

Figure 2.14 Framework of Land Use Directions.

2.3 Built Form

Downtown Saint Paul is a highly attractive place. With a few notable exceptions, the core of Saint Paul avoided the grand redevelopment patterns that dramatically altered the historic fabric and fine-grained structure of many American city cores in the 1950's and 60's. The result is a relatively intact collection of outstanding historic buildings throughout the downtown. In particular, the historic fabric in Lowertown creates a distinct urban form in terms of street width, block length, and historic warehouse architecture. Collectively, these buildings provide a human scale and definition to downtown's strong network of streets and open spaces.

While Saint Paul has a strong inventory of historic buildings, trends in building design and changes in grade have resulted in inactive uses on the ground floors of otherwise attractive buildings. In a number of places, underutilized or vacant properties create the potential for new development that can both support and benefit from investment in transit. The introduction of LRT and increased emphasis on street-level activity that come with it create an opportunity to rethink how buildings meet the street and capitalize on new development opportunities along the Corridor.

The following Directions describe the potential of LRT investment to reactivate the street, strengthen the character of downtown, and capitalize on the real-estate potential of downtown's distinct living and working environments.



Figure 2.15 New buildings should reinforce the existing warehouse character of Lowertown, particularly on lower levels. Upper levels may introduce more contemporary features and materials.

1 Preserve the Unique Character of Lowertown

The Lowertown Heritage Preservation District is a traditional 1800's brick warehouse district with generous floor heights, large floorplates, and building footprints that cover the entire block. The on-going stewardship and revitalization of Lowertown is one of downtown Saint Paul's greatest success stories. The large floorplate industrial buildings have demonstrated surprising resilience to change, and continue to be adapted for a variety of new uses.

As the neighborhood continues to evolve, and reinvestment potential is enhanced by LRT, there should be great emphasis on preserving the unique character and quality of development that has promoted the area's continued success. This includes a flexible range of spaces, capable of accommodating a healthy mix of residential, cultural, and commercial activities. The directions within this Plan, together with the existing flexible zoning parameters, should enable the sensitive evolution of this area as LRT improves accessibility of Lowertown for residents, workers and visitors.



Figure 2.16 The Urban Renewal Historic District will continue to offer the highest density of uses within a distinct, multi-storied environment.

2 Strengthen the Character of the Urban Renewal Historic District

In the Urban Renewal Historic District, smaller floorplate buildings sit atop two- and three-story commercial podiums connected by skyways. Though lacking some of the more traditional charm of Lowertown, the Urban Renewal Historic District is nonetheless unique in the context of the downtown. New development here should strive to represent the creativity and brave architecture embodied in the spirit of the buildings at a scale and intensity of use appropriate for the core of the city.

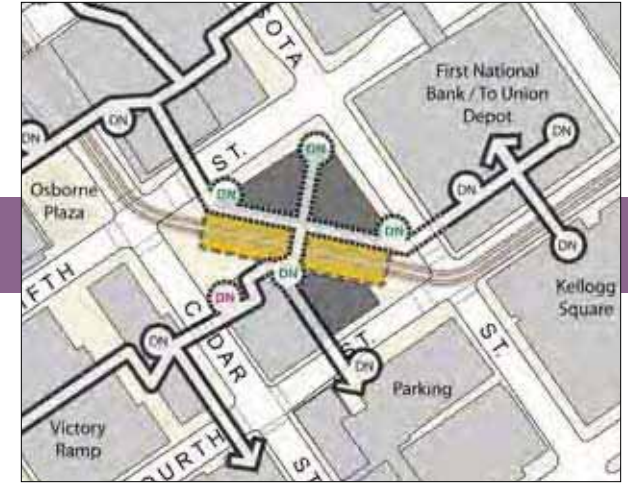
LRT here will place a new emphasis on street-related activity. This should be supported by new developments and the appropriate renovation of existing buildings with usable street-level spaces and strengthened connections between skyway and street. This is particularly important in and around the Central Station Mobility Enhancement Area, where connections to LRT and bus transfer points are desired.



Figure 2.17 New infill development should reinforce the existing block and building pattern.



Figure 2.18 Central Station (above left) represents an unparalleled opportunity for new development atop LRT, including integrating bus and LRT operations, and completing a series of key skyway linkages (above right).



3 Strengthen the Existing Block and Building Pattern

The existing fine-grain pattern of streets and blocks is one of the defining characteristics of downtown. As opportunities for infill development emerge and larger redevelopment sites come forward, new development should reinforce and re-establish this existing pattern through extensions of the street grid and placement of new buildings that define the streets. This increased sensitivity to the way buildings relate to the street will enhance the pedestrian environment, thus creating more walkable streets and improving the walk to and from LRT stations.

One of the best opportunities for the re-establishment of the block and building pattern remains with the potential redevelopment of the Diamond Products property. New development here should extend 5th Street east to Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and replicate the pattern of north-south streets to promote a pedestrian scale and walkability.

4 Link the Central Station Block to its Surroundings

The Central Station block represents an unparalleled opportunity for new development in the heart of downtown. Situated atop the new Central Station, at the intersection of over 15 bus routes, the redevelopment of this block represents a strategic opportunity to integrate new development with the historic Athletic Club building, and connect with both bus and LRT.

As demonstrated in the *Central Corridor Development Strategy*, development of the Athletic Club block could take on a variety of configurations - on either side of the station or as part of an integrated station structure bridging the LRT. To succeed, however, the development of the site will require the accommodation of a carefully balanced program of activities. The integration of an LRT station and new skyway connections, both horizontally through the building and between the skyway and ground, will require careful coordination between City staff and prospective developers.

As a strategic opportunity with significant implications,

successful redevelopment of the block will require a proactive public sector role, including site assembly and the preparation of a detailed Request for Proposals from potential development partners.

As part of the Section 106 process for the Central Corridor project, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) among the Federal Transit Administration, Metropolitan Council, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation was signed. As mitigation for the demolition of the Midwest Federal Building, required to make way for the LRT station, the PA requires the Metropolitan Council to develop design guidelines for future development of the block, consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation*. The Metropolitan Council will work with the City of Saint Paul, Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, and State Historic Preservation Office to prepare the guidelines. Once these guidelines are approved, they will be adopted as an amendment to the *Downtown Station Area Plan*.



Figure 2.19 The contrast between the existing condition (top) and illustration (bottom) on Minnesota Street between 4th and 5th streets demonstrates the dramatic improvement numerous small initiatives can make over a longer period of building reinvestment and streetscaping.





Figure 2.20 Kellogg Mall Park, within a minute walk from LRT, creates a remarkable open space vista looking out to the Mississippi River.



Figure 2.21 The areas in red show where effort should be made to activate the ground floors of buildings.

5 Improve Building Frontages Between LRT and Kellogg Mall Park

With LRT bringing new activity into the heart of the city, the role of Kellogg Mall Park as one of the largest open spaces in downtown becomes increasingly important. Situated within a minute’s walk of the Central Station, Kellogg Mall Park and the route down 2nd Street represents one of the easiest ways for residents and visitors to view or gain access to the river.

In order to enhance the walk from LRT and encourage greater levels of pedestrian activity, new buildings should actively front the north side of Kellogg Boulevard and the principal routes of Cedar and Minnesota streets that lead to the park. Renovations to existing buildings should seek to enhance the street condition with new windows and openings facing the street.

6 Activate the Ground Floor of Buildings

The dominant role of the skyway in accommodating downtown retail and services has led to a reduced market for these uses at grade. The introduction of LRT and corresponding emphasis on street-related activity creates an important opportunity to reconfigure and reactivate the ground floors of buildings in downtown. Since the majority of riders will be walking or cycling to LRT, creating active streets is not only about creating new businesses, but enhancing the experience of pedestrians and transit users. As such, the need for supporting street-level activity is most acute at stations in and around the Mobility Enhancement Areas.

A key strategy to activate the ground will be to strengthen the relationship between the skyway and street. This can be achieved by enhancing the visibility of existing skyway connections with improved glazing and signage. More critical, however, will be to orient skyway connections to

existing and planned transit stations so that they may doubly function as places to wait for a train or bus.

Along the Corridor, efforts should be made to engage building owners to establish commercial and retail space at sidewalk level and to incorporate appropriate exterior building materials to distinguish a strong base level or podium at the base of buildings. This could be complemented where feasible by designating adjacent sidewalk space for the display and sale of goods, exhibition of art, or as outdoor seating areas for cafes and restaurants.

Other opportunities for activating the ground floor of buildings include 5th and 6th Streets between Rice Park and Mears Park, and the plazas of mid-century buildings. Fifth and 6th streets will form important pedestrian connections west from the Central Station area to the existing cluster of cultural and entertainment uses. The plazas of such mid-century buildings as Kellogg Square, Federal Building, and Alliance Bank Center represent excellent opportunities for active public space.