

# Midtown Greenway

## Land Use and Development Plan

### Executive Summary

#### Introduction

The Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan sets policy direction for land use and development in the Midtown Greenway corridor for the next 10-20 years, with implications for private development and investment in the public realm. The study boundary generally includes properties within one block of the greenway from the western border of the city east to Hiawatha Avenue.

The Plan evaluates the long-term viability of existing land uses along the corridor. It provides guidance for future land uses along the Midtown Greenway, and proposes development guidelines for development intensity and form. The recommendations take into consideration the development of Lake Street, current land use patterns, existing transit service and the anticipated rail transit under consideration for the area. Possible approaches to key implementation issues, such as open space ownership and management strategies, are explored and outlined in this report. All of the plan recommendations evolved through a process of stakeholder and public engagement that included extensive input from the community.



#### Vision and Principles of Development

*“The greenway area is distinctive in its proximity to exciting and convenient commercial districts, in the availability of outstanding transportation options, and in the presence of the Midtown Greenway amenity itself. Over time it will grow as a place where the natural and built environments work together, where mixed-use development patterns of varying intensity are complemented by open space and traditional urban neighborhoods. New private development, and enhancement of the public landscape, will add to its commercial, residential and recreational assets, and strengthen its sustainability and connectedness.”*

Through the community process, twelve principles of greenway-supportive development were established that support the community’s vision (above):

1. Promote a safe, vibrant and active environment with calmed streets and widened sidewalks. Focus investments toward developing an enlivened, pedestrian-friendly public realm.
2. Encourage redevelopment projects to be transit-supportive by integrating bicycle and pedestrian amenities as well as accessible and visually appealing transit stops into projects.
3. Promote opportunities for additional public green space, dedicated parks, trail connections and public art along the Greenway edge, especially near transit stops and higher-intensity developments.

4. Support compact development and promote mixed use in existing commercial areas. Create a more lively and diverse urban environment.
5. Focus the most intensive development near future transit stops and existing commercial nodes and encourage the provision of open space and active stormwater management in new developments.
6. Promote development that reinforces appropriate architectural scale and relates to adjacent land uses. Employ development strategies that minimize Greenway shadowing.
7. Use new development, the pedestrian environment and open space to promote an integrated relationship between the Greenway floor and the Greenway edge/rim, fostering a sense of place and community.
8. Develop a premier public edge along both sides of the Greenway, including a more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly 29<sup>th</sup> Street and public promenades.
9. Promote Greenway safety and comfort through environmental design features such as doors located on the street or Greenway as appropriate, windows facing public space and the relocation of service doors away from the public realm.
10. Promote compatibility of industrial uses with residential areas and the Greenway through landscaping and enhanced urban design.

### Future Land Use Plan

The land use and development patterns in the project area around the Midtown Greenway have experienced a great deal of change over the past 10 to 15 years. Some of this change has resulted from the abandonment of the railroad line, while other changes can be attributed to changes in the real estate and development market. These market-based development pressures will continue to shape the kinds of redevelopment proposed by the private sector in the Greenway. The Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan offers an opportunity to influence these market based transitions so that further changes to development patterns strengthen the community, support enhanced transit service and business districts, and are compatible with existing development in the surrounding neighborhoods.

The future land use plan was developed concurrently with the Development Guidelines, and in particular its development intensity map. These two components of the plan are meant to be used together to guide future development in the corridor. The development intensity map is intended to give further refinement to appropriate scale of development within areas labeled high density residential in the future land use map. For this reason, residential areas labeled “High-density housing” in the future land use map are further distinguished as either “Urban Oriented” or “Transit Oriented” in the development intensity map. Areas labeled “Low-density housing” and “Medium-density housing” in the future land use map are grouped together as “Neighborhood Oriented” in the development intensity map.

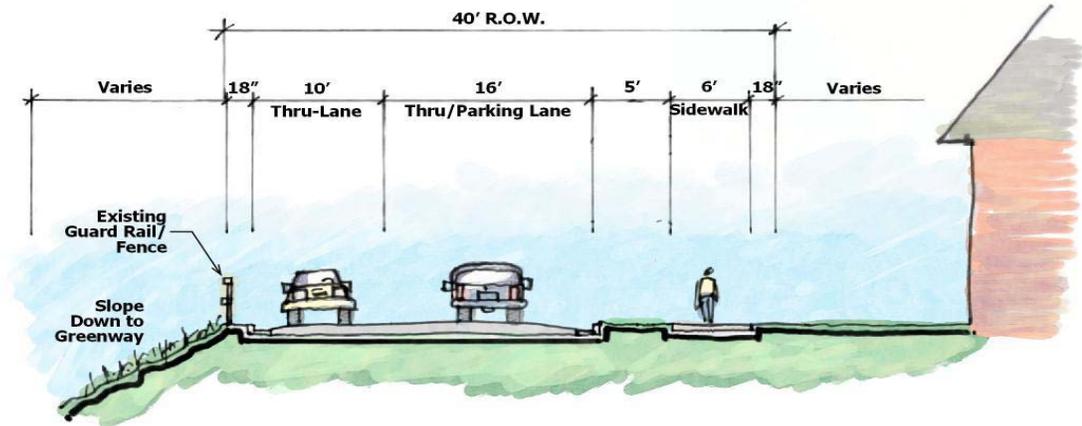


The land use designations in the future land use map were assigned based on several factors. These include current land use and zoning, City policy, community input and potential for redevelopment. Land use recommendations include:

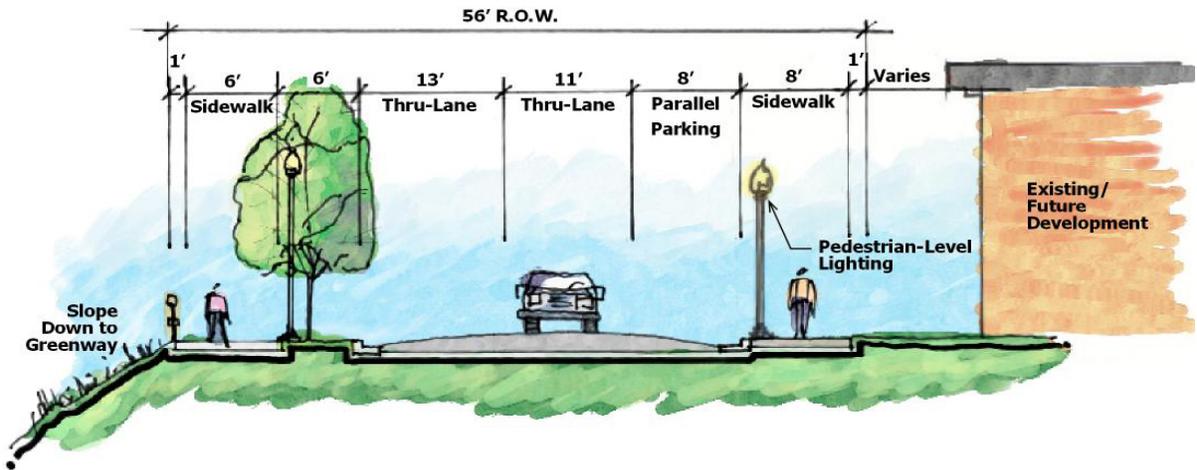
- *Commercial and Mixed use* – Concentrate new commercial development at existing nodes and along



along the street is redeveloped. This enhances the place-making value of the Midtown Greenway and improves public safety.



Typical existing cross-section of 29<sup>th</sup> Street west of Lyndale Avenue.



Typical proposed cross-section of 29<sup>th</sup> Street west of Lyndale Avenue.

- *Public promenades* - A primary recommendation of the plan is to provide a linear public “promenade” or walkway wherever possible between private development and the Midtown Greenway. Promenades have similar value to sidewalks in that they create a street-level pedestrian network, and provide visual connections between the Midtown Greenway and adjacent spaces.



- *Transit station areas* - Future transit stations are proposed for the Midtown Greenway corridor at several locations. The stations would be located at the Greenway level with vertical access connecting to the street-level bus system and pedestrian environment as necessary. Transit station areas can serve as expanded and enhanced public spaces. To support this, the plan recommends consideration of opportunistic property acquisition adjacent to likely future transit stations. Care should also be taken not to foreclose possibilities in these locations in the placement of new buildings.
- *Greenway access points* - Midtown Greenway access points (ramps, stairs and at-grade) are currently provided at 18 locations and more have been proposed by private parties and citizen-based organizations. Future access points to the Midtown Greenway should benefit the general public and not just one property owner or a group of owners. With that consideration in mind, future access points should have at least one of these characteristics: 1) origination from the public right-of-way; 2) origination from a publicly-used promenade; 3) connection through a publicly-used green space; and 4) connection as part of a transit area.

## Development Guidelines

Development Guidelines are meant to support and function alongside the future land use plan. They address development intensity and describe other desired characteristics of development. These guidelines are in part a physical and illustrative representation of the Principles of Greenway-Supportive Development, and were derived from input obtained from Greenway-area residents and stakeholders, as well as the development community. The development guidelines are organized into three primary elements—development intensity, general and private development, and public realm features.

- *Development intensity* - The Development Intensity maps categorize Greenway area property into three Development Districts – Transit-Oriented (most dense and at dominant north-south corridors), Urban-Oriented (consistent with medium density buildings up to five stories), and Neighborhood Oriented (compatible with existing residential neighborhoods). Each district corresponds to a level of development intensity and density related to current and anticipated uses in the Greenway. This approach is consistent with policies in The Minneapolis Plan, which supports housing growth near features such as commercial and community corridors, activity centers and transit station areas.
- *General and private development* – Private development should reflect the shared vision and principles of the plan by paying particular attention to a) the perceptual impact of development intensification, b) how development and related improvements address the Greenway, and c) how new development relates to the surrounding neighborhoods and adjacent development. New developments should mitigate development intensity by utilizing

a variety of building types on larger sites, incorporating open space visible from the public realm, and stepping back the mass of buildings from adjacent properties and the greenway.



- *Public realm features* - Important public realm elements include the 29<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way, Greenway access points and promenades, and future transit station areas. This plan proposes a 56-foot right-of-way for 29<sup>th</sup> Street wherever possible, promenades that include at least twelve feet of public realm, and enhanced public access points and transit station areas. If done correctly, these elements can greatly enhance the function, comfort, safety, and aesthetics of the public realm in the Greenway corridor.

## Implementation

Implementation strategies follow two different paths: 1) ownership and financing strategies for public public realm improvements; and 2) zoning and regulatory recommendations to guide redevelopment.

The public realm features and improvements recommended by this report were prepared within the context of both public desire and the City of Minneapolis implementation process. The public realm features highlighted include streets and sidewalks, promenades, community gardens, parks,

greenway access points and transit station areas. The table below provides recommendations as to what entities should own and manage these public spaces.

Public Space Type	Ownership	Management/Maintenance
Streets & Sidewalks	City of Minneapolis	Maintenance by the City. Snow removal from sidewalks by adjacent landowner, except where Special Services District or Housing Improvement Area provides maintenance
Promenades	Private with public use easement	By adjacent landowner or city under Special Services District or Housing Improvement Area
Community Gardens	Non-profit entity or Park and Recreation Board	By Non-Profit Organization
Parks	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	By Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Greenway Access Points	Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority or adjacent landowner with public use easement	By Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority, adjacent landowner, or by Special Services District or Housing Improvement Area
Transit Station Areas	Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority or adjacent landowner with public use easement	By Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority, adjacent landowner, or by Special Services District or Housing Improvement Area

Upon adoption of the Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan and its subsequent amendment to The Minneapolis Plan, the City’s Zoning Code and Map may need to be modified to correspond to its principles and recommendations. The following zoning and regulatory strategies are recommended:

1. 15-foot setbacks along the Midtown Greenway property line
2. Prohibition of billboards within 300 feet of the Greenway
3. Explicit consideration of shadowing and visual connectedness in conditional use permit applications for additional height
4. Consideration of density variances where private land is dedicated for the purpose of providing one of the identified public realm features

These regulatory strategies complement the development guidelines in shaping development that meets the goals and recommendations of the Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan. It attempts to strike a balance between guiding development by regulation and allowing the flexibility necessary for development to reflect the desires of the community while also remaining of interest to the development community.