



# EDA 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

## YEAR IN REVIEW

As the city grows, well planned development requires a variety of flexible zoning options to accommodate the needs of both families and businesses interested in calling Columbus home. In 2015, the Columbus Economic Development Authority (EDA) continued working to plan for the future of the community, focusing on these keys areas:

- ColumBiz – Local business leaders gathered April 9, 2015 to network, share information, provide feedback and hear economic and policy updates from City, County and State officials.
- Retail Marketing Study – The City contracted with Jim McCombs to provide an updated Retail Marketing Study of the freeway district. The study was completed and presented to the City in June, outlining changes in this market since the previous study in 2009 and the greatest opportunities for potential development in this district.
- Architectural Master Plan – As a result of the Retail Marketing Study findings, the City subsequently hired Kathy Anderson of Architectural Consortium to provide an Architectural Master Plan for development and sale of the City-owned land in the Northeast area of the freeway district. The initial plan was presented to the City in late 2015 with a final version due in January 2016. The final plan will be used to market the area in 2016 for development.
- Interstate 35 (I-35)/Trunk Highway 97 (TH97) Bridge Project – Significant work was undertaken in 2015 to secure funding and support at the legislative level for a new and larger bridge over I-35 at TH97. The existing bridge is 50 years old, suffers from deteriorating rebar, and is not large enough to handle the capacity of growing nearby communities. The current maintenance plan being offered to simply repair the existing bridge by MnDOT would be detrimental to local businesses, emergency and other services, a huge imposition for commuters and not address the expanding capacity issues. That plan would close the bridge for nearly a year and force an 18-mile detour. Columbus worked in partnership with a coalition of leaders from both Anoka and Washington Counties, and the City of Forest Lake meeting with federal and state legislative representatives, to gain project support for grants and other transportation funding. Columbus also invited representatives from local businesses, School District 831 and emergency services to share their stories of the broader impact of the current insufficient, deteriorating bridge and potential replacement plans. This project will continue to be a significant focus for the Columbus EDA in 2016.