Twin Cities must develop new vision, framework to shape future urban growth

by Ron Wirtz

In late February, the Citizens League released a report on urban growth in the Twin Cities metro region, *It Takes a Region to Build Livable Neighborhoods: Urban Growth Strategies for the Twin Cities Metro Region*. The report is the culmination of 15 months of work by a committee of 51 people, chaired by former Minneapolis mayor Don Fraser and Sally Evert of the Metropolitan Council.

The report outlines negative land-use practices and outcomes, both past and present, as well as the underlying forces that shape local and regional land use. This article highlights two innovative areas of the report the League hopes can have a lasting effect on future land-use policy: urban design and urban form. Simply put, the Twin Cities metro region needs a vision for how it wants to look, feel and act “when it grows up”—a vision for the physical, built environment at both the neighborhood and regional levels.

Continued on page 5

Duluth school board will use new charter schools to challenge its other schools

by Dana Schroeder

*Minnesota Journal*: Why did the school board decide to sponsor the two charter schools?

**Mark Myles**: The Duluth public schools have been looking at charter schools for several years. There were two charter applications in January 1995 that the board rejected: one was a conversion school and one had a philosophy in the high cirrus or cumulus range. That served as a catalyst.

Then last year we didn’t do as well on the Minnesota graduation tests as we expected. The board adopted a resolution of purpose having to do with teaching and learning. The school board decided to proactively improve teaching and learning in Duluth. Charter schools are one method of doing this.

Continued on page 7

Education: Consumer or producer interest?

by Ted Kolderie

When the Duluth charter school was approved Feb. 10, the assistant attorney general responsible for education, Charles Mottl, told the State Board of Education the arrangement proposed meets the requirement of law. The charter school will organize as a nonprofit; that nonprofit will then contract with Edison.

A few days later the president of the Minnesota Federation of Teachers (MFT), Sandra Peterson, met with legislators to ask them to change state law so no charter school could henceforth bring in Edison or any other commercial firm.

In the Legislature the House this year has “working groups” authoring bills. Reps. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) and Alice Seagren (R-Bloomington) are cochairs of the group getting up—in an open process—a bill generally to improve Minnesota’s charter-school program.

Their draft distributed at a meeting Feb. 26 included the MFT provis—Continued on page 6

Editor’s note: Following are excerpts of a March 3 interview of Duluth Superintendent of Schools Mark Myles with *Minnesota Journal* editor Dana Schroeder. The board of education in Duluth voted 9-0 to sponsor a charter school at two campuses—one for grades K-5 and one for grades 6-8. The school will contract with The Edison Project, a commercial firm that operates schools on contract to districts and to charter schools around the nation. The decision in Duluth has become an issue at the Legislature. (See related article by Ted Kolderie.)
From looming state revenue gap to surplus: What now? Editors denounce 'status quo'... If you're wrong at least twice, you're wrong at least twice, you're wrong at least twice... A faster-growing economy... Minnesota's public leaders... There's a better way to (fill in the blank)... The idea that some districts lack schools in Minnesota... The state should use "a suitable system for assessing the results of..."... The $250 million proposed by Gov. Anderson... the retractable roof is "a 50 percent tax credit (up to $500 worth)..."... the $250 million proposed by Gov. Anderson... for the $250 million proposed by Gov. Anderson... for the $250 million proposed by Gov. Anderson... for the $250 million proposed by Gov. Anderson... for the $250 million proposed by Gov. Anderson... for the $250 million proposed by Gov. Anderson... for the $250 million proposed by Gov. Anderson... for the $250 million proposed by Gov. Anderson...
St. Paul: Partnerships will move community forward

Excerpts from St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman's State of the City address on Feb. 27.

Today, more than ever, we must support our private sector, our faith community, to the people of St. Paul. We must seek part in moving our city forward.

We’ve seen a dramatic change in the face of Saint Paul neighborhood through an aggressive program of forcing action on vacant, dilapidated buildings. The amount of vacant land in St. Paul is allowed to stand and blight our neighborhoods has been reduced to one year by from its previous four years.

Our city is safer as a result of the six percent decrease of crimes in St. Paul. We have 5,200 more jobs in Saint Paul than there were in 1993.

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The result of job growth has been a drop in unemployment. Today 27 percent of all St. Paulians are out of work in Saint Paul.

In 1996, for the first time, Saint Paul led the region in absorption of office space—filled over 1,000,000 square feet of space. The recent Towle Report calls downtown Saint Paul the hottest market in the metropolitan area.

In downtown, as it has in the past, our neighborhoods will suffer. If the downtown tax base shrivels, more and more of the property tax burden will be put on residential homeowners in our neighborhood.

More people are spending money in our neighborhood stores. Nearly $9.4 million was collected as part of the half-cent sales tax in 1996—$9.4 million more than in 1994—a clear indicator of the renewed strength of Saint Paul’s downtown.


Minnesota’s higher than average welfare benefits have attracted individuals from other states to come to Minnesota. As a result, we expect our welfare rolls in Saint Paul will be up by 17 percent.

Surveys like the Visual Preference Survey would help direct funds to build new communities. Neleson visually compare neighborhoods that are doing well but innovative surveying techniques are being developed to tap private and public green spaces. The Metropolitan Council is, however, doing a poor job of achieving any sense of community.

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U of M regent selection system has no accountability

The regents today did not have the power to name any of the candidates. The selection process involves the governor and the legislature. The governor nominates candidates, and the legislature confirms them. The system is designed to ensure that the regents are accountable to the state. The current system does not allow for direct vote on candidates, and the governor has the final say in the selection process. The system is considered to be outdated and in need of reform. There have been calls for a more transparent and democratic selection process, but none have yet been successful.
Uninsured Minnesotans stabilize at nine percent

Changing faces. A recent report by the state Department of Health revealed an interesting trend for those without health insurance.

The proportion of uninsured Minnesotans has stabilized at about nine percent, while the national average has crept steadily upward to more than 15 percent. One reason for Minnesota’s lower rate is the level of employer-provided health insurance. In Minnesota, 71 percent of nonelderly people received insurance through work, compared with 65 percent nationally.

But rising health-care costs and a changing workplace—more part-time, temporary workers and more job hopping—are expected to push up rates for the uninsured, at least at the national level. Persons receiving health insurance through government programs (mostly children and low-income people) rose between 1990 and 1995, both here and nationwide. In Minnesota, the percentage buying their own health insurance dropped from almost 10 percent in 1990 to just five percent in 1995.

These factors have given rise to a curious trend both here and nationwide: the average uninsured person in 1995 is older and has a higher income than the average uninsured person in 1990.—Ron Wirtz.

In August 1995 the Journal reported that restrictions by a number of metro-area school districts were making open enrollment “less open.” The article pointed to tight restrictions on the policy in Minneapolis—prohibiting white students from open enrolling out of the district and students of color from open enrolling in—and restrictions by a number of suburban districts as they struggled with space issues and tried to pass building referenda. The article noted that St. Paul, unlike Minneapolis, had placed no restrictions on the policy. The story was picked up by the metro newspapers and KTC-CA-TV.

Interestingly, the Minneapolis restriction prohibiting white students from open enrolling out of the district has just been dropped—at the direction of the state Department of Children, Families and Learning. But space restrictions will prevent students of any race from open enrolling into Minneapolis, with a few exceptions. One Minneapolis official quoted in the Star Tribune said students wishing to leave the district may find no place to go, because of the continuing restrictions on enrollment into surrounding suburban districts.

So, while the change allowing freer movement from Minneapolis is a welcome one—at least in theory, it’s still not clear exactly how open Minneapolis’s highly touted open enrollment really is.—Dana Schroeder.

Bad news, good news: Time (Feb. 24) reported on a UCLA survey of college freshmen on a set of bell-wether attitude questions that have been posed over the past 30 years. In 1967, students’ top goal was “to develop a meaningful philosophy of life.” Today the top goal is “to be very well off financially.” And the share of students who think it’s important to keep up-to-date with political affairs has plunged from just under 60 percent to about 30 percent.

Meanwhile, the national student loan default rate is at its lowest point ever, according to a report in The Monitor. The default rate for 1994, the most recent year for which figures are available, was 10.7 percent, compared with 22.4 percent just four years earlier.

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley attributed the improvement to get-tough policies and enforcement efforts.

But we wonder whether the supposed crass materialism on the part of today’s young adults might somehow translate into better bill-paying habits and more responsible citizenship. Could it be a silver lining to the alleged dark cloud of youthful cynicism?—Janet Dudrow.

Back to 40. Rep. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope) reports that, after further analysis, she has decided to offer an author’s amendment regarding the fiscal disparities pro-

gram to her property tax reform bill. The amendment will leave the percentage of commercial-industrial (C-I) tax-base growth that is contributed to the shared fiscal disparities pool at its current level of 40 percent.

Rest’s bill, which was introduced in February, originally proposed cutting the contribution percentage from 40 percent to 20 percent because of changes the bill makes in the way C-I property is taxed. More detailed analysis by the House Research Department after the bill was introduced, Rest said, showed that dropping the contribution to 20 percent reduced the impact of the fiscal disparities program. Since that was not her intent, she will return the contribution percentage to 40 percent at the first hearing of her reform bill. No hearing was scheduled at press time.—D.S.

Forbes (Jan. 27) ran an eye-catching chart showing big differences in federal research spending among various maladies. The National Institutes of Health (NIH), which spend 80 percent of the federal government’s research dollars, spent $1.34 billion on AIDS research in 1995. With AIDS claiming 42,506 deaths that year; that works out to $31,453 per death. Meanwhile, NIH spent $1,297 per death related to heart disease, which claimed 738,781 lives in 1995.

Reporter Peter Brimelow was quick to point out that there are likely many scientifically defensible explanations for the difference. But it’s hard to avoid at least hypothesizing that interest-group politics has something to do with it.—I.D.

Back to the basics, dummy. With all of the complex theories and strategies surrounding urban renewal and redevelopment, the city of Houston has used simple and basic infrastructure improvements to boost the condition of its inner-city neighborhoods.

Like many cities, the central neighborhoods declined both in appearance and socio-economic status over the last decade and a half. Building on a simple plan, entitled “Neighborhoods to Standard” (NTS), the city is focusing on making neighborhoods safe, clean and attractive to residents. It does so through simple infrastructure investments like upgrading water and wastewater service, installing more sidewalks and street lights, overlaying asphalt streets, and upgrading parks.

Importantly, NTS concentrates on maintenance rather than new infrastructure and has pumped $75 million into 57 neighborhoods, with another 14 preparing for improvements. NTS has shown some remarkable success after only four years; property values in targeted neighborhoods have gone up 30 percent in several cases, and an estimated 5,000 people are returning annually to these neighborhoods.

Incidentally, in two mayoral elections since the inception of NTS, Mayor Bob Lanier has won 90 and 85 percent of the vote.—R.W.

"Take Note" contributors include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members.

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"I keep getting more cynical, but I just can’t keep up."—L. Tomlin

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Minnesota Journal
Citizens League
Suite 500
708 S. Third St.
Minneapolis, MN 55415

March 18, 1997
Welcome New and Returning Members

Robert Ambrose
Barbara & James Eppel, Jr.
Eric Eoloff
Jesse L. Goodman & Nicole Lurie
John Hovanec & Sally Hovanec
John T. Lawlor
Michael Nguyen
Linda Oliva
Terry Riley
Jeffrey Schneider
Michael J. Stutzer
Joe Tennyson
Gary Thaden
Avisia Whiteman
Susan Wolkerstorfer
Duane Zaun

Thank you recruiters:
Mike Christenson and Linda Ewen.

Citizens League Matters

March 18, 1997

Legislative Network Breakfasts resume in April

 Reserve Friday mornings in April on your calendar for the League's popular Legislative Network Breakfasts.

The Legislative Network Breakfasts provide an informal setting to talk politics, keep abreast of activities at the Capitol and hear from policy makers about issues that are of concern to the League. If you are interested in getting beyond the headlines, this forum is for you.

This year the breakfasts will focus on four issues in which the League has recently produced reports.


Economic competitiveness is the subject on **Friday, April 11**, Sen. Ed Oliver (R-Deephaven), Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls.), John Gunyou, Minnesota Office of Technology and John Yngve, co-chair of the League study, *Compete Globally, Thrive Locally*, will provide the commentary.

On **Friday, April 18**, the subject will be tax and finance with featured guests Rep. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope), Morrie Anderson, chief of staff, Governor's Office, and Citizens League Board members Duane Benson and Gene Merriam discussing the stadium, the budget surplus and property tax reform.

The series will end on **Friday, April 25** with a look at urban growth strategies. We will be joined by Sen. Steve Morse (DFL-Dakota), Rep. Joe Opatz (DFL-St. Cloud) and Sally Evert, co-chair of the League study, *It Takes A Region to Build Livable Neighborhoods*.

Meetings will be at the Univ. Club, 420 Summit Ave., St. Paul from 7:30 to 9 a.m. Cost is $10 for members; $15 for non-members. Call 338-0791 for reservations.

Mind-Openers look at closing the education gap

 Few public policy areas receive attention and scrutiny at so many levels as does education.

Yet despite this importance, and the resources dedicated for education, arguments over education policy often focus on the margins, such as over teacher licensure or the length of the school day and school year.

Often lost in the discussion is the goal of education — to provide kids with a portfolio of skills to be productive citizens — and the elements necessary to facilitate learning.

Related to this mission is an issue too often overlooked in our school system: the achievement gap between poor and minority students compared with more well-to-do white students.

The Mind-Opener series will look at how Minnesota can close the education gap that currently exists in the state's public education system.

The series will be at the Univ. Club, 420 Summit Ave., St. Paul. Cost is $10 for members; $15 for non-members. Call 338-0791 for reservations.

**Citizens League**

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Please visit our Web site at:
http://freenet.umn.us/p/poi/citizen

The Citizens League promotes the public interest in Minnesota by involving citizens in identifying and framing critical public policy choices, forging recommendations and advocating their adoption. Suggested dues for membership are $50 for individuals and $75 for families. For more information, please call 338-0791.
Prolific output generates attention for the League

In his December “Viewpoint,” Executive Director Lyle Wray talked about the League Board’s pledge to increase the League’s impact by rolling out an “idea product” every 90 days.

Well, the League has turned out no less than five products—all in the past 45 days:

Two major study committee reports, our annual review of Minnesota’s metropolitan tax-base sharing law, and two Mind-Opener series—one on property tax reform and University regent selection—that captured news and editorial coverage in both Twin Cities newspapers. For instance, the Star Tribune, in a March 3 editorial on the League’s It Takes a Region to Build Livable Neighborhoods report, said “no group has exerted more positive influence on metropolitan affairs than the Citizens League...the League again has done a fine job of laying its regional cards on the table.”

League volunteers and staff have been testifying and meeting with Legislators on issues including student assessment, state economic development, land use and property tax reform. Toss in the Public Affairs Directory of who’s who in the policy arena and the 1996 Annual Report, and it adds up to a pretty significant outpouring of League work.

By our count, the five “products” were made possible by the efforts of 107 League volunteers, 70 community resource people who contributed their time and expertise, and lots of behind-the-scenes help from public agency staffers who provide data and technical advice to League staff.

Special thanks to study committee chairs Buzz Cummins, Pam Neary, Sally Evert and Don Fraser for their leadership. Steve Hinze, legislative analyst for House Research, merits special thanks for his technical assistance with the League’s annual tax-base sharing review.

Resource testimony educates the League’s education committee

Once again a League study committee is the beneficiary of the collective wisdom of people in the community with special expertise. Our thanks to the following resource speakers who provided graduate school-level instruction to the K-12 education committee which produced the report, Straight A’s for Minnesota’s Schools.

Beth Aune, coordinator of external consumers in the Office of Graduation Standards, Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.
Jennifer Bloom, director, Minnesota Center for Community Legal Education.
Milo Cutter, teacher, City Academy charter school.
Dan Loritz, vice president of University relations, Hamline University, and former assistant commissioner and director of governmental relations, Minnesota Department of Education.
Vicky Davis, parent, Summit-University Education Consortium.
Claudia Dengler, director of services to children and families, The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.
Vernae Hasbargen, Minnesota Rural Education Association.
Susan Heegaard, director of education policy, Office of the Governor.
Jim Hilbert, legal fellow and co-director of programs for the Institute on Race and Poverty, University of Minnesota.
Tom Kingston, president and CEO, The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.
Ted Kolderie, director, Center for Policy Studies.
Mark Larson, strategic planning specialist, Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long-Range Planning.
Don Lifto, superintendent, Northeast Metro District 916, and member, Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA).
Tom Melcher, manager of the finance division of the Office of Management Services, Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.
Van Mueller, professor of education policy and administration, University of Minnesota.
Joe Nathan, senior fellow, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, and director, Center for School Change.
Ruth Anne Olson, education consultant in program design and evaluation.
Randy Peterson, Minnesota Court of Appeals, and former member, Minnesota Senate.
Matthew Ramadan, executive director, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council.
August Rivera, principal, Wenonah Elementary School, Minneapolis.
Fr. Richard Schuler, pastor, St. Agnes Church and School.
Laura Waterman Wittstock, executive director, MIGIZI Communications.

Hunting Web-bitts

Have you visited the League’s World Wide Web site? The League has recently expanded the items on its web site. No., in addition to Take Notes and the Viewpoint from the latest Minnesota Journal, you’ll find summaries of the global competitiveness report and It Takes a Region to Build Livable Neighborhoods. You can also read the entire report, Straight A’s for Minnesota’s Schools.

Want to know what’s happening? Check out the current calendar of events.

Can’t attend all the Mind-Openers? Check the League’s web page for transcripts of selected meetings. Dan Salomone’s informative Mind-Opener presentation on property taxes is now on the web.

We also are developing a link with the PioneerPlanet’s “A’ the Capitol” web site.

So stay in touch with the League and with public affairs through our web site: http://freernet.nsp.mn.us/fpoxl/citizen.

While we’re at it, please let us know your favorite web sites.

Correction and omission

Norma Lorshbough’s name was inadvertently omitted from the list of committee members in the League report, It Takes a Region to Build Livable Neighborhoods.

In the League’s 1996 Annual Report, Medtronic was listed in the wrong contribution category. They should be included in the $2,500 to $9,999 category of corporate contributors.