

FOOD-ORIENTED PLACEMAKING ON DALE STREET IN SAINT PAUL



METRO GREEN LINE LRT STATION AT DALE AND UNIVERSITY

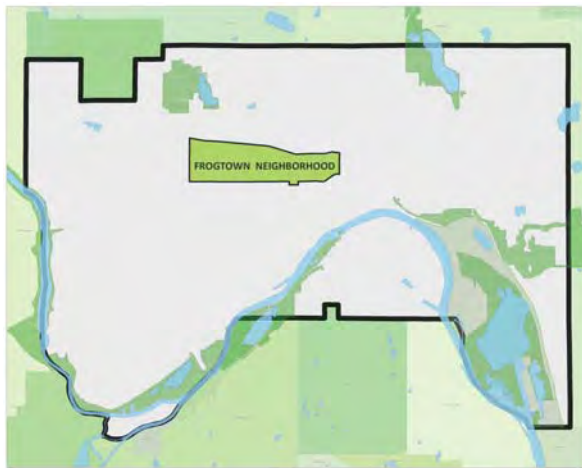
FROGTOWN BACKGROUND

FrogTown is a neighborhood in central Saint Paul that has long struggled to find and embrace its identity. Historically an immigrant neighborhood, FrogTown has a wide array of existing assets that are often overlooked. Strides have been made in recent years to recognize the “green” potential that is present in the neighborhood, particularly along Dale Street. Being a main traffic artery that is lined with locally owned businesses, Dale is a street that has the potential to serve as the marquee for the neighborhood, proudly boasting its unique identity.

GOAL OF THIS PROJECT

The intention of this project is to create a vision of what Dale Street could be for the community. A variety of improvements are needed along this corridor for it to function as a walkable and vibrant destination for members of FrogTown and the surrounding area. Though many challenges exist along this corridor, there are also many existing assets that will be an important part of the revitalization effort. Planning and policy recommendations will be created for this corridor based on the existing conditions of the corridor and by examining strategies that have been successful in stimulating positive growth in other areas.

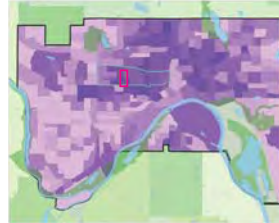
LOCATING FROGTOWN WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SAINT PAUL



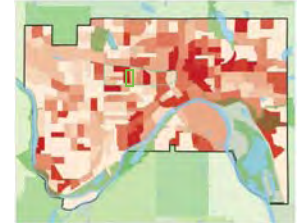
MEDIAN INCOME



GOV. ASSISTANCE



VACANT PROPERTIES



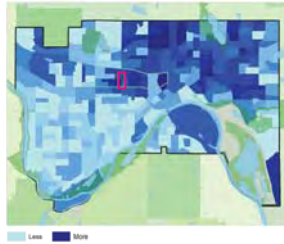
It is important to examine where FrogTown is located within the economic and cultural context of Saint Paul. This collection of maps illustrates how FrogTown compares to the rest of Saint Paul in terms of several characteristics. All of the maps show Saint Paul’s census block groups with both FrogTown and the Dale Street corridor outlined.

- Median household income for Saint Paul census block groups ranges from \$10,000 to \$155,000. The green map shows the four census blocks that comprise the Dale Street corridor in median household income from \$12,000 to \$30,000.
- The purple map shows what proportion of the population receives some kind of government assistance. The census blocks that comprise the Dale Street corridor have a high proportion of residents that receive government assistance relative to Saint Paul as a whole.
- The red map shows vacant parcel data in Saint Paul, with darker red representing census blocks with a greater proportion of vacant parcels. This map shows the relatively high amount of vacant parcels near the Dale Street corridor.
- The gray map used to show education level across Saint Paul shows the proportion of residents that have received a bachelor’s degree.
- The blue map shows the proportion of residents that speak an Asian language in Saint Paul. You can see in this map that the Dale Street corridor is located in a part of the city with one of the highest proportion of Asian language speakers.

EDUCATION



ASIAN LANGUAGE USE



HOW WE GOT HERE

In 1995, Dale Street was widened to make auto traffic move more rapidly on and off Interstate 94. Homes and businesses on both sides of the street were removed to effect the widening, leaving behind multiple vacant lots, some up to 54 feet deep. At 60 feet across from curb to curb, Dale Street became the widest street in St Paul without a continuous median.

Residents were divided at the time about whether the city should install a median strip, providing a safe place for pedestrians to cross the street. Business owners on Dale opposed a median because it would block left hand turns, making their businesses less accessible to customers in cars. According to two urban planners quoted in the Times, the width of the street without medians would create “a traffic sewer... and vacant lots on the east will turn into derelict, unusable spaces.”

A last-ditch effort by residents garnered three slightly raised pedestrian “islands” at major intersections, as well as curb bump-outs that narrow the street at some crossing points. But investment to fill the vacant lots never materialized, and multiple empty spaces remain, two decades later.

After the construction was complete, a FrogTown Times editorial ruefully concluded, “We should have made sure that the traffic engineers’ desires to make traffic flow more smoothly took a back seat to our concerns for a safe, vibrant neighborhood.”

Given these constraints, how can food access become a source of benefit to the community and how can this idea be implemented in a corridor vision?



FROGTOWN BRANDED BIKE RACK ON DALE STREET

THE MANY STRENGTHS

There are a wide variety of community assets that exist on Dale Street. The strengths of this corridor include a diverse mix of businesses and ownership, great access to public transit, and several parcels that are currently owned by the City of Saint Paul. These assets offer great opportunities for creating a cohesive corridor with an identity that the community can be proud of.

MAP OF DALE ST. CORRIDOR



DRAGON STAR FOODS

Cambodian-owned full-service grocery store specializing in Asian ingredients you cannot find at some other stores.



MALINA'S RESTAURANT

Hmong-owned restaurant and bar offering dancing and billiards.



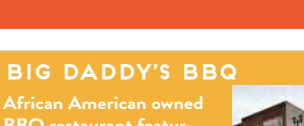
STONES THROW URBAN FARM

3-parcel farm in the middle of the neighborhood featuring large hoop-houses, a seasonal farm stand, and offering community supported agriculture shares to residents for purchase.



NEIGHBORHOOD-WORKS HOME PARTNERS

Community development organization that has a community garden on its property that is run by Youth-Farm



BIG DADDY'S BBQ

African American owned BBQ restaurant featuring a grant-funded outdoor patio for customers



METRO GREEN LINE STATION

Located at the south end of the corridor, the Metro Green Line is a light rail transit line offering all day frequent service to downtown Saint Paul and downtown Minneapolis

RONDO COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Saint Paul Public Library offering a wide variety of community services and programs



MINNEHAHA & DALE BIKE LANES

There are existing bike lanes on Dale Street just north of Minnehaha Avenue, which also has bike lanes.

ASIAN ELDERS DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

Hmong farmer run, fully planted lot

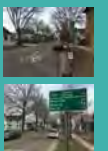


TREE FROG'S TREE PARKLET

Will be renovated this summer with grant funds and will offer free fruit and cool shade to neighborhood residents and visitors

CHARLES BIKE BLVD.

Significant bicycle route with many traffic-calming features.



FROGTOWN SQUARE

A new mixed-use development that features Los Ocampo, a Mexican Restaurant and Global Foods Grocery located below senior housing units.



NICE RIDE

A nice ride station is located outside of Frogtown Square, offering residents and visitors the option to arrive or depart from the corridor on a rented bike.



UNIDALE FARMERS MARKET

Located in a large surface parking lot, the Unidale Mall is home to weekly farmer's market from June to November. This is a great source of affordable and fresh produce for the neighborhood.

WORKING WITH THESE STRENGTHS

- There are several food-related assets that currently exist in this corridor. There are major anchor establishments at each end with Dragon Star Foods and the Uni-Dale Farmer's Market, and Stones Throw Urban Farm is a significant food anchor in the middle of the corridor.
- The Green Line, Bus Route 65, and the Charles Bike Boulevard are significant pieces of transportation infrastructure that allow people to access the corridor without using a car.
- The city-owned parcels that line the east side of this stretch of Dale Street offer unique opportunities for development and street improvements.



TAKING A LOOK AT THE BARRIERS

Although there are many assets that exist on this part of Dale Street, there are also many challenges. These challenges combine to make an area that is unpleasant for pedestrians and easy to pass through for motorists. These challenges must be addressed in order to create a food-oriented corridor that people will want to come and enjoy.

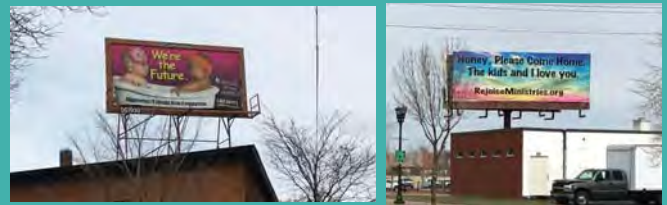
AUTO-ORIENTED DESIGN, WIDE ROAD WITH FAST CARS



Dale is a Street that is made for cars. In the mid 90s it was reconfigured to move traffic through the area even faster, and the corridor has since been left with many negative effects. The challenges created by Dale Street's auto-oriented layout include; increased and faster moving traffic, fewer comfortable crossings for pedestrians, and a more dangerous setting for bicyclist using the roadway. The road widening project also left a narrow strip of city-owned parcels that line the east side of the corridor. This stretch of city-owned parcels is one positive outcome of past planning missteps, and offers some unique opportunities for bike and pedestrian improvements, as well as area for community gatherings.

UNSIGHTLY BILLBOARDS

There are multiple billboards on Dale Street that have remained unchanged and unmaintained for years. These faded billboards project political and religious messages out onto the street. These advertisements are not visually pleasing and cast a large shadow on the corridor. What happens with these billboards should be left up to the neighborhood, but a discussion of their fate is long overdue.

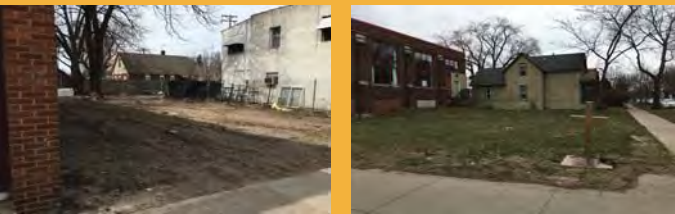


POOR PEDESTRIANS CONDITIONS

The existing conditions on Dale Street make for a very poor pedestrian experience. There are currently sidewalks on both sides of the entire corridor, but there are limited crossings with pedestrian safety features. In addition to the lacking safety features, there are many other factors that combine to make walking along this stretch of Dale Street rather unpleasant. These factors include the fast moving traffic, poorly maintained properties, and the ugly billboards overhead. Creating a more inviting experience for pedestrians in this corridor must be a top priority, since increased foot traffic is an important aspect of the overall vision for the street.



FRONTAGES IN NEED OF UPGRADE



How a neighborhood looks matters, and this portion of Dale Street is in need of some improvements. Along this eight block stretch, there are several properties that are either poorly maintained or vacant and seemingly forgotten. Breathing new life into this corridor will have to involve strategies aimed at the general beautification of the frontages. Being intentional about how improvements to the corridor look will have a positive effect for pedestrians and be more inviting in general.

PROBLEMATIC ADA FACILITIES



These days, making accessibility improvements to streets that are being re-configured is a given, and the ADA facilities that exist on Dale Street are outdated and inconsistent. The current configuration does not facilitate safe crossing for people in wheelchairs at many corners. It will be important to design the corridor in a way that is accessible to all visitors. This will mean ramps facing Dale at every corner regardless of whether or not they have a traffic signal and large concrete slabs at all bus stops.

BAD FOR BIKES

North of the corridor, Dale Street is striped with continuous bike lanes from Minnehaha Avenue to Como Avenue. The city of Saint Paul has designated this section of Dale Street as a "Major Bikeway" in the Citywide Bicycle Plan. Just south of Minnehaha Avenue, the bike conditions are much worse. The bike lanes on Dale end abruptly as you enter the corridor, and cyclists are forced to put themselves in a busy roadway that lacks the necessary safety features. This leaves a problematic gap in the bike network between Minnehaha and the Charles Bikeway that could be fixed by extending the bike lanes south on Dale Street to University Avenue.



LOOKING FOR CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS

Understanding the current challenges along this street is an important part of this corridor revitalization effort. The strategies designed to address these barriers must be sensitive to the context of the surrounding neighborhood. Finding appropriate solutions to these problems will be necessary for the corridor's potential to be realized.

By mapping the corridor in different ways, we can learn a lot about the surrounding neighborhood. This context will be used to inform the revitalization strategies that are being recommended.

1. FIGURE GROUND

Figure-ground maps are two-dimensional maps of urban space that show the relationship between built and unbuilt space. Several parcels on the east side of Dale Street do not have buildings or frontages facing the street.

2. CITY OWNED PARCELS

The city owned parcels that line the east side of the Dale Street corridor are a result of the street widening that occurred in the mid 1990s. These small parcels offer unique opportunities to create a more pedestrian friendly environment along Dale Street.

3. ACTIVE LIVING INFRASTRUCTURE

Dale Street has some great existing active living infrastructure that can be built upon. The Charles Ave Bikeway passes directly through the Dale Street corridor and connects to several other bike routes in the city. There are also existing bike lanes located north of the corridor on Dale Street and Minnehaha Avenue.

4. PROPERTY VALUES

Property values in this part of Frogtown are low relative to the rest of the city. The highest value properties in this area are the office buildings along Minnehaha Avenue and the commercial parcels along University Avenue.

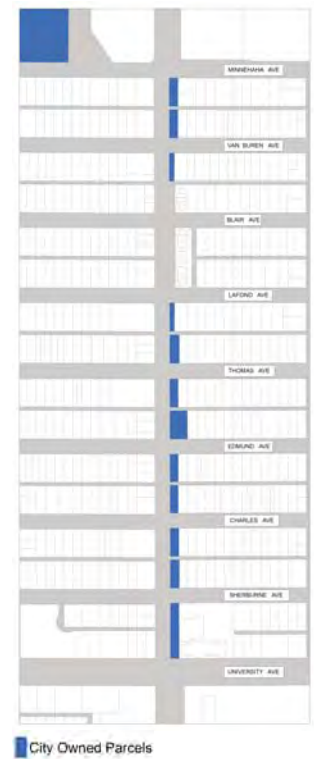
5. HOUSING TYPE

You can see in this map that it is primarily single-family housing in close proximity to the Dale Street corridor.

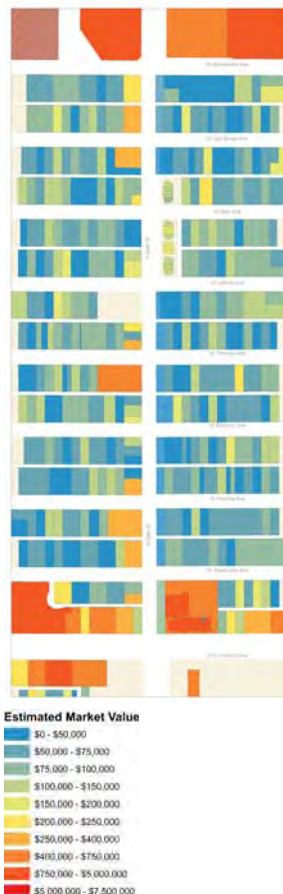
1. FIGURE GROUND



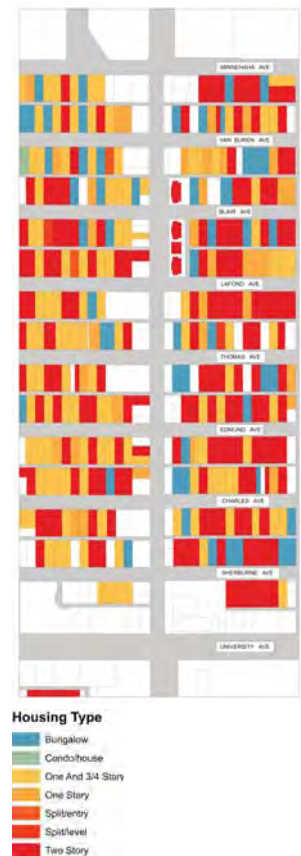
2. CITY OWNED PARCELS



4. PROPERTY VALUES



5. HOUSING TYPE



3. ACTIVE LIVING INFRASTRUCTURE



- Active Living Infrastructure**
- Dale Street Bike Lanes
 - Charles Ave Bike Blvd
 - Minnehaha Ave Bike Lanes
 - Bike Share Station
 - Major Transit Stop
 - Greenspaces

LOOKING FOR GUIDANCE

When looking for guidance in planning for the future of the Dale Street corridor it is useful to examine other examples of neighborhood revitalization efforts and traffic calming that have been effective elsewhere. Each of the case studies below offers insights and direction regarding specific practices that have been proven to be successful in similar situations.

EAT STREET, MINNEAPOLIS MN

Nicollet Avenue has been a very important street in Minneapolis for a very long time. It stretches from the urban core of downtown Minneapolis to the southern limits of the city. Downtown, the street is a lively pedestrian mall and business hub. Nicollet also serves as a crucial transit corridor, even offering free service in the downtown zone. To the south, Nicollet is one of the premier dining streets in Minneapolis, boasting dozens of highly regarded restaurants. In recent years, the street has been branded as “Eat Street”, and the area has undergone many changes.

Nicollet is a street that has been the focus of major neighborhood revitalization efforts in the past. These efforts have transformed the area and have given Nicollet an identity that it is very proud of. It is a street that has been transformed, and is still currently transforming. Nicollet is a street that has been intentionally and successfully revitalized. Though some barriers remain, Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis today looks much different from the deteriorating street of 1980s and 90s.



NICOLLET AVENUE IN MINNEAPOLIS

The Nicollet Avenue Task Force was formed in 1998 to address the many challenges facing the waning main-street. The Task Force was charged with developing recommendations regarding development opportunities, areas for improved streetscapes, and transportation improvements. Over the course of a year, the Nicollet Avenue Task Force developed a series of recommendations that can be grouped into four main strategies. The four strategies are:

Strategy #1: Invest in well-defined commercial nodes and corridors to encourage compatibility of adjacent uses

Strategy #2: Redevelop under-utilized commercial areas to encourage compatibility of adjacent uses

Strategy #3: Encourage quality urban design and pedestrian-friendly environments

Strategy #4: Manage traffic flow and reduce traffic speed

LITTLE AFRICA, ST PAUL MN

Little Africa is an example of a current and ongoing effort in Saint Paul to make African immigrants more visible by leveraging the community’s unique assets as an economic development strategy.

- Develop partnerships with community organizations to fund and market corridor opportunities
- Leverage existing cultural and economic assets
- Emphasize strategic location along major transit corridors as an economic development strategy
- Build and market intentional spaces for the community



SNELLING AVENUE IN SAINT PAUL

NORTHEAST ARTS DISTRICT, MINNEAPOLIS MN

In February 2003, the city of Minneapolis designated the area of Northeast Minneapolis bordered by Broadway Ave. NE, 26th Ave. NE, Central Ave. NE, and the Mississippi River as the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District.

The Northeast Minneapolis Arts District and the Arts District Committee are both outcomes of the Arts Action Plan, published in 2002.

- Establish the Northeast Arts District
- Create a Business Improvement District to fund Arts District programming and activities, temporary exhibition programs, businesses displaying and selling artists’ work, percent-for-art requirements for private development, and creating a concentration of public art
- Secure sustainable, affordable spaces for artists studios, live-work and arts-related businesses
- Expand the level of arts programs—both visual and performing—in the Arts District
- Coordinate with the City to institute changes in planning and zoning regulations
- Develop marketing programs and branding strategies



NORTH EAST MINNEAPOLIS



WELLS AVENUE ROAD DIET, RENO NV

In 2003, the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Washoe County installed a Road Diet on Wells Avenue between Stewart Street and South Virginia Street in Reno, Nevada. The original 4-lane cross section of Wells Avenue was converted to one vehicle lane in each direction, a center turn lane, a dedicated bicycle lane on each side, and wider sidewalks.

Results of Road Diet

- Improved pedestrian experience
- Average traffic speeds decreased 5 - 9 mph
- 54% reduction in pedestrian crashes



WELLS AVENUE IN RENO NV

APPLYING THESE LESSONS

Dale Street is similar to the above examples in many ways and could benefit from similar branding and marketing efforts. The strategies that have been used to revitalize these other corridors have great potential for improving this section of Frogtown. Much like all of the streets in these examples, Dale is a very busy auto-oriented street with a variety of commercial activity in close proximity. A modest degree of traffic-calming measures and wayfinding signage could make Dale much easier to navigate at the pedestrian scale and more inviting to visitors. A revitalized Dale Street will require a frontage and pedestrian improvements, as well as a corridor marketing strategy.

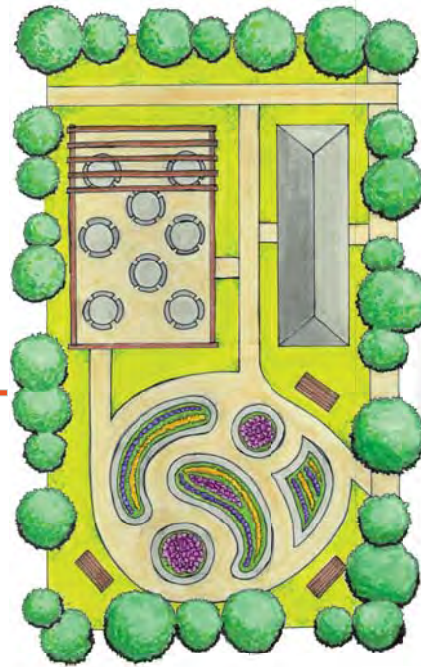
ONE POSSIBILITY

The future of Dale Street could look many different ways. The images below offer an idea of what a more pedestrian friendly corridor could look like. In the plan that has been laid out below, there is a strong emphasis on creating a good pedestrian environment, but the element of food is also an intentional element of the vision. The plan involves a significant road reconfiguration, which will add bike lanes and many new trees to the corridor. A site plan has been created to show the potential for more public gathering places outside along the corridor. Places like this will offer residents and visitors the opportunity to gather and share meals while they are enjoying the corridor.



ADDING A MEDIAN

In order for this section of Dale Street to become the pedestrian friendly place that the community deserves, it will be necessary to reconfigure the roadway. The new configuration will have pedestrian and bicycle safety as a top priority and will incorporate a median running the entire length of the Dale Street corridor. There will be a break in the median at Thomas where cars will be able to make left turns. Bike lanes will be another major feature of the roadway reconfiguration. This cross section shows what the roadway will look like for that majority of the corridor, where left turns will be restricted.



EDMUND SITE

The parcel that has been selected for this site planning scenario is located at Dale and Edmund, near the middle of the corridor. It is a vacant site that is currently owned by the city. We have envisioned a multi-use outdoor community gathering space for this location. One of the primary uses for this location would be picnic spot, with tables and drinking fountains under a pergola (in the rendering the pergola is cut-away to show the picnic area). A second use for this spot would be a little garden stand on the site. This stand could sell some local produce that's ready to eat, but the idea is that it could sell sprouted plants that people could take home and plant in their garden. This could be a community run venture that functions as a place to get advice and plants for the backyard gardeners in the area. The rest of this site is dedicated to some intentionally beautiful flower beds, adding another pop of color to the corridor.

FEWER LEFT TURNS

This cross section shows what the intersections at Minnehaha, Thomas, and University will look like with the new road configuration. At these intersections, left turns will be permitted, and there will be left turn lanes instead on a median. Minnehaha and University being the major streets at the ends of the corridor, it will be necessary to allow left turns at these stoplights. Left turns will be allowed at Thomas because it is a major road that has stoplights at other major intersections.



A revitalized corridor will need more than just one new picnic area and traffic calming. These plans are the first steps towards a larger effort to rebrand the corridor and attract not only more happy pedestrians, but also more happy businesses. It will be helpful to think about this stretch of Dale Street as a unit that can be branded and marketed to the city as a food oriented corridor, that not only sells great food, but also produces great food. This type of future will be made possible by building on the amazing assets that are already there, like Stones Throw Farm, Dragon Star Foods, and the Uni-Dale Farmers Market.

LOOKING AT OTHER INITIATIVES

There is much work already happening to bring new life to some of the neighborhoods in Saint Paul. As the visioning process for the Dale Street corridor continues, it will be wise to build on the momentum that has been created by other initiatives in the area. The ideas of creating a pedestrian friendly, food-oriented corridor along Dale Street align quite well with the efforts of other groups' vision for the city. Below you will see the various plans and initiatives that have goals that are compatible with the goals of the Dale Street corridor.

SAINT PAUL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



The comprehensive plan points out that Dale is one of the transit station areas that is highlighted in the Central Corridor Development Strategy:

"The Central Corridor Development Strategy, adopted by the City Council in 2007, describes the vision and a set of strategies for how the Central Corridor should grow and change in response to the investment of LRT. The six principles in the strategy, guiding the preparation of plans for each of the transit station areas, are:

- Reposition Saint Paul in the region.
- Benefit and strengthen the diverse community along the Central Corridor.
- Link and foster economic activity.
- Improve people's mobility throughout their community.
- Improve the image and quality of life along the Central Corridor.
- Collaborate from design to operation."



ST PAUL GREEN LINE



GREENING THE GREEN LINE INITIATIVE

The Greening the Green Line Initiative aims to do just what it sounds like, bring more green spaces to the neighborhoods along the Metro Green Line. The Trust for Public Land is leading this effort with education, policy work, and on the ground park building opportunities.

"The vision is for a connected and complementary system of parks and other privately owned but publicly accessible open spaces that ensures higher quality development and weaves neighborhoods together between stations to equitably enhance livability in the Green Line corridor."

GREENING THE GREEN LINE: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STRATEGIES TO INTEGRATE PARKS & OPEN SPACE IN GREEN LINE DEVELOPMENT. AUGUST 2014
[HTTPS://WWW.TPL.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/GREEN%20LINE%20PARKS%20%26%20COMMONS%20GUIDEBOOK.PDF](https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/green%20line%20parks%20%26%20commons%20guidebook.pdf)

FROGTOWN PARK & FARM

The neighborhood gained a wonderful green space in 2015 with Frogtown Park and Farm. A result of a partnership between the Trust for Public Land and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Frogtown Park and Farm is 12.7 acres where the neighborhood can come together and be outside with each other. The park is meant to serve as a hub for health, recreation, and local food in the Frogtown neighborhood.



FROGTOWN PARK & FARM AERIAL VIEW



FROGTOWN PARK & FARM PLAN



UNIVERSITY AVENUE



LITTLE MEKONG

Right down the road from the Dale Street corridor is Little Mekong, an Asian business and cultural district on University Avenue between Mackubin and Galtier streets. There are many restaurants and stores in this area that offer a unique selection. Little Mekong is a nearby cultural district that has also tried to emphasize their convenient location on the Metro Green Line.

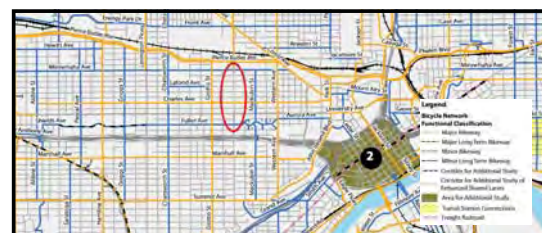
"Little Mekong's mission is to develop the area around University Avenue and Western Avenue as an attractive destination for visitors and residents; to support and promote businesses; to share cultural traditions and activities; and to create a living, breathing, colorful district for all to enjoy."

[HTTP://WWW.LITTLEMEKONG.COM/DISTRICT/](http://www.littlemekong.com/district/)

SAINT PAUL BIKE PLAN

The Dale Street corridor is currently a missing link in the Saint Paul bike network. There are bike lanes on Dale just north of the corridor that will connect to planned bike lanes on Como Avenue this summer. Currently, the bike plan shows Grotto being the primary north-south route in this area, but the existing lanes on Dale it makes sense to extend this network in order to connect to both the Charles Avenue Bikeway, and the Dale Street LRT station. Bike improvements on Dale will make the network easier to use and increase access to the key bike connections.

[HTTP://DISTRICT5STPAUL.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2015/08/2015-SAINT-PAUL-BICYCLE-PLAN.PDF](http://district5stpaul.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2015-SAINT-PAUL-BICYCLE-PLAN.PDF)



The work being done in Saint Paul, and in Frogtown specifically shows that there is community will to create vibrant places here. The vision of a pedestrian friendly Dale Street corridor that offers several green spaces clearly aligns with work that is currently being done by other groups in the community. These existing initiatives show the positive effects that intentional revitalization efforts can have.