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## **Stevens Square Community Organization (SSCO) Neighborhood Revitalization Program Phase 2 Action Plan**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The SSCO NRP Phase 2 Action Plan represents the hopes, desires and aspirations of the residents of our neighborhood. The plan is the product of many volunteers and countless hours.

The hallmark of the SSCO NRP process has been extensive neighborhood participation and involvement. From the beginning of the process, neighborhood ownership of the plan was the major goal of the SSCO NRP Phase 2 Planning Committee. Every effort has been made to be as inclusive as possible through an open and extensive meeting and survey process.

### **II. NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE**

The Stevens Square-Loring Heights community is a unique urban neighborhood bounded on the east by Interstate 35W, to the west by Lyndale Avenue, to the north by Interstate 94, and to the south by Franklin Avenue. Stevens Square Park is the community's center, both geographically and socially. Surrounding the park are several blocks of three story, red-brick apartment buildings dating from the first quarter of this century. Many of these structures are included in the Stevens Square Heritage Preservation District.

Stevens Square-Loring Heights has a very diverse, urban demographic makeup consisting of a population of approximately 3,950 (2000 Census). It is one of the most densely populated areas in the Twin Cities. The largest population group (55% of the total) is made up of young people, often single, ages 20 to 34, who work both downtown and in the suburbs, or who are students at the Minneapolis College of Art & Design or the University of Minnesota, among other schools. The neighborhood's proximity to MCAD, the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the Walker Art Center makes the neighborhood attractive to artists. Being a mobile population, many in these groups tend to live in the area for a short period of time.

The past decade has seen a 72% decline in the number of neighborhood residents over 60 years of age. Only 7% of households have children under 18 years of age, partly due to the large number of one-bedroom and efficiency apartments in the neighborhood. About 93% of the housing units in the neighborhood are rental.

African Americans make up about 17% of the population, whites about 66%. About 12% of residents identify themselves as Hispanic, up from 3% ten years ago. There has been an influx of East African immigrants, especially Somalis, to the neighborhood over the past few years, but good census information on the actual numbers is not available. Many of these immigrants live in the two Minneapolis Public Housing Authority high-rise buildings in the neighborhood.

Income information for the census tract incorporating the Stevens Square area of the neighborhood (east of Nicollet Avenue, with a population of about 2,875) shows a significant number of residents struggling economically. 25% of these residents live below the poverty level and 62% of households earn less than 50% of the Metro median income. 44% of residents are members of minority groups.

The Loring Heights area (west of LaSalle Avenue) differs from the Stevens Square part of the neighborhood in several ways. First, it is not as densely populated: the predominant architectural structures are single family homes, duplexes, townhomes, and mansions. Second, Loring Heights is home to several of the neighborhood's community based residential treatment facilities. Many professionals also make Loring Heights their base.

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The commercial center of the neighborhood is located on Nicollet Avenue, where several restaurants, social service agencies and schools, and retail merchants operate. Minor commercial hubs include Franklin Avenue and the Clinton Avenue strip mall. Major institutions in Stevens Square-Loring Heights include: Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis Age and Opportunity Center, African American Family Services, Abbott Northwestern Hospital, Minnesota Church Center, City of Lakes Transitional Care Center, Abraham Lincoln Middle School and the Loring Nicollet Community Center. The Stevens Square Community Organization is the primary citizens group active in the community.

Because of the densely-built nature of the neighborhood, green space is at a premium. In addition to Stevens Square Park, green spaces include LaSalle Community Garden, Emily Peake Memorial Garden, Gardeners Park, and the Stevens Square Greenway & Overlook which runs along I-94 between Third and LaSalle Avenues. These spaces are on both public and private land, and are maintained by neighborhood residents.

Serious crime (homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, auto theft, arson), although still a problem, continues to decline in the neighborhood, due to an effective partnership between neighborhood volunteers and law enforcement. Livability crimes (such as drug dealing, prostitution, loitering, panhandling, and graffiti) continue to be a problem and a focus of prevention and enforcement efforts. Trash and litter in the streets and alleys is another concern of residents.

### **III. NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY**

Stevens Square neighborhood is located immediately south of the Minneapolis Central Business District between I-94 and Franklin Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Lyndale. Its heritage revolves around its community park with the town pump in its midst. The park is over 80 years old, becoming a part of the city park system in 1907 and named after Minneapolis pioneer Colonel John Stevens. The pump dates back to 1915 and has become a symbol of Stevens Square's sense of community.

In 1989, Stevens Square received its historical designation due primarily to the number of three-and-a-half story brick apartment buildings: similar in size, character and materials, surrounding the park. However it was December of 1856 when "Stevens Square" was platted awaiting the expansion of city perimeters to create a market.

During 1856 and 1874 a large portion of the land was purchased by two owners, Richard J. Mendenhall and Dr. Nathan B. Hill. They developed large but few single-family dwellings in the Stevens area with the onset of the horse-car surface transit after 1874. Because of the presence of large land holdings by wealthy owners, sale and rental of the land wasn't available for construction until 1912.

In 1907, David P. Jones sought assistance in acquiring land from Dr. Hill's son R.J. The purchase of Stevens - 2nd Avenue, 18th - 19th Street was approved. In cooperation with property owner, the park system and heirs of Mendenhall and Hill. Homes promoted the development of land in Stevens Square in hopes of rapid growth.

The next couple of years brought slow growth with the exception of Abbott Hospital beginning construction in 1910. It was during this time when Park Superintendent Theodore Wirth reported that the residents of the Stevens Square area "...are clamoring for improvements." With his recommendations modest plantings, walkways, tennis court, and play area were implemented in 1911. These fine improvements upgraded the park in turn making the vacant land attractive to developers.

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The growth of downtown Minneapolis was producing a market for apartment housing which became a strong force in city development. The city population grew from 200,000 in 1900 to 300,000 in 1910. From 1910 -1912 single family dwellings and duplexes decreased as apartment units increased by 400 percent. With the availability of transit lines to Stevens Square and the improved park, Stevens Court became the first large apartment building to be built in 1912. Stevens Court was one of 43 building permits issued in 1912 and built by the Delaney Company. The next year brought six additional apartment buildings that rose on vacate land formerly owned by Hill and Mendenhall. Anderson in partnership with G.A. Nelson, in particular built some of these structures and continued to develop six of eight buildings in 1914. In 1915 approximately nine apartment buildings were added ending the rush of new development for the next couple of years.

During 1916 and 1917 the real estate rush was slowing. Immediately following the war development boomed adding eight new apartment structures and the expansion of Abbott Hospital in 1919. During 1921 - 1926 Ambassador Holding Company built three apartment buildings and Superior Holding Company built Clara Doers Club Women's residence of the Women's Christian Association and an apartment building to close the end of the area's development phase.

As the suburbs developed in the 1950's the population lost some of the middle income people to low income. It was at this time that many buildings were showing signs of deterioration as well. In 1968 James Larson began to acquire buildings in the area for renovation because of his concern and interest in the community. By 1974 Larson successfully renovated nine buildings under the name Stevens Court and encouraged other individuals to purchase and rehabilitate other properties within the neighborhood.

In 1974 General Mills became an investor in Larson's company, at the interest derived from President James Sumner, in hopes that a private enterprise could play the role as well as make a profit in rebuilding decayed structures. General Mills' financial support allowed for a more extensive and thorough renovation process to take place even though profits failed to yield amounts expected. In 1980, General Mills sold its vested interests to the Boston based March Corporation (In 1992 it is anticipated that the project will change its ownership and management).

Renovation continues today in the neighborhood to a lesser extent to meet the demands of quality housing. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, a few buildings were sold and converted into condominiums. Today, however many are renter occupied similar to the profile of the people who first lived in the neighborhood. "Therefore, the neighborhood character is demographically as well as physically very much the same as it was when it first took shape as a neighborhood of respectable apartment dwellings in the early 1900's."

"There is a visual cohesiveness to the neighborhood because of the uniformity of building style, height and materials used. Nearly all the apartment buildings are 3 1/2 stories high and have a brown brick exterior. Most have contrasting limestone lintels, belt - coursing and columns flanking the main entrances. Broad cornices of tin and terra cotta prevail, most of which are in good repair. Stone quoining is used on a number of the buildings. Although substantial renovation has been performed on the interior of many of the buildings, the exteriors have been largely left untouched. Even the original double-hung windows remain, although most have been covered by aluminum combination storms and screens.

Although similar housing developments were developed in other parts of the City of Minneapolis as well as the country, few, if any, survive in close to their original condition and contribute to the urban fabric as successfully and consistently as the Stevens Square neighborhood in its present condition. The existing buildings are in good condition. That fact together with the unique character of the

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apartments, the charming and homogenous character of the neighborhood, and the revived interest by area owners, contribute to a good prognosis for the future of the area.

(Condensed from Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission's Historical Sketch of the Stevens Square Neighborhood)

#### **IV. NEIGHBORHOOD NRP PROCESS**

Planning for Phase 2 of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program in Stevens Square-Loring Heights began with the approval of a participation agreement with NRP by the SSCO board on March 14, 2001. A kick-off meeting was held on April 23, 2001, and a Planning committee, made up of representatives reflecting the neighborhood's diverse makeup, was formed and began meeting to develop an action plan.

SSCO adopted the following goals for citizen participation during Phase 2 planning:

- Develop an action plan that builds on the success of NRP Phase 1 planning and bring the neighborhood even closer to fulfilling its vision
- Pursue inclusive organizing strategies that encourage input from all segments of the neighborhood
- Start with the community goals and vision articulated in the Phase 1 action plan and other community planning documents

The Planning committee developed a mail-in and intercept survey and conducted a series of sector meetings (Loring Heights, Nicollet, Park, and Clinton) to gather information and suggestions from residents. The survey was translated into Spanish and Somali. Results were presented at the SSCO annual meeting on June 19, 2001 and then compiled to present to the organization's standing committees (Housing & Development, Arts & Greening, Safety, and Outreach) for review. These standing committees were directed to develop goals and strategies for the action plan based on this community input. This work took place from September, 2001, to May, 2002.

Over the summer of 2002, the Planning committee compiled the strategies into a draft action plan and presented it for comment at a community meeting on September 18, 2002. The Planning committee conducted another round of sector meetings on October 16, 2002 and subsequently produced a final draft of the action plan incorporating all of the new input. The action plan was translated into Spanish and Somali and made available, along with interpreters, to members of those communities. The action plan was mailed to every address in the neighborhood and presented for discussion and a vote at a community meeting on October 30, 2002. The community voted to approve the action plan, which was then approved by the SSCO board of directors on November 14, 2002.

SSCO NRP Phase 2 Planning committee members:

Gene Blackledge and Karen Ives, co-chairs; Gregg Daubert, James Davies, Chris Holm, Jeanne Krueger, Michael Lyght, Rebecca Moyer, Jonathan Palmer, Robert Poehling, John Roberg, George Roehrdanz, Liz Sheets, Arlene Storandt, Kate Thompson, Ted Thompson, Elizabeth Tocko, Dee Tvedt, Keith Twist.

**Stevens Square Community Organization**  
**Neighborhood Revitalization Program Phase II Action Plan**

Approved June 19, 2003

With amended allocations per SSCO Board of Directors, August 9, 2004

Amended allocations approved by community vote November 11, 2004

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**STEVENS SQUARE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION MISSION STATEMENT**

SSCO provides a respectful forum for community involvement and leadership that builds on neighborhood strengths to promote and improve Stevens Square-Loring Heights as a fun place to live, work, and play.

SSCO works to strengthen Stevens Square-Loring Heights by initiating, integrating, and implementing key priorities. 2003 priorities:

- Economic development (housing and development)
- Community safety
- Clean green environment
- Building community through the arts
- Community involvement

## CHAPTER 1: HOUSING & DEVELOPMENT

Stevens Square-Loring Heights has a very diverse, urban demographic makeup consisting of a population of approximately 3,950 (2000 Census). It is one of the most densely populated areas in the Twin Cities. The largest population group (55% of the total) is made up of young people, often single, ages 20 to 34, who work both downtown and in the suburbs. The opportunities for homeownership, and long-term stability are limited due to the geography and demographics of the community.

In 1989, Stevens Square received its historical designation due primarily to the number of three-and-a-half story brick apartment buildings: similar in size, character and materials, surrounding the park. Today, many are renter occupied similar to the profile of the people who first lived in the neighborhood. Therefore, the neighborhood character is demographically as well as physically very much the same as it was when it first took shape as a neighborhood of respectable apartment dwellings in the early 1900's.

There is a visual cohesiveness to Stevens Square neighborhood because of the uniformity of building style, height and materials used. As stated, nearly all the apartment buildings are three-and-a-half stories high and have a brown brick exterior. Most have contrasting limestone lintels, belt-coursing and columns flanking the main entrances. Broad cornices of tin and terra cotta prevail, most of which are in good repair. Stone quoining is used on a number of the buildings. Although substantial renovation has been performed on the interior of many of the buildings, the exteriors have been largely left untouched. Even the original double-hung windows remain, although most have been covered by aluminum combination storms and screens.

The Loring Heights area (west of LaSalle Avenue) differs from the Stevens Square part of the neighborhood in several ways. First, it is not as densely populated: the predominant architectural structures are single family homes, duplexes, townhomes, and mansions. Second, Loring Heights is home to several of the neighborhood's community based residential treatment facilities. Many professionals also make Loring Heights their base. The Franklin Avenue corridor sits up on a ridge with a retaining wall along most of the avenue in the Loring Heights Sector.

The commercial center of the neighborhood is located on Nicollet Avenue, where several restaurants, social service agencies and schools, and retail merchants operate. Minor commercial hubs include Franklin Avenue and the Clinton Avenue strip mall. Major institutions in Stevens Square-Loring Heights include: Plymouth Congregational Church, African American Family Services, Abbott Northwestern Hospital Research, Minnesota Church Center, City of Lakes Transitional Care Center, Abraham Lincoln Middle School and the Loring Nicollet Community Center. Over the past several years the quality of retail operations has fluctuated. Currently there is no grocery store in the community. Community members have identified the gap of service retailers in the community.

**GOAL 1: Stevens Square-Loring Heights will remain a lively, diverse and welcoming neighborhood, with a mix of affordable and market rate housing and commercial development which respects our historic architecture and reflects community values of fairness and support for a walkable, green, attractive, fun, and safe urban environment with increased opportunity for home ownership.**

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**OBJECTIVE A: Stevens Square-Loring Heights residents will report a more stable and desirable community.**

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**STRATEGY 1: (A) Create a stable and desirable neighborhood:**

- a) In Phase I, the Stevens Square Community developed a successful housing “Rental Rehab Program” (Strategy 9.4.c) that has resulted in the rehabilitation of dozens of buildings and hundreds of housing units in the Stevens Square neighborhood. Under the Phase I guidelines, each project is evaluated and approved on a case-by-case basis. SSCO and partners (which may include CPED Housing and Development Division and/or CPED Planning Division) will continue the Phase I program, and revise the guidelines of the existing program to provide incentives for both existing and new housing projects to encourage long-term stability. As with the existing guidelines, the revised guidelines will identify the use of loans, deferred loans, grants, and matching funds. Guidelines will continue to determine eligible projects, which may include tuck-pointing, window replacement, and repair of retaining walls and steps, and other improvements identified as priorities by the neighborhood;
- b) SSCO will work with partners (which may include CPED Housing and Development Division and/or CPED Planning Division) to Create and maintain a list of existing or potential sites and strategies for development, redevelopment, or rehab.

**STRATEGY 1: (B) Create opportunities for long-term residency:**

- a) SSCO will work with neighborhood property owners and other partners (which may include CPED Housing and Development Division and/or CPED Planning Division) to convert existing rental units for homeownership opportunities. Properties identified by the neighborhood may be eligible for loans or grants provided under strategy 1 (A) above;
  - b) SSCO and its partners (which may include CPED Housing and Development Division and/or CPED Planning Division) will work to encourage long-term rental by making housing more desirable and affordable. Properties identified by the neighborhood may be eligible for loans or grants provided under strategy 1 (A) above.
  - c) SSCO will explore the use of land trusts and other options/programs to stimulate new and retain affordable homeownership and rental. Properties or projects identified by the neighborhood may be eligible for loans or grants provided under strategy 1 (A) above.
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**STRATEGY 2: Part of the neighborhood around Stevens Square Park is a designated Minneapolis Heritage Preservation District. Promote education, awareness, and**

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**understanding of the unique architecture and landscape of the Stevens Square historic district:**

- a) SSCO will work with partners (which may include CPED Planning Division) to seek enforcement of Minneapolis Heritage Preservation District guidelines;
  - b) SSCO will work with partners (which may include CPED Planning Division) to ensure that new architecture respects—though not necessarily mimics—building styles in the historic district
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**STRATEGY 3: Explore corporate and institutional partnerships for development:**

SSCO will work with partners (which may include CPED Planning Division, the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County and other agencies) to:

- a) Develop an inventory of institutional uses (e.g., City of Lakes Care Center, M.A.O., Volunteers of America) currently in the neighborhood;
- b) Make proactive plans for reuse of institutions in the event they cease operations;
- c) Reduce, through attrition, the number of supportive housing facilities in the neighborhood\*.

\* **Note:** A minority dissenting view was expressed stating the reduction of supportive housing was not beneficial or necessary. A consensus was expressed that housing with supportive services should be a part of a metro-wide planning process.

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**OBJECTIVE B: The density and demographics of the neighborhood can support a walkable urban community. Stevens Square-Loring Heights will support and encourage alternative transportation options.**

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**STRATEGY 1: Support and encourage a community that is not dependent on automotive transportation and has less traffic congestion on the streets:**

SSCO will continue to work with partners to:

- a) Promote a walkable community;
  - b) Discourage and reduce surface parking lots;
  - c) Promote, support and encourage efforts / amenities to reduce automotive use (bike storage / racks, walkways, etc.);
  - d) Promote shared parking in commercial areas (and decked parking for new developments);
  - e) Eliminate on-street parking restrictions (where appropriate);
  - f) Promote availability of parking and explore parking solutions throughout the neighborhood;
  - g) Request a neighborhood-wide parking and traffic study;
  - h) Explore use of traffic calming measures with neighboring communities.
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**OBJECTIVE C: Housing and development in Stevens Square-Loring Heights will continue to incorporate strategies for a green, clean community.**

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**STRATEGY 1: Promote and support a green, clean community:**

In Phase I, the Stevens Square neighborhood developed a successful “Greening Fund” (Strategy 8.2.a). SSCO will work to continue and extend that work in Phase 2 by working with partners to:

- a) Ensure that all development and rehab includes measures to keep the neighborhood’s environment healthy;
  - b) Ensure that all development and rehab initiatives interact with the Arts & Greening and Safety Committees and coordinate with public agencies to help promote City programs, such as Public Health to address lead abatement;
  - c) Maintaining urban forest, trees, and green space.
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**OBJECTIVE D: Stevens Square-Loring Heights will encourage a variety of mixed-use facilities along our commercial corridors and at our business nodes to strengthen and stabilize our community by meeting the needs of residents.**

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**STRATEGY 1: Offer the community a variety of affordable and market-rate housing alongside or combined with commercial development:**

SSCO will work with partners to develop guidelines in order to:

- a) Establish an economic development incentive program for new / existing commercial projects, using loans, grants, or matching funds;
- b) Create commercial corridor opportunities (e.g. Franklin and Nicollet);
- c) Promote development of a large grocery store, especially one with an urban, pedestrian-friendly design.

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**OBJECTIVE E:** The main corridors of the Stevens Square-Loring Heights neighborhood share boundaries and / or activities with neighboring communities. These include Franklin Avenue, Nicollet Avenue, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. SSCO will increase the number of connections and coordination with surrounding neighborhoods and downtown.

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**STRATEGY 1:** Create and strengthen connections and coordination with surrounding neighborhoods and downtown:

In Phase I, The Stevens Square neighborhood worked successfully with other neighborhoods and the City of Minneapolis to implement a major streetscape project on Nicollet Avenue (Strategy 8.2.e). SSCO will continue and extend this strategy by working with its partners to:

- a) Implement the recommendations of the Nicollet Avenue Planning Group (lighting, treatment at the ends of the bridge, fencing)
  - b) Enhance the Nicollet Avenue bridge over I-94
  - c) Resurrect the Avenue of the Arts project, connecting downtown to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts along 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue
  - d) Work on emerging issues that impact neighboring communities
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**OBJECTIVE F:** Support projects with NRP Affordable Housing Reserve Funds.

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**STRATEGY 1:** Seek additional funding for neighborhood projects by applying for NRP AHRF:

- a) Support projects such as Lofts on Arts Avenue (awarded by NRP in 2002);
- b) Apply for additional AHRF funds when approved by neighborhood if future AHRF are approved by NRP policy Board.

**CHAPTER 2: ENVIRONMENT**

The environment is a critical issue for Stevens Square-Loring Heights. The density of the community counters the green space many other communities enjoy. Because of the density and architecture of the community, the amount of green space, congestion of automotive transportation, and safety of the community are of concern. SSCO has and will continue to:

- (1) transform derelict lots and create in their place beautiful, natural spaces for people to enjoy
  - (2) create opportunities for neighborhood residents to get to know one another and work together for a better neighborhood
  - (3) find ways to get residents out on the street, enhancing community safety
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**GOAL 1: Stevens Square – Loring Heights will become a more environmentally vibrant place to live and grow which will provide a safe and environmentally conscious community.**

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**OBJECTIVE A: Residents of Stevens Square – Loring Heights will become increasingly involved in community gardening and other neighborhood activities to improve the environment.**

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**STRATEGY 1: Involve neighborhood residents in community gardening through projects that address environmental and safety issues:**

In Phase I, the Stevens Square neighborhood implemented a popular and successful Greening Fund (Strategy 8.2.a). SSCO will continue and extend that program with projects to address environmental and safety issues such as:

- a) Community events that bring people together to create and maintain public gardens
  - b) Promotion of, and technical assistance to, LaSalle Community Garden
  - c) Promotion of, and technical assistance to, Emily Peake Community Garden
  - d) The establishment of permanent community gardening space, e.g., on existing unbuildable lots
  - e) Development of a project to install container gardens on private property, using containers owned by SSCO and maintained by neighborhood residents
  - f) Working with property owners to encourage residents to take ownership of green space near their buildings for gardening activity
  - g) Creation of opportunities for neighborhood children to participate in gardening
  - h) Proactive involvement in deliberations regarding development projects as they are addressed by the Housing & Development Committee, so that they will include improvements to the neighborhood environment
  - i) Creation of a matching fund to support environmental improvement projects undertaken by any community member in the Stevens Square – Loring Heights neighborhood
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**STRATEGY 2: Involve residents in neighborhood environmental projects**

SSCO will work with partners to involve residents in neighborhood environment projects such as:

- a) Assessing and increasing the effectiveness of currently-placed trash cans, and arrangements for purchase and adoption of additional cans in key locations
- b) Spring and Fall Clean Sweeps (neighborhood litter pickup events)
- c) Working with property owners to ensure their compliance with local ordinances regarding trash collection, recycling, litter, and snow removal
- d) Maintaining communication with the Park Board about concerns with dog waste, the urban forest, litter, lighting, and other park issues, and encouraging enforcement of dog waste and off-leash ordinances

### **CHAPTER 3: SAFETY**

SSCO is a citizen participation organization, which utilizes a community organizing model to involve residents in all aspects of organizational governance and planning. This structure ensures the involvement of residents and area organizations that are located or provide services in the neighborhood in all of SSCO's activities. Of all the issues addressed by SSCO, safety continues to be the galvanizing issue in the neighborhood. In its early years, the organization tended to address issues separately, but in recent years has become more sophisticated, incorporating safety into all programming areas, such as greening, housing, employment, economic development, and events. In SSCO's recent strategic planning process, safety is interwoven in all areas of the organization.

SSCO's safety programming has several components, which are coordinated through the Safety committee. Numerous building and block clubs have been organized throughout the neighborhood, and regularly provide information to the Safety committee. The SSCO Block Patrol, now in its 12th year, records and monitors incidents observed while on their regular patrols, and makes reports each month to the Safety committee. The Block Patrol, coordinated by SSCO staff and volunteers, perform ongoing evaluation for program improvement and planning implementation. Regular monitoring and reporting provides SSCO with timely information about crime and violence in the neighborhood. Additionally, local law enforcement staff also participate in the SSCO's safety efforts, including the neighborhood's beat police officers, the Precinct Sector Lieutenant and Precinct Crime Prevention Specialist, and the Hennepin County Neighborhood Probation officers.

Stevens Square-Loring Heights continues to suffer from its old reputation as an unsafe place. Potential renters call SSCO's office, asking if it's true that SS-LH is a high crime neighborhood. Years of drug dealing activity and a few well-publicized instances of violence have created a lasting impression that we struggle to overcome. Yet, problems still reoccur whenever we let down our vigilance, especially in the Clinton Sector, the six square blocks on the east edge of the neighborhood, which continue to be plagued by drug problems. The Clinton Sector is home to our two public housing high rises, most of our Somali and Latino residents, and our growing youth population. We plan to devote a large-scale concentrated effort of organizing and community gardening in this area in the next year. This includes additional recruitment of residents of the high rises, training materials translated into Somali and Spanish, and ongoing vigilance within the Clinton Sector.

While SS-LH still experiences reputation problems, residents for the most part report feeling more comfortable in the neighborhood. While still exercising caution, they do not feel the uneasiness they did just a few short years ago. We are putting the difficult high crime years of the 1990's behind us. We see this period as a crucial era. Our challenge for the next five years will be to maintain our successes and deepen the skills and capacities of our diverse community volunteers

**GOAL 1: Provide a safe and healthy environment for neighborhood residents and increase the social stability of the neighborhood through concerted crime prevention programs and safety strategies in conjunction with our law enforcement partners.**

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**OBJECTIVE A: Stevens Square – Loring Heights will be a safer neighborhood with a stronger social fabric.**

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**STRATEGY 1: Support and strengthen our successful ongoing safety and crime prevention projects**

In Phase I, the Stevens Square neighborhood implemented a very successful safety program. SSCO will work with its partners to continue implementing neighborhood safety programs, including:

- a) Block Patrol, by providing supplies and equipment, including radio and phone service, for our citizens' walking patrol volunteers;
  - b) Safety coordinator staff position, to support and implement all neighborhood safety activities;
  - c) Outreach and recruiting for safety projects and events, especially for new residents & immigrants and through the use of online technology;
  - d) Building safety improvement program, to provide matching grants for safety-related property upgrades;
  - e) Anti-graffiti initiatives, to report, remove & minimize graffiti in the neighborhood and to hold offenders accountable;
  - f) Park safety programs, to keep Stevens Square Park safe by sponsoring and participating in social events and community-building activities.
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**STRATEGY 2: Support and strengthen our community safety partnerships**

The Stevens Square neighborhood has developed several successful partnerships with government agencies and other neighborhoods, and successfully applied for NRP COPSIRF funds in 2004. SSCO will continue to work with partners such as:

- a) Central City Neighborhoods Partnership's Restorative Justice program, allowing residents to meet face-to-face with neighborhood offenders to talk about how the crime affected them and to help develop a resolution to the crime;
- b) Law Enforcement Group (Hennepin County Community Probation, the Precinct Sector Lieutenant and Precinct Crime Prevention Specialist, community response team and neighborhood beat officers), various jurisdictions working together in innovative ways to prevent crime and solve problems;
- c) The Precinct Sector Lieutenant and Precinct Crime Prevention Specialist, recruiting block leaders and organizing block clubs, promoting community education on crime, safety and law enforcement issues, and helping neighbors get to know each other, in collaboration with the Outreach committee;

## SAFETY

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- d) City and County prosecutors, helping residents have an impact on criminal court cases that affect the neighborhood;
- e) Minneapolis Public Housing Authority's Project Lookout, organizing residents to prevent crime in public housing facilities;
- f) Business and rental housing property owners, working together to deal with common crime and safety issues;
- g) Apply for NRP Community Oriented Public Safety Reserve Funds (COPSIRF).

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### **STRATEGY 3: Improve the neighborhood's safety-related infrastructure by identifying and addressing problems**

SSCO will work with partners to continue identifying and addressing problems, such as:

- a) Inadequate public alley, street, & park lighting;
- b) Insufficient parking for residents, in collaboration with the Housing & Development committee;
- c) Traffic safety, especially speeding violations;
- d) Need for a new or upgraded police substation.

## **CHAPTER 4: CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT**

The Stevens Square-Loring Heights neighborhood is an historic, vibrant, urban neighborhood that lies just south of downtown Minneapolis. Its history began in 1912 when many of the neighborhood's signature three-and-a-half story brown brick apartment buildings began to sprout up amid the family mansions and businesses. The neighborhood's low-cost housing and proximity to downtown employment made it an ideal location for people new to the city.

Now, the Stevens Square Historic District and the five buildings that are on the National Register of Historic Places provide the backdrop to a new generation of residents who have easy access to Downtown Minneapolis, art museums, theaters, and Eat Street restaurants. The variety of entertainment, retailers and service options makes for a lively central city neighborhood, while numerous bus routes and regional highways allow for ideal transportation access.

SS-LH also boasts of an incredibly diverse population that calls the neighborhood home. While walking through the neighborhood, taking the Historic Walking Tour, or attending one of SSCO's many community events, you will find people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, which enhances the charm of the neighborhood.

SSCO has worked on neighborhood improvement initiatives for 25 years. In the last 10 years, SSCO has come into its own, becoming a professional organization that remains in close contact with its constituency. Through its committee structure, the community owns and has a vested interest in every action SSCO undertakes. SSCO is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors, which takes an active role in overseeing its activities. In the past two years, the organization has overhauled its accounting procedures to accommodate its growth, creating a system that will meet our needs for years to come.

The dedication, commitment and vision of our volunteers is one of SSCO's greatest assets. Our volunteers have a wealth of experience and history, and represent a cross section of the neighborhood. Newer members work side by side with seasoned "old timers", allowing new ideas to come into the organization while retaining the lessons that history has taught us. Years of experience have taught the community how to effectively advocate in the system to access its resources. This experience has taught SSCO how to work effectively with city agencies and elected officials to create win-win situations while serving the needs of all of the community.

Collaborations with neighborhood stakeholders also help keep our neighborhood strong. SSCO's safety programming benefits from area business and property owners. Unlike many neighborhoods with large amounts of rental property, our property owners are actively involved and a positive part of our team. Their cooperation is invaluable in gaining access to buildings for doorknocking and meetings, addressing neighborhood problems, and providing space for SSCO activities. They also provide financial support for our community events and a few provide rent rebates for their tenants who participate in community- building activities.

Despite the challenges involved in organizing a neighborhood characterized by significant numbers of new immigrants, high rental rates, low ownership opportunities, and high turnover rates, SSCO has accomplished a lot over the past decade. SSCO has worked hard to engage all residents, which is one of the reasons for the success of our programming. Many of our outreach efforts are the entry point for involving active and productive community members. The following strategies are designed to continue and build on our successes.



**GOAL 1: Support the Stevens Square-Loring Heights neighborhood through the organization of community events and outreach to residents that encourage community participation and build a sense of community stability and safety.**

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**OBJECTIVE A: Residents of Stevens Square-Loring Heights will be more connected with each other and with community organizations, institutions, and businesses.**

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**STRATEGY 1: Organize and support the development of new and ongoing community events**

**SSCO will continue to organize and support the development of new and ongoing community events, such as:**

- a) Music & Movies in the Park series, Red Hot Art, Fair in the Square, Walker on Wheels, and Winter Lights festival
  - b) New events and activities, e.g. with a multi-cultural focus
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**STRATEGY 2: Continue to fund staff position(s) to organize and promote community activities and events.**

SSCO will continue to provide support for ongoing NRP activities, and to engage neighborhood residents and other stakeholders in NRP strategy development and implementation.

**STRATEGY 3: Using a variety of communications technologies (e.g., the internet, publications, welcome packets, etc.) to provide information about services, events, and activities, continue to build community relationships in and around the neighborhood.**

SSCO will work with partners to develop and utilize communication technologies to provide information about services, events, and activities and to build community relationships in and around the neighborhood with:

- a) Residents, businesses, community organizations, institutions, and other neighborhood associations;
- b) Diverse ethnic and cultural populations, through training, translation and interpretation services, and other programs, in collaboration with all other SSCO committees;
- c) Arts organizations, to exhibit public art, especially sculpture, in the neighborhood;
- d) Property owners, to establish art studio work space for neighborhood artists.

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**OBJECTIVE B: SSCO will continue to support its office and staff.**

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**STRATEGY 1: Fund the organizational infrastructure needed to implement the neighborhood's NRP Action Plan / Five-Year Vision**

SSCO will continue to implement the neighborhood's NRP Action Plan and Five-Year vision:

- a) Staff to plan and implement these strategies
  - b) SSCO office rental and supplies
  - c) Miscellaneous / emerging development and planning activities
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