

Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association Strategic Plan 2019-2021

The Neighborhood

The Lowry Hill East Neighborhood is named after Thomas Lowry, a leader in the development of rapid mass transit who installed the horse-drawn street cars that first ran along the neighborhood in the 1880s. The neighborhood is most often referred to as The Wedge because its boundaries – Lyndale, Hennepin, and Lake – form the shape of a wedge.

The Wedge began as one of the first suburbs for the expanding downtown in the 1880s and 1890s. Many of these original Victorian homes and brownstones still exist as both single and multi-family homes. Renters and homeowners alike cherish the beauty and history of these original buildings – the Lowry Hill East historic district provides a glimpse into the enduring legacy of famed architect T.P. Healy. As in many neighborhoods, some buildings have changed over time; most recently, there has been significant expansion of the residential housing along the business corridors and the Greenway that has enlivened these areas. At the heart of the neighborhood is Mueller Park, named after brothers Robert and Herbert, residents and environmental stewards who served as natural historians of the neighborhood. The park was the result of the dedicated efforts of residents organized through LHENA who moved into the neighborhood in the 1970s to restore the aging, though still beautiful, housing stock and who raised their children alongside college students, artists, and musicians (most famously, The Replacements).

Today, the neighborhood remains a hub for mass transit options, including the Bryant Ave Bicycling Boulevard, the Greenway that runs along the southern border, and the Uptown transit hub. The Wedge is among the most densely populated neighborhoods in the city of Minneapolis with nearly 7,000 residents living inside one square kilometer, and business-lined corridors along its borders. This densely compact built environment makes the neighborhood a magnet for people who value the ability to walk or bike to businesses, schools, the lakes, grocery stores (including the iconic Wedge Co-op, which was started in this neighborhood), medical and veterinary services, restaurants, art institutions, and nightlife. The Wedge continues to be an exciting and dynamic neighborhood at the forefront of progressive urban living.

The Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association

The Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association, or LHENA (pronounced 'Lee-Nah'), is one of the 70 neighborhood organizations recognized in the City of Minneapolis. Its history can be traced back to the 1970s, prior to its official recognition by the City. At that time, neighbors came together to form an organization to build community, host recycling events, and host ice cream socials. As LHENA was the hub of neighborhood activity, it even started one of the city's first neighborhood newspapers. *The Wedge* was a multi-page newspaper fielding advertisements from local businesses and stories from volunteer writers. The success of this paper and the founding of a neighborhood association inspired the creation of many others in the city. Though the last paper was published in 2012, LHENA continues to evolve in the age of social media and is still the center of neighborhood news and activities.

Today, all residents, property owners, and business owners in Lowry Hill East are considered LHENA members and can take part in official association acts such as board member elections and committee votes. Lead by a volunteer board of 11 members, the association helps communicate goings-on around the neighborhood and city, provides resources to members, facilitates civic forums, and assists members in championing projects. A majority of the work occurs in dedicated committees where members brainstorm, design, and execute initiatives.

As funding and requests of LHENA have changed, so too have the foci of the organization. In the 1990s and early 2000s, LHENA developed Neighborhood Revitalization Program priorities, and throughout the 2010s, it created Community Participation Program priority plans, which were approved by the members and the City. Through both of these programs, LHENA has received City funding to carry out these plans. As LHENA professionalizes and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of these previous plans and processes, the 2018-2019 LHENA board decided to undergo a strategic planning process that will allow the board and staff to carry on neighborhood activities through the end of 2021.

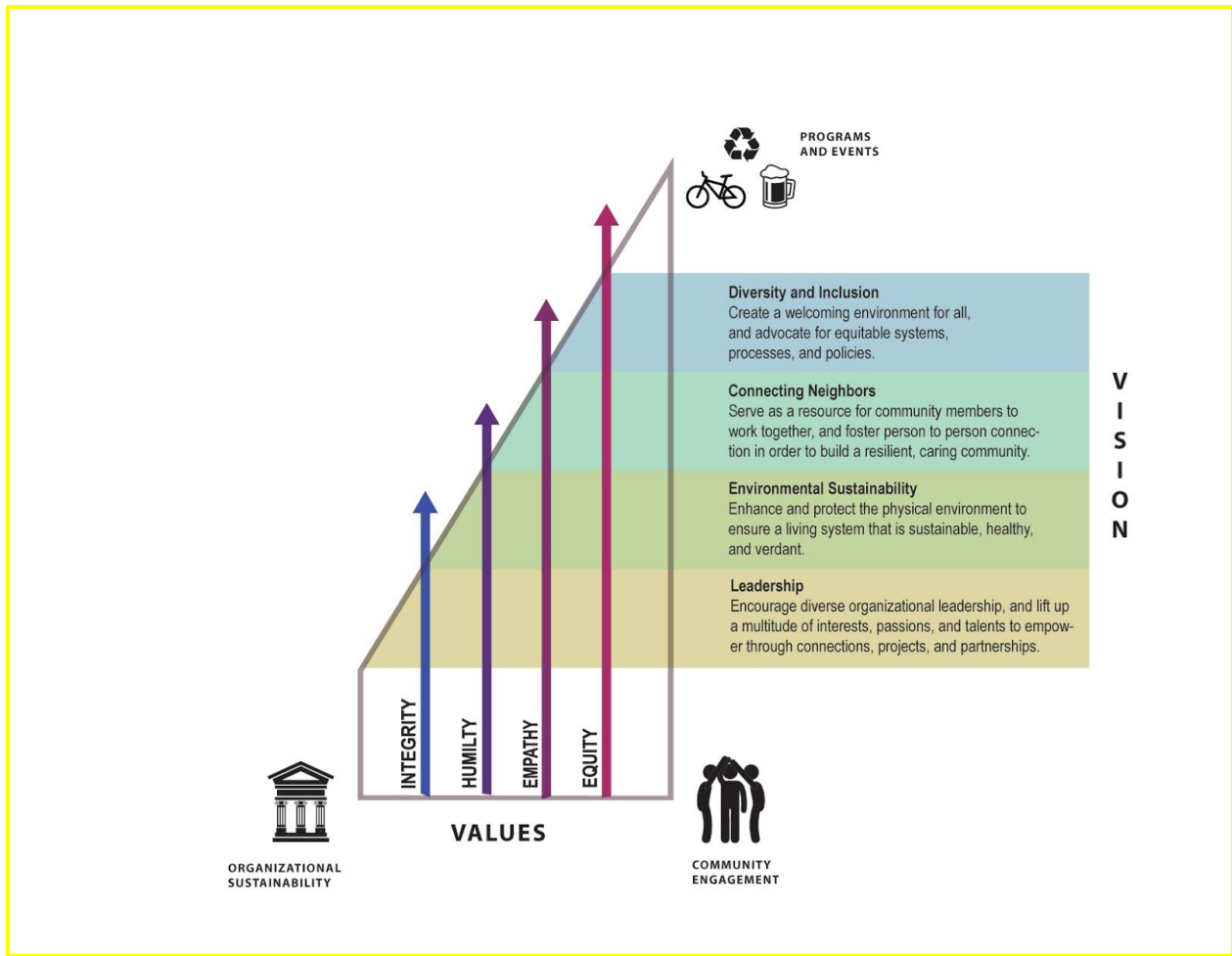


Strategic Plan Development

The 2018-2019 board started its term with a drive to develop into a more structured non-profit to best serve the neighborhood. One tool we wished to add to the toolbox was a strategic plan to guide our work, something LHENA had never before developed. Given that it was our first strategic plan, we purposely scaled our plans according to the time and volunteer hours available.

In October 2018, LHENA hosted a “Theory of Change” professional development process with the guidance of the Conflict Resolution Center. Community members and LHENA board and staff came together during four evenings to engage in intimate conversations and share individual values and hopes for the future of the neighborhood. The group went on to identify overarching goals and actions, which provided the framework for the strategic plan’s vision. This strategic plan has been guided throughout by this vision (as represented below in our Theory of Change matrix).

Advancing on the Theory of Change work, the board selected a small task force to lead a strategic planning process. In December, the task force established a process schedule and expectations that were approved by the board. The engagement process began in January 2019 with a neighborhood survey that was advertised by mailed postcard and digital media. Additional input was gathered at committee and board meetings as well as a workshop dedicated to community member feedback. The task force processed all input and found common themes to create the first strategic plan draft. At the February board meeting, the board reviewed the updated mission and vision to guide further strategy development. Next, LHENA members were invited to provide feedback on the draft via an online survey and a dedicated workshop. Taking this second round of input, the task force processed and incorporated the feedback into a final, cohesive plan. The final draft was submitted to the board for approval in March and presented to the community at the April 2019 Annual Meeting. In 2021 the board determined to extend the strategic plan with slight modifications.



Our Vision

Mission:

LHENA's mission is to provide a structure for neighborhood leadership and participation, facilitate the equitable sharing of resources, and advance a vision for the neighborhood.

Vision:

LHENA promotes a sense of belonging in the neighborhood. We continue to lead the City in adopting ideas and launching member-driven initiatives that push our community forward on the following:

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Create a welcoming environment for all, and advocate for equitable systems, processes, and policies.
- **Connecting Neighbors:** Serve as a resource for community members to work together, and foster person to person connection in order to build a resilient, caring community.

- **Environmental Sustainability:** Enhance and protect the physical environment to ensure a living system that is sustainable, healthy, and verdant.
- **Leadership:** Encourage diverse organizational leadership, and lift up a multitude of interests, passions, and talents to empower through connections, projects, and partnerships.

Our vision is the lens through which we will implement all of our strategies.

LHENA Strategies for 2019-2021

-Projects & Programs
-Community Engagement

-Organizational Sustainability
-Flexibility

Projects & Programs. We will be a support system for community-driven projects and programs that positively impact our neighborhood.

1. **Support**
 - Develop an event/program structure and communications template for member-driven initiatives.
2. **Advancement**
 - Inspire member-driven leadership for new community ideas and initiatives (*found at the bottom of the document*).
3. **Messaging**
 - Develop consistent communications regarding ways to participate.
 - Create communication tools to advertise the Request for Funding program.
4. **Mutual Aid**
 - Provide ongoing support to residents and businesses in need and those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest.

Community Engagement. We will provide everyone in the Wedge community opportunities to meaningfully engage and play active roles in the stewardship of the neighborhood.

1. **Accessibility**
 - Assess need for multi-language communications.
 - Refine and expand how people can plug into LHENA.
 - Improve all kinds of diversity in active membership and input.
 - Design specific outreach to engage businesses, new residents, and unheard groups.
2. **Partnerships**
 - Enhance new and current partnerships within and beyond our neighborhood: neighborhood organizations, not-for-profits, neighborhood businesses, educational institutions, City of Minneapolis, Ward 10 office.
 - Explore and foster mentorship opportunities to develop more neighborhood leaders.

3. **Increase Organization Visibility**

- Recruit volunteers and partners through multiple methods: canvassing, social and educational events, varied event times and places, expanded media platforms, and effective messaging.
- Promote social enrichment forums: education, arts, history, and entertainment.
- Develop community beyond neighborhood boundaries.

Organizational Sustainability. We will seek to improve the health and sustainability of the organization's structure and operations.

1. **Financial**

- Plan and pursue a path to financial sustainability, which may include seeking grants, participating in socially responsible investing, engaging donors, seeking advertising, and pursuing more fundraising opportunities.

2. **Leadership Development**

- Develop and institutionalize standard trainings for board members, committee chairs, and project leads.
- Equip LHENA leaders with tools to encourage civil dialogue in LHENA meetings and activities.
- Prioritize participation and representation in the board, committees, and projects for traditionally marginalized peoples.

3. **Relationship Management**

- Implement chosen software platform to assist in member and volunteer contact management and recruitment; assess after six months.
- Assess current grievance policy and examine routes such as conflict mapping or restorative justice models for further conflict resolution refinement.

4. **Defining Membership**

- Define how Jefferson Community School families and teachers, and other people who work in the neighborhood - who currently are not members as defined in our by-laws - can participate in LHENA.

Flexibility. As needs arise, we reserve the ability for the board to develop and approve new strategies that fit within the mission and vision. Development of new strategies must include robust community engagement.

Appendix. The Strategic Plan task force synthesized data and member feedback to create a cohesive plan that reflects the priorities of the community. To review the input we received to shape this plan, go to thewedge.org/appendix