



Community Context

Relationship of downtown to the rest of the community

In terms of development, use and appearance, it is obvious that downtown is the historic center of business in Hutchinson. To the south and east, commercial development has evolved along Highway 7 and Highway 15 outside of downtown, but its scale and intensity is definitely not “downtown” in appearance. The physical boundaries of the Crow River and Otter Lake define downtown’s northern and northeastern edge. Just outside of downtown to the south and west lie well-established residential neighborhoods, and to the east a small cluster of older industrial uses occupies a few blocks in and around the rail lines.

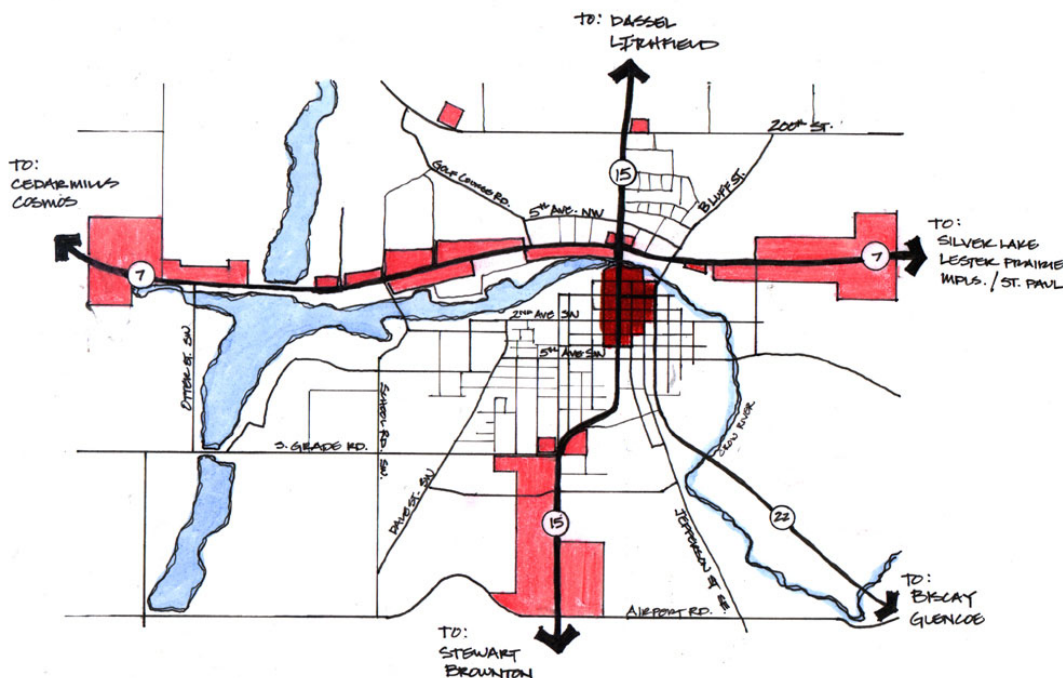
Downtown Hutchinson lies south of Highway 7 along Highway 15 (Main Street). The intersection of these roadways forms its northern boundary and marks the entry to the downtown area. The presence and the associated traffic of these arterials offer significant benefits for downtown. The southern end of downtown is less defined, but identifiable by the two churches along Main Street and a strong residential neighborhood.

TH 15 or Main Street provides the main flow of traffic and movement through the downtown. Adams Street also allows automobile and truck traffic in and out of downtown. Local streets, particularly those between Washington Avenue and Second Avenue SE, provide good circulation through downtown. There are strong connections to surrounding neighborhoods and social and cultural features like Park Elementary School, Library Square and City Hall. Controlling traffic levels and providing a safe pedestrian environment are extremely important, especially for Main Street.

Other Commercial Areas

Downtown is not the only area in Hutchinson where commercial activities occur. Development along Highway 7 and Highway 15 (south) has evolved with commercial uses - generally of a different scale than found in downtown, however. These areas are auto-dominated, with patterns of development that focus on parking lots and larger scale buildings. These commer-

Commercially-zoned areas of Hutchinson are typically auto-dominated and focused along major transportation corridors; downtown (shown in dark red) is the only area with a real pedestrian orientation.

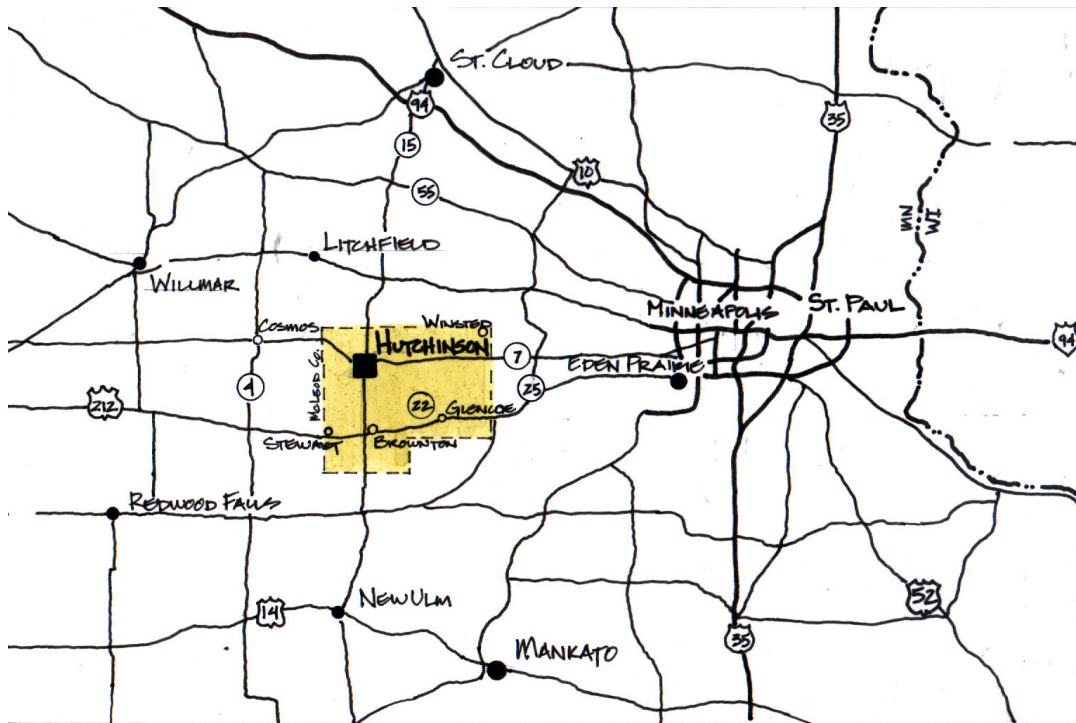


cial areas are important economically for the community, but they serve a different function than downtown. They have evolved with an orientation toward convenience and the highway user. Ultimately, it would be desirable for these areas to be linked more closely with downtown (through physical improvements, site development standards and even marketing practices).

Commercial development will no doubt continue at the edges of the city along Highway 7 and Highway 15 because of the traffic levels and land availability. If a Highway 7 bypass, or peripheral road is constructed, it is possible that commercial development will follow its alignment or seek out intersections of the bypass with major local streets. The community should exercise care as it defines land use patterns along such a bypass; new uses could harm downtown, but the more likely result is the denigration of existing commercial areas along Highways 7 and 15.

Regional context

Hutchinson is central to a region that includes a number of smaller agricultural communities; most would consider it to be the trade center for the communities of Silver Lake, Kimball, Dassel, Winthrop, Winsted, Lester Prairie, Biscay, Brownton, Stewart, Cedar Mill and Cosmos. It is impacted to an increasing degree, however, by commercial development in the western suburbs of the metro area like Minnetonka and Eden Prairie, and even more distant cities such as St. Cloud and Mankato. These larger commercial centers are becoming increasingly attractive for shopping because of the greater range of goods and services offered in those communities. Hutchinson will not likely be able to position itself to compete with these locations; however, its context as a center for trade in the more local region will not likely change and should be a focus for development efforts in the community.



Hutchinson's proximity to the Twin Cities metro area and commercial centers such as Mankato and St. Cloud, suggest that the community should focus its development efforts to serve a more local region.