



## Waite Park Neighborhood Priority Plan

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### **Priorities**

***Crime prevention and public safety: Encouraging neighborhood participation in public safety events, and in personal safety and home security measures***

Respondents to the Waite Park neighborhood survey ranked crime prevention and public safety as their highest priority. In communications with the Waite Park Community Council (WPCC), residents have also expressed their desire to have problems such as dangerous intersections and other public safety issues addressed. In addition, comments written in the survey reflected a desire for more information about crime, as well as concern about the effect crime—and the perception of an increase in crime—has on the livability of the neighborhood. The opportunity presented by this priority would be not only in people being drawn to live in the Waite Park neighborhood, but also in people wishing to remain in a safe community.

The WPCC currently supports the Waite Park neighborhood in this respect through our security rebate programs, support of block club organizations, National Night Out promotion, regular communication with the Second Precinct and Crime Prevention Specialists, crime activity awareness efforts, and safety education. These efforts will continue, and can be expanded. The WPCC can function as a referral service that connects residents with resources to learn more about crime statistics and be alerted to recent incidents, making sure neighbors know whom to contact and when. Residents might also find it valuable to have Crime Prevention Specialists or Second Precinct police representatives appear at better-attended board meetings—in particular, the annual meeting held in the spring.

***Promoting home ownership and upkeep: Continuing or developing programs that enhance Waite Park's housing stock***

According to 2000 and 2010 Census data, the overall resident population of Waite Park has remained flat; however, the percentage of owner-occupied households has decreased by 6 percent

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(representing 132 households) in that same period. Some respondents to the Waite Park survey expressed disappointment over the number of neighborhood households that are not being maintained or that are falling into disrepair. They suggest as causes neglect by absentee property owners, as well as economic difficulties due to declines in market values, homeowner incomes, or both.

The WPCC promotes owner-occupied residency and home improvement through rebate programs, low- to no-interest loan programs, homeowner engagement and recognition, and outreach to neighborhood-identified “problem properties” to help make corrective resolutions and positive outcomes possible. To further these efforts, the WPCC can facilitate workshops that educate residents on home upkeep topics, or events in which experts are available to provide advice to homeowners.

### ***Neighborhood identity: Encouraging participation in community events and awareness of Waite Park as a city-designated entity***

Through signs, flyers, mailings, contact with local businesses, and online efforts, the WPCC promotes Waite Park’s Fall Festival and Pushcart Derby, which are intended to strengthen neighborhood participation and identity, and to fulfill the WPCC’s mission for the city. The positive response to these events backs the comments and ratings reflected in the neighborhood survey: bolstering neighborhood pride was ranked as the third-highest priority, and respondents expressed their desire for community-building events and opportunities to meet their neighbors. However, though the WPCC’s annual meeting is the best attended of the year, many people are not aware of the official designation of the Waite Park neighborhood, nor do they know about Minneapolis’ neighborhood programs in general.

Since 2008, the WPCC has worked to improve awareness and recognition of the city-defined neighborhood of Waite Park by creating and publicizing a visual identity used in neighborhood communications, such as newsletters, a website, and social media accounts. Promotional items—t-shirts, water bottles, window clings—are also available and are included in a welcome pack greeting new homeowners to the neighborhood. These efforts help to augment a sense of identity and connection for Waite Park residents. Further reinforcement of this sense of place could be pursued through neighborhood signs welcoming visitors to and announcing Waite Park. The WPCC also intends to have a presence and information available at as many Northeast functions as possible, and continue our role of promoting participation in events such as those supporting the NEighborhood sales, NE Ride, Waite Park Community Garden, Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association, PEN, Area A, Waite Park Community School, Northeast Middle School, and Edison High School. More visibility in Northeast Minneapolis means a stronger identity for those who live in a neighborhood that takes an active role in the area and in Minneapolis as a whole.

### ***Improving public spaces: Enhancing parks, boulevards, schools, and other public spaces***

The Waite Park neighborhood contains three parks: Waite Park, Deming Heights, and Cavell Playground. Survey respondents reported that they view the neighborhood’s appealing public spaces as valuable amenities. As rewarding as these resources are, and as much as they contribute to the neighborhood, challenges remain in maintaining or restoring these recreational assets, and in ensuring that they reflect their historical significance to the neighborhood and their potential for new uses. Parks are not our only public spaces that require protection and investment. As one example, storms and invasive species have damaged the urban canopy of the boulevards.

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People want places in which to gather as a community. The WPCC can help in bolstering these venues for families and the neighborhood overall. We can take on service or beautification projects in collaboration with those who have a natural connection to or expertise in these areas—the community gardeners, for example, or local contractors. Some efforts already underway, such as the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s renovation of Waite Park’s pool and playground, would benefit from further involvement from the WPCC and other community stakeholders to make sure that the project is rewarding and reflective of the neighborhood’s desires.

### **Process**

To develop the priorities represented in this plan, the WPCC conducted a survey in the spring of 2013. In addition, the WPCC formed a Neighborhood Priority Plan committee that has met throughout the year. This committee was tasked with integrating survey results, neighborhood feedback received informally by all WPCC board members, and suggestions voiced by residents and community stakeholders at public meetings and through written communication with the board. Efforts were made to involve underrepresented communities. For example, the WPCC organized a community forum with the goal of drawing an audience that might be underengaged or unrepresented at monthly board meetings. This forum was held on Saturday, March 2, 2013 at Columbia Manor and advertised through flyers. The response was underwhelming; however, based on the survey data, the NPP committee is confident that residents of all areas of Waite Park were able to, and did, offer their feedback. The WPCC will continue attempts to make certain that everyone feels welcome and knows that he or she is invited to participate in forging the direction of the neighborhood.

At the WPCC’s meeting held on November 6, 2013, residents were invited to vote on approving this plan. Notice of the meeting was placed in the Waite Park Voice newsletter, and postcard invitations were mailed to residents of the neighborhood. After a presentation of the priorities, the meeting attendees voted unanimously to approve the plan.

With the limited resources of money and time available to an all-volunteer organization, our focus lies on efforts that will produce the biggest reward. The four priorities chosen by the community will amplify the Waite Park neighborhood’s efforts, as progress made on one should reinforce the others.