Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
University Avenue SE & 29th Avenue SE Development Objectives & Design Guidelines Plan

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Project Name: University Avenue SE & 29th Avenue SE Development Objectives & Design Guidelines Plan

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Ward: 2

Neighborhood Organizations: Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association

Existing Minneapolis Plan Designations:

- **University Avenue SE is a Community Corridor; SEMI is a Growth Center in conjunction with the University of Minnesota; SEMI is an Industrial Business Park Opportunity Area; University & Bedford is a Neighborhood Commercial Node; University of Minnesota area is a Transit Corridor**

Zoning Plate Numbers: 22

Background and Public Process:

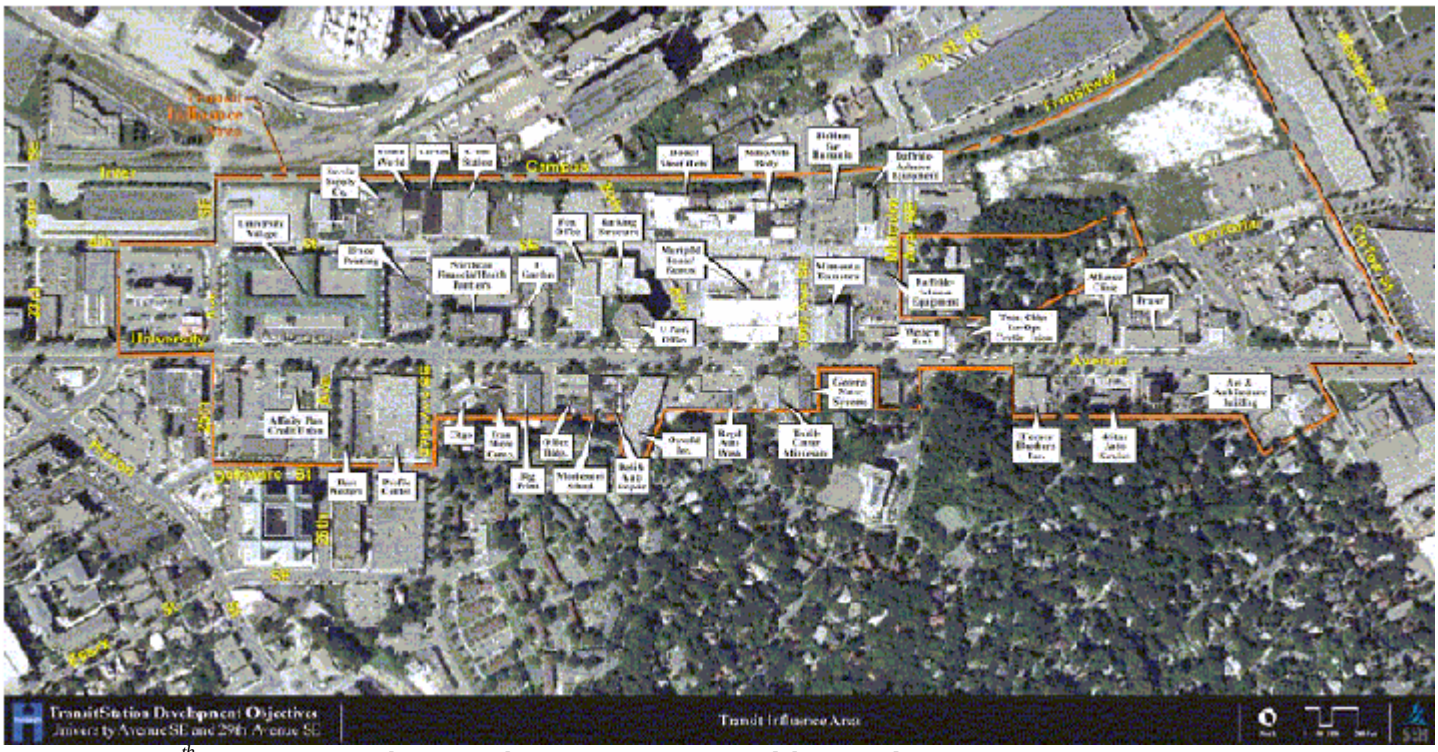
The Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association engaged the Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works and Transit to conduct a planning process to formulate development objectives for a portion of the University Avenue SE corridor. The City of Minneapolis served as an active partner and participant throughout the process. The neighborhood wanted a small area plan in place to help shape transit-supportive development along this corridor prior to transportation system improvements for the Central Corridor between Minneapolis and St. Paul. At that time, it was not clear whether light rail transit or bus rapid transit would be chosen for the corridor. The neighborhood saw a need to develop a guiding vision for new development in the area in advance of future transportation infrastructure decisions. The planning process for the development objectives component began in October 2004 and concluded in April 2005. A community meeting was held on January 31, 2005 where the community participated in a visual preference exercise. A second community meeting was held on March 21, 2005 to present the draft document. A developer's roundtable and a meeting with local businesses were held March 7th and March 8th, 2005, respectively, to gather input and feedback.

Upon completion of the development objectives, the neighborhood decided that they wanted to add companion design guidelines to the original development objectives. The process for design guidelines began in December 2005 and concluded in April 2006. A community meeting was held on March 9, 2006 to present the draft design guidelines document.

The CPED Planning division received the development objectives document in June 2005 and made the draft document available for a 45-day review and comment period to allow wider community and City department input. The neighborhood elected to make some revisions to the original development objectives document and resubmitted both it and the design guidelines document to CPED Planning for 45-day review and comment beginning November 17, 2006 through December 31, 2006. The neighborhood reviewed and adopted the Development Objectives document on June 27, 2005 and the Design Guidelines document on June 26, 2006.

Overview:

The study area comprises a half-mile radius around the intersection of University Avenue SE and 29th Avenue SE (a potential future transit station location) for roughly a two-to three block wide east-west corridor along University Avenue SE between the Minneapolis/St. Paul border and the University of Minnesota. The half-mile radius for the study area excludes the single-family portions of the neighborhood.



University & 29th Avenue SE Development Objectives & Design Guidelines Study Area

Development Objectives

The development objectives identify areas along University Avenue SE where redevelopment can occur and where growth can be accommodated. The study area shares some overlap north of University Avenue SE with the existing, adopted SEMI plan area. The SEMI plan has been amended into the City's comprehensive plan. The land uses and scale of redevelopment proposed in the University & 29th Avenue SE Development Objectives plan are consistent with the SEMI plan and the development objectives document gives greater detail in terms of height, scale and massing, particularly with regards to future housing development.

The focus of the study operated under the overarching premise that future development should be transit-supportive. The principles for transit-supportive development were highlighted throughout the process and are listed below:

- Use transit as a catalyst
- Promote partnerships to create development synergies
- Promote mixed-uses to create economic spin-off
- Leverage positive relationships
- Foster a mature, diverse neighborhood with expanded housing choices
- Create a pedestrian-scale neighborhood with special places and buildings
- Respect the natural environment
- Promote locational advantages that the area has in conjunction with the University of Minnesota, SEMI and the Midway industrial area of St. Paul
- Provide public sector incentives and flexibility in development regulation and review

- Think, plan and act with a future orientation

The Development Objectives were organized to give specific guidance on 1) preferred land uses and density, 2) open space, 3) building form, and 4) integration of transportation and circulation into future development. In addition to policy guidance, the document also identified key redevelopment sites as well as sites that should remain as is within the study area and gave two redevelopment scenarios that showed how density could be achieved with different scale and massing and the trade-offs associated with each approach (taller buildings, more green space OR shorter buildings with less green space).

1. Land Uses and Transit/Neighborhood-Supportive Densities

- Throughout the corridor, encourage residential ownership and rental, as well as a variety of unit and building types to accommodate a wide variety of income levels, lifestyles and lifecycles.
- Integrate potential transit station with other activities and amenities, perhaps as part of the same building.
- Concentrate employment and housing densities adjacent to transit station areas.
- Create a mix of land uses that will generate increased transit ridership in terms of both volume and pattern; concentrate convenience retail and service uses to support transit riders; cater to jobholders, business visitors and residents.
- Be creative and flexible in the vertical and horizontal mixing of uses; permit the renovation and conversion of houses located on University Avenue SE from residential to commercial uses to provide reinvestment, revitalization and diversity.
- Establish minimum site densities of FAR 0.5 to 1.0 for new buildings and an aggregate area-wide density target of FAR 1.5. Residential densities should average 45 to 50 units per acre in the corridor.
- Provide a parks and open space system as a network of green spaces and corridors that unifies and organizes the corridor into an easily understood orientation system that, together with sidewalks, facilitates walking and transit use.

2. Urban Design Character – Open Space Form, Image and Identity

- Carry out streetscape improvements, such as special sidewalk treatments, landscaping, pedestrian-scale lighting and street furniture in the quarter-mile radius of the proposed transit station.
- Create mid-block pedestrian paths that augment the sidewalk system to provide a network of options for walking within the neighborhood and for accessing transit.
- Create a special and unique Prospect Park-University Gateway transit corridor image.
- Use open space and public realm to organize the mixed-use core and create links to other areas in the corridor.
- Emphasize large trees, green spaces and art in the design of the public realm.
- Reinforce a green corridor feeling and experience for this portion of University Avenue SE, establishing a true urban boulevard/parkway.
- Create a north-south green corridor to link Prospect Park neighborhood to the transit station and to the SEMI/Bridal Veil Creek area beyond.
- Use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles to foster “round-the-clock” security, safety and the perception of safety.

3. Building Form and Image

- Facilitate innovative and bold architectural design of an exciting transit station that incorporates other uses and activities.
- Provide options for quarter-block, third-block, half-block and full-block developments to provide a range of development opportunities, design diversity and increased pedestrian circulation.

- Promote infill projects that use small block size, building massing, and site planning and orientation to facilitate public/private pedestrian circulation and connectivity patterns.
- Orient buildings to the street and place buildings close to the sidewalk. Building placement should reinforce the streetwall with main entrances that front the street.
- Site coverage for buildings should be generally no less than 50 percent and no more than 70 percent.
- Preserve view of Pratt School and the "Witch's Hat" water tower. Design and locate signature building elements to create new views, identity and orientation features.
- On the north and south sides of University Avenue SE, permit and/or promote buildings of three to five stories. To the north of University Avenue SE, west of Malcolm Avenue SE, permit/promote a mixture of building heights with some reaching a maximum of six to eight stories with the majority at three to five stories.
- Create a mix of ground-oriented residential units with street or pedestrian pathway entrances and taller apartment/condominium buildings.
- Promote building designs that create visually interesting developments, complementary to their neighbors but unique unto themselves. New buildings should have a sense of their own style.
- New developments should provide generous landscaping to complement public investment in streetscape enhancements.
- Where possible, incorporate green building techniques in development.
- Use high-quality permanent materials such as masonry, stone or brick. Minimize the use of "artificial stucco" or EIFS.
- Encourage building transparency, especially at the ground floor where the ratio of windows and doors to total frontal area should be at least 40 percent.
- Design aboveground, structured parking to include and present ground-floor retail or offices on the street-facing facades to facilitate pedestrian activity.
- Integrate building identification signage and other private signage with the building and/or landscape design. Signs should complement the overall architectural design of buildings. Prohibit pole or pylon signs.
- Use a variety of lighting types, including high-level general street lighting, mid-level pedestrian lighting and low-level lighting in localized areas such as parks, plazas, stairways, paths and seating nodes. Lighting on buildings should be designed in a manner that contributes but does not overpower the light levels of nearby public open spaces.

4. Transportation and Circulation

- Create a transit station/transfer experience that facilitates and promotes increased transit use. Combine the transit station with other uses that provide opportunities to take care of daily business (such as dry-cleaning, breakfast/coffee) or a combination of daily/weekly business (banking, deli, post office, hair styling) whose market demand is driven more by the density of residential units and jobs nearby.
- Facilitate transfer between bus and other transit modes. Design arrival/waiting, drop-off/pick-up areas that are compatible with pedestrian-oriented environment.
- Support the use of private car-sharing (Hourcar) within new developments to provide access to cars without requiring personal ownership.
- Reduce dependence on the car by ensuring streets are designed to promote walking and bicycling to transit station areas.
- Improve pedestrian crossings of University Avenue SE, shortening the walking distance through bump-outs and possibly with a median.
- Vehicle and parking access and circulation should be designed to minimize conflicts with pedestrian traffic. Curb cuts should be consolidated wherever possible.

- Provide mid-block and diagonal pedestrian pathways to achieve a high level of connectivity and intersecting pedestrians.
- Prohibit skyway connections.
- Where possible, provide dedicated bike lanes and provide bicycle lockers or attended storage.
- Minimize the amount of land devoted to parking.
- Maintain a good supply of on-street parking for retail customers and for buffering pedestrians from traffic.
- Promote structured, underground parking.
- Place shared parking a five-to-seven minute walk from the transit station to open/retain prime real estate near the transit station for new development.
- Provide options to developers that would allow them to reduce parking requirements by allowing less parking in exchange for transit passes or carsharing programs, unbundling the price of housing and parking to create a separate market for each, and promoting shared parking strategies.
- Locate all service areas off-street, away from and screened from view of streets, parks, plazas and walkways.

Design Guidelines
The design guidelines document translates the city's existing zoning code and the neighborhood's design preferences into a visual guide for prospective developers and is meant to be a companion to the development objectives document. It provides design guidance in terms of the general built form as well as guidance for site development. The document breaks out items by topic and covers basic site plan principles such as building placement, window coverage, entries as well as specific elements such as materials, awnings, retaining walls, and franchise architecture.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency:
An analysis of how the Development Objectives document relates to and is consistent with designated land use features from ***The Minneapolis Plan*** follows in the matrix below. Adoption of policy guidance for this area as part of the City's comprehensive plan lays the ground work for studying and possibly changing the zoning for the area to ensure that future development can occur according to the plan. Zoning changes are likely to include mapping the Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District in the area.

Applicable TMP Features	Redevelopment Strategy Proposed	TMP Consistency
Growth Center: University of Minnesota	Proposes mixed-use development directly along both sides of the University Avenue SE corridor with and higher-density, multi-family housing for the blocks between the northern side of University Avenue SE and the University of Minnesota Transitway	**3.3 Minneapolis has adopted a Growth Center plan for the University of Minnesota/ SEMI area which guides land use decisions and investment in the area and recognizes the contributions from existing plans and planning processes.** **Implementation Steps** Promote moderate to high density housing of a variety of affordability levels and supporting commercial uses adjacent to the University of Minnesota.
Industrial Business Park Opportunity Area: SEMI	Proposes better street and pedestrian connectivity from station area and potential redevelopment sites north of University Avenue SE into the SEMI area.	**2.1 Minneapolis will increase its share of economic prosperity in the region.** **Implementation Steps** Create a growth center concept approach to economic development, housing investment, transit service planning and investment in amenities to focus major investments in the city.

	Reinforces support for concept of extending green space and pedestrian and bicycle paths from north to south into and through SEMI area. The redevelopment of SEMI for future industrial use occurs primarily north of the University of Minnesota Transitway. The SEMI plan calls for mixed-use development between the Transitway and University Avenue SE. Plan calls for service-related retail close to the station as well as public realm improvements in order to make it convenient and attractive for workers and residents to use transit to and from the area.	Facilitate investments in land preparation through pollution clean up and land assembly activities. Continue to maintain high quality physical and information infrastructure that serves the needs of businesses and residents. Support efforts that build skills and connect residents to living-wage jobs. **2.2 Minneapolis will support the existing economic base by providing adequate land and infrastructure to make city sites attractive to businesses willing to invest in high job density and low impact, light industrial activity.** **Implementation Steps** Identify appropriate areas for the retention and expansion of existing industry and the development of new industry in specific industrial and business park opportunity areas. Promote light industrial uses as the preferred use of industrial land, but discourage warehouse or distribution uses in areas where truck traffic will negatively impact residential neighborhoods. Continue to protect a healthy physical environment that is attractive for private investment and compatible with neighborhoods. Engage in pollution clean up and land readying activities to be able to provide clean and competitive sites. Encourage federal, state and metropolitan support for pollution clean up and land readying activities. Allow for a limited amount of heavy industrial uses where appropriate, but minimize negative impacts on their surroundings. Relocate conflicting heavy industrial uses from impacted areas as more appropriate sites in the city or the region become available. Encourage heavy industry to locate at appropriate sites, such as those that have with immediate freeway access, are distant from natural or cultural amenities, and with no significant residential uses in the immediate vicinity.
Community Corridors: University Avenue SE	Proposes mixed-use buildings with retail on ground floor and residential and office on additional floors for both sides of the University Avenue SE corridor. Calls out need for particular attention to scale and massing for developments on the south side of University Avenue SE.	**4.2 Minneapolis will coordinate land use and transportation planning on designated Community Corridors streets through attention to the mix and intensity of land uses, the pedestrian character and residential livability of the streets, and the type of transit service provided on these streets.** **Implementation Steps** Strengthen the residential character of Community Corridors by developing appropriate housing types that represent variety and a range of affordability levels. Promote more intensive residential development along these corridors where appropriate. Discourage the conversion of existing residential uses to commercial uses, but encourage the development of mixed-use residential dwelling units in commercial buildings where appropriate. Support the continued presence of small-scale retail sales and commercial services along Community Corridors. Ensure that commercial uses do not negatively impact nearby residential areas.
Neighborhood Commercial Node: University	Proposes a focus of daily and weekly service-related retail close to the transit station	**4.5 Minneapolis will identify Neighborhood Commercial Nodes that provide a shopping environment of small-scale retail sales and commercial services and are compatible**

Avenue SE & Bedford Street SE	area. The existing commercial node is half-way between the 29th & University Station and the Westgate Station. There may be a change in this node for the future in that it may evolve into a Transit Station Area.	**with adjacent residential areas.** **Implementation Steps** Support the continued presence of small-scale retail sales and commercial services in Neighborhood Commercial Nodes. Direct other uses that act as neighborhood focal points (institutional, cultural or social) to locate at Neighborhood Commercial Nodes. Restrict auto-oriented, industrial or manufacturing activities that generate significant vehicular traffic, noise or air-borne impacts on residential neighbors. Promote medium density residential development around Neighborhood Commercial Nodes (see also Community Corridors policy in this chapter). Limit the territorial expansion of Neighborhood Commercial Nodes, but encourage rehabilitation and reinvestment in existing buildings. Ensure that commercial uses do not negatively impact nearby residential areas. Facilitate the redevelopment of underutilized commercial areas and promote their reuse as infill development, such as office or housing, while maintaining neighborhood compatibility. Promote traditional urban form in terms of building siting and massing when undertaking new development in Neighborhood Commercial Nodes. (See discussion of traditional urban form in Chapter 9.) Preserve traditional commercial storefronts at Neighborhood Commercial Nodes wherever possible. Develop parking facilities and management strategies that balance the following goals: improved customer access, protection of sidewalk traffic; reduced visual impacts, mitigated impacts on neighboring uses and shared use of parking facilities. Promote transit stops and bicycle parking and storage in Neighborhood Commercial Nodes.
Transit Corridor: University of Minnesota area	Proposes that all new development be designed and oriented using transit-supportive principles. Encourages mixed-use development directly on the University Avenue SE corridor and identifies areas north of University and south of the University of MN Transitway for higher density housing.	**8.7 Minneapolis will direct its share of regional growth to areas well served by transit, to existing and potential growth centers and along transit corridors.** **Implementation Steps** Require that future growth centers be well served by reliable and convenient transit service. Require that all major new developments located within the city facilitate transit access and service. Develop components of site plan review and environmental review manuals which can be used in land use and environmental processes to secure more transit friendly developments. Allow costs of driving in peak rush hour traffic to reflect the true costs of congestion and sprawl. Prohibit construction of new freeways in Minneapolis. Allow limited expansion and improved capacity of existing freeways in order to reduce traffic spillover onto primarily residential arterial roads when mitigation of impacts is determined to be acceptable to the city. Encourage employers to provide incentives for ride-sharing, car or van pooling and bicycling and other alternatives of getting to work.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING DIVISION:

Recommended Motion: The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission and City Council **approve** the *University Avenue SE & 29th Avenue SE Development Objectives and Design Guidelines* documents and **amend** the policy guidance for the area into the City's comprehensive plan.

Attachments:

- University Avenue SE & 29th Avenue SE Development Objectives
- University Avenue SE & 29th Avenue SE Design Guidelines