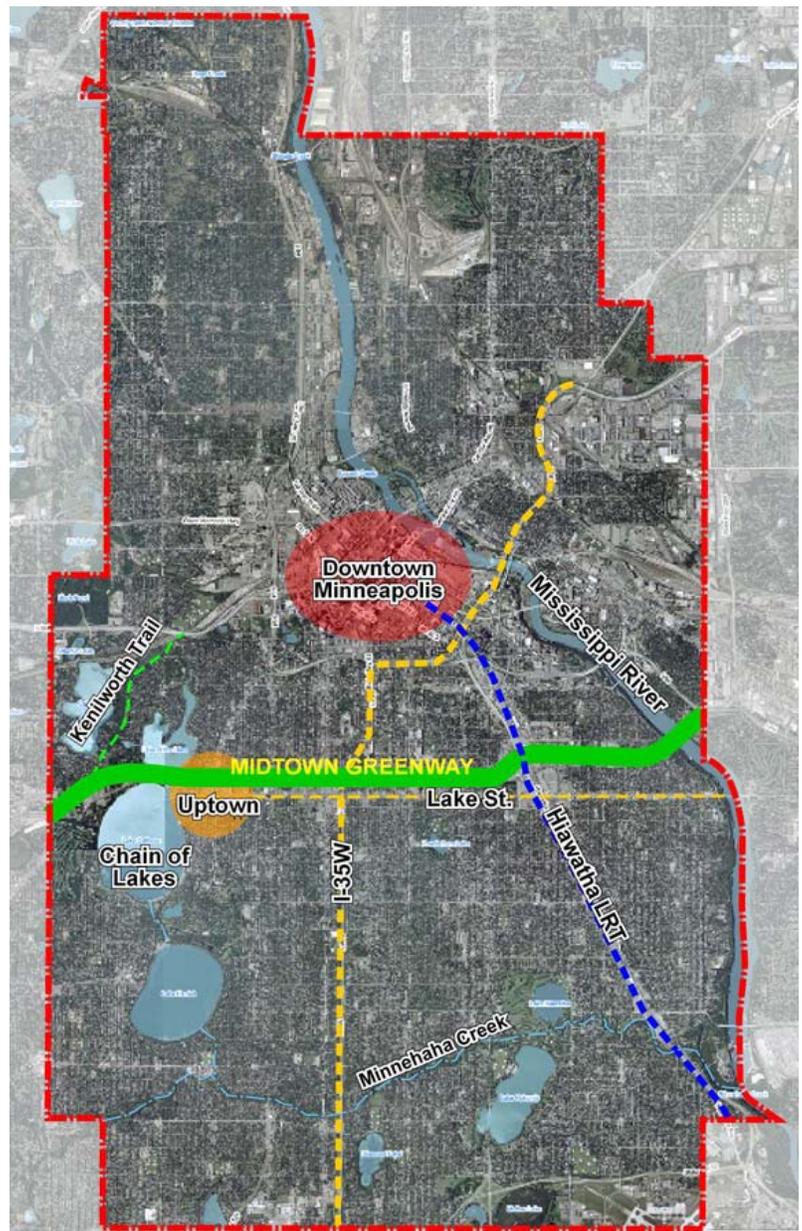


III. Site Conditions

Location and Context

Regional

The Midtown Greenway is a major component of the Minneapolis world-renowned parkway and open space system. From a regional perspective, the Greenway serves as a pedestrian and bicycle connection between two regional/national ecological elements: the Chain of Lakes to the west and the Mississippi River and trails to the east. Additionally, fixed-guideway transit in the Greenway has long been proposed as part of the evolving metropolitan area transit system.



Midtown Greenway: regional and neighborhood context

Local/Neighborhood

The Midtown Greenway also brings together several neighborhoods and areas that are important to Minneapolis and its residents. The Greenway passes through 10 city neighborhoods, connecting them to the major recreational/ecological features discussed above as well as commercial and entertainment centers such as Uptown, Lyn/Lake Eat Street, and the Midtown Exchange area. Persons traveling by bicycle, transit or automobile in the Lake Street/Greenway corridor can connect to downtown Minneapolis and other employment centers via the arterial streets that cross the Greenway.

Property Characteristics

Specific property characteristics and trends for the project area were analyzed in this study. These included current land use and zoning as well as property/land value. The analysis area extended a couple of blocks beyond the Midtown Greenway study area in order to gain a more complete understanding of the Greenway context (see Figure 1 at end of chapter for Greenway area zoning and land use).

Current Land Use

Residential

Residential land uses dominate the area of analysis, representing 50 percent of the total land area. With notable exceptions, the majority of residential uses exist outside of the primary study area, between one and three blocks from the Greenway. Housing most directly addresses the Greenway in the far western and eastern parts of the study area, in the West Calhoun, Cedar-Isles-Dean and East Phillips neighborhoods. There are a wide variety of housing types and densities in the analysis area, (see Chapter II. Summary of Research for further information), including single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, condominiums and apartments. Taller residential buildings are currently concentrated west of the Lakes, while the highest residential densities lie in the Uptown area between the lakes and Hennepin Avenue. Well-established, single-family neighborhoods abound throughout the corridor, especially along the Greenway near the lakes and in the Phillips Community.

Commercial

Commercial land uses make up approximately 46 percent of the land in the analysis area, and are concentrated along Commercial and Community Corridors, including Lake Street and Lagoon, Hennepin, Lyndale, Nicollet and Chicago Avenues. These commercial uses tend to serve the nearby neighborhoods, with the exception of the Uptown and Lyn-Lake areas that draw from a larger area. Many retail establishments are located in older, mixed-use buildings. Additional newer, more intense commercial uses exist in the corridor west of Lake Calhoun, east of I-35W (the Wells Fargo campus) and between Cedar and Hiawatha avenues, north and south of Lake Street.



Residential land uses represent 50% of the total land area in the project area.



Commercial land uses are concentrated along Commercial and Community Corridors.



Industrial land uses comprise about 4% of the project area and tend to be located adjacent to the Greenway trench.

Industrial

There are scattered industrial land uses throughout the corridor with a number of medium to heavier industrial uses located near 28th Street and the Greenway (near Hiawatha). These comprise about 4 percent of the total land area and tend to be located adjacent to the Greenway itself rather than in the outer portions of the analysis area, due to the historical use of the Greenway as a railroad corridor.

Land Use	1990		2000		Change	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Retail/Office/General Commercial	182.7	23.2%	197.5	25.1%	14.8	8.1%
Institutional	50.2	6.4%	55.2	7.0%	5.0	9.9%
Commercial Total	232.8	29.6%	252.7	32.2%	19.8	8.5%
Industrial	146.6	18.7%	75.2	9.6%	-71.3	-48.7%
Industrial Total	146.6	18.7%	75.2	9.6%	-71.3	-48.7%
Single Family	131.5	16.7%	206.9	26.3%	75.4	57.3%
Multi-Family	210.3	26.8%	148.7	18.9%	-61.6	-29.3%
Vacant/Undeveloped	10.8	1.4%	17.2	2.2%	6.4	59.0%
Residential Total	352.6	44.9%	372.7	47.4%	20.2	5.7%
Park, Recreational, & Preserve	47.1	6.0%	72.0	9.2%	24.9	52.7%
Open Space Total	47.1	6.0%	72.0	9.2%	24.9	52.7%
Major Highway	3.0	0.4%	9.5	1.2%	6.5	216.3%
Water	3.6	0.5%	3.6	0.5%	0.0	0.1%
Other Total	6.6	0.8%	13.1	1.7%	6.5	98.7%
Grand Total	785.7	100.0%	785.7	100.0%	0.0	0.0%

Parks and Open Space

Please refer to the “Public Realm” section of this chapter (below).

Land Use Change

To better understand the land use trends in the project area, land use area was calculated within the analysis area for both 1990 and 2000 using geographic data obtained from the Metropolitan Council. The table on the following page shows land use area in acres for 1990 and 2000, as well as the relative change in land use over that period.

Several important trends are evident in these data. The commercial land area increased over the period by 20 acres or by approximately 8.5 percent. Industrial land decreased by 71 acres to around half its 1990 extent. The residential land area grew by about 20 acres—or on a percentage basis, a rather modest 5.7 percent. Park, recreation and preserve land increased by 25 acres, representing a gain of almost 53 percent over the decade.

The decrease in industrial land from 1990 to 2000 is partly attributed to the conversion of railroad right-of-way to the recreation/trails use of the Midtown Greenway. Approximately 25 acres of industrial land was converted to park, recreation and preserve land. Another 46 acres of industrial land has converted to commercial and residential land. This is most likely due to changes in the industrial market and a stronger market for commercial and residential uses (see Chapter II: Summary of Research).

Zoning

City of Minneapolis Zoning Designations

Property zoning was also reviewed as part of the location and context analysis. This involved aggregating certain similar zoning categories to get a clearer picture of relevant patterns. Similar comparisons were done with the City as a whole as a point of comparison. The following charts summarize this information.

Midtown Greenway Zoning Breakdown

Zoning Category	Acres	Percentage
C1 & C2 Total	129.0	16.4%
C3A & C3S Total	56.0	7.1%
C4 Total	7.3	0.3%
I1 Total	60.3	7.7%
I2 Total	11.2	11.5%
I3 Total	8.6	1.1%
OR1 – OR3 Total	45.5	5.8%
R1 & R1A Total	90.9	11.6%
R2 & R2B Total	175.4	22.3%
R3 & R4 Total	20.8	2.7%
R5 & R6 Total	181.7	23.1%
Grand Total	786.4	100.0%

City of Minneapolis Zoning Breakdown

Zoning Category	Acres	Percentage
C1 & C2 Total	1,227.6	3.3%
C3A & C3S Total	541.8	1.5%
C4 Total	31.3	0.1%
I1 Total	1,926.6	5.2%
I2 Total	3,129.6	8.4%
I3 Total	245.9	0.7%
OR's Total	1305.3	3.5%
R1 & R1A Total	20,111.8	53.9%
R2 & R2B Total	5,282.4	14.2%
R3 & R4 Total	1,143.3	3.1%
R5 & R6 Total	1,752.4	4.7%
Downtown	611.8	1.6%
Grand Total	37,309.8	100.0%

This analysis reveals that there is much more commercial and industrial zoned land in the Greenway area than the City of Minneapolis as a whole. The Greenway area has fewer single-family zoned (R1, R1A, R2, R2B) properties than the City as a whole, and it has more medium- and high-density residentially zoned properties (R3, R4, R5 and R6). This would be expected in that the density in the Greenway area is significantly higher than city's average density.

Land/Property Value

Land value varies widely in the study area depending on parcel size and proximity to the transit network and various commercial, recreational and natural amenities. In general, the average total property value (land + building) per square foot of land is greater in the western subarea of the project (west of Hennepin Avenue), and decreases in an easterly direction to Hiawatha (see table below). The increased property value in the western subarea is due to the presence of Lake Calhoun and Lake of the Isles, which has a positive effect on land value. Additionally, the Uptown area centered on Hennepin and Lake has benefited from significant and long-standing stability or rising of land values over the past two decades.

On average, property values are lower between Lyndale Avenue and I-35W, and lower still east of Chicago Avenue to Hiawatha Avenue. However, land values in this eastern subarea have experienced a recent rise over the past several years due to increased investment in the Wells Fargo campus area, the Midtown Exchange, Lake Street redevelopment and the Hiawatha LRT line.

Total Property Value per Square Foot by Subarea

Greenway Subarea	No. of Parcels	Total Value of Parcels	Total Area of Parcels (Sq Ft)	Total Value Per Sq Ft
West of Hennepin Ave.	387	\$362,363,800	5,316,729	\$68
Hennepin Ave. to Chicago Ave.	847	\$396,140,800	7,939,879	\$50
East of Chicago Ave.	621	\$136,301,500	4,967,187	\$27
	1,855	\$894,806,100	18,223,795	\$49



Much of the project area is characterized by a traditional urban street grid.

Transportation

Roadway Infrastructure

The vast majority of streets in the project area are arranged in a traditional urban grid street pattern, with the exception of the area west of the Chain of Lakes where the grid is interrupted and skewed to accommodate the lakes, the diagonal alignment of the Greenway and Excelsior Boulevard.

Elsewhere larger parcels and major transportation routes also interrupt the grid, including at the Wells Fargo campus, Pioneers & Soldiers Memorial Cemetery, the I-35W freeway, and the diagonal Hiawatha Avenue. It should be noted that the Midtown Greenway itself, as a former railroad bed

depressed through the city, also interrupts the street grid by limiting the number of crossings over it (see “Bridges” below).

The most prominent roadway in the project area is Lake Street, which is designated a Commercial Corridor in The Minneapolis Plan and is a Class “A” arterial that connects the neighborhoods in the project area west to St. Louis Park and east to St. Paul over the Mississippi River. The north-south major arterials that intersect the Greenway include Hennepin, Lyndale and Cedar avenues, connecting the project area to downtown Minneapolis and other parts of the City. Larger principal arterials include I-35W and Hiawatha Avenue, which carry a significant amount of automobile (and light rail) traffic. Access to south-bound I-35W, in the central subarea of the Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan project area, is obtained via ramps at 31st Street.



There are 44 bridges that cross the Greenway throughout the length of the project area.



Access to the Greenway is obtained at grade (above) or via ramps or stairs.

Bridges

Forty-four bridges serve to connect the street grid across the railroad trench through the length of the Midtown Greenway. Twenty-nine of these bridges are nationally designated as historic and were constructed between 1913 and 1916. These bridges are a distinguishing characteristic of the Greenway as experienced from within the trench as well as across the landscape as one looks east or west from each bridge. A bridge study is currently being undertaken by the Minneapolis Public Works Department to identify which bridges merit replacement, removal or reclassification. The evaluation criteria generally include Level of Service (LOS), physical condition, traffic projections, nearby current and future land uses, and closure/reclassification implications.

Greenway Access Points

There are 19 points of access to the Midtown Greenway for pedestrians and bicyclists; several more are under consideration. These access points vary from informal trails within community gardens to timber-framed stairways or fully accessible ramps. The following is a list of current access points:

Ramps

- Dean Parkway
- Lake of the Isles Parkway
- Bryant Avenue
- Nicollet Avenue
- Park Avenue
- 13th Avenue
- 18th Avenue

Stairs

- Columbus Avenue
- Chicago Avenue
- Bloomington Avenue

At Grade

- Kenilworth Trail
- Calhoun Village
- James Avenue
- Irving Avenue
- Humboldt Avenue
- Soo Line Gardens
- 5th Avenue
- 28th Street

