

**THE  
NORTH LOOP  
NEIGHBORHOOD**

**PHASE I  
NRP  
REVIEW  
FEBRUARY 2010**

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## **HISTORY OF THE NORTH LOOP NEIGHBORHOOD**

The North Loop Neighborhood, located in what is frequently referred to as the Warehouse District, played an important role in Minneapolis history. Recognized as a bustling commercial hub and industrial center, this part of the city served everyone from manufacturers and millers, farmers to furriers, through the 1800's. In addition, the "north loop" of rail lines - the railroad and city streetcars running through the neighborhood - brought vital transportation to businesses and consumers alike.

With the decline of the industrial boom, businesses favored trucks over trains, and the Neighborhood slipped into disinvestment. Many buildings were abandoned and left to decay. The 1970's brought a new era of artists seeking large spaces and low rents. These artistic pioneers found what they were looking for in the North Loop, and are largely responsible for bringing life back into this significant neighborhood. Today the North Loop is once again a vibrant community, offering unique housing options, award-winning arts, entertainment, fine dining, and specialty shops, many within the original warehouses of the North Loop's historic heyday.

North Loop boasts the unique position of offering some of Minneapolis's newest residential opportunities in one of the oldest neighborhoods in the City.

## **ABOUT THE NORTH LOOP NEIGHBORHOOD**

North Loop neighborhood makes the northern part of the loop that encircles Minneapolis' downtown. The neighborhood extends from Plymouth Avenue on the north to Interstate 394, which makes the southern boundary. The western boundary is Interstate 94. The boundary continues along 12<sup>th</sup> Street North to Third Avenue North, then to Washington Avenue, and Hennepin Avenue. The Mississippi River is the northeastern boundary.

The neighborhood grew very fast in the last few years, as industrial buildings and old warehouses were converted for residential and commercial uses. This transformation was flowed by new residential construction. The North Loop, which used to be industrial land, is now a vibrant residential neighborhood, very conveniently located near the downtown core.

North Loop experienced significant increases in residential population between the 1990 and 2000 census. There was a 250% growth during that time. North Loop will experience an even more significant increase in the 2010 census.

The North Loop Neighborhood is the gateway to the Minneapolis riverfront 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 very unique character districts. The districts are:

- a) **Waterside Residential District** – Most of the new residential developments in this area are bordered by West River Parkway, 8th Avenue, 2nd Street North and the Railroad tracks between 3rd and 4th Avenue. Before 1995, the 250 units in the Itasca and Riverwalk buildings were the main residential areas. This area saw the addition of residential developments such as River Station, Landings, Creamette, Lindsay Loft, Garr Scott Lofts, Renaissance on the River, Heritage Landing, Mill City apartments, Reserve, Rock Island Lofts and many more.
- b) **Mixed-Use Loft District** – this district contains a wide variety of uses including residential, arts, businesses and light manufacturing. The buildings are a mix of historic warehouses converted to residential living and newer buildings constructed in a way that respect the historic character of this district.
- c) **Washington Avenue Corridor** – this area is the commercial core and heart of the North Loop. It has a wide variety of uses.
- d) **Charitable Organizations/ Farmers Market District** – In addition to the Minneapolis Farmer's Market, the eastern edge of the North Loop is home to some significant charitable organizations including Sharing and Caring Hands/Mary's Place, the Salvation Army and the Glenwood residence of Catholic Charities.
- e) **City Services/Utilities/Industrial District** - The Southwest corner of North Loop contains numerous facilities that support the infrastructure for the City of Minneapolis including the MTC bus garage, the Hennepin County incinerator, the

**Curry and Royalton City of Minneapolis maintenance facilities and the Excel Energy Service yard.**

- f) **Twins Stadium/Northstar Commuter Rail and Hiawatha Light Rail Transit Center - this district contains the newly constructed Target Field and transit center.**

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING EFFORT**

When the Phase I NRP Program originally began the North Loop neighborhood participated with the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association (DMNA) to develop a combined Phase I NRP Neighborhood Action Plan. At the time this plan was being developed there was a very small residential base in North Loop. As the residential base began to build people it became evident that North Loop had issues that were unique. As such, a group of residents worked with the City to form what is now the Warehouse District North Loop Association (WDNLA). On May 9, 2001, the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association (DMNA) passed a motion acknowledging the formation of the new Warehouse District – North Loop Association (WDNLA). DMNA also acknowledged that the new group would represent the business/property owners and residents of the North Loop Neighborhood. WDNLA continued to work in partnership on issues and projects that were important to both neighborhood groups. A shining example of this partnership was the work both neighborhoods did to develop the Downtown East/North Loop Master planning effort that was led by the City of Minneapolis. The Master Plan was approved in 2004.

On July 17, 2001 the Neighborhood Revitalization Program recognized WDNLA as the official organization selected to plan and implement a new Phase I Neighborhood Action Plan for the North Loop neighborhood.

The WDNLA spent the next year building the organization and seeking volunteers to become members of the organization and work to develop a Phase I participation agreement. In September of 2002 the NRP Policy Board approved the WDNLA participation agreement. This started the effort to develop the Phase I Neighborhood Action Plan.

The WDNLA spent the next year on the following activities:

- Forming an NRP Steering Committee
- Recruiting volunteers to participate on the committee in the planning effort
- Hiring a consultant to guide them through the process
- Hosting organizational meetings and trainings
- Developing mechanisms to solicit input from North Loop residents and businesses. Focus groups and surveys were the main form of soliciting input.
- Hosting focus groups to inform neighborhood stakeholders and have them prioritize the needs of the neighborhood that would be addressed in the Phase I Neighborhood Action Plan.

The WDNLA Board of Directors and greater North Loop neighborhood stakeholders approved the Phase I Neighborhood Action Plan in August 2003. The NRP Policy Board approved the plan on November 17, 2003. The plan was approved by the City of Minneapolis City Council in March 2004.

## **NORTH LOOP NEIGHBORHOOD MAP**

### THE PLAN OUTCOMES

#### **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.

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

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

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

#### **OUTCOME:**

Of the 4 strategies within this goal and objective, 2 of them were accomplished during Phase I of NRP. The neighborhood completed an inventory of existing assets in an effort to determine what was missing in the neighborhood in terms of goods and services that would be desired and to help define what this new residential neighborhood should become in the

future. Through its web site and brochures WDNLA helped to showcase businesses and advertise events that were occurring at neighborhood performance and art organizations.

## **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.

**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.

**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.

## **OUTCOME:**

The strategy to bring a grocery store to the North Loop neighborhood was considered accomplished by those working on this strategy when the Byerlys/Lund's grocery chain located a new store on Central and 4th St. S.E. There were plans to locate another store on 12th and Hennepin and there was hope that a Whole Foods might locate in the old Jaguar site on Washington and Hennepin Av. The second Lund's store and the Whole Foods store

are currently on-hold due to economic circumstances. While the store on Central Av. is in close proximity to North Loop and an easy drive, it is not optimal walking distance.

The WDNLA hosted a series of events geared at networking all neighborhood stakeholders. The most popular and successful of these events was "Third Thursdays". The business community hired the River City Trolley and provided participants with a map of local restaurants and businesses that participated in the event. Participants could ride the trolley to the various locations and experience the flavor of that particular business. Businesses provided specials on appetizers and drinks. Some had wine tastings. Others did other special things to showcase their products. These events were intended to highlight North Loop as a newer residential neighborhood to local businesses and to neighborhoods surrounding them and highlight businesses to local residents.

North Loop also hosted an annual "Rooftop Party". The parties were held at a different loft location each year it was held. Minglings, cocktails, hors d'oeuvres provided by local businesses provided a chance for neighbors and merchants to sample the fares from the various restaurants.

The neighborhood participated in the City Pages Annual "Wing Ding" for one year. This event was held at the Minneapolis Farmer's Market.

The eclectic mix of small commercial and light industrial businesses in the neighborhood continues to be strong. It should be interesting to see what effect the new Target Field will have on the addition of new businesses in the neighborhood.

## **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.

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

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

### **OUTCOME:**

The neighborhood continues to view this goal and strategies as important, the work of helping to define the future of these amenities will continue to evolve. An immediate need was identified by the WDNLA that was addressed through these strategies. Due to the high influx of new residential it became evident that there was little green space to provide dogs a place to play. WDNLA worked closely with the 7th Ward City Council office to establish a "dog park" in the neighborhood and provided NRP funds to help facilitate its implementation.

North Loop also engaged in an ambitious tree-planting project in an effort to "green-up" Washington Avenue. NRP funds were used in partnership with the City of Minneapolis Public Works Department to plant new trees on Washington Avenue.

The North Loop Neighborhood is currently working to plan and develop a children's playground. This effort will support the concept of an urban family friendly environment. A playground is vital to families in the North Loop, children who visit (extended family visitors, grand children, nieces, nephews and friends) and visitors to our Downtown Riverfront area. A play ground is necessary to be viable market-wise for further real estate development in the North Loop.

## **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.

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

**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.

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

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

## **OUTCOME:**

WDNLA created an annual event that symbolizes the North Loop. The event changes venues each year but maintains the same spirit. They developed a neighborhood web site that is used to advertise organizational meetings and events, advertises neighborhood businesses and events sponsored by neighborhood art and theater organizations. The neighborhood created both marketing brochures and a newsletter. The neighborhood did not have the funding to continue production of the printed newsletter. Both the website and the neighborhood e-list inform neighborhood stakeholders of important information.

The neighborhood embarked on a journey to develop a new branding logo that would be carried not only in all of its communication and marketing materials but would be proudly displayed in the street banners located on the major commercial corridors in the neighborhood. The new logo won the Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine "best neighborhood logo" award in 2005.

## **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.

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

**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.

## **OUTCOME:**

North Loop residents continue to work with the 1st precinct CCP/SAFE staff to address issues of livability. The e-mail network created and maintained by Luther Kruger of the City of Minneapolis provides great connection between residents and businesses for crime alerts. This network has been responsible for apprehending people in commission of crimes in the past. The network provides important information on maintaining personal safety as well as recommendations for how businesses and condo/apartment owners can keep their properties safe.

## **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.

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

Strategy 1: Support and Enhance the North Loop Newsletter.

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

**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.

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

## **OUTCOME:**

A large amount of NRP funds were allocated to the creation of a Comprehensive Land Use plan for the North Loop. However, the City engaged in a Master Planning effort called the Downtown East North Loop Master Plan that did not require a neighborhood investment of NRP funds. The City's plan was approved in October 2003. The funds allocated to this strategy were redirected through a plan modification to provide funding to help establish the dog park and to continue organizational support to WDNLA during implementation of the Phase I NRP Plan.

## **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.

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

**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.

## **OUTCOME:**

North Loop did not allocate any Phase I NRP funds to a housing strategy. It was determined that the neighborhood was developing so quickly utilizing private investments that it was better at the time to let the market dictate what was happening in the neighborhood. Phase II will provide interesting opportunities for North Loop to help fill some gaps that exist from the intense development that occurred in the late 90's and early 2000's.

North Loop is currently working on a set of guidelines to aid in defining what future development in the neighborhood might look like.

## **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.

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

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

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

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

## **OUTCOME:**

Transportation has been a huge issue of interest in the North Loop. While no investment of NRP funds were made in this area, the volunteer time spent on this issue is immeasurable. Neighborhood stakeholders have worked very closely with the City, the County and the Met Council to address traffic and transportation in the following areas.

1. The addition of another Light Rail Transit Station and the development of the Northstar Commuter Rail.
2. The development of the new Target Field and how both vehicular and pedestrian traffic will be affected by this. Also, how will public transportation for this venue be addressed and how will local parking be affected. Some of these issues remain on the table. It will not be until the stadium actually engages in its intended use that some of these questions will present themselves. Work in this area is very much on-going.
3. Addressing the maintenance and rehabilitation of local streets in the North Loop is an issue and will continue to be an issue.

## **SUMMARY**

The Warehouse District North Loop Association has enjoyed and taken pride in many accomplishments since the group's inception in 2001. Many volunteers hours have been spent establishing and showcasing North Loop as the unique and vibrant neighborhood it was, is and will continue to be in Minneapolis history.

Volunteers have spent countless hours working on a variety of issues of great importance, not only to the North Loop neighborhood but also to Minneapolis as a whole.

With the help of competent staff from the City of Minneapolis, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and the Minneapolis City Council office the North Loop Neighborhood has been able to focus its energy on issues vital to the neighborhood. The fruits of these efforts by the dedicated volunteers have produced a neighborhood that is flourishing now and into the future.

The Warehouse District North Loop Neighborhood Association wishes to thank all the volunteers that helped to make the journey through Phase I of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program a success.