



Snelling Avenue After the A Line

Land Use and Economic Development Strategies to Transform Snelling Avenue
into a Livable Street and a Regional Destination

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Guide to this document

Section 1: Context Assessment

presents an overview of the study area, a discussion of the issues, and previous efforts in the corridor.

Section 2: Vision


takes readers on a tour to the future of Snelling Avenue in 2040.

The envisioned changes are attributed to the A Line and policy changes.

Section 3: Action Plan

recommends innovative zoning modifications and complementary strategies that will guide today's Snelling Avenue into the future.

Interactive Document

This is an interactive document. Digital readers may click and jump to a specific page when there is a  icon.

Executive Summary

Snelling as it Is

The neighborhoods around the southern portion of Snelling Avenue are prosperous and pleasant. While the study area itself contains a highly educated and mostly White population, it is diverse in terms of age and income and surrounding neighborhoods are some of Saint Paul's most racially and culturally diverse. The community provides housing options for both homeowners and renters and has a fair amount of attractive affordable options for young families. Snelling Avenue hosts a variety of successful businesses, many of them locally-serving and independent.

The community's successes, while impressive, are tempered by the fact that Snelling Avenue itself was not designed to be a destination corridor. The roadway is designated as State Highway 51 and its existing design was intended to move as many cars as possible with little attention given to other users. Aside from major crossings, most intersections have only painted crosswalks to help pedestrians get across four lanes of fast-moving traffic and two parking lanes. Snelling Avenue's auto-oriented nature has led to the construction of many surface parking lots and strip-mall style buildings that cater to drivers but are unpleasant for pedestrians and detract from the overall experience of the corridor. As a result, Snelling lacks the distinctive identity and destination appeal that other Saint Paul commercial districts such as Grand Avenue and Selby-Dale enjoy.

Snelling as it could Be

Snelling Avenue has the potential to go from being a good street to a great street. The implementation of the A Line will provide the community with a catalyst that can be used to transform their corridor from a street that people use to get through Saint Paul to a place that people want to visit and stay. In the future, Snelling's visitors and residents will not feel compelled to use a car every time they want to spend time on the corridor (although cars will still be welcome). Mixed-use development and better attention to design will transform bland streetscapes into the sort of place that people want to get out and walk around. The corridor will support an even broader mix of housing options than it does now, and residents will have the ability to spend their entire lives in the neighborhood, transitioning seamlessly between housing types as their age, income, and family size changes. People will say "I want to spend time on Snelling Avenue" and they will mean it.

How to Get There

The cornerstone for achieving this vision of a great Snelling Avenue is the implementation of Saint Paul's new traditional zoning districts (T zoning). Unlike the rigid use-based zoning currently in place, T zoning gives property owners more flexibility in developing their properties but imposes design standards to ensure that they do so in a manner that promotes walkability and preserves the character of the neighborhood. This will likely mean allowing a greater intensity of development at the major street nodes and then tapering off that intensity between those intersections while still emphasizing walkable design. Companion strategies that should be used for further corridor enhancement include prioritizing the implementation of more pedestrian safety medians on Snelling Avenue and using public art and distinctive street fixtures to give the corridor a strong and unique identity. The business community will need to play an active role and coordinate as one group to make Snelling a more unified experience. Finally, to make sure that residents and visitors are aware of the A Line and the increased access it will give them, the City should consider launching a "Where Will the A Line Take Me?" promotional campaign to specifically spell out what amenities can be reached using the route. With these strategies in place, Snelling will be transformed into a livable street and a regional destination.

Section 1

Context Assessment

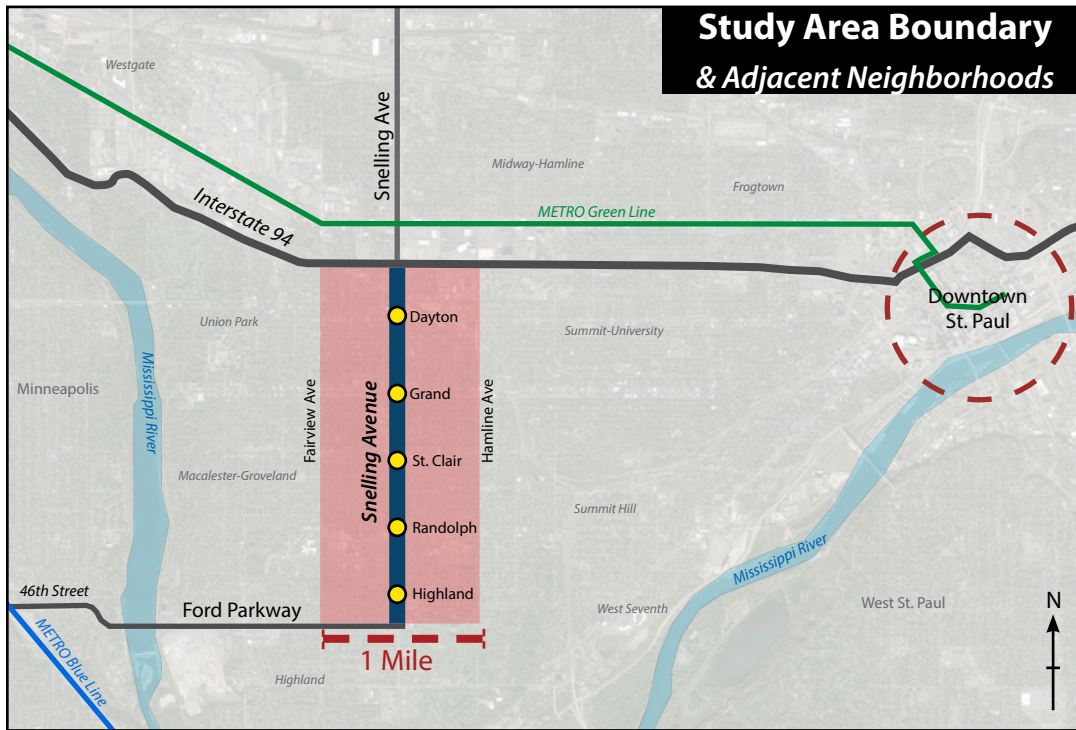


Problem Statement & Study Area

The A Line will be the first Arterial Bus Rapid Transit line in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It will provide the City of Saint Paul with opportunities to transform Snelling Avenue into a transit supportive and pedestrian friendly corridor, while promoting economic development and safety on the avenue. The City of St. Paul asked the consulting team to develop strategies to ensure Snelling Avenue is well positioned to capture the benefits of the new transit investment.

The study area is centered on the alignment of the A Line from **Interstate 94** to the north and **Ford Parkway** to the south and it is bound by **Fairview Avenue** to the west and **Hamline Avenue** to the east. As shown in the map below, the study area is located in close proximity to downtown Saint Paul and the City of Minneapolis. It covers the Union Park, Macalester-Groveland, and Highland neighborhoods.

The Study Area will be referred as **South Snelling** throughout the document



◀ The study area is bounded by Interstate 94, Ford Parkway, Fairview Avenue, and Hamline Avenue.

● A Line Stations within the study area are shown as on the map.

Outside the study area, the A Line continues on Snelling Avenue and Ford Parkway, connecting to METRO Green Line and METRO Blue Line.

About the A Line

The A Line, opening in 2016, will be the first Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT) service in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Running along the same alignment as the existing local bus route 84, the A Line will travel on Snelling Avenue and Ford Parkway connecting Rosedale Mall to the north and 46th Street Station to the south-west, providing convenient connection between the Green Line and Blue Line¹.

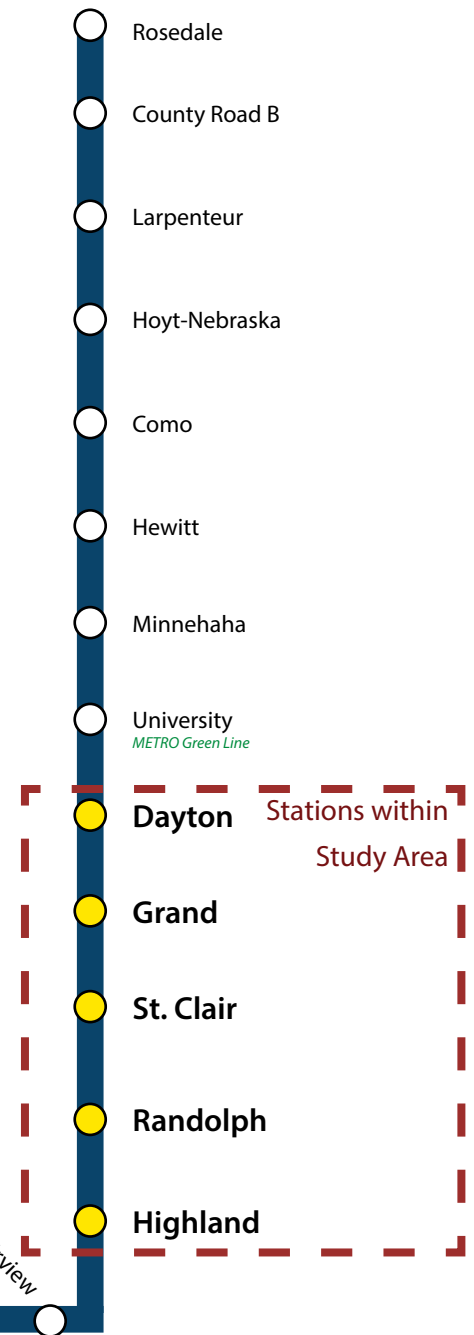
With features such as off-board payment, curb extensions, enhanced station amenities, and signal prioritization, A Line riders will enjoy faster trips and an experience that is similar to riding the light rail.

Current Service - Route 84

The existing bus service, Route 84, currently travels down Snelling Avenue before splitting off into three separate branches at Ford Parkway. Two of the branches, the 84F and 84H, cross into Minneapolis after Highland Village and terminate at the Blue Line's 46th Street Station. The 84D serves several Saint Paul neighborhoods south of Highland Village and terminates at Shepard Road in southwestern Saint Paul. Route 84 runs at 15 minute intervals along its trunk on Snelling Avenue throughout most of the day. The corridor's total daily ridership in 2012 (including the cancelled express service to downtown Minneapolis - Route 144) was 3,800. Metro Transit projected that this number would increase to 5,700 by 2030 without any bus service changes.

Future Service - A Line

The A Line will follow the alignment of the 84F branch, operating every 10 minutes during rush hour and throughout midday. The frequency will decrease to every 15 minutes in the evening and every 30 minutes during late night service. The 84D will be preserved and will have a frequency of 30 minutes throughout the day. Some 84D trips will be modified to continue serving Highland High School which had previously been part of the 84H alignment. Route 144 has already been phased out as part of the service changes that coincided with the opening of the Green Line. Metro Transit projects daily ridership in the corridor in 2030 will be 8,700, with the expectation that the A Line will increase ridership by 3,000 per day.



Station Area At-A-Glance



Dayton Avenue



Grand Avenue

● Station Corner Location

The station at Dayton Avenue will serve The Vintage, a new apartment building with 210 units anchored by Whole Foods. The northbound station will be located in front of The Vintage, which will be sited in the southeast corner (bottom right of the photograph). Riders will use this station to access Selby Avenue or to transfer to Route 21.

The Grand Avenue station will serve students, and staff at Macalester College. This station will provide another transportation option to reach popular shops and restaurants on Grand Avenue and an opportunity to connect to Route 63.



St. Clair Avenue



Randolph Avenue



Highland Parkway

The intersection of Snelling Avenue and Saint Clair Avenue is the southern end of Macalester College (their athletic fields can be seen in the northwest corner of the photo at left). Saint Clair is a dense commercial street with many businesses and neighborhood amenities. This station, along with the Grand Avenue station, provides a convenient link from one end of Macalester's campus to the other.

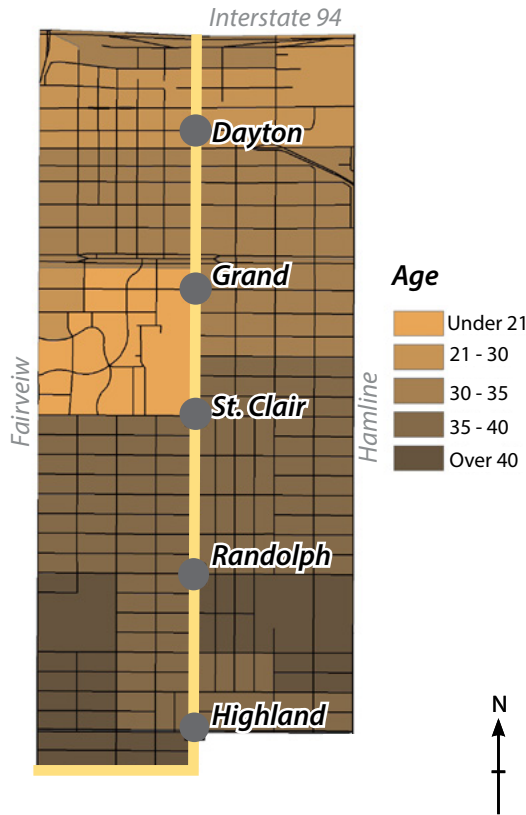
The Randolph Station is located in a dense cluster of neighborhood-serving businesses including eating and drinking establishments, banks, insurance companies, gas stations, and salons. This station will also provide connection to the existing Route 74.

Highland Parkway is the final southbound stop before the A Line turns onto Ford Parkway towards Minneapolis. The southeast corner hosts a large golf course. The Waters development, a 70+ room assisted care facility, is two blocks north of this set of stations, and will provide strong ridership for this station as it gives mobility options to the residents.

Corridor Demographics

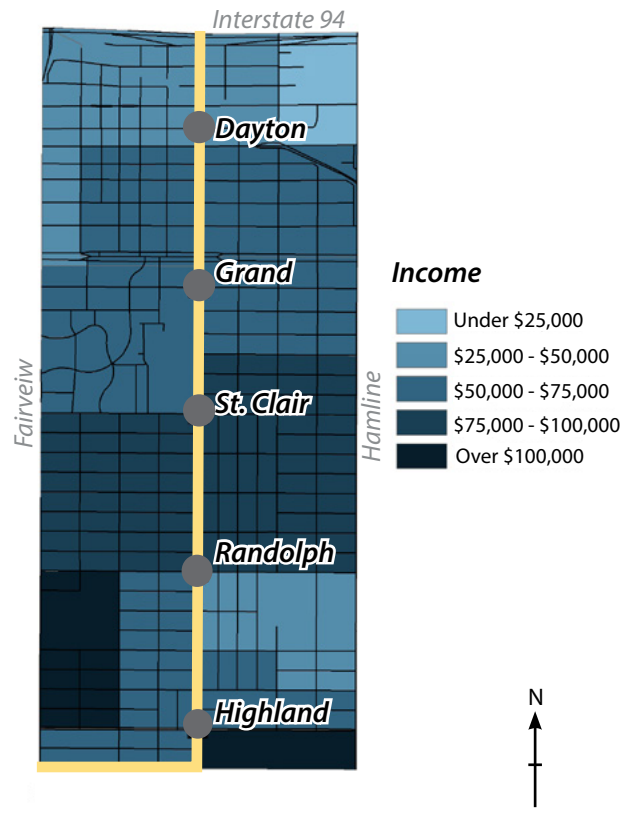
Residents of the study area of Snelling Avenue between Interstate 94 and Ford Parkway have higher education attainment and earn higher income than the Saint Paul population at large. The racial composition of the study area is predominately White, with greater diversity in the northern section.

Maps and diagrams in this section illustrate and explain the demographic characteristics in terms of age, income, race, and educational attainment.



Age

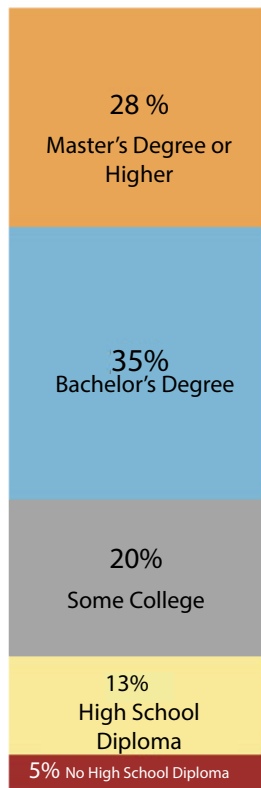
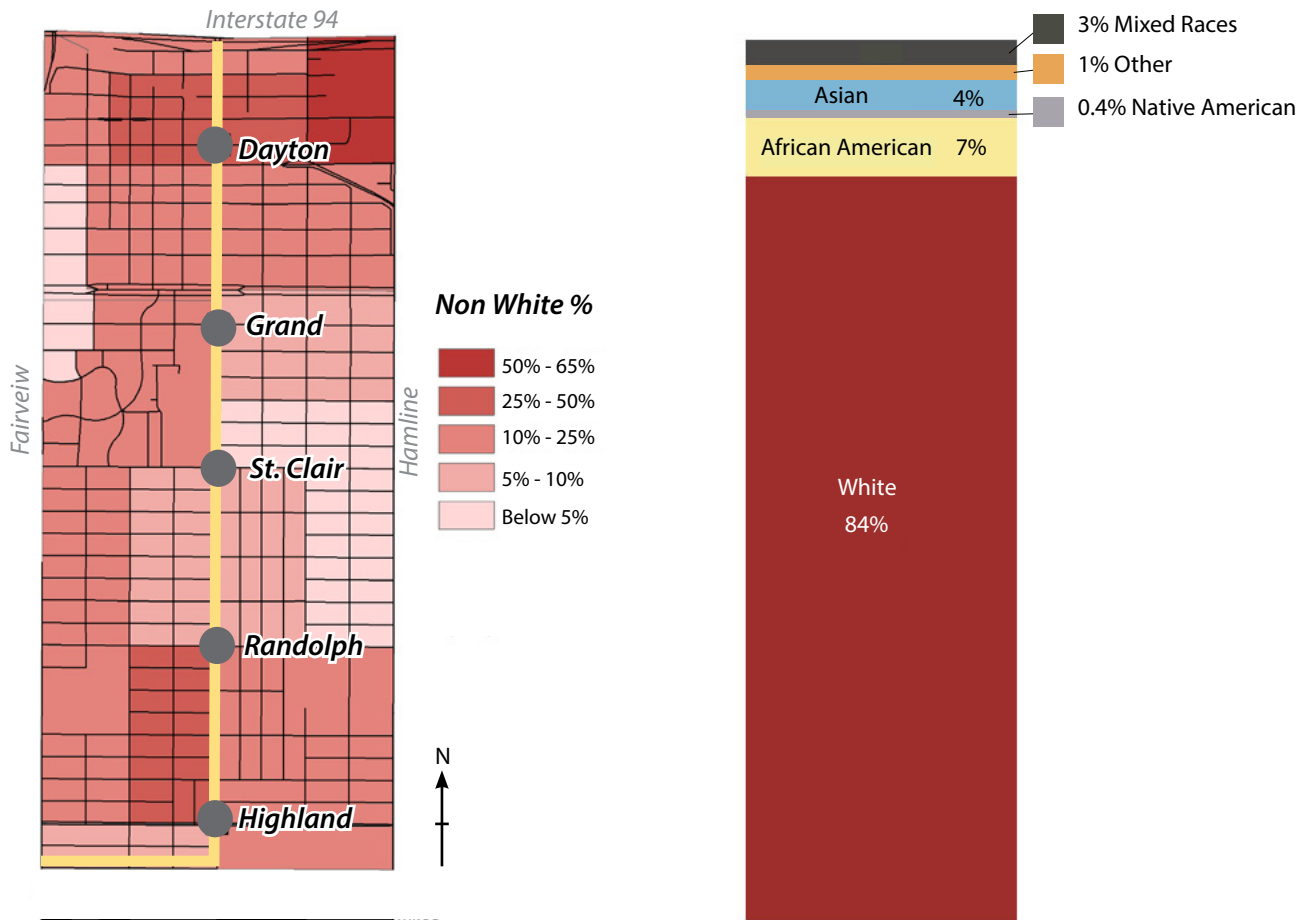
The median age of the study area (broken down by census block group) differs significantly from north to south. Residents of Macalester-Groveland (the middle third) tend towards the 35-40 age range and Highland's residents (the Southern third) are predominantly 40-65. Union Park (the Northern third) has the most youthful population with a demographic trend towards 21-35 year old residents throughout much of its area. The youngest block groups overlap the study area's three post-secondary institutions. Overall, the median age of the study area is 38 years, almost a decade older than Saint Paul's population (30 years).



Income

Overall, the study area is quite affluent. The median income of the study area reaches \$70,071 in 2012, substantially higher than the median income of Saint Paul at large (\$46,305).

At the block group level, the majority of the study area has a median income of over \$50,000. The wealthiest block group has a median income that is close to \$140,000 per year.



Race

The majority of the study area is predominantly White, with some concentration of African Americans in the northeast boundary of the study area. A moderate concentration of Asians are found at the very south end of the study area, just east of Snelling Avenue. Other these examples of concentrations, residents of color are dispersed fairly evenly throughout the study area. The percentage of the Whites in the study area (84 percent) is substantially higher than the percentage in the City of Saint Paul as a whole (56 percent).

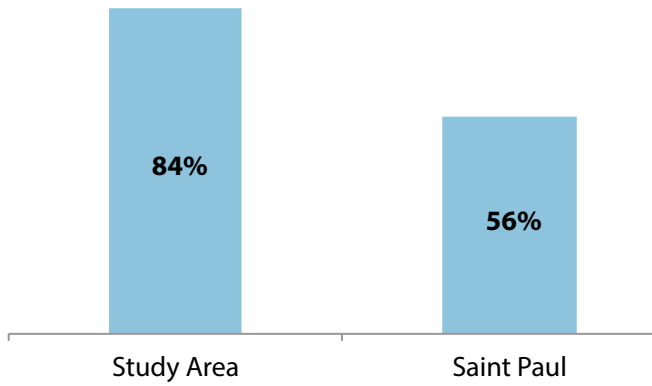
Education

American Communities Survey data¹ indicates that 63 percent of the population of the study area has some type of post-secondary degree, whereas only 37 percent of Saint Paul residents have the same accomplishment. As the figure demonstrates, the most common of these is a Bachelor's Degree, though higher degrees are quite common as well.

1 US Census Bureau

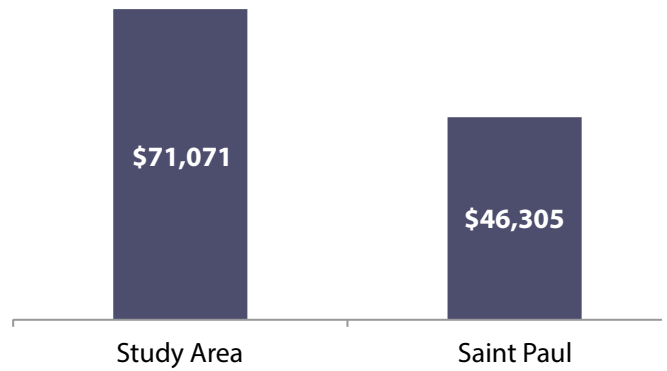
Study Area v. Saint Paul

Percentage of White



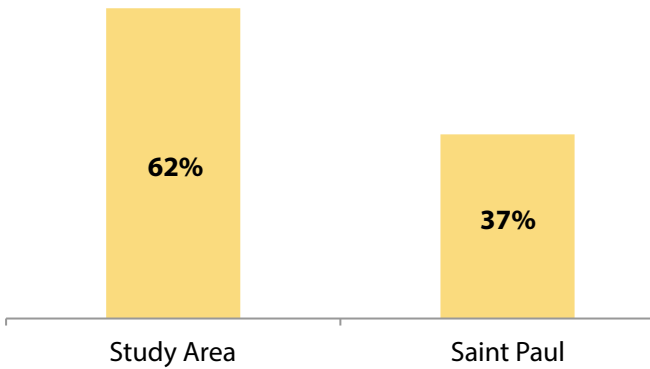
▲ Though the study area is less ethnically diverse than the City of Saint Paul as a whole, it is highly connected to nearby diverse neighborhoods.

Median Income



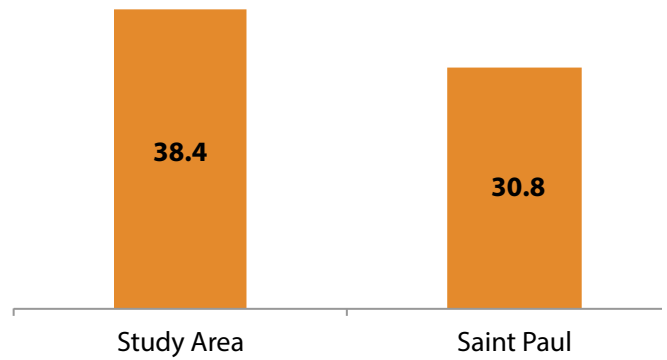
▲ The median income in the study area is significantly higher than the City of Saint Paul at large. With its proximity to the two downtowns, presence of prestigious universities, and historical character, the study area attracts professionals both young and old.

Percentage of College Degree Holder (Bachelor Or Above)



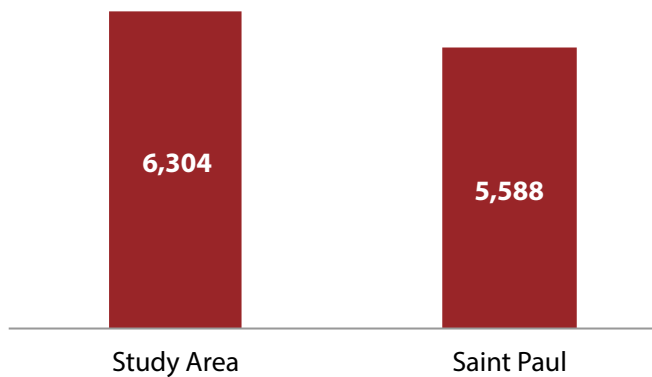
▲ The high education attainment in the study area may be attributed to the presence of universities. According to community members, alumni of these universities tend to stay in the surrounding area after graduation or return to it later in their lives.

Median Age



▲ The median age among residents in the study area is almost a decade older than that of Saint Paul at large. Many seniors who raised families in the study area have lived in the study area choose to remain throughout their lives.

Population Density



◀ Population density of the study area is similar to the City of Saint Paul at large. The slight differences can be explained by the presence of apartments in the northern part of the study area and universities, as renters tend to live in higher density areas than homeowners.

Physical Condition

Snelling Avenue, within the study area, is a road designed to quickly move cars and trucks with far less attention being given to other users. In the southern part of the study area, the speed limit is currently 35 mph which is then reduced to 30 mph at the intersection of Snelling and Hartford. The lanes are very generously sized with a width of over 12 feet--the same as many Interstate Highways--which encourages speeding. The corridor has two traffic lanes and a parking lane in each direction for most of its length. There are signalized crossings only at the major nodes and at a few important intersections such as Summit Avenue and the Jefferson Bike Boulevard. A pedestrian safety median, decorated with plants and trees, runs along the length of Macalester College from St. Clair Avenue to Grand Avenue. At almost all other intersections, basic painted crosswalks are present in an attempt to reduce the difficulty of crossing the four lanes of traffic and two parking lanes. However, there are no further measures in place at most of these intersections to aid pedestrians in getting drivers to stop for them aside from an experimental program where pedestrians carry bright orange flags at some crossings.

The streetscape on Snelling Avenue includes many individually attractive houses and businesses but the corridor's auto-oriented nature has resulted in many strip malls and surface parking lots being interjected between otherwise walkable sections. The overall feel of Snelling Avenue as a business district is very disjointed which prevents it from providing a premium pedestrian experience to residents and visitors like they would find on Grand Avenue.

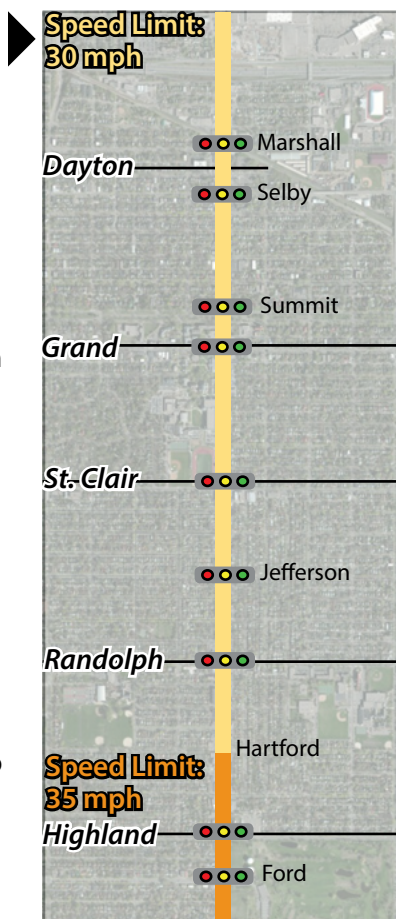
Speed Limit & Locations of Signalized Crossings

Significant gaps are found between signalized crossings.

A Line station locations all have a signalized crossing, except Dayton Avenue station.

Other signalized crossings are placed at the intersections of Marshall, Selby, Summit, Jefferson, and Ford.

The speed limit is 30 mph from the north end of the study area to Hartford, and 35 mph from Hartford to the south end of the study area.



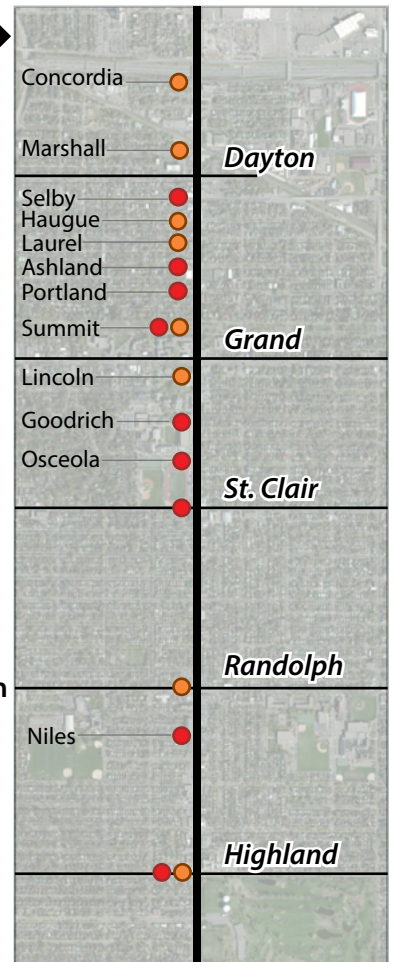
Vehicle-Pedestrian and Vehicle Bicycle Crash Incidents Map

shows the location of intersections where these two types of incidents have occurred from 2009 to 2013.

Each dot represents a specific intersection where at least one collision has occurred. The cross streets of the incidents are labeled on the left side. A Line stations are labeled on the right.

● Vehicle-Bicycle Crash
Total Count: 15

● Vehicle-Pedestrian Crash
Total Count: 18



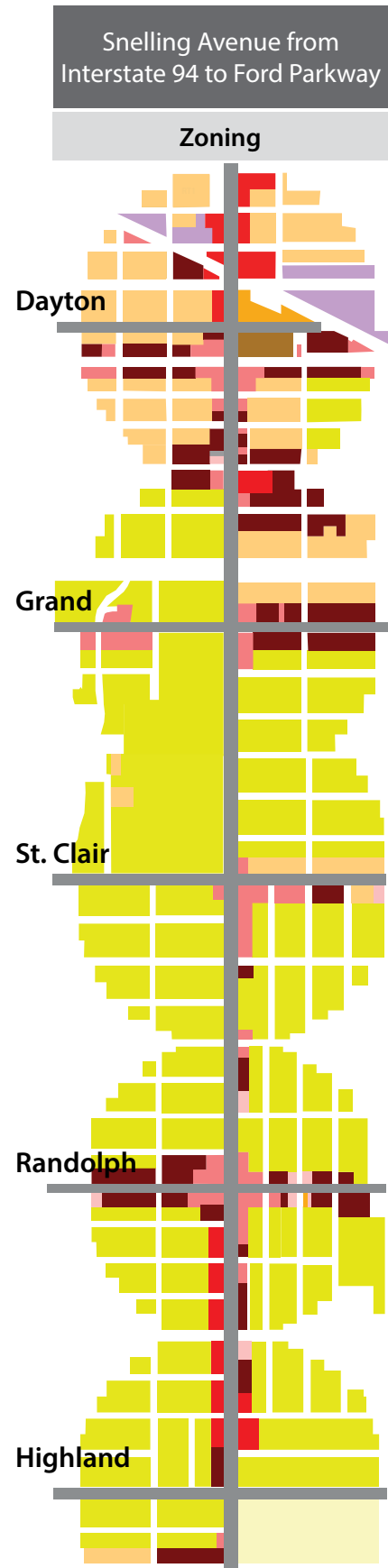
Zoning

Snelling Avenue is primarily zoned with B3 General Business from Interstate 94 to Summit Avenue. The intersection at Selby Avenue is zoned B2 Community Business with the exception of The Vintage, a mixed-use building, zoned T3 Traditional Neighborhood on the northeast corner. South towards Summit Avenue, there is a combination of Multiple Family, Community Business, and Two Family Housing zoning. The corresponding land use profile from Interstate 94 to Summit Avenue is predominantly Retail and Other Commercial, followed by Single Family Attached and Multifamily land uses.

The west side of Snelling Avenue from Summit Avenue to St. Clair Avenue is home to Macalester College. Single family detached land uses, with retail and other commercial zones south of Summit Avenue, are mainly found on the east side. From Summit Avenue to St. Clair Avenue, zoning is well-aligned with current land uses.

The stretch of Snelling Avenue from St. Clair Avenue to Randolph Avenue is more commercial than areas to the immediate north, with most commercial zoning and land uses located on the east side of Snelling. Snelling Avenue between Randolph Avenue and Ford Parkway is zoned for a higher density, much like the northern section of this study area, from Summit Avenue to Interstate 94. General Business and Multiple Family zoning dominate this stretch. There are some non-conforming uses such as multifamily uses that are zoned for General Business. Non-conforming uses will be further examined later in this document.

- Commercial**
- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial
- Residential**
- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family
- Traditional Neighborhood**
- T2 - Traditional Neighborhood
- T3 - Traditional Neighborhood

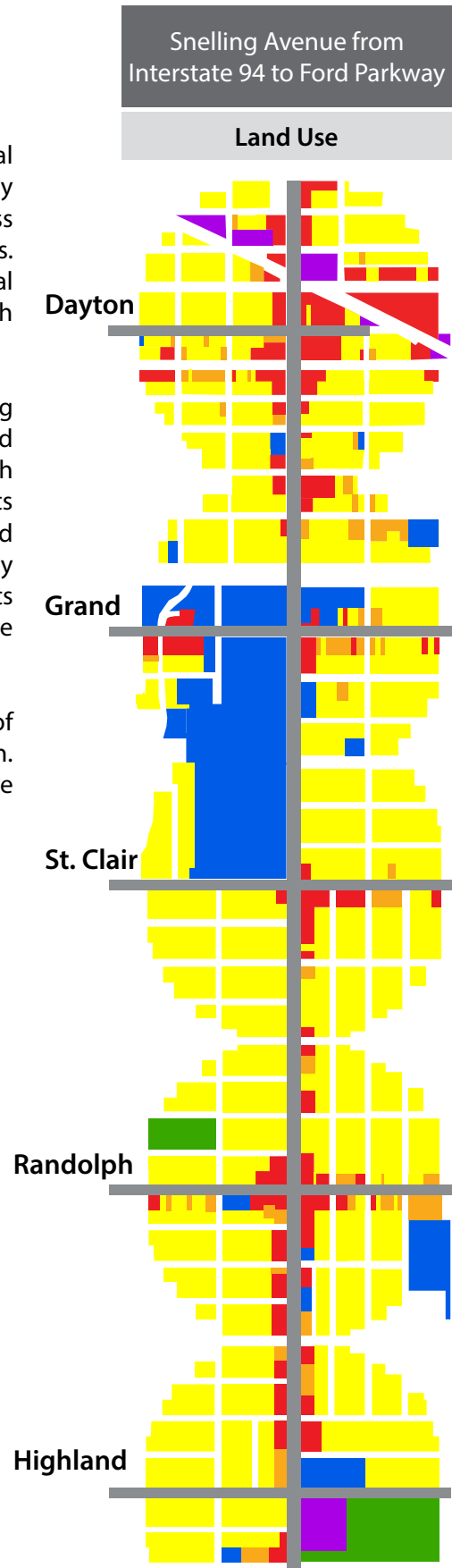


Land Use

The land use in the study area is primarily residential, with substantial business and institutional uses as well. The institutional uses are primarily the Macalester College campus and its supporting buildings. The business uses are concentrated along Snelling Avenue and on major cross-streets. There are two areas of open space in the study area, Highland National Golf Course at the southern end of the area, and Mattocks Park, just north of Randolph Avenue.

The Dayton Station area hosts a wide variety of land uses, including residential, mixed use, commercial, institutional, and industrial. The Grand and St. Clair Station areas are largely institutional and residential, with some commercial and mixed use to support the residents and students who frequent these areas. The Randolph Station area has intense land use along Snelling Avenue and along Randolph Avenue, but is largely residential on other streets. The Highland Station area in the South hosts the golf course as well as a continuation of the businesses and mixed use along Snelling Avenue.

Overall, the corridor is very diverse in its land uses and the idea of concentrating commercial activity along major streets can clearly be seen. Only a very few parcels that do not front Snelling Avenue or on one of the major cross streets are used for anything other than residential use.



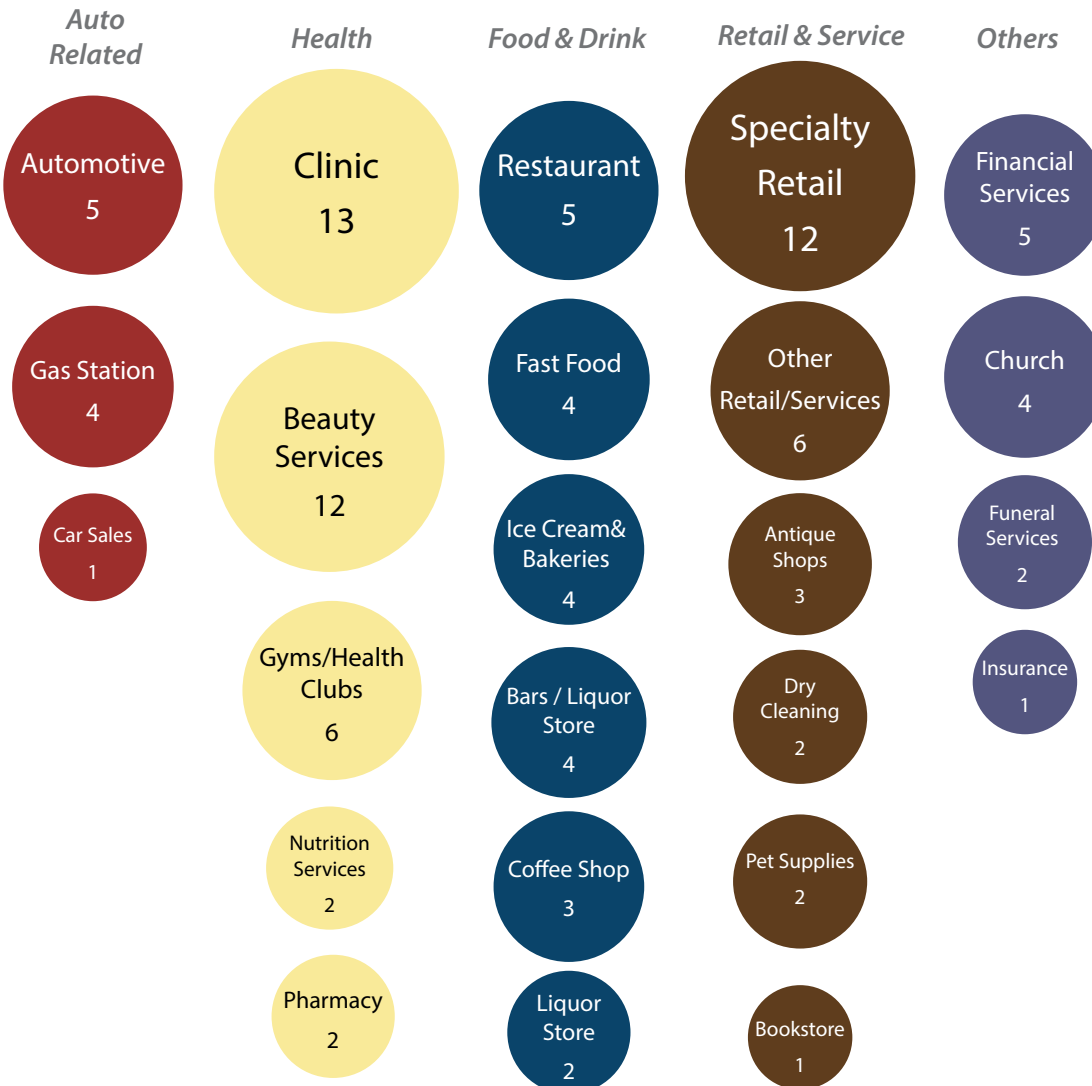
- Residential
- Mixed Use
- Commercial / Retail
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Parks / Open Space

Area Businesses

A business inventory performed on February 2, 2015 identified 116 businesses with signage located on Snelling Avenue between Ford Parkway and Interstate 94. The corridor's businesses are highly varied and many different sectors are represented. The most common types of businesses are healthcare, beauty services, and specialty retail. In the northern part of the study area, land use shifts towards more industrial and automotive uses. As of February 2015 there were four vacant storefronts, a vacant auto garage, and one vacant single family home.

There are currently two active construction sites along this part of Snelling. One is The Vintage, a large apartment complex near the intersection of Snelling and Selby anchored by a Whole Foods grocery store. The other is The Waters, a new senior housing complex being constructed in Highland Park.

Many of the Snelling Avenue businesses belong to business associations, but there is no one organization that represents the interests of the corridor. The Grand Avenue Business Association and the Highland Business Association both represent small sections of Snelling and the Selby-Snelling Business Association represents a large cluster of businesses located nearby the intersection of those two streets. The organizations are in contact with one another but do not formally collaborate.



◀ The South Snelling Area has a wide variety of neighborhood-serving businesses and amenities. The existing businesses are already meeting daily needs and offering weekend fun for residents and visitors.

District Council Plans

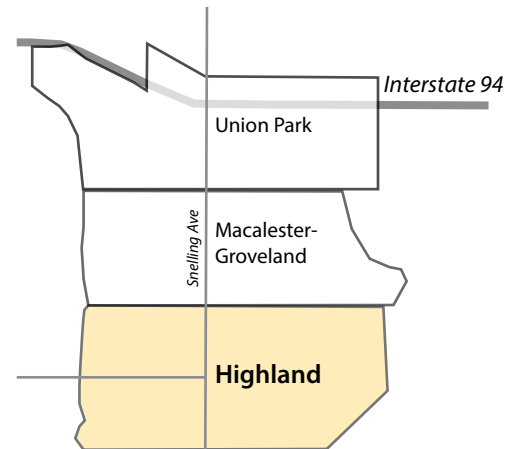
In 1975, the City of Saint Paul established a system of formalized neighborhood groups, which are known as district councils, to increase the city government’s responsiveness to local needs. Saint Paul contains seventeen of these organizations, each representing a specific geographic region of the City. The councils are funded through a combination of direct financial support from the City and private donations. They act as individual nonprofit organizations and are responsible for advising the City on physical, social, and economic development issues within their borders. Volunteers from the neighborhoods serve on committees established to address different community needs. Each district council develops a neighborhood plan which the City takes into consideration when creating the comprehensive plan for Saint Paul. The study area along Snelling Avenue (from Interstate 94 to Ford Parkway) encompasses three districts: Macalester-Groveland, Highland, and Union Park.



Highland

The Highland Neighborhood’s most recent community plan was issued in 2007. The community’s stated desire is to encourage mixed-use development, walkability, and to ensure that the neighborhood is accessible to a diverse group of residents from different income levels. The community would like to:

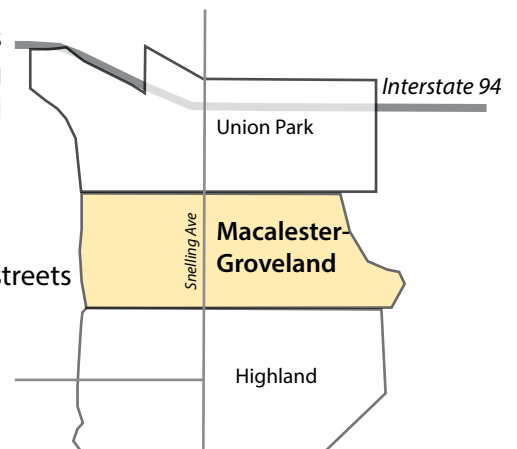
- Consider rezoning portions of the Snelling-Randolph commercial area to T-2 in order to facilitate mixed-use development
- Prevent commercial uses from encroaching into the residential neighborhood.
- Ensure that new buildings are compatible with nearby existing structures
- Support transportation changes that will lead to enhanced street safety and comfort
- Avoid increasing the size of any arterial streets and see a reduction in speed on the parts of Snelling that currently support 35 MPH traffic
- Improve streetscaping, widen sidewalks, and welcome bike lanes where feasible
- Improve bus access in the neighborhood



Macalester-Groveland

The Macalester-Groveland District Council released a new draft community plan in late 2014, which will likely be adopted in Spring or Summer 2015. The vision is supportive of economic development but also stresses the importance of retaining community character and preserving its “small-town feel.” The community would like to see:

- Mixed-use and higher density developments confined to the major street
- Street and sidewalk improvements that increase walkability
- Most new development taking place at the nodes, the intersections of major streets
- Preservation of single family housing and character in non-nodal areas
- More transit and streetscape changes that will make the streets more hospitable for riders
- Policies that would discourage demolition and incentivize rehabilitation of existing buildings



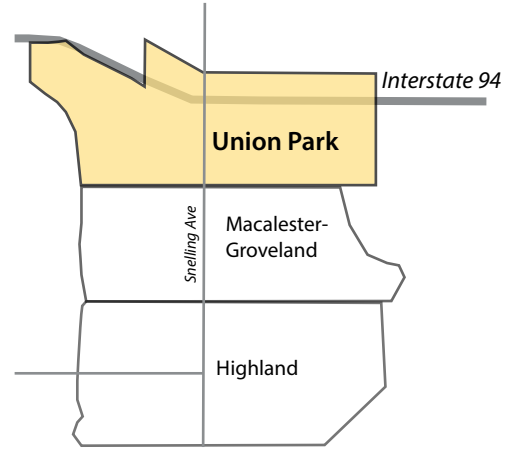
Union Park

Union Park was created from the merger of the Districts of Merriam Park, Snelling-Hamline, and Lexington-Hamline in 2007. A unified plan has not yet been created for Union Park. A summary of the Lexington-Hamline plan is not included in this overview because that neighborhood was not located along Snelling Avenue.

Merriam Park

Merriam Park developed a community plan in late 2003, several years before becoming part of Union Park. Their vision at the time called for the creation of an “urban village feel” throughout the district. Residents support the following:

- Encourage new mixed-use development along transit corridors and underused sites.
- Avoid teardowns and encourage rehabilitation of existing structures.
- Require that new houses blend in with existing housing stock.
- Support improved transit connections to the neighborhood and avoid adding more parking.
- Implement traffic calming along Marshall, Cleveland, Cretin, Fairview, and Snelling Avenues.
- Prevent the connection of Ayd Mill Road to Highway 94.



Snelling-Hamline Neighborhood

This plan was created in 2007, prior to Snelling-Hamline’s incorporation into the Union Park neighborhood. The plan’s overarching vision is to promote a mix of businesses to support a balance of economic development and neighborhood character. More specific goals include:

- Make travel safer for all users including non-motorized users.
- Implement “Urban Village Principles” and encourage transit oriented development.
- Require new development and remodeling to complement the existing neighborhood fabric.
- Implement traffic calming measures on Snelling Avenue at its intersections with major streets.
- Keep the character of the neighborhood primarily residential.
- Prevent Ayd Mill Road’s extension to I-94.

Commonalities and Differences across the district plans



Commonalities
Need for design standards to preserve community character
Concentrate density and commerce on arterial streets at the nodes
Prefer mixed-use development
Transit is welcome
Desire for greater walkability and better streetscapes on major roads
Prevent teardowns, encourage rehabilitation of structures

Differences
Different visions for the future of Ayd Mill Road
Highland already heavily utilizing T-Zoning, others are not

Previous Agency Studies

Two previous studies conducted by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the City of St. Paul related to the transportation and land use changes in the study area:

The Multimodal Transportation System Study conducted by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) focuses on the segment of Snelling Avenue north of Interstate 94 and seeks to accommodate the needs of all of these modes in a balanced manner. The goals of the study are:

- Improve safety and mobility for all users of Snelling Avenue
- Increase directness of routes to key destinations for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Create an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant corridor
- Improve transit connections and mobility
- Connect neighborhoods across the study segment
- Develop designs that are appropriate for the multiple land use contexts along the study corridor

The **Snelling Avenue Hamline-Midway Mixed Use Corridor Zoning Study** focuses on the northern section of Snelling Avenue (north of Interstate 94). The City generally recommends rezoning Snelling Avenue street front parcels to varieties of Traditional Neighborhood (T) zoning. The northern section of Snelling Avenue is currently characterized by a mix of commercial, residential and institutional uses, with predominantly one and two-story commercial buildings. The table below summarizes the zoning changes recommended by the City of St. Paul.

Current Zoning	Recommendation
RT1 Two-family	Change to T2 Traditional Neighborhood
R4 One-family	Change to T1 or T2 Traditional Neighborhood
RM2 Multifamily	Change to T1 Traditional Neighborhood
B2 Community Business	Change to T2 Traditional Neighborhood
B3 General Business	Change to T2 Traditional Neighborhood

Synthesis of the Two Studies

Transit improvements (Green Line LRT, A Line BRT) were a key consideration of St. Paul’s zoning study. Zoning along the Snelling Avenue corridor needs to accommodate growth and intensification of both residential and commercial uses, consistent with its designation as a Mixed-Use Corridor and with the investment that improved transit service should bring over time. MnDOT’s multimodal study also identified recommendations on how to better accommodate bikes and pedestrians within the corridor and how to improve safety and mobility. The physical form of future development along the corridor should also enhance the multi-modal nature of the corridor through building design and site configuration.

American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Passed in 1990, requires public infrastructure and services be accessible to users with all range of abilities. This includes sidewalks wide enough to accommodate users in wheelchairs, ramps to facilitate crossing at intersections, and the provision of accessible parking spaces.

T2 Traditional Neighborhood

is compatible with existing uses, and provides for flexibility in potential redevelopment as the level of transit service in the area continues to improve.

Overview of Study Area Context

Demographic Features

The study area population is relatively affluent, well-educated, and has a White majority. The area is, however, immediately adjacent to several of Saint Paul's most ethnically and culturally diverse neighborhoods. The presence of universities near Snelling and its proximity to employment centers attracts people of all ages, marital statuses, income levels, and educational attainment levels, both renters and homeowners alike. Given the study area's dynamic demographic features, it is well poised to become an even stronger magnet for young professionals, families, and renters.

Business Profile

The study area already has a wide variety of independent, locally serving businesses. From clinics to funeral services, from gourmet restaurants to grocery stores, from liquor stores to bookstores, and from dry cleaning to gas stations, residents can find their daily needs and weekend getaways without stepping beyond the study area boundaries. The existing diversity of businesses makes the South Snelling corridor a potential regional attraction and it should be preserved and promoted in order to retain current residents and attract newcomers.

Physical Condition

As a state highway (MN 51), Snelling Avenue has prioritized the movement of cars and trucks over pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. Unpleasant experiences with traffic and perceived danger often keep walkers away from the avenue's sidewalks and crossings. The demographic features, the business profile, and the stated desires of the community all point to the need for a more walkable Snelling Avenue. The A Line presents a tremendous opportunity to balance traffic needs with a safe and pleasant environment for pedestrians.

Community Support

Residents of the study area, formally represented by the District Councils, and members of the business community have voiced almost unanimous support for the A Line. They anticipate the enhanced transit service providing great benefit to Snelling Avenue. Residents are excited about the improved transit connectivity to the rest of the region and businesses expect the A Line to boost their sales. The A Line also puts Snelling Avenue in a better position to achieve one of the major common goals of the three District Councils, encouraging mixed-use and higher density developments along transit corridors.

South Snelling currently:

appeals to a diverse population at different stages of life.

has a wide variety of locally serving businesses.

prioritizes movement of cars and lacks walkability.

is presented with an opportunity to make it a destination street.

Section 2

Vision



Prologue

Situated halfway between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul, Snelling Avenue has a history of being a significant thoroughfare in the Twin Cities. It continues to be a vital part of the regional transportation system, handling over 40,000 vehicles¹, 3,800 transit riders², 2,200 pedestrians and 670 bicyclists on an average weekday.

Prior to the 1950s, Snelling Avenue was a link in the Twin Cities’ extensive streetcar system. The local bus route 84 largely follows the same path as the streetcar line, and the A Line Arterial Bus Rapid Transit will build on this legacy by following the Route 84. The implementation of the A Line presents a tremendous opportunity to transform Snelling Avenue into a destination street with lively businesses and restaurants, and also a safer environment for people who walk, bike, drive or ride transit. These improvements will build upon Snelling’s role as a vital destination and connective thread in the fabric of Saint Paul and the larger metropolitan region.

Snelling After the A Line

In the future, South Snelling Avenue is an even more vital connection within Saint Paul and within the Twin Cities region. It is celebrated for its commitment to the safety of all of its users, its thriving and unique small businesses, and its multitude of exciting dining and entertainment offerings. It is a desirable yet affordable place to live that balances trendy and timeless. It provides many advantages to many different types of residents.

In 2040, South Snelling boasts the following accomplishments:



1 MnDOT. Snelling Multimodal Transportation Plan
2 Metro Transit. ABRT Study.

Provides Many Options for Renters

The rental market on Snelling Avenue is in-demand, diverse, and affordable. Renters in the area have a choice of apartments, townhomes, and detached houses, all within an easy walk of the A Line. New developments are building fewer and fewer parking spaces, as renters opt to take transit, bike, or walk to their destinations. Many residents forgo car ownership completely. When asked why they chose to live along Snelling, renters often cite transit accessibility, the presence of locally owned small businesses, and walkability among their top reasons.

Attracts and Retains Homeowners

Snelling Avenue has some of the longest tenures in Saint Paul. Once a house is purchased in the corridor, its residents tend to stay put. Often, these houses are even passed down through generations. Recent years have seen the development of more high-density homeownership opportunities. Condominiums and housing co-operatives have seen great success along Snelling, largely due to a high demand for housing in the corridor. Homeowners are drawn to the corridor because it represents a strong investment which will appreciate in value while providing urban dwellers the amenities that they want in a neighborhood.

Meets the Needs of Young Families

Young families are drawn to Snelling Avenue because it affords them many housing options. A couple can rent their first apartment together in the corridor, and transition through a variety of home types as their needs change and their family grows. The more affluent parts of the neighborhood provide stability and support good businesses as well as contribute funding for good schools. Parents of slightly older children will appreciate the increased freedom given to those children by the A Line. The presence of a fast and safe mode of travel frees parents from having to shuttle teens to and from activities and social calls.

Provides Increased Mobility and Amenity

Access for Seniors

The success of The Waters, a four story assisted living and memory care facility located on Schaeffer and Snelling Avenue has led to the construction of several other assisted care facilities. The A Line has been an important component of The Waters' success as it has increased the mobility and independence of residents who no longer hold a driver's license. Having immediate access to the A Line's frequent, user-friendly, and highly connected service has been a major benefit to The Waters and other senior housing complexes. For seniors who live in single family homes or in conventional apartments, the A Line, recent business developments, and zoning changes, have also increased their mobility and accessibility.

"Snelling Avenue has changed drastically from the street that we only used to get through the neighborhood. The new buildings along the street make it a more exciting place to visit and we actually stop in that part of the neighborhood now! They've made it so much better for walking and riding the bus, but cars still seem to move along like they always have. I think I read that they even made the road safer for cars. With more people walking and taking the bus, I definitely take better notice of people trying to cross the road. Safety in numbers, I guess!"

Area Resident, 2040

A Great Place for University Students to Live and Learn

By connecting local university students to the Twin Cities' greater transit system, the A Line has become essential to students. St. Catherine University and Macalester College specifically feature A Line bus stops as part of their prospective student tours. The success of the A Line and development along Snelling Avenue is reflected in the statistics and surveys provided by both schools. Application numbers have increased, which is influenced by many factors including the A Line. The car ownership rate among students have declined at a faster pace since the opening of the A Line, a statistic that can be directly linked to the new bus service. Overall, the A Line and development it has spurred along Snelling Avenue has accommodated students' increasing desire for a car free lifestyle and walkable neighborhood.

Accommodates Traffic Needs

As the number of businesses and housing units has increased along Snelling Avenue, the demand for transportation has increased. Though there were some initial fears about the A Line negatively affecting traffic patterns, the changes on Snelling have not exacerbated traffic congestion. The increases in the level of transit service and the more walkable environment have helped to keep traffic levels manageable as fewer users are choosing to drive.

A Transit-Oriented and Pedestrian-Friendly Corridor


The improved connectivity to the Green Line, the Blue Line, and local bus routes has made Snelling Avenue very transit accessible from almost anywhere in Minneapolis or Saint Paul. Residents of Union Park, Macalester-Groveland, and Highland Park use the A Line to get to key destinations and job centers including Downtown St. Paul, Downtown Minneapolis, and the Mall of America. With businesses serving the needs of neighborhood residents, storefronts facing sidewalks, and a variety of streetscape improvements, walking along Snelling Avenue has become safer, more pleasant, and more exciting. The increase in residential and commercial density along Snelling Avenue has made taking transit and traveling on foot more viable for residents of all ages and abilities.

"I love that freaking bus, man. This is a great neighborhood to go to college in, I feel like I have the entirety of Minneapolis and Saint Paul at my fingertips. My dad got a new car this year and offered to let me take his old one if I paid for gas and stuff. I told him 'thanks but no thanks'. I don't need that kind of hassle and there's really nowhere worth being that I'd need a car to get to. I'd rather spend that money on a new guitar or something."

A Macalester College Student, 2040



◀ Artist Impression of a future Snelling Intersection & A Line Station (Aerial view)

Illustrated by:
John Gronhvd,
Landscape Architect 

A Regional Attraction

South Snelling has become a regional attraction. It is located in the center of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area and it is highly accessible by cars and by public transit. The State Fairgrounds, a key attraction that draws millions every summer during fair season and hosts other events throughout the year, is located north along Snelling Avenue. The mix of modern and historic buildings gives Snelling Avenue an identity that attracts visitors from the entire region to shop and dine.

A Thriving Business District

Business owners along Snelling Avenue are excited by the changes brought to the neighborhood by the A-Line and supporting projects. The A Line itself has reduced the need for parking which has, in turn, lowered development costs and allowed for businesses to better target their financial resources towards other pursuits. The traditional neighborhood zoning model has allowed new businesses and residential development to peacefully co-mingle. This has resulted in a pleasant walkable neighborhood with a vibrant street life. The neighborhood is much more of a destination now than ever before and business owners are optimistic that more high quality development is on the way. The community outlook is confident and strong.

An Asset to Local Colleges

Macalester College and the University of Saint Catherine have been able to use the presence of the A-Line as a recruitment tool and admissions are slightly higher than projected. Students are choosing to live on or near their campuses and are increasingly forgoing cars entirely. Due to decreased demand for parking, both colleges have been able to turn parking lots into open space, with Macalester hosting popular community events almost monthly. The improved street life and increased pedestrian safety has led to students becoming more actively engaged in their community.

Snelling Avenue: The Next Great Minnesota Street

“This summer when you visit the State Fair with your family, don’t forget to hop on the A Line going south on Snelling to check out this hip new place! Snelling Avenue is an exciting place to be and offers a wide variety of experiences for visitors looking for local restaurants, coffee shops, and boutiques. Wandering along Snelling is a great way to experience authentic Twin Cities culture. Don’t forget to visit the historic Rosemark Bakery and try their pastries fresh from the oven!”


Mpls-St. Paul Magazine, 2040

“I’ve operated my restaurant on Snelling Avenue for 30 years now and quite frankly business has never been better. I didn’t think much of it when the City put in that new bus line back in 2016 but I think it marked a real turning point for our neighborhood. There has been so much new development! It seems like most of the new people who have moved in, largely young professionals, love walking around their neighborhood and spending money locally. I’m hoping for another 30 years of getting to be a part of this fantastic community.”

Local Restaurateur, 2040



◀ Artist Impression of a future Snelling Intersection & A Line Station (Perspective View)

Illustrated by:
John Gronhovd
Landscape Architect 

Section 3

Action Plan



Introduction to the Action Plan

This section provides recommendations to transform South Snelling Avenue into a destination street, a safe environment for all, and into an integral thread in the fabric of Saint Paul. There are two key components of the recommendations: A. Zoning Recommendations and B. Complementary Strategies.

Diagram shows the links between the Context Assessment and the Vision. Each linkage is translated into an element in the Action Plan.



From Section 1: Context Assessment

South Snelling currently:

Appeals to a diverse population at different stages of life.

Has a wide variety of locally serving businesses

Prioritizes movement of cars and lacks walkability.

Outline of Section 3: Action Plan

With these recommendations:

A. Rezoning

B1. Marketing Campaign

B2. Placemaking

B3. Medians

B4. Shared Parking

B5. Business Association

Page

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From Section 2: Vision

In the future, South Snelling will:

Provide many housing options

Be a regional attraction & thriving business district

Ensure safety and accessibility for all users

A. Zoning Recommendations

The modification of zoning codes in the study area is the most important policy change. In addition to zoning changes, complementary strategies maximize the benefits of the A Line and support the zoning changes.

Increased Utilization of Traditional Neighborhood Zoning along Snelling Avenue

Traditional Neighborhood Zoning (T Zoning) calls to mind old Main Streets with thriving shops and people interacting with one another at the street level. Housing is above these shops or just off of Main Street. There are many benefits to this zoning type. It lends support to transit projects such as the A Line by making the area more walkable.

T Zoning is one of the most flexible zoning types employed by the City of Saint Paul. It allows property owners to build a variety of structures as long as they adhere to specific design standards and promote walkability. **Table 1** on p.21 outlines the intent, density requirements, and the permitted uses of the three Traditional Neighborhood zones (T1, T2, T3) that are being recommended for the Snelling Avenue Corridor.

St. Paul Design Standard Definitions and Traditional Neighborhood Applicability

The T Zoning proposal has taken the St. Paul City-wide Design Standards (Sec. 63.110)¹ into consideration. The overall features of Traditional Neighborhood zoning types (T1, T2, T3 and T4) are well aligned with the design standards.

T Zoning also utilizes stricter design standards than other zoning types. This is to ensure that there is a coherent and accommodating environment for street activity. Examples of these design standards include: a continuous façade, which provides the feeling of enclosure and desirability of the corridor; placement of parking behind or alongside structures to relate shops and buildings more closely to the sidewalk; and requiring the provision of sidewalks. **Table 2** on p. 22 is a complete list of these design standards.

Learn more about
**Traditional
Neighborhood
Zoning**

Turn to Table 1 on Page 23



Learn more about
**St. Paul Design
Standards**

Turn to Table 2 on Page 24
and Page 25



¹ Design Standards Zoning Text Amendments. City of St. Paul. <http://www.stpaul.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/10464>

Table 1: Traditional Zoning Types At-a-Glance

(A Summary of Saint Paul's current zoning codes)

	Intent	Density	Permitted Uses
T1	"To serve as a transitional use of land along major thoroughfares, between commercial...districts, and residential districts or other less intensive land uses" (66.312)	6 - 12 Single Family Units per acre 8 - 20 Townhouse Units per acre 10 - 25 Multifamily Units per acre 0.3 – 1.0 Floor-to-Area Ratio for non-residential uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-, two- and multiple-family dwelling • Live-work unit • Mixed residential and commercial use • College, university, trade school, arts school • Fraternal organization, lodge hall • Museum • Noncommercial recreation • Utility/public service building* • Artist and photographer studio • Business office, bank, insurance, real estate office • Professional office, medical clinic • Post office, photocopying • Service businesses, e.g. watch and shoe repair, tailor shop, barber, beauty shop • Coffee shop, tea house* • Bed and breakfast
T2	"To foster and support compact, Pedestrian-oriented commercial and residential development that, in turn, can support and increase transit usage" (66.313)	6 - 12 Single Family Units per acre 8 - 20 Townhouse Units per acre 0.3 FAR – 2.0 FAR with Surface parking or 0.3 – 3.0 FAR with structured parking for Multifamily and Mixed uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All T1 uses • Hospital*, veterinary clinic • General retail, grocery, bakery, liquor store* • Drivethrough sales and services* • Laundromat, dry cleaning (retail outlet) • Mortuary, funeral home • Service business with a showroom or workshop* • Tattoo shop, tobacco products shop* • Restaurant*, catering • Hotel, inn • Health club, indoor recreation* • Theater, assembly hall* • Auto convenience market, service station* • Limited production and processing* • Printing and publishing*
T3	To support "A mix of uses...in close proximity to one another, a mix of housing styles, types, and sizes...a system of interconnected streets and paths that offer multiple routes...a system of open space resources and amenities"	8 - 12 Single Family Units per acre 10 – 20 Townhouse Units per acre 0.5 – 3.0 FAR for Multifamily or Mixed uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All T2 uses except drive-through sales/ services • Parking facility, commercial*

*Conditional uses only, additional design standards may apply

Table 2: St. Paul Design Standards and Traditional Neighborhood Zoning
(Summary of Saint Paul's current zoning codes and design standards)

Standards	Description	T1	T2	T3	T4
Land Use Diversity	"In general, it is desirable for each block to include some diversity in housing type, building type, and mix of land uses."			X	X
Transitions to Lower-Density Neighborhoods	"Transitions in density or intensity shall be managed through careful attention to building height, scale, massing, and solar exposure."		X	X	X
Block Length	"Block faces in mixed use areas shall typically not exceed four hundred feet."		X	X	X
Compatible Rehabilitation and Reuse	"Remodeling, additions or other alterations to existing traditional building shall be done in a manner that is compatible with the original scale."	X	X	X	X
Use Established Building Façade Line	"New building shall relate to the established building façade line on the block where they are located."	X	X	X	
Building Anchor the Corner	"New buildings on corner lots shall be oriented to the corner and both public streets."	X	X	X	X
Front Yard Landscaping	"Front yard areas located between the principal building and the street shall be landscaped."	X	X	X	X
Building Façade continuity	"New buildings along commercial and mixed-use streets shall provide a continuous façade along the street."		X	X	X
Building Façade Articulation	"The bottom twenty-five feet of buildings shall include elements that relate to the human scale."	X	X	X	X
Building Height	"New buildings of two or more stories are encouraged. One story buildings shall be designed to convey an impression of greater height in relation to the street."	X	X	X	X
Definition of Residential Entries	"Porches, steps, pent roofs, roof overhangs, hooded front doors or similar architectural elements shall be used to define all primary residential entrances."	X	X	X	X
Entrance Location	"There shall be a primary pedestrian building entrance on all arterial or collector streets."	X	X	X	X
Door and Window Openings	<p>a. For new commercial and civic buildings, windows and doors or openings shall comprise at least fifty (50) percent of the length and at least thirty (30) percent of the area of the ground floor along arterial and collector street facades.</p> <p>b. Windows shall be designed with punched and recessed openings, in order to create a strong rhythm of light and shadow.</p> <p>c. Glass on windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, and allow views into and out of the interior.</p> <p>d. Window shape, size and patterns shall emphasize the intended organization of the façade and the definition of the building"</p>	X	X	X	X
Materials and Detailing	"residential buildings of more than six units and nonresidential or mixed use buildings shall be constructed of high-quality materials such as brick, stone, textured cast stone, tinted masonry units, concrete, glass or metal"	X	X	X	X

Table 2: St. Paul Design Standards and Traditional Neighborhood Zoning (continued)
(Summary of Saint Paul's current zoning codes and design standards)

Standards	Description	T1	T2	T3	T4
Screening of Equipment and Service Areas	"if an outdoor storage, service, or loading area is visible from adjacent residential uses or a public street or walkway, it shall be screened by a decorative fence, wall or screen of plant material at least six feet in height"		X	X	X
Interconnected Street and Alley Network	"the existing street and alley network shall be preserved and extended as part of any new development"		X	X	X
On-street Parking	"streets shall generally have parking on both sides to buffer pedestrians, calm traffic and supplement off-street parking unless the space is needed to accommodate traffic volume, emergency vehicles, transit or deliveries"		X	X	X
Parking Location and Entrance Design	<p>a. Off-street parking shall be provided within a principal structure, underground, or to the rear of buildings to the greatest extent possible. Limited side yard parking may be appropriate. Entrance drives and garage doors for underground or structured parking may face the street, except adjacent to light rail transit platforms, but shall be designed for pedestrian convenience and safety.</p> <p>b. Surface parking shall not be located within thirty (30) feet of a corner. Buildings shall be located to emphasize and "anchor" the corner whenever possible.</p> <p>c. Vehicular entrances to structured parking shall be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of the building. Possible techniques include recessing the entry; extending portions of the structure over the entry; using screening and landscaping to soften the appearance of the entry; using the smallest curb cut and driveway possible; and subordinating the vehicular entrance to the pedestrian entrance in terms of size, prominence in the streetscape location, and design emphasis.</p> <p>d. New above-grade parking structures fronting on arterial and collector streets shall be lined with active commercial/retail uses at street level with direct access to the sidewalk.</p> <p>e. Upper levels of new parking structures shall be designed with exterior wall treatments, detailing, fenestration and materials that screen the view of vehicles and relate to existing adjacent buildings."</p>	X	X	X	X
Resident Garage Location	"attached residential garages shall be recessed at least ten feet behind the front façade of the building. Detached residential garages shall be located in the side or rear yard, recessed at least twenty-five feet behind the front façade"	X	X	X	X
Parking Lot Lighting	"pedestrian-scale lighting shall be provided within parking areas"		X	X	X
Entrance Location for Transit Access	"new and existing retail, office, and multifamily housing shall coordinate with the transit agency in locating bus stops and related improvements"	X	X	X	X
Street Trees	"street trees in the street right-of-way...shall be provided along all streets at regular intervals to help define the street edge, buffer pedestrians from vehicles, and provide shade"	X	X	X	X
Sidewalks	"streets shall be designed with sidewalks on both sides except where they abut a park or other open space"	X	X	X	X

Applying Traditional Neighborhood (T) Zoning in the Study Area

After evaluating the existing zoning, changes have been recommended on a parcel-by-parcel basis. The goal of the proposed changes is to promote A Line ridership, facilitate walkability, foster economic development, and improve pedestrian safety and comfort.

Traditional Neighborhood (T) Zoning recommendations were limited to major intersections with future A Line stations, and structures with frontage onto Snelling Avenue. Lots which border Snelling Avenue but which are oriented towards small, local streets retained their Single-Family Residential zoning. Additionally, areas with existing overlay districts, such as Grand Avenue, were minimally altered to avoid creating non-conforming uses. If, in the future, the City of Saint Paul no longer wishes to utilize overlay districts, these areas should be re-zoned to be consistent with the rest of the corridor.

The illustration on page 29 is an overview of the recommended zoning changes. It compares the existing zoning with the proposed zoning. Following this illustration, zoning proposal at each station area (defined as quarter mile radius of A Line Stations) are demonstrated in detail.

What does "Density" really mean?

The illustration below shows the potential types of built environments under **Traditional Neighborhood** zoning.

It visualizes what a certain level of density looks like in real life and what kind of physical changes can be brought by zoning codes updates.

		Density			Height
		Single Family	Townhouse	Multifamily or Mixed Use	
T1		6-12 units per acre	8-20 units per acre	0.3 - 1.0 FAR (for non-residential uses)	Max 35 feet
T2		6-12 units per acre	8-20 units per acre	0.3-2.0 FAR with Surface Parking or .3-3.0 FAR with Structured Parking	Max 35 feet
T3		8-12 units per acre	10-20 units per acre	0.5-3.0 FAR	25-35 feet for single family 25-45 feet for multi-family 25-55 for mixed use

Floor-to-Area Ratio (FAR)

The ratio of the area of all floors to the area of the land.

Why Re-zone?

Traditional Neighborhood (T) zoning allows greater flexibility in the use of a building, encourages day-to-night usage, and increases walkability. In addition, the application of T zoning in selected locations helps achieve “node-oriented density”, and a “southbound density gradient”, which fits with the local context.

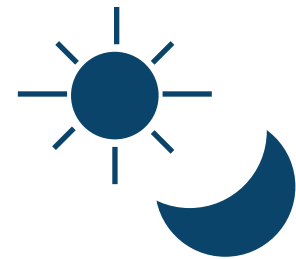
Flexibility

By allowing a wide variety of activities to take place within a city block or a building, Traditional Neighborhood zoning can better respond to future changes in the corridor than the existing zoning. Residential areas near Snelling Avenue may one day be poised to support some small-scale, community-serving commercial development. Less restrictive uses (T zoning allows more uses than Business zoning) can create more potential for mixed use development along Snelling Avenue, which allows residents to reach more amenities on foot. Traditional Neighborhood zoning facilitates the transition between these two uses, and limits the amount of work needed on the part of city staff to conduct repeated re-zoning studies and solicit public engagement.



Day to Night Use

The presence of both residential and commercial uses means that an area has the potential to be filled with people and activity at all times of day. People come during the day to work or run errands, residents return home in the early evening, diners come to bars and restaurants through the evening and into the night. While the A Line supports all day activity with more frequent services, day-to-night use will help to maintain the A Line’s ridership throughout its service hours. All day uses will also have a positive effect on residents’ and visitors’ perception of safety, as passing pedestrians can serve as deterrents for crime.



Walkability

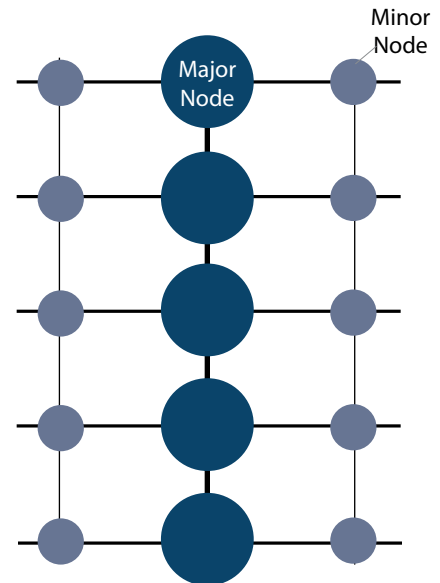
“To foster the development and growth of compact, pedestrian-oriented urban villages” is one of the goals of the Traditional Neighborhood zoning district, according to Saint Paul’s zoning code (Sec 66.311). The Traditional Neighborhood Design Standards are also intended to support a more walkable environment. A more pleasant walking environment can encourage residents and visitors to replace their automobile trips by walking; and reduce traffic congestion along Snelling Avenue. Fewer cars also lead to fewer emissions. Businesses located on walkable streets often see increases in revenue due to higher pedestrian traffic.



Node-Oriented Density

The Mac-Groveland, Union Park, and Highland Park neighborhood groups are united in support of vibrant, walkable commercial districts. Though residents understand that viable commercial districts require certain levels of population density, they are not interested in seeing intense development along the entirety of Snelling Avenue. The neighborhood groups have professed a desire to have less intense development between higher density nodes.

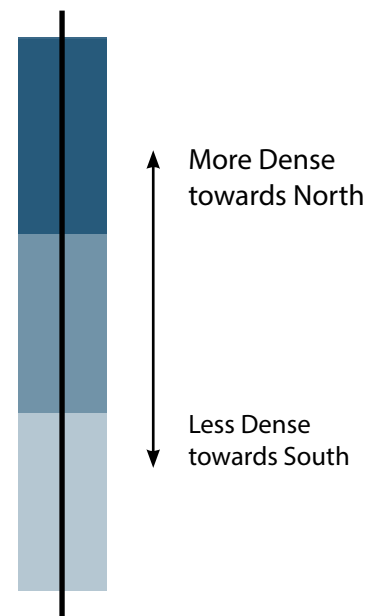
To support the neighborhoods’ vision, the City should rezone areas near A Line stations to create a vibrant commercial corridor where nodes at major intersections are zoned for intense use which tapers off in the surrounding parcels. The nodes should be rezoned as T2, which will allow for heightened levels of development. The blocks between the nodes should be zoned T1, which, while allowing the retention of existing single-family residences, will also allow more pedestrian friendly uses to evolve in the future as the market dictates. T1 zoning will ensure that these interior blocks do not develop to the same heights as the nodes. The design standards in T1 and T2 are largely the same and will create a feeling of continuity along the corridor.



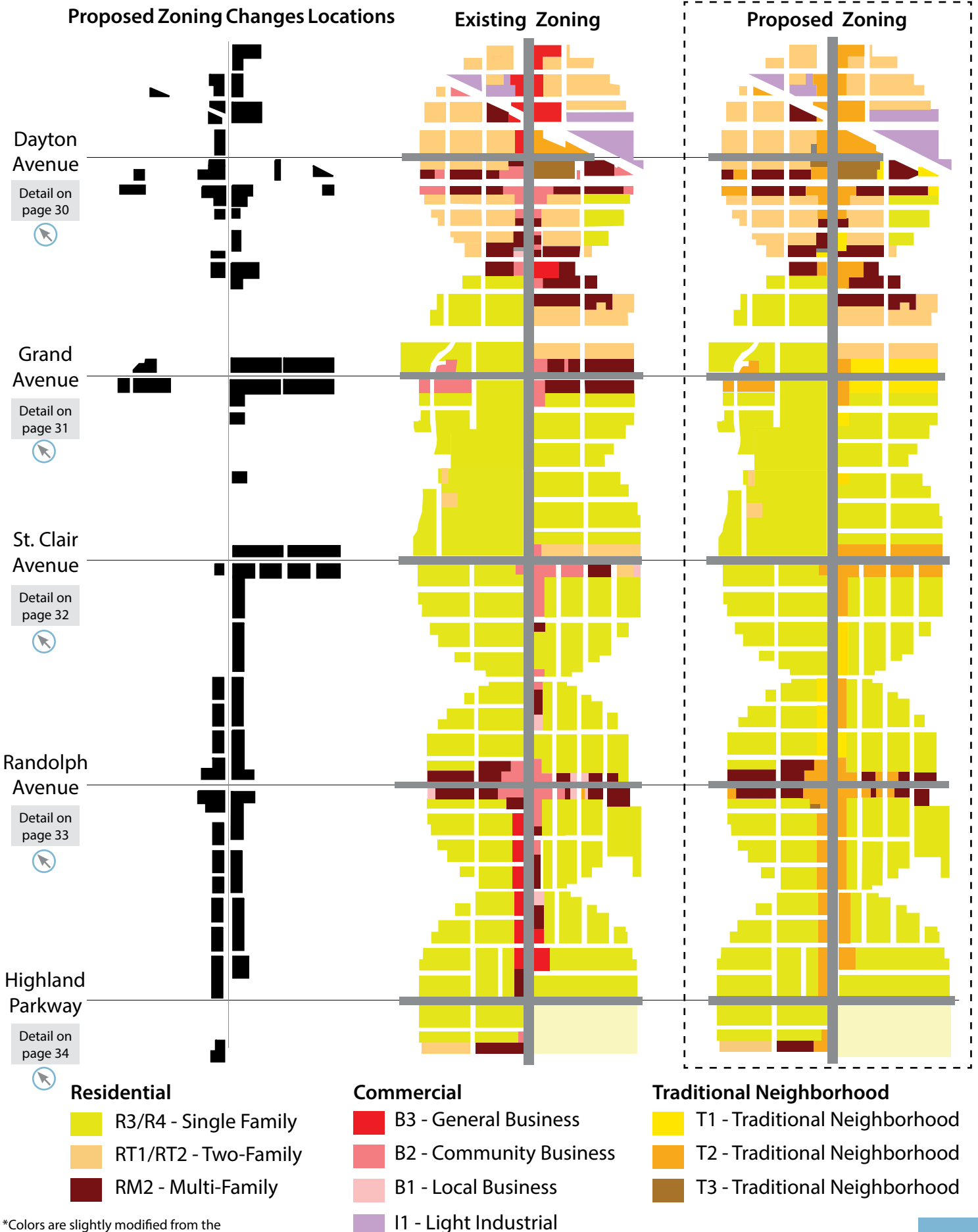
Node-oriented density allows existing commercial nodes to flourish and maintains neighborhood character.

Southbound Density Gradient

The northern section of the Snelling Avenue study area currently hosts significantly denser land uses than the southern section. Union Park has indicated they support fairly dense development in their district, especially in nodal intersection areas. Highland Park, on the other hand, does not have much density in its existing uses and the neighborhood feel is much more residential. The City could institute a density gradient where the northern section of the study area receives T2 and T3 zoning but the southern section is limited to T1 zoning. This will preserve its existing character while still supporting new development that results in an improved pedestrian experience.



The Southbound Density Gradient reflects the changing characteristics, and the different level of acceptable density from north to south.



*Colors are slightly modified from the standardized zoning colors to enhance visualization

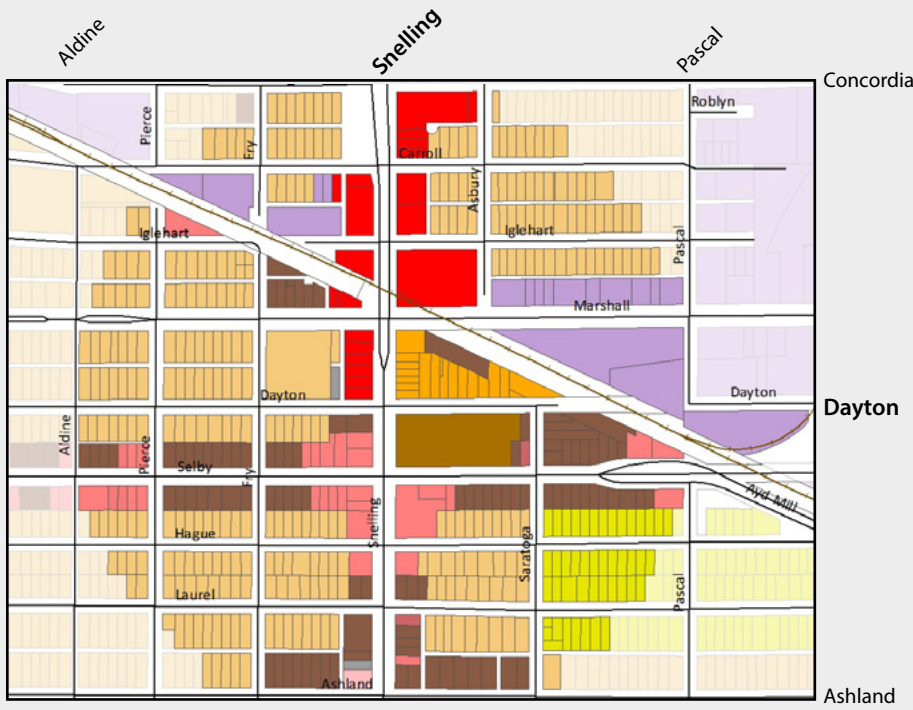
Dayton Avenue Station

[Back to Overview Page](#)

Station Area: Quarter-mile radius of Dayton/Snelling Intersection



Existing Zoning



The current zoning allows for high density residential land use and mixed use developments. Main corridors (Snelling Avenue and Selby Avenue) are zoned for multifamily residences and businesses, creating a node at the junction of Snelling and Selby. The current business (B1-B3) zoning, marked as red on the map, does not allow mixed use development.

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

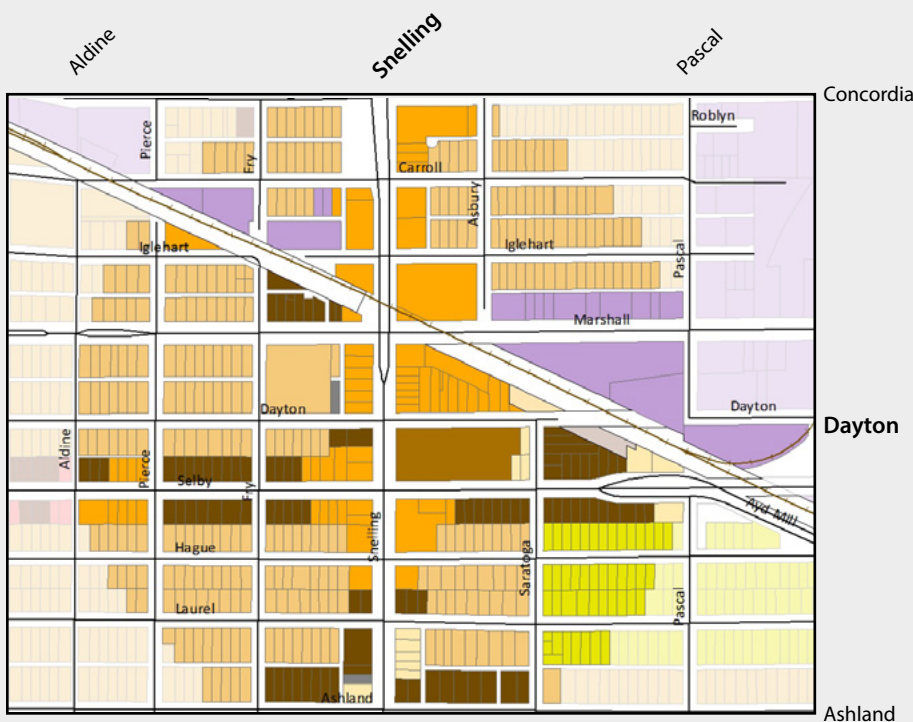
Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

Proposed Zoning



To allow more flexible land uses and create more pedestrian friendly character, much of the existing General Business and Community Business zoning are proposed to be rezoned Traditional Neighborhood (T1). The existing T3 zoning, where The Vintage is sited, and the Multifamily zones along Selby Avenue remained unchanged.

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

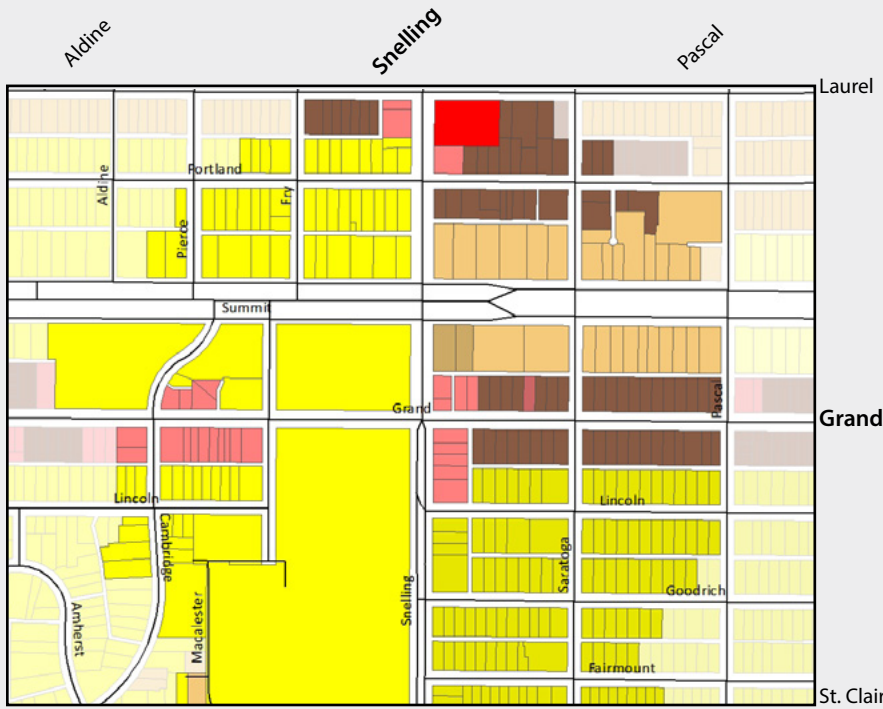
Grand Avenue Station

[Back to Overview Page](#)

Station Area: Quarter-mile radius of Grand/Snelling Intersection



Existing Zoning



The station area is primarily zoned as Single Family Residential. Higher density zones are concentrated on the northeast quadrant. Grand Avenue east of Snelling is currently a multi-family residential corridor. Community Business (B2) zones are found at the Grand/Snelling intersection and Grand Avenue west of Macalester College

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

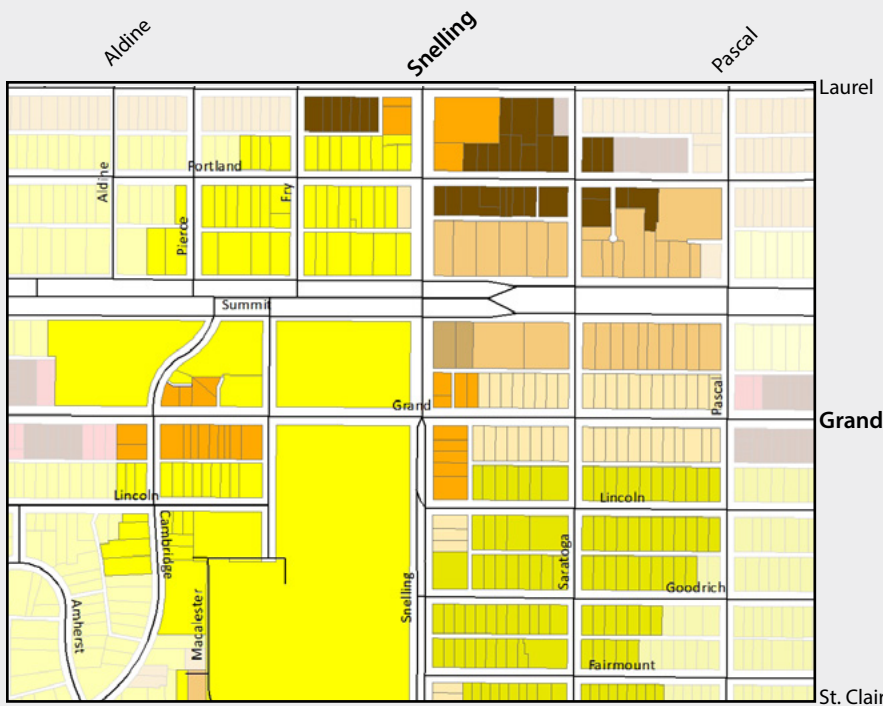
Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

Proposed Zoning



Business zoning (B3 and B2) is converted to Traditional Neighborhood (T2) zones to encourage pedestrian-friendly features. Multi-family parcels are rezoned to the lower density T1. The proposed zoning reflects the intent of the East Grand Avenue Overlay District to create a unified Grand and Snelling pedestrian-supportive corridor.

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

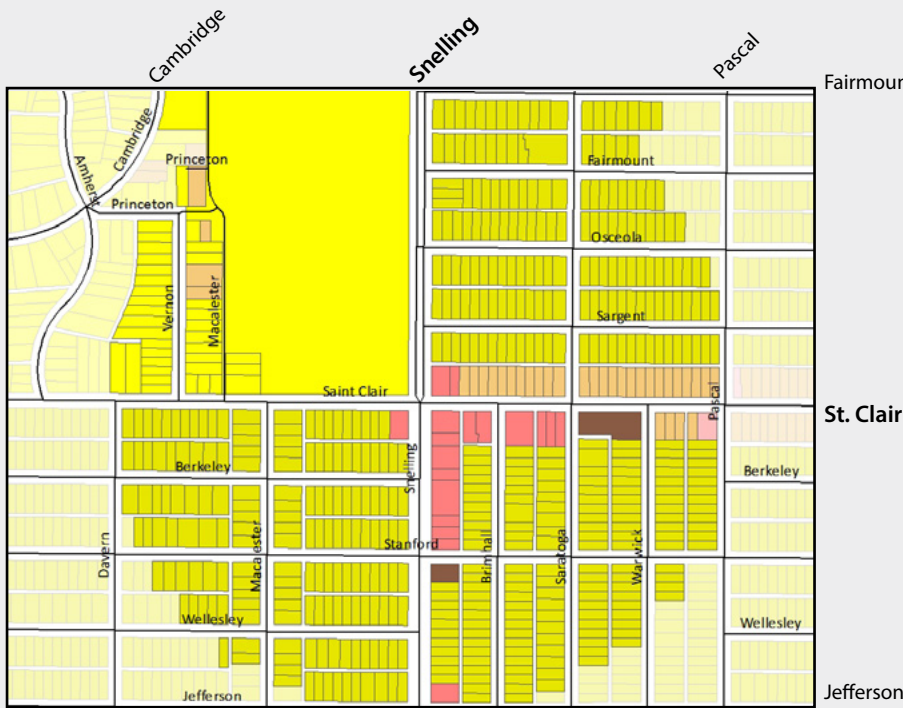
St. Clair Avenue Station

Station Area: Quarter-mile radius of St. Clair/Snelling Intersection

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Existing Zoning



Currently, the station area is primarily zoned for Single Family Residential. The intersection of St. Clair and Snelling is a neighborhood node, with a business corridor on Snelling (south of St. Clair) and a higher density residential corridor on St. Clair (east of Snelling).

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

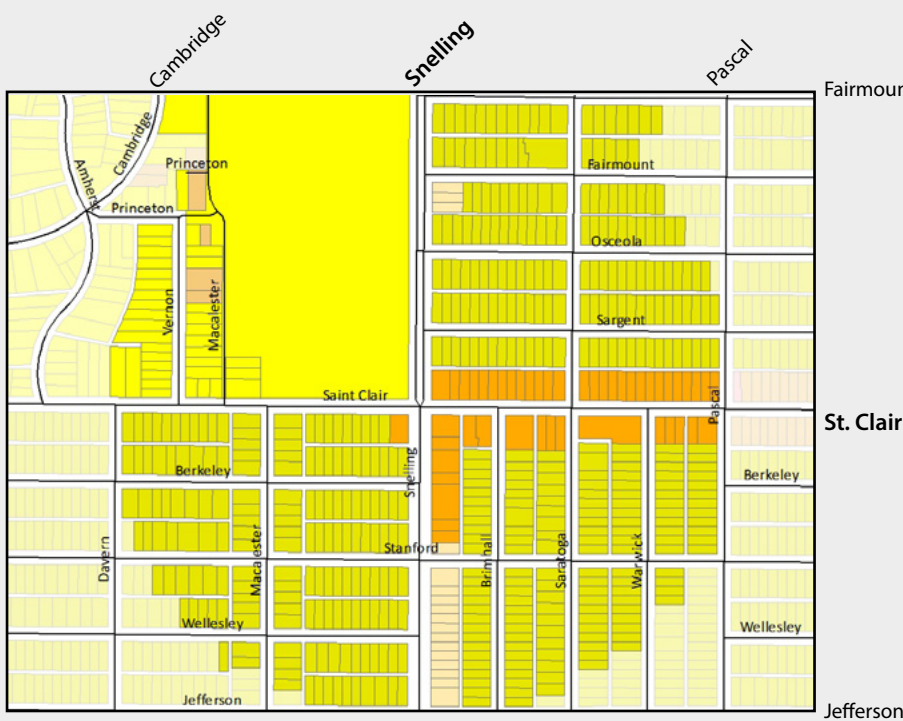
Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

Proposed Zoning



To create more potential for mixed use development, the business corridor on Snelling and the higher density residential corridor on St. Clair are converted into Traditional Neighborhood zones (T1 and T2). Parcels south of Stanford are zoned to be slightly less dense, which reinforces nodal density while still creating continuity along the corridor.

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

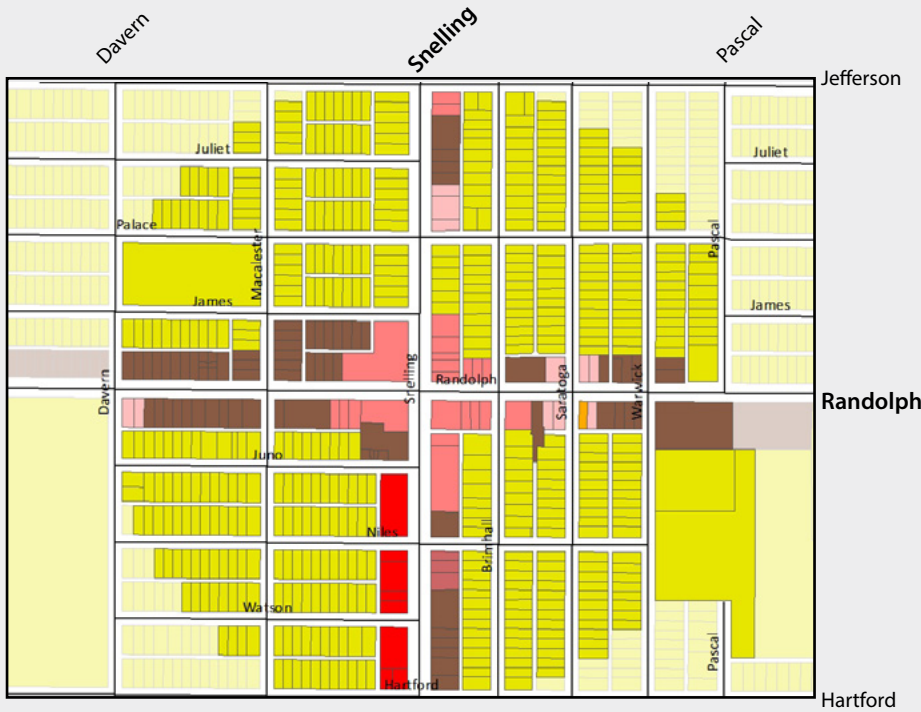
Randolph Avenue Station

Station Area: Quarter-mile radius of Randolph/Snelling Intersection

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Existing Zoning



Randolph Avenue, within this station area contains a mix of Business and Multi-family zones. All corners of the Snelling/Randolph intersection are Community Business (B2) zones. General Business (B3) parcels south of the intersection tend to be auto-oriented, which does not fit into the transit and pedestrian friendly vision.

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

Proposed Zoning



Business zoning (B1, B2, and B3) is converted into Traditional Neighborhood zoning (T2) to allow more flexible use and impose tighter design standards. Single family parcels on Snelling north of Randolph are converted to T1 zoning to create a continuous neighborhood corridor.

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

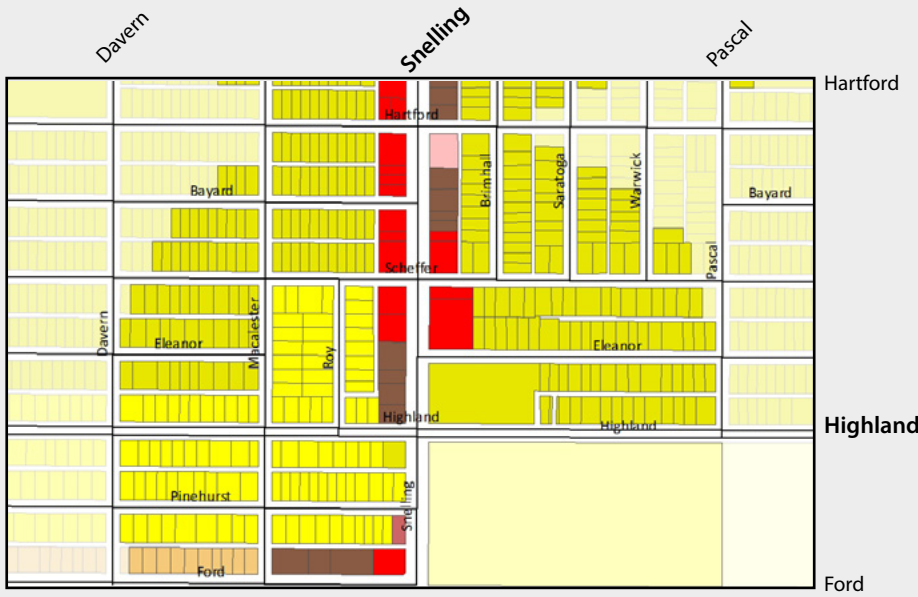
Highland Parkway Station

Station Area: Quarter-mile radius of Highland/Snelling Intersection

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Existing Zoning



The Highland Parkway station area is a continuation of the Randolph/Snelling commercial district. The General Business parcels do not fit in with the pedestrian-friendly and transit-friendly vision for Snelling Avenue due to their auto-oriented nature.

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

Proposed Zoning



The Business zoning and Multifamily zoning are changed to Traditional Neighborhood (T2). This zoning type allows for more flexible use. Depending on future demand, current Multi-Family areas may be converted into businesses, or vice versa.

Commercial

- B3 - General Business
- B2 - Community Business
- B1 - Local Business
- I1 - Light Industrial

Traditional Neighborhood

- T1 - Traditional
- T2 - Traditional
- T3 - Traditional

Residential

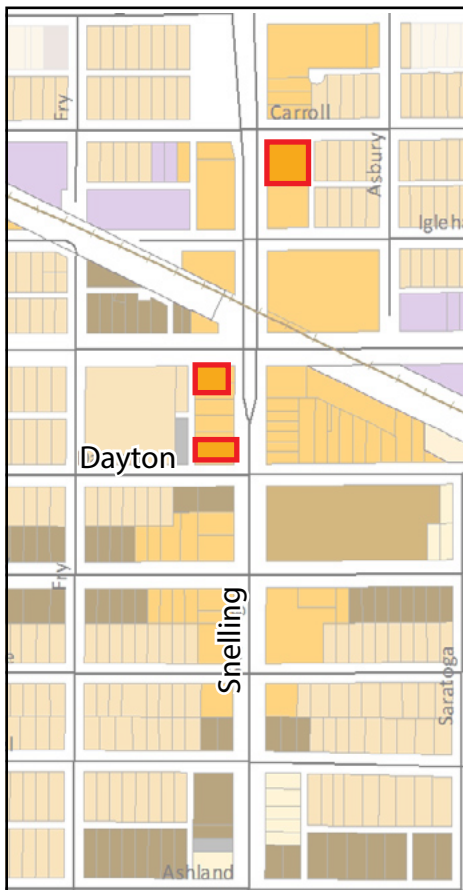
- R3/R4 - Single Family
- RT1/RT2 - Two-Family
- RM2 - Multi-Family

Automotive Uses Under the Proposed Zoning

Traditional neighborhood zoning is structured to create a pedestrian friendly environment. More specifically, T3 and T4 discourage the creation of excessively car-oriented business areas. T1 zoning, however, still permits automotive uses; and T2 zoning allows such uses with a conditional use permit (CUP) from the City. The study area currently contains several automobile-focused businesses including gas stations and car repair shops. Five parcels in the Dayton Avenue Station area, which are being recommended for a rezoning of T2, are automotive in nature.

These parcels would be grandfathered in and would not require any additional permits from the City to operate in their current location. This could be transferred along with the property to future owners as long as the automotive use does not lapse for longer than one year. If the property is vacant for more than a year, the owner would need to obtain a CUP before a new automotive use could be put in place on the site.

The City also has the option of exempting some or all of these parcels from the rezoning recommendation if the community desires to have the continuous presence of at least some automotive uses, such as a gas station or a repair shop.



Locations of automotive uses under the zoning proposal :

1. South-east corner of Carroll and Snelling
2. South-west corner of Marshall and Snelling
3. North-west corner of Dayton and Snelling

Impact of the Zoning Changes

The table below presents how the site design standards will change from the existing zoning to T1 and T2 zoning.

		Proposed Zoning	
		T1-Traditional Neighborhood	T2-Traditional Neighborhood
Existing Zoning	RT1-Two Family	<p>Minimum Setbacks decreased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -From 25 to 10 feet in the front -From 9 to 0 feet on the side -From 25 to 15 feet in the rear <p>Maximum Height decreased from 40 feet to 35 Feet*</p> <p>Density of 8 - 20 Dwelling Units per acre</p> <p>New Design Standards</p>	<p>Minimum Setbacks decreased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -From 25 to 10 feet in the front -From 9 to 0 feet on the side -From 25 to 15 feet in the rear <p>Maximum Height decreased from 40 feet to 35 feet*</p> <p>Density of 8 - 20 Dwelling Units per acre</p> <p>New Design Standards</p> <p><i>This Change Not Being Recommended in Study Area</i></p>
	RM2-Townhouse	<p>Minimum Setbacks decreased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -From 25 to 10 feet in the Front -From 1/2 building height to compliant with building code on the side -From 25 to compliant with building code in the rear <p>Maximum Setback of 25 feet on front</p> <p>Maximum Height decreased from 50 feet to 35 feet*</p> <p>Density to be 10 - 25 Dwelling Units per acre</p> <p>New Design Standards</p>	<p>Minimum Setbacks decreased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -From 25 to 10 in the front -From 1/2 building height to compliant with building code on the side -From 25 to compliant with building code in the rear <p>Maximum Setback of 25 feet on front</p> <p>Maximum Height decreased from 50 feet to 35 feet*</p> <p>FAR between 0.3 - 2.0 allows Surface Parking</p> <p>FAR between 0.3 - 3.0 requires Structured Parking</p> <p>New Design Standards</p>

		Proposed Zoning	
		T1-Traditional Neighborhood	T2-Traditional Neighborhood
Existing Zoning	B2- Community Business	<p>Minimum Setbacks eliminated</p> <p>Maximum Setback of 15 feet in front</p> <p>Maximum Height increased from 30 to 35 Feet*</p> <p>FAR Minimum of 0.3</p> <p>FAR Maximum of 1.0</p> <p>New Design Standards</p>	<p>Minimum Setbacks eliminated</p> <p>Maximum Setback of 10 feet</p> <p>Maximum Height increased from 30 feet to 35 feet*</p> <p>FAR between 0.3 - 2.0 allows Surface Parking</p> <p>FAR between 0.3 - 3.0 requires Structured Parking</p> <p>New Design Standards</p>
	B3- General Business	<p>Maximum Height increased from 30 feet to 35 feet*</p> <p>FAR Minimum of 0.3</p> <p>FAR Maximum reduced from 2.0 to 1.0</p> <p>Design Standards</p>	<p>Minimum Setbacks eliminated</p> <p>Maximum Setback of 10 feet in front</p> <p>Maximum Height increased from 30 feet to 35 feet*</p> <p>FAR between 0.3 - 2.0 allows Surface Parking</p> <p>FAR between 0.3 - 3.0 requires Structured Parking</p> <p>New Design Standards</p>
	BC-Community Business Converted (From a House)	<p>Minimum Setbacks decreased</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -From 25 to 10 feet in the front -From 9 to 0 feet on the side -From 25 to 15 feet in the rear <p>Maximum Height increased from 30 feet, to 35 Feet*</p> <p>New Design Standards</p>	<p>Minimum Setbacks eliminated</p> <p>Maximum Setback of 10 feet in front</p> <p>Maximum Height increased from 30 feet to 35 feet*</p> <p>FAR between 0.3 - 2.0 allows Surface Parking</p> <p>FAR between 0.3 - 3.0 requires Structured Parking</p> <p>New Design Standards</p> <p style="color: red;">This Change Not Being Recommended in Study Area</p>
<p>*All T zones permit buildings to exceed the maximum height provided that they are recessed the number of feet over the height. With a building that is 40 feet tall, the portions exceeding 35 feet would have to be set back by 5 feet from the lower levels of the building.</p>			

B. Complementary Strategies

In addition to zoning changes, other recommendations including a marketing campaign, placemaking, placing more medians, facilitating shared parking, and forming a unified business association are key to promoting safety and vitality on Snelling Avenue.

B1. Marketing Campaign Highlighting Destinations along Snelling

When residents are trying to figure out the usefulness of a new transit line, the most important variable that they consider is what places they can get to directly. Many casual transit users are not going to be interested in using the A Line as part of a series of transfers to get themselves around town. They might consider using it, however, for trips that they can quickly and comfortably be made by using the bus. Shoreline, Washington combined the rollout of a similar arterial bus rapid transit line with a promotional campaign alerting residents to all the amenities that they could get to just by riding the bus. This can be as simple as pointing out which grocery stores and laundromats are on the route. Ridership on their line is much higher than projected. Resident’s increased awareness of the BRT route’s usefulness, due to this promotional campaign, is a likely component of this.

One possible direction that the City could go with promoting the new line is a “Where Will the A Line Take Me?” campaign. The A Line will provide access to many retail amenities that residents will have an interest in visiting. The northern anchor of the route is the Rosedale Mall, a thriving shopping center with many common chain stores. Walmart is just a short walk from the University Avenue A Line Station. A Lunds and Byerly’s grocery store and a Whole Foods are located immediately on the line. The Highland Village shopping area can also be found there. The A Line can partially serve as a college campus connector, giving residents and students access to Hamline University, Saint Catherine’s University, Concordia University, and Macalester College. Finally, the connection that the A Line provides to both lines of the regional light rail system is a core benefit that opens up both downtowns, the airport, and the Mall of America to Snelling-area transit users.

Where will the A Line take me?

A LINE BRINGS YOU TO
SHOPPING AREAS

Rosedale Mall Highland Village Grand Avenue Midway

MEETING YOUR DAILY NEEDS & CRAVINGS

From grocery shopping to gourmet dining, from cleaning supplies to sporting goods
The A Line connects you with your destination.

City of Saint Paul Metro Transit

Gas + Insurance or Beach + Sun

Save for your Spring Break trip
Take the A Line!

City of Saint Paul Metro Transit

▲ Billboard highlighting major destination along the A Line

◀ Advertisement catering to university students

B2. Placemaking

West Seventh Street in Saint Paul has ornate stylized bus shelters that help to add a sense of place to the corridor. Summit Avenue has its grand boulevard and large setbacks. Many Saint Paul streets have inspirational poetic statements etched into the sidewalk. At present, there is no stylized theme to make Snelling Avenue feel like a cohesive whole or give it a distinctive sense of place. This could be remedied, with support from the City, by giving Snelling Avenue some sort of distinctive physical modification that the corridor could become known for.

Currently, an artist group called Midway Murals is painting murals onto the side of four Snelling Avenue businesses. This program was privately funded primarily through online donations. The City could actively encourage the development of Snelling as a “mural corridor” and give its support and blessing to other local artists looking to add an artistic touch to other parts of the street. Even if the City did not see fit to endorse the mural program, it could and should still take some steps towards creating visual cohesion in the corridor.



Sidewalk Poetry on many St. Paul streets could be expanded to Snelling Avenue
Photo Credit: msthames.blogspot.com



Mural in Plant City, FL helps create a sense of place in the community
Photo Credit: City of Plant City - plantcitygov.com

B3. Supportive Stance towards More Medians

Safety medians, more specifically medians with plantings and landscaping, go a long ways towards making a corridor both statistically safer for pedestrians and also perceptively safer and more comfortable which lures in more foot traffic. The City of Saint Paul has only partial control over the shape and design of Snelling Avenue. Snelling is a State highway and MnDOT has final say over its form. However, future plans detailing a road median on Snelling between St. Clair Avenue and Grand Avenue suggests that MnDOT is willing to consider pedestrian safety improvements when a compelling case is made. MnDOT is also planning to install new vegetated medians on a portion of Snelling Avenue close to Interstate 94 as part of a reconstruction project. The City of Saint Paul could adopt a supportive stance towards new medians on Snelling and actively advocate for MnDOT to consider such treatments every time road reconstruction is taking place on the corridor.



Landscaped Medians on Snelling Avenue near Macalester College has improved safety and comfort for pedestrians
Photo Credit: tkda.com

B4. Facilitate Shared Parking Agreements

The Snelling-Selby Business Association already operates an informal shared parking network amongst its participating businesses. Many businesses utilize all of their parking during part of the day but utilize no parking at other times. Bars do not require much morning parking capacity, for example, and offices probably have few visitors after 5:30. If businesses can lend each other the use of their parking spots during times of underuse, it reduces the need for building more lots. This both beautifies the area and saves businesses money. The City should continue to encourage the businesses on Snelling Avenue to coordinate together and set up more formal shared parking agreements.

With a more cohesive shared parking system in the Snelling corridor, parking requirements could be reduced and more land could be made available for development. Shared parking agreements would help support a heightened intensity of development without the need for private surface lots at each business. Pedestrian environments are optimized when even visitors who drive in can leave their cars somewhere and then access the environment as a pedestrian. Requiring visitors to repeatedly move their cars as they shift between businesses both undermines their own shopping experience and generates unnecessary traffic that interferes with other pedestrians enjoying the corridor.

B5. Encourage the Formation of a More Unified Business Association

Saint Paul has several retail districts with strong and distinctive identities such as Grand Avenue and Highland Village. These districts have created comprehensive business associations to promote their identities and represent their interests. Snelling Avenue's business community is currently represented by a multitude of different business associations that are not fully integrated. South Snelling Avenue businesses belong to the Highland Business Association, the Grand Avenue Business Association, and the Snelling-Selby Business Association.

To help Snelling develop a more tangible character, getting all of the businesses to coordinate with each other as one community will be an important step. The formation of a more inclusive Snelling Avenue business association would help to accomplish this and the businesses north of University Avenue could also be invited to participate. While the City does not have the authority to compel the creation of such a group, it could facilitate the process and even potentially provide some funding or staff time to help with initial outreach and other startup.

Summary of Action Plan

The action plan seeks to capitalize on the A Line to bring about the transformation of the southern portion of Snelling Avenue into a safe, walkable, and vibrant regional destination through zoning and policy changes. The most important component of the recommendation is the changing of existing rigid zoning into Traditional Neighborhood zoning (T1, T2, and T3) which allows for mixed use development. These zoning changes will ensure that all future growth in the corridor happens in a way that adds more access to goods and services, more safety and visual beauty, and more pedestrian friendliness. The City of Saint Paul can further support the corridor through a series of complementary strategies such as supporting the business community and giving Snelling Avenue a more distinctive identity. Finally, a marketing campaign promoting some of the A Line's most useful destinations will make sure that visitors and residents know about the new bus's presence and how it can be of direct benefit in their lives.

Conclusion

Snelling Avenue today is a good street but not a great street. It has thriving businesses and desirable neighborhoods. But these successes have been achieved in spite of Snelling, rather than being supported by it.

As a State highway and major truck route, Snelling Avenue moves cars and trucks efficiently but it's not a particularly pleasant environment for pedestrians. Snelling Avenue can serve a dual role as a neighborhood street but also a regional freight corridor. Snelling and its surrounding neighborhoods have the potential to be a vibrant pedestrian friendly commercial destination—a place with a street life that residents and visitors alike feel drawn to. The district councils along Snelling Avenue support a wide range of incremental improvements that can help transition towards a more pleasant and accessible experience for pedestrians and transit users, while still fulfilling its function as a state highway. The A Line, opening in 2016, will serve as a catalyst that will help make this a reality.

Snelling Avenue has the potential to become a destination street—a safe and pleasant environment for all and an integral thread in the fabric of Saint Paul.

Anchored by the A Line and bolstered by improvements in walkability and safety, the corridor will become a magnet for economic activity and a highly desirable place to visit. Driving will no longer be the only desirable option to travel along Snelling Avenue, as the corridor will support walking and using transit at higher levels than today. Seniors, students, and young professionals who live an auto-free lifestyle can live around Snelling Avenue and have access to many parts of the Twin Cities. Abundant opportunities for both renters and homeowners provides space for residents in all phases of their lives.

The policy and infrastructure recommendations presented in this document are intended to guide the corridor towards the future. The current zoning is inflexible and prevents Snelling Avenue from realizing this vision of becoming a walkable mixed-use corridor. Much of the land facing Snelling is currently zoned to restrict the use of land to business or residential only, limiting the potential for mixed use development. The Traditional Neighborhood zoning strategy relaxes this restriction and allows for a wider range of development, while placing more emphasis on how structures fit in with neighborhood character. Initiatives to increase pedestrian comfort and safety are recommended to create a greater sense of place along Snelling Avenue.

Snelling Avenue has the potential to be a wonderful amenity to the area, to Saint Paul, and to the whole metropolitan region, but getting there will require effort on the part of the City. Through zoning changes, initiatives to increase walkability, and a dedicated attempt to increase pedestrian safety, Snelling will be transformed from a street used for passing through to a street used to visit and live.