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

**East Town Development Group Meeting**

**Tuesday, October 24, 2017, 9:00-10:00 a.m.**

**Thrivent Financial, 625 4th Avenue South, Lower Level Conference Room A**

**DOWNLOAD PRESNTATION HERE:**

[**https://www.dropbox.com/s/wzqjuazrzsziei8/2017\_10\_24-Thrivent%20Corporate%20Campus%20Redevelopment.pdf?dl=0**](https://www.dropbox.com/s/wzqjuazrzsziei8/2017_10_24-Thrivent%20Corporate%20Campus%20Redevelopment.pdf?dl=0)

1. **Welcome, Introductions and Announcements**Dan Collison welcomed the audience to the October East Town Development Group meeting and thanked Thrivent Financial for hosting. He explained the ETDG is a task force of the Minneapolis Downtown Council’s 2020 Plan Development Committee (<https://www.mplsdowntown.com/2025plan/2025-plan-committees>) that is being implemented in partnership with the East Town Business Partnership (<https://easttownmpls.org/>). He toggles between both organizations as shared staff, i.e., as the Director of Downtown Partnerships for the Minneapolis Downtown Council/Downtown Improvement District, and Executive Director for East Town Business Partnership.  
     
   Then the audience introduced themselves:  
     
   Carina Aleckson, Catholic Charities Opportunity Center  
   Art Bartels, Elness Swenson Graham (ESG) Architects  
   Jacquie Berglund, Finnegans  
   John Campobasso, Kraus-Anderson Construction  
   Anna Coskran, NTH (formerly Nelson, Tietz & Hoye)  
   Alex Duval, Duval Development  
   Mike Dwyer, NRG Energy   
   Chris Fleck, North Central University  
   Robert Foster, Henrickson Furniture  
   Tim Graves, Allsteel Architectural Products  
   Derek Hansen, Mortenson Construction  
   Bill Jarvis, Kraus-Anderson Construction  
   Kelly Mansell, Mortenson Construction  
   Nancy Martel, Kraus-Anderson Construction  
   Patrick Melody, SK Capital Group  
   Kjersti Monson, Duval Development  
   Robin Mooney, Allsteel Architectural Products  
   Charley Owens, Cushman & Wakefield  
   Ben Shardlow, Minneapolis Downtown Council/Downtown Improvement District  
   Kelly Stenzel, Thrivent Financial  
   Carletta Sweet, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association  
   Jim Vos, Cresa Minneapolis  
   Brent Webb, Mortenson Construction  
   Dale White, TFS Corporation  
   Scott Wordelman, Hennepin County Medical Center   
     
   Collison thanked the audience for attending as he considers them the thought leaders who are building community and 21st century urbanism. Then he announced the following activities [listed in order of occurrence] and encouraged those uninitiated to join the mailing list:

* *Tuesday, October 24th, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.* Super Bowl LII Host Committee community information session at the Minneapolis Central Library, 300 Nicollet Mall, Pohlad Hall (<https://northloop.org/event/super-bowl-lii-community-information-session/>).
* *Tuesday, October 24th, 6:00-8:00 p.m.* The Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association’s annual meeting featuring a public forum on 800 Washington Avenue at Open Book, 1011 Washington Avenue South (<https://www.thedmna.org/dmna-annual-meeting-on-october-24/>).
* *Thursday, November 9th, 4:30-6:30 p.m.* 2025 Plan Quarterly Forum on Development hosted by Shindig Event Space (<https://www.mplsdowntown.com/event/2025-plan-quarterly-forum-3/>).
* *Thursday, November 16th, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.* East Town Business Partnership business forum on Super Bowl 52, Let’s Get the Party Started! with featured presenters Kyle Chank, Vice President of Operations and Logistics; Alex Tittle, Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Business Connect; and Amanda Koonjbeharry, Administrative Manager Anti-Sex Trafficking Response Plan for Super Bowl 52, at the Guthrie Theater, 818 South 2nd Street.
* *Tuesday, November 21st, 9:00-10:00 a.m.* East Town Development Group meeting on Driving Retail in East Town with featured presenters Jim Vos, Cresa Minneapolis, and Andrea Christenson, Cushman & Wakefield, at Kraus-Anderson’s new corporate headquarters, 501 South 8th Street.
* *No ETDG meeting in December due to the holiday,* but in January 2018 will be lining up Ani Backa from Stoel Rives LLP (<https://ca.linkedin.com/in/ani-backa-7455aa68>) to present a deep dive into electric cars as part of the downtown sector. And in February, will try to line up a presentation on the new City of Minneapolis office building (<http://news.minneapolismn.gov/2017/08/31/design-team-recommended-design-new-city-office-building/>).

Collison advised there is a digital bookshelf for the work of the EDTG at <http://www.easttowndevelopment.com/>, and that at the last EDTG event on September 28th, a new website was launched for the Park and Portland Vision for Development project by BKV Group ([www.parkportlandprojectmpls.com](http://www.parkportlandprojectmpls.com)).

1. **Thrivent Financial Corporate Campus: East Town Redevelopment Plan**Collison introduced the keynote presenters John Breitinger, Executive Director of Retail Advisory at Cushman & Wakefield (<http://www.cushmanwakefield.com/en/people/john-breitinger/>), and Kirsten Spreck, Vice President of Real Estate Development at Thrivent Financial (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kirstenspreck>), by providing a summary of their biography.  
     
   Breitinger advised they have been on this project for the past 3-1/2 years and it’s exciting to be able to talk about it in public. Using a PowerPoint presentation, the first three slides illustrated the transition in land use and, shaded in deep orange, the amount of surface parking lots in East Town in 2002, 2010 and 2017. TF’s headquarters, where the meeting was taking place, opened the same time as the former [Hubert H. Humphrey] Metrodome in 1981 with the promise it would spur development and revitalize East Town. By 2010, not much changed in East Town except for Gold Medal Park and several developments creeping toward Washington Avenue from the riverfront; it was still a neighborhood dominated by surface parking lots. However, by 2017 it’s a different world.   
     
   Breitinger, who has been partners with TF for 20 years on a bunch of different projects, became involved with Kelly Stenzel when it became apparent there was over $3 billion worth of development occurring around their downtown Minneapolis campus and they had some of the last remaining surface parking lots; the existing campus sits on 2-1/4 city blocks, 1-3/4 of which is surface parking. Stenzel was fielding calls from developers interested in these surface parking lots and TF’s senior leadership team didn’t have much of a strategy. As a consequence, Stenzel and Dean Bussey, Senior Counsel of Real Estate at TF, asked Breitinger to help them think about what to do with these parcels.   
     
   Spreck explained a way for TF to get grounded in the development of their real estate was to establish guiding principles to help them move forward, i.e.:

* *Commitment to a downtown Minneapolis headquarters*. In the 18 years Spreck has been with TF, whether to remain in downtown Minneapolis continues to come up and the master planning process reconfirmed their continued commitment to be here. This year marks TF’s centennial in downtown Minneapolis. Its prior downtown headquarters was on the block where Ameriprise Financial Center now stands (<https://www.emporis.com/buildings/216565/lutheran-brotherhood-building-minneapolis-mn-usa>), and with each successive move it pushes the edge of the downtown core further into East Town.
* *Contemporary workplace strategy for their employees*. Initially they were just focused on their corporate headquarters building and bringing it up to current standards, which would have been cost prohibitive and disruptive, until they became aware of other opportunities available.
* *Commitment to Class A facilities* (<http://www.boma.org/research/Pages/building-class-definitions.aspx>).
* *Optimize under-utilized real estate*. Breitinger coming in and helping them think through the highest and best use for these surface parking lots got the conversation going with the City, County and others in the community and led to where they are today.
* *Stewardship*. As a member-owned organization, they care about being good stewards of their members and community’s resources and assets, and being able to create this new corporate headquarters in downtown Minneapolis and contribute to the 2020 Plan’s goals with greening, connections and public active spaces is a reflection of who they are as an organization.

Breitinger described the potential site uses that were identified through the master planning process:

* Corporate Lot (1/2 block east adjacent to Thrivent headquarters): parking for Hennepin County (300-450), Thrivent (250), and residential (40-60)
* 625 Building (1/2 block Thrivent headquarters along 4th Avenue South): Hennepin County offices, potential public services
* East Lot (last undeveloped full block immediately to the east across 5th Avenue South)
* Northwest and Northeast: Thrivent office opportunity, potential commercial at street and skyway levels, Thrivent/partner amenities (food, fitness, etc.)
* Southwest and Southeast: office, residential, hospitality, Thrivent outdoor amenity
* Smith Lot (1/4 block to west of Sexton): residential/affordable housing, commercial

Early in the planning process it became apparent a parking solution was needed first because there are 500 to 600 employees who park on TF’s surface lots today and they hoped to take a district parking lot approach in order to support development on adjacent sites and be in use more than 8 hours a day. And, if you want to achieve any sort of density, parking ends up being the commanding detail in any mixed-use project. Also, through data collection, they’ve discovered more than half of their employees use some other form of transit to get to work other than driving alone in their cars, and there’s an appetite for using mass transit; TF is leveraging this trend to make sure they are creating alternative avenues for their employees to get to work. They ended up working with Doug Hoskin of Interstate Parking who Breitinger first became aware of through his work on behalf of Urban Land Institute; municipalities love IP because they are good at driving utilization and they have proven to be a phenomenal partner on the corporate parking lot project ([https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/  
news/2017/08/24/thrivent-submits-plans-for-parking-apartments.html](https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/news/2017/08/24/thrivent-submits-plans-for-parking-apartments.html)).  
   
There’s been a lot of tension in the City’s policy around parking and by right they were able to build an accessory parking ramp for the 625 Building, but it doesn’t allow for any after-hours use and as soon as it becomes available to the public it becomes a primary use which is now virtually prohibited above ground. Since the City will be razing the existing parking ramp at 501 4th Avenue South immediately adjacent to the north of the 625 Building in order to build a new office building, and there will be 2,000 employees and residents added to the corporate parking lot site, it is important for the new ramp to do double or triple duty because there will be a net loss of parking in the district.   
  
The new ramp will be lined by 107 apartments and Art Bartels of ESG Architects has been helping with the master planning for the past 2 years. The design has evolved over the last couple months and since 6th and 7th Streets are the main corridors to and from I-94, there will be bus shelters built into the structure. With the incorporation of the feedback received from the City and neighborhood groups to add more green space and to pay attention to how the development fits into the neighborhood, the project has evolved in positive ways.  
  
A critical aspect to the design that was important to them, as well as for HCMC, was to have a skyway connection from the emerging East Town district to the CBD, and to keep life on the street by having transparent places where people can move from the skyway to the street at functional junctures. They focused on coming across the hard edge of downtown and connecting to the new park, and improving the streetscape to make it a place that is humane and hospitable. Therefore, all of the street frontage will be pulled back with generous sidewalks and landscaping with active uses, and they will be participating in the greening of Portland with their new corporate headquarters. They’ve been in talks with the [Minneapolis] Armory about how each of their respective green spaces can connect and provide a pathway to the Commons.  
  
The new headquarters site is interesting because it has three of the highest vehicular traffic intersections, i.e., along with the main corridors to and from I-94 on 6th and 7th Streets, it also has the northbound traffic from I-35W onto 5th Avenue South, and if they’re successful with their design goals, they will be mixing a lot of cars with a lot of pedestrians but in a thoughtful way. The site is also fortunate to have two LRT stations within 2 blocks, i.e., Government Center and U.S. Bank Stations.  
  
The plan is to have the new TF headquarters built on the north half of the East Lot oriented toward East Town and the Commons with a public plaza at the corner of South 6th Street and Portland Avenue. To minimize where vehicles and people on foot intersect and for a unified sense of arrival, there will be a covered center-block motor court. The existing skyway along the rear of TF will extend along the perimeter of the corporate lot development along South 6th Street with clear views to the street and incorporated into the shell of the new TF headquarters and then connect to HCMC to the east across Portland Avenue.  
  
A hotel developer is interested in the southwest corner of the East Lot, and several residential developers are interested in the southeast corner of the East Lot as well as the Smith Lot; the entire project will probably have three places where one can move easily from the skyway to the street.  
  
Displaying images of contemplative outdoor environments, i.e., TF’s original 701 4th Avenue South headquarters site which had a private interior courtyard, their Appleton, Wisconsin campus which has an expansive green space, and a rooftop green space, when they were thinking about wellness, daylight and access to nature, the new headquarters will be infused with all of those features.  
  
Thereafter, Breitinger and Spreck entertained questions from the audience during which they were advised it is important to continue to have some form of eating experience for their employees and that there’s a desire to keep it public; it’s more activated throughout the day and they’re able to have more choices. Their current cafeteria has also been the best meeting space and right now they’re deciding which active uses will end up on ground or skyway level. There is also a desire by the senior leadership team to share its master art works with the public while respecting TF’s need for privacy.  
  
Not only the City, but the community generally doesn’t like surface parking lots and that has been the best part of this entitlement process; everybody wants to see vertical development happening. But the tension in the City’s process is the zoning code (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcmsp-204904.pdf>) is written to discourage parking. By rights, if you’re building an office building or school, you’re allowed to have parking but they really want to see it below grade or if above grade it has to be lined with active uses and the way they solved it for the corporate lot was by finding a developer who would build liner housing around it. TF could build an accessory parking lot to serve its headquarters, but the difficulty they encountered was once they crossed over to build a district parking lot they needed to find uses for it in the off-hours (e.g., residential, hospitality) to offset the revenue needed to replace the surface stalls.  
  
Spreck shared that affordable housing is her passion; she started her career in public housing, just rolled off the House of Charity board and is currently serving on the Aeon board. Thus, TF is looking at all the opportunities to incorporate some mixed or affordable housing to enhance the community with greater diversity where possible.

1. **Closing Remarks**

Collison thanked Breitinger and Spreck for their presentations, TF for hosting, and the audience for attending. He expressed gratitude to TF for having engaged with the City, County and neighborhoods, and reviewing all relevant plans and corridor studies so that their plan is integrative and cross disciplinary.