

The Affordable Housing Initiative A HUD Community Outreach Partnership Center University of Minnesota, Greater Frogtown CDC, and the Wilder Foundation

About the Affordable Housing Initiative

The HUD-funded Affordable Housing Initiative brings together the Greater Frogtown Community Development Corporation, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, and a team from the University of Minnesota. The University team is comprised of faculty and research staff from the Department of Architecture, the Center for Sustainable Building Research, Cold Climate Housing Program, and the Metropolitan Design Center. The goal of the project is to develop ten prototype houses that integrate affordability with sustainable design, healthy construction, social and cultural responsiveness, and design excellence.

This report summarizes a public opinion gathering process soliciting input about the design preferences of residents living in the Frogtown neighborhood. Homes reflecting local preferences are more likely to be accepted as a neighborhood asset. The information gathered will assist designers in future development of landscape and prototype house designs.

Overview

In 2004 the University of Minnesota Community Outreach Partnership Center team solicited input on house and yard preferences in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul. An informal survey of area residents was conducted at two public events. At the Taste of Frogtown 110 people responded to the survey and at the Center for Hmong Arts and Talents (CHAT) festival 123 responded. Because this was not a random sample, this report deals only with very broad trends in the responses. In addition to the survey, the team used the opportunity to distributed general information about the project and answered residents' questions regarding it.

In the survey people were asked to rate photos of different design options on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 was good). Design options were clustered by type, respondents could give all images good ratings, all bad, or a mix. The photos were displayed on large posters and in reduced form on the survey itself. Images were chosen to be of buildings or landscapes that were comparable with the exception of the dimension addressed by the question. House style examples were recently constructed. The English version of the survey is attached.



Our booth at the Taste of Frogtown.



A team member discusses the survey with a participant at the Taste of Frogtown.



A visitor at the Center for Hmong Arts and Talents festival participates in the survey.

Design Options

Front yard designs (5 options)

Mostly lawn, lawn with scattered trees, lawn mixed with trees and bushes, formal plant beds, and a native plant garden

Fencing (5 options)

Plastic, natural wood, hedge, wrought iron, chain link

Plant types (5 options)

Native Minnesota flowers, a mix of bushes, flowers, & trees, flowers & bushes as ground cover, ornamental flowers and bushes, bushes and ornamental trees

House heights (3 options)

One, one and a half, and two story

House styles (4 options)

Gable front, contemporary, craftsman, Tudor

Entrance styles (3 options)

Stoop, covered, side

Porch styles (3 options)

Partial porch, open porch, three-season porch

Exterior materials (5 options, only used at Taste of Frogtown)

Yellow brick, red brick, stucco, vinyl, wood

Townhouse styles (5 options, only used at the Home Festival of Arts and Talents)

Contemporary 1, contemporary 2, traditional, bay window, front porch

Sample images from surveys:



Hedge



Native Minnesota flowers



Craftsman

Results

The survey identified some key likes and dislikes, as well as some areas where people were neutral about innovative designs (e.g. gardens with all native flowers and no lawn).

Key dislikes included (for each of these the most common score was a 5 or bad):



Chain link fence



Contemporary house styles



Contemporary town houses



Key likes included (and for each of these, on at least one day, at least half the people ranked it as a 1 or good):



Two story houses



Open porches



Formal plant beds



Red brick

There were also some surprises:

- Front yards with mostly lawn or lawn and scattered trees were ranked lower than native plant gardens, formal plant beds, and lawn mixed with trees and bushes. This indicated that people are neutral to positive about more innovative planting styles such as native plant gardens.
- Wood was liked less than other exterior materials.
- The townhome design with the front porch was the most liked.

Ann Forsyth and Katherine Thering
Metropolitan Design Center
2005

Thanks

In addition to the two authors, several team members helped with the survey work at the two events: Julia Robinson, Billy Weber, Frank Fitzgerald, Jorge Salcedo, and Xee Cha. Billy Weber, Julia Robinson, John Carmody, Richard Milgrom, Steve Weeks, Mary Guzowski, and Kris Graham gave specific comments on image selection. Chelsa Johnson helped compile the survey data and provided other assistance, and Ian Kaminski-Coughlin assisted in layout.

What style of yard design do you prefer?

Like Neutral Dislike
1 2 3 4 5



mostly lawn

1 2 3 4 5

comments:



lawn with scattered trees

1 2 3 4 5



lawn with mix of bushes and trees

1 2 3 4 5



formal plant beds

1 2 3 4 5



native plant garden

1 2 3 4 5

What style of fencing do you prefer?

Like Neutral Dislike
1 2 3 4 5



plastic

1 2 3 4 5

comments:



natural wood

1 2 3 4 5



hedge

1 2 3 4 5



wrought iron

1 2 3 4 5



chain link

1 2 3 4 5

What style of plant types do you prefer?

Like Neutral Dislike
1 2 3 4 5



native minnesota flowers

1 2 3 4 5

comments:



mix of bushes, flowers & trees

1 2 3 4 5



use of flowers and bushes as ground cover

1 2 3 4 5



ornamental non-native flowers and bushes

1 2 3 4 5



bushes and ornamental trees

1 2 3 4 5

How do you like these house heights?

How do you like these house styles?

Like Neutral Dislike
1 2 3 4 5



one story

one and a half story

two story

gable front

contemporary

craftsman

tudor

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

comments:

Vertical lines for comments under each house style.

How do you like these entrances?

How do you like these porches?

Like Neutral Dislike
1 2 3 4 5



stoop

covered

side

partial porch

open porch

three season porch

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

comments:

Vertical lines for comments under each entrance and porch type.

How do you like these townhomes?

Like Neutral Dislike
1 2 3 4 5



contemporary 1

contemporary 2

traditional

bay window

front porch

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

comments:

Vertical lines for comments under each townhome type.