An aerial photograph of downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota, showing a grid of streets and buildings. A semi-transparent dark grey overlay covers the image. In the upper right corner, a hand is visible, holding a pen and writing on a small piece of paper that is placed on the map. Several other small, semi-transparent paper notes are scattered across the map, some with handwritten text. The title text is overlaid on the left side of the image, with a solid blue vertical bar on the far left edge.

# Plan-It Hennepin: Creative Placemaking for Downtown Minneapolis

Comprehensive Report

December 2012



## Plan-It Hennepin: Creative Placemaking for Downtown Minneapolis

This plan looks at Hennepin Avenue and its neighboring and intersecting streets as a place, an experience and an organism. It represents the result of *Plan-It Hennepin*, a creative placemaking project undertaken in 2011–2012, led by Hennepin Theatre Trust with active partners Artspace, the City of Minneapolis and Walker Art Center. Funding and support were provided by an “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the City of Minneapolis, Target Corporation, Frauenshuh Companies, AECOM Inc., collaborating organizations and others. Minneapolis-based Creative Community Builders was contracted to manage the project. Following on the heels of Downtown 2025, a plan released in late 2011 by the Minneapolis Downtown Council, *Plan-It Hennepin* focuses on Hennepin

Avenue and its role in the larger organisms of Downtown, the city and the region.

In the details of *Plan-It Hennepin* are recommendations for street design and in-fill development to create a more widely perceived sense of connection between destinations. Immediate actions include strengthening relationships between organizations, businesses, civic and municipal entities and creating more activity in the public realm. Finally, the plan addresses the catalytic role Hennepin Avenue and the proposed Cultural District play within the larger Downtown area. It recommends ways to build on existing strengths, offers tools to measure progress towards outcomes and puts in place a management strategy to carry out this work.



PLYMOUTH BUILDING  
OFFICES NOW READY

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WAL  
30

R. S. KEELER  
CLOTHING FURNISHINGS

MEN'S Clothing  
HATS

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Unique

# Creatively Building on a Long Tradition

*Hennepin Avenue, arguably Minneapolis' oldest thoroughfare and most important street, performs the same vital functions today that it has for 500 years. It is a meeting ground of pathways where natives and visitors make contact, share cultures and exchange goods, information and ideas — the site of the first bridge across the Mississippi River, the street from which the city grew and continues to grow.*

## BACKGROUND

In this plan, “culture” is defined to include a wide range of creative, traditional, recreational, culinary and social activities through which people share experiences.

Funded largely by an “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and dovetailing directly with the *Downtown*

2025 Plan released in 2011 by the Minneapolis Downtown Council, *Plan-It Hennepin* was a process including conversations with urban visionaries and public workshops to develop and define a vision for the Hennepin Cultural District. The District includes parallel and intersecting streets surrounding Hennepin Avenue’s two-mile stretch from the Mississippi River to the Walker Art Center/Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.

With the goal for Downtown residential population to reach 70,000 by 2025, the refinement of this already culturally and academically rich urban district becomes increasingly fundamental to the growth and progress of Downtown and to the city’s vitality as a whole. Hennepin remains the current and historic heart of the social and cultural life of the city, a destination for millions each year for arts, business, education, entertainment, religious and sports activities.

The diversity of people who connect to Hennepin as a place to live, work, play and visit, necessitated a flexible and layered planning approach that was inclusive, creative and participatory. Artists and urban designers engaged with a variety of organizations, business owners and members of the public in creative placemaking, a robust process that involved large numbers of people, aimed at defining values, goals and opportunities for

←  
Throughout its history, Hennepin Avenue has served as a central transit route, social meeting place, and point of exchange. The early 20th Century photo of 6th and Hennepin reflects evolving modes of transportation.

Historical image courtesy Hennepin Theatre Trust. Planning activity photos: Mark VanCleave.

collaboration. Nearly 1,500 people concerned with the future of the Avenue and Downtown represented this complex group of stakeholders and contributed to *Plan-It Hennepin's* vision for The Hennepin Cultural District. The resulting plan represents a broad consensus around a vision that involved parties are committed to achieve.

#### KEY STRATEGIES

- Build on the current strengths of Hennepin Avenue and Downtown.
- Actively partner across public, private and nonprofit sectors coordinating efforts with the Downtown Council, City of Minneapolis and other stakeholders.
- Launch and lead through a Cultural District Alliance.
- Create a “culture of possibility” that encourages experimentation and innovation in urban design, public art and cultural programming, fostering new models of regulation, financing and other elements of conducting business in both the public and private sectors.
- Balance initiatives requiring long-term planning and infrastructure investment with high-visibility events and spontaneous grassroots efforts to animate the district.
- Develop a statewide network of arts and cultural districts of all sizes to build collective momentum, put in place policies and incentives and create an infrastructure that supports Minnesota as “the arts and culture state.”

#### 10-YEAR OUTCOMES

*Plan-It Hennepin's* recommendations bring to life and sustain a vibrant Cultural District that enhances the lives of residents and entices

visitors. Inclusive leadership advocates for policies that support active public spaces and complementary development. The Alliance together with volunteer civic, business and public sector leadership, supports and facilitates an active public realm and creative sector.

Successful outcomes for *Plan-It Hennepin* include:

- A VIBRANT, ACTIVITY-RICH AND SEAMLESS DOWNTOWN “CAMPUS” distinguished by arts and accessible programming, including activities for young people, singles, families, seniors and diverse populations. Arts, culture, education and sports organizations implement joint promotion and marketing campaigns, ensuring a cohesive array of diverse experiences. Recruiting and supporting additional nonprofit cultural organizations, arts-related retail and creative sector businesses infuse a consistent vitality along Hennepin Avenue and in the District.
- DOWNTOWN IS A RESIDENTIAL AND GATHERING PLACE OF CHOICE. For an expanding residential population, the Cultural District is central to everyday life and to the success of the business community. New cultural, retail and residential development catalyzes and promotes an active 24/7 street-level experience. Working with property owners and the City, the Alliance catalyzes the transformation of sites surrounding the light rail transit area at 5th and Hennepin and surface parking lots at 10th and Hennepin. Developments include an artist live/work building, hotel and/or arts hostel, mixed-income residential housing, creative and culturally oriented enterprises, food choices from around the globe and other retail services. Families, students, workers, seniors and people of various means are increasingly attracted to Downtown living and use alternative modes of transit within Downtown and to travel elsewhere. Public spaces, programmed activities and educational options for all ages and abilities reinforce the decision to live Downtown.

→ VISITORS TO DOWNTOWN COME MORE OFTEN AND STAY LONGER. Robust cultural, sports, food, educational and entertainment choices entice visitors to take part in multiple activities in a welcoming environment. The District delivers positive pedestrian experiences and convenient transit options. Priority is placed on re-development, public art and green space around the 5th Street light rail station as a central Downtown transportation hub and arrival point. Retail in the District expands, with an emphasis on unique, locally owned shops and arts-related products and services, especially in the Theatre District. The Gateway and Hennepin-Harmon areas develop retail that serves the needs of Downtown residents. In the short term, vacant storefronts are infused with unique activities, such as pop-up art galleries, designed to draw interest until the properties can be fully leased. Visitors have many options, including food and historic tours, world class musicals and concerts, free outdoor events and seasonal festivals at designated sites on a regular basis.

→ INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGNED FOR GREEN, CREATIVE, SAFE AND WALKABLE PUBLIC SPACES. Residents and visitors find distinctive, welcoming, active and well-connected green spaces at least every two blocks between the Mississippi River and Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. Each space includes places to sit, directional signage and access to services, such as public restrooms, public drinking fountains, warming areas, coffee shops and food vendors or proximity to restaurants. A stimulating, eclectic and inviting environment includes both public art and programmed cultural activities. Pedestrian and transit amenities encourage walkability, biking and ease of movement throughout the District. Safety is a priority.

→ DISTINCTIVE PUBLIC ART. Public art in the District is eclectic and iconic with an element of unpredictability. It reflects different cultural aesthetics appealing to the growing



diversity of people visiting and living Downtown. Like the District and its stakeholders, public art work is a juxtaposition of old and new, permanent and changing, with a great mix of cultures and styles. Public art in the District is anchored by complementary iconic pieces at the Hennepin Avenue Bridge in the River Gateway, and at the I-94 overpass in the Hennepin-Lyndale Gateway. Key investments give the street unique visual integrity and enliven challenging spaces.

#### FIRST STEPS (TWO YEARS)

These initial actions provide formal recognition to the Hennepin Cultural District and create a Hennepin Cultural District Alliance with real influence. Following City recognition, the Alliance would then work along two tracks, creating the conditions for grassroots initiatives and leading larger efforts requiring cross-sector support and funding. Actions include:

↑  
Photo collage of a  
Hennepin Avenue  
streetfair.

Photoshop by Josh Bergeron,  
AECOM, Inc.



- **FORMALLY RECOGNIZE THE HENNEPIN CULTURAL DISTRICT.** The City of Minneapolis gives formal recognition to the Hennepin Cultural District and to a Cultural District Alliance as an active participant in planning, design and development review for the District.
- **CREATE AN ONGOING “NO VACANCY” INITIATIVE FOR DOWNTOWN STOREFRONTS.** Vacant storefronts and other under-used real estate become home to ongoing greening initiatives and artist-led projects, including pop-up galleries, performances and seasonal displays.
- **EXPLORE NEW MODELS** to advance and incentivize arts and complementary development in the District and State. The Hennepin Cultural District serves as the hub of creative and cultural exchange in the region, powering the innovation that keeps the city vibrant, ever-changing and resilient.
- **EXPAND ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE DISTRICT.** Partner with civic, arts, culture, education, sports organizations and law enforcement along Hennepin and elsewhere in Downtown, the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board and philanthropies to create opportunities of interest to young people in a safe, welcoming, supportive and inspiring environment.
- **LAUNCH AN OPEN STREET PROJECT, WITH EVENTS CENTERED IN THE DISTRICT.** In partnership with District arts, education and sports organizations, local businesses and the Downtown Improvement District, this will bring a burst of creative and cultural activity to Hennepin Avenue with everything from art markets to swap meets.
- **INITIATE JOINT MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS** and launch a District campaign, including a positioning study to formalize a name and brand for the District.
- **MONITOR OUTCOMES.** The Alliance will track key indicators through *Track-It Hennepin*, in partnership with City departments, Metro Transit, Minneapolis Police Department, Downtown Improvement District and others.

➤ Planning workshop participants explore Hennepin Avenue led by landscape architect, Bob Close (right).

Photo: Mark Vancleave.



- **INVEST IN DISTINCTIVE PUBLIC ART.** Initiate investments to realize key defining public art commissions to give the street unique visual integrity and to enliven challenging spaces. Opportunities include utilization of blank walls and buildings, murals, temporary installations in green spaces, performance events in outdoor spaces and artist-designed street furniture, artist-inspired lighting and other functional elements.
- **IMPROVE THE PERCEPTION AND REALITY OF SAFETY** by encouraging a variety of lighting options in the Theatre District and at various strategic gateway points throughout the District and by encouraging more pedestrian activity.
- **UNDERTAKE INITIAL STEPS FOR ARTIST LIVE/WORK SPACE IN THE DISTRICT.** Although this is a long-term effort, the Alliance can work to secure sites and develop plans for building projects that would provide residential opportunities for artists on Hennepin Avenue.

- **CREATE MORE VISUAL STIMULATION.** Facilitate the creation of public art and other visual stimuli such as lighting, banners and seasonal decorations that reinforce a sense of arrival in the Theatre District and at gateway areas of the District.
- **SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THAT IMPLEMENT A NEW VISION FOR THE HENNEPIN CULTURAL DISTRICT.** The Alliance will work with the City, developers and property owners to help ensure that Downtown projects—retail, office, residential and institutional—will reflect and further the idea of a Hennepin Cultural District.
- **LEGISLATIVE ACTION.** Explore development of an agenda that identifies state policies in support of cultural and creative districts in Minneapolis and across Minnesota.

↩  
The Pantages Vaudeville built in 1916 continues to serve regional audiences. Restored in 2002, it is one of four theatres operated by Hennepin Theatre Trust.

Photo by Charles Hibbard, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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Participants in planning workshops indicated their likes, dislikes and future visions using the 42-foot-long 1/20-scale model of Hennepin Avenue built by AECOM, Inc.

Photos: Mark VanCleave.



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←  
Planning workshop participants create a new model of Hennepin Avenue, describing their contributions to it.

Photo: Mark Vanleave.



# The Nature of Hennepin Avenue

*Hennepin Avenue connects people, cultures and other parts of the City and metro area with the people and cultures of the world, serving a unique and critical role at the heart of Downtown Minneapolis.*

Hennepin Avenue originates at a bountiful and special spot along the Mississippi River. Early Dakota tribal hunting, gathering and trading economies thrived along the river above St. Anthony Falls as a fording location for a route that went from the lakes area to across the river, using Nicollet Island as a stepping stone. Early settlers from New England replaced the ford with a ferry and then with the first bridge across the Mississippi, making Hennepin Avenue a true gateway to the west. Bridge Square, where Hennepin and Nicollet met near the river, was the new town's first hub and the location of its first city hall, athenaeum library and market. Major rail depots at Hennepin carried passengers and freight for the growing community. When the agrarian economy met the industrial economy, the power of nearby St. Anthony Falls brought Minneapolis into global prominence through lumber and then flour milling.

During the 20th century, a diversified economy evolved based in agriculture, manufacturing, finance, research, technology and medicine

concurrent with Hennepin Avenue's evolution as a place of arts, culture, entertainment and knowledge. Hennepin was a major streetcar route and home to grand hotels, the Lumber Exchange and a Masonic Center, while two dozen theatres along and adjacent to Hennepin Avenue and their bright lights transformed it to the city's "Great White Way." Four of those historic theatres remain today, as do the Lumber Exchange and Masonic Center. That first library was followed by other central library locations, but all were on Downtown Hennepin, including the current library. The initial T. B. Walker art gallery at Hennepin and 8th later became the world-famous Walker Art Center a few blocks further down the avenue.

With the creative and knowledge-based economy now driving global competition, Hennepin Avenue continues to power the area's economic engine. The creativity produced by artists and by the cross-cultural connections and exchanges taking place on Hennepin Avenue power the innovative thinking that keeps the city vibrant, ever-changing, and resilient. As a living urban space—an ongoing work of art and performance in its own right—Hennepin Avenue continues to unfold, leading the City into the 21st century.

As Minneapolis' oldest thoroughfare, Hennepin Avenue tells many stories. The two-mile Downtown portion of the street winds from the site of the first bridge across the Mississippi River at the point where Hennepin and Nicollet Avenues once met, to the Walker Art Center, where Hennepin and Lyndale Avenues still

←  
1906 Grand Army of the Republic parade in Downtown Minneapolis.  
Photo courtesy of Hennepin Theatre Trust.

converge. Throughout its 500-year-plus history, this pathway is where cultural, economic, intellectual and social connections have been and continue to be made. Stories from people who live, work, play and learn on Hennepin Avenue reflect varied experiences, vastly different for people from different walks of life. They recount celebration, discovery and tragedy, as well as the mundane. *Plan-It Hennepin*, a one-year creative placemaking project, collected and shared many of these stories resulting in this document that weaves them into a new story of a street and Downtown district where people, places and ideas continue to connect—and where new stories are created and told every day.

At either end of the Downtown stretch of Hennepin Avenue, people encounter green spaces and beautiful parks. Along the Avenue are prominent cultural, educational institutions and historic theatres along with high-rise and mid-rise residential buildings, restaurants, bars, schools, galleries, hotels and entertainment venues. The Avenue offers access to bus and light rail transit and vast systems of bikeways, freeways and skyways.

In spite of these rich amenities, stories of walking, biking, driving or riding public transit on Hennepin Avenue are not always pleasant. Young people attracted to the urban energy of the area often report it as unwelcoming and say it offers little to do that's within their means. The street itself is interrupted by unattractive surface parking lots, inconsistent sidewalk conditions, empty storefronts, blank walls and some uninviting buildings.

Public comments that Hennepin Avenue feels disconnected and offers an “uneven” experience launched this planning process. The unevenness includes a mix of active and inactive land uses, unrelated daytime and nighttime activities, as well as public and private institutions and businesses that share little relationship to one another. A wide variety of both daily and occasional visitors to the Avenue lack opportunities to meaningfully interact. Residents, workers, students and participants in arts, sports, religious and entertainment venues too often share little in common. While diversity and variety are considered strengths of the Avenue, they

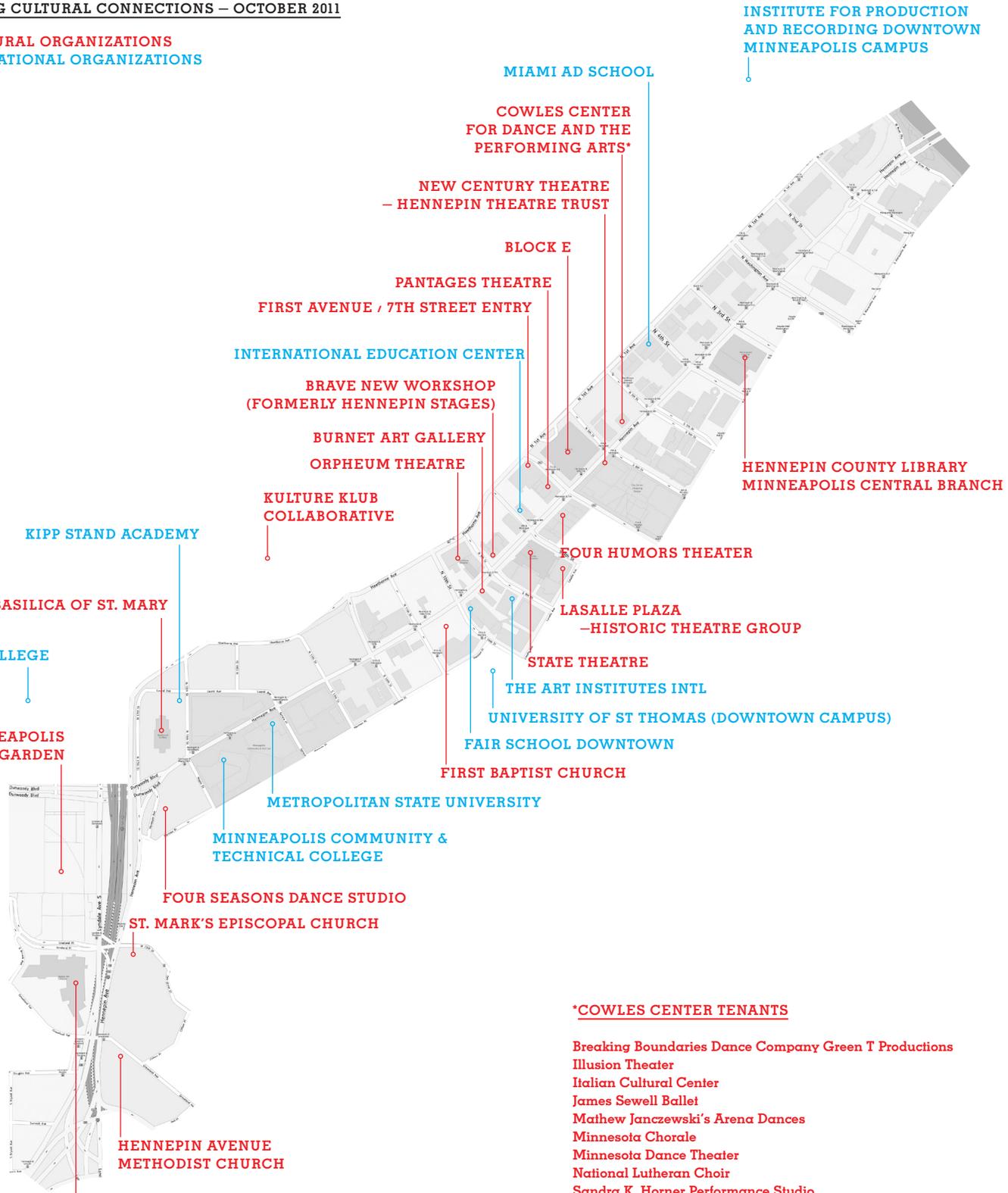
don't always work together to create a welcoming and safe experience. Urban design interventions offer some solutions to what is seen on the surface. To create a Hennepin Avenue experience that is more welcoming, engaging and connected, efforts in many areas are needed.

The two-mile stretch of Hennepin Avenue addressed in this plan is a destination for millions of visitors every year. It houses at least 57 arts, culture and education organizations with more than 12,000 fixed theatre seats and almost 90,000 square feet of visual art exhibition space, in addition to a 7.5-acre public sculpture garden. Four major nearby sports facilities accommodate more than 125,000 people and connect them directly to the Avenue. Hennepin is home to eight educational institutions offering kindergarten through doctorate training, with more than 20,000 students in day and evening classes. Four regional churches of various denominations on the Avenue attract thousands of weekly visitors and produce significant cultural activity.

Hennepin Avenue is not a zone of cultural production in the traditional sense, where artists live and create their works. Some performing arts groups make new work here and students learn and practice production of a wide variety of arts, but primarily it is a place where people come for arts, cultural, culinary, education, spiritual and sports experiences. The City of Minneapolis is one of the most robust arts cities in the United States, with numerous active districts and areas of significant cultural production in all forms. Some cities that emphasize cultural consumption by building performance halls, museums and other institutions, neglect the artists needed to create the works that will draw audiences to those buildings. Minneapolis and the Twin Cities region provide a better balance of support for producing artists and for presenting institutions, but need more opportunities for artists, audiences and markets to connect. Hennepin Avenue plays a unique role in this ecosystem. It is a central place of exchange supplying the common meeting ground where artists and art consumers from all parts of the city and metro area and visitors from across the region share experiences.

CREATING CULTURAL CONNECTIONS – OCTOBER 2011

- CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS
- EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



INSTITUTE FOR PRODUCTION AND RECORDING DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS CAMPUS

MIAMI AD SCHOOL

COWLES CENTER FOR DANCE AND THE PERFORMING ARTS\*

NEW CENTURY THEATRE – HENNEPIN THEATRE TRUST

BLOCK E

PANTAGES THEATRE  
FIRST AVENUE / 7TH STREET ENTRY

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CENTER

BRAVE NEW WORKSHOP (FORMERLY HENNEPIN STAGES)

BURNET ART GALLERY  
ORPHEUM THEATRE

KULTURE KLUB COLLABORATIVE

HENNEPIN COUNTY LIBRARY MINNEAPOLIS CENTRAL BRANCH

KIPP STAND ACADEMY

FOUR HUMORS THEATER

BASILICA OF ST. MARY

LASALLE PLAZA – HISTORIC THEATRE GROUP

DUNWOODY COLLEGE

STATE THEATRE

MINNEAPOLIS SCULPTURE GARDEN

THE ART INSTITUTES INTL

UNIVERSITY OF ST THOMAS (DOWNTOWN CAMPUS)

FAIR SCHOOL DOWNTOWN

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MINNEAPOLIS COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

FOUR SEASONS DANCE STUDIO

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

HENNEPIN AVENUE METHODIST CHURCH

WALKER ART CENTER – MNARTISTS.ORG

\*COWLES CENTER TENANTS

- Breaking Boundaries Dance Company
- Green T Productions
- Illusion Theater
- Italian Cultural Center
- James Sewell Ballet
- Mathew Janczewski's Arena Dances
- Minnesota Chorale
- Minnesota Dance Theater
- National Lutheran Choir
- Sandra K. Horner Performance Studio
- The Singers-Minnesota Choral Artists
- Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus
- VSA Minnesota
- Zenon Dance Company

# What happens when we imagine a different kind of Hennepin Avenue together?



Participants in planning workshops indicated their likes, dislikes and future visions using the 42-foot-long 1/20-scale model of Hennepin Avenue built by AECOM, Inc.

Photos: Mark Vancleave.



Theater artist, Harry Waters Jr. (center) leads a planning team at FAIR School Downtown workshop.

Photo: Mark Vancleave.





# What kinds of networks will we need to make it happen?



Looking north on  
Hennepin at 8th Street.



Visual artist, Ta-coumba  
Aiken (center) identifies  
opportunities for “remodel-  
ing” Hennepin Avenue  
with workshop participants  
at City Centre workshop  
(bottom).

Photos: Mark Vancleave.

# Which strategic actions will have the biggest impact?



Young people from North High School worked with KBEM-FM to produce radio spots as one of seven youth projects exploring the stories of Hennepin Avenue.

Photo: Lucas Erickson.



The Orpheum and State Theatres were among 20 theatres on or adjacent to Hennepin Avenue that anchored the city's "Great White Way" in the early 20th Century.

1936 photo courtesy of Hennepin County Library, Minneapolis Collection.



Olga Viso (top) introduces a visioning workshop (bottom) at Walker Art Center overlooking part of the Avenue.

Photos: Mark Vancleave.





**Hennepin Avenue is home to 57 arts, culture and education organizations, more than 12,000 theatre seats, almost 90,000 square feet of visual art exhibition space, a 7.5-acre public sculpture garden, 20,000 students in day and evening classes, and four regional churches of various denominations. Together we envision a vibrant new cultural corridor, from the Mississippi River to the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.**

# Values and Aspirations

Through the planning process, stakeholders identified a set of values used by planners to guide the subsequent vision, outcomes and actions. Stakeholders said the Hennepin Avenue they want would demonstrate:

- **CLEAR PHYSICAL AND PROGRAMMATIC CONNECTIONS.** Visible and accessible links to Minneapolis' larger urban area, the Mississippi River, green spaces, gathering places and around-the-clock human interaction are apparent. Street design and in-fill development create a sense of connection among destinations. Arts, sports, education and other organizations cooperate to activate public spaces and promote the District.
- **CURIOSITY AND POSSIBILITY.** The District is a place of interest, anticipation and imagination, where creativity as well as individual and group expression is fostered and appreciated.
- **A CELEBRATION OF URBANITY.** Encounters with new and different people and cultural activities provide unique urban experiences in the region. The city inspires spontaneous activities and surprising elements contribute to Hennepin's eclectic and exciting nature while ongoing events reinforce the joy of individuality and the pleasure of community in an inclusive and inspiring environment.
- **SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY.** The District is a safe and comfortable place for people of all abilities, ages and walks of life to travel to and through using various means of movement and transportation.
- **A RANGE OF SPACE USE.** Both the public spaces and buildings accommodate mixed uses, including living, working, learning, eating, creating recreation and providing opportunities for both solitude and community.
- **A SIGNIFICANT SENSE OF PLACE.** People from diverse backgrounds recognize Hennepin Avenue as a distinctive place—and one where they feel they belong.





ORPHEUM

BROADWAY THEATRE  
JERSEY BOYS  
The World's Most Famous Show  
MAY 11

NEW JERSEY  
THE GREAT DISTANCE

SANTO MERITO

# Setting the Stage for Sustainable Change

This plan offers a long-term, innovative revitalization strategy for Hennepin Avenue and an area of Downtown Minneapolis proposed to be called the Hennepin Cultural District. Led by a consortium of creative-sector organizations, a year-long planning process known as *Plan-It Hennepin*, brought together hundreds of artists, businesses, churches, City officials and staff, developers, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, philanthropists, residents, students, youth and others in unprecedented ways to create a collective vision for the Hennepin Cultural District.

A vibrant and resilient Minneapolis revolves around a diverse and healthy Downtown arts, culture and entertainment district. Nearly 60 cultural and educational institutions already thrive in and around Hennepin Avenue, giving connection and support to a future cultural district that will be distinctive for its dynamic public spaces, ongoing and inclusive cultural and civic leadership, intentional design and supportive public policy.

**WHY NOW?** The need to improve the Hennepin Avenue experience for regular users and visitors has been growing for decades, but several trends make it the right time to invest in the Avenue's future:

- The 5th Street LRT station between Hennepin Avenue and First Avenue, already serving riders on the Hiawatha Light Rail and only a short distance from the Northstar
- Commuter Rail plus several bus routes, will be a stop for an additional two light rail lines within the next few years. It will be a heavily used transit station, bringing diverse people right onto Hennepin Avenue.
- Downtown and the nearby North Loop areas have become popular places to live, not just to work, learn and recreate. This trend is continuing, with condominium and apartment projects already underway. The Downtown Council has established the goal to increase the Downtown residential population to 70,000 by 2025.
- Target Center, about to be improved, and the popular new Target Field have brought hundreds of thousands of people to Hennepin Avenue, some of them for the first—but not the last—time.
- A thriving arts, education and culture sector already exists on Hennepin Avenue, with nearly 60 organizations from the Walker Art Center to Minneapolis Community and Technical College to the Hennepin Theatre Trust's historic theatres to The Cowles Center for the Performing Arts to the Central Library, including galleries, schools, theatres, studios and more.
- Retail is changing. Shoppers have many options for finding exactly what they want from major retailers, including online orders.

\*[Creative Placemaking](#) (2010) by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, a white paper for the Mayors' Institute on City Design, the National Endowment for the Arts, the United States Conference of Mayors and American Architectural Foundation, established the term and practice in the United States.

Downtown retail in the future will look different, and is likely to be less of what draws visitors to Downtown.

- The business sector has mobilized around the *Downtown 2025 Plan*, acknowledging profound changes taking place in the city's center and calling for new partnerships and for a renewal of Hennepin Avenue as the cultural core and connector.

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING HERALDS A NEW WAVE OF CIVIC LEADERSHIP by cultural and educational organizations that, with the public and private sectors, are poised to tackle challenges that no one sector can address alone. In the City's past, major business owners used their influence—and money—to create the community they wanted to live and work in, building cultural institutions, establishing a world-renowned park system and investing in the present and the future of Minneapolis. Although these kinds of business leaders still play a part in the City's development, the civic landscape has changed. It is time for leaders of the City's nonprofit cultural and educational institutions to assume a leadership role at the table.

Creative placemaking\*, an approach being adopted by cities worldwide, was used to arrive at this plan. This process focuses on creating the conditions, collective will and overarching design philosophy needed to sustain long-term visionary change. It requires active bridging, bringing different sectors, disciplines and cultures together in an ongoing and meaningful way.

The creative placemaking process takes place primarily outside the usual municipal planning process, but in cooperation with the City. It addresses the physical and economic as well as the human, cultural and civic dimensions of city life. Creative placemaking values not only the design, construction and financing of public and quasi-public spaces but also the activities that go on in them and how the community organizes for action.

THIS PLANNING PROCESS DOES NOT CARRY ANY GUARANTEES OF FUNDING. The report includes specific recommendations—some of them relatively easy to accomplish quickly—but it is not an implementation plan; it sets out a vision for a Hennepin Cultural District and seeks public and private funding. The decentralized structure of Minneapolis City government, along with diminishing public sector resources, calls for more robust cross-sector collaborations and new partnerships, including the establishment of a new Cultural District Alliance that will represent and advocate for the diversity of arts, culture, education and entertainment organizations and businesses in the heart of Minneapolis' Downtown. This leadership platform will rally and mobilize new partnerships to usher in a new day for the City's historic central entertainment district and primary Downtown gathering place.



→ [Performance in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.](#)

Photo courtesy Walker Art Center.

# Vision for a Hennepin Cultural District

*A vibrant and resilient Minneapolis revolves around a diverse and healthy Downtown arts, culture and entertainment district enjoyed by all. This dynamic public space is valued and supported through ongoing and inclusive cultural and civic leadership, intentional design and progressive public policy.*

## EXPERIENCING THE HENNEPIN CULTURAL DISTRICT IN 2025

Stepping off the light rail at 5th Street and Hennepin Avenue, the visitor crosses the street for morning coffee at the Cowles Center Arcade. While there, she takes a seat outdoors to people-watch and get directions to the District's many attractions. Setting off on a walk towards the Mississippi River, she glimpses the spectacular Central Library teeming with visitors. She pauses at the Gateway, a green space near the River where a noon performance is setting up, along with food carts and information tables promoting bicycling and health. A belt of green-lined sidewalk leads her to the river, where retail and other activities enliven the river level of the post office, an architectural gem of a century

earlier. A sloping green space down to the river provides a breathtaking view of the Hennepin suspension bridge and historic Nicollet Island.

Crossing the street and jumping on a south-bound streetcar towards the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, our visitor passes storefronts on the west side of Hennepin filled with distinctive local boutiques and galleries below residential high- and mid-rise buildings. Re-entering the Theatre District, daytime workers and visitors fill the sidewalks. Marquees and high-definition billboards advertise a panoply of theatrical events. Students step off buses and streetcars and cross Hennepin headed to Art Institutes International, FAIR School, St. Thomas and Minneapolis Community and Technical College. The Basilica lawn is crowded with a flea market and musicians welcoming browsers. Our visitor jumps off the streetcar to cross under the I-94 overpass on foot to take in the nationally acclaimed visual experience she had seen many times on YouTube. Emerging from the overpass is a dramatic view of the Dunwoody College campus to the right and the Sculpture Garden to the left. Throngs of visitors assemble in the Garden for a noon high school poetry slam and the dedication of a new sculpture. Our visitor walks up the slope towards the Walker Art Center enthralled by the outdoor artwork, encountering people along the way.

After lunch and a long afternoon in the museum, our visitor returns to the center of the District, taking the streetcar to 10th Street. As the sun sets, the light show in the Theatre



Vision of the future riverfront.

Image courtesy Damon Farber Associates.



During planning workshops, participants traveled Hennepin end to end (top), and participated in a workshop exploring the sounds and stories of the Avenue (bottom).

Photos: Mark Vancleave.

District becomes a spectacle to behold. Waves of diners and visitors enter the various theatres and cross Hennepin, some headed to Target Field for a ball game, some stopping at one of the District's many distinctive restaurants or a food truck to grab a treat. The core of the Hennepin Cultural District is abuzz with street corner music and sidewalks filled with people of all ages strolling among outdoor artworks, sidewalk diners and others enjoying the evening.





# 10-Year Outcomes

*Revitalization of Hennepin Avenue and the surrounding streets through a Cultural District is both a long-term vision and an ongoing process. These long-term outcomes envision a welcoming District with robust and active year-round cultural events, as a desirable place to live for people of all cultural backgrounds and the region's leading destination for arts, sports, entertainment and special events. Public and private sectors, nonprofits and resident groups must work together and foster an inclusive, safe and vibrant community. While these outcomes were envisioned during the initial Plan-It Hennepin process, other outcomes and strategies will emerge through time.*

# Activity-Rich Environment

*Inclusive arts, culture, education and sports organizations acting together within the District can offer a robust and seamless Downtown “campus” programmed with accessible, enriching and active experiences for all residents and visitors— young people, singles, families, seniors and diverse populations. With joint promotion and marketing campaigns among arts, culture, education and sports organizations, there is a cohesive array of diverse experiences. Recruiting and supporting additional nonprofit cultural organizations, education, arts-related retail*

*and creative sector businesses infuse a consistent vitality along Hennepin Avenue and in the District.*

Investments in transit infrastructure, public parks and sports and education facilities that flank the District will increase the numbers of visitors, attract participants with a stake in their success and serve a growing Downtown residential population. Unique cultural and learning experiences make the Hennepin Cultural District the place to go. To remain relevant in a changing world and to fully engage and grow as new people participate in all aspects of urban life, Downtown institutions must create new partnerships.

By 2040, 43 percent of the region’s population will be people of color. Hennepin Cultural District organizations and businesses of all sizes will see increasingly diverse and expanding audiences, customers and students who bring with them a wider range of interests. Minneapolis Community and Technical College, a central institution on Hennepin Avenue foreshadows the future, serving one of the most diverse populations in the region.

Providing the mix of cultural activities of interest to this population is not only a major challenge for arts, cultural and educational institutions and for businesses of all kinds, but imperative for Downtown's most visible District to truly serve a growing and changing region.

*Long-term partnership activities:*

- Develop, facilitate and expand partnerships between education, arts, youth organizations, businesses, sports and religious and civic organizations.
- Expand upon existing programs among schools and arts organizations to engage young people in arts, culture and urban design activities.
- Work with arts organizations and sports facilities to incorporate more diverse programming and build larger audiences.
- Expand partnerships and cross-over activities bridging arts and sports audiences utilizing events such as: artist tailgating events, street performances and vendors before and after games to engage visitors on Hennepin Avenue, opening and half-time activities produced by arts organizations, ticket deals and sports-themed arts programs.
- Build on connections among schools, colleges and cultural organizations to include students and their creative work as integral and visible parts of the District and Downtown public spaces.
- Implement joint promotion and marketing campaigns among arts, culture, education and sports organizations, restaurants, hotels and other local businesses.
- Recruit and support nonprofit cultural organizations, arts-related retail and creative sector businesses to locate on the Avenue.

- Create regular and accessible activities for families with cultural programming, sports and education in outdoor public spaces that work in all seasons.
- Improve arts organizations' financial stability and programming offerings through partnerships, joint marketing, promotions and fundraising for community initiatives.
- Regularly revisit the *Plan-It Hennepin* process and update the outcomes in this plan as needed.



# Living and Gathering Place of Choice

*As the most significant factor in choosing to live in Downtown, the Cultural District and the robust activities there are central to the life of residents and to the success of the business community. Surrounded by growing, mixed-income residential options, including plentiful workforce housing options, artist live/work spaces, hotels and an extended-stay arts-focused hostel, Hennepin Avenue serves as the place to live as well as the active gathering place of choice for an increasingly diverse mix of residents as well as visitors.*

Working with property owners and the City, the Alliance prioritizes transforming sites surrounding the light rail transit area at 5th Street and Hennepin and vacant sites at 10th Street and Hennepin for residential and related cultural and retail development. Developments include an artist live/work space building, hotel and/or arts hostel, mixed-income residential housing, creative and culturally oriented enterprises, food choices from around the globe and other retail services. Families, students, workers, seniors and people of various means are increasingly attracted to Downtown living and to make use of alternative modes of transit within Downtown and for travel elsewhere. Public spaces, programmed activities and educational options for all ages and abilities complement a robust cultural, dining, sports and entertainment scene.

As the Minneapolis Downtown residential population doubles to 70,000 by 2025, the Hennepin Cultural District will become increasingly important, providing significant artistic, educational, recreational, spiritual and social activities to visitors and residents. A dense and active urban residential population will require more 24/7 services and will share spaces with heavy visitor traffic. Every vibrant urban center requires the spaces and amenities



that Hennepin Avenue already connects with or contains. However, support for the public infrastructure and programming needed to maximize the value of these assets has not been in place. Coordination among cultural programmers, institutions, and businesses needs to expand. This includes collaborations between not only nonprofit and for-profit sectors, but between cultural, educational, municipal, religious and sports interests. To maintain livability in an environment with 24/7 activity and heavy traffic, care also should be given to the location and design of residential development and to the parameters within which events and activities are planned.

*Long-term residential and gathering place activities:*

→ Promote and facilitate development of high-density residential options, including ownership and rental, senior, family and single occupancy units and live/work spaces,

including those for artists. Working with the City of Minneapolis and its Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) department through its Great Streets Program, sites were identified and prioritized for possible compatible development. Targeted strategies include (See map on page 96 for key to sites):

- ↳ Transform the area surrounding the light rail transit at 5th and Hennepin, a primary entry point to Downtown; develop and re-develop multiple sites in a coordinated effort to include an artist live/work space building, hotel and/or arts hostel, mixed-income residential housing and arts, culture and culinary-related enterprises.
- ↳ Promote residential and mixed-use development combined with partial block green spaces at the southern corners of 10th and Hennepin.

↖  
Overlooking 2012 Pride  
Parade from Le Méridien  
Chambers Hotel.  
Photo: Tom Borrup



- Actively support in-fill of underutilized and aesthetically challenged sites with complementary developments that include mixed-income residential housing, and arts, culture and culinary-related enterprises and public art interventions. Targeted sites for physical improvement include surface parking lots between 1st and 2nd streets, Washington Avenue and 3rd Street and at the east corner of 4th Street; and mid-block gaps on the west side of Hennepin Avenue between 7th and 9th streets.
- Work with owners, developers and tenants of Block E, on the west side of Hennepin between 6th and 7th Streets, to re-purpose the structure with attention to how it can support the District goals. Explore use of excess retail space that may provide opportunities for the “No Vacancy” storefront pop-up project.
- ➔ In addition to FAIR School Downtown, explore adding public educational options for Downtown families.
- ➔ Participate in Downtown residential neighborhood associations, making periodic reports at monthly meetings (Citizens for a Loring Park Community, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association and the North Loop Neighborhood Association).
- ➔ Engage Downtown residents as advisors and volunteers in events, street performances, public art installations, greening projects and transportation planning.
- ➔ Explore membership benefit opportunities for Downtown residents and workers among arts and education organizations and businesses in the District.

# Placemaking Opportunity: Hennepin Station Area



Welcome, you've arrived in the Theatre District!

As the Twin Cities regional transit network develops, the Hennepin Avenue light rail station will continue to emerge as a primary Downtown stepping-off point for visitors of all kinds, including commuters, theatre-goers, sports fans, bar-goers and an ever-increasing number of Downtown residents.

Guests and customers coming in from the airport or from points north may be visiting Downtown (and Minnesota) for the first time and should be made to feel welcome, safe and comfortable as soon as they are dropped off in a cab or step off the train.

Residents, workers and students deserve a place Downtown to celebrate and relax in a dignified, uplifting space that expresses the best of our culture.





**DIVERSE NEW  
MIXED-USE LIVING  
AND WORKPLACES**

- Diverse Live/Work Loft and Rental
- Small Business and Creative Sector Focused including Flexible Small Office, Studios and Office Co-Location Facilities
- Ground Level Commercial to Diversify, Expand and Strengthen Downtown Offerings



**MAJOR,  
OUTSTANDING  
PUBLIC ART**

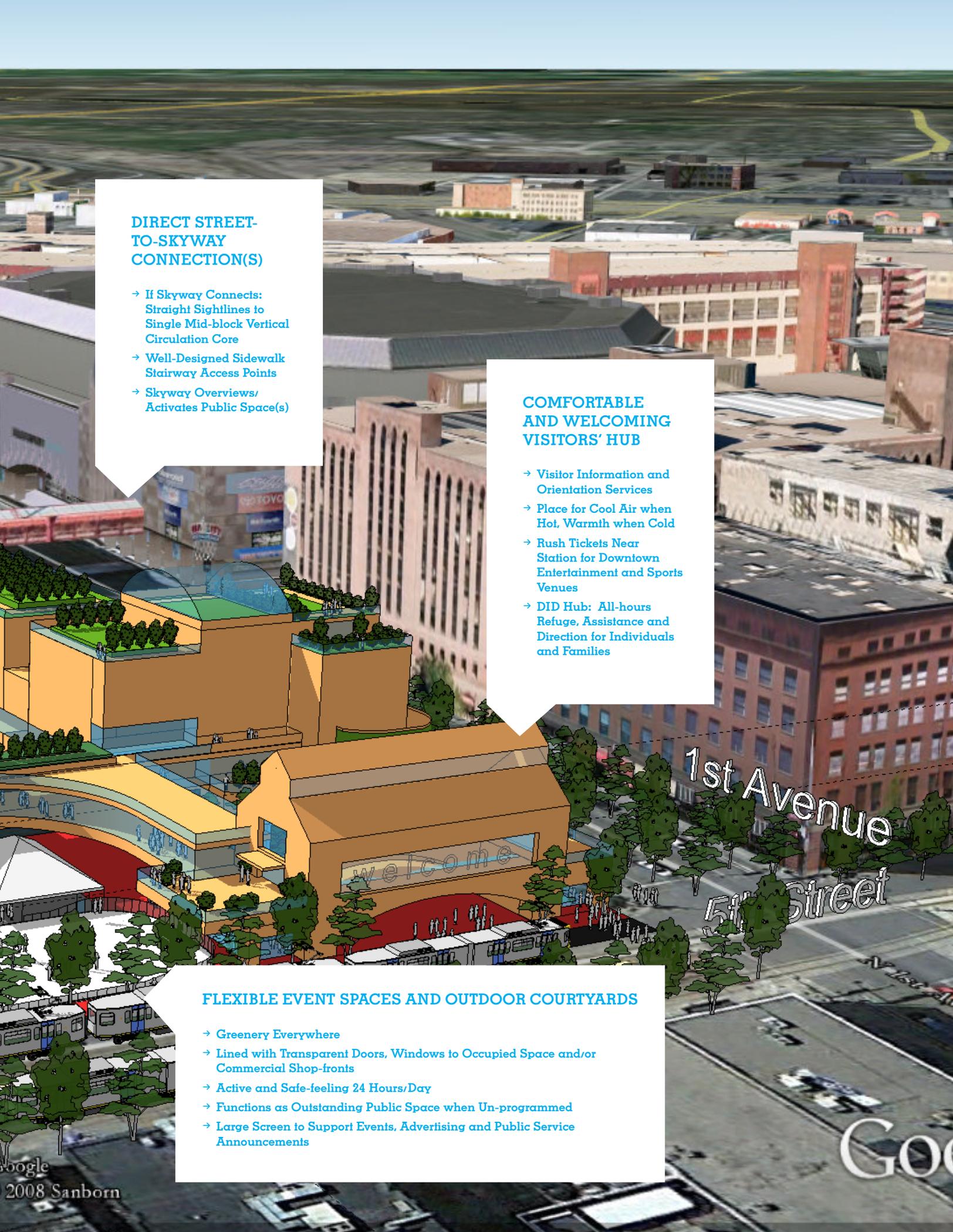
- Reflects Culture and Heritage
- Reflects Creativity of Minnesota Artists
- Reflects Values of Minneapolitans

Hennepin

HENNEPIN THEATRE TRUST  
OFFICIAL STATE OPERATING THEATRE CENTER

SAVE THE DATE

TICKETS



## DIRECT STREET-TO-SKYWAY CONNECTION(S)

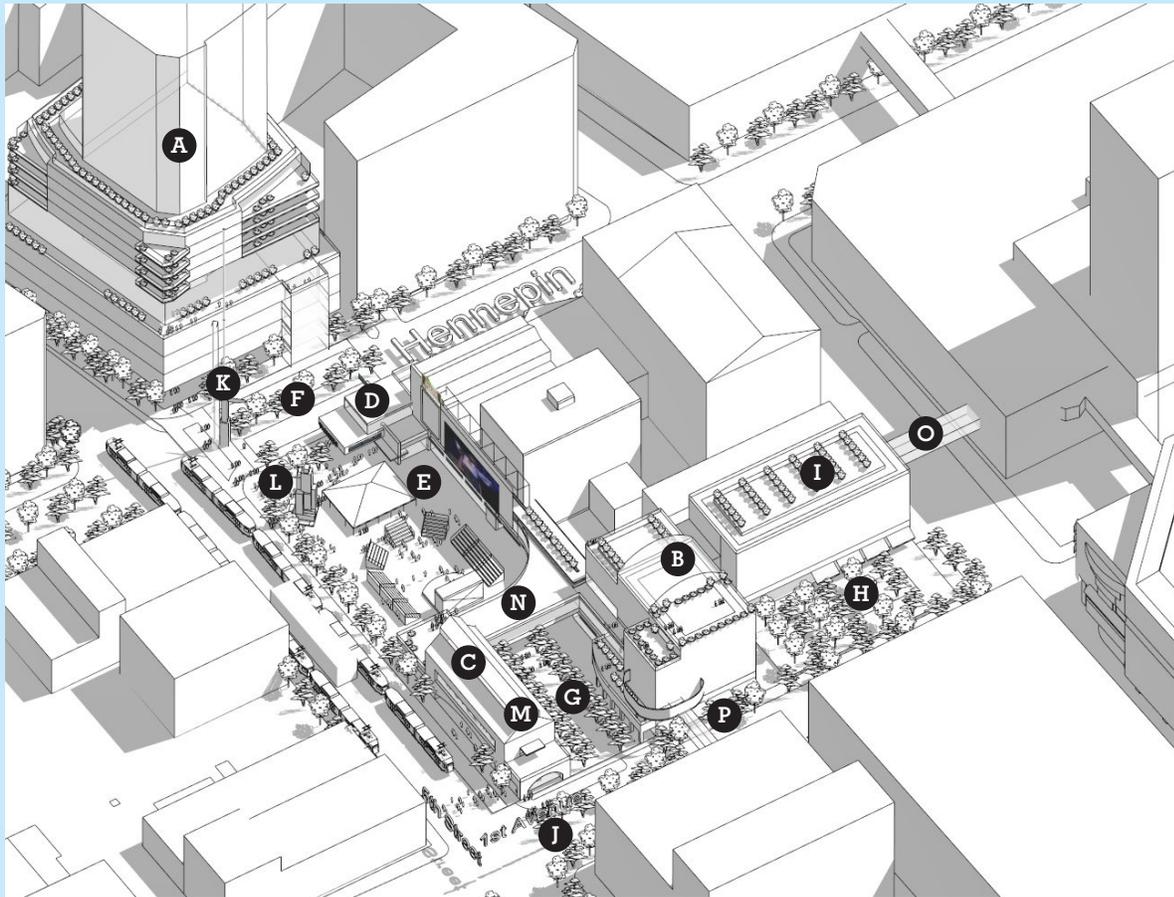
- If Skyway Connects: Straight Sightlines to Single Mid-block Vertical Circulation Core
- Well-Designed Sidewalk Stairway Access Points
- Skyway Overviews/ Activates Public Space(s)

## COMFORTABLE AND WELCOMING VISITORS' HUB

- Visitor Information and Orientation Services
- Place for Cool Air when Hot, Warmth when Cold
- Rush Tickets Near Station for Downtown Entertainment and Sports Venues
- DID Hub: All-hours Refuge, Assistance and Direction for Individuals and Families

## FLEXIBLE EVENT SPACES AND OUTDOOR COURTYARDS

- Greenery Everywhere
- Lined with Transparent Doors, Windows to Occupied Space and/or Commercial Shop-fronts
- Active and Safe-feeling 24 Hours/Day
- Functions as Outstanding Public Space when Un-programmed
- Large Screen to Support Events, Advertising and Public Service Announcements



The urban design for Hennepin Station Area shown on the previous pages is a conceptual vision developed by Peter Musty, design consultant to *Plan-It Hennepin*. It is intended as an exposition of potential public and private improvements in support of the 10-Year Outcomes outlined in this plan. Many of the details are based on the foundation of design and urban design analysis work by AECOM, project design consultant; but also greatly inspired by the wide-ranging public comments (both general and specific) recorded during *Plan-It Hennepin's* four Thursday evening gatherings and four artist-led Saturday planning and urban design workshops. Appendix C contains all *Talk-It Hennepin* event records.

#### NEW BUILDINGS

- A Mixed Use Residential Building w/ Tower
- B Mixed Use Workplace Building
- C Welcome/Visitors Hub
- D Rush Ticket Facility and Public Restrooms

#### NEW PUBLIC SPACES AND IMPROVEMENTS

- E Hennepin Theatre Square
- F Hennepin Avenue Center Trees and Street Paving Patterning
- G Visitor Hub Courtyard
- H "After-Event" Courtyard
- I Green Roofs and Green Walls
- J Continuous Street Canopy

#### MAJOR PUBLIC ART

- K Hennepin Trail Marker: (Example Shown: *Vertical Marker: The First, The Modern and The Future*, by Urban Designer)
- L Theatre Square Sculpture (Example Shown: *Hearth Sculpture*, by Urban Designer)
- M Welcome Hub Gallery: Permanent Installations and Limited Special Exhibit Space

#### POTENTIAL STREET-TO-SKYWAY CONNECTIONS

- N Through Mid-block to Visitor Hub
- O To 6th Street and Block E
- P To 1st Avenue, Parking Ramps and Bus Transit Hub

# Major Regional Destination

*The Hennepin Cultural District stands out as a regional destination encouraging repeat and extended stays. Robust cultural, sports, food, educational and entertainment choices entice visitors to partake in multiple activities in a welcoming environment.*

The District offers positive pedestrian experiences and convenient transit options. Priority is placed on re-development, public art and green space around the 5th Street light rail station as a central Downtown transportation hub and arrival point. Retail in the District expands, with an emphasis on unique, locally owned shops and arts-related products and services, especially in the Theatre District. The River Gateway and Hennepin-Harmon zones offer retail serving residential needs. Short-term activation of vacant storefronts as called for in short-term activities draws inter-

est on an interim basis until properties can be fully leased. Programming choices for visitors include food and historic tours, free outdoor events at designated sites on a regular basis and seasonal festivals.

Residential patterns across the country are seeing population growth in urban centers, especially those with rich cultural amenities. Investments in transit infrastructure and cultural and sports facilities in and adjacent to the District will push the numbers of visitors to grow further, along with expanding Downtown residential and worker populations. Diversity of visitors, residents and workers in terms of age, ethnicity and interests will also continue to grow.

A major strategy will be to generate more interactive and engaging experiences in the public spaces on Hennepin Avenue. This means bringing more visible, free and low-cost activity to the street and other public spaces, so that the increasing numbers of visitors and residents of all ages and different means can find connection to and value in their time on Hennepin Avenue. Many of these efforts are best approached as small-scale experiments or temporary events to test and build on successes.

*Long-term regional destination activities:*

- Activate public spaces, producing free regularly scheduled outdoor cultural events at designated sites; periodic events along the street will engage Hennepin Avenue arts, education and cultural organizations in producing and hosting activities to enliven Hennepin Avenue and side streets.
- Identify performance spaces in parking areas and other public spaces to provide opportunities for theater and music groups likely to perform at noon or during special events.
- Encourage resident arts, education and cultural organizations to activate their ongoing street presence and to provide greater exposure to their work.
- Establish an ongoing “First Friday”- or “Art Walk”-type program of art openings and events.
- Commission temporary and permanent public artworks at strategic locations, including vacant storefronts, to animate the street and inspire residents and visitors.
- Conduct an ongoing collection of the District’s stories and living history working with the Central Library and others to share in writing and video both the history and ongoing creation of new stories of Minneapolis’ most lively street.
- Organize public tours that highlight history, architecture and cuisine.

→ Along with the Downtown Council’s 2025 Downtown Experience Committee, participate in pedestrian and transportation studies and work with Downtown leaders to explore streetcars and options for moving people throughout the District: along both Hennepin and Nicollet from the Walker Art Center to Riverfront destinations.

→ Accommodate 24/7 activities with a greater array of late-night sit-down food service options.



# Green and Walkable Public Spaces

*Residents and visitors find distinctive, welcoming, active and well-connected green spaces at least every two blocks between the Mississippi River and the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. Each includes places to sit, directional signage and access to services such as public restrooms, warming areas, coffee shops and food vendors. Stimulating and iconic public art, including artist-inspired lighting at key locations and programmed cultural activities enhance an inviting environment.*

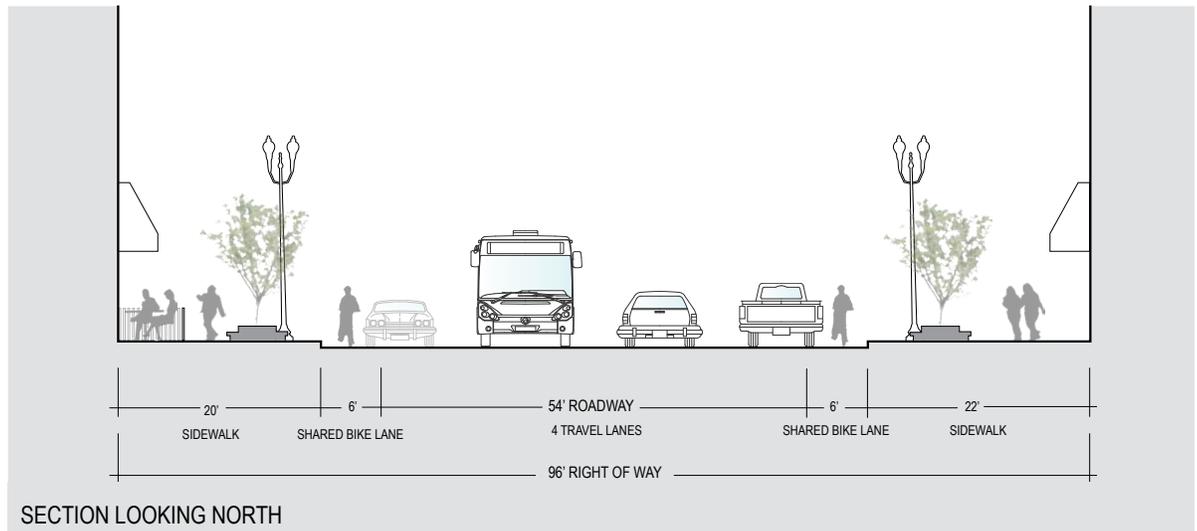
Well-designed pedestrian and transit amenities encourage walkability, biking and safety.

The built urban fabric of Downtown



Minneapolis continues to suffer from 1960s urban renewal and slum clearance and continuing accommodations for car traffic and parking. Significant historic structures have been destroyed, and human-scale walkability damaged. The lack of aesthetic guidelines and façade treatments has left the Avenue victim to uneven building design. Gaps between buildings, whether they are surface parking lots or simply blank walls, as well as uneven street and sidewalk quality and inadequate lighting, diminish

See Appendix F for the complete Urban Design: Analysis appendix



the pedestrian experience, making it at times uninviting. Historical and cultural assets and landmarks are not connected.

As a significant corridor in the District, Nicollet Mall has been acclaimed for decades as a success in pedestrian-oriented infrastructure, but today it needs an influx of funds for physical and business improvement. While differing functions, transit mixes and use patterns characterize Nicollet, Hennepin, 1st Avenue and connecting cross streets, the entire urban center needs to offer a welcoming environment. Hennepin Avenue has re-emerged since the 1980s as the city’s historic spine of cultural and social activity. Activities on Nicollet favor daytime business and retail while Hennepin and 1st avenues generally favor evening and late night activity. The personalities and purposes are distinct and each street builds on its unique strengths and complements those of the nearby streets. Both Nicollet and Hennepin avenues have been recognized as part of the City’s long-term streetcar network plan.

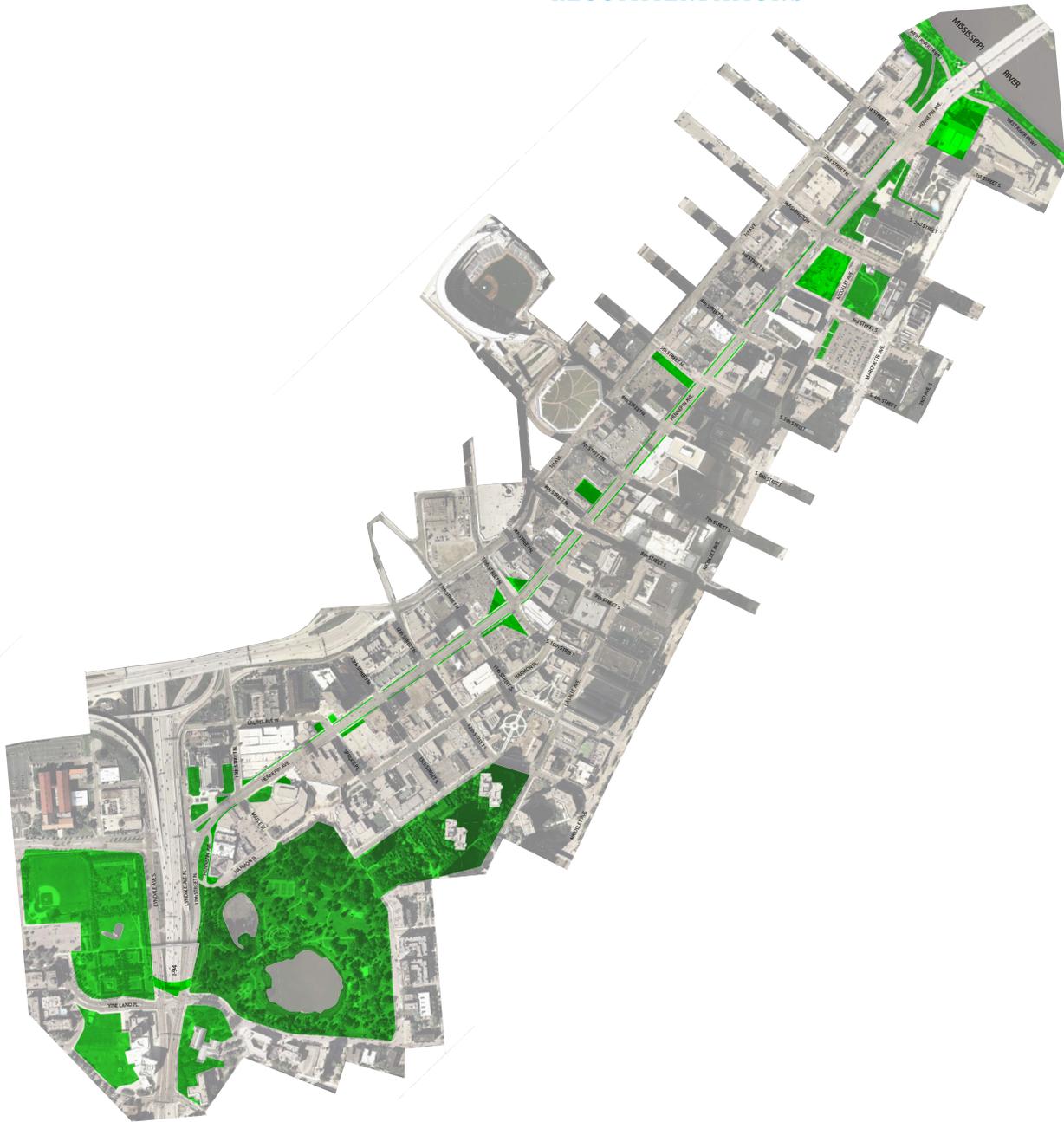
Hennepin Avenue doesn’t have green space, public gathering spaces and fully activated public programming in keeping with its function and identity. The kind of events and public activity called for in this plan present a chicken-egg conundrum in relationship with physical

infrastructure. Both activities and infrastructure need to advance in parallel and in modest ways, while successes are evaluated as larger-scale investment is secured.

Physical changes can be tested by the Alliance through temporary projects before larger investments are made. Changes need to consider the disabled, a growing population of elderly, youth groups and an increase in families.

*Long-term design and public space activities:*

- Employ branding, design, public art and promotional initiatives to build on the historical distinction of Hennepin Avenue as the City’s earliest pathway, cross-cultural meeting ground and where connections are made.
- Maintain structures of historic and aesthetic significance through ongoing commitment to preservation as well as recognition of historic figures and events, including historical markers and/or commissioned public artworks. Create opportunities for interpretive art installations.
- Implement the City’s long-term streetcar network plan that includes Hennepin Avenue as one of the designated routes.



- Design and implement an integrated streetscape that includes way finding signage.
- In collaboration with the 2025 Public Realm Committee, pursue a network of green spaces accommodating public activity connecting the River to Loring Park and the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden (i.e. a pedestrian will not have to walk more than two blocks without finding an inviting green space):
  - ↳ Advocate for and assist in planning the Gateway to add green space and better connect the River and the Library; work with RiverFirst and the Minneapolis Park Foundation to create regularly programmed public gathering spaces that will help achieve the Cultural District vision.
  - ↳ Develop a string of pocket parks along Hennepin for both active and passive activities including live performance, games, festivals, sitting, reading and conversing. (see illustration above)



# Distinctive Public Art

*Public art in the District is of an eclectic nature, with an element of unpredictability. It reflects different cultural aesthetics appealing to the growing diversity of people visiting and living Downtown. The best works of public art provoke visitors to text or Tweet their friends to say, “you’ve got to see this!” Like the District and its stakeholders, public art work is a juxtaposition of old and new, permanent and changing, with a great mix of cultures and styles.*

Public art in the District is anchored by complementary iconic pieces at the Hennepin Avenue Bridge in the River Gateway, and at the I-94 overpass in the Hennepin-Lyndale Gateway. Key investments give the street unique visual integrity and enliven challenging spaces.



↑  
Paul McCarthy's "Daddies Ketchup" (2001) in City Hall Park, New York City.  
Source: nytimes.com



Opportunities include utilization of blank walls and buildings, murals, temporary installations in green spaces, performance events in outdoor spaces and artist-designed street furniture, lighting and other functional elements.

*Long-term opportunities:*

→ The Alliance will manage commissioning and placement of public art for the District focused on Hennepin Avenue and the larger District that reflects the character and spirit of the city while reinforcing its history, diversity and cultural focus. This effort will be guided by the Alliance's focus on:

- Reflecting the importance of the American Indian populations and significance of St. Anthony Falls and of the Avenue as a cross-cultural meeting ground.
- Making aesthetic connections and helping ground people within the Cultural District (i.e. signage).
- Inspiring curiosity and compelling pedestrian and bicycle movement.

➤ Anish Kapoor's "Cloud Gate," in Millennium Park, Chicago.  
Source: nytimes.com

- Embracing the District's density and "urban-ness" while also offering rest, escape, contemplation and areas to interact.
  - Responding to the needs and desires of diverse audiences and stakeholders.
  - Celebrating the social environment and engaging visitors and residents in ways to reinforce community connections.
  - Remaining attentive to safety concerns.
  - Investing in structures that require little maintenance.
- Secure significant public and private funding to conduct an international design competition to select key iconic public art commissions to:
- Enliven the underside of the I-94 overpass, both temporarily and permanently.
  - Site iconic works at the River Gateway, the Hennepin-Lyndale Gateway, and entrances to the Theatre District.



- Develop unique visual elements to distinguish and identify the four sub-districts while bringing a sense of visual connectivity to the entire District.
- Identify viable projects throughout the District using criteria that include, but not limited to: 1) funds available; 2) biggest impact for investment; 3) ease of implementation; 4) consensus among key stakeholders about desirability; and 5) opportunity. Examples may include:
  - Integrating public art throughout the District and involve artists in the design of street re-building, green spaces, way-finding, transit and infrastructure improvement.
  - Working with Franconia Sculpture Park to help artists move existing outdoor sculptures to the promenade along Loring Park and the MCTC corner.
  - Organizing and promoting tours of the District with QR Codes or other technological markers placed on strategic sites and buildings, smart phone guided tours and a cadre of expert tour guides.

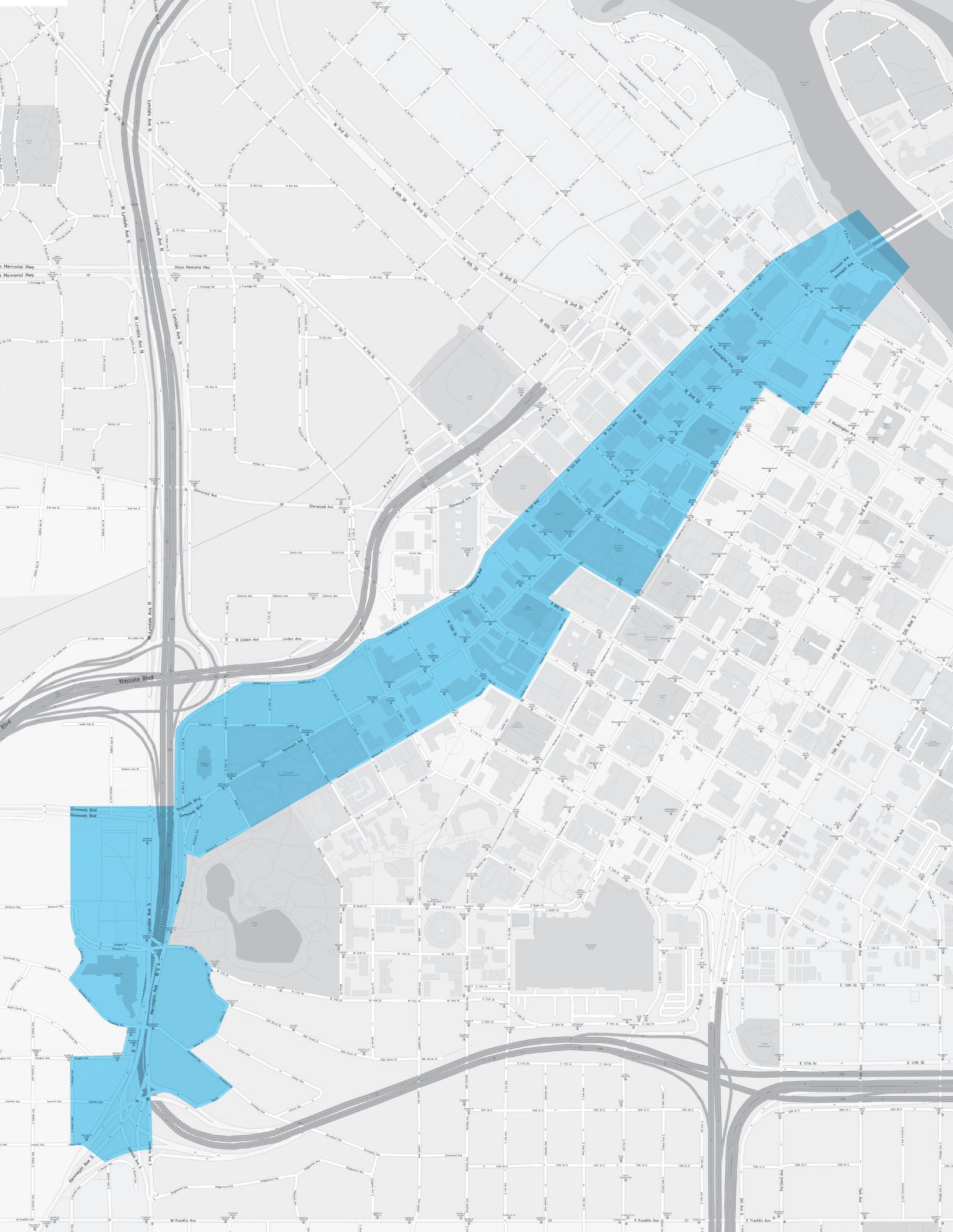
- Encouraging chalk drawings on sidewalks.
- Securing sponsorships to underwrite arts events and installations with thematic tie-ins to the many events and attractions in the District, adding value to the events and bridging cultures.
- Working to create a billboard art program.
- Exploring creation of a commercially sponsored mural program.
- Exploring artist-in-residence concepts to increase presence of artists and arts activities in the District.

↳ Charles Long's installation, "Pet Sounds," in Madison Square Park, New York City (left). Oscar Tuazon's "People," in Brooklyn Bridge Park, New York City (right).  
Source: nytimes.com



# First Steps

*Many stakeholders reached consensus on a short list of key actions to be implemented quickly. Some actions were already set in motion and gained traction during the planning process. The following are recommended actions to complete within the first two years.*



# First Steps: City of Minneapolis

*Formal endorsement by the City of Minneapolis accompanies agreement to work with and support Cultural District leadership to: 1) facilitate fast and efficient permitting, 2) enhance greening, 3) stimulate culturally related development, 4) bring creative design to streetscaping and 5) explore expanded ways of moving people throughout the District.*

## FORMAL RECOGNITION OF HENNEPIN CULTURAL DISTRICT.

The Hennepin Cultural District Alliance seeks formal recognition from the Minneapolis City Council, similar to the City's endorsement of the Northeast Arts District. In addition, the Alliance seeks general endorsement of the short-term actions and long-term goals, while recognizing that some of the specific actions and recommendations, including City commitment of financial resources, will need further consideration.

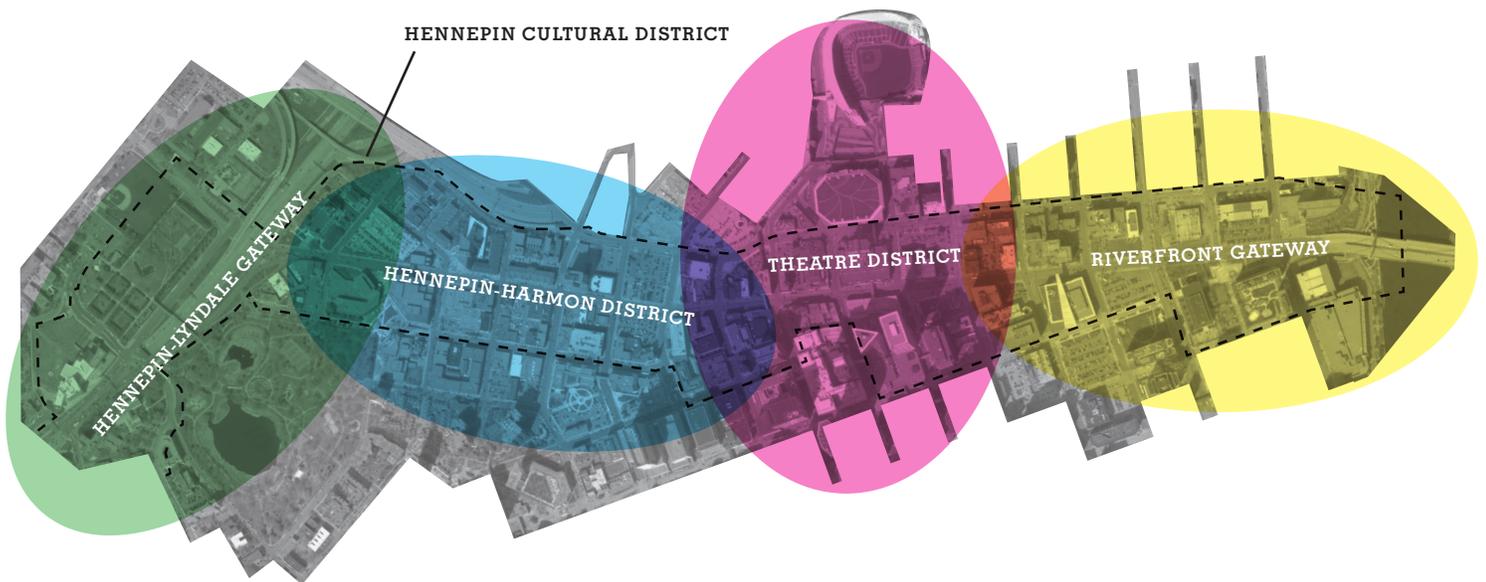
*The City of Minneapolis is asked to:*

- Formally recognize the Hennepin Cultural District, an area following Hennepin Avenue from the Walker Art Center to the Mississippi River and encompassing parallel streets including Nicollet, Harmon and First Avenues (the triple spine with Hennepin Avenue as the central artery) as well as connecting streets. This area mirrors the combined boundaries of the City's Downtown Hennepin and Lyndale Commercial Corridors areas.
- Collaborate with District leadership to facilitate development that is consistent with and complementary to the District; programming vacant storefronts throughout Downtown and encouraging new development that favors cultural uses and complementary commercial uses including galleries, a diverse mix of restaurants and unique, locally-owned retail.
- The City will be an active participant in and work cooperatively with the Alliance to identify and/or facilitate required approvals; assist with regulatory and permitting needs for projects and initiatives proposed by the Alliance, with the goal of identifying improved processes that can be replicated elsewhere in the City.

←  
The Hennepin Cultural  
District — CPED  
Combined Commercial  
Corridor Boundary



- Enforce existing surface parking landscaping and screening guidelines from the zoning code as the most desirable option for improving the aesthetics of parking lots along Hennepin, with the first priority being establishment of the green buffer space along sidewalks. The District Alliance will work with the City to determine the most timely and effective path to implementation of parking lot greening on properties within the defined project area.
- Explore improved pedestrian markings at intersections along Hennepin and cross streets; enhance bicycle travel.
- Continue to make existing permitting and regulations easier to understand and access; further the City's cooperative and creative approach to regulations, permitting and support for events, food options, building permits and business development.
- Strongly support arts and cultural development in the District, including insisting that all first-floor spaces be visible to pedestrians and exploring ways to ensure that these spaces are open to the public at street level.
- Facilitate processing temporary storefront usage requests.
- Re-examine regulations related to murals and expand permissions if needed to foster a more visually stimulating environment.
- Create visual excitement and interest. Improve overall lighting and safety with a variety of lighting options throughout the District, including lighting building facades, art and iconic focal points.
- Explore possible changes to City policy related to sponsorship recognition on signage, banners and other event signage.
- Work with the Alliance to explore delegating authority for all street pole banners throughout the district to the District Alliance.
- Promptly consider initiatives to encourage property uses by owners and tenants for arts and cultural purposes; encourage arts-related economic development projects to consider the District for their location.



- Engage Inter-Governmental Relations staff to work with the legislative action team of the Alliance to explore and help secure state policy support of incentives for cultural and creative districts, such as revisions to real property tax classifications that support arts usage, including the creation of gallery spaces.
- Collaborate with the Alliance, Metro Transit and Downtown leadership to address Downtown transit circulation to better serve residents, visitors and employees and to facilitate movement between cultural institutions and businesses.
- Recognize four connected zones within the District, each with distinct streetscape components and unifying elements, including directional and informational signage:
  - ↳ HENNEPIN-LYNDALE GATEWAY: Hennepin Avenue Methodist Church and Walker Art Center to Dunwoody College and the Basilica, characterized by spiritual and educational institutions, museum and green space focused on social interaction.
  - ↳ HENNEPIN-HARMON DISTRICT: the Basilica to 10th Street, characterized as an urban residential area with educational institutions and local retail.
  - ↳ HENNEPIN THEATRE DISTRICT: 10th Street to 5th Street, characterized by an active urban environment with historic theatres, entertainment, bright signage, sports venues and restaurants.
  - ↳ RIVERFRONT GATEWAY: 5th Street to Nicollet Island, characterized by the Central Library, residential, retail, civic institutions and green spaces focused on recreation.
- Direct the Public Works Department to work with the Alliance to explore ways the Alliance can be involved in public realm improvements.
- Direct appropriate City staff to cooperate in the *Track-It Hennepin* effort by providing data to address those indicators that are monitored by City staff.



EXECUTIVE SUITES 612 486-5705

JURCO



# First Steps: Hennepin Cultural District Alliance

*Coordination and management of short-term actions and long-term outcomes in the District begin with the creation of the District Alliance by the partners in Plan-It Hennepin (Hennepin Theatre Trust, Artspace, Walker Art Center, City of Minneapolis) as well as arts, culture, sports, education, neighborhood, restaurant and food vendor organizations involved in devising and implementing evolving plans.*

## NEW PARTNERSHIP

International research on establishing urban cultural and creative districts points to the enhanced benefits of “bottom up” planning and organizational management. Highly centralized or municipally run districts can fail to engage and empower a broad enough base of stakeholders to ensure longevity, continued stewardship and the broad distribution of benefits.

During the *Plan-It Hennepin* project, a wide mix of stakeholders worked together to find common ground where they could express their

concerns and ideas. This plan calls for building on those efforts and fostering ongoing stewardship among multiple stakeholders. This would be accomplished through a network participating in governance and partnerships to carry out short and long-term activities as well as other goals that may emerge through time and experience.

*The Cultural District Alliance will:*

- Foster active participation and leadership in the Alliance building a governance committee from across organizations and businesses in the District.
- House the Alliance and day-to-day management of the District initially with Hennepin Theatre Trust.
- Establish priority first-step initiatives and identify funding sources and partnerships to support, carry out and manage these programs and services.
- Develop positioning, a brand architecture and communications vehicles
- Create a joint promotional campaign to define and support the Cultural District.
- Secure funding necessary to implement and grow these new initiatives; a non-exhaustive list of potential funding partners to consider include:

- Partnership with Meet Minneapolis.
  - Kickstarter campaigns for art projects initiated by the District Alliance.
  - Private funding through Downtown businesses, individuals and foundations.
  - Parking surcharge for garages and lots within three blocks of the District.
  - Partnering with groups like Forecast Public Art, Artspace or Springboard for the Arts to provide mini-grants to artists.
  - Corporate sponsorships and foundation start-up support.
  - Billboard advertising fee or surcharge.
  - Partnering with the City public art program to identify optimal opportunities for permanent public artworks.
- Establish an active communications program serving stakeholders, the City, Downtown 2025 Implementation Committees and the broader public; maintain awareness and engagement among stakeholders to participate in District activities to advocate for policies that support public realm vibrancy and broad-based success of organizations and businesses in the District.
- Seek out local, state, national and international cultural district and creative placemaking networks to assist in establishing best practices and innovations.

*The Alliance will actively engage in the planning and design of public works projects impacting the area. Physical improvement or replacement of roadways, sidewalks, signage, public facilities, street trees, planters, furnishings, lighting and other amenities that occur present opportunities for involvement by the Alliance.*

#### DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Already underway are two parallel projects and opportunities to address design concerns along Hennepin Avenue: The Minneapolis Park Board and Walker Art Center began a process of redesigning the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and its relationship to its immediate surroundings. Simultaneously, City funds were allocated to reconstruct the Hennepin and Lyndale Avenue segments along the Sculpture Garden and Loring Park frontages. Collaboration and creative solutions to aesthetics and pedestrian crossings present an immediate opportunity for this portion of the District.

The I-94 underpass between the Basilica and Dunwoody College is a major barrier to pedestrians, with poor lighting, much concrete and fast-moving traffic, contributing to the perception that the area is unsafe. Short-term events, as well as permanent lighting and aesthetic improvements, can make a big difference.

*The cultural district Alliance will:*

- Devise long-term lighting and physical improvements to the I-94 underpass (See Appendix D, Public Art Site Considerations); devise temporary arts activities to enliven the I-94 underpass

- Examine with public works staff the current policies and practices for stakeholder and community engagement in the design and operations of public infrastructure, identify barriers that need to be addressed and discuss with the appropriate public entities.
- Identify opportunities for artist involvement in planning and installing public art.
- Involve planners and designers from Minneapolis Public Works, Hennepin County, Metro Transit, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minnesota Department of Transportation and the District Alliance to coordinate timetables for planning and design, identify and address budgetary challenges and target opportunities.
- Track ongoing scheduled capital improvements in the District and identify opportunities for partnering with the appropriate public entities on public realm upgrading while incorporating public art.
- In collaboration with the Downtown Council's 2025 Public Realm Committee, engage in more detailed streetscape planning to devise a package of designed amenities.



*Through Track-It Hennepin, the Hennepin Cultural District Alliance monitors, assesses, and reports key indicators of changes in the District in partnership with City departments, Metro Transit, Minneapolis Police Department, Downtown Improvement District (DID), arts and cultural organizations and others.*

#### PROGRESS TRACKING AND COMMUNICATION

Annually, *Track-It Hennepin* will compile relevant indicators related to long-term outcomes called for in this plan. By tracking these data sets over the long term, stakeholders can monitor progress and adjust strategies. *Track-It Hennepin* will increase accountability and motivate stakeholders to continually improve by regularly sharing evidence of impacts and challenges.

*Track-It Hennepin* coincides with burgeoning national interest in the development of creative placemaking indicator systems, such as efforts initiated by the National Endowment for the Arts and ArtPlace. The indicators in this plan improve on these efforts, because they reflect this plan's specific goals and geographic scope and make extensive use of rich local data sources.

Various departments within the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) and Metro Transit record and evaluate data relevant to the plan's desired outcomes. For example, in conjunction with its commercial corridor spatial analyses, CPED Research monitors change in business establishments, employment, local option sales tax and estimated market values. It has agreed to examine employment and business establishment

trends specifically for creative industries. The City of Minneapolis City Coordinator's office has also recently begun using WESTAF's Creative Vitality Index (CVI) data to better understand the characteristics of its cultural and creative economy; data on employment in select creative occupations and sales in select creative industries is now available at the zip code level. The DID conducts an annual survey of Downtown workers and has added questions to serve the needs of *Track-It Hennepin*. The Cultural Data Project, launched in 2012, will collect detailed attendance, event and financial data from participating arts and cultural nonprofit organizations. Other data is publicly available through the Census Bureau. *Track-it Hennepin* will also gather primary survey and interview data to augment secondary sources. However, to reduce administrative burdens and avoid survey fatigue, these will be undertaken on a periodic and not annual basis. Similarly, periodic pedestrian count studies may add value to the annual indicators.

*Track-It Hennepin will establish baseline data and partner with existing entities to monitor and communicate changes related to the following goals and indicators:*

- Attract people and improve experience and perceptions.
  - ↳ Change in population and number of housing units (Census, American Community Survey, City of Minneapolis' new permitted projects).
  - ↳ Change in the number of visits/multi-destination visits (DID survey to Downtown workers).
  - ↳ Attendance at cultural events (Cultural Data Project).
  - ↳ Change in bus boardings/deboardings and light rail boardings (Metro Transit).
  - ↳ Survey questions on whether people perceive the physical experience to be more

- vibrant, beautiful/inspiring, walkable, and safer (DID survey to downtown workers).
- Change in levels of proxy crimes (robbery and theft from motor vehicle) (MPD).
  - Crime in hotspots (MPD).
  - Change in permits for sidewalk cafés (Minneapolis Business Licensing).
- Foster an activity-rich and inclusive cultural environment.
- Change in permits for festival and parades (Minneapolis Public Works).
  - Numbers and kinds of cultural events (Cultural Data Project).
  - Survey/interview questions on organizations' perceptions diversity/inclusivity of offerings (self collected).
- Strengthen arts and cultural organizations and support artists.
- Attendance at cultural events (Cultural Data Project).
  - Survey/interview questions on boosts to individual organizations' visibility and exposure, boosts to patronage, opportunities and expanded capacity through collaboration or new and deeper partnerships (self collected).
  - Financial performance metrics for arts and cultural nonprofits (Cultural Data Project and/or Guidestar).
  - New, paid opportunities: public art commissions, coordination of pop-up programs and/or tours (track internally).
  - Support for artist housing and creative/cultural enterprises (track internally).
- Generate positive economic momentum.
- Change in "creative industry" business establishments and employment (CPED Research).
  - Change in local option sales tax (sales and use, liquor, lodging, restaurant and entertainment) (CPED Research).
  - Change in overall number of business establishments (CPED Research).
  - Change in real estate Estimated Market Value (CPED Research).
  - Change in "creative occupation" employment (WESTAF CVI).
  - Annual sales in select "creative industries" (WESTAF CVI).
- Monitor for unintended consequences and equitable revitalization.
- Survey/interview questions on arts organization's perceptions of space affordability, and whether benefits of cultural district participations outweigh costs (self-collected).
  - Red flags for gentrification-led displacement of low-income residents and people of color: change in race/ethnicity composition, change in share of low-income households (Census and American Community Survey).

The above indicators reflect the following evaluative criteria: relevance; data availability; frequency of data releases and lag-time; the degree of required technical skills or equipment to obtain, interpret, and communicate the indicator/equipment; cost, appropriate geographic scale; and accuracy and reliability. Appendix B details the known limitations of particular indicators, and presents data collection processes and available baseline data.

*Vacant storefronts and other under-used real estate are used for ongoing artist-led projects, including performances and seasonal displays. The Alliance works with artists, galleries, pop-up enterprises, promotional, educational and professional sports entities and builds partnerships with property owners, arts groups, arts schools and others to activate vacant spaces while celebrating and promoting local arts, culture, food, sports and other entertainment.*



#### “NO VACANCY” INITIATIVE

Storefront art or “pop-up” projects offer productive ways to fill empty storefronts with unique activities and experiences that benefit artists, property owners and, most of all, residents and visitors on Hennepin Avenue. Pop-up projects can take many forms. Some simply exhibit visual art in vacant windows. Others present more elaborate three-dimensional installations viewed from outside. Still others adapt spaces for temporary exhibits, hosting galleries with set hours or special events.

Some pop-up enterprises take over spaces at little cost, serving as a trial space or incubators. Bookshops, craft stores, cooperative galleries or other retail uses may take root and lease space after their pop-up time is exhausted. In other models, retail shops become artist workspaces where, in exchange for free space, artists agree to conduct “open studio” sessions for a set number of hours or to conduct public or youth workshops. Another type of storefront activation may include reduced rent for educational institutions to conduct regular classes.

These may include traditional instruction or studio space, including dance or performing arts classes. Although this report recommends starting “No Vacancy” on Hennepin Avenue, it can and should be a part of the Downtown experience throughout the District. While the general goal will be to find permanent uses to fill vacant storefronts, it may be determined that one or two spaces should be permanently used to accommodate short-term uses and activities that bring vitality and change to the District.

#### *Short-term “No Vacancy” activities:*

- Complete an inventory of vacant retail spaces, their ownership and condition, building on the work funded with a City Great Streets grant and then updating as needed.
- Develop model leases and artist agreements to pilot the “No Vacancy” Project in up to six sites.
- Address barriers that prevent property owners from engaging in these types of activities.

- Secure financial support.
- Develop program guidelines and procedures.
- Recruit local architects and contractors to assist with assessing and preparing spaces for use.
- Partner with local educational institutions and explore opportunities for a post-graduate and student-oriented gallery space.
- Conduct a call for proposals from artists and others to develop a roster of prospective art projects for available sites.
- Develop at least 10 leads for prospective District-complementary businesses or activities to activate underutilized spaces and work to match those with vacant spaces.
- Other possible roles: promote pop-up uses, provide necessary insurance, support incremental increase in utilities or operating costs.
- Activate storefronts using a variety of lights and digital signs.
- Inventory needs for classroom spaces, especially among arts and culture-related programs to link space available with fixed low-cost leases up to three years.

*Modeled after Walker Art Center's Open Field and other events that activate public space, an Open Street Project brings a burst of creative and cultural activity initiated by artists and other creative organizations to Hennepin Avenue. Beginning as an annual event, Open Street provides regular opportunities in temporary and ongoing spaces along Hennepin for people, events and tours.*

#### REGULAR SERIES OF EVENTS

Cities around the world have experienced great success with planned street events, First Friday art walks and participatory public activities like bicycle rides, recreational events and street fairs. Creative, cultural and sports organizations in the Hennepin Cultural District have enormous capacity to conduct robust public activities. Already, Historic Theatre tours and restaurant tours attract great interest. Testing small-scale events and building on successes will generate new ideas and help forge working relationships along Hennepin Avenue.

#### *Short-term Open Street Project activities:*

- Modeled on Walker Art Center Open Field, plan an annual Open Street event.
- Work with the growing number of District restaurants to create at least two events that highlight food and other arts and culture activities. Conduct a restaurant tour, possibly linked with a historic tour.

- Coordinate and support a cluster of events on Hennepin Avenue during the June 2014 Northern Spark Festival.
- Produce an event related to *War Horse* on Hennepin Avenue with equestrian groups and mounted police during the run of the Broadway touring performances, scheduled at the Orpheum Theatre in June 2013.



*The Alliance partners with Downtown civic, arts, culture, education and sports organizations and law enforcement, the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board and philanthropies to create opportunities of interest to young people in a safe, welcoming, supportive and inspiring environment.*

#### EXPAND YOUTH PROGRAMS

Young people frequent Hennepin Avenue as students, arts and sports enthusiasts, workers, homeless people, bus riders and curiosity-seekers. Hennepin supplies activity and excitement late into the evenings and sometimes generates trouble. Youth are among the District's greatest assets yet also among its greatest challenges. Juvenile crime was a factor on the Avenue as early as 1938, when the University of Minnesota's Sociological Research Facility cited it as the city's epicenter for juvenile delinquents. Among the four-dozen cultural organizations on Hennepin, there are nearly 20 youth and education programs. Youth-serving organizations, churches and schools in the District, together with major-league sports franchises, represent a potential powerhouse of constructive youth activities. Coordinating these considerable resources can substantially contribute to making Hennepin a destination for positive youth activity.

#### *Short-term youth program activities:*

- Inventory and convene youth-serving programs and organizations in the District to plan short-term activities and identify prospective collaborative projects.

➤ Open Field, a project of the Walker Art Center, hosts an outdoor concert.

Photo courtesy Walker Art Center.



- Seek philanthropic and business support for new and existing youth activities and for expanding successful collaborations.
- Explore options for dedicated space for prominent youth arts and culture activities in vacant or other under-utilized space.
- Work with Youth Coordinating Board and youth workers assigned to Hennepin Avenue to link youth to available services.



↑ Emerson School 5th graders explore historic maps with Ian Stade, Hennepin County Library.

Photo: Lucas Erickson.



↩ Youth working with Intermedia Arts document *Plan-It Hennepin*.

Photo: Mark Vanclave.

# Conclusion

*The heart of Downtown Minneapolis offers exceptional opportunities in arts, culture, entertainment, dining, shopping, sports, religion and recreation, not to mention a full range of residential options and places to work. Any urban center would be envious. Yet the core of the Downtown has many challenges.*

As Minneapolis' historic central artery and connection to the cultures of the world, Hennepin Avenue and its immediate environs have suffered decades of neglect. Since the 1990s, they have begun to see the most significant investments in a century in transportation infrastructure, parks, cultural and sports facilities, residential dwellings and dining and entertainment businesses. This follows two decades of extraordinary growth in Downtown office buildings and employment.

Like many cities, Minneapolis is now experiencing significant changes in lifestyles and people — residential patterns, shopping, work, recreation, cultural and educational choices and age and ethnic diversity. It is becoming a global city. The City of Minneapolis and Downtown

sits at a critical moment of transition and opportunity.

This plan sets the stage for the next several decades. It responds to and anticipates these changes calling for coordination and investment in strategic areas to assure the city is successful as a hub of culture, education, economic opportunity, tourism and providing a better life for all. To succeed, this requires political will and leadership to acknowledge the importance of this moment, to respond accordingly and to continue to work together. This plan rises from the active involvement of more than 1,500 residents and leaders, many youth among them, who represent diverse points of view but all with a stake in the future of the Hennepin Cultural District and Downtown Minneapolis.

This is not a plan with a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Success requires many “doers” and the ongoing engagement of the public and the many private, nonprofit and public sector players. The already robust set of actors on the Downtown stage must become a high-functioning ensemble. This plan provides the beginnings of a script but the ability of the actors to come together to perform it, and to improvise as conditions warrant, is far more critical.

Through the one-year *Plan-It Hennepin* process, many players contributed scenes to the play. The curtain has already gone up. In fact, it was never down. The show goes on.

↗  
Speakers in one of a series of public programs discuss the users and uses of public space. Left to right, Don Mitchell, Seitu Jones, Chancee Martorell.

→  
Choreographer, Leah Nelson performs a walk along the model of Hennepin Avenue at a planning workshop.





NO...to...YES!

5TH

NO...to...YES!

NO...to...YES!

NO...to...YES!  
16. Transform 5th & Hennepin

# The Plan-It Hennepin Process

*The diverse mix of people who stake a claim to Hennepin Avenue is both an asset and a challenge. In traditional neighborhood planning, key constituencies can often be represented in a single room. This Downtown portion of Hennepin Avenue is different.*

While described as the most “big city” place in the upper Midwest, it belongs to many and varied people, including millions of annual visitors who come for theatre, music, dance, movies, comedy and sports. In addition to serving as a “lobby” for these activities, Hennepin Avenue also functions as a campus for eight educational institutions, including Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Dunwoody College, Art Institutes International and FAIR School, the students of which represent more than 1.5 million individual visits to the Avenue each year.

The Avenue also belongs to its residents, the 160,000 employees who work Downtown and business and property owners. As a transit route, it serves those on their way to other parts of the city and workers who occupy the street and adjacent buildings by day. Restaurant, bar, nightclub and entertainment patrons occupy

the District by night. Along the Avenue, homeless people seek active places to safely spend time or simply to blend in. Young adults seeking the excitement of city life consider the Avenue their stomping ground. Hundreds of thousands of participants take over the street for annual celebrations, including the Aquatennial and Gay Pride parades.

The complex and multi-faceted stakeholder group “owning” Hennepin Avenue required *Plan-It Hennepin* to adopt the flexible and multi-layered planning process advocated in creative placemaking. This process was designed to model values identified as important for a successful future; to be inclusive, collaborative and creative; and to engage a wide mix of people through a variety of participatory activities.

*Plan-It Hennepin* took the creative part of creative placemaking to heart. Planning strategies included social media, public meetings of stakeholders, interactive workshops and a series of informative talks at various locations. Artists were involved at all levels and worked with urban designers to facilitate an active and creative in-person public participation process.

Young people from elementary and high schools, as well as from programs for homeless teens, arts education and leadership development, contributed in many ways, documenting life on Hennepin Avenue and envisioning its future. These included Emerson Elementary, FAIR School-Downtown, KBEM-FM and North High School, Intermedia Arts, Kulture Klub

← Planning workshop activities included identifying locations that say “no” and describing ways to transform them to places that say “yes.” Miniature billboards are placed on the model of the Avenue.  
Photo: Mark Vanleave.

\*See Appendix C for the complete set of Talk-It Hennepin Event Records

Collaborative, Say Word! Youth Poetry Festival and Walker Art Center Teen Council. Some youth wrote, performed and recorded a song. Some produced radio and video interviews or took photographs. Some wrote and performed poetry. Still others studied urban design and created models. All toured the Avenue and some of its institutions and came up with ideas for what they want it to be. Arts, culture and education organizations convened to explore visions and opportunities for collaboration.

Forecast Public Art, a non-profit public art consulting agency with a 34-year history in the field of public art, provided site analysis and recommendations and collaborated with Clear Channel Outdoor to demonstrate creative uses for digital billboards on the Avenue.

The core of the planning process consisted of four Saturday public planning workshops, each preceded by a Thursday evening speaker. This *Talk-It Hennepin*\* series ran from March through June 2012, addressing history and values, vision, design and implementation. Speakers included local, national and international innovators in urban planning, design and placemaking, including Candy Chang, Charles Landry, Seitu Jones, Chancee Martorell and Don Mitchell. Additional gatherings hosted other leaders in urban design and cultural programming including Alexander Garvin, Leslie Koch and Gil Peñalosa. Each event provided new ideas and nuanced vocabularies for planners and participants. Workshops led by a team of local artists—Ta-coumba Aiken, Leah Nelson, Mankwe Ndosu and Harry Waters Jr.—employed creative techniques to access multiple ways of thinking, visioning and formulating ideas. With a team of urban designers and more than 100 stakeholder-participants, these workshops identified and built on collectively held values and assets and creatively addressed both physical and social challenges related to Hennepin Avenue.

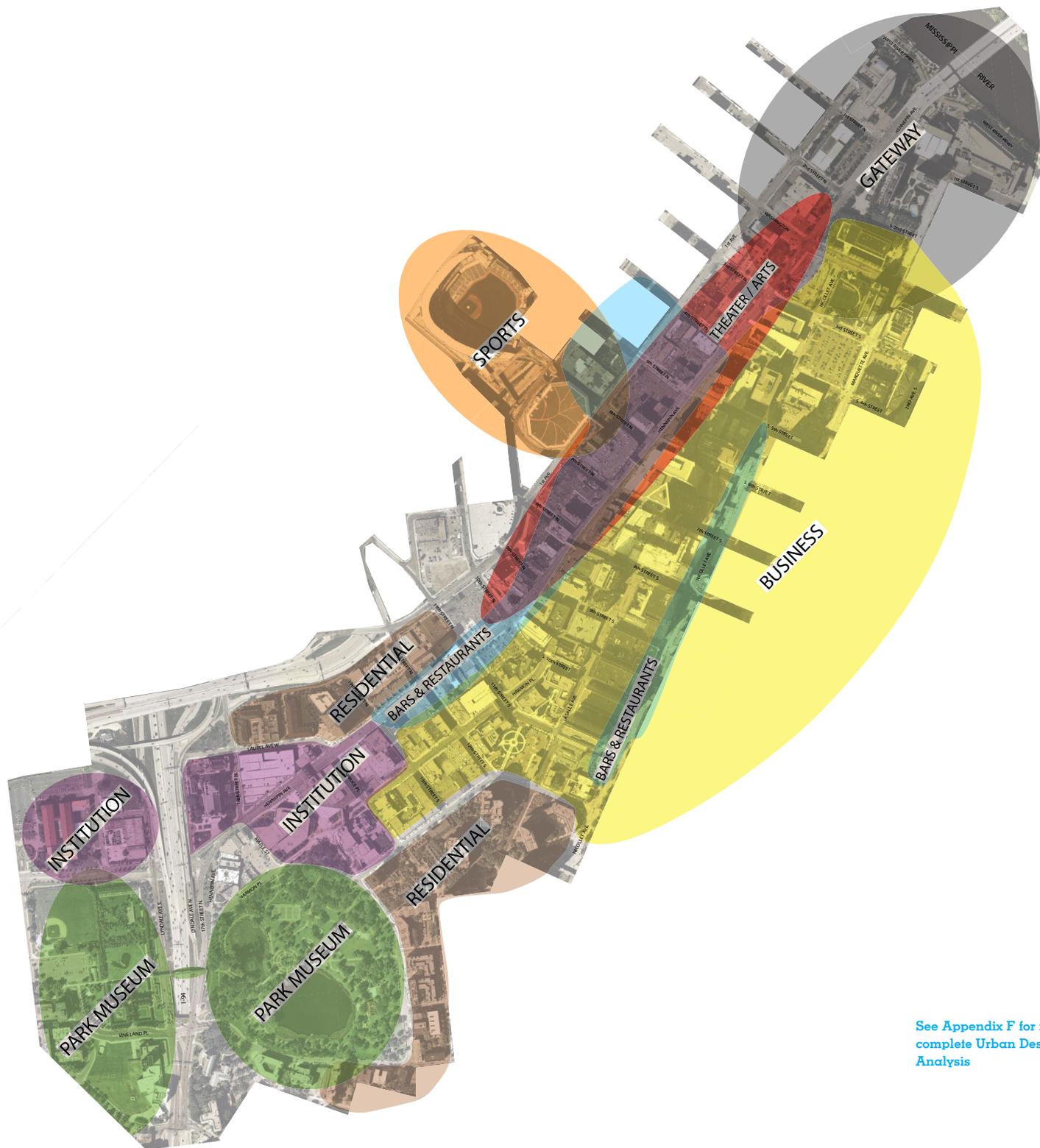
AECOM, a prominent architecture and design firm on Hennepin Avenue, provided considerable pro bono time through its team of landscape architects and designers led by Bob Close and including Josh Bergeron, Jillian Mans and Nicholas Ramirez. They analyzed

urban conditions and made recommendations in the artist-led public process. Metris Arts Consulting, led by Anne Gadwa Nicodemus, shadowed the planning process, led focus groups and established partnerships to devise a set of measures, indicators and base-line data to track on-going progress in the District.

A 42-foot-long, 1/20th scale model of Hennepin Avenue built by AECOM was displayed in several public spaces with a comment box that collected hundreds of responses. It was used in public workshops as a tool for generating ideas and targeting areas for improvement. A *Plan-It Hennepin* Facebook page gathered and shared ideas and commentary. A content-rich webpage provided access to dozens of planning documents and meeting notes, video interviews, hundreds of new and historic photographs and links to a multitude of news articles covering the process and the concept of creative placemaking. The public also gave feedback through the webpage and Facebook. In total, at least 1,500 people participated.

A steering committee made up of artists, business and public sector leaders, planners and urban designers met numerous times to explore ideas and review input from other groups. An advisory group of prominent business owners, philanthropists and civic leaders reviewed plans and made recommendations. Additionally, a group of active downtown private sector developers provided ideas, analysis and advice. (See Acknowledgements) A team of City staff committed time and expertise that enabled this plan to better articulate its vision and actions.

Through this multi-layered process, *Plan-It Hennepin* arrived at a vision, a set of desired outcomes and a series of strategic steps for the future of Hennepin Avenue and the Hennepin Cultural District. This future continues to unfold and engage varied stakeholders as participants in the ongoing re-visioning and renewal of this vital urban corridor and district.



See Appendix F for the complete Urban Design Analysis



# Plan-It Hennepin Leadership Team and Contributors

Plan-It Hennepin was a one-year initiative to re-imagine Hennepin Avenue as a revitalized cultural district from the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden to the Mississippi River. The project was led by partners Hennepin Theatre Trust, Walker Art Center, Artspace and the City of Minneapolis and funded by a National Endowment for the Arts “Our Town” grant.

For additional information please see: [hennepintheatretrust.org/plan-it-hennepin](http://hennepintheatretrust.org/plan-it-hennepin).

←  
Planning workshop  
participants take a break  
during their exploration of  
the Avenue.

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MAYOR R.T. RYBAK	<i>City of Minneapolis</i>
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**Charles Landry Residency Partners**

PRESENTED BY	<i>Ethnic Culture Tourism Destinations Collaborative/CultureBrokers Foundation</i>
	<i>District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis</i>
	<i>Plan-It Hennepin/Hennepin Theatre Trust</i>
	<i>Twin Cities LISC</i>
	<i>Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation</i>
WITH SUPPORT FROM	<i>Central Corridor Funders Collaborative</i>
	<i>City of Saint Paul</i>
	<i>Cowles Center</i>
	<i>The McKnight Foundation</i>
	<i>Metropolitan Council</i>
	<i>Minneapolis Community and Technical College</i>
	<i>John S. and James L. Knight Foundation</i>
	<i>Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation</i>
	<i>The Saint Paul Foundation</i>

# Project Support

## Meeting and Event Space

ALATUS	<i>Bob Lux, Principal</i>
ART INSTITUTE INTERNATIONAL MINNESOTA	<i>Jeffrey S. Allen Ph.D., President</i>
BRAVE NEW WORKSHOP	<i>Erin Farmer, Managing Director</i>
BROOKFIELD OFFICE PROPERTIES	<i>Megan McGough, Manager, Marketing</i>
CITIZENS FOR A LORING PARK COMMUNITY	<i>Jana Metge</i>
CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS	<i>R.T. Rybak, Mayor</i>
COWLES CENTER	<i>Lynn A. Von Eschen, Executive Director</i>
DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION	<i>Christie Rock</i>
ELLIOT PARK NEIGHBORHOOD, INC.	<i>David Fields</i>
FAIR SCHOOL DOWNTOWN	<i>Mike Elston, Director, Partnerships</i>
GRAVES 601 HOTEL	
HENNEPIN THEATRE TRUST	<i>Tom Hoch, CEO</i>
IDS CENTER CRYSTAL COURT	<i>Nicolle Toth, Concierge</i>
LE MÉRIDIAN CHAMBERS HOTEL	<i>Ralph Burnet</i>
MINNEAPOLIS CENTRAL LIBRARY	<i>Betsy Williams, Coordinating Librarian</i>
MINNEAPOLIS COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE	<i>Greg Mellas, Service Learning Coordinator</i>
NORTH LOOP NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION	<i>David Frank</i>
WALKER ART CENTER	<i>Olga Viso, Executive Director</i>

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→  
 Plan-It Hennepin participants explore design challenges on Hennepin Avenue (top).  
 Photo: Mark Vancleave.  
 Poet performs at the Say Word! Youth Poetry Festival at the New Century Theatre as part of the exploration of stories of the Avenue (bottom).  
 Photo: Nikki Tundel, courtesy MPR.



