

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)

MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

November 23, 2020

Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Jesse Gislason, Emily Lien, Pam Rosenau, Joanna Schrupp and Brittany VanDerBill

Excused: Melissa Knott

Absent: Donna Boonstra

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Diane Beck, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chair Brittany VanDerBill called the meeting to order at approximately 12:03 p.m.

Aaron Backman reported the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners allocated an additional \$194,000 from its remaining \$258,000 CARES Act funds to the EDC for distribution. The EDC distributed the funds to 48 businesses, mostly restaurants. Recipients have been notified and checks have been issued and picked up or mailed.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Joanna Schrupp, SECONDED BY Emily Lien, to approve the Minutes of the October 26, 2020 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

Social Media Statistics. Backman presented the website statistics for October 19 through November 15, 2020 noting new users of 218 and over 1,000 active users. The top landing pages were the home page, business loan programs, news, major employers and transportation.

Backman provided the following Facebook statistics from October 19 to November 15: Page views 104 (▲ 14%), page likes 10 (▲ 25%), post reach 928 (▼ 51%) and post engagement 106 (▼ 62%). The top five posts were:

- COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program by United Community Action Partnership—reach 372;
 - Aaron noted Kandiyohi County and units of government have allocated 46% of their CARES Act funds for business assistance and nonprofit organizations compared to Hennepin County which is 30 times the size of Kandiyohi County who allocated just over 10% of their CARES Act funds for business assistance.
- HelpNow resource for homework help through the Willmar Public Library—reach 352;
- Newsletter article on the Willmar Renaissance Zone—reach 85;

- MnDOT weather-related traffic map—reach 78; and
- West Central Tribune’s “Making an Impact” publication—reach 73.
 - Backman commented additional copies of the publication are available at the EDC office.

Backman reported approximately 71% of women, ranging in age of 35-44, compared to 28% of men are viewing the EDC’s Facebook posts

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Update Ag Flyer. Connie Schmoll reported the Ag flyer has been reformatted by REDstar. Search continues for new photos and statistics for the flyer.

Broadband Speed Test. Schmoll reported there was a marketing push for the broadband speed test and shared Kandiyohi County provided \$10,000 to market the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition speed test. She participated in Open Mic last week to promote the broadband speed test. Schrupp voiced dissatisfaction with some Internet providers in the area. Pam Rosenau commented she has a contact for MVTV. Schmoll shared she has been working on a project with some townships to look at a broadband study. She commented Federated Telephone Cooperative is interested in looking at additional projects for a study, depending upon cost. The maximum state grant is \$10 million. Schmoll will bring back information to the townships to reassess if they are willing to move forward on a study.

NEW BUSINESS—Backman referred to the Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (CMJTS) flyer regarding the opportunity to earn a CDL through participation in the CMJTS CARES Pandemic Relief program (see attached). CMJTS used its EDC CARES Act grant funds of \$29,500 to partner with Ridgewater College for nontraditional students to participate in the CDL program. Currently, two participants have passed the course, and more applicants are being considered.

Marketing Materials for Willmar Renaissance Zone. Backman shared information on the city of Willmar Renaissance Zone (see attached). Incentives for the program include: reduced permit fees, façade renovation forgivable loan program, city-owned land incentives and tax abatement. He shared the tax abatement process/opportunities, loan program and incentives. Backman stated Dave Ramstad with the city of Willmar asked the EDC to assist with marketing of the Opportunity Zone and the Renaissance Zone. Suggestions from committee members were:

- Social Media Ads
- LinkedIn
- Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)
- Revamp Flyers/Maps
 - Less detail, but an overview to create interest, slim down, one page
 - Create interest and have interested parties make the contact
 - Reach out to REDstar regarding flyer
- Send to business list via EDC Constant Contact
- Connect with Justin Erickson of CVN

- Reach out to EDAM or other development groups
- Site Selector groups
 - Schmoll has a contact list

A video was discussed but committee members suggested to wait until there has been some success. Backman encouraged committee members to send additional ideas to him. The marketing discussion will continue at the December meeting.

Backman inquired if the December 28th meeting should be moved to January 25th. Committee members concurred to move the next meeting to January 25th.

Chair VanDerBill inquired if Emily Lien, current Vice Chair, will be taking over the Chairperson position at the January 2021 meeting. Discussion held regarding a new Vice Chair; Schmoll suggested Pam Rosenau.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, January 25, 2021** via ZOOM video conference.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.



CMJTS

Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc.

www.cmjts.org



Equal Opportunity Employer and Program Provider

Workforce excellence is **CENTRAL** to all we do.

Upon request the information in this document can be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities by calling 800-284-7425.



CARES Pandemic Relief — a career in **TRANSPORTATION**

A collaboration of partners:



RIDGEWATER
COLLEGE
Willmar Campus

This program is made possible through Kandiyohi County CARES Act Pandemic Relief funds for nonprofit organizations.

Start your path to a great paying career!

Earn your CDL through participation in the **CMJTS CARES Pandemic Relief program**

- Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training and exam
- Support from CMJTS and Ridgewater College staff
- Job search assistance

Basic Eligibility Requirements

18 years of age or older

Valid driver's license

Criminal background check

Drug testing

Clean driving record

Ability to pass a DOT physical exam

Basic math and reading skills

No DUI conviction in past 5 years

Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services, Inc. (CMJTS)

For more information, contact:

Vanessa Gerhardson

vgerhardson@cmjts.org ■ 320.249.7650

11-20



Renaissance Zone

A program to promote development, creativity, and vibrancy in the Central Business District & surrounding neighborhoods.

What incentives have been created for this program?

- Reduced Permit Fees
- Façade Renovation Forgivable Loan Program
- City-Owned Land Incentives
- Tax Abatement

Reduced Permit Fees:

All Building Permit, Water & Sewer Access Charges, Land-Use (e.g. Conditional Use Permits), and Sign Applications for projects within the Renaissance Zone will automatically receive the reduction in City fees.

Façade Renovation Forgivable Loan Program:

Property owners can apply for \$5,000 & \$10,000 matching loans for Façade Renovation projects on commercial & mixed-use buildings. Loans are eligible for 20% forgiveness per year, up to the full loan amount after 5 years. The City will award up to \$50,000 each year, starting in 2021.

City-Owned Land Incentives:

Applications for reduced or free City-owned land will be considered on the project's economic impact (job creation, capital investment, environmental, and/or social benefits).

Tax Abatement:

Projects must meet minimum thresholds:

- At least 10,000 square feet (gross)
- At least 3 stories
- At least 4 dwelling-units (mixed-use with housing component)
- At least 10 dwelling-units (residential only, 5% designated for households less than or equal to 80% AMI)
- Renovation projects shall be an investment of at least 50% of current assessed value

Tax Abatement will generally follow the minimum investment thresholds table, and are subject to Planning Commission, Community Development Committee, & City Council review and approval.

Every project is unique!

Every detail of the Renaissance Zone program cannot be explained in a handout. If you're exploring the possibility of a project, schedule a time to meet with City Staff & talk about your project vision.

Contact Us:

City of Willmar
 David Ramstad
 Planning & Development Director
 320-214-5184
dramstad@willmarmn.gov

Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC
 Aaron Backman
 Executive Director
 320-235-7370
aaron@kandiyohi.com

2020 MINIMUM INVESTMENT THRESHOLDS			
Term	Renovation	New Construction	Abatement Percentage
<u>5 years</u>	<u>\$30 SF</u>	<u>\$50 SF</u>	<u>100%, Years 1-5</u>
<u>10 years</u>	<u>\$45 SF</u>	<u>\$75 SF</u>	<u>100%, Years 1-5</u> <u>75%, Years 6-10</u>
<u>15 years</u>	<u>\$60+ SF</u>	<u>\$100+ SF</u>	<u>100%, Years 1-5</u> <u>75%, Years 6-10</u> <u>50%, Years 11-15</u>

To apply, visit https://willmarmn.gov/departments/planning_and_development/

How can I access these incentives?

Reductions of permit fees are automatically applied for all projects within the Renaissance Zone. All other incentives require submission of an application, found on the City's website.

How are incentives awarded?

Most incentives require the approval of Planning Commission, Community Development Committee, and City Council. Decisions are based off of a rubric that evaluates how the project meets the City's Renaissance Zone Objectives and Viability of the project. This rubric is available on the City's website.

I am a current property owner & planning a renovation of my existing building. Can I apply?

Yes! Reduced permit fees will automatically be applied to your project when applying for permits. Applications for tax abatement allow for a reduced \$/square foot investment for renovation projects. If your renovation includes work on your commercial building's Façade, we've created the forgivable loan program just for you!

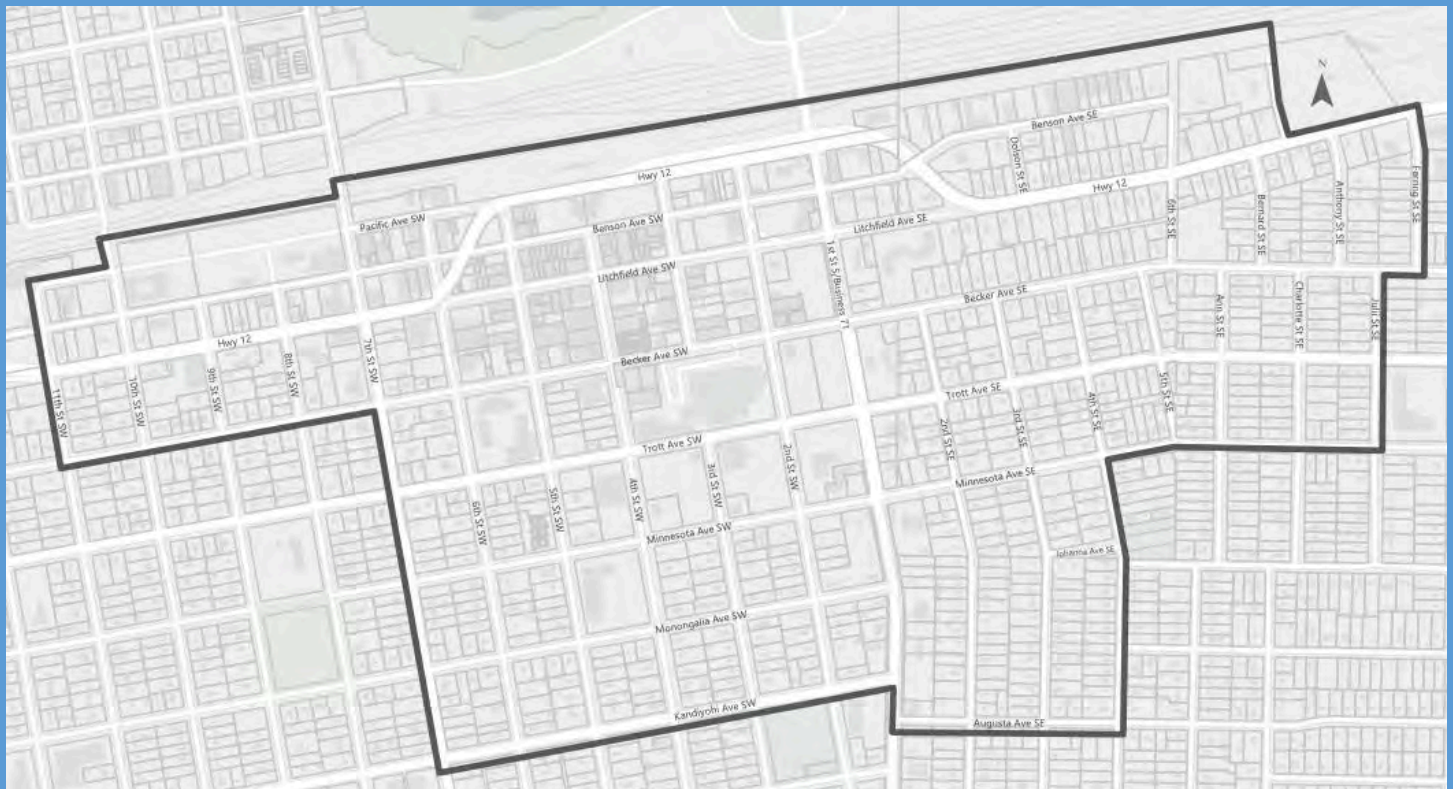
I own a house within the Renaissance Zone. Are any of these incentives relevant to me?

Reductions of permit fees are automatically applied for all projects within the Renaissance Zone!

Is the creation of the Renaissance Zone Program complete?

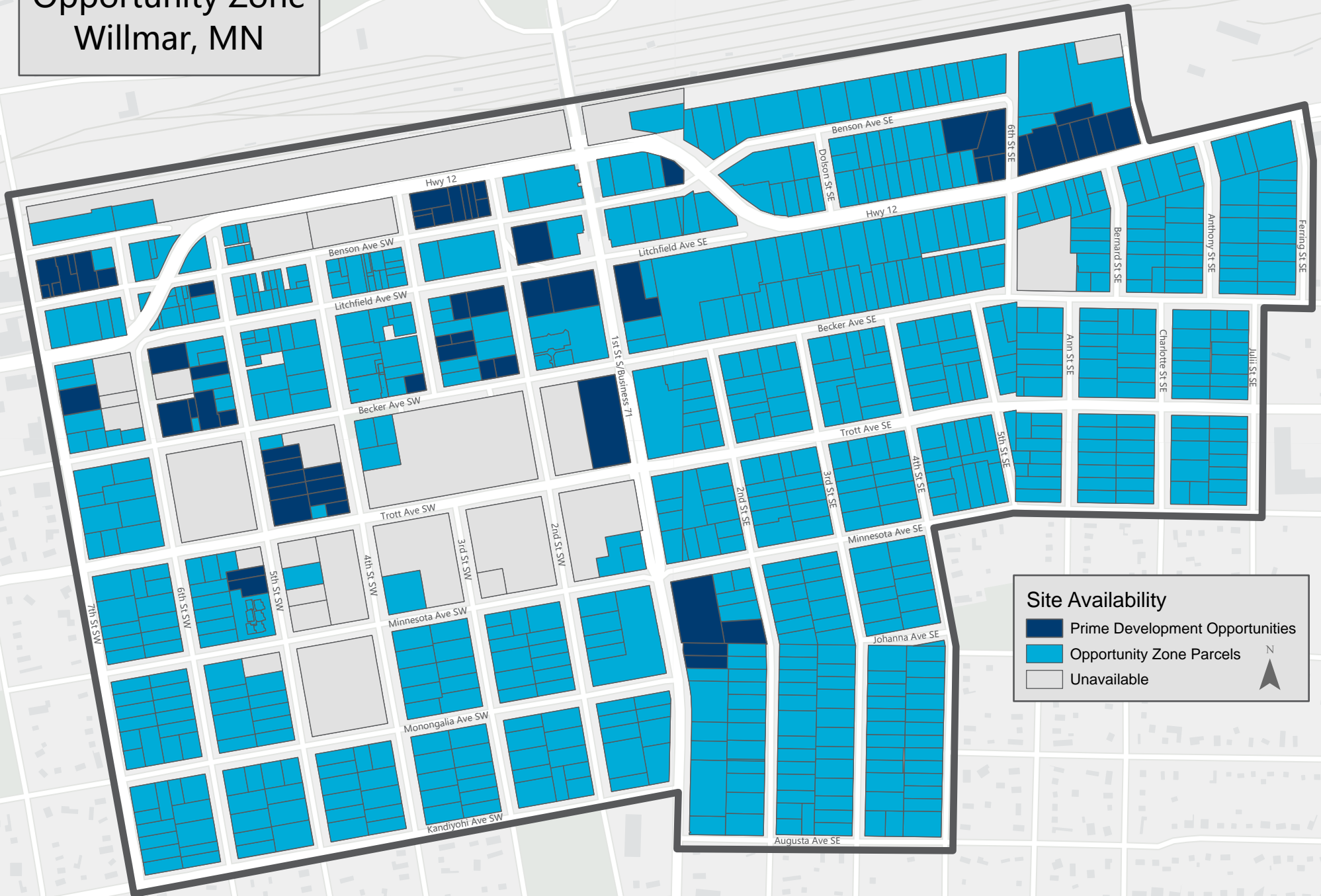
No. Staff is working to complete the third phase of this incentive program that will include a zoning overlay district & heritage designation incentives, allowing for greater creativity in the use and renovation of existing properties.

The Renaissance Zone (dark gray boundary) encompasses the Central Business District and surrounding neighborhoods. All properties within this zone are eligible to apply for Renaissance Zone incentives.

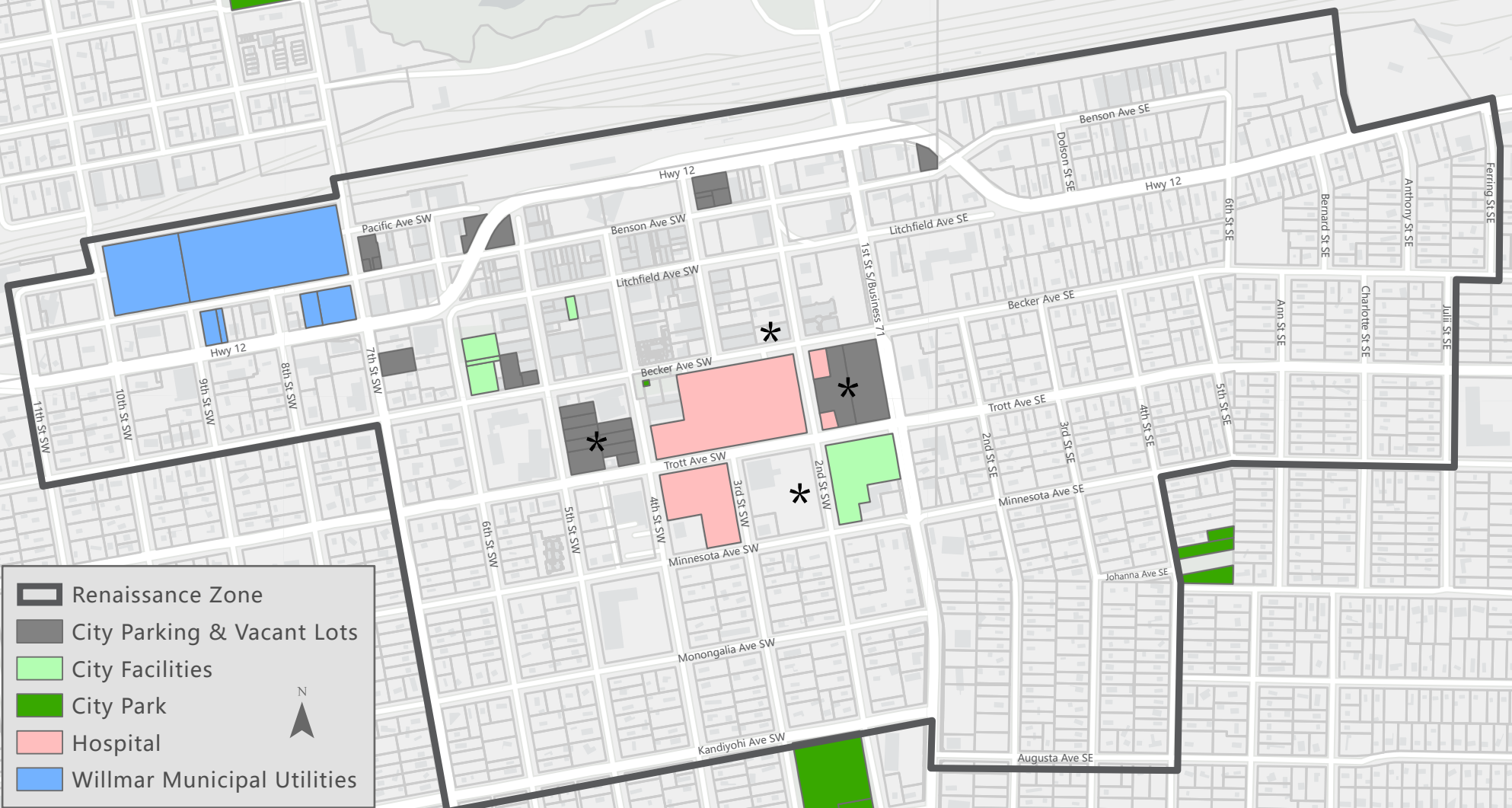








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Opportunity Zone Willmar, MN



Renaissance Overlay District Willmar, MN

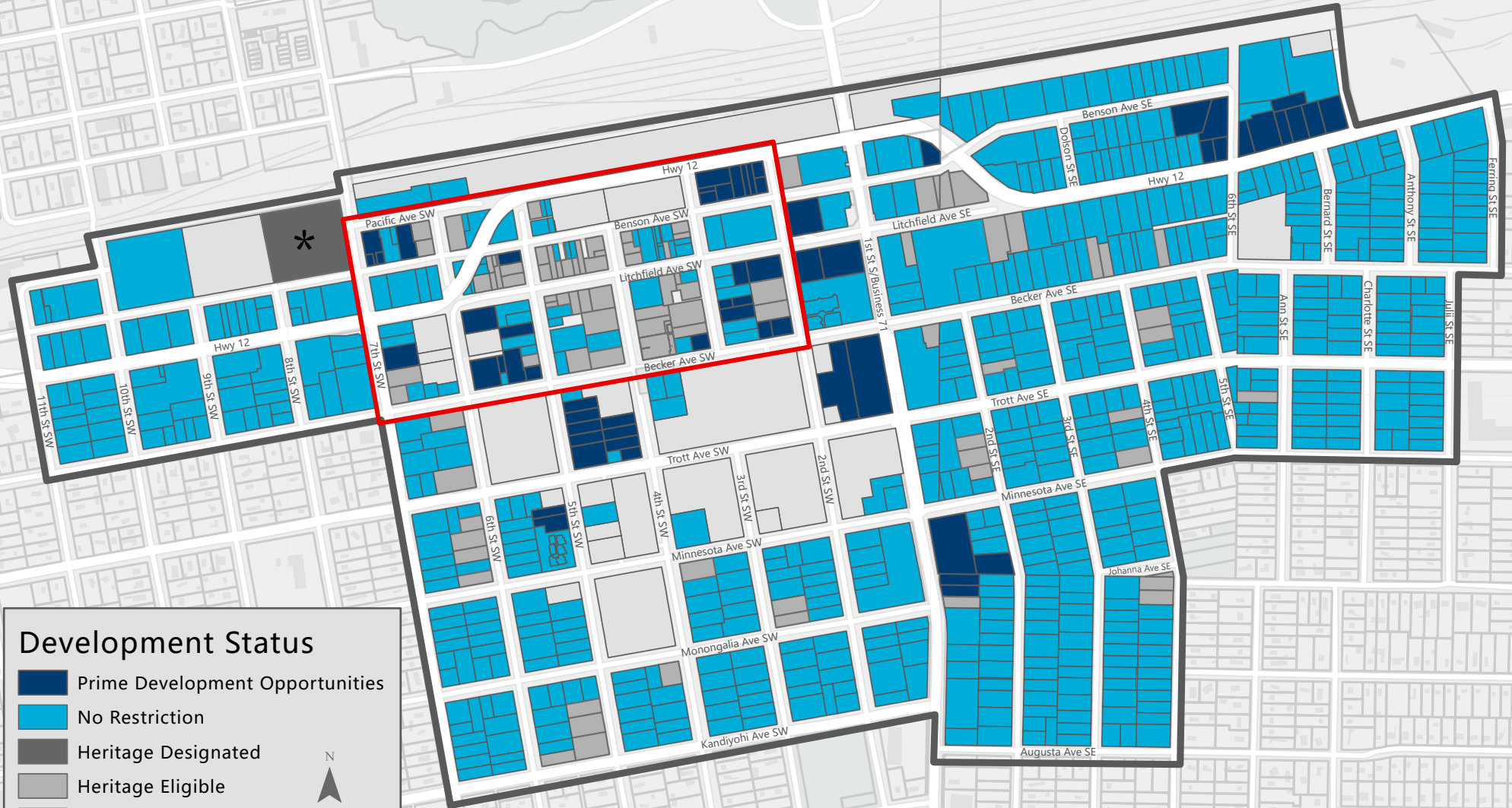


-  Renaissance Zone
-  City Parking & Vacant Lots
-  City Facilities
-  City Park
-  Hospital
-  Willmar Municipal Utilities

N
▲

*Potential sites for hotel development --
City Owned or Hospital owned parking lots.

Renaissance Overlay District Willmar, MN



Development Status

- Prime Development Opportunities
- No Restriction
- Heritage Designated
- Heritage Eligible
- Unavailable
- Downtown Heritage District



*Tentative Heritage Designation
until December 2022