In Downtown

Union Depot

LRT provides an important opportunity to reinstate Union Depot as a prominent gateway to the city and a multi-modal hub in the Twin Cities regional transport network. As both the beginning and terminus of LRT in Saint Paul, Union Depot and the areas around it will take on heightened significance in the future as not only the heart of the Lowertown Urban Village but as an important regional destination.

The terminus of LRT in front of Union Depot's head House on Fourth Street results in a remarkable opportunity to activate the station and the areas around it. By treating this forecourt area, from station steps to adjacent building face, as a large pedestrian-friendly zone, an opportunity exists to transform the area from a vehicular-dominated drop off zone into a more vibrant pedestrian quarter.

A new focus around Union Depot has the potential to result in a number of positive changes to the area, including the infill and intensification of existing surface and structured parking surrounding the station, and the extension of a pedestrian network of streets both in downtown and south towards the Mississippi River. As these new development and public realm initiatives move forward, further opportunities to activate the streets through the location of active at-grade uses should be pursued.

The rendering at right illustrates what the front of Union Depot might look like. In it, the area in front of Union Depot has been transformed into a large pedestrian-friendly zone with special streetscaping treatments and landscaping. The existing drop-off has been transformed into a large plaza that will act as a gateway to the city and is capable of handling the increased activity through the area. The added exposure resulting from LRT has encouraged the redevelopment of a two-story parking ramp across from the station into an "Urban Infill" development (see page 57) that helps to frame the plaza. In its place now sits a residential development that both maintains the historic style and character of the neighborhood and has active uses at-grade.