Twin Cities Neighborhood Maps

Figure 1. Current Housing Value (2011) and Change in Housing Value (2007–2011), Minneapolis

The central cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Both cities have officially designated neighborhoods, but they are quite different from each other. Minneapolis has 83 residential neighborhoods, with an average population of 4,600. St. Paul has 17 District Councils, with an average population of 16,800. We have mapped the two cities separately.

The maps shown here depict current housing values, as well as declines in value since 2007, the peak year before the housing market crash. Our data come from county tax records of estimated market values. We have restricted our analysis to neighborhoods that have at least 25 single-family residential parcels. We did not count parcels with values under $10,000, assuming they were vacant lots or boarded homes. We ignored condominiums and townhomes. We focused on the median housing value for each neighborhood, so results are not affected by a few high- or low-value properties. Neighborhoods in each city are presented in four classes, with classes defined by natural breaks in the data. St. Paul housing values and changes appear smaller than those in Minneapolis because their larger district neighborhoods hide internal variations.

The current housing value maps show the 2011 value of homes in the two cities. The highest values in Minneapolis are the traditionally high-value homes around the lakes and in southwest Minneapolis. St. Paul's highest values are all in the western part of the city. Lowest values in both cities are in areas close to downtown, many with smaller, older homes that were not maintained well over the years. In both cities, these low values extend from downtown to the northern city limits. For the Twin Cities Metro magazine editors, low values were seen as more affordable and more desirable.

The change in value maps show the effect of the Great Recession and the drop from peak housing values in
2007. These maps help to illustrate why so many people are underwater on their mortgages. In both cities, the vast majority of neighborhoods have not recovered their earlier values. The few that have recovered are in the upper tier of values, especially in Minneapolis where four neighborhoods (Kenwood, ECCO, Linden Hills, and West Calhoun) have completely regained their 2007 values. The poorest neighborhoods have had the steepest declines in value. In both cities, those values are one-third below what they were in 2007. Homes in these neighborhoods may have had excessively inflated values during boom times and are now available at bargain prices.

Figure 2. Current Housing Value (2011) and Change in Housing Value (2007–2011), St. Paul

It’s in the Numbers: What Makes One Neighborhood More Desirable Than Another?

“It’s in the numbers” was the title of the cover story for the September 2011 issue of Twin Cities Metro magazine. The cover itself showed a picture of a modest, well-kept home and was emblazoned with the words “30 Best Neighborhoods” and “The Twin Cities’ Most Livable Neighborhoods.” Inside, we learned that Downtown West leads the Minneapolis neighborhoods with a score of 98, followed by a 3-way tie for second place among Loring Park, Diamond Lake, and Marcy Holmes. In St. Paul, the leader was Union Park (then called Miriam Park and Lexington-Hamline) followed by Summit-University. The tonier neighborhoods did not score that highly. They are wonderful places, but not affordable to many families. They tend to largely White and the article gave higher scores to neighborhoods with more diversity.

The article was the brainchild of then Editor-in-Chief Chris Clayton and Senior Editor Quinton Skinner. They had seen an article in New York Magazine called “The Most Livable Neighborhoods in New York” (April 11, 2010)1 and wanted to do something similar for the Twin Cities. The authors of the New York Magazine article had collected data on 12 separate dimensions and applied weights to each. Clayton and Skinner tried to get more details about how each dimension had been weighted, but the authors were not responsive so they had to build their own model. They came to CURA for help. We had much of the data they were looking for, but not all. We quickly realized that the missing data they wanted included things the neighborhoods themselves were asking for from us. We compiled most of it from reference documents at the Hill Reference Library. In the end, Clayton and Skinner identified the following measures of neighborhood quality and chose to weight each measure as indicated to create a composite score:

- Housing Cost: 15%
- Transit: 13%
- Recreation: 13%
- Safety: 12%
- Schools: 10%
- Arts & Culture: 10%
- Diversity: 8%
- Restaurants: 6%
- Retail Outlets: 5%
- Food/Gas: 4%
- Bars: 4%

Future issues of the Reporter will present many of the thematic maps for these measures, always using the most current data available. Other maps will be added that represent neighborhood views about what makes a neighborhood desirable. We won’t be weighting the results. We’ll leave it to each reader to decide whether living near a park is, for example, more important than access to transit.

1 nymag.com/realestate/neighborhoods/2010/65374/