



Operating Plan

# Lincoln Park Special Service District

*Prepared by the Lincoln Park Business Group*

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## I. Introduction

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The Lincoln Park Business Group (LPBG) was established in the 1930s and has long served as the driving force behind the growth and identity of the Lincoln Park neighborhood. LPBG's Board of Directors is representative of business leaders and property owners within the district, which is defined as "from the rocks to the docks, and the shoreline to the skyline"; 14th Avenue West/Piedmont Avenue to Carlton Street, and the St. Louis Bay to West Skyline Parkway.

LPBG was responsible during the 1990s for naming the district Lincoln Park and in the late 2000s was part of the branding of West Superior Street as the Lincoln Park Craft District. Today, LPBG is committed to the continued revitalization of Lincoln Park through its Clean Sweep Program, business-to-business mentoring, advocacy with local and state government, and events and promotions that drive traffic and grow the district's profile.

Under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 428A, cities are authorized to adopt an ordinance establishing a Special Service District upon the petition of property owners within the proposed boundaries. The Petition for the Lincoln Park Special Service District has been signed by owners of more than 25% of the net tax capacity of property that will be subject to service charges, and by owners of more than 25% of the land area of property that will be subject to service charges.

## II. Why a Special Service District for Lincoln Park?

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Lincoln Park has become a destination for residents and visitors alike, anchored by a growing mix of local breweries, restaurants, retail, and creative businesses. But Lincoln Park's momentum is not guaranteed and it must be actively supported.

The city's budget cannot stretch to meet all of the neighborhood's needs. At the same time, major infrastructure projects are on the horizon. The impending reconstruction of West Superior Street creates an immediate need for district-wide wayfinding and business marketing, as well as a long-term dedicated fund to maintain public amenities added by the project.

A Special Service District (SSD) is a tool that allows property and business owners to pool resources for things the city cannot provide at the level the district needs. By law, every dollar raised through the SSD must be spent inside Lincoln Park, for Lincoln Park businesses and properties.

LPBG currently coordinates trash pickup, tree care, and district marketing through membership dues and a small Tourism Tax allocation. Without pooled resources, these responsibilities will fall to individual businesses and property owners, fragmented and underfunded. The SSD creates a sustainable, equitable, and collective solution.

Special Service Districts have proven to be the funding mechanism of choice for improving safety, cleanliness, and economic vitality across the United States. Districts that invest in "clean and safe" programs, marketing, and physical enhancements consistently see reduced vacancy rates, increased property values, and stronger business attraction.

## III. District Boundaries

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The Lincoln Park Special Service District boundaries are defined as follows:

From West of the Intersection of Piedmont Avenue and Garfield Avenue at West Superior Street to 27th Avenue West, and from Lower Michigan / the block below West Michigan Street to the alley between West Superior Street and West 1st Street.

Only property that is classified under Minn. Stat. § 273.13 may be subject to service charges. Single-family residential properties and tax-exempt properties are excluded by state law.

## **IV. Objectives and Needs**

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### **A. Plan Objectives**

The Lincoln Park Special Service District will serve as a key tool in sustaining and accelerating the revitalization of Lincoln Park. The District will supplement the services provided by the City of Duluth. Objectives include:

- Increase foot traffic and daily visits to Lincoln Park businesses
- Strengthen the Lincoln Park Craft District brand and visibility
- Maintain and beautify the physical environment of the district
- Support business retention, recruitment, and entrepreneurial development
- Provide coordinated, professional management of district-wide programs
- Serve as a unified voice for business and property owners with city, county, state, and federal government
- Prepare the district for and mitigate impact related to West Superior Street reconstruction and future projects
- Maintain district infrastructure, public amenities, and the Highway 53 underpass lot through formal agreement with the City of Duluth
- Build a sustainable fund for maintaining district infrastructure
- Increase overall property value as a result of the objectives outlined above

### **B. Level of Service Agreement with the City**

The City of Duluth will continue to provide its standard level of maintenance and public safety services throughout the Lincoln Park district. It is understood that SSD funds will go toward enhancing and creating new services, not replacing existing ones. The City and the District will enter into a cooperation agreement to establish a baseline level of service and to ensure that City services are not reduced as a result of the District's formation.

### **C. Identifying the Need for Special Services**

The Lincoln Park Business Group has identified the following priority needs through conversations with business owners, property owners, and community stakeholders:

- The number one need expressed by Lincoln Park businesses is increased exposure and collaborative advertising.
- The Clean Sweep Program currently operates part-time (2–3 days per week). Businesses and property owners want full-time, 5-day coverage to maintain the cleanliness and welcoming character of the corridor.

- With construction projects continuing throughout the neighborhood, there is an urgent need for district-wide wayfinding signage to help customers navigate to Lincoln Park businesses during disruption.
- New streetscape amenities installed through the West Superior Street Reconstruction project require dedicated maintenance to preserve their condition and impact. Without an SSD, no reliable funding source exists for this purpose.
- There is a strong desire to beautify the corridor with light pole flags, hanging flower baskets, streetscape planters, and string lights to signal that Lincoln Park is a destination worth visiting.

## V. Proposed Operating Plan

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### A. Minimum Level of Services

The Lincoln Park Business Group proposes to provide coordinated management of all activities and programs within the district boundaries. Each service area budget includes staff salaries and benefits as well as operating costs.

#### Proposed Expenses

##### 1. Clean Sweep Team - \$37,000

The Clean Sweep Team is the most visible and highest-priority service of the District. The team provides neighborhood cleanup, security patrols, ambassador services, and trash receptacle maintenance along Superior Street.

- Litter and debris removal
- Goodwill ambassador services
- Coordination with City and contract garbage service for removal of large discarded items

##### 2. Marketing and Special Events - \$31,000

Increased visibility and advertising is the number one need expressed by Lincoln Park businesses. Through the "Visit Lincoln Park" and "Lincoln Park Craft District" brands, LPBG has built a platform that can support much greater reach.

- District-wide marketing campaigns
- Public relations and advocacy on behalf of district businesses
- Business recruitment and storefront improvement support

##### 3. Business Support and Advocacy - \$10,000

Lincoln Park's strength comes from its businesses, and the District's long-term success depends on keeping those businesses informed, connected, and growing. LPBG will provide direct support to business owners and property owners through advocacy, planning assistance, and organized opportunities for collaboration and business to business mentoring.

- Government relations and policy advocacy
- Business planning and mentoring
- Storefront activation and vacancy reduction
- District monitoring, business tracking, and trend reporting

- Networking events and workshops for business owners
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## **Proposed Income**

### **1. Special Service District Assessment - \$33,000**

The district assessment for the SSD of \$40,000 will include a \$1000 cap per parcel, resulting in actual fee collection to reflect a lesser amount. The assessment fee and cap will increase by 4% annually.

### **2. Member Dues & Earned Income- \$45,000**

LPBG will continue to earn revenue through membership, special events, workshops, grants, and donations.

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## **Proposed Minimum Level of Services Total**

**Total Proposed Expenses - \$78,000**

**Total Proposed Income - \$78,000**

## **B. Additional Services with City Investment**

LPBG is requesting \$30,000 in annual Tourism Tax commitment from the City to support the minimum level of service provided by the SSD.

### **1. Clean Sweep Team - \$17,000**

- Additional hours and equipment investment for enhanced services
- Security patrols and social services referrals
- Graffiti removal

### **2. Marketing and Special Events - \$10,000**

- Increased business collaborative marketing and district digital presence
- Enhanced signature annual events
- New monthly programming and activations

### **3. Beautification - \$3,000**

- Light pole flags and banners celebrating the Lincoln Park Craft District brand
- Planting and maintenance of existing streetscape planters
- Emerald ash borer treatment and general tree care
- General wayfinding for district navigation

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## **Proposed Additional Services Total**

**Total Additional Service Expenses - \$30,000**

### **C. Full Services Requiring Further Community Investment**

This operating plan recognizes that the minimum level of service does not reflect the full scope of Lincoln Park's needs, which exceed what the SSD assessment alone can support. The following services represent LPBG's priorities as additional funding is secured.

#### **1. West Superior Street Reconstruction Wayfinding and Marketing - \$40,000**

With ongoing construction projects throughout the neighborhood and the Superior Street and Blatnik Bridge reconstructions on the horizon, wayfinding signage is an urgent and practical need. Additional funding will allow LPBG to design, install, and maintain a district-wide wayfinding system in coordination with digital communication and marketing to direct customers to Lincoln Park businesses during periods of disruption.

#### **2. West Superior Street Reconstruction Infrastructure Maintenance - \$113,800**

The West Superior Street Reconstruction project will provide much needed new infrastructure to the district that will require ongoing maintenance and service.

- Addition of 26 multi-stream trash receptacles requiring monitoring by Clean Sweep Team and twice weekly service with the addition of recycling.
- Upkeep and cleaning of 47 new benches and 65 bike loops.
- Landscaping and public pathway maintenance including care for 371 new trees, new planting beds, weed control, and seasonal refresh.
- Coordination with the City for warranty and capital repair issues.

#### **3. Highway 53 Underpass Lot Sublease and Maintenance Agreement - \$20,000**

The parking lot located beneath Highway 53 within the district boundaries presents both an opportunity and a maintenance responsibility. LPBG will enter into a sublease agreement with the City of Duluth to assume management and upkeep of this space. The sublease defines responsibilities for regular cleaning, snow removal, graffiti abatement, and any programming or activation of the space to benefit district businesses and visitors. This is a significant commitment that reflects LPBG's role as the steward of public assets within the district, and it requires dedicated staffing resources.

- Regular cleaning and litter removal
- Snow removal and seasonal upkeep
- Graffiti abatement
- Programming and activation of the space as a district amenity
- Coordination with City on lighting and structural maintenance

#### **4. Enhanced Beautification and Storefront Improvement - \$23,000**

Beyond routine beautification, LPBG will pursue a coordinated program of physical enhancements that elevate the corridor's appearance and support individual businesses in improving their storefronts.

- Hanging flower baskets
  - Streetscape planters
  - String lights
  - Storefront improvement matching grants
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## **Proposed Full Services Total**

**Total Full Service Expenses - \$196,000**

## **VI. Implementing the Special Service District**

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### **A. Assessments**

The Lincoln Park Special Service District will be funded in part by service charges imposed on commercial, industrial, and public utility properties and commercially zoned vacant land within the district boundaries. Service charges will be based on net tax capacity and collected in the same manner as ad valorem real estate taxes by St. Louis County.

The assessment is designed to represent approximately 2% of a property owner's current tax payments. The total district assessment is set at \$40,000 for 2027, with a maximum service charge of \$1,000 per property in 2027. Both the total assessment and the per-property cap will increase by 4% annually through the end of the district term in 2030.

### **B. Voluntary Contributions**

Tax-exempt properties (generally those operated by nonprofit or government entities) are not subject to involuntary assessments for service charges. However, such properties benefit from the special services provided within the district. LPBG will actively solicit voluntary contributions from exempt organizations within the district boundaries.

### **C. Service Contract Between the City of Duluth and LPBG**

The Special Service District is a funding mechanism and does not create a separate legal entity. The special services must be carried out through a qualified service provider. The Lincoln Park Business Group will serve as that entity. The City of Duluth will act as a conduit and all service charge revenues will flow through the City to LPBG in exchange for LPBG's agreement to provide the special services.

The service contract between the City and LPBG will, at a minimum:

- Incorporate this Operating Plan to identify the special services to be provided and the division of the budget to provide those services
- Provide that all service charges collected will be passed through to LPBG in full, without reduction by the City for administrative or other expenses
- Require LPBG to provide the special services
- Provide that LPBG will prepare and submit an annual budget to the City consistent with this Operating Plan
- Require the City to adopt and approve the annual budget submitted by LPBG if it is consistent with this Operating Plan

- Require the City not to reduce its existing level of services to the district (except where there is a proportionate reduction in services citywide), establishing a baseline for services currently being provided
- Include a term that ends when the District ends (December 31, 2030)

#### **D. Governance and Oversight**

The Lincoln Park Business Group Board of Directors, composed of Lincoln Park property owners and business representatives, will provide oversight of SSD activities and spending. The board will ensure that SSD funds are spent in accordance with this Operating Plan and in the best interests of district stakeholders.

#### **E. District Sunset**

The District will begin on January 1, 2027, and will sunset on December 31, 2030. The District may be renewed or extended in the same or different form if petitions meeting the requirements of Minnesota Statute Chapter 428A or its successor are submitted prior to the sunset date.

### **VI. Conclusion**

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The Lincoln Park Special Service District represents a direct, equitable, and accountable investment by the Lincoln Park business and property owner community in its own future. Every dollar collected within the district stays within the district.

LPBG has spent decades building the identity, programming, and community relationships that make Lincoln Park a place people want to be. The Special Service District gives that work a sustainable financial foundation. This operating plan sets the stage for a clean, vibrant, well-marketed, and professionally managed Lincoln Park, a district that works for every business and property owner within its boundaries.