

Community Engagement Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 11, 2023, 6:30-8:00 pm
Hybrid Meeting: MCAD, 2501 Stevens Ave + Zoom Digital Meeting

Attendees: Jill Hamilton, Jo Ann Musmeci, Nick Hutchinson, Josh, Lisa, Sadie Luetmer, Megan Mathew, Karla Hovde, Sydney Burroughs, Charlie, Madeleine L, Robert Speeter, Mohamud Isse, Pam, Patty, Zachary Metoyer, Martin Schulenberg, David Gilbert-Pederson, Jeff Carlson, Peter Wohler, Dominic Nzara (2 others, no sign-in)

Staff: Kaley Brown, Fartun Ismail

Presenters: Adrienne Bockheim & Rebecca Parrell, City of Minneapolis; Ward 10 Councilmember Aisha Chughtai

Introductions & Meeting Overview

- Welcome at 6:34 pm by Nick Hutchinson.
- A round of introductions is done.
- The Standard of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policies are reviewed.
- The agenda is reviewed.
- The minutes from October are reviewed.
 - Motion to approve the minutes from the October 2022 meeting is made, seconded, and approved.

Former Kmart & New Nicollet Ave Redevelopment Project - Adrienne Bockheim & Rebecca Parrell

- The former Kmart site came back into City control in 2020, and since then they have been developing a process for how to begin engaging community on the future of the site and reconnecting Nicollet Ave at Lake St.
- There will be 3 Phases of Engagement across a number of years
 - Launch and Listen - Sept 2022 - Jan 2023: Creating a Characteristics of Success Document and an Engagement Summary after hearing from community about various quality of life topics like housing, transportation, small business opportunity, public spaces, and more.
 - Phase 2 (March--December 2023): Adoption of a New Nicollet Layout Plan and Public Space Plan
 - Phase 3 (2024 and beyond): Development
- The engagement focus area is overviewed and some examples of the types of engagement activities are shared including a public open house, door knocking to both residents and businesses, and targeted focus groups with historically under-engaged community groups.
- [The project expectations document](#) outlines the things the City already knows about the project based on established City policies, as well as the items are still to be determined based on community input, anti-displacement studies, and other factors; this is the most effective way to get a good understanding of what is happening with this site and where the opportunities to engage and influence the outcomes will be throughout the engagement process.
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - **Build for who is there: what specific ideas do you have for ways that this project can benefit those who live and work here now?**
 - Question about who the stakeholders are. A: business owners, residents, property owners within about a half mile around the site
 - Want to take a moment to dream and see this project through the eyes of a 7 year old -- What does a kid see and want? Maybe a public plaza that is theirs; a place for kids to exist and be welcome inside
 - Has heard a lot about the fact that Kmart closing has created a gap in his neighbors' daily needs

- GREENWAY! This is the time NOW to figure out how this connects to future transit in the greenway corridor; if not, how can we create active green space in the greenway trench to be UTILIZED in the intervening years?
 - City is hitting the nail on the head in terms of the project expectations doc
 - Agrees with previous comment on creating a park-like atmosphere
 - Underground parking will be important to talk about if we can create park space for the street level
 - ADA accessibility access at the Greenway is important
 - Interested in working with first-time homebuyer organizations to check into feasibility for wealth creation; thinks mixed income level projects is the way to go to make the project more feasible
 - Condominium type housing would create another entry point for homeownership
 - Health and safety elements are very important; would be interested in on-location security 24/7 and a safety center in partnership with MPD
 - Include a space for community meetings
 - Concern about the fact that affordable housing doesn't contribute towards building generational wealth; likes the idea of condominiums and would like to see green spaces within a certain secured building for residents to utilize to grow food and; an investment that is theirs to pass down to someone else in their family; there are work to own models that could be creative and new for Minneapolis
 - Need access to fresh groceries that are affordable
 - Biggest challenge as a small business is the inaccessibility of owning their own spaces; has been renting his space for 17 years and hopes that this project will create spaces for business owners to own their spaces rather than just lease
- **Transportation: How do you envision a New Nicollet Ave to look, feel, and function?**
- Connecting to the Greenway in this area has certainly been a goal of the City for many years, and the City has been meeting monthly with the County for many months to prepare for how that will happen; ADA accessibility in Whittier to get to the Greenway has been a challenge for a while now that the City wants to remedy that.
 - Q: Will there be a possibility for things to be added to the Nicollet Ave bridge that goes over the Greenway? A: Project will span the curb line at Lake Street and will go all the way north to the curb line of Cecil Newman Way; the design and functionality will be focused on in Phase 2 of the engagement this year.
 - Minneapolis is going through a rough patch in terms of community safety; this project can help us get our footing back
 - Would like to see places for people to gather, and they hope to put young people first in that; create places for **people and family**, places for them to walk and feel safe
 - Bus rapid transit on Nicollet and bus priority lanes? A: Yes, they are working with Metro Transit; the Lake Street B Line Bus Rapid Transit project does have bus priority lanes getting constructed in the next couple years before Nicollet is reopened
 - How it should look, feel, and function? The project will have failed if it looks, feels, and functions like other surrounding roads; if it looks very different and people feel safe walking around, it will be a success.

- Best example is Milwaukee Ave that has no cars at all, but also the south part of Bryant Ave was just recently redone is a greatly improved area.
 - An entrance to the Greenway - wants to be sure the connection to the Greenway will be something we are PROUD of; include public art, landscaping, and intentionality.
 - Places for people to be picked up by Metro Mobility or picked up in a car - loading zones, other designated places for those who cannot walk or bike
 - Would like to see that biking stations are incorporated - Nice Ride station, and a secure area to unlock and park bikes and scooters.
- **Community Health and Safety: What elements and experiences provide you with a sense of safety? What does a healthy community mean to you?**
 - People need access to food, goods, and transportation to jobs that pay the bills
 - People need access to permanent housing and healthcare that aren't going to go away
 - A community center where people can come in to warm up in the cold
 - Access to jobs
 - Center the small business opportunity piece from the get-go as an important element of hyperlocal job creation; don't include the small business space as an afterthought -- design for it specifically from the beginning
 - Employment and job training programs on the site!
 - #1 thing that makes them feel unsafe - fast, loud, polluting cars; safe and separated bike lane, safe sidewalks are important; doesn't want Nicollet to be a highway for people just to get through to downtown and back; it should be built for the uses of people who live here not those who just travel through.
 - Absolutely agrees verbatim of what the last person said; air quality is also threatened by cars
 - Concern about what is in the soil under the Kmart if there are going to be parks and community gardens. A: The City will be doing a full cleanup that MPCA and other environmental oversight bodies will require; they've had initial soil samples and review done, and it is actually not in terrible shape.
 - More kids in 3 of our census tracts than are in the Cedar-Riverside Towers; what is happening for kids before and afterschool? How can this site accommodate Pre-K options, afterschool programs?
 - This site is in a challenging location with high intensity streets surrounding it; how to make it safe for kids to get to and from?
 - TRAFFIC CALMING draw from the urban design toolkit of speed bumps, raised sidewalks, weaving the road - all those things should be put into play here to make it not just another street or intersection; can serve as a model for other infrastructure projects
 - Housing - families are always looking for Section 8 housing with apartments that can accommodate many kids; hard for mothers who have multiple kids to be able to afford a down payment for an ownership option; include multiple options for affordable, family-sized rental AND affordable ownership.
 - Many people used the Kmart site and now they do not have anything they can walk to
 - Dangerous sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure & poor snow management from Horn Towers to this site needs to be addressed
 - GREEN SPACE is very important, but people need to be comfortable with their kids going out to enjoy the parks on their own, crossing busy and dangerous streets

- Minneapolis is cold 6 months out of the year, so we need to be sure we are considering how the public space is designed for winter enjoyment as well.
 - Is the city open to a skyway as a part of the development? A: The comprehensive plan shows a map of where the skyways can go and it's downtown; would the City be open to doing something here? Not very likely given that policy guidance.
- **Q&A**
 - How will the City be looking to recoup the major investments they've made in acquiring and developing the site? A: The City hasn't decided how the property will be sold off or reinvested or long-term leased, but there are fair market value laws that they will need to comply with if and when the time comes for that to be decided.
 - Would be interesting to see how we could position the types of housing and transportation that can get to good paying jobs - access to work.

Ward 10 Councilmember Aisha Chughtai

- City budget 2023 - Ward 10 office budget priorities
 - Ward 10 is home to an 80% renter community and a high population of transit users, youth, and families; priority was investing in traffic calming measures - additional 5-10 traffic calming neighborhood projects for Whittier - 1st time the City has ever allocated money for this use in the budget like that
 - Also worked to set aside money for legal defense for people going through eviction court - anticipating about \$500,000 each year for the legal partners they work with (Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, others)
 - Updates to fire suppression systems in the remaining 3 high rises that do not have them due to age of the building, which is a big deal
 - Worked on expanding our immigration support services
 - Something she supported but that did not pass was a municipal snow and shoveling program (\$200,000 pilot); going to keep working on this, has research coming back from the pilot that they will review and discuss this year
- The year ahead priorities
 - Kmart and New Nicollet preferred concept design will be voted on towards the end of the year; her office will be supporting Whittier Alliance in holding the engagement work for this project
 - Rent stabilization workgroup came back with a set of recommendations after a year of work - 30 different stakeholders including both renters, landlords, and property managers; now it moves through the City's policy approval process. The goal to get this back on the ballot for this November's election; lots of work coming on that this year
 - Unsheltered homelessness response - they expect historic, unprecedented amount of money coming from the State this year for this issue, so they are gearing up for putting that into action
 - Started work with the State and district court on the consent decree coming out of the State of MN about MPD's racist practices; there is also the Federal Justice Department's investigation into MPD; it will cost a lot of money to implement but will be backed by court authority this time.

Upcoming Meetings, Events, & Opportunities

- **WA Housing and Land Use Committee:** Tuesday, January 17th, 6:30 - 8:00 pm (Hybrid Meeting - MCAD, 2501 Stevens Ave + Zoom)
- **WA Board Meeting:** Thursday, January 26th, 6:00-8:00pm (Hybrid meeting - 10 E 25th St + Zoom)

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.
Meeting minutes submitted by Kaley Brown.