

Mayor Rybak Announces Five Great City Design Teams Residents & Design Professionals Chosen to 'Re-weave' Minneapolis Neighborhoods

Five Minneapolis neighborhoods have been chosen for some make-over design help from Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak's Great City Design Teams. Teams of volunteer architects, landscape architects, urban designers and developers are gearing up to work with residents and community groups in five key neighborhoods in the coming year to develop design visions for future possible changes.

Mayor Rybak joined Tom Hysell, President of the Minneapolis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) today to describe the five projects chosen for one of the Great City Design Teams:



Nicollet Avenue and 18th Street

A Design Team will work with Stevens Square Community Organization to re-vision Nicollet Avenue just south of I-94 including the Johnson Meat site, which is essentially a vacant city block on the east side of Nicollet. The goal of this project is to provide the community with more affordable housing ownership, add essential businesses (grocery store, bank etc.), develop mixed-use buildings on Nicollet Avenue and improve Nicollet Avenue's perception. This Design Team will explore ideas for the Mall Center, which includes a one-story mall with several small businesses and a community garden, and the Strip Mall, which has a single-level strip and interior mall with small businesses that come and go every few years. Additionally, the Team will study options for the vacant building at 1911 Nicollet Avenue and several nearby surface parking lots.



46th Street S. and 46th Avenue E.

A Design Team will work with Longfellow Community Council on the area along E. 46th Street between 46th Avenue S. and the Ford Bridge in order to create a landmark gateway into Minneapolis and the Longfellow community and link to City development efforts at the 46th Avenue light rail station. Longfellow hopes to find more ways to reach Minnehaha Park from all directions and evaluate opportunities for signage, landscaping, boulevard treatment and monuments. The project hopes to look at how landscape and design enhancements can provide a higher-quality environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, make Minnehaha Park more of a regional recreational destination and make general aesthetic improvements. Lastly, the project will look to better educate residents about the history and amenities the Longfellow area has to offer.



40th Street and Lyndale Avenue S.

A Design Team will work with the 40th and Lyndale Task Force to study options for the 40th and Lyndale Avenue S. intersection, which currently houses two Super America gas stations across the street from each other. Earlier this year one of the gas stations closed and stands empty with a vacant lot next to it and the remaining station is outdated and poorly designed. The 40th and Lyndale Task Force wants the Design Team to help them develop a vision for the intersection, with a primary goal of creating a proposal for land use that reflects the interests of the residents and takes into account proposed street design changes on Lyndale. The design proposal document would be presented to East Harriet Farmstead and Kingfield neighborhood associations, City Council representatives, Super America, and other commercial property owners at the intersection.



Central Avenue NE and NE Lowry Avenue

A Design Team will work with Northeast Chamber of Commerce to study the SE corner of Lowry Avenue and Central Avenue, where a fire destroyed three businesses and nine apartments in May 2005. A large hole in the ground now exists where the corner buildings once stood. Central Avenue is Northeast's Main Street, is a major bus line and is a candidate for a streetcar line. The Northeast Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce hopes the Design Team can help bring fresh perspective on how to fill the hole on the southeast corner of the intersection and help local business owners and residents come to an agreement on development for the corner.



Penn Avenue N. and N. Lowry Avenue

A Design Team will work with Cleveland Neighborhood Association to envision a vibrant community space on the northwest corner of Penn and Lowry Avenues in north Minneapolis by building a vibrant public space that opens up Cleveland Park and creates a stronger neighborhood identity. This intersection has supported small businesses within a walk-able community in the past, but Lowry Avenue is being reconstructed and many businesses will relocate. As a result, the northwest corner of the Penn/Lowry intersection will need to be redeveloped to provide the community with businesses they need and integrate the interests of property owners after the reconstruction. The vision for this site hopes to maximize development planned for the intersection and explore creating a green gateway to the park, along with a four-story mixed-use building on the corner and a future bus rapid transit station.

A Groundbreaking Partnership to Re-weave Minneapolis Neighborhoods

"The purpose of the Mayor's Great City Design Teams is to help residents develop community visions for their neighborhood, energize neighbors into action and help more residents understand urban design and development planning," Mayor Rybak said. "There is a place for everyone's ideas as we work together to create a vision of Minneapolis as the greatest city of our time."

The Great City Design Teams are a key part of Mayor Rybak's vision to "reweave" Minneapolis into a city of diverse, connected, urban villages where streets are destinations and residents can access unique goods and services nearby.

AIA Minneapolis worked with Mayor Rybak to create the Great City Design Teams to engage volunteer architects and other design professionals in Minneapolis neighborhoods. Members of AIA Minneapolis, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and the Minneapolis Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (MASLA) will work with selected projects to create visions for urban design.

"We are proud and excited to work with Mayor Rybak on this groundbreaking partnership as a way to celebrate AIA's 150 anniversary," Tom Hysell said. "Individually, these projects will develop a creative vision for local sites, but combined together over time, the resulting visions will show a rewoven city of great neighborhoods, great buildings, and great spaces better linked together."

Applications for Great City Design Teams were open to any citizen group or community-based organization in Minneapolis. Mayor Rybak's first Great City Design Team has already begun work on a new vision for Washington Avenue, one of the Mayor's top priorities. A citizen committee selected the five new projects set to begin in early 2007, with another round expected later in the year.