COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROCESS

7

Table of Contents

I. Introduction 7-3

A. Community Steering Committee 7-3

B. Public Workshops 7-3

II. Workshop #1 7-3

A. Land Use Survey 7-4

B. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats 7-4

C. Image Preference Survey 7-4

III. Workshop #2 7-5

A. Group Work 7-5

B. SWOT Prioritization 7-5

IV. Workshop #3 7-9

A. Group Work 7-12

B. Market Assessment 7-12

V. Workshop #4 7-14

A. Group Work 7-14

VI. Additional Stakeholder Meetings 7-16

7 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROCESS

I. Introduction

Robust community input is essential to formulating a concept plan which best meets local needs and will be widely supported throughout the community. The 46th and Hiawatha master planning process benefitted from robust public participation from the very beginning.

A. Community Steering Committee

In addition to the large public workshops which are discussed below, a simultaneous set of meetings occurred with a Community Steering Committee (CSC). The CSC was made up of community leaders representing residents of the three neighborhoods involved. Early meetings with this group introduced the most prominent concerns of residents regarding LRT and station area planning, bringing the consultants up-to-date on the climate of the neighborhood. The meetings continued throughout the process and were used as a forum for the committee members and consultant team to shape the agendas of the large public workshops.

B. Public Workshops

Approximately 500 people participated directly in the planning process by attending at least one of the public workshops. However, many people attended two, three or even all four of the workshops. In addition, the planning session participants were characterized by a diversity of views and representing the key constituencies: residents, business owners, and public officials.

For the County, MCDA and City Council faced with the decision on what course of action to take concerning this area, the aggressive community process that has taken place should provide some comfort. Through a series of four public workshops, citizens were asked what they think of the existing conditions in their neighborhood and what they would like to see happen in this area. The consultant team used this input to shape a final concept plan for the 46th and Hiawatha area that will enjoy much community support.

II. Workshop #1

The first public workshop was held twice on consecutive evenings from 6-9 pm, the first in the Standish Ericsson neighborhood at the Ericsson Elementary school and the second at Hiawatha Elementary in the Longfellow neighborhood. The two meetings were designed to be identical and were held separately only for the convenience of residents on both sides of Hiawatha. All residents and business owners within a half-mile radius of the proposed light rail station at 46th and Hiawatha were invited to attend either meeting. About 110 people attended at least one of the two meetings. The attendees represented a diversity of views, both for and against light rail, and the key constituencies: residents, business owners, non-governmental organizations and public officials.

Each meeting consisted of four basic elements; the land use survey, the Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, the Image Preference Survey (IPS), and a best practices slide show, all of which are described below. However, at the meeting held at Ericsson Elementary the consultants ran out of time and were unfortunately not able to present the best practices slide show on the first evening.

A. Land Use Survey

This informal survey was conducted by posting a list of possible land uses on the wall and allowing the workshop attendees to "vote" by placing dot stickers beside land uses they would like to see within the vicinity of 46th and Hiawatha. This voting occurred throughout the meeting, and the complete results can be found in Appendix A. In general, those that voted, tended to prefer neighborhood-oriented uses such as a family restaurant, coffeeshop, bookstore, senior center and open space.

B. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

At the first workshop, the consultant team used the SWOT process, a planning tool that helps identify both a community's core assets and limitations.

In a group process, residents, business owners, staff of public agencies, and elected officials identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats they see in their neighborhood. This exercise opens a dialogue about the existing conditions of the area and the potential of future growth to improve the quality of life. The SWOT process dissects the various systems that make up a community such as infrastructure, local economy, transportation, demographics, available land parcels, land uses, zoning, political climate, and the natural environment, to determine community perceptions of the study area.

The results of the SWOT analysis were then printed out on large sheets of paper and posted at the next workshop. Upon entrance, attendees of Workshop 2 were asked to "vote" using dot stickers for the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat that they felt were most important.

The complete results of the SWOT analysis can be found in Appendix B and the items that received the most votes can be seen in Figure 7.2, under Workshop 2.

C. Image Preference Survey

Next, the consultant team conducted an Image Preference Survey (IPS). The IPS is a tool used to guide the formulation of design standards for architectural character and scale, various land uses, street treatment, and other urban design issues.

The participants at the September workshops were shown a slide show of numerous photographs. Two images were shown at a time, but they are paired randomly with no intended relationship between the pair. Images taken from the study area are mixed with images from elsewhere to place the local images in a larger context.

On a survey form, each participant rates each image on a 20-point scale according to how well they feel the scenes would fit in the Hiawatha and 46th Street station area. In addition to assigning a numeric value to each image, the participants were also asked to choose a caption they would use to describe each image. Examples of captions include adjectives such as quaint, well-kept, ugly, tacky, etc, and phrases such as "We love it!" or "Not for our neighborhood" Farr Associates then compiled both the quantitative and qualitative data from the IPS, and a summary of those results are presented below. The highest and lowest-rated image from each category is included here along with the captions that participants supplied.

Although the IPS was conducted at both evening workshops, the results from each evening were fairly similar, and therefore the results were combined. Top three and bottom three images in each category can be found in Appendix C.

This IPS show consisted of 96 slides shown in 48 pairs and divided into the following eight categories:

First Impressions

Sustainable neighborhoods welcome outsiders as visitors, consumers and potential residents. People judge the desirability of a neighborhood by many things, among them the visual impression they form upon approach. Most visitors will form their impression of a place while passing through in a car, on a bicycle or while riding transit, primarily on arterial streets.

In this category participants gave low ratings to a first impression of their neighborhood showing auto congestion on Hiawatha. Images they liked included the well-landscaped approach along 46th Street from the west, as well as pedestrian-friendly retail streets with sidewalk cafes, and distinguishing landmarks.

Housing

An earlier market study concluded that the 46th Street station area would be a suitable location for new housing development. Currently, the neighborhoods around 46th and Hiawatha consist of predominantly single-family homes. Sustainable neighborhoods offer a variety of housing choices allowing residents to remain in their neighborhood as their housing needs change through life. The images in this category showed a wide range of housing types which differ in scale, materials, character and cost.

In this category, participants favored single-family and low-rise housing up to about three and a half stories. They gave very low ratings to any image of high-rise housing.

Sidewalks

The introduction of light rail at 46th and Hiawatha offers new opportunities for pedestrian-oriented development in the neighborhood. In order to encourage walking, pedestrian concerns must be understood and addressed in the urban design character recommended by this study. This section is concerned with the pedestrian path alongside streets which are most likely to be used intensively by pedestrians. (The next section addresses pedestrian concerns while crossing streets.) The primary concerns of pedestrians are reducing conflicts with cars, safety, comfort, and interest, concerns which can be addressed through urban design guidelines.

In this category participants favored images that showed continuous walkways with buildings built to the sidewalk, retail windows, and wide sidewalks. Low rated images showed sidewalks next to parking lots with many curb cuts.

Crosswalks

Crosswalks can be intimidating to pedestrians especially along wide, busy streets like 46th and Hiawatha. Because the light rail is located west of Hiawatha while the redevelopment area is predominantly east of Hiawatha, these crosswalks are a vital link for the station area. The design of the crosswalks will need to be optimized for pedestrians if there is to be successful redevelopment of this area. The design options

may include landscaped medians, lane narrowing, textured crosswalks, traffic tables and pedestrian bridges and tunnels.

In this category participants favored crosswalks with clear pathways, special paving, and those crossing narrower streets.

Parks and Open Space

The proximity of Minnehaha Park presents the possibility of extending the character of the park into the redevelopment area. This could be in the form of a greenway connection between the two, among other open space opportunities.

The slides in this category showed different types of parks and open space. These images are all attractive and the tendency was to give them all high ratings. However, the intent of this category is to determine which type of open space will best fit into the areas identified. Images shown ranged from highly manicured to naturalistic environments and from passive to active open space.

An image of a biking trail with heavy tree cover was the highest rated image in the category of parks and open space. Small spaces between buildings were called useless and given low ratings, as well as an image of the railroad corridor just east of Hiawatha.

Buildings Abutting Minnehaha Park

In traditional city planning, buildings facing a large park such as Minnehaha Park feature architecturally distinguished facades. Individual buildings form a "street wall,"providing a sense of enclosure around the park. A low-rise version of this pattern exists on Nawadaha Boulevard. Redevelopment presents choices regarding the character and scale of the buildings which would be built facing the park. These images array some of those choices that would apply along the north side of Nawadaha Avenue, the east side of Hiawatha Avenue, and parts of Minnehaha Parkway adjacent to open space.

An image of a continuous streetwall of three-story mixed-use buildings and an image of single-family housing next to a park were the highest rated slides for this category. Generally the participants did not like anything too tall or too bulky next to the park.

Parking

Cars are a part of modern life and some amount of parking must be provided for automobiles in any development. The intensity of development proposed by this study along with the ability of alternative modes of travel (light rail, bus, bicycle, walking) to reduce car dependence will determine the amount and type of parking needed. The types of parking include on-street, surface, structure and underground.

The lowest rated image in this category showed the surface parking lot in front of the neighborhood strip mall. Residents preferred well-concealed parking, either underground or highly-landscaped.

Signage and Commercial Character

The image of a neighborhood is affected by the type and appearance of its commercial uses. The character of retail and service uses can help to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment that is inviting to residents and visitors. Visual clutter or a generic commercial character can be avoided through the use of design guidelines and signage regulations.

Participants gave high ratings to images showing interesting displays in the windows, smaller-scaled signage, awnings, and well-maintained facades and disliked auto-oriented signage and poorly-maintained storefronts.

Appendix C displays the highest and lowest-rated images for each category.

III. Workshop #2

More than 160 people packed the Ericcson Elementary School cafeteria on Tuesday, November 14th, 2000 for Workshop 2 of the 46th & Hiawatha station area planning process. The attendees again represented a diversity of views and key players: residents, business owners, City and County staff and elected officials. The purpose of the meeting was to gather input from residents and business owners about what they would like the 46th & Hiawatha redevelopment area to look like. This area was roughly defined as the commercial areas east of Hiawatha within a half-mile of the 46th and Hiawatha light rail station, as well as the station site itself.

A. Group Work

Workshop attendees were organized in 12 groups of 8 to 12 people plus a facilitator from the Community Steering Committee, City or County Staff, or the consultant team at each table. The teams worked independently in various rooms throughout the school. Using markers and maps, each group was charged with completing various tasks that made them think about the future of the redevelopment area.

For every task, groups were encouraged to write any notes that they thought would help communicate their ideas directly on the map.

After about 45 minutes, the meeting reconvened in the cafeteria where one person from each group presented their land use plan. The various land use plans varied from beautifying the existing conditions to proposing up to 5-story new buildings on the site. However, considerable consensus was reached on several components of the plans.

See Figure 7.1: Results of Group Work. The consultant team refined and consolidated the ideas illustrated in these 12 plans into three different schemes to be presented at the following Workshop.

B. SWOT Prioritization

As explained above, workshop attendees were asked to review the posted results from the SWOT analysis exercise that was conducted during Workshop 1 and set priorities. After viewing the four lists, those attending Workshop 2 were asked to vote on which item in each category they felt was most important. Figure 7.2 shows the three items that received the most votes for each category.

At this workshop, the consultant team showed the highest and lowest-rated images from the IPS exercise at the previous workshop. The team also showed slides from various pedestrian and bicycle-friendly neighborhoods and towns once again.

Figure 7.1: Results of Group Work

Consensus
Every group included new housing in their plan. The types and density of this housing varied from single-family, to townhomes, to senior housing, to condos above shops. 3 groups specified that they did not want subsidized housing.
5 groups set building height limits at 2 stories, 4 groups allowed 3 or more stories, the remaining did not specify limits.
7 groups showed a park on the southeast corner of the Soo Line and 46th Street, 5 groups showed a park on the City Services facilities site at 45th and Snelling. Overall there was a strong emphasis on open space, trees and other greening strategies.
5 groups called for a grocery store in their plan. Other comments throughout the plans detailed coffeeshops, delis, medical offices, upscale and/or family restaurants, and day care.
6 groups showed at least one underpass, and 3 groups showed at least one overpass. These were drawn across Hiawatha or 46th, typically at their intersection, but some were in nearby locations.

Figure 7.2: Results of SWOT Prioritization

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
1. Private Homeownership	1. Lack of confidence in the public process	1. Make everything ped/bike-friendly	1. Rumor of an existing plan
2. Minnehaha Park & Creek, Mississippi River	2. Not pedestrian/ bike-friendly, can't cross Hiawatha	2. Create housing that fits the character of the neighborhood	2. Crime and noise from LRT
3. Small-town feel	3. Suburban-like intersection, sprawling & auto-oriented	3. Meet a need for senior housing	3. Unsure how to preserve the small-town character

IV. Workshop #3

On Tuesday January 30th, 2001, approximately 135 people attended the third public workshop of the 46th & Hiawatha station area planning process in the Hiawatha Elementary School gymnasium. Once again, those attending represented a diversity of views and key players: residents, business owners, City and County staff and elected officials. This 3-hour public workshop again emphasized small-group interactive participation, but first the consultant team presented the alternative land use schemes for the area developed by the consultant team based on input from the previous workshops.

The three schemes developed have some common elements including new single-family homes, new mixed-use development (retail with housing or office above), open space opportunities, and congestion mitigation efforts. Key features of each scheme are as follows:

Scheme A–Limited Change (Figure 7.3)

- Retention of some auto-oriented uses
- Infill of new mixed-use buildings along 46th, 1-2 stories
- New single-family homes
- Open space at LRT station site
- Change of orientation of the strip mall so that it faces the Soo Line

Scheme B–Main Street (Figure 7.5)

- Retail development focused on 46th Street as a “Main Street"
- Retain Walgreens at its present location
- Extension of Snelling Avenue, elimination of driveway entrances along 46th St.
- Infill of new mixed-use buildings along 46th and along the Soo Line, 2-3 stories
- New housing types including units above shops, senior housing building, townhomes, and single-family detached homes.
- New open space opportunities
- Retail and housing at the LRT station site

Figure 7.3: Scheme A, Limited Change

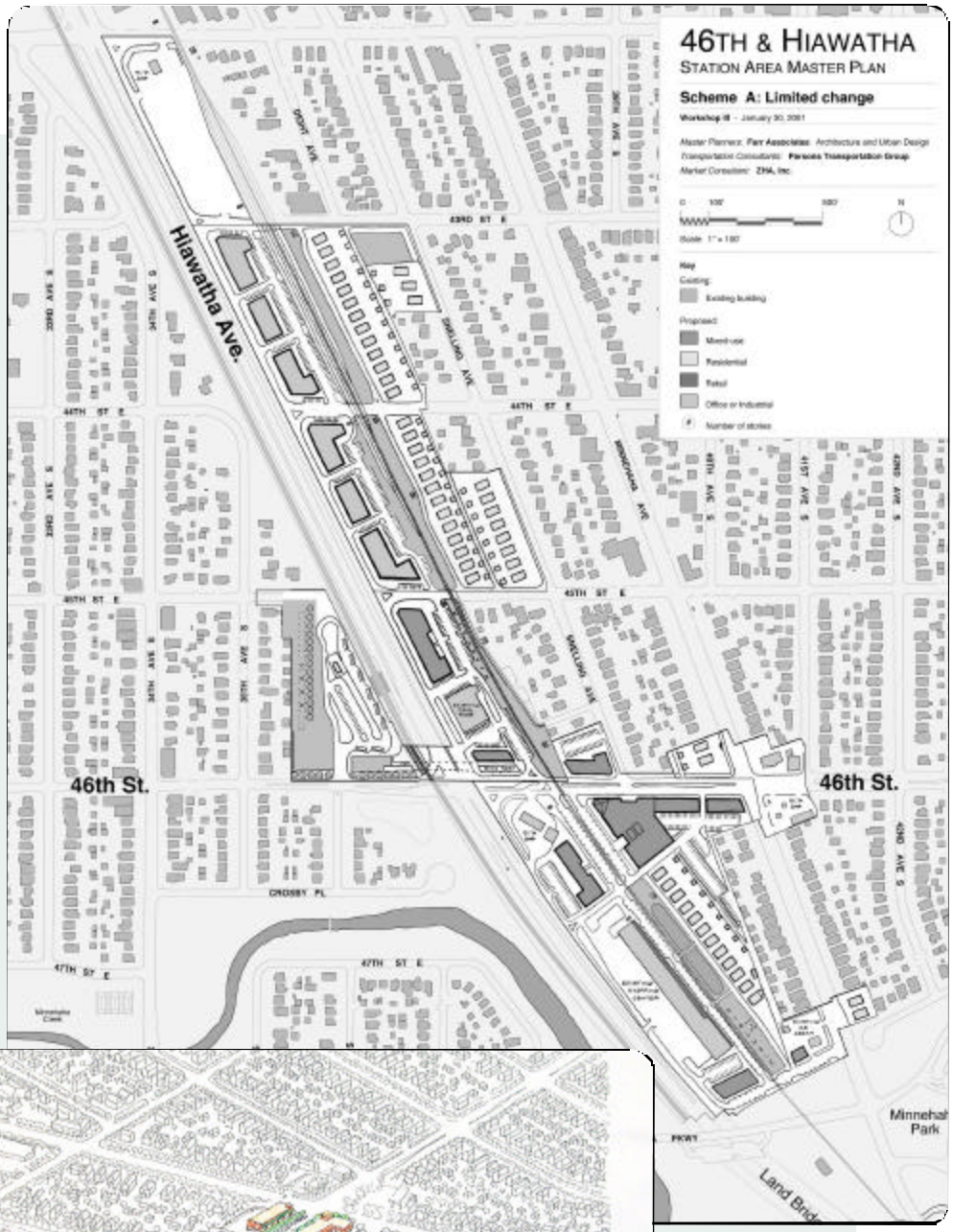


Figure 7.4: Perspective A

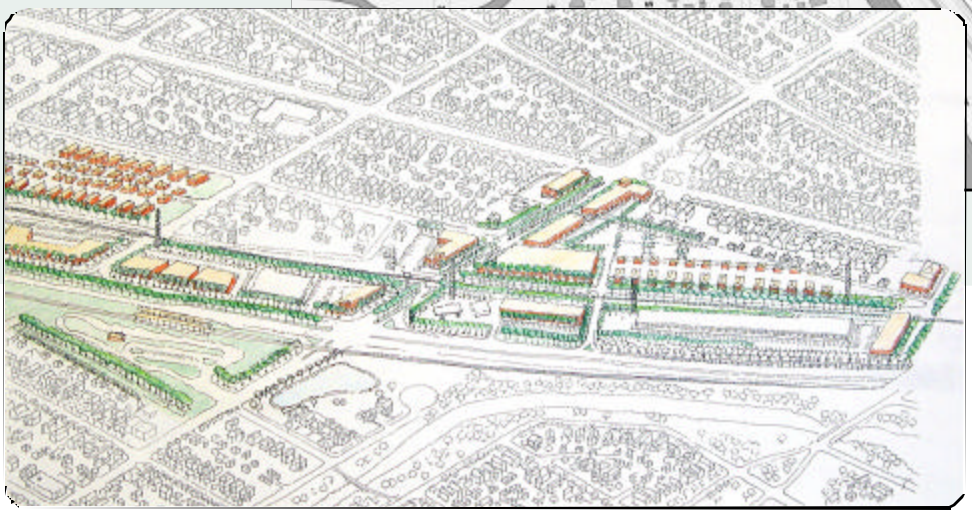


Figure 7.5: Scheme B, Main Street

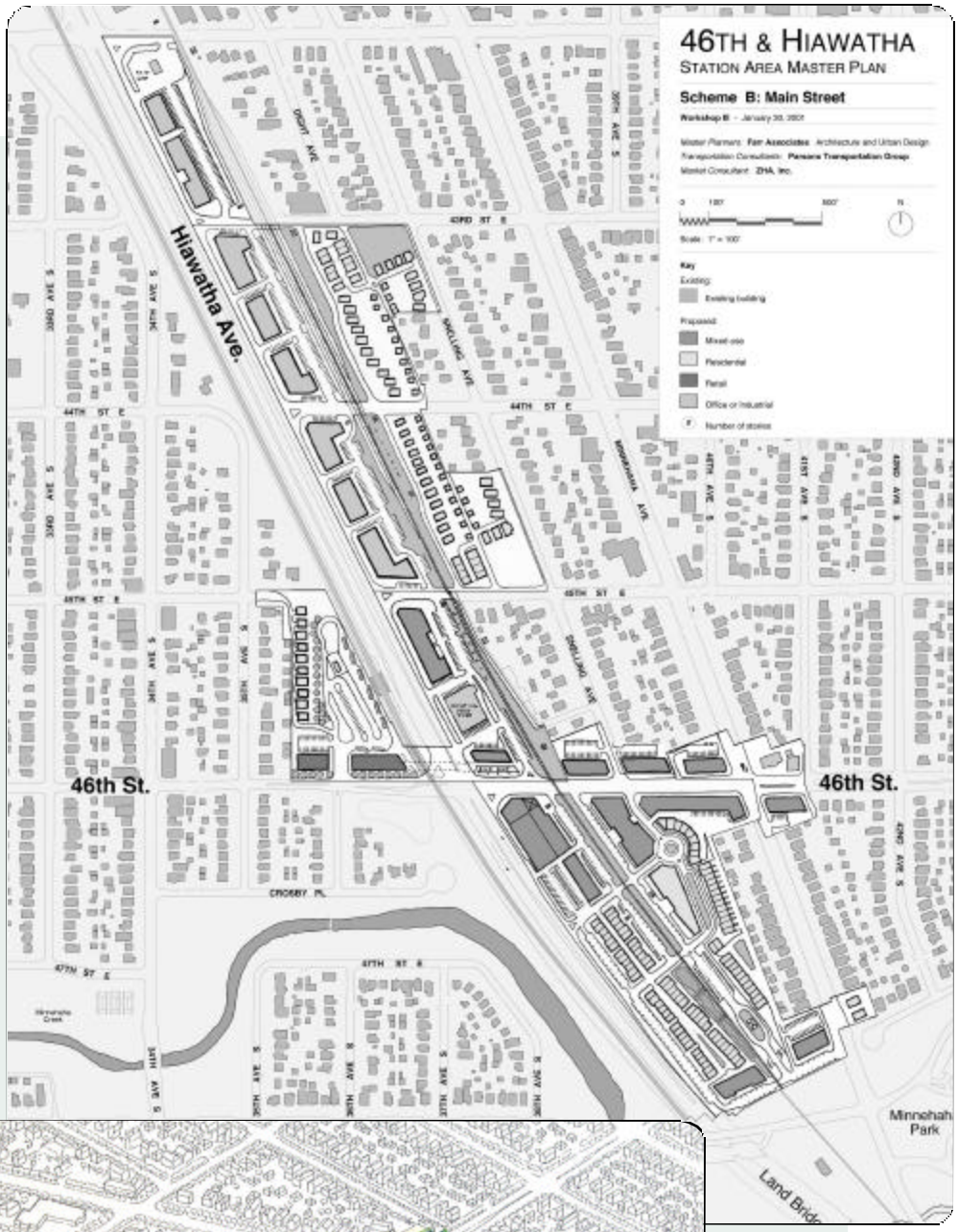
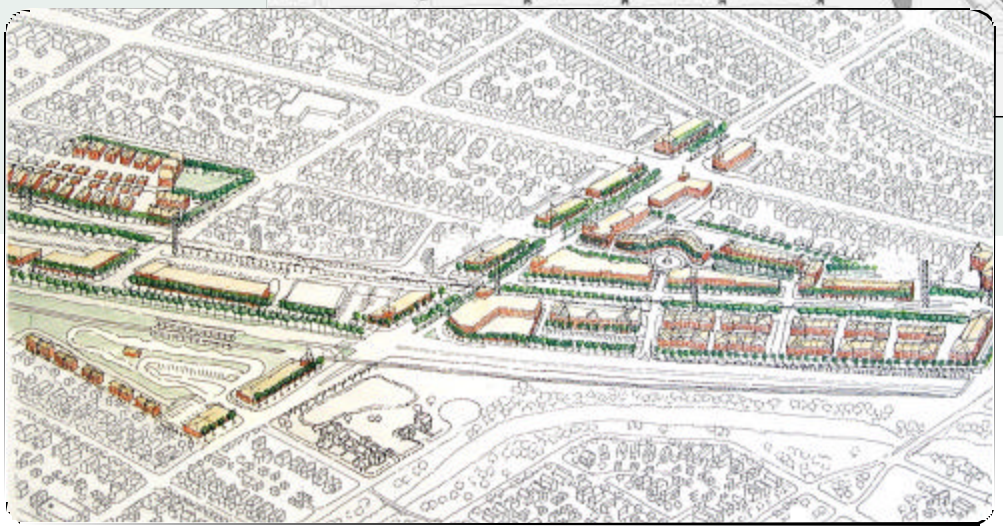


Figure 7.6: Perspective B



Scheme C–Town Square (Figure 7.7)

- Retail development focused around a "Town Square" south of 46th Street
- All auto-oriented uses at 46th and Hiawatha are replaced with pedestrian-oriented uses
- Extension of Snelling Avenue, elimination of driveway entrances along 46th St.
- Infill of new mixed-use buildings along 46th and along the Soo Line, 3-4 stories
- New housing types including units above shops, senior housing building, townhomes, and single-family detached homes.
- New open space opportunities
- Mixed-use buildings and housing at the LRT station site

A. Group Work

After the schemes were presented, the workshop attendees were organized in 20 groups, each with a facilitator from the Community Steering Committee, City or County Staff, or the consultant team. The teams worked independently at different tables to discuss and assess the schemes. Each group was charged with evaluating plans for different sub-areas of the schemes and attempting to reach consensus on which scheme they preferred for each sub-area. They voted on each sub-area determining whether it was "preferred," "acceptable," or "unacceptable." Lastly, the groups were able to cut and paste their preferred subareas from each scheme onto a base map to develop their overall preferred plan.

After about 45 minutes, the large group reconvened and one member from each table reported out the results of their exercise. Overall, Scheme C was preferred most often, with Scheme B in a close second place. Typically, Scheme B was deemed acceptable while Scheme A was deemed unacceptable by most groups.

B. Market Assessment

One of the biggest concerns of residents early on this process was the results of a previous market study that had been completed for the entire Hiawatha LRT line. In order to clear up some misconceptions and to comment on the viability of each land use scheme, Sarah Woodworth, the market consultant working on this project, gave a brief presentation on the market conditions of the area. She outlined some basic opportunities and threats facing the the redevelopment of this area.

Opportunities

a. The location of the station area and its access to downtown Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the airport by car, LRT, bus and bicycle.
b. The proximity to Minnehaha Park and regional recreational trails
c. The area's stable neighborhoods
d. High traffic volumes projected for Hiawatha give the area high visibility
e. Potential redevelopment land is currently organized in several large parcels
f. 17% of the people and 26% of the households are over the age of 65, making senior housing a viable form of new development

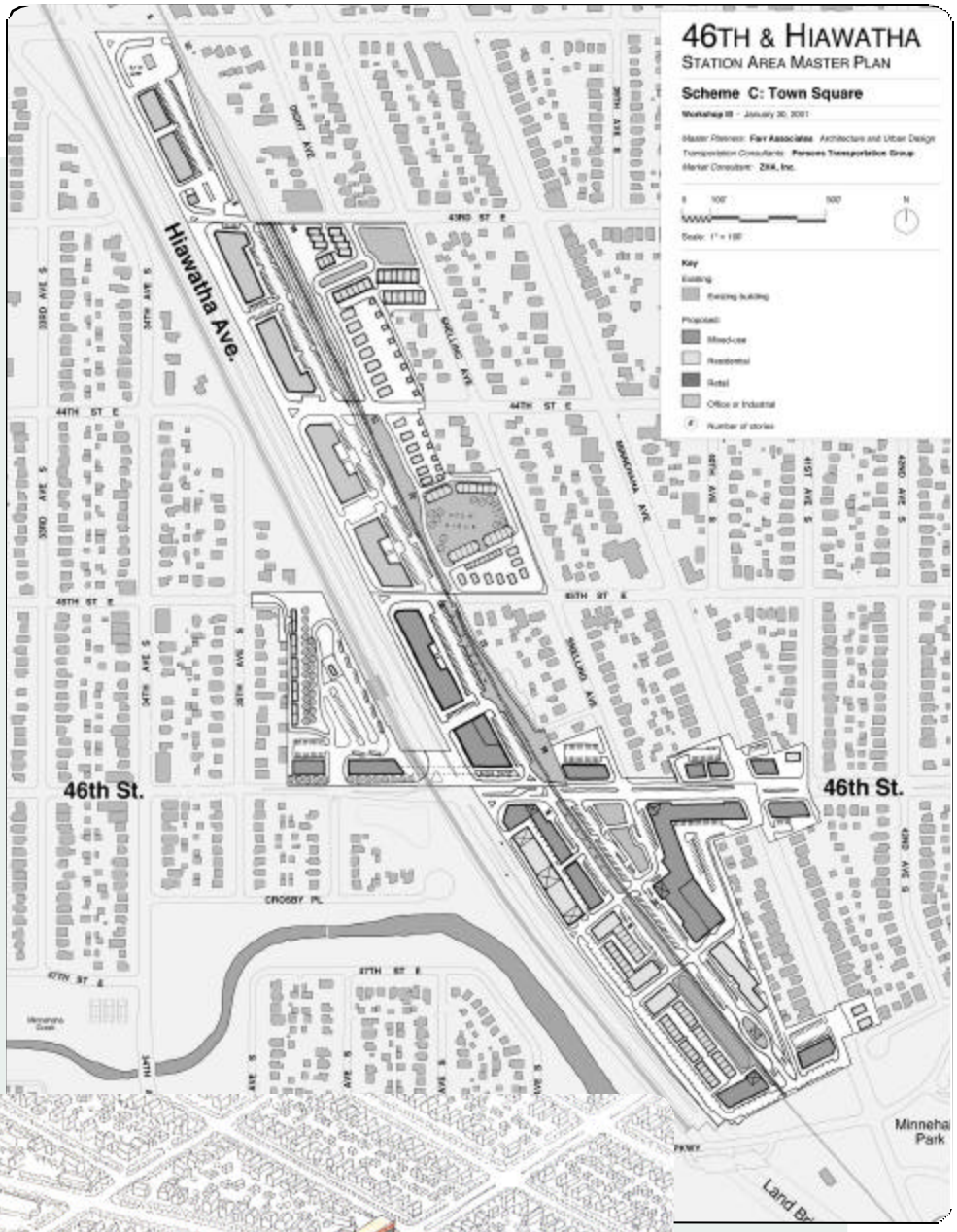


Figure 7.7: Scheme C, Town Square

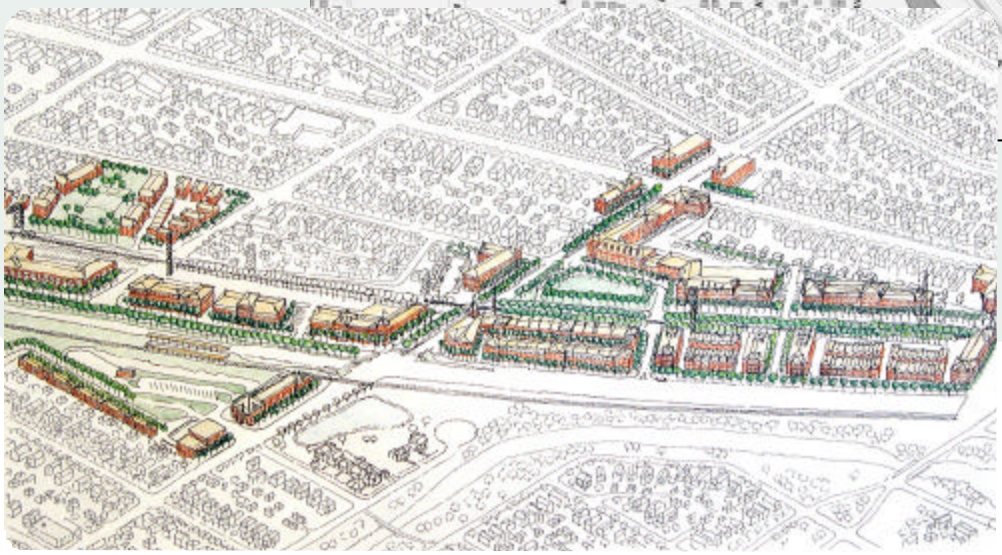


Figure 7.8: Perspective C

Threats

a. Internal circulation problems

b. High traffic volumes projected for Hiawatha will attract drive-thrus, gas stations, and other auto-oriented uses

Supportable Uses

In addition, the market consultant reported on her market assessment of the area in terms what uses and how much of each is supportable. The following is a list of uses that are projected to be supportable in the station area over the next 25 years:

a. Up to 1000 residential units (the three schemes do not propose enough new residential buildings to accommodate this many units)

b. 40,000 to 200,000 square feet of office/light industrial space

c. 40,000 to 150,000 square feet of neighborhood retail

V. Workshop #4

On Tuesday March 27th, 2001, approximately 80 people attended the fourth and final public workshop of the 46th & Hiawatha station area planning process in the Ericsson Elementary School gymnasium. Residents, business owners, City and County staff, and elected officials attended the workshop. The purpose of the meeting was to present the final consensus plan, and survey preferences on implementation policies. The final plan was created based on input from the previous three workshops.

After the plan was presented, the consultants arrayed a list of recommendations they would like to make for the implementation policies that will put the plan into effect. These recommendations ranged from setting a maximum building height to requiring environmentally sound building practices.

A. Group Work

The workshop attendees were organized in seven groups of six to 10 people, each with a facilitator. The teams worked independently at different tables to discuss the final scheme and to vote on what level of policy should be enacted to implement the plan. Each group was charged with evaluating 17 different recommendations and choosing one of three policies for each recommendation. Typically they chose whether the recommended action be mandatory under zoning, whether building owners would *receive incentives,* or if there should be no policy dealing with the recommendation.

This group activity lasted about an hour, at which point, the votes were tallied on a master ballot at the front of the room. Participants were quickly able to see the results of the group work. Figure 7.9 highlights some of the key results from the group work.

After the results had been tallied and it was clear which policies had wide support and which did not, the key players in implementation took the microphone to assume responsibilities for the next steps.

City Council Member Sandy Colvin-Roy and City Planner Mike Larson spoke about the process involved in creating an overlay zoning designation that could codify the

Figure 7.9: Community Reaction to Proposed Policies

Public Infrastructure Action Steps	
Extend street grid into redevelopment area south of 46th, including the extension of Snelling and signalization of its intersection with 46th.	6 groups agreed and one could not come to consensus.
Construct an underpass or overpass beneath/over Hiawatha Ave. immediately north of 46th Street.	All 7 groups agreed.
Zoning Action Steps	
Should zoning set a building height minimum for non-residential buildings in the redevelopment area?	4 groups preferred a 2-story minimum, 2 preferred no minimum, and one group specified 3-stories next to the town square and 2 stories elsewhere.
Should zoning set a building height maximum for the redevelopment area?	1 group preferred a 5-story maximum, 4 preferred a 4-story maximum, and 1 preferred a 3-story maximum.
Can senior housing be an exception to a height maximum if economically necessary?	6 groups said yes, but set a new limit, typically noted at 5-6 stories.
Should zoning prohibit the construction of new of addition to existing auto-oriented building types in the redevelopment area?	4 groups favor prohibiting this type of construction, and 3 want to limit location and amount of auto-oriented building types.
Should new zoning allow for the development of coachouses/granny flats above garages throughout the entire half-mile radius?	All groups wanted to allow residents to build coachouses over their garages, and 2 groups wanted to give incentives to do this.

supported recommendations. Each step would involve public hearings and input will be gathered from residents along the way. They estimated that a new zoning overlay could be adopted within 9 months to a year.

VI. Additional Stakeholder Meetings

In addition to the extensive public process through workshops and Community Steering Committee meetings planning process included the following stakeholder meetings:

a. A series of Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings with staff from various transit agencies, City departments, County Departments, Minnehaha Creek Watershed Council, and the Metropolitan C Development Agency, among others;

b. A series of private meetings with elected officials typically to discuss implementation and advocacy efforts;

c. A meeting with Excel Energy to learn about and discuss the high-voltage power lines in the study area;

d. A meeting with the Park Board to learn about and discuss ownership of land beneath the Soo Line;

e. Two meetings with Met Council staff to learn about and discuss funding opportunities;

f. A meeting of the Canadian Pacific Railroad to learn about and discuss ownership and operations of Soo Line;

g. Breakfast with several local developers;

h. Two informal meetings with a bicycle planner at the City of Minneapolis, to discuss existing biking facilities and needs for the study area; and

I. Two meetings with MCDA staff to discuss implementation efforts.