



1. Executive Summary

Introduction

Uptown is one of the most strategically located communities in the region. Minutes from downtown and adjacent to the Chain of Lakes, Uptown offers the best qualities of urban living—it is green, well-connected, and urban.

Throughout the past century, Uptown has attracted a mixture of residents, businesses, visitors, and investors. The result is a mixed-income and mixed-use community that is a regional destination for shopping, dining, entertainment, and recreation. It is a haven for artists and a full-service community with access to daily uses and activities for local residents. Furthermore, Uptown has geographic brand recognition unmatched by any other locale in the region.

Residents of Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods are passionate about their community, and investors large and small remain interested in Uptown as a place to do business.

But once again, Uptown is in a state of change. Change is happening quickly on several fronts and is creating a sense of uncertainty among stakeholders.

A renewed interest in urban living spurred proposals for several high profile projects in 2005 and 2006. The absence of a plan directing new development resulted in a fear of increased traffic and loss of neighborhood identity.

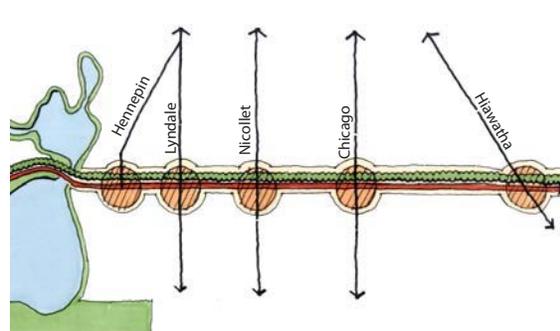


Uptown in the region: Uptown is strategically located near the Chain of Lakes and downtown Minneapolis.

To date, many of the most controversial projects have not materialized, and in the meantime market influences beyond Uptown have resulted in a loss of daily goods and services, a loss in daytime population, and increased commuter through-traffic. Moreover, a few high profile crimes and retail turnovers have added to the sense of unpredictability.

Fortunately, this plan can provide predictability, find common ground, and help make Uptown the leading urban neighborhood it should be. To this end, the Plan:

- Recognizes, protects, and enhances the established neighborhoods of East Isles, Lowry Hill East, East Calhoun, and CARAG.
- Recognizes the value and benefits of high quality, well-located, and well-designed urban density.
- Celebrates Uptown's primary amenities, its adjacency to the Lakes and the Midtown Greenway.
- Prioritizes streets (especially Hennepin Avenue, Lake Street, and Lagoon Avenue) as places for social interaction and urban activity instead of just as conduits for through-traffic.
- Accepts the dual role of Uptown as a regional attraction and a local community.



The Midtown Corridor: Lake Street and the Greenway will facilitate strong growth corridors for mixed-use development in South Minneapolis.

Growth

It is important to encourage growth in Uptown. Growth in Uptown will help bring about positive changes that residents desire. Growth will support transit and pedestrian infrastructure improvements. Growth will help stabilize local businesses and create opportunities for new businesses. Growth can help bring about new open spaces, gathering spaces and improved connections to the Lakes and the Greenway. In short, growth is needed to strengthen Uptown's eclectic urban character.

As important as it is for Uptown to grow, it cannot do so in a sustainable manner without simultaneously stabilizing the edges of existing neighborhoods and creating new and improving existing public spaces. The area's public spaces and neighborhoods are, after all, the foundation for Uptown's quality of life and desirability. This Plan proposes specific patterns of new growth that can achieve the goals of providing development capacity while simultaneously stabilizing the neighborhoods and improving open spaces and streets.

Uptown's growth strategy, as outlined in this Plan has several components. They include:

- Focusing the most intense development in the Core of Uptown.
- Defining the edges of new growth, and shaping the edges of new growth such that transitions to the neighborhoods are clear and predictable.
- Shaping the new growth, and the additional height and density in the Core such that it creates high quality public streets and green spaces.



Current Zoning Analysis, Allowable Height: Current zoning directs growth to different parts of Uptown, including into the neighborhoods.



Proposed Development Intensity: The majority of new development should be directed to the core of Uptown, between Hennepin Avenue and Bryant Avenue, the Greenway, and Lake Street.



Sculpted Building Envelopes: The Plan recommends future development be sculpted to create better transitions and reduced shadowing of public spaces and streets.

Public Participation

The Small Area Plan process took place in three phases over approximately eighteen months. The depth of public outreach was a foundation for the Plan, and the process was open, transparent, and inclusive; all focus group, steering committee, and public meetings were open and accessible. The steering committee met approximately eleven times throughout the process and helped to guide the project. The design team hosted nine community meetings at Calhoun Square and facilitated fourteen focus group discussions. In addition, the team gave regular updates to the Planning Commission and interested groups such as the Midtown Greenway Coalition and the Uptown area business associations. Total meeting attendance exceeded 500 people.

Steering Committee

The Uptown Small Area Plan Steering Committee was selected in June 2006. The committee was made up of:

- One (1) Council Member
- Two (2) representatives from each neighborhood
- Six (6) City Council Member appointees
- One (1) representative from each business association
- One (1) representative from the Midtown Greenway

Responsibilities of committee members included:

- Communicating with appointing organizations.
- Helping to engage the public.
- Advising on the planning process.
- Advising on plan content.
- Balancing the various values.

Other Public Input Sessions

Visioning sessions, focus group meetings, and public input meetings provided opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the planning process.

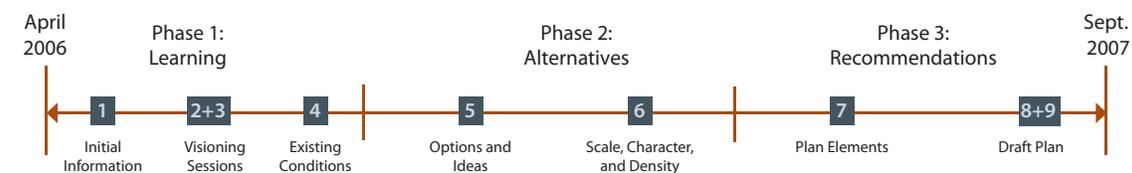
Key points from the visioning sessions included:

- What participants value about Uptown: livability, parks and green spaces, transportation options, unique and quirky character.
- What participants' concerns are about Uptown: transportation and traffic, incompatible development, crime and safety, loss of identity and diversity.

Key themes from the focus group meetings included:

- Business mix is out of balance.
- Parking is a problem.
- Calhoun Square is critical.
- People love Uptown.
- Public infrastructure is poor.

This Plan addresses these concerns by identifying where growth should occur and how it should be designed to create a high-quality environment.



Public Process: The process included nine community meetings. Presentations and feedback sessions were part of each meeting.

Vision

In November 2006, over 100 people attended visioning sessions to discuss their hopes and concerns for Uptown. Participants described the Uptown they want to see in the future. The Vision Statement below is a synthesis of the individual visions.

Uptown is a **welcoming** neighborhood, with a **diversity** of people, places, and architecture.

Uptown is a **green** community. Its buildings, streets, lakes, and parks form a green cityscape that contributes to a sustainable region.

Uptown looks and feels like no other place. It offers its own **urban character** with a dense, mixed-use core of new and old buildings surrounded by quiet, tree-lined neighborhoods.

Uptown is a **vibrant** center of activity where people gather throughout the day and into the evening.

Uptown is a car-optional environment. Walking, cycling, and transit use are the preferred **transportation choices** of many residents and visitors.

Uptown has a rich social and architectural **history** that contributes to and sustains its unique character.

This vision could be used to describe some of the nation's greatest urban neighborhoods, such as the Pearl District in Portland, Oregon, Downtown Santa Monica in Santa Monica, California, and Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C.

Urban neighborhoods like these typically contain a variety of services convenient to a residential population. These include community destinations and gathering places, good access to public transit, and a prominent public realm of parks, plazas, and open spaces. A compact, well-connected pattern incorporates a variety of building types at a range of price points, all set within an area that is comfortable for walking and biking. Uptown can have these characteristics and can be a premier destination location as well.

Goals

The following goals make the vision tangible. They connect ideas with the physical place, and help realize the vision outlined by Uptown stakeholders. The goals are to:

1. Reinforce surrounding neighborhoods.
2. Reinforce a mixed-use core.
3. Establish public open spaces.
4. Improve streets for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit.
5. Improve parking options.



Character Areas

Not all of Uptown is the same. Different parts of the study area have different characteristics and thus should evolve differently over time. This Plan recognizes that change and growth should be informed by the study area's strong context and surroundings, and ensures this happens by organizing the study area in six distinct Character Areas.

Just as the vision and goals reflect variety in thoughts and ideas expressed by the public, the Character Areas come from the variety of characteristics demonstrated by the place itself. Each Character Area has a different economic niche, land use pattern, circulation need, and range of building types, frontage types, and open space. The purpose of defining the different Character Areas is to reinforce the varied urban character of Uptown. Defining the Character Areas helps promote orderly and predictable development.

Hennepin Avenue Commercial Corridor

This area is primarily the retail/service that lines both sides of Hennepin. A healthy mix of neighborhood and commercial serving uses includes established favorites and new emerging businesses. Various building types and parking conditions, including on-street parking, exist in this area. Recent development has been incremental on smaller sites.

Recommended Uses: Primarily mixed-use/commercial

Preferred Heights: Primarily 2-4 stories with occasional buildings up to 84 feet on larger blocks.

West Lake Street Live/Work

This area is an eclectic mix of higher-density housing and residential converted to retail/service uses. Significant features include the lake edge, the Mall, and the heavily traveled one-way Lake Street segment. The area is characterized as live/work partially due to the residential scale of smaller, independently-owned shops and offices. A portion of this area includes the Shoreland Overlay District.

Recommended Uses: Primarily residential/live/work

Preferred Heights: 2-5 stories



Character Areas: Future growth in Uptown will be diverse and varied, yet appropriate to its context.

Urban Village

(North and South Sub-Areas)

Residential development in this area includes a number of for-sale and for-rent developments with others in progress or planned. The Urban Village was envisioned in 1998 as the area immediately north of the Greenway. This Plan expands the definition of the term to include the parcels on Lake Street and Lagoon Avenue.

Recommended Uses: Primarily mixed-use/residential

Preferred Heights: Primarily 3-5 stories with some opportunities for taller buildings up to 84 feet on major corridors (as shown in section drawings throughout the Plan)

Activity Center

The Activity Center is primarily a shopping and entertainment area with an established pattern that relies on traditional store fronts, active sidewalks and a mix of daytime and evening uses. A major focus of this Plan is to define more clearly the area's Activity Center, which is at the crossroads of Hennepin Avenue and Lake Street.

Recommended Uses: Mixed-use/commercial

Preferred Heights: Primarily 3-5 stories with opportunities for taller buildings up to 84 feet on major corridors. (as shown in section drawings throughout the Plan)

South Hennepin Community Corridor

Mostly residential in scale and character, Hennepin Avenue south of 31st Street includes neighborhood serving commercial uses at selected sites and intersections (32nd, 34th, 35th, and 36th Streets). The avenue features a predominance of front yards and several former single-family houses that have been converted to professional office use.

Recommended Uses: Primarily residential/office, small commercial

Preferred Heights: 2.5-3 stories

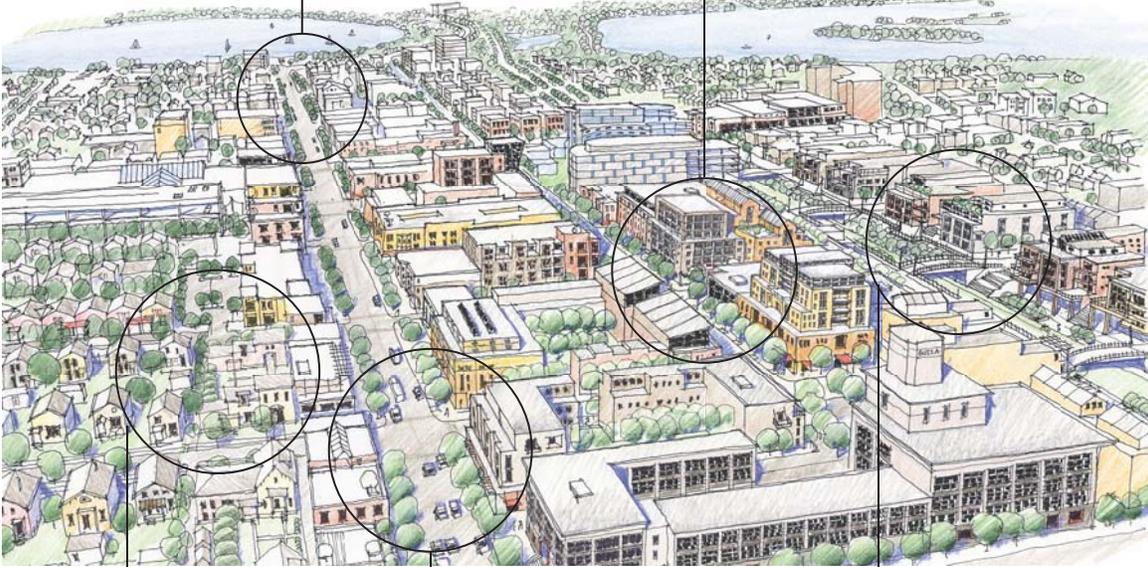
Neighborhood

The neighborhood Character Areas are residential, mostly single-family duplex, triplex and small apartments, and are well established and maintained.

Recommended Uses: Residential

Preferred Heights: 1.5-3 stories

Preferred height is discussed generally on this page. Preferred height is described in stories and is based in large part on the existing building context. Please refer to Section 7: The Plan and Section 8: Plan Elements (Land Use Sub Section) for more detailed discussion on building height, building envelope, and the zoning code. Building scale is more specifically defined in feet later in the document.



Live/Work
 The scale and pattern of development at the Lake edge should respect local scale and pattern; more intense uses are appropriate between Lake Street and Lagoon Avenue.

Core Activity Center/Urban Village South Sub-Area
 The Core Activity Center and Urban Village South Sub-Area are proposed to accommodate more intense and taller development in order to protect the neighborhoods and encourage more consistent development patterns in the neighborhood transition areas and edges. Buildings on the south side of the Greenway should step back from the Greenway to prevent shadowing.

Neighborhoods
 Neighborhood use and pattern are maintained; transitions and edges are more defined.

Lake Street
 Lake Street is proposed as a more pedestrian-friendly street with less pavement dedicated to automobiles. Height and scale of future development on the south side of Lake Street reinforces and responds to the neighborhoods.

Urban Village North Sub-Area
 Recent residential developments on the north side of the Greenway establish appropriate precedents for building type, use, and relationship to the Greenway.

note: all graphics included in this Plan are illustrative and were created at various times throughout a year long process. They represent a long term vision for Uptown, not specific development proposals.

Plan Elements

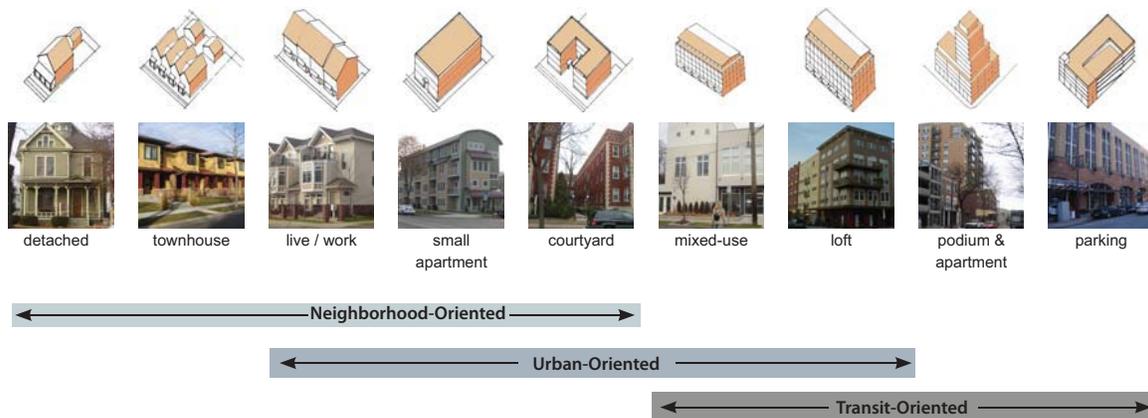
In addition to acknowledging Uptown as a series of different Character Areas, it is important to consider its overall urban fabric. To create a high quality environment, each element of the urban fabric must be studied both independent of and together with each of the other elements. The three main elements of this plan include Built Form, Open Space, and Access.

Built Form

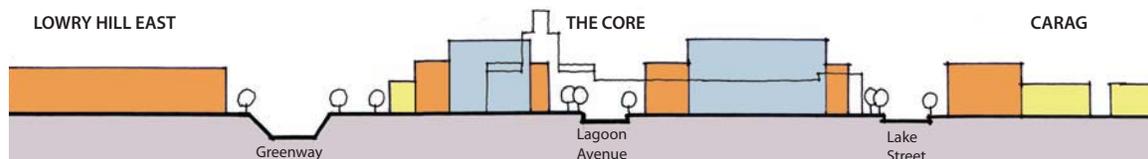
Built Form is further classified as Land Use, Development Intensity, and Physical Features. The Plan provides detail for appropriate implementation of each. Primary recommendations are to:

- Focus growth in areas where it is most appropriate, or where surface parking, underutilized land, large parcels, and market interest is abundant.
- Establish - through design and use - strong, gradual transitions between residential and commercial areas.
- Discourage one-story buildings
- Encourage retail on specific blocks.
- Stitch neighborhoods together by promoting residential uses and low impact neighborhood services on side streets.
- Encourage mixed-use along Lake Street to connect Uptown and Lyn/Lake.
- Identify the area most near the intersections of Hennepin Avenue and Lake Street and Hennepin Avenue and the Midtown Greenway as the “Activity Center,” and contain high intensity entertainment uses in this area.
- Locate tallest buildings along corridors.
- Step back upper floors of buildings to limit shadowing of streets and the Midtown Greenway.

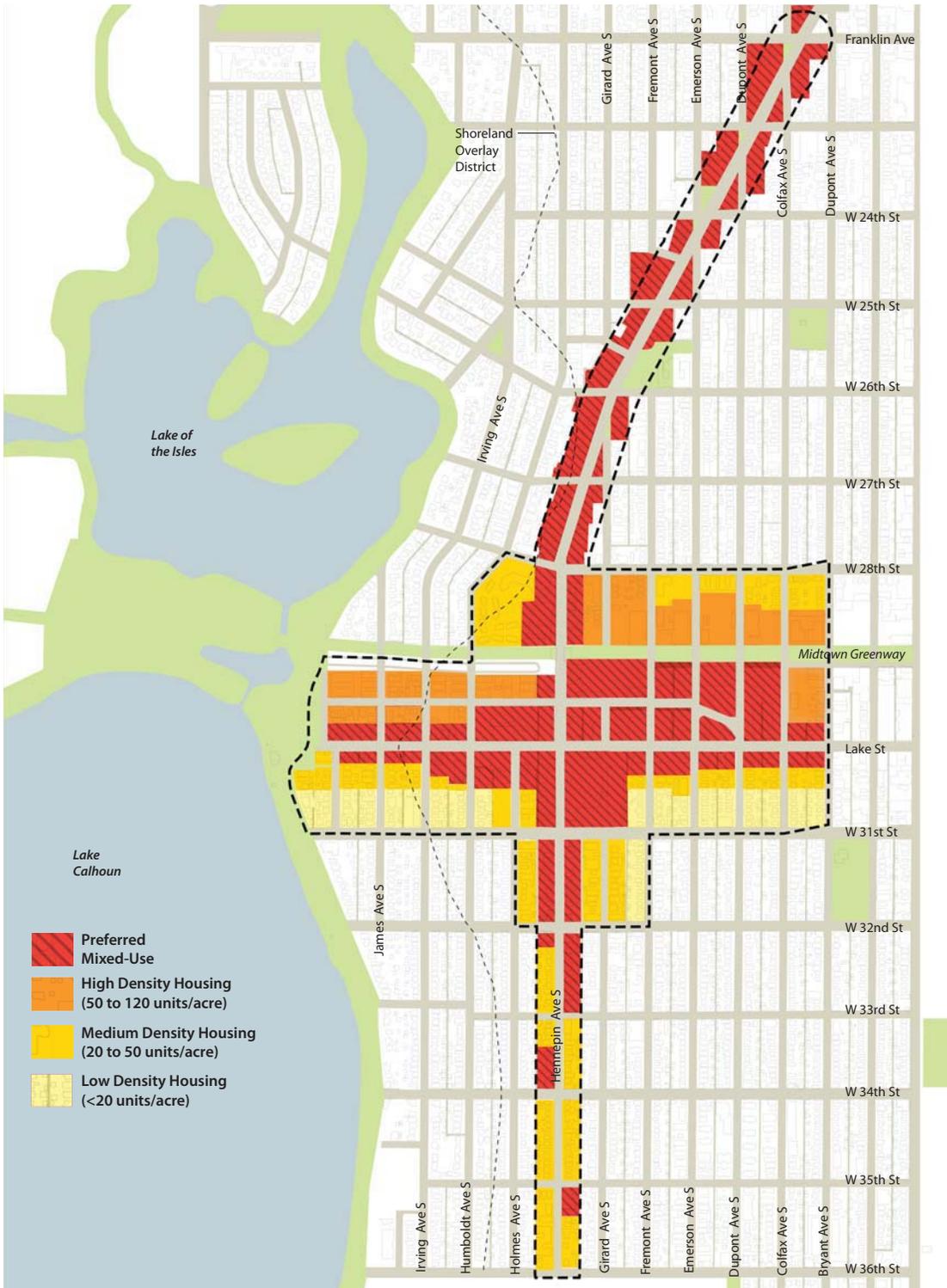
Building Types



Building Types: A range of building types in Uptown will assure transitions are smooth and density is focused in the appropriate locations.



Sculpted Building Envelopes: The Plan recommends future development be sculpted to create better transitions and reduced shadowing of public spaces and streets.

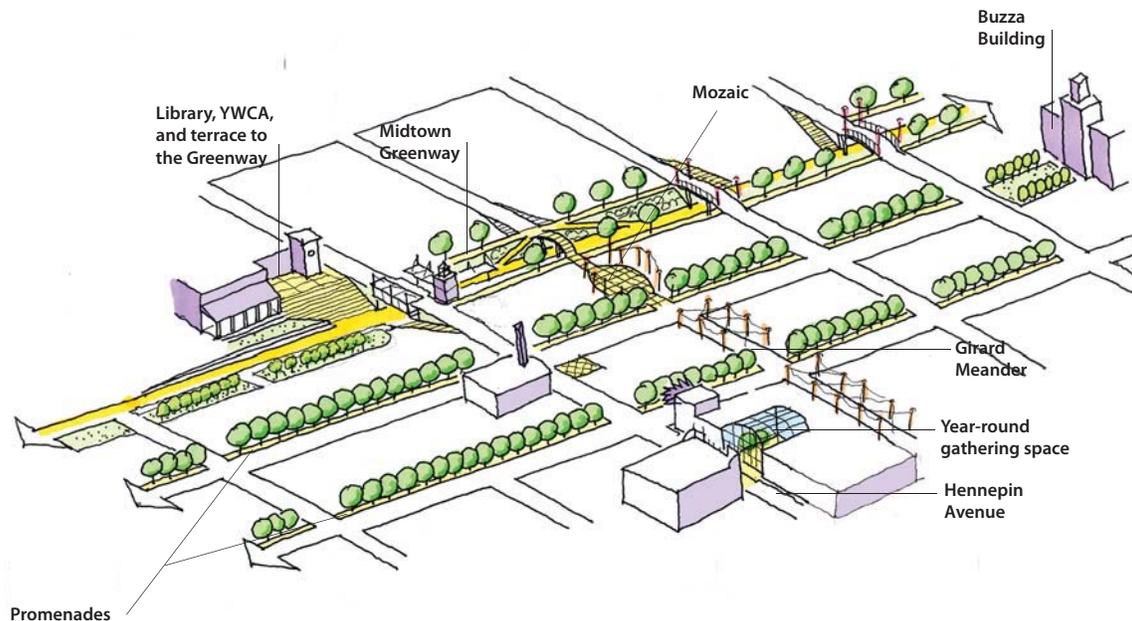


Future Land Use: Suggested land uses focus development in the Uptown core.

Open Space

Open Space is further classified as Public Open Space and Private Open Space. The Plan provides detail for appropriate implementation of each. Primary recommendations are to:

- Create several small urban gathering spaces instead of one large space.
- Create wider sidewalks through setbacks of buildings or narrowing of streets.
- Create broad pedestrian promenades on Lake Street and Lagoon Avenue.
- Establish street level pedestrian promenades on both sides of the Midtown Greenway except where buildings or public open spaces are proposed that open up down in the Greenway.
- Encourage new development on north side of Greenway to animate the Greenway with active, privately owned open spaces.
- Create terraces to the Greenway on development blocks that slope to the Greenway.
- Create a year-round indoor/outdoor space in Calhoun Square.
- Create the Girard Meander, a narrow street with wide sidewalks connecting the Mozaic site and Calhoun Square.
- Create a public open space at the eastern terminus of Lagoon Avenue.
- Create additional triangular urban plazas on the north segment of Hennepin Avenue.
- Pursue public/private funding and operational options to development additional public spaces.



Open Space Ideas: The Plan suggests a more connected public realm and open space network that may include more connections/terraces to the Midtown Greenway, additional sidewalk promenades along Lake Street, and pedestrian/gathering place features such as the Girard Meander and Calhoun Square Winter Garden.

Access

Access is further classified as Pedestrian and Bicycle, Transit, Parking, and Traffic. Primary recommendations are to:

- Promote land uses and development densities that create and support strong transit markets, such as high density housing, employment, and retail.
- Improve bicycle connections between the Greenway and the Uptown core.
- Implement Southwest Transit Corridor through Uptown or extend a streetcar to connect at the future West Calhoun Transit Center.
- Pursue, through public/private cooperation, a circulator along Lake Street and Lagoon Avenue connecting Uptown with the Lakes and Lyn/Lake.
- Support the possible future development of streetcars on Hennepin Avenue.
- Establish shared parking practices between complementary uses such as entertainment and offices.
- Develop district parking lots in the core.
- Shorten the walk distance by providing bump-outs at signalized intersections.
- Reduce lane widths to match East Lake Street standards and consider reducing the lane count on Lake Street east of Hennepin.



District Parking: The Plan recommends locating district parking in the Uptown core to increase wayfinding efficiency and to encourage a “park once” approach.

- Encourage property owners on Hennepin Avenue north of 28th Street to combine parking lots behind their buildings and to connect them to side streets, which would reduce the number of curb cuts, add on-street parking, and reduce mid-block left turns on Hennepin Avenue.
- Make interim/temporary improvements to Lake Street and Lagoon Avenue (re-stripping, curb extensions, countdown timers, and well designed planters) that narrow the travel way and create additional pedestrian space.
- Study the possibility of converting Lake Street and Lagoon Avenue to two-way streets.



Existing Shared Parking



Proposed Shared Parking: The Plan recommends combining parking lots behind buildings along Hennepin Ave. north of 28th Street to reduce curb cuts and mid-block left turns, and to maximize on and off-street parking.

Implementation

This Plan will update the Minneapolis Plan regarding land use and land use designation. Adoption of this Plan by City Council should signal the beginning of a new era for Uptown. The Plan will be implemented over the next 15 to 20 years with both private and public resources. Implementation will amount to significant changes and improvements in Uptown – changes that are both qualitative and quantitative.

The Plan promotes responsible growth. Over the next two decades, Uptown has the potential to accommodate substantial new residential, commercial, retail, and office space. This growth should be directed away from the edges of the residential neighborhoods and toward the core. This growth will bring support for existing and new local businesses.

New growth will broaden the area's housing options, provide new employment opportunities, and bolster the local retail and service base. It also will support transit, help fund public improvements, reduce automobile use, and make a positive contribution to the environment. In addition,

new growth has the potential to contribute to connections to the Lakes, transit connections to Midtown, the southwest and downtown, new plazas and parks, new cultural and community facilities, more efficient parking, and improved and enlarged sidewalks and bikeways.

Together these private and public investments will help Uptown reassert itself as a regional destination for recreation, shopping, and entertainment, as well as stabilize itself as a desirable local mixed-use residential community.

Partnerships and civic cooperation are as important to the implementation of this Plan as the physical legacies described above. This Plan is not a blueprint for how to spend public resources. Rather, it is a document designed to raise investor confidence, form partnerships, and inspire new ideas. The ideas come from vested interests and passions of Uptown's diverse body of stakeholders. The realization of these ideas depends on continued cooperation and coordination between an active public sector, an entrepreneurial private sector, and an engaged citizenry. The result of such partnerships will be a renewed Uptown – a place that embodies the best qualities of urban living in Minneapolis.



New Growth, Old Neighborhoods: The Plan clearly defines intense and taller investment in the Activity Center and Urban Village South Sub-Area (between Lake Street and the Greenway) in order to direct that pattern away from neighborhoods and neighborhood transition areas.