

Upper Harbor Terminal Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Final Meeting

Meeting Minutes

5/6/2021 (6:00-8:00pm)

Online Zoom Call

Introduction/ Updates (Robin and Kate)

Robin started the meeting by thanking everyone for coming, and by giving an overview of the meeting explaining that it would run similarly to the previous meeting as a “round robin” style to give each CAC member an opportunity to speak.

Kate also thanked everyone for joining and explained that the goal of this meeting was to get the CAC’s final thoughts and recommendations captured for the Board of Commissioners so they can understand the work that the CAC has done. Kate went over the meeting rules and online meeting guidelines as well as the Agenda for the meeting. Kate gave a presentation that outlined the 3 potential main directions for the park site, she went into specifics of each of the options (including remediation options, stormwater BMP options, key considerations from the community engagement like commonly requested amenities). Kate talked about helping activate the site, especially through jobs, in order to address safety concerns, and the potential for partnerships with other organizations to continue to bring green jobs to the space, even before construction. Kate addressed concerns about overdevelopment by providing examples of choices that could be made to make the area more flexible. Kate also outlined the next steps for the project and process which will continue to run concurrent with the City’s process. Kate explained that there would be no final direction determined until the City adopts their plan (which will happen after the environmental review), then there will be all the regular steps from the MPRB’s Community Engagement Policy process (including a 45 day public comment period), and the earliest that construction would occur would be Fall of 2022.

Public Open Time

- (Public) Question about what the options are for a smaller or a larger park?
 - (Project Staff) Currently the City of Minneapolis holds the title to the land, there isn’t really an option for a larger or smaller park, especially because there is also a defined regional park boundary.
- (Public) Secretary of Native People’s Caucus, speaking in favor of option 1. Believe this is an opportunity for reconciliation and justice, an opportunity to be more mindful about relationships with treaty partners (especially the Dakota people whose land this park would be on). Opportunity to clean up the park land but want to know what the Dakota nations would want to see happen in this space beyond remediation. Want to know that these conversations are happening.
- (Public) Agree with the previous comment and speak in support of Option 1. When talking about restoration, and reintroducing native species, need to make sure the conversations also include reintroducing Native People. With St. Paul and Indian Mounds Regional park they were able to honor the Dakota people by keeping it as a sacred burial ground. Would like to see the same

thing happen in this space, letting the Dakota people decide how to develop the land once it's been cleaned up as best as possible. Would like this to prompt the deeper conversation of where sacred lands can be returned (ex. Theodore Wirth, Powderhorn, etc.)

- (Public *in chat*) Let's remember that there is no public transportation scheduled to service this "park."
- (Public) Support option 1 and what others have stated. Seems like an oxymoron where people are arguing over Indigenous lands when the land should be given back plain and simple. Let Indigenous people decide what to do with the space.
- (Public *in chat*) Regarding the amount of Public land possible at UHT The MWMO has been working with the MPRB, Mpls Public Works, CPED and the Developer to open up more natural public spaces affiliated with stormwater and habitat
- (Public) Question about if this is the property that was originally spoken about as an outdoor music venue that First Ave was involved in?
 - (CAC) That is part of the development as a whole. Explained that the point of this MPRB Community Advisory Committee (CAC) focuses on the PARK, just a portion of the site, while the City's CPC focuses on the City side of the development, which included the venue and other elements like housing.

CAC Discussion

Robin called on CAC members individually to speak to their opinions. Each CAC Member would have at least two times where they would be able to speak.

- (CAC) Believe that the CAC has to recommend that something be done on the land. Lean this way because the MPRB doesn't own the land and that if the MPRB isn't the one to create a park then the City will find someone else in the private sector to develop the land. By doing something on the land now, it's an opportunity for the MPRB and the CAC to have a say in what happens.
- (CAC) Would love the opportunity to see the river and have the space cleaned and opened up. Also believe that not doing something will allow the City to develop the space, would like to see it opened up and made beautiful. Agree with Option 3.
- (CAC) Want to remind everyone that underneath the UHT park site is the rubble of the 1967 riots and the remnants of the African American economy that existed in the city up until that time. Still have major concerns with the park, including the fact that public transportation is not set up to service anything that will be developed. Want to caution the CAC and MPRB from using public dollar for what will feel like a private space. Believe the CAC and MPRB is locking themselves into a misuse of public dollars. Agree with Option 1; would like to see the site cleaned up but a lot needs to be put in place to make sure this space is for public use.

- (CAC) Agree with Option 1. Urge the MPRB to slow down this process, thinking about who this park is for and who will be able to use it. Believe that if this park is built now it will only serve the development, those who already have money, those who don't even live in the city. Don't want to see tax dollars going to a park that isn't truly for Northsiders. Want to take the time to pause the project so that the MPRB can continue meeting with community leaders to talk about land back and other reparations.
 - (CAC *in chat*) We need to stop building the tax base by taking from the Indigenous and destroying the African American Community.
- (CAC) Speaking on behalf of another CAC member who had to be at a different event, said he was in favor of Option 1.
- (CAC) Thanked the members of the public who came to speak to giving the land back. Recognize that this isn't the end of the conversation and are curious to hear what others have to say about a layered approach, similar to both one and two, where the process is slowed down but with a continued charge, what would that look like? Think that conversations about land back are bigger than this committee, not sure what would be possible from the CAC. Ultimately would like to see Option 2, but don't want to skim over the fact that there is more engagement that needs to be done about how to move forward once the land is cleaned up.
- (CAC) Have voiced concerns about the park in the past, also have concerns about the creation of a parkway, believe that it will provide roadway more so for the commercial development, don't like how it opens up the door. Don't see the value in cleaning up the land for the private use of the developments, lean toward Option 1.
- (CAC) Lean towards Option 3.
- (CAC) In favor of developing this into a park. Have heard from Commissioners and from surveys he's done in his own community that people want a park here. Support Option 3, but have been listening to other CAC Members concerns. Also feel concerned that MPRB is being asked to fund the rehabilitation of this site that could be complicated to use with the surrounding developments. Shouldn't do this on the park board budget without a clear sense of it benefiting the park. Thinks this needs to go forward, but also think the MPRB needs to think carefully about what land it accepts from the City.
 - (Public *in chat*) Agree with what was said about clean up benefiting the commercial development. The cleanup should be paid for by commercial development.
- (CAC) Agree with Option 3. Need to get going with a park for folks.
- (CAC) Appreciate the public comments about giving the land back. Not sure what the process for giving land back would be, or if it's even possible at this point. If it is possible, would love for the land to return back to Indigenous people. Not opposed to a graduated/layered system, where the CAC recommends something like 1 with the potential for 2. Would like to see this move forward but would prefer it move forward in the hands of Indigenous people. Worried the land

would ultimately go to private buyers, if there's an opportunity to do something on it, should move forward.

- (CAC) Want a space that services the needs of the community. Has always wanted this space to become a park, think about how valuable it is to grow up in parks and to make sure that's an experience that's possible for others. Need a park on the North side of Minneapolis that exposes Northside residents to the river. Always see people walking, biking and driving along the river, would like to have a space where people can settle in and gather to visit and stay in the park. Believe that yes, Indigenous people need to be involved in the process for how they would like to see and feel in the park. There is an opportunity to work with the Indigenous community to develop this park into a space that represents them and who they are, it's an educational opportunity for something like that to be incorporated in the space. Not sure what giving land back would look like in all legality but think there are other ways to bring people to the space. Want to get the process going to build a park for the north side.
 - (CAC *in chat*) Then start fighting for public transportation!!!
 - (Public *in chat*) It starts with actually trying for a process and not pushing it off to another group or institution

Before the CAC began their second 'round robin', Kate addressed some of the questions that she heard come up during the discussion.

- The City of Minneapolis still holds title of the land, if the land were to come into MPRB ownership it is given with the agreement that the MPRB will create a park.
- Kate spoke to more community engagement and the next steps for the process, how communities and leaders are being integrated in the process and how relationship building has been going. Kate acknowledged that there is still a lot of work being done together, more to come, and that they are still figuring out the details and continuing to bring folks in.
- (CAC) Asked what some of the consultants (who identify as Indigenous) are working on.
 - (Project Staff) A number of different things, as consultants they are embedded on the project to help advise on different pieces of the process like how and when to reach out to community. They advise on all steps of the project, and they're allowed a lot of agency in how they work. They have recently been recruiting youth and bringing Indigenous folks on site, etc.
- (CAC) Would vote for Option 2 with the intention that the MPRB take over ownership of the land and do minimal restoration. Believe that 2a addresses other comments and concerns about the music venue and other developments.
- (CAC) Still for a park but have never been in support of a music venue or any of the other buildings. Because this is such an industrial area, owe it to the residents and the earth to start cleaning it up. Would love to be able to see the river, would love to see a giant open park that is full of life, wildlife, and people. In support of Option 3

- (CAC) Expressed that from the get-go this process has felt flawed, the CAC is working together on top of years of prior community engagement. Still feel like the CAC is learning, and it always feels like there is additional community engagement and things to be learned going on behind the scenes. Expressed that he wanted to file a complaint about some of the behavior that occurred during the formal CAC process.
- (CAC) Still agree most with Option 1. Have heard that cleaning up the site is important. When thinking about what site clean up means, also then need to be thinking about what having a Native site means. That involves our Native community being involved in discussions about land back, site design, etc. Want to recognize that there are at least 39 Native communities/tribes in the Metro area, who all need to be included. Would support Option 1 and cleaning up the and, but making sure that what clean up means and including the Native community are included in the recommendation. Support other CAC member and his experiences and asked that everyone respect one another in these meetings.
- (CAC) Expressed that she doesn't feel like this is the appropriate time to call out other committee members. Didn't feel like she heard the group moving toward any kind of consensus, acknowledge that this has been the CAC's reality for some time. Agree with problems and concerns about the site and development and think that the CAC shouldn't aim for consensus at this point. Should figure out how to present the Board of the Commissioners with the range of individual views.
 - (CAC *in chat*) Agree that this isn't the time and place to air grievances, apologize for feeling pushed to make the compliant.
- (CAC) Agree that the CAC doesn't want to lose riverfront or park space, it's a shame that the park space got whittled down so much over time, don't like that parks in North/Northeast will be built by selling land to private enterprise. Think that the City will continue to make parks similar to the Yard downtown which has exchanged hands several times and now is privately maintained. To some extent believe that the MPRB needs to hold onto what's been offered. Don't want to join in on the process the City is doing. Would stick with Option 1.
- (CAC) No further comments.
- (CAC) Still in the same place. Think that this CAC has looked at this project in a more forward-thinking manner than any other project in the city. Don't feel like people are fighting against other park projects on the North side the same way that people are fighting against UHT. Don't think that UHT needs to stand as the litmus test for everything progressive. Have heard strongly from his neighbors that people want a park, frustrated that this project has become the epicenter for political complication, don't feel as though that's fair to the Northside. Concerns about access, but if there's no park then no one will be able to access it and that's a mistake. The development should take on the cost for the rehabilitation. Support Option 3. Wish the commissioners were here to hear the community.
 - (CAC *in chat*) It happens on the Southside too. East Phillips Urban Farm

- (CAC) There are a lot of variables to consider, still feel that this needs to be a park for all and that it needs to be developed. Support Option 2.
- (CAC) Here as a committee to also listen to what the community wants, in the previous meetings have heard from community members that they'd like to see a park. Have also heard opposition to the park as well and have heard the position of giving the land back. Joined the committee because they wanted to have a park and there are a lot more complications with that, that weren't perceived in the onset, there are systemic inequities present that cross over into the park. Would like to see a nice green park space. Wish that it didn't have to be connected with the amphitheater that the City is building. Support Option 3, would like to have a park space, doesn't mean the work is done, means the work will begin. Need to work with community and city leaders to address the issues the site has.
- (CPC) Wanted a park, didn't really know and understand the CPC side of the project, which plays a big role. Concerned about development, don't want the development, but do want a park that serves the Northside. This process started before the CAC and will continue after the CAC concludes. Committee members can still be engaged in the project and make their voices heard as community members. Came together to develop a park, to represent the community's desires for a park on the river. Lots of considerations, still think that they should create a park based off the recommendations and move forward while understanding that the process doesn't end now, there's so much knowledge and understanding that can be carried forward.
- (CAC) Apologized again verbally for airing grievances in the discussion, thanked everyone for their opinions and experiences that were brought to the table.
 - (Project Staff) Thanked everyone for their time and energy around the project and apologized for the rocky process; thanking folks for learning with staff as the project went on, especially when the project had to transition to being virtual. Kate explained that the MPRB is also thinking about how the organization shows up within everything else going on within the City which is becoming increasingly more important. Will pass on to commissioners the variety of opinions that have been shared.
- (CAC) Nothing further to share, thanked everyone for the experience, have learned lots.
- (CAC) Feels like this project has been whittled down. Want a park, want to see the space cleaned up, want the relics gone. Want to thank the CAC members and project staff for everything they've done, understanding that it's been a tough process with all the politics around the project and the added stress of the pandemic. Feel like the in-person process was better.
- (CAC) Want to push everyone to look at the work of [Scenic Hudson](#) which transformed an industrial space in upstate New York not a natural, wild, pollinator friendly space. Would like to see similar work done in this space which is regenerative, and doesn't end up as a lawn for private development. Want to see this activated as a space for education, want to see transportation stops.

- (CAC) Second that they miss meeting in person, feel as though the virtual process is a lot different. Feel that the City has historically set up these park spaces for private developments, and that those coming to use the park will be users coming for the amphitheater. Feel like it's important to get this right so that tax dollars benefit those on the North side, don't feel like that needs to be rushed. Make sure the Dakota community is invested in this as well. Support Option 1 with the addition that the Native community is included and that the site is cleaned up (like a scaled back Option 2)
- (CAC) Should share with Commissioners how challenging this has been with so many considerations (ex. Land back, gentrification, who is accessing parks and who users feel parks are for, lack of trust in the City and MPRB, etc.) The lack of trust, although merited, has led the CAC to a place where they don't feel like anything they recommend will be heard and addressed later on. The MPRB has a way to go in earning community trust. Commissioners are often making the politically charged decisions while staff is working behind the scenes with community, but the perception that staff doesn't have the communities back either makes it hard for the community to trust.
 - (CAC *in chat*) Plus the park CAC and City CPC didn't get to meet as joint committees!
- (CAC) Disappointed that the City has shaped what kind of park is being accepted by the MPRB. Think that cleaning up the park is an insult, it will become a front yard for a music venue, it will become just another commercial spot. Hopeful that someday the RiverFirst vision, of continuous parkland with a focus on the river will come about, for that reason still support Option 1.
- (CAC) Encouraged folks to look to the highline park in New York, which took an industrial area and converted it to a park in a densely populated location. Don't think that a turf lawn, even if it's cleaned up is a park. Bringing back prairie grasses and other things would make it feel more like a park. Need a robust and intentional effort to make it feel less like a backyard.
- (CAC) Developments and parks are happening all over the city, don't think that people are fighting other projects. Have to be careful about this project being the site where all the political thinking lands, is this the neighborhood we want to decide to let it out on? MPRB Commissioners need to get the message that they should be more involved in these ongoing conversations. Don't feel like the CAC have heard from a majority of them. Have heard from Commissioner Vetaw who has also said that community/area residents have said yes to a park here. Minneapolis is so unique because of its park system. I think that by doing something here there is the potential to create something that is a destination that puts North Minneapolis on the map. Don't think this will displace people, think this will welcome people. Still don't think the MPRB should be stuck with the bill for site rehabilitation.
- (CAC) Make sure there's robust access to the river, not just kayaks and canoes (many cannot use these or get access to these). Would really love to have a pontoon or something that connects people to the history of the area.

- (CAC) Would really like to see transportation, public transit to this area at the bare minimum. Seems like the City will develop this area with or without the MPRB and the CAC needs to make sure to stay engaged and keep their voices loud. Even after this process ends there is an opportunity to let the Commissioners know what the CAC and Community want. Would like to see the development of a park space begin.
- (CAC) Detailed recommendations about the development were given to the City at one point, think that there should be something similar brought to the commissioners as well. This would give a basis of what the conversation was like. Doesn't seem like the CAC wants to recommend anything because of too many unknowns. Recommendation that have been previously drafted seem to address concerns and how the park can work around them. There is still more work to do. Need a park here.

The CAC was invited to voice their final thoughts in the chat.

- (CAC *in chat*) MPRB needs to fight for better boundaries for the land so that we have better park space and the Venue takes the cost for the rehabilitation
- (CAC *in chat*) I would like to see the world's best pedestrian path that goes over the traffic, the freeway, the train tracks, and safely allows biker, walking, running and all to get to the PARK.
- (CAC *in chat*) I think you are right, and the presentation more or less gives our group "mixed" POV
- (CAC *in chat*) The votes on 1, 2, or 3 should just be included.
- (CAC *in chat*) We need a clean site and a PARK!
- (CAC *in chat*) I would suggest we give the recommendations WITH our votes. Will someone present this?

Thanks and Next Steps

Kate explained that project staff would draft something and send it back to the CAC to get an accurate perspective of their thoughts and opinions. Encouraged everyone to stay in touch and involved. Meeting was adjourned.