Bridging the Gap:

The Future of the North Loop's "Other" Side

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Hall • Phenow • Roth

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Bridging the Gap: The Future of the North Loop's "Other" Side

Prepared by Adele Hall, Patrick Phenow, and Katie Roth
for Beth Elliott and Joe Bernard
of the Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bridging the Gap: The Future of the North Loop's "Other" Side explores the development potential of the southwest portion of Minneapolis' North Loop neighborhood, referred to throughout this document as the Lower North Loop. The study area is bounded on the west by Interstate 94 and on the south by Interstate 394. Local streets 12th Street North and 3rd Avenue North form the eastern edge of the study area. The diagonal 7th Street North forms the remaining border of the area.

Big changes are coming to the Lower North Loop. The study area is located just south and west of Target Field, future home of the Minnesota Twins, and next door to a multi-modal transit station, now under construction. Up to four light rail lines, one heavy rail commuter line, and many local buses will one day converge here. These significant public investments could have a major impact on the neighborhood and this study aims to understand the issues in the area that will shape the potential for development and change in the area.

Bridging the Gap is based on four themes, each of which will address a specific question about development in the area:

- *Barriers*: What barriers—physical, political, cultural, or otherwise—may inhibit this area from realizing its full development potential?
- *Connectivity*: How can multi-modal connectivity be improved within the North Loop, to Target Field and the multi-modal station, into the downtown core, and to Near North?
- *Balance*: What is the right balance of uses to complement and not compete with the downtown core?
- *Public Realm*: What improvements are needed on public sites and within the public realm?

The answers to these questions will be presented in three chapters within this report:

- Diagnosis: The diagnosis chapter will focus upon the current state of the study area, examine relevant planning documents and peer experiences, and identify barriers to development, connectivity issues, and land uses.
- Vision: The vision chapter will focus on the development potential for the study area, with an eye toward resolving the barriers discussed in the diagnosis chapter.
- Action Plan: The action plan will describe how the barriers can be specifically addressed and how the vision can be realized by the City of Minneapolis.

Bridging the Gap is prepared at the request of the Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development, which will use the study to inform a small area plan for this portion of the North Loop neighborhood.

Diagnosis: Barriers to development

One of the most pervasive barriers to redevelopment of the Lower North Loop is the lack of connections within the area, as well as to downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. Inside the area, a series of super-blocks make internal travel difficult on foot or bicycle. In addition, the Lower North Loop is bordered on all sides by high-speed roadways located either above or below the prevailing elevation of the neighborhood.

In addition to existing connectivity issues, several substantial barriers will impede and discourage development if not addressed.

- Funding: Initiating development in the Lower North Loop will require a significant investment by the public sector.
- Political feasibility: There are few residents in the area and thus few constituents to please, and the area itself holds little political influence.
- Public involvement: The Lower North Loop has the potential to become valuable real estate, but developers, elected officials, and current will likely have competing visions for the Lower North Loop.
- No cohesive area identity: The Lower North Loop exists neither as a stand-alone area nor as an involved part of another established neighborhood.
- Safety and security: Existing uses provide very little street life or pedestrian traffic that could provide natural surveillance for the area.
- Industrial legacy of the land: Based on existing uses, it is anticipated that much of the land in the Lower North Loop will need to be cleaned up before it can be redeveloped.
- Housing providers: The transient population in the Lower North Loop could be a deterrent to both residential and business development.
- Hennepin Energy Recovery Center: The HERC facility raises problems for all nearby development due to the odors given off by trucks transporting waste to the facility.
- Current land uses: Much of the Lower North Loop is occupied by large-scale public facilities (Metro Transit, City of Minneapolis) and quasi-public facilities (Xcel Energy) uses that will not likely be altered.

- Scale problems: Grade-separated roadways that surround most of the neighborhood create differences in scale that are unwelcoming to pedestrian activity and create creepy nooks in the neighborhood.
- Inadequate streetscape: Streetscaping is minimal or nonexistent throughout the neighborhood.
- Bicycle gaps: Gaps in the Minneapolis bike network make it difficult and dangerous for bicyclists to get to destinations in the neighborhood.

Vision: Possibilities when barriers are resolved

The vision for the Lower North Loop is about possibility and what can happen if the barriers identified in the diagnosis are removed or resolved. The vision revolves around three themes of the study.

A balanced mix of land uses: new structures and green spaces

In the future, the neighborhood will consist of a mix of land uses including housing, offices, retail shops, live-work artist spaces, housing providers, and publicly owned facilities. Because of its relatively strong connection to downtown and visibility from the ballpark, the intersection of Glenwood and Royalston Avenues will become a small entertainment area with Lee's Liquor Lounge anchoring a corner with several new bars and restaurants. Conversion of existing warehouse spaces to office will be spurred by the strong transit connections and proximity to other downtown businesses; these will be the first changes to the area. Eventually, mixed income housing will be added to the emerging office and entertainment uses and the neighborhood will be home to an increasingly diverse mix of uses. Public investment in parks, streetscapes, and new road and sidewalk connections will help to turn the Lower North Loop into a livable neighborhood.

An improved public realm: coexistence between new and old

An influx of residents, shops, offices, and restaurants will reshape much of the land in the Lower North Loop between now and 2030. During the same timeframe, however, the public facilities and emergency housing providers located in the area are unlikely to leave. What will change is the way these uses are integrated with their neighbors.

New residential developments will house residents of mixed incomes, avoiding the creation of a vast disparity within the Lower North Loop. Public areas will provide connections between old and new residents, rather than isolating them from one another. The city's public facilities in the area will also be better neighbors. A green, friendly public realm will bring together existing facilities and new development to form a cohesive and welcoming neighborhood, inviting visitors to explore the area, and giving residents a reason to take pride in their neighborhood.

Effective connections: a gateway to the City of Minneapolis

Public investments taking place in and adjacent to the Lower North Loop, with its prime geographic location, will transform it into a primary gateway to the city. New transit lines will make it into one of the most easily accessible places in the city. Several improvements in local accessibility will ensure that the neighborhood takes advantage of this boon in connectivity to the neighborhood.

The Lower North Loop will be replete with green spaces, including trails and larger park spaces. Traffic calming measures will improve existing pedestrian connections to the Near North, Sumner-Glenwood, Harrison, and Downtown neighborhoods. Non-motorized accessibility will also be improved by extending four local streets through the central part of the neighborhood. This newly traversable and inviting neighborhood will accommodate all modes of travel safely and efficiently.

Action plan: Making the vision a reality

The action plan delineates actions for implementing the vision. Suggested actions range in scale, intensity, and priority and are organized according to the three themes incorporated in the vision.

A balanced mix of land uses: new structures and green spaces

Because the Lower North Loop is isolated from adjacent neighborhoods, has few residents, and is primarily an industrial area with several overnight housing providers, we anticipate that without significant public investment, it will be difficult to inspire the private development needed to realize the vision for this area. We propose two methods of luring private development to the Lower North Loop.

First, the City of Minneapolis could attempt to acquire several connecting parcels in order to facilitate a large-scale redevelopment effort and reduce the possibility of a failed "pioneer" development. As land assembly is a difficult barrier for developers to overcome, possession of a large developable parcel could give the City of Minneapolis some leverage to negotiate with a developer for features that the City considers important, such as a refurbished farmers' market, right-of-way for new connecting streets, and a public park. Second, if resources are available, tax increment financing (TIF) is another tool that the city can use to incite development in the Lower North Loop.

Zoning changes can also facilitate changes to the area. The parcels across Glenwood Avenue from Lee's Liquor Lounge should be rezoned to accommodate additional bar, restaurant, or entertainment business. In addition, the City should maintain zoning that is conducive for future Metro Transit expansion near the Heywood Garage facility.

An improved public realm: coexistence between new and old

Improvements to the public realm are focused on lighting and greening the study area, adding amenities throughout the neighborhood, managing the on-street parking supply, and creating a public identity for the area through a branding campaign.

Significant investments in lighting will not only improve the appearance of the neighborhood, but will also address the barrier posed by unsafe-feeling streets and sidewalks and improve perceived security. The appearance of the public realm can also be vastly improved by greening the area. The City can encourage private property owners to voluntarily green their properties through tax incentives. The City can also use improvements to the public realm to create a cohesive area identity. We also recommend that the city partner with a local nonprofit youth art center to add mural-like paintings to the concrete support posts underneath I-94.

Finally, managing the on-street parking supply will be crucial in implementing a multi-modal, mixed use district. The city can implement variable-rate meters in portions of the Lower North Loop to achieve parking goals in the area. These measures will ensure that the area does not share the fate of the Downtown East neighborhood, whose streets are packed during game times at the Metrodome.

Effective connections: a gateway to the City of Minneapolis

As an industrial neighborhood that is essentially bounded on all sides by freeways, connectivity and accessibility must be improved to spur development. To ensure that private development and to make the neighborhood more appealing to those that would use its current and future amenities and those that would live here, a set of infrastructure improvements presented here will make the Lower North Loop a more accessible place. These actions are intended to address access both to and from this neighborhood, as well as connectivity within the neighborhood.

Glenwood Avenue, currently designated as an Industrial Street in the Minneapolis Action Plan, will become an Activity Area Street, as it will be one of Lower North Loop's activity centers and a primary gateway to downtown. Glenwood will be densely populated with automobiles, bikes, and pedestrians, and will require a marked on-street bike lane, filling one of the major bicycle network gaps in the neighborhood. Other major gaps in the bicycle network will be filled on 7th Street and 10th Street by adding on-street bicycle lanes. Traffic calming measures will improve existing pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods. Overall accessibility in the neighborhood will be enhanced by extending four roads through the center of the area.

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INTRODUCTION TO *BRIDGING THE GAP*

Bridging the Gap: The Future of the North Loop's "Other" Side explores the development potential of the southwest portion of Minneapolis' North Loop neighborhood. In the last decade, the upper portion of the North Loop changed steadily as new residents moved into historic warehouses converted to condominiums, and coffee shops, bars, and restaurants followed. The "other" (south) side of the North Loop neighborhood, which is the focus of this study, has seen little of these changes, and remains mostly a light-industrial area with few residents.

Problem statement

Now even bigger changes are coming to the North Loop neighborhood, and this time to the "other" side. The study area is located just south and west of Target Field, future home of the Minnesota Twins. Next door, a multi-modal transit station is under construction. Up to four light rail lines, one heavy rail commuter line, and many local buses will one day converge here. These significant public investments could have a major impact on the neighborhood and this study aims to understand the issues in the area in order to inform the potential for development and change in the area.

Change is coming to the North Loop Neighborhood—this time to the "other" side.

Report structure

Bridging the Gap is based on four themes, each of which will address a specific question about development in the area:

- *Barriers*: What barriers—physical, political, cultural, or otherwise—may inhibit this area from realizing its full development potential?
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Chapter 1: Diagnosis

Area Background

This chapter, the first of three, is focused on a diagnosis of the study area. As such, it will address the *barriers* theme most heavily, with some discussion of *connectivity* and the *public realm*.

This section provides background information about the study area, including a definition of the study area's boundaries, an inventory of the current uses in the area, and demographic information about the residents of the area.

Study area location

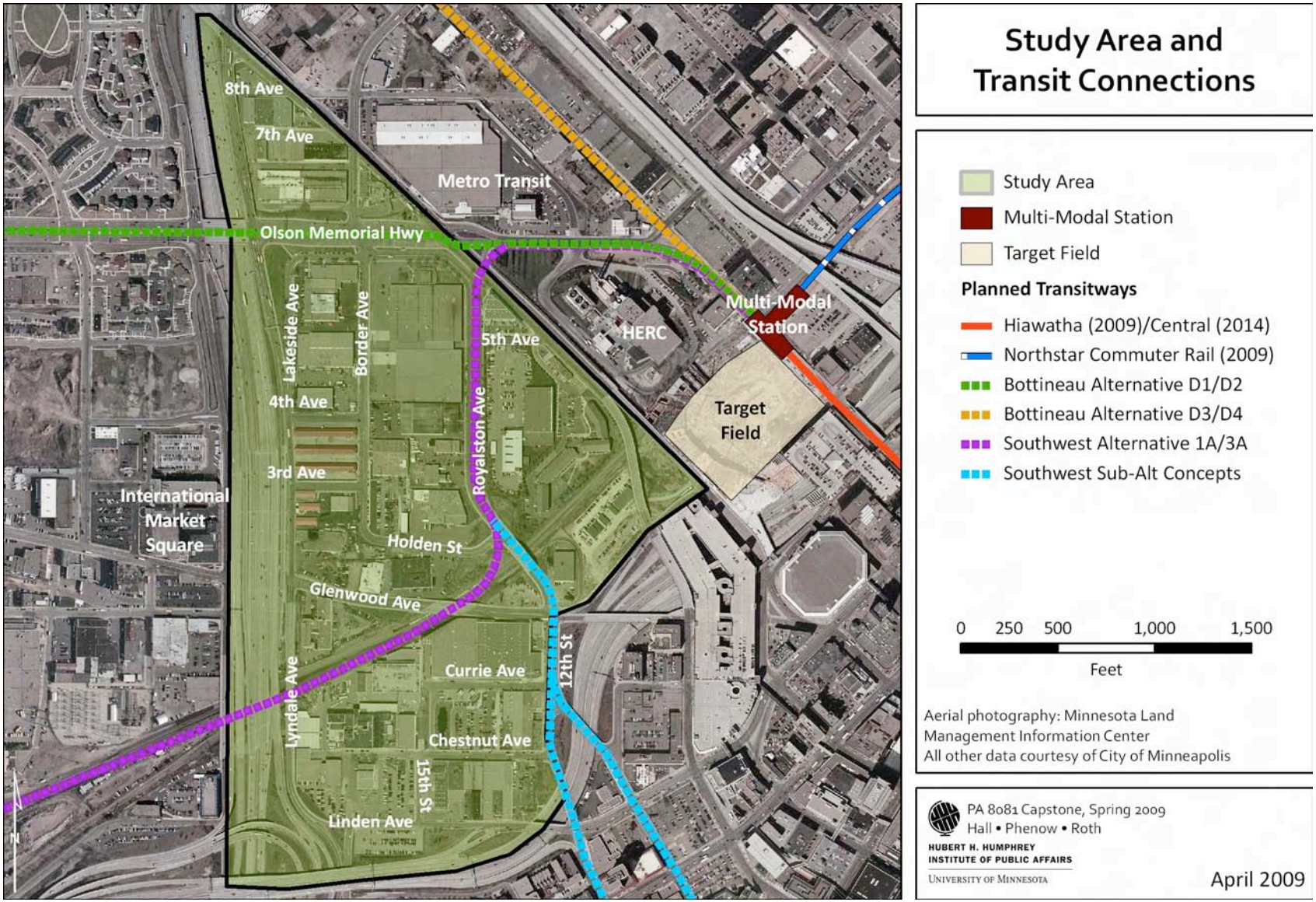
This study focuses on a portion of the North Loop neighborhood to which little attention has been paid in the past. Located south of the ballpark and the multi-modal station, North Loop neighbors refer to this area as the "other" side. Because of its geographic relationship to the more highly developed northern portion of the neighborhood, we refer to the study area as the *Lower North Loop* throughout the report.

North Loop neighbors refer to this area as the "other" side.

The Lower North Loop, illustrated in Figure 1-1, is bounded on the west by Interstate 94 and on the south by Interstate 394. Local streets 12th Street North and 3rd Avenue North form the eastern edge of the study area. The diagonal 7th Street North forms the remaining border of the area.

The entire study area covers approximately 152 acres of land; however, only 84 acres are occupied by distinct land uses. The remaining land is occupied by transportation infrastructure, including surface streets throughout the area, I-94 on the west side of the study area, and the I-94/I-394 interchange in the southwest corner.

Figure 1-1 | Study Area Boundaries and Planned Transit Connections



Current land use

Land use in this area is characterized by large-scale municipal facilities, temporary housing providers, and industrial and warehouse uses. Commercial uses are located north of Olson Memorial Highway, south of the Cedar Lake Trail, and in other small concentrations throughout the area. Industrial uses are distributed throughout the study area, and congregate living facilities owned by Catholic Charities and Sharing and Caring Hands are located on the 7th Street border of the study area and at the corner of Glenwood Avenue and Lyndale Avenue.

Property ownership

Parcels in the study area occupy 84 acres, or just over half of the study area's total 152 acres. The remaining 68 acres are occupied by large-scale transportation infrastructure, including the elevated portion of Interstate 94, which forms the western border of the study area and covers nearly 24 acres of urban land. Right-of-way allowances, surface streets, and Olson Memorial Highway comprise the remaining non-parcel area.

Table 1-1 contains a summary of the area's 13 largest property owners and the amount of land they each hold. The locations of these properties are illustrated in Figure 1-2 on page 9. The largest property owners in the area are the City of Minneapolis (22 percent of the total parcel area), Xcel Energy (14 percent), and ICIDS, LLC, a private company which owns two adjoining warehouse/industrial buildings at 501 and 415 Royalston Avenue (9 percent). Also present among the largest property owners is Sharing and Caring Hands, whose properties along 7th Street North amount to 7 percent of the study area.

A striking characteristic of the property ownership summary is the diverse range of property owners present in the study area. Public, private, and non-profit property owners are all present in the Lower North Loop. Among the top 13 largest owners shown in Table 1-1, seven are private entities, with two—Xcel Energy and BNSF—considered quasi-public in the scope of their businesses. The City of Minneapolis, the Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Ballpark Authority represent the public sector, while Sharing and Caring Hands is a non-profit landowner.

Public, private, and non-profit property owners are all present in the small study area.

Residents

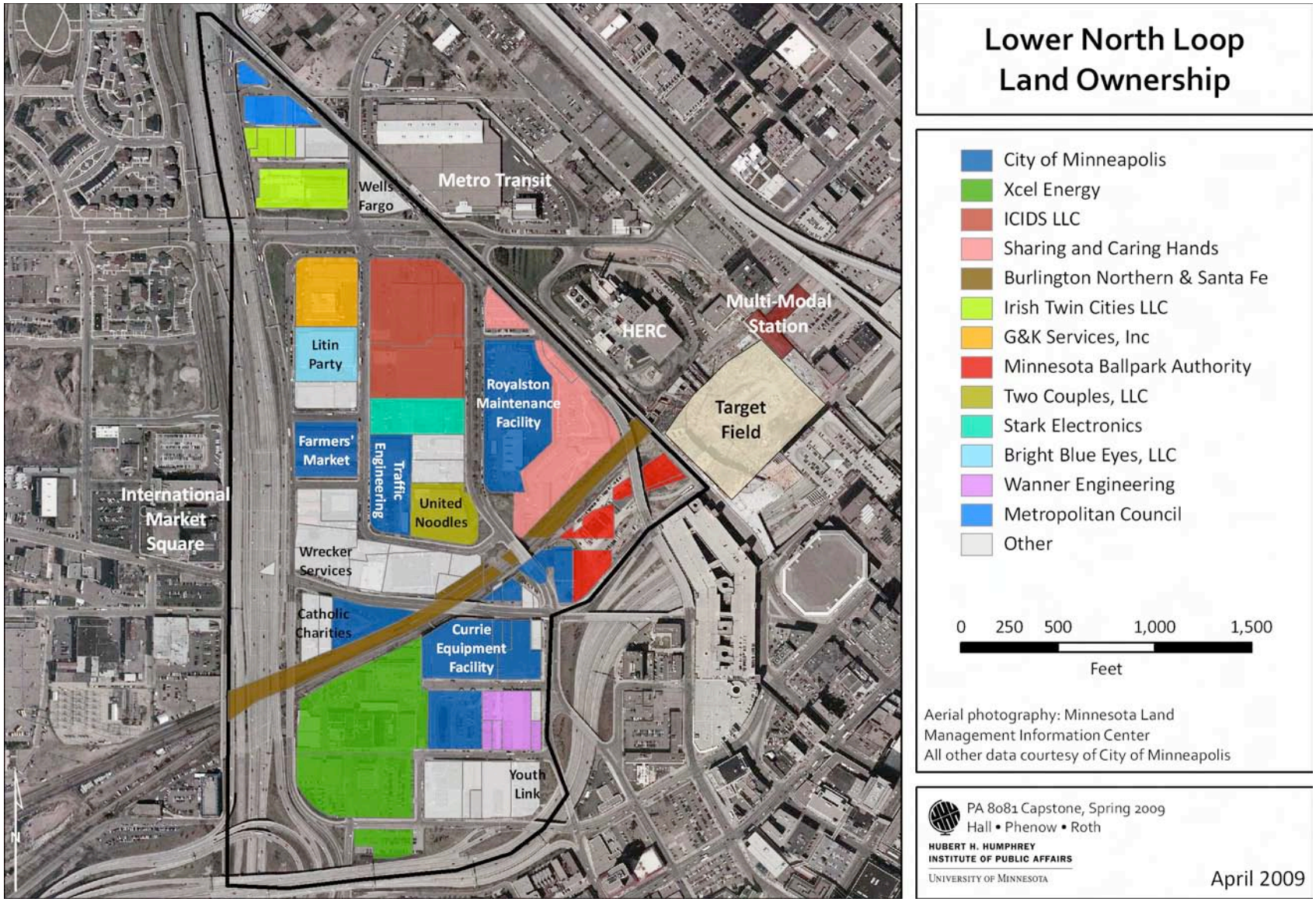
Several limitations hinder a useful demographic analysis of the residential population of the Lower North Loop. The most recently collected Census data dates back to 2000, and when the data is disaggregated enough to show population for this area, little information is available beyond age, sex, and race. Most importantly, the census data shows a permanent population of only 67 residents living in 50 housing units within two buildings[i].

The transient population in the Lower North Loop is larger than the population of permanent residents. The Sharing and Caring Hands facility known as Mary's Place consists of 82 transitional housing units that house up to 500 persons. In addition, Catholic Charities maintains the 80-bed Glenwood Residence facility for chronic alcoholics, as well as an 88-unit housing facility for homeless men and women called the Evergreen Residence.

Table 1-1 | Property Ownership

Property Owner	Number of Parcels	Total Acreage	Percent of Study Area
City of Minneapolis	14	18.8	22%
Xcel Energy	3	11.9	14%
ICIDS, LLC	2	7.9	9%
Sharing and Caring Hands, Inc	3	5.9	7%
BNSF	4	5.1	6%
Irish Twin Cities, LLC	4	3.1	4%
G&K Services, Inc	1	2.6	3%
Minnesota Ballpark Authority	4	2.4	3%
Two Couples, LLC	1	2.3	3%
Stark Electronics	1	2.1	3%
Bright Blue Eyes, LLC	1	2.1	2%
Wanner Engineering	4	1.9	2%
Metropolitan Council (Metro Transit)	3	1.4	2%
Other	32	17.9	19%
TOTAL	**74**	**83.9**	**100%**

Figure 1-2 | Primary Property Owners



Current zoning regulations

Prior to formal approval of the 2008 Minneapolis Plan, five different zoning types existed in the study area:

- C2: Neighborhood Corridor Commercial District

  The Wells Fargo property in the northwest portion of the Olson Memorial Highway/7th Street intersection is zoned C2.
- I1: Limited Industrial District

  The I1 district encompasses the majority of the study area south of Glenwood Avenue, including the Xcel Energy property and the Currie Maintenance Facility.
- I2: Medium Industrial District

  The majority of the study area is zoned I2.
- OR3: Institutional Office Residence District

  South of Linden Avenue and west of 15th Street, a very small portion of the study area is zoned OR3.
- B4S: Downtown Service District

  The border of the study area along 3rd Avenue North is zoned B4S.

Future land use plans within the 2008 Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth call for the majority of the study area to be zoned *transitional industrial*. This zoning designation will act as a placeholder until a small area plan for the Lower North Loop can be completed and implemented. In the meantime, the zoning will allow the city to keep a tight hold on any development in the area to ensure continuity with its plans.

Overview of Relevant Literature

This study considers a variety of documents both directly and indirectly relevant to the Lower North Loop. This section consists of three document categories: concurrent and recently completed planning documents, planned connections, and best practices.

Concurrent and recently completed planning documents

Bridging the Gap exists precisely because of a lack of a long-range plan to date for this site. Formal plans have been written that encompass or are adjacent to the Lower North Loop influence what planning can and should look like in the area. Influential planning documents are briefly examined in this section.

Downtown Minneapolis Multi-Modal Station Area Master Plan

The Downtown Minneapolis Multi-Modal Station Area Plan was produced for the Hennepin County Transit and Community Works Department in 2002. While over seven years old, it is one of the few documents that deals directly with planning in the Lower North Loop. The Station Area Plan identified a need for additional planning and direction for development in this area[ii].

The Downtown Minneapolis Multi-Modal Station Area Plan yielded some useful insights for application to the Lower North Loop:

- The Farmers' Market should be expanded into a year-round facility and incorporated with a future Royalston LRT station[iii].
- Better transit connections will enhance the study area's attractiveness for office, light retail, and industrial development.
- For housing to be successful here, appropriate sites, types, quantities, and price points must be identified.
- Street environment, particularly along Glenwood, should be more inviting to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Downtown East-North Loop Master Plan

Attention to the Downtown East-North Loop Master Plan is vital to maintaining a balance that will not compete with the downtown core. This area should serve to complement the downtown core, not draw business away from it. The study area is part of the North Loop neighborhood, but plans for it are strikingly absent from the existing master plan. While the Lower North Loop is not directly addressed in this

plan, many of the goals and principles of the Downtown East-North Loop Master Plan will affect the Lower North Loop or should be applied there as well:[iv]

- Development of "complete communities" in both Downtown East and the North Loop so that people can walk to where they work, shop, and play;
- Preference for mid- to high-density mixed-use developments that combine residential, commercial, and retail uses in a collection of distinct, readily identifiable new neighborhood clusters;
- Land uses organized to encourage and support movement by public transit, bicycle, and walking as viable alternatives to the private automobile;
- Structured parking built below, or embedded within, mixed-use development projects in a way that allows for and encourages active uses on all street frontages both at-grade and above the street level; and
- Promotion of pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, street-facing retail, transit nodes, and neighborhood services that are organized into compact "neighborhood" nodes.

The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth

The Lower North Loop is an excellent candidate for increases in employment density.

The City of Minneapolis recently completed its 2008 update to its comprehensive plan, known as the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth. Several policies and key points within the plan relate to potential development in the Lower North Loop. First, the plan calls for high job density. Given the Lower North Loop's proximity to downtown, the area is an excellent candidate for increases in employment density. Second, the plan suggests branding as a way to create a business district. In addition, a policy within the plan outlines the city's stance in favor of large-scale revitalization through infrastructure investment. The ballpark and multi-modal station are excellent examples of this type of infrastructure investment.

Access Minneapolis

In the summer of 2007, the Minneapolis City Council approved the Downtown Action Plan, part of Access Minneapolis, the city's ten-year transportation action plan. The plan identifies specific actions that should be taken in line with the policies outlined in the Minneapolis Plan. Two elements of the plan are of particular interest in this study. First, the plan identifies infrastructure needs throughout the downtown area. In the Lower North Loop, a number of sidewalk gaps and on-street bicycle network gaps are identified. Also in terms of the Lower North Loop study area, the action plan calls for the completion of a linkage between the Cedar Lake Trail and West River Parkway. The link, which will directly connect the Lower North Loop to the greater neighborhood and the rest of the city, will be part of a future Primary Pedestrian Corridor.

Market Analysis

Concurrent to this study, the City of Minneapolis has retained a consultant to conduct a market analysis of the study area. The final market analysis will include:

- The anticipated impacts to the study area from both the ballpark and transit improvements
- The development competitiveness of the area in comparison to other parts of the city
- The types of development that have the most potential in the area, including several likely development scenarios and the identification of key sites and catalysts for development
- The possible contingencies that could further enhance or constrain development activity in the study area, focusing primarily on public improvements and regulations

The purpose of the report is to outline the development issues, potential, and contingencies that can inform possible courses of action for the City of Minneapolis to encourage optimal development of the area.

Planned connections

The Lower North Loop has become a focus for long-range planning partly because of planned transit connections that will radically improve accessibility in the area. This section will identify and briefly examine those planned connections, illustrated in Figure 1-1 on page 6.

Northstar Commuter Rail

The Northstar Commuter Rail is a heavy rail transit line, currently under construction, that begins in the city of Big Lake, 40 miles northwest of downtown Minneapolis. The line will approach downtown Minneapolis from the north and terminate at the multi-modal station. When the line becomes operational at the end of 2009, the schedule will include three peak-direction rush hour trips in the morning and the evening, as well as one reverse-commute trip during each peak period.

Southwest Transitway

The Southwest Transitway is a proposed light rail transit line between downtown Minneapolis and Eden Prairie. Currently, three proposed routes are under consideration, two of these routes would pass through the Kenilworth Corridor in Minneapolis, following existing right of way under I-94 and then rising to street grade at Royalston Avenue, in the heart of the Lower North Loop. With a station planned for Royalston Avenue, the Southwest Transitway has excellent potential to serve and connect the Lower North Loop to the city and the greater Twin Cities region.

The Southwest Transitway has excellent potential to serve and connect the Lower North Loop.

Bottineau Transitway

The Bottineau Transitway is a proposed transitway that would link downtown Minneapolis to a northern terminal in either Brooklyn Park or Maple Grove. As the line is currently in the Alternatives Analysis stage of planning, alignment decisions that would affect the Lower North Loop have not yet been determined, though the Bottineau Transitway is planned to connect to other transitways at the multi-modal station. At present, the line is likely to approach the multi-modal station via either Olson Memorial Highway or a guideway adjacent to the I-94 viaduct.

Best practices: Peer review

As planning in this area progresses, it is important to consider the failures and successes of other developments that have faced similar opportunities and problems as the Lower North Loop. The construction of Target Field and the existing and planned connections at the multi-modal station create the potential for the Lower North Loop to become an exciting new place in Minneapolis' North Loop neighborhood. What follows are peer cities' experiences with areas that underwent revitalization as a result of similar infrastructure improvements.

Transit-oriented development

The eastern edge of the Lower North Loop is less than half a mile from the multi-modal station, which will bring travelers from all ends of the metropolitan area to the neighborhood and the downtown core. The Lower North Loop is a currently marginal industrial neighborhood that has the opportunity to benefit greatly from this new influx. Below is a brief examination of two areas whose past experiences can contribute to successful planning in the Lower North Loop.

Portland's Pearl District

Vibrant, mixed-use destination depends on the creation of accessible and affordable public spaces for all.

Portland's Pearl District reminds planners of the potential of transit as a revitalizing force in a blighted industrial area that may be applied to the Lower North Loop. The most valuable lesson of the Pearl District's success is that a vibrant, mixed-use destination depends on the creation of accessible and affordable public spaces for all. In addition, the Pearl District has high connectivity and transit access throughout the neighborhood; without improved pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections the Lower North Loop will be merely adjacent to a major multi-modal hub that will directly improve region-wide accessibility.

Some of the following principles and goals outlined in the Pearl District Development Plan should be considered for the Lower North Loop:

- Investigate ways to reduce impacts of changes on established businesses[v].

- Encourage both private actors and public agencies to support development to ensure successful development.
- Ensure that new developments support and reinforce public infrastructure investments[vi].
- Reduce the dominance of public buildings.
- Establish facilities that are appropriate for the neighborhood.
- Enhance or create public open spaces.
- Capitalize on current and potential employment opportunities.

Denver

Like Portland, Denver has also used transit as a springboard to transform its urban fabric. In November of 2004, voters in the Denver region approved the $4.7 billion FasTracks program to build and extend eight transit lines, all of which will be complete by 2016. Denver plans to make historic Denver Union Station (DUS) the center of its multi-modal transportation system. Built in 1881, DUS currently hosts two Amtrak trains each day, and the C-line light rail transit (LRT) train terminates at the station. However, the DUS Master Plan calls for the intersection of LRT, regional and local bus service, commuter trains to the North Metro Area and Denver International Airport, regional rail service to mountain communities and other Colorado cities, as well as charter buses, taxis, shuttles, and limousines, and bicycle and pedestrian connections at DUS, morphing it into a bustling multi-modal facility.

Like Portland, Denver has also used transit as a springboard to transform its urban fabric.

The location of DUS and its surrounding neighborhood are similar to the location and surrounding neighborhood of the multi-modal station planned in Minneapolis. Located on the edge of downtown, DUS is adjacent to Lower Downtown (LoDo), an area that has absorbed a significant portion of the residential growth in Denver over the last decade with the conversion of historic warehouse buildings to condominiums[vii]. Coors Field, where the Colorado Rockies play, is less than one half mile from the station.

The Denver Union Station Master Plan highlights two strategies that model best practices and should be integrated into plans for the development surrounding the Minneapolis multimodal station:

- The Denver Comprehensive Plan calls for the integration of affordable housing into new residential development. Without a strategy for affordable housing in the area, the Lower North Loop risks loss of potential demographic, economic, and land-use diversity in the new development.
- Denver's new development program near DUS calls for mixed use with mostly residential development. This type of development is compatible with the City of Minneapolis' desire to develop uses compatible with and not competitive with downtown.

Urban ballparks: Development catalysts?

Upon its completion in 2010, Target Field will be the latest in a wave of new ballparks constructed in urban centers throughout the country. This new generation of single-use, context-sensitive ballparks has been developed in part due to a widespread belief in the ability of such large-scale public investments to spur adjacent development and play a substantial role in reviving downtown core areas[viii]. In this section, the study examines the lessons that can be learned from three similar ballparks in Baltimore, San Diego, and Denver.

Baltimore: Camden Yards

Completed in 1992, the Baltimore Orioles' Oriole Park at Camden Yards was on the leading edge of the new generation of urban ballparks. The park sits adjacent to the Baltimore Ravens' football-only stadium, completed in 1998, together forming the Camden Yards sports complex. The location of Camden Yards relative to Baltimore's downtown core is similar to the North Loop site of Target Field; however, the complex is also directly adjacent to the Inner Harbor entertainment district, a major activity generator containing tourism-oriented retail and an aquarium. No similar district exists in Minneapolis, though the waterfront amenity in part resembles the Mississippi riverfront.

The Camden Yards complex was constructed with the initial goal of retaining Baltimore's Major League Baseball team and attracting professional football to the city, though as the project progressed, city officials and the media began to see the project as a way to revive the southwestern sector of the city's downtown core. The two facilities were largely financed with public funds, costing the state of Maryland over $500 million, and expectations were high for those public costs to be recouped by way of adjacent development[ix].

Growing demand for parking near Camden Yards resulted in the clearing of several blocks around the ballpark to make way for surface parking lots.

Since completion of the complex, however, development has not changed the Camden Yards area in the way many hoped. Though the area has seen the renovation and repurposing of several warehouse structures for ballpark-related development, housing team offices, the stadium authority's headquarters, and a gift shop, as well as other private uses, the western edge of downtown Baltimore has been strikingly unaffected by the facilities' construction. Instead of spurring new development, Camden Yards shaped the surrounding area by growing demand for parking in the area, resulting in the clearing of several blocks around the ballpark to make way for surface parking lots.

Denver: Coors Field

Much like Target Field and San Diego's Petco Park, Coors Field is also located in an old warehouse district. Known as Lower Downtown or LoDo, the area is home to what was once the hub of warehousing and

manufacturing in Denver, a collection of 1860-1880s vintage buildings, many of which have been transformed into a mix of office, retail, gallery, restaurant, and residential uses. These changes began in the mid-1980s when Denver approved a series of major plans, code changes, and investments in and around Lower Downtown, which created opportunities for new development in the area while retaining its architectural flavor[x].

There are several things to learn from Coors Field. First, The LoDo Neighborhood Plan identifies Coors Field as the anchor of the lively and active street life in LoDo, and the neighborhood plan credits the increased pedestrian traffic in the area to the active street-level focus of the neighborhood's design. Second, though a major league baseball park, Coors Field was designed on a small scale. There is little dedicated parking near the site; most is shared parking with downtown uses, and the ballpark fits within one city block. The stadium sits flush with the sidewalk, making the brick and terra cotta detailing visible to passersby, and an attractive Bulova clock tower sits over the main entrance, visually linking Coors Field to the old Denver neighborhood[xi].

San Diego: Petco Park

Petco Park, located at the terminus of the San Diego trolley line, is in a once-underused warehouse district near the San Diego Convention Center and adjacent to the trendy Gaslamp Quarter. A nearby warehouse is integrated into the seating of the ballpark, shown in Figure 1-3.

Figure 1-3 | Petco Park, San Diego

Much like the new Target Field in Minneapolis, construction of Petco Park was funded by local taxpayer dollars. However, the City of San Diego approached development aggressively and engaged in an agreement with the Padres that ensured the ballclub's investment in redevelopment adjacent to the stadium. As of 2004, the Padres' development arm had committed to $311 million worth of development projects, and engaged other developers in $593.3 million worth of hotel, residential, retail and parking structures[xii]. Though the opportunity has passed for Target Field, a similar agreement should be considered for future stadium development in the Twin Cities.

STAKEHOLDERS

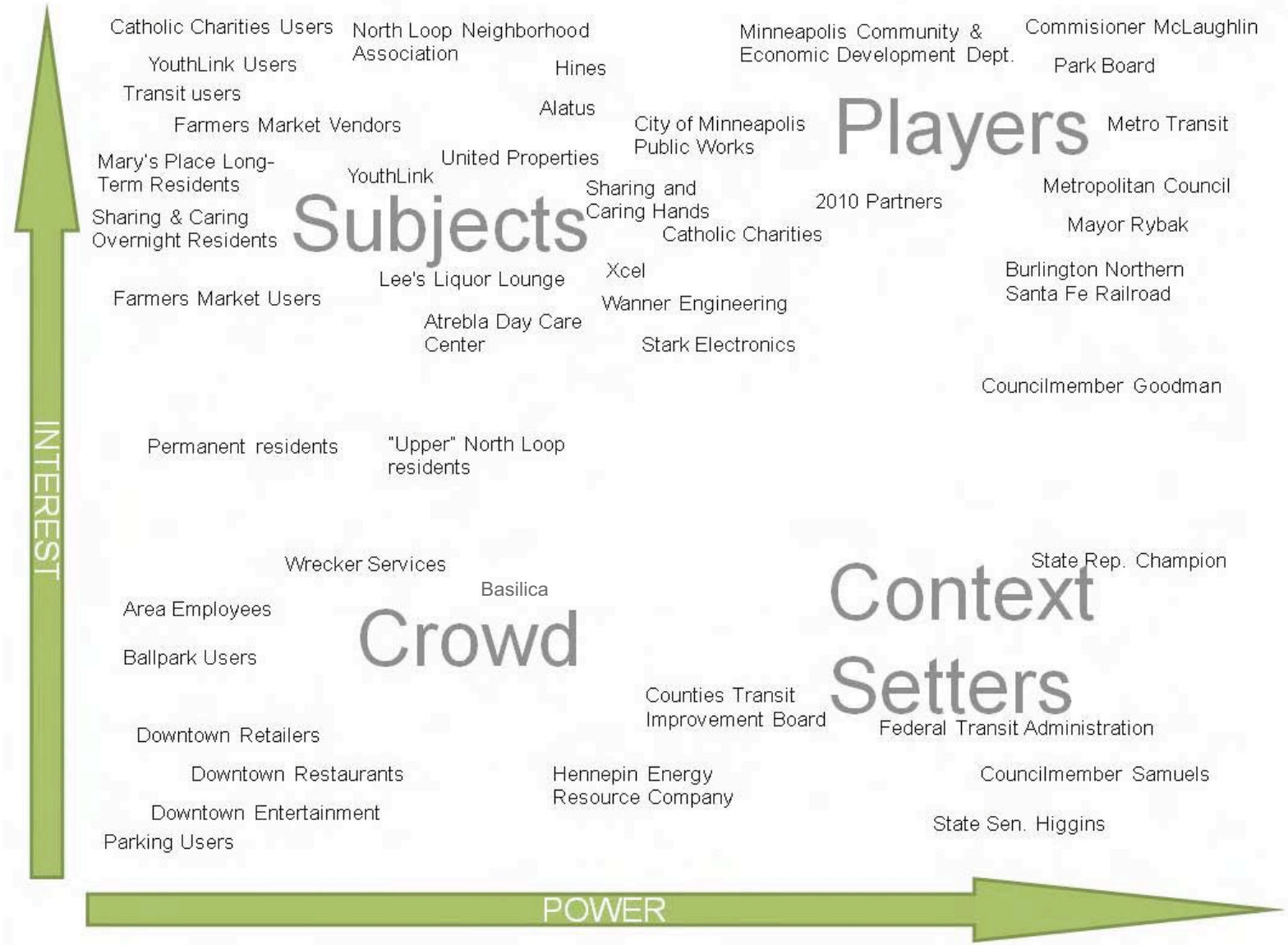
Policy and planning literature encourages leaders organizing a major change effort to consider the ability of various stakeholders to make their voices heard during the change[xiii]. Power-Versus-Interest Grids are a tool that can be used to understand the relationships between stakeholders in a project according to stakeholders' decision making power and interest in the project. Before a development or major public investment begins, a Power-Versus-Interest Grid can illuminate which individuals or groups are likely to voluntarily engage in the process, and those whose participation may need to be encouraged. Power-Versus-Interest Grids can also be helpful in determining or understanding alliances and conflict amongst involved individuals and groups.

The Power-Versus-Interest Grid shown in Figure 1-4 displays the people and groups this study considers to have a stake in changes to the study area. Stakeholders' places on the grid correspond to their perceived powers and interests. According to their position on the Power-Versus-Interest Grid, stakeholders are separated into four categories:

- Players are stakeholders with high power and high interest.
- Context setters are stakeholders with high power and low interest.
- Subjects are stakeholders with low power and high interest.
- The crowd consists of stakeholders with low power and low interest.

The study team used the Power-Versus-Interest Grid and recommendations from the client to reach out to a range of stakeholders and select interviewees. The city should also use this tool as it moves forward in the planning process.

Figure 1-4 | Power-Versus-Interest Grid



SWOT Analysis

This section contains a SWOT analysis of the Lower North Loop. A SWOT analysis addresses the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats that will be considered in the planning for the Lower North Loop. *Strengths* and *opportunities* are the positive aspects of the study area that should be emphasized and highlighted. The *weaknesses* and *threats* are things that need to be mitigated or eliminated where possible. The *strengths* and *weaknesses* denote the internal physical, political, and environmental issues that affect this area's future. The *opportunities* and *threats* denote the external physical, political, and environmental issues that must be considered. Figure 1-5 illustrates this analysis.

Purpose

The goal of this SWOT analysis is twofold: to identify barriers to development that must be directly and indirectly mitigated, and to identify those opportunities present that, if properly highlighted or encouraged, will lead to the success in this area. Accomplishing these two goals will help ensure that the Lower North Loop becomes a successful and vibrant Minneapolis district, taking full advantage of the development potential spurred by the large-scale improvements in the area.

Figure 1-5 | Lower North Loop SWOT Analysis

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
INTERNAL	**Strengths** • Close to city center • Good transit service that will get better with Bottineau and Southwest transitways • Large parcel sizes make land acquisition easier • Several parcels owned by City • Cedar Lake Trail provides accessibility for recreational bikers as well as commuters • Farmers' Market as major destination for area	**Weaknesses** • Lack of interconnectivity • Lyndale, 7th, Olson Highway create barriers that impair local circulation • Public land holdings are not likely to leave or change form • Major grade separation from downtown makes accessibility difficult • Without connection over 7th street, area might not see benefits of the ballpark • Odor from HERC could dissuade developers, tenants • Adjacent immobile land uses could hinder development possibilities (HERC, Metro Transit) • Streetscape needs major improvements
EXTERNAL	**Opportunities** • Improve transit access for transit-dependent populations • Foster region-wide accessibility through multi-modal station • Ballpark and downtown entertainment encourages development, residents	**Threats** • Potential disruption of vulnerable populations • Failure to develop this area would be a loss of opportunity • Environmental contamination from industrial legacy could discourage or slow development • Widespread community concern for future of Sharing and Caring Hands/Mary's Place • Small-scale, piecemeal development could cause safety concerns for "pioneers" to the area

CONNECTIVITY ANALYSIS

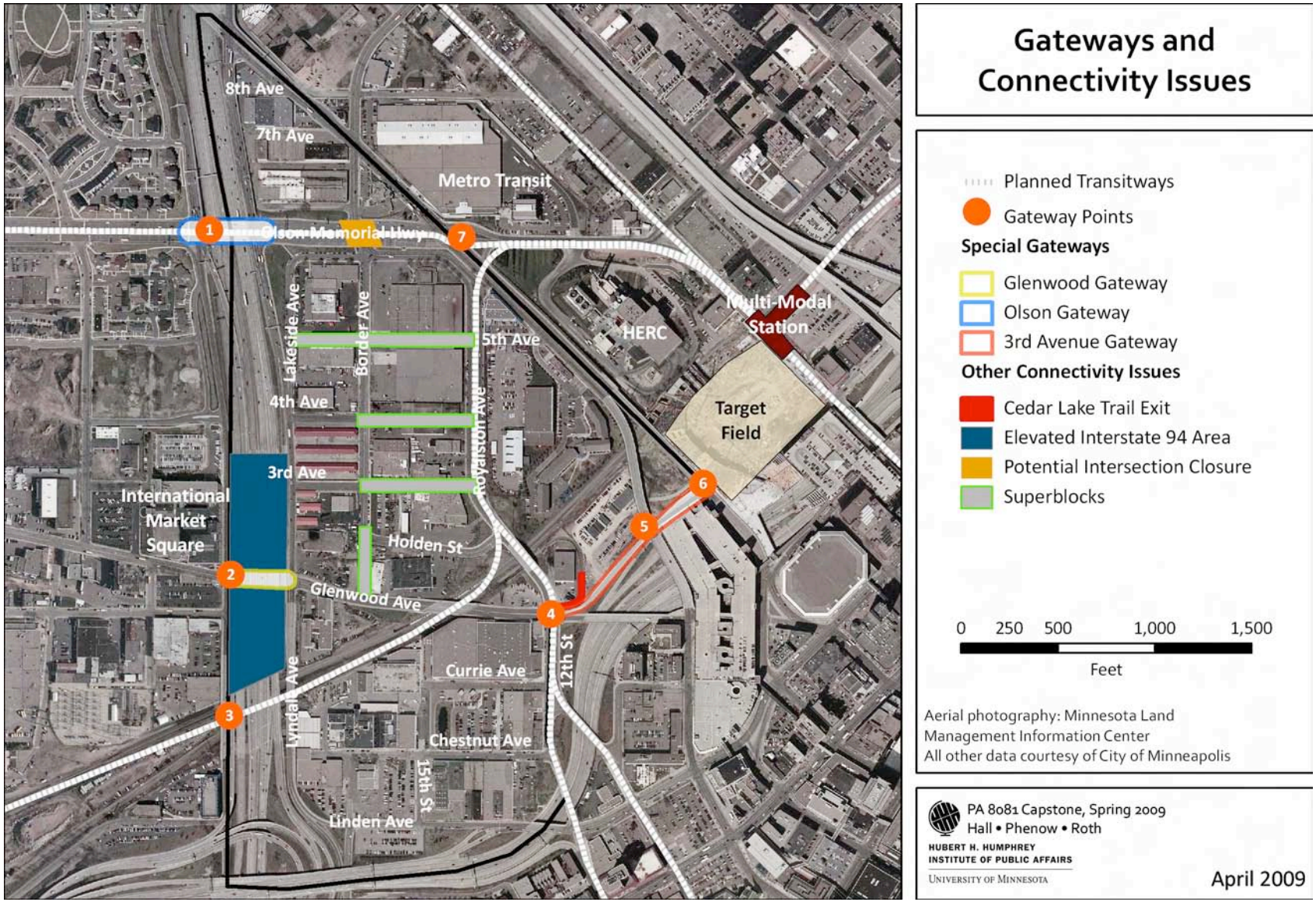
One of the most pervasive barriers to redevelopment of the Lower North Loop is the lack of connections within the area, as well as to downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. Inside the area, a series of super-blocks make internal travel difficult on foot or bicycle. In addition, the Lower North Loop is bordered on all sides by high-speed roadways located either above or below the prevailing elevation of the neighborhood. These elevated and depressed roadways enable high-volume vehicular through and around the neighborhood, but physically cut off the Lower North Loop from adjacent areas, effectively making the area an island in the middle of the city.

Two types of connection issues are discussed in this section:

- **Gateways** are external connectivity points between the Lower North Loop and other neighborhoods. Special Gateways are of particular interest for future development in the area.
- **Internal issues** are other connections (or lack thereof) that affect the internal connective fabric of the Lower North Loop and may hinder development.

Figure 1-6 on the following page displays the locations of the connectivity issues identified in this analysis.

Figure 1-6 | Gateways and Connectivity Issues



Gateways

A number of intersections on the periphery of the study area function as gateways between the Lower North Loop and adjacent neighborhoods. These gateway points, represented in Figure 1-6 with orange markers, are described in Table 1-2. The rightmost column refers to positive and negative issues surrounding the gateway point, including possible connections (marked with a "+" sign) and the aspects of the gateway that may hinder successful development or make the gateway unpleasant for users (marked with a "-" sign).

Table 1-2 | Gateway Points

Gateway Point	Location	Issues (+/-)
1	Olson Highway & I-94/Lyndale Avenue	Connection to Heritage Park (+) Poor pedestrian visibility (-)
2	Glenwood Avenue & I-94/Lyndale Avenue	Connection to Harrison neighborhood(+) Connection to International Market Square (+) Glenwood Design Corridor (+) Non-pedestrian friendly scale (-)
3	Cedar Lake Trail at I-94	Unsightly storage under I-94 (-) Safety of cyclists (-)
4	Glenwood Avenue & 12th Street	Activity center: Lee's Liquor Lounge (+) Unsightly SE & NE portions (-)
5	10th Street & 3rd Avenue	Connection to Downtown (+) Wide sidewalks (+) No adjacent land uses at grade (-) Overlooks I-394 and sunken parking area (-)
6	7th Street & 3rd Avenue	Connection to Downtown (+) Wide sidewalks (+)
7	Olson Highway (6th Avenue) & 7th Street	High traffic volumes (-) Poor crosswalk conditions (-) Potential crossing for Bottineau/Southwest (-)

Special gateways

Of the identified gateways, three stand out as especially important for future development, identified in Figure 1-6 as special gateways. In the future, the Lower North Loop will serve as an important bridge between the region's largest transit hub and neighborhoods to the west. These critical points deserve special

attention in light of their function as connections between the Harrison and Near North neighborhoods and the regional attractions just east of the Lower North Loop.

Glenwood Gateway

Glenwood is the only street to cross under I-94 for almost a mile.

Interstate 94 and the Lyndale Avenue frontage road form a nearly impenetrable border on the western edge of the entire Lower North Loop. For almost one mile between Olson Memorial Highway and Dunwoody Boulevard, Glenwood Avenue is the only street to cross this border, making the Glenwood Gateway an extremely important connection for the Lower North Loop.

The Glenwood Gateway serves as the primary east-west connection point between the Harrison neighborhood and the Lower North Loop, the future multimodal station and ballpark, and downtown Minneapolis. Metro Transit Route 9 travels on this segment of Glenwood, connecting downtown Minneapolis to the Bryn Mawr neighborhood and St. Louis Park. International Market Square stands directly west of this intersection, along with several up-and-coming design centers.

Figure 1-7 | Glenwood Gateway (Glenwood Avenue under I-94)

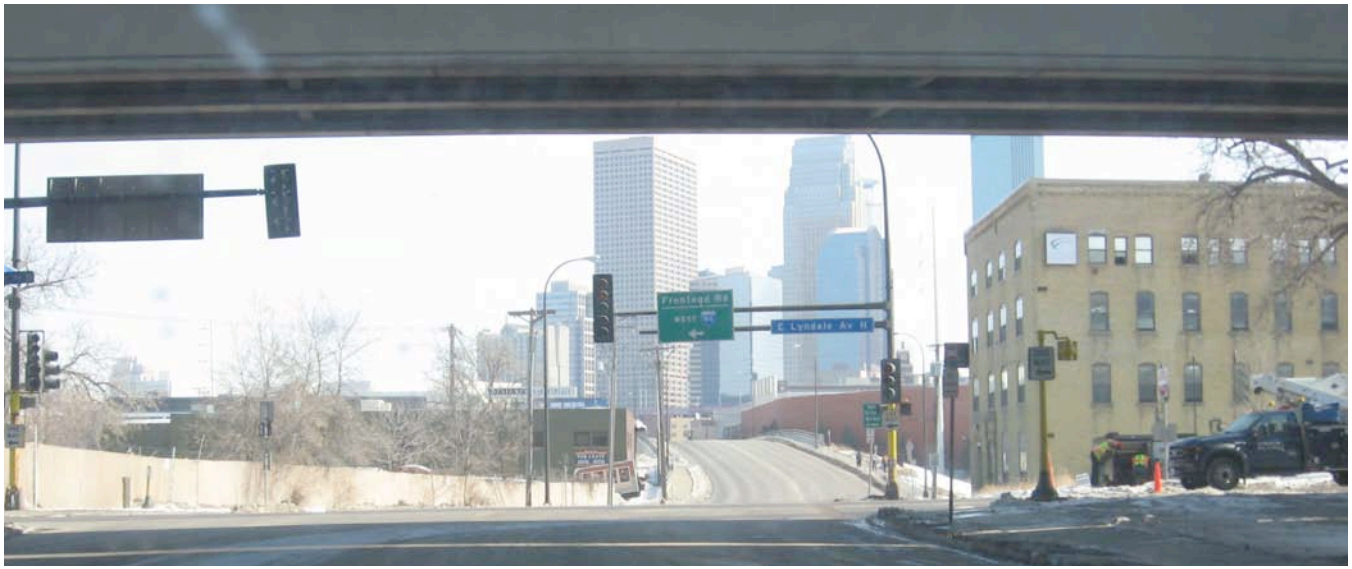


Figure 1-7 illustrates the current condition of this critical access point. As it passes under Interstate 94, Glenwood Avenue is poorly lit and wide open on either side, creating a poor sense of security for pedestri-

ans, cyclists, and transit users under the overpass. Parking lots are located on both sides of the roadway. These lots sit vacant during most hours of the day, and are mainly used by commuters looking for a cheap place to park and ride a bus into the downtown core. The gateway's current condition is not conducive to non-automotive connections.

Olson Gateway

Olson Memorial Highway forms another east-west connection between the Lower North Loop and the adjacent Near North neighborhood, including the Heritage Park development. The high-volume roadway is an efficient connection for automobile, bus, and truck travel, but is not conducive to non-motorized travel.

The high-volume Olson Highway is not conducive to non-motorized travel.

A site visit revealed a particular issue for pedestrians using the sidewalks on the south side of the roadway, pictured in Figure 1-8. As cars and trucks approached the intersection from the south on Lyndale Avenue, numerous vehicles failed to stop completely at the intersection on a red light. Instead, many vehicles completed right turns on red without yielding to approaching pedestrians who have the right to cross on the green light. This practice puts pedestrian safety in jeopardy and may serve as an impediment for residents of Near North to reach the Farmers' Market, ballpark, and transit station.

Figure 1-8 | Olson Gateway (Olson Memorial Highway at Lyndale Avenue)

3rd Avenue Gateway

This gateway corridor should be given special attention in the future to ensure that it remains an inviting place for non-motorized traffic.

The 3rd Avenue Gateway extends on 3rd Avenue from 12th Street to 7th Street, connecting the ballpark to Lee's Liquor Lounge. While conditions on this gateway are not as treacherous for pedestrians and cyclists as on Olson or Glenwood, this gateway corridor should be given special attention in the future to ensure that it remains an inviting place for non-motorized traffic. 3rd Avenue serves as the primary connection across the high-volume 7th/10th Street corridor, bridging the divide created by these roadways. In addition, the Cedar Lake Trail exits onto this section of road. This gateway is currently outfitted with on-street bicycle lanes, wide sidewalks, and adequate lighting.

Internal issues

While the external connections identified as gateways in the previous section will be important to ensure links to adjacent areas in the future, other internal issues will play a larger role in the future redevelopment success within the Lower North Loop.

Four specific issues have been identified:

- Cedar Lake Trail exit at 12th Street/3rd Avenue

  Currently, the Cedar Lake Trail exits to the intersection at 12th Street and 3rd Avenue. Cyclists exiting the trail are able to travel in one direction only at this point, as 3rd Avenue is a one-way street traveling west into Glenwood Avenue.

- Elevated portion of I-94

  The area beneath the elevated section of I-94 presents a unique connectivity issue. In this area, the problem lies not in physical barriers but in a psychological barrier that deters pedestrian movement between the Lower North Loop and the Harrison neighborhood.

- Potential intersection closure at Olson Highway/Border Avenue

  Two of the four current alternatives for the Bottineau Transitway would effectively close the Border Avenue/Olson Highway intersection, eliminating a north-south connection.

- Superblocks between Royalston and Lyndale Avenues

  Green blocks in Figure 1-8 illustrate areas where superblocks interrupt street grid connections. These superblocks will make neighborhood-scaled development in the area difficult.

Barriers to Development

In addition to existing connectivity issues, several substantial barriers will impede and discourage development if not addressed. Barriers were developed as a result of site visits, stakeholder interviews, and review of relevant literature presented earlier in this chapter. Twelve barriers are identified in this section.

- Funding

  Initiating development in the Lower North Loop will require a significant investment by the public sector. Connectivity and streetscapes need improvement; private partners will likely seek environmental cleanup funds; using tax increment financing as an incentive for a large scale private development will have to compete for limited city, county, or state funds.

- Political feasibility

  Though the Lower North Loop is represented by Minneapolis city council members Lisa Goodman and Don Samuels, there are very few residents in the area and thus few constituents to please, and the area itself holds little political influence. Although Farmers' Market users and vendors could potentially be mobilized in this area, rousing elected officials' interest in this area could be an uphill battle.

- Public involvement

  Hidden beneath freeways and out of sight from downtown Minneapolis, the Lower North Loop is a somewhat forgotten corner of the city. With the large-scale public investments nearby, however, the Lower North Loop has the potential to become valuable real estate. When the development community starts to take interest, elected officials pay attention, and current businesses and residents sense the possibility of displacement, there is likely to be a large discrepancy amongst stakeholders in the vision for the Lower North Loop. The City's Small Area Plan will help to clarify the City's position on the neighborhood when potential conflicts and a multitude of visions arise.

- No cohesive area identity

  In addition to housing very few residents, the Lower North Loop exists neither as a stand-alone area nor as an involved part of another established neighborhood. Although the Lower North Loop belongs to the North Loop Neighborhood, residents and other stakeholders do not feel that the area is truly a part of the neighborhood. In addition, although the Farmers' Market serves as the area's major amenity and a citywide destination, the site is not used to enhance the identity of the Lower

North Loop. Current signage, shown in Figure 1-9, is utilitarian but not unique. As a result, the area lacks the cohesive identity that could boost future development opportunities.

Figure 1-9 | Current Farmers' Market signage

- Safety and security

  Several of the barriers noted here feed into the problems created for safety and security in the neighborhood. Existing uses provide very little street life or pedestrian traffic that could provide natural surveillance for the area.

- Industrial legacy of the land

  Based on existing uses, it is anticipated that much of the land in the Lower North Loop will need to be cleaned up before it can be redeveloped.

- Housing Providers

  A sometimes real and sometimes perceived threat, the transient population present in the Lower North Loop could be a deterrent to both residential and business development. However, the social service organizations in the area provide important resources, and their location near downtown

and many transit options is important to their function of serving low-income, homeless populations.

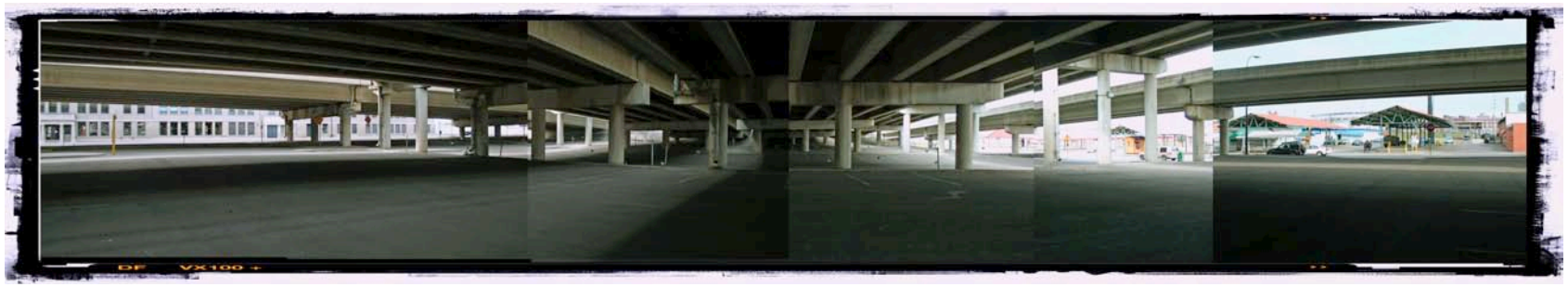
- Hennepin Energy Recovery Center

  Immediately to the east of the Lower North Loop and directly adjacent to Target Field, the HERC facility raises problems for all nearby development due to the odors given off by trucks transporting waste to the facility. While some measures are being taken in conjunction with Target Field construction that will mitigate this problem, many worry that those measures will not go far enough. The perception as well as the reality of this problem has discouraging effect on potential developers, tenants, and residents.

- Current Land Uses

  Much of the Lower North Loop is taken up by large-scale public facilities (Metro Transit, City of Minneapolis) and quasi-public facilities (Xcel Energy) uses that will not likely be altered. Another public space, the Farmers' Market, will likely not be changed due to its power as an important neighborhood attraction during the summer months. However, the Market sits vacant and unutilized for most of the year. The placement of these sites throughout the neighborhood limits the scale of redevelopment that can take place.

Figure 1-10 | Panoramic view from underneath I-94 overpasses



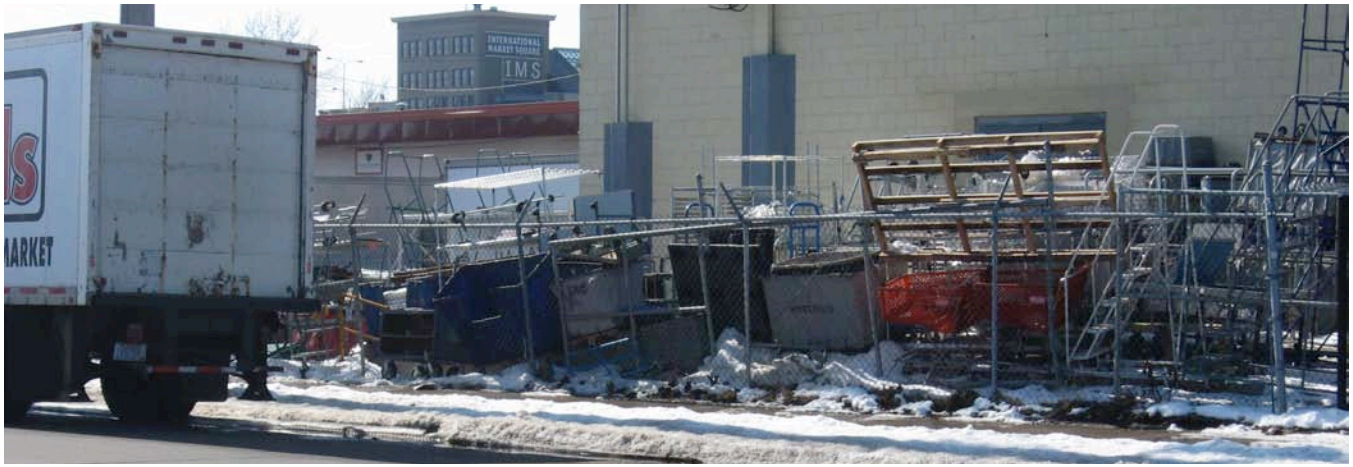
- Scale problems resulting from grade separations

  Major grade separations that surround most of the neighborhood create differences in scale that are unwelcoming to pedestrian activity. Huge overpasses create dark, uninviting spaces (Figure 1-10). Other grade-separated roadways create impenetrable barriers to adjacent neighborhoods.

- Lack of Streetscape

  Likely due the heavy focus on industrial uses, streetscaping is minimal or nonexistent throughout the neighborhood. Where sidewalks exist, they are often in disrepair or of insufficient width. There is a preponderance of concrete and asphalt and minimal greenspace. There is virtually none of the street furniture that provides barriers between pedestrian spaces and automobiles (Figure 1-11).

Figure 1-11 | Current streetscape on Border Avenue



- Bicycle gaps

  The City of Minneapolis notes several gaps in the bicycle network in and adjacent to the Lower North Loop, primarily along Glenwood, 7th Street and 10th Street. This study has also added Royalston Avenue as a gap in the bicycle network that currently limits north-south connectivity. These gaps make it difficult and sometimes dangerous for bicyclists to get to destinations in the neighborhood.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented relevant background information related to the Lower North Loop, examined pertinent planning documents related to the study area, analyzed stakeholders, and examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the study area. The connectivity analysis and summary of barriers in the study area forms the basis for the visioning and action planning to follow in the next two chapters.

Chapter 2: Vision

VISION STATEMENT

"*Redevelopment* in the Lower North Loop will *fuse existing* residents and places with *new* structures, spaces, and people to create a *lively gateway district* that serves as both an *origin* and a *destination* for city and regional residents."

This chapter contains the study's vision for the Lower North Loop in the year 2030, incorporates issues raised in the diagnosis, and acts as the guide for implementation. The diagnosis focused on the first theme of the study, the barriers to redevelopment and change in the Lower North Loop, as well as on the current state of connectivity in the area. The vision statement is about possibility and what can happen if these barriers are removed or resolved. The vision for the Lower North Loop revolves around the remaining three themes of the study:

- A balanced mix of land uses: new structures and green spaces
- An improved public realm: coexistence between new and old
- Effective connections: a gateway to the City of Minneapolis

A balanced mix of land uses: new structures and green spaces

With the Minneapolis Farmers' Market firmly established within the area, the Twins Ballpark nearing completion, and transit stations planned for construction in the not-so-distant future, the Lower North Loop has tremendous potential to attract new development. By attracting office and residential development and the neighborhood retail that goes hand-in-hand with downtown homes, the city can ensure an all-day stream of activity and reconnect the Lower North Loop to the rest of Downtown.

The Lower North Loop will consist of a mix of land uses including housing, offices, retail shops, live-work artist spaces, housing providers, and publicly owned facilities. Together they will create a district that will function throughout the day and into the evening. Connections to the nearby neighborhoods of Harrison, Sumner-Glenwood, and Downtown, as well as to the ballpark and multi-modal facility, will inspire the private development that will change this area. Because of its relatively strong connection to downtown and visibility from the ballpark, the intersection of Glenwood and Royalston Avenues will become a small entertainment area with Lee's Liquor Lounge anchoring a corner with several new bars and restaurants. Conversion of existing warehouse spaces to office will be spurred by the strong transit connections and

The Lower North Loop will consist of housing, offices, retail shops, live-work artist spaces, housing providers, and public facilities.

proximity to other downtown businesses; these will be the first changes to the area.

Eventually, mixed income housing will be added to the emerging office and entertainment uses and the neighborhood will be home to an increasingly diverse mix of uses. Public investment will help to turn the Lower North Loop into a livable neighborhood. A public pool and small adjacent park will be a welcome source of greenery and open space. Mixed-income residential development between Holden and 5th Avenues will take advantage of the pool and park, as well as the transit station on Royalston, and will be built in the style of many South Minneapolis apartment buildings, shown in Figure 2-12 below.

Figure 2-12 | Lower North Loop housing

An improved public realm: coexistence between new and old

What will change is the way existing uses are integrated with their neighbors.

An influx of residents, shops, offices, and restaurants will reshape much of the land in the Lower North Loop between now and 2030. During the same timeframe, however, the public facilities and emergency housing providers located in the area are unlikely to leave. Political realities and significant existing investments will ensure that these uses remain intact regardless of the development that will change the rest of the area. For better or worse, residents and users of future development in the Lower North Loop will coexist with shelter residents, stored bulldozers, and burning garbage.

What will change is the way these uses are integrated with their neighbors. In the future, housing providers will no longer be seen as a threat to would-be visitors and neighbors, but as an essential service for a diverse urban neighborhood. Stepped-up security, community outreach, and improvements to the built environments of the Sharing and Caring Hands, Mary's Place, and Catholic Charities campuses will make

these facilities part of a new neighborhood fabric. New residential developments will house residents of mixed incomes, avoiding the creation of a vast disparity within the Lower North Loop. Public areas will provide connections between old and new residents, rather than isolating them from one another. Building facades will be updated and new construction will be held to a higher aesthetic standard.

The city's public facilities in the area will also be better neighbors. Rather than being isolated from the community behind barbed-wire fences, city facilities will be made over with a green brush to reflect the theme of open space in the area. The city's traffic engineering operations will be relocated to another place, and the site of the ancient, bunker-like facility on Border Avenue will be occupied by new mixed-use development.

City facilities will be made over with a green brush.

Figure 2-13 | Future Improved Public Realm at 12th Street and Glenwood Avenue

A green, friendly public realm will bring together existing facilities and new development to form a cohesive and welcoming neighborhood. Streets and sidewalks will be rejuvenated through an ongoing beautification and maintenance campaign, through which attractive lighting and public art will be added to

the area to improve the pedestrian experience. Wayfinding signs and banners will welcome visitors to the area and direct them to the heart of the Lower North Loop, the Farmers' Market. The improved public realm in the Lower North Loop will invite visitors to explore the area, and will give residents a reason to take pride in their neighborhood.

A Gateway to the City and Other Neighborhoods

The major public investments taking place in and adjacent to the Lower North Loop, with its prime geographic location, will transform it into a primary gateway to the city. New transit lines will make it into one of the most easily accessible places in the city. Several improvements in local accessibility will ensure that the neighborhood takes advantage of this boon in connectivity to the neighborhood.

The Lower North Loop will be replete with green spaces, including trails and larger park spaces. The Cedar Lake Trail is a valuable transportation and recreation amenity and it is important that employees and future residents of the Lower North Loop have access to the trail. Assuming that the Southwest Transitway will run at grade on Royalston Avenue, with a stop on Royalston near 5th Avenue, the current exit from the trail to the intersection of Royalston and Glenwood Avenues will be maintained, and bike lanes will be extended west on Glenwood and north on Royalston Avenue, through the heart of the study area. The existing boulevard on Royalston Avenue will be planted and landscaped in order to create a green corridor and bike- and pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Traffic calming measures will improve existing pedestrian connections to the Near North, Sumner-Glenwood, Harrison, and Downtown neighborhoods. Non-motorized accessibility will also be improved by extending four local streets through the central part of the neighborhood.

This newly traversable and inviting neighborhood will accommodate all modes of travel safely and efficiently.

In the next 10 years, transit lines will bring people from the northwest, the southwest, the south, and the east to Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. All of these lines will either come through or adjacent to the Lower North Loop, and this neighborhood will be the point at which millions of people enter Minneapolis each year. Improved connectivity throughout the neighborhood will make all the new adjacent and interior development accessible to residents and visitors to Minneapolis. This newly traversable and inviting neighborhood will accommodate all modes of travel safely and efficiently.

Chapter 3: Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines an implementation plan for carrying out the vision described in the previous chapter. Suggested actions range in scale, intensity, and priority and are organized according to the three themes incorporated in the vision:

- A balanced mix of land uses: new structures and green spaces
- An improved public realm: coexistence between new and old
- Effective connections: a gateway to the City of Minneapolis

The action plan for each of these themes consists of an implementation table that delineates actions that the City of Minneapolis and its partners can take to ensure that the vision for the Lower North Loop becomes reality; a map that shows specific places referred to in the implementation table; and a narrative, explaining the significance and justification for the prescribed actions.

A Balanced Mix of Land Uses: New Structures and Green Spaces

Because the Lower North Loop is isolated from adjacent neighborhoods, has few residents, and is primarily a low-density industrial area with several overnight housing providers, we anticipate that without significant public investment, it will be difficult to inspire the private development needed to realize the vision for this area. We propose two methods of luring private development to the Lower North Loop. First, the City of Minneapolis could attempt to acquire several connecting parcels in order to facilitate a large-scale redevelopment effort and reduce the possibility of a failed "pioneer" development. As land assembly is a difficult barrier for developers to overcome, possession of a large developable parcel could give the City of Minneapolis some leverage to negotiate with a developer for features that the City considers important, such as a refurbished farmers' market, right of way for new connecting streets, and a public park. Actions related to the development of a balanced mix of land uses are outlined in Table 3-4; Figure 3-14 shows the locations of these suggested actions.

If resources are available, tax increment financing (TIF) is another tool that the city can use to incite development to the Lower North Loop. Though the City's TIF requirements are necessarily stringent, the Lower North Loop is a critical connecting area between Downtown and North Minneapolis with much room for improvement. Mixed-use development in the Lower North Loop has the potential to satisfy the city's requirements of increasing the tax base, providing diverse housing stock, cleaning contaminated sites, creating new jobs, and eliminating blight in the city.

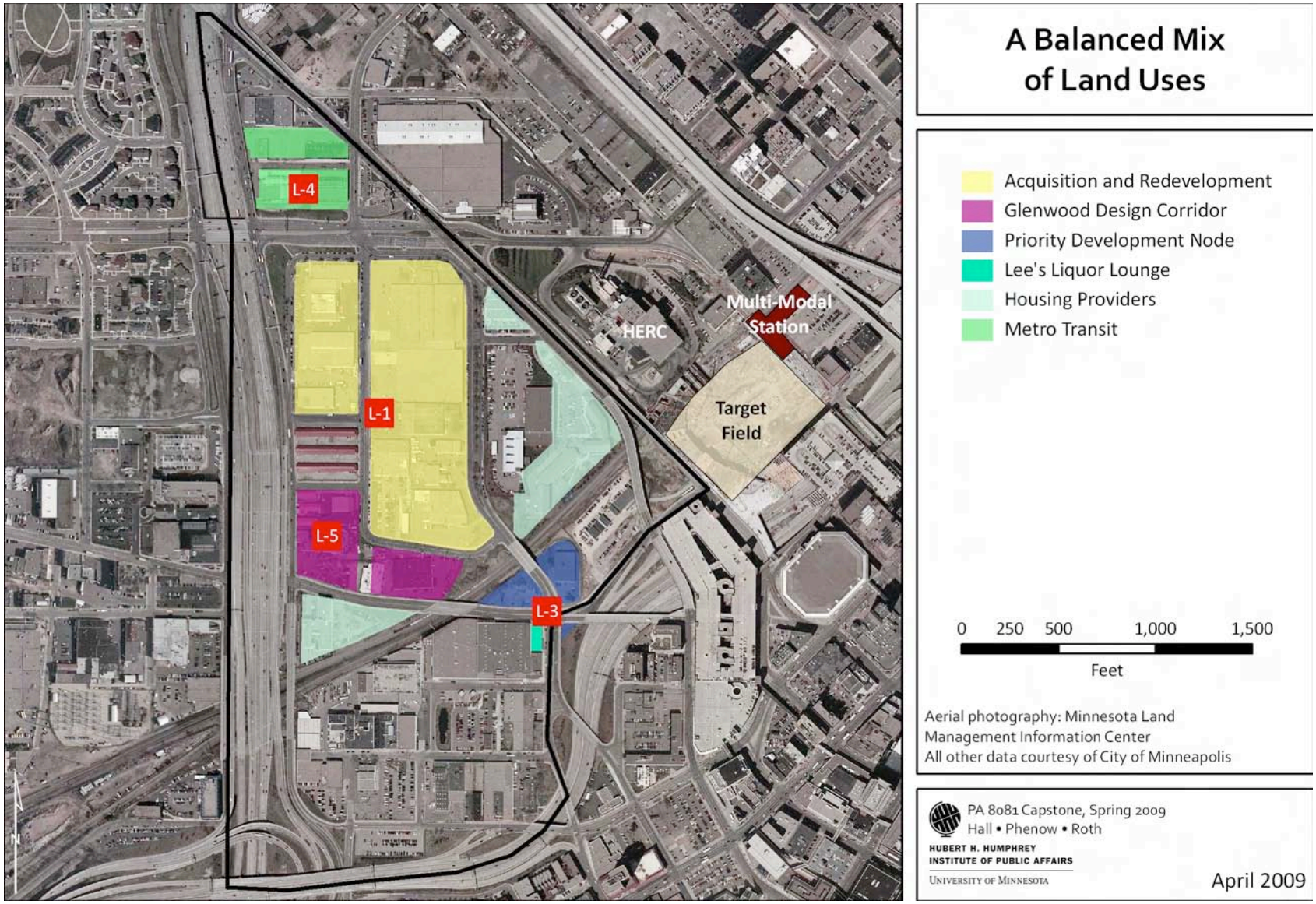
Zoning changes can also facilitate changes to the area. Currently, Lee's Liquor Lounge is located in an OR3, office residential zone. The parcels across Glenwood Avenue from Lee's, which are recommended for additional bar, restaurant, or entertainment business, are also zoned OR3. Changing the zoning to C2 commercial reduces restrictions on the size and type of restaurant establishment and eases the development of these new businesses.

Because the triangle area north of Olson Memorial Highway is relatively small and completely surrounded by highways, its potential for redevelopment is limited. Metro Transit has expressed interest in expanding transit police and storage facilities near the Heywood Garage facility; this appears to be the best use of the triangle-shaped area, excluding the Wells Fargo parcel. To this end, the City should maintain zoning that is accommodating of Metro Transit's expansion; the current zoning of I2 is complementary. The city should also work with Metro Transit to ensure that any agency expansion in this area is done so in an area-appropriate way.

Table 3-3 | Land Use Actions

LAND USE ACTIONS				
Number	**Action**	**Responsible Agency**	**Partners**	**Goal year**
L-1	**Acquire adjacent parcels between Royalston and Border Avenues from willing sellers**	**Mpls TPW**		**2015**
	• Assemble land and offer for resale to developer	Mpls CPED		2015
	• Use large parcel as leverage with developer to take desired actions such as: • Incorporation of low-income housing • Improvements to Farmers' Market to make a year-round facility • Land set-aside for park with playground	Mpls CPED		2015
L-2	**Establish a TIF district for implementation of Planned Unit Development**	**Minneapolis City Council**		**2013**
	• City Council pass an ordinance allowing for a tax increment financing of the PUD.	Minneapolis City Council		2013
L-3	**Rezone Glenwood & Royalston Avenue Intersection from OR3 to C2**	**Mpls CPED**	**Mpls City Council**	**2015**
L-4	**Retain existing zoning north of Olson Memorial Highway**	**Mpls CPED**		**N/A**
	• Retain C2 zoning for Wells Fargo Bank Branch	Mpls CPED		N/A
	• Retain I2 zoning for remainder of area	Mpls CPED		N/A
	• Encourage Metro Transit to consider the parcels within for expansion of transit police and maintenance facilities.	City of Minneapolis	Metro Transit	N/A
L-5	**Encourage development of Glenwood Design Corridor** • Create artists' live-work space	**Mpls CPED**		**2015**

Figure 3-14 | Land Use Actions



An Improved Public Realm: Coexistence Between New and Old

Public realm integration measures are outlined in Table 3-4. Improvements to the public realm are focused on lighting and greening the study area, adding amenities throughout the neighborhood, managing the on-street parking supply, and creating a public identity for the area through a branding campaign. Public realm improvements are shown in Figure 3-15.

Significant investments in lighting will not only improve the appearance of the neighborhood, but will also address the barrier posed by unsafe-feeling streets and sidewalks and improve perceived security. As such, the city should address lighting in the area on major corridors, including Glenwood and Royalston Avenues, in the near term. The addition of street furniture will also address security concerns through environmental design, allowing passersby to dwell in the public realm and add "eyes" to the streetscape.

The appearance of the public realm can also be vastly improved by greening the area. The city can encourage private property owners to voluntarily green their properties through tax incentives. Targeted areas for these initiatives are identified as "Greening Gaps" in Figure 3-15.

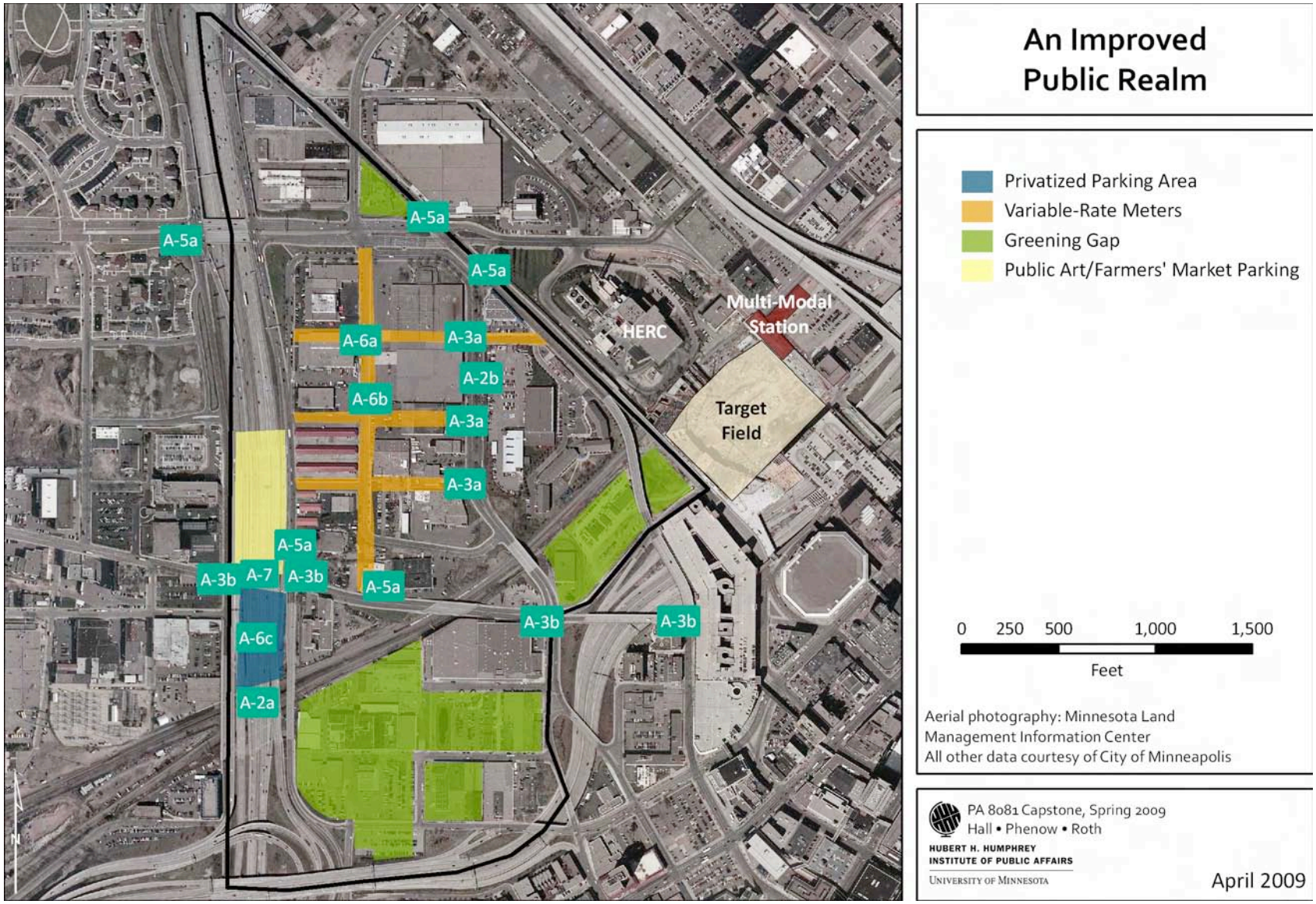
The City can also use improvements to the public realm to create a cohesive area identity. Banners affixed to lighting fixtures in the area can advertise the Farmers' Market, using repetitive graphics and words for consistency throughout the district. Improved wayfinding signs can be added to the arterial streets in the area to bring visitors to the Lower North Loop. We also recommend that the city partner with a local non-profit youth art center, such as Juxtaposition Arts, to add mural-like paintings to the concrete support posts underneath I-94. Painting the posts with Farmers' Market-themed art can improve the parking area underneath I-94 and visually tie it to the neighborhood. Public art can also be added to the utility boxes throughout the area for a splash of color in the landscape.

Finally, managing the on-street parking supply will be crucial in implementing a multi-modal, mixed use district. The city can implement variable-rate meters in portions of the Lower North Loop to achieve parking goals in the area. By setting rates low or free during Farmers' Market times and raising rates during ballpark events, the City can ensure that parking is available when it is needed most and deter ballpark visitors from using the neighborhood for cheap parking. These measures will ensure that the area does not share the fate of the Downtown East neighborhood, whose streets are packed during game times at the Metrodome.

Table 3-4 | Public Realm Actions

PUBLIC REALM ACTIONS				
Number	**Action**	**Responsible Agency**	**Partners**	**Goal Year**
A-1	**Address pavement issues identified in Downtown Action Plan**	**Mpls TPW**		**2015**
A-2	**Improve neighborhood lighting**	**Mpls Public Works**		**2010**
A-2a	• Address security perceptions on Glenwood under I-94 with lighting			2010
A-2b	• Install neighborhood-style lighting fixtures on Royalston and Border			
A-3	**Encourage fast-tracking of Glenwood and Royalston Avenues in Minneapolis Coordinated Street Furniture program**	**Mpls TPW**	**Selected vendor**	**2025**
A-3a	• Install benches and trash receptacles on Royalston Avenue			
A-3b	• Install standard bus shelters on Glenwood Avenue at Lyndale Avenue and 3rd Avenue			
A-4	**Encourage private landowners in greening gap to make properties more presentable**	**Mpls CPED**	**Mpls City Council**	**N/A**
	• Offer tax incentives for installation of green roofs and voluntary reduction of impervious surface in the Lower North Loop			N/A
	• Practice effective and stringent code enforcement			N/A
A-5	**Embark on a branding campaign for the Lower North Loop focused on the Farmers' Market**	**Mpls CPED**	**Meet Minneapolis**	**2015**
A-5a	• Install wayfinding signage on 7th Street, Glenwood, Lyndale, and TH 55			2015
A-5b	• Design and install banners advertising the Farmers' Market throughout neighborhood			2015
A-6	**Improve parking situation throughout neighborhood and discourage free/cheap parking during ballpark events**	**Mpls Traffic & Parking Svcs**	**Mpls City Council**	**2020**
A-6a	• Install programmable, variable-rate meters to accommodate Farmers' Market users but discourage cheap Target Field parking			2015
A-6c	• Privatize commuter parking underneath I-94 south of Glenwood and require maintenance			2015
A-6d	• Retain and improve parking under I-94 for Farmers' Market; allow free parking during market times and regulate with			2015
A-7	**Improve spaces under elevated sections of I-94** • Partner with local artists or nonprofit to paint murals on Glenwood support beams	**Mpls CPED**	**Artists, nonprofits**	**2025**

Figure 3-15 | Public Realm Actions



EFFECTIVE CONNECTIONS: A GATEWAY TO THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

With its proximity to the multi-modal station, the Lower North Loop is going to become one of the most connected neighborhoods in the state. However, improvements need to be made to the local connectivity for this neighborhood. As an industrial neighborhood that is essentially bounded on all sides by freeways, connectivity and accessibility will be improved to spur development. To ensure that private development and to make the neighborhood more appealing to those that would use its current and future amenities and those that would live here, we present a set of infrastructure improvements that will make the Lower North Loop a more accessible place. These actions are intended to address access both to and from this neighborhood, as well as connectivity within the neighborhood. contains details on the actions to be taken to improve connectivity. Connectivity improvements are shown in Figure 3-16.

Glenwood Avenue, currently designated as an Industrial Street in the Minneapolis Action Plan, will become an Activity Area Street, as it will be one of Lower North Loop's activity centers and a primary gateway to downtown. Activity Area Streets are located near transit nodes or retail centers and support retail, service commercial, and residential land uses. The Glenwood Design Corridor will be densely populated with automobiles, bikes, and pedestrians, and will require a marked on-street bike lane, filling one of the major bicycle network gaps in the neighborhood.

Improvements to primary pedestrian connections to the neighborhood will make walking more appealing and less physically threatening. For the more treacherous crossings (along Lyndale Avenue, 7th Street and 10th Street) this will include the following calming measures, consistent with the Design Guidelines for Streets and Sidewalks in the Access Minneapolis plan: ladder-striped crosswalks, improved lighting, curb extensions, and refuge islands. At 11th Street North and 12th Street North, ladder-striped crosswalks will be added as well as signage to alert cars to crossing pedestrians.

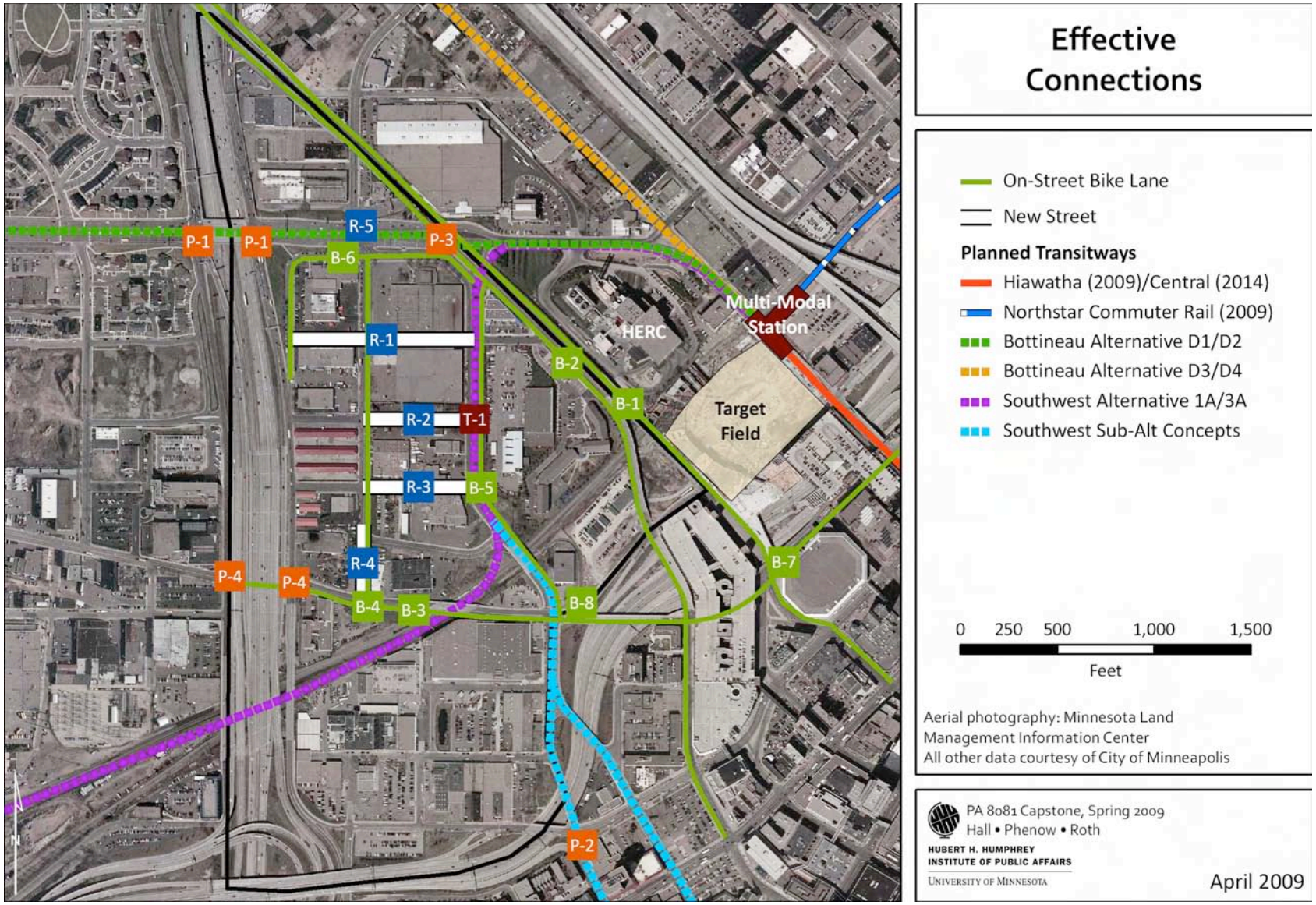
Other major gaps in the bicycle network will be filled on 7th Street and 10th Street by adding 6-foot on-street bicycle lanes. Signage designating streets as shared bicycle lanes will be added to other interior neighborhood connections, noted in the table below.

The City should strongly advocate for a Southwest LRT alignment that includes a stop at Royalston. On-street bike lanes will be added to major corridors, as well as throughout the neighborhood. Finally, four roads will be extended to increase accessibility to uses within the center of the neighborhood.

Table 3-5 | Connectivity Actions

CONNECTIVITY ACTIONS				
Number	**Action**	**Responsible Agency**	**Partners**	**Goal year**
Pedestrian Actions				
P-1	Implement traffic calming measures, including no right on red designation at Olson Memorial Highway/Lyndale Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2010
P-2	Implement traffic calming measures on 12th & 11th Streets	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2010
P-3	Implement traffic calming measures at Olson/7th Street	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2010
P-4	Implement traffic calming measures on Glenwood Avenue at Lyndale Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2010
P-5	Sidewalk improvements on east and west sides of Royalston Avenue	Mpls TPW	Private Developer	2020
Transit Actions				
T-1	Advocate for inclusion of Southwest LRT stop at Royalston Avenue	Mpls TPW	Hennepin County	2015
Bicycle Actions				
B-1	Add on-street bicycle lane striping on 7th Street, from Target Field to Lyndale Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2010
B-2	Add on-street bicycle lane striping on 10th Street, from 7th Street to Glenwood Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2010
B-3	Add on-street bicycle lane striping on Glenwood Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2010
B-4	"Share Lane with Bicycles" signage on Border Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2010
B-5	Add on-street bicycle lane striping on Royalston Ave from 7th St Glenwood Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2015
B-6	"Share Lane with Bicycles" signage on Border Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2015
B-7	Narrow 7th Street to two lanes to accommodate on street bike lane	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2009
B-8	Maintain Cedar Lake Trail exit at 3rd Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2009
Roadway Actions				
R-1	Extend 5th Avenue N from Royalston to Lakeside Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2014-2020
R-2	Extend Cesar Chavez Avenue from Border to Royalston Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2014-2020
R-3	Extend 3rd Avenue from Border to Royalston Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2014-2020
R-4	Extend Border Avenue from Holden Street to Glenwood Avenue	Mpls TPW	Mpls CPED	2014-2020
R-5	Discourage closure of Oak Lake Avenue at Olson Memorial Highway due to Bottineau Transitway	Mpls TPW	Hennepin County	2009

Figure 3-16 | Connectivity Actions



CONCLUSION

The potential for change in the Lower North Loop is immense. This study is the first step toward widespread recognition of the Lower North Loop as a viable part of Minneapolis. The forthcoming small area plan will build on the barriers, connections, public realm issues, and land use possibilities identified in this study to formalize a long-term vision and plan for the area. Beyond the boundaries of the Lower North Loop, creation of this plan will also turn the attention of city council members, planners, developers, and the public to this previously forgotten area.

In the meantime, however, the findings of this report can contribute to improvements in the area. As the Southwest and Bottineau transitways become reality, rising land values in the Lower North Loop will invite higher and better uses. Parallel to the transitway and small area planning processes, the City should examine the actions presented in this document for feasibility and priority. Implementing these actions will ensure that the Lower North Loop can capitalize on growing demand for residential and commercial land in the city center as the economy rebounds in coming years.

Interviews conducted for this project:

Charles Carlson, Facilities Planner, Metro Transit
David Frank, President, North Loop Neighborhood Association
Greg Goeke, Director of Property Services, City of Minneapolis
Minneapolis City Council Member Lisa Goodman
Heather Huseby, Ed. D., Executive Director, YouthLink
Mark Klinkner, Mark Klinkner Realty
Chuck Leer, North First Ventures
Robert C. Lux, Principal, Alatus, LLC
Bruce Maus, Senior Vice President, Grubb & Ellis|Northco
Michael Mechtenberg, Associate Planner, Metro Transit
Dick Paik, Consultant, W-ZHA, LLC
Janet Pope, Catholic Charities
Minneapolis City Council Member Don Samuels
John Saunders, United Properties
Lou Sirian, Owner, Lee's Liquor Lounge

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