

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

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Hamline-Midway Rental Profile

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A CONSORTIUM PROJECT OF: Augsburg College; College of St. Catherine; Hamline University; Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs; Macalester College; Metropolitan State University; Minneapolis Community College; Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program; University of Minnesota (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; Children, Youth and Family Consortium; Minnesota Extension Service); University of St. Thomas; and Minneapolis community and neighborhood representatives.

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**Center for Urban and Regional Affairs
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330 Humphrey Center**

Hamline-Midway Rental Profile

Conducted on behalf of
Hamline-Midway Area Rehabilitation Corporation

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March 2000

*This report (NPCR 1145) is also available at the following internet address:
<http://www.npcr.org>*

March, 2000

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(NPCR) supported the work of the author of this report but has not reviewed it for publication. The content is solely the responsibility of the author and is not necessarily endorsed by NPCR.

NPCR is coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota. NPCR is supported by grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center, the McKnight Foundation, Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the St. Paul Foundation, and The St. Paul.

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Executive Summary

H-MARC (Hamline-Midway Area Rehabilitation Corporation) required a census of rental housing in the neighborhood in order to supplement the information needed to consider the presence and status of rental housing in the neighborhood. H-MARC was formed to address changes in and especially the deterioration of housing conditions occurring in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood of St. Paul. H-MARC and the Hamline Midway Coalition (HMC) were interested in beginning a neighborhood process of looking at rental options in the neighborhood. The Alternatives to Single-Family Housing Task Force was formed in order to meet these goals. The goal of the task force is to identify "at risk" rental properties and work at stability and prevention, identify potential redevelopment sites, continue the analysis of the demographic changes in the neighborhood, and engage in advocacy to encourage affordable housing metropolitan wide.

The scope of the research required a rental census study of the neighborhood and an inquiry into strategies taken by other community groups was conducted. Other tasks included: learning about current trends in multi-family development, beginning to interview landlords, and compiling a series of strategies for encouraging development and preservation of the rental housing stock of the neighborhood. There have been very few studies exclusively focused on the rental housing stock of a neighborhood. The neighborhood was not aware of the number of rental buildings and their location. The Hamline-Midway neighborhood not only wants to preserve their present rental housing stock but also pursue future rental development.

Introduction into Hamline-Midway

Hamline-Midway is a stable low-moderate income neighborhood which has Hamline University in its midst. The neighborhood has two main commercial areas: Snelling and University Avenues. In addition there are a number of parks, churches, and schools. The 1990 Census lists District 11 (Hamline-Midway) with a total population of 11,815. Of adults over 25 years old, 84.1% finished high school or higher degrees, while 24.9% finished with a bachelor's degree or higher. The mean travel time to work is 17.2 minutes. The most common occupation is administrative support followed by service occupations. There are 4,857 households with a median household income of \$26,351. Of the 2,516 families, there is a median family income of \$34,420. Nearly 11% of the Hamline-Midway population is below the poverty level.

There are a total of 5,027 housing units. The neighborhood consists of 60% home ownership with 40% rental (which is at St. Paul city averages for home ownership profiles). The majority (70%) of the units was built in 1939 or earlier. Homes are more likely to be 3 bedrooms, with 2 bedroom and one-bedroom homes following.

There has been relatively little new construction in the neighborhood in the last 10 years with the exception of the Hamline Park Townhomes, a 24 unit complex for families, which were built in 1991 (see community plan). H-MARC and several small private developers have also added four buildings in the last three years (3 single-family, 1 duplex).

In 1999 in the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* listed 391 properties for rent in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood (source: HMC summary). Rent ranged from a low of \$165 to a high of \$1,495 (depending on the size of the unit and whether it was a room for rent or a

house for rent). Ninety-three properties were advertised more than once. The average rent for Hamline-Midway was calculated at \$490 from the advertisements.

H-MARC and HMC

Both organizations operate in the same service area - St. Paul's District 11-- Hamline-Midway bounded to the east at Lexington Parkway, on the north by Pierce Butler Route, on the south by University Avenue, and on the west by Cleveland Avenue. The mission of H-MARC is to promote the general welfare of the Hamline-Midway Community by helping to stabilize and rehabilitate housing stock. H-MARC is a neighborhood based housing community development corporation focused on improving housing through development projects, home improvement loans, and technical assistance.

HMC is a community-based non-profit organization that is dedicated to making the Midway a better place to live and work. Hamline Midway Coalition (HMC) was founded in 1972 as part of St. Paul's district council system to represent neighborhood interests in city planning and policy making. HMC's community development strategy uses planning, youth development, economic opportunity, crime prevention and community-building programs to improve the overall quality and vitality of the Hamline Midway neighborhood.

H-MARC and the Hamline Midway Coalition (HMC) have worked together since 1995 to create a comprehensive and highly coordinated community development strategy to prevent crime, create economic opportunity, support youth development and stabilize housing.

Project Goals

This project grew out of the Hamline-Midway community planning process. Early research for the Community Plan set out a series of questions for the neighborhood to consider, including:

1. "What strategies work to ensure stable, well-maintained housing that is also affordable and suitable to a wide range of individuals and families-large to small, renters to owners, new to long-term?"
2. "What is the most appropriate way to develop affordable housing in Hamline Midway?"
3. "What is the proper balance between affordable housing opportunities and high home sale prices?"
4. "What are some effective ways of addressing the needs of landlords and tenants of rental properties in the community?"
5. "What role do large retail firms on University Avenue play in contributing to a lack of housing stability along Sherburne Avenue and nearby locations?"
6. "What would be effective strategies to improve these neighborhoods?"

(Source: Hamline Midway Community Planning Resource Guide September, 1997: 13).

The Housing for All Strategy Group was one of five community task forces created as part of the community planning process. This strategy group focused its discussion on these questions and others to develop a list of priorities (see community plan):

1. Address property distress in a practical manner
2. Improve access to housing maintenance assistance programs
3. Develop alternatives to single-family housing
4. Maintain existing housing stock
5. Improve rental housing

Their discussions also pondered the relationship with Hamline University and its influence on the neighborhood. As part of the implementation of the plan, the Alternatives to Single-Family Housing Task Force was formed in the fall of 1999 to begin the process of looking into rental housing. The research project involved talking with community development corporations (CDCs) and neighborhood groups to find out the current trends in multi-family housing development and preservation. Multi-family development on the part of CDCs is not a common in the Twin Cities presently. From

brief discussions with other Twin Cities' community development corporations, it was found that most are involved in preservation of current rental housing stock. A brief foray into the current literature of rental housing design was made to supplement H-MARC's knowledge of multi-family trends. An extensive photographic and exterior survey was conducted and organized into a binder. These photos help to verify current Ramsey County data on rental properties in the neighborhood. The visual survey and in-house GIS (Geographic Information Systems) were used to come to some conclusions about which areas of the neighborhood should be focused on for rental housing preservation or development. The data collected will be used as a resource for H-MARC, HMC, and the Task Force.

Rental Census Results

The following results were compiled from the exterior survey. Verification of the County data records of duplexes, triplexes, commercial/apartments, and apartments was conducted by an exterior survey. Looking at the number of electrical meters and/or mailboxes was helpful in identifying duplexes and triplexes. In some cases, it seems that some duplexes are presently being converted to triplexes. A closer inspection of both the zoning for duplexes and triplexes would be helpful in order to conclude whether properties were zoned correctly for their current use. The neighborhood did not realize the large number of rental properties in its midst. The data on the number of rental properties was collected using Ramsey County data in addition to the information collected during the exterior survey. The present count of 687 rental buildings (which will be discussed further below) is a preliminary number. A number of rental properties were found in addition to the county properties listed, therefore additional data needs to

be gathered in order to get a more accurate count of rental properties. The next phase of the research will address these data clean-up issues.

Forty-two property owners own at least two properties in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood. Together these property owners own a total of 118 properties (see map of Multiple Property Owners). Twenty-six of the forty-two property owners own only two properties. The rest of the property owners own from three to eight properties. Whitaker Buick owns the most properties (eight in total). A more thorough survey of whether the Hamline-Midway landlords own property elsewhere in Saint Paul as well as whether they live near their properties would add further perspective.

Absentee landlords have been an issue in the Hamline-Midway and finding out landlord proximity to their units would add to the information. A landlord survey was begun in this phase of the project and consisted of a series of questions that were of interest to H-MARC. These phone interviews will be continued in the next phase of the research (See rental questionnaire). Any information garnered about landlords is particularly important in a time where a small number of landlords account for the large amount of code violation complaints and are often not fined (See *St. Paul Pioneer Press* series on problem properties December 5-7, 1999). In fact 6,400 or more properties in Saint Paul have failed to comply with housing codes for more than two years (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 5, 1999: 1A). The series in the Pioneer Press discussed the attitude that many landlords have by blaming their property problems on their tenants (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 5, 1999: 6A). While this may be the case in some instances, it is important for landlords and tenants to feel less combative towards each other. H-MARC, HMC, and the task force are interested in providing access, information,

and training for landlords and tenants. Further information about the exact status of rental tenancy would help in this endeavor.

According to the survey, there are 687 rental buildings in the neighborhood. There are 78 apartments, 29 commercial/apartments, 47 double dwellings, 356 duplexes, 1 multi-family (condo), 125 single-family rental property, 40 triplexes, 24 town home units, plus 12 vacant properties (see map of Rental Buildings). Most of the rental properties are single-family homes that were converted into rental properties with fewer large buildings. The home as a multi-family unit is mostly evident with the abundance of duplexes and single-family buildings. The majority of the rental properties are west of Snelling including many of the larger buildings. There is only one high-rise in the neighborhood (777 Hamline) which is owned by the Public Housing Authority and is home to a large number of the seniors Saint Paul wide.

The current rental housing stock in the neighborhood includes mostly brick 2½ story walk-ups with garden level apartments. There are a number of corner stores (some still in use) with apartments on the upper level. The corner store properties help retain the small-scale character of the neighborhood. In some cases, corner stores have been entirely converted to residences. The majority of the larger apartment buildings are located near or on the two main arteries of the neighborhood (Snelling and University Avenues) convenient to major bus routes.

According to Ramsey County data there are twelve vacant lots listed in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood. The vacant lots listed by the County are:

1. 0 Pierce Butler Route
2. 0 Snelling Avenue
3. 0 Taylor
4. 1171 Minnehaha

5. 1235 Thomas
6. 1283 Van Buren
7. 1302 Lafond
8. 1329 Van Buren
9. 1371 Van Buren
10. 1394 Sherburne
11. 1398 Sherburne
12. 1492 Sherburne

Due to the degree to which the neighborhood is built up, future development strategies would be limited. Of foremost importance is the preservation of current rental stock and education about rental tenancy. Those areas that would be conducive to development should be considered in order to expand the number of rental housing units.

Future Strategies

H-MARC and its partners HMC and the Alternatives to Single Family Housing Task Force are unusual in their desire to perhaps increase the number of rental units in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood. Traditionally, rental housing is thought to be the pre-cursor to home ownership. H-MARC and HMC embrace rental housing as a valuable lifestyle. Because rental housing has increasingly been used by empty nesters and seniors, not just young people starting out or low-income people, now is the time to encourage future development. Neighborhood organizations are much more likely to seek a stable rental base through preservation strategies of their current housing stock. The Hamline-Midway neighborhood will most likely begin their rental housing overhaul by looking at preservation strategies, however they are also interested in looking into future development.

One of the strategies used to encourage of rental housing is to first preserve and create a healthy environment for the current rental stock. Education of landlords and tenants is important in creating a healthy working relationship between landlords and

tenants. Education of homeowners and other property owners are also necessary in order to dispel the myths associated with rental properties and rental tenants. However, in cases of problem properties and/or code violations, it is important for neighbors to recognize these problems and have the resources to report them (block clubs are one way to combat problem neighborhoods).

Specific Strategies

Dispel the myths

One method to dispel myths about rental properties and rental tenants is to use current rental education workshops or develop workshops for this neighborhood perhaps in association with SPARL (St. Paul Association of Responsible Landlords) and/or the Saint Paul Tenant's Union.

Financing Options

Generally speaking, the Hamline-Midway neighborhood has a number of things to consider. First, should a property become available are there financing options available to purchase and rehabilitate? It would be necessary to explore local bank possibilities and inquire further into other neighborhood financing tactics. What financial incentives or packages would encourage current landlords to maintain and improve their properties?

Mixed-Use

It would also be beneficial to look into mixed-uses. A rental property next to a community center is a possibility, as are the addition of new commercial/residential properties. Despite the fact that the neighborhood is relatively pedestrian-friendly with a plethora of park space, there is no community center. Should future rental housing

development occur it would be beneficial to the neighborhood to include with it some sort of community space.

Utilize the NEWS system

The data generated on frequent problem areas by the NEWS survey along with the recent rental census data can be used to target additional areas more closely. From the NEWS data collected, plus the data from the exterior survey certain areas can be targeted for preservation and/or future development. A map was generated of potential focus areas using the exterior survey data plus additional information from H-MARC. One future strategy would be to combine the NEWS information of distressed areas overall and target rental properties in those areas.

Corner Stores

The corner stores are a valuable asset to the neighborhood. Many of them have been converted to residential apartments (on the lower levels). It would be beneficial to ascertain the actual structure of the interior of the buildings. A number of the corner stores were not properly converted; some need exterior siding work. Mixed-use buildings may be economically viable for communities, further analysis would need to be done for a specific site. For those buildings with an existing commercial use on the first floor, it might be beneficial to expand the apartment facilities on the upper floor.

The Main Arteries

The main arteries of the neighborhood would be good places to start, especially those tied in with economic development projects. The most prominent of these is Snelling Avenue, a main thoroughfare through the neighborhood and a state highway. Many of the areas with the most police calls are located on Snelling and University

Avenues. Currently, a planning process for Snelling Ave. Redesign is underway lead by HMC staff. After the visioning is completed, the next phase will include detailed design and fundraising. Snelling Ave. redevelopment could stimulate housing redevelopment on and around this vital street.

Please contact H-MARC if interested in learning more about the areas of focus for redevelopment and preservation.

Conclusion

A surprising number of rental housing buildings were found through the research. Hamline-Midway's goal of looking to slightly increasing their rental housing stock is unusual. It is more usual for neighborhood organizations to focus solely on rental preservation. Hamline-Midway's goals are an all-encompassing strategy to encourage a healthy neighborhood. The research I conducted gives a base-line study for the neighborhood. I do have a number of suggestions for continuing the research and the neighborhood process:

- A more thorough examination of the specific properties recommended for preservation should be conducted.
- Financing options and potential real estate ventures should be pursued.
- A larger number of landlords and tenants should be interviewed.
- More members of the community should be included in order to have a better understanding of the desires of the neighborhood. Through tenant interviews and perhaps forming focus groups on the rental housing issues, more community input could be garnered. Members of the present task force have suggested interest in affordable housing, co-housing, and housing for seniors. A more definitive goal will

have to be set in order to move the process forward (as the task force continues to meet and pursue goals this will occur in short order).

- Once more specific goals and specific areas of focus are decided, it would be possible to talk again with contacts on the resource list to ask specific questions regarding rental programs and financing.

The next phase of the research will address these concerns. As Hamline-Midway continues the process of exploring their rental housing options, they will continually have to redefine their goals. With the community planning process behind them, H-MARC, HMC, and The Alternatives to Single Family Housing Task Force will surely make progress and help keep Hamline-Midway a healthy, lovely place to live.

Acknowledgments

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Rodney Johnson, HUD

Jessica Ness, Neighborhood Director of the Bancroft Neighborhood Association

Sherrie Pugh, Community Builder at HUD

Paul Schmidt, SPARL

Stacy Sorenson, NRP

Bernie Waibel, Seward Neighborhood Group

Tom Ruffaner, Seward Neighborhood Group

Tom Sanchez, PED

Bill Sarvela, TCF

Kristin DeGrande, Housing Coordinator, Longfellow Community Council,

Erik Takeshita

Works Cited

Hamline-Midway Community Plan

St. Paul Pioneer Press series on problem properties December 5-7, 1999

Hamline-Midway Neighborhood
Rental Questionnaire

- Owner's Name: _____
Property Address: _____
Home Address: _____
Home Phone: _____
Number of Units: _____
Size of Units:
Efficiency _____
One Bedroom _____
Two Bedroom _____
Three Bedroom _____
Four Bedroom _____
Five+ Bedrooms _____
How long have you owned the property?
How would you describe the condition of the property?
Good Average Poor
Has the property been a rental property the whole time you have owned it?
When did it become a rental property?
Do you live on site?
Who's responsible for property management?
Is there a caretaker or manager of the property?
How long have the current residents lived there?
Is there a high turnover in tenants?
How would you describe your tenants? Student renters? Seniors? Family/Kids?
How much is the monthly rent?
Has the property been vacant for a month or more?
Yes No
How is the property financed?
Do you own any other properties in Hamline-Midway?
Yes No
If yes, how many properties do you own in the neighborhood and where are they located?
Are you aware of HMC?
H-MARC?
Would you like any information?

RENTAL BUILDINGS

687 Rental Buildings



-  APARTMENT 4+ UNITS
-  COMMERCIAL/APARTMENT
-  DOUBLE DWELLING
-  DUPLEX
-  MULTI FAMILY
-  SINGLE FAMILY
-  TRIPLEX
-  VACANT LAND - RESIDENTIAL

78 Apartments 4 +
 29 Comm/Apt
 47 Double Dwellings
 356 Duplexes
 1 Multi-Family
 125 Single-Family
 40 Triplexes
 11 Vacant Properties

Prepared By:
 Katherine Ember
 Source: Ramsey County

Multiple Property Owners



Legend

	A. Hamann		M. And C. Hipp		Two properties: B. Johnson, C. and M. Johnson, V. Chen, D. and P. Rychner, Dokmo Family, Eagle Flight, G. Hagen, H. Fischer, J. Fairbanks, J. Goetzke, J. Letourneau, J. Watkins, J. Wussler, M R Dooley, M. Fitzgerald, M. Mandell, M. Mortimer, M. Swenson, R. Sagstetter, S. Mark, S. Tschida, Security Pacific National Bank, State of MN, T. Jackson, T. Moran, and T. Mussi
	C. and M. Johnson		N. Linnell Trustee		
	F. Crowley		R. Hayne		
	G. Melby		R. Johnson		
	HUD		T. Wang		
	J. Krohn		Trustees of Hamline		
	K. Buzicky		W. Jones		
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