of factors including unit mix and layout, it is anticipated that the development could accommodate likely include approximately 420 residential units, developed in phases

5.4 Market Potential: Retail / Office

Retail / Office Drivers: population growth; access to Hwy 17 corridor; changing consumer habits; proximity to downtown.

As the aftermath of the pandemic continues to adversely affect retail and office space requirements, current retail trends towards value-orientated, convenience-focused, and experiential retail are expected to continue to grow. The inclusion of residential uses in the development strategy could provide an opportunity for some supporting neighbourhood-serving retail. Other tenants that typically locate as part of a mixed-use development often cater to convenience-oriented options including cafés, fast / casual restaurants, personal care services, fitness centres, and smaller-scale general merchandise. Depending on the phasing of development, it may be feasible to include smaller strip retail development near the Hwy 17 corridor.

5.5 Market Potential: Industrial

Industrial Drivers: population growth; access to Hwy 17 corridor, on-site power generation

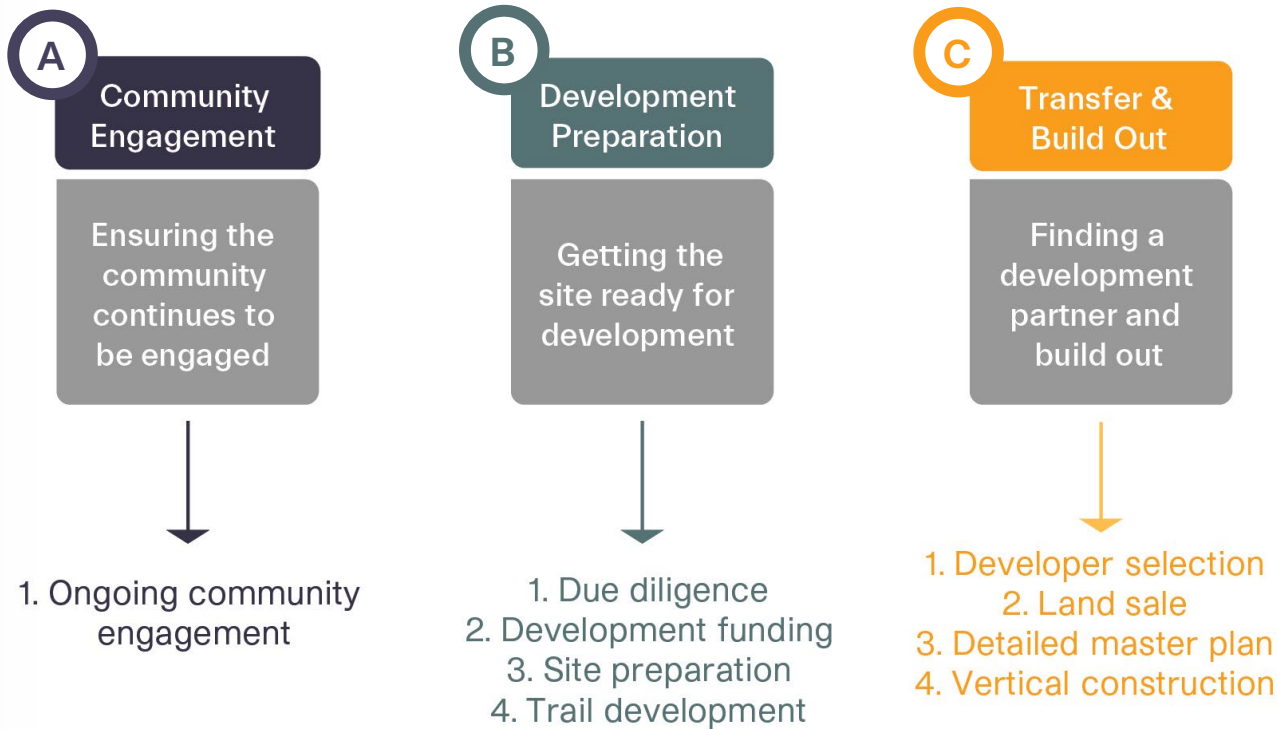
There is likely limited demand for industrial uses on the site. Despite this, the existing dam and energy generation occurring on the site does lend itself to some smaller scale light industrial use potential at the north end of the site around the existing cluster. Uses that are directly related to energy generation or benefit from being in close proximity to energy generation facilities, could be explored for this area of the site. There may be additional interest from some industrial users along Hwy 17, however this may not be the highest and best use of this area of the site.

5.6 Market Potential: Tourism / Recreational

Tourism / Recreational Drivers: regional location, local culture, site contamination, access to Sturgeon River, access to Hwy 17 corridor

Sturgeon Falls and West Nipissing’s location in Northern Ontario’s ‘cottage country’ provides some obvious synergies for the site that should be explored. Commercial uses that cater to the traveling public and tourists are likely very feasible along the Hwy 17 corridor and would complement many of the existing users along that corridor. As the location of the namesake Sturgeon Falls and iconic Hwy 17 bridge the site has both cultural / heritage elements as well as natural beauty that could form the nucleus of a regional tourism destination in Sturgeon Falls.

Development Strategy



5.7 Implementation Strategy

The redevelopment of the former mill site presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the Municipality and the community of Sturgeon Falls. As such, an implementation strategy is critical to turn the development concept into a reality. The Municipality has determined that the preferred process for redeveloping the site will be largely undertaken by one or more private development companies. This implementation strategy outlines three primary phases leading to the development of the site, namely:

- A. Community Engagement** – an ongoing phase used to keep the local community and stakeholders informed of this important development
- B. Development Preparation** – a significant phase involving the undertaking of site due diligence, identifying funding opportunities, and undertaking initial site preparation

C. Transfer & Build Out – the final phase of the strategy will involve the selection of a development partner and the physical redevelopment of the site.

The implementation of this strategy and the redevelopment of the former mill site is expected to occur over multiple years, particularly given the required remediation of the site and the size of the Sturgeon Falls real estate market, however the ‘preparatory’ phases of the strategy are anticipated to take approximately five years to complete.

Implementation Phasing



IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

To guide the actual implementation of this strategy, three core guiding principles were identified by the Municipality as follows:

Private Sector Led – The Municipality has determined their desire to see the redevelopment of the former mill site led by the private sector, with input from the community. While the Municipality is the current owner of the site, it is the intention of the Municipality to transfer the site (in the medium term) to a qualified developer who will carry out the actual redevelopment. To that end, the Municipality’s involvement in the redevelopment of the site will be limited to site preparation and the development of public spaces (parks and trails) on the site.

Maximize Economic Development Opportunities – Given the site’s location in the heart of Sturgeon Falls with frontage along Hwy 17, the site is seen by the Municipality as have significant economic development potential. As such, job creation and revenue creation (through additional tax assessment) are priorities.

Address Community Needs – Finally, the Municipality has outlined that it is seeking a redevelopment programme that will address community needs, and gaps that exist within the Sturgeon Falls community including housing, commercial, and recreational needs.

CAVEATS & ASSUMPTIONS

That the completion of a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment will demonstrate that the site can accommodate residential, and other sensitive land uses.

That some financial assistance or public funding will be required to address contamination on site, and that it is financial unfeasible to remove / remediate the site with or without public funding.

That the preferred developer(s) are seeking to purchase the entire developable area of the property.

Community Engagement

WHO?	WHAT?	WHEN?	HOW?
Engage: <ul style="list-style-type: none">ResidentsElected officialsIndigenous communities Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Municipality of West NipissingEconomic Development CommitteeDeveloper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide project updatesSolicit public feedback (when required)Provide public notice and conduct public meetings when required by legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Frequency may vary depending on project timelines and desired level of engagementTiming of engagement may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Quarterly updatesCritical decision pointsAs required by legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Municipal website or designated project websitePublic mailing listsPublic meetings / open houses

A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

For a longer-term redevelopment project such as this, ongoing community engagement with residents, elected officials, and other stakeholders is required to ensure the community is kept informed of decisions that impact them, through project updates and opportunities to solicit local feedback. The frequency of engagement may vary depending on the project timeline, desired level of engagement, and legal requirements. To that end, the Municipality may wish to develop and maintain an engagement plan to ensure continued community support and facilitate information sharing.

In some instances there may also be statutory requirements under the Planning Act and / or Environmental Assessment Act for public consultation.

Key Considerations

- Identifying the desired level of engagement going forward
- Understanding any statutory requirements for consultation

Key Actions

- Develop a stakeholder engagement plan that will be regularly reviewed and updated throughout the implementation process.

B DEVELOPMENT PREPARATION

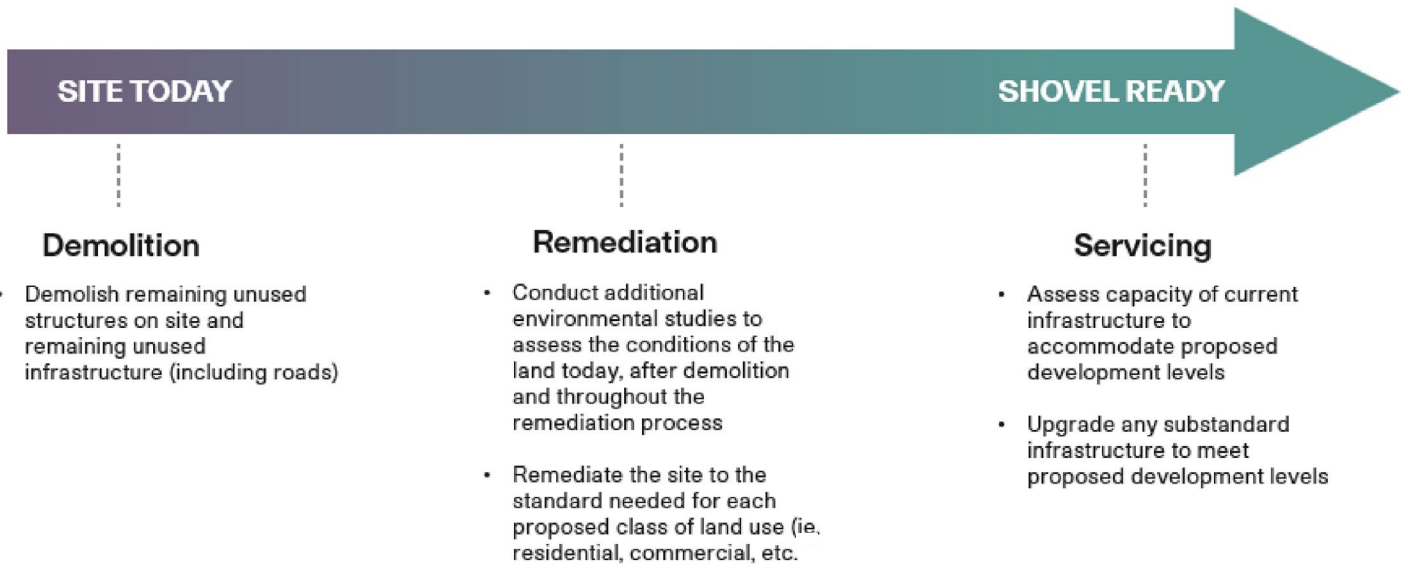
The development preparation phase is composed of actions undertaken by the Municipality to get the site ready (‘shovel ready’) for physical redevelopment. This includes investigations and planning, assessing potential public sources of funding to assist in the redevelopment, and the physical preparation of the site (ie. site clean up, extending / upgrading infrastructure, etc.).

B.1 Due Diligence The site currently contains building foundations and building materials, obsolete roads, infrastructure, and utilities that present challenges to redevelopment, however the full extent of these encumbrances and the costs to address them are unclear. Due diligence is critical to assess potential contamination of the site, performing cost benefit analyses of solutions to site challenges, and to informing detailed site planning, phasing, and negotiations with developers. Additional studies may be needed to uncover what improvements are required, the cost of clearing and cleaning the site and the potential for phasing public investment over time.

Key Considerations:

- Identifying / confirming building envelopes and development areas
- Confirming property boundaries and record any site encumbrances (i.e. easements, etc.) through preparation of a reference plan

Development Preparation



- Confirming of servicing capacity (i.e. water and sanitary sewage service)

Key Actions:

- Conduct Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) and Record of Site Condition (RSC)
- Confirm property boundaries and record any site encumbrances (i.e. easements, etc.) through preparation of a reference plan and establish development envelopes
- Review other available reports and conduct due diligence as required
- Use findings from due diligence to inform negotiations with potential purchasers

B.2 Development Funding

A developer is typically responsible for paying all costs associated with development including installation of public infrastructure; private site improvements; and costs of developing all buildings and structures. In this case however, the site is challenged by extraordinary development costs, namely contamination and remediation. In an unproven real estate market such as Sturgeon Falls, this would likely make redevelopment of the site unfeasible with

typical funding / financing models. In instances where the private market is unable to support redevelopment of a site such as the former mill, municipalities (and higher levels of government) have a suite of financial tools that can assist, recognizing the greater community good of seeing the site redeveloped as opposed to remaining in its current state.

Of particular note, is the Municipality's ability to potentially create a community improvement plan (CIP) specifically for the mill site to incentivize redevelopment. This could include a range of incentives from grants to property tax forgiveness in order to support the redevelopment of the site.

Key Considerations:

- Understanding the costs associated with remediation and redevelopment of the site
- Understanding of available funding opportunities to support redevelopment.

Key Actions:

- Assess cost of site remediation
- Investigate funding opportunities from higher levels of government
- Investigate opportunity to create a CIP for the mill site

Development Funding

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT	FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green Municipal Fund, Brownfield Site Redevelopment• Canada Community Building Fund, Brownfield Redevelopment• Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, Green Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brownfield Community Improvement Plan

B.3 Site Preparation

Most developers prefer 'shovel-ready' sites that are fully serviced by infrastructure and have capacity to meet future demand. Shovel-ready sites are those sites that have all necessary planning permissions, are serviced with infrastructure, and graded. Sites such as these minimize risk to developers and provide greater clarity for project delivery. To prepare a shovel-ready site, the Municipality should:

- Strategically remediate contamination on the site in areas that will accommodate development;
- Extend / upgrade public infrastructure and utilities to the property line (if needed);
- Stabilize and grade the developable portions of the site
- Ensure the site has an appropriate official plan designation and zoning.

Given the costs associated with site preparation, it may be necessary to phase improvements over time in conjunction with private development. Depending on the condition of the site when the transfer of the land takes place; the financing and phasing plan to prepare the site and install new infrastructure; and the private sector's appetite to serve as the land developer, it may be necessary to hire consultant team to support the land development and site preparation process.

Key Considerations:

- Cost and financing of on-site excavation of contaminated soil and other materials.

- The need and cost to upgrade infrastructure and utilities to the property line.
- Cost of the grading of the site.
- Current official plan designation and current zoning of the site as it relates to the proposed development.

Key Actions:

- Prepare preliminary work plan for site preparation
- Seek site preparation cost estimates
- Undertake any required official plan and zoning by-law amendments

B.4 Trail Development

Immediately following, or concurrently with site preparation, the Municipality should commence development of the proposed trail network connecting the site to the downtown Sturgeon Falls and Minnehaha Marina. This is a two-part process that will involve the preparation of detailed design by a qualified landscape architect, and the physical construction of the trail, and surrounding park space. Of specific note, this is also the stage at which the proposed lookout tower on the south side of Hwy 17 should also be designed and constructed as both features (trail and tower) are intended to act as catalysts for the development of the site itself.

Key Considerations:

- Identification of a qualified landscape architecture team and architecture team for the trail and tower

- Determine the level of public engagement desired for the development of the trail and tower

Key Actions:

- Retain a qualified landscape architect and architect
- Undertake design and construction of trail and lookout tower

C TRANSFER & BUILD OUT

Transfer and built out of the site involves identification of an appropriate development partner who will undertake the actual development of the site. As owner of the site, the Municipality has significant control on entitlements, design, communications, and exit strategy, which can help ensure that redevelopment aligns with the vision outlined in this Strategy. Additionally, the Planning Act also provides many tools to ensure that the final form of development reflects the vision outlined here, and to ensure it meets the Municipality's objectives and expectations.

C.1 Developer Selection

The best practice to achieve the highest and best use of a site of this scale and importance is for the Municipality to select a master developer with the qualifications and capacity to develop the entire developable area site. Selection of a preferred developer should begin with the issuance of an Expression of Interest (EOI) to gauge developer interest in the site. An EOI process is an informal and flexible way to assess publicly, and transparently, who may be interested in developing the site, and their qualifications with minimal effort required on the part of the developer (as opposed to a more formal request for proposal process). The EOI process does not bind the Municipality to any one developer but only identifies interested parties. An EOI document could be posted on municipal procurement websites and sent by

invitation to select developers across Ontario with capacity and proven track record of development sites such as this.

If there is limited interest from a master developer the municipality can act as master developer and sell off individual parcels depending on the Municipality's desire and capacity to remain involved in the project. If this route is chosen, it is recommended that the Municipality engage with development consultants to assist. Finally, if the Municipality does not wish to act in the role of master developer, it also has the option of disposing the site through the Municipality's standard surplus lands process.

Key Considerations:

- Interest, capacity, and reputation of potential master developers
- If the Municipality has the ability and desire to act as master developer if there is limited interest from the private sector

Key Actions:

- Research potential master developers with capacity to take on the project
- Prepare EOI documents, establish selection process, and distribute EOI on municipal procurement websites and by invitation
- Assess next steps based on developer interest / response to EOI

C.2 Land Sale

Once a qualified developer has been selected, the Municipality will negotiate and enter into an agreement of purchase and sale to transfer the site. Negotiations for the agreement of purchase and sale will cover matters such as price of land, timing of development, responsibility for infrastructure build-out, and financing / funding. Specifically the purchase and sale agreement must address situations of default on the part of the developer and timeline for completion of development to ensure that land is not potentially held for speculative purposes.

Key Considerations:

- Sale price for the lands in order to recuperate public investment made to bring the lands up to a developable standard
- Terms of the agreement of purchase and sale
- Recourse should the selected developer abandon the project or not fulfill their obligations under the agreement of purchase and sale

Key Actions:

- Engage a solicitor with experience in negotiating public sector real estate deals to act on behalf of the Municipality
- Prepare and execute purchase and sale agreement with selected developer

C.3 Detailed Master Plan

Upon completion of the agreement of purchase and sale, the selected developer will commence the process of preparing a detailed master plan for the redevelopment of the site (excluding areas to be retained by the Municipality and West Nipissing Power Generation). The detailed master plan should include: a master concept plan and design guidelines in addition to the standard requirements for a draft plan of subdivision (ie. draft plan, engineering drawings, etc.) application in order to ensure conformity with the vision established in this strategy.

Upon completion of the entitlements process (ie. the process to obtain all required planning approvals), the selected developer will be required to enter into a development agreement, or subdivision agreement with the Municipality to enforce the requirements of the approved plans.

Key Considerations:

- Terms for the development agreement
- Review process for the preparation of the detailed master plan, and accompanying detailed design plans

Key Actions:

- Engage a solicitor with experience in negotiating development agreements to act on behalf of the Municipality
- Prepare and execute a development agreement with selected developer

C.4 Vertical Construction

Following the transfer of the land and the execution of a development agreement, the selected development will commence development of the site and construction of buildings. At that time, the Site would likely be cleared and ready for further infrastructure build-out which should be phased with the vertical development all in accordance with the master plan and development agreement. The selected developer should be open to “wild card” development opportunities but must ensure that the overall site development potential is not unduly compromised in service of a single transaction.

Key Considerations:

- Monitoring of site development progress
- How to address unexpected or wild card development opportunities

Key Actions:

- Establishing regular progress meetings with selected developer

