



Appendix – 1.4 KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan



Gail Dorfman

November 22, 2010

The following is a summary of an interview conducted by Peter Musty, CLPC Master Plan Consultant, attended by Beth Elliott, City of Minneapolis Dept of Planning & Economic Development, and John Van Heel, Board Member and Co-Chair of Citizens for a Loring Park Community Master Plan Steering Committee. The notes were reviewed and approved for accuracy by Commissioner Dorfman's office on November ____, 2010.

Gail invited us to visit her office in the Hennepin County Government Center in downtown Minneapolis. We began by reporting to Gail on the progress of the master planning. We provided her a list of questions, topics and issues and asked her to reflect on some of them:

GAIL'S BACKGROUND & COUNTY COMMISSIONER 101

What do County Commissioners do?

Characterize how Commissioners/you typically interact with neighborhoods & communities?

ISSUES IMPACTING LORING

Transit Timelines - impact of election (interchange, SW, Bottineau, etc.)

Streetcars on Nicollet – possibility

Housing – MCTC issues of homelessness

Sustainability – water, energy/ carbon reduction goals or programs that communities can plug into/collaborate on?

Complete Streets?

Healthy Communities?

Creative Industry...?

Funding programs for neighborhoods?

HOPES/IDEAS for LORING?

MASTER PLANNING & LEADERSHIP LESSONS

Any lessons Gail has learned for communities undergoing master planning? St Louis Park, etc.



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Gail's Background

Gail started her career in politics and began developing her passion for public service working at Ohio State. She was appointed to a public relations position by Jack Gilligan, governor of Ohio (and father of Kathleen Sabelius), - in an office set up to connect better to students in the wake of Kent State.

She later ran the Washington office of Michael Dukakis.

In Minnesota, before becoming Hennepin County Commissioner, Gail spent 12 years as city council member and mayor in St Louis Park.

As County Commissioner

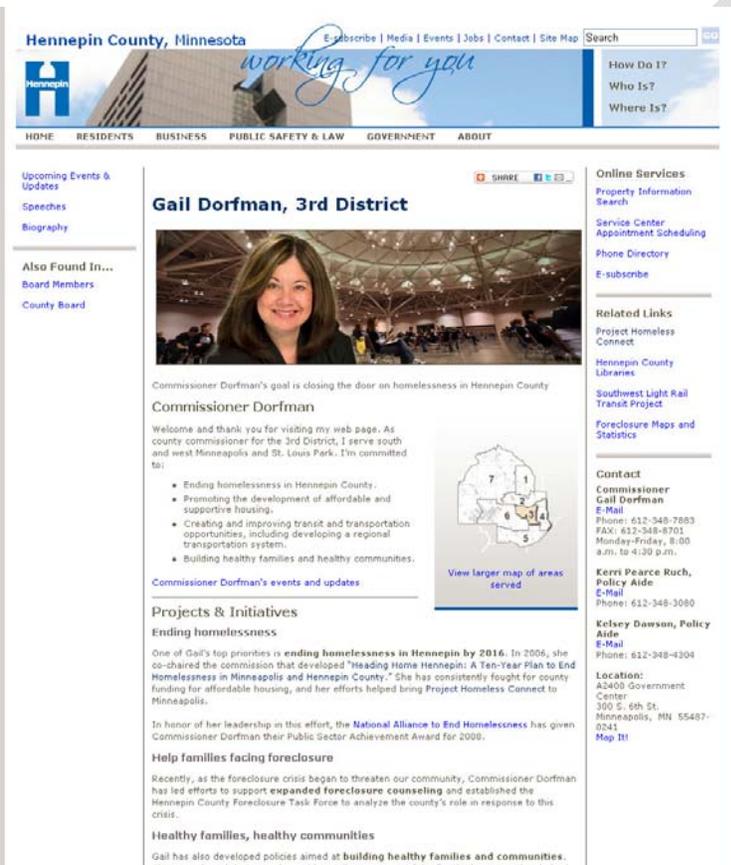
Gail is the County Commissioner for the 3rd District in Hennepin County. (This is the District directly west of Loring, Loring is in the 4th District (Commissioner Peter McLaughlin). Her webpage at the County can be found by going to the Hennepin County website (www.hennepin.us) or directly at the following link:

<http://www.hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47ccf06498/?vgnnextoid=4692b1ab19a34210VgnVCM10000049114689RCRD>

Gail provided information on how the work of County Commissioners directly impact communities; from social services, transportation, housing, trails, “...there is an opportunity to do a lot of good.”

The specific focus of Gail’s work while as commissioner includes homelessness, mental health care and transit.

She holds specific, high regard for land use planning efforts...”Land use planning is how we tie it all together.”



HOMELESSNESS

On issues of homelessness and related public policy, Gail feels Loring is among the most impacted communities.

When Gail began at the county, there was a cohort of folks cycling through county services. “We were spending a lot of money, but we were not doing anything to break the cycle that existed for many.” In 2006, with large support from the faith community, she worked to establish the 10 year plan to end homelessness,



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and she spoke about several initiatives that have been forwarded, some of which are active in Loring and surrounding communities.

Heading Home Minnesota <http://www.headinghomeminnesota.org/hennepin/>
Project Homeless Connect <http://www.homelessconnectminneapolis.org/>
Youthlink <http://www.youthlinkmn.org/>

Gail was “astonished” at the extent of homelessness growing among students at Minneapolis Community Technical College.

“How can we house our Hennepin County clients?”

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Moving into the interrelated issues of affordable housing, she mentioned work on housing for immigrant nursing students – and discussed the integrated issues and needs of MCTC students, housing and healthcare.

Gail also pointed out how much development the county has done, and offered to put together a list of projects the County has supported in Loring. She also summarized two key programs the County offers, which have impacted projects in Loring:

Affordable Housing Incentive Fund (AHIF) - \$ for rehabilitation, preservation & new construction
<http://hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47ccf06498/?vgnextoid=9a24b42321ff5210VgnVCM20000048114689RCRD>

Supportive Housing Initiative Fund (SHIF)
<http://hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47ccf06498/?vgnextoid=eb09b42321ff5210VgnVCM20000048114689RCRD>

Funding for SHIF will be reduced by 50% in 2011.

On the Definition of ‘Affordable’

John Van Heel asked about the definition of affordable ... has it changed? Gail offered to supply an updated chart...(to be attached)

Housing Partnerships

Gail mentioned that the County has done a lot of work with Family Housing Fund, which is supported by the McKnight Foundation. <http://www.fhfund.org/>

On State Funding

Gail states that “...the county is a creature of state government.” And funding is heavily dependent on state aid.

On Loring Housing

Loring, unless it gets gentrified, will continue to need subsidy to develop lower income housing. Gail also mentioned the ‘unique diversity’ of Loring – and related that this is a distinct strength of the community.



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TRANSIT/MULTI-MODAL

Two Priority Transit Projects

Gail explained that she is a supporter of Nicollet/Central streetcar.

A second (and highly related) priority is to explore the feasibility of Streetcar on the Midtown Greenway. She mentioned that a remaining issue is ownership, and that this has yet to be determined. Gail also mentioned a BRT study of the Midtown Greenway by the Met Council.

(Further clarification and precision needed on this issue.)

In general, Gail expressed frustration at the general mindset of sequential investment in transit (vs parallel investments ala Denver & other competing cities). “How do we maximize federal funds?” The midtown Greenway is better taken in the context of the regional system – “How do stations connect?”

Streetcars on Nicollet

On Nicollet, although LRT is very good for development, the streetcar may work very well. She holds hope that we can look for ways to integrate development right into the stops/stations – and anticipates that the scale of Streetcars (vs LRT) may be more manageable at the neighborhood scale along Nicollet.

She also wonders about the possibilities of public-private partnerships; “Why can’t the private sector actually build stations?”

She concedes to challenges with parking on Nicollet; and the obstacles created by the necessity for individual surface parking lots for each business.

Complete Streets

Gail pointed out that Hennepin County was the first County in Minnesota to adopt a Complete Streets policy. A task force was developed. She mentioned the state’s three year pilot to encourage communities (but not require) compliance. Gail wonders if there is a chance to find a project in Loring that would be a Complete Streets demonstration project. She particularly likes the concept of relating street design to surrounding context – which she acknowledges has become a central policy in the Minneapolis Plan.

Regarding Southwest LRT

Politics! Gail mentioned that the recent election could impact the SW LRT timeline. Approval came from Federal government early this year. For many near the future stations, transit is now 3 transfers and 2 hours to get downtown – with LRT it will be one transfer & 30 minutes. First phase of planning will be done soon.

Royalston Station (Southwest LRT Station in North Loop)

Gail sees big opportunities to connect from Loring north to Royalston station. Beth (Elliott) and Gail discussed that City/County collaborative planning is going on right now for the station areas, on the heels of the North Loop Small Area Plan.

MENTAL HEALTH

Gail explained that connecting people to mental health services is another priority for her as County Commissioner. She made particular mention of the work done with DID in Minneapolis, and with St Stevens outreach – which has done a good job of getting people off the streets.



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COUNTY FUNDING PROGRAMS

Gail mentioned throughout the interview a range of funding alternatives - for a range of issues from housing to mental health – and **offered to provide a list of projects** the County has supported in Loring. Related to development, she made special mention of:

Transit Oriented Development funds, which is increasing (doubling) this year;

<http://hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47ccf06498/?vgnnextoid=665fb42321ff5210VgnVCM20000048114689RCRD>

Environmental Response Fund;

<http://www.hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47ccf06498/?vgnnextoid=064637a03d614210VgnVCM10000049114689RCRD>

“We’re getting really good at piecing it (*funding*) together.”

Lessons from St Louis Park (Excelsior & Grand Project)...

LEED-ND (Neighborhood Development) certification was brought up by John Van Heel – mentioning that St Louis Park was the only project in MN yet to certify. Gail was big on LEED certification - to a point. She acknowledges that it can be expensive. She thinks it is more important that projects simply make the investments, rather than get sidetracked with expense of certification. Having said that – she points out that certain thresholds should be met; “Is there a proven return on investment?” ...”How do you build in sustainability?”

Regarding Excelsior & Grand as a model project – she cautioned that it may be doubtful such a project could take place these days, and that it is such a different context (from Loring Park). There was more public money available – with Livable Communities and other aid. The politics in St Louis Park were ready for it – and there was a long range vision leading up to it. TIF was used and eminent domain was available. They also had at times very little idea what certain items/ideas would cost as they went.

On Fifty Year (Large Scale) Visioning

More words of caution; it is fun to look ahead; but some will resist too much change too soon.

Gail’s Questions

Gail asked John Van Heel about Nicollet Avenue Business Plan – what has been learned from that?

She also wondered about the ways in which we’ve included non-english speakers in the process, and felt that was important.

Further Thoughts About Loring in 2030?

[This is a placeholder for any additional input that Gail would like to submit as follow up to the interview.]