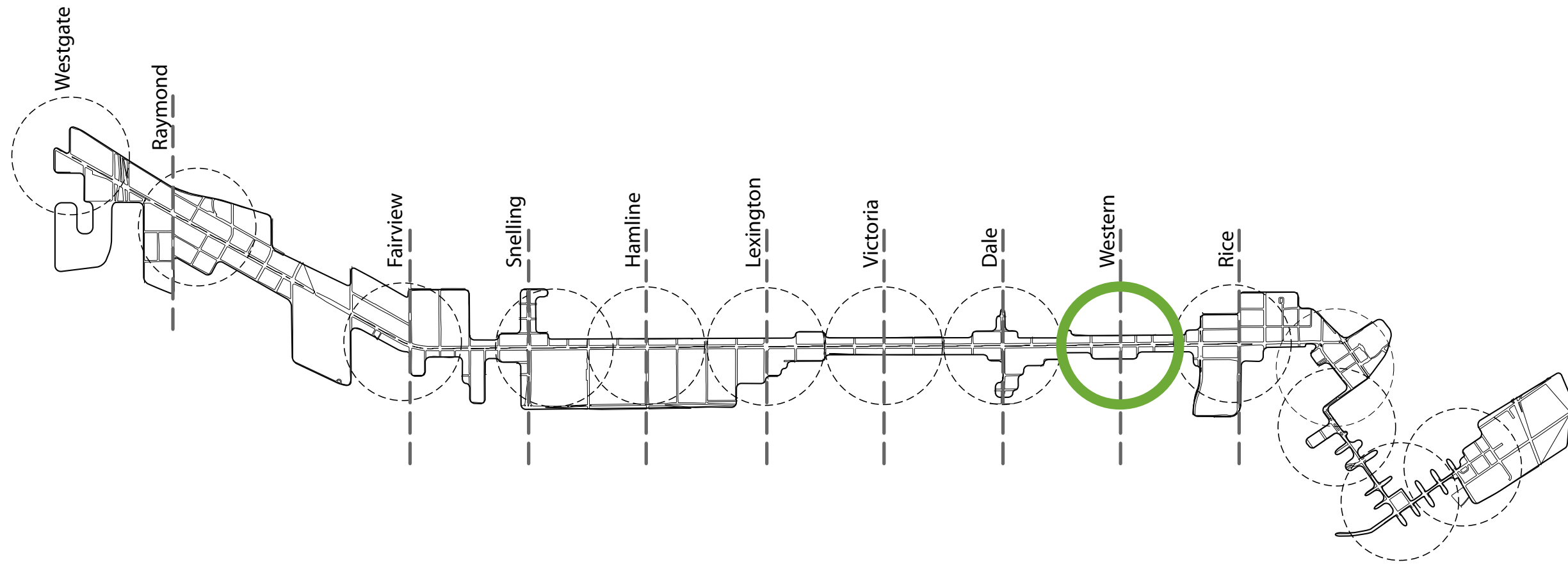




# WESTERN STATION AREA PLAN

DRAFT  
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# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>The Western Station Area Today</b>	<b>- 05 -</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The Future of the Western Station Area</b>	<b>- 11 -</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Public Realm - Creating Places</b>	<b>- 17 -</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Future Character Areas - Policy Directions</b>	<b>- 23 -</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Movement - Balancing Modes</b>	<b>- 39 -</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Getting There</b>	<b>- 45 -</b>

**The Station Area Plans, Introduction and Moving Forward chapters are adopted as addenda to the Central Corridor Development Strategy.**

## **Planning for the Central Corridor**

Planning for the Central Corridor is an opportunity to focus and guide future investment, both public and private, to create a stronger, more vibrant community that is a better place to live, work and do business. The goal is to support economic development and overall corridor prosperity that results in new housing at all income levels, more and better jobs and more business activity. The resulting increases in the property tax base and sales tax revenue will provide the resources for additional public services and infrastructure that, in turn, support economic development activity. The plans focus on an improved movement network, high-quality design, and improved open space and pedestrian amenities that will support and encourage economic investment, as well as create a more livable, attractive and vibrant community.

The Central Corridor Development Strategy (CCDS) establishes a set of strategies for how the Corridor should grow and change over the next 25-30 years in response to the LRT investment. The Station Area Plans, using the foundation of the CCDS, provide a more detailed framework for integrating decisions about future land use and development; the public realm; and the movement of LRT, buses, cars, pedestrians, and bicycles at each station area.

## **Station Area Plans and Future Development**

The Station Area Plans were developed through a series of community-based roundtables, workshops and open houses, guided by a steering committee of community representatives. Property owners, residents, business owners, and institutional and organizational representatives participated in this grass-roots process.

The Western station area was initially addressed in the Station Area Plans for Rice and Dale adopted October 22nd, 2008. Given the identification of an additional station at Western, this Station Area Plan provides a greater level of detail for the station area and addresses the context of the area surrounding the new station. Following the adoption of this plan, the directions here will supersede those of the previous two plans for the lands within the Western Station Area Planning Boundary (see figure 2.3).

## **3-D Renderings of the Corridor**

During the workshops, participants created a 3-D model of potential future development at station areas. These models have formed the basis of a series of computer generated renderings which have been used to depict potential new buildings, open spaces, and other public realm improvements within this plan. Since there is little vacant land along the Corridor, most of the change depicted would involve reuse, redevelopment and replacement of existing buildings and surface parking lots. While these renderings are used throughout these plans to illustrate how the principles and objectives for new development could be realized, it is important to note that these images represent only one of many possible development scenarios. The renderings are not intended to prescribe how new development will look, but are an example of how the vision, goals, and objectives of these plans might be realized. The intent was to illustrate potential building height maximums, open spaces and streets to demonstrate transit-supportive developments for individual parcels.

## **Change Over Time**

Change will occur when individual property owners decide it is either the right time to reinvest in their properties, sell to someone else who will reinvest in the property, or the City has the resources and appropriate public purpose to purchase property. Change will happen incrementally over time, and likely more slowly until LRT is up and running.



# The Western Station Area Today

**This chapter provides a snapshot of the Western station area's history, and a brief description of the physical conditions that are shaping the role and character of the Western station area today.**



## The History of the Western Station Area

Situated between the two busiest intersections during the streetcar era (Snelling Avenue to the west and Rice to the east), the Western-University intersection and surrounding area first served as the encampment for traders who came from Manitoba to gain access to the Mississippi River port during the early days of the Minnesota Territory. By the middle 1800s the area was platted and was home to a solidly middle-class population.

With the opening of the streetcar line along University Avenue in 1890, connecting Minneapolis and Saint Paul, the neighborhood became more working class. While this area was clearly part of the Rondo neighborhood, it also came to be known as “Cornmeal Valley” or Lower Rondo, so named for the greater poverty and dislocation that came about before and during the depression era, and it was made up of mostly African Americans who worked in the packinghouses.

By the turn of the century, the intersection of University and Western avenues was served by a mix of small businesses. In 1912, the Minnesota Milk Company commissioned architect Charles H. Berger to design and build a 46,000 square foot creamery on the southeast corner of the intersection. In 1932, architect Charles Hausler updated the building in a sleek Art Deco design. It remained operational until 2006. Today the building sits unoccupied, and has been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

From the 1920s through the late 1940s, Rondo continued to be an integrated, vibrant neighborhood. The Rondo-Stryker streetcar and a number of bus lines gave people without cars access to the rest of the city. Numerous small businesses were within walking distance, but as the latter part of the 1940s approached, the divide between Rondo’s Oatmeal Hill and Cornmeal Valley was becoming more apparent. In Cornmeal Valley the bulk of the households were non-white. Only 20 percent of the homes were owner occupied. No new homes had been built in the neighborhood since 1919. The large houses of the late 1800s were divided and rented out at very low prices. The median income in the area was half that of the city as a whole. The area suffered from a lack of

recognition from city agencies, exemplified by the fact that when the streets were repaired in the late 1980s, it was discovered they had never been paved.

By 1957, 66 acres of land had been cleared through City efforts to remove blight and develop new housing, schools, parks. Twenty of these acres were used for the construction of I-94 through the neighborhood, which further divided communities and displaced thousands of African American residents. An initiative by the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) in the 1970’s created Central Village, a suburban-style neighborhood marketed to middle-class African Americans. The development included modern homes with yards on cul-de-sacs, its own Central Village Park, and a pedestrian bridge spanning I-94.



FIGURE 1.1 - University and Western Avenues, 1933



FIGURE 1.2 - Mosaic detail, 2006



FIGURE 1.3 - Old Home Foods, also known as the Minnesota Milk Building, 2010



FIGURE 1.4 - Streetcar on Western Avenue, 1941

Source of photos: Minnesota Historical Society and the City of Saint Paul

## The Western Station Area Today

**The Western station area is a culturally diverse neighborhood offering a range of house forms surrounding a mixed-use “main street.”**

The area is considered a hub of the Southeast Asian community with numerous small-scale stores, restaurants and independent businesses catering to the local Hmong and Vietnamese communities. As a result of this cluster, the area is emerging as a regional destination for visitors seeking authentic Asian goods and cuisine. While many of the traditional “main street” buildings remain, several smaller gaps in the streetscape detract from the character and quality of the area. These gaps, along with several larger redevelopment sites (including the Old Home and Saxon Ford sites) represent an opportunity to increase the housing offerings and expand the local retail mix over time.

To the south of the Avenue, the neighborhood is defined by a mix of housing styles and block configurations that are a result of “urban renewal” following the construction of I-94 in the 1960’s. Residential developments such as the suburban-style Central Village and the Hanover Townhouse complex have resulted in numerous cul-de-sacs and inward-looking residential blocks. In recent years a cluster of community facilities and services has developed at the intersection of Central and Western. North of University Avenue, the early 20th century housing has been severely hit by the current recession. This has resulted in numerous foreclosures and housing vacancies.

Local neighborhood services include Jackson Elementary School, Lao Family Community Center, several churches and smaller independent community facilities. However, the area is lacking an outdoor community gathering space. While several larger neighborhood open spaces exist south of the Avenue, these are located on the edge of the station area, are not inviting to the public, and are generally under-used due to their internal focus.



**FIGURE 1.4** - The Western station area today represents a multi-cultural “main street” neighborhood defined by open spaces and diverse housing styles.





**FIGURE 1.5** - Traditional “main street” buildings along University host small businesses and community facilities. Over the last decade a wave of new businesses have opened, offering a range of goods and services. These businesses are transforming the area into a regional destination.



**FIGURE 1.6** - The Hanover Townhouse complex sits between the Western Sculpture Park and Central Village Park. Its current configuration leaves it feeling cut off and isolated from the surrounding neighborhood.



**FIGURE 1.7** - North of University Avenue, the area is comprised of blocks of early 20th century housing served by rear alleys. In recent years, this area has been severely hit by foreclosures and vacancies.



**FIGURE 1.8** - Jackson Elementary, anchoring the northern end of the station area, is an emerging focus of community activity and youth services.



**FIGURE 1.9** - Central Village Park is poorly connected to its surroundings, with limited street visibility. Park users describe the feeling of intruding upon a semi-private or exclusive park enclave, rather than being welcome guests.



**FIGURE 1.10** - The suburban style layout of the Central Village housing development introduced a new built form and street layout into the surrounding urban fabric. Numerous cul-de-sacs limit street connections to link the neighborhood south of Aurora to University and east of Western.



# The Future of the Western Station Area

# 2

**The Future of the Western station area chapter describes:**

- **the planned location of the future LRT platform;**
- **forecasted market opportunities for new growth and investment;**
- **a description of the Station Area Boundary and Areas of Stability and Change within the Western station area; and**
- **a vision statement describing the future potential role and character of the station area with regard to both the immediate community and the broader Central Corridor.**

## The Future of the Western Station Area

**The Western station area will benefit over time from modest residential and commercial development, though its real strength rests in the quality of the existing residential neighborhood.**

LRT will increase pedestrian and transit user access, raising the profile of local businesses, and benefitting residents through access to a modern and efficient transit system linked to the many employment, learning and cultural institutions located throughout the Twin Cities. Where redevelopment potential does exist, new buildings and streetscape enhancements will help to enliven and frame University Avenue and Western Avenue.

### 2.1 The Western LRT Platform

The future Western LRT station (Figure 2.1) is planned as a split side platform centered on the intersection of Western Avenue and University Avenue. This is a two platform configuration, with the westbound platform to the west of Western, and the eastbound platform to the east. LRT passengers will be able to access their platforms either from the main traffic signal located at Western, or at non-signalized pedestrian crossings at Arundel and Farrington.

Traffic at the intersection of Western and University will differ slightly from its current operations. Motorists will be able to turn left onto Western, or complete a U-turn, on green arrows only. The median will be closed at Arundel, Virginia, and Farrington Streets, so vehicular movement across University, at these locations, will not be allowed.

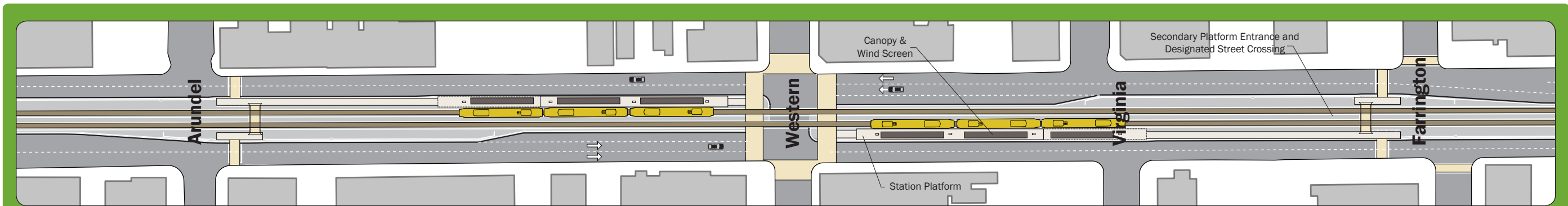
A new traffic signal will be placed at Mackubin (immediately west of the station area), to facilitate additional safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings, and provide another opportunity for left turns onto and off of University Avenue. Due to the location of elements such as the LRT platforms, left turn lanes, pedestrian crossings, bus stops and driveways, on-street parking will be removed between Arundel and Farrington Streets on both sides of the street. Parking will also be lost on the north side of University between Mackubin and Arundel, but will remain intact on the south side of that block, as well as on both sides of University between Farrington and Galtier.

### 2.2 Market Forecast

Building on the Central Corridor Development Strategy market forecast, a review of the Western station area characteristics and market potential was undertaken to consider the extent and timing of future development. The Western station area possesses some larger, reuse and redevelopment sites, such as the Old Home site and Saxon Ford properties. These larger vacant and presently underutilized sites, in conjunction with the area's predominantly single-family character, result in a

Western Station Area Market Potential						
	Forecast Development Potential 2010-2035	Forecast Pre-Construction Development 2010	Forecast Development During LRT Construction 2011-2014	Early LRT Operation 2015-2025	Mature Operation 2026-2035	Specific Market Opportunities
# of Residential Units: Rent	400 - 500	-	100	150 - 200	150 - 200	There will be mostly affordable housing demand in early years and limited market rate demand as the line matures.
# of Residential Units: Own	50 - 100	-	-	-	50 - 100	There is only a marginal condo market. The recent value loss in the condo market will discourage new condo development.
Amount of Office Space (sqft)	45,000	-	-	15,000	30,000	There is limited potential for office development as there is little or no identity as an office market.
Amount of Retail Space (sqft)	20,000	-	-	10,000	10,000	New retail will likely be focussed on serving the needs of the immediate neighborhood.
Amount of Industrial Space (sqft)	-	-	-	-	-	This is not an industrial market.
Number of Hotel Rooms	-	-	-	-	-	More immediate access to I-94 is required for hotel development and there is currently limited demand.

**FIGURE 2.2 - The Western Station Area Development Forecast** predicts modest growth with opportunities for mixed use infill development and additional community facilities.



**FIGURE 2.1 - The diagram above represents a typical split side platform as it might look within the future Western Station area**

mixed land-use pattern that includes residential, retail and remnant industrial uses that create interesting and eclectic opportunities for adaptive re-use of existing buildings. One of the core strengths of the area is its strong ethnic identity and character.

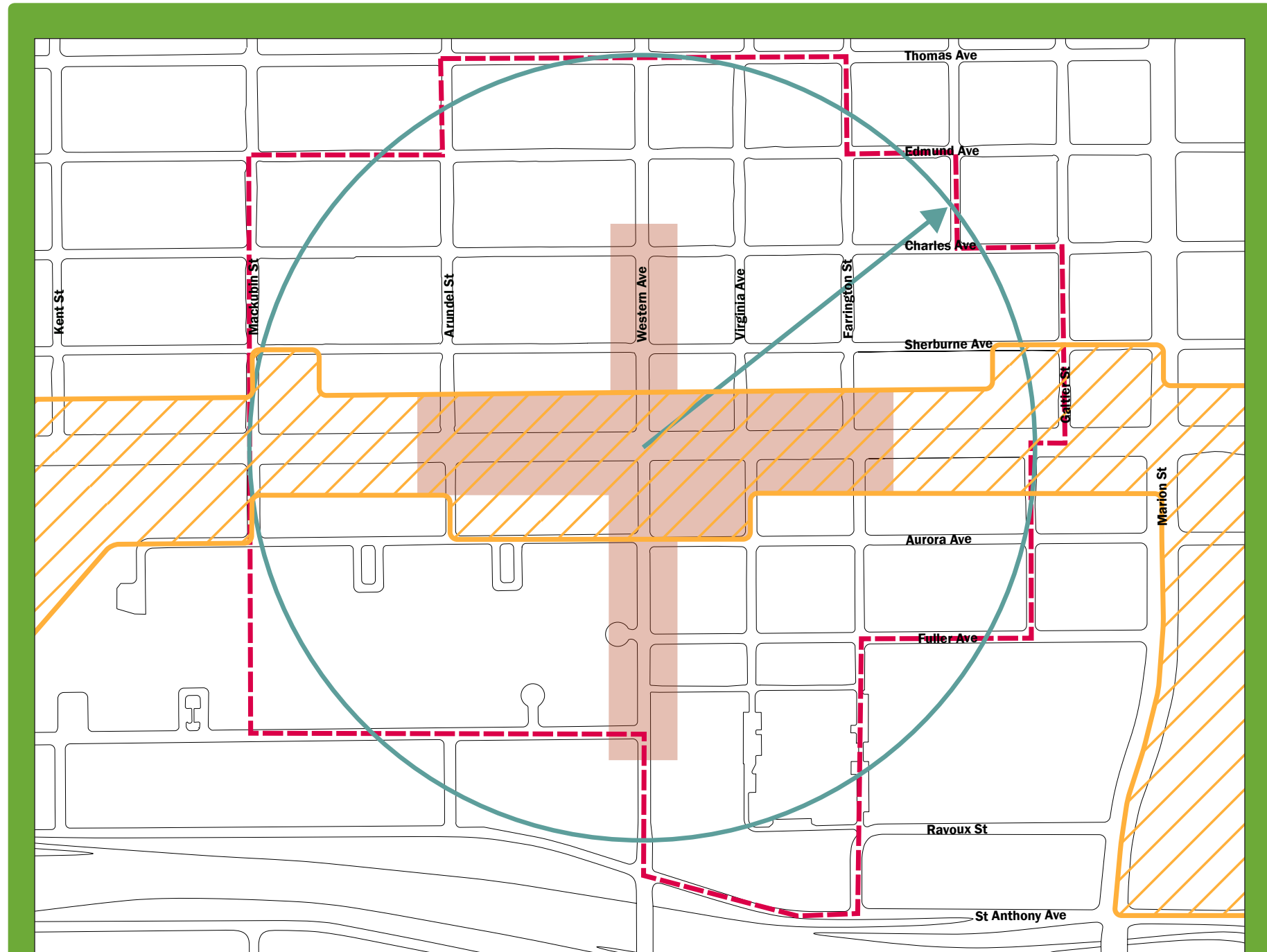
Despite these strengths, limited market-rate demand is anticipated for new residential development as the line matures. Recent value loss in the condo market has resulted in only a marginal demand for condo development, and there is very little potential for any significant office space. Given these factors, it is estimated that within the next 25 years, the Western station area will grow modestly in the areas of housing and commercial development, with new investment focusing primarily on retail and services to meet the daily needs of the surrounding neighborhood. Figure 2.2 provides the estimated breakdown of the total potential development within the Western station area over the next 25 years.

### 2.3 Defining the Study Area

The station area boundary captures portions of the Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhoods. This boundary is the primary focus for all recommendations contained within this document.

Within the boundary, a refined Area of Change has been delineated through the station area planning process. The Area of Change denotes the parcels where change is welcome and should be encouraged within the Western station area, whether through gradual infill and/or intensification or comprehensive redevelopment. Conversely, areas outside the Area of Change have been identified as areas where the existing character should be maintained. Emphasis in these areas is on preserving and enhancing the neighborhoods in order to ensure that the existing low-rise residential character is reinforced and that there is a stable population in the vicinity of the LRT.

Finally, the current and future area of high pedestrian activity has been identified as a Mobility Enhancement Zone. Section 5.0 of this plan presents recommendations for balancing modes of movement within this active hub.



**FIGURE 2.3** - The diagram above illustrates the lenses of understanding applied to the Western station area.

- Mobility Enhancement Zone
- Area of Change
- 5-minute Walking Radius (1/4 mile)
- Station Area Planning Boundary

## The Future of the Western Station Area

### 2.4 Looking Ahead – The Western Station Area in 2035

The Western station area will continue to strengthen along with the features that make it such a welcome and diverse community today. Incremental change will focus on steadily enhancing the existing residential neighborhood, strengthening the business community, and revitalizing the existing building stock.

While the introduction of LRT will promote a modest demand for new residential and commercial development, it is the existing residents and business owners that stand to benefit the most over the long term. Foot traffic generated by LRT passengers will help to enliven the surrounding streets and open spaces. This will be most noticeable along University and on Western, where a renewed focus on the pedestrian environment will enhance this critical north-south connection.

A new public space at the intersection of Virginia and University has the potential to establish a new community gathering place for both local residents and visitors to the area. Central Village Park will continue to function as the principal open space for the area, with improved connections and signage that better inform park users of the trail system's origins and destinations.

Where alleys have been vacated or eroded over time, their intended function, access and appearance will improve through rehabilitation, enhanced lighting, and consolidated business parking. Residential areas will witness slow and steady improvement through targeted revitalization programs, and maintain their quality, value and vitality.

#### Western Station Area Vision:

**A safe and healthy neighborhood containing a mix of housing types capable of supporting a range of household sizes. New buildings and uses along the avenue will continue to support and strengthen the “main street” character of the area while expanding services to meet the daily needs of the local community. The area will be a destination for visitors from across the region.**



**FIGURE 2.4** - The rendering illustrates one possible long-term, full build out of the station area. It describes a vision for the Western station area as a traditional “main street” neighborhood of stable residential areas organized around a strengthened and attractive “main street” with a mix of small restaurants and businesses. The colors represent distinct *Character Areas* that are addressed in Chapter 4 of the Station Area Plan. Rather than attempting to predict the location and distribution of anticipated long-term investment, this conceptual model illustrates the application of transit-supportive principles throughout the entire station area. The total development yield illustrated is therefore not meant to be precisely representative of the 2035 market forecast (Figure 2.2) for this station area, but demonstrates how, over the long-term, new development can help to achieve the community, place-making and transit-supportive opportunities that exist in the station area.





## Public Realm - Creating Places

**The following Key Moves identify priority investments for improving the public spaces and pedestrian environment in the Western station area in a manner consistent with the Vision of the Central Corridor Development Strategy: a beautiful urban place with pedestrian-friendly, attractive, tree-lined boulevards. These recommendations explore opportunities for streetscaping, enhanced open-space connections, community gathering places and expressions of public art.**

### The Western station area contains a range of larger parks and open spaces but lacks smaller community gathering places.

Though Central Village Park is an important community asset, it is poorly connected to its surroundings and isolated at the center of a large block of housing. Currently, the park has limited visibility and points of access to the larger community. Where connections extend into the surrounding neighborhood, they have little visual presence and fail to identify the park behind them. An important connection east to the Western Sculpture Park is absent. Park edges are poorly defined and seem to 'bleed' into adjacent residential properties. The park, however, holds tremendous potential to contribute to the neighborhood through new programmed uses and enhanced connections. North of the Avenue, Jackson Elementary School playground provides an active recreation space for the surrounding community.

The quality of the streetscape and public realm in the station area is inadequate. This is most noticeable along Western Avenue, which has the potential to act as an important north/south connector, linking the Selby neighborhood north to the Avenue. Throughout the station area, but most noticeably south of the Avenue, are vacant lots and semi-private green spaces. While these are currently uninviting to users, they represent an opportunity for new temporary green spaces and community gardens that can enhance the image of the station area and promote more neighborhood interaction.



**FIGURE 3.1 - The Public Realm Plan** identified here demonstrates one possible configuration of an improved network of open spaces and pedestrian routes. It illustrates an enhanced Western Avenue connecting Jackson Elementary south to the Ober Community Center at the northeast corner of St Anthony and Western, an enhanced and extended Central Park, improved connections between Jackson Elementary and the LRT, a new park at the intersection of Virginia and University, community green spaces and enhanced alleys.

- Ⓐ Public Art Opportunities
- Alleys
- Streetscape Improvements/ Landscaping

### 3.1 Western's Public Realm: Key Moves

The following Key Moves describe a series of ideas for future investment in the public realm. While the eventual location and configuration of these spaces may be different than the images presented here, developers, City departments and other stakeholders should strive to achieve the general intent and purpose of the Key Moves described below. These conceptual Moves will require a range of implementation measures - from allocation of municipal capital works budgets to private investment and parkland dedication and/or acquisition - to be determined on a site-by-site basis as investment occurs.

#### Enhance the Central Village Park and Link it to LRT



**FIGURE 3.3** - An Enhanced Central Village Park would create strengthened connections between surrounding areas and better delineating public areas.

Central Village Park is currently an underutilized asset sitting at the heart of the neighborhood. To reactivate the space, the park should undergo improvements to help delineate public and private space and strengthen the park's identity.

In order to enhance connections between the park, the neighborhood and LRT, pathways through the park should be strengthened with wider, directly routed sidewalks and supplemented with enhanced lighting and pedestrian amenities. This is particularly important at Mackubin Street south of Central Avenue, which functions as an important connection over the I-94 corridor. A designated bike lane should be provided through the park to connect with the pedestrian bridge at Saint Anthony. Opportunities for the extension of Mackubin and Arundel south through the park should be explored as a means of further enhancing these connections and opening the park to the neighborhood. Improvements to each of the park's entrances should seek to elevate the profile of the park and path system from the neighborhood through special landscaping treatments, new way-finding signage and expressions of public art.

#### Create a Community Gathering Space at Virginia



**FIGURE 3.2** - The proposed new Virginia Avenue Park will create a new gathering space along University and can act as a gateway to neighborhoods south of Aurora.

There is a significant need for a new neighborhood park within the Western station area. A new square or open space at the corner of Virginia Avenue and University could serve as an important outdoor meeting place for the neighborhood. This new space could evolve in partnership with the City as a component of a reused or redeveloped Old Home site, where it would serve as a complementary component to new uses there.

The proposed open space would help to create a highly visible civic space adjacent to the Avenue and enhance connections north to the LRT station area. The smaller scale and urban quality of the new square or public open space would contrast with the larger, less formal spaces found in Central Village Park and Western Park and create a gateway south into the community. As a focal point for community interaction, the open space is a prime candidate for new expressions of public art celebrating the different cultures of the area.

### Establish Western as an Important Pedestrian Spine



**FIGURE 3.4** - A series of streetscape improvements along Western would help to connect areas north and south of the Avenue to the LRT.

Western Avenue is a strong north-south connection linking the Western station area south to the Selby neighborhood. A series of streetscape improvements along Western Avenue would help to enhance connections between Jackson Elementary and the station, capture the emerging cluster of community-supportive services south of Fuller and strengthen connections south of I-94. These improvements should be targeted at enhancing the pedestrian environment, improving safety, and supporting users through amenities such as enhanced lighting, seating, bike facilities as well as garbage and recycling receptacles.

The Western Bridge over I-94 is currently one of the more distinguished crossing points over the highway, linking University Avenue to Selby. Wider sidewalks on either side of the bridge would improve conditions for pedestrians over the highway and support streetscape improvements along Western.

### Make the Most of Neighborhood Green Space



**FIGURE 3.5** - The existing small-scale underutilized green spaces represent an opportunity for community-led initiatives such as gardening or neighborhood art installations.

There are a number of underutilized open or vacant spaces located throughout the community. These have resulted from the Radburn-styled patterns of redevelopment south of the Avenue and in recent years from a high number of housing foreclosures and sporadic demolitions. Though small in scale, these spaces represent a tremendous opportunity for both temporary and long-term public realm and open space initiatives that can help to bring members of the community together and activate these spaces.

Opportunities for community-led initiatives such as the creation of community garden plots, landscape treatments or locally based expressions of temporary or seasonal public art should be explored as a means of re-activating these underutilized spaces in the absence of redevelopment or intensification.

### Enhance the Walk to Jackson Elementary



**FIGURE 3.6** - A series of targeted streetscape improvements around Jackson Elementary School will help to make it safer and more comfortable for people to walk to and from the school.

Frequented by neighborhood children and adults, the streets around Jackson Elementary School have an added importance within the station area. Ensuring that the streets and sidewalks around the school are safe and comfortable is consistent with the Safe Routes to School initiative, and will also make it easier for elderly members of the community to get around safely.

A targeted series of streetscape improvements should be implemented around the school to connect it south to the LRT. These improvements should be aimed at enhancing crossing points through the creation of crosswalks and curb bump-outs, and supported with enhanced pedestrian amenities such as seating, pedestrian lighting and garbage receptacles.

### Enhance the Existing Alleys



**FIGURE 3.7** - A series of targeted alley improvements are needed to parking access to neighborhood businesses and reduce concerns related to neighborhood safety.

Where alleys exist, a targeted program of alley enhancements aimed at improving the condition, maintenance and character of the alleys will help to support an expanded role for the alleys and enhance perception of user safety. Opportunities for enhanced paving, pedestrian lighting and the integration of stormwater management techniques should continue to be explored. The alleys represent excellent opportunities for public stormwater improvement programs. Whenever possible, water should be captured and filtered on site through the use of permeable paving, rain gardens or expandable grates that can be adjusted as trees grow.

The alleys also present opportunities for public art that can help enhance their attractiveness to members of the community.

## Integrate Public Art Opportunities:



Artist: Unknown



Artist: Wayne Healy &amp; East Los Streetscapers

**FIGURE 3.8** - The entry points to Central Village Park at Western and Mackubin offer locations for public art that emphasize the area's garden-like character and signal the park's presence (left). A community-sanctioned mural program (right) could help to transform blank walls and enhance the character of the alleys.

All future public development projects and public-realm projects within the station area should include public art, consistent with the City's adopted public art ordinance. Private property owners and developers are encouraged to recognize the potential for public art to shape and transform the experience of public places, and consider strategies to include public art and to involve artists.

Public art is:

- 1) The creation of site-specific objects and site-integrated work to beautify public spaces, improve their function and enhance their meaning in the community; and
- 2) The creation of site-specific experiences using various art forms and media, including time-based works, to enhance the sense of place.

Public art has the potential to express the distinct character of the station area as well as to emphasize the continuity and wholeness of the corridor. The following concepts and opportunities identified through the workshop process represent some of the specific possibilities for public art within the Western station area.

- The Western LRT station and area present opportunities for public art that defines and distinguishes the station and its surrounding neighborhood; identifies the area's unique parks including Central Village Park and Western Sculpture Park; and tells the story of the area's mosaic of different cultures.
- Public art could explore, celebrate and honor the cultures and experiences of past and present residents, and enlighten visitors. A series of landmark works distinguishing different cultural zones; awnings and

storefront improvements; and streetscape amenities such as seating and unique bike racks created by artists could deliver expressions of public art along the corridor.

- The entry points to Central Village Park at Western and Mackubin offer locations for public art that emphasize the area's garden-like character and signal the park's presence.
- Establishing a safe east-west connection across Western Avenue could link Western Sculpture Park and Central Village Park enabling the fuller use of these resources as called for by the Western Park Neighborhood Assessment and Plan (2004-2006) undertaken by Public Art Saint Paul. A continuum of artful spaces including sculptures, historic markers, benches and other amenities designed by artists could identify and reinforce this connective spine.
- Temporary or seasonal public art by emerging artists could highlight neighborhood green initiatives including urban gardens and stormwater gardens.
- Virginia Park, envisioned as a new community gathering space adjacent to the LRT at the vacated Old Home site, could be planned with artist(s) on the professional design team and/or feature works of public art as well as supply flexible spaces for cultural events and performances.
- A community sanctioned and supported mural program engaging local youth in public art practice by mentoring with professional artists, could enliven blank facades and mitigate the character of the neighborhood alleys.

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## Future Character Areas - Policy Directions

**Recognizing the diverse places within each station area, two distinct Character Areas have been identified for the Western station area.**

**Utilizing a series of 3-D renderings derived from models developed through the course of community workshops, this section builds on the transit-supportive development types identified in the Central Corridor Development Strategy to describe historic and emerging Character Areas within the Western station area. Each Character Area contains a series of policy directions to guide future investment and change in built form, land use and circulation over time. These directions include identifying the appropriate location and scale of taller buildings, requirements for transitioning to stable neighborhoods, a desirable mix of transit-supportive uses, and recommendations for accommodating a system of movement that balances modes of active, transit and automobile transportation.**

**Images in this section illustrate how the goals and objectives of the station area plan may be realized. Flexibility in the interpretation and application of these guidelines is anticipated in order to allow for a range of transit supportive development scenarios that reflect the directions and intent established in this Station Area Plan.**







# Future Character Areas - Policy Directions

## Future investment in Western's station area should build on two distinct Character Areas.

Investment in the Western station area should preserve the integrity and character of the stable residential neighborhoods, revitalize the area's eclectic building stock, and continue to fill in the gaps along the Avenue with a range of mixed-use buildings that cater to a broad spectrum of businesses and families.

A flexible and permissive land-use strategy follows that emphasizes connectivity, design performance, transit-supportive qualities, a broad mix of uses, flexibility of regulation over time, active first floor building faces, and shared parking solutions. Together, these approaches will strengthen and repair the area's "main street" quality, and reinforce the fabric of the area as a traditional transit-supportive community with housing, employment and a range of local and regional services.

While this overall direction will help guide change over the entire Western station area, this section describes two distinct Character Areas that will require specific policy direction to achieve their built form and land-use potential over time. The following character area descriptions and policy directions guide future development in the broader station area. Each Character Area contains a series of policy directions to guide future investment and change in built form, land use and circulation over time.

The final section of the chapter outlines common policy directions for parking and access that apply to both of the Character Areas.

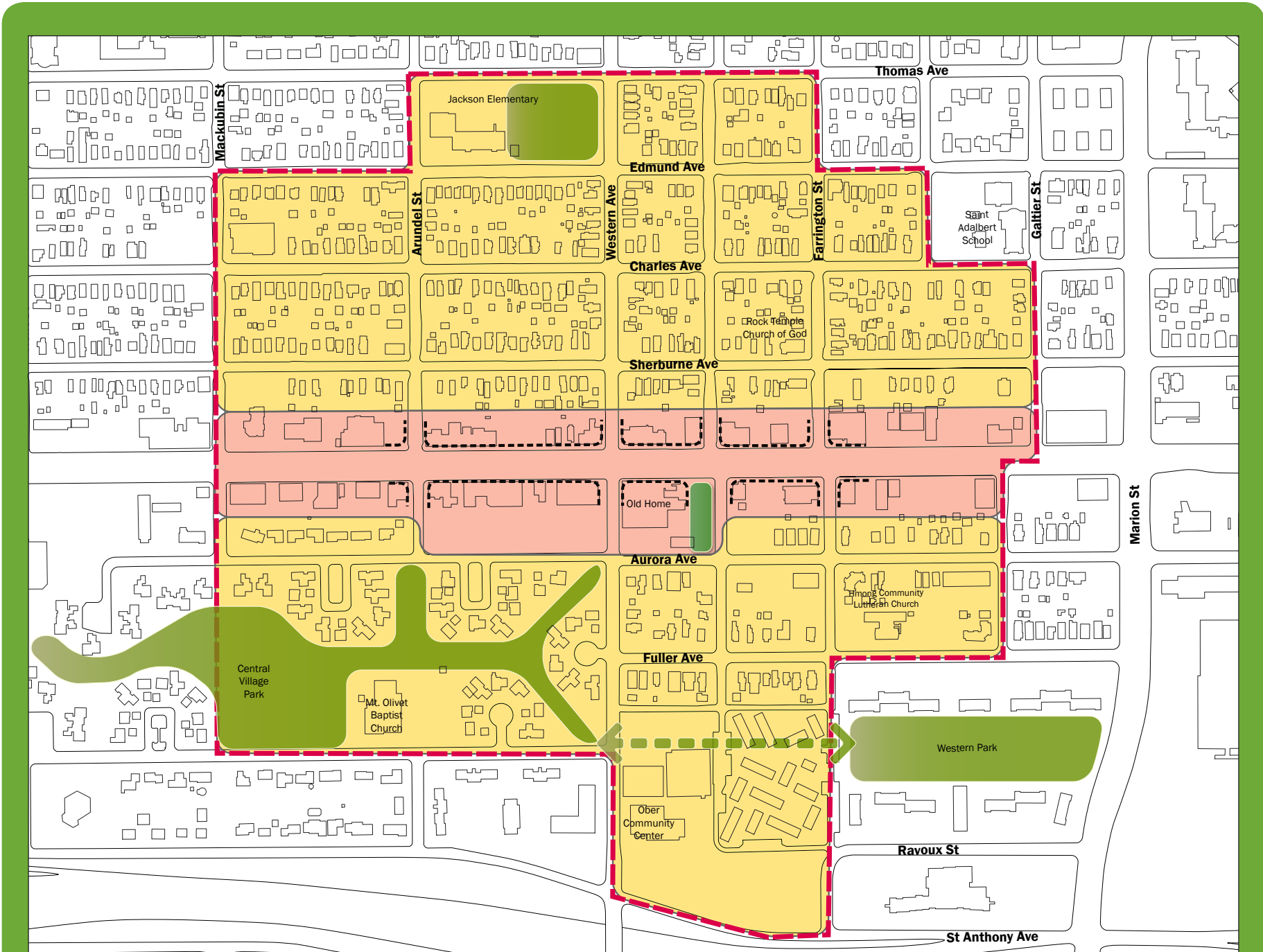


FIGURE 4.1 - The Western station area is comprised of 2 Character Areas, each with its own potential.

- Strengthening the Avenue
- Proposed Open Space
- Station Area Planning Boundary
- Sensitive Neighborhood Infill
- Existing Open Space
- Priority Active Frontage
- Key Open Space Connection

## Future Character Areas - Policy Directions

### 4.1 Strengthening the Avenue

**A reinforced and restored University Avenue that is pedestrian friendly, and contains a mix of services catering to both the local and wider community, represents one of the greatest opportunities for strengthening the Western station area.**

Though the Western station area represents one of the most intact portions of “main street” along the Avenue, several smaller gaps and larger redevelopment sites (including the Old Home site and the Saxon Ford site), represent an opportunity to improve the edge condition of the Avenue, and introduce new retail, employment and residential uses. These could take on a variety of forms including smaller half depth, infill developments facing onto the Avenue and larger full depth developments that contribute to the character of the Avenue and help to restore the residential fabric along Sherburne and Fuller Avenue.

University Avenue is the seam that connects the two very distinct residential neighborhoods to the north and south together. It can be strengthened with an expanded and enhanced retail presence that continues to cater to the local ethnic community while providing important services to the broader neighborhood populations.



**FIGURE 4.2** - The model illustrates the potential for a strengthened neighborhood “main street” with low-rise mixed use buildings that help to fill in gaps in the street over time.

### 4.1.1 Built Form

#### New development should fit with its surroundings

- a) New development or expansion of existing buildings should be predominantly low rise in scale, generally between three and four stories in height. Infill and intensification, where appropriate, may be greater than four stories in height.
- b) Buildings should transition down in height towards the alley and the neighborhoods to the rear.
- c) In instances of larger sites with frontage along both University and Sherburne or Aurora, buildings should transition down in height away from the Avenue and incorporate residential uses with direct first floor access along these streets.
- d) To repair the residential character of the street, buildings along Sherburne and Aurora should be no greater than three residential stories in height and adopt similar setback and massing characteristics to the existing residential development along the street.
- e) To create a comfortable relationship with pedestrians on University Avenue, buildings should be stepped back from the street generally around the third floor.
- f) The Old Home site contains a unique heritage structure known as the Minnesota Milk Building that is an important local landmark for the neighborhood. New uses and developments should seek to reuse the building to strengthen the connection between the station area's past and present.
- g) The parking lot south of University Avenue between Western and Arundel is a prime candidate for new development that can repair the residential character of Aurora Street. New development here should explore the

potential for a small shared parking structure to serve existing University Avenue businesses.

#### All new development should promote transparency and activity at street level

- h) All first floor units and storefronts should have at least one pedestrian entrance oriented towards the Avenue, Station Access Points and/or key gathering places.
- i) Commercial or retail uses located at grade should help to animate the street by incorporating extensive use of transparent glazing that allows activity within to be seen from the street.
- j) New development adjacent to the Avenue should be set back a minimum of 4 feet to accommodate a 14-foot sidewalk and pedestrian zone. An additional 6 feet should be permitted on sites adjacent to the station to encourage active ground floor uses such as sidewalk cafes.

#### The neighborhood "main street" should have many uses

- a) A greater mix and integration of uses should be encouraged along the Avenue where they afford an easy connection to public transit, and benefit from the visibility and profile of being located on a major transportation corridor.

#### Flexible live-work spaces should be encouraged

- b) Ground floor residential units should be designed as adaptive, grade-related live-work units with taller floor to ceiling heights that can evolve over time to accommodate a wide range of uses: studios, professional offices, community services, etc.
- c) The renovation and re-use of existing buildings or development of new smaller commercial spaces, with access to common amenities such as meeting spaces,

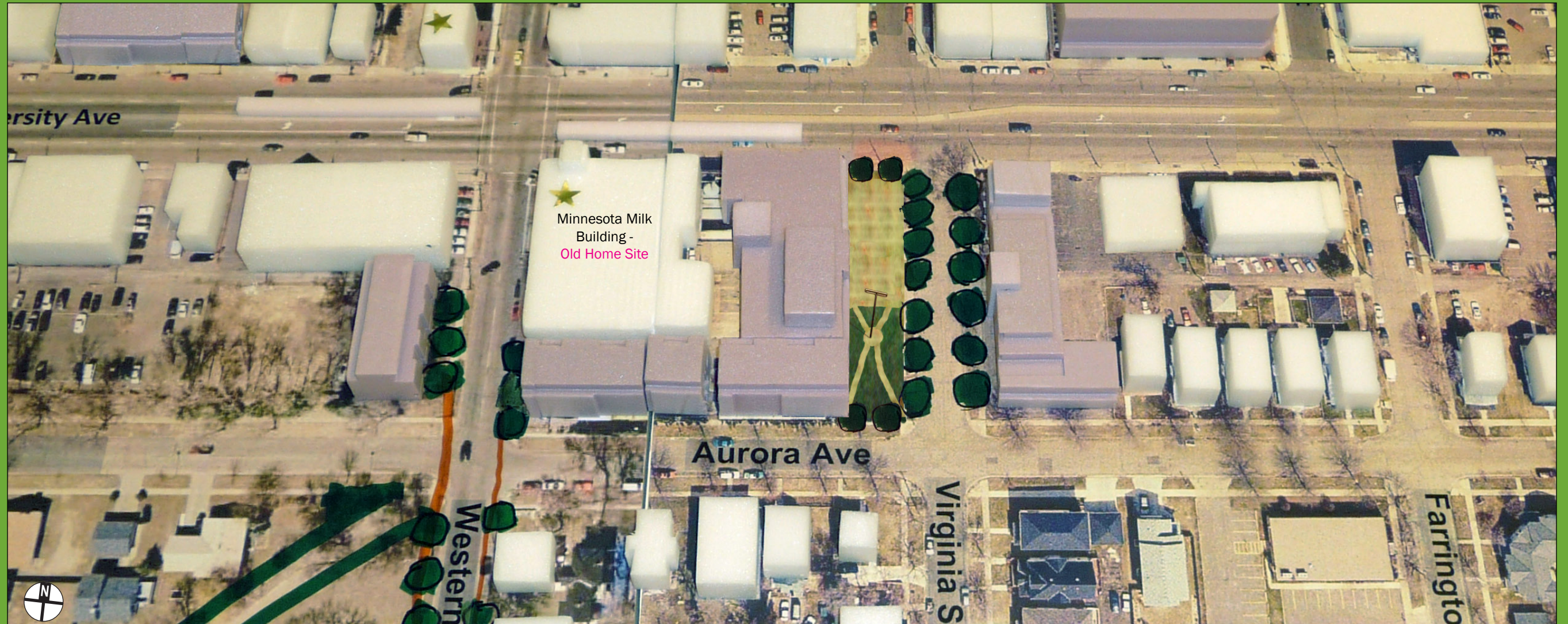
can help to reduce costs for local start-up businesses that want to get a foothold on the Avenue.

#### All new private development must contribute to the character of the area

- d) Buildings should be designed to front adjacent streets to enable more "eyes on the street" and promote neighborhood safety.
- e) Where there is insufficient public right-of-way for new street tree planting or public realm amenities, new buildings should be set back from property lines to establish an outdoor area for seating, display space and/or landscaping or public art as appropriate. A minimum pedestrian promenade dimension of 14' would provide for street trees, sidewalk and some outdoor seating space.
- f) Developments within the area defined as Priority Active Frontage (Figure 5.2) should provide entrances and spaces for active uses at grade to support greater levels of activity adjacent to the LRT.
- g) Where parking lots create gaps in the street frontage, they should be adequately landscaped along the street frontage.

#### Integrate the Traction Power Sub-Station (TPSS) into the streetscape

- h) New developments adjacent to the proposed TPSS should explore opportunities for the use of generous landscaping and planting patterns that can be extended west across the front and sides of the sub-station site integrating it into the development.
- i) The TPSS site should be generously landscaped with trees and shrubbery on all sides in order to assist in shielding it from adjacent uses.



**FIGURE 4.3** - Redevelopment of the Old Home site should seek to reuse the historic Minnesota Milk Building to strengthen the connection between the station area's past and present. A proposed new park at the intersection of Virginia Avenue and University will create a new gathering space along the Avenue and can act as a gateway to neighborhoods south of Aurora.

### Re-use and Redevelop the Old Home Site

The historic 46,000 square foot Minnesota Milk Building, anchoring the corner of Western and University at the Old Home site, was originally built in 1912 and updated to its current Art Deco design in 1932. Though vacant, the current building is a prominent structure within the station area. An ideal redevelopment scheme for the site would include restoration and reuse of the Minnesota Milk Building, if economically and architecturally feasible.

The reuse and redevelopment of the Old Home site represents an opportunity for the introduction of new homes and businesses immediately adjacent to the station and the incorporation of new neighborhood-related uses along the Avenue. The station area currently lacks a significant community gathering/event space and the redevelopment of the site represents an opportunity to introduce this along the avenue housed within a unique venue.

The incorporation of a new public space at Virginia Street could deliver a much needed outdoor gathering space connecting the neighborhood to the LRT and complimenting new ground-floor uses in the development.



**FIGURE 4.4** - A small “main street” plaza space such as this example (above) results in the creation of an informal gathering space that compliments the ground floor uses of the adjacent uses. A similar plaza at the intersection of Virginia and University, as a component of a redeveloped Old Home site, would provide a much needed outdoor community space and help to strengthen the connection between neighborhoods south of the Avenue and the LRT.



**FIGURE 4.5** - The reuse of the Old Home site represents an opportunity for the incorporation of a new community gathering/event space along the Avenue. This facility could take advantage of the unique spaces within the building to create a destination event space that can be used by members of both the local and wider Saint Paul community. A wedding being held in the grand space of a former round house (top) and the Midtown Global Market in Minneapolis (bottom) are two examples of how unique heritage structures can be reused to serve the wider community.

## Restoring and Enhancing the Alleys



**FIGURE 4.6** - A series of targeted alley improvements will enhance parking access to neighborhood businesses while reducing concerns related to neighborhood safety. Where alleys do not exist a focus on restoration and re-configuration aimed at restoring a continuous access route across the rear of the properties should be pursued.

↔ Targeted Alley Enhancements     
 ↔ Priority for Alley Restoration     
  Re-configuration of driveways to establish shared parking and access

### Establish and enhance the alleys

- a) Where opportunities arise through redevelopment or other initiatives, partially vacated alleys should be restored and parking consolidated in order to enhance access for businesses along University Avenue. The City should actively pursue the restoration of alleys between Arundel and Mackubin in order to increase safety and access.
- b) On the north side of the Avenue on the blocks between Galtier and Western, there are not traditional alleys. Driveways and parking lots here should be reconfigured

over time to create shared circulation routes to the rear of the block.

- c) Existing alleys in the station area should be preserved as public right-of-way in order to maintain access for businesses and development along University Avenue, and to increase automobile and pedestrian circulation.
- d) Where alleys exist, a targeted program of clean-up, maintenance and alley enhancements should explore opportunities for new paving, the integration of stormwater management features such as permeable paving and rain gardens, enhanced lighting, and artwork. Alleys shared between commercial and residential uses should focus on buffering commercial traffic and noise.

**Pursue creative shared parking and/or on street parking solutions where opportunities arise**

- e) Reconfigure and share existing parking lots to maximize supply within current constraints. The redesign of striping and access points to encourage shared parking and circulation, and the addition of pedestrian amenities and lighting can help to enhance conditions for pedestrians and increase the utilization of existing commercial lots. In the Western station area, beneficial shared lots could be developed on the Asian American Press site, the existing Burger King site, or during off-peak hours, at Lao Family.
- f) Reduce or eliminate commercial parking requirements for development along University Avenue. This strategy will reduce development costs, increase affordability, support transit ridership with more compact development, and open new possibilities for flexible,

small scale live-work spaces.

- g) Support alley enhancements and shared parking through a municipal initiative targeting the retrofit of existing buildings to create additional business entrances to the rear of buildings and by ensuring that new structures preserve opportunities for shared, alley-accessed parking.
- h) Close curb cuts where possible, and discourage new curb cuts. Driveways (also called curb cuts) create a discontinuous frontage along the streetscape, resulting in the loss of parking. Businesses often have multiple access points, some of which could be voluntarily closed to gain additional on-street spaces.
- i) Install parking meters on all remaining spaces on University Avenue, and a range of time-limited signage on the side streets.
- j) Work with business and property owners to substitute street parking spaces for deliveries, loading and bike parking where needed.
- k) Provide ADA-accessible pedestrian pathways from rear parking to University Avenue.

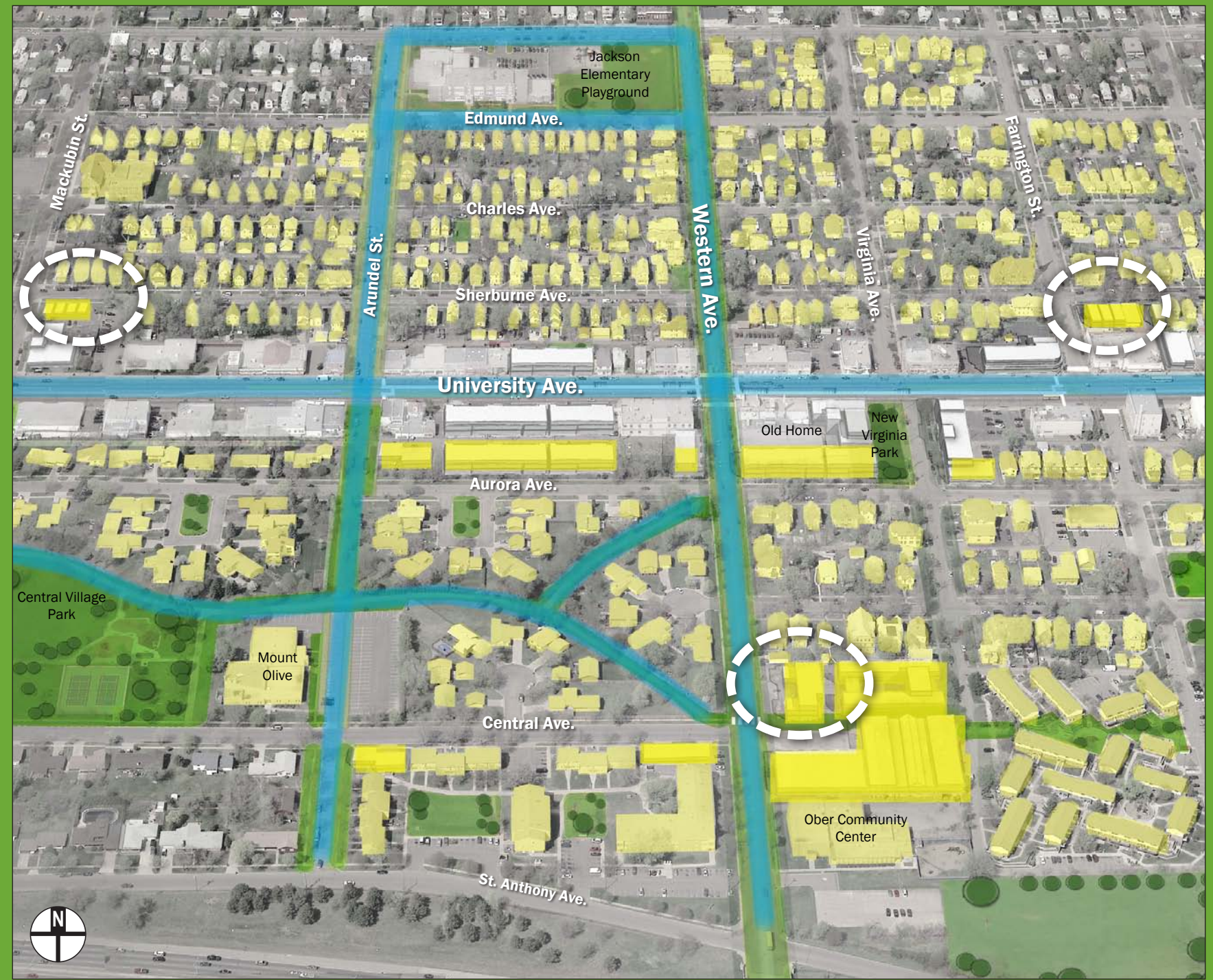


**FIGURE 4.7** - Murals created by local artists such as this example along Grand Avenue (top left) can help to enhance the image of the alleys. Enhanced metal halide lighting such as in this example from Chicago (top right) creates a brighter, more natural light making it easier to see and enhancing user safety. The before and after photos of this alley in Chicago (bottom) illustrate the results of their Green Alley program and demonstrate how permeable surfaces can reduce water runoff issues while enhancing the image and character of the alley.

## 4.2 Sensitive Neighborhood Infill

**The neighborhoods that surround the Western station can be reinforced through reinvestment and sensitive infill.**

New buildings should respect and fit in with the development pattern, scale and height of adjacent properties. This may include rehabilitation of existing single family homes; the construction of new single-family and multiple-family townhome dwellings, and the construction of new accessory units. East of Western, where there is an emerging cluster of long-term care and community service facilities, this may include multi-unit low-rise residential dwellings and small scale retail uses.



**FIGURE 4.8** - The rendering illustrates the potential for sensitive neighborhood infill development that strengthens the character and quality of the existing neighborhoods while expanding the range of available housing.



### 4.2.1 Built Form

#### Design for sensitive infill:

- All development should be designed to preserve light, views, and privacy in single-family neighborhoods.
- To repair the residential character of the existing low-rise neighborhoods, buildings should generally be no greater than three residential stories in height and adopt similar setback and massing characteristics to the existing residential development along the street.

South of the Avenue

- Redevelopment or new development on either side of Western Avenue should be oriented to actively address all adjacent public streets with doorways and generously proportioned windows that can enable more “eyes on the street.”
- East of Western, at the intersection of Western and Central Avenue, there is an emerging cluster of long-term care facilities and community services. Infill and intensification here should be no greater than 3 stories in height.
- Where previous development has resulted in the creation of gaps in the streetscape, new infill developments should help to create the feeling of a continuous building face running parallel to the street so that they reinforce the historic street and block pattern and enhance community safety by putting more “eyes on the street.”

### 4.2.2 Land Use & Development Pattern

#### Encourage accessory units in areas of stability:

- Accessory units and multi-unit dwellings should be encouraged as a means of simultaneously increasing density and housing options within the station area. These renovations represent excellent opportunities to repair and strengthen residential properties and provide opportunities for additional sources of revenue for families on a fixed income.

#### Re-purpose underutilized vacant open space:

- Private vacant lots within the residential neighborhood may be sold to adjacent residential land owners for private yard space.
- Publicly owned, vacant open space should be re-purposed either through the sale of the lands to adjacent owners for private yard space, redevelopment as new infill housing or as community gardens/public open spaces. The re-purposing of underutilized spaces will help to reactivate gaps in the neighborhood and enhance community safety.

#### Growth of the long-term care and community services cluster at Western and Central Avenue should enhance the neighborhood setting:

- A connection running east through the site from Central Avenue through the Hanover Townhouse complex would help to better integrate the Hanover Complex west into the station area and activate the existing pedestrian walkway through its center, creating a safer environment for users. New development and intensification should be sited as close to the street as possible and massed to preserve a connection between Central Park and the Western Sculpture Park to the east.
- Expansion and/or redevelopment of the Ober Community Center and its lands should seek to enhance the relationship between the playing fields, Western Avenue and the neighborhoods east of Farrington through the creation of a new paved east-west connection across the northern edge of the field and gateway treatments.

### 4.2.3 Circulation, Parking & Access

#### Ensuring that parking does not detract from the character of the neighborhoods:

- Off-street parking will not be permitted between the primary frontage of any dwelling and the public sidewalk.

#### Enhance the alleys:

- Focus on beautification, greening, and safety in residential alleys. Encourage residents to install lighting on the alley, and to remove blight and overgrowth from the area adjacent to their properties. Residential stormwater management techniques can help limit flooding and pooling, which can erode and damage alleys over time.

#### Enhance connections through Central Park:

- The extension of Mackubin and Arundel Street through Central Village Park could greatly enhance north/south connections through the station area and open up isolated areas of the park to the neighborhood. Redevelopment or revitalization initiatives focused on Central Village Park should explore the impacts and potential of extending these streets and ensure that there is no net loss of parkland.



**FIGURE 4.9** - Small infill projects such as this housing at Galtier Street and Fuller can help to fill small gaps in the street at a scale that is complementary to the surrounding neighborhood.



**FIGURE 4.10** - The model above of the proposed cluster of long-term care and community service cluster at Central Avenue and Western demonstrates how the new development could be integrated within the neighborhood.

**Grow the long-term care and community services cluster and enhance connections between Central Village Park and Western Park**

The intersection of Central Avenue and Western Avenue is home to a range of new uses including an assisted living center, home health center and adult day center. The continued intensification of the large surface parking lot at this intersection creates an opportunity to expand the range of uses here to develop a long term care and community services cluster. This would expand the current housing offerings within the station area and strengthen local services.

New development here should be low rise in scale, generally between two and three stories in height, and help to fill in the gaps along the Western Avenue streetscape. The preservation and formalization of a direct connection between the Central Village Park and Western Sculpture Park to the east will help to integrate the Hanover Townhouse Complex into the station area and activate its existing pedestrian walkway to create a safer environment for users.



**FIGURE 4.11** - The preservation of a small formal pathway or linear greenway linking the Central Village Park, east to Western Park (left top and bottom) would help to formalize and strengthen the existing path through the Hanover Townhouse Complex improving safety for users and extending the neighborhood’s unique greenway system. Low-rise buildings such as this example (right) from the Grand Avenue neighborhood in Saint Paul could accommodate long-term care and community facilities while preserving the scale and character of the neighborhood.

### 4.3 Managed Parking Strategies

#### Accommodating parking for existing businesses and residents will be an important challenge as the Western station area evolves.

The loss of on-street parking as a result of the LRT will place increased emphasis on maximizing the effectiveness of existing parking resources and finding new shared parking solutions. While large surface lots to the rear of existing University Avenue stores and businesses play a role in accommodating parking, these have the detrimental effect of eroding residential streets, and result in neighborhood instability along Aurora and Sherburne.

In the future, a strategy of shared parking will need to focus on the provision of more discrete neighborhood lots, maximizing the effectiveness of the alley system, and managing on street parking north and south of the Avenue.

The following policies provide a range of parking strategies for maximizing the effectiveness of parking solutions within the Western station area.

- a) Encourage better utilization and design of existing parking lots, and share the use and cost of parking. Discourage the establishment of large new single-use surface parking lots on University Avenue, and the expansion of existing lots within the station area.
- b) Discourage new surface parking fronting on University, which detracts from the vitality and pedestrian-friendly “main street” character of the Avenue.
- c) Where alternative parking solutions are not available surface parking fronting onto University Avenue should be limited to a maximum of 60 feet in width (for the provision of two parking aisles and one drive aisle) and utilize landscape buffers along the Avenue to minimize the visual impact on the pedestrian environment.
- d) Larger redevelopment sites should create or utilize shared, structured or below-grade parking.
- e) Maximize side-street parking where possible. Minimize curb cuts on north-south streets and along the Avenue by consolidating driveways. The use of flexible stall spacing, parking meters, and time-limited signage on side streets will help to encourage short trips and enable frequent vehicle turnover. Work with businesses and property owners to substitute space for deliveries and loading, and bike parking, where needed.
- f) Deliveries or loading that currently take place in the parking lane should be coordinated to happen during off-peak hours. In addition to rear and side street loading, some deliveries may need to occur in the curb lane of traffic, as some businesses have only street access.
- g) Manage neighborhood parking to discourage all-day commuter parking.
- h) Evaluate the current residential permit parking system to gauge its effectiveness, and explore allowing employees of businesses to park in the permit district in order to preserve limited nearby spaces for customers.
- i) Encourage greater use of mass transit, ridesharing, biking, and walking, reducing the demand for single-occupancy automobile parking. Require a Travel Demand Management plan as a part of the site plan review process for larger developments, or for employers using City financial assistance.
- j) Once LRT becomes operational, explore the potential for off-peak, on-street parking along University Avenue.
- k) Use parking enforcement technology to enforce parking regulations including time limits at parking meters, area-wide time limits, and permit restrictions.
- l) Explore partnerships to create, manage, and maintain shared parking lots.
- m) Encourage the centralization of refuse and recycling between businesses. If clusters of businesses could access common refuse and recycling facilities it would result in fewer dumpsters freeing up valuable space for additional parking.
- n) Create a Parking Improvement District to fund alley enhancements and shared off street parking solutions, streetscape improvements, snow removal, and the cost of operating a shared parking facility.



**FIGURE 4.12** - Signed shared parking arrangements such as these examples on Grand Avenue (top) maximize the effectiveness of the alley system and support multiple businesses. The combination of shared parking areas served by a network of alleys and the addition of rear entrance ways (bottom) creates a convenient parking environment while preserving the character of the alley.



## Movement - Balancing Modes

**This chapter contains strategies for improving options to move to, from and within the Western station area. These include Connections to improve the safety, efficiency and quality of pedestrian and cyclist routes; and The Mobility Enhancement Area, to provide safe and efficient pedestrian access to the Western LRT platform and destinations along University Avenue.**

# Movement - Connecting the Corridor

**While the surrounding neighborhoods are inherently walkable, movement around the University and Western intersection is currently dominated by the automobile.**

Future improvements aimed at enhancing mobility should facilitate people moving to and from neighborhood destinations, to the LRT and along University Avenue. Though Western Avenue provides an important vehicle crossing over I-94, its role as a local street and connection to Central Village Park and the Selby neighborhood demands a rebalancing of modes to better accommodate pedestrians and bicycles.

While the block structure north of University facilitates multiple routes and a high level of connectivity, south of University, the Central Village block pattern creates a break in the grid that minimizes on-street connections. This is addressed to some extent by the layout of Central Village Park, which provides a network of interconnected pathways linking all four sides of the development. However, wayfinding, design improvements and potentially new street connections are needed to enhance the legibility of its path system and reduce the sense of isolation felt by park users.

Recommendations for improving and expanding mobility options are structured into two key themes:

The first theme is Connections, which describes a strengthened pattern of movement options for pedestrians, transit riders and cyclists to reach destinations within the Western station area, the Central Corridor's many neighborhoods and the broader region. The second theme is the Mobility Enhancement Area, which more closely examines the future impact of LRT on movement patterns in and around the proposed platform location, and provides recommendations for ensuring a safe, efficient and pleasant pedestrian experience for area residents, workers and visitors alike.

## 5.1 Connections

Improved movement options for pedestrians, transit riders and cyclists moving between the Western station area, its adjacent neighborhoods and the broader region are critical. The Connections diagram (Figure 5.1) identifies the key existing and proposed routes to and within the Western station area, and illustrates recommendations for improving connectivity, safety, efficiency and quality of these routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

### Enhance Western Avenue

This multi-modal route should be upgraded to support and encourage pedestrian and bicycle activity. Key to this improvement will be the calming and redesign of Western with marked pedestrian crossings and enhanced streetscaping. Pedestrian-oriented amenities such as lighting, seating and garbage receptacles stretching from the Western bridge north to Jackson Elementary will help to enhance connections to the station for students and seniors.

### Establish New Alleys

The loss of on-street parking resulting from the introduction of LRT has placed an increased emphasis on the mobility issues for neighborhood businesses. Through and after LRT construction, alleys will emerge as critical components of the neighborhood's movement network, providing important access and servicing to local businesses and the potential for access for loading and off-street parking.

For various reasons, many blocks in the station area do not have alleys, creating situations where access and circulation are limited or nonexistent. Where alleys have been vacated, the City should actively pursue the extension of the existing alley network. Where alleys have never historically existed and the establishment of an alley system is not feasible, individual driveways and parking lots should be re-configured over time to create shared circulation routes to the rear of the block. An exception to this strategy exists on the Old Home site at Western and University. Site constraints related to the preservation of existing historic structures and the desire for the creation of a new community gathering space along

Virginia make an alley extension unfeasible at this location. **Improve the Western Avenue Bridge Crossing Between University Avenue and Selby**

The Western Avenue bridge provides a good connection south of the station area to the Selby neighborhood. Decorative guard rails with pedestrian-oriented lighting and gateway posts create a pleasant impression when approaching from either side of the freeway, and the existing elevations result in good sightlines to the other side. Given the relatively low volumes of traffic on Western, an opportunity exists to further enhance this important crossing by providing widened sidewalks with barriers to separate pedestrians from adjacent traffic.

### Improve bike connections to and from the station area

The Bike Walk Central Corridor Action Plan (adopted in May, 2010) identifies a range of opportunities for enhancing cycling connections within the station area. There are only two options that exist for crossing I-94 here – a mixed-traffic bridge at Western and an exclusive pedestrian bridge - at Mackubin. The Mackubin bridge is in disrepair, and should be a priority for Minnesota Department of Transportation funds for a significant rehabilitation or replacement project. Investment in pedestrian lighting and new landscaping that does not obscure views to and from the bridge would greatly enhance pedestrian safety and comfort, and public art could enable the bridge to become a neighborhood landmark.

Two primary east-west bicycle routes, north and south of University Avenue, have been identified as candidates for the future creation of bicycle boulevards. North of the Avenue, Charles Avenue is the preferred route because of its calm traffic pattern and convenient but safe distance from the Avenue. South of the Avenue, the preferred route of the bicycle boulevard is Aurora Avenue due to its calm traffic pattern and its ability to connect east towards the Capitol. A trail currently exists through Central Village Park, but this route should be enhanced and connected east through the Hanover Townhouse complex to connect with Western Park.

### Connect Central Village Park to its surroundings

Though a valuable green space within the station area, Central Village Park could be improved through a better delineation of private and public spaces, expanded



pedestrian-scaled lighting, and a system of wayfinding. A straightened bicycle and pedestrian path aligned with Mackubin would create a more direct route between the Avenue and the important Mackubin pedestrian crossing over I-94. Alternatively, the potential for the extension of Mackubin and Arundel Street through the park should be explored. This would provide safe, on-street north/south connections between Central Avenue and the LRT and open up isolated areas of the park to the neighborhood.

The redevelopment of an underutilized site at Western and Central Avenue provides an opportunity to create an east/west link connecting Western Sculpture Park with the Central Village Park through a continuum of artful spaces featuring sculptures, historic markers, benches and other amenities designed by artists to identify and reinforce this connective spine. New development here should complete the missing link from Central Avenue east through the Hanover Townhouses to connect with Western Park.

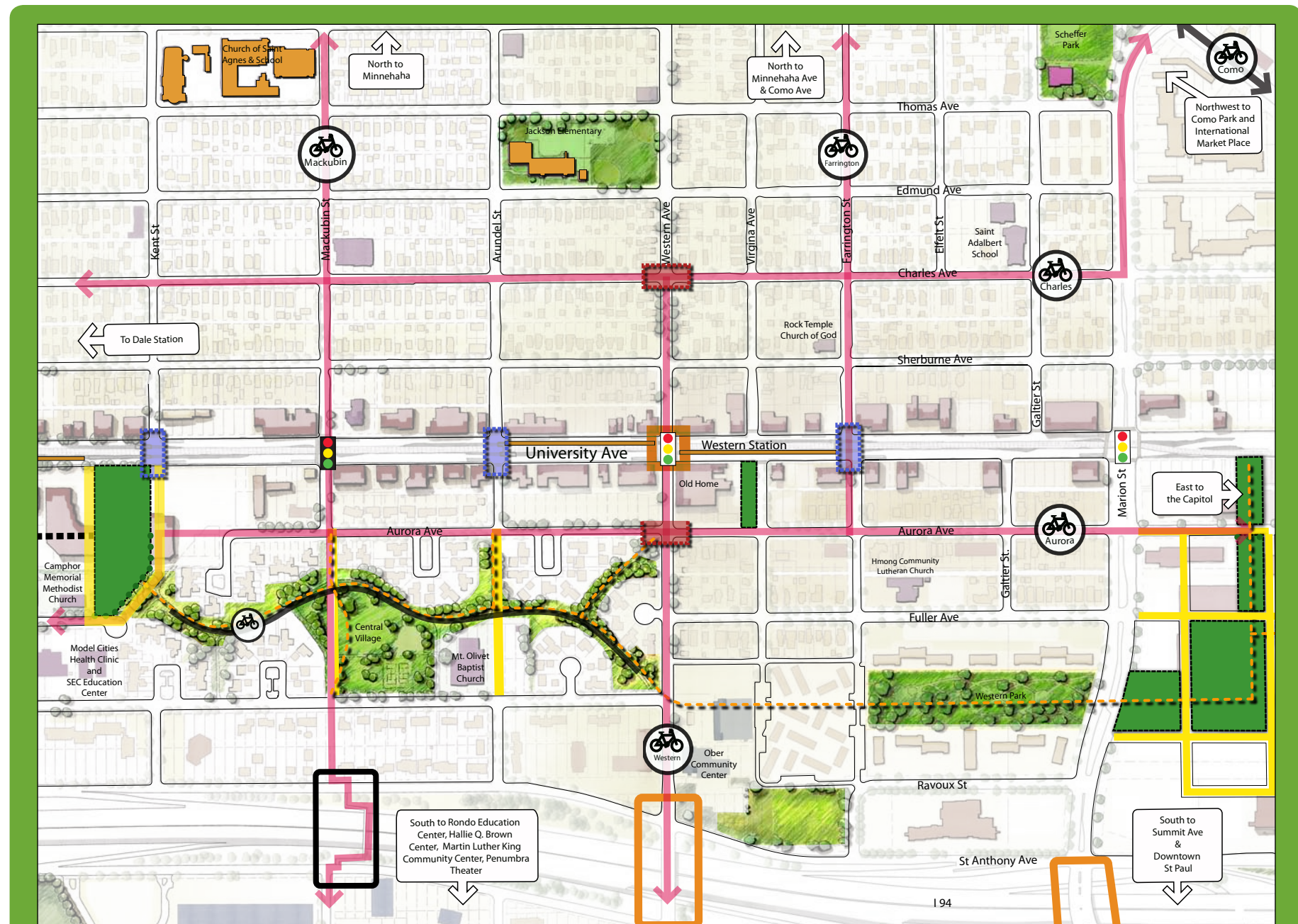
### Maintain Bus Service

Route 16 serves a more local market than LRT will. This makes it particularly important to those who cannot easily walk long distances – the young and old, persons with disabilities, those who are transporting groceries and other goods, and those who are transit dependent. University Avenue has an unusually high midday and weekend ridership, rather than the traditional peak of morning and afternoon commuter rush hours. Route 16 service during the midday, evenings and weekends should be retained to meet this demand.

Although no bus service currently exists or is proposed for Western Avenue, bus ridership in this area should be reconsidered as a part of Metro Transit's LRT Service Area Study.

### Establish a Network of Complete Streets

The State of Minnesota has recently passed legislation supporting of the establishment of complete streets policies. The planning and design of new streets and the refurbishment of existing streets within the station area should identify and balance the safety and accessibility needs of all users including motorists, pedestrians, transit users and vehicles, and bicyclists.



**FIGURE 5.1** -The *Connections* drawing above illustrates key connections, destinations and public realm moves across the station area.

- - - - - Key Pedestrian Pathway
- - - - - Proposed Mid-Block Connection
- Existing Bikeway
- Preferred Bikeway
- Future Signalized Intersection
- Existing Signalized Intersection
- Potential New Street Pattern
- Key Public Art Location
- Primary Station Access Point
- East - West Bike/Pedestrian Crossing
- Alternate Station Access Point
- Pedestrian Bridge Improvement
- Bridge Improvements
- Local Destinations
- Corridor Destinations

# Movement - Improving Options

## 5.2 The Mobility Enhancement Area

The Mobility Enhancement Area diagram (Figure 5.2) illustrates the current and future movement patterns within the Western station area.

### Mobility Enhancement Area

An opportunity for enhanced mobility around the Western station occurs in three key areas. To the north, an opportunity exists to rebalance Western Avenue in favor of pedestrians and cyclists. This will help to strengthen the connections to neighborhood uses and community facilities, such as Jackson Elementary to the north.

Along the Avenue itself, investment should enhance the existing streetscape as an inviting place to walk, shop and linger. Commercial façade rehabilitation, infill development, public art landmarks and a potential new park space created in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Old Home site will improve the Avenue's function and appearance as a primary mobility route.

South of University Avenue, two significant opportunities exist to improve block permeability and connectivity: establishing a clear east-west route between Central Village Park and Western Park, and creating and improving north-south pedestrian and bicycle connections wherever possible in the large block running from Western Avenue to Dale Street.

Special strategies for the Western Station Mobility Enhancement Area include:

- Requiring streetscape improvements with any redevelopment of vacant or underutilized sites in the station area including street trees, and enhanced landscaped boulevards on University Avenue, and reduced curb radii, bump-outs, narrower driveways and private streets, and special paving patterns in the

broader station area;

- Providing enhanced pedestrian crossings at the intersection of Central Avenue and Western Avenue, and create a publicly accessible pedestrian path leading to Western Sculpture Park to the east.
- Providing enhanced pedestrian and bicycle crossings at Mackubin Street and Western Avenue at Charles Avenue to create safe and continuous east/west connections.
- To mitigate the discontinuous bikeways and pedestrian system, provide increased wayfinding for bicycles and pedestrians as they travel east and approach the Capitol Area.

### The Station Transfer Zone

The Station Transfer Zone (identified in Figure 5.2) stretches from Arundel Street in the west to Farrington Street in the east and encompasses a large section of the Avenue Character Area, including a potential park space associated with the eventual redevelopment of the Old Home site. As such, an opportunity exists to improve the character of the Avenue by expanding sidewalks and incorporating pedestrian amenities that will support the emergence of a healthy main street and positive transit experience.

Special strategies for the Western Station Transfer Zone include:

- Providing a higher level of pedestrian amenities such as increased lighting, garbage receptacles, seating and wayfinding signage;
- Fully integrating the streetscape with any potential future community gathering space on Virginia Avenue;
- Incorporating special signage and wayfinding or public art which will help to direct visitors south to local businesses and the area's unique park and open space system;
- Providing bicycle racks and lockers for cyclists, which should be placed along the streets within the Station

Transfer Zone as space permits; and

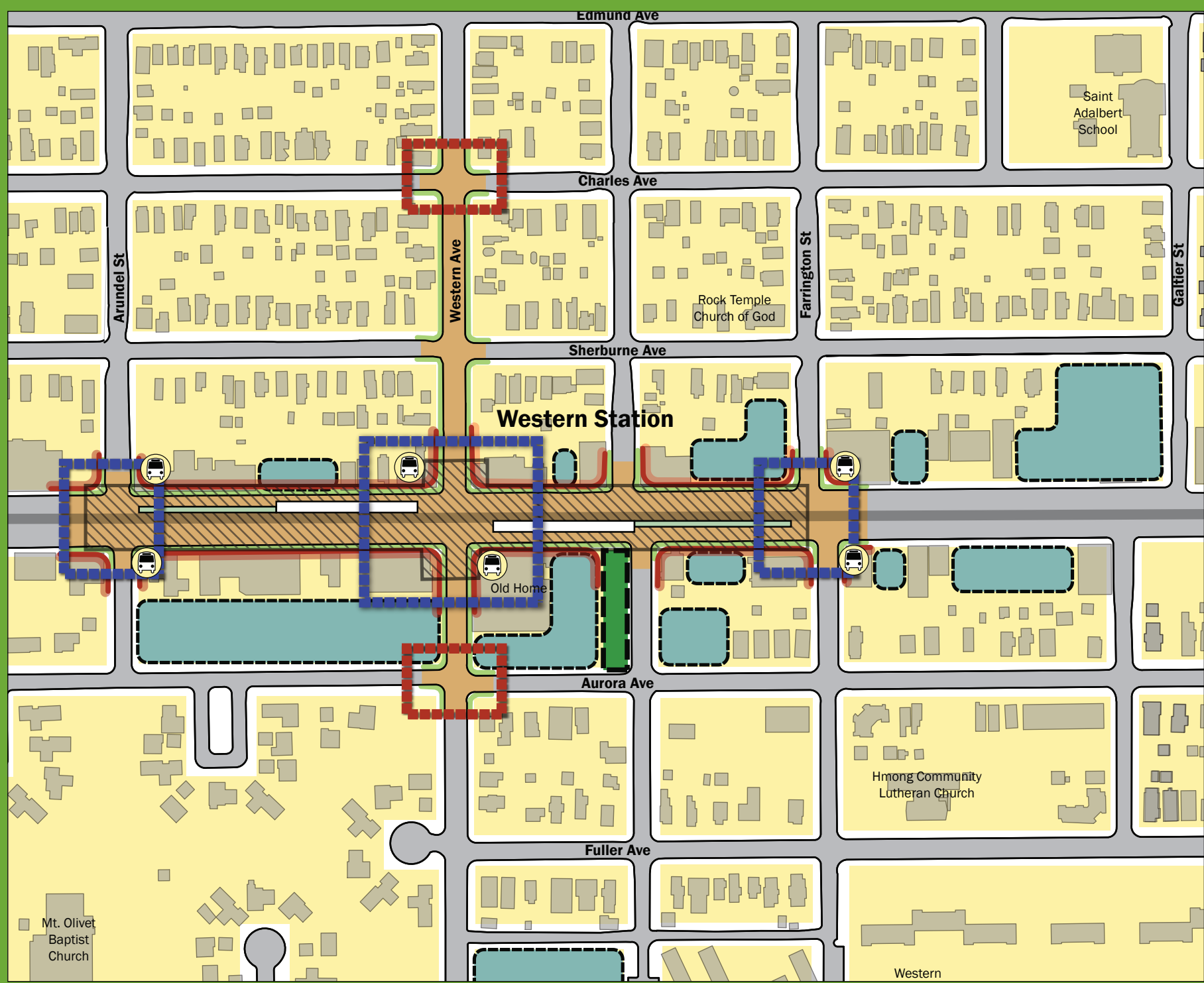
- Incorporating expressions of public art that helps to define and distinguish the station and the community.

### The Designated Crossings

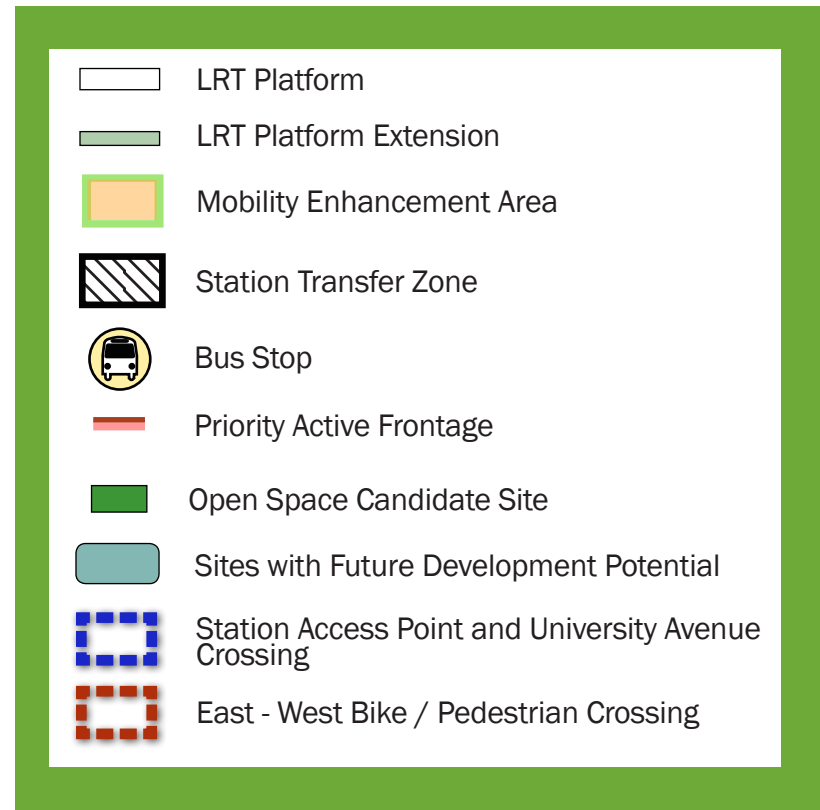
There are a number of designated crossings within the Western Station Mobility Enhancement Area. The main platform access is located at the intersection of Western Avenue and University Avenue. It will be the primary area where the LRT links with the bus network and the principal hub of station activity. Two non-signalized crossings are located along University at Arundel Street and Farrington Street. These will be linked directly to the far sides of the station platform to provide additional pedestrian access to the station and space for bicycle parking.

Along Western Avenue there are two east/west bike/pedestrian crossings at Charles and Aurora. These are important crossings that will extend the corridor wide east - west bicycle routes east to the Capitol Area and west towards Dale and the Rondo Library.

For more detailed descriptions of the Mobility Enhancement Area, Station Transfer Zone and Designated Crossings proposed for the Central Corridor, please refer to Chapter 1 of the full set of Station Area Plans.



**FIGURE 5.2** - The Mobility Enhancement Area illustrates the area around the station where a higher level of pedestrian activity can be anticipated.





## Getting There

**Achieving the long-term objectives set out in this document for the Western station area will require the sustained collaboration of many local partners, investors and stakeholders and will occur over time. The following recommendations provide direction on key initiatives that are core to the success of the future Western station area.**

## Getting There

In addition to the broader Community-Building Strategies described in the CCDS, and the Station Area Implementation Strategies set out in Chapter 9 in this series of Station Area Plan Documents, the following describes place-specific strategies for the Western station area.

### Using this Station Area Plan

The development concepts illustrated in this plan, including the location of new open spaces, represent possible development scenarios. Their purpose is to illustrate how the principles and objectives for new development, as contained within the CCDS and this Station Area Plan, could be realized over time. They are not intended to be prescriptive for evaluating future development proposals, but are examples of how the vision, goals, and objectives of this plan can be realized.

Until such time as the City is able to secure necessary resources, either through public investment or through negotiation with private developers for desired new open spaces or other public infrastructure, private property may be used for any legal use permitted under the current zoning classification, provided that the proposed use meets all applicable conditions and/or standards.

Once adopted as a component of the City of Saint Paul's Comprehensive Plan, City staff intend to pursue mechanisms, programs and partnerships that will collectively assist in realizing the vision and objectives created for each station area. The sum of the CCDS's 21 Community-Building Strategies (Section 4.3.), the Getting There recommendations from individual Station Area Plans (Section 6.0), and the Station Area Plan Chapter 9 - Moving Forward, contain a range of strategies, partnerships and recommendations for assisting in realizing the strategic place-making and economic development potential of this station area.

### Reuse of the Old Home site

The City should work with the owner of this site to develop an appropriate plan for its future reuse. Reuse of this site should be in accordance with the long-term vision of this document, and include public realm improvements like a new community park space/transit plaza.

### Ensuring inclusive communities

The greatest strength of this community is its diversity. The potential for gentrification and displacement of low-income individuals, families, and small businesses from the Corridor as property values rise is a primary concern of area residents and stakeholders, as it would erode the unique qualities that distinguish the area's past, present and future. Members of this community who wish to stay in this area and contribute to and benefit from its revitalization must therefore have the option to do so.

Chapter 4 of the CCDS contains a series of strategies and recommendations for realizing a complete and inclusive housing and business community. These include supply-side regulatory and financial incentives to encourage the construction of affordable housing units; options for assisting individuals and families to purchase their own home; strategies to support small businesses, both through the short-term construction of LRT, and for the long-term benefits afforded by this investment; and options for securing community benefits as new development occurs throughout the corridor. In addition, some combination of tax increment financing, the STAR Program, a regional transit-oriented development "bank," or Invest Saint Paul, each described in Chapter 9 Moving Forward, may assist in creating more inclusive and complete communities.

### Parking solutions

The City of Saint Paul began the Neighborhood Commercial Parking Pilot Program (NCP) in 2009 to help mitigate the proposed loss of on-street parking. In 2010, the NCP will fund a limited number of projects that improve parking management, increase the amount and utilization of commercial parking, and/or encourage business and property owners to equitably share the use and costs of off-street parking. The forgivable loan program encourages short-term, low-cost solutions that will help businesses through the construction and transitional years until light rail is operational.

### Programming traffic lanes on University Avenue

As LRT ridership matures, the City should reevaluate the number of traffic lanes on University Avenue and explore a range of enhanced bicycle accommodation options, as well as the reintroduction of on-street parking and deliveries to better serve businesses and to help buffer pedestrian activity from automobile traffic.

### Complete Streets

The City of Saint Paul should work with local stakeholders to develop new criteria for assessing level of service for all modes of transportation including pedestrians, cyclists, transit and private vehicles. The benefits and trade-offs of different street design strategies should then be identified in relation to the impacts on various users so that decisions can be made with an understanding of the full service impacts. The Bike Walk Central Corridor Action Plan has identified a range of design approaches for cyclists and pedestrians throughout the corridor.

### A Central Corridor Systems Plan

The City should study and propose strategies for operation and maintenance of major city systems within the Central Corridor, including snow plowing and/or removal, alley circulation and maintenance, deliveries and loading, safety

and security, refuse and recycling, medians and streetscape landscaping, street furniture, right-of-way acquisition, stormwater management, and other city systems that will be impacted. The study should address strategies both for the construction period and for more long-term permanent solutions.

### Small business support

The City of Saint Paul is helping to support active small businesses throughout the construction period with programs such as Ready for Rail. The City should also seek to attract new small businesses who may be drawn to the accessibility and profile afforded by LRT. These efforts could include marketing support such as: regular mail-outs to customer bases, identifying access disruptions and alternate routes, promotion of retail sales and the coordination of community events.

Space to help grow and foster new businesses could be generated through a municipally led program targeting the rehabilitation of existing, under-utilized buildings aimed at re-purposing these structures as shared incubator and business start-up spaces.

### Renovation programs to improve energy efficiency

Improving the energy efficiency of housing is an important step towards conserving local energy resources and maintaining housing affordability for residents. A municipally led program encouraging the retrofit of existing houses along the corridor could help to contribute to the stabilization of existing neighborhoods and support strategies aimed at preventing neighborhood displacement.

### Involving local partners

Meeting the long-term objectives of the Western Station Area Plan will require coordination with many local partners.  
**District 7 and Summit-University Planning Councils**

District Councils will review development applications coming forward, promote and work towards quality development projects and meet with residents, institutions, business and property owners to discuss and document evolving community concerns and objectives for new development.

### Greater Frogtown CDC, Aurora Saint Anthony CDC, Selby Area CDC, Model Cities, and University UNITED

Local CDC's will set high standards for redevelopment in the community, strengthen stable neighborhoods through rehabilitation and infill and through development of larger parcels as they become available.

### Midway Chamber of Commerce, University Avenue Business Association and other business groups

These business groups will ensure the interests of area businesses and property owners are adequately represented through comprehensive policy framework reviews.

### Central Corridor Funders Collaborative

The Funders Collaborative will assist in securing resources for community improvement projects.

### Frogtown Gardens

Frogtown Gardens can assist in the utilization of vacant/underutilized green space throughout the community through the creation of community gardens and urban agriculture demonstration projects.

### Saint Paul Smart Trips

As the Transportation Management Organization for the City, Smart Trips should work with local partners to provide information about parking in the corridor, and to promote opportunities for walking, bicycling, and transit.

### Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA)

AEDA will assist in retaining, promoting and strengthening businesses along University Avenue.

### The Saint Paul Public School Board

The City of Saint Paul will prioritize streetscape improvements around Jackson elementary with input from the School Board.

### The Central Corridor Design Center

The Central Corridor Design Center will be a champion and advocate for the principles and vision of the Central Corridor Development Strategy as they guide public and private investment in the corridor. The CCDC will be involved in design review and guidance of the Central Corridor LRT and other public realm improvements; design development conversations with large and small property owners; technical assistance to small businesses to redesign their facilities to take advantage of the LRT and proposed public improvements; providing leadership in energy and environmental design; and education and training of City staff, consultants, developers and property owners in maximizing transit-oriented design opportunities along the Corridor and in the neighborhood.

### Public Art Saint Paul

Public Art Saint Paul will advocate for and support new and existing public art in the station areas, as well as along the Corridor with the Central Corridor Public Art Plan. Public Art Saint Paul will also continue to maintain and curate Western Sculpture Park, and support the creation of an "avenue of art" along Western Avenue.

### FORECAST Public Art

FORECAST Public Art will support the public art goals by using its existing network of local artists and community members to facilitate projects, connect to the public, and advocate for artists.