

## CHAPTER 2: Existing Conditions

This chapter provides an overview of conditions within the study area at this general time. Existing conditions include both social and physical characteristics, and will serve as background information for the recommendations presented later in the plan document.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

The Lyn-Lake area is focused around a business center located at the intersection of four unique neighborhoods: Lowry Hill East, CARAG, Whittier, and Lyndale. The Whittier neighborhood is largest in area and population.

The most detailed and well documented demographic trends can be found in the US Census. This document first looks to this data to establish general conditions and then examines recent development projects and population forecasts that affect neighborhood demographics.

The four neighborhoods surrounding Lyn-Lake make up 9% of the city's population of 383,618. Populations increased both citywide and in the four Lyn-Lake area neighborhoods between 1980 and 2000. Even though the Lowry Hill East and CARAG neighborhoods lost population during that time, the Whittier and Lyndale neighborhoods increased in population. This accounted for an overall growth rate in Lyn-Lake that was higher than the city as a whole from 1980 to 2000. It's important to note, however, that probable population increases from recent residential developments in Lowry Hill East are not reflected in the numbers below.

**Table 1: Population, 1980-2000**

	1980	1990	2000	% change 1980 to 2000
Lowry Hill East	6,187	5,933	5,912	-4.44%
CARAG	6,223	5,825	5,907	-5.08%
Whittier	12,729	13,051	15,247	19.78%
Lyndale	7,167	7,239	7,690	7.30%
<b>Area Total</b>	<b>32,306</b>	<b>32,048</b>	<b>34,756</b>	<b>7.58%</b>
Minneapolis	370,951	368,383	383,618	3.41%

Source: City of Minneapolis and US Census

Demographically, the Lyn-Lake area is dominated by a younger population group. Age in the general area is displayed below as is age distribution by neighborhood. The Lyn-Lake area has the greatest number of people in the age 25 to 44 cohort, with the under 25 cohort ranking second.

**Table 2: Age Distribution, 2000**

	0-17 years	18-24 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65 + years
Lowry Hill East	380	1,269	3,333	761	169
CARAG	457	997	3,261	795	397
Whittier	2,652	3,154	6,964	1,871	606
Lyndale	1,484	1,239	3,206	1,127	634
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,973</b>	<b>6,659</b>	<b>16,764</b>	<b>4,554</b>	<b>1,806</b>

Source: City of Minneapolis and US Census

The residents in neighborhoods surrounding the Lyn-Lake intersection primarily self identified as White in the 2000 US Census as displayed below. Whittier and Lyndale neighborhoods are both more diverse in racial make up than Lowry Hill East and CARAG neighborhoods, which have similar ethnic distributions.

**Table 3: Ethnic Distribution, 2000**

	White	Black	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Others
Lowry Hill East	4,919	391	59	160	217	166
CARAG	5,087	281	54	184	168	133
Whittier	7,148	3,018	360	915	3,165	663
Lyndale	3,786	1,477	101	330	1,646	350
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,940</b>	<b>5,167</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>1,589</b>	<b>5,196</b>	<b>1,312</b>

Source: City of Minneapolis and US Census

### INCOME

In part because the Lyn-Lake population is largely made up of younger people, the majority of household incomes were below \$50,000 in 2000. In the Lyn-Lake area 74% of households had incomes of less than \$50,000, whereas, city wide, 63% of households had incomes of less than \$50,000.

**Table 4: Number of Households at different income levels, 2000**

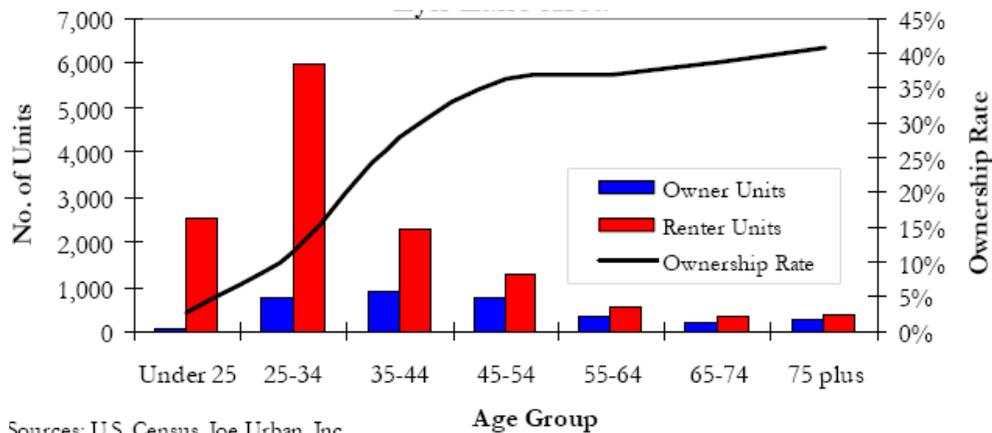
	Less than \$25,000	% of households	\$25,000-\$50,000	% of households	\$50,000-\$100,000	% of households	\$100,000 plus	% of households
Lowry Hill East	1,160	33%	1,390	39%	815	23%	180	5%
CARAG	925	26%	1,450	40%	980	27%	235	7%
Whittier	3,020	43%	2,680	38%	1,110	16%	235	3%
Lyndale	1,420	42%	1,050	31%	775	23%	150	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,525</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>6,570</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>3,680</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>5%</b>

Source: City of Minneapolis and US Census

## HOUSING

Since the Lyn-Lake area is home to many younger adults, more people chose to rent rather than own a home. Another reason for the high number of renters is the diversity of availability of rental housing stock in the area. The chart below shows the number of rental and ownership housing units by age of householder in the Lyn-Lake area. The chart illustrates not only a larger number of rental units occupied by the younger portion of the population in the Lyn-Lake area, but also shows that that ownership rates among older cohorts still lag behind the citywide averages.

**Chart 1: Household Tenure by Age of Householder**



Sources: U.S. Census, Joe Urban, Inc.

## SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Household size is smaller in the Lyn-Lake area than in Minneapolis as a whole. In 2000, in Lowry Hill East the average household size was 1.6 people. It was 1.7 in CARAG. Whittier and Lyndale both had household sizes of 2.1, which was closer to the city wide average of 2.3. This is reflective of a national trend of more people living in homes without children [see Appendix A-Market Study].

The City of Minneapolis gathers health data by neighborhood group. Lyndale Avenue is the border between the Calhoun Isles community and the Powderhorn community. Generally speaking, the Calhoun Isles community ranks higher than Powderhorn on a series of social indicators related to health conditions and behaviors [see Appendix B – Powderhorn and Calhoun Isles Community Health Data]. This is important to consider in a future land use plan because of the relationship between health and access to services and general comfort of the neighborhood environment.

All four neighborhoods have strong neighborhood associations that strive to better the community. The Lyn-Lake Business Association coordinates with the larger Lake Street Council. The business association has approximately seventy members which include business, churches, developers, and non-profit organizations.

## CURRENT LAND USE AND ZONING

In the Lyn-Lake area, most land uses located around the intersection of West Lake Street and Lyndale Avenue South and along West Lake Street to the east end of the study area are commercial. Along the Midtown Greenway several recent high-density residential and mixed-use development projects have replaced previous industrial uses. Lyndale Avenue South north of West 27<sup>th</sup> Street contains a mix of land uses including small commercial establishments, older homes converted to apartments, and smaller apartment buildings.

The existing zoning is generally compatible with the existing land uses. Commercial zoning is found along West Lake Street and Lyndale Avenue South. South of West 31<sup>st</sup> Street along Lyndale Avenue South, the zoning is a mix of residential and office-residential districts with some commercial zoning districts located at the intersections. Some properties that have yet to be redeveloped along the Midtown Greenway are zoned industrial. Excerpts of the City's land use and zoning maps for the Lyn-Lake area are shown on the following page.



*Residential development along the Midtown Greenway*



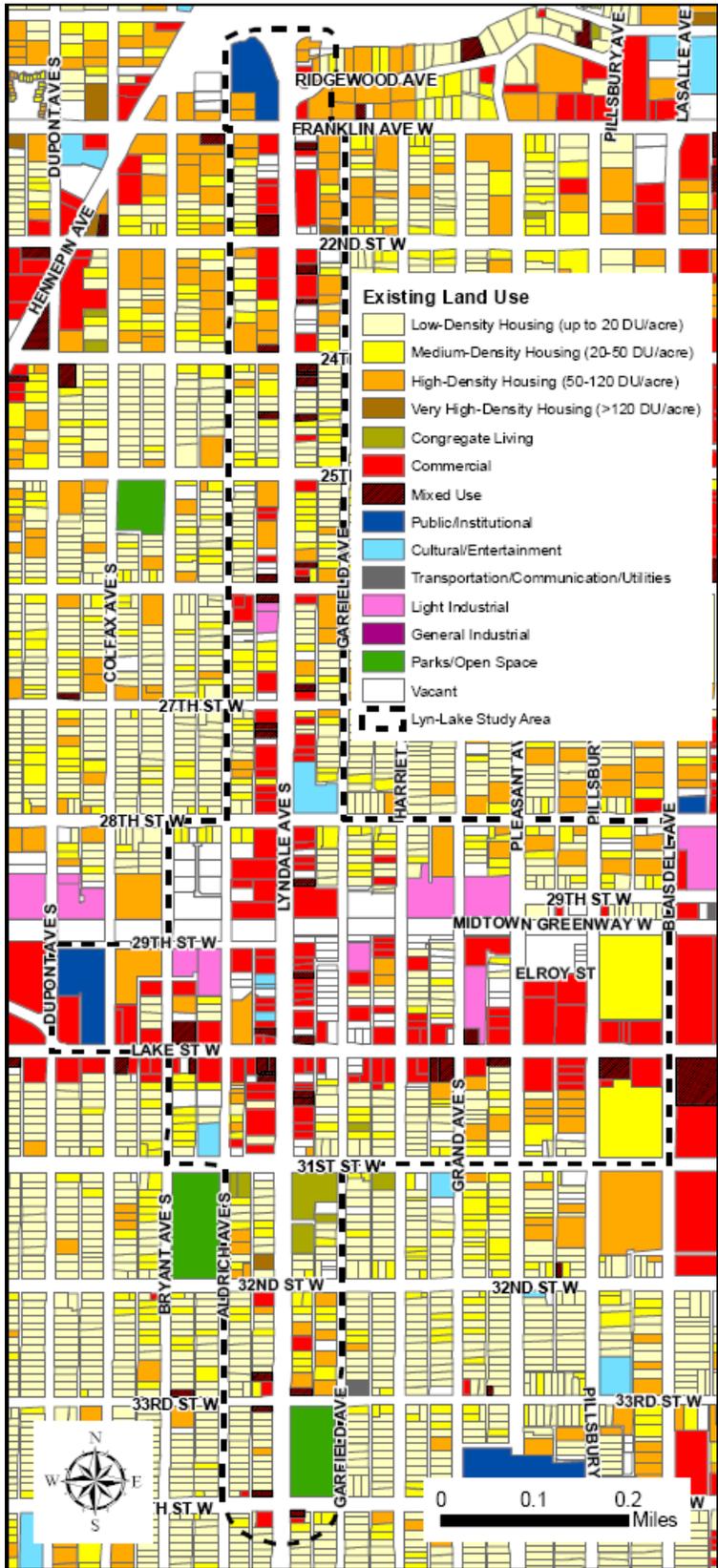
*Lyndale Avenue at 22<sup>nd</sup> Street*



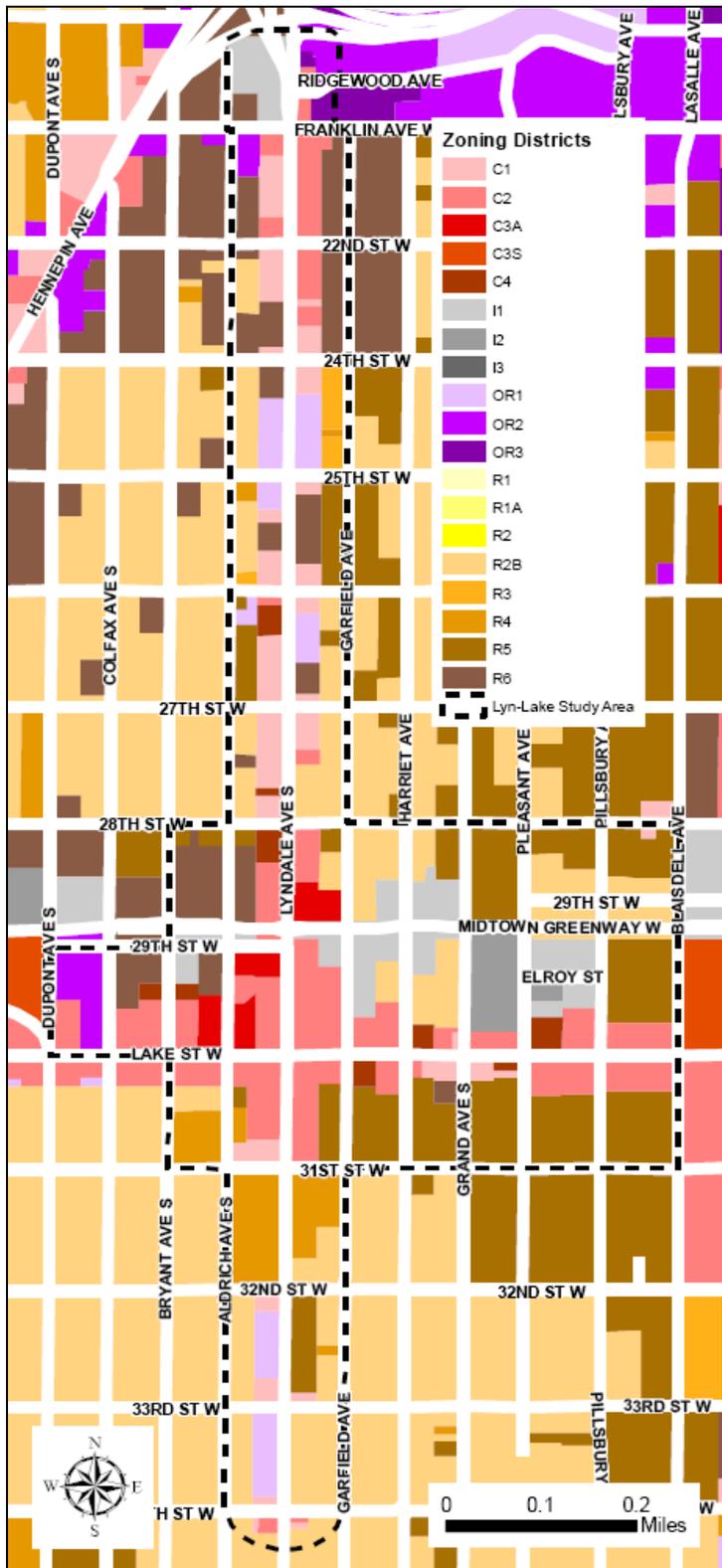
*Lyndale Ave. between Lake St. and the Midtown Greenway*



*Lyndale Avenue at 24<sup>th</sup> Street*



Existing Land Use



Existing Zoning

## RECENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The business districts of Lyn-Lake and Uptown are a draw for people desiring urban amenities. This has been a driving factor in the redevelopment of industrial parcels along the Midtown Greenway into mixed-use and residential buildings, which is in line with existing land use policy for the area. Several recent development projects are representative of this shift in land uses; the “Blue” apartments along the west side of Aldrich Avenue South between West Lake Street and West 29<sup>th</sup> Street; “The Murals of Lyn-Lake” at the northeast corner of the intersection of Lyndale Avenue South and the Midtown Greenway; and “Karmel Village” between Grand and Pleasant Avenues along the Midtown Greenway.

Several other mixed-use projects have been proposed and or approved. Two key sites with current proposals are the southwest corner of the intersection of the Midtown Greenway and Lyndale Avenue South and the site of the Salem Church at West 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Lyndale Avenue South.

## BUILT FORM

The built form in the study area varies greatly. Around the intersection of Lyndale Avenue South and West Lake Street, there are older buildings that range from one to five stories. To the east of the intersection, there are smaller, more auto oriented buildings that are typically one story. Along the Midtown Greenway there is a new six story building at Lyndale Avenue and the Greenway. This building drops down to two stories where it is adjacent to traditional homes.



*Recently approved development: The Murals*

Off the main corridors of West Lake Street and Lyndale Avenue South, there is a mix of land uses that includes, single family homes, duplexes, smaller apartment buildings, and some light industrial buildings.

There are a number of parking lots in the study area that provide necessary access to local businesses. However, many of these lots are dark and isolated, inviting crime. Theft from motor vehicles is a serious problem in the area, particularly in the public parking lot at West Lake Street and Garfield Avenue South.

## HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The City of Minneapolis has surveyed the Lyn-Lake area to assess the potential for the designation of historic districts and historic landmarks. There is one nationally designated landmark and one locally designated landmark in the study area. However, the fabric and history of the structures near the intersection of West Lake Street and Lyndale Avenue South may make that immediate area eligible for designation as a historic district as suggested in the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth.

The building located at 2957 Lyndale Avenue South, which houses the “Its Greek to Me” restaurant, was designated as a local landmark in 1985 because it was the first large scale development that accompanied the expansion of the streetcar system in southwest Minneapolis. The building, which was built in 1888 and is referred to as the Cromwell Block, is exemplary of the Richardsonian Romanesque architectural style.

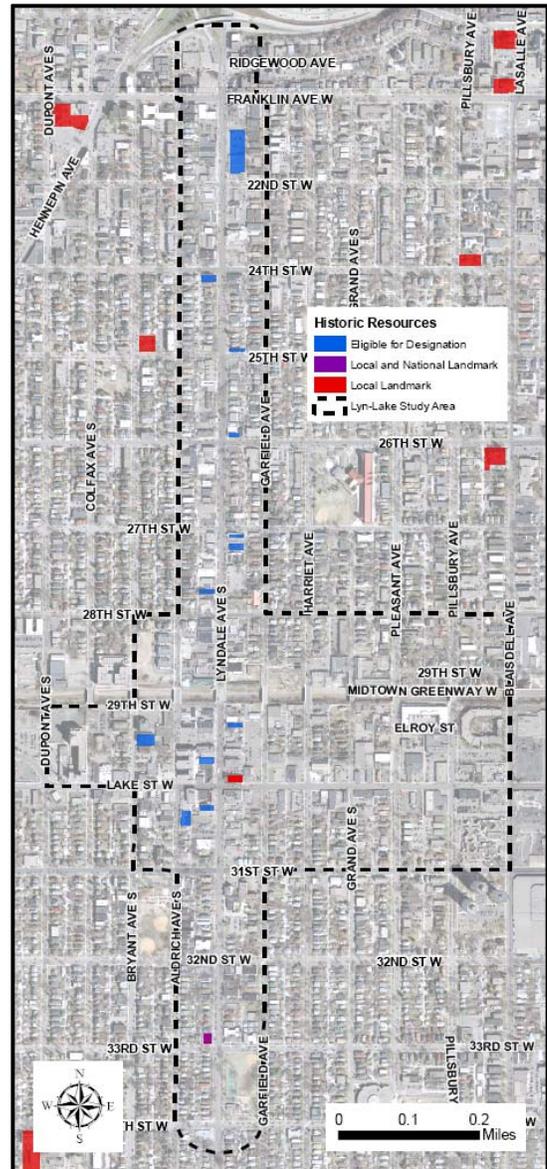
The former White Castle restaurant at 3252 Lyndale Avenue South is both locally and nationally designated. It was built in 1936 and is considered historically significant because it represents the spread of the fast-food restaurant phenomenon.

Several other sites in the study area have been deemed to be potentially eligible for designation based on both historic and cultural significance. These buildings are not protected at this time, but may merit future study and consideration. These include:

- 2105 Lyndale Avenue South
- 2400 Lyndale Avenue South
- 2457 Lyndale Avenue South
- 2555 Lyndale Avenue South
- 2701 Lyndale Avenue South
- 2709 Lyndale Avenue South
- 2711 Lyndale Avenue South
- 2744 Lyndale Avenue South
- 2917 Lyndale Avenue South
- 2934 Lyndale Avenue South
- 3008 Lyndale Avenue South
- 3013-23 Aldrich Avenue South
- 2917 Bryant Avenue South

In addition to individual sites, larger areas can be designated. The Midtown Greenway trench, bridges, retaining walls, and two adjacent properties are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the

Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Grade Separation. This designation impacts what types of alterations can be made to the trench, bridges, and retaining walls. Any demolition plans for buildings within the boundaries may be subject to additional review. Properties within the study area of this plan and the boundaries of the historic district include 2836 Lyndale Avenue South, 2848 Pleasant Avenue South, and 2900 Pleasant Avenue South. These buildings are “non-contributing” structures to the district but are within the boundary.



Historic Resources

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Because the focus and influence areas of the study area are largely built out, there is a lack of substantial outdoor gathering spaces. However, a number of parks and park facilities surround the study area.

Painter Park is located at West 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Lyndale Avenue South and Bryant Square Park is nearby at West 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Bryant Avenue South. Whittier Park is located at West 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Harriet Avenue South. Mueller Park is the smallest and is located at West 25<sup>th</sup> Street and Colfax. Painter, Bryant, and Whittier Parks have community centers with multi-purpose rooms.

In addition to public parks, open spaces such as The Soo Line Community Garden (located along the Midtown Greenway at Garfield Avenue) serve as a gathering space for neighborhood residents. This garden was established in 1991 and serves over 100 gardeners. The Midtown Greenway also provides green space, but it is focused on a very specific activity and portion of the populace.

## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

### Automobile

The dominant means of transportation in the Lyn-Lake area today is by automobile. In the study area, both Lyndale Avenue South and West Lake Street are considered A-Minor Arterials and carry a sizeable volume of traffic. On average, Lyndale Avenue South carries 27,800 vehicle trips per day, while West Lake Street carries 20,800 vehicle trips per day through the study area. This volume of traffic has shaped the variety of uses that exist in the study area, and poses considerable opportunities and challenges for nearby residents and businesses.

Lyndale Avenue South and West Lake Street share similar traffic volumes with other major streets in the Minneapolis area. However, it is interesting to note the distinctly different land uses that surround the examples below.

**Table 5: Traffic on Comparable Local Road Sections**

Street	Segment	Average Daily Traffic Volume
Lyndale Avenue	from Franklin Avenue to 26th Street	27,800
Lake Street	from Bryant to Lyndale Avenue	20,800
Hennepin Avenue	from 24th to 26th Street	26,800
Hiawatha Avenue	from Lake Street to 42nd Street	31,500
Broadway Street NE	from Marshall Street to University Avenue	22,900
France Avenue S	from 69th Street to I-494	27,500

*Minnesota Department of Transportation - 2007*

## **Parking**

In developed urban areas, parking is typically a challenge because many of the structures were built before driving became common. The positive aspect of this challenge is that developed urban areas like Lyn-Lake are typically a more enjoyable place to walk than are areas with a great deal of parking.

It is fortunate that parking supply was identified as an issue at Lyn-Lake several years ago and some strategic action was taken. In 1997 the City Council directed staff to prepare a budget, designs, land acquisition agreements, zoning changes, an operations agreement, and to initiate an assessment process for two public parking lots. In 1998 a Lyn-Lake Parking Advisory Board was established and \$2,282,000 in bond debt was issued to create the Garfield lot and the Aldrich Avenue lot, which is now the site of the Uptown City Apartments (but still contains sixty-six public parking spaces).

The Garfield lot, which is located on nine parcels along Garfield Avenue South between West Lake Street and the Midtown Greenway, contains one hundred and thirty spaces and is operated with a drop box, or honor system, set up. The City of Minneapolis owns and operates the lots with the assistance of a private parking lot management company. The Lyn-Lake Parking Advisory Board offers recommendations concerning parking in the area to the City's Department of Public Works.

The City of Minneapolis administers an assessment process for the repayment of the original bond by the businesses that benefit from the parking lots. All businesses within 300 feet of the Garfield lot are assessed based on a calculation that includes the following factors: market value, building area, parcel area, and a parking shortage calculation (which is based on parking requirements for various uses outlined in the zoning code).

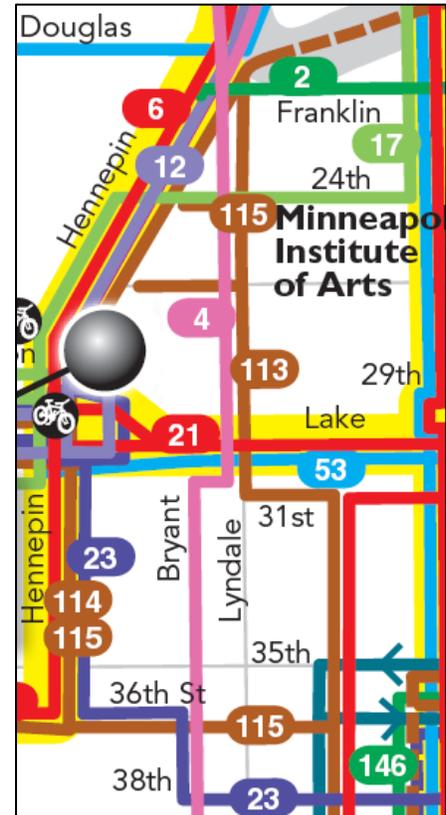
An inventory of parking between Bryant Avenue South and Blaisdell Avenue and between West 28<sup>th</sup> Street and West 32<sup>nd</sup> Street can be found in Appendix C. North of West 28<sup>th</sup> Street there is on-street parking on both sides of Lyndale Avenue South and there are some small off-street parking lots associated with individual businesses. On Lyndale Avenue South between West 32<sup>nd</sup> Street and West 34<sup>th</sup> Street there are two small parking lots associated with adjacent uses. Along West Lake Street there are few off-street parking spaces between Dupont Avenue South and Lyndale Avenue South, but there are many small off-street parking lots associated with individual business between Lyndale Avenue South and Blaisdell Avenue.

## Transit

### Bus

Current bus service in the Lyn-Lake area is robust with multiple routes serving the area. Route 21 which runs along West Lake Street operates at a frequency of 10 minutes during rush hours, and route 4 which runs along Lyndale Avenue South has a frequency of seven to 15 minutes during rush hour. These two routes have the most frequent service and account for the greatest number of boardings and departures at the intersection of Lyndale Avenue South and West Lake Street. Weekend and evening service is also available.

Express bus service to the University of Minnesota campus also runs north and south on Lyndale Avenue South during the fall and spring semesters. The route 53 bus runs east and west through the study area and serves riders heading to downtown St. Paul. The northern end of the influence area is also served by bus routes 2 (traveling east and west along West Franklin Avenue) and 17 (running from the western suburbs through downtown to Northeast Minneapolis).



Existing Bus Routes

### Rail

The Midtown Greenway has long been targeted as a route for future rail transit. The Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority is currently evaluating routes for a light rail line that would connect the southwest suburbs to downtown Minneapolis. This project, referred to as the Southwest Transitway, currently involves two possible light rail alignments. One of these possible routes would travel along the Midtown Greenway and then turn north and access downtown via Nicollet Avenue. The other potential route would follow the Kenilworth Trail west of Lake of the Isles. These two routes are being evaluated through an Environmental Impact Study and a final route is scheduled to be selected in mid 2009. If the alignment through the Midtown Greenway is chosen there will be stations at Hennepin Avenue South and the Midtown Greenway and Lyndale Avenue South and the Midtown Greenway. There is potential for the Southwest Transitway to be in operation by 2015 if all of the appropriate authorization and funding is received.

The City of Minneapolis has also studied the Midtown Greenway as a possible route for a streetcar line. The Midtown Greenway was selected as one of six potential streetcar corridors. However, typically modern streetcar networks are initiated with a “minimal operable segment”, which is the smallest section that can be built and still be effective, in order to speed implementation and bolster creative funding options. The Midtown Greenway route was not considered a viable minimal operable segment in the Minneapolis Streetcar Feasibility Study

that was published in 2007, but is being pursued in an ongoing process by a collection of private partners.

### **Bicycle**

Lyn-Lake is home to and a major hub for bicycle activity. The Midtown Greenway provides east/west access across the south side of the city and there is a concentration of bike shops in the area. In 2007 the first large body of comparative bicycle count data was collected in the Midtown Greenway. The major finding of a report issued in July of 2008 about bicycle usage in the Midtown Greenway was that it is increasing at a substantial rate. The count location on the Midtown Greenway was at Hennepin Avenue, where in June of 2007 there was an average of 2,680 bicyclists a day. One year later at the same location there was an average of 3,620 bicyclists a day. The highest one day total recorded was Sunday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 when 5,336 cycling trips were recorded. The area has multiple access points to the Midtown Greenway trench. The Bryant Avenue South access point serves areas west of Lyndale Avenue and the access point between Garfield and Harriet Avenues provides access to areas east of Lyndale Avenue. Bryant Avenue South is also a marked bicycle route providing north/south access to the area.

A bicycle master plan is currently being drafted by the City's Public Works Department. This plan will make recommendations related to the prioritization of routes and improvements throughout the city.

### **Pedestrian**

The intersection of West Lake Street and Lyndale Avenue South was recently reconstructed and now has sidewalks that are approximately 20 feet wide at the intersection. New street trees, benches, bike racks, and decorative pavers have been added creating a comfortable pedestrian environment. The pedestrian enhancements also exist east and west of Lyndale Avenue South on West Lake Street, but the sidewalks are narrower.

The sidewalks on Lyndale Avenue South north of the Midtown Greenway are in fair condition. However, the streetscape character varies greatly with boulevards in some sections and not others. On Lyndale Avenue South, south of West 31<sup>st</sup> Street the pedestrian environment is more typical of a neighborhood, with narrower sidewalks and slightly larger boulevards with larger trees.

The City of Minneapolis is in the process of developing its first pedestrian master plan. This document will provide guidance on design and maintenance of the pedestrian realm. In addition, the City has developed a Coordinated Street Furnishing Program that addresses the placement of bus shelters, benches, trash cans, and newspaper kiosks throughout the city.



*Recent streetscape improvements*