

GENERAL INFORMATION

Applicant: CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

Request: Consider adoption of 98th Street Station Area Plan

CHRONOLOGY

City Council Study Session	05/14/2018	
Planning Commission Study Session	08/09/2018	
City Council Study Session	10/08/2018	
Planning Commission	12/20/2018	Public Hearing Held - Recommended Adoption
City Council	01/07/2019	Public Hearing Scheduled

STAFF CONTACT

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DEADLINE FOR AGENCY ACTION

The agency action deadline was waived by the applicant.

Newspaper Notification: confirmed – (12/06/2018 Sun Current – 10 day notice)

Direct Mail Notification: although not required, staff sent mailed notice to all property owners within one half mile of the 98th Street Station

PROPOSAL

Staff will present the 98th Street Station Area Plan (“Plan”) for recommended adoption. At the public hearing, staff will provide an overview of the Station Area Plan including the recommendations that will complement the planned METRO Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. The “station area” extends one-half mile around the transit station as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Station Area Map



BACKGROUND

As directed in the 2018 Planning Commission Work Plan, staff drafted a station area plan for the 98th Street Orange Line Transit Station (Bloomington South Transit Station) as attached to the project webpage - BLM.MN/98thSAP.

The METRO Orange Line BRT is a high frequency transit line that is expected to be in operation in December of 2020. It will connect Burnsville to Downtown Minneapolis, and includes 12 planned stations along the line that mostly follow the I-35W corridor. In Bloomington, the Orange Line will stop at the South Bloomington Transit center (98th Street Transit Station) and at Knox Avenue at American Boulevard.

BRT operates similar to light rail. Stations have platforms, real time signage, and improved lighting and security features. Users pay ahead of time and can board at any door. The line operates frequent enough that a schedule is not needed (e.g., every 10 minutes during rush hour and every 15 minutes during midday, evenings and weekends, with less frequent service in the early morning and late at night).

PLAN VISION STATEMENTS

The Station Area Plan provides a framework for short and long-term public improvements, and a vision to guide future development of the area. In August 2017 Metro Transit and the City conducted a meeting with stakeholders and community members to develop the plan's vision. Participants included residents of Summer House (senior apartments), Nativity of Mary School, VEAP, Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, and government agencies. A facilitated discussion helped define three long term vision statements for the station area:

- Enhanced public realm that creates a sense of place
- Development patterns that support transit
- Improved access to the station for all users

This vision acts as the foundation for the Station Area Plan.

PLAN STRUCTURE

The Plan has three main components: Issues & Opportunities, Recommendations, and Implementation. The Issues & Opportunities section explains existing conditions, input gathered from a variety of outreach methods, and identifies barriers and opportunities for public improvements in the station area. The Recommendations section identifies short and long-term projects that help achieve the plan's vision. The Implementation section explains priorities and next steps. The Plan's recommendations will need to be incorporated into City departments' future work plans to ensure implementation. The City will also need to work with partners to achieve many of the recommendations, most notably Hennepin County, Metro Transit, and MnDOT.

KEY RECOMMENDATION

Infrastructure Improvements

A major component of the Plan is focused on improving access to the Station while also enhancing walkability throughout the station area. The Plan recommends 33 improvements to address accessibility throughout the station area. The majority of the recommendations focus on pedestrian and bicycle improvements. Other improvements are related to vehicle circulation and streetscaping. While some of the recommendations are minor and can be implemented in the short term, several recommendations require additional study. Some of the more impactful recommendations include:

- Removing free right turn lanes throughout the district to improve pedestrian safety at intersections.
- Repurposing extra auxiliary lanes to provide additional pedestrian space. The lanes entering and exiting the free right turns at 98th Street and Lyndale Avenue can potentially be converted into additional pedestrian space.
- Adding a crosswalk over 98th Street west of the railroad crossing to improve pedestrian access to the industrial employment.

- Adding streetscaping features, such as trees and benches, along major corridors where none exist already to enhance pedestrian comfort and improve aesthetic character
- Adding a pedestrian bridge over I-35W south of the transit center to connect residential neighborhoods.
- Removing one of two left turn lanes from westbound 98th Street to southbound Lyndale Avenue as traffic volumes don't warrant two.
- Adding refuge islands where space permits to enhance pedestrian safety.

Corridor and Interchange Study

Conducting a formal corridor and interchange study is recommended to evaluate the feasibility of recommended improvements around the interchange. This Plan's recommendations are based on high level analysis, and more detailed study is needed to model the recommended improvements to determine their effect on crash rates and traffic capacity. The area from the split of 98th Street and Old Shakopee Road to the intersection of 98th Street and Grand Avenue should be evaluated.

In addition to, or in conjunction with, the corridor study, an interchange study should be conducted for I-35W and 98th Street. The interchange was designed to accommodate a looped entry for northbound I-35W which would encroach into the area planned for the new transit station. The City and the Metropolitan Council purchased the property currently occupied by the transit center in order to reserve the land for future interchange modifications. Since then, the existing transit center has proven to be well used and is considered a major asset for the City. With the addition of the METRO Orange Line BRT and the planned station improvements, the looped interchange design will likely need to be modified.

Rezoning

The Plan also recommends rezoning key properties located near 98th Street and Lyndale Avenue to promote transit supportive development patterns and higher residential densities. Several properties are recommended to be up-zoned from B-2 to B-4 to allow for mixed use development. The proposed B-4 zoning allows higher development intensities, allows mixed residential uses, requires buildings to be closer to the property line and restricts drive-throughs in order to create a more accommodating pedestrian environment. The following map highlights the six properties that are proposed to be rezoned in 2019. The hatched areas are properties where the City would support additional rezoning to B-4 if privately initiated.



Proactive Rezone - properties will be rezoned to B-4 following the adoption of this plan



Transitional - properties remain zoned B-2, but market driven upzoning in accordance with the Land Use Guide Plan would be considered on a case by case basis.

The proposed rezonings result in some properties becoming legally non-conforming with regard to development standards. While the existing uses on these properties are all permitted in the B-4 zoning district the existing structure placement does not comply with the B-4 district requirements which are intended to create a more urban character with shallow street setbacks and minimum floor area ratio (FAR) requirements. A comparison of the B-2 and B-4 zoning districts is provided below.

	B-2 (Existing) General Commercial	B-4 Neighborhood Commercial
Uses		
Office/Medical Office	Permitted	Permitted
Retail	Permitted	Permitted
Residential	No	Accessory
Restaurant w/ drive-though	Conditional	Conditional (single lane drive thru, not street side)
Restaurant w/out drive-though	Conditional	Conditional
Auto Dealers	Conditional	No
Standards		
FAR	Min: N/A Max: 0.5	0.2 0.5; (2.0) With Residential
Building Floor Area	Min: 3,000 sq. ft.	4,000 sq. ft.
Impervious Surface Area	Max: 90%	95%
Site Width	Min: 100 ft; 150 ft for corner sites	150 ft; 200 ft for corner sites
Site Area	Min: 25,000	40,000
Setbacks Along Public Street	Min: 35 ft Max: N/A	10 ft (or width of public easement) 40 ft
Rear	Min: 15 ft	15 ft; 30 ft for buildings over 4 stories
Side	Max: 10 ft	10 ft; 20 ft for buildings over 4 stories
Abutting Residential	Min: 50 ft	50 ft

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Throughout the summer of 2018, staff conducted an online survey, a walking audit, stakeholder focus groups, a public open house, and attended community events. Public input guided development of the draft recommendations.

Online Survey – A survey was posted on the City website during the month of June. Staff promoted the survey through social media, newsletters, fliers at high employment businesses, and at the station. A total of 167 responses were received. The results were in line with what staff expected.

The survey included an interactive map feature allowing respondents to place points and post comments in locations where issues exist. This map helped staff identify where to focus on key issues and was used to create the route for the walking audit.

Walking Audit – Tracy Smith, the City's ADA Coordinator, organized a walking audit of the station area. Participants included persons with disabilities and seniors. The route began and

ended at Nativity of Mary Church and extended along Lyndale Avenue and 98th Street. Different segments were evaluated for their accessibility and general comfort level for participants.

Many of the issues first identified in the online survey were field verified. Participants also noted that the crossing with rapid flashing beacons at 96th Street across Lyndale Avenue was well utilized. Additionally, pedestrians travelling across I-35W almost always use the sidewalk on the south side of 98th Street because it is wider and more accommodating than that on the north side of the bridge. These observations are reflected in the preliminary recommendations.

Focus Groups – Business owners and property owners were invited to participate in small group and one-on-one discussions about the area. Discussions took place with:

- Kraus Anderson
- VEAP
- The Works Museum
- Shah Properties
- Metro Transit
- Hennepin County
- Bloomington Chamber of Commerce

Community Open House – held on October 1st at the Nativity of Mary Church. Around 15 people attended, in addition to staff from the City, Metro Transit, and Hennepin County. A series of information boards were displayed that provided information about the station area and presented the plan's recommendations. Planning and Engineering staff were available to explain the boards and answer questions. The open house provided an opportunity for public input on the plan recommendations. In general, people indicated that they were supportive of the recommendations and comments are reflected in the Plan's final set of recommendations.

Notice & Other Public Engagement - Notice of the public hearing on the proposed amendments to the City Code was published in the official newspaper (Sun Current). Notice was also sent to all property owners located within the Station Area (half mile radius of the transit station). Additionally, notice was sent via email to 598 people who registered for the "98th Street Station Area Plan" e-subscribe group and 1,493 people who registered for the "Planning Commission" e-subscribe group.

The proposed plan and supporting information was posted on the City website prior to the December 20, 2018 Planning Commission public hearing. Staff received four calls from residents regarding the Plan. Residents were looking for more information about the plan and after discussion were supportive of the Station Area Plan and its recommendations.

PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on December 20, 2018. After the staff presentation the Commission had only a few clarifying questions. There were no public comments during the public hearing. Planning Commission voted to recommend adoption 6-0.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff and the Planning Commission recommend adoption via the following motion:

In Case PL2018-391, I move to adopt a resolution adopting the 98th Street Station Area Plan as linked in the staff report.