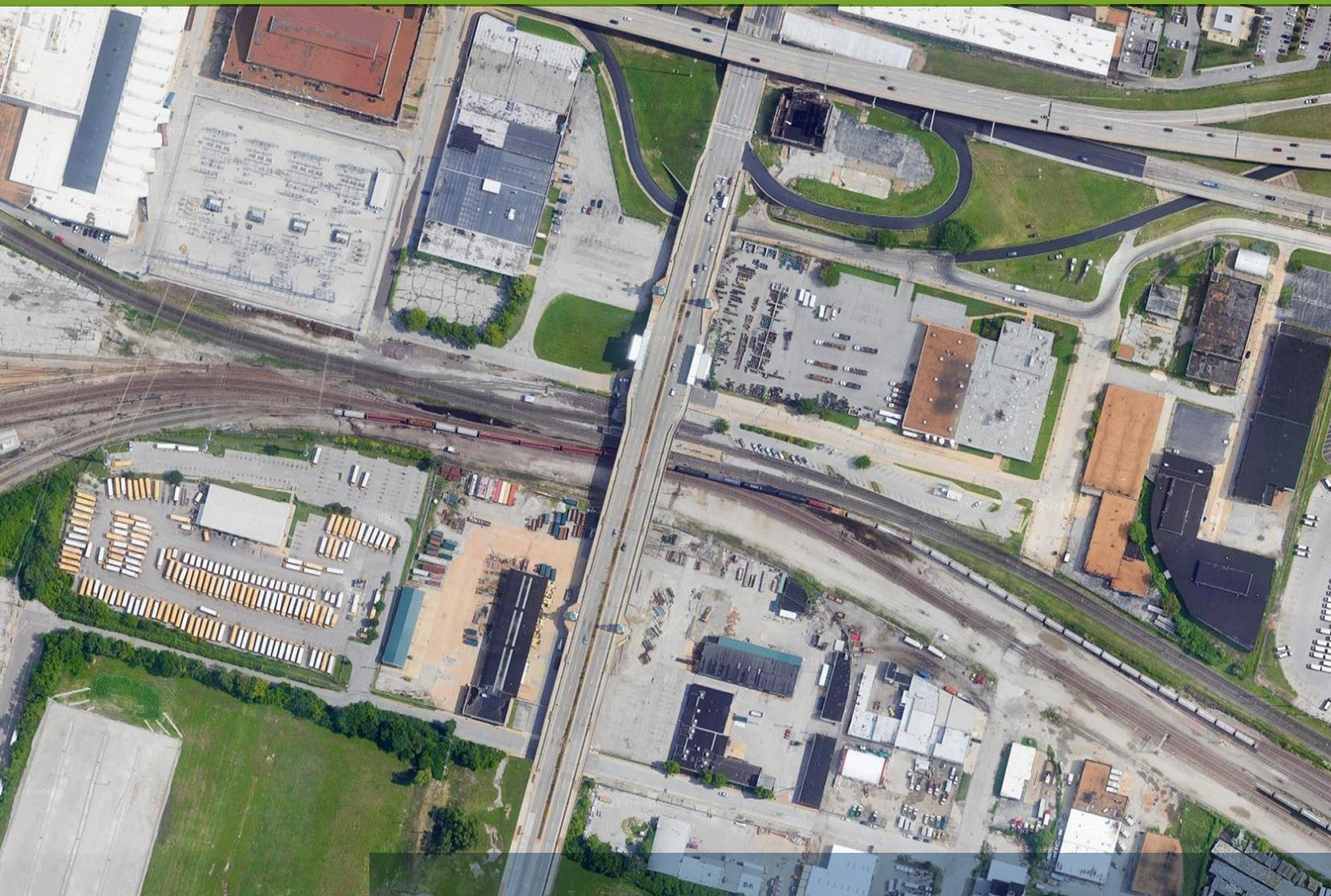




St. Louis

# GRAND METROLINK STATION

Connecting People to Transit and Development Opportunities



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ON THE COVER: The Grand MetroLink Station  
from above. (*Google Earth*)



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The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific region, with members in 81 countries. ULI's extraordinary impact on land use decision-making is based on its members' sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns. Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. Drawing on its members' work, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

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## About ULI St. Louis

As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, national, and international industry leaders and policymakers dedicated to creating better places. The ULI St. Louis District Council brings together real estate professionals, civic leaders, and the St. Louis community for educational programs, initiatives impacting the St. Louis region, and networking events, all in the pursuit of advancing responsible and equitable land use throughout the region. From conversations with 10 people to programs for 200, ULI has a forum for everyone to share, learn, and connect. ULI St. Louis is run by an 18-person Management Committee and guided by a 12-person Advisory Board, with members of each group contributing their individual time, talent, and expertise to advancing ULI's mission in the St. Louis region.

### ULI District Council Leadership

#### **Kacey Cordes**

Vice President, US Bancorp Community Development Corporation  
District Council Chair, ULI St. Louis

#### **Aaron Williams**

Project Manager, Penn Services  
Chair of Mission Advancement, ULI St. Louis

#### **Chip Crawford**

Managing Director, LJC  
Governance Chair, ULI St. Louis

#### **John Langa**

Vice President for Economic Development, Bi-State Development  
Co-Chair, Technical Assistance Panel Committee, ULI St. Louis

#### **Cristen Hardin**

Project Manager, PGAV Planners  
Co-Chair, Technical Assistance Panel Committee, ULI St. Louis



## ULI Advisory Services: National and Global Programs

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics.

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Learn more at [americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services](https://americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services).

## Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

Urban Land Institute harnesses its members' technical expertise to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the St. Louis region. Drawing from our professional membership base, ULI St. Louis offers objective and responsible guidance on various land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The sponsoring organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project and present it to the panel. TAP panelists spend a day interviewing stakeholders, evaluating the challenges, and ultimately arriving at a set of recommendations that the sponsoring organization can use to guide development going forward. As we wrestle with land use decisions today, ULI St. Louis would like to acknowledge that much of St. Louis is located on the traditional and ancestral territory of the Osage Nation, Missouriia, and Illini Confederacy. We thank them for their hospitality and stewardship of this land and hope we can all agree on the importance and genius of our natural environment as we provide guidance on issues around future land use and development.

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ULI Advisory Services identify creative, practical solutions for complex land use and development challenges.



## Technical Assistance Panel and Project Staff

### Panel Members

**Chris Beard**

Director of Traffic Engineering and Planning  
Lochmueller Group

**Justin Carney**

Principal  
Development Strategies

**Erica Henderson**

Economic Development Consultant

**Toyin Oduwole**

Broker/Owner  
St. Louis Realty Partners

**Bonnie Roy**

Partner  
SWT Design

**Will Smith**

Director of Asset Management and Investments  
New + Found

### ULI Project Staff

**Kelly Annis**

Executive Director & Technical Writer, ULI St. Louis

**Kaitlyn Shannon**

Project Manager, ULI St. Louis

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Citizens for Modern Transit [cmt-stl.org](http://cmt-stl.org)

St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation [stlmrc.com](http://stlmrc.com)



A view looking north on Grand Boulevard with the Grand MetroBus stop visible above the rail lines and MetroLink Station below.

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CMT

An elevator and stairs connect transit riders between the MetroBus service on Grand and the MetroLink light rail station below.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been nearly 10 years since the Urban Land Institute – St. Louis conducted the Grand MetroLink Station Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) at the request of Citizens for Modern Transit (CMT). While quite a bit has changed in the area – developers are tackling the renovation of historic structures such as the Armory and City Foundry and others are developing new residential options just south of the MetroLink station – other challenges noted in the 2012 report remain. The station remains disconnected from these exciting new developments and transit riders, other pedestrians, and bicyclists have limited options for mobility around the area. The car reigns supreme on Grand Boulevard and throughout the surrounding area.

Given the development activity and interest in the area around the Grand MetroLink Station and the transit and connectivity challenges that remain, CMT and St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation turned once again to the Urban Land Institute – St. Louis (ULI St. Louis) to study the area around the station to better understand the improvements that could be made to leverage transit, increase connectivity, and develop the area into a district that would be enjoyed by those who live in and around the area as well as a draw for the larger region.

Bordered loosely by Interstate 64/40 to the north, Chouteau Avenue to the south, South Theresa Avenue to the east, and South Spring Street to the west, the study area for this TAP expands beyond the immediate station platform yet remains within what should be a 5-minute walk of the station. At present, however, the area is difficult to traverse as a pedestrian, lacking key connections to/from Grand, transit, and what are or will be key development sites. This lack of connectivity formed the basis for the study and became the focus for many of this report's recommendations.

Certain recommendations from the 2012 TAP have been or are being realized today, including the formation of a redevelopment corporation and the development of Chouteau Greenway, now known as the Brickline Greenway. Other recommendations, such as bringing Forest Park Avenue to grade at its intersection with Grand Boulevard

and the building of platform-style developments along Grand remain unrealized yet continue to be excellent recommendations worth pursuing.

Grand Boulevard and the area around the MetroLink station provide significant connection points for the region. The MetroBus line on Grand boasts the highest ridership in the transit system. Interstate 64/40 runs east to west at the northern edge of the study area. Chouteau Avenue forms the southern border of the study area and is another key east-west corridor. The Brickline Greenway, a signature trail network of Great Rivers Greenway, is under design and is expected to likewise travel through the study area. These macro transportation assets connect the study area to the broader St. Louis region. Yet, the infrastructure comprising these transportation assets has become a barrier to micro-level connectivity, specifically pedestrian and bicyclist movement, throughout the study area.

In order to address this micro connectivity, the TAP panelists recommended that CMT and St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation (together, the Sponsor) focus on improving connections to the surroundings along Grand in the study area. The panelists also placed significant importance on improving the connections to and between the forthcoming Brickline Greenway, MetroLink light rail service, and the MetroBus service on Grand. Grand is physically a “grand” boulevard, featuring a generously wide road deck with four lanes of traffic and a raised median.





The Grand MetroBus Stop on the western side of the Grand Boulevard viaduct.

It is also an island with the only connections off the road deck available north at the interstate, three-tenths of a mile south at Chouteau, or at the bus stop via an elevator or set of stairs. Additional access points, using stairs, ramps, or a combination thereof (a stramp) would improve connections between the transportation along Grand and the development and businesses now located or moving into the area between Chouteau and I-64/40.

New multi-family residential options are under development in the study area and the market has proven strong for market-rate rental units in this part of St. Louis. This residential development will generally cater to a younger demographic (25-35 year olds) and is a welcome addition to the neighborhood. Expanding the supply of new housing to include a broader range of ages and income levels would also be welcome, particularly given the opportunity to enjoy life-long learning at SLU nearby, the proximity to the hospital and health care, and the plentiful transit assets available within a half-mile. Expanding the variety of housing options

and price points will also provide more equitable access to housing for potential residents.

In keeping with the pursuit of more equitable practices and outcomes, the communication and relationship building with the immediate surrounding neighborhoods to-date has been quite good. Extending that reach further north and south into neighborhoods home to commuters who might move through the area on a daily basis is also strongly encouraged. It will be important to communicate that the services and amenities in or coming to the district are for everyone, not just those living or working in the immediate area.

Building on the excellence of Grand and its function as a primary north-south connector, additional emphasis should be placed on expanding connectivity north and south on Grand for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-vehicular traffic. While consolidating all uses on the Grand bridge deck might not be feasible in the near-term, deck space could be optimized for multi-modal transportation, including



strategies such as narrowing or removing the landscaped median, narrowing the existing traffic lanes, and buffering the sidewalk and bike lanes from moving vehicles.

The study area is rich in transit options, yet access to those transit options – the rail station and the bus stop – is limited. Moving between light rail and bus lines requires an elevator ride or stair climb. Moving between the north and south bus lines likewise requires an elevator ride or stair climb. Auto access to the transit park-and-ride lot is limited, confusing, and not intuitive. Expanding and enhancing the transit riders' experience, via improved bus waiting areas and additional options for more open and visible vertical movement, would be most welcome and encouraged. Additional thought should be given to traffic control measures on Grand at the station to enhance the safety of bus riders moving between the east/west facilities. The forthcoming Missouri Department of Transportation study may provide a convenient means for evaluating this portion of Grand, given its proximity to Interstate 64.

At the MetroLink station, building on the improvements to the lower-level plaza, additional lighting, placemaking, and wayfinding would be welcome additions to the station surroundings. As the Brickline Greenway is anticipated to run through or alongside the station, the addition of bicycle amenities at the station plaza may also be beneficial and provide additional means to activate the area.

To the north and south of the station, additional street improvements would go a long way toward creating a more connected and safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Bringing Forest Park Avenue to grade at its intersection with Grand would help slow traffic, decrease motorists' confusion when exiting Forest Park Avenue, and improve pedestrian safety. Creating a walkable/bikeable connection between Grand and Gratiot Street below would likewise improve the experience for those moving between the two streets and replace the dirt path that has been worn by those seeking that connection.

Given the development interest in the study area and the position of St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation, it is a good time to institute a range of development incentives and controls that will help shape

future development in the area for the benefit of residents, visitors, and businesses alike. Establishing development guidelines and/or creating a form-based code for the area will help direct development in a manner that can enhance connectivity throughout the district and even promote connectivity to the Grand roadway by encouraging or incentivizing development up to and connected with the street. Reducing parking requirements, using parking maximums, or requiring the prioritization of transit, walking, and/or biking in new developments will reduce the vehicular traffic in the area and encourage more people to use the sidewalks, trails, and greenway. The use of alternative transportation modes throughout the area will only increase the importance of creating connections between anchors in the district. As new development enters the study area and the gaps of vacant land begin to fill, there is less need to create new anchors or islands of activity and more benefit to focus on the connections between a new development and existing anchors, leveraging the work of others and connecting people throughout the district.

Finally, Saint Louis University (SLU) went to great lengths to rally the community around a new name for the district and its surroundings. The result, Prospect Yards, could and should be leveraged throughout the study area, featuring the name on enhanced wayfinding signage and branding and aligning with the identity as much as possible.

The district is rich in transportation connectivity, yet this macro-level transportation focus has led to a situation where automobile transportation is dominant, transit is tucked away in awkward spaces, and pedestrians and bicyclists are few and far between as the experience is unsafe and uninviting. By focusing on micro-level connectivity and multimodal transportation throughout the district, the tide can turn on the nature and character of this study area.

It is exciting to see development interest in the area, and the work of St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation should be applauded. With the organization's further guidance, the recommendations herein, and CMT's focus on connecting people with transit, the area is poised to become one of St. Louis' shining examples of development 'done right.'

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Midtown St. Louis is experiencing a level of development interest not seen in the area for years. From commercial development, such as City Foundry and the Armory, to residential development, as seen at the Steelcote Lofts, the land around the intersections of Grand Boulevard, Forest Park Avenue, Interstate 64/40, and Chouteau is of particular interest and, at the same time, poses a particular set of challenges.

As these development pressures increase and more people move in and around the area loosely bound by the roadways noted above (the study area), St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation (Redevelopment Corp.) and Citizens for Modern Transit recognized the benefit of providing ready and even improved access to public transit in the study area. While the area is served by both MetroLink light rail and MetroBus services, the connections

to both are challenging. The Grand MetroLink Station sits 40+ feet below Grand Boulevard, it is difficult to access by car or on foot, and it is isolated from surrounding uses by the heavy rail line to the south and the topography and industrial uses to the east, north, and west. The Grand Blvd. bus line, traveling north and south along Grand, boasts the highest ridership in the system, yet is marked by an isolated stop on top of the raised roadway, above



The study area is bound by Interstate 64/40 to the north, Chouteau Avenue to the south, South Theresa to the east, and South Spring to the west. The station is marked by the MetroLink logo.

the light rail station, and divided north and south by four lanes of automobile traffic on Grand Boulevard. The area is transit-rich – with light rail, bus, and vehicular access – yet the buildings, spaces, and uses within the area remain incredibly disconnected and difficult to navigate whether on foot, in a car, using transit, or other modalities.

Given this challenging mix of development pressures, transit access, and lack of connectivity, CMT and the Redevelopment Corp. turned to ULI St. Louis for insights and advice regarding the improvements that could be made to the study area to better connect transit riders to the surrounding developments, better connect the north and south campuses of Saint Louis University, and leverage and enhance the area's various transportation services to the broader region's benefit.

ULI St. Louis convened a Technical Assistance Panel to address the questions posed by CMT and the Redevelopment Corp. The TAP panel, comprised of real estate professionals with development, planning, economic development, and brokerage expertise, applied their knowledge and expertise to the questions at hand, reviewing briefing material supplied by the Sponsor, touring the study area, and interviewing stakeholders. Following the information gathering process, the TAP panel deliberated and ultimately arrived at a set of recommendations that the Sponsor can leverage as it considers future development and improvements in and around the study area.

## Questions for the Panel

1. It has been 10 years since the last TAP in this area. What “big ideas” from the 2012 Grand Station TAP have been implemented successfully, what hasn't worked out, or what remains on the table relative to potential redevelopment of the 2021 study site? How might these “big ideas” impact the redevelopment of this site?
2. Given grade separation and challenges regarding access and connectivity, what is the best way to integrate the site with the surrounding new projects in the redevelopment areas both north and south of I-64?
3. Given those surrounding developments and the Redevelopment Corp.'s vision to turn this area into a 'district,' what is the highest and best use for the site and how should the massing begin to take shape?
  - a. Surrounding areas have a unique development character: institutional (SLU, BJC, Wash U, Harris-Stowe), arts and cultural (Grand Center and Forest Park), entertainment and hospitality (Downtown West, Soccer Stadium, Union Station). What is the recommended “redevelopment identity” for this site?
  - b. Addressing equity in land use decisions: How can development at the site become an asset and draw for the surrounding neighborhoods, particularly those south of the site?
4. What are the best solutions for access, connectivity, and integrating the use and design of the Brickline Greenway and the Grand MetroLink/MetroBus Station to the site? How can redevelopment of the site both leverage and enhance these major transportation components?



## STUDY AREA – CONTEXT

The study area around the Grand MetroLink Station is notable in its rich transportation assets. It sits at the crossroads of the most heavily-used bus line in the St. Louis region and the east-west MetroLink light rail lines. Interstate 64/40 runs east and west just one block north of the station and Forest Park Avenue parallels the interstate another block north. Chouteau Avenue, also a four-lane east-west vehicular corridor, sits two blocks south of the station.

The study area is home to several industrial businesses, including a compressed natural gas manufacturing/distribution facility, a significant electrical transfer station, the Armory (currently under redevelopment), and land currently leased by a school bus transportation company. Land in the southwest corner of the study area has been acquired by the Redevelopment Corp. and assembled for development, most recently under consideration by Cullinan Properties as the site for Iron Hill, a 14-acre \$335 million mixed-use project that was scrapped due to pressures potential tenant businesses experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The site remains a viable, shovel-ready development site.

Residential uses are also entering the study area. Across South Theresa Street to the east, the Steelcote Lofts are

taking shape, poised to provide new residential options close to the light rail station and bus stop. At the corner of Papin Street and Grand, another parcel is undergoing planning efforts, which may bring additional residential options as well as ground-floor retail tenant(s) to the study area.

Entertainment and destination uses are also entering the study area. The Armory, an adaptive reuse development one block west of Grand and fronting Interstate 64/40 will feature a unique bar and play venue in addition to the office space. City Foundry, bordered by Interstate 64/40 to the south and South Spring to the east, features an event venue, a movie theater, office space and St. Louis' first food hall. Finally, plans are underway for the construction of the region's second Top Golf location in the southeastern corner of the study site.



Looking north to the study area with Chouteau Avenue in the foreground and Saint Louis University in the distance.



The study site is surrounded by institutional, residential, and commercial assets.

## Considerations

Given the transportation access at the site and the development currently underway or contemplated in the study area, the TAP panelists considered five key drivers throughout the course of their deliberations.

**Highest and Best Use.** The land in the study area is becoming increasingly valuable with each building redevelopment or site conversion from industrial or vacant status to a more active and/or public-facing use. Understanding the future land use potential within the study area hinges on a determination of the highest and best use of the land in light of the trend in development around the station.

**Topography.** The station and significant acres of land sit in a valley. The land rises steeply to the north under the interstate. Along the southern edge of the study site, there is another significant grade change along the southern edge of Gratiot Street back up to Chouteau Avenue. The land between the interstate and Gratiot is level, yet the mass of the viaduct support structure for Grand Boulevard is an imposing barrier to east and west movement, and for the areas open beneath Grand, the mass of the roadway above is likewise significant and creates a large tunnel space below.

**Traffic and Access.** In addition to Grand supporting the bus line with the systems' highest ridership rates, Grand Boulevard is a major automobile corridor, featuring four

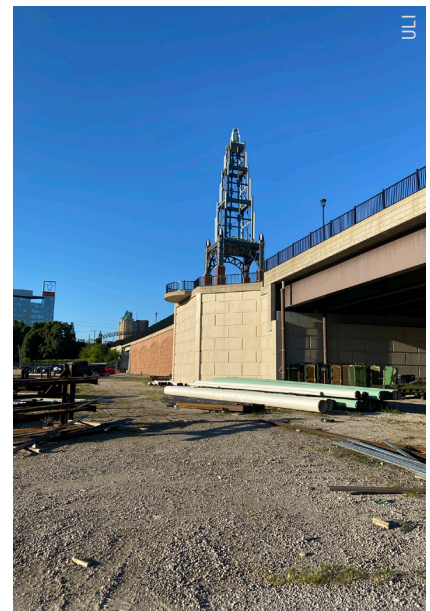




LEFT: The Grand MetroLink Station. RIGHT: Stairs and elevator access move transit passengers between the bus and light rail platforms.



LEFT: Gratiot Street and the Grand viaduct. RIGHT: The view looking north toward the Armory and Saint Louis University from Gratiot St.



LEFT: Gratiot St. and the topography change to the south/left. MIDDLE: View from Gratiot St. south/up to the Grand Blvd. sign and Doisey Center beyond. RIGHT: Businesses in the area make creative use of the space under the road deck for storage.



lanes of traffic and, on the elevated portion of the roadway, a raised median down the centerline. For transit riders requiring a transfer between the northbound bus stop and the southbound stop, the station directs riders to the elevator or stairs where they travel down to the rail/ground level, cross to the elevator or stairs on the other side, and move up again to the Grand Boulevard street level. Many transit riders instead take a more direct, however unsafe, route, choosing to cross the four lanes of automobile traffic and raised median to the other side of Grand.

**Adjacent Uses.** Several of the surrounding developments in the study area or adjoining it have been mentioned, yet it is also important to note the uses found within a five- to ten-minute walk of the station. Saint Louis University's primary campus is located north of the interstate and the medical campus is roughly a half-mile south of the station, with Chouteau as the northern boundary of the medical campus. Beyond SLU to the north is the Grand Center arts and entertainment district, featuring live theater venues, art galleries, restaurants, and more.

**Community Input.** The Redevelopment Corp. has taken care to build relationships and trust with the surrounding neighborhood residents and their identified leadership. Saint Louis University is a significant property owner in the area and the Redevelopment Corp.'s moves and development decisions will have lasting and ripple effects on and into the surrounding neighborhoods. It continues to be important that anyone developing in this area strives to understand the desires of the surrounding community when contemplating future development decisions.

To that end, and in an effort to better understand the goals and concerns of property owners, business leaders, city and transit leadership, and neighborhood residents, the panelists interviewed a series of stakeholders during the TAP process. The insights highlighted in the sidebar were gathered during those interviews and helped inform the discussions that shaped the TAP panel's recommendations.

### Insights from Stakeholder Interviews

- The Grand bus and light rail stations provide important commuting connections for transit riders.
- The study area is not walkable. The presence of fast-moving vehicles on Grand and the topography separating the bus and roadway from the MetroLink station below is challenging and uninviting.
- Grand is also an important access point for the current and planned developments in the study area.
- Given the centrality of the study area, it does not have a sense of place, a clear identity, nor is it welcoming.
- Similar to the lack of a sense of place, wayfinding assistance in the area is limited and does not extend beyond basic instructions for accessing the transit services. Wayfinding does not include assistance to surrounding services or amenities.
- Safety and security is an issue at and around the transit stations, with the below-grade nature of the light rail station posing security challenges and the separation of the north/south bus lines on Grand posing a safety challenge.
- Connections between the current and proposed developments in the area are missing. With the addition of new businesses and housing in the area, further pedestrian and other multi-modal connections would help improve access, facilitate movement, and improve the sense of security in the area with the presence of more eyes on the street.

# 2012 TAP RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2012, CMT commissioned a ULI TAP at the Grand MetroLink Station, with the goal of identifying the development potential around the light rail station and seeking ways to better connect light rail and bus riders with the surrounding businesses and services. That TAP, nearly a decade ago, delivered a set of recommendations, some of which have been implemented while others remain unrealized.

**Pedestrian Connections and Safety.** At the time, the panelists noted the need for improved pedestrian connections to and between the transit access points and the surroundings. While those challenges and improvements remain central to the current TAP, a raised median on Grand was installed to discourage pedestrians crossing Grand and further encourage the use of the elevator and stairs to connect between the northbound and southbound bus routes.

Another factor in improving the pedestrian experience centered around improvements at the Grand and Forest Park Avenue intersection. The 2012 recommendation that Forest Park Avenue be brought to grade with Grand remains an important consideration and is supported by the 2021 TAP panel, this time pointing to the successful reconfiguration of the intersection of Forest Park Avenue and Kingshighway as a good case study.

**Chapter 353.** The 2012 TAP panel also recommended the formation of a Chapter 353 redevelopment corporation to help facilitate and coordinate development in the station area and between SLU's campuses. Today's TAP co-sponsor, St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation, formed following the 2012 TAP and plays a critical role in the area today.

**High-speed Rail.** Of the bold ideas noted in the 2012 TAP, the addition of high-speed rail at the station, has not been realized and remains unlikely. However, the concept of the area serving as a transit hub for bus, light rail, and other mobility options is still highly viable.

**Chouteau Greenway.** Another 2012 recommendation

involved the connection of downtown St. Louis to Forest Park via a system of lakes, ponds, and greenways. Once dubbed "Chouteau's Greenway," this system of greenways and trails, led and operated by Great Rivers Greenway, is currently under construction and will travel through the study site. Today, this greenway is known as the Brickline Greenway and will also extend north to Fairground Park and south to Tower Grove Park.

**Platform Development.** Finally, pointing to the winning submission for the 2006 ULI Gerald D. Hines Urban Design Competition, the subject of which was this very same station/street design dilemma, the 2012 TAP panel noted that platform developments along Grand are worthy of pursuit. (In 2006, the Harvard University Graduate School of Design proposed a design solution that is constructed on the ground at the station level yet connects with Grand at the street deck level thereby engaging with the street, creating connection points for pedestrians, and effectively creating an inviting and walkable streetscape along Grand Boulevard.)



2012 TAP Report prepared by ULI St. Louis.

## 2021 THEMES

Building on the 2012 TAP report and incorporating updated development information, challenges, and stakeholder input, the 2021 TAP panel identified a series of themes that should guide any new development in the study area. These themes focused on connectivity – to surrounding developments and among transit options – and the highest and best use for the study area land, keeping in mind district identity and equity goals.

### Improving Connections to Surroundings

Grand Boulevard is the spine that runs through the study area and connects Saint Louis University's two campuses, Grand Center, and the neighborhoods further north and south. The functionality and effectiveness of this connecting thoroughfare, however, is lost for the pedestrian, bicyclists, those riding scooters, or anything that is not an automobile.

When considering transportation improvements in the area – particularly non-auto transportation – Grand should remain the focal point for the long-term, providing the platform for all modes of transportation. In the near-term, the bridge deck should be optimized for better multi-modal transportation. Strategies such as

removing or narrowing the landscaped median, narrowing existing traffic lanes, and further buffering the sidewalk and bike lanes from moving vehicles would improve the experience for those moving north and south along Grand. Ultimately, it would be preferable to move all modes of transportation onto Grand, but this kind of long-term strategy will require shifts in how St. Louisans think about transportation and mode choices.

Similarly, by extending the potential for enhanced multimodal connectivity along Grand north and south of the station, there is an opportunity to lighten the vehicular load on Grand and encourage additional transit ridership if it is clear that other modes of transportation are not only accommodated, but welcome and encouraged along Grand.



View on the Grand Boulevard road deck looking north.



Connection and facilitated vertical movement between the surface of Grand on the bridge and the expanse of land and structures below need innovative solutions. At present, an elevator and staircase at the bus stop provide the only opportunity to move between the street level and the expanse of space below, leaving businesses and future residents without ready access to all points north on Grand. Today, a person wishing to walk from a business south of the rail lines must walk south to Chouteau and east or west to where it intersects with Grand, adding up to three-tenths of a mile to their walk.

Once on Grand, the pedestrian experience is not pleasant. Grand is built for and caters to vehicular traffic, and pedestrians are an afterthought. There are a number of people who do not have transportation choices and must walk across Grand to access the transit options. The experience today is not pleasant and would be greatly enhanced by street-level activation and engagement for pedestrians.

Within the study area, at grade between the interstate and Gratiot Street, many of the streets are disconnected and often dead-end. By restoring the street grid and

reconnecting businesses and development sites, the human scale is restored and people can more freely move around, traveling to/from businesses or even returning home at the end of the day.

Finally, the panelists noted that the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) is due to launch a study of Interstate 64/40, focusing on movement through and connections to the interstate in the study area and beyond. This study and potential for connection improvements present an opportunity for increased connectivity throughout the area as well as potential new development sites should on/off ramps be reconfigured or decommissioned.

### **Connectivity – Leverage Brickline, MetroLink, and MetroBus**

The study area is rich in transportation options, and there is great potential for an enhanced transportation experience for residents, employees, and visitors to the businesses along Grand. Pedestrians, bikes, and vehicular traffic should continue to exist on Grand, yet the vehicular lanes are worthy of redesign in order to consolidate



The Grand viaduct with the freight rail lines in the foreground, the Grand MetroLink and MetroBus station in the middle ground, and Saint Louis University beyond.

auto traffic and create safe and buffered space for non-vehicular (peds, bikes, scooters) modes of transportation.

The bus service that is currently active on Grand should be used as a model for service in other parts of the region. The high-capacity MetroBus service and the use of electric fleets on Grand should be featured and leveraged throughout the system where possible.

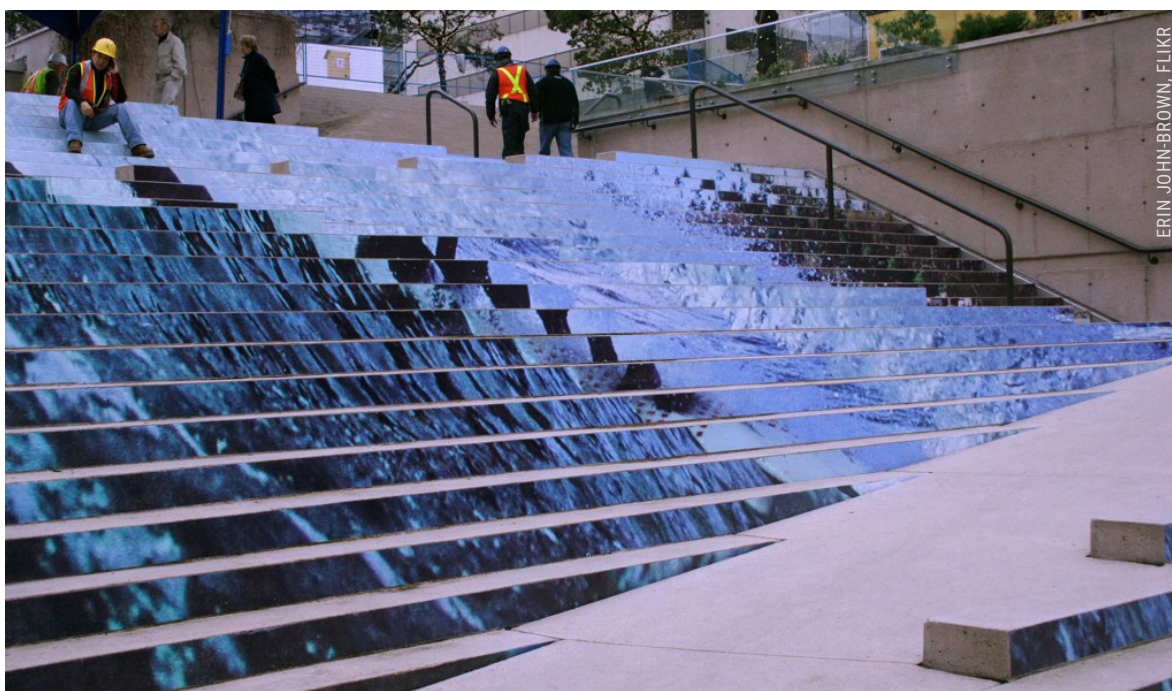
To encourage additional transit riders and to better connect those transferring between MetroLink and MetroBus, there needs to be an enhanced pedestrian grade change (vertically) to help people move between the road deck and the ground level. The elevators and stairways in place today are inadequate, closed in, and unwelcoming. The nature of these connection points and transition mechanisms further alienates potential transit riders who have a choice to use transit or a personal vehicle.

Ramping will be necessary to ensure accessibility for all and yet stairs may be more efficient for some. Innovative and combined ramp and stair designs can provide a choice of movement and could become a signature design

feature and/or amenity for the area. Indeed, a stramp, a combined ramp and stair facility, could draw more people along Grand and encourage easy movement between the street level amenities and developments and businesses at grade below. This stramp feature would also provide a welcome integration feature for the Brickline Greenway and the variety of wheeled and pedestrian users expected to enjoy the miles of trails through the study area and points beyond.

### Highest and Best Use around the Station

As it relates to land use around the Grand MetroLink Station and in the surrounding study area, additional residential uses should be considered. At present, all apartments within a one-mile radius of the study site are running at a 98 percent occupancy rate, demonstrating the strength of the residential market in the area. While current residential construction in the area will produce market-rate units generally catering to a 25-35-year-old demographic, the TAP panel encourages additional new residential development that would be welcoming to a broader range of ages and incomes. Older residents,



A stramp is a combined staircase and ramp.



for example, might be attracted to the life-long learning options at SLU or Harris-Stowe State University, the proximity of health care resources at the nearby hospitals, and the availability of transit.

In addition to residential uses, hotel and office uses could also be of market interest in the future. Present conditions may make financing these types of uses difficult today, but in the future, the addition of hotel and/or office uses could be particularly interesting for this area of the city.

To date, developments in and around the study area have had to rely on the addition of a significant anchor use as a draw, largely due to the lack of connectivity between developments, i.e., each development has had to stand successfully on its own. At this stage in the area's economic growth, however, new development coming to the study area may now be able to focus on the connections between existing anchors rather than the creation of a new and separate anchor.

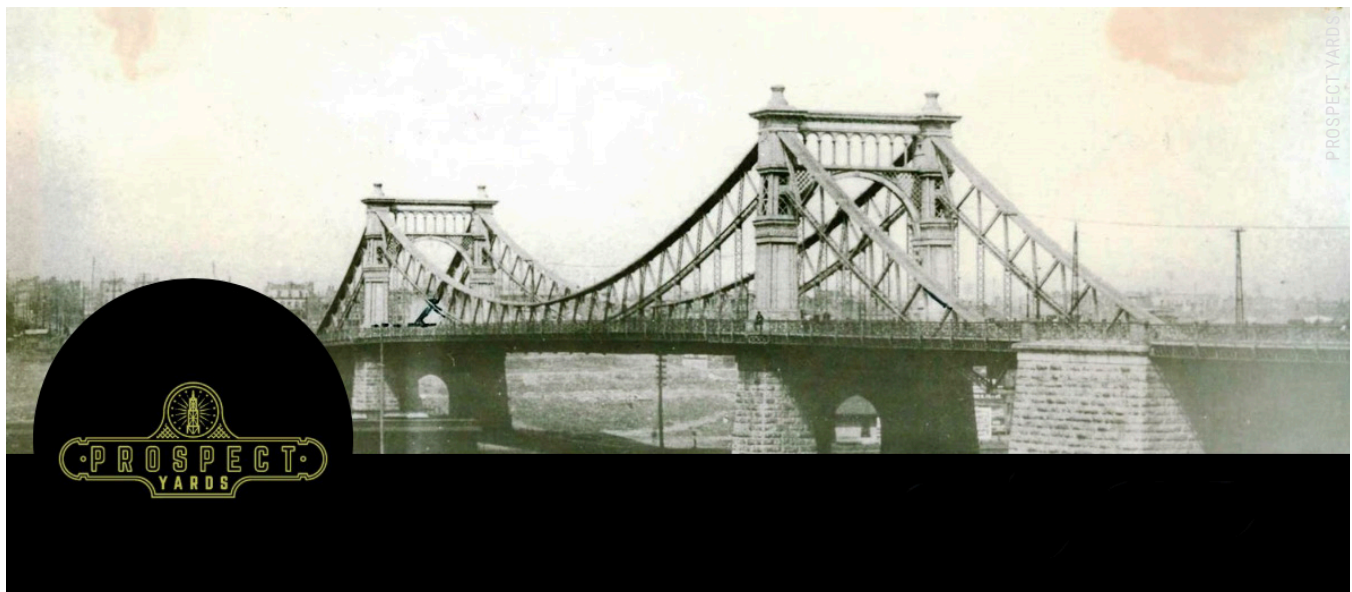
## Identity

As development around the study area begins to expand, it is important to consider a cohesive and cogent identity for the area around Grand Station. Saint Louis University and the Redevelopment Corp. have identified the broader area

(north to Laclede, west to Vandeventer and Spring, south to Chouteau, and east to Compton) as Prospect Yards. While the study area expands slightly east of the Prospect Yards footprint, the panelists would like to see that identity woven into the fabric of the district and leveraged by transit and private developers alike. That identity could – and should – take into account the entertainment, residential, and community mobility uses for multi-modal transportation and even emphasize transit as a central element of this portion of the district's identity. That identity would focus on the connections throughout the district, weaving together the multi-modal connections between developments and connections among the neighborhoods proximate to the station as well as those further north and south of the station. The identity would also leverage the proximity of and connections to City Foundry, Armory, Chaifetz Arena, Grand Center, Saint Louis University (both campuses), Iron Hill, and more.

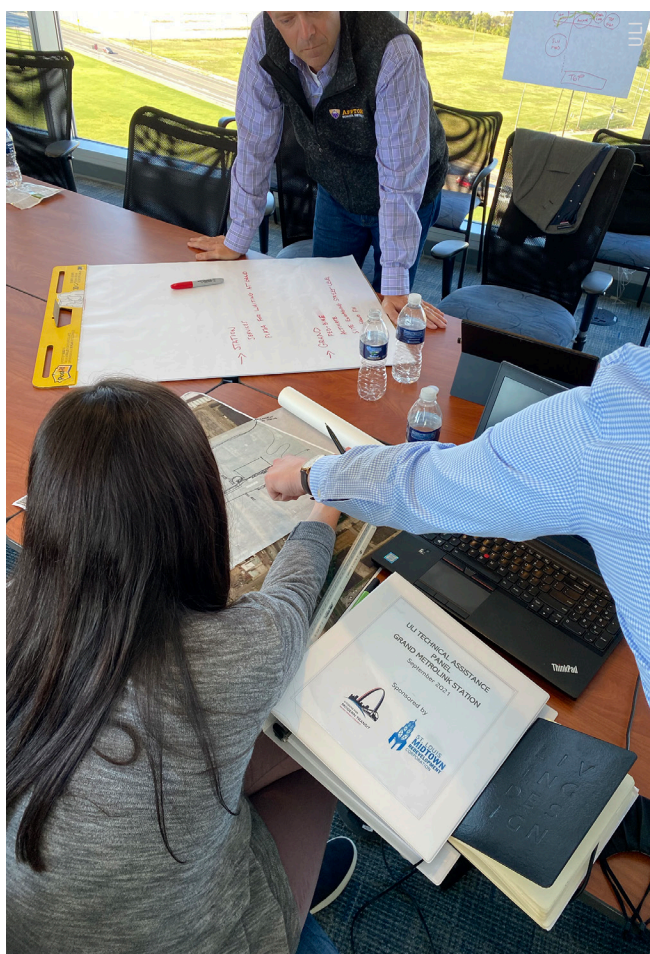
## Equity

ULI is interested in promoting development opportunities that include social equity as a core value. While most of this focus centers around racial equity, there are also opportunities to expand the equitable focus to also include opportunities for diverse age groups and income



The western half of the study area is located within Prospect Yards, a 150-acre district in Midtown St. Louis. The image above is a historical photo of the Grand Boulevard viaduct with the Prospect Yards logo.





TAP panelists evaluating the connections to and around the study area from the surrounding neighborhoods.

levels. By expanding the housing options in and around the study area, residents of all ages and incomes may begin to enjoy the benefits of living in the center of life-long learning opportunities, proximate hospital/medical services, and transit.

While the TAP Sponsor was deliberate in the inclusion of leadership from nearby neighborhood associations, Grand Boulevard is a connector to neighborhoods even further north of Grand Center and south to South Grand and beyond. The TAP panel strongly encourages active engagement and communication with these additional neighborhoods and their citizen leaders to better understand the types of goods and services that they might find beneficial in the study area. Additionally, considering these services and goods through the lens of the transit rider will be important as bus and light rail riders could easily disembark and stop to shop during their evening or end-of-shift commutes.

New development entering the study area and the Redevelopment Corp. will be well-served by communicating far and wide, and personally to neighbors, that, "this is what is here, this is what is coming, and this is what we hope to attract."

## 2021 RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a tremendous amount of potential around the Grand MetroLink Station in Midtown St. Louis. With development interest increasing in the area and improvements like the Brickline Greenway on the horizon, it is time to set a foundation for future development that will serve transit riders, property owners, residents, and visitors to the area well into the future.

### Build on the Excellence of Grand

With its high transit ridership and presence of commuters using Grand throughout the day and into the evening, the addition of a community mobility hub at the Grand Station would be of benefit – for area residents and transit riders alike. In addition to linking transit riders more efficiently and directly to and between bus and light rail services, the hub could also be home to other mobility services like scooter rentals, bike share, and electric vehicle charging stations. Such a facility might also incorporate neighborhood services that could serve commuters passing through as well as residents living in and around the station.

By default, Grand serves as the primary north-south linkage for bus riders and automobile traffic. Future development and improvements to Grand should embrace and expand upon this north-south connection capacity to serve all modes of transportation. This important connectivity should be highlighted and promoted as a primary benefit to living, working, or moving through the study area.

The Grand Boulevard viaduct is generous in its width and has the capacity to carry far more than the auto and bus traffic it caters to today. By repurposing some of the space taken by the median and the generous lane widths, additional space can be carved out to provide safer and more welcoming north-south passage for pedestrians and bicyclists. This narrower roadway for vehicles will also serve as a mechanism to help calm automobile traffic moving along Grand, further increasing the ability to move safely along Grand using other means of transportation.

### Improvements to Transit Access

The study area is one of the most transit-rich districts in the region. At the same time, accessing those transit options is challenging. Light rail riders must travel below Grand Boulevard to access the station, and bus riders must travel below Grand to the light rail station and use the elevator or stairs back up to the road deck for the bus stop on the other side. Others choose to cross the speeding traffic on Grand to access the opposite stop directly. Additional means of vertical movement between the light rail station and the road deck and bus stop above is needed.

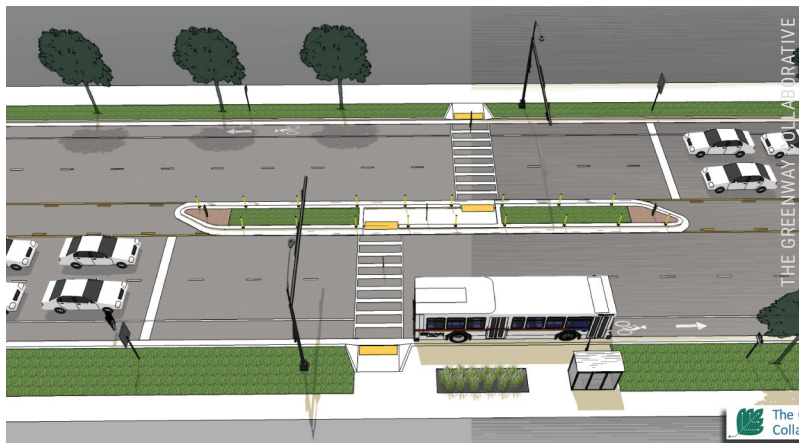
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The current options – either the closed-in elevator or set of stairs – are really limited and the experience is unappealing.

– TAP Panelist

The options currently in place to move between the bus and light rail station include an elevator and a set of stairs. One panelist noted that the experiences of each are intimidating and unappealing as both feel very closed-in and small. By providing more open and visible means of vertical mobility at the station, riders will have an easier time finding access points and those who use transit by choice may be more comfortable returning to this station over time.





TOP, BOTTOM: Crosswalk improvements could more safely connect MetroBus riders transferring between the north and southbound routes. MIDDLE: A wide crosswalk with a different paving material and separate walk lights provide safe passage across a wide roadway.

The reliance on the current elevator system places a burden on one solution and funnels all riders to one point of access. This limited access could be expanded via additional ramps, stairs, and open areas along Grand.

Building on this concept of and need for more vertical mobility along the Grand viaduct, it would be beneficial to integrate public vertical mobility into adjacent developments as each comes to life in the study area. Greater access and more frequent access points encourage pedestrians to move freely and safely along Grand and between developments. More pedestrians also mean more eyes on the street and often also result in increased public safety.

The current configuration of the north and south bus stops on Grand is designed to keep riders safe by discouraging pedestrian crossing on Grand. Instead, riders are directed to ride the elevator down to light rail level, cross to the other side of the viaduct and take the elevator back up to the street level on Grand. With the other bus stop visible just feet away on the other side of Grand, pedestrians are just as likely to cross Grand directly and dodge traffic and scramble the median along the way. Instead of prioritizing the vehicle, priority should be placed on the pedestrian and pedestrian safety, and a crosswalk or other traffic control mechanism should be installed across Grand between the MetroBus stops.

In another manner of prioritizing pedestrians and transit riders, enhanced MetroBus waiting areas off of Grand could greatly improve the transit rider experience and improve safety for all by creating more space for riders to wait during transfer or connection points.



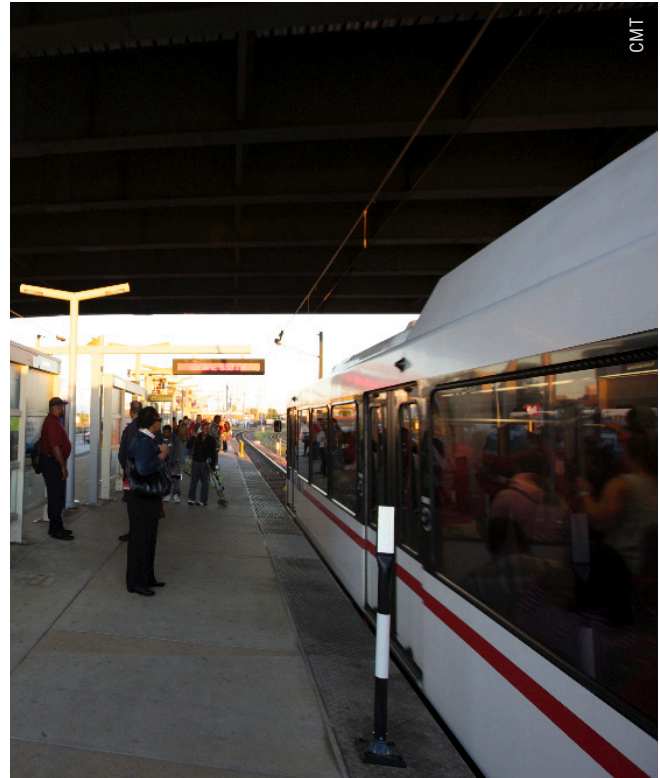


The current MetroLink station is positioned below the Grand viaduct and would benefit from additional lighting and improved points of access.

## Station-level Improvements

At the light rail station level, the improvements to the plaza area directly under the roadway have improved the rider experience to a certain degree, yet more is needed. Placemaking features such as water, overhead LED ribbon lighting, and additional art could make the area more interesting to move through. Lighting under the roadway, in particular, needs attention as the space feels dark and enclosed and is therefore not as inviting or as safe as it should be.

There are streets around the station that have been closed, limiting traffic movement between Grand Center, the east-west corridors, and the station. Restoring the street grid will not only assist vehicular movement, it will also provide more ready access to the Metro parking lot and transit assets for those wishing to park and ride. Should Metro determine that the current park-and-ride lot is no longer necessary – or perhaps not necessary in its current configuration (e.g., excess spaces), the site could become



yet another development parcel for those looking for transit-oriented, development-ready sites.

Finally, the station-level experience and services could and should become a landing and service station for bicyclists using the forthcoming Brickline Greenway. The space at the station is such that the addition of a bike service station or repair facility could easily fit into the landscape, thereby providing important services for greenway users and further enlivening and activating the space under the Grand Boulevard viaduct.

## North and South of Station

In addition to the recommended improvements at or adjacent to the light rail station and bus stops, there are certain improvements just north and south of the station/stop that would likewise improve the rider experience and improve access to and within the study area.

While Grand is a grand connector on a macro scale, micro connections to and from Grand are difficult. The addition



LEFT: Pedestrians have trod a path to/from Grand down to Gratiot Street below. RIGHT: Forest Park Avenue crosses under Grand, leaving cars to exit/enter Grand in four separate areas resulting in four separate pedestrian crossings.

of multimodal connections and alternative mobility options to the area would greatly improve the connection to and between major destinations proximate to the Grand MetroLink and MetroBus stations. Similarly, as the Sponsor and developers consider more active and direct connections to the Grand road deck, priority should be placed on the addition of vertical pedestrian and bicycle connections between Grand and Gratiot Street. Employees of the businesses on Gratiot who use transit have trod an informal path between Grand and Gratiot below, but this path is not paved, wide enough, or safe. As residential development in the study area is completed and people begin to move in, this need to connect more directly to Grand and the transit options beyond will only become more pressing.

North of the station and study area, pedestrians are again challenged to find safe passage among the vehicular traffic at Forest Park Avenue and Grand Boulevard. The

intersection today, with Forest Park below grade and Grand above, provides for faster vehicular commutes through the area. Pedestrians are left facing on-ramp and off-ramp traffic from Forest Park and are then moved closer to the Grand roadway as the sidewalk crosses over Forest Park. Again, the intent to move vehicles through quickly translates beyond Forest Park to cars entering/leaving the area, and the area is not safe for pedestrians. Recent improvements further west on Forest Park Avenue, where the roadway was brought to grade to intersect with Kingshighway, may prove to be a good example of how this type of reconfiguration can further serve and protect pedestrians and other non-vehicular traffic while still providing adequate movement and speed through the intersection.

Between Forest Park Avenue and the station, Interstate 64/40 travels east to west through the area. The panelists learned of a study that MoDOT is preparing to launch to better understand the potential for improvements to the



interstate network through this section of the city. The Sponsor is encouraged to work with MoDOT to lessen impacts of the interstate in the area, whether through on/off ramp decommissioning or rerouting of other assets to help restore opportunities for development and multimodal connectivity around this busy section of the city.

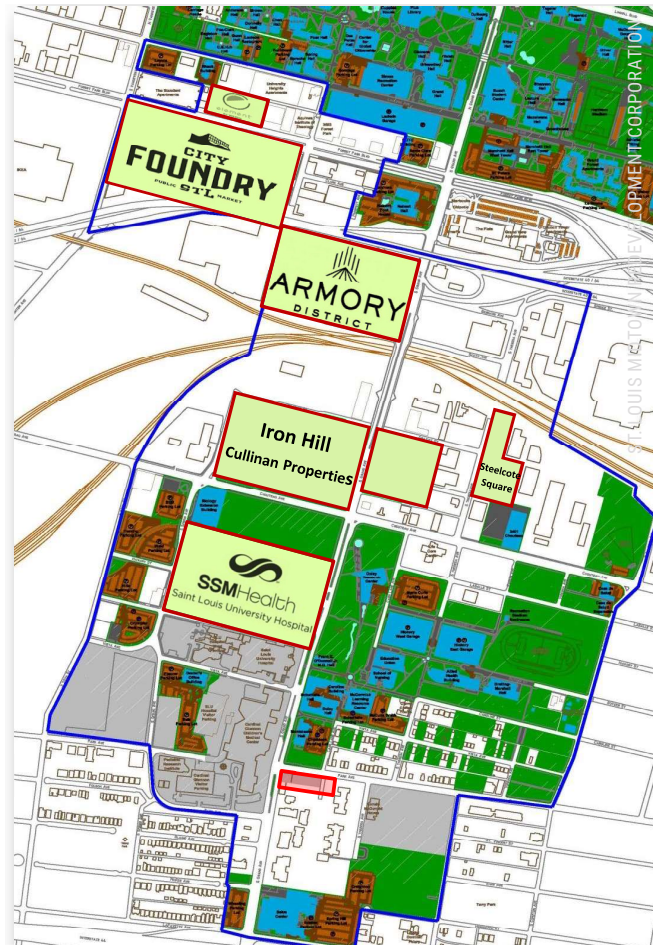
## Development in the District

Focusing on the potential for new real estate development in the study area, the Redevelopment Corp. has a significant and exciting role to play in shaping the future of the area and the connections throughout. Work that the Redevelopment Corp. has undertaken to date and the care with which it has built relationships with business leaders and property owners will serve as a strong foundation for establishing development guidelines going forward. Guidelines of this nature will help define the desired future development within the organization's footprint and can establish criteria upon which all new development will be built.

It should also be noted that the TAP panel approached the study area with the understanding that the current businesses operating in the district intend to remain in place. Over time, as businesses seek growth opportunities beyond what their present locations may accommodate and land then becomes available within the district, these recommendations and the development guidelines will come into play for those parcels as well.

**Parking.** Given the transit-rich nature of the Redevelopment Corp.'s footprint, it may wish to consider instituting parking maximums or establish a district parking management system to share parking and lessen parking mandates (burdens) on individual developments.

**Incentive District.** The authority that is granted the Redevelopment Corp. via the Chapter 353 designation is an excellent start to an active development force in the area. Added to that tool could be an incentive district, such as a Transportation Development District, which could assemble dedicated funding for public realm improvements and shared amenities in the taxing area.



The study area is situated in the center of a number of development projects currently underway.



The Iron Hill site at the northwest corner of Chouteau and Grand remains a development site of particular interest in the study area.





The eastern edge of the study area is marked by the Steelcote Square residential development taking shape.

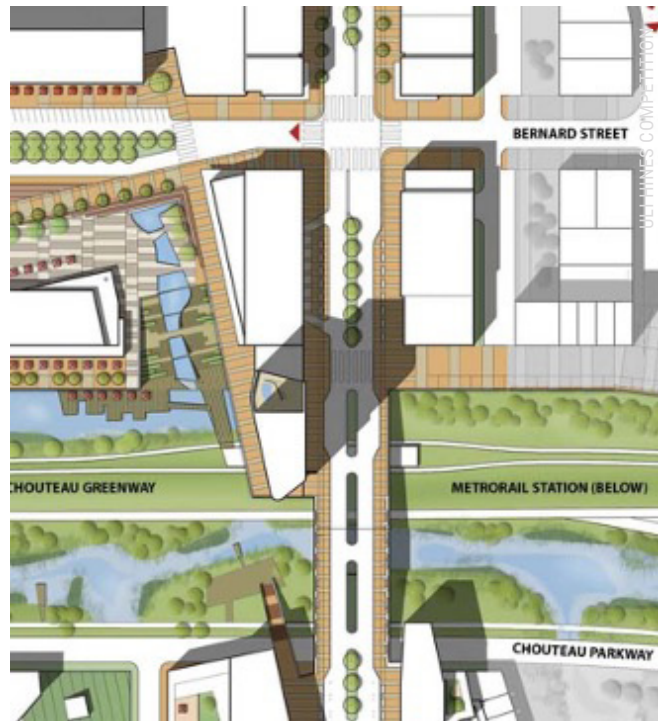


The TAP panelists touring the study area and meeting with property owners and business owners.



**Connect to Grand.** As new development takes shape in the area, buildings adjacent to Grand should take further design steps to actually connect with the roadway. Developments that otherwise may approach but not touch the roadway could be incentivized to go a step further and actually build up to and physically connect with Grand Blvd. This platform style of development will begin to activate Grand at the street level and still provide ample opportunity for activation in the spaces below the level of the road deck. It is encouraging to see plans for new development in the area that will begin to close the gap to Grand. Taking one step further, however, and actually connecting to the roadway would create a sense of place for the development and begin to shape a much more human-scale, street-level experience for non-vehicular traffic on Grand Boulevard.

**Form-based Code.** Instituted in other parts of the city, the Redevelopment Corp. may wish to consider implementing a form-based code for the study area to further promote more urban and dense development types.



TOP RIGHT: The proposed building placement for this new development, close to Grand, is a great improvement. BOTTOM LEFT, RIGHT: Connecting developments directly to Grand to create a streetscape on the Grand road deck, as demonstrated in the 2006 ULI Hines Competition award-winning design, would be even more impactful and transformative for the district.

**Prioritize Transit.** In working with future developers and business owners interested in moving into the study area, measures could be taken to require or encourage developments to prioritize transit, biking, and walking in order to further reduce auto dependency in the area and maximize the readily available transit resources.

**Public Realm.** In addition to connecting new developments to the Grand bridge and street level, space could be expanded outward from the viaduct. Enhancing and expanding the public realm off of the Grand viaduct will assist in engaging with and connecting to adjacent developments as and where it makes sense related to the use at the development or building site.

**Identity.** At the time of designing the branding and location of wayfinding throughout the study area, the Redevelopment Corp. is encouraged to leverage the Prospect Yards name as branding for the district. Signs directing riders to transit, surrounding businesses, and historical markers could feature the Prospect Yards name

and iconography and begin to tie the area together as a cohesive district with a unique identity and vibe. It is also worth noting that wayfinding to/from the station and around the district should be plentiful. With current difficulties of getting from the station to various destinations within the district, making it obvious how to move around the district will only enhance the experience.

**Connections.** Development is well underway in the study area, with more development on tap. With all of this activity and new services and amenities soon to be in place, efforts can turn from drawing new anchor businesses and institutions to focusing instead on establishing connections between the existing anchors in place. Those connection points and assets will make it easier for non-vehicular traffic to move through the area as well as improve the experience for those choosing to live or work in the district and/or visit its businesses and amenities.



## CONCLUSION

The area around the Grand MetroLink Station and between the campuses of Saint Louis University is full of development excitement. Residential development is taking shape in multiple locations, entertainment destinations are entering the market here, and businesses are choosing to locate close to the station. The area is incredibly rich in transportation assets, with light rail, bus, interstate, and vehicular access running through the study area. This macro-level connectivity is certainly a foundation on which to build. At the same time, however, the connections within the study area, the micro-level connectivity, are lacking, with personal autos taking priority over pedestrians, bicyclists, and even transit riders.

The formation of the St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation since the 2012 ULI Grand MetroLink Station TAP positions the study area as one with a vision for what it wants to attract and become. It also signals that it is a sophisticated development entity that is ready to work with parties interested in developing in or moving to the area.

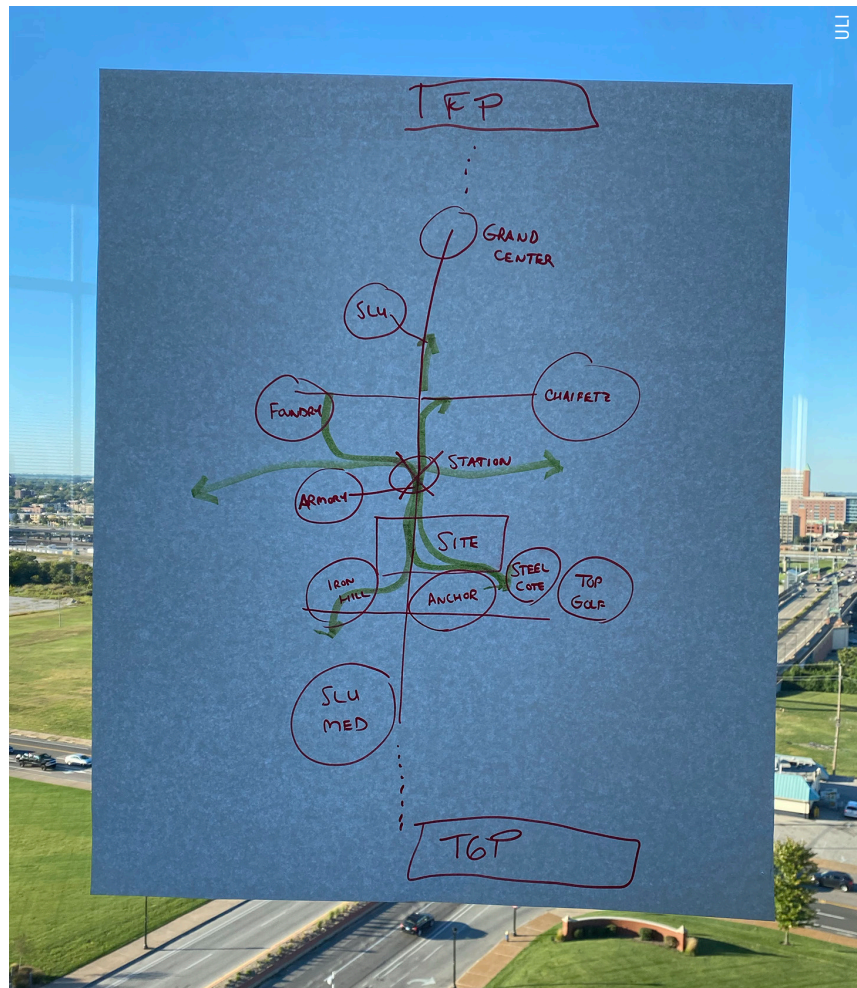
The recent development interest throughout the study area places the Redevelopment Corp. in a strong position to become an active partner with developers and business owners to shape a future for the area that will serve everyone well into the future.

Rising to the top of the priority list should be a focus on connections, improved non-vehicular connectivity throughout the study area, restored street grids to improve vehicular connectivity, connectivity between new buildings and the road deck, and connectivity for transit riders moving between stations and stops.

As these types of connection improvements may not be intuitive for business owners or developers, certain development tools should be used to encourage or press for improvements to both the public and private realm. From form-based codes to development guidelines and/or the establishment of an improvement district, these mechanisms can help establish the foundation for new building in the area and help to ensure that future connections are incorporated from Day 1.

This is an exciting time to be working and living in Midtown St. Louis, and the study area appears to be in the center of much of the region's development progress. It is time to embrace Prospect Yards as the identity for the area and shape its future as a great place to live, work, and play, all while still providing ready access to public transportation, vehicular transportation, and enhanced access for those choosing to walk, bike, scoot, and roll through the area under their own steam.

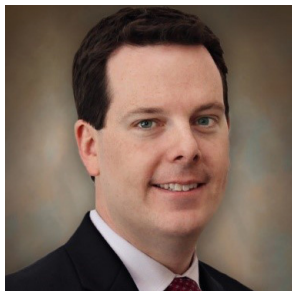
## It's Time To Connect The Dots



The current and proposed developments in the study area are exciting and transformative for St. Louis. All that remains is a manner by which to connect each site to one another and the surrounding community.



## About the Panel



**Chris Beard**  
**Panel Chair**  
**Director of Traffic**  
**Engineering**  
**Lochmueller Group**

Chris Beard is Director of Traffic Engineering and Planning for Lochmueller Group where he is responsible for leading a team of

16 engineers and planners involved with comprehensive planning, site planning, and a wide array of traffic and multimodal studies to support transportation infrastructure investment.



**Justin Carney, AICP**  
**Principal**  
**Development Strategies**

Through years of strategic planning, Justin has developed a deep understanding of the complex interplay of issues facing communities, and brings a multi-faceted approach to creating

workable solutions. He has broad experience in overseeing neighborhood, housing, land use, and transportation strategies, and has cultivated a role as a valued policy advisor on a variety of regionally-significant plans and initiatives. Mostly recently, Justin served as Director of Planning for St. Louis County, overseeing the department's collaboration on key initiatives such as the St. Louis County Affordable Housing Trust Fund Taskforce, selection of the County's Opportunity Zones, and stakeholder engagement for the redevelopment of Jamestown Mall. His experience informs a strong understanding of public sector needs, implementation capability, and effective communication. At the core of Justin's planning philosophy is the desire to integrate meaningful public and stakeholder involvement into all phases of planning, leveraging his unique skills at uniting different stakeholders under a shared vision and set of goals.



**Erica Henderson**  
**Impact Strategist, Racial**  
**Equity Advocate and**  
**Consultant**

Erica has more than 17 years of experience building strategic alliances for progressive change in disinvested communities and promoting inclusive growth in

the St. Louis Region to minimize social and economic inequities. As Executive Director, St. Louis Promise Zone, and Vice President of Community Investment and Real Estate at the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, Erica forged and cultivated strong relationships in North St. Louis City and North St. Louis County. In this role, she helped to launch and lead the largest urban Promise Zone, both in population and geography, in the country instituted under President Obama's administration. Erica attracted and oversaw the investment of more than \$90 million to the St. Louis footprint through direct service provider partnerships and convening of more than 200 community partners and 19 federal agencies in the Promise Zone. The St. Louis Promise Zone catalyzes a more equitable, thriving region through radical collaboration, alignment, and intentional, strategic investment in our most disadvantaged communities.



**Toyin Oduwale**  
**Realtor**  
**St. Louis Realty Partners**  
**LLC**

Toyin Oduwale has been assisting buyers and sellers in achieving their real estate goals since being licensed in 2011. As Broker/Owner of St Louis Realty Partners, Toyin

is dedicated to exceeding clients' expectations while delivering professionalism and passion into each real estate transaction. With a combination of high energy, local resources, and the exceptional branding exposure of St Louis Realty Partners, clients

are often ecstatic to share their experiences in working with him. Maintaining a comprehensive knowledge of the local market, Toyin is not only a top producer, but a leader in the real estate industry who is passionate about building relationships and creating communities.



### **Bonnie Roy**

**Partner**

**SWT Design**

Focusing on a distinctive collaboration of landscape architecture, architecture, and infrastructure in the metropolitan landscape, Bonnie's interests fundamentally lie in bringing

clients economically and environmentally responsible design solutions. Her leadership of multi-disciplinary teams drives an internal process rich with data, benchmarking, and both pre- and post-occupancy evaluations. "We're always learning from design performance – metrics is a dynamic tool that can tell us whether a design achieved its goals, or if we need to rethink a solution. In the end, we want to capture measurable outcomes." Her passion for large-scale regional impacts is evident in her design and planning approach, whether through her process of engaging public stakeholder groups, analysis of existing conditions, or iterations of design concepts.



### **Will Smith**

**Managing Director,  
Investments and Asset  
Management  
New + Found**

In 2020, after starting his career in management consulting and gathering inspiration from cities around the country, Will

Smith joined his dad Steve to create a fully integrated real estate investment and management company. New + Found gives homage to their unified passion for historic spaces that are often overlooked and undervalued and reimagining them into sought after destinations. At the same time, their experience in building medical and educational facilities pushes the envelope in what is possible for their institutional partners. Both Will and Steve share an equal passion for development of places and people. They are actively building a team that is known for their commitment to all stakeholders – their community, employees, and investors.



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# St. Louis

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ULI St. Louis  
4240 Duncan Avenue  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
St. Louis, MO 63110

314 863 9977  
stlouis@uli.org

**[stlouis.uli.org](http://stlouis.uli.org)**



[knowledge.uli.org](http://knowledge.uli.org)