

# A Vision for The Greenway and Midtown: Minneapolis, MN

A MURP Paper

In Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Urban and Regional Planning Degree Requirements

The Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs

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Minneapolis, MN

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## Thanks!

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August, 2012

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{PREMISE}

## What is this project?

From the beginning, this project has been a tool for learning. With three years of school under my belt, I'm not naive enough to assume that this the definitive solution to one of Minneapolis' most wicked problems, but I am wise enough to understand that to take it on will be to learn a great deal in the process; which, hopefully, will fuel my professional development for decades to come.

In many ways, this process started on a bike. I love biking. Not only because biking is one of the most versatile forms of transportation, but also because biking exposes the rider to urban systems in a way that other forms of transportation cannot. Across any city, a well-researched bike route can and will link together a combination of roads, trails, parks, shortcuts, residential streets, collector streets, arterials, bike facilities, construction zones, pedestrian areas, and more. In other words, this mode of recreation/transportation encourages the rider (whether they are conscious of it or not) to understand something about the interaction between types of space in their city. As such, I've come to realize that it's all this stuff, these systems and spaces, that stimulate my interest in biking, my interest in both landscape architecture and urban planning, and my interest in this project.

As could be imagined, this project started with a consideration of urban cycling. As it has turned out, this project is a consideration of all of the urban systems that manifest in our cities.

## What is this book?

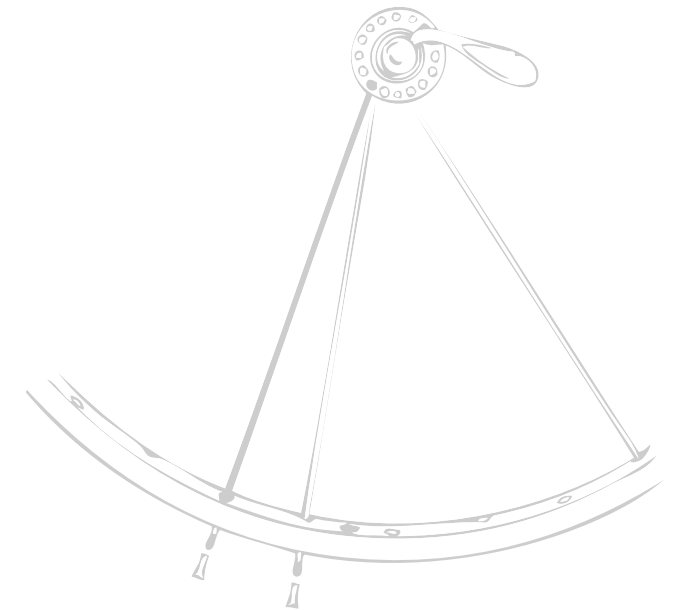
This, largely, is a document for graduate students. Why is that? Because it is most likely that you, reader, are a graduate student. How many Council Members, landscape architects, or city planners are ring-up the university and ask to see a grad project from X years ago? Maybe they should, but it's rare. On the other hand, there are dozens of professors, advising 2nd-year MURPs or 3rd-year MLAs who'll say, "Hey, So-and-so did a project like that a while ago, let me send you their book".

The protocol is to make a professional planning document that anyone could pick-up and understand. However, this doesn't do much for those trying to understand that process of such a massive project. Between you and me, reader, we'll have decades to make standard professional planning documents that anyone on the street could read and understand (though only a small percentage of them ever will). My aim through school, at least at the Humphrey School, was to challenge the conventions of professional communication. For example, why does every visual presentation have to be a Powerpoint? I never made a single .ppt presentation in my graduate career but I still was able to communicate effectively with visual media, digital and otherwise. In short, I'm writing this book for you and I, reader. To be honest, I want to have a little fun with it.

Contrary to what that last two paragraphs imply, many people in the community have heard, seen, and read about some of the ideas presented here. To-date, this proposal has been shown to the Ward 6 Council Member, Robert Lilligren, and he is using it in his

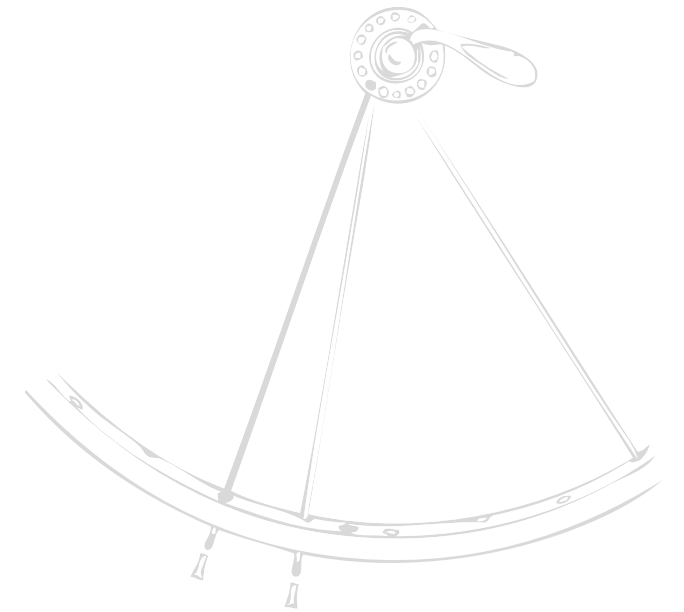
quest to reopen Nicollet Ave, it's been shown at public meetings by The Midtown Greenway Coalition, it's been reviewed by the Assistant Superintendent for Planning at the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board for it's proposed expansion of public space, and has been trotted around local firms such as Damon Farber and Associates, HKGi, LHB, and KHA, among others. Still, I doubt any of them are itching to read and implement dozens of pages on a project that was created by a singular student, with no public input, and with no budget. They wanted the important points, and they've used and appreciated them. If Minneapolis is truly going to make changes on this site, at this scale, they are going to need more than just a capstone book.

So, this does not look like a professional planning document. Maybe that's endearing, maybe not. Hopefully it has some life and character, or at least doesn't end-up sounding and looking like every other capstone book collecting dust on forgotten shelves. In any event, I hope you get something useful out of it.



# CONTEXT

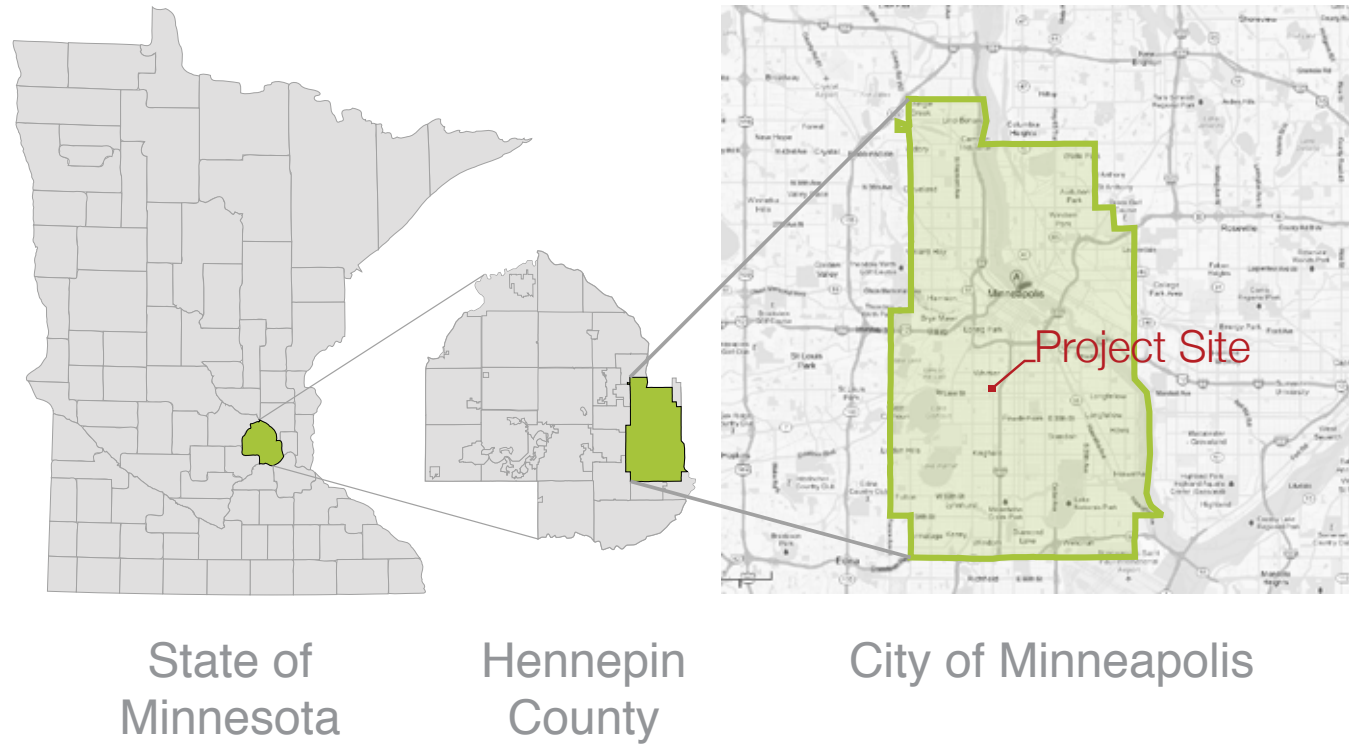
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## Overview

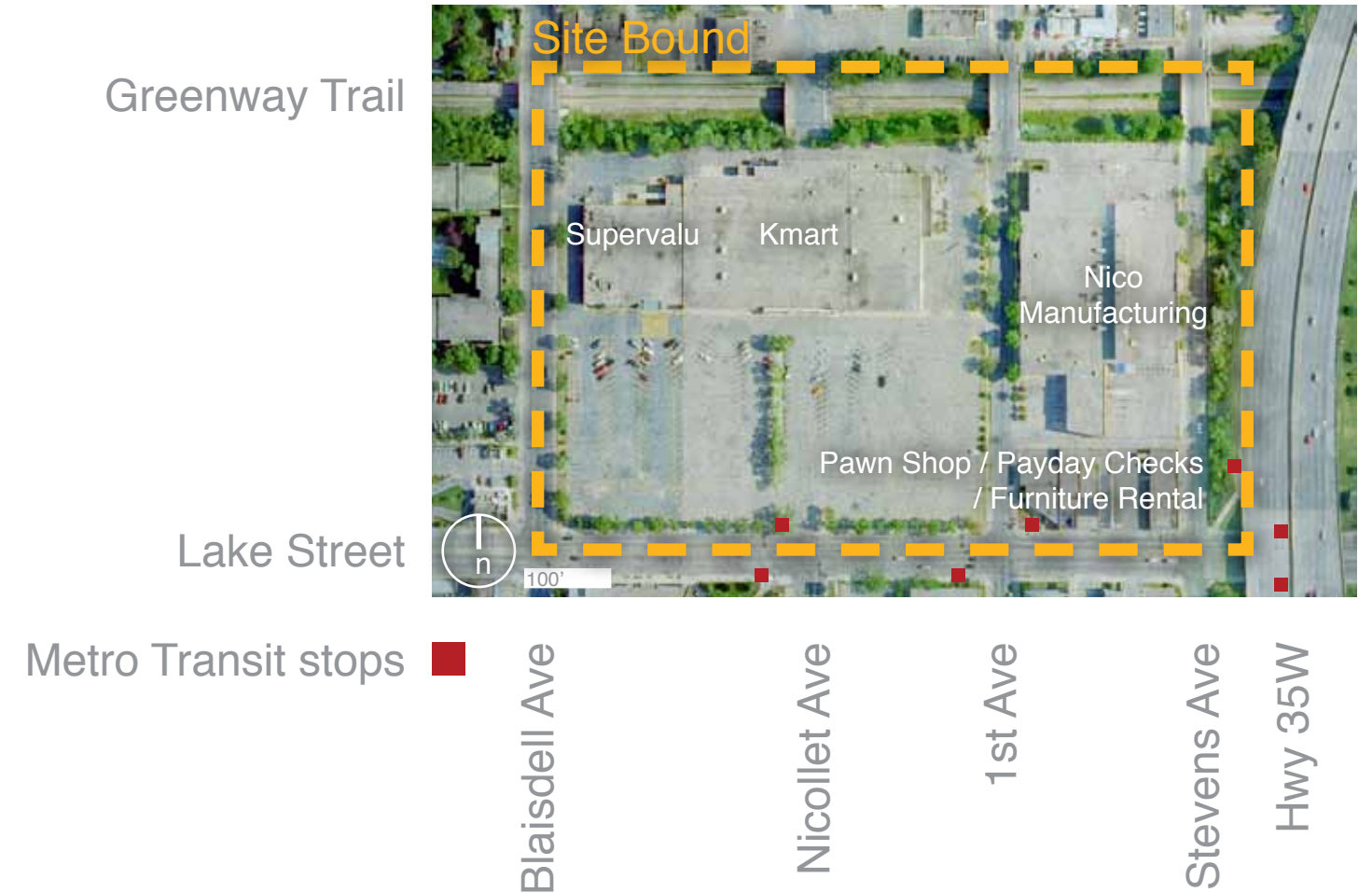
This section is an introduction to the site area of this project, and some of the surrounding context. In regards to this project, there are some specific aspects of site context that will be considered as pertinent to this effort. They are:

- » Commercial nodes of Lake Street
- » The historic connection and current disconnection of Nicollet Avenue
- » Current land-use and zoning overlay districts



## Project Site

This site was chosen largely because of its potential change. It is on what should be very valuable urban land, considering its central location in Minneapolis, and its situation at the intersection of two of Minneapolis' more historically important corridors: Lake Street and Nicollet Avenue. As evidenced by this image of existing conditions, Nicollet has been cut-off by the Kmart big-box retail store, and there is little connection to the Midtown Greenway. The area within the site bound is approximately 19.5 acres, almost 10 of which is surface parking immediately adjacent to Lake Street.



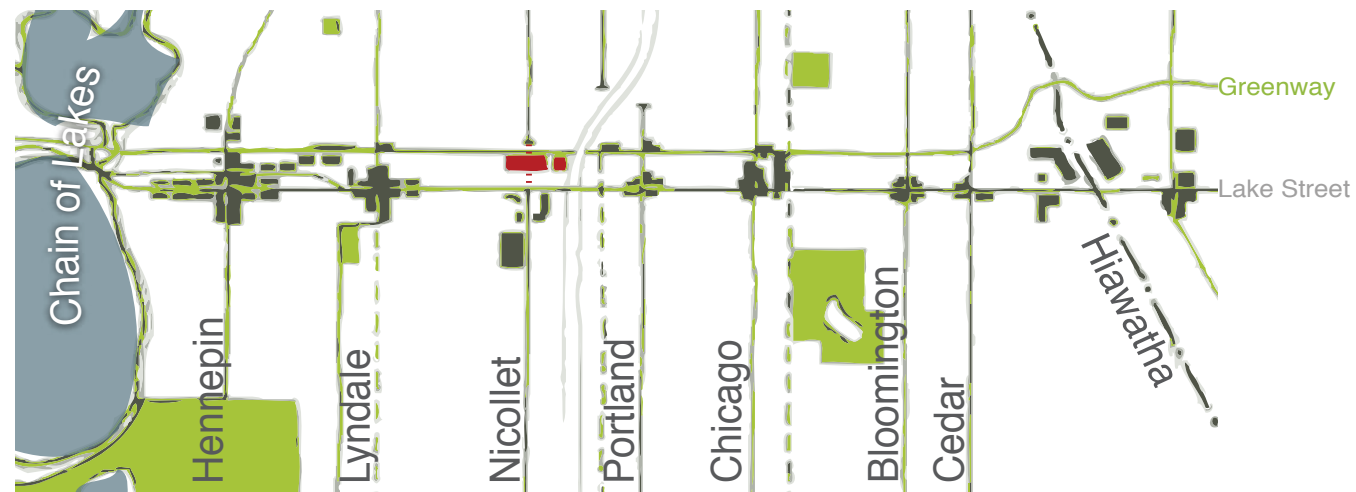
## Nodes of Lake Street

Historically and contemporarily, Lake Street has been understood by urban planners in Minneapolis as a series of commercial nodes, stretching from The Chain of Lakes to Hiawatha. Among them are Lake and Hennepin, Lake and Lyndale, and Lane and Chicago to name a few. While it is true that Lake and Nicollet is also a commercial node in that it is the site of commercial activity, it does not present the same typology of street amenities that some of these other nodes present.

For example, near Lake and Hennepin, there is a large, heated, enclosed metro transit hub whose lines extend beyond the city limits of Minneapolis. Also, there is a wide variety of stores in Calhoun Square, no surface parking lots, and building setbacks that are less than 20

feet from the edge of the street curb.

In contrast, the parcels north of Lake Street at the intersection with Nicollet Ave to the south (also where Nicollet Ave used to run north, connecting to downtown Minneapolis) have 300 foot setbacks behind over 500 surface parking stalls, some derelict street furniture, and a comparatively lesser variety of retail stores. Granted, the Kmart and the Supervalu that are at this node are doing well, the configuration of the streetscape does not include as many concessions to the pedestrian as the other commercial nodes along Lake Street. So, while this intersection still maintains economic activity, it does not maintain the same level of pedestrian service in its street typology as the other nodes along the corridor of Lake Street.



**(ABOVE)** This diagram indicates some of the commercial nodes along Lake Street. Its purpose is to indicate which streets are commercial nodes. Note that at most of the nodes, the building footprints (grey rectangular shapes) are clustered closely to Lake Street, where as the building footprints of the Kmart and Supervalu (red rectangles) at Lake Street and Nicollet Avenue are comparatively further away from the Lake Street center line.



Calhoun Square at Hennepin Avenue & Lake Street

Note the shorter building setback (the distance from the sidewalk to the front edge of the buildings), the larger amount of glass on the building facade, and building height.





## Lyndale Avenue & Lake Street

Again note the small set-backs, multiple stories with different potential uses (mixed-use retail- and residential-use buildings, for example), and pedestrian amenities such as awnings.



## Chicago Avenue & Lake Street Chicago Avenue & Lake Street

**(ABOVE)** Again note the small set-backs, multiple stories with different potential uses (mixed-use retail- and residential-use buildings, for example), and pedestrian amenities such as awnings.

**(RIGHT)** One unique characteristic that will be discussed later is how new development at Lake and Nicollet could address the Midtown Greenway. Notice how both the “back” of the Midtown Exchange building (background) and the Sheraton Hotel (foreground, with stairs) address the Greenway in some fashion.



## Historical connection : Nicollet Avenue

Before 1976, Nicollet ran as a continuous avenue from well-past 50th Street, nearly all the way to the Mississippi River, and was affectionately known by some as “Minneapolis’ Main Street”. Since then a block of Nicollet Avenue between 29th Street and Lake Street (the equivalent of 30th Street) has been closed, the parcel leased, and a suburban style big-box<sup>o</sup> Kmart retail store was constructed on the previous center-line of Nicollet Ave north of Lake St.

This is significant, as one of the key proposals of this project is to reopen Nicollet Avenue. This action would reestablish the importance of this avenue by leveraging the value of historic character and re-imagining that character for a contemporary context.

Similar to the photos on the previous pages, these historic photos depict an intersection where there used to be higher residential density<sup>oo</sup> rentals that sat atop street-level retail. Indeed, mixing residential and commercial units in a single building is nothing new to this intersection.

<sup>o</sup> A “big-box store” is generally understood as a one-story retail store with a large footprint, with a large amount of surface parking and fast, low-cost construction.

<sup>oo</sup> Because there are currently no residential units on either side of what used to be Nicollet Ave between 29th and Lake Sts, any units at all could create higher densities, relatively.



**(TOP)** Lake Street looking east, Christmas, 1956. Notice in each of these images the streetcar lines and overhead wires. As recently as the 1940’s, streetcars connected Minneapolis, St. Paul, and their outlying suburbs.

(Minnesota Historical Society, used with permission)

**(ABOVE)** Nicollet Avenue looking north, 1926.

(Minnesota Historical Society, used with permission)

## Zoning & Overlay Districts

The current zoning within the project site is delineated by the large parcels (see the map on page 12. Compare the parcels of the project site versus the parcel sizes of areas a little further south), and is exclusively commercial, with one light industrial parcel. Currently, there is no residential or mixed-use land use types on the site. These are a direct result of the 1972 Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan (to be discussed in following sections) which used tax-increment financing to allocate commercial parcels to what was supposed to be a thriving pedestrian marketplace in the heart of Minneapolis.

Unfortunately, after cutting-off direct circulation to downtown Minneapolis, and installing suburban big-box and strip-mall<sup>o</sup> commercial buildings, developers and planners at the City of Minneapolis have severely diminished attractive pedestrian characteristics in this project area.

For example, the Pedestrian Overlay District that extends from Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis stops right at the northern edge of the Kmart parcel. This gap in the overlay district is likely because of the current lack of pedestrian amenities on the project site. If these streetscape issues were addressed it would be easier, politically and administratively at the city planning office, to extend the overlay district. That would, in turn, allow lower minimum parking requirements, and institute some guidelines for streetscape design in the future.

<sup>o</sup> The development south of Lake Street, on the eastern site of Nicollet is a strip-mall which also uses large, suburban-type set-backs for surface parking.



**(ABOVE)** This is a map from the City of Minneapolis showing the current state of the Pedestrian Zoning Overlay District that extends from Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis. Similar overlay districts also cover the aforementioned commercial nodes along Lake Street. The break in the Pedestrian Overlay Zoning District is likely due to the diminished nature of the pedestrian realm within this project site.

(City of Minneapolis Zoning Commission. [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us))

**(OPPOSITE PAGE)** This is a map of the existing land use zoning on and around the project site area. Note that there are some limited implementations of mixed-use zoning, but they are arguably rare for urban land that has much greater potential than is currently expressed.

(City of Minneapolis Zoning Commission. [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us))



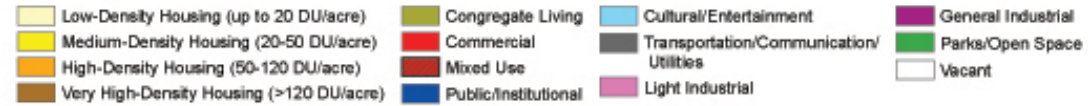
Project Site

Greenway Trl

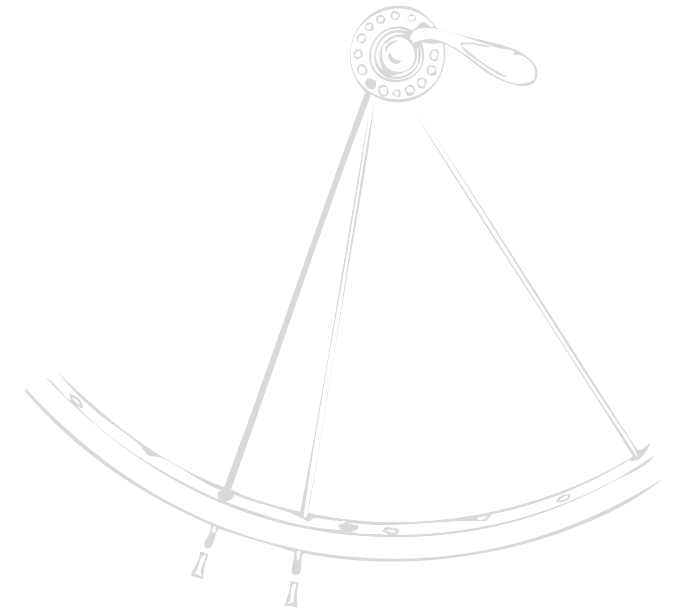
Lake St

Niccollet Ave

Hwy 35W



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# PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

## Overview

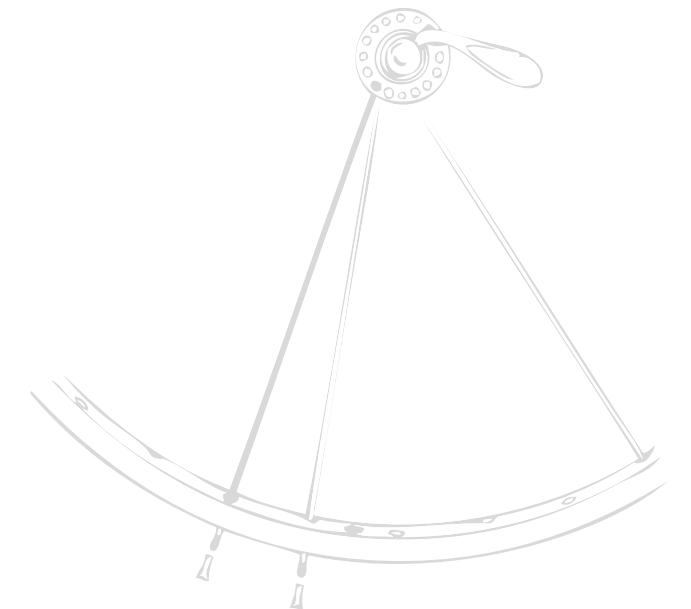
This section is meant to showcase some of the most pressing issues on the site. They are:

- » How the surface area of the site is currently being used.
- » Kmart's setback and the "ocean of surface parking"<sup>o</sup> adjacent to Lake Street.
- » The lack of connection of Nicollet Ave across the site.
- » Access to the Midtown Greenway and wayfinding from the Greenway to the rest of the city.

In addition to displaying the shortcomings of the current conditions, this project aims to increase livability by expanding on an address of current problems. That is, this project aims to make a unique place both along Lake Street, as well as the Midtown Greenway, and to link those places together to form a unified district from Blaisdell Ave on the west to Highway 35W on the east.

The specific goals of the proposal's goals will be further explained in sections to follow, but for an introduction, this section serves to justify the changes that will address current issues.

<sup>o</sup> From an interview with Robert Lilligren, Council Member representative for Ward 6, which includes this site. ([www.streets.mn/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/podcast7robertlilligren.mp3](http://www.streets.mn/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/podcast7robertlilligren.mp3))

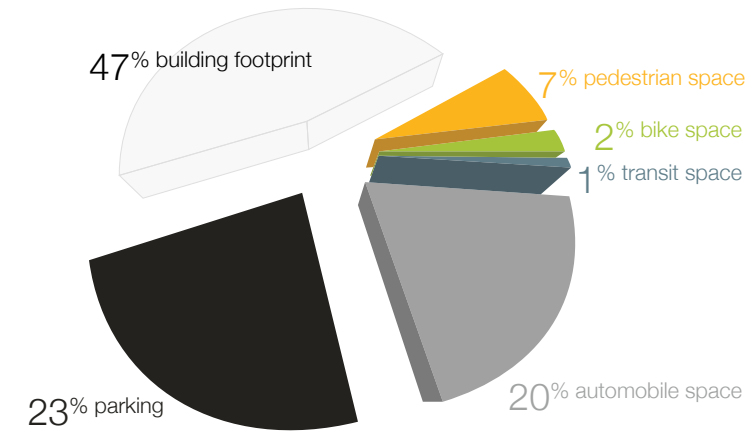


## Current Use by Area

This rough metric is used simply to identify the extent to which the site is dedicated to space for automobiles, rather than other uses. This identification is important because with a site that has as much pedestrian traffic as this one does, more space should be dedicated to other modes of circulation. Also, given the urban nature of the site, some space might be well-suited for office or residential uses, as identified by the Midtown Minneapolis Land Use & Development Plan (discussed in the “Plans” chapter).

**(BELOW)** This is a basic map of the site, the same area as seen on page 5, with area quantities and highlighting some issues that are addressed later in this section.

**(OPPOSITE : LEFT)** Using satellite images of the site, this chart on page 17 shows by percentage how much physical surface area is given to which land uses. For clarity, “automobile space” refers to areas, such as road lanes that are designed and dedicated to automobile circulation above all other modes (for example, the outside 5’ of a driving lane is not counted, as that area may be used by cyclists).



**(BELOW)** This graphic shows how heavily this area is used by Metro Transit riders (Metro Transit, data gathered in September 2012. [www.metrotransit.com](http://www.metrotransit.com)). The size of the green circles proportionally represent the quantity of transit ridership by area between these three intersections.

Based on riders per day, Nicollet and Lake is the busiest transit intersection in the Metro Area. As such, the minimum parking requirements are overstated in this particular instance because the large majority of these customers are riding public transit. Furthermore, this creates a defensible argument for the expansion of the pedestrian realm. The issue of parking will be further addressed and explained in the following section, “The Kmart Setback & Surface Parking”.



## The Kmart Setback & Surface Parking

Currently, the Kmart site has a 300' setback from the edge of the sidewalk on the north side of Lake Street, and has a capacity of 522 automobiles.

This creates a wonderful opportunity for change, but first there is a need to explain and address why the current configuration of the site is detrimental to the pedestrian realm.

In the last decade, there have been a number of articles published that explore the correlation between the urban built environment and levels of pedestrian traffic and public health<sup>o</sup>. There is a call for more research, but the underlying thread is that the edge is important. That is, that to activate the street, or any space for that matter, the edge must be activated.

To be “activated” in this instance means to inspire social behavior, or human use of the space. This idea of the activation of, “the edge”, has been well understood by landscape architects for decades, if not centuries<sup>oo</sup>. If that principle is applied to this site, where there is

practically a football field between the pedestrians on the sidewalk and the Kmart storefront, it is clear that this condition should change if there is to be a comfortable pedestrian realm at this intersection, as is evident at the other nodes along Lake Street.

Additionally, there is the compound factor of the underutilization of the available parking. The graphic on page 16 cites that the average use of the parking lot is 22%<sup>ooo</sup>. These observations can potentially be applied to the whole year, with a slight increase in capacity use during the winter assuming less people choose to walk or bike to this location when the weather is poor.

This is a busy area for public transit users, so it logically follows that there is a decreased demand for automobile parking, especially compared to the parking demand of suburban sites, from which the architectural template of this parcel is derived.

In short, this site does not require nearly the amount of surface parking it currently has, which opens-up acres of possibility.

<sup>o</sup> Two of them are “How the built environment affects physical activity: Views from urban planning”, by Handy et al. in the Journal of Preventative Medicine (2002) and “Urban Form and Pedestrian Choices”, also by Dr. Handy for the Transportation Research Board, (2007).

<sup>oo</sup> This idea is most clearly explored by Christopher Alexander in the 1977 classic in landscape architectural literature, “A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction”. In his description of open spaces, he discusses the need to activate the edge of the space with some type of activity. For example, think of a vibrant European square; there are vendors, there are people, street furniture, and it’s ringed by small, unique storefronts with various wares in the windows. Now, imagine that same space with no edges, just blank asphalt reaching out for hundreds of feet. Which one is preferable?

<sup>ooo</sup> This was based on observations over two consecutive weeks in March, 2011. They were two hours, 9-10am and 5-6pm, on two week days each week (Tu / Thur, week 1 and Wed / Fri, week 2) and each weekend day from 11am to 2pm, with moment-counts at 5pm each Sunday to account for week’s-end shoppers.

## Disconnection Across the Project Site

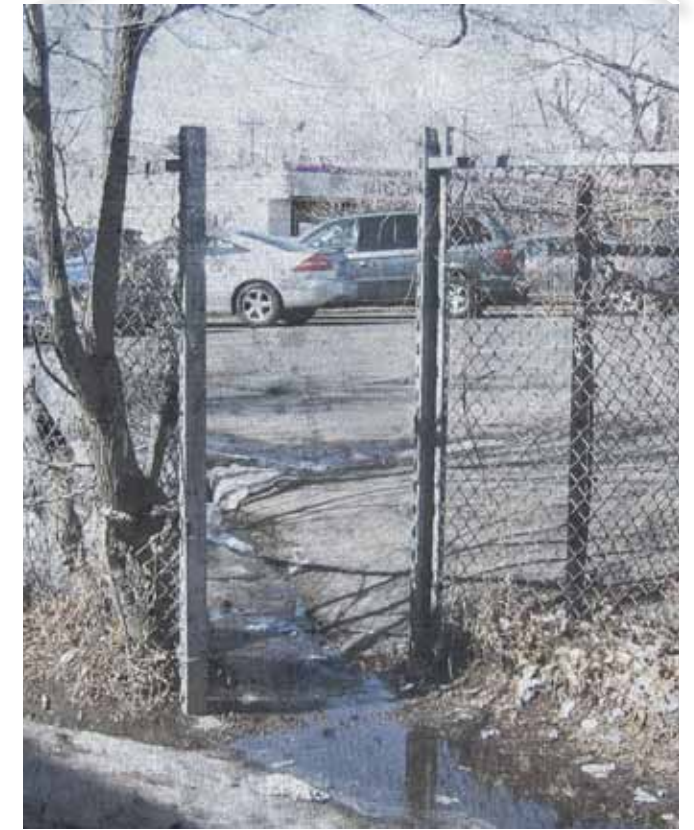
Beyond the sea of surface parking and the need to address the pedestrian realm, one of the most basic needs of this site is the need to reconnect Nicollet Ave from 29th St to the north and Lake St to the south. Historically, Nicollet was called Minneapolis’ Main Street<sup>o</sup> largely because of its connection from downtown through Uptown. As a further insult to the historic character of Nicollet Ave, the big red “K” of Kmart sites squarely on the historic centerline of the avenue. Where one there was a ballpark and commercial gateway to our gleaming metropolis, there is now a plastic neon “K”, bolted to cheap, out-dated architecture behind a cracked and disused field of asphalt.

In terms of site change, the reopening of Nicollet is the most basic need for this site, and has been building momentum in the public realm recently<sup>oo</sup>.

<sup>o</sup> From an interview with Robert Lilligren, Council Member representative for Ward 6, which includes this site. He has also lived in this area and owned rental property here since the 1980’s, and is well-read on the history of this area.

Also, this article by Midtown Community Works gives a good synopsis of the history of the intersection of Lake St and Nicollet Ave: <http://www.midtowncommunityworks.org/mcwnnewsurbanrene.html>.

<sup>oo</sup> Here is a link to that interview with Council Member Lilligren, wherein he outlines the level of public interest for reopening Nicollet Ave at Lake St: <http://www.streets.mn/2012/08/22/streets-mn-podcast-7-re-opening-lake-street-with-robert-lilligren/>



(ABOVE) These photos were taken from behind the existing Kmart, and represents the only usable connection from north to south near the historic alignment of Nicollet Ave; it is barely usable by anyone, and represents a stark change from the vibrant commercial vitality of Eat Street to the north and the strip-mall pedestrian neglect to the south.

## Greenway Ramps & Wayfinding

In addition to connecting this site to its context from north to south across the parking lot, and typologically to other commercial nodes along Lake Street, there is a clear need to better connect the Greenway to this site.

This connection does not only pertain to ADA<sup>o</sup> accessibility, it is also germane to businesses along Lake Street, as more foot traffic and exposure would lead to more business, or, a larger market catchment.

Currently, access to the Greenway is restricted to 8% asphalt ramps (maximum allowable grade for ADA accessibility in MN is 5%) that enter the Greenway at a perpendicular angle (see photo on the right).

The reason for this configuration is to allow for a potential future streetcar line along the south side of the Greenway<sup>oo</sup> (see the recessed area to the left of the path pictured at right). Unfortunately, this means that bikers need to heavily apply their brakes to avoid a collision on entering the Greenway, and/or come to an almost complete stop before proceeding up a relatively steep incline to get up to street grade.

Another issue that plagues the Greenway is the simple fact that it provides only a small amount of legibility to the rest of the city and the street grid. That is, new users of the Greenway rarely have a good understanding of where they are in relation to the rest of Minneapolis. To illustrate this idea, take for example the comparison of the places along Lake



**(ABOVE)** This photo is typical of the ramps leading from street grade down to the Greenway (approx. 30' in elevation change, depending on the location). This particular photo was taken at street grade, Nicollet Ave just north of the Kmart building, looking west toward Blaisdell Ave.

<sup>o</sup> Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990

<sup>oo</sup> from an interview with Soren Jensen, Executive Director of the Midtown Greenway Coalition, on March 15, 2012.

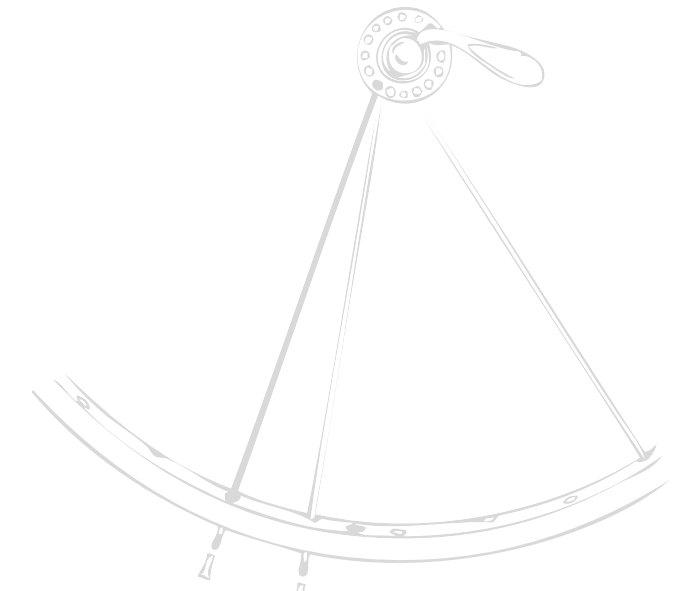
Street versus the Midtown Greenway. Because the City of Minneapolis and developers have created unique nodes, places with character (see: “Eat Street and Lyn-Lake) new visitors to Minneapolis clearly know when they are at Lake-and-Hennepin versus Lake-and-Lyndale, or -Chicago, etcetera. Furthermore, for people know the city, these nodes can be used as landmarks in daily navigation/circulation.

This intuitive legibility is not as clearly evident down on the Midtown Greenway. Comparatively, the Midtown Greenway has far fewer usable landmarks along the corridor. By-in-large, to new users the Greenway looks much the same from one end to the other<sup>o</sup>. The potential remedy for this is maybe not to start putting up massive street signs at every bridge crossing, but to start to truly make “places” along the Greenway. For example, most users know the relative location of the Freewheel bike shop on the Greenway, because it is unique. It gives its surrounding area a character that is visibly and socially different from the fences and retaining walls that typify the rest of the Greenway corridor.

This plan presupposes that true places along the Greenway would not only contribute to wayfinding and legibility along the corridor, but also help to build legible “nodes” along this corridor, similar to those along Lake Street, not a few hundred feet away. Furthermore, this proposal argues that these new places would not be in competition with Lake Street, but if the connection is well-established, that these places could be mutually beneficial; this framework will optimally operate similarly to the benefits of

<sup>o</sup> Based survey question data executed during the Fall 2011 Bike Walk Twin Cities (BWTC) bike and pedestrian traffic count ([www.bwtc.org](http://www.bwtc.org))

agglomeration that are enjoyed by many retail mall establishments. That is, enjoying the benefit of an increased level of customer traffic because of their relative position to other, potentially complementary, businesses.



# PLANS

## Overview

This section introduces the prioritization model that was used for this project, as well as 5 plans published by the City of Minneapolis and Metro Transit which have implications for the project. These 5 plans were chosen because of their scope and impact for the project, and because they are in-line with the prioritization model that functions both as a conceptual framework for the design, and an editing device against which to understand the effectiveness of the proposal.

Also, because this project lacks a comprehensive public involvement process, these plans will act as a proxy for the needs and preferences of the people of Minneapolis.

The 5 plans reviewed here are:

- » The Minneapolis Pedestrian Master Plan
- » The Minneapolis Bike Master Plan
- » The Minneapolis Streetcar Feasibility Study
- » The Midtown Minneapolis Land Use & Development Plan
- » The Minneapolis Urban Agriculture Policy Plan.

## Prioritization Model

At its core, this project proposes a shift in the paradigm of urban spatial organization. As is demonstrated by the land allocation by surface area, automobiles are currently the most dominant feature in the landscape of this site (see page 17). In terms of a design process for the public realm, it can be assumed that currently consideration of automobile circulation is addressed first, then other modes (public transportation, pedestrian movement, bicyclists, etc.) are added to the automobile framework. In other words, right now we design roads and add sidewalks to them, rather than vice versa.

The new paradigm this project uses takes its template from the City of Vancouver. Since its implementation in 2008, when the city is evaluating civic projects and new development, it considers them for pedestrians first and automobiles last (see below). This is done because at some point, every person is a pedestrian, and because pedestrians have the most important safety needs. Additionally, Vancouver's website notes that a list of priorities that ends with the personal automobile, rather than starts with it, has had wide-ranging positive effects on public health, safety, accident rates, transportation mode-share of bikes and pedestrians, aesthetics and streetscapes, and even property value.

Vancouver City Council priorities in order:  
**pedestrian, bicycle, transit,  
movement of goods,  
and the automobile**

<http://vancouver.ca/engSVCS/transport/cycling/plans/policy.htm>



## Minneapolis Pedestrian Master Plan (MPMP)

Among other recommendations, the MPMP identifies that Lake Street, within this project site, is an area that has been identified as needing improvement in pedestrian facilities. These improvements include better sidewalk ramps and crosswalks, wider sidewalks along Blaisdell, 1st Ave and Stevens Ave, and better transit stops with larger capacities to better accommodate the volume of users at the transit stops within this project area.

Additionally, the MPMP includes recommendations to address the ADA accessibility from the street grid elevation down to the Midtown Greenway.



ADOPTED BY CITY COUNCIL  
October 16, 2009

## Minneapolis Bike Master Plan (MBMP)

In its analysis of gaps in the current bike infrastructure system in Minneapolis, the MBMP identifies that the bike lanes are needed on both Blaisdell and 1st Avenues. Additionally, the plan mentions that the reopening of Nicollet would be a desired change for the cyclists of Minneapolis.

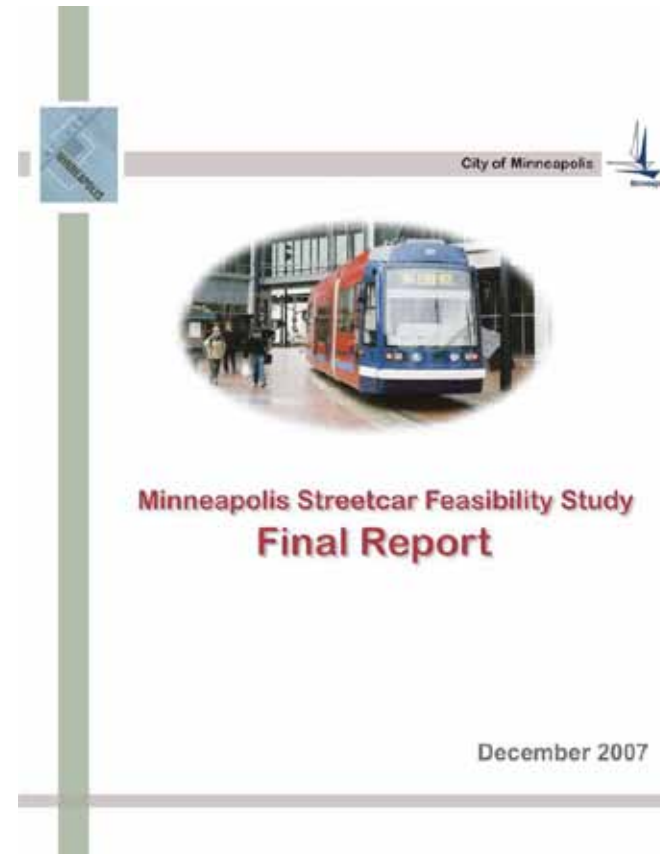
Similar to the MPMP, the MBMP also notes that there is a need to address the grades, or slopes, of the access ramps connecting the elevation of the street grid with the Midtown Greenway.

Also, the MBMP recommends that bike commuters and recreational cyclists should be encouraged to bike on the Midtown Greenway rather than on Lake St because of the volume of traffic on Lake, and the relative proximity and safety of the Greenway.



## Minneapolis Streetcar Feasibility Study (MSFS)

In terms of potential impact for the project site, this plan recommends not just that Nicollet should be reopened between 29th and Lake Streets, but that a streetcar line should be reinstated along Lake St, and that further study should be conducted to vet the feasibility of a potential future streetcar line in the Midtown Greenway trench, along the southern edge of the existing bike trail.



## Midtown Minneapolis Land Use & Development Plan (MMDP)

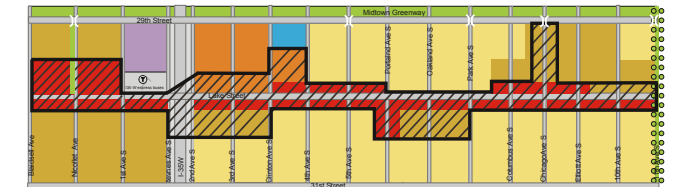
Though this plan was published before the recent financial recession, it still has pertinent recommendations to consider for this project and project site.

Most importantly, this plan recommends re-configuring the current Kmart site to better address Lake St (that is, to decrease the current setback to under 10', rather than 300'), that developed density should increase, and that this project site should include mixed-use commercial-and-residential land use.

Additionally, this plan recommends a decrease, if not complete elimination of surface parking, in favor of structured parking. Also, the MMDP recommends a decrease in the minimum requirements for parking, and the need to evaluate whether this area should be part of Minneapolis' system of Pedestrian Zoning Overlay Districts.

### MIDTOWN MINNEAPOLIS LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Lake Street  
From Blaisdell Avenue to 11th Avenue and  
The Midtown Greenway to 31st Street



APPROVED DECEMBER 23, 2005  
MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL

*Prepared for:*

City of Minneapolis  
Community Planning & Economic Development  
Planning Division  
Room 210, City Hall  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415

*Prepared by:*

Biko Associates, Inc.  
79 13th Avenue Northeast, Studio 104  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55413

*and*

B. Aaron Parker & Associates | Metropeligo PC  
430 Oak Grove, Suite 205  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

## Minneapolis Urban Agriculture Policy Plan (UAPP)

The most pertinent recommendation of this plan is the basic notion that the City of Minneapolis could increase its share of farmer's markets, as well as the amount of land dedicated to agriculture in the city.

The most important change in City policy that has resulted from this plan is the allowance of small, private gardeners to be able to sell their excess produce at local farmer's markets. The practical implication of this change is that if there is adjacent space that can be used for agriculture and as a farmer's market venue, the families of the local community garden can sell their produce at the local farmer's market without a special license, or need to transport their wares.



### Urban Agriculture Policy Plan: *A Land Use and Development Plan for a Healthy, Sustainable Local Food System*

**Minneapolis, Minnesota**  
Adopted by the Minneapolis City Council  
April 15, 2011



Prepared by the:

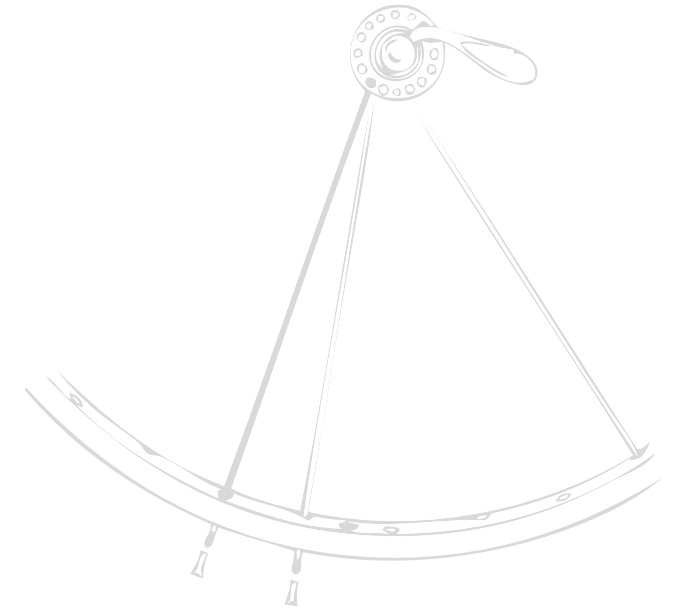


The City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department as an amendment to the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth

Funded by:



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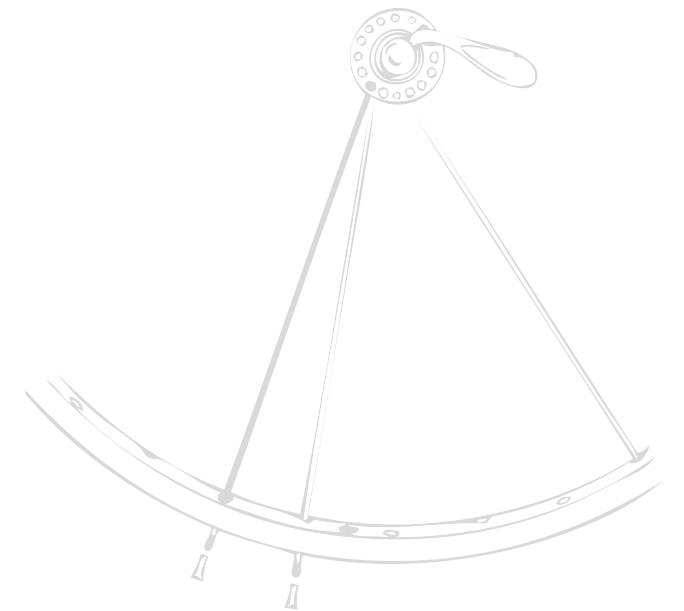


# INSPIRATION

## Overview

The projects in this chapter address some of the main issues in the project area by identifying precedent projects that address issues of landform moving across grade, the function of mixed-use projects that incorporate residential uses, and how parking can be more responsibly addressed, from an urban design prospective. Additionally, this chapter will touch on vertical circulation in regards to public transportation station design, and how they can be used to connect various transportation modes.

The form section illustrates the success of the Seattle Art Muesum's Olympic Sculpture Garden in using ramps, tilted planes, stairs, seatwalls, and retaining walls to move from the street grid down to Elliot Bay on Pugeot Sound. In function, the Blue apartments here in Minneapolis are highlighted because of the development's density, and how it addresses both Lake Street and the Greenway, among other features. Finally, as an introduction to how some of the parking will be handled on this project site, the Mill Quarter Municipal Parking Ramp is discussed for its responsible design, and adjacency to other uses.



## Precedent : form

The project that lent the most influence for this proposal is the Olympic Sculpture Park at the Seattle Art Museum by the Weiss/Manfredi architecture firm, completed on January 20, 2007. Situated on Elliot Bay in Puget Sound on the west coast of Seattle, just south of Lake Union (see below), the park covers 9 acres of urban waterfront, and gracefully connects 40 feet of elevation change from the street to the water's edge with ramps, stairs, and structures.

The reason this project in particular is so influential is because of its basic use of landscape form to create spaces, and for its incorporation of ramps, and stairs/seat walls.



*"The design not only brings sculpture outside of the museum walls but brings the park itself into the landscape of the city."*

-Weiss/Manfredi

**(OPPOSITE : TOP)** This image shows the whole park, from the street grade at Western Ave all the way down to the water's edge at Elliot Bay. In its course across grade, the ramps of the park bridge the potential barriers to circulation of Elliot Street and the freight rail line, and creates a massive amount of public green space which both creates open space for visitors and urban dwellers, as well as setting the stage for internationally-acclaimed sculptures.

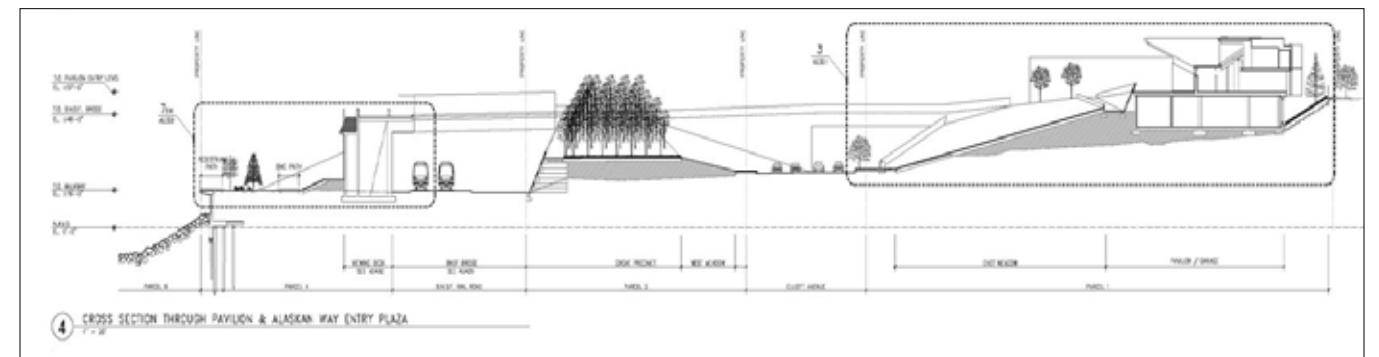
(image taken from Wikipedia under Creative Commons license; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympic\_Sculpture\_Park)

**(OPPOSITE : INSET)** This image shows one area of the park where stairs and seat-walls are used to create space. Because of the large lateral distance between the Midtown Greenway and Lake St, this typology would be well applied in a space that could step-up over longer distances, and use the spaces in-between as discrete outdoor "rooms".

(image used with permission from Weiss/Manfredi; www.weissmanfredi.com/project/seattle-art-museum-olympic-sculpture-park)

**(OPPOSITE : BOTTOM)** This image shows a cross-section of the elevation change across the site, as well as Elliot Street (in the center, the automobiles) and the freight rail line (towards the left, the train cars).

(image used with permission from Weiss/Manfredi; www.weissmanfredi.com/project/seattle-art-museum-olympic-sculpture-park)



## Precedent : function

While there are very few projects that present the unique challenges of the project site on Nicollet and Lake, there are examples right on the Greenway of development that is working. However, it's still limited. As quoted from the Southwest Journal, "Development surging around Midtown Greenway. Projects, however, haven't reached east of Lyndale Avenue.", (Aug 20, 2012)<sup>o</sup>. With this in mind, as well as the recommendations of the Midtown Minneapolis Land Use & Development Plan, and the City's comprehensive plan, the type of development that is expressed by projects like the Blue Apartments in the Lyn-Lake area.

The Blue Apartments, on Aldrich and Lake St (see opposite page) provide a good example of smart urban development. This development comprises of 242 units, and is a mix of both uses, with both residential and commercial space, as well as income levels, with >8% low-income residents which would

be an important amenity at Lake St and Nicollet Ave, considering that some of the neighborhoods adjacent to the project area have concentrations of low-income residents that are higher than the Minneapolis neighborhood average<sup>oo</sup>. In addition to these facts, the development also boasts LEED certification with a green roof and passive solar architecture, secured indoor bike parking as it's north side has access to the Greenway. Finally and most importantly, the development is successful. From an interview with a developer who is familiar with the project, the property has had less than a 4% vacancy rate since opening in 2008.

<sup>o</sup> [www.swjournal.com/index.php?publication=southwest&story=18744&page=152&category=63](http://www.swjournal.com/index.php?publication=southwest&story=18744&page=152&category=63)

<sup>oo</sup> The city of Minneapolis provides an incentive to developers of an allowed increase in residential density of 20% for developers that commit at least 50% of the ground-floor area to commercial use ([www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/planning](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/planning)).

Also, General Land Use Policies in the Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan are as follows:

"Support a variety of commercial districts and corridors of varying size, intensity of development, mix of uses, and market served." (1.4.1)

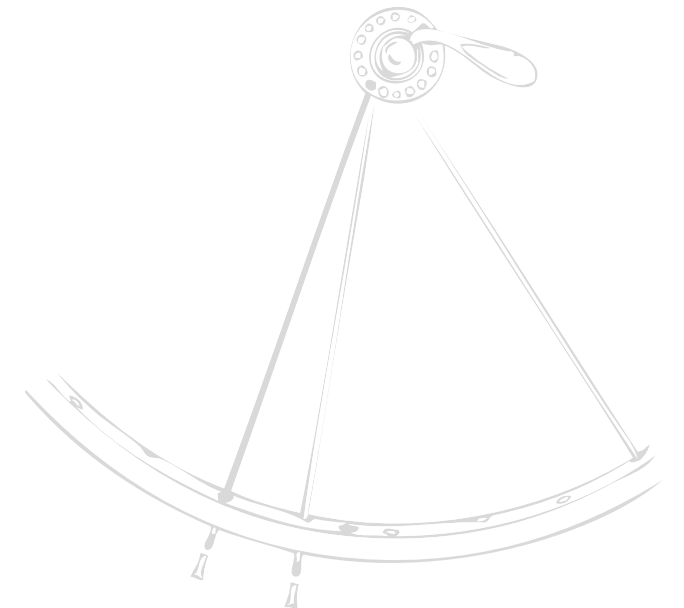
"Promote standards that help make commercial districts and corridors desirable, viable, and distinctly urban, including: diversity of activity, safety for pedestrians, access to desirable goods and amenities, attractive streetscape elements, density and variety of uses to encourage walking, and architectural elements to add interest at the pedestrian level." (1.4.2)

([www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-084730.pdf](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-084730.pdf))

<sup>ooo</sup> [www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@citycoordinator/documents/webcontent/convert\\_264841.pdf](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@citycoordinator/documents/webcontent/convert_264841.pdf)



(ABOVE) Looking northwest across the intersection of Lake St and Aldrich Ave in the Lyn-Lake area, which is one in a string of nodes along Lake St. The awnings along the roofline facing south are to minimize solar heat gain in the summer, but allow in low-angle sun in the winter. (Image used with permission from the BKV Group, [www.bkvgroup.com](http://www.bkvgroup.com))

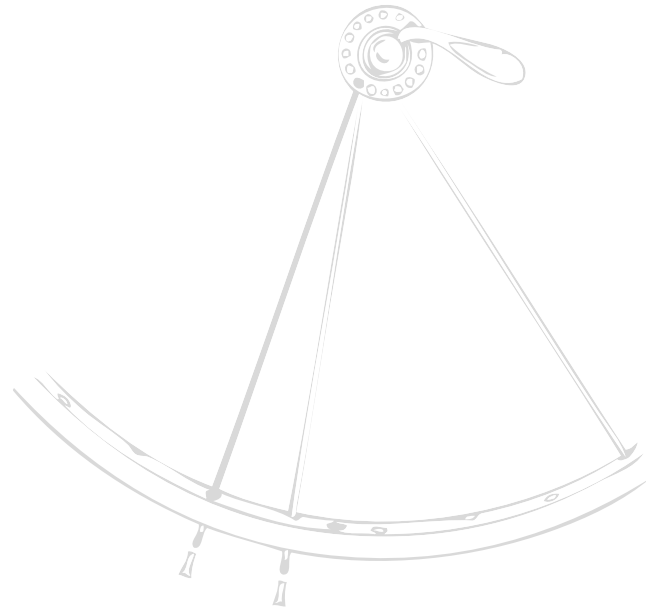


## Precedent : parking

In reviewing the recommendations of the Midtown Minneapolis Development Land Use & Development Plan, as well as discussions with the President of the Minneapolis Planning Commission<sup>o</sup>, it is realistic to assume that Hwy 35W will, sometime in the near future have a southbound exit ramp to Lake St. This is supported by local businesses because of their constant need to maintain customer flow through their enterprises, but this project presupposes that surface parking is not an attractive solution for Lake St and Nicollet. Similarly, most people have an aversion to traditional, grey concrete structured parking.

The solution then, is to look for examples of structured parking that responsibly address the street (that is, provide pedestrian amenities at the sidewalk, such as commercial business, or a more attractive facade). One example of this are the St. Anthony Mills Apartments and the Mill Quarter Municipal Parking Ramp.

This project, at 711 2nd Street South, in the Mill District near the Guthrie Theater, is a fully-automated, 324-space parking ramp with a restaurant, a brick facade, and is immediately adjacent (two sides of the structure) to an apartment development. This is an example where the parking is not tucked under a structure which creates an activity void at the street-level, but rather behind the development. Also, this ramp services both public users, and residents of the apartment building.



<sup>o</sup> David Motzenbecker, President of the Minneapolis City Planning Commission, interviews in Fall 2011 and Spring 2012.



**(ABOVE)** The eastern facade of the St. Anthony Mills Apartments is a five-story residential facade, with individual unit entrances. The south facade, facing Washington Ave, is mixed-use with the bottom story housing 4 local businesses including both retail and office uses.

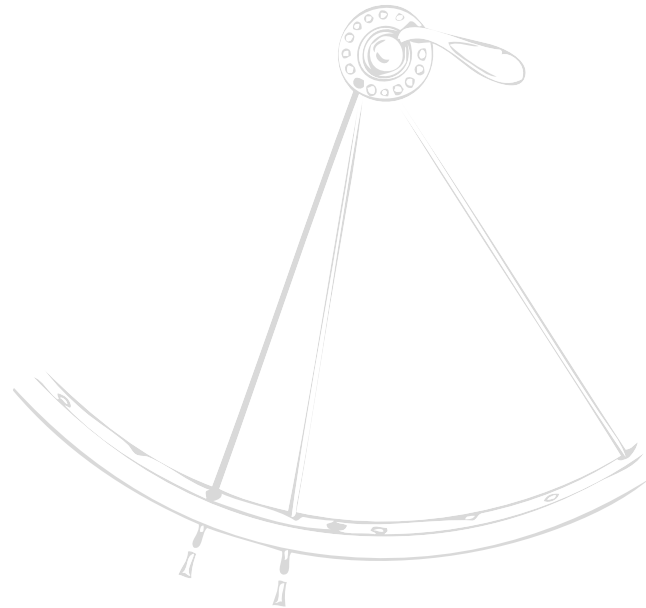
**(BELOW)** The north-facing facade of the building has the parking entrance, just a few blocks from the Guthrie Theater and the Mill City Museum. Also, on the building corner (L. side of the image) is a new, popular, restaurant.



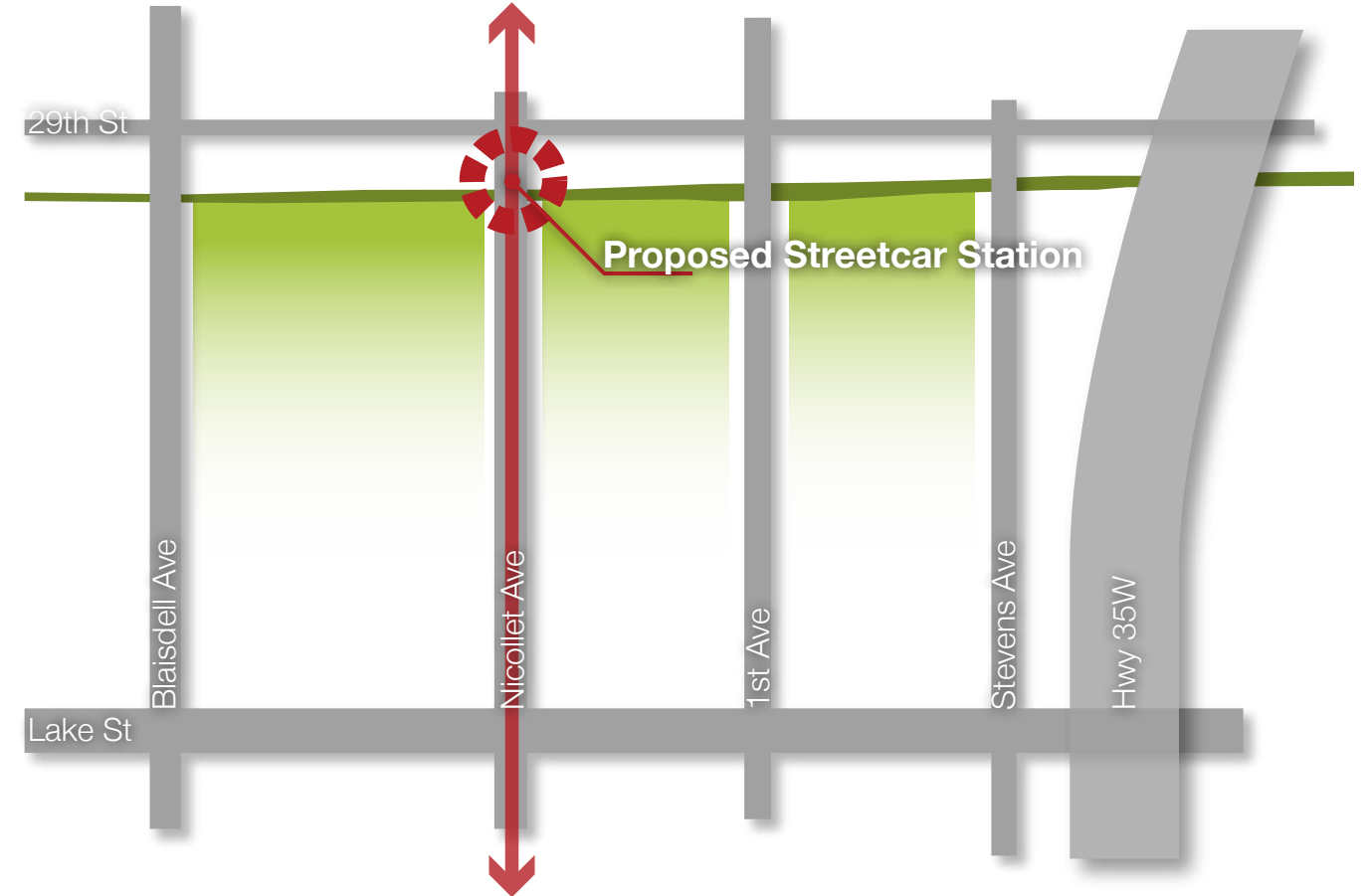
## More Circulation Opportunities

Beyond manual vertical circulation like that at the Olympic Sculpture Park (ramps and stairs), a major component of this project site is the proposed addition of a streetcar line that could service the Greenway, among other places. Because of this, there is a clear need for mechanical circulation as part of a future station design that could move people between the street grid and the Greenway. Luckily, there are some very good examples of stations in Minneapolis that demonstrate how a transit line can connect to other modes of transportation that are grade-separated.

The vertical circulation opportunities diagram on the opposite page shows the project site and the proposed streetcar line along Nicollet Ave. The examples that follow would be for the proposed streetcar station on Nicollet Ave, above the Midtown Greenway.



o groundtruthing is the process of verifying collected data to existing conditions on the ground.



**(ABOVE)** This diagram depicts the opportunities for mechanical and manual vertical circulation on the project site.

The red line represents the proposed streetcar line, extending south from downtown Minneapolis. The dashed circle represents the place where the street-grade streetcar line would pass 20 feet above the Midtown Greenway, where a stop could be installed that spans the vertical distance, including an elevator to move people between grades.

The green gradients represent areas that could incorporate paths or stairs that move from the grade of the Greenway,

up and toward Lake Street. With nearly 600 lateral feet from the Greenway to Lake Street, paths or sloped planes could be as little as 3.33% in a straight line, or less on a meandering path. Compared to 8% or more on the existing access ramps north of the Greenway, this would be relatively much easier, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.



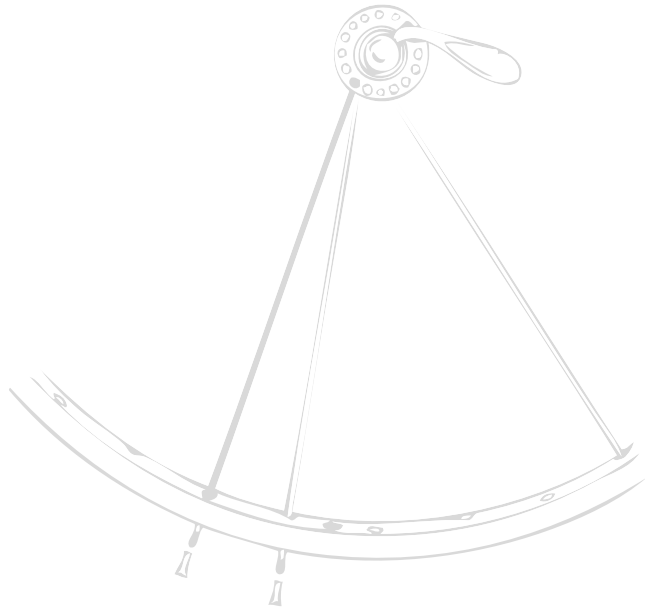


**(ABOVE)** The Franklin Ave LRT station is used as an example, because it spans the roadway beneath, connects to other transit services (note the Metro bus), and provides room for services under the track alignment. Given the potential streetcar stop above the Greenway at Nicollet (see the previous page), there could potentially be amenity space for bike parking, lockers, or showers in the station on the Greenway.

**(BELOW LEFT)** The BRT stop where the BRT buses traveling along 35W (the surface below, running diagonally through the frame) stop at 46th St (the road surface above). This example is used because of the glass architecture, the mechanical circulation, and that this connects to the pedestrian realm, much like the Franklin Ave LRT stop. (image from Metro Transit's website: metrotransit.com)



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# PROPOSAL

## Overview

This chapter outlines the design proposal for this project site.

As an aside, in the plan, section, and perspective renderings of the project design, the architecture is commonly represented as blank white shapes. This is to indicate what the potential building envelope could be, and strays from suggesting specific architecture. While architecture is clearly important for this site, the specific architectural design would be formed in iterations between developers and the public as part of a comprehensive public participation plan. Also, this is a landscape architecture / urban planning document, no more, no less.

This chapter includes:

- » Concepts in design development such as the three conceptual axes of connectivity and the concept of blending land use/zoning.
- » Process of how the site design was conceived. This section covers how the site design was conceptualized, and what the driving factors were in the formulation of the site design.
- » The Plan, including an annotated plan drawing with brief descriptions of each design element. This includes.
- » Sections describing vertical relationships across the site. These are important because of how buildings that are double-loaded address the Greenway and Lake St at different elevations.

- » Perspectives that illustrate the scale of the spaces that are proposed, and how these spaces create a place at the project site.

*"The greenway area is distinctive in its proximity to exciting and convenient commercial districts, in the availability of outstanding transportation options, and in the presence of the Midtown Greenway amenity itself. Over time it will grow as a place where the natural and built environments work together, where mixed-use development patterns of varying intensity are complemented by open space and traditional urban neighborhoods. New private development, and enhancement of the public landscape, will add to its commercial, residential and recreational assets, and strengthen its sustainability and connectedness."*

*-Midtown Minneapolis Land Use & Development Plan, Vision and Principals of Development*

## Axes of Connection & Land Use Concepts

This section is meant to outline the underlying concepts of design that were used to formulate this design proposal. It is important to include these aspects of design because they underpin many of the successive design and planning decisions that are implemented on this site. As such, it is important to understand the process to fully appreciate the product. That is, this will hopefully shed some light as to why some decisions were made regarding this site as they pertain to space and land use.



## Axes of Circulation

When considering the connection needs of this site and putting it into practise, they represent the basic axes of any three-dimensional space: X, Y, and Z.

In addition to being a reminder that all designs and policies are applied in a complicated and dynamic world, this analogy creates a simple abstraction with which to understand the basic connection needs of the project site. Too often planners and landscape architects, alike, execute their ideas without fully understanding the impacts on the site in question.

For example, “designing in plan” to a landscape architect means designing from above, not understanding the vertical dimension, or the detail of what the design. Similarly, urban planners will sometimes use only narrative plans dictate ideas, which can lead to misguided zoning codes that, in application, are a disservice to the public (the Kmart minimum parking requirement and setback, for example).

In this diagram, “X” along Lake Street refers to the connection to and compliment of the other commercial nodes along the Lake St corridor. “Y” represents the physical reopening of Nicollet Ave, as well as the large-scale re-connection of downtown Minneapolis to neighborhoods south of the project site. Finally, “Z” represents the need for a more meaningful vertical and lateral connection from the Greenway to Lake St and the rest of the street-grid.

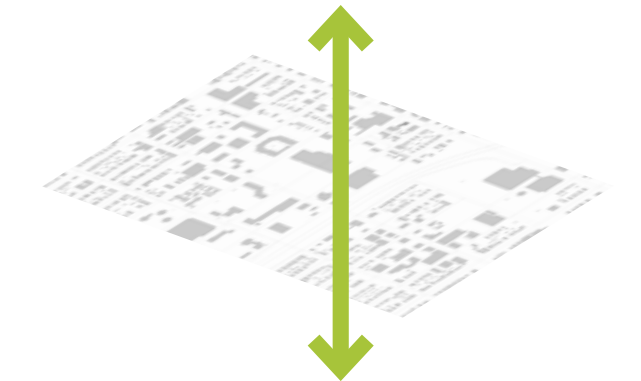
### X : Lake St



### Y : Nicollet Ave



### Z : The Greenway



## Conceptual Blending of Land Use

This page displays the contrast between current land use on the project site and the concept of future land use.

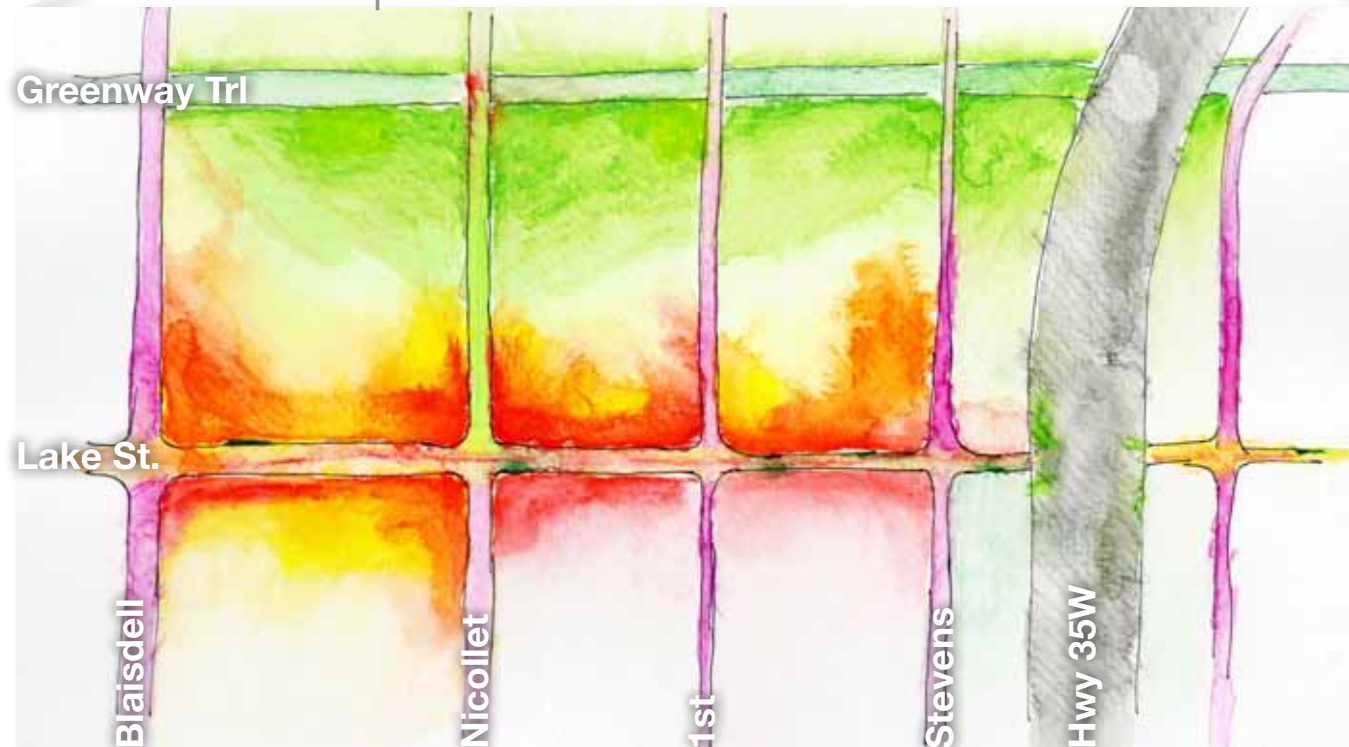
As evidenced by the current land use map (RIGHT), land use is currently delineated by parcel bounds, and is predominantly a single use on each parcel. In contrast (BELOW), the concept for land use on the project site going forward should be much more blended.

The basic idea is to set up a gradient of land use type and

Current Land Use ([www.minneapolismn.gov/zoning/maps/zoning\\_maps\\_plate\\_\[18, 20, 24, 25\]](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/zoning/maps/zoning_maps_plate_[18, 20, 24, 25]))



## Conceptual Land Use






intensity between Lake Street and the Midtown Greenway.

The Greenway side of this gradient should have a more “green” focus. That is, there should be more park or open space adjacent to the Greenway so users can stop at destinations, and recreate by other means on the Greenway beyond simply using the corridor trail. Opening the Greenway side in this way would also help lend a sense of legible place to this site, as discussed in previous sections. Also, development on the north side should be physically shorter to minimize shadowing on the Greenway, this allows for a safer space with more light, and would help keep the trail clear of moisture and snow in all seasons.

On the south side, adjacent to Lake Street, land use should be much more dense, and the building facades should be much closer to the sidewalk than on the north side of the site land use gradient. Also, this density should be concentrated at the street intersections. This side would likely house much more commercial and office space, though some space for office and commercial use is also encouraged on the Greenway.

(BELOW) This legend to the conceptual land use diagram on the opposite page is meant to help inform the use of space, but these colors are not meant to be exclusive of other uses.

-  Commercial
-  Residential
-  Greenway Residential

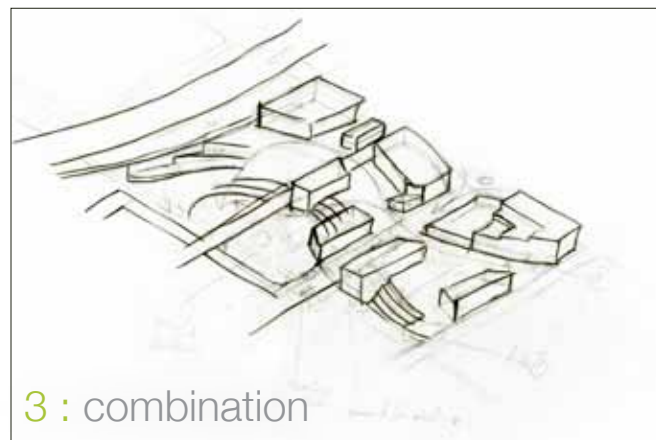
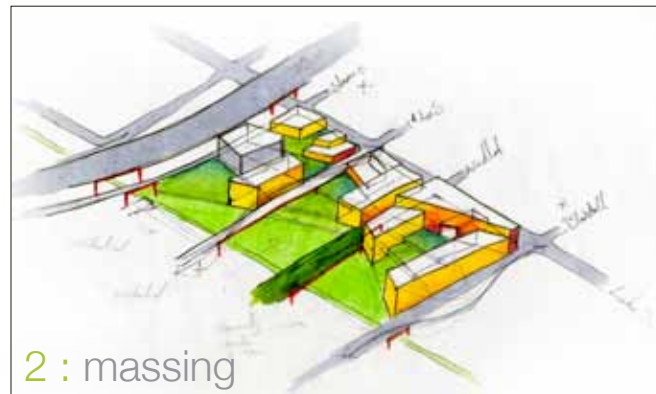
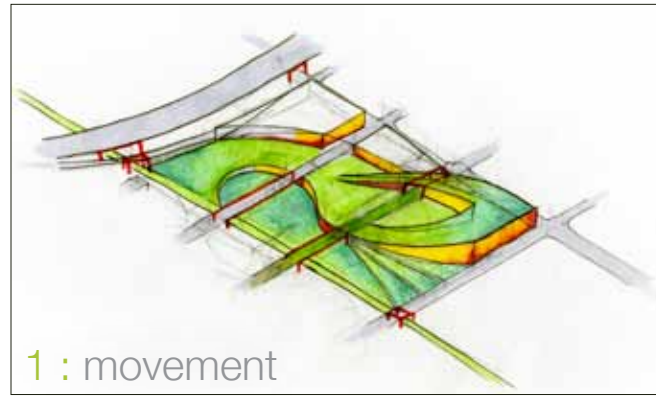
## Building Envelope & Open Space Process

The process sketches on these two pages are intended to illustrate the method by which the design for this project site was formulated. Done in conjunction, the building envelope and open space sketches were used in concert to find the optimal site design for this project.

### Building Envelope Process

These three sketches illustrate progressive iterations of the site design. To capture the vertical dimension of the site, these were done in axonometric perspective looking down and to the southeast to maintain a view of the Greenway. Also, the colors of these drawings correspond to the land use colors in the diagram on page 44, where red is commercial, yellows are residential, and green is open space.

The first sketch explores what is possible by manipulating the ground plane to achieve vertical circulation across the site in a curvilinear fashion. The second sketch addresses where building facades should face the street, and what the resultant opportunities for open space are on the interior of the blocks. Finally, the third sketch combines the best attributes of the previous sketches: the curvilinear forms addressing the Greenway, and the building masses that appropriately address the streets running through the site.



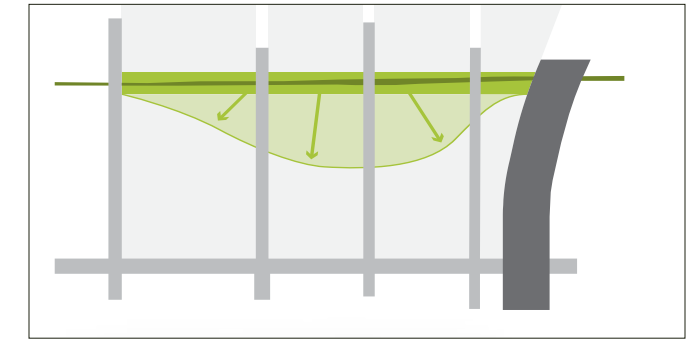
### Open space process

These diagrams outline the process that was used to design the block and building envelope layout for the project site. These diagrams are in plan (top-down) view, and the green horizontal line represents the Greenway, the grey horizontal line represents Lake St, the vertical lines represent the avenues, and the darker grey curved line represents Highway 35W.

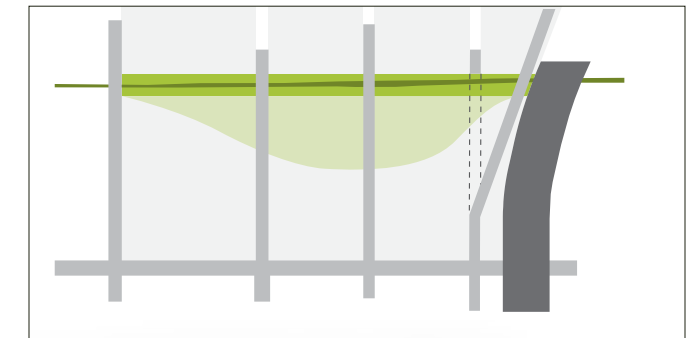
Step one would be to open the Greenway. This would allow more solar access, increase user's perceptions of safety, create the spatial opportunity to make a "place" in this project site on the Greenway, and minimize shading on the Greenway.

Step two involves eliminating Stevens Ave through the project site (see justifications on pages 52 and 53), and create the opportunity for an exit ramp for southbound traffic from 35W onto Lake St, and into this new commercial and residential node.

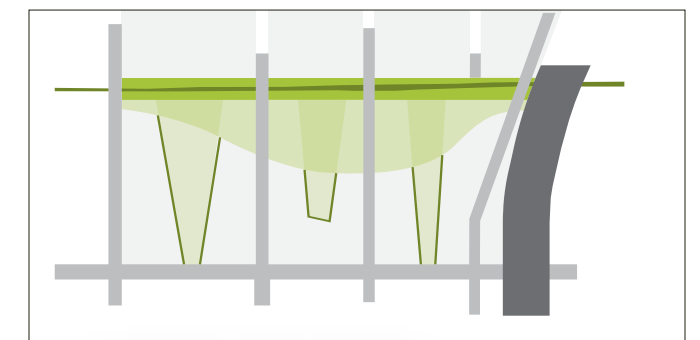
Step three is to open the blocks to create more connective space between Lake St and the Greenway. This also gives an impression of what the building footprints should fit within.



1 : opening the Greenway

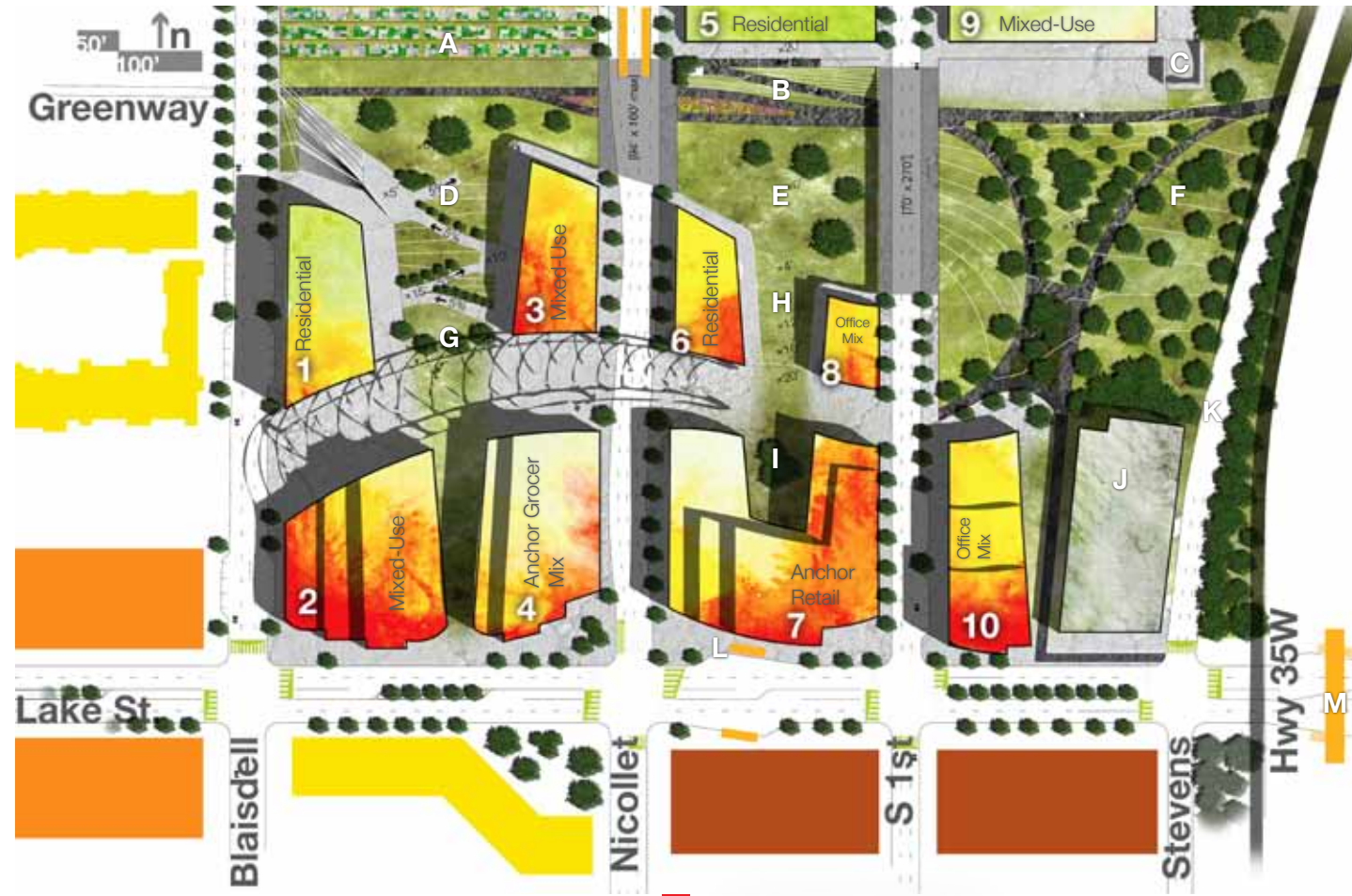


2 : connecting the highway



3 : opening the blocks

# The Plan



In this plan of the overall site design, the letters represent site design elements, while numbers represent the building envelopes of the site design and correspond to the table on the following page. At a few locations there are markers to indicate slope and elevations. The following pages include descriptions of the 13 design elements implemented on the site (A-M). For a larger, higher-resolution plan, please visit: [www.flickr.com/photos/prescottdesign/sets](http://www.flickr.com/photos/prescottdesign/sets)

- commercial mixed-use
- high density residential & commercial
- residential & commercial mixed-use
- transit stops or stations
- high-density residential
- Greenway residentail & open space
- parking

- A:** Community garden space that has the capacity for 96 20'x20' plots. This block is meant to be the “Food Block” with an anchor grocery retail space, a venue for a Farmer’s Market, and Community Garden, all in the same block. The goal with this programming is to take advantage of proximity, much like mall business owners rely on the effects of agglomeration to stimulate business.
- B:** Bike and pedestrian ramp that would connect the Pedestrian Promenade (C) and the streetcar stop (orange bars the left of residential building #5) to the Greenway. As seen in the rendering on PAGE XX, this would be a ramp at a 5% slope to comply with ADA accessibility, with green space on either side of the path.
- C:** Overlook and Pedestrian Promenade running between the residential buildings and the Greenway. The overlook at this location takes its inspiration from the 10th Ave Square street overlook on the Highline in New York, NY ([www.thehighline.org/galleries/images/10th-avenue-square](http://www.thehighline.org/galleries/images/10th-avenue-square)). The facade of this building could be much like the facade of the St. Anthony Mills Apartments, with individual unit access to the street grade.
- D:** Open/green ramps space. As pictured on PAGE

- XX,** this space takes its inspiration from the ramps of the Olympic Sculpture Park (see pages 32 and 33). This would be a large open space that would gracefully connect the Greenway grade and the surface grade.
- E:** The Great Lawn. Space similar to this, like the Kix soccer field a few blocks east of highway 35W on the Greenway are extremely effective, in terms of user experience, at creating legible spaces. This could be flexible space to be further programmed, or it could remain a large open green space for recreation, similar to the open greens in Central, or Gold Medal Parks.
- F:** The Dog Park. This space, the Farmer’s Market space (G), and the Community Garden (A) all share the common thread that these program elements are social tools, in addition to being amenities that urban residents might enjoy. The Dog Park would follow the boundary of the path, with fencing, adjoin to the back of the structured parking building to the south (J), and boarder the fenced edge of the 35W southbound exit ramp (K) to the east. Given that this space is not immediately adjacent to residential units, and is bordered on two sides by non-active use, it creates a great opportunity for a park of this nature.
- G:** Farmer’s Market venue / flex space / pedestrian avenue. The trellis pattern over this pedestrian avenue

The Numbers

Building	Greenway Footprint (sf)		Floors of Residential		Floors of Commercial		Floors of Office		Units (900 sf/unit, adj)	Total Commercial (sf)	Total Office (sf)
	Greenway	Street Grade+	Greenway	Street Grade+	Greenway	Street Grade+	Greenway	Street Grade+			
1		20464		6					116	0	
2		34984		4		1			132	34984	
3	5659	17147		4	1	1			65	22806	
4		31946		3		2			91	63891	
5		18167		4					69		
6	3990	12091	1	4					49		
7		49865		5		3			235	149596	
8	3168	6336		2				1	12		9504
9	19774	19774	0.7	2.7	0.3	2.3			63	51413	
10		22551		3					64		45101

**896 units**   **8% low-income**   **46 DU/AC**   **322,689 sf Commercial**   **54,605 sf Office**

here is meant to be similar to the trellis structure of Millennium Park in Chicago to create the experience of space. This space would stretch from Blaisdell Ave on the west, over the new streetcar line along Nicollet, and to the interior of the following block. The buildings adjacent to this amenity could front their facades with storefronts or sidewalk cafés. This space would also help to create a safe and graceful bike and pedestrian connection between the avenues, the interior of these blocks, and the Greenway.

**H:** The Stepped Green. This space also takes its inspiration from the Olympic Sculpture Park, but from a different section (see inset on page 33). This green space, using grade separation such as retaining walls and steps, would create discrete outdoor “rooms” that residents or visitors could enjoy. As conceptualized here, the spaces here could be considered on a gradient of public-to-private space.

For example, some residential developments have the interior of their block open to the street, but elevated a few feet (accessed by stairs or ramps, sometimes with a gate) to create the distinction of a semi-private space. A place that is open, but doesn't feel like it belongs to the sidewalk. A similar difference between the street grid and/or the Greenway could be implemented here.

**I:** Interior green space. This park space could, potentially be very private for the residents or customers of the adjacent building.

**J:** The parking ramp. The Midtown Minneapolis Land Use & Development Plan simultaneously recommends a better connection to 35W to stimulate local business, and a decrease in traffic speed and volume of traffic on

Lake St to enhance safety and encourage walking. One way to facilitate those conflicting recommendations is to capture automobile business traffic before it gets onto Lake St.

This building takes its inspiration from the Mill Quarter Public Parking Ramp (see pages 36 and 37). This structure could be used by residents for the project site, as well as visitors and shoppers. Also, this structure could be fronted on Lake St by commercial retail development.

**K:** The Highway 35W southbound exit ramp. This ramp would be 3-lanes wide to accommodate drivers turning into the parking ramp, and those turning right or left at the intersection. This ramp would occupy the intersection that is currently being used by Stevens Ave to the north.

Although eliminating roads segments is a potentially contentious issue that would need to be addressed through a public participation process, this proposal is justified in five ways.

First, Stevens carries the lowest volume of traffic, measured as average daily trips (ADT) than any adjacent avenue. Where 1st Ave S sees over 4,000 ADT, Stevens experiences less than 1,000 ADT (City of Minneapolis 2010 Travel Demand Management Plan, [www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@publicworks/documents/webcontent/convert\\_264155.pdf](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@publicworks/documents/webcontent/convert_264155.pdf)).

Second, with the increase in accessibility that reopening Nicollet Ave would allow, the potential demand, or congestion created by closing Stevens between Lake St and 29th St could be shifted to Nicollet.

Third, it eliminates the traffic conflict of drivers merging onto a city street directly from a highway. An example of this can be found at the 35/36th St exit from Highway 35W southbound. It is a bottleneck, and an intersection with a high rate of accidents.

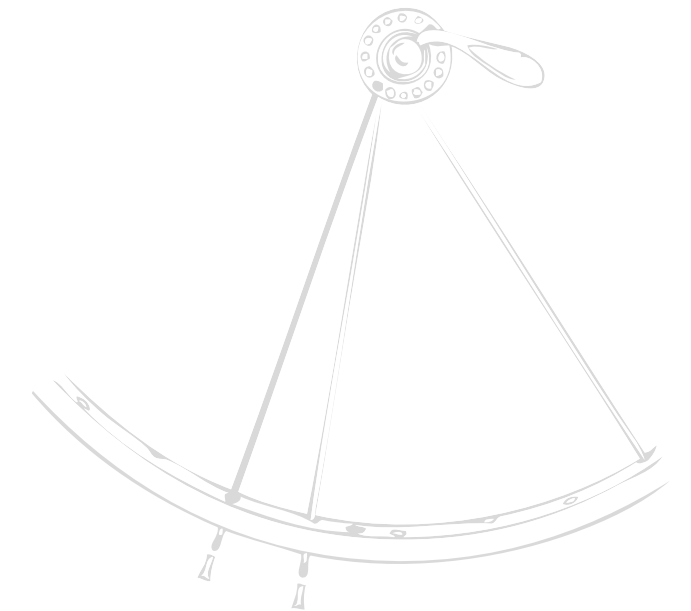
Fourth, by eliminating Stevens over the Greenway, the need to maintain and repair the bridge is no longer an issue. Most of the street bridges that span the Greenway were constructed in the 1920's or before, and are considered to have an 80-100 year life-span. That time is coming up quickly, if not already past, and the cost to replace a bridge can be difficult to come up with in a recession economy.

Finally, the elimination of the southern leg of the intersection at 29th and Stevens creates the opportunity to book-end the Pedestrian Promenade with the Greenway Overlook (C), opposite the streetcar stop at Nicollet Ave and the Greenway.

**L:** The transit stops proposed at this project site could be a test-piece as a new way to think about bus stops. These stops, first tested in Denver, CO, allow the bus to pull completely out of the lane of traffic, and any bike lanes, to load passengers. This seems like a pertinent location to try bus-stop curb-reliefs, considering that this location regularly has close to 2,000 boardings per day (see page 17) on one of the busiest streets in the city.

**M:** This would be the site of a potential BRT station on Highway 35W over Lake St. This station would have vertical circulation, similar to the other Metro transit stations cited on previous pages. This station would be in the center of traffic on the highway, similar to the

stop on 46th St S, and would completely span Lake St above and below. There could be an opportunity here for station amenities such as news and magazine shops or a cafe on both the Lake St level and the highway deck in an enclosed station. Also, with the inclusion of mechanical vertical circulation, transit users would no longer have to rely on the crumbling concrete stairs that are the only current means to access the Metro Transit stops on the north and southbound sides of 35W.



## Section Progression : West to East

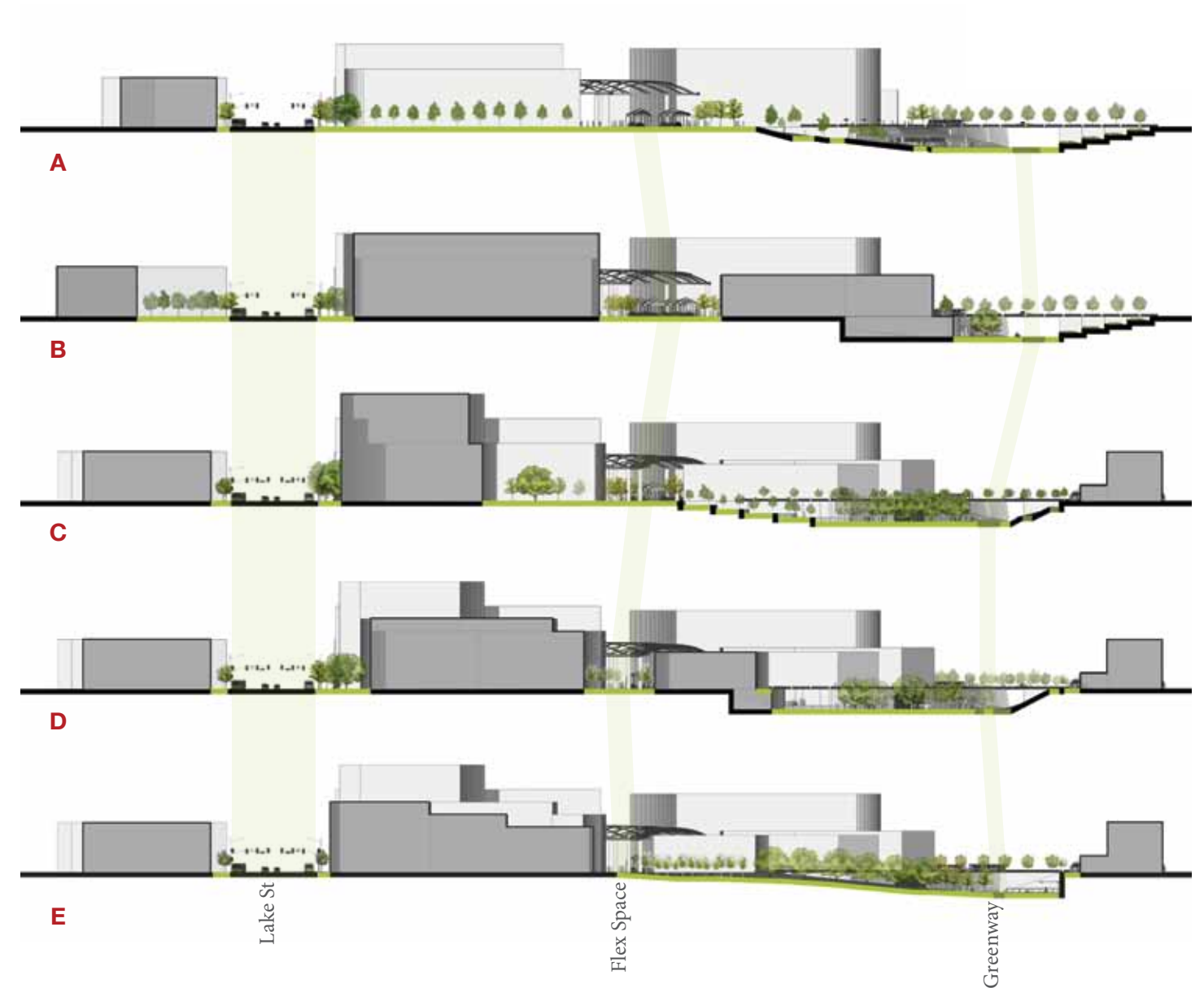
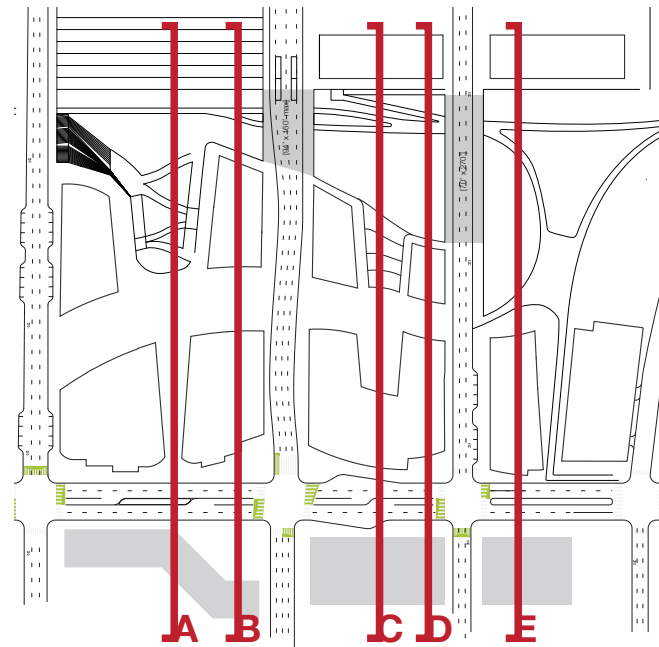
The sections on the opposite page display cross-sections of the site (see key below, right). These sections are meant to illustrate 3 things.

First, the way that various buildings (shaded with a darker grey for those that the cross-section is cutting through) address the elevations of both the street grid and the Greenway. In section B for example, the building on the right has floor elevations at both the street grid level (to the left, or the building's south side), as well as on the Greenway (to the right, or the building's north side). These facades could be populated with either residential development or commercial space. The basic idea of this orientation is to maintain "eyes on the street". This term, coined by Jane Jacobs, refers to the idea of natural surveillance which states that having more people passively observing a place will make it safer for all. For example, imagine sharing an outdoor space with a dangerous person in a dark alley versus a well-lit and busy public square. That is the effect of "eyes on the street". A mix of uses that includes business and residents ensures that there will be people and activity to maintain that natural observation both day (business activity) and night (residential activity).

Second, these sections are meant to illustrate the openness of the Greenway itself. Notice how the grade gradually slopes or steps from the Greenway south (to the left) towards Lake St. Not by coincidence, the range of southerly aspects (west-south-west to east-south-east) are the direction that all of our sunlight comes from in the Northern Hemisphere. So, by opening the Greenway on the southern side, not only

is there a better connection to Lake St across grade ala Olympic Park, but there is also much more solar exposure. This also enhances the perception of safety, but also helps to keep the trail clear of water and snow or ice.

Lastly, these sections are meant to demonstrate the meandering nature of the Greenway and the Flex Space versus Lake St. Generally speaking, a busy, meandering street is more attractive to pedestrians (think of urban European villages), which straight predictable corridors are preferred by motorists.



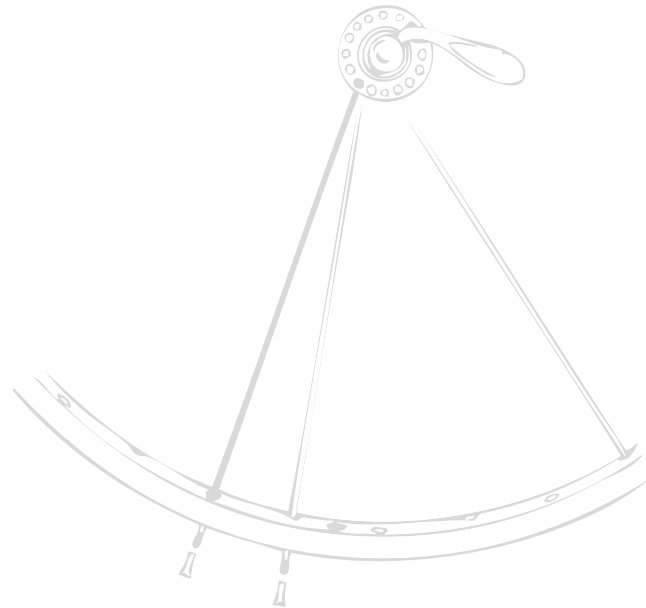


## Perspectives

The following three perspectives are meant to inform how these spaces would actually look and feel to users on the ground. Granted these are artistic interpretations, and in some way they are meant to inspire public conversation about what is possible, what is feasible, and what is desirable at this project site.

Each of them focus on a slightly different area of the Greenway development. The first one is meant to display how a station area might look when linked to an amenity such as the Greenway. The second, to show the attractive nature of community garden space adjacent to the Greenway, and the ramps leading up to the Farmer's Market. Finally, the third is a conceptual rendering of how a bike-share station could attract people to businesses, and create station space themselves along the Greenway.

Also, each of the images has an associated key graphic that is meant to illustrate the location and aspect of each perspective. The point of the arrow is at the point where the viewer would be standing, and indicates the direction of view.



## Streetcar Station & The Great Lawn



**(ABOVE)** Note the vertical circulation of the blue glass elevator. The concrete facade below Nicollet Ave could be populated with coffee shops, a lounge area for Metro Transit workers, or indoor bike parking. To the right, extending behind the man in the hat and the tree would be the ramp connecting up to the station area. The terraces beyond Nicollet, visible under the bridge are the community garden plots, stepping up from the elevation of the Greenway. Finally, the foreground is the area of The Great Lawn.

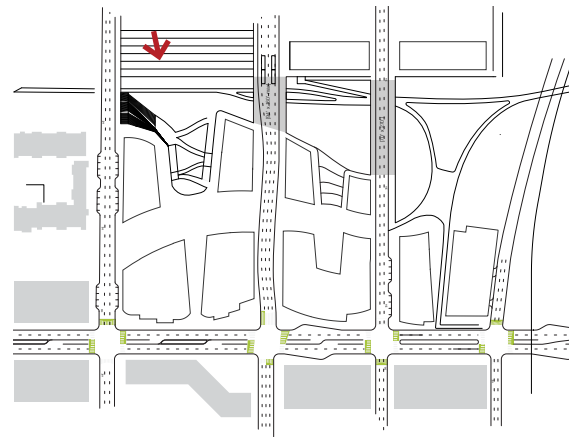


## Community Gardens & the Ramp Open Space



**(ABOVE)** This perspective shows the community garden plots in the foreground, an extension of The Great Lawn, and terraces/steps from the ramp section and street grid in the foreground, and the Farmer's Market/Flex Space trellis structure in the background.

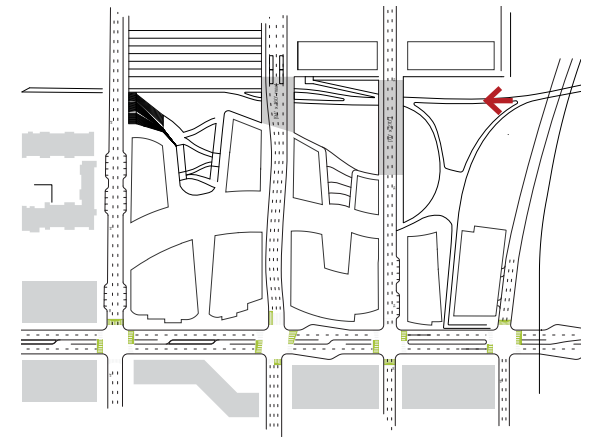
The intention of this image is to show the variety of uses that the Food Block could facilitate. While there is space for food production and sale, there is also ample space for recreation and place-making. It is feasible that the wide-open green space pictured here could be programmed for other uses that would better fit the community, and that information would be gleaned and understood through a comprehensive community input process. However, this clearly illustrates the vast amount of space that could be considered if only a 300 foot set back and a sea of surface parking were re-configured to address Lake St.



## Bike Share Station



**(ABOVE)** This conceptual perspective shows how there could be relief along the corridor on both sides to create pocket parks (very small parks), plazas, or small gathering spaces along the Greenway. Additionally, these small spaces could be paired with complimentary programming, such as bike-share stations and business storefronts.



# CONCLUSION

## Summary of Elements

In summary, this place has the opportunity to be as good, as vibrant, and as successful as any of the other commercial and urban residential nodes along Lake St. Indeed, considering the massive parking lot (see: blank urban canvas), this has the potential to be much, much better.

While this proposal has some specific recommendations, it is not meant to be definitive or discrete. For example, if the public is against a dog park, there's no reason why a good public input process can't identify other ways in which their community would like to program or engineer their social spaces. The real points to not are the larger themes and ideas.

First, this place needs more people to truly be a livable community. That is, more people closer to some of the basic amenities that already exist on the site: commercial retail and a grocer. In a place that sees as much traffic as this does, there's no reason why there shouldn't be residential space on the project site (where currently there is none)

Next, a lot can be done with a little shuffling. Not everyone is excited about Kmart as a retailer, but they do fill a market niche here, and their business is doing well. Also, their structure is nearing the end of its intended service life, so why not move south and address the street like a proper urban retailer. Look at the downtown Target, for example.

This "shuffle" creates amazing opportunity for a scale of open space that is unheard of on the Greenway. Where else could the city find 7-10 acres of land to work

with? There would likely need to be public-private partnerships between developers and the Minneapolis Parks & Recreation Board, the Midtown Greenway Coalition and others, but it could be an extremely fruitful relationship for all parties involved, the larger public of the City of Minneapolis, and our growing tourism industry.

Address and connect the Greenway. This trail is the new urban highway, and it can create as much if not more customer traffic than any other road or connection. Every business on the Greenway is doing well, and I've heard from dozens of people that they would love to live adjacent to this awesome public amenity. Furthermore, there is a clear need to keep "eyes on the street" around the clock. This would have multiplicative positive effects for users and residents, alike. Businesses on Lake Street could always use better connection, and this connection, to make a commercial node that encompasses the Greenway instead of turning its back on it could create a commercial node unlike any other in the city, or even in the country.

Finally, if nothing else, reopen Nicollet. It is a popular agenda item, it speaks to the history, as well as the future of Minneapolis, especially as a streetcar corridor. It is difficult to find anyone in the City of Minneapolis who would oppose such a move. Furthermore, this deceptively simple move could serve as a catalyst for change on this block. That is, if Nicollet is reopened, that would instigate change for Kmart, wherein the site layout would change, which would address the parking issue, and so-on. In short, Nicollet Ave is the most pressing and most practical issue for this project site.

## The Future

In real terms, what are the first steps? Site control. Currently, the site is owned (99-year lease) by a capital investment company in New York City. According to Council Member Lilligren, there have been discussions with the family who comprise the board of trustees for this particular investment, and it sounds like the city is close to having the land move into the hands of a developer who is willing to work with the City and the site, or back into the hands of the City itself (though the former is more likely). According to a timeline being used by the City, the issue of site control may be handled by the end of the year, and invitational stakeholder meetings are tentatively scheduled to start in January.

The further-out predictions become, the more inaccurate they are however. Into next year, it is unclear how long this initial round of input will take, or how quickly the City and any associated developers are going to move through this project. Beyond site control and a potential public-private partnership, CM Lilligren made it very clear that any potential change to the site would be the result of a comprehensive public involvement / public input process. An interview with Mr. Lilligren on this topic can be found at the Streets. MN Podcast #7 ([www.streets.mn/2012/08/22/streets-mn-podcast-7-re-opening-lake-street-with-robert-lilligren](http://www.streets.mn/2012/08/22/streets-mn-podcast-7-re-opening-lake-street-with-robert-lilligren)).

So as not to get too far ahead of ourselves, remember that currently, nothing is happening on this site, and nothing about this site has changed significantly since Nicollet Ave on this block was demolished in the 1970's, and Kmart was installed. However, there does

seem to be a groundswell of momentum starting to take shape around this project. With any luck, this exchange of land for the site will prove successful for the City, the developer, and the general public, but only time will tell.



# LITERATURE

## Overview

While most of the information germane to the statements and arguments presented in the text narrative are cited in-line, the baseline knowledge needed for this project is extensive. Provided here is a list of the literature that was reviewed in the formulation of this project. Some of it is pertinent only for the project site, but much of it can also be applied elsewhere, or lend a better understanding of urban design or urban policy in general. As such, this list is meant to be a resource of literature for those engaged in similar pursuits, or those who simply want to start conceptualizing their own urban areas in new ways. Enjoy.

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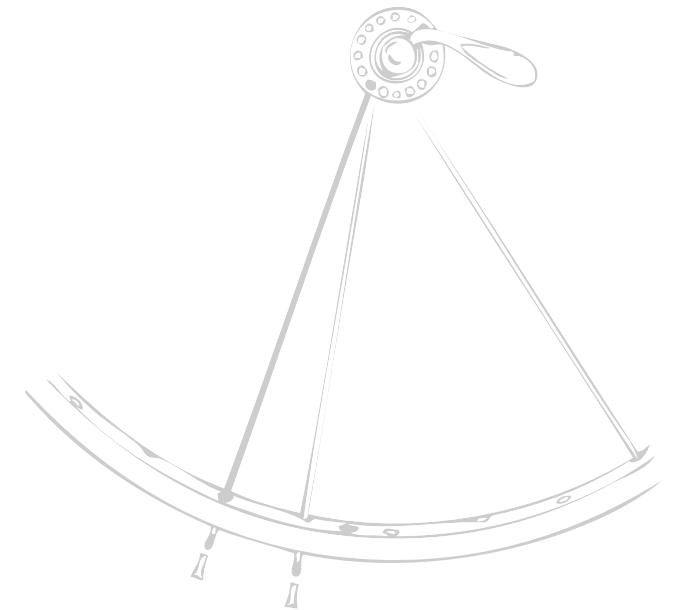
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