

Executive Summary

THE MINNEAPOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

Envisioning the Public Realm



Executive Summary Contents

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Warehouse District Public Realm



In the context of the Minneapolis Warehouse District, the public realm encompasses the streets, sidewalks, open spaces, alleys, parks, plazas, and other open spaces that are accessible to everyone. It serves as the connective tissue of the urban fabric, facilitating movement, social interaction, and community engagement. Enhancing the public realm is essential for creating a vibrant, livable, and inclusive district.

The public realm holds paramount importance in the context of the Minneapolis Warehouse District's revitalization for several compelling reasons.

1. Heritage Preservation and Identity:

The Warehouse District boasts a rich industrial history, characterized by its historic buildings, cobblestone streets, and architectural remnants of its past. Enhancing the public realm allows for the preservation and celebration of this heritage, fostering a sense of place and identity. By integrating design elements that honor the district's industrial past, such as repurposing old warehouses into mixed-use spaces or incorporating industrial artifacts into public art installations, the public realm becomes a tangible reflection of the district's unique character.

2. Social Interaction and Community

Cohesion: A well-designed public realm provides opportunities for social interaction and community engagement, fostering a sense of belonging among residents and visitors. Open Space, Alleys, Parks, plazas, and pedestrian-friendly streets serve as gathering spaces where people can come together, interact, and build connections. By creating

inviting and inclusive public spaces, the Warehouse District can strengthen social ties and cultivate a vibrant community spirit.

3. Economic Vitality and Livability:

A thriving public realm contributes to the economic vitality and livability of the Warehouse District. Attractive streetscapes, bustling public spaces, and vibrant cultural programming draw visitors, residents, and businesses, driving economic activity and supporting local commerce. Moreover, a well-designed public realm enhances the quality of life for residents, providing opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and cultural enrichment.

4. Sustainable Urban Development:

Investing in the public realm promotes safe, sustainable urban development practices within the Warehouse District. By prioritizing walkability, green infrastructure, and public transportation, the district can reduce car dependence, mitigate environmental impacts, and promote healthier, more active lifestyles. Additionally, sustainable design features such as permeable paving, rain gardens, and energy-efficient lighting contribute to environmental resilience and long-term sustainability.

In essence, the public realm serves as the heart and soul of the Minneapolis Warehouse District, embodying its history, culture, and aspirations for the future. By prioritizing the enhancement of public spaces, the district can create a dynamic and inclusive urban environment that celebrates its heritage while embracing innovation and progress.

Introduction

Overview

The Minneapolis Warehouse District is uniquely positioned to transform itself into a connected, vibrant neighborhood of urban density, regional attractions, and distinct local amenities. The neighborhood has a lot to offer with historic character, proximity to local attractions, and opportunity for rebranding, however development has stalled, the public realm is disconnected, and its identity has been lost between downtown and the North Loop.

Barriers exist between destinations that interrupt the sense of community and allow emerging vibrancy to dissipate. Beyond redevelopment opportunities to diversify the use of space, it will take an emphasis on achieving strategic connections, establishing community spaces, and developing an undeniably walkable character to make the revitalization happen. The neighborhood could see new community gathering space, enhanced circulation, updated streetscapes, and places for residents, business, and visitors to interact.

To achieve this goal, walkability must go beyond the sidewalk to permeate the atmosphere and lifestyle of the community. To maximize its potential, the Warehouse District must become increasingly engaging, accessible, comfortable, and convenient, focusing on projects that will overcome community barriers, animate public spaces, increase public safety, and strengthen neighborhood character.

Area Map





Purpose with Momentum

Related Studies

Numerous studies and stakeholder engagements have occurred to help reinvigorate the Warehouse District. The Community Planning and Economic Development Department, in coordination with the ULI-Technical Assistance Panel (ULI-TAP), met to consider and envision a Warehouse District that would allow for a greater mix of uses and return to a regional destination for entertainment.

Technical Assistance Panel

As the panel considered the next chapter for the Warehouse District, it set forth a set of six guiding principles that should serve as north stars for work in the area:

1. Shift mindset to focus on amplifying strengths rather than focusing on the challenges.
2. Amplify regional attractors to the concept that the district is the center for fun.
3. Celebrate the authentic and rich history of the Warehouse District.
4. Strengthen connections to the surrounding neighborhoods.
5. Support the health and vitality of the district by adding more housing opportunities—particularly attainable options for the district's workforce.
6. Engage the city's artists and businesses to create authentic connections to this central entertainment district to support connections with the broader community.

Recommendations

In detailing its recommendations, the panel identified the initiatives that should be pursued in the next 12 months, those that can be tackled within the next three years, and the longer-term interventions that will require planning today for realization in the years to come.

The Warehouse District in Minneapolis's downtown is ready for its next chapter. Known primarily as the place to go for night clubs, music, and entertainment, the district can again come alive across more hours of the day and night, shining extra bright in the evening and nighttime hours. The buildings, many historic and well-built, are ready for new uses. The streets, alleys, and sidewalks connect people but can also become centers of additional vibrancy and activity.



Warehouse District TAP

Summary of Findings

DESIGN + BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Near-Term (NOW)	Mid-Term (1-3 Years)	Long-Term (4+ Years)
Plan for wayfinding	Launch 1st Avenue N reconstruction with plaza	Begin public realm improvements
Plan for signage and historic plaques	Launch pedestrian improvements	Address 5th Street Promenade for east-west connections
Activate surface lots with temporary pods	Convert the Butler Square lot into new use	Activate surface lots
Launch incremental public enhancements (art, trees, bike racks)	Build skyway to parking for residential conversions	Design intentional connections at gateways and district borders
Pilot closures of 1st Avenue	Design WDL 3.0, including redesign of 1st Avenue N	Build gateways
Geofence ride share zone	Enhance ABC ramp entries	Move 1st Avenue N to pedestrian use only
Install temporary lighting	Plan/RFP for 4th-5th/2nd-3rd	Activate rooftops
Define gateways (primary and secondary)	Pursue mass crowd screening (e.g. zeroeyes.com)	Extend 2nd and 3rd Avenues
Build skate park	Increase lighting	
	Expand facade program build out ramp ground floors	

OPERATIONS + PROGRAMMING

Near-Term (NOW)	Mid-Term (1-3 Years)	Long-Term (4+ Years)
Create district entity for operations	Bring Loppet and The Great Northern to this district	Continue innovative programming and evaluate ongoing experiences and successes
Begin branding initiative	Create heated winter areas in alleys	
Bring food trucks to surface lots	Rollout branded identity for district	
Expand WDL (2.0 expanded frequency, footprint)	Create DID subdistrict	
Identify attractors	Incentivize local businesses expansion to the district	
Pilot projects (e.g. skating rink)	Establish permanent welcome center	
Implement nighttime economy director	Activate ABC ramps on/along first levels	
Open temporary welcome center to include the TKTS at site	Maintain/support skate park	
Curate temporary retail and service pods		
Activate additional alleys		
Activate storefronts		



POLICY

Near-Term (NOW)	Mid-Term (1-3 Years)	Long-Term (4+ Years)
Identify stakeholders, form coalition	Create policy framework for entertainment district	Spur development of intentional workforce housing for district employees
Establish nighttime economy director position, supports	Create permanent city position for nighttime economy director	
Conduct a district-wide parking study	Implement district parking plan	
Enforce regulatory requirements for surface parking lots	Revise signage regulations for district	
Identify funding for environmental enhancements	Expand closing times for district businesses	
Expand DORA (open container zone) to district	Allow for temporary active use at first level	
Expand DID authority		
Implement Agent of Change policies		

FINANCIAL TOOLS

Near-Term (NOW)	Mid-Term (1-3 Years)	Long-Term (4+ Years)
Reframe, reallocate alcohol tax	Conduct tax equity analysis for the district (e.g. taxing of vacant land)	Establish Community Development Corporation
Increase or re-fund facade grants	Pursue/support conversion tax credit	
Increase WDL budget and private support	Pursue/support tax abatement	
Identify funding for nightlife resources	Approach MnDOT for funding participation for ramp modifications	
Identify funding for storefront activation	Pursue TIF for new construction improvements	
Identify CDFI to increase district funding	Use IRA for energy initiatives	
Help building owners access Historic Tax Credits	Leverage green bank opportunities	
	Encourage more financial participation by anchor institutions for public realm improvements	

Framework

Building a Vision for the Warehouse District Public Realm

The following framework outlines a vision for creating a vibrant, pedestrian-focused public realm in the Minneapolis Warehouse District. It emphasizes flexibility, social engagement, connectivity, sustainability, safety, attractiveness, accessibility, and inclusivity. The framework builds on past studies and current successes while fostering new opportunities as the fabric for human interaction and experiences.

Vision Statement

To create a dynamic, people-centered public realm in the Minneapolis Warehouse District that balances historic character with forward-thinking design, fostering an inclusive and thriving community through pedestrian streets, gathering spaces, activation, branding, and seamless connectivity.

Guiding Principles

Flexibility

Design adaptable spaces that can accommodate diverse uses throughout the year, ensuring vibrancy in all seasons and adaptability to future needs.

Social Interaction

Prioritize spaces that encourage human connection and celebrate community, with amenities that appeal to diverse groups and foster cultural expression.

Connective

Ensure the district is seamlessly connected to surrounding neighborhoods, transit hubs, and key destinations through pedestrian and multimodal networks.

Sustainable

Incorporate green infrastructure, energy-efficient designs, and climate-responsive solutions to promote ecological health and resilience.

Safe

Use design interventions and programming to create spaces that feel welcoming, secure, and comfortable for all users, day and night.

Attractive

Maintain the district's unique character while introducing innovative design elements that enhance its visual appeal and brand identity.

Accessible

Design for universal access, ensuring physical, social, and economic inclusion for individuals of all abilities and backgrounds.

Inclusive

Reflect the diversity of the community in design, programming, and branding, creating spaces that are welcoming for everyone



Pedestrian Focused Streets

We can incorporate strategies such as widening sidewalks, installing street furniture (such as benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles), planting trees and greenery, and improving lighting to create a more welcoming and pedestrian-friendly



Gathering Spaces

The focus on the public realm gathering spaces should explore strategies to create inviting, accessible, and multifunctional spaces that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.



Activation

The Public Realm can be activated through permanent, temporary or seasonal interventions, such as pop-up markets, art installations, ice skating, food truck gatherings, and outdoor performances.



Branding

Public realm design is an integral part of a city or town's identity and – when done well – can create safer, more cohesive communities. Signage directly impacts how visitors experience public spaces and wayfinding is essential for navigating city streets and sites



Connectivity

The public realm is made up of spaces that are open and accessible to everyone, such as streets, parks, and public plazas. Connectivity in the public realm can help people travel to and from destinations safely and effectively.

Pedestrian Focused Streets





Streetscape Enhancements

One aspect of improving the public realm involves streetscape enhancements focussed on the pedestrian environment. We can incorporate strategies such as widening sidewalks, installing street furniture (such as benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles), planting trees and greenery, and improving lighting to create a more welcoming and pedestrian-friendly environment. These enhancements not only improve the aesthetics of the streets but also contribute to safety and comfort for pedestrians. Some of the desing initiatives we considered for First Avenue included the following:

- Widening the Pedestrian Space
- Consolodating Bike/Scooter Lanes
- Maintain metered parking on one side
- Add outdoor seating dining NW side
- Add graphics / art / wayfinding
- Add trees & landscape
- Add street closure barricades
- Enhance lighting and security

Gathering Spaces





Gathering Spaces

Open space, alleys, parks and plazas play a crucial role in providing spaces for recreation, relaxation, and community gatherings. We explore opportunities to enhance existing parks or create new ones within the Warehouse District. This might involve adding amenities such as playgrounds, dog parks, seating areas, water features, and event spaces.

Design considerations could include incorporating elements that reflect the district's industrial heritage while also providing opportunities for cultural programming and public art installations.

Overall, the focus on the public realm gathering spaces should explore strategies to create inviting, accessible, and multifunctional spaces that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. By prioritizing placemaking, pedestrian comfort, and community interaction, the Warehouse District can become a dynamic and inclusive urban destination.

Activation





Programming the Public Realm

The Public Realm can be activated through permanent, temporary or seasonal interventions, such as pop-up markets, art installations, ice skating, food truck gatherings, outdoor dining, and outdoor performances.

These initiatives not only bring vibrancy and excitement to the district but also provide opportunities for local businesses, artists, and performers to showcase their talents and engage with the community.

Warehouse District Live on first avenue provides an enhanced pedestrian programming featuring food trucks, tables, seating, music, entertainment and activities.

A variety of activation will attract a variety of people and keep them coming back to experience the different things the Warehouse District has to offer.

Larger community concerts, sporting events and seasonal activities should be embraced as a unique attraction in the Warehouse district and theme based programming can build upon their popularity.

It will be important to build upon Minneapolis as a winter city and provide programming that embraces year round activation.

Branding

Signage and Wayfinding

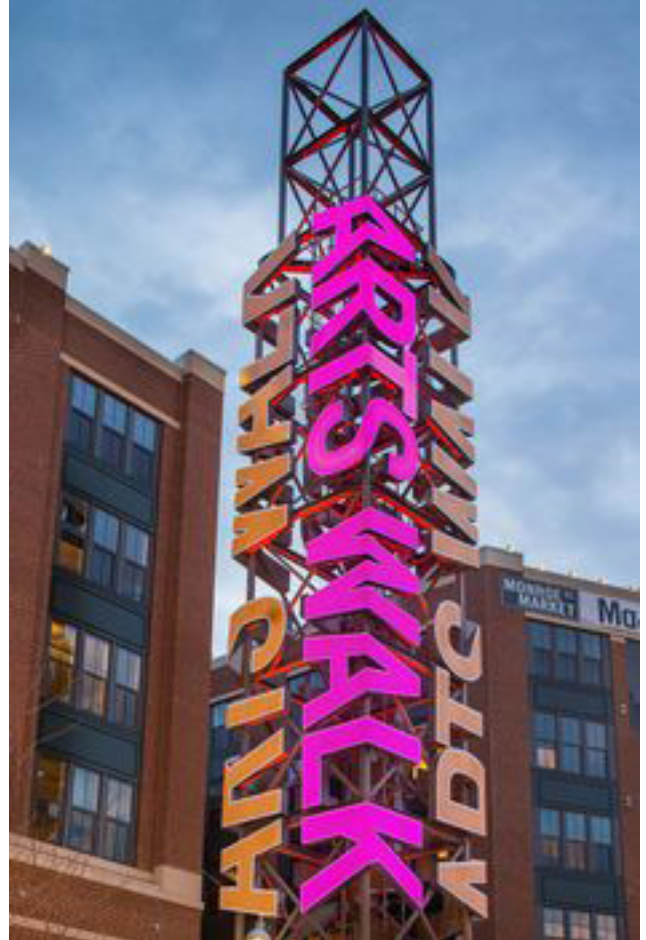
Signage and wayfinding is an important component of Branding it helps in:

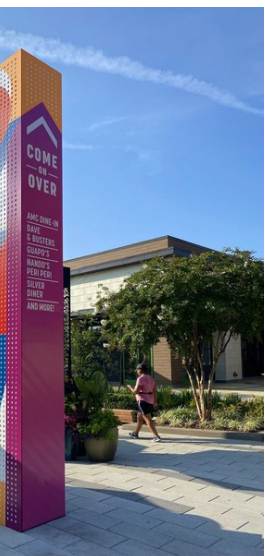
- Identity creation: Develop a cohesive branding strategy using signage, wayfinding, and consistent design elements that reflect the district's character.
- Lighting design: Introduce ambient and artistic lighting to enhance safety and extend the use of spaces into evening hours.
- Storytelling: Incorporate plaques, murals, and interactive exhibits that share the history of the Warehouse District.

Gateway signage will be used to identify key entry points to the district and key areas of the district. Additional signage will also be used to orient the visitor and provide wayfinding and information.

ACTION ITEM

Create a brand and logo.



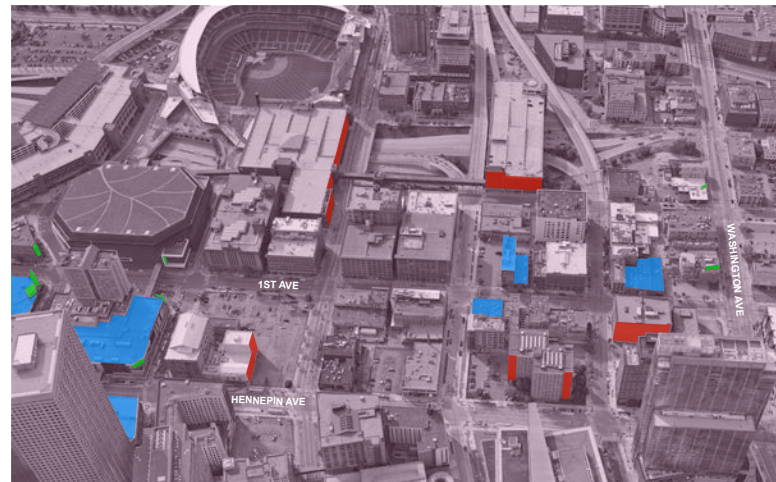
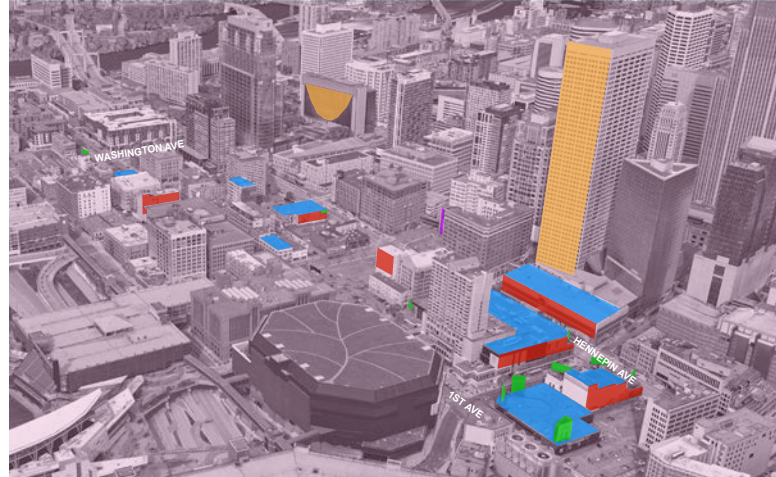


Graphics

Digital Billboards

Increase visual impact of Warehouse District by introducing more digital billboards, murals, and digital projejts on buildings, walls and rooftops in the District.

- add digital billboards to tops of buildings and walls in the district
- add murals to solid walls
- use digital projection to put large scale images and color on building
- use billboard and projections to them district for events and celebrations
- create opportunities for selfie moments
-



ACTION ITEM

Identify key locations and partnerships througout the Warehouse District.



Connectivity

Connecting People and Places

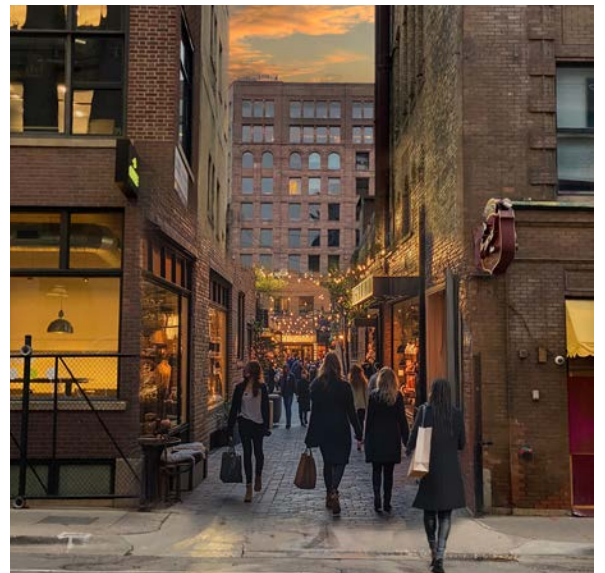
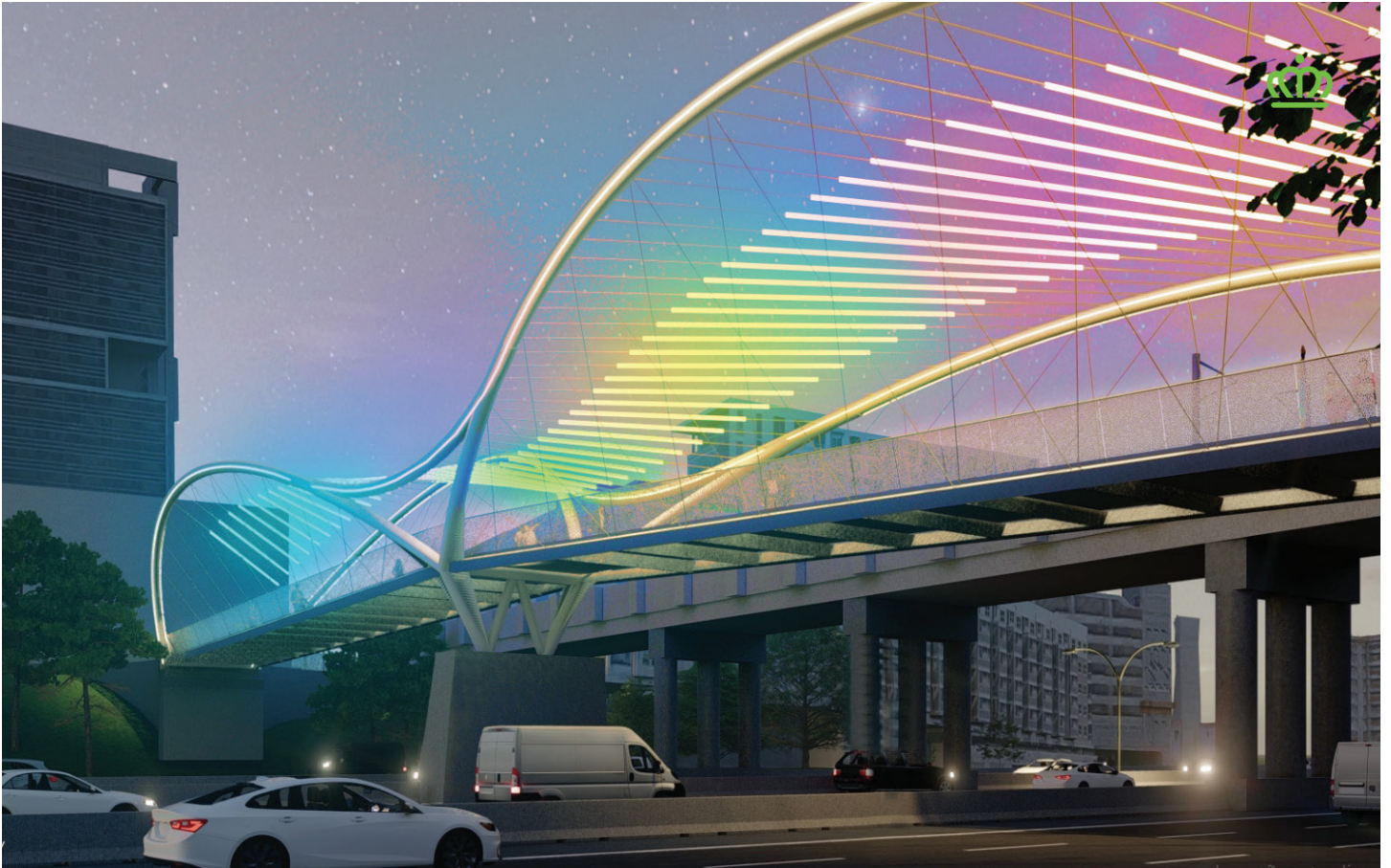
It is important to ensure that the public space network is wellconnected and easy to navigate for people walking, rolling and cycling.

- Design streets, sidewalks and walkways to encourage a walking and rolling culture.
- Provide more room to the pedestrian in the streetscape.
- Improve the street crossing experience by prioritizing people moving across intersections.
- Provide more direct and intuitive connections to the river from the WD and to the North Loop neighbourhood.
- Provide a wayfinding system that includes signage, landmarks and other cues to improve connectivity.
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ACTION ITEM

Redevelop First Avenue and enhance connections to the North Loop and Downtown.



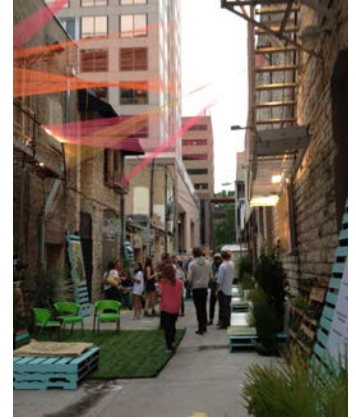
Implementation / Near-Term Opportunities

Near-Term Opportunities (NOW)

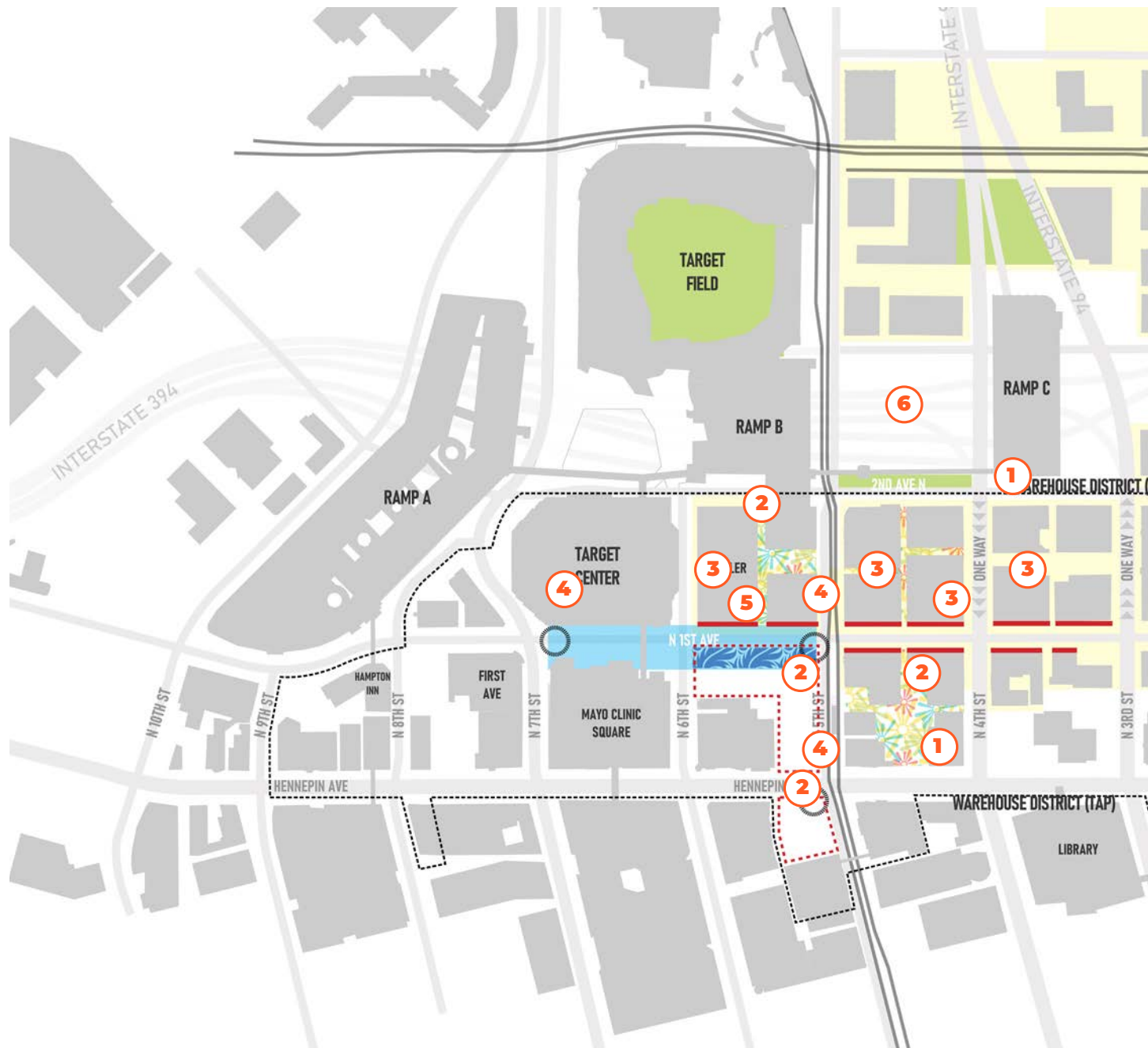
The short-term urban design solutions for the Warehouse District could deliver quick wins and immediate actions that enhance public spaces, improve safety and accessibility, and activate vacant areas. This could include installing temporary art, street furniture, enhanced lighting, and improved pedestrian crossings. Vacant spaces could be utilized for pop-up markets and events, infusing the area with vibrancy and energy. Pilot programs may explore innovative ideas like car-free zones and shared streets, while community-driven initiatives could foster neighborhood beautification and greater community engagement, setting the stage for long-term success.

Through the stakeholder engagement, the following tasks and goals have been identified as priorities:

- Safety and Infrastructure
 - Implement a safety plan
 - Implement and engage a Night Mayor
 - Build/Convert so that a safety plan can work
 - Traffic study on 1st and 2nd Avenue
- District Identity and Promotion
 - Identify district to create potential incentives
 - Temporary Branding and marketing efforts to promote the district
 - Minnesota Mainstreet involvement
- Generate strong idea/identity that people can get behind
- Architectural and Design Guidelines
 - Establish guidelines around architecture
 - Temporary wayfinding solutions that identify the district
 - More art/murals to reflect the character of the district
- Activation and Public Spaces
 - Public/private activated space (events + activation)
 - Activate surface lots and vacant storefronts
 - Continue and expand Warehouse District Live!
 - Provide a Dog park
 - Create opportunities for Walk up windows
 - Focus on Side street connections from North Loop
 - Alleyway popup events/gatherings
 - Utilize Shipping containers as a pop up concept
- Food and Retail
 - Provide opportunities for Kiosks, food trucks, and popups
 - Create more opportunities for Late night food vs brick/mortar
- Community Engagement and Support
 - Coordinate Volunteers at gateways
 - Engage Guide to Minnesota



Near-Term Activation Plan





Near-Term Opportunities (NOW)

- ① WAREHOUSE DISTRICT BOUNDARY IDENTIFICATION
- ② ACTIVATE SURFACE LOTS / ALLEYS
- ③ ACTIVATED VACANT STORE FRONTS
- ④ VOLUNTEER STATIONS AT GATEWAYS
- ⑤ TEMPORARY ACTIVATION - LATE NIGHT FOOD/TRUCKS, KIOSKS, POP-UPS
- ⑥ SKATEPARK / DOG RUN / PARK (FLEXIBLE CONCEPT)

Implementation / Mid-Term Opportunities

Mid-Term Opportunities (1-5 Years)

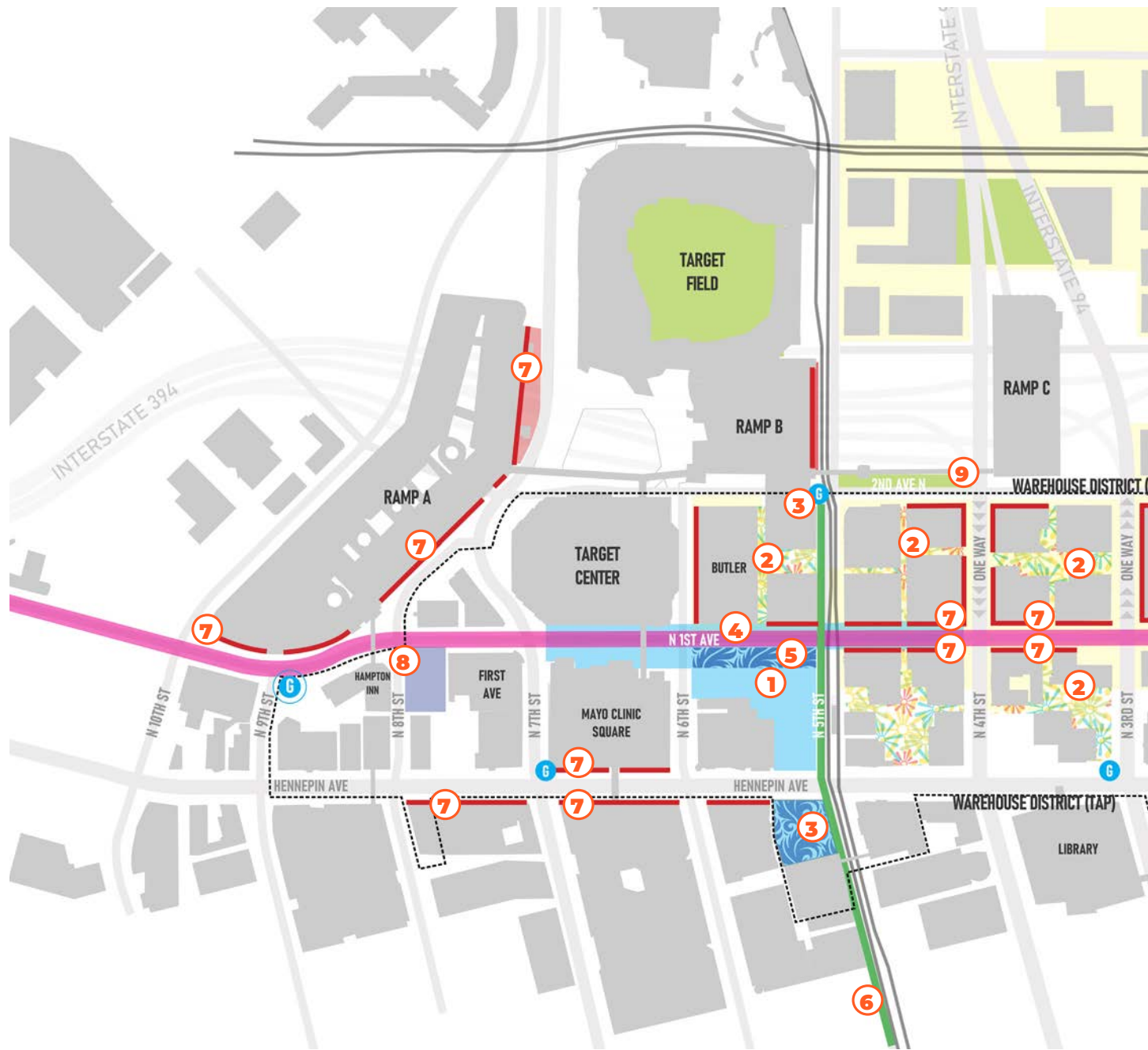
The mid-term urban design solutions for the Warehouse District offer the potential for transformative changes through strategic infrastructure improvements, redevelopment, and economic strengthening. Upgrading transportation networks, such as adding bike lanes and enhancing public transit connections, could significantly improve mobility, while investing in utilities and green infrastructure might foster sustainable growth. The repurposing of historic buildings into mixed-use developments and creative spaces presents opportunities for adaptive reuse and the adoption of sustainable practices, like green roofs and energy-efficient designs. By supporting local businesses with grants and incubators and attracting new investments through developer incentives, the district could see a revitalized economy and a thriving community.

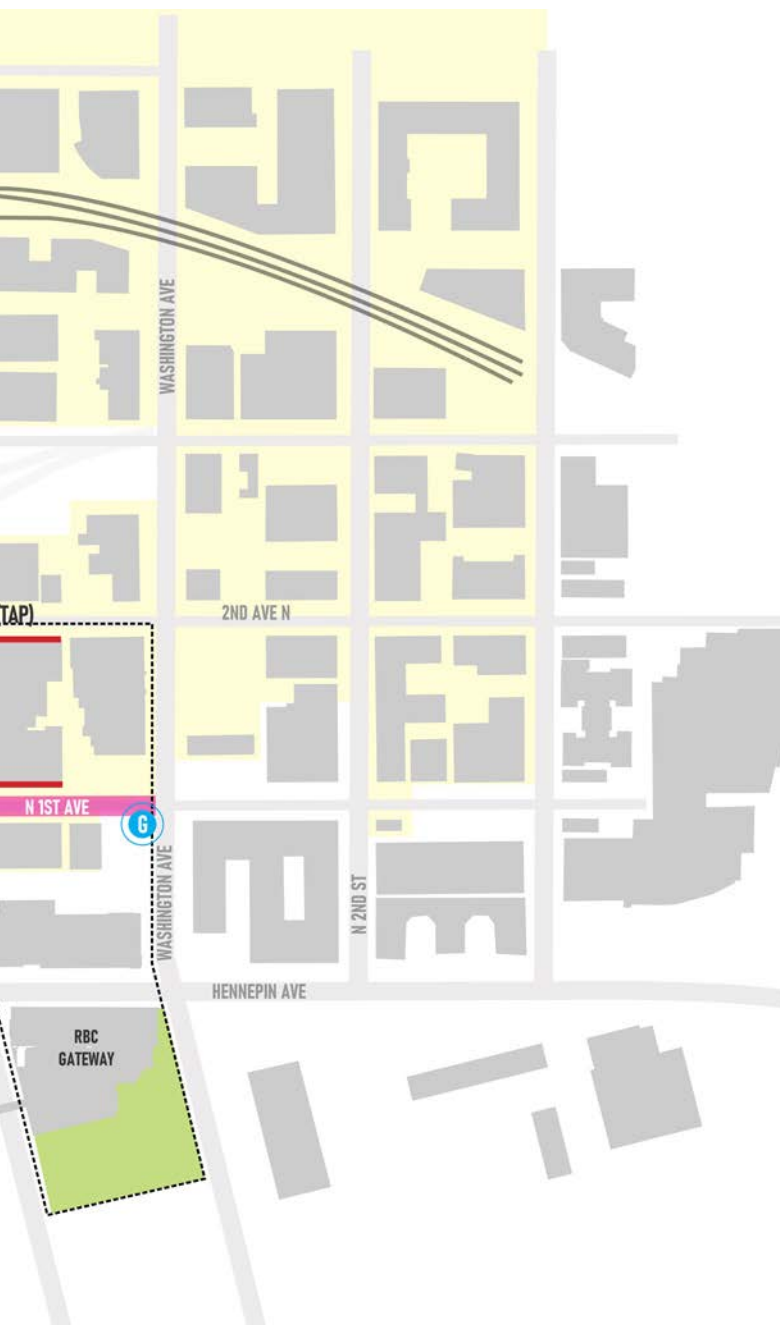
Through the stakeholder engagement, the following tasks and goals have been identified as priorities:

- **Tenant Curation and Diversity**
 - Curate tenants on 1st between Washington and 5th
 - Focus on diversity and motivated people
- **Infrastructure and Flexibility**
 - 1st Ave Reconstruction Design - emphasize focus on pedestrian / plaza
 - I-94 Viaduct study
- Activate garage/ramp frontages and rooftops where feasible (Ramps A, B, C)
- **District Activation and Entertainment**
 - Expand Warehouse District Live!
 - Affordable entertainment
 - Kid destinations
 - Food truck plaza
 - Alley activation and subdistrict creation
 - Heated Winter Activation
- **Subdistrict Creation**
 - Creation of subdistricts: Fashion, Food, Manufacturing, Historic, Naughty
- **Art, Culture, and Public Spaces**
 - Expand art and culture
 - Connective and consistent within the district
 - Geocaching/scavenger hunts
- **Signage and Wayfinding**
 - Iconic identity to the district
 - Emphasis on pedestrian access
- **Housing and Community**
 - Target middle-market housing
 - Health and wellness - community
- **Property Ownership and Incentives**
 - Incentivize/engage property owners' policy
 - Target inactive building owners with potential Penalties
 - TIF or other policies for conversions



Mid-Term Activation Plan





Mid-Term Opportunities (1-3 Years)

- ① CONTINUE AND EXPAND WAREHOUSE DISTRICT LIVE
- ② ACTIVATE AND EXPAND ALLEY / PARKING PUBLIC REALM
- ③ ACTIVATE POP UP PARK / FOOD PLAZA CONCEPT
- ④ 1ST AVE RECON - ADVOCATE PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY (FLEXIBILITY)
- ⑤ 1ST AVE RECON - ADVOCATE FOR PLAZA (PHASE 1)
- ⑥ STUDY REMOVAL VEHICULAR ACCESS FOR PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR
- ⑦ STREET LEVEL ACTIVATION (WHERE FEASIBLE)
- ⑧ UBER / LYFT LOT CONCEPT
- ⑨ SKATEPARK ALONG FREEWAY AND DOG PARK AT RAMP C

Implementation / Long-Term Opportunities

Long-Term Opportunities (5+ Years)

The long-term urban design solutions for the Warehouse District could lead to comprehensive redevelopment and sustainable growth, with a focus on resilience and cultural integration. Large-scale projects, such as transit-oriented developments, have the potential to create iconic public spaces like parks and plazas that define the district. Additionally, fostering a sense of community through cultural events and public art, alongside ensuring equity and inclusivity in development with affordable housing and community centers, could enhance the district's social fabric and make it a vibrant, inclusive place for all.

Through the stakeholder engagement, the following tasks and goals have been identified as priorities:

- **District Identity and Experience**

- Create positive experiential memories
- Develop icons for the district
- Build off existing anchor tenants
- Create new anchors (housing, redevelopment, youth)
- Provide programming to turn into a safe and popular area
- Bring in diversity with street art and murals

- **Connectivity and Public Spaces**

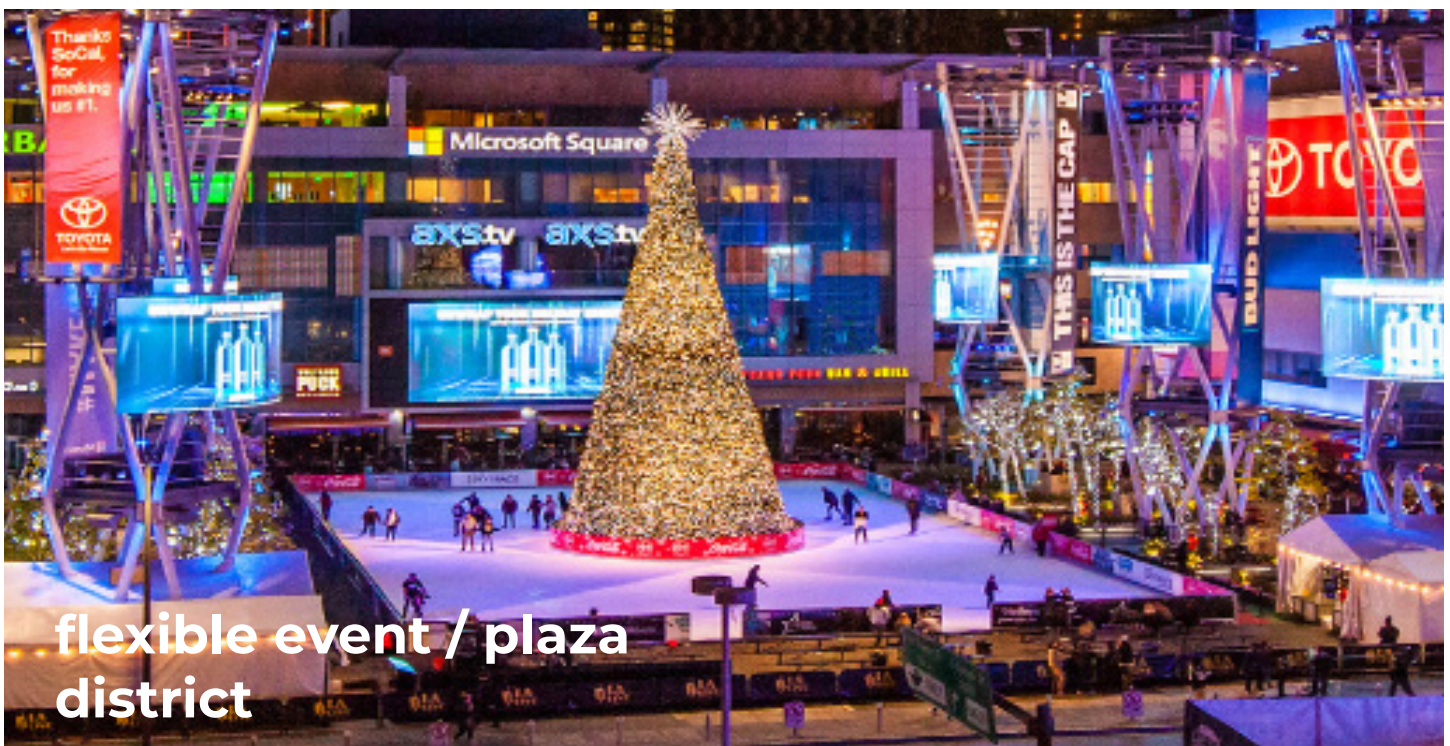
- Connect the district - North Loop, River, Downtown East
- Vision for meaningful park and

plaza space

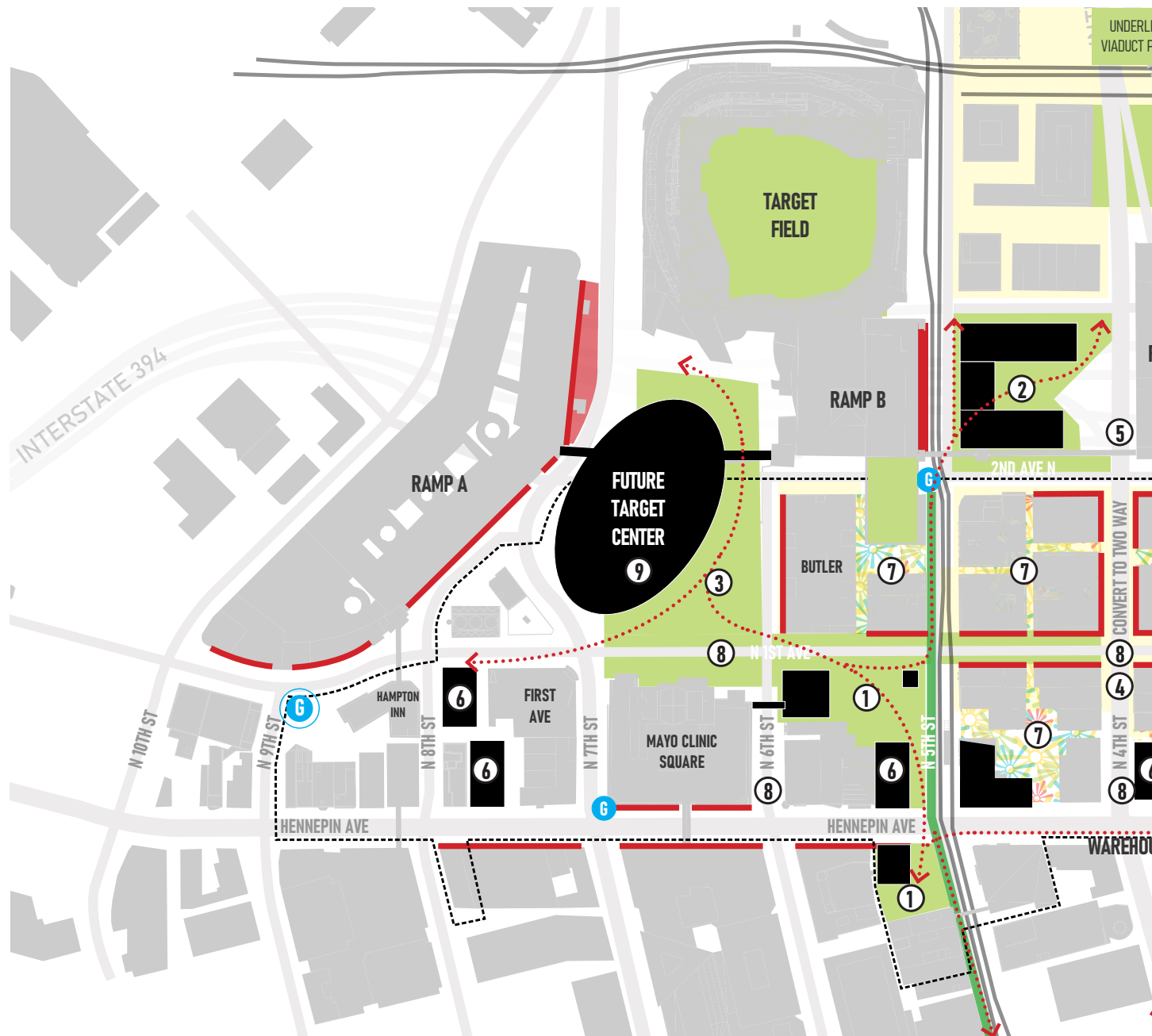
- Family-oriented development (e.g., music museum, visitor center)
- Increase focus on greenspace, parks, and public plazas
- More / enhanced lighting.
- Complete streets

- **Development and Infrastructure**

- Indoor food hall concept
- Development priority to connect to North Loop.
- Target Center Redevelopment / Relocation



Long-Term Activation Plan





Long-Term Opportunities (5+ Years)

- ① WAREHOUSE DISTRICT LIVE VISION
- ② NORTH LOOP CONNECTOR
- ③ PARK PLAZA DEVELOPMENT
- ④ ENHANCE STREETSCAPES
- ⑤ ENHANCE USE OF C RAMP
- ⑥ INFILL OPPORTUNITIES
- ⑦ PERMINANT ALLEY ACTIVATIONS
- ⑧ FIRST AVENUE RECONSTRUCT
- ⑨ POTENTIAL TARGET CENTER REDEVELOPMENT WITH ENHANCED PUBLIC REALM AND RELATIONSHIP TO TARGET