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Responsive Housing Redevelopment Near North Minneapolis

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Project for Pride in Living

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PPL Responsive Housing Redevelopment – Near North

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**PPL Responsive Housing Redevelopment
Near North**

Kirsten Anderson, CURA Research Assistant
May 2012

Executive Summary

This community based research project was intended to

- Gather a baseline of data about neighborhood perception of the Near North neighborhood where PPL buildings are located.
- Gather data on how the rehab of PPL buildings might have impacted the Near North neighborhood.
- Gather data on what neighborhood residents like and don't like in terms of the rehab and their neighborhood.

Data was collected through a series of focus groups with residents and neighbors of PPL Near North building.

Summary of Findings

- Quantitative Survey and Qualitative Focus Group data showed a mostly positive perception of the inside and outside appearance of the PPL buildings (with the qualitative data being even more positive).
- The top three themes mentioned from each of these categories are displayed below. For the complete outline of major themes and supporting quotes, see *Findings*, p.3).

Strengths of PPL Buildings

1. Outside Appearance
2. Interior
3. PPL Staff

Challenges for PPL Buildings

1. Suspicious characters and activities
2. People hanging out
3. PPL signs

Strengths of Neighborhood

1. Community Resources
2. Public Transportation
3. Quiet

Challenges for Neighborhood

1. Police
2. No Activities/Places for Recreation
3. Drugs / Violence / Unsafe

Neighborhood Defined Indicators

Positive and negative indicators discussed were most heavily in the following areas, an ideal Near North neighborhood would encapsulate the best of these. Future research should address determining to what extent the most positive indicators within these areas are present (see *Neighborhood Defined Indicators*, p. 14).

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Crime and Safety | • Appearance | • Activities | • Communication and Awareness |
| • Loitering | • Resources | • Businesses | • Transportation |
| | • Noise | | |

Recommendations

- Future research should include looking at the Neighborhood Defined Indicators.
 - (see Appendix C: Suggested Future Survey Tool)
- Future research should also include an established group of locals to help coordinate and design the research, working in partnership with the community and PPL to determine and achieve mutually beneficial research outcomes.
- PPL should look at improving what they can from what was discovered as challenges for the PPL buildings.
 - PPL signs on buildings being a particularly easy to change and potentially very impactful example.

Introduction to the Project

This community based research project was intended to

- Gather a baseline of data about neighborhood perception of the Near North neighborhood where PPL buildings are located
 - This might eventually show convincing data of an impact of PPL's buildings on the neighborhood.
- Gather data on how the rehab of PPL buildings might have already impacted the Near North neighborhood.
- Gather data on what neighborhood residents like and don't like in terms of the rehab.

Methodology

In order to collect qualitative data about neighborhood perception in Near North Minneapolis, I decided on a mixed methods design. The design was constructed in consultation with Lauren Martin at UROC, and Joan Bennett and Chris Wilson at PPL.

The design included focus groups constructed of residents of each Near North PPL building as well as neighbors surrounding the buildings. Neighbors and residents were placed in different groups, for a total of seven groups (four resident groups and three neighbor groups). Residents and neighbors were recruited door to door for the focus groups, by offering a chance to enter into a neighborhood discussion group and earn a \$15 Target gift card in appreciation for their participation. A survey about neighborhood perception and some simple household characteristics was administered to any interested neighbor or resident who could not attend the focus group. This same survey was administered when each participant arrived for the focus group. The survey for residents was slightly different than the survey for neighbors, but both included the same matrix for rating different aspects of their neighborhood on a five point scale between a positive and negative adjective, with the opportunity to add other sets of adjectives and rate them (see Appendix A for surveys). The focus group protocol was also slightly different for residents and neighbors, but questions had very similar targets (see Appendix B for focus group protocols).

Six youth interns were recruited and funded through a partnership with Emerge, a non-profit in North Minneapolis working to improve employment opportunities, in order to assist with this project. Two interns (Coraey Jones and Ariel Deloney), both living in North Minneapolis, remained committed to this project through the duration. They assisted in each step of the project from data collection through analysis.

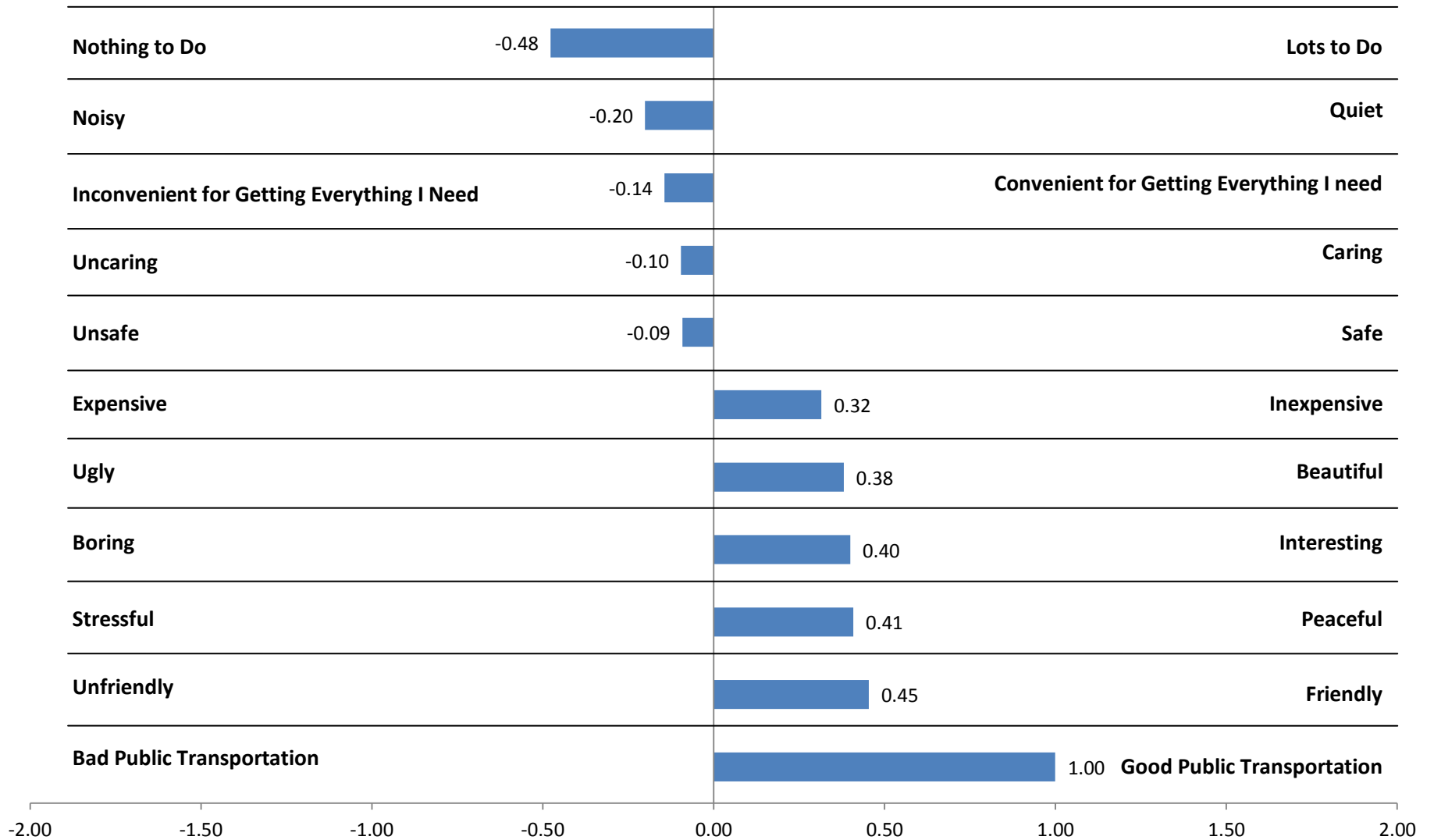
Findings

We did find a wide variety of perceptions of the neighborhood as well as perceptions of the PPL buildings. A good proportion seems to be filtered through individual personality and attitudes, as well as perhaps the role that participants felt the researchers were playing in relation to themselves. Every theme represented in this section was mentioned by at least two groups. They are listed in order of how much they were mentioned, with those themes that came up more frequently being mentioned first.

Neighborhood Perceptions

The graphic display on the following page is a representation of survey data - intended to give a sense of what characteristics of Near North were viewed as most positively and most negatively.

**Figure 1. Near North Neighborhood: Mean Ratings Distance from the Median
(n=28, n for each question varies from 19-22)**



A Deeper Look at the Survey Data

1. Often people did not fill out every question on the survey
2. Friendly was not necessarily seen as a strength, people were often annoyed at people being too friendly, and did not want to make friends with people in the area.
3. Peaceful and stressful were often interpreted as the same as quiet and noisy.
4. Convenience was divided into two different aspects
 - a. the public transportation was convenient and the location was convenient to downtown
 - b. BUT having no stores, businesses, places of work nearby made it inconvenient.
5. Interesting was interpreted two different ways
 - a. The neighborhood was not interesting because there was nothing to do, and it felt unsafe to go around looking for things
 - b. The neighborhood was very interesting because “there’s always something going down.”
6. Feeling safe seemed pretty subjective. Those who had seen several shootings and other criminal activity were likely to say they didn’t feel unsafe, while those who had not seen any kind of violence often noted that they were very scared of it. Seemingly, this has more to do with personality than an objective view of crime or violence.

Strengths of Neighborhood

1. Community Resources

Most frequently mentioned were Northpointe and the Urban League

- “There’s a lot of resources that people probably don’t even know about: Northpointe, Oak Park Community Center, nuns around the corner...Northpointe lets people use their computers...they make things convenient” -Resident
- “You need to connect yourself with good people you can learn from...I learned all that stuff here in Minneapolis. My kids didn’t just go outside, they went to a community center, to the library, to groups, support groups and stuff, they had daycare, PPL had stuff going on...We’d go to lots of group things and you’d just talk and eat, talk about the community, a woman’s support group or domestic violence group. You know stuff like that...And I’ve never really seen a town support people on the street like that.”
–Resident
- “Planned Parenthood is giving out condoms, lots of good stuff for the youth happening around here. There is lots to do around here – computer classes, Northpointe, Urban League, a lot of us are computer illiterate and we need computer skills for getting jobs, there is lots of support, that is a strength.” -Resident

2. Public Transportation

This was very frequently mentioned as the greatest strength of the area, although some complained that you had to take two buses to the store, and that evidently bus drivers had been threatened recently.

- “Cause it’s close to downtown, the buses all run constantly, the 19 is right there you know. It was very convenient, since I don’t drive you know.” –Neighbor
- One resident told the story of being able to go to pick up some money at 3AM when he needed to.

3. Quiet

- “Its quiet here, we don’t have no problems. It’s a quiet neighborhood.” –Resident
- “Its pretty quiet, the guys across the street, they play their music and their motorcycle, that’s all the noise you hear.” -Resident

4. People keep to themselves

- “They don’t bother you, you don’t bother them, on this block everyone stays in their house.” –Resident
- “People mind their own business” -Resident

5. Improved Appearance

- “I think it looks nice, people are repairing stuff. People taking care of their yards and selves.” –Neighbor
- “I mean I would let me three year old run up and down the street without worrying he’s gonna see a crack pipe or something on the ground.” –Neighbor
- “Its looking better, with this building, the new Urban League, its shaping up, they got the new garbage cans, they’re hardly using them, but they painted it up nice. You know new aluminum siding on those housing projects there. So they’re giving it a face lift and its looking pretty good so far. The neighborhood is looking much better.” -Neighbor

6. Safety/Drugs/Crime

- “I do feel pretty safe. My block and about a four to six block radius I feel pretty safe...we’re on the expressway and I think that’s the reason its pretty safe because there probably aren’t any parks where teenagers and troublemakers can hang out.” –Neighbor
- “There’s not a lot that happens here. Just in the building and we got that taken care of.” -Resident
- “Oliver has changed drastically, that’s where they all used to congregate, they all used to be there at that little bend behind where this building is, they’d all congregate there, cars with the music blasting, selling dope and the girls..” –Neighbor
- “Its pretty peaceful here, it’s safe because I know the area well.” -Resident

7. Unity

This idea was mostly one group of residents

- “Unity is the only thing. You can feel, if somebody’s out there and something’s happening they will help you or whatever.” -Resident

Challenges for Neighborhood

1. Police

- “The police isn’t doing what they should – protecting and serving without judgment” –Neighbor
- “He should’ve been caught, they asked me where he went, they should’ve been here. That was on 12th, I walked down to the police station before they came...they did stop me for not having my seat belt on, but when people are getting raped and stuff, it takes them 15 minutes to ask all the questions.”
-Resident
- “And they make you seem like you did it.” –Resident
- “The police are there for show and tell” –Resident
- “They should have more respect for some of the older people. When people ask them a question, they just get smart. You should have more respect than that.” -Neighbor

2. No Activities/Places for Recreation

- “Its not very interesting because there’s not a whole lot in the general area. We have the Hospitality House for children, but you have to be careful around here because of the negative influences around here.” -Neighbor
- “Really there’s no place to go that’s family friendly in the neighborhood, you go to the grocery store and drug store and back home” -Neighbor

- “There are a lot of things to do if you’re older, but they’re not fun, the young mind gets bored.” – Neighbor
- “I put my daughter in the car and take her out of the neighborhood, there’s nothing around here for her to do.” –Resident
- “I would say its kinda boring because there’s nothing there for the kids...You know parents can find something to do for themselves, but when it comes to kids, you gotta really entertain them.” -Neighbor
- “This community should have some nice, decent little parks” -Neighbor

3. No Businesses / Stores

Also there was concern that the stores that do exist are not nice, and not stocking healthy food, and that there are way too many liquor stores.

- “You can go out and get some dope before you can get a loaf of bread”
- “One thing that’s not convenient is there’s not a lot of businesses on this side of town. Its an undesirable area. Dominos told me they won’t even deliver after 5 o clock because its an undesirable area. They wouldn’t even deliver to a woman’s shelter!” –Resident
- “There’s still people that live over here! I mean like we want to have restaurants, wa want to have a nice store we can go to, not go 20 or 30 blocks. What if you have no bus fare, you gonna walk the whole way to Cub? That’s a long way!” -Resident

4. Drugs / Violence / Unsafe

- “With all the violence and shooting, sometimes at night I think what if someone shots in my home? I ain’t doing anything, but look at the people that are getting killed just being in their own home, minding their own business? Maybe step up neighborhood watch or security. Security watches the places they want to, not the places that need it.” –Neighbor
- “Not that I feel like I can’t go out but I have to be more aware about what’s around me when I do go out. In this area was have drug trafficking and we have robberies and violent crime and what not. Before I moved out here I’ve seen a couple shootings...It makes you concerned for your children.”
-Neighbor
- “The gun play is more in effect now. Just like you said it was mostly the drug dealers, but now it’s the young guys out in the street with guns.” –Neighbor
- “I keep my kid within reach, don’t let him run everywhere. I take my kids out of the area to have fun with their friends, be free...I don’t have to worry about someone saying your kid dead. Around here I’m worried, I hear gun shots periodically. My son says, ‘I seen a guy walking down the alley with a gun’...If I want to sit out here on a nice summer night, I gotta scratch my head about it. I don’t know if I gotta duck a bullet or...” –Resident
- “No one that I know over North that I feel like they’re really safe in their home” -Resident

5. Youth

- “I was walking down the street and seven or eight young people decided they wanted to jump me. I was able to get out unscathed. The mind set of the people, some of the young people you know...”
-Neighbor
- “It’s the young guys, from like 16 to 25 I would say...they’re running around with guns and they just don’t care” –Neighbor
- “Ya and [the teenagers] take over, get on the swings, the kids couldn’t get on the swings. They flipped the swings, tore the swings up so the kids couldn’t get on them...” –Neighbor

- “Don’t mean to be prejudiced but groups of guys with saggy pants hanging out, they look at me like I’m a steak.” –Resident
- “Because you don’t know what they’re going to do, its like, they’re trying to think of something to do...you don’t know if they’re standing there because they’re waiting for someone to walk by that they’re going to fight or something...” –Neighbor
- “Its not even about a race issue, its just kids are unpredictable, themselves. You never know what will tick a kid off and what they’ll do.” –Neighbor
- “Parents are afraid to discipline their kids...” –Neighbor
- “They’re high and they’re smoking the blunts. Walking down the street and they’re high and just ready to do something” -Neighbor

6. Lack of Information / Communication

Often people in the groups were telling others about something they didn’t know existed in the community in terms of resources, activities, history, criminal incidences, etc., it was clear that this information was not widely shared.

- “Ya there should be a paper like that, to let you know what they have in the neighborhood.”
-Neighbor
- “That stuff needs to be publicized...if people don’t know, people won’t go searching, its got to be presented.” –Neighbor

7. Reputation

- “My wife does taxes, she can’t get people to go here, they ask if it’s safe.” - Neighbor
- “When I do tell people I live over North everyone’s like, “O my God!”” – PPL building resident

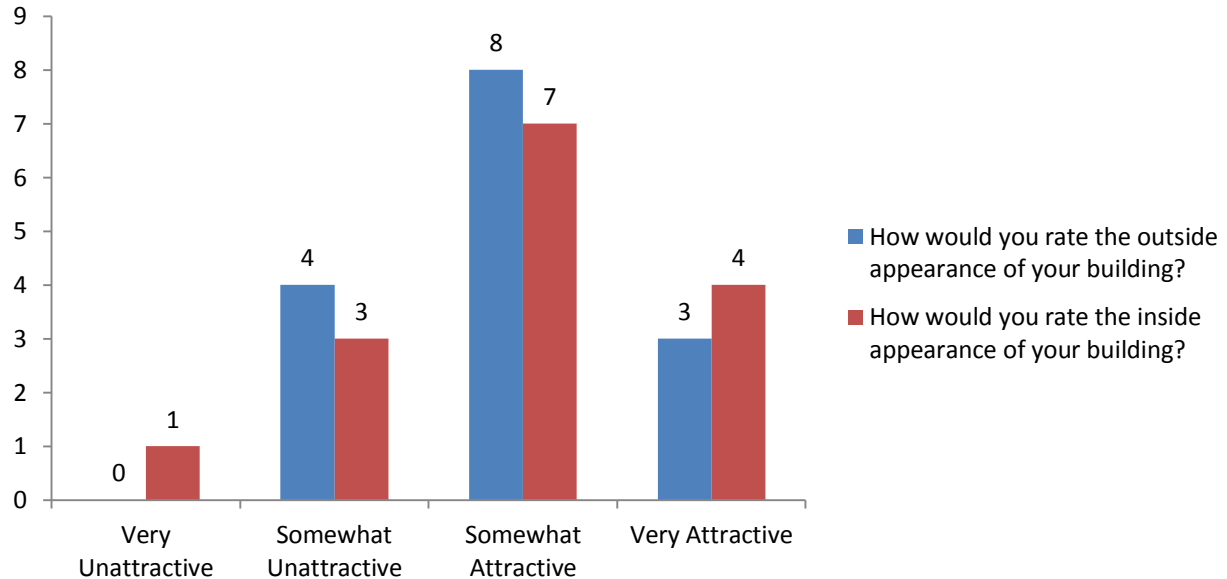
8. Noise

- “I just don’t like this area, all that yelling. I mean this street is off the chain. If its not there, its that house over there.” –Resident
- “In the summer there are lots of noise and parties” –Neighbor
- “And the loud music, its not the homes or apartments, it’s the people coming down the street in their cars.”
-Neighbor

Perceptions of PPL Buildings

The following figure represents survey data gathered about the appearance of the PPL buildings. Groups often contradicted what they had said in their survey in the group discussion, so take these results with a grain of salt. Within group discussion, it was clear that everyone felt the exterior of the buildings since the rehab looked spectacular.

Figure 2. Perceptions of PPL Near North Housing Appearance (n=15)



Strengths of Buildings

1. Outside Appearance

Everyone in the groups agreed that the outside of the PPL buildings looked great since the rehab.

- “This is the street I’m on and this is 100% better to what it looked like on this corner. They all look good, 100% improved.” –Neighbor
- “You can tell whoever owns the property cares, in spite of the area its in, because this is beautifying the block.” –Neighbor
- “They do, they like it. Since they rehabbed it. People across the street before the rehab thought it was the worst building in the world. Now they think its nice.” -Resident
- “Look at it! Look at it, we got a brick patio, its clean, you don’t see litter or trash, they’re well kept, they care about their properties.” -Neighbor

Reasons mentioned were:

a. Colors

- “I like the color tones. The color schemes, I like all of em, they’re like country, like down south...this color tone is like money (1230 Morgan), it looks like somebody got some money up in there. And this one (brick) looks like the brownstones in New York with the red accent. This is perfect, all of them.” – Neighbor

b. Cleaned up

- “It brings the building out, makes it look cleaner... they painted it.” – Resident
- “They threw some more bricks in the wall.” - Resident

c. Structure / Building Elements

- “The roof is coming out far enough so there’s no water damage” –Neighbor
- “Look at the windows, you can tell they’re energy efficient and all that, and that counts.”
-Neighbor
- “It looks like they put some efficiency solar panels up there on the roof, that looks nice. I thought I’d like to have some of those solar panels, saves energy.” –Neighbor
- “The layout, the structure, no damage when storm, pretty sturdy, energy efficient thing going on.” –Resident

d. Landscaping

- “Well the landscaping, usually when spring comes and it gets a little warmer, they’ll start putting flowers in. They always try to keep their grass up, they always seem like they’re mowing, they always have people doing things around here.” -Neighbor

2. Interior

Most agreed it was much improved since the rehab in terms of space, liveability, appearance, etc.

- “This building is like a trip to Vegas, I be proud.” – Resident
- “I had friends that had been in these apartments before the rehab, they come over and they be like, ‘O my God.’” -Resident
- “We’re the first to use the sinks, the toilets, the tubs, everything... ya its real nice, it makes you want to keep it nice.” -Resident

3. PPL Staff

- “PPL stays on it, they handle problems, people fix things.” – Neighbor
- “They have a lot of support and advocates to help people be self sufficient.” – Resident
- “They’re good with notices about what they’re gonna do, when they will enter the unit, I always get proper notice in advance.” –Resident
- “One thing I can say about maintenance is they be on it. If you call maintenance, they don’t like, you don’t call them five times. You have an issue you can probably call them down.” - Resident

4. Residents

a. Improved over the last few years

- “I mean we go to work we come home and the on the weekend, not any wild parties or anything...all my problems are solved, no one’s ringing my door bell at 3 AM spooked...things are calmed down, pretty good.” –Resident
- “I knew people that lived in there when it wasn’t like it is now. I used to come through the back door and I’d get scared, someone there getting high. That’s done, it’s been that way a good five years straight.” –Neighbor
- “They’re doing what they need to now, they put the people out, they’re rehabbing the place, they’re putting stuff together.” –Resident
- “There were drugs being sold out of both of these buildings, and that one too...Now none of that’s going on.” -Neighbor

b. Watch out for each other

- “Anything loud they’ll call the police, and they’ll let you know. A lot of times I go home and they’ll tell me if something isn’t right around my apartment.” –Resident
- “We watch out for each other. Overall in this building people watch out for one another.” -Resident

5. Impact on Neighborhood

All of these quotes came from one group of neighbors, who believed that the appearance of the PPL buildings had had a tangible impact on the surrounding area.

- “It’s a good motivator, these properties are a good motivation for the neighborhood.” -Neighbor
- “I just moved back over here...I have noticed less guys hanging out since last time I lived over here.”
-Neighbor
- [if PPL didn’t own these buildings] “they probably would’ve been torn down or owned by slum lords” -Neighbor
- “I’m not seeing that anymore like I used to. I’m thinking since these properties have straightened out the blocks, the people are getting with the program. You don’t want to see this beautiful place here but then you’ve got all this trash in front of your house, I want my place to look nice too. This was a good thing because everyone gradually wants to get on board.” -Neighbor

6. PPL as an organization

- “PPL has a good foundation.” -Neighbor
- “I have the utmost respect for PPL.” –Resident
- “I love PPL...PPL does what it should.” –Neighbor
- “Sometimes people reject a new building like this, but not this one. Lots of organizations do housing things like this...but PPL is the only one left.” -Neighbor

Challenges for Buildings

1. Interior Issues

- “One thing I noticed about PPL is they take care of the outside better than the inside.” –Resident
 - a. Mice and rats
 - b. Not enough laundry machines
 - c. Air conditioners installed wrong
 - d. Smells bad
 - e. Cigarette butts in basement
 - f. Gaps in doors
 - g. Floors slanted

2. PPL signs

Most groups (not all) had a problem with the signs, gave the residents and buildings some sort of stigma.

- “I don’t know why that’s up there, it makes us look like a facility” – Resident
- “why treat it like a project if it ain’t a project?...it looks like the projects and projects attract bad people. It attracts that type of crowd...That’s the way it makes me feel, like you’re in poverty whether you got a job or not.” -Resident
- “no to me it seems like, because they have the sign saying PPL it makes me think of something temporary” - Neighbor
- “like these are only for ‘certain kinds of people’” -Neighbor

3. Sketchy characters / activities in buildings

- “People getting kicked out left and right for too much traffic, probably drugs” –Resident
- “Everybody in this whole entire building had drug activity going on, everybody.” –Resident

- [Most people acknowledged that recently, PPL had gotten “good people” mostly in the buildings and that things were calming down.]

4. People hanging out

- “I don’t like people hanging out, it just looks bad...ya sitting out in front and drinking or whatever you’re doing. That looks bad, they be in their car, sitting on top of their car and hanging out.” - Neighbor
- “And all those guys that come in off the street when they were having that party...they always harassing me, like I need a man or something, like I want to be talked to.” – Resident
- “I mean I’ve got kids, if they’re gonna jump something off, you know that’s gonna affect my children, they’re gonna hear it. I mean this wasn’t 1,2 in the morning when they just got home from the club, this was 9, 10 o clock.” -Resident

5. Lack of Communication/Action from Staff

- “We need to deal with one issue, the drama. Actually follow through, they keep saying we’re working with her, they need to work harder, the whole follow through” - Resident
- “People took it for granted that they weren’t on site keeping track.” – Resident
- “Instead of continuously getting new things done, they should finish what they started.” - Resident

a. Maintenance (@ only one building)

- Takes forever to get problem sorted out and solved, going through various staff members, takes a lot of work, people dropping the ball.

b. Security

- A few different people saying the cameras don’t actually work for catching criminals.
- “I don’t know but they act like they don’t care... stop falsifying information like we got so much security over here...PPL that’s so unprofessional!” - Resident

c. Turnover

- “The problem with PPL is they change staff too often, by the time you get somebody to work on your problem, there’s somebody new there.” -Resident

6. Other

- Should be flowers / some more landscaping
- Should be something for kids to play on
- Should be more storage space
- Should finish/stain the wood of the deck on 1230
- Respect for building should be posted and enforced:
parking is for residents, don’t cut across grass, etc.

Other Insights

1. Several groups expressed that crime and littering could happen in any neighborhood, anywhere, just more likely to happen in certain areas.
2. Towards Plymouth was seen as where you were more likely to encounter trouble, towards Highway 55 (Olson Memorial) was seen as less problematic.
3. Youth are seen as a big problem in this area, and central to several of the other issues mentioned. They are seen as a threat to younger children, violent, drug addicts, destructive, disrespectful, unpredictable, gun-toting, uncaring, and generally something to be avoided.

- a. We got some suggestions that activities and mentoring should be provided for the youth, but something that would grab their attention, most likely involving money.
 - b. We got another suggestion that PPL help youth with housing as well, because youth also want to have a stable home with their family, but don't necessarily know how to keep an apartment, etc.
 - c. Another suggestion was involving youth in beautifying or landscaping the PPL buildings.
 - d. "If we could get young people to have as much pride in where they live as they do their shoes."
- Neighbor
4. Participants recognized a trade-off – that when there was a grocery store and businesses nearby there was also an open-air drug market in the parking lot. While they wish there was a store still nearby, they are glad that aspect of drugs and crime is gone.
 5. Participants recognized that even if the neighborhood and buildings looked very nice, it was up to the residents to act with respect and take care of the neighborhood and their neighbors.
 - a. "But this is real life. It's not just having a building that PPL has put together. They're beautifying the neighborhood but people got to beautify their mind." - Neighbor
 - b. "It ain't got nothing to do with the property or the building or the plants or anything, the building is well taken care of. PPL comes in to clean up every day, maybe every other day, they clean the outside, they keep it decent for people to live. But the people, that's all... Are they gonna fill up with the same people?...they may need to rehab again..." -Resident
 6. There seemed to be a consensus that if you just keep to yourself, you should be fine.

"I just stay in my apartment I don't want to come out. And who cares anyways, I don't want to be in anyone else's business, people do stuff to other people. I feel like you know, that's how people get hurt, if you get in other peoples' business." - Resident

 - a. PPL residents mostly don't interact with the neighborhood, they "keep to themselves." Several thought this was because they lived in an apartment building though, and thought it would be different if they were in a house.

Neighborhood Defined Indicators

Through group discussion with Near North residents, majority consensus formed around the following indicators of an ideal neighborhood.

1. Crime and Safety

- a. No drug activity
- b. No violence/guns
- c. Police is responsive and respectful

2. Loitering

- a. People do not hang out on the streets or in front yards
- b. Young people especially are occupied elsewhere

3. Appearance

- a. Landscaped yards
- b. No trash
- c. Well maintained buildings
- d. No vacant buildings

4. Resources and Community

- a. Medical support
- b. Social support and connection
- c. Spiritual support, community and guidance
- d. Financial support

5. Noise

- a. No loud noise / quiet neighborhood
- b. Especially no loud parties

6. Activities

- a. Lots of safe and fun activities for children
- b. Lots of safe, fun, meaningful activities for youth
- c. Lots of safe activities for adults

7. Businesses

- a. Ability to buy good, healthy food a reasonable distance from home
- b. Less liquor stores
- c. Inexpensive convenience stores at a reasonable distance from home
- d. Shopping for clothing, other businesses nearby

8. Communication and Awareness

- a. Residents should be aware of crime in area – sexual offenders, incidents, etc.
- b. Residents should be aware of activities and resources in the area.

9. Transportation

- a. Convenient public transportation to downtown, work, shopping, etc.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future research should use the Neighborhood Defined Indicators mentioned above to measure progress and regress in terms that the neighborhood has itself acknowledged as valuable. Appendix C displays a draft survey tool for future research.
2. PPL should have a system for evaluation and research set up that is rooted in the community within the Near North neighborhood. This could go a long way towards PPL's impact and image in the neighborhood.
 - a. Ideally this would be a staff member that is well connected with organizations in the area, and established long term in the position. This person could regularly evaluate how things are in the buildings and within the neighborhood.
 - b. This also ideally would include an established neighborhood council that meets regularly and can give assistance in terms of evaluating neighborhood issues and progress on certain measures. This group could work with CURA researchers in the future.
3. How to get more people present for a whole group:
 - a. Next time have stricter rules about what participation in the group means – be there the entire time to get gift card.
 - b. Tell people to bring a friend/neighbor.
 - c. Provide a higher gift card amount – possibly \$20.

Limitations of the Study

In conducting this research, we ran into several barriers that should be considered when conducting future research.

1. Difficulty of securing participants.

First of all, residents were difficult to recruit before the actual group. Going door to door yielded a few people signing up, but what is needed is a more sustained effort of recruitment coordinating with PPL staff working in the buildings, something that no one seems to have time for. What seemed most effective was going door to door right before the actual group to recruit whoever is in the building.

Secondly, the Near North neighbor groups ended up much smaller than projected. For example, one group had 13 people signed up for the group, eight had confirmed the day before, and one of those showed up at the group (luckily that person brought two friends). While our research team had considered that we would have plenty of people there for that group, we had not counted on so many people not following through on that commitment. This also connects to what I talk about in point three, the lack of trust built within this community provided almost no social incentives for coming to the group, and a \$15 gift card was not enough to bring people.

It was also difficult to make sure that participants were on time to the groups and remained for the entire group time. This threw off the structure and flow of the groups, making them not quite standard focus groups.

2. Not necessarily representative sample:

As in all research, we most likely had a participation bias present in this study. This seemed to play out a little differently in terms of residents and neighbors of the buildings. Both groups were more likely to participate if they were more vested in the community improving. Within the group of building residents, it seemed that those who had more complaints about the building were more likely to attend the groups. This seemed to be an airing session for all of their frustrations living in their building, no matter how small. However, we did get a good balance of people with positive and negative things to say on several different aspects, so this bias was perhaps not as pronounced.

Surprisingly, one resident actually asked if other residents would have the opportunity to fill out the survey. I made the surveys available in her building and the other building I had the key to, and the SSP staff was responsible for making them available in other buildings. Ideally, every stakeholder would have multiple chances to express their voice. Because of limitations on my time, and my position as an outsider in the community and PPL organization, I was not necessarily able to meet this ideal in my research ethics.

With Near North neighbors, we recruited once at each household in the area. Therefore, those who were not home or did not answer their door were not included in our sample. This was probably a large percentage of those living in the area. Something we heard from those who did participate within the PPL buildings was that they were afraid to deal with other people in the area, therefore neighbors who had a similar perception were probably unlikely to answer the door for a stranger. Also, in my neighbor groups, the participants who actually managed to show up for the groups were those who were very much invested in their community already, and were actively thinking about and working for community building and change. This led to some very rich and thoughtful responses, but also meant that the voices of those who were not yet very invested in this way were probably not heard.

Also, we ended up getting no one from the 1119 and 1123 Logan buildings to come to the group, and we ended up with one group of neighbors who already were friends and colleagues. We also ended up with a few people who did not currently live within the Near North defined borders, but did have a lot of knowledge about the area, either from living there in the past or from spending a lot of time there for other reasons.

3. My position as a researcher

I felt that my position as a young, white, University researcher who does not live in Near North and is a recent transplant to Minneapolis with no connections to the people involved in this study, limited my ability to conduct this research. First of all, the trust I was able to build in the course of a few months was minimal, if not non-existent, just by virtue of me being new. Add to that a bad history with University research in North Minneapolis, and a predominantly African-American community, and the trust I was able to build could almost be considered negative. This was probably one contributing factor to the small numbers of people that attended my groups, and also probably limited the amount of honest information I was able to gather. I noticed that race was brought up in very shallow terms and indirect ways several times. It was clear to me that there were more racial issues at play than people were going to share with me, as the only white person in the room. I felt very challenged by this limitation. If I had more trust built up with these people, I would perhaps be able to address some of these issues more directly, but as it was, they had no reason to share these things with me.

4. Surveys

I encountered multiple ways of filling out the survey matrix that I had created. Some people were filling it out as directed, some would refuse to fill out all the questions, others informed me that they rated everything in the middle of the scale, still others would only check boxes next to the adjectives. This raises questions about the reliability of this survey design. My intern even suggested perhaps that just checking boxes for each adjective might work better.

I also encountered the dislike for surveys among neighbors. One told me she did not want to fill out surveys because she didn't like surveys. Others again, did not want to fill out the entire survey, and only felt the need to rate a few sets of words. Only one neighbor added pairs of words to his survey. He had a lot of time on his own to fill out the survey without distraction, so that might be why.

Another issue was the survey data occasionally contradicting the focus group data. This was particularly clear in one group where four out of five people said that the PPL building's exterior was somewhat unattractive, when within the group everyone had agreed that they thought the PPL building's exterior looked good. I can perhaps attribute this to people's perceptions that negative survey data is their only chance to effect change.

Future suggestions for the survey would be that people have a significant amount of time to fill out the matrix survey, and that verbal directions for filling out the survey are given along with the written directions. Perhaps also editing the matrix to include less measures might increase full responses.

5. Not having specific research questions or intended outcomes of research.

This made it very hard to explain what we were doing to my interns or potential participants. I think having a very clear reason why they should participate to better their community would perhaps contribute to participation level as well utilization of the results. The level of effort and investment of resources from multiple parties to conduct effective research of this kind requires buy in from those multiple parties. I would not suggest a reiteration of this project without clear goals for utilization of the information.

6. Neighborhood perception is very subjective.

Different groups and individuals from the same building and same area would have completely different ideas about the strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood. They would have completely different perspectives on similar experiences, symbols, and stories. Some would say they felt unsafe because they just did, others did not feel unsafe even after witnessing several shootings. Some participants had negative things to say about everything, others only positive things to say. Some participants said the PPL sign on buildings made them feel like they were institutionalized, others said it was a symbol they were proud of.

Also, people have chosen to live in the Near North neighborhood are a certain subset of the population that might have a perspective on the area. Ratings at the middle of the scale on each item might indicate more about the people living in Near North than about the area (especially given what I've said above about perceptions varying)

Best Practices of the Study

1. Mixed methods approach.

As I mentioned before, the survey and focus group data were sometimes contradictory. Also, I think that sometimes surveys do lead people into certain responses that don't necessarily express how they would express themselves. I think that having some sort of interviewing or focus group component to this study was essential for pulling out relevant information and tailoring future research efforts to community issues and understandings.

2. Knocking on every door in the area.

Giving every resident near the PPL buildings a chance to participate (in theory) is essential to this research I believe. This could have been attempted several times to be even more ethical about our research design, but in general, I think this was important for the credibility of the research within the community and within the research community.

3. Giving room to discuss what was most important to residents.

Being flexible within the focus groups to ask more probing questions meant that I got much more valuable information than just sticking to my prepared questioning guide. Particularly probing for stories and examples, and probing for meaning of stories that are told.

4. Having research team members from the area, culturally aware of neighborhood.

It was invaluable having my interns more aware of the neighborhood. They were able to probe and ask more questions that I would have never thought of, they were able to bring up neighborhood history and specifics I was not aware of, they were able to recruit focus group participants I believe more effectively, they were able to connect with people in the neighborhood better, and they could give further insight into the information gathered. In the future I would recommend someone from the area (possibly one of my interns) lead this research.

5. Framing as "neighborhood discussion groups."

I think this got people a little more excited and engaged than talking about a "focus group" or "research" being done on the neighborhood. I understand that's a sore spot for people in the area, especially given the history with the University and UROC there.

APPENDIX A: Surveys

Near North Neighborhood Pre Focus Group Survey

How long have you lived in Near North?

1. Less than a year
2. 1 year to less than 2 years
3. 2 years to less than 4 years
4. 4 years to less than 6 years
5. 6 years or more

How long have you lived in your current residence?

1. Less than a year
2. 1 year to less than 2 years
3. 2 years to less than 4 years
4. 4 years to less than 6 years
5. 6 years or more

What ages of people live in your home with you? (check all that apply)

1. 0-2 years
2. 3-12 years
3. 13- 21 years
4. 22 – 59 years
5. 60 + years

Please rate your neighborhood on the following scales: Mark an X where you think your neighborhood is between the two words on each row. If there are any other ideas for pairs of words you can think of, please write them in at the bottom and rate them for your neighborhood as well.

Peaceful						Stressful
Safe						Unsafe
Inexpensive						Expensive
Beautiful						Ugly
Lots to do						Nothing to do
Friendly						Unfriendly
Quiet						Noisy
Interesting						Boring
Caring						Uncaring
Convenient for getting everything I need						Inconvenient for getting everything I need
Good public transportation						Bad public transportation

PPL Building Neighborhood Survey

This survey is confidential; your name or identifying information will not be connected to any of your responses. You have the right to refuse to continue at any time.

Your answers or your agreement to do this survey will not at all affect your relationship with PPL or the services they provide.

Please be honest. This information will help PPL improve what they are doing in the community.

If you do not want to answer a question, you may skip it.

How long have you lived in the Twin Cities?

6. Less than a year
7. 1 year to less than 2 years
8. 2 years to less than 4 years
9. 4 years to less than 6 years
10. 6 years or more

How long have you lived in your current building?

1. Less than a year
2. 1 year to less than 2 years
3. 2 years to less than 4 years
4. 4 years to less than 6 years
5. 6 years or more

Have you lived in a different PPL building?

1. Yes
2. No

What ages of people live in your home with you? (check all that apply)

6. 0-2 years
7. 3-12 years
8. 13- 21 years
9. 22 – 59 years
10. 60 + years

Please rate your **neighborhood** on the following scales:

Mark an X where you think your neighborhood is between the two words on each row.

If there are any other ideas for pairs of words you can think of, please write them in at the bottom and rate them for your neighborhood as well.

Peaceful						Stressful
Safe						Unsafe
Inexpensive						Expensive
Beautiful						Ugly
Lots to do						Nothing to do
Friendly						Unfriendly
Quiet						Noisy
Interesting						Boring
Caring						Uncaring
Convenient for getting everything I need						Inconvenient for getting everything I need
Good for public transportation						Bad for public transportation

How would you rate the **outside appearance of your building?**

Please circle the word you think best describes it.

Very unattractive Somewhat unattractive Somewhat attractive Very attractive

How would you rate the **inside appearance of your building?**

Please circle the word you think best describes it.

Very unattractive Somewhat unattractive Somewhat attractive Very attractive

Comments?

APPENDIX B: Focus Group Protocols

Kirsten Anderson

Near North Neighborhood Focus Group Guide

Participants:

Survey at door (5-10 minutes)

Introduction

So good morning everyone, it's great to meet you all, and thanks again for coming. My name's Kirsten, and I'm work for an organization called Project for Pride in Living, or PPL, and this is _____, who will be my assistant moderator. I'd like to explain a little of what we're doing and how this will go before we get started.

So first of all, we're here to talk about your neighborhood. You are all here because you live within a few blocks of each other and we want to hear what you might have to say about the area. Your answers are going to be used to give us an idea of what you like and don't like about your neighborhood, what you would want to change and not want to change. Please say whatever you're thinking about on the topic. We're here to absorb all of your wisdom, so don't hold back.

That being said, we don't want everyone here to agree all the time, but we do want to hear what everyone has to say. Please feel free to say something without me directly asking you a question. If time is getting short, however, I might have to interrupt you to move on to another question or person, so I apologize now for that.

Also, just so you know, we're recording this group so that we can go back and find exactly what you have said if we don't take notes fast enough. It would be great if you could wait before your neighbor is done talking before you say something, because it's really hard to understand on the tape if more than one person is talking, and it's just hard to have a good conversation that way I think.

Also if you have a cell phone, it would be great if you turned it on silent and left it alone for the next hour and a half. If an emergency comes up, please take the call outside and come back as soon as you can.

We'll be calling everyone by their first name, since you have these handy name tents in front of you, but don't worry, none of your names will be in any of our reports, this group is the only people who will know who you are. That being said, lets all remember that what is said here, stays here. We're all trusting that no one will be indentifying individuals if we talk to our friends and neighbors about what was said here.

So, I think we're ready to find out a little about you all....

Questions:

1. Could you tell us your first name and tell us about a place (besides your home) that you really like in your neighborhood? Probe if not apparent: What do you like about it?	10
2. Ok now let's go through the ratings you filled out on the survey you took in the beginning (Discuss top two high ratings and top two low ratings and new categories added by more than one person)	15
3. Now if you could pick one thing, what do you think is the greatest strength of your neighborhood?	10
4. If you could pick one thing, what is one thing you wish would change about your neighborhood?	10
Ok now I'd like to ask you a little about the PPL building (pictures)	
1. So first, how would you describe the building? Probe: What are a few things you like and a few things you don't like	15
2. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of PPL buildings? Probe: How do you think this neighborhood would be different without this building? Probe: Can you tell me about any interactions you've had (or heard about) with PPL or the buildings? Probe: What one word would you use to describe the building?	15
3. Alright, thank you so much for all of your insight, does anyone have anything important to add to the discussion that they don't think has been stated yet? Probe: what question do you wish I had asked? Probe: what one thing that was said was the most important?	15

Kirsten Anderson

Near North Building Resident Focus Group Guide

Participants:

Survey at door (5-10 minutes)

Introduction

So good morning everyone, it's great to meet you all, and thanks again for coming. My name's Kirsten, and I'm work for Project for Pride in Living, or PPL, and this is ____ who is going to help take notes. I'd like to explain a little of what we're doing and how this will go before we get started.

So first of all, we're here to talk about your neighborhood. You are all here because you live at _____ and we want to hear what you might have to say. Your answers are going to be used to give us an idea of how this building might have affected this neighborhood. Also we want to know what you would want to change and not want to change about the neighborhood. Please say whatever you're thinking about on the topic. We're here to absorb all of your wisdom, so don't hold back.

That being said, we don't want everyone here to agree all the time, but we do want to hear what everyone has to say. Please feel free to say something without me directly asking you a question. If time is getting short, however, I might have to interrupt you to move on to another question or person, so I apologize now for that.

Also, just so you know, we're recording this group so that we can go back and find exactly what you have said if we don't take notes fast enough. It would be great if you could wait before your neighbor is done talking before you say something, because it's really hard to understand on the tape if more than one person is talking, and it's just hard to have a good conversation that way I think.

Also if you have a cell phone, it would be great if you turned it on silent and left it alone for the next hour and a half. If an emergency comes up, please take the call outside and come back as soon as you can.

We'll be calling everyone by their first name, since you have these handy name tents in front of you, but don't worry, none of your names will be in any of our reports, this group is the only people who will know who you are. That being said, let's all remember that what is said here, stays here. We're all trusting that no one will be indentifying individuals if we talk to our friends and neighbors about what was said here.

So, I think we're ready to find out a little about you all....

Questions:

5. Could you tell us your first name and tell us about a place (besides your home) that you really like in your neighborhood? Probe if not apparent: What do you like about it?	10
6. Ok now let's go through the ratings you filled out on the survey you took in the beginning (Discuss top two high ratings and top two low ratings and new categories added by more than one person)	20
7. Now if you could pick one thing, what do you think is the greatest strength of your neighborhood?	10
8. If you could pick one thing, what would you change about your neighborhood?	10
Ok now I'd like to ask you a little about this building (pictures)	
1. How would you describe the building? (physical appearance) Probe: What do you like and not like? Probe: What are your thoughts on the new remodel of the building? Probe: what kind of effect do you think it's had on the area around it, if any? Probe: What would you have done differently with the rehab?	15
2. So first, what do you think this building's place is in this neighborhood? Probe: what kind of relationship does it have with the community here? Probe: Do you feel like you are a part of the community? Why or why not? Probe: Can you tell me about some of the interactions you've had with your neighbors? Probe: How would you like it to be different?	15
3. Alright, thank you so much for all of your insight, does anyone have anything important to add to the discussion that they don't think has been stated yet?	10

Appendix C: Suggested Future Survey Tool

For future research in Near North I suggest choosing a **selection** of questions from this list. Perhaps, for PPL's future research, choose only questions you think PPL might have had an effect on, or the information that you need. I have italicized questions that I think are probably not that relevant to PPL. All questions are on a five point Likert scale, with labels on each end.

I would also suggest asking the survey taker's age (category) AND again the age categories of people living with them.

Crime and Safety

1. How problematic are drugs within your neighborhood?

Not a problem _____ A desperate problem

2. How problematic is violence within your neighborhood?

Not a problem _____ A desperate problem

3. *How responsive are police in your neighborhood?*

Not at all responsive _____ Very Responsive

4. *How respectful are police in your neighborhood?*

Not at all respectful _____ Very Respectful

5. How often do you feel unsafe in your neighborhood?

Never _____ Constantly

6. How often do you worry for your childrens' safety in your neighborhood?

Never _____ Constantly

Loitering

1. How often do you see people "hanging out" outside in your neighborhood?

Never _____ Constantly

Appearance

1. How would you rate the appearance of the houses and structures in your neighborhood?

Horrible _____ Fantastic

2. How would you rate the appearance of the yards in your neighborhood?

Horrible _____ Fantastic

3. How much trash do you see on the ground in your neighborhood?

None _____ Everywhere I look

Resources and Community

1. *How easy is it to get help with medical issues in your neighborhood?*

Very difficult _____ Very easy

2. *How easy is it to get help financially in your neighborhood?*

Very difficult _____ Very easy

3. How easy is it to connect with other like-minded people in your neighborhood?

Very difficult _____ Very easy

Noise

1. How problematic is the noise level in your neighborhood?

Not a problem _____ A desperate problem

Activities

1. How many worthwhile activities are available in your neighborhood for youth?

None _____ Plenty

2. How many worthwhile activities are available in your neighborhood for children?

None _____ Plenty

3. How many worthwhile activities are available in your neighborhood for adults?

None _____ Plenty

Businesses

1. *How available is healthy food in your neighborhood?*

Not at all available _____ Very available

Communication and Awareness

1. How aware do you feel of crime activity in your neighborhood?

Not at all aware _____ Very aware

2. How aware do you feel of resources available in your neighborhood?

Not at all aware _____ Very aware

Transportation

1. *How convenient is public transportation for you in your neighborhood?*

Not at all convenient _____ Very convenient

Overall

1. How much do you enjoy spending time in your neighborhood?

Not at all _____ Very much

Survey Participant Demographics

Table 1. Length of Residence

		Less than a year		1 to less than 2 years		2 to less than 4 years		4 to less than 6 years		6 years or more		Total
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Neighbors	How long have you lived in Near North?	2	18%	0	0%	1	9%	2	18%	6	55%	11
	How long have you lived in your current residence?	3	27%	1	9%	1	9%	1	9%	5	45%	11
Residents	How long have you lived in the Twin Cities?	1	8%	1	8%	0	0%	3	25%	7	58%	12
	How long have you lived in your current building?	4	3%	3	25%	2	17%	1	8%	2	17%	12

Table 2. What ages of people live in your home with you? (check all that apply)

	0-2 Years		3-12 Years		13-21 Years		22-59 Years		60 + Years		Total
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Neighbors	2	18%	7	64%	3	27%	8	73%	3	27%	11
Residents	1	8%	5	42%	2	17%	6	50%	0	0%	12

Appendix E: Presentation/Discussion Information

Interested in being involved with Future Research projects:

- Barbara McCormick – PPL – 612-455-5100
- Josh Tolkan – PPL – Josh.tolkan@ppl-inc.org
- Mary Novak – PPL – Mary.novak@ppl-inc.org
- Sarah Koschinska – PPL
- Sherrie Madden - 612-282-9946
- Jessica Frehse – PPL – Jessica.frehse@ppl-inc.org
- Kayla Dotson – PPL – Kayla.dotson@ppl-inc.org
- Muriel St. Urbain – 612-588-3473
- Jen Chamberlain – PPL – jen.chamberlain@ppl-inc.org
- Chris Wilson – PPL – chris.wilson@ppl-inc.org

Neighborhood Indicators most important for an ideal Near North
(In order of popularity according to group of PPL staff at discussion)

1. Crime and Safety (11)
2. Activities (5)
3. Businesses (4)
4. Appearance (4)
5. Resources and Community (4)
6. Transportation (3)
7. Loitering (2)

Additional items written under each indicator:

Appearance

- Appearance/Living
- No Graffiti
- Houses rented or owned

Crime and Safety

- More Collaboration with officers and community

Resources and community

- Mental health resources / intervention programs

Additional Indicators:

- Natural Amenities
- Affordable

What one thing would I like to see changed in Near North?

- More holding the city accountable for safety
- More mental health intervention services available – mental health is a big barrier for a lot of individuals and families
- Possibly a meet and greet of residents at project for pride in living and the other apartments and homes
- More community organizing and support staff
- Secure playgrounds
- I'd like to see Plymouth turned into a bicycle boulevard! Reduce the traffic and crime
- Community meetings on crime and safety that include police dept participation
- More programs for early education and also teenagers. Make learning fun and engaging so kids understand how they are connected and responsible for neighborhood outcomes. Let them be part of the solution.
- Think about how PPL service staff can be better “connectors” to resources and utilize resident leaders/word of mouth
- I would like for PPL to have community dinners once a month
- Accumulate community resources information and make it accessible in one location