

Franklin Avenue LRT Task Force



Final Report
March 1, 2000

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For additional information about LRT, you are welcome to visit the web site mentioned above, which has links to other LRT sites, as well as the complete text of this report. You can also write Seward Redesign at 2412 E. Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55406, call us at (612) 338-8729, or email us at info@sewardredesign.org.

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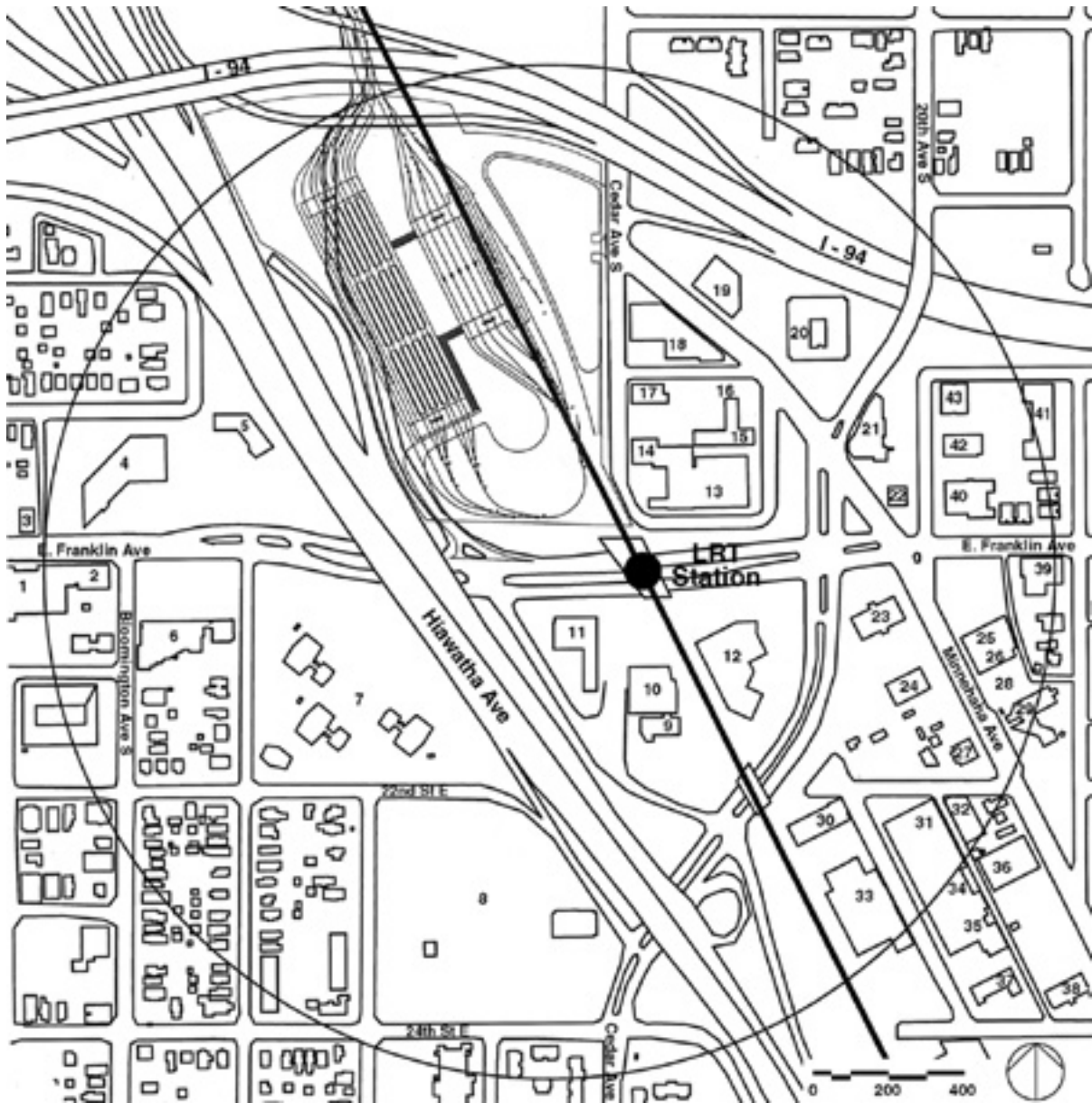


Figure #1: This map identifies the major businesses, institutions, and apartment buildings within a one-quarter mile radius of the Franklin Avenue LRT station.

1. Franklin Business Center; 2. Tom & Jerries; 3. Free Store; 4. American Indian Center; 5. Anishinabe Wakiagun; 6. U of M Community Clinic; 7. Public Housing; 8. East Phillips Park; 9. Ambles; 10. Dadson's Machining; 11. Cedar Box Company; 12. American Indian OIC; 13. For Lease; 14. Cabooze; 15. Easy Rider; 16. Contemp. Transportation; 17. Whiskey Junction; 18. Minnesota Grinding; 19. New Dimension Child Care; 20. Minnehaha 94 Apartments; 21. NovaCare; 22. Taco Bell; 23. Fairview MIS; 24. US West; 25. Fairview MIS; 26. Minnehaha Center; 27. Apartments; 28. Mental Health Counseling; 29. Senior Housing; 30-33. Bystrom Brothers; 34. A-Craft Windows; 35. Garlock-French Roofing; 36. AA Equipment Co.; 37. Gutter Brothers; 38. Coastal Seafood; 39. Blue Nile Restaurant; 40. Fire Station #7; 41-43. Apartments.

I. Executive Summary

The Franklin Avenue Light Rail Transit (LRT) Task Force has brought together residents, property owners, organizations and businesses from Seward and Phillips to create a community vision for future development around the proposed Franklin Avenue LRT station. A core group of 25 participants from both neighborhoods has met 12 times since July of 1999 to study the Franklin Avenue station area, review community plans already in progress, identify the critical issues for community stakeholders, and develop recommendations about how these issues should be addressed. This report is the result of that effort.

Construction of the Hiawatha LRT line and the Franklin Avenue station provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Phillips and Seward to redevelop a neglected tract of vacant and inefficiently developed commercial-industrial land in the heart of the city. The impact of the LRT project on this area can be enormous. It can also be minimal – or even negative – if the infrastructure for this first LRT line is constructed without laying the groundwork for positive, transit-oriented development. In conjunction with community development projects in progress elsewhere on Franklin, Hiawatha Avenue and Lake Street, carefully coordinated development around the Franklin LRT station can significantly alter long-term patterns of disinvestment in south central Minneapolis. Even if construction of LRT is blocked or delayed, the Task Force believes that this community vision will provide a valuable guide to future development in this pivotal location.

Critical Issues

Since the community first became involved in planning for the Franklin Avenue LRT station over a year and a half ago, local residents, property owners, and business people have consistently identified four critical issues:

- 1. The impact of the LRT maintenance facility**, called the shops and yards, on the Franklin Avenue LRT station area and adjacent the neighborhoods.
- 2. The challenge of providing safe, convenient access** through this isolated area for people on foot, and for those using wheelchairs, bikes, busses, or cars.
- 3. The potential for significant new development** in the station area, and the need for proactive, public involvement to maximize this potential.
- 4. The need for effective public oversight of the project** to ensure a balanced approach to critical infrastructure and development decisions.

The community's first concern, and an issue on which the Task Force spent a considerable amount of time and energy, is the location of the shops and yards. The negative impact of this large industrial facility on an area that is already isolated, and the preclusion of significant development opportunities, have led many in the community to advocate for the relocation of the facility.

While some in the community continue to pursue the relocation of the shops and yards – including the advocates of the Ventura Village Vision – the Task Force as a whole concluded that decisions made by the governing jurisdictions in the past have made relocation politically unfeasible today. Although the Task Force is not pleased with this reality, it decided to accept it and adopted a strategy of aggressive mitigation. The location of the shops and yards is the result of a public process that has to balance the needs of the regional transit system as a whole against the needs of particular neighborhoods. The Task Force reasoned that, since placement of the shops and yards at the Franklin Avenue station serves the larger system, a significant public commitment to ameliorate the negative impact of this decision is also appropriate. This report provides specific recommendations to inform and guide that public commitment.

Ultimately, the Task Force believes that the LRT line can have significant positive potential for both the Phillips and Seward neighborhoods, but that this potential will only be realized if the critical issues identified by the community, including the location of the shops and yards, are successfully addressed.

The Task Force has developed a community vision for the Franklin Avenue station area that addresses these critical issues and provides recommendations to guide ongoing planning and implementation. This vision has four elements:

- **goals, strategies and guiding principles** for development in the station area;
- **site planning alternatives** that improve access and development potential;
- **land-use recommendations** for specific sites within the station area; and
- **process recommendations** to ensure appropriate public influence on the design of the LRT infrastructure and on future development activity.

Goals, Strategies & Guiding Principles

Given the isolated location of the Franklin Avenue LRT station, the community has identified two main goals for redevelopment of the station area. The first is to enliven the station area with new mixed-use development that creates a safe, inviting pedestrian environment 24 hours a day. The second is to enhance access to the station area from all directions.

The primary barrier to new development in the station area is the presence of the shops and yards, while the primary barriers to safe access are Hiawatha Avenue to the west and the intersection of Cedar, Franklin and Minnehaha Avenues to the east. The Task Force focused much of its discussion of strategies on mitigating the effect of these primary barriers to access and development.

The key strategy to accomplish new development in the immediate station area is to work with LRT planners to revise the layout of the shops and yards facility, in order to preserve the maximum land area for “buffering” development along the Franklin and Cedar Avenue pedestrian corridors. The key strategy to provide improved access to the station area from the west is to incorporate bridges or skyways above Hiawatha Avenue into development plans. The key strategy to improve access from the east is the redesign of the street pattern to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

These key strategies were informed by a set of guiding principles identified by the Task Force: that the station and surrounding area should be safe and accessible, and that the economic and environmental impact of new development should be distributed fairly across neighborhoods and throughout the region. The Task Force intends that these goals, principles and guiding strategies will bridge the gap between Seward and Phillips, and lead to development of the station area as an inviting gateway to both neighborhoods and to the larger community.

Site Planning Alternatives

Because the present pattern of streets and overpasses within the station area creates significant barriers to access and severely limits development potential, the Task Force has developed four site plan alternatives that address these barriers to access and development. While the degree of intervention – and therefore the associated cost – varies with each alternative, these studies demonstrate that with even a minor change in the existing street patterns, it is possible to achieve a significant improvement in both access to the LRT station and development potential around it.

Land Use Recommendations

Having explored possible improvements to the planning of the station area, the Task Force considered which land uses are best suited to specific locations. The resulting land-use recommendations focus on four zones within the station area, and identify appropriate land uses for each zone.

In the first zone, along Franklin Avenue between Hiawatha and Cedar, the Task Force recommends new multi-level development that makes it possible for people to enter a building at street level on Franklin and take an elevator or escalator to the LRT platform. This also creates the opportunity for a skyway to new development west of Hiawatha, which is an ideal solution to the problem of pedestrian access to the station area from the west. The Task Force recommends a mix of office and convenience retail for this area, and has begun discussions with potential tenants, including the Metro Transit Police.

Development at this pivotal location is presently constrained by both the layout of the south end of the shops and yards and the width of Franklin Avenue itself, both of which the Task Force believes can be redesigned without adversely affecting their function. Coordination of these infrastructure design projects with planning for new development is a critical process issue.

In the second zone, along Franklin between Hiawatha and Bloomington, the Task Force recommends new development related to existing uses: medium-density housing, adjacent to Anishinabe Wakiagun on the north side and the public high rises on the south side, and expansion of the existing Community-University Health Care Clinic. Both of these developments will strengthen the pedestrian environment along Franklin to the west of Hiawatha Avenue.

In the third and fourth zones, farther north and south of Franklin to the east of Hiawatha, the Task Force recommends mixed-use development with an emphasis on housing to the north and office and institutional uses to the south. While these areas are already developed and contain a variety of uses, the Task Force believes

there is significant long-term potential for a more unified and transit-oriented development vision. Potential development partners for these zones include institutions that have a strong commitment to the area, including the University of Minnesota, Fairview Health Care, and Augsburg College.

Next Steps

The completion of this report is one step in a complex set of ongoing planning and implementation activities related to the Hiawatha LRT line. In order to ensure appropriate community involvement over the long term, the Task Force has developed a set of process recommendations and next steps.

The most immediate recommendation is that the Hiawatha LRT Control Board and Corridor Management Committee work with members of the Task Force to ensure that the request for proposals for construction of the shops and yards contains specific criteria to encourage a compact, efficient design of the facility that preserves the maximum potential for transit-oriented development along Franklin and Cedar Avenues. A similar effort will be required to coordinate planning for the realignment of Franklin Avenue through the station area.

Another immediate step will be the participation of Task Force members on the advisory committees of the Station Area Planning process under the direction of the Minneapolis Planning Department. The consulting team for this planning process will receive this report, as well as complete information on the other community planning efforts that were reviewed by the Task Force.

Development organizations in Seward and Phillips will continue to pursue resources, partners and projects within the Franklin Avenue LRT station area. Seward Redesign will continue to facilitate communication and coordination of these activities, and will reconvene the Task Force on a quarterly basis. Members of the Task Force will continue to work with the Minneapolis Planning Department, the Community Development Agency, Hennepin County, Metro Transit, the Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation to advocate for the community vision outlined in this report. Working together, we can ensure that the Hiawatha LRT line – and the new development that occurs around it – benefit everyone in the community.

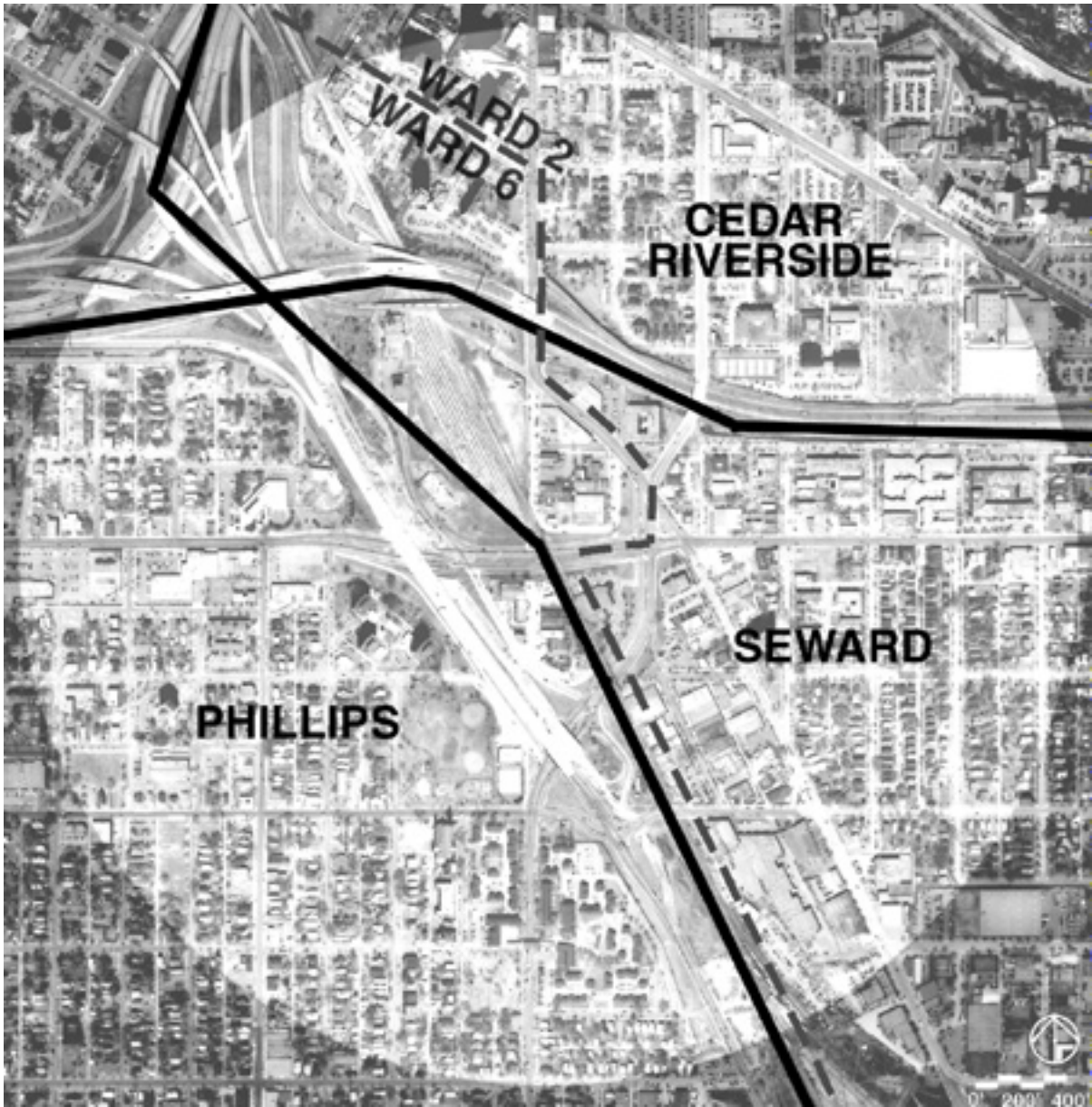


Figure #2: This aerial photo highlights the study area within a one-half mile radius of the proposed Franklin Avenue LRT station, and the neighborhood boundaries (solid) and ward boundaries (dashed) within the station area.

I. Purpose & Process

Community Involvement

Community involvement in planning for the Hiawatha LRT line began when the Metropolitan Council organized the Hiawatha LRT Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The Council and CAC hosted a series of planning workshops in the fall of 1998 to gather community input on station area design issues and expectations for the LRT system. Because the initial CAC workshops involved people from all of the neighborhoods along the Hiawatha corridor, there was little time to consider individual station areas in much detail, or to discuss development issues beyond the immediate station areas. Nevertheless, the four critical issues identified by the community for the Franklin Avenue station, as outlined in this report, were clearly articulated during these early meetings and haven't changed significantly since.

Task Force Origin & Purpose

Seward Redesign, a nonprofit community development corporation based in the Seward neighborhood, was instrumental in organizing community input and response to the CAC workshops. During the process, it became clear that the challenges and opportunities presented by the Franklin Avenue LRT station would require additional community discussion and input. It was also clear that because the LRT line forms the boundary between Phillips and Seward south of Franklin Avenue, any meaningful planning for long-term development along the line would need to engage participants from both neighborhoods.

Seward Redesign approached the Minneapolis Foundation with a request to support a community-based task force process involving participants from both the Seward and Phillips neighborhoods. The foundation granted the request, and Redesign began outreach work to identify interested residents, organizations, businesses and property owners. Initial informational meetings held in June of 1999 were attended by over 80 people, of whom over 40 people expressed interest in participating in an intensive 6-month task force process.

The goal of the Task Force is to influence development within the Franklin Avenue station area to ensure that it provides safe, convenient access to LRT for local residents and generates new development that benefits surrounding community. To accomplish this goal, Task Force identified critical issues and created a community vision for future development within one-half mile of the Franklin Avenue LRT station. The work of the Task Force builds on the planning workshops hosted by the CAC, and provides timely input and ongoing community oversight to the Station Area Planning process for the Franklin and Cedar/Riverside station areas, which is under the direction of the Minneapolis Planning Department.

Time Line & Process

The Task Force began meeting in July of 1999 and completed this final report in February of 2000. Participation in the Task Force was well balanced between the Seward and Phillips neighborhoods, with a mix of residents, organizational representatives, business people, and commercial property owners. Attendance at individual meetings varied from 25 to over 40 people, with a consistent core group of 25 participants. Minutes and agendas were mailed to a growing list of over 90 interested parties. (A complete list of Task Force participants is included in the Appendix.)

The following outline summarizes the content of the twelve Task Force meetings that Seward Redesign facilitated over this eight-month period:

- Mtg. 1 - July 15:** *organize & provide information on LRT planning to date; discuss shops & yards and other immediate issues;*
- Mtg. 2 - Aug. 12:** *provide in-depth information on site, zoning, design constraints; discuss community development goals;*
- Mtg. 3 - Sep. 9:** *review impressions from walking the site; begin review of related community planning in progress ;*
- Mtg. 4 - Sep. 23:** *complete review of related community planning in progress;*
- Mtg. 5 - Oct. 28:** *review corridor market study & demographics; determine strategy regarding shops & yards;*
- Mtg. 6 - Nov. 11:** *discuss & rank development goals for the station area;*
- Mtg. 7 - Nov. 18:** *discuss & rank development strategies & guiding principles;*
- Mtg. 8 - Dec. 9:** *community meeting: revise & rank draft goals, strategies and principles; work on site planning alternatives;*
- Mtg. 9 - Jan. 6:** *revise & rank site planning alternatives; discuss land uses for specific areas within station area;*
- Mtg. 10 - Jan. 27:** *complete discussion of land uses within specific areas;*
- Mtg. 11 - Feb. 10:** *review first draft of Task Force report; discuss ongoing involvement and implementation strategies;*
- Mtg. 12 - Feb. 17:** *approve final draft of Task Force report; finalize ongoing involvement & implementation strategies; celebrate!*

III. Critical Issues

Since the community first became involved in planning for the Franklin Avenue LRT station over a year and a half ago, residents, property owners, and business people have consistently identified four critical issues. The first is the impact of the LRT maintenance facility, called the shops and yards, on the Franklin Avenue LRT station area and the adjacent neighborhoods. Second is the challenge of providing safe, convenient access through this isolated area for people on foot, as well as for those using wheelchairs, bikes, busses, or cars. Third is the potential for significant new development in the station area, and the need for proactive, public involvement to maximize this potential. And fourth is the need for effective public oversight of the project to ensure a balanced approach to critical infrastructure and development decisions.

Shops & Yards Impact

Standing on the railroad bridge over Franklin Avenue that is the proposed site for the Franklin Avenue LRT station, the view of the Minneapolis skyline is truly stunning. It is not surprising that many neighborhood residents were shocked to learn that this prime location had been reserved for the LRT maintenance and storage facility. Surely, they reasoned, there is a higher and better use for 13 acres of undeveloped land a stone's throw from the thriving downtown business district and bisected by a brand-new LRT line!



Figure #3: *The view of downtown Minneapolis from the Franklin Avenue station.*

The location of the shops and yards also directly affects the second main issue identified by the community: providing safe, inviting access to the LRT station. The prospect of walking past fenced train yards, through an area that is already perceived as isolated and unsupervised, is a grave concern. The negative impact of this large industrial facility on an area that is already isolated – and the preclusion of significant development opportunities – have led many in the community to advocate for the relocation of the facility. During the past 18 months, representatives from the Seward and Phillips neighborhoods have met repeatedly with representatives of the governing jurisdictions to challenge this long-standing decision about the location of the shops and yards.

While some in the community continue to pursue the relocation of the shops and yards – including the advocates of the Ventura Village Vision – the Task Force as a whole concluded that decisions made by the governing jurisdictions in the past have made relocation politically unfeasible today. Although the Task Force is not pleased with this reality, it decided to accept it and adopted a strategy of aggressive mitigation. The location of the shops and yards is the result of a public process that has to balance the needs of the regional transit system as a whole against the needs of particular neighborhoods. The Task Force reasoned that, since placement of the shops and yards at the Franklin Avenue station serves the larger system, a significant public commitment to ameliorate the negative impact of this decision is also appropriate. This report provides specific recommendations to inform and guide that public commitment.

The first step in this mitigation strategy was the designation of a development area at the south end of the shops and yards, as recommended by community input to the Metropolitan Council. The Minneapolis City Council recently took another significant step by including the Franklin Avenue station on its short list of five priority development areas along the entire Hiawatha LRT line.

Ultimately, the Task Force believes that the LRT line has significant positive potential for both the Phillips and Seward neighborhoods, but that this potential will only be realized if decision to locate the shops and yards at Franklin Avenue, and the other critical issues identified here, are successfully addressed.

Providing Safe Access

The concrete wasteland between Seward and Phillips is completely inhospitable to pedestrian, wheelchair and bicycle activity. The absence of buildings along Franklin Avenue to provide activity and eyes on the street is part of the problem. The grade separation as Franklin Avenue drops beneath the LRT rail bridge and the Hiawatha Avenue/Highway 55 overpass further isolates pedestrians and others passing through this automobile-dominated “no-one’s land.” While safe access to the LRT station is a concern to residents of both neighborhoods, it is of particular concern in Phillips because of the two enormous barriers to the station area from the west: Hiawatha Avenue and the grade separation of Franklin Avenue from the LRT line above. The following photos illustrate the problem.



Figure #4: View approaching the LRT station area from the Phillips neighborhood.



Figure #5: View approaching the LRT station area from the Seward neighborhood.



Figure #6: North side of Franklin Avenue between Bloomington and Hiawatha Avenues.



Figure #7: North side of Franklin between Hiawatha and the LRT bridge and station.



Figure #8: North side of Franklin between the LRT bridge and station and Minnehaha Ave.



Figure #9: South side of Franklin between Minnehaha and the LRT bridge and station.



Figure #10: South side of Franklin between the LRT bridge and station and Hiawatha Ave.



Figure #11: South side of Franklin Avenue between Hiawatha and Bloomington Avenues.

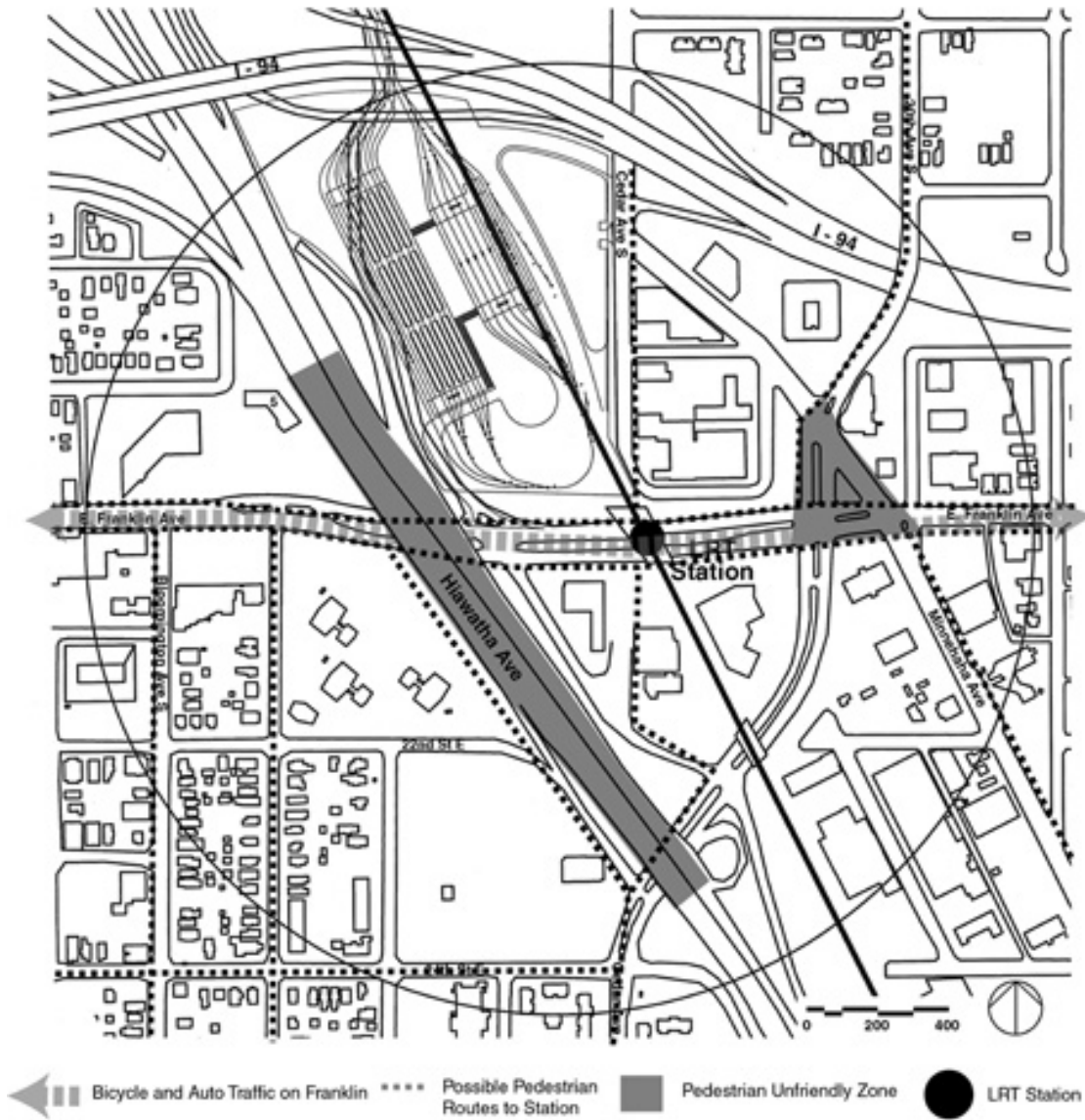


Figure #12: This diagram illustrates the major barriers to access to the station.

The diagram above illustrates the major barriers to access within the Franklin Avenue LRT station area: the Hiawatha Avenue overpass on the west (from Phillips) and the intersection of Minnehaha, Franklin and Cedar on the east (from Seward). The Task Force explored a variety of approaches to enhancing access to the LRT station area from both directions, paying particular attention to access from the west, and to the fact that, for many bike riders, passing through the station area is more important than getting to the station. A related issue is providing a strong bike and pedestrian connection from the surrounding streets to the bike and pedestrian path that follows along side the LRT line. The following diagram illustrates four solutions to providing access from both Phillips and Seward. Each solution would require a different combination of resources and related development activity to succeed. As a result, the four solutions are presented in the order in which the Task Force believes they can most likely be accomplished.

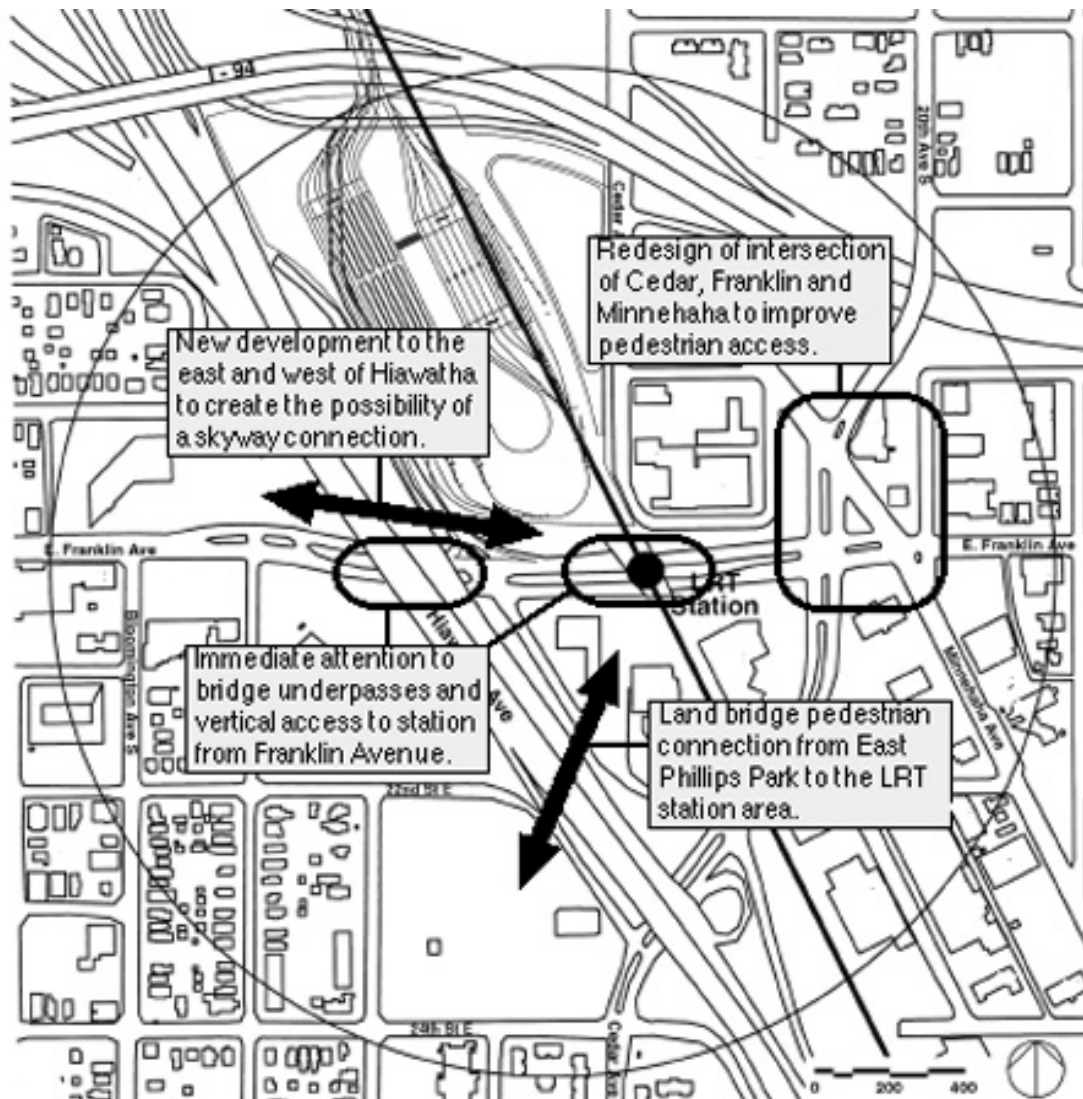


Figure #13: This diagram illustrates solutions to access to the station area.

First of all, the areas beneath the Hiawatha and LRT bridges, and the design of vertical access from Franklin to the station platform, must be addressed as part of the initial station design and construction process. While the Task Force’s long-term goal is to stimulate new development and provide access alternatives above Hiawatha Avenue, these under-bridge areas must be enhanced in the short term with lighting, public art, and safety measures including video cameras, call boxes, and routine monitoring. Vertical access from Franklin to the LRT platform should include elevators, stairs, and ramps suitable for pedestrians, bicycles and wheelchair users. The cost of these elements must be included in the initial construction budget, and the work must be complete when the line opens.

Secondly, the Task Force recommends that multi-level development on the north side of Franklin, between Hiawatha and the LRT platform be the first priority for new construction. This is the most important location from the standpoint of providing access through the station area from the west. As new development is planned along Franklin to either side of the LRT line, it should accommodate grade-level access to the station platform for pedestrians and wheelchair users, as well as bikeways for those passing through the station area.

Finally, a pedestrian overpass from East Phillips Park to the southwest corner of the immediate station area should be considered as a direct means of providing access to the station from the residential areas in Phillips south of Franklin. The timing of this project will depend on the redevelopment of the light-industrial properties immediately to the southwest of the LRT platform and the availability of additional resources for public infrastructure, which is why the Task Force believes this project is likely to follow the three described above.

Development Potential

The need for new development at the Franklin Avenue station naturally raises the question of what type of development can be attracted to this area and sustained over time. The market study for transit-oriented development commissioned by the city concluded that the main variable in the level of private development stimulated by this first LRT line will be the level of public investment at critical stations, especially Franklin Avenue. The reason is simple: without public investment, the Franklin Avenue station – and the Hiawatha Line as a whole – are much less likely to succeed as catalysts for development. It is in everyone's best interests for this first line to demonstrate that LRT can in fact stimulate significant reinvestment in the central city.

The Task Force has concluded that public-private partnerships may be the most successful approach to new development in the short term. The Task Force has already begun discussions with a variety of potential private and public partners for development in the Franklin Avenue LRT station area, including the University of Minnesota, Augsburg College, and Fairview Health Care.

Balanced Priorities

Members of the Task Force and others in the community are concerned that the importance of planning for significant transit-oriented development in the immediate station areas has not had adequate influence on the decisions that are guiding the design and construction of the LRT infrastructure. The process to date has been driven by concerns of operational efficiency and initial costs. The impact of these infrastructure decisions on the short- and long-term potential for supportive development deserves equal consideration.

The most critical issue of this kind in the Franklin Avenue station area, as mentioned above, is the configuration of the shops and yards. The Task Force is committed to working with the governing jurisdictions to ensure that the design of this facility is as compact as possible, and that any impact on system cost or efficiency is weighed against the impact on development in the station area, and the effect of long-term development on tax base and community livability.

IV. Community Vision

The Task Force has developed a community vision for the Franklin Avenue station area that addresses these critical issues and provides recommendations to guide ongoing planning and implementation. The community vision has four elements: goals, strategies and guiding principles for development in the station area; site planning alternatives that improve access and development potential; land-use recommendations for specific sites within the station area; and process recommendations to ensure appropriate public influence on the design of the LRT infrastructure and on future development activity.

While the Task Force considered the impact of the Hiawatha LRT line on the entire area within a one-half mile radius of the Franklin Avenue station, it focused its attention on two critical areas. The first, outlined as area A on the map below, is the presently undeveloped site designated for the shops and yards. The second, outlined as area B, includes properties that are immediately adjacent to this undeveloped area. These are the areas that the Task Force considered in greatest detail. However, the goals, strategies and principles that follow can also be applied to area C, the rest of the one-half mile area.



Figure #14: Three study areas within a one-half mile radius of the station area.

Goals, Strategies & Guiding Principles

Before exploring specific land uses or project proposals, the Task Force developed and prioritized a set of development goals and strategies. The term “goal” refers to a broad outcome or community benefit that could be achieved by a variety of development-related activities within the LRT station area. The term “strategy” refers to a specific approach or development idea that might be used to achieve one of the community’s development goals. The term “guiding principle” refers to a positive guideline that can be applied to all development activity, regardless of the specific strategy or goal to which it relates.

After generating an initial list of potential goals and another of potential strategies, the Task Force grouped similar ideas into the outlines you see below. While the goals and strategies are listed in order of priority, based on informal “sticker exercises” at two public meetings, each goal and strategy is considered important and worth pursuing. The guiding principles are not ranked, since they are intended to relate, as a group, to all development within the station area.

Development Goals:

- 1. Enliven the station area with new development** that creates a safe, inviting pedestrian environment 24 hours-a-day:
 - Create high-density, mixed-use development that serves neighborhoods
 - Create a destination at the station that will attract visitors to area
- 2. Bridge the gap between the Phillips & Seward neighborhoods:**
 - Create gateway to neighborhood destinations (i.e. Ancient Traders, NCC)
 - Connect activity along Franklin Avenue between Phillips & Seward
 - Reclaim and create sense of ownership of the “no-one’s-land”
 - Market neighborhood destinations at LRT station
 - Integrate neighborhoods with the station area
- 3. Provide convenient integration of other transit modes with LRT:**
 - Improve transit integration throughout neighborhoods, not just at station
 - Increase frequency of related bus service
- 4. Strengthen pedestrian connections from all directions:**
 - Improve access to east end of pedestrian bridge at 24th Street
 - Make pedestrian connections to all neighborhoods work
- 5. Create/attract new living-wage jobs for local residents:**
 - Provide access to jobs and supportive services for local job seekers
 - Provide technology infrastructure (fiber optics) to support development
- 6. Create new mixed-income housing** with at least 20% of units affordable at 30% of Metro Median Income
 - Create land trusts to control housing cost for the long term
 - Use transit-oriented mortgages to reduce housing cost

7. **Create green connections** to Midtown Greenway, nearby parks
 - Create a “land bridge” over Hiawatha at East Phillips Park

Development Strategies:

1. **Reconfigure the shops and yards facility** to preserve the maximum development area along Franklin and Cedar
 - Reduce (or at least structure/condense) parking for LRT facility
 - Pursue development in “air rights” above some/all of shops & yards
 - Engage all public jurisdictions in aggressive mitigation strategies
 - Coordinate infrastructure design & RFP with mitigation strategies
 - Lobby for significant public investment/intervention in station area
2. **Concentrate new development along pedestrian and bike routes** to create safe 24-hour environments with many “eyes on the street”
 - Integrate new development along shops/yards edges at Franklin & Cedar
 - Locate mixed-use development with housing above at station site edges
 - Extend Cedar entertainment district (positive aspects) through station area
 - Partner with nearby institutions to develop immediate station area: i.e. U of M, Fairview, Augsburg
3. **Redesign the intersection of Cedar, Franklin & Minnehaha**
 - Redesign Cedar, Franklin & Minnehaha intersection (as round-about?)
 - Separate pedestrian/bike and vehicle circulation along busy streets
 - Narrow Minnehaha Avenue south of Franklin
4. **Create an integrated transit hub** that brings busses off the street and provides direct, sheltered access to the LRT platform
 - Create neighborhood circulator (trolley, horse carriage, shuttle bus)
5. **Provide regional services in station area for transit users**
 - Locate new child care facility at LRT station
6. **Extend new development along Hiawatha/Minnehaha corridors**
 - Locate more intense housing development south along Hiawatha Ave.
 - Consider locating regional amphitheater on greenway
 - Clarify and strengthen north/south commercial street (Cedar)

Guiding Principles:

The following principles are intended to guide the design and construction of all new development and transportation infrastructure within a one-half mile radius of the Franklin Avenue LRT station.

- Safe access for all LRT users, regardless of transportation mode or path.
- Equitable, accessible design for pedestrians, bikes & wheelchair users.
- Retail development should serve neighbors first, commuters second.
- Use multi-level development with different uses on different levels to bridge the level change between Franklin Avenue and the LRT station.
- Design for sustainability, including economic & environmental impact, equity (who is affected, who benefits, and fair use of resources), and maintenance.
- Re-introduce green space, natural materials, wherever possible.
- Re-establish traditional street grid to improve circulation, comprehension.
- Use comprehensive development approach to avoid problematic “gaps.”
- Train local residents for construction, maintenance, operations jobs.
- Create job-training program to support LRT employment opportunities.
- Site, landscape and building design should be inviting, welcoming.
- Incorporate energy-efficient design concepts, materials & systems.
- Provide on-site social services to residents of affordable housing.
- Integrate art that reflects the diversity of adjacent neighborhoods.
- Street-front development should have front and back access.
- No more “Berlin walls” dividing the community.

Site Planning Alternatives

The Task Force recognized early on that the present pattern of streets and overpasses within the Franklin station area creates significant barriers to access and severely limits development potential. In particular, the grade separation at Franklin and Hiawatha and the massive intersection of Franklin, Cedar and Minnehaha were identified as major barriers to access and development.

Over a period of several meetings, the Task Force explored a variety of site planning alternatives that address these two major barriers. Four of the most promising alternatives are described below. While the degree of intervention (and associated cost) varies with each alternative, these studies demonstrate that it is possible to achieve significant improvement in both access and development potential even with minor changes in the existing street patterns.



Figure #15: One-quarter mile radius area showing current street configuration of Franklin, Cedar and Minnehaha Avenues adjacent to the proposed LRT station.

Plan A: Realignment of Cedar Avenue

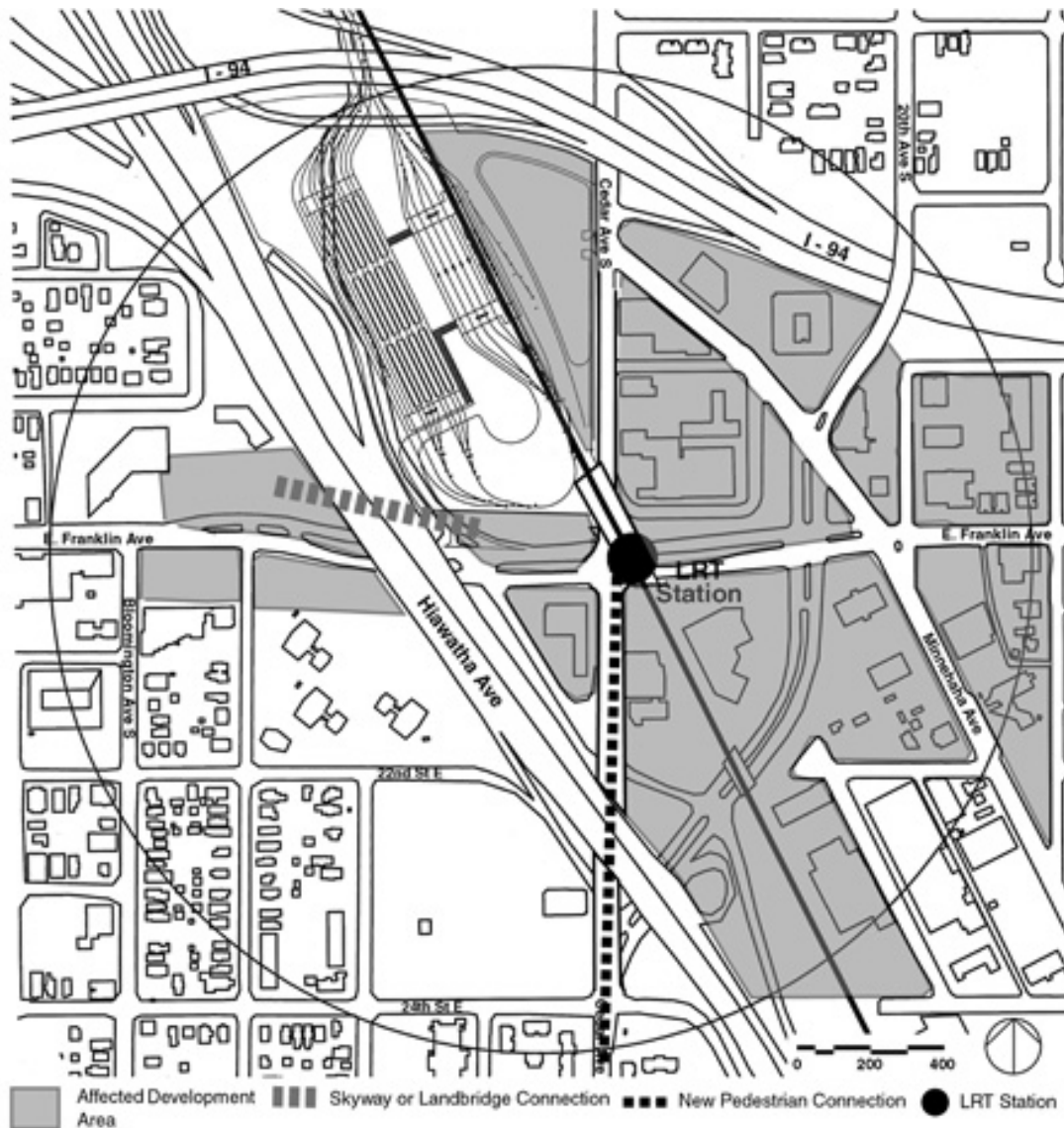


Figure #16: Plan A returns Cedar Avenue to its former north-south alignment, intersecting with Franklin Avenue beneath the LRT overpass.

Plan A provides dramatic benefits, both in terms of enhanced access to the LRT station and enhanced potential for transit-oriented development. By returning Cedar Avenue to its former alignment, and dropping the intersection of Cedar and Franklin beneath the LRT bridge, this plan brings bus and pedestrian traffic to a single access point directly beneath the station. It also greatly simplifies the intersection of Franklin and Minnehaha. If supported by new, multi-level development, this plan could simultaneously revive this isolated stretch of Franklin Avenue at the lower level and provide ideal bus and pedestrian access to the LRT station. Eliminating the curved portion of Cedar Avenue to the east provides a significant opportunity for new transit-oriented development on the south side of Franklin. Although this plan requires a high level of intervention, it was also the most popular alternative considered by the Task Force because of the enormous positive impact it could have in the long term.

Plan B: Redesign of Cedar-Franklin-Minnehaha Intersection

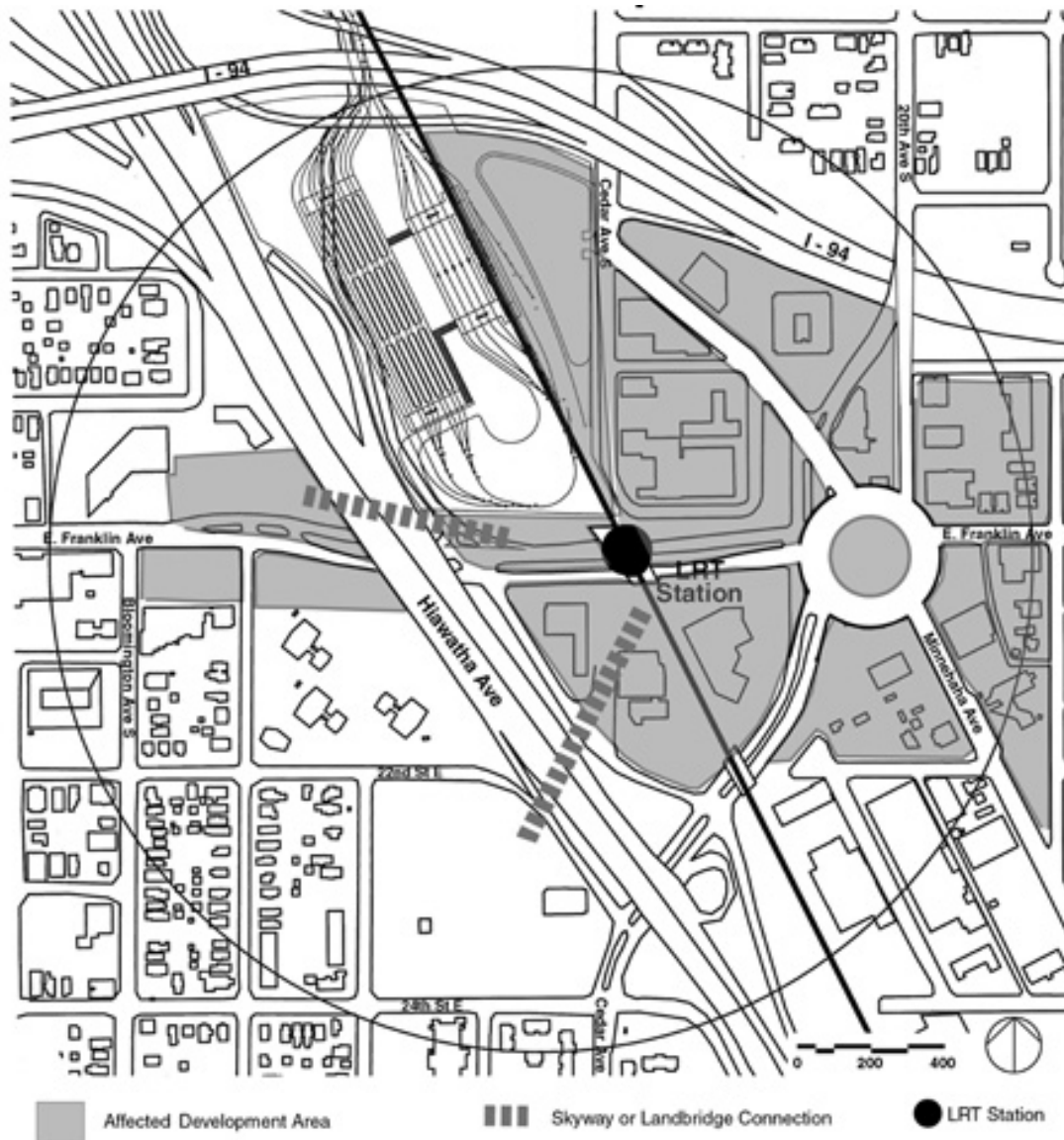


Figure #17: Plan B reconfigures the intersection of Cedar, Franklin & Minnehaha Avenues and the approach to the 20th Avenue bridge.

Plan B creates a positive sense of place and well-organized traffic flow where there is now a dangerous and confusing intersection. The creation of a public plaza that is a unique amenity would fundamentally change the perception of this presently chaotic, mixed use district. While this plan has a very positive impact on the development potential for the surrounding property, it does not directly solve the problem of the north-south bus interface with the LRT station. This could be accommodated by a bus-only lane or other internal driveway system within the block bounded by Cedar, Franklin and the LRT tracks. At the very least, development along Franklin between the round-about and the LRT station would need to provide a sheltered pedestrian path. While this plan also requires a high-level of intervention, it could also be developed with a simpler star intersection in place of the round-about shown.

Plan C: Separation of Cedar & Minnehaha Intersections



Figure #18: Plan C separates the intersections of Cedar and Minnehaha Avenues with Franklin Avenue, and redirects Cedar along its former path.

Plan C – a moderate-intervention approach – proposes a modification of Cedar Avenue to bring north-south busses closer to the LRT station at the upper level, while east-west busses connect below. Again, multi-level development at the intersection of Franklin and the LRT line could facilitate pedestrian and bus-transfer activity within a safe environment. This alternative and Alternative D both assume a lower level of regional trucking activity on Minnehaha Avenue after the completion of Highway 55, and reconfigure the intersection of Franklin and Minnehaha to separate traffic on Cedar from traffic on Minnehaha. With the elimination of the present alignment of Cedar and Minnehaha north of Franklin Avenue, this configuration creates a significant transit-oriented development opportunity between “Old Cedar” and a realigned 20th Avenue.

Plan D: Redirection of Minnehaha Avenue



Figure #19: Plan D redirects Minnehaha Avenue to the north of Franklin Avenue and reconfigures the approach to the 20th Avenue bridge.

Plan D – a minimum-intervention approach – redirects north-south traffic on Minnehaha along 20th Avenue and separates it from the intersection of Franklin and Cedar. The purpose of this is to simplify and reduce the crossing distance at these key intersections to improve safety and remove barriers to the LRT station for pedestrians, bike riders and wheelchair users. This alternative suggests a major bus-transfer point at the intersection of Franklin and Cedar that could be incorporated into development on the north side of Franklin to provide a sheltered pedestrian path to the LRT station. Like the other three alternatives presented here, this configuration shows a narrowing of Franklin Avenue to expand the developable land area on the north side of the Avenue. The next section of this report discusses other key site planning assumptions.

Site Planning Assumptions

The Task Force made two important assumptions for the purposes of these site planning studies. First, because this decision will not be finalized until after the Task Force has completed its work, it was assumed that the alignment of the Cedar/Riverside LRT station will not be changed. Obviously, a change of this alignment could significantly affect both the layout of the shops and yards and the site planning alternatives presented here.

Second, the Task Force assumed that the alignment of Franklin Avenue can be narrowed as indicated in the studies currently under development by Hennepin County to provide additional developable land adjacent to the avenue. The following plans and sections illustrate the additional development potential created by a narrowing of Franklin Avenue adjacent to the LRT station.

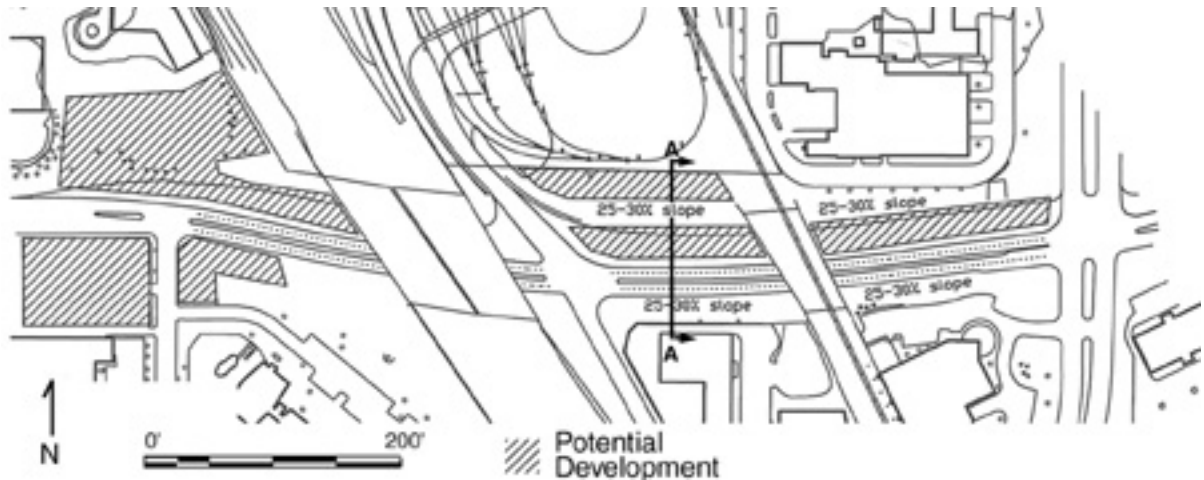


Figure #20: Franklin Avenue narrowed to the south side of the present median.

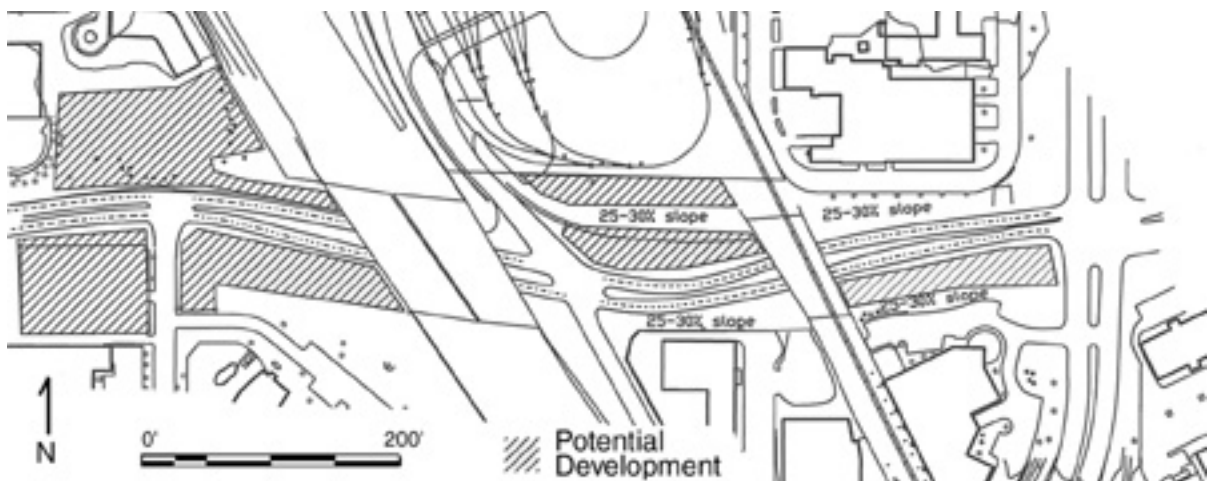


Figure #21: Franklin Avenue narrowed on both sides of the present median.

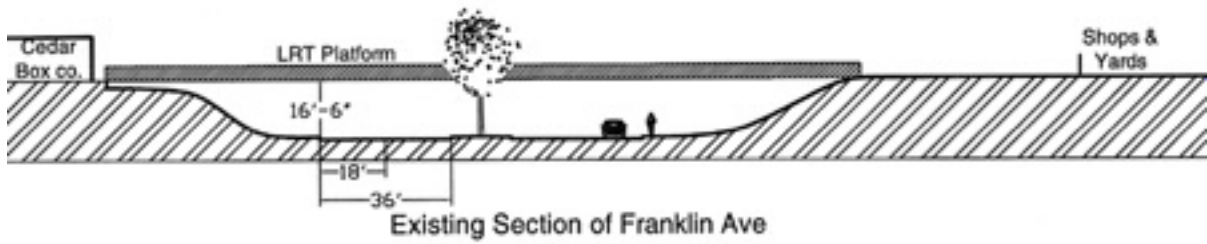


Figure #22: Existing section through Franklin just east of the LRT bridge and platform.

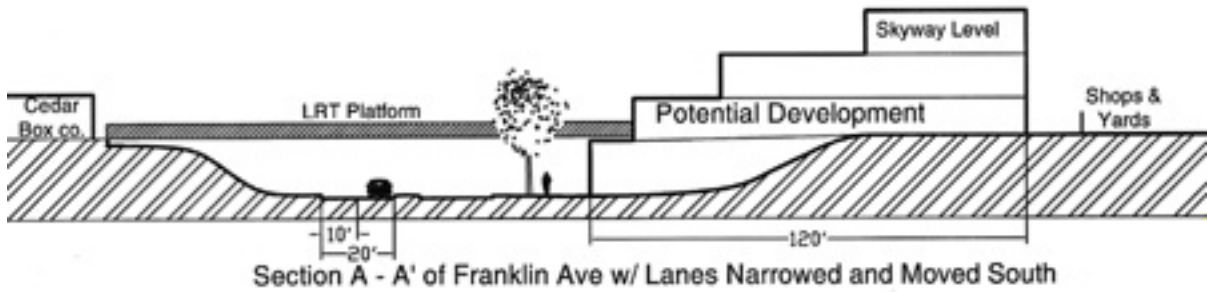


Figure #23: Revised section showing development area when Franklin is narrowed to the south of the median.

Land Use Recommendations

The Task Force focused its discussion of land-use recommendations on four zones within a one-quarter mile radius of the Franklin Avenue station, as shown in aerial photo below. The zones 1 and 2 along Franklin Avenue require immediate attention to ensure a safe and inviting pedestrian, bike, and bus-transfer experience for LRT users and area residents. Zones 3 and 4 have the greatest potential for supportive longer-term development. While the specific development opportunities will depend on which of the site planning alternatives described in the previous section of this report is pursued, these general land-use recommendations apply to all four alternatives.



Figure #24: The Task Force identified four zones within the station area and developed separate land-use and development recommendations for each.

Zone #1 - Franklin between Hiawatha & Cedar

The Task Force recommends new multi-level development along both sides of Franklin between Hiawatha Avenue and Cedar Avenue. This pivotal site requires immediate redevelopment in order to create a safe, inviting setting for pedestrians, bike riders, and bus riders arriving at or departing from the new LRT station. Multi-level development at this central location would create the opportunity for riders to enter a building at street level on Franklin, below the station platform, and take an elevator or escalator within the structure to the platform level. This also creates the possibility of a skyway connection over Hiawatha Avenue to new development in the West Zone, as described below.

The Task Force recommends a mix of office and convenience retail for this critical location. Potential office tenants could include the Metro Transit Police, other Metro Transit central administrative functions. Convenience retail, serving transit users and office workers, could include a coffee shop, news stand, or dry-cleaning drop off.

While immediate access to mass transit is one of the clear benefits of this site, any new development will have minimum parking requirements as well. The Task Force recommends that MNDOT incorporate structured parking (or at least the footings and plan for a future structure) into the specifications for the shops and yards, to accommodate the facility's own parking needs and enhance the potential for adjacent development, while generating parking revenue to support the LRT system.

Zone #2 - Franklin between Hiawatha & Bloomington

The Task Force recommends new infill development on the property flanking Franklin Avenue between Bloomington and Hiawatha. Given the proximity of Anishinabe Wakiagun and the public high-rises, additional medium-density housing (two to four stories) is seen as a desirable land use for this area, possibly incorporating convenience retail or support services at street level.

The Task Force also encourages the Community-University Health Care Clinic to consider expansion of its facility and program at this location. The arrival of LRT may make it possible for the Clinic to position itself as a regional provider of multi-cultural health services. To strengthen the pedestrian environment along Franklin, the physical expansion of the facility should be built to the street edge along Franklin Avenue, accommodating required parking behind or beside the new construction.

Multi-level development on the north side of Franklin, immediately west of Hiawatha Avenue, would support the possibility of an enclosed skyway connection to new development on the east side of Hiawatha near the LRT station. This would provide an alternative for pedestrians and wheelchair users to passing underneath the Hiawatha overpass on their way to the station.

Zone #3 - North of Franklin

This area north of Franklin Avenue is most affected by the four site planning alternatives presented earlier in this report. It is also the area with the greatest potential for significant redevelopment activity in the long term, regardless of the site planning alternative pursued.

Given the potential for housing development at this location – and the critical shortage of student and senior housing in the city – the Task Force recommends that the present mix of spot zoning be unified to permit the development of larger parcels of medium-density housing. The known markets for housing at this location include students and entry-level workers, as well as seniors and other special-needs populations who are dependent on (or prefer to use) mass transit. The University of Minnesota alone anticipates a 2,000-bed shortage of student housing by 2010. This site also has potential to accommodate administrative, laboratory, or other space for nearby institutions, including Fairview Health Care, Augsburg College, and the University of Minnesota.

Other uses that may be appropriate for this location include a hotel and related entertainment businesses that could easily serve both the university and downtown markets. Given the proximity of several large institutions with visiting faculty or clients, there also appears to be a market for extended-stay hotel or short-term rental of furnished apartments in the area. The Task Force is also interested in the possibility of a child care center that could serve LRT users as well as neighborhood residents.

Zone #4 - South of Franklin

The area south of Franklin is presently a mix of office buildings and light-industry, most of which is not transit-oriented. Nevertheless, the value of these businesses is significant, and every effort should be made to keep them (and the jobs they represent) within the community as redevelopment occurs.

Some of the existing uses have good potential for transit-oriented expansion. The American Indian OIC, for example, is well positioned to build upon its present program as the centerpiece of a workforce development center at this site, with direct access via bus lines and LRT to two of the region's major employment centers: downtown Minneapolis and Bloomington. The Task Force recommends that a comprehensive workforce development center be considered for this location, which might incorporate additional day care capacity and other on-site services (the AIOIC already operates a small day care center on the site).

Other uses that may be appropriate for this location include medium-density office or mixed-use office/residential development with convenience retail. In any case, the Task Force recognizes that the redevelopment of both the north and south zones will be a long-term process, and will require close collaboration with existing property and business owners to ensure that their short- and long-term interests are fully considered and addressed.

V. Next Steps

The completion of this report is one step in a complex set of ongoing planning and implementation activities related to the Hiawatha LRT line. In order to ensure appropriate community involvement over the long term, the Task Force has developed a set of process recommendations and next steps.

The most immediate recommendation is that the Hiawatha LRT Control Board and Corridor Management Committee work with members of the Task Force to ensure that the request for proposals for construction of the shops and yards contains specific criteria to encourage a compact, efficient design of the facility that preserves the maximum potential for transit-oriented development along Franklin and Cedar Avenues. A similar effort will be required to coordinate planning for the realignment of Franklin Avenue through the station area.

Station Area Planning

The completion of the Franklin Avenue LRT Task Force Report was scheduled to coincide with the beginning of station area planning, which is an important technical, analytical and participatory planning process that will guide the city in implementing the values and general goals of the Minneapolis Plan. The city considers the construction of LRT in the Hiawatha Corridor an investment with great potential to influence land use patterns and the development climate in neighborhoods. Consequently, the arrival of LRT service requires the city to consider potential land use change in the neighborhoods along the corridor.

The station area planning process will be accomplished through staff work and consultant contracts, involving technical and community expertise. Planning for station areas will involve residents at all stages; first, in understanding existing conditions, economic and demographic trends (including the review of this report and other community plans); second, in responding to concepts for future change and new development and finally, in revising and commenting on final proposals. As station area plans are completed, they will be presented to the City for approval and implementation, including land use changes (through zoning controls), investment commitments and other public activities. While the schedule is still being developed, the station area planning process is expected to include public meetings in late March and late May, with a draft master plan completed by early July and a final report submitted to the city in August.

A number of Task Force members will serve on the advisory committees of the station area planning process for the Franklin Avenue and Cedar/Riverside stations. The Minneapolis Planning Department is the lead contact for station area planning activities within the City of Minneapolis. For more information, contact Monique MacKenzie at 673-2595 (Lake Street, general inquiries) or Sally Benjamin at 673-2687 (Franklin/ Cedar-Riverside, South of Lake stations).

Community Plans in Progress

There are a wide variety of community planning efforts at various stages of development in and around the Franklin Avenue LRT station area. At its September 1999 meetings, the Task Force invited organizations to present their work, and the following plans were presented and discussed:

- **Ancient Traders - Franklin Circles Redevelopment (AIBDC)**
- **Augsburg College Master Plan**
- **East Phillips Neighborhood Plans**
- **Franklin Avenue Redevelopment Plan (Seward Redesign)**
- **Franklin Avenue Streetscape Project (FABA/AIBDC)**
- **Phillips Environment-Transportation-Community (ETC)**
- **Ventura Village Vision**
- **Village in Phillips Plan**

Each of these community planning efforts is on its own time line, and is at its own stage of planning or implementation. While much of the commercial development on Franklin Avenue identified in the AIBDC and Seward Redesign plans is already in progress or partially completed, implementation of most of the other plans has yet to begin. Summaries of these projects, with contacts and status information, are included in the Appendix.

Although the Task Force did not endorse or critique the specific content of these community plans, there are many elements of each plan that are consistent with the community vision outlined in this report. The Task Force encourages the city and its consultants to contact the sponsoring organizations and review their complete plans as part of the Station Area Planning process.

Development organizations in Seward and Phillips will continue to pursue resources, partners and projects within the Franklin Avenue LRT station area. Seward Redesign will continue to facilitate communication and coordination of these activities, and will reconvene the Task Force on a quarterly basis. Members of the Task Force will continue to work with the Minneapolis Planning Department, the Community Development Agency, Hennepin County, Metro Transit, the Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation to advocate for the community vision outlined in this report. Working together, we can ensure that the Hiawatha LRT line – and the new development that occurs around it – benefit everyone in the community.



Figure #25: The aerial photo above illustrates the planning areas that are currently being considered by a number of community groups and local institutions within a one-half mile radius of the Franklin Avenue LRT station.