

upper~harbor

Upper Harbor Terminal Redevelopment

Park Concept Project Questions

9/15/2020

1. What is the process to name the park? Can this park have a Dakota name?

There is no name currently for the park; Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) is the current name of the property and the name of the planning project. The park needs a name and MPRB anticipates that the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) may make recommendations about naming. If community members are interested in a Dakota name MPRB would reach out to Dakota leaders and elders to see if there is interest and to establish a respectful process.

Because the UHT property is defined by recent legal boundaries, rather than distinctive land/water formations, to the best of our knowledge there is not an existing name specifically for this property that can be restored. (Bde Maka Ska is a specific lake with an existing name). Areas may have more than one name, names can change over time, or there may be interest in creating a new name with the Dakota language. MPRB can also initiate a process that includes speaking with many interested parties, such as seeking a name that is meaningful to both Northside residents and Dakota people.

The Board of Commissioners must approve the name of a new park area. The process for selecting a name is outlined in MPRB's Naming Policy (Appendix I – policy may be updated). This park at the UHT site will still be within the Above the Falls Regional Park, so a name would be similar to Sheridan Memorial Park or Mill Ruins Park where there is a generally defined park space within the larger regional park.

2. Can Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) give the land back to the Dakota people?

MPRB cannot legally dispose of land, whether by selling land or giving it to another owner without (1) a super majority vote of the Board of Commissioners (which is 6 of the 9 Commissioners) and (2) a court order. In order to obtain a court order, MPRB would need to prove that the land is "unnecessary" or is not needed as park land. There is substantial documentation that there is widespread support for a public park in this area and that public land and access to the river are deficient in North Minneapolis compared to other parts of the City. A community member or group

that disagreed with a decision to dispose of park land could challenge the assertion that the land is not necessary for park land.

The Upper Harbor Terminal property is currently owned by the City of Minneapolis. Staff anticipates that any land transaction from the City to MPRB ownership will include the stipulation that MPRB develop a public park. Should MPRB decline the land transaction, the land would stay in the ownership of the City. The City of Minneapolis cannot manage or operate a public park in Minneapolis. The regional park funds allocated to develop a park are dedicated funds and cannot be transferred to another entity to develop or manage the land. See below for more detail on the 2018 State Bond Funds.

The question of giving land back is a larger policy question that the Board would need to address. While the CAC Charge is focused on the specific park concept, the CAC can definitely recommend that MPRB study and address relevant policies further.

3. What is behind the project timeline and what happens if MPRB does not meet the timeline to begin construction?

The City and MPRB were awarded \$15 million of state bond funds in 2018 in order to construct public infrastructure, such as a park, roads, pathways, utilities, etc. (This was a separate bond request than the current City request for the venue at the UHT site.) MPRB and the City risk loss of funds if the construction work is not bid and a corresponding funding agreement is not approved and executed with the state by the end of 2022. MPRB plans to bid work for the start of the 2022 construction season, which is usually in late spring. Although construction can begin later in the year, this timing for bidding and construction is ideal to get the best prices and most efficient construction season. This timing also allows for unforeseen project delays, rebidding, permitting delays, and other issues that can come up with complex construction projects. MPRB needs about a year for design development and construction detailing leading up to a bid.

There is risk beyond the UHT project should MPRB not use the funds as approved. MPRB seeks state bonding regularly for regional park funding and would risk the loss of future funds. In addition, because the City of Minneapolis owns the land, MPRB refusal to develop the park may result in a transfer of the park development to the City. Divestment of land intended for a park would require MPRB to forego the \$6 million in state bond funds that will help develop the park. Because the entire \$15 million was awarded to both the City and MPRB, it is possible that if MPRB were to refuse to use the \$6 million for park, the City could use the entire \$15 million for park and public infrastructure.

The City and MPRB could request an extension to the bond funds which would require legislative action.

4. Will people be able to garden and harvest here?

The short answer is yes, although providing gardening and harvesting spaces can mean different scenarios, some of which are dependent on more maintenance and ongoing funding. Per MPRB

ordinance, harvesting of fruits and nuts on park land is allowed except in designated areas. Restored ecological areas along the river can offer significant harvesting opportunities, particularly with an Indigenous understanding of plants. Sage, sweetgrass, willows, Labrador, redosier dogwood, serviceberry, prairie clover, and chokecherry are examples of plants that might commonly be found and harvested for food, medicine, and ceremonial use. Foot traffic can damage ecological areas however, particularly on slopes. MPRB would likely want to consider how pathways and plantings work together to provide access. It may be ideal to designate some areas where foraging is encouraged and expected so MPRB can plan for maintenance. Harvesting beyond fruits and nuts is possible, but may require some policy changes. (Which the CAC can recommend that MPRB explore).

Native plant gardens, such as raingardens, which may also be needed to help manage additional stormwater, can offer similar harvesting opportunities. MPRB could also provide a curated and maintained medicine garden, which might be somewhat like the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden or the Rose Garden. See the next question regarding community gardens. Note: it is possible to combine raingardens and edible gardens, but anytime people are harvesting, MPRB would need to be careful about the quality of the stormwater being treated.

Link to MPRB Urban Agriculture Activity Plan (key documents on the left hand side):

https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/park_care_improvements/park_projects/current_projects/urban_agriculture_activity_plan/

Link to ordinance language that allows harvesting:

https://library.municode.com/mn/minneapolis/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodetd=PAREBOCOOR_CH2GEREGOCO_2-2MOVE

5. How would growing food work in the park? Who would grow and maintain gardens?

Different types of agricultures, such as vegetable gardens, will require programming and staff support. Since UHT is divided from the existing neighborhoods, it is not likely to serve a community garden function unless there is adjacent residential development. Gardens here could serve a teaching and programmatic function; staff are currently exploring whether a plant growing nursery could support MPRB gardening efforts throughout the park system. Gardens would likely be staffed by the MPRB Green Team, which is a youth employment team primarily from North and Northeast Minneapolis, along with some full time staff. The mission of the Green Team is to introduce BIPOC youth to environmental fields and careers. All garden areas will need some level of staffing, maintenance, and infrastructure (such as storage, water, pathways, accessible options, etc).

6. How are all plans, goals of this area in compliance to Gov Walz' Exec Order 19-24-Government to Government relationships?

Executive Order 19-24 requires State Agencies to recognize the unique legal relationship between the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Tribal Nations and accord Tribal Government the same respect accorded to other governments. While this order does not apply to MPRB, the Park Board

has taken steps to build and establish a relationship with the Minnesota Tribal Nations and keep them apprised of MPRB projects.

7. How have the Native American Nations been engaged?

Many people and organizations, particularly those not near the park, tend to be more interested in larger Minneapolis park topics. As opposed to one particular initiative or one park planning project, MPRB has found that people are interested in representation, language, gathering rights, treatment of the river, employment, awareness of sacred sites and more. For this reason, MPRB reaches out to the leadership and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices of the eleven Minnesota Nations with communications that cover several topics of likely interest. MPRB has set a goal of regular communications, which has led to follow up conversations about some specific topics and projects. We do not expect that such communications will necessarily result in an engagement meeting, but they help to build a larger relationship. While past communications have included the park project at the Upper Harbor Terminal, we have not received any response about this project. Given that the project is one of many park sites along the river, we do not expect it to be of particular interest by itself.

Sometimes MPRB engages with people affiliated with a Nation, but they may not be representing any part of the organization itself. Sometimes an engagement meeting may be appropriate, but often engagement is often better done by hiring Indigenous people to be part of the project team, or oral interviews and research as part of an art or interpretation project. Often, a specific Indigenous focused effort within a larger planning project generates more interest. For the UHT project, Indigenous gardens, architecture, language, art and employment opportunities may open up more collaborative planning opportunities.

MPRB has also discussed park development on the river with other organizations with a local presence and reaches out with specific questions and notifications as it feels appropriate. These organizations include the Minnesota Indian Affairs Commission (MIAC), Native American Community Development Initiative (NACDI), and the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directive (MUID).

Engagement is nuanced and happens at many levels. The interest in park development that a Dakota community member living outside of the metro area may have, can be very different than the interest of a Dakota resident of Minneapolis, which can also be very different than the interest of a non-Indigenous North Minneapolis neighbor. Other agencies may be interested in maintaining research and archaeological records from a project or may be interested in general treatment of the river but may not wish to weigh in on the types of park amenities.

Link to earlier FAQ that responds to a related question about engagement with Indigenous people:
http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2019-12-31_FAQ-CURRENT.pdf

Engagement is ongoing, including with the Tribes as agencies, as well as people and organizations within the Tribes.

8. What will the park boards first phase budget cover? Is removal of the structures figured into that?

Each of the three concepts shows an estimate of what MPRB can afford for the first phase of park construction. Since these concepts are an articulation of different ways that the 10 program experiences can happen on the site, both concepts and first phase improvements can change. Because MPRB will need to do some site clean up and land restoration in order to provide even a basic park, many improvements will be too expensive for the first phase. Such improvements include major modifications to the shoreline, such as removal of the riverwall, and major structures such as a permanent new building. MPRB anticipates that improvements will be focused in the most publicly accessible area off the end of Dowling Ave. Some structures are removed in the first phase, but some remain and would be stabilized and secured. MPRB is still exploring whether there is public interest in maintaining portions of the existing buildings and infrastructure for the long term.

9. Is the river channel shown financially feasible? Would it be allowed?

The river channel shown in Concept A: The River Experience would grade an accessible route to the river and allow the water to enter into the park. It is very possible that the Army Corps of Engineers and/or the Department of Natural Resources may have concerns about creating a new channel primarily for recreational purposes. The team believes that MPRB could design the ravine so that it is not an intrusion into the natural grade of the area but still creates the feeling of a ravine. However, if MPRB pursues the channel idea, we will consult with the relevant agencies about any work that involves shoreline modifications. It is uncertain whether or not they would support work that does not mimic or recreate the natural features.

The channel would not be financially feasible in the first phase with the existing budget. At an upcoming meeting, MPRB plans to discuss whether or not there is interest in large future capital projects, including the potential channel.

10. What are things that all concepts include?

All concepts include improved ecological systems and native vegetation restoration along the river, opportunities for public art and cultural communications, places for interpretation and learning, stormwater management, improved wildlife habitat, opportunities for green job creation and programming, opportunities for indoor spaces, and parking. MPRB has established that these elements are important based on past engagement before the current planning project; some are too detailed to be seen at this stage of concept design.

All concepts include the following 10 Program Experiences, which were the top experiences distilled from the several years of general engagement and the CAC. Every concept supports all 10 Program Experiences, but each emphasizes certain experiences more than others.

Link to concept boards. Program analysis for each concept describes how it provides each of the 10 program experiences in the first and later phases.

<http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UHT-Park-Concept-Boards-FINAL.pdf>

10 Program Experiences

- Connect with the river: View, walk or sit by the water, touch water, access with watercraft. We believe that this water access needs staff, partners, and equipment in order to facilitate use by community members less familiar with watercraft. This access point should not be a repeat of the Camden boat launch and needs to be in a central location near the rest of the park activity.
- Hold large event: Festivals, performances, movies, neighborhood socials. Having cultural and local events on the river can support Northside organizations and people, introduce residents to the park, and add to the sense of Northside ownership.
- Hold small gatherings and events: Family gatherings, picnics, art shows, classes. Many Northsiders have stated that they would love to have family picnics on the river, and that places that can accommodate large groups, such as 200 people, are in short supply.
- Buy, enjoy, harvest food: Grow food, take classes, cook outside, purchase food, attend a market. Food can be intertwined with public spaces in many ways, and park can contribute toward food justice and a more local system.
- Relax in nature: Quiet places within natural landscapes to walk, sit, view the river. Park should have continuous natural areas large enough to allow visitors to escape the hustle and bustle of the city
- Learning and education: Outdoor or indoor classes and skill building, educational signage, programs focused on food, ecology, and culture. Park can be an outdoor classroom for individuals, but also for partners and schools that may bring groups to the river.
- Visitor support: Drink water, shelter from weather, find bathrooms, staff support. Visitors need shade for picnic areas, seating, and parking, and staff needs storage and space to support all the listed experiences.
- Intergenerational play: Playground, free play, pop up games, events. Park should be a place that youth of all ages enjoy.
- Winter activities: Ice skating, sledding, winter classes, sit around a fire, indoor activities. Desire for the park to be a place that community members can go and enjoy throughout the year.
- Movement and exercise: Activity and sport areas, fitness classes, play, run and bike. Desire for both field sports such as soccer, frisbee, lacrosse, and activities such as basketball and skateboarding that need hard surfaces.

11. How will MPRB address the transportation barrier?

Currently, Dowling Avenue and possibly 33rd Avenue to the south, are the only available connections. MPRB will provide future connections to the north and south once the necessary property or transportation easements have been secured. The long term master plan calls for continuous parkway, trail, and park connections along the riverfront.

The City of Minneapolis, in close coordination with Hennepin County, MnDOT, and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), proposes to reconstruct Dowling Avenue North and construct a new segment of parkway to provide access and circulation to the Upper Harbor Terminal site. Dowling Avenue North has been planned to be the primary access point to the site and will serve as the gateway between the site and the greater North Side community. This project provides a significant opportunity to design public infrastructure that aligns with the vision of the site. As such, new infrastructure will prioritize pedestrian and bicycle connections between adjacent neighborhoods and the UHT site by incorporating designs that promote safe, convenient, and comfortable travel.

The City of Minneapolis Public Works Dept is working on improvements to Dowling Avenue as part of the UHT infrastructure project that is planned for implementation along with the park. Public Works has expanded the project limits further west to Lyndale Avenue to improve connectivity to the greater community and address a major access barrier to the UHT site. The conceptual plan for the reconstruction of Dowling Avenue prioritizes a wider public realm with sidewalks, an off-street trail, boulevards, trees, pedestrian street lighting, and new traffic signals. Because Dowling Avenue work must be done within a limited right-of-way, the City hopes to further improve the bicycle/pedestrian connection over the freeway. City leadership and Public Works continue to advocate for MnDOT to reconstruct the Dowling Avenue bridge and pursue construction of an additional bicycle and/or pedestrian bridge so that they can further improve this connection between the neighborhood and the Upper Harbor site. MnDOT has not approved or committed funding at this point. Public Works is continuing to explore ways to improve the Dowling Ave bridge over I-94 with lower-cost treatments within the space available – with markings, bollards, etc. They have been successful on this approach with numerous MnDOT bridges (see Plymouth Ave over I-94 and Central Ave over Mississippi River).

The City and MPRB can provide a space for transit stops but further coordination regarding the provision of transit service with Metro Transit is needed. Public Works will continue to work with Metro Transit to coordinate improvements that support existing and future transit service upgrades. As the plans for the development are finalized, Metro Transit will evaluate the phasing and intensity of uses to determine if route modification is warranted.

Although MPRB cannot control many uncertainties about the transportation barriers, staff has suggested that MPRB might use an internal shuttle to support programming at the park. Some programming, such as walks, rides, and canoe/kayak/boat rides can also help people become familiar with ways to access the park.

Many people have asked if large land bridge or “freeway lid” over I-94 is possible. Although details are not defined, the MPRB RiverFirst plans to support this concept of a lid. Any bridge over the freeway would require state, and possibly federal, government support. MnDOT is open to considering “freeway lids” including one that connects the existing North Minneapolis neighborhoods to the river but has not committed to a project in this location. Changing the UHT site to be part of the fabric of the North Minneapolis community would help to build a case for a future bridge.

12. How is MPRB providing habitat and needs of non-humans?

Parks are a huge opportunity to support native wildlife, pollinators, birds, etc. Native vegetation, healthy soil, and healthy water are essential to supporting wildlife. Much of the UHT park site will be devoted to ecological restoration along the riverfront. This restoration (which will happen in phase over time) will be advised by technical experts, but will include native vegetation establishment and likely habitat for turtles, birds, fish, insects, and aquatic invertebrates including mussels. etc. Future opportunities include removing some or all of the riverwall. MPRB has done some preliminary exploration of whether the existing red grain elevator could be repurposed as a habitat tower for bird nesting. Early research indicates that the tower may be suitable for osprey nests; if there is interest MPRB can further explore options. MPRB will seek to minimize hazards for birds that lighting, windows, and taller structures can pose. If there is lawn area, the UHT site may be a good location for a bee lawn. Bee lawns cannot take as much wear and tear as athletic field lawns but can provide more support for pollinators. Through programming, MPRB can provide education and volunteer science opportunities about the wildlife in urban areas.

13. How will MPRB ensure that the park programming reflects the desires and needs of North Minneapolis residents?

MPRB has collected significant input over several years on desired park programming. While the immediate task is to build a park that will support the desired programming, the concept plan will include guidance based on community input for future park employees that will staff and manage the park. Planning for physical improvements lays the groundwork for how programming is structured, potential community partners, and setting up expectations at MPRB and among community members. In addition, once the park is established, residents will be able to provide ongoing input to staff and elected officials. Staff are working on strategies to support enhanced programming and activities.

14. How will the future park build an equitable economy that makes concrete improvements in the lives of people of color and those historically underserved?

MPRB is forming strategies for different stages of park development to positively impact the economy and provide income in many ways, including beyond the boundary of the park.

Key goals and methods based on engagement so far include:

- Planning stage - designing the right park. Because people were concerned that the park would cause gentrification and displacement, the goal for the first phase is to create a park that serves the needs of the surrounding community first and foremost and can be further designed and shaped over time. This strategy is referred to as “just green enough”.. The first phase of the park should support implementation, programming, and employment that benefit the Northside and should be very flexible. (See question below about “just green enough” concept).

- Implementation stage - use creative implementation strategies to deepen engagement and maximize investment going to Northside and BIPOC organizations, businesses, and community members.
- Operations stage - actively program the park to support community entrepreneurs, artists, and organizations and to build ownership of the park by Northside community members. Also provide onsite employment as a method of park activation and community support.

Link to DRAFT documents regarding implementation and operation strategies:

<http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UHT-ImplementationOperations-SUMMARY.pdf>

<http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/UHT-ImplementationOperations-DRAFT.pdf>

15. Why “just green enough”? Shouldn’t it be as green as possible?

The vision for the first phase of this park that is “just green enough” points towards a space that serves the surrounding community first and foremost and seeks to reduce the risks of gentrification by providing a space that is inviting and adaptable by being “just green enough”.

During previous community engagement there has been support for a park where the first phase is “just green enough”. A park that is “just green enough” is not intended to mean either disinvestment in a community or a low-quality park or a low amount of green, vegetated space. Beginning with more basic improvements is also known as the Slow Park movement and is an evolving strategy to combat gentrification resulting from green space development. Slowing the rate of change, particularly if combined with efforts to build local connections, can help avoid the cultural gentrification that often accompanies dramatic change. When creating a new park, starting with just enough features to support local use, allows the park users to help shape more of the space after they’ve gotten to know it. Future park development could be deferred unless community members feel that the park will not add to the risk of gentrification. All of the concepts have been designed to show how all 10 of the program experiences can fit together. However, if community members do not wish to move ahead with further phases of park developments, the “just green enough” graphic shows what a lighter development touch might evolve into.

Appendix i. MPRB Land Acquisition Policies

**MINNEAPOLIS PARK &
RECREATION BOARD**

Approval Date: 04/01/1998
Effective Date: 04/01/1998
Date of Last Review: 03/26/2015
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PUBLIC POLICY

Land Acquisition

Planning Division

Frequency of Review: Every 5 years

Land Acquisition Policies

POLICY

The MPRB seeks to acquire suitable resources to meet the system's purposes as outlined by the Board in the System Plan and Park Master Plan. The MPRB acquires these resources by purchase, donation, gift or devise. Gifts of park land are most desirable when they are identified as compatible with the Board's System Plan. When not compatible, the property can be accepted or sold with the resulting revenues used for MPRB purposes.

SUPERINTENDENT APPROVAL: _____

Date: 3/26/15