

PARK COMMITTEE

Thursday, November 14, 2013

4 - 5:30 p.m.

Room 333 City Hall

Meeting Minutes

Committee members present: Chair: David Wilson. Members: Lester Bagley, Bruce Chamberlain, Dan Collison, David Fields, Brent Hanson, Diane Hofstede, Penny Hunt, Michele Kelm-Helgen, Aron Lipkin, Peggy Lucas, R.T. Rybak, Matt Tucker

Committee members excused: Chair: Tom Fisher. Members: Hussein Ahmed, Lisa Goodman, Barbara Johnson, Eric Laska, Peter McLaughlin, David Miller, Jim Norkosky, Brian Pietsch, Mike Ryan, Trent Tucker

Guests: John Crosby Sr., Varun Kharbanda

Staff/consultants present: Hilary Dvorak, Beth Elliot, Heidi Hamilton, Kjersti Monson, Jennifer O'Rourke, Brian Schaffer, Marsha Wagner

- 1. Welcome and Introductions.** Chair David Wilson called the meeting to order at 4:07. After inquiring if there were any Park Committee members attending for the first time, he invited Park Committee members and guests to introduce themselves.

Following introductions, Chair Wilson described the contents of the Park Committee binder. Prior to the meeting, the order of agenda items had been changed so that the meeting ended with a brainstorming session.

- 2. Approval of Minutes of 10/17/13 Meeting** – It was MOVED and SECONDED that the minutes be approved. Motion CARRIED.

- 3. Downtown Public Realm Issues, City Perspective [Appendix A]**

Kjersti Monson described her presentation as an overarching view for the downtown public realm beyond the site from the City's perspective. The big theme that will run through this planning process is "Placemaking," the lens through which we can see all of the different aspects of the city that will give this place identity, including global competitiveness, equity, community development, public health, land use planning, tourism, housing, etc. The public realm includes existing and future parks and open space in downtown Minneapolis. Public realm also means connectivity: a navigable network of places with a clear hierarchy and legible identity. Hierarchy of streets - Hennepin and Washington Avenues are major spines. Connectivity - the Convention Center and its connection to the river; our park, the station area and the Stadium and its connection to the river; and the riverfront itself.

Program is the next layer. A "splatter shot" of existing parks indicates the potential for everything from passive to active programming. St. Anthony Main was cited as an example of active programming; Nicollet Mall should be active. In the placemaking piece of the planning process, the Mississippi riverfront is key to our civic identity. The City supports what the Downtown 2025 Plan proposed: make our downtown riverfront a world-class destination. The piece of the riverfront that abuts downtown is currently passive but should be an active downtown, urban riverfront that is the center of something.

Another big place is Nicollet Mall—from Loring Park, to the Convention Center, along Nicollet Mall, across the river to Northeast Minneapolis—which could eventually have a streetcar. It will be re-envisioned and re-built, adding a lot of new residential units, which will support more retail development. Gateway Park connecting the Mall to the river is an exciting project.

The third major place includes an event corridor—essentially along the LRT line—from Target Field, Target Center, Nicollet Mall, Government Center, through Downtown East to the new Stadium. There is also the conversion of the 5th Street offramp from 94 on the horizon, and the possibility of making it a pedestrian and bike connection between downtown and the West Bank. With an evolving framework, the Park Committee must craft a vision for an East Downtown Park that participates in broader place identities, deciding whether the Park should be active or passive, a neighborhood park, with active programming, revenue-generating, who will be served, and what principles should guide its development.

Looking ahead to 2014, the East Downtown framework plan will envision networks and urban elements as places with a legible identity and program within the downtown context, especially in these two areas: (1) areas where public space is going to be actively programmed, and (2) streetscapes. We are going to have to look at some new tools and strategies to deliver meaningful public realm. We have a lot of passive, open space, but if we really want to have those urban parks with active programs—like what is talked about on Nicollet Mall, this park, Peavey Plaza—there have to be stakeholders. This Park Committee needs to continue breaking down silos, look at urban forest, and most importantly be the leader, piloting some new strategies and standards that we can apply elsewhere in downtown.

When asked to define new strategies and standards, Ms. Monson gave two examples. Currently there's a gap in urban public space. The Park Board does very well in managing neighborhood parks and park and recreation, but not programmed urban parks - if you think about the Bryant Park (New York City) model, it is revenue-generating with active programming and complex leasing agreements. That sort of park requires a vested interest to manage it. Do we want to explore doing something like that? In terms of standards, tree planting standards are important in order to establish mature trees that contribute meaningfully, creating an urban forest; also storm water management through landscape is important; we need to look comprehensively at creating standards for planting in the City.

The key takeaways from this presentation included looking at the landscape of opportunity: where does this park fall within that in terms of setting priorities, program, how best to participate. Also:

- The Stadium is a huge thing to consider, making this park home base, a main place to convene. The park site won't be large enough for a lengthy walk or run, so the Stadium could be included as part of that, with a walkway around it.
- David Fields said that East Downtown is the portal to the rest of downtown. With the two LRT lines, it's an introduction to the city and a way to get oriented to the downtown attractions. This area has a lot of amenities—Riverfront, Gateway Park vision, Peavey Plaza, Nicollet Mall—which need holistic coordinated strategies for developing them, but that's not in the purview of the Park Committee. We need to strike a balance between planning and creative chaos.
- Bruce Chamberlain reported that recent visitors staying in Downtown viewed Minneapolis as a transition city, on the verge of something great. They said we have a lot of things but they don't hang together. We need to take this collection of stuff and move it to a whole.
- Mayor Rybak added that for this park there is no strategy for programming, management and money to continuing to function. There was money to build plus ongoing programs. This park

shouldn't be distinguished by looking pretty; the real issue is what's going on there all the time.

- David Wilson said we can set the vision for programming this space. We will have a beautiful new stadium that will have some programming. A large corporate entity, Wells Fargo, will add an employee base, and there will be residents. We can decide what different uses we want this park to support, and do things that will complement the stadium.
- Diane Hofstede said it's important to relate to the community, and define what active means. Main Street across the river has biking, walking; as we think about activity what can residents tolerate because if there is too much programming they won't be happy.
- Michelle Kelm-Helgen said this outdoor space could be used as part of other events at the Stadium. When people attend a Final Four event it lasts 3-4 days, and people spend almost a week in town. The economic impact of that kind of programming—e.g., setting up tents—is over \$100 million.

4. Downtown Public Realm Overview, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB)

Perspective. [Appendix B] Bruce Chamberlain, Assistant Superintendent for Planning at MPRB, building on the information in the previous presentation, pointed out that it's not just the spaces that are important, but also the connections between them. Minneapolis has evolved a long way in thinking about streets as spaces; streets as public places where people want to congregate and spend time. He said the Park Board is not about building parks, it's about building a city, and listed several key elements in the context of city building:

- Reestablish community trust
- System thinking instead of focusing on one property or issue at a time
- Stacked benefits, including urban and ecological functions (i.e., storm water infiltration, energy generation), thinking about all of the components and benefits that an investment can derive
- Parks as urban framework; Minneapolis, more than any other city in the country, was built around its park system—"city in a park"—so we need to extend that pattern or urban development using parks as the framework
- Legacy design—tremendous great work, meaningful investments, high quality design

The MPRB business model includes system planning, the city approach to parks; master planning, the importance of programs, not just about design but how we develop an operating model and programming; design and construction piece, 2013 capital budget is about \$30 million, so there's between \$20 and \$30 million of work currently under construction within the park system. MPRB is also focusing on real estate services, inter-governmental coordination and capital planning. We have a tremendous park legacy, designated as number one in the country in 2013. We are experiencing very complex demands with scarce but growing resources; an engaged population; a turn toward cities, especially Minneapolis, with a spotlight on downtowns and especially Downtown Minneapolis; a great public realm focus. Minneapolis is a city in transition, on the verge of doing something really cool; this is a pivotal moment.

MPRB has identified service areas comprised of five zones: North, Northeast-Southeast, South, Southwest, and at the heart Downtown is in the middle of the five zones, bounded by I-35W and I-94. MPRB is in the process of creating master plans for every park in the city through this service area approach by 2018. It has 7,000 acres, about 185 properties, and \$1 billion in park development assets, and no coordinated long-term capital reinvestment strategy. We need to think about connections, with the City and Park Board working together on the Park Public Realm. David Wilson noted that in MPRB's map the Downtown District stops at the river; Mr. Chamberlain said we should look at the river as the center, not the edge, and they are doing that with the Central Riverfront Master Plan. The

needs of the business district on the other side of the river are more similar to Downtown businesses than to the neighborhoods. Mr. Wilson added that the Downtown Council included the area across the river up to University Avenue. Mr. Chamberlain agreed we should add that into the thinking about this site.

As a point of clarification, Mayor Rybak noted that the area between the Library and the river has been referred to as Gateway Park, but he urged everyone to call it the Gateway. At one time there was an historic Gateway Park in Minneapolis, but it was eliminated in the early 1960s.

MPRB is in the middle of the Central Riverfront master plan. It is looking at 2014 as kicking off the Downtown Service Area Master Planning process, looking at all of the parks in the area. Consistent with the Downtown 2025 Plan they should look at jumping the river to include that area, and ensure that parks are speaking to each other. MPRB and the City will conduct this effort together, building on the framework of previous plans ([2003 DT East/North Loop Master Plan](#), [2008 Downtown Parks Study](#), [Downtown 2025 Plan](#), [2012 RiverFirst Proposal](#), [2012 Gateway TPL Study](#), [2013 North Loop Park Scoping Study](#)).

MPRB is focusing on the park assets, components and program; the City is focusing on the public realm and how it is creating a great vibrancy through the city. There will be a coordinated public engagement process for the Downtown East small area/public realm framework and the downtown service area park master plan. They will use an integrated approach for land use, urban design issues, public realm strategy, land protection or acquisition, and phasing in an investment approach. This is a confirmed coordination initiative that MPRB and the City are coming together to do; MPRB has money in its budget to do the MPRB service area plan.

The Downtown Council has voted to move forward with a collaborative strategy focused on greening the public realm within the same time frame; new Downtown Council CEO Steve Cramer wants to launch it this winter. It was suggested that they be included in the process.

- 5. Stadium Implementation Committee (SIC) Principles.** David Wilson referenced the SIC Principles as a template for where the Park Committee should go in developing principles and vision for the stadium park. The SIC addressed two specific areas: exterior of the stadium building and surrounding public plaza, and the district/neighborhood around it.

Looking at the structure of the document, the Vision was very straightforward—The best urban football stadium in the country at the core of a vibrant place—and the park will be very much that core. He pointed out that while the design principles for a building are not applicable to this group, the design principles for place are pertinent, as are sustainable development and planning principles. He pointed out some key phrases within the document that are pertinent to the Park Committee's mission, including:

- Creating a memorable experience for fans on game day and for nearby residents, workers, and business owners every day
- Providing a seamless transition to nearby properties while promoting public safety and accessibility
- Versatile and attractive year round, all four seasons, 24/7

The SIC had a goal that we limit the number of street closures that would be required by building the Stadium. They didn't want the stadium to be a fortress cut off from the urban fabric of the city. When considering the park, there are competing views on whether or not it should be three city blocks without streets cutting through them. These are County roads and the decision rests with Hennepin County, which owns the streets.

The SIC called for creating dramatic approaches, vistas and archways that take advantage of existing and create new view corridors of the 27-story-high Stadium. The Park will help with this objective. Mayor Rybak talked about walking around the Stadium as part of a walk around the Park; the SIC promoted landscape design that would include the ability to do that.

The last bullet point about the site and surrounding area is a seamless connection to the Downtown East LRT station. The Ryan Project shows the parcel being incorporated into the Park. The Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority (MSFA) didn't have site control; the parking structure was owned by a private developer, Minneapolis Ventures. This issue was resolved with the signing of a purchase agreement by the MSFA, finalized on November 14, to acquire the plaza and parking below. With the resolution of ownership, the LRT Plaza will become an extension of the park. The front corner of the plaza has been used on game day, the back corner by the LRT station was at one time deemed a development site, but that is no longer the case. The surface, which dips on the back corner, will be made level to create one large space. When the Central Corridor comes online, Metro Transit will be adding more ticket machines and queuing space.

Again referencing the SIC Principles, the plaza should be bold, iconic and cherished year round, with a lush and green landscape. [See SIC Principles, The Plaza, p. 2.] They will be seeking LEED Certification for the Stadium and neighborhood. [SIC Principles, A Sustainable Development, p. 3.] There may be opportunities for LEED Certification for the Park, storm water capture and that sort of thing. Planning Committee members were encouraged to read through the list, noting those pertinent to a park rather than a building structure.

The planning principles echo what the Park Committee needs to look for in the park. Mr. Wilson encouraged the members to read through page 4, noting that almost every bullet point is pertinent to the Park. He then invited the members to reflect and talk about what they would like this park to be, including major game day experiences. This will be addressed more specifically at the next meeting.

- Aron Lipkin requested clarification on the definition of game day programming. Lester Bagley, Vice President of the Minnesota Vikings, said there is no ideal vision because it depends on what the park will look like. There's no example of an urban stadium to use for reference. Tailgating will be a side project, and they are putting together a Tailgating Task Force. When the Ryan Project is built, 822 parking spaces currently leased for tailgating will be lost. They have a lot of ideas but no vision. Michelle Kelm-Helgen added that it will look different in September-October than in winter months.
- The possibility of street closures was introduced, for game days but also possibly permanently. Kjersti Monson suggested that Chicago Avenue could be closed on game day between the Stadium and the River, and that temporary street closures on several of the streets between the park and Washington could facilitate tailgating. The Park is not just about Vikings or games; it should be a part of a great city. It needs to work for 10 regular season games plus playoffs. It was mentioned that the park may have revenue-generating programming which could include tailgating revenue.
- David Fields said that the Tailgating Task Force needs to remember to keep access open to Hennepin County Medical center. He suggested using side streets, some of which are essentially alleys. This could be a new style of tailgating, in little insets or enclaves. This suggestion for "linear tailgating" was met with enthusiasm.
- David Wilson noted that while running along the Mall in Washington, D.C., he noticed the way it is designed and thought it might be used as a model for this park. The middle section is a vacant, open grassy area. The walkways surrounding it are covered by a beautiful canopy of

trees. Because the space is so open it is flexible and can be used for many sorts of events. Lester Bagley of the Vikings said this sounded like a promising model.

To conclude this discussion, David Fields said that moving forward we should take the principles and focus on the primary issue, programming; think about different kinds of things that we really envision can happen here.

6. **Site Walk.** David Fields announced that Brian Schaffer and he would be leading a walk around the site, tentatively scheduled for Thursday, December 12, at 2:30, immediately prior to the next Park Committee meeting. If the weather is not conducive to being outdoors for that length of time, the Park Committee will convene for a graphic presentation, or virtual tour using Apple 3D maps, in Room 333 City Hall.
7. **Next Meeting.** Thursday, December 12, Room 333 City Hall.

Co-Chair David Wilson assigned as homework for the Planning Committee to read the SIC Principles and start thinking about their vision for the park.

8. **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.