

Hopkins

BLAKE ROAD LRT STATION AREA

Development Guidelines

May 2015



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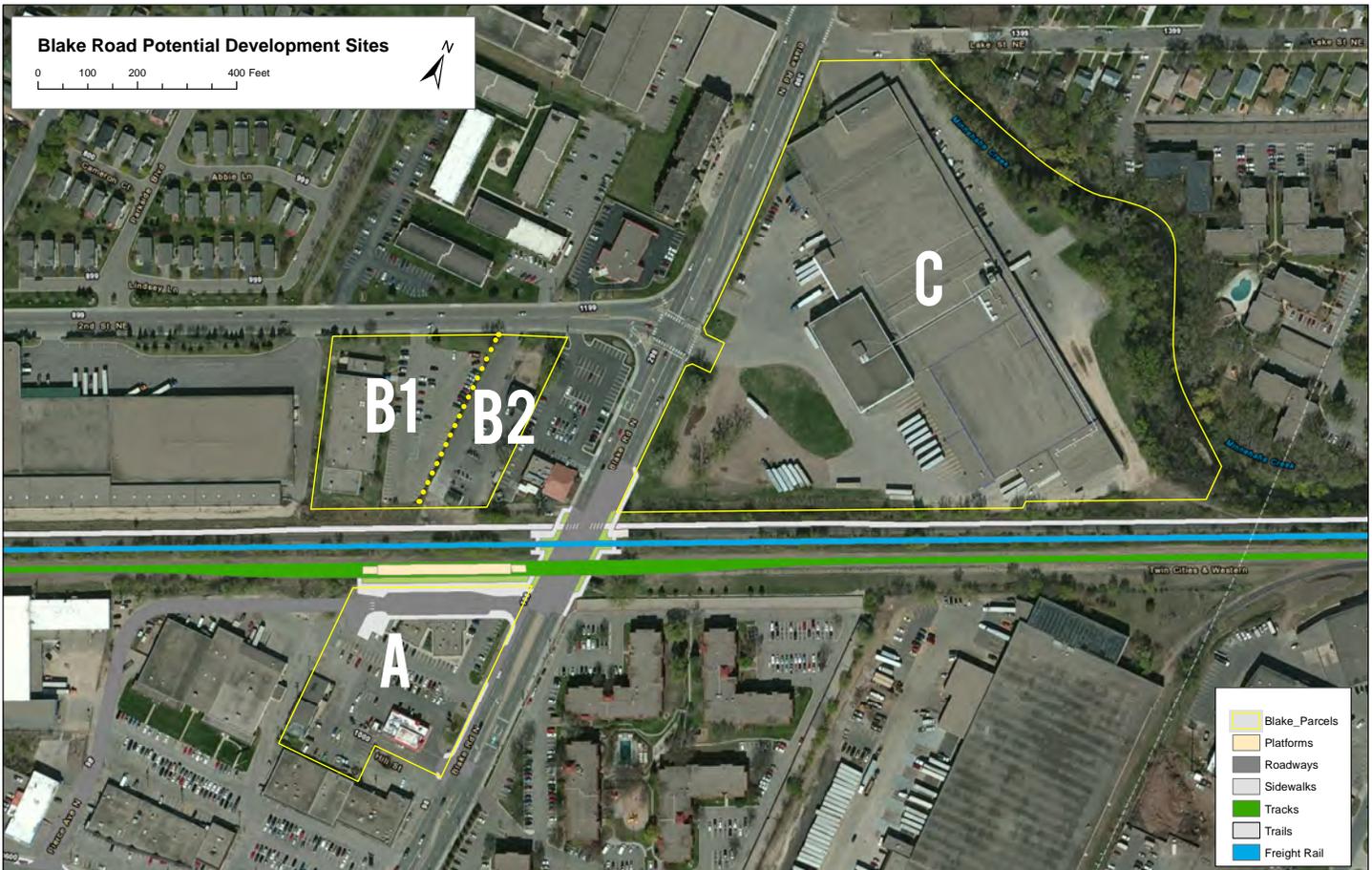
*Blake Road Corridor Collaborative
City of Hopkins*



Overview

Hopkins is a dynamic community of over 17,000 residents located just 13 minutes west of the Twin Cities. Founded rich in tradition and growth, Hopkins offers the advantages and conveniences of a large city with the security of a small town. The residents and the business community have an enormous sense of pride and support for their City. Travel any street and you will see and feel the reflections of pride and vitality.

Three of the Southwest LRT transit stations will be located in Hopkins, one of which is the Blake Road Station. Already a mixed-use, higher density district, the transit stop will offer greater regional access to jobs and amenities. A partnership between the City of Hopkins, Hennepin County Community Works, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) and the Met Council, is transforming Cottageville Park to increase the amount of green space along Blake Road, improve the water quality of the Creek, and make the creek more accessible and visible to the community. Phase one of this \$3 million project will be completed in October of 2015. The new park will include new play equipment, trails, lighting, a permanent community garden with water source and tool shed, and extensive new landscaping. When the project is complete the park will be nearly three times larger.



With the advent of the light-rail transit investment, the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative and the City of Hopkins partnered with Twin Cities LISC / Corridor Development Initiative to lead a series of community workshops to explore development options and scenarios for existing or proposed redevelopment sites that include public ownership near the Blake Road LRT station area. These development objectives are the result of the community workshops, and serve to inform the future development of the area surrounding the Blake Road LRT Station.

Through the CDI process, three key sites that include some aspect of public ownership were identified for their redevelopment potential:

- A. The Joint Development site, south of the Blake Road LRT Station (proposed for a park-and-ride and possible joint development by Metro Transit)
- B. 43 Hoops Basketball Academy site and adjacent parcel to the north of the Blake Road LRT Station (43 Hoops site is owned by the Hennepin County Rail Authority)
- C. Cold Storage site (owned by the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District)

All three sites will be integrated with Blake Road and its improvements in pedestrian, bike, and vehicle access.



Above: Images from Downtown Hopkins

ASSETS

The City of Hopkins offers a wonderful quality of life through:

- Its spirit of community where people are treated with respect, and where the community participates in building culture, character and common bonds;
- A thriving Mainstreet featuring an array of local shops, restaurants, the Hopkins Art Center, a movie theater, and residential components.
- Support for business growth, and home of corporate campuses such as Cargill and SuperValu;
- Outstanding schools and a community that offers and values diversity and cultural heritages; quality parks, housing and public services.
- Hopkins is home to over 20 community education facilities, including public, charter, private and adult education schools.
- Numerous regional trails and parks that connect to downtown Minneapolis, the Uptown area, St. Louis Park, and Minnetonka.
- The surrounding Blake Road area includes parks, educational institutions, athletic center, large and small companies and retail businesses.



Above: Sites near the Blake Road LRT Station. Clockwise from l to r: Joint Development site, 43 Hoops Basketball Academy, Cold Storage site, and the Cedar Lake LRT regional trail.

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

The Blake Road Station has been noted for its strong redevelopment potential along the Southwest LRT Corridor in various planning studies. Factors supporting redevelopment in the Blake station area include a large and diverse population base, good station access, several strategic sites available for redevelopment, a number of underutilized properties, and open space amenities such as Minnehaha Creek and Cottageville Park. Near the proposed station platform, the Hennepin County-owned 43 Hoops site presents a near-term redevelopment opportunity for transit supportive uses. The Cold Storage site, now owned by the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, and several underutilized sites along Excelsior Boulevard offer additional redevelopment opportunities near the station. A potential joint development project includes a park- and- ride ramp that may be able to be incorporated with a mixed-use development facing Blake Road and the station platform, located just south of the station.

The **Joint Development (A)** proposed for the three parcels, including the Pawn America site, immediately south of the Blake Road LRT Station will house a structured parking ramp (245 parking stalls) to help increase access and ridership of the Green Line. Currently, SPO and the City of Hopkins are partnering to explore working with a private developer to incorporate additional components to increase the functionality, value and appeal of the site.

The **43 Hoops Basketball Academy (B1) and adjacent site (B2)** Well loved by the Blake Road community, the 43 Hoops Basketball Academy sits on a site owned by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority situated just north of the proposed Blake Road LRT Station. The parcel was purchased for potential transit purposes, and offers the opportunity for higher density residential and other transit-related uses given its proximity to the transit station. The adjacent site is considered to be underutilized given the future potential of the area. The community has expressed strong desire for a community center in the area, for which 43 Hoops has served as a surrogate.



Above: Some of the many amenities Hopkins has to offer. Top: Cargill campus, Bottom r: Blake School, Bottom l: New commercial development on Blake Road.

The **Cold Storage site (C)** was seen as the site with the greatest redevelopment potential because of its size (approximately 17 acres), proximity to natural amenities which also buffer nearby uses, and visibility and access to Blake Road. Of critical importance on this site will be the integration of storm water management and expansion of the Minnehaha Creek Greenway. This section of the creek is currently the worst offender for pollutants draining into the creek’s watershed. Because of the site’s central location and size, attention should be given to creating connectivity to the surrounding amenities (e.g. Minnehaha Creek, Cottageville Park, Three Rivers Bike Trail, Blake Road LRT Station), and providing for walkable areas.

The opportunity is great to explore how transit-oriented development could further enhance the area by addressing accessibility, livability, and strengthening the pedestrian environment for people of all ages and abilities. It might be advantageous to move the smaller sites to the south and north of the Blake Road LRT station for redevelopment first, which could strengthen the market for the more desirable Cold Storage site. It is important that the Blake Road Station maintain its neighborhood character, diversity, and sense of place. This can be accomplished by enhancing the pedestrian flow of the area, attracting smaller scale retail and services, and utilizing public art or green space to make it memorable. The Blake Road LRT Station offers an important opportunity to capitalize on the transit and natural amenities in the area, strengthen the multi-modal access, and provide for a mix of housing options to serve the needs of the community.



Above: Pizza Luce located near the future Blake Road LRT station.

Recommendations for redevelopment of the site include:

Goal 1: Create stronger connections and walkability for the Blake Road area

- A. Create a connected, walkable, mixed-use, sustainable neighborhood, with a pedestrian-oriented and human-scale streetscape.
- B. Greater pedestrian / bicycle safety through better signage and slowing cars on Blake Road.
- C. Improve the permeability of Blake Road by creating more areas for pedestrians to cross safely.
- D. Improve safety and security through partnership with the City's Police Department, Three Rivers Police, and Metro Transit, with strategies such as greater security presence, improved lighting, and other practices such as CPTED (Community Policing Through Environmental Design).
- E. Pursue transit-oriented design that enhances multi-modal access, and provide for bicycle accommodations (racks, lockers, etc.) for businesses and residents.
- F. Connect site / LRT station area to bike trail.
- G. Pedestrian access to the Blake Road LRT Station from the north (e.g. 43 Hoops site)
- H. Add green space to soften the built environment that would allow for outdoor use year-round.
- I. Utilize landscaping and streetscape amenities to create stronger pedestrian district.
- J. Limit surface parking with new development encourage underground or structured parking.
- K. Improve connections with the Cargill Corporate Headquarters to strengthen local businesses.

Goal 2: Preserve the neighborhood diversity

- L. Maintain cultural and ethnic diversity, and the needs of those communities.
- M. Provide for a range of housing types and affordability to meet the needs of all people throughout their life and changing lifestyle needs.
- N. Utilize universal design principles that can respond to changing demographic needs and anticipate in innovative ways to address the dynamic and changing needs of residents.
- O. Strengthen the vitality of the area through increased density and mixed commercial and residential uses.
- P. Encourage businesses that fit into and serve the needs of the community.
- Q. Enhance the intergenerational opportunities in the community.
- R. Engage neighborhood residents in planning for redevelopment projects early in the process.
- S. Promote high-quality design.
- T. Enhance a sustainable neighborhood by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- U. Create opportunities to live, work, learn, play – the spectrum of elements for a healthy community.



Above: Bike trail near the future downtown Hopkins LRT station.

Goal 3: Improve water and environmental quality

- V. Align with efforts to expand the Minnehaha Creek Greenway to promote and integrate 260 acres of regional storm-water management to improve water quality for Minnehaha Creek.
- W. Connect the Minnehaha Creek Greenway to the newly expanded Cottageville Park and downstream trails and open space.
- X. Ensure community access to the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, the Three Rivers Park bike trail, and other public open spaces.
- Y. Reduce the area’s carbon footprint.
- Z. Incorporate sustainable development practices into new construction projects.

Goal 4: Strengthen residential and neighborhood-oriented retail to enhance vitality and livability

Support was expressed for:

- A mix of housing types, including senior housing, that can accommodate a range of incomes, ages and family size (both rental and ownership options).
- Multi-family housing amenities such as guest suites and shared space for larger gatherings.
- Medium to high density residential, to preserve green space and enhance street-level amenities.
- Locally owned businesses and increased opportunities for residents of all ages to live and work in the area.
- Commercial uses that enhance rather than compete with downtown Hopkins Mainstreet vitality.
- A hotel or motel.
- Redevelopment that works to incorporate existing local businesses into new construction projects.
- Creative ways to support small cultural businesses that serve the community.
- Maintaining existing assets such as 43 Hoops Basketball Academy in the area.
- A community center that supports activities for all generations.
- Convenience services (e.g. fast food, bike repair, etc.), especially near the transit station.
- Flexible space that can adapt as needs change.
- The option of a trail attraction, offering a convenient stop-off spot for bikers and pedestrians.
- Encourage public private partnership for infrastructure
- A connected and complementary system of parks and other privately owned but publicly accessible (POPS – Privately Owned Public Spaces) open spaces that ensures higher quality development and weaves the neighborhood together to enhance livability (see Trust for Public Land’s report: Greening the Green Line <http://www.tpl.org/our-work/parks-for-people/green-line-parks-and-commons>).
- Welcome developers and businesses that operate with equity principles of hiring and wages.

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