

FIRST ANNUAL STATE OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS ADDRESS

The Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods

Thursday, January 5, 1995

The Mixed Blood Theatre

4:00 p.m.

INTRODUCTION

Our purpose today is to assess how well Minneapolis is facing the challenges of urban neighborhood life.

The State of the Neighborhoods Address is our annual review of the extraordinary richness of neighborhood life. Distilling lessons and insights from the solid energy and issues generated by residents, organizations, and informal initiatives throughout the city, we propose to illustrate some of the most important actions needed to move Minneapolis neighborhoods forward. In the process, we will suggest that in a community hungry for a coherent and compelling urban agenda, it is to our neighborhoods that we might look for guidance.

The importance of this kind of assessment has been heightened by the dramatic swing in the national electoral mood. Partnerships with the federal government in resuscitating our nation's cities, always a tenuous proposition, are likely to become even more difficult to forge. An urban agenda, in Minneapolis as elsewhere, will need to be grown from the strengths of local communities. And those strengths will increasingly emerge only to the extent that cities tap the creativity and pragmatism of their neighborhoods.

The Address is not intended to catalogue the economic, social, and political conditions of our community. There is no shortage of these kinds of analyses, and most city residents are all too familiar with their unremitting negativity.

The Address is instead an effort to capture a vision of the city that is rooted in neighborhood life. For it is in our neighborhoods that people live, relate to others, and build a sense of community. It is in our neighborhoods that we all play out the large and small dramas of our daily lives. As our city faces forces of fragmentation, isolation, and neglect, it must take its bearings from the values and sensitivities that neighborhoods have cultivated over time and are working daily to preserve and enhance.

We offer this State of the Neighborhoods Address as a vision that has been collectively formed by the members of the Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods. We hope it will provoke reaction, discussion, and ultimately a process of community change.

The Address will be divided into three sections:

- [1] The Neighborhood Report Card -- how the neighborhoods and the public sector are doing in advancing a neighborhood agenda;
- [2] The Neighborhood Agenda -- what initiatives of promise are emerging from Minneapolis neighborhood activity;

[3] The Challenge of Activating a Neighborhood Agenda -- what must be done to move neighborhoods forward.

I. THE NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT CARD

What follows is our assessment of how well our community and our public systems are performing on key indicators of urban health. We intend to open debate -- less about whether the grade is a point too high or low than about what can be done to improve in those areas in which our community is clearly not doing as well as it could.¹ The grades are informed by the value the Center places on approaches that are creative, linked to the realities of neighborhood life, and holistic in their recognition of the need to draw connections among the disparate activities of community activity.

The State of the Neighborhoods has two faces. The first is the creative, ambitious urban agenda emerging from Minneapolis neighborhoods. The second is the sluggish public policy-making and service delivery system that must respond to the initiatives proposed. We have accordingly divided the report card into two parts -- the bold-faced items, which capture neighborhood activity, and the italicized items, which describe public sector activity.

Neighborhood human development strategies	B
• <i>Public sector support for human development strategies</i>	<i>B</i>
Neighborhood responses to public safety challenges	A-
• <i>Public sector leadership in developing neighborhood public safety models</i>	<i>B</i>
Neighborhood infrastructure strategies: to enhance the environment, improve housing, and encourage small business development	A-
• <i>Public sector development of comprehensive housing, economic, environmental, and land-use strategies</i>	<i>D</i>
Neighborhood commitment to cross-neighborhood coalitions	B
• <i>Public sector leadership in encouraging cross-neighborhood strategies</i>	<i>D</i>
• <i>Public sector leadership in creating connections between neighborhoods and regional activities</i>	<i>D</i>
Neighborhood commitment to urban revitalization	A

¹ The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs recently issued a call for faculty research to examine how to create Neighborhood Benchmarks, which presumably could provide a more objective measure of community health in such areas as children and families, environmental quality, public infrastructure (including housing, streets, parks, and libraries), education, public safety, economic opportunity, and community development. The State of Oregon, the Minneapolis Health Department, and the Minneapolis Public Schools have all launched such measurement efforts.

As you can see, neighborhood commitment and creativity have consistently been high while the public sector response appears at best reluctant and at worst hostile. Or stated a bit more strongly: were we the parents of City Hall, we would demand a parent-teacher conference immediately. Perhaps that is why we are here.

II. THE NEIGHBORHOOD AGENDA

Minneapolis neighborhoods are demonstrating considerable energy, creativity, and perseverance in addressing the challenge of keeping the city healthy, safe, stable, and attractive.

The illustrations that follow were chosen not because they are representative, but because they represent attempts to test innovative models at a neighborhood scale or illuminate broader themes of cross-neighborhood or cross-disciplinary cooperation.

Strengthening Community Networks of Family Support [Neighborhood Human Development Strategies -- Grade: B]

The first category is strengthening community networks of family support.

Minneapolis enjoys a national reputation for its civic emphasis on the challenges facing children and families.² Much of this reputation is attributable to the innovative community partnerships that have emerged to address the challenges of early childhood development.³ Although the neighborhoods have contributed to these efforts, one of the shortcomings of the NRP process has been that human development issues have fallen out of the bottom of most neighborhood plans.⁴

² This emphasis became the hallmark of Mayor Don Fraser's administration, which legitimized city involvement in Head Start, Neighborhood Early Learning Centers, the Way to Grow Program, after-school programming for teens, teen employment and training programs (Teen Teamworks), youth mentoring (the Youth Trust), and many other efforts. It is noteworthy that Mayor Fraser's final State of the City Address in 1993 was dedicated virtually in its entirety to children and family issues. The administration of Mayor Sayles Belton has sought to continue this emphasis.

³ The Success by Six Program, the Youth Trust, the Youth Coordinating Board, and the Way to Grow Program, among others, are all rooted in public-private-non-profit cooperation.

⁴ A number of explanations are possible: the complexity of the issues involved; the pre-existence of highly organized social service bureaucracies that are hard to understand, let alone penetrate; the failure of key players such as the Youth Coordinating Board, the United Way, and the Youth Trust to become involved in the neighborhood workshop process; the city-wide nature of most social service programming; or the extensive funding available to support human development from sources outside the NRP. See Rapson et al, *The Neighborhood Connections Project: Building a Community Agenda From the*

Some of the most interesting efforts to address issues of human development have sought to create a broader, more holistic context at the neighborhood level. While recognizing the necessary role played by traditional social service models, these efforts focus on strengthening the basic building blocks of neighborhood life: solid anchoring institutions such as places of worship, commercial centers, educational institutions, and parks; cohesive networks of informal support such as block clubs, garden societies, or volunteer organizations; and access to such primary services as employment and training, education, health care, child care, and transportation.

Integrating Preventive Health Care into Neighborhood Life

The Powderhorn neighborhood's **Healthy Powderhorn** initiative embodies this focus on community building blocks.

Healthy Powderhorn is a community planning and organizing effort to improve the basic measures of community health, including education, job satisfaction, safe homes and streets, air and water quality, and spiritual well-being. It is grounded in teams of neighbors called Citizen Health Action Teams that define and develop a solution to one health condition (for example, sexually transmitted diseases or infant mortality in the African American community) that undermines the community's quality of life. Over a two-year period, these teams will work with government and service agencies and make decisions about health and wellness within Powderhorn.⁵

The **Southeast Seniors block nurse program** similarly brings essential support services into the homes of senior citizens.⁶ Nurses make visits not only to ensure that the seniors' basic health care needs are being met -- assisting with bathing, monitoring medication and nutrition, checking medical conditions -- but to find ways that the resident's daily life can be made more manageable -- arranging for a volunteer to provide transportation, shovel the snow, shop for groceries, check the furnace, or be a companion.

Connecting the Schools to the Community

Education occupies a central position in any community human development strategy. Neighborhood residents are increasingly searching for different ways to re-integrate public

Ground Up, pp. 18-19 (Design Center for the American Urban Landscape, June 1994) ["*The Neighborhood Connections Project*"].

⁵ The Healthy Powderhorn initiative envisions as well that the Teams will evolve into an Elders Council, which will embody the community's health and wellness values and pass on the wisdom and best practices of the community to the next generation. The Teams will connect to public policy makers, funding institutions, and other key decision-makers through a Community Resources and Investment Body (CRIB), which will include representatives of each of these groups.

Healthy Powderhorn has found a strong partner in the Medica Foundation, thanks in considerable part to the vision and leadership of Mike Christianson, the Foundation's Executive Director.

⁶ The program serves three southeast neighborhoods: Como, Marcy-Holmes, and Prospect Park. It targets the frail elderly, who are not able to care for themselves unassisted. Last year, the program served more than 130 elderly citizens.

education more fully into neighborhood life. One of the most promising efforts is the **Hale Elementary School facilities planning process**.⁷

The Hale, Page, and Diamond Lake neighborhoods called attention in their NRP to the need for physical plant improvements at Hale Elementary School, setting aside approximately \$400,000 for that purpose. This became the point of departure for a community planning process that identified the highest priority improvements and explored how those improvements could be tied to a similar capital effort being undertaken by the neighboring Our Lady of Peace school.⁸

Schools are also becoming more connected to the community through partnerships with the business community:

- The **Minneapolis Youth Trust** is working with five Minneapolis schools to develop career exploration programs.
- The **Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce** has developed apprenticeships in banking and finance for two Minneapolis high schools.
- **Honeywell** has created its own apprenticeships in accounting and consumer banking at Minneapolis Roosevelt and Robinsdale High Schools.
- **Target Stores and the University of Minnesota** have created a training and internship program for high school students interested in retail merchandising.
- The **Plymouth Christian Youth Center's alternative school** has developed a work readiness program in which students learn and apply skills in caring for seniors at the St. Olaf's Residence.

These efforts reflect an increased recognition that businesses have a significant stake in their host communities. Coupled with a heightened national interest in secondary school technical preparation,⁹ this suggests that Minneapolis neighborhoods and businesses may have a role to play in how the schools train neighborhood residents for the workplace.

Promoting a Vibrant Cultural Environment

Neighborhoods are quietly at work building a network of cultural activities that express not only the joy of community life, but the values and visions of our many cultures and traditions. Art galleries, neighborhood theaters, drum groups, gospel choirs, dance studios, storytelling, ceramics workshops -- all are strengthening the fabric of our community. A few examples can only begin to suggest the extent to which cultural activities enrich and define a substantial portion of neighborhood life.

Arts organizations are also small businesses that enhance the economy and the sociability of the neighborhoods they occupy. Artists are often ideal tenants for creative, non-

⁷ The impetus for the Hale planning process came from Chuck Leer, a real estate and development consultant, and Garth Rockcastle, an architect and University of Minnesota College of Architecture faculty member. Working with a small NRP grant from the Minneapolis Public Schools, Leer and Rockcastle provided the technical guidance, both in design and facilities planning, that enabled the community to develop its recommendations.

⁸ The community is exploring, for example, how Hale and Our Lady of Peace might share a media/resource center and an outdoor play area.

⁹ See footnote 55 below.

industrial re-use of commercial and industrial space. Because artists are skilled at thinking up new and different uses for old and discarded materials and buildings, they are often able to help a neighborhood see the potential for transforming a neighborhood eyesore into a site that has positive community significance.

When **Intermedia Arts** exercised a purchase option this fall on the Bee Line Building on Lyndale Avenue, the CARAG, Lowry East, Lyndale, and Whittier neighborhoods breathed a collective sigh of relief. Joining the **Jungle Theatre** and multitude of restaurants near the Lyn/Lake intersection, Intermedia introduces another anchoring institution to the neighborhood's revitalization. It is a place for neighbors, not just artists, to gather. Its programming is a celebration both of the wonders of multi-culturalism and of the power of community-building. Its recent month-long **Day of the Dead festival**, for example, used the Mexican Halloween-like cultural celebration to create bridges between the neighborhood and the Chicano-Latino community.

The **Loring Park Bar and Cafe** not only draws people to eat, see theater, and witness Myron Johnson's remarkable **Ballet of the Dolls**, but has economically stabilized and revitalized the entire north side of the park.¹⁰

The **Mixed Blood Theater**, by its own admission "the greatest theater in the history of the galaxy," was instrumental years ago in establishing the West Bank Theatre District -- then thought to be a lark of Mixed Blood Artistic Director Jack Reuler, the District has worn well and contributed significantly to the continued vitality of the West Bank.

The arts help us make meaning in our lives. They connect us to our communities and enable us to appreciate why we suffer and persevere. These are the experiences that bind neighbors together and make individuals feel safe and at home in their neighborhoods.

Now approaching middle age, the **May Day Parade and Festival** along Bloomington Avenue and in Powderhorn Park is an extraordinary celebration of urban life. For those who think parades start and end with the Holidazzle Parade of Lights,¹¹ a trip to see this neighborhood festival is absolutely essential -- the **Heart of the Beast** puppets and

¹⁰ Jason McLean, the owner of the Loring, is one of the unheralded treasures of our community. Part head chef, part impresario, part developer, part actor, Jason's energy and commitment to the park has rubbed off on the entire Fawlk block, which now includes the Utne Reader, the Amazon Bookstore, Ruby's Cafe, and the Ballet of the Dolls studio, among others.

On the southside, the **Bryant Lake Bowl** has introduced the same kind of vitality and commercial stability to the Bryant/Lake intersection as the Loring has to the park. It is a place to socialize, to bowl, to eat, and to see films, readings, and performances of all description on its very intimate stage.

Patrick's Cabaret has served less to stabilize its end of 24th Street than to present challenging, sometimes controversial works (Ron Athey's performance last year at Patrick's is likely to dominate Newt Gingrich's imminent abolish-the-National Endowment for the Arts rhetoric), particularly those that address issues of the gay, lesbian, and transgender communities.

¹¹ Which is not to say that the Holidazzle Parade is not a wonderful event -- it is, and all of us who enjoy it owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Downtown Council, downtown businesses, and thousands of parade volunteers.

performance, the dizzying array of crafts, music, and public information, and the promenade of tens of thousands of people around the lake, all contribute to an event like no other.

On the other side of town, the **Juneteenth Celebration** in the Near North and Hawthorne neighborhoods is a powerful reminder of the drama of 19th Century African-American emancipation and its social, economic, and political implications for contemporary society. The celebration begins with floats, drum and bugle corps, dance groups, and dignitaries proceeding from the Wirth Park Chalet down Plymouth Avenue to the Hawthorne neighborhood. It channels participants into a community bazaar full of food, public service exhibits, and hats, shirts, crafts, artworks, and anything else that can be sold.

People gather regularly in a slightly more intimate setting to hear storytelling in countless settings throughout the city. **Jerry Blue** weaves his magical tales for children at the community libraries. The **Wild Rumpus Bookstore** -- its designed-for-children interior a destination in and of itself -- attracts authors, storytellers, and musicians each weekend to spellbind the children of the Linden Hills neighborhood.¹² Using stories from Africa, **Mattie Clark** recently passed on to Twin Cities children the Omoja (unity) principle of Kwanzaa, a week-long celebration of African-American culture and community.

These examples can help our community think more imaginatively about the framework of possibilities for human development. They help us find meaning in our daily activities. They help us feel good about where we live.

Building the Community's Capacity to Create Safe Neighborhoods [Neighborhood Responses to Public Safety Challenges -- Grade: A-]

The second category is building the community's capacity to create safe neighborhoods.

A vocabulary of violence has come to dominate much of this community's dialogue about what it means to live in the city. Public safety is the centerpiece of political campaigns, the city budget,¹³ and media coverage of city affairs¹⁴. The traditional focus is invariably on how best to respond to criminal activity -- more police officers and prosecutors, bigger jails, stricter teen curfews, tougher sentencing.

Meanwhile, neighborhoods quietly pursue alternative ways of mobilizing for safe communities.

¹² Just in the first eight weeks of the new year, for example, Wild Rumpus has scheduled a teen jazz ensemble, the Woodland Fairy Workshop, a dulcimer-playing puppeteer, a scrimshaw-maker, a knitting class, a paper-maker, a bead workshop, and an archeologist.

¹³ For example, the only substantial increase in City personnel in the Mayor's November budget submission was for public safety functions.

¹⁴ Both the *StarTribune* and WCCO television deserve credit, however, for introducing more balanced coverage of regional affairs. The *StarTribune* has created a metropolitan coverage team to explore more expansively regional economic, social, and political issues. Among other initiatives, WCCO TV is increasingly searching out positive community stories in its "Bright Side" segment (although it should be possible to feature more city initiatives).

Identifying the Assets and Capacities within a Community

A more holistic model for thinking about the community's role in public safety was offered at a recent **public safety roundtable sponsored by the Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods**.¹⁵ Using an analogy to the human body, crime becomes a symptom of a breakdown within the natural system. Instead of only treating the symptom (*i.e.*, of reacting to criminal activity), we should also be looking for ways to address underlying causes and to restore the body's natural immunity and healing systems (*i.e.*, to build crime-resistance within the neighborhood).¹⁶

The neighborhoods of St. Paul are exploring this concept through the **Safe City initiative**. Safe City is a comprehensive and integrated approach to crime prevention that centers community attention on environmental change and social development -- in particular, youth development and family support, economic opportunity, and social cohesion at the neighborhood level. It looks both to a city-wide Public Safety Advisory Council and to neighborhood organizations working with an interdepartmental team of city agencies. It utilizes neighborhood safety audits, which help a neighborhood identify both safety assets and liabilities -- what makes residents feel safe and unsafe in their homes and streets.¹⁷

The interest of Minneapolis neighborhoods in **police storefront offices** -- so-called "cop shops" -- reflects a similar attitude.¹⁸ The intent is to tie officers more fully into neighborhood life. By becoming more familiar with the neighborhood's residents and daily routines, officers stationed in a neighborhood can identify potentially disruptive activities before they become full-blown problems. Such an approach would stretch both community-oriented policing and SAFE teams into an even more preventive model.¹⁹

¹⁵ Held on October 26, 1994 at the University Technology Center, the roundtable gathered approximately 25 community activists from Minneapolis and St. Paul to discuss four models of community response to the challenges of public safety. The roundtable was led by Minneapolis Center for Neighborhood Board Members Paul Ostrow, Hope Melton, and Chris Bacon.

¹⁶ One very specific example was how to deal with the challenge of urban refugees: how does our community welcome people who have left the equivalent of an urban war zone in another city and help them make the transition to life in Minneapolis and St. Paul?

¹⁷ The Safe City model was developed in a 1989 North American and European conference on urban crime. Safe City initiatives are widespread in Canada, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. These programs have emphasized social development and environmental design. The comprehensiveness of these approaches is suggested by the twenty social indicators to which Edmonton is looking in assessing the effectiveness of its program: criminal code occurrences, youth offenders charged, resident perceptions of safety, suicides by young people, child welfare investigations, Head Start spaces, early school leavers, graduation rates, juvenile prostitution arrests, food bank users under the age of 13, family violence calls, family violence homicides, shelter spaces for abused women, shelter refusals, new housing starts, housing inspections, households with affordability problems, new spaces for hard to house.

¹⁸ Requests for police sub-stations appear in many neighborhood NRP plans: Bancroft, Jordan, Stevens Square, and Windom among others.

¹⁹ The arrival of the new Police Chief in a few months presents a valuable opportunity for the city to make this stretch. Through bike patrols, beat patrols, cop shops, and more

Fostering A Sense of Community Ownership

A number of recent neighborhood public improvement projects have demonstrated the potential for fostering a sense of community ownership by transforming unsafe places and destructive activities into community assets.

The **Phillips Neighborhood Gateway** project was born of the neighborhood's efforts to remove Snyder's Liquor Store from the corner of Chicago and Franklin Avenues and reclaiming the space for public use and enjoyment. Working with artist Rafala Green, the community began designing and constructing pathways, an archway, a plaza, and a community podium.

What began as a public art project soon became a community organizing effort. It drew 700 students from the Four Winds School into a four-month residency with the artist -- the resulting drawings of community life were displayed on the site. It used the project's construction fence as a easel for the paintings of students and staff at Anderson school. It created an arts workshop in a vacant grocery store to train young people in the skills the project's construction would require and hired those young people to do the work.

The **Green Chairs Project** reflects a similar process. After having an Adirondack Chair stolen from his yard in the Whittier neighborhood, Joel Sisson decided that it made more sense to provide more yard chairs than to pursue a police complaint. He set up a workshop in his garage, recruited teenagers from the neighborhood to learn to make chairs, and convinced a generous donor to buy materials and provide his crew with a modest wage. After the chairs were constructed, the young people placed a chair in every yard on Sisson's block. Sisson has sought to continue the Green Chairs Project as a way of providing teens with skills training and employment.²⁰

There are many other examples -- the **Phantom Bike Shop** developed by Seward Redesign (training young people to repair and market stolen bikes seized by the Police), the **Neighborhood Safe Art project** at 12th and Lake (murals at the site of a vacant lot previously infested with drug activity), tens of houses rehabilitated by jobless young people trained by the **Two or More program**. Each represents a powerful response to the forces that create fear in our neighborhoods.

Building Healthy, Crime-Resistant Communities

One of the participants at the Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods' recent community safety roundtable crystallized both the rewards and frustrations that neighborhoods experience in trying to build healthy, crime-resistant communities. Her commentary is worth excerpting at length:

Three years ago, life was simpler in our neighborhood. We were known for our effective community organizing efforts.... With strong block club

creative precinct assignments, the Department should be able to assign a particular officer to each Minneapolis neighborhood.

²⁰ The project was showcased this summer when 1000 of the chairs Sisson and his team have produced were displayed at the State Capitol.

involvement, we systematically shut down more than 150 drug houses in the neighborhood.

Two summers ago, however, life became much more complex and frightening. We found ourselves in the cross-fire of a major dispute -- rounds of gunfire shattering the neighborhood.... We shifted into high gear and gathered together all the block club leaders in the affected area and took action Within four to six weeks, we had the [drug] houses shut down and the people causing the trouble removed from the neighborhood.

[But we have come to realize that] with all of the tools available to us, we are only able at this point to hoist our most threatening problems off on someone else. This does not get at any of the root causes, nor pose long-term solutions.

The erosion of the livability in the neighborhood is palpable. The drug dealers no longer blatantly do business out of specific houses. They're more covert, doing business on a street corner here, then there, working out of several houses simultaneously; we see them like a fleeting memory of the good old days when life was simple and we knew how to shut down drug houses.

What are the solutions?

We continue to organize, determined to stick to our principles of being a block club-based, inclusive organization that deals with issues of top concern to a majority of people in the neighborhood and to seek solutions that unite and not divide the community. . . . We have a Youth Organizing Project, Renter Involvement Program, a Citizen Inspectors Program, a Police Sub-station, Graffiti Removal, and a Neighborhood Patrol. . . . [W]e organized the Dirty Thirty Campaign, targeting the 30 worst absentee landlords in the neighborhood.

Even with all our efforts, the neighborhood doesn't necessarily feel stable or safe; and people are concerned. . . . [I]t wears you down over time -- even the most committed. I certainly understand why people move. We each learn to identify our limits.²¹

These observations underscore the difficulty of making real headway against the enormously complex and resistant cycles of violence, intimidation, arrest, and release that neighborhoods face. Neighborhoods have, nonetheless, pieced together small-scale strategies that do make a difference.

²¹ Susan Braun, "Community Organizing and the Experience of Crime," paper presented to the Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods Community Crime Prevention Roundtable, October 26, 1994.

Neighborhood residents have done a remarkable job in building a network of **block clubs** throughout the city.²² Culminating annually in National Night Out, the effort to organize neighbors to be the eyes and ears to the street has been a tremendous success story.²³

Few problems are as vexing to neighborhood residents as prostitution. Not only do the prostitutes frequently draw drug dealing into an area, but the Johns are a threatening, harassing presence. Even when a prostitute is arrested, he or she is frequently back on the street within hours, a consequence of the criminal justice system's inability to free the resources necessary to deal meaningfully with these and other "status" offenses.

Neighborhoods have been tenacious in their efforts to make a dent.²⁴ The **Flush the Johns coalition** in Hawthorne has sent sex customers "Dear John" letters. Businesses in the **Warehouse District** have posted public notices to their sex business neighbors. Residents of **Prospect Park** picketed around the clock to discourage customers of a sauna on University Avenue. The **Southside Prostitution Task Force** has carried on a continuing community organizing campaign to identify Johns, close saunas, and get prostitutes off Lake street.

Other communities have taken to the street in a slightly different way. The **Lyndale Walkers** have organized Unity Walks among the Lyndale, Stevens Square, Whittier neighborhoods. Wearing fluorescent hats and handing out pamphlets to educate the public about community standards, the Lyndale Walkers are more emissaries than enforcers. The **Queer Street Patrol** in downtown Minneapolis is similarly a visible reminder of the need for vigilance in protecting the basic rights of the gay and lesbian communities. The **WATCH** program utilizes citizen-observers to monitor the sentences dispensed in district court to batterers, rapists, and child abusers.²⁵ The **Minneapolis Mediation Project** trains neighborhood residents to resolve disputes without resort to violence.

²² The City's Community Crime Prevention/SAFE office deserves considerable credit for providing the technical assistance and personnel support that greatly enhances the effectiveness of block clubs, neighborhood watches, and other community crime prevention strategies. With few exceptions, Lucy Gerrold, the Director of CCP/SAFE, has advocated consistently for seeing the City's personnel as a resource for neighborhoods.

The CARE program, pioneered in the Jordan neighborhood, has similarly drawn thousands of neighborhood residents into an effort to work with public agency staff in identifying and uprooting problem spots within a neighborhood.

²³ That is not to say that block club organizing cannot be improved upon. It is significant almost all of the neighborhoods that have completed their NRP plans call for heightened efforts to organize block clubs or to strengthen those that already exist. See *The Neighborhood Connections Project, supra*, at pages 16-17, 41.

²⁴ Although this effort has been effective, it may have had the effect of pushing the activity downtown, where it has been legally relegated by city ordinance. See C. Haga, D.P. Drew, "Neighbors vigilant as war on 'spa' customers spreads to downtown," *StarTribune* 1A (December 21, 1994).

²⁵ Founded by Susan Lenfesty and Jackie Hauser, the executive director, WATCH not only observes, but takes action, contacting prosecutors who agree to reduced sentences, publishing its findings, and advancing concrete recommendations for reform. See Editorial, "Scrutiny: It's Wise to keep an eye on the courts," *StarTribune* 16A (December 30, 1994).

**Strengthening Infrastructure as the Physical Building Blocks of
Neighborhood Life
[Neighborhood Infrastructure Strategies -- Grade: A-]**

The third category is strengthening infrastructure as the physical building blocks of neighborhood life.

As we think about what qualities of our city draws us here and what improvements we would make that would keep us here in the future, we are drawn into a conversation about strategies for creating, maintaining, and upgrading the city's infrastructure -- homes, streets, commercial centers, schools, places of worship, parks, open space.²⁶ That conversation is proceeding in earnest in Minneapolis neighborhoods. We will focus on three strands: enhancing the environment, improving the housing stock, and encouraging small business development.

Promoting Community Development through Environmental Organizing

The neighborhoods that have worked their way through the NRP process have consistently affirmed the importance of the natural environment to the sense of place conveyed by a neighborhood.²⁷ In the process, neighborhoods have begun the difficult work of assembling an environmental agenda appropriate to a neighborhood scale.

A consequence of thinking at this scale is that neighborhoods have begun to use environmental organizing as a way not only of enhancing the natural environment, but of defining the community characteristics they wish to enhance.

The neighborhoods' involvement with water quality and watershed preservation provides a number of strong examples.

The **Save Cedar Lake Park** coalition is a powerful illustration of how neighborhood residents have used their success with an environmental organizing effort to develop a broader community vision. Save Cedar Lake Park emerged to protect the Cedar Lake watershed and to develop a pedestrian/bicycle linkage between Cedar Lake Park and the River.²⁸ In the process, it not only won an enormous victory for environmental stewardship, but began to explore how the park would relate to the rest of the city. At its annual meeting on January 25th, Save Cedar Lake Park will unveil a one hundred year vision for the park, pushing people to re-think at a physical and spiritual level how connections can be made between city residents and the natural environment.

²⁶ One of the most exciting and thoughtful treatments of urban infrastructure and the process by which communities can plan for its preservation and enhancement is *Planning to Stay* by William Morrish and Catherine Brown (Milkweed Editions: 1994). The authors begin with the premise that "Planning a neighborhood is an act of community participation and expression of belief in its future. In the process, participants can discover new dimensions of being a good neighbor and a good citizen." *Id.* at 13.

²⁷ This theme is developed extensively in *The Neighborhood Connections Project*, which provides an assessment of the substantive outcomes of the NRP. *Supra*, pp. 12-15, 33-38.

²⁸ When it began, the organization received little encouragement or support from the public sector. It created its own organizational structure, its own fundraising strategy, and its own vision of the possibilities the park and trail would lead to.

The **Minneapolis Water Quality Initiative** represents a landmark in this community's thinking about environmental protection. The report, now almost two years old, translated into lay terms the often highly technical case to be made for preventing further degradation of the lakes, creeks, and river. Its prescription ranged from the minute -- use of grit chambers in storm water drains, more frequent street sweeping, improved public information -- to the boldly expansive -- setting aside wetlands to filter Lake Harriet's runoff, severely restricting the use of lawn pesticides, working across municipal boundaries to enhance the watershed.²⁹

The **Minneapolis Water Quality Committee** was formed to keep the ideas of the Water Quality Initiative alive. It is currently developing an ordinance that would help improve overall storm-water conditions by placing restrictions on individual and bureaucratic practices. The Committee is also holding a public roundtable later this month to keep water quality issues in front of city residents.³⁰

The River is to north and northeast neighborhoods what the lakes are to south Minneapolis neighborhoods. Eleven neighborhoods adjoining the river from East Hennepin to the north city limits have formed the **Mississippi Corridor Neighborhood Coalition** to plan for the riverfront's protection and enhancement.³¹ That mission has taken the Coalition from a focus just on water quality and shoreline and habitat conservation to a broader concern with how these issues affect the revitalization of the more inland portions of the neighborhoods.³²

²⁹ City hall's movement on the report has been virtually undetectable. The good news is that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is beginning to move -- it will start construction this spring of a wetlands at the Cedar meadows. This is expensive work. Additional support simply must come from the Legislature.

³⁰ The roundtable underscores the lack of public information emerging from city hall and the Park Board about the kinds of practices that could be adopted by citizens, businesses, and government departments to improve water quality. Philipp Muessig of the **State Office of Waste Management** is helping organize the environmental community to convene an urban environmental summit this spring. That effort, combined with the ongoing work of the Water Quality Committee, holds the promise that groups outside of city hall can help focus public attention on key urban environmental issues.

³¹ The Coalition conducts an annual clean-up, testifies before public bodies, works with environmental advocacy organizations, publishes information, and initiates action on behalf of neighborhood residents.

³² The Coalition has formed a strong partnership with **Citizens for a Better Environment**, an environmental advocacy organization that successfully sued the City to stop the Public Works Department from discharging contaminants from its water treatment facility into the River. The settlement of that lawsuit set aside money for CBE to assist efforts like the Mississippi Corridor Neighborhood Coalition. CBE has also completed an extraordinary inventory of the sources of river pollution from north and northeast neighborhoods. The inventory identifies 600 polluters. CBE is currently developing "Good Neighbor" with some of these businesses that will encourage voluntary clean-up activities.

³² L. Mack, "Architecture: Buildings, bridges at center of public debate," *StarTribune* 1E, 6E (December 28, 1994). Mack goes on to note, "It is this growing recognition of the need for character and for connections -- to each other and our collective roots -- that explains the increasing number of preservation battles . . ." *Id.* at page 6E.

In raising using water quality as a point of departure for other urban revitalization issues, neighborhoods have recognized the importance of physical planning in neighborhood development. This has taken other forms as well.

Notable examples arise from the neighborhoods' continuing fight for the preservation of their historic fabric. As Linda Mack of the *Star Tribune* recently observed:

All over the Twin Cities, from inner-city neighborhoods to distant suburbs, people were rallying around old houses, bridges, stands of centuries-old oak trees, and rolling farmland in a growing recognition that these physical assets shape their community identity.³³

The **Marcy-Holmes** neighborhood successfully organized to prevent the MCDA from leveling some of the city's oldest buildings, along East Hennepin Avenue, for a parking lot. A coalition of northeast residents called **Hollywood Theatre Preservation** has finally succeeded in obtaining the rights to preserve the Art Deco theater on Johnson Avenue for evening film screenings and daytime meetings. Culminating years of wrangling among the city, county, and state, the **Stone Arch Bridge** was opened this fall for pedestrian and bicycle traffic.³⁴

Other fights are still brewing. The Loring Park neighborhood is deeply divided over the future of the **Lyon House**, an irreplaceable Victorian tucked behind the Cathedral of St. Marks. The proposed expansion of 35W would not only displace hundreds of Minneapolis residents, it would destroy the Victorian jewels on the **Healy Block**. The departure of **Sears** from Lake Street opens the possibility that a community landmark may be razed to entice a large-scale commercial developer onto the site.

Each of these disputes can be viewed as an isolated case in which neighborhood history must be placed on the balance against modern economic realities. Or they can be seen as a shared recognition among neighborhoods of the vital role historic resources play in distilling and reflecting the experiences, symbols, and civic values of succeeding generations of our community.³⁵

Creating Stable and Diverse Neighborhoods

The mobilization of resources to stabilize, preserve, and improve the availability of safe, affordable, and attractive housing is one of the cornerstones of this city's public policy. But even the combined efforts of the MCDA, community development corporations, non-

³⁴ People living along the river, historic preservationists, the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Preservation Board, and many others had weighed in to try to prevent the county from pursuing one misguided plan after another. It took the considerable statesmanship of **State Representative John Sarna** to break the impasse -- the bridge was transferred to state ownership and dedicated to public use.

³⁵ These themes were developed in Mayor Fraser's 1990 State of the Urban Environment address. D. Fraser, "The State of the Environment: Minneapolis Urban Planning and Design in the 1990s," pp. 7-12, 21 (November 1, 1990).

profit organizations, and others have not been able to prevent a severe erosion of the quality of city housing stock.

The neighborhoods, many in response to the NRP, are increasingly asserting an independent role in combating this erosion. Their activism holds the potential to redefine the traditional relationships among neighborhoods, the MCDA, community development corporations, and the non-profit housing community.³⁶

The work of the **Northside Neighborhood Housing Service** suggests how those relationships might be formed.³⁷ Part of a national network of housing services, NNHS was chosen by the **Jordan Neighborhood** to develop an implementation strategy for the neighborhood's NRP plan. Northside offered Jordan the possibility of working across neighborhood lines -- NNHS already provided lending services to the Hawthorne and Near North neighborhoods. The package created by Northside and Jordan includes home purchase or improvement loans for people who fail to meet traditional private sector lending criteria, loans for improvement of boarded or vacated properties, loans for new construction, and home-buyer training programs.

Project for Pride in Living, the Damascus Corporation, and the Honeywell Corporation are working to fashion a home-ownership initiative on the southside.³⁸ The initiative seeks to create 100 new homeowners in the Whittier, Phillips, Powderhorn, and Central neighborhoods. Although still in the idea stage, the proposal would target buyers at or below 80% of the city's median income and properties that are vacant, deteriorated, rental, or vulnerable to conversion from homestead to non-homestead. It would also provide pre-apprenticeship work and training opportunities to students.

Neighborhoods are also creating linkages between housing and other support families may need to remain in that housing.

³⁶ One of the most difficult challenges facing the NRP program is how to ensure that neighborhood plans take into account the need to provide safe, affordable housing for low-income residents. See *Neighborhood Connections Project, supra*, at page 32. One observer has proposed that the neighborhood revitalization movements in Minneapolis and St. Paul have accentuated tension between neighborhood organizations pursuing homeowner interests and community development corporations focusing on low-income housing opportunities. Edward Goetz and Mara Sidney, "Revenge of the Property Owners: Community Development and the Politics of Property," 16 *Journal of Urban Affairs* 319 (1994). The jury is still out as to how the balance will be struck city-wide between these potentially conflicting agendas.

³⁷ Northside has emerged as one of the most successful components of the national neighborhood housing service system. Under the strong leadership of Ronnie Davis, NNHS has not only fashioned its own lending program, but has begun to work with local banks to create even greater community housing lending capacity.

³⁸ Initiated by Honeywell, the proposal is being developed by Steve Cramer, PPL's Director of Housing.

Abbott Northwestern Hospital already has in place a buyer incentive/fix-up program that offers substantial one-time grants to home-buyers who live within a certain radius of the hospital and who remain in their homes for more than seven years. The program was developed in conjunction with PPL and Lutheran Social Services.

The **Phoenix Group** is committed to projects that demonstrate that providing safe, affordable housing cannot be separated from investing in family self-sufficiency.³⁹ By helping train residents to build their own homes, Phoenix understands that these residents develop strengthened self-esteem, marketable skills, and an investment in the asset they will now occupy.

Most of the houses in the Phillips neighborhood were built before 1940, increasing the likelihood that residents live with lead-based paint on the walls, in the air, and in the soil.⁴⁰ Even if lead abatement techniques were completely safe and effective, which they are not, eliminating lead from every dwelling in Phillips would carry a price tag of almost \$40 million. The **Phillips Neighborhood Lead Collaborative** has therefore launched a strategy to make Phillips "lead safe."

Working with the University of Minnesota's Community-University Health Care Center,⁴¹ neighborhood residents and businesses who are members of the Collaborative will design a program to educate mothers and children to clean up lead dust, flush lead pipes, wash a child's hands after she plays on the floor, eat calcium- and iron-rich foods that discourage lead absorption, and reduce exposure through other means.⁴² The project will monitor families to assess how successful the education has been and will provide alternative shelter if testing demonstrates the need to abate lead at a family's home.

The Lead Collaborative has set its sights on a medical outcome: maintaining children's blood-lead at levels below those recognized to cause lead poisoning. But its interweaving of housing and health strategies demonstrates the interdependence of investing in physical infrastructure and in human development: in the absence of a lead safe strategy, the risks to child health destroy the value of the homes as a community asset.

This interdependence of housing and human development support is also reflected in a number of other community initiatives.

³⁹ In this, Phoenix builds on the **Habitat for Humanity** model. Habitat's remarkable efforts in bringing together potential homeowners with donated labor and materials from the religious and corporate communities embody a "sweat equity" ethic that is mirrored in the Phoenix Group's emphasis on self-sufficiency.

⁴⁰ The Minneapolis Health Department has stated that nearly every structure in Phillips contains lead in amounts believed to place children at risk. See P. Norcross, "Phillips Neighborhood and University Team Up Against Lead Poisoning," *University of Minnesota Research Review*, pp. 1, 12-15 (Nov. 1994).

⁴¹ CUHCC clinic director Amos Deinard has been instrumental in bringing University faculty on board to help with statistical analyses, administrative expertise, and medical support. The Collaborative has secured a \$1 million grant to try its "lead safe" approach from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, as well as \$1.1 million from the National Institutes of Health and \$250,000 from the NRP. It is also working with Honeywell to take control of a "lead-free" house.

⁴² The education program will furnish teachers to work one-on-one with families in intensive, cultural-specific instruction over the course of three years. Its research protocol calls for a control group whose members will receive no special education about lead safety. The control group will, however, be closely monitored and will receive appropriate attention if their blood lead levels rise to certain levels.

The **Coalition for Housing for People with HIV** has completed a complex assessment of, and will soon finalize recommendations concerning, the factors that enhance housing options available to persons living with HIV.⁴³ Lutheran Social Service's **Share a Home Project** enables seniors to remain in their homes free of the pressures that too often cause them to move to an institutional setting. Turning Point and the Urban League have created **Hotep House**, an emergency shelter offering counseling and care for African-American children who have temporarily been removed from their homes.⁴⁴ The **West Bank Child Care Center**, working with the West Bank CDC, designed four of the West Bank VIII homes to meet the regulatory requirements for in-home child care; the project simultaneously increased the supply of child care for neighborhood residents, provided affordable rental housing, and created the opportunity for four people to run their own businesses.⁴⁵

⁴³ Among the proposals the **HIV Housing Assessment and Planning Project** is considering are: an HIV Housing Clearinghouse, an HIV Housing Emergency Fund, Intensive Housing Intervention, Public Housing/Voucher placement, HIV Supportive Housing Development, Specialized HIV Care Facilities, and HIV Supportive In-Home Care.

⁴⁴ Hotep serves up to ten children at a time, ages two to ten. James Johnson, Hotep's Director, has created an Afrocentric approach to teaching, nurturing, and healing the children. See K.H. Taylor, "Afrocentric shelter soothes kids who are hurting," *StarTribune*, page 1B (October 23, 1994).

⁴⁵ The residents are part of a rental cooperative. Each of the four "Shooting Star" family child care centers houses ten children. The idea was developed by Jerry Cutts, who is attempting to replicate the model in the Hawthorne neighborhood through the **Development Corporation for Children**.

Defining a Neighborhood Economy

No issue of public policy is more layered with complexity than economic development.⁴⁶ Within a neighborhood, it expands horizontally to embrace small business assistance, light industrial development, job training and placement, and commercial corridor development. Within the metropolitan region, it expands vertically to include micro-strategies at the neighborhood level, middle-level strategies at the city-wide level, and macro-strategies at the state and regional levels.

This complexity has forced Minneapolis neighborhoods to define what niche of economic development activity they can most appropriately fill. They have made limited, but noteworthy, progress.

One of the most creative attempts to define the scope of a neighborhood-based economic development strategy is a study done by an organization called **Crossroads Resource Center** for the Phillips Community Initiative for Children program. The Crossroads study identified the wealth that could reasonably be measured within the neighborhood -- personal income, housing assets, commercial activity, and many others -- and constructed a neighborhood economic balance sheet. Using the balance sheet, it is possible to make a powerful argument that there is sufficient neighborhood net wealth to support a neighborhood-based economy. The challenge becomes retaining and circulating capital within the neighborhood rather than permitting assets to be drained from it.⁴⁷

The systematic, thoughtful economic planning and development process adopted by **Seward Redesign** is a model of how neighborhoods can make tangible progress in retaining existing businesses, revitalizing neighborhood commercial centers, and attracting new economic development opportunities.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ This complexity is suggested by the work of two planning initiatives that have made a limited dent in the regional economic development discussion: the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Study and the Twin City Economic Development Task Force. It is further suggested by the inability of the City of Minneapolis to take significant action to address the widely criticized absence of a comprehensive city economic development strategy. See the discussion at pages 26-27 below.

⁴⁷ Ken Meter, the author of the Crossroads study, argues that the more we can keep the flow of money within the neighborhood, the more healthy the neighborhood economy becomes. The local business is part of a neighborhood network within which money circulates and is replenished. A dollar spent at the neighborhood hardware store improves that business's ability to invest in local employees, in neighborhood projects, or in taxable improvements to its building; that same dollar spent at a chain grocery leaves the neighborhood, except for some of the wages that might be paid to local employees. Local businesses are, moreover, more likely to supply goods and services tailored to a particular neighborhood's needs and character.

⁴⁸ Caren Dewar, Executive Director of Seward Redesign, has overseen a six-step economic planning process in the neighborhood. Whether applied to the Seward Industrial Area, East Franklin Avenue, or the conversion of Norma Jean's nightclub to a YWCA, this process emphasizes (1) identifying needs, opportunities, and underlying forces, (2) selecting targets with the greatest potential for impact, (3) establishing guidelines and

Farther west along Franklin Avenue, the **American Indian Business Development Corporation** has been successful not only in seeding minority entrepreneurialism, but in increasing the employment base of the neighborhood, taking risks that have enabled a multitude of small businesses along the avenue to thrive, and expanding the flow of dollars that are available to be spent on neighborhood goods and services.⁴⁹

One of those risks is a tenant few landlords would have accommodated: the **Phoenix Group**. Just as it has done for housing, the Phoenix Group has pursued neighborhood-based economic development strategies that seek to put society's cast-off's on the road to productive, self-sufficient lives.⁵⁰ It has put neighborhood residents to work owning, managing, staffing, or supporting such varied enterprises as a construction company, a grocery store, an automobile repair shop, a cafe, and an artist outlet (the "Wall"). In each, it provides services tailored to the particular needs of the community. The Phoenix Foods grocery store, for example, plans to run a shuttle bus to public housing highrises, food stamp centers, and other places people gather as a service to the many residents who do not own cars.

The Phillips **Green Institute** builds on the same philosophy. The Green Institute emerged from the Phillips neighborhood's fight to block construction of a garbage transfer station. Deciding that there could be "gold in the garbage," the neighborhood began a process of imagining all the possible uses to which the transfer station property could be put that would symbolize the neighborhood's desire to marry economic revitalization and environmental stewardship. It developed the concept of an eco-industrial park that would house and incubate companies working at the cutting edge of environmental technology.⁵¹ The Institute thus holds dual promise: to attract new jobs to the neighborhood and to give the neighborhood and the city a toe-hold into the economy of the 21st century.

criteria for whatever strategies are developed, (4) developing an action plan, (5) setting up an implementation structure, and (6) evaluating the impact of the actions.

⁴⁹ It could be argued that the success of the American Indian Business Development Center paved the way for Project for Pride In Living's **Chicago Crossings**, a project that has, together with the removal of the Snyder's Liquor store, breathed new life into the Chicago-Franklin intersection.

⁵⁰ For example, the Phoenix Foods grocery store has hired approximately 25% of its employees from the ranks of the chronically under-employed. Bill Harris, the store manager, recently remarked: "We try to employ the unemployable -- people who are ex-drug dealers, ex-robbers, ex-criminals -- people who normally don't get a second chance." *StarTribune* 5B (October 11, 1994).

⁵¹ The Green Institute will also include environmental education facilities, a construction materials re-use center (see discussion in text), and other elements that will promote the development of environmental industries in such fields as solid waste disposal and recycling. It will be located on more than ten acres in the vicinity of 28th and Hiawatha. Half of the land is pollution-free; the other half will require pollution abatement over time. The Green Institute has already counted some successes, including the securing of significant start-up funding from the NRP and the hiring of an Executive Director, George Garnett, who brings more than ten years of community development experience from the Department of Trade and Economic Development and the West Bank Community Development Corporation.

The Green Institute will also house a decidedly old-fashioned concept. The **Phillips Re-Use Center** will be a store for used construction materials. The Re-Use Center will be a large-scale retail operation, complete with an answer booth to help people with questions about home improvement issues, a try-it-out space to permit people to practice home improvement techniques under the supervision of Re-Use Center staff, a home education center run in conjunction with the Minneapolis Public Schools, and product demonstration centers equipped with videos showing how a product can be used.

Like the Green Institute's incubator activities, the Re-Use Center blends an environmental and economic development agenda. Not only will it seek to reduce the solid waste stream and provide state of the art home improvement education to consumers, it will demonstrate that a neighborhood-based green economic enterprise can thrive in the Phillips neighborhood. It will be self-supporting from within the neighborhood. It will be staffed by Phillips neighborhood residents -- from the salvagers to business managers and from the architectural cleaners to the floor sales personnel. It will draw much of its stock from the re-usable parts of neighborhood houses. It will seek to educate neighborhood residents about the building and physical maintenance process.

Neighborhoods have also used their involvement in the NRP to explore a wide spectrum of economic revitalization strategies.

The **Near North** neighborhood has proposed a neighborhood micro-loan pool for small businesses that would be administered by a neighborhood-based investment corporation. The **Marcy-Holmes** neighborhood conducted an inventory of home-based businesses as part of its NRP plan. The **Stevens Square** neighborhood has created a separate non-profit corporation to carry out small business development strategies.⁵² The **Marcy-Holmes, Prospect Park, and Como** neighborhoods are developing a joint plan for the development of a southeast industrial park. The **Central Neighborhood Improvement Association** has put in place the first pieces of an economic revitalization plan for the intersection at 4th Avenue and Lake Street. Neighborhoods along Hennepin Avenue, Lake Street, Chicago Avenue, and other major streets have initiated **commercial corridor studies** that seek to knit together transportation, land-use, residential, and retail issues into a comprehensive revitalization plan.⁵³

Although it is mentioned in many of the neighborhood NRP plans, job training has proved to be a difficult topic for neighborhoods to address effectively -- perhaps because there are so few models of how it can be done, perhaps because this is a function best handled at a city-wide level by public and private agencies.⁵⁴ One consequence of this may be an

⁵² In an effort called Lower Level Commercial Development, Stevens Square is seeking to attract businesses and shops to the lower levels of neighborhood buildings, creating the feel of an urban village.

⁵³ This is discussed in greater detail below at page 19.

⁵⁴ One of the most promising initiatives is **Twin Cities Rise!**, an effort to train low-income city residents -- particularly men of color -- to fill skilled jobs for which the private sector has identified a specific need. Conceived and spearheaded by Steve Rothchild, a former General Mills executive who has woven strong working relationships with companies such as Norwest Banks, Supervalu, General Mills, HB Fuller, Dart Trucking, and Cub Foods, Twin Cities Rise! will provide for up to two years of training, counseling,

increased interest in developing more intensive vocational training options at the junior and senior high schools.⁵⁵

Seeking Connections Among Neighborhoods **[Commitment to Cross-Neighborhood Connections -- Grade B]**

Although some of the initiatives we have described stretch outside a particular neighborhood's boundaries, efforts to mobilize multiple neighborhoods in pursuit of a shared agenda are difficult to sustain. A number of cross-neighborhood coalitions of considerable promise are, however, beginning to emerge.

Fair Housing

The **Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH)** has drawn together congregations, housing organizations, and individuals from the cities and suburbs to take action to provide decent, safe, and affordable housing throughout the region.⁵⁶ MICAH has convened public forums and seminars, encouraged congregational involvement in producing housing, advocated for affordable housing strategies, and provides seed loans for affordable housing projects. Over the last year, MICAH has

and other support services to its participants. The program is now working with 25 people, but hopes to increase that to 100 in the next year, and to 1,000 over the long-term.

Rothchild's approach views the employer as the customer -- employers will contract with the program to provide a work-ready employee. Rothchild also believes strongly that the program must be measured not by the cost of making a potential employee work-ready, but by what the return on that investment will be.

⁵⁵ See the discussion about private sector initiatives to encourage apprenticeships at pages 4- 5 above. The **Stairstep** initiative developed by Alfred Babington Johnson also holds considerable promise.

Minneapolis closed its vocational high school in the 1970's, substituting what has turned out to be small, low-status, poorly-funded career preparation programs in several of its comprehensive high schools. As is true in most of the country, Minnesota high schools aggressively promote their college preparation track while giving what are called general track students short shrift. A new emphasis on vocational education is, however, appearing in some states, particularly in the south and southeast United States. Known as "tech prep," the new programs would focus on large industry sectors such as business finance, computers, and printing and graphics. They have strong academic components, including encouraging post-secondary attendance, and provide students exposure to the workplace through job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships.

The Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods intends to examine how neighborhood interest in job training can better be tied to these kinds of career preparation initiatives.

⁵⁶A number of other initiatives have targeted fair housing opportunities in the metropolitan region, including the **Hennepin County Fair Housing Analysis** (a joint working group involving the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Community Action for Suburban Hennepin, Hennepin County Office of Planning and Development, the Minneapolis Legal Aid Society, and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency), "**Innovations in Affordable Housing and Building Inclusive Communities: New Housing Policies for the Twin Cities**" (a forum sponsored by the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association), "**The Case for a Regional Housing Policy in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region**" (a May 1994 report of the Citizens League).

become increasingly involved in finding common ground between city and suburban residents through its City-Suburb Initiative.

MICAH has also joined with other social justice, environmental, and transportation groups to form the **Alliance for Metropolitan Stability**, which is committed to passage of a package of legislative proposals to develop affordable housing, limit urban sprawl, and build a reliable transportation system.⁵⁷

Transportation

Transportation -- specifically the proposed widening of Lyndale Avenue South -- was the catalyst for the creation of the **Lyndale Livability Project**. The coalition has subsequently expanded its focus to advocate for improved city planning as a means of enhancing air quality, public safety, and residential stability.

An interest in transportation -- in this case bicycle and pedestrian routes through the middle of the city -- also motivated city residents to form the **29th Street Corridor Coalition**.⁵⁸ The 29th Street corridor, a largely-abandoned railroad right-of-way stretching from Lake Calhoun to the River, has become a way of linking neighborhoods one to another and of creating a "belt" for the midsection of the city's "grand round" (the River, Victory Memorial Parkway, Wirth Park, the Chain of Lakes, and Minnehaha Creek).

Economic Development

Cross-neighborhood planning for commercial corridors has become a focal point of interest for NRP neighborhoods. More than sixty people attended a **commercial corridor roundtable** organized by the Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods in late August. The roundtable reviewed the progress that has been made in looking at the future of West Broadway⁵⁹, Lake Street⁶⁰, and Hennepin⁶¹, Central⁶², Lyndale⁶³, Franklin⁶⁴, Chicago⁶⁵,

⁵⁷ The Alliance has mobilized around many of the concepts advanced by State Representative Myron Orfield. One of its most interesting partners is **Clean Water Action**, which is bringing its considerable grass-roots environmental organizing capacity to bear on the Orfield legislative package.

⁵⁸ George Puzak, now a Commissioner of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, was the original champion of this concept. Armed with a large schematic drawing that had light rail, bicyclists, and pedestrians using different levels of the 29th Street corridor channel, George tirelessly traveled from one community meeting to another to encourage residents to think about a vision that would link neighborhoods through a mid-town greenway.

⁵⁹ The West Broadway Business Association has completed a 2-1/2 year planning phase supported by a grant from the McKnight Foundation. It has projected a five year work plan.

⁶⁰ The Lake Street Corridor Study was prompted by the Powderhorn neighborhood's focus on Lake Street redevelopment in its NRP plan. Powderhorn received a sizable NRP early access grant to launch the commercial corridor review process.

⁶¹ A Hennepin Avenue Corridor Task Force has been working for almost two years on developing a private-public-neighborhood coalition to examine the residential and commercial implications of development along Hennepin from the Basilica to Lakewood Cemetery. Involving seven neighborhoods that abut Hennepin, the planning process was

and Nicollet⁶⁶ Avenues. The Center subsequently circulated a framework that identified some of the themes common to the corridor planning efforts.

The roundtable made clear that the studies are less about particular neighborhoods than they are about how neighborhoods fit together. Seen in this light, effective corridor studies would ideally be coordinated by the Planning Department working through an updated Comprehensive Plan and zoning code. This would permit the ideas and issues generated by the neighborhoods to be placed in a city-wide context.

The Environment

We have already noted some of the cross-neighborhood collaborations that have emerged around natural resource protection: the eleven neighborhoods of the **Mississippi Corridor Neighborhood Coalition** working to reclaim the riverfront, the city-wide **Minneapolis Water Quality Initiative** that formed to elevate watershed protection efforts, the **Save Cedar Lake Park** coalition that not only created a new park and trail in place of a tony housing development, but demonstrated the power of mobilizing ideas and people in the face of government indifference.

A number of other initiatives have drawn neighborhood residents and businesses together to conserve resources, beautify the landscape, and promote new ways of creating an environmental consciousness among city residents.⁶⁷

initiated by the Lowry Hill neighborhood. It has secured NRP funding to hire a consulting team for the next phase of its assessment and planning work.

⁶² Although there is no formal planning process underway for Central Avenue, a number of neighborhood residents and businesses, particularly the North East Business Association, have begun meeting to discuss the future of the avenue.

⁶³ The Lyndale Neighborhood Development Corporation completed a study of the 31st Street corridor in 1992 and is now attempting to pull together a study of the Lyndale/Lake Street intersection as part of the Lyndale neighborhood's NRP process.

⁶⁴ The Franklin Avenue Task Force has focused on job creation and community culture. Its three-year planning process has produced, among other things, a number of NRP early access projects, including streetscape improvements, business association development (a Franklin Avenue Business Association was formed last February), marketing, and clean-up.

⁶⁵ An initial assessment of the Chicago Avenue corridor has just been completed for the Phillips, Powderhorn, Central, Bryant, and Bancroft neighborhood organizations by Scott Wende Architects. The report proposes an ambitious corridor plan and implementation program.

⁶⁶ Corridor planning along north Nicollet Avenue (from the mall to Lake Street) was initiated by the Stevens Square Community Organization as part of its NRP plan. The plan called for the development of a masterplan for the avenue, implementation of streetscape improvements, and loan assistance to small businesses on Nicollet. It has subsequently been expanded to include the Whittier and Loring Park neighborhoods.

⁶⁷ On Earth Day 1992, Mayor Don Fraser gave his second State of the Urban Environment Address. The first had focused on urban design; this focused on the natural environment. It remains a powerful statement of the possibilities of public and private action to protect and enhance the environment. D. Fraser, "The State of the Urban Environment II: Environmental Challenges in the 1990s," April 22, 1992.

The **Uptown Business Association**, drawing from four neighborhoods, has developed a commercial recycling program that involves more than 250 businesses.⁶⁸ By pooling their efforts and contracting with a single recycling contractor, the businesses are able not only to keep their costs down considerably, but to reduce dramatically the level of material moving into the waste stream.

Community gardens, pocket parks, neighborhood gateways, and other small-scale public spaces are increasingly drawing residents together across neighborhood lines. A number of years ago, the **J.D. Rivers 4-H Children's Garden** was dedicated in memory of a man whose life embodied public service. It is a place where children between the ages of 6 and 12 from all over the northside learn to grow, harvest, and share vegetables.

The **Urban Environment Education Coalition** has completed a survey of those environmental issues most important to neighborhood health and vitality. That survey was in part the basis for a meeting last fall of more than fifty environmental organizations to discuss the possibility of convening an urban environmental summit this spring.

Adding it Up: Laying the Foundation for a Neighborhood Urban Agenda [Neighborhood Commitment to Urban Revitalization -- Grade: A]

These illustrations only scratch the surface of practical ideas being created daily in Minneapolis neighborhoods. Powerful in their individuality, they assume even greater significance when viewed together. But we have failed as a community to see in their collective creativity, energy, and pragmatism the contours of an urban agenda with enormous potential for positive change.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Now more than three years old, the program was developed in conjunction with the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group's "Barter Program," which conducted and analyzed a survey that permitted the business association to determine whether the amounts and kinds of materials generated by the businesses would make a joint recycling effort financially worthwhile.

⁶⁹ One place that is not true is our community newspapers. We sometimes take for granted the contributions these newspapers make in keeping us informed about community life and in focusing our attention on the forces that define our neighborhoods. Whereas the "major media" often gloss over the fine grain of neighborhood life, the "community press" thrive on it, covering stories, providing analysis, and raising issues that would otherwise go ignored. Examples are legion, but a few are illustrative:

- The *Alley's* coverage of the community's efforts to fight the garbage transfer station, remove Snyder's liquor store, and hold slum landlords accountable;
- The *Surveyor's* reporting on the tensions over police-community relations in Elliot Park and on the issues overlooked in the siting of the Federal Reserve building;
- The *Whittier Globe's* analysis of the complications following approval of the city's first NRP plan;
- The *Southwest Journal's* remarkable in-depth coverage of the NRP;
- *Southside Pride's* commitment to environmental reporting;
- The *NorthNews* and the *Northeaster's* documentation of positive examples of resident involvement in northside and northeast community affairs;
- The *Lake Area News'* extraordinary, long-standing series about city history;
- The detailed reporting of the *Seward Profile*, *Longfellow News*, and *Southeast* on their neighborhoods' progress on the NRP.

The next section looks more carefully at what steps are necessary for realizing that potential.

III. THE CHALLENGE OF ACTIVATING A NEIGHBORHOOD AGENDA

If neighborhood initiatives and energies are to be a solid foundation for the construction of a coherent, productive urban agenda for Minneapolis, they must be placed within a larger public policy framework. It is the role of the public sector to assess what the neighborhood efforts add up to, to draw from them the imperatives of public policy.

That is the theory. The practice in Minneapolis is, however, quite different. The public sector has received low grades today precisely because of this -- for a lack of responsiveness to neighborhood efforts, for an inability to formulate comprehensive strategies, and for an absence of leadership in bridging between neighborhoods and a regional agenda.

We accordingly propose that four steps must be taken to move neighborhoods forward.

First, the public sector must adjust its policies and priorities in response to strategies emerging from the neighborhoods.

Service Redesign

A disarmingly straight-forward premise animated the early discussions of the neighborhood revitalization program: the planning efforts of neighborhoods should contribute to a re-thinking of how public services are provided to neighborhood residents. This emphasis on service re-design presupposed two things: (1) that the cumulative weight of neighborhood plans would suggest the need for adjustments in how department budgets are allocated; and (2) that City Hall would welcome the opportunity to make those adjustments as a way of providing more responsive, "customer-friendly" services.

The first supposition turned out to be correct: the plans have suggested patterns of interest that could serve as the point of departure for changes in spending priorities.⁷⁰ The second did not, however. There has been very little of the kind of rethinking of budgets, workplans, policies, and implementation strategies that the NRP promised. And, as the

KFAI radio similarly gives voice to perspectives otherwise unheard, whether through its ethnic programming, Fresh Fruit's treatment of issues of particular concern to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities, or shows like "We Want You To Know" (no longer aired) that focus on issues affecting women.

⁷⁰ Some of these patterns are so clear that one observer has suggested that a Neighborhood Framework be developed by the city to reflect them and that an Off the Shelf approach be adopted to implement them. See *The Neighborhood Connections Project, supra*, at pp. 27-68.

preceding discussion has suggested, it is a lack of response not simply to NRP plans, but to a wide array of neighborhood activities and initiatives.⁷¹

Part of this may be attributable to the complexity of trying to turn the battleship of state in another direction -- indeed, two successive City Coordinators have been meeting for more than two years to try to figure out ways to integrate NRP plans into the city's budget process.

Part may be caused by the public sector's lack of clarity about its directions and goals -- the operative city policy documents are either so scattered (what is the city's low-income housing policy?), so complex (how does the Capital Long Range Improvement Process fit into the city's Directions Framework?), or so out of date (the city's zoning code has not been comprehensively revised for more than thirty years) that it is hard to know what one would want the neighborhood initiatives to be consistent with.⁷²

And part may be a consequence of the excessively parochial nature of public decision-making -- it is difficult to redesign services when NRP funding is seen as simply another pot of money into which favored projects can dip.⁷³ The Park Board, Public Works, the MCDA, elected officials, and others are eager to use NRP dollars to fund what their operating and capital budgets would otherwise have to. Taken to its extreme, this approach would call for the NRP to cover the estimated \$2 million in operating costs that the MCDA attributes to having staff who are already on payroll work on neighborhood-based projects.⁷⁴ Or it would call on the NRP to cover the cost of neighborhood transportation planners when the Public Works Department concluded it could not re-allocate any of its \$50 million plus budget for that purpose.⁷⁵

Implementation Strategies

The city's failure to redesign services is paralleled by a failure to come to terms with how neighborhood strategies emerging from the NRP will be implemented.

⁷¹ See *The Neighborhood Connections Project, supra*, at pp. 1-5.

⁷² Going almost a year without a Planning and MCDA Director does not help matters much.

⁷³ The extraordinary exit statement of Chuck Denny, the Acting Director of the MCDA for much of last year, underscored the problem. Denny, as honest and insightful a director as the agency has ever had, observed:

The MCDA is bedeviled by political interference in its day-to-day operations, [including] excessive and questionable pressures brought to bear on agency personnel. [As a result,] program strategies are weakened by decisions made under pressure to divert funds to projects favored by some at City Hall, [skewing priorities and leading to] a hodgepodge of projects that waste precious resources and often secure only temporary benefits for a select group of city residents. [P]rojects are commenced that agency personnel know to be flawed, overpriced, and of little permanent value.

D. Youngblood, "Report lists MCDA woes," 1D *StarTribune* (December 16, 1994).

This is not new news, of course. The two-year old MCDA Task Force report outlined many of the same problems.

⁷⁴ This proposal was floated last fall. Fortunately, it sank.

⁷⁵ Also floated last fall. Unfortunately, it has not completely sunk.

The first challenge is structural: how will the city organize its resources to ensure that the strategies they approve in neighborhood action plans be carried out? This relates back to the issues of service redesign just discussed -- moving money and people around. But it also raises questions about how the city is organized. Although the MCDA has been charged by the Mayor and City Council with NRP implementation responsibility, the Agency has not been able re-structure its own operations to accommodate the NRP, has limited control over other city agencies, and has no authority over the independent boards and the county.

One of the first priorities of the new MCDA Director should be to design an interdepartmental/interagency steering committee to oversee and evaluate NRP implementation efforts.

The second challenge is philosophical: the city must decide whether it wants to give neighborhoods the tools they will need in order to ensure implementation of their plans. If the answer is yes⁷⁶, a number of questions need to be answered immediately:

- how will city staff be trained to work as partners with neighborhood residents?
- how will project contracting be simplified to prevent protracted legal haggling between the city and neighborhoods?⁷⁷
- how much money will be set aside to support ongoing neighborhood staffing?
- how much money will be made available for neighborhoods to hire independent contractors in areas of special need?⁷⁸
- how will neighborhoods be given access to the full information capacities of city departments?⁷⁹

⁷⁶ It is by no means clear that the answer is indeed yes. Consider the following statement from the elected representative of the city's 12th Ward:

The [NRP] program literally calls for community organizations to think of ways to spend money in their neighborhoods. . . . Doesn't it make sense for the Mayor and City Council to make all the spending decisions, because they are truly accountable to the taxpayers? . . . [I]s it wise to give [neighborhood organizations] a slush fund of \$20 million per year for pet projects?

D. Schulstad, "NRP: an 'expensive luxury,'" *The Surveyor*, page 5 (September 1994).

⁷⁷ See *Neighborhood Connections Project*, *supra*, at pp. 102, 112.

⁷⁸ An alternative approach would be to establish an organization whose responsibility it is to provide support for neighborhood planning and implementation. That organization could develop a resource pool from which the neighborhoods could draw. It could also be the neighborhood revitalization library, collecting local and national information about revitalization efforts.

Some of this approach is already being done. Kris Nelson's neighborhood research project at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Jay Clark's training program for community organizers at CURA, and the Pro Neighborhoods program at the Minneapolis Foundation all contribute invaluable assistance to neighborhoods. Taking the next step might be a project of the foundation community.

⁷⁹ In the strange, but true, category: the City Council denied the Hale/Page/Diamond Lake request for a computer while funding the rest of an ambitious early access proposal.

The NRP and Planning Departments have improved considerably their efforts to provide information, training, and technical assistance to neighborhoods going through their planning processes.⁸⁰ The level of support that will be required to implement plans will, however, be exponentially greater than this. Unless city hall provides clear and constructive direction to the kinds of questions posed above, it will undermine the very outcome it professes to want -- *i.e.*, moving beyond painfully long periods of planning to tangible neighborhood improvements.

If the examples this Address has highlighted demonstrate anything, it is that citizen participation can be a potent force in advancing urban life. But the capacity for citizen participation is being taxed to the limit in Minneapolis neighborhoods. The public sector must provide the staffing, information, and financial support that will nourish citizen involvement and enable neighborhoods to think comprehensively.

System-Wide Policy Issues

The city's failure to restructure public services and to design an effective implementation strategy has been accompanied by a systematic neglect of large public policy issues being generated by neighborhood activity.

The NRP Policy Board has only recently begun inching toward converting itself from a parliamentarian's nirvana to a body that engages issues of urban policy.⁸¹ The Mayor and the City Council have similarly been slow to move into this arena.

Two examples are illustrative.

Neighborhoods have been reluctant to include low-income housing as a priority in their plans. When a neighborhood representative on the Policy Board introduced a resolution calling for more extensive neighborhood consideration of fair housing opportunities, he was roundly criticized for even raising the issue. The merits of the resolution aside, it could have afforded a valuable opportunity for elected officials in the city to discuss a topic that has direct bearing on city housing policies and practices.⁸²

⁸⁰ Kellie Rose Jones, Laura Lambert, and Julia Paulson, the full Planning Department contingent assigned to work with NRP neighborhoods, deserve enormous credit for doing as much as they do. It goes without saying, however, that three planners cannot carry the burden of working with 81 neighborhoods. Nor can they be expected to assume significant implementation responsibilities.

⁸¹ The first two Rutgers University NRP evaluations described at length the dysfunctional qualities of the NRP Policy Board. The Neighborhood Connections Project report similarly presented detailed recommendations about how the Board might be encouraged to focus on policy matters. *See Neighborhood Connections Project, supra*, at pp. 99-103.

⁸² One of the apparent byproducts of this failure is the city's continuing inability to encourage more effective use of the Tenant Remedies Act, a state law that enables tenants of rental buildings to pursue improvements in neglected properties. The contrast with St. Paul is quite stark. *See, e.g.*, T. Robinson, "New lease on life: Group helps tenants repair run-down buildings," *StarTribune*, page 1B (September 27, 1994)(describing how St. Paul's **Community Stabilization Project** has used the TRA to improve housing conditions for tenants).

The Rutgers University NRP evaluation has consistently called attention to the difficulties NRP neighborhoods have had in including people of color in the planning process. This is an extremely complex issue that has been the subject of at least two staff study committees. Ultimately, however, it is a question of public policy that must move from the staff level to the level of public officials. This has not happened -- not because public officials are hostile to having a neighborhood plan be formed by people who are representative of that neighborhood, but because they have not invested the kind of time and energy necessary to get on top of an issue of this complexity and importance.⁸³

Despite their inherent complexities, each of these problems of non-responsiveness -- service redesign, implementation strategies, and policy leadership -- can be overcome. The Rutgers evaluations, the Design Center's NRP report, and other commentaries have offered a wealth of ideas. The challenge is for a handful of public officials to summon the political will and energy to pick up a few and try them.

Second, the public sector must develop comprehensive housing, economic, environmental, and land-use strategies.

The city has cabinets full of policies, studies, task forces, and plans. What it does not have is clearly articulated, readily digestible, and comprehensive strategies in its key activity areas.

This has serious ramifications. It makes it difficult to surmount parochial interest in favor of system-wide imperatives.⁸⁴ It guarantees that city resources will not be spent in pursuit of consistent, identifiable objectives.⁸⁵ It makes it impossible to convey to neighborhoods

⁸³ We should not hesitate to tap into the considerable creativity available to help think about this. We might be heartened, for example, by the number of ongoing forums that seek to combat racism and promote multi-cultural activities: the United Way's Undoing Racism Initiative, the Minneapolis Public Schools' Initiative to Combat Racism, implementation of the Minneapolis Initiative Against Racism recommendations, and the work of Inter-Race at Augsburg College, are only a few. Inter-Race, under the direction of Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, has recently developed four particularly important projects: the Race and Media Project, the Girls of Color and Gang Planning Study, the Youth Bias/Hate Crimes Diversion Project, and the ongoing Minneapolis Police/Community Leadership/Youth Retreats.

⁸⁴ Steve Minn and Lisa McDonald's excellent guest commentary for the *Southwest Journal* called attention to this problem:

Instead of executing a masterplan [developed by the Planning Department], we have asked our development staff to create the plan. Instead of simplifying job growth and housing revitalization, we have created myriad programs and projects that serve the 'pork barrel' inclinations of an elected board (which is the city council).

L. McDonald & S. Minn, "Planning Department, MCDA should be equal partners in shaping Minneapolis' future," *Southwest Journal*, page 7 (October 1994).

⁸⁵ This was one of themes sounded by departing MCDA Chuck Denny: when pressures of the moment direct resources, money and time are inevitably spent on projects that have minimal long-term impact, that are overpriced, or that are simply bad ideas. See footnote 64 above..

the context into which neighborhood plans must fit. And it undermines efforts to reduce fragmentation and promote coordination within city operations.

The problem is at once a lack of vision and a lack of leadership.

The absence of a **comprehensive city economic development strategy** has been the subject of countless editorials, task forces, and public commentaries. Its effects are quite tangible. The city reacts where it should lead⁸⁶ or takes no action where it should react.⁸⁷ The city finds itself on the perimeter of discussions in which it should be central.⁸⁸ It falls increasingly behind the best practices of other communities.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Countless examples come to mind of the city reacting to a development proposal rather than having a clear blueprint for what it wants: the Conservatory, the Sears Tower, the Federal Reserve, LSGI.

⁸⁷ The failure of the city to bring coherence to the eight commercial corridor studies is a striking example. Even though the neighborhoods took the initiative, it soon became clear that they could not bring to bear the kind of city-wide planning, transportation, land-use, and economic development perspective needed to make sense of the proposed re-conceptualization of entire corridors. The Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods plans to re-convene the eight corridor groups in February to discuss some of these issues with the new MCDA, Public Works, and Planning Directors.

⁸⁸ The city's response to the **Metropolitan Council's "Blueprint for the 90s"** ("Keeping the Twin Cities Vital: Regional Strategies for Change in the Fully Developed Area"), a document filled with implications for the long-term economic development of the city, was late, largely unheard, and ineffectual. Even though the city participated in the first phase of the **Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Task Force**, it has not been able to steer the second phase of the work toward practices and policies with constructive implications for the city's economy. And despite dedicated work from Becky Yannish, now Director of the MCDA, **the Twin City Economic Development Task Force's** recommendations to establish community economic development banks have still not emerged into the public light.

⁸⁹ It is ironic that just a month ago, Neal Pierce ran a national column describing the efforts of other urban areas to tap into the inner city's enormous economic development potential. N. Pierce, "'Hot' Economist Sees Gold in Inner Cities," *Nation Cities Weekly*, pp. 18-19 (December 5, 1994). Citing the views of Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter, Pierce wrote:

Inner cities sit near downtowns and high-rent areas, astride transportation routes on communications nodes. They're in the midst of heavy business and hospital service activity, tourist, and entertainment centers.

Next come the inner city internal markets. Residents' average incomes may be low, but population is concentrated and has big cumulative purchasing power -- money too often lost elsewhere when residents shop elsewhere. Smart local retailers can snare the home dollars first.

A next advantage: from distinctive food tastes to skin and beauty care products to ethnically related entertainment, there are big market niches among African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians just waiting for smart minority entrepreneurs to exploit.

Id. It is difficult to imagine how Minneapolis could fit this description more fully.

The lack of an **updated land-use plan and a neighborhood-based planning strategy** has had similarly serious consequences. The first revision of the city's zoning code in thirty years has proceeded in fits and starts for almost four years and is scheduled to drag on well into this year.⁹⁰ Planning continues to be marginalized, driven by the agendas of other departments.⁹¹ Neighborhoods are left without a framework that can meaningfully guide their options for future transportation, housing, commercial, and open-space needs.

The **Ewing Wetlands** dispute exemplified this. At a time when there is an acknowledged need for wetland protection within the Chain of Lakes watershed and at a time when the Cedar Lake Park and Trail promise new recreational and leisure uses of urban land, the city failed to anticipate and divert efforts to build two dozen townhouses on a Cedar Lake wetlands site. Good planning would have seen the problem coming and headed it off -- crafting a wetlands protection ordinance far earlier in the process could likely have averted the entire dispute.

The city may be walking into a similar briar bush through its inactivity in planning for the settlement of the **Legal Aid/Public Housing Authority lawsuit**. Brought by Legal Aid to challenge the Public Housing and city's practice of concentrating public housing units in the poorest neighborhoods, the suit is likely to be settled in the next number of months in a way that removes a substantial number of the Sumner-Olson family housing units. This could transform the Sumner-Olson, Near North, and Hawthorne neighborhoods. Although the Public Housing Authority has spent considerable time in working through its options, the city has not. It has not explored how these changes affect the Near North NRP plan, how they might be shaped to open the three neighborhoods more fully to the Cedar Lake Train and Bryn Mawr neighborhood, or how they might redefine the mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses in the area.

Despite consistently strong interest from the neighborhoods in re-thinking city transportation policies from a neighborhood perspective, the city has balked at creating a **neighborhood-based transportation plan**.

⁹⁰ Consultants have been fired, Planning Directors have changed, staff have been re-assigned. Somewhere in the confusion, the sense of purpose has been lost. We need as a city to decide what we want to accomplish, codify those objectives in our Comprehensive Plan and other operative policy documents, and then proceed to develop a zoning code that promotes those objectives. The beleaguered Planning Department has wandered on and off this path. The incoming Planning Director, Paul Farmer, should provide welcome stability and leadership.

⁹¹ Council Members Steve Minn and Lisa McDonald offered a tough-minded and insightful analysis of this phenomenon in their *Southwest Journal* guest commentary:

Thirteen political fiefdoms have produced a patchwork of priorities, plans, and money-grabs, all championed in the name of 'planning.' The Planning Department and our Planning Commission have been reduced to a rubber-stamp operation, reacting to individual zoning and land-use issues, variance requests and use permits instead of truly shaping the 'big picture' for the city. This is a sad epilogue to a department once so prominent in its vision, recognized for its expertise, and effective in its lasting impact on the community.

L. McDonald & S. Minn, "Planning Department, MCDA should be equal partners in shaping Minneapolis' future," *supra*, page 7.

In neighborhood plan after neighborhood plan, residents have underscored the importance of developing transportation policies that are rooted in a concern for their impact on neighborhoods, that address such questions as:

- how to provide choices to encourage changes in travel behavior;
- how to ensure neighborhood residents ready access to shopping, employment, and entertainment centers⁹²;
- how to make environmental stewardship an integral part of neighborhood transportation practices; or
- how to improve non-motorized travel within the neighborhood.⁹³

This is Greek, however, to a Public Works Department still wedded to an automobile traffic management mentality born of the 1950's and refined through the traffic computer modeling capacities of the 1990's. Proposals to remove parking from Hennepin Avenue, expand the breadth of Lyndale Avenue, or erect an absurdly over-engineered overpass at Hiawatha and Lake all reflect an attitude that moving automobiles with ever-greater efficiency is an *end* of public policy rather than a *means* to the kinds of ends the neighborhoods have identified.

These failures to think and act comprehensively will not be remedied easily. It is hard work to stitch pieces together in a way that strengthens the whole. It is harder still to establish and stick to a long-term direction than it is to placate immediate political pressures.

But ultimately that is what it will take if the public sector is to capture the energy and innovation being generated in the neighborhoods. The neighborhoods are proposing through their aggregated efforts a more contextual way of looking at urban life -- how one action affects another, how those actions add up to something more than the individual parts. They can only go so far. It now falls to city hall to do its part.

⁹² For example, the role of taxicab service in Minneapolis neighborhoods is a fascinating issue. After creating two pilot programs last year -- a medical services contract with Suburban Taxi and Town Taxi and a neighborhood ride-share contract with Yellow Taxi -- the city has begun a broader discussion of taxi service with the introduction by Council Members Biernat, McDonald, and Minn of an ordinance that would increase the number of taxi licenses, open "small vehicle" routes in neighborhoods, and eliminate the private market for selling licenses. Regardless of the merits of the various proposals being floated, the Council should use the debate as an opportunity to move beyond the regulatory aspects of the issue and examine how the city can contribute to the creation of an urban transit strategy -- cars, buses, taxis, bicycles, and pedestrians -- that meets the needs of inner-city residents

⁹³ See *Neighborhood Connections Project*, *supra*, at pp. 56-59. A number of organizations are now being formed to advocate for the creation of a bicycle trail system throughout the city. The Loring Bicycle Task Force, for example, is working with the Park Board to suggest the best bike routes to connect the neighborhood with the rest of the city. The Task Force also repaired about 250 bikes this summer and donated them to the Loring Flea Market.

Third, the public sector must provide leadership in connecting neighborhood agendas into the larger cross-neighborhood, city-wide, and regional economic, social, and political agendas.

Just as comprehensive thinking needs to tie together discrete neighborhood activities, it needs to draw neighborhoods together where they have expressed interest in cooperative action.

Southeast Minneapolis neighborhoods can open a discussion of a light industrial park, but they need a coherent city light industrial policy to make progress. Neighborhoods along the northern banks of the Mississippi can talk about reclamation of the river, but they need clear land-use and industrial development policies to take them to the next step. Neighborhoods along Lake Street or Hennepin Avenue can prepare a plan for the revitalization of their avenues, but they need city-wide economic development, transportation, and land-use tools in place to realize its potential. The Planning Department and Commission can, and should, provide the leadership to enable these cross-neighborhood agendas to emerge.⁹⁴

It is equally as important that the city articulate, systematically and aggressively, its role in emerging regional housing, economic development, and transportation agendas.

From the vantage point of Minneapolis neighborhoods, discussions about a regional agenda have evolved with little grounding in urban realities.

- The Metropolitan Council's "Blueprint for the 90s, " while giving lip service to inner-city challenges, focuses in substantial part on the growth and redevelopment of the outer ring.
- The Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Study appears headed in the direction of gliding over urban economic development opportunities in favor of the macro-level policies that will guide regional job creation and market expansion.
- The coalitions emerging in support of Representative Myron Orfield's metropolitan stability legislation have called attention to the equities of suburban sharing of the region's low-income housing, but have devoted relatively little energy to articulating the need for urban revitalization strategies.

The implications of these and other regional initiatives for Minneapolis neighborhoods are far-reaching -- housing, transportation, land-use, economic development, tax base, environmental protection, and virtually every other element of a neighborhood agenda will be affected by the plans, strategies, and working relationships that grow out of them. Conversely, the work the neighborhoods are undertaking should inform the broader discussions.

⁹⁴ As Council Members McDonald and Minn argue, the Planning Department and Commission need to be given the latitude to provide a framework for these kind of discussions, clearing the brush for the MCDA, Public Works, and Regulatory Services to follow with implementation strategies. L. McDonald & S. Minn, "Planning Department, MCDA should be equal partners in shaping Minneapolis' future," *supra*, at page 7.

It is city hall's responsibility to articulate city interests in the broader arenas and to bridge between the neighborhood experience and the regional experience.

This will require first and foremost that the city weigh in clearly and forcefully on behalf of the objectives of the Orfield legislation: breaking up the housing market; developing regional economic markets; creating equitable regional revenue sharing; and structuring a regional institutional presence that is elected and accountable. These need to appear at the top of the city's legislative agenda. They need to be the subject of forums the Mayor and Council hold in the neighborhoods. They need to be reinforced by city policies and programs.

The city's also has responsibility to search out common ground with its suburban neighbors. Not all city-suburban interaction needs to be trench warfare over the expansion of 35W, the relocation of the airport, or the fair sharing of low-income housing. They might instead take the form of smaller-scale, neighborhood-to-neighborhood connections that reclaim industrial areas along the river, strengthen small business development in markets that stretch beyond city boundaries, explore more fully school attendance zones that join city and suburban school districts, develop transit services that link urban workers to suburban job locations, or create trails and pathways along natural systems common to both sides of a political boundary.⁹⁵

Fourth, neighborhood-driven approaches to urban stability, revitalization, and health are essential if we are successfully to manage our future. They must be sustained, advocated for, and publicized.

That is the reason the Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods was formed.

The Center consists of neighborhood activists, public employees, academics, and others who are committed to advancing public and private actions that enhance the potential of urban life. It is an organization that will advocate for changes in the way public policy decisions are made:

- We are concerned that the tough, strategic issues facing the city are not being discussed and addressed effectively.
- We are troubled that the creativity and energy emerging from neighborhoods are not being reflected in public policy.

⁹⁵ The **Hennepin Community Works** project has great potential to explore some of these ideas. Conceived by County Board Chair Mark Andrew, the project was designed to identify cross-jurisdictional, cross-community projects that would combine community development, infrastructure improvement, enhancement of the physical environment, and job training. It got off to an exciting start under the guidance of a task force chaired by Harrison Fraker, Dean of the University of Minnesota's College of Architecture, and Judith Martin, Professor of Geography at the University. The task force focused on three types of projects: place enhancement (site reclamation, economic projects, and housing), community linkages (corridors, streets, and trails), and natural systems (water quality, vegetation and habitat, large-scale open space). Although its pace has slowed in recent months, it deserves close attention.

- We are frustrated by the difficulties of making connections: across neighborhood lines, between neighborhoods and city hall, and between the city and its suburban neighbors.

The Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods will seek to give voice to a neighborhood perspective.

It will convene a series of community roundtables that touch on some of the issues this Address has raised: commercial corridors, public safety, human infrastructure investment, workplace preparation, environmental protection.⁹⁶ These roundtables will draw together people who too rarely meet to discuss models, strategies, and next steps in strengthening our community.

It will publish a quarterly newsletter to test points of view, propose different approaches, and share information among people involved in neighborhood activity.

It will provide a forum through which Center members can address publicly the large challenges facing our community.⁹⁷

It will scrutinize governmental actions for their effect on neighborhoods and advocate for ways of giving life to an agenda rooted in those neighborhoods.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods believes that the neighborhoods working together with the public sector can create a holistic, comprehensive vision for our city and work cooperatively for its effective implementation.

⁹⁶ The Center has already convened two public policy forums.

In August, it brought together more than 60 neighborhood representatives, government staff, and other interested parties to discuss the growing interest in commercial corridors. That roundtable identified the elements common to eight corridor planning efforts now underway in the city and proposed a framework that might guide future efforts. A follow-up roundtable is being planned for February.

In October, the Center gathered approximately 25 community activists to discuss four models of community crime prevention. That roundtable sought to distill from these four models -- the CARE program, the experiences of the Jordan Area Council, the St. Paul Safe City initiative, and the Ramsey County Violence-Free Families and Communities program -- key components of a comprehensive and integrated neighborhood response to public safety issues. A follow-up meeting is being planned for March.

⁹⁷ See, e.g., the Center op/ed article on the challenges facing a new Minneapolis police administration. J. Ahrens, P. Ostrow, & S. Sweeney "No need to delay steps for a better Police Department," *StarTribune*, page 13A (July 27, 1994).

We urge you to join the effort. It will take energy and good will, but that is how a great city is made.

Thank you.