

North Minneapolis Greenway Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 8, 2012

Sumner Library, 4-5:30 PM

Attendees: Neal Baxter (Pedestrian Advisory Committee), Bob Carlson (Minneapolis Public Works), Matthew Hendricks (Twin Cities Greenways), Jennifer Ringold (Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board), Rose Ryan (Hennepin County Housing, Community Works and Transit Department), Jim Skoog (Ward 4, BAC), Sarah Stewart (Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support), Jim Voll (Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development)

Absent members: Tara Jenson (Public Health Advisory Committee), Saeng Kue (Public Health Advisory Committee), Georgianna Yantos (Bicycle Advisory Committee, Ward 3)

Next steps/action items:

- Matthew will email the committee members with a link to download Community Design Group's full community engagement report
- All committee members will contact Sarah if they have ideas for community engagement for this project.
- Sarah will follow up on community engagement leads
- Sarah will schedule the August meeting once the greenway planning contractor (SRF) is brought on board

1. Overview of the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) and the North Minneapolis Greenway project

Sarah Stewart shared the following information about SHIP and the Greenway project:

- Through the Statewide Health Improvement Program (or 'SHIP'), the Minnesota Department of Health provides funding to the City of Minneapolis to address and prevent obesity, tobacco use, and the resulting chronic diseases
- SHIP uses a policy, systems and environmental change approach (as opposed to an individual level behavior change approach). The goal is to surround people with healthy environments so that it is much easier for them to make healthy choices and avoid negative health outcomes.
- One of the SHIP strategies is to supporting active transportation through a policy, systems and environmental change approach. The goal is to support residents to walk and bike to destinations, and, as a result, incorporate physical activity into their daily activities.
- As part of the SHIP active transportation strategy, the Minneapolis department of Health and Family Support is partnering with the Department of Public Works to develop plans for converting a low-volume street to a greenway in North Minneapolis.
- The "greenway" will be an off-street facility that will provide safe, accessible space for physical activity and active transportation. This is likely to be accomplished by eliminating or reducing the space in the street right-of-way for motorized vehicles. Further, this concept proposes to eliminate or reduce vehicles crossings at streets that intersect the greenway.
- North Minneapolis was as the location for the greenway because 1) North Minneapolis residents experience a higher burden of obesity and chronic diseases compared to the City as a whole (see Attachment 1: Obesity and chronic disease-related health disparities in North Minneapolis) and 2) Bike Walk Twin Cities, in partnership with Twin Cities Greenways, funded a community engagement process around this concept in 2011, and there is community interest in this project.
- Between now and June 2013, the greenway project will accomplish the following:
 - Identify a route for the greenway
 - Develop concept plans (through outside consultant)

- Gather community input on the route and concept plans
- Develop a funding plan
- Develop *Guidelines* document to document lessons learned and to serve as a guide in any future street-to-greenway conversion efforts
- Project timeline and steering committee involvement were discussed. (See Attachment B: Purpose and Role of the North Minneapolis Greenway Steering Committee and Attachment C: North Minneapolis Greenway Project Timeline)

2. Review of community engagement work completed in 2011

Matthew Hendricks (Twin Cities Greenways) presented an overview of the 2011 community engagement process and results (PowerPoint sent as a separate attachment):

- Twin Cities Greenways is a nonprofit, all volunteer group that promotes the construction of greenways in the Twin Cities area.
- The community engagement process was funded through Bike Walk Twin Cities, a program of Transit for Livable Communities, and Joan Pasiuk worked on this project.
- Community Design Group, led by Antonio Rosell, was hired, and they completed the community engagement process.
- Various neighborhood and community groups in North Minneapolis were supportive of the process.
- The community engagement process consisted of 10 workshops where residents viewed a presentation, completed a survey, and participated in group exercises designed to gather input.
- They were shown three greenway options – ½ and ½, bike boulevard, street-to park greenway conversion
- The process did not cover the following questions: what should the route be? Which designs should be used? What's the right amenity mix?
- Amenities could be things like playgrounds, guest parking, gardens, BBQ's
- Main findings of the process include:
 - 93% felt that the process helped them understand the greenway concept
 - 89% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that a greenway would be an asset to the community
 - Most participants (73%) agreed that they would be happy to have a greenway street in front of their houses (vs. 16% who disagree or strongly disagree)
 - Most people who participated in the process would like to live on or very near the greenway: 40% would want to live on a greenway, 27% one block away, 17% would like it nearby, 11% had no opinion
- Respondent zip codes were collected, but there is no way to match responses with specific addresses
- Caveat: people were not responding to what specific type of greenway they would want.
- It's important to note that it is possible to have different styles of greenway from block to block while still maintaining a nice trail.
- Matthew will send out link to full report.

3. Review potential route and design elements; discuss what is exciting about the project and what the potential challenges might be

- The group viewed a map of the potential greenway routes (sent as a separate attachment). The route map was developed by Twin Cities Greenways. It is a north-south route located in the central part of North Minneapolis. Some of the streets identified in the route map are also identified as "bike boulevard/long term greenway" in the Minneapolis Bicycle Master Plan.
- The group discussed the potential benefits of a greenway in North Minneapolis:
 - Smart to run things along the Cemetery and parks, since streets already dead end at these locations.

- North Minneapolis needs something cool and unique. The Mayor announced things like 100 green homes. Creating a unique amenity could be a really positive thing for this community.
 - It's good that we're focusing on a smaller segment rather than the whole of Minneapolis. Being consistent as to what's being discussed.
 - Seems like a positive investment in an area where there's a perception of disinvestment. Could make people feel like the City cares about the area they live in.
 - It's a feel-good project with real tangible benefits – physical activity, property values, community building
 - Property values could go up (but this could become an affordability issue down the line)
 - From excited about the community process that happened up to this point.
 - There are several east-west projects that are a great tie-in to this north-south corridor, such as 26th St. N, Lowry Ave, the River First project.
- The group discussed some potential challenges that could be encountered in the planning process:
 - One lesson from Bottineau line engagement process– people want the line to go through the neighborhood, but the problem comes with people don't want it in front of their houses – could maybe address this by having different greenway/bike boulevard treatments on different blocks.
 - If property values go up, residents may be concerned that their taxes will go up too. Could be addressed by changing the way properties along the greenway are assessed for a set length of time
 - Concerns about violence and crime on the greenway could cause problems
 - Concerns about emergency vehicles and ensuring access could be an issue – need to be sure that this isn't a problem in the final plans
 - There may be concerns about snow removal, moving van access, deliveries, and parking – especially around higher density housing
 - Loss of handicap parking in front of some homes may be a concern
 - We need to discuss – how will we maintain this? If there's no maintenance money, we better not do it. This has implications for the magnitude of how much we change things along the route. We need partners to help carry this on as we go. The greenway could start could start with designation and simple things (like traffic diverters and planters) and could expand to a more extensive change in the future.
 - A potential concern: in the Comprehensive Plan, the goal is to keep the grid open as much as possible. This is challenging because you're talking about blocking cross streets. But these crossing will not be closed to bikes and peds. The City is usually opposed to diverters, cul-de-sacs, and the like, which create arterial streets. Diverters would force more traffic onto other 2 parallel streets.
 - One concern will be how to help bike and peds cross safely across major arterials/busier streets – creating a sensitive crossing and balancing with traffic.
 - It would be great to connect parks along the route together.
 - Other considerations discussed by the group:
 - When we finish the initial plans, we may want to have suggestions for the first locations to implement the greenway. We'll need to think about the best place to start construction, where it will still have good connections and continuity.
 - We could cut cost and time down by painting the existing pavement, using planters and paint in the short term. Could use vibrant paints, etc. We could have short-term strategies for letting people test it out and try it.
 - We could look at a suite of funding options for maintenance, e.g., the Milwaukee Ave. association concept, a conservancy, or other alternative funding models could be brought into the discussion.
 - One thing to consider doing (which could also add to overall project cost) is to make Improvements to adjacent alleyways so they can handle more cars.
 - On Victory Memorial Drive– we're working to close down some crossing to increase span between

car traffic and walkers – maybe get it to match up with VMP so that east west are true thoroughfares.

- Don't want to get higher bike traffic through the parks- it would be good to design the greenway so that bike traffic doesn't cause a conflict with pedestrians in the parks. There needs to be a design response to this.
- It will be best if the sidewalk is retained – this is important for peds, and is a long-term help with encroachment into people's yards. It helps define what is residential and what is a public space.
- The process is not yet developed for notifying/getting approval from residents about a planned greenway installation on their street. It might be best to have residents opt out instead of opt in. Put the hard work on the NIMBY's to stop the project. A change like this would require a council action. There's an example of a process like this with street lighting. Certain streets are designated ped paths, and on these streets, 70% of people have to opt out of the lighting. (Residents are assessed for lighting projects). Another option could be that instead of opting out, residents could 'opt down' to a bike boulevard or 'opt sideways' to a different treatment. It would be smart to have a low-threshold for opting out.
- It makes sense to connect to similar quality facilities so that the riders are comfortable using the facilities.

4. Review of route selection criteria

The group reviewed and prioritized a list of criteria for route selection that was developed by Twin Cities Greenways. New criteria that were suggested by the committee are bolded below. The group used a dot-voting process to prioritize the criteria, and the numbers of votes per criteria are included below.

- High Percentage of Local resident support (12)
- Route connects to parks & other trails (12)
- **More linear route** (9)
- Traffic volumes (more points for lower volumes) (8)
- Active local champion(s), no active opponents (7)
- Existing diverters (more points if street is already diverted) (6)
- **Share expense and benefits; partner with another amenity (e.g., storm water)** (4)
- **Fewer intersections** (4)
- Route connects to schools (4)
- Stormwater & flood mitigation potential (3)
- Route connects to other neighborhood destinations (2)
- No frontloaded driveways (or very few of them) (2)
- **Smallest impact on businesses** (1)
- Significant underground utility infrastructure (1)
- Topography (more points for flatness, compared to alternative routes) (1)
- Percentage of vacant parcels on the block (more is better - new residents moving into vacant buildings would do so knowing that the greenway would be on the street) (0)

5. Discussion of community engagement opportunities

Committee members offered the following suggestions for engaging community members and making them aware of the planning process:

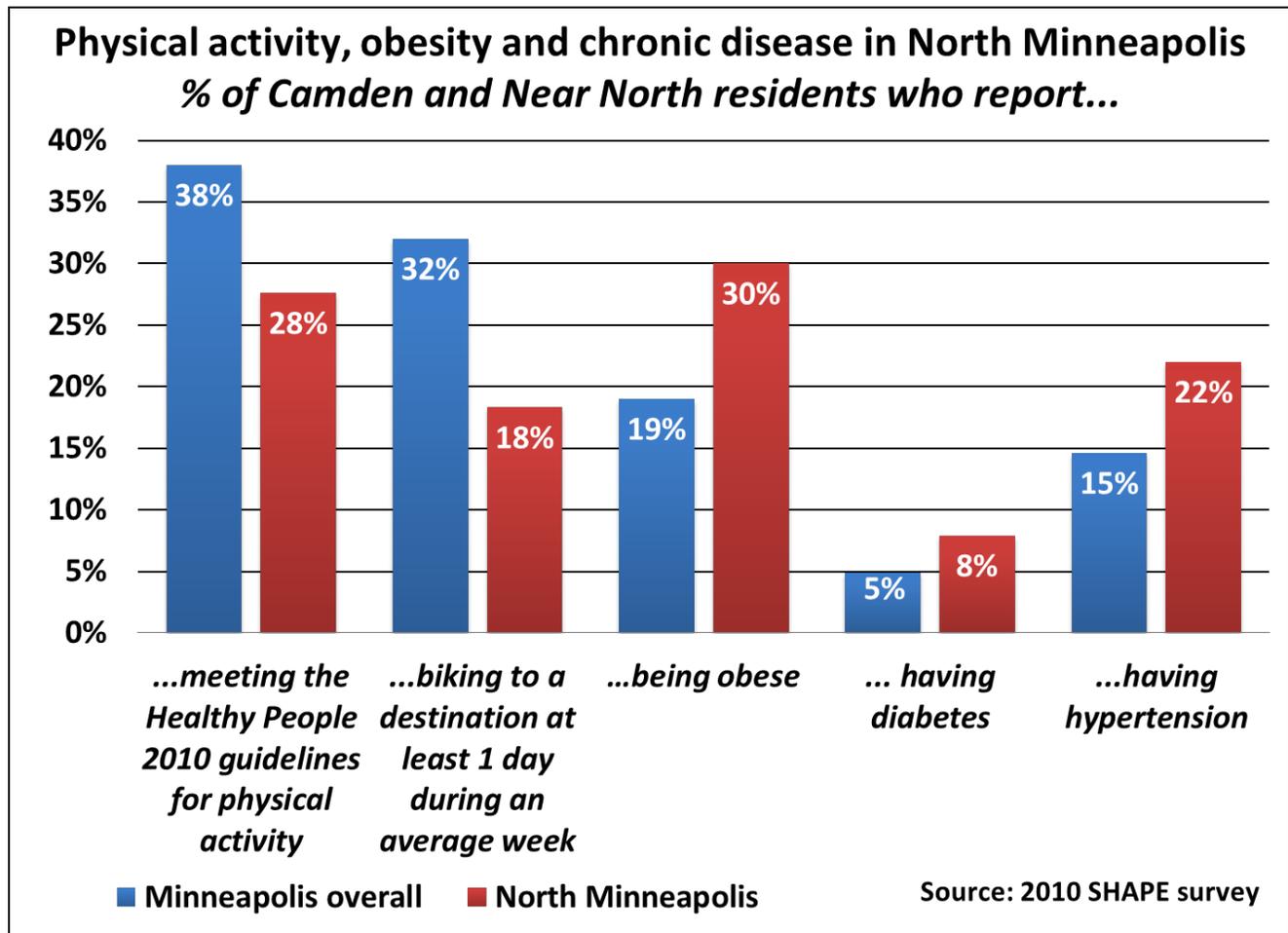
- Contact Robert Thompson in Neighborhood and Community Relations, who can connect to the North First group and other North Minneapolis groups and leaders
- Invite someone from MWMO (maybe Laurie Strong) to participate in the steering committee or to participate in the process in some way
- Be sure to engage the storm water folks in helping to make the final decision about the route
- Possible events to attend to talk about the greenway:
 - HarvestFest event (August?)

- Open Streets (Sept. 29)
 - Van White Boulevard ground breaking event in June
- Consider holding community field trips to existing greenways for people who are uncertain about the project. Use 37th Ave North flood mitigation project as an example of how this is done. For a lot of people, they need to see a tangible example. Some of the people who lived on 37th were against the project, but then really liked it later. 37th is more relevant and recent example for residents than Milwaukee Ave. Residents can talk with people who have gone through a change like this on their street.

6. Meeting reflection and wrap up

- The next steering committee meeting will be in August; date and location TBD

Attachment 1: Obesity and chronic disease-related health disparities in North Minneapolis



The chart above shows the obesity and chronic disease statistics from Hennepin County’s 2010 SHAPE survey. The chart shows that 28% of North Minneapolis residents get recommended amounts of physical activity compared to 38% of all Minneapolis residents; 18% of North Minneapolis residents report biking to a destination at least once per week compared to 32% of Minneapolis residents overall; 30% of North Minneapolis residents are obese compared to 19% of Minneapolis residents overall; 8% of North Minneapolis residents report having diabetes compared to 5% of Minneapolis residents overall; and 22% of North Minneapolis residents report having hypertension (high blood pressure) compared to 15% of Minneapolis residents overall.

Attachment B: Purpose and Role of the North Minneapolis Greenway Steering Committee

Background

The Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support (MDHFS) received funding from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) for Healthy Living Minneapolis, an initiative to improve healthy eating, physical activity, and smoke-free living for Minneapolis residents. As part of Healthy Living Minneapolis, MDHFS will partner with Public Works to develop concept plans to convert a low-volume street to a greenway in North Minneapolis. The “greenway” will be an off-street facility that will provide safe, accessible space for physical activity and active transportation. This is likely to be accomplished by eliminating or reducing the space in the street right-of-way for motorized vehicles. Further, this concept proposes to eliminate or reduce vehicle crossings at streets that intersect the greenway.

Purpose and Role of the Steering Committee

The steering committee will advise the City on the greenway planning process, providing input on potential routes and design elements, reviewing plans, identifying potential issues and barriers, and ensuring that community input is incorporated in plans. The committee will also review a draft of a Public document, *Guidelines for Converting Low-Volume Streets to Greenways*. This document will lay out the process for converting a street to a greenway and will serve as a guide for any future projects of this type.

Steering committee will be comprised of the following representatives: residents from North Minneapolis, (including at least one representative each from Wards 3, 4, and 5); Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support, Minneapolis Public Works, Hennepin County Public Works, Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Twin Cities Greenways, the Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Bicycle Advisory Committee. Minneapolis Police and Fire Departments may also be represented on the Steering Committee.

The role of Steering Committee members is to:

- Bring their experience, expertise, and insight to advise the city on the greenway design
- Ensure that input from various stakeholder groups is incorporated into the project
- Identify obstacles or barriers to and suggest potential solutions
- Ensure that the final product has the support of the various stakeholder groups represented on the committee

Steering committee members are expected to:

- Attend all five steering committee meetings (if this is not possible, send a replacement representative to meetings you will miss, or connect with MDHFS staff to stay informed of the process and provide input)
- Review agendas in advance and prepare to provide input on covered topics
- Seek input, information, and support from the stakeholder groups that members represent, as appropriate (including upper management, if relevant)
- Maintain a solution-oriented mindset and a commitment to moving the project forward

The Steering Committee will meet quarterly for up to two hours from May 2012 through May 2013 (5 meetings). An approximate schedule of meetings is as follows:

- May 2012
- August 2012
- November 2012
- February 2013
- May 2013

Questions? Contact Sarah Stewart, Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support, 612-673-3987, sarah.stewart@minneapolismn.gov.

Attachment C: North Minneapolis Greenway Project Timeline (5/8/12)

2012

April-June	Hold initial meetings with Northside council members or staffers to inform them of the project
May	<u>Hold steering committee meeting</u> to introduce the project, get initial input on potential routes, design elements, and community engagement Hire contractor
May-June	Conduct engagement activities to get the word out about the project, get feedback on routes and ideal designs (reach out to PAC, BAC, neighborhood groups, etc.)
June/July	<u>Hold first community meeting</u> (share potential routes; get feedback on routes, ideal designs)
August	Contractor finishes traffic study on up to 3 routes; makes route recommendation Hold Steering committee meeting - review community meeting 1 results, traffic study results, route recommendation
September	Contractor develops route map and cross section renderings
Sept - Oct	Conduct community engagement with PAC, BAC, council members, neighborhood groups to get feedback on the route recommendation, ideas for designs
October	<u>Hold second community meeting</u> to share the route recommendation, typical cross-sections; gather input and ideas for designs
November	<u>Hold steering committee meeting</u> to review community meeting 2, discuss ideas for the greenway design

2013

January	Contractor completes draft 10-30% plan <u>Hold third community meeting</u> - plan shared with community, discuss priority segments for construction
February	<u>Hold steering committee meeting</u> - review 10-30% plan, community meeting 3 results, priorities for construction
March	Contractor completes draft <i>Guidelines for the Conversion of Low-volume Streets to Greenways</i>
April	Draft <i>Guidelines</i> shared with stakeholders (PAC, BAC, others) Public Works develops funding plan
May	<u>Hold steering committee meeting</u> - review funding plan, <i>Guidelines</i>
June	Public Works finalizes, publishes, and disseminates <i>Guidelines</i>