

**Neighborhood Planning  
for Community  
Revitalization**



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**Where Do We Go From Here?**  
*An analysis of trends in the Stevens-  
Square-Loring Heights Neighborhood*

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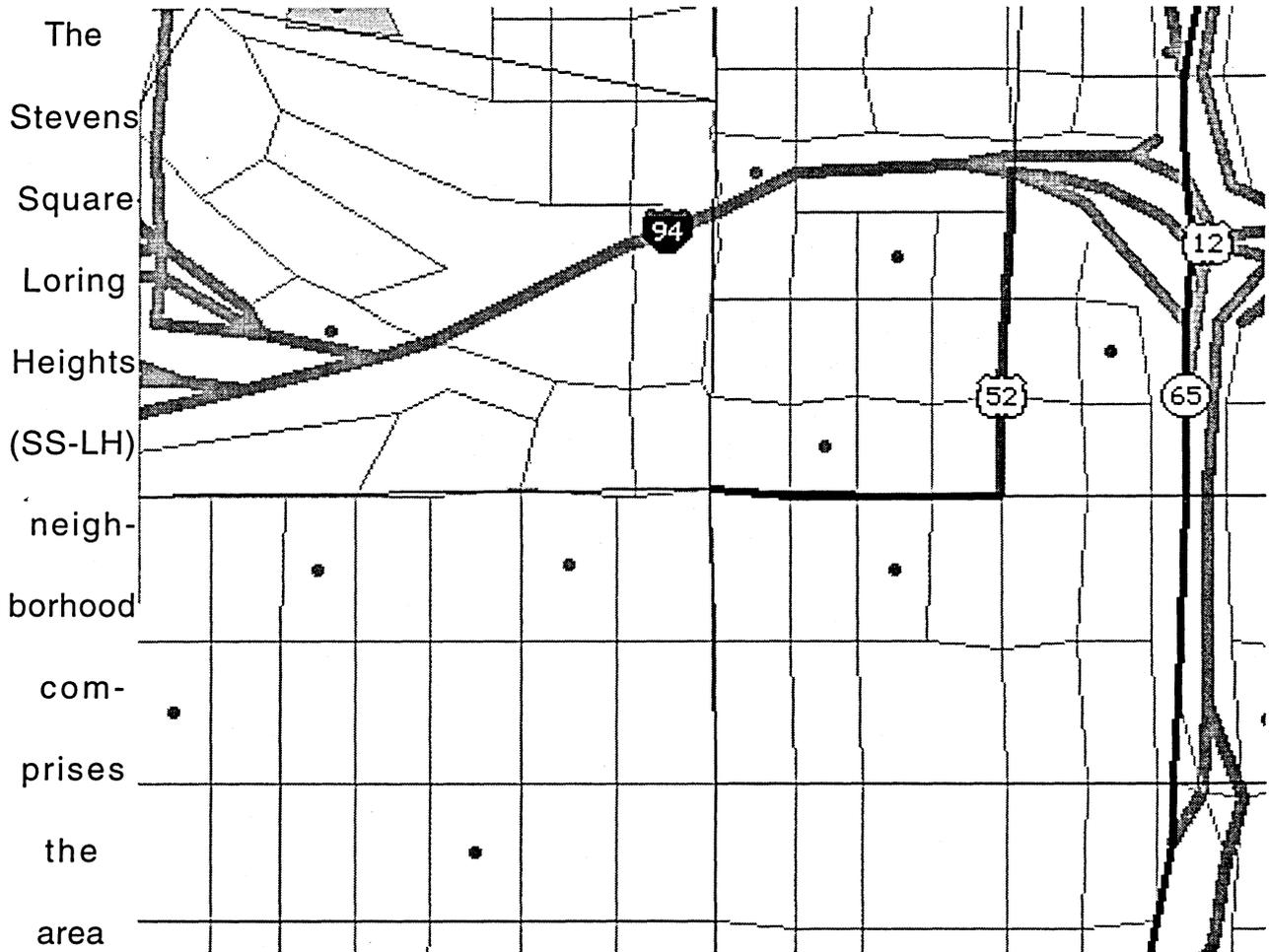
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## Introduction



TIGER file courtesy of Mapquest

bounded by I-94 on the north and Franklin Avenue on the south between Lyndale Avenue And 35-W.

Stevens Square and Loring Heights are divided from one another by

Nicollet Avenue, represented above as a thin purple line running north to south, with Stevens Square lying to the east of the avenue and Loring Heights to the west. The structures of the neighborhood were constructed roughly from 1890-1930, with Loring Heights being developed first. Some of the differences between the two halves of the neighborhood are partially explained by the pattern of this initial development. Loring Heights was developed as an upper-class neighborhood in one of their first of many moves to the south and west of central Minneapolis. Its layout of curved streets and uneven terrain are the classic marks of the Victorian romantic suburb. Its site on a ridge and its situation, with easy access to both the center and the lake district were also factors in its development as a neighborhood for the wealthy. On the other hand, Stevens Square was built largely as a response to increasing demand for workers in both the Abbott Hospital, located in the neighborhood, and downtown, where milling and trade boomed<sup>1</sup>. This paper, by applying broad research into neighborhood and city history to statistical information on Stevens Square-Loring Heights, will attempt to trace the themes of population, labor, transportation, and transience to elaborate on how SS-LH made the transition from this initial development to the neighborhood we see today

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<sup>1</sup>Howard, Pp. 6-22

and to provide a supplement to Liddy Howard's history of the neighborhood,  
"Stevens Square-Loring Heights: A Neighborhood Defined."

## Population

In this section, we will examine data on the population of SS-LH in order to detect those characteristics which have changed and which



have remained stable. Among the characteristics to be examined are those of total population, age structure, race, and economic status as shown in the chart below<sup>2</sup>. Not shown on the chart, but significant, are the facts that only about half of current residents are native to Minnesota and that over 10% are enrolled in a post-secondary institution. Additionally, 298 residents were born outside of the US and between 11% and 12% speak a

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<sup>2</sup> Chart information was taken from the applicable Census of Population (Minneapolis tracts 56, 57, and 58), except 1996 data which was taken from the 1996 State of the City. Statistics for 1940, 1960, and 1970 are approximations made necessary by the size of and changes in tract area, especially the effects of freeway building, and comparability. 1980 and 1990 data are taken from UDAP statistics which conform to the neighborhood boundaries.

language other than English in the home. Immigrant populations in the neighborhood include southeast Asian and Somali refugees from conflicts in their respective areas.

Year	Total Population	Largest Age Cohort in years	Percent Minority	Median Family Income	Percent Families Below Poverty Line
1940	6,000		1%		
1960	4,500	20-24	2.5%	\$3,866	
1970	4,000	20-34	2.1%	\$6,971	11%
1980	3,919	22-29	14%	\$10,604	26%
1990	4,549	25-34	15%	\$17,123	30%

It appears, from Burt Berlowe's The Homegrown Generation: Building Community in Central Minneapolis and from Liddy Howard's "Stevens Square - Loring Heights: A Community Defined", as well as the built landscape, that the first non-Indigenous residents of the neighborhood were the wealthy land speculators, physicians, and industrialists who built their homes in Loring Heights in the 1890s. Later, following a

growing city economy and the establishment of the Abbot hospital Stevens Square was developed on the former site of Richard Mendenhall's nursery to house young hospital, downtown, and industrial workers. While the introduction of the automobile allowed the wealthy to begin their departure in the 1920s, a return to less expensive apartment living kept the neighborhood full during the depression and war years.

As we can see, the raw number of inhabitants has been down since mid-century. Possible reasons for this include freeway building, especially important in this area, as well as movement out of the city during the massive suburbanization of the post-war period. Minneapolis as a whole lost 153, 335 residents during the period between 1950, its peak year, and 1990. However, like many other central neighborhoods, SS-LH saw a population gain during the 1980s. During the 1970s, the neighborhood saw a significant increase in its minority population as well, which may be attributed to rust-belt migrations from heavily industrial cities, which were hardest hit by economic restructuring, to more diversified, or service-based cities that sustained less damage to their economic base.

While the largest age cohort seems to have remained fairly stable, the influence of large numbers of elderly are not shown in the chart. In

the 1970s this population was extraordinarily large. In general though, the neighborhood, especially that part of which we call Stevens Square has always been the home of young singles and small families. These small families were especially important in the early years of the neighborhood remembered by Jeanne Kreuger (Berlowe, Pp. 55-59). However as standards of living changed, families were less satisfied with the small apartments of the neighborhood. Under new ideas of necessary space, the area is most attractive to those who have yet to have a family, or to those whose families have left home. Of the families that are left, the Census shows many of them to be headed by single women.

Levels of poverty have also been increasing during the past few decades. This too may be seen as a function of the out-migration of those at the peak of their earnings. The same single-parent households who make up many of the neighborhoods families may be a part of this phenomenon; as such parents may not be able to achieve economic success while caring for their children. The presence of elderly residents, many of whom can be presumed to have a fixed income, as well as the addition of public housing are likely factors as well. Overall, Stevens Square seems to have remained relatively stable as an area for young workers, with the significant exception of a relatively new elderly population. Loring

Heights, on the other hand has undergone significant change, as its large houses have become multi-unit housing, group homes, and businesses.

## Labor

The characteristics of a neighborhood's labor force can give us important insight into the way they lived. While early



statistics into the labor force were unavailable, the importance of the hospital and downtown have been sighted as important sites of labor for neighborhood residents.

Year	Unemployment (Workforce/ #Unemployed)	Largest Employment Sectors	Location
1960	6%	Operatives and Clerical	City of Minneapolis (CBD especially important)

1970	4%	Operatives and Clerical	City of Minneapolis (CBD especially important)
1980	5%	Services (Clerical especially important)	City of Minneapolis (CBD less important)
1990	11.4%	Services (Clerical especially important)	N/A

As the chart above shows, unemployment has been relatively low in the neighborhood. The prominent exception being the 1990 figure, which is more than twice that of that for 1980. While some of this may be a function of the statistics were created<sup>3</sup>, it seems likely that this could be linked to the national recession experienced in the early '90s. We can also

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<sup>3</sup> The 1990 data is from a User Defined Area Profile that addresses the precise boundaries of the neighborhood, while the 1980 data was composited from census tracts.

see that while industrial operatives outnumbered service employees in the 1950s and 1960s, service occupations came to dominate the workforce in the 1970s and 1980s. This coincides with the economic restructuring and deindustrialization occurring over those periods. Throughout the neighborhoods history, however, workers have been concentrated in Minneapolis, especially the CBD, or downtown, but there are signs that the draw of the CBD has lessened somewhat and the 2000 census may show us a less centralized figure for employment location.



## Transportation

Transportation issues have been critical in shaping the neighborhood as we understand it today. When most people walked everywhere they went, development in cities was extremely compact to allow easy access by foot. The development of a streetcar line along Nicollet Avenue actually delayed the development of Stevens Square by permitting leap-frog growth farther out. These same streetcars brought commerce along the streets on which they ran, with clustering of such activity near stops and stations<sup>4</sup>. Most notably, in this area, streetcars were a major impetus

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<sup>4</sup> See "History of Phillips Neighborhood Part I-Transportation"

for commerce along Franklin Avenue. Until 1944, streetcars were still be purchased for use in the city. Unfortunately, according to "History of the Phillips Neighborhood Part 1-Transportation" their viability was destroyed by decreased frequency of service and rising fares. By 1954, the conversion to a bus system had taken place, while one of the managers of the system, Fred Osana, was found guilty of conflict of interest charges resulting from the switch. The mass adoption of the automobile also had its effect on the neighborhood, and cities across the country, as mass suburbanization became possible. The next phase of development would be the construction of highways, specifically I-35W. The construction of the freeway exacerbated tensions between residents of the inner-city, for whom freeways are obstructions to the flow of everyday life, and suburbanites, for whom they were an improved route to the city center. During construction, 1965-1967, thousands of units of housing were destroyed along the SS-LH/Phillips border. In fact, Stevens Square would not now exist if it weren't for planners reluctance to destroy Honeywell and the Minneapolis Art Institute, both of which lay in the path of development. Stevens Square now rests in the bend made to accommodate them. The problems of freeways for inner city neighborhoods can be seen on Fourth Avenue, where a once-busy street is cut off from downtown

traffic by freeway walls and storefronts are vacant or underutilized because of their inaccessibility. The neighborhood faces further fragmentation as a result of the one-streets, such as First Avenue, that run through the neighborhood and serve as quick routes from neighborhoods further south into central Minneapolis.

Year	Percent commuting by Automobile
1960	36
1970	47
1980	39
1990	50

As can be seen by the chart above, the site and situation of SS-LH has had an interesting impact on automobile use by neighborhood residents. The density of building, especially in Stevens Square, has allowed it to support numerous functions within short walking distance. Services include markets, restaurants, a supermarket, the park, coffeehouses, an autoshop, social services, etc. This density also discourages car ownership by providing only limited parking. The situation of the neighborhood also reduces its need for automobiles. Not

only does it contain many services, but it is well connected to other parts of the city, including downtown, by bus. There are three routes that follow Nicollet, one on Franklin, and one on Lyndale. All of this adds up to the neighborhood having below average dependence on the automobile. Hopefully, the neighborhood can preserve and cultivate its service-rich pedestrian-friendly environment.

## Transience

Transience is the last of the issues to be examined. Its importance lies in the idea that a tight, stable community is more easily built, when the population is present for extended periods of time, as one can then develop a sense of familiarity and belonging among the residents.

Year	Percent remaining from five years previous	Largest source of new residents
1960	30	Other Minneapolis
1970	25	Other Minneapolis
1980	24	Other Minneapolis
1990	27	Hennepin County

Obviously, from our data, the advantage of a large number of long-time residents has not been among the neighborhoods strengths. In fact, SS-LH retention rates over five years are among the lowest in the city.

According to Berlowe's interview with Jeanne Krueger, Stevens Square

was populated by mostly working-class families before the building of freeways in 1965. In the decades that followed however, the population shifted to contain more young and elderly people. At the same time, the neighborhood cannot provide these young people with the space they need in order to raise families; so they look elsewhere, while older people may move to be closer to family, stay warm, or may simply pass away. Newcomers are overwhelmingly from the city of Minneapolis, but are supplemented by arrivals from other parts of the state and the rest of the country. However, few new residents are from suburbs or the southern states. Attempting to attract families to the neighborhood can have only limited success, as there are few homes large enough for a modern family, so the neighborhood will have to find other ways to build community. Methods may include emphasizing the historicity of the neighborhood, amenities like the park and overlook, and its urbanity and self-containment. While Loring Heights offers ample opportunities for renewal and reuse, Stevens Square has the heritage of its stable place in the city's history as a nursery for young people starting out on their own.

## Conclusions

To conclude, we will summarize the findings of the various sections. In the section on population, we found that the population has both shrunk, since 1950, and become more extreme in its age, as well as more diverse racially and ethnically. However has been a slight rise in population during the 1980s. The current population is probably close to the maximum that the neighborhood can accommodate and a return to 1950 levels of population would be impossible, considering the loss of units during highway building and the shift in what is an acceptable number of people per unit. Under Labor, we saw the transformation from a workforce of managers in Loring Heights and manufacturing and clerical workers in Stevens Square, who found their work at the center of the city, to a more uniform economy based on services throughout the city. This trend will likely continue as growth at the region's edge dilutes the primacy of the CBD. This trend will likely see more residents working in suburban locations, a phenomena that has so far been quite limited. We also saw how transportation shaped the neighborhood and its economy by providing and preventing access to and from different places at different times. The transportation picture is unlikely to change much in the near future, as freeways and public transportation patterns appear static. Despite

this, a more cohesive neighborhood fabric could be achieved by encouraging the reversion to two-way streets, as this would discourage high-speed traffic through the neighborhood. Finally we addressed the short-lived nature of most residents' stay and made some suggestions for dealing with this transience. While this transience can be seen as an obstacle to developing community within the neighborhood, it is a function of its population, which is primarily young and full of vigor. Greater stability could be achieved by promoting the reversion of Loring Heights homes to single-family residents, but Stevens Square should celebrate its heritage as a place for those new to the city or life on their own. After all, the area was once Mendenhall's nursery; it is only fitting that it serve the same purpose for the city as a whole today. SS-LH has been the home of people of all sorts and from many places in its hundred years of development, hopefully many more who work and live here will be sheltered and nurtured by it in the future.

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