

**Recap of East Downtown Council's Business Forum**  
**Thursday, December 17, 2015**  
**11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**  
**MN Adult & Teen Challenge, 1619 Portland Avenue South**  
**Elliot Park Neighborhood of Minneapolis**

- **Welcome and Introductions**

Dan Collison welcomed the audience to the December business forum and thanked MN Adult & Teen Challenge, one of EDC's platinum sponsors, for hosting and providing the lunch [catered by Così at the IDS Center (<http://www.getcosi.com/>)]. Dan then acknowledged the other platinum sponsors:

- Allied Parking
- CenterPoint Energy
- ESG Architects
- Hennepin County Medical Center
- Kraus-Anderson
- Minnesota Vikings
- Mortenson Construction
- NRG Energy Center
- PadillaCRT
- Ryan Companies
- Valspar
- Wells Fargo

Dan explained he was opening the forum in President Paul Mellblom's absence, and then he introduced himself as the EDC's Executive Director and Christie Rock Hantge as the Executive Coordinator and encouraged the audience to contact them about EDC's expanding work ([info@edcmpls.org](mailto:info@edcmpls.org)).

He stated there are few times in one's life where one can experience the level of growth occurring in the EDC district. In addition to the billion dollar stadium that often gets the spotlight, there's another billion dollars being invested as follows:

- HCMC's new Ambulatory Outpatient Specialty Center (<http://www.bwbr.com/insights/idea-cloud/tag/hennepin+county+medical+center/>);
- Kraus-Anderson's new multi-building block development (<http://www.popearch.com/news/kraus-anderson-companies-redevelopment-includes-offices-apartments-and-brewtel>);
- The new 4.2-acre park (<http://www.downtowneastcommonsmpls.com/>);
- Numerous proposed new hotels (e.g., Hyatt Centric, Marriott Moxy, Radisson Red, The Chicago at Thresher Square, The Stone Arch Hotel); and
- Numerous housing projects.

For a detailed list of development projects in the EDC's district, visit <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/downtowneastdevelopments>.

Dan hopes the business community will see this as an opportunity to connect to an emerging district at a time that is rarely seen in urban centers.

Thereafter, the audience introduced themselves. Dan then acknowledged the three newest members: Downtown East Investors; Portland Avenue Partners, LLC; and U.S. Bank Stadium/SMG Management.

- **Upcoming Events**

- The January 21, 2015 business forum at Day Block Brewing is important for all of the public spaces in downtown. With the EDC district containing amenities such as Franklin Steel Square, Triangle Park, Elliot Park, the imminent Downtown East Commons, Gold Medal Park, and the Water Works project on the Central Riverfront, it is potentially the most vibrantly outdoor experience in the entire city. Having Kjersti Monson, the City's Planning Director, and Jennifer Ringold, the MPRB Deputy Superintendent, present on the findings from the Pathways to Places public engagement process is a big deal because they are collaborating to create master planning for Minneapolis's parks. Visit [https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/asset/p8dvrj/dt\\_masterplan\\_steering\\_committee\\_mtg7\\_presentation.pdf](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/asset/p8dvrj/dt_masterplan_steering_committee_mtg7_presentation.pdf) for latest information on this joint project.
- The February, 2015 business forum will be about how security plays a role in our businesses led by some members who have been proactive in thinking holistically about security that proved to be a positive upgrade to their businesses. A higher level conservation will be held with Glenn Sanders, Protection Security Advisor at the Minnesota/U.S. Department of Homeland Security who has worked closely with, among other members, an EDC board member and owner of the tech hub for the entire internet system for downtown.
- The Downtown Community Choir led by J.D. Steele will be performing at the December 19th Holidazzle Performance Stage in Loring Park, 5:00-5:30 p.m.
- Due to a major shift in design, the Bobby and Steve's Auto World expansion plan update has been moved to be presented at a later date in 2016 for when plans have been solidified.

- **District Branding Update**

Dan explained that PadillaCRT, a nationally recognized integrated communications agency located in Downtown East (<http://www.padillacrt.com/>), has been performing pro bono work on district branding. Branding geography is a complex, multi-layered conversation that brings together multiple organizations, leaders, and

neighborhoods to help ascertain the economic platforms that can be marketed to the region, nation and world. Cities across American are investing in district branding, e.g., MicroSoft's Paul Allen and Vulcan Inc.'s creation of the South Lake Union Neighborhood in Seattle (<http://www.vulcan.com/news/articles/2013/11/the-transformation-of-south-lake-union-building-a>). The EDC is going more grassroots up in getting feedback in building a district brand. During Phase 1, stakeholder meetings were held with City council members and staff, the EDC board, the East Downtown Development Committee Task Force, Meet Minneapolis, EPNI, MDC executive board and staff, Minnesota Vikings, Greater MSP, MSFA, Metro Transit staff, Ryan Companies, and the DMNA. As a result of these meetings, the following working vision statement was developed:

“In five to ten years, East Downtown will be a vibrant and distinctive urban neighborhood where people live, work and play. The park is a safe and friendly focal point, with a lot of activity during the day and in the evening. The neighborhood is family-friendly and diverse in population. While it is a destination within the city, it is also a walkable, street-level connector to the core of Downtown, Elliot Park, Mill District and the Mississippi River.”

Next steps for Phase 2 involve developing a brand name; brand language; visual identity; and an integration and application plan. PadillaCRT will have at least three to six ideas that will be unveiled during the next round of stakeholder engagement with the above-named groups to receive input. Phase 3, implementation, is expected to occur during mid year of 2016. The goal is to have the district branding process wrapped up by July 1, 2016 so that it is “mature” at the end of Super Bowl 2017, the time in which promotion for the 2018 Super Bowl begins according to 2018 Super Bowl CEO Maureen Bausch.

Thereafter, Dan entertained questions from the audience.

- **The Healing Presence of Human Services**

Dan feels today's topic is a wonderful parallel to last month's business forum topic about homelessness. Stakeholders who work on homelessness also work on the broader array of social services and are a complement to talking about all the stages of growth around human need in the EDC district and in society in general.

Dan then introduced the panelists and gave a brief biography of each (listed alphabetically):

- Daniel Gumnit, CEO, People Serving People (<http://www.peopleservingpeople.org/>)
- Laurie Ohmann, SVP of Client Services and Community Partnerships, Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis (<http://www.ccspm.org>)
- Tim Walsh, VP of Long Term Programs and Mental Health Services, MN Adult & Teen Challenge (<http://www.mntc.org/>)

- Bert Winkel, Executive Director, House of Charity, <http://www.houseofcharity.org/>

Thereafter, each panelist in turn gave an overview of their respective organization, provided statistics about the clients they serve, programs offered, annual operating budget, funding sources, and informational literature. Then they responded to the following questions (edited for brevity):

**1) What is the top misconception about the people your organization serves?**

Gummit: That people want to abuse the system, take a free ride in the shelter, that they're lazy people exploiting everybody else. In reality, there are nearly no people/families in my shelter who want to live there; they're there because the educational system has not only failed them but probably failed their parents and grandparents as well. Also, because if you want to afford a 1-bedroom apartment in the city you have to work 83 hours a week so how does a single mother with three children work those many hours to be able to afford a 1-bedroom (or for a 2-bedroom which is what a family of this size needs) and still care for her kids.

Dan noted that the land use group of the East Downtown Development Committee had the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the University of Minnesota conduct an analysis of subsidized affordable housing and other indexes. What's interesting is even if you combine transit as an enhancement that will lower total household costs, the Location Affordability Index (<http://www.locationaffordability.info/lai.aspx>) for this district exceeded the number established for total household income of a single parent family with two children, i.e., more than 45%.

Winkel: There are very few of our people who want to be stuck in this system. Barriers to overcome include having a criminal background that cause problems for obtaining housing, credit or a job. Usually there are a number of scenarios as to why they end up homeless and getting out of that is a huge task and he doesn't know anyone who can do that without support services.

Ohmann: If anyone of us were to have something significant happen in our lives, we'd have an immediate reaction to how dependent we are on somebody else to help us out; absent that support, you're really stuck. What's most challenging for her is what they're learning about the brain development of children and how much care, nurturing, stability and support they need and how little of it we can offer when they're in a shelter or bouncing between foster care and the child protection piece. We're sending the signals for a longer-term issue that we haven't been able to interrupt.

Walsh: There's a lot of misconception about both mental health issues and drug issues. What hits him again and again is what a dim view the public has of the potential for our clients to change. We see transformed lives all the time. We see hope in what we're doing; we see people go from having almost nothing with complex multi-systemic issues to where in our long-term program we're able to hire 30-40% of our clients. We've had two studies done and there are flaws to those studies, but the studies show they are very effective; he communicates to the public that there is hope and they have thousands upon thousands of examples of people who have transformed their lives.

**2) Beginning with incarceration, what are the top two to three factors that are the biggest hurdles for your clients?**

Ohmann: Beginning with statistics from our Opportunity Center just down the road, over half of the people we see there have a felony in their background and most everybody else have a misdemeanor so when we're in a really tight employment market, we're doing our best to build the support they need to become employable and one of the biggest challenge is finding felony friendly employers. Short of a job, you can't rent an apartment. If you can't rent an apartment, you can't get a rental history. If you're in a shelter and you want to look for a job, you don't have an address so the cycle continues and it's really hard to find a hook to grab and hold onto just long enough to climb up the next rung of the ladder.

Winkel: First, make sure you have the skill set to do the job. Second, if you make it through the interview and get to the point where the job has been offered, then the background check happens. All of a sudden you're no longer offered the job because of your background. It makes it very difficult to get the job and find housing so the more quality, felony-friendly employers there are the better they can operate.

Gummit: Going back to the early childhood development conversation, one of the barriers the people we serve face is a lack of executive function skills, types of skills that most people take for granted, e.g., organize time, impulse control, plan. Strangely enough, we are a very large shelter for homeless families, yet our single biggest program expense is in early childhood development because we passionately believe that if you're going to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness children have to be ready for kindergarten. Image you're a young child and you don't know where you're sleeping, you never get an opportunity to have a routine. If you never have a routine, you never have the opportunity to learn how to anticipate. If you never learn how to anticipate, you never learn how to plan. So during this critical point in brain development, children are having major setbacks that will follow them for the rest of their lives. These really large systemic issues of housing,

incarceration and income are not just a today issue but a lifetime and generational issue.

Walsh: Another issue our clients run into again and again is they need to be a super bureaucrat to navigate the funding sources for access to all the programs and economic assistance. We have a committee focused on this issue, but in order for the clients to move toward self advocacy and self case management, they have to become experts in navigating financial and funding streams of the state and federal systems.

Responding to Marc Berg's inquiry, Gumnit advised Hennepin County is one of the few government entities that provide shelter for children and their family at least for the night. The average stay for families in shelters in Hennepin County is 39 days, and the average stay in New York City is north of 400 days. Here in the Twin Cities, especially in Hennepin County, we've done a really good job of reducing veteran homelessness, but we still have a long way to go for non-veterans and families in general. There's been a lot of talk about Utah recently in terms of reducing chronic homelessness, but they have not reduced overall homelessness significantly. So, there's a lot of great stuff happening here in the Twin Cities that's not happening elsewhere, but we still have a far way to go.

Responding to Chris Fleck's inquiry, Gumnit advised he passionately believes in system awareness. Let's not talk about homelessness as just being a housing issue; it's also an employment or income issue, an education issue, and lack of access to mental health issue. We need to talk about this from a systemic perspective and coordinating across all these systems or we'll never solve the problem.

Responding to Dan's inquiry if we could give you anything, Walsh advised they have incredibly charitable donors and that's how they keep people in their programs over the years. They step up and sponsor us in so many ways (e.g., marketing, communications, educating the community). Working on systemic issues such as doing something about [Franklin Steele Square] to make it safer so our clients can use it would be great. But volunteering, mentoring, donating and supporting us as we're expanding, what you're already doing is good, and more is good.

Ohmann noted that on the systemic level we need to have a different conversation in this community about diversity. The most vulnerable people in our community are people of color; we see more of them in our homeless and child protection systems at a percentage higher than they represent in the general population. We need to think about what's going on there. On an operational level, one of the things she talked with Winkel about earlier is, if we operate on a housing first mentality, the best thing we can do is get someone into a stable living place and then wrap them with the support they need to stay there. It use to be you had to become sober or get a job before you could have a roof over your head; the emerging philosophy is housing first and support everything else. Trying to find the operational dollars to

support everything else is almost impossible. We'll get funding for housing but then we're scrounging to find the money to support the regular visits to healthcare provider or in-home nurse to help manage their diabetes so they can maintain their jobs, or counseling services, etc. It's never just one issue, but all those funding streams and bureaucracies make it hard to put the whole package together.

Winkel stated that part of what we need to also take a look at is how to prevent people from becoming homeless and that goes back to jobs and affordable housing. Thirty percent of your income goes toward housing; right now we are hearing 50% of income goes toward housing so if you lose your job or your job gets cut back in hours, you now have the issue of how to maintain housing and the next thing you know you are going to be visiting one of us. There's a lot to be looked at but if there is one issue to focus on is jobs and housing.

In closing, Dan noted that social determinants of health is a new frontier that a lot of these advocates are working on holistically that cut across every topic discussed here. Systemically we're trying to look at whose fulfilling these roles as a society. These panelists, and others in the East Downtown, are the some of the premier providers of social services in the state and we're proud to have them as leaders. Thereafter, he thanked everyone for coming and wished them a wonderful holiday season.