



# SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR

## INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK



Hoisington Kogler Group Inc.

Corridors of Opportunity  
connecting people, places and resources



**SOUTHWEST LRT**  
community works  
[www.swlrtcmmunityworks.org](http://www.swlrtcmmunityworks.org)



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# SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

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For more information about Southwest LRT Community Works and Southwest LRT station area planning, go to:

[www.swlrtccommunityworks.org](http://www.swlrtccommunityworks.org)

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# INTRODUCTION

- » OVERVIEW
- » DEMOGRAPHICS, HOUSING + DEVELOPMENT
- » PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
- » CORRIDOR CHARACTERIZATION

# Document Overview

directly implies, a guide for transit related investments along the Southwest Corridor with an emphasis on the areas surrounding the 17 stations. In its entirety, it represents a comprehensive look throughout the corridor at what is needed on opening day in 2018 to best take advantage of the opportunities that will occur due to the construction of light rail. It also looks beyond 2018. It looks at long-term opportunities and provides guidance for communities to use as they consider comprehensive plan and capital improvement plan updates over the next 10 to 20 years.

The following is a brief overview of the organization of this report.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

- » **1.1 Background:** The section broadly covers transit in the Twin Cities and then focuses on the SW LRT line (Green Line Extension). It contains information on the Southwest Corridor Community Works project, an unprecedented collaborative effort led by Hennepin County. It addresses the origin of the Transitional Station Area Action Plan (TSAAP) process, an innovative and again unprecedented effort to better integrate land use planning with transportation engineering.
- » **1.2 Demographics, Housing, and Development:** Over the past several years, a number of studies and reports have documented existing conditions and offered projections on population, housing growth, development and market conditions. This section of the report briefly summarizes a few of the key studies as a background for planning initiatives.
- » **1.3 Public Process:** During the course of the TSAAP planning process, open houses, listening sessions, community events, and electronic outreach efforts were used to present information and seek public input. The public process section of the report briefly outlines the efforts that were undertaken and provides highlights of information received. Additional public engagement information can be found in Technical Memorandums that accompany this document.
- » **1.4 Corridor Characterization:** With seventeen stations, five communities, urban conditions, and suburban conditions, the SW LRT corridor defies being categorized in a single way. Rather, it is a collection of unique places that make up a corridor, places that in many cases share qualities while exhibiting qualities that are also unique. The Corridor Characterization section of the report assesses the character elements of each station, outlining those that are of primary significance and those that are contributing. Characterization is important because it is a foundational element that influences land use and facility planning.

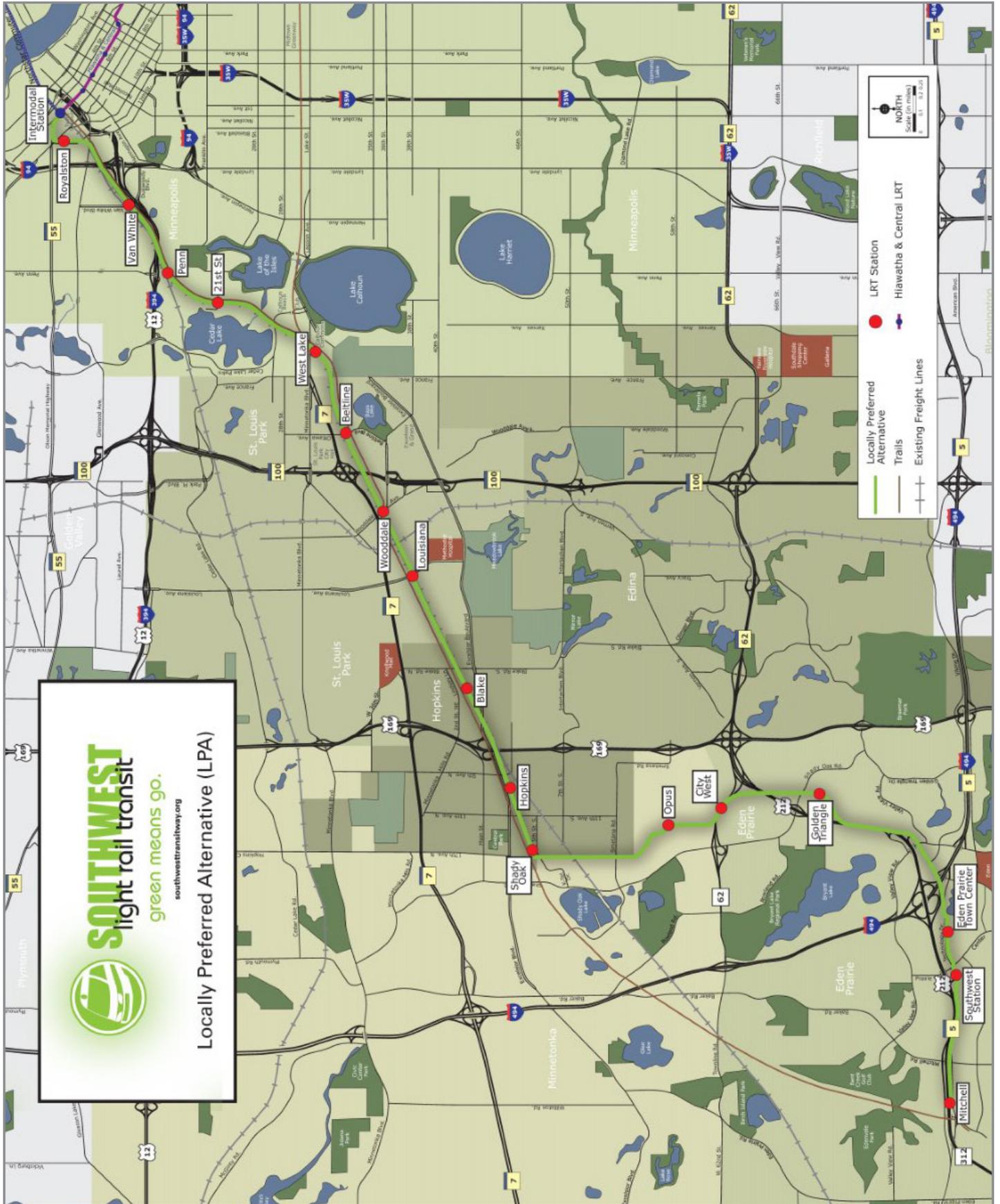
## CHAPTERS 2-18. TRANSITIONAL STATION AREA ACTION PLANS (TSAAP)

- » The Transitional Station Area Action Plans are the central feature of the SW Corridor Investment Framework. Each station is presented in its own sub-chapter of this larger document. Information on existing conditions, access and circulation plans, station area site plans, infrastructure plans, development potential and key initiatives is presented for each station. The format of this report allows each of these sub-chapters to be “pulled out” and used as freestanding documents.

## CHAPTER 19. IMPLEMENTATION

- » Collaboration is one of the key reasons that the SW LRT is moving ever closer to reality – to actually becoming an extension of the Green Line. The implementation section of this report helps guide future collaborative efforts by outlining the actions and strategies that will be necessary to make the SW LRT line a success. What needs to be done, when, by whom and in what sequence are all questions addressed in this section.

FIGURE 1-1. SOUTHWEST LRT - LOCALLY PREFERRED ALIGNMENT (LPA)



**SOUTHWEST**  
light rail transit  
green means go.  
southwesttransitway.org

**Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)**

## PREFACE

The construction of the SW LRT line, known as the Green Line extension, will significantly enhance mobility in the region by connecting six communities—Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, Edina, St. Louis Park, and Minneapolis—via light rail transit. Arriving from Eden Prairie at the new Target Field Station interchange hub in Minneapolis, riders can continue their journey eastward to St. Paul, northward via NorthStar Commuter rail and southward toward the airport, Mall of America and southern suburbs via the Hiawatha (Blue Line) LRT and the Red Line BRT. The SW LRT is expected to move 30,000 people per day. Although being an effective people mover, the SW LRT line is much more. It is the region's single largest investment in transit; one which is fully expected to help grow the economy, add jobs, create opportunities for quality housing, enhance access to employment, and support walkable neighborhoods.

This document, the Southwest Corridor Investment Framework, is the result of the Transitional Station Area Action Plan (TSAAP) Process. It represents the work of Hennepin County and partner communities Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Edina, Minnetonka and Eden Prairie; Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, SouthWest Transit, and Urban Land Institute (ULI) Minnesota; and business owners and area residents.

# Background

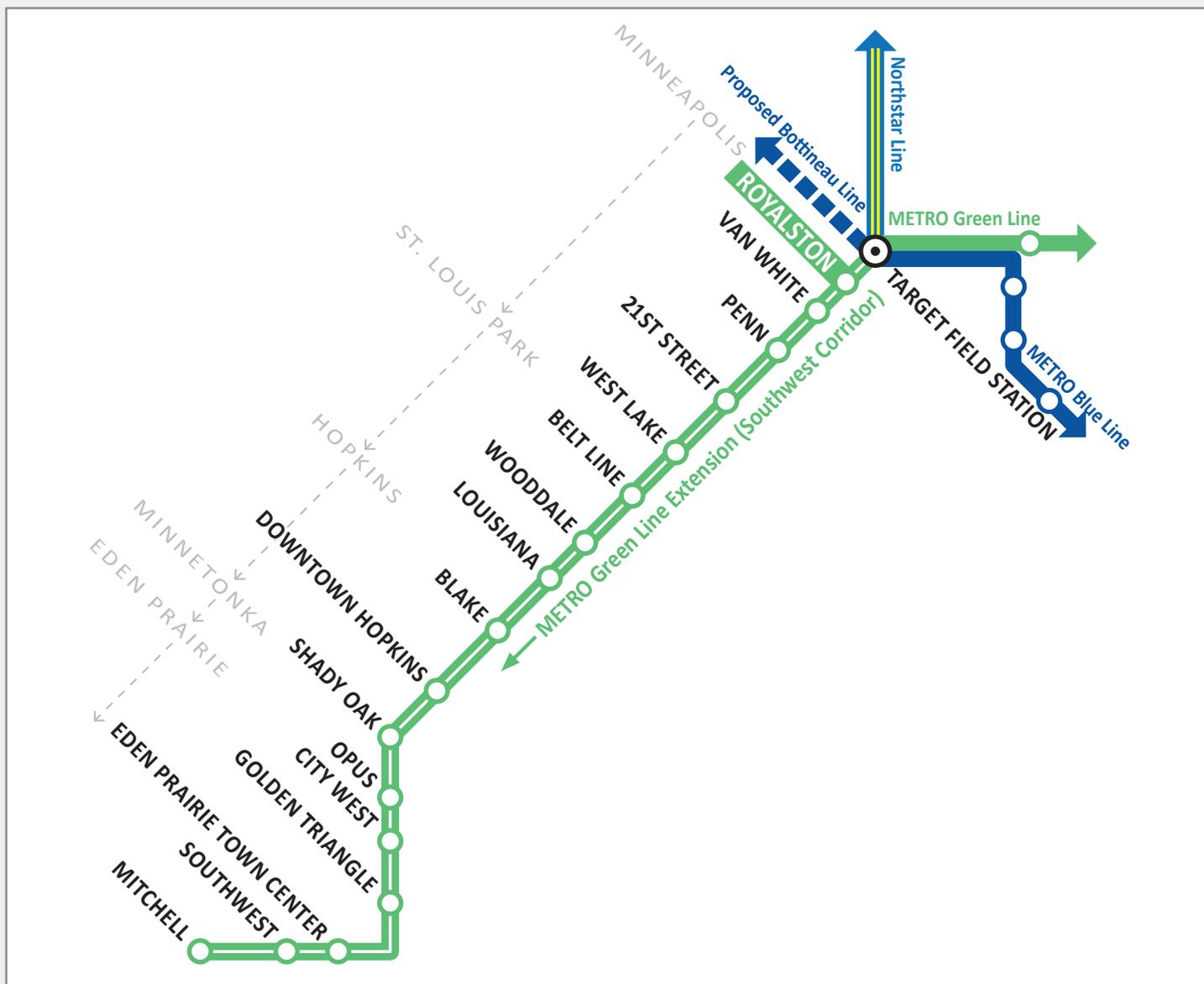
## About Southwest LRT

The Southwest LRT Project is a proposed 15-mile light rail transit (LRT) line with 17 stations serving the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Edina, Hopkins, St. Louis Park and Minneapolis. The LRT line will increase system capacity in an area of high demand, respond to travel demand created by existing and planned residential and employment growth, provide a competitive travel option that will attract 'choice' riders (who have a choice between transit and driving) and serve transit dependent populations. This line will also be an expansion of the region's transitway system connecting with the Hiawatha (Blue Line) and Central (Green Line) Light Rail Transit Lines, the Northstar commuter rail line, and the Metro Transit bus system.

The Southwest LRT project's locally preferred alternative (LPA) was selected by the Metropolitan Council in May 2010 and the project received Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval to enter the Preliminary Engineering (PE) process in August 2011. During the PE process, the LPA conceptual engineering plans will be reviewed and refined to a 30% design level, based in part upon agency and community feedback and input.

From previous LRT projects, it is known that the early integration of LRT engineering and economic development will lead to a more productive LRT line that shapes the future of the station area. Placement of station platforms and park and rides, siting the operations and maintenance facilities and opportunities to coordinate utility upgrades during construction all can impact the success of development around station areas. Successful station areas increase ridership for the LRT line as well as the tax base for local government, and contribute to a strong regional economy where residents have access to jobs, housing, recreational activities and other amenities. Strong station areas are integral to the success of Southwest LRT and this was recognized by Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council and other partners.

Hennepin County initiated the Transitional Station Area Action Plan (TSAAP) process to promote opening day readiness in 2018 by bridging the gap between current conditions and future needs by identifying and prioritizing infrastructure improvements that enhance existing business, support mixed-income housing opportunities, and encourage new development. Over the long term, the TSAAPs will help create unique, transit oriented stations along the diverse SW corridor.



Schematic diagram of Southwest LRT stations and major transit connections



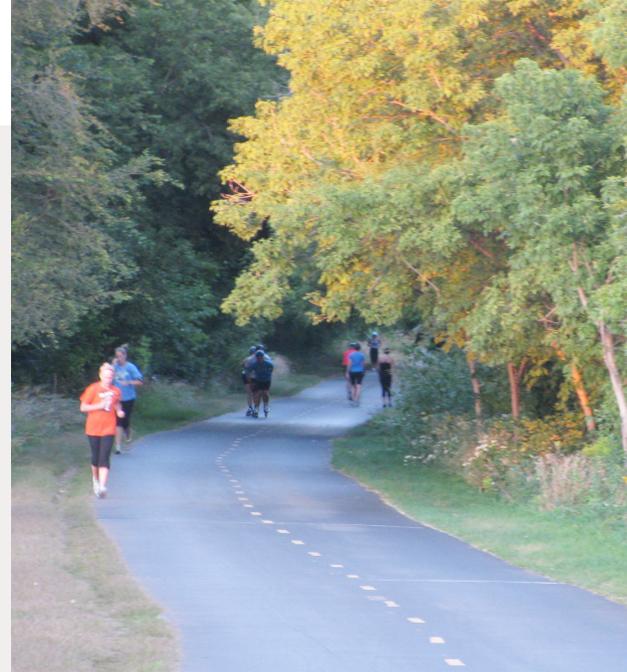
Existing Hiawatha (Blue Line) LRT station with views of downtown

# Southwest LRT Community Works

In December 2009, the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners established the Southwest LRT Community Works project. Community Works projects seek to capitalize on investments, by looking at land use and economic development opportunities along corridors. Community Works goals include stimulating economic development, building bridges for effective planning and implementation, maintaining and improving natural systems, strengthening communities through connections and enhancing the tax base.

Lessons learned from the Hiawatha and Central Corridor lines confirm the vital role of a strategic, collaborative, integrated framework to address coordination, planning, and implementation for public and private investment to deliver light rail's broader benefits.

Through partnerships, Southwest LRT Community Works will maximize the benefits that lie "beyond the rails." The program builds on successful corridor and regional partnerships and effective delivery systems to align policies, including federal initiatives to create sustainable communities, enhance economic competitiveness through better access to housing and jobs, improve efficiency of public infrastructure investments, unlock private capital, and create healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods served by public transit.



## SOUTHWEST LRT COMMUNITY WORKS GOALS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### SW LRT Community Works Goals:

- » *Economic competitiveness and job growth*
- » *Promoting opportunities for business and employment growth*
- » *Housing choices*
- » *Positioning the Southwest LRT communities as a place for all to live*
- » *Quality neighborhoods*
- » *Creating unique, vibrant, safe, beautiful, and walkable station areas*
- » *Critical connections*
- » *Improving affordable regional mobility for all users*

### SW LRT Community Works Guiding Principles for Investment:

- » *Partner for Effective Planning and Implementation*
- » *Create Great Quality Transit Oriented Development and Achieve Unique, Vibrant Places*
- » *Stimulate Employment and Economic Development*
- » *Provide a full Range of Housing Choices*
- » *Strengthen Communities through Connections and Access to Opportunity*
- » *Maintain and Improve Natural Systems*
- » *Build Healthy Communities*
- » *Enhance Tax Base*

## PARTICIPANTS

Hennepin County is the lead agency for the Southwest LRT Community Works program working in collaboration with partner cities Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Eden Prairie, and Edina; the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA); the Metropolitan Council; the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District; SouthWest Transit; the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board; and the Urban Land Institute-Minnesota.

The Southwest LRT Community Works is guided by the Southwest LRT Community Works steering committee, which is comprised of elected officials and representatives from the member agencies. The work of the Steering Committee is conducted by the Southwest LRT Community Works Technical Implementations Committee (TIC), which is composed of technical staff from the member agencies.

The Community Works Steering Committee also receives input and feedback from a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and a Business Advisory Committee (BAC). These committees report jointly to the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee and the Southwest LRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to further integrate and coordinate the engineering of the line with land use and economic development.

In addition to the public participants, the Southwest Investment Partnership is also an active partner in encouraging development near station areas. The Partnership is composed of representatives of many of the large employers along the line like Park Nicollet/Methodist Hospital, United Health Group, Cargill and Japs-Olson.

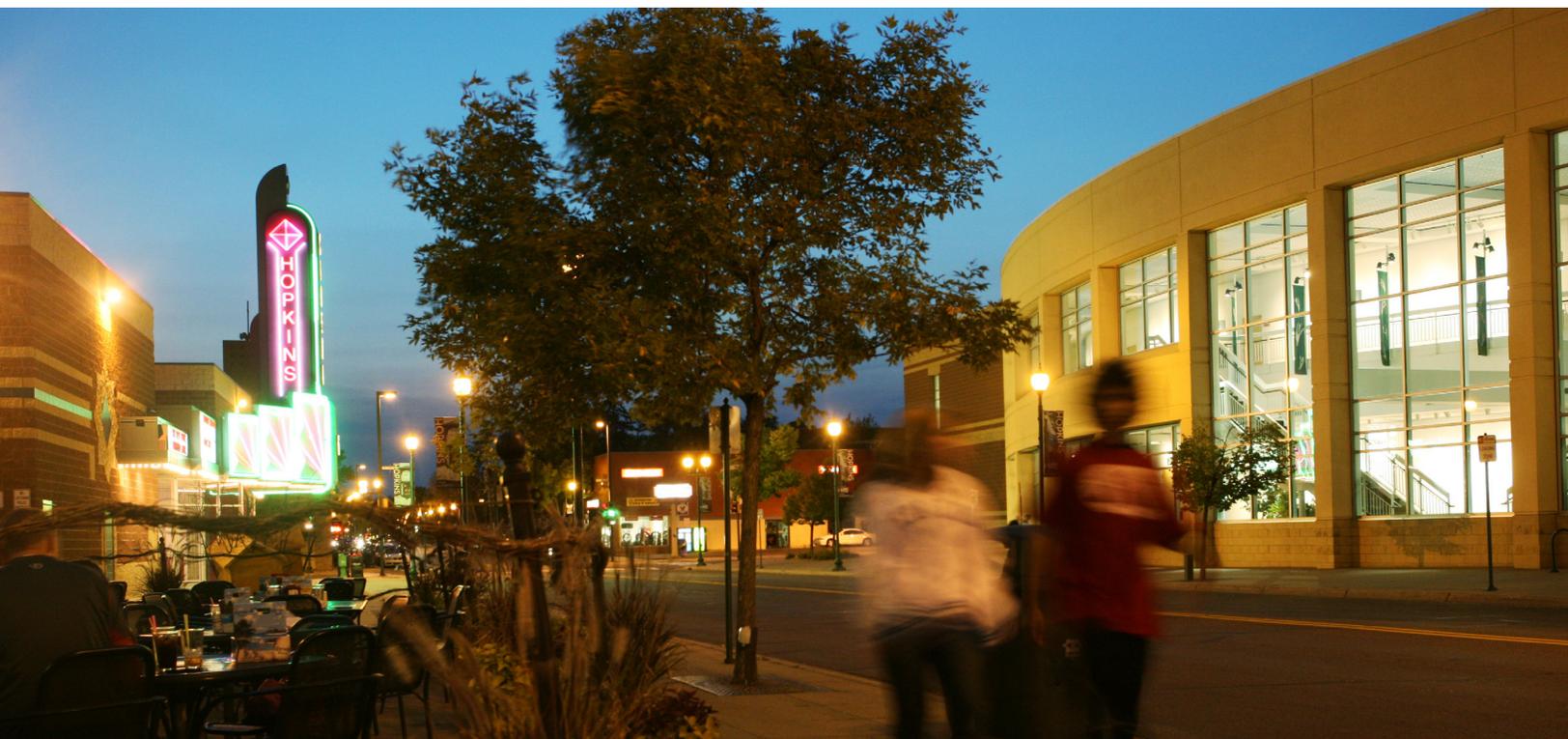
## PROCESS

Southwest LRT Community Works partners with corridor cities and other public, private and non-profit partners are working to improve access to stations, encourage transit-oriented development, enhance existing businesses and support a full range of housing opportunities. This work is done through collaboration on studies, plans, and projects to make the areas around proposed stations ready for LRT.

The Southwest LRT Community Works project provides a platform for the partner cities, county, regional and state agencies, including the Southwest LRT Project Office (SPO), and other partners to integrate LRT engineering with land use and economic development strategies- and to maximize the economic and community benefits of the public investment in the LRT line.

The Southwest LRT Community Works project provides an organizational structure and a process for the multiple Southwest partners to:

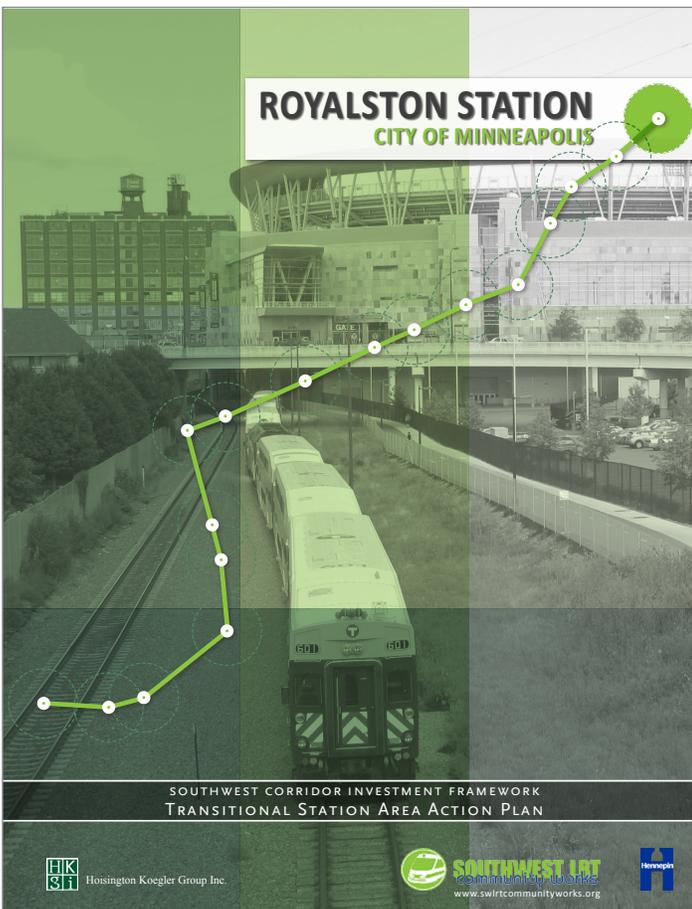
- » Garner broad-based community input
- » Establish and pursue a shared vision for the corridor that recognizes different character areas and each station as a unique transit-centered place
- » Strategically plan a framework for public investments that not only leverages private investment but delivers community and economic benefits
- » Align jurisdictional authorities, policies, technical and financial resources to maximize benefits
- » Collectively advocate for corridor-wide funding needs
- » Work in tandem with the LRT project to ensure timely coordination with project decision points, timely infrastructure investments, and successful delivery of the transit line.



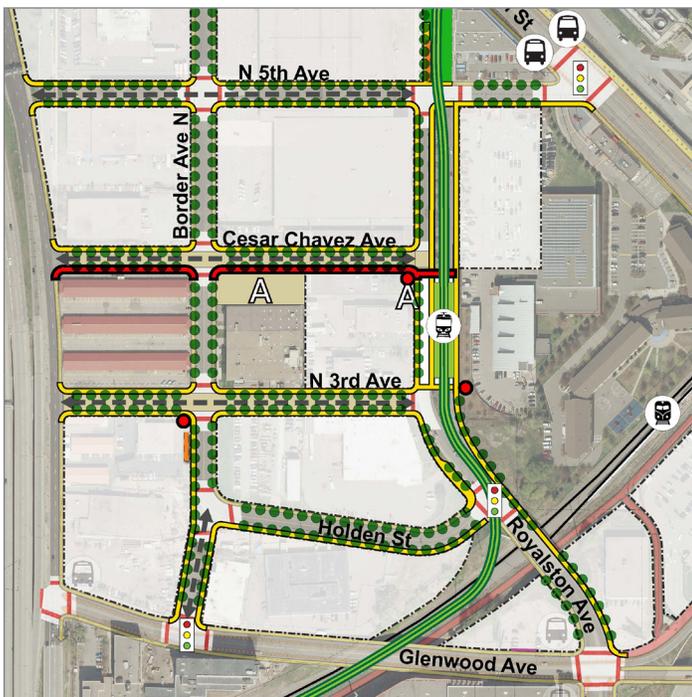
# Transitional Station Area Action Plans (TSAAP)

The Southwest LRT Transitional Station Area Action Plans (TSAAPs) are designed to bridge the gap between current conditions and future needs by recommending infrastructure investments for implementation by opening day of LRT in 2018. Additionally, the TSAAPs will support short-term development and facilitate long-term, phased Transit Oriented Developments (TOD). Regional investments in LRT can be maximized by identifying and prioritizing infrastructure improvements that enhance existing businesses, support a full range of housing opportunities, and encourage development. This planning effort will facilitate the evolution of station areas into Transit-Oriented Developments (TOD) with a unique sense of place that relates positively to the Southwest corridor as a whole.

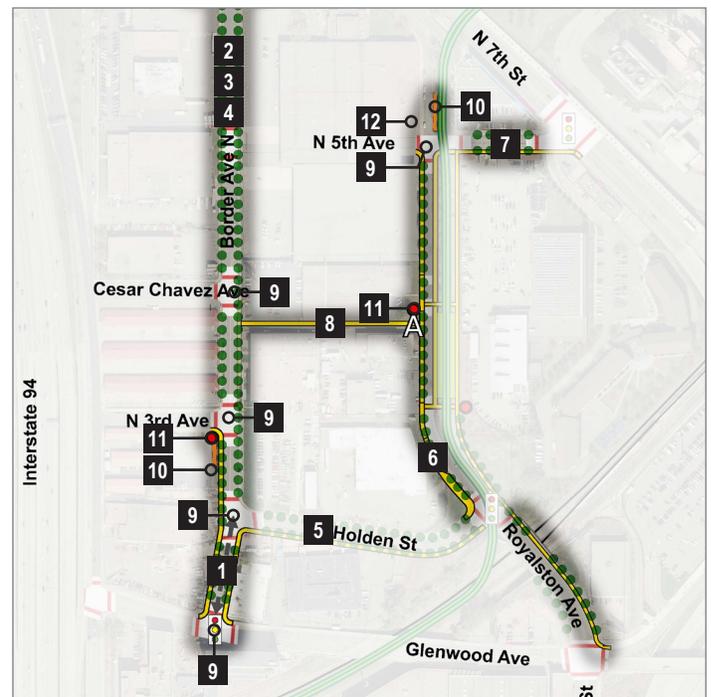
The results of this process are action plans that will assist the cities, Hennepin County, other Community Works partners, the Southwest LRT Project Office, and the private sector in understanding infrastructure investments that are needed in the near term to improve business and housing conditions, and in the future to enable the station areas to achieve their long-term vision and the LRT project to increase its ridership base. The TSAAP process was also used as a tool to recommend changes to the LRT engineering to better serve existing land uses and facilitate long-term phased TOD.



Royalston Station Transitional Station Area Action Plan



Example Station Area Improvements Plan



Example Opening Day Recommendations



*Project charrette*

## Early Integration Initiative - Engineering and Development

### OVERVIEW

Through early integration of engineering and development, coupled with systemic organizational change, the Southwest project is intended to serve as a national model. The Southwest project was one of the key initiatives funded through the Federal HUD Sustainable Communities grant awarded to the Twin Cities. Significant collaboration occurred between the TSAAP consulting team, the Southwest Project Office and its consultants.

### LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE – A COMMON STARTING POINT

The Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) that follows the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle route was selected as the general alignment of the Green Line Extension by the Metropolitan Council in May of 2010. The LPA was the common starting point for the integration of engineering and development along the Southwest LRT corridor.

### PROJECT CHARRETTE

Early in this process, a technical design charrette was held to creatively explore planning, design and development opportunities at each station. The outcome of the charrette was a series of sketch ideas for each station with accompanying illustrations to further explain concepts and directions. Staff from the Southwest Community Works member agencies, SPO and Preliminary Engineering (PE) consultants participated in two key pin-up sessions as part of the charrette. The charrette

resulted in recommendations to move station platforms, change LRT routing, consolidate park and ride facilities, change pedestrian, bike, and bus access to stations- to facilitate future transit-oriented development.

### REGULAR COORDINATION MEETINGS

Representatives from the TSAAP team met on a regular basis with the SPO/PE teams throughout the course of the TSAAP work. Meeting generally on a weekly basis, coordination meetings were an overall vehicle to coordinate work, to share emerging ideas, coordinate schedules, and coordinate public outreach activities.

### IRT WORKSHOP MEETINGS

The TSAAP and SPO/PE consulting teams held a number of Issue Resolution Team (IRT) workshops to jointly explore a wide range of topics. Topics addressed included, but were not limited to, track alignment alternatives, station platform locations, development and redevelopment opportunities, transit connections, local roadway needs, and pedestrian and bicycle connections. The workshop meetings helped shape the preliminary engineering work as well as the infrastructure projects identified in the SW Corridor Investment Framework.

The Southwest Corridor Investment Framework is, as the name

# Demographics, Housing & Development

Understanding existing conditions in the Southwest corridor is essential to creating station plans that serve both current and future populations. The Twin Cities region is changing and so are the five communities that line the SW LRT. Ten years ago, the Metropolitan Council predicted that 30 percent of the region's 2040 growth would occur in the "developed area" which includes Minneapolis and St. Paul and close-in, suburban communities. In 2013, the Metropolitan Council increased that estimate from 30 percent to 55 percent. Having more than half of the projected 2040 population growth being in close proximity to the traditional urban core is significant. That population growth supports higher densities along the SW LRT line that can be in locations that already supply jobs as well as goods and services. The following provides a brief overview of three recent efforts that have analyzed demographics, housing, and development.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The Excensus 2010 Change Report includes tables comparing demographics broken down by station, corridor, city, and county. Comparing the Southwest corridor (1 mile radius of stations) to the city of Minneapolis and to Hennepin County as a whole reveals some interesting facts:

- » 52.9% of SW corridor households are renters, compared to 30.3% in Minneapolis and 19.7% in suburban Hennepin County as a whole.
- » 43.7% of all households occupy rental apartments in the Southwest corridor.
- » 75.6% of households under age 35 and 49.6% of households age 35 to 54 in the Southwest corridor are renters, both of which are higher than the percentages for these age groups in Minneapolis and suburban Hennepin County as a whole.

## HOUSING

In March 2013, Maxfield Research Inc. completed a Southwest Corridor-wide Housing Inventory. The Inventory compiled baseline data at all 17 proposed station locations at half-mile, one-mile and two-mile radii from each station. For Minneapolis stations, data was also compiled at the quarter-mile radius.

The Inventory includes demographics, employment, education, housing characteristics, the for-sale real estate market, and a review of existing housing units to examine affordability, inventory of rental and condominium units, homestead vs. non-homestead, planned development projects and "naturally-

occurring" affordable housing. The Inventory also provides an overview of existing city policies, housing programs and financing tools.

Connections between existing housing, especially affordable housing, and station areas are a key component for the success of Southwest LRT. Additionally, TSAAP highlights housing development and redevelopment opportunities at station areas along the corridor. The employment data contained in the Inventory provides a solid basis for additional economic development work along the corridor as well.

An initiative is now underway to follow-up on the housing inventory with a housing gap analysis as well as a corridor-wide housing strategy.

## DEVELOPMENT

The Southwest LRT has the potential to increase demand for housing, office and other uses along the line. Studies show that some households and employers have a preference for locating near transit, and that transit can have an impact on real estate markets and development potential. However, transit alone does not "make" a market. Other conditions along the line will influence the potential for TOD, including availability of pedestrian connections and other infrastructure and the presence of neighborhood amenities such as pleasant sidewalks and paths for walking and bicycling, parks, good schools, and local-serving retail.

Key findings from a report prepared by CTOD and Stantec are summarized below, followed by a summary of TOD potential by corridor subarea.

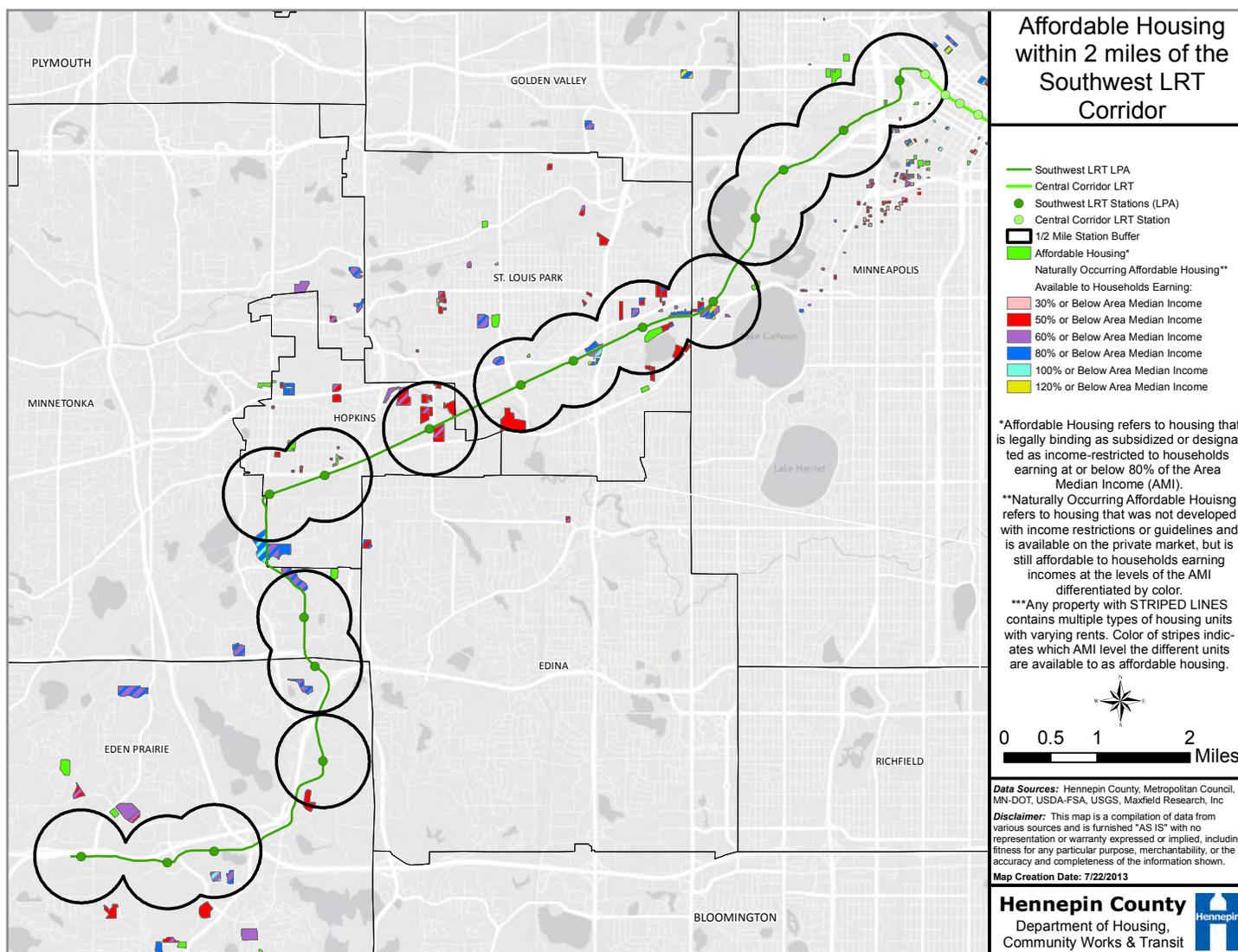
### *Key Findings:*

#### **Recent demographic trends in the Southwest LRT Corridor support TOD.**

Compared to the region, the Southwest LRT Corridor has a much higher percentage of people age 25 to 34 – one of the prime demographic groups frequently targeted for TOD projects – and fewer school age children. Households in the Southwest LRT Corridor are also significantly more likely to rent their homes, suggesting that the area will be especially attractive for development over the short term given the current strength of the region's rental market.

#### **In general, real estate market conditions along the Southwest LRT Corridor are relatively strong.**

Home prices in the Southwest LRT Corridor are relatively high



Analysis of existing affordable housing options in the Southwest LRT corridor

compared to the region as a whole, and in some locations have declined less during the recession. In general, the stations closest to the “Lakes Area” tend to have the highest priced housing. Rental housing also tends to be more highly priced in the Southwest LRT Corridor markets relative to other metro submarkets. In the short term, the Southwest LRT Corridor is well positioned for new apartment development.

**The Southwest LRT will connect a series of major employment centers, providing a strong market rationale for TOD.**

Approximately 16 percent of the jobs in the Metro Area are located within one mile of the Southwest LRT Corridor; or about 7.5 percent excluding the one-mile radius around the Royalston station area (which covers much of downtown Minneapolis). Some of the region’s most important employment centers are located near the future Southwest LRT line, as well as some of the region’s largest employers.

**The region is projected to experience relatively modest job growth, but growing sectors of the regional economy are more likely to prefer transit-rich locations.**

Future growth is expected to be concentrated in educational and health services; and knowledge-based industries including professional, scientific and technical services. Research shows that these “knowledge based” jobs are most likely to locate near transit, particularly near central business districts and in other high-density regional employment centers. Population-serving industries like education, health services, retail, and entertainment typically locate in areas of household growth, so demand from these industries is also likely to increase as the population in the corridor grows.

**The corridor has been experiencing a shift away from industrial uses to commercial and residential uses.**

Historically, the corridor has included a strong concentration of jobs in the production, distribution and repair (PDR) sector. As these jobs have declined, employment is shifting toward the knowledge-based industries and education and health services. Almost all of the recent development throughout the corridor has been either commercial office, retail, or multifamily residential.

## DEVELOPMENT (CONTINUED)

**The corridor includes a significant amount of opportunity sites for new development, the nature of which vary by location.**

CTOD research suggests that opportunity sites located near existing employment centers will be most likely to see new development. Opportunity sites for transition exist at Royalston and Van White with conversion of industrial properties at Belt Line, Blake Road and Shady Oak Road.

**Demand projections show the potential for between 3,200 and 3,900 additional housing units and between 12,500 and 13,800 new jobs in the Southwest LRT Corridor between 2010 and 2030.**

The demand for TOD housing in the corridor is expected to increase by between 780 and nearly 1,000 households every five years, or about 150 to 165 households a year. How much of this demand the corridor actually absorbs will depend on a wide range of factors, including place-making and connectivity improvements, development feasibility, and other market dynamics. The corridor also has the potential to gain about 3,100 to 3,500 jobs every five years, or about 625 to 675 new jobs a year, driven by the knowledge-based and education and health services sector. It is important to note that the production, distribution, and repair (PDR) sector is excluded from these projections because employment in this sector is expected to decline in the region as a whole, and will likely decline even more rapidly in the corridor as industrial uses are replaced by commercial and residential uses. Between 2002 and 2009, PDR employment in the corridor declined by about 675 jobs a year on average, and has the potential to offset employment gains in other industries in the Southwest LRT Corridor.

**Improving connectivity from the surrounding neighborhoods to the transit stations and fostering a sense of place will be critical in facilitating ridership and encouraging new transit-oriented development.**

Because the corridor is aligned along an old rail line in some segments and near major highways in others, many of the station areas have auto-oriented street systems and poor pedestrian connectivity. As a result, the current “walkshed” for many of the stations is small, limiting the potential for TOD. Some of the station areas also lack the kinds of urban amenities that are desirable in TOD neighborhoods, such as parks or neighborhood-serving retail. Strategic investments to expand the “walkshed” and enhance connectivity will be especially important for promoting desired development.

## TOD POTENTIAL BY SUBAREA

The Southwest LRT Corridor Development Assessment report divided the Southwest LRT Corridor into three market sub-areas. While these sub-areas could have been defined in a number of different ways, they were intended to reflect the existing land use patterns that will influence future development. Following are key findings about the potential in each segment.

### **Minneapolis Segment: Royalston Station to West Lake Station**

This segment of the corridor has been developed for more than 100 years. The stations closest to Downtown Minneapolis (Royalston and Van White) are dominated by older industrial uses, which could be redeveloped over the mid- to long-term. The stations farther to the west are primarily residential in nature, however the West Lake station area includes a significant concentration of multifamily housing as well as commercial uses. Homes in the West Lake area have held their value better than other regional locations in the recent downturn. Within the Minneapolis segment, the West Lake station area offers a strong market for development, but few opportunity sites exist.

### **Middle Segment: Belt Line Station to Shady Oak Station**

The six stations between Belt Line and Shady Oak follow an historic rail corridor that was developed with industrial uses between 50 and 100 years ago. However, many of the original industrial uses have transitioned into residential and commercial uses. Some large industrial sites remain, including a significant number of buildings that have the potential to be redeveloped over time. The initial development of this area coincided with the growth of the automobile, and as a result many station areas include a mixture of pedestrian and automobile oriented uses. This segment has experienced the most recent development, and is expected to offer the strongest market for redevelopment. In particular, Blake Road and Downtown Hopkins are attracting developer interest.

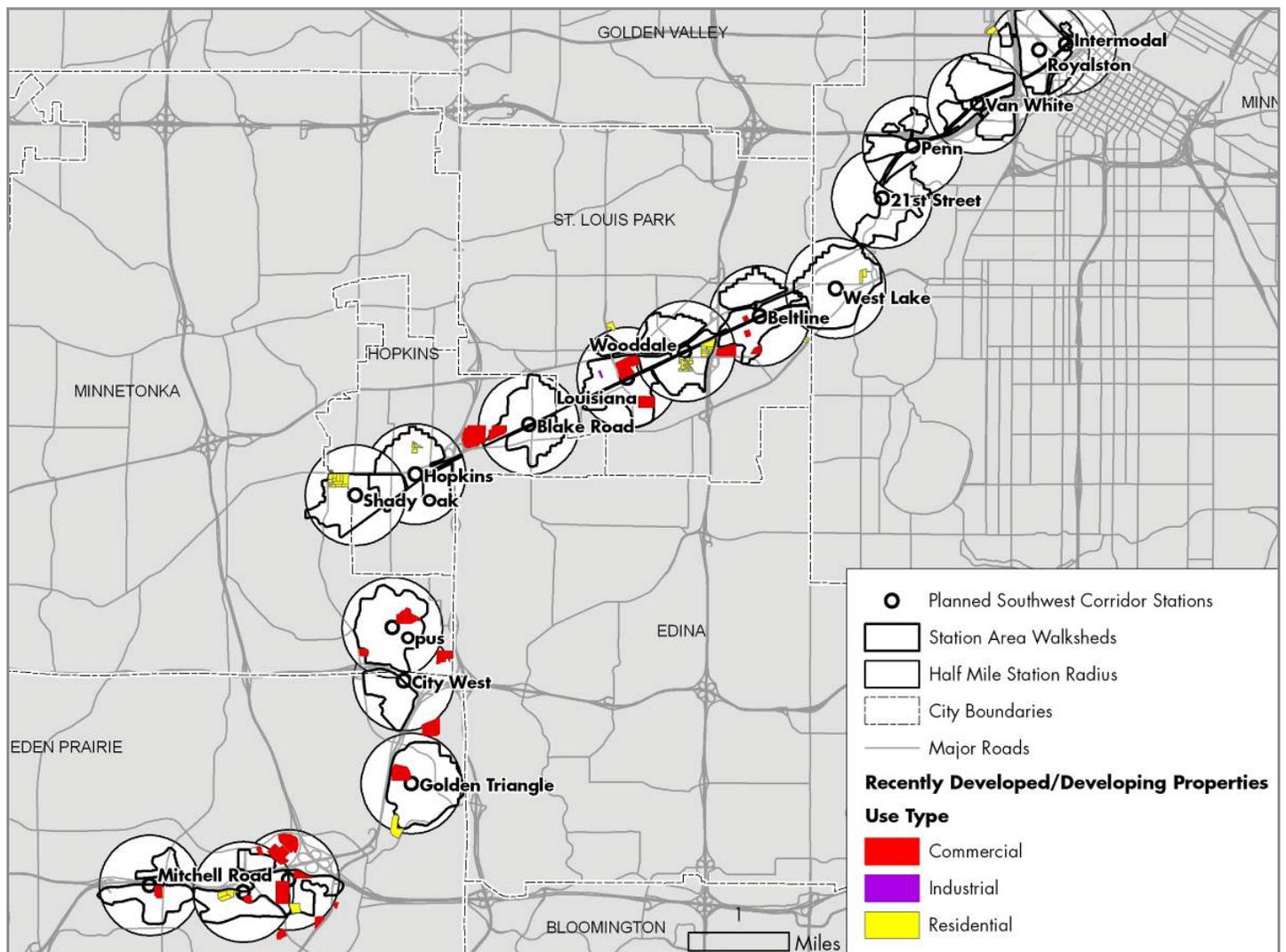
### **Southern Segment: Opus Station to Mitchell Station**

The land uses near the six future station areas in the southern portion of the corridor were developed relatively recently, and most are oriented toward the regional highway system. As a result, the current development pattern in this part of the corridor is almost entirely automobile-oriented, and the area tends to be attractive for auto-oriented uses such as big-box retail. Residential uses are much less prevalent in this part of the corridor, though recent development has included some apartments. Some significant tracts of vacant land remain, particularly around the City West and Mitchell Road stations.

The southern segment of the corridor will face challenges in attracting transit-oriented development due to its auto-oriented nature. The northern end of the segment (Opus, City West and Golden Triangle stations) offers some opportunity for infill development that could help the areas transition over time to be more walkable, mixed-use places. Absent public-sector intervention, development in the southern end of the segment (Mitchell, Southwest and Town Center stations) is more likely to consist primarily of highway-oriented uses such as retail.

These findings about the corridor segments are intended in part to help inform public investment decisions. For example,

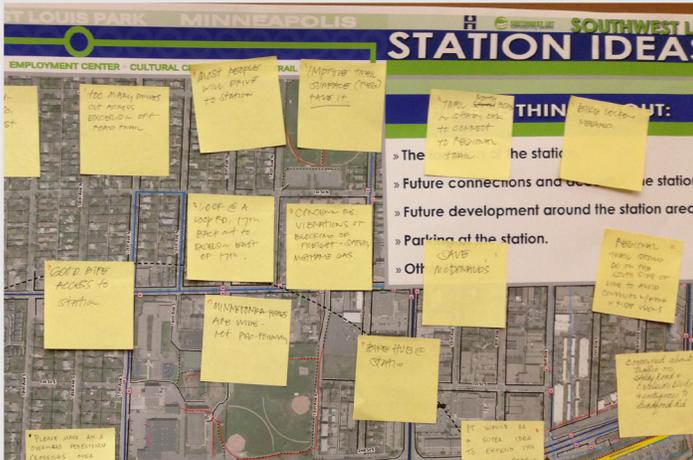
the findings outlined in the report show that some of the stations, such as West Lake and Wooddale, have already experienced significant redevelopment. Others, like Shady Oak, may require significant public investment in order to attract new development. Stations such as Mitchell, Southwest, and Town Center are well positioned to attract development, but improvements to local pedestrian conditions may be required to encourage developers to plan more compact projects or incorporate design features (for example, active ground floor uses and public spaces) that will encourage residents, workers, and shoppers to take transit, walk, or bicycle.



Analysis of recent private development in the Southwest LRT corridor (Source: "Southwest Corridor Development Assessment" prepared for Southwest LRT Community Works)

# Public Engagement

Gathering broad-based community input has been an important part of the preparation of the SW Corridor Investment Framework. During the course of the project, general open houses, focused listening sessions, community events, established committees and interactive, on-line outreach tools, were used to exchange ideas, present concepts and to gather feedback.



Community input on the Southwest corridor and stations



Exchanging ideas at a community open house



Public participation was vital to the planning process

## OPEN HOUSES

The outreach effort started in April and May of 2013 with four open houses, one in each corridor community with the exception of Hopkins and Minnetonka who held a combined open house since the Shady Oak station is split between the two cities. Participants were asked to share corridor and station ideas including:

- » Platform locations
- » Alignment options
- » Potential future development
- » Pedestrian, bike and auto connections
- » Park and open space needs
- » Other ideas

Approximately 425 people attended the four open house events. While comments received covered a wide range of topics, participants consistently highlighted interest in mobility, safety, and development issues. Respondents strongly advocated the need for:

- » Expanded bike facilities – bike racks, lockers and the installation of Nice Ride
- » Maintaining trails and trail continuity
- » Enhanced pedestrian safety improvements
- » Adequate lighting at platforms and connecting sidewalks and trails
- » Enhanced aesthetics – landscaping, gardens and green space
- » Inclusion of retail – coffee, restaurants and convenience goods
- » Expanded options for affordable housing

## FOCUSED OUTREACH - TRADITIONALLY UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS

An important emphasis of the outreach effort for the SW LRT project was a focus on including traditionally underrepresented communities, generally defined as communities made up of members of racial/ethnic minorities, low-income populations, persons with limited-English proficiency, members of the disability community, and populations with higher than median rates of transit dependency.

In order to reach members of these communities, listening sessions were held to host deeper conversations with smaller groups of participants, and receive detailed information from stakeholders or members of the public with a common interest or affiliation (for example, members of a cultural or community group, members of a local chamber of commerce, or civic group with an interest and knowledge of previous stages of the work). Community groups that are Corridor of Opportunity grantees were included in focused listening sessions.

Although listening sessions varied slightly in format across stations, all sessions sought to obtain resident responses to the following issues:

- » How SW LRT may fit into participants' daily travel needs
- » How bus riders may connect to and from each station area
- » How pedestrians and bicycle riders may access each station area
- » What improvements may be made to the design ideas already developed so the system may work better for system users

Listening session participants were supportive of the SW LRT. In locations ranging from Minneapolis to Eden Prairie, meeting attendees stated that the new line will greatly enhance their ability to "travel to more places" and they were appreciative that stations would be located in close proximity to where they live. They also commented that as the line is designed, care needs to be given to providing safe and convenient access for people on foot and in wheelchairs.



*Community events*



*Focused outreach*



*Listening sessions*

## ELECTRONIC OUTREACH

Supplementing face-to-face meeting opportunities, the planning process for the SW Investment Framework also included a number of electronic outreach tools.

### SW LRT Community Works Website – Beyond the Rails

The primary focus of the Community Works website is the SW LRT Corridor. The website includes links to prior studies and planning efforts, background information on the project, summaries of open houses and meetings, and copies of planning concepts and initiatives. The site is also a means to directly solicit input. It provided both updated information on public meetings and with a click of a mouse, allowed people to directly contribute their ideas about areas around the planned stations. [www.swlrtccommunityworks.org](http://www.swlrtccommunityworks.org)

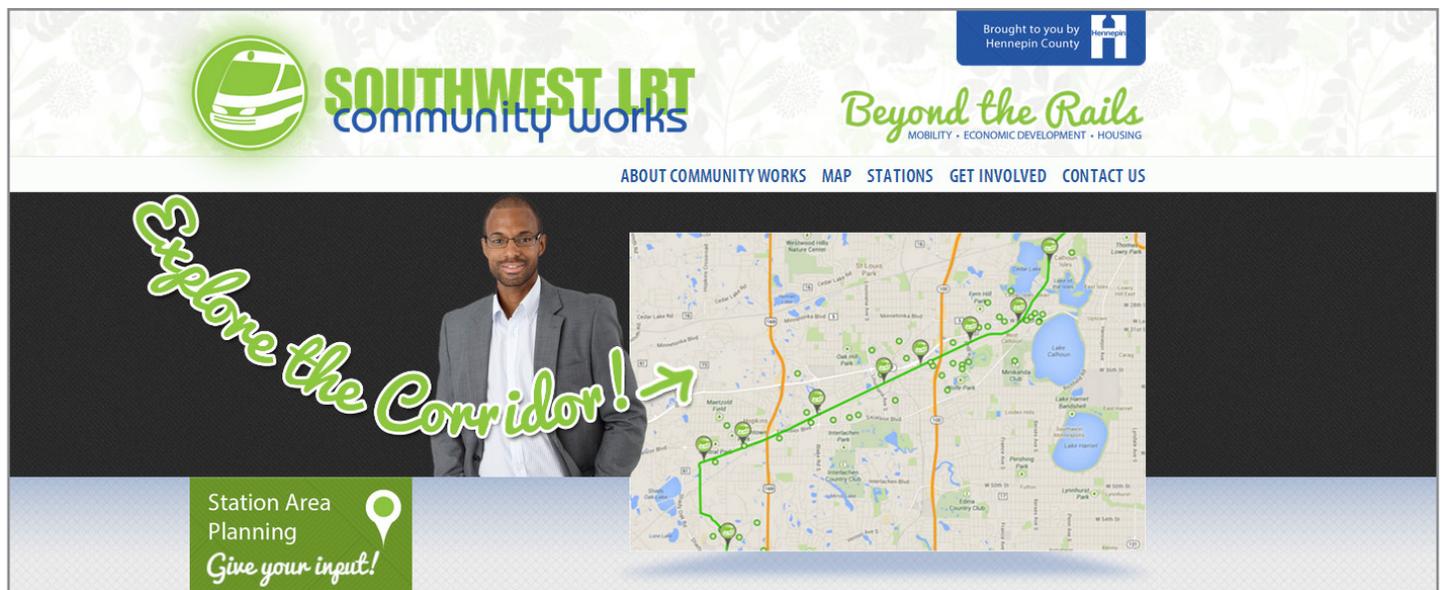
### MindMixer

Through MindMixer, Hennepin County hosted an interactive site for community dialogue about how areas around proposed Southwest LRT stations might change to take advantage of the coming LRT. Using an active online interface, people were asked about how they are likely to get to a station and what they would like to see in the station area. The site also encouraged participants to post photographs illustrating examples of what they would like to see in the station areas.

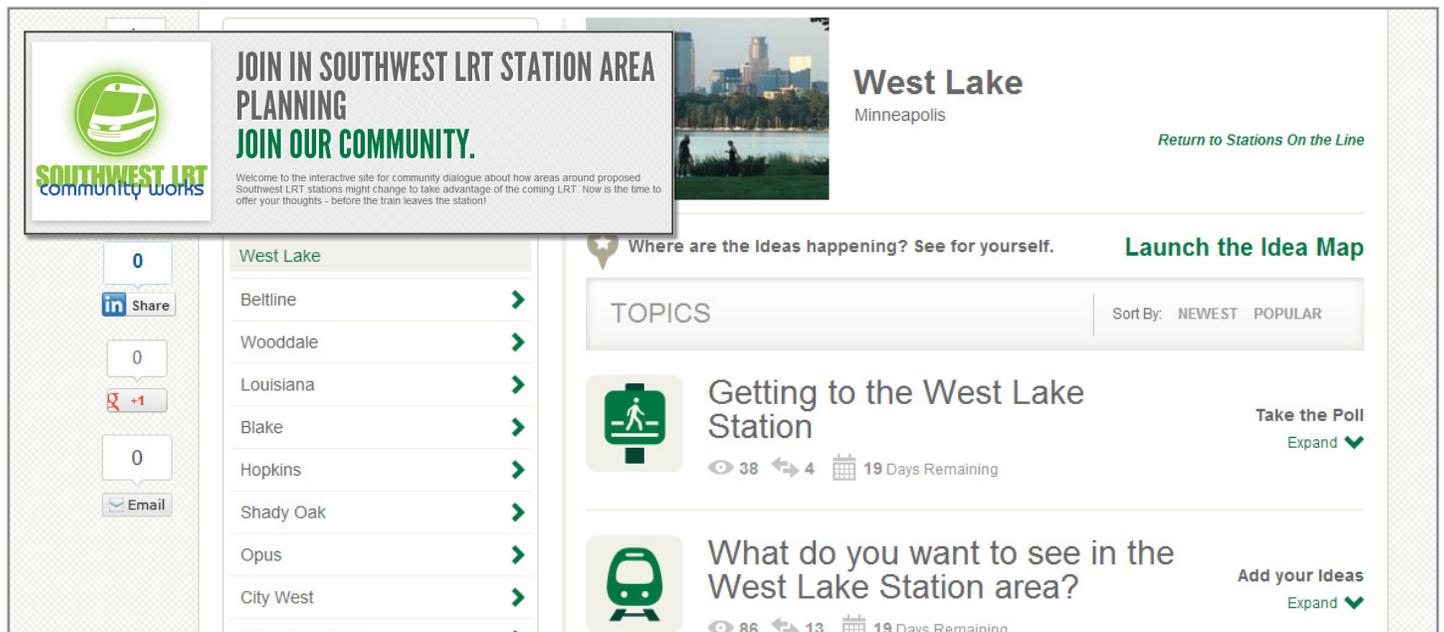
<http://www.swbeyondtherails.com/>

### Tablet Surveys

A brief survey was developed and made available via tablet in electronic form. The survey which was used as part of the listening sessions, covered participant's familiarity with the LRT project, knowledge about the different transit locations being considered, and the potential usefulness of the transit line for their future travel.



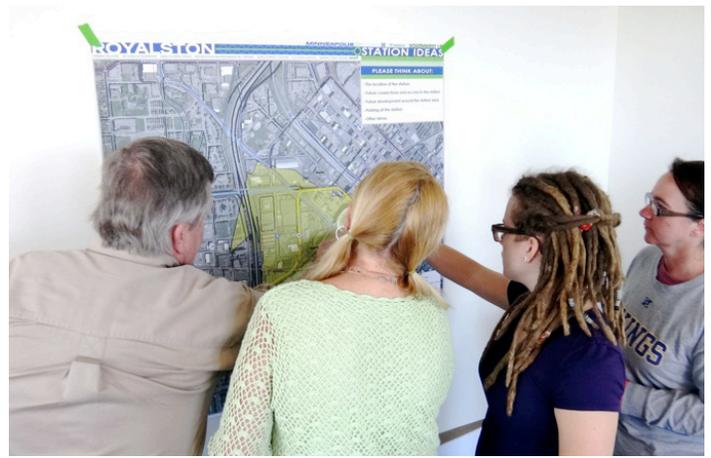
Screenshot of the Southwest LRT Community Works website ([www.swlrtccommunityworks.org](http://www.swlrtccommunityworks.org))



Screenshot of Southwest LRT Community Works' interactive MindMixer website ([www.swbeyondtherails.com](http://www.swbeyondtherails.com))



SW LRT Community Works Steering Committee



Community Outreach

## CORRIDOR-WIDE OUTREACH

The planning and design of the SW LRT line is overseen by a number of committees including both elected officials and members of the general public. As the Investment Framework was being assembled, meetings with committees served to provide updates on the status of the project and more importantly, direct input on ideas and concepts as they were being developed. Committees providing ongoing input included:

### **Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee**

The Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee has broad membership including elected officials from Hennepin County and the cities of Eden Prairie, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka, St. Louis Park, Minneapolis; the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board; and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. Additional members include representatives from the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, the Metropolitan Council, the Urban Land Institute; the Southwest LRT Community Advisory Committee, and the Southwest LRT Business Advisory Committee. Meeting monthly, the Steering Committee provided direction at key points during the planning process.

### **SW LRT Community Works Technical Implementation Committee (TIC)**

The Technical Implementation Committee is a staff working group comprised of representatives of the Steering Committee partners. The TIC provided a review of the Investment Framework planning process as well as direct feedback on the organization and content of the final plan document. A TIC Principals group made up of one representative of each community and a representative of the Southwest Project Office also met monthly to provide a more focused review during the project.

### **Community Advisory Committee**

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is made up of community representatives who advise the Steering Committee and the Corridor Management Committee during the planning and implementation of the light rail line. They reviewed key concepts and ideas during the TSAAP planning process.

### **Business Advisory Committee**

The Business Advisory Committee, composed of business representatives, provides input during the planning and implementation of the SW LRT line. Station area development concepts that were developed early in the TSAAP process were reviewed by the BAC to ensure that planning reflected the needs and interests of area businesses.

### **Southwest Investment Partnership**

Representing many of the major employers along the SW LRT line, the Southwest Investment Partnership was established to help facilitate the involvement of the private sector in future development supportive of transit. The Partnership provided another forum for direct input to the TSAAP process.

### **Southwest Project Office (SPO)**

The Southwest Project Office is charged with the design and construction of the SW LRT line. Information on the Investment Framework was included as part of SPO public outreach efforts either as a direct part of presentations or as supplementary information available to all meeting participants.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Specific, local community outreach also provided direct input from elected officials, community organizations, and interested residents and business owners. Outreach efforts included:

- » Meetings with City Councils
- » Meetings with City boards and commissions
- » Meetings with neighborhood associations
- » Meetings with bicycle advisory committees
- » Meetings with pedestrian advisory committees
- » Presentation materials at community festivals
- » Information posted on individual city websites

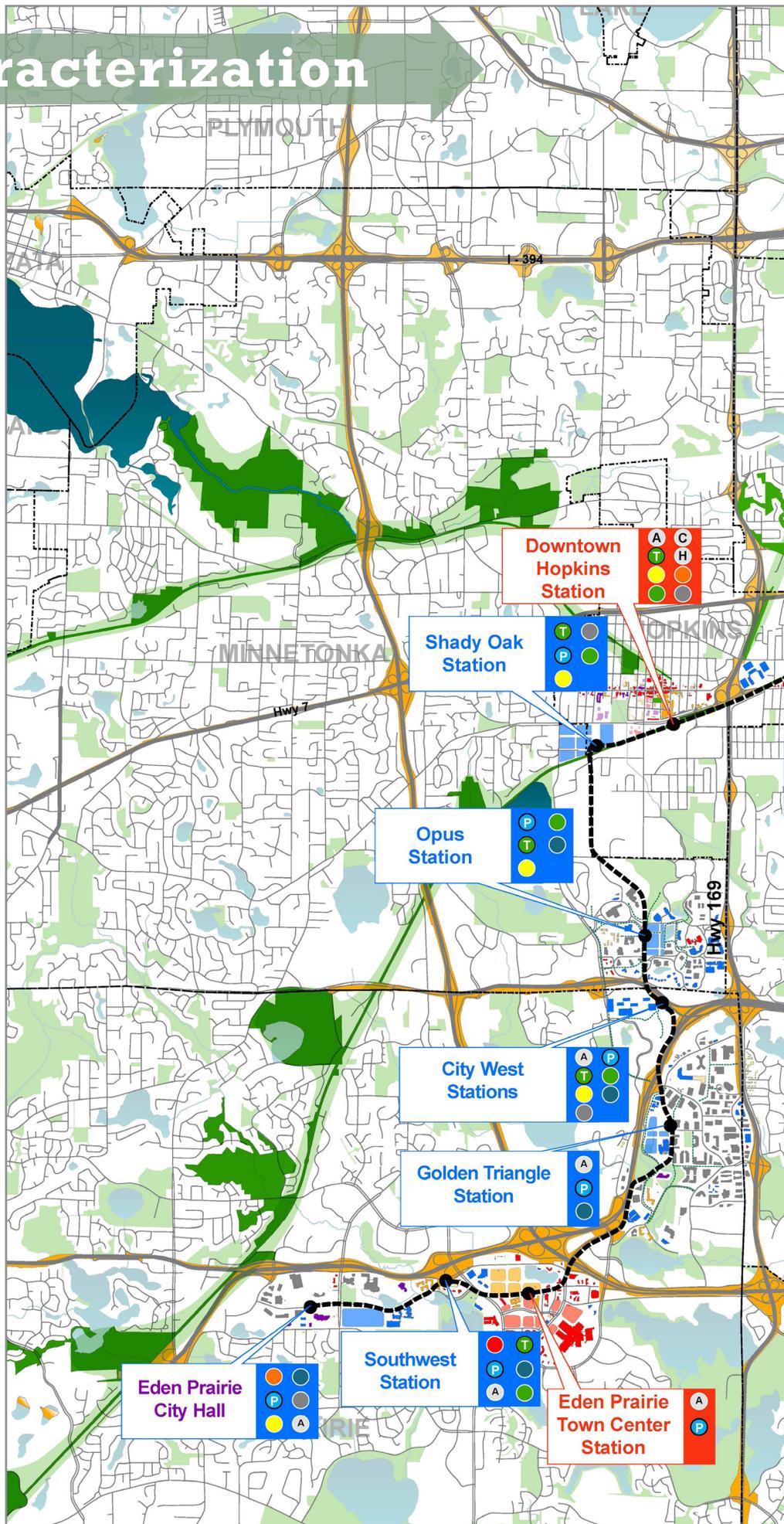
# Corridor Characterization

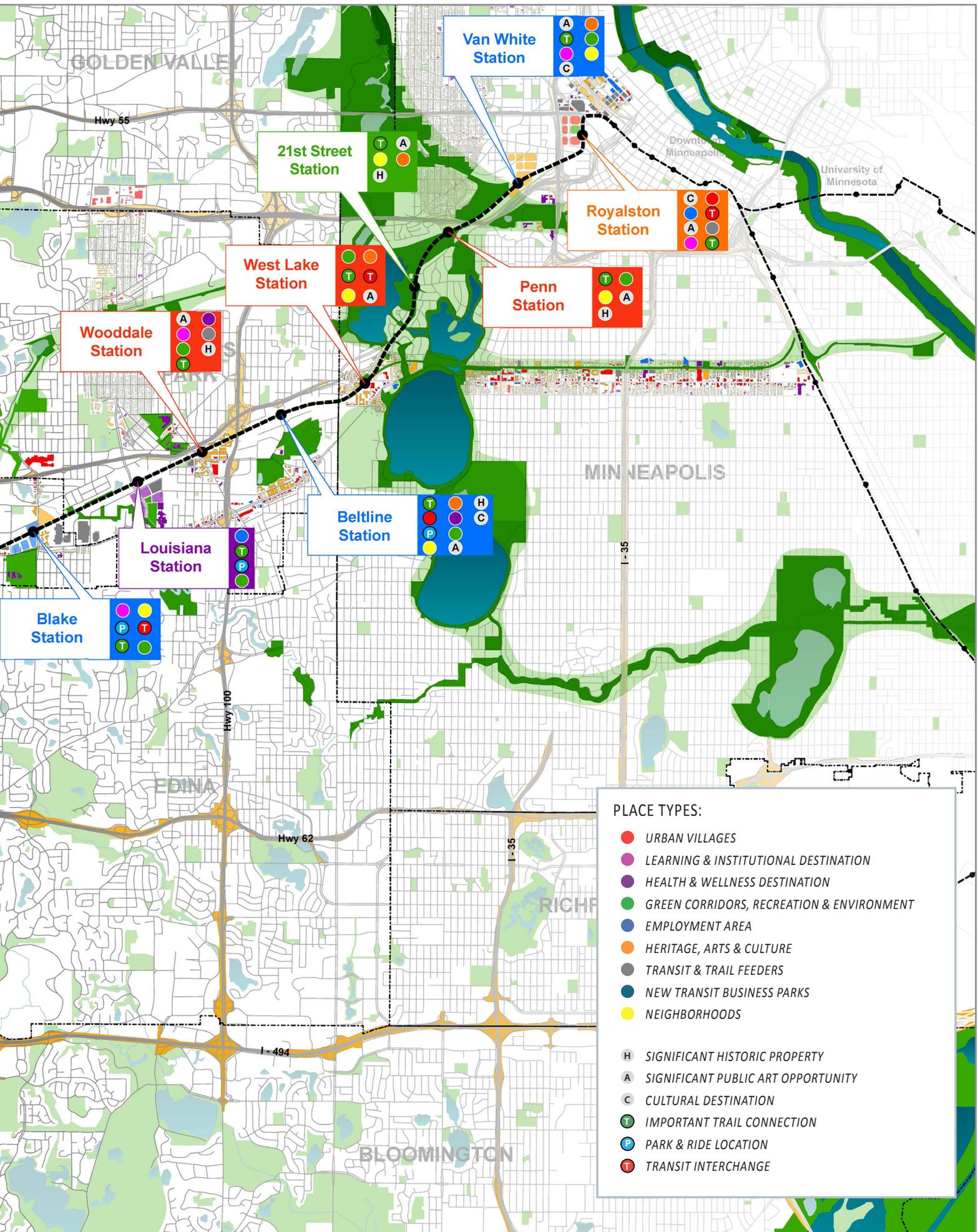
## OVERVIEW

Over its 15 mile length, the Southwest LRT Corridor passes through five different municipalities. Although generally characterized as a “jobs line”, a closer look at the line and its 17 stations reveals that it is much more. The Southwest LRT Corridor is an interwoven string of interesting and unique places. While each of the stations is distinct, there are a number of systems and in some cases, common elements, features and characteristics that help connect station areas along the corridor and relate them to adjacent neighborhoods. The exhibit on the following pages illustrate the primary areas of influence surrounding each of the station areas as well as the key systems (streets, parks, corridors, etc.), features and characteristics with which they have a relationship.

## PLACE TYPES

When it opens in 2018, the Southwest LRT will connect a range of diverse communities and place types along its route including places to work, mixed use centers, public institutions and important recreational and open space assets. Nine different place types along the route have been identified by groups like the Urban Land Institute. These place types provide clues as to the types of infrastructure that can better help them support their functions on opening day and beyond.





**PLACE TYPES:**

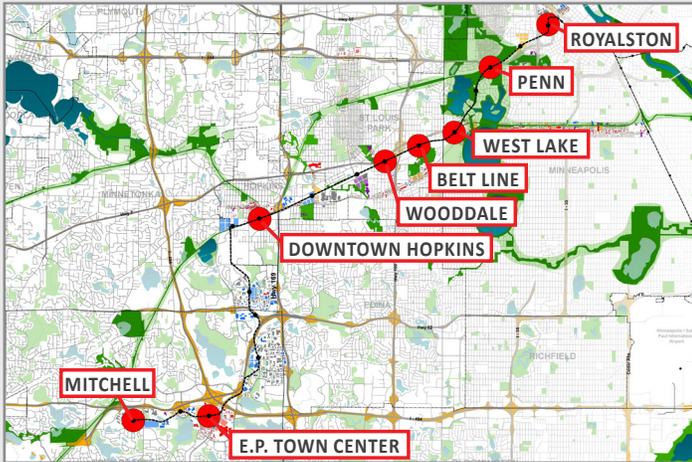
- URBAN VILLAGES
- LEARNING & INSTITUTIONAL DESTINATION
- HEALTH & WELLNESS DESTINATION
- GREEN CORRIDORS, RECREATION & ENVIRONMENT
- EMPLOYMENT AREA
- HERITAGE, ARTS & CULTURE
- TRANSIT & TRAIL FEEDERS
- NEW TRANSIT BUSINESS PARKS
- NEIGHBORHOODS

- H SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC PROPERTY
- A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITY
- C CULTURAL DESTINATION
- T IMPORTANT TRAIL CONNECTION
- P PARK & RIDE LOCATION
- T TRANSIT INTERCHANGE

## PLACE TYPE: URBAN VILLAGES

Urban Villages are traditional town centers or planned activity centers that provide for a mix of complementary land uses including places to live, work, shop and play. Everyday services and amenities in Urban Villages are located within close proximity (1/4 mile radius), this reduces reliance on cars, promotes greater levels of walking and cycling and supports transit ridership. The compactness, higher densities and pedestrian oriented nature of urban villages require that special attention be provided to the character and quality of streets and open spaces.



### Built Form and Land Use

- » Design transit infrastructure so that it integrates with its environment
- » Position infrastructure to support new development
- » Sensitive fill gaps in the street with new buildings that relate to the scale and character of adjacent development
- » Encourage new development that contains a mix of uses that can be vertically integrated into buildings with active uses located at street level

### Public Realm

- » Provide high quality supports pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users such as wider sidewalks, street furniture and weather protection
- » Create direct and safe routes to existing public open spaces and where possible, establish new public open spaces with new development

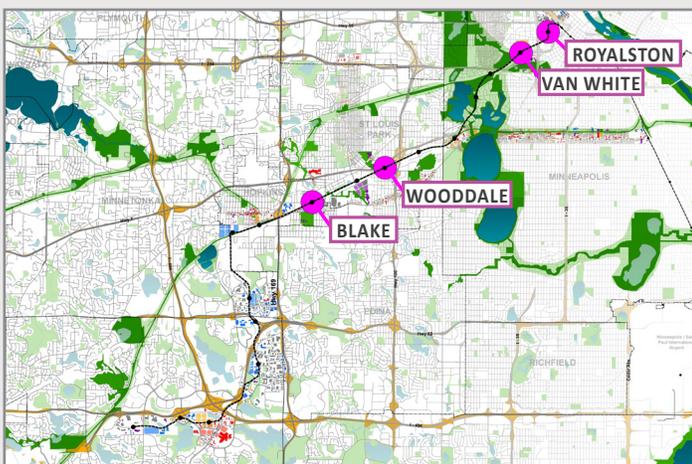
### Mobility

- » Provide parking below-grade or in shared parking structures to ensure greater opportunities for active uses at grade
- » Introduce cycling lanes and related cycling facilities along key routes
- » Reduce dedicated turning lanes and reduce curb radii to re-balance streets in favor of pedestrians and cyclists
- » Maximize crossing points and establish a fine grained street and block network that allows for ease of movement for all modes of transportation
- » Discourage park and ride facilities that included large paved areas that will detract from the character of the center



## PLACE TYPE: LEARNING & INSTITUTIONAL

Colleges, secondary schools and other academic institutions represent major destinations along the corridor. While many of these places function to support students, they also serve as vital community hubs and places for social gatherings. Enhanced connections between these facilities and transit will make it more inviting for students and community residents to walk or ride transit to these institutions and will help reduce automobile traffic in these areas. Many students travel outside of their communities to take advantage of co-ops and apprenticeships offered in business and employment areas.



### Built Form and Land Use

- » Provide parking at the rear of buildings away from transit stops, station areas and key connecting routes
- » Locate major campus activities such as student centers, libraries and eateries adjacent to transit stops/stations

### Public Realm

- » Focus streetscape, sidewalk and crossings improvements on existing routes leading to and from schools and institutions

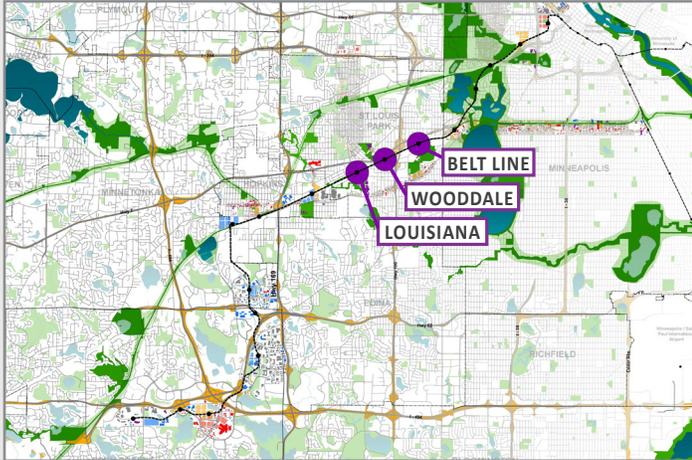
### Mobility

- » Formalize existing and extend new access routes to create a well-defined pattern of walkways leading to and from schools and institutions
- » Encourage campus enhancements that improve connectivity to and integration of transit services
- » Incorporate enhanced cycling facilities and amenities including sheltered racks, fountains, and free or low cost pumps



## PLACE TYPE: HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health and Wellness areas are close to hospitals, medical/healing centers and other health care related services including senior facilities and supportive services. The design and layout of these areas should help achieve an environment for patients, families and employees that is safe, convenient and accessible for people with all ability levels. To support and enhance the overall experience of these uses, design features around these spaces should reduce or eliminate barriers to pedestrian traveling to and from the station area.



### Built Form and Land Use

- » Where feasible, locate transit stops/stations and employee shuttle drop-off/pick-up locations in close proximity to the primary health and wellness building entrance
- » Provide overhangs, awnings or other weather protection features along significant routes

### Public Realm

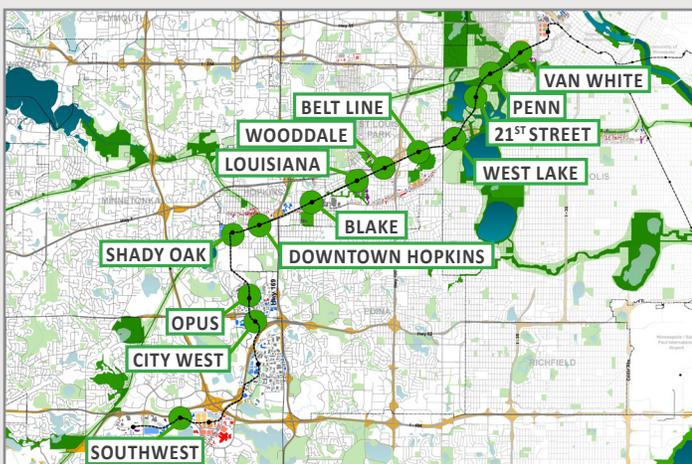
- » Focus on accessibility enhancements including curb cuts, crossing enhancements, benches and wider sidewalks leading to and from the station
- » Incorporate street plantings, street furniture and public arts with an emphasis on health and wellness to enhance the pedestrian experience
- » Incorporate pedestrian oriented lighting along key connecting routes to support evening patients and shift workers

### Mobility

- » Target wayfinding highlighting accessible routes to and from the station
- » Design access to station platforms to be accessible for all users
- » Create direct routes with clear sight-lines and enhanced lighting for evening users
- » Where distances between transit and health and wellness facilities are far, consider providing shuttle services

## PLACE TYPE: GREEN CORRIDOR, RECREATION & ENVIRONMENT

Parks, open spaces and natural areas along the corridor form an important part of the public realm. These areas help establish the identity and character of neighborhoods they relate to and can act as gateways to significant natural features such as lakes, beaches and trails. A strong network of linked green spaces connected to transit can provide both formal and informal recreational uses for neighborhood residents and visitors, particularly if supported by amenities that cater to recreation users



### Built Form and Land Use

- » Focus on providing amenities for users including pedestrian trails, restrooms and changing rooms, water fountains and picnic facilities
- » Explore opportunities for pavilion retail, education and awareness or classroom opportunities that can help to animate adjacent public spaces
- » Incorporate green building features that emphasize the relationship to nearby natural/open space features

### Public Realm

- » **ADD PUBLIC REALM BULLETS**

### Mobility

- » Extend existing trail networks to integrate with the station and establish clear open space connections to and from the station areas
- » Provide enhanced cycling amenities such as short- and long-term bike facilities
- » Incorporate wayfinding into area trails and recreational amenities
- » Create clear pedestrian access routes that enhance sightlines and safety

## PLACE TYPE: EMPLOYMENT

There are many major employment areas along the corridor. Along with accommodating office and industrial activities, these spaces provide opportunities for clusters of innovation where research and development can take shape. The traditional organization of buildings and road networks in employment areas has often resulted in inefficient street patterns that leads to increased distances and travel time. This has reduced the attractiveness of public transportation to and from these areas. Improving travel options through the creation of pedestrian and cycling facilities is needed to help transition away from these largely auto-dominated employment areas.



### Built Form and Land Use

- » Encourage a greater mix of uses along key routes to and from the station
- » Encourage shared amenities such as public squares and courtyards to link surrounding buildings. Where possible, position these outdoors spaces to face public streets
- » Ensure doors are located where they are easily accessible from area sidewalks and trails

### Public Realm

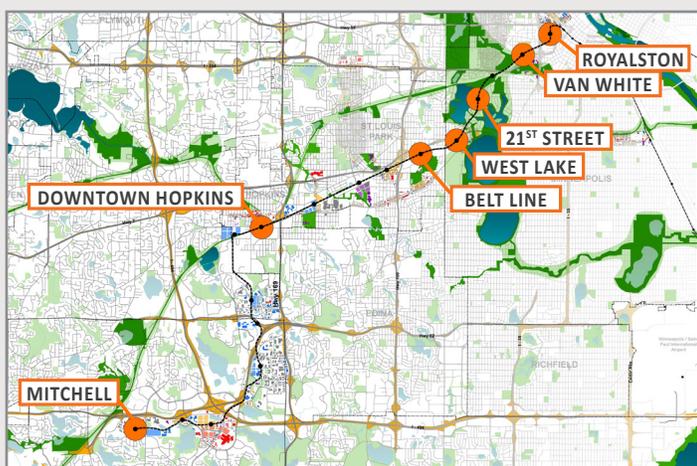
- » Ensure pedestrian links are continuous and extend directly to the main entrance of buildings
- » Locate outdoor lighting in areas that enable users to easily identify different routes and buildings

### Mobility

- » Consolidate driveways and access points along key routes, and where feasible establish shared access and parking to help further minimize driveways
- » Introducing mid-block connections between sites to support walking to businesses further from the station
- » Provide enhanced cycling facilities and incorporate bike lockers to facilitate riding from the station to work.
- » Ensure sidewalks are provided where possible on both sides of the streets and incorporate pedestrian supports including street trees

## PLACE TYPE: HERITAGE, ARTS & CULTURE

Cultural and Heritage assets play an important role in communities. They represent the history, community values and the aspirations they hope to carry into the future. These spaces can take a variety of forms – gallery building, monument or cultural landscapes and they often provide significant cultural, social and economic benefits. Maximizing opportunities to better connect and promote these locations can benefit surrounding communities through improved tourism, enhanced civic pride, education and awareness, community participation and new opportunities for arts and cultural activities.



### Built Form and Land Use

- » Encourage the rehabilitation of historic properties, and ensure that all new developments are compatible with the distinctive qualities of adjacent historic properties.
- » Incorporate landscaping, buffering or other forms of mitigation measures where there may be potential impacts

### Public Realm

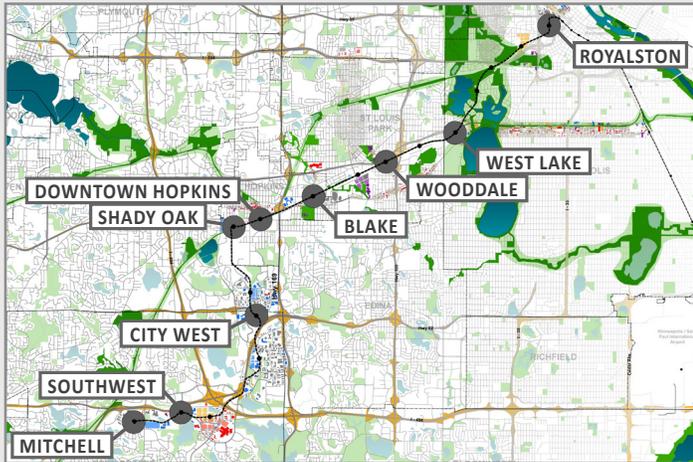
- » Where appropriate, incorporate special streetscape and landscape treatment to further celebrate heritage/art and culture zones
- » Integrate artwork or other features into the design of the station that reflects local heritage or arts and cultural themes

### Mobility

- » Incorporate wayfinding and signage to inform passengers of important points of interest
- » Locate transit stops/stations in close proximity to cultural heritage venues for ease of access and to promote visibility of the sites
- » Use public art to connect places and destinations that are located away from the corridor

## PLACE TYPE: TRANSIT & TRAIL FEEDERS

Bus, transit and trail feeders are found at the intersection of transit lines. These locations provide access to a range of destinations and allow commuters to make transfers between different modes and systems to get around. Given the higher number of users that frequent these areas, provisions for travelers that enhance ease of movement such as wider sidewalks and prominent wayfinding are encouraged. High quality facilities that support people walking, riding or cycling should also be integrated to further improve the function of these spaces.



### Built Form and Land Use

- » Design station facilities and infrastructure to minimize transfer distances and create direct, comfortable connections between modes
- » Ensure that the design of station facilities does not inhibit new development adjacent to the station over time

### Public Realm

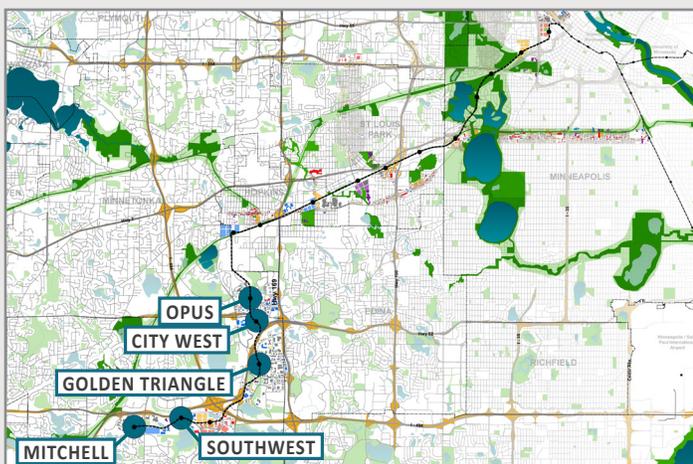
- » Develop new open space that can act as receiving points for station user and facilitate transfer between modes
- » Develop new open spaces that can serve as multi-functional spaces for activities such as markets or celebrations that can benefit from their high level of accessibility
- » Ensure that station areas are designed to provide adequate, comfortable and safe waiting environments for transit users

### Mobility

- » Incorporate wayfinding signage to direct travelers between different modes of transit
- » Extend path and trail networks to integrate with the station
- » Provide enhanced level of cycling amenity
- » Establish safe and efficient parking facilities that prioritize ride-sharing and car sharing
- » Incorporate wider sidewalks in areas where higher levels of transfers are anticipated to maintain a comfortable pedestrian experience

## PLACE TYPE: NEW TRANSIT BUSINESS PARKS

New Transit Business Parks have similar characteristics to employment areas but today are more suburban in nature. Their location on the periphery of cities along with the dispersed layout of buildings and large areas of surface parking has resulted in poor connections from these business parks to public transportation. As transit services expand there is an opportunity to integrate transit and new pedestrian and cycling networks that can help to enhance access for people wishing to walk, bike, or take transit. This will make it possible for them to access area amenities and services without having to drive.



### Built Form and Land Use

- » Encourage infill and intensification at the station location in order to increase densities and provide amenities for area employees
- » Orient new buildings so that they actively address streets and key connections
- » Locate active uses such as company cafeterias adjacent to transit stops or along key routes connecting to and from station areas

### Public Realm

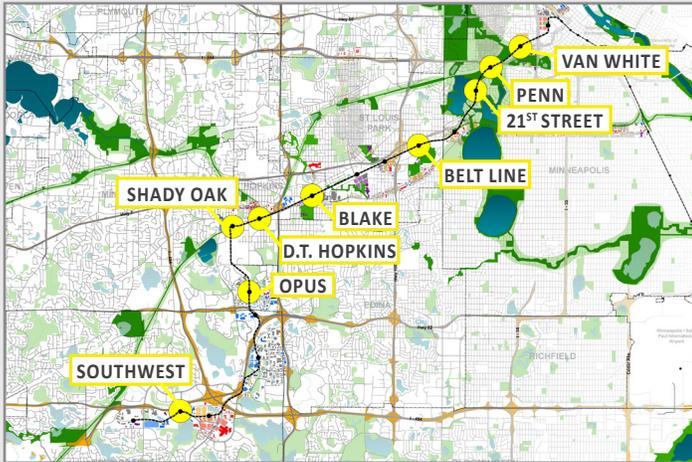
- » Extend trail networks and mid-block connections to connect with the station and provide sidewalks along key pedestrian routes
- » Identify a finer grained pattern of street and block and work to secure it over time
- » Incorporate wayfinding directing users to transit and their destinations
- » Ensure a maintenance program exists to clear pedestrian and cycling routes during winter months
- » Explore the potential for the provision of a shuttle service to serve employees that work at a distance from the station

### Mobility

- » Establish a positive pedestrian environment through the introduction of wider sidewalks, tree plantings and other amenities

## PLACE TYPE: NEIGHBORHOODS

In addition to providing places to live, neighborhoods support a variety of local activities for everyday life including daycares, community centers, places of worship and smaller retailers. The introduction of new transit services in close proximity to some neighborhoods will enable residents to more easily access additional amenities and services located further away. In areas where access to transit may encourage neighbourhood growth, the focus should be on managing new development so that it is sensitive to the character and scale of the existing neighborhood.



### Built Form and Land Use

- » Encourage infill that can be sensitively integrated into the neighborhood to support increases in neighborhood density
- » Where new development is proposed, ensure it is a similar scale and character to the existing neighborhood or that taller buildings transition in scale down to lower-rise buildings

### Public Realm

- » Incorporate pedestrian amenities around transit stops including shelters, seating areas and street lighting

### Mobility

- » Provide safe and attractive pedestrian connections from places of residence to transit corridors and key community destinations
- » Ensure sidewalks are located on at least one side of the street and extend sidewalks in areas where there are existing gaps
- » Locate stops in areas with maximum access to residents
- » Explore the potential for new mid-block connections that reduce travel distance between neighborhood streets and transit

