

What is the Central Corridor ?

The Central Corridor stretches 11 miles from its western terminus at the downtown Minneapolis multi-modal hub to Saint Paul's Union Depot - connecting the University of Minnesota, Midway shopping and industrial districts, and the State Capitol along the way.

Within this geography a new light rail transit service is proposed to travel within the right-of-way of existing major streets, including Washington Avenue, University Avenue, Cedar Street and Fourth Street.

What is the study area?

The study area consists of University Avenue and adjacent neighborhoods from the Minneapolis/Saint Paul boundary through the State Capitol Area and surrounding environs, as well as downtown Saint Paul.

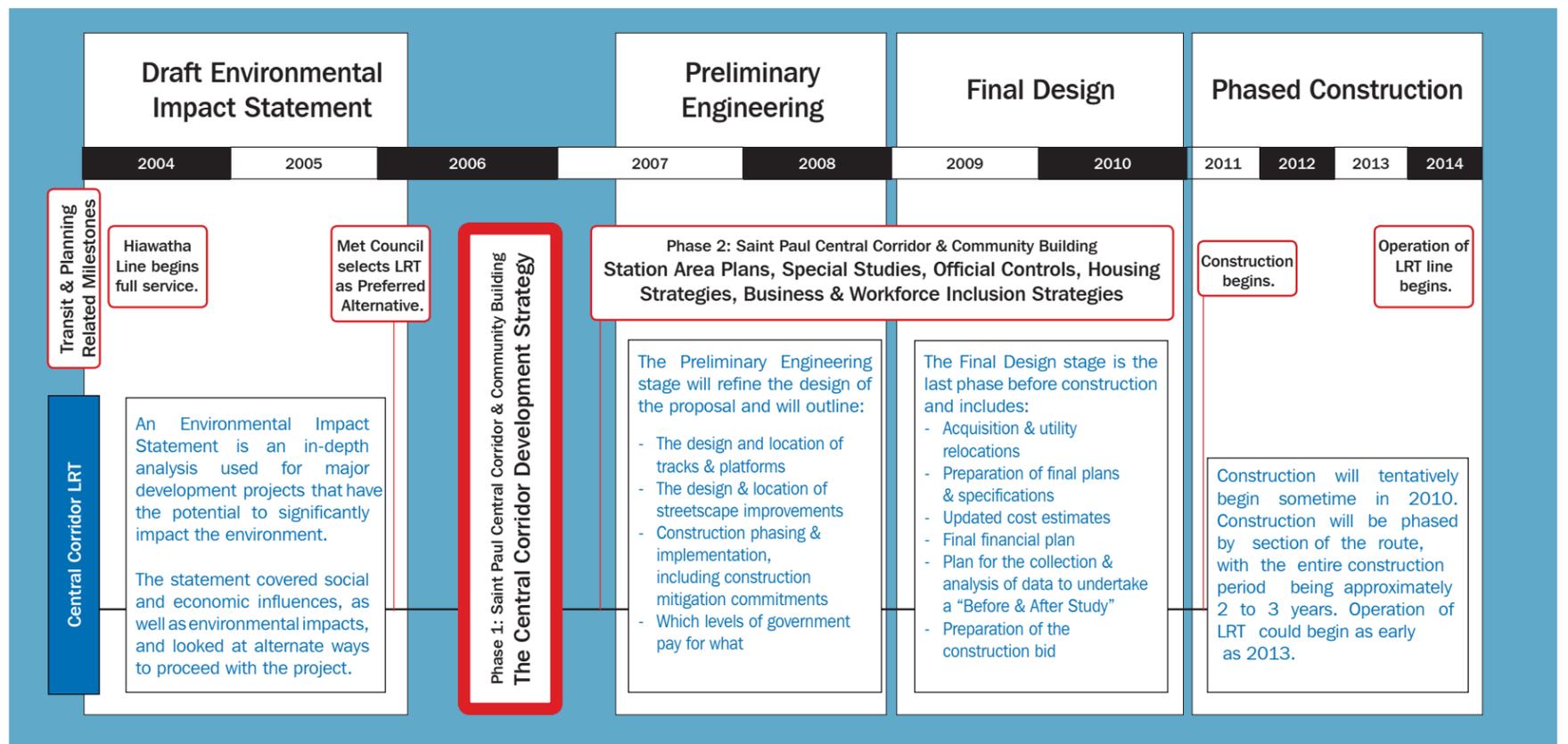
What was the study process?

The process for development of the Light Rail Transit project is shown right. It sets the time-line for finishing this phase I of community planning and establishes that subsequent land use planning, zoning and development planning should be predominantly completed by the end of 2008.

Complimentary to the LRT Process is the Central Corridor Development Strategy. This was commenced in June 2006, immediately following the approval of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The Mayor-appointed task forces will consider the recommended Development Strategy in February 2007 with a final presentation and submission to the Saint Paul Planning Commission and City Council in the Spring of 2007. Extensive public consultation and collaboration - with the task forces, Central Corridor businesses, area residents and other stakeholders - occurred throughout each phase of the study process. The recommendations, strategies and initiatives described in this document grew out of that dialogue, and are firmly based in community, task force and stakeholder aspirations.



The Central Corridor and Development Strategy Study Areas.



The Central Corridor LRT Timeline and Key Milestones.



Task Force meetings and working sessions informed the Development Strategy at each stage of the process.



Three community open houses were held.

Key Events in Preparation of the Central Corridor Development Strategy

<p>Phase 1 Understanding: Investigation, Analysis & Reconnaissance</p>	<p>Jun 2006 - Sep 2006</p>	<p>Analysis & Research: an assessment of current and emerging conditions, including movement, market, transportation and parking, urban structure, relevant policy framework documents, and best-practices review</p>	<p>Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups: Interviews with key stakeholders, City staff and focus groups provide an important local transfer of knowledge to the study team</p>	<p>Mayor's Task Force Meetings: visioning and brainstorming sessions to document key issues, concerns, objectives</p>	<p>Staff Workshops and Review Sessions: regular meetings and discussions with City staff to develop and review preliminary ideas</p>	<p>Community Open House #1 Sep 16, 2007: Phase 1 research and workshop findings; discussion of study process, LRT proposal and precedents; collecting community input and ideas</p>
<p>Phase 2 Exploring: Preliminary Directions for a Central Corridor Vision and Guiding Principles; Future Development Potential; Community-Based Initiatives for the Corridor</p>	<p>Aug 2006 - Dec 2006</p>	<p>Mayor's Task Force Meetings: meetings to review preliminary Vision and Principles, development precedents and community-building initiatives</p>	<p>Staff Workshops and Review Sessions: regular meetings and discussions with City staff to review direction of study process and outcomes</p>	<p>Community Open House #2 Oct 25 & 27, 2006: Future Development – where and what it should look like; Vision, Principles & Objectives for the Corridor; 84 Initiatives for Community-Building</p>		
<p>Phase 3 Testing: Preliminary Implementation Strategies and Redevelopment Concepts</p>	<p>Nov 2006 - Jan 2007</p>	<p>Mayor's Task Force Joint Meeting Nov 30, 2006: public meeting to present redevelopment concepts, public realm recommendations</p>	<p>Staff Workshops and Review Sessions: regular meetings and discussions with City staff to test and develop regulatory recommendations; refine redevelopment concepts</p>			
<p>Phase 4 Recommending: Final Redevelopment Concepts; Implementation Strategies & Community Building Initiatives</p>	<p>Jan 2007 - Spring 2007</p>	<p>Mayor's Task Force Meetings: meetings to review recommendations of Draft Development Strategy; revised redevelopment concepts</p>	<p>Staff Workshops and Review Sessions: meetings to review Draft Development Strategy, including revised regulatory recommendations and revised redevelopment concepts</p>	<p>Community Open House #3 Feb 15 & 16, 2007: presentation and discussion of Draft Development Strategy</p>	<p>Draft Review & Revision Period: Staff and task force meetings to review Draft Development Strategy and provide recommendations on final document</p>	<p>Final Presentation: Joint presentation to Mayor, City Council and Planning Commission of the Development Strategy</p>

What We Heard

The Central Corridor does not speak with one voice, but contains many different languages, ethnic groups, interests, socioeconomic groups and histories. Each possess opinions, concerns and ambitions with respect to future development within the Central Corridor, which we have tried to capture throughout this process. The following excerpts have been selected as broadly representative of the many voices we heard. Some are competing, others supportive, but all are interesting and important.

I am not against the LRT, but I want it to work for the community **LRT must help the entire community 'move up'** This is an opportunity to put Saint Paul 'on the map' **Maintaining both street life and skyway life downtown is difficult, and Saint Paul is doing neither very well** You have to be on high alert to ride a bicycle on University Our neighborhood is not a Park & Ride for Wisconsin commuters **The #16 bus is a lifeline for this community** We need a Green Strategy that promotes sustainable development along the Corridor **This investment should assist in creating living wage jobs** **Stations and trains must be accessible to people with limited mobility** Buildings should be 3 to 4 stories maximum **Buildings should be 4 to 5 stories maximum** Station design should celebrate the diverse heritage along the corridor **Distinguishing stations the way Hiawatha was done is inefficient and expensive to maintain** **We need to fill in the harmful gaps along the Avenue** **We need alternatives to homogenous Big Box retail** **The Big Box stores fulfill an important function in this community** We need more parks and gathering spaces along the Avenue **Diversity is the Avenue's greatest asset** **Union Depot is the spark** **Lowertown needs** **Neighborhoods have turned their backs to University and each other. This is the chance to re-connect them** **There are few places to walk and get coffee along University** **Walking and cycling – to jobs, to a transit station, to the corner store – must become attractive and safe alternatives to driving** **The I-94 is a physical and psychological barrier – the LRT must avoid creating this same impression** **Better north-south connections with University are critical** **4th Street should become an Avenue of Arts & Sciences**

Moving through the Corridor - Today & Tomorrow

University Avenue evolved as a major transportation corridor between Saint Paul and Minneapolis - first as a shared automobile and streetcar corridor, along which many of the neighborhoods that exist today first emerged; and later, after construction of I-94 in the 1960s and the termination of the streetcar, as a heavily-trafficked throughfare serving approximately 22,000 bus riders and 28,000 automobile trips per day.

As lanes were widened and concessions made to accommodate the increase in vehicular volume on I-94, entire neighborhoods were displaced. In a pattern repeating itself across North America, commercial development along traditional main streets and corridors began to orient itself exclusively to the demands of vehicular parking and access. In Saint Paul, the urban structure, activity, and movement along the Avenue became characterized by parking lots, wide lanes, a lack of connectivity and fewer comfortable options for walking.

Cities are changing, however. A combination of demographic shifts, traffic congestion and a renewed preference for living in urban areas is requiring us to create more-balanced transportation systems. Our movement corridors today must integrate many layers of movement within their boundaries: pedestrians, buses, light rail, automobiles, commercial traffic and bicycles.

The following themes reflect current conditions, patterns and issues with respect to mobility in the Corridor as observed by area residents and stakeholders. Each is followed by a set of key directions for future decisions affecting how people move through the Corridor.

Theme 1: Putting the Pedestrian First

As noted above, the Central Corridor today is dominated by automobiles and auto-oriented uses. Pedestrians report feeling neglected, even unsafe, by the volume and prominence of automobiles, a lack of passive surveillance, and general lack of amenity provided for pedestrians.

A pedestrian-priority approach to movement is one that puts the pedestrian first in the decision-making equation. This equation includes all variables affecting the design and orientation of buildings, streetscape treatments, network of sidewalks and crosswalks, regulation of parking provisions and access, placement of LRT stations, installation of public art, and creation of new parks and open spaces.

Theme 2: Enhancing Existing Transit Service

A major investment in public transit should provide a 'lift' to all those for whom transit is a part of their daily lives. Residents are fearful of being 'left behind' by this addition, which is perceived by some as serving 'outside' demand at local expense. Any shift towards a two-tiered transit system, wherein one level or type of service is enhanced to the detriment of another, should be avoided.

This can be accomplished by pursuing three main objectives:

- First, **a commitment to maintain local transit service at current service levels.** The frequency of local service provided by the #16 bus, often described as a "life line" for the community, is critical to meeting the day-to-day needs of residents who work and shop in the Corridor, a number of whom rely on bus service as their sole means of transportation. A combination of LRT and bus service should continue to fully serve this ridership segment. Also, if the #16 service level is reduced and station distances remain 1 mile apart within the eastern segment of the Corridor, provide circulator service to the LRT line to ease transportation access to planned station where there is a high concentration of transit dependent population (elderly, people of color, students, disabled).
- Second, **improve north-south connections to LRT from neighborhoods and destinations adjacent to the Avenue.** Explore the use of circulator buses to serve neighbors adjacent to the LRT line along University Avenue to encourage access to business and to transit. This may help to lessen 'hide and ride' activity in neighborhoods and is a must for commuters who wish to access LRT at the most convenient location. The Central Corridor is the spine along which a number of Saint Paul's major destinations, employment centers and central neighborhoods are located. However, many of these fall outside a comfortable, five-minute walk of planned transit stations. Enhanced north-south bus service will expand the ridership base for LRT, increase modal splits for major commercial and employment uses, and improve access and mobility options for central area residents, especially those who are transit-dependent.
- Third, **complement current transit service in the downtown with a downtown circulator.** Structure bus service to more effectively serve the circulator needs of riders, particularly to the SMM/RiverCentre complex, Saint Paul College/Cathedral Hill area and Metro State University.

Theme 3: Preserving Opportunities for Future Stations

Just as the preservation of Union Depot has permitted its planned reuse as a regional transit hub, or the creation of a long-term vision for the Athletic Club Block can initiate momentum and support for its future development, so too should the identification of future LRT expansion opportunities start today. Residents have expressed strong interest in new stations on University at Western Avenue, Victoria Street, Hamline and/or Cleveland Avenue/Transfer Road as well as future extensions to Wacouta Commons and the East Metro.

Where stations cannot be added initially, accommodating for future stations may include: ensuring base infrastructure is put in place to minimize the cost of adding stations in the future; promoting transit-supportive densities and mix of uses along possible routes; planning for future parks and open spaces; and the creating and/or revising of precinct and small area plans.

Theme 4: Maximizing Parking Efficiency

There are currently over 250 acres of surface parking located within a five-minute walk of the proposed LRT line. Many of these large paved areas are under-utilized, the presence of which contributes to the experience of the Corridor as an auto-dominated environment. Despite the large amount of surface parking, area businesses have documented portions of the Corridor where there is currently insufficient parking to meet local business needs, and are concerned with the anticipated net loss of approximately 800 on-street parking spaces due to LRT. In addition, residents frequently cite 'Hide & Ride' impacts on local streets as a key concern.

Clearly, the management of parking along the Corridor will be critical issue in the implementation of LRT. One of the keys to addressing these concerns is to shift from a single-user to a pooled resource approach in the provision of parking. Second, it will be important to maximize the efficiency of on-street parking through design, enforcement, and potential user fees captured by metered parking. Third, the potential variances to current parking standards and allowing for some creativity in their application must be explored. Finally, there may be need for proactive public, private and community-based partnerships to secure shared structured parking facilities.

Theme 5: Promoting the Co-Existence of Cars and Transit

The tension between private automobiles and public transit is universal. In every city where these two modes share roadways, advocates of one can be expected to cast blame on the other for worsening congestion, clogging intersections, and draining public resources for maintenance and expansion.

To address this seemingly inherent conflict, we must seek opportunities to integrate cars and transit - rather than segregate or prioritize one at the expense of numerous transit-oriented and place-making objectives. For example, the construction of a grade-separated crossing over a busy intersection, as a means to facilitate through auto traffic, could potentially introduce enormous physical constraints to the development potential of strategic Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) sites, and should only be considered if pedestrian accommodations and redevelopment potential is enhanced by such a design.

Market Conditions and Potential

Light rail transit has the potential to create opportunities in real estate markets.

There are a number of factors that shape market opportunity, including supply/demand market dynamics, demographic trends, regulation of development through zoning ordinances, and the responsiveness of government to encourage and facilitate private development. Other important factors and market influences include the availability and suitability of developable (or redevelopable) land or properties at feasible price levels, streetscape amenities and the availability of financing.

In addition, LRT and/or proximity to an LRT station can enhance or amplify a market opportunity that already is present or accelerate the timing of an opportunity that is trending toward development feasibility. Where market support is marginal, LRT in some, but not all, cases may tip the scale toward positive feasibility. There are several new projects springing up along the Hiawatha Line where this has been the case. However, market support, as determined by supply/demand dynamics, and a site's particular competitive locational attributes, are the most important determinants of development success.

The Saint Paul Central Corridor: A Market Overview

From a real estate standpoint, the Central Corridor is not one real estate market, but five distinctive sub-markets, each with visibly different land use characteristics, and dramatically different demographic profiles. The five sub-markets that comprise the Central Corridor are defined and illustrated on the facing page.

Population, households and employment for the Central Corridor are expected to grow by a factor of at least 20%-25% between 2010 to 2030. This translates to approximately 11,000 to 14,000 new housing units (both for sale units and rental units) and a population increase ranging between approximately 20,000 to 30,000. In general, the strongest part of the Central Corridor, from a real estate market perspective, is the West Market Area. Income and degree of home ownership diminishes as one moves from west to east along University Avenue toward the State Capitol.

West and Central Market Area

The West Market Area contains very promising development potential, especially from 2010-2015. Positive market demand is already being demonstrated in this sub-market. The Central Market Area is ripe for more intense residential development. A finer-grained, more pedestrian-oriented retail and employment environment oriented towards the Avenue would help to complement the significant retail base that is already present. In the presence of the Midway Shopping Center and "big box" shopping centers, and with market confidence and synergy flowing from the planned Super Target and other potential developments, there may be support for the addition of 3-4 large-format retail stores within the 20-30 year study period. Attention to the sensitive design and placement of these structures will be warranted in the context of an evolving transit-supportive regulatory framework. New housing in the Central Market Area Shopping District should be a diverse mix of rental apartments, for-sale medium-density units, student housing and life-cycle housing for seniors in all price ranges. Densities of 50-75 units per acre and building heights up to 4-8 stories are warranted by the market.

East Market Area

The East Market Area presents market development challenges, at least in the early years of the LRT. The predominance of several ethnic populations with relatively low incomes will require that development be carefully targeted to the needs of the Thomas-Dale, Summit-University and Lexington-Hamline neighborhoods. The small storefronts and independent retailers in the East Market Area should be supported and the businesses preserved (either in existing buildings or as tenants in new projects). The streetscape should be significantly upgraded to strengthen the real estate potential of the area. Promising development opportunities will be rental housing with a mix of both affordable and market-rate units in the early years, introduction of ownership housing in the 2020-2030 time frame. Two- and three-story structures along University are appealing to the Hmong entrepreneurs prevalent in the East Market Area. The World Cultural Heritage District incorporating, for example, the Historic African American Rondo Heritage District and a Pan Asian Village branding concept has market validity in this stretch of University, if realistically scaled. There are a number of vacant or underutilized sites in the East Market Area with redevelopment potential that must be shaped to address the development needs and aspirations of this segment of the Corridor.

Capitol Market Area

The Capitol Market Area will continue to be dominated by office pressures and retail demand serving primarily State government workers. The Sears site represents one of the most potent redevelopment sites in the entire Central Corridor, with the potential for an exciting, mixed-use urban village containing 1000+ residential units, and over 700,000 square feet of new employment space in the form of retail and office uses.



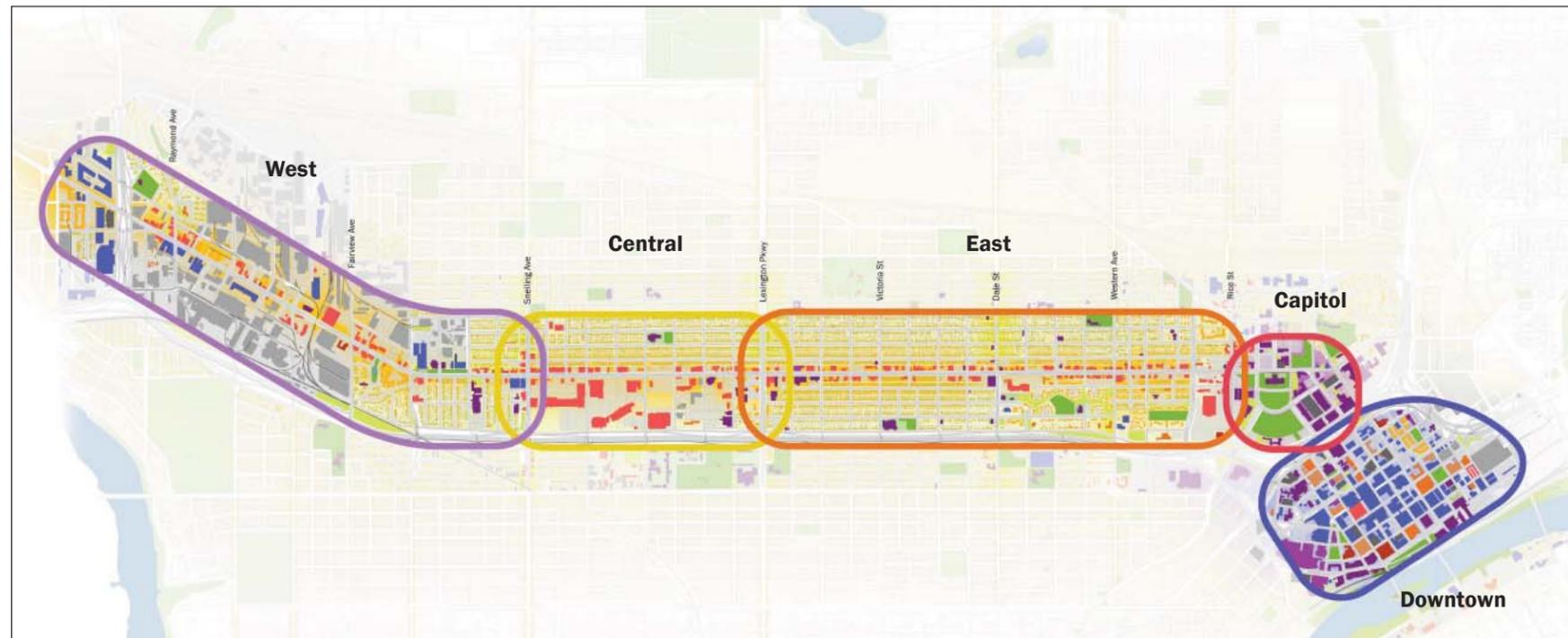
The West and Central Market areas have the potential for a diverse range of rental and for-sale medium-density units such as these examples in Westgate (top) and Wacouta Commons (bottom).

Downtown Market Area

Downtown Saint Paul is largely built-up with limited sites for significant redevelopment or infill. The retail landscape is likely to change, with more retail development appearing on the street level near station stops and major upgrades to skyway retail near station stops. Within the horizon of the 20-30 year study period, a significant redevelopment of the Athletic Club Block at 4th and Cedar could occur, the potential for which would be considerably aided by an on-site connection to LRT, and by convenient links to the current bus system and planned regional transit hub operating out of Union Depot. This mixed-use, landmark redevelopment could take several forms, including a base building with a large bank, grocery store or cultural institution at its concourse and lower levels, and different configurations of towers with residential, hotel and office uses - each important components in reaching the critical mass of people and economic activity needed to support neighborhood businesses in the downtown. It is not likely this development would occur in response to latent market demand for the above-mentioned uses. Rather, it will instead require a coordinated marketing and design effort to secure a primary, prestige tenant interested in realizing the benefits of this unique development.

Likely Growth Around the Station Stops

Market analyses and both supply-side and demand-side studies were performed for the 12 station areas within a 1/4-mile radius, or approximately a five-minute walk of each station. Based on this research and analysis, likely growth or initial market direction has been forecasted for each Saint Paul LRT station area stop. The results are summarized in the table to the right.



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Two- and three-story "work-live" structures such as these along University Avenue will continue to be attractive to small businesses in the East Market Area.

Estimated Development Potential of Each Station Area

Station Area	Potential Number of Residential Units		Potential Office Space	Potential Retail Space	Status of Existing Industrial Uses	Potential Number of Hotel Rooms
	Rent	Own				
Westgate	1,500-2,000	300-500	700,000 sq ft	45,000 sq ft	Mostly Preserved	150
Raymond	500-600	250-500	950,000 sq ft	60,000 sq ft	Mostly Preserved	-
Fairview	400-500	200-300	300,000 sq ft	70,000 sq ft	Slightly Reduced	-
Snelling	500-600	300-400	300,000 sq ft	450,000 sq ft	-	150 (Future)
Lexington	200-250	75-150	150,000 sq ft	90,000 sq ft	-	-
Dale	400-600	50-100	50,000 sq ft	50,000 sq ft	-	-
Rice	150-200	800	750,000 sq	100,000 sq ft	-	200 (Future)
Capitol	150-200	N/A	50,000 sq ft	50,000 sq ft	-	200 (Future)
Downtown Area	5,000-6,000	500-1,000	2,350,000 sq ft	100,000-150,000 sq ft	-	300 (Future)
Totals (Rounded)	9,000-11,000	1,750-3,000	5,600,000 sq ft	1,015,000 sq ft		1,000