

NORTH LOOP PLAN UPDATE
Community Advisory Committee Meeting #2

Wednesday, June 24, 2009
City of Minneapolis Public Service Center
3:00 – 5:00 PM

MEETING SUMMARY

Committee members present: Karen Rosar, Erin Fitzgerald, Mary de Laittre, Bob Schmitz, Bruce Rubin, Adrienne Hannert, Ryan Kronzer

Committee members absent: Cara Letofsky, Tracy Berglund, Paul Adelman

City staff present: Beth Elliott, Joe Bernard

Others present: None

Guiding Principles

Joe Bernard went through the new list of guiding principles. Input was incorporated from the North Loop Neighborhood Association's Planning & Zoning Committee, and then CAC members provided input and additional revisions were made. Joe emphasized that the principles should be written more broadly than policies, but that the plan will eventually get down to that level of detail. He also explained that there is likely a need for an additional principle that speaks to the distinctiveness of certain parts of the neighborhood. The Guiding Principles presented were:

- **Transportation and Infrastructure**
 - Pedestrian and Bicycle accessibility and connections are important aspects of livability for the residents, employees, and visitors of the North Loop.
 - Integration of transportation and land use planning that encourages and supports movement by public transit, bicycle, and walking as viable alternatives to the private automobile make the North Loop a desirable place to be.
 - Enhanced pedestrian safety, function, and aesthetic character in public rights-of-way encourage walking, particularly on roads connecting to major destinations.
 - The North Loop Neighborhood is and will be host to transit lines coming from all parts of the region which provides tremendous opportunity to place new emphasis on the movement of all modes of travel to and through the neighborhood.
- **Urban Design**
 - Neighborhoods of choice such as the North Loop enjoy a high level of neighborliness through mixed-use development and design standards that acknowledge the interconnectedness of land uses.
 - The North Loop benefits from a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders that work toward the common goal of creating a unique urban identity for the neighborhood.

- Historic character of the private and public realm is highly valued by residents, employees, and visitors of the North Loop Neighborhood.
- Improving safety conditions makes the North Loop a place that people want to live in and visitors want to revisit to experience all that the neighborhood has to offer.
- **Land Use**
 - The North Loop Neighborhood is a community of choice that provides a harmonious mix of housing options for a variety of incomes.
 - The unique uses and built form of Downtown neighborhoods require a specialized regulatory environment that supports the historic character of the area while acknowledging the need for adaptive reuse and context sensitive design in redevelopment.
 - Environmental sustainability is a key feature in the future of the North Loop Neighborhood.
 - Preservation and enhancement of parks and open space is a priority throughout the North Loop Neighborhood.
 - Community gathering spaces within the North Loop Neighborhood connect residents, employees, and visitors in a convenient and publicly-accessible manner.
 - Seamlessly integrated living wage employment and work force housing opportunities are a priority for the North Loop Neighborhood.

Public Participation Plan

Beth Elliott explained the purpose of public participation thus far – coordination with City partners and community members to make sure all the concurrent North Loop plans and studies respond well to each other, and also to engage residents, property owners, and business owners who may not yet be represented in any official way. The committee discussed that the best way to reach property owners, particularly those in the Lower North Loop, may be to have individual meetings versus one larger meeting, so staff will begin that work in July. The group also agreed that a September community meeting should have extensive outreach to adjacent neighborhoods in addition to the North Loop stakeholders.

CAC members also expressed interest in staff visiting the Harrison Neighborhood because of the direct connections and major Bassett Creek Valley redevelopment plans being proposed.

Past/Concurrent Planning Efforts

Beth Elliott went through some key components of past and concurrent planning efforts. The comp plan land use designations may be important to build from and they are:

- Commercial Corridors: Washington, Hennepin, 1st Ave N
- Activity Center: Warehouse District
- Growth Center: Downtown (as a whole)
- Industrial Employment District: North Washington
- Transit Station Area: Multimodal Station

A brief description of the *Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan*, which this planning process is amending, included its four main priorities:

- Articulate the market potential inherent in underdeveloped districts of Downtown.
- Promote vertical mixed-use “complete communities.”
- Capitalize on rail transit and encourage a less auto-dependent downtown.
- Encourage the design and delivery of high quality public spaces and streetscapes.

The *Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan* emphasized Glenwood Avenue as a future commercial spine just west of the plan’s western boundary at I-94, so that could be something the plan considers continuing on into Downtown. Plans done recently by the 2010 Partners discuss using urban design to make connections, improving the pedestrian experience near the ballpark and transit station, and creating a transit plaza on 5th Street. Staff has mentioned some highlights of multimodal station plans done by Hennepin County that include:

- Joint development at station
- Eliminate viaducts
- Daylight Bassett Creek for green network
- Connection through long blocks to river
- Year-round Farmers Market
- More pedestrian-oriented Glenwood

Market Analysis

Dick Paik completed the market analysis for the Lower North Loop and the CAC had an opportunity to review it prior to the meeting. The group discussed some of the interesting points, including the fact that the Lower North Loop is the closest Downtown ring neighborhood to the central point of the office core – the issue is that it is physically and psychologically challenging to get there. Dick also emphasized that the catalytic opportunities for a private developer would be a Southwest Corridor transit station on Royalston Avenue and a Lunds in the proposed Alatus development just south of the study area, instead of the formerly-assumed ballpark and multimodal station because they are so inaccessible from the Lower North Loop. He believes that there will be a market for low-cost (but market-rate) housing, ongoing industrial tenancies, and small-scale renovations. The Lower North Loop is not likely to see new office or industrial development due to the cost of the land, demolition, and potential site clean-up.

CAC members agreed that the Farmers Market is currently the life of the Lower North Loop. In order to create an identify for this area, it may be important to capitalize on this asset (which was an idea from the capstone report).

Recommendation Continuum

Joe Bernard proposed a way of thinking for the plan recommendations that fit along a continuum of: **Functionality**, **Managed Growth**, and **Visionary**. By creating options under each component of the recommendation continuum, it offers the plan more flexibility to prepare for various contingencies of implementation. The **Functionality** category is important for implementing physical changes to help the neighborhood function better for people who currently live, work, and visit there, and also does not assume private sector interest in land use changes. Under a **Managed Growth** scenario, the recommendations will assume market demand for moderate land use changes as well as an introduction of new transit lines. For the **Visionary** recommendations, they will occur if there are catalytic land use changes or

improvements, drastic improvements in infrastructure connectivity, and a complete altering of neighborhood perception.

Committee members agreed that this strategy seemed to fit this process and the neighborhood very well.

Consultant Work – infrastructure design challenges

Beth Elliott informed the committee that the City is in the process of hiring the Hoisington Koegler Group to do some strategic thinking of some infrastructure design dilemmas. Some elements of the scope will include:

- An evaluation of the neighborhood within the context of Access Minneapolis
 - Are the street types accurate?
 - Possible inclusion of an historic street type
- Reviewing the broader infrastructure context of the Lower North Loop
- Creating illustrations of a possible non-viaduct corridor

Transportation and Infrastructure Recommendations

Joe Bernard went through the beginnings of possible recommendations related to improving the transportation infrastructure. Some specific places in the neighborhood to think of ways to improve **Functionality** are the two major intersections of Olson at 10th Ave N and 7th St N. Those two intersections are challenging for all modes of transportation but particularly for pedestrians – it is difficult to know where to cross and make it across the street in a timely way. Converting the full length of Border Ave to a two-way street could improve circulation but it makes for a traffic problem at the intersection with Olson because northbound cars on Border would run into cars coming around the corner from Royalston Ave. Another problem area is the southerly part of the Lower North Loop south of Glenwood. This area lacks a sufficient grid and has major circulation challenges due to one-ways and dead-ends. One more possible functional improvement could be adding street infrastructure for a small section of missing 6th Ave N between 2nd St and the alley in the direction of Washington. This addition would allow 6th Ave N to extend all the way from 2nd St south through the North Loop and connect to Olson. Overall the CAC agreed that it is important to make both strategic functional connections within the neighborhood as well as to adjacent areas. Beth Elliott explained that **Functionality** recommendations should have lower price tags with maximum benefit. CAC members agreed with the problem areas but added some suggestions:

- Fill in the sidewalk gaps on 11th and 12th Streets, tying better to the office core.
- Better utilize 5th St through the core for improved pedestrian connections from the Metrodome to Target Field. Beth Elliott asked members to take a look at the *Downtown East/North Loop Plan* to see if this issue is adequately addressed.
- Improve connections to Heritage Park.

In a **Managing Growth** scenario, there may be possibilities to add more streets through the large block between Border Ave and Royalston Ave, but this will likely only be accomplished if those sites are redeveloped by the private sector. If new infrastructure is identified in a small area plan, it is easier for the City to work with a developer on improvements as part of a larger project – a Minneapolis Official Map could be one way to make these new streets more formal. Adding to these suggestions and **Functionality** recommendations to improve Border Ave and the

intersections on Olson, Royalston Ave could be eliminated from 5th Ave N as it curves over to 10th Ave N parallel to Olson. If this was done, it would make a two-way Border Ave more feasible because northbound traffic would not run into cars coming from Royalston. It would also be necessary to direct traffic from Royalston Ave onto 5th Ave N and create a new 90 degree intersection with 7th St. This would hopefully alleviate congestion and circulation confusion on Olson. In order to make the changes on Border most effective, staff recommends completing its connection to Glenwood Ave – this small connection once existed and may be even more necessary if the Southwest LRT comes up from the rail corridor in that location and necessitates a dead-end at Holden/Border before Royalston. Another idea that had come up previously by some community members was to take a look at the feasibility of converting Lyndale Ave N to a two-way street in the North Loop, but Joe Bernard explained that technical experts do not view it as feasible because of the on- and off-ramps and the southerly section of Lyndale on the west side of I-94. CAC members understood and agreed it should be taken off the table for conversion but that there are still possibilities to make traffic-calming improvements. And finally, staff recommended new access points north-south through the Upper North Loop and to the river. Connections could be made to make 8th Ave N more direct from 5th St through to the river. This would be more likely as a pedestrian or bike connection. CAC members think 8th Ave N could be a good connection into Heritage Park as a major pedestrian route, but this would also require a bridge over I-94. Mary de Laitre also suggested that the random triangles of land in the neighborhood could be used for gateway opportunities or street roundabouts.

Joe Bernard explained some of the ideas for **Visionary** improvements. Again adding to a major circulation system change, a possible option could be to complete the north-south connection of 10th Ave N through a two-way Border Ave all the way to Linden Ave. This would require connecting through the Xcel Energy property which seems less feasible to implement. An alternative route south of Glenwood Ave could add onto a small section of 15th St N to complete the connection to Glenwood. Improvements to the viaduct are also some visionary options. Former plans have recommended its elimination at the end of the useful life, but current technical engineers think it would not be feasible. The benefit of the viaduct is that it takes commuter traffic off the local system and dumps it directly into parking ramps. If the viaduct was eliminated, there would still need to be a bridge structure over the rail corridor along 5th Ave N as well as a ramping system to the freeway at 10th Ave N. Instead the committee offered ideas for working with the viaduct rather than seeing it as a complete negative. Bob Schmitz mentioned there are possibilities to build below and connect above, and that we could have modular buildings below that still offer MnDOT the opportunity to do maintenance on the viaduct structure when needed. Karen Rosar suggested that the Farmers Market may be a good addition in the area underneath.

Beth Elliott reiterated that HKGi will be looking at the viaduct as well as other **Visionary** opportunities – they will present at the August meeting. Staff will have more detailed recommendations for discussion during the next meeting. In July, the main focus will be land use and design recommendations that build on the transportation infrastructure opportunities.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 22nd from 3-5pm

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00pm