

ATTACHMENT A - BACKGROUND

The Victoria Park property is part of a larger 64-acre site that until 1995 was used as a petroleum tank farm owned by Koch Industries Inc. and Mobil Oil Corporation, connected by a pipeline to barge facilities on the Mississippi River. The site was a quarry before becoming a tank farm so mostly consisted of bedrock. By 1996, the owners had demolished the tank farm and began to clean up the petroleum contamination to MPCA standards. Eventually it was determined that the developable property for the 64-acre Koch Mobil site was about 37 acres after streets, utilities, and bluffs are removed.

When the petroleum companies first announced they were closing the tank farm, the neighborhood, recognizing its great development potential, asked the City to begin a small area plan to guide a dramatic change of land use intended to capitalize on the area's significant assets. These assets include its convenient location between the airport and downtown Saint Paul, its great regional access (Interstate 35E, Shepard Road, and Fort Road), public transit service (Route 54), its proximity to Crosby Farms Regional Park, and its great views of the Mississippi River valley.

In 2000, the City of Saint Paul adopted *The Brewery/Ran-View Small Area Plan Summary*, which envisioned “a safe and attractive mixed-use and mixed-income community that takes full advantage of the scenic Mississippi River and the thriving pedestrian-scale Fort Road/West Seventh street commercial corridor. It was projected to become home to hundreds of new households, living on reclaimed industrial land in the heart of one of Saint Paul's oldest and most cherished neighborhoods.”

Achieving that vision, however, took longer than anticipated. Some of the key historical steps on that journey include the following:

- **Purchase of the Koch site:** Prior to the HRA's purchase of the 22-acre Koch site in 2004, the site was cleaned to MPCA standards, and the extraction system was removed with MPCA approval.
- **Approval of the Redevelopment Plan:** In 2001, the City approved the *Koch-Mobil Redevelopment Project Area Plan*.
- **Selection of Brighton as master developer:** In 2003, Brighton was designated master developer of the Koch site. The HRA agreed to design a new street grid to serve the site and connect it to the surrounding street grid. The HRA also contracted for the vast amounts of fill needed to prepare the site.
- **Site preparation of the Koch property:** In 2005, the HRA installed 10 to 12 feet of fill, and constructed a large portion of the streets, sidewalks and utilities; and installed light poles and boulevard grass and trees on the Koch 22-acre site to allow housing to be built there.
- **Approval of the Victoria Park Master Plan:** In 2005, the City Council approved the

Victoria Park Master Plan, calling for neighborhood-scale commercial businesses and medium-density residential development on the 22-acre Koch site. The plan was amended several times as market conditions changed (Brighton built only 13 for-sale townhouses due to the housing market downturn and they were eventually converted to rental units) and other developers emerged to develop various parcels (Sholom Community Alliance, Mississippi Market and Chase Real Estate). The mixed-use development continued to follow urban village design guidelines.

- **Acquisition of the Exxon-Mobil site:** The issue of residential or commercial reuse of a contaminated industrial site is critically important for the future redevelopment of such sites in the inner city. The HRA won its condemnation case against Exxon Mobil on January 12, 2005, whereby Commissioner hearings determined the land value as of September 2008. The City was awarded the site along with \$5 million for environmental clean-up; however, the reuse of the property was restricted to parkland purposes only.
- **Development to-date:** Today the developments on the site includes 13 rental townhouses; the Senior Campus, developed by Sholom Community Alliance (45 independent living units, 60 assisted living units and a 90-bed nursing home); Mississippi Market, an organic grocery cooperative that opened at the end of 2009; Nova Classical Academy, a public charter K – 12 school that opened in 2018, and three phases of market-rate rental apartments totaling 462 units developed by Chase Real Estate.
- **Final MPCA clean-up approval:** On March 27, 2017, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency sent a “no further action” letter concluding the required clean-up of the site.
- **Victoria Park:** To-date, some of the park trails, a new parking lot, and some of the landscaping has been completed for the new Victoria Park. Remaining Exxon funds will be used to continue the park improvements.