

MINNEAPOLIS NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

**WAITE PARK
NEIGHBORHOOD
ACTION PLAN**

Date Adopted by the Policy Board: December 15, 1997

Date Adopted by the City Council: January 23, 1998

Document Number: 98-13M

Waite Park

Neighborhood Revitalization Program Action Plan

Table of Contents

Neighborhood Description	1
Vision Statement	2
NRP Process	3
Community & Education	5
Housing	8
Community Flexibility	10
Funding Table	11

Neighborhood Description

The Waite Park neighborhood contains the highest elevation in the city of Minneapolis, a feature that is both praised for cool breezes in the summer and the view of the City and the Mississippi River Valley, and cursed by winter drivers attempting to make their way uphill during a snowstorm, people mowing their lawns, bicyclists, and volunteers delivering the neighborhood newsletter. Waite Park is one of the youngest Minneapolis neighborhoods, with most houses built between 1920 and 1960. There is a strong sense of community and neighborliness.

Waite Park is located at the northeast corner of Minneapolis, bounded by the City of Columbia Heights in Anoka County to the north, the City of Roseville in Ramsey County to the northeast and the Hennepin County portion of Saint Anthony Village on the east. Our southern neighbor is Audubon Park with Columbia Park neighborhood to the west. The street boundaries include Stinson Boulevard, Saint Anthony Parkway, Central Avenue and 37th Avenue NE.

Our neighborhood takes the first portion of its name from Judge Edward F. Waite, the "Father of the Juvenile Court System" in Minneapolis. He served on the Municipal Court, District Court and Juvenile Court from 1904 to 1941. The park from which the neighborhood takes the second portion of its name was originally farmland that was subsequently designated to become a cemetery to avoid taxes.

As well as being a beautiful, modern park, it is also the site of the Waite Park School and Community Center. The school opened in 1950, and was the first School Board/Park Board joint effort in the nation. In the fall of 1996, Waite Park School became a community school with Kindergarten to 6th grade students. It is also the first Twin Cities school to be named for a living person. There are two other parks within the neighborhood: Deming Heights, also known as Norway Hill, and Cavell Playground.

Ours is a quiet neighborhood, with a crime rate lower than in most suburbs. Residences and yards are maintained with pride and homes sell quickly, often before being advertised. Homes are, on average, about fifty years old. Public transportation is convenient; the neighborhood is served by three major bus routes.

The residents have a fairly high educational level and voter participation is high. Waite Park Community Council was incorporated as a community service non-profit in 1954. The neighborhood has been home to two or three generations of hardworking people who owned their homes, raised their families and are active in community affairs. As long-time residents age and move out of their homes, young couples are moving into the neighborhood and starting families. Waite Park neighborhood is an active and viable community that respects the stability of the past and looks forward to the opportunities of the future.

Waite Park Vision Statement

The neighbors of Waite Park Community envision a friendly and safe neighborhood, with a strong sense of community, communication and cooperation within the neighborhood, the school and neighborhood parks, and a strong sense of pride in the physical appearance of our homes and neighborhood.

NRP Process

The Waite Park neighborhood began its Neighborhood Revitalization program (NRP) planning process in February 1995. Prior to this time, several people in the Waite Park Community Council (WPCC) had been attending NRP training classes. The NRP First-Step Plan and Early Access proposal were developed by neighborhood residents utilizing the knowledge and experience of our designated NRP representative, Erik Takeshita. No paid staff or consultants were involved to reduce costs and increase neighborhood involvement.

The Community Council promoted the NRP Steering Committee and directed its first actions. This NRP Steering Committee wrote the Waite Park Neighborhood Participation Agreement which was approved by the WPCC on April 5, 1995.

Over the next several months a survey was written and mailed to Waite Park residents. The response to the survey was one of the highest of the neighborhoods in the NRP process. Over 700 of our neighbors responded, for a response rate of over 30%.

On October 26, 1995, a Public Forum/NRP Kickoff was held at the Waite Park Community Center. Over 50 residents began to prioritize the neighborhood concerns identified in the neighborhood survey. Two groups were formed to begin developing a plan to improve our neighborhood. The Physical Environment Committee worked on housing maintenance, bike paths, and the Central Avenue Commercial Corridor. Crime, schools, youth and senior programs and neighborhood communications were the primary topics of the Social Environment Committee.

The Physical and Social Environment Committees spent the winter months in many meetings reviewing the survey results, identifying community resources and gaps in services, developing a draft First Step plan, meeting with community partners from various governmental jurisdictions, mailing the plan draft and further refining the plan. The WPCC approved the use of up to \$250,000 in Early Access funds to support the Waite Park Elementary School and Park and Recreation Center at their February 17th meeting. These funds were used to purchase technology services and equipment, band equipment, media center materials, and latch key and park program equipment.

The NRP Steering Committee mailed a draft of the First Step Action Plan to all homeowners, renters, property owners and businesses in Waite park in mid-February, 1996. Nearly 200 ballots attached to the plan were returned through the mail with a 90% approval. More than 60 people attended a second town meeting held on February 22, 1996 to hear and comment on the plan. The meeting featured elected officials as well as representatives from the parks department, school administration, the community school, housing service providers, the commander of the 2nd Precinct and the director of a youth mediation program.

The First Step Action plan was approved, pending minor revisions in wording at the March 6, 1996 Community Council Meeting. The First Step Plan was sent too the Management Review Team, Policy Board, and the City Council for their approval.

The Waite Park neighborhood then began its comprehensive Action plan planning process on December 7, 1996 with a town meeting devoted to brainstorming on neighbors' concerns and proposed projects. All of the subjects brought up at the meeting were divided into

three general categories and then assigned to the three subcommittees: Housing, Community & Education, and Streets & Safety.

Each subcommittee and the Steering Committee met at least once a month, researching many options to meet the neighborhood's needs. Throughout the process, the neighborhood was kept abreast of the progress made through articles in the *Waite Park Voice* newsletter and by welcoming feed-back and participation at the open committee and neighborhood council meetings.

Another town meeting was convened on May 31, 1997 at which 23 proposals for NRP funding were presented by the subcommittees. A ballot/questionnaire on which votes were cast for or against NRP funding of each proposal was collected from all attendees.

In addition, four focus groups were held the week of June 23-26 to narrow down close votes from the town meeting results. A special meeting was held August 14th to get neighborhood direction for the process of improvement to Cavell Playground.

The Action Plan draft, with recommended funding levels was then distributed to every address in Waite Park along with a postage-paid Community Response Card. A final town meeting was held October 1, 1997 and a vote was taken after full discussion. Based on the mailed-back responses and the town meeting, the Action Plan was overwhelmingly approved by the neighborhood and passed unanimously by the Waite Park Community Council on October 1, 1997.

Community & Education

Goal: Promote Waite Park as a caring and sharing community.

Objective 1: Enhance the neighborhood's community infrastructure.

Strategy A: Help transition Waite Park Elementary from grades 4-6 to K-6.

Work with the Minneapolis Public Schools in upgrading the Waite Park Elementary media and technology/computer centers, acquiring new band equipment and instruments, and purchasing materials for a new peer mediation program so that the school may better serve the community and its students.

Funding: NRP \$151,250 (Early Access), MPS NRP \$60,000

Strategy B: Seek improvements to Cavell Playground.

The neighborhood will work with the Minneapolis Park Board to upgrade the Cavell Playground playlots, basketball and tennis courts, lighting, and walkways. The tentative breakdown for improvements is:

- Playlots: \$150,000 to \$200,000
- Basketball Court: \$15,000
- Tennis Court: \$45,000
- Walkways: \$10,000
- Lighting: (to be determined)

NOTE: Cost estimates include construction management, overhead, surveying, and other similar administrative costs.

Partners: Minneapolis Park Board

Funding: NRP \$220,000 (1998), Minneapolis Park Board: \$50,000 (1999)

Contract Manager: Minneapolis Park Board

Timeline: 1998

Strategy C: Enhance the Community Center's ability to provide a wide variety of quality community based experiences.

C1: Work with the Park Board to implement a new Rec+ Program at Waite Park Community Center by purchasing equipment and completing needed facility remodeling.

Funding: NRP \$39,000 (Early Access)

C2: Work with the Park Director and Community Education Director to improve the quality of the educational and recreational equipment, improve the kitchen and building facilities.

The park staff and Park Board will be responsible for maintenance and repairs.

Partners: Minneapolis Park Board, Community Education

Funding: NRP \$5,000

Contract Manager: Minneapolis Park Board

Timeline: 1998

Objective 2: Enhance the neighborhood's community relationships.

Strategy A: Promote Waite park as a safe and caring community.

A1: Promote mediation skills in resolving conflicts among neighbors, family, and youth, recruit and train volunteers for mediation training, establish a mediation program through Waite Park Community Center, and promote the peer mediation/conflict resolution program in the Waite Park Elementary

A2: Sponsor CCP/SAFE workshops at the Waite Park Community Center and encourage participation by providing vouchers for safety equipment.

Funding: NRP \$10,000 (First Step)

Strategy B: Increase community participation, neighborhood identity, and volunteerism.

The neighborhood will use NRP funds to provide childcare at neighborhood meetings and events, identification for neighborhood volunteers during the course of the activity, and other meeting costs needed to maintain community involvement in the implementation of the neighborhood's Action Plan

Partners: N/A

Funding: NRP \$2,000

Contract Manager: NRP

Timeline: 1998

Strategy C: Establish and build a relationship with NE Middle School.

The neighborhood will build and maintain a relationship with the NE Middle School and the Family Resource Center in order to facilitate the continuity of educational services and opportunities for Waite Park area families.

NRP funds are being set aside to help implement improvements at the school that will facilitate the full implementation of this strategy.

Partners: Minneapolis Public School Board, NE Middle School, Family Resource Center

Funding: NRP \$5,000

Contract Manager: Minneapolis Public School Board

Timeline: 1998

Strategy D: Initiate a youth employment program.

The neighborhood will work with Minneapolis Employment Training Program and other organizations to initiate a pilot Youth Employment Program unique to the neighborhood. This program will connect neighborhood youth with nearby residents who need some chores done (e.g. leaf raking). The neighborhood will work with its partners to ensure all applicable laws are followed.

NRP funds will be used for program administration costs.

Partners: Minneapolis Employment Training Program, Minneapolis Kids, Youth Employment Program, Community Crime Prevention/SAFE

Funding: NRP \$5,000

Contract Manager: Minneapolis Employment & Training Program (METP)

Timeline: 1998 - 1999

Strategy E: Establish a community garden.

Work with Canadian Pacific (CP) Rail and Sustainable Resource Center to establish a raised bed, community garden on CP Rail property along 36th Avenue. Neighborhood volunteers will work with both organizations to develop an agreeable design and use policies. The garden will be designed to eliminate the need for soil testing.

NRP funds will be used for start up and capital costs (e.g. fill, top soil, fence material, etc.).

Partners: Canadian Pacific Rail, Sustainable Resource Center

Funding: NRP \$5,000

Contract Manager: NRP

Timeline: 1998

Housing

Goal: Maintain the housing stock of Waite park.

Objective: Provide incentives for all residential property owners to maintain and enhance their property.

Strategy A: Consider a variety of finance programs including, but not limited to deferred loans, interest buy down loans, and revolving loans.

Implement a 15% rebate program for home improvements including: plumbing, terracing, additions, heating and cooling projects, garages, concrete work, roofing, electrical, and improvements to correct code violations. This program will allow applicants great freedom in choosing the source(s) of improvement funding (savings, choice of bank, etc.).

Funding: NRP \$240,000 (First Step) Leveraged Potential: \$1.6 million

Strategy B: Establish a home improvement revolving loan fund.

The neighborhood will establish a low interest revolving loan pool for improvements to all residential property neighborhood wide. Eligible improvements include: garages, concrete work, roofing, electrical, plumbing, terracing, additions, heating and cooling projects; improvements to correct code violations; and other improvements to correct problems that may compromise the integrity of the structure. The program will also be designed to provide funding for those who fall outside normal bank underwriting criteria and other program guidelines.

Partners: Fiscal Agent and Third Party Administrator

Funding: NRP \$150,000

Contract Manager: MCDA

Timeline: 1998

Strategy C: Establish a matching grant program.

The neighborhood will set aside NRP funds to be used as matching grants for designated capital improvements to residential property. Eligible improvements are the same as for the revolving loan. Maximum amount of NRP funds per project is 30% of project cost or \$6,000, whichever is lower. There will be an income limit for this program.

Partners: Third Party Administrator

Funding: NRP \$100,000 Leveraged Potential: \$333,000

Contract Manager: MCDA

Timeline: 1998

Strategy D: Establish a fix-up forgivable grant pool.

The neighborhood will work with the Assessor and Housing Inspections to identify homes in the neighborhood with condition ratings of below average and substandard, and work with the property owner, Inspections and a third party administrator to determine improvements most needed. Substandard properties will be initially targeted with priority given to lower income households. The owners of these properties will be eligible for a forgivable loan to complete needed improvements. Loans will be tied to ownership and will be forgiven after 5 years.

The neighborhood will work with all its partners to develop a process for confirming condition rating and handling challenges.

Partners: Minneapolis Inspections, Assessor, Third Party Administrator, Fiscal Agent

Funding: NRP \$100,000

Contract Manager: MCDA

Timeline: 1998

Strategy E: Remove vacant/boarded houses.

The neighborhood will work with Inspections to remove vacant/boarded houses on the City's '249' List. The neighborhood will commit NRP funds for each project up to half of the demolition cost. Because the neighborhood currently has no properties on this list, funding for these projects will come from the Community Response Fund (Community Flexibility Strategy A.).

Partners: Minneapolis Inspections

Funding: NRP \$0

Contract Manager: Inspections

Timeline: 1998 (continuing)