

2. Land Use & Development Guidance

- 2.1 Existing Policy
- 2.2 Land Use & Development Intensity
- 2.3 Development Objectives
- 2.4 Design Themes
- 2.5 Development Opportunities

2.1 Existing Policy

The City’s land use and development policy is layered. High level guidance is established in its comprehensive plan, titled The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth (TMP). Small area plans such as this one add detail through maps and narrative. Zoning of property adds further specificity and puts regulatory teeth into land use guidance.

This chapter starts with an overview of existing land use and development policy that pertains to Lowry Avenue. It then offers new and refined guidance concerning land use and density, development objectives and design guidelines. It concludes w/ suggesting opportunity areas for new development.

The Comprehensive Plan

In the language of The Minneapolis Plan, Lowry Avenue is a Community Corridor, as are the three major north-south corridors that cross it. The areas where they intersect are all Neighborhood Commercial Nodes. The table below describes the land use and density that are suggested for these designated areas.

The community corridor designation is appropriate for Lowry in that it denotes a street that is an “important travel route for both neighborhood residents and through traffic.” The design and development of community corridors are encouraged to be “oriented towards the pedestrian experience and residential quality of life.”

Commercial development on Lowry Avenue is primarily clustered at the three existing Neighborhood Commercial Nodes, although there are scattered commercial businesses along the length of Lowry. At Lyndale Avenue most of the former commercial businesses were displaced by the street reconstruction.

The designations in The Minneapolis Plan provide general, broad brush guidance for how the area ought to develop over time. This plan, however, proposes a slight modification to this direction in that it proposes the elimination of the Neighborhood Commercial Node designation at the Lyndale/Lowry intersection. This is discussed in more detail below.

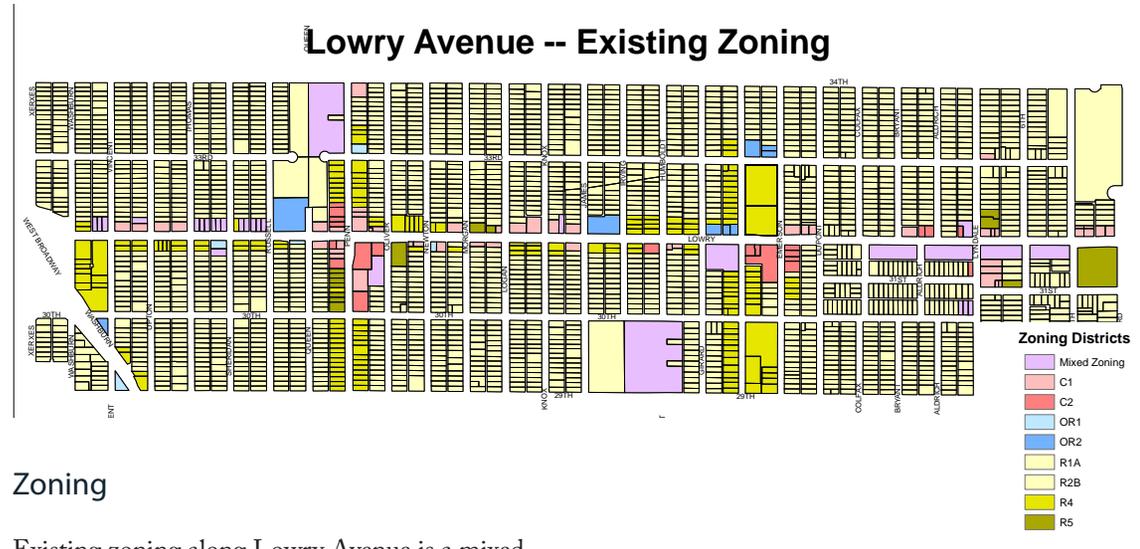
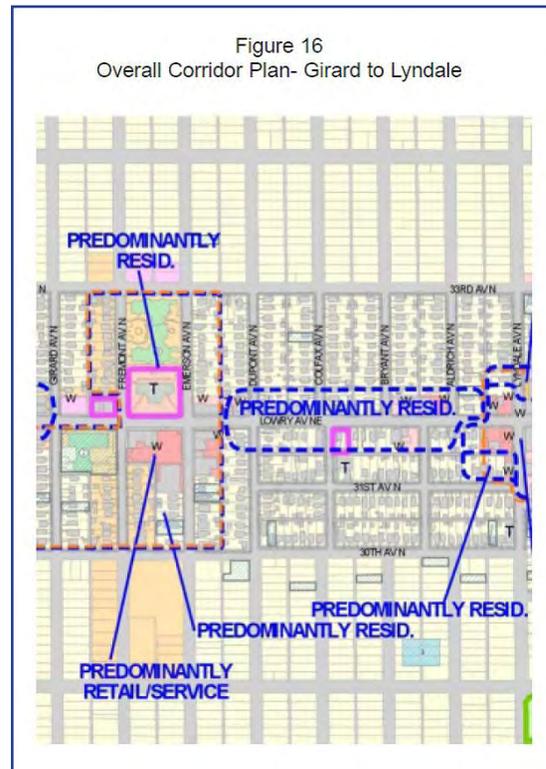
Land Use Feature	Feature Names	Land Use Description	Residential Density Range (est)
Community Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowry Avenue from the Mississippi River to Victory Memorial Drive • Lyndale Avenue from Plymouth Avenue to 49th Avenue • The Emerson/Fremont Avenue pair from Plymouth Avenue to 33rd Avenue • Penn Avenue from Cedar Lake Avenue to 44th Avenue 	Primarily residential with intermittent commercial uses clustered at intersections in nodes. Commercial uses, generally small-scale retail sales and services, serving the immediate neighborhood	Medium density (20-50 du/acre), transitioning to low density in surrounding areas
Neighborhood Commercial Node	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowry & Penn • Lowry & Emerson-Fremont • Lowry & Lyndale 	Generally provide retail or service uses on at least three corners of an intersection. Serve the surrounding neighborhood, with a limited number of businesses serving a larger area. Mix of uses occurs within and among structures	High density (50-120du/acre), transitioning down to medium density in surrounding areas

2.1 Existing Policy

continued

The Lowry Avenue Corridor Plan

The 2002 Lowry Avenue Corridor Plan is approved city policy. While less specific than usual for city small area plans, it provides some land use and development guidance for Lowry Avenue beyond what is found in the The Minneapolis Plan. The map below shows the general land use guidance for Lowry in the Lowry Avenue Corridor Plan. This document updates the land use guidance for Lowry Avenue and brings it to a parcel level of specificity.



Zoning

Existing zoning along Lowry Avenue is a mixed bag of residential and commercial zoning that supports various levels of development density. As would be expected, commercial zoning is particularly concentrated at the areas around Penn Avenue and the Emerson-Fremont area. But there are quite a few commercially zoned properties scattered along Lowry Avenue between these nodes.

Much of the residential zoning on Lowry Avenue would support medium density development, but there are also sections of Lowry where single family zoning is predominant.

The existing zoning is not entirely consistent with the land use guidance offered in the Lowry Avenue Corridor Plan. The land use guidance developed in this plan provides the policy foundation for making changes to zoning that are consistent with the land use and development objectives for Lowry Avenue.

The remainder of this chapter represents new and refined development guidance for Lowry Avenue, beginning with this section on land use and development intensity.

2.2 Land Use & Development Intensity

Land use guidance established by this plan is based on an understanding of the characteristics of the area, its assets and liabilities, and market conditions for different types of development. It is generally consistent with the historical guidance referenced above in that it sees Lowry as a mixed use corridor with residential development predominating. It supports a medium to higher density development pattern along the entire length of the corridor.

Locations for Commercial Development

It is important to be realistic about the extent of commercial development that can be supported along Lowry. Market research over the last few years shows that there is additional local buying power that can be captured for neighborhood-level shopping, and that Lowry Avenue can be positioned to attract some of that market. There

are also certain destination businesses that can serve as anchors to expand destination niche markets. However, even with improved conditions it seems doubtful that the extensive intermittent commercial development pattern along Lowry Avenue can be sustained over time. For this reason, a more focused pattern of well defined, attractive commercial spaces at intervals along Lowry has a greater likelihood of being a neighborhood asset over the long run.

Given that, this plan recommends ways to strengthen the retail mix and customer base for Lowry. It also proposes a reduced commercial footprint, suggesting that the retail node at Lowry & Lyndale not be reestablished after many businesses were demolished when Lowry Avenue was reconstructed.

The proposed future commercial development pattern, as illustrated in the diagram below, includes two robust neighborhood commercial nodes at Penn Avenue and Emerson-Fremont, and “micro-nodes” at three intermittent locations, including Lyndale Avenue. This concept would offer the convenience of providing some neighborhood-scale goods and services within a short walking distance of any residence near Lowry Avenue, while still being quite focused in comparison with the former commercial development pattern.

The intent is not to require the abandonment of existing commercial establishments which are outside of the identified commercial areas. Instead it guides the location of new commercial development, and assumes that the complexion of the street will change over time as properties are redeveloped.



Upton

Penn

Knox

Emerson-Fremont

Lyndale

2.2 Land Use & Development Intensity

continued

Future Land use

Below is the parcel specific Future Land Use map that will guide development over the life of this plan. It reflects the commercial development guidance as described above. “Mixed Use” signifies support for both commercial and residential development, either in separate buildings or in developments where housing is developed over ground floor commercial. Where possible, new developments are encouraged to include both residential and commercial.

Note that new medium-density housing development is supported along the length of Lowry Avenue between the commercial areas, as well as on the north-south corridors of Lyndale, Emerson-Fremont, and Penn.

Development Intensity

Additional and intensified development along Lowry Avenue is critical to its vitality. More homes and businesses increase the customer market for Lowry Avenue businesses, and make it easier to attract new businesses. They contribute to a safer street because criminal activity is deterred in areas that are well populated and active. Increased density can also support efforts to strengthen public transit service to the area.

The idea of intensifying residential development along Lowry Avenue has been explored a number of times with the residents of the area, including during development of:

Lowry Avenue -- Future Land Use



2.2 Land Use & Development Intensity

continued



Judging by the public engagement during development of this plan, it seems that most community members have grown comfortable with the idea of increased development intensity along Lowry Avenue, and realize that it is an important component of revitalization. A few residents felt that multi-story development on Lowry would be out of scale with their largely single-family neighborhood. Another concern focused on the possibility that much of the new housing development would be built for rental housing.

Recommended density in the study area is for medium density development along Lowry Avenue and the north-south community corridors, and higher density development at the three intersections where public transit service is strongest, at Penn and Lyndale Avenues, and the Emerson-Fremont pair. This concept is illustrated in the diagram below.



Adjustments to the scale of development, and design features that are compatible with neighboring properties, should be employed to make sensitive transitions between new development and adjacent single family neighborhoods.

- The Lowry Avenue Corridor Plan
- The Minneapolis Plan
- A Request for Proposals for the city-owned SE corner of the Penn-Lowry intersection
- A Mayor's Design Team scenario for the NW corner of the Penn-Lowry intersection



2.3 Development Objectives

Development objectives are simply an expression of the character of development that is desired in a location. Expressing these objectives in a document such as this makes it more likely that property improvements that occur over time, and by different parties, build toward community and city goals. This section includes development objectives that pertain to new development anywhere on Lowry, as well as objectives focused on:

- Housing
- Open space, including urban agriculture
- Particular geographic areas of focus that have the potential to become more interesting, useful and attractive places—Lowry & Penn, Lowry & Emerson-Fremont, Lowry & Lyndale

Developers and property owners should review these objectives as they design property improvements on Lowry.

General Development Objectives

New development in economically challenged neighborhoods must place a high priority on development quality. In order to be an enduring community asset it must use high quality, long-lasting materials. It must project character and attractiveness. And it must be sensitive to its context. The following general development objectives should characterize new development along Lowry Avenue.

- **Mixed Use.** New development in commercial areas are encouraged to be mixed use development, with residential dwelling units over ground floor commercial.

- **Density.** All new development on Lowry should be two or more stories.
- **Articulated Facades.** Buildings should have well articulated facades that break up massing.



- **Design Detail.** Varied materials and interesting and ample design details should be employed in building facades to create visual interest.



- **Entrances.** Buildings should direct prominent primary entrances toward the public sidewalk. They should front on Lowry when possible, with primary entrances of buildings onto the Lowry Avenue sidewalk.

- **Windows.** Buildings should utilize lots of window area to increase visibility on the public realm.
- **Transitions.** Careful attention should be given to making good transitions between new development on Lowry and single family neighborhood homes. Building scale adjustments, and design elements should be utilized to make this transition and improve compatibility between new and existing development.



- **Open Space.** Employ landscaping, appropriate setbacks, public spaces and open areas in the design of new developments to maintain a sense of intermittent light and space as Lowry development progresses.
- **Design Elements.** To contribute to a Lowry look, new development should, to the extent possible, incorporate the design themes identified in Section 2.4.

2.3 Development Objectives

continued

Housing Objectives

Housing objectives are discussed in Chapter 4.

Greening/Open Spaces Objectives

The Lowry Avenue neighborhoods are built in a largely single family development pattern, and that heritage is embraced as an important aspect of community identity. While medium and higher density development belongs on Lowry Avenue, its visual impact should be mitigated through the use of landscaping and open space. The following menu of green space strategies can beautify Lowry Avenue and strengthen community compatibility.

- **Connections to Existing Parks.** The northwest corner of Lowry & Penn is very close to Cleveland Park, and represents a fabulous opportunity to create a visible gateway connection to the park from the Lowry & Penn retail node. Green space connections are recommended along Humboldt Avenue to Jordan Park and Folwell Park, and along 4th Street between Farview Park and Cityview School. The important connections to the parkways at the west, and the Mississippi River at the east, should also be highlighted utilizing gateway treatments and design continuity.



- **Landscaped Medians.** Enhanced landscaping in center medians near Lowry & Lyndale could be a powerful gateway element. It requires the identification of a party to take ownership over ongoing maintenance.



- **Transit Stations/Public Plazas.** Given the frequency of bus service on Penn Avenue, and the Emerson-Fremont corridor, as well as the presence of underutilized land, those intersections are good candidates for construction of an enhanced transit station facility. Other new commercial developments should consider creating a public plaza or outdoor seating.
- **Open Space in New Development.** Outdoor community space or landscaped areas that are visible from Lowry Avenue are encouraged in new housing developments. The cost of this space can be offset by a reduction of the newly instituted park dedication fee.
- **Location-specific Landscaping Opportunities.** Large setbacks and vacant land make it possible for property owners to collaboratively create a unique landscaped area at Emerson-Fremont, utilizing three of the corners at Lowry & Fremont, and two corners at Lowry & Emerson.

Five blocks of publicly owned Lowry frontage between I-94 and Colfax Avenue allow for an intentionally landscaped gateway to North Mpls.

- **Setbacks.** Residential setback standards can be developed that support high quality landscaping between buildings and the public sidewalk while still supporting an urban housing sensibility. Landscaping that screens surface parking lots is another opportunity for greening the public edge.
- **Boulevard Trees.** The boulevard tree pattern along the north-south cross streets can be intentionally continued all the way to Lowry Avenue. New development may present opportunities to plant additional trees along Glenwood as well.



- **Specific Plants.** The selection of particular plant varieties is encouraged as a contributor to a Lowry Avenue look. Once selected, property owners from one end of Lowry to the other should be encouraged to find ways to utilize them.

2.3 Development Objectives

continued

Lowry & Penn

Having over twice the commercially zoned land as the Emerson-Fremont business area, the goal of Lowry and Penn development is to create a vibrant community-serving mixed-use retail area—where north Minneapolis residents can do multiple tasks and activities such as shopping, eating, banking, and utilizing professional services.

Lowry & Penn Development Scenario



The following objectives should inform development of the Lowry & Penn area:

- **Business Development.** The mix of businesses that are national (international even) and local is healthy and desirable. Further expansion of the business mix is of highest importance at Lowry & Penn. Additional anchor businesses such as a drug store or bank would be suitable additions, as would any of a score of smaller scale businesses such as book store, bike shop or flower shop,

or neighborhood services such as restaurant, medical office, or tax accountant.



- **Fill Storefronts.** Filling vacant retail space next to North End Hardware, Aldi, and Family Dollar is a high priority near term objective.
- **Community Space.** Outdoor public space can play an important role in animating neighborhood retail areas. Opportunities should be sought to create a plaza, outdoor restaurant seating, etc.



Redevelopment of publicly owned land could include a public plaza.

2.3 Development Objectives

continued

- **Scale.** New development of some scale is needed to establish this area as a neighborhood retail center. The best opportunity for this is on the publicly owned land at the northwest quadrant of the intersection. Increasing the footprint of available land would offer additional flexibility and make it easier to achieve target densities.
- **Housing.** Housing development is desirable as a component of any new development in the Lowry Penn area. Because of the nearby park and school, the northwest quadrant of Lowry Penn is a particularly good location for new housing over retail.
- **Park Linkage.** The development of the northwest quadrant of Penn and Lowry should capitalize on the proximity of Cleveland Park by including a gateway and linkage to the park as a prominent part of the development.
- **Post Office.** The post office at Lowry & Queen is a wonderful community service that seems disconnected from the rest of the commercial node. Every effort should be made to improve its linkage to the retail node, particularly with the redevelopment of the northwest quadrant of Penn Lowry. Pedestrian access should also be improved at the Post Office site itself.
- **Liquor Store.** Bringing the liquor store closer to the Penn-Lowry corner would reduce the distance between anchor businesses at the intersection, and provide opportunity for a better buffer between the store and nearby housing.
- **3118 Oliver.** Establish a well-defined edge condition along the northern property line of this property. In the short term this could be accomplished through high quality landscaping between the parking lot and public sidewalk.



Parkside Living concept looking south from Cleveland Park.

Phasing

Near Term (1-3 years)

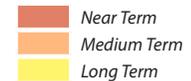
- A. Fill Vacancies
- B. Proposed Housing near Christ English Lutheran Church
- C. New Development Phase 1

Medium Term (3-7 years)

- D. New Development Phase 2
- E. Complete Penn-Lowry Crossing
- F. Create Parkside Living

Long Term (7+ years)

- F. New Development Phase 3
- H. Redevelop Surface Lot and Infill



The illustration above outlines the possible phasing of some of the important development opportunities in the Penn Lowry area.

Another development scenario for the Penn Lowry area was developed through a Great City Design Team exercise in 2007. The product of that exercise is reproduced in the Appendix of this plan.

2.3 Development Objectives

continued

Lowry & Emerson-Fremont

The Emerson-Fremont commercial node is the part of Lowry Avenue best served by the city's transit service. It is comprised of an assortment of

businesses, institutions, and residences of disparate sizes and conditions. North Regional Library and So Low Foods are anchors, complemented by three traditionally structured, small-scale storefront strips.

The concentration of storefront buildings is unique on Lowry. They represent good opportunities for

Lowry & Emerson-Fremont Development Scenario



small business entrepreneurs, and can provide a varied and interesting assortment of goods and services to nearby residents. However, the current condition and appearance of the commercial buildings are fair to poor, with the exception of the newly remodeled library building.

The grand Historic Bremer condominium building, with its well landscaped front lawn, dominates the landscape on the north side of Lowry.

Issues and opportunities abound in this district. Its identity can be enhanced by capitalizing on greening opportunities, exploring the prospect of an enhanced transit station, and restoring the quality and value of the small scale commercial buildings. Development objectives include the following:



2.3 Development Objectives

continued



- **Storefront Revitalization.** The storefront strips in their current condition and management are not attractive to the neighborhood customer base, and they dampen further investment in the area. Improving the condition of the buildings and the success of its business tenants should be of highest priority. Strategies for addressing challenged properties such as these are found in the economic development chapter. Facade improvements at So Low Foods would be helpful as well.

- **Transit Station.** The area is served by Metro Transit's Primary Transit Network, and there is space available at the Lowry-Emerson corner for the development of a distinctive station and plaza. Development of this asset should follow improvements to the storefront strip across Emerson Avenue.

- **Greening.** This district is unique in that so many of the corners of the intersections have space for high quality landscaping. With cooperation

between property owners the area can be marked by the presence of gardens, common plant materials, even new public spaces.

- **So Low Foods.** So Low Foods is the anchor retailer at this commercial node, and has developed a successful market niche. But it is difficult for the retail node as a whole to benefit from its success because the site configuration doesn't facilitate pedestrian connections between So Low and other businesses. Parking lot and sidewalk improvements could help to knit the district together. A more comprehensive approach would be to add a building to the site, or redevelop it completely, establishing the business in another location. Three examples are illustrated below. The red buildings represent new construction.



Buildings with good architectural value.



Coffee shop at the Fremont-Lowry intersection as part of the library, as an infill use, or to fill an existing vacancy.



So Low Alt 1: Addition to building and improved parking.

So Low Alt 2: Small outbuilding located on Lowry.



So Low Alt 3: Store rebuilt in the base of a larger mixed-use building.

2.3 Development Objectives

continued

Lowry & Lyndale

Lowry & Lyndale serves an important connecting function. It is a gateway to north Minneapolis, and links North Minneapolis to the Mississippi River—a connection that will grow in importance in the future as the riverfront parks and trails system is developed in accordance with the Above the Falls plan. The dramatic rise in elevation from

Lowry & Lyndale Development Scenario



the river to Lyndale Avenue will make gateway enhancements more effective.

Eco-village, a multifamily residential development will anchor the southeast quadrant of Lowry & Lyndale with two-plus blocks of new development. The county owns the next two blocks of Lowry Avenue frontage to the west, making four contiguous blocks of cleared land available for new development. Recent market analysis does not support extensive new commercial development at this node.

Facade improvements and adding public space could enhance traditional-style buildings on north side of Lowry.



Development objectives for Lowry & Lyndale include:

- **Housing Development.** Multifamily housing development should predominate on developable land on the south side of Lowry. It could include a small commercial presence at the Lyndale intersection. The design of new housing should be consistent with the general development objectives earlier in this section.
- **Site Acquisition.** Development of the county-owned blocks is constrained by the extremely shallow property depth. Acquisition of the south side of the blocks should be pursued to support higher quality development.
- **Gateway.** Artistic gateway elements should be developed to mark the entry to North Minneapolis from the east, and to capitalize on the proximity to the Mississippi River. With the cooperation of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority and Hennepin County, landscaping continuity could be created for the first five blocks of Lowry west of the freeway.
- **Eco-Village Brand.** Although still largely in a design phase, “Eco-village” has proved a successful brand in capturing community support and a grant from the Home Depot Foundation.

2.3 Development Objectives

continued

Hawthorne Eco-Village Plan courtesy of PPL
Dark colored buildings are new construction.



It may also be effective for attracting tenants to the new development. Sustainable design, and the Eco-Village brand, should be expanded to include all new development in the Lowry Lyndale vicinity.

- **Problem Properties.** Some commercial properties on the north side of Lowry are fine historic structures worthy of preservation, but are thought of as problem properties—attracting criminal activity and deterring honest customer

Phasing

Near Term (1-3 years)

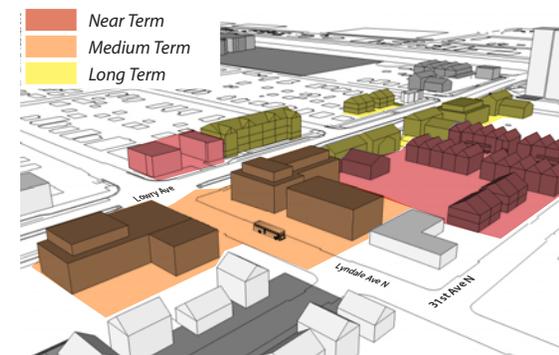
- A. Rehabilitate selected buildings, fill vacancies
- B. Create temporary or interim uses on vacant land and buildings (temporary use not shown)
- C. Complete the Eco-Village

Medium term (4-7 years)

- E. Develop infill housing on Lowry Avenue

Long Term (7+ years)

- F. Create permanent urban agriculture/education/commerce



traffic. Attending to these is a high priority in order to attract quality new development to the area.

- **Green Linkages.** Compatible with the sustainability theme, green pedestrianways along 4th Street would make and mark connections to Farview Park to the south, and City View School to the north. Consideration should be given to transforming east-west 31st Avenue into a green street to tie Eco-Village east of Lyndale in to the expanded Eco-Village blocks west of Lyndale.

2.3 Development Objectives

continued

Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture and community gardens are categories of open space that are receiving a lot of attention recently. They hold promise for improving the health and availability of food, for providing entrepreneurial opportunities for urban farmers, for building community through shared use of land. They can make use of land that is difficult to develop.

These land uses may have a role to play on Lowry Avenue because of the many properties that are vacant or in public ownership, and the likelihood that the reemergence of a robust development market is not likely in the short-term.

In Milwaukee, Growing Power (www.growingpower.org) employs people from nearby neighborhoods to grow food year-round. They raise fish in ground tanks, grow greens in 25,000 pots above them, and produce 1,000 trays of sprouts per week—all in 14 greenhouses on two acres in an urban neighborhood. In Madison, there

are plans for an urban school and curriculum based entirely on growing food in the city.

A potential urban agriculture site on Lowry is adjacent to City View School. This gateway site is across the street from the Eco-Village, another model for sustainable living along Lowry Avenue. An urban farm on this site might include:

- 5-tier greenhouse production
- Aquaponics
- Orchard
- Farmers market
- Employment
- Training
- School curriculum
- Youth involvement
- Community kitchen
- Community classrooms
- Volunteer opportunities
- Access for all to healthy food



Badger Rock Middle School in Madison, WI



Local food production in high tunnels and greenhouses, and distribution at farmer's markets



Potential Site for Urban Agriculture

2.4 Design Themes

Lowry Avenue has a characteristic look that can be built on and strengthened with careful attention to design. Inspiration can be drawn from existing visual characteristics such as small scale storefront buildings, the use of traditional building materials, and the presence of gardens and tree lined streets. Other design themes can be gleaned and patterned from new streetscape features such as the monuments, medians and signs, as well as the powerful and distinctive basket-handle design of the soon-to-be-built Lowry Avenue bridge.

The general and open space development objectives, detailed above, will assist in strengthening the visual character of Lowry. The following design themes, inspired by all of these sources, are suggested as themes to be incorporated



in creative ways along Lowry Avenue. This list can be maintained and enhanced over time by the Lowry Avenue business and residential communities.

- **Brickwork.** Brick can be used in new development, fence piers, etc, to echo both traditional architecture and the distinctive new Lowry Avenue piers.
- **Tree-lined Side Streets.** The boulevard tree pattern along the north-south cross streets can be intentionally continued all the way to Lowry Avenue.
- **Gardens.** The several gardens along Lowry should inspire others.
- **Specific Plant Materials.** The selection of particular plant varieties is encouraged as a contributor to a Lowry Avenue look. Once selected, property owners from one end of Lowry

to the other should be encouraged to find ways to utilize them.

- **The Bridge Outline.** The outline of the new bridge, an arch over a horizontal plane, constitutes a simple yet distinctive line combination that can find its way into building architecture, signage, Lowry logo, etc.



2.5 Development Opportunities

Development opportunity sites are properties that are likely to attract development interest in the future.

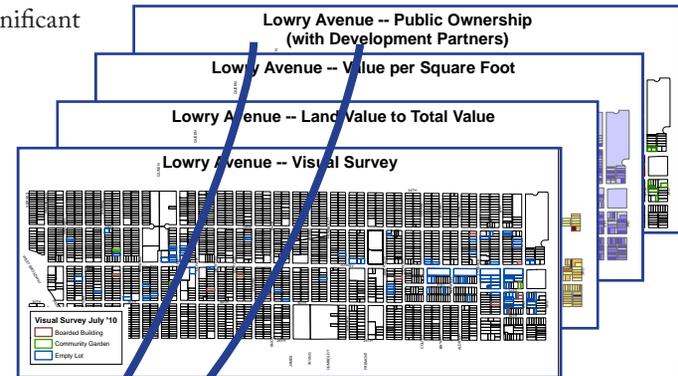
Many opportunity sites are privately owned properties, and where this is the case the term does not imply that there is an intent or strategy to acquire the property and redevelop the site. Nor does it imply that there is something wrong with the existing development. Rather, based on site characteristics, identifying a site as a development opportunity simply means that, under certain circumstances, redevelopment of the property may be financially possible.

A broad set of criteria was used to flag these sites, including the following:

- Property value per square foot
- Ratio of land value to building value
- Ownership--City, County, and Development Partner
- Vacant Lots
- Vacant and Boarded structures
- Opportunity to bundle properties for significant redevelopment projects

Each of these characteristics was mapped, and factored into a composite Development Opportunities Map. The background maps are available in the Appendix.

The Development Opportunities map can be useful for setting City priorities for development related activities such as site assembly and development support. It can also be employed in conversation with developers about what opportunities might be available for redevelopment.



Lowry Avenue -- Development Opportunities

