

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS PLANNING DEPARTMENT
DOWNTOWN EAST / NORTH LOOP MASTER PLAN

Chapter Four Land Use Plan

Chapter Four of the *Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan* presents a Land Use Plan for the Project Area. The Land Use Plan is a refinement of the existing land uses in Downtown East and the North Loop – one that seeks to address the modifications necessary to forge Complete Communities in the districts peripheral to the Downtown Core.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Four begins by envisioning the Project Area as thirteen smaller districts or precincts, each of which is the basis for developing a Complete Community. The second part of the chapter summarizes the development and public presentation of three different land use scenarios that were compiled in order to discuss three different paths of growth and change that might be pursued: decentralization of the existing downtown core, continued centralization of the existing downtown core, and expansion of the existing downtown core. The third and main piece of the chapter is a detailed description of the Recommended Land Use Plan and what it looks like on a precinct-by-precinct basis.

FORMULATION OF DEVELOPMENT PRECINCTS

The Consultant Team learned early on in the process that Downtown East and the North Loop are not simply single-use development districts. After conducting field work and preliminary analysis of the Project Area, the Consultant Team determined that in order to realize new neighborhoods and in order to enhance the neighborhoods that already exist in Downtown, it was necessary to break the large portions of the Project Area into smaller “Development Precincts” (see Figure 4.1, page 33). Currently, most development precincts contain a series of often-dissimilar sub-districts – some commercial, others residential, some have pieces of both. But over time, each precinct has the potential to become a Complete Community, one that is internally self-reliant while simultaneously being part of a larger family of Downtown neighborhoods. In the meantime, the formulation of

“Development Precincts” creates a unit of analysis that supercedes block-by-block analysis, but is more discrete than existing neighborhood boundaries. Similarly, in formulating the collection of Development Precincts, the Consultant Team created a series of lenses through which to look at and develop several different alternatives for how land uses should be organized. Finally, and most importantly, disaggregating the Project Area into smaller pieces allows the City and the development community to be more focused and more strategic in pursuing new projects.

EXPLORATION OF ALTERNATIVE LAND USE SCENARIOS

At the outset of the project, one of the City’s directives was to develop two or more land use scenarios for how growth and change in Downtown should occur. This directive resulted in the production of three different land use scenarios for the Project Area, each of which takes a different approach towards the relationship between the Downtown Core and its impact on neighboring areas in Downtown East and the North Loop. At issue was whether or not the City’s traditional Downtown Core should continue to be the hub of future, Class-A commercial office development, or whether new, high-intensity commercial office development should be channeled into new – albeit smaller – office districts focused around specific rail transit stations outside of the existing core.

In working through the issue, it became readily apparent that the two districts adjacent to the existing core – Downtown East and the North Loop – couldn’t responsibly be looked at in isolation. Rather, they should be looked upon as “development pairs” in relation to their potential impact on the existing Downtown Core and vice versa. In addition, each of the scenarios considered what land uses would look like in conjunction with two issues related to downtown stadia: whether or not a Baseball Ballpark would be built over the Rapid Park site in the North Loop, and whether or not the Metrodome would still be needed twenty years from now. Maps and graphics for each of the three land use scenarios were prepared for use at public open houses held during the course of

LEGEND

- HIAWATHA LRT (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- TRANSIT STATIONS
- PROPOSED RAIL TRANSIT LINES
- 1/4 MILE RADIUS TO LRT STATION

- ① ELLIOT PARK WEST
- ② HCMC
- ③ ELLIOT PARK EAST
- ④ EAST WASHINGTON
- ⑤ WASHINGTON VILLAGE
- ⑥ METRODOME
- ⑦ DOWNTOWN CORE EXPANSION
- ⑧ 5TH STREET SPINE
- ⑨ WEST HENNEPIN
- ⑩ WAREHOUSE WEST
- ⑪ FREEWAY WEST
- ⑫ MUNICIPAL SERVICE
- ⑬ THE CUT



Figure 4.1 Map of Development Precincts

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 7

the study. They outline in detail, the variety of development alternatives considered. Each strategy was discussed in detail, and comment was solicited through the course of the public meeting process. A short overview of the key features of each scenario follows:



Land Use Alternative 1 – Decentralization of the Existing Core:
 The first scenario features significant intensification of commercial office development in both Downtown East and the North Loop. New nodes of commercial office development would be built in the areas immediately adjacent to the Downtown East LRT station and the proposed site for the Multi-Modal Station in the North Loop. By focusing future development in these two areas, any change to the existing Downtown Core would be limited to the area within its current boundaries. Ultimately it was determined that creating new high-intensity satellite office districts outside of the existing core would “water-down” the economic power and special character of the existing core.



Land Use Alternative 2 – Centralization of the Existing Core:
 The second scenario features a moderate level of commercial office development in both Downtown East and the North Loop. Similar to Alternative 1, growth would be focused on rail transit stations, but it would be less intensive than what was contem-

plated in the first alternative. The key feature of the second scenario is the proposed relocation of the Multi-Modal Rail Station to the block bounded by Hennepin Avenue, First Avenue North, North 5th Street and North 6th Street. The intent was to develop a rail station that is directly adjacent to the existing core and – as a means to compliment that development location – intensify uses within the existing core. The existing core would absorb most future development, while only modest growth would be allowed outside the core. This scheme was considered unworkable because it created too little space to accommodate the level of expansion in the office sector that is predicted in the market analysis.



Land Use Alternative 3 – Expansion of the Existing Core:
 The third scenario limits future high-intensity development in the Project Area to a well-defined expansion of the existing Downtown Core. That being the case, new development in Downtown East and the North Loop would still allow for commercial office development – particularly in sites proximate to rail transit stations – but only within mixed use projects. The idea behind this scenario is that maintaining and expanding the existing area within which high-intensity commercial office development can take place will allow for the emergence of more holistic precincts and neighborhoods outside the core. Such mixed-use neighborhoods would be more likely to achieve the objectives of transit-oriented development and therefore would be more likely to develop into Complete Communities. As a result, commercial office, commercial retail, and entertainment uses in and around the existing and expanded core would be bolstered by, and benefit from, residential uses that would allow for a stronger, more populous downtown consumer base.

Maps and graphics for each of the three land use scenarios were

prepared for use at public open houses held during the course of the Study. Two alternatives – “Decentralization of the Existing Core” and “Centralization of the Existing Core” were not recommended (see Figure 4.2, page 36). A clear preference for the third alternative – “Expansion of the Existing Core” (see Figure 4.3, page 37) emerged from the public meeting process, consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and consultation with the Steering Committee convened for this project. The consensus held that this alternative had the maximum potential for allowing the Downtown East and North Loop components of the Project Area to develop into mixed-use, residential communities. Moreover, the strong demarcation lines marking the expansion boundaries of the Downtown Core would help new and existing neighborhoods develop distinct community identities.

Given the complexity of information presented on the Recommended Land Use Plan, a supplemental map illustrating an overlay of At-Grade Retail use was produced for clarity (see Figure 4.4, page 38).

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RECOMMENDED LAND USE PLAN

Overview of the Entire Project Area:

- Concentration of future Class-A Office development within an expanded Downtown Core;
- Development of “Complete Communities” in both Downtown East and the North Loop so people can walk to where they work, shop, and go to school;
- Preference for mid- to high-density mixed-use development - residential, commercial, and retail – in distinct, identifiable development precincts in both Downtown East and the North Loop;
- 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 that feature active uses on all street frontages; prohibition of future “single-use” parking ramps;
- Promotion of pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, street-facing retail, transit nodes, and neighborhood services, all organized into compact “neighborhood” nodes.

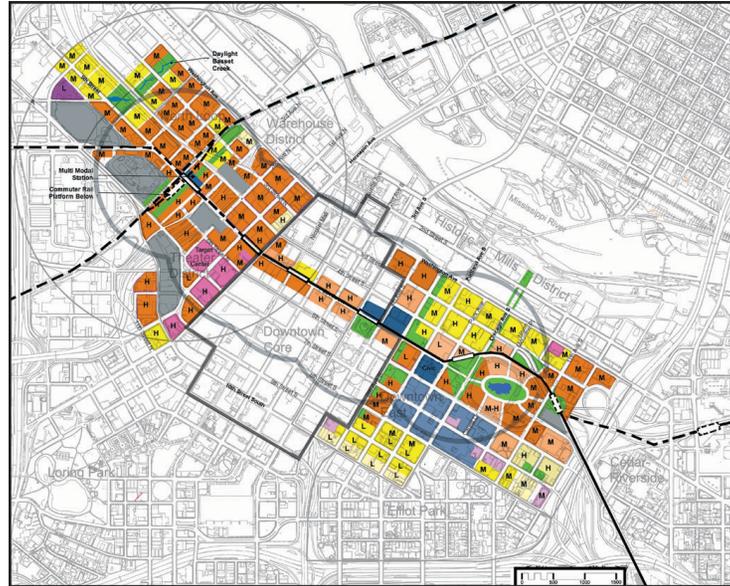
TOD Opportunities in the Downtown Minneapolis LRT Corridor: Early on in the project, the question of whether the 5th Street LRT stations could become the focal points for a series of downtown TOD communities was studied. Excellent opportunities exist to create new mixed use development building projects at the three most central stations – Government, Nicollet Mall, and Warehouse District/Hennepin. The likeliest candidates for creating strong full-fledged TOD nodes are the stations located on the outer edges of the Project Area – the Multi-Modal station site on the west and the Downtown East Station site adjacent to the Metrodome. A closer look at TOD and infill opportunities for each downtown station area is presented in the description of land uses for each development precinct, following.

Downtown East

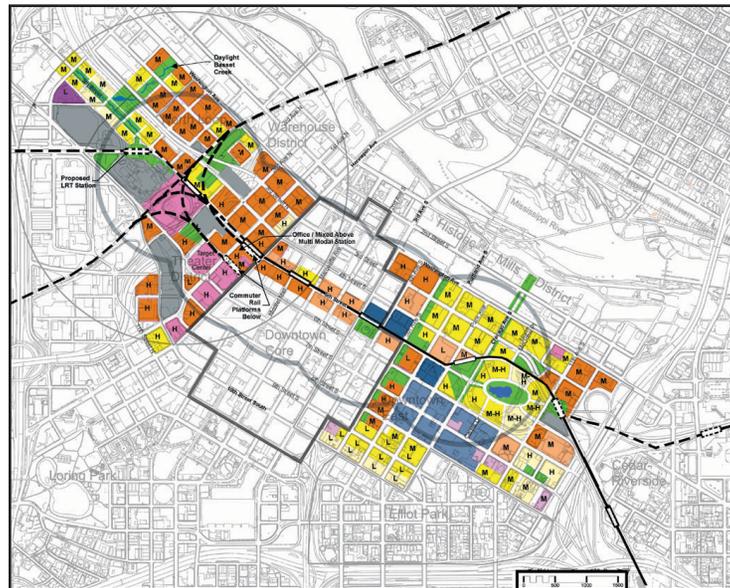
The Recommended Land Use Plan accommodates many recommendations contained within recently completed land use studies – the Historic Mills District Plan and the Elliot Park Neighborhood Plan.

LEGEND

-  HIAWATHA LRT (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
-  TRANSIT STATIONS
-  PROPOSED RAIL TRANSIT LINES
-  1/4 MILE RADIUS TO LRT STATION
-  PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
-  CIVIC
-  HOSPITAL
-  OFFICE
-  MIXED USE (OFFICE/COMMERCIAL = PRIMARY USE)
-  RESIDENTIAL
-  MIXED USE (RESIDENTIAL = PRIMARY USE)
-  LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
-  PARKING UTILITY
-  CULTURAL/ENTERTAINMENT
- L** LOW – 1 TO 4 FLOORS
- M** MEDIUM – 5 TO 13 FLOORS
- H** HIGH – 14 FLOORS AND TALLER
-  EXISTING DOWNTOWN CORE
-  BOUNDARY FOR EXPANSION OF DOWNTOWN CORE



Land Use Alternative 1
Core Decentralization
(Not Recommended)



Land Use Alternative 2
Core Centralization
(Not Recommended)

Figure 4.2: Maps of Land Use Alternatives 1 and 2: **Not Recommended**

LEGEND

- HIAWATHA LRT (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- TRANSIT STATIONS
- PROPOSED RAIL TRANSIT LINES
- 1/4 MILE RADIUS TO LRT STATION
- PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
- CIVIC
- HOSPITAL
- OFFICE
- MIXED USE – OFFICE / COMMERCIAL
- MIXED USE – RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL
- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- PARKING UTILITY
- CULTURAL/ENTERTAINMENT
- L** LOW – 1 TO 4 FLOORS
- M** MEDIUM – 5 TO 13 FLOORS
- H** HIGH – 14 FLOORS AND TALLER
- EXISTING DOWNTOWN CORE
- BOUNDARY FOR EXPANSION OF DOWNTOWN CORE

NOTE: This is a land use map, not a redevelopment plan. Proposed changes in land use indicate what is necessary in order to realize the goals of this master plan. Land use categories are a planning tool. They are not synonymous with, nor should they be confused with, property ownership, occupants, or building types.

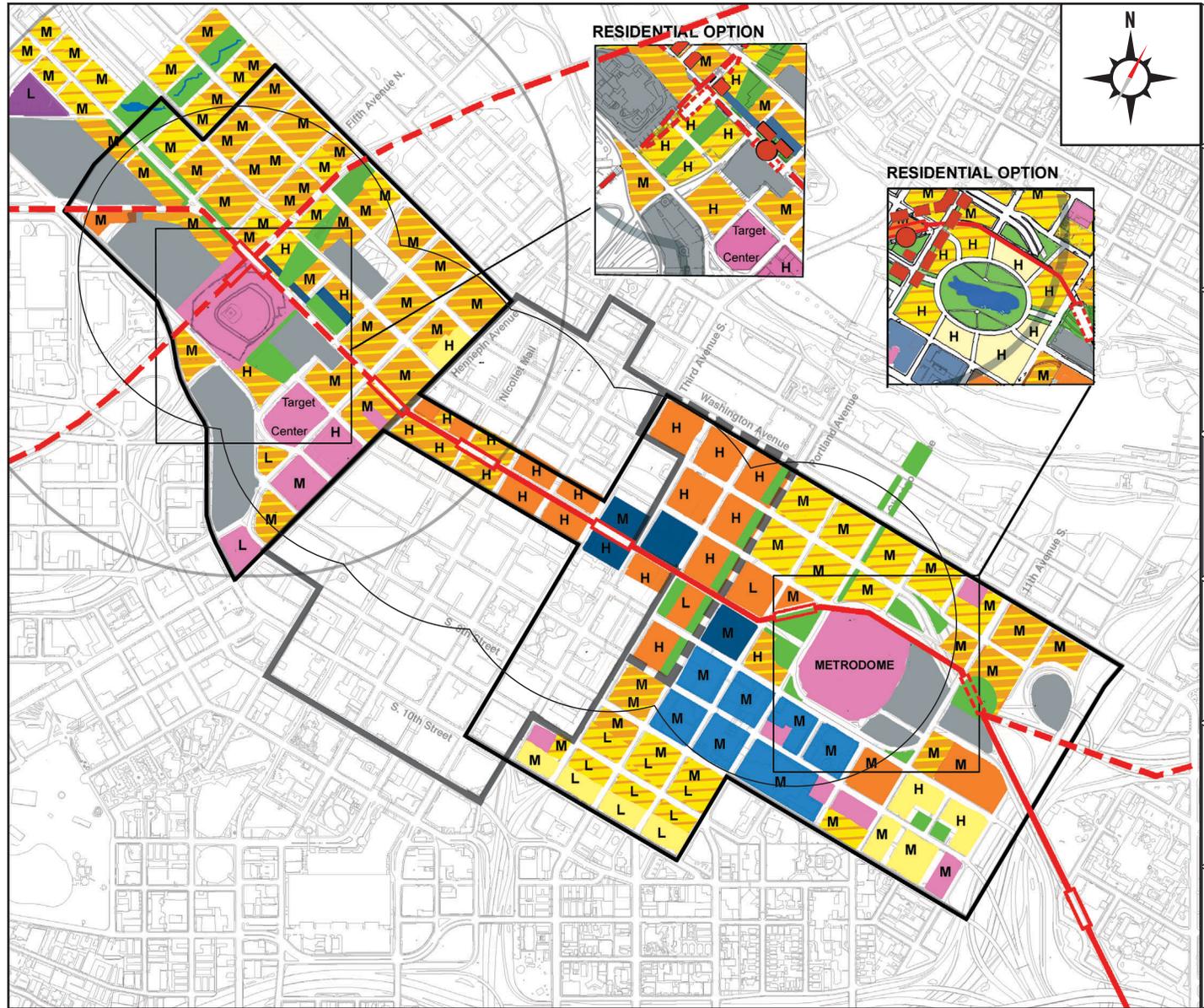


Figure 4.3 Map of Recommended Land Use – Core Expansion

LEGEND

- HIAWATHA LRT (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
- TRANSIT STATIONS
- PROPOSED RAIL TRANSIT LINES
- 1/4 MILE RADIUS TO LRT STATION
- RETAIL AT GRADE
- STREET VENDING
- PROPOSED OPEN SPACE
- CIVIC
- HOSPITAL
- OFFICE
- MIXED USE – OFFICE / COMMERCIAL
- MIXED USE – RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL
- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- PARKING UTILITY
- CULTURAL/ENTERTAINMENT
- L** LOW – 1 TO 4 FLOORS
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- EXISTING DOWNTOWN CORE
- BOUNDARY FOR EXPANSION OF DOWNTOWN CORE

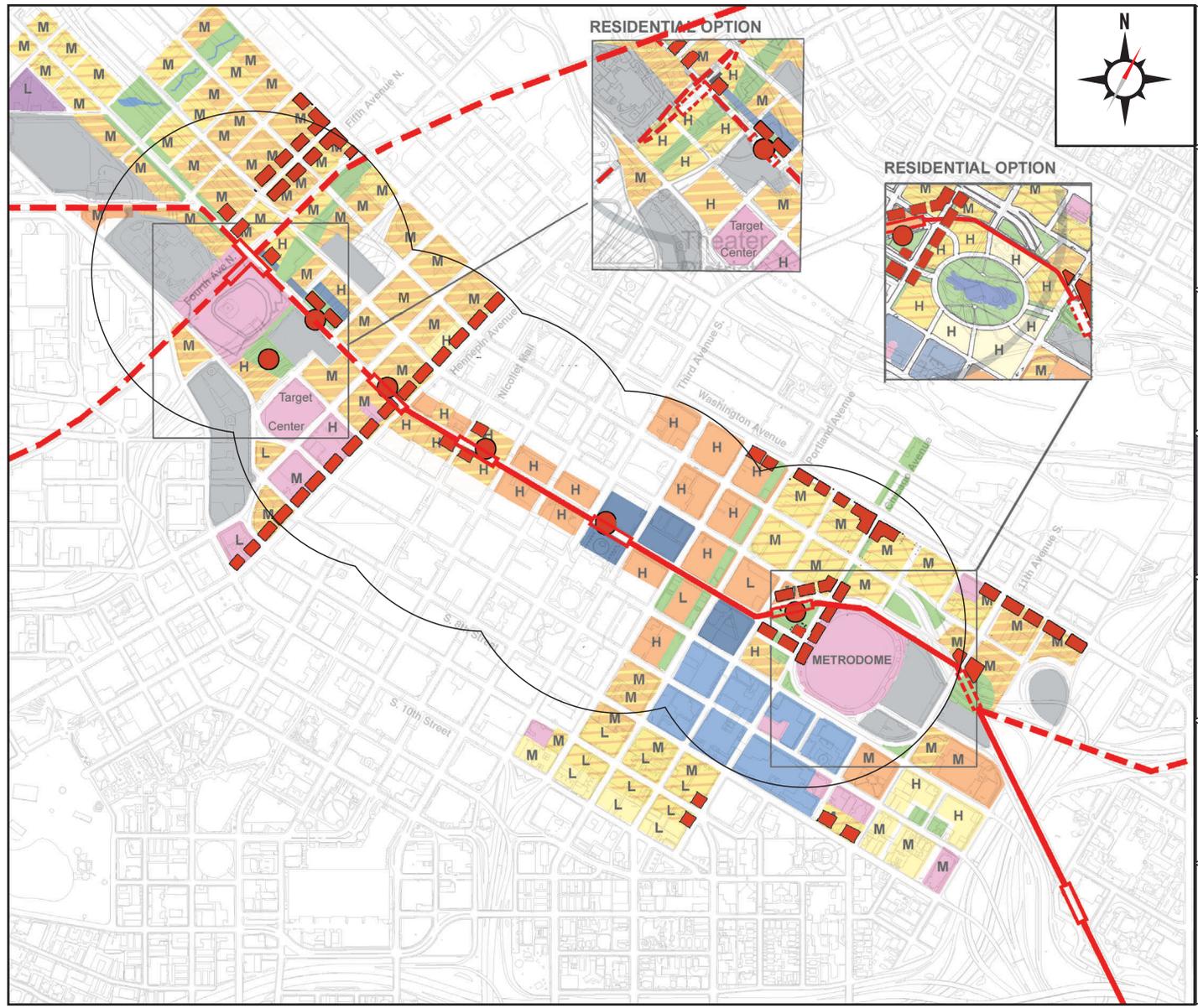


Figure 4.4 Map of Recommended Land Use – At-Grade Retail

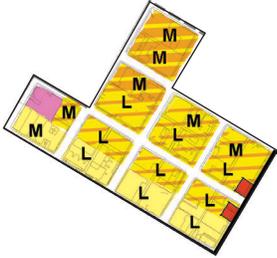


Figure 4.5
Development Precinct 1: Elliot Park West

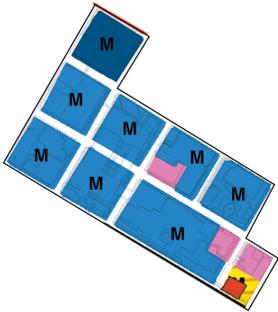


Figure 4.6
Development Precinct 2: Hennepin County Medical Center

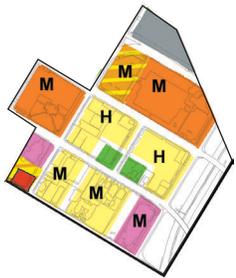


Figure 4.7
Development Precinct 3: Elliot Park East

DOWNTOWN EAST

Development Precinct 1: Elliot Park West

The thrust of new development in this precinct should be in the area within and around the South 9th Street Historic District. As a means to enhance preservation and reuse of existing brownstones, and in order to encourage new infill development, land uses in this precinct should be geared primarily toward low- or medium-density residential development. Medium-density mixed-use projects are appropriate in the northern reaches of the precinct in order to create a transitional “step-down” zone between the high-intensity character of the Downtown Core and the low-intensity setting of the historic district. A retail node should be located at the intersection of South 9th Street and Chicago Avenue in order to create an identifiable center to this portion of Elliot Park. Highlighting this intersection will help create a recognizable “cross-roads” for east-west pedestrian circulation between Elliot Park and the Downtown Core and north-south between Elliot Park and the proposed linear park along Portland Avenue (see Chapter 5).

Development Precinct 2: Hennepin County Medical Center

With the exception of preserving a small number of existing cultural uses, healthcare and hospital-related uses should continue to be the major land use in the blocks currently occupied by the Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC). Wherever possible, the hospital is encouraged to redevelop outpatient clinics, and other activities that generate pedestrian traffic, in ground floor locations that face onto downtown streets. Though it is considered part of the Washington Village Precinct for the purposes of this master plan, the block between Park Avenue, Chicago Avenue, South of 5th Street, and South 6th Street should be further developed (on the north half) to include street-level retail that would help create an identifiable retail / transit node at the Downtown East LRT station.

Development Precinct 3: Elliot Park East

The area immediately east of the Metrodome and HCMC should be developed in a way that complements the existing uses but expands and fills out the neighborhood with a greater mix. In particular, this will include adding a more visible residential component to the precinct through the construction of both medium density mixed-use development as well as medium- and high-density residential construction. Development in this precinct should provide a physical transition from the high-intensity uses of the Medical Center, the Metrodome, and neighborhood office buildings to the low-density residential character of the area south of East 14th Street. 11th Avenue South is the natural spine of this precinct. Retail uses should be encouraged first on South 8th Street near 11th Avenue South so that it complements existing commercial uses near this corner of Elliot Park.

Development Precinct 4: Washington East (see Figure 4.8, next page)

At some point in the future, an opportunity exists to develop a new LRT station and a new TOD-centered community at the convergence of the Hiawatha LRT and the proposed Central Corridor LRT from the University of Minnesota and Downtown St. Paul. Creating a station at the junction of these two LRT lines offers an exciting opportunity to create a new TOD neighborhood offering a full array of housing, retail, and commercial services within the neighborhood combined with excellent access by rail transit to the Downtown Core, the University of Minnesota, Downtown St. Paul, south Minneapolis, and the International Airport.

Similarly, at some point in the next fifteen or twenty years, an opportunity exists to provide direct connections between South 3rd Street and 4th Street to and from I-35W. Building new fly-over connections would compliment the existing interchange at Washington Avenue and I-35W. Because new fly-overs would relieve traffic congestion on Washington Avenue, it should become a

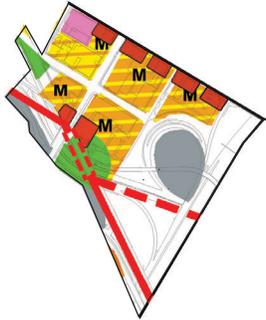


Figure 4.8
Development Precinct 4: Washington East



Figure 4.9
Development Precinct 5: Washington Village

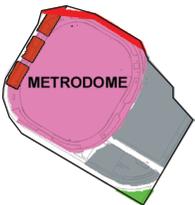


Figure 4.10
Development Precinct 6: Metrodome Site

wide boulevard that serves as the backbone for neighborhood commerce serving both Downtown East and the Mills District.

The precinct should be characterized by mixed office / residential development focused on the stretch of 11th Avenue South between the proposed LRT station and Washington Avenue South. Many, if not all, of the existing Valspar facilities could be incorporated into this mixed-use district. When the Central LRT Line is built, the new station – proposed in this plan – will be the appropriate focus for neighborhood retail services. Additional intermittent business opportunities would be present on game days at the Metrodome, especially for food and drink vending. Although not officially listed as historic sites, most of the existing buildings in this area should be preserved, rehabilitated, and re-used. Infill development should be encouraged around existing building stock. Eleventh Avenue South will be an important link between this neighborhood, the Central Riverfront, and Elliot Park East.

Development Precinct 5: Washington Village

The area immediately north and west of the new Downtown East LRT Station is a promising candidate for a new TOD neighborhood. A collection of underdeveloped properties – many of which are existing surface parking lots – are located within easy walking distance of the station site. Many of these blocks are excellent sites for full-block, half-block, quarter-block and infill development projects. This area provides the best opportunity to create a new “Complete Community” that would integrate existing structures and uses with new development. Creating a medium-intensity, mixed use district in this precinct would add a major residential component to Downtown East; one that is immediately adjacent to the Downtown Core and within easy reach of the amenities located in the Mills District and along the Central Riverfront.

This precinct should be focused on Chicago Avenue, which would serve as a pedestrian-friendly link between two retail concentrations, one at the LRT station and another along Washington

Avenue. The City of Minneapolis has already expressed a desire to create a strong TOD node at the Downtown East station by forging a mixed use project that will integrate a new commercial office building, an outdoor neighborhood plaza, and at-grade convenience retailing all within the same block as the new LRT station. The north half of the block between Park Avenue, Chicago Avenue, South 5th Street, and South 6th Street should be further developed to include street-level retail that would help create an identifiable retail / transit node at the Downtown East LRT station.

The potential for two new streetscapes – east-west along South 5th Street and north-south along Chicago Avenue – would help link this neighborhood node with the Downtown Core, and two other neighborhoods in the CBD, Elliot Park to the south and the Historic Mills District to the north.

Development Precinct 6: Metrodome Site

Based on the current state of negotiations and financing for the construction of new stadia, it is likely that the HHH Metrodome will remain viable and active in the foreseeable future. However, the fact that each of the major tenants of the Metrodome is currently seeking new stadia located elsewhere begs the question: “What happens to the Metrodome if the efforts to build a new ball park and football stadium are ultimately successful?” With this question in mind, the Consultant Team was charged with looking at two different options for what the Metrodome site could or should be like twenty years from now.

Option 1: Sports Stadium Remains. Given that the Metrodome is likely to remain in place for the foreseeable future, combined with the intention of realizing higher and better uses throughout the underdeveloped areas of Downtown East and Elliot Park, there is a pressing need to address the physical relationship between a single enormous structure and a series of finer-grain neighborhoods that surround it. Softening the scale differences between the Metrodome and surrounding structures is primarily a matter of

urban design modifications rather than of land use designations. (see Chapter 5, page 77, Case Study: Revising the Physical Impact of Megastructures in Downtown East).

Option 2: Redevelopment of existing Stadium Site. In the event that the Metrodome becomes redundant over the course of the next twenty-five years, redevelopment on that site will offer an excellent opportunity to fill out transit oriented development on the east and west sides of the LRT station (see Figure 4.18, page 45). The six block area should be redeveloped as a new downtown neighborhood with high-density mixed-use and residential projects. In such a scenario, the City should take full advantage of this opportunity by organizing new development around a new “central” park that includes a lake and new recreational fields that would serve nearby residents. This new neighborhood would be served by retail districts located in and around the Downtown East Station at 5th and Chicago and at the proposed Washington East Station at South 4th Street and 11th Avenue South.

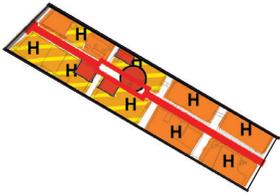


Figure 4.11
Development Precinct 7: 5th Street Spine

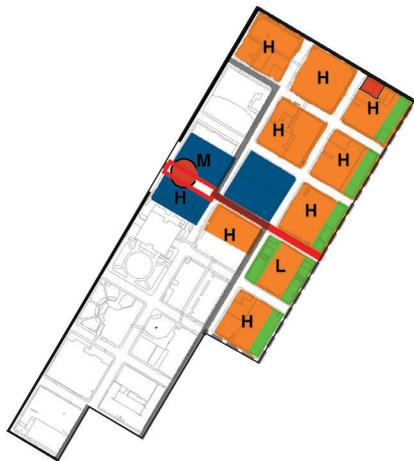


Figure 4.12
Development Precinct 8: Downtown Core Expansion

In this option, additional developable land is made available by relocating the 4th St. freeway access north of its existing location and pairing it with the 3rd St. freeway exit. The existing 5th Street freeway exit would terminate at 11th Avenue South and incoming traffic from the freeway system would be distributed north or south along 11th Avenue South.

5TH STREET SPINE AND DOWNTOWN CORE EXPANSION

(Development Precincts 7 and 8)

The portion of the Project Area that includes the existing Downtown Core and the proposed expansion to the Downtown Core will remain the location specifically designated for high-intensity commercial office development in Downtown Minneapolis. Consistent with existing regulations for this part of the City, high-intensity residential uses will also be permitted within the Downtown Core. The proposed expansion of the Downtown Core

includes nine blocks adjacent to the northeast corner of the existing core (see Figure 6.1, page 109). More than four of these blocks are currently occupied by surface parking lots and are expected to be comparatively easy to redevelop when the marketplace presents the opportunity.

Within the existing core, a small collection of both large and small development sites close to the Nicollet Mall Station afford an exceptional opportunity to create a high-intensity, mixed-use district where new residential development complements new and existing development at the heart of the Downtown Core. For example, one developer / property owner is considering a combination of commercial office, hotel, and residential spaces on two blocks immediately north of the station. In addition, two or three surface parking lots within a block or two of the station are excellent quarter-block and infill development sites. And while the new central branch of the Minneapolis Public Library will serve citizens and businesses from across the city and around the Metro area, it will also serve as the “neighborhood branch” for both existing and new residents in this, the most dense of all neighborhoods Downtown.

Although the areas immediately adjacent to Government Station are already built out, new commercial office development should be channeled to two areas within easy walking distance of this station: The under-developed blocks within the existing Downtown Core that lie between South 5th Street and Washington Avenue South; and the surface parking lots two or three blocks east of the Government Station along Fifth Avenue South.

Two major urban design initiatives will help integrate these areas into the rest of Downtown while offering a distinct identity for parts of the core beyond Nicollet Mall and Marquette Avenue. These initiatives include a new east-west streetscape along the 5th Street LRT corridor (see Chapter 5, page 68, Case Study: 5th Street Streetscape) and a new quarter-block wide linear park that stretches north and south along Portland Avenue in the expansion area of the Downtown Core (see Figure 5.8, page 61).

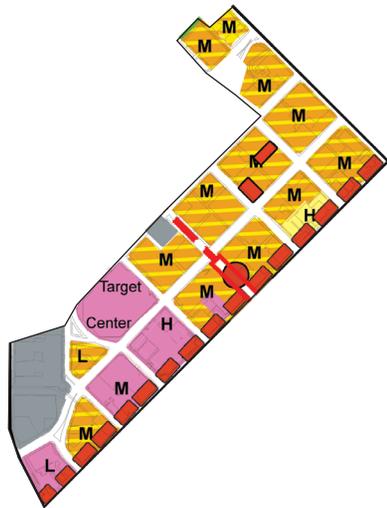


Figure 4.13
Development Precinct 9: West Hennepin



Figure 4.14
Development Precinct 10: Warehouse West

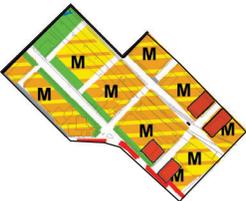


Figure 4.15
Development Precinct 11: Freeway West

THE NORTH LOOP

The Land Use Plan accommodates many of the recommendations put forth in the "Downtown Minneapolis Multi-Modal Station Area Master Plan," prepared by Meyer Mohaddes Associates Inc. for Hennepin County (2001).

Development Precinct 9: West Hennepin

Given the mostly built-up nature of this station area, there is limited potential for new large-scale development projects. The majority of development in this precinct should be medium intensity, mixed-use development at a scale similar to that of existing buildings. Several high-profile "infill" development sites are located adjacent to, or within, very short walking distance to the proposed Warehouse District / Hennepin LRT Station. These sites provide opportunities to intensify and fill-out the existing neighborhood. All new development in this precinct should maintain and enhance the historic character of this district. Development should be consistent with the existing theater / entertainment uses, but should also include new commercial and residential spaces for those who seek to live and work within the entertainment district. Street-level retail should be encouraged throughout the district, particularly in locations directly adjacent to the LRT station.

Development Precinct 10: Warehouse West

Similar to the West Hennepin precinct, much of the Warehouse West precinct is already built out. The historic warehouse structures in this precinct should be protected and preserved, with an emphasis on adaptive re-use of existing structures. The majority of development in this precinct should be medium intensity, mixed-use development at a scale similar to that of existing buildings. However, here are several surface parking lots and other under-developed sites that should be considered for infill development projects. Street-level retail should be encouraged along the length of Washington Avenue North in order to ensure that this street becomes

the commercial spine that serves the residents and businesses in both this precinct and in the new residential areas north of Washington Avenue. Street level retail should also be encouraged to stretch along Fifth Avenue North to create a connection between Washington Avenue and the commercial node at, or near, the new multi-modal station and the proposed ballpark.

Development Precinct 11: Freeway West

In the long term, an opportunity exists to dismantle the freeway viaduct that currently connects North 3rd Street and North 4th Street from Second Avenue North to westbound Interstate 94 (see Figures 4.1 and 4.15). The presence of this aerial roadway ensures that traffic by-passes the neighborhood while creating a barrier that inhibits a neighborhood feeling. Dismantling the viaduct would allow the neighborhood street grid to be re-established and access to the neighborhood improved. In turn, this would enhance both the economic viability of the street-level environment in this part of Downtown as well as the overall livability of neighborhoods in the North Loop. (Also, it is conceivable that a significant number of bus and SOV trips atop the existing viaduct might be replaced once the NorthStar commuter rail is in full operation.) Similar to the portions of the Warehouse District in adjacent precincts, development in the Freeway West precinct should be mixed-use, medium intensity. The far western reaches of North 5th Street (west of where most traffic turns west towards Olson Memorial Highway) should be redeveloped to incorporate a new residential neighborhood organized along a thin, linear park.

Street level retail should also be encouraged to stretch along Fifth Avenue North to create a connection between the commercial node at, or near, the new multi-modal station and the proposed ballpark to Washington Avenue North.

Development Precinct 12: Municipal Service

Given the investment made to locate major institutional uses in



Figure 4.16
Development Precinct 12: Municipal Service

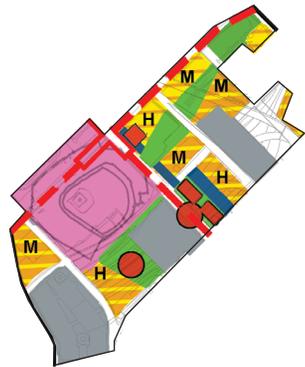


Figure 4.17
Development Precinct 13: Air Rights
Development Over "The Cut"

this precinct (The Hennepin Energy Resource Center and the Metro Transit facility) major redevelopment in this precinct is not likely or recommended. However, in keeping with the proposal put forth in the Hennepin County Station Area Plan, the berm along North 5th Street and Sixth Avenue North could be redeveloped with a band of medium-density, mixed use development that houses commercial or government offices and, perhaps, low-impact light industrial development. Wrapping the site with active uses would help to create a buffer between the Energy Resource Center and the developing neighborhoods to the north and east.

Development Precinct 13: Air Rights Development District over "The Cut"

A large swath of railway and highway lands cut through the North Loop and interrupts the fabric of Downtown Minneapolis. In the course of doing fieldwork, the Consultant Team dubbed this area of Downtown as "The Cut." In conjunction with the findings and proposals of the Hennepin County Multi-Modal Station Area Plan, the team identified it as a location ripe with major redevelopment opportunities.

Within The Cut, the existing highway infrastructure is critical to the everyday function and overall economic competitiveness of Downtown. Likewise, when existing freight rail tracks along the Burlington Northern right of way are leased for commuter rail operations, it will be necessary to use land adjacent to these tracks for new rail sidings that will accommodate multiple commuter rail lines and inter-city lines (Amtrak). Nevertheless, allowing for the large space requirements of transportation infrastructure need not inhibit a cohesive environment between the North Loop and the Downtown Core.

As has been done in other cities, the airspace above this depression could be developed by decking above the existing freeway and railroad tracks and reconnecting the downtown street grid through this area. This will not only re-knit the physical environment of the surrounding neighborhoods into one another, but will also cre-

ate new development sites, or air rights parcels, built above the existing ground plane on an at-grade level similar to the surrounding neighborhoods (see Figures 4.19 and 4.20, pages 46 and 47).

Redevelopment within and above The Cut includes several key projects that are the cornerstone for developing a multi-faceted new neighborhood in this precinct. The most important of these air rights development sites include the potential for a new ballpark and a new multi-modal transit station both of which will flank the extension of the LRT corridor on North 5th Street. Existing City policy reserves the existing surface parking lots located between North 5th Street, North 7th Street, Third Avenue North and the Burlington Northern right-of-way as the site for a new downtown ballpark. However, it is still not clear that a ballpark can be developed on this site anytime in the immediate future. That being the case, the Consultant Team was asked to develop two different options for what redevelopment in The Cut should look like in twenty years. Both schemes include development of the multi-modal station and associated redevelopment north of North 5th Street. In the area south of 5th Street, Option 1 recognizes and lays out the framework for the construction of a new urban ballpark and is considered the preferred scheme. Option 2 was developed as a back-up scheme in case a ballpark is never realized at this location.

Option 1: Redevelopment of The Cut that includes a new Ballpark. In the event that a ballpark can be developed above The Cut, it will need to be sited and designed in such a way as to ensure maximum flexibility for the creation of at-grade rail infrastructure that will satisfy the anticipated needs of a full-blown commuter rail and inter-city rail network. In addition to the ballpark, the multi-modal station and the "underground" rail network, the remainder of this development precinct should be filled out with a host of ancillary medium-intensity, mixed-use development sites. All of these sites should be woven together with a series of meandering parks and plazas that stretch from North 5th Street to Washington

Avenue North and help to reconnect the station and the ballpark to the existing entertainment district. As in other cities, the main train station need not be the site of transportation infrastructure alone. The air space above the rail yards is a prime location for commercial office development, hotel complexes, and even residential buildings. Of course, it makes tremendous sense to allow for and encourage retail uses that are convenient to transit patrons using the station, baseball fans coming and going from the ballpark, as well as those who live and work within such an active neighborhood.

Option 2: Redevelopment of The Cut without a new Ballpark. In the event that a ballpark is never realized on the Rapid Park site, new air rights development should be geared towards the construction of high-intensity residential structures, though a concentration of high-intensity commercial uses were also considered for this site, it was considered unwise to pursue such uses in this area because they would compete with, and weaken the intensity of the existing Downtown Core (see Figure 4.2, page 36, Land Use Alternative 1: Decentralization of the Existing Core, above). The area under these towers and associated open spaces that are not needed for rail infrastructure related to the multi-modal station should be given over to structured parking (which would actually be built above grade, but because the street level is raised, would in the end appear below grade.) Similar to Option 1, new parks, plazas, a strong retail component should be incorporated into this air rights development district.

Siting of the multi-modal station: Regardless of which option is pursued in relation to the ballpark, further detailed studies will need to be undertaken concerning the relationships between the components of the multi-modal station, including the rail yards, train platforms, and the exact location for the headhouse (which would include waiting areas, retail services, ticketing, and luggage handling). Moreover, these studies should address the relationship between the multi-modal rail station, the proposed LRT station, and the existing bus station on the 5th Street Ramp. In

all cases, Amtrak and commuter rail platforms would be located beneath the new baseball stadium (or residential development). The interface between these new rail yards and the new street system on the deck above can be accomplished in a number of ways and therefore demands more detailed study.

One scenario for how the multi-modal station is configured calls for the commuter rail station to “bridge the cut” and provide incoming passengers with a sense of arrival in the city. In this scenario, passengers would disembark their train and walk one block to the east through an interstitial enclosed concourse to the existing Minikahda Building at Third Avenue North and North 5th Street. This historic building would be rehabilitated and retrofitted as part of the station. Escalators and elevators would distribute passengers to skyway level, where they would travel across 3rd Avenue North to a new station headhouse, built on decking above Interstate 394. High-density mixed-use development is envisioned in conjunction with this station.

While the City has conducted preliminary explorations of these issues in separate projects, further study should be conducted sooner rather than later in order to ensure that costly interim solutions do not impede the best possible solution of full build out.



Figure 4.18 Metrodome Re-Use Illustrative – Aerial View

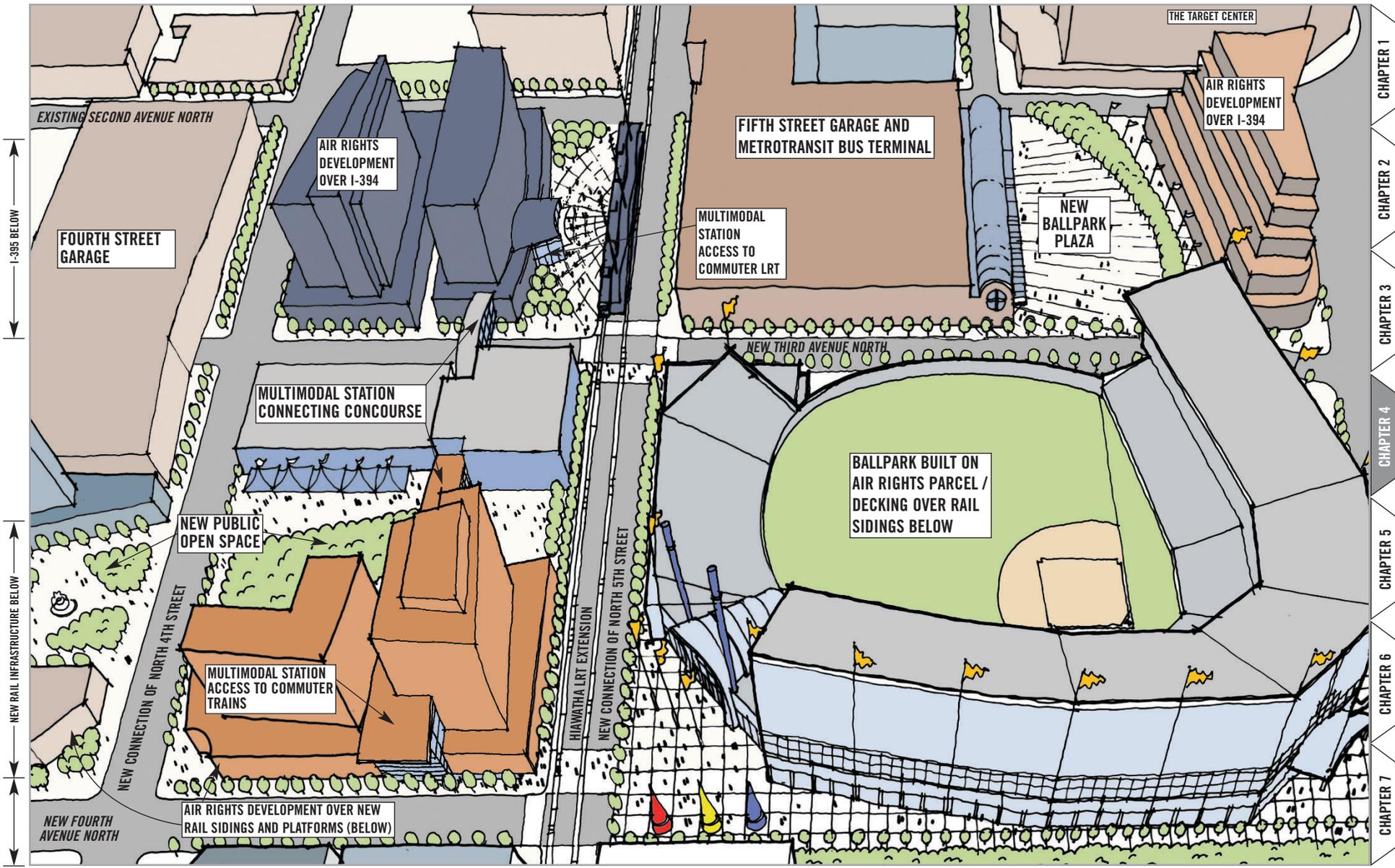


Figure 4.19 Possible Air Rights Development over "The Cut" – Aerial View

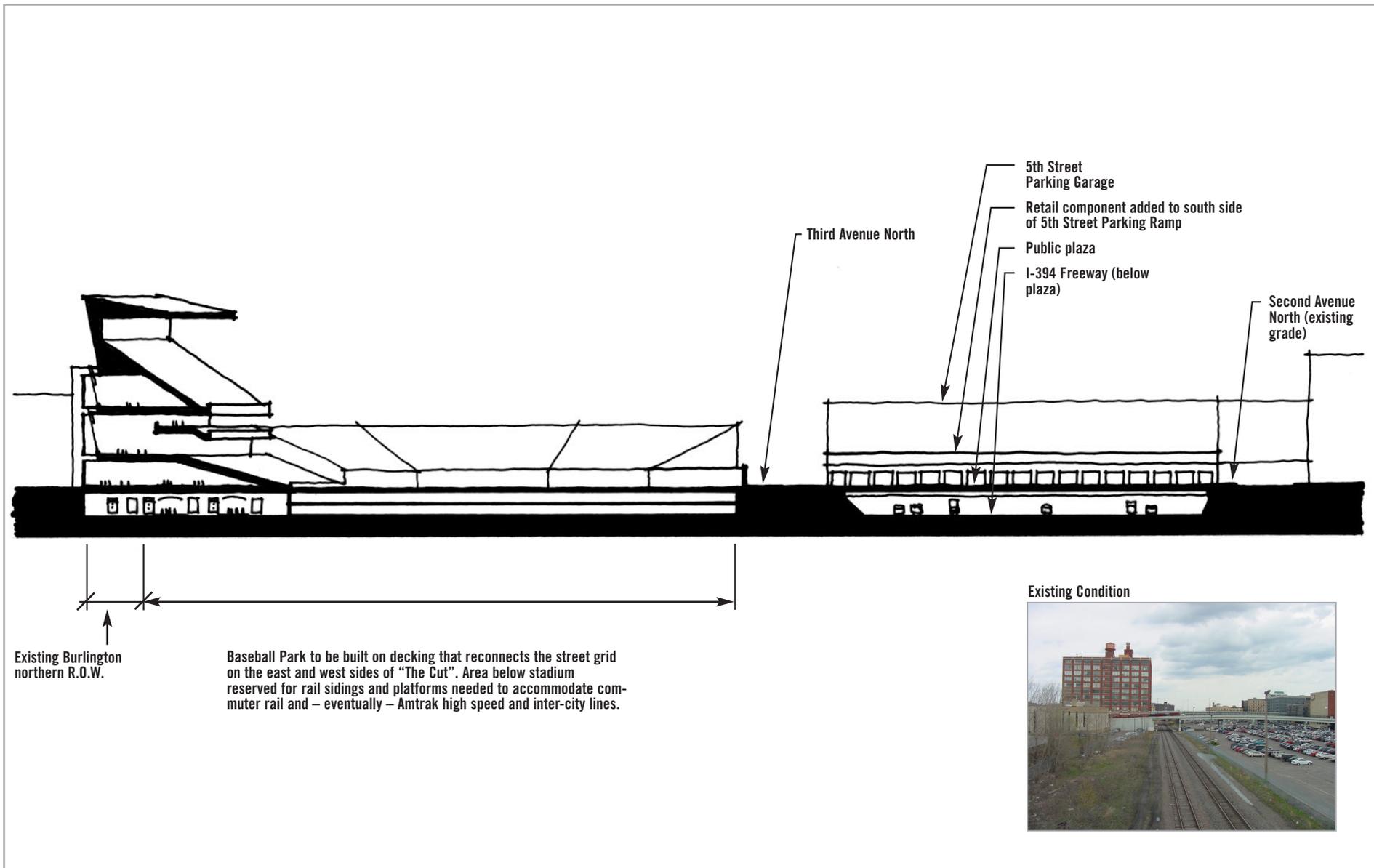


Figure 4.20 Possible Air Rights Development over "The Cut" – Cross-section Looking North