



Place-Specific Opportunities

3.0 Building on Success

This chapter demonstrates the application of the Section Two Directions to specific places in downtown Saint Paul. The four Place-Specific Opportunities represent strategic priorities with the greatest potential to capture the momentum and place-making potential created by LRT.

Though not all of these Opportunities are necessarily created by or solely dependent upon the construction of LRT, each is enhanced by this significant investment, and is described and illustrated here in the context of its relationship to the future LRT alignment, design, and construction.

3.1 Creating Positive Transit Environments

LRT Stations As Outdoor Rooms

The potential for LRT to affect positive change is most apparent at the Central and Union Depot stations. As identified in the Directions outlined in Section 2, these places have the potential to develop into “outdoor rooms” over time with a high-quality public realm, high levels of street-related activity, and the ability to accommodate a wide range of movement patterns.

Central Station

The Central Station block will arguably constitute the most dramatic transformation of any planned LRT station within Saint Paul. The existing block, a centrally-located and underutilized redevelopment parcel, will be bisected by the LRT track running diagonally across the site. This unique block configuration affords an opportunity to develop a landmark development atop or on either side of the LRT station, creating unrivaled access between a commercial and/or residential development and this significant public asset.

Key Strategies

- 1) **Redevelop the block on which the station sits to be a landmark high-density, mixed use development** that will support the investment in LRT.
- 2) **Strengthen connections between the bus and LRT station through the creation of a generous east-west promenade along the south side of 5th Street.** A pedestrian link stretching between Cedar and Minnesota will create a direct and generously proportioned connection between the two principal bus stations in downtown and LRT. This will help to enhance wayfinding and create a focus for pedestrian amenities and facilities catering to transit users.
- 3) **Incorporate internal transit-related waiting areas into the redevelopment of the Central Station block.** The creation of internal waiting areas or shared circulation areas along 5th Street would help to enhance the experience for transit users during colder winter months, and create an interface between transit users and new development on the Central Station block. In particular, an enclosed atrium running the length of the block along 5th Street would have the ability to link the LRT and bus stations to



Figure 3.1 The existing condition of the northern edge of the Central Station block.

create an integrated station environment capable of supporting a range of retail uses and internal pedestrian amenities.

- 4) **Create a strong connection to the skyway system.** The redevelopment of the Central Station block represents an important opportunity to strengthen connections between the skyway system and ground. A skyway connection here, linked to internal circulation and waiting areas associated with the LRT and bus stations, would help support greater levels of street-related activity and strengthen the relationship between these two levels of circulation and transit service.
- 5) **Create a new public plaza to act as a focus for station-related activities.** The new plaza should be conceived as the common ground between the bus and LRT, and adjacent businesses and development. The design and creation of this new publicly-accessible space should create a safe, green, vibrant, and inspiring place. It should accommodate a range of complementary activities that will make the space a choice destination for transit users, workers, visitors, and residents.



Figure 3.2 A transformed 5th Street edge with the new station integrated into the redevelopment.

The redevelopment of the Central Station block represents a tremendous opportunity to create a positive transit environment that better connects bus and LRT operations. In this illustration, a generous atrium links the LRT station with bus stops on Cedar and Minnesota. Integrating modes of transit through the redevelopment of a block such as this will help break down perceived differences between modes, encourage greater levels of street activity, and create an active, safe environment for transit users.

Union Depot Station

LRT, in conjunction with planned commuter and high-speed train service based out of the historic Union Depot, provides an opportunity to return the Union Depot plaza to its former status as an important civic space and gateway into Saint Paul and the larger Twin Cities metropolitan area. LRT will stop directly in front of the plaza on the south side of the street. This orientation provides direct pedestrian access from the LRT platform to the Union Depot plaza and building. Extending the design language of the plaza directly to the platform has the potential to create a distinctive urban room that integrates and celebrates contemporary and historic elements of Saint Paul.

Key Strategies

- 1) Actively promote adjacent redevelopment sites.** There are four key sites adjacent to Union Depot with the potential to redevelop over time: the 4th Street parking ramp north of Union Depot, the two Wacouta Street parking lots on either side of 4th Street, and the Post Office.

These sites represent high-profile opportunities for the creation of new mixed-use developments incorporating residential, cultural, employment and institutional uses that will activate the station area and strengthen the physical setting of Union Depot.
- 2) Create a consistent streetscaping language for the station plaza and adjacent streets that can help create a coherent “urban room.”** Over time, the plaza and the three streets that bound it should read as a consistent singular urban space, the forecourt to Union Depot.
- 3) Optimize Union Depot’s role as an important transit hub through the planned integration of a wide range of transport alternatives.** The concourse and affiliated train deck of Union Depot represent an unparalleled opportunity for

the accommodation of a range of transportation modes, including local and regional bus and train service. Long-term planning for the station should allow for this broad range of activities over time.

- 4) Ensure that surrounding buildings incorporate active uses at-grade and support the high level of pedestrian activity in the area through the provision of neighborhood retail and services.** This initiative should be targeted to both existing buildings and the design of future developments on parcels adjacent to Union Depot.
- 5) Expand the role of the historic train deck with a green roof, green wall, rain garden or other natural amenity.** While plantings should preserve ample room for anticipated regional rail service, they can help improve the setting of the sites lining the north side of Kellogg and the deck structure by providing an improved river valley vista. Also, the potential exists here to demonstrate sustainable practices such as stormwater re-use, biodiversity, and increased tree canopy. A greened train deck would also enhance the experience of arriving in Saint Paul by train.



Figure 3.3 Creating an “urban room” at Union Depot.

The redevelopment of sites adjacent to Union Depot in this image will create a consistent wall of buildings that frames a new “urban room” in front of Union Depot. To the rear of the building, beneath the concourse, the train deck has been adapted to accommodate new bus and regional rail service.

3.2 Reinforcing Lowertown

A Renewed Vision and Urban Structure for a Transit-Supportive Village

The Opportunity

Lowertown is a special neighborhood in downtown - one where new and revitalized historic buildings house a growing arts- and culture-based community with a strong residential and local business base. Popular destinations like the Saint Paul Farmers' Market and events like the Saint Paul Art Crawl bring visitors and activity into the core on weekends. The result is a remarkably urban place with an energy and unique creative vibe in the city.

Lowertown is an important part of downtown Saint Paul's future and has been the focus of critical thought and planning since the late 1970's. Most recently, the Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation's *Urban Village Vision*, the *Report of the Diamond Products Task Force*, the *Historic Lowertown Small Area Plan* and the *Saint Paul Downtown Development Strategy* all herald the potential of this precinct to evolve as a vibrant and attractive historic district that embodies the spirit of downtown Saint Paul's renaissance.

While the area has evolved significantly over the past decade, there is much potential for continued investment. East of Broadway, many underutilized sites have left this edge of downtown poorly defined and

unresolved. To the south, the presence of significant rail and roadway infrastructure has resulted in poor connections to the riverfront.

In addition to LRT, the eventual introduction of higher-order transit and inter-regional transit at Lowertown's doorstep create critical opportunities to advance the area as an arts, cultural, residential and employment cluster. Enhanced mobility options, combined with an improved public realm and streetscape connections, will increase reinvestment potential and pedestrian activity into and throughout Lowertown.

In thinking about the future of Lowertown, it is useful to group strategies into three sub-areas:

- **Historic Lowertown** (Jackson to Broadway),
- **Lowertown Extension** (Broadway to the Lafayette Bridge), and
- **Lowertown Transition** (Lafayette Bridge to Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary).

In the **Historic Lowertown** sub-area, strategies focus on strengthening Lowertown's character as expressed in its historic buildings, connected street grid, urban

scale and block pattern, building scale and materials, and the relationship of buildings to the street. Redevelopment must be more "delicate" in this area, as development sites are small and a strong fabric already exists.

In the **Lowertown Extension** sub-area, strategies focus on guidance for redevelopment of the Diamond Products site, including the OMF and a regional/Saints ballpark. The redevelopment "moves" in this area can be a bit bolder since the sites are larger; the task is to complete the urban edge of downtown in a way that adapts new development to fit the historic Lowertown pattern. Redevelopment must take best advantage of this incredible opportunity, yet respect the historic fabric, street grid, and movement patterns of Lowertown proper.

In the **Lowertown Transition** sub-area, strategies should focus on the transition from the highly urban character of Lowertown to the very natural character

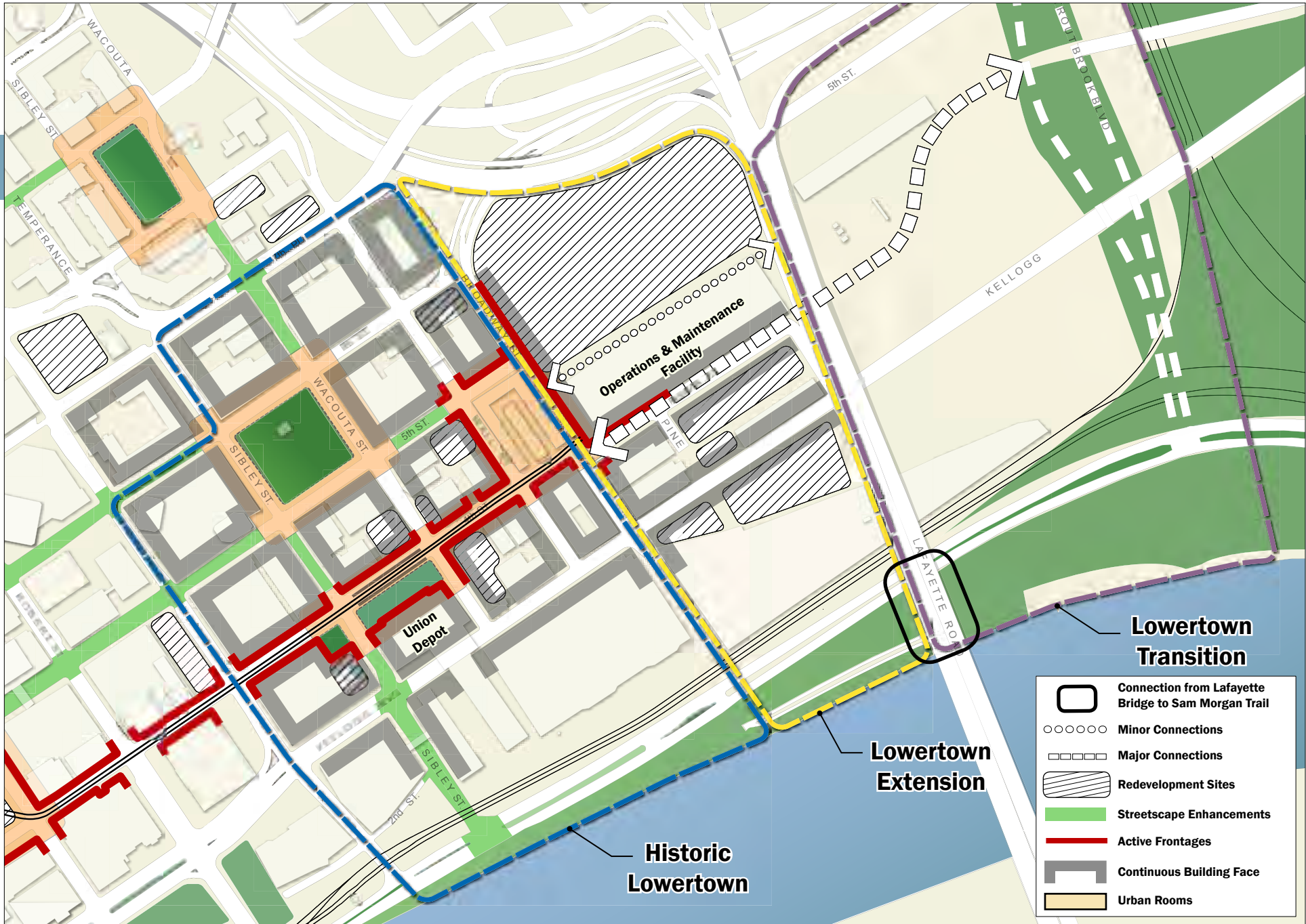


Figure 3.4 A Lowertown Framework.



Figure 3.5 The existing condition of Union Depot.

of the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. Redevelopment in this area is likely to be much less intense, especially due to constraints imposed by proximity to Holman Field, but must also transition to the Nature Sanctuary in an environmentally-sensitive way.

Key Strategies: Historic Lowertown

1) Strengthen Lowertown as a unique arts and cultural district.

- a) Explore the idea and viability of a multi-disciplinary, contemporary visual and performing arts center. The center would engage communities at all scales – neighborhood, city, region, state, and beyond – in the active experience of diverse contemporary art forms.
- b) Maintain and expand the diversity of art and cultural offerings.
- c) Continue to invest in the Farmers’ Market as the focal point of Lowertown.

2) Maintain and strengthen Lowertown as a diverse residential community.

- a) Work with land owners and developers to incorporate uses that improve residential amenities for residents. These may include locally-oriented retail and services, such as corner stores and dry cleaners.
- b) Promote a family-friendly environment with play areas and day care facilities for children. The presence of families in the area will help generate pedestrian traffic on sidewalks and in public parks during evenings and on weekends. In particular, the Children’s Play Space on the southwest corner of 4th/Sibley, now 17 years old, requires significant investment to relace the rubber surfacing, repair or replace the play equipment, repaint the public art on the wall, and replace landscaping.
- c) Avoid displacement of artists, and maintain housing and commercial affordability, as development and redevelopment occur.



Figure 3.6 The Union Depot LRT Station.



The Union Depot LRT station and adjoining plaza will provide a landmark gateway for visitors arriving in Saint Paul by LRT or another mode of transportation.



Figure 3.7 The existing condition of 4th Street east of Union Depot.

3) Require new development in Lowertown to be sympathetic to the scale, materials, massing, and height of adjacent buildings, particularly historic warehouse buildings that contribute to the neighborhood’s attractive qualities.

While buildings should embrace contemporary architecture and be representative of their time, they should be designed to be sensitive to their context, including the built form, scale, massing, and facade articulation that contribute to Lowertown’s distinct identity.

4) Develop the Union Depot Station to reflect its role as a gateway to Saint Paul.

- a) Design the Union Depot building, station and lawn to create a front door not only for LRT but also for Lowertown. The front lawn should be designed to celebrate the significant heritage of the site and also offer opportunities for revolving art displays and installations that signify the presence of the vibrant arts and cultural community living and working nearby.
- b) Redevelop underutilized parcels adjacent to the Union Depot plaza to take better advantage

of the value LRT brings to this centrally-located and accessible site, and strengthen the enclosure of this important historic plaza. Over time, this civic space will become once again an important gateway into Saint Paul. These sites should incorporate active uses at grade.

5) Improve the experience of moving along the short block between Union Depot and the Farmers’ Market.

The route along 4th Street will become an increasingly important pedestrian street as LRT operations commence, and as the Lowertown community continues to expand with new cultural, residential, employment, and commercial uses. This stretch of 4th Street should become a priority project for a targeted streetscaping program aimed at promoting the successful integration of pedestrians and transit. In addition, encouraging the expansion of grade-related retail west towards Union Depot will extend the draw and energy of the Market so that one’s market experience essentially begins at the station. During special events, the City should explore the potential for street vending and additional artisan booths along 4th Street.



Figure 3.8 4th Street to the Farmers’ Market.



4th Street in the future may evolve to include an extended Farmers' and Artisans Market where display booths spill off sidewalks and out into streets during special events.

6) Prohibit skyway expansion in Lowertown.

Concentrating pedestrian movement at ground level will keep activity on the street and provide needed foot traffic for Lowertown businesses. Prohibiting visually disruptive skyway connections between buildings will also protect the architectural integrity of historic buildings.

7) Maintain and enhance the street grid.

The street and block pattern in Lowertown is a defining feature of the neighborhood. Keeping existing streets open is important not only to maintain Lowertown's sense of place and scale, but also to accommodate some increase in vehicular traffic that will come with a major entertainment facility, and new neighborhood commercial and residential activity. In addition, enhancing the grid – by converting Prince Street to a “complete street,” for example – will provide vehicular, bike, and pedestrian connections to the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

Key Strategies: Lowertown Extension

8) Design the Diamond Products site to be a complementary neighbor.

Proposed alterations to the former Diamond Products warehouse and property should be considered in the context of Lowertown's unique setting. The following considerations should be brought to bear in the design of the OMF and the potential development of a ballpark on the adjacent northern half of the site:

a) Explore opportunities to provide active street frontage along Broadway between Prince and 6th Streets and along Prince Street east of Broadway. Approximately 8,000 square feet have been reserved in the OMF along Broadway for this purpose. On the northern half of the site the City of Saint Paul has determined that a future ballpark - programmed for a range of minor league baseball and public recreational uses and events - represents



Figure 3.9 The creation of a green “living” wall on the OMF along Prince Street would help to soften the edge of the facility.

the best reuse of the non-OMF portion of the former Diamond Products site. An active street-level frontage should be explored for the facade of this proposed ballpark use. This important interface with Broadway Street and the surrounding Lowertown community could potentially incorporate street-related retail, concession and ticket stands, and/or other uses compatible with and complementary to the ballpark, the adjacent Farmers' Market, and the general vitality of surrounding street life and activity.

- b) Celebrate the terminus of 4th Street with an architecturally distinct portal or other feature on the OMF that draws the eye to Lowertown and encourages the viewer to continue down 4th Street into Lowertown.
- c) Explore opportunities for the creation of a green roof atop the OMF and a green “living” wall along Prince Street to help trap runoff during storm events, create a green amenity, and enhance views from adjacent uses.



Figure 3.10 A sensitive brick façade wrapping Coors Field in Denver helps to integrate the ball park into the surrounding warehouse district.



Figure 3.11 The integration of an extensive green roof atop the OMF would help trap runoff during storm events.



Figure 3.12 A pedestrian pathway adjacent to Camden Yards in Baltimore helps to extend the city’s fabric past the stadium and to create an interesting environment for smaller vendors.

- d) Redevelop underutilized parcels on the south side of Prince Street to frame and strengthen the street. These building parcels lend themselves well to infill mixed-use or residential development that would support enhanced activity along Prince Street and provide a strong east-west connection between downtown and the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.
- e) Allow for pedestrian circulation east through the ballpark north of the OMF. Subject to additional investigation, this connection may be provided through either a pedestrian pathway as an extension of 5th Street east of Broadway (i.e. between the proposed ballpark site and the OMF site); or along the northern edge of the proposed ballpark where it would intersect with John Street and 4th Street before connecting directly to the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

9) Should a regional/Saints ballpark facility prove infeasible for the northern half of the Diamond Products site, design new development to extend the urban fabric, built form, and street grid of the Lowertown urban village.

Key Strategies: Lowertown Transition

10) Enhance connections east to the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

- a) Improve connectivity between downtown and the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary with a restored and extended street grid and enhanced pedestrian connections. The conversion of Prince Street to a full public street - designed to accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles equally - will provide direct access

to the Nature Sanctuary and potential active recreation uses between Lowertown and the Sanctuary.

New connections should incorporate pedestrian and cycling infrastructure with significant landscaping and tree planting. Streetscape strategies along these routes should provide tactile and visual connections to the tremendous natural resources sitting immediately east of Lowertown.

- b) Design new uses east of the Lafayette Bridge to be sustainable and “green.” If a large part of the area is needed for services ancillary to the ballpark, ensure that these services are provided in the most environmentally sensitive manner. Further, encourage shared use of facilities, such as parking, and active or passive recreational uses.

3.3 Re-Imaging 4th Street

The Saint Paul Artway

The Opportunity

The introduction of LRT on 4th Street is an important stage in this downtown street's evolution. Already an important link between the Rice Park Entertainment District on the west end and the arts community and Farmers' Market of Lowertown, the re-design of this street through the introduction of LRT will help elevate the profile of the street and the many businesses, institutions and significant buildings along its length. In time, a "Walk on 4th" will become synonymous with visiting and experiencing all that downtown Saint Paul has to offer.

The reconstruction of the 4th Street right-of-way as a component of the LRT construction represents an opportunity to significantly enhance the character of the street through new streetscaping, the insertion of vertical greening and planters, and new opportunities for public art. Over time, the street will become a pedestrian-friendly route with greater street-level activity, permanent and rotating exhibitions of public art, cafes, and galleries.

Of the many activities and destinations that line the street, LRT stations at Union Depot and the Central Station block will stand out as special places of enhanced mobility and activity. These areas will act as launching points from which to set out for an evening of dining and entertainment, attend a sporting event, or meet friends for coffee before participating in a

gallery tour. Historic buildings, brimming with activity from new media, graphics, and communications firms, become the backdrop for photographs taken by tourists en route to tour the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary by bicycle.

Key Strategies

- 1) **Focus resources on the provision of a high-quality public realm to complement the historic setting and create a street that balances pedestrians, vehicles, and transit.** The installation of attractive paving to clearly delineate pedestrian, vehicle, and LRT zones, and the provision of additional pedestrian amenities such as wayfinding signage and street furniture, will help to enhance 4th Street as a pedestrian route and create a striking impression for visitors arriving in Saint Paul by either LRT or regional train.
- 2) **Explore opportunities to create a green and animated streetscape through a variety of planting and landscaping mediums** including sidewalk planters, hanging baskets, and street trees wherever feasible. Green walls and other vertical landscape elements will help to soften blank walls and create a welcoming pedestrian environment.



Figure 3.13 The existing condition along 4th Street.

- 3) **Heighten the profile of the arts community** by employing blank walls, skyways, and street furnishings as canvases for murals and other forms of public art expression.
- 4) **Promote infill and redevelopment sites as premier downtown mixed-use redevelopment opportunities** in keeping with the exceptional access and amenity of their locations. Future buildings should exhibit a high degree of transparency at the ground level with active retail, cultural or service uses that have direct access to and integration with the sidewalk. Upper floors should incorporate generous floor-to-ceiling heights, accommodating a truly urban mix of uses from residential to live-work to office and/or gallery spaces.
- 5) **Work with key stakeholders such as 4th Street businesses, building owners, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, and Lowertown arts community to create and promote 4th Street as an "Artway"** – an ongoing opportunity to explore and celebrate the many arts, culture, and local heritage stories of the street.



Figure 3.14 A revitalized 4th Street.

A revitalized 4th Street includes facade improvements, improved skyway connections, and a range of public art expressions to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment .

3.4 Getting People to the Riverfront



Figure 3.15 The existing condition of the Sibley viaduct.

The Opportunity

Downtown’s “green edge,” an open space and river park system consisting of the National Great River Park, Harriet Island Regional Park, and Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, represents one of Saint Paul’s most significant assets. However, poor existing connections resulting from rail infrastructure, in combination with the bluffs south of Kellogg Mall Park, create natural impediments to the frequency and ease of pedestrian access between downtown and these areas. Where pedestrian viaducts are provided, they are poorly lit and poorly maintained. Their infrequency of use speaks to their perception as unsafe and unattractive environments.

Though construction of the LRT will not in and of itself enhance connections, the introduction of LRT service into downtown creates an ideal opportunity to re-examine and improve options for people moving between LRT, downtown, and these valuable natural resources. Enhanced connectivity is primarily a matter of improving the experience for users along existing connecting routes, in particular Sibley, Jackson and 2nd streets. With improved connections, downtown’s “green edge” has the potential to leverage this proximity to nature as an amenity that will attract employers, residents, and investors.

Key Strategies

- 1) **Explore options for improving existing pedestrian and bicycle viaduct connections along Sibley and Jackson.** These routes should be more than covered sidewalks, but instead evolve as celebrated and attractive passages linking the bustle of downtown with the beauty of the river. Each should exhibit significantly improved lighting treatments, decorative paving materials, way-finding devices, and artwork capable of enlivening the connection.
- 2) **Initiate a program of regular maintenance** to enhance the upkeep of the passages and foster an image of cleanliness and safety.
- 3) **Promote Kellogg Mall Park as a “postcard” destination** that offers key vistas to the adjacent river valley and a memorable view of the downtown skyline.
- 4) **Improve 2nd Street as a riverfront connection.** A targeted program of sidewalk enhancement and widening, improved lighting features, and dedicated maintenance would strengthen this direct link between Kellogg Mall Park and the riverfront trail system.
- 5) **Explore construction of a new north-south local green street , Trout Brook Boulevard, to connect University Avenue and the riverfront.** This would improve access between downtown destinations, neighborhoods, and the water; create an accessible new entryway to the river valley and Sam Morgan Regional Trail; and expand the riverfront pedestrian and cycling system linking riverfront destinations like the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and the Upper Landing Urban Village.



Figure 3.16 A refreshed riverfront connection along Sibley.

A renewed riverfront connection along Sibley enlivens the viaduct through entertaining and whimsical art installations, while celebrating the connection to the downtown’s surrounding natural features.