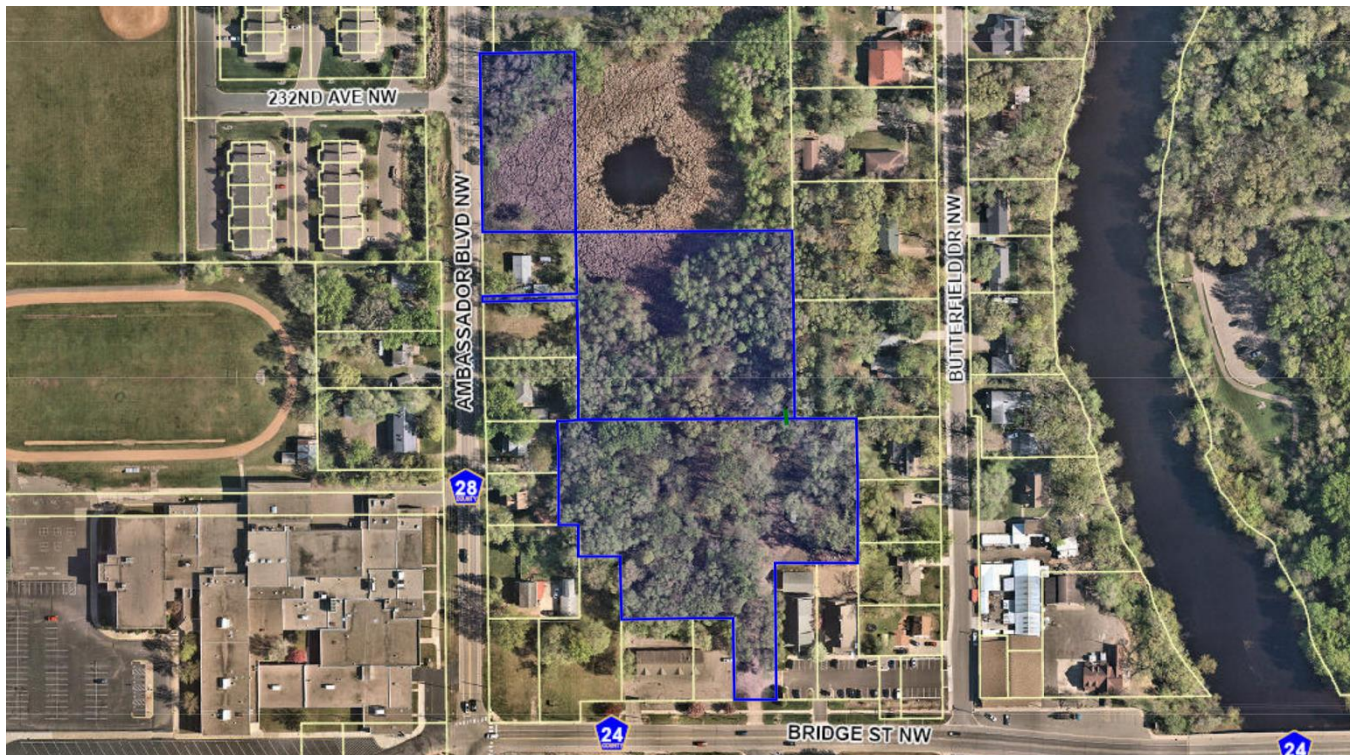


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**TO:** St. Francis Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Jason Zimmerman, Consulting Planner  
**SUBJECT:** St. Francis Apartments Concept Review  
**DATE:** 4-10-2025 for 4-16-2025 meeting  
**APPLICANT:** North Shore Development Partners  
**LOCATION:** 3731 Bridge St NW and PID 32-34-24-31-0016  
**COMP PLAN:** Medium Density Residential and Medium/High Density Residential  
**ZONING:** R-2 and R-3

### **OVERVIEW**

The applicant, North Shore Development Partners, represented by Matt Alexander, has applied for review and discussion of a concept plan for the development of a multifamily rental building on an approximately 6-acre site located at 3731 Bridge St NW and an adjacent parcel to the north (PID 32-34-24-31-0016). These properties are north of City Hall and interior to the block bounded by Ambassador Blvd NW and Butterfield Dr NW. The proposed use is a 120-unit apartment building that would be accessed via a new public street that would be constructed to the south and west.



The purpose of a concept plan is to provide the applicant with an advisory review of a specific development concept before the applicant enters into binding agreements, incurs substantial expense, or files a formal application. This process is intended to inform the applicant of the alignment with the City's Comprehensive Plan and to identify elements of the development concept which may not be in compliance with current requirements. Staff, the Planning Commission, and the City Council will review the concept and identify areas for discussion. Ultimately, the goal is to provide feedback to the applicant who can then determine whether or not the development is worth pursuing.

## **PROPOSAL**

The applicant is proposing to work with the City to coordinate the development of a two phase apartment building. 120 units would be developed at full build-out, with 60 units constructed in each phase. The four story building would be U-shaped with an opening to a central courtyard facing south towards Bridge St NW. First floor garages would provide some parking, while additional spaces would be provided in parking lots to the north, east, and south. For phase 1, only the west half of the building and the parking lot to the north would be constructed, along with outdoor amenity spaces (a pickleball court and a dog park) in the adjacent open space. A new stormwater pond to the east would manage runoff. Once land is dedicated for new public roads, the site would be reduced in size to approximately 4.25 acres.

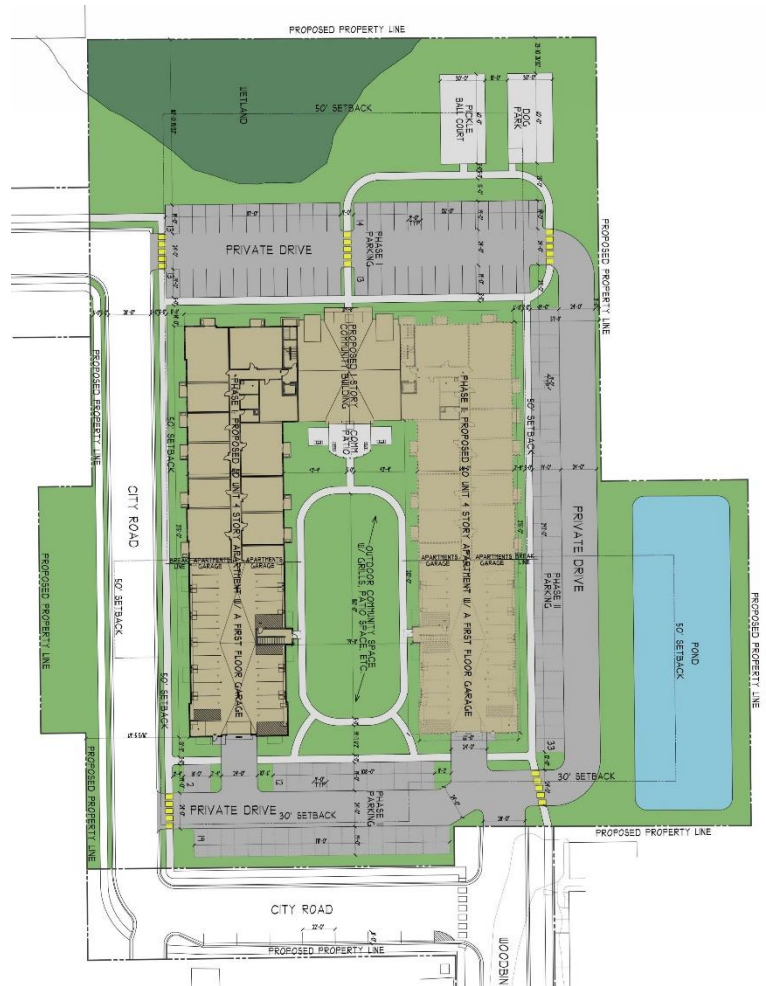
## **ANALYSIS**

### ***Land Use***

This property is primarily guided for two separate land uses in the Comprehensive Plan. The south half of the site is guided for medium/high density residential use (7-12 units per acre) while the north half is guided for medium density residential use (3-7 units per acre). A small portion of the northern lot is guided for low density residential use (2-3 units per acre).

The proposed concept is generally consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. A goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to "maintain a healthy balance between residential, commercial, business park/office, and park/open space land uses" within the city. A specific policy is to support redevelopment along Bridge Street into housing in order to build the City's residential base and stimulate demand for retailers and businesses.

Opportunities for development and redevelopment along Bridge Street were explored in the 2017 St. Francis Forward Plan. In that plan, this site is identified for housing infill development, though at a lower density than what is currently being proposed. If the current proposal were to



move forward, a Comprehensive Plan Amendment would be needed to reclassify these properties as High Density Residential use (12-20 units per acre). Even with this designation, the proposed density of 120 units on 4.25 acres (28 units per acre) is greater than what is allowed. In order to meet the density requirements, the number of units would need to be reduced to 85, the size of the development would need to be increased to 6 acres, or some combination of the two adjustments would need to be made.

### ***Zoning***

The site is currently zoned R-2 and R-3, similar to how it is guided in the Comprehensive Plan, with a portion of the northern lot zoned R-1 (Urban Low Density Detached Residential). R-2 (Medium Density Detached and Attached Residential) and R-3 (High Density Residential) both support attached housing, though the R-2 district is focused on townhome or rowhouse development while the R-3 district allows apartment buildings. If this proposal were to move forward, the R-2 property (to the north) would need to be rezoned to R-3. Given the proposed zoning, staff has evaluated the project using the R-3 district requirements.

### ***R-3 District Standards***

The R-3 District is intended to provide for higher density attached residential housing types in a vertical or horizontal orientation within the Urban Service Area. This district is intended to support areas of greater concentrations of commercial, employment, and public activity. For apartment uses, 2,000 square feet of lot area is required per unit. At 120 units, 240,000 square feet of lot area would be needed. Once land is dedicated for public roads, the remaining site is anticipated to only be approximately 184,000 square feet in size. This will need to be addressed prior to consideration of approval – either through a modification in the number of units or the size of the site, or through a variance request or the use of a Planned Unit Development (PUD). The site does mean the minimum lot width standard of 100 feet.





Zoning Map

With the inclusion of the new public road, the site would have two front yards (west and south). Each front yard would require a setback of 30 feet. Interior side yard setbacks are 10 feet and the rear yard setback is 25 feet. As shown, the building placement would need to be adjusted in order to meet the front yard setback to the west. A 50 foot setback is required from the R-1 zoned properties to the east; this distance appears to be met.

Building height is limited to 4 stories or 50 feet, whichever is less. As described, the apartment building would be 4 stories high.

The Zoning Code requires a minimum floor area (dwelling unit size) as determined by the unit type (number of bedrooms). At this time, absent floor plans, it cannot be determined if the proposed apartment meets the following standards:

Unit Type	Minimum Area
Efficiency units	500 square feet
1 bedroom units	700 square feet
2 bedroom units	800 square feet
More than 2 bedroom units	An additional 80 feet for each additional bedroom

### ***Topography and Wetlands***

The site is relatively flat with a slight slope downwards from south to north. A portion of the northern lot includes a wetland. As designed, the wetland would not be impacted by the

apartment building or its northern parking lot. A vegetated buffer 16.5 feet wide is required along the delineated edge of the wetland. Structures must be set back 30 feet.

### ***Parcel Remnant***

As currently shown, a portion of the northern lot that abuts Ambassador Blvd NW would not be developed as part of this proposal. This is the part of the site that is guided for low density residential use and zoned accordingly. The Planning Commission should confirm with the applicant the intended use for this remnant following construction of the apartment building.

### ***Access***

The property is located north of Bridge St NW. It can currently only be accessed via an unimproved driveway between the Subway restaurant and Milestone Orthodontics. The City owns this land and intends to construct an extension of Woodbine St NW which would wrap around the west side of the apartment property and connect to Ambassador Blvd NW mid-block. Access into the site from this road extension would happen at three locations – one at the northwest corner of the building and the other two at the south end of the property.

Ambassador Blvd NW is a County road and the City will therefore coordinate the design of the new intersection with the Anoka County Highway Department.

### ***Parking***

The applicant is proposing first floor enclosed parking spaces for each phase of construction (total number of spaces unknown) with 52 phase 1 surface lot spaces and 66 phase 2 surface lot spaces (118 total). Required parking for apartment buildings is based on the type of unit (number of bedrooms). Without floor plans, it cannot be determined if the proposed parking meets the City's requirements. However, at least one space per unit must be enclosed which equates to 120 enclosed parking spaces.

Unit Type	Minimum Area
Apartment	1.5 spaces per efficiency and 1 bedroom unit
	2.25 spaces per unit for 2 or more bedroom units
	1 space per unit shall be enclosed

No parking is allowed within 5 feet of a property line. Along the west property line, the parking setback may need to be adjusted.

No indication has been made at this time regarding snow storage – appropriate measures should be taken to plan for where snow will be placed during the winter so as not to take up parking spaces.

### ***Pedestrian Facilities***

Sidewalks are shown encircling the building, along the parking lots, and leading to the outdoor amenities. City code requires that sidewalks abutting parking stalls must be 6 feet wide. This dimension should be confirmed as refined plans are prepared.

### ***Landscaping***

No landscaping plan has been prepared. The applicant should be aware that the minimum number of caliper inches of trees required is the gross square footage of all floors of the

building divided by 320. Other landscaping standards require a diversity of species. As currently shown, there are long stretches of the parking lot lacking landscaping – parking lot islands with trees should be considered.

Site standards limit impervious coverage to 50% of the area. When the second phase of the building and additional parking lots are constructed, this threshold may be surpassed.

### ***Signage***

One monument sign is allowed with a maximum height of 6 feet and a maximum sign area of 32 square feet.

### ***Exterior Building Materials***

No building elevations have been prepared, so no evaluation of the exterior materials can be performed.

## **QUESTIONS**

In addition to any issues raised by the analysis above, staff recommends discussing the following questions:

1. What is planned for the northern parcel remnant that would not be developed as part of this proposal?
2. What types of materials and architectural features are being considered for the apartment building?
3. What is the anticipated timing between the construction of phase 1 and phase 2?
4. Prior to the construction of phase 2, how would the undeveloped portion of the site be maintained?

## **ACTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED**

The Planning Commission is requested to provide feedback to the applicant on the proposed concept. No motion is required. Comments shared are not binding on the City nor do they constitute official assurances or representations of the City on future recommendations or approvals. The City Council will also review the concept and provide feedback.

As submitted, the current concept does not align with some City regulations – primarily with respect to the maximum density allowed on the site, which also relates to the required lot area per unit. Minor questions remain to be addressed around setbacks and landscaping which will be evaluated as more refined plans are developed.

If the applicant chooses to proceed with the project following concept plan review, they would need to seek amendments to the Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan as well as a Zoning Map Amendment

## **ATTACHMENT**

- Concept Plan