STATION AREA CONDITIONS ANALYSIS
INTRODUCTION

The creation of transit station area plans and their eventual development is a complex process. TOD station areas may accommodate multiple transportation modes (motorized and non-motorized), dense concentrations of activities, create a sense of place, and serve several different land use classes, often with vertical stacking of uses. In addition, transit stations are often developed in areas that already have substantial development which adds the complexities of redevelopment to the TOD process including a lack of willing sellers, redevelopment costs, incompatibilities with legacy uses, site control, blight, infrastructure constraints, contamination, and historic preservation.

One tool for helping a community manage this complexity during the station area planning process is to map areas of change and stability in the station area. This allows the community to focus its attention and resources on those areas where they will have the most impact.

Areas of Change are those areas where market forces are the strongest for creating change or the community has a strong desire to see change. Change can be positive, neutral or negative. Positive changes may include redevelopment, reinvestment, expansion, increases in value, and similar impacts. Negative changes can be land use incompatibilities, system failures (traffic, infrastructure), relocations, blight, decreases in value, loss of historic properties and displacement. Areas of Change can require a significant amount of public policy direction, focus and financing to ensure the change is positive.

Areas of Stability are those areas where the market forces are generally in balance and the community is satisfied with the result. These areas generally require less public policy direction and focus. However, Areas of Stability should still be given an initial public policy scan to ensure that existing policies and land use controls are supporting that goal of stability and that market forces won’t create new instabilities. Common instabilities include policies such as incompatible zoning standards, significant infrastructure modifications that change the area’s character, or breaking key neighborhood links that support the area’s stability.

An analysis of Areas of Change and Stability has two key components:

- An analysis of market forces and indicators of change
- A public policy discussion regarding the desirability of change in various areas

At the pre-planning study level, there is not the direct and sustained involvement with public officials necessary to have the public policy discussion to establish formal lines around Areas of Change and Stability. However, it is possible to identify those areas where market forces are likely to exert pressure, so that future public policy discussions can account for the desirability of those potential changes as part of the station area planning process.

Not every parcel is a likely redevelopment site. Many parcels are developed at a level of intensity that makes them far too expensive to acquire and redevelop in a profitable manner. Others may have attributes that make them unattractive for certain types of development. Some may be marginal for current auto-related transportation, but could excel with a transit station. Others may be impacted by adjacent properties.

To identify the Market Focus Areas, Stantec used a multi-step process to screen properties using geographic information systems (GIS), stakeholder interviews and field surveys. The results of this screening process resulted in the identification of numerous Focus Areas that appeared to contain attributes that could create market interest. The screening process included analysis of the factors outlined in this appendix, but also was based on some of the larger corridor-wide demographic analysis contained in Appendix A2. This GIS work was then supplemented by sending Stantec staff with experience in real estate development site selection and development into the areas to physically view every property from a development site selector’s perspective.
Redevelopment is generally a complex process and there is often a role the public can take to facilitate development and ensure the redevelopment reaches its full potential. These actions can vary from minor actions such as facilitating discussions between stakeholders up to and including actively participating in development activities and planning approvals.

In some areas, redevelopment will likely occur without extensive public involvement due to the attractive market fundamentals. However, in many situations, the market forces alone may not be able to justify redevelopment. In these circumstances, one or more of the following tools could be necessary to achieve the full potential of a site:

- Land banking/site acquisition
- Financial assistance (TIF, tax credits, tax abatement, etc.)
- Site clearing
- Assistance with helping industrial users relocate to industrial parks
- Revising zoning requirements
- Environmental studies and/or remediation
- Shared parking
- Trail and sidewalk construction
- Parks and open space development
- Streetscape upgrades

Successful Transit Oriented Development (TOD) includes a variety of attributes such as close proximity to amenities, density of activity, an interesting and attractive setting, a feeling of security, and convenient access via walking and biking. When redevelopment occurs near stations, it is important to ensure that convenient access through such sites, serving more distant properties, is adequately planned and protected. By carefully planning convenient access (minimizing traveled time and maximizing the experience), the effective zone of TOD may be increased.
LAND USE

As a former streetcar stop, Downtown Robbinsdale is already configured for transit with a well located mixed use district as well as surrounding smaller lot single family residential. TOD changes in this area will likely be more modest and site specific rather than large scale changes in land use. When the corridor begins operation (and as the current bus service grows), there may be some shift in development emphasis and pedestrian traffic patterns so that they orient more towards the station than is currently the case.

The area north of 42nd Avenue between Hwy 100 and CSAH 81 has an isolated feel in some areas and is likely negatively affected by the amount of road and rail transportation running through this relatively small area.

Hwy 100 creates a significant barrier to the west and existing development patterns and grades make it difficult to get sites that are visible from Hwy 100. This limits retail benefits from the traffic on Hwy 100.
The Robbinsdale Station area has several subsidized projects, primarily focused on senior or disabled housing. With the exception of the Robbins Way project, all of the projects are inside or very near the 10-minute walkshed.

267 Subsidize Senior/Disabled Units
- Lilac Pkwy Apts – 48 units
- The Cunningham – 25 units
- Copperfield Hill – 84 units
- Robbins Landing – 110 units

94 Subsidized General Occupancy Units
- Robbins Way – 36 units
- Bridgeway Apts – ~48 units
- Community Involvement Program - 10 units

Valuation makes this one of the most challenging areas on the corridor to redevelop because of the high costs of acquisition. Fortunately, the historic transit oriented land use pattern greatly reduces the need for significant redevelopment of public infrastructure.

The City of Robbinsdale has actively been supporting development and redevelopment in this area for many years and has actively been developing enhanced streetscapes and supporting redevelopment that has supported the valuation in this area.

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The area that is north of 42nd Avenue North between Downtown and Hwy 100 is showing some signs of valuation decline, particularly in the wedge between the railroad tracks and West Broadway. Having single family lots between these two significant transportation facilities is not an ideal land use for that type of location and therefore property values could have trouble keeping pace with other nearby neighborhoods for the long term. Another pocket of lower valued properties on a per square foot basis is north of 40th Avenue and west of Regent Avenue where the terrain and development pattern has resulted in much larger single family lots than the surrounding neighborhood.
FOCUS AREAS

Because so much of the Robbinsdale station area is already developed with transit compatible development, the areas of focus are far more scattered and smaller in scale than at most station areas. For this reason, the number of focus areas in Robbinsdale is larger (13 focus areas), but the actual acreage involved is much smaller for most sites.

Figure A1.26- Robbinsdale Station Focus Areas
**AREA 1**

**Size:** 2.17 Acres

This site is a pocket of upper value homes that have larger lots which reduces the per square foot cost across the entire site acreage of acquisition for redevelopment in spite of the home value. It is at the outer edge of the 10 minute walkshed and requires a crossing of CSAH 81 which minimizes the impact of the transit station on redevelopment for this site. However, the site has a unique attribute in that it is within the 10 minute walkshed and also has lake frontage, which is a rare combination for TOD. It is possible that this unique combination of factors would interest a developer to propose some sort of residential concept that takes advantage of this combination or some other intensification of the use such as substantial upgrade/expansion of the single family homes. Given the scarcity of lake frontage, it is unlikely that enough property could be consolidated to change the use, so single family home upgrade and expansion is the most likely scenario.

**AREA 2**

**Size:** 4.22 Acres

This site is currently occupied by single family homes and is a challenging environment for this use due to the close proximity of the railroad tracks, Broadway Avenue and Highway 100. In addition, as the properties move further to the northwest (closer to Hwy 100), the railroad tracks and Broadway Avenue converge which reduces the depth of the lots and providing less of a buffer from the railroad. These challenges can be seen in the lower per square foot valuation of the properties on the west side of Broadway, although some of that per square foot valuation difference is due larger lots in the areas closer to 42nd Avenue.
AREA 3

Size: 1.45 Acres

This site contains several older retail buildings including some that are beginning to show their age and appear to be generating a low amount of retail traffic. The design character of some buildings is more quasi-industrial than the “Main Street” character on the other side of 42nd Avenue. Retail access can be challenging due to the perceived complexity of turning movements, given the median, railroad tracks and turn in 42nd Avenue. As with Area 3, the site is in close proximity to the transit station and has access to a signalized intersection for crossing 42nd Avenue which minimizes 42nd Avenue as a pedestrian barrier.

AREA 4

Size: 1.6 Acres

This site consists of a small number of single family structures that face 42nd Avenue with access provided by a rear alley. The character of these lots is not ideal for single family homes due to the amount of traffic on 42nd Avenue and there has already been some conversion to non-residential uses with the evolution into a dentist and chiropractor office. Redevelopment pressure could occur beyond the designated focus area to include more lots along the southern half of 42½ Avenue in order to put together a site with more lot depth, although the higher per s.f. costs of houses on 42½ Avenue could complicate any efforts along those lines. 42nd Avenue is a much more significant pedestrian barrier in this location and there is not a protected pedestrian crossing between this focus area and the transit station. This could be an area of concern because it may limit the redevelopment potential of this site and could also create a pedestrian safety concern since pedestrians north of 42nd Avenue and west of the railroad tracks will be tempted to cross 42nd Avenue at an uncontrolled intersection, rather than walking two blocks out of their way to utilize the signal at Broadway Avenue.
**AREA 5**

**Size:** 1.95 Acres

This site would likely be the one that would receive the most initial attention due to its superb proximity to the station, large size and visibility from both the station and 42nd Avenue. It has the potential to be a key “anchor” development site geared towards residential or mixed vertical mixed use development. The size of the site may also facilitate the inclusion of a joint use public parking facility as a key component of the development. A substantial amount of this site (0.89 acres) is owned by public entities.

**AREA 6 & AREA 7**

**Size:** 0.48 Acres  
**Size:** 0.3 Acres

These two areas (7 and 8) are adjacent block faces that serve as the rear of buildings that front on Broadway Avenue. The areas are dominated by surface parking. Given the location of the transit station, it may be desirable to encourage redevelopment/intensification along Hubbard Avenue so that there is a more finished, “front door” appearance to the block faces across Hubbard Avenue from the station.

Key challenges to any intensification efforts will be to work closely with the existing businesses to ensure it does not significantly harm them and ideally provides benefit as well (expansion space, larger customer base, improved visibility, etc.). Key items to address in infill situations like this include replacement of parking in convenient locations (such as a parking deck adjacent to the transit station); accommodation for rear entrances, delivery and waste handling; and sharing or relocating utility services.

Although the lots include the buildings that face on Broadway Avenue, they are not included in the potential redevelopment, since it is assumed the city would seek to preserve those Broadway facing structures. The parking lots and small buildings that were designed to be in the rear position may take on increased exposure with their “front door” to the transit station and reduced need for individual tenant parking with the addition of transit service and shared parking.
AREA 8

Size: 0.91 Acres

These are very small infill sites that could see value escalation because of their lower square foot values and adjacency to the station area (assuming there will be reasonable station access from Railroad Avenue to serve the neighborhood west of the tracks). It is anticipated that any higher value interest would be for expansion of the existing single family uses, either by current or future owners. The site does not seem to be well suited for non-residential uses.

AREA 9

Size: 1.38 Acres

This area is a small enclave of homes that are impacted by the railroad and the Sacred Heart properties. It could attract interest for residential intensification due to its proximity to the station, lower per square foot valuation and the scale of the building massing on the Sacred Heart properties.