

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
SEPTEMBER 2014

# PENN AVENUE

## VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK: *INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS*



Hoisington Koepler Group Inc.  
Planning • Landscape Architecture • Urban Design



## INTRODUCTION

Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, and Metro Transit are working with the local community to make positive changes for those who live, work, play or worship along Penn Avenue North in Minneapolis. The project, known as the **Penn Avenue Community Works Corridor Vision and Implementation Framework**, will develop an integrated, community-based vision and a coordinated, long-term implementation framework for the Penn Avenue corridor.

This document is a brief summary of the inventory and analysis completed at the initial stage of the project. Sources for the inventory include prior studies and mapping; broader community input from prior engagement efforts; additional community input consistent with initiatives outlined in the Community Engagement Plan; and input from the Project Implementation Committee.

The full Phase 2 - Inventory and Analysis information can be viewed at: <http://www.hennepin.us/penn>.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

From 2013 through early 2014, Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, and Metro Transit were actively engaged with the Penn Avenue corridor community to learn about challenges and opportunities related to housing, jobs, transportation, public safety and other issues. That information is summarized in **Penn: 2013 to early 2014 Community Ideas and Input by Category** which is available at: <http://www.hennepin.us/penn>.

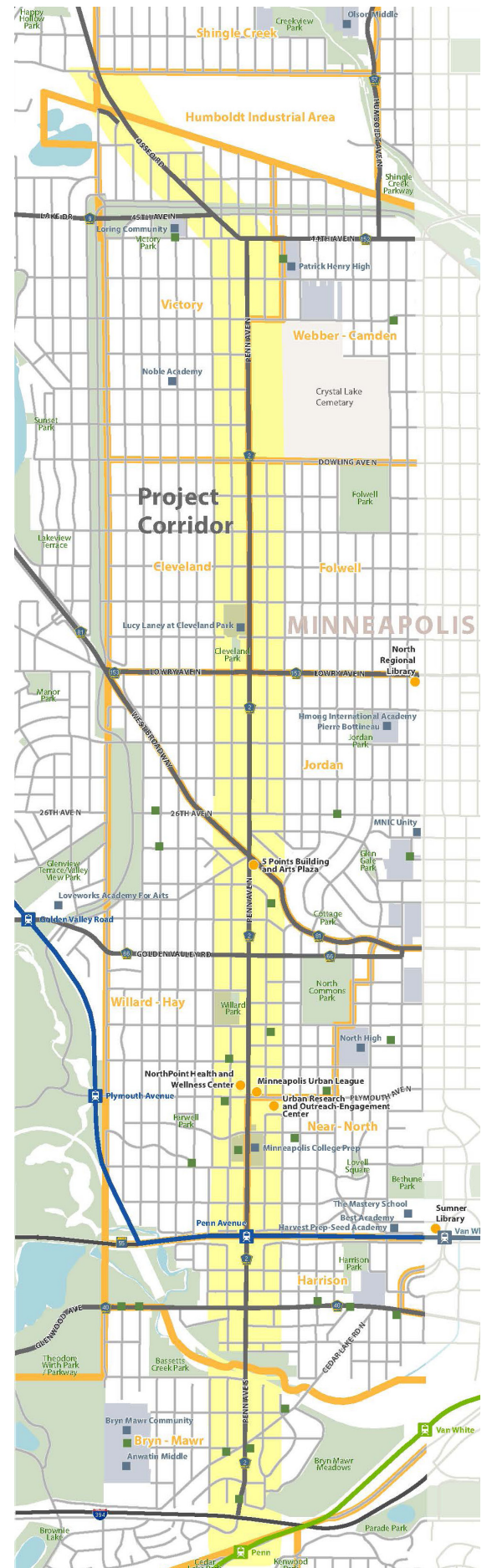
Since March of 2013, substantial additional community input has been gathered to better understand community priorities and to learn more about specific topics.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Understanding the needs of those who live and work in the Penn Avenue corridor first requires an understanding of the people themselves. Key demographic observations and findings include:

- » Many neighborhoods on the north side showed a decrease in population between 2000 and 2010 while the population of Minneapolis as a whole remained relatively stable.
- » The Penn Avenue corridor is racially and ethnically diverse. The proportions of White non-Hispanic and Black or African American non-Hispanic residents were nearly equal as of 2010 (34.2 percent White and 39.9 percent Black or African American). Asian residents comprised 12.3 percent of residents in the corridor and Hispanic or Latino residents comprised 7.0 percent. This diversity is a strength for the corridor and has positive implications for future retail development.
- » There are significant concentrations of households without vehicles- up to 52 percent in some census tracts. Neighborhoods with high concentrations of households

Penn Avenue Corridor



without vehicles include Near North, Jordan, Folwell, and McKinley. Vehicle ownership is higher in Shingle Creek, Lind-Bohanan, Bryn Mawr, and Willard-Hay neighborhoods.

- » There are significant concentrations of households living below poverty- up to 50 percent in some census tracts. However, these rates vary greatly throughout the corridor, and in some areas, the poverty rate is as low as 6.0 percent. Future development strategies for the corridor should factor in the full range and diversity of socio-economic conditions.

## TRANSPORTATION/TRANSIT

Penn Avenue is a two-lane, undivided roadway that accommodates the movement of cars, trucks, and busses. Occasionally, bicycles intermix with roadway traffic. Parking is present along both sides of the street, and a narrow, incomplete network of sidewalks exists. Key observations and findings pertaining to transportation and transit include:

- » One out of every four people travelling on Penn Avenue north of Highway 55 is on a Metro Transit Route 19 bus.
- » Only 6 out of 65 bus stops on Penn have shelters. Many bus stop locations do not have space to include a bus shelter and still allow adequate sidewalk space for pedestrian movement.
- » The proposed C Line bus rapid transit (BRT) would bring enhanced transit stations and service to the corridor. Most stations would include “bumpouts,” which would extend the sidewalk into the roadway to provide space for a shelter and other features.
- » A traffic analysis indicated that, with the inclusion of BRT stations on bumpouts along Penn Avenue, all study intersections are expected to have an acceptable level of operations.
- » A parking assessment indicates that current on-street parking is not heavily used throughout the day, including during overnight hours. However, the nodes at Cedar Lake Road, Plymouth Avenue, Broadway Avenue, and Lowry Avenue have higher on-street parking use during the mid-day and/or evening hours in comparison to the rest of the corridor.
- » Some locations in the northern end of the corridor are missing sidewalks. The largest sidewalk gap is adjacent to Crystal Lake Cemetery. In several locations along the Penn Avenue corridor, utility poles and traffic signals significantly narrow the width of the available sidewalk.
- » There is a lack of usable boulevard space in the corridor which limits the presence of street trees.
- » A number of sites along Penn Avenue have retaining walls, staircases, fencing, and planting areas that encroach onto the public right-of-way.

- » Although there is currently no bicycle infrastructure on Penn Avenue, the 2011 Minneapolis Bicycle Master Plan defines Penn Avenue as a proposed bikeway.

## DEVELOPMENT AND PROPERTY CONDITIONS

The Penn Avenue corridor is the product of over 100 years of development. The pattern of development on the ground today owes its roots to market conditions, building styles, the transportation network, and economic cycles over time, most importantly the economic downturn related to the financial crisis in 2007. Key observations and findings about existing development and property conditions include:

- » Penn Avenue North is primarily a residential corridor, interspersed with a variety of other land uses at major roadway intersections (nodes). Each node has unique characteristics.
- » There are a number of publicly and privately owned vacant properties along the Penn Avenue corridor particularly at the nodes. Including underutilized parcels, more than 40 acres of property exists for development and redevelopment. However, available sites are small in many of the nodes, and off-street parking may be limited.
- » Building scale and form along the Penn Avenue corridor varies. Most of the corridor is characterized by two to three-story, single-family detached homes facing Penn Avenue and parallel side streets. Community input has shown an interest in higher density housing at key nodes. Nodes with the strongest potential for increased density include Penn’s intersections with Plymouth Avenue, Golden Valley Road, West Broadway Avenue, Glenwood Avenue, and Lowry Avenue.
- » Minneapolis assigns a property condition rating to all properties in the City. The highest concentration of properties within the corridor categorized as “poor” is found between Golden Valley Road and Lowry Avenue.
- » There are a number of significant current and planned development projects in the corridor. Some projects are under construction; others are still in the planning and/or approval process. Many of these projects are planned on sites that include vacant property. These projects have the potential to recapture a portion of the dollars currently being spent outside of the Penn Avenue corridor.
- » Nodes where the greatest opportunities currently exist to add neighborhood goods and services include: Glenwood Avenue, Golden Valley Road, Plymouth Avenue, West Broadway Avenue, and Lowry Avenue.

## HOUSING

Penn Avenue is predominately a residential corridor. Maintaining and expanding quality housing is critical to the long-term health and vitality of the area. Key observations and findings regarding housing include:

- » Most of the housing stock in the Penn Avenue corridor is single-family detached homes and low-density multi-family homes, including duplexes, triplexes, and four-plexes.
- » Foreclosures still remain relatively high in North Minneapolis despite the economic recovery. There is a trend toward decreasing foreclosures which is likely to strengthen housing values in the next few years. Foreclosure rates in North Minneapolis have decreased from 55 percent of the citywide total in 2006 to 20 percent of the citywide total as of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter in 2014.
- » In 2012, owner occupancy ranged from 84 percent in the Victory neighborhood to 48 percent in the Jordan neighborhood.
- » Distressed home sales dropped from 538 in 2011 to 384 in 2013. During this time period, total sales remained relatively constant at 951 and 963, respectively.
- » There is less diversity of housing products in North Minneapolis than in some parts of the City and fewer high-density apartment buildings. The Penn Avenue corridor presents the opportunity to diversify the housing mix and add housing along a transit corridor.
- » There is a need to introduce more market rate housing into the corridor, but this will require a viable strategy and likely new financing tools to do so.
- » There is an opportunity to strengthen the residential fabric in the corridor through targeted infill on small residential lots.
- » Attention needs to be given to how potential residential development options and increased density may affect existing residents. Gentrification is a concern in many areas.
- » Efforts to improve housing will need to broaden and balance the residential mix to increase and preserve affordable housing and identify the gaps in the creation of new market rate housing.
- » There is a need to develop an investment framework that will bring together appropriate public and private funding resources to create successful developments.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Important parts of the economic development and business related research will occur in Phase 3 of the project. However, the research and preliminary analysis completed as part of Phase 2 identifies areas of economic development opportunity and the challenges which must be addressed to realize these opportunities. Key observations and findings include:

- » Enhancement of the Penn Avenue corridor provides opportunities to strengthen the economy of North Minneapolis in significant ways.
- » Improved transit connections can link neighborhood residents to a wide array of jobs and a higher proportion of living wage jobs. The C Line BRT, Southwest LRT, Bottineau LRT, and improvements to local bus service can provide expanded connections to jobs outside of North Minneapolis.
- » Improved transit connections can save household transportation costs, leaving households with more discretionary income.
- » Providing as many goods and services as possible within the corridor reduces auto-dependence and associated expenses.
- » The Penn Avenue corridor presents opportunities to increase employment options and expand jobs in areas where there are existing job concentrations.
- » Asset building, new development, and placemaking along Penn Avenue will catalyze additional development, property improvements, and business investment.
- » Transforming Penn Avenue through improvement and development of its assets will improve neighborhood stability and contribute to more opportunities for transformation in other areas of the city.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Phase 3 of the Penn Avenue Vision and Implementation Framework builds off of the inventory and analysis work that is summarized in this document. Phase 3 involves the identification and analysis of alternative approaches and strategies to improve the street and transportation network; housing opportunities; economic development and jobs; and livability. Phase 3 will continue to seek ideas and input from the community through small group meetings and open houses. The work developed in Phase 3 will provide a foundation for more detailed design work and strategies to enhance the Penn Avenue corridor, and prepare for C Line BRT improvements scheduled for 2016.