

'Where the biggies leave off...'

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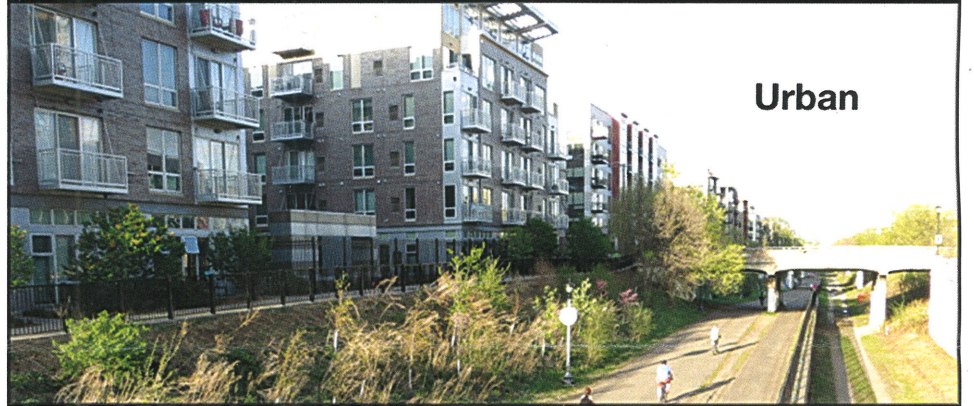
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As cost climbs past \$2 billion, SWLRT fails to meet city's density and mass-transit goals



Top left: Penn Station site/Cedar Lake sign
Bottom left: Buses in Uptown



Top right: 21st Street station site/Kenilworth bike trail.
Bottom right: Apartments on the Greenway

Photos and article by Michael Wilson

Policies 80 and 38 in the city's proposed Comprehensive Plan update address development near METRO (LRT) stations and affordable housing near transit and job centers. The Action Steps to implement these policies seem sound and achievable — until you realize that SWLRT, the most costly transit project that we'll ever see in our lifetimes, goes through a part of Minneapolis where those Action Steps will be difficult if not impossible to attain.

The proposed Penn Avenue SWLRT station will nestle on the valley floor under the Bryn Mawr bluff (above, left). Access from above will be via a 300-foot-long sky tunnel, then an elevator. No buses currently run to the top of the bluff. No bus access is contemplated for the valley floor. Development on land now occupied by Cedar Lake Park would be opposed and is years away in any event.

The 21st Street station site (above, right) lies in the heart of the Kenilworth Trail. Only the Route #25 buses lumber occasionally to the proposed station site. The City's 2014 Memorandum of Understanding with the Met Council specified that "the Corridor shall be designed to a park-like level of amenity, not only restoring, but improving pre-existing conditions." Development was never envisioned.

ACTION STEPS — POLICY 38

Affordable housing near transit and job centers

The City will seek to accomplish the following action steps to create more affordable housing near transit and job centers

- ✓ a. Maximize opportunities to create affordable housing near transit stations and along high-frequency transit corridors.
- ✓ b. Identify and pursue opportunities to acquire and assemble property for larger-scale development near transit stations and along transit corridors.
- ✓ c. Improve coordination within the City enterprise and with outside jurisdictions to identify opportunities to increase housing density and affordability along transit corridors and near job centers.



ACTION STEPS — POLICY 80

Development near METRO stations

The City will seek to accomplish the following action steps to support development and public realm improvements near existing and planned METRO stations that result in walkable districts for living, working, shopping, and recreating.

- ✓ a. Allow and encourage a dense mix of housing, employment, and commercial goods and services near METRO stations.
- ✓ b. Develop affordable housing near METRO stations.
- ✓ c. Require a minimum level of development near METRO stations to ensure that land is used efficiently near major transit investments.
- d. Ensure that METRO stations are accessible via sidewalks and bicycle facilities.
- ✓ e. Identify and implement strategic investments to increase connectivity and support development.
- f. Break up large blocks into small, walkable blocks.
- g. Orient buildings to the sidewalk.
- ✓ h. Line main pedestrian routes leading to METRO stations with active uses on the ground floor of buildings.
- i. Incorporate plazas and open spaces into development and station design.
- j. Minimize the impact of automobiles near METRO stations by tucking parking behind and under buildings, by sharing parking among area uses, by prohibiting the establishment of auto-oriented uses, and by prohibiting the establishment of park-and-ride facilities.

Now imagine the Southwest mass transit line running through Uptown and Midtown, where masses of people already live. Imagine a METRO stop below the Uptown Transit Station (above, left), where buses already swarm with potential LRT riders from all over south and southwest Minneapolis.

Hennepin County plans to continue spending \$1 billion of our sales tax dollars on a mass transit line that renders some of the city's most important Comp Plan goals impossible. What will it take for Minneapolis citizens and officials to insist that the County change the route and do LRT right?