**Notes from Minneapolis Downtown Council’s 2025 Plan**

**East Town Development Group Meeting**

**Tuesday, January 17, 2017, 9:00-10:30 a.m.**

**American Academy of Neurology**

**210 Chicago Avenue South, 5th Floor Training Room A**

**DOWNLOAD FEATURE PRESENTATION AT THIS LINK:**

[**https://www.dropbox.com/s/n7ob3yzaui0tkhp/MnDOT%20Technical%20Assistance%20Panel%20Presentation\_FINAL.pdf?dl=0**](https://www.dropbox.com/s/n7ob3yzaui0tkhp/MnDOT%20Technical%20Assistance%20Panel%20Presentation_FINAL.pdf?dl=0)

1. **Welcome and Overview of Agenda**Dan Collison, MDC Director of East Town Partnership, welcomed the audience to the first East Town Development Group meeting in 2017 and thanked the American Academy of Neurology for hosting. Then he reviewed the agenda which included a highlight of the three Wards that comprise East Town; and the featured presentation on Urban Land Institute Minnesota’s Healthy Communities Initiative Report.
2. **Introductions**  
   Carina Aleckson, Catholic Charities Opportunity Center  
   John Campobasso, Kraus-Anderson Construction  
   David Fields, consultant to Minneapolis CPED  
   Chris Fleck, North Central University  
   Brent Hanson, Wells Fargo  
   Varun Kharbanda, 511 Building  
   Robert Loken, Elness Swenson Graham (ESG) Architects  
   Pat Mascia, Briggs and Morgan, P.A.   
   Robin Mooney, Boarman Kroos Vogel (BKV) Group  
   Cathy Schmidt, Surfacequest  
   Thomas Schmidt, DMNA Land Use Committee  
   Ken Searl, Friends of the Mill District, Gold Medal Park Conservancy   
   Ben Shardlow, Minneapolis Downtown Council/Downtown Improvement District   
   Carletta Sweet, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
3. **Upcoming East Town Development Group Meetings**

* *Tuesday, February21st.* Downtown Minneapolis Market Rate Owner and Rental Housing: Where have we been, where are we now, and where will we be in 5 years presentation by Realtor Cynthia Froid and staff of the award winning Cynthia Froid Group (<http://www.cynthiafroid.com/>) at the newly completed, market rate Encore Minneapolis apartments (<http://mplsencore.com/>), 212 10th Avenue South. This is the second phase of Sherman Associates (<http://www.sherman-associates.com/>) development next to its Zenith Condominiums.  
    
  The ETDG studies and advocates for a diverse housing portfolio and has held technical panels on affordable housing and presented the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at University of Minnesota’s analysis of the East Town housing market. This presentation will cover the market rate ownership and rental side of the district and a tour of the property will follow.
* *Tuesday, March 21st*. Park and Portland: A Vision for Development by the BKV Architecture Team. This presentation will go before the EPNI’s Building, Land Use and Housing Committee this Thursday, January 19th and before the DMNA Land Use Committee on Tuesday, February 7th to engage with the neighborhoods and receive feedback.

1. **East Town Development Group Website**  
   Using a slide presentation, Collison guided the audience through the neighborhoods of Downtown East and Elliot Park and Wards 3, 6 and 7 that comprise the East Town district of the Central Community in downtown Minneapolis, all of which can be found on the recently launched East Town Development website (<http://www.easttowndevelopment.com/>).   
     
   He noted that prior to the 2010 census (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/census/2010/index.htm>) and subsequent to municipal redistricting (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/redistricting2012/>), this area was governed by Ward 7 Council Member Lisa Goodman, but as a result of changing demographics and increased development, the area now has a much more rich and diverse profile and municipal leadership, i.e.:

* Ward 3 (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-143228.pdf>);
* Ward 6 (<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-143231.pdf>); and
* Ward 7 (<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-143233.pdf>).

Collison noted that with the 2025 Plan, in order to cast vision for future development, it is critically important to understand street, neighborhood and ward level narratives and how they all connect together to make up downtown. Ward 6 is in play for the Healthy Communities Initiative; it is the most densely populated in the entire city but has less home ownership and other economic disparities. The HCI is a great opportunity for engagement, connection to the outer edges of the district, and opportunity sites for future development.

1. **Urban Land Institute Minnesota’s Technical Assistance Panel Report   
   for Minnesota Department of Transportation on the Healthy Communities Initiative**  
   Collison introduced Patrick Mascia, ULI Technical Advisory Panel Co-Chair, by providing a brief biography of his professional experience (<http://www.briggs.com/attorneys-Pat-Mascia.html>), all of which he considers perfect for this type of project.  
     
   Mascia thanked Collison for the invitation and the audience for attending and advised he’s been Chair of ULI Minnesota for the last year and that is what brought him into this project. He came in skeptical about what a “lid” is, how and whether it could work, and has come out as a believer that it should happen and that it will happen but there are a number of things that have to be done to do it correctly.  
     
   Because of the numerous improvements needed to be made to our roads, bridges and highway corridors, ULI Minnesota was commissioned by MnDOT Commissioner Charles Zelle (<http://dot.state.mn.us/information/commissionerbio.html>) to rethink the I-94 Corridor and look into the possibility of placing lids over it to restore connections in adjacent neighborhoods and foster new growth. Initially this study covered a broader scope that included the State Capitol and Midway in St. Paul, and the U of M Gateway, Elliot Park and Nicollet Avenue Arts District in Minneapolis, but ULI backed off to focus on Rhondo in St. Paul, and I-35W and Farview Park in Minneapolis (<http://minnesota.uli.org/advisory-services/mndot-technical-assistance-panel-healthy-communities-initiative/>) and applied the findings to the remainder of the corridor.  
     
   Mascia explained what a Technical Advisory Panel does (<http://minnesota.uli.org/advisory-services/technical-assistance-panel-tap/>) and because ULI is comprised of members from both the private and public sector, it puts them in a unique position to bring together a public and private interdisciplinary panel to help solve regional problems. The 9-member panelists for this initiative were:

* Patrick Mascia, Co-chair
* Ann Marie Woessner-Collins, Co-chair
* Sarah Harris, University of Minnesota Foundation Real Estate Advisor
* Seitu Jones, Artist from the Rhondo community
* Bill Lively, Retired, National Geographic Society (Klyde Warren Park fundraiser)
* Hugh Murphy, JLL Chicago (former Millennium Park Project Manger)
* Bob Pfefferle, Hines
* George Sherman, Sherman Associates
* Rich Varda, Target Corporation

This panel, along with members from the neighborhood and other constituents, came together for 3 days visiting the sites, gathering information and conducting fact finding due diligence, then they pulled everything together in an unbiased manner in the context of what’s best given the assignment.

As background, he showed an aerial view of downtown Minneapolis in 1954 when there was continuous streets, downtown connected to adjacent neighborhoods, and little underutilized land versus and an aerial view from the 1990s showing how the freeways changed downtown Minneapolis with a massive amount of land near the core used for surface parking, underutilized land along the interstate, and interrupted connections between places.  
  
In the case of the Rhondo community in St. Paul, the 1947 aerial showed connected, complete neighborhood with homes, businesses, places of worship, parks, and schools; and an aerial view of today showed an estimated 600 homes and 300 businesses removed in Rondo alone, neighborhoods divided with proximity to exhaust and air pollution.

Mascia explained in reality a “lid” is developing the right-of-way alongside highways, not building structures over the top of highways (although you can to a limited extent from an engineering standpoint); it is about taking excess right-of-way that MnDOT owns and will never need and putting it back into productive use. To do so, they are taking something that currently is not on the tax roll and putting it onto the tax role to finance these projects.   
  
The goal of this initiative is to reconnect communities and create available land for construction and development. Lids can be done in a variety of ways, e.g.:

* I-670 at Union Station in Columbus, OH (<http://casestudies.uli.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/98/2015/12/C035010.pdf>) is owned and maintained by Continental Real Estate Companies. Buildings and roadway sit on three separate bridge structures built by ODOT. The cost to build was $7.8 million on 1.12 acres or $160 per square foot.
* Millennium Park in Chicago, IL (<https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/millennium_park.html>) is owned by the City of Chicago and maintained by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. The cost to build was $475 million on 24.5 acres or $445 per square foot. A parking garage was part of the development which attracted $105.6 million in public money. Other funding sources included $60.6 million in public money for the Metra superstructure; $25 million endowment; and over $100 million in private donations for amenities.
* Klyde Warren Park in Dallas, TX (<https://www.klydewarrenpark.org/>) is jointly owned by the City of Dallas, Texas DOT, and the Klyde Warren Foundation, and maintained and operated by the Woodall Rogers Park Foundation. The cost to build was $106.7 million on 5.2 acres or $471 per square foot. Construction was funded through a public, private partnership, i.e.: $20 million from the City of Dallas (bonds), $20 million from TxDOT, $50 million from private donations, and $16.7 million from stimulus funds.

In addition to the three primary study areas, the panel also provided guidance on lid typologies and development opportunities for several other locations along I-94 as part of a “lightning round,” i.e.:

* Arts District / Nicollet Avenue
* Elliot Park
* University of Minnesota Gateway
* Midway in Saint Paul
* State Capitol

After listening to people and gathering information, they believe the I-94 corridor should be one unified corridor and have one vision, i.e.:

* Unify lid projects under a single banner
* Improve health–physical, environmental, economic and social
* More than just lids. All MnDOT right-of-ways throughout the corridor should be evaluated for better utilization
* Unique goals and solutions for each lid
* Be bold, creative, and ambitious

Questions posed included whether they have the right structure in place to look at it as one unified corridor. Who is running the charge, MnDOT or should it be a division of MnDOT? Do we have tools in place at state level to fund it? Who is going to be the Hugh Murphy project manager and Bill Lively fundraiser?

This is what has been named the Healthy Community Initiative and it is about more than lids. It is about changing the course of communities along freeways, the principles for which are:

* Connecting and reconnecting communities
* Protecting and enhancing our environmental health
* Catalyzing economic and housing opportunities for all
* Valuing aesthetics
* Strengthening the state’s economy.

Each of the three lids they focused on is different and has its own challenges and opportunities:

* *I-35W at Washington Avenue*
* Site visit and interview themes: Downtown 2025 Plan is driving planning; growing population and need for schools downtown; affordability and diversity of housing are challenges; better connections to U of M and Cedar-Riverside; reduce and reconfigure infrastructure.
* Panel findings and analysis: Create forward-thinking master plan that establishes new road and street patterns that will define the parcels; reconnect Cedar-Riverside/U of M to downtown to create new economic opportunities; recognize the university is unlikely to expand its footprint; develop vision for area as an integrated, multimodal transportation hub; timing is critical to influence surrounding development to be sensitive to the future of this area; opportunity to create a “cool factor” to attract wide interest.
* *Saint Paul’s Rondo Neighborhood*
* Site visit and interview themes: Opportunity and desire to heal a painful legacy; eight neighborhood values for eight bridges; community actively engaged in planning what lids can be; cultural and community connections as well as opportunities for wealth generation are key.
* Panel findings and analysis: Prioritize locations; pursue community consensus; honor “8 Bridges and Community Values of Rondo”; Victoria Street: best opportunity for a seam of activity connecting Frogtown Park and Farm through Grand Avenue; build from Columbus model (1-story commercial buildings); additional development as demand grows over time; engage community youth throughout the process.
* *Farview Park in North Minneapolis*
* Site visit and interview themes: Current concepts focused on park and recreation connections; known challenges in adjacent communities but opportunities as well; strong neighborhood associations in Hawthorne and Jordan; conflicting visions on future land uses along the river.
* Panel findings and analysis: Area needs a reconciled vision for the industrial land between I-94 and the river; create an “industrial overlay” to facilitate gradual transition of land uses; focus on the green connection between the river and Farview Park; focus on walkable residential uses and strong connection across the highway to existing neighborhoods; engage community youth throughout the process.

Mascia noted they don’t envision building 9 lids; it will be a step at a time. They need to know how to plan a responsible investment of public and private money to make it happen and it is important for the first lid to be successful and help generate momentum for additional lid developments. Out of the 3 they reviewed, the I-35W has the greatest immediate opportunity for commercial development and how they plan and management for that needs to be thought through now. Based upon their findings, they have developed the following overarching recommendations:

* Form a quasi-governmental public-private partnership to oversee and manage all aspects of the Healthy Communities Initiative.  
    
  MnDOT has some existing statutory authority to form public-private partnerships and possibly to determine how revenues are used to facilitate development. This is land off of the tax rolls, so it’s possible to be creative. Could set up “special taxation districts” to help with collecting revenues and reinvesting them into lid areas and throughout the corridor. May need special legislation to get the right structure and authorities, which should be investigated. This entity should have the power to leverage funding and land use tools available to government and potentially create new ones. Should have powers similar to port authorities, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, and the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority. Keep the number of people overseeing the entity as small as reasonably possible.
* Establish a 501(c)(3) for charitable giving and find a champion to lead fundraising. Establish an endowment for long-term funding right away.
* Put an experienced, professional leader in charge of managing and delivering the Initiative as a whole and set an aggressive timeline.
* Focus on making freeways lid-ready during any reconstruction activity, and start with small steps that can be taken right now.
* Develop market-based conceptual plans at Rondo and I-35W/Washington Avenue to shape a deeper analysis of lid-ready developments. Technical Assistance Panels or similar deep-dive analyses focused on the Rondo community and/or the I-35W / Washington Avenue areas could help develop capitalize on the good work already done by community leaders in those neighborhoods.  
    
  Pursue land use consensus at Farview Park. The panel felt the next step was to build consensus among the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the surrounding community regarding the land uses east of I-94.
* Conduct a corridor-wide parking and transportation study to evaluate district parking at lids and how transit at lids can provide access to jobs. Look to coordinate other transportation modes including public transit, car share, and cycling.
* Mandate a mechanism (i.e. through statute) to ensure the inclusion of affordable housing that serves all people and the communities in which they reside.
* Use the corridor as a showcase for art, architecture, design, and innovative engineering and technology best practices.
* Practice effective community engagement and support cultural connections every step of the way.

The immediate next step should be establishing a broad based taskforce to identify the leadership and resources necessary to carry out an implementation strategy based on these recommendations. Commissioner Zelle has promised to do so at the Wilder Foundation (<http://www.wilder.org>) and the TAP is pushing him hard to get this done.

Thereafter, Mascia entertained questions from the audience.

1. **Closing Remarks**

Collison thanked Mascia for his presentation, the audience for attending, and reminded them of the February 21st ETDG meeting at the Encore Apartments.