



## Appendix – 1.4 KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

### Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

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## Diane Woelm

### A Life in Loring

*Interviewed October 28, 2010*

*The following is a summary of an interview conducted by Peter Musty, CLPC Master Plan Consultant, attended by Steve Barberio, Master Plan Steering Committee Member. The notes were reviewed by Max Woelm on behalf of Diane Woelm on November 10, 2010, and then approved by Diane on January 4, 2011.*

Her entire life, Diane Woelm has lived, loved - and stood her ground - for Loring. Her parents moved to 85 1/2 South 10<sup>th</sup> St. when Diane was in second grade, and Diane attended Emerson school as a child. (The building was torn down long ago.) Her memories of Loring Park from that time are very fond ones. “Loring Park was like an oasis in the summer – I remember crafts and paintings.”

#### **Greatapes Media / MediaExpress Services** 1523 Nicollet Avenue

“Greatapes began as a business founded by Jim Woelm in our home on Humboldt Avenue in East Isles in 1976. It moved into The Old Flame which we leased with the option to buy in 1981. with 10 employees and today have 30. The Woelms own the businesses and the building at 1523 Nicollet Avenue.”, relates Diane. Today they are a local anchor on Nicollet with a nation-wide base of customers. They provide a full range of media services from video production, Flash Drive / USB Drive Printing, CD & DVD authoring, audio production, graphic design, DVD duplication, video duplication, and CD duplication.



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During a brief tour of the building – Diane pointed out a company highlight - a poster ad presenting ‘America Before TV – A Day From The Golden Age of Radio’ She proudly introduced every employee that walked by. Three of us began the interview in a nicely finished basement lobby space, nearby to MediaExpress (<http://www.mediaexpress.net/>), and in front of large sliding glass doors to the Law Enforcement Resource Center (<http://www.lerc.com>), a small business providing on-line training and training books and manuals for law enforcement. Greatapes website states:

“Our building, originally known as the Happy Hour bar and then Club Carnival, was a popular jazz club ... in the late '30s and '40s. After World War II it became a country-western hot spot and hosted such greats as Patsy Cline, Tex Ritter, Waylon Jennings, and many more. Their pictures still hang proudly on our walls, and some say the strange noises at night are not just from our hard-working staff...” – passage from <http://www.greatapes.com>



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Greatapes occupies the art deco building with the doors on the corner of Nicollet. When it was first built and opened as Club Carnival, the marquee lit up with names like Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday. Greatapes’ hallways are lined with posters from the era as a jazz club, mixed in with posters from the era when it was called The Flame Bar & Café, a popular country western venue. She later clarified: “...(Club Carnival) was a class place for food and entertainment. It was one of first (if not *the* first) night clubs in Minneapolis. And it was the first night club to bring "Black Entertainment (Jazz) to a predominantly white Minneapolis in the 30s and 40s.” The stage opening is still in place, but is now bustling as a media production studio. “I was told once that Louis Armstrong was not a headliner at The Happy Hour Bar & Restaurant or Club Carnival, but when he was in town he jammed there with other musicians.” In the early eighties, after years of some decline, the building was purchased and renovated by the Woelms, and Greatapes moved in. “We felt like just moving here was helping the neighborhood.”, said Diane.



#### Savitt Paint – 1515 Nicollet

About 2005, the Woelms bought Savitt Paint (next door to the north) when they needed more space for CD & DVD production. The businesses adjoin – but are still run separately. Savitt Bros Paint Store originally started in 1928 in the Loring neighborhood on Harmon Avenue.



“Savitt Bros. Inc, carries just about any product or tool you might need to paint for theatre, film, video and display. We have been serving the professional in the twin cities area for over 66 years with our extensive range of theatrical and television paint products.” – text from <http://www.savittpaint.com>



#### The Neighborhood Revitalization Program, Citizens for a Loring Park Community & Friends of Loring Park -

Diane has been involved with NRP activities from the beginning, serving on the Board of Citizens for a Loring Park Community for 13 years before retiring. Her love of ‘the park’ brought her to spend increasing energies with Friends of Loring Park. “I care a lot about it.” When disrepair and safety issues surfaced, Diane and others stood her ground for the park, “We just thought – we’ve got to do something about it.” “Ione Siegel, a Loring Park Property owner is the founder of Friends of Loring Park along with Dottie Speidel, a former resident of Loring.”

#### Nicollet

Diane briefly considered the issue of



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perception vs reality in terms of public safety on Nicollet Avenue “Yes, issues on Nicollet can be challenging, but you can stay positive.” Diane recalls points in the past having to take things into her own hands with her husband. “Jim and I would take turns walking circles around the building during the day (just to establish a presence on the street.)” She agreed with Steve Barberio that public safety is an important short term priority to address on Nicollet.

#### **Parking**

Ms Woelm also related her understanding of how it is hard for some businesses that don’t have parking – but says that there is enough total parking in the district.

#### **The Meter Farm Hotel Proposal**

She recalled the meter farm project proposal a couple years ago – that included a proposed hotel. She says that many in the neighborhood supported it, that she thought it was a good idea, and that it would have brought a lot of business – but it didn’t happen due to lack of city council support.

#### **Loring Businesses**

She mentioned working with Michael McLaughlin, and the [Loring Business Association], and the Nicollet Avenue Service District extending from Grant south to Kmart, for which she is an advisory board member.

#### **National Night Out**

She shared with us an article written for the Hill and Lake Press (August 2010) about this year’s National Night Out events: <http://hillandlakepress.com/PDF/Hill%20Lake%20August'10.pdf> She mentioned the great efforts of Piere Barnes, all the contributors and sponsors, and discussed the great turn out at the Woman’s Club. She also was impressed at the turn out at The Music Box for the neighbors on Nicollet. She had been hoping to procure the Meter Farm but The Music Box came through when the City presented a fee for its use. Steve and Diane agreed that next year there may be a need to organize more food. She is very proud of the effort by everyone in support of the event – and hopes it will continue.

#### **Looking Ahead**

Asked about the vision for Greatapes in the future, she mentions her children as heirs to their business, and expresses confidence that things will continue, “We’re here, and our business works fine.” she said, smiling.

She also lit up with a large smile when asked about her perspective on the future of the neighborhood and Nicollet, “Oh YES - Loring Park (Neighborhood) has a GREAT future!”