

upper~harbor

Upper Harbor Terminal Redevelopment Frequently Asked Questions

7/31/18

1. What and where is the “Upper Harbor Terminal”?

The Upper Harbor Terminal (or “UHT”) is a 48+-acre site owned by the City of Minneapolis. It’s located in North Minneapolis along the Mississippi River between 33rd and about 40th avenues and also extends at one point inland to I-94. It’s been operated for decades as a barge shipping terminal. With the closure of the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock to barging, the site is now being used for storage on an interim basis until redevelopment starts.

The site was taken from the local Dakota First Nation as a result of an 1851 treaty. Prior to acquisition by the City through a number of transactions, the land between Washington Ave. and the River apparently was owned by a series of businesses. The portion of the site between Washington and I-94 (Parcel 7) was part of the land condemned by MnDOT for the construction of I-94 and then later conveyed to the City of Minneapolis as excess right-of-way.



2. What guidance do City and Park Board plans provide for the site?

There has been extensive community engagement and planning for the area along the Mississippi River upriver from Plymouth Avenue (the “Above the Falls” area), including the UHT site. Most recently, there was an extensive community engagement process in 2012 – 2014 to update the [Above the Falls Master Plan](#) and [Above the Falls Regional Park Plan](#), including the RiverFirst park visioning process.

These plans agree that the terminal operation on the UHT site should end and the site redeveloped for a mixture of parkland along the River and private development inland. This park will be a “regional park,” rather than a “neighborhood park” and eventually will be connected up and down river into the city’s famous Grand Rounds system. Because it will be some time before these connections can be made, planners feel that the addition of a destination where Dowling Avenue meets the Mississippi River is a key first step to bring people to the site and start providing a riverfront amenity. The *Master Plan Update* calls for mixed use and business park redevelopment. Other uses may be considered, if there is a feasible market for them and they meet the plan’s criteria.

Studies indicate that the structures on the site are eligible for local historic designation because of their connection with the history of the long-standing rivalry between Minneapolis and St. Paul over which town should be the head of river navigation, which led to the construction of the St. Anthony Falls locks and the development of the UHT site as a barge shipping terminal.

3. What other designations, plans and regulations will inform the redevelopment?

The future of the UHT site will be impacted by several designations that include all or part of the site. In 1988 Congress designated a 72-mile corridor along the Mississippi that as the [Mississippi National River and Recreation Area](#), a unit of the National Park Service. This includes the portion of the UHT site east of Washington Ave./Second St. The MNRRRA [Comprehensive Management Plan](#) and [Strategic Plan](#) identify visions and goals to be achieved within the corridor. That same portion of the site is included within the State-designated [Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area](#). The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has issued new rules for this corridor that eventually will be reflected in Minneapolis's comprehensive plan and zoning code. Within Minneapolis, the Zoning Code will impact the redevelopment of the site, including three overlay districts ([Mississippi River Critical Area](#), [Shoreland](#) and [Floodplain](#) overlays). The UHT site also is located entirely within the federally-designated [Promise Zone](#), which has the goal of eliminating economic and other disparities in high poverty communities. The portion of the site south of Dowling is included in the City-designated Northside [Green Zone](#), a policy initiative aimed at improving health and supporting economic development using environmentally conscious efforts.

4. What still remains to be decided?

The following are still open questions being explored in the planning process:

- How much of the site should be a park, and what park features should be included in addition to trails, a parkway and green river edge?
- What other non-park amenities would complement the park and make the site a true community destination?
- Is an amphitheater a desirable public amenity and, if so, at what scale and for what types of programming?
- Are there appropriate reuses for any of the existing historic structures that should be included in the plan? Are any of those reuses acceptable alternatives to pure "park" space?
- Should the existing powerlines be relocated and/or buried to make way for development?
- Once we have a clearer sense of the "destination," what types of private development would complement that destination, be supported by the market and be desired by the community?
- If housing is one of those desired/appropriate land uses, what types of units are best (rental vs. ownership) and what markets should it serve?
- If business development is one of those desired/appropriate land uses, what types of business development would be desired and how could that development benefit the community?
- What can be done to make it easier for the community to access the site?
- What roads and other public improvements are needed to both serve the redevelopment on the site and provide good access from the adjacent community to the site?
- How can site redevelopment benefit the community with as little negative impact (e.g., gentrification) as possible?

5. What process is being used to pursue redevelopment?

The City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board worked together on a “request for qualifications” (RFQ) process to find a qualified private developer to work with them. This RFQ was issued in August 2016, and one developer submission (for the entire site) was received in October 2016. After reviewing the submission and community input about it, the City and Park Board selected that development team. This team is led by United Properties and also includes THOR Companies and First Avenue Productions. As outlined in an [Exclusive Rights Agreement](#), the three parties have been working together, with community input, to formulate a coordinated redevelopment plan. This plan will include an implementation strategy and the business terms for at least the initial phases of park and private development.

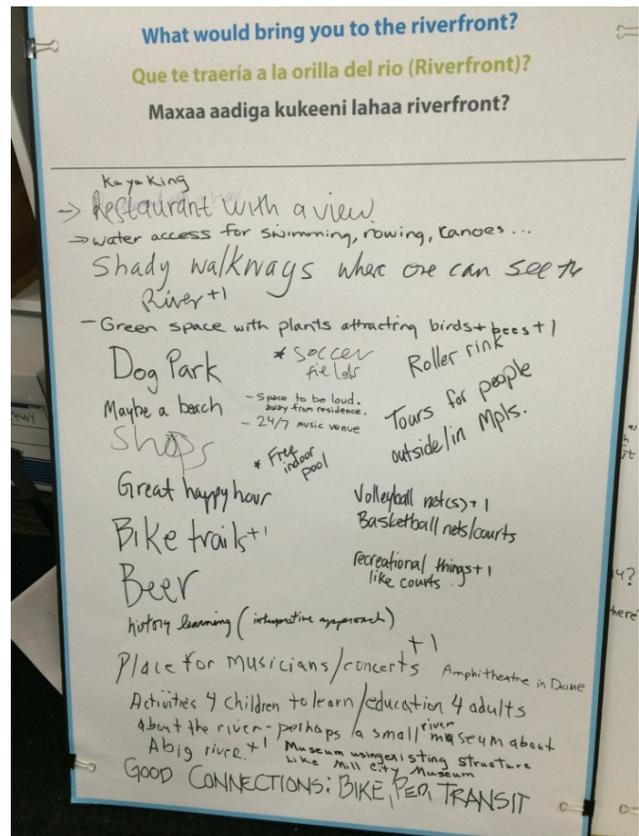
6. How soon might redevelopment occur?

The coordinated planning process is expected to be completed in 2019. The search for funding to implement the plan may take additional time, but implementation could begin by 2020 or 2021. Full implementation is expected to occur in multiple phases over several years.

7. What happened to the community input received during the RiverFirst and Above the Falls processes and initial UHT site engagement? When has the community had input, and how has it been used? What is being done to include community voices who often have been left out of the process?

The community input received during the RiverFirst and Above the Falls processes informed those earlier plans and also provided a starting point for discussions relative to the UHT site.

Starting in the fall of 2015 and continuing through summer 2016, the City and Park Board used a variety of approaches to seek input that would inform the RFQ and explore what types of destinations would be of most interest. In order to reach out to a variety of under-represented communities, staff held not only public meetings at a variety of times and locations to gather initial general input, but also sought input at events and meetings which various under-represented sectors of the community typically attend. The end result of this input was a “Characteristics of Success” summary that was included in the RFQ, a list of information that the community wanted included in RFQ submissions and evaluation criteria that were informed by community values and concerns.



Community input about the developer submission was gathered at a public open house and input also was sought via an online survey. This input informed the decision to select the team to act as the master developer. In late 2016 and early 2017, the City and Park Board also worked with the community to explore what can be done to assure that both the community engagement process and the resulting development project are equitable.

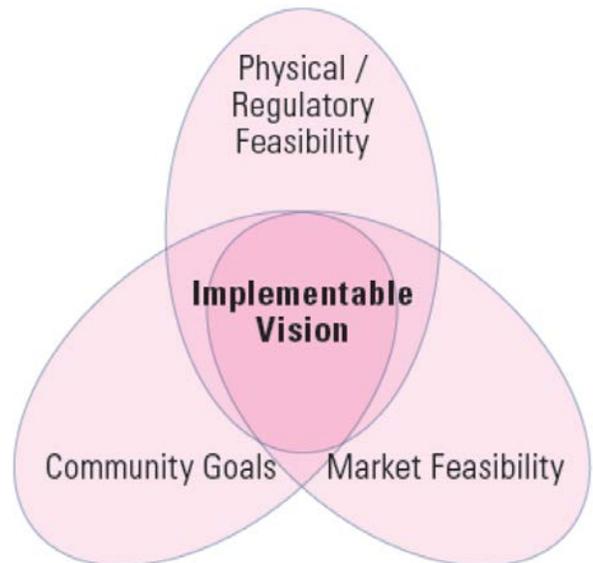
Full-scale community engagement in the coordinated planning process began in spring 2017. During this process, input was sought relative to the types and basic design of the park, private development, destination(s) and public improvements. The City, Park Board and development team hosted a series of community meetings and made efforts to reach out to communities that typically are not engaged in that manner (see the website for [information](#) on upcoming meetings and engagement opportunities and summaries of previous meetings).

A new round of community engagement is beginning in late summer 2018 to seek input on the draft redevelopment concept that resulted from the 2017 input and planning.

8. **What is possible? What is not possible? What factors will impact the actual redevelopment?**

Redevelopment of this large and complicated site will require significant public and private resources and the collaborative effort of multiple public, private and nonprofit partners. There are a number of factors in addition to community input that will influence what can actually happen on the site. These include:

- The regulatory framework in which the City, Park Board and developer must work and the physical realities of the site.
- For the park and public improvements on the site: how much funding is available (and the various requirements that come with that funding).
- For the private development: the real estate market, the financial feasibility of various types of development, the amount of debt and equity funding available and the requirements that come with that funding.
- For any special project improvements and/or programs: whether one or more nonprofit partners are willing and able to take on construction, operation and funding of those programs.



9. **How can I stay informed and involved?**

At www.upperharbormpls.com, you can learn more about the site, the various plans and studies to date and the developer selection process and also read summaries of the community engagement meetings and efforts. You also can sign up for email updates, participate in any online surveys and see announcements of any upcoming meetings.