The Alliance
A University District Partnership

The District

Reinforce established neighborhood patterns.
• In Interior SE Como.
• In West Marcy-Holmes (Holmes).
• In South Central Prospect Park.
• In East and West Cedar Riverside.

Focus growth toward areas of change and opportunity.
• Adjacent to the University.
• Well-served by transit.
• Established and planned business districts.
• Along primary streets.

Establish a strong District identity.
• At regional entrances to the District.
• Along a series of great connecting Avenues.

Prioritize a complete and connected public realm.
• Between and within neighborhoods.
• Between neighborhoods and the University.
• Of streets, sidewalks, and open spaces.
• That links to planned and existing river, park, and trail systems.

Transformative Projects
Based on neighborhood input, relevance to themes, and the potential for District-wide impact, five sites were selected to demonstrate some ways transformative projects can have a positive effect on the neighborhoods and the District as a whole. The five transformative sites are: (A) Washington Avenue Trench in Cedar Riverside, (B) 15th Avenue Blocks in Marcy-Holmes, (C) Van Cleve Park/15th Avenue Blocks in Southeast Como, (D) 29th Avenue LRT Station Area in Prospect Park, and (E) U of M/Motley Area in Prospect Park.
(A) Reconnect the neighborhood across the Washington Avenue Trench. Build “ribbon buildings” along the Cedar Avenue bridge to make a more lively, pedestrian-friendly, and transit-oriented environment.

(B) Improve connections between Cedar Avenue and the new LRT station. Connect to the LRT station with a glass atrium building. This improves visibility between Cedar Avenue and the station below, highlights the station’s presence on Cedar Avenue, and increases safety at both the street and station levels.

(C) Reclaim land adjacent to the Washington Avenue trench. Use land made available by the removal of entrance and exit ramps on the south side of the trench for new development. New buildings further stitch the neighborhood together and offer opportunities for partnerships between the University and the neighborhood.

(D) Improve the physical relationship between the University and the neighborhood. Encourage new buildings to face the street with windows, doors, and person-oriented facades.
Challenges
The Washington Avenue Trench disconnects Cedar Riverside. It lies at a lower grade than surrounding streets, occupies a vast amount of land, and operates primarily for cars. About 740 feet separates buildings on the south and north sides of the trench. Narrow sidewalks and access ramps make a hostile pedestrian environment. The new LRT station will be located in the trench, well below the Cedar Avenue elevation.

Solutions & Benefits
The Central Corridor LRT will operate in the Washington Avenue Trench, and a station is planned for just east of Cedar Avenue. To accommodate the LRT, automobile access to Cedar Avenue and to the U of M’s East Bank campus will change. With these changes comes a rare opportunity to stitch Cedar Riverside back together and prioritize connections between the neighborhood, the University, and the LRT.

• Reclaim land currently occupied by entrance and exit ramps for new development. The presence of new buildings on these sites reduces the distance across the trench, brings new life and activity to the dynamic Cedar Avenue commercial area, and provides the University, the neighborhood, and the District with new academic, residential, and commercial opportunities.

• Reurbanize the Cedar Avenue bridge with “ribbon buildings” along the edges. Active uses on the bridge transform the harsh pedestrian and cyclist environment to a balanced, lively, multi-modal commercial and LRT station area. This solution provides ideal connections within the neighborhood and between the neighborhood, the LRT, and the University.

• Provide parking ramps beneath new trench buildings for Cedar Avenue business patrons and people traveling to the U of M’s East Bank. Parking reservoirs will encourage people to patronize businesses, restaurants, and cultural amenities on Cedar Avenue and to use the LRT for access to the East Bank. This has the added District-wide benefit of minimizing traffic through other neighborhoods since Washington Avenue will be closed to cars on the East Bank.

Precedents
There are times when a bridge should celebrate itself, and there are times when it should blend in with the urban fabric. Like in Columbus, Ohio, the Cedar Avenue bridge can be better used as a part of the neighborhood by making it more urban, just like the area it occupies once was.
(A) Focus growth at neighborhood edges. New development of a larger scale and higher density along I-35W and 10th, 15th, and University Avenues preserves the lower scale, lower density neighborhood core.

(B) Celebrate University Avenue as a great District street. Streetscape improvements unify District avenues and balance University Avenue’s role as a neighborhood street and regional arterial.

(C) Design new infrastructure with neighborhood-friendly amenities and connections. Buildings front a new pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly Granary Parkway so it acts as a neighborhood street. A link between East River Road and SE Main Street improves connections and access to the river.

(D) Establish a District and neighborhood gateway at the I-35W intersection. Architecturally significant gateway buildings on sites adjacent to the intersection highlight it as a District and neighborhood entrance.

(E) Reconnect the neighborhood across I-35W. Well-designed pedestrian bridges across the trench connect the neighborhood and create a gateway identity.
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Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood

Challenges
Marcy-Holmes has a rich collection of historically significant homes. Given the neighborhood’s proximity to both the University and Downtown, development pressures are high and much of the older housing stock is at risk. Marcy-Holmes seeks a balance between the preservation of historically significant homes and new development. To do so in a way that is beneficial to the neighborhood, Marcy-Holmes supports high quality, higher density development along its edges.

Solutions & Benefits
Because of their location at the edge of Dinkytown and the University, the blocks along 15th Avenue in Marcy-Holmes offer the ideal opportunity for new higher density redevelopment that is in keeping with the overall neighborhood strategy.

• Provide a wider range of higher density housing options. Higher density housing not only relieves pressure on the neighborhood core, but also offers the opportunity to support on-site amenities and management services. Higher density housing appeals to residents that value proximity to the University.

• Transition building scales to integrate the higher density edge with the lower density core. To respect the low-rise historic core of the neighborhood, new redevelopment should locate tallest portions of the buildings on 15th Avenue and the lower buildings on 14th Avenue.

• Create a 15th Avenue promenade that connects Marcy-Holmes, SE Como, and the University. Fifteenth Avenue is a primary intra-District avenue as it traverses neighborhoods and links directly to the University. If designed as a promenade, with wide sidewalks, bike lanes, and multiple residential entrances, 15th Avenue will add to the District’s identity.

Precedents
New development should enhance and improve the quality of the neighborhood. On 15th Avenue, new development should both create an active promenade and respect the scale of the neighborhood.

15th Avenue Promenade

Transitions between building scales (Madison, WI)

Many entries, active patios, and wide sidewalks (Portland, OR)
(A) Prioritize a high quality 15th Avenue streetscape. Fifteenth Avenue is one of the most-traveled pedestrian and cyclist routes in Minneapolis. Streetscape improvements like wide promenade sidewalks, active porches, and buildings with multiple entries enliven and beautify the street.

(B) Maximize underused sites. Higher density buildings with structured parking offer opportunities to diversify housing options, relieve parking pressures, and make more efficient use of land.

(C) Prioritize open space connections and amenities. Courtyards that face Van Cleve Park extend the park into the neighborhood and provide opportunities for activities like community gardening.

(D) Improve 15th Avenue appearance. New, high quality, well-designed buildings reinforce neighborhood character and unify and enhance the "front door" to SE Como.

(E) Focus improvements along the 18th-Como-15th Avenue route. This is the primary route to the University through SE Como. Reinforcing the central neighborhood commercial node provides a high-quality, neighborhood feel and welcoming experience.
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Southeast Como Neighborhood

Challenges
The identity and image of Southeast Como has declined in recent years due to several factors, including:

• High student rental housing demands. A wave of conversions from single-family owner-occupied homes to overcrowded rental houses has occurred recently.
• A lack of investment along 15th and 18th Avenues. The primary route through the neighborhood to the University does not present the attractive and welcoming SE Como appearance that it should.
• Growing parking demands. Overflow University parking on neighborhood streets limits available parking for residents and visitors.
• The closing of Tuttle School. A valued building located in the heart of the neighborhood is mostly empty and in need of active uses.

Solutions & Benefits
New investments should restore neighborhood stability and reinforce neighborhood identity. Offering a range of housing choices targeted at existing residents, enhancing the viability of the commercial node, and improving the appearance and quality of 15th, 18th, and Como Avenues are some ways to achieve this.

• Redevelop the 15th Avenue blocks with medium density housing and underground parking. Redevelopment should present a new medium-density residential frontage across from Van Cleve Park, with courtyards that face the park and architecture that reflects neighborhood character. Parking should be accommodated beneath residential buildings.
• Make appropriate transitions in building scale and use between 15th and 17th Avenues. Medium scale buildings are appropriate along 15th Avenue, and smaller scale buildings are appropriate along 17th Avenue. Transitions between the two scales should occur within the block.
• Reinforce the Como Avenue node with commercial uses. Existing and new buildings should be commercial buildings with person-scaled storefronts.
• Explore creative options for reusing Tuttle School. Reviving the site and building with uses that benefit the community, such as senior housing, community education, urban farming, or child care, will provide much needed amenities to the neighborhood.

Precedents
Multi-family buildings should be designed to fit in with the neighborhood. Large square blocks should accommodate courtyards or semi-public space to organize buildings and provide amenities.
(A) Develop a lively LRT station area. A well-designed central plaza, a mix of commercial and residential uses, and a focus on local, daily-use services establish a dynamic urban village and District destination.

(B) Focus high density uses between the 29th Avenue LRT station and the East Gateway. The 29th Avenue station area offers a significant opportunity for a true transit-oriented development in the Twin Cities. A high density, mixed-use development supports more people in a smaller area, and therefore supports a diversity of housing types, allows for more open space, and fosters a more sustainable mix of uses.

(C) Reconnect the street grid. New street connections create a complete network that promotes walking, helps with wayfinding, and establishes more efficient development parcels.

(D) Celebrate University Avenue as a great District street. A boulevard and promenade will establish University Avenue as a District gateway, promote a human-scaled environment, and facilitate safer, more comfortable street crossing.

(E) Maximize open space opportunities and connections. High-quality streetscapes and strong urban building frontage reinforce Granary Park, the Grand Rounds Missing Link, and urban plazas.

(F) Design context-appropriate transitions. Locating taller buildings on the north side of University Avenue and smaller buildings on the south side maximizes solar access to University Avenue and sensitive transitions between existing and new buildings.
Challenges

Strong regional growth, strong University job growth, and an increased interest in urban living will put significant development pressure on neighborhoods surrounding the University. The District is challenged with defining both the areas and the patterns of new growth. Prospect Park offers approximately 20 blocks of underutilized industrial land north of University Avenue that can become a once-in-a-generation opportunity to develop high density job growth, housing, and a self-sustaining mix of uses that defines a new urban village and neighborhood center.

Solutions & Benefits

Central Corridor LRT and a redefined University Avenue can radically transform the physical environment and the real estate dynamics of a 20 block area north of University Avenue. An extended street grid can create developable and pedestrian friendly blocks, new open spaces and boulevards can connect to the Grand Rounds, and a concentrated critical mass of employees and residents can create demand for community retail and services.

• **Build a new street grid that creates pedestrian scaled and transit-oriented development.** A more complete street grid will extend the urban fabric north of University Avenue, creating blocks that can be developed with a mix of uses. New development north of University Avenue can provide goods and services within walking distance to new and existing District residents and employees.

• **Connect to regional open space amenities.** New development blocks north of University Avenue can help complete the Grand Rounds as well as create a regional stormwater facility at the proposed Granary Park. Development adjacent to LRT Stations can become community focal points with plazas, courtyards, and other gathering spaces.

• **Carefully transition the scale of buildings.** New development should be sensitive to existing residential neighborhoods. Buildings that gradually increase in size from 2-4 stories on the south side of University Avenue to 8-20 stories along Granary Road will help maintain the cherished patterns of existing neighborhoods while creating new patterns in new growth areas.

Precedents

Identity, comfort, and visual appeal are important components of successful streets and spaces. mixed-use, human-oriented environment.
Guiding Principles
from the U of M Twin Cities Campus Master Plan 2009

Building Community
(1) Cultivate a genuine sense of community.
(2) Strengthen connections to adjacent communities.

Creating a Model Campus
(3) Create a cohesive, memorable system of public spaces.
(4) Provide a compatible and distinctive built environment.
(5) Steward historic buildings and landscapes.
(6) Foster a safe, secure and accessible campus environment.

Integrating Local and Regional Systems
(7) Preserve and enhance natural systems and features.
(8) Develop integrated transportation systems emphasizing pedestrians, bicycles, and transit.
(9) Optimize the use of campus land and facilities and apply best practices.

Integrating Local and Regional Systems
(10) Develop a campus that is environmentally and operationally sustainable.
(11) Utilize the campus as a living laboratory to advance the University’s mission.
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University Growth

Challenges
Managing the expectations of growth around the University of Minnesota is critical to stabilizing neighborhoods and creating a predictable real estate market. The University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus Master Plan 2009 anticipates significant growth in the East Gateway area around the TCF Bank Stadium as well as in the area between Washington Avenue, Fulton Street, and Huron Boulevard.

Solutions & Benefits (Fulton Street)
Development along Fulton Street should create a defined edge and front door to campus. South of Fulton Street, new development should enhance District housing options by building on the success of Dartmouth Place.

Fulton Street itself should become a signature street with a high quality pedestrian and bicycle environment that connects the campus, the Grand Rounds, and East River Parkway.

Huron Boulevard should also be a signature street, carrying high volumes of traffic and prioritizing new, well-designed high density housing opportunities.

Solutions & Benefits (East Gateway)
New lab buildings surrounding the stadium should create a series of mid-block courtyards that connect several groupings of buildings.

A new intermodal station adjacent to the 23rd Avenue LRT station will become an important portal to the University, providing an easy alternative to driving and immediate access to the east campus edge.

Precedents
Streets through and along the edges of the University should become signature streets. The street and adjacent buildings can establish the transition between the University and the neighborhoods.

A multi-modal street along the edge of a campus (Madison, WI)
A high volume avenue along the edge of an urban university (Montreal, Quebec)

East Gateway Urban Design Plan design and image from JK-SmithGroup