

STUDY AREA - OPPORTUNITY DISTRICTS

While the Midtown Greenway has already contributed to strengthening Minneapolis's bike network, there is dramatic opportunity to further expand the trail's impact and enhance accessibility across the Twin Cities.

Four Opportunity Districts have been identified by the Midtown Greenway Coalition where strong potential exists for development and extension of the bikeway network in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The proposed Saint Paul Greenway was split into two segments for the purposes of this study. Segment 1 follows the existing rail line from the Mississippi River to Cleveland Avenue. Segment 2 extends to Ayd Mill Road. This segment would connect the newly opened Ayd Mill Trail with the proposed Saint Paul Greenway and the rest of the existing bike network. Two Opportunity Districts in Minneapolis were also included in the analysis. The Min-Hi Line is a proposed link between the existing Greenway to Minnehaha Falls. The Prospect Park Spur would connect the Saint Paul Greenway to the "missing link" of the Grand Rounds Byway System. ("Fig. 4: Opportunity District Overview and Existing Bike Network, Minneapolis and Saint Paul").

FOUR OPPORTUNITY DISTRICTS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED BY THE MIDTOWN GREENWAY COALITION WHERE STRONG POTENTIAL EXISTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EXTENSION OF THE BIKWAY NETWORK IN MINNEAPOLIS AND SAINT PAUL.



Fig. 4: Opportunity District Overview & Existing Bike Network, Minneapolis & Saint Paul

OVERVIEW OF OPPORTUNITY DISTRICTS

GREENWAY SEGMENT 1
→ located in Saint Paul - follows the existing rail line from the Mississippi River to Cleveland Avenue

GREENWAY SEGMENT 2
→ located in Saint Paul - extends to Ayd Mill Road from Greenway Segment 1

MIN-HI LINE
→ proposed link between the existing Greenway to Minnehaha Falls

PROSPECT PARK SPUR
→ would serve as an at-grade connection between the Saint Paul Greenway and the 'missing link' of the Grand Rounds Byway System near the University of Minnesota, in addition to the extensive bike network of Southeast and Northeast Minneapolis

OPPORTUNITY DISTRICTS OVERVIEW & EXISTING BIKE NETWORK, MINNEAPOLIS & SAINT PAUL

- Midtown Greenway
- Proposed Extension
- Ayd Mill Trail (Part of Proposed STP Greenway)
- Existing Off-Street Route
- Existing On-Street Route

Source: Metro Park and Trail Data Collaborative, 2020

BENEFITS OF EXTENDING THE MIDTOWN GREENWAY EQUITY BENEFITS

The Midtown Greenway travels through diverse neighborhoods with varying levels of household income. The Opportunity Districts represent a series of potential network expansions that will connect residents – including those with lower incomes or less access to cars – to regional jobs and amenities.

Likewise, trails and greenways create healthy recreation and transportation opportunities by providing people of all ages with attractive, safe, and accessible places to bike, walk, hike, jog, skate or ski. In doing so, they make it easier for people to engage in physical activity. With the increase in health-focused initiatives, and more multi-use trails being constructed than ever before, there is evidence showing the positive impact that trails like the Midtown Greenway have on public health.

It is well-documented that people in low-income communities and communities of color suffer disproportionately from the impacts of physical inactivity. Recent research has identified some key factors that negatively influence a community's level of physical activity: higher rates of crime, lack of access to public parks and play areas, and poor bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Expansion of the Midtown Greenway is expected to not only improve connectivity between Minneapolis and Saint Paul but to provide better access to homes, schools, and jobs for everyone while promoting healthier lifestyles for Greenway users.



Fig. 8: Extending the Midtown Greenway would facilitate and encourage physical activity. Source: American Trails

OVERVIEW OF EQUITY BENEFITS

- Deliver **low-cost transportation** options for residents to access destinations for work, education and training, or leisure activities
- By adding **bikeway extensions** in the corridors identified as Opportunity Districts, the rail lines that for decades or longer have often divided communities on the basis of race, ethnicity and financial wealth, can instead bring those neighborhoods together.
- Facilitate and encourage **physical activity**
- Improve **psychological health**
- Improve **air and water quality**
- Improve **social health** of corridor communities
- Reduce** frequency of automobile **crashes with pedestrians and cyclists**
- Improve access to **healthy foods** in the corridor

THE EXPANSION OF THE GREENWAY NETWORK WILL DELIVER **MORE ACCESSIBILITY** TO MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING LOW HOUSEHOLD INCOME, BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ATTAINMENT, LOWER LEVELS OF ACCESS TO CAR TRANSPORTATION, AND OTHER HURDLES.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS
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MIDTOWN GREENWAY EXTENSION IMPACT STUDY

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MIDTOWN GREENWAY EXTENSION IMPACT STUDY

JULY 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Midtown Greenway is a 5.7-mile bike and pedestrian trail located in a former commercial railway trench. The trail runs east and west through the City of Minneapolis, largely uninterrupted by automobile traffic. The Midtown Greenway originally opened in 2000 and is now considered one of the most vital features of the city's acclaimed bicycle network. It is estimated that an average of 5,000 people use the trail each day and over one million bike trips are made each year.

The Midtown Greenway Coalition formed in the late 1980's and became a non-profit organization in 1995. The Coalition has worked with Hennepin County and other public agencies throughout the planning and construction process and engages with local residents, businesses, and private developers to ensure that the Greenway is protected and continually improved.

The Midtown Greenway has come to be known as a "bicycle highway" as it includes two-way bike and pedestrian paths. In the past 20 years, the creation of the Greenway has led to an explosion of residential and commercial development adjacent to the corridor. With higher property values along the Greenway and the continuing expansion of bicycle infrastructure, the Greenway illustrates the role that bicycle trails can play in revitalizing once underused corridors. In addition to the health and economic benefits the Greenway brings to the city, it also serves ethnically diverse neighborhoods



ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE MIDTOWN GREENWAY

Fig. 1: At least 2,500 new housing units have been added within 500 feet of the Midtown Greenway since its opening, including the developments shown in the images above.

along the corridor and provides alternative modes of transportation for families that lack the resources to own an automobile. Despite the Greenway's success, expansion across the river to the east has yet to be realized. This extension would establish regional connection points to the east including to the University of Minnesota, Allianz Field, and downtown Saint Paul.

In 2006, Hennepin County funded a study that evaluated the feasibility and associated costs of extending the Midtown Greenway across the Mississippi River. The focus was on using the existing railroad bridge (Short Line Bridge) over the river, as well as options for building new bridges nearby. The County ultimately decided not to pursue the project due to the largely unknown condition of the existing Short Line Bridge and community objections to building a new bridge.

In 2019, the Midtown Greenway Coalition funded another study which focused exclusively on the projected costs of repairing and rehabbing the Short Line Bridge for bicycle and pedestrian use. This study determined the bridge could be safely rehabbed (or rebuilt), and presented various options and associated costs for placing a bike-ped trail on the bridge. Both the 2006 and 2019 studies suggest that there are feasible solutions to crossing the river and establishing a more regionally significant trail.



SHORT LINE BRIDGE

Fig. 2: Short Line Bridge - Identified as the most viable Greenway extension across the Mississippi River



EXTENDING THE MIDTOWN GREENWAY TRAIL OVER THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND THROUGH SAINT PAUL WOULD CREATE THE BEST INTER-CITY BICYCLE HIGHWAY IN THE NATION.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The potential for the Midtown Greenway to be a driver of monetary and social value in the surrounding community has been broadly recognized since its inception. Despite being anecdotally acknowledged, less emphasis has been placed on the quantification of this value until now.

While not all new development can be directly tied to the Greenway, in the 20 years since its opening, a strong mix of new multifamily, commercial, and other development has emerged in the areas directly adjacent to and nearby the trail. During this time, the total property value within 500 feet of the greenway increased by \$1.8 billion (see “Fig. 5: New structures built within half-mile of Midtown Greenway, 2000-2020”). Hundreds of millions of dollars have also been spent in building permitting fees with at least 2,500 new housing units added within 500 feet of the Greenway since its opening. This finding suggests that proximity to the Greenway is viewed as a desirable amenity by both developers and residents.

The Greenway includes some of the most heavily-trafficked cycling points in the city due to its extent and convenience. Even though ridership in Saint Paul is notably lower than in Minneapolis due to a less robust bike network, bike count patterns reveal an especially high volume of traffic passing between the two cities. The locations with the highest average number of cyclists (between 2007-2009) were the Midtown Greenway terminus and West River Parkway in Minneapolis and the Marshall Avenue Bridge in Saint Paul. This data reveals a strong flow of bike traffic between the two cities with the Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge as the main connection (“Fig. 3: Bike Score - Minneapolis & Saint Paul”).

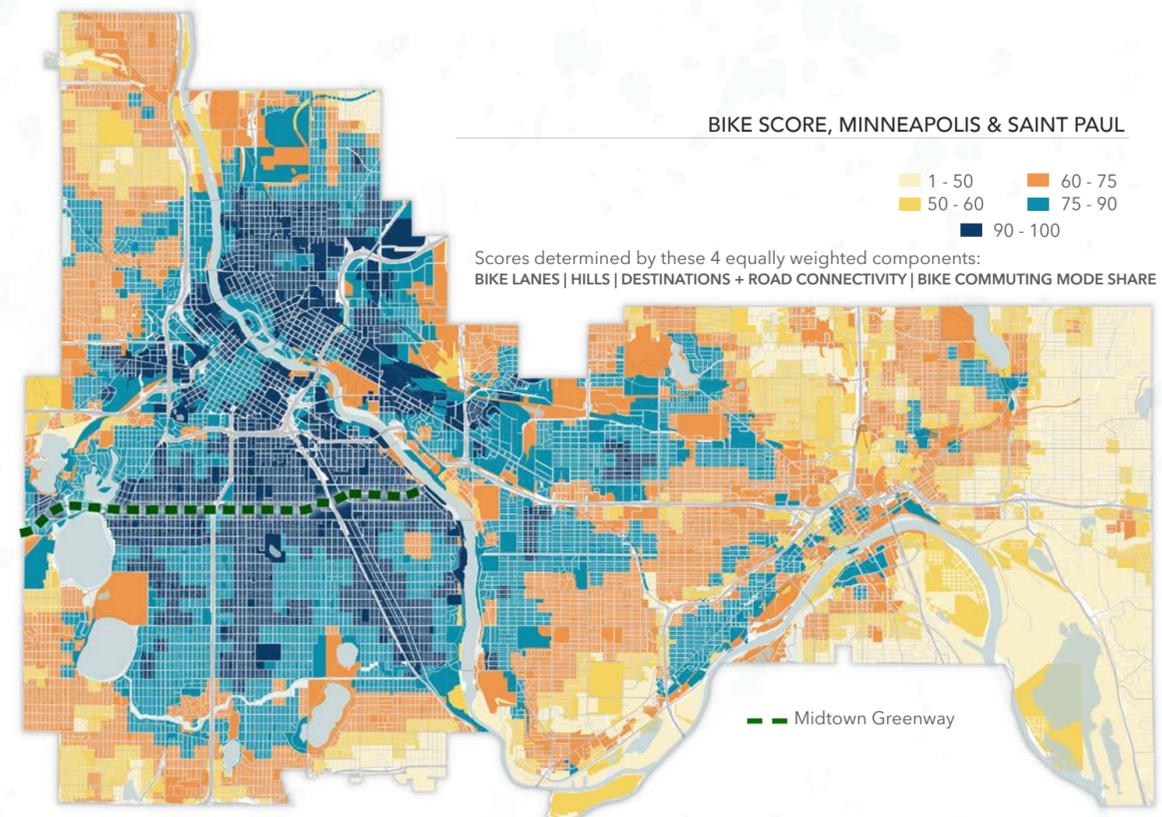


Fig. 3: Bike Score - Minneapolis & Saint Paul

Source: Walk Score, 2020

THE MIDTOWN GREENWAY INCLUDES SOME OF THE MOST HEAVILY-TRAFFICKED CYCLING POINTS IN MINNEAPOLIS. RIDERSHIP IS NOTABLY LOWER IN SAINT PAUL, WHOSE BIKE NETWORK IS LESS ROBUST THAN MINNEAPOLIS'S. HOWEVER, BIKE COUNT PATTERNS REVEAL AN ESPECIALLY HIGH VOLUME OF TRAFFIC PASSING BETWEEN THE TWO CITIES.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE MIDTOWN GREENWAY

For the twenty-year period since the bikeway's development began the Midtown Greenway has acted as the spine for dramatic redevelopment and reuse across south Minneapolis (“Fig. 6: New structures built within half-mile of Midtown Greenway, 2000-2020”). During this period, the property located within 500 feet of the Greenway increased in value by \$1.8 billion, adjusted for inflation and expressed in today's dollars. As a result of this value, an additional \$30.37 million in property taxes was collected in 2020. These economic and tax base benefits are reflected in a larger geography surrounding the Greenway. Since 2000, the value of property within a wider band extending one mile north and south of the

Greenway has increased by \$7.875 billion (“Fig. 5: Change in Estimated Market Value, 2000-2020”). From this additional value, property taxes paid in 2020 increased by \$113.28 million.

This report does not claim that all of the new construction and investment, and increased value of existing property, is attributable to the Midtown Greenway alone. However, the scale of growth in the areas surrounding the Greenway has been supported by the increased bike accessibility, the demonstrated demand for residents to rent and own homes nearby, and response of the businesses offering amenities to those residents.

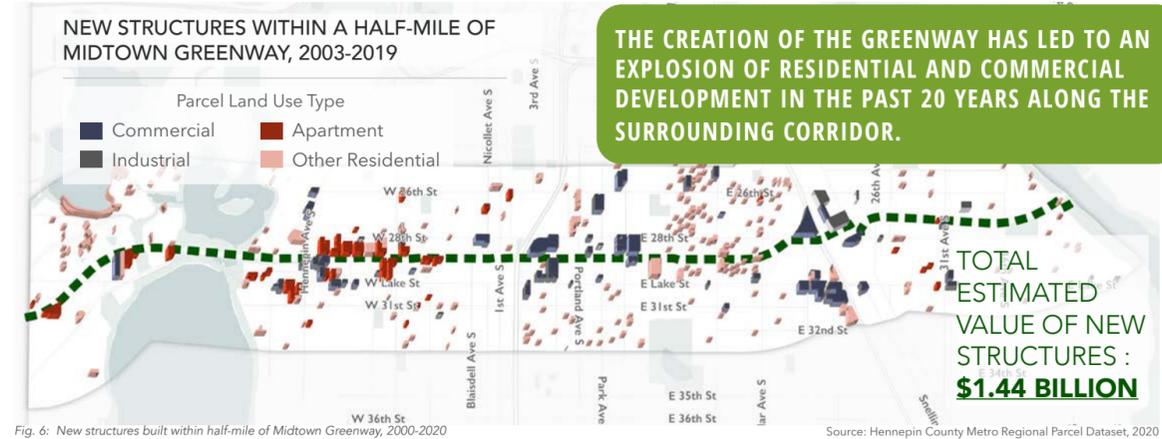


Fig. 6: New structures built within half-mile of Midtown Greenway, 2000-2020

Source: Hennepin County Metro Regional Parcel Dataset, 2020



Fig. 5: Change in Estimated Market Value, 2000-2020

*2000 values have been adjusted to reflect US Bureau of Labor Statistics 20-year inflation rate of 46.53%
Parcel data source: Hennepin County Resident and Real Estate Services

BENEFITS OF EXTENDING THE MIDTOWN GREENWAY

Over the last 20 years, the Midtown Greenway has developed into a critical piece of infrastructure within Minneapolis and has become the spine of the regional bikeway transportation network. The Greenway has not only spurred and anchored substantial economic growth – it has made this growth more accessible to a variety of residents by connecting to destinations for work, education, training, and leisure. Extending the Greenway into multiple well suited corridors and linking to Ayd Mill Trail offers a rich opportunity to generate more efficient use of land, more economic activity, and more equitable access to this community asset.

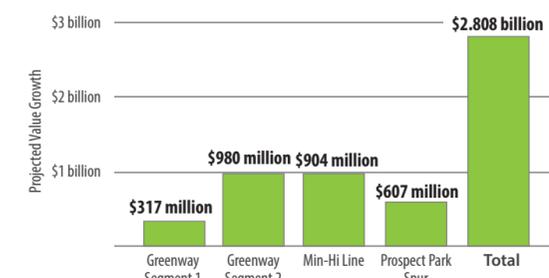
ECONOMIC & TAX BASE BENEFITS

When applied to the Opportunity Districts, the experience of the Midtown Greenway can help highlight potential for economic and tax base benefits associated with bikeway proximity. In addition to strengthening accessibility, dynamics surrounding the Midtown Greenway underscore how bikeways can support the addition of value to nearby properties.

With modest investment required in new infrastructure, parcels in each of the Opportunity Districts, including currently vacant or underused spaces, can become places for housing, job creation, and park use. This added capacity spreads levies across a wider base while increasing total assessed property taxes. This approach supports the cities, counties and school districts that rely upon those levies.

The increase in estimated market value for each of the Opportunity Districts and the total additional annual property taxes collected at today's tax rates are projected in “Fig. 7: Increase in Estimated Market Value & Projected Annual Tax Growth for Opportunity Districts”. Together, they total \$2.8 billion in estimated market value.

INCREASE IN ESTIMATED MARKET VALUE FOR OPPORTUNITY DISTRICTS



PROJECTED ANNUAL TAX GROWTH FOR OPPORTUNITY DISTRICTS

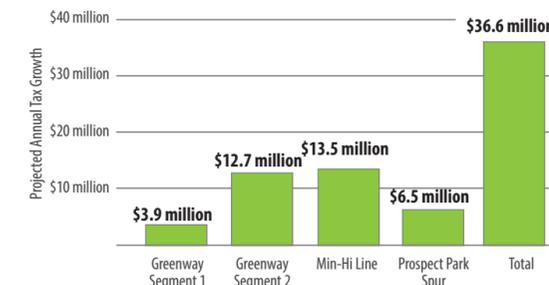
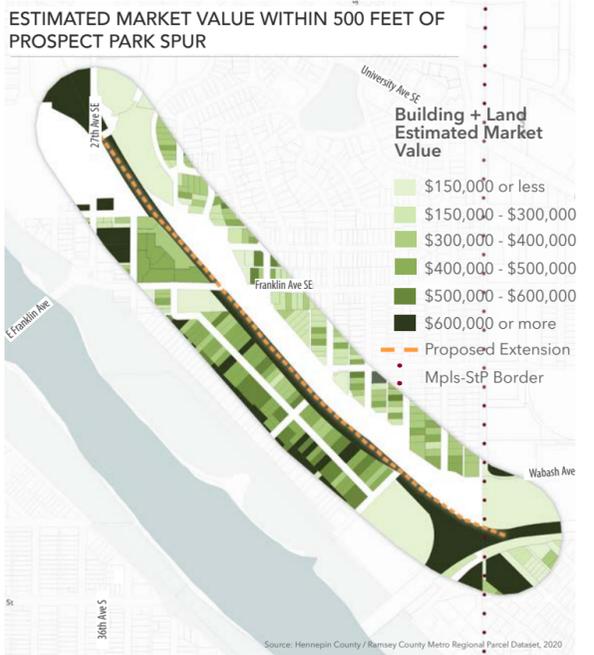


Fig. 7: Increase in Estimated Market Value & Projected Annual Tax Growth for Opportunity Districts

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC & TAX BASE BENEFITS

- **Stronger connections** among the region's commercial districts and neighborhoods;
- **Greater utilization of urban land** and existing infrastructure including the transit network, street network, and other utilities;
- Increased utilization translates to a **larger property tax base**, which reduces the overall burden of property tax levies; and
- Construction and maintenance of bikeways provide **ongoing jobs** benefits as well.



Source: Hennepin County / Ramsey County Metro Regional Parcel Dataset, 2020