



Event Record: Focus Group - Nicollet District Visioning Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

Focus Group Nicollet District Visioning

2:00-3:30pm

November 30, 2010

The Music Box Theatre (*since renamed The Loring Theater*)

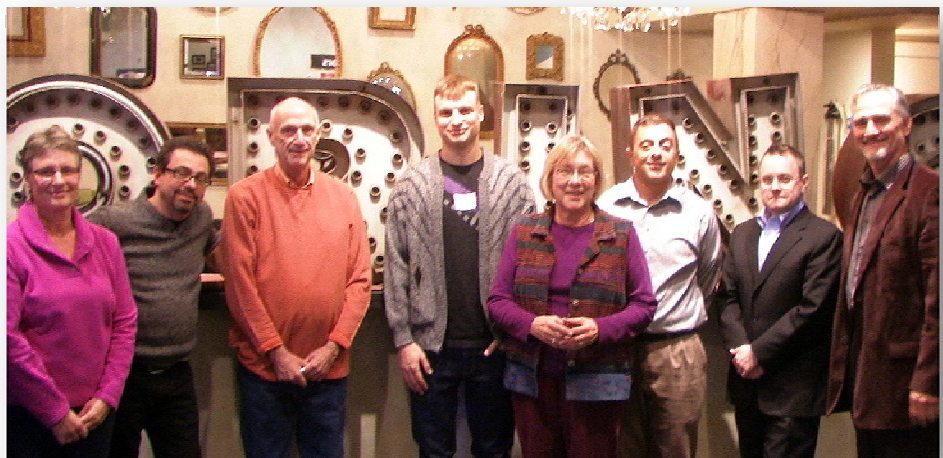
1407 Nicollet Avenue

The following is a summary of a focus group discussion conducted by Peter Musty, CLPC Master Plan Consultant, and Jana Metge, CLPC Coordinator. Several stakeholders of Nicollet Avenue were present. The Focus Group was held November 30, 2010 in the lobby of The Music Box Theatre, since renamed The Loring Theater. Our host was Steve Barberio, member of the CLPC Master Plan Steering Committee.

There were thirteen (13) present: Steve Barberio/Music Box Theatre, Diane Hansen/Copenhagen Apts., Michael McLaughlin/Loring Business Association, Bob Hansen/Nicollet Ave. resident, John Novak/Wesley Center, Alan Arthur/AEON, Barb Berg/Emerson School, David Bank/Loring Kitchen & Bar, John Van Heel/Master Plan Steering Committee co-chair, Bill Weber/Consultant Team, Peter Musty/Consultant, Jana Metge/CLPC Coordinator, and Beth Elliott/Minneapolis City Planner. This record includes three items:

- **Event Preview**
- **Agenda**
- **Notes** by Jana Metge.

(Pictured from left to right: Barb Berg, Steve Barberio, Bob Hanson, John Novak, Diane Hansen, John Van Heel, Michael McLaughlin, Alan Arthur.)





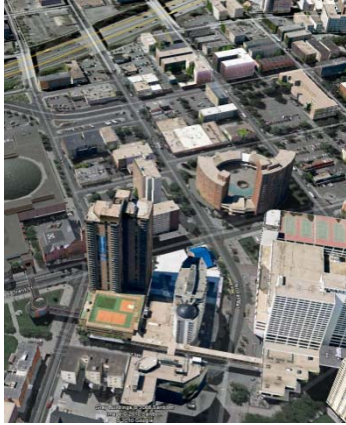
EVENT PREVIEW

Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

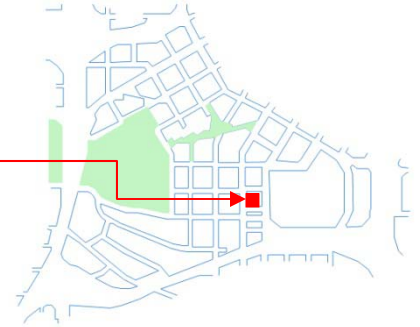
Tuesday, November 30

Focus Group: Nicollet District Visioning

Music Box Theatre 1407 Nicollet Ave. 2:00-3:30pm



Citizens for a Loring Park Community (CLPC) have set up a public planning process in support of the Neighborhood Master Plan effort. Each phase of the planning process will engage the public in a series of group and individual interviews, informal gatherings, and four community workshops.



- Phase I **Discovery** (Fall 2010)
- Phase II **Visioning** (Fall 2010 through Winter 2011)
- Phase III **Urban Design** (Winter 2011)
- Phase IV **Implementation** (Spring 2011)

Developing a Shared Vision!

The CLPC Board approved the selection of Nicollet district of Loring as a Focus Area within the Master Plan, identified as a district within the neighborhood that would benefit from a long term vision and set of basic development guidelines. It is anticipated that there will be illustrations, including plans, diagrams and 3D computer modeling developed reflecting the long term impacts of the community based master plan policy.

In order to develop a long term public realm vision and land use policy for the district, the CLPC Master Plan Steering Committee is inviting stakeholders of the Nicollet Avenue district to weigh in on the important issues affecting the Nicollet district today and to share ideas for the future. Some attention has been focused recently to public safety and livability issues. Beyond some of those issues, the Discovery & Visioning Community Workshops this fall have already revealed what many of the longer term issues may be:

Parking Needs for Businesses | Building Reuse & Sustainable Improvements | Streetcars

*Long-Range Land Use Plan & Zoning Changes
Redevelopment Opportunities | Placemaking
Viewsbeds | Economic Development | Protection
of Existing Businesses*

Invited stakeholders will include local businesses, property owners, public agency staff, Minneapolis Convention Center, among others. The session, organized by CLPC Master Plan Steering Committee, will be 90 minutes long and will be facilitated by Master Plan consultant team coordinated by PETER MUSTY LLC.

Note to Participants:

Come as you are. The meeting will be conducted with a wide ranging group invited from throughout the district, and is intended as an opportunity for key stakeholders to have a voice in the master planning process. The public is invited to listen. For further information, contact Jana at CLPC - 612-874-9002.

Updated November 11, 2010.



EVENT PREVIEW

Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

NICOLLET FOCUS GROUP

AGENDA

November 30, 2010

2pm-3:30pm, Music Box Theatre

2:00 pm

- Welcome by Jana Metge, Steve Barberio
- Participant Introductions
- Overview of master plan activities by master plan consultant Pete Musty, consultant team members John Lauber and Bill Weber introduced.

2:15 pm

- Note card exercise: ask participants to answer two questions and discuss or pass in by end of session:
 - **Notecard #1: Identify two issues you think should be addressed in the master plan.**
 - **Notecard #2: Imagine Nicollet District (in Loring) in 2030: What do you see?**

...by 2:40 pm

- Discussion

3:30 pm

- Adjourn

What are the the key issues your individual business or property is facing today?

What are the key strengths/assets/characteristics of the District? What gives this District a competitive advantage?

What is working in the district now? What is not working?

What public realm projects make sense to consider? What development opportunities do you see emerging?

Urban design issues in the master plan: height of buildings, land uses, intensities etc – any opinions?

Sustainability ideas...?

What other ideas do you have for the district? For Loring Neighborhood?

How can the City and the Neighborhood organizations serve district (or the businesses/properties) better?

What are your thoughts about the proposed streetcar?

What is your opinion of DID extension?

Loring Park Master Planning Process

Nicollet Avenue – FOCUS GROUP

Tuesday, Nov. 30th, 2010; 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Thanks to Steve Barberio & The Music Box Theatre for hosting!!

Those present: Steve Barberio/Music Box Theatre, Diane Hansen/Copenhagen Apts., Michael McLaughlin/Loring Business Association, Bob Hansen/Nicollet Ave. resident, John Novak/Wesley Center, Alan Arthur/AEON, Barb Berg/Emerson School, David Bank/Loring Kitchen & Bar, John Van Heel/Master Plan Steering Committee co-chair, Bill Weber/Consultant Team, Peter Musty/Consultant, Jana Metge/CLPC Coordinator, and Beth Elliott/Minneapolis City Planner.

Jana and Steve welcomed the participants. Sign in sheet passed around, as well as handouts. Pete overviewed the Master Plan process to date, as well as having a slide show with photos to illustrate the activities, events, and workshops. Jana invited all the the Annual Holiday Party & Curry Dinner at 228 Clifton on Thursday, Dec. 2nd and to “Light Up Loring” @ Loring Park on Thursday, Dec. 9th.

Pete overviewed the process to date – Sept. 30th was our Kick Off event at the Park featuring a panel on the history of Loring Park followed by a “Discovery Workshop” on Sat., Oct. 2nd. Then on Thursday, Nov. 4th a gathering was held at the Music Box Theatre featuring food from Nicollet Businesses, live music, and a panel on “Creative Neighborhoods in the Creative City”. Saturday, Nov. 6th a “Visioning” Community Design workshop was hosted by the Wesley Church. There will be six (6) focus groups. To date, focus groups have been held with the Property Owners & Managers and another Condo Owner meeting. Nov. 30th will be a Focus Group of stakeholders along Nicollet Ave. and Dec. 7th a focus group for the Harmon area. The Steering Committee will be deciding on the remaining focus groups – options are long-time renters, Arts & Culture/Creative Sector, and developers. Key Stakeholder interviews have been conducted with Diane Woelm (Nicollet Ave.), Sen. Scott Dibble, and HN Co. Commissioner Gail Dorfman. There will be ten (10) Key Stakeholder interviews.

Pete reviewed that the four (4) focus areas of the Master Plan have been identified as 1) Nicollet Ave., 2) Harmon Ave., 3) Perimeter of Neighborhood/freeway edges, and 4) Perimeter of Loring Park/safe passage to the Park. The Request for Proposal overviewing the purpose of the Master Plan is on the CLPC website – www.loringpark.org click on Citizens for a Loring Park Community. Peter Musty’s contract is based upon that RFP. All information and documentation of this Master Plan process is also available on the web. Comments can also be called in or emailed into the CLPC office at 612-874-9002 / clpc@visi.com.

Exercise: Notecard #1 – Identify two (2) issues you think should be addressed in the Master Plan.

- 15th – west block south to Bridge on Nicollet is under-developed
- The issue of safety and perception of safety to businesses, residents, & workers in Loring
- How Loring Park Neighborhood can be branded as the Center of the Creative Community
- Need more active, improved retail on Nicollet & 15th
- Development of vacant or underused parcels
- Identify resources & options for Economic Development
- Improved crime & safety strategies
- Crime – Police – Beat Cops on the street to help deter street crime
- Parking – Street parking made easier – parking lots or ramps added – good signage
- Increased street lighting
- Re-use of parking lots/vacant blocks
- Safety
- Filled spaces

Exercise: Notecard #2 – Imagine Nicollet District (in Loring) in 2030: What do you see?

- Expand DID/Downtown Improvement District for entire Nicollet to Bridge
- Commercial/residential mix: grocery store, specialty shops, condos/apts.
- Arts District: Wesley Church/Performing & Community Arts, Loring Theatre, Connections between Arts Institute & Nicollet/Loring Park (all the way to Stevens Park)
- More positive street activity
- More Lights/Marquees
- Low/Medium density mixed housing
- Vibrant & Lively, welcoming, attractive, a little artsy
- Move people in 30-55 year age group
- A thriving mixed-use (business & residential) area that takes advantage of its proximity to the Downtown office market and the Convention Center
- Friday and Saturday nights – Nicollet Avenue is the destination for Arts and Culture in the City.
- Street car running from start of Nicollet past Franklin, Lake Street, and all the way to south suburbs.
- Continued mix of housing & business
- A thriving community that serves those who live and visit
- Green connections and secret gardens
- Lots of housing of all kinds – a neighborhood, great amenities, including continued growth in small restaurants.

Discussion: A series of questions were displayed on individual agendas –

- What are the key issues your individual business or property is facing today?
- What are the key strengths/assets/characteristics of the District? What give the District a competitive advantage?
- What is working in the district now? What is not working?
- What public realm projects make sense to consider? What development opportunities do you see emerging?
- Urban design issues in the Master Plan: height of buildings, land uses, intensities, any opinions?
- Sustainability ideas....?
- What other ideas do you have for the district? For Loring neighborhood?
- How can the City and the neighborhood organizations serve this district (or the businessness/properties) better?
- What are your thoughts about the proposed streetcar?
- What is your opinion of DID/Downtown Improvement District extension?

Discussion Responses:

A story was told about potential renters for a Nicollet venue from a local charity for a cultural celebration & fundraiser. Could be a \$10,000 rental. After tour of venue, they walked onto Nicollet into angry behavior on the Ave. and a MPD squad with lights flashing. Their response was “Is this always like this or just on a Monday night?” Businesses are struggling against real issues of safety and perception of safety on the Avenue.

Request for police presence on street to deter crime – street crime and property crime – Nicollet to Loring Park; from the Freeway to Grant Street.

Increase in the uptick of crime/serious crime – new thing since Spring.

Parking is an issue/the City is brutal on customers – they come in for a \$15 meal and get a \$42

ticket and never come back. Realize the city needs to make money; but what if they are so aggressive here that they force businesses out of business. There is limited ramp space and parking for customers. Customers call and ask “where can I park?” We are up against free parking in the suburbs. Constant ticketing drives people away. We lose business.

Parking is a big issue – concern of renters to walk safely; lighting is low – not bright enough, not a pleasant walking experience – not welcoming pathways from say, Emerson school to Nicollet. Feels uncomfortable and unsafe. Alleys also need to be improved. We should make it attractive and inviting on the street – welcoming folks to walk.

Safety is an issue now for Emerson; we’ve seen an escalation in crime in this area. When we take 400 kids to Orchestra Hall, we are fine; but when parents or teachers are by themselves or in small groups, they get approached, even threatened by folks on the streets. We are more concerned, we take our cell phones when we walk anywhere now. Emerson parents, teachers and students love to be here – lots of places, close, to take students to.

Loring Park is a beautiful amenity and accessible.

I like the diversity/mix of businessness – restaurants, theatres, housing – Seniors and young people, different cultures – very eclectic mix of people.

Loring Park is centrally located.

Location of Loring Park is a competitive edge.

We need a brand – folks say “are your apartments in uptown?”

Loring Park feels authentic – feels more real – more of a neighborhood. We can work the Artsy/Creative side of things more authentically.

Creative identity of Loring Park is a real asset. This area has 16% residents who work in the creative industry compared to HN County as a whole at 7%. A marker of this community.

Great diversity of ownership here – businesses, Convention Center, Walker Arts Center, the colleges, churches, schools, hotels. Gives us a competitive edge.

Have seen increase in ages – seeing more young students waiting to catch the bus in the morning. It is like a little United Nations. There are also 5 students at Emerson who live in Loring Park Neighborhood.

Minneapolis School Administration stated 3 weeks ago that Emerson would be staying on in the foreseeable future. The students, parents, staff want to stay. They like it here. It is a Spanish Immersion program. Came to Loring Park in 1992. Has been K-8 until this year (5-15 years of age). Middle School children moved to Anwatin. Emerson is now pre-school-5th Grade. Instruction is all in Spanish, up to Year 2 at the school, then they add English in. Students are from all over the city north of 46th Street. 46th to Crosstown students attend a Spanish Immersion on the south end of the City.

Parking lot is leased by 2 Loring Park businesses. After 3:00 on weekdays and on weekends, these businesses contract with the Mpls. Schools. They have exclusive rights to the parking and pay a set monthly fee to the School district. Spirit Garage also uses the lot on Sunday mornings, their church uses the Music Box Theatre. You can park up to 70 cars in the parking lots and if you park on the playground area, more.

Question was asked – what is our identity to Downtown? Are we Downtown or not?

We are NOT downtown – it is Loring Park/folks will come to businesses from downtown and say they live downtown and wanted to come into Loring Park.

Nicollet Ave. seems to be a separate stretch from downtown.

See it as a Gateway to Downtown; lots of pedestrian traffic to and from work/school; lots of busses come and go through to Downtown. Willow is used as a thoroughfare as well.

Hotels on Nicollet make a visual separation/Greenway is also a passage from Downtown to Loring Park.

Answer to the question is how you would approach branding. Going east, the neighborhood fades – no man's land – no one lives there. Face the back of the Convention Center.

The scale is nice in Loring Park – couple of tall buildings, but set backs. A few towers pop up, but overall, scale is nice and you have the Park in the middle; makes it feel open.

Not much synergy between where Loring Kitchen & Bar is and Nicollet Ave. – no easy connections – doesn't feel like a good place to walk.

Grant Street/Hotels create a barrier separating Loring Park from Downtown. The apt. building on Grant is dark and intimidating with commercial businesses not at street level and really inaccessible to folks other than those who live in the building.

No good connections – visually to the Park – disconnected. Need to create clear connections between Nicollet to the Park to Stevens Park to MCAD – a pleasant, walking path.

No residential on the other side of Nicollet (east), we have the Convention Center. There are bodies and residential properties on the west side of Nicollet.

LynLake area has things in the sidewalk, stating that they are Lyn/Lake, there are banners, trees, lighting that enhance the walkability.

Bring back the Loring Theatre marquee!! That will help to announce Loring Neighborhood!

It is a concrete jungle on Nicollet & Grant – Green it up; need to enhance the greening. There is also significant concrete 1 block either side of the freeway bridge on Nicollet. Need a Land Bridge – connect Stevens Square to Loring Park – build in some greening, a place for bikes and parking. Examples of this are in Duluth and Seattle.

Land Use?

Suggestion was made for 8-10 stories; a counter was 4-6; group settled on 5-7 with 7 being the highest and mixed use; commercial at street level.

Beth stated that the City's guidelines state that commercial must be at ground level along Nicollet Mall.

We should do mixed-use development on the east side of Nicollet Ave. where there is no housing – would move Nicollet more as the central commercial corridor. Many opportunities for housing on Nicollet on either parking lots or under-utilized buildings.

Way-finding needed – hard to locate access to the Skyway. Customers and renters cannot find it easily. We need to create ways to make this easier.

Streetcar – Beth reported that the City has identified Nicollet as the top priority for a streetcar. The route would go from Franklin (maybe 46th St.) to NE through downtown. The City has a proposal in for funding. Should funding be received, a consultant would be hired and an Alternatives Analysis done. This analysis would look at transportation, land use, and economic development. Streetcars can replace busses. They stop every 1/8 to 1/4 mile.

Questions raised – would streetcars enhance capacity – moving people? Could parking ratios go down if their was available transit? The higher the density in the future, the more likely funding for streetcars.

Bill asked if there was a model for this stretch of Nicollet?

- North side of Excelsior and Grand
- Downtown Hopkins
- Commercial with housing

City/County/State/Neighborhood/Developer coordination is imperative or development won't happen. We have not hit the bottom of the market yet and when we do, it will be 2-3 years to climb out. We are looking at no development in the next 10 years if no public subsidy; won't do a lot in this Country with that. Competition will be greater for getting funds. Example of Washington Ave. was given as a way the City could help. The City assimilated the properties, cleared the land and cleaned it up for Village Green to develop on. City can help consolidate properties. There is development potential on almost every block here. We have to have street level businesses. Maybe we should put in development guidelines that a developer has to provide for customer/public parking in any development? Lenders want more parking than is needed to ensure the marketability of the development.

There is support for density on Nicollet, but not on Loring Hill or in the Harmon area. It was reported that Harmon has set guidelines per its HPC designation for development.

Discussion of Meter Farm – Question to analysis the need and the use of this parking.

It was suggested that there are lots of lots to park in and that if residents need parking, they should buy a spot. Others felt it was a disadvantage competitively to not have adequate parking as a part of a package; either for residential or commercial. Reported that cars line up to park around Emerson School daily. Many cars are towed at 7:00 a.m. Emerson watches the desperate need for parking in this area. There is some critical parking, we should explore that more.

Time ran out. It was 3:45, so 15 minutes over limit.

All were thanked for coming and reminded to come and recruit folks to come to the **Jan. 20th and Jan. 22nd Master Plan events. Flyers distributed to all.**

Respectfully submitted, JLM/CLPC Coordinator