

**Connecting to the Entertainment District**

A unique feature of the LRT Zone in downtown will be the extension of the zone along Fourth Street, west towards the cluster of arts and entertainment attractions at Rice Park and east towards the Lowertown Urban Village.

The extension of the LRT Zone along Fourth Street is a key strategy towards realizing a Fourth Street “Avenue of the Arts and Sciences” and an important move towards strengthening downtown’s existing attractions. This key civic connection would link the arts and cultural cluster in the west with the high-tech community in Lowertown. It will benefit from integrated input from the arts and cultural community from early concept design stages. During the day, it would place the Entertainment District within a pleasant five-minute walk of LRT; during major events, the street could be closed off to accommodate event surges and create a pedestrian-friendly grand procession route.

To complement the Fourth Street connection, an opportunity exists to strengthen links to the Entertainment District through streetscape improvements along Fifth and Sixth Streets. The extension of “Park Streets” west from LRT along these routes will help to link Rice Park with three of the downtown’s busiest bus stations, a proposed transit station at Fourth and Cedar and a potential new Station Square adjacent to Fifth Street. When completed, they will create a continuous pedestrian-friendly, streetscaped precinct that stretches from Washington Street, west to Cedar.

An important strategy towards the strengthening of linkages with the Entertainment District will be the incorporation of wayfinding techniques along park streets to and from the area. This should include signage, which could also be incorporated into overhead skyway connections and form part of the overall pattern of streetscaping along these routes.



An image of the existing connection west along Fourth Street from the intersection of Fourth and Cedar. Unnecessarily wide streets, narrow sidewalks and blank walls create an unpleasant environment for pedestrians.



This rendering demonstrates what the new LRT Zone along Fourth Street west of Cedar might look like when closed to traffic during a major event. New pedestrian-oriented lighting and special event lighting help to create a dynamic procession route towards the Entertainment District.





This rendering demonstrates the potential for Fourth Street as an LRT Zone stretching west from Cedar towards the Entertainment District. As a result of lane reductions east of Cedar Street, two lanes that were no longer required for vehicular traffic have been reclaimed to create a wide pedestrian boulevard capable of supporting a double row of trees and additional pedestrian amenities, such as lighting. Rotating displays of artwork, wall murals and newly opened ground floor uses help to enliven the street and create a pleasant walk for pedestrians. As an important procession route, Fourth Street has been treated with a special paving treatment to identify key attractions along its length, calm traffic and act as an informal wayfinding device for vehicles travelling through the area. On the southwest corner, a new cafe has taken advantage of a bump-out in the sidewalk to provide outdoor patio space for its patrons while overhead, wayfinding signage and electronic billboards help to orient pedestrians and create a dynamic feature of the skyway system.

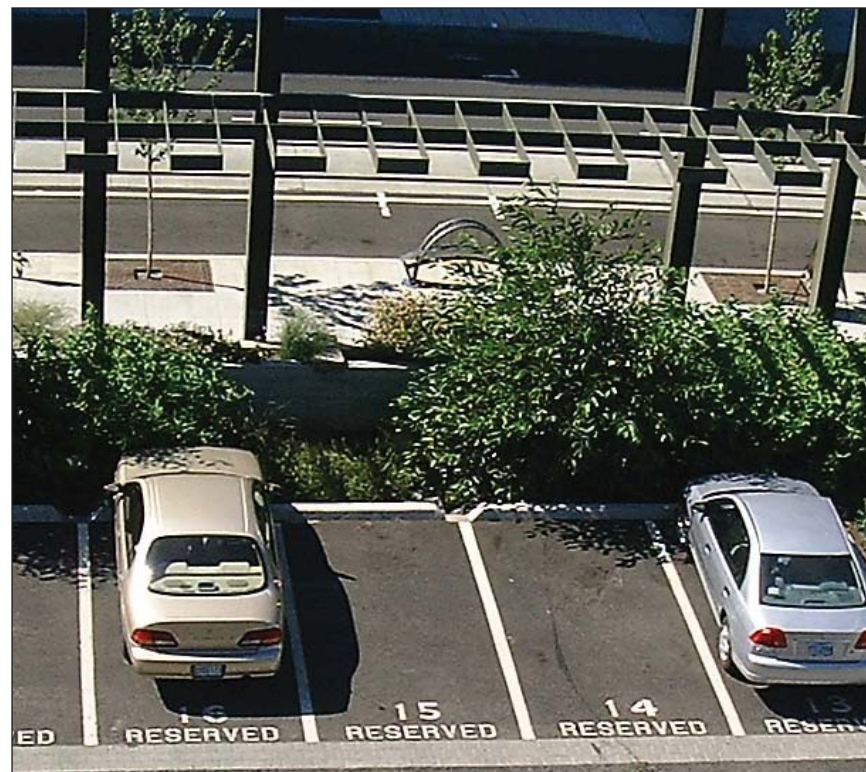


### People on the Street

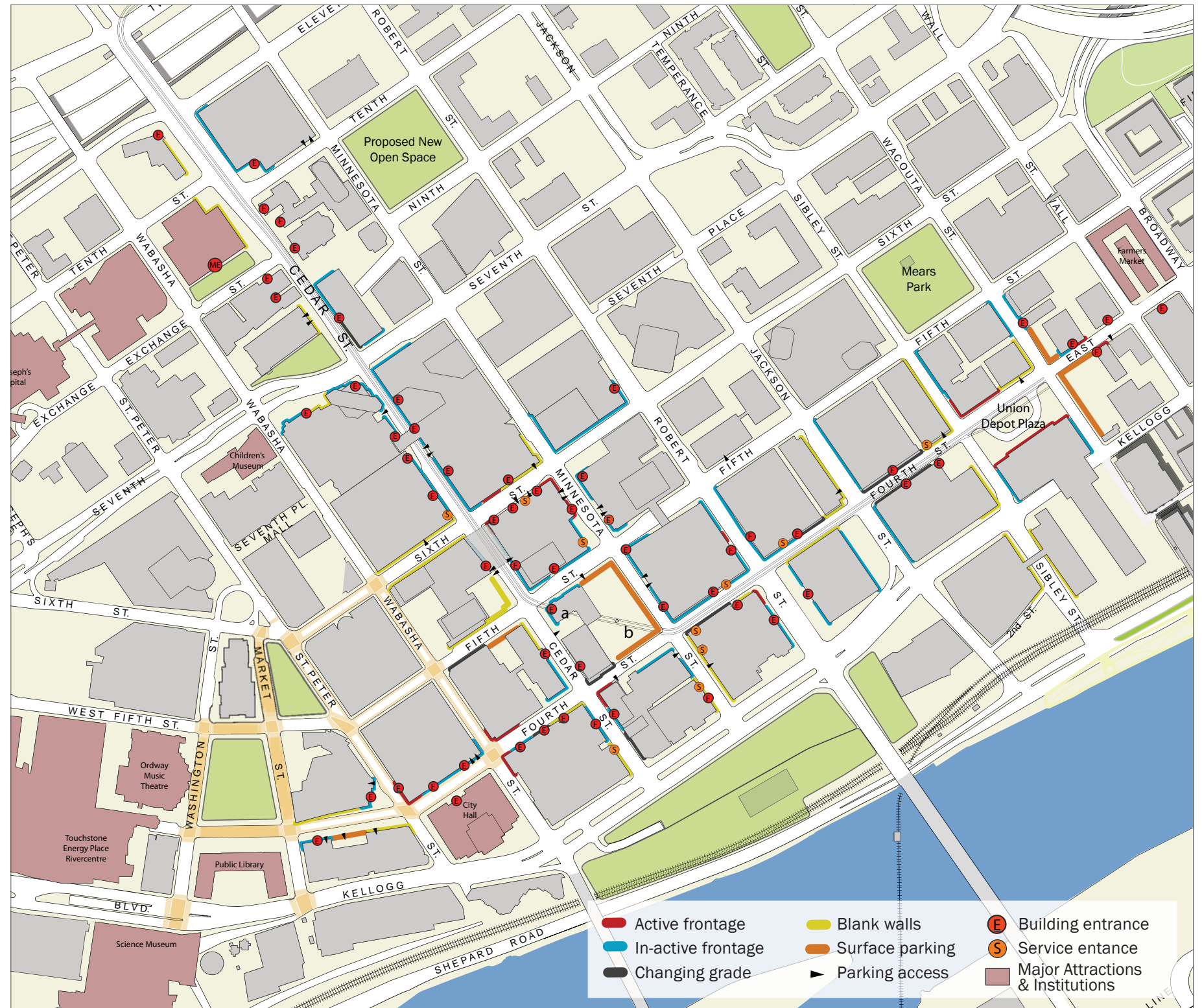
The investment in LRT through downtown presents a significant opportunity to redefine the street, by shifting the focus of investment away from the skyway system to a newly -invigorated ground level. The Corridor, in combination with an increased downtown residential population and new construction presents an opportunity to “jump start” the at-grade pedestrianization of downtown, through a program of improved streetscapes, an expanded pedestrian realm, improved connections between the skyway and ground, and a re-activation of the street level.

#### Opening up the Ground Level

Decades of focus on the skyway system have left the streets of downtown Saint Paul quiet. Buildings that once fronted onto public streets now turn their backs and face inwards toward a labyrinth of semi-public walks and private courts. Much of the street activity that once existed has been drawn up into the skyway. Storefronts are now vacant. In many modern structures, the existence of an outwardly-oriented street level is nearly non-existent.



A parking lot in Portland, Oregon employs extensive planting in an effort to reduce its impact on the surrounding street.



An analysis of the existing ground-level street conditions along the Central Corridor. Development of LRT presents an opportunity to reorient buildings, open up the ground level and encourage people to use the street.



With the development of LRT, an opportunity exists to encourage a more lively at-grade pedestrian zone, reorient buildings to face the street and reanimate the ground. The following conditions, identified within the Ground Level Conditions Plan (left), highlight a range of opportunities to open up the ground level and create a more inviting, pedestrian-focused environment.

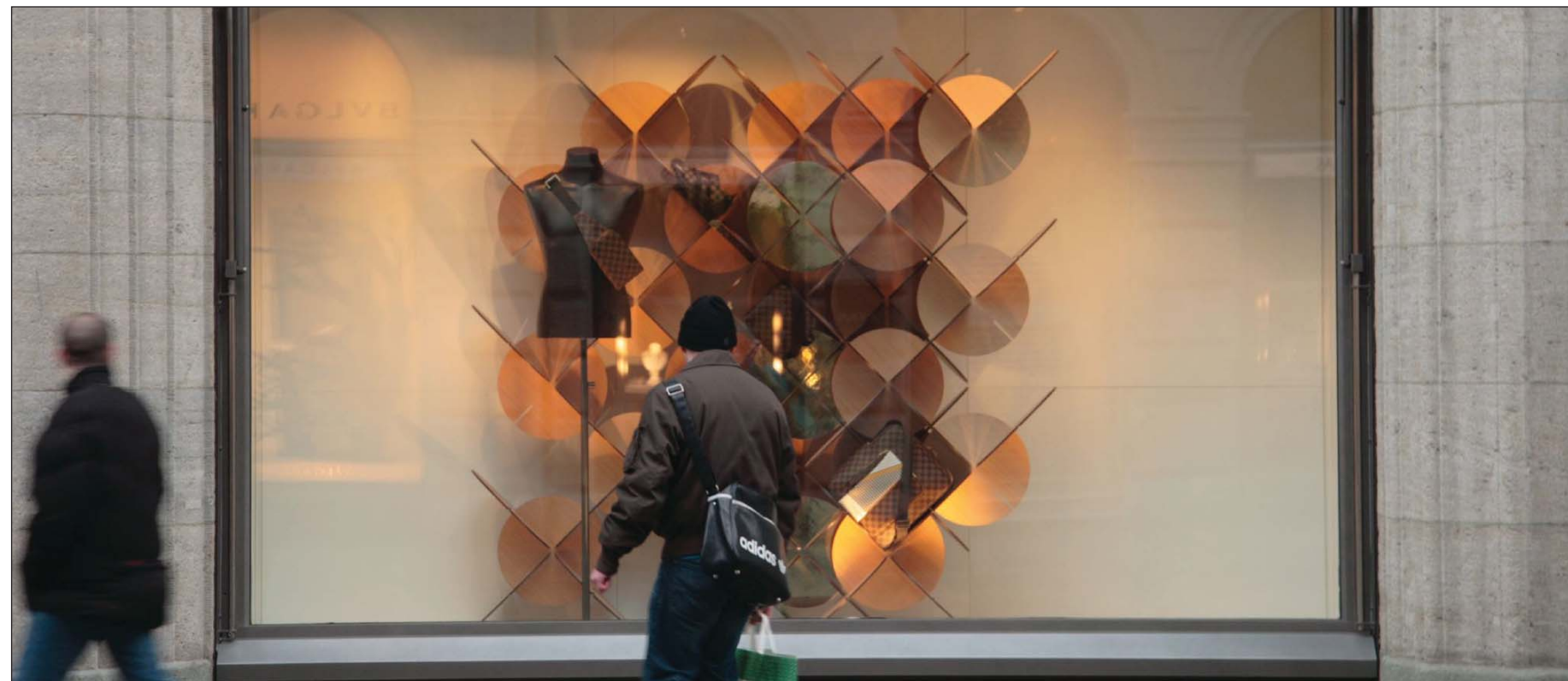
- **Blank walls** - Blank walls create harsh pedestrian environments by limiting activity, removing a sense of connection between the building and the street and limiting “eyes on the street.” Where the reconfiguration and reopening of blank walls is not possible, an opportunity exists to enliven the street and improve visual interest through the creation of a mural or other form of artwork.
- **Frontage on a changing grade** - As a result of the changing grades along Fourth Street, a number of the existing buildings possess ground levels that are either below or above the grade of the street. Where opportunities do not exist to create new access points to these levels, effort should be made to improve visual connections between the street and the interior of the buildings.
- **Inactive frontage** - There are a number of buildings within downtown that are vacant at ground level. In many cases, these areas have the potential to contribute to the sense of activity and interest at street level; however this potential is often hidden with dark glass or concealed behind a curtain. While the long-term strategy for these areas should involve the opening up and activation of these spaces, short-term strategies include the removal of any shades or glazing and/or the active use of such areas for the creative display of merchandise or public art.
- **Surface parking** - Areas of interim surface parking produce holes in the streetscape, deaden spaces and result in an overall deterioration of the pedestrian environment. As an interim improvement, planting street trees and applying landscape treatments can help to mitigate against the impacts of surface parking while laying the foundation for a long-term maturing of the streetscape.
- **Parking access points & service areas** - Parking access points and service areas are necessary to the functioning of buildings. With the introduction of LRT, care will have to be taken on a case-by-case basis to ensure that these points remain safe for users and pedestrians alike. Where opportunities exist, efforts should be made to consolidate these points among buildings and relocate them to secondary frontages away from the proposed LRT Zone and park streets.
- **Entrances** - Building entrances are the public face to buildings; they hint at the activities inside, can be places of gathering and in many instances are the principal points of access to the skyway system. Opportunities should be pursued to ensure that these areas are clearly identifiable from the street, elements and setbacks are provided to support the levels of activity that exist there, and entrances leading to the skyway are clearly indicated.



A mural in Detroit helps to liven up what would otherwise be a blank wall.



A split ground floor in Toronto, Canada has been opened up to create a store on the lower level.



An artistic window display in Zurich, Switzerland helps to enliven a street and generate interest for a passerby.