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Minneapolis Downtown Council Charts Course for Thriving, Exciting and Welcoming Downtown by 2025

*Downtown 2025 Plan builds on previous plan that resulted in light rail transit,
outdoor stadium and other improvements*

MINNEAPOLIS – (Dec. 14, 2011) – The group that 15 years ago envisioned a new home for the Minnesota Twins, a light rail line serving the Minneapolis central business district and a more livable downtown announced today its plan to make downtown Minneapolis an even more attractive place to live, work and visit during the next 15 years.

The Downtown 2025 Plan was developed by the Minneapolis Downtown Council, the business association for Minneapolis' central business district, with a membership that spans the city and the western suburbs. Its 10-point plan calls for a thriving, livable, green, connected, exciting and welcoming downtown with housing and amenities for 70,000 new residents; a new park between the heart of downtown and the Mississippi River; a downtown sports district; and transportation options that lead the country.

"Thriving downtowns are critical to the economy and quality of life of entire metro areas," said Sam Grabarski, Downtown Council president and CEO. "Our leaders recognized this when they developed the 2010 plan. Since then, downtowns have become even more important in attracting businesses, employees and visitors to our region. Even the largest employers located in our suburbs tell us that a vibrant, livable downtown is a major selling point when recruiting employees. This plan will ensure that our region is high on the 'best places to live and work' list."

The planning began in early 2010 and was led by John Griffith, Target Corp.'s executive vice president for property development. A steering committee organized around five areas: development; transportation and transit; greening and the public realm; entertainment and hospitality; and education, faith and human services. More than 80 people were deeply involved in creating the plan, Griffith said. They represented businesses, residents, educational and cultural institutions, entertainment and hospitality organizations, and government. "That broad-based support reflects the fact that downtowns are no longer viewed as central business districts. They are *the* places within metropolitan areas to live, work and play."

(more)

The plan's 10 initiatives include:

1. *Doubling downtown Minneapolis' residential population to 70,000.* The north end of Nicollet Avenue is a top priority for housing.
2. *Transform Nicollet into a "must see" destination.* Nicollet becomes the Greenest Urban Street in North America.
3. *Build Gateway Park.* The metro region's "central park" creates a grand connection between the core of downtown and the Mississippi River.
4. *Create a consistently compelling downtown experience.* Nicollet, Hennepin and First Avenues become a "triple spine" of arts and entertainment experiences year-round, day and night.
5. *Establish a downtown sports district that includes a new Vikings stadium.* Renovate Target Center, update the Farmers Market and build the transportation interchange as part of the process.
6. *Lead the nation in transportation options.* Improved capacity for auto and transit commuters encourages new jobs, housing and business vitality.
7. *Create and sustain a green infrastructure.* Showcase the riverfront as a world-class destination and downtown's green focal point.
8. *Forge connections to the University of Minnesota.* Establish a new residential district on the Metrodome site that links to the U.
9. *End street homelessness.* Become the first major U.S. downtown to solve this chronic problem.
10. *Launch a festival of ideas.* Popular idea festivals around the country can be models for a Minneapolis event.

The Downtown 2025 Plan contains an implementation checklist and evidence of success. Minneapolis Downtown Council's Grabarski said the group will begin forming implementation task forces and will report progress against this "ambitious and achievable" plan at regular intervals. "This plan thinks big," Grabarski said. "But other cities such as Denver, Portland, Seattle and Dallas are thinking equally big thoughts and are ready to compete against any other cities to implement them. This plan represents our full intent to not be outdone by any other city."

Elliot Jaffee, Twin Cities market president at U.S. Bank and Minneapolis Downtown Council Chair, said the Downtown Council's board of directors is now engaged in making the changes necessary to carry out the vision. "We need to implement this plan so we can continue to attract employers, employees, residents and visitors," Jaffee said. "This will ensure we'll continue to be the best place to live, work and play in the years ahead."

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