



MEMORANDUM

TO: CPC Committee of the Whole

FROM: Brian Schaffer, Principal City Planner

SUBJECT: Linden Hills Small Area Plan

DATE: October 9, 2013

The Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED) Department of the City of Minneapolis and the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council (LHiNC) has completed a small area plan for the Neighborhood Commercial Districts and Community Corridors of Linden Hills. The small area planning effort was completed using funds from the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP). LHiNC appointed a steering committee for the plan and CPED staff served as the project manager and managed the consultant contract. The consultant team included:

- SEH, Inc.
- Cornejo Consulting
- Miller Dunwiddie Architecture

Engagement Process

The public engagement process kicked off in February 2013 with a survey to gather feedback from the community on desires for the future of Linden Hills. The online survey was supplemented by hard copy surveys that were delivered to every household in Linden Hills. In total over 400 responses were made. Following the survey in February a community workshop was held to discuss preliminary results of the survey and discuss issues and opportunities in the project area.

In April 2013 two community workshops were held to work through ideas and alternatives for specific elements of the plan including Land Use, Building and Site Design, Public Realm, Connectivity and parking, and Heritage Preservation. Over 100 people attended the workshops.

In June 2013 an in-person and online open house were held to review and comment on draft concepts that were created based on the input of the April community workshops. In total, over 100 people provided comments on the concepts presented in the open house.

In September 2013, a week after the draft plan was open for the 45-day public comment period, an open house was held to allow the public to review and discuss the plan's recommendations with the project team. Approximately 40 people attend the open house.

In addition to the public engagement, a steering committee appointed by LHiNC was integral in reviewing and refining the public engagement process and content of the engagement as well as providing feedback and guidance on the overall content of the plan.

Creative City Making

The Linden Hills Small Area Plan was a pilot project of Creative City Making, a collaboration between the City of Minneapolis and Intermedia Arts to embed artists in planning process. Creative City Making was made possible by a grant from ArtPlace America. Three artists, Roger Cummings, Caroline Kent, and Samuel Ero-Phillips, engaged youth from Southwest High School in the development of the plan and developed a Zine, a picture book questionnaire, to further engage members of the community on elements of the plan.

Plan Content

The Linden Hills Small Area Plan was developed and its guidance focused on two key items. First, the plan will not change adopted City policy, it will serve to refine the policy in the context of the project area. Second, the recommendations of the plan are linked to the vision that was developed for the plan and five overarching goals to accomplish that vision.

As such each section of plan reviews existing conditions and existing policy before making recommendations. Policies are introduced under the five overarching goals and specific recommendations that reflect the goals and policies are introduced.

Vision & Goals

Linden Hills is a thriving pedestrian-friendly and sustainable urban village that offers varied housing, commercial, open space, and transportation choices to meet residents' and business owners' needs. Renovation and new development support and enhance the existing scale and character of the neighborhood.

Neighborhood scale and character are in part defined by:

- A walkable, pedestrian friendly public realm
- An eclectic mix of human-scale buildings
- Vibrant, independent, neighborhood-serving businesses

To fulfill this vision five goals have been established:

1. Keep and enhance what makes the Linden Hills commercial districts unique.
2. Ensure appropriately-scaled development.
3. Encourage complementary uses, activities, and public realm enhancements.
4. Promote public infrastructure and private development that reinforces an ecologically healthy neighborhood.
5. Support the development of a broad spectrum of life-cycle housing options.

Specific Recommendations

The following is a list of the specific recommendations of the small area plan

3.1 - Land Use & Development Intensity

- Define the existing commercial areas between Chowen and Zenith Avenues as a new mixed use Neighborhood Commercial Node.
- Amend the Future Land Use map to reflect the following:

- Redefine the area along France Avenue from the corner of 46th Street up to the south property line of the Lake Harriet Masonic Center as Medium Density residential 2 to 3-story multi-family apartments or row houses.
- Redefine the area along the north side of 44th Street between Drew Avenue and France 44 Liquors as Medium Density Residential, 2 to 3-story multi-family apartments or row houses.
- Redefine the area along the north side of 44th Street between Xerxes Avenue and St. John the Apostle Church and School as Medium Density Residential, 2 to 3-story multi-family apartments or row houses.
- Study and refine the existing Linden Hills Overlay Zoning District to reflect the guidance in this Small Area Plan, including the amount and location of parking and allowed uses. The study should also consider applying the overlay district to the 44th & France Neighborhood Commercial Node to further encourage more pedestrian oriented development patterns.

3.2 - Building & Site Design

- Establish a building height maximum of 3-stories or 42-feet, whichever is less, if the development is a mixed use commercial-residential building (new or addition), and 35-foot maximum for residential buildings (new or addition/remodel) within the Neighborhood Commercial Nodes of 43rd & Upton and 44th & Beard and along the community corridors of 44th Street & France Avenue (to 46th Street West).
- Establish a building height limit of 3-stories or 42-feet, whichever is less, if the development is a mixed use commercial-residential building, and 35-foot maximum for residential buildings (new or addition/remodel) within the 44th & France Neighborhood Commercial Node. Exceptions to increase height might be considered within this node along the 44th Street frontage if the proposed project can demonstrate that the added height allows the project to better fulfill the goals and policies of this Small Area Plan than it would at the height of 3-story.
- Reduce visual impacts of 3-story developments to properties in transition areas. New development adjacent to transition areas should consider increased side and rear building setbacks, stepping back the third story, and articulating or enlivening the rear facade. New development across the street from transition areas should consider stepping back the third story.

3.3 - Movement, Connectivity & Parking

- Add curb extensions (bump-outs) at key intersections along 44th Street and at 43rd & Upton to improve pedestrian safety, help calm traffic, and enhance the overall streetscape.
- Explore the installation of decorative pedestrian lighting from Upton Avenue and 43rd Street to 44th Street & France Avenue.
- Expand the quantity and distribution of bike parking facilities.
- Improve safety and convenience for pedestrians crossing between Sunnyside Avenue and 44th Street by enhancing or redesigning Sunnyside Avenue between 44th Street & France Avenue as a more pedestrian-oriented facility.

- Analyze options for refining the function and design of the former streetcar right of way between Xerxes and Upton Avenues as either an open and mixed traffic, public facility or as a closed and segmented semi-public facility.
- Manage and reconfigure existing supply of parking resources to their maximum potential while also seeking opportunities for expanding car share, bike rental, and neighborhood transit circulator service.
- Ensure that parking facilities maintain and enhance the character of Linden Hills through their location, design and the types of facilities.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to, from, and within the three commercial nodes.

3.4 - Sustainability & the Environment

- Provide access via web links to green building organizations' information (USGBC LEED, MN B3, Green Globes, etc.) on the neighborhood's web site to further educate and promote sustainable, green building practices.
- Integrate stormwater best management practices (BMPs), such as rain gardens, permeable paving, and vegetative green roofs, as components of new development and significant renovations or additions to existing sites and buildings.
- Convert tree-lawn boulevards along 44th Street to linear rain gardens (vegetated bio-swales), where practical.
- Expand on the program of hosting topical presentations to the neighborhood by renowned experts in the fields of sustainability and green design.

3.5 - Heritage Preservation

- Enhance the “Christmas Tree” public green space along 44th Street between Chowen and Beard Avenues.
- Seek funding for and implement a study by qualified consultants to determine the eligibility of properties and/ or districts within the Small Area Plan Study Area and the Area of Influence.
- Monitor the progress of the Conservation District concept as it is considered by the Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) and provide support for the concept city-wide. Once adopted by the City, use the results of the historic designation study as the basis for identifying and creating Conservation Districts in Linden Hills as another tool to protect its character.

Next Steps

The 45-day review period began on September 5th and will end on October 21st – ten comments have been received by CPED. Your suggestions and any received from the public will be evaluated in October and necessary revisions will be made. The LHINC board plans to review and take action on adopting the plan at its November 12th board meeting. CPED intends to bring the Linden Hills Small Area Plan to the City Planning Commission and City Council in December for adoption.

Once the Linden Hills Small Area Plan is approved by the City Planning Commission and City Council, City staff will begin the process of amending it to *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*.