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

**East Downtown Development Committee Task Force  
Small Group Meeting #3**

**Tuesday, December 23, 2014, 9:00-10:30 a.m.**

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

1. **Introductions and Review of Agenda**Dan Collison, MDC Director of East Downtown Partnership, asked participants to introduce themselves:  
     
   David Fields has a contract with CPED and is working with Dan on this project   
     
   Ken Searl from the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association  
     
   Kim Vohs, Vohs Consulting, Inc., on behalf of Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc. He assists EPNI in the review of development issues and was its Executive Director from 1985 to 1991  
     
   Carletta Sweet, the DMNA representative on the EDC  
     
   Chris Fleck, North Central University’s Development Director  
     
   Patrick Sadler, Policy Aide to Ward 7 Council Member Lisa Goodman  
     
   Heidi Ritchie, Policy Aide to Ward 3 Council Member Jacob Frey  
     
   Daniel Gumnit, Executive Director of People Serving People  
     
   Beth Elliott, CPED Principal Planner for Long Range Planning  
      
   Dan advised that the purpose of the instant meeting is to finalize the work plan for 2015. He, Beth and David have been getting together to guide the process and review what this group presents because it links into the history and narrative of what priorities have already been established. With his experience in Elliot Park, the planning process, and now his contract with CPED, they are leveraging some of David’s contracting time to bring together a system that would offer timely interaction with the projects they’re looking at.
2. **Proposed Monthly Meeting Structure**As they head into 2015, a proposed meeting structure emerged (reference 2015 Topics on page 2 of agenda). The meetings will turn from intake and assessment to actually doing something so that each 1-1/2 hour session will include:

* *An informing section*, e.g., proposing that in January 2015 Mike Dwyer and perhaps some collaborators present on how energy works in East Downtown, what energy companies look for and assess;
* *A facilitated discussion section*; and
* *An evaluation section* to press into what could go wrong or what are we not thinking about.

Dan hopes to gather that information and have David provide a narrative then quickly turn it around because time is of the essence. If we’re going to get ahead of projects and bring meaningful input to City Hall and the CPED process, they have discerned that perhaps the niche this group can fulfill is becoming a “go-to” place for developers and planners where they can be assisted in what the framework is for what they are proposing; not another approval process or stopping point. They would love for Council Members to say to prospective developers this is a resource group that can help you succeed so contact Dan Collison because they’re part of the business community and connected with the real narratives. We encourage you to go there as a way to engage the community, understand the aspirations of the business community, and perhaps even find some meaningful advocacy for what you’re doing.  
  
Beth noted that as a subset of the MDC’s 2025 Plan process, if there are issues we feel strongly about during the evaluation process, that they arise to a level in which the MDC provides a letter from us. It doesn’t have to be that formal, but there are avenues in case we do.  
  
Dan said that Michael Langley told him at the full EDDCTF meeting on December 16th that what they’re looking for to market the region is the on-the-ground working groups have a clear sense of inventory space, clear sense of what is best for that inventory space, and if we recruit someone they can send them to the system where they will be welcomed or shepherded to a different space/idea. There’s always this process of matchmaking and if there is a way for us to be the group to help with the matchmaking that should be our goal.  
  
Beth explained the way to be most efficient in the 1-1/2 hour meeting is to be really succinct in learning, discussing, and providing feedback. We want to leave each meeting with that feedback loop in place.  
  
Dan advised that they are not taking the place of neighborhood review but can help facilitate and host multi- organizational events. This group could facilitate the neighborhood process and perhaps provide more strategic input and elevation of what a project is, e.g., the joint neighborhood events held regarding the Ryan/Wells Fargo mixed-use development to help everyone in the community understand how it connects to the whole district.  
  
Beth explained that the 2015 topics are not developments particularly but studies or projects going on that the neighborhoods may not hear about on a daily basis. This may be the first stop for those discussions then disseminated out to the neighborhoods.  
  
David commented that we’re talking about defining a new district and the neighborhoods are an integral part of that then referenced the DEEP Initiative that at the time had no momentum. However, the next step was to form this type of group, a district-wide review group at which neighborhood groups are sitting to anticipate what may come down the line and to make whatever neighborhood projects and developments do occur to fit into a district vision; it’s a great opportunity to do this in East Downtown and if we don’t watch out it will be a hodgepodge type of thing.  
  
Discussion ensued about the neighborhood review process and potential misunderstandings (e.g., recent Kraus-Anderson project), how developers typically behave when they go before the City or when they release information through the media, and how to be an integral part of the City’s process.  
  
Dan advised that this is important because what he’s hearing from a lot of voices, is there a way to streamline the process that doesn’t remove neighborhood voices but holds it in the framework that is structurally aligned to tempo, pace and process. It is his desire, as they head into 2015, to pursue a grant to study it structurally and come to agreement so that then City Hall would say go to that group for community approval.

1. **Review of Previous Meeting Exercise/Distillation into Key Question and Sub-questions**Dan distributed the results of the November 25th small group exercise Beth conducted to help understand why each group member is participating in this process, prioritize projects, and to make these meetings most valuable to the participants (reference the 1-page Core Commitments and Questions document).  
     
   Beth advised that this is getting us to how we evaluate projects and would love to have a set of principals on a poster to view at every meeting. Then she distributed a two-sided page of the Downtown 2025 Plan’s 10 goals from which she compiled those she believes are most relevant to this side of downtown. She also displayed posters of the adopted City plans — Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan; Elliot Park Neighborhood Master Plan; and the Historic Mills District Master Plan — to see if there is anything else to add or subtract. Next she went through the list to determine those that this group could help in implementing the 2025 Plan:

* *Goal 1: Double Downtown’s residential population*. Because of the amount of land available, Beth believes this is really relevant to East Downtown; it is about maximizing density and there are great sites in the area to do so. Participants were then asked how much of these activities are relevant to the East Downtown.  
    
  Some of the comments included:  
    
  Kim: “Elliot Park definitely wants to increase the population and to have more residential development. There are public resources for affordable and low-income housing and you have the market that’s taken care of high-end housing but the middle is a big gap. We need to look at how we can best do so in this area and within projects (e.g., Aeon and Shamrock Development) and we’re in a position to do so.”  
     
  Carletta: “We should emphasize the kind of housing that would appeal to people of all ages and incomes.”  
     
  David: “We should have a discussion and education on affordable housing because we don’t want East Downtown to become exclusive and another area for just millennials and empty nesters. I wrote a housing guideline for Elliot Park that argues very strongly for more affordable housing and figuring out how to do that; that’s going to be an all city process. ”  
     
  Daniel: “I remember when we originally talked with the Ryan folks, there was going to be some sort of affordable housing just across from us (PSP), and now that has gone away. And then there’s workforce housing and the middle class affordable housing. One has public policy associated with it and one is purely market driven so how do you create a market that makes it affordable?”   
    
  When we say workforce housing in East Downtown, Beth thinks about where HCMC, Augustana, and PSP employees and students at NCU can live. Augustana purchased homes around its campus to provide affordable housing to their employees and they take the rent out of their paychecks. Land in Downtown East and Elliot Park is very expensive but there are ways to push the issue by asking them how is your project diversifying the housing stock in downtown and make them answer, but we need to be flexible on other things like density and height. If we’re having this in-depth discussion at this table, that’s how we can educate the neighborhoods.  
    
  David advised that he recently saw the final models for the Centennial Commons by Mic Johnson’s architectural students. He assumes we’ll all see it because it creates a totally transformed vision of Elliot Park and does not tear down one existing building. But it does have density and height unlike anything you’ve seen in the downtown neighborhoods as yet and creates more affordable as a result.  
    
  Beth explained the exact way this could play out, e.g., HCMC was going to buy an historic residential building on the south side of that block. City staff told them they did not want them to tear down that building; they were focused on the historical elements and were unaware of the fact that it was affordable housing. However, once they did become aware, between staff and particularly the Council Member pushing the County, it came to the point where they ended up not buying that property.   
    
  Kim gave an update on this project. Just yesterday he spoke with Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative the City involved and the owner is in the process of selling it to someone who owns a lot of older buildings in Minneapolis and St. Paul and presumably would know how to manage it. Since the property is located in the South 9th Street Historic District, any exterior rehab has to occur in accordance historic guidelines. They’ll get the historic piece; the question is whether they’ll get affordable housing going forward. Using the historic tax credit, it makes so much sense to also use the low income tax credits also to be able create affordability while preserving the historic nature and the two build on each other and we’ve done a lot of projects like that in Elliot Park.  
    
  Heidi stated that we don’t necessarily have to only think about existing policy and leveraging that; CM Frey has been really looking hard at inclusionary zoning (<http://dhcd.dc.gov/service/inclusionary-zoning-affordable-housing-program>) and how to bring it to Minneapolis. It’s something that is hard to wrap their head around especially with the market and the legal advice given by the City Attorney. Trying to figure out if we can have input on that Frey would appreciate it. Beth advised that it is part of the regional housing plan for our area.  
    
  Chris agreed with the affordable housing discussion then added, as he looked at the high-density models by Mic Johnson’s architectural students, he kept thinking about how Dinkytown supports the infrastructure of the U of M and wondered where are the grocery stores in East Downtown. Therefore, he would advocate for retail and grocery stores.
* Heidi commented that neither *Goal 2: Transform Nicollet into a “must-see” destination*, or *Goal 3: Build Gateway Park* should be goals for this group.
* *Goal 4: Create a consistently compelling Downtown experience*. Heidi suggested adding a crime and safety component, i.e., create a consistently compelling and safe Downtown experience. Beth said this would include various elements like expanding the DID and skyway system, and adding a police substation.
* *Goal 5: Establish a Downtown sports district that includes a new Vikings stadium*. This is already underway and a lot of people are working on it, but the question for this group is how do we fit a stadium into a mixed-use district so that residents and employees can live here and move throughout the district unencumbered.   
    
  Beth has done a lot of research on other urban environments that have NFL stadiums and they aren’t good examples for us on how this is being done, so we have to invent this in Minneapolis about how we’re going to create a community that also has a major stadium in it.  
    
  Responding to whether we want to encourage entertainment venues, specifically nightclubs or adult entertainment, Beth advised that the zoning for this area does not allow it. However, we don’t have a real say as to what fills a commercial space unless it’s against zoning or other ordinances.
* *Goal 6: Lead the nation in transportation options*. Beth advised that this is a major transportation station and is something she always pushes. What she usually likes to make sure of with any project is that it is benefiting all modes of transportation. If it’s residential that they’re thinking about people storing bikes. If it’s restaurants that they’re thinking about bike parking and the pedestrian environment. Beth will consider an inclusive statement that would incorporate the various modes transportation as a checklist for when we’re evaluating development projects and the park for the group to consider at the next meeting.
* *Goal 7: Create and sustain a green infrastructure and showcase the riverfront*. Beth believes this is going to be big for this area.
* *Goal 8: Force connections to the University of Minnesota*. Beth advised that likewise, this is going to be big.
* *Goal 9: End street homelessness*. Beth said this is a major tenant of the 2025 Plan but there aren’t a lot of details except extending housing and outreach efforts. Daniel sits on this committee but the problem is panhandling versus homelessness. He and Beth will discuss an appropriate principle for this goal.
* *Goal 10: Launch a festival of ideas and civic engagement*. Heidi believes it may be a lower priority but definitely something to think about.

1. **Next Steps**In addition to Mike Dwyer’s presentation on district energy, Beth and Dan will prepare guiding statements for the goals on which to focus, and the topics uncovered will be continued to the next small group meeting.   
     
   Dan advised that similarly to David Frank’s transit-oriented development presentation, he would convene a housing presentation for the larger group that would include the array of affordable market analysis.  
     
   Chris added that the vehicle for making 80% of this happen is through developers, which in his mind are like our customers that build the infrastructure for downtown with additional dollars from the county and city, and he wonders if we should focus time on being a vision caster courting developers to make them comfortable to bring them in, not just locally but nationally or even internationally.  
     
   Dan will send out a doodle poll to schedule January’s meeting.
2. **Adjournment**  
   The meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.