

Upper Harbor Terminal Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #16

Meeting Minutes

3.16.2021 (6:00-8:00pm)

Online Zoom Meeting or Call In

Introduction/ Updates

Kate started the meeting by thanking everyone for joining. She walked through the Agenda for the meeting (CAC #16) and explained that the goal of the meeting was to talk about the main direction for the park. She reminded folks of the online meeting expectations (i.e. CAC members renaming themselves to show they are on the CAC, one conversation in the chat box, etc.) Kate explained that the CAC Discussion that evening would be a 'Round Robin' style, so that every CAC member would have the opportunity to speak. Robin, the CAC Chair, had to be unexpectedly out, but Mysnikol, Vice Chair, would help facilitate at very short notice.

Kate gave updates from the City side of this project; approvals of the Draft Development Plan are delayed until the AUAR review (the environmental review of the site) is completed. Kate reiterated the role and goal of the CAC and explained the community engagement process that has been going on for the last year or so. She explained that over the last summer, design discussion was the wrong focus at the time, and that the community engagement instead has focused on the larger impacts of a park on community members, particularly how community members can directly benefit from the building and operations of a park.

Based on all the discussions that have happened and the feedback that has been received, Kate presented 3 potential different directions the project could take [Staff Note: More information about these directions can be found under the March 16, 2021 CAC Meeting or in the [CAC #16 presentation](#)]. These are not the only possible directions, but are some very different routes that have arisen from prior engagement.

1. DO NOT PROCEED WITH PARK DEVELOPMENTS at this time
2. PROCEED WITH CLEANING UP THE INDUSTRIAL SITE, RESTORING THE LAND, AND MINIMAL CIRCULATION COMMITMENTS but do not proceed with further park amenities
3. BUILD JUST ENOUGH PARK TO ALLOW THE SITE TO SAFELY FUNCTION AS A PUBLIC PLACE AND SUPPORT DELIBERATE PROGRAMMING AND STAFFING. Beyond basic improvements, focus on site clean-up and environmental restoration

Link to 2021-03-16 CAC #16 Presentation

http://upperharbormpls.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-03-16_CAC-Slides-Notes.pdf

Kate explained how all these options differently address some of the overarching themes from the CAC (ex. investing in people—offering jobs, trainings, etc.; modeling new hands on community engagement methods that invest in community members as a part of the construction project; potential for local investment with construction). Kate talked about the flexibility of the second and third directions, which

allow the park to respond to some of the major decisions as the project is implemented (ex. piloting ideas like trying a food vendor at the site before committing to building a restaurant building).

Public Comment

Folks in attendance were asked to provide input on the three drafted recommendations that were on the table.

- (Public) Leans toward #3 because if the park isn't built there's no opportunity to see the benefits that the park could bring. Think there's an opportunity to embed those benefits into a park. Think there's a lot of momentum for this project on both the MPRB and City of Minneapolis side.
- (Public *in chat*) I will potentially speak after I hear CAC members. At this time, I vote #3
 - (CAC) Reminded people that this meeting isn't a space to debate opinions, it's for sharing perspectives and asking questions. Also reminded folks that public comment will not take place after the CAC Discussion and this is the time to have opinions, hopes, and concerns heard.
- (Public) Would also learn in the direction of #3 in the sense that people maybe would be drawn to the park and then there would be more park users to weigh in on future planning efforts. Also, think that although the dome buildings are large and bulky, at least one of them should be saved for their character and history. Could partner with an artistic/creative group or individual to make into a public art piece.
- (Public *in chat*) Question/Concern about how citizen engagement is increased with this project if the moving forward option doesn't result in any tangible/visible park? Think Option #2 is abstract and think that it will continue to attract people who are already highly engaged with the City of Minneapolis and MPRB.

First Round of CAC Discussion

The CAC Discussion flowed in a Round Robin style, to give each CAC member the chance to speak.

- (CAC) Leaning toward direction #2. Had a question about the use of the language 'minimal circulation commitments' and wanted to know what that means in terms of a potential trail connection.
 - (Project Staff) Will continue to be part of the more detailed discussion based on the overall direction the CAC wants to go. Would basically be a parkway, separate shared use paths (for bikes and pedestrians). There would be connections through the park to the river from Dowling. Essentially would have linear connections TO and THROUGH the park. Can get into more detail later, this discussion is more of the high-level check in about what direction to move towards.
 - (CAC) Also had a question about programming and staffing, what that could look like in terms of how the park could expand in the future if the infrastructure is built.

- (Project Staff) Need a certain amount of infrastructure to do the programming, but it can be designed in a way where it's not hard to change in the future/not so permanent. Gave the example of mobile buildings that could be used to operate programs, then can be packed up and moved. Can build to be flexible.
 - (CAC) Said that he still felt like he was leaning toward #2, thanked project staff for answering questions.
- (CAC) In favor of #3, didn't have any additional comments to expand on.
- (CAC) Thanked everyone for their work on the project and explained that he felt like he has learned a lot from this process. Said that he doesn't feel as though direction #1 does justice to North Minneapolis residents, that in the conversations he's had he's heard almost unanimous support to move forward with the park. Think that the park should move forward, aligns most closely with #3, stated that he believes it's the best way to support the community.
- (CAC) Thanked the CAC for all their differing backgrounds and perspectives and the work that's been accomplished together. Agrees that there needs to be additional clarification written in about what minimal circulation entails. Think that on its own it's up for interpretation. Agrees that he's heard that people want a park, has also heard from people who are deeply concerned about gentrification and displacement as a consequence of this park. Voiced his concerns about the fact that it is mostly a renter occupied neighborhood, and that the unintended consequences of this project and surrounding developments will disproportionately affect marginalized communities that have historically been overlooked. Still feel deeply concerned about the environmental hazards. Think that the language about 'safety' that is included in direction #3 also needs to be included to options #1 and #2. Voiced that at this time he is between options 1 and 2; and that his major concerns are green gentrification, the benefit this will bring to Northside Residents, access concerns (public transit access).
- (CAC) Echoed appreciation for the work that's been done together by the CAC. Explained they're somewhere between #2 and #3 because they share a lot of concerns about over-improvement and who will ultimately benefit from the park. Would like to see job training and more people involved but think that may lead to a snowball effect of what amenities could be added and included. Also has concerns about slower/just green enough project; worried that site clean up would become the permanent state of the park because it doesn't feel like there's a mechanism in place to ensure that MPRB will carry out another process for future amenities.
- (CAC) Voiced appreciation for the CAC process, and how his views have been impacted by others. Don't think that the process should slow down; thinks he's between #2 and #3. Worries about the fact that the City of Minneapolis owns the land, and that if the CAC decides to slow down the process that the City could build a park here regardless without having to be concerned with the issues community has voiced.

- (CAC) Echoed concerns about the City owning the land and being able to develop it privately if the MPRB doesn't move forward. Stuck between #2 and #3, believes that the language in #2 would eat up any available funding for further development later on (no guarantee of funding later). Think that it would be fabulous to increase access for bikes and pedestrians but think that a parkway might be awkward as one of the first elements at the site. Don't want to spend great deal of money just to prepare a mundane park. Would love to see a dedicated trail for bikes and peds that has access on both ends, with some programming to use the space.
- (CAC) Thinks she's leaning toward #2 but needs additional clarification about what cleaning up the industrial site means. Still has a lot of concerns about the contamination present at the site, has heard that the scoping document (AUAR review) will not include the contamination as part of the environmental review. Concerned about soil contaminated with petroleum and diesel, arsenic, and dissolved lead and the interactions of those contaminants with ground and surface water. No remediation has been done at the park yet, curious how that would start and what the extent of that would look like.
 - (Project Staff) MPRB hasn't done any remediation on the site yet because the MPRB doesn't own the land at this time. Early testing has been fairly extensive and generally shows that the site does not have a lot of high levels of contamination, which is to be expected given that it's largely been a transfer site. There are legal parameters around the level of contaminants allowed in a public space, more specific testing would need to be based on what is planned at the site and where. Explained that the methodology for remediation would be figured out once all the contaminants (and their respective levels) were identified. Cleaning up the site would entail getting the site ready so that it would be safe for public use as a minimum but have heard that additional remediation may be desired. Also working with Dakota team on phytoremediation as cleaning the soil, rather than shipping contaminated soil to a landfill, is their preference. There is history, language, and interpretation opportunities with more holistic treatment.
 - (CAC) Explained that she's in the #1-#2 range because she's still unsure about the level of contamination. Sounds like safety would be a priority, but this is still her main concern, still feels like things won't be addressed with the AUAR.
- (CAC) Thanked folks for the conversation that's taken place over the course of the CAC process. Agrees with some other fellow CAC members that it feels like there's a certain level of expectation for a park and that going with #1 would lead to some disappointment with community members. Would lean more toward #3, ensuring that the CAC is providing what he feels the community is anticipating.
- (CAC) Would really like to see the CAC move forward with getting something started. Feels between option #2 and #3, would not be happy with #1. Think that there are still unanswered questions about public transit and what site clean-up means. Need more clarity but has a lot of hope that something positive will happen on the site for Northside residents.

- (CAC) Leaning toward #3, still has concerns about overdevelopment but would like to see this park be a space for Northsiders to experience and congregate at. Concerned about gentrification, safety of the site, and accountability. Would like to move forward but would also like to enforce accountability that North Minneapolis residents have what they need, and that they're not being pushed out or priced out of property, thinking about the impact on renters as well. Would like to see this accountability effort extend further than the MPRB, would like to see elected officials concerned about this. Believes that #2 would be a good start but worries that there wouldn't be more movement. Thinks that if the CAC doesn't start building a park now, then there might not be anyone who will think about development in terms of supporting and maximizing the enjoyment of CURRENT Northside residents. #2 is not enough, but #3 needs to be done with more global accountability on all fronts.
- Project Staff spoke on behalf of the CAC Chair who was unable to attend the meeting; explaining her stance of wanting a park but having concerns about who the park will serve (who will be there) and the impacts of gentrification and displacement from the park and the surrounding developments. Concerns about how the surrounding development will affect the park. Doesn't feel like #1 is the correct option, would like to move ahead with #3 and see tough commitments made by all parties involved.
- (CAC) Spoke to her and other's personal experiences with being priced out of neighborhoods. Worried that she will continue to be priced out of places where she wants to plant roots. Thinking about this decision from a different position of power, access, and privilege. Leaning toward #1 or #2; cares more about people than about property. Willing to disappoint those who want a park right away to protect the others who aren't at the table. Concerned that the impacts of this decision will affect PEOPLE. Worry that the impact will be immense if this site is developed too far, too far. Would love to see it developed into a beautiful park but sees an opportunity to do that in a slower, more deliberate way. Making decisions beyond #2 doesn't feel appropriate to her based on the current information available. In favor of #1 based on unknowns.

Kate answered some of the questions that were posed by the CAC. She explained that the details of 'minimal circulation' would still need to be worked out, since these are just the high-level directions. Explained that it doesn't have to be an either or with options #2 and #3, that something in between those two options could be focused on as well. Addressed questions about funding, and explained that hearing the CAC's positions about the overall direction will help to determine the financial priorities for the site (ex. if additional remediation beyond legal requirements is requested that may prevent other structural amenities from being added). Explained that the site will be cleaned up to function safely regardless of what overall direction is decided on and that there's enough funds for circulation and restoration to happen. Plan is that Public Works (City of Minneapolis) would be building the roadway no matter what, not something the MPRB would be tasked with funding. For transit access to the site, MPRB has been in conversation with Metro Transit, who's interested in providing transit to the site but that likely won't happen until AFTER development of the site. Have information about how the park could support transit access (i.e. providing a public bathroom). Accountability is a more difficult

conversation, trying to build in creative accountability in the site (designing for flexibility), acknowledge it's a tricky part of the process.

- (CAC *in chat*) What does Restoring the land mean? Prairie?
 - (Project Staff) Restoration generally means native vegetation – in the upland areas that would likely be a lot of prairie species. Ecological vegetation restoration would likely be fairly specific at this site (specific shoreline plants), explained that experts on river ecology are involved in the decision making for what plant species end up where, but essentially it will be cleaned up and restoration means native plants and not turf lawn or other ornamental landscape.

- (Public *in chat*) How does this conversation fit in context with the rest of the development?
 - (Project Staff) The City's CPC conversations have proceeded somewhat separately from the MPRB CAC's conversations which has been an area of large concern for many. Feelings about the development plan are all across the spectrum, there are still a lot of unknowns. This CAC is trying to figure out how to best proceed with a park given a lot of unknowns and differing opinions with the project site as well as what is happening in the more general vicinity.

- (CAC) Question about the justification of the MPRB investing in the remediation and restoration of a site that feels like it might not truly have access to the broader community. Should the City pay for this level of removal and remediation at this time since they own the land?
 - (Project Staff) Part of the agreement between the MPRB and City is that the City is not asking the MPRB to purchase the land, it's being given with the caveat that the MPRB takes on the responsibility of environmental clean up of land that is accepted. To some degree it is all public dollars and MPRB has heard support for cleaning up the industrial riverfront in general. Question to the CAC is how accessible do they think this park can be? Think that a shuttle could be provided, but that can only help support SOME access, support some programming.

- (CAC) With Option #2, what is the timeline for moving forward beyond that, to option #3?
 - (Project Staff) That would be a to be determined thing, there's not currently a second phase of funding sitting available for this project. Think it's likely there would eventually be funding in the relatively near future through the CIP (Capital Improvement Projects). Every year, 25% of the regional park funding is specifically dedicated to the incomplete regional parks (The Grand Rounds and Above the Falls; UHT is part of Above the Falls Regional Park). This money is dedicated every year until these parks accomplish certain defined levels of completeness (bike and pedestrian connections on both sides). Although this money is potentially available to UHT, it can also be used for other parks that aren't UHT.

Second Round of CAC Discussion

The CAC was encouraged to make another statement if something came up for them while listening to the rest of the CAC members speak during the first-round robin. Project staff explained that after this second round, they would be going through the CAC members one final time to hear about how to proceed.

- (CAC) Appreciated everyone's initial comments and conversation. Think that cleaning up the site and river sounds good but agree that the details of what that looks like needs to be clarified. Don't want to deal with carcinogens, lead, poor air quality, etc. on this site. Feels more of an affinity toward #2 but is thinking about voting for #1 to take a stand to prioritize people. Thinking about if the CAC moves forward if it will produce the correct outcomes.

At this point, there was conversation in the chat about misinformation, CAC members asked the member of the public to clarify what they were addressing/provide sources to correct the 'misinformation'. The member of the public explained that many of the CAC's concerns already came through the CPC and are addressed in the Concept Plan. They included links to the [CPC's Draft Coordinated Plan](#). Explains that the things that aren't currently addressed by the Coordinated plan could be developed in tandem with the community later on.

- (CAC) Still thinks that she sides with #3 the most. When she hears about the pollution on the site this pushes her to want it cleaned up even more. Thinks that there's no time like the present to move forward with the project. Important to have access to the river, to see the water, the birds, sanctuary across the river, wildlife on the site. Thinks that at the least the site needs to be cleaned up, that it's owed to the land and the river.
- (CAC) Has heard almost unanimously through his conversations with Northsiders that people want to move forward with cleaning up the site and creating the foundations for a park. Disappointed to hear people say they don't think they should move forward with a park. Don't think that moving toward #3 means that the CAC is going to create a park that will automatically result in gentrification and displacement. Believes #3 is an opportunity to clean up the site, add a trail, and have some enjoyable green space; doesn't think that's an excessive plan, thinks that this is the time to move forward.
- (CAC) Expressed his appreciation for the CAC process and learning from his other CAC members. Wants to remind people of this history that exists within this park site, and the history of systemic injustices in Minneapolis. Thinks that a park will be developed no matter what, considering the City owns the land, which lands him somewhere between #1 and #2. Concerned for the community, very concerned about how 'unintended' consequences will affect people.
- (CAC) Believes that Northsiders deserve the very best park they can have, now have to think about HOW that's delivered and what's the risk.
- (CAC) Would like to see the 'to safely function' language from option #3 also added to #2. Also, still concerned about accountability. Asked if it would be possible to set aside time and money

to have another CAC in upcoming years, could make that a recommendation to make sure there is additional accountability embedded.

- (CAC) Agreed they'd like to see alignment between #2 and #3 in terms of the language used. They expressed they'd like to see the space activated and that the CAC could put off major expenses/decisions in order to start with creating more public access, to get people to the park to enjoy it. Would like to see this park kicked off.
- (CAC) Land Back is missing from the options. Thinks that this option should be offered outright from the MPRB, City, and State all the time on a regular basis. Would like to see that language included in one of the options. Leaning toward #1 or #2 because the residents of the Northside are the most important aspect of this park development. Thinks there's still a lot of key elements missing (transit, GAF contribution to pollution/contamination). Glad to hear MPRB is thinking about new methods of engagement and thinking about additional ways to continue to bring in BIPOC communities and individuals into all parts of the process, hope to see that continued.
- (CAC) Had a question about the funding differences between the options are, and if there's a difference what the funding would be reallocated towards.
 - (Project Staff) Explained that the project budget is \$12 million from two different funding streams (state matched funding). The funding needs to be allocated to this project, can't reapply for it, can't set it aside for later years. Don't have a super exact cost estimate for any of the options because the details still need to be worked out based on the general direction that CAC wants to proceed with. Need further refinement from the CAC.
 - (CAC) Question about if there would be any loss of funding? With #2 would the funds remain available for the suggested future opportunities or not, do they go elsewhere?
 - (Project Staff) Explained that if the funds are not spent as outlined, they would go away, essentially would have to go ahead and spend it or would have to choose not to use it. Could find \$12 million worth of improvements to do with both options #2 and #3, only scenario where the \$12 million wouldn't be spent would be if the CAC voted to stop the process and not develop a park at this time.
- (CAC) Would like to meet one more time to try to answer some of the questions posed by the CAC, including getting a timeline for what park clean up could look like.
- (CAC) Appreciate all the comments made by CAC members. She was initially leaning toward #3 but has heard a lot of valid arguments that make her fall somewhere between #2 and #3. Explained that she's also heard comments from community who want a park. Think that moving forward with #3 would bring a lot of momentum and excitement to the project, but don't think that's worth having people priced out of their neighborhoods later down the road. More information as always would be helpful.

- (CAC) Explained that she feels as though decisions are made for those that have the privilege to do so, think it's important to acknowledge the truth that there will be people who will be negatively impacted by this development that people on this CAC don't have a relationship with. She has done her own community engagement and feels like the CAC moving forward puts others own needs and biases ahead of those community members who will be impacted, doesn't feel like everyone is being brought along with this process and project.

CAC Member check in on process

Kate explained that this conversation was meant to be about how to move ahead as a CAC.

- Commissioner Vetaw (Commissioner At Large) wanted to take the time to share some feedback that she's heard from community members that have reached out to her. Majority of the conversations that she's had, there's been an expectation that there will be a park available in this space. People feel as though they have been promised a park and they would like to see it delivered. Have heard that River access is needed for Northside Residents. Most people have expectations for a park, want a park, want to feel connected to the river in this space.
- (CAC) Clarified what was on the table for the CAC, expressed that it would make the most sense to motion for another meeting first, and the second potential vote, about what the CAC wants to do for recommending a specific direction, could be held off until that potential meeting. Suggested someone motion for another meeting to get the details of the recommendation flushed out, keeping in mind some of the data will still not be available.

A motion was made, and seconded. The CAC Vice Chair asked if there was any discussion on the motion.

- (CAC) Would like to see the options narrowed down into two directions instead of three. Felt like he heard lots of people say they were in-between #1 and #2 or in-between #2 and #3.
- (CAC) Affirmed that the additional meeting would be used to figure out the details of the language of each recommendation.
- (CAC) Question if there was another meeting if there would be more information to know.
- (Project Staff) Explained that some additional information could be provided but there wouldn't be clarity on topics like public transit because MPRB can't guarantee what Metro Transit will do years down the road. The team is working with Metro Transit and thinks transit is likely provided there is some development. Explained that the purpose of the next meeting would be to dig into what each of the options might mean and what's possible in the middle of the options.
- (CAC) Expressed that if there was an additional meeting where it was more discussion based and not presenting information that eventually the CAC will have to draw a line about when to vote about moving forward.
- (CAC) Would like to see the Land Back piece added to the discussion as an option at the next meeting.
- (CAC) Asked if it would be appropriate to send along information to Kate before the meeting.

- (Project Staff) Yes, if there is another meeting there will be a window to submit questions so that Project Staff can get information together before the next meeting.

A member of the CAC clarified the MOTION: to have an additional meeting to get clarity on the language and possible details of each of the three options. Call to add a fourth option to the conversation.

4 Abstain, 8 in Favor, 0 Opposed.

- (CAC) Asked if anyone wanted to motion to have a vote on the direction at this meeting.

No one spoke up in favor of this motion, so the meeting was adjourned.

End of Notes