

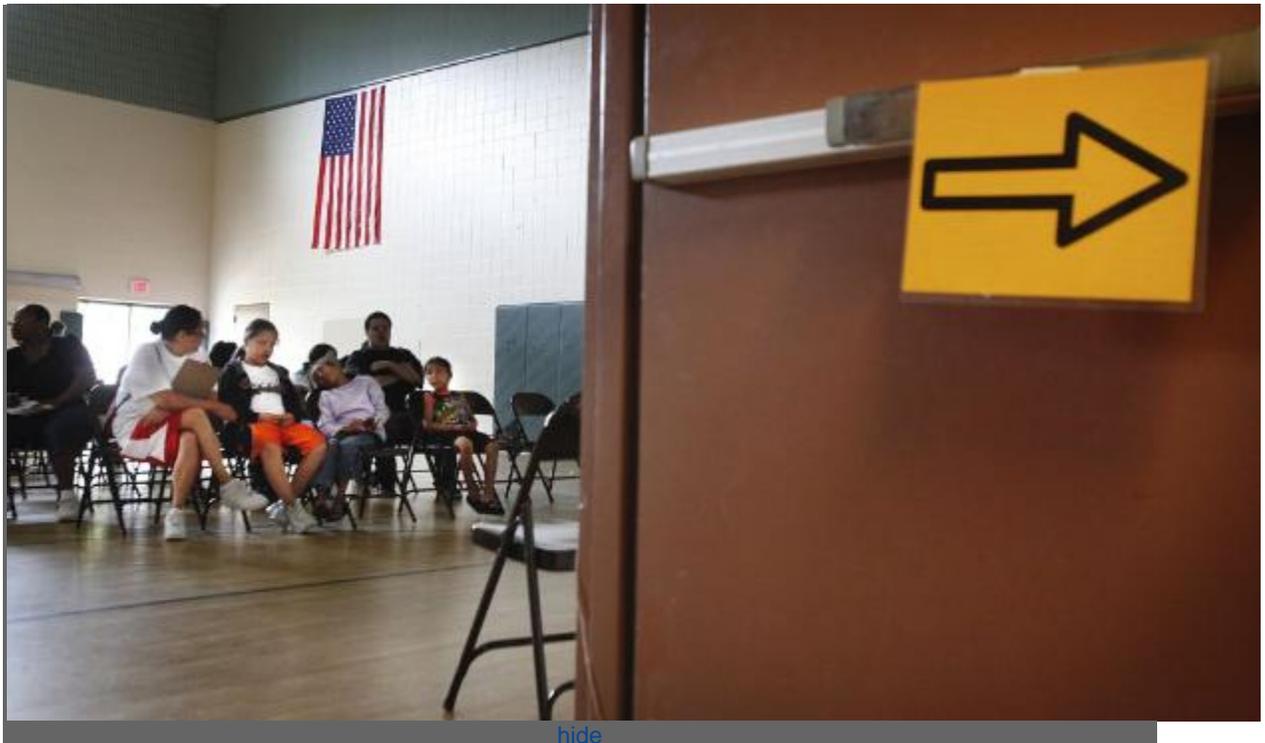
StarTribune | Minneapolis

On the road to storm recovery

• Article by: [RANDY FURST](#) , Star Tribune

Updated: July 12, 2011 - 10:14 PM

Public and private money flows to north Minneapolis community and nonprofit groups in wake of May 22 tornado.



[hide](#)

Lori Charging Whirlwind, far left, waited with family members at Lucy Laney School to apply for a loan through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to replace furniture, bedding and clothes ruined in the May 22 tornado that struck their home on Russell Avenue N.

Photo: David Joles, Star Tribune

Local leaders have begun to map out a recovery effort for north Minneapolis that envisions reconstructing neighborhoods and helping families get back on their feet.

Seven weeks after a tornado ravaged the North Side, a clearer picture is emerging of the extent of the devastation and the leadership and resources that have been hastily developed to deal with it. As of June 24, 3,623 properties were reported to have sustained some damage from the storm, and of those, 204 had major damage, meaning it would cost more than \$20,000 to fix them, if they can be repaired at all.

At least 820 building permits have been issued to repair damage, and a disaster loan outreach center opened Tuesday at Lucy Laney School, 3333 Penn Av. N. It will stay open for a week, offering low-interest recovery loans to homeowners and renters through the U.S. Small Business Administration. Earlier this month, the City Council voted to bolster North Side neighborhood organizations with an additional \$600,000.

While the federal government denied the state's request for cash assistance for tornado survivors, the Minneapolis Foundation and the Greater Twin Cities United Way say that \$1.3 million has been raised for a North Minneapolis Recovery Fund.

"We certainly want to raise another million or so, helping to stabilize the housing situation and by that, stabilizing families," said Jo-Anne Stately, director of grant making and special projects for the Minneapolis Foundation.

"We saw the community come together very rapidly," said Stately. "It was very clear that people within the North Side were going to be doing their own organizing and they wanted to do it in collaboration with their own leadership."

The largest single grant was \$240,000 to the Northside Community Response Team, a collaborative of more than 20 nonprofit groups to help those affected by the tornado. The team is led by Louis King, head of Summit Academy, a vocational training and job placement center, who said he used his Army training to develop a recovery strategy.

He gathered a "command and control" committee of executives of North Side groups, which then started calling community meetings to develop a plan. He said his group has a three-year focus, but the grant money will underwrite a six-month plan to hire a project manager for \$31,250 to coordinate the community groups and pay for six "navigators" at \$17,000 each, who will work with families to assure their basic needs, including mental and physical health care, housing and food. About \$25,000 will be available for emergency cash. Five other staff members will also be hired.

King predicts "a robust community discussion" about the North Side's future once it becomes clear which damaged structures will be torn down, combined with other available land from foreclosed and city-owned property.

"In the first couple of weeks, there were times where I would go past block after block of destruction and sometimes get a little overwhelmed by the scale of this," Mayor R.T. Rybak said Tuesday.

"Since then, the collective response, public and private, is so strong that I feel much more confident now than I did early on that we can really do what needs to get done."

In the short term, Fifth Ward Council Member Don Samuels sees the city clearing tree stumps off boulevards and gently prodding residents to remove debris from their yards.

There's also discussion of planting 6,000 trees on city boulevards and residents' yards over the next three years, Samuels said.

He said officials are talking about an "extreme makeover" of some of the most devastated streets -- replacing single-family homes that are now rundown rental units with large, well

managed apartment buildings. But that won't happen before extensive community meetings, he said.

Hennepin County officials estimate that several hundred people have been displaced by the tornado. There have been rumblings among some activists that destruction of current rental property could force lower-income people out of the neighborhoods permanently.

"North Minneapolis has lots of land and sadly, a fair amount of vacant property," said Rybak. "There is plenty of space for people at all income levels. Nobody is going to be pushed out."

Randy Furst • 612-673-4224