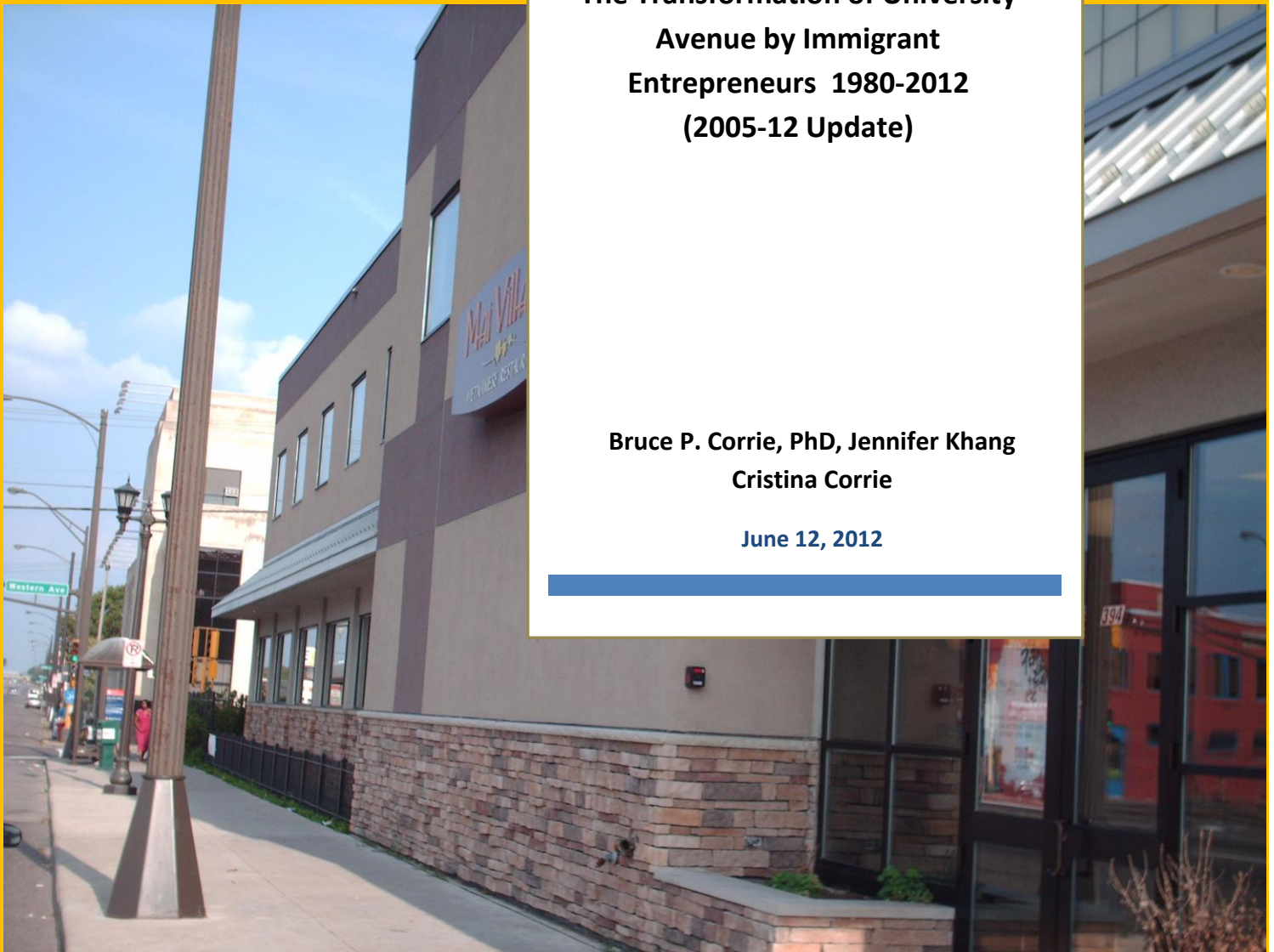


We found that the avenue continues to be an incubator for immigrant entrepreneurship. The area is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic with a growing presence of African immigrant and African American entrepreneurs....

**The Transformation of University Avenue by Immigrant Entrepreneurs 1980-2012 (2005-12 Update)**

**Bruce P. Corrie, PhD, Jennifer Khang  
Cristina Corrie**

**June 12, 2012**





## **Executive Summary**

This report focuses on a six block segment of University Avenue (in Saint Paul, Minnesota) from Dale to Farrington to assess progress and change in immigrant entrepreneurship over the past seven years. This report follows up on previous studies on this segment of the avenue analyzing immigrant entrepreneurship since 1981.

We found that the avenue continues to be an incubator for immigrant entrepreneurship. The area is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic with a growing presence of African immigrant and African American entrepreneurs. There is also a constant churning in the sectors these businesses operate. These entrepreneurs start businesses to take advantage of economic trends which also make their survival tied to these same trends – for example the housing boom and bust. We noted in many entrepreneurs a sense of pessimism as a declining economy has hurt their bottom line and considerable anxiety over light rail construction. This was a sharp contrast to our report in 2005 where we found a greater optimism on the avenue, reflected in business expansion and diversification beyond the avenue.



## **The Transformation of University Avenue by Immigrant Entrepreneurs 2005-12**

**Bruce P. Corrie, PhD, Jennifer Khang and Cristina Corrie<sup>1</sup>**

Over the past two months we visited a six block segment of University Avenue (in Saint Paul, Minnesota) from Dale to Farrington to assess progress and change in immigrant entrepreneurship over the past seven years since our last report. We were following up on previous studies on this segment of the avenue analyzing immigrant entrepreneurship since 1981.

We found that the avenue continues to be an incubator for immigrant entrepreneurship. The area is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic with a growing presence of African immigrant and African American entrepreneurs. There is also a constant churning in the sectors these businesses operate. These entrepreneurs start businesses to take advantage of economic trends which also make their survival tied to these same trends – for example the housing boom and bust. We noted in many entrepreneurs a sense of pessimism as a declining economy has hurt their bottom line and considerable anxiety over light rail construction. This was a sharp contrast to our report in 2005 where we found a greater optimism on the avenue, reflected in business expansion and diversification beyond the avenue.

### **Increasingly Multi-Ethnic**

Over the past seven years the avenue has become more multi-ethnic. Asian entrepreneurs continue to be the largest group but in percentage terms they have declined from 69 percent to 57 percent of all businesses. Non-Asian ethnic entrepreneurs have grown almost 200 percent from 7 in 2005 to 19 in 2012 and reported to us the following as their ethnic origins: Nigeria, Somalia, Guinea, Benin, Latino, Yemen, Arab-Israeli, Jordan, Oromo and African American. They own a diversity of stores: beauty salons, grocery stores, retail, automobile repair,

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Corrie is an economist and dean of the College of Business and Organizational Leadership at Concordia University, Jennifer Khang is a student at Concordia University, Cristina Corrie is a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student at Roseville Area High School. This report builds on a 2005 study by the lead author and is attached at the end of this report. There is some error in counting the actual number of businesses given our inability to verify the existence of certain businesses in some locations.



telecommunications, fashion and financial services. There is also a new religious center that serves the African immigrant population.

This increasingly multiethnic character of the area is reflected in recent attempts to create this area (and the area around it) as a destination for ethnic cultural heritage tourism branded as the World Cultural Heritage District. Ethnic destinations such as Little Mekong, Little Africa, African American Heritage Corridor and the Historic Rondo District are being developed in the area.

### Changing Mix of Businesses

The area continues to be dominated by Asian immigrant businesses. However, the number of Asian businesses declined from 61 to 48 (one business relocated to another section of University Avenue) during this seven year period. For Asian entrepreneurs, there was also a change in the mix of businesses found on this section of the avenue since 2005. Video stores, financial services firms, specialty retail stores, restaurants and fashion stores experienced a decline. Personal care businesses, health care businesses and other retail stores have increased.

Ethnic Businesses 2005-2012				
	Asian Businesses		Non-Asian Ethnic Businesses	
	2005	2012	2005	2012
Personal Care Services	3	5	3	5
Restaurants	11	9	1	2
Specialty Stores, Supermarkets	8	4	1	3
Automotive Repair and Maintenance	1	1		1
FIRE	8	2		
Clothing Stores	5	2		1
Accounting, Tax Prep, Book Keeping	1	3		1
Health and Personal Care	3	6		2
Video	6	1		
Other Retail	11	12	3	4
Travel	1	3		



As mentioned earlier the number of non-Asian ethnic entrepreneurs is increasing very rapidly and they are in a wide range of sectors as can be seen in the previous table. African American businesses have increased from 1 to 5 during this 7 year period. These are all new businesses as the only African American business in this area in 2005 no longer exists.

What is new in this area is what can be termed, “externally funded” developments such as at the corner of Dale and University. Unlike in 2005 when a lot of the development was by the entrepreneurs themselves with their own resources, we are beginning to see a public private partnership emerging.

### **Financial and Housing Crisis, Technology and the Economic Slowdown**

In many ways we can call the avenue “Incubator Avenue”, as it serves as a space for businesses to take advantage of current economic trends. The flip side is that economic and technological disasters leave their footprint on the avenue. This negative footprint can be seen through many indicators:

- Since 2005 there has been a slight decline in the total number of businesses from 89 to 82.
- Technological changes have practically wiped out the video businesses on the avenue.
- The area is one of the worst in terms of distressed home sales. This could be reflected in two impacts on area businesses – a decline in firms tied to the real estate market and the decline in the customer base for area businesses. The neighborhoods around this area have been hit hard by the housing crisis.
- The overall economic slowdown has been felt by the area businesses as many restaurants reported declining sales.
- The economic slow-down has hurt some of the successful entrepreneurs in the area. In 2005 there was a spirit of enthusiasm and they expanded both within and outside the avenue. The declining economy has hurt them deeply as anticipated sales have not grown as expected. Some of them report nearing bankruptcy or have closed down businesses they were expanding into during the period of the last report in 2005. This is



unfortunate because they were on the verge of moving beyond the ethnic markets to mainstream markets.

### **Light Rail and Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

Light rail construction is serving to deepen the impact of the housing, technological and economic downturn on the immigrant entrepreneurs. LRT is a locally produced storm on this ethnic economy. What it is serving to do is destabilize the fragile cash-flow situation for these entrepreneurs. In a declining and fragile economy they continue to face property tax and assessments increases with a declining customer base. If not addressed there is a danger the ethnic economy could well be destroyed and the benefits of light rail construction would not accrue to them. This is unfortunate because these businesses are paying the direct costs for the construction in terms of lost revenue and increased tax/rental payments. For businesses that rent property - higher property taxes get transferred to them through higher rents.

There have been a number of efforts to help soften the impacts of light rail disruptions such as a forgivable loan program, outreach to businesses and organizations pre-construction and during construction and technical assistance provided to businesses and organizations in the area. These efforts have had positive impacts in the area. The reality however remains – will the businesses who were already vulnerable survive to benefit when light rail launches in 2014?

Kaplan (1997)<sup>2</sup>, the author of the original study of the avenue, questioned whether these immigrant businesses would be able to move beyond the ethnic markets to mainstream markets. The challenge today is narrower – will they survive the economic downturn and light rail construction?

This segment of University Avenue is a microcosm of the dynamic churning of the entrepreneurial spirit in immigrant and minority communities. Dramatic changes have occurred over the years while a common theme continues – immigrants and minorities seeking to realize the American Dream through entrepreneurship and while doing so they bring economic vitality

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<sup>2</sup> David H Kaplan (1997), *The Creation of an Ethnic Economy: Indochinese Business Expansion in Saint Paul. Economic Geography*. Volume 73 (2), pp 214-33.



to the area. We can see this in the new entrepreneurs locating on the avenue – they are taking advantage of the new opportunity and are excited about the future. This spirit is what will keep the avenue alive for the next decades.



Ethnic

# University Avenue from 1981-2005

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF UNIVERSITY AVENUE BY ASIAN IMMIGRANT BUSINESSES 1981-2005

University Avenue (Dale to Farrington) 1981		University Avenue (Dale to Farrington) 1991		University Avenue (Dale to Farrington) 2005	
Left side of Dale to Farrington	Right side of Dale to Farrington	Left side of Dale to Farrington	Right side of Dale to Farrington	Left side of Dale to Farrington	Right side of Dale to Farrington
<b>Dale to Kent</b>	<b>Dale to Kent</b>	<b>Dale to Kent</b>	<b>Dale to Kent</b>	<b>Dale to Kent</b>	<b>Dale to Kent</b>
Bar	Liquor Sipre	Restaurant	Restaurant	St. Paul Police Western District	Wendy's
Restaurant	Laundry	Electronic Wholesale	Dentist Office	615 <b>Food Cafe</b>	612 <b>East's Beauty</b>
Lumber	Bookstore	Appliance Repair	Reading School	608 <b>Phoan Restaurant &amp; Bakery</b>	608
Electronic Wholesaler		Curtain Cleaner	Used Goods	601 <b>Phoan</b>	Ragit Printing
Dentist		Insurance Agency		598 <b>Phoan</b>	Disabled Vet Thrift
Motorcycles		<b>Grocery Store</b>		577 <b>Moonlite Video Rental</b>	<b>Dollar Store</b>
Housewares				577 Check Cashed	7 Mile Sportswear
Finance Company				577 <b>C.J. Hair Braiding Gallery</b>	<b>Foodmart</b>
Cleaning Supplies				579 Insurance	Midas
Electric Contractors				568 <b>David's CD &amp; Cassette</b>	Harmon Auto Glass
Finance Company				565 <b>Central Staffing</b>	510
				561 <b>New Fashion</b>	
<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>	<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>	<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>	<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>	<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>	<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>
Auto trimming	Auto Parts	Auto Repair	Social Service Agency	565 Auto Max	500
Tire Wholesaler		Used Trucks	Grocery Store	548 <b>Trieu Cheu</b>	500
Furniture Factory		Tire Store	Auto Repair	519 <b>Paul's Tire</b>	<b>Maytag Laundry</b>
Auto Repair		Driving School	Auto Repair	509 <b>Letter Tech</b>	<b>Chao Mung Quê Khach</b>
Restaurant		Auto Parts Factory		507 <b>Walters Rebuilders</b>	478
				511 <b>Creative Luxions</b>	Le Auto Service
				501 <b>Lao Thai Restaurant</b>	USM University Supermarket
					<b>Chem Heng Restaurant</b>
					448
					<b>Phan Jewelry</b>
					448
					<b>MN Mortgage Specialist</b>
					448
					<b>Movie Time Video</b>
					448
					<b>Universal Chiropractic</b>
					448
<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>	<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>	<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>	<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>	<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>	<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>
Medical Clinic	Motorcycle dealer	Medical Clinic	Rental Shop	481 <b>Health Start</b>	
Laundromat	Restaurant	Dentist	Printing	479 <b>Hunan Chiropractic Clinic</b>	<b>Hana Market</b>
	Auto repair	Chiropractor	<b>Grocery</b>	461 <b>Rater &amp; Fenske Attorneys</b>	<b>Wolter's Drug and Liquor</b>
		Law office	<b>Grocery</b>	458 <b>Kim Hung Supermarket</b>	<b>Krua Thai Restaurant</b>
		<b>Grocery</b>	Auto Repair	456 <b>Morbebe Inc.</b>	<b>Al Hui Bakery</b>
			Auto Parts		432
			Cleaning Supplies		<b>Oriental Video</b>
			Paint Wholesalers		422
			<b>Grocery</b>		<b>Kuonng Phou Jewelry</b>
					422
					<b>Ket Lim Development Inc.</b>
					422
					<b>Pastry Shop</b>
					422
					<b>New Wave Fashion</b>
					422
					<b>Asian Book and Gifts</b>
					422
					<b>Spectrum Travel</b>
					422
					<b>Western Union</b>
					422
					<b>Fina Fashion</b>
					422
					<b>Hair U</b>
					422
					<b>Mai's Market</b>
					422
					<b>All State - Chong Agency</b>
					422
					<b>Bui's Asian Cuisines</b>
					422
					<b>St. Paul Meat Market</b>
					402
<b>Arundel to Western</b>	<b>Arundel to Western</b>	<b>Arundel to Western</b>	<b>Arundel to Western</b>	<b>Arundel to Western</b>	<b>Arundel to Western</b>
<b>Restaurant</b>	Pharmacy	<b>Restaurant</b>	Pharmacy	439 <b>Phoan Restaurant</b>	
Business Service	Window Repair	Grocery	Barber	436 <b>Sain Dzung</b>	<b>Mai Village</b>
Auto Glass	Auto parts Wholesale	Apparel	Employment Bookstore	433 <b>Lan Chi's</b>	<b>Mai Village Furniture</b>
Real Estate	Wholesale meat	Restaurant	Grocery		394
Beauty Parlor	Restaurant	Insurance Agency	Restaurant	429 <b>Huong Video Rental &amp; Gifts</b>	
Restaurant		Tax Service	Apparel	426 <b>Thai Lanna Portrait</b>	
			Dentist	421 <b>Infinite Hair</b>	
			Financial	417 <b>Asian American Press</b>	
			Bakery	397 <b>Anh's Hair Stylist</b>	
			Printing	385 <b>Today Fashion</b>	
			Newspaper	381 <b>Option Financial Mortgage Inc.</b>	
			Meat Processing	381 <b>Home Mortgage</b>	
			Restaurant	383 <b>Frog Town Chiropractic</b>	
<b>Western to Virginia</b>	<b>Western to Virginia</b>	<b>Western to Virginia</b>	<b>Western to Virginia</b>	<b>Western to Virginia</b>	<b>Western to Virginia</b>
Bar	Milk Processing	Social Service Organization	Milk Processing	377 <b>May's Market (opening soon)</b>	
Typesetting	Wholesale Dairy	Beauty Parlor	Wholesale Foods	374 <b>Huong Metro Realty</b>	<b>Spichan Mortuary</b>
Wholesale Electronic	Funeral home	Restaurant	Funeral Home	376 <b>Marriage and Family Counseling Inc.</b>	344
Beauty Parlor				379 <b>Primerica</b>	
				377 <b>Ramsey Chiropractic</b>	
				371 <b>Josaton's Braiding</b>	
				371 <b>Mai Pastry - N - Deli</b>	
				365 <b>Vang Dental Clinic</b>	
				363 <b>Ha Tien Oriental Market</b>	
<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>	<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>	<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>	<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>	<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>	<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>
Labor Union	Organization	Grocery Store	Organization	347 <b>Wung Lee Supermarket &amp; Jewelry</b>	
Organization		Restaurant		345 <b>Diversified Home Health Care</b>	<b>Lao Family Community</b>
				345 <b>Yong &amp; Su Tax</b>	320
				343 <b>Flashlight Video</b>	
				341 <b>La Dva Professional African Hair Braiding Salon</b>	
				333 <b>Burger King</b>	7 non asian





Ethnic

## University Avenue from 2005-2012

University Avenue (Dale to Farrington) 2005		University Avenue (Dale to Farrington) 2012	
Left side of Dale to Farrington	Right side of Dale to Farrington	Left side of Dale to Farrington	Right side of Dale to Farrington
<b>Dale to Kent</b>	<b>Dale to Kent</b>	<b>Dale to Kent</b>	<b>Dale to Kent</b>
St. Paul Police Western District	Wendy's	Global Food Market	Wendy's
Sud Food Cafe	Earth's Beauty	Sunday Best	Earth's Beauty Noho
Saigon Restaurant & Bakery	Rapit Printing	Subway	Hook
H Bodecon	Disabled Vet Thrift	MI Lader Terra	TJ Nails
Moonlite Video Rental	Dollar Store	OMG Nails	Rapit Printing
Check Cashed	7 Mile Sportswear	Higher Ground Boutique	Disabled Vet Thrift
C.J. Hair Braiding Gallery	Foodsmart	Century Docs	7 Mile Sportswear
Insurance	Midas	C.J. Hair Braiding Gallery	Sun Foods
Davduh CD & Cassette	Harmon Auto Glass	Insurance	Midas
Central Staffing		P.L. Travel	Discount Auto Glass
New Fashion		Kong and Su Tax	
<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>	<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>	<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>	<b>Kent to Mackubin</b>
Auto Max		Auto Max	
Auto Sale	Trieu Cheu	3N Enterprises	Trieu Cheu
Paul's Tire	Maytag Laundry		
Letter Tech	Chao Mung Qui Khach		
Walkers Rebuilders			
Creative Lustions	Le Auto Service		
Lao Thai Restaurant	USM University Supermarket	Towdy Groceries	Maytag Laundry
	Cheng Heng Restaurant	Letter Tech	
	Palin Jewelry	Closed	
	MN Mortgage Specialist	Signs and Banners	Le Auto Service
	Movie Time Video		
	Universal Chiropractic		Cheng Heng Restaurant
<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>	<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>		
Health Start			
Hyan Chiropractic Clinic	Hann Market		Chronic with NY Car
Ritter & Fenske Attorneys	Wolter's Drug and Liquor		Pace Chiropractic clinic
Kim Hung Supermarket	Krum Thai Restaurant	<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>	<b>Mackubin to Arundel</b>
Morbebe Inc.	Al Hui Bakery	Lor Dental/Advance Medical Clinic	
	Oriental Video	University Therapeutic Massage	
	Kuom Phoc Jewelry	Hyan Chiropractic Clinic	
	Ket Lim Development Inc	Ritter & Fenske Attorneys	Wolter's Drug and Liquor
	Pastry Shop	Phon City Beauty Salon	Bangkok Cuisine
	New Wave Fashion	IT Sales	Al Hui Bakery
	Asian Book and Gifts	Hoan Phat	Bottom Bon Video
	Spectrum Travel		Kuom Phoc Jewelry
	Western Union		ABC Money Transactions
	Fina Fashion		Coffee Shop
	Hair U		New Wave Fashion
	Mai's Market		Dong Poung Thu Quan
	All State - Choung Agency		Quam Family Dentistry
	Bui's Asian Cuisines		
	St. Paul Meat Market		Asia Travel
			Hair N U
			Farmer's Insurance
<b>Arundel to Western</b>	<b>Arundel to Western</b>	<b>Arundel to Western</b>	<b>Arundel to Western</b>
Phocdao Restaurant		Clearwater Colonics	
Kim Dung	Mai Village	JPS Computers	
Lou Chia's	Mai Village Furniture	Phocdao Restaurant	Mai Village
Huong Video Rental & Gifts		Tracies Auto (Latino)	Mai Village Furniture
Thai Lanna Portrait			
Infinite Hair		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Asian American Press, Asian Directory		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Anh's Hair Stylist		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Today Fashion		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Option Financial Mortgage Inc.		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Home Mortgage		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Frog Town Chiropractic		Phon City Beauty Salon	
<b>Western to Virginia</b>	<b>Western to Virginia</b>	<b>Western to Virginia</b>	<b>Western to Virginia</b>
May's Market (opening soon)		Phon City Beauty Salon	
	Spielman Mortuary	Phon City Beauty Salon	
Huong Metro Realty		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Marriage and Family Counseling Inc		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Primeica		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Ramsey Chiropractic		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Lesson's Busting		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Mai Pastry - N - Deli		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Yang Dental Clinic		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Ha Tien Oriental Market		Phon City Beauty Salon	
<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>	<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>	<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>	<b>Virginia to Farrington</b>
Wung Lee Supermarket & Jewelry		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Diversified Home Health Care	Lao Family Community	Phon City Beauty Salon	
Kong & Su Tax		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Flashlight Video		Phon City Beauty Salon	
La Diva Professional African		Phon City Beauty Salon	
Burger King		Phon City Beauty Salon	



## **The Transformation of University Avenue by Immigrant Entrepreneurs from 1981-2005: A Report\***

*Bruce P. Corrie, PhD, Grant Meyer, Jenna Field, Sherri Volkert, Xieng Thor, Amber Suttle, Watchee Zogaa, Chee Lor, Xue Vue, James Holmes, Shayne McMahon, Damien Dukek, Derek Coleman, Dylan McAlpine, Cesar Perez, Frank Hanzlik, Bryan Bach, Dave Furlong and Eric Utoft.*

University Avenue in Saint Paul from Lexington Parkway to Rice Street illustrates the vibrant energy that immigrants bring to Minnesota. Asian American entrepreneurs from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Korea, and the Philippines have taken over dilapidated buildings and transformed them into profitable enterprises. Today the avenue is poised to be transformed into a thriving commercial corridor.

In 1997, David Kaplan documented the growth in the avenue in an article published in the journal *Economic Geography*. Integrating data from various sources he documented the growth and development of Asian owned businesses in a 6 block stretch from Dale to Farrington from 1981 to 1991. The growth in the avenue paralleled the arrival of Southeast Asian refugees to Minnesota and Saint Paul. In 1999, *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* reporter Brian Bonner did an extensive and detailed map of businesses on 17 blocks on University Avenue.

Undergraduate students at the Department of Business at Concordia University under the direction of Dr. Bruce Corrie decided to update the above reports of the avenue and provide a contemporary perspective on the 6 block stretch from Dale to Farrington. The advantage of focusing on just the 6 block stretch on the avenue was the presence of comparable data going back to 1981 that could illustrate the dynamic energy on the avenue.

Students visited every store on the 6 block stretch of the avenue to verify if the business was Asian owned and whether the building was also owned by an Asian. The experience of Bonner in 1999 still



holds true – business owners on the avenue are still wary about talking to strangers, but when a bond of trust is established they have been very open in providing information.

In 1981, the Kaplan study stated, that there was only one Asian owned business on the 6 block stretch on the Avenue. In 1991, Kaplan estimated the number to be 22. In 10 years the avenue was beginning to diversify and various kinds of Asian owned businesses emerged from restaurants and grocery stores to companies providing financial services.

In 1999, the *Pioneer Press* report documented 59 Asian owned businesses in the 6 block stretch of the avenue. The diversification noted in the Kaplan study had deepened, with a variety of stores from music to video stores to the Asian American Press and Hmong Times. Asian owned businesses were now spread all across the 6 block stretch from the 2 block core from Western to Macubin in the 1991 Kaplan study.

The Concordia University study of 2005 estimates the number of Asian owned businesses on the 6 block stretch to be around 61.

The following are some trends observed in the survey that is also illustrated in the accompanying illustration of business on the avenue.

- Since 1981 the overall number of businesses has grown on the avenue from 46 in 1981 to 91 in 2005 – around 100 percent.
- The number of Asian owned businesses increased from 1 in 1981 to 61 in 2005- a 6000 percent increase.
- Asian businesses grew from 2 percent of all businesses on the six block stretch of the avenue in 1981 to 39 percent in 1991 to 67 percent in 2005.
- From one Asian business on one block of the avenue in 1981 to complete blocks of the avenue filled with Asian businesses.



- There appears to be a lot of churning of businesses in the very small category for various reasons and as entrepreneurs focus on emerging business opportunities such as the housing market boom or the need for home health for Asian elders.

A recent report in the *Hmong Times* referred to the impact of the nearby flea market as a cause of the decline of some Hmong businesses on the avenue. Businesses with lower overhead costs located at the flea market gained a competitive edge over businesses on the avenue. It also presents two models at work in the ethnic economy: the stand alone store versus various forms of mini-malls/flea markets that can be found not only in the Asian community but also among other immigrant groups such as the Somali and Latino communities.

- A number of core strong businesses have expanded, through renovation or building of new structures. Take the popular Mai Village restaurant for example – they built a beautiful multimillion dollar restaurant with an authentic Vietnamese tradition by the side of their old rental property. Asian American Press is another example – the owner expanded across the avenue to the present location and made significant improvement on the building.

In many parts of the avenue we can find new additions on top of the old structures being rented out to start-up businesses.

- The owner of Mai Village provides an example of another dimension of the many contributions immigrants make to Minnesota. He plans to establish on the floor above the restaurant a museum of traditional Vietnamese culture. Through this museum he hopes to share with Minnesotans the rich cultural heritage of Vietnam going back thousands of years.
- Another trend is for entrepreneurs to buy up other properties and expand outside the avenue. One business owner reported owning 5 new businesses, two on the site, and two on other parts of the avenue and one in a nearby suburb. Each of these businesses had a different focus: A restaurant, jewelry shop, pharmacy and a hotel.
- What also is happening over the years has been the expansion of Asian owned businesses from the Western-Macubin blocks to a wide stretch of University Avenue from Dunlap to Rice Street. The 1999 Pioneer Press study listed over 100 Asian owned businesses on a 17 block stretch of the avenue.
- Most of the businesses still focus on the ethnic market with a few businesses aiming for a blend between the ethnic and mainstream markets. Some restaurants had an ethnic flavor but catered mainly to a mainstream clientele.



- Among the 61 Asian businesses identified in the avenue, there was considerable diversity: 3 jewelry shops; 11 food establishments; 5 grocery/supermarkets; 7 financial services companies; one liquor store; 12 retail/clothing stores; 1 automobile repair shop; 6 video stores; 3 health care establishments. Many of the buildings were Asian owned. Some buildings and businesses were also owned by Asians outside Minnesota.
- Most of the business owners interviewed reported receiving no start-up capital from the government. They put in a lot of sweat labor and their family resources to start and run their businesses. However the successful businesses also reported accessing outside resources such as SBA loans. As one business owner reported, she started out with her husband as workers in a restaurant and slowly built up their businesses.
- It appears that security is a big concern of businesses on the avenue.

It appears from our preliminary survey that University Avenue sheds much light into the dynamic energy of Minnesota's new immigrants. With practically no government resources they have revitalized the avenue through their entrepreneurial activity. Many of these entrepreneurs have built and expanded their businesses on the avenue and in the process achieved the American dream. One business owner proudly boasts of one of his children attending Notre Dame. From University Avenue to Notre Dame – that truly is an immigrant's dream and achievement.

\* This report was produced by a team of undergraduate Concordia University students in the Department of Business led by Dr. Bruce Corrie. Students walked down the avenue many times in April 2005 to document the number of businesses.