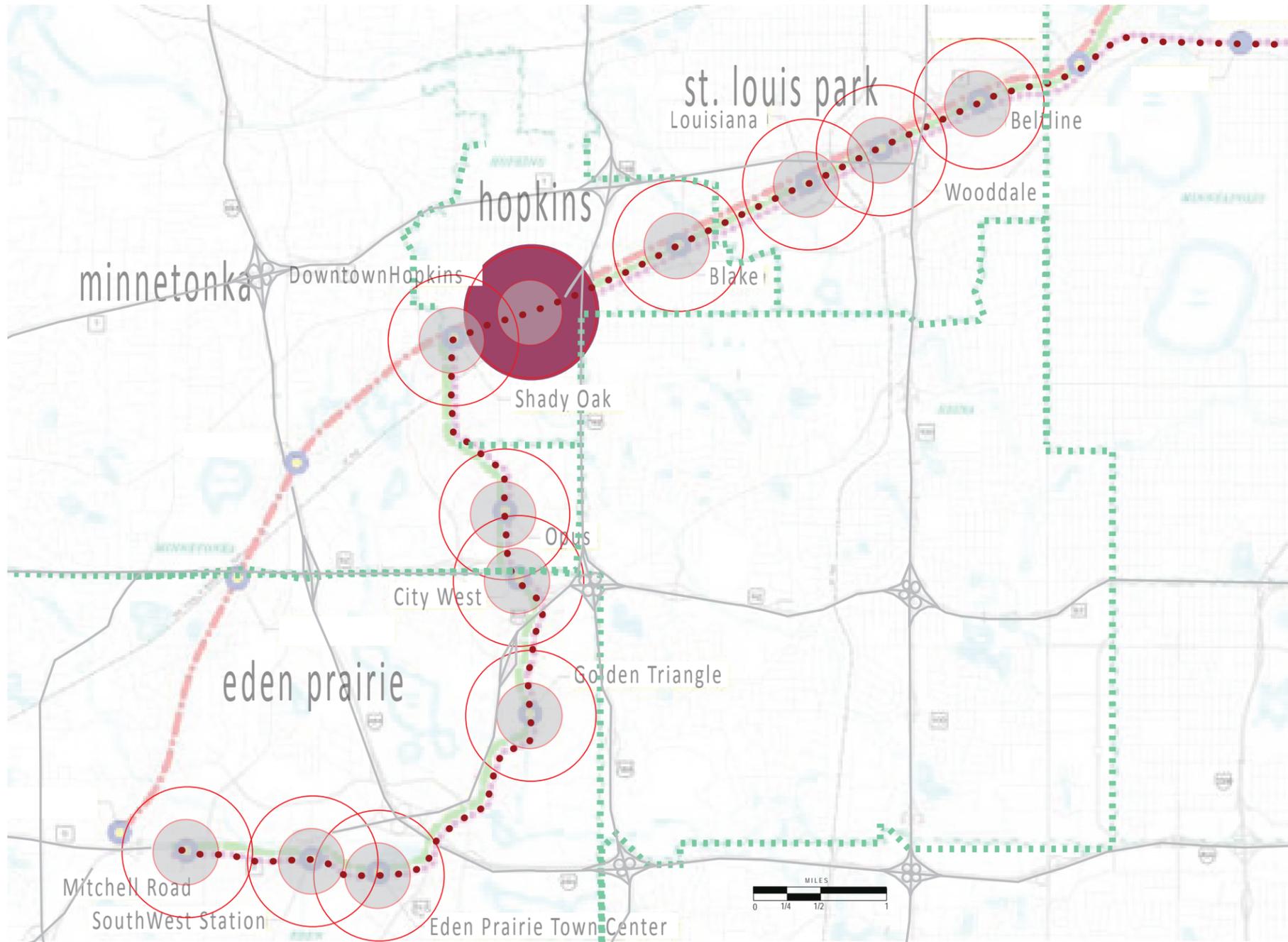




# STATION AREA PLANNING



Blake,  
Downtown Hopkins,  
Shady Oak

# 5

HOPKINS  
DOWNTOWN  
HOPKINS



December 2009

[www.southwesttransitway.org](http://www.southwesttransitway.org)



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# HOPKINS DOWNTOWN HOPKINS

HOPKINS

Blake

DOWNTOWN  
HOPKINS

Shady Oak

## Approach

*A Vision for the future, unique to each city and tailored to each community*

Southwest station area planning is grounded in the belief that the Southwest LRT line connects a series of unique, yet related station areas. The primary objective of the planning process is to define each station area according to its existing character, and realize the unique opportunities for development and infrastructure changes over the next 25-30 years with the introduction of LRT to the area. Some stations are focused on employment, some on housing or entertainment, while others are focused around a specific large-scale existing use, like a hospital. Using this unique identifier, recommendations for land use, roadways, infrastructure, trails, parks and greenspace, public realm improvements, transit supportive development, and development typology were created for each of the station areas, defined as a half-mile radius (ten minute walk) from the station. Station area planning during the LRT planning process assures future land use changes and infrastructure improvements are supportive of people using transit.

### An Authentic Downtown

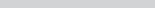
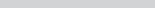
The Downtown Hopkins Station has the advantage of being just two blocks away from Hopkins' Mainstreet. Mainstreet has an authenticity, scale, and patina that is rarely found. This is a distinct competitive advantage over other station areas that are newly formed or require redevelopment and all new construction. Efforts should be made to celebrate this unique sense of place and the proximity of the station to this historical and traditional development pattern.

Future public and private investment in the Downtown Hopkins Station Area must focus on connecting the station area into the city grid to the north of the station via 8th Avenue. Over the long term, this traditional city block scale and pattern should extend south and west of the station to create a cohesive integrated station area.

Connections should also be sought to the Shady Oak Station located within walking distance to the west.

The goal is to create a rich mix of transit supportive uses rather than a scattering of automobile oriented uses.



-  Proposed LRT Route
-  Proposed Stations
-  1/2 mile Radius
-  Parcel Lines



Aerial View of the Downtown Hopkins Station Area



Map of proposed LRT Line in Hopkins

## Site Orientation

The proposed Downtown Hopkins station is located on the existing Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA) Right-of-Way, at the southeast corner of Excelsior Blvd and 8th Avenue.

The Downtown station is approximately 1/4 mile south of Mainstreet--about a five minute walk.



Map of proposed stations in Hopkins



Existing mixed-use retail and housing on Mainstreet. Redevelopment is expected to create additional housing and retail/businesses in the Downtown area.



View of the Hopkins Cinema on Mainstreet



A redeveloped 8th Ave will provide a safe and lively connection to Mainstreet, shown above, the main retail corridor in Hopkins

## The Downtown Hopkins Vision



### **A Center for Family, Entertainment, Dining, Shopping and the Arts.**

The Downtown Hopkins Station Area is envisioned as the “Face of Hopkins”, with the station itself serving as a symbolic gateway to Downtown Hopkins. The intention of the station area planning is to extend the existing city grid southward from Mainstreet towards the station in support of a mixed-use, pedestrian friendly station area that is well-connected to Downtown Hopkins. Arts, entertainment, retail, dining and additional housing uses are envisioned for the area to support the existing uses in Downtown Hopkins.

Land Use types are important; a mix of uses with ground floor activities and upper floor housing and offices is recommended. However the placement, form and scale of future development is equally, or even more, important. Specifically, 8th Avenue is envisioned as the primary pedestrian spine connecting the station to Mainstreet. Future mixed-use development will frame both sides of each street with bustling restaurants, coffee shops, live music and arts venues, unique shops and other uses that create an exciting place to live, work, and play.

A redeveloped 8th Ave will create a lively connection to Mainstreet

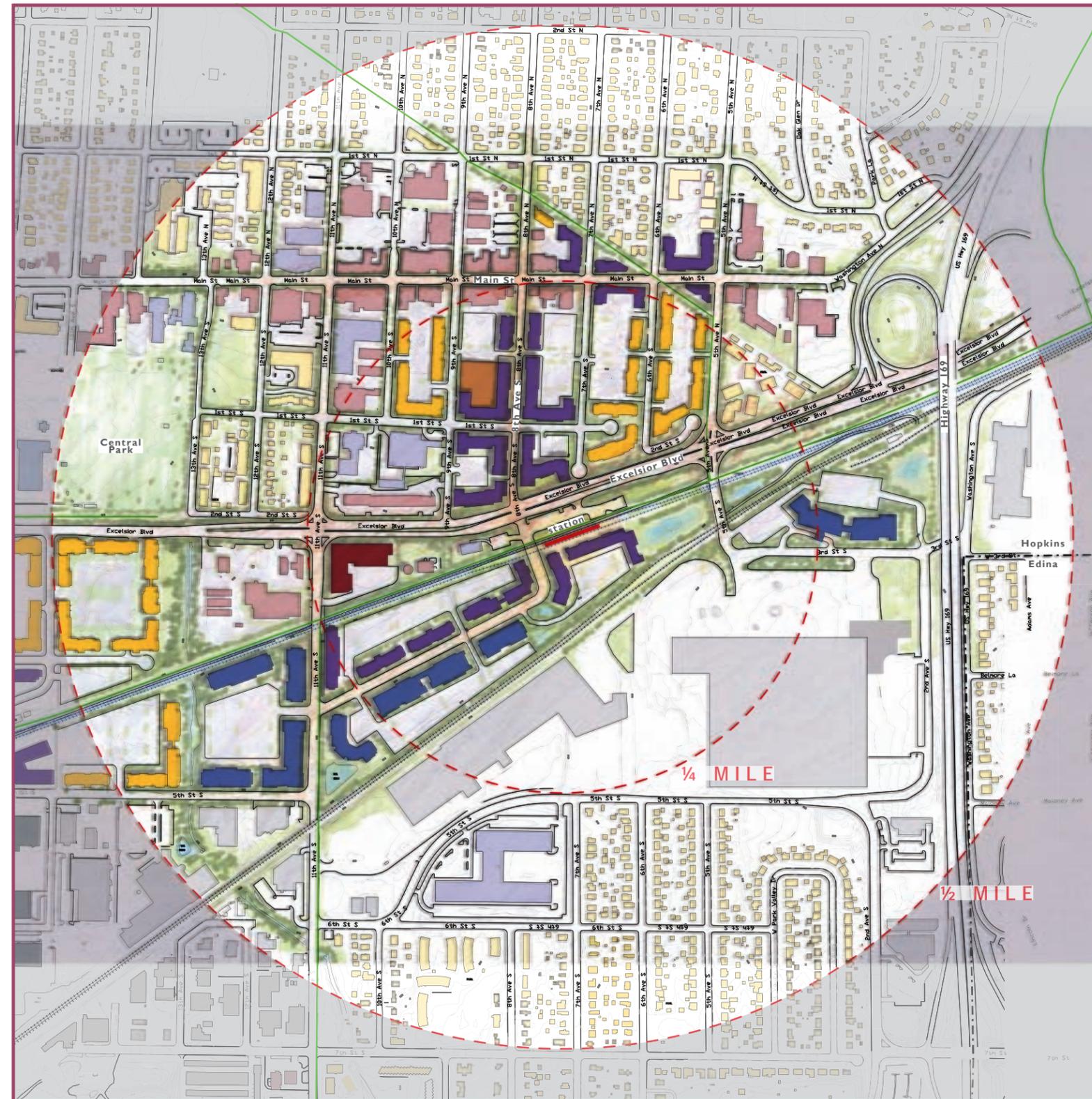
# Illustrative Plan

## Creating a transit supportive place

Continuation of the existing city grid to create a mixed-use district surrounded by a variety of housing choices is the key idea behind the planning for the Downtown Hopkins Station Area. Strategies in support of this include:

- Transform 8th Avenue into the primary connection between the LRT Station and Mainstreet. Seek to develop 4-5 story mixed-use development linking Excelsior Boulevard and the station to Mainstreet. Include wide sidewalks, pedestrian scaled lighting and supportive street furnishings on 8th Avenue. Consider doing the same on other primary streets near the station.
- Support the introduction of a variety of uses within the study area including housing, retail, office and mixed-use. Seek to create a vertical mix of uses with active ground floor uses, such as retail and services, on primary streets.
- Minimize Park-and-Ride and surface parking near the station. Provide on-street parking throughout the station area. Consider a shared parking structure at the northwest corner of 8th Ave and 1st Street to serve transit riders as well as Downtown Hopkins businesses and residents.
- Allow for new office and mixed-use uses south of the station as a buffer to the remaining light industrial uses.
- Plan for a strong residential community of 4-5 story development north of Excelsior Boulevard that is close to the LRT station, Mainstreet and 8th Avenue.

• Provide safe and easy crossing of Excelsior Boulevard



**DOWNTOWN HOPKINS CONCEPTUAL SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN** 0' 400' 800' N

KEY	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow;"></span>	Residential Redevelopment
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightyellow;"></span>	Established Neighborhood (No proposed redevelopment)
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkred;"></span>	Commercial Redevelopment
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightcoral;"></span>	Existing Commercial (No proposed redevelopment)
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:purple;"></span>	Mixed Use Redevelopment
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightpurple;"></span>	Existing Mixed Use (No proposed redevelopment)
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:blue;"></span>	Office / Civic / Institutional Redevelopment
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue;"></span>	Existing Office / Civic / Inst. (No proposed redevelopment)
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:grey;"></span>	Industrial Redevelopment / Parking Ramp
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgrey;"></span>	Existing Industrial (No proposed redevelopment)
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen;"></span>	Parks, Open Space
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px solid black;"></span>	Ramp LRT Park & Ride
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px solid black;"></span>	Lot
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; border-bottom:1px solid blue;"></span>	Proposed Light Rail
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; border-bottom:1px solid black;"></span>	Heavy Rail
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; border-bottom:1px solid green;"></span>	Regional Trail
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; border-bottom:1px dashed red;"></span>	Proposed LRT Station

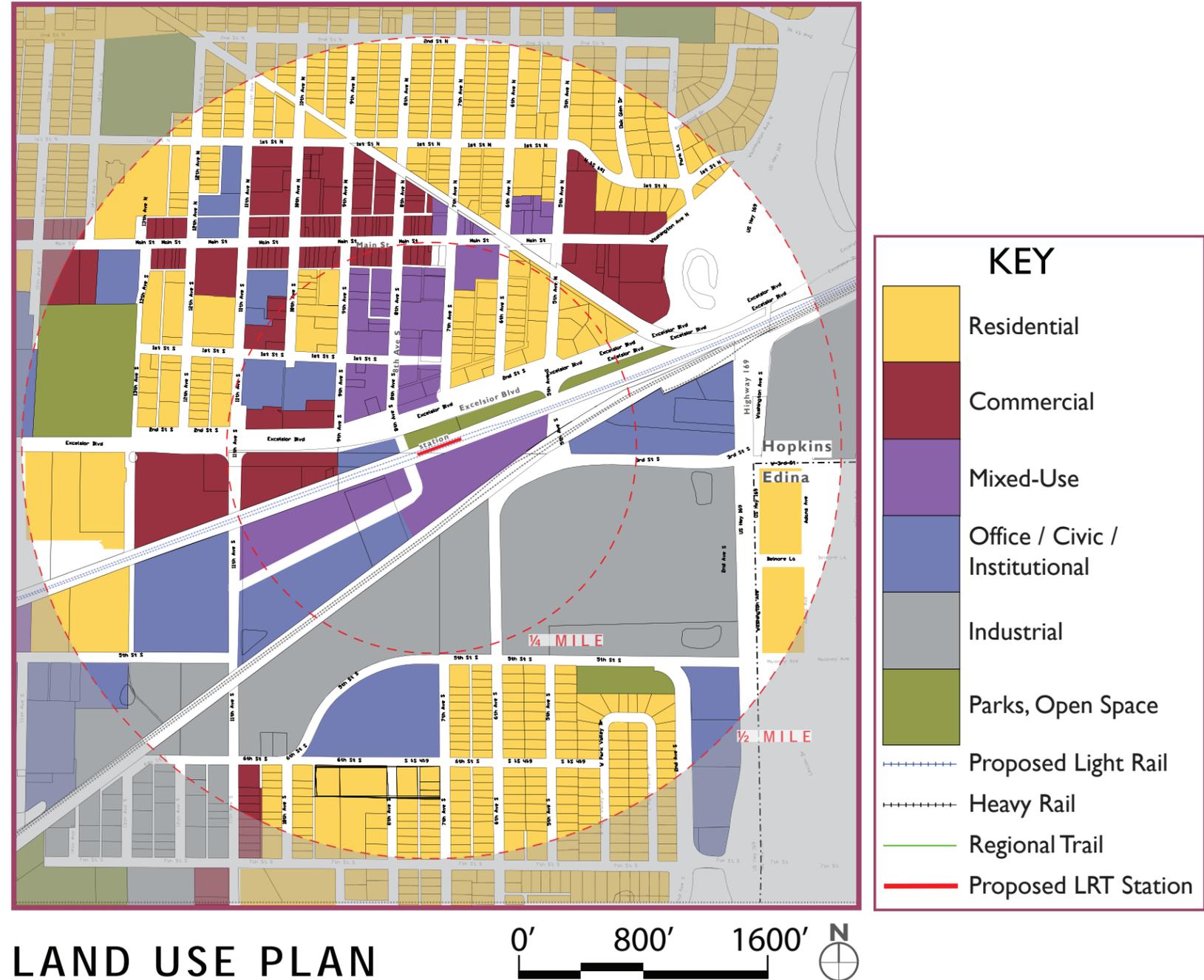
# Recommendations

## 1. Land Use

### Building on existing strengths

The Downtown Hopkins Station Area should be walkable and connected. It should provide variety and choices.

- Along 8th Avenue and Mainstreet, streetwalls comprised of 3-5 story mixed-use development should frame the space and create a strong pedestrian oriented district. Along 8th Ave, buildings should step down from 5 stories at Excelsior down to 3 stories at Mainstreet.
- Block faces on other streets and avenues north of Excelsior Boulevard should frame the pedestrian environment and should be activated with residential porches and patios and potentially live/work uses
- Land use near the station should include ground floor uses that are active and connected to the pedestrian environment.
- Large format “big box” retail should be avoided within this Station Area. Retail should only be permitted as a secondary use within a mixed-use development and should not exceed more than 25% of the gross square foot floor area of new buildings.
- Parking should be accommodated with structured parking where possible. When surface parking is required it should occur behind buildings that front on principal streets. Shared parking is encouraged.



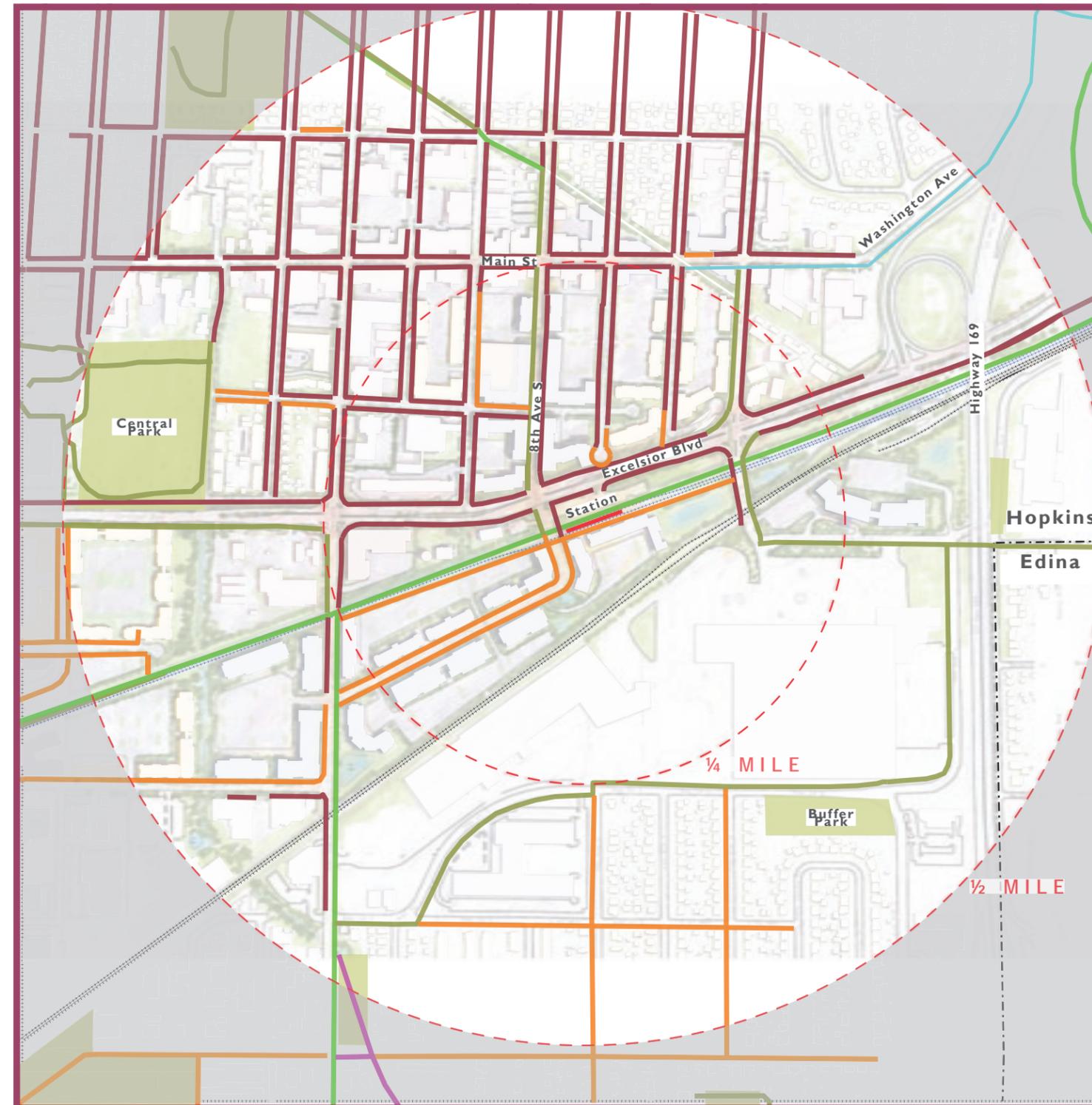
## 2. Movement and Connections

### Enhancing Multi-modal movement

The Downtown Hopkins station area has a relatively complete and connected sidewalk system north of Excelsior Boulevard. Going forward, the most important task will be to ensure a safe crossing at Excelsior Blvd and to enhance 8th Ave from Excelsior Blvd up to the Regional Trail just north of Mainstreet. As redevelopment occurs, it is critical to plan for complete streets that safely and comfortably accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, motorized vehicles, and everything in between. See page 13 for a sketch of proposed changes at the intersection of Excelsior and 8th Ave.

A new city trail is proposed along Washington Ave that will connect downtown to an existing regional trail as well as over to the east side of Hwy 169--to the Blake station area including Excelsior Crossings (Cargill).

A proposed multi-use trail would parallel the south side of the LRT tracks between 5th Ave and 11th Ave and would help to link the residential area that lies south of the station. This residential area, near Buffer Park, has no existing sidewalks. Pedestrian connections should be created along 6th St S, 7th St S, 7th Ave S, and 5th Ave S in order to provide safe access to 11th Ave to allow these residents to reach the Downtown Hopkins Station.



KEY	
	Proposed LRT Station
	Proposed Light Rail
	Heavy Rail
	Existing Regional Trail
	Proposed Regional Trail
	Existing City Trail
	Existing City Sidewalk
	Proposed City Trail
	Proposed Connection

**CIRCULATION PLAN** 0' 800' 1600' N

# Recommendations, Continued

## 3. Traffic Analysis

### Conceptual Transportation Assessment

#### Access to Station Site

The Downtown Hopkins station will have direct access off of Excelsior Boulevard via 8th Avenue. Currently, there is a small Metro Transit Park & Ride lot on the site, which also provides parking for the regional trail. Vehicular access via 8th Avenue is shared with an existing car dealer adjacent to and immediately south of the trail. An existing traffic signal at 8th Avenue/Excelsior Boulevard controls traffic on Excelsior Boulevard and vehicle/pedestrian movements to and from the site. A secondary right-in/right-out access point could be maintained at an existing driveway east of 8th Avenue. Eighth Avenue also provides a direct connection to Mainstreet and the city's downtown district. Figure 5 shows general access routes to the Downtown Hopkins Station.

#### General Roadway Capacity

A general roadway capacity analysis of projected average daily traffic volumes indicates that existing roadway capacity would be sufficient to handle anticipated traffic volumes resulting from the implementation of the light rail line. However, there are some exceptions where projected 2030 traffic conditions may exceed existing roadway capacities. These roadway segments include Mainstreet west of 13th Avenue and between 5th and 8th Avenues. Fifth Avenue north of Excelsior Boulevard is projected

to reach capacity in 2030 with the Southwest LRT project in place. Figure 5 depicts these projected 2030 over-capacity segments. See Appendix 5, Table A-1 for a listing of Year 2030 average daily traffic compared to daily threshold capacities, with and without the Southwest LRT project.

#### Potential Constraints

The station site is small and space will be very limited. A circulation road with drop-off space, station platforms, and a re-located regional trail will need to be accommodated. It is likely that parking for transit riders may need to be provided north of Excelsior Boulevard, possibly as a shared parking arrangement with lots serving downtown Hopkins.

#### Possible Transportation Improvements

The following potential transportation improvements (also shown in Figure 5) should be considered:

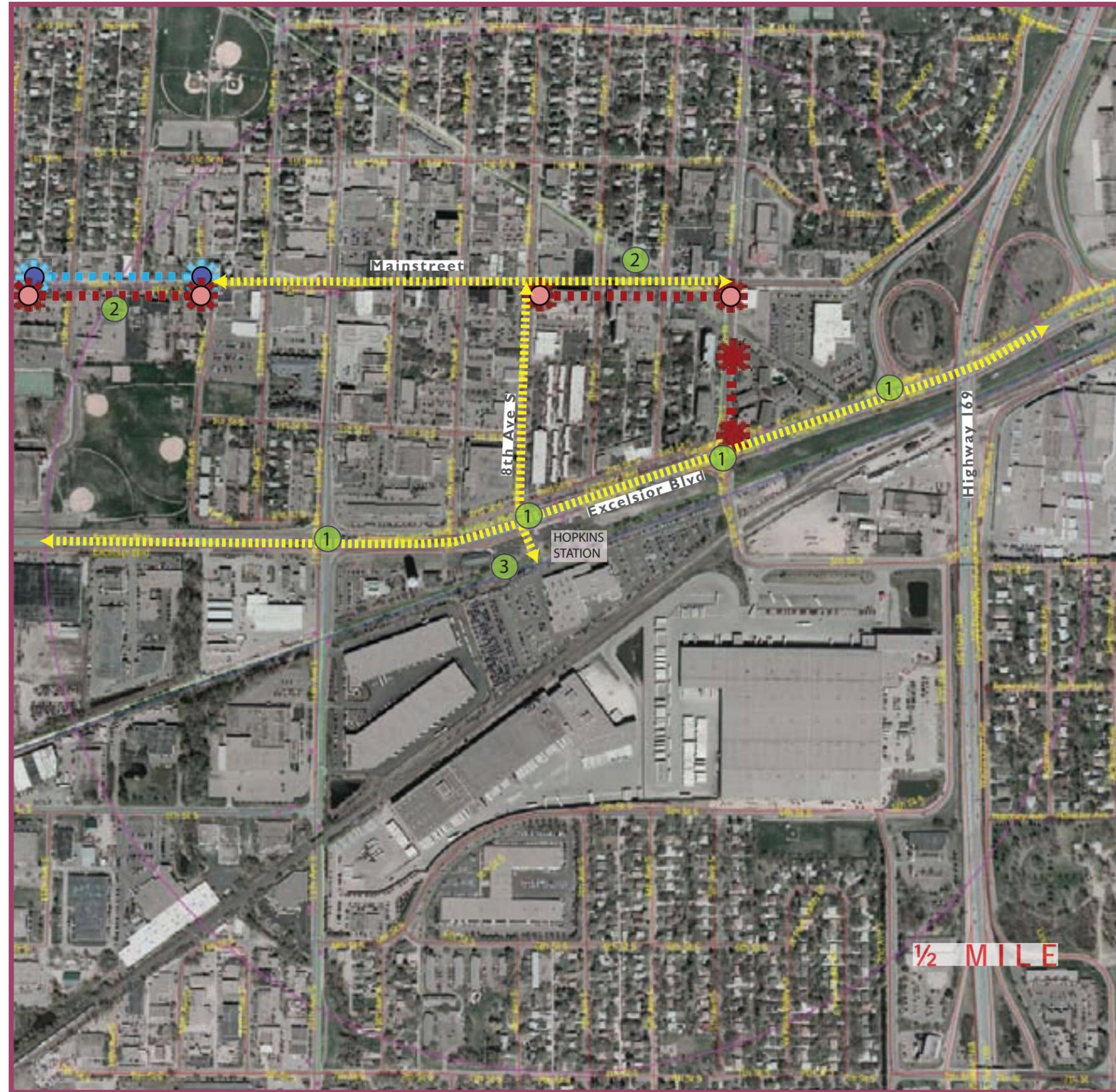
- Revising signal timing at Excelsior Boulevard signals to handle peak hour station vehicle traffic and provide safe pedestrian crossings of Excelsior Blvd
- Provide alternate east-west access route on 1st St N to alleviate congestion on Mainstreet
- Re-construct regional trail within the existing corridor

#### Special Parking Considerations at Downtown Hopkins

In the Alternative Analysis, the forecasted unconstrained demand for LRT Park & Ride at Downtown Hopkins was 210 spaces. However, under guidance from city staff to limit parking at this station, the number of Park & Ride spaces that was planned for in this study was reduced to 100 spaces. The remaining balance of the parking demand (110 spaces) was then accommodated by increasing capacity of the Shady Oak and Blake station Park & Rides by 100 spaces and 50 spaces respectively.

Despite increasing Park & Ride capacity at the adjacent stations to shift the parking demands away from Downtown Hopkins, there is still concern of "hide & ride" parking around the station area; both in residential and commercial areas.

There is not a complete consensus regarding the number of spaces (if any) that should be provided at the Downtown Hopkins station or regarding the specific location north of Excelsior Boulevard that could accommodate a shared-use Park & Ride ramp for transit riders and downtown Hopkins businesses and residents.



## Access & Circulation

-  Over Capacity 2030 Baseline
-  At Capacity 2030 w/LRT
-  Over Capacity 2030 w/LRT
-  Primary Access Route
-  Trails
-  Sidewalks
-  LRT Route
-  Half Mile Radius
-  Bus Route
-  Bus Stop
-  Existing Roads

### IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

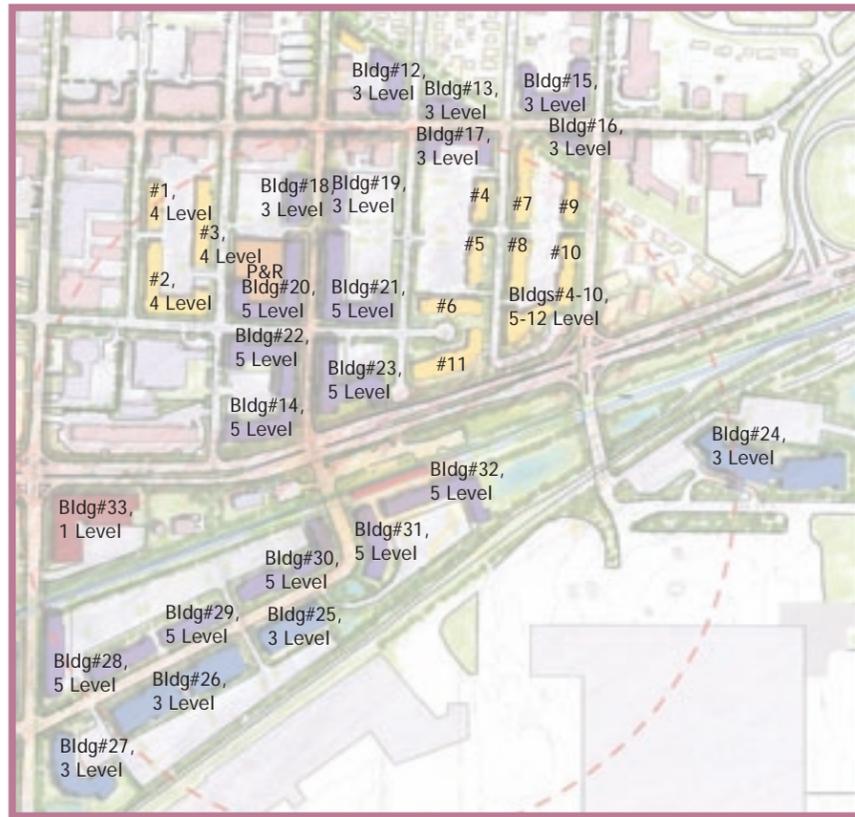
-  Signal timing revisions to handle peak hour traffic flows
-  Remove parking and restripe to create left turn lanes on Mainstreet
-  Reconstruct regional trail nearby

FIGURE 5 - STATION ACCESS PLAN

# Recommendations, Continued

## 4. Building Scale & Type

### Projected New Development



DOWNTOWN HOPKINS

A vital, connected, urban district is envisioned at the core of Downtown Hopkins.

Wide sidewalks and an enhanced streetscape will support strong connections between the LRT station and Mainstreet.

Ground floor shopping, dining and entertainment uses will flank 8th Avenue with office and residential uses on the upper floors.

This will support the ability to “live, work, and play” within walking distance of the LRT station.

Downtown Hopkins - BUILDING SCALE AND TYPE RECOMMENDATIONS\*

Land Use Type	Building #	Footprint Area (SF)	# Floors	Total
Residential	1	9,000	4	36,000 sf
	2	28,800	4	115,200 sf
	3	18,000	4	72,000 sf
	4	10,800	8	86,400 sf
	5	12,600	8	100,800 sf
	6	14,100	8	112,800 sf
	7	14,400	8	115,200 sf
	8	12,600	8	100,800 sf
	9	10,800	8	86,400 sf
	10	28,800	8	230,400 sf
	11	21,800	8	174,400 sf
Commercial	33	48,200	1	48,200 sf
Mixed Use	12	22,500	3	67,500 sf
	13	12,600	3	37,800 sf
	14	20,500	5	102,500 sf
	15	28,800	3	86,400 sf
	16	10,800	3	32,400 sf
	17	14,400	3	43,200 sf
	18	10,800	3	32,400 sf
	19	10,800	3	32,400 sf
	20	32,400	5	162,000 sf
	21	32,400	5	162,000 sf
	22	27,400	5	137,000 sf
	23	25,200	5	126,000 sf
	28	30,700	5	153,500 sf
	29	14,100	5	70,500 sf
30	25,075	5	125,375 sf	
31	18,800	5	94,000 sf	
32	28,600	5	143,000 sf	
Civic/Institutional/Office	24	56,800	3	170,400 sf
	25	25,600	3	76,800 sf
	26	60,500	3	181,500 sf
	27	27,500	3	82,500 sf
	Industrial	-	-	-
<b>Land Use Type Summary</b>				
Residential Development				1,230,400 sf
Commercial				48,200 sf
Mixed Use				1,607,975 sf
Civic/Institutional/Office				511,200 sf
Industrial				-
Job Growth Potential (@ 350 sf per worker)				2,747 Jobs
# of Housing Units @ 1200sf each (2 BR)				1,695 Housing Units
Park & Ride				100 Cars

\*plans and calculations are conceptual, based on projections for beyond the year 2030, and may shift as a result of on-going station area planning efforts.



View of redeveloped 8th Avenue looking north

The intersection of Excelsior Boulevard and 8th Ave is expected to see significant changes as parcels redevelop, including eliminating the frontage road on the north side of Excelsior Boulevard between 5th Ave and 9th Ave, and shifting the build-to line about 50 feet closer to Excelsior Boulevard. By bringing the building faces closer to Excelsior, a sense of compression, significance, and activity are created as one arrives at the main entrance to downtown Hopkins and the LRT station.



Bird's eye view of existing conditions looking west down Excelsior Blvd at the intersection with 8th Ave

The existing Park & Ride lot at the proposed station site is envisioned as transforming into a transit plaza. This will provide an opportunity for a new icon and help to reinforce this as the gateway to Hopkins.

These two changes will have the dramatic effect of reducing the perceived length of crossing Excelsior Blvd by about half. Along with this, the intersection should include a high degree of comfort and safety for non-motorized travelers.



Illustration showing the Downtown Hopkins transit plaza and redevelopment at the station, along Excelsior Blvd, and up 8th Ave.

## Recommendations, Continued

### 5. Connecting to Nature

There are few opportunities for large open spaces or green spaces within the Downtown Hopkins Station Area due to the existing street grid and pattern. However, there are several strategies that may be employed to subtly connect users to the natural environment.

- a. Connect to the existing regional trail system that runs through the station area
- b. Orient buildings and sidewalk cafes, plazas and other open space to take maximum advantage of solar access and seasonal conditions.
- c. Introduce street trees, boulevard trees and trees on private property to enhance the urban forest.
- d. Introduce planters, planting beds, planter boxes and other opportunities for seasonal and perennial plantings.
- e. Introduce new rainwater gardens and greenspaces where possible
- f. Preserve existing green amenities including existing trails and the Downtown and Central parks
- g. Create a greenspace buffer between Excelsior Boulevard and the regional trail
- h. Integrate natural elements, water features, and sustainable systems into the transit plaza



## 6. Special Features

### Complete Streets, Livable Communities, Public Art

**Bikeshare programs and secure bicycle lock/parking at the stations will greatly increase the mobility of transit riders while at the same time expanding ridership for the Southwest Transitway line.**

Special attention should be paid to promote biking at the Downtown Hopkins station--in part because of the limited Park & Ride, and in part because of the large population centers and employment centers that would benefit from flexible access. A bikeshare program at the Downtown Hopkins station would allow transit riders to easily connect between stations and beyond, and the city should seek partnerships and/or sponsorships that could provide cyclists with amenities such as showers and maintenance/repair facilities.

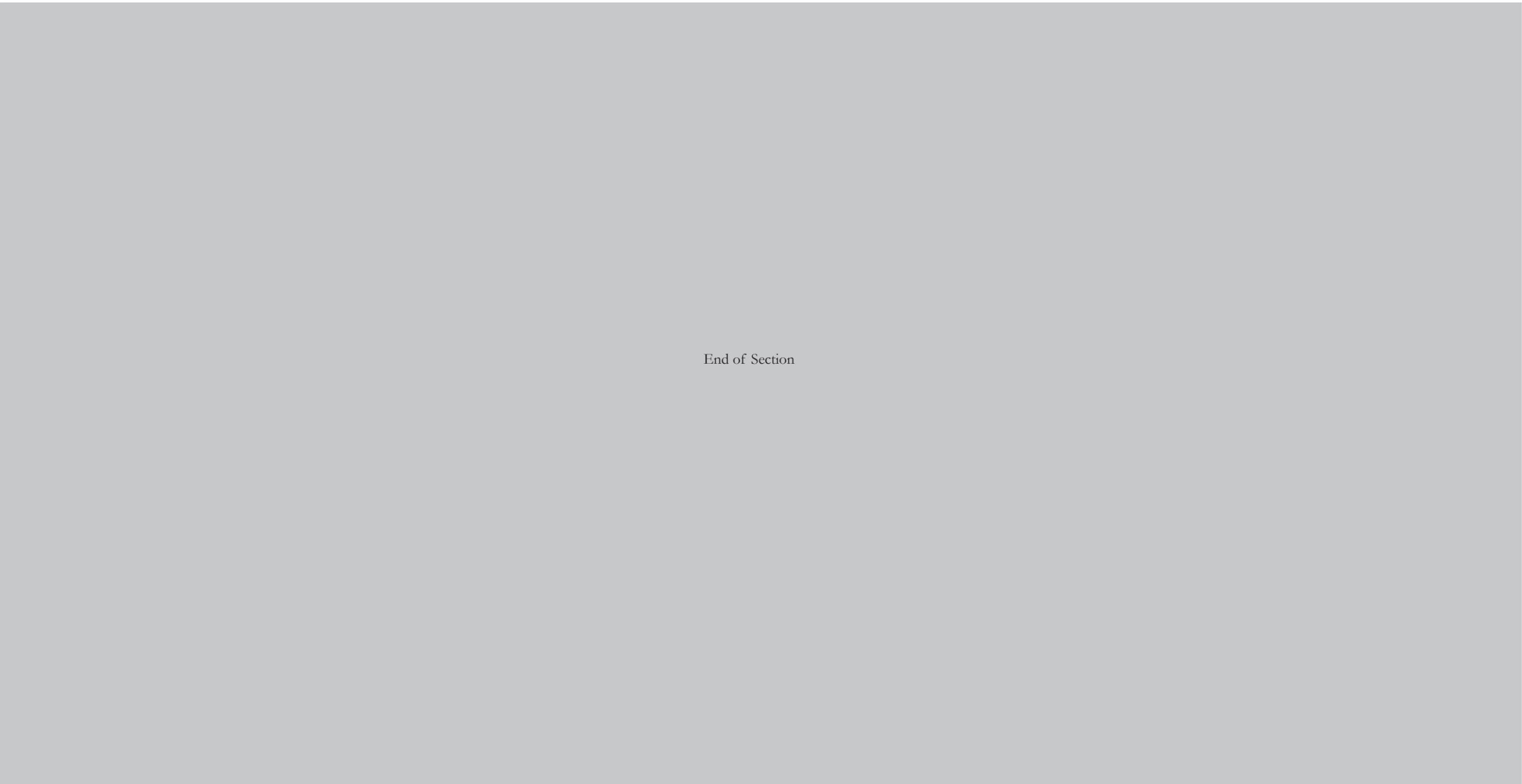
Streetscapes along 8th Ave, Mainstreet, and beyond should be upgraded and redesigned with the pedestrian, bike, car, and rail transit in mind. As the opportunities arise, make improvements to better and more safely integrate pedestrian, bike, auto, and rail movements.



Examples of bike lockers and bikeshares for increased mobility. Transit riders should be able to lock-and-leave bikes, bring their bicycles on the train, or even rent bicycles at the station.

Public Art is an important aspect of creating communities and establishing neighborhood icons. The greatest opportunity to establish a new icon for Hopkins is at the Downtown Hopkins transit plaza where a large-scale sculptural element is recommended.





End of Section

