Brooklyn Park/NHCC
Housing Development Exploration

2016
–
2017

Prepared by

Noelle Martinez, Artika Roller, Kiara Ellis, Sarah Fleming, Gillian Burling

Students in SW 8551: Advanced Community Practice: Assessment, Organizing, and Advocacy
University of Minnesota
Instructor: Jennifer Blevins

Prepared on Behalf of

City of Brooklyn Park Community Development Department and
North Hennepin Community College

Spring 2017

Brooklyn Park

Resilient Communities Project

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover℠

The project on which this report is based was completed in collaboration with the City of Brooklyn Park as part of the 2016–2017 Resilient Communities Project (RCP) partnership. RCP is a program at the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) that connects University faculty and students with Minnesota communities to address strategic projects that advance local resilience and sustainability.

The contents of this report represent the views of the authors, and do not reflect those of RCP, CURA, the Regents of the University of Minnesota, or the City of Brooklyn Park.

This publication may be available in alternate formats upon request.

Resilient Communities Project
University of Minnesota
330 HHHSPA
301—19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
Phone: (612) 625-7501
E-mail: rcp@umn.edu
Web site: http://www.rcp.umn.edu

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

Introduction

Brooklyn Park is a rapidly-growing community in the Twin Cities Metro area of Minnesota. It is the sixth largest city in the state, with just under 80,000 residents in 2014 (City of Brooklyn Park 2015). The city has become increasingly young and diverse; the average resident age is five years younger than the national average, and about half of residents are people of color (City of Brooklyn Park 2015). Increased development is expected in the area due to plans for an extension of the Twin Cities' light rail system to run through Brooklyn Park on 85th Avenue (Maxfield Research 2015).

Our project centers on an affordable housing development project proposed by North Hennepin Community College in Brooklyn Park. The college, which owns vacant property on 85th Avenue, is considering selling the land to an external developer to build affordable housing units for students and the wider community. Students have indicated a need for affordable housing near the college that includes supportive services such as childcare. Before making further plans for the property, North Hennepin Community College partnered with the City of Brooklyn Park and the Resilient Communities Project at the University of Minnesota to learn about the perspectives of community members.

Objectives

The goal of this project in partnership with North Hennepin Community College, the City of Brooklyn Park, and the Resilient Communities Project was to better understand the affordable housing needs of NHCC students and community members living in the area. Specifically, we were asked to work with community members to identify recommendations for supportive

services in an affordable housing unit that would be open to students and community members.

Previous research had been done to identify major areas of need for students; through our

project, we sought to incorporate the perspectives of Brooklyn Park community members living

near North Hennepin Community College.

Theoretical Base

In our project with North Hennepin Community College, we intended to engage in a process of

participatory social planning. In this approach, municipalities or other institutions involved in

development engage community members in collaboratively planning the development process.

Participatory planning has been linked to increased levels of trust in institutions and to increased

social capital (Menzel, Buchecker & Schulz 2013). Social planning has a strong focus on data as

a means for rational problem-solving (Minkler & Wallerstein 2012). Members of the community

should be closely involved in this data collection and throughout the entire community

development process.

In this project, North Hennepin Community College and the City of Brooklyn Park

recognized community members as key stakeholders in the development of affordable housing

and sought their perspectives early in the process. We feel that the feedback we received from

community members is essential to the development process and recommend continued

engagement with community members in the future.

Methodology

This project was a needs assessment using quantitative data analysis gathered through in person

and online surveys.

The in-person surveys were developed using (Appendix A) open ended questions with the intention of giving community members the opportunity to voice their opinions about the project without prompt. We believed this was an effective method for in-person meetings, allowing the survey participants the opportunity to ask questions and engage each other in a discussion about the potential community housing project.

Our team used the information gathered from the in person surveys to inform the modifications for the online survey (Appendix B). The open-ended questions were eliminated from the survey. The online survey questions were crafted as multiple choice answer options. Additional questions were added including pointed questions regarding access to light rail on 85th Avenues. In addition, specific options for addressing cultural needs in the development of a housing complex was added to the online survey.

The in-person survey was distributed on March 16, 2016 at 7:00 P.M., during the Brooklyn Park Human Rights Commission's monthly meeting located at the Brooklyn Park City Council Building, 5200 85th Ave. N. Brooklyn Park, MN 55443. Ten people attended the meeting including two people from the research team. Surveys were given to participants after a brief introduction. Participants completed the surveys onsite and immediately returned the surveys to the research team.

The online survey notification was sent out via email. The email list was acquired and used with permission from the City of Brooklyn Park. The listserv used contained email addresses of Brooklyn Park residents that provided their contact information for the purpose of receiving updates, notifications and request. We used the Qualtrics survey tool for developing the survey and collecting the online data. The request for completing the survey went out on Monday April 3, 2017. The survey was open from April 3, 2017 through April 15, 2017.

Researchers analyzed the data as follows. Paper surveys were collected and input into Qualtrics as it's own entity. This survey reflected the specific language on the paper surveys and responses were recorded verbatim from the handwritten copies. All data was coded into topic areas. Topic areas for each question were determined by researcher interpretation of responses. The results included both qualitative and quantitative data (derived from Online Survey responses) and are summarized below.

Results

We determined that the methodology for the paper and online surveys were too distinct to analyze as one data set. Below are the results from each distinct method which will be synthesized in the following section. Each question has been assigned an alphanumeric value as follows: P1, P2... for paper survey questions, and O1, O2… for the online survey questions. Furthermore, notable quotes have been identified and assigned a letter for ease of reference. Each quote was pulled directly from survey responses and are included to amplify the voices of community members and offset the limitation of researcher interpretation. Quotes were determined to be notable if they were (1) representative of the sample or coded topic area, (2) complex in nature and thereby difficult to code appropriately, or (3) expressing specific concerns. The number of respondents to each individual question is indicated in the column labeled "n."

Paper Survey

Seven BP community members completed the paper survey. Some community members did not

complete the survey in its entirety, leaving some responses blank. Table 1 details responses to

each question and identifies notable quotes accordingly.

Online Survey

Twenty-eight BP community members responded to the online survey. Since each question was

not obligatory, the number of responses for each question vary and are noted in Table 2. Table 3

provides additional notable quotes and context for "other" responses.

Table 2: Online Survey Quantitative Responses

Discussion

The goal of this project was to learn more about community expectations and desires regarding a

potential affordable student housing initiative developed in partnership between North Hennepin

Community College, the City of Brooklyn Park, and the Resilient Communities Project. Our

team polled community members in person and electronically to gather this information. This

research yielded a general understanding of community attitudes on issues like affordability,

access, safety, and the light rail project and some distinct expectations for the potential housing

project.

Results from both the electronic and paper surveys primarily focused on issues not

explicitly posed in those surveys. In general, community members taking the paper surveys were

concerned about what the proposed housing would mean for students and low income residents

but there were also concerns about what it would mean to the existing community. Community

members who took the online survey were more blatantly concerned with issues surrounding

perceived safety, city rezoning, and the light rail project, especially in regards to their own properties. Overall, we became aware of a general sense of scepticism and hesitancy about any new multifamily housing or any new infrastructure that might change the economic and cultural makeup of city, lower home values, or raise taxes.

Generally, pollsters placed priority on cost and safety when choosing housing for themselves or when thinking about affordable housing for others. Access to transportation, schools, and libraries was also discussed in terms of affordable housing. Pollsters agreed that childcare and businesses like a grocery store, restaurant, or cafe would be a benefit to the community if included in the plan. One pollster was concerned that opening housing to people other than students would make it too difficult for students to find housing in the area (P7, G). Another was worried about the role of a developer in the plan: "Would it revert to a developer who exercises exclusive control over it?" (P7, H). A third community member stated they would like the property to stay in the hands of NHCC and not be handed over to an outside developer (P7, I).

Although many responses were quite constructive and positive, community members also used the survey as a place to voice concerns about their changing community. One community member stated in O8 that their taxes had gone up and adding student housing would lower their home value because "no one in their right mind would want to buy near student housing" (O8, M). Another said they would not like the space to be used for affordable housing because they lived "only a couple of blocks away" (O8, O). One community member voiced concern that priority was often given to those seeking affordable housing over those who already lived in the area (P1, B).

Additionally, because it was requested that we include a few questions about the light rail project, we discovered that many concerns were centered around that issue. Only one of five paper survey takers said that living near the light rail appealed to them. Concerns centered around noise, safety, home values, and the changes it may bring to their neighborhood environment. Online survey takers were more likely to view the light rail project desirably with 54.17% saying living near the light rail appealed to them and 45.83% saying that it did not. Those who viewed the project favorably were equally interested in the added convenience and accessibility. Those who viewed the project unfavorably were highly concerned with noise. Many were also concerned about traffic and safety.

Although the community members we polled often did not answer the survey questions in a predictable manner, we found that many of these answers were themselves quite revealing. Community members were generally preoccupied with fears and concerns about their properties, which made it difficult to accumulate data on their ideas of what would be helpful to students or low income residents. Regardless, the issues that came to light during the administration of the survey will continue to be relevant as the project develops. This issues may also come up with any new projects planned by the city or the school in this area.

Although compiling these reports was effortful and planned, there were some limitations and shortcomings that have come out in the final report. These include the unknown details of the project (developer, zoning, timeline), questions about what qualifies as "affordability," and limitations in who we were able to reach with the survey.

Many community members' questions were addressed during our dissemination of the paper surveys and others were written into the responses on the electronic survey. While we were able to have conversations while administering the paper survey, community members had

questions that we were not able to answer because we did not know the answers or the answers were not yet clear or available. Even more limiting, during the administration of the electronic survey, we were not able to clarify questions or answer community members questions due to the format. Even so, because the project is at its earliest stages, our team is not involved in the planning, and we did not come into the project with intimate knowledge of the community and its history, we were unable to assuage many fears or answer all of our pollsters' questions.

There were several instances where the history of the community and preexisting concerns imparted emphasis on the questions we posed. More background knowledge of the community's concerns would have helped us to ask better targeted questions. For example, we struggled to clarify for community members was what affordability meant. In the paper survey, we asked, "What does affordable housing look like for you and/or your community?" The term "affordable housing" seemed to make some community members uncomfortable, especially those concerned about their own property values. These preconceived notions appeared to alter the focus of the survey for many of those polled. Ideally, we would go back and ask community members for a range of numerical values that they thought constituted "affordable" in their neighborhood. This kind of well-specified question would have been far more helpful and far less derailing than the question we asked.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that our sample size was fairly small and we gathered few details about the demographic nature of the community members we polled. Although the paper survey was a better method to gather information, as we were able to clarify some questions and have a more open conversation, those surveys only reached seven community members during one community event. The electronic survey reached 28 respondents. We did not collect demographic data for either survey so we do not know the extent

of the sampling bias on our data. Ideally, we would include the collection of demographic data including age, gender, income, and race/ethnicity. With that kind of data we would be better able to target different communities depending on which demographics had not been included.

Our overall impressions during this project were that there are many unanswered questions and concerns in the community about development and the rapidly changing appearance of Brooklyn Park. We recommend the city and the school work to open more spaces for community members to talk about their concerns. Additionally, more details are needed before community members are again polled. Ideally, information from the other student housing group can be collected and combined with our data. When more concrete plans are decided, the community can be further informed about the role of the developer and the school, and what this development will bring to the community, and some of the consequences of the development to them.

If further community research is done, it would be beneficial to have those organizing the surveys pay close attention to demographic data so that they collect information from a true sample of the population of Brooklyn Park and not simply what is convenient. Additionally, it would be helpful to have insight from someone who is intimately familiar with the community's concerns when writing new survey questions. This would make it easier for community members to voice their opinions on the issue without becoming distracted by other, less relevant concerns.

Going forward, the values of the community should be emphasised in further information distributed about the project. We found that safety was a significant value to this particular community. Ideas about safety should be included in the plan—the safety of students, traffic safety (due to concerns over increased congestion from the light rail project), safety of property, and of course, the safety of the community members and their families. Those polled also saw

value in the inclusion of new business, specifically grocery stores, restaurants, coffee shops, and child care. Inclusion of new businesses that are exciting to community members as well as beneficial to students may deemphasize concerns over rising property taxes or lowered property values.

Conclusion

Although our research within the community was not intended to clarify the direction of the NHCC student housing project in the same way the research with students was, our surveys revealed a great deal of information about community concerns and desires that will undoubtedly remain at the forefront of the discussion from this day forward. A housing project that intends to be responsible and inclusive must value the opinions of its residents as well as the surrounding community in order to be successful in its aims. The plans for the North Hennepin Community College student housing project will eventually gather momentum and involving the community at every stage will be increasingly important. Additionally, intentionally addressing the above stated concerns and placing an emphasis on the community's values—especially safety—can only build trust. We hope that the community will continue to have their voices heard by groups like ours and that actions taken by the city and the planners of this project will work to dismantle some of the scepticism and mistrust that preceded our involvement.

References

City of Brooklyn Park. (2015). Community Profile.

City of Brooklyn Park. (2015). Snapshot of the City.

Maxfield Research. (2015). Bottineau Corridor Blue Line Extension Northern Stations
Demographic and Economic Analysis.

Menzel, S., Buchecker, M., & Schulz, T. (2013). Forming social capital—Does participatory
planning foster trust in institutions? *Journal of Environmental Management*, 131, 351-362.

Minkler, M., & Wallerstein, N. (2012). Improving Health Through Community Organization and
Community Building: Perspectives from Health Education and Social Work. In M. Minkler
(Ed.), *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health and Welfare* (pp. 37-
58). Rutgers University Press.

Appendix: Survey Results

Table 1: Paper Survey Results

Question	n	Response Summary	Notable Quotes
P1: What does affordable housing look like for you and/or your community?	6	<u>Code: # of respondents</u> Cost: 2 Transportation: 2 Proximity to resources (schools, libraries): 2 (Quote A) Type of housing (condo, studio): 2 Concern over re-zoning and the impact of this housing unit on community members : 1 (Quote B)	A: "A place to live that is affordable with easy access to transportation, schools, libraries, etc." B: "That all depends on where it is, are lands being rezoned giving priority to "A/H" instead of pre-existing community members"
P2: What are the two most important factors that you consider when you are looking for housing?	6	<u>Code: # of respondents</u> Safety: 5 (Quote C) Cost: 3 Quality: 2 Nearby Business: 1 Community Nearby: 1	C: "The type of neighborhood. and is it safe for my children."
P3: Is there anything specific to your culture that you would like to see in this housing development?	6	<u>Code: # of respondents</u> Diversity: 2 (Quote D) Nearby Retail: 2 In-unit laundry: 1 Cleanliness: 1 Community services (Interpreters): 1 Community Meeting Space: 1	D: "diverse community (not homogeneous) access for all, not just upper class white families"
P4: Would you be interested in living in a building near NHCC?	6	<u>Code: # of respondents</u> No: 3 Yes: 3	
P5: Does living near the light rail appeal to you? Why?	5	<u>Code: # of respondents</u> Yes: 1 No: 4 Reasons provided for "no": noise, safety, already owns a home, and neighborhood appeal (Quote E)	E: "No. Because I do and we bought the home because of the beautiful neighborhood w/o light rail."

Question	n	Response Summary	Notable Quotes
P6: What support services would benefit you and your family and/or community if the services were in the same building as you lived (for example, on the first floor of an apartment complex)? E.g. restaurant, county services, child care etc.	7	<u>Code: # of respondents</u> Child Care: 6 Restaurants/ Coffee Shops: 4 County Services: 3 Health Care: 2 Convenience Store: 2 Gym: 2 Adult Care: 1 None: 1 (Quote F)	F: "would not benefit my family"
P7: Is there anything else you would like us to know regarding the new affordable housing complex near North Hennepin Community College?	6	Respondents utilized this space to express various concerns. Two concerns about zoning were raised, and one concern was noted about each of the following: definition of affordability, the developer exerting exclusive control (Quote H), NHCC ownership (Quote I) and opening up the housing to people who are not students (Quote G). One person asked "What is considered affordable?"	G: "I think this should be student housing; this is what would best fit the needs of NHCC students. Housing open for all will not guarantee affordable housing for students." H: Would it revert to a developer who exercises exclusive control over it?" I: "I would prefer to see it continued to be owned by N. Hennepin Community College."

Table 2: Online Survey Quantitative Responses

Question	Response Summary		
	Answer	**%**	**Count**
Q1: What are the most important factors to you when choosing housing? (choose the 2 most important)	Cost	58.33%	14
	Location: proximity to public transit	4.17%	1
	Location: proximity to work/school	8.33%	2
	Location: proximity to services you utilize regularly	12.50%	3
	Location: desirable neighborhood	45.83%	11
	Number of beds/baths	4.17%	1
	Has a yard	12.50%	3
	Allows pets	8.33%	2
	Parking availability/cost	4.17%	1
	In-unit Laundry	4.17%	1
	Amenities (pool access, porch/balcony, exercise room)	0.00%	0
	Accessibility (wheelchair access etc)	0.00%	0
	Other — Proximity to emergency services 1; Safety 3; General Discouragement 1		5
	Total	100%	24 respondents, 44 responses

Question	Answer	%	Count
O2: What cultural elements are important to have in your housing unit? *(also see Table 3)*	Foot Bath	0.00%	0
	Special Venting	25.00%	3
	Prayer Space	0.00%	0
	Group Meeting Spaces	33.33%	4
	Other (please specify)	Student Only Residents 1 Concern- Prayer 2 None 2	5
	Total	100%	12
O3: Would you be interested in living in a building next to NHCC?	**Answer**	**%**	**Count**
	Yes	41.67%	10
	No	58.33%	14
	Total	100%	24

Question	Response Summary		
	Answer	**%**	**Count**
O4: Does living near the light rail appeal to you?	Yes	54.17%	13
	No	45.83%	11
	Total	100%	24
	Answer	**%**	**Count**
O5: Why does living near the light rail appeal to you?	Convenience	45.45%	5
	Accessibility	45.45%	5
	Sustainability	18.18%	2
	Flexibility	9.09%	1
	Total	100%	11
	Answer	**%**	**Count**
O6: Why does living near the light rail not appeal to you?	Traffic	57.14%	4
	Safety	57.14%	4
(also see Table 3)	Unnecessary	28.57%	2
	Noise	85.71%	6
	Total	100%	7

Question	Response Summary		

Q7: What support services would benefit you and your family if they were in the building that you lived in (for example, on the first floor of an apartment complex)?

Answer	%		Count
Restaurants	44.44%		8
Grocery Store	61.11%		11
Childcare Center	11.11%		2
County Services	5.56%		1
Tutoring Services	0.00%		0
Other (please specify)	Security	1	3
	None	2	
Total	100%		18

Q8: Please use the space below to share any additional questions, comments or considerations related to this project. If you are interested in attending the presentation of findings, please include your contact info here.

(also see Table 3)

Answer	%	Count
Concern over personal financial impact	11.11%	1
General support	11.11%	1
Don't want to live near affordable housing (safety concern?)	11.11%	1
Concern over feasibility of light rail project	11.11%	1
Question- who will this housing be for?	11.11%	1
Invite to presentation	44.44%	4
Total	100%	9

Table 3: Online Survey Qualitative Responses

Question	Response Summary	Notable Quotes
O2: What cultural elements are important to have in your housing unit? *See quantitative responses in Table 2.*	"Other" responses summarized here: One respondent said "student-only residents," and the other is included as a Notable Quote.	J: "Prayer should be in church or within your own home"
O6: Why does living near the light rail not appeal to you?	*See summary of coded responses in Table 2.*	K: "Too much noise. Too many people wandering about looking for something to steal and sell." L: "It does not appeal to me. Just more congestion and Brooklyn Park has enough of that already."
O8: Please use the space below to share any additional questions, comments or considerations related to this project. If you are interested in attending the presentation of findings, please include your contact info here.	*See summary of coded responses in Table 2.*	M: "We live near the college and new library. We live near a new development of 80 plus new homes. Our taxes are out of sight and now you want to add coals to the fire by putting in student housing near us. Our home value would drastically go down for selling as no one in their right mind would want to buy near student housing." N: "The light rail is very out of date and too costly to build and maintain" O: "Your email states possible affordable housing which I would definitely not what to live near since i am only a couple of blocks away"