

# Activating New Hope's Civic Plaza

## Completing a Complete Street

Xylon Avenue is located in the heart of New Hope – home to the city hall, fire station, and Civic Center Park. A busy shopping center is located across the street, with a Hy-Vee grocery store, Post Office, and other popular destinations. Senior housing is also located along Xylon Avenue, underscoring the need for a safe walking and biking environment.

Xylon Avenue was built as the city's first Complete Street. Meant to be welcoming and safe for all users of the road – including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, as well as people driving cars – the street was designed to be a gathering place for the whole community.

To help the City of New Hope recognize the street's full potential, Hennepin County's Healthy Community Planning team partnered with the city and the Musicant Group on a placemaking initiative that culminated in East to West: New Hope OctoberFest.

### Increasing Capacity for Placemaking

Everyone can play a role in creating places that encourage people to walk, bike, and connect to their neighbors. To build capacity for placemaking, the city and the Musicant Group hosted two placemaking workshops to teach businesses and residents the concepts of creating vibrant community places. The workshop highlighted ways to:

- Enhance signage around New Hope
- Create more places to sit
- Create more opportunities for decorative lighting
- Improve shade
- Develop more games and family activities
- Create more places for high school students to gather



## Building Partnerships

The project team recognized that tapping into the full social and commercial potential of Xylon Avenue and the Civic Center district would mean reaching out to a diverse group of stakeholders, particularly seniors and youth. These two groups experience barriers to biking, walking, and social connectedness within New Hope and their participation was critical to the project's success. Government agencies and businesses have a strong presence in the district and were eager to participate in activating the area.

## Octoberfest East to West

East to West OctoberFest brought hundreds of people to the Civic Center Campus and adjoining commercial district on a blustery fall day. Our earlier placemaking workshops combined with feedback from partners to define the activities that helped residents and business patrons experience the space in a new way. Engaging and lively pathways were created with chalk art, activities, and roving musicians encouraging people to walk the area from east to west – and passport stamps provided more incentives to entice movement along the way. Creative activities, food, fire pits, and other engaging booths helped boost the energy and imagination of the people at the event.

## Results

Approximately 500-750 people attended the East to West OctoberFest, with 113 completing their passports. City of New Hope staff gathered valuable information to help in planning how to make their future Civic Campus and the business district around it a community gathering space with more biking and walking connections.

The Musicant Group also prepared several recommendations for activating Xylon Avenue and the Civic Campus:

- Design, manage, and program pathways connecting through the project area,
- Build off of the partnerships established in the project,
- Create more things to do: program small-scale activities in the area, signage and wayfinding, and simple permitting process for events, and
- Create organization to keep focus on civic center space



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