

Upper Harbor Terminal Park Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Recommendations to the Collaborative Planning Committee (CPC) and City of Minneapolis on Development and Impacts to the Park

January 11, 2020

The following recommendations were developed by the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members in order to address development concerns that may impact whether current Northside residents and ADOS (American Descendants of Slavery), Dakota, and other BIPOC people will connect with the park and river

- 1. MPRB should not build a full waterfront regional park amenity until ADOS (American Descendants of Slavery), Dakota, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) residents are confident that the park will serve them as measured by being open and accessible at all times.** The following language has been used to justify the project: *Unfortunately, Minneapolis and the region also rank high in the level of disparities between white and black residents on a number of success factors. The Northside neighborhoods across I-94 from the UHT site suffer from many of these disparities, and an important goal of the site redevelopment is to help address at least some of these disparities, including the lack of access to a waterfront regional park amenity.* If park users are mostly non-Northside residents, their presence may create a park that feels unwelcoming to Northside community members and they will then not truly have access to a waterfront regional park amenity.
(CAC votes: 12 Yes, 1 No, 1 Abstain)
- 2. Adjacent development is important because it will greatly impact who uses the park and whether current Northside residents and ADOS, Dakota, and other BIPOC users feel connected with the park.** The CAC recommends a flexible and incremental (described as Just Green Enough below) approach to the park as displacement of vulnerable residents and negative impacts from gentrification are a significant risk. Achieving community goals requires cooperation and partnerships across agencies and property lines. Some of the ways that this park and development could be approached cooperatively are suggested in this document.
(CAC votes: 13 Yes, 1 Abstain)

3. The CAC recommends against a privately operated multi-thousand seat venue adjacent to this park as we feel that it will have a significant negative impact on the park and its enjoyment by North Minneapolis residents in particular. In 2019 CAC Members recommended that the City of Minneapolis explore alternative options to the venue and offered a willingness to partner on a public performance area that is sized and operated in a manner that works on park land. Should the venue be built, attendees may overwhelm or inhibit the enjoyment of the park by Northside residents. While attracting users from the wider region to the park is often framed as an asset, these users could easily make this park feel like a space inhabited by white people. There are many examples of these white public spaces and this perception influences security, assumed rights for white people to police others, and overall experiences for ADOS, Dakota, and other BIPOC park users. Because of the scale of the venue, the impact of the ticketholders may be the dominant force that shapes the park experience during the evenings and weekends. The park should provide a public benefit, targeted to public users, without feeling commercialized or consumer oriented.

(CAC votes: 11 Yes, 3 No)

4. If the City moves forward against the recommendation of this CAC and builds a privately operated venue, we insist on the following accommodations by the venue and its operator:
- a. Pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular access to the park should stay open, regardless of events at the venue or elsewhere in the private development. Any traffic management or event management plans should not close Dowling Avenue or other direct access routes to the park including the public parking area.
 - b. Traffic congestion caused by venue events may deter neighborhood park users, negatively impact the neighborhoods, and contribute to air pollution. The venue should be responsible for evaluating these issues and developing management plans that minimize congestion in the area before the Coordinated Plan is approved.
 - c. The primary route for vehicles serving the venue or accessing parking should not be adjacent to the main park space at the end of Dowling Avenue. The primary entrance to the venue should not encourage people to travel through the park.
 - d. All transportation vehicles serving the venue, including buses and shuttles, should not be allowed to idle along the parkway and adjacent to the park space.
 - e. Public parking in the park is dedicated for park users; parking should not primarily serve adjacent development. Park users should be able to access the main park parking area during events at the adjacent venue. Paid parking will deter park use and parking for public park users should be free.
 - i. No special use parking permits should be given to the venue for parking within the park

- ii. Public park parking times should be strictly enforced on evenings of events in order to deter use by venue ticket holders
- f. Noise from the venue may impact park enjoyment by the general public. The venue should be responsible for containing sound, possibly beyond the standard requirements once the impacts are fully understood.
- g. Queuing at the venue may impact park use and damage portions of the park; the venue should be responsible for directing people in line to stay on the sidewalk across the parkway.
- h. Security for the venue will have an impact on the adjacent park and who feels comfortable in the park. There should be a way for the public to have input into the hiring and oversight of venue security particularly when large numbers of participants might be in the adjacent park.
- i. The perimeter of the venue is important to the park. The venue should maximize transparency and outward facing amenities, such as concessions, and minimize solid blank walls. The venue should be designed so that the spaces can be integrated with the adjacent park when not in use for a private event.
- j. There is a clear desire for public performance and community events, however MPRB cannot fully develop such a space without knowing how the adjacent venue will operate. The first phase of the park improvements should include a flexible space that can support community performances and events and allow for future changes to this space. Should the adjacent venue change, MPRB and the City should explore a performance/event area on park land that is suitable as a public park amenity.

(CAC votes: 14 Yes)

- 5. Some critical and specific statements about development impacts to the park include:
 - a. Only if housing is deemed environmentally safe to be constructed on the site, all housing that is provided must be affordable to those making incomes equal to or less than the median income of those in the surrounding North Minneapolis community. Without this commitment the CAC is concerned that the park will serve white middle and upper income users, as other market rate housing may be built in the area.
 - b. The CAC is concerned about industrial uses that are not supportive of park uses, defined as uses that increase pollution, truck traffic, and buildings that are dominated by blank walls. Industrial uses that are compatible with the park would be those that are “green”, defined as those that emit minimal pollution of all kinds, have low truck traffic, and focus on agricultural, clean energy, small scale making, or non-noxious recycling. In every case, industrial buildings, should they exist, should have many windows, doors, little or no parking that faces the park.
 - i. Commercial and industrial businesses included in the development should be owned and operated by Northside residents, employ Northside residents, and not contribute to environmental pollution that inhibits

enjoyment of the park. Many businesses have promised Northside jobs, but until we know who is working at this site, and under what conditions, it is premature to know who the adjacent park will serve.

- c. All development should adhere to the Shoreline Overlay Plan, and the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Ordinance Requirements and be built to bird-safe standards. One goal of the park and the entire Above the Falls Regional Park Master Plan is to restore the environmental corridor and create high quality habitat. Providing this habitat directly adjacent to taller buildings, more nighttime illumination, and more glass may negatively impact migratory birds and other river life.
- d. Public funds, via the Minneapolis Parks and Rec Board's investment in this future park, should not be directed towards creating a space that is effectively a private amenity for surrounding private development and patrons of the venue. We are concerned that this park, like Downtown Commons, could be a misuse of public funds and public property based on the current development plan. There should not be special use of public space with the expectation of monetary participation, such as purchasing a concert ticket.
- e. Before the Coordinated Plan is voted on, the multiple requested studies listed in this document need to be completed and widely advertised for public and agency comments as part of the environmental review process. Community members and policy makers need to understand and consider the impacts of noise, air pollution, and traffic congestion on the people, the wildlife, the land, and the river before making decisions on the development. Post public comment period, the City should share how they are going to respond to the public concerns and defined impacts before approving a plan.

(CAC votes: 12 Yes, 2 No)

6. In order to create a park that is truly connected to Northside residents, the CAC recommends that the City and other agencies - with support by MPRB - should make the following transportation improvements:
 - a. Improve Dowling Avenue, 33rd Street, Washington Avenue, future parkway connections, and the river itself as important transportation corridors. These corridors should get physical improvements for better connectivity, but also be treated as cultural Northside corridors that clearly link current residents with the river.
 - b. Transit to the UHT site will support residents in existing North Minneapolis neighborhoods to access the park and river. Because transit is likely to be supported by demand related to the new development, as a part of the Coordinated Plan the City must show how transit options and better physical connections to the existing Northside neighborhoods are envisioned and will be implemented with each stage of the park and development. The City should also make communications with Metro Transit public and seek to make joint projections on how transit service will be rolled out. (Given the existing transportation barriers and distance the CAC may recommend that MPRB should not rely on other agencies, but also provide transportation for park programming from Northside pick up

points. While the park alone is unlikely to generate demand for transit, a development well served by transit will support park and green space users as well as workers and residents.)

- c. New safe and accessible routes to the site from North Minneapolis via walking and biking that do not force people to cross auto traffic, via a highway bridge or tunnel, should be added.

(CAC votes: 14 Yes)

7. All parties should collaborate across property lines for better environmental restoration and management.

- a. No development or venue should be approved until all environmental review processes have been completed and that these processes find that safe conditions for the building of these structures exist.
- b. The City/development partners should collaborate with MPRB, and MWMO (Mississippi Watershed Management Organization) to support a regional and district stormwater management system that protects the river and enhances the environmental corridor. Seek to maximize opportunities for ADOS, Dakota, and BIPOC youth to build careers in related environmental careers.
- c. The City/development partners should work with Indigenous ethnobotanists and other partners to incorporate culturally relevant native plants on the privately managed land parcels. Allow for harvesting and use by Indigenous people and incorporate language and education as appropriate. These plantings and uses would be complementary to planned vegetation restoration and activities at the public park.

(CAC votes: 14 Yes)

8. While it is premature for MPRB to make any permanent decisions about a park building, the CAC sees potential benefit of having indoor park space within development that is community oriented.

- a. If the housing on Parcel 1B is subsidized for residents who are low income, MPRB should pursue a long term sharing of ground floor public spaces within the building. MPRB should provide amenities that are supportive of these residents as well as the general public. Should the housing plan be changed to market rate housing, MPRB should revisit whether sharing a building is advisable as the priority consideration should be the needs of residents living in supportive housing.
- b. If the Hub or other community space is relocated south of the park, MPRB should explore how the park and community space should interface – including sharing indoor park spaces.

(CAC votes: 13 Yes, 1 Abstain)

Park Project Definition of Just Green Enough: For the purposes of this project “just green enough” is a space that serves the surrounding community first and foremost and seeks to reduce the risks of gentrification. 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 cultural gentrification. 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 improvements will not add to the risk of gentrification.