

## Community Planning and Economic Development News Release

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### City of Minneapolis Celebrates Grand Opening of The Commons with Community

**Thursday, July 21, 2016 (Minneapolis, MN)** – Elected officials, partners, and community members gathered today to celebrate the grand opening of The Commons, a 4.2 acre, dynamic green space located in the heart of downtown that aims to engage all of Minneapolis’ diverse communities.

Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges; Council Member Jacob Frey; Pat Ryan, President and Chief Executive Officer of Ryan Companies US, Inc.; Mark Wilf Owner/President of the Vikings, and Mary Margaret Jones, President of Hargreaves Associates kicked off the opening ceremony. Event attendees forwent a traditional ribbon cutting and tossed blue and green Frisbees into the air to officially commemorate the opening. The event featured food trucks, dance performances by *Asian Dance Team*, free yoga by CorePower Yoga, and a variety of lawn games in a program designed to exemplify the many activities that will take place in The Commons.

“The Commons is a vital new extension of the city’s footprint, a new space downtown to connect diverse communities from across the city,” said Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges. “As the anchor for the ongoing transformation of Downtown East, the Commons is a green space for all residents, visitors and communities. It will connect the city and its people together and provide new opportunities for healthy outdoor activities as Minneapolis continues to grow.”

“Every great city has a world class downtown park, and today we deliver the first block of our very own,” said Council Member Jacob Frey. “The Commons is the kitchen table for our city – the place where everyone can gather and connect. Bring on the picnic blankets, soccer balls, and Frisbees because this downtown park is primed for action.”

The Commons is a key part of the broader, five-block Downtown East development project that has brought over \$400 million of investment in new office towers for Wells Fargo, housing, retail, parking, and a hotel to an area that resisted development for decades. The East Block officially opened today and includes: a great lawn, promenades, areas for play, and plantings. The West Block will open next month.

“The Commons is the “crown jewel” of the \$2 billion Downtown East development,” said Pat Ryan, Ryan Companies US, Inc. CEO and co-chair of The Commons fundraising committee. “This largely neglected area of Downtown East has been transformed by Wells Fargo, US Bank Stadium, Radisson Red, and the Edition Apartments. The Commons is a gathering place for all of Minneapolis to celebrate this live-work-play city. I am proud of the public-private partnership that has brought The Commons to life. Great

cities have great people who work together to create a great environment. It is a privilege to lead the fundraising efforts with Mayor Betsy Hodges.”

In early 2015, the City hired a team lead by the internationally recognized landscape architecture firm, Hargreaves Associates, to design The Commons beyond a flat, grassy field as was originally negotiated. After a year of intensive community engagement including four community meetings and feedback from over 2,500 survey responses, the design was finalized and construction began by Ryan Companies in the fall of 2015.

“Today is just the beginning! We have been honored to guide the design process for this transformative, destination open space for the City of Minneapolis – a welcoming and inclusive public landscape, which we are eager to watch emerge and evolve over the coming years. The participation of the public and stakeholders has been exceptional, resulting in a vision for The Commons that truly incorporates the needs of all users,” said Mary Margaret Jones, President of Hargreaves Associates.

The Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District (DID) will operate The Commons through 2016. Green Minneapolis, a nonprofit public-private conservancy is working with the City on an operating agreement for 2017 and beyond. To date, Green Minneapolis has raised over 14 million in supporting the fundraising effort for The Commons. The City has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) to transfer fee title of the property to MPRB and lease it back and be responsible for its operations.

“The City of Minneapolis, in partnership with many philanthropic businesses and individuals, has invested, designed, and built a first-of-its-kind green space for the City and the State—a tremendous accomplishment,” said David Wilson, Chairman of the Green Minneapolis Board. “Now comes the most important part— bringing the park’s potential to life for everyone in our community. For this we will need continued support and investment to ensure the park is well maintained, programmed, and cared for.”

Donors to the green space thus far include Wells Fargo, Ryan Companies, The Minnesota Vikings, Valspar, U.S. Bank, The Pohlard Family Foundation, Julia Dayton, Jay and Page Cowles, The Edward J. Phillips Family Foundation, Piper Jaffray, CenturyLink, The David Wilson and Michael Peterman Family, Target Corporation, Carlson and the Carlson Family Foundation, Land O’Lakes, Thrivent Financial, Veit USA and Xcel Energy.

For more information on upcoming events or to learn how to reserve The Commons for activities visit [www.CommonsMpls.com](http://www.CommonsMpls.com).

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