

# St. Louis County/Berkeley, Missouri North Hanley Station Walkabout Brief



## Summary:

On the cool and blustery morning of October 12, 2012, more than thirty people attended the Wellston MetroLink Station Walkabout. The purpose of the effort was to ask attendees to analyze the current MetroLink station located on a large parcel just south east of North Hanley Road and Interstate 70, located in the St. Louis Metropolitan area, as well as the immediate surroundings in order to understand how Transit Oriented Development, building around light rail, could benefit the surrounding community. A post-walk discussion included a survey focused on the types of development that would best benefit the community.

## Background and Site Information:

As one of the system's busiest nodes, the North Hanley Station is one of thirty-seven light rail stations located in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area and run by the regional transit authority, Metro. The 20-acre site includes a 1,705 Surface Park-Ride Lot as well as an approximately 780 space parking garage. "The North Hanley Station logs over twice the daily and monthly average boardings for stations in Missouri."<sup>i</sup> Where the Missouri Station Average is 42,000 monthly boardings, the North Hanley station average is estimated to have 88,000 daily riders.

The station area is actually located in two jurisdictions, St. Louis County and the City of Berkeley. The Express Scripts Corporate Headquarters is located within a half mile radius of the station, to the east. On the southeast side of the station is the University of Missouri, St. Louis Campus. South of the bus entry on University Place is the connection to the Great Rivers Greenway St. Vincent Greenway Trail and several vacant lots proposed for potential development. Other existing development around the station includes a gas station, an apartment complex consisting of 12 low rise buildings, and a family owned farming operation, to the west of the station. In addition, located to the north the station and Interstate 70 is the future North Park development.

There are limited housing options in close proximity of the station primarily due to zoning issues in the area. The available housing stock in the area is mostly rental and built between the 1940s-90s. "Half of the households within a half-mile of the North Hanley Station make less than \$50,000 per year, and a third of individual residents live below the federal poverty line."<sup>ii</sup> In addition, one quarter of the surrounding households do not own a car and 21.5% use transit for their daily commute.

Of the area immediately surrounding the N. Hanley MetroLink site there is strong development prospects to the south, and some potential to the east around the retention basin or watershed area between the station and Express Scripts. There are many strong amenities within close proximity of this station.



Diagram by permission from Metro St. Louis

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A number of stakeholders spoke regarding their knowledge about the site. Attendees were fortunate to hear from:

- Lance Peterson, Director of Service Planning at Metro, who provided information regarding station improvements that are planned for spring/summer of 2013 which would include new steps and ADA ramp to N. Hanley road on the west as well as lighting improvements. Metro hopes to add additional bus bays in the future.
- Betty Van Um with UMSL highlighted the benefits of the station to UMSL and their hopes for future uses at the station.
- Glenn Powers, Executive Director of the St. Louis County Planning Department talked about the County's efforts to create new Form-Based zoning and code standards to help support TOD at the station. This station is the only station that falls within unincorporated St. Louis County.
- Nancy Thompson, Project Manager with Great Rivers Greenway, talked about the St. Vincent Greenway and its connection to the station and to the University, and throughout the region.

### Findings:

Based on the conversations, post-surveys and post-walk interviews, the North Hanley Station is an ideal location for a multi-use development plan as there are few businesses near or adjacent to the station that immediately support riders and area residents. Standing at the ticket area, attendees wished for coffee or a warmer place to stand. The sea of the 1705 parking spaces must be crossed to get to University Drive, where most future development is likely to occur. The lot is not marked or lighted well for pedestrian safety. The stations location on the site is as far away from user's access points as possible, and there are significant grade issues.



A Transit Oriented Development Plan is needed that focuses on bridging the gap of the parking lot through redesign and introduction of multi-purpose structures while addressing housing and necessary support amenities. The community, the significant rider base, as well as the MetroLink Station, would benefit from a variety of improvements. These improvements, coupled with mixed-use development would provide a vast resource to the community. Short term improvements suggested include:

- Better station signage and maintenance of existing worn areas.
- Wider sidewalks and new sidewalks where current 'cow paths' exist and more defined sidewalks where streets and sidewalks meet.
- Improved accessibility for the disabled and seniors.
- More seating and shelters for riders
- Better lighting. Cobra heads are not pedestrian scaled and are too far apart.
- Better traffic signals for pedestrians and better defined crosswalks
- More trees, vegetation and benches to provide shade and comfort to pedestrians
- Reduced trash, increase trash receptacles.

Other long term improvements suggested include:

- Multi-family and single family housing
- Retail amenities, i.e., coffee shop, grocery, restaurants
- Healthcare services, such as Urgent Care and a Pharmacy
- Improve access to the station through the new trail system and sidewalks.
- Work to improve overall accessibility.

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## Next Steps:

For the North Hanley Station, it seems the next steps are underway. With the many strengths of the station and the strong support and interest of the University, St. Louis County, and even area developers, the North Hanley Station has significant potential. Critical to the next steps will be getting a revised plan for integrating mixed-use development and housing into the area and make it dovetail with the station. Part of this effort will be to study what will make the station more inviting. It's location on the site makes people feel it's not accessible, welcoming or safe. In addition, the station is not immediately adjacent to homes, stores or other public areas or amenities. In order to promote mixed-use development in the immediate vicinity will require first and foremost the re-evaluation of the current zoning.

Working together with all the stakeholders; businesses, corporations, non-profit organizations, and residents to help define a master plan and design standards while helping educate and engage community leaders, county economic council, to work towards creating a phased development plan for the area is critical for success. Such a plan needs to promote all the elements that make an area walkable and desirable while supporting the basic needs of the community.



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<sup>i</sup> Metro Station Area Profile, North Hanley Station, Metro St. Louis, Mark Phillips, 2012

<sup>ii</sup> Metro Station Area Profile, North Hanley Station, Metro St. Louis, Mark Phillips, 2012