CHAPTER 3: Community Engagement

This chapter provides an overview of the community engagement process used during the development of this plan. Additional information on this process, including summaries of comments received, can be found in Appendix D.

STEERING COMMITTEE

In February of 2008, a group of individuals and representatives from various organizations were invited to serve on a steering committee for the planning process. Each of the surrounding neighborhoods was asked to send two representatives, as was the Lyn-Lake Business Association. The Midtown Greenway Coalition and the Midtown Community Works Partnership were also invited to send a representative. In addition, the two City Council offices representing the area each appointed four individuals to the committee. The two Council Members and their aides also attended steering committee meetings as their schedules allowed. Although not all committee members were able to make the meetings, they were all kept on an e-mail list and received regular updates about the project. The steering committee met five times during the planning process.

The role of the steering committee was to:

- Advise on process. The steering committee provided guidance to city staff on how to structure the planning process.
- Communicate with appointing organizations. Steering committee members served as a communication link between the study process and their appointing organization.
- Help engage the public. Steering committee members were asked to help get the word out about public events related to this study.
- Advise on plan content. The steering committee was asked to be a sounding board and
 offer preliminary feedback on plan content in preparation for broader public meetings.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

A series of community meetings were held to share information with the public, and to collect input from stakeholders for the plan.

Meeting #1 (June 24th, 2008)

The purpose of the first community meeting was for the public to hear an overview of the process, to review information about existing conditions and land use policy, and discuss their vision for the future of the Lyn-Lake area.

The meeting was an open house format. After a brief presentation, attendees were encouraged to walk around the room, look at presentation boards, and talk to city staff. There were three main stations at the meeting for participants to learn about the area and interact with City staff.

Station 1:

At station number one, a presentation was given covering the reasons for the upcoming planning process, and a description of what a planning document is intended to accomplish. A general timeline and steps to come were shared, along with the types of materials that would be produced and incorporated into the final document.

Station 2:

At station number two, there were poster boards containing information about existing land use policy, existing land uses, and zoning in the study area. Several recent planning efforts have taken place near the Lyn-Lake area, and staff discussed how these various plans would interact with the Lyn-Lake planning process as it moved forward. A number of questions were asked regarding how zoning interacts with adopted policy, and what zoning regulations can accomplish.

Station 3:

At station number three, meeting attendees were invited to answer three questions that were aimed at focusing planning efforts on specific issues in the community. The three questions were:

- What do you value most about the Lyn-Lake area?
- What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing the Lyn-Lake area?
- What three words describe your vision for Lyn-Lake?

The responses to these questions were use to draft a vision statement, and to generally guide the planning recommendations.

Also available at the meeting was a general survey that was previously available online. A detailed description of materials presented at the meeting and questions asked by attendees can be found in Appendix D.

Meeting #2 (September 15th, 2008)

The second meeting was designed to report on the vision established at the first meeting, inform participants on the findings of the market study undertaken for the area, and get input

on what parts of the study area were valued and what parts were problematic. The project market consultant Joe Urban, Inc. presented preliminary findings from the market study. These findings are detailed in other sections of this plan, and the full report can be found in Appendix A.

After the presentation there was an opportunity for meeting attendees to provide feedback on three issues



presented by City staff. The questions were asked as part of a mapping exercise, to look at where in the study area certain positive and negative attributes could be found. The three issues presented were:

- Identify your favorite place in the study area and explain why.
- Identify your least favorite place in the study area and explain why.
- Identify where in the study area it is difficult or unpleasant to travel by car, bike, foot, etc and explain why.

Maps showing the location of responses can be found in the appendix, along with a list of all comments recorded during the meeting.

Meeting #3 (December 18, 2008)

A third meeting was held to discuss the work of the urban design consultants. The consultants were asked to examine building height in the study area and explore potential design concepts for three case study areas. These were located at Lyndale Avenue South and West 26th Street, West Lake Street and Pleasant Avenue South, and West Lake Street and Garfield Avenue South (on the Garfield parking lot).

At this meeting the consultant presented their design concepts and considerations for the case studies. After the presentation, meeting attendees were invited to examine poster boards of the designs and asked to post their comments on the boards. A comment card was also distributed. The concepts for the case studies can be found in coming chapters.

Meeting #4

The fourth meeting was held to explain the recommendations in the plan and kick off the 45-day public review period. Staff presented the major recommendations in the plan and explained the process for adoption.

For each of these meetings e-mail notices were sent out to all who had expressed interest in the project and press releases were sent out. For the first meeting flyers and posters were distributed in the study area. For the second meeting a flyer was sent to all property owners and renters in the study area.

SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

In addition to steering committee meetings and community meetings, a total of fourteen updates were given to smaller groups at their regularly scheduled meetings throughout the process. These groups included: the Whittier Alliance, CARAG, the Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association, the Lyndale Neighborhood Association, the Whittier Business Association, the Midtown Community Works Partnership, the Nicollet-Lake Business Association, and the Lyn-Lake Business Association.

OTHER OUTREACH MECHANISMS

Other outreach efforts included periodic e-mail updates and a project website. Approximately 140 people were on the project e-mail list. People signed up for the list at meetings, and the list also contained neighborhood associations and other groups. All meeting agendas and

summaries were placed on the project website. These summaries can be found in the Appendices of this document.

Early in the study process, an online survey was also posted on the website. The survey focused on peoples' hopes and concerns for the area.

As mentioned, to ensure that people without access to a computer were also made aware of the process, a direct mailing was sent out early in the planning process.

Project updates and meeting announcements were included in several area newsletters and several newspaper articles were written about the process.

45 DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Upon completion of the draft plan, a draft was distributed for a 45 day public comment period. It was placed on the City's website, and copies of the document were placed at the Public Service Center, Bryant Square Park, Walker Library, and Hosmer Library. Copies of the plan were also sent to the area neighborhood organizations, the Lyn-Lake Business Association, and the Midtown Greenway Coalition. The public was notified of the availability of the draft through an e-mail announcement and a press release. Staff attended each of the area neighborhood group meetings and a joint meeting of the Nicollet-Lake and Lyn-Lake Business Associations to review the major recommendations and explain the process for adoption of the plan.