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

**East Downtown Development Committee Task Force  
Small Group Meeting #2**

**Tuesday, November 25, 2014, 9:00-10:30 a.m.**

**Minneapolis CPED, 105 5th Avenue South, 2nd Floor, Conference Room 3**

1. **Review of Agenda**Dan Collison reiterated that this small group is connected to the Downtown Development Committee of the Minneapolis Downtown Council’s 2025 Plan. Both Beth Elliott and Lacy Shelby are here to guide the group through some work plan goals and aspirations for 2015 that will put us on a course to relevancy and get our hands in the soil to bring helpful engagement with all of the 100 blocks in the east downtown area of Minneapolis.  
     
   Dan then followed up with an overview of the instant meeting’s agenda: a brief review of priority projects; facilitation of work plan and goals; review of the newly drafted purpose statement; and next steps for larger group engagement.
2. **Brief Review of Priority Projects**Dan updated the group on what progress has occurred on several of the priority projects since the October 16th small group meeting:

* *HCMC Ambulatory Clinic and surrounding neighborhood blocks*. The conversation regarding this $190 million project has now expanded to include conducting a small area study plan. Kraus-Anderson expressed interested in being part of a study group, and Thrivent also expressed interested in developing a business and City-led working group as a subset of what this small group is doing that would be pulled together by the middle of 2015 to envision for this 15 block area.
* *A new model for community engagement*. This relates to some of the issues related to the complexities of development and how design elements and approvals are achieved.
* *Social equity in the built environment*. This is an area being delved into by Bruce Jacobson and Alex Tittle.
* *Elliot Park Urban Design Guidelines*. David Fields wants to begin to elevate these guidelines adopted by the City in August 2002.
* *District Branding.* This has gotten a nice little uptick; the EDC has been given pro bono services by PadillaCRT simultaneous to Ryan Companies hiring PadillaCRT to do branding for their Downtown East development. Now Dan, Tony Barranco, VP of Development at Ryan, and Tom Jollie, SVP at PadillaCRT, are working together to try and find common goals to brand the district.
* *District Energy*. It is wonderful to have the NRG Energy Center here and at some point we want to study this topic.
* *Stadium Commons, Commons Park and LRT Station*. There’s a lot of terrific synergy occurring there. Dan and Steve Cramer met with Brian Lamb of Metro Transit to get their priorities, and with the MSFA to get its sense of priorities. Next they will meet with 3rd Ward Council Member Jacob Frey to get his priorities. All are working in concert and Dan hopes to get everyone synced up and creatively engaged as they head into 2015.

1. **Introductions**I’m representing Thrivent in this area and I’m also chair of ULI Minnesota. We’re very interested in this community engagement issue and in trying to convene the right people and stimulate the right sort of conversations. We’ve had a couple of initiatives that might fit really nicely with this. First, we’re exploring a project with the Science Museum on the past/present/future of cities and we’re trying to figure out a lab and some modeling that could help stimulate the right sort of discussion on how all these things come together. Second, the governing principle for all our work for the next few years is healthy communities. This district has the greater potential for almost anything we’re working on to demonstrate many of those principles with the keen interest in helping to bring together the real estate community to explore and come up with ideas.   
   ~John Breitinger, Cushman & Wakefield/NorthMarq.  
     
   ~John Slack, Senior Landscape Architect at Perkins+Will and City Planning Commissioner  
     
   I’m focused on helping Thrivent discern what to do with the city block they have now as parking.   
   ~Mark Houge, Cushman & Wakefield/NorthMarq  
     
   ~Ken Searl, Mill District Neighborhood Association and Mill City Commons  
     
   We’re excited about this whole area. We’ll be providing steam and chill water to the new stadium.   
   ~Mike Dwyer, Director of Sales and Marketing, NRG Energy Center  
     
   ~Ben Shardlow, Director of Public Realm Initiatives, Minneapolis Downtown Council/Downtown Improvement District  
     
   I will be switching off somewhat with Scott Wordelman, VP of Ambulatory Administration.   
   ~Tom Hayes, Director of Public Relations and Marketing at HCMC, and EDC board member  
     
   ~ Carletta Sweet, DMNA representative on the EDC  
     
   ~Patrick Sadler, policy aide to 7th Ward Council Member Lisa Goodman  
     
   ~Chris Fleck, Development Officer at North Central University  
     
   ~Marcela Sotela Odor, policy aide to 6th Ward Council Member Abdi Warsami  
     
   ~Heidi Ritchie, aide to 3d Ward Council Member Jacob Frey  
     
   ~Alex Tittle, Equity Director, Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority  
     
   ~Lacy Shelby, Principal Urban Designer, City of Minneapolis  
     
   ~Beth Elliott, Principal Planner, City of Minneapolis
2. **Public Realm Inventory Presentation**Lacy Shelby explained that this was a priority project discussed at the October 16th small group meeting wherein she agreed to report on the over 2,800 data points collected in greater detail at this instant meeting.  
     
   They used iPhones or iPads to take images of features that are in the public realm, i.e., not just the public right-of-way but also built sculptural elements against buildings. They also collected GPS data points to create a Google map of these features. While displaying maps, Lacy explained the overall distribution of streetscape features: street furniture/benches, vegetation, bike racks, and public art within the downtown district on a neighborhood basis. They will begin to distill this information on a street-by-street basis and will be supplementing this information with a great deal of graphics as well as photo images. The goal is to zoom into certain priority pedestrian corridors to get a sense of the experience as they move through the environment and to highlight blocks that are making a significant amount of investment in the streetscape versus those that are not.  
     
   What they discovered when they took pictures between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. is that all the bike racks are full so they need more because so many people are commuting through the area. Also, since the public’s and the City’s views of public art are different, they will comb through this data with the public art administrator to ascertain what’s City owned and managed versus public art on private property. They are starting to sift through the data and this is one piece of the larger Downtown Public Realm Framework Plan process launched last week with the Technical Advisory Committee. The first Steering Committee meeting is coming up on December 2nd with the MPRB.  
     
   Lacy hopes the outcome of this process will help them begin to highlight what priorities are for investment and will look to the Steering Committee, TAC and the neighborhoods as part of community engagement and outreach to better understand those priorities. Based on their current resources this is point-in-time data, however, they are investigating ways to make it available to all communities online.  
     
   Responding to Dan’s inquiry as to whether there are guidelines for street and sidewalk design, Beth referenced *Access Minneapolis*, the 10-year transportation action plan spearheaded by Public Works a number of years ago, the outcome of which was the Design Guidelines for Streets and Sidewalks document dated February 8, 2008 (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/transplan/comp/public-works_trans-plan_designguidelines>) that the City uses in reconstruction of streets and redevelopment of properties.
3. **Facilitation of 2015 Small Group Work Plan and Goals**Beth Elliott explained that she has been discussing with Dan what the value of this group can be as a subcommittee of a subcommittee of the MDC. She wants the time it spends meeting to be as valuable as possible and guided by a 2015 work plan. What they heard loud and clear from the Downtown Development Committee is that this group should be actionable, less visionary, and more project-based to get things done.   
     
   To help her understand why each group member is participating in this process, and to help prioritize projects, Beth distributed blank sheets of paper for them to write responses to the question: What do you hope to gain or influence in East Downtown over the next year being a part of this group? Thereafter, responses were read out loud and discussed then placed into piles based on the following broad themes: community engagement; development; vision; market; public realm; residents/livability; sustainability; district brand; and inclusion.  
     
   Beth’s responses included equity in designer decision-making, having property and business owners involved and organized, be a sounding board for development projects, and influencing the design of The Commons. There were also a lot of responses from members about community engagement (not grass root organizing) and the opportunity to get more people involved; a lot about public realm; some about development and market; and inclusion, branding and livability that may or may not tie in together.  
     
   Beth then guided the discussion around 3-, 6- and 12-month goals and explained that besides the 12-month work plan, each meeting should be programmed around a specific topic or project that is going on and to structure the meeting so that there’s a speaker, an education component, and at the end of which the group gives input or feedback on that process.  
     
   For the next 3 months, when Chris mentioned district branding, Dan reminded the group that Ryan Companies and PadillaCRT would be doing some assessment of the EDC constituency including, at EDC’s December 18th business forum at the Guthrie where they will be hosting local legislators, spending 10 minutes of structured time on district branding. Dan believes that a district branding exercise is something that has to interact with market and touches on development. For more information about the forum, visit <http://edcmpls.org/edc-december-18-business-forum/>.   
     
   Someone commented that they would like to see an overview of the district, i.e., what’s there, what’s in process, and what’s left to be developed so we can get a big picture of the inventory and how much space we have left to activate. It would also be interesting to see if there’s a difference in zoning amongst the areas.  
     
   Someone else noted that the Greater MSP study identified 28 sites for potential development in Downtown East (<http://www.journalmpls.com/news-feed/a-roadmap-for-downtown-easts-future>).   
     
   Beth noted that zoning is super flexible in almost every area; there’re some height differences, but they all allow the same things and have the same market flexibility. Zoning is usually looked at as a barrier, but in downtown Minneapolis it’s not. Then she stated that understanding the development and market context might be a first topic and that could get to branding, but frankly what she and Alex care about and should be mindful of at each meeting is creating an inclusive community and diversity of development.  
     
   Dan stated that the Stadium Commons, Commons Park and LRT Station are on fire right now. The MSFA is working with Metro Transit to get contracts figured out. They’ll be coordinating their engineers and architects and working with the firm selected for The Commons. And in December he has acquired the expertise of David Frank to give a presentation at PadillaCRT on LRT and transit-oriented development for the large group of this task force; he’ll send details about it later. It will be primarily educational and an opportunity for us to get started on what we’re looking at for these three pieces. Whatever gets built in the next 5 years is going to be here for 30 years.  
     
   Beth advised that Dan would like to have Michele Kelm-Helgen from the MSFA come in January to discuss the LRT station and the pedestrian bridge. Then she queried how does this group provide input if we all have different ideas? There are certain questions or broad goals that we want to ask at every meeting that goes to the vision. There’s the City vision, the MDC vision, and the Greater MSP vision. Do we need to do another easy, tangible roundup of the broad aspect of some of those, i.e., have three barometers for how to evaluate stuff? She is not going to push the City’s plans on this group, but there is a benefit as a group to know what and how we’re providing feedback based on broad goals.  
     
   Ben noted that there is a lot of interest in the process, inclusion, and community engagement and that for the foreseeable future all those will relate to the existing process in site plan review. In the Greening and Public Realm Committee, people come in and give presentations on active projects then they take a position, make a recommendation and take advantage of it going up the ladder to the Executive Committee of the MDC where it becomes an official resolution that can actively influence the outcome. Ben is mindful that there will be developments that go through the normal process and if this group is poised at different points in the process to jump in and influence things, we as a group should understand what those opportunity points are. Beth said we could use Kraus-Anderson as a case study next month to talk about why staff recommended certain things related to the City’s plans, policies and zoning; others could provide divergent or complementary perspectives.   
     
   Regarding what to do in the next 6 months, Dan advised he’ll be working on a small area plan for the HCMC/ Kraus-Anderson/Thrivent group that we could help tee up. We need to have a structural conversation about what would make a small area plan successful for all of these stakeholders.   
     
   Beth suggested calling it a development/feasibility plan rather than a small area plan due to it’s specific definition by the City: a 20- to 30-year vision of a geographical area that covers land use, transportation, urban design, housing, economic development, etc. Further, it is policy document that has a huge community engagement component that takes about a year and is run by the City and is adopted by the City Council. Also, Lacy’s public realm framework covers the entire area and she wants to make sure that what we’re doing can influence that work or that work can influence what Dan is trying to do with branding.   
     
   Mike advised that NRG needs to know where to route the district energy lines. It’s a given they’re going down 8th Street but they need to know whether to go north on Portland or one of the other avenues and is probably more a discussion for the first quarter as they will begin digging in March/April. What happened in the North Loop is a good example for what shouldn’t happen; no one did the economic analysis and it isn’t financially viable over there.  
     
   Other topics for this time frame included the Greening Minneapolis Conservancy, the DID expansion plan and stakeholder engagement, and greater transparency to residents.   
     
   Topics to cover for the next 12 months include the lid connecting the east side of downtown Minneapolis to Cedar-Riverside over a portion of I35W (<http://www.startribune.com/local/minneapolis/283528111.html>), Lacy’s public realm framework, and finding out what are the appropriate public safety strategies for East Downtown.  
     
   After additional discussion, Beth reminded the group that David Fields has been hired by CPED to create a website that is everything East Downtown. It mentions all the stakeholders that have been involved in processes, all the plans, and updates on the development projects happening in the area. They could potentially put the outcomes from this group on that website so that whoever is looking for more information can go to this site.  
     
   Dan said he is hearing a rising tide of some cohesive center point (i.e., a website that is content rich and interactive) that would not only have the cataloging but even some visioning where everyone can access it in a meaningful way. Beth recommended going through the website and showing what it has thus far at the next meeting.
4. **Adjournment**  
   Dan will send out a doodle poll to schedule the next meeting. It was agreed it would take place at the same location and time, date TBD.