Section 1 establishes an understanding of what the Central Corridor is and how a shared vision and strategy will guide its development over the next 30 years. The purpose of this section, “What We Want,” is to begin describing these improvements – the community’s vision for the Central Corridor - as recorded throughout the Development Strategy process.

In this section you will find:

Section 2.1 – “The Vision,” which answers the important question: What kind of place do we want the Corridor to become?

Section 2.2 describes the foundation for the Vision in an accompanying set of “Principles,” which are the “Big Ideas” public investment in the Central Corridor LRT should help to achieve.

Section 2.3 takes a closer look at each of the Principles through a series of related “Objectives & Strategies.” For each Principle, a set of Objectives describes things the community wants to see happen or change over time, while Strategies provide some ideas for new programs and partnerships that will be necessary to achieve the Vision.

Section 2.4 – “90 Initiatives for the Corridor,” outlines tangible initiatives that can begin the process of positive change along the Corridor. This is a comprehensive account of all the places the community said weren’t working well enough, and that need to be improved.
The Vision

The following pages describe a series of ideas, from very broad to quite specific, about shared expectations for the Corridor. They begin with a Vision, stated below, which is a general description of community aspirations for the Corridor over the next 30 years. A vision answers the question: “What kind of place do we want the Corridor to become in the future?”

Our Vision for the Future of the Corridor:

The Central Corridor will build on its assets to become a place that has stronger businesses, more vibrant neighborhoods, and more beautiful urban places. Along University Avenue and in the downtown, the Corridor will invite residents, shoppers, employees and visitors to linger on safe, pedestrian-friendly, attractive, tree-lined boulevards; establish a home and sense of community in stable and diverse neighborhoods; and work and invest in an area that provides a range of employment and economic opportunities.
WHERE WE ARE TODAY | WHAT WE WANT | WHAT IT SHOULD LOOK LIKE | HOW WE GET THERE

Central Corridor Development Strategy
April, 2007

Reposition Saint Paul in the Region
How do we put Saint Paul “back on the map”? LRT creates an opportunity to re-image the city as an innovative, diverse and progressive place to live, work, play and invest. We must leverage this investment to invigorate the perception of Saint Paul in the region and the nation, and distinguish Saint Paul within the Midwest as an economic hub and livable community.

Benefit and Strengthen the Diverse Communities Along the Corridor
Diversity is the greatest asset and defining characteristic of the Corridor. While change is both welcome and inevitable here, it must occur in a way that will enhance - not diminish or displace - the rich variety of distinct neighborhoods, cultures and businesses that reside here. LRT should act as a catalyst for “lifting up” the many communities along its length, promote new ways to diversify and preserve the existing housing stock for all income groups, and celebrate and recognize the unique culture and heritage of the area.

Collaborate from Design to Operation
The LRT process must include meaningful public and stakeholder input through all stages of its implementation – from design, through construction, to operation. This collaboration will need to take many forms in order to serve the different needs and backgrounds of the people living and working in the Corridor. Collaboration will include creating early opportunities for the selection and commission of public art, focused public education campaigns, and regular outreach and engagement.

The vision is grounded in the six Principles described below. These principles reflect what we have heard to date: the ambitions, concerns, and objectives for future growth and development along the Central Corridor. These are the “Big Ideas” that public investment in the Central Corridor LRT should help achieve.

1 Reposition Saint Paul in the Region
2 Benefit and Strengthen the Diverse Communities Along the Corridor
3 Link and Foster Economic Activity
4 Improve People’s Mobility Throughout Their Community
5 Improve the Image and Quality of Life Along the Corridor
6 Collaborate from Design to Operation
Objectives & Strategies

Each of the six Principles describes a “Big Idea” for the Corridor as expressed by area residents, businesses and stakeholders. The following pages describe the many Objectives – the goals and desired end results - that will help to achieve each Principle. Objectives describe the things the community wants to see happen or change over time. Each Objective is followed by a set of Strategies, which represent a community toolbox of recommendations for individual actions, opportunities, investments and partnerships that will assist Saint Paul in realizing its vision for the Central Corridor over the next 30 years.

1 Reposition Saint Paul in the Region

Objectives

1.1 Put Saint Paul on the Map - as a major creative, cultural, economic and transportation hub.

1.2 Elevate the Avenue as one of Saint Paul’s core assets along with Downtown, the Riverfront and the State Capitol. Foster the many diverse, livable urban communities along its length.

1.3 Establish Saint Paul as a leader in green and sustainable community design. Utilize the LRT investment to demonstrate leading-edge infrastructure and design practices.

1.4 Establish Saint Paul as a leader in advancing social and economic equity so that all segments of the community derive benefits generated by this major public infrastructure investment.

1.5 Promote downtown as a dynamic place to visit, live and work. Build on recent successes and continue to diversify the experiences and services downtown has to offer. Give people a reason to want to explore downtown by foot, and create a better balance of activity between the sidewalk and skyway systems.

1.6 Create strong synergies between the cultural, financial, educational and social institutions in Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

Strategies

1.1.1 Establish Fourth Street as a creative corridor extending east from Rice Street - an Avenue of Arts & Sciences - complete with revolving public art installations, public realm improvements and legible wayfinding signage.

1.1.2 Utilize Saint Paul’s culturally diverse artist, architectural, development and contracting community to enhance Saint Paul’s Capital City image.

1.2.2 Create a prominent Saint Paul Gateway at the Westgate LRT station.

1.2.3 Utilize existing historic homes along University between Victoria and Grotto to create a unique Gallery District, Program gallery tours, openings and lectures, and promote the area as a regional and tourist cultural destination.

1.2.4 Develop a strategy for exporting Saint Paul’s experience with successful LRT and community development. Brand the City as a leader in sustainable and equitable transportation, and city building.

1.3.1 Create a Sustainable Central Corridor Strategy, including standards and incentives for sustainable building technology in new and renovated buildings along the Corridor and in the design of public infrastructure.

1.4.1 Develop a strategy for exporting Saint Paul’s experience with successful LRT and community development. Brand the City as a leader in sustainable and equitable transportation, and city building.

1.4.2 Develop strategies to reduce social and economic disparities as new neighborhoods and meeting places along the Corridor. This could include, for example, the eastern Avenue as a Global Village, the entire Corridor as an “Avenue of Villages,” and the creation of discovery walks that guide residents and visitors through the history of area neighborhoods.

1.5.1 Create a “Great Walks” guide for Downtown. Highlight area neighborhoods and meeting places, such as the Wacouta Commons neighborhood, that tell the stories of the Housing 5000 Plan and other successful initiatives. Distribute the guide at a new visitors’ center, possibly located at Union Depot or another strategic location adjacent to LRT.

1.5.2 Create a Branding and Marketing Strategy that celebrates meeting places along the Corridor. This could include, for example, the eastern Avenue as a Global Village, the entire Corridor as an “Avenue of Villages,” and the creation of discovery walks that guide residents and visitors through the history of area neighborhoods.

1.5.3 Develop a Tourism and Convention Strategy that promotes LRT as the vehicle to a “2 for 1” experience - an easy and fun way to stay in one great city while attending a conference, concert or sporting event in the other. Develop a Twin Cities LRT Pass as the best way to spend a day or weekend discovering what each of these cities has to offer.

2 Benefit and Strengthen the Diverse Communities Along the Corridor

Objectives

2.1 Facilitate the development of new mixed-income housing units along all segments of the Corridor. Units should respond to the diversity of housing needs in terms of income and type of housing, and provide life-cycle housing choices that enable residents to remain in their neighborhoods as their housing needs change over time.

2.2 Encourage continual reinvestment in the existing housing stock by both ownership and rental property owners in all neighborhoods along the Corridor.

2.3 Create opportunities to explore and celebrate the many cultures, identities and stories that make up the history of Corridor neighborhoods.

2.4 Assist the entire community to share in the long-term benefits of the LRT investment.

2.5 Protect and enhance existing neighborhood character as a core asset. Clearly identify areas of change and stability, and enforce objectives for each through the regulatory framework.

2.6 Help stabilize and support the retention and enhancement of area households. Implement “stay in place and thrive” programs. Those who choose to stay in a rapidly-developing area, whether young singles, families or seniors, should have the opportunity and support to do so through, for example, a greater range of housing options.

2.7 Leverage LRT investment and related development activities to improve quality of life and foster various wealth-building opportunities for existing residents and businesses. Ensure options for living wage employment, job training, affordable housing (home ownership and rental) and business development opportunities are captured in investment along the Corridor.
2.8 Commit to easing the transitional periods of LRT construction. Identify and minimize both short-term disruption and any possible long-term negative effects of LRT infrastructure requirements.

2.9 Research, evaluate and explore the possible effects of displacement and gentrification in the area. Identify policy options for vulnerable areas, and work to avoid potential short- and long-term negative effects associated with LRT investment. Place special emphasis on providing timely support and options for groups most at risk (e.g., seniors, people of color, small businesses, low income households, and the disabled).

**Strategies**

2.1.1 Coordinate with the Housing Plan chapter of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that citywide housing policies address the goal of providing mixed-income housing along transit corridors, where rising property values may create barriers to developing affordable housing.

2.3.1 Establish the World Cultural Heritage District. Establish tickets and transfers as “Cultural Passports” that offer discounts and incentives to both use public transit and visit the World Cultural Heritage District.

2.4.1 Increase support and ridership for LRT by identifying and promoting its many long-term local community benefits, including: improved quality of life through enhanced access to jobs, education and entertainment; a revitalized local economy with new development activity and investment; the creation of “complete communities” with a range of housing options; increased number of local shops and community services; reduced demand for parking; and an active and safe public realm.

2.4.2 Support how new development in the Corridor may participate in Community Benefit Agreements (CBA) between property owners and area resident groups. A CBA may promote the creation of training and living wage jobs, additional community services, locally owned shops and other priority community issues as identified.

2.5.1 Develop Inclusive Housing Strategies including: rental to ownership programs, and new residential products to serve lifecycle considerations (seniors, students, first-time buyers). Implement an inclusory zoning policy. Explore policy options for expanding affordable housing targets. The Corridor needs creative solutions to improving and diversifying the current housing stock, keeping housing affordable, and moving residents from rental to ownership before, during and after LRT construction.

2.6.1 Take advantage of forthcoming LRT construction to provide skilled “first source” hiring system that targets un/under-employed area residents.

2.6.2 Preserve the residential blend of homeowners and renters. Policies and programs must be enacted to stem increases in property tax and rent hikes which often times is a contributing factor to economic displacement. This addresses housing needs for groups most at risk (e.g., seniors, people of color, small businesses, low income households, and the disabled).

2.7.1 Support the creation of jobs and residential and commercial ownership opportunities.

2.8.1 Establish a Parking Management Strategy. Tools within the strategy may include residential permit parking, permit parking relief program, shared parking, public investment, caps on parking within certain districts, and allocation of funds for parking enforcement. Monitor implementation to identify successes and failures, and revise approach as necessary.

2.9.1 Utilize key community facilities, such as the Rondo Library and Central Corridor Resource Center, as community information zones providing information related to LRT construction, schedules, destinations, etc.

**3 Link and Foster Inclusive Economic Activity**

**Objectives**

3.1 Ensure commercial development is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods and supports the vision for the Corridor. This includes the retention, enhancement and growth of local small minority businesses, a strengthened Midway Shopping district, major employment opportunities, and locally-owned businesses and incubator spaces.

3.2 Encourage an increased range of building types to accommodate a broader range of business interests. These should include smaller scale live-work, co-op models, infill and new urban villages.

3.3 Strengthen and foster local businesses along the Corridor. LRT should create opportunities to maintain and enhance existing customer and client bases through increased transit and pedestrian activity.

3.4 Facilitate shifts from commercial tenancy to ownership. Like area residents, local entrepreneurs and business owners have a vested interest in their community. Those who choose to stay should have the opportunity to pursue the long-term benefits of building equity and real estate appreciation.

3.5 Create parking strategies to support local and downtown businesses through short-term construction and long-term supply that meets client/customer needs.

3.6 Minimize disruption to Avenue and downtown businesses during LRT construction.
Objectives & Strategies

4. Improve People’s Mobility Throughout Their Community and Region

Objectives

4.1 Support proposed LRT station at Union Depot on 4th Street and its role as an intermodal and city-building investment.

4.2 Ensure LRT is built to serve both current demand and is capable of evolving over time through the addition of new stations.

4.3 Make getting to and using public transit an easy, attractive and reliable alternative to the private automobile when traveling to work, school, home or an entertainment destination.

4.4 Put pedestrians first. The quality of the pedestrian environment must be a priority in all engineering and design decisions. A safe and enjoyable pedestrian experience is vital to the long-term success and vitality of the Corridor and LRT.

4.5 Ensure accessibility and safety for people with impaired mobility.

4.6 Continue to meet the travel needs of local residents. The ability to make short trips for essential goods and services, whether by foot, bicycle, bus or LRT, should be maintained and improved along the Corridor.

Strategies

4.1.1 Create a Union Depot Vision – a detailed description of the multimodal hub’s importance to the success of downtown, LRT and the region.

4.2.1 Strongly encourage the Metropolitan Council to consider adding stations at Western, Victoria, Hamline and Cleveland/Transfer Road during the Preliminary Engineering process. If stations cannot be added initially, ensure that the base infrastructure is put in place to minimize the cost of adding stations in the future as demand and available funding allow. Within the segment of the Corridor where there are high concentrations of transit dependent population, maintain the overall level of transit service for the Corridor so that it is not diminished or reduced from pre-LRT levels.

4.3.1 Develop a CentralCorridorBicycleStrategy: Identify strategic locations for bicycle racks/locks, lockers and new designated bike routes. Create bicycle parking requirements for new developments along the Corridor.

4.3.2 Explore options for regional transit connections with smart card technologies. Provide open-ended and flexible regional transit passes for special events.

4.3.3 Design stations for a Winter City – make transit usage an attractive option all year round.

4.3.4 Integrate stations with buildings in the downtown, particularly where opportunities exist to link skyways with transit stops.

4.3.5 Implement a wayfinding program in the downtown to promote greater legibility and ease of navigation from the LRT to both cultural and entertainment destinations and downtown precincts.

4.3.6 Create and expand north-south bus routes that connect with the LRT at stations along University Avenue, and design convenient and safe pedestrian access between the bus stops on such connecting routes and the LRT station.

4.4.1 Implement a Pedestrian Priority Approach for all streetscape and station designs. Pedestrian access across the Avenue is critical to the success of businesses and a sense that neighborhoods are connected by, not split by LRT, as has been the criticism of Interstate 94.

4.4.2 Improve the walk to work from each station through legible and safe pedestrian paths.

4.4.3 Expand the local network of north/south pedestrian and bicycle paths at key connection points and stations.

4.4.4 Establish a methodology for pedestrian and bicycle demand modeling, similar to vehicular traffic modeling, to record the numbers, flow and behavior of people on foot. Run the model initially for the Central Corridor, and use the results to plan for safe, easy pedestrian and bicycle movement.

4.5.1 Create Accessibility Guidelines for the design of LRT stations. Guidelines should ensure that stations utilize minimal ramping to platforms; incorporate non-slip materials; provide a place of respite mid-block for pedestrian crossings; and others.

4.6.1 Maintain the #16 bus at current service levels.

4.6.2 Re-evaluate existing bus routes downtown in light of planned LRT service. As Cedar will be well-served by LRT, alternative entrances into the downtown for Metro Transit bus routes 16, 50 and 94 should be considered that could better serve the edges of downtown (including Saint Paul College, United Hospital, and the entertainment district).
5 Improve the Image and Quality of Life Along the Corridor

Objectives

5.1 Green the Corridor. Change the image of the Corridor from one of gray empty spaces to a green boulevard with attractive landscaping and numerous neighborhood parks.

5.2 Provide better meeting places for all types of activities: outdoor festivals, coffee breaks, art displays and others.

5.3 Promote design excellence in all aspects of the Corridor: new buildings, LRT infrastructure, pedestrian amenities, landscaping and public art.

5.4 Create better connections between neighborhoods through new types of development, green and open space networks, improved pedestrian pathways and designated bicycle routes.

5.2.4 Create a Capitol District Gateway at the eastern end of the Avenue. Create legible connections to the State Capitol Building and promote this area as a popular “political hub” and launch pad for exploring the Capitol campus.

5.2.5 Create a Historic Rondo Gateway at the Dale intersection. Designate the Dale station as “Historic Rondo” and redesign the Dale Street bridge with Rondo-related art depictions guiding people to the community’s historic interior and commercial corridor. Support the preservation, enhancement and restoration of a cultural community and its historic attractions. Promote this area as a cultural heritage destination to attract cultural tourism.

5.2.6 Create the Hmong Community Garden to provide a focus for this strong residential and business community.

5.3.1 Leverage LRT investment to create investor confidence and set a high standard for quality private development through the creation of a high quality public realm and streetscaping program.

5.3.2 Create detailed Precinct and Small Area Plans for priority redevelopment areas as a refinement of this vision and to guide the development approval process.

5.3.3 Define areas of neighborhood stability and transition. Enforce appropriate built form and access guidelines that ensure compatibility with immediate surroundings in these areas.

5.3.4 Preserve the unique architectural character of designated historic districts, such as the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District and the Lowertown Historic District, individually designated historic structures and other significant buildings that contribute to the Corridor’s identity and sense of place.

5.4.1 Create physical and/or visual linkages between each station and each public space.

5.4.2 Establish design criteria for all new development in the Corridor to ensure design is responsive to the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users, in addition to cars and trucks. Utilize a Design Review Process for all new development, including public realm and infrastructure projects.

5.4.3 Reactivate downtown streets with new ground floor uses, activities and entrances and strengthen connections between transit and skyways.

6 Collaborate from Design to Operation

Objectives

6.1 Educate and inform the community about all facets of LRT. The public needs a constant, easy-to-access, and reliable source of information throughout design, construction and eventual operation. Whenever possible, bring this information directly to where the community lives and works.

6.2 Ensure a voice throughout the process. Opportunities to provide meaningful input are essential. Identify and widely publicize milestone presentations, meetings and decisions.

6.3 Build trust and enthusiasm for LRT. Outreach campaigns should involve, and messages should be delivered by, trusted community members.

6.4 Encourage early and meaningful dialogue between developers, District Councils and community groups on development proposals along the Corridor.

Strategies

6.1.1 Celebrate LRT as a once-in-a-century investment and opportunity. Discover creative means to document the history of the Corridor and this chapter of its evolution.

6.1.2 Create an LRT Public Education Program on design, construction and operation.

6.2.1 Establish a Central Corridor Resource Center within an existing community facility for communication between the City and community on issues and concerns related to LRT design and construction.

6.2.2 Support the Metropolitan Council’s Community Advisory Committee to ensure it plays a meaningful role.

6.3.1 Create a Construction Communications Program to provide ample notice to businesses and residents of construction schedules, road closures and detours, limited access, etc.

6.4.1 Encourage early communication and dialogue between developers, District Councils and other interested community groups, prior to any official application to the City for development approvals. Require this early and on-going dialogue for any projects seeking City financing assistance.