



Appendix – 1.4 KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan



Robert (Bob) Copeland

Interviewed December 1, 2010

The following is a summary of an interview conducted by John Lauber and Peter Musty, CLPC Master Plan Consultants. The notes are by John Lauber and were reviewed and approved for accuracy by Bob Copeland on January 7, 2011.

Bob's Background

- Grew up in south Minneapolis attended SW High School.
- Has worked at the UM for thirty years, mostly in communications and General College, recently accepted new position in the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence.
- Interest in historic preservation began when his childhood home, near 50th and 35W was demolished to make way for freeway construction. Interest in preservation and architecture increased after demolition of historic buildings in the Minneapolis Gateway area.

Involvement

- As a young adult, lived in the Wedge area of south Minneapolis (Hennepin/Franklin) area.
- Moved into the Loring neighborhood with partner ca. 1989. Purchased condo in the Wellington building.
- Move to Loring coincided with beginnings of NRP program. He became involved with neighborhood NRP group, interested in helping to identify neighborhood issues, set priorities for funding, and establish procedures for administering programs.
- Has been involved with neighborhood groups and the city for many years. Has served on the CLPC board as well as the Land Use Committee.
- He was also a longtime member of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission and served as the chair in the early 1990s when the new Target headquarters was under way. Construction of the Target facility required demolition of several old/historic buildings that housed viable small businesses.

Harmon

- Was involved in the Harmon Small Area Task Force—a group organized in the 1990s to consider the potential impact of St. Thomas campus development on Harmon Place. The group held a number of focus groups to consider impacts, and was successful in instituting a brief moratorium on development, but there were no other tangible or long-lasting outcomes.
- In conjunction with his involvement on the task force, Bob began to look into the history and significance of Harmon Place as an automobile district. His work preceded the study by Carole Zellie that resulted in designation of Harmon Place as a local historic district in 2001.
- While the district nomination was under way, two important buildings were lost—The Cadillac and Chevrolet showrooms.
- As for the status of the Harmon District now, Bob had a couple of observations:



Appendix – 1.4 KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

- The street has essentially been severed from any connection to the surrounding area, which, in Bob’s opinion makes Harmon “a really difficult street” to deal with from an urban design standpoint. As a result, he observed, “Harmon is dead.”
- The Harmon District is a thematic historic district rather than primarily an architectural district, which makes it “not self-evident” as a historic place. Consequently, the neighborhood does not perceive the area as historic, and students from MCTC and St. Thomas are utterly unaware of its significance.
- Both of these factors work against preservation.

Loring Greenway

-When prompted, Bob suggested that the battle over demolition of the Naulhaka Flats catalyzed the neighborhood and helped to bring historic preservation to the fore as a factor in planning for the future.

-The flats were demolished as part of an urban renewal effort that made room for construction of the Loring Greenway as a link between Loring Park and the Nicollet Mall.

-Bob noted that although the demolition of the three Naulhaka buildings caused neighborhood residents to rise up in protest, he thinks that many residents now see the Greenway as a neighborhood asset.

-He also noted that the Greenway was originally intended to have a number of small retail spaces that would make it a vital, pedestrian-oriented area, but that “nobody wanted to build on it.”

-He acknowledged that the Greenway had some potential significance as a designed landscape, but that recent redesign had “ruined the Greenway as an important historic landscape.”

Housing

-When asked about repeated comments from Loring residents, especially students that many MCTC attendees were homeless and that there was a need for affordable housing in the neighborhood, Bob noted that there was “lots of affordable housing” in the area, and cited the Jeremiah project as an effort to address the needs of low-income people in the area. Later he mentioned the Salvation Amry's Booth Manor, the Archdale Apartments for Project off-Streets, and several subsidized residential buildings.

Owners vs. Renters

-Bob felt that owners of apartments and other buildings in the Loring neighborhood had been active participants in planning efforts.

-When asked if temporary residents (apartment dwellers) exerted undue influence on long-term planning, he indicated that renters were not really involved in planning efforts.

Institutions

-When asked about the involvement of large institutions (MCTC, St. Thomas, the large churches) in neighborhood planning, Bob noted that many of the institutions had been “slow to come around.”

-He recalled that the neighborhood mounted strenuous resistance to the expansion of the St. Thomas campus, and that St. T had essentially “turned its back” on the neighborhood. He lamented the loss of a number of viable businesses in buildings that had been removed to make room for the campus expansion.

Vacant Buildings

-The Billy Graham organization owned a considerable number of buildings along Harmon Place, but essentially “sat on them.” Although there were things going on inside, the buildings/organization generated very little street activity and was not much of a public presence. Even though the buildings were in use, they seemed vacant.



Appendix – 1.4 KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

-Olson Advertising occupies a considerable amount of space in buildings on Hennepin near Harmon Place, but, like the Billy Graham organization, they generate very little public activity.

-The (three) Lunds buildings sit vacant (on the block between Harmon and Hennepin, between 12th and 13th) because the company was reluctant to create a grocery store that was two-stories high. They would rather build a new facility on property that is used for parking. Meanwhile, the Lunds buildings are in limbo.

Current Issues

Bob identified a number of current issues facing the neighborhood, including:

-It is not pedestrian friendly.

-Parking is a significant issue, but people “don’t like paying for parking.”

Future Issues/Opportunities

-The proposed streetcar line along Nicollet Avenue is a potential threat to some small-scale and historic buildings.

-However, there seems to be some consensus in the neighborhood that the Nicollet corridor would be a likely candidate for large-scale redevelopment, even if a few historic properties are lost in the process. Bob felt that new construction, even of high-rise buildings, “would be welcome along Nicollet.”

-At some point MnDOT will have to consider rebuilding Interstate 94 through the neighborhood. This would provide an opportunity for restoring/establishing the neighborhood’s connections to the Walker, Lowry Hill, and other adjacent areas. The neighborhood should anticipate this possibility and address it in long-term planning.

Whose stories are not being told?

-Bob noted that the Loring neighborhood was defined, in part by its many human-scaled apartment buildings. He observed that these buildings “speak very clearly of transition—of Loring’s history as the city’s first streetcar neighborhood.”

-He felt that some effort should be made to tell the story of people who made their homes in these buildings during the 1930s and 1940s.

-He also felt that some attention should be paid to the displacement of many long-term neighborhood residents in the 1970s by redevelopment/urban renewal efforts that resulted in construction of the Loring Greenway.

-When asked about the neighborhood’s history as home to the city’s GLBT population, Bob suggested that that was in part a by-product of the “hippie culture” of the 1960s and 1970s.