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BLAKE ROAD STATION

A GLOBAL VILLAGE IN A MIDWESTERN TOWN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2011, the City of Hopkins commissioned student consultants of the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, to research station area improvements for the proposed Blake Road Station of the Southwest Light Rail Transit line. The City requested recommendations that complement existing plans for the station and engage the area's diverse population in order to:

- Improve safety and interaction between all modes of Corridor traffic
- Create a sense of place through public realm improvements
- Enhance land uses in and around the station area through mixed-use zoning that respects the residential characteristics of the area

The consulting team conducted a literature review of transit station area research, with special attention to the studies of the Blake Road Station Area, City of Hopkins planning documents and research commissioned by the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative. The consultants interviewed 22 stakeholders identified by the City or referred by interviewees. Census Bureau and LEHD data informs recommendations made by the team.

The Blake Road Station Area population is younger than Hopkins generally and includes a large number of recent immigrants, as well as higher numbers of African American, Latino and Asian residents than the rest of the City. Fully 90% of the children in the Blake Road Corridor receive free or reduced lunch, indicating a high level of poverty. Typically, station area residents work outside of Hopkins, despite the fact that more than 11,000 jobs exist in the city where slightly more than 17,000 residents live. The positions are increasingly professional and managerial, creating opportunity for businesses catering to professionals who commute.

The consulting team identified the unique demographic profile of the Blake Road Corridor as an untapped opportunity to distinguish the area within Hopkins as well as promote future growth of young families in the City. The makeup of the residential community, combined with the area's proximity to major employment centers that draw commuters, the ease of access by car, the convergence of trail heads and Minnehaha Creek, as well as the planned multi-modal transportation improvements, create an opportunity for a global marketplace that incubates new businesses, infuses capital into the area for building improvements and meets the needs of residents, commuters and visitors alike.

Recommendations for the area include:

Transform Blake Road into a Complete Street, including pedestrian paths linking Blake Road to businesses north of Highway 7 via Minnehaha Creek, and Texas Avenue with the Cedar Lake Trail, establish bicycle lanes along Blake and connecting roads and implement traffic calming designs and median refuges for pedestrians. Interim recommendations include establishing a circulating bus system to connect youth with area programs.

Create a Mixed-Use, Compact HUB Village Surrounding the Station Area, including building higher-density housing within ¼ mile of the station, reducing parking structures and surface lots through shared parking based on the times of day when residents and commuters require it and modifying residential zoning outside of the TOD district to increase density without impacting the character of stabilized neighborhoods.

Establish Financial Tools to Encourage Small Business Development, including funding for business incubation and façade improvements using new capital secured from philanthropic partners and commercial lenders designed as a sustainable tool for Hopkins' continued redevelopment.

The following report includes a full description of the research and recommendations. Thank you to Tara Beard and Kersten Elverum of the City of Hopkins Planning and Development Department and Lee Munnich and Kris Nelson of the Humphrey School of Public Affairs for their advice and support throughout this project.

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PROBLEM DEFINITION

The City of Hopkins seeks a set of tools that complement existing plans for the proposed Blake Road Station of the Southwest Light Rail Transit line (SWLRT). These tools should support the engagement of a diverse population in recommendations which:

- Improve safety and interaction between all modes of Corridor traffic
- Create a sense of place through public realm improvements
- Enhance land uses in and around the station area through mixed-use zoning that respects the residential characteristics of the area

The City intends for the area surrounding the Blake Road Station to remain largely residential, complemented by some new economic development and redevelopment to attract new users and support connections with the two additional SWLRT stations proposed for Hopkins.

Sign announcing Excelsior Boulevard & Blake Road intersection

INTRODUCTION

HOPKINS

Hopkins covers four square miles of the southwest Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. As an inner-ring suburb, the community is recognized across the Twin Cities for its charming historic downtown, high quality schools and annual Raspberry Festival. Today Hopkins is home to over ten unique neighborhood associations or districts.

In 2010, the City was approximately 98% developed and boasted 17,591 residents – a 1% increase from 2000 and a 6% increase from 1990 population levels.

In the past decade the City has experienced an increase in racial and ethnic diversity. In 2000, 80% of Hopkins residents identified themselves as white, compared to 66.6% in the 2010 Census. Resident populations experiencing the largest growths in between 2000-2010 include Black/African American (from 5.1% to 13.2%), Hispanic/Latino (from 5.5% to 8%) and Asian (from 5.8% to 8%).

The City population is aging with a corresponding decrease in household size as children leave home. A rising number of households consisting of adults under the age of 40 are attributed to the growing racial and ethnic minority residents of Hopkins.

Hopkins serves approximately 8,000 students in six elementary schools, two middle schools and a high school, as well as several private and charter schools: The Blake School, Ubah Medical Academy and the Mainstreet School for Performing Arts. [1]

[1] City of Hopkins, 2011; Hoisington Koegler Group, n.d Retrieved 20 April 2011 from http://www.hopkinsmn.com/development/plan/pdf/comp-plan-2009.pdf

Area residents are highly educated with approximately 60% of the population aged 25 or older having attained at least some college-level education and approximately 1/3 holding a college or advanced degree.[1]

The City's historic employment base has been industrial, linked to the Soo Line Rail Road. Today the employment base is increasingly shifting to managerial and professional employment through large area employers like Cargill, SuperValu and NAPCO International, Inc. Today Hopkins hosts 11,296 jobs – 94% of which are filled by employees not living in Hopkins. [2]

Jobs in Hopkins are filled largely by importing employees. The pie chart below shows the breakdown of where employed Hopkins residents live and work. For more information, see the appendix: Inflow Outflow Employment Data for Hopkins.

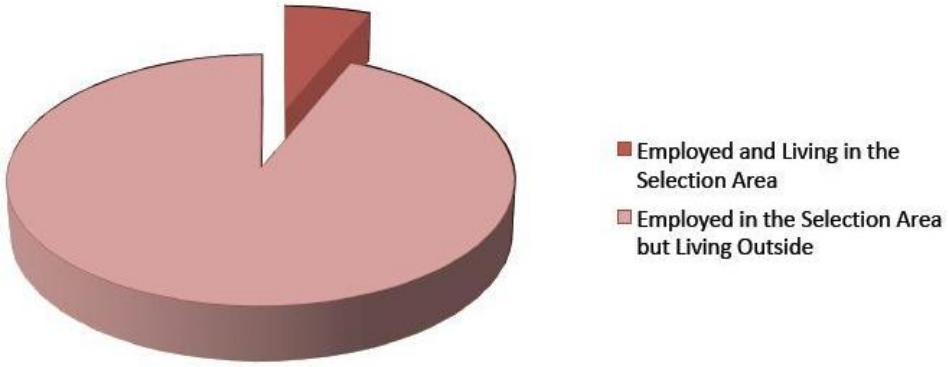
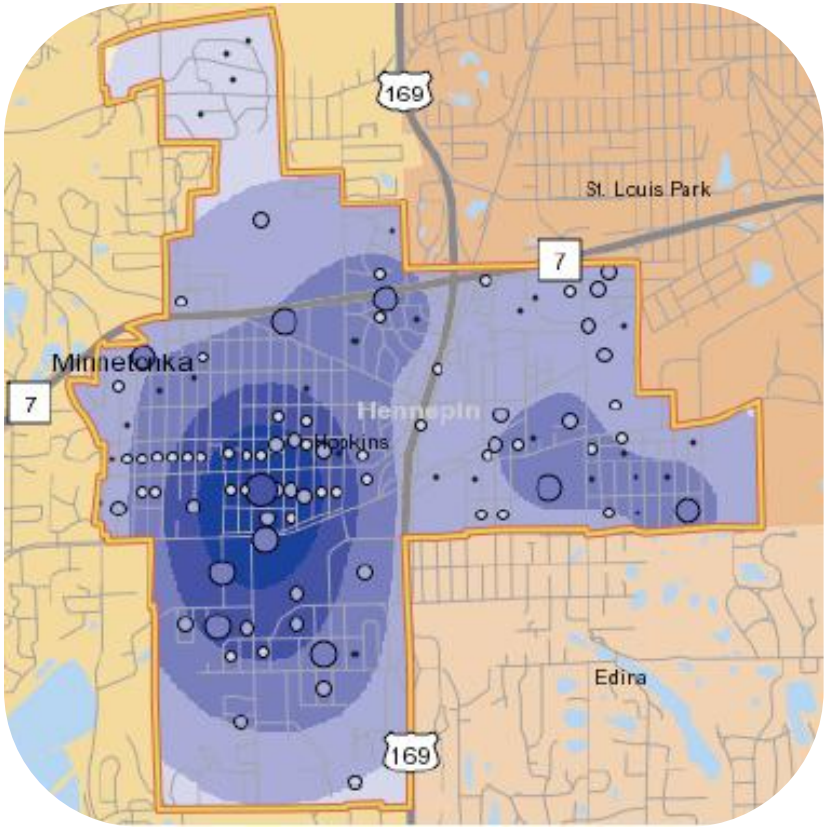


FIGURE 1: EMPLOYEE RESIDENTIAL LOCATION

[2] U.S. Census Bureau, 2011. *Inflow/Outflow Report.*

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the highest concentration of jobs in Hopkins is south of Highway 7 and west of Highway 169. The Blake Road Corridor has some of the City's lowest job densities per mile.[3] The image below displays employment in Hopkins and surrounding communities with the darkest areas representing the highest concentrations of jobs.



MAP 1: EMPLOYMENT DENSITY

[3] Ibid.

BLAKE ROAD CORRIDOR

The Blake Road Corridor represents a one mile by one-half mile section of eastern Hopkins. East of Highway 169, Blake Road is the major north-south thoroughfare for Hopkins. This corridor connects the highly-used Trunk Highway 7 and Excelsior Boulevard.

The Blake Road Corridor consists of densely developed residential and commercial properties. As of 2008, the majority of the Corridor's approximate 1,350 housing units were rental units.[4]

The Blake Road Corridor is Hopkins' most diverse residential district. According to the Wilder Foundation's 2008 assessment, more than 40 languages are spoken and residents represent over 15 different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

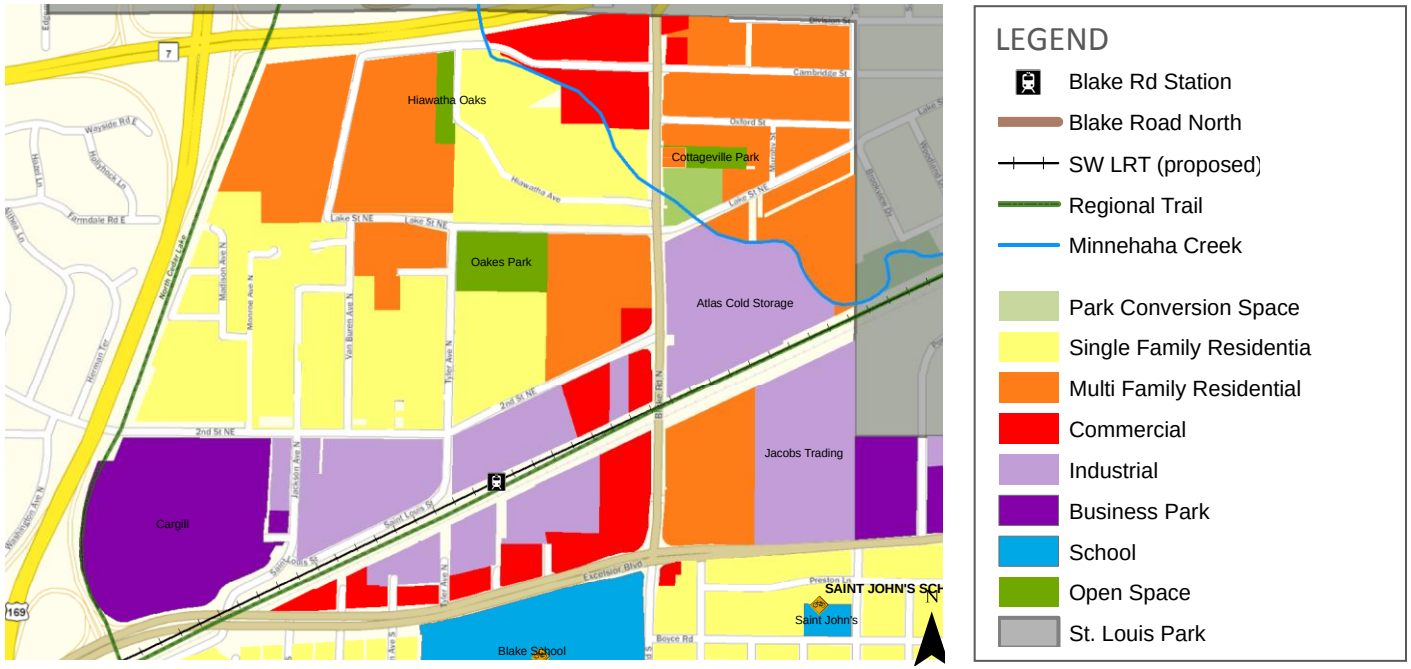
Along the Blake Road Corridor, 60% of residents are 40 years old or younger.[3] An abundance of school-age children and work force-aged citizens reside in the Corridor.

Major employers located within and adjacent to the Corridor include Cargill, Jacobs Trading, Hopkins Cold Storage and the Blake School.

Despite proximity to major employers and a large workforce-aged population, the Blake Road Corridor contains some of the lowest job densities per mile in the city [See Appendix].[5] The corridor area is home to 11,296 jobs, yet Corridor residents hold slightly more than 6% of them.[6]

MAP 2: BLAKE ROAD CORRIDOR

The Blake Road Corridor is bordered by Highway 7 to the north, the City of St. Louis Park to the east, Excelsior Boulevard to the south and Highway 169 to the west.



[4] Wilder Research, 2008. Blake Road Corridor Community Assessment.

[5] U.S. Census Bureau, 2011. *Inflow/Outflow Report.*

[6] Ibid.

BLAKE ROAD CORRIDOR COLLABORATIVE

In 2008 a community assessment conducted by the Wilder Foundation engaged Corridor residents and business owners in a series of interviews and surveys to better understand the needs and perceptions of the Corridor community. In 2009 the *Blake Road Corridor Collaborative* (BRCC) was formed to help further engage Corridor community members in addressing findings of this survey.

In addition to ongoing outreach, the BRCC sponsors subcommittees focusing on safety and youth development and connects with the increasingly diverse members of this community.

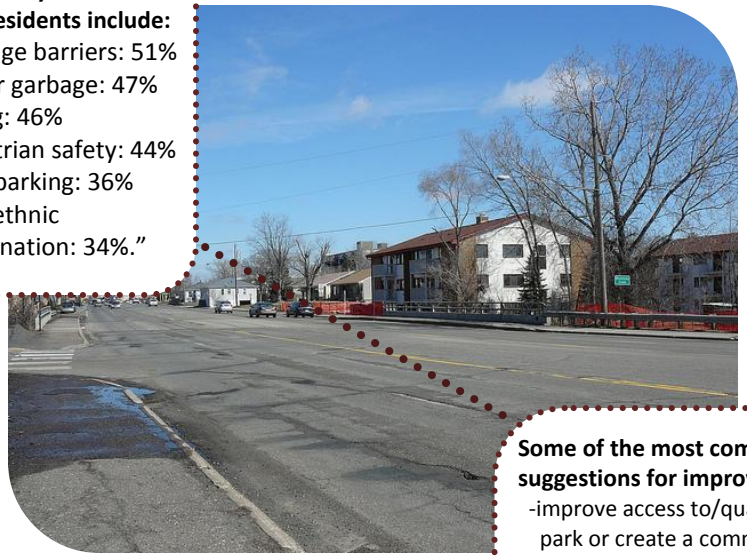
EXISTING PLANS

Existing plans for the proposed Blake Road Station call for higher-density uses near and around the proposed LRT station. Desired uses expressed in established plans include a mix of high-density housing with neighborhood-serving retail commercial and offices, such as drycleaners, hair and nail salons or insurance offices. These types of businesses may bring jobs to areas that are lacking employment opportunities currently. Existing plans for this area include:

- City of Hopkins 2010 Comprehensive Plan Update
- Blake Road Corridor Community Assessment (2008)
- Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan (2009)
- East End Study
- Southwest Transitway Station Area Planning document (2010).

Findings of the Wilder Foundation's 2008 Blake Road Corridor Community Assessment catalyze the need for land use and transportation improvements around the Blake Road Corridor. These findings are the result of direct engagement with corridor residents and business owners. Key findings are pulled out at right.

"Quality of life issues identified by more than 1/3 of residents include:
-language barriers: 51%
-litter or garbage: 47%
-lighting: 46%
-pedestrian safety: 44%
-street parking: 36%
-racial/ethnic discrimination: 34%."



Some of the most common suggestions for improvement:
-improve access to/quality of local park or create a community center
- provide opportunities to engage residents in community improvement efforts
-expand programs or services for children and youth
-improve sidewalks or walkways for pedestrians
-physical improvements: facility upgrades, improved lighting, redevelopment & road enhancements.

"More than 80% of respondents felt street traffic and garbage on the streets was a problem in the Corridor."

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The SWLRT project is in the Draft Environmental Impact phase. A Preliminary Engineering (PE) application was submitted to the Federal Transit Administration in August, 2010, and approval to begin PE is anticipated in mid-2011. On the current project timeline, construction is anticipated to begin in 2015 with the line operational in 2017.

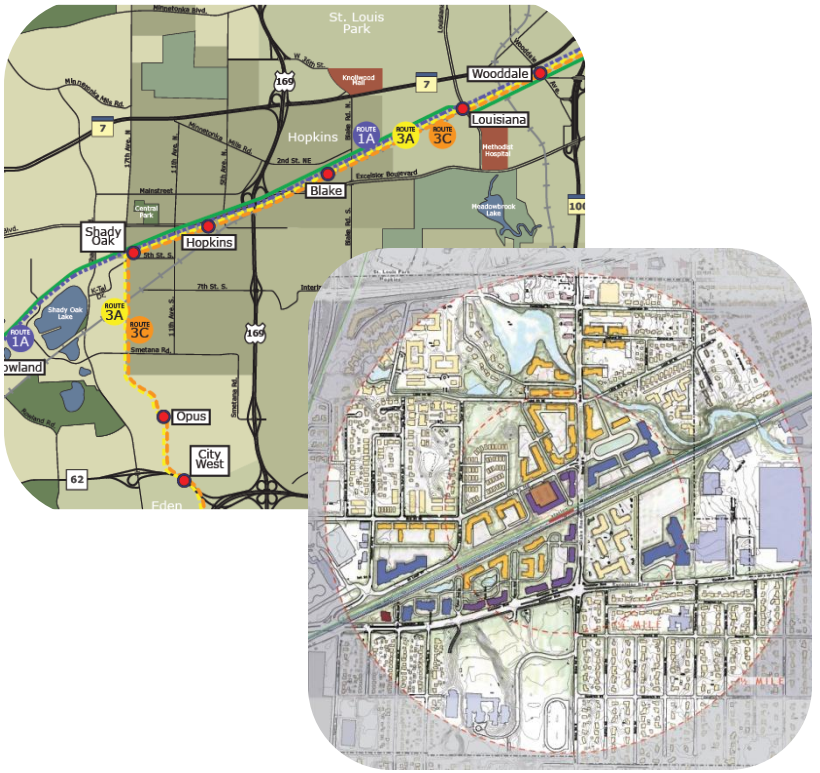
The Blake Road station is one of three SWLRT stations proposed for Hopkins. The vision for the station area is a balance mix of redevelopment including office, commercial and residential space. A park-and-ride facility is tentatively planned near the station. The character of this station will promote connections within the region and improve the current offerings for station area residents and visitors.

The proposed SWLRT station presents a unique opportunity for the Blake Road community to further define itself. The current land and transportation uses along the corridor mask the vibrancy that exists within this community. Through coordinated land use, transportation, economic development and community engagement, the proposed station can help the Blake Road community to shine.

The primary challenge of this station is integrating an improved pedestrian environment. The pedestrian environment must complement current and future needs of diverse residents and businesses, accommodate a variety of transportation modes, and balance land use and economic development with competing station areas up and down the SWLRT line.

The 2009 *Station Area Plan* for the Blake Road station was the result collaborative work by consultants Hay Dobbs and Bonestroo, the City of Hopkins and Hennepin County. The *Station Area Plan,* in conjunction with the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan (2010), the *East End* Study (2003) and the *Blake Road Corridor Community Assessment* (2008) by Wilder Research, informed this project. The following research and recommendations are meant to complement established objectives, visions and goals for the Blake Road station.

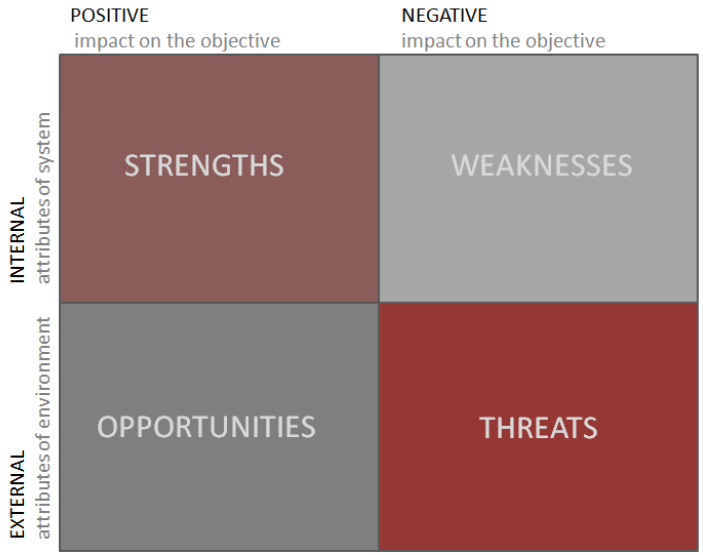
This project focuses on corridor revitalization to improve the pedestrian environment, enhance land use and increase economic development opportunities. The diversity of the Blake Road community must be considered throughout this process. Because the attitudes and interests of the community are integral to creating an environment that embraces pedestrians, land use and economic development changes, the consulting team integrated community engagement within each section. This document should serve as a base to future community engagement.



SWOT ANALYSIS

The area surrounding the Blake Road Station includes many attributes that support pedestrian activity. The following section reviews the assets in the area, as well as conditions which may slow or prevent action on a plan.

Strengths are the internal assets that support a goal
Weaknesses are the internal assets that may limit reaching a goal
Opportunities are external assets that help achieve a goal
Threats are external assets that may limit reaching a goal



STRENGTHS

- Local and regional employment centers are based nearby.
- Residential neighborhoods support a sense of community.
- Cedar Lake Trail draws visitors and connects to regional trails.
- Minnehaha Creek flows through the Corridor.
- Cottageville and Oakes Parks are nearby.

WEAKNESSES

- Poor or non-existent pedestrian environment.
- Segmented land uses.
- Poor connection to and awareness of public spaces.
- Age of housing stock detracts from long-term housing interests and home ownership.
- Limited residential vision for the area may not align with the long-term possibilities afforded by the station.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Access to light rail transit.
- Access to major regional employment centers.
- New development may promote revitalization of area.
- Community identity and development to embrace and reflect unique demographics present in Blake Road Corridor.
- New families: ~1/3 of residents claim African-Native or Latino/Hispanic racial origin; 85% of these residents <age 40.
- Complete Streets-based redesign of Blake Road.
- Connection to existing public amenities: Cedar Lake Trail, Cottageville and Oakes Parks, Minnehaha Creek.
- Community engagement in Blake Road Corridor Collaborative.

THREATS

- Economic uncertainty of the Great Recession.
- State and local government budget strains.
- Displacement of current families by revitalization efforts.
- Emphasis on downtown could limit investment in the area.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Light Rail Transit (LRT) projects have a long, contested history in the Twin Cities. LRT projects' diverse funding base and connection to a variety of land use issues, underscore the many stakeholders involved in LRT, their power bases and their strongly-held beliefs about the effectiveness and importance of public transit. The following stakeholder list was identified with City of Hopkins planners:

Residents
- Single family home owners
- Multi-family home/rental residents

Businesses/Employers
- Within Hopkins
- Located in employment centers up and down the LRT line

Hopkins Schools
City and County Staff and Elected Officials
Third-party authorities
- Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
- Three Rivers Park District
- Metro Transit

Third-part 'interested' entities
- Blake Road Corridor Collaborative
- Twin Cities LISC
- Transit for Livable Communities
- Public arts organizations

Visitors/Tourists
Cedar Lake Trail users
Developers

Interviews were conducted with stakeholders in each category to inform this project and its recommendations. The project team conducted a stakeholder analysis to understand who is impacted by the plan, who can inform the plan, and who has power to implement the plan.

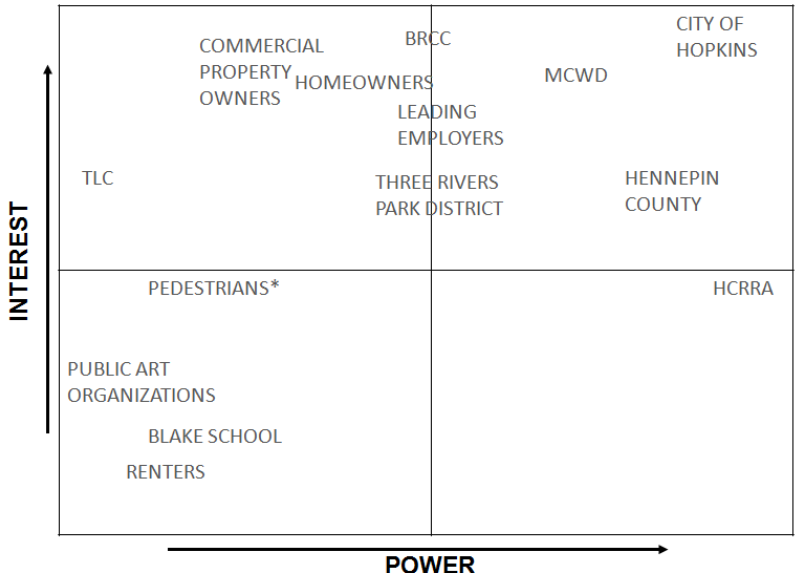


Figure 2: Stakeholder Power v. Interest Grid

The Stakeholder Power versus Interest Grid [Figure 1] demonstrates the consulting team's placement of stakeholders' power and interest in the construction of the Blake Road Station during the preparation and planning phase. Over time, the power and interest of these groups may shift.

SCOPING STUDY

Community involvement is essential to successful station area development. Throughout the report, we explore opportunities to connect with the community and improve the livability of the Corridor. By studying the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative (BRCC), using stakeholder interviews and reviewing examples of activities in other communities, we identify ways to support Hopkins' goals. These include improved safety and interaction between pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles within the corridor, increased sense of place through public realm improvements and enhanced land uses through mixed-use zoning that respects the residential character of the area. It is important to note that case studies replicating Hopkins' unusual combination of modest population size, large employment centers and multiple LRT stations are difficult to find. Therefore, this report studies larger cities.

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

"When asked for suggestions for improving quality of life in the Corridor, residents most often mentioned traffic management and lighting; 90% of respondents rated sidewalks in *poor* condition and 50% rated street lighting as *poor*."-2008 Wilder Community Assessment

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The mix of personal vehicle, semi-trailer, heavy rail, recreational trail and pedestrian uses in Blake Road Corridor creates competition for access, use and safety. As a result, it is difficult for all users to navigate the Corridor.

Blake Road spans ⅔ of a mile between Highway 7 and Excelsior Boulevard. Blake Road is a four-lane county road with high daily traffic and congestion during peak hours on weekdays and weekends. From curb to curb, Blake road varies in width between 65 to 70 feet.

Sidewalk improvements are underway to replace fragmented or non-existent pedestrian areas. The goal is to transform Blake Road into a 'Complete Street,' accommodating all traffic modes safely and efficiently.

Additional public realm amenities located throughout the corridor include street lights, sidewalks on both sides of the road, crosswalks and signs announcing Minnehaha Creek, trail and rail road crossings and bus stops.

There are six main intersections within the Blake Road Corridor [Map 2]:

HIGHWAY 7: traffic signal, dedicated turn lanes, cross walk, timed walk signal, curb cuts, median pedestrian refuge space located between turn lanes and Highway 7.

CAMBRIDGE STREET: traffic signal, pedestrian cross walks

LAKE STREET: pedestrian cross walks, semi-trailer traffic exiting Cold Storage facility from East.

2nd STREET: traffic signal, dedicated turn lanes on western side, pedestrian cross walks, semi-trailer traffic exiting Cold Storage facility from East.

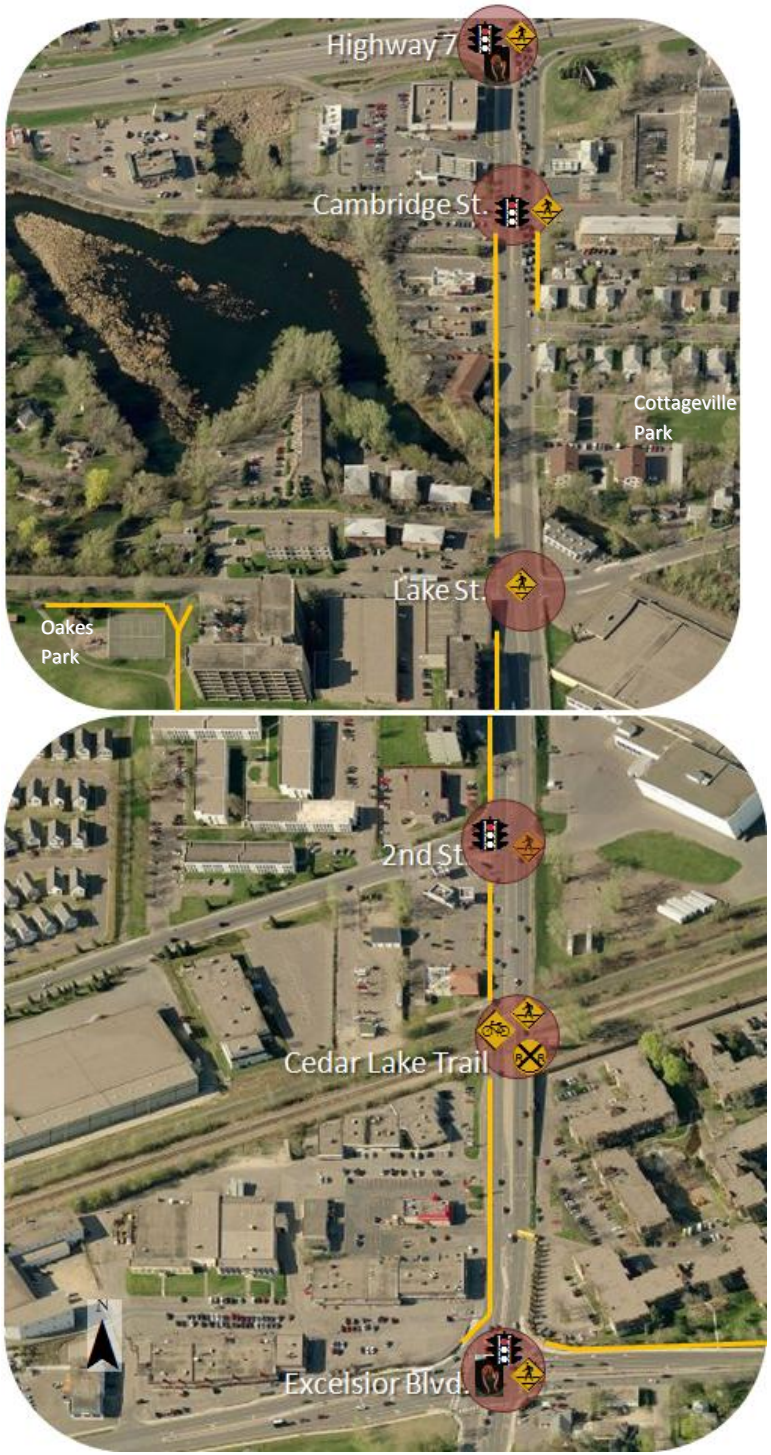
CEDAR LAKE TRAIL & HCRRA RAIL: at-grade crossing with pedestrian trail running parallel to freight rail, pedestrian cross walk, yellow trail and rail notification signs, rail notification lights, trail stop signs, medians north and south of crossing.

EXCELSIOR BOULEVARD: cross walk at light, includes signal-timed walk light and crossing dedicated turn lanes.

Blake Road intersects several residential side streets and is interspersed with driveway aprons to commercial, retail and residential dwellings.

The mix of users, uses and destinations in this corridor result in an environment that is always busy.

MAP 3: INTERSECTIONS OF BLAKE ROAD- CURRENT FEATURES



LEGEND

- Local Trail
- Signaled Stop Light
- Signaled Ped Crossing
- Ped Cross walk
- Cedar Lake Trail Crossing
- Rail Road Crossing

MOTORIZED TRAFFIC

Personal vehicles and semi-trailers are the majority of motorized traffic in the Blake Road Corridor. Public transit is limited and concentrated on the northern half of the corridor, and is accessible from Excelsior Boulevard just west of Blake Road. Recent Hennepin County Average Daily Traffic (ADT) display significant demand of motor vehicle use of Blake Road during the Great Recession. As the economy improves, these traffic counts may change (email correspondence with Stan Albrecht, 7 March 2011):

	2008	2010*
Blake Road & Hwy 7	15,100	15,200
Blake Road & Excelsior Blvd	11,800	11,800

By comparison, Shady Oak Road (a comparable north-south thoroughfare in western Hopkins) between Highway 7 and Excelsior Blvd. had a traffic count of 11,200 in 2008 (*figures for 2010 not yet available*).

Industrial properties in the area generate semi trailer traffic; dozens of semi trailers traverse Blake Road on a daily basis.

RAIL TRAFFIC

The Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA) owns the land and right of way that will be used by the Southwest LRT line. The Cedar Lake Trail is also located on land owned by HCRRA. Rail traffic through this segment of the corridor is limited, averaging 6-8 trains per day. A shared-use agreement is anticipated to support coexistence of heavy and light rail train vehicles through the corridor.

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

The pedestrian network around Blake Road is comprised of the Cedar Lake Trail and the sidewalks and crosswalks of streets within the Corridor. Pedestrian connections to amenities are inconsistent and limit access. For example, accessing the commercial district north of Highway 7 requires crossing 10 lanes of high speed traffic and lengthy waits at signal crossings.

Cedar Lake Trail approaching Blake Road

Three Rivers Park District manages and operates Cedar Lake Trail with a lease from the HCRRA. The trail spans approximately 2.3 miles across Hopkins, running parallel to HCRRA rail tracks. The 10-foot wide, multi-use trail hosts a variety of non-motorized users on a daily basis. Cedar Lake Trail is integral to the region because it connects multiple branches of the regional trail system.

In 2009 Cedar Lake Trail hosted 427,792 users. A user survey conducted during 2008-2009 indicates that 85% of users patronize the Cedar Lake Trail segment between Louisiana Avenue (St. Louis Park) and Excelsior Boulevard in Hopkins.[7] Trail usage on the segment immediately west (Excelsior Boulevard to 11th Street) is reported at 69%, while use of the segment immediately east (Louisiana Avenue to Minneapolis) was 89% of users surveyed. This indicates that the segment crossing Blake Road is highly traveled and can be used to encourage visitors to stop in Hopkins as part of their recreational activities.

Prior to recent improvements the sidewalks along Blake Road were disconnected, of varying quality and largely non-existent. Sidewalks were constructed and connected on the east side of Blake Road in 2010. Sidewalks on the west side remain in mediocre condition and are slated for improvement as Blake Road is redeveloped. A median was installed between Excelsior Boulevard and the entrance to Arby's in 2010.

[7] Three Rivers Park District, 2011. Twin Lakes Trail Master Plan.

A 2008 corridor pedestrian survey[8] monitored pedestrian traffic and environment through the corridor, finding:

- **Pedestrian traffic dynamics around Arby's:** The driveways on either side of the restaurant act as the portals for the collection of small commercial and retail buildings on this lot; Arby's serves as a landmark for drivers who create car-pedestrian conflicts along the west side of Blake.
- **Jaywalking and bike crossing mid-block create unsafe conditions** (predominately along the southern half of the corridor)**:** 29 jaywalking pedestrians and 2 jaywalking bicyclists were counted in 50 minutes during evening peak traffic hours. The jaywalking route takes 30 seconds or less to complete. Using of crosswalks adds as much as 5 minutes to reach the same destination.
- **Poor pedestrian environment around Blake/Excelsior commercial center:** the walkways are not visible to trail users and the parking lot is indirect and has no formal walking area.

Segment of Blake Road where jaywalking is most prevalent

[8] Bruce, P. 2009. Study of Pedestrian Activity in Retail Area At Excelsior and Blake Road.

PUBLIC REALM AMENITITES

The Blake Road Corridor contains sparse public realm amenities. Public realm amenities are identified as infrastructure available for public use in a public space – for example, parks, street lights, benches, trash receptacles and way finding signs.

The 2008 Wilder Assessment of the Corridor reveals safety concerns by residents and business owners as well as limited use of public spaces. Both issues should be addressed through investment in public realm amenities.[9]

The Blake Road Corridor features two public parks (Cottageville Park and Oakes Park) bisected by Minnehaha Creek just north of the Lake Street intersection. The Minnehaha Watershed District has also acquired property along the creek and has plans for increasing access to the natural amenity. Despite the proximity of these parks, Corridor residents and visitors are largely unaware of their existence and visit them infrequently. The 2008 Wilder Community Assessment found that between 74-76% of residents did not visit Cottageville or Oakes Parks because they were not aware of their existence in the community.[10]

The Blake Road Corridor generally lacks public realm amenities like street lamps, trash receptacles and transit stops. Way finding signs are present, but are easily overlooked in the constant bustle of the street. Further, way finding signs from and around the Cedar Lake Trail do not announce Hopkins, broader community connections at this access point, or amenities present in the Blake Road Corridor. The prevalence of mid-block jaywalking in the southern half of the corridor is matched with medians that do not provide refuge for pedestrians if they meet oncoming traffic. These factors, when combined with variable sidewalk conditions, create an environment that discourages pedestrians.

[9] Idzelis, M., Holm-Hansen, C., and Thao M. (2008). Blake Road Corridor community Assessment, Final report for the Corridor Advisory Collaborative. Wilder Research. Retrieved 26 February 2011 from http://www.wilder.org/reportsummary.0.html?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=2072

[10] Ibid.

BEST PRACTICES

Reimagining and implementing an established physical space is no small undertaking. Space redesign incorporates physical infrastructure changes that must be met with psychological changes to be successful. Cohesive policy, design and collaboration are required in order to appropriately address the physical and psychological redesign of a public space.

POLICY

Over the past century the automobile has driven the design and placement of most transit corridors across the United States. Recent interest in accommodating alternative transportation modes on traditional street networks has brought the pedestrian environment to the forefront of street design and planning initiatives. This charge is categorized as Complete Streets and is defined in the state of Minnesota as,

> *"The planning, scoping, design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of roads in order to reasonably address the safety and accessibility needs of users of all ages and abilities. Complete streets considers the needs of motorists, pedestrians, transit users and vehicles, bicyclists, and commercial and emergency vehicles moving along and across roads, intersections, and crossings in a manner that is sensitive to the local context and recognizes that the needs vary in urban, suburban, and rural settings."* [11]

Since 2009, communities across the state have adopted Complete Streets resolutions, and in August, 2010, the Minnesota Complete Streets state law was enacted.

The adoption of a Complete Streets resolution and policy gives a community an established voice in the physical design of their land and transportation network. Complete Streets policies range in specificity from declarations that implement the concept in future transportation projects to a complete reworking of established design and planning manuals. Established Complete Streets policies allow a city to embrace values of pedestrian environment that can help shape future development.

The National Complete Streets Coalition identifies 10 elements of an ideal Complete Streets policy:[12]

1. Includes a **vision** for how and why the community wants to complete its streets
2. Specifies that '**all users'** includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles.
3. Encourages street **connectivity** and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.
4. Is **adoptable** by all agencies to cover all roads.
5. Applies to both **new and retrofit projects**, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right of way.
6. Makes any **exceptions** specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.
7. Directs the use of the **latest and best design criteria** and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs.
8. Directs that complete streets solutions will **complement** the context of the community.
9. Establishes **performance standards** with measurable outcomes.
10. Includes **specific next steps** for implementation of the policy.

[11] Minnesota State Law 174:75, Sec 52.1: Accessed 18 March 2011 from: http://www.mncompletestreets.org/gfx/Complete%20Streets--final%20law.pdf

[12] National Complete Streets Coalition. 2011. Policy Elements. Retrieved 4 March 2011 from http://www.completestreets.org/changing-policy/policy-elements/

DESIGN

The challenge of creating a pedestrian environment is rooted in the physical and psychological redesign of a space that was originally built around the automobile. Psychological adjustment to an environment that accommodates pedestrians can be achieved through physical design. When constructed thoughtfully, the physical street redesign results in an environment that is more user-friendly for all modes of transport.

Pedestrian environment design recommends rooting the design in the following principles:

Access: *Balance access to all modes of motorized and non-motorized transportation.*

Connectivity: *Design that aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.*

Context: *Consider the way adjacent functions interact with the pedestrian. A pedestrian friendly environment should have a positive relationship to an area's land use. A mix of complementary land uses and appropriate densities is necessary to make walking a realistic option.* [13]

Safety: *Construct active streets that promote walking, reduce vulnerability to collision, and provide 'eyes on the street' to enhance peoples' sense of safety and security from crime and violence.* [14]

Locally, Hennepin County and Blue Cross and Blue Shield have championed street design and policy concepts. Nationally, San Francisco's *Better Streets Plan* and Sacramento's *Pedestrian Master Plan* provide best practices to consider when (re)designing a street with the pedestrian in mind.

[13] Sacramento Pedestrian Master Plan, 2003. Accessed 4 March 2011 from: http://www.cityofsacramento.org/transportation/dot_media/street_media/sac-ped-plan_9-06.pdf

[14] San Francisco Better Streets Plan. 2010. Accessed March 2011 from: http://www.sf-planning.org/ftp/BetterStreets/proposals.htm#Final_PlanP.4.

Although street design guidelines and pedestrian environment planning differ from city to city, common threads appear in established literature:

- Attention to street length, sidewalk width and connectivity, ADA accessibility, curb conditions, design and frequency of pedestrian access points, street lighting and furniture, interface with adjacent buildings and driveways
- Street length for roads with greater than 500 vehicles per day should not exceed 900 feet[15] to reduce traffic speed, likelihood of jaywalking and create a safer transportation environment.
- Marked mid-block cross walks are present when a pedestrian destination is less than 300 feet away at a location mid-way between signal or stop-controlled intersections. [16]
- Design sidewalks to comfortably accommodate pedestrians, including those with disabilities: a minimum of five feet wide in all areas, and 8-12 feet in walkable areas such as town centers and mixed use development.[17]
- Integration of bike lanes, access to transit, connection to broader street and trail network.

Crime prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) can work simultaneously with principles described above to enhance the safety of a public space. CPTED is a multidisciplinary concept that works to deter unsafe or criminal behavior through environmental design. CPTED strategies enhance the perceived risk of detection and/or apprehension in order to deter criminal behavior. CPTED strategies include:[18]

[15] Sacramento Complete Streets Best Practices. Accessed 4 March 2011 from: http://www.sf-planning.org/ftp/BetterStreets/docs/FINAL_Exec_Summ.pdf

[16] City of Sacramento Pedestrian Safety Guidelines. 2003. Accessed March 2011 from: http://www.cityofsacramento.org/transportation/dot_media/engineer_media/pdf/PedSafety.pdf

[17] Hennepin County , 2011. Design Checklist. Retrieved 4 March 2011 from http://hennepin.us/files/HennepinUS/Housing%20Community%20Works%20and%20Transit/Community%20Development/Active%20Living/ALHC%20Active%20Living%20Design%20Checklist.3-23-11.pdf

[18] Crowe, Tim. (2000). *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*. 2nd edition. Boston: Butterworth - Heinman.

Natural Surveillance: *Design that increases the perception that people can be seen.*

- ➔ *Examples: design that uses passing vehicular, bicycle or pedestrian traffic as surveillance, street lighting along pedestrian paths that is at a height appropriate to light the face of other pedestrians.*

Natural Territorial Reinforcement: *Design that promotes social control through an increased definition of space and improved proprietary concern.*

- ➔ *Examples: Trees in residential areas have been found to make an area feel more safe and attractive, benches placed in common public areas*

Pedestrian environment design guidelines and CPTED strategies can inform the design and placement of public realm amenities. When designed and located according to a community's need, public realm amenities create a unified and visually attractive environment that evokes a sense of place. This "sense of place package" serves as an investment catalyst for communities across the country. [19]

CASE STUDIES

SACRAMENTO, CA

The City of Sacramento, California adopted a resolution for *Pedestrian Friendly Street Standards* in 2004. This resolution contains policy implementation objectives that guide the City in future transportation and land use project and planning. In 2006 the City published a *Pedestrian Master Plan* to provide further detail on its intent to, "make Sacramento the walking capital."[20]

The Plan establishes the specific standards for each of the following:

- New streets
- Adding sidewalks
- Adding bike lanes
- Lane drop
- Two way conversions
- Shorter crossings
- Widening sidewalk
- Engaging the street
- Making bike/ped communities

A follow up presentation[21] provided an overview of the lessons the City learns from its early attempts to implement the plan. Some of the key lessons learned were:

Adding bike lanes: Adjust lane lines before adding bike lanes, pursue dropping vehicle lanes to integrate bicycle lanes on existing roads.

Shorter crossings: Wide bike lanes can serve as deceleration right turn lanes, make wider curb ramps.

Engage the street: Housing and retail uses keep eyes on the street, multiple entries at street level can activate the street

Bike/ped communities: Need to push for wider sidewalks, minimize the number of travel lanes for shorter crossings

MILWAUKEE, WI

Milwaukee uses collaborative pedestrian planning as a tool to bring stakeholders with varied interests together to engage in redevelopment projects. This form of participation leverages 'Walking Workshops' which, "combine meaningful stakeholder participation with the application of best practices in pedestrian planning to enable stakeholders to address the walkability issues that most directly affect them." [22]

Walking Workshops used in Milwaukee are rooted in principles of the *Pedestrian Road Show* program of the United States Federal Highway program. "Under the auspices of *Wisconsin Walks*, the Milwaukee Walking Workshops have evolved to:

[19] City of Chula Vista, 2007. Urban Core. Retrieved 11 March 2011 from www.ci.chula-vista.ca.us/city_services/development_services/planning_building/documents/8-publicrealmguidelines6.04.07.pdf

[20] City of Sacramento. 2003. Pedestrian Safety Guidelines. Accessed March 2011 from http://www.cityofsacramento.org/transportation/dot_media/engineer_media/pdf/PedSafety.pdf

[21] SACOG, 2010. Accessed 4 March 2011 from: http://www.sacog.org/complete-streets/toolkit/files/docs/Cox_Completing%20Streets%20Lessons%20Learned.pdf

[22] Bay Ridge Consulting. (2007). Retrieved 13 March 2011 from http://www.walk21.com/papers/Guequierre_Nathan-Collaborative%20Pedestrian%20Planning%20in%20Commu.pdf

- focus on the neighborhood as a geographical unit, rather than the larger FHWA geographies,
- allow stakeholder priorities to drive planning rather than the data-oriented approach of the Pedestrian Safety Roadshow,
- make group walking audits of the study area a focus of the process,
- encourage stakeholders to seek solutions to walkability issues beyond top-down engineering and enforcement initiatives."[23]

In 2006 the City's Walnut Way neighborhood leveraged Walking Workshops to engage the community's diverse interests around the idea that "enhancing neighborhood walkability would help further the goals and priorities of all stakeholders."[22]

A typical Walking Workshop consists of three facilitated meetings: Pre-workshop planning meeting to engage stakeholders, Walking Workshop meeting – a facilitated process engaging 20-25 residents and business owners, and the Follow Up Meeting for stakeholders to review proposed actions and refine their collective priorities.

A Walking Workshop in Milwaukee

[23] Bay Ridge Consulting. (2007). Retrieved 13 March 2011 from http://www.walk21.com/papers/Guequierre_Nathan-Collaborative%20Pedestrian%20Planning%20in%20Commu.pdf

[24] Anderson, A., Baker, K., Herman, K., Lindstrom, A., Marza, R. and Rodgers, K. (2009).

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Engaging station area residents is important to the successful implementation of pedestrian-friendly design and can reinforce safe pedestrian uses.

Most elementary-aged children in the Blake Road Station area attend Eisenhower Elementary, located approximately 2.5 miles west, across Hwy 169. For children the only means of safe transportation to the school is via car or bus.

Community gathering spaces, like the Hopkins Pavilion, a sports and recreation complex, are also nearly 2 miles away and require crossing Hwy. 169. Burnes Park, the closest green space with programmed sports activity, is also west of Hwy 169, approximately 1.2 miles away. It also has limited safe access from Blake Road other than by motorized vehicle.

The closest city-supported facility to the Blake Road station area is The Depot Coffee House, located nearly one mile away on Excelsior Boulevard. The Depot and is accessible from Blake Road via the Cedar Lake Trail. The facility will hold up to 90 people for performances and events and it runs programs year-round overseen by a board of directors of up to 15 high school students (grades 9-12) and five adults over the age of 18 (The Depot, 2011).

Improved access to these sites via pedestrian connections is one way to increase opportunities for children and families in the area to access these resources. While longer-term solutions, such as expansion and enhancement of Cottageville Park are underway, a circulating bus or trolley system to access existing community parks and facilities may be an interim solution.

In Saint Paul, a circulator system linking low-income and under-served youth with access to existing programs has been in operation since 2001. A 2009 Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs student consultant project revealed circulator systems effectively link youth with programs and promote greater collaboration between organizations. The study was inconclusive regarding the return on investment in youth programming, noting reports have ranged from no economic benefit to returns as high as $12 for each $1 invested. Additional research is required for more conclusive findings. The Blake Road Station area, with limited existing facilities to support youth programming, including meal sites, may benefit from exploring a circulator program such as the decade-long program in Saint Paul.[24]

LAND USE

The arrival of the SWLRT to the Blake Road Corridor presents a unique opportunity to tie land uses and transportation systems together. This connection can result in new development and redevelopment that further strengthens the economic health of this corridor.

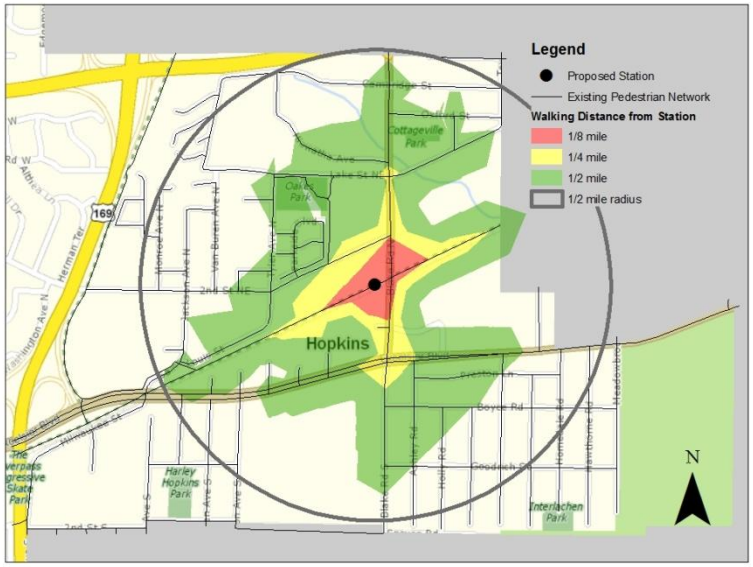
Transit Oriented Development (TOD) incorporates land uses and development patterns "that supports, and is supported by, mass transit."[25] A well planned station area that incorporates TOD and can reduce levels of auto dependency by improving alternative modes of transport, increase the economic vitality of the area through a mixture of land uses, create a sense of place for the community, and improve equity in terms or accessibility and housing options.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Blake Road Corridor is spatially fragmented from within and physically isolated from the majority of the rest of Hopkins. This arrangement contributes to social and cultural divisions, deters redevelopment and inhibits economic development in the Corridor. Stabilized residential neighborhoods are segmented into discreet sections that lack significant linkage, limiting the Corridor's ability to function as a collective district.

The current network of pedestrian oriented infrastructure is insufficient to support current and, more importantly, future land uses within the proposed station area. Only 43.7% of the area within a ½ mile radius of the proposed station is accessible by foot within the same distance. This percentage shrinks to 26.5% within a ¼ mile distance, and increases a bit to 32.6% within an 1/8 of a mile. Therefore, to properly support TOD land uses, the pedestrian network must be improved upon.

[25]Berke, Philip. (2006). *Urban Land Use Planning.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.



Land uses and urban design concepts that create a neighborhood activity center will help unify the east Hopkins neighborhood.

BEST PRACTICES

The ability for a transit station to support new development depends greatly on the land uses surrounding the station site. Therefore, it useful to consider multiple land uses adjacent to a station, as well as those on the outer periphery of the station. *Station Areas* typically encompass an area within a quarter mile radius of the station site, whereas a *Small Area District* covers a larger area and may incorporate a number of smaller neighborhoods outside the immediate station area.[25]

Development suitable to one area may not work for another area. One approach to resolving these issues is the urban village model. Urban villages integrate transit-oriented, mixed-use development at the core with primarily residential land uses along the periphery. Delineating these two

areas helps determine appropriate development and land use policies, such as zoning, ordinances and parking requirements.

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

TOD can take different forms depending on the type of activity center and intensity of surrounding land uses. TODs typically consist of compact development, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly infrastructure, enhanced circulation and connectivity throughout the site, high transit accessibility, mixed land uses that complement one another, and a variety of housing options – both in the form of lifestyle preferences and affordability.

Station area plans should permit higher-density development, ensure a high level of station visibility and accessibility for a station, account for convenient transfer locations to other forms of transit and transportation options, as well as strategically placed park and ride facilities. [25]

Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) incorporate land use "that supports, and is supported by, mass transit."[26] TODs can take different forms depending on the intensity of land uses or the type of activity centers that exist or are proposed in a station area. TODs typically consist of compact development, pedestrian and bicycle friendly infrastructure, enhanced circulation and connectivity throughout the site, a high level of transit accessibility, mixed land uses that complement one another, and diverse housing options, both in the form of lifestyle preferences and affordability.

To accommodate TOD-style development, Station Area plans need to identify sites for high-density development, create highly visible and easily accessible station entrances and exits, provide convenient transfers to other modes of transit and transportation, as well as offer sufficient park and ride facilities.[27] At their core, TODs are comprised of mixed land uses, usually in the form of vertical mixed use that accommodate higher residential densities. Residential development within TODs is typically paired with commercial and retail space to support station area and adjacent neighborhood residents.

TODs should also provide "childcare centers, schools, libraries, public services, local government offices, and community parks. Auto-oriented land uses, such as gas stations or restaurants with drive-through windows are discouraged."[28] Design features of a TOD include:

- Vegetation, ornamental lighting, pedestrian seating, building awnings, and weather protection along key pedestrian corridors.
- Relatively narrow, interconnected streets and small blocks.
- Shallow or zero setbacks on buildings with entrances that connect directly to the public walkway.[29]

MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

Mixed Used Development (MXD) is characterized by three or more significant revenue-producing land uses that are mutually supportive, significant physical and functional integration of site components, and coordinated development. [30]

First, it is important that MXDs have several revenue-producing uses to achieve the "critical mass" to support market penetration. These uses should be mutually supporting. for example, a nutrition shop and a fitness center complement one another.

[26] Berke, Philip. *Urban Land Use Planning.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006

[27] Ibid.

[28] Hendricks, Sara J. and Julie Goodwill. *Building Transit Oriented Development in Established Communities.* Center for Urban Transportation Research, National Center for Transportation Research, Tampa: University of South Florida, 2002.

[29] Ibid

[30] Schwanke, Dean, 2003. *Mixed Use Development Handbook.* Washington DC: ULI.

Secondly, the site needs to have significant physical and functional integration, such a vertical mixing on uses at a single site location and the careful positioning of key project components. For example, the placement of retail around social gathering spaces and pedestrian promenades and complete streets to support multiple means of circulation.

The success of a MXD often hinges on the following site specifications:

- Substantial holding capacity, consisting of 15 acres with a floor-to-area ratio (FAR) of 5 on average. Specifications can be adjusted downward for suburban areas.
- Highly visible and trafficked areas with numerous access points.
- Located in an overall area that contains generally flexible zoning.
- Located within a larger multi use environment.

The last site specification is important because MXDs typically perform best when located within a multi-use environment. Multi-use is similar to MXD in that both are comprised of different uses within a single site, but different in that multi-uses support a lower number of land uses and lack substantial physical integration between the various uses. In suburban environments, multi-use areas typically provide horizontal mixing, such as strip malls, or other types of local activity centers. Within this type of land use environment, an MXD can benefit as a point of confluence among multiple land use markets.

LAND-USE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

LIBERALIZE DENSITY REGULATIONS

Prior to the Great Recession, research offers evidence that the market is underserved by dense mixed use development. Additional research is necessary to verify if these trends continue post-Great Recession. A 2004 survey indicated that 62% of developers in the Midwest thought that there was an inadequate supply of alternative housing available.[31] A significant factor limiting dense mixed use is developers' expectation that alternative housing will be rejected. Therefore, they refrain from making alternate proposals. Survey respondents indicated that the planning and approval process resulted in density reductions 81.7% of the time and mixed-use character reductions 47.2% of the time.

Because developers are hesitant to incur delays or rejections associated with transit-oriented development, they tend to propose standard forms of development. This means they may pass up TOD infill projects in favor of other opportunities, resulting in slower redevelopment for TOD projects. Unsupportive regulations, such as maximums on floor-to-area ratios, height restrictions, minimum setbacks, lot coverage maximums, and parking requirements, can restrict the density necessary to support profitable TOD projects.[32] The report concludes that local regulations are the primary obstacle to attracting TOD because developers are interested in developing more densely and with more mixed-use than regulations typically allow.[33]

Often, zoning ordinance minimum parking requirements create barriers to efficient land use and hinder social activity. In many communities, large swaths of land are allocated to surface or structured parking to accommodate the highest volume of cars during the peak time of the year. In fact, data from across the country shows vast amounts of parking space go unused during high-use periods. A study of employer-subsidized suburban office parking showed that occupancy was 40% on average and 60% during peak demand times.[34] Furthermore, even if off-street parking reaches full capacity a few times in the year, it hardly justifies the loss of

[31] Levine, Jonathan and Inam, Aseem. "The market for transportation-land use intergration: Do developers want smarter growth than regulations allow?" *Transportation*, 2004: 409-427.

[32] Hendricks, Sara J. and Julie Goodwill. *Building Transit Oriented Development in Established Communities.* Center for Urban Transportation Research, National Center for Transportation Research, Tampa: University of South Florida, 2002.

[33] Levine, Jonathan and Inam, Aseem. "The market for transportation-land use intergration: Do developers want smarter growth than regulations allow?" *Transportation*, 2004: 409-427.

[34] Shoup, D. C. (1995, Winter). An Opportunity to Reduce Minimum Parking Requirements. *Journal of the American Plannign Association* , 14-28.

other economic or social uses. Aside from inefficient land use, parking also creates barriers for pedestrians and reinforces auto-centric behavior.

In its *Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Urban and Suburban Zoning Code*, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides a number of guidelines for developing best practices for off-street parking:[35]

- Reduce Parking Supply Minimums based on land use mixes
- Offer off-site parking that near local destinations
- Provide Fee-In-Lieu System for developers to contribute toward public parking in place meeting on site minimums
- Provide Shared Parking Credits for businesses with different peak time uses to 'bundle' together their parking requirements
- Enforce parking rules to ensure parking is used as intended
- Make Public Transit a viable option in place of the car
- Compensate for off-street reductions with On-Street Parking.

A particularly useful parking standard strategy is the combining parking overlay districts with mixed-use TODs. This combined strategy regulates the amount of off-street parking and encourages non-motorized activities. Compact mixed use TODs are often physically or financially prohibited because of traditional high minimum parking requirements.

Another strategy is to implement parking permit provisions and curb-parking fees to manage overflow on local streets. Often, there is a fear that reduced parking minimums will translate into crowded residential streets. To avoid this outcome, communities should implement a residential parking permit (RPP). This way, residents park as usual, while visitors are either prohibited or are charged for parking accordingly. Pricing curb parking for commuters and visitors during daytime hours can regulate use and minimize driver inconvenience while raising revenue. An excellent way to gain community buy-in is through a parking benefit district which generates revenue for community improvements in the district.[36]

Designing new streets or retrofitting exiting ones with diagonal parking is an additional option. In areas where the level of parking is highest, diagonal parking can increase parking spaces by up to 30 percent per block face. This strategy is especially useful in core commercial areas.

CASE STUDIES

DENVER, CO

In an effort to reduce congestion and urban sprawl, the City of Denver instituted *BluePrint Denver,* a long-range plan that whole-heartedly embraces TOD and identifies "transit-serving nodes and corridors as sensible places to direct growth."[37] This plan divides the city into "*areas of stability*" and "*areas of change.*" In places identified as "*areas of change*," the city adopted the new zoning ordinance TMU-30, which significantly increases allowable densities along LRT corridors.

The policies below facilitate TOD within designated areas[40]:

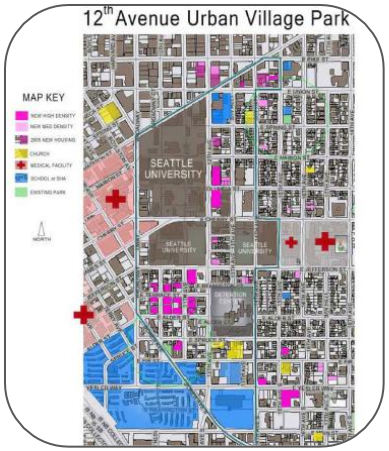
- Establish a clearinghouse for TOD site information, technical support, project review, and feedback.
- Develop educational materials on TOD and local opportunities.
- Conduct outreach to property owners, developers, lenders, politicians, community advocates, policymakers, and consultants.
- Establish a TOD fund
- Write and issue RFQs/RFPs for TOD site.
- Identify funding and grant sources.
- Develop an implementation strategy.

[35] Nelson, Kevin et al. (2011, Febraury 22). *Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Urban and Suburban Zoning Codes.* Retrieved April 4, 2011, from United States Enviromental Protection Agency: http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/essential_fixes.htm

[36] Shoup, D. C. (1995, Winter). An Opportunity to Reduce Minimum Parking Requirements. *Journal of the American Plannign Association* , 14-28.

[37] Cervero, Robert. 2004. *Transit-oriented development in the United States: experiences, challenges, and prospects.* Washington DC: Transportation Research Board.

The Denver suburb of Arvada adopted "transit-ready" development that proactively "anticipates transit, rather than using transit as a catalyst for change." In other words, the suburb has started zoning strategic transit node areas for TOD, not in response to LRT, but in preparation of its arrival.



Because the "private real-estate market [was] not likely to justify the costs of assembling, clearing, and preparing land, even transit-accessible land, when other undeveloped properties exist elsewhere," the city made strategic near-term investments in hopes of long term payoffs, which were ultimately achieved.[40] The key take-away from TOD in the Denver area is that successful redevelopment around suburban transit stations can largely benefit from strategic proactive public investments, as long as developable parcels are available elsewhere. This has meant that local municipalities have had to "contribute substantial resources up front with the aim of recapturing value over the ensuing decades."[38]

SEATTLE, WA

The City of Seattle instituted the urban village concept to maximize land use and improve transportation efficiencies. For example, transit-oriented development (TOD) near the station site acts as a town center for adjacent residential neighborhoods.

A village-like area is created by integrating the appropriate infrastructure and transitional land uses between core and peripheral sites. These urban villages vary in size and scale to accommodate different urban forms. One prototype is the hub-urban village, which functions as a compact residential district with average densities between eight and fifteen units per acre – sufficient to support public transit – and has access to major activity centers via a regional transit system.

The highest densities are located at the village core within the station area plan and taper off towards the periphery small area plan. These communities offer housing and employment. The City of Seattle designates areas as urban villages where the intent is to transform "auto-oriented environments into more cohesive mixed use pedestrian environments or within economically distressed communities to focus economic reinvestment to benefit the existing population."[39] The following is a list of hub-urban village goals and policies:[40]

Goals

- Accommodate concentrations of housing and employment at strategic locations in the transportation system conveniently accessible to the city's residential population, thereby reducing the length of work-trip commutes.
- Provide convenient locations for commercial services that serve the populations of the village, surrounding neighborhoods, the city, and the region.
- Accommodate concentrations of employment and housing at densities that support pedestrian and transit use and increase opportunities within the city for people to live close to work.

[38] Cervero, Robert. *Transit-oriented development in the United States: experiences, challenges, and prospects.* Washington DC: Transportation Research Board, 2004.

[39] City of Seattle, 2005 *Seattle's Comprehensive Plan.* Retrieved April 2, 2011, from http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/static/Urban%20Village%20element_LatestReleased_DPDP016169.pdf

[40] Ibid.

Policies

- Zoning that allows a mix of uses to accommodate concentrations of employment and housing.
- Sufficient zoned capacity to accommodate a minimum of 25 jobs/acre and to accommodate a total of at least 2,500 jobs within ¼ mile of the village center, and to accommodate at least 3,500 dwellings units within ½ mile of the village center.
- Current zoning supports a concentration of residential development at 15 or more units/acre and a total of at least 1,800 housing units within ¼ mile of the village center.
- Residential areas that allow a mix of densities, and non-residential activities that support residential use.
- Within ½ mile of the village center a minimum of one-third (at least 20 acres) of the land area is currently zoned to accommodate mixed-use or commercial activity.
- A broad range of housing types and commercial and retail support services either existing or allowed under current zoning to serve a local, citywide, or regional market.
- A strategic location in relation to both the local and regional transportation network.
- Open space amenities.
- Opportunities for redevelopment because of a substantial amount of vacant or under-used land within the village.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Blake School is located on the edge of the half-mile station area. The school's interests focus on watershed management issues creating opportunity for partnerships with the Watershed District to establish new green space and shared public and private spaces.

In addition, Blake School has a strong interest in exploring ways to move students between its campuses in Minnetonka, Hopkins and Minneapolis, as well as supporting student use of the line for regular round trip home-to-school commuting (Ken Nivala, telephone interview, 15 February 2011).

Coordinating school programming with rail line development, engaging faculty, students and parents in rail line plans and establishing a mini-course on transit development may create opportunities for deeper community engagement in the plans and subsequent use of the line.

Stewart Lawrence Group acquired the Hopkins Cold Storage site to develop corporate campus facilities similar to Excelsior Crossings, leased by Cargill currently (Larry Pobuda, telephone interview, 4 March 2011). With the change in the economy, this plan has been shelved. For the near future, the site is likely to be maintained as a cold storage facility.

The developers have had limited contact with the Watershed District staff. In the current economic climate, the developers may be open to a partnership or purchase that could create a future revenue stream for the Watershed District while reclaiming valuable real estate along Minnehaha Creek.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

No single "model" bylaw or ordinance can be adopted by a municipality without some tailoring to the unique characteristics and needs of that individual municipality. [41]

EXISTING ASSETS

Economic development policies and incentives have the power to shape the environment of the Blake Road Corridor. In recent years, the Corridor has "experienced ongoing changes and has been heavily influenced by changes in industry, transportation and in residential living patterns."[42]

A large strip mall development at the northwest corner of Blake Road and Excelsior Boulevard contains a variety of services. The site has multiple owners and few shops have street frontage or sidewalk access. The single story shopping center is nearly 100% covered in pavement and its buildings have seen few aesthetic improvements since they were constructed. Despite these challenges, the mix of uses serves the surrounding neighborhood. As a result, occupancy is high and owners retain tenants. This commercial site is one of the highest priorities for redevelopment in the City; its proximity to Excelsior Boulevard, Lake Street, the Cedar Lake Trail, and SWLRT enhances its accessibility and presents an opportunity to create a focal point along the Corridor.

The Blake Road Corridor sits in the east section of Hopkins and residents have low to moderately low employment. As described in the diagnosis section, few Corridor residents work in Hopkins. With the Asian and Hispanic population each representing 8% and African Americans representing 13% of the population in this area, the demographic makeup of the Corridor offers unique opportunities for new business development to serve the needs of Corridor residents, commuters and visitors. According to the most recent numbers from the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA),[43] minority firms, between 1997 and 2002, in Minnesota grew 42% compared to 8% for all other firms in the State.

The Corridor is adjacent to the Interlachen neighborhood, one of the most affluent neighborhoods proximate to the station area. Improvements to the Corridor create opportunities to draw these residents into the area for unique cultural and recreational experiences, as well as access to LRT.

With employment expected in grow 30% between 2010 and 2020, and another 10% between 2020 and 2030, Hopkins' economic development policies should reflect the employment and minority household trends as a major opportunity to expand locally owned business that cater to its unique population mix, especially in the Blake Road Corridor. [44] These businesses can draw from the surrounding community to fill their employments needs. New businesses development along the Corridor will increase jobs and change the landscape along Blake Road. New buildings to house these businesses will bring much needed reinvestment to the area.

BEST PRACTICES

Business incubators are "programs that nurture start-up businesses by providing hands-on management assistance, access to financing, and exposure to critical business or technical support services." [45] Incubators provide tenants with physical space for their business and often provide lending and consulting services to all tenants. Other benefits include lower

[41] State of Massachusetts. Accessed 1 March 2011 from: http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/bylaws/TOD-Bylaw.pdf
[42] Hoisington Koegler Group Inc., 2003.

[43] Minority Business Development Agency. (2010). *Minority Business Development Agency.* Retrieved 2011, from U.S. Business Fact Sheets: http://www.mbda.gov/pressroom/research-library/us-business-fact-sheets
[44] Metropolitan Council, *Community Profile*, 2010, http://stats.metc.state.mn.us/profile/detail.aspx?c=02394417 (accessed 2010).
[45] Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator, 2011.

overhead costs, encouragement of new businesses development and job creation. The most important benefit an incubator offers to the Blake Road Corridor is "creating vibrant active places that contribute to the economic development and revitalization of urban neighborhoods."[46] Incubators support emerging and growing markets within communities such as the Latino, East African and Indian populations along the Corridor. However, it should be noted that business incubators cannot take the place of a well thought-out business plan; tenants in incubators may come and go just like a strip mall or retail center. The strength of incubators lies in their geographic niche and communities of color and neighborhoods prime for revitalization often work best. They may also be areas where typical retail space is not well matched with community needs.

Small business lending services can serve as the catalyst that helps an incubator business grow into a stand-alone business. Numerous community development agencies (CDCs) and cities offer small business lending programs to specific geographic areas throughout their cities. Areas in need of small business lending are underserved typically by large commercial lenders. CDCs have a vested interest in the area they serve and have more knowledge of the micro economic climate in which they lend.

Photo courtesy of LEDC; Global Market, Minneapolis

CASE STUDY

Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) – Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

Modeled after Chicago's South Shore Bank, NDC formerly a subsidiary of Western Bank in St. Paul, MN was formed to "support local economic revitalization initiatives in core areas of poverty in St. Paul and Minneapolis." [47] NDC's business incubator program is designed to have positive economic impacts on inner-city neighborhoods by targeting the redevelopment of blighted structures into thriving commercial properties that inject economic development and activity in the surrounding neighborhood. Since 1993 NDC has helped small businesses in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area by revitalizing five commercial properties into business incubators that represent over 120,000 ft^2 and more than 100 businesses. NDC's services go beyond business incubating and also include small business lending, consulting, and entrepreneur training. During 2009 NDC financed 27 loans totaling $344,503 for start-up and existing businesses. To better serve residents in the areas in which they work, NDC offers its services in Hmong, Somali, Oromo and Spanish. NDC also offers an award winning "Reba-Free" financing program. In compliance with Islamic law, observant Muslims may not participate in programs that charge interest. The NDC developed the program to accommodate its Somali population, which is primarily Muslim.

[46] Neighborhood Development Center. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 April 2011, from http://www.ndc-mn.org/.

[47] Ibid.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Opportunities to engage the community:

- **Community presentations** on successful incubator businesses presented by the Neighborhood Development Center and hosted by the BRCC at Blake Road businesses during evening hours convenient for residents who live in the area
- **Small Business Administration workshops** linked online to the BRCC website connecting residents with resources for starting new businesses
- **A LinkedIn happy hour offered by the** BRCC at Pizza Luce featuring City of Hopkins officials describing plans for the area
- **TwinWest Chamber of Commerce subcommittee** to provide advice and mentors for new Blake Road Corridor businesses

VISION

A Vision for the Blake Road Station Area

The vision for the Blake Road Station area creates a sense of place through public realm improvements on key sites, complementary land uses, development that is at a human scale, and improvements to transportation infrastructure that supports greater multi-modal mobility and accessibility. Efficient and complementary land uses facilitate economic development and dynamic changes to the built environment, while respecting residential neighborhoods. Improvements in the transportation infrastructure will enhance the safety of pedestrians, bicycle riders and vehicle drivers within the corridor. These improvements will strengthen the economic, environmental, equity, and livability of the area, and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

The following vision supports a vibrant mix of people – from new immigrants to lifelong residents – who make their home in the area along the corridor, to outdoor enthusiasts who walk and ride its beautiful trails or visit the creek, to commuters and families who work or attend school in the area. The vision elevates the human condition and fosters a sense of community is through the built environment. This is a vision that promotes prosperity with enhanced equity, placing social cohesion on an equal footing with economic development.

With the planned investments described in the action plan, people who live, work and play around the station will:

- Access the station area, other neighborhoods, and area amenities by bike or foot safely
- Experience reduced crime as a result of increased pedestrian traffic – “eyes on the street” – and blurred distinction between public and private spaces.
- Enjoy a safe, renovated Cottageville Park connected to Minnehaha Creek, regional bikeways, and the greater community.

- Experience a vibrant multi-cultural and demographically diverse neighborhood with a range of amenities that support both established and more recently arrived residents.
- Chose from a greater mix of housing and commercial spaces resulting from zoning plans the support diverse land uses.

IMAGINE THIS – EXPERIENCE THE POTENTIAL OF BLAKE ROAD

A RESIDENT'S EXPERIENCE

LAND USE, URBAN DESIGN AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Having grabbed your bag of groceries on your way out from the local grocer, you're looking forward to the stroll home. Now, there's a co-op within walking distance, which you visit frequently to pick up what you need for the week, or even that very day. "How convenient!" Running errands, it turns out, is a pleasure. However, it's not just the addition of a neighborhood grocer that has positively impacted your life, it's the many improvements that have accompanied the redevelopment of the neighborhood around the new LRT station: the coffee shop that you frequent on your morning walks to catch the train to work; the drycleaners next to the station when you arrive home; the tax accountant and doctor's offices above the various retail shops that encompass the mixed used development adjacent to the station. You love that there always seems to be life on the streets: commuters travelling to and from the station, the amount of pedestrian activity that the local businesses generate, and the residents who live above many of the shops or near the station that walk, rather than drive, for most short distance trips.

What was once a disparate mix of land uses, largely inhospitable to pedestrian traffic, or any non- motorized traffic for that matter, is now a highly rational mix of uses that not only serves the commercial, retail, and residential needs of the community, but also acts as a cohesive civic center for the immediate area and the surrounding neighborhoods. At the center of the station area are buildings four to six stories tall that house a mix of retail and commercial offices on the first and second floors, with residential units filling the remaining floors. The new buildings aren't the only positive change; the redesign of streets and sidewalks has also greatly improved access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

As you walk westbound along Excelsior Boulevard towards its intersection with Blake Road, you admire the smooth condition of the wide concrete pavers under your feet – a welcome change to the disconnected and hazardous sidewalks from years before. As you approach the intersection you look-up and take notice of the landmark 'Excelsior and Blake' gateway marker welcoming you. The happy ring of a bicycle bell catches your attention as a family pedals past, and leaves you to think to yourself "wow, that's something I never used to see on Blake Road!" Ahead, the LRT train is approaching. As you wait for the crossing gates to rise, you take cover under one of the boulevard trees.

Crossing the rail tracks, the corridor all of a sudden takes on a new life. Immediately in front of you on the Cedar Lake Trail is a group of cyclists congregating at the edge of Blake Road waiting to cross. Heading north towards Knollwood Mall, the street sidewalks are lined with shade trees, benches, decorative plantings, and ornamental streetlights with raspberry colored banners. Defined bicycle lanes hug the curbside in both directions and feed riders onto the Cedar Lake Trail. As you walk from the station area continuing north along Blake Road, the higher density of mixed uses, gives way to moderately dense row houses with front porches and shallow set backs from the street. This type of urban design gives the area a residential feel, but not one where private spaces feel walled off or isolated from shared areas. A little ways past the new traffic-calming street design at 2nd Street is a well-marked crosswalk with a pedestrian refuge within the median separating either direction of traffic.

As you approach the creek, raspberry red trail signs welcome you to the trail and remind you to schedule some time to take a walk this weekend. Just a further ways up you approach the entrance to the newly enlarged Cottageville Park where beautiful native grasses, flowers, and other vegetation line the banks of Minnehaha Creek. Rather than attracting crime, the park now attracts families and children to play, relax and watch performances on the green during the summer. Residents and visitors are served by a mix of conveniences, ranging from fast food to small shops, and the area is backed by a restored creek habitat.

While you like living in your neighborhood of single-family houses in Cottageville, you appreciate the activities that mixed use development and infrastructure upgrades have brought to the area. Finally, the neighborhood is just that, a "neighborhood." The land use changes and urban redesign spurred by the station has created an efficient, functional and livable urban space with a distinct identity.

A COMMUTER'S EXPERIENCE

NEW BUSINESSES, RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND LOCAL IDENTITY

You are heading home from work – it's a gorgeous evening and the quarter-mile walk from your desk to the station platform is a welcome chance to stretch your legs. You notice Three Rivers Park has installed a series of mini-exercise stations every few hundred feet along the Cedar Lake Trail with simple exercises to try – no need for the gym tonight! You remember you promised to bring home dinner and the food being prepared near the train platform smells great. Brightly colored stalls, spices from around the world and a friendly call from Ajay, whom you've gotten to know from your early morning coffee stops, remind you why you enjoy commuting to and working in this area more than any other. The neighborhood around your office feels like a global village – and the working-class community that surrounds the train station has embraced the opportunities it provides for new, neighborhood businesses. Ajay has told you he never planned to live in this neighborhood for more than a few months before the station opened and he could barely scrape together enough work to feed his family. He's been here for many years now, his oldest daughter is expecting their first grandchild, and he runs a successful series of coffee stands along the station line. His cousin is part-owner of a new multi-story apartment building planned a few blocks away, near Oakes Park, where the neighborhood kids engage in various sports and activities. You smile and make small talk while your dinner is wrapped up for the trip home. You remember some of your older co-workers describing the neighborhood changes – formerly a high-crime area, children were often hungry and families moved regularly looking for safer, more stable neighborhoods. You can hardly imagine it was the same place.

ACTION PLAN

The action plan for the Blake Road Station area supports safe, multi-modal activity throughout the station area, a sense of place through public realm improvements and economic development through mixed-use development on key sites. The action plan uses the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative (BRCC) as the primary resource for public engagement.

The following action plan recommendations focus on creating a global village in the Blake Road Corridor. The village concept is designed to build on the strength created by the Corridor's relatively young and highly diverse resident population, as well as the opportunities created by existing employment centers, access to public parks and trails along with ease of access to the area by car.

Bicyclist heading north on Blake Road

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

The conversion of Blake Road into a pedestrian-friendly environment is central to this community's future identity. It will improve the experience of Corridor residents, business owners and visitors, enhance the livability of the area, and serve as a connection point that merges the physical and psychological needs of corridor users. This section provides recommendations on policy, design and collaboration to guide the City of Hopkins and Corridor stakeholders in creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment that addresses the needs of its users.

RECOMMENDATION: TRANSFORM BLAKE ROAD INTO A COMPLETE STREET

Transforming Blake Road into a Complete Street will:

- Spark a sense of community identity through unified, unique street and public realm design
- Enhance engagement of the diverse Corridor population
- Improve overall livability of the corridor by creating a cohesive environment that is more connected, accessible and safe

POLICY

As of April 2011, Hopkins is working on a Complete Streets resolution. Complete Streets resolutions typically lead to Complete Streets policies and in some cases lead to Complete Streets implementation plans. Future resolutions, policies or plans should specifically address the following within the Blake Road Corridor:

Pedestrian safety:

- Require future building front direction and window-to- brick façade ratios oriented to Blake Road and pedestrian travel spaces around

- Resolve jaywalking by integrating median refuge areas mid-block to reduce pedestrian crossing time.
- Require minimum number of public realm infrastructure improvements per block (benches, receptacles, trees) and way finding signs at a minimum distance from destination, visible to pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

Connected network of local trails and access points:

- Establish a new local trail along the north side of Cambridge Street
- Enhance signing of 2nd Street local trail and signing of connection to the North Cedar Lake Trail at Blake Road and 2nd Street intersection.

DESIGN

Design will play a key role in successfully orienting Blake Road to a more pedestrian-friendly place. Street space and public amenity design should consider the physical and psychological transformation of this corridor. The following conceptual site plan provides recommendations that address these transformative points. Recommended design elements are the result of a review of case studies and award-winning Complete Street designs from around the world. Each leverage design principles that support access, connectivity, context and safety that a Complete Street can offer to its community.

The Blake Road community's desire to improve access, connection and safety can be partially addressed through these design recommendations. Collectively, these provide the infrastructure basis to enhance livability and bring a greater 'sense of place' to the Blake Road Corridor.

Space used for pedestrian crossing, just north of Blake Road/Excelsior Boulevard intersection

SITE PLAN: PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT/PUBLIC REALM

Interactive pedestrian boardwalk
(connection to north of Hwy 7)

Identify *Hiawatha Oakes Preserve* view:

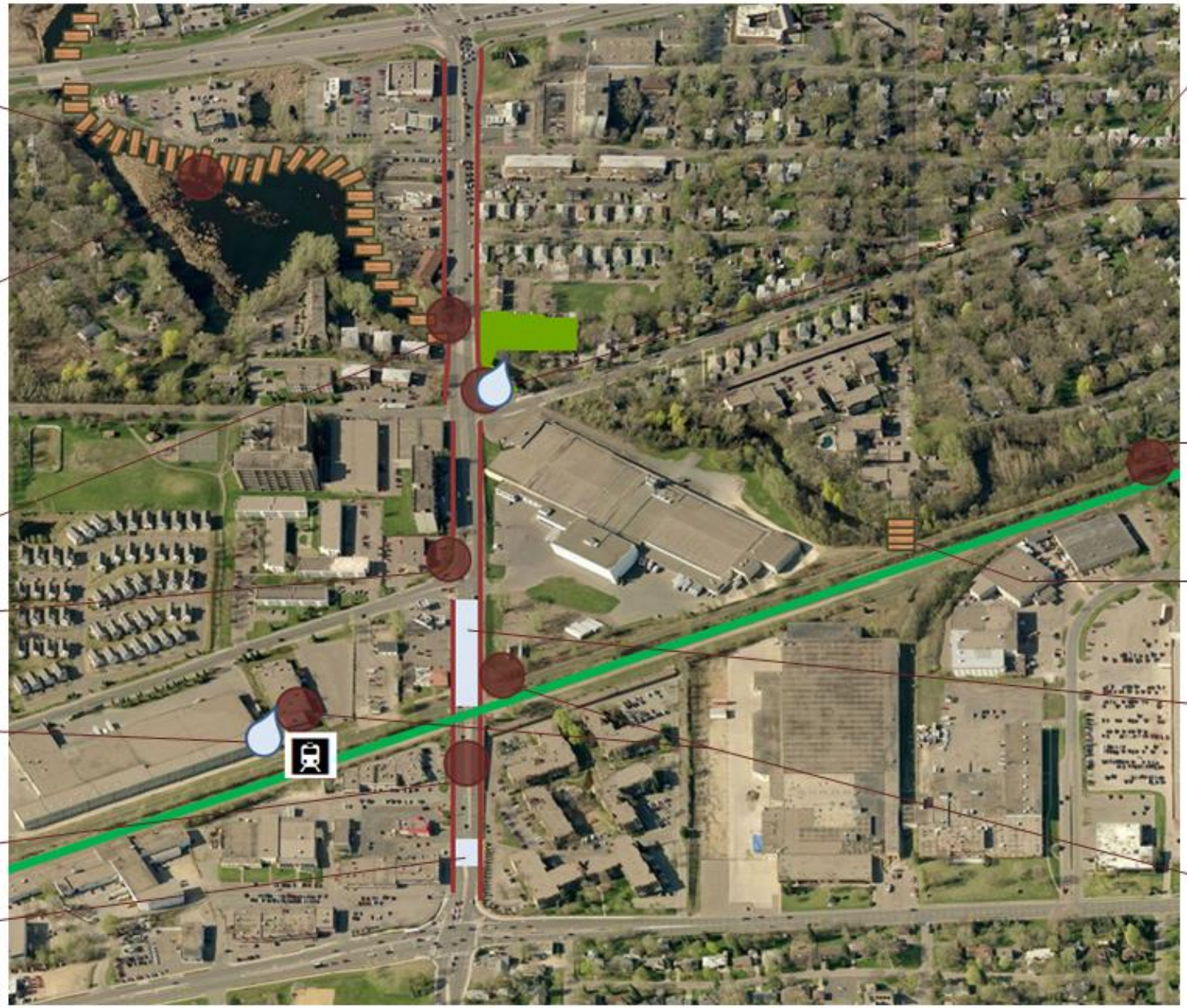
Announce Minnehaha Creek & Boardwalk access

Announce 2nd Street connection to North Cedar Lake Trail

Gathering space integrated in new development

Hopkins median banners

Pedestrian refuge



Announce Cottageville Park & Minnehaha Creek

Programming Space:

'Welcome to Hopkins' Sign

Pedestrian footbridge

Traffic calming street feature

Map/Directional

LEGEND

- LRT STATION
- CEDAR LAKE TRAIL
- BICYCLE LANE
- STREET DESIGN
- BRIDGE/BOARDWALK
- SIGNING OPPORTUNITY
- PUBLIC GATHERING SPACE

Photos by Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, Minnehaha Oakes Association

AROUND BLAKE ROAD CORRIDOR

High speed roads isolate the Blake Road Corridor from many community amenities. These roads make pedestrian and bicycle crossings unsafe and act as barriers to pedestrians trying to access amenities beyond them. The following recommendations provide the Blake Road community with improved options to access broader community amenities:

Circulator bus: Connect Station Area children with existing programs through a circulating bus system. Since 2001, St. Paul has operated a circulator system linking low-income youth to programs. A 2009 study revealed circulator systems are effective and promote greater collaboration between organizations.[48] The Blake Road Station area, with limited facilities to support youth, including meal sites, would benefit from a circulator program.

Create a network of local trails connected to Blake Road: Local trails are not identified around Blake Road. Opportunity exists to enhance bicycle lane signage on 2nd Street and its connection to Burnes Park as well as to downtown via Washington Street. Through redesign, Cambridge Street west of Blake Road could accommodate a single pedestrian lane. This pedestrian connection works with the next recommendation:

Connection to the north side of Highway 7 via Minnehaha Creek: Improve access to commercial area by constructing a pedestrian boardwalk along Minnehaha Creek that spans the shoreline behind Dairy Queen and ultimately connects to the north side of Highway 7. Like the pedestrian boardwalk over the creek at Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park, this public amenity could be funded in part by adjacent businesses and result from partnership with the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. This option provides a safe pedestrian alternative to crossing the 10 lanes of Highway 7 traffic, and is closer than the North Cedar Lake Trail via 2nd Street.

Boardwalk over Minnehaha Creek at Methodist Hospital

Connect the Texas Avenue neighborhood area to Cedar Lake Trail via a pedestrian footbridge: improve trail access for the neighborhood north and west of Blake Road by integrating a pedestrian foot bridge over Minnehaha Creek near the terminus of Texas Avenue. Currently residents must go around Hopkins Cold Storage or trespass through private property to access the trail near Rhode Island Avenue.

ENTIRE BLAKE ROAD CORRIDOR

PUBLIC REALM AMENITIES

Details in public spaces generate a sense of community. Public realm amenities create a visually attractive environment through unified infrastructure and design. They allow a community to express itself and provide users with a psychological sense of place.

Despite its proximity to two parks and Minnehaha Creek, Blake Road lacks noticeable visual cues of the natural environment. Streetscaping should enhance the visual connection to natural spaces within the Corridor. Ornamental trees or shrubs should be integrated into the new lane median spaces, sidewalk improvements on the west side and retrofitted into select points of the sidewalk on the east side.

Uniform way finding signs are important connective features of any public space. Way finding signs need to be more prevalent along Blake Road and along Cedar Lake Trail leading into the Corridor. Signs announcing Cottageville and Oakes Parks, the Hiawatha Oakes Preserve as well as Minnehaha Creek should be integrated into roadway improvements and Cedar Lake Trail. Currently Cedar Lake Trail users are given no indication of their arrival into Hopkins. A sign paired with a directory map should

[48] (Anderson, Baker, Herman, Lindstrom, Marza, & Rodgers, 2009)

welcome visitors to the Hopkins, as Blake Road is the first major west bound access point in Hopkins of the Cedar Lake Trail. This format can be duplicated around the Blake Road SWLRT station area. Partnership with the Three Rivers Park District can support sign branding, funding and experience in sign placement in HCRRA right of way.

Hopkins raspberry-colored banners, like those along Excelsior Boulevard medians, should further connect Blake Road to the larger Hopkins community and clearly announce the City to LRT and trail users.

Design-approved streetlamps, benches, receptacles and tree grates will further tie Blake Road to the broader design of Hopkins.

Blake Road Corridor lacks community gathering spaces and integrating them will give residents and business owners a place to gather and further enliven the sense of community throughout the Corridor.

A community building should be located in the newly expanded Cottageville Park. This facility should mimic the success of Van Cleve Park programs in Minneapolis' Southeast Como neighborhood. A partnership with the Three Rivers Park District, Lesard neighborhood or private businesses, such as tenants at the Hopkins Cold Storage site, Cargill, Jacobs Trading, could provide facility funding and maintenance.

Another community gathering point, such as a community room integrated into redevelopment plans, should be located on the western side of Blake Road. This site should be integrated into future development and located proximate to the station stop. This space can act as a gathering space, with no programming and little maintenance required.

STREET AMENITIES – BICYCLE LANE

Successful bicycle lane design enhances the user experience for all transportation modes. Vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic benefit from physical and psychological design cues, ultimately creating a safer and more efficient environment.

A 'claimed' bicycle lane concept is adaptable to both the east and west sides of Blake Road. This concept claims part of the existing vehicle lane for a bicycle use. The width of Blake Road is substantial enough to incorporate a 5' bicycle lanes on both north and southbound sides. This bicycle lane concept can be further differentiated from vehicle traffic lanes by varying pavement combinations and/or full-lane coloring.

Pavement combinations should consider user experience, as some pavement surfaces are difficult to navigate with wheel chairs, personal shopping carts or bicycles. Storm water friendly paver/surface choice can play into the City of Hopkins' designation as a Blue Star City, and can act as a potential catalyst for grant funding of storm water management practices.

A median-separated, at-grade bicycle/ pedestrian lane concept removes the elevated sidewalk to create a side-by-side lane for bicyclists and pedestrians. Bicycle space is separated from pedestrian space by painted markings or differential pavement combinations. The median is a narrow elevated curb that can feature trees, shrubs or transit stops. The median also acts as a pedestrian refuge by reducing the street crossing distance. This concept should be integrated into sidewalk improvements for the west side of Blake Road.

SOUTH OF CEDAR LAKE TRAIL

The existing median on the south end of Blake Road should be reconfigured to enhance the pedestrian environment. Mid-block jaywalking dominates the pedestrian approach to crossing Blake Road south of the Cedar Lake Trail. This common route is located 255 feet north of the Excelsior Boulevard intersection and 550 feet south of the Cedar Lake Trail intersection. Mid-block crossing is dangerous for both pedestrians and vehicles, especially on a road with average vehicle speeds of 40 mph and short sight distances between intersections. Jaywalking in this part of the Corridor seems inevitable given the area's high amount of foot traffic and findings from Peter Bruce's 2008 study; therefore, design elements to improve pedestrian safety and psychological awareness of travelers' surroundings should be pursued.

With slight enhancements the existing median can become a refuge point that improves pedestrian safety by shortening crossing distances. A marked pedestrian crosswalk should be integrated into the existing foot path – providing a visual connection between the Westside Apartments and the commercial shopping area located on the west side of Blake Road. This should be enhanced by signage reminding drivers to yield to pedestrians and implementing a pedestrian refuge median that is angled and signed to encourage pedestrians to stop and monitor traffic before finishing their crossing. The presence of a signed and highly visible crosswalk calms traffic and sets a visual expectation of pedestrian awareness for vehicles travelling north on Blake Road. This awareness can enhance pedestrian safety throughout the Corridor.

NORTH OF CEDAR LAKE TRAIL

The north side of the Blake Road Corridor features connections to parks and open spaces integral to the pedestrian environment. Jaywalking is mitigated on this segment of Blake Road by more frequent pedestrian crosswalks and proximity between housing and commercial destinations. Unlike the south end, this end of the Corridor is features transit stops.

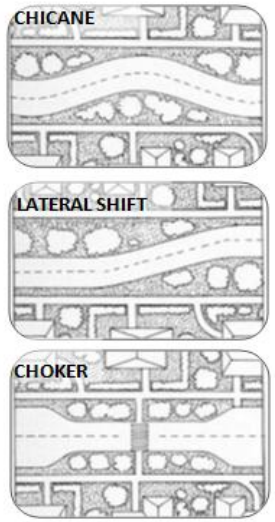
Considerations for this segment of the study area include:

Integrate traffic calming design near the 2nd Street intersection. This intersection is well suited for streetscape and traffic-calming enhancement because of the amount of traffic moving through this area. Chicane, lateral shift or choker lanes are three options for this area.[49] Each concept is implemented mid-block to calm traffic on longer stretches of a road.

CHICANE LANES have lateral shifts that alternate on both sides of the street creating an S-shaped path of travel.

LATERAL SHIFTS break up long sections of roadway.

CHOKERS are midblock curb extensions that narrow the street by expanding the sidewalk or adding a planting strip and often are installed at midblock crossings.



According to the Federal Highway Administration, Chicane, Lateral Shift and Choker lanes are proven to slow traffic because of the psychological effect they have on motor vehicle drivers.[50] By reducing sight-lines, drivers take a more cautious approach and naturally slow their speeds. Pairing one of these options with other physical infrastructure pedestrian cues can

[49] FHWA, 2001. Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access
[50] Ibid.

significantly enhance pedestrian safety at the Cedar Lake Trail intersection. These options should incorporate the desired Blake Road bicycle lane and future sidewalk enhancements on the west side. This street feature should complement future land uses at the Hopkins Cold Storage site.

Currently no bus shelters exist along the corridor. If bus service continues after the SWLRT is operational, "slim" bus shelters should be integrated along the bike/pedestrian lane median. The City of Copenhagen maximizes pedestrian space and safety by integrating slim transit shelters within median space.

COLLABORATION

Transforming Blake Road to a Complete Street will require the collaboration and engagement of a variety of stakeholders. A successful translation of this space will reflect community needs and values and play on enhanced partnerships with regional entities.

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

Engaging the diverse array of stakeholders in the Corridor should be rooted in a theme of "from your perspective." Because the current pedestrian environment is used by many community members, it is important to understand what aspects of the landscape are desirable and what should be changed from the vantage point of a variety of users. Some recommendations on engaging the community in this initiative include:

- *Photo Commentary Sessions:* cameras are given to residents, business owners, school children, trail users and other stakeholders with the objective of returning 5-10 pictures of what they like about the corridor and 5-10 pictures that represent opportunities for change in the corridor.
- *Walking Workshops:* a walking tour of 20-25 corridor users complemented by expertise of City or County Engineers and redesign experts. The objective is to help users understand how the street was designed and how street design can change the way the area is used. The tour should include a walking guide of existing conditions along the Corridor.
- *New BRCC Pedestrian/LRT Committee*: create a new BRCC committee to focus on the conversion of Blake Road to a Complete Street. This committee will be charged with engaging community members in design discussions, facilitating workshops and communicating construction activity.
- *Organize 'Adopt A...' Programs:* programs that engage the community beyond planning and construction phases of a project can create a lasting sense of community connection and pride.
    - *Adopt a Bench/Receptacle*: Allow community members to adopt public amenities on two-year term. Groups are responsible for decorating infrastructure within general aesthetic guidelines and maintaining them during their contract. Annual cleanup events can feature a 'day of painting' to ensure that aesthetic quality is maintained.
    - *Adopt a Complete Street*: The Sierra Club Northstar Chapter coordinates volunteers to 'Adopt a Complete Street.' While this should not be the primary way to maintain Blake Road, it will bring volunteers and visitors to the community and help maintain the safety and visual appeal of Blake Road once it is a Complete Street.

PARTNER WITH REGIONAL ENTITIES

Hennepin County, with encouragement from the City of Hopkins and other regional entities, can enhance the overall pedestrian experience created by converting Blake Road to a Complete Street. The county should engage organizations like the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and the Three Rivers Park District to expand connections to natural spaces, programming opportunities, corridor signage and future amenities in the area. Ideas for each of the partners include:

- Hennepin County: Hennepin County is an early adopter of Complete Streets policy and planning. As owner of Blake Road, Hennepin County should lead the charge in transitioning Blake Road into a Complete Street; Hopkins should leverage recommendations of this report to guide this transformation. In addition to expertise in bicycle and Complete Streets plans, the County offers cost-share funding opportunity through its Bicycle CIP program. Through this program, up to $100,000 is awarded from the County for a two-year period. The Hennepin County Active Living department also provides funding and educational opportunities for communities.
- Metro Transit: Once the Metropolitan Council assumes leadership of the SWLRT, they will be the primary channel for construction and operating funds. Federal funding for LRT projects makes Transit Enhancement monies available for station area public realm amenities. Metro Transit works on station area design with stakeholders proximate to station areas. This concept should be leveraged to engage community artists to create a station area design that reflects the vibrant Blake Road Corridor community.
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District: The existing engagement of the MCWD around Cottageville Park can be leveraged to address recommendations of this report- connecting newly opened public space to public realm and pedestrian environment improvements will further tie the Corridor together and create a more safe, connected and accessible gathering space for the community.
    - The boardwalk created by the District around the St. Louis Park United Methodist Hospital is an example of a way to encourage visitor interaction with the Creek. A similar boardwalk could be built around the Creek west of Blake Road and South of Highway 7.
    - Ideas funded by grants include pervious pavers used in streetscape improvements, or a service learning project of the Blake School with creek-area improvements.
- Three Rivers Park District: The Park District can enhance the pedestrian environment in the following ways:
    - Interactive and educational programs that engage underserved populations. Partner with the Park District to incorporate opportunities in Hopkins and connect Hopkins residents with off-site programs.
    - The Park District maintains iconic way finding signs throughout its trail system. Partner with the Park District to introduce way finding signs around the Blake Road intersection. Complement them with signs that educate trail users on other amenities present in the Corridor.
- Transit for Livable Communities: TLC was awarded $21.5 million to increase bicycling and walking throughout the Twin Cities between 2005 and 2010. TLC is a strong educational and advocacy resource that can be leveraged with the design and launch of Blake Road as a Complete Street. Future funding opportunities may also be available.
- Arts Organizations: *BRCC Day Camp:* Hopkins is well known as an arts destination and leveraging the artistic talent in the community, as well as from across the state and country. Funding for a new arts day camp can be secured through the Minnesota State Arts Board and the 2008 Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment approved by Minnesota voters.

LAND USE

Land use decisions have a profound impact on the physical and social environments of the Blake Road Corridor community. Residents within the area desire increased amenities and services which can be provided efficiently through mixed use and compact development. The City of Hopkins would also benefit from greater densities – both residential and commercial – that provide more revenue and decrease the cost-to-revenue ratio for city infrastructure and services. This section addresses the key land use components through a policy, design, and collaboration lens that are likely to drive the type of development that benefits community residents, local government and future transit users.

RECOMMDENDATION: CREATE A MIXED-USE, COMPACT HUB VILLAGE SURROUNDING THE STATION AREA

The goal is to create a compact mixed-use community centered on the proposed LRT station at Blake Road. The following recommendations promote non-motorized activity, economic development and social cohesion, establishing the LRT station as a neighborhood anchor without infringing on the growth of nearby downtown Hopkins.

Creating a successful pedestrian friendly transit-oriented development that enhances neighborhood identity requires the following:

- Linking housing development with rail transit: the bulk of higher density housing should be located within a ¼ mile radius of the station. Improve the connectivity of housing within the peripheral area with the proposed station site.
- Coupling mixed use parking structures with reduced parking requirements. Reduce the number of parking structures and surface lots through shared use between multiple developments.
- Providing residential zoning outside the TOD district to increase density without dramatically impacting the character of stabilized neighborhoods. Allow accessory units on low density residential lots and rezone vacant parcels as live/work multi-use.

POLICY

TRANSIT ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Within the core area surrounding the station residents need a mixture of housing options that support:

- Increased use of the transit system through walking, biking and driving. Aside from providing sufficient park and ride space for autos, other options such as bike lockers and push cart kiosks should be made available so that non-motorized commuters can easily and conveniently access transit.
- Denser and more diverse built environments. Within the ¼ mile station area, restrictive land use requirements should be liberalized to allow developers flexibility to ensure the viability of TOD. Allow increased height maximums and FARs, as well as greater flexibility in mixed use configurations.
- Increased non-motorized access to nearby services and amenities. Increase the number of pedestrian-only pathways to link sites within the core, as well as the periphery to the core. Ensure bike accessibility to key residential, commercial, retail and recreational sites by requiring bike storage options in TOD zoning or provide public facilities.

PARKING WITHIN THE STATION AREA

Integrate station parking into residential and commercial uses. Rather than designating parking for particular uses, support shared uses with parking sites. During the day, a certain number of parking spots can be reserved for park-and-ride, while on evenings and weekends, spaces are available to residents. This practice should also be integrated within commercial land

use. Shared parking methods meet the variability of parking needs for differential land uses throughout the day.

Parking structures should be visible, yet discrete, so that drivers can easily identify parking locations while the facilities do not detract from the residential character of the area surrounding the station. Shared parking reduces the need for multiple, segregated parking and allows for more intense and productive land use.

Implementing this policy on publicly-owned parking is relatively easy. For privately-owned facilities, agreements with Metro Transit can lease park-and-ride spaces during daytime hours. This arrangement maximizes the efficiency of land use and tax base for the city, while preserving space for future development and recreation that complements the needs of Corridor residents and visitors.

RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE THE STATION AREA

An overall strategy must include areas outside the core station area. Most of these areas are stabilized neighborhoods consisting of single-family homes. Both the City of Hopkins and area residents wish to retain the character of these neighborhoods and are opposed to redevelopment that reduces existing single-family housing. In order to support the transit ridership and improvements sought by the community, long-term plans that support increase density should be considered.

DESIGN

URBAN VILLAGE

The station area should be a point of confluence where residents from the surrounding neighborhoods interact with one another, visitors and commuters. Therefore, the station and the surrounding site should perform the function of a living civic space that is highly visible, attractive and easily accessible to residents and commuters that travel to the site for work or to perform other activities.

The station site should be located near housing as well as office and retail jobs. The area within a ¼ mile radius of the station should contain a balance of housing/jobs in order to increase transit rider accessibility to multiple land uses and to provide a corresponding distribution of origin and destination trips. Balancing housing and jobs also provides peak and off-peak flows of pedestrian traffic as people travel from home to work.

In order to create an area with sufficient housing/job balance and a high level of accessibility and visibility for the station, the station should be located at the end of Polk Avenue on the Southside of the rail line, just west of Blake Road. This location provides ample coverage of existing and potential commercial development to the west and to the mixed and residential uses to the north and east. Furthermore, the site is located nearer to Excelsior Boulevard where a horseshoe-shaped drive would offer both visual and auto accessibility from a highly travelled route. A pedestrian crossing over the HCRRA tracks will connect the site to the LRT platform and the Cedar Lake Trail, opening opportunities for future developments along the LRT line.

The median created by a horseshoe-shaped drive on Polk Avenue would provide access to the station and can be designed as a civic space with vegetation, water features and other plaza amenities to create a community gathering space for socializing, vendor kiosks and a neighborhood farmers' market.

NETWORK CONNECTIVITY

To support the proposed land use changes proposed around the station area, the network connectivity of roads and walkways must be increased. As mentioned earlier, the actual walkable distances from the station are constrained by the limited transportation network. By providing additional network linkages, walking distances equal to the radial distance from the station are increased. Under the current network system, only 43.7% of the area within a ½ mile radius of the proposed station is accessible by foot

within the same distance. This percentage shrinks to 26.5% within a ¼ mile distance, and increases a bit to 32.6% within an 1/8 of a mile. Therefore, to properly support TOD land uses, the pedestrian network must be improved upon.

Leaving the proposed station site unchanged and expanding the network in the form of a grid would increase make 47.3% of the area within a ½ mile radius of the proposed station is accessible by foot within the same distance. While this appears to provide only a slight increase in accessibility to the station area, more substantial gains are made in areas within ¼ and an 1/8 of the proposed station site. Within a ¼ mile accessibility increases from 26.5% to 45.1%, while in an 1/8 mile, accessibility increases from 32.6% to 40.8%.

Alternatively, If the station is moved slightly to the west from its proposed site, the new grid network would further increase the level of accessibility. Within a ½ mile, the level would increase to 51.7%, with increases to 52.3% and 51% within a ¼ and 1/8 mile area, respectively. Such increases to pedestrian accessibility can more adequately support the type of mixed use, density, transportation alternatives that are the hallmark of a successful TOD.

TRANSIT ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

There should be concentration of housing, along with secondary uses, within the corridor that extends a ¼ mile from either end of the station parallel to the LRT tracks. Areas directly adjacent to the station should allow space for park-and-ride structures and primarily commercial mixed use that accommodates neighborhood retail and office space. Given the diverse demographic make-up of the Blake Road Corridor community, it is also important to support a variety of housing preferences and resident incomes without visibly differentiating between market rate and subsidized housing choices.

The Mosaic at Prince George's Plaza Metrorail station.
Image courtesy of the City of Hyattsville.

PARKING WITHIN THE STATION AREA

Parking structures should be visible, yet discrete, so that drivers can easily identify parking locations while the facilities do not detract from the residential character of the area surrounding the station. Station area parking can be shared between transit users and residents, as each group has different needs according to the time of day. Shared parking reduces the need for multiple, segregated parking and allows for more intense and productive land use.

RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE THE STATION AREA

Accessory units in addition to the primary home on a property parcel, increase density within single-family neighborhoods without significantly altering the character of these places. The addition of carriage houses or guesthouses on property parcels is possible through zoning code amendments. Infill sites offer opportunities for neighborhood-focused, multi-use development, such as cafés, restaurants, or convenience stores. Zoning should permit residential lofts above these neighborhood businesses to promote residential land use and provide additional density without altering the residential character of the neighborhood.

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

Area stakeholders can offer input on the types of mixed uses they value using community engagement activities described in the Pedestrian Environment section.

Courtesy of the City of Minneapolis

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Building on the unique qualities of the Blake Road Corridor, the community will create are more livable area that serves the needs of its residents, commuters and visitors. A small business development program will promote new opportunities for those living in the station area as well as provide greater amenities for those who travel through the Corridor.

RECOMMENDATION: PROVIDE FINANCIAL TOOLS TO ENCOURAGE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The City should take the lead to establish a business incubation program centered on small business revolving loans, façade improvement loans and business training. The mix of these three activities provide a well rounded approach to small business development by providing essential capital for small businesses, increasing the character of the Corridor through business improvements and establishing a sustainable path for businesses through training programs and other resources to help new and small business owners avoid pitfalls during their start-up phase. Building on the diversity of the population in the area, an urban village focus for the incubator will support the creation of businesses that meet the needs of those living and working in the area as well as create a sense of place for the Corridor.

IMPLEMENTATION

Hopkins city staff should convene local business incubator experts, lending institutions, philanthropic partners, and city staff to begin conversations regarding a small business incubator. Specific groups to invite include:

- Key NDC and Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC) staff
- Community lending staff from the Hopkins' branches of U.S. Bank, Wells Fargo, Bremer, as well as representatives from locally based Citizens Independent, and People's Community Credit Union

- Philanthropic partners including The Bush Foundation, Greater Twin Cities United Way, the McKnight Foundation, the Minneapolis Foundation, the Otto Bremer Foundation and the St. Paul Foundation
- Blake Road Corridor Collaborative staff and citizen members
- Staff from the Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MDDC)
- City of Minneapolis Planning staff responsible for "Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program"
- Hopkins Planning, Economic Development staff and City Council

It is important to bring to the table every group that will play a part in the formation of the incubator. NDC and LEDC staff will play a key role working with the BRCC to evaluate the viability of this type of program in Hopkins. Their expertise will help establish and strengthen connections between city staff, community members and the BRCC to shape the program and begin building its key components. Small business training made available to prospective owners should be modeled after NDC's current program that provides step-by-step assistance for book keeping, city permitting approval, marketing plans, loan counseling and other activities.

SMALL BUSINESS LOANS

Discussions with local lending institutions and philanthropic partners should focus on the structure of loan products. The Two-Percent loan program offered by the City of Minneapolis is an excellent example of a successful loan product Hopkins should consider. The program "provides financing to small Minneapolis businesses (retail, service or light manufacturing) to purchase equipment and/or to make building improvements."[51] A private lender (from the list provided earlier) provides the business owner with half the loan at market rate interest rates. The City, through philanthropic grants, provides the other half of the loan at 2%. By blending the interest rates of the two loans, business owners have access to below market rates for business creation. Using philanthropic support to fund its half of the loan, the City is able to offer a more affordable rate as well as recapture money to establish a revolving loan fund. This adds to the long-term viability of the program. A one-time grant from the philanthropic partners listed above to the City or a nonprofit partner it designated to administer the program will serve residents both in the short-term and throughout LRT construction. A program of this nature also builds local partnerships between the City, lending institutions, and philanthropic institutions to support future needs.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT LOANS

Establishing businesses is an important step in incubating businesses along Blake Road. Ongoing maintenance of store fronts must be conducted in conjunction with this effort to ensure the long-term viability of businesses along the Corridor. Therefore, the City should create a façade improvement loan for small businesses. Improvements to commercial properties along the Blake Road Corridor would enhance appearance of store fronts, challenge other businesses to upgrade their appearance and spur additional private investment. New businesses may be attracted to the Corridor as they see the area become more attractive to customers.

The City should approach façade improvement loans in the same manner as small business loans. City of Hopkins staff should take the lead in organizing local banks, philanthropic partners, City of Minneapolis staff and the BRCC in a conversation around the feasibility of such a plan and the structure of the loan product. The loan structure should be similar to the small business loans with the City providing half the funding through grant funds and the remaining funds offered by a lending institution, creating a blended interest rate. Alternatively, the program can be designed as a matching program with business owners providing the City

[51] City of Minneapolis. (18 April 2011). Community Planning and Economic Development Two-Percent Loans. Retrieved 20 April 2011 from http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/two_percent.asp.

with improvement plans and documentation of a loan for renovation to receive a matching grant from the City for the planned improvements.

The backbone of these programs is the relationship the City builds with lending institutions and philanthropic partners. This action plan recognizes these programs lean heavily on receiving grant dollars at a time when philanthropic support has been stretched to serve many needs. If the City's goal is long-term revitalization along the Corridor, it is wise to invest resources in securing the necessary funding.

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

The philanthropic partners noted have strong commitments to innovative projects serving low income and diverse populations. Partners such as the Otto Bremer Foundation and the Bush Foundation have particular interest helping communities organize, develop leadership and move out of poverty. Further, the Otto Bremer Foundation has already supported the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, a key sponsor of the BRCC.[52] The BRCC partnership is an asset that should be leveraged as an example of how Hopkins taps its community partnerships to build a stronger city.

PROJECT PHASES

City staff should host a meeting to discuss the concept with the BRCC, City of Minneapolis staff, NDC and LEDC staff, as well as residents and local businesses and lenders. An agency, possibly the NDC or Local Initiatives Support Corporation, should be invited to play a leadership role in conversations with institutional donors. Funding will take 8-12 months and implementation an additional 4-6 months.

CONCLUSION

City of Hopkins officials have led creative, community-based approaches to ensure Hopkins is a welcoming, livable city. One of its notable accomplishments is the creation of the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative. The City has also partnered with institutions such as the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs and the Minnehaha Watershed District to improve the quality of life for its residents, workforce and visitors. As the home to three future Southwest Light Rail Transit stations, Hopkins is uniquely positioned to implement station designs that improve safety, create a sense of place and enhance land use throughout the City.

The tools recommended in this report support and enhance the livability of the Corridor in light of its changing demographics, particularly its young and growing population of recent immigrants, as well as African American, Hispanic and Asian people. Investing in Complete Street improvements are cost-effective solutions that can be implemented now and enhanced as new resources become available. They will improve safety around the station by encouraging residents, workers and visitors to use shared community resources, such as bike lanes, parks and well-designed and maintained sidewalks. Land uses based on a mixed-use, compact HUB village model also promote pedestrian-friendly environments without impacting the character of stabilized neighborhoods. Finally, investing in small business development enables Blake Road Corridor residents, commuters and visitors to benefit from a greater mix of services and amenities, while simultaneously creating a safer, more stable neighborhood and stronger tax base for the City.

[52] Otto Bremer Foundation, 2011. IRS 990 for 2009, retrieved 18 April 2011 from www.guidestar.org

Implementing these recommendations requires the engagement of a large number of stakeholders, particularly Corridor residents and business owners. In planning for the SWLRT line, Hopkins City officials have established credibility as an effective leader to convene stakeholders and begin these discussions. By investing staff time now, the City will be well positioned to realize the full potential of the SWLRT line when it opens.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES

The consulting team gathered significant data on resources to support the recommendations made throughout this report. The following appendices hold these materials as a reference to staff and agency partners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The following literature review summarizes seven key elements of the light rail system: 1.) the history of light rail, 2.) funding opportunities and issues, 3.) the impact of the 2010 state elections, 4.) the economic opportunities presented by light rail, 5.) the importance of housing on light rail plans, 6.) the impact on public health and 7.) an initial stakeholder analysis. These topics were chosen because of their ability to inform inevitable choices that must be made between options presented to the client regarding the station area plan. In this review, we have learned that light rail has been in the making for more than 40 years in the metro area of Minneapolis/St. Paul. The stakeholders involved in the issue have diverse interests in neighborhoods, cities and the state of Minnesota as a whole. A complex series of funding streams, the economic opportunity presented by light rail sites, as well as the power of light rail and public transit to positively improve the physical health of a community, have also been uncovered. Below is more information on what we discovered.

Historical Perspective

A review of the literature regarding light rail transit in Minnesota reveals a long and contradictory history. Contemporary public transit plans received a necessary boost with the creation of the Metropolitan Transit Commission in 1967, which modernized and consolidated an aging network of private bus companies into a metro-wide public transportation system (Metropolitan Council 2011). Yet, even with an agency dedicated to public transit, funding to explore a light rail system did not occur for more than 20 years. In 1988, after two separate legislative prohibitions on light rail study were lifted, the legislature appropriated $4.17 million for its study (Minnesota Legislative Reference Library 2011). Heavy rail transit was identified as an opportunity in the early 1970s by the Metropolitan Transit Commission; however, its goals were opposed by the Metropolitan Council, an agency formed in 1967 by the Minnesota State Legislature (Metropolitan Council 2011). The Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) had a goal to complement a public bus system with "a 37-mile heavy rail transit system such as those serving San Francisco and Washington, D.C.," while the Council called for a system based solely on buses (Metropolitan Council 2011). The Council received the full backing of the Minnesota State Legislature which voted in 1975 and 1985 to prohibit the use of public funds to study "fixed guideway" or light rail transit (Minnesota Legislative Reference Library 2011). During the following decade, a series of legislative actions established the foundation for light rail in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area leading to the 1999 appropriation of $60 million to begin construction on the Hiawatha Corridor Light Rail Transit line (Minnesota Legislative Reference Library 2011). The following year, the legislature granted the Metropolitan Council the authority to "sell or lease naming rights to light rail transit stations and to apply revenues from sales or leases to light rail transit operating costs" line (Minnesota Legislative Reference Library 2011). The first service on the new line began June 26, 2004 (Blake 2004).

Hopkins' light rail projects are the third phase of a light rail system, the Southwest Transit Corridor. Planning for the Central Corridor began in 2006 (Minnesota Legislative Reference Library 2011).

Light Rail Funding

With a looming $6.2 billion dollar state deficit and a change in Minnesota's ruling party in the House, the funding future for the Southwest LRT is highly contested. The project is not yet to preliminary engineering phase,

but transit supporters remain optimistic about the timely construction of this line. Opponents hope to cut the project before further public funding is dedicated to its construction.

In 2010 the total project cost was estimated at up to $1.25 billion. According to a June, 2010, press release by the Metropolitan Council, half of the funds will come from the FTA and the remaining revenue to come from metro area county taxes (30%), Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (10%) and the State of Minnesota (10%) (Met Council, 2011).

While specific funding sources have yet to be identified, the funding potential has wavered. Early notions for project funding were optimistic, while more recent state and federal budget constraints add uncertainty. Recent local trends in transit ridership have added to this unstable funding projection. In 2010, Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman had a highly optimistic mood regarding funding:

> "I am pleased that Southwest LRT has reached this milestone and is transitioning to the Metro Council. I am confident Southwest LRT will be a strong candidate in the competition for federal dollars. Light rail in the corridor will generate strong ridership, connect people with key destinations and serve as a catalyst for economic development." (Metropolitan Council 2010).

In 2011, budgetary and transit ridership trends are causing doubt.

Senate District 44 (St. Louis Park, Hopkins and Golden Valley) Representative Ron Latz referenced budget constraints in the future: "I believe there is going to be efforts to cut this year's request to the state for their contribution to the proposed Southwest Light Rail project," (Wilkinson, 2011).

Further reflecting the current legislative sentiment on this project, State Rep. Michael Beard, R-Shakopee, the House Transportation Committee's chairman, told the *Star Tribune* in December 2010 that, "The new GOP leadership wants to "press the pause button" on transit, following the lead of Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City, who said after November's election that Northstar's performance would "determine the future of mass transit in Minnesota," (Berg, 2011). The article further elaborates, "It came as no surprise, then, that when Metro Transit's 2010 numbers came out last week (mid-January, 2011) critics chose to ignore light rail's success and highlight commuter rail's failure," (Berg, 2011).

The volatility in accepting and acknowledging transit ridership numbers and budget woes continue to color the story of Southwest LRT's future.

As state legislators work on the line's future, proponents remain strong in their dedication to the Southwest LRT alignment. "Pausing now is a bad idea because almost 100 other projects across the country are at the same stage as Southwest," said Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin, after meetings with federal transit officials in Washington, D.C. "The queue for federal money is long, and the competition is stiff. If we let even a dozen projects butt in line ahead of us, Southwest will lose five or 10 years. We can't afford that. Southwest should proceed on its merits," (Berg, 2011).

2010 Elections

The 2010 elections in Minnesota saw sweeping changes in the political landscape of the state. The Republicans took control of both houses of the legislature while the state elected its first Democratic governor since Rudy Perpich in 1991. (Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, 2011). With a major political shift occurring during a vital time in the planning of the Southwest LRT project, the changes in control of both houses bring interesting questions to light regarding the future of the project. Will funding for Southwest fall through the cracks? How will the Metropolitan Council deal with this shift? Could the project end up dead in the water?

The overwhelming consensus is that the GOP will do everything in its power to stop the project (Berg, 2011).

Cutting to the point, the newly GOP-controlled Legislature is not a big fan of transit. Republicans Mike Beard, Amy Koch and Joe Gisme all oppose the project and point to the state's major deficit as reason to cut or delay the project's funding (Clements, 2010). A similar argument from the incoming governors of Wisconsin and Ohio was the basis of their campaigns. Ohio Governor-elect John Kasich and Wisconsin Governor-elect Scott Walker both followed through on campaign promises to reject federal funding for high-speed commuter rail lines though their states. Requests were made (and promptly denied) for the rejected money to fund road or bridge construction in the states, and was given to states "that are eager to have it for their rail projects" (Lowy & Freking, 2010).

Businesses and politicians in along the Southwest LRT line are at odds when it comes to supporting the line. The four chambers of commerce along the line (the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce, the Eden Prairie chamber, the Minneapolis Regional chamber and the Edina chamber) all support the project and formed the Southwest Transitway Alliance to rally for its cause (Clements, 2010). Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin, chair of the Hennepin County Regional Rail authority, believes passing on federal funding for the project is a bad idea (Berg, 2011).

Economic Impact

The level of success achieved by new light rail transit depends on a number of factors, which influence each other. For example, high numbers of riders will ensure the financial viability of LRT and attract new station development, while rational and efficient land uses around stations can promote the type of development that supports density, which in turn generates higher ridership. These two factors build on each other and foster opportunities for greater economic development. For the purpose of this literature review, the research focuses on suitable and sustainable land uses, economic development, and ridership as key factors to a successful transit station area plan.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is the land use model most commonly applied to these site area designs. Robert Cervero, one of the most respected scholars of TOD, notes that it "is viewed and defined differently throughout the United States, with its most common traits being compact, mixed-use development near transit facilities and high-quality walking environments" (Cervero 2004, 2). Preliminary analysis of Boarnet and Compin (1999), Goetz, et. al. (2010), and Levine (2004) suggest that the slow growth of transit-oriented development near new transit stations might be a "planning failure – the result of municipal regulatory exclusion," (Levine 2004, 409) rather than lack of interest by developers or the markets. Institutional structures and planning approaches vary among cities and can account for how well land uses complement transit infrastructure.

An integrated governing structure and coordinated framework has promoted planning synergies in Denver that have had an effect on how well land use and transit complement each other (Godschalk, 2004). A key commonality between the Twin Cities and other regions (such as San Diego) is "the legacy of pre-existing land uses [as] an important determinant of TOD implementation," meaning that "TOD prospects are heavily influenced by the alignment of a rail line and the placement in stations" (Boarnet and Compin 1999, 4). Goetz, et. al., add that in Minneapolis, "neighborhood station areas are well developed communities with established neighborhood characters" (Goetz et al 2010, 65). This appears to slow down regulatory change.

Housing/Transit Access

Housing and transportation costs for working families in 28 of the largest metropolitan areas account for 48% of household income (Lipman, 2006). Understanding (and successfully implementing) the linkage between

housing and transportation has become more important under the current economic situation and housing crisis. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities (HUD, EPA and DOT) is a prime example of the federal government understanding the connection by funding programs that link housing and transportation (U.S. Environmntal Protection Agency, 2011). The Metropolitan Council was awarded $5 million from this innovative to support planning along the "region's growing network of transit corridors" (Metropolitan Council, 2010)

Hennepin County's Transit Orientated Development program supports, "both redevelopment and new construction that enhances transit usage" (Hennepin County, 2011). The program has been around since 2003 and awarded over $13 million in bonds to Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) projects across the county. Additionally, Living Cities (a national philanthropic collaborative of 22 foundations and philanthropic organizations) awarded the Twin Cities $12 million for "equitable Transit-Oriented Development that ensures that low-income residents, businesses and neighborhoods along the existing Hiawatha line and planned Southwest and Central lines benefit from transit-related investments" (Living Cities, 2011). This agglomeration of funders (both public and private) highlights the connection between housing and transportation and makes money available to those who design projects to support it.

Public Health

The dynamic link of public health and urban design – specifically urban design around transit stations – has received heightened attention in recent years and may attract additional investment by nontraditional partners, as well as greater support from the general public.

Public health and mass transit are dynamically linked in a variety of ways. Urban design of a transportation system is one of the most commonly cited connections – linking personal health to whether an environment is automobile-dependent or walkable. Public health is also considered in the design of the area around transit stations. Transit systems and the areas around them are part of the solution to promoting public health initiatives.

Personal health trends are often associated with areas that are walkable or have pedestrian access. "Transportation development has enormous impacts on regional networks, and on local neighborhoods. While the spread-out nature of automobile-oriented communities makes it less likely people will walk or bike for essential transportation, the car-only design of many roadways suppresses such activity even for recreation," (Atlanta Regional Health Forum and Atlanta Regional Commission, 2006). Walkability and access to recreation are important considerations in LRT station placement and design.

The negative health effects of environments that are less walk or bike-friendly are expansive. Risk of chronic diseases including obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, coronary artery disease, osteoporosis, cancer and stroke are attributed to the sedentary lifestyle promulgated by areas that have poor walkability, high automobile dependence or are built in sprawled out manner. Lack of a walkable or bikeable environment is literally killing us. It is estimated that thirty percent of US citizens are 'completely inactive,' (Stokes et al., 2008). "People who are physically inactive are at a two- to threefold greater risk for premature mortality than their physically active counterparts," (Geller, 2003).

Many studies linking improved public health to walkable environments exist. For example, a 2008 study that followed participants around through travel diaries reported improved mortality rates, reduction in risk for chronic diseases and overall improved health (Boarnet et al., 2008).

Further, the impact of the transit-public health relationship can be measured economically. A 2007 report in the Health & Place journal found that, "investing in light rail is associated with a 9-year cumulative public health cost savings of $12.6 million," (Stokes et al., 2008). Additionally,

measurements of the costs of chronic diseases can be used to promote LRT projects. "The economic costs of obesity (for example, loss of work productivity) may exceed even the direct health costs. The projected costs associated with treating chronic diseases will increase to $1.07 trillion by 2020 (up from $510 billion in 2000)," (Stokes et al. 2008).

In order to support walkable, pedestrian-friendly environments, the area around an LRT station should be thoughtfully designed. Subjective experiences of users must be considered when attempting to create a walkable area accessible to pedestrians. In 2007, Brown et al., found that, "the most walkable segment had superior traffic and environmental safety, a pleasant social milieu, more positive aesthetics, more natural features, more pedestrian amenities, and a greater diversity of destinations."

In designing a station area, it is important to consider what pedestrians are willing to consider accessible or barriers to walkability. A 2007 study found that the average distance a pedestrian is willing to walk is approximately one-half mile. This study explains, "The distance a person will walk and the mode of transport he or she will use are strongly affected by the walking environment. Real and even perceived delays and inconveniences such as lack of sidewalks, inadequate signage, dangerous walkways, poor appearance, and factors that create a sense of insecurity can cause potential riders to choose use of their personal automobiles," (O'Sullivan and Morall, 2007).

Further, this study found the following average walking distance guidelines for LRT stations (see chart to the right).

TABLE 1 Current LRT Walking Distance Guidelines

CANADIAN CITIES	WALKING DISTANCE GUIDELINES
Calgary Transit, Calgary	General Guideline is 400 m
B.C. Transit, Vancouver	Guideline For LRT is 900 m
Societe de Transport de la Communaute Urbaine de Montreal, Montreal	General Guideline is 400 - 500 m
Ottawa - Carleton Regional Transit Commission, Ottawa	General Guideline is 400 - 600 m
Toronto Transit Commission, Toronto	General Guideline for Surface Transit is 300 m
Edmonton Transportation, Edmonton	General Guideline is 400 m

AMERICAN CITIES	WALKING DISTANCE GUIDELINES
Maryland Mass Transit Administration, Baltimore	Use Guidelines of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, Buffalo	General Guideline is 457 m
Regional Transportation District, Denver	General Guideline is 536 m
New Jersey Transit, Newark	General Guideline is 804 m
Southern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, Philadelphia	An area is considered 'well served' if a stop is less than 402 m from a passenger's origin and is considered 'served' if a stop is less than 804 m from a passenger's origin.
Port Authority of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh	No Guidelines Available
Sacramento Regional Transit District, Sacramento	A 1992 Study found that 64% of transit riders walk less than 403 m and 90% walk less than 804 m. Regional Transit's Guideline is 609 m.
Bi-State Development Agency, St. Louis	No Guidelines Available
Metropolitan Transit Development Board, San Diego	General Guideline is 538 m
San Jose Trolley Corp., San Jose	Average walking distance from LRT to a commercial destination is 30 - 60 m. A one block walk is necessary for 42% of LRT passengers in the five block long core area.
Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, Cleveland	No Guidelines Available

Design of transit and urban areas maintain four of the top 10 reasons the CDC links public health benefits to the design and implementation of transit areas and the built environment. The 2006 CDC study provides the following four of ten reasons:

> **"7. Create complete neighborhoods where daily needs are close at hand**
> Health Benefits: keeps communities compact and less auto-dependent. As a result, decreases segregation by age, income, and race and thus develops social and cultural capital. Residents spend less time commuting to jobs and family members. Provides more opportunity for walking to destinations, thus increasing physical activity and decreasing ailments associated with inactivity. Improves air quality and helps decrease respiratory problems. Supplies fresh, local food for maximum nutritional benefit at a lower environmental cost.
>
> **8. Create a safe, inviting environment for walking**
> Health Benefits: provides more opportunity for walking to destinations such as community gardens and parks for more vigorous exercise, thereby increasing physical activity and decreasing ailments associated with inactivity. Improves air quality and helps decrease respiratory problems.
>
> **9. Foster distinctive communities with a strong sense of place**
> Health Benefits: increases civic pride and sense of ownership in communities. Supports a strong public realm and … cultural and social interaction among citizens. Decreases depression and sense of isolation and increases the perception of safety.
>
> **10. Make efficient use of public investments in infrastructure, schools and services**
> Health Benefits: keeps communities compact and less auto-dependent. As a result, decreases segregation by age, income, and race and thus develops social and cultural capital. Residents spend less time commuting to jobs and family members. Provides more opportunity for walking to destinations and thus increases physical activity, decreases ailments associated with inactivity, improves air quality, and helps decrease respiratory problems "(Atlanta Regional Health Forum and Atlanta Regional Commission, 2006)

Public health and planning officials recognize the role of government in promoting the link between public health benefits and public transit. According to a 2006 CDC report, design or layout of a development directly impacts human health and safety – and the best way to impact design or layout of development is through governmental policy tools like zoning (Atlanta Regional Health Forum and Atlanta Regional Commission, 2006). Such tools are part of the entire package that makes transit areas more walkable- and are available at the municipal, state and federal levels of government (Geller, 2003).

Further, policy makers can be influenced to support LRT projects by the health cost savings that occur when LRT projects are introduced to an area. Health care cost savings come from eliminating need to treat preventable health risks, which can occur when a more walkable, pedestrian-friend environment exists. This environment is often organic in LRT stations. For example, "because 125 million Americans … [have] chronic diseases and 70% of the nation's medical care costs are… [spent on] these conditions, the impetus to craft policies that affect lifestyle changes has gained momentum," (Stokes et al. 2008).

Stakeholder Analysis

The long and contested history of light rail in the metropolitan area, its diverse funding base and its connection to a variety of land use issues, underscores the many stakeholders involved in the issue, their power bases and their strongly-held beliefs about the effectiveness and importance of public transit. The following is a brief overview of these stakeholders and their interests. This analysis will be expanded and deepened using data gathered from the student consultants' interviews with community members and agency representatives.

City of Hopkins zoning, planning and community development – Hopkins city employees have taken a proactive stance regarding light rail transit. The city was among the first along the Southwest Transit Corridor to seek student consultants from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, with special emphasis on the residential character of the area surrounding the Blake Road Station, including improvement to and increased visibility of the pocket park, Cottageville Park. The city has a particular interest in maintaining downtown Hopkins as a destination area and station area improvements may create a dynamic tension to spur continued investment in downtown Hopkins as a destination area. Creating opportunities to enhance downtown as a destination will important to the Blake Road Station plans.

The Governor and Legislature – Former Governor Tim Pawlenty vetoed funding for the Central Corridor project in 2008, although the funds were restored in a supplementary bonding package following Pawlenty's first-ever veto override by the DFL (Lopez 2008). In her April 13, 2008 story, Star Tribune reporter Patricia Lopez highlighted how Pawlenty was characterized as the "brake to the runaway train of DFL" (Lopez 2008). The article further highlighted the incendiary friction between the governor and the legislature, which ousted Carol Molnau, Pawlenty's lieutenant governor, as transportation commissioner (Lopez 2008). The flip between the two parties in the 2010 election now places a DFLer in the state's top seat, while the House and Senate are controlled by the GOP. Bond funding in 2011 will be an initial test of the two parties' ability to work together and Governor Dayton issued a call for $1 billion in bonding on January 31, 2011. "Pitching it as a jobs stimulator… Gov. Mark Dayton …included an unusual olive branch to Republican lawmakers – he asked them to pick out half of the projects" (Stassen-Berger 2011). The Governor's package includes several light rail transit projects, including continuation of the Central Corridor work and supports the Metropolitan Council's work on three transit stations (Office of the Governor, Mark Dayton, 2011). In the current economic climate, the ability to define and demonstrate economic impact is likely to be highly important for continued political support.

Blake Road Station Area Residents and Businesses – One of the largest parcels of land adjacent to the Blake Road Station is owned by a business affiliate of the company Stewart Lawrence and used for cold storage (Feyder, 2010). Following a $6.5 million purchase in 2008, group has added "several improvements…including a new energy-saving roof, automated freezer doors and technology upgrades for computerized inventory management (Feyder, 2010). The company has also landed a five-year lease with E.A. Sween Co., which moved its moved its frozen-food distribution operations from Newport to the Hopkins building" (Feyder, 2010). The property use may be at odds with long-term planning goals for the area. Hennepin County and Hopkins invited area residents to discussions facilitated by the urban planning group Hay Dobbs for the small area plan. Residents identified Minnehaha Creek, area trails and selected businesses as the greatest positive attributes of the area (Hay Dobbs, 2009). The community members identified the "several businesses; the lack of continuous sidewalks; crime/drugs; traffic; and unsafe street crossings" as negative attributes in the area (Hay Dobbs, 2009). The tension between existing land use and community vision for the future will require particular attention in the station plan.

Summary

Through this research and analysis, we learned public transportation and light rail can quickly become a highly visible target for political battles between the executive and legislative branches of government and between political parties. The two largest funding sources are the Federal and County governments (80% of total revenue), with the remaining 20% of fund split between the County Regional Railroad Authority and the State of Minnesota. City, county and state regulations can play a major role in determining the range of land use opportunities available for developing properties surrounding transit stops and the ability to link housing with stops increases the value of the investment as well as the use of the public transit system. In addition, public transit is proven to create opportunities for healthier communities by promoting more walking and bicycling, improving public safety, promoting a greater identity and sense of place within communities and "decreas[ing] segregation… and thus develop[ing] social and cultural capital" (Regional Health Forum and Atlanta Regional Commission, 2006). Finally, in reviewing the stakeholder interests, we discovered there are conflicting interests among stakeholders. Establishing a plan for the City of Hopkins that benefits the Blake Road Station neighborhood and the Southwest Transit line as a whole may cause the student consultants to advise investments in the Blake Road Station area that require additional growth and investments in the downtown Hopkins district beyond what is currently envisioned for the area.

In the coming weeks, the student consultant will complete a series of stakeholder interviews that will provide greater insight into the community interests and needs regarding light rail transit. The information will be used to guide recommendations made the client, including identifying new opportunities to expand and enhance the impact of the station investment.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDIES

TIF for TOD: *Dallas, TX*

On December 10th, 2008 the City of Dallas, TX passed ordinance number 27432 which established four TIF for TOD districts (districts) in the city. The four sub-districts, Lovers Lane/Mockingbird station area, Cedars West, Lancaster Corridor area, and Cedar Crest area are along the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) system. During the life of the district (ending in 2038) the City hopes to collect $185,177,697 in revenue from a $3.3 billion tax base to be used for public improvement projects. Currently over $8.4 million in future TIF revenues has been approved by the City Council for Phase 1 of the Lancaster Urban Village project (pictured above). The project, when complete, will have 163 units of residential and 14,000 ft^2 of retail space. Six additional projects either under construction, partially completed, or planned are located within the districts and projected to have a total value of over $130 million.[53]

Pennsylvania – Transit Revitalization Investment District

The State of Pennsylvania's Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) acts in the same way a TIF for TOD district. It allows for, "planning studies, comprehensive plan and zoning amendments and use of existing statutes and techniques to achieve transit-oriented development, redevelopment, community revitalization and enhanced community character." [54] TRID's are not meant as the sole source of funds for TOD projects, rather they

[53] City of Dallas, TX, 2009.
[54] State of Pennsylvania, 2003.

encourage “multi-entity investment and collaboration.” [55] They help to integrate land use, transportation, and the private sector by making public dollars available along transit lines for infrastructure improvements or gap financing that help to finalize deals. Two proposed projects, one in North Philadelphia and the other in West Philadelphia had planning studies funded by TRID funds and are projected to generate between $4.6 – $17.4 million in increment revenue. The success of TRID projects is linked to the rise and fall of property values; when values fall smaller amounts of increment is collected, and vice versa. Pittsburgh’s head transportation planner Patrick Roberts stated the problem with TRID projects is also related to the financial sector; “it’s difficult to issue bonds to take advantage of TRID tax revenues — in part because banks aren't experienced with them.” [56]

“PAY AS YOU GO” TIF: *Prescott, WI*

In 2003 the City of Prescott (population 3,918) utilized “pay as you go” (PayGo) TIF to aid in the redevelopment of their historic downtown. Previously, the site was home to a vacant industrial building stood as an obstacle between the City and the banks of the St. Croix River. The City was able utilize PayGo to as a way to reimburse developers for upfront costs related to site acquisition and demolition. A 43-unit condominium building took place of the dilapidated building on the banks of the River, which is part of the National Scenic Great River Road Byway. As part of the redevelopment walkways along the river were constructed as well as a connection to newly revitalized Mercord Mill Park.[57] A project that was unlikely to move forward without the help of the city now serves as a poignant reminder of the applicability of PayGo TIF. In this case, the developer saw a successful and profitable project that had the opportunity to enhance the beauty of a city’s waterfront. The City, unable to bear the upfront costs and risk associated with the project, collaborated with the developer to create a financing plan where both parties succeeded.

[55] Econcult Corporation, 2008.
[56] Plan Philly, 2011.

[57] Cedar Corporation, 2006.

Kansas City, MO

In 2001 Kansas City, the 43rd & Main TIF District was part of the city's plan to redevelop a multi-block employment center adjacent to a residential neighborhood. H & R Block served as the anchor tenant with hopes of expanding its corporate offices. The total cost of redevelopment and expansion was $13.3 million. The city contributed nearly $700,000 in the form of PayGo TIF reimbursements. Approved costs under the PayGo agreement included enhancements to the sidewalks and streets in and around the site. As part of the agreement, H & R Block created 2,500 ft^2. of new retail space and 3,200 ft^2 of green space. None of the costs associated with construction were part of the agreement. The project resulted in 507 new jobs with a payroll of $152 million. To date, all TIF reimbursements have been paid and the site's assessed property value has increased nearly $4 million. For Kansas City not only were they able to keep a major tenant from packing up and leaving the city, but also grew their tax base by over 500 workers, increased property values, and made improvements to the city's sidewalks, streets, and park space. [58]

Hot Bread Kitchen, New York City, NY

Hot Bread Kitchen "is a non-profit social enterprise that creates better lives for low-income women and their families" by paying women while they learn the necessary skills to start a food business and achieve management level positions in food manufacturing.[59] Hot Bread Kitchen offers members of its incubator program access to flexible kitchen space at varying costs without the expense of building and maintaining their own kitchens. Like similar business incubators, Hot Bread Kitchen also offers business consulting and training, English language classes, and job placement assistance as part of the incubator membership. The 4-part incubator process is designed to follow each chef from the inception of his or her idea, all the way through transitioning into a stand-along business. The goal of the organization is to incorporate the multi-cultural backgrounds of their chefs by selling breads that represent the countries of their origin. Bangladesh, Mexico, and Morocco style breads are all available at the kitchen's bakery. The ability of a non-profit kitchen to foster the development of so many female owned immigrant businesses shows the value of an incubator in a diverse community.

[58] Bay Area Economics & Urban Collage, Inc. 2005.
[59] Hot Bread Kitchen, 2011.

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