Introducing

Old Town
Minneapolis

*a New Name & Brand
for Minneapolis'
Oldest Neighborhood*

INTRODUCTION

February 3, 2021

Dear fellow NIEBNA Board & Placemaking Task Force Members,

As we embark upon our re-branding effort, this is my "pitch" to re-brand the neighborhood and business district as "Old Town Minneapolis." This project has been a labor of love for me for nearly five years. As many of you know I started this re-brand myself after an earlier pitch to the neighborhood's business association (NEBA) in 2017. I have a "placeholder" logo, active Facebook Page, Instagram account, reserved domain name/hosting/email, printed business cards and I even had a jingle created. One business has already adopted the name and many of my fellow business owners and residents are anxious to see the brand implemented.

I know now that I can't bring the brand to fruition without support from NIEBNA. With new leadership and members buzzing about a re-brand, this is a great opportunity to make it happen.

While we have the benefit of overwhelming consensus on the vast majority of our current NIEBNA initiatives, the "Name Game" is complicated and can be polarizing. **I hope that sharing my thoughts with you will help us work together productively, provide some backstory, and highlight potential challenges we will need to overcome — regardless of the name we choose.**
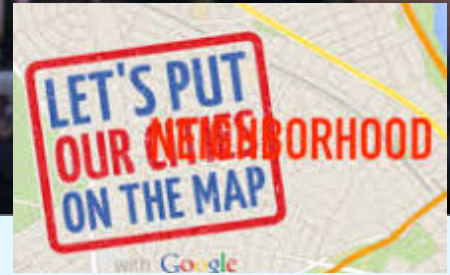
Thanks for your time and consideration,

Scott Parkin

A COMMON GOAL

I think we share the same desire to establish this neighborhood as a popular household name in the Twin Cities Metro Area — to literally and figuratively "put us on the map."

Creating and implementing this identity will require us to unify a huge number of community stakeholders. For this reason, I think it will take a powerful new brand to accomplish this lofty goal.

The name "Old Town" or "Old Town Minneapolis" spoke to me on many levels when I first heard it. At first blush, it seemed an almost foreign ascription as it's not a common place-name in this part of the country. It obviously showcases what I think is the most awesome feature of the neighborhood — it's history. Second blush brought me to the conclusion that the name was quite accurate. Local historian Penny Peterson's lovely book <u>Hiding in Plain Sight</u> had opened my eyes to a new level of appreciation for this little gem of a neighborhood and the book's "origin story" premise supported the name entirely.

History is a powerful force in creating a sense of place. It can capture the "special-ness" of a place while simultaneously connecting it universally to other parts of the world. This is where I find the moniker to be so potent as we try to attract the attention of those who may not yet appreciate this wonderful part of the city.

It's been a great conversation-starter and I've enjoyed seeing the name capture the hearts of many friends and neighbors. This is when I became convinced this was a winning brand. It's fun, easy-to-say, and it actually means something.

Let's get to my pitch and see what you think!

Our familiarity with the neighborhood has a tendency to obscure its **significance** to Minneapolis as a whole. This neighborhood is:

• One of the most **recognizable & popular** urban neighborhoods in the Twin Cities.

• One of only a handful of **walkable & self-contained neighborhoods** in the city.

• A **destination neighborhood for travelers** with multiple-days' worth of attractions to enjoy - these are amenities that appeal to all walks of life.

• A well-preserved collection of **historic & cultural landmarks** highlighting the very origins of our city.

• A uniquely human-scale **European-Style Riverfront Neighborhood** with:
     Impressive <u>Sense of Arrival</u> (Grain Belt Sign & Historic Bridges)
     A <u>Riverfront Promenade</u> (Main Street & Mississippi Mile)
     A <u>"Central Park"</u> (Nicollet Island)
     An historic <u>Walking Boulevard</u> (East Hennepin)

• A special location at the **well-travelled crossroads** of Downtown, U of M, Riverfront, and the greater Northeast neighborhoods.

• A place with a uniquely **"Old Town" feel**. We are home to 50+ historic landmarks and turn-of-the-century commercial buildings. Our residents know each other and enjoy local bars, restaurants, grocery, church, and common spaces together, creating a sense of community. We maintain a predominance of small businesses over major chains. We've been blessed with remarkably low crime rates for many years.

We're not a little up-and-coming
section of Northeast Minneapolis
across the bridge from Downtown…

We are a World-Class Destination Neighborhood

…we're kind of a big deal!

• It's recognizable, memorable, it's easy to market, it's easy to say, and makes an immediate impression.

• It's evocative and descriptive — amplifying the most unique thing about the neighborhood - it's history. It accurately describes the area as part of the birthplace of the city and accentuates its remarkable heritage.

• It's a powerful brand with a special benefit — an "Old Town" is universally recognizable to travelers, visitors, and shoppers as a small and dense walking neighborhood with interesting attractions and fun things to do — it screams "destination location." Much of the place-making comes built-in with this name.

• It's a fun and likable name that lends itself easily to merchandise. Minneapolitans love their neighborhood brands and there aren't any other Old Town neighborhoods in the city or state.

• It's searchable online - the domain name, placeholder website, and Facebook page already have top-tier Google rank when searching "Old Town Minneapolis."

• It compliments the city's other well-known areas — Uptown, Downtown, Dinkytown, & Tangletown. It'll look great on the same bookshelf with those guys.

• It tells a great story as a place that lost its identity but has re-discovered what made it great to begin with. The media would eat it up.

• It's a short, sweet, and easy-to-say name that still manages to evoke something big. We need big.

A POPULAR CONCEPT

From Wikipedia:
In a city or town, the old town is its historic or original core. Although the city is usually larger in its present form, many cities have re-designated this part of the city to commemorate its origins after thorough renovations (that's us!). There are many places throughout the world referred to as the old town (and this is sometimes construed as a proper noun and capitalized).

Wikipedia further lists nearly **70 countries** with areas named Old Town.

There are more than **30 "Old Towns" in the U.S.** in a total of 16 states:

California
Old Town Eureka
Old Town, Kern County
Old Town, Marin County
Old Town, Santa Barbara County
Old Town, Ventura County
Old Town, a city - formerly Pine Town
Old Town Pasadena
Old Sacramento State Historic Park, Sacramento
Old Town, San Diego, neighborhood of San Diego

Virginia
Old Town Fairfax
Old Town Alexandria
Old Town Manassas
Olde Towne Portsmouth

North Carolina
Old Town, Brunswick County
Old Town, Forsyth County
Old Town Township, Forsyth

Florida
Old Town, Florida, a town in Dixie County, not to be confused with one in Orlando
Old Town Fernandina, Florida; the last town in Western Hemisphere to be platted
Old Town, Key West, the historic section of the city of Key West, Florida
Old Town, an amusement park/shopping center in Kissimmee, Florida

Other US states
Old Town Scottsdale, Arizona
Old Town, Chicago, Illinois
Old Town, Wichita, Kansas
Olde Towne Gaithersburg, Maryland
Old Town Albuquerque, New Mexico
Old Town Chinatown, Portland, Oregon

Old Town, Augusta, Georgia
Old Town, Indiana, Indiana
Old Town, Maine, Maine (a city)
Old Town Lansing, Michigan
Old Town, Staten Island, New York
Old Town Franklin, Tennessee

It's a popular and effective brand all over the world.

ARE WE REALLY THAT OLD?

Yep, we are...

From the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission:

"The St. Anthony Falls Historic District is the heart of the city of Minneapolis and the center of its founding. It is nationally recognized as a place of cultural and historical importance and is officially designated as such. Its historic resources are enjoyed by residents, business owners and visitors alike and contribute to a "sense of place" that contributes to the distinct identity of the city."

"This area (Hennepin/Central Ave District) was once the principal business center for the east side. The collection of historic buildings reflects the early development pattern of the former city of St. Anthony and current city of Minneapolis. Portions date back to St. Anthony's Upper Town"
This Commercial District has been a prominent commercial area since the mid-1870s. It is noteworthy for its unusual range of styles conveying the flavor of early Minneapolis commercial architecture.

From the historian that developed our Historic Walking Tour:

"This commercial area developed as the first major commercial corridor for the St. Anthony community, prior to its annexation into Minneapolis. The commercial corridor was also serviced by the streetcar beginning in the late nineteenth century until the 1950s. Today, the district continues to serve as an important commercial district north of downtown. The commercial district was constructed from the 1880s through the early twentieth century and displays architectural styles popular during this period including Greek Revival, Italianate, and Beaux Arts. Integrity throughout the district is good, with pockets of mid-twentieth-century and modern infill development."

MORE THAN OLD — WE'RE HISTORIC

This area is home to many of the city's most treasured historical landmarks:

- **Oldest Church** (Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church)
- **Oldest Wood Frame House** (Ard Godfrey House)
- **Oldest Street** (Main Street) - (also part of the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway)
- **50+ Preserved Turn-of-the-Century Commercial Buildings**
- The many beautiful **historic homes on Nicollet Island**
- Home to a popular **Historic Walking Tour** (co-sponsored with Preserve Minneapolis)

- Minneapolis Historic District (St. Anthony Falls Historic District)
- National Register of Historic Places (Nicollet Island Inn)
- National Register of Historic Places (Mpls Fire Dept & Repair Shop)
- National Register of Historic Places (Grain Belt Beer Sign)
- National Register of Historic Places (Grove Street Flats)
- National Register of Historic Places (Third Avenue Bridge)
- Minneapolis Historic Landmark Building (Melrose Flats)

Immediately adjacent contributing properties in Marcy Holmes Neighborhood:

- **Oldest Bar** (Pracna on Main)
- **Oldest Brick Commercial Building** (Aster Cafe)
- National Historic Place (McLeod & Smith Inc. Headquarters, 700 Central Apartments)
- National Historic Place (5th Street SE Historic District)
- National Historic Landmark (Pillsbury A Mill)
- National Historic Place (Twin City Rapid Transit Co. Steam Power Plant)

TAGLINE/SLOGAN IDEAS

OLD TOWN MINNEAPOLIS

HELLO my name is

HISTORIC HEART OF THE CITY | Est. 1848

Tagline Ideas (permanent brand identifiers)

Birthplace of Minneapolis	Est. 1838
Historic Heart of Minneapolis	Historic Heart of NE Mpls
Historic Heart of the City	Historic Downtown Northeast
Downtown Northeast	A Place of Many "Firsts"
the Historic East Bank	the Historic East Side

Slogan Ideas (for ad campaigns)

A New Name for Minneapolis' Oldest Neighborhood

Great Neighborhoods Deserve Great Names

Where It All Began   Making History Again

Small town feel in a big city   A little something for everyone

The Best Things Come in OLD Packages   We Make/Where Old Look Good

A World-Class Neighborhood   First & Best

Where History and Commerce Thrive Together

Welcome to History   Welcome to your History

Historic NE + Sexy SE   The Friendly Neighborhood

Cool Towns Embrace Their History

Old Town. It Took 150 years, but it's Finally "Found" Itself!

Probably the Best Neighborhood in the Entire World

EVENT IDEAS

Historic Walking Tour
Already in place - make it more often, though

Old Town Cocktail Competition
Annual competition to create a signature cocktail for Old Town hosted at a different bar each year and with celebrity judges

Old Town Power Hour
Business Networking Group

Pumpkin Grab
Always popular with NEBA

Old Town Book Club
For the nerds in the neighborhood

Old Town Music Fest
Rock on! This would be awesome

Santa Claus
Mall Santa at Lunds or Surdyks for kids and adults

Keep the Beat
Spring fundraiser to support extra off-duty patrols in the neighborhood during the holidays.

Old Town Shred Fest
Document shredding after tax day set to rock music

Hot Rod Show
Maybe during Father's Day

National Night Out
Annual cookout in Chute Square

Old Town Dog Parade
Super popular - Bring it back to the neighborhood - not on the river.

Fire Muster
See River Days in Chaska - an epic event with fire departments competing against each other

Beautification Pageant
Fundraiser in the Aveda Institute Ballroom - runway models - local fashion, proceeds used for street improvements n the neighborhood.

THROWING SOME "SHADE"

A polite critique of other proposed names.

We are more than just Northeast Minneapolis
Despite having one leg on the Northeast side of the fence, the neighborhood actually feels A LOT different than greater Northeast Mpls' blue-collar neighborhoods. It is more developed, more downtown, more riverfront, more U of M, more notable history, and is overall more European-feeling. It's a distinct community with its own "gravitational pull." I see it as a value to differentiate ourselves and stand out from greater NE. We are worthy of our OWN name - we deserve it.

We are more than an Acronym
Acronym names often elicit immediate negative reactions as "trying to mimic Manhattan" or "trying too hard". It is often considered a dated fad associated with larger east-coast cities. It doesn't translate well to our Midwest sensibilities.

We are more than a Direction
Regionally speaking, East is often associated with St. Paul — an unremarkable suburb of Minneapolis.

We are only partly on the Riverfront
While the riverfront is a hugely important part of the neighborhood, I don't think it defines this business district and most of the area we are branding is actually quite a distance from it.

We are more than a Street Name
So we have three major streets running through the neighborhood - big deal. They also run straight through several other major business districts and, therefore, aren't really all that distinguishing.

Three Saints Walk into a Bar…
I always wanted to stick with name Old St. Anthony, but it's apparently had its time in the limelight and it also competes with the northern suburb and St. Paul neighborhood of the same name. Maybe a bit over-used for our lofty goals?

COMMON OBJECTIONS

Listed in order of prevalence that I've heard:

#1   "I always call it *something else*"
Yes, there are more than 10 common names that people call the neighborhood. We need to pick <u>one name</u> that actual stakeholders can agree to and stick with it. People will adapt if it's a cool name with a cool and attractive marketing campaign.

#2   "It's Northeast"
Part of the neighborhood IS in Northeast. Many people simply can't fathom calling it something other than Northeast. Are we prepared to rip the bandaid off? Do we/ should we incorporate NE into the tagline? Nothing is stopping a business from keeping "Northeast" as their location name.

#3   The Word "Old" is Bad
Yeah, sometimes. In this context I just don't think that logic sticks. I think a **name** is more powerful than a **concept**. People don't avoid Dinkytown thinking they will shrink if they go there or that it's a "silly" place because its a silly name - it's just a name. Lowertown isn't a "lower quality" part of Downtown St. Paul than Upper Landing. Uptown isn't even "up" from Downtown. People will equate the name "Old" to "History" and not "Decrepitude" or "Near Death." I'm just not relating to this objection. Thoughts?

#4   It won't stick
I think it will if the majority of the neighborhood is behind it and we actually give it a cool brand with awesome merch and super fun events.

#5   It doesn't need a new name - leave it alone
We have a real problem without a name. We're committed to solving the problem on behalf of residents and business owners and other stakeholders we serve who've elected us and directed us to do so.

Sing it with me…

"The Old Town Jingle"
Lyrics by Jennifer Ryan (Old Town resident)

It's Your Town
It's My Town
It's Our Town
It's Old Town
…Come On Down!

Wanna ease on down to the East Side of the Mississippi
Can you believe that there is an Island in Minnesota and an occasional
retired Hippy
We have the Oldest House and the Oldest Church surrounded
by an abundance of Bars
We have Nice Ride Bikes, walking Paths and shared Community Cars

(chorus)

You can take University, Central or even Hennepin
Come for what is Old or what is new…it will keep you coming back again
We are the crossroads of the Historic Northeast and Southeast's Sexy Side
Come and visit in the evening, you can take a romantic Carriage Ride

(chorus)

And while you are here you may just want to swing by
One of our favorite spots Surdyks' where you can give their wines a try
There are homes, shop and places nummy food is made
And if you come in the right Month there is even a Doggie Parade

(chorus)

Imagine…
having our very own name.

"Let's meet up in **Old Town.**"

"We spent the entire weekend in **Old Town** -
that neighborhood rocks!"

"**Old Town** - Isn't that the new neighborhood
everyone is talking about."

"OMG have you seen all the new restaurants
opening up in **Old Town**?"

"I can finally tell my customers where my business is
and they actually know what I'm talking about."

"I want to shop locally for gifts this year - any ideas?
Definitely check out all the awesome shops in **Old Town**."

"I just bought a rad new condo in **Old Town.**"

"Do you want to meet in Uptown, Downtown,
or **Old Town**. Ummm,… **Old Town!** DUH!"

"Did ya' hear there's finally a name for our fave neighborhood?
it's now called **Old Town.**"   "**Old Town,**… I like it!"

"OK,… See you in **Old Town**!"