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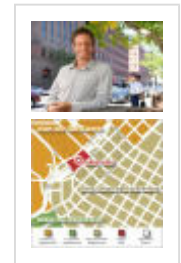
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Ballpark neighborhood seeks identity

Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal - by [John Vomhof Jr.](#) Staff Writer

The new **Minnesota Twins** ballpark finally has a name, but the district around the stadium still needs one.

Of course, the area around Target Field already has several monickers — Warehouse District, North Loop, Downtown West — but neighboring businesses want to develop one collective brand to promote the ballpark district when the facility opens in 2010, hoping to drive sales in ways the Metrodome never did at the other end of downtown Minneapolis.



2010 Partners — a group comprised of ballpark stakeholders such as neighbors, business owners and officials from the Twins, city of Minneapolis and Hennepin County — has launched an initiative to rebrand and promote the area. The organization is working with Minneapolis-based architectural and marketing firm **Shea Inc.** to create one identity that all parties can rally behind.

“There are a lot of mixed messages out there, so we just want to create a more cohesive vision and develop consistent, key messages and unified marketing efforts,” said Andy McDermott, communications director for Shea and co-chair of the 2010 Partners subcommittee exploring the district-identity issue. “We don’t want 10 different names for the same area and then have people from Eagan who don’t have a clue where they are. We want it to be accessible, understandable and recognizable.”

Once a name is selected, 2010 Partners plans to launch a public-relations and marketing campaign to build recognition for the area. The group intends to promote the ballpark neighborhood as a “completely connected, vibrant, safe, urban community” that people should visit before and after Twins games, McDermott said. The group is assembling a leadership team to coordinate the branding initiative and is seeking partners to help pay for it.

Building a brand

2010 Partners is modeling its efforts after L.A. Live, a sports and entertainment district anchored by Staples Center in Los Angeles. The group also looked at Denver’s LoDo District and San Diego’s Gaslamp Quarter as strong examples of district branding.

While it has floated some possible names, such as Warehouse Live and Warehouse Central, it has not started the formal branding process yet. The name likely will play off of the Warehouse District, the area’s most common and most recognizable monicker.

A key piece of the new ballpark-district brand will be an umbrella Web site featuring a comprehensive calendar of events and information about the area.

“Whether we all combine together under this one group or we all maintain our own separate identities, we still want to have one landing site so that people aren’t getting bombarded with different messages,” McDermott said.

The Warehouse District Business Association (WDBA) has increased its own marketing efforts, but its member bars and restaurants also felt it was important to get involved with the 2010 Partners’ broader ballpark-district branding campaign, said Joanne Kaufman, executive director of the WDBA and co-chair of 2010 Partners’ identity subcommittee. “We all want to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to market the entire area, create this identity and make it a wonderful, family-oriented environment that people want to come to.”

Denver’s Lower Downtown, or LoDo, marketing initiative actually started several years before Coors Field opened, but really took off thereafter. Jason Dennison, executive director of Denver’s LoDo District neighborhood association, said a similar marketing approach could work in Minneapolis, but the key is to maintain a local focus.

“There are so many variables that I don’t think it’s a one-size-fits-all,” Dennison said. “You really have to find what’s unique about your specific district. What is your district and where are you headed?”

One place, many names

The Target Field site is located on the border of Minneapolis’ Downtown West and North Loop neighborhoods and squarely within the Warehouse District, which overlaps both neighborhoods. The Warehouse District isn’t an official city-designated neighborhood, but it has been marketed that way by various groups for years. Some groups also have referred to the area around the ballpark as the Warehouse Entertainment District or the Northern Warehouse (NoWare) District.

While it’s important for those various groups to come together for the ballpark-district branding campaign, 2010 Partners has been careful not to diminish their individual identities, McDermott said. “If anything, I think we’ve been overly sensitive in that area. We were prepared for that kind of response, but we’re not getting it. We’re seeing people who want to play well in the sandbox and are willing to rethink the way they do things if we can stand together to make things better.”

2010 Partners hasn’t decided yet whether it will outline borders for the ballpark district or keep the definition vague.

Dan Kenney, executive director of the **Minnesota Ballpark Authority**, said he thinks the ballpark district’s borders and future identity will be defined organically over time based on how residents view the area.

“To me, this new neighborhood — and I do think that it ultimately will be a new neighborhood — will be defined by the ballpark and the new rail lines,” he said.

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