

# Perspectives on the MLS Stadium Development

## A Baseline Study of the Snelling Avenue Station Area



Photo courtesy of Minnesota United FC

A collaborative project by Qualitative Research Methods  
supervised by Professor Dan Trudeau

December 20, 2017



MACALESTER

## Table of Contents

---

Executive Summary .....	I
Acknowledgements .....	III
List of Contributors .....	III
Introduction .....	1
The Study Area .....	3
Maps .....	7
Fieldwork and Observation Methods .....	7
Interview Methods .....	14
Why Did Businesses Originally Locate in the Study Area? .....	16
Will Businesses Stay in the Study Area? .....	20
Business Employees .....	25
How Do Businesses Get Information About Neighborhood Happenings? .....	28
What Concerns do Businesses and Organizations Have Regarding Major League Soccer Stadium Development? .....	31
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	35
Works Cited .....	37
Appendix .....	38

## Executive Summary

In this report, we seek to paint a picture of the businesses and organizations in the Snelling Avenue Station area, and to understand the opportunities and challenges that they face. Our goal is to document the perspectives of business and organization leaders before the Allianz Major League Soccer (MLS) Stadium is completed in Spring 2019. Through observations of the area and interviews with local businesses and organizations, this report synthesizes the variation in experiences throughout the area and proposes initial suggestions for future action and research.

Students in the Qualitative Research Methods in Geography course at Macalester College conducted this research project throughout the Fall 2017 semester. With supervision by Professor Dan Trudeau, sixteen students worked on this project with the opportunity to study the area in-depth. The project partners with the Union Park District Council (UPDC), the local governing district for the Union Park neighborhood of St. Paul, Minnesota. Through this collaboration, the results of this project provide the UPDC with information on important trends in this neighborhood and how to best support businesses as the area changes.

In this report, we pose the following core questions: *Why did businesses and organizations locate in the study area? Will businesses be staying in the short-term? Where do employees come from and how do they travel to the area? Where do businesses and organizations go to get information about what's happening in the area? What concerns and interests do businesses and organizations have regarding the stadium development?* These thematic questions guide a baseline study prior to the stadium completion, and help us to understand current opportunities and challenges for businesses in the area. We answer these questions through 24 interviews with local managers and owners in the Snelling Avenue Station area, completed during October and November 2017. In addition, we include maps for the study area based on the results of our interviews and data collection.

Our results show that businesses found the area attractive for a wide variety of reasons, including the proximity to clientele and accessibility of transportation options. Beyond more specific reasons to locate in the area, we identify three primary motivations for why businesses located in the study area: to attract new clients, to retain existing clients, and to benefit the owner and organization. Looking ahead in the short-term, there is considerable variation in how participants felt about the prospect of remaining in their current location. While respondents had both optimistic and pessimistic outlooks, there is some degree of uncertainty about the future. Several key factors highlight the outlook for businesses in the study area: financial constraints, non-financial pressures, and perceptions of neighborhood change. With regards to employees, our results find that most employees live in Saint Paul and Minneapolis, though a portion do commute from nearby suburbs. Overall, most employees drive to work, however about half of businesses we talked to have at least some employees that rely on public transit.

It is clear that businesses and organizations get their information about the area in a variety of ways, including gathering information individually, drawing on informal connections, and using formal networks. Many participants are members of the Midway

Chamber of Commerce, Little Africa, or other coalitions, though there are still those businesses that are not members of coalitions or any similar networks. In applying this to the impact of the stadium development, these means of information dispersal can be one way to understand how businesses may adapt to potential challenges. Our conversations with participants show that in addition to overall uncertainty, parking availability and traffic congestion are of special concern in regards to the stadium. At the same time, many respondents note that they are hopeful about potential new customers. Although the concerns themselves vary, both anxiety and hope are apparent across all types of businesses.

Overall, this project offers a critical look at the notable heterogeneity of experiences and opinions in the area. This research also highlights the uncertainty and fragility of businesses in the face of upcoming stadium development. Our conversations with participants have helped us to create a list of suggestions to the UPDC or others hoping to facilitate positive change in this area. Since traffic and parking are major concerns, we recommend assisting employees with public transit, either through informational sessions or reduced fare opportunities. Additionally, we also urge the UPDC to build a system that helps all businesses, especially small or struggling businesses, to stay up to date on proposed changes in the area. Furthermore, we recognize that the UPDC could connect businesses to advertising and sales opportunities within the stadium, and we see this as one avenue to ensure that local businesses benefit from the development. Finally, we encourage the UPDC to continue their research in the study area through follow-up studies that capture an even greater diversity of viewpoints and track changes in business experiences in the years to come.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who participated in our research project. We would also like to thank Julie Reiter, Michael Johnson, and the Union Park District Council for partnering with Macalester College and for their tremendous guidance and support throughout this process.

## List of Contributors

This report was collaboratively written by members of the Fall 2017 Qualitative Research Methods (QRM) course offered by professor Dan Trudeau in the Geography Department at Macalester College. Rachel Lieberman created the maps featured in this report. The following individuals contributed to this collaboration:



*From left: Dan Trudeau, Isaac Gamoran, Regan Fruh, Anna Dolde, G.G. Gunther, Alexander Ramiller, Maya Swope, Sarah Kraatz, Rachel Lieberman, Martin Moore, Ceren Dolma, Anna Bebbington, William Feeney, Margaret Lobbig, Virginia Flurry, Elizabeth Abramson, and [not pictured] Kathrene Garcia.*

## Introduction

In the Summer of 2017, construction broke ground for a 20,000 seat MLS stadium at the intersection of I-94 and Snelling Avenue in the Midway neighborhood of Saint Paul. The stadium is the central feature of a redevelopment plan for a 34.5 acre site that includes the Midway Shopping Center. A large portion of this site is zoned for mixed-use, introducing the potential for new retail, office, residential and public open space uses in the area surrounding the stadium. A result of the development is the demolition and displacement of several buildings in the Midway Shopping Center, as well as the future uncertainty of other businesses and organizations in the Snelling Avenue Station area. In sum, there is a great deal of anxiety that the stadium and spillover development will contribute to changing the dynamics of the area.

The MLS stadium is the second major development project to alter the Midway neighborhood in recent years. The construction of the Metro Green Line light rail impacted University Avenue, the central artery of the neighborhood, during its construction from 2010 to 2014. Local residents and business owners have expressed varied reactions to the establishment of the Green Line, with some seeing it as a boon to local business and neighborhood life, and others viewing it as a catalyst for displacement of local businesses and residents. In many ways, hopes and fears about the potential impact of the MLS stadium development are informed by perceptions of neighborhood change associated with the recent Green Line development.

The UPDC and Hamline Midway Coalition are two district councils that are responding to concerns owners, managers and residents have voiced about the changes they expect will come to the Snelling Avenue Station area as a result of the new MLS stadium. In response to the issues that businesses and organizations anticipate facing, there is an interest in establishing a “baseline” understanding of the current realities of business operations before the stadium comes online. Recognizing these viewpoints will help the district councils to track change in the area.

This project is a collaboration between the UPDC and the QRM course at Macalester College that aims to understand the current opportunities and challenges of conducting business in the Snelling Avenue Station area. By documenting the diverse viewpoints of businesses and organizations in the area before the MLS stadium is completed, we hope to track changes in these perspectives over time. Additionally, this project is interested in learning about the information networks used by organizations and businesses in the area. This will help to identify potential networks that can assist with the UPDC’s efforts to support existing businesses and organizations in the area around Snelling Avenue Station. We also created several visualizations focused on the geography of ownership and employees in the commercial areas of the study area. These help to ensure that we document the perspectives of owners, managers, and directors from a wide variety of businesses and organizations located in this area.

Our project aims to record the unique and diverse viewpoints of businesses and organizations in the Snelling Avenue Station area using qualitative research methods.

Employing qualitative methods allows us to gain deep insight into individual experiences, beliefs, and motivations. We want to emphasize that our findings should not be generalized to the entirety of our study area, or to any other area. Nonetheless, we did structure our research process to ensure accordance with high standards of scientific rigor. Rigor was ensured by clearly documenting all steps in analysis, examining our own positionality as researchers in relation to our subject matter, and most importantly, through employing a collaborative process wherein all material and analysis was reviewed by multiple researchers.

This report represents the insights gathered from conducting and analyzing a series of semi-structured interviews with owners and operators of businesses and organizations located in the Snelling Avenue Station area. Our report begins by providing a description of our study area and expanding on the process we used to learn about it. We then discuss the observation methods and coding process that we employed in the first phase of our research. Next, we discuss our methodology of planning, conducting, and analyzing interviews. This section considers the merits and limitations common to employing qualitative research methods, as well as successes and challenges we faced in our research process. The following section shares findings relevant to the five central questions that guided our interviews. These questions address the following topics: why each business originally located there, how long they foresee staying in their location, where their employees come from, how they get information about the neighborhood, and what hopes or concerns they have regarding the stadium development. Finally, our report concludes with recommendations for future action by the UPDC and Hamline Midway Coalition, as well as directions for future research.

## The Study Area

### Neighborhood Context

Given that the MN United MLS Stadium development is being constructed at the corner of Snelling Avenue and St. Anthony, just a block south of the Snelling-University Avenue intersection and Green Line Snelling station, the UPDC requested that we investigate the entire Snelling Avenue Station area (see maps below). This area encompasses the businesses and residential areas situated within a 0.5-mile radius around the Green Line light rail station at the corner of University Avenue and Snelling Avenue. An A-Line rapid bus stop is also located at this intersection. The area has historically been a site of high traffic and strong commercial activity, and is one of the largest commercial districts in St. Paul (Carlesen & Roers, n.d.). Though to less of a degree than before the transit lines were put in, traffic in the area is largely car-oriented, with over 40,000 daily vehicle trips on Snelling Avenue and University Avenue, and 150,000 daily trips on I-94, located just south of the study area (Snelling-Midway Jobs Strategy Work Group, 2016).

The Snelling Avenue Station area consists of a mix of residential and business use. 4,921 people live within 0.5 miles from the station. Of those, 59.3% consider themselves white, 25.2% black, 8.2% Hispanic, 5.5% Asian, and 5.4% two or more races. The average household income is \$54,765 -- with 59% of households receiving less than the average -- and 56.7% of homes are renter occupied (ESRI Community Analyst, 2017).

Within the 0.5 mile radius of the station, there are also 646 businesses and nonprofits, with a total of 9,086 employees. Including the Midway Shopping Center, businesses and organizations have an average of 3 employees, and a median of 4 employees. The average annual sales for the businesses in the area, again including Midway, were \$1,852,913, the median annual sales were \$580,000, and the max annual sales were \$27,134,000. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of annual sales for each business and organization in the study area (ESRI Business Analyst, 2017).

Of the 107 parcels owned within the area that businesses are located on, 54% are owned by people or groups within St. Paul, 32% within Minnesota, and 14% are owned nationally (Figure 2). Of these parcels, 72% are owned by corporations, 25% are owned by individuals, and 3% are owned by the government (Figure 3). It should be noted that there is a lot of variation in the types of corporations owning parcels in the area, including both local corporations, such as Little Africa coalitions, and national corporations. Likewise, parcel ownership does not indicate building or business ownership. A locally owned business may be on a nationally owned parcel (Minnesota Geospatial Commons).



## 2016 Annual Sales



FIGURE 1

## Parcel Owner Location

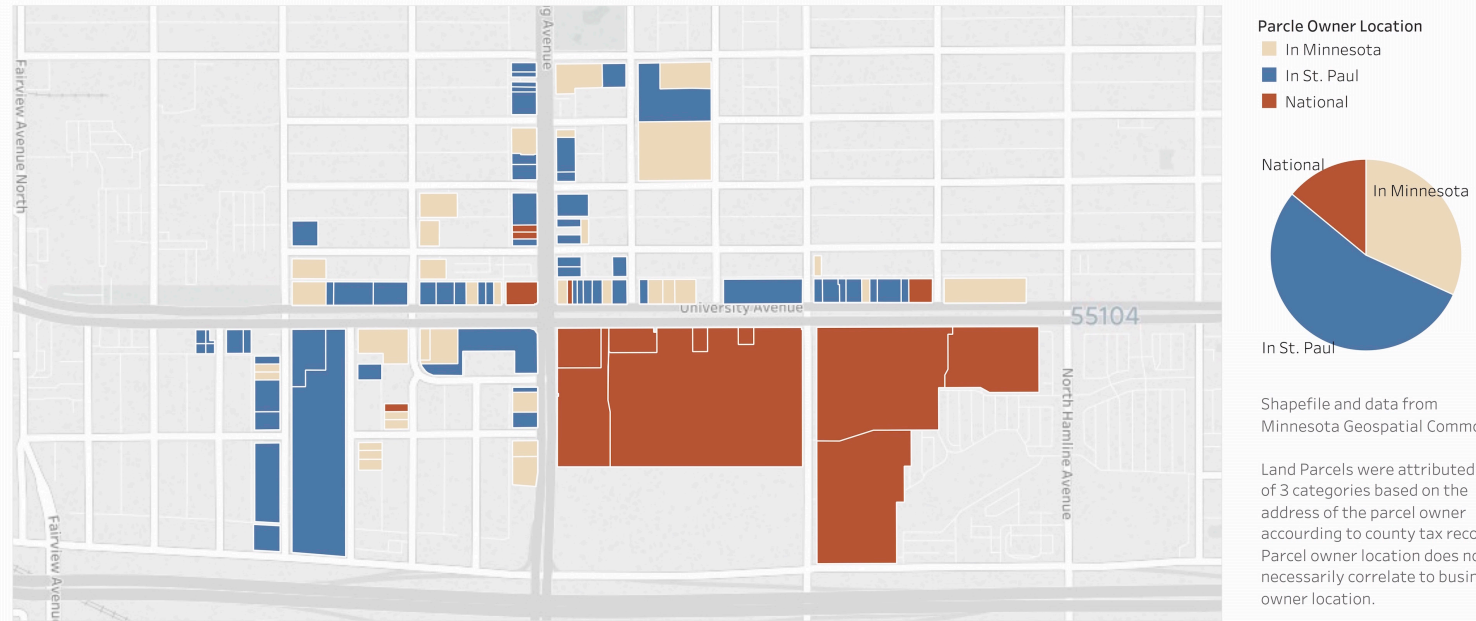


FIGURE 2

## Parcel Owner Type

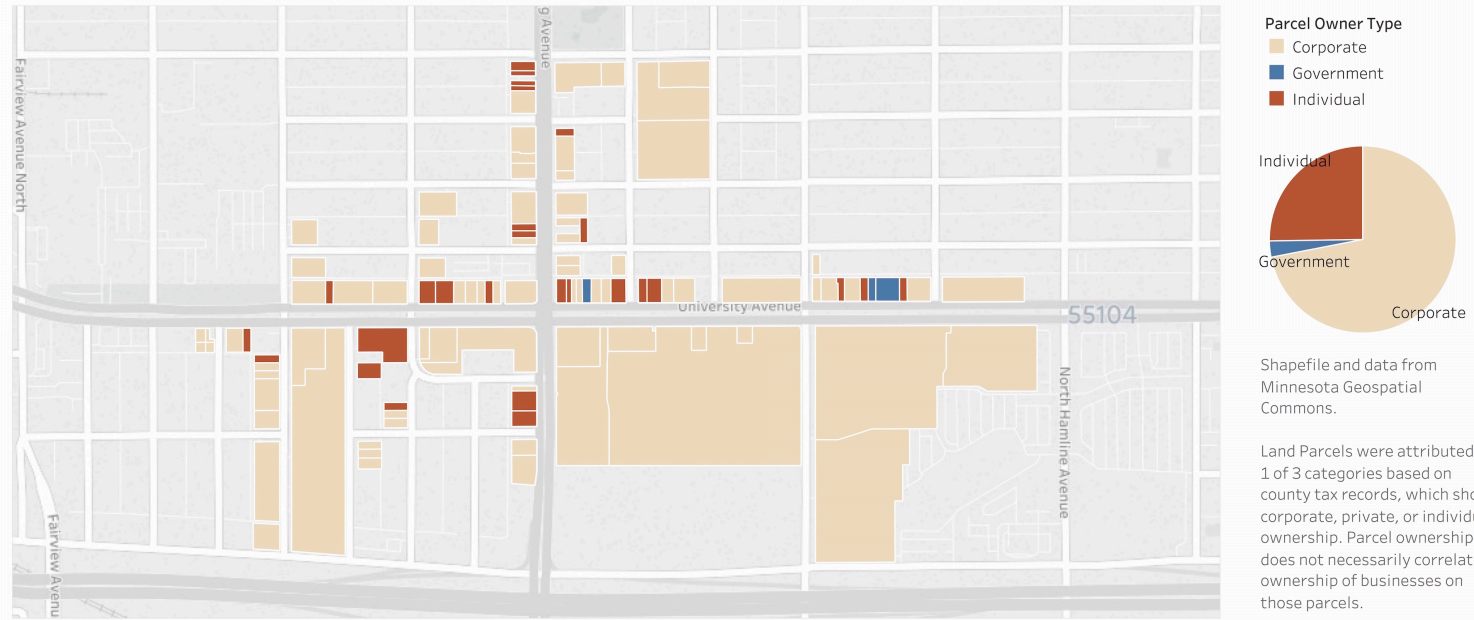


FIGURE 3

## Maps

The maps that are used throughout the report can also be found in interactive, dynamic form through this link:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/rachel.lieberman#!/vizhome/SnellingAvenueStationArea/MidwayBusinessSnapshot?publish=yes>

## Fieldwork and Observation Methods

In order to acquaint ourselves with the physical landscape of and the community in the study area, we conducted walking interviews and observations of the local businesses. Before starting the official research process, we paired up with local community members who volunteered to tell us about the area. We interviewed them about how they interact with and relate to the area while they walked us around places that are important to them. Once we knew a little more about our research area from this personal perspective, the next step in our research was to divide up the study area amongst ourselves and catalogue the businesses, organizations and any vacancies. In addition to familiarizing ourselves with the study area, these individual observations helped us to generate data for further use in the study, including categorizing businesses to mapping change in the area.

Initially, we each went to our assigned sections of the area and recorded the address, occupant information and descriptions of the businesses and organizations. Based on our initial observations, we gained a better understanding of the composition of the area, which we later used to sort the businesses and organizations into categories. Following the observations, we then used Google Maps street view to record the occupant information from 2009 and 2013. We looked at 2009 because it is as far as we could trace back using Google Maps street view, and we looked at 2013 so that we could observe the area before the Green Line started running in 2014. Looking at the composition of the businesses and organizations in the study area during different time frames allowed us to get a sense of change over time and collect the data to create maps that show the business categories in each of these years, as well as the change since 2009.

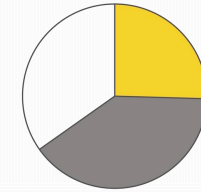
The maps below illustrate the business categories in 2009 and 2013 (Figure 5 and 6), and the change in terms of whether the business or the organization located in the area before or after 2009 (Figure 4). While using Google Maps street view allowed us to gather tangible information about change in the area, it is important to note that there were also limitations to it. For instance, we were not able to view inside of large buildings, like Spruce Tree Center, that are occupied by several businesses and organizations. We were also unable to view businesses that did not have a street-facing storefront. The unknown categories in each of the maps below are a result of the limitations in retrieving data through street view. To further reference the percentage representation of each category, please refer to table 1, which follows the maps, on page 11.

## Business Change Since 2009



Were Current Occupants Here Before or After 2009?

- After
- Before
- Unknown



Shapefile from Minnesota Geospatial Commons, data from student observations in the study area and Google Maps.

We were unable to determine land use for a number of buildings in the past. This disproportionately affects observations about change over time.

FIGURE 4

## Business Categories 2009

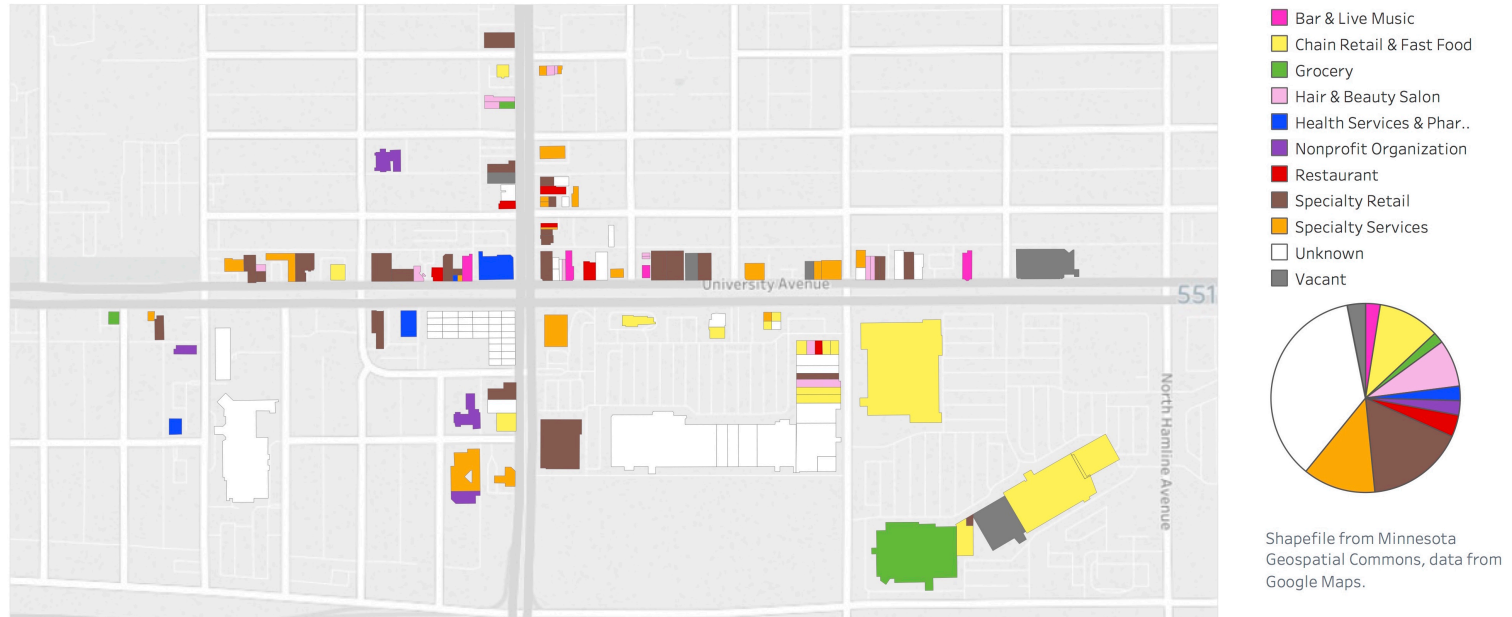


FIGURE 5

### Business Categories in 2013 (Pre- Green Line Opening)



FIGURE 6

TABLE 1. Distribution of Business Types in 2013 and 2009				
Business Categories	2013	Percentage of Total Businesses 2013	2009	Percentage of Total Businesses 2009
Bar & Live Music	4	2%	4	2%
Chain Retail & Fast Food	18	1%	17	11%
Government	0	0%	0	0%
Grocery	5	3%	3	2%
Hair & Beauty Salon	12	7%	13	7%
Health Services & Pharmacy	5	3%	4	3%
Nonprofit Organization	6	4%	4	2%
Restaurant	6	4%	6	4%
Specialty Retail	29	18%	27	17%
Specialty Services	18	11%	20	12%
Vacant	6	4%	5	3%
Unknown	52	32%	58	37%
<i>161 total businesses</i>				

FIGURE 6

### Categories

After observations our individually assigned sections of the study area, we input our observations onto a shared spreadsheet. Individually, and then collectively, we engaged in a research method called “coding”. Coding is a tool used by researchers to organize and reduce data, and ultimately facilitate its interpretation. For our study, we used qualitative coding strategies to organize both our observational data of businesses and organizations, as well as for interpreting the interviews we conducted. Research methods associated with interviews are discussed in a later section.

First, we individually created “descriptive codes” based on each business or organization’s observed land use. A descriptive code is a single word or short phrase that describes the activities that each business or organization supports. By generating descriptive codes, we were able to reduce the number of observations to several main categories that helped us gain a better understanding of the range of businesses in the study area. After generating descriptive codes, we went back through the descriptive codes we created to merge and redefine where necessary. At this point, each of us had created a list of about 10-15 unique codes to categorize the land uses of the observed businesses and organizations. We then came together as a group to create a single list of categories we



could use to re-code all of the businesses and organizations.

As previously mentioned, it is important to code observational data in order to gain a better understanding of the data, to organize and synthesize it, and to be able to identify patterns. Additionally, coding data produces organized and clear answers to research questions and provides context-sensitive and nuanced answers to research questions. Lastly, it allows us to make our interpretive work clearer for others' to understand and to check our work for rigor and quality.

For the purposes of our specific research, it is important to generate business and organization categories for the study area in order to assure equal representation among business types. To best assess the businesses' perceptions and opinions of the stadium development, the categories had to reflect the diversity of business types within the study area, otherwise we would not be able to draw accurate conclusions or appropriately answer our research questions.

After coming together to synthesize our individual codes into a single list of categories, we decided on nine different business/organization categories and later added "government" and "vacant" categories for a total of 11. Figure 7 shows the assigned category of each of the businesses and organizations we observed in the study area. Please see the map legend in Figure 7 for a list of the business categories. Additionally, there is a breakdown of the number of observed businesses in each category found below in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Distribution of Business Types in 2017		
<b>Business Categories</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Businesses 2017</b>
Bar & Live Music	4	3%
Chain Retail & Fast Food	19	12%
Government	3	2%
Grocery	5	3%
Hair & Beauty Salon	11	7%
Health Services & Pharmacy	21	13%
Nonprofit Organization	13	8%
Restaurant	8	5%
Specialty Retail	33	20%
Specialty Services	29	18%
Vacant	15	9%
Unknown	0	0
<i>161 total businesses</i>		

## Business Categories 2017

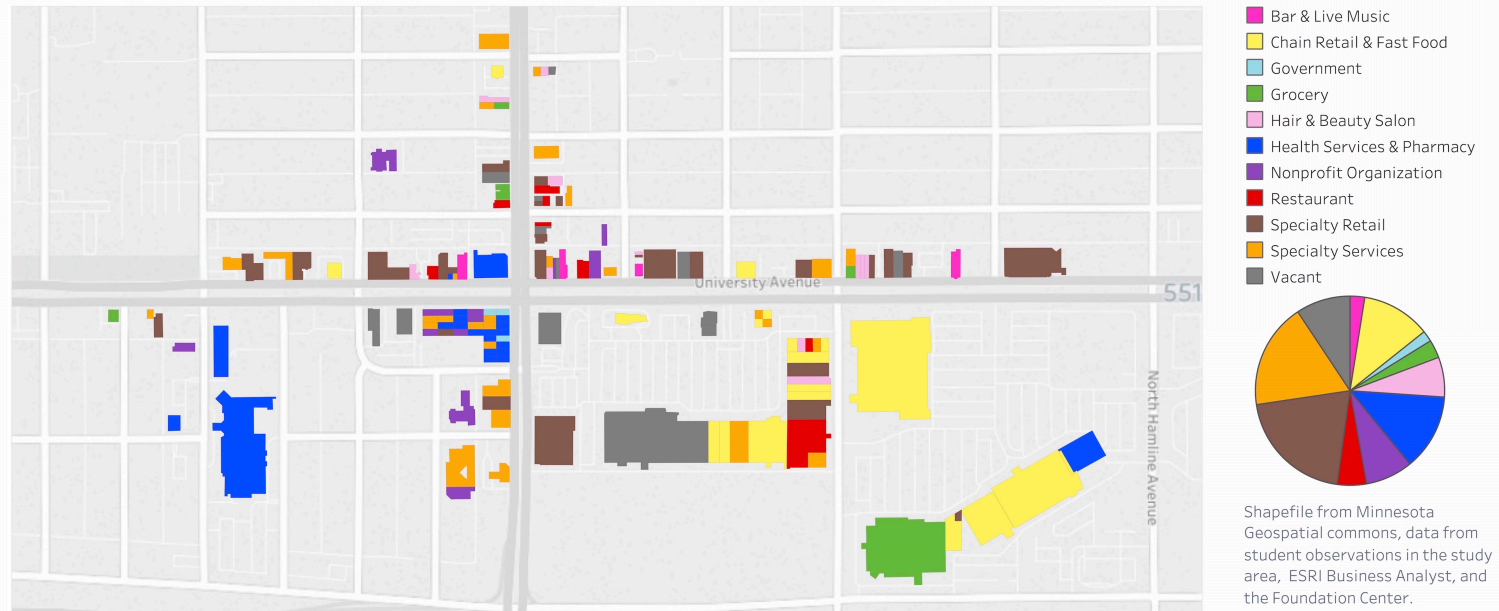


FIGURE 7

These sections have focused on our efforts to get to know the area, observation methods and methods used to determine business and organization categories, which then informed our interviewing process. The next section includes an in-depth description of our study's qualitative research methods.

## Interview Methods

It is important to note here that our methods were operating under the guidelines approved by the Institutional Review Board, a research ethics board, which requires the informed consent of the participant, ensures their confidentiality, and establishes rigor in our analysis. To this end, we began interviews with a discussion of informed consent, ensuring that participants knew how their responses would be used, and that any information would be used anonymously.

Qualitative research methods are a broad descriptor for research methods that are not driven by quantitative data, and instead look for more subjective information. Qualitative research methods often involve surveys, interviews, or focus groups. While we did ask some questions that were quantitative in nature, such as how many employees a business had, the vast majority of our questions related to how business owners felt about or perceived changes in the area.

The process of choosing the specific businesses to contact was fairly straightforward. As noted above, we used a combination of datasets on area businesses and in person fieldwork to establish a list of businesses in the study area. The list of our categories was representative and proportional to the observed makeup of the study area. For example, since Hair and Beauty Salons represented seven percent of our observed businesses and organizations in the study area, they also represented seven percent of our composed list. This contact list was included 68 businesses and organizations.

We then randomly chose three businesses for each student to attempt to contact. After the first round of outreach, students contacted an additional one or two businesses each. There were a number of different ways that students contacted businesses, from calling the business on the phone, going in person, and email. In the case of businesses that were part of a chain, we were often redirected to a corporate representative.

This purposeful sampling of the study area allowed us to ensure that we were completing a representative study that would accurately portray the sentiments, opinions, and motivations of the entire study area, not just members from a specific category or group of categories.

When creating questions for interviews we took into account the priorities of the UPDC, and tried to minimize the invasiveness of the questions (e.g. instead of outright asking a business' yearly revenue, having business owners select from one of five ranges). Through a group design process, in which the entire class helped to design questions, we worked to ensure that questions were not biased or leading, and were not

overly tailored to one type of business or another. We first created a full list of questions for longer interviews, and then upon realizing that many interviews had to be shorter out of necessity, we created a truncated list of questions that covered the most important points of interest. Interviews varied in terms of length, but almost all were under 30 minutes. Interviews took place in a variety of locations, the most commonly at the business or organization of the respondent.

24 interviews were conducted over the course of three weeks in late October and early November. Respondents were asked to sign a consent form and were asked for permission to record the interview. After the interviews, we compiled the business structure (i.e. corporately-owned or independently-owned) and gross revenues for each participant in a shared file. We based the business structure for each participant on general knowledge about the business/organization being interviewed. For example, if the participant was part of a nation-wide chain, we identified them as corporately owned while if the participant was a local coffee shop or bar we identified them as independently owned. The last question in our interviews asked the respondents to identify their gross yearly revenues within brackets, divided into \$0-10,000, \$10,001-\$50,000, \$50,001-\$250,000, \$250,001- \$1M, and over \$1M. To construct these brackets, we followed a strategy first outlined by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State (2016). After this, interviews were transcribed and uploaded to a shared folder for analysis.

Analysis of the interviews was completed in a three-step approach. First, groups of three within the class were initially tasked with descriptively coding the interviews. Using software such as Google Sheets and Atlas.ti, descriptive coding is a method of distilling the information within the interviews down to key, recurring topics, organizing them, and creating ways to easily search for them again. Second, once the descriptive coding was completed, the results were then analyzed and interpreted into unified themes about the opinions and sentiments of the businesses and organizations in the study area. Finally, the analyses and interpretations of each individual group were then examined and critiqued by other groups. This step was performed to ensure the rigor of our methods, in that many perspectives on the same information will result in interpretations that are more robust and accurate.

This inclusion of various perspectives contributing to and investigating a single topic, called triangulation, is an element in all of our research beyond just the analysis that ensures the robustness of our study. Multiple sources of data, multiple researchers reviewing and reexamining the work, and multiple hypotheses for how the information might be explained ensured that the analysis of the study area was as strong as possible.

Writing about the results of our study began once analysis and interpretation were completed. When quoting respondents in our paper, we ensured confidentiality once again by adjusting potentially identifying information and only referencing the interview number, rather than the respondent's name. For a small collection of transcripts with some redacted information, please see the appendix.

While our study was a success, we did encounter some challenges and limitations throughout our investigation. Our largest challenge was recruitment. As mentioned earlier,

we contacted over 65 businesses and only completed 24 interviews. This difficulty in recruitment is, in part, to be expected in qualitative research. Low recruitment success means a small study size, which was our largest limitation. Our study would be more robust if we had a larger sampling and more perspectives. It is also important to note that the small study size of our research, together with the nature of qualitative research, means that the conclusions of this report cannot and should not be applied to other populations. This research was completed in a specific temporal and spatial context that cannot be used to explain other situations (e.g. other stadium developments), no matter how similar they might be.

Finally, in the interest of transparency, it is necessary to disclose meetings that the QRM course had with staff of the UPDC. These meetings consisted of receiving advice from the UPDC on how to create and structure our interview questions, suggestions on possible contacts in the research area, and general recommendations on the path of our research. No breach of guidelines from the Institutional Review Board occurred during these meetings, and the full confidentiality of our participants was always maintained.

## Why did Businesses Originally Locate in the Study Area?

This section focuses on the characteristics and factors of the Snelling Avenue Station area that originally made it attractive to businesses and organizations. By comparing initial reasons that made this location desirable for businesses to current feelings surrounding the conditions of the area, it is possible to see the present-day opportunities and challenges of operating in the Snelling Avenue Station area. Specifically, this section discusses the explicit answers to the question, “why did businesses and organizations originally choose to locate in the study area,” and if their perspectives on this location have changed in light of major infrastructure projects. These projects include the already completed Green Line along University Avenue, and the future Minnesota United MLS stadium, which began construction in 2017.

Based on the information gathered in the twenty-four interviews we conducted, we organized the multitude of perspectives into three broad categories. With a few exceptions, businesses and organizations generally chose to locate in the Snelling Avenue Station area for at least one of three reasons: firstly, they wanted to attract new clients; secondly, they wanted to be accessible to clients who already frequented the business; and lastly, the location of a building, or the unique characteristics of a building itself, made the site advantageous. A few of the interviewees’ responses to the question did not fall into any of these three categories; these perspectives will be discussed later in this section.

### **Diversity of Reasons to Choose to Locate in the Area**

When analyzing the interviews conducted, we came across a wide array of reasons why each business moved to the study area. Given the fact that the businesses ranged from chain corporations to small local shops, this was not too surprising, but nonetheless

critical to our research. As such, we created 14 distinct descriptive codes to highlight the variations among businesses. From being near clientele, to affordability, and being near a busy intersection, to the amenities of the building itself, we observe a wide range of reasons why businesses found the area attractive.

The three most popular reasons for locating near the Snelling Avenue Station are proximity to clients, location on University Avenue, and availability of parking. Close proximity to clients is mentioned most often, being cited as a reason in ten of the twenty-four interviews. One of our respondents mentions the importance of proximity to clientele, explaining, “we are based in East African culture ... so it’s a lot of Ethiopian people ... living [in] this area, Ethiopian, Somali, around this area, so that’s why we chose it” (Respondent 20). Proximity to clientele is critical, particularly for specialty retailers who serve specific populations, such as the Little Africa District.

Second, many respondents indicated a desire to be located on University Avenue, in particular, as it is a major thoroughfare connecting the downtowns of St. Paul and Minneapolis. University Avenue has been recognized as a bustling commercial hub for years, drawing numerous businesses to the area with the promise of access to customers. For example, many independent car dealerships historically populated the street, which brought in clientele from nearby and created an attractive area for businesses and organizations. One of our respondents notes the proximity to these car dealerships as a critical amenity for moving their business into the study area (Respondent 6).

Parking was also among the top reasons businesses originally found the area attractive. Many businesses praised parking as a critical amenity, which became even more apparent through their fear of losing it. There have been threats to parking in the past, such as the construction of the Green Line in 2014. Many business owners noted that this is problematic, as it hinders clients and employees’ accessibility to the business. This was further illuminated in one interview with the manager of a specialty retail shop where they said, “parking is very important for businesses that are in the city” (Respondent 14).

Two complimentary reasons to locate - foot traffic and being at a busy intersection - appear in six of the twenty-four interviews. Foot traffic came up throughout as an important catalyst for moving to the area, given the fact that greater visibility can translate to more business. One respondent noted this, stating, “maybe being on a busy street ... draws in people because they come past and see it and come in so maybe the location... on a busy street, would draw in business” (Respondent 7). According to this participant, the busy street (University Avenue) draws people in, which leads more customers to patronize the store. Similarly, many businesses discuss the busy intersection as a rationale for moving to the area because they anticipated that locating on this intersection would increase visibility and patronage of their business. For example, a specialty services retailer mentioned locating near the busy intersection as a key motive to move, given that more traffic means more cars and more customers (Respondent 6). Overall, these two reasons for choosing the Snelling Avenue Station area emerge as vital to the attractiveness of the Snelling Avenue Station area.

Beyond these critical factors in choosing this location, there are also points made about the importance of the building itself. Building amenities, cited in six interviews, reference both the size and interior features of buildings themselves that proved attractive to the business. Another category included three businesses that found the location appealing because there was a similar building usage beforehand. A beauty salon owner mentioned this when stating, “Yeah, the beauty shop, well it’s been here before, before I took it over ... it’s been the beauty shop that’s been here for over 40 years ... it’s a grandfathered-owned beauty shop, beauty salon” (Respondent 9). For this beauty salon, the location is therefore suitable for the owner because it had already served as a beauty salon and could continue as such. Businesses also found their buildings and the area attractive because of its affordability. Affordability appears in four interviews, and proves important to one owner when they explain, “we bought it because it was an opportunity. Well it was originally built for 10 million dollars and we bought it for a whole lot... less than that” (Respondent 8). Finally, the familiarity with the area appears influential to locating in the study area, as it is cited in three different interviews. One respondent states, “I used to live here before around this area, ... so we look at this area, we were comfortable, with my family with my sisters” (Respondent 19). For this participant and others, familiarity with the Snelling Avenue Station area proved to be an important reason to locate nearby.

There are six other reasons not examined here that appear significant for businesses. These other reasons illustrate the notable diversity in why businesses found the area attractive. Other causes for locating include access to parking and transportation, the urban setting or central location between the Twin Cities, and the impact of affiliation or relationship with another location in the city. Additionally, the business may have been the only one of its kind in the area.

### **Three Overarching Themes**

While it is clear that businesses and organizations located in the Snelling Avenue Station area for a number of reasons, three central themes appear throughout many of the responses: the ability to attract new clients, retain current clients, and benefit the owner and organization as a whole.

Attracting new clients is essential to successful growth for all businesses and organizations, so it is an important consideration for the organizations within the study area. Many of our respondents emphasized the importance of locating in an area where they felt they could accumulate more clients. Since many people pass through the Snelling-University intersection either by car, bus, the Green Line, bike, or on foot, the study area is ideal for businesses and organizations looking to expand their clientele. The constant flow of people moving through and stopping in the area for other purposes has proven attractive for businesses and organizations that have located there. This is especially true for the small, locally owned businesses and organizations that have relied on the bustling area to build a large customer base.

While attracting new clients is important, many respondents noted that continuing to retain their existing clients is also a crucial factor in choosing a location. The businesses and organizations that have been in the area for years have a loyal customer base that they want to continue serving. In order to do this, they emphasize the need for parking, remaining accessible during construction, and staying close to their clientele. We find that these amenities and conveniences, offered to those who frequent the business, were important motivations in the organization's decision to locate within the study area. This is especially important considering the stadium development, since retaining clients ensures stability during times of change.

Lastly, owners of businesses and organizations within the study area were acutely aware of the benefits they received by locating to this area. Some noted their overall familiarity with the area, others mentioned that the available location fit their needs nicely, or the building itself was simply affordable. If the overall situation were unattractive for the owner, there would be little desire to locate there. Furthermore, in order for businesses to profit and organizations to be successful, they must situate themselves in spots that are the most practical and economically viable. Thus, it is not surprising that we observe both the needs of and the benefits received by the owner as incentives to locate in the study area.

While the themes we found (attracting new clients, retaining existing clients, and benefiting the owner) do not highlight the outliers and breadth of responses, they are useful in drawing greater conclusions about concerns regarding the stadium development.

Businesses moved into the study area for a vast array of reasons, ranging from being on University Avenue to moving into a specific building for a number of different property amenities. The top reasons to locate in the area include being close to clients, proximity to University Avenue, accessibility of foot traffic, and the busy intersection. However, fourteen reasons are recorded in total, indicating both the large number and variety of motives. Given the assortment of businesses included in this research, from locally owned convenience stores to large-scale chain corporations, it made sense to see a broad range of reasons for locating in the study area. Furthermore, the reasons are closely related but emerged as distinct points that needed to be separated on a case-by-case basis.

Beyond this comprehensive look at the rationale of why businesses located where they did, we also broke the reasons down into three thematic categories: to attract new clients, retain current clients, and benefit the owner and organization. These three categories serve as general guides to why the businesses located in the Snelling Avenue Station area, thereby aggregating the themes that came up for a range of respondents.

Looking ahead, business and organization owners highlight multiple opportunities and challenges to the sustenance of their particular location moving forward. Some respondents are pointedly optimistic about staying in their property, whereas others have a more pessimistic perspective. In a positive light, some businesses anticipate that the stadium will help spur growth. However, some businesses have a more negative outlook, thinking that these developments may deter old clients from visiting and cause property values to rise uncomfortably high. These points and more will be included in the section to follow on short-term outlooks for businesses in the study area.



## Will Businesses Stay in the Study Area?

This section will focus on the question of whether businesses and organizations in the study area anticipate remaining in their current location over the short term or long term, as well as what factors contribute to this determination. For this study, the short term is defined as one to two years, while the long term is defined as anything beyond that. Overall, no overwhelming trend emerges in response to the question of whether businesses and organizations will remain in their location beyond the short term. Some respondents stated almost unequivocally that they would remain in the long term, while other respondents expressed serious doubt about the prospects of remaining in their current location for long. However, in almost all interviews, respondents expressed some degree of uncertainty about the future. We found that respondents' expectations about the prospect of remaining in the long-term were shaped by several key factors, which can be categorized into financial constraints, non-financial pressures, and perceptions of neighborhood change. Each of these considerations will be discussed in depth in this section.

### Financial Constraints

Many respondents anticipate that changes in the area associated with the stadium development will impact the financial feasibility of their business or organization to remain in its current location over the long-term. Changes in property taxes and associated changes in rent prices are central considerations for many respondents in considering the likelihood that their business or organization will remain in its current location. There appears to be a general consensus among respondents that the stadium development is likely to lead to an increase in property taxes in the local area. Rising property tax rates were often mentioned in the same manner as rising rents. Many respondents indicated that both rising property taxes and rents associated with the stadium would likely put a financial strain on their business or organization, affecting their potential to remain in their current location long term. One specialty retailer indicated that their business might need to make serious adjustments in order to remain in its current location over the long-term as rents rise, stating, "for the future we don't know, because the stadium, rent will rise, but we have to change... the business to get more money to pay our rent" (Respondent 23).

Some concerns about the implications of rising rents and property taxes stem from observed changes in the neighborhood already underway. One nonprofit organization commented, "when gentrification is what is happening and will continue to happen, a lot of the kinds of folks who have lived in the neighborhood will start to get priced out as property taxes start to go up and they can't afford property taxes" (Respondent 1). This respondent's observation indicates that expectations about how long businesses, organizations, and their clientele will remain in the area stem in part from neighborhood-wide changes that are already occurring. This respondent's comment also brings attention to the importance of considering the displacement of local clientele when considering the ability of businesses to remain in the area over the long-term.

Several respondents' apprehensions about rising rents and property taxes stem from increases in rent and property taxes that their business or organization has already experienced. One business owner remarked that their rent had already gone "sky-high" (Respondent 3). Similarly, a specialty retailer that expressed concerns about rising rent explained, "it seems like every time we come to this point of the lease being up the owner wants to raise the rent and it's just getting to the point where it's not worth it. Not worth that amount of money for the business" (Respondent 14).

Changes in property taxes and rent may be considered differently by respondents who own the space where their business or organization is located, by those who lease their space and are locked into long-term leases, and by those who rent their space but did not mention having a long-term lease. In some cases, owning rather than leasing space appears to account for higher confidence in the respondent's estimation of their ability to remain in their current location over the long-term. One business owner indicated that having sole proprietorship made them feel less vulnerable in terms of their business being pushed out of its current location in the near future (Respondent 6). Another respondent, who owns rather than leases their space, reports that owning their building makes them feel "safe" (Respondent 9). Furthermore, increasing property values appear as an opportunity for growth to one respondent whose organization owns its property. This respondent explained, "Now what does happen is that our property gets more valuable... As the property values go up, what does that do for us – how do we leverage that well?" (Respondent 1). Meanwhile, some respondents who own their current space still expressed serious concerns about rising property taxes. The manager of a business that owns their building reflected, "The only thing I worry... is that as the property tax gonna go higher... is it gonna be more than I can afford to stay here, you know? Otherwise, we won't stay here" (Respondent 9).

Respondents who reported being locked into long-term leases tended to express high confidence in the likelihood of remaining at their current location. One business manager asserted, "We lease the building and we have a lease of twenty years, so we got fifteen to go... We locked in a lease rate...So [the rent] is not a factor" (Respondent 5). This sentiment was echoed by a business manager who stated, "We have a 15 year lease. So, yeah. The plan is to be here a while" (Respondent 16). Another respondent with a long-term lease explained, "I have a long lease... over 5 years, more than. So, that's why I don't go nowhere. Unless the business have a problem, unless losing customers" (Respondent 21). For this respondent, overall confidence in remaining in the area was relatively high, though qualified. Declining sales appear as a more pressing consideration for this business than rising rents in estimating the long-term financial feasibility of remaining in their location.

Many respondents who lease their space and did not mention having long-term leases seem to express high uncertainty about their ability to stay in their location due to the financial constraints of rising property taxes and rising rents (Respondent 4, 10, 12, 15, 23.) However, not all respondents who rent their space and did not mention having a long-term lease see rising rents as a concern. Among renters who do not have long-term leases, confidence in the prospect of retaining their location in the long term is often tied to the current profitability of their business. Overall, businesses reporting high sales

seem more confident about the potential to remain in their current location over the long term (Respondent 18, 21). One restaurant owner who appeared confident in their business' current sales and long-term viability affirmed, "definitely, we are going to stay here more than five years. It's new business, but look, we are really doing really well... without any other additional improvement or like, the stadium" (Respondent 19).

Meanwhile, businesses reporting low or declining sales express more uncertainty about their ability to remain in their current location in the long term. Concerns about sales generally compounded concerns about property tax or rent increases to produce feelings of vulnerability and doubt about the long-term potential for a business or organization to remain in its current location. This uncertainty is evident in one respondent's observations about some of the other businesses in the area, when they commented, "[business owners] pay more to the employee rather than what they make... I'm hoping that they will stay in business but they do need help.... Just imagine for you to be here for all-day, not to make anything. And on the top of that have expenses just to run... from here on... I don't know" (Respondent 13).

### **Non-financial Pressures**

Among the non-financial factors respondents cited that may contribute to their decision of whether to stay in their current location, relocate, or close down are development pressures. Speculation that the stadium may cause the price of land in the area to increase is causing businesses and landlords to feel pressure to sell their land and relocate. One business that leases their property commented, "we wish to stay in this same spot for as long as we can, but our landlord has it up for sale because of the construction across the street. He thinks he's going to get a lot of money for his property now that the soccer stadium is coming" (Respondent 3). Another business made a similar statement: "I don't think [the stadium development] will really affect us, where it will affect us is that obviously the property values in the neighborhood will go up and our landlord, just like probably every other landlord on the strip, is ready to cash in and sell their properties for millions if they can" (Respondent 15). Some businesses in the area have already been forced out of their locations by these development pressures, like this respondent whose landlord sold the building out from under them: "we knew when the new stadium had made the decision to move into that big lot ... that the value of those buildings were going up, and so having that low cost overhead wasn't an advantage. The owners of that building had an opportunity to sell the building... They had gotten a purchase agreement with an intent to buy it so they basically said you know, you're gonna have to start looking because we're selling the building" (Respondent 16). Other businesses have the foreboding feeling that they will be the next to be priced out of their location.

The unique transportation situation in the Snelling Avenue Station area also seems to be an influential factor in whether businesses feel they can remain in their current locations into the future. Multiple respondents mentioned that they already struggle with the lack of parking, which is a consequence of the Green Line. The lack of access to parking puts pressure on businesses, including one whose manager said: "we have a couple years left on our lease, we are always looking for other locations that we could open a new store, so that's always in our train of thought to move out of this area, get back

somewhere where we have convenient parking for customers... So we're always looking for other options that we might have when it comes time to fight or flight if you will" (Respondent 14). Seven businesses also expressed concern that soccer match spectators would park in their parking lots, leaving little or no room for actual customers, let alone employees. One business noted that at busy times, like during the Minnesota State Fair, "it's a lot of traffic, so at that time we get less customers, because there is no parking in the area" (Respondent 20). This indicates that businesses are worried that games and events at the stadium may cause the same dilemma, bringing many potential new customers into the area, but also preventing those new customers from accessing local businesses, because they cannot find a place to park. The same respondent noted that their fears might be assuaged if the stadium developers considered adding more parking to their plans.

The third non-financial factor identified in the interviews is personal factors, which vary greatly, and mostly apply to small businesses. Understandably, these responses are very specific to each respondent. One owner stated "if the opportunity would have arised (sic) about 10 years ago to buy the location...I would have at that time, but yeah, I'm 64 years old now, I don't want that" (Respondent 6). Another respondent noted that whether their family members can continue to help run the business will determine their outlook on staying in the area (Respondent 4).

### **Perceptions of Change**

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that many felt that the neighborhood was changing, specifically in ways that they were unhappy about. One trend noted by a number of businesses was that the transient population in the area is quite sizable and growing. Some people we spoke with related this issue to panhandling, drinking, sleeping in front of the stores, and theft. One manager noted that their establishment loses \$60,000 a year to theft (for reference, annual sales are over \$1 million; Respondent 18). This was a point of frustration because they hoped that the city would help to limit the presence of the transient population in the area, though they have yet to see this happen. Another manager hopes that the new stadium will increase security and decrease theft.

On the other hand, one neighborhood organization noted that the new development and more expensive housing being built are bringing wealthier people into the area. Additionally, this representative commented that the construction of office buildings is bringing new workers, but not residents, to the area. Some feel that consequently the neighborhood has markedly changed, with one establishment lamenting that they have no more, or very few "regulars" and that they had lost a lot of business (Respondent 17). Similarly, one neighborhood organization felt that they did not really know how to continue to serve their clients, since they "just don't know what [the neighborhood] is going to be five years from now" (Respondent 1).

## Short-Term Outlook

Ultimately, when asked about plans to stay in the area in the short and long term, respondents largely responded positively about the location, and in fact many were quite enthusiastic about staying. This is perhaps related to the type of business or organization interviewed. Both non-profits, and two of the businesses that directly serve the area expressed no intention of moving to other locations. On the other hand, there was no clear trend between the four businesses that expressed either serious doubt or an intention to move. The other 16 businesses and organizations answered less directly whether or not they would remain in the area beyond the short term.

It is noteworthy that many of those interviewed were highly complimentary of the location, expressing that they did not want to move because business has been good there. Among those who replied that they intended to stay, it was apparent that there is a degree of uncertainty. In a statement, echoed in a number of other interviews, one specialty retail manager said, “[w]e’ll stay here. As long as we are *not* forced to move, we will stay in this location” (Respondent 11). This uncertainty was frequently expressed as “as long as I can I will” (Respondent 12) and “I hope we will stay” (Respondent 13). This concern is not without precedent. As previously mentioned, one business is currently in the process of moving, since their landlord has put the building up for sale due to the construction in the area. Another business owner explained that they had had to move recently for the same reason, though they were able to remain in the area. Additionally, during the study period, many of the businesses in the Midway Shopping Center closed or moved. Among those businesses not staying, respondents noted that declining sales, corporate pressure and parking concerns were driving factors.

Respondents’ uncertainty clearly emerged over the course of our research, as they struggle to know how to respond to financial constraints, development pressures, parking concerns and a changing neighborhood character. Notwithstanding these challenges, the business owners and managers overwhelmingly expressed positive opinions about the study area. While this section has reviewed the short-term prospects of businesses in the study area, the following sections analyze some of the current dynamics shaping these businesses.

## Business Employees

### Trends in Employment Numbers

Businesses and organizations in the study area vary widely in the number of people that they employ. Numbers range anywhere from just one employee, to close to 200. When comparing the number of employees at independently owned businesses and organizations versus corporately owned ones, some interesting patterns emerge. Smaller businesses and organizations, or those with 10 or fewer employees, tend to be independently owned. Meanwhile, larger businesses and organizations, like those that have closer to 75 employees or more, are often corporately owned.

Some of the smaller businesses in the study area are family run, like this small restaurant where the manager said “we have four sisters ... and then we have three brother-in-laws so they are pitching in” (Respondent 19). In addition, while gesturing to his family who was working, a specialty retailer said, “No, we don’t have employees” (Respondent 23).

Interestingly, business structure and employee numbers do not necessarily coincide with annual sales and budgets. Smaller, independent businesses reported annual sales and budgets among all brackets (Appendix 3). Meanwhile, the majority of the larger, corporate businesses reported over \$1 million in sales per year, falling in our largest sales and budget bracket. It is intuitive that a company with more employees would require a larger budget.

### Trends in Where Employees Come From

In addition to the number of employees, we think that it is also valuable to know where the employees come from, so that future research can identify whether the stadium development will have an impact on who is employed in the study area. We asked the participants whether they could speak to where their employees commute from, and since they had varying degrees of knowledge, their responses also varied in format, detail, and specificity. We notice that generally, participants from small businesses with fewer employees are better able to speak to where each of their employees come from with higher levels of detail, and can usually pinpoint which employee lives in what specific city, suburb, or even neighborhood. One respondent specifically referred to their employees as locals and when we asked what that meant to them, they elaborated by saying: “I mean most of our employees are within 5 miles of the store” (Respondent 16). On the other hand, as the size of the business and number of employees get larger, the interviewees tend lose their ability to speak where their employees come from in detail. Two employers, who are both affiliated with larger businesses (Respondents 2 and 5), used percentages when they were talking about their employees. Overall, the specificity of the answers we received varies from general statements like “They live around here” (Respondent 20) to names of suburbs and surrounding cities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

To paint a general picture of where the employees come from, we decided that the most meaningful way of representing where the employees come from is to count the

times each neighborhood, suburb or city was mentioned in the interviews. By doing so, we were able to make sure that each answer is accounted for within the limitations of different levels of detail and specificity. Figure 8 below illustrates all of the places mentioned in their relative direction to downtown Saint Paul and Minneapolis. We also aggregated any response that indicated the employees lived near the study area under Saint Paul. The size of each place in the figure represents the number of times that place was mentioned. It should be noted, however, that these sizes are not necessarily proportional and distances are not to scale. Looking at the sum of number of the times each place was mentioned, we conclude that the employees largely come from St. Paul, followed by Minneapolis, and then by suburbs within the metropolitan area.

### Origin of Workers' Commutes to the Workplaces in the Study Area

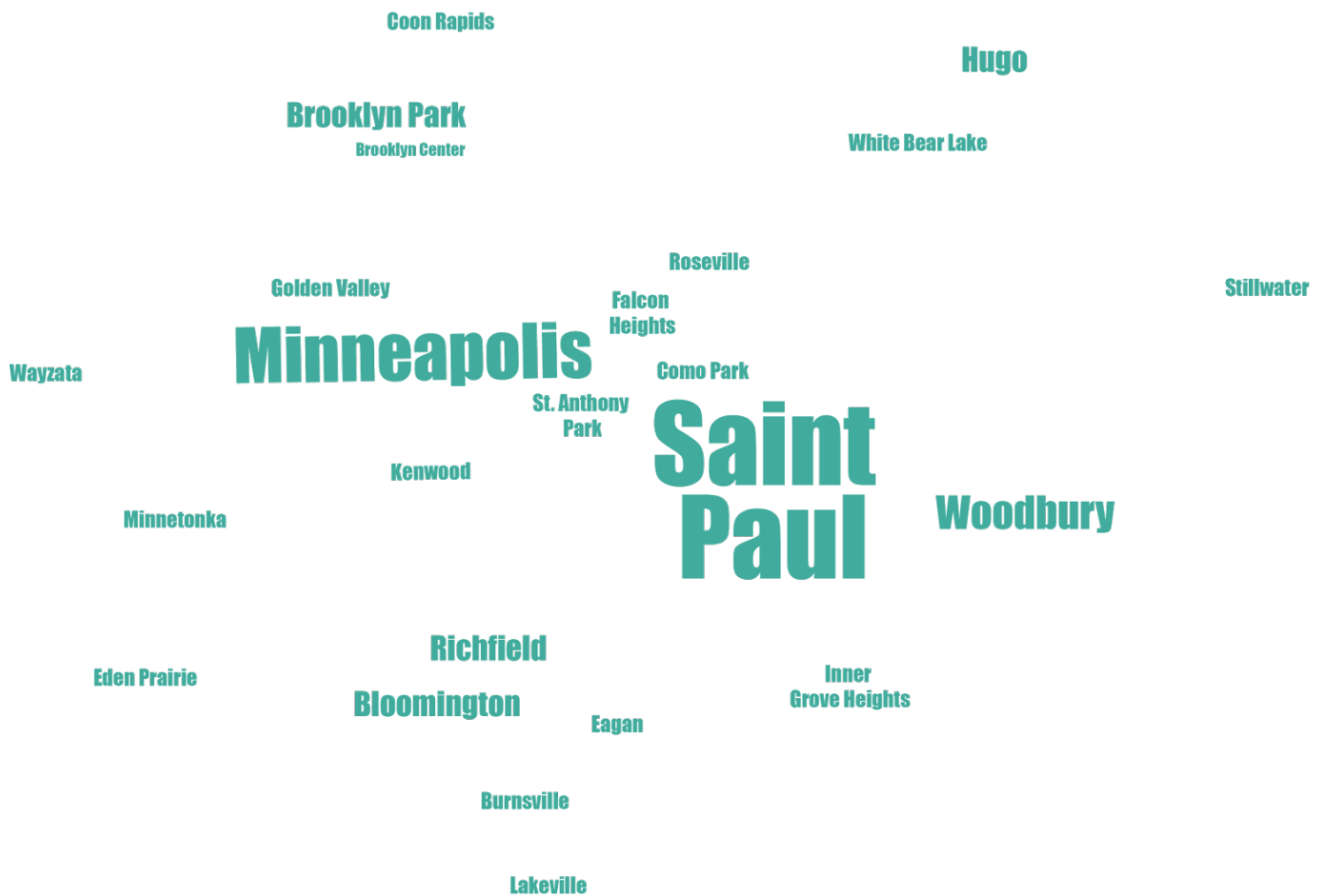


FIGURE 8

## Trends in How Employees Get to Work

To further consider the role of employees in the dynamics of the Snelling Avenue Station area, we became interested in their chosen mode of transportation to arrive to work, and the implications of their chosen mode to the traffic patterns of the area. Although not all respondents offered a rationale for their employees' transport decisions, all respondents had a sense of what modes of transportation their employees used. These responses help us to get a better sense of how employees' travel could be affected by the stadium development.

When respondents were asked about their employees' transport of choice, a prominent theme was the reliance on cars to arrive to work. Out of the 24 interviews conducted, 14 respondents noted that the majority of their employees rely on cars. One respondent mentioned that this choice was mainly due to the convenience of unfettered access and mobility provided by a car, noting that "...it would be easy for me to take public transport, but I never know what call I'm going to get for me to go to the hospital or go to this or go to that. So we tend to need to be somewhat mobile" (Respondent 1). Two respondents also laughed when noting their employees' car-dependency, possibly indicating that they feel a strong need to use a car instead of public transit (Respondents 4 and 11).

However, many respondents also recognized the presence and practicality of public transit in the area, particularly with the Green Line. Although many respondents said that the majority of their employees drive, 12 respondents mentioned at least one of their employees utilizes public transit. There were also 4 participants for whom at least half of their employees used public transit to arrive to work, with one respondent in particular noting that 95% of their employees use the Green Line (Respondent 18). Additionally, some respondents (even some who mentioned having a majority of employees driving) noted the convenience of public transit options in the area. One individual in particular mentioned that he uses the Green Line because "...it's easier sometimes to not pull a car out of the ramp and just take the train" (Respondent 15), thus demonstrating the impact of traffic patterns on chosen transport methods.

While many respondents noted a reliance on cars, several also noted some associated problems that arise for their mainly car-dependent staff. One issue raised was that of parking. One respondent indicated that with limited parking in the area, they ask potential new hires during interviews about their ability to access public transit so as to avoid parking issues (Respondent 5). This indicates the pressure businesses can feel as parking options become more limited and they must consider how their employees get to work. Another issue raised that relates to employees driving to work was traffic. One respondent noted that "...it's bumper-to-bumper from about here to all the way up 94 now. In the afternoons, trying to get across 94, it's rough. In the last year, traffic has changed immensely" (Respondent 1). Thus, changing traffic patterns can affect the mobility of employees, and could prompt shifts in future chosen transport methods as traffic patterns change.



Overall, most of the businesses interviewed in this research area are small, independently owned businesses with less than ten employees. Only 5 of the 24 respondents were corporate businesses. Based on the number of mentions in the interviews, employees mostly live in Saint Paul and Minneapolis while the rest live in suburbs nearby. About half of the businesses have employees that use a range of public transit options, while the other half have car-dependent employees. When considering future implications of the stadium development on where employees come from and their transport options, it will be informative to compare this baseline to future commuting patterns and how employees' transportation has changed possibly as a result of a difference in parking and transit accessibility in the area. In this section we explored the trends in number of employees and their commuting patterns, and the following section will investigate the ways in which businesses/organizations get information about what is happening in the area.

## How Do Businesses Get Information About Neighborhood Happenings?

A useful way to understand the businesses and organizations in this area is to look at how and where they get information about the neighborhood. Studying these communication networks gives us a sense of the connectivity among businesses, as well as the ways that information flows through the area. Additionally, it is likely that a business that is well informed and well connected will be better able to adapt to changes that the stadium development may bring. In order to determine a business or organization's information networks, we drafted the questions: *Where do businesses and organizations go to get information about what's happening in the area? What coalitions do they participate in?*

Our interviews with local owners, managers, and directors show that there are a number of distinct and varied ways that organizations gather information. Despite this wide variation, we were able to categorize this diversity of experiences into three groups: individual information gathering, informal connections, and formal connections. These formal connections, especially in the form of local coalitions, are especially important mechanisms for spreading information.

### Information Gathering

Individuals gather information in many different ways. Some respondents reported that they usually do not rely on formal networks, but rather find information on their own. Four respondents mentioned they read local newspapers, such as City Pages, in order to follow progress on the stadium development. One respondent indicated that they do not gather *any* information about the stadium at all, suggesting disconnect or disinterest in the process (Respondent 7). Another remarked that they only learn about the stadium by visually perceiving changes at the stadium site (Respondent 3).

The majority of respondents do gather information from some sort of interaction with other people, many of which are informal. Informal networks, such as with neighbors, customers, and vendors, seem largely to be the result of owners and managers talking and developing relationships with the people they see regularly. For example, one respondent said, “I am really good friends with the maintenance man in the mall because he’s been here 30 plus years, so I get a lot of information from him” (Respondent 11). Another respondent said, “We all kinda come together as a community, kinda allies against the light rail a little bit because we all want each other to do well of course, but other than that we don’t hold meetings or anything because there’s not so much we can do about it” (Respondent 14). A large majority of respondents explicitly mentioned these personal connections as important to their information gathering process.

On the other hand, many respondents reported that they do rely on formalized networks. The breadth of official networks respondents utilize consists of: direct or indirect involvement with the stadium project, connections through organizations’ board of directors participation, partnering with higher education, and joining established coalitions (as discussed later). One business, for example, teamed up with Mortenson Construction to provide food for a meeting about the stadium (Respondent 18). Another respondent noted, “we’re also part of a Frogtown network through Bethel University... they have a network there where they have community leaders who are involved with keeping tabs on what’s going on” (Respondent 1). Involvement in these types of formal networks is an important way to gather information about events happening in the surrounding neighborhood, which suggests that they may play an important role for businesses and organizations in tracking the development of the stadium site. One of the most prominent examples of formal networks in the Snelling Avenue Station area is business and organization coalitions. In the next section, we detail these coalitions and the relationships businesses and organizations have with them.

### **Coalitions**

Based on our interviews, a prominent source of information gathering comes through various types of coalitions, including business coalitions, neighborhood development and community-oriented coalitions, and industry-specific coalitions. The Midway Chamber of Commerce was the most prominent business coalition mentioned by respondents. Of the twenty-four interviewed, five described themselves as being members of the Midway Chamber of Commerce and another stated that they are planning on applying for membership. One respondent described their relationship with the Chamber as an effective way to keep themselves “informed of development opportunities and things that are going on” (Respondent 16), emphasizing that the Chamber plays an important role in keeping local business owners up to date about new developments happening in the area.

Several businesses around the Snelling Avenue Station area also interact with smaller neighborhood and community-oriented coalitions, which facilitate more culturally- or occupationally-specific connections between businesses. These included District Councils, including the UPDC and Hamline-Midway Coalition. However, respondents also referenced other neighborhood coalitions such as Little Africa, which is

led by African Economic Development Solutions. In the words of one respondent, “Little Africa is a non-profit organization, and they help small businesses, encourage new businesses” (Respondent 19). In essence, it provides support and communication for African businesses north of the Snelling Avenue Station area. Respondents mentioned other neighborhood and community groups, including the Neighborhood Development Center near University and Dale, a local neighborhood watch group, and some religious networks. Industry-specific coalitions were also mentioned, although it appeared that they play somewhat less of a role in local information gathering as those coalitions are not rooted in the neighborhood.

At the same time, about a third of businesses in this study noted that they are not currently part of coalitions or other business groups in the area. One respondent suggested that opportunities to gather information in the neighborhood were plentiful, stating, “I always feel like if the information is out there and you don’t go to the community meetings, can you really complain when something happens?” (Respondent 15). However, this was disputed by other businesses that faced constraints on their abilities to make external connections. One small business reported that they are not interested in joining groups like the Midway Business Coalition “because we’re a small business struggling and those different coalitions have fees and dues that you have to pay, and we are not going to be getting no help from them anyway, so I just can’t see myself paying dues to something every year that I’m not getting any results from... I’m not trying to figure out what the other businesses are doing” (Respondent 3). This quote shows that some business owners are aware of the options but it just does not make sense to join a group that will not adequately support their needs. Another participant noted, “I am very busy on my own” (Respondent 21). After weighing the options, the leaders of these businesses find that any benefits of connectivity or other advantages associated with belonging to a coalition do not outweigh the financial and time commitments of being a member.

It is clear that businesses and organizations get their information about the area in a wide variety of ways. Through individual information gathering techniques, informal connections, and formal networks, they can better understand what is happening in the neighborhood and the changes that are taking place. Notably, more formal networks serve as important information pathways in the community, and many participants are members of the Midway Chamber of Commerce, Little Africa, or other coalitions. Still, there are still those who are not members of coalitions or any similar networks of actors.

Our research shows that businesses and organizations have varying interest in staying informed about the area, and exhibit different degrees of success in doing so. As the stadium site continues to develop, it will be essential to ensure that they are able to obtain the information they need to stay up to date on changes in the neighborhood and to make timely decisions in regards to potential challenges or opportunities associated with the development. As we write in the next section, participants have a variety of concerns and points of optimism in regards to the stadium development. Understanding the channels of information dispersal can contribute to a better sense of how these businesses and organizations are able to adapt to future change.

## What Concerns do Business and Organizations Have Regarding Major League Soccer Stadium Development?

One of the main goals of our overall research was to create a baseline study of opinions of the businesses and organizations located in and around the intersection of Snelling Avenue and University Avenue. In order to do so, we formed the following questions:

*“In what ways do you expect the stadium will affect this business/organization? Do you think the stadium will lead to any challenges or opportunities for this business/organization?”*

*“What was your initial reaction to the MLS stadium development?”*

When we asked the participants how the stadium development might affect their business or organization, we noticed some recurring topics in their responses. Participants are concerned about the stadium negatively impacting traffic, parking, business operations, sales or revenue, and nearby housing options, as well as increasing property taxes and rent. Some participants also see the stadium development as a sign of the increasing pressures from the city for certain businesses to leave the area and new ones to come in. A common response was concern about increased traffic congestion and limited parking as a result of stadium construction, reminiscent of the Green Line construction. More positively, however, participants also see potential opportunities in the stadium bringing new or increased business and general positive neighborhood change.

After dividing the responses into three main categories of “concerns/challenges”, “interests/opportunities”, or “neutral/no opinion”, we decided to synthesize the most common responses we received into a couple of recurring themes regarding the questions. Each of these themes is addressed more thoroughly below. These themes are, in no particular order: concerns about traffic and parking, that there is no effect or uncertainty, that people are generally hopeful, and that diverse businesses have similar concerns.

### **Concerns about Traffic and Parking**

One of the most common concerns we encountered were concerns about traffic and parking in the Snelling Avenue Station area. Many of these concerns related to pre-existing traffic issues, not just parking difficulties/traffic increases from the stadium construction/soccer games. Interestingly, concerns about current traffic were more prevalent than concerns about stadium impacts. Many concerns referenced the Green Line construction, and how many area businesses experienced a drop in customers when the Green Line construction temporarily brought congestion to the area. An owner of a specialty retail business expressed this concern, “the light rail coming through, that was four years of construction for us, so that changed a lot too. People quit shopping in the area because of the construction and it was a pain in the butt, so... kind of what we are going through now with this construction” (Respondent 11). Another business owner

expressed similar feelings: “You know, they ripped up University Avenue, there was no entrance here [pointing to the front of the shop], we did have, we were fortunate that we had a side entrance, but University Avenue would take three stoplights to get across, so ... people didn’t want to come to the area, so business dropped off tremendously” (Respondent 6).

While many business owners used the traffic from Green Line construction as a frame of reference for their concerns, others did not know what to expect from the stadium construction. The prominent concern is that once the stadium is built, game day traffic will be substantial, and that this will impact business. One business owner remarked: “Parking is already a challenge, so if you add office towers or you add game day traffic or whatever it might be, the people in the neighborhood are concerned about that” (Respondent 1).

The concerns about traffic and parking in the Snelling Avenue Station area are quite varied; some businesses are concerned about losing parking, while others are worried about the large volume of traffic going to soccer games. In interviews we did not explicitly mention the estimates of how many soccer fans would be taking the Green Line or busses to games, so it is possible that once more information about that is known, there would be less concern about traffic and parking. Overall, feelings of concern about the potential traffic and parking changes are a common theme throughout the interviews, both in reference to specific streets and businesses, and in a broader sense.

### **No Effect or Uncertain**

Many of the businesses and organizations that we interviewed were unsure at the time of interview how the stadium might affect their business. A number of respondents expressed concrete concerns about things such as traffic and property tax increases or were excited at the prospect of new customers coming to the neighborhood as a result of the stadium, but there were an equal number of businesses that could not predict how the stadium might affect them, or if these anticipated concerns and hopes would even occur. The responses we received in this category were often a more neutral opinion than strongly negative or positive. For the most part, opinions in this theme fell into two categories: 1) the business felt like the stadium would have no effect on them or 2) the business was uncertain about what the potential effects of the stadium might be, positive or negative.

There were multiple responses that support the first point. A specialty retailer, for example, was unsure of whether the stadium would be good or bad for business “So it is hard to say how it’s gonna affect us, if it’s gonna be good for us, if it’s gonna be bad for us. I mean during the games we could be really busy, we could not be” (Respondent 11). The manager at a bar was similarly unsure about how the stadium development would affect their business, but felt it would be worth remaining in the neighborhood should the stadium in fact bring more business, “We’ll try to ride out the storm and see what happens... slight chance we’ll be okay” (Respondent 17). While respondents 11 and 17 were more generally unsure about what would happen, respondent 22, a health organization, considered the possibility of the development affecting other aspects of the neighborhood,

but was also unsure the degree to which this could happen, “I’m not sure how it will impact homeowners, property taxes, homeless people, etc. or our rent” (Respondent 22).

There were several remarks that illustrated the second point. Certain businesses, in this case a hair/beauty salon and a business offering specialty services, both felt that their businesses would be unaffected by the arrival of the stadium, but for different reasons. The business offering specialty services did not think that the actual games would not disrupt their business, “It’s a weekend thing [soccer games]. I don’t think that is going to affect [business] much at all. Four nights a week. Four nights in a year. Four games a year, three to four games, are on weekday nights. So on those nights it won’t be much different” (Respondent 8). On the other hand, some businesses, ~~like the hair/beauty salon~~ such as Respondent 3, felt that the people that would be attending soccer games would not be the same as the racial demographic of their business’ clientele and therefore thought the stadium would have no effect on their business. Another respondent, a specialty retailer, had similar sentiments, and indicated that they sold a niche product so business was unlikely to be affected by the stadium, “I think the stadium is a waste that’s just my opinion... Honestly I really don’t think [business] will be affected I mean what we do is a niche product and it has been for 25 years...” (Respondent 15).

Overall, of the 24 interviews, 10 gave a response that was uncertain about the impacts or felt that there would be no impact on their business or organization. Five of these were unsure of how the stadium would affect their business in the future, including how the stadium would affect things such as property taxes or rent. The remaining five of the ten businesses and organizations felt that the stadium would have little to no effect on their business, often because their clientele is not the same as those who would attend soccer games.

### **Generally Hopeful**

Despite concerns and uncertainties, 16 out of the 24 people we interviewed expressed hope that the stadium will bring new business in the future. For example, one restaurant owner said, “I would say [the stadium] will bring in a lot of customers who want to try new food or a new adventure with food” (Respondent 4). However, one person non-profit organization also cited how exposure to new businesses in the area and increased security from the development will also contribute to new business opportunities: “I think it might give us exposure to different corporations as other corporations come in and maybe see our organization, so it might be an opportunity that way, to be exposed to other organizations,” and “I think that the potential to even see more businesses come into the neighborhood, there’s that possibility, maybe things might..... get a little bit better in terms of security and things like that, might be an opportunity for us” (Respondent 10).

Furthermore, many people who expressed explicit concern or ambivalence about the stadium development also stated that they are hopeful for new business in the long run. For example, the manager of a specialty services business said both: “I don’t think that is going to affect it much at all” and “I’m holding a space, I’m leaving 1600 square feet that I’m not renting to anybody in case people want to have a beverage before they go to

the game”, indicating that he still hopes for an increase in customers (Respondent 8). The owner of a hair/beauty salon spoke about limited parking spaces and traffic saying that, “I guess some people don't want to [drive by the development]. So it may be a problem, but honestly I wouldn't mind though, as long as they attract more people to my business, I'm fine with it” (Respondent 12).

### **Diverse Businesses Have Similar Concerns**

Finally, we found that business owners and managers from a diverse range of business expressed these three themes. Not only were the opinions expressed unrelated to the type of service or product being sold, they were also expressed by both independent and corporate businesses. For example, the sentiment of uncertainty about the future was represented by corporate specialty services businesses as well as independent health businesses. Concerns about traffic and parking are held by independent hair/beauty salon businesses as well as corporate businesses. Independent nonprofits and corporate chain retail/fast food alike still held out hope for new business opportunities.

Throughout the interviews, several themes regarding how people think about the stadium development became clear. One of the most common is concern about how the stadium would impact parking and traffic congestion in the area. Many business owners referenced the traffic congestion that occurred during the Green Line construction, and how it impacted their business. General uncertainty about the effects of the stadium development is common as well, with some businesses expressing vague senses of hope or concern, while others simply didn't have an idea as to how they would be affected. Feelings of hope are frequent, especially about new business gained from stadium goers. It is additionally important to note that businesses have similar concerns regardless of whether they were corporate chains or small family owned businesses. While the nature of the concerns may vary, worries about parking and fluctuations in business are prevalent across the interviews.

This concludes the overarching themes of our study. In the next section, we discuss overall conclusions from the research gathered in our study and ultimately make recommendations about how to use the findings. Finally, we make suggestions as to potential future research opportunities that could build off of our baseline study and track changes over time with regard to the stadium.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In this report, we have provided a summary and analysis of responses given by business and organization owners and managers in the Snelling Avenue Station area to a series of questions concerning their operations and attitudes towards changes in the area. We find that businesses originally chose to locate in the area for several different reasons, including to attract new clients, to become more accessible, or to take advantage of individual building characteristics. Their employees were mostly local, living in St. Paul and Minneapolis as well as the inner-ring suburbs, although most employees drive to work. This contributes to concerns about parking, which was one of the main concerns listed by respondents about staying in the area, particularly as the stadium development is widely expected to increase traffic and parking needs. There are also concerns about property taxes and rents, which they generally expect to rise in conjunction with the stadium development. Some respondents, however, reflected that the stadium could also be a positive development for their bottom line, by bringing in more potential customers who would spend time in the area. Overall, respondents were generally ambivalent when it came to whether or not they would directly benefit from the stadium development. This uncertainty is perhaps accentuated by the fact that there does not seem to be a coordinated way for businesses to learn about what is happening in the neighborhood. With the exception of coalitions like the Midway Chamber of Commerce, UPDC, and Little Africa, businesses appeared to get information through more informal sources such as neighboring businesses, customers, or personal contacts.

To address the concerns illuminated in this report, we offer a few suggestions to the UPDC moving forward. The most noticeable problem is the looming threat to public parking. Many businesses are concerned about losing parking, as this would affect both their clientele and employees. Meanwhile, there appears to be a disconnect between employees and the public transit system. The vast majority of employees continue to drive, even though the majority resides within the Twin Cities, where public transit is relatively convenient. We recommend that the UPDC bridges the gap between employees and public transit opportunities, either through informational sessions, or reduced fare opportunities supplied by the Metropolitan Council. We believe that this will not only spark a sustainable initiative, but hopefully also prevent congestion and heavy traffic flows, particularly on game days.

Furthermore, we urge the UPDC to build a formal support system for small, struggling businesses, in order to help them adapt to rapid neighborhood change. As previously noted, there area wide array of perceptions of the upcoming stadium development and uncertainty about future changes. To ensure that the businesses and organizations in the area feel secure, it is important to support them through any viable means. Those of particular concern are businesses and organizations with fewer financial means to adapt and transition, as those with greater annual gross sales appear to be less concerned about changes happening in the area. Current networks of support, such as the various business coalitions, are not necessarily accessible to every business in the area, and



are not always worth the high upfront membership costs. Thus, we encourage the UPDC to construct networks of support that are inclusive and beneficial to all.

Such networks would ideally connect the businesses and organizations in the area to existing resources that could benefit them. Currently, there is significant ambivalence about the changes occurring, because businesses and organizations are not fully aware of what is happening. We identify this as a potential point of intervention, as we see an opportunity to share information more intentionally with the businesses and organizations that occupy the area. Connecting them to resources with information that they can access and circulate will increase awareness and knowledge of future change. Additionally, the UPDC could connect businesses and organizations with the numerous schools in the Twin Cities. Some businesses noted how they would appreciate the assistance of colleges and universities, while those who have already formed these relationships speak of their success. These connections would be beneficial to both those students looking for civic engagement opportunities and local businesses in need of assistance. Furthermore, many of our respondents noted that the stadium is an opportunity to grow and gain more clients. We recognize that the UPDC could connect these businesses to advertising and sales opportunities within the stadium, as one avenue to ensure local business reap the reward of the new development. By connecting businesses and organizations to useful resources, the UPDC can proactively make the positive change current businesses and organizations are hoping for.

In the future, we encourage the UPDC to continue their efforts to research the study area and the effects of the MLS stadium development. While our study focuses solely on business perceptions, we find that businesses and organizations are hyper-aware of the change occurring within the neighborhood, and so it is essential to consider the residents and businesses together. While this fell outside the scope of our research, an investigation of clientele and neighborhood change is a promising approach for analyzing business outlook in the future.

Future research should aim to include even more respondents in order to capture an even greater diversity of viewpoints. While we divided area businesses and organizations into nine different categories, some categories of businesses were underrepresented in our sample of respondents. For instance, while the health sector made up 13% of the businesses and organizations in the area, for example, we had only one respondent representing that sector.

Finally, given that this is a baseline study, it would be useful to see how attitudes about neighborhood change evolve over time, both in the short-term and the longer-term. This report only captures the sentiments of neighborhood and organization owners and managers at a single point in time. The study was conducted during a period of substantial change within the Snelling Avenue Station area, with initial construction on the stadium structure, the rapid relocation of nearby businesses, and the demolition of several buildings. It is entirely possible that respondent attitudes were affected by the immediacy of these changes, which suggests that it may be useful to reevaluate as the stadium site evolves. One suggestion for further research would thus be to revisit this topic in the future, either through interviews with the same respondents or other similar respondents,

in order to track whether attitudes have changed toward the stadium development or broader transformations in the neighborhood. This could take place both in 2-3 years time, when the stadium development is nearing completion, in order to evaluate whether businesses have stayed through the construction period, and in 5-10 years time, in order to evaluate the longer-term impact of the stadium on the neighborhood economy.

In conclusion, the research we have provided is a baseline study to illuminate points of intervention for the UPDC. We hope our findings assist the council's ability to proactively respond to upcoming change, so that the development may have a positive impact on the various businesses and organizations in the area.

## Works Cited

Carlsen, S. & Roers, M. (No Date). *Snelling Station Area Transit Oriented Development Opportunity: Green Line Light Rail, Saint Paul*. Retrieved 18 December 2017 from Metropolitan Council Website: <https://metro council.org/METC/files/4c/4ce47d1f-983b-47de-9c27-7dec10428b40.pdf>

ESRI Business Analyst (2017). Dataset. Available from: <https://bao.arcgis.com/>

ESRI Community Analyst (2017). Dataset. Available from: <https://communityanalyst.arcgis.com/>

Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State (2016). Minnesota Business Snapshot [web page]. Retrieved 18 December 2017 from: <http://www.sos.state.mn.us/business-liens/business-liens-data/minnesota-business-snapshot-data/>

Snelling-Midway Jobs Strategy Work Group (2016). *Snelling-Midway Jobs Strategy Report*. Retrieved 18 December 2017 from: [https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Planning%20%26%20Economic%20Development/FINAL%20Jobs%20Strategy%20Report\\_July2016.pdf](https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Planning%20%26%20Economic%20Development/FINAL%20Jobs%20Strategy%20Report_July2016.pdf)

## Appendix

---

Interview Questions .....	39
Categories to Guide Selection of Businesses and Organizations .....	40
Interview Subject Record .....	41
Sample Interview Transcript #1 .....	42
Sample Interview Transcript #2 .....	47
Consent Form .....	52

## Interview Questions

### **Questions about this location**

1. When did your business/organization open at this location? What about this location was originally attractive to your business/organization?
  - a. Do you still feel the same way about this location? What has changed?
2. Do you think this business/org will stay in this location in the next 1-2 years? What factors would impact that decision?
  - a. Does your bus/org own or lease your property? And how does this affect your outlook for the future?

### **Questions about this business/organization**

3. Who uses your business/ org?
  - a. Has this changed over time? If yes, do you know what prompted this change?
  - b. Do you have a sense of where your customers/ clients come from?
  - c. How do people find out about your establishment?
4. Where do you get information as a business owner/manager about what's happening in this neighborhood?
5. In the past few months, have you or any leader in this business/ organization interacted with leaders of any business or organization in this neighborhood?
  - a. Are you a member of any business associations?

### **Details about this organization/business**

6. Thinking about the people who work here, how many employees are there?
  - a. Do you have a sense of where employees come from (name of the city is fine)?
  - b. How do you and other employees typically arrive here?
7. We want to make sure we talk with people representing a range of business and organization experiences. We therefore would like to know a ballpark estimate for your business' **gross revenue or sales** / **organization's budget** for the past year. Which category below best describes your situation. As a reminder, we will not share this information with anyone.
  1. \$0 - \$10,000
  2. \$10,001 - \$50,000
  3. \$50,001 - \$250,000
  4. \$250,001 - \$1M
  5. Over \$1M
8. For our records, would you please share your job title or otherwise explain your relationship to this business or organization.

## Categories to Guide Selection of Organizations and Businesses

Goal: Maximum Variation

1. **Bar & Live Music** - 2
2. **Chain retail and fast food** - 6 (e.g., food and retail stores, department stores)
3. **Grocery** - 2
4. **Health services & pharmacy** - 2 (e.g., clinics, pharmacies)
5. **Hair/Beauty Salon** - 5
6. **Specialty retail** - 12 (e.g., liquor stores, clothing, book stores)
7. **Specialty services** - 9 (e.g., tattoo parlors, auto services, banks, finance, vets, office spaces, insurance offices)
8. **Restaurants** - 3 (e.g., sit-down restaurants)
9. **Nonprofit Services** - 2 (e.g., religious institutions, charities)

## Interview Subject Record

Transcript Number	Category	Corporate/Independent	Land Tenure	Annual Sales/Budget
1	Nonprofit Organization	Independent	Owner	\$250,001-1 Million (\$750,000)
2	Specialty Services	Independent	Lease	\$250,001-1 Million
3	Hair/Beauty Salon	Independent	Lease	\$50,001-\$250,000
4	Restaurant	Independent	Lease	\$250,001-1 Million (\$700,000)
5	Chain retail and fast food	Corporate/Independent	Lease	> \$1 Million
6	Specialty Services	Independent	Owner	\$250,001-1 Million
7	Specialty Retail	Independent		\$250,001 - \$1M
8	Specialty Services	Corporate	Lease	>\$1 Million
9	Hair/Beauty Salon	Independent	Own	\$50,001-\$250,000
10	Nonprofit Organization	Independent	Lease	\$250,001 - \$1M
11	Specialty Retail	Corporate	Lease	\$250,001-1 Million
12	Hair/Beauty Salon	Independent	Lease	N/A
13	Specialty Retail	Independent	Lease	\$0-\$10,000
14	Specialty Retail	Independent	Lease	\$250,001 - \$1M
15	Specialty Retail	Independent	Lease	\$10,001 - \$50,000
16	Specialty retail	Independent	Lease	>\$1 Million
17	Bar	Independent	Lease	N/A
18	Grocery	Corporate	Lease	>\$1 million
19	Restaurant	Independent	Lease	
20	Grocery	Independent	Lease	\$50,001-\$250,000
21	Restaurant	Independent	Lease	\$250,001-1 Million (predict)
22	Health	Independent	Lease	\$50,001 - \$250,000
23	Specialty Retail	Independent		
24	Nonprofit Organization	Independent	Lease	

## Sample Interview Transcript #1

*We have edited this transcript to keep identities confidential.*

Interview with owner of [Hair/Beauty Salon]

I: Interviewer

S: Subject, Owner of [Hair/Beauty Salon]

I: The first questions are about the location of this business. So what about the area was originally attractive to your business? Why did you choose this area in particular to be located?

S: Basically because the distributor that we used to purchase from, when I was at another location, stopped being a distributor and opened a business that was competing with ours. And they moved across the street into the mall so we moved from Selby and came across the street from them. That's sometimes good for competition.

I: Are there any advantages or disadvantages to this location compared to your old one?

S: The advantage is that it's on University so it's more visible. We were on Selby at the time and being across the street from a competitor that doesn't carry as much a variety of products for African-Americans, they always recommend, when they don't have it, they send the customers to us who don't even know we exist, so that's an advantage. Disadvantage was when the light rail came and split up the street because you have customers who don't want to do the U-turn to come back, so then they go down to our other location.

I: Previously you mentioned the light rail being an advantage, has the light rail affected this business in any other way?

S: No, because it didn't bring us business. When the construction was going on it took away some of our customers and they never came back. In that way it affected us.

I: We've heard other statements from other residents that said the construction in particular was very disruptive. So you agree?

S: Yeah.

I: With regard to other businesses, since you've been here, have they changed a lot over time or have the same businesses generally been here?

S: No I've watched a lot of the businesses close. There's a few businesses that are gone that used to be here before the light rail. One of them is one of my competitors... right in the next block. She's no longer there.

I: Is that recent?

S: I think sometime in the beginning of the year or so. Or last year, I don't know, but I know it just disappeared.

I: In terms of short term, do you think you guys will stay in the area just in the immediate future or do you have plans to move elsewhere?

S: We wish to stay in this same spot for as long as we can, but our landlord has it up for sale because of the construction across the street. He thinks he's going to get a lot of money for his property now that the soccer stadium is coming.

I: So that's my next question, about the soccer stadium, what's your initial reaction to it?

S: Well, like I told my landlord, I don't think it's going to make any difference because the customers that come to the soccer stadium are not going to come across the street. So whoever invests in property at this location will not get customers from the soccer stadium. They come to the soccer stadium, they go back to the suburbs. They're not going to cross the street because of the [racial demographic] of the businesses that are on this side of the street. I can't see any good that's going to get to us from the soccer stadium...

I: That's a really good point. In terms of short-term impacts as well, have the rents or property taxes changed a lot because of the changes that have happened to the neighborhood?

S: Yes it has. It has gone sky-high.

I: Is that something that you guys are in particular concerned about?

S: Yeah, because if the landlord sold this spot, I wouldn't be able to afford a space between Lexington and Snelling, which is the space I would need for my business.

I: These next sets of questions are going to be more specific to [Hair/Beauty Salon]. I know you've mentioned it a little bit in talking about the light rail and who's going to come to the stadium, but who in particular uses this business? Who's your clientele?

S: My clientele are African-American, black people. This is where they come to get their hair products and their hair supplies... We've been in business for almost thirty-something years. You can add that up.

I: Yeah that's close to 35. That's great. And that's been consistent over the 35 years you'd say? And how do people, how do your customers, find your establishment?

S: It was a small neighborhood business at the same because when the Selby neighborhood was the Rondo neighborhood, it was a black neighborhood so word of mouth everybody knew... and over the 34 years it has become... we don't even do much of social media or even advertise because it's been around that long. The neighborhood people know [Hair/Beauty Salon]...

I: That was actually my next question...where in general do your customers come from? Is it primarily in the blocks surrounding here or...



S: No they come from all over. Like that customer (referencing a customer who had just purchased something) is probably someone who used to live in Saint Paul and she knows that [Hair/Beauty Salon] is a better bargain that's what she was just saying that the competitor near her house in Minneapolis the prices are higher and most people don't know that but she knows [Hair/Beauty Salon], so they come from all over. From Brooklyn Park, from Eagan.

I: How do you guys communicate with your customers, do you guys use email? I know you mentioned not a lot of social media but...

S: No. Just in store.

I: In terms of the neighborhood, other than just visually observing what's happening, how do you find out what's going on in the neighborhood?

S: Visually. That's about it. When the construction was going on the neighborhood development program used to give us information on what was going on but after the construction it's just what you see.

I: Is that the Union Park District Council? What organization is that?

S: It still exists it's at the Western Bank Building. Before you get to...

I: That's all the way near Dale, huh?

S: It's the neighborhood development program, which helps businesses all around in different neighborhoods in the Minneapolis/Saint Paul area. They were the ones helping with the loans and grants and stuff for the light rail. That's how we got our information what was going on during the light rail construction and after that it's just what you see.

I: Is [Hair/Beauty Salon] a member of any business association in the neighborhood? Are you guys in close contact with neighboring businesses?

S: Like Midway Business Coalition? No. That's because we're a small business struggling and those different coalitions have fees and dues that you have to pay, and we are not going to be getting no help from them anyway, so I just can't see myself paying dues to something every year that I'm not getting any results from.

I: Is there a divide? Are you familiar with businesses that are a part of it versus...

S: No, I am not familiar with any business that's a part of it. I'm the sole proprietor of [Hair/Beauty Salon] and I'm not trying to figure out what the other businesses are doing.

I: You've mentioned a couple of times that you're the only employee here, is that true?

S: Mhmm.

I: Where do you commute from?

S: Hugo, Minnesota.

I: From Hugo? Isn't that like 20 miles out?

S: That's a 25 minute drive.

I: Do you drive? I assume you drive.

S: Yeah.

I: Do you have any last opinions about the light rail, the neighborhood change, the soccer stadium, that you'd just like to state for the record?

S: No.

I: That's it? Ok. Our project really wants to make sure that we talk to a range of businesses whether it be small and local like you guys, where there's only one employee, or even big and corporate like Wal-Mart, even Great Clips is a corporate chain, and so we have a question regarding gross revenue, or sales, would you be comfortable answering that? We've broken it up into five categories.

S: I wouldn't know, my accountant would probably be the one to answer that question, but let's see if I can. Yearly right?

I: Yearly. For the past year. So for 2016.

S: Let me tell you in a minute. Ok, put me in number three.

## Sample Interview Transcript #2

*We have edited this transcript to keep identities confidential.*

Interview with Manager of [Chain Retail and Fast Food]

I: Interviewer

S: Subject, Manager of [Chain Retail and Fast Food]

I: So we'll talk about the area, the stadium, and your business.

S: ok

I: So what about this area, this neighborhood, was originally attractive to, do you think, to a place like [Chain Retail and Fast Food]?

S: Because there was no [Chain Retail and Fast Food] around here. That was the first option, the second one was transportation for employees and customers, since we already knew that project with the light rail was in place. We figured this was a good target.

I: So, how long has this business been here?

S: Since 2012

I: Ok, great. Has your opinion of the benefits of this location changed over time?

S: Yes, it has. It has improved because people now actually drive on University versus staying away from University to avoid construction. We don't know if it's going to affect while the stadium's going up, but at least the light rail users can still get to us.

I: Yeah. So you still think that this location is an advantageous location?

S: Yes.

I: Have the other businesses or organizations around here changed over those five years that it's been here?

S: Personally, I haven't noticed other than now that we know that they're closing on the other side

I: As far as the [Chain Retail and Fast Food], I know that we just talked about that there have been changes. Do you think that it'll stay here in the next coming years?

S: Yes. We actually don't own the building, we lease the building and we have a lease of twenty years, so we got fifteen to go.

I: Oh wow, ok. That's great. So do you think then that this building will remain a [Chain Retail and Fast Food] for the next 20 years?

S: Yes

I: You've already answered one of my questions, that's great. So have the rents changed a whole lot over the past few years?

S: No, we locked in a lease rate.

I: So you don't expect that to change in the future?

S: No, not in the future

I: So that's not a factor

S: No, not for us.

I: Cool. So you said already that the light rail has been a positive impact. Have you seen any... so you said that obviously the construction affected how many people that were coming in?

S: Yes, the first two years that the light rail wasn't running, the construction for the light rail was affecting our business.

I: So in other ways, has the reduction in on-street parking from the light rail affected business as well or not?

S: [thinking] Yes. Yes it has

I: How so?

S: We see not the same amount of people during the late afternoon or the late dinner.

I: Ok, and you think that's due to

S: That's due to not enough parking areas and stuff like that, so that's what we don't know what's going to happen when the stadium goes up, you know. Are they going to restrict right now... Here on the side, we only have two hours parking. But we're very limited inside, so we try to park there, but we're switching back and forth so we can take advantage of that. So when the stadium goes up, we don't know if they're going to reduce the amount of time parking or they're going to have ramps or anything else.

I: Yeah, that's a good point. So do you have any ideas of how the stadium *would* affect this business?

S: We're expecting it will affect it for good because of people going to the games, but since there are not games every day and they don't want to use it for other events, maybe people are going to avoid the area during game time, too.

I: Yeah, that's a good point. So, do you see that as a challenge or an opportunity?

S: We see it as both. A challenge with the people attending the stadium, if there's not enough parking around, they're going to use our parking. And we see it as an *opportunity* because people are going to want to eat before they go to the game. It's probably more affordable than in the stadium.

I: Absolutely. Stadium food always costs an arm and a leg. So do you remember what your initial reaction was when you heard that they were going to be developing a soccer stadium right over there?

S: It was shocking, actually. We couldn't believe it. Because it was between here or Harding Hills or Blaine. But at the same time, it was exciting because we see it as an opportunity to, like I said, attract more customers, but at the same time, a challenge that we cannot accommodate everybody that drives.

I: Yeah. So has that shock worn off a bit?

S: Yeah, now it's settling (laughing).

I: That's good. So, how do you think the stadium will affect the area in general?

S: [pause] You know, for being here five years, and I see that people really like the old ways. They don't really want newer developments and stuff. It may be not well accepted at the beginning, maybe. But at the same time, because everybody think in pollution, garbage, you know, parking, noise, and yeah, I don't know. I'm hoping for good, but at the same time, we're just tenants here.

I: Yeah, absolutely. So, in general, who comes to [Chain Retail and Fast Food]? Are there specific populations you see more than others?

S: For the lunchtime, it's people that work in the offices around here. For the dinner time, it's definitely the neighbors, because they bring families all together. And on the weekends, it's a lot of the students, from the U of M, Macalester, from Saint Thomas, Hamline, Concordia.

I: Have those populations changed over those five years that you've been here?

S: No, I think it's pretty much been the same. I mean, it has increased in volume, but we still see the same type of population coming in.

I: Do you see any seasonal variation with who comes in?

S: [thinking] During the winter, like in snow time, it's definitely people who drive that come in. People who walk, that live around here, they stay inside, not really come and eat.

I: Understandable. So, how you think people find out that you guys are here?

S: Driving by. We have advertised in the Monitor, the Villager, and you know, social media. And we include ourselves in the U of M planner. So new students always get a package, and we advertise there.

I: Cool. So would you say those are the primary ways that you communicate with your customers?

S: Yes.

I: Ok, and have those methods changed at all in the five years you guys have been here?

S: Changing how?

I: Like did you add some platforms or get rid of some?

S: Oh, yes. We have increased our electronic ways and decreased some of the paper. Not a lot of newspaper advertising anymore. Promotions probably like once or twice a year in

the paper. But social media, we do use a lot of that. Facebook, there's an Around Campus app, and we do pretty much monthly specials there, too.

I: So you guys do definitely, would you say that you target the college population?

S: Yes, we try to target the college population, since there's like five or six around here.

I: Yeah, that's true. So kind of flipping that, where do you guys get your information about what's going on in the neighborhood?

S: We're members of the Chamber of Commerce for the Midway. And all the businesses around here are very involved.

I: So how did you find out about the chamber of commerce or how do you connect with other businesses?

S: The chamber of commerce actually introduced themselves to us when we first came in, and we became members. The Minnesota Restaurant Association is another way that we communicate with everybody else.

I: Ok, so in the past like few months or year, have you or any of the other leaders at [Chain Retail and Fast Food] interacted with other leaders of businesses in the area other than through the chamber of commerce?

S: Yes, the corporate actually goes with the Minnesota Restaurants' Association to the capitol, and that's how they get more of the information on what's happening.

I: Alright, so going on to some more specific to this location. The people who work here, how many employees are there?

S: I have 33 including myself.

I: Great, and that's both full-time and part-time?

S: Yes.

I: Ok, cool. So do you have any idea of kind of like where your employees come from to come work here?

S: 70% of them are students, high school students. And the rest come from Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park area.

I: Ok, do you know how they get here? Do they use transportation, or do they drive, or?

S: Probably like 25% of them drive and the rest use the light rail or the bus.

I: Oh ok, cool. That's interesting. I mean it makes sense with the parking issues that you mentioned.

S: Yeah that's the first thing, the first question I ask "Do you drive? I just want to let you know that we're limited on parking."

I: So that's something that you do think about when you're hiring?

S: Yeah.

I: How do you get here?

S: I drive (laughing). I live in Brooklyn Center.

I: Alright. So we're also trying to make sure that we get a sense of a good range of the businesses around here, so that it doesn't skew things too much. And so, we're kind of looking for a ballpark estimate of the gross revenue or sales for like the past year, and so there are some categories here, and you just indicate a category.

S: We're here (pointing to 5).

I: Yeah, we're just trying to get an idea, so that we can a range, since we're talking to small businesses, and obviously [Chain Retail and Fast Food] is a chain

S: Larger, yeah

I: And if you have any other thoughts or things to add...

S: [thinking] Hmm, not really much, you know. Just waiting to see what's going to happen with everybody because there's people that used to work across. Some of them were relocated, because the business closed. Some of them lost their job, and we're trying to see if they want to continue, since most of them live around here, if they want to work here. Some have chosen to go different ways, others were waiting to retire from what I understand, and some of them just want a change in career.

I: So you have noticed some changes, even since it started

S: Yes. We'll see.

I: Alright I think that covers most of it. It was great talking to you.

S: Yeah, thank you, nice to meet you. I'm hoping we can help.



## Consent Form



### CONSENT FORM

#### **Opportunities, Challenges, and Outlooks for Businesses and Organizations in the Snelling Ave Station Area**

*Please review the following material that explains the purpose of this research project. This should help you decide whether or not you want to participate in the study. Signing this form will indicate that you have been informed about the study and that you want to participate.*

You are being asked to take part in a research project conducted by students in the Qualitative Research Methods in Geography course at Macalester College. The project is supervised by Professor Dan Trudeau in collaboration with Union Park District Council. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Dan Trudeau, at 651-696-6872 or [trudeau@macalester.edu](mailto:trudeau@macalester.edu). You may also contact Michael Johnson, community organizer with the Union Park District Council, at [michael@unionparkdc.org](mailto:michael@unionparkdc.org) or 651-645-6887.

#### Purpose, Intent, and Scope of the Research Project

This purpose of this research is to understand the opportunities and challenges that businesses and organizations in the Snelling Avenue Station area currently face, before the Minnesota United's soccer stadium is completed. We want to document the perspectives of owners, managers, and directors from a diverse range of businesses and organizations located in this area. We aim to record perspectives from people associated with at least 30 different organizations and businesses. Your participation will help us better understand current opportunities and challenges facing businesses and organizations. Our research will inform the Union Park District Council's efforts to support existing businesses and organizations in the Midway.

#### Privacy

We want to assure you that your responses to the interview will be kept private and secure. We may quote parts of your interview in public documents, but will never reveal your identity. Furthermore, we will only share our final report with Union Park District Council and not your individual responses.

#### Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely your choice. If there is a question that you do not want to answer, please feel free to skip it. You can end or withdraw your participation in the interview at any time. Withdrawing from this study will not affect your relationship with Macalester College or Union Park District Council.

#### Permission to Record the Interview

This interview will take about 45 - 60 minutes of your time and I would like to record it. I will use this recording to generate an accurate transcript of the interview. The digital recording and transcript of this interview will be kept secure on a password protected computer and will be deleted after this project is complete.

Questions?

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Dan Trudeau. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Macalester College Institutional Review Board at 1600 Grand Avenue, Saint Paul MN 55105 or by phone at 651-696-6153.

***You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.***

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read this form about the study or it was read to me. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to obtain the results of this research? Please provide your contact information below.

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

Phone: