

Linden Hills Small Area Plan

Survey Result Summary

The following includes short summaries of the responses to the survey conducted in February 2013. Following many of the question summaries are additional highlighted insights gleaned through connecting the common themes in the survey responses. At the end of the document there is an overall summary of these insights. All of the survey responses can be found on the project webpage or by clicking [here](#).

QUESTION 1: *What three words best describe Linden Hills today?* Of the 976 responses (3 responses per survey), a majority (83%) responded using words to describe a healthy, happy, tight-knit community. The results were mainly positive descriptors. Neighborhood (86), quaint (81) and Friendly (59) make up the top three results.

Other common responses to the question “*what three words best describe Linden Hills today?*” include:

- *Community*
- *Neighborhood*
- *Friendly*
- *Walkable*
- *Unique*
- *Family Oriented*
- *Charming*
- *Safe*
- *Small*
- *Progressive*
- *Environmentally Conscious*
- *Thriving*
- *Upscale*
- *Attractive*

QUESTION 2: *What three words do you want to best describe Linden Hills 20 years from now?* Of the 926 responses, many used the same descriptors as for question 1 (Linden Hills today). Community (57), Neighborhood (56) and Friendly (50) make up the top three results. The most common additional terms used to describe Linden Hills in the future include diverse (35), sustainable (32) and affordable (19).

Other common responses to the question “*what three words do you want to describe Linden Hills 20 years from now?*” include:

- *Community*
- *Neighborhood*
- *Friendly*
- *Walkable*
- *Unique*
- *Vibrant*
- *Family oriented*
- *Quaint*
- *Safe*
- *Progressive*
- *Sustainable*
- *Charming*
- *Accessible*
- *Diverse*

Insights (Questions #1 and 2): *The responses to questions one and two are close mirrors of each other, which would indicate that the majority of respondents would like to retain the current essence of Linden Hills going forward for the next 20 years.*

Analyzing these responses through a lens of all the responses to the questions reveals some differences in the responses and issues going forward. There seems to be a strong current of wanting Linden Hills to be more diverse. “Diverse” was more prevalent in responses about the future. In responses to later questions this is further expressed as both racially and ethnically, but also financially. It also comes up in comments about housing stock options.

Another issue that was identified is based on the use of the word “upscale” in responses about Linden Hills today and the word “affordable” in the describing Linden Hills in the future. There is common theme throughout the responses to all questions about a concern that the area is becoming less affordable and that it is trending toward becoming too “upscale” or expensive for residents to live in or shop in.

“Sustainable” received several responses in describing Linden Hills in the future. There is a common thread throughout the responses about sustainability and in particular addressing green space, energy consumption/generation and alternative forms of transportation.

QUESTION 3: *What do you like most about Linden Hills?* Respondents continued on the theme of tight-knit community in this category, many describing in more detail the specific terms used in the first two questions. The overall feel was one of an open minded, friendly neighborhood that can thrive thanks to local businesses that serve resident's needs and a safe, walkable environment.

Other comments on what residents like most about Linden Hills include:

- Walkable and safe neighborhood.
- A friendly small town feel, with local businesses in a big urban city.
- Very family friendly amenities including parks, lakefront, high quality schools and the downtown village.
- Open minded, liberal and unique neighborhood that includes everything to enjoy life.
- Conscientious, diverse and environmentally aware residents.
- Cultural, recreational, engagement and social opportunities abound.
- Unique combination of small ventures, with friendly, community minded proprietors.
- Great neighborhood events, such as; farmers market, free concerts, Winter fest, and the Spring Festival

QUESTION 4: *What do you like least about Linden Hills?* Airplane noise, high taxes, a lack of diversity and unappealing demolition/remodeling were all common responses here, along with over 30% of responses being “nothing.”

Other common responses to the question “*what do you like least about Linden Hills?*” include:

- Nothing
- Airplane noise
- Anti-growth and the desire to freeze time.
- High and rising taxes
- Lack of racial and socioeconomic diversity
- Demolition of historic cottages
- Traffic and parking issues
- City Service issues
- No grocery store
- Not enough diversity in housing (socioeconomic and multigenerational)
- Traffic circle
- Strip mall architecture in business district

Insights (Questions #3 and 4): *At the core of the responses seems to be a theme of connectivity- the connectivity of the residents to each other and to the places in Linden Hills. While much of this is a product of the people, organizations and residents of Linden Hills, the built environment contributes directly to this connectivity. The lake and park amenities, the commercial nodes and the mix businesses that serve the community provide destinations to walk to. The businesses themselves and business areas become a central connecting point and the fact that it is all walkable increases opportunity of interactions with neighbors that a car dependent area cannot offer.*

The prevalence of the response about the lack of a grocery store identifies an interesting issue. The move of the co-op from the 43rd & Upton node to the 44th & France node reveals the challenge of connecting

the business nodes of Linden Hills. The move also disrupted a traditional pattern t 43rd & Upton of walkable access to goods that many respondents desire and enjoyed in the community. It also reveals the impacts of how people feel connected to specific business nodes.

Traffic and parking was also identified as issues that require attention and likely engulf a couple themes. A theme may be that it is hard to go to and through the businesses nodes and once there, it is hard to find a spot to park. It also identifies concerns about the impact of the externalities of the successful business nodes on the surrounding residential areas and it can also mean safety issues or concerns about impacts to the walkability of the area, which were so common in the responses about what people liked about the community. This will be explored with the community in more depth throughout the small area plan process.

The responses surrounding “anti-growth” themes were on both sides of the issue and reflect in part the differences in opinion regarding prior development proposals. The small area plan process will explore growth and development intensity as well as building design to find more common ground on this issue.

QUESTION 5: *What are your three special places within Linden Hills?* Downtown and outdoor spaces make up 82% of the respondents special places. Specifically Lake Harriet (143), 43rd & Upton business district (122), and Linden Hills Park (110) received the most mentions. Many responses also dealt with personal yards, neighbor’s yards and porches, and a resident’s specific neighborhood block

Other common responses to the question “*what are your three special places within Linden Hills?*” include:

- Lake Harriet
- 43rd & Upton
- Park
- Library
- Bookstore (Wild Rumpus)
- Band shell @ Lake Harriet
- Sebastian Joes
- Linden Hills Co-op
- Great Harvest Bakery
- Dunn Brothers

Participants were asked “*What makes each of these places in Linden Hills special?*” Other common responses include:

- Each space supports the neighborhood and community feeling
- The special places are welcoming, active and unique to Linden Hills
- Walkable and friendly neighborhood defining spaces
- Bird sanctuary is one of two in Minneapolis, making it very unique
- St Thomas parking lot has a view of downtown and you can watch approaching weather

- The business district in Linden Hills is proportional, meaning each place and space complement each other to create a comfortable and opening atmosphere
- Residents often cite memories associated with the neighborhood, and how the historical nature of some of the spaces holds those memories in tact

Insights (Question #5): *It was not surprising that the park amenities and Lake Harriet were identified as special places. Nor was it very surprising that respondents revealed more intimate locations such as yards, porches and blocks. What was interesting was the rate of responses about specific businesses. Several of the most frequently named are listed above and a significant number of other businesses were named and can be found in the raw responses. The reasons that these businesses and places were special are summarized well by the top three most common responses listed above. The commonalities revolve around the ability to walk to the places, interact with business owners and informally gather and interact with neighbors. These interactions reinforce the feeling of connectivity in a community and strongly relate back to what people cherish about the community.*

QUESTION 6: *What do you think is missing from Linden Hills?* A grocery and/or convenience store gained (81) responses, at 23% of the feedback. A casual pub and casual family friendly dining as well as added diversity in the community were the next two most popular answers.

Other common responses to “*what do you think is missing from Linden Hills?*” include:

- Grocery store
- Convenience store
- Casual dining
- Housing options
- A pub or neighborhood bar
- Diversity
- Connecting the business nodes/making streets more walkable
- Parking
- More public gathering places in business areas

Insights (Question #6): *The top responses about businesses reinforce the issues highlighted above about meeting resident’s needs, connectivity of the nodes, and concerns about businesses becoming too high end or upscale to serve the community.*

The desire for a pub or neighborhood bar also reinforces this need and is interesting as many felt that it was prohibited specifically in Linden Hills. There is no liquor ordinance specifically for Linden Hills. The ordinance requirements are the same for all of the surrounding area of Minneapolis.

The responses regarding more diversity in both race/ethnicity and incomes and more and better parking are becoming some additional common threads throughout the responses.

Housing and options for housing at various price points and types of housing (specifically multi-family housing) received a large share of responses. Affordable housing was frequent among these, but was not defined further and could mean housing options defined by institutional definitions of affordable to people who make less than the median area income. In this case it could also mean a less institutionalized definition and just reflect general concerns about the cost of renting or buying in the community and wanting options in various price points. Housing for the aging population was also frequently stated in the responses.

There was a theme of better connecting the business nodes and amenities like Lake Harriet using both existing streets and the former trolley right-of-way. Making the area more walkable and bikeable was also evident in responses about improving the streetscape with more greening and providing better bike parking and space within the roadways.

QUESTION 7: *If you could change one thing about Linden Hills, what would it be?* Respondents mentioned their previous responses as what they think should change about Linden Hills with a heavy focus on types of businesses , as well as listing off a mix of the following needs for the neighborhood.

Other common responses to “*if you could change one thing about Linden Hills, what would it be?*” include:

- Better city maintenance
- More diverse housing options
- Sidewalk shoveling mandate
- Buried power lines
- Improve alternatives to using a car
- More and better parking
- Connect trolley-way to public transit
- Allow more density/ new development at context appropriate scales
- Be known as a model sustainable community
- Reduce airport noise
- Reduce speed on Sheridan Avenue

Insights (Question #7): *The responses further reinforce previously identified themes. There were two themes of responses that further refine issues. There were several responses that could be best grouped together as wanting new development that is context appropriate to the area and just about an equal amount of responses that thought density was missing.*

Another grouping of responses focuses on providing more alternatives to using cars for transportation in the neighborhood.

QUESTION 8: *What things in Linden Hills should not change?* The feeling, more specifically defined as the small-town feel was the most prevalent response. The neighborhood scale and character of the 43rd and Upton business district, the independent businesses, and the walkable convenience were the next most prevalent responses.

Other common responses to the question “*what things in Linden Hills should not change?*” include:

- 43rd & Upton
- Community involvement
- Park system, green space and tree lined streets
- Civic pride
- Convenience
- Walkability
- Historic charm

Insights (Question #8): *The combination of the comments about the small-town feel, the independent businesses and the character of the area all relate to a theme identified above as connectivity. One response summarized this well and state that what should not change is how “the business nodes function as community gathering spaces.” The character or feel is driven, in part, by the connections residents feel with the businesses as they see and know the owners, the connections with neighbors that are reinforced by the casual encounter and informal and planned meetings at various businesses throughout the area.*

In maintaining the neighborhood scale, which was the second most frequent comment, were several comments stating concerns about commercial nodes losing their scale and becoming like other nearby commercial nodes such as 50th and France and Excelsior and Grand, which have more large scale developments.

QUESTION 9: *What is the most common way to travel within Linden Hills during the cold season?*

- Drive (57.4%)
- Walk (38.7%)
- Bus (.9%)
- Bike (.3%)
- Other (2.7%)

Other responses include the use of a mixture of biking/bussing/walking/driving as well as the use of scooters or mopeds.

QUESTION 10: *What is the most common way to travel within Linden Hills during the warm season?*

- Walk (72.3%)
- Bike (19%)

- Drive (6.8%)
- Other(1.8%)

Other responses include the use of a mixture of biking/bussing/walking/driving as well as the use of scooters or mopeds.

QUESTION 11: *Describe a particular idea or issue you want the Small Area Plan to address.* Retaining the overall atmosphere in Linden Hills throughout the possible future development is an important factor to many respondents. Keeping the businesses local and independent, the business district density tight, and the proportional scale of the buildings were the most common responses.

Additional responses focused on:

- Retain independent character
- Increase the diversity of housing
- Add a neighborhood grocer
- Guarantee the core mix of utility businesses remains
- Preserve the local scale of the neighborhood
- Connect to city public transit
- Support more intensive maintenance of existing features

Insights (Question #11): *The responses provided more emphasis on previously identified themes. These major themes are highlighted below.*

Highlighted common themes in survey responses

- The character, feel and identity of Linden Hills expressed by the respondents to the survey are significantly tied to being connected to other residents and the businesses. The businesses often provide the locations, services, goods that provide reason for either for formal and informal gatherings or bumping into neighbors.
- Working to define the scale and character of the community and foster that in new development could help the community realize some of its desires with regard to providing housing options and allow the community to have a more shared understanding and expectation for future changes.
- There is a strong desire for increasing diversity in the community
- There is common desire in maintaining and providing affordability in the housing stock.
- Providing life-cycle housing options that helps diversify the housing stock is important
- Efforts to connect the commercial nodes need to be explored.
- Desire for the community to become more sustainable.
- Parking and traffic present challenges that need significant attention.