



Lincoln Playground Reimagining

Community Events, Summer 2016

Active Places Demonstration Project

A neighborhood-led series of “pop-up” events to bring energy back to Lincoln Playground, where residents can interact with and begin envisioning a place of new investment and community improvement.



Active Places Demonstration Project

Lincoln Playground – Reimagining

Supported by the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross), we began an outreach initiative by creating a series of “pop-up” events to bring energy back to Lincoln Playground, where residents can interact with and begin envisioning a place of new investment and community improvement. Because of shifting school populations – from public school to charter school – the playground has deteriorated into little more than a community eyesore and is not an asset for local children or their families.

Formation of the Lincoln Playground Leadership Team:

A Lincoln Playground improvement initiative has been in progress for several years, started by residents and block club leaders who were frustrated by the deterioration of the playground. An MWMO Planning Grant in fall of 2015 was a catalyst for the development of the Lincoln Playground Working Group and the groups “Ambassadors”, active participants in the community who were motivated to drive change. In the first quarter of 2016, the Working Group actively recruited area leaders to create a decision-making body, eventually coined the “Lincoln Playground Leadership Team.” The Leadership Team members have strong ties within North Minneapolis, many with specific connections to Lincoln school. They each bring expertise needed to help move the project forward and ensure it retains the character of their neighborhood and reflects the needs of the community. The formation of the Leadership Team was a key development overlapping with the Active Places Demonstration activities at the playground.

Lincoln Playground Leadership Team (as of 12/2016):

Chair: **Paul Bauknight**, President & CO of Urban Design Lab, resident

Co-Chair: **Marcus Owens**; President of Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON), resident

Treasurer: **Nicole Knuckles**; Regional Diverse Segments Manager at Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, resident

Secretary: **Beverly Roberts**; Owner at Homewood Studios, resident

Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson; Director of Family and Partnerships at Minneapolis Public Schools, former resident

Kelly Hoffman-Orth; Development Program Manager, Community Works, Hennepin County Public Works

Markeeta Keyes; City of Minneapolis Environmental Services, resident

John Munger; Executive Director of the Loppet Foundation, resident

George Roberts; Owner and Artist at Homewood Studios, Retired teacher from North Community High School, resident

Tory Roff; Playground Designer, former resident

Makeda Zulu-Gillespie; Director of Community Outreach at Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC)



"Before" photo of Lincoln Playground, with school in background, Summer 2015

Guided by the Lincoln Playground Leadership Team, along with a group of determined residents and supporters, we cast a wide net of invitation and involvement. We believe these events resulted in improved health and wellness, enhanced the community's sense of place, and encouraged economic development and overall livability. These events were undeniably successful in drawing local interest to the site, in showing students their play space matters, and in planting the seed for a future community space. These efforts were just the beginning of the community outreach that will help to shape the larger project, which we intend to continue throughout 2017.

Pop Up Events:

Greening the Playground, June 2016

Paint the Pavement, July 2016

Celebration of Learning, September 2016

Live at Lincoln, October 2016

Additional Activities through Active Places Funding:

Started lincolnplayground.org

Hosted listening session with Best Academy teachers, November 2016

Purchased banners to put up when events or activities are taking place at Lincoln

Other project support activities during summer 2016:

Mississippi River Green Team participation

Volunteer time and Wells Fargo grant to work with Rebuilding Together Twin Cities

Fiscal Agent: [Mississippi Watershed Management Organization](#) (MWMO)

Lincoln Playground Reimagining

"Greening the Playground"- June 2016

Funding for the event was provided by the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota



“Greening the Playground”

About: On June 2, 2016, alongside year-end activities with Best Academy teachers and administrators, several hundred youth participated in “Greening the Playground.” Kindergarten and First Graders created small sunflower planters to bring home at the end of the school day. Older students prepared and planted nine raised-bed planters on site - weeded, amended soils, and planted vegetable seeds and plants – they literally “greened” the playground.

Theme: Start students thinking about how improvements to the Playground will also mean improvements to the environment. Offer a sense of ownership for the planters, the growth of the vegetables, and the maintenance to keep it clean and beautiful. Begin to instill ownership into the site itself.

Planting station – The Garden Ambassador and Project Sweetie Pie volunteers facilitated the preparation and planting of existing raised-bed planters on the site.

Art station – Led by the Working Group Arts Ambassador to create, interact, and communicate student visions. Students created individual art pieces to begin to envision the future of the Playground, energize the site, and create temporary pieces that will beautify the site throughout the summer.

Environmental design station – The Mississippi Watershed Management Organization and the Working Group Design Team facilitated environmental thinking about the site. Using simple tools, students will see how water flows over hard surfaces. By adding areas of green, they will see how these green spaces can absorb the water, rather than allowing it to run off.

Ambassador: Becca Brackett, Local Block Club Leader

Partners: [Best Academy](#), [Project Sweetie Pie](#), [Mississippi Watershed Management Organization](#)

Outreach: Over 300 Best Academy youth participated in the greening activities.

Unexpected Outcome: This event allowed for an early and ongoing relationship with Best Academy. We were able to meet with several of the teachers in the school, give a presentation to the entire student body about the project, and begin the process of listening to the direct needs of the school at the Lincoln site.

...my current scholars are enjoying the garden out on the playground. They have been rushing over every day to pick fresh vegetables. Many pulled carrots and radishes out thinking they were weeds, and screamed with delight when they saw the vegetable. I have never seen children more excited to see an eggplant than I have with this class. Thank you for all that you have done to better this school with the playground remodel.

Lincoln Playground Reimagining

"Paint the Pavement"- July 2016

Funding for the event was provided by the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota



“Paint the Pavement”

About: Since 2006, FLOW Northside Arts Crawl has become an important community celebration and art event in North Minneapolis. Part of the West Broadway Business and Area Coalition, an arm of FLOW has been extended south to Plymouth Avenue to showcase local artists. On July 28, 2016, resident artists created an event to extend this arm even further, to Lincoln Playground.

Northside painter, teacher, and muralist Melodee Strong designed a river through the space, with stations along the way to dream about the future of the playground, draw, and learn about water quality. Visitors were invited to “Paint the Pavement” and see the art piece unfold in real-time.

Theme: “Dear Lincoln Playground, this is what I hope for you...” What can this place mean for our community?

Empower the community to care for the playground and engage them in the Lincoln Playground Reimagining process.

Activities:

The Drawing Project & Ten x Ten – Visioning

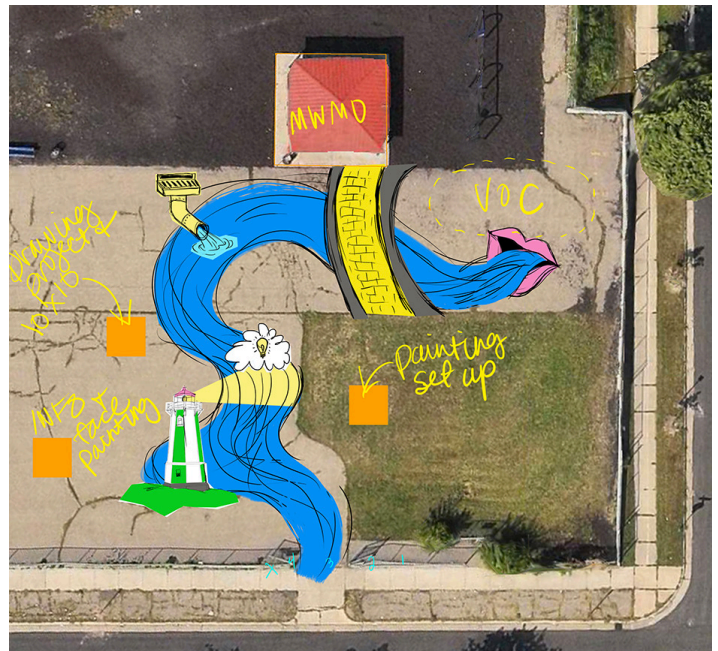
Voice of Culture Drum and Dance

Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

Face Painting by Northside resident Phyllis Chatham

Whole Soul Food Truck + Big Bell Ice Cream Truck

...The greatest success for me yesterday was that people were in the space, playing, resting, and just being. It was a calm sense of belonging - the parents and adults sitting around chatting while the kids played or painted. It felt like a real park, a real place where neighbors gather to be together...



Ambassador: Sarah Sampedro, Local Artist and Arts Advocate

Partners: The Drawing Project, Ten x Ten, Voice of Culture, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Whole Soul Food Truck, Big Bell Ice Cream

Outreach: Facebook event posted to local Facebook Groups: Homewood Neighborhood, NOMI Good, North Talk; promoted on Facebook through MWMO, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC), Arian Fine, and Will Lumpkins, Emailed to include in newsletter: NRRC, UROC. Posted on Northside Arts Collective calendar of events. Advertised on radio station KMOJ. Hand drawn yard signs posted day ahead. Flyers passed out.

We estimate approximately 250 visitors attended this event, based on food and ice cream sold and handed out.

Lincoln Playground Reimagining "Celebration of Learning"- September 2016

Funding for the event was provided by the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota



Photo from Summit Academy



Photo from Summit Academy



Photo from Summit Academy



Photo from Summit Academy



Photo from Summit Academy



Photo from Summit Academy



“Celebration of Learning”

About: In collaboration with the Sumner Library, a pop-up outdoor summer reading room was created, extending use of the site through the summer months. First and foremost, we wanted our children to feel they are valued and noticed. This focus on our children will carry right into the school, where a range of learning activities will take place on the renovated playground site. On the sunny evening of September 8, 2016, we held a community celebration of the new Outdoor Reading Room. The event was of the community, for the community, utilizing Northside talent.

Theme: Through the temporary installation of an Outdoor Reading Room on the Lincoln School Playground, we hoped to *strengthen nearby residents’ connection to place and to each other*. We hoped that the Outdoor Reading Room would encourage learning and play for the students at the school and for the neighborhood children.

Activities:

Storytelling with Nothando Zulu

Blues piano by Cornbread Harris

Free books!!

Free library cards from Hennepin County Library (30 library cards issued)

Free food by WholeSoul (~175 meals served)

Conversations with Ten X Ten Studio

Watershed Bookmark making with MWMO

“I’ve never been to a library before.”

• The Components of the Outdoor Reading Room:

- Northside carpenter, Dale Myers built an outdoor book shelf, a performance stage, a drain cover and 12 portable benches.
- Summit Academy carpentry students built 4 Adirondack style reading chairs.
- Hennepin County Library provided two story strolls (Last Stop on Market Street, The Negro Speaks of Rivers), one banner map for how to get to Sumner Library from the playground and \$500 in new books.
- Fourth Precinct Police and Little Free Library provided three Little Free Libraries.
- Cedar Ridge Landscaping provided potted plants.
- Best Academy students painted the colorful brick “bridge” between the shelter and the grass, swept the concrete and mounted the story strolls.
- Visitors at the Grand Opening felt relaxed, happy, excited, interested and safe. They met new people, and talked with neighbors.

Ambassador: Natalie Hart, Librarian, Hennepin County Library - Sumner Branch

Partners: Summit Academy, Hennepin County Library, Fourth Precinct Police, Little Free Library, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Whole Soul, Ten x Ten, Best Academy

Outreach: Flyers, Facebook event page, ultimately reached nearly 200 visitors

Lincoln Playground Reimagining

"Live at Lincoln"-October 2016

Funding for the event was provided by the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota



“Live at Lincoln”

About: Over the summer, a partnership was developed between Lincoln Playground and the Loppet Foundation. The Loppet Foundation’s mission is to share the passion for year-round outdoor adventure in Minneapolis, focusing on underserved youth and families. Staff saw an opportunity to utilize Lincoln Playground to connect residents with this mission.

On Saturday, October 29, Loppet staff and volunteers, as well as Lincoln area volunteers including the Mississippi River Green Team, hosted a day of adventures at Lincoln Playground.

Theme: Show visitors to Lincoln, particularly residents, the easy proximity to wonderful outdoor recreation areas including the Mississippi River and Theo Wirth Park.

Activities: Lincoln served as the hub from where bike excursions took place, showing youth and their families how close they are to wonderful resources. Visitors toured through their own neighborhood to find key landmarks and onward to Theo Wirth Park.

In addition to neighborhood interactions, adventures were created at the playground and adjacent soccer field. Visitors participated in an obstacle course, played a water quality bean bag toss game, and carved pumpkins to take home.

Ambassador: Anthony Taylor, Loppet Foundation Adventures Director

Partners: [The Loppet Foundation](#), [Mississippi River Green Team](#), [MWMO](#)

Outreach: Although fall weather kept the visitorship low, participants felt strong connections were made within the neighborhood. The Mississippi River Green Team and the Loppet Foundation is one such connection that may benefit both groups long-term.

Lincoln Playground Reimagining

"Rebuilding Together" Clean up Event - October 2016

Funding and Volunteers from Wells Fargo and Rebuilding Together Twin Cities



Listening Session with Best Academy Teachers & Staff

About: In November, a dinner and listening session was held for several Best Academy teachers and staff at Homewood Studios. We used this opportunity to hear directly how the playground space is utilized by the building tenant. We hope to continue this relationship through 2017 as community feedback is gathered for the design of the improvements to the site.

Activities: Dinner and discussion.

Ambassadors: Best Academy Liaison Committee Co-chairs, George Roberts (resident) and Hannah Watson (3rd Grade)

Partners: Homewood Studios, Best Academy

Outreach: Several Best Academy teachers and staff

Leveraging other activities

In addition to Blue Cross funded activities, the enthusiasm around the site led to other activities and participation.

The Mississippi River Green Team assisted in cleaning up the Peace Garden adjacent to the playground site.

Rebuilding Together Twin Cities

About: A significant event was a volunteer day funded by a Wells Fargo “LIFT the Block” grant and built by Rebuilding Together Twin Cities. An estimated 320 hours of volunteerism were at the core of several site activities to clean up, paint, and energize the site.

Activities:

Painted playground equipment and shelter

Removed plants from asphalt cracks

Replaced missing basketball nets

Painted the pavement to add race track lanes and a hopscotch course

Built a boardwalk to contain rubber mulch from flowing off the site

Ambassador: Nicole Knuckles, Wells Fargo Volunteer Team

Partners: Rebuilding Together Twin Cities, Wells Fargo

Outreach: Nearly 40 volunteers participated, including residents. Press coverage was provided by KSTP.

Last year, I looked outside and was deeply saddened by what our children experience every day. The slow transformation has not gone unnoticed, and it directly impacts families and their child's behavior within the school.

Dear Lincoln Playground,

This is what I hope for you...

Sincerely,

Want to stay connected to this project? Join our mailing list and we promise not to give or sell your info to anyone else.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____



LincolnPlayground.org

Next Steps: 2017 will be continued outreach, specifically to gathering input and feedback on concept designs for the community space. We anticipate the “feasibility” phase of work will be complete by mid-year, resulting in a concept plan that is for the community and designed by the community. At that time, we will pursue firm support from Minneapolis Public Schools, as well as other local approving organizations, to move the project forward toward design development.

General Notes for Lincoln

- Rededication of Peace Garden to “All Nations Peace Garden”, possibly honoring Kirk Washington, among others
- Holding a contest to allow youth to design the playground, including a monetary award for engagement
- Youth intern position for the Lincoln Playground Leadership Team. What position/role would be helpful to the Leadership Team?
- Oak Park teen cooking program – how could this be connected to Lincoln in the future?
- Juxtaposition Arts has an Environmental Design program
- Coordinate with Northpoint to participate in National Night Out activities
- Juneteenth parade on Penn Ave coordination
- Work group teachers (active and retired) will work with teaching staff to develop project-related curricula for the children and creation of learning environments that could be explored as the site development plans progress.
- Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON) has vendors to rent from rather than Broadway Rental, less expensive and local

Physical constraints of the site:

- Getting water to the site, watering plants, watering people.
- Connection across Penn Avenue is difficult, and considered unsafe
- Unable to dig into the site
- Vandalism is a challenge

Suggested outreach tools for future activities:

- KMOJ
- Flyers
- Announce through local churches
- Natalie Hart, Sumner Librarian, asked many people how they found out about the event. The most common answer was, “I found a flyer in my door.” The second most common answer was, “I heard the music.”
- We heard people say that this neighborhood is 60% online. To me, the lesson learned is that it was completely worth the time spent for the 6 volunteers who walked door-to-door distributing flyers.
- Ice Cream Truck gives a sense of providing free food to the neighborhood. The agreement was that we needed to guarantee \$175/hr of sales for them to come (\$525 total). With half an hour left we’d only reached \$105 of sales so they started handing out free ice cream since we wouldn’t get near that \$525 total.