

# upper~harbor

## Upper Harbor Terminal Redevelopment Park Concept Project Questions

12/31/2019

### 1. Do people anticipate visiting both Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) and North Mississippi Regional Park (NMRP)? If so, do they want a different mix of activities at the two different parks?

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has asked specific questions about the relationship between UHT and NMRP and NMRP has come up many times in conversation. Overall the reaction has been very mixed as to how well NMRP is embraced by community members and whether the parks should be different or similar. The two park areas will also be very disconnected until the river trail can be completed to the north of UHT. This connection of the river trail to the North depends on private property acquisition with no current opportunity to buy. Also note that the plan is to maintain a vegetated, ecological shoreline at UHT so there will be some similar areas.

Some comments from previous engagement:

#### **What are existing destinations in the area that you feel are already successful? What makes them successful? Could they be improved?**

“Upper Mississippi Regional Park! The biggest factors making this area of the river successful is nature and the access that people have to the river via bike and walking paths. I personally use the paths multiple times a week; mostly for biking. When my children were little we would go to the playground, interpretive center, wading pool and picnic grounds near 49th Ave. This park is very popular for all of these amenities, and people like to come to this park for the amenities, especially because they feel like they are in a wild area outside of a city environment. Children can see and learn about wildlife, plants and more. It is not unusual to see Eagles and other wildlife.” *(Cityview School Open House / online survey, 2017)*

“The Upper Mississippi Regional Park and the attached Webber Park are important destinations which draw people to the area. However, they need more parking and signs along the highway. They also need more publicity. NMRP needs more planning on things that could be changed to make walking in the hidden areas more safe. NMRP is a great area for "getting away from the hustle and bustle" of the city. However, the new "natural" pool at Webber probably does not need more users, at least on some days.” *(Cityview School Open House / online survey, 2017)*

“The park further North was a destination for me before it was developed and afterward.” *(Cityview School Open House / online survey, 2017)*

"I like the N. Miss Regional park: bike paths, wading pool, picnic area & Boom Island: biking/walking trails, riverfront space. Both have paddle share/bike share locations. I love the idea of a climbing wall, playground, zipline. A stage on the water would be terrific. Very exciting space for a park - yay Mpls!!" (*Cityview School Open House / online survey, 2017*)

**What balance of "natural" or "designed" water front areas would you prefer? A natural area tends to support more individual experiences, while a designed waterfront may accommodate use by more people and larger groups.**

"This area should be more "designed". NMRP is the one that should have the "natural areas". The city should also either purchase or acquire a strip along the river that would connect this new area to the existing NMRP so people can flow between the two." (*Cityview School Open House / online survey, 2017*)

**How do you think the Park at Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) should be similar or different from the North Mississippi Regional Park?** (*Slow Roll bike ride to both parks, September, 2019*)

1. Pavilions are great
2. More of the same, plus more
3. Similar, with lots of vegetation and trails
4. Similar
5. Different
6. Have more things to do
7. More space for sports, community events, active uses
8. More spaces for social gathering made of public space the river park is more for nature walk
9. Less recreation paths
10. More direct routes for bike/pedestrians
11. Like Mills Ruins
12. Different
13. More developed
14. Big

**2. Is there a match between the revenue a vendor business would need, and the prices neighborhood park visitors are willing to pay? I worry about planning for food/equipment vendors and then the local residents not feeling like the park is "for them" if the prices are too high.**

Given that the site is challenging to access and is not currently connected to other areas, initial private vending opportunities will likely be mobile. MPRB recognizes that managing cost is an important part of making sure that park amenities are accessible. There are several potential strategies to manage costs such as:

1. Having rental equipment available, but providing programming that allows greater access to equipment use

2. Testing options and collecting feedback from “pop-up” opportunities for the first several years
3. MPRB provided options such as equipment check out or possibly food and drink.
4. Whether now, or in the future, if the plan is to include a private vendor, MPRB will have a public process to select the vendor. Selection criteria can include pricing considerations, although there isn’t a way to completely control the market. A private vendor may commit to maintaining some healthy and lower cost options, but the price of food and operations will always be a factor.
5. Maintaining open and public seating at areas where people have the option to purchase food etc., but the design still feels like a public space with no pressure to buy.

**3. What amenities are available in other parks in North Minneapolis and what amenities is the neighborhood lacking? Are there amenities (specific sport courts, etc) in the neighborhood that are currently overcrowded (more demand than supply)?**

MPRB completed the North Service Area Master Plan (NSAMP) which created a plan for each neighborhood park as well as a vision for the service area in general. Many of the needed athletic field, sport court, and aquatic (splash pad/wading pool) amenities have been addressed through changes in the neighborhood parks. NSAMP did identify a portion of the McKinley neighborhood near the UHT as underserved by neighborhood parks. The intention was that the UHT, with improved connections, could help address that need. Some of the most relevant points from the NSAMP plan are summarized below:

1. More activities and spaces for teens/ young adults, with clear intent that teens/young adults are welcome in the parks for both programmed and unprogrammed activities
2. Design for seniors: accessibility, active low-impact
3. Recognize the importance of the basics: water, restrooms, benches, trails, art, etc
4. Create more opportunities for gathering— in small groups of friends and family, as extended families, and in large community groups (reunions, family events, weddings)
5. Include flexible gathering plazas and courtyards in park designs
6. Consider parks as one vehicle for equitable food access in Minneapolis
7. Increase diversity of play opportunities to include adventure and nature play
8. Provide a walking loop with seating in most parks
9. Implement a universally designed playground in the service area
10. Increase opportunities for year-round activity. Few winter options exist in the north service area

**Link the North Service Area website** (final plan found on the right side of the page under key documents):

[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/park\\_care\\_improvements/park\\_projects/current\\_projects/north\\_service\\_area\\_master\\_plan/](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/park_care_improvements/park_projects/current_projects/north_service_area_master_plan/)

**Link the North Service Area Vision chapter:**

<https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NSAMP-3-Service-Area-Vision.pdf>

MPRB also completed the Theodore Wirth Regional Park Master Plan in the last few years. While the plan does not identify unmet amenities that might be provided at the UHT, some of the overall park experience guidelines may still be relevant:

[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/wirth\\_park\\_masterplan\\_revised\\_w\\_appendices.pdf](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/wirth_park_masterplan_revised_w_appendices.pdf)

#### 4. **Is physical engagement with the river now/in the future plausible? (Pollution, health, and overall safety concerns?)**

Yes, engagement with the river, such as recreational water use (boating, kayaking etc) and touching the water, etc. are options. There are some guidelines issued by the DNR regarding swimming and fishing that are noted below.

#### 5. **Can people swim here? Is it safe?**

**The response from the Department of Natural Resources:** The river in that area is not very suitable for swimming. It's a narrow channel that drops off steeply from the bank. Under average flow conditions the river in this stretch is not considered safe for swimming because of depth and current. The river is extremely unsafe for swimming when the water level is up. Water quality (related to swimming) inside the metro area is similar to water quality outside the metro area and will depend on the time of year and river level.

MPRB professionals will not advise swimming in the Mississippi River at the UHT location unless it is possible to create an environmental where the current and water quality can be controlled. In addition to the hazards posed by the current, physical flowing open water can be dangerous. Large debris can easily enter the river and can tangle or injure a person swimming. It is also challenging to monitor water quality because it takes 24 hours to get the results of a test.

Should MPRB determining swimming can safety be done on any natural water body (non-pool), the process to monitor water quality can be found on the website. Beaches are monitored weekly from June through August and close if a water sample does not meet the State of Minnesota's guidelines.

Link to MPRB beaches information page:

[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/activities\\_events/water\\_activities/beaches/](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/activities_events/water_activities/beaches/)

#### 6. **Can people fish here? Is it safe to eat the fish?**

According to the DNR there are no restrictions for the general population for eating fish from this segment of the river, but there are restrictions for sensitive populations.

MN Department of Health (MDH) general guidelines for fish consumption:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/fish/eating/sitespecific.html>

MDH Fish Consumption Guidelines for Women Who Are or May become Pregnant and Children Under Age 15, Rivers (see page 13 for Mississippi River between Coon Rapids Lock and Dam and St. Anthony Falls):

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/fish/docs/eating/specpoprivers.pdf>

## **7. Why build a beach if you can't swim?**

This question is for community members – does a beach have value given that swimming is not recommended here? There is some existing sandy beach-like area on the southern part of the site. The current and the slope of the river may be a problem keeping the sand in the beach. It would not be healthy to dump sand every year and effect the rivers natural dynamic. The river level is unpredictable with season and rain fall (further study would need to be done).

## **8. Will MPRB have to purchase the park land from the City? Is there a rough sense of the price and are there restrictions on which funds can be used for MPRB to purchase the land? (Specifically, can state bond funds be used to buy property from another governmental entity?)**

The tentative plan (nothing is truly final until there is a legal agreement) is that MPRB will not purchase the park land at UHT. MPRB is eligible to receive park dedication associated with land development which can be either fees or a portion of the land for public park. The plan is for MPRB to accept the 19.5 acres as fulfillment of the park dedication requirements for the development at UHT. MPRB will not pay for the land at UHT but will also receive no further park dedication from any development. This land transaction is a very good deal for MPRB as park dedication would normally be 10% of the land (roughly 5 acres). The developer will not have to pay MPRB park dedication, which the City and developer will consider in their negotiations over land pricing, filling funding gaps, obligations by the developer, etc.

The City and MPRB are collaborating to use funds effectively and in some cases, it may be more efficient for one agency to cover certain costs. If MPRB were to buy the land at fair market value from the City, there is precedent for one government agency buying land from another government agency with Met Council funds.

Link to more information about park dedication ordinance:

[https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/park\\_care\\_improvements/park\\_dedication/](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/park_care_improvements/park_dedication/)

## **9. How will this project impact the MPRB budget?**

For capital (physical) improvements, MPRB has allocated regional parks (must be spent within the regional park system) budget to match the state bonding awarded for City/MPRB public infrastructure work at UHT. In the Above the Falls (ATF) Regional Park Master Plan, MPRB has estimated ongoing operations costs for the additional park land, although the UHT budget isn't isolated from other ATF areas. MPRB has committed to developing park land on the upper river where residents lack public access to waterfront green space and that commitment includes maintenance and staffing. As MPRB develops park land, planning staff works with other departments to understand what staffing levels might be available and when.

**10. What happened to the MnDOT / I-94 transportation issue?**

MnDOT is proposing a freeway expansion north of the UHT site and needs municipal consent from the City of Minneapolis. Currently the City is negotiating various requests with MnDOT, including a request for access improvements to the UHT site over I-94. This negotiation process will likely last several months or more.

**11. When will we know what will be developed on the non-park portions of the site so we can take that into account?**

In the first quarter of 2020 the City's team will be reviewing conceptual design options, similar to MPRB's plan to review park concepts. The City of Minneapolis is planning to issue a draft Coordinated Plan in the spring of 2020 which would more clearly define land uses, building massing, basic design, and development anticipated on the private property. The City is also working closely with MPRB on design of the public infrastructure, particularly Dowling Avenue and the parkway and expects to show those design options along with the public and private development in early 2020.

Similar to the park, some aspects of the development and development timing may be subject to changes depending on market changes, environmental review, funding, etc.

**12. Economic modeling: how much tax base is required for this to fund itself (self-sustaining).**

It is impossible for MPRB (or the City) to answer this question at this point in the process. There are public infrastructure needs beyond the park, and the amount of tax revenue that will be generated is currently unknown. It's also not yet known how much tax revenue will be needed to meet other project goals, such as housing affordability. For challenging urban redevelopment areas, such as areas with limited existing infrastructure, limited access, existing structures, etc., public agencies often need to invest money beyond revenues generated by the project, rather than expecting that such developments will be self-sustaining. The definition of self-sustaining for an area including development also varies widely and depends on the timeframe considered. (Note: Tax increment revenues cannot legally be used for park development.)

While MPRB cannot provide a definite answer isolating the UHT area, park funding in general is linked to development in several ways. Regional park capital improvements are funded through state bonds, lottery proceeds and sales taxes. Regional park maintenance includes both lottery and local (property tax) funds. MPRB also receives park dedication funds, a one-time fee on new development. Property taxes and local government aid provide the majority of funds for maintenance and capital improvements in local parks.

- 13. How could the institutions of North Minneapolis be involved with the park/project? It concerns me that this area could become a gentrified extension of the North Loop. Could permanent partnerships be formed with the North Minneapolis schools to offer the people of the community regular access to the park in some format (i.e. swimming pools, athletic facilities, access to outdoor recreation in the form of kayaking / canoeing, school events, etc.)? In general, being aware of known project constraints helps me avoid considering things that aren't possible.**

MPRB has many existing partnerships and can form more. Relationships and ideas and trends fluctuate over time, making partnerships a very flexible tool to meet needs. During this UHT design process, MPRB will want to establish some goals and directions and generate ideas, but actually forming the partnerships is an ongoing task.

MPRB wants CAC and community members to offer ideas even if they are not possible. Community members are in the best position to set values and visions for a project, the project team can identify means and methods to achieve the goals. However, it is important for MPRB and the project team to understand the deeper vision and goals behind the ideas, as well as details which may make an idea work. Even if a particular idea doesn't work, the project team would then be well positioned to suggest other ways to achieve the same goals.

- 14. Was there an engagement effort to involve the Native American community (or a group / non-profit that would represent their interests appropriately) regarding preserving the sites history? Per UHT project website under goals "The site's historic interpretation extends back to the First Nations' relationship to the Mississippi River in this vicinity. Given that the naming conventions and historic preservation efforts in the City often focus on celebrating our robust industrial history, how could the next round of engagement extend to the First Nations People to honor their culture and wishes?"**

MPRB tries to engage Indigenous people on many levels which vary according to the project. This effort includes engaging with Indigenous people as community members and park users, but also around current and historic cultural connections and interpretation (including naming). This work may involve years of reaching out to many community leaders, finding community members with a personal connection to a site, and discussions with historians, language experts, and others. Usually such engagement is ongoing, involves multiple people and groups, and is about the larger park system, rather than one project at a time.

The public art planning work is also a tool to explore the storylines related to the site and find ways to express history, current experiences, and healing. MPRB has found that planning for interpretation, programming and art is an effective way to engage people and then deliver ways to communicate, celebrate, and be honest about the stories and feelings they have. This

planning work can also help translate the ongoing conversations into specific ideas for a specific project.

- 15. How does preserving industrial relics relate to the history of the site as Indigenous land? Are the industrial relics historically significant? There is an evaluation of all structures onsite by an architectural historian on the project website, but it's lengthy. After reading small portions of it, I realized that the conclusions about whether relics onsite are historically significant contain lingo that lay people like me don't understand. I would like a summary of what relics (if any) are historically significant. However, it may not be necessary if they can't be preserved anyway because the project engineers say so.**

The significance of the industrial structures and the process to modify them is somewhat undetermined. MPRB has a cultural resources consultant to help navigate the process. The project team is creating graphics and summaries to help clarify processes and options and will present and post them in January 2020. A couple of key takeaways are:

- Some of the earlier studies came to different conclusions about the recommended historic significance. The two regulatory agencies: City of Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) need to evaluate the earlier studies and determine their position.
- There are different ways in which a structure may be considered significant. A structure may be individually significant or may contribute to a larger historic district. The agencies may determine that the UHT contains both types of structures.
- Even if a structure is significant, it does not mean that it cannot be modified or removed. There are potential levels of treatment that preserve/modify historic structures in different ways, and each has its own set of standards. MPRB will propose a course of action and seek approval.
- While it is impossible to know what the position of one of the regulatory agencies will be without a formal review, staff communications and cultural resource consultants can help navigate the process to avoid surprises.
- While the structures definitely impact both process and design, it is still important for community members to help MPRB shape a vision and goals for the site. The project team will look for a way to achieve the goals while considering a variety of project conditions – structures, soils, budget, timeline, slopes, etc.

**See Upper Harbor Terminal Overview of Industrial Structures Matrix:**

In progress but available soon. Check back for this link to be provided.

**See Upper Harbor Terminal Overview of Industrial Structures Regulatory Process:**

In progress but available soon. Check back for this link to be provided.

For the UHT project, community members have largely been interested in the Indigenous and environmental history, rather than the industrial era. Interest in the industrial structures has



been more about the architectural character and possible reuse, or the street art and nature reclaiming and healing the space.

**16. I would be interested in the same type of questions but have it specifically for North Minneapolis residents (immediate neighbors to the park). After discussions, a lot of the data was pulled from open meetings where anyone could attend, but then given the zip code of where the meeting was held, as opposed to where the person commenting lives.**

Engagement work from 2015 – 2019 was targeted toward North Minneapolis residents with staff often attending meetings or events believed to be attracting North Minneapolis residents. The team typically did not tag actual comments with zip codes until well into 2017 when working with Juxtaposition Arts. For example, at a neighborhood meeting where nearly 100% of the attendees were residents, MPRB did not retroactively tag those comments with a zip code. During one of the earlier CAC presentations, data numbers were summarized that consolidated assigned zip codes and zip codes where meetings were held. However, in actual comment tabulations, zip codes are only assigned to comments if residents assigned them. In 2017 and 2018 the doorknocking and online survey efforts are where many of the comments with Northside zip codes can be identified. Juxtaposition Arts had also created a summary in late 2017 of engagement specifically from 55411 and 55412 zip codes. Links are provided below – note that this summary does not include 2018 engagement, some of which is also tagged with known zip codes.

MPRB is currently working on highlighting and summarizing just the comments specifically tagged with North Minneapolis zip codes for comparison to the larger data set. Because park planning engagement is more about understanding how users experience parks and goals for parks, rather than a voting exercise, MPRB believes there is value in reviewing the full set of comments as well.

Link to doorknocking summary from 2017:

[http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/UHT-2017-Engagement-Summary\\_-\\_Doorknocking.pdf](http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/UHT-2017-Engagement-Summary_-_Doorknocking.pdf)

Link to presentation including a 2017 summary of engagement based on known North Minneapolis zip codes:

[http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017-10-24\\_AFCACPresentation\\_Accessible.pdf](http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017-10-24_AFCACPresentation_Accessible.pdf)

**17. Have any people been interviewed in-depth? Or is it all “off of the cuff” reactions?**

Engagement has included interactions of all types. When at an event the project team might talk in depth with several community members, get written comments from many more, and provide project information to dozens. While doorknocking, the team found the conversations lasted anywhere from 5 – 25 minutes. Some engagement has been multi-hour interviews, site

tours, and repeated conversations with community members and leaders. Many people have weighed in briefly with a few thoughts or written comments.

**18. How many people need to be engaged before it is “enough”? When does engagement no longer add value?**

Ideally engagement is both broad and deep. Reaching a wide group of people is desirable but it is also important to have in depth conversations. No one engagement method is complete by itself, a deliberation group such as an ongoing committee allows for engagement that is not always possible by meeting people where they are already at. In general, MPRB needs enough effective engagement to assess that the project is moving in the right (or wrong) direction; which is a judgement call. The CAC and community members can help MPRB make that judgement call. After the engagement from 2015 – 2018, most people involved felt that the UHT project engagement could go no further with general questions. The team saw very similar responses coming back from a variety of events and questions. The team also saw signs of engagement fatigue among community members. Part of the value of concept design alternatives is that they give people something to react to while there is still a lot of decisions to be made. It can be hard to move the conversation forward without showing how options fit on the site, relate to each other, impact site experiences etc.

**19. Is there a statistic or standard for engagement for a project like this? How does this compare to other projects nationwide?**

Generally, engagement cannot be defined by numbers, although it may be obvious if there have been too few opportunities. Early in a project it is critical to push information out broadly so as many people as possible can enter the process. Much of the 2015 – 2017 work was about spreading the word and getting some initial feedback. It is important to provide feedback loops and opportunities ongoing engagement. In 2019 more of the focus has been on the CAC and focus groups so that community members can choose to be more deeply involved.

It is also important to consider what community members can influence and when. The UHT is a large project, but the park space is relatively small compared to many parks. Engagement for MPRB does not end when a design concept is established. Engagement around programming, communications, operations, and the ongoing park should continue as the new park becomes part of the existing system. Many ideas for programming and partnerships can continue to evolve.

**20. Do we know how well the feedback givers’ demographics align with the demographics of the neighborhood nearest UHT? Race, age, income, language, ability? How are you ensuring equal racial /ethnic representation in the data collection?**

At the start of a project, MPRB reviews the demographics around the park area and creates an engagement plan tailored to the project. Staff identifies goals, a general plan, and timeline, and engagement strategies. Means and methods may change as the project evolves and staff will periodically update the engagement plan.

Link to MPRB Community Engagement Plan for UHT Concept Design:

[http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-05-21\\_UHT-CEplan-CURRENT-Updated-07-25-19.pdf](http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-05-21_UHT-CEplan-CURRENT-Updated-07-25-19.pdf)

**21. If some of the engagement was done with the City, how were comments related to the park differentiated from those related to the rest of the development?**

MPRB staff tagged and tabulated comments that seemed most relevant to the park and public space. MPRB defined park related comments broadly, including comments around access and connections, even though some may not be on park land. Comments about housing, or office space, were not included.

**22. What information is being provided back to the public for context when comments / surveys are collected?**

Typically, staff write up a brief description of the interaction (date, location, event type) and enter the questions and responses into a written document in order to comply with accessibility requirements. Public engagement is posted by the City or MPRB on the project website. (Some engagement that is not public such as one on one conversations may not get posted).

<http://upperharbormpls.com/community-engagement/summaries-meetings-engagement-opportunities/>