

Lind-Bohanon Neighborhood Assessment

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The Lind-Bohanon neighborhood is a small family-oriented residential tract on the city's northern fringe. Lind-Bohanon is composed mostly of similar postwar 2-3 bedroom rambler homes built in the 1940's and 50's. There has been little new construction in this working-class area, as the homes remain in fairly good condition, even with minimal upkeep. The residents are a mix of elderly, middle age and young families. Most residents claim to live there for the suburban feeling and the affordability of the property; which also is within the city lines and on interstate 94.

The neighborhood, incorporated in 1887 by the city of Minneapolis, has an urban-history that starts after W.W. II. Most of the current houses were built from the 1930's to the 1950's and can best be described as 1 and 1/2 story starter homes. The median assessed value of the neighborhoods homes today is about \$48,000. The neighborhood has in the

past been home to a Minneapolis workhouse, brick factory and a streetcar line that ran up Bryant Ave.. Lind-Bohanon also borders the Mississippi river(park-land), but access is fairly limited because of the construction of I94 in 1983. Another note is that the neighborhood is bordered by a number of small industrial sites and is traversed by an active railroad line (Soo). There is also a new elementary school (Jenny Lind) that will open for the 1995-1996 school year.

The area had 4,449 residents at the last census count (1990), which is a slight decrease from the 1980 tally. This trend is similar to the city wide totals.

The small size and affordable price of the homes here contribute to a recent increase in the number of young families to the neighborhood (not to mention a number of city parks within walking distance). This group makes up the largest segment of the Lind-Bohanon population and the fastest growing group. This is a similar increase as compared with neighboring communities such as Camden and Shingle Creek.

The most recent census shows there has also been a slight increase in the neighborhoods minority population since the previous census (6% to 11.6% of the population). This increase is a citywide trend seen during the eighties and not exclusive to the Lind-Bohanon neighborhood. Lind-Bohanon has a smaller minority population than the neighboring communities of Camden and Shingle Creek.

Middle age residents (45-64) showed the most marked population loss in the neighborhood between 1980 and 1990. Lack of a diverse housing stock (only one size of house) could have contributed to this decline, in residents looking for bigger homes. This is often a problem of neighborhoods with housing from one particular era.

Demographics

1,768 households (1994)

Race: 88.3 % white, 11.6% other (1990)

Female headed households: 27.8% ; city rate 33.5% (1990)

Percent below poverty line: 7.1%; city rate 14 % (1990)

owner-occupied: 87.3% (1994)

owner-occupied: 84.1% (1984)

vacant units (1990): 58

housing constructed between 1920 and 1960: 81%

Resident Perceptions

Through talking to residents, distribution of a survey, and a town meeting; local residents voiced their thoughts and concerns about the neighborhood. The survey was rather in depth and asked residents their thoughts on a variety of issues including: safety concerns, barriers to home improvement and ideas for improving the neighborhood.

Long time residents agreed that traditionally the Lind-Bohanon neighborhood had been quiet and safe and for the most part residential. Most of the original residents were the families of World War 2 veterans who received the ability to buy a home through the G.I. bill. Many residents claim affordability as the main reason that they choose to live in Lind-Bohanon. They believe that the neighborhood is a good value for a residence in the city. They mention the areas park-land as an asset.

The seemingly single most important issue facing many in the community is the potential loss of property value. This issue is directly affected by many other issues in the minds of residents. People living in Lind-Bohanon are concerned that people are not caring for their property (especially renters) and the overall appearance of the neighborhood is at risk. The longtime residents of the neighborhood also perceive an influx of renters into the neighborhood (not caring for upkeep of property). Another property related concern is the thought that litter is becoming a problem in the appearance of the area.

Crime is also thought to have risen. Longtime residents claim that they do not feel as safe as they have in the past. They site burglary as the biggest fear.

Other non-housing concerns include traffic moving too fast through the residential area, and a lack of nearby shopping options within the neighborhood. Some residents are concerned that their children will not be able to attend the nearby new school.

Findings

The decline of property value was a major concern for residents of the Lind-Bohanon neighborhood. Residents believed that values perhaps were not increasing due to neighbors not caring for property, an increase in renters (with lack of upkeep) and a crime upswing within the neighborhood.

The median sale value of homes in the Lind-Bohanon (52,500) has shown only a small increase since 1988 (51,800) and a decrease since 1992 (55,000). In real value, homes in Lind-Bohanon have not gained value during the last five years. However, they do not seem to have lost value either. This trend could potentially have more to do with the nation's overall housing market, than direct conditions in the neighborhood itself. The neighboring communities of Shingle creek, Camden, the city as a whole, St. Paul (non-exclusively), and many other cities also showed this trend for the duration of this period. Therefore the overall housing market was probably a foremost deciding factor in the fluctuation of prices for Lind-Bohanon neighborhood.

Conditions in the neighborhood also have a significant impact on the change in sale prices of homes when an affecting trend is visible. Things such as city assessor house

ratings, crime trends, renter issues, changes in city policy and homeowner perception help to decide how much property owners get for their home.

Crime is a key issue that decides how residents perceive their neighborhood. Residents in Lind-Bohanon seem to feel that crime has increased recently in their neighborhood. Minneapolis crime statistics show that the trend of vandalism seems to be on the rise (36 cases in 1993; 28 in half of 1995). Other crime such as burglary and motor vehicle crime is holding pretty much steady (92 residential burglary in 1993 as compared to 51 through midyear 1995). Violent crime such as assault and personal robbery is down in the neighborhood since 1993. The trend seems fairly similar to nearby neighborhoods and the overall rate remains well below the city of Minneapolis as a whole. The perception of crime increase, rather than actual crime increases, is therefore a negative factor affecting housing value.

The perception that crime is rising within Lind-Bohanon has been voiced by some residents of the neighborhood. This inevitably has an impact on the number of residents choosing to leave the area "before it gets too bad and housing values drop." Often, the perception and fear that a neighborhood's crime will increase causes residents to sell at a time they feel that they can still get a good return on their investment. The irony of this common situation is that under a fear for worsening crime trends, property values are pushed down by greater number of sellers than buyers on the market, rather than the neighborhoods crime actually becoming worse. The fear causes the neighborhood to lose value as a chain reaction is started. And as the property value drops due to a flooded market, crime will probably rise eventually with the influx of more impoverished residents. This common city-neighborhood occurrence has not taken place in Lind-Bohanon as of yet, but there is a risk as long as the perception of crime getting worse is present.

The number of renters in the neighborhood has declined since 1984. More property owners are living in their own units. There has also been almost no change since 1980 in the amount of rental property that is considered substandard by the Minneapolis city assessors office. These trends show that the quality of rental property is not deteriorating as perceptions by some residents show. The number of actual renters has dropped and the ratings have not shown a decline.

Another note that seems to back the claim that rental property is not becoming more run down is the median monthly rent as compared to other city neighborhoods. City Planning information shows that the average rent in the Lind-Bohanon neighborhood is moderately high at \$510/month. Sale prices for homes in the Lind-Bohanon neighborhood are below the city average (not a new trend) however. This shows that the condition, or desirability of rental units within Lind-Bohanon boundaries is fairly high compared to bordering neighborhoods (I94 access to downtown?) and therefore is not a sign of deterioration. This high rent average, could be tempting for homeowners to rent out their property rather than sell it because of a good return in renting and a low sale price. This would not contribute to being a negative factor for sale prices because less housing sales would equal a stronger market with less houses flooding it.

Information obtained through the Minneapolis GIS print room showed that renter properties did not receive high property ratings as often as homeowner properties. 4.5% of renter properties were given a 1-4 rating (highest 1, size and condition), while 9.5% of homeowner properties received the 1-4 rating. These stats are a somewhat weak indicator on the condition of rental property as the ratings take size into account in its assessment of rating. Rental units are usually smaller than homesteader houses. But it does show that a homesteader (owner occupied) property is somewhat more likely to be viewed 1-4 (probably more valuable) by the assessors office. Also a slightly higher percent of homesteader property increased in value during the last five years. 8.97% of homesteader compared to 7.6% of rental property went up in price. These statistics are not the best indicator of status either due to the fact that renter occupied property is outnumbered by more than 6-1 by owner occupied property in Lind-Bohanon, which gives more variance to the data of renter property.

A stronger indicator of what is happening is found in what houses were increasing in price. The stats show that 29.9% of houses that received a city assessment of 1-4 increased its price in the last five years. While only 7.1% of property that was rated below that went up in value. Less than 30% of the neighborhood is rated 1-4. This could indicate that only the better maintained property increased in value. It could also mean that the larger homes were in more demand in the housing market. It does show a correlation between maintaining a home with good rating and increasing property value. It would make sense for the neighborhood to attempt to keep maintenance on as many home as possible (owner occupied and renter occupied) for an overall increase in value.

Property value seems clearly related to upkeep in Lind-Bohanon. However it is not clear that rental property is a negative factor in property value, or that rental property is not being maintained. It would make sense that rental property is not being improved and remodeled at the rate of owner-occupied housing, due to lack of incentive by owner or tenant. Rental property seems to follow the same path as homeowner property, given the same thing happens to it (maintained property maintains value; deteriorating property deteriorates in value). It makes sense that rental property is not increasing in value because it is not being improved at the rate that homesteader house are. It is also not losing value because it is being maintained. It is important to note to that there has been a decrease in the number of rental units in Lind-Bohanon since 1984. Rental property is therefore not decreasing the value of the neighborhood, nor increasing it. It does not have a great effect either way.

Another concern that was voiced by residents (neighborhood schooling) was seemingly averted in a change in city-wide schooling policy. These changes seems to move city opinion from the notion of busing as still a necessary factor in education, back to the older policy of neighborhood schooling. Jenny Lind Elementary, perhaps a citywide magnet, will be available for all Lind-Bohanon children. The school should now serve as more of an anchor in the neighborhood as families will stay there for the school. This would seem to bring more cohesion to the neighborhood and bring a closer identity to the area.

The condition and program of the city parks department also plays a role in the state of the neighborhood. Lind-Bohanon has a higher percentage of park-land and playing fields than many city neighborhoods. For the most part residents seem happy with the park-land. There are a number of programs for children and plans for a new building to offer more space for residential meeting and interaction. Safety is a growing concern, especially at night. And the park that borders the river front has no neighborhood access point and seem fairly under-utilized perhaps due to this factor.

Traffic seems to be less congested than many places in the city. The speed at which cars travel could therefore be raised due to lack of other cars on the road and enforcement. This causes a safety concern, especially for residents with children. Although a solvable problem, it detracts from the condition of the neighborhood.

Lack of nearby shopping options is a problem that residents of the neighborhood face. There is necessity of a car due having to travel to Camden or Brooklyn center to shop for food and supplies. There are a number of small establishments in the neighborhood that support the local economy and give residents some close options. Not everything is available though and is questionable as to whether it is even feasible due to size and location of the market population. This is a harder to solve factor for the neighborhood.

These are some of the major issues facing the residents of the neighborhood. Most of these issues are solvable and can be done through the coalition of neighbors that already exists. Although this report does not highlight the positive, it is obvious that Lind-Bohanon has many assets that other neighborhoods only dream of. This report simply exposes areas of need, that can soon be filled in reality by ideas for improvement and change. And hopefully create not only a better physical environment for the neighborhood, but a deeper connection and feeling of community for the population as a whole.

Suggestions for Maintenance and Change

The greatest concerns of the residents of Lind-Bohanon are the vitality and upkeep of residential property, and making the neighborhood safer. The neighborhood must develop an action plan using input from the spectrum of residents that will achieve these goals. The neighborhood organization has the help of 1.6 million dollars from N.R.P. (Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Project) to use as a means, and will be most successful in achieving goals by using resident synthesis and input for the direction of money.

The development of a loan and housing grant program is a idea that many residents feel they would take advantage of, if available. Many residents feel that the neighborhood is not seeing to the maintenance of its houses. 35% of survey respondents answered that they would not be able to afford repairs to their home if needed. And 63% of respondents said they would consider working on their home if money were available. Therefore a loan and grant program would likely be both popular with residents and valuable in keeping value in the housing stock.

The Bancroft Neighborhood Association, in South Minneapolis (similar neighborhood to Lind-Bohanon), implemented one such housing grant and loan program in the spring of 1994. The neighborhood organization constructed an action plan and decided to use 1,076,000 dollars of their NRP money towards housing stability over a ten year period. The in-depth program has been fairly popular with residents and was approved 96-0 by their neighborhood association. The program is detailed and seemingly well constructed as to use the money in the most productive way. In the first year of the program, applications for housing grants have been as expected, however fewer people have applied for Bancroft loans as they believed would initially.

The Bancroft goals for the ten year project that could be implemented by Lind-Bohanon include:

1. Access to low cost improvement resources to support routinemaintenance. (tool lending, rate for rental of equipment, shared cost)

The Bancroft organization has set aside a month for helping homeowners to get the supplies and help they need in fixing up their homes. This could be implemented similarly in Lind-Bohanon. Local contractors and other residents could volunteer a day or so to fixing small things in houses (paint, windows, Etc.). The neighborhood group could develop a tool and repair library in which residents could borrow equipment that they could use on their own. The neighborhood organization would be able to afford the cost of supplies through the NRP grant.

2. Provide a resource network.

Bancroft is providing information on contractors and distributing self-administered checklists for home maintenance. Lind-Bohanon could provide information to residents about where to receive services and develop a block resource program at a very local level. This would help to create a sense of community as well, residents providing resources to neighbors.

3. Continue the Housing improvement program.

This is the loan and grant portion of their project which covers 975,000 dollars of NRP funds. It is to last ten years and have an overhead cost of managing the program not to exceed 10%.

The Lind-Bohanon Neighborhood group could organize a committee to develop such a plan that would include the city and local banks. The plan would make a number of loans and grants available to residents of Lind-Bohanon over a period of time based on need. Everybody in Lind-Bohanon would therefore have the ability to access funds to maintain their home. This would use a fair portion of Lind-Bohanon NRP dollars and need full support of the neighborhood association in being successful. The plan would likely be a center piece to an improvement program and fairly visible.

4. Identify and provide resources for vacant homes

The Bancroft neighborhood will attempt to identify and promote vacancies to local realtors who are able to fill them for 100% occupancy.

Lind-Bohanon does not have a large problem with housing vacancies (58 last year). It could set up a committee to track vacancies and identify homes that have been vacant for a long period of time. It could attempt to fill them or rehabilitate them through local residents and realtors efforts.

5. Have environmentally safe homes in Bancroft.

They are using a small portion of NRP dollars on education about hazards in the home and community. This could be duplicated in Lind-Bohanon. The education campaign lets residents take control of their environment through knowledge of potential dangers, some that affect property values.

Lind-Bohanon is in a good position to take from the best ideas of Bancroft's tested plan and incorporate them in to their own specially fitted plan of home maintenance. Lind-Bohanon can learn from Bancroft's and other neighborhood's trial plans in crafting one that will be right for the community.

In creating a closer community and addressing current area of tension, Lind-Bohanon should look at homeowner-renter relations. Lind-Bohanon would be able to create a committee of residents including both homeowners and renters to solve problems. The renters will be able to help other renters develop ways to influence their building owners to respond to rental maintenance, and decide who is responsible for different maintenance problems (owner or tenant). The committee could also look into ways of furthering relations between renters and homeowners. It would create a dialogue, break false perceptions and create avenues for change.

The issue of crime should be addressed in improving the neighborhood. Lind-Bohanon's residents need to be safer and just as importantly, feel safer. One idea is the creation of a Block Club that would be designed to combat crime on specific blocks. This would include an organizing block leader on a street, crime watch, publishing and distributing crime stats, and communication with a regular police liaison. Residents would in effect, take control of their environment by having someone to call and a role in the action. The goal would be a safer feeling neighborhood and a lower crime rate. The costs could be covered by NRP funding.

The neighborhood could also consider hiring a bike or foot patrol officer for certain times of the year. The goal of this would to have the police department closer to neighborhood people by knowing each other more intimately. Residents would feel that the police were a bigger part of solving the crime problem as knowledgeable participants in the community, not just respondents.

The issue of traffic could easily be remedied through a committee of residents identifying problem areas. They could then decide the best solutions for these areas (speed bumps, lights, stop signs, police presence) and use a small portion of NRP dollars, or by putting pressure on the city in paying for these needed changes.

The neighborhood should also work toward making the best use of it's existing benefits. The neighborhood is rich in park-land. However, the access and use of it could be vastly improved through resident planning. One idea is making the Bohanon play-field the true center of recreation for the neighborhood. With the new rec center being built with the school, the park makes perfect sense as a meeting place and center for a closer community. Park statistics show the field as having less athletic participation and organized league play than many other city parks. The Neighborhood organization could provide resources to create a Bohanon park youth sports and recreation program. There could be a part time staff organizer, volunteers, leagues and events such as summer cookouts. This would work towards creating a sense of community with a definite center area. The Bohanon park and new school is perfect in providing this space already.

Another long term project is creating neighborhood access to the Lind-Bohanon river park-land. As it stands now, there is no way to access the river from the neighborhood due to the location of I94. There could be better access for one of the neighborhoods potentially most beneficial assets. The river park could provide more demand for the neighborhood if access was improved. One idea is to form a committee to investigate options in looking at a bridge, expanding the river park to park space on the other side of I94, and/or increasing its publicity as a public place.

Although there is not clear answer for how to entice business to set up in the neighborhood and create close shopping options, the trip to shopping could be made more convenient. A weekly trip to the supermarket could be made by charter bus, as a service to some of the areas older residents. It could provide a door to door service that would be convenient, especially during the colder months. The service could be provided using funds from the NRP grant money initially for relatively little cost. The service would provide incentive to stay in the area as it would not be difficult to reach the market.

It would also seem important for the neighborhood organization to do things to increase the sense of community. One option could be a monthly community event such as a annual cookout, annual neighborhood cleanup, or other light activities that would incorporate all that wished to participate. Another thing that could help in creating a definite sense of community is establishing marked neighborhood boundaries. The neighborhood could erect a number of signs that would define the entrance to the neighborhood and help the sense of belonging and give the area a sense of grandeur.

An idea for incorporating the neighborhood organization into the forefront of community life would be to make it a regular source of information to residents on issues that affect the neighborhood. Local information could be kept on file and sent out on everything from employment, to local health care options, to local city road construction. These would just be things of interest that could be compiled in a frequent newsletter.

There are many ways that Lind-Bohanon could improve the housing condition and general quality of life in the community. The first step in such a process is involving a committed community to the changes that they would like to see take place in their own neighborhood. This is perhaps the hardest and most important part of the process because it involves the whole population and not just the ideas of a few. For change to work anywhere it must be a democratic process that truly has the support of the people that it affects. When it is done by those same people, the personal gratification is lasting and the improvements are done how they are wanted, the first time. The process in itself, not only the positive changes we hope to make, will also bring the community together.

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