

Our Vision of University Ave

On Thursday March 19, 2009 business owners and community members gathered for another University Avenue Business Association Event, this time to discuss marketing and branding. The meeting began with a presentation from Mike Temali of U7 discussing their partnership with UABA, and the importance of customized marketing strategies for each business in order to identify and retain customers during the looming LRT construction. He announced U7's plans to increase myriad resources for small businesses, including possible mitigation grants, deferred interest loans, professional legal consultation, personalized marketing development and implementation. He sought feedback for these initiatives, which was met with support.

For the second half of the meeting, Linda Winsor, working on behalf of UABA, facilitated a group discussion of the question – *what will a vibrant University Avenue look and feel like in 8-10 years?* Setting aside all concerns about revenues and costs, property taxes, lightrail construction and other issues that trouble the minds of small business owners in this area, people instead focused on what aspects of this place they treasure and how we might be able to convey those ideas to people passing through. What do we cherish about this place? What brings people here? What makes other happening streets so appealing? What do we want to change? What do we want to see more of?

These are the ideas that were shared:

We cherish...

- DIVERSITY of people, neighborhoods, and businesses
- History of the corridor, from horses to lightrail
- The stories of residents and business owners who have lived and worked along the avenue (**See below for a story shared by one of our members)
- The good FOOD
- Surrounding college campuses
- Connecting Minneapolis and St. Paul
- The cool residential areas emerging along the Ave
- The ease with which motor vehicles can access major highways (i.e. I-94, 35W, 35E, Hwy 61, Hwy 280)

We want more...

- Accessibility – bus, bike, walk and drive (slower traffic?)
- Safety and CLEANLINESS – crime reduction
- Garbage and recycling containers everywhere
- Activities for youth, and appeal to college students
- Music & nightlife – fun
- Even more variety in restaurants – (i.e. Mexican, Soulfood, etc.)
- GREENERY – flowers, grass, trees
- Benches, cafes, and other GATHERING places
- Community resources
- Beautifully restored historic buildings

- Corporate campuses
- Multi-use buildings (i.e. retail on 1st floor, housing above)
- New buildings, replacing old
- New hotel structures
- New sit down restaurants
- More senior housing, like University & Fairview

Key words of importance...

- Connectivity
- Diversity
- Support
- Community
- Inviting
- Eclectic
- Inclusive
- Cultural diversity
- Pride
- Investment

To increase accessibility...

- Maps (posted at bus and LRT stops)
- Business directories
- Events calendar
- Brochures
- Affordable access to billboards and other media along University for small local businesses
- Public relations firm
- Marketing strategies

Phrases we like...

- *University Avenue: The World At Your Doorstep*
- *University Avenue: Many Neighborhoods, One Avenue*
- *As Beautiful as a Paris Blvd*
- *Visit University Ave!*

** In 1986 we (ECCM) decided that we *must* own a building on University Avenue between the University of Minnesota Law School and Rice St. In 2001, our dream was realized with the purchase of 1933-41 W University Ave. It has been a struggle for us to keep the building, but now we are more hopeful because all of *this* is happening.

We decided on University Avenue back in 1986 because of the public transportation bus route 16, and because the majority of our people at that time lived in two locations: 1247 St. Anthony on St. Paul side, and the Cedar Square building – University Avenue is the connector between the two. Now, with the leadership of UABA and the coming of the rail system, we are more encouraged to be part of this group and work with UABA to serve our community and the community at large.

~ ECCM, Member of UABA