



Our community. Our choice.

July 2022 Cultural Wellness Center • Project for Pride in Living presents

3030 Nicollet Community Connection and Outreach Summary



Our community. Our choice.

The long-standing Wells Fargo branch at 3030 Nicollet Ave South was destroyed in the social unrest following George Floyd's murder. In the fall of 2020, Wells Fargo issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a development partner to rebuild the site.

Project for Pride in Living (PPL) and the Cultural Wellness Center (CWC) responded to the RFP with a proposal rooted in a community-centered redevelopment process—believing this site, which had been so profoundly impacted by near and long-term community trauma, represented a powerful opportunity for this community to forge partnerships in visioning for a better future together. Wells Fargo selected our proposal and the three organizations moved forward in partnership to listen, learn, and develop differently with the community in new and profound ways.

This summary captures a fraction of what was shared during the process as the lessons continue to unfold and the three partners and community continue to shape the future of Nicollet and Lake.

FROM THE BEGINNING...

We believed as important as the question of what will be rebuilt on this site were the questions ***how*** and ***for whom?***

We believed the redevelopment of this site should tangibly benefit and create opportunity for the surrounding community—specifically the traditionally marginalized Black, Indigenous, and Communities of Color (BIPOC) residents living in close proximity to the site and within an approximate one-mile radius.

We believed that the community should have agency and voice in shaping the vision for the site and in their own terms.

We also believed that too often community engagement efforts surrounding real estate development is focused on limiting questions that are not particularly meaningful to community (e.g. “what color” or “what should the building look like”) or disingenuous (i.e. trying to confirm or provide cover for decisions that have already been made).

Instead, the overarching questions we asked the community were ***how do you want this physical development to impact your life*** and ***how do you want to engage with it?***

...AND IN RESULT

Our partnership and the CWC-guided process engaged hundreds of people from traditionally marginalized communities in defining an overall vision that aligns human capital investment with physical development. The process also assisted PPL with designing the first phase of redevelopment on the site: a \$55 million affordable housing development with a new Wells Fargo branch and commercial space for local BIPOC businesses and other community amenities.

Dozens of networked and engaged informal discussions and seven open community sessions, which were all facilitated by the Cultural Wellness Center staff and colleagues, were held through the summer and fall of 2021. The process was grounded in an approach developed by the CWC that centers culture and community assets and is rooted in trusted relationships with community. The CWC brought its experience of over 25 years building an infrastructure for community-owned, cultural solutions to meeting community challenges. The CWC philosophy and strategy for development is one that considers and prioritizes a project's net effect on the lived experience of the people who currently reside nearby and making their well-being a goal of development as much as a bricks and mortar improvement.

Among the unique elements CWC brought to the process included:

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- Using networks of trust and credibility to reach and engage with local BIPOC residents, business owners, and other community stakeholders.
 - Centering culture in the engagement process through the use of local artists, music, performances, and food.
 - Framing engagement around broadly applicable questions of aspiration; and
 - Designing the engagement process as educational and capacity building in both directions (not just extracting one-sided information).

As a result, our process included outstanding, representative participation and dynamic, engaging sessions. This report shares some highlights and take-aways from those sessions and our process. It also documents some of the learnings the partners are continuing to draw from this experience. We invite you to explore with us:

***What happens when we listen, learn and design with human capital,
not just physical spaces in mind.***

A COMMUNITY-CENTERED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT


The Cultural Wellness Center approach is designed and modeled after community-engaged health strategies and is largely rooted in the recognition that lifestyles, behaviors, and the incidence of illness are all shaped by cultural, social, and physical environments. This “ecological” view is consistent with the idea that health inequalities have their roots in larger systemic socioeconomic conditions. CWC starts with the fundamental belief that social and cultural capital are what enable individuals to build the successful web of relationships necessary to understand, address, and overcome barriers that stand in the way of health and wellness—including economic security. Thus, these principles and approach can also be easily applied to economic and community development and be a foundational part of the CWC-guided process at Nicollet and Lake.

The CWC approach to engagement is also a two-way exchange. The intention is to be enriching for community, not extractive. The process for Nicollet and Lake created space to bridge gaps in knowledge, history, and experience across communities. It incorporated contextual history, the role of culture and race, and education about systems and development constraints to anchor residents and community partners (and their respective experiences) to the neighborhood’s history and a vision for the future.

With the end goal of community well-being in mind, framing dramatically different questions with the community during this process elevated several issues and elements of importance:



Understanding culture as a community building asset.



Supporting local entrepreneurship and creating support and opportunities for women-owned and BIPOC businesses specifically.




Creating opportunities for the community to build assets and create wealth.




Recognizing local ownership/control.



Creating opportunities for human capital investment and aligning these investments with economic and physical redevelopment.



Elevating the desire for family and life-cycle housing, providing a range of housing types for people as they progress through different life stages, and affordability from very affordable, smaller units, to more moderately affordable larger units, and, ultimately, to ownership housing.



Creating accessible, usable and inviting public outdoor space (e.g. park and roof) that enhances the quality of life, is programmable and has the ability to serve a range of age groups.

More importantly, the process sought to yield the creation of a **network of community stakeholders** that are **engaged in the determination of community outcomes and benefits**, not just recommendations for the site's redevelopment. Instead, the process required challenging residents to answer: *"What would you like your neighborhood/community/life to be like in ten years?"*

The theme of "Our Community, Our Choice" began to resonate and ripple through each subsequent community session as invested residents shared what the entire neighborhood could become. For example, residents pointed out that they chose East Lake because it was still a hub of opportunity, but that commerce wasn't necessarily accumulating wealth for the diversity of owners. Rather than open leasable space to these entrepreneurs, they noted the lack of resources and property to own were a hinderance not just for the current generation of business owners but also the next. If Black, Indigenous, and People of Color could own their business locations, they could build wealth, learn business operations, and create generational wealth.

Another example redefined notions of public space as being a space "owned by all." Community members said that the freedom of the space stems from the fact that nobody owns it. It's not a public space, it's a "communal space." This definition allows for the aesthetic and the experiences there to be shared and ever-changing to continually promote and protect the diversity of the community through art, music, and celebration.

Building materials were similarly addressed. They noted cold concrete and soulless design actually increased division and tension in the community. Rather, buildings and spaces that are beautiful, awe-inspiring, or simply mindful of a connection to nature help humans to feel more relaxed, happy, and engaged. Even the path of the sun to maximize light during Minnesota's seasons was taken into account in the design.

Grown-ups didn't get all the attention. Community Session Five opened the design process to youth, and not just to listen. They were given posterboard, blocks, markers, and models to create their own architectural designs of the building. Again, the brainstorming opened floodgates of ideas not previously heard but important. The youth, for example, pointed out that courts and fields for sports also need seating, because the community gathering is as (if not more) important than the game.

Throughout this process, releasing all the voices, including the youngest, created authentic and trusted opportunities for elevating and sharing the knowledge of people that has often been marginalized, overlooked, or even silenced during real estate development processes. CWC's guided facilitation specifically created spaces for people to speak their truths. Their collective voice became knowledge, which in turn informed and transformed elements of the overall redevelopment design and vision for the future. A vision that elevates and enables the equality of opportunity for all in the community.

The first phase of the community engagement process is a bold and beautiful structure that seeks to not just fit into the community but to express and reflect it. There will be 110 apartment homes for low-income residents, both at the 30% and 50% AMI level. There will be several condominium properties for sale to BIPOC entrepreneurs, a communal space reserved for the preservation and celebration of the varied cultural heritages, as well as, of course, a Wells Fargo bank branch to cater to the growing needs of a wealth-building community.



PPL is in the process of securing the financing and investment supports needed to get the construction of the 3030 Nicollet project underway in 2023. In the meantime, support has been provided to area BIPOC businesses as PPL has sought to secure owners for the commercial spaces. Efforts are also underway to identify support for the public art and communal spaces envisioned for this project. Lastly, Phase II of the partnership's community engagement will build upon the momentum created last year.



LESSONS LEARNED:

The three partners that came together to reimagine and redevelop this important neighborhood site started with the goal to advance a community-driven development, which would recognize the intersection of multiple interests, communities, experiences, and histories. It required additional care and planning to ensure this goal could be authentically and meaningfully achieved. Each partner played an important role and brought their specific expertise. Our engagement, fronted by the Cultural Wellness Center, surfaced guiding principles for the first and future phases that align physical, economic, human, and social capital to create a sense of place for belonging and thriving.

Elements and strategies of this community engagement and development that were particularly effective include:


- Meaningful framing for the process that focused on impact and importance to the community.
- Creating deliberate formal and informal ways to engage, including open, designated community meetings, 1:1 conversations drawing upon relationships, connections and networks, and actively using existing meetings and other community infrastructure.
- Designing the community meetings to be both educational and information gathering as an enriching two-way exchange on a progression of topics.
- Valuing and respecting participants' input, including compensating for their time.
- Utilizing artists, music, performance and food to enhance the experience and drawing upon the expertise of T. Mychael Rambo and Pollen Studio.

Key process take-aways that the partners will carry forward also include:


- Trust, relationships, and community credibility matters!
- Recognizing the community as knowledge producers and keepers also matters.
- Centering culture through music, food, art, and fellowship and as a jumping off point in the process strengthens trust to have courageous conversations and share experiences about trauma as well as hopes and dreams.
- Incorporating contextual history, the role of culture and race, and education about systems and development constraints enriched conversations.



As real estate and community developers, we have slow down to go fast.




Additional strategy and intention should be paid at the start process to set expectations, ground partners and participants in the framework, and engage in collective stakeholder mapping to advance the process even further.



Deliberately capturing themes and learnings throughout the process and ensuring a clear process for looping back at and in between community sessions to keep the community engaged is paramount.

Additional recommendations for any future community and economic development efforts and/or community investors and policymakers should consider:

Align human and social capital with physical development:




Create a deliberate focus on increasing household/family income of surrounding area. Include project-related and adjacent amenities that help improve health and well-being.



Dedicate 2% of real estate development cost to be directed to human capital investments.

Connect cultural assets and cultural capital to increase economic mobility and opportunity in the community:




Utilize public spaces as “communal spaces” – i.e. use of public art, performances and activity in public space to create, celebrate and validate a sense of community, identity, belonging and well-being.



Support, promote and protect cultural heritage, diversity, and identity of this place, including spaces for local entrepreneurs.

Work to build better neighborhoods with the same neighbors:



Reduce the potential for gentrification when improvements and benefits don't accrue to people who live in an area or involuntarily displace residents.



Recognize and understand systemic racism in policies and practices that influenced/impacted the community and persist.

COMMUNITY SESSIONS

ARTISTS:

Marlena Myles
Bayou Thomas
Hussain Ali
Jordan Hamilton

Pollen Studio

HOST:

T. Mychael Rambo
CWC Cultural Ambassador,
Artist in Residence

SPONSORS:

Cultural Wellness Center
Wells Fargo
Project for Pride in Living
Design by Melo

SESSION THEMES:

- 1) The History & Future of Lake Street
- 2) Community Aspirations
- 3) Strategies & Desired Impacts
- 4) Economics & Economic Impacts
- 5) Design Matters: Public Space & Transportation
- 6) Design Matters: Public Space & Housing
- 7 & 8) Community Presentation

FACILITATION:

Anthony Taylor, Cultural Wellness Center (CWC)

CWC SUPPORT TEAM:

Minkara Tezet, Comfort Dondo, Sister Peace

SESSION ELEMENTS:

- Communal Meal
- Communal dining. Meals are prepared by community-based, culturally connected entrepreneurs. They were able to prepare their choice of meals, and the only requirement was salad prepared from produce from community gardens.
- Culture and performance
- Bi-directional education and capacity building
- Community voice and reflection
- Translation services: Amharic, Oromo, Somali, and Spanish

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - BEFORE LAKE STREET:

The area we now know as Minneapolis has been, and continues to be, home to many indigenous communities. Prior to European settlement, Dakota and Ojibwe people, among others, had lived in and traveled through the area for hundreds or thousands of years. On Lake Bde Maka Ska, a Dakota agricultural community known as Heyate Otunwe existed from 1829 to 1839, and is now commemorated with artwork along the south side of the lake. Throughout this era, indigenous people were pushed away from the land they called home through broken treaties and government-sanctioned aggression. Due to this, many of the remaining stories told about Lake Street are centered on the experience of the immigrants who shaped Lake Street in new ways over the decades.

We are engaged in shaping the stories that will be told by our ancestors, as we breath.

LABOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the legacy of slavery in our region and the enslaved African people whose labor was exploited for generations to help establish the economy of the United States. An estimated 10 million enslaved Africans were forcibly brought to the Americas beginning in the 1500s until 1867. Countless millions of Black people suffered in bondage in the United States until the ratification of 13th Amendment in 1865 abolished slavery and indentured servitude. The end of slavery was followed by a series of discriminatory and repressive laws that created a racial caste system that legitimized anti-Black racism. The gruesome legacy of slavery, and the racist laws and practices that continue to be passed and implemented, impact American culture and our institutions at every level.

We acknowledge the harm that colonialism and white supremacy have brought to these lands, in particular the erasure of both First American and African identities, culture, and contributions via racist laws that segregated all peoples. By recognizing the land that was taken from First Americans and the forced labor that was provided by enslaved Africans and Black people, our communities are acknowledging that we understand that the foundation of our country, the United States of America, and the roots that it created in order to grow and thrive, are based in colonialism, racism, and indignity. It is only by recognition and understanding that these world views were central to our nation's origins that we can hope to correct our path.

MEET THE ARTISTS

We chose a slate of artists to create an enduring aesthetic that have south Minneapolis roots and represent the communities that live, work, and play on lake street. They believe that the role of the artist is often to reflect the unspoken aspirations of the community.



Marlena Myles



Bayou Thomas



Jordan Hamilton



Hussain Ali

THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF LAKE STREET

Artists/Performers:

Daniel Bergin,
Documentary Film Maker, Storyteller,
History Teacher and Senior Producer TPT

Wing Young Huie,
Photographer, Lake Street, USA

Key Themes:

Intergenerational mobility and moving to
opportunity

The ideal by which equality of opportunity is available to any person, allowing their highest aspirations
and goals to be achieved.

History of Lake Street:

Heart of Scandinavian America
Bustling Thoroughfare to Boarded up Businesses to Rebirth

Guests/Presenters:

Minneapolis Council President Andrea Jenkins
Hennepin County Commissioner Angela Conley

COMMUNITY VOICES:

"I was surprised that Lake Street
has always been a place that
people move as new citizens for
hundreds of years. I learned where
my people fit in that history."

- Shevonne Johnson,
South Minneapolis resident

Culture as an asset:

The Indigenous Community on Lake Street
African American Southside
The Latinx Lake Street
Vietnamese, Hmong and Chinese immigrants
Nicollet Ave
The East African Community at Lake and Nicollet





Community Session Two: June 17, 2021

COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Artists/Performers:

Bayou Thomas

Key Themes:

Cultural Assets and Cultural Capital

Aligning Human Capital Investments and cultural assets to increase economic mobility and opportunity in the communities that we live in while supporting social capital.

What goals do you have for yourself?

What aspirations do you have for your children?

What goals do you have for your community?

What do we want our neighborhood to look like in 10 years?

Guests/Presenters:

Dr. Bruce Corrie, Associate Vice President for Government & Community Relations, Professor of Economics

Elder Atum Azzahir, Founder & Executive Director, CWC

COMMUNITY VOICES:

"I have worked on Lake Street organizing and building for over 30 years and we are finally working in a manner that may support solidarity and culture and collective economic growth."

–Juan Linares

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Artists/Performers:

Marlena Myles

Mohamoud Osman Mohamed, Somali Museum of Minnesota

Somali Museum Dance Troupe



Key Themes: “Communal Spaces”

Preserve heritage (both material and immaterial), protect diversity and contribute to the distinctive urban development and identity.

Use public art, performances and activity in public space to create, celebrate, and validate a sense of community, identity, belonging and well-being.

How do you use public space?

What are your favorites public spaces?

Are there ways ‘your’ community uses public space that is unique to your culture?

What makes you feel welcome, unwelcome, uncomfortable?

What activities promote diversity and inclusion?

What activities do you use to build community?

What activities support economic vitality?

What activities support health and well-being?

COMMUNITY VOICES:

“I found myself in a very challenging conversation, with an African-American woman that made me think about what I understand about Black culture and American culture. I now look forward to working together against the real systems that are in the way of our prosperity. We are both African-American.”

– Nebiyu Ashagre, South Minneapolis

ECONOMICS AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Artists/Performers:

Hussain Ali

Command Steppers

Key Themes:

Affordable housing

Home ownership

Financial empowerment

Career readiness and pathways

Working to build better

neighborhoods with the same
neighbors

Building assets of community
versus displacing people



What type of housing does this community need to create opportunity for the people who currently live here?

How do you define home ownership?

How about financial empowerment?

What would owning a home mean for you and your family?

Guests/Presenters:

Malika Billingslea, Project Manager, PPL

Stephanie Brown, Executive Director,
Urban Land Institute

Henry Rucker, Lead Home Ownership and
Financial Coach, PPL

Antonio Cardona, Vice President of Career
Readiness, PPL

COMMUNITY VOICES:

"These sessions helped me realize the ways that our culture influences our relationship with money, the way we do business and why we do business. The way that we raise money, that there is power in cultural practice, but we don't leverage that. I found my voice as a business owner and as a leader in my community."

– Ibrahim DeMaag,
Lake Street Business Owner

COMMUNITY VOICES:

"Our Youth were excited to actually design spaces using the tools they learned and to see those models become real in the architectural drawings. This was empowering!"

-Ukasha Dakane,
Executive Director FRAYEO

DESIGN MATTERS - PUBLIC SPACE AND TRANSPORTATION

Artists/Performers:

Bayou Thomas
Ghana Mbaye, Griot, Drummer, Educator

Key Themes:

Why does design matter?
Design constraints and efficiencies
Design activity

Guests/Presenters:

Damaris Hollingsworth, Principal Architect,
Design by Melo
Obettu Subah, Max Carr, Natalie Wiersma
(Design by Melo)





Community Session Six: August 26, 2021

DESIGN MATTERS - PUBLIC SPACE AND HOUSING

Artists/Performers:

Jordan Hamilton

Key Themes:

How does design achieve specific interactions and support human connection?

How do we design to support different and new family structures

How does housing support economic mobility?

Guests/Presenters:

Damaris Hollingsworth

COMMUNITY VOICES:

"I have lived in the Phillips neighborhood for 20 years, and I have never understood the way that the decisions about what housing is built were decided. I didn't understand why certain designs "felt" better and want to own a home, but I don't want to move out of my community."

- Danette Billups, Phillips West Resident

Community Session Seven & Eight: October 28 & November 11, 2021

COMMUNITY PRESENTATION OF STRATEGIES AND DESIRED IMPACTS

Artists/Performers:

T. Mychael Rambo

Key Themes:

Culture as asset and determinant of development.

A range of housing types with an emphasis on affordability.

Access to active and attractive public space.

Support for community ownership and control.

Support for local entrepreneurship, particularly for businesses owned by BIPOC women.

Opportunities for the community to build assets and wealth and to develop skills and capacity (human capital).

Guests/Presenters:

Damaris Hollingsworth

Design By Melo

COMMUNITY VOICES:

"If we can build spaces that will

support BIPOC and women entrepreneurs, providing the tools for their development as business owners and property owners, we can build generational wealth."

- Comfort Dondo,
Community Advocate

