



## Event Record: Focus Group - Harmon Place Visioning II

### Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

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# Focus Group Harmon Place Visioning II

7:00-8:30pm

March 2, 2011

Espresso Royale

1229 Hennepin Avenue

The following is a summary of a focus group discussion conducted by Peter Musty & John Lauber, CLPC Master Plan Consultants. Master Plan Steering Committee Members Janine Jelks-Seale, Neil Reardon & Brad Conley were present. Several stakeholders of Harmon area were present. The Focus Group was held March 2, 2011 at Espresso Royale, 1229 Hennepin Avenue.



The session was attended by a number of individuals who had not participated in previous planning sessions.

*Those that signed in: Allison Wright (Harmon area resident), Mark Wright (Harmon area resident), Lisa Goodman (Harmon area resident), Keith Henrickson (Harmon area resident), Cathy Geist (MCTC Professor), Jim Goulet (Loring neighborhood resident), Peter Feeney (Loring neighborhood resident), Doug Hennes (St. Thomas), Kent Smead (MCTC Professor), Brad Conley (MCTC Student Council*



*President), Lenell McKenzie (MCTC Student and Loring neighborhood resident), Same Berbland (MCTC student), Michael Gioskirentz (MCTC Student), Janine Jelks-Seale (Master Plan Steering Committee), Neil Reardon (Master Plan Steering Committee), Peter Musty (Consultant), and John Lauber (Consultant).*

This record includes three items:

- **Event Preview**
- **Agenda**
- **Notes** by John Lauber



## EVENT PREVIEW

### Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

# Wednesday, March 2

## Focus Group: Harmon District II

Espresso Royale 1229 Hennepin Ave. So.

6:30pm-8:00pm



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



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

The Harmon Place District was identified as one of four Focus Areas within the Master Plan, in need of a long term vision for development and public realm improvements that fit within the framework of the Harmon Place Historic District Guidelines. The community has completed the Public Input and Discovery stages of the Master Plan process. The Master Plan team and Steering Committee are now ready to synthesize the information and draft short term and long term goals and objectives. But first...

### A New Role for Harmon Place?

Harmon Place has struggled to maintain the vitality of its' shop-fronts. Historic auto show room spaces have given way to a more diverse commercial mix. The closing of the street to the north and south have irreversibly compromised its' original role as a retail 'main street'. The street has drawn energy from community preservation and reuse efforts, assorted small office users, and housing developments such as Hennepin's Laurel Village. There is considerable untapped energy available from MCTC and St Thomas.

The focus group will be an exchange of information. First, a review of issues the community has identified so far, and a scan at the

list of ideas and solutions that have been shared. Secondly, we will continue discussion on several of the key issues:

*How is the vitality of Hennepin & Harmon interrelated, and can they be positioned to better support residents, workers, students, and visitors? What kinds of businesses do well on Harmon now? What kinds of businesses will want to locate on Harmon in the future? Without fundamentals such as traffic count and visibility, can mid-block retail shop-fronts on Harmon be supported? What is the future for public realm improvements, short term & long term?*

Invited stakeholders include Councilmember Lisa Goodman, condo owners, local businesses, property owners, students, neighborhood residents, Minneapolis Community & Technical College (MCTC) student body & faculty, among others. The session, organized by CLPC Master Plan Steering Committee, will be 90 minutes long and will be facilitated by Master Plan consultant team coordinated by PETER MUSTY LLC.

**Note to Participants:** *Come as you are. The meeting will be conducted with a wide ranging group invited from throughout the district – but is open to the public. Updated February 8, 2011.*



## EVENT PREVIEW

### Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

#### HARMON DISTRICT FOCUS GROUP

## AGENDA

March 2, 2010

6:30pm-8:00pm, Espresso Royale

#### 6:30 pm

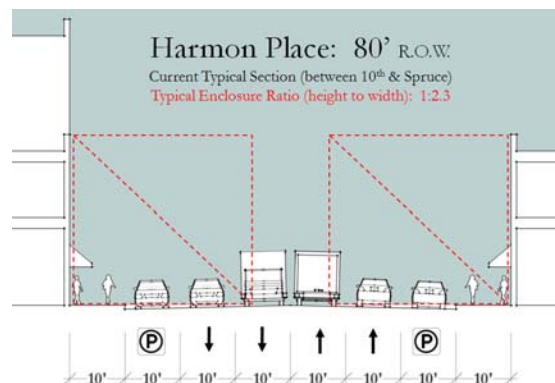
- Greeting & Participant Introductions
- Overview of master plan activities by master plan consultant Pete Musty, consultant team member John Lauber.
- Note card exercise: ask participants to answer two questions and discuss or pass in by end of session:
  - **Notecard #1: Identify two issues you think should be addressed in the master plan.**
  - **Notecard #2: Imagine Harmon District in 2030: What do you see?**
- Review of Community Input So Far
  - October Discovery Workshop
  - December Focus Group
  - Community Visioning & Design Workshops
  - Stakeholder Interviews
- Key Design & Planning Issues

#### ...by 6:50 pm

- Issue Discussion

#### 8:00 pm

- Adjourn



What is the future for **streetscape improvements** on Harmon Place, short term & long term?

What re-development & reuse opportunities do you see emerging? What impact would an **anchor redevelopment** have?

How is the vitality of **Hennepin & Harmon** interrelated, and can they be positioned to better support residents, workers, students, and visitors?

Without fundamentals such as traffic count and visibility, can **mid-block retail** shop-fronts on Harmon be supported? What kinds of businesses do well on Harmon now? What kinds of businesses will want to locate on Harmon in the future?

How about relationships to Hennepin, to Loring Park, MCTC, St Thomas, Basilica of St Mary, Dunwoody?



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#### Notes by John Lauber

After a welcome by a CLPC representative, and introductions of participants, Pete Musty gave an overview of the planning process to date, and asked attendees to consider how the Harmon Place streetscape could be improved in both the short and long term.

This exercise prompted an immediate question from Council Member Goodman asking if participants should think in practical terms—what is actually possible from a fiscal, physical, political standpoint given current constraints—or whether they were being asked to be visionary, but perhaps impractical. This question regarding the tension between the practical/possible versus the visionary was a recurring theme during the evening.

Participants were asked to write down their thoughts in response to two questions. The following are transcribed from their submissions:

#### *Question #1:*

#### ***Identify two issues you think should be addressed in the Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan.***

- Draw out students from St. Thomas and MCTC
- Pedestrian & Bike safety
- Loring Park is a central location and major gateway into Minneapolis' downtown area for many, many cyclists. Loring Park, in particular, could be utilized to funnel bikes into the Harmon area, and away from potentially dangerous Hennepin. Suggestions: -Bike lanes on Harmon, make them prominent
- Harmon & 13th is a very poor pedestrian intersection – make pedestrians important there!
- Bikes bring business and money to the neighborhood!!
- Diagonal parking
- Single lanes of traffic each way, bump outs, etc.
- Green space median
- Greenspace/Landscaping and its maintenance
- Walkways vs. bikeways & then maintenance
- A transition between downtown and residential space.
- Pedestrian crossings to the Park & MCTC campus – make them more visible
- Parking! Both, how to increase parking spots available, but also encourage people to use alternative forms of transportation.
- Safer pedestrian/bike transportation
- Ways to “build bridges” between sustainability efforts at MCTC and the greater Harmon neighborhood, including MCTC’s Climate Action Plan and human behavior changes – “cultural change” for sustainability
- Create shared community gardens (shared between college and MCTC)
- Bikers coming from downtown along Harmon and enter the MCTC campus sidewalk on their way to Loring Park and presumably to other bike pathways on the other side of the Park. The pathway from



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Harmon Place onto campus needs to be more integrally planned to signaged so that bikers can pass these without endangering the pedestrians, leaving MCTC buildings. Many, many near mishaps occur here.

- More, clear maps and signage to bike pathways away from MCTC and out of the neighborhood.
- I would like to see a bike path from the Harmon area to the paved path that starts near 12th, near Lee's Liquor Lounge. 12th is wide and doesn't seem very busy, so it wouldn't seem like a major problem.
- The underdevelopment of key passage ways, such as Harmon Place, between the downtown District and the Park Park community, MCTC Campus and greater Minneapolis.
- Streetscape issues – narrow Harmon to accommodate pedestrian walkways or perhaps create a parkway down the middle of Harmon (splitting the driving lanes), bike lanes?
- Further expansion of educational uses and how that hurts property redevelopment. What can we do?

*Question #2:*

### ***Imagine Harmon District in 2030 – What do you see?***

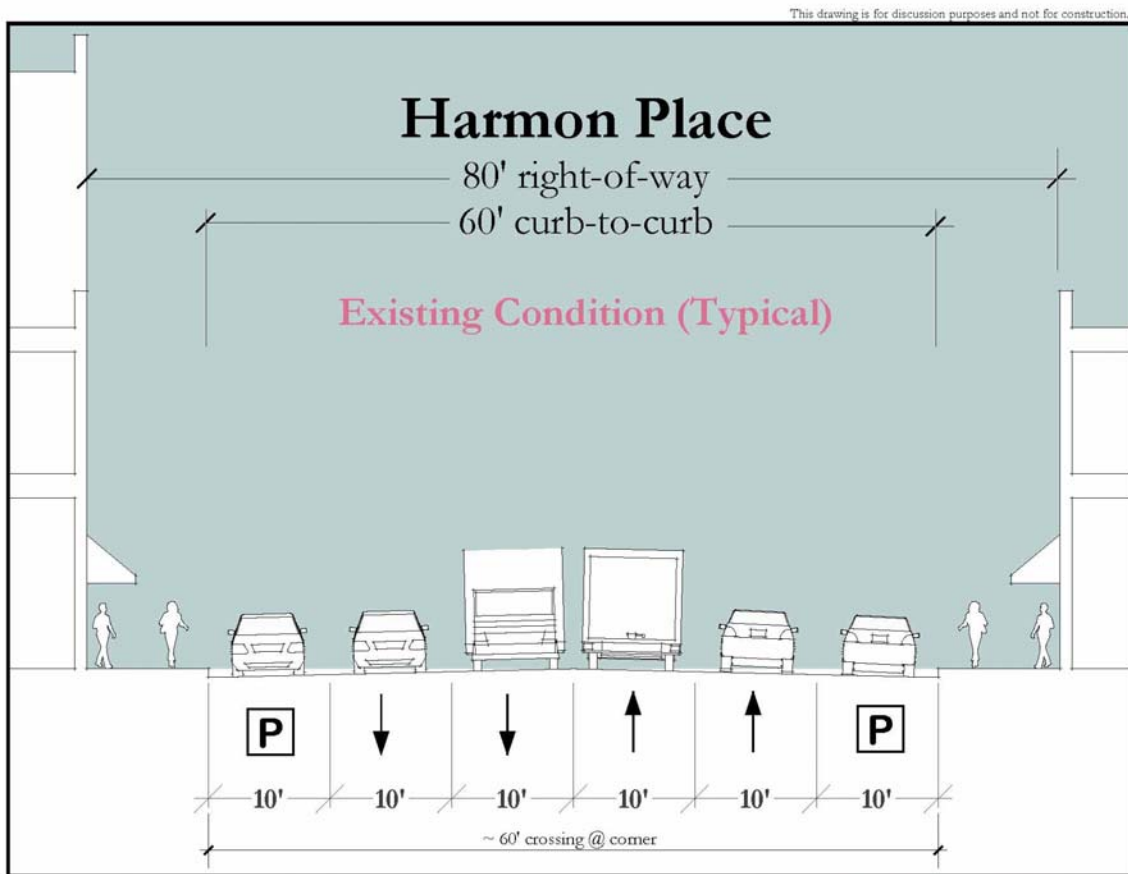
- I would like to see a vibrant cultural, arts, and restaurant District along Harmon Place that acts mainly as a pedestrian and bicycle corridor between downtown and the westend communities. Ideally, Harmon would provide adequate parking for motorists. an extensive bicycle avenue connecting into downtown bicycle lanes, MCTC Campus, and Loring Park. ....and include walking and greening aspects.
- Shopping district for neighborhood, especially for a corridor that is bikes and pedestrian friendly. Market to food shops, restaurants, food vendors, bikeshop, bike supply stores, hardware.
- More student housing
- Recruit to the area – Restaurants, bike shop
- Diagonal parking
- Bike lanes
- I'd like to see mixed-use housing (student & condo & rental) that bridges aesthetically the ultra modern MCTC with historic buildings like the Bellevue and Kenosha.
- I'd like to see a grocery store in the Harmon area.
- I'd like to see landscaped walking/biking paths that would connect Loring Park to the Farmers' market.
- Harmon/Hennepin Integration – Tie the two together more in terms of development, traffic management, etc. Don't have anything specific in mind, but there seems to be an interesting opportunity.
- Narrow the road
- Sustainably, renovated buildings
- Bicycles with safe bike pathways
- Collaborative work between MCTC and community re: housing, sustainable behaviors, etc.
- Rewards (by local vendors) for generating less waste/trash
- Solar energy – passive and photovoltaics
- Native vegetation, include demonstration plots for prairie, oak savanna, and deciduous forest plan communities.
- Community Gardens
- More transit/reduced automobile traffic



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- Explain the difference between dreams for how it could be compared to the reality of funding them & getting it done.
- I think Harmon could become a “design district” of Minneapolis. We have an amazing design community in this city and a number of businesses already located here. With our close proximity to Target, it is an ideal location for smaller agencies working with Target. Drawing design agencies to the area would be great for the college and their design department, would support new retail (shops, cafes, etc.) and would add to the lively eclectic character of Loring Park.



Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan - 3.5 Focus Area Visioning

March 25, 2011

PETER MUSTY, LLC

### Discussion

Participants were presented a diagram of the existing conditions along Harmon (see image above). After background of the planning process was briefly outlined, we opened up discussion. During discussion, several issues emerged:

**Parking and bicycles:** There was a lengthy discussion about reconfiguring parking along Harmon Place to increase capacity for automobiles and to accommodate bicycle traffic—essentially making Harmon Place a



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safer route for bicyclists than the current bike lanes along Hennepin Avenue. A number of participants stated that there was an ongoing conflict between bikes and cars in the area, and that biking was unsafe as a result. Lisa Goodman pointed out that there will soon be new bicycle connections to the broader Loring Park area, and echoed other cyclists observations that biking on Hennepin was unpleasant and unsafe. Ideas included:

- Restriping to establish angle parking along the outer lanes to increase the number of spaces available for cars. This would narrow the street to two driving lanes.
- Establishing angle parking down the center of the street, which would maintain the visibility of the historic buildings, and enable cyclists to ride close to the sidewalks.
- Using a boulevard/median to “green up” the street and make it more visually appealing.

#### **Concern over the area’s status as a historic district:**

One participant suggested that Harmon Place’s historic district status and the design guidelines that have been put into place to maintain the character of its buildings put limits on the use/rehabilitation of buildings that discouraged potential redevelopment in the area. This has been a recurring theme in discussions about Harmon Place. One participant asked if the design guidelines would allow the construction of infill buildings with alternative frontage types along Harmon Place. This prompted a comment from Ms. Goodman who asked why the group was talking about changing design guidelines and the designation status of the Harmon Place District when the Master Plan would not have the authority to change the designation or the guidelines.

#### **How do we Increase Vitality?**

There was considerable discussion about the lack of vitality and street life along Harmon Place. Participants noted that existing businesses fail to engage the street, with many of the service oriented tenants essentially closing their shades and remaining cloistered within their buildings. One participant noted that “there is no incentive for tenants to open their windows.” This is due in part to the nature of businesses, which do not rely on street traffic to remain viable, and in part to the fact that the street offers relatively few amenities to tenants.

The representative from the University of St. Thomas expressed enthusiasm about revitalizing the Harmon Place streetscape, but indicated that St. Thomas had “an excess of space” with room for two additional buildings on its existing land, as well as an entirely vacant building in the former MacPhail building. This meant that St. Thomas was unlikely to expand its operations into Harmon Place. The representative expressed willingness to collaborate further on ideas for improving Harmon.

#### **Street Trees?**

The topic of street trees, now lacking on most of Harmon Place, are appropriate. Historic research shows that Harmon’s streetscape has always changed to suit the uses of the day; historic photos and maps supplied by John Lauber show that prior to Harmon’s role as home to larger auto showrooms, it was a tree lined street home to a variety of Victorian era homes and mansions.



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Images below: at left - Harmon Place in 2011; at right - Harmon Place in 1929 looking north towards downtown from Fawkes Block at Hennepin Avenue (Loring Park is to the right).

