Upper Harbor Terminal

Community Advisory Committee and Public Meeting #1

Current project goal: recommendation to Board of Commissioners on concept design and first phase improvements

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Wednesday, June 31, 2019

The Upper Harbor Terminal Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is one part of a much larger project, and a much larger engagement effort led by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). The two goals for this stage of the project are to create a concept plan for the overall park and to prioritize what the first phase of improvements should be. If we do this work well, we will contribute to overall agency and project goals such as building trust and understanding, connecting people to their park board and the river, as well as moving this project closer to implementation.
The Minneapolis Park system is known for providing public access to green space, and water across the city. The system is also known for the high level of connections between green spaces through the parkways and trails – especially the Grand Rounds. The system has many types of parks from small pocket parks to large expanses of land, from natural areas, to places for active sports, and indoor facilities.
One area that substantially lacks public access to parks and water is on the upper riverfront in North and Northeast Minneapolis. Because much of this land was industrialized before MPRB began establishing public green space along the water ways, completing the park system in this area is a challenging task. This land in the upper river has gone through several transformations, from Indigenous and native landscape before 1855, to lumber milling from 1855-1880, to railroads and farming in 1880 – 1950, finally to the heavy industry that continued to develop until about 2000. Heavy industry still exists on the land today which prevents the residents of this area of the city from connecting to the river. In North Minneapolis, I-94 is another significant barrier between the existing residential areas and the river.
The City and MPRB have sought to finish the park system in this area through a series of efforts. In 2000, MPRB established the Above the Falls (ATF) Regional Park and began to acquire land necessary to complete the parkway, trails, and areas of expanded park amenities. In 2011 MPRB launched the RiverFirst Initiative, which was an effort to refocus energy on the riverfront. In 2013 MPRB created the first draft of the ATF Regional Park Master Plan; the effort to finalize that plan continues today.
Because high health, income, and educational disparities are in the areas in North and Northeast nearest to the industrial land, other agencies have also focused on the upper river area. The City is has created the locally designated Northern Green Zone and helped to establish the Federal Promise Zone, and worked on the ATF Health Impact Assessment, and the ATF Master Plan Update done in 2013 with the corresponding park planning by MPRB.
The ATF park planning paused in order to allow the City and MPRB time to establish a park boundary through the Upper Harbor Terminal site, a 48 acre area on the west bank of the upper river. The site was always planned to be split between regional park and development. The current planning process began in 2015 when the downtown lock closed, which ended barging to the upper river.
The City and MPRB knew that the site was a challenging one and needed to better understand what type and extent of development was possible. After nearly a year of engagement to inform a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) the two agencies issued the RFQ for a master developer in 2016. One development team (United Properties, THOR Companies, and First Avenue Productions) submitted and approved as a planning partner.
Engagement began in 2015 with an effort by the City and MPRB to raise awareness of the upcoming project, get some initial thoughts from community members, and inform the search for the developer. In 2017 the City, MPRB, and developer collaborated on engagement to help define the concept. In 2018 the team released a draft concept plan which was refined into the plan approved by the City in 2019.
The 2019 Concept Plan can be found on the www.upperharbormpls.com website. The concept defines land uses, circulation and infrastructure, and the park boundary.
The park areas are shown in green above and include the parkway which also serves as a city street. Much of the park is riverfront land with a width that allows the parkway, trails, and shoreline restoration. There is continuous public land along the riverfront; in places the parkway swing away from the riverfront and allows private development between the parkway and trails.
The City and developer, along with the Collaborative Planning Committee (CPC) will determine how the private development evolves. The land uses, music venue location and capacity, general locations for development and property boundaries, area of first phase of development, and general layout of roads and infrastructure has been defined. These elements of the plan may change, but significant changes would need additional consideration by the City Council.
The concept plan defined the park boundary and general circulation. MPRB has established other aspects of the plan such as the importance of linear circulation (parkway, bicycle, and pedestrian connections) through previous planning efforts. MPRB also committed to restoring the shoreline and enhancing the river environment in the ATF plans.
In 2018 the State awarded $15 million to the City and MPRB for public infrastructure. These funds will be applied to the first phase of development nearest to Dowling Avenue which is currently the only access point. The City will use $9 million along with a $9 million local match to build the public infrastructure including roads, circulation, and utilities. MRPB will use $6 million along with a $6 million local match to build the first phase of park improvements. With the local match, the total infrastructure project will be about $30 million.
Non-park development – what can community influence?

Outside of the park, the City is the authority on what community members can influence and should be the source of specific information. MPRB has listed some of the categories that are discussed most often, such as type of housing, target levels of affordability, ownership and programming options, community benefits, aspects of public infrastructure such as streets, and design.
Park - what can community influence?

Within the park community members can still help define what types of park amenities are found, the character and design of the park, important public support functions and features, programming, environmental benefits, opportunities to partner with other organizations, and more.
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<th>$15,000,000 State bonds – what does this mean?</th>
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<td>$30m+ of public infrastructure will not cover entire UHT</td>
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<td>Current task to determine first phase – how this current funding for park is spent</td>
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<td>Agencies are seeking additional funds</td>
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<td>Public projects should be under contract (bid) by end of 2022</td>
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<td>State bond funds for the music venue are a separate ask by City and developer</td>
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There have been many questions about the state bond money. The funds will not be enough to provide infrastructure for the entire UHT site; the agencies are seeking third party sources of funding. The current schedule laid out by MPRB will allow construction to begin in 2022 which allows some contingency time for when projects need to be bid. Many people have asked about state bond funds for the music venue; that is a separate request by the City and developer and is not a part of the $15 million for infrastructure.
Where to make your voice heard - MPRB

MPRB is responsible for park related engagement:

Meet people where they are at:
• Events / meetings by others
• Door knocking
• Intercepts
• Online

Provide a place for discussion:
• Focus groups
• Advisory committees
• Public gatherings / open houses
• Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

MPRB and not the City, developers, our consultants, or the CAC, is responsible for park related engagement. Engagement is a broad process where we combine trying to meet people where they are at, make our team available for people to come to us, and connect with a wide range of people, and get to know community members and their needs well enough to dig deep into subjects. No single format works for everyone and so we try to look at engagement collectively and fit different piece together.
Where to make your voice heard - MPRB

MPRB CAC Meetings:

- Focused and ongoing discussion
- Build project knowledge and capacity
- Place for community interaction
- Gather and examine public input and questions
- Public participation and comment
- Input into agendas and content

The CAC is the place for ongoing and focused discussion where we bring much of the other engagement into these public meetings. CAC meetings are always public and will always have time for public comment. We will work to create meaningful opportunities for public participation and to allow members to have input into the meetings.
Where to make your voice heard - MPRB

- UHT Park concept
- UHT First phase of improvements
- Input into park related aspects of the development plan
  - Public infrastructure such as transportation
  - Music venue
  - Development edges

The CAC will focus on aspects of the project within and related to the park. For the development, the CAC will not weigh in on issues such as housing affordability, but will have input on aspects of the development that influence the public realm. The City’s CPC committee will be the community body deliberating the private development, but will likely wish to weigh in on aspects of the park that are important for the development.
The City has bimonthly CPC meetings, and monthly Learning Tables planned through the fall. MPRB expects to have CAC meetings every 5 – 6 weeks although the cadence will vary according to project needs. The City and MPRB are working on ideas for some joint engagement.
Many people have asked about traffic, air pollution, noise, and impacts to the river corridor. The Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) is the environmental review study required for a project of this size. The AUAR contains its own minimum public comment and response process and will be a key part of understanding and addressing project impacts.
What gets decided when?

Summer / fall, 2019: Determine principles and program

Fall / winter, 2019: Concept alternatives

Winter / spring, 2020: Preferred alternative

Spring / summer, 2020: Concept and first phase of improvements

COORDINATED PLAN

MPRB has established a general schedule for this stage of project planning and the CAC’s regular meetings. Once the park concept is approved, the CAC’s role is concluded unless there are changes that must be made. MRPB would seek to keep the public and CAC informed through construction of the first phase. The City Council set March, 2020 as the goal for passing the Coordinated Plan.
Coordinated plan?

Basis for real estate transactions and legal agreements such as:

• City sale of land for development

• City conveyance of land to MPRB for park

The Coordinated Plan is the next layer of approval beyond the concept and would be the basis for real estate transactions such as the sale of land to the developer and conveyance of land to MPRB. The next year of the UHT project will be a very important one where many decisions will get made.
Who is doing what?

Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

City - Public Works

City - Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED)

Development team and consultants

The Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) is conducting a study of stormwater management options across the entire site. The City Public Works department is leading on infrastructure and circulation planning. CPED continues to work with the development team and their consultants on the development parcels.
MPRB is seeking to layer in meaning and function and benefits to all areas of the park; many of the key partners are at the table and actively participating in the project planning.