

*Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program*  
**1990-2000 Progress Report**



**Making Visions a Reality**

# 1999 Minneapolis NRP Policy Board

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# **Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) 1990-2000: Making Visions A Reality**

**I**n the late 1980's public officials and community leaders in Minneapolis determined that neighborhood revitalization would be the most urgent long-term challenge facing the city in the coming two decades. The Minnesota Legislature, the Minneapolis Mayor, and the City Council responded to that challenge in 1990 by establishing the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP).

Citizen empowerment through neighborhood-based planning and priority setting is the heart of the NRP. Through collaboration with government and others, neighborhood residents organize together, gather information, prioritize needs, identify resources, and implement solutions that improve neighborhood and city livability.

Residents participating in the NRP use a systematic planning process to develop their Neighborhood Action Plan – a multi-year, neighborhood-based plan that identifies the visions, goals, objectives, and strategies that will address neighborhood priorities and direct the expenditure of NRP funds.



# Message From the Director

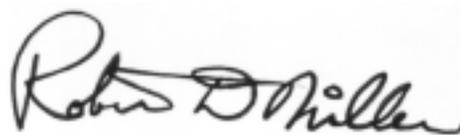
As the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program enters its tenth year, I am pleased to share with you this progress report highlighting the tremendous achievements made by Minneapolis residents involved in the program.

Six neighborhoods were chosen to participate in the NRP when it began operating in 1991. By 1996, every neighborhood in the city had entered the NRP process. Today, 58 Neighborhood Action Plans have been approved and the NRP has invested more than \$170 million in the revitalization of Minneapolis neighborhoods.

The NRP process has been called one of the nation's most extraordinary models for citizen participation. Thousands of Minneapolis residents are using the NRP planning process to identify and meet the needs of their neighborhoods. From increasing the amount of affordable housing and improving existing housing stock to stimulating economic development, from building community centers to reducing crime, Minneapolis residents are the creators and catalysts of change – change that renews a sense of common purpose and improves our City.

As we move into the new century, Minneapolis residents continue to make progress on their efforts to improve the livability of their neighborhoods. All NRP achievements – and there are many – are the result of committed residents and progressive government partners. I am confident this report demonstrates how the NRP produces real change.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Miller, Director



Photo by Bill Carter

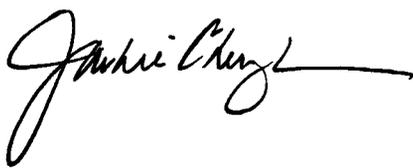


# Message From the Chair

Having a vision for the future is one thing, but turning a vision into a reality is another. When the NRP was established in 1990, it envisioned making our city a better place to live, work, learn, and play. Thanks to the tireless efforts and commitment of Minneapolis residents and government staff, our shared vision is rapidly becoming a reality.

Creative, adept planning in the Willard-Hay and Near North communities has provided a revolving loan fund and a major rehab program for existing housing which, coupled with aggressive new home in-fill construction, has generated the single strongest market value appreciation experienced within the city of Minneapolis for any neighborhood. Four housing programs in the Seward neighborhood have not only changed the face of that community, but have also leveraged significant private investment. Construction and renovation of several schools and the signing of Shared-Use Agreements between neighborhoods, schools, and parks show that collaboration through the NRP is working. All of these accomplishments began as neighborhood visions. Today, I am happy to report these visions have become reality.

Sincerely,



Jackie Cherryhomes  
Chair, NRP Policy Board



Photo courtesy of the City of Minneapolis

# Where Are We Now?

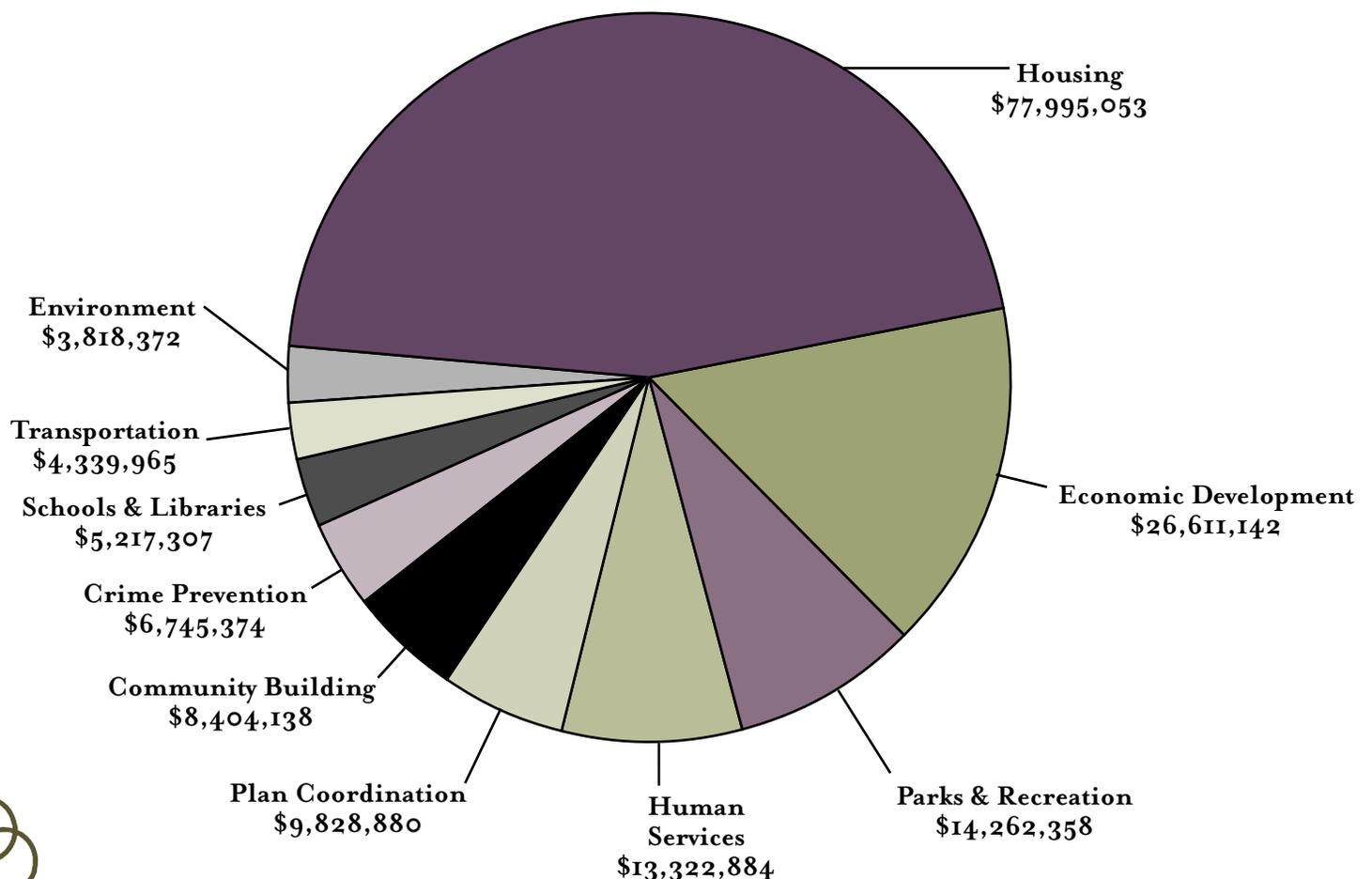
Prior to the launch of the NRP, the Minneapolis City Council dedicated \$20 million a year to the program for 20 years. This money, in turn, is allocated through the NRP to Minneapolis neighborhoods implementing Neighborhood Action Plans. These plans are created by residents and other stakeholders working together to define what is needed for their neighborhood or community.

Some neighborhoods have formed voluntary partnerships that result in a single plan for several neighborhoods. A total of 66 Neighborhood Action Plans will be in place when all Minneapolis neighborhoods have completed their planning efforts. Fifty-eight of these Action Plans have already been approved by the NRP Policy Board and Minneapolis City Council. In addition, seven more neighborhoods are currently implementing First Step Plans that will be the basis for their approved Neighborhood Action Plans.

To date, neighborhood planning efforts have resulted in more than 1,100 NRP-supported projects throughout the city. These projects have had a dramatic impact on neighborhood and city priorities. A pie chart illustrating how Minneapolis neighborhoods have invested their NRP money is shown below.

## Total NRP Allocations (Inception – December 31, 1999)

\$170,545,473



# Housing

FACTORS LIKE AGING HOUSES and citywide population growth place tremendous stress on the city's current housing stock. More NRP funds have been used by neighborhoods to maintain and improve this housing stock than for any other purpose. Nearly \$78 million has been allocated through the NRP to rehabilitate, renovate, preserve, and develop homes and rental properties in Minneapolis.

## Seward Housing Programs Maximize NRP funds by Leveraging Property Owner Investments

Using NRP funds to leverage additional community resources is one of the most effective ways to revitalize neighborhoods. That is exactly what the Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG) had in mind when it designed four housing programs aimed at encouraging additional owner investments.

According to Bernie Waibel, Seward Neighborhood Group Housing Program Coordinator, the neighborhood's housing programs have turned nearly \$1.8 million in NRP funds into \$7.1 million worth of Seward neighborhood housing improvements since 1993. In addition, 534 of the approximately 3,670 Seward neighborhood dwelling units have benefited from some form of assistance as a result of the neighborhood's housing programs.

The four programs: the Deferred Loan Housing Program, the Home Additions Program, the Duplex Reconversion Program, and the Rental Repair Program, all have some built in matching component requiring housing award recipients who make above a certain income to

invest some of their own money in home improvements.

"In addition to the improvements brought about directly by the programs, there is a 'companion effect' on the surrounding properties," Waibel said. "Neighbors become excited about the improvements on their block and then decide to do something about their own properties without the boost of partial NRP funding."

Waibel believes the impact of this "companion effect," coupled with NRP investments and leveraging, could equate to more than \$10 million in Seward housing improvements since the programs were launched six years ago.

Scott Lanphear is one of the Seward residents who has not only benefited

from a housing program, but who has also maximized an NRP investment in the neighborhood.

In 1996, Lanphear and his partner, Jana Goodermont, purchased a deteriorating duplex for \$54,000. Lanphear, a professional painter, then matched a \$10,000 Duplex Reconversion loan with \$50,000 of



*Scott Lanphear is pleased with the investment he made in his family's Seward home.*

his own money and labor. Today, the single-family home owned by Lanphear and Goodermont is worth \$164,000. If they keep the home for five years, their loan will be fully forgiven.

"The housing program motivated us to move into the Seward neighborhood," Lanphear said. "It also afforded us the opportunity to remodel a run-down house to fit our needs."



# Stevens Square Project a Model in Preserving Affordable Housing

*"We must make the vision of the choice to live in healthy, stable mixed-income communities a reality for all of our citizens." — Minneapolis Affordable Housing Task Force in a special report to Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton and the Minneapolis City Council*

**O**n July 15, 1999 the Minneapolis Affordable Housing Task Force proclaimed in a special report to the Mayor and the Minneapolis City Council that the city's affordable housing crisis was on the brink of becoming a catastrophe. Immediate action was necessary in order to combat this potentially dire situation.

Long before the release of the task force report, however, residents of the Stevens Square/Loring Heights neighborhood had already begun mobilizing public and private resources to assure that high-quality affordable housing remained a staple in their neighborhood.

More than 95 percent of the nearly 5,000 people who live in the neighborhood are renters, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the city. Even more striking is the fact that nearly a third of the neighborhood's residents have incomes below poverty level. That is why the neighborhood agreed to pump \$500,000 of its NRP money into a project that would help renovate apartments owned by the neighborhood's largest rental property owner — Stevens Community Associates Limited Partnership (SCA).

"It was a prime concern to see that residents' needs were being met," said

Jonathan Palmer, Board Chair for the Stevens Square Community



Organization (SSCO), the group that administers the neighborhood's NRP finances. "The question we had to answer was how do we help one of our largest property owners in the neighborhood make sure that their buildings — which are affordable — are also a place that is nice to live. Not just an apartment but a home."

SCA manages 618 apartments in 23 low-and-moderate income apartment buildings in the Stevens Square neighborhood — equivalent to 25 percent of all rental units in the neighborhood. According to SCA property manager Alan Olson, the apartments are home to approximately 1,000 residents, 20 percent of whom receive Section 8 or some other government subsidy to pay for their housing.

SSCO's decision to use NRP money in the renovation project encouraged SCA to invest \$3.5 million of its own money in the project. Project renovation work included modernization of kitchens and plumbing, window and roof repair and replacement, exterior painting, and the transformation of 34 studio and one-bedroom units into 14 two-bedroom apartments in an effort to help meet the neighborhood's demand for more family units.

The SCA renovation project serves as a lesson for future collaborative housing efforts. In this case, the innovative collaboration between the U.S. Department of Housing and



Urban Development (HUD), the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA), the NRP, the Family Housing Fund, the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, the SSCO, and private investors earned national recognition. In fact, the MCDA was awarded the 1998 John J. Gunther Blue Ribbon Best Practice in Housing Community Development Award for its role in what became a \$14.8 million project.

In a letter to Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton, HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo praised the project: "You have set the standard for housing community development excellence," Cuomo wrote. "Your success is a testament to what communities can accomplish when they work in partnership with government, private organizations and local agencies, and most important, with citizens."

SSCO's Palmer agreed with Cuomo. "The partnership with SCA was a wise investment because of how it has increased the quality of life for residents throughout the neighborhood."

# Northside Housing Program Fights Urban Decline

*"An abandoned house is one of the most powerful symbols of urban decline, a visual reminder of the reluctance of families and institutions to invest their time, money, and futures in a community. It represents the abandonment of hope as well as of a physical structure." — from the CURA Reporter*

When residents from the Near North and Willard-Hay neighborhoods approved a housing plan to revitalize their community, one of their primary goals was to return vacant properties to home ownership.

Approximately 10-15 homes in the two neighborhoods go into foreclosure each year. Besides costing the city thousands of dollars in lost tax revenue, vacated properties depress the value of neighboring properties as well as discourage private investment and economic development in the community.

With the help of a \$1.2 million NRP investment, Near North and Willard-Hay residents established a single-family housing program to identify vacant properties, renovate them, and finally sell them to new homeowners.

Launched in 1995, the program, which is administered by the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC), has been responsible for renovating and finding owners for 20 formerly vacant properties.

"The NRP money has been well spent," said Kevin Gulden, NRRC Housing Development Director. "It was used in areas where immediate impact could be felt — places where we could draw residents and spending power to the community."

Reverend Paulette Ajavon, one of the people who purchased a single-family housing program home, said the program has made her feel a stronger bond with her community.

"Preserving this house gave me a real sense of civic pride," Ajavon said. "I

felt I was doing something to help my community because I had helped save one of the houses."

"The [single-family housing] program not only helps preserve the architectural and fiscal integrity of the community, but it also stabilizes and produces homeowners who have a vested interest in the community," Ajavon added.

Ajavon's interest in the community goes beyond the purchase of her home. She is an active participant in such neighborhood activities as the Blooming Boulevards program where

residents maintain flower gardens on their front lawns as a way of adding radiance to the community.

Gulden is quick to point out how vital NRP investments have been in drawing residents like Ajavon to the Near North and Willard-Hay neighborhoods.

"Put it this way," Gulden said, "if we didn't receive any NRP money, half of the properties we've renovated wouldn't be standing today."



# Economic Development

STIMULATING INVESTMENT in the commercial and industrial areas of our city has been a top priority for Minneapolis neighborhoods. Already, more than \$26.6 million has been allocated to neighborhoods through the NRP for such economic development activities as improving and developing commercial areas and supporting, growing, and nurturing new businesses.



One of the best ways to stimulate economic development in a neighborhood or city is by creating places where businesses can survive and grow. That is precisely what Powderhorn Park and Phillips neighborhood residents did when they directed \$327,000 in NRP funds into Mercado Central, a new cooperative marketplace owned and operated by 47 Latino merchants.

The Mercado, with its wide variety of Latin American foods and wares, is designed to simulate the outdoor markets found in many Latin American cities. By grouping many businesses together under one roof, the Mercado is able to create an exciting marketplace atmosphere and attract

larger crowds than any single business could on its own. Vendors pay about \$300 a month for use of a 10 foot by 12 foot shop. Indeed, most of the merchants in the Mercado wouldn't have had the capital or collateral to open their own shops, nor could they have qualified for bank financing if they had not formed the cooperative.

Besides enjoying mass appeal and reasonable rent, Mercado businesses gain access to a number of in-house resources like hands-on management assistance and other business and technical support services that help lessen the risk of incurring debt or failing altogether. Vendors had to complete small business training classes, submit business plans, and buy \$1,000 of stock in the Mercado

before they could even become members of the cooperative. To Community Development Corporation (CDC) officials like Whittier CDC's John Flory, the Mercado is a classic business incubator – nurturing new businesses when they are most vulnerable. Flory says the success of the Mercado will impact the economic development of the area near the corner of Lake Street and Bloomington Avenue where the Mercado is located.

"The Mercado has given relatively new immigrants to Minneapolis the opportunity to seek their own dream while at the same time redevelop a depressed area of the city," says Flory, one of the Mercado project's principal organizers.

Ramon Leon, Mercado board president and owner of Mexam Furniture, agrees that the Mercado showcases the contributions Latino immigrants make to the city.

"We all have abilities and skills – some of us are artisans and some of us know how to make bread," Leon says.

*"Before Lake Street was scary for the people. Now it is a good neighborhood" – Jose Franco, owner, La Cosecha grocery.*



## ...Mercado continued

"We want to show American society we have the skills to succeed. The Mercado gives us that chance."

Vendors in the 30,000 square foot Mercado sell everything from clothing and crafts, to fresh meat and produce; from jewelry and shoes, to books and music. Mercado customers can also find restaurants, a coffee shop, a juice bar, and an ATM machine.

Mercado Central opened in July 1999 thanks to the help of several project partners including: Interfaith Action, the Neighborhood Development Center, the Project for Pride in Living (PPL), and Whittier CDC. Additional funding for the project came from several prominent foundations, the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA), National Co-op Bank, US Bank, the Wedge Community Co-op, and more than 80 individual donors who make up the Amigos de la Mercado.



## Artist Studio Adds Vitality to Plymouth Avenue

In the 1950s and early '60s, Plymouth Avenue in north Minneapolis was a thriving commercial corridor. But the infamous riots of '66 and '67 changed all of that and development along the once prominent thoroughway stagnated and went into rapid decline.

Neighborhood planning efforts over the past several years, however, have resulted in Plymouth Avenue beginning to show signs of its once glorious past. The Plymouth Avenue Townhomes, the redevelopment of Penn Plymouth Commercial Center, and the new 4th precinct police station are just a few of the projects that have helped create a new look on Plymouth.

Thanks to the Homewood Block Club Coalition (HBCC), a committed group of northside residents, work on Plymouth Avenue has now even begun to move west of Penn Avenue to

Russell Avenue. HBCC mobilized support for the nearly completed Homewood Studios, an artists' studio/incubator that replaces a blighted property that had been a fixture on the corner for the past 10 years.

"The addition of Homewood Studios to the area shows people that this community is viable and is alive and well," said Beverly Roberts who along with her husband George purchased the building in 1998 for \$35,000.

Homewood Studios has five studio spaces for neighborhood artists and one larger gallery space where local and prominent national artists can display their work to the public. Homewood Studios has already committed to an annual showing for North High School's Graduating Senior Artists as well as an annual Community Arts Festival.

Right next door to Homewood Studios, another artist is planning to convert a blighted property into an art classroom for students as well as nine additional artist spaces.

Together, the two buildings will provide a unique gathering place where neighborhood artists can share ideas and pursue artistic endeavors.

Known as the "West of Penn" project, the Roberts' building renovation serves as a catalyst for additional development in the community.

"I think that the work Bev and I have done on our building is making the rest of 'West of Penn' more possible," said George Roberts.

*Near North and Willard Hay residents directed \$80,000 in NRP funds into Homewood Studios shown above.*



# Crime Prevention & Community Safety

## Multi-Neighborhood Group Develops Response to Urban Crime

Minneapolis residents are constantly developing ways to enhance livability in their neighborhoods. That is why a vast majority of the city's neighborhoods have made crime prevention and community safety a top priority. Leading the way in this crusade is the Central Cities Neighborhood Partnership (CCNP) – a multi-neighborhood collaboration that has created its own restorative justice program called Community Conferencing.

Restorative justice programs are founded on the belief that crimes are not only violations of a victim but of the community as well. Justice is served when the community and the victim hold offenders accountable for their actions.

CCNP's Community Conferencing is a neighborhood-based model of restorative justice that emphasizes accountability for crimes that damage community livability such as prostitution, drug dealing and possession, public urination, and trespassing. Community conferences bring offenders face to face with people from the neighborhood so they can learn how their behavior has affected the community. At the end of a conference, offenders enter into an agreement that allows them to repair the harm they've caused in a way that is meaningful to the victim and the community.

*REDUCING CRIME and increasing confidence in safety and security has been one of the key ways Minneapolis residents have used the NRP to enhance livability in their neighborhoods. Nearly \$6.8 million has been allocated through the NRP for the implementation of strategies and programs aimed at reducing crime and promoting safety in neighborhoods.*

According to Gina Gerard, Community Conferencing Coordinator, the two-year old program has produced encouraging results. "We look at both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the program," Gerard said. "We're interested in how victims feel and how community members feel about the outcome of cases."

Surveys of residents participating in the program indicate they are satisfied with the way Community Conferencing is working. Gerard said that of the 60 offenders who have entered the program, only 6 have failed to fulfill their contracts with the community. In addition, more than 100 different residents and community stakeholders have participated in a community conference.

The program is important not only because it offers an already bogged down criminal justice system an alternative way of dealing with low-level offenders, but also because it gives the community a voice in the process. Trained facilitators from the community help draft the agreement that holds offenders accountable to the victim and the community. Offenders who participate in community conferencing do so instead of facing formal prosecution. All conference

participants, including the offender, make a voluntary decision to be a part of the program. Generally, the terms of community conferencing agreements include some combination of the following: performing varying hours of community service, letters of apology to victims, and monetary donations to community organizations.

The program is working according to Michelle Jacobson, Assistant Minneapolis City Attorney. "Community Conferencing deals with neighborhood livability crimes in a way that helps the community feel its concerns are being addressed," Jacobson said. "Our office sees the program as a viable alternative to traditional punishments."

Jacobson cites the fact that there has been zero recidivism by offenders participating in the program as evidence that Community Conferencing prevents offenders from committing additional crimes.

While restorative justice programs are being considered elsewhere in Minneapolis, Powderhorn Park's national award winning Restorative Justice Project is the only other program currently operating.



## Restorative Justice Program Tied to NRP

One of the most often overlooked features of the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) is its ability to generate resources beyond the scope of its \$20 million annual investment in Minneapolis neighborhoods. Programs like Community Conferencing exemplify the strategic way in which NRP investments spawn additional economic and human resources in a community.

"NRP supports the neighborhood infrastructure that our restorative justice program relies on," said Gena Gerard, Community Conferencing Coordinator. "I'm not just talking in terms of staff but also in giving us the credibility in the neighborhoods to do our work."

"You need to have a way to interact with neighborhoods and that happens through NRP-supported neighborhood organizations and boards. We answer to neighborhood organizations and coordinate our efforts with them," Gerard added.

The CCNP Community Conferencing program is currently operating on an annual budget of \$90,000. None of this money comes from the NRP.

*SE Seniors Primary Block Nurse Darla Wexler (left) helps a client with a new prescription.*



Photo courtesy of Southeast Seniors

FROM HEALTH CARE TO CHILDCARE, *from youth programs to senior programs, neighborhoods have made health and human services a top priority. More than \$13.3 million has been allocated through the NRP to neighborhoods to assure that a multitude of health and human services are available to residents.*

## Block Nurse Program Enables Seniors to Remain at Home

Minneapolis neighborhoods have invested NRP funds in numerous programs and projects designed to create or improve services for children, families, and seniors. In southeast Minneapolis, three neighborhoods have together invested \$67,000 in Southeast Seniors, a living at home block nurse program. The program, which serves people over the age of 65 living in the Southeast Como, Prospect Park, and Marcy-Holmes neighborhoods, provides several services that enable seniors to continue living in the comfort of their own homes rather than face moving into assisted-care facilities.

Seniors participating in the program gain access to in-home nursing services, certified home health aides, homemaker assistance, and companionship from visiting volunteers. In addition, the program helps seniors with transportation, meals, and other chores that require them to leave their homes. Founded in 1988, Southeast Seniors has doubled its service output since 1994, when it first began receiving NRP funds. "NRP has really allowed us to stabilize and grow

into all of southeast while adding more new services," said Mary Quirk, Southeast Seniors Program Director.

"NRP has also given residents that sense of neighborhood ownership of our program," Quirk added. "All three neighborhoods have had to make conscious decisions to participate in the program meaning we are a priority for all three neighborhoods."

According to Quirk, 16 percent of the approximately 1,200 seniors living in the three neighborhoods, have participated in the program in the past year. Quirk estimates that 24 seniors would be in a nursing home today if it were not for the program.

Seniors participating in the program receive their nursing and home health aide services through a contract with Metropolitan Visiting Nurses Association (MVNA). The part-time nurses and home health aides are recruited from the neighborhood by Southeast Seniors and are employed by MVNA. Medicare, private insurance, and medical assistance cover some of the costs of the nursing services with participants paying for the rest on a sliding fee scale. The subsidy is reserved for people who need service but do not qualify for coverage from another source and cannot afford the full cost.



# Parks & Recreation

PARKS AND RECREATION *services and facilities improve the quality of life in the city by providing social, environmental, economic, and physical benefits to neighborhoods. Nearly \$14.3 million has been allocated through the NRP to neighborhoods for the purpose of improving parks and recreation facilities and services.*

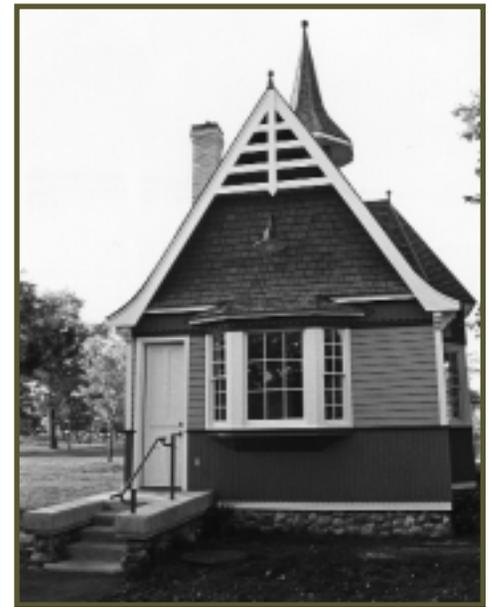
In 1883, the Minneapolis Park Board paid \$147,125.72 to acquire the land that is now Loring Park. That figure seems pale in comparison to the nearly \$1.14 million in NRP funds that were recently used to renovate this treasured outdoor refuge.

Named after Charles M. Loring, "the father of the Minneapolis Park System" and the Minneapolis Park Board's first president, Loring Park is one of the city's most popular summertime venues. Designed by Horace Cleveland, the famous landscape architect responsible for planning the city's nationally recognized parkway

system, Loring Park is also one of the oldest of all Minneapolis park system amenities.

It is no wonder then that more than 100 years of heavy use would take its toll on the park originally named Central Park because of its close proximity to Downtown. In fact, by the 1980's the park's facilities had become rundown, nearby traffic and development were disrupting its serenity, and at night the park was deemed unsafe due to inadequate lighting.

Citizens for a Loring Park Community (CLPC), the neighbor-



*The office of the Minneapolis Parks' first Superintendent, William M. Berry, has been a Loring Park fixture since 1889.*

hood group that represents residents of the Loring Park neighborhood, decided it was time to do something about its beloved park.

CLPC began working with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) to develop a comprehensive master plan for Loring Park that included a hydrological study of Loring Pond – the park's main attraction. The study determined the pond was losing water and was in need of repair.

Besides refining the pond, several additional park improvements resulted from the neighborhood's Action Plan. They included: safer bike and pedestrian paths; new lights, benches, and extensive landscaping; relocation and renovation of the historic office of the park's first superintendent; and creation of a formal "Garden of the Seasons" at the park's center. Today, with help of countless volunteers, Phase I of the renovation project is complete. Project partners



*The Woman's Club of Minneapolis donated this viewing pier overlooking Loring Pond.*

## Neighborhood Center Gives Brackett Park Residents a New Identity

hosted a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony in the fall of 1998. Shortly thereafter, the project earned a 1998 Committee on Urban Environment (CUE) Award and a 1999 Heritage Preservation Award.

Capital funds from the MPRB, along with more than \$40,000 in grants from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Youth Coordinating Board will help upgrade the park even further during the project's second phase. In all, the renovation project will cost approximately \$3.4 million.

"A place like this brings people together," said former CLPC board member and neighborhood resident Dottie Speidel. "We had to save it. Rebuilding this park is building community."

A new organization called Friends of Loring Park has been incorporated to raise additional funds for continued work at Loring Park. Other project partners include the Cathedral Church of St. Mark, Bachman's Nursery, and the Woman's Club of Minneapolis.

— Jake Houle contributed to this story.

Ask Minneapolis residents where they live in the city and you are likely to get a variety of responses. Some people will tell you they are from a certain side of town. Others will say they live in a certain neighborhood. But for folks like Bill Block, there is only one possible way to answer the question — by identifying himself with his local park.

That is why Block, a member of the Brackett Boosters, a committed group of Longfellow neighborhood residents, turned to the NRP as a way of bringing a new \$1.2 million recreation center and several new community programs to Brackett Park.

"It was clear to us that Brackett Park was in major need of renovation," Block said. "It was a park that was essentially dying. Now it is completely revitalized."

*Brackett Park's new recreation center has led to increased turnout at neighborhood events, meetings, and activities.*

"When we learned that NRP resources could be used for whatever we thought was important to our neighborhood, I found that to be amazing and real exciting," Block added. "It's a really cool thing to be able to say I helped build that park, and I had a say in how it ended up."

Completed in June of 1999, the new building contains a 150-person meeting room, a multi-purpose room, a pre-school area, a lounge, staff offices, and restrooms.

The 5,300 square-foot recreation center, which is carefully nestled among Brackett Park's beloved oak trees, is surrounded by softball and baseball fields, tennis and basketball courts, and a playground.

The building replaces a nearly 70-year old park structure that was in rapid decline. The new energy-efficient structure has been a place for senior residents to have lunch, play cards, and socialize as well as a place for children to come learn and play.

"This really is a neighborhood owned and designed park," Block said. "You can't get that anywhere else."

Funding for the Brackett Park improvement project came from the Longfellow Community Council, which contributed \$677,000 in NRP funds; the Minnesota Legislature, which approved a \$250,000 Youth Initiative Grant; and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, which appropriated \$150,000.



# Schools & Libraries

PEOPLE ARE NEVER TOO OLD *or too young to expand their minds. Neighborhoods have proven their commitment to education and learning by making schools, libraries, and continuing education programs a top priority. More than \$5.2 million has been allocated through the NRP to improve school and library facilities, programs, and events. Already to date, 48 schools and five libraries have been improved with NRP funds.*

*A Shared-Use Agreement signed recently at the Windom Community Center in South Minneapolis shows that collaboration through the NRP is working.*



Seventy-seven-year-old Gen Joubert is a lifelong resident of the Windom neighborhood in South Minneapolis. "Growing up in Windom," she recalls, "there were no parks or recreational facilities." As a child, she played baseball with other friends in a neighbor's pasture, using dried cow pies for bases and clearing the field of the occasional cow that wandered too close to the game.

This year, Mrs. Joubert and her neighbors can finally enjoy a new local community center. Visitors explored the much-anticipated Windom Open School and Community Center joint-use facility for the first time at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in May, 1999. Those in attendance applauded the extraordi-

nary partnership that saw this long-overdue facility to fruition.

The neighborhood and city identified a need for community space in studies conducted as early as the 1930's. Yet, in 1991, Windom still lacked the park land, and any alternative affordable open land had already been developed for other purposes. A major public park was no longer possible.

That did not stop the Windom Community Council (WCC). When it created its NRP Neighborhood Action Plan in 1992, the Council was determined to establish a community center in the area and made this goal its highest priority. In a neighborhood in which preschoolers and seniors — the neighborhood's two largest

population groups — had the most unmet needs, a safe community space for adult and children's programs and services was vital.

The only remaining publicly owned green space was at 5821 Wentworth Avenue, the site of Windom Open School. After four long years of negotiation and countless hours at the drawing board, the WCC, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the Minneapolis Public Schools found a way to build a community center and improve the school's environment at the same time. "The best vision is a shared vision," concluded the group, "in which the school and the community acknowledge how important they are to each other."

Together, the group invested more than \$3 million in the project that now houses the Windom Community Council office. The new community center features conference and multi-purpose rooms, a kitchen, congregational dining facility, and a gymnasium. Other amenities include a kindergarten classroom, reception area, and an outdoor tot lot.

In addition, the Open School's existing gym was transformed into a new media and technology center. The facility's offices and classrooms, which previously did not meet district standards, were also remodeled. A new elevator makes the facility ADA compliant.

"This has been a long time coming," said Mrs. Joubert, who served on the project planning council. "At long last, Windom residents of all ages have a place to go, a place to proudly call our own."

— Jake Houle

## Windom has Storied Past

**B**uilt in 1920 for \$300,000, the Richfield Roosevelt School was annexed by the City of Minneapolis seven years later and renamed William Windom School. Due to declining enrollment, the school was closed in the late 1970's. It opened again in 1989 as the Windom Open School to serve grades K-8.

A partnership between the neighborhood, Minneapolis Public Schools, and the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board has made the new Windom Community Center possible. The three entities collaborated and shared resources in order to maximize the benefits and opportunities for the entire community.

Activities offered at the community center include: a dance class for 4- to 13-year-olds; a girls' group for 12- to 16-year-olds; a 55+ exercise group; after-school programs; an adult poetry class; and, on alternating Fridays, teen or family nights. A pre-school program is in the works.

— Jake Houle



A collaboration between the McKinley Community neighborhood group and the Minneapolis Public Schools helped make construction of the new Northside Community/McKinley School (shown above) possible. The school, which will house the neighborhood group's office, opened in 1999.

**REDUCING POLLUTION** by increasing the cleanliness and beauty in our neighborhoods makes the city more appealing to all Minneapolis residents. More than \$3.8 million has been allocated through the NRP for such environmental ventures as community gardens, neighborhood clean-ups, water quality improvements, and the planting of trees and shrubs.

## Garden Club Adds Splendor to vacant land

**M**ore than \$1 million in NRP funds have been used by Minneapolis neighborhoods for the planting of flowers, gardens, trees, and shrubbery. In the Camden neighborhood, home of the Camden Garden Club, two community gardens have benefited from NRP funds.

"Any beautification project improves the quality of life in a neighborhood and encourages residents to do better maintenance of their own property," said Dee Smithey, Chairperson for the Webber-Camden Neighborhood Organization (WCNO) Green Space Committee. "Residents want to keep up with what's going on around them."

Nearly as important as improving the quality of life in the area, the Camden Garden Club has made good use of vacant land in their projects. For example, the intersection at 42nd Street and Humboldt Avenue has been converted from a concrete slab in the middle of the street to a flower garden known as the Humboldt Triangle.

The other NRP-funded Camden Garden Club project involves an entire city block. From 41st Street to 42nd Street, between Lyndale and Highway I-94, trees, shrubs, and flowers have been planted on what had been vacant land. Smithey said the project "snowballed" as residents began to see how creative they could be with the land. The site also features several rock sculptures commissioned by the Minneapolis Arts Commission for the Camden Neighborhood Gateway Project in 1996.

"It was a good use of the land," Smithey said. "The projects have made a tremendous impact on the neighborhood. We've had very favorable responses — particularly with 42nd and Humboldt because of the heavier traffic that passes through the area."

# Community Building

*Making people of all cultures, races, and economic classes feel welcome, safe, and proud to live in their neighborhood has been a very important priority for Minneapolis neighborhoods. More than \$8.4 million has been allocated through the NRP to neighborhoods implementing plans aimed at building a sense of community.*



*Northeast resident and artist Chank Diesel painted this mural located at 1900 Central Avenue NE as a tribute to the virtues extolled by residents of Northeast Minneapolis.*

One of the primary functions of the NRP is to increase collaboration between community stakeholders. In fact, some of the most far-reaching NRP-sponsored projects have resulted when neighborhoods, government, and businesses have joined forces in developing and implementing plans aimed at benefiting entire communities.

Nothing exemplifies this better than the Breakfast Club, a group of neighborhood activists and business people from Northeast Minneapolis who have partnered with public officials and the foundation community for the purpose of redeveloping an entity they all have in common – Central

Avenue. The group, which includes residents from the Audubon Park, Windom

Park, Holland, and Logan Park neighborhoods as well as members of the Northeast Business Association, has been meeting regularly at the “wee hour” of 6:00 a.m., since July, 1994.

While the Breakfast Club has been active throughout Northeast Minneapolis, its biggest achievement has come in the form of a plan for Central Avenue formally titled, “Making Central Avenue Great.” The plan includes retail and housing recommendations, a development framework, and an implementation strategy for Central Avenue from 7th Avenue to 37th Avenue. The Central Avenue corridor passes through nine Northeast neighborhoods and impacts six others on the periphery making it one of the most large-scale NRP endeavors to date.



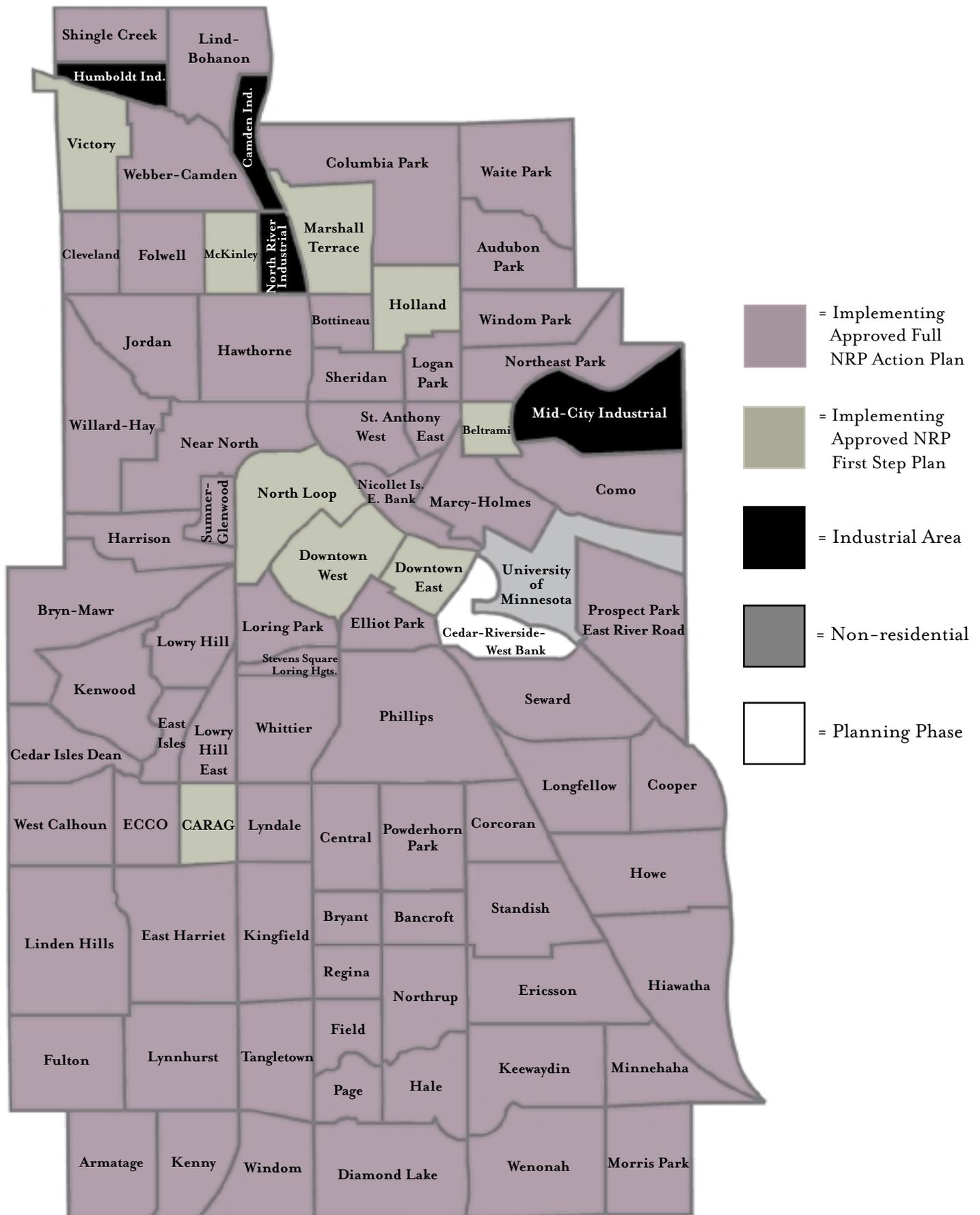
The Phillips Neighborhood Gateway, also known as Touchstone Plaza, grew out of a community’s determination to reclaim its streets from despair; to celebrate its rich history, culture, and creativity; and to nurture a healthy and sustainable future.

Designed by artist Rafala Green, the gateway consists of five rock mosaic pathways containing signs and symbols significant to the five cultural groups of the Phillips neighborhood – Native American, European, African, Latino, and Asian.

More than 80 youth worked with Green to create the gateway that features an 18-foot high arch covered with woven fiber and wire (pictured above) in a motif drawing from the God’s eye – a design element commonly associated with Native American and South American cultures.

The Phillips gateway was a welcome replacement for an infamous liquor store that was located on the same corner of Franklin and Chicago Avenues in south Minneapolis. The liquor store was torn down in 1992.

# Minneapolis Neighborhoods



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