

# Phase 1 NRP Plan

## Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood



*Submitted By:*

Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Association

**August 2003**

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	3
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD VISION</b>	3
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION</b>	3
<b>NRP PROCESS</b>	4
<b>DESCRIPTION OF COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN</b>	4
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:</b>	5
<b><u>Part 1. Neighborhood Arts and Culture</u></b>	5
1.1.1. Awareness of Neighborhood Assets	5
1.1.2. Arts and Culture Association	5
1.1.3. Arts and Culture Promotional Programs	6
1.1.4. Identify Funding Sources for Arts and Cultural Uses	6
<b><u>Part 2. Commercial Development</u></b>	7
1.1.1. Grocery Service in the Neighborhood	7
1.2.1. WDNLA Retail/Service Committee	7
1.3.1. Promote Neighborhood Business	8
<b><u>Part 3. Natural Environment</u></b>	9
1.1.1. Riverfront Amenities	9
1.1.2. Neighborhood Connections	9
1.1.3. Future Parks, Open Spaces and Trails	9
<b><u>Part 4. Neighborhood Identity</u></b>	10
1.1.1. Localized Neighborhood Events	10
1.1.2. Programs to Support Neighborhood Businesses	10
1.2.1. Annual Neighborhood Event	11
1.2.2. Neighborhood Identification Signs/Monuments	11
1.2.3. Neighborhood Promotion	12
<b><u>Part 5. Neighborhood Livability</u></b>	13
1.1.1. Residential Crime Initiative	13
1.1.2. Coordination with City of Minneapolis: Crime Prevention	13
1.2.1. Improve City Services	13

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<b><u>Part 6. Planning and Implementation</u></b>	15
1.1.1. Comprehensive Neighborhood Master Plan	15
1.2.1. North Loop Newsletter	16
1.2.2. Neighborhood Stakeholder Meetings	16
1.3.1. City Resources for Plan Implementation	16
1.3.2. NRP Plan Implementation Consultant	17
<b><u>Part 7. Residential Development</u></b>	18
1.1.1 New Neighborhood Housing Types	18
1.1.2 Neighborhood Affordable Housing Options	18
1.2.1 Future Neighborhood Residential Developments	19
<b><u>Part 8. Transportation</u></b>	20
1.1.1 Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan	20
1.1.2 Critical Neighborhood Intersections	20
1.2.1 Alternative Transportation Modes	20
1.2.2 Neighborhood Bus Service	21
<b>NORTH LOOP NRP FUNDING SCHEDULE</b>	22
<b>NORTH LOOP NEIGHBORHOOD MAP</b>	23
<b>FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES</b>	ATTACHMENT
<b>MAIL SURVEY RESULTS</b>	ATTACHMENT

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Association (WDNLA) would like to thank the volunteer members from the community for the countless hours they have given to the Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) Phase I Plan. Your efforts have set the framework to help guide the future growth, revitalization, livability and character of the North Loop Neighborhood.

We would like to also thank Barb Lickness from the Minneapolis NRP staff for her help and support throughout the NRP Phase I process. We also appreciate the continued efforts of the following offices at the City of Minneapolis: Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED), Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and Public Works.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD VISION**

The vision for the Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood is to foster a strong community that is rich in the diversity of ideas, talents, people and property. Toward that end, the neighborhood shall promote a climate of safety, livability, and improvement through public neighborhood meetings, communication, creation of programs that encourage community participation and advocacy with the relevant municipal and county organizations.

## **ABOUT THE NORTH LOOP NEIGHBORHOOD**

The Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood is located along the Mississippi River, adjacent to the heart of Downtown (see page 22). The geographic boundaries of the Neighborhood are the Mississippi River on the east from Plymouth Avenue to Hennepin Avenue, Interstate 94 on the west from Plymouth Avenue to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, Plymouth Avenue on the north from Interstate 94 to the Mississippi River, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North on the south from Washington Avenue to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North.

The North Loop Neighborhood is the gateway to the Minneapolis river front and the link to neighborhoods in Northeast Minneapolis. The North Loop is a mix of eclectic shops, vibrant restaurants, new and renovated multi-family housing, historic warehouse buildings, public service uses and riverfront recreational opportunities. The Neighborhood can be defined by the five very unique character districts. The districts are:

- a) Waterside Residential District – most of the neighborhood residential developments occur in this district.
- b) Mixed-Use Loft District – this district contains a wide variety of uses including residential, arts, businesses and light manufacturing.
- c) Washington Avenue Corridor – this area is the commercial core and heart of the North Loop.
- d) Charitable Organizations/ Farmers Market District – the location of the Minneapolis Farmers Market and home to significant charitable organizations.
- e) City Services/ Utilities/ Industrial District – this district contains many of the City of Minneapolis support facilities and most of the industrial/ manufacturing uses.

## **NRP PROCESS**

The Phase I NRP planning process has spanned a one-year period beginning in October 2002, at which time the WDNLA approved the first NRP Steering Committee. The NRP Phase I Participation Agreement was approved in September of 2002.

The NRP Steering Committee, appointed by the WDNLA Board, was formed to facilitate the public input process and to develop the goals and objectives for the Phase I Plan. In August of 2003, the WDNLA Board voted to accept the Phase I NRP Plan. In September of 2003, WDNLA residents voted, during a public open house, to approve the Phase I NRP Plan.

Page 1 of Mail Survey Results located at the back of this plan describes the demographic and neighborhood characteristics unique to the North Loop Neighborhood.

## **COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN**

The Comprehensive Master Plan will be mentioned several times throughout the plan. Currently, the City of Minneapolis has several documents that were produced by the City Planning Department, The Met Council or other sources that cover certain geographic areas of the North Loop Neighborhood. WDNLA will embark on a planning effort to:

- \* Produce a plan for the area of the North Loop Neighborhood that does not currently exist in other plans.
- \* Working in coordination with City of Minneapolis CPED staff person, WDNLA will review other planning documents for the neighborhood and combine those elements into one comprehensive plan.

## NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

### ARTS AND CULTURE

*Goal: To create a neighborhood where arts, culture, history and entertainment opportunities are plentiful, diverse and well supported.*

**Objective 1:** Preserve and Enhance the Existing Arts, Cultural, Historical and Entertainment Opportunities in the North Loop.

**Strategy 1:** Develop an awareness of existing Neighborhood assets.

- Create a database of all arts, cultural, entertainment and historical assets and organizations in the North Loop.
- Seek to understand the critical issues that face each organization (e.g. audience/membership development, marketing, affordable space needs, etc.) and encourage qualified WDNLA members to volunteer expertise to help in meaningful ways.
- Encourage North Loop retailers/businesses to display works of local artists.
- Encourage developers/property owners to attract art galleries in retail spaces.
- Encourage developers/property owners to propose that space be used for artist “live/work” spaces.

**Partners:** WDNLA, Warehouse District Business Association (WDBA), North Loop businesses, developers and property owners, North Loop arts and culture organizations

**City Goal Supported:** Create an environment that maximizes economic development opportunities within Minneapolis by focusing on the City's physical and human assets.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Strategy 2:** Tie local arts, entertainment, historical and cultural institutions together through a North Loop Arts and Culture Association.

- Seek sponsors to fund organization start up and encourage volunteer technical assistance by qualified WDNLA members.
- The association could identify future arts, entertainment, cultural and historical institutions that should be developed in the North Loop and possible locations for them.

**Partners:** WDNLA, CPED, North Loop businesses, developers and property owners, North Loop arts and culture organizations

**City Goal Supported:** Create an environment that maximizes economic development opportunities within Minneapolis by focusing on the City's physical and human assets.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Strategy 3:** Help create promotional programs for local arts, historical, cultural and entertainment organizations.

- Develop “Explore the North Loop” or other regular events to encourage residents and outsiders to learn about North Loop arts, cultural, historical and entertainment assets.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop arts and culture organizations, local media, North Loop businesses

**City Goal Supported:** Create an environment that maximizes economic development opportunities within Minneapolis by focusing on the City's physical and human assets.

**NRP Funds:** \$8,000

2003 - \$4,000

2004 - \$4,000

**Strategy 4:** Identify sources of financial assistance to help maintain affordable rents for artists, arts and culture institutions and small businesses.

**Partners:** WDNLA, CPED, North Loop businesses, developers and property owners, North Loop arts and culture organizations, City of Minneapolis, area art philanthropists

**City Goal Supported:** Promote public, community and private partnerships to address disparities and to support strong, healthy families and communities.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

## **COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Goal: To support and enhance the vitality of existing neighborhood businesses and attract appropriate retail and services to create a self-sustaining neighborhood.*

**Objective 1:** Achieve a Higher Level of Local Grocery Service in the North Loop.

**Strategy 1:** Form a WDNLA grocery subcommittee to explore different options for achieving a higher level of grocery service in the North Loop.

- Option: Contact Grocery Retailers to see if they would be interested in creating a unique, small-scale urban store as a pilot project. Coordinate with adjacent neighborhoods to strengthen the demographic argument for locating a store that is central to several neighborhoods, including the North Loop. Find out the key demographic benchmarks that grocery operators typically seek and where the North Loop stands relative to these benchmarks.
- Option: Work with existing North Loop food markets or grocery stores in nearby neighborhoods to consider changing their format and product lines to better fit the desires of North Loop residents.
- Option: Work to attract small specialty shops to supply all needed grocery goods, similar to urban neighborhoods in New York or Chicago.
- Option: Establish a warehouse-style co-op. Hire a consultant to help select a location, develop the store concept, set-up the cooperative business plan and staff/run the store.

**Partners:** WDNLA, hired consultant, CPED, North Loop developers, grocery retailers property owners, Council Member, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association., City of Minneapolis

**City Goal Supported:** Create an environment that maximizes economic development opportunities within Minneapolis by focusing on the City's physical and human assets.

**NRP Funds:** \$8,000 (for consultants and research)

2003 - \$4,000

2004 - \$4,000

**Objective 2:** Attract New Retailers and Service Businesses to the North Loop.

**Strategy 1:** Set up a WDNLA retail subcommittee to work with a retail consultant and to contact desired retailers to come to the North Loop.

- Consultant would assess Neighborhood retail needs and identify missing retail and service businesses.

- Subcommittee would circulate focus group and mail survey summaries to developers and City/elected officials. Desired uses identified by residents include: restaurants, bakery, breakfast café, video, dry cleaners, wine store, barber shop and an ice cream parlor.
- Subcommittee would make formal contact with developers of all proposed residential buildings to apprise them of the WDNLA’s desire for ground-level commercial space.

**Partners:** WDNLA, hired consultant, CPED, North Loop developers and property owners, City of Minneapolis

**City Goal Supported:** Create an environment that maximizes economic development opportunities within Minneapolis by focusing on the City's physical and human assets.

**NRP Funds:** \$6,000 (for consultants and research)

2003 - \$3,000

2004 - \$3,000

**Objective 3: Keep the Existing Eclectic Mix of Small Commercial and Light Industrial Businesses in the North Loop.**

**Strategy 1: Promote local businesses among each other, to North Loop residents and to residents of adjacent neighborhoods.**

- Create business “ice breaker” events (in conjunction with local business organizations) on a regular basis to promote retail and service businesses in the North Loop.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop businesses, local media, Downtown workforce, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association, North Loop business patrons.

**City Goal Supported:** Promote public, community and private partnerships to address disparities and to support strong, healthy families and communities.

**NRP Funds:** \$10,000 (establish the event and support it for several more years)

2003 - \$5,000

2004 - \$5,000

**NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

*Goal: To ensure that the natural environment plays a central role in the daily lives of North Loop residents, daily workers and visitors*

**Objective 1:** Maximize the Recreational Amenities and Open Space Opportunities in the North Loop.

**Strategy 1:** Expand the amenities of the riverfront parks.

- Support the development of a Parks and Trails Master Plan as part of the WDNLA Comprehensive Master Plan.

**Partners:** WDNLA, CPED, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

**City Goal Supported:** Preserve and enhance our natural and historic environment and promote a clean, sustainable Minneapolis.

**NRP Funds:** part of the WDNLA Comprehensive Master Plan

**Strategy 2:** Develop strong connections between the North Loop riverfront and riverfront districts in adjacent neighborhoods.

- Support the development of a Parks and Trails Master Plan as part of the Neighborhood Comprehensive Master Plan.

**Partners:** WDNLA, CPED, City of Minneapolis Public Works Department, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

**City Goal Supported:** Preserve and enhance our natural and historic environment and promote a clean, sustainable Minneapolis.

**NRP Funds:** part of the WDNLA Comprehensive Master Plan

**Strategy 3:** Promote the development of future parks, trail connections, open spaces and boulevards in the Neighborhood.

- Support the development of a Parks and Trails Master Plan as part of the Neighborhood Comprehensive Master Plan.

**Partners:** WDNLA, CPED, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

**City Goal Supported:** Preserve and enhance our natural and historic environment and promote a clean, sustainable Minneapolis.

**NRP Funds:** part the WDNLA Comprehensive Master Plan

## **NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY**

*Goal: To build a strong sense of shared identity, purpose, community pride and collective knowledge/awareness among residents, daily workers and business/property owners across all parts of the North Loop.*

**Objective 1:** Foster Regular, Positive Interaction Between Residents, Daily Workers and Business/Property Owners.

**Strategy 1:** Develop regular events.

- A pancake breakfast/charity fundraiser.
- “Movies Off the Wall” (films projected against warehouse walls) in the summer.
- Develop WDNLA -sponsored tours every 4-6 months for residents to learn about businesses and uses in all parts of the Neighborhood.
- Flea markets or rummage sales.
- Loft tours and business tours.
- National Night Out.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop businesses, property owners and arts and culture organizations, local media, City of Minneapolis, GMVCA, Downtown Council, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association

**City Goal Supported:** Promote public, community and private partnerships to address disparities and to support strong, healthy families and communities.

**NRP Funds:** \$10,000 (establish the event and support it for several more years)

2003 - \$5,000

2004 - \$5,000

**Strategy 2:** Develop programs to support local businesses and to engage them in the community.

- Develop Neighborhood shopping promotions and resident discount programs.
- Engage local business organizations to participate in events and become event sponsors.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop businesses, local media

**City Goal Supported:** Promote public, community and private partnerships to address disparities and to support strong, healthy families and communities.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Objective 2:** Teach the Outside World About the Great, Unique Benefits and Features of the North Loop.

**Strategy 1:** Create an annual, signature event or block party that symbolizes the North Loop and/or creates awareness of the community to the larger world.

- Center the event around local arts:
  - The opening of the Theater de la Jeune Lune season.
  - A week long drama festival like Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, SC.
  - An event like “Art on the Town.”
- Center the event around an eclectic theme:
  - Take over the Bastille Day celebration formerly hosted by the New French Café.
  - Gardner Hardware anvil drop.
- Center the event around a prominent Neighborhood feature or natural amenity:
  - Some event based along Washington Avenue as the main street of commerce.
  - Mississippi River Clean-Up/Earth Day type celebration.
  - Riverfront food festival.
  - Farmer’s Market Opening and/or Closing Season celebration.
  - “Wing Fling” at the Farmer’s Market.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop businesses, property owners, developers and arts and culture organizations, local media, City of Minneapolis

**City Goal Supported:** Promote public, community and private partnerships to address disparities and to support strong, healthy families and communities.

**NRP Funds:** \$25,000

2003 - \$12,000

2004 - \$13,000

**Strategy 2:** Install “North Loop Neighborhood” identification signs, banners and/or Neighborhood monuments.

- Focus on key entry points/gateways to the Neighborhood.
- Explore public identification schemes such as public art, traditional neighborhood signs, decorative banners, etc.

**Partners:** WDNLA, City of Minneapolis, CPED

**City Goal Supported:** Create an environment that maximizes economic development opportunities within Minneapolis by focusing on the City's physical and human assets.

**NRP Funds:** \$25,000

2003 - \$12,000

2004 - \$13,000

**Strategy 3:    Develop promotional materials and utilize local media to raise awareness of the North Loop.**

- Create one or more maps to show the following information:
  - Retail stores and service businesses.
  - Arts, cultural, historical and entertainment attractions.
  - Parks and open spaces.
- Work with a Neighborhood PR firm (on a pro-bono basis) to develop a PR strategy and corresponding marketing materials.
- Work with local media to promote the Neighborhood as a separate entity.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop businesses and arts and culture organizations, City of Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, local media, CPED

**City Goal Supported:** Create an environment that maximizes economic development opportunities within Minneapolis by focusing on the City's physical and human assets.

**NRP Funds:** \$15,000

2003 - \$7,500

2004 - \$7,500

**NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY**

*Goal: To create a neighborhood where land uses and infrastructure support a safe, healthy community in which to live, work, host visitors, seek entertainment and pursue recreation.*

**Objective 1:** Keep Crime Low and Improve the Perception of Safety in the North Loop.

**Strategy 1:** Promote all tools that residents can use to avoid dangerous situations and to report criminal activity.

- Encourage residents and businesses to sign up for the crime notification email (list serve) service.
- Encourage residents to complete personal safety and awareness training.
- Promote community-based crime prevention programs (e.g. restorative justice).

**Partners:** WDNLA, City of Minneapolis Police Department

**City Goal Supported:** Build communities where all people feel safe and trust the City's public safety professionals and systems.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Strategy 2:** Coordinate with the City of Minneapolis to identify potential crime areas and install crime prevention hardware.

- Surveillance cameras in areas that are “off the beaten path” and where crimes could take place discreetly (e.g. under the bridges along the Cedar Lake Trail).
- Report burned-out lights to Public Works officials and Excel Energy to ensure their timely replacement.

**Partners:** WDNLA, City of Minneapolis Police and Public Works Departments

**City Goal Supported:** Build communities where all people feel safe and trust the City's public safety professionals and systems.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Objective 2:** Preserve the Infrastructure and Character of the Neighborhood.

**Strategy 1:** Work with City of Minneapolis to capture a “fair share” of city services.

- Police, fire protection, snow removal, garbage removal, parks maintenance, traffic management and general infrastructure.

**Partners:** WDNLA, City of Minneapolis Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

**City Goal Supported:** Maintain the physical infrastructure to ensure a healthy, vital and safe City.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

## PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

*Goal: Encourage all members of the neighborhood to participate in its evolution and well being, and foster strong channels of communication to ensure that all neighborhood initiatives are implemented.*

**Objective 1:** Create a Unified Comprehensive Master Plan for the North Loop Neighborhood.

**Strategy 1:** Hire a Consultant to Prepare the North Loop Comprehensive Master Plan.

- Set up a WDNLA Master Plan subcommittee that facilitates the selection and management of the consultant.
- Utilize the research and documentation created by the summer planning intern.
- The master plan should address these topics at a minimum:
  - A Boulevard Plan for Washington Avenue.
  - Public gathering spots/focal points for Neighborhood events.
  - Identification of appropriate areas for retail and grocery store development.
  - How to connect the Farmer's Market with existing and planned residential districts.
  - A Parks, Open Spaces and Trails Master Plan covering:
    - a. an inventory of open space/public amenities and an assessment of needs.
    - b. a comparison of the North Loop amenities to other riverfront districts.
    - c. how North Loop recreational amenities tie into amenities in adjacent neighborhoods and the regional trails system (e.g. Cedar Lake Trail).
    - d. Shade refuges.
    - e. Even distribution of open space amenities throughout the North Loop.
  - A lighting plan.
  - Uses that do not fit the goals and visions of the North Loop and should be encouraged to move from the Neighborhood.
  - Design guidelines for architecture to ensure that new development is appropriate.
  - Design guidelines for street signs, light poles, benches and other infrastructure elements.
  - Mechanisms to ensure a mix of residential and commercial (retail, office and service uses) in as many new buildings as possible.
  - Traffic management: locations of control devices, an assessment of parking (including where to locate new facilities such as municipal ramps), bridge connections and how the Neighborhood will integrate multi-modal transit (light rail and commuter rail).
  - Should incorporate the elements and information that is contained in existing plans that were produced by the City of Minneapolis, the Met Council or other groups.

**Partners:** WDNLA, WDNLA Master Plan Subcommittee, hired consultant, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, CPED, and City of Minneapolis Public Works Department.

**City Goal Supported:** Create an environment that maximizes economic development opportunities within Minneapolis by focusing on the City's physical and human assets.

**NRP Funds:** \$76,000

2003 - \$50,000

2004 - \$26,000

**Objective 2:** Ensure a High Level of Communication With Key North Loop Stakeholders.

**Strategy 1:** Support and Enhance the North Loop Newsletter.

- Support the efforts of the North Loop Newsletter by submitting articles about the progress of the WDNLA, Neighborhood milestones and accomplishments, upcoming volunteer opportunities and other important pieces of information.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop Newsletter

**City Goal Supported:** Promote public, community and private partnerships to address disparities and to support strong, healthy families and communities.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Strategy 2:** Hold regular WDNLA-sponsored gatherings to update key stakeholders on Neighborhood issues.

- Bi-annual meetings with the Ward Council Member.
- Regular meetings with the business associations that cover the North Loop.
- One-on-one visits by WDNLA representatives with representatives of major commercial, governmental and non-profit institutions in the North Loop to understand their issues and to seek participation or support in Neighborhood activities; Star Tribune, the Federal Reserve, Sharing and Caring Hands, Hennepin County, etc.

**Partners:** WDNLA, Ward Council Member, North Loop businesses, non-profit organizations and institutions

**City Goal Supported:** Strengthen City government management and enhance community engagement.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Objective 3:** Set Up a System to Ensure Full Implementation of Neighborhood Plans.

**Strategy 1:** Work with Minneapolis City Staff to gather resources in support of plan implementation.

- Utilize City Planners and CPED representatives.

**Partners:** WDNLA, CPED, City of Minneapolis NRP, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and Minneapolis Public Works

**City Goal Supported:** Strengthen City government management and enhance community engagement.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Strategy 2:** Hire consultants as necessary to assist with implementation of the NRP Plan, to organize various events and to conduct research as necessary.

**Partners:** WDNLA, hired consultant, City of Minneapolis NRP

**City Goal Supported:** Strengthen City government management and enhance community engagement.

**NRP Funds:** \$10,000

2003 - \$5,000

2004 - \$5,000

**RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Goal: To encourage a highly integrated, mixed-use residential development pattern that holds a variety of housing options, suitable to a wide range of household types and income levels.*

**Objective 1:** Encourage the Development of a Wider Range of Housing Options.

**Strategy 1:** Contact developers to attract new styles of housing not present in the North Loop.

- Traditional “Rowhouse” style (owner and rental) units in areas where this design is appropriate.
- Senior housing.
- General-occupancy cooperatives.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop developers and property owners

**City Goal Supported:** Foster the development and preservation of a mix of quality housing types that is available, affordable, meets current needs, and promotes future growth.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Strategy 2:** Work to increase the amount of affordable housing (owner and rental) in the North Loop.

- Communicate with existing North Loop developers to add some affordable housing units in future developments.
- Contact developers of affordable housing to consider building in the North Loop.
- Identify existing buildings that may be renovated/converted to affordable housing.
- Work with the City of Minneapolis and other public entities to develop affordable housing in the North Loop.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop developers and property owners, City of Minneapolis, local non-profit housing developers and affordable housing funding organizations

**City Goal Supported:** Foster the development and preservation of a mix of quality housing types that is available, affordable, meets current needs, and promotes future growth.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Objective 2:** Encourage all Residential Buildings of Significant Size to be Mixed Use.

**Strategy 1:** Work with city of Minneapolis officials to develop mixed-use guidelines for future development and redevelopment opportunities in the North Loop.

- Work with developers to ensure that first-floor spaces are devoted to office, service and retail uses.
- Identify buildings with viable first-floor commercial spaces and encourage upper-floor renovation to residential uses.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop developers and property owners, City of Minneapolis

**City Goal Supported:** Create an environment that maximizes economic development opportunities within Minneapolis by focusing on the City's physical and human assets.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**TRANSPORTATION**

*Goal: To create as many transportation options as possible, ensuring that they integrate well within the Neighborhood, minimize auto usage and traffic congestion, and maintain a high standard of safety.*

**Objective 1: Reduce Traffic Hazards and Manage Traffic Effectively.**

**Strategy 1:** Coordinate with the City of Minneapolis to ensure the development of a traffic management plan for the North Loop.

**Partners:** WDNLA, City of Minneapolis Public Works, CPED and Hennepin County

**City Goal Supported:** Build communities where all people feel safe and trust the City's public safety professionals and systems.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Strategy 2:** Encourage the City of Minneapolis to improve safety at critical intersections.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North and 1<sup>st</sup> Street.
- Near the Itasca Building, where the resident driveway enters 1<sup>st</sup> Street.

**Partners:** WDNLA, City of Minneapolis Public Works and Hennepin County

**City Goal Supported:** Build communities where all people feel safe and trust the City's public safety professionals and systems.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Objective 2: Enhance Transportation Opportunities for North Loop Residents.**

**Strategy 1:** Promote the Development of Alternative Modes of Transportation.

- Work to establish regular trolley service to/from key destinations Downtown and the 1st Avenue North Warehouse and Historic Mills districts. Secure donations to renovate an historic electric trolley and work to re-establish trolley service (or some equivalent) through the Neighborhood and to key destinations along Washington Avenue, West River Parkway and other thoroughfares.
- “Our car” car-sharing program.
- Improve/enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections and facilities.
- Multimodal transit options (e.g. light rail and commuter rail).
- Consider other options not addressed here.

**Partners:** WDNLA, North Loop developers and business and property owners, Historic Preservation Commission, adjacent neighborhoods, The Downtown Council, City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County.

**City Goal Supported:** Preserve and enhance our natural and historic environment and promote a clean, sustainable Minneapolis.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

**Strategy 2:** Work with Metro Transit to improve public transportation in the North Loop.

- Ask Metro Transit to increase bus/metro mobility service in the Neighborhood.

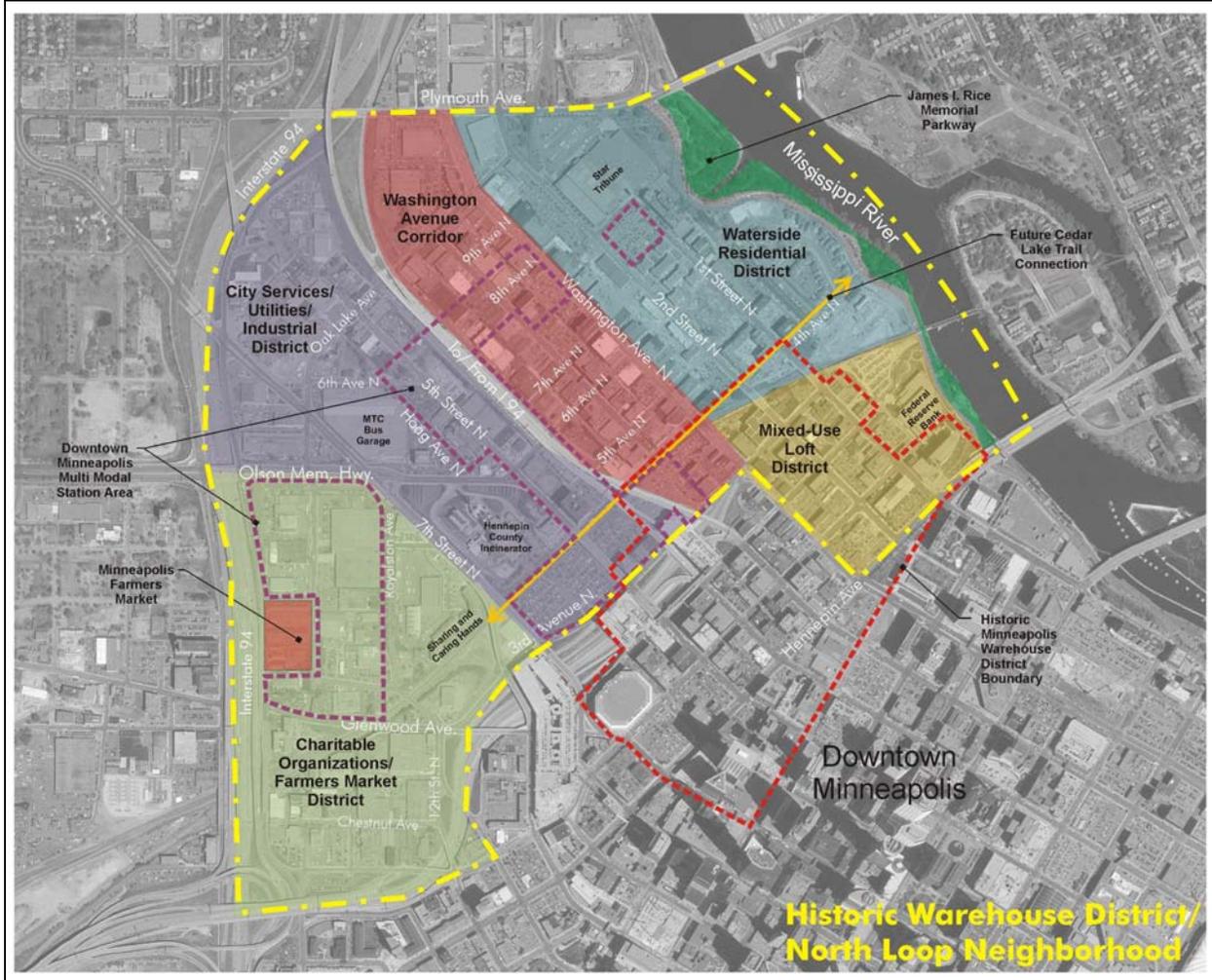
**Partners:** WDNLA, Metro Transit Commission, City of Minneapolis Public Works and Hennepin County

**City Goal Supported:** Deliver consistently high quality City services at a good value to our taxpayers.

**NRP Funds** - \$0

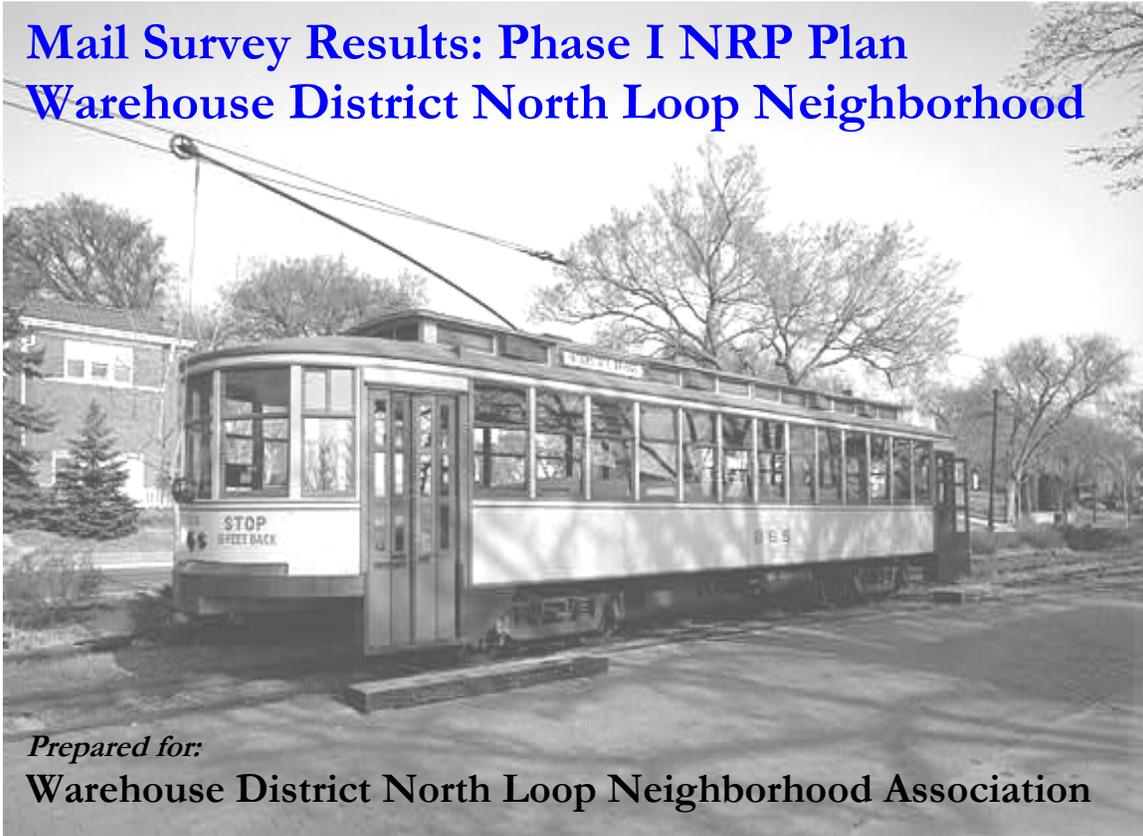
### North Loop NRP Funding Schedule

Section	Strategy	2003	2004	Total
<b>1. Arts and Culture</b>				
	1.1.1.1. Awareness of Neighborhood Assets	\$0	\$0	\$0
	1.1.1.2. Art and Culture Association	\$0	\$0	\$0
	1.1.1.3. Arts and Culture Promotional Programs	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$8,000
	1.1.1.4. Identifying Funding Sources for Arts and Cultural Uses	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>2. Commercial Development</b>				
	2.1.1.1. Grocery Store in the Neighborhood	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$8,000
	2.1.2.1. WDNLA Retail/Service Committee	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$6,000
	2.1.3.1. Promote Neighborhood Businesses	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
<b>3. Natural Environment</b>				
	3.1.1.1. Riverfront Amenities	\$0	\$0	\$0
	3.1.1.2. Neighborhood Connections	\$0	\$0	\$0
	3.1.1.3. Future Parks, Open Spaces and Trails	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>4. Neighborhood Identity</b>				
	4.1.1.1. Localized Neighborhood Events	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
	4.1.1.2. Programs to Support Neighborhood Businesses	\$0	\$0	\$0
	4.1.2.1. Annual Neighborhood Event	\$12,000	\$13,000	\$25,000
	4.1.2.2. Neighborhood Identification Signs/Monuments	\$12,000	\$13,000	\$25,000
	4.1.2.3. Neighborhood Promotion	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$15,000
<b>5. Neighborhood Livability</b>				
	5.1.1.1. Residential Crime Initiative	\$0	\$0	\$0
	5.1.1.2. Coordinate with City of Minneapolis; Crime Prevention	\$0	\$0	\$0
	5.1.2.1. Improve City Services	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>6. Planning and Implementation</b>				
	6.1.1.1. Comprehensive Neighborhood Master Plan	\$50,000	\$26,000	\$76,000
	6.1.2.1. North Loop Newsletter	\$0	\$0	\$0
	6.1.2.2. Neighborhood Stakeholder Meetings	\$0	\$0	\$0
	6.1.3.1. City Resources for Plan Implementation	\$0	\$0	\$0
	6.1.3.2. NRP Plan Implementation Consultant	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
<b>7. Residential Development</b>				
	7.1.1.1. New Neighborhood Housing Types			
	7.1.1.2. Neighborhood Affordable Housing Options			
	7.1.2.1. Future Neighborhood Residential Developments			
<b>8. Transportation</b>				
	8.1.1.1. Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan			
	8.1.1.2. Critical Neighborhood Intersections			
	8.1.2.1. Alternative Transportation Modes			
	8.1.2.2. Neighborhood Bus Service			
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$107,500</b>	<b>\$85,500</b>	<b>\$193,000</b>





# Mail Survey Results: Phase I NRP Plan Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood



*Prepared for:*  
**Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Association**

*Submitted by:*  
**Market Research Partners, Inc.**  
*Real Estate, Land Use and Public Policy Consultants*  
*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

June 23, 2003

# ***Mail Survey Results: Phase I NRP Plan Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood***

Market Research Partners, Inc.  
***Real Estate, Land Use and Public Policy Consultants***

## **Table of Contents:**

1. Introduction
1. Demographic and Housing Characteristics of Survey Respondents
7. Survey Responses to Likes, Dislikes, Concerns and Vision for the Neighborhood
- Appdx. North Loop Mail Survey

## ***Acknowledgments:***

*Thomas G. O'Neil compiled the information in this report with the valuable assistance from Barb Lickness of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) at the City of Minneapolis and John Slack of the Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Association.*

## ***Intellectual Property Notification:***

*Specific methodologies and information formats contained throughout this report are proprietary to Market Research Partners, Inc. and are not to be replicated or copied without the written consent of Market Research Partners, Inc. Data and findings in this report are intended for use by the Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Association in its effort to develop a plan for the Neighborhood's evolution.*

*Front Cover Photo/Footer Photo: Como-Harriet Streetcar Line & Trolley Car No. 265, 42nd Street West at Queen Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN (North Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress)*

**Market Research Partners, Inc.**  
June 23, 2003



## **INTRODUCTION**

In March 2003, the Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Association (WDNLA) mailed a survey to more than 2,000 neighborhood residents, workers and business and/or property owners. The survey was designed to gather basic demographic information about survey respondents, as well as solicit opinions on likes/dislikes of the neighborhood, concerns for the future, areas needing attention by the WDNLA, long-term neighborhood vision and more. Market Research Partners provided input on the questionnaire and tallied the results, with assistance from Barb Lickness at the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP). The mail survey results will be combined with other information about the neighborhood to support the drafting of a Phase I NRP Plan.

Approximately 160 people responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of roughly 7%. A copy of the survey form is included in the Appendix of this report.

## **DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

This section presents a summary of the demographic and housing characteristics of survey respondents. The first six questions of the survey dealt with these issues.

### **Residency, Local Employment Status and Property/Business Ownership Status**

<b>North Loop Residents:</b>		
Resident Only	78	50%
Resident and Property Owner*	38	25%
Resident and Business Owner	9	6%
Resident and Employee of N.L. Business	<u>4</u>	<u>3%</u>
	129	83%
<b>Non-Residents:</b>		
Property Owner Only	10	6%
Business Owner Only	9	6%
Employee Only (non-resident)	4	3%
Other Combinations	<u>3</u>	<u>2%</u>
	26	17%
Total Responses	155	100%
<i>* This tally likely includes mostly homeowners in the North Loop. Some of these respondents may also own North Loop buildings other than their home, but the survey did not ask respondents to make this distinction.</i>		



- 83% of survey respondents were residents, regardless of whether they owned a business or property.
- 17% of respondents were non-residents.<sup>1</sup>

**Household Income of Survey Respondents (Residents Only)**

Under \$15,000	1	1%		
\$15,000-\$30,000	6	5%		
\$30,000-\$50,000	12	9%		
\$50,000-\$75,000	25	19%	} 83	64%
\$75,000-\$100,000	26	20%		
\$100,000-\$150,000	27	21%		
\$150,000+	30	23%		
Not reported	2	2%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100%</b>		

- The North Loop Neighborhood is a relatively high-income area, according to income figures reported by survey respondents. Approximately 83% of respondents reported incomes of \$50,000 or more.
- Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported household incomes of \$75,000 or more, well above the household averages for Minneapolis (2000 average income of \$52,103 and the Twin Cities (2000 average income of \$67,670).

**Household Type (Residents Only)**

Singles	49	38%	} 105	81%
Married Couples	56	43%		
Unmarried Couples	19	15%		
Unmarried, Roommates	5	4%		
Not reported	0	0%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100%</b>		

- Singles made up 38% of respondents, suggesting that the North Loop is similar to Minneapolis (40%) in its singles makeup.
- Married couples made up 43% of respondents, far higher than the proportion of married couples in Minneapolis (29%). The North Loop might be attracting more married couples (younger, empty nesters and retirees) because of its unique multifamily owner housing.

<sup>1</sup> The WDNLA may want to consider a business-only survey in the future to more closely gauge business concerns and interests.



- Roommates and unmarried couples made up 19% of survey respondents. The combined percentage of these two groups in Minneapolis is slightly lower at 14%.

### Households by Presence of Children (Residents Only)

Without Children	114	88%
With Children, Age 1 or Under*	5	4%
With Children Age 2-8*	2	2%
With Children Age 8-12	0	0%
With Teenagers (<18)*	2	2%
Not reported	6	5%
Total	129	100%

\* All of these households had one child.

- Nearly 90% of survey respondents did not have children, suggesting a small population of children in the North Loop currently.
- Most of the children of the survey respondents are very young (5 of 9 are no older than 1 year). Just two children of survey respondents are between 2 and 12; only 1 child was of school age (over 5). The other two children of survey respondents are teenagers.
- This survey data suggests that families with children (especially of school age) are quite uncommon in the North Loop.

### Housing Style (Residents Only)

Owner Townhome	46	36%
Condominium	54	42%
Rental Apartment	21	16%
Rental Townhome/Condo	4	3%
Single-Family Home	0	0%
Subsidized Rental Unit	1	1%
Not reported	3	
Total	129	100%

- More than 75% of survey respondents live in townhomes or condominiums that they own. No respondent owns a single-family home (as there are likely none in the North Loop).
- 20% of respondents rent their housing, mostly in market-rate apartments.



**Owned Housing Value (Residents Only)**

Under \$200,000	3	3%
\$201,001-\$300,000	44	43%
\$300,001-\$400,000	8	8%
\$400,001-\$500,000	16	16%
\$500,000+	18	17%
Not reported	14	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Range: \$130,000-\$1,200,000</i>		
<i>Average: \$388,350</i>		

- Survey respondents who own their homes fall into two main value classes: between \$200,000 and \$300,000 (43%) and above \$400,000 (33%).
- The average home value for resident respondents was \$388,350, nearly double the Twin Cities Metropolitan average sales price of roughly \$200,000 for 2002.

**Rental Housing Cost (Residents Only)**

Under \$500	0	0%	
\$700s	4	15%	
\$875-\$985	1	4%	
\$1,000-\$1,200	6	23%	} 18 69%
\$1,300-\$1,500	6	23%	
\$1,500-\$1,700	6	23%	
\$1,900+	3	12%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<i>Range: \$437-\$2,750</i>			
<i>Average: \$1,288</i>			

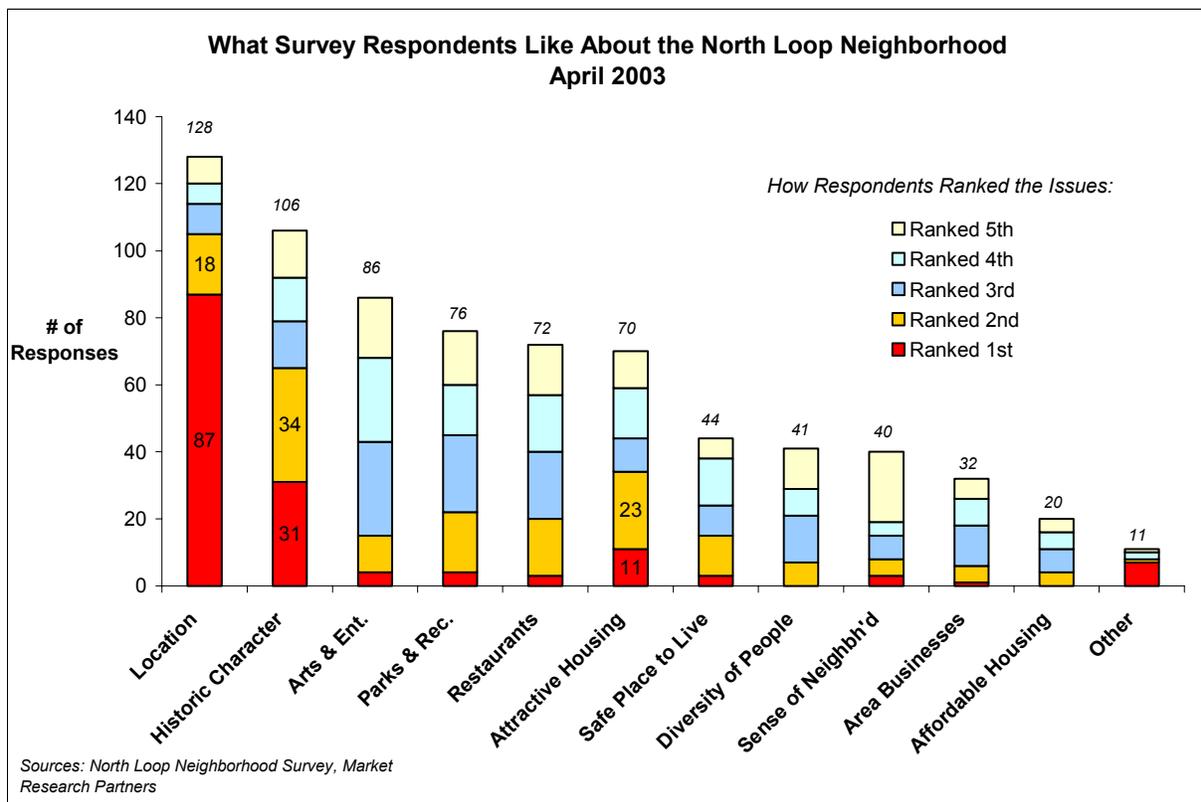
- Of the survey respondents who rent their housing, most (69%) pay between \$1,000 and \$1,700 per month in rent. This is the typical price range for newer rental housing (built in the mid 1990s and after) across the Metro Area.
- The average price range for rental units among survey respondents is \$1,288, which is typical for newer, more-upscale rental housing in the Twin Cities.



**SURVEY RESPONSES TO LIKES, DISLIKES, CONCERNS AND VISIONS FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

This section presents a summary of the open-ended questions (qualitative data) asked in the North Loop mail survey. Roughly a dozen questions were structured in this manner on the survey. All of the comments are included in an Appendix to this memorandum.

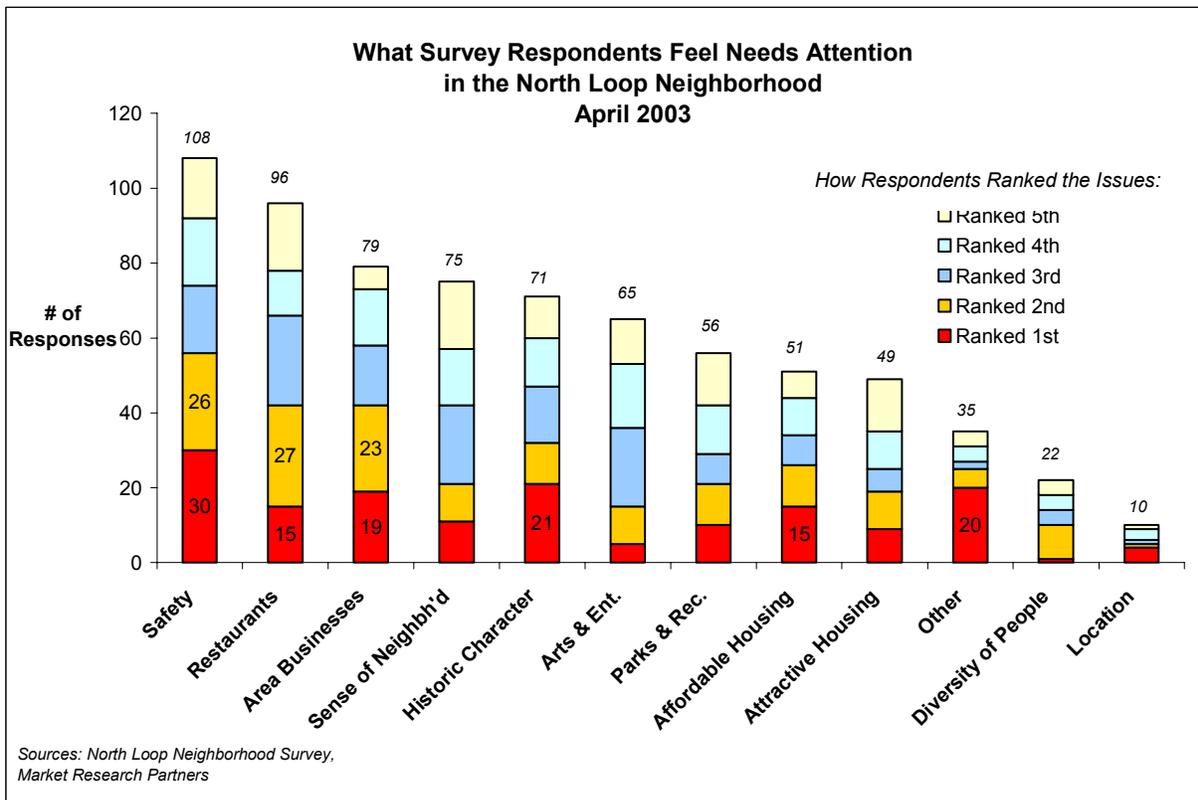
**What Do You Like Most About the North Loop Area? (top 5 responses of 12 choices)**



- Location (nearness to Downtown for employment and entertainment) was the most cited benefit of living or working in the North Loop Neighborhood. Eighty-three percent of mail survey respondents (128 of 155) cited this as one of the top five aspects of the Neighborhood, with 56% citing it as the strongest reason (the red bar on the graph above).
- Other strong benefits of the North Loop Neighborhood, according to the mail survey, include the historic warehouse character, arts and entertainment offerings, the river and park amenities, restaurants and housing choices.
- Survey results demonstrated strong support for historic warehouse character (65 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place votes) and housing choices (34 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place votes). This suggests a strong interest in larger Neighborhood character, and that many people have moved to the North Loop because of its unique offering of converted warehouses for living and/or working.



**What Needs Attention to Make the North Loop Area Better? (top 5 responses of 12 choices)**



- Three issues that ranked relatively low on the scale of what people like about the North Loop – safety, area businesses and sense of neighborhood – all rank high on the scale of what needs attention, according to the survey. Making the Neighborhood safer was cited by 70% of survey respondents (108 of 155); 56 respondents placed the issue first or second on their list.
- Two related issues – expanding local businesses (96 responses) and increasing restaurant opportunities (79 responses) – fell second and third on the needs-attention list. Each issue had 42 respondents citing it as a primary or secondary priority for the Neighborhood.
- Creating a sense of neighborhood, maintaining the historic character of the North Loop and developing arts and entertainment opportunities each had between 65 and 75 responses. Maintaining the historic character of the Neighborhood appears to be a key issue among a substantial number of people as it garnered the second largest number of first-rank responses (21), behind only safety (30).



## Concerns About the Neighborhood

Many respondents used this question to talk about needs in the Neighborhood (things that would make it better) instead of voicing concerns. Many comments were made about the need for better grocery service, and more restaurants, retail shops and various small businesses. As well, there were at least 10 comments on the need to build a sense of neighborhood identity.

The most frequently mentioned concerns included:

- Safety; the highest single concern mentioned, with at least 25 responses
- Traffic management and stop signs (15+ responses)
- Traffic control (e.g. stop lights) at the intersection of 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North
- Increasing parking options (both off-street and on-street)
- Maintaining the area's historic character and architectural quality
- Over-development or poor-quality/inappropriate development
- Eliminating the adult-oriented businesses
- Loitering and transient males
- Rising property taxes coupled with declining services
- Lack of diversity in housing prices (too much upper end) and people (few minorities)
- Lack of bus/transit service

## Perceptions of the Neighborhood

Many respondents speak very positively about the Neighborhood being a vibrant, emerging, promising place with many young professionals and upper-income retirees. Many wrote about the Neighborhood's great potential to become a true urban neighborhood like those that one finds in Chicago and New York. At least 35 respondents identified a fast pace of growth, with most seeing growth as positive, but some seeing it as a threat to identity and character. Several respondents mentioned the diverse nature of the North Loop in a positive way.

Several respondents commented about the expensive housing costs, the lack of collective identity in the Neighborhood and the disjointed land development and transportation patterns.

## Service Enjoyed by Residents

Residents clearly appreciate 3 things about the North Loop Neighborhood: 1) the close proximity to the Mississippi River for recreation (74 responses); 2) being able to walk downtown to work, to local restaurants and entertainment or along the riverfront (61 responses); and having great restaurants in the area (61 responses). Respondents also appreciate the parkland in and near the Neighborhood (29 responses) and being able to bike on the Cedar Lake Trail and elsewhere (28 responses). A number of respondents mention coffee shops, particular restaurants (e.g. Sapore, Monte Carlo, etc.) and the Guthrie Lab and Theatre de la Jeune Lune.



### **Services Missing From the Neighborhood**

No other question had such clear unanimity of response as this one. More than 79% of respondents (110 of 139 responses) cited the need for a grocery store or supermarket in the North Loop. A significant number also wrote about the need for more restaurants (43+ responses) and other types of stores (especially a video store and a breakfast café). A handful of comments addressed the need for better transit service, more bike paths/connections, the Twins' Stadium, a liquor store, a pharmacy and a gas station.

### **Ideas for Neighborhood Events**

About one-third of all responses to this question (33 of 103) mentioned that the Neighborhood should hold a block party or festival of some sort. About 19% of respondents (19 people) mentioned the Mississippi riverfront as a good focal point for an event; a river clean-up party, a barbecue/cookout or a music festival. A few people mentioned art (4 responses), music (5) and the Farmer's Market (4) as "themes" for an event. 15 respondents suggested that the event be held during the summer.

### **What Should be Preserved in the North Loop?**

Nearly 71% of respondents to this question (89 of 126) cited the architecture or historic warehouse character and buildings as needing preservation in the North Loop. Parks, trails and recreational amenities were also mentioned by roughly a dozen respondents as Neighborhood features that should be preserved. Respondents also mentioned that the existing, eclectic, independent businesses of the North Loop should be encouraged as much as possible.

### **What Are the Threats to the North Loop?**

About 25% of the responses to this question (33 of 131) cited a concern for future development. Many cited fear over franchise restaurants or retailers arriving and changing the character of the Neighborhood as it continues to grow. Many others cited a concern over poor architectural quality of new buildings (out of synch/style with the historic character; "suburban" style) and too much development without corresponding infrastructure (parking, especially).

Other significant responses related to crime and safety (35+ responses), increasing traffic due to continued growth (21 responses) increasing taxes (18 responses) and sex-related businesses (6 responses).



### **Vision for the Neighborhood**

Many respondents appreciate the path of development the Neighborhood has taken thus far, and would like to see the North Loop become more mixed, with a wide diversity of people and a strong mixture of residential, business, retail, arts, public/recreational and entertainment uses. The term “self sustaining,” referring to the presence of all common goods and services in the Neighborhood, was mentioned (or hinted at) several times.

Many responses mention a young, urban, vibrant neighborhood like those found in other, larger cities (Chicago, New York, Boston’s Back Bay). Several people cited the need to maintain controls on housing costs, the scale of development (building heights) and the quality of architecture. Clearly, arts, entertainment, restaurants and recreation are important features in the North Loop Neighborhood, and they need to play lead roles in its future.



# How can we improve the North Loop Neighborhood?

**Please complete this anonymous survey and return it by April 11, 2003.**

Feel free to write any additional comments next to your answers.

Please fold it in half, making sure the NRP return address shows, tape it closed and drop it in the mail.

No postage is necessary.

*Dear North Loop Neighbor:*

*The North Loop Neighborhood Association has Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) funds from the City of Minneapolis that we can use to make sure that our community remains a vital, thriving place. Your answers to this survey will help determine how these funds are spent (Phase I) and help develop a plan for future improvements.*

*Once the surveys are in, the results will be tabulated and used to develop the North Loop Phase I Neighborhood Action Plan. You will have the opportunity to vote on the Action Plan. Once approved, the proposed action will be implemented.*

*Results of the surveys will also be published in the North Loop Neighborhood Association newsletter.*

## Frequently asked questions regarding the NRP and the survey.

\* What is the Neighborhood Revitalization Project?

The NRP is about building partnerships among residents and between residents and government agencies. Basically, we identify issues in our neighborhood that we would like to confront, develop a plan to address those issues, and then work with NRP in order to complete it.

\* What is the North Loop?

If you live or work within the boundaries of the map shown on the back of the survey, you are in the North Loop Neighborhood.

\* What is the purpose of this survey and why should I fill it out?

The purpose of the survey is to interview the neighborhood. We are trying to learn as much as possible about what concerns us as a neighborhood. Once we know what our concerns are, we can begin to develop a plan to address them and secure the appropriate and available funding from the NRP. This is our chance to help get something positive – something we all want- done in our neighborhood.

*Thank you for participating in this Community Input Process!*

## ISSUES facing the North Loop:

- Traffic Management: Strategies for lighting, signage, traffic patterns, vehicle speed limits, etc.
- Safety: Police + Fire strategies and coverage
- Connections: pedestrian, bike, automobile to downtown, adjacent neighborhoods + river
- Neighborhood Identity
- Creation of an annual neighborhood event: something to bring the neighborhood together
- River maintenance, and riverfront improvement
- Promotion of small business + residential development
- Creation of a "Master Plan": a guideline for future development + other neighborhood visions + goals.

## North Loop Neighborhood Survey

1. Please check all that apply:

I am a  North Loop resident  Employee of a North Loop business  
 Business owner  Property owner  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the annual gross income for your household (the combined income of all persons in your household who work)? \* Please note: These detailed questions are necessary because the neighborhood has changed so much in recent years that the 2000 census is not accurate anymore.

Under \$15,000 per year  Between \$75,000 and \$100,000  
 Between \$15,000 and \$30,000  Between \$100,000 and \$150,000  
 Between \$30,000 and \$50,000  Over \$150,000  
 Between \$50,000 and \$75,000

3. Please describe the type of household in which you live:

Married couple  
 Unmarried couple  
 Unmarried, roommates  
 Single

Please list the gender (M/F) and ages of the adults who live with you, including yourself:

You \_\_\_\_\_ Person 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Person 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Person 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Person 4 \_\_\_\_\_

If you have children, please list the ages for each child:

Child 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Child 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Child 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Child 4 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you own or rent your Housing?  Own  Rent

If you rent, what is the amount that you pay per month, not including utilities?

\_\_\_\_\_

If you own your housing, what do you think is the market value of your home?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Please describe the type of housing unit in which you live:

- Townhome (separate entry to your unit from the outside)
- Condominium (entry to your unit from an interior hallway, like an apartment)
- Rental Apartment
- Rental Townhome or a rental unit in a condominium
- Single-family home
- Subsidized rental unit
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

6. What do you like most about the North Loop Area? Please choose the 5 main reasons why you live in this neighborhood. (Please indicate "1, 2, 3, 4, 5" with 1 = most important reason, etc.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic warehouse character | <input type="checkbox"/> Attractive housing   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts + entertainment         | <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable housing   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe place to live   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Businesses in area           | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks and recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity of people          | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of neighborhood        | _____   |

7. Please choose the 5 areas you think need the most attention to make the North Loop Area a better place to live. (Please indicate "1, 2, 3, 4, 5" with 1 = most important reason, etc.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic warehouse character | <input type="checkbox"/> Attractive housing   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts + entertainment         | <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable housing   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe place to live   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Businesses in area           | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks and recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity of people          | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of neighborhood        | _____   |

8. Please elaborate on one or two concerns for our neighborhood.

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9. When you have a concern, whom do you call?

10. As it exists today, how do you perceive our neighborhood?

11. Which activities/services do you enjoy in our neighborhood?
12. What activities, services, stores or businesses do you feel are missing or need improvement in our neighborhood?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
13. Do you have any ideas for enhancing neighborhood identity or ideas for a neighborhood event?
14. What would you like to see preserved in the neighborhood?
15. What might pose a threat to the neighborhood in the future?
16. What is your vision for our community?
17. Do you have suggestions on how to make this vision happen?
18. Please write any additional comments here.

**Please complete this survey and return it by April 11, 2003.**  
**Feel free to write any additional comments next to your answers.**  
**Please fold it in half, making sure the NRP return address shows, tape it closed and drop it in the mail.**  
**No postage is necessary.**



# Focus Group Summaries: Phase I NRP Plan Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood



*Prepared for:*

**Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Association**

*Submitted by:*

**Market Research Partners, Inc.**

*Real Estate, Land Use and Public Policy Consultants*

*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

June 25, 2003

# Focus Group Summaries: Phase I NRP Plan Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood

**Market Research Partners, Inc.**  
*Real Estate, Land Use and Public Policy Consultants*

## Table of Contents:

1. Introduction
1. Summary: Focus Group 1 – Retail Stores, Restaurants and Services in the Neighborhood
6. Summary: Focus Group 2 – Vision for the Neighborhood
11. Summary: Focus Group 3 – Neighborhood Livability
15. Summary: Focus Group 4 – Neighborhood Identity and Organization

## ***Acknowledgments:***

*Thomas G. O'Neil compiled the information in this report with the valuable assistance from John Slack and Penny Grabek of the Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Association.*

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*Front Cover Photo/Footer Photo: Como-Harriet Streetcar Line & Trolley Car No. 265, 42nd Street West at Queen Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN (North Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress)*

**Market Research Partners, Inc.**  
June 25, 2003



## **INTRODUCTION**

Market Research Partners, Inc. (MRP) conducted four focus groups in the North Loop Neighborhood of Minneapolis during May and June of 2003. These discussions were designed to follow up on a detailed mail survey that was completed in April 2003, which revealed key issues of interest or concern to Neighborhood stakeholders. The four focus groups, which were well publicized and open to anyone with ties to the Neighborhood, involved roughly 60 people, mostly residents. Several days in advance of each session, participants were given a list of questions and directed to come prepared to discuss their answers during the session.

The results of the focus groups are summarized in this document, and will be combined with the mail survey results to support the drafting of a Phase I NRP Plan.

## **FOCUS GROUP 1: RETAIL STORES, RESTAURANTS & SERVICES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD (HELD MAY 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2003)**

### **QUESTIONS DIRECTED AT THE PARTICIPANTS**

1. What existing grocery store in another area is a good model for the North Loop?
2. What strategies could the Neighborhood pursue to attract a grocery store?
3. What are the pros and cons of a co-op market instead of a traditional grocery store?
4. Besides a grocery store, what other specific retail uses or goods/services do Neighborhood residents and businesses need (that are not there now)?
5. Where in the North Loop should the various retail and services businesses be located?
6. Should the Neighborhood encourage the development of a retail node (one area with most of the stores) or should these uses be distributed in several spots?
7. What areas of the city have the appropriate scale and “character” of retail/services that are appropriate for North Loop (e.g. Linden Hills, Nicollet Island East/University & Central, “Eat Street” (Nicollet))?

### **COMMENTS MADE BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

#### Visions of a Grocery Store in the North Loop

##### *Specific Comments:*

- Model after the Kowalski’s (Grand Avenue, 24th and Hennepin and 53<sup>rd</sup> and Lyndale): small, high-quality, interesting, unique space.
- Model after Dean and DeLuca in New York – convenient, a “walkable” store, not a box; a place that integrates tightly into the Neighborhood and feels part of the place.
- Model after the Wedge Co-op in south Minneapolis or Whole Foods (another co-op).
- The store should be a full-service grocery with a deli and specialty items.



- Could be a “hybrid” of several stores; not typical, but combining things uniquely demanded by the Neighborhood (need a creative developer).
- The curb appeal is very important; large windows, architecturally fitting with the Neighborhood.
- Small grocery stores that draw you in (like in New York); several specialty stores next to each other that together form a sense of place and offer many items.
- Full service grocery with other stores inside (several specialty shops under one roof).
- Items that should be in the store:
  - Fine cheese
  - Fresh produce
  - Flowers
  - Good meat
  - Pharmacy
- The store should provide daily necessities and a really good deli.
- Some of the existing businesses in the Neighborhood might be good candidates to be part of a grocery store/specialty store development.
- Delmonico’s on Central/Broadway (Italian specialty shop with a broad product selection) is a great store.
- There is a give and take between quality and price, but many in the Neighborhood want higher-quality goods and can pay for them.

*Moderator’s Summary:*

Overall, participants agreed that a grocery store in the North Loop must be very unique and highly focused on the Neighborhood (as opposed to attempting to serve a large area and pulling traffic in from the outside, like many suburban stores). The Neighborhood has a large population of educated, urbane, cultured people and the grocery store should reflect this in its offerings and atmosphere. The store should not attempt to follow established grocery models found throughout the Twin Cities but should attempt to be a “one of a kind.”

Strategies to Get a Grocery Store in the North Loop

*Specific Comments:*

- Someone from the WDNLA should get the grocers to come and talk to us. We should ask them why it would not work here. What is the density threshold that is needed to support different levels of market service? Identify critical measures to find out how we stack up.
- Jim Stanton: He has talked to the grocers, and stated that there has never been a push for a grocery in this area and with the price of land so high, it will not likely work in the Neighborhood. Parking is also an impediment, as land is at a premium and structured parking is very expensive (\$20,000-\$25,000 per stall?) The area needs more people to make a grocery store viable. The Basset Creek/Washington Avenue area might offer the most affordable land for a store.



- Explore the Farmer's Market; it has plenty of parking and is within walking distance for many residents. Create partnership to relocate it closer to residents and provide a more permanent location?
- Create a contest for designers and professionals to develop a creative, affordable solution for grocery in the Neighborhood and offer a cash prize for the best solution.
- Formal outreach program to work with Downtown and Nicollet Island East Neighborhoods to work together to get a grocery store.
- Work with the River Market (which many are disappointed with) to alter its product offerings to better fit the Neighborhood.
- Work to upgrade Rick's Market in the University/Central area (Nicollet Island East Neighborhood).
- Identify a commercial area in which the grocery would be developed.
- Spend some of the NRP money to create the perception of need in the North Loop: newsletter articles, PR, Skyway News (Ellen), etc.

*Moderator's Summary:*

Jim Stanton's comments brought a valuable "realistic" perspective to the discussion. Getting a grocery store in the Neighborhood will require a lot of grassroots work and creative problem solving. A committee/subcommittee should be set up to work on this issue exclusively. The answer may lie in working with adjacent neighborhoods such as Downtown and Nicollet Island East (University/Central area). Several people thought that the Neighborhood should make an attempt to work with the River Market to see if its owners could modify the store and products to better match resident desires.

The Co-Op Model (*introduced by Julie S. of Sapore*)

*Specific Comments:*

- Alternative grocery model that might work in the Neighborhood. Much smaller store. Owned by residents who become members. Members, in turn, decide on what products should be in the store and how it should operate, look, etc.
- Local consultant that works nationally on co-op feasibility. \$8,000 (?) for feasibility study for a co-op in the Neighborhood. This person surveys the Neighborhood on product interests and helps set up the organization.
- Whole Foods considers the North Loop too small for a co-op.
- Small co-op at Snelling/Selby that is about 4000 square feet could be a good model.
- Requires a small group of very committed persons to get it up and running.
- People go to places because of the quality not the bricks and mortar.



*Moderator's Summary:*

People seemed a bit cool to the idea at first (many thought that co-ops were too “granola”), but during break, several participants thought that the idea was worth exploring. Many cited the high degree of control over the operations and product selection as big benefits to the co-op grocery idea.

Other Retail Stores and Services that the North Loop Needs

*Specific Comments:*

- Uses needed in the Neighborhood:
  - Bakery
  - Breakfast place (Cuzzy's)
  - Late night diner
  - Ice Cream parlor
  - Barber shop
  - Health/fitness – day spa
  - Art Galleries
  - Good dry cleaner inside of grocery store
  - Wine store
- John Cunningham/developer of Itasca wants to develop a restaurant on the River. Neighborhood should support the idea of some commercial uses along the River that create destinations. The Park Board has rejected this in the past and will be a tough foe.
- National franchises are too “suburban” for the North Loop. Block E developed in the wrong manner.
- Bring in uses that generate “foot traffic.”
- Need to build upon locally owned businesses.
- Space is expensive – local businesses have trouble finding affordable space within the Neighborhood. Sarah (Mitre Box owner) stated that new development leads to high-price space and the developers don't make it affordable. Nicollet Island East should not be the model in the North Loop, as it relates to space cost and national food retailers.
- Something more unique would act as a broader draw to get more people into the Neighborhood.
- Grand Avenue is a good mix and has recently allowed a national retailer (Pottery Barn) in. Some “anchor” uses like national retailers help because they bring in traffic, helping the independents to survive. The North Loop realistically needs some national stores.
- Larger stores (e.g. big box) can support development because they have the money. Independent businesses will need some sort of subsidy.

*Moderator's Summary:*

People were very concerned about becoming a typical national chain district. All were concerned with maintaining as many local, independent retailers as possible and fostering a retail mix that fit with the historic character of the Neighborhood, and has a walkable form. Keeping spaces affordable as development pressure intensifies will be a great challenge for the North Loop.



Where Should the Retail in North Loop be Located? What Should it Look Like? Focused on One Node? How Do We Fill the Void?

*Specific Comments:*

- “Vision” should be to keep local retail independent and as small as possible.
- Create a special neighborhood. Washington Avenue has great potential as commercial corridor, but the services are not good now.
- Unique, high-quality uses that reflect North Loop history.
- A (gas?) trolley should run through the Neighborhood. This would offer frequent stops at key nodes, reduce parking need, allow people to shop at a variety of places in the Neighborhood and would connect the North Loop with other areas.
- We need some draw that identifies with the area. The Neighborhood has to have some notion of what it wants to be. The challenge is getting/keeping independent retailers and businesses that can afford the space (or keeping space affordable in the face of new development).
- Washington Avenue is not Grand Avenue.
- We need a local event, and Washington Avenue would be a logical location for it.
- Establish a recognizable piece of art, a plaza or a square. The expensive costs for land will be an impediment to this.
- The city tore down the Gateway Center (?) which was a recognizable landmark.
- More feasible approach to get the businesses to locate where they can, rather than try to direct them all to one place.
- Services should remain concentrated within walking distance to residential.
- Develop Washington Avenue as a walkable street with boulevards. Make it the commercial strip in the Neighborhood.
- Identify what we have vs. what we need. There are many uses that people don’t know about. Locals would support what they know. Maybe the next marketing effort is to promote what is already here.
- Market research study of the Neighborhood.
- Grass roots effort to promote area local businesses.
- Develop a map of local businesses.
- The proposed north Nicollet Mall district plan comes into the North Loop and we should know about this effort and work with it.
- Jim Stanton was fairly bullish about future retail, stating that he has had 2-3 unsolicited inquiries from retailers for the Rock Island building. He sees a great mix of residents in his North Loop buildings and the retail is just gaining momentum.
- Commercial nodes in the Neighborhood – get the right uses and the right form will follow.
- The North Loop needs a plan that identifies what we want/don’t want; a “road map.”
- We are an historic neighborhood and our preservation depends on representation (HPC, developers).
- The Neighborhood has no voice yet. We need much stronger participation from locals.



*Moderator's Summary:*

The North Loop has unique characteristics not found elsewhere. The North Loop cannot simply copy the pattern of another neighborhood. The Neighborhood is so new that many people don't understand what is here. The issue of what retail to attract and where to put it is premature without first understanding and promoting what is already here. The group has strong desire to foster local businesses and avoid becoming a standardized retail/commercial district like other areas (e.g. Block E). The Neighborhood needs focal points and elements that speak to an identity. Washington Avenue is important to the Neighborhood's identity and should play prominently in future retail plans, identity-building events and transportation.

**FOCUS GROUP 2: VISION FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD (HELD JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2003)**

**QUESTIONS DIRECTED AT THE PARTICIPANTS**

1. What do you envision for the North Loop Neighborhood when it is fully built?
2. What adjectives describe the kind of place that the North Loop Neighborhood is in the future (e.g. busy, quiet, serene, dense, etc.)?
3. What are the important physical elements that make the North Loop the unique place that it is (and help achieve the vision)?
4. How do public open spaces or other amenities play a role?
5. How should the North Loop be different from other Neighborhoods?
6. What other areas nationally or locally are good models for the North Loop?
7. What kinds of people live in the North Loop, and how is the mix different than today?
8. What kinds of housing options are there in the North Loop, and how is it different from today?
9. What are the key threats to achieving the vision of the Neighborhood?

**COMMENTS MADE BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

Neighborhood Vision

*Specific Comments:*

- To become an area where one can find all major goods and services. To not have to leave the Neighborhood for anything. Become "self-sustaining."
- A highly complex place (land uses and people), where all of the parts work together, and there is a clear identity.
- A very pedestrian-friendly place.
- A place with parks and amenities for children.
- Maintain the unique character and mix that is currently here.
- Demand funding from developers of high-density buildings for parks and parking.
- More trees and green spaces.



- One coordinated plan versus a whole series of individual development decisions.
- Boulevards with trees lining them.
- A distinctive neighborhood with a common theme through landscape architecture and infrastructure elements (e.g. street lamps and benches).
- An area without the sex-oriented uses. These uses imply a transient quality, while the Neighborhood is trying to become a permanent, notable, livable place.
- An area with an organized approach to emergencies; fire/police; quick response.
- Maintain the continuity of character that currently exists in the Washington corridor as development spreads to other parts of the Neighborhood.
- An area with good signage.
- No “sharp edges” in the development pattern. The district should transition gently from one use to another.
- An area where all the buildings are full and there are lots of arts and artists.
- No one thinks of Déjà vu and Sex World when they think about the North Loop.
- The Neighborhood is proactive about developing/fostering commercial businesses, especially those that offer complementary goods and services to the Neighborhood.
- An area where many different forms of transportation come together in a workable, logical way; buses, light rail, commuter rail, walking, bicycles, the trolley and cars.

*Moderator's Summary:*

People care very much about the character of the Neighborhood and the quality of life in it. Many have a vision of a human-friendly place where people walk a lot and drive little. Density is a benefit to many residents, not a problem. People appreciate the unique mix of uses and want to continue to foster this quality. The historic character of the district and the unique architecture of the buildings should be acknowledged in new development and maintained as much as possible. Most attendees focused on the residential district north of Washington Avenue in their comments, and many do not naturally think of the other parts of the Neighborhood (outside of the Farmer's Market) in their visioning.

Adjectives That Describe the Kind of Place North Loop Should Be (and Supportive of the Vision)

*Specific Comments:*

- Urban.
- Many little-sized parks.
- Upscale.
- Bustling.
- Diverse (ethnically and in terms of uses: light industrial, residential, open spaces).
- Crime-free.
- Historic, warehouse style architecture.
- Where historic development patterns meet the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



- Walkable, comfortable and friendly.
- Farmer's Market.
- Artistic (theaters).
- Trendy, art-embracing.
- Active in a people way, but not noisy.
- The Minneapolis version of SOHO.
- Trolley as a symbol.

*Moderator's Summary:*

People want the North Loop to be lively, active and busy, but in a "people way." Activities should be centered around what residents need and desire in all aspects of living (shopping, dining, entertainment, personal errands and services, etc.) and not centered around the needs of industrial uses or uses that negatively impact the quality of life. For example, the sex-oriented uses would make the North Loop busy in a way that is not friendly to the Neighborhood. The North Loop should be cultured, intelligent, urban, friendly and exciting, yet calm.

Important Physical Elements That Make North Loop Unique (and That Also Support the Vision)

*Specific Comments:*

- The River makes North Loop unique.
- Bridges help define this area, and the Plymouth Bridge is the worst part of the Mississippi Mile area.
- The street next to Rock Island Lofts should be opened to allow cross connections in the Neighborhood.
- The style of lighting on Washington is great; iron fences in spots also keep the historic character.
- Washington Avenue is the most important street in the district.
- The Farmer's Market is important to North Loop's identity.
- The Cedar Lake Trail and its connection to the riverfront.
- The stadium proposal could put the Neighborhood on a whole new trajectory, not unlike what happened in Baltimore (Camden Yards baseball park), Denver (SODO near Coor's Field baseball stadium) and near Pac Bell Park (baseball) in San Francisco.
- The multimodal facility (the meeting of light rail and commuter rail) could be an important element or node in the North Loop.

*Moderator's Summary:*

The mix of uses and the land use pattern in the North Loop are complex. This is a good thing, according to discussion participants. The challenge to the community will be to connect all of the assets of the district – the River, Washington Avenue, the Farmer's Market, etc. – in a cohesive manner that enhances livability for residents, creates human-scale connections and fosters commercial/retail uses. Future possible uses, including the multimodal facility and the stadium,



could enhance the livability of the North Loop, but they need to be integrated with uses that exist (and are valued by residents).

### Other Areas That Are Good Examples for the North Loop

#### *Specific Comments:*

- The Bottineau Library in NE Minneapolis is a great example of a public institutional use.
- SOHO in New York.
- Lincoln Park in Chicago; great mix of old brownstones, families, singles, small restaurants, etc.
- Old Town in Alexandria, Virginia; an old torpedo factory was renovated into a great retail (?) center.
- Back Bay in Boston; great residential district; lots of first-floor retail; self-sufficient neighborhood.
- Belltown in Seattle; bordering Pike Place Market, along the monorail to the Space Needle and downtown retail (Westlake Center); mix of light industry, artists, poor/homeless agencies, new high-density residential; close to inner harbor area.
- East Hennepin area (Nicollet Island East); retail node and new residential.
- Lowertown, St. Paul; Farmer's Market, artists' lofts, historic buildings, parks.

#### *Moderator's Summary:*

There are bits and pieces from many successful areas that the North Loop could model. However, the North Loop has a very unique mix of residences, commercial uses, government uses (Federal Reserve, the garbage incinerator, MTC, etc.), non-profits, small businesses, restaurants and arts. The Neighborhood needs to develop a vision from the ground up, from scratch, which addresses the unique assemblage of pieces and works toward a vision that unifies the disparate parts. It is clear that Washington Avenue, the Farmer's Market, restaurants/retail, open spaces and the arts will play critical roles in unifying the Neighborhood vision.

### People and Housing Mix of the Future North Loop Neighborhood

#### *Specific Comments:*

- More, affordable housing.
- More rental units, to allow other household types into the North Loop
- Get brownstone units added; townhomes too.
- More families with children (need playground equipment).
- Currently there are only high-income or low-income people; not much in between. We should work toward a better mix of incomes.
- Ensure commercial use diversity in the future.
- Diverse people-wise, even if there are few children.



*Moderator's Summary:*

People enjoy the North Loop that exists today, but hint that something is lacking in the diversity of people, commercial/retail uses and housing price points. Many would like to see further housing development with new urban styles (e.g. traditional brownstones), an addition of lower-cost housing alternatives and the attraction of a wider diversity of people. People believe that the North Loop is a place of strength and that future development should add to the strength; keep the good parts and add new good parts.

Threats to the North Loop Neighborhood

*Specific Comments:*

- Increased traffic could overtake the Neighborhood as growth continues. Parking and traffic management need to be addressed holistically (a transportation plan for the Neighborhood).
- Lack of connections. There are large blocks with no north-south crossings for several blocks (e.g. from Heritage Landing past Riverstation. The residential part of the Neighborhood is disconnected from the Farmer's Market area.
- The lack of a grocery store is a hindrance to quality of life.
- The lack of mobilization of residents is a threat. Locals need to become involved in the WDNLA!
- Heavy industrial uses on the south side of I-94, particularly their expansion (e.g. the car crusher proposal).
- Crime has to stay minimal and the residents have to perceive that they are safe.
- Reduction in services from the city and a raising of property taxes. One respondent cited the lack of city money for landscaping. As well, bus service needs to be as strong as possible.
- Poor architectural quality of new buildings.

*Moderator's Summary:*

The movement of people and traffic seem to be important issues in this rapidly-developing area. Many believed it important for stakeholders to stay on top of these issues, suggesting the need for a master plan. Other threats could come about if industrial uses expand, needed goods and services fail to materialize in the Neighborhood and the overall budget problems of the city and state lead to a reduction in services such as park maintenance, police and fire protection and road maintenance. Crime, stated by participants as not a large problem at the time, could be a problem as the area adds more people. A new stadium would bring a lot of outsiders into the area on a regular basis, affecting safety, traffic and overall quality of life, if not designed and managed well.



### **FOCUS GROUP 3: NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY (HELD JUNE 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2003)**

#### **QUESTIONS DIRECTED AT THE PARTICIPANTS**

1. What negatively affects the livability and safety of the North Loop? (be specific)
  - Crime?
  - Traffic?
  - Poor Lighting?
  - Unsafe Spaces?
  - Particular Uses?
  - Lack of particular amenities?
  - Other?
2. Who is most affected, and when?
3. What should be done to change the things that negatively affect the North Loop?
4. What is the Neighborhood's role in making these changes?
5. What other entities should have a role and what should they specifically do?
6. What other similar, urban places (nationally or in the Twin Cities) have the "livability" characteristics that the North Loop should have?

#### **COMMENTS MADE BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

##### Things That Negatively Affect the Livability of the Neighborhood

###### *Specific Comments:*

###### Traffic:

- The intersection at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Street (near the former Nikki's restaurant) is a dangerous intersection. There should be some sort of traffic control device there. One person mentioned that it is particularly bad at rush hour. Another mentioned that he avoids this intersection on foot for fear of being hit while crossing either street.
- Many drivers "blow through" the stop sign (going both directions) at the intersection at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Street (near the Rock Island Lofts).
- People tend to drive quite fast in front of the Guthrie Lab (a "speedway" according to one). This causes a dangerous condition for people exiting the Itasca Building residences from the north (where the road intersects with 8<sup>th</sup>, in front of the StarTribune plant).
- The timing of the light near Lappin Lighting should be changed.
- The Neighborhood has an historical cut-through traffic pattern that will go away as drivers understand that it is now a residential area.
- The hours for the municipal ramp at 10<sup>th</sup> and Washington should be extended.



Crime:

- The potential for crime (mostly petty) increases at bar closing time.
- Specific crime incidents: car break-ins along 8<sup>th</sup> near Bunkers; a shooting several years ago in the parking lot of HGA (near 8<sup>th</sup> and Washington); loiterers looking to commit petty theft in the 411 Washington Building; some break-ins in the past in The Landings townhome complex along the river road (attributed to overgrowth of bushes and a larger homeless population along the River a few years ago).
- Now that the Neighborhood is approaching a critical mass of residents, the Neighborhood should get better policing (the Neighborhood should demand it).
- The riverfront parkland has the potential to foster crime at night.
- New development has “squeezed out” those who used to come up from the River, commit petty crimes in the Neighborhood at night and then retreat to the river area.
- “Snow birds” (those who only live in the Neighborhood half the year) could be susceptible to crime if thieves discover their patterns.

Other:

- No facilities for children (play equipment, parks) in the Neighborhood.
- No gas station at night.
- No dog park.
- The lighting along the River ends where the incline down to the River begins.

*Moderator's Summary:*

Traffic problems seem limited to just a handful of intersections. Relatively minor improvements in these areas (e.g. stop signs or lights) can likely reduce the negative impact and improve safety. Surprisingly, none of the respondents mentioned any significant crime problems over and above those that one would expect for an inner-urban neighborhood. New development with residential uses has reduced the number of hiding places for vagrants and transients who might commit crime. Despite being asked about other things that might negatively affect the Neighborhood, few responded with anything meaningful other than the few things listed above, under “Other.”

What Should be Done to Change the Things That Negatively Affect the Neighborhood

*Specific Comments:*

Crime:

- Create a “safe unit” plan in conjunction with a police officer or civil servant (Luther Krueger)
- Encourage residents and business/property owners to get on the crime email list.
- Establish a link from the WDNLA web site to the crime email resource.
- Use the newsletter to let residents know about resources to fight crime.



- Surveillance cameras near shelter areas and the Cedar Lake Trail. The first stretch of the trail goes under a freeway overpass (I-94 access bridges) and there should be better lighting and perhaps some cameras.
- The Neighborhood should produce a map showing the locations of crime incidents.
- Residents should take personal awareness training.

Traffic:

- There should be a traffic circulator trolley in the Neighborhood with regular routes. Developers could contribute to the costs of development/operation. This would tie back to the roots of the Neighborhood as a key place in the Minneapolis trolley system.
- Encourage building residents to use fewer cars. The 607 Washington Avenue building has just one parking space for each unit.
- The Neighborhood should have formal involvement to ensure that off-street parking needs are satisfied by new developments.
- The Neighborhood should develop a traffic management plan; work with the City and get the plan formally recognized.
- Make sure that circulator bus service is included in the Downtown Minneapolis transit plan.

Other:

- Lighting – develop a lighting plan for the whole.
- Create “pocket parks” as places of refuge for residents; small spaces throughout all parts of the Neighborhood. One of these parks could perhaps be a dog park (although this might require more space than a typical pocket park).
- Develop “shade refuges” or “oases” for walkers during the summer months. The Neighborhood is all concrete in many sections and foot travelers would benefit greatly from strategically-located shaded spots.

*Moderator's Summary:*

There are several resources already available to address the crime issues in the Neighborhood; it's mainly a matter of spreading the news about them and encouraging their use. Based on comments, it appears as though several “holistic plans” could help unify the Neighborhood and minimize conflicts: a traffic management plan, a lighting plan, a parks/open spaces/shade plan and a crime prevention plan, at a minimum.

Neighborhood's Role in Making Changes; Other Entities That Should Play a Role

*Specific Comments:*

- The WDNLA invites Councilmember Johnson-Lee to monthly meetings.
- Under former Councilmember Cherryholmes, there was an open forum meeting (open to all) twice per year, and it was seen as a good thing for the Neighborhood.



- The North Loop Business Association should be a stronger player (and more connected to the WDNLA) on livability issues in general. The Greater North Washington Business Association was also mentioned as a possible stakeholder in the Neighborhood, although some thought that the area of coverage for this association was outside of the North Loop.
- Other key entities that the Neighborhood could formally work with on various issues: The Farmer's Market, the StarTribune, police/fire, Hennepin County, Sharing/Caring Hands, The Comedy Club, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, The Guthrie.
- The arts play a big role in the Neighborhood: The Comedy Club, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, The Guthrie Lab, The Minnesota Opera (stars live at the Gar Scott Lofts on a seasonal basis).
- Annual events that bring the community together: National Night Out, a Bunker's-sponsored event, the Gardner (sp?) Hardware Anvil Drop. Also, there was a one-time event called No Wash Day which was very successful.

*Moderator's Summary:*

There are a wide number of entities that have a stake in the Neighborhood and the WDNLA has ample opportunities to make positive connections. At least one committee could be established to reach out to the entities mentioned by session participants (and many other entities not mentioned). In particular, the WDNLA could strengthen its relationship with the business associations that serve the Neighborhood. For example, the WDNLA could help with awareness building of local businesses and the businesses, in turn, could help the WDNLA through event sponsorships and lobbying with politicians and other civic entities on livability issues.

Other Places Nationally and Locally That Have a High Level of Livability

*Specific Comments:*

- Downtown Portland, Oregon. There is a great mix between residential, business, entertainment, leisure and transit uses. People can walk there. The place has not been overdeveloped.
- Belltown, a neighborhood just off of Downtown Seattle, Washington. This area mixes light-industrial, non-profit/homeless organizations, public transportation, entertainment and residential uses very well.
- Chelsea Pier in New York. Among the uses in this area are retailers, fashion boutiques, taxi cab repair, residences and converted warehouses (to retail).
- Downtown St. Paul.



## **FOCUS GROUP 4: NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY AND ORGANIZATION (HELD JUNE 11<sup>TH</sup>, 2003)**

### **QUESTIONS DIRECTED AT THE PARTICIPANTS**

1. What activities/initiatives should the Neighborhood undertake to create a more cohesive community?
2. Who participates in these activities?
3. What are the goals of pursuing these activities? (Who benefits from them and how?)
4. What themes could the activities be based on?
5. How will the North Loop Neighborhood know that it has achieved an “identity?”
6. What other neighborhoods serve as good role models, and what specifically do they do?
7. What does the City have planned for the Neighborhood? What should the City do?
8. What communications strategies should the Neighborhood follow (what should be communicated, how often and to whom)?

### **COMMENTS MADE BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

#### Activities That the Neighborhood Should Pursue; Participants; Themes; Reasons

##### *Specific Comments:*

- Activities that the Neighborhood has pursued in the past:
  - No Wash-one-time event done 3 years ago in the summer.
  - Gardner Hardware Anvil Drop (July?)
  - National Night Out
  - Camp Heartland-weekend rock fest promoted by Bunker’s
- The Neighborhood should have a block party based around the opening of the Theatre de la Jeune Lune season. Perhaps Jeune Lune could take over the former Bastille Day (sponsored by the former New French café)?
- A party around the Farmer’s Market opening and closing (?) days.
- Earth Day/Clean up the Mississippi River; could be done in conjunction with the Minnesota Watershed Project (a clean up effort from Prescott, WI to St. Anthony).
- Movies in the Park (similar to those at Loring Park and Steven’s Square).
- “Films Against the Warehouse.”
- The Neighborhood should create a permanent gathering spot/public space that serves as the focal point for the Neighborhood.
- Base the annual event around art or food; other participants can “glom” onto these easily.
- A fair/annual event centered on drama would be unique. Wasn’t Washington Avenue an historic theater district in the past?
- Don’t have the annual event in August; the heat would be horrible, especially along Washington (no trees; all concrete).
- Why do an annual event? To inject some life into the street.



- The annual event should not be too focused on one thing; there should be 3 or 4 “draws” to get people to attend.
- Key spots for identify-building: Washington Avenue; the riverfront area; Farmer’s Market.
- The theme of the annual event should be the “street.”
- Build an annual event around the anvil drop by the hardware store? It certainly is unique and would be a fun event around which to rally. It has a nebulous quality and many different types of events and participants could emanate easily from it.
- Make sure that there is a “little something for everyone.” (Which is a lot like the way the North Loop is in reality.)
- The North Loop should pursue two types of activities on an annual basis:
  - A big event to bring outsiders into the Neighborhood (raise awareness and cement identity) and to support local businesses. This could be a joint effort by residents and businesses.
  - A series of smaller events to get residents together and to bring family and friends into the Neighborhood. Summertime is too packed with competitive activities; summer art fairs especially. The North Loop should have its annual event in the fall.
- Big event idea: Theater Fest. It could grow to include other types of artists and businesses (sponsorships). A wine tasting party at the Farmer’s Market: “fruit, cheese and wine.”
- Big event idea: The Twin Cities Fine Arts Organization (former warehouse district artists) produces “Art on the Town” in October. Participants get a passport to visit galleries and vendors around town. Could the North Loop dovetail its annual party with this event?
- Small event idea: Flea market once per month on the parking lot next to Cuzzy’s (sp?). This could also be in a warehouse
- Small event idea: Community breakfast; team with a charity
- Small event idea: Open house for businesses; the Old St. Anthony Business Association does an “ice-breaker” event primarily to promote retailers. The Association promotes the event partly through a post-card mailing.

*Moderator’s Summary:*

There was strong support that an annual event should be unique and positioned so as to be different from other neighborhood parties. One person’s comments about a “big event” once a year and several smaller gatherings garnered good support. Many participants believed that the theater assets of the Neighborhood could serve as a foundation for an annual event; Theatre de la Jeune Lune was mentioned several times as an institution from which an event could emerge (e.g. Bastille Day or a theater-season opening party). Support seemed to be strong for a fall event, as this would be a less competitive time and cooler in temperature. Washington Avenue should figure prominently in any large-scale celebration in many minds, as it is the most important arterial (historically and currently).



### What are the Hallmarks of Identity in the North Loop?

#### *Specific Comments:*

- The visual aspects of identity for the Neighborhood are very important.
- The North Loop will in part have an identity when:
  - There are signs introducing the Neighborhood at key points, such as the Gateway area.
  - Residents will not have to explain outsiders where the North Loop is.
  - When there is a regular vehicle for communication (?)
  - When the media recognizes the Neighborhood and covers local news and events.
  - When the North Loop is not considered to be the “warehouse district” or just another subdistrict of Downtown.
  - When all of the areas of the Neighborhood are tied together through the development pattern, transportation, signage and other elements.

#### *Moderator’s Summary:*

Knowing when the Neighborhood has exactly achieved an “identity” is a difficult concept, but many respondents reported specific milestones that work toward this goal. A big hurdle will be to pull together the wide range of subdistricts in the Neighborhood into some sort of cohesive whole. Certainly, awareness-building with the media and the outside world (and cleaving from the Downtown area perceptually) will be an important first step.

### Other Areas That Have Strong Elements of Identity

#### *Specific Comments:*

- Eat Street; Nicollet South (caters to the specific market of tourists/conventioners).
- Bryn Mawr. This neighborhood has a garage sale weekend and a garden tour.
- The Powderhorn Neighborhood; the park is a strong feature.
- 50<sup>th</sup> and France. Known by the intersection. Strong shops, pedestrian friendly, signage along 50<sup>th</sup> listing retailers.

#### *Moderator’s Summary:*

The group didn’t spend a lot of energy trying to identify other areas to emulate. Instead, the group talked about the belief that the Neighborhood is a unique place, and will therefore require a unique identity-building effort.

### Communications Strategies, Specific Tactics and Other Comments

#### *Specific Comments:*

- Map of area businesses, theaters/entertainment and other attractions.
- A flyer like the one covering Eat Street.



- “Loft design tour;” have businesses and residents open their loft spaces for a tour.
- Work more closely with Skyway News to develop identity and news stories.
- Work more closely with the North Loop Newsletter.
- Focus marketing efforts on theater-goers?
- Develop a WDNLA signage committee.
- Process: 1. Solidify the logo (is the trolley symbol strong enough?); 2. Develop graphic design standards that apply to all documents relating to the North Loop and make sure everyone uses them; 3. Create a neighborhood map and other pieces that follow the standards.
- Have a walking tour of the Neighborhood (J. Slack).
- Create a self-guided walking tour for visitors to the Neighborhood. This would highlight the historical elements of the Neighborhood.
- Get a PR firm to help with identity building on a pro-bono basis (which they do in cases like this).
- A strong business association is vital to creating an identity.
- Do not rely on the City to show the way. The Neighborhood should be instructing City officials about what they can do to help the Neighborhood.

*Moderator’s Summary:*

The group identified some novel ideas and resources including pro-bono work by PR firms (of which there are some in the North Loop, along with many professional designers), walking tours, loft tours and direct marketing to theater patrons. All in all, there appears to be plenty of strong thinkers to tackle the issue of identity building, assuming the energy and momentum in the Neighborhood continues to grow and the WDNLA can continue to show leadership and provide an organizational framework for further efforts. There could be several subcommittees set up to pursue things such as logo/design standards, local business map creation and media outreach.

