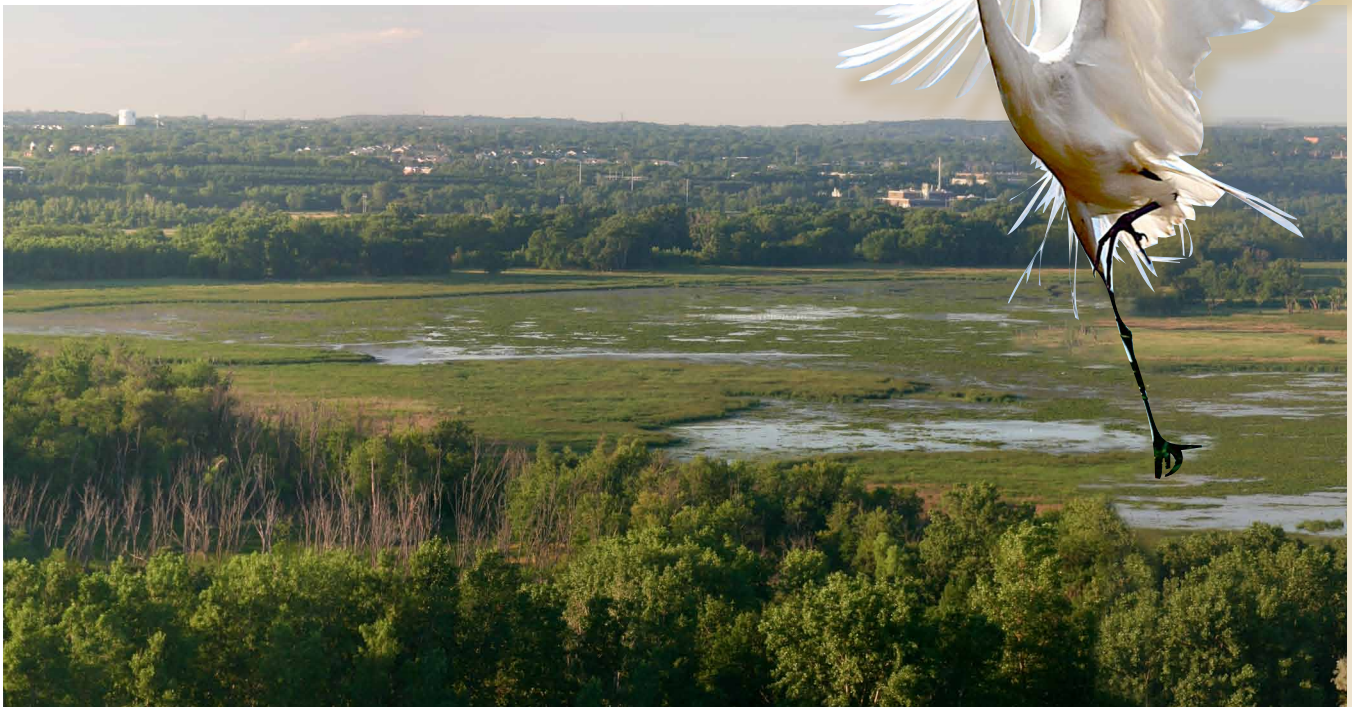




## Section 1

# THE BIG STORY

**O**n a warm day in May, a snowy egret perches in a tree near the water. Suddenly, she glides over Long Meadow Lake, dives for a shimmering fish and soars home with the morsel.



*This is a special place. Ancient Woodland peoples built earthwork mounds along the bluff edge. Sports fans watched Harmon Killebrew slug one into the stands for the Twins and Neal Broten pass the puck down the ice to score for the North Stars. Years later, children wait eagerly for a rotund red-suited elf in the Mall's giant rotunda.*



© 2009 NHL



© Minnesota Twins

**North Star player Neal Broten, left, and Twins hitter Harmon Killebrew, above, delighted sports fans.**

It is a distinctive place where people build their lives around work and community. Where people still feel connected to their environment. Where the wooded bluffs, meadows and marshlands of our Native American and pioneer ancestors are never more than footsteps away.

The South Loop District is not a retreat from modern life, but a confluence of environmental and economic forces. The District is a center for business and employment, connected to the Twin Cities metropolitan area by adjacent freeways and convenient transit, and to global centers such as Amsterdam, Tokyo, Paris, and London via direct flights from the nearby Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

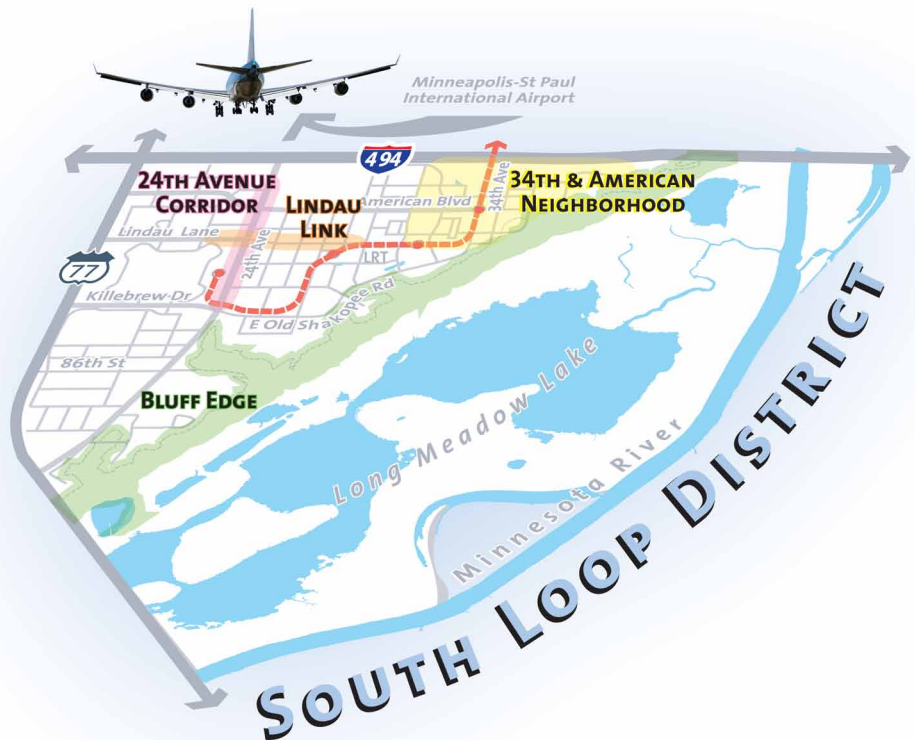
**Why does South Loop prosper?** Because it has unparalleled CONNECTIVITY; it is a regional center for COMMERCE; and it brings together urban development and natural RESOURCES in one place.



Along the bluffs were Native American mounds like these on the Robert Davis property.



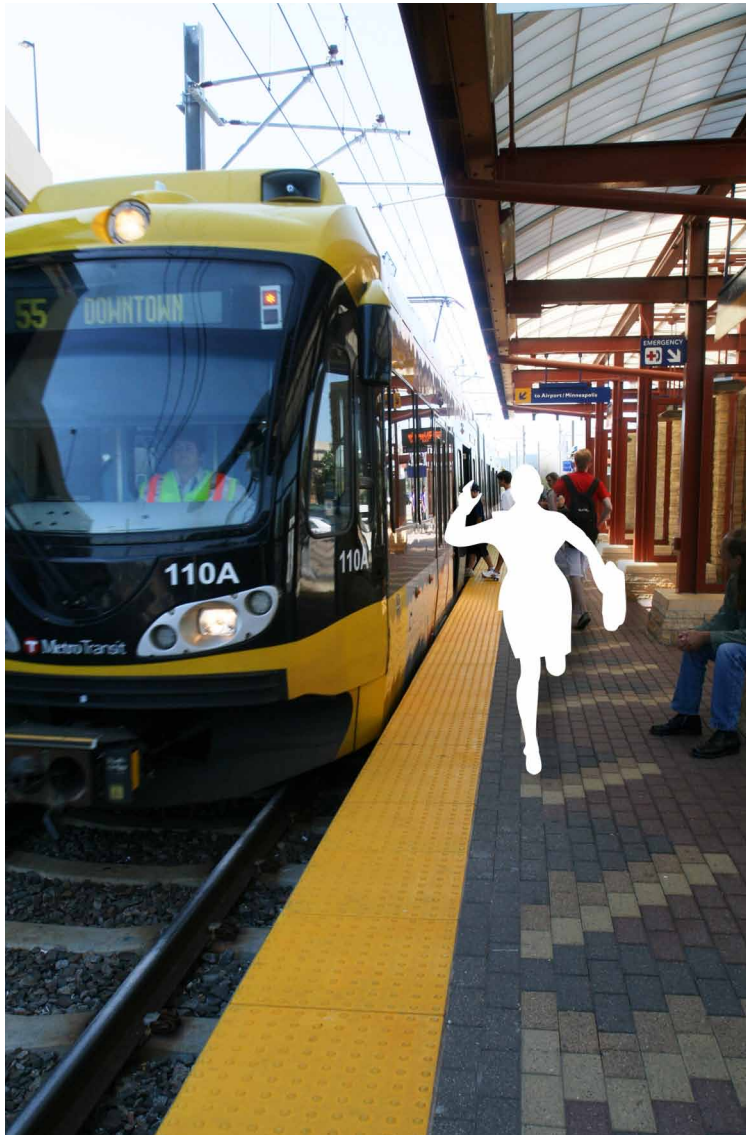
Bloomington Central Station is located in the 34th and American Neighborhood.



Long Meadow Lake borders the District.



*Mei-Hua finishes the latte she bought from her building's coffee shop, grabs her briefcase and dashes to the train station. She sees rain clouds approaching and hopes the weather won't affect her Chicago flight. Thankfully, the train is punctual as usual – she'll be through security and at her gate in less than half an hour.*



Over the next 40 years, two-thirds of Bloomington's growth potential will be realized in the South Loop District. Put simply, the vision for South Loop is to transform the District from suburban to urban. The vision includes mixed land uses that support additional streets to enhance circulation; higher densities of jobs and homes close to two light rail stations; and sustainable development practices that save energy and support growth.





*As soon as the brief thunderstorm passes, Ethan and his frisky pup Jake head to the nearby dog park. The air smells clean. The sidewalks are still wet. Ethan notices the landscape swales along the walk are half full of water. These water gardens collect stormwater from the surrounding blocks. The water is naturally filtered by the soil and carefully chosen plantings before it enters the groundwater and emerges from natural springs in the bluff.*

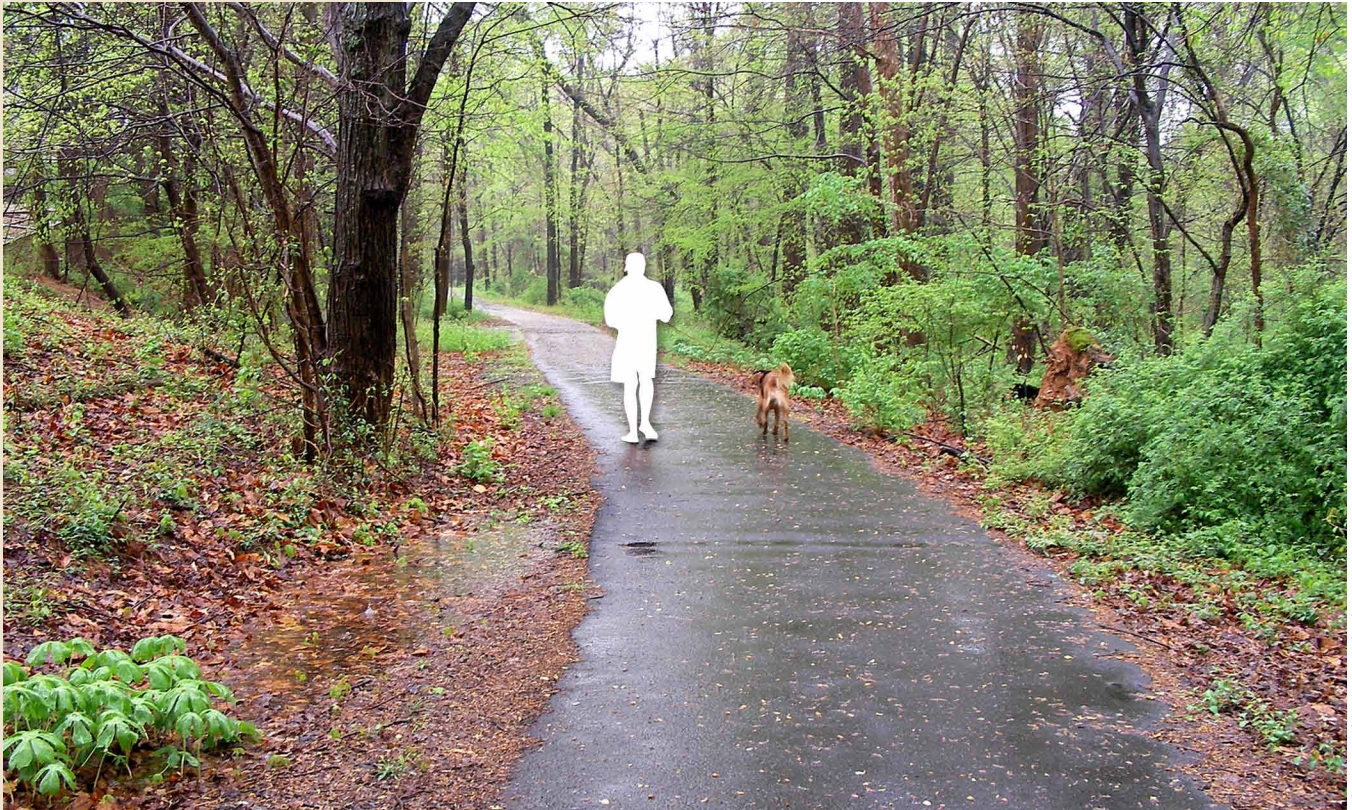


Photo credit: Big Stock Photos

A commitment to sustainable development is the foundation of the *South Loop District Plan*. The *Plan* describes the City's approaches to transit-oriented site design, storm water management, South Loop's interface with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and energy efficiency.



**Rain gardens efficiently cycle from heavy rain storms to dry conditions.**



*Home again and warm from the exercise, Ethan nudges the thermostat down a couple of degrees as Jake sprawls on the cool bamboo floor. Ethan tries to minimize his carbon footprint, and knows that his apartment's heating and cooling system runs on waste heat created during production of electricity. Jake hopes the savings from Ethan's next electric bill purchases a new chew toy.*

The City is studying the feasibility of a district energy system that is 40 percent more efficient. Waste heat from the generation of electricity is captured and used to heat and cool buildings in the South Loop. District energy savings are an important competitive advantage for both businesses and residents who locate in the South Loop District.

Photo credit: Big Stock Photos



**More efficient energy systems lower utility bills.**



*Luisa checks her watch as her train pulls into the Mall of America Station. Before she transfers to the 11:20 a.m. Bus Rapid Transit to Apple Valley, she has time to run upstairs into the Mall to buy a birthday gift.*

*Luisa enjoys her semi-retirement. She easily balances consultant work from her home with volunteer work for Friends of the Minnesota River Valley. Whether she travels locally or internationally, the District's public transit and the proximity to the airport make movement simple. She can't remember the last time she filled up her electric hybrid car.*

**Shoppers stroll the Mall of America's West Market.**

Lindau Link, a key placemaking element of the *South Loop District Plan*, extends Bloomington Central Station's pedestrian-scale streets and improves visibility and access to the Mall of America. The street creates an attractive, landscaped environment with enhanced pedestrian amenities and transit service for new hotel, entertainment and office developments. It incorporates low-impact design and advanced storm water management and improves vehicle circulation in the District, postponing the need for intersection improvements and traffic management solutions.



Credit: SRF Kinley-Horn Associates

*Jake leaps for his new chew toy as Ethan heads out the door. Ethan's dropping some materials at his office and meeting his friend Mei-Hua at the new restaurant on Lindau Link. The stormy morning gave way to a beautiful spring evening. Everyone is enjoying the weather on bicycles and foot. The sidewalk cafes are packed, but Mei-Hua's meeting went so well that she was able to catch an early flight home and already has claimed a prime people-watching table. The pair wave to passing acquaintances and make plans to meet for the Saturday morning bird walk in the Wildlife Refuge where migrating trumpeter swans were spotted below the Kelley Farm trail access.*





The *South Loop District Plan* identifies strategic public investments that lay the foundation for private investment and growth. The network of green streets and neighborhood parks, the LRT stations and 24th Avenue transit hub, and the sustainable infrastructure link the vibrant new residential neighborhood on the east side of the District to the commercial core along the Lindau Lane Greenway. Evidence of the nearness of nature and connection to the Wildlife Refuge is everywhere.

The revitalized South Loop District attracts new businesses and new residents to Bloomington. Property value increases as a result of the new development enable the City to maintain its high level of services without increasing taxes for residents or businesses. The District's development also reinforces the City's reputation as a forward-looking, high-quality community. The young professionals and families occupying the condominium and apartment units want to stay in the community when they are ready for single-family homes. Thousands of new jobs in the District provide opportunities for Bloomington and south metro residents to shorten their commutes, and to substitute travel by transit and bicycle. The South Loop District has become a distinctive place where people can build their lives and feel connected.



*In the valley, an egret flies toward its nest to perform a greeting ritual for its mate. The scene is repeated at dozens of nests in the colony as the sun dips down towards the horizon.*

## 1.2 Vision

To transform South Loop from a dispersed, suburban commercial area into a walkable urban neighborhood that attracts residents, office tenants, hotel guests and shoppers by virtue of its unique character and assets.

The primary goals to achieve this vision include:

1. **Build on** the District's unique mix of assets and mitigate its disadvantages.
2. **Transform** the District's densities and character from suburban to urban.
3. **Accelerate** the District's development.
4. Establish the District as a **branded place** emphasizing sustainability, quality, comfort, and safety.
5. Create a **sustainable** district.

Each goal is discussed in more detail on the following pages.

### Goal 1 Leverage the District's assets.

- LRT and bus transit.
- Proximity of Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP).
- Regional freeway access and visibility.
- Visual and recreational opportunities of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.
- Mall of America and Bloomington Central Station developments.
- Sites available for development.

### Goal 2 Mitigate the District's disadvantages.

- Aircraft noise.
- Airport zoning restrictions on uses and structure height.
- Access limited by freeways and the river valley surrounding the District.

### Goal 3 Transform the District's density and character.

- Promote a mix of land uses based on Transit-Oriented Design (TOD) and sustainable development strategies.
- Establish a network of interconnected parks, open spaces, and trails.



- Connect South Loop to potential MSP area development north of I-494.
- Provide a hierarchy of complete streets to increase connectivity, accessibility and movement.
- Create a safe, attractive walkable environment that makes it easy to get around on foot or bicycle.
- Design public spaces to enhance placemaking and complement private development.

## Goal 4 Accelerate the District's development.

- Establish South Loop as a place branded for sustainability, quality, comfort, and safety, with a clear sense of place.
- Promote the advantages of balanced, transit-oriented development.
- Make strategic public investments that foster placemaking and leverage private investments.
- Commit resources to maintain the function and appearance of public spaces.
- Market publicly-owned development sites.
- Promote the District's assets.

## Goal 5 Create a sustainable district.

- Promote energy conservation and low-impact site design techniques.
- Explore district-scale alternative energy systems.
- Foster denser, mixed-use development near transit stations.
- Implement an interconnected network of multi-modal streets and green infrastructure.
- Implement a shared parking strategy with on-street, surface, and structured spaces.
- Use intelligent transportation technology (ITS) to maximize the efficiency and capacity of the street network.
- Preserve and enhance existing residential neighborhoods.
- Expand housing choices in Bloomington.
- Protect natural and cultural resources by applying best management practices.

