

Resilient Towerside: Exploring the Socioeconomic Landscape of Towerside and Looking Toward Its Future



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The project on which this presentation is based was completed in collaboration with Towerside Innovation District as part of a 2021–2022 Resilient Communities Project (RCP) partnership. RCP is a program at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) that connects University faculty and students with Minnesota communities to address strategic projects that advance local resilience, equity, and sustainability.

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Resilient Communities Project

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Resilient Towerside

*Exploring the Socioeconomic Landscape of Towerside
and Looking Towards its Future*

Adam Brandt, Lila Franklin, & Ben Harrington

Faculty Advisor: Greg Lindsey

In Conjunction With CURA's Resilient Communities Project



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Agenda

1. Introduction, Process & Methods
2. **What are current perceptions of Towerside?**
3. **Where can Towerside expect future developments in the district and what do people who live/work/visit the district hope to see in the future?**
4. **What can the Towerside Board do to strategically position itself to capture future economic and community development opportunities?**
5. Time for questions and discussion



Introduction

History:

- Industrial era boom
- Late 20th century decline
- 21st century renewal



Towerside's model of 21st century re-development:

- District-scale (energy, water, transport) independent systems
- A 'complete' neighborhood
- Enhanced public spaces
- Economic growth - public/private partnerships



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Methods Used to Answer Key Questions

- **Community Survey**
 - Qualtrics based survey, flyers distributed to businesses and posted in public locations throughout Towerside
- **Parcel Analysis**
 - Estimated market value, age of building, owner-occupation status, and mapping
- **Employment Analysis**
 - LEHD On The Map Data, business Inventory, and employment estimates from D&B

Community Survey - Background



- Purpose: To try and better understand what people who live, work, play or pass through Towerside think of the area as it is now, and what potential Towerside has for the future

Asking **PREFERENCE** questions

Ex. What do you like best about Towerside?

Asking **VISION** questions

Ex. If you were to move to Towerside in 10 years, what new developments would draw you to the area?

Asking **BEHAVIOR** questions

Ex. How frequently do you engage in certain activities in Towerside?

- Drivers:
 - Community survey about Towerside has not been administered before
 - Opportunity to re-engage people after the pandemic
 - Value of inviting community members into a planning process that may affect their lives

Community Survey - Distribution

Received

96

survey
submissions
between
March 22nd
and
April 10th

**TOWERSIDE**
THE NEW PROGRESSIVE DISTRICT

Share your ideas for the future of this area!



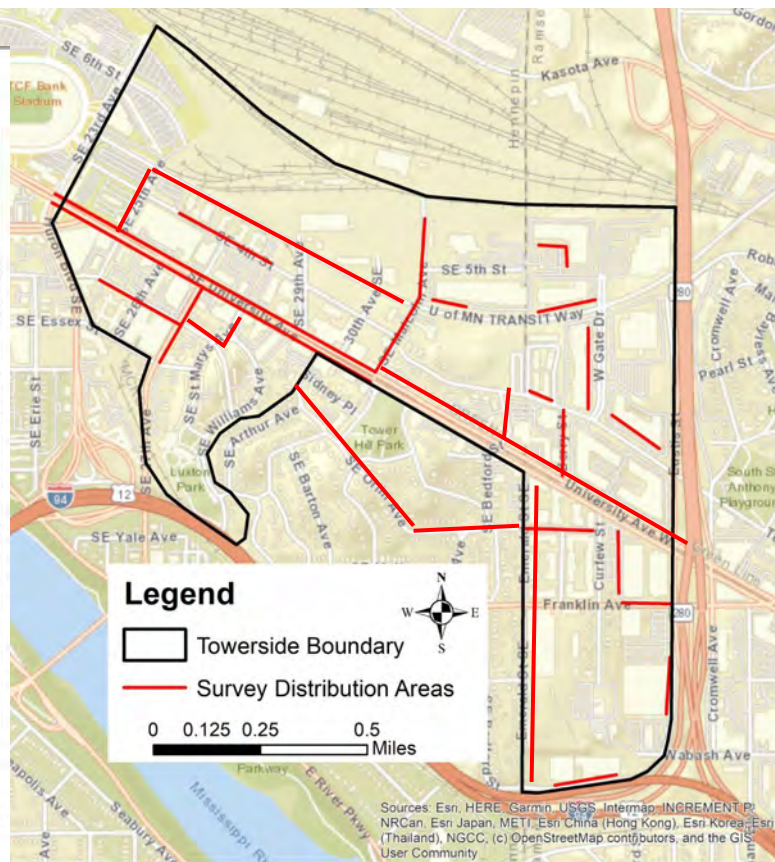
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MINNEAPOLIS | ST. PAUL
UNIVERSITY AVENUE
GREEN LINE LIGHT RAIL
HIGHWAY 94

Follow the QR code or link to access a 5-10 minute survey to share your preferences, concerns, and hopes for the area outlined. Somali and Spanish survey translations are available.

Complete and submit your survey by April 10th to be entered for a chance to win a \$50 Amazon or Malcolm Yards gift card (20 gift cards available!) Thank you!



https://umn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_37YIUZBBOaUccFE



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Survey Demographics

- In comparison to the general population of Towerside (per the 2020 census), our survey...
 - Oversampled White population and ages 20 to 29
 - Undersampled Black, Asian and Hispanic populations as well as the young and old populations

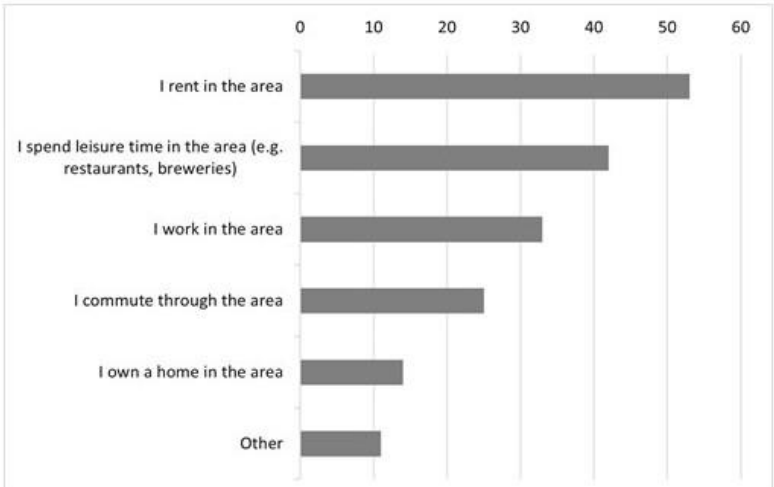
	White	Black	Asian	Native	Other	Hispanic
General Population	44%	19%	30%	0%	2%	4%
Survey Respondents	74%	4%	8%	1%	1%	1%

	0 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 79	80+
General Population	6%	7%	46%	15%	6%	9%	7%	3%	1%
Survey Respondents	0%	3%	55%	18%	9%	8%	5%	0%	1%

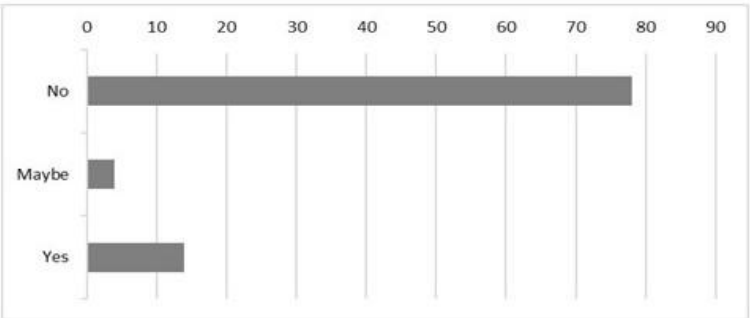


Relationship to Towerside

Which of the following best describes your relationship with the Towerside Innovation District?



Before taking this survey, were you familiar with the Towerside Innovation District?

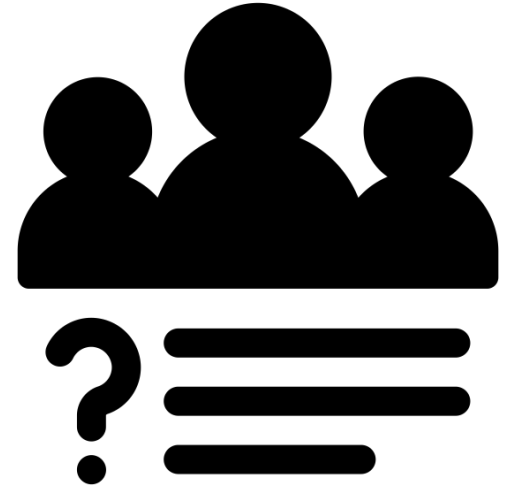


- Over half of the respondents (55%) identified as renters residing in or around Towerside
- 81% of respondents (78 people) were not familiar with the Towerside Innovation District concept before taking the survey



Survey Limitations

1. Self-Selection Bias
2. Engaging people of color
 - The survey failed to adequately sample these populations
 - Overcoming this may involve more targeted surveying in the future, across a wider area (including Prospect Park and other neighboring communities) collaboration with other community groups, tabling at community events

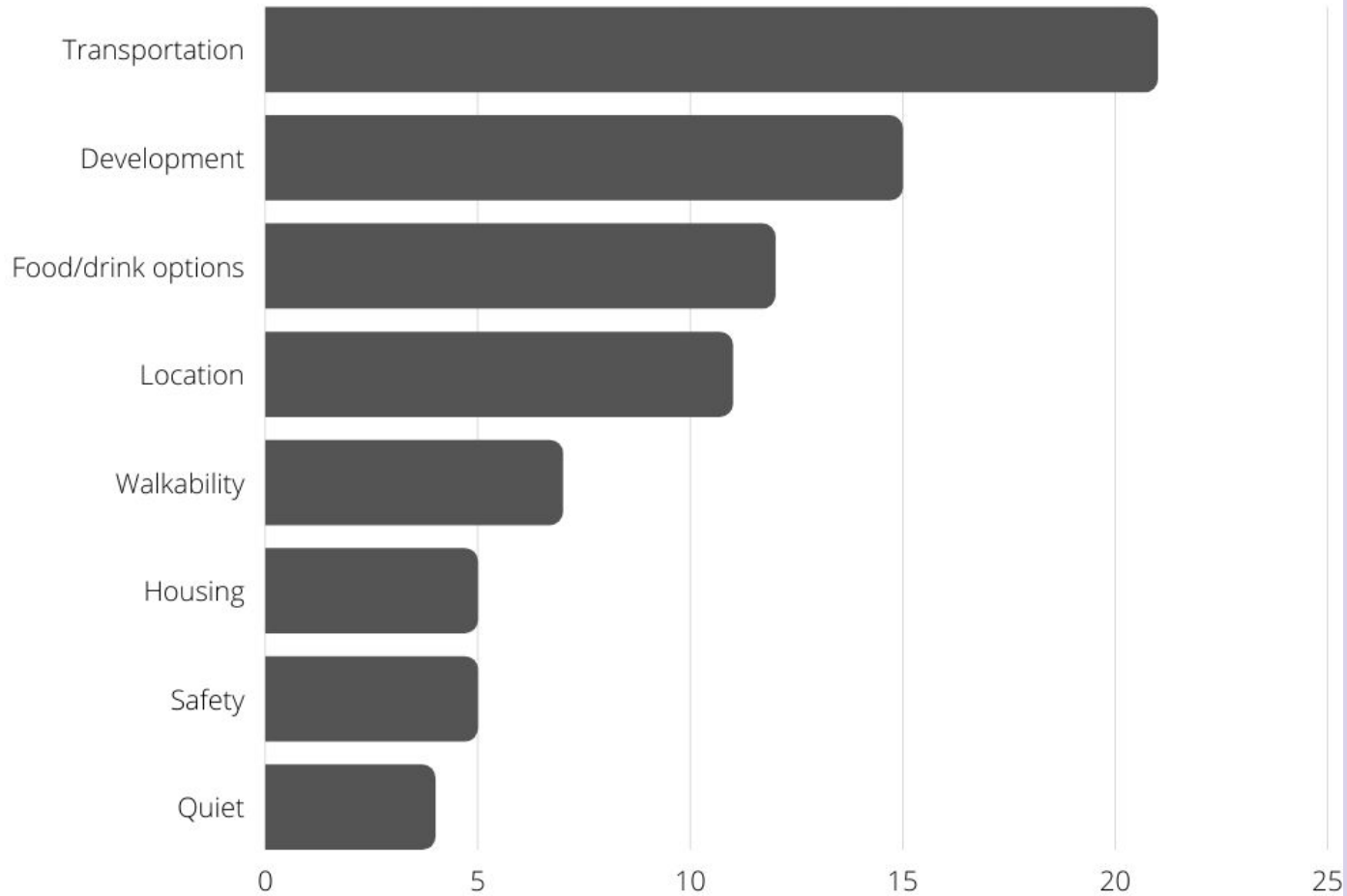


What are current perceptions of Towerside?



Respondent's Towerside Likes by Theme

■ # of responses



Open Ended Responses - Common Likes

1. Transportation

- Accessibility and convenience of the green line light rail stations throughout Towerside
- Bike infrastructure along the transitway

"Being able to take the green line to work everyday has been incredibly advantageous."

"Bike lane improvements have been great!"

"Commuting is super easy which is why we live in this area."



Source: [MPR News](#)

Source: [Star Tribune](#)



Open Ended Responses - Common Likes

2. Development

- Mixed use
- So much potential
- Small/local/creative businesses
- Revitalization
- Food/drink options

"I love the direction this area is taking. I have lived here for 7 years and the changes are incredibly encouraging!"



3. Location

- Proximity to UMN and both downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul

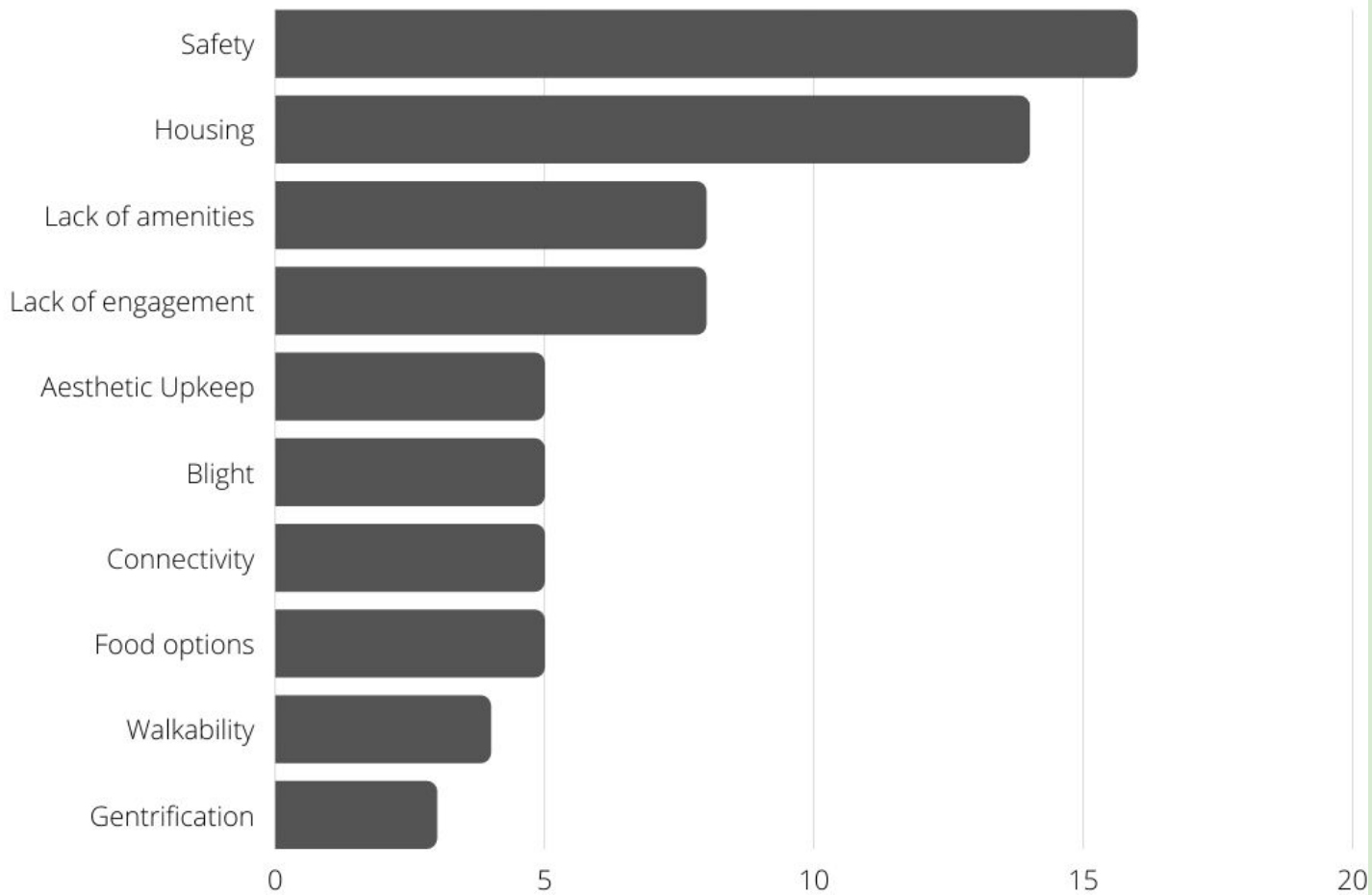
"Central location to the twin cities is a huge perk."



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Respondent's Towerside Concerns by Theme

■ # of responses



Open Ended Responses - Common Concerns

1. Safety

- Crime - burglaries, carjacking, vandalism, assault
- Roadways - not enough safe intersections for pedestrians to cross, need for safer bike infrastructure

"My greatest concern as a business leader is crime. We may relocate due to employee safety issues."



2. Housing

- Affordability - Luxury apartments, not enough affordable housing
- Options - need more missing middle housing



"I love the area and it has been hard to see people get priced out. Luxury apartments that block out the sky and trees are going to kill the feel of the neighborhood."



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Open Ended Responses - Common Concerns

3. Lack of amenities

- Accessible everyday shopping
- Services - barbershops
- Retail - boutiques, shopping, small businesses

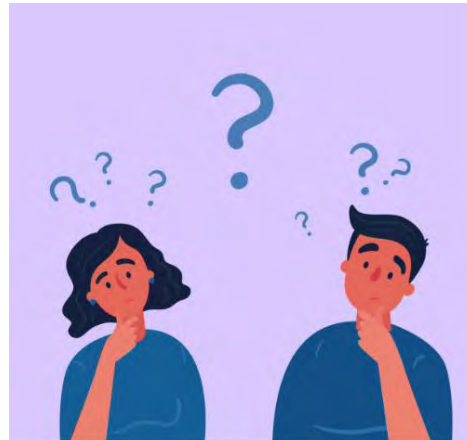
"Development of multi-family and high density housing has taken place, but the amenities nearby haven't kept pace with it."



Source: smallbiztrends.com

4. Lack of engagement

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Area Vision



Source: istock.com

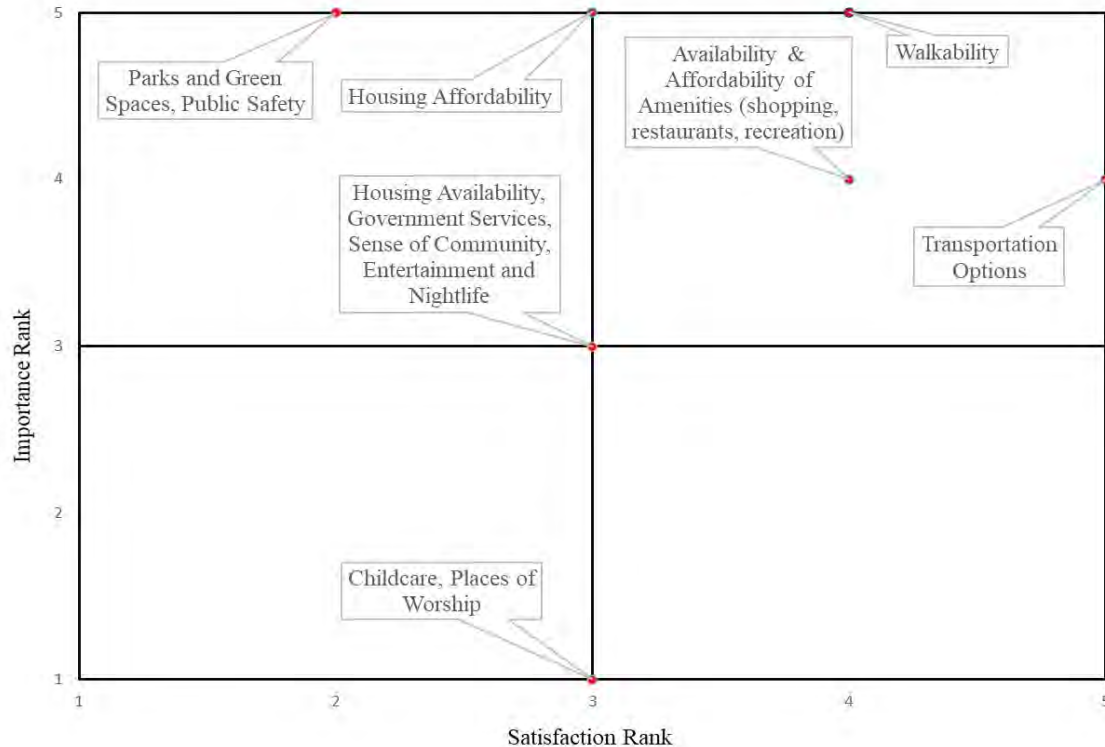
"It needs a clearer vision. I don't think the community really understands what it is about."

"Towerside has never tried to engage with residents north of university."



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Satisfaction & Importance Questions

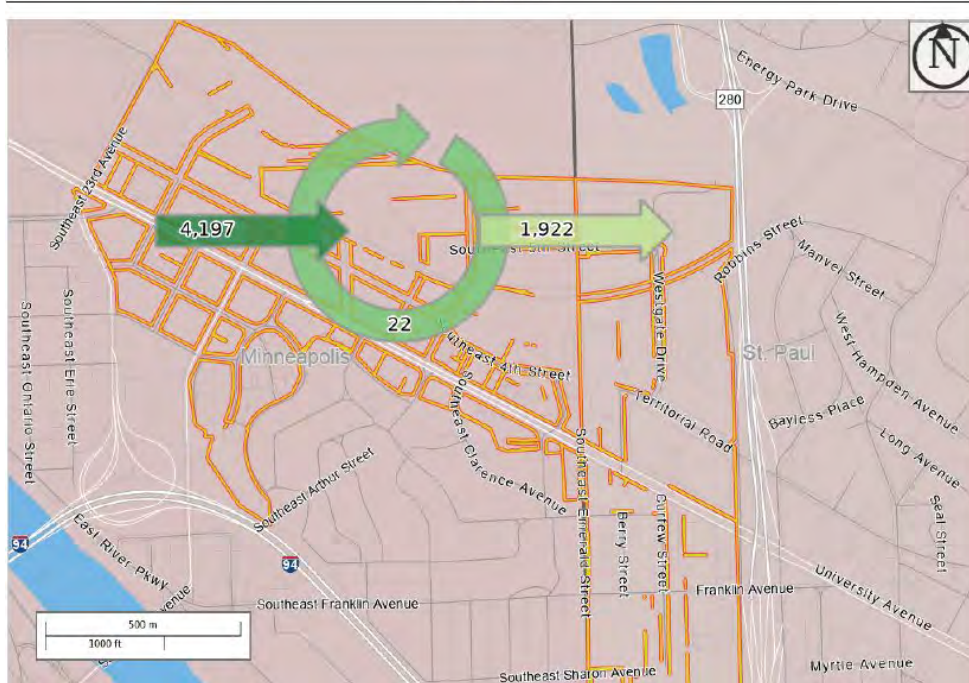


- To understand which Towerside elements are (un)satisfactory and (un)important to people, we asked survey respondents to rank various neighborhood elements on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest)
- Parks/Green Spaces and Public Safety are some of the most important elements, yet are least satisfactory according to survey respondents



Worker Inflow/Outflow of Towerside

Inflow/Outflow Counts of All Jobs for Selection Area in 2019
All Workers



- Towerside is not a “complete community” yet
 - Very few people work and live in the district
 - Far more job opportunities than residential opportunities at the moment

The dark green arrow represents the number of employees who live outside of Towerside who work within it (4,197). The green circle represents those who work and live within Towerside (22). The light green arrow represents the people who live within Towerside but are employed outside of it (1,922). The arrows do not indicate the direction people are coming from or going to.



Labor comparison between Towerside and the Metropolitan area

2019 LEHD Data

We compared Towerside's employment/labor data to Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and the whole Metropolitan Area

People Who Reside In Towerside (and are in the labor force)

- Are more likely to work in educational services compared to residents in other parts of the Twin Cities and the Metro Area as a whole
- Are less likely to work in manufacturing compared to residents in other parts of the Twin Cities and the Metro Area as a whole
- Are less than 60% White as a group
- 42% are under-29.

People Who Work in Towerside

- Less likely to work in educational services
- More likely to be work in manufacturing than comparison areas
- More youthful (<29yo) than comparison areas, not quite as youthful as residents of Towerside
- Are 60% female



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Where can Towerside expect future developments and what do people who live/work/visit the district hope to see?



Employers By Industry

Industry	Number of Enterprises	Estimated Employees
Nonprofit / Social Services	18	841
Healthcare	16	534
Media	2	440
Professional Services	11	394
Medical Technology	3	382
Manufacturing	6	193
Brewing	1	170
Other	8	134
Restaurants	12	115

- We conducted our own employment inventory
- Nonprofits/ Social Services are estimated to contribute the largest number of workers to Towerside. It also has the most amount of firms.
- Healthcare is also a very large industry
- Towerside ultimately lacks an industry anchor which makes it difficult to forecast future “clustering”

Towerside's Current Largest Employers

Enterprise Name	Number of Employees	Industry
Fraser	600	Non-Profit / Social Services
KSTP and Hubbard Entities	400	Media
UJEL	350	Medical Technology
Kimley Horn	190	Professional Services
Surly Brewing Co	170	Brewing
Best Care Home Health Care	150	Healthcare
Impressions Inc	150	Manufacturing
HealthPartners Health Center for Women	142	Healthcare
North Star Resource Group	110	Professional Services
Fresh Thyme	80	Grocery
USPS	68	Other
Days Hotel	60	Hospitality
M Health Fairview Children's Clinic	55	Healthcare

- Fraser, a non-profit that assists in healthcare and general well-being of autistic individuals, is estimated to be the largest employer in Towerside.
- There are 8 different industries amongst the largest 10 employers.
- Towerside is only currently publicly partnering with three of these businesses

Green Denotes Listed Partner on Towerside's Website



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LEHD Data Insights Into Towerside

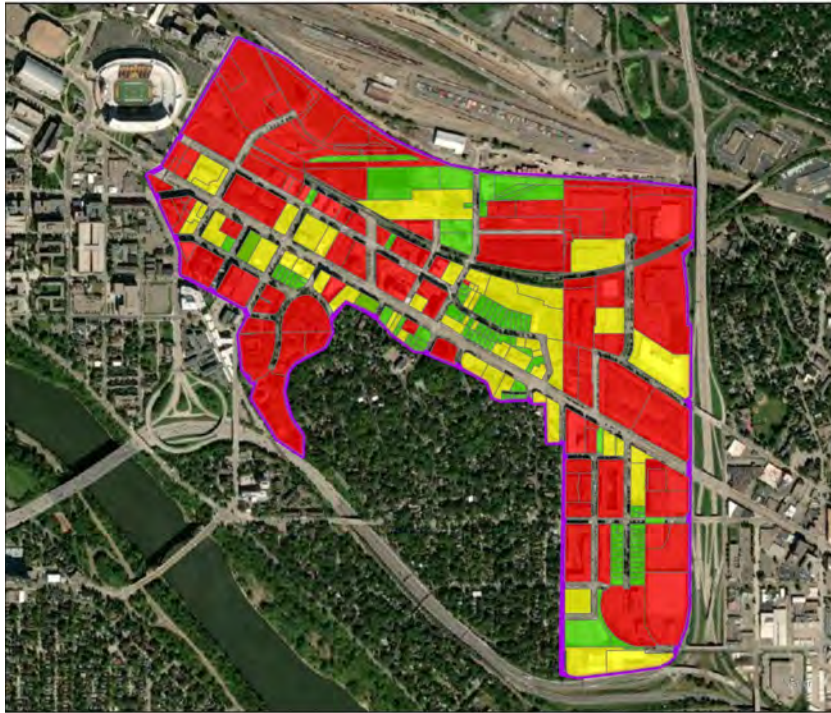
- The existing jobs in Towerside are largely not in the same industry as those who live in Towerside
- Manufacturing makes up a substantial portion of the employment in Towerside, but very few residents work in that industry
- Many people who live in Towerside work in Educational Services but there are not many job opportunities for them within the district
- Many residents of Towerside work in Accommodation and Food Service but very few do both

Category	Workers	Residents	Difference
Manufacturing	15.8%	4.8%	11.0%
Educational Services	2.8%	22.7%	-19.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	28.0%	17.8%	10.2%

Category	Workers	Residents	Difference
Accommodation and Food Services	162	180	-18



Towerside: (Re)Development Potential



(Re)Development Potential

- High
- Medium
- Low

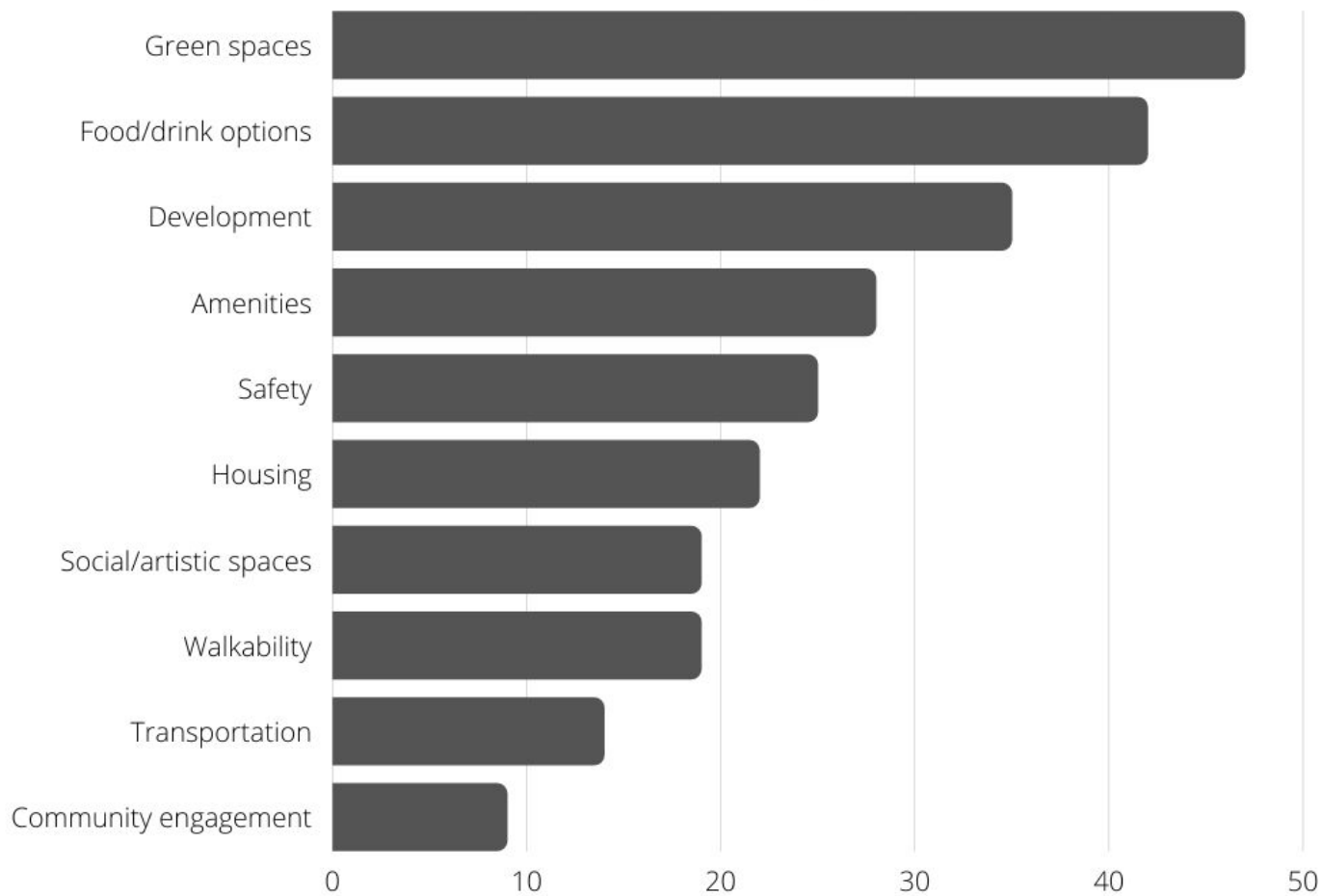
(Re)Development Potential

- Wrote a formula based on estimated market value, owner-occupation, building age, and special factors (Historically preserved / owned by public entity /railroad related)
- This map is meant to model areas that would be attractive to a developer based on the data we have of the *parcel* and forecast areas where Towerside could see development next.
- This map is not an indication of where we *hope* to see development or even necessarily where we would encourage
- Only 11.5% or about 40 acres of Towerside's total parcel acreage is "highly developable". It's also fragmented, split around the district, and across many owners.



Respondent's Suggested Improvements by Theme

■ # of responses



Improvements and Hopes for Towerside

1. Green Spaces

- Parks
- Community gardens
- Dog parks
- Landscaping

"Most of the area is brown and run down , creating green spaces and vibrant businesses will help bring life back to this area of Minneapolis and St. Paul."



Source: [EuropeNow](#)

2. More Accessible Amenities and Food/Drink Options

- Restaurants/Cafes
- Coffee shops
- Another less curated grocery store
- Retail



"I do wish there was more restaurants and shops close by. I often feel like I have to drive out of the area to go to events or go out."

Source: [spur.org](#)

Improvements and Hopes for Towerside

3. Creative development with an emphasis on social/artistic spaces

- Mixed use
- Transit/pedestrian oriented
- Creative businesses and reuse of space
- Places to "hang out"
- Nightlife and entertainment
- Public art

"Every move for regional development should be towards a denser and more pedestrian friendly space."

"I would like to see more public art, more theatrical performances in the parks, more music in the parks, where I can be outdoors, with a mask, and enjoy some social/artistic events."



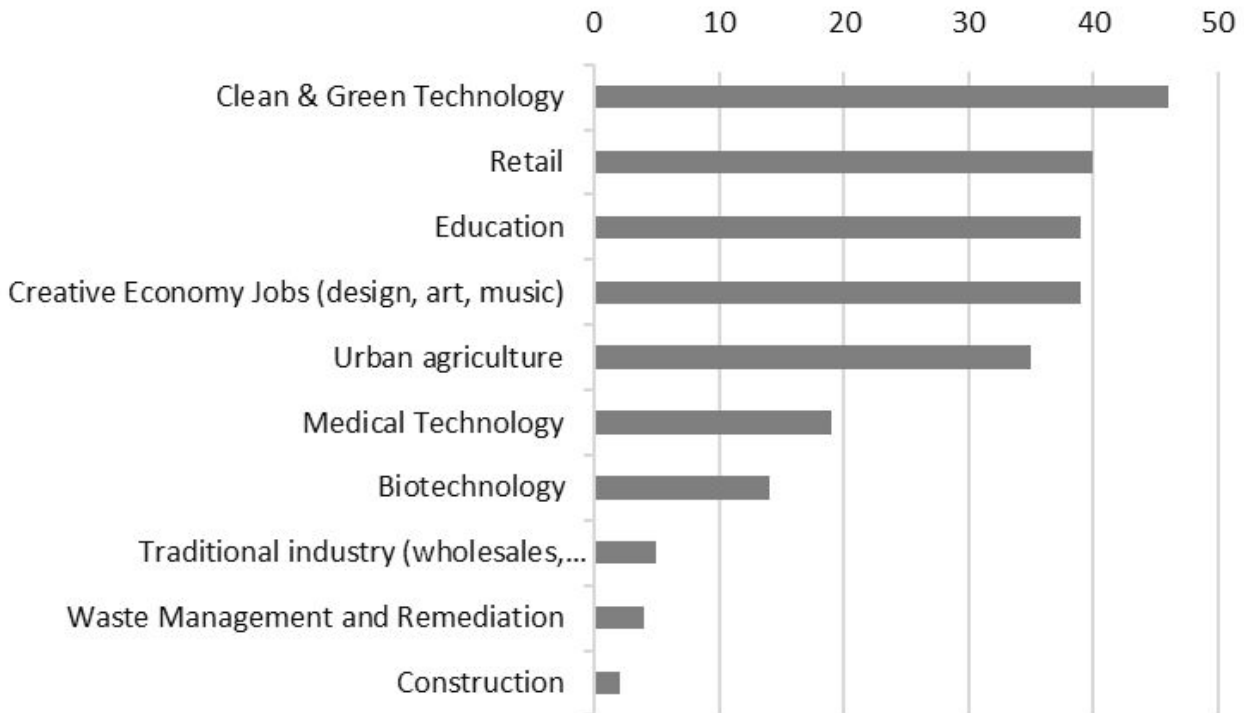
Source: [TOD Institute](#)



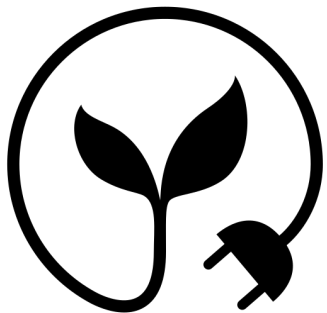
Source: [vancouver.ca](#)



Improvements and Hopes for Towerside



Which employment opportunities and industries would you like to see grow in Towerside?



What can the Towerside Board do to strategically position itself to capture future economic and community development opportunities?



Based on the survey findings:

Responders want to feel more engaged in Towerside and its visioning process

Respondents are most concerned about safety and housing affordability in the area

Respondents would like to see more green spaces, creative and social development, and clean and green technology

Recommendation:
Community Engagement Task Force



Recommendation: Create a Community Engagement Task Force

- Further engagement around Towerside in the community
 - Pop-up Informational tables outdoors or in businesses around Towerside
 - Make Towerside's social media presence more accessible and active
- Co-create with community members, especially those who were not well represented by the survey
 - Encourage more people in the area to be a part of Towerside's visioning process and invite them to be a part of the task force
- Consider how survey findings may contribute to Towerside's vision
 - Use results of survey as clues - but don't assume the findings ring true for everyone



"I suggest asking the low-income people of color living in this area what they want done with their own housing."



Based on the findings:

Towerside is spatially constrained

There is a disconnect between the people that live in Towerside and the people that work in Towerside

Towerside is missing out on working with other institutions and businesses inside of the district

Recommendations:

- A Creative Use of Space Task Force
- An Institutional and Business Collaboration Task Force



Recommendation: Create a task force on Creative Use of Space

Web Application

- A great asset of the Towerside Board is the connections they have with developers, people in real-estate, and large corporations.
- Having data on hand can be a great tool for getting developers, site-selectors, and others to take a closer look at the district.



A screenshot of our Web App



Recommendation: Create a task force on Creative Use of Space

Ground Floor Commercial

- Currently six vacancies
- Reported problem in the Twin Cities and around the country that property-owners are having a difficult time filling these spaces
- The vacancies sit in three different zoning districts across Minneapolis and Saint Paul
- Different regulations and standards
- Unclear if regulation or a lack of market-interest is the cause of the vacancies

Ground Floor Commercial Vacancies



Legend

Ground Floor
Commercial Vacancy
■ Yes



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Recommendation: Institutional and Business Collaboration Task Force

Target Largest Employers

- Towerside is only currently partnering with 3 of the 13 employers in the district that have over 50 employees
- This task force should approach these other large businesses and attempt to forge concrete partnerships with ones that share their mission, vision and values

Continue Relationship With The University

- Grow relationship with the University by continuing to raise awareness and strengthen ties with their real estate department



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Recommendation: Institutional and Business Collaboration Task Force

Strengthen The Strategic Partnership With The Creative Enterprise Zone

- The CEZ is similarly both a district and non-profit organization that geographically overlaps with Towerside
- The CEZ has a comparable mission and financial capacity to Towerside
- The organization has real-estate and creative-space resources that would benefit Towerside



“Our Vision: To be a thriving district of creativity and innovation centered in an equitable and just community of economic and environmental well-being.”



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Recommendation: Institutional and Business Collaboration Task Force

Engage the Owners of The Case and Court International Buildings

- Case and Court International buildings are a massive employment center for Towerside
- Tenants appear to be in professional services / office jobs
- There is likely a mutual interest to be found. A relationship could become a source of public support and funding



Pictures of Case and Court Intl.



Acknowledgements

- We'd like to thank -
 - Greg Lindsey for his invaluable knowledge, support and encouragement as our capstone advisor
 - Sarah Tschida for her assistance with coordination and feedback throughout the semester
 - Sabina Saksena and Dick Gilyard for their direction and support for our work
 - Metric Giles, Gloria Jeff and Diane Rucker for asking important questions and providing thoughtful feedback during our team's first run through
 - The Market at Malcolm Yards for hosting our presentation



Thank you!

Questions?



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