

Conceptual Redevelopment Vision for the Midway Industrial Area

The attached drawings show a conceptual redevelopment vision for the industrial area midway between the Twin Cities and the two campuses of the University of Minnesota. This is only a preliminary concept that is at the beginning stages of a community process and is not, at this point, reflective of any position or preference of University UNITED or its members. The concept is an outgrowth of a number of meetings over the last six months of the Midway Industrial Area Initiative, a task force established by University UNITED. This group is chaired by Sherman Eagles, a Technical Fellow at Medtronic, and a community resident and long-time activist in the St. Anthony Park neighborhood in St. Paul. In September, the Task Force released a report documenting a substantial job loss in the manufacturing sector within a 1,200 acre study area. This proposed vision seeks to create a framework for redevelopment that will provide for new, more intensive employment opportunities, and allow for a more efficient and productive use of land and infrastructure. The Board of UNITED, at its October meeting, approved the circulation of this vision to the community for comments and feedback.

The key element calls for a revamped north/ south route at Vandalia Street crossing the Burlington Northern railyard and connecting to the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. Vandalia was selected because it has direct access to I-94, and essentially runs through the heart of the industrial Midway. This area sorely needs a new north-south road crossing the tracks, as the existing routes at Raymond Avenue and Snelling Avenue are spaced too far apart to provide adequate access. A new Vandalia Street and bridge would provide a direct and fitting gateway to the St. Paul campus of the U. of M. It also establishes a clear triangular district that links the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses, with University Avenue, the University Bus Transitway, and Vandalia as the three legs. It is approximately 1 mile from the intersection of University and Vandalia to the St. Paul campus. This new triangular district also links the two cities, allowing for a seamless and coordinated redevelopment of the industrial areas on both sides of the city line. This would allow for efficiencies in infrastructure improvements, as well as opportunities for joint marketing and management which would enhance its competitive advantage regionally and nationally.

We believe this district, if properly developed, could serve as an ideal location for a variety of institutional buildings, student housing, and possibly a high tech or biotech cluster. A baseball stadium shared by the Saints, the Gophers, and perhaps other colleges, is shown. This could help serve as a catalyst for neighborhood scale retail development, building upon the Midway University Village project proposed by MetroPlains Development for the former Johnson Brothers Warehouse on University Avenue. This vision serves, in effect, to bring the campus to University Avenue. It also takes full advantage of the existing transportation infrastructure, including roads (with direct access to I-94 and Highway 280), bus (and future light rail), trucking and rail terminals, as well as the nearby intermodal facility. Because of its proximity to the two campuses and the adjoining neighborhoods it provides a perfect location for more intense, higher quality development.

The drawings are merely intended to suggest a conceptual vision, and should not be interpreted literally. Land uses or building types shown are illustrative. No specific projects or land parcels have been identified for redevelopment. University UNITED is soliciting feedback on the general concept; if there is positive interest and support from the community and stakeholders, the Midway Industrial Area Task Force will explore more specific development opportunities. The vision is posted on the UNITED web page, www.universityunited.com, and viewers are encouraged to post feedback on the visitors log. A community meeting will be held by the end of the year, with a date to be announced. For additional information, call University UNITED at (651) 647-6711.