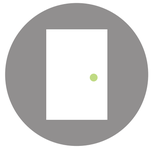
OPENSPACEDESIGN

ELEMENTS OF THE PUBLIC SQUARE



PORTAL

The overarching goal of a TOD in Hamline-Midway is focused upon the creation of a destination; however, the specific purpose of our design is not on destination creation. Rather, our design seeks to create a transportation portal for the neighborhood. It is a launching point for those venturing into other parts of the metropolitan area, and it is a landing point for those who come to visit the larger destination that has been envisioned for Hamline-Midway. The design of our spaces are therefore not geared to be a final destination in and of themselves; rather, they are laid out strategically to elevate the status of transit in the public eye and to facilitate ease of use for the transit infrastructure.

ENCLOSURE

Once a user has entered a public open space, two things affect the feeling of comfort that user will have; the first of these is enclosure. The more enclosure a space has, the more comfortable a user will generally be when occupying that space. Our design generates enclosure through a number of methods. Principally, a seamless enclosure is provided on the north and west sides of the square by the transit station building itself. On the east side, the detached bicycle shop and the trees in the café area provide an appropriate level of enclosure. The south side of the square is left open in order to address the street, but a partial barrier is provided in the form of a short retaining wall and a vegetation screen.

SCALE

Scale is the second factor that influences a user's comfort in an open space. Different scales are appropriate for different types of open space. A regional park has a different sense of scale than a neighborhood playground, and each space needs to be designed with this in mind. If spaces that require intimacy are designed too large, they won't function. Our design is scaled appropriately for its intended use. The space is not so large that users have no sense of direction or purpose, yet it is not too small that it cannot handle the flow of traffic through it. It has also been scaled appropriately for its economic market and TOD station type by identifying the correct size of the target user group,

ADDRESSING THE STREET

Street activity is key to the vitality of any public space. Cities are designed around streets they carry the flow of people and the energy they embody. A public space adjacent to the street, though it may need to be shielded from the noise and danger, must also relate to that street in order to draw energy and pedestrian traffic from it. Our design provides a permeable shield to reduce noise pollution from the street, but it also gestures through form and gate to those passing by. As it provides glimpses of the activity and features within, it becomes not only a place to be, but also a place to see. As the street life along University Avenue improves with the envisioned growth, our station will become a focal point on the street.

ACCOMODATION

Creating a space that is form-fitted for users is crucial to the success of a public square. By paying attention to small details in the shaping of site structures, the space can become both more inviting and usable for pedestrians. This particularly applies to the creation of seating in the public square. By designing retaining walls, planter boxes, and dividing walls to the correct parameters, these elements can serve dual purposes by providing seating for passers-by. Accommodation also includes avoiding site elements and design parameters that would deter people from using the site. Our design takes all of this into consideration by designing for the user in all details by scaling and sizing elements to be pedestrian-friendly.

PLACE FEATURES

Place features are those attributes of a public space that set it apart from other spaces. The arrangement of trees, the presence of water, the availability of food, and the inclusion of an iconic feature are a few key examples. Trees provide protection from sun and noise and can also provide overhead enclosure. Water provides an interactive feature for users, while also creating a cooling micro-climate and providing noise-cancellation. Food increases the attractiveness of a space to passers-by. People who might not otherwise utilize a public space are more likely to do so if food is being sold within. Finally, iconic features heighten the identity of a public space, making it more recognizable. Our design utilizes all four of these features.

TRANSITDESIGN

GOALS OF TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

LOCATION EFFICIENCY

Two main benefits arrive to residents of the neighborhood when location efficiency is achieved: lower vehicle-miles travelled and a semblance of economic justice through the availability of transit and amenities in the TOD. If the station area can be located correctly, the need for personal automobiles is significantly decreased. Our design is sited with just this in mind; its proximity to schools, a variety of residence options, and both local and regional scale retail – not to mention a variety of transportation options – allows a greater number of residents to take advantage of its offerings. This increase in acessibility is a direct result of the reduced need for automobile dependence.

MIX OF CHOICES

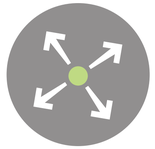
Mix of choices, in the case of our design, applies primarily to increased access to a larger mix of transportation options. Our site accommodates equally to light rail, bus, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian commuters. The outcome of this is that the envisioned TOD can provide a mix of choices on all other scales: by bringing a greater mix of users to the site, the neighborhood will be able to provide a greater mix of housing types, retail options, and activity choices. By promoting a mix of choices, the design will transcend the bounds of catering to any one user group – our site caters to users from all economic classes, geographic locations, and household types.

PLACE-MAKING

Place making brings three main benefits to the neighborhood: creation of a healthy, pedestrian-oriented environment, a pleasant aesthetic experience for the pedestrian, and a greater likelihood of public funding for the TOD. At Hamline-Midway, this meant that we were starting from scratch: our site was simply an open space, not a place where people want to be. Our resulting design is oriented entirely towards the pedestrian, while being adapted to the existing form of the neighborhood. It accommodates for users who may arrive via any mode of transit, while encouraging pedestrian and public transit – all while adding a previously lacking aesthetic element to the site.

VALUE CAPTURE

Value capture is about providing economic benefits for all of the actors in the planning, building, and growth of a TOD. Value benefits come in both the short term and the long term, and different actors receive their benefits at different times. Though our focus has primarily been on design, it is important to consider the viability of the project – if we fail to look into economic feasibility, our project loses any merit it may have. Our design, therefore, is tailored to creating value in the short term, in order to increase the viability of public transit and the TOD in the long term. By providing a portal as a strong foundation for the TOD and including uses that see profit immediately, our project can see viability across all time scales.



PLACE-NODE TENSION RESOLUTION

The goal of any TOD, including our vision at Hamline-Midway, is to create a place. However, the nature of any TOD is that before it becomes a place, it functions simply as a node. In this case, the intersection of Hamline and University Avenues and the train platforms was not a place or destination, it was simply a crossing of routes. Though our design still functions primarily as a portal – an elevated form of node – this elevation successfully resolves the tension between that node and the larger place destination that has been envisioned for the TOD. This resolution comes in the form of blending the elements of a node (the intersection of transportation options) and those of a place (uses that compose a destination).