

SUMMARY OF VISION DOCUMENTS PREPARED FOR THE LAKE STREET CORRIDOR

Lake Street at the Crossroads

Prepared by Powderhorn Park, Corcoran, Central and Phillips Neighborhood Associations and Lake Street Council

Twin Cities natives can recall a time when Lake Street was a destination point for shopping, entertainment and general community interaction. However, the past four decades have witnessed the slow decline of Lake Street as a successful commercial corridor. There is growing inertia to redirect Lake Street to once again become a vibrant, urban community. The project area is the focal point for public support, private sector interest, non-profit activity, planned public improvements and the will to act.

In “The Competitive Advantage of the Inner City,” Michael Porter argues that any successful effort to revitalize cities must link inner city neighborhoods to the regional economy. The inner city is not a separate economy and attempts that only focus inward are not sustainable. This redirection strategy offers a complex and ambitious agenda that seeks to re-establish strong economic links to the metropolitan region and to strengthen neighborhood livability and sense of community.

Opportunities

A successful revitalization effort must build on project-area opportunities.

Strategic Location

Lake Street’s strategic location within the region is advantageous for business. The project area is at the center of the metro area and provides easy access to the broader marketplace. It is bordered by Interstate 35W to the west and Hiawatha Avenue to the east. Interstate 94 is less than one mile to the north of the project area, and Minneapolis’ central business district is less than two miles away. For businesses requiring close proximity to the airport, Minneapolis-St. Paul International is less than five miles to the southeast.

Well Established Pattern of Streets

One of the project area’s assets is its well-established pattern of streets. A connected network of streets requires less asphalt, is more habitable, and allows for a variety of routes so that traffic is dispersed and congestion is minimized.

Lake Street is a regional thoroughfare serving both through traffic and local trips. Average daily traffic on Lake Street ranges between 20,100 and 23,000 within the project area. Running parallel to Lake Street are 26th, 28th and 31st Streets. Currently, 26th and 28th streets are operating as a one-way pair, each handling between 11,000 and 13,000 vehicles per day. Average daily traffic on 31st Street is 7,800 vehicles.

The project area's street grid also includes major north-south routes. Portland and Park Avenues are a one-way pair each handling approximately 10,000 vehicles per day. Average daily traffic on Chicago, Bloomington and Cedar Avenues is 9,400, 8,600, and 12,900 respectively.

Maintaining this network of streets is important to the growth of the project area. However, providing buffers and calming traffic without reducing capacity may be necessary to preserve the residential and pedestrian environments of some streets.

Transit Network that Provides Good City Access

Another asset of the project area is its high level of transit service. Easy access to mass transit is an important factor for many businesses and Lake Street's role in the regional transit network provides a competitive advantage over outlying areas. In addition to Lake Street, I-35W, 4th Avenue, Chicago, Bloomington, Cedar and Hiawatha Avenues are all part of the regional transit system that connects the project area to the region and has the potential to attract new employers.

The transit service also connects market area residents to employment opportunities elsewhere. Whether by choice or necessity, 38 percent of the neighborhoods' households reported having no vehicle in 1990, making mass transit and alternative forms of transportation important to the mobility of the market area's labor force.

The proposed light-rail transit (LRT) system could further solidify Lake Street as an employment and residential center for the region. In places such as Arlington, Virginia and Bethesda, Maryland, mass transit has been the catalyst for redevelopment around rail stations. The key for Lake Street will be to ensure any LRT system has adequate stops in the project area to connect Lake Street and the surrounding neighborhoods to the region.

East Lake Street Corridor Study

Prepared by Longfellow Community Council

Objectives Guiding This Study

- To improve the safety, appearance and image of East Lake Street
- To strengthen the economic vitality of existing desirable businesses; to attract and retain new businesses
- To build a partnership with neighborhood residents and property and business owners
- To build upon the corridor's existing strength: recognized location, destination amenities, stable residential neighborhoods
- To promote a mix of uses: residential, commercial, recreational and cultural
- To suggest viable solutions for localized parking and traffic challenges
- To encourage both visual and physical connections with neighborhood and regional amenities
- To ensure that recommendations respond to policy and procedural issues: zoning, review and approval process

Neighborhood Challenges

Neighborhood Character

Build on existing strengths

The easternmost segment of Lake Street (36th Avenue to the River) is challenged by its lack of high quality architecture, numerous parking lots and auto-oriented businesses. However, the Longfellow community also has charming residential streets, an interesting mix of businesses and many unique and historically significant parks and trails nearby. These assets, including the close proximity of the Mississippi River, provide a strong foundation on which to build a creative, contextual, community-based plan for action.

Traffic and Transit

Share the Street

With increased development comes increased traffic. This seemingly unavoidable outcome of growth highlights one of the fundamental urban design debates, seeking balance between development and the infrastructure necessary to support it. Of primary importance to the Task Force is the desire to promote solutions for sharing the street: integrating car, bus, pedestrian, bicycle, emergency, delivery, maintenance and other uses.

Parking

Provide solutions to meet round-the-clock needs

The demand for adequate parking facilities to support new development is a primary neighborhood concern. An inventory of existing parking, provided by the Task Force,

suggest that a comprehensive parking strategy must include a mix of on-street, off-street (private), off-street (public) and structured parking solutions. Refinements to City parking standards and anticipated improvement to the public transit system will bring focus to this issue as it relates to the Neighborhood Action Plan.

Mix of Uses

Balance residential and commercial development

Based on preliminary market information, suggested absorption rates and overall neighborhood objectives, the Task Force voiced a strong preference for a balance of uses along East Lake Street. This approach explores opportunities for more housing and additional commercial/retail opportunities in the neighborhood.

Priority Projects

Lake Street Repaving Project Streetscape Enhancement

With funding from the federal TEA-21 program, the City and County have joined forces to proceed with the repaving of Lake Street from Lyndale Avenue to West River Road. Along with the repaving of the street itself, additional monies have been identified specifically for streetscape enhancements – improvements to the public realm. To be ready for repaving from 27th Avenue to the River, scheduled for 2003, the Task Force has provided a description of preferred streetscape components and more specific guidelines to strengthen neighborhood character and identity.

Streetscape Guidelines – *Create More Inviting Streets*

The quality and intensity of streetscape improvements have both aesthetic and financial implications for the community. There are two options for consideration: first, the neighborhood can use standard elements (as defined by the City of Minneapolis), which require no special funding for maintenance and replacement, or the neighborhood can propose non-standard or custom elements, which require a Special Services District to support maintenance and replacement costs. Within such a district, costs beyond City standards are funded through assessments made to non-residential properties.

- Lighting
- Planting
- Special Pavements
- Fences, Walls and Railings
- Signage
- Street Furniture and Transit Stops
- Public Art

Site Development Guidelines – *Fill in the Gaps*

Access and Connections – Vehicular Movement

This identifies the mix of transit and transportation uses in the area, describes street patterns and street types and provides an understanding of basic street function. The

primary objective is to identify opportunities to ‘calm’ vehicular traffic while creating a balance between pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular movement. The integrated relationship between redevelopment, transit and the public realm demands a more comprehensive approach to ensure successful neighborhood revitalization. For example, additional housing or business growth cannot be supported without timely improvements to transit systems, parking facilities, streetscape and other public infrastructure projects.

Access and Connections – Pedestrian and Bicycle

This refers to the system of streets, sidewalks, trails and alleys that provide pedestrian and bicycle access and connections throughout the neighborhood and with the surrounding community/region. The intent is to foster increased pedestrian and bicycle use. This can be accomplished in two ways: first – to provide the physical facilities that will invite this type of use, and second –to ensure that pedestrian/bicycle systems are designed and located next to safe, highly visible and interesting places to be, connected with the street and the mix of neighborhood uses/activities.

Market Position Analysis The Lake Street Corridor

Prepared by Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study identifies the market potential for new market-rate housing units, both new construction and adaptive re-use of existing buildings, to be leased or sold within the Lake Street Corridor Study Area (bounded by 36th Street to the south, Lake Calhoun and Lake of the Isles to the west, Franklin Avenue to the north and the Mississippi River to the east.)

The depth and breadth of the potential market for the Lake Street Corridor has been determined through analysis of households currently living within conservatively-defined draw areas. Analysis of Hennepin County migration patterns over the past six years—based on data provided by the Internal Revenue Service—shows that, on average, approximately 31,000 households a year moved out of the county in the 1990s, compared to about 30,000 households a year that moved in.

As derived from migration analysis and anecdotal information, households currently living in the City of Minneapolis, the suburbs of Hennepin County, as well as Ramsey, Anoka and Dakota Counties constitute the main sources of demand for market-rate housing within the Lake Street Corridor Study Area. Households currently living in the City of Minneapolis should comprise just under half of the potential market for new housing along the Corridor. To retain existing households, or attract new ones, a city must provide appropriately-located newly-constructed housing units. The establishment of urban residential neighborhoods need not be a “zero-sum” exercise; rather than succeeding at the expense of other city neighborhoods, new market-rate housing opportunities within the Lake Street Study Area, when properly targeted, should expand the total number of households moving into the city.

The Lake Street Corridor Study Area

Lake Street is a four-lane arterial that traverses midtown Minneapolis, from Excelsior Boulevard in the City of St. Louis Park to Marshall Avenue in the City of St. Paul on the east side of the Mississippi River. Lake Street is the commercial hub of downtown, and is the only direct route across the breadth of the city south of downtown. Lake Street crosses a number of neighborhoods, each of which has distinctive characteristics and active community groups.

A wide variety of uses and conditions are located along the Lake Street Corridor, from the well-to-do residential neighborhoods surrounding Lake Calhoun and Lake of the Isles along the Mississippi River to the decaying business district surrounding the vacant Sears Building. The SOO Line railroad tracks, where the 29th Street Greenway is planned, run parallel to Lake Street one block to the north between the lakes and Hiawatha Avenue.

When the Greenway is complete it will provide a bicycle and pedestrian link between all the neighborhoods through which it passes. East of Hiawatha, the tracks veer north and continue to the parkway along the Mississippi river.

Lake Street/Midtown Greenway Corridor Framework Plan

Prepared by Close Landscape Architecture

The Significance of Place

The revitalization of the Lake Street Midtown Greenway Corridor will fill a gap in a much larger network of neighborhoods, business districts and recreational systems.

It is a key piece of a metropolitan-scaled puzzle, providing a highly desirable east-west link across the city, eventually connecting Saint Paul to the western suburbs. It also provides excellent access to north-south streets and bikeways, creating a new urban movement network.

The success of the Lake Street Midtown Greenway corridor is important for reasons that extend far beyond its immediate borders. While this regeneration will stimulate local growth and initiatives, it will also serve as a model for a new way of thinking about the metropolitan area – underscoring the fact that successes in one portion of the community support successes elsewhere.

To neighborhoods like those along the Greenway and Lake Street, the goals are simple: keep businesses and residents who already live and work here, and attract new businesses and residents to the area. This can succeed only if the neighborhoods are safe and well maintained, and if the conveniences and amenities of high quality urban living are present.

This Framework is intended to help “guide the market” in the corridor, by identifying new opportunities and uniting all interests – public and private, business and neighborhood resident – behind a shared vision for a revitalized Midtown community. If we do nothing, change will still occur, but it will typically be developer-driven and site specific. This document focuses on the two critical qualities that will “raise the standards” for revitalization: **creating meaningful places and linking them together with a highly quality public realm.**

Key Connections – Linking it Together

While Lake Street and the Midtown Greenway corridors – running parallel and a block apart – cut a significant east-west swath through much of south Minneapolis, it is their relationship to adjacent neighborhoods on the north and south this is especially important. Historically, the success and decline of the neighborhoods could be measured against the vitality of Lake Street, especially moving east from the Lakes District. The railroad corridor, servicing business and manufacturing facilities, was accepted as a necessary compromise that kept important jobs in the community.

The departure of the railroad and the development of the recreational and commuter bicycle trail in the trench offer a tremendous opportunity to re-think the physical form and character of this entire part of the city. Together, the Greenway and Lake Street act

as a joined pair, a redefined armature through the neighborhoods. The attached diagram shows the inseparable relationship that exists between the two, especially at the commercial centers, such as Lyndale and Lake, Nicollet and Lake, 4th and Lake, Chicago and Bloomington and Lake, Hiawatha and Lake and other key nodes from the Chain of Lakes to the Mississippi River.

Transit, Mixed Use and the Livable City

Transportation systems have historically determined the form of cities. The streetcar system was the prime generator of form on Lake Street during its maturation in south Minneapolis. The parallel rail corridor, while not a public space, also shaped development by creating a new edge between the neighborhoods to the north and the mixed commercial and industrial uses between Lake Street and 29th Street. While commercial uses always tended to cluster at the major north-south crossroads, there was a remarkable consistency to the retail character of Lake Street from Hiawatha to Hennepin Avenue. Without the streetcar, and with the increased use of the automobile, the character of Lake Street is destined to change.

Purchased by Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority for use as a light rail corridor, the Greenway will once again effect change in land use patterns along Lake Street and adjacent to the Greenway itself. Based on observations of similar light rail “new-starts” in other cities, the areas around proposed stations will see a significant increase in commercial and residential development characterized by a more compact land use pattern at these important nodes. The rail corridor, long a negative space dividing the neighborhood, will become a positive space, attracting significant new investment.

The increase in residential density and commercial activity will certainly bring more people to the Midtown area. Both the Minneapolis Plan and the Metropolitan Council regional Blueprint suggest significant gain in population for these south Minneapolis neighborhoods. This pattern of growth and re-investment cannot be fully realized without improved transit to support it. The potential conflicts caused by increased traffic, business growth and new housing, supports the need for a long-term vision and implementation strategy. Lane use, street capacity, infrastructure replacement, access, funding and other issues must match with overall objectives for transit and transportation improvements in the corridor.

Building the Livable City – The Foundation and the Structure

Successful revitalization of the Midtown Corridor is dependent upon three essential and interdependent components: a multimodal transportation system; open space and infrastructure improvements; and mixed-use compact development – all supported and energized by the political and community will to succeed.

Urban Planning Principles

- **Reinforce safe environments**
- **Establish links to transit and support transit-oriented development**
- **Foster a sense of place and community**
- **Support compact, mixed use development patterns**
- **Respect architectural form, scale and context**
- **Incorporate environmentally sustainable practices**
- **Support 'greening' as a key component of corridor development projects**
- **Balance economic vitality with quality of life**
- **Target strategic public improvements to leverage private investment**

