

PARK COMMITTEE
Thursday, December 12, 2013
4 - 5:30 p.m.
Room 333 City Hall

Meeting Minutes – Amended on 5/8/14

Committee members present: Chairs: Tom Fisher, David Wilson. Members: Lester Bagley, Bruce Chamberlain, Dan Collison, Penny Hunt, Michele Kelm-Helgen, Eric Laska, Aron Lipkin, Peggy Lucas, R.T. Rybak, David Miller, Tom Nordyke, Jim Norkosky, Mike Ryan, Matt Tucker

Committee members excused: Members: Hussein Ahmed, David Fields, Brent Hanson, Barbara Johnson, Peter McLaughlin, Brian Pietsch, Trent Tucker

Guests: John Crosby Sr., Varun Kharbanda, Claudia Kittock, Rick Kittock, Ben Johnson, Sam Newberg

Staff/consultants present: Ann Calvert, Hilary Dvorak, Beth Elliot, Heidi Hamilton, Jennifer O'Rourke, Linda Roberts, Brian Schaffer, Marsha Wagner, Jeremy Hanson Willis

1. **Welcome and Introductions.** Chair David Wilson called the meeting to order at 4:05. After inquiring if there were any Park Committee members attending for the first time, he invited David Miller and Tom Nordyke, Council Member Goodman's designee, to introduce themselves.
2. **Approval of Minutes of 11/14/13 Meeting** – It was MOVED and SECONDED that the minutes be approved. Motion CARRIED.
3. **Related Project Updates**
 - a. **Ryan Development** – City Council will vote on it Friday (December 13), with approval expected. It has already passed unanimously through two committees. Project is moving forward but a key part is the park. The Park is a city park which the City will control except for 41 days a year when the Authority has the right to program. It will be operated by the Park Board, but within the city's control. The City has designated \$.5 million to buy and prepare the land, and will launch a campaign for private funds; the Minnesota Vikings have donated \$1 million for capital and operating expenses. This is an opportunity to have nonprofit partners, and how much funding is needed will depend on programming. The goal of the Park Committee is to set the programming that will determine the funding needed.

As part of the infrastructure change around the Stadium, Steve Kottke, Director of Public Works, has proposed moving the Fifth Street exit ramp from westbound I-94 to Seventh Street, which will become a two-way street. What was Fifth Street would be city-owned, connecting to LRT on the West Bank, and would become part of the public realm, opening the possibility for a skate park or other uses. The public realm is not just the Yard but the area all around the Stadium. Chair Wilson suggested speaking about this with Anne-Marie Woessner-Collins of Jones Lang LaSalle, who was part of an initiative in Dallas that built decks over the freeway. Chair Fisher added that a recent study showed that decking over that area would pick up 11 blocks of real estate, so it would pay for itself.

In the last round of negotiations, the City was awarded the developments rights over the McClellan Ramp. If the City sells air rights to another developer, that money could go into the Yard.

- b. **Stadium Ground Breaking** – Chair Wilson commended them for getting the project moving forward so quickly. Michelle Kelm-Helgen encouraged everyone to take a drive on Eleventh Avenue; the ground breaking was not just ceremonial. Construction is underway.
 - c. **StarTribune Site** – Chair Wilson referenced emails that were going around about the StarTribune building and some of the architectural elements, including medallions. At one point it was thought that the park space would be encumbered with having to make use of the medallions. It has been determined that they do have to be saved but do not necessarily have to be included in the Park.
 - d. **Technical Team Creation** – While this Committee is focused on developing the vision, principles and guidelines for the Park, a Technical Team is being established that will deal with timelines for building the Park, how it will be operated, etc. Their first meeting will take place on December 13.
4. **Park Overview** – Bruce Chamberlain reported that the Park Board, in beginning to think about the Yard, looked at ideas for programming: different types of uses; extremely flexible; active and passive recreation; involving the Vikings, Authority and neighborhood. Meeting with members of the Mayor’s staff, they developed some ideas about programs and surface treatments, i.e. road closures during events. He shared several posters showing the ideas they came up with, which will be very useful when the Park Committee has its programming brainstorming session on January 9. [Appendix C - Downtown Signature Park Program Options]
5. **Park Committee 2014 Meeting Schedule.** Mayor Rybak has requested that the meeting schedule be accelerated to be concluded within a six month time frame. Using the chicken-egg metaphor, he would like to begin raising funds while finalizing decisions about programming. David Miller suggested that we need a case statement, and Chair Fisher asserted that it’s easier to raise money with a big picture than with detailed programming. After additional discussion, the Committee members agreed that a vision statement could be finalized in January, and the principles and guidelines finalized by the end February. To accomplish this an additional meeting will likely be scheduled within that time frame.
6. **Parkmaking 101.** Matt Tucker, in keeping with his status as Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota’s Landscape Architecture College of Design, started his presentation with a pop quiz: What is your favorite park, and why? Committee members and guests responded:
Tom Fisher: Bryant Park, New York – always busy, heavily programmed
Lester Bagley: Millennium Park, Chicago – programmed, tastefully sponsored, center of action, connects the lakefront and downtown, context
Varun Kharbanda: Hyde Park, London – it’s alive
David Miller and Tom Nordyke: The Mall, Washington DC
David Wilson: Central Park, New York – has everything, natural forest areas, heavily programmed, skating rinks, zoos; entire Borough of Manhattan’s back yard-everyone is out there; edges-hundreds of thousands of eyes on the park at all times; poster-child for a park that died and was brought back to life with public-private partnerships
Dan Collison: Father Hennepin Park, Minneapolis – fully programmed, view of city and river, gets used constantly
Mayor Rybak: Lake Calhoun, Minneapolis – combination of beauty and people, where the people become the attraction; Washington Square Park, New York – wonderfully “scary”, not sure what was going to happen, people, music, energy – just this side of dangerous

Aron Lipkin: Murray Athletic Complex, Saint Paul – athletic fields; Chain of Lakes, Minneapolis – specifically sections of Cedar Lake where you can go off trail, and sections of Lake Harriet where there is high tree cover

Michelle Kelm-Helgen: High Line, New York (most of her favorite parks were already mentioned) – all of the development around it, functional space that has turned into cool urban park development, always something to do, unique

Rick Kittock: Echo Park, Los Angeles – water, trees, flowers, fish, and you can run all the way around it; skyline view of downtown Los Angeles

Linda Roberts: Minnehaha Falls – height opportunity, different views and different heights make it a unique cool park

Mike Ryan: Madison Square Park, New York – offers the most reprieve in New York, quite spot, lush tree canopy, Shake Shack; Petco Park, San Diego – ballpark and public park, all new buildings/development around it in historic neighborhood

Eric Laska: In Japan they use “forest bathing” to decrease stress levels

Matt Tucker added to the notes “ritual” – there are different times that we go to parks, different user groups at different times of day, week, year. How different ethnic groups use parks is also important.

What is interesting about the list that was generated is that we all bring different attitudes, opinions and memories about what a park is. The list is a cross-section of most of the park typologies in the last 150 years in the United States. A lot of parks started as large pleasure grounds, retreats. They evolved into urban parks with more recreation, and more recently being sustainable was important. Each park, like architecture and cultural arts, is embedded in its time. As we think about programming, what are the prevailing socio-cultural attitudes that are changing now? How do they exist in the landscape?

Mr. Tucker showed several images of parks with contemporary attitudes, noting unique components in each: Wynyard Point, Auckland, New Zealand – kept part of footprint of what was there; Sugar Beach, Toronto, Ontario – middle of downtown on site of former candy factory; Directors Park, Portland, Oregon – extremely small, not green, on top of parking structure; Steel Yard, Providence, Rhode Island – run by non-profit, open to the public; Cumberland Park, Nashville, Tennessee – was urban brownfield, now event program space, children’s park, cost \$12 million above land acquisition cost; Discovery Green, Houston, Texas – closest to what we have been talking about, in downtown core overlooking convention center. [Appendix A]

There are four items related to development of a park:

- a. Programming and budget – consider optimal governance structure for long-term viability; be strategic; develop a realistic schedule, planning for “opening year” right now as it’s never too early to combine program and operations; prioritize and demand flexibility - don’t have more programming than time + budget + space; be realistic, connect program + budget + schedule
- b. Design and permitting – clear and early communication; look for complementary opportunities, combine with Stadium events; integrate quality space with operational strategy
- c. Construction and commissioning – it’s not “just a park”, important to find the right general contractor that gets it
- d. Big opening and sustained support – there’s only one opening, so make it good; the way a park is maintained and managed is extremely important

Following Mr. Tucker’s presentation, there was discussion about the “walls” around the park. Mayor Rybak noted the walls around the Yard: Wells Fargo headquarters, Vikings Stadium, jail, Armory. Mr. Ryan added that another wall is the city skyline. What edges the park—i.e., residential, restaurants—is important. Mr. Miller mentioned Broadway Avenue in New York, where half of the

road has been made into a park; a street can be multi-purposed. Mr. Lipkin talked about his hopes and dreams for the park to be used by different groups at different times of the day: yoga and jogging in the early morning, toddlers and babies in strollers during the day, people there during lunch or after school, walking the dog after work, getting dinner, going to a movie; there needs to be security and safety for all different groups that will be using the park.

In closing, Mr. Tucker said he would like it if everyone in the room could be on site before the Park opens, and then experience it with people there after it opens.

- 7. Draft Principles Working Session.** Chair Wilson said that the first three meetings of the Park Committee provided grounding. For the next two months we will be focusing on principles and guidelines. Pertinent principles developed by the Stadium Implementation Committee, very aligned to what we want to see, were extrapolated from that document to create a draft document for discussion. [Appendix B]

- 8. Next Meeting.** Thursday, January 9, Room 319 City Hall.

To expedite the work of the Park Committee, Chair Wilson assigned homework. Committee Members are to start thinking about what to include in a vision statement. They are to read the principles in the draft document, sending their comments to Marsha Wagner no later than Thursday, December 19. In addition they should start thinking about what kind of programming they would like to see. At the January meeting we will focus on the vision statement and principles, and by the end of February will have developed guidelines. It is necessary to accomplish these tasks so that fundraising for the Park can commence.

- 9. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.