Strategic Investment Framework

MINNEHAHA Hiawatha Community Works

“A partnership and unity between County, City, Neighborhoods and Community”

Project Partners
Hennepin County
City of Minneapolis
Neighborhood Organizations
  Longfellow Community Council (LCC)
  Standish-Ericsson Neighborhood Association (SENA)
  Corcoran Neighborhood Organization (CNO)
Longfellow Business Association (LBA)
Metro Transit
MnDOT

May 2011
Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works Strategic Investment Framework

In April 2008 Hennepin County Community Works launched a two-year process to develop a Strategic Investment Framework for the Minnehaha-Hiawatha Corridor to guide County, City and other revitalization investments. The investment recommendations outlined in this framework document are community driven and based on a close collaboration among all stakeholders. A Community Advisory Committee (CAC) served as “stewards” of the community involvement process and worked directly with a consulting team hired to lead this program. A Technical Advisory Team (TAC) comprised of agency staff from many disciplines provided expert guidance and resource information throughout the process as well. The following are the key values and components of the project.

Project Values and Components

» We listened to the community and respected all opinions and ideas. Community Input gathered perspectives and guidance from stakeholders through neighborhood listening sessions and other activities, supported by the Community Advisory Committee.

» Corridor Issues emerged from community input and existing corridor plans and data.

» A Corridor Strategic Investment Framework was developed in partnership with stakeholders, the County, and the City, to reflect community priorities for a unique and valued sense of place.

» An Implementation Strategy defines how to leverage strategic investments in the corridor area to address issues and optimize revitalization opportunities.

» The Framework is realistic in the strategies and projects it envisions and forward looking, recognizing the long term nature of project implementation.

Hennepin County Community Works investments are based on the following principles:

1. Strengthen communities through connections
2. Maintain and improve natural systems
3. Build bridges for effective planning and implementation
4. Stimulate economic development
5. Enhance the tax base

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Patrick Connoy - Division Manager
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Community Advisory Committee Members
Jamie Buss - Council Member Schiff
Judy Corraro - Council Member Colvin Roy
Steve Krause - Longfellow Business Association
Ed Leaf - Longfellow Community Council
Lisa Middag - Commissioner McLaughlin
Sam Newberg - Standish-Ericsson Neighborhood Association
Karl Stoerzinger - Corcoran Neighborhood Organization
Dan Swenson - Longfellow Business Association
Greg Toliman - Longfellow Community Council

Technical Advisory Committee Members
Patrick Connoy - Hennepin HCWT
John Dillery - Metro Transit
Anna Flintoft - Minneapolis Public Works, Transportation Planner
Mark Garner - Minneapolis Planning, business development with focus on transit corridors
Peter Lenke - Hennepin County, Transportation
Paul Mogush - Minneapolis Planning, community/long-range planning
John Griffith - Minnesota Dept of Transportation, Metro District, West Area Manager
Joel Settles - Hennepin County, Environmental Services
A birds-eye view of the corridor looking north from Minnehaha Parkway towards downtown Minneapolis. Source: Image: Regents of the University of Minnesota
Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works Project

In 2008, the Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works project initiated a partnership among Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, Metro Transit, MnDOT, and neighborhood/business organizations to define strategies for coordinated future public and private reinvestments in the Minnehaha-Hiawatha diagonal corridor and to establish a means for measuring the change and progress. The Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor is defined as the general area bounded by Minnehaha Avenue (CSAH 48) to the east, Hiawatha Avenue (MN Hwy 55) and the Hiawatha LRT line to the west, the Midtown Greenway to the north, and Minnehaha Park & Falls/Grand Rounds to the south.
The Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor possesses a unique sense of place and identity as an important historic and present-day connector corridor for Minneapolis and the Twin Cities region. The corridor’s diagonal orientation within the Minneapolis street grid makes it unique and memorable as a place. The Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor is physically defined by its pattern of diagonal avenues, including Minnehaha (CSAH 48), Hiawatha (MN 55), Snelling, and Dight, as well as a freight rail line that preceded the dominant Minneapolis street grid of north-south avenues and east-west streets, which now surrounds the Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor. The Hiawatha LRT line, which was completed in 2004, reinforces the diagonal character of the corridor. This diagonal orientation also creates unique blocks, including triangles, street intersections, and houses with unique street orientations. The Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor also serves as an important transportation link between the urban core of downtown Minneapolis and several key destinations to the southeast, including Minnehaha Park & Falls, Historic Fort Snelling, Fort Snelling State Park, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, and the city of St. Paul (via 46th Street/CSAH 46). With its broad mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and transportation land uses, the corridor also functions as the main link between neighborhoods both north-south and east-west, which are predominately lower density residential.

In 2004, the Hiawatha LRT line was completed on the west side of the corridor as the first LRT line in the state, connecting downtown Minneapolis to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, the Mall of America, and the city of Bloomington. Three Hiawatha LRT stations are located within the corridor at Lake Street/Midtown, 38th Street, and 46th Street. This major investment by the County, City, Region and State has been a catalyst for some major reinvestments in the Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor since that time, however, the potential for significantly more reinvestment still exists, particularly, east of the LRT line.

In 2006, the Longfellow Community Council (LCC) initiated a request for the creation of a Hennepin County Community Works project in the Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor. The County subsequently met with LCC and the other neighborhood organizations along the corridor to define the project. The County established the Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works project in late 2006 with resolutions of support adopted by the City of Minneapolis and LCC in 2007.

Although a number of plans (small area/station area plans, street plans) already exist for various portions of the Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor, none of them encompass the entire corridor and most of them do not address all the elements of community livability. The Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works project’s purpose is to establish a coordinated reinvestment guide for the entire corridor that is based on locally-driven community and partnership-based strategies and projects. This large-scale corridor planning effort falls in between the scale of citywide plans and small area plans, involving seven (7) neighborhoods and three (3) Hiawatha LRT station areas. This project approaches community livability and reinvestment based on five (5) general elements:

» Mobility
» Land use & physical resources
» Environment & natural resources
» Economic development
» Social/cultural/heritage.
The Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works project to establish a Strategic Investment Framework began in 2008 with an extensive series of community input forums and a number of coordinated technical studies focused on better understanding the corridor’s issues and opportunities for revitalization. The project’s outcomes encompass three components:

I. Baseline Data Inventory - compilation of a comprehensive baseline data inventory based on previous plans and adds new information from current studies as appropriate;

II. Issues & Priorities - identification of the corridor's key issues and priorities; and

III. Strategic Investment Framework - creation of a future corridor concept, neighborhood livability elements, revitalization strategies, and key projects for implementing short, medium and long-term improvements.

**Purpose of Strategic Investment Framework**

This report, which is a Strategic Investment Framework for the corridor, comprises the third component of the project and establishes the preferred future corridor concept, neighborhood livability elements, reinvestment strategies, and priority projects to guide future improvements and investments. Creation of this Framework was centered around collaboration among neighborhood organizations, City departments, County departments, regional/metro agencies, state and federal agencies, railroad companies, public utility companies, private property owners, and developers. These partners represent vehicle, transit, bike, walk, freight and railroad transportation; land use and housing development; environmental management; parks and recreation; economic development (jobs, taxes, property values/investment); and local social, demographic, cultural and heritage concerns.

The Framework also describes a future vision of the corridor as the Minnehaha-Hiawatha Diagonal or a “diagonal ladder” consisting of three (3) connected “diagonal districts”: the Lake Street, 38th Street, and 46th Street diagonal districts. These unique diagonal districts are centered around the key “rung” streets that connect the two corridor diagonals - Minnehaha Avenue (CSAH 48) and Hiawatha Avenue (MN 55)/LRT line. The “diagonal ladder” metaphor for the corridor is intended to visually convey the need for the diagonal avenues and rail lines to be strongly linked with the key east-west “rung” streets.

This document is organized into the following chapters:

**Chapter One** provides an historical background and introduction to the corridor study area and key initiatives at the neighborhood, city, region or state level that are relevant to revitalization of the corridor.

**Chapter Two** defines the corridor’s neighborhood livability elements, values, long-term revitalization strategies, and project evaluation criteria.

**Chapter Three** describes recommended projects for improving and reinvesting in the corridor. Many of the recommended projects are place-oriented so they are organized by the major “rung” streets and diagonal districts that define the overall corridor.

**Chapter Four** presents the Minnehaha-Hiawatha Diagonal and three diagonal districts concept as the organizing structure for the corridor’s future revitalization.

The Strategic Investment Framework shares similar principles and objectives as The Partnership for Sustainable Communities. This partnership was created by the Federal Government (HUD, EPA and DOT) in 2009 to coordinate federal housing, transportation, and other infrastructure investments to protect the environment, promote equitable development, and help to address the challenges of climate change. The partnership embraces the following key principles: provide more transportation choices – promote equitable affordable housing – enhance economic competitiveness – support existing communities – coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment – value neighborhoods and communities. (see www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/partnership/index.html)
MINNEHAHA-HIAWATHA Strategic Investment Framework

0. Overview
   » Purpose of the document, who, what, where, when

1. Corridor Background
   » Defining the Corridor Study Area
   » Understanding the Corridor’s Origins
   » Leveraging the Corridor’s Future Growth
   » Establishing Neighborhood Livability Elements
   » Identifying the Corridor’s Partner Jurisdictions
   » Summary of Corridor Issues

2. Livable Corridor Vision and Strategies
   » Neighborhood Livability
   » Mobility Strategies
      » Land Use & Physical Resources Strategies
   » Environmental & Natural Resources Strategies
   » Economic Development Strategies
   » Social, Cultural and Heritage Strategies
   » Livability Metrics

3. Diagonal Concept
   » The Ladder of Diagonal Neighborhood Districts
   » The Diagonals
   » The Rungs

4. Projects
   » Descriptions
   » Coordinated Projects
   » Funding
   » Lead Agencies
   » Metrics
   » Prioritizing Projects