

Stadium area gets rebrand as East Town

The Downtown East and Elliot Park neighborhoods in Minneapolis will be covered by umbrella term.

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GLEN STUBBE • Star Tribune file
Inconsistencies with what people called the area led to the rebranding of East Town.

The east side of downtown Minneapolis is officially East Town.

On Thursday, the East Downtown Council — which will also soon change its name to include the new title — voted to adopt East Town as the new umbrella term for the Elliot Park and Downtown East neighborhoods.

The 21-seat council, which includes nonprofit organizations, real estate agents, bars, hotels, churches and the Minnesota Vikings, made the decision nearly two years after it recognized the confusion surrounding the various names people use to describe the same area.

For years, there was scant new development within the district's 100-block swath, demarcated by the Mississippi River, Interstate 35W,

Interstate 94 and 5th Avenue S., and so few people concerned themselves with the name.

But just like Uptown when it experienced significant commercial growth in the early 20th century, the east side of downtown is undergoing a renaissance. The district's changes have been spurred by a variety of factors, including the construction of a new Wells Fargo corporate campus, the new Vikings stadium, light-rail access and a postrecession population boom in downtown.

The district is composed of two official city neighborhoods, Elliot Park and Downtown East, and one unofficial area, called the Mill District.

Dan Collison, executive director of the council, admits it will require a concerted effort to get everyone to actually use the new name, but said the arrival of Super Bowl LII in the district in 2018, is the business association's target date to have the brand fully rolled out in signage, logos and way-finding.

Public relations firm PadillaCRT developed the graphics, primarily through pro bono work. The East Downtown Council received two grants for the effort: one competitive business grant from the City of Minneapolis for \$25,000 and one from the McKnight Foundation. McKnight is giving the Minneapolis Downtown Council \$50,000 a year for three years, a small part of which was used for the rebranding.

The council will make the logos, colors and all associated brand materials available for free to all neighborhood businesses. The idea is to get as many to use the imagery and name so as to increase its prominence.

A long list of other names were rejected by the council, names such as E Do, East Central Square, East Loop and SoFa (south of Fifth Avenue).

“There were imperatives we heard over and over and over again from conversations we had. ‘East’ was a must have. Coming up with a tricky or

trendy name was subordinate to the word 'East,' ” Collison said. “It’s sort of a shortening of ‘East Downtown’ which some people wanted.”

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