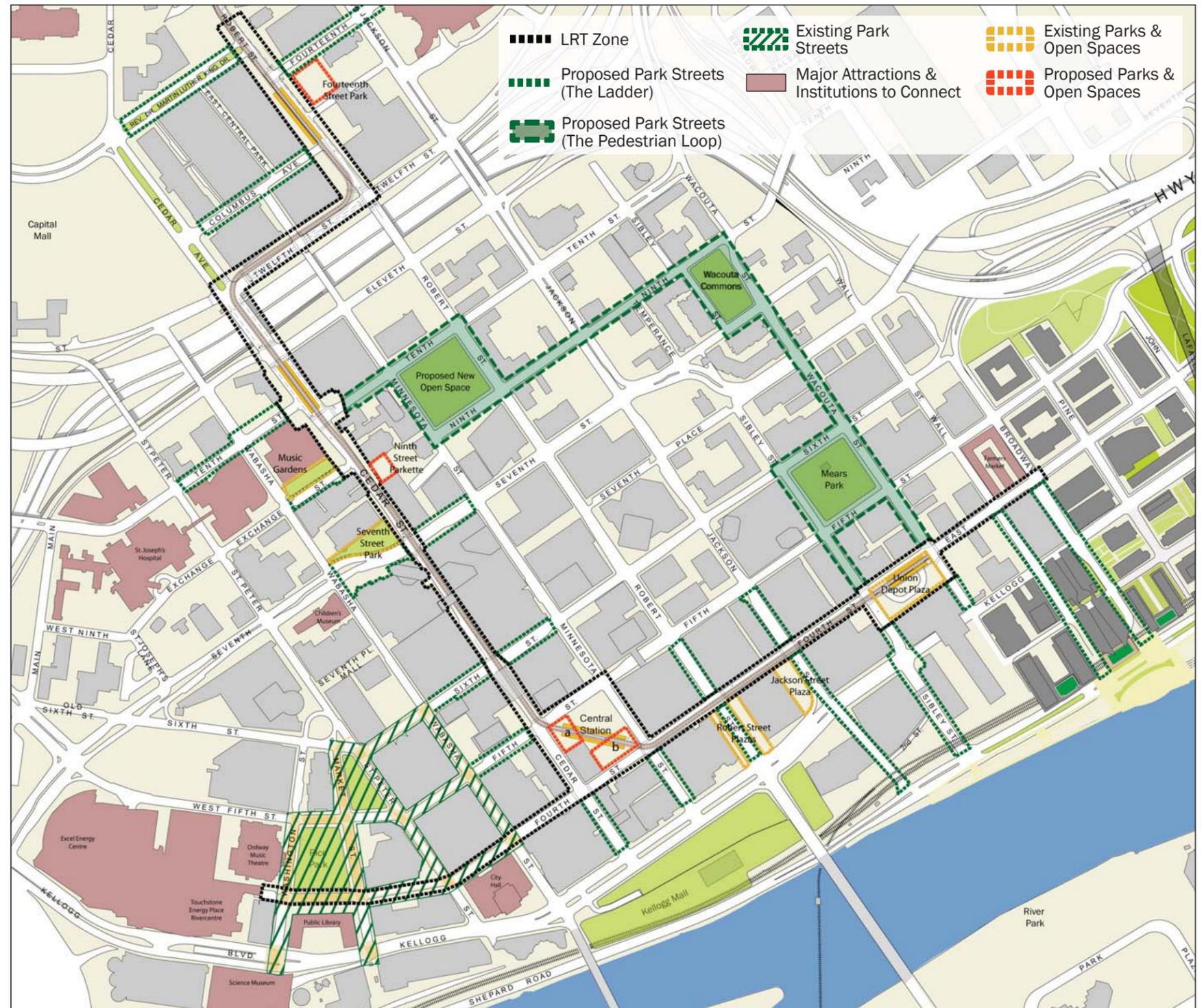


As the line leaves University Avenue and turns south through the Capitol District into downtown, the nature of the Central Corridor LRT noticeably changes. No longer separated from pedestrians by several lanes of traffic, and running along much narrower rights-of-way, the “downtown leg” becomes primarily a transit and pedestrian corridor with limited vehicular movement along its route.

LRT through the downtown creates an opportunity to redefine several key streets within the city center, promote a greater balance between pedestrian and vehicular traffic, enhance transit connections, re-activate the street level, and pave the way for a number of new developments that together will help reposition downtown as a vibrant, contemporary urban center. Sites with development potential include the existing parking lots in and around Union Depot, underutilized parcels in and around the emerging Fitzgerald Park neighborhood and the block bounded by 4th, Cedar, 5th and Minnesota streets. The intent of this section is to link the investment in LRT with both existing and future businesses, residents and attractions, to create and support a greater level of amenity throughout downtown.

Connecting LRT to Downtown

The downtown portion of the route provides an opportunity to embed LRT into the city, making it synonymous with the experience of Saint Paul. The Downtown Public Realm Improvement Program (right) identifies a series of strategies aimed at connecting LRT to downtown, and will form the basis for key amendments to the Downtown Development Strategy. These strategies seek to integrate LRT with downtown through an expansion of the existing and already-successful network of “park streets,” the creation and improvement of open spaces and the establishment of a strong pedestrian-friendly spine along the length of the Corridor.



The Downtown Public Realm Improvement Program (above) identifies a series of strategies aimed at connecting the LRT to downtown fabric. These include the creation of a pedestrian-friendly LRT Zone, a network of “park streets” to link with LRT, and a series of open space improvements along the Corridor.

A Pedestrian-Friendly LRT Zone

The Saint Paul Central Corridor south of University Avenue is unique in that it brings together vehicles, pedestrians and LRT within a limited right-of-way. Care will be required to ensure that an environment is created that allows for the safe intermingling of the various modes of transport and the successful layering of activities.

A pedestrian-friendly LRT Zone established along the length of the downtown route will help to create cohesion through the application of a consistent pattern of streetscaping, enhanced street planting, sidewalk treatments, lighting and signage. The intent of this zone will be to promote pedestrian comfort, accessibility, improved legibility, and increased safety for pedestrians.

Strategies to create a pedestrian-friendly LRT Zone that will help to promote safety and foster a sense of place include:

- enhanced street planting, including new street trees and hanging planters where street trees do not fit;
- improved streetscaping, including decorative paving to improve legibility and enhance awareness of LRT;
- use of bollards or similar features to delineate the LRT alignment while maintaining pedestrian permeability;
- street patterning to indicate areas of high pedestrian traffic and delineate pedestrian crosswalks and areas where pedestrian and LRT traffic may come into conflict;
- pedestrian amenities such as pedestrian-oriented lighting, garbage receptacles, water fountains transit shelters and seating to promote pedestrian comfort, public art; and
- dedicated bicycle lanes



A rendering of how the LRT zone might look at the corner of Fifth and Cedar where the LRT passes diagonally through the block. Decorative paving and pedestrian bollards alert pedestrian crossing the LRT tracks. At this intersection, strips of concrete have been used along the streets to calm traffic and signal the pedestrian nature of the area.

Park Streets - Extending the Pedestrian Network

Over the last 20 years, the City of Saint Paul has made substantial investment in its downtown. This has led to the revitalization of several neighborhoods and has gone a long way towards promoting the city center as a place not only to work but to live and play. One of the most successful examples of this revitalization can be found in the Rice Park neighborhood, where a combination of investment in open space and streetscaping has resulted in the creation of one of the city's key destinations. Here, the extensive use of a high-quality streetscaping palette creates a comfortable and attractive environment, one that balances the needs of both vehicles and of the pedestrians that frequent the area.

The extension of this existing network of pedestrian streets through the creation of a series of similarly treated "park streets" will be an important strategy to spread the benefit of LRT and connect it with the rest of downtown.

Fanning out from the Corridor to form a ladder and looping around the downtown to link key open spaces, natural features and attractions, these "park streets" will help to shift the emphasis away from the private automobile, connect LRT with the existing network of pedestrian-friendly streets around the Rice Park neighborhood, and encourage residents and visitors to walk to LRT while enjoying the amenities the city has to offer on foot.

Strategies to create a network of pedestrian friendly "park streets" include:

- **The Ladder** – Extending a series of pedestrian-oriented streets comprised of enhanced streetscaping, planting and pedestrian amenities to connect surrounding streets, key destinations and neighborhoods to LRT. Along these streets, it will be important to establish a clear and consistent approach to wayfinding that could include both streetscaping and directional signage.

Of strategic importance, an opportunity exists to use these "park streets" to strengthen connections along Fourth, Fifth and Sixth, west towards the Entertainment District and east of Robert to improve connections south towards the city's riverfront.

- **The Pedestrian Loop - "Walking to LRT"** – Completing the pedestrian-friendly loop linking Rice Park, Mears Park, Wacouta Commons and the proposed Fitzgerald Park to LRT. This loop would contain streets with enhanced streetscaping, planting and pedestrian amenities to create a continuous pedestrian-friendly environment throughout downtown. A key intent on of this strategy is to create a series of highly-legible, pedestrian-friendly routes to connect the existing and emerging neighborhoods with LRT.



A pedestrian-friendly LRT Zone in Portland, Oregon illustrating enhanced streetscaping and planting. At this intersection, decorative paving helps to identify pedestrian crossings and delineate the boundaries of the LRT.



A "park street" in Montreal, Canada illustrating improved streetscaping, planting and pedestrian amenities.

Improving Public Spaces along the LRT Corridor

The parks and open spaces along the Corridor play an important role in attaching LRT to downtown. They provide places for people to gather, create a focus for new and existing development, and afford respite from the intensity of downtown. Downtown Saint Paul has a history of placing great importance on the its parks; three of the area's most successful neighborhoods: Rice Park, Lowertown and Wacouta Commons- have public open spaces at their heart.

The parks and open spaces along the Corridor in downtown will play a similar function by acting as a focus for activity and investment. Comprising both hard and soft surfaces, their function and nature should be defined by the changing character of the Corridor and of the neighborhoods and features with which they connect.

Proposed parks and open spaces along the Corridor include the following:

- **Fourteenth Street Park** – A surface parking lot to the east of the new LRT station provides an opportunity to create a new open space. An open space in this location could act as a focus for the State buildings along Robert Street and Regions Hospital.
- **Station Square** – A new square at the intersection of Fourth and Cedar provides an opportunity to create a focus for new development above the station. A square in this location has the potential to become an iconic focal point for downtown, where the skyway “meets the ground” and at the heart of a dynamic new transit station.
- **Ninth Street Park** – This small piece of unused lawn, to the south of the Central Presbyterian Church, provides an opportunity for the creation of a landscaped open space between the Corridor and Ninth Street to the east.



A small parkette in front of the McNally Smith College of Music provides a quiet escape from the city, an escape that could be enjoyed by more people if greater access were provided.

Existing parks and open spaces to be enhanced include the following:

- **Music Gardens** – This small privately-owned parkette creates a green retreat within downtown. Allowing for greater access to this area will help realize its potential to act as an important green link between the Corridor and St. Joseph's Hospital to the west.
- **Seventh Street Park** – This large underutilized lawn sits at both the gateway to the downtown core and the northernmost entrance to the skyway system. An opportunity exists, through a program of planting and landscape treatment, to celebrate the park's unique location and strengthen connections west to Wabasha.
- **Robert and Jackson Street Plazas** – The Jackson and Robert Street Plazas are currently underutilized, hard-surfaced plazas intended to act as forecourts for their respective buildings. An opportunity exists to redefine these spaces to make them more inviting for pedestrians and strengthen connections south towards the Kellogg Mall and riverfront.
- **Union Depot Plaza** – This is the future welcoming mat for many visitors, residents and employees arriving in the city and should be reflective of this status. While currently a lay-by for the former station, the introduction LRT and planned future transport improvements creates an opportunity to redefine this space into an exciting urban plaza at the heart of a regional transit network.



Landmark Plaza demonstrates how landscaping and public art can create a unique place out of what would otherwise be a leftover fragment of lawn.



A small public space can be a great place. A waterfall in Paley Park, New York creates a large focal point and helps to hush the din of the city, while trees provide shade in the summer.



A rendering of what the LRT Zone along Fourth Street might look like, illustrating the enhanced streetscaping and planting. A strip of red brickwork helps to delineate the alignment of the LRT for pedestrians, while, along the street, bollards keep vehicles off the tracks. Across the street, where the narrow sidewalk widths make the planting of street trees difficult, hanging baskets help to green the street.