

Intro and Summary

This two-page summary provides an overview of the key points throughout the document. When planning a significant park, MPRB creates a concept document describing the process, design recommendations, and other information to guide park operations. This document is in rough draft form but will be revised into a finished format. The current purpose for the document is to provide more information about park implementation and operations after the park is built. The project background and design are summarized here, and are still in process, but will be fully articulated in the final document. Further information about the project background, program and design guidance, can be found on the website in the documents about the park draft concepts:

<http://upperharbormpls.com/draft-park-concepts/>

Program and Design Guidance

MPRB developed a program model to guide the design process in order to center the key experiences desired by community members. A program model translates the desires of the community and the physical opportunities presented by the site into a set of experiences and activities and serves as a guide to shape ongoing staffing, events, activities, and how the park is run. After analysis of thousands of park related comments generated from past engagement efforts, the team recommended ten Program Experiences. While there is considerably more detail available, in summary the experiences include connecting with the river, holding larger events, supporting small gatherings and events, enjoying food – buying, harvesting, growing, learning, and supporting a just food system, relaxing in nature, supporting learning and education, encouraging intergenerational play and recreation, holding winter activities, and providing basic visitor support such as shelter, restrooms, and parking.

MPRB previously made commitments regarding improved ecological systems and stormwater management prior to this park planning process. Any park development will include restoration along the riverfront and habitat enhancement. Based on engagement, staff also recommends incorporating places for public art, interpretation, and cultural communications as messaging about Northside storylines and Dakota and Indigenous perspectives are critical. In order to support ‘green’ jobs and career pathways into environmental science and recreation fields, this park will also need some spaces for storage, staff, and flexible work and staging.

Other key design guidance from various CAC meetings and engagement efforts includes:

- Use a Slow Park approach to limit the first phase of the park to some basic and flexible amenities. This approach reduces the risk of gentrification caused by the park and allows park user to shape the park over time. Given the limited budget for first phase improvements, it would be best to construct enough of the park that MPRB can program it effectively, but keep spaces simple, flexible, and adaptable.
- Use robust and deliberate activation to create a strong connection to North Minneapolis residents, particularly residents who may need support to access the park. If MPRB provides only the physical amenity there is too much risk that the park will not become a North Minneapolis park, but primarily used by people from outside the neighborhood. Programming and employment at the park can be community supportive tools to promote this activation.

- Invest directly into North Minneapolis community members, businesses, and organizations as much as possible. Create strategies to construct, maintain, and staff the park that are supportive, provide income and skills, and build career pathways.

Park Implementation

The following section on park implementation outlines a pathway for building the park that supports Northside and BIPOC people and organizations. The construction industry is known for a lack of diversity, and the team needs to reach higher than the standard tools for Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) participation in contracts. The strategies for park implementation are organized around goals established by the extensive Northern Green Zone and Promise Zone work done on the Northside. From finding alternative sources of materials, innovative procurement methods to direct investment locally, creating learning opportunities, and expanding connections with established contractors, the team should maximize investment in the Northside at all levels. The tools outlined may apply to public and park projects outside of the Upper Harbor Terminal. A more creative and deliberate process for construction can also serve as ongoing and deeper engagement.

Park Operations

Operations and staffing are as important as the physical amenities, particularly for this park project where creating a deliberate connection between Northside residents and the park is critical. This section lays out strategies for supportive programming and 'green' jobs and career development opportunities. While much of this work will evolve over time, there are existing tools and needs within the park system where community members can experiment and learn building, environmental, and recreational skills while meeting established needs. This cycle of testing and slowly determining what the long-term plan for the park should invite community members to shape this park over time.