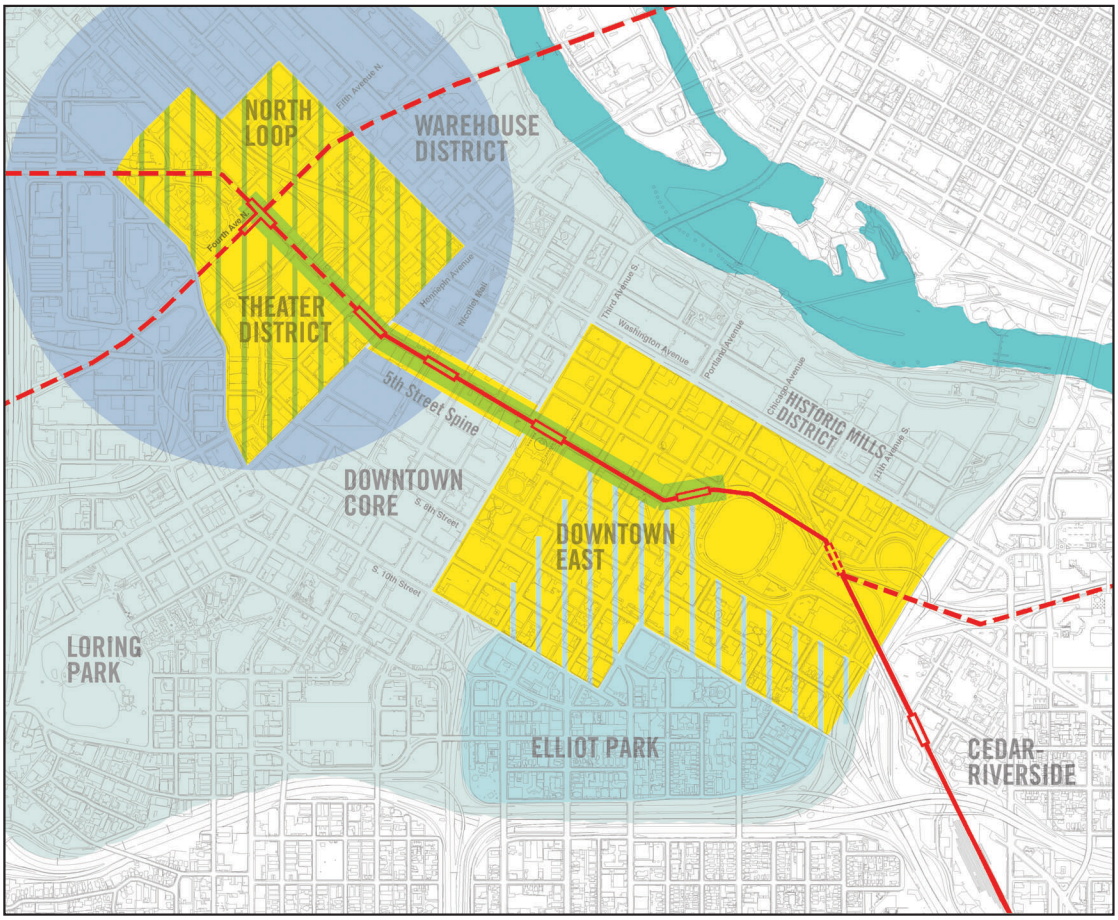

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

DOWNTOWN EAST / NORTH LOOP MASTER PLAN

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IBI GROUP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DOWNTOWN EAST/NORTH LOOP MASTER PLAN: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intention of the Minneapolis Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan is to develop a vision and strategy for how new growth should occur in the underdeveloped districts of Downtown Minneapolis, particularly in those areas that surround proposed rail transit stations. Because a large proportion of space on the eastern and western ends of Downtown is underdeveloped and underutilized, the introduction of rail transit service offers new opportunities to rethink how the economic potential of these districts can be captured. With this goal in mind, the primary objective of the Minneapolis Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan is to encourage renewed interest in living, working, and shopping in Downtown Minneapolis through the creation of a high-quality, easy-to-use physical environment; one that enhances the everyday urban experience. As such, this Master Plan proposes a vision that aims to:

- Articulate the market potential inherent in underdeveloped districts of Downtown.
- Integrate transportation and land use planning in order to encourage and realize more "complete" neighborhoods and communities.
- Capitalize on the introduction of rail transit and encourage a less auto-dependent downtown by concentrating high density, mixed-use development within easy walking distance of transit stations.
- Encourage the design and delivery of high quality public spaces and streetscapes while reinforcing pedestrian linkages to existing downtown amenities.
- Foster the development of mixed-use precincts through modifications to the local regulatory framework in a way that encourages redevelopment while protecting and advancing community interests.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

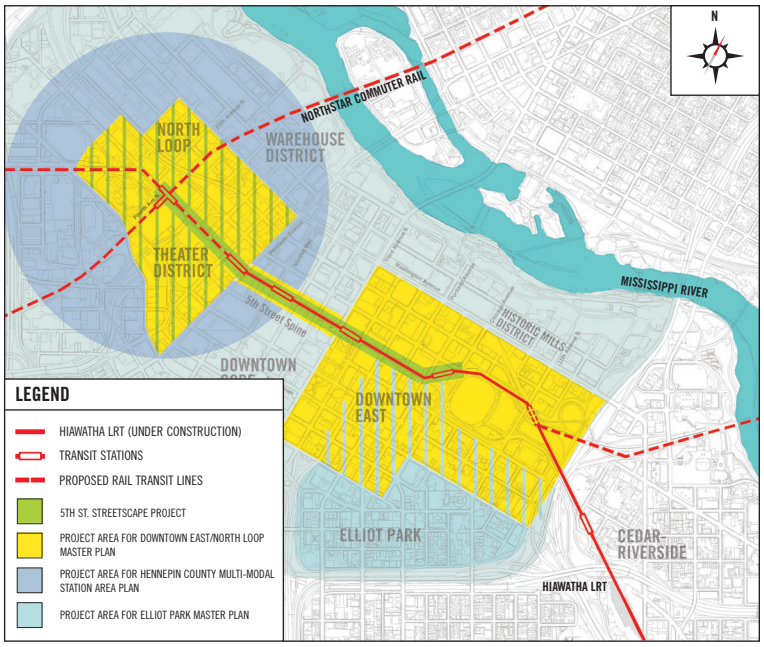
In the summer of 2001, the City of Minneapolis Planning Department commissioned a consultant team led by the IBI Group to complete a Master Plan for two districts adjacent to the Downtown core – Downtown East and the North Loop. The 5th Street Light Rail Transit (LRT) corridor was included because it joins to these two districts together through the Downtown Core. Throughout the second half of 2001 and the first half of 2002, the Consultant Team met on a regular basis with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) convened specifically for this project. During that time, the Consultant Team also conducted four workshops for a larger group of stakeholders known as the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee includes civic, neighborhood, and business leaders that represent various organizations within the Project Area. Likewise, four open houses were conducted in order to engage the general public in process and to seek their input into the Master Plan as it evolved.

The work program followed a general planning sequence beginning with data collection and problem identification. Once this was completed, data analysis was initiated and various alternatives for potential outcomes were generated. These alternatives were reviewed and discussed by the Technical Advisory Committee, the Steering Committee, and the general public. Direction from the participants in these meetings formed the foundation for a series of recommendations and proposals for action and implementation. From these recommendations, a fully developed master plan was compiled as a means to establish and explain the goals, priorities, and vision for emerging redevelopment within the Project Area.

Three other master planning efforts were underway when work on the Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan began: The Hennepin County Downtown Minneapolis Multi-Modal Station Area Plan, The Elliot Park Master Plan, and various ballpark planning efforts. From the outset, it was the explicit intent of the Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan to fully consider overlapping efforts and to formulate policies, tools, and mechanisms that can be used to effect the kinds of proposals brought forward in the combined master planning efforts. Care was taken to fully understand the issues discussed in each of these three parallel projects and to incorporate their findings and recommendations into the Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PROJECT AND MASTER PLAN

The analysis, findings, and recommendations of the Master Plan are arranged into seven chapters in order to articulate both the broad character and the detailed complexity of the subject matter. The first chapter provides background and an introduction to the project and the process.



Map of Project Area

Each subsequent chapter is organized around a common set of themes, issues, and challenges.

Planning Complete Communities: Chapter Two outlines the key principals necessary for encouraging so-called "Complete Communities" in a mature downtown setting. Complete Communities are neighborhoods or districts that are self-sufficient because they are focused on interconnected transit and commercial environments that are surrounded by a diversity of housing types, services, and amenities. They are the product of renewed interest across North America in living, working, and shopping downtown in pedestrian-friendly environments that are intentionally developed to make better, more efficient use of both new and existing urban infrastructure. The chapter begins with a primer on the interrelated goals and objectives of transit-oriented development and mixed-use development. It continues by discussing the wider, emerging trends in urban residential and commercial development in U.S. cities today and considers how these trends might come into play in shaping Complete Communities in Downtown Minneapolis. Special attention must be paid to expanding the number and kind of housing options available, and to renewing the vigor of downtown retail – especially neighborhood-based retail meant to serve a growing downtown resident population. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how Complete Communities can be fostered though transportation, transit, and parking goals that are specifically aimed at making Downtown less auto-dependent.

Attributes of Complete Communities

Market Analysis: Chapter Three summarizes the chief findings of a market analysis of the Central Business District (CBD). The market analysis identifies the existing economic potential within Downtown and describes the possibilities for future development in the Project Area. The analysis begins by looking at Downtown Minneapolis in context with the regional development in the Twin Cities market. From there, the study moves into more detailed analysis of development forecasts for office, residential, retail, and lodging markets in Downtown Minneapolis over a twenty year time frame. Up to seventeen million new square feet of commercial office space is expected, and over four thousand new hotel rooms are likely. Retail growth is expected to be more modest, in that only about one million new square feet of retail space is expected

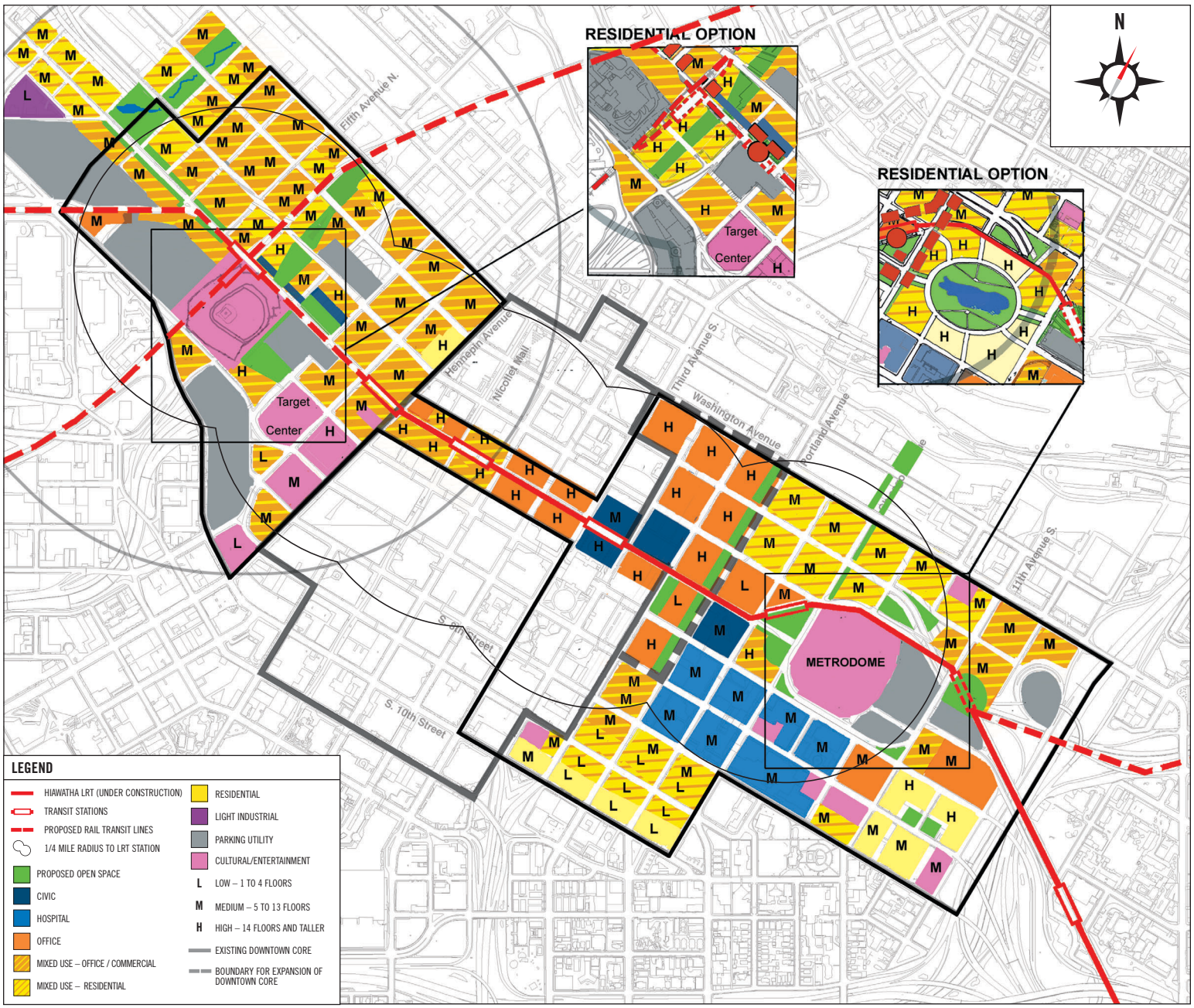
	20-Year Projections for the Entire CBD	Project Area Development / Locations		Alternatives in the CBD but Outside Project Area
		North Loop	Downtown East	
OFFICE SPACE (SQ. FT.)	13-17 million sq. ft.	2-4 million sq. ft.	8-12 million sq. ft. Class-A in expanded core area	New projects in existing Downtown Core and along Central Riverfront
RESIDENTIAL (DWELLING UNITS)	4,000-5,000 du's	750-1,500 du's High end attached housing near: • Entertainment destinations • Light rail station	750-1,500 du's Moderate pricing on inexpensive land; Elliot Park	Riverfront; Elliot Park; Loring Park; Existing Downtown Core
RETAIL SPACE (SQ. FT.)	700,000-1 million sq. ft.	300-400,000 sq. ft. Eating & Drinking near: • Entertainment destinations • Emerging office & residential areas	300-450,000 sq.ft. Grocery along major traffic corridors; convenience/services in skyway; eating and drinking establishments	Riverfront; Existing Downtown Core; Loring Park; Elliot Park
LODGING (ROOMS)	3,700-4,100 rooms	750-1,000 rooms near: • Entertainment destinations	1,000-1,500 rooms; Expanded Downtown Core	Convention Center Existing Downtown Core; Riverfront

Development Niches and Locations

		20 Year Growth Projection	
	Current	Low	High
OFFICE SPACE (SQ. FT.)	36,000,000		
Projected Growth		13,000,000	17,000,000
Avg. Annual Growth		650,000	850,000
Projected Total in CBD		49,000,000	53,000,000
20-Year % Increase		36.1%	47.2%
Annualized % Increase		1.6%	2.0%
RESIDENTIAL (DWELLING UNITS)	11,500		
Projected Growth		4,000	5,000
Avg. Annual Growth		200	250
Projected Total in CBD		15,500	16,500
20-Year % Increase		34.8%	43.5%
Annualized % Increase		1.5%	1.8%
RETAIL SPACE (SQ. FT.)	4,550,000		
Projected Growth		700,000	1,000,000
Avg. Annual Growth		35,000	50,000
Projected Total in CBD		5,250,000	5,550,000
20-Year % Increase		15.4%	22.0%
Annualized % Increase		0.7%	1.0%
LODGING (ROOMS)	5,400		
Projected Growth		3,700	4,100
Avg. Annual Growth		185	205
Projected Total in CBD		9,100	9,500
20-Year % Increase		68.5%	75.9%
Annualized % Increase		2.6%	2.9%

Development Forecasts – Downtown Minneapolis: 2002-2022

in the next twenty years. Most of the anticipated growth in this sector will be in entertainment retailing, restaurants and nightlife, as well as neighborhood-based retail services. Downtown residential growth is forecast to grow by five thousand new developer units. However, five thousand forecasted residential units are considered insufficient for reaching the critical mass required to sustain the ideal of Complete Communities. Importantly, the Consultant Team feels strongly that that figure could easily be doubled to ten thousand new units over the same twenty year time period if proper policy mechanisms are initiated and



Map of Recommended Land Use

adhered to by local government. It should be noted that while light rail transit alone will not make or break the development market, how public policies and ordinances are organized in relation to the line will have a great deal of influence on how quickly and in what shape Downtown market potential will be realized.

Land Use Plan: Chapter Four begins by envisioning the Project Area as thirteen smaller districts or precincts, each of which is the basis for developing a so-called Complete Community. The proposed land uses indicate where changes and refinements are needed in the City's existing land use plan in order to allow for new development scenarios that are complementary to the findings of the market study.

The main thrust of this chapter is the analysis, presentation and public discussion that took place around three different land use scenarios. Three different alternatives 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. Each option was the subject of lively debate within the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the Steering Committee, and among the participants from the general public. After thorough discussion, collective support emerged for the scenario that demonstrated expansion of the existing Downtown Core. This resulted in compilation of a map and a set of recommendations that form the backbone of all work in subse-

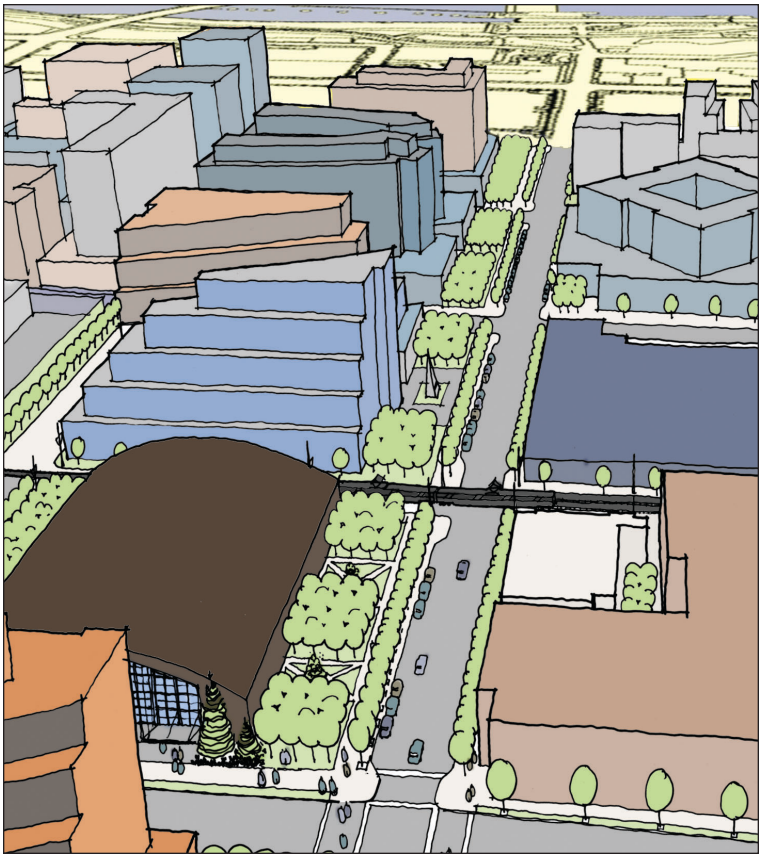
quent chapters of the Master Plan. Highlights of the Recommended Land Use Plan include:

- Concentration of future Class-A Office development within the existing Downtown Core and a new expansion area to the existing core;
- 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. Future construction of "single-use" parking ramps is to be prohibited.
- Promotion of pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, street-facing retail, transit nodes, and neighborhood services that are organized into compact "neighborhood" nodes.

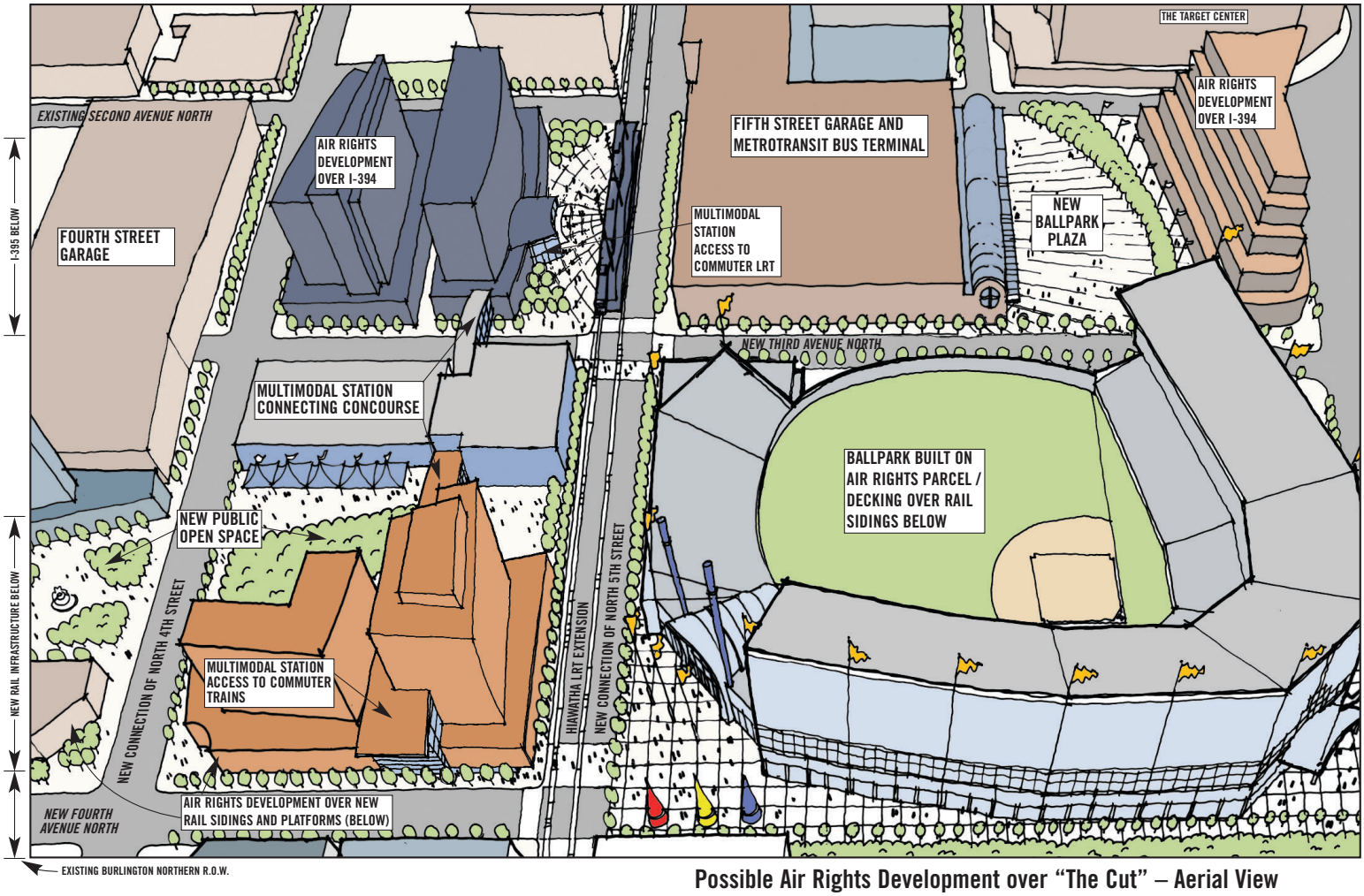
5th Street Streetscape: View looking east from Government Station toward Metrodome Plaza

If there is an overarching distinction about the preferred character for the North Loop, it is rooted in a strong belief that new projects should be geared toward a continuation of medium-density infill development – a continuation of the existing scale and feel of the Warehouse District. In Downtown East, similar medium density development is envisioned. However, it will need to be integrated with the finer grain fabric of the many smaller historic buildings on that side of Downtown. In particular it will need to be sensitive to and supportive of the goals derived from the recently completed Update to the Historic Mills District Master Plan and the Elliot Park Neighborhood Plan.

In addition to considering land uses on existing city blocks, the plan considers two large scale solutions for major sites on each side of the Project Area. First, air rights development over the existing Interstate 394 corridor and the railroad rights of way in the North Loop would create a series of key development sites at the crossroads of rail transit while "re-knitting" the existing Downtown Core with emergent neighborhoods in the North Loop. Second, in the event that over the long term the Metrodome becomes redundant, redevelopment of the site as a mixed-use neighborhood should be considered. Understandably, both concepts are considered long term in nature; each one is worthy of more detailed study in its own right.



Portland Avenue Greenway looking North

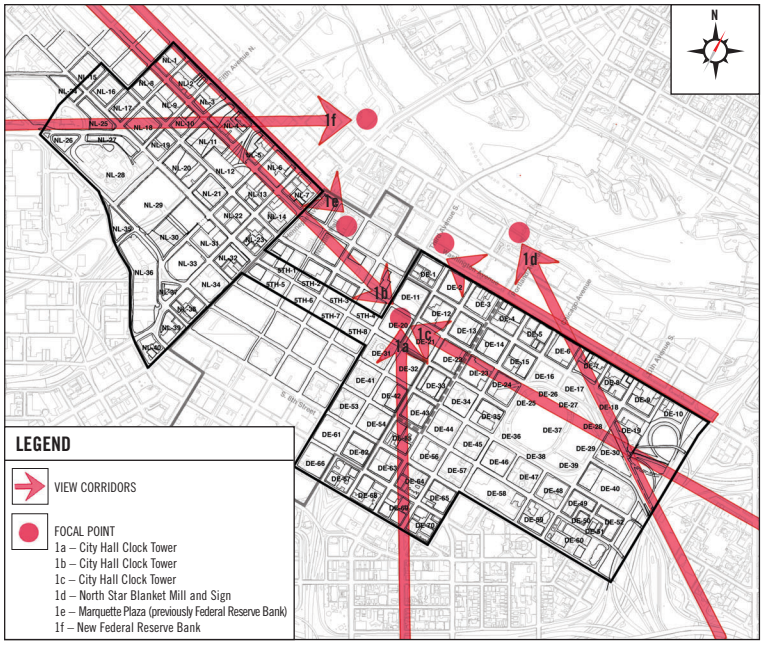


Possible Air Rights Development over "The Cut" – Aerial View

Urban Design Plan: In addition to the new development opportunities throughout the Project Area, the construction of new transit infrastructure offers the opportunity to reshape the public realm in such a way as to tie the outer neighborhoods of Downtown more closely to the commercial core. Infrastructure improvements – such as gateways, streetscapes, and open spaces - should be more firmly integrated into the fabric of Downtown in order to encourage a diversity of uses, activities, and new neighborhoods. Such diversity will at once complement existing downtown development while also creating opportunities to expand the times of the day and week in which various parts of Downtown are active, alive, and vital.

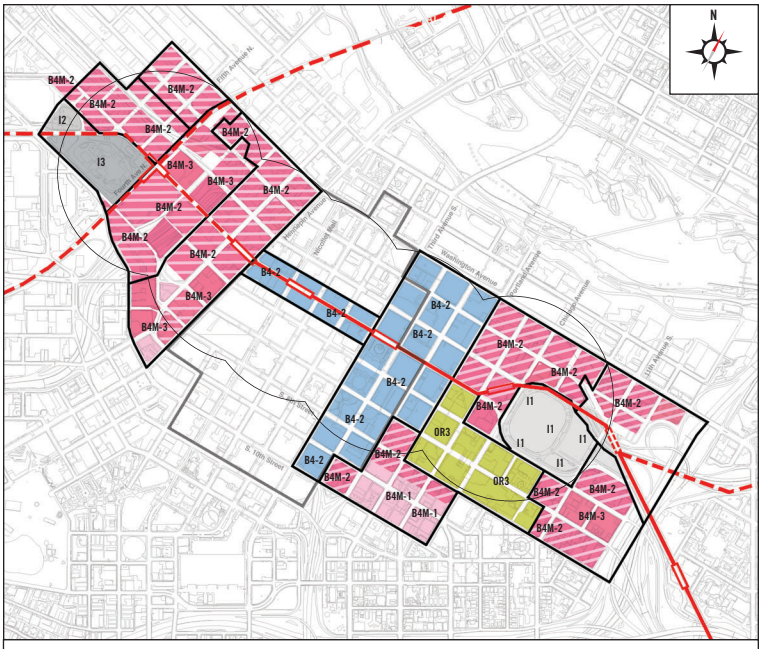
In recognition that the public realm in Downtown East and in many parts of the North Loop is severely lacking in basic necessities such as trees, parks, and pedestrian-oriented environments, Chapter Five sets out the urban design plan for the Project Area. The urban design plan includes a broad range of analysis and recommendations aimed at improving the character and quality of the built environment at a variety of scales – from the broad scope of Downtown as a whole to potential solutions for specific locations within the Project Area. Nuts-and-bolts solutions for how the public realm should be improved start by addressing the basic ways in which the downtown built environment is experienced while moving from place to place. Two detailed case studies demonstrate specific proposals for how to tackle different kinds of urban design challenges: A streetscape for the 5th Street LRT corridor and a plan for street level improvements in the vicinity of the Metrodome and the Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC). In addition, the chapter looks in detail at ways to improve the overall experience of Downtown East and the North Loop by considering the role that gateways and view corridors play in shaping movement into and through Downtown. Finally, an in-depth look at the relationship between the design of individual buildings, the intensity of land uses, and the overall character of the city points out the need for a strong, coherent set of design objectives for future development.

Modifications to the Local Regulatory Framework: Chapter Six considers how the City's primary regulatory tool for guiding new development – the Zoning Code – might be adapted or modified to remove existing barriers that might thwart realization of the vision contemplated. For instance, the basic zoning categories found within the Project Area are evaluated for how well each one is – or is not – suited to accommodating the kinds of change sought in forging Complete Communities. A series of



Map of Gateway Views to Downtown Landmarks

Map of Developable Sites



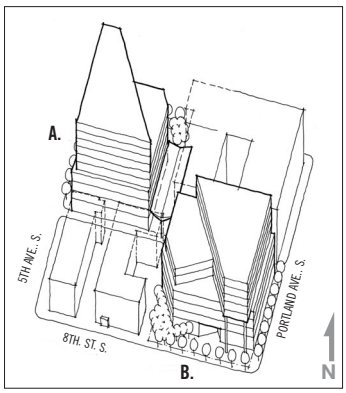
Map of Proposed Zoning Districts

proposals and recommendations show how the Zoning Code should be modified in order to help the development community overcome the challenges inherent in the existing zoning categories, especially as they relate to the goal of creating Complete Communities throughout the Project Area. Specifically, a mixed-use zoning designation should be formally adopted and incorporated into the Zoning Code in order to encourage new opportunities to create such neighborhoods within the Project Area. The suggested name for this new zoning designation is the B4M Downtown Mixed Use District. Sub-categories of this new zoning designation would be B4M-1 (low-rise), B4M-2 (mid-rise) and B4M-3 (high-rise). Furthermore, enhancements to the existing regulatory framework such as as-of-right zoning, built form controls, minimum densities, incentive zoning, and selected fee system modifications are considered as a means to mediate the needs of the development community while protecting the interests of existing and emergent neighborhoods and communities. This analysis puts particular emphasis on developing enhancements to the City's regulatory framework that would help to ensure that improvements to downtown infrastructure and the construction of public amenities proceed in pace with the scale of new development as it comes on line.

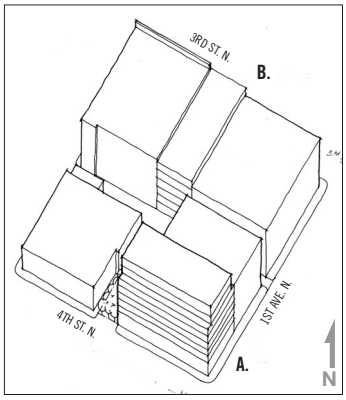
Timing	Precinct Number	Precinct Name	Infrastructure Project
Near-Term	5	Washington Village	Extend Chicago Avenue to South 2nd Street
Near-Term	8	5th Street Spine	Implement 5th Street Streetscape (Chicago Avenue to First Avenue North)
Mid-Term	2	HCMC	Implement Metrodome / HCMC Streetscape
Mid-Term	4	East Washington	Establish new LRT Station at Eleventh Avenue South and South 4th Street
Mid-Term	5	Washington Village	Implement Chicago Avenue Streetscape
Mid-Term	7	Downtown Core Expansion	Construct Electrical substation underneath open space at Portland Avenue Park
Mid-Term	7	Downtown Core Expansion	Eliminate traffic lane on 5th Street (between Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue South)
Mid-Term	8	5th Street Spine	Integrate Nicollet Mall LRT Station with Skyway System
Mid-Term	9	West Hennepin	Extend 5th Street Streetscape west from First Avenue North
Mid-Term	13	The Cut	Incorporate Baseball Park and public plaza into air rights development above The Cut
Mid-Term	13	The Cut	Incorporate multi-modal rail station into air rights development above The Cut
Mid-Term	13	The Cut	Construct New LRT Station along North 5th Street
Long-Term	3	Elliot Park East	Enhance 11th Avenue South with streetscape improvements
Long-Term	4	East Washington	Construct new freeway connections linking I-35W to South 3rd and South 4th Streets
Long-Term	4	East Washington	Relink South 3rd Street to 11th Avenue South
Long-Term	4	East Washington	Deck over freeway entry / exit trenches linking I-35W to South 3rd and South 4th Streets
Long-Term	11	Freeway West	Demolish viaduct to I-94 in the North Loop
Long-Term	11	Freeway West	Re-establish North Loop street grid by reconnecting North 3rd Street and North 4th Street
Long-Term	13	The Cut	Reconnect North 3rd Street and North 4th Street on decking over The Cut

Near-Term = Within 5 years, Mid-Term = Within 15 years, Long-Term = Within 25 years

Infrastructure Investments in the Project Area



Springboard Project A: Illustrative Drawing



Springboard Project F: Illustrative Drawing

Map of Downtown Core Expansion

Implementation and Phasing Plan: Chapter Seven considers the issue of how and when the vision called for in previous chapters of the plan might be implemented into the physical environment of the Project Area. Priorities are suggested to help the City move forward with enhancements to infrastructure and the public realm in a way that that will help to prime and reinforce the development market. Likewise, in an effort to help the development community understand the potential that lies within the Project Area, the second section of the chapter lays out the key development objectives and projects that will be necessary to implement the vision called for in the Master Plan. Notably, it proposes a series of individual "springboard projects" that are intended to illustrate how the principles of the plan are applied in selected locations throughout the Project Area.

The Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan was approved by the Minneapolis City Planning Commission and the Minneapolis City Council in October 2003. The plan is posted in its entirety on the City of Minneapolis website at http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/citywork/planning/index.html. For further information, please contact the Project Manager, Jack Byers, at (612) 673-2634 or e-mail inquiries to jack.byers@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.