

Community Planning and Economic Development News Release

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Downtown East Commons Concept Design Presented at Public Meeting Tonight, May 27

Wednesday, May 27, 2015 (Minneapolis, MN) – Earlier this evening, the City of Minneapolis in partnership with Hargreaves Associates presented a concept design for the Downtown East Commons at a public meeting at the Minneapolis Central Library. This meeting was the third in a series of public meetings that sought feedback on the uses and design of the Commons. The concept incorporated feedback from those meetings as well as through over 2,750 survey responses.

“For this generational opportunity, we need a generational Commons that will serve a great variety of needs for a great variety of users,” said Mayor Betsy Hodges. “We are closing in on a terrific design that will rise to this opportunity. I’m thankful to everyone who took part in the process to get us this far, and to everyone who supports the greening of our downtown.”

“We are very pleased to present a preliminary design for the Commons that captures the essence of all the great input we’ve received and that will create a distinctive urban park - compelling, memorable, a destination for all, and an open space amenity for generations to come,” said Mary Margaret Jones, President of Hargreaves Associates.

The concept design for the Commons envisions a transformative downtown public open space for the City of Minneapolis. It is a welcoming and inclusive civic landscape, balancing active programming and events with opportunities for respite. Key design features include a great lawn; program and garden zones; a Minnesota woodland area; natural landscaping that encourages children to explore and play; a water plaza with jets that can be turned on or off; and a multiuse pavilion. Together, these features provide a flexible framework, within which diverse program and uses can evolve.

The design also emphasizes strong urban connections in all directions, reaching out to both the city and the river. Promenades with robust streetscape canopies extend along both 4th Street and 5th Street. Connections along and across Portland Avenue are also enhanced. Sustainable strategies are incorporated throughout the design, offering a vision for an enduring open space that provides the city with a dynamic, all-season destination.

“The Commons design goes well beyond accommodating recreation and respite – if executed properly, it can aid in highlighting the magnificence of Minneapolis,” said Council Member Jacob Frey. “After seeing the Commons vision, it hopefully becomes very apparent that we aren’t messing around, and the end result will be absolutely extraordinary.”

“The design packs a lot of diverse activities in a relatively small area, with two oval lawn areas that encourage physical activity and people watching, a series of innovative outdoor ‘rooms’ for various active and passive pursuits, a water plaza that will appeal to people of all ages, an elegant pavilion serving park goers, and an ample tree canopy to shade the play areas and promenades,” said Tom Fischer, Dean, University of Minnesota College of Design. “This is landscape architecture at its very best, from one of the top design teams in the world. The Commons will become a destination for people across the entire region, something we can all share.”

“All great cities have great parks – they play a vital role in attracting residents, businesses and visitors, contributing to economic prosperity, public health and a community’s wellbeing,” said David Wilson, Chair of the Greening and Public Realm Committee of the Minneapolis Downtown Council. “I’m excited to see Minneapolis investing in this great new public space, designed for celebration, recreation and green space in the heart of our downtown.”

City staff and the Hargreaves team will use the feedback from tonight’s meeting and through information submitted online at the project website to continue to develop the concept design. Another public meeting is planned for later this summer to present design progress. To review complete project details, including tonight’s presentation or past presentations view the project [website](#) (presentation expected to be posted Thursday, May 28 by noon).

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Images: High resolution images from tonight’s meeting can be found online [here](#).