

LINDEN HILLS SMALL AREA PLAN

Vision

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:

Goal 1: Keep and enhance what makes the Linden Hills commercial districts unique.

- 1.1** Encourage the retention, reuse, and renovation of existing buildings, especially those with historic value to the neighborhood and to the regional community.
- 1.2** Facilitate the cooperation between the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council and the Linden Hills Business Association, and collaboration with the City, on strategies and programs to strengthen and retain existing businesses, as well as to recruit complementary new businesses.
- 1.3** Encourage the protection, preservation, and proper maintenance of historic buildings and landscapes.

Goal 2: Ensure appropriately-scaled development.

- 2.1** Encourage development that reinforces the 43rd & Upton, 44 & Beard, and 44th & France Neighborhood Commercial nodes and appropriately connects them along 44th Street.
- 2.2** Promote measures to facilitate new investment that embrace economic, environmental, and social sustainability.
- 2.3** Promote contextual infill redevelopment through policies and regulations that address the width, length, massing and height of new development, building expansions, and renovations.
- 2.4** Ensure that parking facilities maintain and enhance the character of Linden Hills through their location, design and the types of facilities.
- 2.5 [mis-numbered in LHSAP- does not exist]
- 2.6** Building renovations and additions of should use durable materials in a manner that respects the construction traditions and methods of the existing building.

Goal 3: Encourage complementary uses, activities, and public realm enhancements.

- 3.1** Facilitate the expansion of alternative transportation choices and infrastructure including walking, cycling, and transit to support active living, public health, and environmental quality.
- 3.2** Promote a pedestrian-friendly, attractive public realm.
- 3.3** Calm vehicle traffic to better accommodate walking and cycling while making them safer.
- 3.4** Manage and reconfigure existing overall supply of parking resources to their maximum potential while also seeking opportunities for expanding car share, bike rental and neighborhood transit circulator service.

Goal 4: Promote public infrastructure and private development that reinforces an ecologically healthy neighborhood.

- 4.1 [mis-numbered in LHSAP- does not exist]
- 4.2** Promote the use of infrastructure and building systems intended to reduce overall resource consumption.
- 4.3** Encourage the use of non-motorized transportation by providing parking for bicycles in safe, convenient, and where practical, sheltered locations.
- 4.4** Support healthy living and walking by providing connecting walkways between parking facilities, building entrances, and public sidewalks and pathways.
- 4.5** Encourage environmentally sensitive redevelopment through the use of established green design programs and rating systems such as U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification, MN B3 Standards, and the Green Building Initiative's Green Globes.
- 4.6** Link open spaces and transportation networks into an ecologically interconnected system.
- 4.7** Cultivate a visually appealing public landscape that protects and enhances the ecological function of the neighborhood's natural resources, such as soils, hydrology and urban forest.
- 4.8** Encourage and support the establishment of private gardens for the growth of food.
- 4.9** Encourage and support the sale of locally grown food and food products.
- 4.10** Link open spaces and transportation networks into an ecologically interconnected system that mitigates the effect of stormwater runoff, urban heat island and air pollution while providing natural habitat.
- 4.11** Promote internal connectivity, where it is lacking, for non-motorized modes of transport to improve accessibility to all areas of the neighborhood by pedestrians and cyclists.
- 4.12** Promote the use of infrastructure and building systems (permeable paving, green roofs, recycled building materials, daylighting, etc.) intended to reduce overall resource consumption.

Goal 5: Support the development of a broad spectrum of life-cycle housing options.

- 5.1** Encourage the development of a range of housing types and sizes.
- 5.2** Promote housing options that meet the needs and desires of people throughout their lives (from young adults to seniors).
- 5.3** Encourage a mix of dwelling unit types and sizes within new or renovated multi-family buildings.

Specific Implementation Recommendations

Land Use & Development Intensity

- 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.
- Define the existing commercial areas between Chowen and Zenith Avenues as a new mixed use Neighborhood Commercial Node.
- Expand the southern boundary of the 44th & France Neighborhood Commercial Node to include the property at 4519 France Avenue South.
- Expand the southeastern boundary of the 43rd & Upton Neighborhood Commercial Node to include the property at 2720 West 44th Street.
- 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 4519 France Aveue South as Medium Density Residential.
- Redefine the area along the north side of 44th Street between Drew Avenue and France 44 Liquors as Medium Density Residential.
- 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.

Building & Site Design

- A maximum height of three or four stories is allowed for multifamily residential & mixed use buildings within the three neighborhood commercial nodes and along the community corridors of 44th Street West (from Upton to France Avenues) and France Avenue (Glendale to 46th Street W) where the future land use is identified as medium or high density.
- Encourage overall building heights and floor-to-floor heights that reflect the adjacent architectural context and encourage buildings that are shorter than the current Zoning Code maximums for 3 and 4 story buildings (42 feet and 56 feet respectively).
- The fourth story of any building in the three neighborhood commercial nodes and along the community corridors shall be stepped back from the street facing façade(s) of the building by at least 10 feet.
- Within the 44th & France Neighborhood Commercial Node a fourth story of a building that is not stepped back from the street façade will be considered if:
- A publicly accessible plaza or open space is located adjacent to 44th Street
- The non-stepped back four story portion of the building complies with the articulation requirement (see following bullet point) and does not exceed 70 feet in length along any adjacent street.
- The Neighborhood Commercial Nodes and Community Corridors are valued for their eclectic diversity of buildings and their scale. New development should reflect the character of the area through articulation, such as massing intervals and varied setbacks. This should be achieved through more than just a change in building materials.
- When a new three or four story building is adjacent to single- or two-family structures, the top floor shall be setback an additional 10 feet from the required rear and side yards of the property. Adjacent structures are defined as properties that share a side or rear property line or an alley with the subject property.
- Encourage building designs that articulate or enliven the rear façade.
- Encourage site designs that use vegetative buffers to reduce the visual impacts of higher density development on adjacent lower density development.

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 and 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 France Avenue and 44th Street as a more pedestrian-oriented facility.
- The design and function of this street was explored in the planning process due to the challenges its current design poses for pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular movements at the intersections of 44th & Sunnyside and France & Sunnyside. Several alternatives were explored that modified access and reconfigured pedestrian space and parking layouts within the street right of way. These and additional alternatives could be explored and analyzed in greater detail using traffic engineering and landscape architectural best practices.
- Explore the formalization of pedestrian and bicycle use of former streetcar right of way between Xerxes and Upton Avenue through infrastructure improvements.
- Ensure site improvements and designs within and adjacent to the streetcar right-of-way that increase the real and perceived safety of users of the streetcar right of way
- Analyze options for refining the function and design of the former street car right-of-way to accommodate vehicle traffic associated with the parking and access of the commercial uses within the 43rd & Upton neighborhood commercial node while not compromising the desire for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that is safe and inviting.
- 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.
- Enhance the "Christmas Tree" public green space along 44th Street between Chowen and Beard Avenues

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.

Heritage Prservation

- 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.
- Explore the creation of Conservation Districts in areas valued for their distinctive development patterns.
- 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.