HISTORIC VALLEY COMMUNITY

Although it does not have a major tributary, the Saint Peter landscape contains many of the components of the Glacial River Warren landscape. The community is framed by bluffs, is laid out on a large terrace, and has an extensive river floodplain. Saint Peter is one of the oldest cities in Minnesota and has over forty sites on the National Registry. A three block area of the downtown is a designated National Historic District.

SANDSTONE HILLS

In this corridor Kasota stone (Jordan sandstone) bluffs are the dominant feature. These beautiful, steep, and easily eroded bluffs provide challenges for siting a trail. Opportunities exist for interpreting the river’s geology in the nearby Seven Mile Creek County Park.

RIVER WARREN VIEWS

An intimate, forested area surrounding the very beautiful Minneopa Falls has several Works Progress Administration structures built in the 1930s, a picnic area, and a trail system. The Minneopa Prairie provides views of the River Warren Valley and a historic mill atop a bluff. The Minnehishinona Falls, a smaller falls area not connected to the park, is located along a quiet road that hugs the bluff line north of the Minnesota River. It has a small visitors area.

THE RIVER BEND

The regional urban center of Mankato is located where the river bends north. The Blue Earth River and the LeSeuer River converge on the Minnesota River at this bend. Numerous bluffs and steep topography define and distinguish this area. Several trails have already been built in and around Mankato.
EXPERIENTIAL SEGMENTS

HISTORIC VALLEY COMMUNITY
- URBAN CENTER
- TRAVERSE DES SIoux
- HISTORIC DOWNTOWN ON NATIONAL REGISTER ENCOMPASSED BY NATURAL AREAS

SANDSTONE HILLS
- EXPOSED JORDAN SANDSTONE
- STEEP FORESTED BLUFFS
- AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE DIVIDED BY COULEES

OTTAWA BLUFFS
- FORESTED BLUFFS
- OAK SAVANNA REMNANTS
- PROTECTED WETLAND/WMA
- VIEWS OF SAINT PETER
- ACTIVE QUARRIES

KASOTA PRAIRIE
- BEDROCK OUTCROPS
- ACTIVE QUARRIES
- PRAIRIE LANDSCAPE
- VIEWS TO RIVER

GLACIAL LAKES
- POTHOLE LAKES
- CONSERVATION LANDS
- AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE
- PUBLIC WATER ACCESS

RIVER WARREN VIEWS
- WIDE VALLEY EXPERIENCES
- MINNEOPA FALLS
- MINNEOPA PRAIRIE

THE RIVER BEND
- REGIONAL URBAN CENTER
- RIVER INDUSTRY & DEVELOPMENT
- HISTORIC DOWNTOWN NORTHERN EXPOSURE
GLACIAL LAKES
Numerous pothole lakes dot the farm fields and prairie expanses in this prairie pothole landscape. Deposits of ice trapped by stagnation moraines formed these lakes. The surficial geology map on page 12 shows the stagnation moraine in this area.

KASOTA PRAIRIE
The Kasota Prairie has both natural and cultural features. One of the last prairie remnants of high biodiversity is located in the corridor. Several active quarries produce the famous architectural Kasota stone. The historic town of Kasota is sited in the midst of mines and prairie.

OTTAWA BLUFFS
Steep forested bluffs with remnants of oak savanna provide views over the floodplain/wetland landscape and the City of Saint Peter. The small town of Ottawa contains seven Kasota stone buildings dating back to 1869 that are all on the National Registry of Historic Places.
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EXPERIENTIAL SEGMENTS
CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING SYSTEMS

The Minnesota River Scenic Byway follows Highway 68 to Mankato where it goes through ‘old town,’ joins Highway 22 on the east side of the river, and continues on to Saint Peter. From Saint Peter the byway follows Highway 99 to Ottawa and Le Sueur.

Minnesota River Valley Birding Trail goes through both the Bend of the River and Kasota regions. The Bend of the River Region extends from Swan Lake WMA North Star Unit in the west, through Mankato to Eagle Lake Park and Gilfillian WMA in the east, and south to Red Jacket County Park. The Kasota Region south loop starts at the Kasota Prairie, loops out to Lake Washington County Park in the east, and extends west of Saint Peter to Oakleaf Lake and the Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area.

Snowmobile trails in the area are in road right-of-ways and cut through farm fields. Because signs and temporary bridges only mark these seasonal trails, private landowners are often more willing to allow them on their property. Many of the trails are on the bluff tops and the uplands.

The Lower Sioux Community leads the Commemorative March in the first week in November of even-numbered years. This march is held in memory of the Dakota women and children who were forced to march from the area that is now the Lower Sioux Reservation to an internment camp at Fort Snelling in the fall of 1862. Although the exact route is unknown, the Dakota oral accounts relate that it went through New Ulm and Henderson, so the commemorative march follows the river on Highway 169 through Mankato and Saint Peter.

The Mankato regional trails include the South Route trail and the Red Jacket Trail. The South Route trail connects to Minneopa State Park and follows County Road 90 to Highway 22. The Red Jacket Trail starts near downtown Mankato, follows the Le Sueur River and its bluffs south to Red Jacket County Park, and continues to Rapidan.

The Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail starts at Lime Valley Road just north of Mankato. It extends to the east through the lakes region to Fairbault.
CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING SYSTEMS
REGIONAL TRAIL OPTIONS
A system of trail loops provides a wide variety of experiences on both the western and eastern sides of the Minnesota River. Mankato, Saint Peter, Kasota, and Ottawa are connected by the trail options. The large number of high quality natural amenities guided the alignment of the trail loop options.
REGIONAL TRAIL OPTIONS

[Map showing proposed trails and landmarks such as Nicollet, Sandstone Hills Trail, Minnehaha Falls, Kasota Prairie Trail, and connections to Henderson & Rush River.]

Legend:
- Red: Proposed Trails
- Orange Circle: Proposed Trail Heads
- Brown: Municipal Boundaries
MINNEOPA TO KASOTA

Continuing from New Ulm, the trail goes through Minneopa State Park connecting to the South Route trail where the Red Jacket Trail goes north back to into the city to connect to the Riverside Trail, or the trail follows the railroad right of way to connect to the existing Riverside Trail that goes to Sibley Park. Located at the confluence of the Minnesota and Blue Earth rivers, Sibley Park is a large park with picnic areas, overlooks, baseball fields, gardens, a petting zoo, and a water access. A new trail bridge would connect Sibley Park to the Land of Memories Park and the campsite located on the other side of the Blue Earth River. All the amenities needed for a major trailhead are in these two parks.

Riverside Trail is very close to the river and the downtown and currently ends at Mankato’s north end near Highway 14. If it were to be extended to the Lime Valley Road to join the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail, the junction of the two trails would make a logical trailhead site.

The Sandstone Hills Trail travels through North Mankato up the bluff past farmsteads to Seven Mile Creek. The trail is aligned so that the user could bring their bikes down to the park’s existing hiking trails. A Seven Mile Creek County Park trailhead takes advantage of the park’s existing campsites, trails, and water access. Because of the park’s bluffs and scenic beauty, it is a good place to interpret the region’s geology. State Highway 169 divides the park in two visually, but a highway underpass connects the park’s two sections physically so the trail goes under the highway. If a bridge were built over the Minnesota River, the trail could connect directly to the Kasota Prairie Trail. If not, the trail continues along the bluff’s edge to Oakleaf Park and Saint Peter.

An additional option in this corridor is siting the trail in the Highway 169 right–of–way. The limited room between the river, highway, and steep limestone bluffs and property ownership issues limit this option.

The Kasota Prairie Trail is alongside Highway 22 for a short distance before moving towards the river along quiet gravel roads. Ranches and prairies are prevalent along this route as are filtered views of the river valley below. The trail passes the Kasota Prairie SNA, a Minnesota DNR managed site, and the 90-acre Kasota Prairie with hiking trails that managed by a non-profit organization. The trail travels through the area of many active stone quarries to the small historic town of Kasota, which is named for the beautiful architectural limestone quarried in this region.
From Kasota the trail joins an existing trail along Highway 22 and continues through Riverside Nature Park to Mill Pond Park and Saint Peter’s Chamber of Commerce. The trail crosses the historic Highway 99 Bridge to the Ottawa Bluffs trail.

The **Ottawa Bluffs Trail** follows the road right-of-way but it is constrained by private properties and the bluffs to the east and a substantial grade change to the west. The other option is shown in a dashed line. It follows an old railroad bed through the Ottawa WMA. Presently trails are not allowed through WMAs, but if the railroad still owns some right-of-way perhaps there is room for the trail. By staying on the bluff near the road, there are beautiful views of the wetlands and Saint Peter. The trail passes Ottawa Bluffs, an oak savanna habitat managed by the Nature Conservancy, continues through mining landscapes to the town of Ottawa, passes the Chamberlain Woods SNA and ends at LeSueur.

The **Glacial Lakes Trail** connects two state trails. This trail as shown in grey splits from the Ottawa Bluffs Trail, heads south through the unique lakes region, and connects to the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail.

On the west side of the river, the Sandstone Hills Trail continues to Oakleaf Lake past water quality interpretative site to meet the Historic Valley Community Loop.

The **Historic Valley Community Loop** is based on the Saint Peter’s trail master plan. This larger loop concept extends out to the bluff line to accommodate the future growth of the city. It heads north to Robart’s Creek, passes the Traverse Des Sioux Treaty Site, crosses State Highway 169 at Dodd Road to reach the Traverse Des Sioux Treaty Center and Museum, and travels back to Riverside Nature Park. The Traverse Des Sioux Museum, a major cultural and historic asset is a potential trailhead site.

At the north end of the Historic Valley Community Loop the trail continues along the bluff’s edge to Rush River and Henderson. Each of these Minnesota River State Trail options joins the Minnesota Valley Trail and the Minnesota Valley State Natural Area.
**SAINT PETER: HISTORIC VALLEY COMMUNITY**

**HISTORY**

**Pre-European Settlement:**
Saint Peter has long been a settlement site because it is located in the place where the prairie meets the Big Woods, and people depended on the resources from both biomes. Both Paleoindian and Archaic Native Americans have occupied this area. Settlements have been dated to 10,000 years ago. (Granger)

**Traverse Des Sioux:**
Traverse Des Sioux, a sharp bend/almost loop in the river, was an important Dakota crossing. Called “Oiyuwega” or “The Crossing” by the Dakota, it was named Traverse Des Sioux by the French explorers. This was the location of a Sisseton Dakota Band village. Red Iron was the band’s chief. When it became a popular crossing for French explorers and fur traders, it became a trading post as well as a Dakota village. In 1851 the United States and the Dakotas signed the Treaty of Traverse Des Sioux. With the treaty the Dakota ceded all of their land to the south except for a 10-mile strip on either side of the river from the South Dakota border to just up river from New Ulm. After the treaty was signed, European settlers came into this new territory almost immediately, and the Traverse Des Sioux site became a settlement in 1852. Its key location on the river made the new settlement prosperous, and soon it became the county seat. (Granger)

**Saint Peter’s Founding:**
In 1853 Captain Dodd claimed land just up stream from Traverse Des Sioux and named the town site Rockbend. In 1854-1855 the St. Peter Company was formed. Its influential business and political members wanted to promote this new village. It was platted in relation to the river so that all of the very wide streets are either parallel or perpendicular to the river. Over 200 blocks were platted. The company re-named Rockbend Saint Peter and began advertising offering free lots to business owners. Soon the community of Traverse Des Sioux could not compete because many of its settlers moved to Saint Peter. The Saint Peter Company unsuccessfully lobbied to move the new state capitol from Saint Paul to Saint Peter. In 1858 the county seat moved from Traverse Des Sioux to Saint Peter. (Granger) In 1874, Saint Peter’s bid for Gustavus Adolphus College was accepted. The college saw its first academic year in Saint Peter in 1876. (Waldhauser)

**Transportation, Agriculture, and Industry:**
Transportation was extremely important for this new frontier town. The ferries came first. The natural landing at the end of Broadway provided an ideal spot for crossing the river. When the lobbying efforts to get a railroad were successful and the line was built, the railroad completely changed the city. Farmers were drawn into the region because its fertile soils and the railroad made it possible to ship produce to outside markets making Saint Peter a huge exporter of grain. Farming supplies and other retailing flourished because of the farmer customers in the area. Front Street became the city’s main commercial street. The city also experienced industrial growth. Industries based on agriculture such as dairies, Engesser Brewing Co., and Saint Peter Woolen Mill, and other industries such as Johnson and Company clothing, cigar factories, and furniture factories were started. Local stone was and still is an extremely important resource for quarry mining in this area. One of the first quarries started in 1872. (Granger)

**Current Conditions:**
Presently, retail activity has moved from its original location facing the river on Front Street to a strip along Minnesota Avenue. Three blocks of the commercial heart of Saint Peter is designated as a historic district by the National Registry of Historic Places. Over 40 individual sites within the district and many that are very close to it are also on the registry. In 1998, a tornado struck the town and caused an extreme amount of damage to the city and the college. Many properties were damaged, some beyond repair and had to be razed, but others have been saved and repaired. Although many of the city’s mature trees were destroyed, an aggressive replanting program has replaced many with new, young trees. These new trees can be seen throughout Saint Peter.
Historical Photos

- 1870's lithograph of St. Peter
- Reflections of the Minnesota River Valley
- Plat of Traverse Des Sioux
- Hughes, Old Traverse Des Sioux
- Early downtown St. Peter
- Reflections of the Minnesota River Valley
- 1870's lithograph of St. Peter
- Reflections of the Minnesota River Valley
CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Because Saint Peter is located in a bowl that is bifurcated by the Minnesota River, changes in topography create views of the city from across the valley.

The city has historic residential, commercial, and civic buildings that date back to the nineteenth century European settlement. The city has important sites relating to Dakota culture. The Treaty of Traverse Des Sioux was signed in Saint Peter. It is also the location of a historic Dakota settlement, a traditional river crossing, and trading center. The Treaty History Center Museum is sited north of the business district between the highway and the river.

A number of natural amenities are located in and surround the city. These include Robarts Creek, the Ottawa Wildlife Management Area, the Ottawa Bluffs Nature Conservancy site, Riverside Park Natural Area, Traverse Des Sioux, Kasota Prairie, and Oakleaf Park.

Gustavus Adolphus College’s buildings create a striking presence when viewed from several major streets in the community below.
COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

Land Form:
The City of Saint Peter is located in the base of a bowl-shaped valley formed by the River Warren. At Saint Peter the valley is nearly two miles across, a dramatic and noticeable contrast to many other much narrower areas along the Minnesota River. The western side of the river, where Saint Peter is situated, is composed of a series of terraces and is noticeably different from the steeper eastern riverside. When viewed from below, near the river, Gustavus Adolphus College appears to be on the top of the bluff but it is actually on the crest of the middle terrace. The actual top of the bluff is even farther from the historic town core. The majority of the town sits on the lower terrace below the college. Newer residential development is on the middle terrace. Because Saint Peter is platted right on the river, part of the town is located within an extensive floodplain. Many of the buildings near the river, including the Traverse des Sioux Park, are in the flood plain.

Land Use:
Pockets of commercial land use dot the town, but most commercial uses are concentrated along Minnesota Avenue which is also busy State Highway 169. Saint Peter’s historic downtown is a vibrant place that could benefit from additional pedestrian and bicycle systems that support increased activity. Saint Peter’s industry is concentrated in an industrial district north of downtown and west of the highway. There are plans to expand this area with additional big box commercial uses. More mines are concentrated in the landscape around Saint Peter than in other parts of the Minnesota Valley because of the short distances to bedrock in this area. Active quarries and mines can be dangerous places, but they are also interesting places to see. The famous Kasota Stone quarries located just across the river from Saint Peter are points of interest.
The community center, public library, and a large city park are located on the edge of the middle and lower terraces among residential properties. The primary schools are also found along this slope.

Saint Peter has many small neighborhood parks. Minnesota Square Park located along Highway 169 is a major civic space. Mill Pond Park, Riverside Park and Transverse de Sioux Park are located along the Minnesota River. The large Ottawa Wildlife Management Area is just across the river from Saint Peter. Because trails cannot cut through this land, the beautiful scenery can be viewed from the trails that wrap around it.

Circulation:
Saint Peter has been very active in creating a trail system plan as part of the city’s comprehensive plan. Some parts of the trail system have been built, but many segments have yet to be constructed. The trail plan concentrates on the town’s newer neighborhoods in the outlying areas, and trails are not planned in older residential areas. Only a couple of trails segments bring trail users to the Minnesota River.

There is a conflict between the requirements of a major regional highway and the needs of a commercial main street in a small town. The very busy State Highway 169, the city’s main street, runs through Saint Peter’s linear historic downtown. The heavy traffic of numerous cars and large trucks undermines this monumental street’s potential for pedestrian use and eventually may cause damage to the historic commercial, civic, and residential buildings that make up the historic district.

Although there are a number of sidewalks in Saint Peter, many streets are without them. The wide streets without traffic lights at intersections make crossings difficult for pedestrians. Most parks have sidewalks that lead up to them, but in the places where the roads do not have sidewalks, people have to walk on the road to reach the parks.

Points of Interest:
Because Saint Peter is one of the earliest European settlements in the Minnesota River Valley, it has many of the valley’s oldest buildings and sites. The Traverse des Sioux Treaty was signed at a site within the town’s boundaries. A historic marker marks the site. The Treaty History Center run by the Nicollet County Historical Society is located nearby. A self-guided walking tour of Saint Peter created by community organizations includes the entire historic downtown. Gustavus Adolphus College and Linneaus Arboretum, Saint Peter Regional Treatment Centre and Museum, and the historic bridge are other places of interest within the town.

Many amenities are located within the city’s parks. The Traverse des Sioux Park and History Center have trails, a canoe launch, restrooms, and a museum. The Mill Pond Park and Riverside Park have a boat launch, camping area, restrooms, picnic pavilion, and a play area.
COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

Landform

- Uplands
- Valley Terraces
- River Flats
- Steep Slopes

Land Use

- Commercial
- Industry
- Mines, Gravel Pits
- Schools/Civic
- Parks
- Conservation Lands

Circulation

- Existing Trails
- Community Proposed Trails
- Major Roads
- Arterial Roads
- Railroad
- Critical Intersections

Points of Interest

- Historic Downtown
- Historical/Cultural Points of Interest
COMMUNITY ANALYSIS: TRAIL CONSTRAINTS

Saint Peter’s topography creates constraints for trail design. Trail design challenges occur at both the north and south entrances to Saint Peter because there are steep slopes on all sides of the town. The valley sides at the northern and southern ends of the town create pinch points that leave little room for a trail between the river, Highway 169, and the bluff edge. A large portion of the valley floor frequently floods, making it difficult to site trails in those areas where floods may wash out the trails or leave large sediment deposits on them. The slope up to Gustavus Adolphus College has a steep grade. While there are greater difficulties in winter when roads and sidewalks are slippery, this slope is a challenge for walking and biking year round.

Siting trails along high traffic roads can make trail use unpleasant and dangerous. Crossing busy thoroughfares at intersections without traffic control lights is also undesirable and dangerous. The high water table in the downtown makes underpasses unfeasible. However, the city does not have the challenges that some cities have. Areas of industrial use are usually areas to avoid for state trails. Unlike some other Minnesota River towns, most of Saint Peter’s industry is in a concentrated industrial area in the northern part of the city, so it can be easily bypassed by the state trail. The railroad does not pass through the city because the line is located east of town across the Minnesota River. If the trail or a connecting trail would go east to cross the river, it would also cross the railroad, and a safe crossing would need to be provided.
COMMUNITY ANALYSIS: TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

There is an opportunity to build on the segments of the community system that has already been built. New trail segments can provide a direct connection from downtown to the river, and they can create pedestrian friendly paths for residents to walk and bike to downtown. They can also fill in the gaps and connect all of the important town amenities. Bike lanes can be added on the wide streets through the older residential areas to provide safe routes to and from school for K-12 students as well as college students. Besides keeping cyclists off sidewalks, marked bike lanes on roads are easy to follow routes for visitors.

Mill Pond Park/Riverside Park and Traverse Des Sioux Treaty History Center with their existing amenities are well suited for trailheads. Because a parking lot, restrooms, trails, space for kiosks, and the Center already exist at Traverse Des Sioux, little would have to be changed to make it a trailhead. Trails need to be connected to the park. Because the actual Traverse des Sioux Treaty signing site is across Highway 169 from the park and the center and crossing the highway is dangerous, the opportunities for providing a safe crossing need to be addressed. Mill Pond and Riverside Parks are adjacent to each other along the river by downtown. A heavily used site for camping, a boat launch with parking for cars with boat trailers, a trail along the river, a children’s playground, restrooms, a picnic structure, and visitor parking are all currently in these parks.
COMMUNITY TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

- Parks
- Schools/Civic
- Historic Downtown
- Mines, Gravel Pits
- Conservation Lands
- Cultural/Historical Points of Interest

Existing Trails
Ideal Trailhead Locations
COMMUNITY TRAIL OPTIONS

The City of Saint Peter already has an extensive plan for community trails. This project’s design/planning work builds on the community’s existing plans by proposing additional trails to help build critical connections within the community and between the community and the river. New trail segments provide a direct connection from downtown to the river, and they create pedestrian friendly access to downtown. On-road designated bike lanes in the city’s core knits the existing and proposed system together into a cohesive trail network. New painted bike lanes on selected wide streets through the older residential areas provide safe routes to and from school for elementary and secondary students as well as college students. Besides keeping cyclists off sidewalks, marked bike lanes on roads make routes easy to follow for visitors. The major trails that connect to the river are: Jefferson Avenue, College Avenue, Mulberry Street, Nassau Street, and Broadway Avenue. By the river these bike lanes become paved bike trails that connect to the proposed Riverside Trail. Third Street and Washington Avenue are the major north-south connections linking the majority of the schools, civic spaces, and many historic houses.

The state trail enters Saint Peter’s network of trails either from Oakleaf Lake in the southwest following Highway 99, or from Kasota in the southeast following Highway 22. From Broadway Avenue the trail follows the Ottawa Road or passes Robert’s Creek along county roads to go north to Henderson.

The City of St. Peter is planning to extend its future development to the western bluff line. A greenway system is planned to link this future growth to the existing city and its amenities. This study makes a large loop around the city that extends to the river and back around to Traverse Des Sioux and Robert’s Creek.

Trailheads are proposed at Mill Pond Park and Traverse Des Sioux Treaty History Center.
RIVER CONNECTIONS & HIGHWAY 169

Because Saint Peter’s grid system of streets runs parallel and perpendicular to the river, there is an opportunity for strong connections between the community and the river. Bike lanes located on Jefferson Avenue, College Avenue, Mulberry Street, Nassau Street, and Broadway Avenue go right to the river. These connecting streets were chosen based on their proximity to community civic places and amenities. Jefferson Avenue connects Gustavus Adolphus College, its arboretum, and South Elementary School to the river. College Avenue provides a direct connection between the College’s main entry and historic Old Main and the river. Although bike lanes would be useful on this street, the slopes between Washington Avenue and the college are quite steep. The framed view from the river up the terrace to Old Main is powerful enough to warrant College Avenue as a major river connector. Mulberry Street connects the new community center and library, Gorman Park, and the Nicollet County Courthouse to the new main entry into Mill Pond Park/Riverside Park Trailhead. Nassau Street directly connects the Middle and High School to Mill Pond Park by passing through the downtown core. Near the Middle/High School the road ends, and the trail turns left towards Grace Street to follow the existing bike lane into the community trail system. Broadway Avenue connects the top of the bluff, future development, and the proposed greenway to the historic bridge crossing and ferry landing at Levee Park. Each of these connections would require a traffic light at their Highway 169 intersections for safe access to the river.

The Future of Highway 169/Minnesota Avenue:

“Highway 169 is a high priority interregional corridor between Mankato and the Twin Cities that carries heavy truck traffic and an increasing amount of commuter traffic. In St. Peter, Highways 22 and 99 and numerous city streets intersect Highway 169. The highway forms the city’s main street through the central business district that is also a historic district. The U.S. Highway 169 Corridor Management Plan dated May 2002 identified several issues within St. Peter and along the corridor. “The combination of through traffic, local traffic and pedestrians in Saint Peter results in needs to reduce traffic, operational difficulties at some intersections, and safety problems. The pavement and municipal utilities under the highway are aging. Furthermore, the dual uses of the highway as an interregional corridor and as a main street through an historic central business district are potentially in conflict.” (MNDOT Study in St. Peter)

The Minnesota Department of Transportation has taken a short-term and long-term approach to their analysis of Saint Peter’s transportation needs. “The Corridor Management Plan identified three potential bypass alternatives. Significant environmental and engineering studies are needed before a preferred alternative is selected. The high cost of a bypass ($50 million) make a project unlikely within 20 years.” (MNDOT Study in St. Peter)

A bypass outside of town would potentially take all traffic and economic benefit out of the downtown business district. Therefore, the City of Saint Peter has been partial to a bypass on Front Street between the river and the downtown. However, this would cut the community off from a connection to the river.

As a short-term measure, raised medians will be placed in the downtown district to “channelize traffic and improve pedestrian safety.” (MNDOT Study in St. Peter) Openness and width are parts of the historic character of this street/highway. Because of this and the status of downtown as an historic district, medians and any new plantings cannot exceed thirty inches in height.

This study sought to strengthen the connections between the community, its downtown, and the river. Because the median project is to be built in 2009, this study proposes suggestions to enhance the median plan that connects the community to the downtown and the river. The study also proposes a more visionary option for the future that provides redevelopment/development opportunities in the business district.

In the future option, State Highway 169 becomes a one-way pair in the heart of Saint Peter. Near the junction of Highway 22 and Highway 169, the highway would split into two one-way roads. Front Street is widened to receive northbound traffic. Minnesota Avenue’s road width is decreased to accommodate southbound traffic only. The divided highway would be easier to cross, access to the river will be provided, and traffic will still go through downtown to support local businesses.
DOWNTOWN TO THE RIVER

The drawing shows this study’s proposal for the future of downtown with a divided highway. The one-way highway on Front Street provides development/redevelopment opportunities for new mixed uses that face the riverfront. Currently, the city’s main retail area is concentrated in a linear pattern on either side of Minnesota Avenue/Highway 169 with little room for expansion. This new highway configuration opens the way for a stronger concentration of businesses in the downtown core by reviving Front Street as an important commercial street as it once was.

Streets with bike lanes bring pedestrians and trail users into the downtown historic district. Dense street tree plantings along these “river connectors” help to define the route and provide a contrast to the openness of Minnesota Avenue/Highway 169. Mulberry Street connects to Mill Pond Park and the new Riverside Trailhead with a new formal entry into the park that passes by the courthouse. Nassau Street provides a framed view to the Mill Pond and its amenities. The Nassau Street entry into the park would be closed to vehicles becoming a wide pedestrian mall and plaza overlooking the pond and the park. Broadway Avenue provides trail users with connections to Levee Park, the Chamber of Commerce, the historic bridge crossing, and the state trail.

Existing Downtown Land Use  Proposed Downtown Land Use

|   Existing Commercial   |   Proposed Commercial   |
|   Existing Underutilized Commercial   |   Proposed Institutional   |
|   Existing Institutional   |   Proposed Mixed Use   |
|   Proposed Multi-Family   |
DOWNTOWN TO THE RIVER
DOWNTOWN TO THE RIVER: BIKE LANE OPTIONS

The options for creating bike lanes within the city’s established residential neighborhoods that connect existing bike paths, neighborhood amenities, downtown, and the river area are shown in these cross sectional drawings. As the bike lanes approach the downtown district, the sections change to respond to the downtown design options that are presented on pages 152 and 154.

Jefferson Avenue, Washington Avenue College Avenue and Broadway Avenue are all very wide streets that have three design options. If street parking were eliminated, there would be room for an 8-foot planted median, 14-foot driving lanes, and 6-foot bike lanes. The median trees calm traffic to create a safer cycling environment. If parallel parking is kept on one side of the street, there is room for 14-foot driving lanes and 6-foot bike lanes. If parallel parking is kept on both sides of the street, the parking lane is 9 feet, bike lanes are 4 feet, and driving lanes are 11 feet.

On Nassau Street and Mulberry Street, the narrower residential streets that connect to downtown and the river, parking and bike lanes cannot co-exist. By removing on-street parking, room for 6-foot bike lanes and 12-foot driving lanes is made.
48’ RESIDENTIAL ROADWAY WITH BIKE LANES
- PARKING ON ONE SIDE ONLY
- WIDE DRIVING & BIKING LANES FOR SAFETY

48’ ROADWAY WITH BIKE LANES & PLANTED MEDIAN
- NO PARKING ON STREET
- PLANTED MEDIAN FOR BIKE SAFETY & TRAFFIC CALMING

48’ RESIDENTIAL ROADWAY WITH BIKE LANES
- PARKING ON BOTH SIDES
- NARROW DRIVING, PARKING, & BIKE LANES

36’ ROADWAY WITH BIKE LANES
- NO PARKING
- WIDE BIKE LANES FOR SAFETY

PRECEDENETS

SUMMIT AVENUE, ST. PAUL, MN
- BIKE LANES
- NO PARKING

SUMMIT AVENUE, ST. PAUL, MN
- BIKE LANES
- PARKING ON BOTH SIDES

SUMMIT AVENUE, ST. PAUL, MN
- BIKE LANES
- PARKING
- CENTRAL BOULEVARD
FUTURE DOWNTOWN DESIGN OPTION: Highway 169 as One Way Pair

This design addresses the problem of having Minnesota Avenue/Highway 169 function both as Saint Peter’s main street and a major regional highway simultaneously by making it into a pair of one-way roads as it goes through the heart of Saint Peter. It puts the southbound traffic on Minnesota Avenue and the northbound traffic on Front Street.

This design strategy improves the main street quality of Minnesota Avenue considerably.

Minnesota Avenue is reduced to three traffic lanes with parallel parking on both sides of the street. Bump-outs slow traffic and create shorter, safer pedestrian crossings at intersections. In areas where they are allowed, street trees create a defined pedestrian environment to support downtown activity and vitality. In the historic blocks where street trees are not allowed, Kasota stone planters line the sidewalks to provide a planted edge that buffers pedestrians from traffic as depicted in Section A. The new wide sidewalks provide pedestrian circulation, areas for seating and displays, and the potential for sidewalk cafes and coffee shops.

The design for Front Street is similar to the Minnesota Avenue design. The street is widened to accommodate three traffic lanes and parallel parking. Because there are no historic district restrictions on street trees on Front Street, a row of street trees instead of planters define the edge between the future development, the pedestrian walkway, and highway as depicted in Section B.

Making Front Street one half of the Highway 169 one-way pair creates opportunities for redevelopment/development. Currently the downtown is a thin linear strip on either side of 169/Minnesota Avenue. There is little room for expansion, creating concerns about new and existing commercial activity locating/relocating away from the historic core. Losing businesses downtown would lessen the downtown’s vitality. Much of the land along Front Street is underutilized. Redesigning Front Street creates opportunities for mixed-use development/redevelopment. By concentrating commercial and residential uses on Front Street, downtown becomes a more active, vital place. Land becomes better utilized and more valuable, the downtown is expanded, downtown activity is increased, and the connections to the park and the river are supported. The development/redevelopment areas are highlighted in yellow.

Bike lanes on Mulberry Street, Nassau Street, and Broadway Avenue connect both to downtown and the river. Dense street trees, planters, and a detailed paving pattern identify the intersections of Minnesota Avenue and Front Street. The existing angled parking on these streets is converted to parallel parking in downtown to accommodate bike lanes as shown in Section D on page 160.
FUTURE DOWNTOWN DESIGN OPTION
The currently proposed median plan is linked to a river and community connection strategy in the interim option for downtown. This interim option does not provide the same opportunity for development/redevelopment along Front Street. Highway 169 stays on Minnesota Avenue and Front Street would not be widened and redesigned. Minnesota Avenue/Highway 169 continues to accommodate four lanes of traffic, a turn lane, and parallel parking. Traffic would be separated in areas where segments of the turn lane become a raised median. At the Park Row Street and Grace Street intersections the median widens to accommodate plantings and crosswalks and through traffic is eliminated on these streets. Sidewalks remain at their existing width. Bump-outs promote safer pedestrian crossings by decreasing the length of the crossing and slowing traffic. This option for Minnesota Avenue is shown in Section C. The trees, planters, and decorative paving pattern at the bike lane intersections are same as the Future Downtown Design Option as shown in Section D.
RIVERSIDE TRAILHEAD AT MILL POND PARK

This future design of Mill Pond Park builds on the investments that have been made and expands on them to continue the redevelopment of this area. In order for this site to realize its full potential as an important public space that ties the city to the river, some existing buildings and the power-substation are eliminated or re-located. An alternative plan, seen on page 164, keeps the power station.

Nassau Street is an axis that provides a grand entry into the park that has a framed view of the Mill Pond, the picnic pavilion, and the performance platform. This enhanced civic space also has a pedestrian mall and plaza for markets and art fairs. A new city hall and the Minnesota State Trail Information Center are located across from each other on Nassau Street. Ramps that meet the Americans Disability Act (ADA) standards lead to the viewing platform and stage overlooking Mill Pond. The round shape and the sloping banks of the Mill Pond are used to create an outdoor amphitheatre for concerts and other live entertainment that has the pond at its center. The banks are terraced with Kasota stone and grass to create seating. Pedestrian paths circle the Mill Pond at the base and the top of the terraces to provide access from either level.

A new open-air picnic pavilion is aligned on the axis with the Nassau pedestrian entry as shown in the section below. A plaza surrounds the pavilion providing space for events and concerts. The existing comfort station is remodeled to reflect the architecture of the picnic pavilion. An open green behind the picnic pavilion provides space for recreation while accommodating the grade change.

The state bike trail is located on the platted but never built Market Street through Riverside Park. It curves to meet the trailhead center and city hall, moves north to enter Levee Park, and passes the Chamber of Commerce. A city bike trail loop is closer to the river. It wraps around the pond, the picnic pavilion, and the comfort station to meet the state trail as it enters Levee Park. The main park road skirts around the Mill Pond to the existing canoe launch, recreational vehicle camping area, and the boat launch. A new park entry off of Mulberry Street and the existing exit on Park Row Street provide access to this road. A small parking lot for city hall employees and visitors is located near the north entry on Park Row Street.
SAINT PETER: HISTORIC VALLEY COMMUNITY

RIVERSIDE TRAILHEAD AT MILL POND PARK

If re-locating the power sub-station is not an option, or if the design is implemented in phases, this plan illustrates how to accommodate the existing power sub-station into the larger park design. The power sub-station stays in its present location behind city hall. The state trail is re-routed along the side of city hall and turns north in front of city hall to parallel the pedestrian path into Levee Park. Because the sidewalk and the trail are next to each other, different paving patterns distinguish the pedestrian walkway from the state trail. The city bike trail stays the same, but meets the state trail in Levee Park near the Chamber of Commerce. City hall parking is reduced slightly, so parallel parking on Front Street accommodates additional parking.
TRAILHEAD OPTION WITH POWER SUBSTATION

- New City Hall
- State Trail
- City Hall Parking for 13 Vehicles
- To State Trail
- Existing Power Substation
- Existing Conifer Screen
- City Bike Trail

- Pedestrian Mall & Events Area
- Trailhead Information Center & Cafe
- State Trail
- ADA-Accessible Ramp Access
- Overlook Plaza & Stage