

Sophia Ginis, Prospect Park resident

Interviewed by Laurie Stern at Tower Hill, Prospect Park, June 3, 2011

A I am Sophia Ginis. I live on Melbourne Ave. I moved in a couple years ago. I grew up in a neighborhood close to this one, over in Northeast, and before I moved here I lived just across the river in Cedar-Riverside. I had a bunch of friends from school that grew up in this neighborhood and would visit during my childhood and I know their parents, and when I was looking for a new place to rent I really wanted to come to this place because I had fond associations with it.

Q What's it like?

A It is... it's a very interesting neighborhood. You have very mixed housing – huge houses that are meticulously kept, and then you have a lot of rental properties – some that's fantastic, some that you probably wouldn't want to live in – and then different houses. It's kind of interesting because you have more of the traditional style homes and then you have the homes that have a little artistic flair, maybe are painted an unusual color or have, say, old spoked wheels in a retaining wall or...just gives it a lot of character. There definitely is a sense of community and with community there's always a little bit of disagreement, I think, but it feels very welcoming.

Q Really?

A Yes.

Q Because you have to be the newest comer we've talked to today.

A Perhaps, perhaps. I think people that get associated with the neighborhood really want to stay, so...but there are a lot of new people in the neighborhood. I think it just takes a while to get acclimated and you kind of have to choose to connect with people.

Q Speaking of connections, do you feel connected to other communities along University Avenue?

A Not so much. I don't think University Avenue is a very connecting corridor. Its kind of what people drive fast along. There's a lot of businesses that are interesting, but you'd sit inside more than outside. And there's freeways by us as well, so either you hit the University community or you hit kind of freeway land and that separates people for sure.

Q How do you think light rail's going to change it?

A We'll have to see because light rail, I think, makes people want to live closer to it – it's a way to get around and we always talk about just jumping on the light rail and going downtown and having that be a very easy and accessible thing. But we'll see how people adjust to it. It might be more traffic and congestion and people parking all over the place or it might really bring a safer feel to the street. Because right now you wouldn't necessarily...biking along it is rather terrifying and it feels very industrial in a lot of ways.

Q There's also been some incidents on University heading west, haven't there?
...young women especially?

A I think so. I'm not as...that's not necessarily what comes in my mind when I think of University Avenue, but....

Q So what does it look like up there?

A It's a really unique view because its one of the highest points in Minneapolis. We're in a very flat state so you can see very far – you can see both of the downtowns because we're in the middle of the two. And actually my favorite view is looking towards the east. Prospect Park has a lot of trees, it's a very dense foliage. So you look across the trees that are Prospect Park and then it kind of drops off into the river gorge and then the next kind of focal point is much further away, of all the rest of the trees in Minneapolis. You get this dark, lush green and then this kind of blue – especially on a humid day like this – that really separates the vantage points. There's just something really special about that vantage point.

Q Does it say anything about Prospect Park?

A I think it does. The reason why Prospect Park has so many trees is the neighborhood. The people that live here care about them and they plant trees in their yard and make sure that the boulevard has trees. I think in other neighborhoods, it may be more traditional to cut down trees or have less trees in your yard to be maybe a more managed feel, I don't know. But I do think that it speaks to the characteristics of Prospect Park.