

From the Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/news/2017/07/10/downtown-s-commons-park-8m-funding-gap-could-be.html>

Downtown's Commons park \$8M funding gap could be solved with development fees

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Jul 10, 2017, 4:00am CDT

The Commons park in front of U.S. Bank Stadium could finally get finished thanks to help from the [Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board](#).

Short \$8 million for the park's \$22 million budget, the city has held off on restrooms, a pavilion, a stage and water features.

The Park Board on Wednesday will vote on a [resolution](#) to fill the funding gap by using park dedication fee money. Park dedication fees come from developers who have to pay a fee for building new projects. The money can only be used for capital expenses on nearby parks, not for management or maintenance.

In this case, the 4.2-acre Commons park would get money from nearby projects like the Radisson Red hotel, [Ryan Cos. US Inc.'s new Millwright building](#); the redevelopment of Thresher Square; and [Graves Hospitality's plans for a new hotel and apartments on Washington and Chicago avenues](#).

As of April, those developments had generated \$874,425 in park dedication fees, but could reach \$8 million over the next 10 years. Much of that depends on some projects coming to fruition.

The park is owned by the Park Board, leased by the city of Minneapolis and managed by Green Minneapolis, a nonprofit.

Several downtown businesses chipped in to raise \$14 million, and fundraising continues in earnest, said [Beth Shogren](#), executive director of Green Minneapolis. However, no new contributions have been announced since last year.

A committee led by Mayor [Betsy Hodges](#) and Ryan Cos. CEO [Pat Ryan](#) led the fundraising until January, when they turned it over to Green Minneapolis.

Hodges could not be reached for comment. City Council member [Jacob Frey](#), who represents the area and is running for mayor, applauded the park dedication fee plan, which uses public funds for the park.

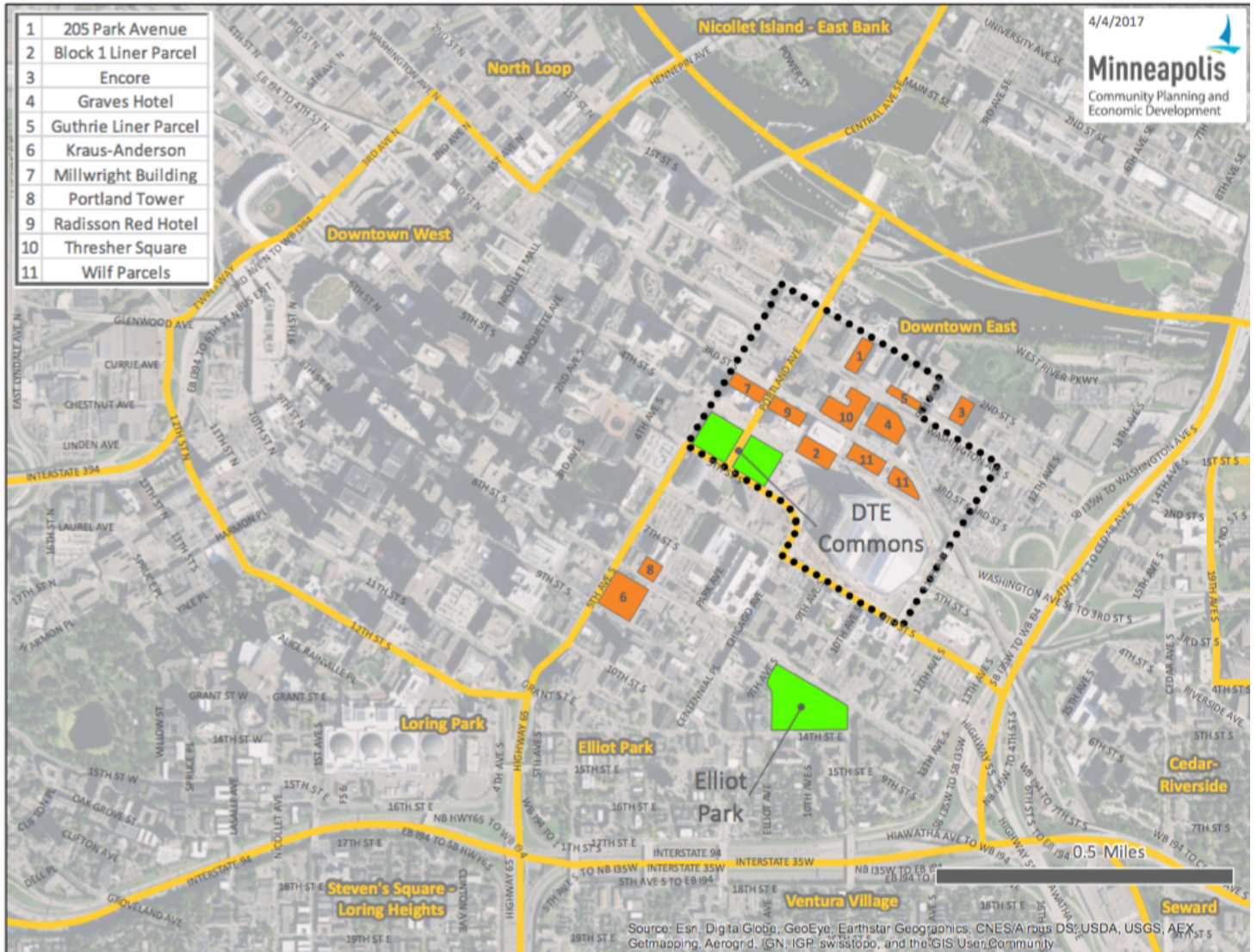
"Contrary to public perception, that park is wide open for public use, almost every single day of the year," he said. "Head over there any day. You can punt a football or throw a frisbee as far as the eye can see."



Downtown Commons park has not been finished and has a funding gap of \$8 million

There's also a question of ongoing funding. The city hasn't decided yet is how the park's operations, management and programming will be funded going forward. For now, the annual budget is just under \$1.4 million, Shogren said.

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