



STEERING COMMITTEE

Thursday, August 20, 2015

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

MPRB Headquarters

Meeting Notes

Committee members present: Deepak Advani, Jay Cowles, Steve Cramer, Richard Mammen, Nancy Nasi, Neil Reardon, Paul Reyelts, Philip Schwartz, Carletta Sweet, Dave Tinjum, Ted Tucker, Jo Vos, Sally Westby, Craig Wilson

Committee members excused: Nick Cichowicz, Joanne Kaufman, Jamie Schumacher, David Wilson
[Please see [website](#) for Steering Committee Member affiliations]

Guests: Greg Berg, Mary Bujold, Paul Forsline, Scott Vreeland

Staff/consultants present: Bruce Chamberlain, Lydia Major, Kjersti Monson, Jamie Neldner, Tyler Pederson, Jennifer Ringold, Lacy Shelby, Marsha Wagner, Sarah Weeks

1. Welcome/Introductions

The fifth meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Jennifer Ringold, Deputy Superintendent, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). Jennifer invited those present—SC members, staff and guests—to introduce themselves.

Jennifer said that during this meeting they will be summarizing where we've been to date, making sure they have gotten correction direction from the SC. In October MPRB will begin doing the individual park planning. At which point, the City will be approaching the time when they will be preparing their documents for public comment.

2. Downtown Public Realm Framework (Streets and Plazas)

Kjersti Monson, Director, Long Range Planning, Minneapolis CPED, said the city's focus is on creating the policy document. The policy document will be comprised of a series of overarching values that will guide site plan reviewers, development applications and capital projects. It will have goals and objectives to address whole systems planning, sustainability, equity and making a people-first city. The policy chapters will cover the three major areas of guidance: physical framework (a map that will highlight corridors, places/districts and connections for enhancement), public realm guidelines, formerly referred to as "Developer Guidelines" (best practices for designing the streetscape), and enhancement toolkit (tools for community members to beautify and enliven their neighborhoods). The physical framework establishes the basic framework of policy guidance, including the building block elements of place or district, corridor, and connection.

Work to date includes working with constituencies—residents, visitors and workers—in committee meetings, focus groups, and public meetings to identify priorities and consensus corridors. The community has identified priority destinations where events are happening, and the City has evaluated existing policy guidance, thereby reinforcing consensus priorities and contextual elements that will contribute to creating a broader series of connections.

Referencing the shaded areas on the Framework Plan map [[PPT Page 16](#)], Kjersti said these have been identified as districts, corridors and key connections. They will have an actual boundary, and within each district there will be recommended streetscape level guidance. Examples include a greater

density of benches and seating, improved pedestrian-oriented spaces, guidance around trees or bike racks, elements that might have greater frequency here than other streets Downtown. The three basic elements are policy building blocks. [\[PPT Page 17\]](#) Corridors are identified as major existing connections between destinations, landmarks and other key features of downtown. Districts refer to places in Downtown that already have a cohesive identity. Connections refer to critical conduits and connection points between different corridors and districts that do not yet exist or that require significant investment.

Kjersti invited Lacy Shelby, Principal Urban Designer, Minneapolis CPED, to talk through the second part of the policy document: Public Realm Guidelines and the enhancement toolkit. The physical framework will guide where the policies are going to be deployed, and the policies will be housed in the public realm guidelines portion. The City will make recommendations in three specific categories: street furnishing, street trees/greening, and ground floor uses. Detail will be provided on where the City expects additional enhancements to go, how they get deployed in the public realm, and the expected level of performance and quality.

- Street furnishing [\[PPT Pages 20-21\]](#): They will focus on placement/siting, basic minimum clearance dimensions, permitting, process and maintenance strategies. Street furnishing features might include benches, planters, trash and ash receptacles, public art, bike racks, etc.
- Street trees and greening [\[PPT Pages 22-23\]](#): The goal will be to provide guidelines around minimum requirements regarding dimensions, planting medium, species selection practices (MPRB), tree protection, spacing requirements and tree guard and tree grate guidance. Street tree and greening guidance typologies may include tree pits, public and private planters (raised and freestanding), stormwater, connected tree pits and understory planting.
- Ground floor uses [\[PPT Pages 24-25\]](#): Leaning on municipal and zoning codes, the goal will be to encourage appropriate complimentary ground floor uses on key corridors and in districts to develop general design guidance on the relationship of ground floor spaces to the public realm in Downtown. Performance goals for ground floors abutting public realm elements, including appropriate uses, will be established. It will provide corridor/district specific guidance, and design guidance on things like setbacks, glazing, entrances and massing.

Every time a new development goes through the City, it will undergo a site plan review process which could result in requirements of the property owner to provide certain features and amenities. Lacy showed a series of maps of major development projects currently in Downtown Minneapolis and explained how guidance could be offered to developers during the development review process [\[PPT Pages 26-30\]](#).

Lacy said the third major piece of the policy document is the enhancement toolkit, which is an examination of existing tools and programs available in the City. The enhancement toolkit will identify and recommend strategies neighbors can deploy on their streets through existing programs, and include preliminary operations and maintenance recommendations that could be enabled through policy changes. One goal of the enhancement toolkit will be the creation of a one-stop-shop for community members to identify strategies for enhancing their streets. [\[PPT Pages 31-34\]](#) They are working with Public Works to better understand some of the limitations of the programmatic elements as well as the actual features, and how they could be more easily deployed on the street. For example, features such as a sidewalk café, community garden or bike rack would be part of the one-stop-shop that would provide additional guidance. Each programmatic feature would have its own “cut sheet” that guides a person on how to utilize a program, what the process and timeline is, and who to contact.

Subsequent discussion dealt with any challenges that might be anticipated. Lacy explained that while all of this information is currently available to the public, once it is more accessible Public Works is expecting to receive an increase in encroachment permit requests. Public Works is concerned about staffing and processing the permits, and is also concerned about maintenance and operations.

Kjersti added that on the funding side, part of the enhancement toolkit is about trying to identify other revenue sources. There are examples around the country of certain streams of funds being dedicated to improvements, whether through unique zoning, public/private partnerships or other means.

Lacy concluded by saying that the policy document will be completed in early October. [Please note: The scheduled completion date has been changed to November.] At which point it will be circulated among the TAC and SC for feedback in advance of the full public release.

3. Downtown Service Area Master Plan (Parks and Trails)

Lydia Major, Landscape Architect, LHB, reviewed work accomplished to date by the SC. [[PPT Pages 36-39](#)] Mapita has been employed and is still available; it has captured a lot of rich data. While more than 500 people have participated, they are looking for thousands of people to offer input. Lydia reminded SC members to continue to spread the word at events they attend.

Intercept events have been successful. Lydia also showed an updated Dashboard, which is used by the MPRB to track the progress of community engagement against its original goals, stating that great progress is being made. [[PPT Page 43](#)] Looking forward, they will be working on neighborhood parks, contacting and having meetings with neighborhood organizations. In October design work will begin.

Jennifer offered appreciation for and thanks to SC members who have been working hard to get information out and collect data. This has been a more robust engagement process than on any previous MPRB project.

A question was asked about engagement with more sophisticated developers who have experience in other urban markets. Doing so could create economic value, accelerating adoption and integration of these plans. Lacy said that the City has had specific conversations and hosted focus groups with a number of developers. MPRB has also had focus groups and conversations with specific developers. Kjersti added that they have heard from developers who want to do this, but they don't know how or they don't know what the City wants. Developers identified specific challenges and made suggestions on how to make it easier for them to make enhancements to their property or adjacent parcels.

Motivators and Planning Framework

At the last meeting of the SC there was a robust discussion about who makes up the group of people using the parks, open spaces (streets, plazas) and other elements within the public realm that makes up Downtown. The Project Team's thinking on that has evolved thanks to feedback from SC members at and subsequent to that meeting. Bruce Chamberlain, Parks Fellow with the Minneapolis Parks Foundation, explained that they have moved from the notion of personas, which would inevitably leave some groups out or would mischaracterize users, to the notion of motivators because everyone who uses Downtown has a motivation for using the public space. Motivations might vary for an individual depending upon the time of day or other factors. Instead of being personalized, it is put in the realm of why people want to use Downtown public space, which gives it a market focus.

Describing the project structure [[PPT Page 46](#)], Bruce explained that the Downtown audience that has been identified has inherent motivations or interests for using Downtown public space that translates

to the public space program. The public space programs are supported by the landscape, whether it's a park, private/public plaza, or street environment. The landscape is expressed and understood through systems, patterns, design character and implementation strategies. The design team is thinking about all of these items as a set of deliverables that are plugged into each of the elements of the process, and together they create a circuit that works.

They looked at the motivators for using Downtown. These include:

- Absolute components, attributes that need to be a part of every park space Downtown like drinking fountains, trash receptacles and handicapped accessibility
 - ADS and universal design
 - Basic needs and comfort
 - Design for playfulness
 - Mobility and connections
 - Nature
 - Safety and security
- Motivators
 - Study/think/work
 - Fitness/health
 - Be entertained
 - Action/adventure/challenge
 - Competition/sport
 - Get away/retreat/rest/relax
 - Explore/learn
 - Assembly
 - Family and friends

Boards were created for each motivator, and Bruce showed an example of one for Fitness and Health. [\[PPT Page 50\]](#) It has descriptive text around the motivator, identifies some key primary activities this group might be interested in, and identifies some of the primary modifiers that would impact the way people use these spaces. It also contains a map showing where in Downtown this motivation is currently accommodated. The maps indicate where MPRB is doing well and where it has gaps.

- Modifiers: Within a particular motivation for using the Downtown park system, there may be a spectrum of park activities or facilities needed to carry it out. For instance, people with young kids or dogs tend to stay fit in different ways than those without. Modifiers are expressed as a series of sliding scale. [\[PPT Page 52\]](#)
 - Flexibility and time
 - Nature
 - Kids
 - Level of Social Interaction
 - Pets
 - Physical intensity
 - Scale/size of group
 - Willingness/ability to pay

A question was asked about where the issue of “seasonal” occurred, perhaps as a modifier, to establish accessibility in different seasons. The Planning Team made the assumption that Downtown is a four season space so “seasonal” has not been identified as a modifier. After discussion, it was agreed that the Design Team would contemplate that subject throughout the design.

Clarification of two modifiers—level of structure and physical intensity—was requested and provided. Level of structure has to do with programming, and perhaps using the word “programming” would make it more clear. Physical intensity refers to the physical challenge of the space, not physically challenging activities like running, etc. It was suggested that “sensory” might be a better term to use.

Another point was brought up about adding in neighborhood character, meaning a community’s sense of ownership of the park in its neighborhood. It could be an overlay on other modifiers, useful to get buy-in and support and possibly even contributions for maintenance. Lacy said that a lot of the work done by the City to define character districts will be helpful in conversations with MPRB staff because a lot of the neighborhoods have already defined their character as part of their community process over the years. The City will share that information with MPRB staff.

Guiding Principles for the Downtown Service Area, Large Group Discussion

Jennifer introduced the section on vision and goals discussion, stating that they attempted to incorporate what they have heard from the SC, TAC, and the community through various outreach methodologies, to put together a vision with some supporting goals. [[PPT Pages 53-55](#)] As they meet with individual neighborhood parks they will use these descriptions to think about how they design the parks.

Understanding that parks will be drivers, or reaction to, development, they developed the following vision and goals:

We envision a 21st Century Downtown Minneapolis with Parks that are:

- *Playful* places for everyone
- *Valued* within and beyond Downtown (Downtown needs to be owned by everyone)
- *Simply* beautiful and ecologically functional
- *Supportive* of whole life health
- *Expressive* of our culture and history
- *Connected* to place and community
- *Tended* by many

Each goal had several descriptors which were tested with the SC members. The ensuing large group discussion gave SC members a chance to question, challenge and do some wordsmithing with the goals and descriptors. Many of these changes will be incorporated into the final document.

Distribution of Motivators in Existing Parks and Search Areas, Small Group Mapping Exercise

Lydia introduced the small group mapping exercise by showing a summary of activities at existing parks [[PPT Page 56](#)] that had been assigned to a motivator or motivators [[PPT Page 57](#)]. Taking activities given to the Project Team by SC members, they placed them on a map of existing parks.

In the small group exercise, SC members were invited to add or delete motivators indicating what should be provided by MPRB, and then to rank them (1-2-3) for each park. Lydia added that almost every motivator was in every park a little bit, but they are looking for the top three priorities to help them understand the needs across the system. SC members were asked to do the same on a separate map of park search areas. To aid in this exercise, a packet of motivator descriptions was provided to each group.

Group A: Deepak Advani, Mary Bujold, Nancy Nasi, Carletta Sweet, Jo Vos, Craig Wilson

Group B: Jay Cowles, Steve Cramer, Richard Mammen, Paul Reyelts

Group C: Neil Reardon, Philip Schwartz, Tom Tucker, Sally Westby

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Upcoming Activities

Jennifer discussed next steps, including working with the communities beginning in October to design neighborhood parks. In addition, they are drafting a schedule for “Design Week” to be held October 19-23. This is a week-long intensive design charrette had begins with a public workshop on the evening of October 19. Because of this schedule, Jennifer asked if the SC would be willing to move its next meeting from October 15 to October 22. By that date the City will be able to introduce its policy document, which will be out for public comment at that time, and MPRB will have a series of drawings and ideas that they will have generated in the three days prior to that meeting. Following a one hour SC meeting MPRB will host a public open house so individuals around the community can attend and weigh in on the concepts and designs.

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

*This constitutes my understanding of items discussed and decisions reached.
If there are any omissions or discrepancies, please notify the author in writing.*

Submitted by:

Marsha Wagner, CastleVisions

marsha@castlevisions.com