



2.6 Report on Public Realm Planning Framework Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

Discovery Report on Public Realm Planning Framework

Updated March 25, 2011

This report summarizes the major findings and planning issues with regard to the “public realm” of the Loring Park Neighborhood, addressing in this order:

1. Streets and highways
2. Sidewalks and paths
3. Bicycling lanes and paths
4. Transit
5. Parks and other public open space
6. List of planned public realm improvements
7. List of major planning issues



The view across Loring Pond to the downtown skyline

Sustainability, Land Use, Historic Preservation and Creative Assets /Economic Vitality are discussed in other Discovery documents.

Subjects where consensus exists are identified, as well as areas where policies diverge. Planned or committed public improvements are briefly described. The report concludes with a description of the major issues that should be discussed, debated and resolved during the process of preparing the *Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan*.

Sources for this report include a review of prior plans that affect the Loring Park Neighborhood, comments received at the first two public workshops, and Neighborhood reconnaissance by the consulting team. The documents reviewed are listed at the end of this report.

1. Streets and Highways

The street system in and around the Loring Park Neighborhood is viewed with ambivalence by many residents. Neighborhood streets and nearby major roads are necessary for auto access and deliveries but are also the source of negative effects because the motor vehicles that use them create hazards, noise, air pollution and congestion. Moreover, the auto is sometimes seen as being in opposition to the modes of circulation that are more supportive of major neighborhood objectives. Yet, those alternative modes -- walking, bicycling and transit -- are conducted predominately in the public street rights-of-way.

Thus, one of the major long-term challenges for the Neighborhood will be to find a way to reconcile the competing demands of the several transportation modes that use the Neighborhood street system.

As an older, fully developed neighborhood on the edge the downtown Minneapolis, adjustments to the Neighborhood and surrounding regional motor vehicle network are possible but will likely be limited in scale in the near future. Recent examples would be closing of a portion of Harmon Place near Willow Street, narrowing Harmon Place south of the Fawkes Block, and redesigning Hennepin Avenue west of the Fawkes Block. Future changes on the horizon are all aimed at improving walking, bicycling and transit; those are described below.



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City Comprehensive Planning Policy: Emphasize Multi-Modalism

The transportation element of the *Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan, 2008*, emphasizes multi-modalism. That is, circulation should be conducted not just by autos, but increasingly by walking, bicycling and riding transit. The definition of transit in Minneapolis has grown beyond the bus to include the commuter rail & light-rail system, cabs, car pools and, potentially, streetcars.

This theme is supportive and consistent with the broader objectives previously established by Citizens for a Loring Park Community, which emphasize those alternative modes. Walking, bicycling and transit encourage land development and public spaces that are more dense, diverse and humane than possible with only auto movement. That is certainly consistent with the mixed urban character the Loring Park Neighborhood.

The thinking of City leaders has slowly evolved to this point as the limits to auto circulation have been reached and as state and federal support for alternative modes have grown. The concept of “complete streets,” a logical result, emphasizes accommodating walking, bicycling and transit into a broadening range of street designs. This is leading to a more sophisticated palette of street design standards within all of the conventional functional classifications.

The Street and Highway System of Loring

The street and highway system in and around the Loring Park Neighborhood is classified as follows:

- Principal Arterials: I-94
- B-Minor Arterials: Hennepin and Nicollet Avenues, 12th and 13th Streets
- Collectors: LaSalle and First Avenues, 15th Street, and Groveland Avenue.
- Locals: All others.

The higher a street is on the scale of functional classification, the greater are the expected traffic speeds and volumes and the lower the degree of land access. Street design should be consistent with street functional classification.

Collector streets are designed to accommodate higher levels of traffic volumes than a Local Street and move traffic between Local streets and Arterials. Some of the characteristics of a Collector street compared to an Arterial street are lower volumes (1,000 to 8,000 vehicles per day), lower posted speeds (30 to 35 miles per hour), and shorter trips (1 to 2 miles).

Several streets in the Neighborhood serve the dual purpose of providing access to properties and moving traffic across the Neighborhood. Because the Neighborhood is located on the edge of Downtown and at a bottleneck point for traffic from the south and southwest, a considerable percentage of trips on Neighborhood streets have destinations outside the Neighborhood. Streets serving dual roles include but are not limited to 15th, Groveland, LaSalle, First, Nicollet Hennepin and 12th. Of those, 15th Street seems to be the most troublesome because of its presence on the edge of the park and the speed of the traffic.



I-94 south of the Neighborhood

Traffic signals are located at most intersections along the Minor Arterial streets, and along the Collector streets in the downtown core. All other intersections are controlled by Stop signs.



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Interstate Highways 94 & 394 are major barriers to movement north, west and south/southeast as well as being a source of noise, air pollution and salt spray. I-94 is located in a tunnel under the combined Hennepin and Lyndale Avenues; in other locations on the perimeter of the Neighborhood, it is in a trench. Several interchange ramps are elevated on structures. It is possible that major reconstruction or improvements to the surrounding Interstate infrastructure surrounding the neighborhood may become necessary before 2030. Further research is necessary to determine whether any such changes should have any bearing on the scope of policy in the master plan. (A recent community based design charrette addressed these issues along the Hennepin/Lyndale Corridor, and is further described later in this document.)

Road ownership, or jurisdictional classification, is as follows:

- State: Interstate 94 & 394 (coincident with US 52 and US 12)
- County: Lyndale Avenue (County 22)
- City: All others.

Hennepin County provides funds for the City of Minneapolis to perform certain maintenance functions on the County Roads within the City. Design decisions for County Road are a County responsibility with City comment.

Context Sensitive Solutions and *Access Minneapolis*

Recently, the City of Minneapolis has demonstrated in several projects the principles of “context sensitive solutions (CSS)” (<http://www.ite.org/css/>), which is “...a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist.” -- *Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)*. CSS calls for fewer ‘one-size fits-all’ applications of conventional street design of arterials, collectors and local streets. For instance, ‘Level of Service’ (LOS) (grading A to F the ability for vehicles to move efficiently on a given thoroughfare) has long been a driving metric for which to judge the merits of roadway improvements. It is now only one component of a broader analysis that engineers are required to perform when considering the need for projects.

It is important for communities and the Loring Park Neighborhood to identify and prioritize capital improvements in their districts, to ensure that auto-centric designs get replaced where they are most inhibitive of multi-modalism.

Access Minneapolis: Activity Area Streets

Access Minneapolis proposes that a set of context-based street types be used for planning purposes. All of the B-Minor Arterials and Collector streets listed above are classified as Activity Area Streets, which are defined as follows:

Activity Area Streets support retail, service commercial and higher intensity residential land uses in a large node of several blocks. They are found primarily near activity centers, growth centers and transit station areas as designated in the Minneapolis





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Comprehensive Plan. They may also be found near some neighborhood commercial nodes or major retail centers.

Activity Area Streets may have many different design characteristics and capacities depending on the unique needs within the specific area where they are located. There is no one design appropriate for an activity area street because each street may have unique needs depending on the adjacent land uses and how the street fits into and serves the area. Activity Area Streets typically need significant pedestrian capacity, need to accommodate high transit loadings/unloadings, often serve high bicycle volumes, and have significant on-street and/or off-street parking demand.

Complete Streets Legislation

The Minnesota “Complete Streets” statute allows the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation to grant variances from the normal design standards for a County State Aid or a Municipal State-Aid Highway upon written request from the affected County or City for the purpose of building a “complete street.” The specific statutory reference is: Sec. 11. Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 162.02, subdivision 3a.

“Complete streets” is the planning, scoping, design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of roads in order to reasonably address the safety and accessibility needs of users of all ages and abilities. Complete streets considers the needs of motorists, pedestrians, transit users and vehicles, bicyclists, and commercial and emergency vehicles moving along and across roads, intersections, and crossings in a manner that is sensitive to the local context and recognizes that the needs vary in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Mn/DOT is also required to develop a complete streets policy and report to the Legislature by January 15, 2011. Local road authorities are encouraged but not required to create and adopt complete streets policies for their roads that reflect local context and goals.

Hennepin County was the first Minnesota county to implement a Complete Streets policy as part of its overall [Active Living Hennepin Communities](#) initiative.

*“Complete Streets is designed to **ensure safety and accessibility for all users of the county’s roads, trails and transit systems**, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, commercial and emergency vehicles and people of all ages and abilities.” - For more information:
<http://www.hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47cef06498/?vgnextoid=e32d838b5a8e3210VgnVCM20000048114689RCRD>*

Specific Street Problems and Opportunities

The following problems and opportunities have been identified with the street and highway system in and around the Neighborhood. Each of these also involves other modes, either walking, bicycling or transit.

- 1. Intersection of 15th Street and Oak Grove Street:** This intersection is perceived as being dangerous for both pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists because of its higher traffic speeds, high volumes and poorly defined geometrics.

The three-legged intersection is Y-shaped, the Oak Grove leg is much wider than normal, the corners are much more rounded than normal and there are no provisions for pedestrians. It is controlled by a one-way Stop sign on Oak Grove Street. The distance is approximately 1,120 feet between the two intersections along 15th Street where pedestrians would normally



Intersection of 15th and Oak Grove



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be directed to cross 15th Street to Loring Park; blocks in Minneapolis are typically 300 to 600 feet in length.

An engineer from the City of Minneapolis Transportation Division evaluated this intersection in 2009 and concluded that it does not warrant pedestrian crossing markings based on the relatively low occurrence of accidents there. However, a high number of pedestrians from Loring Hill and further south are ‘funneled’ through this intersection because of the pattern of long blocks, and it is universally conceived in the neighborhood as a very difficult pedestrian crossing in any direction, particularly across to the park. It may be possible that the intimidating nature of the intersection causes pedestrians to defer and employ inordinate caution, which may lead to less auto-pedestrian conflicts, statistically.

2. Speeds and Volumes on 15th Street: Traffic speeds are also perceived as being dangerously high on 15th Street.

(The western terminus of 15th Street is at Oak Grove Street but for purposes of this report “15th Street” will be intended to include the segment of Oak Grove Street that extends from 15th Street to Lyndale Avenue.)

The same 2009 analysis by the Transportation Division indicated that the 85th percentile speed on this street is lower than normally observed along similar Collector streets in Minneapolis. Further, the percentages of vehicles traveling faster than either 35 or 40 miles per hour are lower than observed along similar City streets. Those numbers do not negate the problem perceived by Neighborhood residents, however.



15th Street

Average daily traffic volumes on 15th Street in the Neighborhood decreased between 2005 and 2009, according to counts by the City:

2005: 10,700
2007: 11,399
2008: 9,763
2009: 9,496

However, traffic volumes decreased noticeably on many streets and highways starting in 2008 as a result of the economic recession. Impacts on traffic levels due to the move of the Guthrie Theater should also be considered.

15th Street, a Collector that is the source of many concerns in the Neighborhood, is approximately 46 feet wide curb to curb, striped for two driving lanes and has parking on both sides. A striped left-turn lane is provided at the signalized intersection at Willow Street. Two driving lanes plus parking could normally be accommodated on a street of approximately 36 feet. Several improvements to 15th /16th corridor are planned for 2011, and are outlined later in this document.



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3. **Traffic Speeds on Oak Grove Street:** Traffic speeds were perceived as being too high on Oak Grove Street relative to the restricted sight distances and the volume of pedestrians crossing the street. The Neighborhood requested the City to install speed humps or plateaus to reduce the traffic speeds. The street is 30 feet wide, has parking on one side and numerous driveways.

City engineering staff evaluated the situation and judged that the width of the street, the number of parked cars and the distance between intersections did not meet the City's criteria for the use of such traffic calming techniques.

4. **Intersection of Oak Grove (15th Street) and Hennepin-Lyndale:** This signalized intersection poses dangers for pedestrians and bicyclists. It is difficult, dangerous and intimidating for a pedestrian or bicyclist to cross the Hennepin-Lyndale leg of this intersection despite the presence of signals, walk indicators, striping and refuge islands (raised medians). Pedestrians cannot cross Hennepin-Lyndale in one signal cycle. Likewise, it is dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross Oak Grove at the intersection. A high number of pedestrians, bicyclists & autos are funneled to the intersections of Oak Grove @ 15th & Oak Grove @ Hennepin/Lyndale. This is due to circulation patterns within the Park itself, the pattern of long blocks south of the Park, and limited alternative crossing points across Hennepin/Lyndale from Loring Park to the Sculpture Garden, to the Walker, and to the western neighborhoods of Minneapolis.

Crossing problems are caused by high auto traffic volumes and speeds, the width of the combined Hennepin-Lyndale leg, the many turning movements and the lack of separation between Hennepin Avenue, the adjacent off-street bicycling path and users' occasional failure to strictly follow traffic regulations. The bicycling path was recently extended south of Oak Grove and follows Lyndale Avenue southward, ending at I-94 at the northern edge of the Wedge Neighborhood.

Hennepin-Lyndale cannot be easily crossed because of the width of the street and its volume of more than 30,000 vehicles per day. Minneapolis signal engineers review this intersection periodically and recommended against a change during a 2009 evaluation.

Regarding the bicycle path problem, approaching motorists have a clear sight distance and can see the bike path and cyclists clearly. The City recently installed a sign at the southeast corner of Hennepin Avenue and 15th Street warning both motorists and cyclists of the hazardous intersection. The basic problems are that volumes for all modes are high and that the bicycle path is located too close to the street intersection.



Oak Grove Street



The Loring Bike Path



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5. **Intersection of 15th Street and Willow Street:** This signalized intersection is perceived as being dangerous and difficult for pedestrians to cross because of the high traffic volumes and the many turning movements. The gentle arc of the curb at the corner of Loring Park allows for rolling ‘stops’ by autos, giving them an advantage over pedestrians waiting for the light to turn.



Intersection of 15th and Willow Sts.

Engineers from the City’s Transportation Division evaluated this intersection in 2009 and concluded that there was no undue conflict between pedestrians and southbound traffic turning right or left because the signal was providing sufficient walk green light time (approximately 20 seconds) for pedestrians.

6. **Willow Street near the Loring Greenway:** Pedestrians on the Greenway attempt to cross Willow Street at mid-block and enter Loring Park. This location has pedestrian curb cuts on both sides of Willow Street and a “Pedestrian Crossing” sign on the east side of Willow Streets, establishing a mid-block crossing. The City plans to install a painted pedestrian crosswalk with “Yield to Pedestrian in Crosswalk” signs at this location.
7. **The Hennepin, Lyndale and I-94 Corridor:** The construction of I-94 through the City in the 1960s (and I-394 later on) gashed a trench through an historic residential area, removed many housing units, took out a major hill, created a significant barrier, and implanted a permanent source air pollution and noise. These interstate corridors became the Loring Park Neighborhood boundaries on three sides. Hennepin and Lyndale Avenues, running parallel to the freeway on the western side of the neighborhood, had to be accommodated within the corridor. Three beautiful historic churches, the Walker Art Center and Sculpture Garden, Loring Park and hundreds of housing units now suffer daily from the traffic, noise, vibration, smell and danger of these roads. The scale and character of this highway is totally out of context with the rest of the Loring Park Neighborhood and other nearby neighborhoods.

In response to recent freeway planning efforts by the Minnesota Department of Transportation and ongoing concerns by area residents and institutions, the Lowry Hill Residents Association and Citizens for a Loring Park Community collaborated with the Minneapolis chapter of the American Institute of Architects in organizing the 2008 Hennepin-Lyndale Civic Corridor Charrette at the Walker Art Center. Their recommendations were divided into mitigative actions that might be accomplished in the next fifteen years and longer-term, more visionary, “transformations.” Among their recommendations were:

- Build an acoustical barrier on the western side of Loring Park; this feature should be designed to also reduce salt spray into the park
- Extend the roof of the freeway tunnel north
- Pave the freeway with asphalt designed to reduce noise
- Redesign the intersection of Oak Grove, Hennepin and Lyndale to make it easier for pedestrians to cross in one signal cycle; the same for the crossing at Groveland Avenue. This improvement would be under the jurisdiction of the County and the City.
- Improve the pedestrian environment under the I-94 bridge at Dunwoody Boulevard
- Add plantings and public art along the corridor
- Improve the quality of the bus stop shelters



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- Build a traffic circle on top of the I-94 tunnel that would link Hennepin and Lyndale Avenues and the freeway ramps.

The Hennepin / Lyndale Civic Corridor Design Charrette 2008

April 26, 2008 Charrette Results:

What is the Vision?

The Face of the City: A grand civic corridor that acts as a gateway to downtown Minneapolis, connecting Uptown and Downtown and incorporating an appropriate balance between vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation movements.

What are the Opportunities?

Seamless relationship to the 15th Street Bikeway

Plans to consider Hennepin Avenue as a two-way street with a downtown bikeway element.

A Minneapolis Pedestrian Master Plan, currently underway and coming to a conclusion in 2008.

Funding opportunities for non-motorized transportation projects.

A potential streetcar plan for Hennepin Avenue

Funding opportunities for small scale action projects.

Long-term improvements by MNDOT, addressing potential increased volumes of vehicular traffic through the tunnel and on the exit ramps.

What are the Problems?

Safety and the perception of safety for vehicles and pedestrians within a complex structure of movements.

Litter, graffiti, and maintenance issues associated with a corridor that seems to “lack ownership” due to multiple jurisdictions within the corridor.

Due to the extreme vehicular volumes moving through the corridor, pedestrian amenities and green space have been crowded out of the corridor, resulting in an imbalance that acts as a barrier to connecting the neighborhoods together.

What are the Key Issues?

Environmental/Sustainable perspective: Reducing pollution and noise, introducing more greenery,

encouraging transportation modes that minimize CO2 emissions.

Maintaining quality access for the significant destination institutions and businesses in the adjacent neighborhoods: The Churches, the Walker, and other businesses that reside in the neighborhood and value access for their constituents.

Perceived implementation challenges, given the complexity of the multiple stakeholders and ever-present funding limitations.

Who are the Stakeholders?

The neighborhoods that abut the corridor: Loring Park, Lowry Hill, Bryn Mawr, etc. , The City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, MNDOT, Downtown and Uptown Business Interests, Key Neighborhood Institutions: the Walker Art Center, the Basilica of St. Mary, St. Mark’s Cathedral, Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church, Dunwoodie Institute, The Woman’s Club

What is the Plan?

To articulate a long-term vision for the Civic Corridor that represents the shared perspective of the stakeholders.

To identify short term opportunities and problem areas so that incremental improvements to the Corridor can be executed within a cohesive master plan.

A poster plan titled *Hennepin-Lyndale Civic Corridor Design Charrette: 15 YEAR PLAN* was prepared to document the outcome of a design charrette sponsored by the Minnesota Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 2008. Among its recommendations and observations were:

Hennepin-Lyndale Pedestrian Crossing: The pedestrian crossing at 15th Avenue / Hennepin / Lyndale is dangerous and intimidating. Specific solutions were not offered.

Bicycle Path: The two-way bicycle path along the east side of Hennepin Avenue is confusing



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and somewhat dangerous, especially at road intersections. Its use by pedestrians adds to the problems for bicyclists.

Pedestrian Routes: The pedestrian routes that pass across this corridor between downtown, the Walker Art Institute and the lakes should be made more clear and safe.

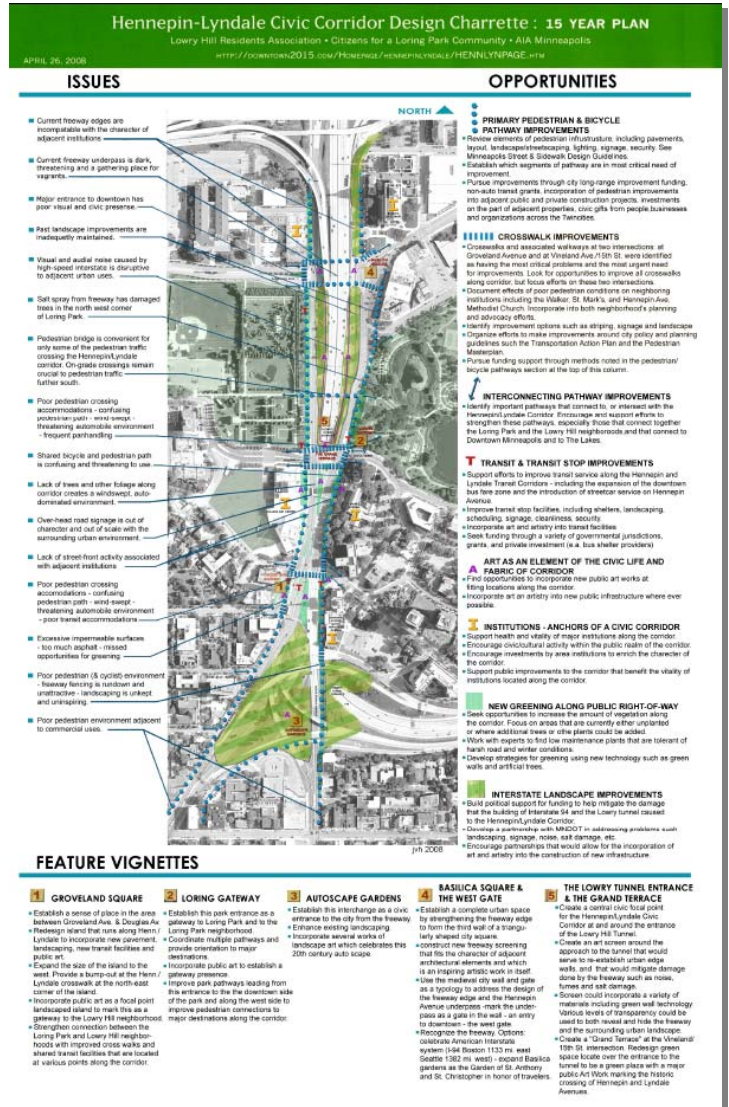
Loring Park Corner: The southwest entrance to Loring Park should be redesigned for improved flow of pedestrians and bicyclists, a stronger sense of arrival and entry, and improved route-finding across and around the park.

I-94 Interchange: The interchange of I94, Hennepin and Lyndale Avenues should receive landscaping and public art to make it into more of an entrance to the city from the freeway and a celebration of 20th Century auto-scape.

Basilica Square: The freeway underpass at Dunwoody Boulevard is dark, noisy and foreboding. Establish a complete urban space at Basilica Square and The West Gate by strengthening the freeway edge to for a third wall of a triangle-shaped city plaza. Construct new freeway screening that fits the character of adjacent architectural elements and which is an inspiring artistic work in itself. Mark the underpass as a gate in the wall.

The Lowry Tunnel Entrance and the Grand Terrace: Create a central civic focal point for the Hennepin-Lyndale Civic Corridor at and around the entrance of the Lowry Hill Tunnel. Create an art screen around the approach to the tunnel that would serve to re-establish urban edge walls and that would mitigate damage done by the freeway including noise, fumes and salt spray. The screen could include a variety of materials such as green wall technology. Various levels of transparency could be used to both reveal and hide the freeway and the surrounding urban landscape. Finally, create a “Grand Terrace” at the Vineland-15th Street intersection. Redesign the green space

located over the entrance to the tunnel to be a green plaza with a major public art work marking the historic crossing of Hennepin and Lyndale Avenues.





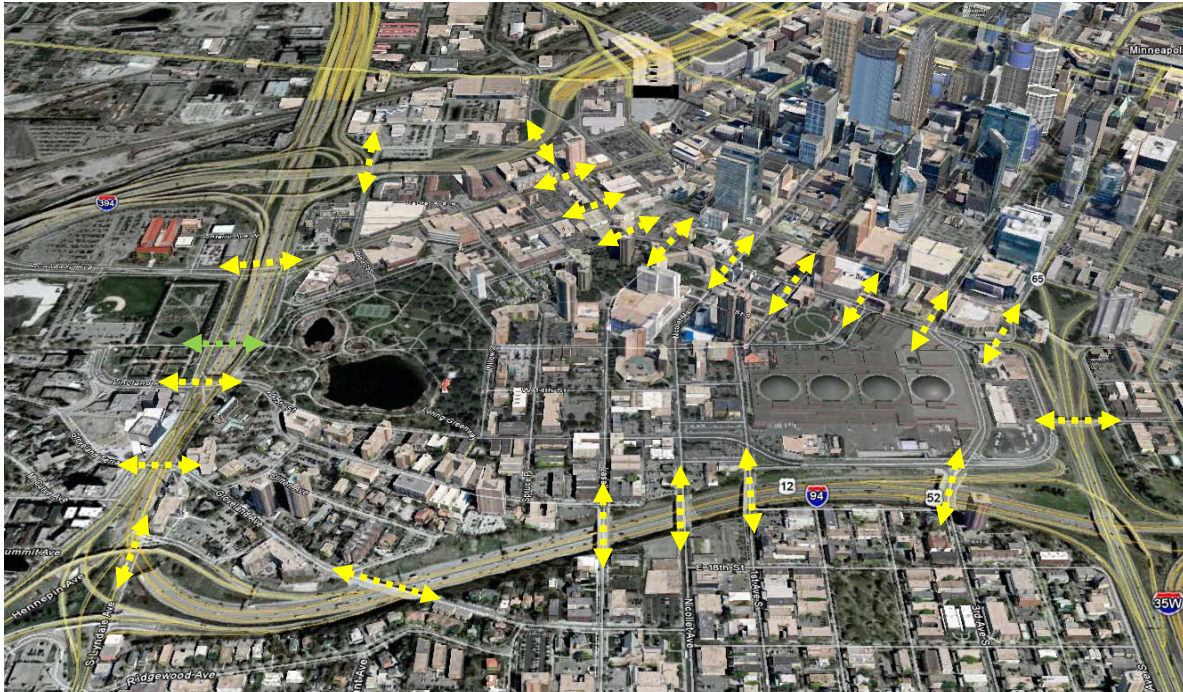
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8. **Connections:** The connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and districts has been identified as a major concern.

Streets within the Neighborhood connect to the grid of downtown streets at numerous points but the freeway on the north, west and south/southeast sides of the Neighborhood creates barriers. (See the map below.)

There are bridges with sidewalks over the freeway at Third, First, Nicollet, LaSalle and Groveland Avenues. Near Loring Park, and there is a bridge dedicated to pedestrians and bicyclists that leads to the Walker Sculpture Garden. The S. Third Street bridge was recently rebuilt with decorative railings and lighting as part of upgrading S. Third Street to serve as the “Avenue of the Arts” from the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts to the riverfront. The LaSalle Avenue bridge was redecked in 2010; driving lanes were narrowed by one foot each and the sidewalks were widened; the “Minneapolis Railing” was added in place of chain link fence. These improvements has been met with general approval in the community.

More difficult connections are west to Vineland Place; southwest to the lakes area, Kenwood, Wedge & Uptown; northwest to the Dunwoody Institute and the planned Van White Boulevard; and north to the planned light rail transit station on Royalston Street near the Minneapolis Farmers’ Market and Target Field. One of two connections east to Elliot Park is near a 15th Avenue bridge across I-94 at the 11th Street exit. This bridge has chain-link safety fencing, and is not visually appealing.



This image depicts the many street connections to adjacent neighborhoods and districts

There is a strong desire by residents of both neighborhoods for a more attractive linkage between the Loring Park and Stevens Square-Loring Heights Neighborhoods. Architecture improvements to the



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bridges at Nicollet, First and Groveland are desired. In 2010, no improvements to those bridges were included in the capital improvements of the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

- 9. **Streetcar System:** Minneapolis has received a major federal grant to study the economic and physical feasibility of installing a streetcar system along Nicollet and Central Avenues, with the first stage running south to Franklin Avenue. Subsequent stages could take the route to Lake Street and ultimately to 46th Street. The effect of this system on driving lanes and parking along Nicollet Avenue in the Neighborhood has not yet been determined but, usually, no driving or parking lanes are lost to streetcar tracks.



A streetcar in mixed traffic.
Note the bicycle lane on the left.

- 10. **LaSalle and First Avenues:** It is recommended in the *Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan* that LaSalle and First Avenues be studied for conversion to two-way movement.

- 11. **Spruce Place Near MCTC:** The volume and speed of traffic on this short street are a concern to students and other members of the Minneapolis Community and Technical College community. One suggested solution is to close the street from Hennepin Avenue to Harmon Place to through traffic but allow truck access to loading docks. Another is to install speed plateaus.

- 12. **The “Meter Farm:”** Excess right-of-way from the former 15th Street between Nicollet and First Avenues is used as metered public parking. This site is holds potential for redevelopment and lacks edge landscaping. The City issued a request for development proposals on this site in 2004; much effort was invested by a prospective developer, the City and the CLPC to achieve a redevelopment project but development was stalled because of several complicating factors in the City process. The CLPC also prepared design guidelines in 2004 for potential redevelopment of this and two nearby sites, in partnership with the Center for Neighborhoods and its Corridor Housing Initiative. All of the coin-operated meters have now been replaced with two centralized pay stations. Eventually, these pay stations will be accessible in Somali and Hmong, presently they are in English, Spanish, French & German.

- 13. **Basilica of St Mary’s Master Plan** – The Basilica of St. Mary’s has carried out internal campus master planning, conducted by by Damon Farber, that addresses circulation, traffic flow & control, and parking efficiency issues on 17th and Laurel Streets adjacent to the site.

2. Sidewalks and Paths

Opportunities and problems with sidewalks and paths in the Neighborhood are described below. Others were described in the preceding section, Streets and Highways.

Throughout the Neighborhood

Walking is a major form of circulation in the Loring Park Neighborhood because a concrete sidewalk exists on nearly every block face, travel distances are often relatively short and nearby transit routes allow walking trips to be greatly extended. Short trips are created by the fact that many residents are employed in the adjacent



An historic apartment building with young street trees along 16th Street



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Downtown and because buses run frequently on nearby Hennepin/Lyndale Avenue Corridor and Nicollet Avenue.

Sidewalks are generally in good condition but many are aging. The City has a program of inspection and replacement that should ensure that conditions do not deteriorate severely.

The Walking Environment

An important consideration in addition to the mere presence of sidewalks is the walking environment, which is affected by sidewalk location, the green boulevard strip, street trees, the adjacent building facades, adjacent land use and driveways or street intersections.



A sidewalk along Spruce Place

Many sidewalks in the Neighborhood are immediately behind the curb, which helps one exit a parked car and reduces salt damage; all other streets have green boulevards.

The overall pattern of street trees is irregular, but where they exist, the sidewalk environment is greatly enhanced. The commercial areas tend to have fewer trees while the residential areas and major redevelopment sites have more. The trees are located in grates in the sidewalk unless there is a green boulevard strip. Additional street trees would definitely help improve the look and feel of some neighborhood streets.

With some specific exceptions (gaps), overall frontage conditions of buildings on most blocks (land use, doorway orientation, front door entry spacing, first floor elevations, lighting, glazing) support a generally comfortable and interesting walking experience throughout the neighborhood. Most buildings have doors and windows that face the sidewalk, and façade materials are usually brick (as opposed to concrete block or poured concrete). There are few on-street parking lots adjacent to sidewalks, but, unfortunately, those that exist are rarely softened with plantings, berms, fences or low walls. Driveways often interrupt the sidewalks because there are few alleys in the Neighborhood. Most blocks on Loring Hill include historic-style decorative street lights, which add to the ambience and emit a pleasing illumination. Further analysis of the frontage conditions and walkability of the neighborhood streets will be provided in a Sustainability Analysis (utilizing walkability metrics provided by United States Green Building Council’s LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND)).



The northern edge of 15th Street

Loring Park Perimeter

One of the few places lacking a sidewalk is the perimeter of Loring Park. There is no perimeter sidewalk on the Park side of the street along Hennepin/Lyndale, from Oak Grove to Harmon Place at the Fawkes Block, nor along 15th, along Oak Grove, or Willow from 15th to Grant. Along the south side of the park, and for stretches along Willow, the steep slope makes installing a sidewalk difficult. In other locations, the slope is more conducive to sidewalks. In fact, a perimeter sidewalk was not recommended in the 1996 design for the park. The concept from that plan was that the edge of the park be landscaped, allowing the the center of the



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park to become more of a green sanctuary. This concept, in practice, often conflicts with the use of the park for large events. Sidewalks on the edge of the park are the responsibility of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Older pictures of the park show a sidewalk along 15th- although it is believed it was taken away when accommodations were made for a wider street design was implemented.

Representative of Friends of Loring Park reports support (by FOLP board) for a sidewalk along Willow between Yale and Grant.

Access to the southwest part of the park by pedestrians and bicyclists is somewhat confusing. A schematic design to resolve the situation was prepared in 2008 and is shown later in this report.

Overhead utility lines detract from appearances along 15th St.

There is potential for Loring Park to be a stronger link for pedestrians along an east-west route between the Downtown, the Walker Art Institute and the Chain of Lakes.

Loring Greenway over LaSalle

The Loring Greenway serves as a key pedestrian link and short-cut between the Neighborhood and Downtown. A longer description is presented under “Parks and other Public Open Space.”

A major drawback created by the elevated Greenway is the fact that it creates a dark tunnel for LaSalle Avenue, which is a pedestrian route to and from Downtown. There is no connection from LaSalle to and from the Greenway. Planning by the Loring Greenway Association at this time does not include plans to make a connection between LaSalle and the Greenway.

Harmon Place

The pedestrian environment along Harmon Place (Avenue) has changed over the years. The auto connection at Hennepin Avenue was closed, creating a one block parking court. More recently, a two-block segment of Harmon Place between Spruce Place and 16th Street was vacated to create a campus pedestrian mall, plaza, green space and garden near corner of Loring Park and the library of the MCTC.

The Fawkes Block Alley

A narrow alley between off of Harmon Place within the Fawkes Block (near Hennepin) has been converted to a delightful pedestrian passageway with shop entrances, intriguing details and a bit of history. This is the type of intimate, human-scaled urban place, often discovered by surprise and long remembered, that makes some older cities so lovable.



Loring Greenway over LaSalle Street



Parking along Harmon Place near the Fawkes Block



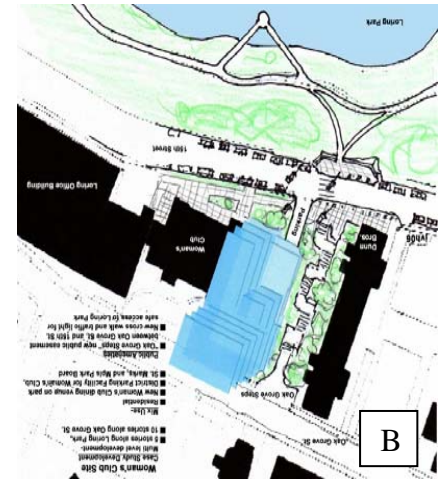
The Fawkes Block alley



2.6 Report on Public Realm Planning Framework Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

The ‘Oak Grove Steps’

A major frustration to pedestrians in the Neighborhood is the length of the block bounded by Oak Grove Street, 15th Street and Spruce Place, which is nearly 1,400 feet. One ambitious solution that is called for in the Loring Hill Design Guidelines would be to build a stairway down the steep slope between Oak Grove and 15th. More informally, similar stairs have been proposed leading up to Clifton and Groveland Avenues. The Loring Hill Design Guidelines locates the proposed stairway from 15th to Oak Grove along the east wall of the Woman’s Club – to the west of the primary Woman’s Club parking lot (Figure A). Another design concept by John VanHeel locates the stair to the east edge of the Woman’s Club parking lot (Figure B). There were steps from Oak Grove to Clifton descending adjacent to the World Mission Prayer League property, but it was closed due to public safety concerns. There were steps from Oak Grove to Clifton descending adjacent to the World Mission Prayer League property, but it was closed due to public safety concerns. The concept may deserve more in depth feasibility study, as the grade changes create several technical and cost issues.



Hennepin Avenue (Basilica to 12th Avenue) Hennepin Avenue feels apart from the Neighborhood, like a border or barrier. However, it is very much part of the Neighborhood and one of its major entrances or faces. The perception of Hennepin as an edge probably results from its width and high traffic volume. Hennepin Avenue has been the subject of much urban design attention by the City because it is a major traffic entrance to downtown and functions as entertainment strip, edge of the office core, educational center and bus route. Consequently, there are street trees, bus shelters, contemporary overhead lights and interesting land development relating to the sidewalk all along its length. The Basilica of St. Mary, Laurel Village, Minneapolis Community and Technical College and St. Thomas University are major elements of the Neighborhood in this corridor. The City has a goal by 2012 of a full reconstruction of Hennepin Ave. – replacing sidewalks, street, streetscape. Due to this, the Master Plan is clearly an opportunity to reflect the level of community engagement expected, as well as to specify the public realm improvements desired by the community.

Laurel Avenue and the I-394 Edge

Beyond Hennepin Avenue is a leafy residential enclave of historic and contemporary apartment buildings. Cut-off and dismembered by the I-394 freeway, this pocket of housing survives nicely because of its easy access to Downtown, solid housing stock and well-designed redevelopment. Streets here are lined with trees. Street-edge landscaping was recently added near the Post Office in this area, and that work has been appreciated.



Laurel Avenue



2.6 Report on Public Realm Planning Framework

Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

LaSalle Avenue

LaSalle Avenue is one-way southbound with two driving lanes and two parking lanes. Trees are limited to the private properties but there are historic-style pedestrian scale street lights plus contemporary overhead lights. The adjacent land development is highly varied and not entirely supportive of walking. Overall, this corridor is dominated by the autos, particularly as you move northward toward Downtown. There is a hardscaped tunnel, mentioned earlier in this report, created by the Loring Greenway, that makes LaSalle a particularly dark and unsafe option for pedestrians moving to and from downtown.

Nicollet Avenue

Nicollet Avenue has long been a focus of neighborhood concern and efforts. Nicollet Avenue has wide sidewalks, a regular pattern of street trees (trimmed to reveal façade signs), newer transit shelters and benches, and contemporary overhead street lighting. The lively small businesses attract many customers from beyond the Neighborhood and generate continual sidewalk activity. Unfortunately, recently there has been increased perception of growing nuisance and personal security problems here. Overhead utility lines also detract from appearances.



Nicollet Avenue south of 15th St.

Nicollet Avenue seems to be more of an edge than a seam for the neighborhood, perhaps because it is much different from the residential environment around the park and because there is relatively little housing to the east. It has been suggested that its identification as part of the neighborhood could be improved through architecture, signage, and other public improvements, especially at the intersection at 15th Street.

Some residents have commented that the experience of walking from Downtown (north of the Hyatt) to 14th or 15th Street is unpleasant because the buildings do not relate well to the sidewalk, the sidewalks are underlit and there occasionally are panhandlers and similar characters.

The efforts of CLPC along Nicollet Avenue include:

- The Nicollet Avenue streetscape improvements (with Stevens' Square and Whittier Neighborhoods)
- Branding and marketing; creating the "Eat Street" theme (with Stevens Square and Whittier Neighborhoods)
- Investing in business façade improvements
- Adding ornamental lighting along side streets
- Adding kiosk graphics at Grant Street and the convention center entrance
- Participating in the city's first Corridor Housing Initiative location (a cooperative effort that included the City of Minneapolis and the Metropolitan Design Center at the University of Minnesota)
- The Nicollet Avenue Task Force Development Guidelines
- Working with the City on a redevelopment RFP for the "meter farm" site.

First Avenue

First Avenue lacks the streetscape improvements found on Nicollet Avenue. Street trees are limited to a portion of the convention center edge and most building facades are blank and foreboding.



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Vicinity of the Minneapolis Convention Center

The easterly portion of the Neighborhood has an entirely different look and feel from the western, residential and mixed use area. This bustling precinct is definitely part of Downtown. The convention center dominates the area and there is much auto traffic. On the northern side, there is abundant street landscaping, greenery, a park above an underground parking structure, attractive streetscape, public art, new buildings, pedestrian activity (many visitors) and magnificent views of Downtown high rise buildings. Managing high volumes of traffic is the primary function of the street system. This area is separated from the Loring Park region by the foreboding trio of LaSalle, Nicollet and First Avenues.



The Minneapolis Convention Center

In 2010, the walking environment was enhanced along 13th Street from Nicollet Avenue to Grant Street to improve the linkage from the mall to the convention center. In 2002, the City installed streetscape improvements on Grant Street with the aim of strengthening the link between Nicollet Avenue (“Eat Street”) and the convention center. However, the City did not implement a maintenance plan for the improvements, and they have fallen into disrepair.

Freeway Bridges and Underpasses

Although the freeway bridges at First, Nicollet, Linden and 11th have sidewalks, the walking environment is unpleasant. The Groveland Avenue bridge is said to be unsafe for pedestrians because of its length and isolation. The new LaSalle bridge improvements completed in 2010 have received positive reviews.



The Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge

The freeway underpass at Dunwoody Boulevard is dark, noisy and full of auto traffic. The pedestrian crossings at Groveland and Oak Grove are difficult and dangerous.

The freeway bridge sidewalks do at least have curb cuts. There is also enough width on the bridge decks for bicycling outside the traffic lanes.

There are four routes to walk from the Loring Park Neighborhood to points west of the north-south portion of I-94:

- An at-grade signalized crossing at Groveland Avenue
- An at-grade signalized crossing at Oak Grove
- The Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge, designed by Siah Armajani in 1987, between Loring Park and the Walker Sculpture Garden, for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Along Hennepin Avenue where it passes under the freeway near the Basilica of St. Mary.

Of these, only the Whitney Bridge is pleasant and safe.

Seal-coating Expected

Seal-coating is expected on Groveland Ave., 3rd Ave. and Grant St.



2.6 Report on Public Realm Planning Framework

Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

Connections to the Skyway System

Entrances to the Downtown Skyway system from the sidewalks are notoriously difficult to find. The nearest entries from this neighborhood are in the Loring parking ramp and the Hyatt Regency Hotel along Nicollet Avenue. However, they are not obvious.

Tree Canopy

The City of Minneapolis Urban Forest Policy calls for aggressive replacement and expansion of Minneapolis' urban forest, and recently launched a \$25/tree planting initiative (with the Tree Trust) to encourage the planting of more trees throughout Minneapolis, including Loring Park Neighborhood.

*“The urban forest is a major capital asset in any city. In Minneapolis, more than 979,000 trees provide incredible beauty and shade while covering more than 26% of our urban landscape. The majority of Minneapolis' trees belong to five species: green ash *Fraxinus pennsylvanica* (14.4%), sugar maple *Acer saccharum* (13.1%), norway maple *Acer platnoides* (11.8%), littleleaf linden *Tilia cordata*, (10.4%) and the American elm *Ulmus Americana* (9.9%).”*

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/urbantreecanopy.asp>

City of Minneapolis Urban Forest Policy

http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/docs/urban_forest_policy.pdf

This policy was adopted in 2004 and is a collaboration of several city agencies, including NRP.

The Forestry Division of the Minneapolis Parks & Recreation Board (MPRB) manages all City-owned trees in Minneapolis:

“...the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Forestry Division is responsible for all City-owned trees. It monitors the planting, pruning and removal of trees on public property, which includes 6,732 acres of park land...”

<http://www.minneapolisparcs.org/default.asp?PageID=28>

How Trees Are Placed

“The Forestry Division is responsible for tree assignments and maintains a list of tree species by street that is referred to it as the Master Planting Plan. When new trees are planted on boulevards, they must conform to the Master Planting Plan. The Director of Forestry can make changes in the Master Planting Plan to allow for the deletion of poor species and the addition of superior species.

When planting trees in residential areas, the Forestry Division adheres to the "block by block," "uniform look" or "symmetrical street" planting philosophy. This means that one or two species of tree are assigned to a particular street or Division of a street. To alleviate concerns that this philosophy will create a monoculture or over dependence upon one tree species, Forestry purposely staggers the number of species throughout the City. This means that while one street will have one type of tree, surrounding streets will have different trees. This reduces the threat of an insect or disease infestation that can devastate a geographical area....” <http://www.minneapolisparcs.org/default.asp?PageID=531#master>

The MPRB website also publishes information regarding

- General Tree Placement Guidelines
- Tree Placement Criteria
- Notification of Tree Planting

The 2010 CURA study in support of the neighborhoods LEED-ND research identified and mapped tree canopy throughout the neighborhood.



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3. Bicycling Lanes and Paths

15th and Oak Grove Streets

As noted above, 15th Street has excess width, and traffic speeds are perceived as being too high.

(The western terminus of 15th Street is at Oak Grove Street but for purposes of this report “15th Street” will be intended to include the segment of Oak Grove Street that extends from 15th Street to Hennepin/Lyndale Avenue.)

There is a fair volume of bicycle traffic along 15th Street because it is the only route that runs all the way east-west across the Neighborhood and it connects to a key crossing of Hennepin/Lyndale Avenue. There is space for a pair of striped bicycle lanes on the street from Hennepin Avenue to Willow Street. The *Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan* designates 15th Street as a “bikeway” even though it presently lacks any such improvements.



15th Street looking west from Willow Street

Fifteenth and Sixteenth Streets are programmed to receive bicycle lane permanent striping in 2011 from Hennepin Avenue to 4th Avenue. Fifteenth Avenue east of 4th Street (in the Elliot Park Neighborhood) will receive shared lane markings (“sharrows”) or bicycle lanes. To accommodate these additions, travel and parking lanes on 15th Street between Oak Grove Street and Nicollet Avenue will be narrowed, which required a Federal-Aid design exception. One of two travel lanes in each direction will be removed from 16th Street between 1st and 3rd Avenues. On-street parking will be added to 16th Street between 1st and 3rd Avenues in both directions, and to 15th Street between Nicollet and 1st Avenue in the westbound direction. Finally, bicycle parking racks will be installed at ten locations along this corridor (plus other locations along First and Blaisdell Avenues south of the Neighborhood). Colored green conflict zones will be striped onto the street where motorists must cross the bicycle lane to enter a right-turn lane on 16th Street at 3rd Avenue (both eastbound and westbound) and at the eastbound approach to the I-94 westbound ramp near 4th Avenue.



The Loring Bike Path

Loring Park Bicycle Path

The Loring Park Bicycle Path is a direct and understandable route from Harmon Place and the Minneapolis Community and Technical College to Lyndale Avenue south of I-94. However, as noted previously, the intersection of this path and Oak Grove is quite dangerous for several reasons, primarily because it is located too close to Hennepin Avenue. (It violates the design principle of separating intersections.) In addition, pedestrians also use this path, sometimes creating conflicts with the bicyclists. Colored green crosswalks (or trail crossings) will be added in 2011 where the Loring Greenway crosses 15th Street and Groveland Avenue.

Since it was redesigned in the 1990s, there is not a direct and smooth bicycling path diagonally across Loring Park. This is probably to the benefit of pedestrians in the park. Bicyclists are thereby encouraged to use the new asphalt Loring Park Bicycle Path that runs along the western edge of the park.



Sketch for Park Entrance



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The southwest entrance to the park at 15th Street is a bit confusing to bicyclists and pedestrians. It may also result in some congestion at the intersection, adding to the hazards there. A sketch plan was drawn for improving that location in 2008.



Hennepin Avenue Bike Lane Sign

Hennepin Avenue Bike Lanes

Portions of Hennepin Avenue and the parallel First Avenue North were reconfigured in 2009 to provide better bicycling lanes. An evaluation of those changes was prepared and is available at: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/hennepinfirst/docs/Hennepin_1st_evaluation.pdf. The first stage of improvements extended only as far south as 12th Avenue. Subsequent stages are expected to extend the improvements south from 12th to Lyndale Avenue and north from 1st Avenue across the river to Central Avenue.



The Cedar Lake Bike Path

Other Corridors

The Minneapolis comprehensive Plan notes that portions of Nicollet, LaSalle and First Avenues near the Loring Park Neighborhood are each gaps in the on-street bicycle lane system. The I-94 bridges along these streets are sufficiently wide for bicycling outside the driving lanes. On-street bicycling lanes are proposed in the Comprehensive Plan along LaSalle, 12th, 15th, First-Grant-Second (traveling in front of Convention Center), and southward along Hennepin/Lyndale Avenue Corridor.

Other needs for safe and understandable bicycling routes from the Loring Park Neighborhood are:

- To the Cedar Lake Bicycle Path (which will soon be extended to the city-wide system at the Mississippi River)
- To the planned Van White Boulevard & Van White light rail transit station
- To the planned Royalston light rail transit station
- To “The Interchange,” the confluence of the Hiawatha LRT, the Southwest LRT and the Northstar Commuter Rail lines adjacent to Target Field.



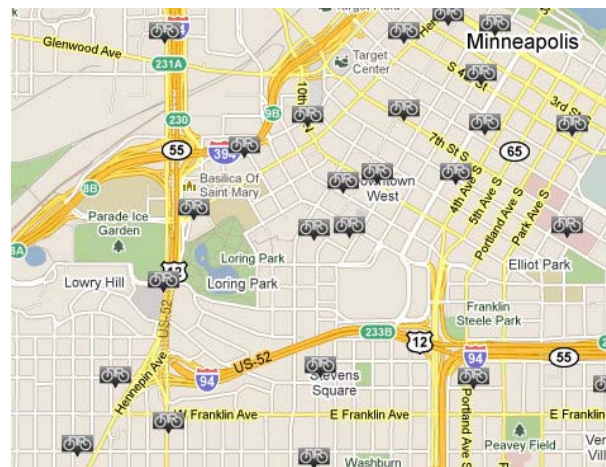
A Nice Ride bike rental station near Laurel Village

Each of those routes to the northwest will be difficult to design and implement because of the labyrinth of major, conflicting roads.

Nice Ride Rental Bicycles

There are four Nice Ride bicycle rental stations in the Loring Park Neighborhood, and one located at the Walker. This growing system allows residents and visitors to conveniently obtain short-term cycle transportation for utilitarian or recreational trips. (See map of locations at <http://www.niceridemn.org>.

Figure from website to the right shows station locations within Loring Park Neighborhood and nearby.)





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4. Transit

The Loring Park Neighborhood benefits from easy transit access, and more improvements are anticipated in the near future.

Bus Routes

Bus routes exist along Nicollet and Hennepin Avenues, and a route composed of Grant, Willow and 15th Streets. Only local (short route) buses run on Nicollet Avenue.



An MTC bus on Nicollet Avenue

Access to the light rail transit system is available in Downtown on Fifth Street near the Nicollet Mall, which can be accessed by bus from the Neighborhood, bicycling or a long walk.

A proposal has been studied to extend the Downtown \$0.50 bus fare district along Nicollet Avenue to the freeway. This idea was studied in the summer of 2007 but did not include the peak hours. It has been suggested that this idea be linked with expanding the Downtown Improvement District along Nicollet Avenue to I-94, acknowledging that the corridor is part of Downtown. (it should be noted that residential properties may not be assessed for benefits from the Downtown Improvement District.)

Streetcar System

The City may build a streetcar system from Nicollet Avenue from Fifth Street south to Franklin Avenue in Stage One, then to Lake Street and beyond to 46th Street in subsequent steps. On the north end, the route would cross the river to Central Avenue NE. The City has applied and received funds from the Federal Transit Administration to conduct an Urban Circulator Alternatives Analysis, where they will measure benefits of streetcar, bus, and ‘no build’ options for the Nicollet Corridor.



A streetcar in Portland, Oregon

Although there is presently bus service on Nicollet Avenue, a streetcar is expected to provide a higher level of service and comfort, thus attracting more riders including those who might normally use an auto. It also has a lower operating cost, although the initial capital cost is high. Several options are being explored for the local share of the capital cost including assessments of property owners in the corridor and dedicating some of the City-wide parking meter revenue. The city is hoping and expecting that a streetcar system will significantly boost land development along the route. There appears to be potential along Nicollet Avenue in the Loring Park Neighborhood to take advantage of that opportunity and incentive.

A streetcar operates in an auto traffic lane of a street. Autos may drive on the rails, which are flush with the street surface, and may block the progress of the streetcar if they wish. Passengers board and alight by walking to the streetcar from the curb. Thus, traffic lanes and parking are not expected to be displaced by the streetcar system.



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Light Rail Transit

Preliminary engineering was underway in 2010 for a Southwest Light Rail Transit line that would run from the end of the Hiawatha LRT line near Target Field to the City of Eden Prairie. Stations are planned along Royalston Street (near the Farmers' Market) and near the point where the future Van White Boulevard would intersect Linden Street and Dunwoody Boulevard. (Van White Boulevard is planned to be extended south from Olson Memorial Highway, across the City auto impound lot and the Minneapolis Public Works storage yard as part of a major redevelopment of that area.)

Walking or bicycling to the planned Royalston station would be a challenge because of the angled and discontinuous pattern of streets between the Neighborhood and the station in addition to the industrial and commercial nature of the district beyond Hennepin Avenue. Eleventh or 12th Streets would be the routes across I-394 to the Royalston station from the Neighborhood, and both are ill-suited for walking at this time. Currently, the nearest and most convenient LRT station would be on Fifth Street near Nicollet Mall.

Hour Car

The Loring Park Neighborhood and Uptown were the first locations in the city to be provided with car-share service. Car-sharing provides an important back-up mode of transportation for people whose primary means is walking, many of whom do not own an automobile. Car-sharing is recognized as a tool in the Travel Demand section of *Access Minneapolis – Downtown Action Plan*.

5. Parks and other Public Open Space

The Loring Park Neighborhood is blessed with two of the finest formal public spaces to be found anywhere: Loring Park and Loring Greenway.

Loring Park

Loring Park, originally named Central Park, was redesigned and improved in the mid-1990s, based on a plan led by landscape architect Diana Balmori. This was done with Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) funds & private contributions. Park improvements were designated as #1 priority in the Neighborhood's NRP Phase I. It appears that most but not all of the recommended improvements have been accomplished. Work remaining to be done includes adding a raised pedestrian crosswalk on Willow Street between the Loring Greenway and the Berger Fountain, rebuilding the Berger Fountain and plaza, creating entrance plazas at the southeast corner of the park and at the Hennepin Avenue entrance, installing new lighting and renovating the small building near the bridge.

Some paths should also be adjusted because certain sections of the system do did not function well. It would be especially beneficial to have a well marked and lit main pathway through the park from the Loring Greenway to the Hennepin Avenue entrance so that it would be clear for visitors how to walk from Downtown to the sculpture garden. It would also be a good idea to more clearly separate bicyclists and pedestrians and to provide a clear bicycling route from the southwest entrance to and from Downtown.



Images of Loring Park



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Another unfinished recommendation from the 1996 park plan was a noise abatement berm along the Hennepin Avenue edge. A torrent of traffic noise and a fine mist of salt spray adversely affect the park. The salt spray is sufficiently severe as to affect which plants and trees can survive all the way to the center of the park. The art wall and berm are far too small to mitigate this impact.

As noted above, there may be need for a sidewalk on the perimeter of the park where there is parking (portions of Willow and 15th Streets). However, along 15th Street, there is a steep slope adjacent to the parked cars, making it difficult to walk to the cars and difficult to add a sidewalk. Old photos show evidence that there was a sidewalk along the perimeter of the park, but was not reinstalled when the roadway was widened.

Other desired improvements that have been noted include better maintenance of the lawns to reduce the proliferation of dandelions and diversifying the plant life along the lake edges. Removing the exotic hybrid cattail (*Typha x glauca*) is the primary goal, followed by restoring the native wetland plants that were there after the 1997 renovation. The hybrid cattail has formed a monoculture almost all the way around the pond and is starting to grow out over the deeper water. It is a safety issue in a heavily used downtown park and is tall enough to block the view of the water from paths in the park; it does not support the diversity of wildlife habitat that the native plants do.

Tree restoration is nearly complete. Issues include the maintenance of the tree canopy and the replacement of trees that die.

Loring Park was among the first pieces of land acquired by the original Minneapolis Park Board, in 1883, at a cost of \$5,000 per acre (in 1883 dollars!). It was originally called Central Park, and was initially considered beyond the edge of the city. Several acres have been lost because of street or highway construction on the west and south sides. Charles Loring was the first parks superintendent in Minneapolis and fought to keep the name Central Park.

The Park Board has not funded any Loring Park improvements in its 5 year Capital Improvements Plan.

The Loring Greenway

The Loring Greenway, which opened in 1980, is a magnificent and captivating walkway between Nicollet Avenue and Loring Park. Despite the historic fabric it displaced, it is one of the best initiatives to emerge from the 1970s redevelopment of that end of the mall. Together with Peavey Plaza, the Greenway was an effort to connect Downtown to Loring Park, the Walker-Guthrie complex and beyond to the Chain of Lakes.

The Greenway is an example of the modern style of urban plaza design that represented a new urban park aesthetic. Both the Greenway and Peavey Plaza were designed by noted landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg. The defining features of their design includes multiple levels, the use of concrete to create hard spaces, water features, sculptures, a playground, lawns and plantings. As such, it helped attract a variety of high-quality residential and commercial developments to its vicinity.

Some community members have expressed an opinion that the Greenway more private than public, that it lacks sufficient “eyes on the street” for personal security, and that the dark tunnel created along



The Loring Greenway



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LaSalle Avenue is unacceptable. There are stalls along the Greenway, towards Nicollet Mall, apparently originally intended for small scale retail that have not been activated.

A citizen committee prepared a plan in 2000 to renovate and improve the passage. Using money from the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program, a new playground was constructed and lighting was improved. The committee went into a dormant period for a few years until it was revitalized around the crumbling state of the Greenway's walkways, fountains and neglected landscape. Renewed leadership--with the help of City Councilmember Lisa Goodman and the Mayor--pressed the city for a complete renewal of the Greenway. Major renovation work was completed during the summers of 2007 and 2008, at a cost to the City of \$2.8 million. The citizen committee evolved into the Loring Greenway Association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that raises funds from private donors in support of the work of volunteers and a professional landscaping firm to maintain and nurture Greenway plantings. The Board also develops strategies to improve the Greenway's physical environment, improve security and program events and activities.



The Basilica of St. Mary

More recent planning has been carried out by the Loring Greenway Association, with assistance of Damon Farber Associates. It is an initiative informally titled 'Finish the Plan', and addresses remaining improvements including lighting, planting and benches.

The Loring Greenway, along with Nicollet Avenue, is identified as a Primary Pedestrian Route by Access Minneapolis.

Hennepin Avenue South of the Basilica of St. Mary

The bend in Hennepin Avenue and the "terminal vista" at the Basilica create a strong sense of gateway to the Downtown. This broad street right-of-way was greatly enhanced when Hennepin Avenue was realigned and the green space moved to the edge of the Fawkes Block. Trees and other plantings have been added at three locations in and around this intersection along with a decorative retaining wall along the freeway edge. The Basilica itself includes a green yard that helps buffer this magnificent edifice from the roaring streams of traffic.

A design for landscaping improvements to the forecourt of the Basilica has been prepared but there is no immediate expectation for implementation.

The Three Terraces Concept

The Three Terraces Concept is an idea to develop or improve public spaces on the north, east and south sides of Loring Park. In conjunction with food and refreshment businesses, locations would be created that provide the community with a way to enjoy the park from the urban edge. The Loring Kitchen & Bar and Dunn Brothers Coffee now comprise the east and south terraces. The area near Joe's Garage would be the third location.



Plaza @ Grant & Nicollet

This space is seen by many as the beginning (south end) of Nicollet Mall, or alternatively, the south end of downtown. The



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intersection deflects the vista northward from Nicollet, marking the shift in the street grid. The public space has green space, lighting and wide sidewalks. The space suffers from a lack of conventional urban frontages; all four corners have walls that are either blank – or buildings set back with focal point entries. 1350 Nicollet addresses the corner with a grand stair, which engages the space, although the commercial spaces in the building are removed from the street. This corner represents the idea of urbanism of the 1960's and 1970's.



St Thomas Mid-block Courtyards **A**

The University of St Thomas has internalized circulation within blocks north of Yale. Future development of the building site next to the former McPhail Center (now owned by the university) will complete the enclosure of the courtyard and terminate the vista up Yale Place. Proper building placement and design will help the appearance of the Yale Place corridor.



Peavey Plaza **B**

Peavey Plaza, a signature public space, is just outside the neighborhood to the north. A landscape architect was just selected to develop a design for renovations to the plaza to complement improvements to Orchestra Hall.

Convention Center Plaza **C**

The issues regarding public space in front of the Convention Center have not yet been addressed through the Discovery or



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Visioning stages. The front of the Convention Center and the blocks that face it are part of the neighborhood but face northward and only relate to the rest of the neighborhood along Grant, as large blank walls face the neighborhood to the west, forming a fairly hard visual edge within the Nicollet District in Loring. Efforts to connect the Convention Center to the west have largely been focused on three issues: doorway to Wesley Church parking lot, streetscape improvements along Grant Street, and skyway access via circulation towers off Grant in the forecourt of the Convention Center.

13th Street Pedestrian Plaza D

A renovation to 13th Street to improve connection from Nicollet Mall to the Convention Center is in implementation. *(More complete status update / summary is needed.)*

Convention Center

The south side of the Convention Center along 15th Street consists of loading and service functions. The fire station buildings that face the street help to soften the edge, but the conditions along 15th are still a ‘no man’s land’ for pedestrians, despite trees and streetscape mitigations. Together, the Interstate 94 trench and the Convention Center, though critical to the success and functioning of downtown Minneapolis, form massive barriers to walkability for the adjacent neighborhoods. Connections to the Elliot Park Neighborhood from Loring Park are very tenuous and circuitous. This is a place in the City that is comfortable for vehicles, but not for pedestrians.



The west side of the Convention Center is landscaped, but the blank walls form an edge to the Nicollet District along First Street.

Urban Gardening & Homegrown Minneapolis

There is interest among some residents to get their fingers into the soil with gardening and composting. The community is just beginning to organize and begin learning about the range of techniques that may work in Loring. Several small locations have been suggested during Master Plan Workshops in the fall of 2010. Homegrown Minneapolis, offered by the City of Minneapolis (<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/homegrown-home.asp>) has launched a pilot program in 2010 for neighborhoods that promotes the local food policy of the City of Minneapolis.



An edible urban micro-garden

“Homegrown Minneapolis is about creating a local, healthy, and sustainable food supply that will positively impact the City and region’s:

Economy: A local food system supports small farms and local jobs, creates new business opportunities, and encourages the re-circulation of financial capital within the city.



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Health: Increasing consumption of healthy foods contributes to improved nutrition and reduced levels of obesity and other chronic diseases.

Food Security: The ability for residents to grow, sell, or easily obtain a consistent, adequate supply of fresh, local foods can empower families and communities to be more self-sufficient and enhance community cohesion.

Environment: Producing and buying local food can improve air quality and pollution by reducing the amount of transportation and packaging required to bring our food from farm to table. Local foods grown in a sustainable manner can also reduce chemical and water usage.

Food Security: A local food system is typically less vulnerable to disruptions due to its smaller scale and decentralized setup. A local food system encourages individuals to share resources in order to provide for the collective needs of their neighbors and the community as a whole.

Food Safety: Food grown locally can be processed and distributed by small- and mid-size operations where careful attention can be paid to food quality and safety measures.”

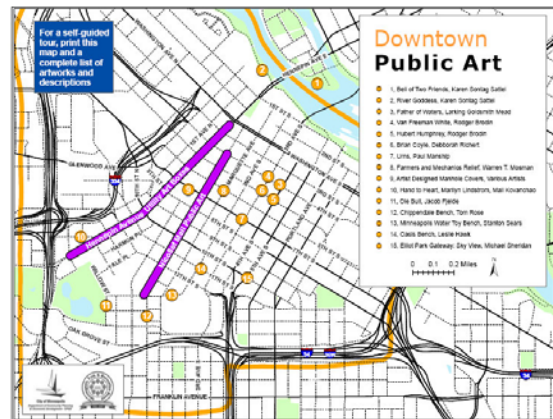
‘Urban’ Composting

Composting for apartment and condo dwellers is becoming easier in Loring due to a local initiative called Urban Compost, which will “...design and implement on-site composting systems for high-density buildings to create a nutrient rich soil enhancer...”. – www.urbancompost.net This is only one example of innovative practices offered locally that serve to reduce waste in the neighborhood.

Public Art

The City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park Board jointly published a map titled Downtown Public Art: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/docs/adt_map.pdf The map identifies six examples in the Loring Park Neighborhood:

- Hand to Heart – Marilyn Lindstrom, Mall Kavanchoo
- Ole Bull – Jacob Fjelde
- Chippendale Bench – Tom Rose
- Minneapolis Water Toy Bench – Stanton Sears
- Hennepin Avenue Utility Art Boxes
- Nicollet Mall Public Art



Additional prominent public art in the neighborhood:

- Berger Fountain
- The Whitney Bridge
- Loring Parking Ramp mural (Monet pixel design)
- Emerson School (various community projects)
- Dog Totem & other installations in the Loring Park Dog Park
- Stained Glass Window in Loring Park Community Center
- ...plus other works to be identified...



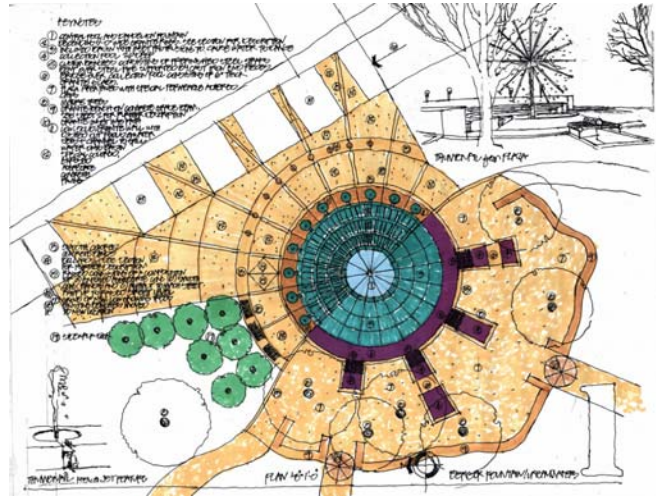
2.6 Report on Public Realm Planning Framework Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

Berger Fountain

A CLPC Board approved concept plan by Robert Cook is published at www.loringpark.org.

Elements of the concept include:

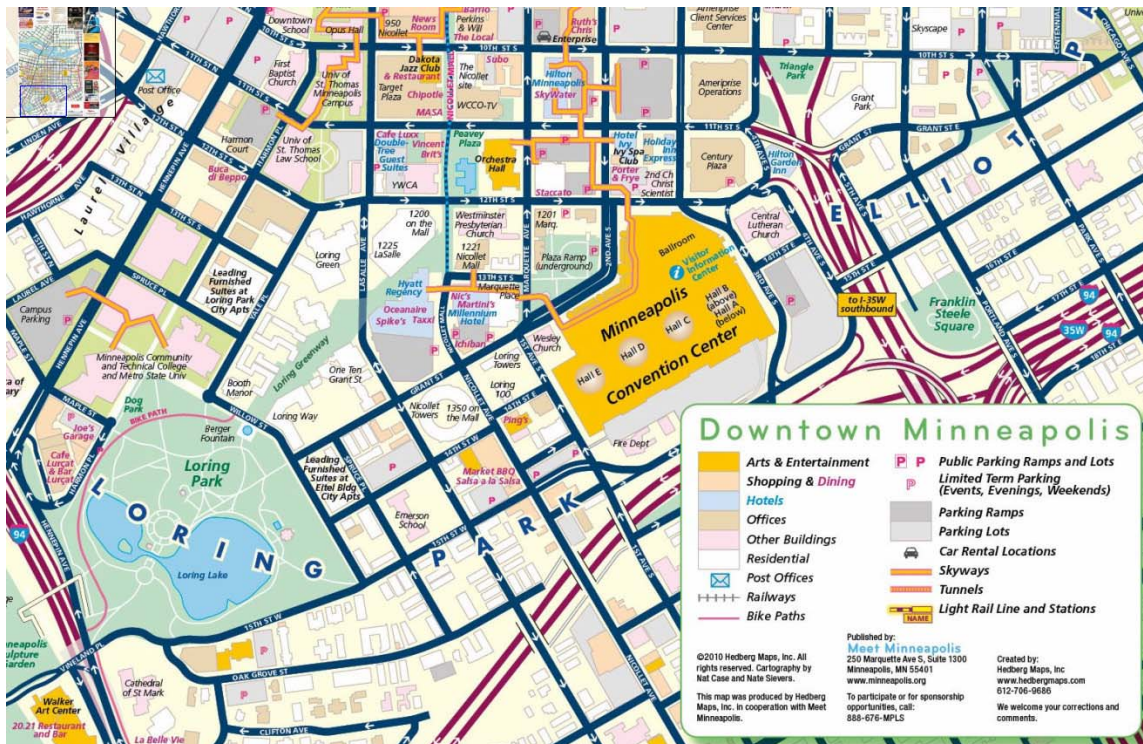
- new plaza made of colored, exposed aggregate concrete paving & smooth colored concrete bands
- new fountain basin
- revised pathway system
- Willow St raised
- illuminated bollards, walls of solid granite
- 24" collection pool w/granite slab bridge
- custom benches of steel & cast iron



Skyway Network

The downtown skyway network extends southward into the Loring Park Neighborhood, through the Convention Center & onward across Nicollet to the Hyatt Regency, which is the southernmost extent (and southern termination) of the network. The skyway system makes walking through downtown more comfortable in harsh weather, but pulls pedestrian activity off the street, making street level spaces less desirable for retail businesses. MCTC has a smaller independent system linking the second levels of three campus buildings; crossing Spruce, Harmon and then across Hennepin to the parking ramp.

Downtown Minneapolis Map below produced by Hedberg Maps Inc. in collaboration with Meet Minneapolis, published at <http://maps.minneapolis.org/page/1/downtown-map.html>





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Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

Planned Public Realm Improvements

The following public improvements in and around the Loring Park Neighborhood are planned, programmed, funded or otherwise deemed inevitable by timing, established policy or community consensus.

Project	Rationale	Timing	Lead Organization
Streets, Sidewalks and Paths			
Raised pedestrian crossing of Willow Street at the Greenway	Improve the connection between Downtown, Loring Park and the Walker Art Center. Improve pedestrian safety.	To be determined. Public Works has promised improved signage & striping	CLPC, Minneapolis Public Works Department (w/ LGA)
Bicycle lanes along Hennepin Avenue from 12 th to Lyndale	Connect the Hennepin / First system to other existing routes (Loring Bike Path, Cedar Lake Trail)	2012	Transit for Livable Communities, through City of Minneapolis
Extension of Cedar Lake Trail	Extend the existing path past Target Field to the West River Parkway path system	2010 (completed?)	Hennepin County in Partnership w/ City of Minneapolis?
West Side Convention Center	Maintain improvements to the pedestrian environment along Grant St between Convention Center & Nicollet.	Unknown	CLPC
13 th Street Pedestrian Plaza	Improve pedestrian connection from Nicollet Mall to Convention Center Plaza	2011/2012	City of Minneapolis
Transit			
Urban Circulator Alternatives Analysis	Improve service and ridership in transit-dependent corridors to Downtown. Requires City and federal funding and engineering.	Preliminary engineering: 2011	City of Minneapolis
Southwest Light Rail Transit Line	Improve transit service to the southwest suburbs; relieve pressure on bus system and roads.	Unknown	Metropolitan Council / Hennepin County
Expanded Downtown Fare Zone		Unknown	City of Minneapolis w/ help of State of Minnesota
Parks and Public Open Space			
Renovate Berger Fountain	Address deferred maintenance.	Concept approved but not funded	Minneapolis Parks and Recreation
Gateway into Park (SW)	Clarify entry & circulation in southwest of park	2011?	City of Minneapolis



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Major Planning Issues Related to the Public Realm

The following major planning issues related to the “public realm” should be discussed, debated and resolved during the course of the *Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan* process.

- **Improvements to the Nicollet Avenue Streetscape:** What improvements should be made in the right-of-way of Nicollet Avenue to complement and take advantage of the streetcar service when, or if, it arrives? Should such improvements be undertaken whether or not there is streetcar service?
- **Improvements to the Intersection of 15th and Oak Grove Streets:** How (exactly) can and should the intersection of 15th and Oak Grove Streets be modified to improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists?
- **Traffic Calming and Bicycling on 15th Street/Oak Grove:** Will the anticipated improvements in 2011 sufficiently address traffic speeds, improve pedestrian safety and enhance bicycling along 15th St/Oak Grove between Hennepin/Lyndale and Nicollet Avenues?
- **Sidewalks on the Perimeter of Loring Park:** Should sidewalks be added to any portion of the perimeter of Loring Park?
- **Loring Hill Stairway:** Should a mid-block stairway be built between Oak Grove and 15th Streets? Between Oak Grove & Clifton?
- **Pedestrian Crossing from the Greenway to the Park:** Should further improvements be made to help pedestrians safely cross Willow Street from the Greenway to the Park?
- **Access to the Southwest LRT Stations:** What should be done to improve the walking and bicycling routes to the nearby stations planned along the Southwest LRT corridor?
- **Access to Bicycling Routes:** What should be done to improve the bicycling connections to the Cedar Lake Trail and the planned Van White Boulevard?
- **Street Trees** – Which streets, specifically, need or deserve further attention to their tree canopy?
- **Surface Parking Lots:** Long range, should these lots serve higher and better uses? In the short term, should owners of surface parking lots be required to improve the treatment of the edges of those lots?
- **Park Protection:** What should be done, if anything, to protect Loring Park from the noise and salt spray generated by Hennepin Avenue and I-94?
- **Harmon Avenue Streetscape:** Should four lanes be reduced to two from Tenth to Spruce? Should lighting and landscaping be improved along Harmon Avenue?



Ideas for Neighborhood public improvements suggested by residents at the “visioning” workshop



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- **Hennepin/Lyndale/I-94 Corridor:** What should be implemented along this corridor to create safer and more humane environments west of the Park, Fawkes Block and in the foreground of the Basilica? Within twenty years, can the nature of the connection to the Sculpture Garden be made stronger? What is realistic?
- **Intersection at Hennepin/Lyndale Avenues & Oak Grove:** Which improvements to improve pedestrian safety does the community feel are most important?
- **Interstate Edge Facing Stevens** – What can be done to improve the neighborhood along the edges of I-94, particularly between the First/Nicollet/LaSalle bridges?
- **Groveland Bridge** – What can be done to improve sense of safety and quality of experience on the Groveland Bridge over 1-94? What has been learned from the LaSalle Bridge improvements?
- **Visual Termination of Yale Place** – St Thomas holds a key site (currently a parking lot that terminates Yale Place. Now may be the best opportunity to engage St Thomas – to express interest in terminating Yale with a beautiful façade or architectural element of exceptional character.
- **Skyway Network** – If the opportunity arises, should they be extended further into the Loring Park Neighborhood? Is current access to the network sufficient?
- **Burying Power Lines** – Burying power lines has been mentioned as a way to improve the aesthetics in the neighborhood in key places. Where should this be prioritized vs. other investments?



Residents participating in the Visioning Workshop on November 6th.



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Some of the Documents Reviewed While Preparing this Report

Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan, 2008
Access Minneapolis: The Year Transportation Action Plan
Minneapolis Bicycle Master Plan
Minneapolis Pedestrian Master Plan
Minneapolis Streetcar Funding Study
Minneapolis Zoning Ordinance
The Loring Park Neighborhood NRP Phase II Ten-year Action Plan, 2009
Nicollet Avenue Development Study, 2001
Nicollet Avenue Development Guidelines, 2004
Nicollet Avenue Traffic and Parking Study, 2003
Nicollet and Lake Traffic Study, 2003
Harmon Place Historic District Design Guidelines, 2002
The Hennepin / Lyndale Civic Corridor Design Charrette, 2008
The Loring Park Master Plan, 1996
The Elliot Park Master Plan
How to Make High Density Housing Development Work to the Advantage of the Loring Park Neighborhood, 2004
Master Plan for the Minneapolis Community and Technical College, 2008
North Loop Master Plan, 2009
Southwest Corridor Station Area Preliminary Engineering, 2010
Proposal for the Loring Pedestrian Arts Corridor
Proposal for the Oak Grove Steps
The Three Terraces Concept
Traffic study memorandum from the City of Minneapolis Traffic Division, 2009
City of Minneapolis website: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us>
Basilica of Saint Mary Master Plan