

LRT Zones

The Saint Paul stretch of the Central Corridor is over six and a half miles long. While the full length of this corridor should strive to be a pedestrian-friendly environment, there are key areas that should be designed and operated as pedestrian-priority zones. In these areas, the design of the public realm should place the pedestrian as the priority consideration. Elements such as special paving, enhanced landscaping and signage should be used to allow for the intermingling of the various modes of transport including LRT, buses, cycling, walking and driving.

It is at station areas where this concern for the integration of movement modes is of greatest concern. Here, emphasis should be placed on the ease and safety with which pedestrians can get to and from LRT. In practice, this means extending this zone of pedestrian priority to the next point of transfer, whether it be bus, bicycle, or a walking destination. Along the Central Corridor, it is these areas that have been designated as LRT Zones.



An LRT Zone in Portland, Oregon illustrating the generous crossings and decorative paving that help to enhance legibility and create a comfortable place for both pedestrians and vehicles using the street.

Strategies to be considered for the creation of pedestrian-friendly LRT Zones along the Avenue include:

- Define station areas as special places by providing streetscape treatments that consist of:
 - decorative paving to improve legibility and enhance awareness of LRT;
 - generous pedestrian crossings to transit platforms, at station areas and key intersections;
 - signage and way finding to direct people to and from transit stations and key destinations in the community;
 - bollards or similar features to delineate the LRT alignment while maintaining pedestrian permeability;
 - integrated public art in the boulevards and on transit platforms; and
 - pedestrian amenities such as lighting, seating, recycling and garbage receptacles.
- Create station platforms that function not only for transit but also:
 - provide opportunities for street trees and additional greening within the Avenue cross section; and
 - provide pedestrian amenities such as pedestrian-oriented lighting, garbage receptacles, transit shelters and seating to promote pedestrian comfort.
- Provide facilities for multi-modal transit such as bike locks and lockers, on-street parking and drop off areas, ticket vending machines and enclosed waiting areas.
- Ensure indoor and outdoor retail amenities such as outdoor dining and café spillover space, market stalls, retail signage, public art and heritage displays.
- Improve existing and create new open spaces to provide a focus for station areas and new development.
- Provide connections to north/south pedestrian and bike routes and bridges.

Remarkable Streets

Streets are the places that connect our lives; they are the places of chance encounters, where people of different backgrounds meet and mingle, and communities bond. The quality and character of the streets along the Corridor will play an important role in connecting LRT to the city. If planned successfully, it will be the streets that help bring people to LRT, spread the benefits of the investment and assist in the transformation of the Corridor from an auto-dominated thoroughway into a remarkable people-friendly experience.

The Avenue

The LRT investment provides an opportunity to greatly enhance the visual and physical image of the Avenue with a palette of materials that will help to unify the Corridor as an identifiable place, enhance the diversity of uses, and highlight the distinct and special attributes along the route.

As the right-of-way is designed, the following five components will redefine, pedestrianize and improve the transit friendliness of the Corridor.

Green the Street - Provide opportunities along every block of the Corridor to introduce and maximize street trees or landscape plantings along boulevards and center medians. Natural species and high environmental performance technologies such as bio-swales, tree pits, solar powered lighting and recycling of materials should be considered and deployed to support the Avenue as a sustainable street.

Design for the Pedestrian - Create a more connected, pedestrian-focused environment that includes street trees and greenery, spacious and walkable sidewalks and integrated street furnishings. Ensure key north - south and east - west connection points are accommodated.

Connect Pedestrians to Transit - Create accessible and pedestrian-friendly methods to integrate LRT with adjacent sidewalks, bicycle facilities and other modes of transit. Streetscape materials should delineate pedestrian zones. At key north/south crossing points, utilize the transit median to provide mid-Avenue respite for pedestrians.

Create Excitement - Use public art, diverse plantings and landscaping to contribute to the sense of place - along the Avenue, within station areas and along routes connecting to other key destinations.

Create a Network of Public Space - Integrate overall streetscape design with existing and proposed open spaces to maintain a visual and physical continuum of green along the Corridor.

The character of the pedestrian realm will have a significant impact on the ease, safety and vitality of how pedestrians experience the Corridor. Sidewalks along the route vary in size and character; most could be significantly improved to create a much friendlier pedestrian environment. There are several key factors that influence the feeling of the sidewalk, these including sidewalk width, streetscaping, plantings, the number of vehicular interruptions, activity levels and the transparency of buildings along the street. Care will have to be taken to ensure that the right balance is achieved.

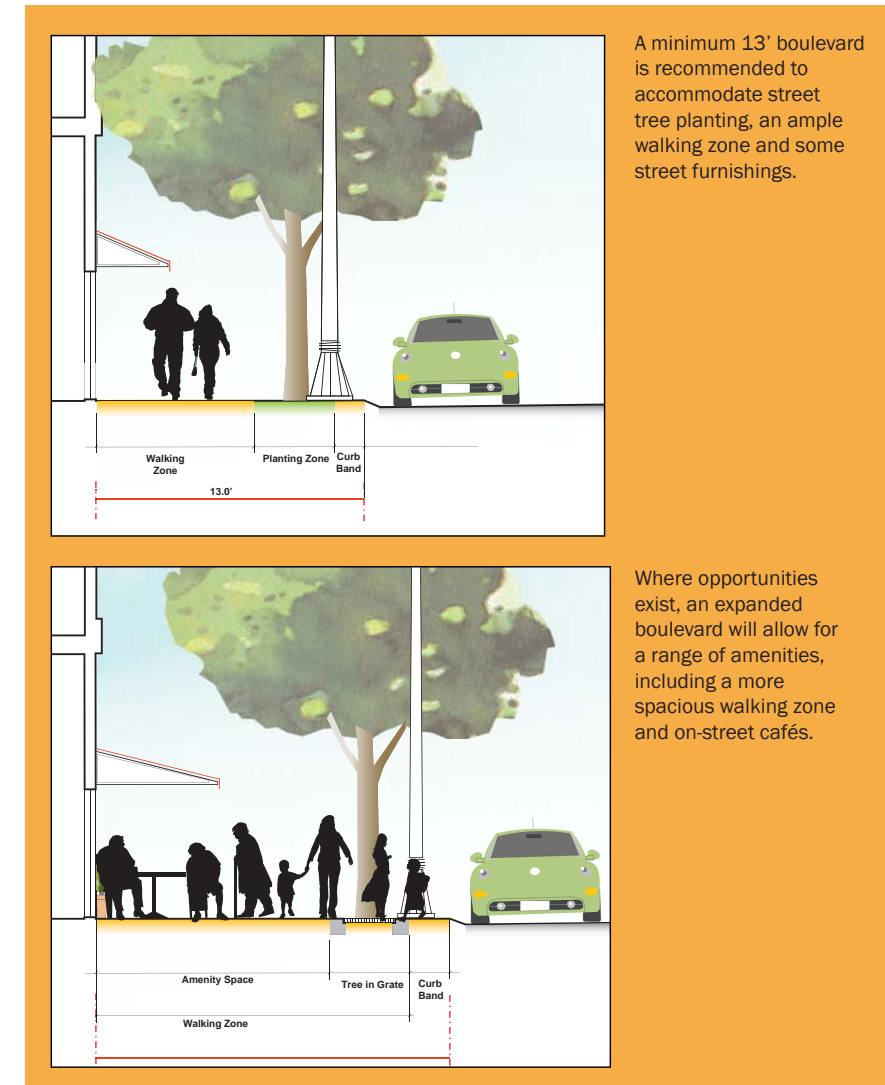
The following principles and guidelines should act as a guide for improving and expanding the pedestrian realm along the Avenue. Working towards their implementation is an exercise that will require work on a block by-block basis as detailed design of the Corridor moves forward.

- Provide for generous pedestrian boulevards. Where possible, a minimum of 13 feet is recommended. This provides a comfortable walking zone, an integrated planting and furnishing zone, and setbacks from the curb to accommodate on-street parking and snow storage.

- Seek to expand the boulevard where possible (for example, through building setbacks) to provide a more spacious walking zone and some storefront embellishments. In some key locations, seek to substantially expand boulevards to allow for on-street cafés and retail market spaces that will help animate the street.
- Introduce street trees or boulevard plantings along every block of the Corridor to green the street and provide natural shade during the summer.
- Encourage at-grade retail, storefront glazing and front door entrances onto the Avenue, Cedar and Fourth to help animate the streets and create visual interest.
- Reduce and minimize automobile access across pedestrian boulevards and eliminate curb cuts where alternate access to sites is possible.
- Design and implement a palette of street furniture, transit and bicycling infrastructure that distinguishes the Corridor while making efficient use of space along the boulevard. This palette could be implemented across the Corridor or by station area, and should combine the full range of facilities and features, including:
 - pedestrian and street lighting
 - seating
 - recycling and waste receptacles
 - retail displays
 - bus shelters
 - bike racks and lockers, and
 - outdoor cafes, market stalls or the display of public art.

Park Streets

In the Capitol Area and downtown, the Corridor intersects with an existing and proposed network of Park Streets. These are intended to draw people along landscaped, pedestrian-friendly streets to key destinations, parks and open spaces. The relationship of these Park Streets to the Corridor should be strengthened through a program of streetscaping, planting, way-finding strategies and the provision of pedestrian amenities. Further direction and a description of strategies to create a network of pedestrian-friendly Park Streets can be found in Section 3.4 – Park Streets: Extending the Pedestrian Network.



A bio-swale incorporated into a bump-out in Melbourne, Australia greens the street and helps to filter water runoff.



Enhanced landscaping, pedestrian oriented lighting and on-street parking along this street in Vancouver, British Columbia help to improve pedestrian conditions along a busy stretch of road.

Connecting to the Corridor

The ability for people to connect north and south into the community and other key Saint Paul destinations is as important as the east/west movement along the Corridor.

Enhanced connections can occur in three key ways:

Green Boulevards

Though primarily vehicular connectors, Green Boulevards should be enhanced and made comfortable for both pedestrians and cyclists. Strategies for Green Boulevards include:

- planting a double row of street trees with internal pathways and a continuous planting strip at curb edge to buffer pedestrians;
- providing new and enhancing existing bike lanes where possible; and
- applying cohesive streetscaping and signage to promote way-finding.

Green Streets/Pedestrian/Bike Linkages

These streets and linkages provide key connections between the Avenue and important destinations along the Corridor. Strategies for these connections include:

- cohesive streetscaping and signage to promote wayfinding and enhance connections to and from the Avenue;
- street cross sections that allow for the safe combined use of pedestrian, vehicular, and bicycle traffic; and
- new and enhanced existing open spaces along these routes to create a green and inviting network of linkages.

Bike Routes - Existing and Proposed

The network of existing and proposed bike routes to and from the Corridor creates an important set of connections to destinations that may be too far to walk from LRT. Strategies for these linkages include:

- marked and/or separated bike ways with clear signage and way-finding to and from the Avenue as part of an overall “Biking to the Corridor” strategy;
- a continuous east/west bike route that runs parallel and in close proximity to the Corridor with connections north and south at station areas
 - This route should continue Downtown via the Capitol along either the transit corridor or network of “park streets” to connect with Union Depot and neighborhoods to the east and west of the Corridor.
 - Dickerman Park affords an opportunity to create a key destination node with connections north and south down Fairview that link to the emerging rail corridor trail network alongside St. Anthony Avenue.
- a string of north/south bike routes along the “Green Boulevards” that connect neighborhoods to the north and south with LRT.

Central String of Parks

The investment in the LRT provides an opportunity to revisit existing open spaces and pursue new opportunities for additional spaces that will help to green the Corridor. Introducing a set of 12 new public spaces to accompany the 12 new transit stations is an important strategy towards this end. While illustrated in a conceptual way, the proposed new parks are intended to provide a string of “green jewels” along the Avenue and through the Capitol Area and downtown. They will create a focus for new development, provide areas for relaxation, become places of community gathering and afford the display of public art.

New Parks

Opportunities to achieve more than a dozen new park spaces along the Corridor have been identified. The intention was not to determine exact locations for new spaces, but rather to illustrate where and how these new parks could be situated in order to enhance the existing community and public realm while integrating with new transit improvements. The identification of new park spaces was based on the following principles:

- Parks should act as a focus for new development and seek to anchor important locations along the Corridor.
- Where possible, existing open spaces should be extended and used to strengthen pedestrian connections with the Corridor.



A “Green Boulevard” in Toronto demonstrates a double row of trees, an enhanced pedestrian environment that is buffered from the street by a strip of planting and dedicated bicycle lanes.

- Parks along the Avenue should always be accessible from the Avenue or should otherwise have visible pedestrian connections from the Avenue via “Green Streets/Linkages”, or linkages through development properties.
- Parks should help define the character of place along the Corridor and provide a diverse range of open space types in terms of both size and function, based on the needs and character of their location.
- Parks and open spaces can help define important gateways and communities along the Corridor by marking symbolic places and important junctures.

Existing Parks

A number of opportunities have been identified to improve or expand existing public spaces. In some cases, the recommendation is to turn parks from parking lots into public open spaces, in others, it is to improve the public accessibility and quality of the space. In all cases, the intent is to encourage better utilization of open space as part of an enhanced and “green” Central Corridor.



An opportunity exists to improve the quality of some of the existing public parks along the Corridor, such as in this proposal for Dickerman Park. (City of St. Paul Department of Parks & Recreation, Friends of the Parks and Trails, University United, Public Art St. Paul, Coen + Partners, Wing Young Huie)

Distinguishing Features and Places

Distinguishing features and places celebrate the diverse assets along the Corridor and turn ordinary moments into extraordinary pleasures. The following strategies aim to highlight the unique features of the Corridor and strengthen its sense of place.

Public Art

The role of public art and artistic input is as broad as it is important, and should be an integral component of the intellectual design process for the Corridor. Art opportunities should be as diverse as the neighborhoods along the route, providing a variety of means - visual, audio and touch - to creatively express the cultural and community stories along the Corridor in design and construction of infrastructure, public spaces, streets, buildings and the public realm. An overall art strategy, integrated with an overall streetscape design strategy for the Avenue, should identify new ways to think about public art as integral to each phase of LRT planning and design, and could include a process of bringing artists 'to the table' during key phases in the planning process.

Special Bridge Treatments

All of the bridges that cross I-94 should be improved to make them inviting, safe, visible, beautiful, accessible and better connected to the neighborhoods south of the Avenue. Many of these pedestrian bridges are excellent opportunities for public art.

Gateways

A number of strategies recommend the identification and celebration of important gateways along the Corridor. Gateways mark important destinations, help to establish identity and should be integrated with an overall streetscape design strategy. As unique events along the Corridor, they should be a priority within a public art strategy and provided with additional streetscape treatments and landscaping.

Character Districts

Investment along the Corridor should build upon existing initiatives to celebrate the diverse character along its seven miles. In particular, the creation of a World Cultural Heritage District, Gallery, Capitol and Downtown character districts would help define the economic development, and distinct cultural and heritage assets along the Corridor. Creating distinctive streetscape treatments and setback characteristics within each district will help to further brand these areas and to animate the experience of traveling along the Corridor.

- Raymond Village
- Midway Shopping District
- World Cultural Heritage District
- Gallery District
- Capitol District
- Downtown District
- Historic Lowertown



A pedestrian bridge in Worcester, Massachusetts demonstrates the value of an integrated public art strategy by creating an elegant yet functional structure above a busy freeway.



Unique seating built into the planter at the entry to Macalester College's Student Services Center creates an inviting place to sit, read and relax.



Combining art and engineering, the incorporation of artistic thinking and direction from the outset allowed what would otherwise be just another retaining wall to become a pleasant work of art along Wabasha.



A creative sculpture west of Fairview creates a playful gateway into a pedestrian walk.

Transforming the Avenue

The following renderings illustrate how change might occur along the Avenue. They illustrate the potential of the Corridor to evolve as a vibrant, attractive and transit-oriented environment.



Today

1

This first image shows the Corridor as it exists today, looking east at Dale Street. Poorly defined, with low rise buildings and large tracks of surface parking, the Avenue is dominated by private vehicles and is more a place to pass through than visit.



Adding LRT

2

In this second image, the introduction of LRT brings with it new streetscaping and station infrastructure. The bus station has been retrofitted to match the language of the LRT, promote the sense of a unified transit system and improve legibility. Special paving treatments create a pedestrian zone across the Avenue to the station platform. This zone is pulled back along the Avenue to provide additional “breathing room” for pedestrians leaving and entering the stations while small pedestrian bollards notify pedestrians of the LRT. To complement this investment, new street trees have been planted where possible, including between a gap in the station shelters.



A New Building along the Corridor

In the third image, a new mid-rise development consisting of an 8-15 story tower on a 3-story podium replaces the Police station and low-density commercial north of University. This new development has been stepped back from the sidewalk by several feet to provide additional space for pedestrian amenities.

3



Framing the Street

In the fourth and final image, the street is framed on both sides when a new low-rise retail use is developed along the south side of the Avenue. Though not high-density, the new store replaces the existing parking lot and demonstrates decidedly urban characteristics by filling in a large gap in the street and improving the existing street condition for pedestrians. At the intersection, where higher levels of pedestrian activity are anticipated, the building has stepped back to provide additional space on the sidewalk.

4