
DESIRED MEETING OUTCOMES:

- Review and comment on the revised Action Plan related to Operational and Facility Decisions for the Library.

OVERVIEW:

Staff has prepared a revised action plan to guide the process of evaluating operational and facility decisions associated with the long-term future of the Library. This plan was initially reviewed by the Council at the worksession of May 28th and those comments have been incorporated into this draft. Specifically, we better defined what information will be included in the report and we added the Library Board to the review and decision-making components of this plan.

At our last Council worksession that included a joint discussion with the Library Board, the direction of the adopted goal took a dramatic turn whereby this plan was essentially abandoned. Instead, our focus seemed to change to moving forward with keeping the Library a City entity and remodeling/expanding at the current site. Rather than provide a specific action plan based on that direction, I would like to have further discussion regarding the merits of that approach based on the following information:

**Dakota County Option**

Since the last worksession, we received a response from Dakota County regarding our questions involving the possibility of turning the operation of the Library over to them. (See Attachment #1) After the Memorandum of Understanding did not proceed, staff continued discussions with Dakota County to attempt to learn what it would mean to SSP if our Library became part of the Dakota County system. These are the same items identified in the first task on the Library Action Plan. Three big takeaways from this information are:

- The LSE Study appears light on parking according to the County’s standards.
- Services “unique to the community” are possible and encouraged in the Dakota County system.
- Integrating our employees into the Dakota County system appears to be workable in terms of wages, benefits, and past practice.

While further analysis would be needed if this option were pursued, it appears to merit further attention.
Tax Savings/Resource Opportunities:

Two goals (ranked 4th and 5th by the Council) that were highly ranked were “Lower Taxes/Hit Redevelopment Harder” and “County should assume cost for dispatch, mental health, county parks, other social services, and reinvest in SSP”. If Dakota County would take over the operation of a library in SSP and finance the construction of a remodeled or new facility, we have the ability to impact both goals while freeing up resources to use in other areas (infrastructure???).

In a preliminary nature and based upon 2018 numbers, SSP levied $751,580 to support the Library. On a median-valued home ($243,000), the Library levy resulted in a tax cost of $114. If Dakota County assumed financial responsibility for library services in SSP and increased their levy by the same amount SSP levied for the Library, the net impact the 2nd year (after fiscal disparity impacts fully phase in) would reduce the tax on the SSP median-valued home by $35 a year.

If SSP shifted our entire levy to the County and then wished to shift those dollars to other city services, we would have about $364,000 available without impacting a person’s overall tax liability.

On the capital expenditure side, Option C-1 was projected at $4,494,320 as of 1/1/2017. Assuming a six percent (6%) construction inflationary factor, that number as of 1/1/22 would grow to approximately $6,025,000 (1/1/22 was chosen because if a referendum passed in November of 2020, we would need about a year to design and bid a project). If we used the LSE estimate of $6,047,500 for a new 17,000 square-foot library as of 1/1/2017, that number grows to $8,100,000. (Note: On 1/1/2019, the County estimated between $7 million and $8 million for new construction. That number would grow to $9.53 million.)

The projected tax impact of Option C-1 in 2022 dollars would mean a levy increase of over $450,000 for 20 years estimated at today’s rates. If we used the $9.53 million new construction figure, total principal and interest would average around $720,000.

The potential opportunity to save between $814,000 ($364,000 + $450,000) and $1,084,000 ($364,000 + $720,000) a year for the next 20 years warrants further exploration given the other needs facing the community.

Inadequate Parking:

- The existing Library site currently has six (6) parking stalls for staff.
- There are 22 stalls shared with the Dakota County Historical Society and City Hall. These stalls are on the Historical Society property.
- On-street parking identified in the 2016 LSE study shows five (5) spaces on 3rd Avenue North and three (3) spaces on Marie.
- LSE’s recommended Option C-1 provides for 11 “below grade” parking stalls. The existing six stalls would be lost due to the new addition to be constructed.
- Based on the City’s zoning code, a 17,000 square foot library would require 110 parking spaces. Even if we assume that is more than is needed, 11 on-site spaces, with eight (8) on-street spaces, and 22 shared stalls seems woefully inadequate.
**Site Constraints:**

The current Library site is only .47 acres or 20,473 square feet. When you consider the building footprint is proposed at 17,000 square feet, it appears we would be squeezing a lot of building onto a small site. Whatever decision is reached will be with us for a long-time. We need to be sure it is a good one!

**Referendum Concerns:**

While it is difficult to argue a referendum provides all voters a chance to express their opinion on a project, defeat of this initiative would leave us in a challenging position. First, it may be difficult to pursue a County option at this point (If SSP voters don’t support an upgraded library why would Dakota County pay to improve facilities here?). Second, we could be left to deal with the existing building to meet the community’s library needs. In 2016, LSE estimated a cost of $2.9 million to remodel the existing structure. Based on a six percent (6%) construction inflation index, that cost in 2022 would be $3.87 million. Our ability to finance that program would be challenging. Third, remodeling the existing building may not be a good way to provide for the long-term needs of the community. Therefore, a failed referendum could back us into a very uncomfortable corner.

**Other Financing Options (information provided by Ehlers):**

A referendum is not necessarily the only financing option available for a Library Improvement project. One other option would be the use of Capital Improvement Bonds. Minnesota Statutes Chapter 475.521 details the Capital Improvement approach and is what we used for the City Hall renovation. A plan is developed and if approved by 2/3 of the council, a notice is published to hold a public hearing. Within 30 days after the hearing, if a petition is received that is signed by at least 5% of the voters that voted in the last general election, the City must hold an election. If the petition is not received, the City can issue the debt without the election. There is also a limitation on the annual payment requirements for all bonds issued under that authority (0.16% of taxable market value), although that shouldn’t pose any real issues.

Abatement Bonds for a library might be another option. We would need to consult with Dorsey to be certain. No potential for referendum on that form of bonds, but there are some procedural requirements. There is also a limitation on the amount of total tax abatement the City can utilize at any one time. One note of caution is using this statutory authority for a public facility could potentially impair its use for economic development or other projects.

Finally, the City could execute a lease structure for issuance of the Bonds using its EDA, or without the EDA by using Certificates of Participation. Those bonds would not be subject to referendum or petition. The lease payments made by the City to secure the bonds would need to be subject to annual appropriation. Because the bonds would not be G.O. they would come at higher interest cost (typically rated one notch below G.O. rating for a facility like a library) and higher costs of issuance.
**Community Engagement/Accountability:**

Community input on this topic is critically important to ensure the needs of our citizens are met, to be accountable for the expenditure of public funds, and to be transparent in our actions. The draft action plan provided for the opportunity to gather critical information that can be placed in front of the community for consideration to enable meaningful engagement. It is my belief that we need to have answers to critical questions on the front-end of the process to establish credibility. While the specific engagement process was not delineated in the Action Plan, it is safe to assume that town meetings, presence at community events with information boards, newsletter articles, social media posts, fact sheets, and other options would be considered.

**Memo From City Attorney:**

At an earlier worksession, the Council asked the City Attorney to update their memo on Library operations and responsibilities (See Attachment #2). The new key piece of information is that the City cannot unilaterally decide to discontinue City Library operations. The Library Board must agree to dissolve as part of that process. Therefore, the City and Library Board need to work together to ensure the needs of the community are met.

**Other Partnership Opportunities:**

In our goal setting session, we discussed the possibility of partnering with the Dakota County Historical Society on a joint project. Recent information indicates this may be a remote possibility given the immediate needs of the existing structure and the County’s lack of an appetite for a larger project here or elsewhere.

Another option that was mentioned during the Discover Together SSP process was the possibility of working with SSP School District and Dakota County Social Services to address various community needs such as a pre-K literacy program, more accessibility to social services for SSP residents in need, more community meeting room space, health care accessibility, and other possible options. While those discussions have been cursory in nature, they seem to be worth exploring if we can address a broader need spectrum in the City.

**Site Options:**

While still very preliminary, the three obvious site options we have discussed today are:
1. The existing site
2. 7th Avenue area
3. The Jefferson site

Each site has its pros and cons. The action plan would delve deeper into these and other potential options.

**Library Board Independence Concerns:**

At the last worksession, we reviewed the Library Board’s response to past questions from the City Council and their opinion as to the best course of action. (See Attachment #3) The
Library Board’s involvement in this process cannot be overstated. They raise valid concerns and their desire for a quality outcome for the community is undeniable.

**Discover Together SSP Summary:**

There has been some discussion about incorporating Discover Together South St. Paul information into this process. **Attachment #4** is the Phase I Summary Report.

**Preservation of 1927 Library Building:**

Preservation of the 1927 building is an important factor to many people in the Community. In past discussions on this topic, the Council also seems to favor preservation. Obviously, if we remodel at the current site, that issue is addressed. However, if we were to choose a new site, finding a re-use for the 1927 building would become a priority. That use could be a city function, another public/quasi-public, or a private user. As you may recall, we have retained Wold & Associates for a space study analysis of City Hall and Public Works. We also have them ready to give us some costs to rebuild the south wall and renovate the space. Depending on the final user, those could be City costs or picked up by a new user (maybe we provide an incentive on the transfer of title in exchange for approved rehab work and appropriate provisions to ensure the preservation of the building.)

**Recommendation:**

Staff’s recommendation is to stay the course as presented in the revised Action Plan for the Library. While this process will not occur quickly, it is warranted given the myriad of implications any decision will have on the community. As policy makers, you have the final call. If you feel another course of action is more appropriate, we should attempt to define it at Monday’s worksession and staff will pursue the direction you set.

**SOURCE OF FUNDS:**

At this time, no dollar impact is projected pending a decision on the course of action to be chosen.
June 13, 2019

Dear Joel,

Thank you for your email of May 6, 2019 requesting some specific information about Dakota County Library operations and standards to aid in the City’s evaluation of whether to seek a closer partnership with the Dakota County Library. In what follows I will provide information in response to the specific topics or questions you identified (your question is in bold, the County response is in italics).

In each case, I want to emphasize that I am providing information about various aspects of the Dakota County Library only, and not attempting to assess how this compares to library services or facilities in the City, or to draw any conclusions about what the City should do, or to create any inferences about what the County would do if presented with a partnership proposal at some point by the City. I do hope that the information below is useful to the City’s evaluation and decision-making process.

County Standards for a Library related to square footage of the facility, parking requirements, accessibility, and any other important site features required by Dakota County.

Size: Assuming a facility that is similarly sized to Inver Glen, Pleasant Hill and Farmington libraries it can be assumed that the facility would be about 16,000 to 18,000 sq. ft. with 12,000 to 14,000 sq. ft. for the library proper and 4,000 sq. ft. for Entry, Common meeting room and restrooms.

Parking Requirements: We are required to meet local zoning ordinances, however we estimate at least 45 stalls, but potentially going up to 70, depending on meeting room size and use expectations.

Accessibility: Accessibility requirements would be installed per the building code and are included in the design.

Application of those standards to the current SSP Library site. (I would think the 2016 LSE study would be the basis for applying the County’s standards to see if the “new addition option” is workable.)

A review of the City’s LSE study (Option C1) shows that it would result in a facility of approximately 17,000 sf with 10 or 11 underground parking stalls, in addition to 24 stalls shared with the Historical Society. That overall square footage would be consistent with County libraries in similar communities, although it is hard to say, based upon the concept designs of LSE, whether the space would work well for the standard features we are building into our County library renovations like flexible special use space (maker spaces, as an example), large accessible community meeting rooms, automated book handling systems, centralized service desks, etc. The extent to which community meeting room space is required may be influenced by availability of other nearby public spaces. The total parking available under the
An outline of a feasible process and timeline for design and construction of a library facility (remodeled or new) once SSP determines a site that is suitable to Dakota County.

New: A normal construction project schedule of a new library facility can be estimated to be about 10-12 months for design and 12 months to construct. Timing for the construction would ideally coincide with summer construction periods, if not the construction duration would increase appropriately.

Remodeled: The remodeling construction schedule of an existing facility will be determined by the extent of needed improvements. For purposes of this question, it can be roughly assumed that design would require 10 months and construction would require 10 months. However, this timing is highly dependent on the complexity of the remodel.

The ability of SSP to “enhance” the facility to meet local needs/expectations.

The County designs a library to meet the needs of a modern facility with features that are consistent with other libraries in the system. A design team is assembled that includes capital projects and library staff that develop a program for the facility which is then reviewed and adopted by the County Board.

If a City wishes to add features that are to be included beyond the County determined features the City can request they be added. In the past those additions have been negotiated for scope and cost with the City providing funding for the additions. Depending on the size, scope and cost, on-going maintenance costs can be required of the City to sustain the requested features.

General comment: time frames for design are for standard County-led process. This would allow for SSP to perhaps have representation on the core team but would NOT include time for City approvals at any phases- only County Board action.

Opportunities to create services unique to the SSP library site versus other libraries within the Dakota County system.

Dakota County Library (DCL) maintains a balance between system-wide services and local. It is the expectation of each branch manager and branch staff in DCL to develop and maintain close ties to the community in which each library is located. This may include partnering with government entities or other community groups. This close connection allows the manager and staff to develop programs and services which meet the needs and interest of the community. This includes events as well as the collection of materials for customers to borrow. In several current DCL locations, an active and supportive ‘Friends of the Library’ group plays an important role in supporting and advising on local programming. Friends groups support their library financially by hosting book sales and also generally raise awareness of library services.

DCL does have centralized purchasing and processing of materials. This allows for a more efficient delivery of service across the nine locations but a process is in place for staff to suggest specific items for
their location. Staff are encouraged to do so. In addition DCL selectors respond to direct requests from customers.

Dakota County Library administration develops program series which take place at most locations such as Silver Teas, Summer Discovery and computer classes. Managers have input on if and when they hold these system events. However this does not take away the ability for each manager to plan events and programs that would be unique to a single location. It is expected that branch managers and staff develop programs and events that address local needs which align with the mission of the Library.

Details relating to the integration of SSP Library employees into the Dakota County system (wages, benefits, hours of work, duties, etc.)

Dakota County has a history of successfully transitioning City staff into County positions when a function has moved to the County; one example is the integration of staff from the City of Lakeville when the County assumed responsibility for the Lakeville license center. Much further back, Hastings city library employees became County employees when they joined the system. While it would be premature to attempt to provide any specific information relating to individual positions, it appears that South St. Paul Library staff positions are compensated within the ranges provided for DCL staff. Dakota County’s 2019 pay ranges for typical positions in the Dakota County Library System, along with a summary of employee health benefits and paid time off programs, are included as an attachment. For any specific questions relating to this information, please contact Andy Benish, Director of Employee Relations.

Details regarding the transfer of assets to Dakota County (book collections, equipment, etc.)

If South St. Paul Library were to become part of Dakota County Library, all materials for public checkout, shelving, equipment for public and staff use, and furnishings would become the property of Dakota County.

A commitment on the part of Dakota County to maintain a library in SSP of like kind/quality as contemplated at the outset of this study (we realize time may change what actually constitutes a “library” but we would want to be treated on the same basis as other jurisdictions of similar size).

Dakota County has not formalized any commitment to maintain libraries in any of the cities in which DCL now operates. The County library system has operated for 50 years and in that time has never closed a facility (although it has relocated within a city, in the case of Hastings).

I hope this information is helpful to you and the City in your evaluation of the City Library facility and operations. Please feel free to call if you have questions or need additional information.

Matt Smith
County Manager
Dakota County
TO: Joel Hanson, City Administrator  
FROM: Kori Land & Aaron Price, City Attorney’s Office  
DATE: May 29, 2019  
RE: Creation and Control of City Library

ISSUES

1. What is the library’s relationship to the city?  
2. What are the city’s duties and powers regarding the library?  
3. How should library funds be handled?  
4. Who employs library employees? Can library employees join a union?  
5. Is it possible to convey the library building and real estate to another entity and merge the library operations with the County?

Many questions have arisen about the operations of the city library, how it fits within the city’s structure, and who has power and control of its activities, operations, finances, employees and buildings. This memo attempts to answer these issues, the answers to many of which are found within the Public and Multitype Libraries statute, Minn. Stat., Ch. 134.

ANALYSIS

I. The city established the library Board in accordance with state statute.

The City established the library Board (“Board”) by resolution on April 17, 1916, and set aside lots that it already owned for library use at the library’s current site on December 20, 1926. The real estate upon which the library sits is owned by the City.

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1 Mayor C.W. Clark submitted a list of nine appointees to the city council on April 6, 1916. On April 17, 1916, the council approved the appointments and created the Library Board.


3 Minn. Stat. § 134.14
When public library service was established, the council appointed a library Board made up of city residents. The library then became an agency of the city. The mayor, with the approval of the council, must continue to fill any vacancies on the Board.5

II. The South St. Paul library Board is part of city government, with independent authority over most library functions.

Even though the library is an agency of the city, the Board has complete authority and control over library funds, personnel, grounds, and buildings and does not need council approval to take action in these areas. The only exceptions are land acquisition and building construction, which requires Board approval and council approval.6

III. There are certain procedures for handling library funds.

The city treasurer must collect all library tax revenue and place this money in a separate account, known as the “library fund.” As stated earlier, the Board has exclusive control of all library funds, including interest, buildings, and grounds. The Board does not need the city council’s approval to make payments, rather, the treasurer must pay any expenses approved by the Board.9

It is important to note that if the city decides to renovate the library, there are no Charter provisions or statutory requirements under Minnesota Statute, Chapter 134 (Public and Multitype Libraries) requiring prior approval from the voters to delegate funding to renovate the library.

IV. While the AFSCME contract currently excludes library employees from membership, the employees have the right to join a union.

The Board employs all library employees, but since the library is an agency of the city, all library employees are city employees. Nationally, only about 1 in 3 library occupations are unionized, however, library employees have the right to join a union. All “public employees have the right to … join labor or employee organizations.” The definition of public employee generally includes “any person appointed or employed by a public employer.” “Public employer” includes

5 Minn. Stat. § 134.09, subd. 1
6 Minn. Stat. § 134.11, subd. 2.
7 Id.
8 Id.
11Minn. Stat. § 179A.06, subd. 2.
12Minn. Stat. § 179A.03, subd. 14.
“the governing body of a political subdivision or its agency or instrumentality which has final budgetary approval authority for its employees.”

Library employees would not necessarily have to vote for unionization to become union members, but library employees would likely have to petition or show other interest in unionizing. The Bureau of Mediation Services would then determine what unit is appropriate. Traditionally, the Bureau defers to the parties’ past labor agreements if there is a particular union that wants to include or exclude certain positions.

It appears that AFSCME members are the most similar to library employees in terms of work performed, benefits, and salaries, and the most likely union for library employees to join. However, the AFSCME labor agreement explicitly excludes library employees from membership.

V. Is it possible for the City to turn over all library operations and convey the real estate and library building to Dakota County?

The title to the library property is vested in and held in the name of the City of South St. Paul pursuant to Minnesota Statute, Section 134.14.

“All property given, granted, conveyed, donated, devised, or bequeathed to, or otherwise acquired by, any city or county for a public library shall vest in, and be held in the name of, the city or county and any conveyance, grant, donation, devise, bequest, or gift made to, or in the name of, any public library or library board shall be deemed to have been made directly to the city or county…”

Under Attorney General Opinion 285A, April 12, 1951, if the city’s ownership is in fee simple and not restricted by any grants, the city may sell, convey, or otherwise dispose of the “present building on the site.”

“Every city shall be a municipal corporation having the powers and rights and being subject to the duties of municipal corporations at common law. Each shall have perpetual succession, may sue and be sued, may use a corporate seal, may acquire, either within or without its corporate limits, such real and personal property as the purposes of the city may require, by purchase, gift, devise, condemnation, lease or otherwise, and may hold, manage, control, sell, convey, lease, or otherwise dispose of such property as its interests require…”

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13 Minn. Stat. § 179A.03, subd. 15.  
15 Scott County at *5; Minn. Stat. § 179A.09, subd. 1.  
16 Scott County at *7.  
17 See id.  
18 AFSCME Contract, § 2.1.  
20 Minn. Stat. § 412.211.
Additionally, Section 9.05 of the South St. Paul Charter authorizes the sale of real property by resolution upon two-thirds vote of all members of the city council.

“No real property of the city shall be disposed of except as authorized by resolution adopted by two-thirds vote of all members of the city council. The proceeds of any sale of such property shall be used as far as possible to retire any outstanding indebtedness incurred by the city in the purchase, construction or improvement of this property. If there is no such outstanding indebtedness, the city council may by resolution designate some other public use for the proceeds.”

Although authorized by law to convey or otherwise dispose of the library’s real estate and its improvements, given the Board’s authority over the operation and direction of the library, the city council cannot unilaterally decide to turn over the operations of the library to Dakota County without Board approval.

The city council could potentially move to abolish the Board or reduce the number of Board members, but it cannot do so without the Board’s approval. Upon abolishment of the Board, the council must simultaneously provide for library service by either creating a new board or joining a regional public library system. In other words, the library cannot just cease operating. Once it has been established, it must either continue as a municipal library or be absorbed into a regional public library.

Upon recommendation of a majority of any library board created under the provisions of subdivision 1, the governing body of the city or county may abolish the library board at the end of any fiscal year provided that the governing body shall simultaneously establish a successor library board of either five, seven or nine members by resolution or ordinance.

It does not appear that there is support from Dakota County to accept the transfer of library operations at this time.

In order to successfully integrate the city library into the County library system, all three entities, the city, Board and the County would need to approve of the transfer of operations.

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21 South St. Paul Charter, Section 9.05.
22 Minn. Stat. § 134.09, subd. 4.
23 Minn. Stat. §§ 134.09, subd. 1, 4; 134.201, subd. 2(1).
24 Minn. Stat., §134.09, subd. 4. However, the transfer of ownership would be contingent upon Dakota County accepting the transfer from the city. At the March 14, 2019, Dakota County Library Advisory Committee meeting, the minutes detail that “the City of South St. Paul has asked the County to explore the possibility of having South St. Paul Library join Dakota County Library, however the County would like to have certain issues resolved first before moving forward.” The South St. Paul Public Library website also provides some additional details on the potential transfer to Dakota County. “On February 19, 2019, the City Council approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dakota County regarding a study to determine the feasibility of merging with the Dakota County Library System. On March 12, 2019, Dakota County did not approve the Memorandum of Understanding, but did agree to the collection of data regarding the guiding principles in the MOU.”
AGENDA ITEM: Discussion with Library Board – Library Repair/Replacement and Status as an Independent Library

DESIRED MEETING OUTCOMES:

Initial joint discussion with the Library Board regarding the future of the South St. Paul Public Library, with continued scheduled meetings to engender a collaborative context for decision making.

OVERVIEW:

The purpose of this memo and discussion tonight is to encourage a collaborative environment with the City Council and the Library Board regarding the future of South St. Paul Public Library.

A mechanical needs/space study by LSE Architects was completed in 2016, with Option C1 presented to the Library Board as a recommendation to satisfy programmatic needs as well as basic mechanical updates, ADA requirements, etc. (See attachment as well as the board’s Essential Points for Library Renovation document.) Discussions with various community members via Discover Together meetings have focused on the possibility of a multi-use facility potentially housing the library, Lawshe Memorial Museum, social services, etc., in addition to considering a joint facility with shared meeting space and entrance with Lawshe Memorial Museum as directed by the City Council.

On February 19, 2019, the City Council approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dakota County regarding a study to determine the feasibility of merging with the Dakota County Library System. On March 12, 2019, Dakota County did not approve the Memorandum of Understanding, but did agree to the collection of data regarding the guiding principles in the MOU.

On April 25, 2019, a sub-committee of the Library Board met to outline a set of discussion points for the City Council as both groups continue to consider the implications of South St. Paul Public Library remaining an independent library within the county with associate status, or merging with the Dakota County Library System.

Points for discussion:

- In order to have all interested parties (including the Library Board, City Staff and citizens) present at the table when the library is discussed, the Library Board and City Staff request that “updates” and agenda items follow the usual procedure with a defined agenda report with identifiable topic, desired meeting outcomes, etc.
- The attached document outlining current core services provided by public libraries
• The unique aspects of South St. Paul Public Library that address services to patrons as well as those that pertain to staff and the building *(See attachment.)*
• The value of an independent city-owned and -operated public library to the community of South St. Paul and all its residents
• The Library Board was, and still is, in strong favor of Option C1 from the study completed by LSE Architects in December 2016
• Conducting a survey of stakeholders, asking their thoughts concerning the library, such as use of space, location, needs, services, etc.

ATTACHMENTS:
Option C1 of LSE Architects, Essential Points for Library Renovation, Core Services of Public Libraries, What Makes SSPPL Unique
Essential Points for Library Renovation/Rebuild

The Library Board met February 13, 2017, and prepared an initial list of essential elements for any renovation or rebuild of the South St. Paul Public Library. These are not in any particular order but do address features that the board considers mandatory for a future building/redesign project.

1. Large public meeting space/programming space and small private study rooms
2. Adaptable and flexible spaces
3. Address safety and security issues with cameras and better sightlines throughout the building
4. More private public computer experience for patrons
5. Better bathrooms and bathrooms specifically designed for children
6. ADA compliance throughout building
7. Kid-friendly spaces
8. Outdoor spaces/green spaces for gatherings, storytimes, etc.
9. Well-lit parking and staff parking
10. Plug-ins and more electrical options for patrons with devices as well as for staff for programming
11. Better display space and arrangement of materials; updated lobby
12. Staff work area
13. Options for displaying art
14. Utilize the 1927 building, highlighting the entrance through an outdoor space or other options, retaining the basic unique character of the original library building
15. Accessibility to the library via a central location and bus line options
Core Public Library Services

1. The public library is a welcoming place to all people of the community, regardless of age, status, race, creed, etc.

2. The library is a community hub where many activities take place, including the circulation of materials (physical, online or electronic) free of charge, free use of public computers and high-speed Internet, free use of meeting rooms, and free access to educational as well as entertainment materials.

3. Staff are a valuable informational resource for basic reference questions and in-depth research in addition to providing readers’ advisory for patrons’ reading pleasure.

4. Libraries educate their residents to be informed citizens, provide legal research materials, offer assistance regarding careers or job searching, and maintain collections for lifelong learning and educated decision-making and life choices.

5. Libraries promote cultural awareness through materials, displays and programming.

6. Libraries are a central clearinghouse of information regarding the local community (newspapers, magazines, services, community organizations, etc.)

7. Libraries encourage a love of reading, learning and literacy through programs and materials specifically designed for youth.

8. Libraries provide nonjudgmental programs for patrons to express their creativity or learn a new skill.

9. Libraries provide a space to reflect, study, work, engage with other people, or just be.
What Makes South St. Paul Public Library Unique
May 2019

- **Local control = freedom and responsibility**
  - Local control comes with fewer levels of administrative oversight, which allows us to implement new collections, services, policies, and procedures with efficiency and less red tape via the Library Board in response to changing community needs.

- **Staff have strong ownership of their work and enthusiastically respond to the variety of duties and cross training a small independent library demands of its employees to serve its community. Rather than constant oversight by other departments, we choose the vendors that best fit the purchase, we screen all applicants for our positions vs. just the portion the county’s HR person rates highly, we control our own communications vs. people who don’t really know what we do or how a library functions, etc. This leads to better job satisfaction because we’re empowered by our independence and a supportive, tight staff.**

- **Our collections are driven by individuals who have frequent, direct contact with community members, which means we can tailor our purchases to the kinds of items they’re interested in, regardless if they make a formal request for purchase or not. The “above and beyond” aspect sets us apart from the county. We’re essentially performing the same duties as county staff, but with personal touches that make people feel seen, supported, and appreciated.**

- **County libraries do not have local control over their collections in the same manner. They can suggest purchases, but all purchases are made centrally. Because of this, we have many unique items in our collection that DCL does not own; as of July 2018, 43% of SSP’s materials were the only copy in the county. This allows us to fill approximately 39,000 requests from other libraries in the metro and state for our materials annually; we are a net lender.**

- **Local control = innovation and creativity**
  - Library staff work closely with each other as well as other city staff and community members to bring one-of-a-kind programming, such as community preschool storytimes at Kaposia Elementary and Lincoln Center to facilitate school readiness, the Sip and Spell Adult Spelling Bee at Croatian Hall, our Librarian on Wheels outreach program, and our “A Book for Every Child” philanthropy for Neighbors, Inc. Our Play and Learn Station, created through an LSTA grant, is much beloved by our patrons. We’re invested in the community we serve and focus all our efforts on SSP, rather than attempting to replicate programs or experiences in various communities throughout the county.

- **Staff recognize the need in our community for services other than core library services and are committed to filling the gaps in local social services through partnering with Ally Supportive Services, undergoing training on the administration of Narcan, etc.**
• Our displays, signs, posters, etc., are created in house rather than through a central communications office and reflect a fresh, modern look even if we are displaying objects of historical significance.

• **Local control = a different experience**

• The accessibility of professional staff for patrons leads to personalized assistance that spans years in the profession. People will call or stop by with reference questions even when they planned to get materials from a different library because they felt they would get better help from SSP staff than at other locations, based on their previous attempts.

• Our library was built with the premise that every community needs a public library, and, as such, it is one of the few historic buildings left in town. While the “vintage” aspect of our building inhibits some things, it does make many visitors feel comfortable and appreciative of slower times where face-to-face contact was the only way to receive service. Its unique features distinguish it from the more generic one-level libraries throughout the suburban metro. Moreover, the fact that we’ve got furniture and shelving that’s older than some of the library buildings nearby is a testament to the quality of materials and workmanship that was used in the past.

• With our library centrally located with other city services, accessible via public transportation, we serve those who need us most nestled among subsidized housing, low-income housing, etc.

• Our Library Board, which is a governing board, is made up of members that live in the community with a vested interest in what happens at their library, rather than being a member from a different community on a county board.

• As an independent affiliate, we have access to all that MELSA (Metropolitan Library Services Agency) has to offer, including Legacy funding and programming options. With city funding, residents know that their tax dollars are providing a library with early literacy programming for young families; public Internet, Wi-Fi, and physical materials for all; and staff to help local people apply for jobs, learn new skills, and become educated, productive citizens.
Discover Together: South St. Paul
Phase One Report
April 30, 2017

Executive Summary

This report describes the work completed and knowledge gained over Phase One of the Discover Together: South St. Paul project. Discover Together, an initiative of the Dakota County Community Services Division, is a place-based initiative that aims to engage communities around the co-creation of strategies that address the needs of Dakota County residents. In late 2016, the city of South St. Paul was selected as the first site in this effort to provide more experiences within the County of working in a generative way with communities. Generative approaches to community engagement and program delivery emphasize co-creating strategies with community residents while recognizing the multi-dimensional challenges that individuals and families face. The initiative began in January 2017.

The Future Services Institute at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota is facilitating this process, drawing heavily upon the patterns and practices developed by a global community of systems’ change facilitators using the Art of Hosting approach. This approach seeks to recognize and harness the complexity of social systems, facilitating engagement across a diverse set of actors in a system. As such, it provides solid building blocks for developing the generative capacity of human service organizations as articulated by the Health and Human Services Value Curve.

This report provides an overview of the Discover Together: South St. Paul project to date and introduction to the next phase of the project. The specific goals of the report are as follows:

1. Provide information on the historic, economic, and social context of South St. Paul
2. Detail what team members learned about the South St. Paul community during the first phase of the project
3. Describe how the knowledge gained during Phase One informs the strategies that will be implemented in Phase Two.

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1 This report was written by Robin Phinney, Research Associate at the Future Services Institute. For questions or comments, please contact rphinney@umn.edu or 612-624-1206.
2 For more about this approach see http://www.artofhosting.org/. Considerable expertise about this approach has developed at the University of Minnesota where significant change has resulted in curriculum, operations, and strategy. A summary of the approach and impact at the University is published in an e-book Cultivating Change in the Academy at http://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/155523.
4 This report does not discuss the lessons learned for Dakota County with respect to replicating the approach taken in this site in other communities; information related to replication will be contained elsewhere.
In addition, a series of appendices elaborate on the participation of South St. Paul residents in Dakota County programs (Appendix A), the Dakota County initiatives and contracts within South St. Paul (Appendix B), the work completed during the first phase (Appendix C) and the tools use to gather information from and about the community (Appendix D).

To summarize the key findings, Phase One of the Discover Together: South St. Paul project revealed important insights about the community. South St. Paul is a unique city with a myriad of strengths and challenges. Its affordable housing stock, strong public schools, considerable public space, and small-town feel create a draw for young families. It is a community with many long-time residents, a robust sense of community loyalty and pride, and a strong independent streak with respect to governance. Yet the community faces multiple challenges, from a vulnerable economic base to racial and generational divisions within the community. Civic leaders in South St. Paul have been active in attempting to address these challenges, creating multiple opportunities to build upon existing programs and practices in order to address areas of concern. While there is some skepticism and hesitation regarding the Discover Together: South St. Paul project, there is also excitement and interest among both civic leaders and community members.
Part 1: Background

There is increasing recognition within the public sector that social and economic factors shape the outcomes of individuals and communities. Healthy individuals – and by extension, thriving communities – require stable housing and jobs, a livable wage, access to nutritious food, quality education, social support, and a safe environment.

In Minnesota, however, not all individuals have access to the socioeconomic resources that generate strong outcomes. These social determinants of health (depicted in the graphic) are unequally distributed across the population, with disadvantages concentrated among individuals and communities of color.\(^5\) Such disadvantages also tend to cluster together: unstable housing often exists alongside food scarcity, lack of educational access, and safety concerns. Addressing needs along one dimension requires understanding the interplay between different factors and responding to individuals in a holistic manner.

Discover Together: South St. Paul grew from the recognition that pockets of concentrated disadvantage exist within Dakota County that likely hinder its goal of promoting health and wellbeing among individuals and communities. Moreover, the complexity of problems facing individuals and communities make solutions difficult to develop. Traditional models of service delivery, which emphasize compliance with categorical policy and program regulations, are limited in their ability to address multiple dimensions of need.

Discover Together: South St. Paul builds from the belief that no single policy, government organization, or program can solve the complexity of the problems confronting individuals and communities living in areas of concentrated disadvantage. Rather, public agencies, staff and leaders must engage authentically with community residents to co-create localized strategies and tactics that address the multiple socioeconomic challenges and opportunities faced by residents.

To address the needs of its residents in a holistic and generative way, the Dakota County board approved in late 2016 a place-based initiative focused on developing more effective strategies for assisting people in need (technically, those living below 200% of the federal poverty line). The

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\(^5\) "The Unequal Distribution of Health in the Twin Cities." October 2010. A study commissioned by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation.
initiative seeks to engage individuals and communities around the co-creation of strategies. This initiative, subsequently named Discover Together, is initially focusing on the city of South St. Paul during 2017 and has four phases.

- Phase One was exploratory, focused on building authentic relationships and understanding of issues present in the South St. Paul community through initial interviews with individuals throughout the city and formation of a Core Team to help ground the project in this community.
- Phase Two focuses on hosting engagement events with the community to identify assets and needs.
- Phase Three emphasizes the development and implementation of small responses (prototypes) to address the needs identified in the second phase
- Phase Four synthesizes and shares with the community and the County lessons learned over the previous year.

This report summarizes what County staff and the Core Team learned during Phase One.
Part 2: Historical, Economic, and Social Context of South St. Paul

The city of South St. Paul was established in 1887, located at what was previously the site of the Sioux Village of Kaposia. The city grew dramatically in its early years, due in large part to the development of a railway route along the riverfront area and the related growth of the stockyards and meatpacking industry. The location of the city made it an ideal midway point for transporting cattle between the western plains and the city of Chicago. By 1890, South St. Paul boasted grocery and hardware stores, butcher shops, clothing shops, restaurants, pool halls, bakeries, and over 2,200 people.6

As the meatpacking industry grew, so did the city. Two large national meatpacking companies, Swift & Company and Armour & Company, opened plants in South St. Paul in 1897 and 1919, respectively. By the mid-1950s, a vast majority of workers in the city worked in some aspect of the livestock industry. The availability of jobs attracted a large number of European immigrants, including Polish, Serbian, Croatian, and Romanian immigrants – groups that remain important parts of the community today. In addition to the jobs it provided, the meatpacking industry became engrained in the social and cultural fabric of the community, with industry leaders maintaining a high level of civil and financial investment in the city itself.

Perhaps as a result, the decline of the industry in the late 1960s and 1970s had a profound impact on the economic wellbeing of the community – an impact that was compounded by the construction of Highway 56 and relocation of the railroad to the Mississippi’s west bank, as well as redevelopment activities that led to the demolition of historic buildings. After Swift & Company closed its meatpacking operations in 1969 and Armour & Company closed its facility in 1979, no single industry emerged to replace the once vibrant meatpacking industry.

Since the decline of the meatpacking industry, the city has been active in redeveloping the areas that once housed stockyards and meatpacking plants in order to accommodate new industrial development, as well as promoting commercial development along Southview Blvd.7 Today, the major employers in the city include American Bottling, Sportman’s Guide, SSP School District No. 6, Stockyards Meat Packing Co., Twin City Bagels, and Waterous Company.8

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Demographic Characteristics of South St. Paul Residents

Today, the population of South St. Paul is just over 20,400. Most residents live in families and the vast majority have a high school diploma or higher. Nine out of 10 South St. Paul residents are born in the U.S., with most foreign-born residents hailing from Latin America (56 percent), Asia (18 percent), and Africa (14 percent). The racial demographics of the city tend to mirror those of Dakota County as a whole: a majority of South St. Paul residents are white, with small but growing populations of African American, Latino, and mixed-race individuals.

Residents in South St. Paul exhibit high need, relative to Dakota County and Minnesota as a whole. The city has higher rates of poverty and unemployment, as well as a lower median income. In addition, a higher percentage of residents receive public assistance in the form of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), SNAP/Food Stamps, and cash assistance.9

Table 1. Demographic Change in South St. Paul City between 2000 and 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000 Estimates</th>
<th>2015 Estimates</th>
<th>Percentage -/+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>20,167</td>
<td>20,413</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma or higher (%)</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree or higher (%)</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Demographics and Nativity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native to the United States (%)</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>-2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born (%)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (%)</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>-9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American (%)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>284.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino (of any race) (%)</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving Social Security (%)</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>-6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving Supplemental Security Income (%)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>208.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving SNAP/Food Stamps (%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving cash assistance (%)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>146.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income and Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty rate</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>116.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in labor force</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>158.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$45,216</td>
<td>$55,607</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


9 Data are drawn from: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. For additional demographic information on South St. Paul, please see: “Basic Information on South St. Paul” memo to the Discover Together working group, dated 2/21/2017.
As Table 1 shows, the city has experienced considerable demographic change over the past 15 years. This table shows that the population in 2015 (Column 2) is only slight larger than in 2000 (Column 1) and rates of educational attainment have increased. The data reveal large changes in racial demographics and nativity. In 2000, fewer residents were black or African American or of Hispanic origin. The percentage of foreign born residents has increased. In addition, indicators of economic hardship - poverty and unemployment – have become more pronounced since 2000.

**Dakota County Community Services “Footprint” in South St. Paul**

Individuals and organizations within South St. Paul come into contact with the Dakota County Community Services Department in several ways: through the program participation of individuals and families, through county contracts to local organizations, and through county-wide initiatives that impact the city and its residents. Collectively, these contacts are referred to as the Dakota County Community Services “Footprint” in South St. Paul. Because South St. Paul residents have relatively high levels of need, individuals and families are particularly likely to come into contact with Dakota County Community Service programs. Maps created using data from 2017 (shown in Appendix A) indicate that participation in county-administered programs extends across the city and is concentrated along its eastern edge, just west of Concord Street and north of Highway 494.

In addition to participation in individual and family programs, residents of South St. Paul also come into contact with Dakota County Community Services through initiatives, such as the Birth to Age 8 Initiative and the SHIP (Statewide Health Improvement Partnership), as well as county contracts. Appendix B provides information on Dakota County Community Services contracts with organizations in the city (Table 1), as well as county initiatives that impact South St. Paul (Table 2). These contracts and initiatives target many different subpopulations, including low-income persons, children and families, schools, veterans, and older adults.

The footprint reveals important areas of contact and collaboration between Dakota County and individuals and organizations in South St. Paul. Yet while parts of Dakota County intersect with city stakeholders on specific projects and issues, individual parts of the County have operated somewhat disconnectedly from one another despite a common focus on the community of South St. Paul. In addition, there is the recognition from the county side that the relationship between Dakota County and the city of South Saint Paul has historically ebbed and flowed; at times there has been healthy skepticism regarding the intent and goals of the county.

Dakota County is fostering a new way of working based on a collective impact mindset and adaptive leadership approach where all perspectives are considered with a commitment to cross-sector engagement, as well as a willingness to take smart risks. With Discover Together: South St. Paul, there is an opportunity to re-calibrate the relationship and launch a new era of partnership where the partners grow in understanding and develop shared ideas/goals to a) magnify and leverage assets of the community, b) build and invest in relationships across differences and c) identify resources to act on ideas from all parts of the community to help South St. Paul continue to thrive.

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Part 3: Work Completed over Phase One (January – April 2017)

The first phase of the Discover Together: South St. Paul project focused on building authentic relationships with the South St. Paul community by engaging key actors, establishing a Core Team to shape a purpose statement and set of guiding principles, and identifying community assets and challenges. To this end, Future Services Institute staff facilitated a series of meetings and, along with Dakota County Community Services leadership, reached out to community members through individual and group interviews. Those with appropriate interest and background were invited to participate in the projects’ Core Team. This Team is reflective of various parts of the community, and provides way for the initiative to be informed by knowledge from the whole community system. Appendix C provides a more detailed description of the work completed over Phase One.

**Purpose Statement**

A central goal of Phase One was to develop a purpose statement for the initiative, and agree on a name. In a participatory project such as this one, it is important that all members of the Core Team share a role in developing the name, purpose statement, and clear set of principles to shape how the initiative will operate. The group selected the name Discover Together: South St. Paul, a corresponding logo (shown on the bottom of each page of this report), and a purpose statement and set of guiding principles.

The initiative's purpose is:

> To discover how community members, community agencies, and Dakota County can continue to work together to invest in making South St. Paul a great place for all who live, learn, work, and play here today and into the future.

The principles that guide the work are:

- **Magnify and leverage assets of the community**
- **Build and invest in relationships across difference**
- **Identify resources to act on ideas from all parts of the community to support our purpose**
- **Believe that government can co-create capacity and broader solutions to community-wide challenges by helping to facilitate community conversations and enabling collective action**
- **Play together and find joy in this work**

**Outreach to the South St. Paul Community**

Phase One activities focused heavily on outreach to community members. Team members hosted and attended a series of group meetings, including a community engagement event held at a high school in the city (called Re-Imagine MN) and a brown bag with Dakota County employees who live in South St. Paul. Members of the group conducted site exploration in a predominantly Latino area of South St. Paul, engaged in a series of informal conversations with Latino leaders, and talked with young residents during a meeting of the Mayor’s Youth Task Force. In addition, group members conducted individual or small-group interviews with 20 prominent community members, such as city officials (including the current and past mayor), school district officials, staff from a prominent nonprofit organization, a local historian, leaders of different faith communities, and community members representing diverse communities within South St. Paul.
Part 4: Knowledge Gained During Phase One

Analysis of the informal conversations, events, site visits, and individual and small-group interviews revealed several important themes in the community.

- **A Great City for Young Families**

The young families of South St. Paul, as well as the resources and characteristics that appeal to young families, were frequently cited as some of the most important assets of the city. Conversations revealed that young families are drawn to South St. Paul due to its affordable housing, high quality schools, ample public space (including the parks and accessibility to the river), and the "small town feel" of the community. Residents find the small town feel of the city – where commutes are short and neighbors known one another – to be unique, especially due to South St. Paul's proximity to a much larger city.

- **Community Loyalty and Pride**

Another asset repeatedly discussed was the loyalty and community pride present in the city. Residents mentioned that children grow up in the schools and then return to the city to raise their own children. Long-time residents (termed “B & R's,” or “Born and Raised”) possess a deeply-embedded loyalty to the city, which can be home to multiple generations of the same family. This loyalty and pride is evident in a saying that was frequently expressed in conversations – referring to the high school mascot, we often heard, “Once a Packer, always a Packer.”

- **Concern for Fellow Community Members**

High levels of volunteering and engagement around the needs of community residents were also cited as important community assets. Perhaps owing to the deep sense of community loyalty and pride: “People care deeply about each other and the community.” This is evidenced by many people in the community devoting time to volunteering and resources to food and clothing donation drives for those in need. Such activities have created links between various civic and religious organizations in the city.

- **Growing Poverty and Need**

South St. Paul residents also discussed the challenges confronting the city, including the limited ability of the city to address the needs of families living in poverty. Participants reported that within the schools, the number of children qualifying for free and reduced lunch has increased in recent years. Families living in poverty have multiple needs (resources for housing, food, health services, etc.) that the city and community struggle to address on their own. The separation of services from one another, coupled with the transportation barriers that many face, make it difficult for individuals and families to access the services that do exist. The needs of families are acutely felt in the public schools, where many services and resources for families in need are now located.
• **Vulnerable Economic and Business Foundation**

Business development was also referenced as a challenge, though some residents did mention business development (particularly the business park) as a strength. Economic development within the city has historically been associated with the tearing down, rather than the building up, of commercial and industrial space. There is a general sense that the community lacks an adequate number of jobs, commercial and entertainment space, and that there is a lack of diversity among existing businesses and business owners.

• **Absence of Community Gathering Spaces**

Many residents struggled to identify important community gathering spaces. Some referenced the Cro, festivals like Kaposia Days, sporting events such as hockey games and high school football games, and the Central Square. Some restaurants and coffee shops were mentioned (including Angelos Pizza and the Black Sheep coffee shop), but in general there is a perceived absence of restaurants in town. Compounding this lack of physical gathering spaces is the absence of other types of avenues for shared experiences, such as a weekly or monthly newspaper for the city. In addition, there are few gathering spaces that bridge racial or generational divisions within the community. Although residents found it difficult to identify community spaces, they tended to have more ease identifying important community members.

• **Divisions within the Community**

Interviews, site visits, and participatory events suggest that many residents perceive South St. Paul to be a community divided along racial and generational lines. Although racial and class divisions often exist alongside on another, racial divisions emerged as more salient than class divisions in this community. Such racial divisions tend to line up along generational lines, with “new families” representing Latino and African American families (or at least, families that include greater racial and ethnic diversity) and “old families” representing older white households. The growing diversity of community appears to be something that older generations in the community are wrestling with more than the youth. Moreover, perceptions of the extent of the racial and generational divisions in the community vary across individuals. In conversations with residents, racial divisions often surfaced in the context of “change”. Participants mentioned that the city is changing in terms of its demographics and that this change is uncomfortable to some city residents. Divisions along racial and generational lines are magnified by the physical separation of groups, with older white families clustered in the northern part of the city and newer, non-white families concentrated closer to the south. It is noteworthy that several community members were unable to name prominent members of the recent ethnic communities.

• **Perceptions of Dakota County Government**

Some members of the South St. Paul community appear to view the Discover Together project – and to a larger sense, Dakota County – with hesitation and some mistrust. This sentiment was not overtly expressed in interviews, but rather was experienced by some members of the Core Team engaged in community outreach. When asked about any concerns regarding the project, participants mentioned that past interactions between the city and county have been complicated and have not always led to significant action, as well as a perception that the city possesses both an independent streak and historical commitment to acting on its own.
• **Fear and Anxiety among Certain Subgroups**

It is also noteworthy that some residents expressed alarm and trepidation over a series of recent local and national events. The December 2016 murder/suicide of a South St. Paul couple (one of whom was an elementary school teacher in the city) appears to have deeply affected some members of the community. This event, alongside a February 2017 controversy involving a registered Level 3 sex offender living in South St. Paul, likely contributes to the sense of anxiety that some interview participants expressed about sexual predators within the community. In addition, recent national events involving the Trump administration’s strict stance on illegal immigration have created a sense of fear within the Latino community surrounding deportation, the breakup of families, and of the government in general. Such sentiments are not defining features of the South St. Paul community, yet are important contextual dimensions that must be recognized and navigated moving forward.

• **Hopes for Discover Together: South St. Paul**

South St. Paul residents offered multiple ideas for the Discover Together: South St. Paul project. Some of these ideas were general: focus on underserved communities; enhance communication between the county and South St. Paul residents; build relationships; help identify needs; and promote community. Other ideas were more specific: align efforts around the city’s comprehensive plan; cooperate in projects involving early childhood education; increase the county’s interaction between businesses and the local Chamber of Commerce; promote effective and efficient transportation; and help revitalize low-income housing. Several ideas emphasized the county’s role in assisting with economic development, including bringing more businesses (industrial and commercial) into the city.

As these themes suggest, members of the South St. Paul community recognize that there are multiple areas of need that must be addressed to enable individuals and families within South St. Paul to thrive. It is important to note that some of these areas of need fit squarely within the framework provided by the *social determinants of health* (housing stability, employment and income stability, etc. – see graphic on page 2). Yet others reflect residents’ unique understanding of the assets and vulnerabilities of South St. Paul. As the project progresses, it will be important to allow residents’ own conceptions of the dimensions of a thriving community to continue to emerge. Allowing local frameworks to come forward and shape action will yield prototypes that are more directly tied to community assets and challenges, and more widely understood and accepted by community members.
Part 5. Applying the Knowledge Gained to Phase Two (Community Engagement)

Lessons learned from the community outreach, informal discussions, and semi-structured interviews conducted in Phase One inform the Phase Two community engagement strategies in the following ways.

First, the knowledge gained in Phase One directs the attention of Core Team members to particular areas of concern, as well as opportunities, in South St. Paul. It is clear that economic development is a salient concern of many residents – one that is shared by those in government. Addressing the service and resource needs of families in poverty is also a prominent worry of both community members and civic leaders. The lack of community gathering space, coupled with the racial and generational divisions within the community, are additional areas for potential focus.

These areas of concern are both recognized and being acted upon by community and civic leaders in South St. Paul. As a result, there are multiple opportunities to build upon the activities already in place to address issues related to economic development, families in poverty, racial and generational divisions, and sense of community.

Second, the knowledge gained provides important contextual information about the community. South St. Paul is a unique city – its small-town feel within a large metropolitan region, coupled with strong schools, ample public space, and affordable housing, provide a draw to young families. The city has a strong sense of pride and loyalty, especially among long-time residents and families, and a history of engagement within the community. All of these strong features of the community can be leveraged as the Discover Together: South St. Paul project works with the community to enhance its existing strengths and address its concerns.

Yet the community is also changing, and these changes have in some instances led to deepening divisions within the community. Both local and national events contribute to a sense of fear and anxiety among some residents. And a strong independent streak coupled with past city-county interactions creates some skepticism about the Discover Together initiative among South St. Paul residents. It will be important to recognize and navigate these dimensions as the project moves forward.

Third, although the knowledge gained during Phase One informs the activities of Phase Two, it does not necessarily dictate or directly map onto particular community engagement strategies. Indeed, there is much more to learn about the community’s strengths and needs. During Phase Two, the Core Team will continue to gather information about assets and opportunities as it expands its engagement with the community in South St. Paul and incorporates additional voices. Team members will harvest and analyze information gained during engagement activities during Core Team meetings and in discussions with one another. This information will directly shape the prototypes – or small responses – for action developed during Phase Three.
Appendix A

Maps of Program Participation in Dakota County Programs (2017)

Figure 1. Participation in Veterans Service Programs

Figure 2. Participation in Social Service Programs
Appendix A (continued)

Figure 3. Participation in Public Health Programs

Figure 4. Participation in Community Corrections Programs
Figure 5. Participation in Employment and Economic Assistance Programs
Appendix B:

Dakota County “Footprint” in South St. Paul

The following tables describe the list of Dakota County contracts with organization in South St. Paul (Table 1) and list of Dakota County programs that impact individuals and organizations within South St. Paul (Table2). Tables created by Kathleen Simon, Manager of Strategic Projects and Performance Measurement at Dakota County.

Table 1. List of Dakota County Contracts with South St. Paul Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENTITY (SERVICE)</th>
<th>NEIGHBORS, INC. (Emergency Cash Assistance)</th>
<th>NEIGHBORS, INC. (Volunteer Driver Services)</th>
<th>Comprehensive Services, Inc. (Group Residential Housing Services)</th>
<th>Ally Supportive Services, LLC (Group Residential Housing Services)</th>
<th>Everyday Living, LLC (Group Residential Housing Services)</th>
<th>Fraterr Recovery Homes (Group Residential Housing Services)</th>
<th>Peter &amp; Tracy Buchard (Group Residential Housing Services)</th>
<th>Comprehensive Services, Inc. (Group Residential Housing Services)</th>
<th>Special School District #6 - SSPPS (SEFP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES</td>
<td>Ensure that County clients and residents who are low-income persons have transportation to appointments with County staff, court appearances, medical/dental appointments (subject to certain restrictions)</td>
<td></td>
<td>GRH is an income supplement to help people with low-income and disabilities pay for their housing expenses; requirements for GRH are in MN Statute chapter 256L.</td>
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<td>Enhanced physical education opportunities for SIP Secondary Middle School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. List of Dakota County Initiatives that Impact South St. Paul

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>SHIP (CSD)</th>
<th>Birth to Age 8 (CSD)</th>
<th>ADAI (CSD)</th>
<th>CFL (CSD)</th>
<th>U of MN Ext (CSD)</th>
<th>SSP: Downtown Roadway (PD)</th>
<th>Veteran Outreach in SSP (CSD)</th>
<th>CBA (CSD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOAL</td>
<td>Improve health of Dakota County residents by reducing health care costs, increasing healthy eating and physical activity, reducing tobacco use and exposure, and engaging in sustainable, evidence-based strategies</td>
<td>Establish data sharing mechanisms to allow smooth transitions between programs to ensure that program benchmarks are being met, to create early warning systems to trigger new interventions and to determine effective strategies by risk factors or other descriptors</td>
<td>The mission of ADAI is to improve the system response for justice-involved individuals with mental illness and/or chemical health needs by developing alternative responses to incarceration and increasing opportunities for integrated service delivery</td>
<td>The Dakota County Communities for a Lifetime initiative engages community members, leaders in the private and public sectors to create accessible, supportive communities for a life一辈子 that enable people to lead active and healthy lives</td>
<td>Extension researchers and educators engage individuals and organizations in asking the challenging questions to discover science-based answers that make a difference. Together, we create a better world for today and tomorrow by:</td>
<td>Southview Boulevard will be upgraded to address aging infrastructure, improve pedestrian, bicycle, and transit accommodations, include streetscape elements, and manage traffic operational and safety needs; input from both business and public interests was solicited</td>
<td>To improve the lives of Dakota County residents by creating affordable housing opportunities and strengthening Dakota County communities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TARGET AUDIENCE(S) | Those with greatest need and largest health disparities | Children 0 - 8 and their families | Justice-involved individuals with mental and/or chemical health needs | Older adults | Available to all Minnesotans | All who rent, live and work in SSP | Veterans | Those in need of affordable housing options |

| PARTNERS | - Schools | - Child care/early education - Communities | - South St. Paul (ISD 6) | - Burnsville-Eagan-Savage (ISD 191) | - West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan (ISD 197) | - Inver Grove Heights (ISD 199) | - 360 Communities | - CDF Head Start | - Fairview Ridges Hospital | - National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of MN | - The White House | - First Judicial District Court | - Public Defender’s office | - City law enforcement within Dakota County | - GovLab Academy | - Harriett’s Community | - Community organizations - Cities | - Business owners | - SSP City Council | - Met Council | IN DEVELOPMENT |

- Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station
- College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences
- College of Education and Human Development
- Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
- College of Design
- Office of Public Engagement
- MN Institute for Sustainable Agriculture
- College of Veterinary Medicine
- Minnesota Counties
- MN Department of Agriculture
- MN Department of Natural Resources
- National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA USDA)
- National 4-H
- Oklahoma — interactive learning environment from land-grant universities

A multitude of partners support the CDA in administering over 10 different programs.
Appendix C

Detailed Description of the Work Completed Over Phase One
(January-April 2017)

Phase One of the initiative focused on building authentic relationships and understanding with the South St. Paul community by engaging key actors, establishing a Core Team to shape a purpose statement and set of guiding principles, and identifying community assets and challenges. To this end, the working group spearheading the initiative held a series of meetings, reached out to community members through individual and group interviews, and formally invited key actors in the community to participate in the core team.

Dakota County staff members’ participation in the project began with a three-day training in the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter approach that underlies this project. Four members of Dakota County Community Services attended on January 18-20, 2017.

Between late January and April, a working group, consisting of ten people from both Dakota County Community Services Division and the Future Services Institute, met a total of 9 times. While early meetings were held in the Dakota County building, the meetings were moved to South St. Paul in early March as the Core Team comprised of community members began to take shape. During Phase One, the Core Team focused on engaging with the community, naming the initiative, and defining its purpose and principles.

In this approach, a Core Team is designed to be a microcosm of the community, reflecting the diversity of the whole. The current Core Team includes four members of the community, yet we continue to feel that certain groups are not appropriately represented. As of April 17th, the Core Team includes:

**Dakota County Community Services Administration**
1. Jackie Forrester Senior Project Manager
2. Jill Pittelkow Program Supervisor, Workforce Services
3. Stephanie Radtke Deputy Director of Dakota County Community Services
4. Kathleen Simon Manager of Strategic Projects and Performance Measurement
5. Luke Van Horn Former South St. Paul resident
6. Andrea Zuber Director of Dakota County Social Services

**South St. Paul Community**
7. Deb Griffith Community Affairs Liaison, City of South St. Paul
8. Patrick Joiner Associate Pastor at Luther Memorial Church
9. Oliver White Reverend at Clark-Grace United Church of Christ
10. Jeanne Zehnder Community Education Program Coordinator, South St. Paul Public Schools

*The Core Team is facilitated by the Future Services Institute, including Jodi Sandfort (Academic Director) and Jen Mein (Project Director and Innovation Manager).*
Initial Community Outreach

In addition to building a core team and naming and developing a purpose statement, Phase One activities focused heavily on outreach to community members. The group prioritized building connections with leaders representing the diverse parts of the South St. Paul community, including leaders representing the Latino community, African American community, and to the white working class. The team also worked to engage with prominent members of city government, the school district, faith communities, nonprofits, and long-standing members of the community, as South St. Paul residents indicated that these individuals play a prominent role in the South St. Paul community.

Members of the working group participated in a wide array of community outreach activities. For example, team members attended community events, conducted outreach with the Latino community, hosted a brown-bag with Dakota County employees living in South St. Paul, and conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with community residents and leaders. Each person documented their notes on a structured template and the data were analyzed systematically to identify salient themes in the community.

Specifically, individual and small-group interviews were designed to gather information about the assets, opportunities and challenges, prominent community actors, significant community gathering spaces, communication and visibility of the work, and community resources and existing strengths. Members of the working group used a template consisting of 12 questions to structure the interviews (listed in Appendix D), but all were free to select certain questions or improvise new questions during the course of the interview. These semi-structured interviews were referred to as “probes” of the system, designed to uncover key knowledge about the complex community system.11

Together, these initial outreach and engagement activities were designed to build relationships with members of the South St. Paul community, as well as gather information about community members’ perceptions of assets, challenges, and opportunities in the city.

11 The intervention is occurring with a complex community system in which linear planning towards identifiable performance measures are not appropriate at this time. Instead, the team is operating in a probe, sense, respond planning mode that is appropriate in responding to what emerges in complex systems. For more information about this model, see the Cynefin Framework as articulated by David Snowden and Mary Boone (2007). “A Leaders Framework for Decision Making,” Harvard Business Review: 1-12.
Appendix D

Sensing Interview Template

During Phase One, Core Team members used the following sensing interview template to gain knowledge about the South St. Paul community. Core Team members were free to select a subset of questions as well as add their own questions. Core Team members systematically recorded notes on each interview; the set of interviews was then analyzed to identify key themes within the community.

Date:
Your Name:
Interviewee name (and role, if significant):
Setting:
Type of Interview (informal to formal, group to individual):

1. If this work could live up to its fullest potential, what do you imagine is possible?
2. What are the main assets in the community right now?
3. What community issues are at the forefront of your concerns?
4. What challenges and opportunities is South St. Paul facing?
   a. Who are the leaders we should talk with to learn more about these issues?
5. Where are significant community gathering places?
6. Are there particular dynamics about race and class in South St. Paul that we need to particularly understand?
7. Who needs to be at the core of our project?
8. Who do we need to talk to in order to make this work, and what questions should we ask them?
9. Who has the authority to accelerate or impede this work and how might we involve them?
10. How would you like this work to be visible to you in the months ahead?
11. If you were a cynic or a skeptic, what would you say about this project?
12. What are the resources (talent, ideas, and commitment) present in the South St. Paul community, which we need to pay attention to?