

Recap of East Downtown Council's Annual Meeting

Thursday, April 18, 2013

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**Normandy Inn & Suites, 405 South 8th Street
Downtown West Neighborhood of Minneapolis**

- **Welcome and introductions.** EDC Director Tom Hayes introduced himself, invited guests to introduce themselves, then summarized the agenda: review of the past year; report by Membership Director Dan Collison; Q&A with 7th Ward Council Member Lisa Goodman; election of the board of directors; and “Opportunity Sites for Development in Downtown East and Elliot Park (DEEP)” presentation by EPNI Community Development Coordinator David Fields.
- **EDC year in review.** Tom Hayes explained that the past year has been very busy primarily due to what’s happening in Downtown East (i.e., activities related to the new People’s Stadium). He believes that the EDC is growing up with the neighborhood during this period of transition that has brought the organization under the spotlight and called upon it to decide what its role will be, not only as a business association but also in connecting with the neighborhood associations of Elliot Park Neighborhood Inc. (EPNI) and the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association (DMNA). The EDC has been having good discussions about these matters and will be having more discussions with the EDC membership in the coming weeks.

Then he informed the audience that the EDC met last week to conduct a Stadium/DEEP district design strategic planning session wherein they reviewed the Stadium Implementation Committee’s Vision and Principles document to find the connections that resonate with the EDC to enable it to step up as a stronger voice within the DEEP district going forward.

Tom followed with some of the monthly business forums held in the past membership year:

- In March 2013, received a status update on the Washington Avenue Design project at the aloft Hotel (an EDC member) from Hennepin County Senior Design Engineer Jennifer Lowry and City of Minneapolis Director of Traffic and Parking Jon Wertjes;
- In February 2013, learned about the work of Meet Minneapolis at their headquarters in the Marquette Plaza Building from President and CEO Melvin Tennant and its Partnership and Marketing Manager Michael Rainville. Also received a status update on the new People’s Stadium project from MSFA Chair Michele Kelm-Helgen;
- In February 2013, learned about the elements of good urban design at Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle (an EDC member) from EDC Director Paul Mellblom;
- In December 2012, learned about the Guthrie’s (an EDC member) 50th anniversary celebration plans at the theater’s Level 5 Café from External Relations Director Trish Santini;
- In November 2012, with representatives from the DMNA and EPNI, received a stadium update at the Vikings (an EDC member) Gridiron Club from MSFA Chair Michele Kelm-Helgen, Vikings VP of Public Affairs Lester Bagley and a representative from HKS. Tom advised that more of these joint organizational events are forthcoming.

Tom also noted the two Façade Improvement Matching Grant programs facilitated by the EDC:

- Allied Parking at 800 South 9th Street; and
- Catholic Charities Opportunity Center at 740 East 17th Street.

Tom then introduced the Membership Director who he praised for helping make the EDC a much better organization by increasing its membership through his strong leadership and outreach skills.

- **Membership report.** Dan Collison began by stating he stumbled across a document entitled *The Plan of Minneapolis 1917* that contained a quote on the front page by Daniel Burnham, a famous American architect and urban designer, of whom he quoted:

"Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will not themselves be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing consistency."

Dan feels that Minneapolis is in one of its big plan moments. He was in Manhattan recently and was dazzled by its unparalleled density and diversity and how it is one of the best cities in the world. Yet he could not be more excited about being in downtown Minneapolis in what is at minimum a post recession recovery surge, but what could also be at its best the beginning of a decade of growth not seen in 80 to 100 years. Living and doing business in downtown at this time is a once in an EVER moment.

As a resident of downtown, a leader on the EDC, and as a leader of a nonprofit organization, Dan believes we need to be focused and work collaboratively to make the most of this moment. That is why the goal of the EDC with its low membership rate, as it brings together small- to medium-size businesses to multi-national corporations, is to get together and collaborate. This past year was great; membership grew from 41 to 55 including 15 new and a couple having moved out of the district. A total of 175 businesses have been identified, so a great goal would be to increase membership by 25 so that half of the identified businesses within the district are coming together for the business forums, staying in touch with one another, networking through the facebook page, interacting with civic leaders and community organizers so we all stay ahead of things.

How do we recruit these additional 25 members?

- By having a simple marketing strategy to engage more of the restaurants who will benefit from timely updates, especially as we move into a construction phase and in the midst of a changing demographics.
- By increasing the value of our brand in small but tangible ways, e.g., colorful utility wraps around the district and paying close attention to the development of what Mayor Rybak calls "the most important transit hub in Minneapolis," where even the naming of the station we tie into and are a part of what people experience when they arrive.
- By having business forums that will invite new high potential entrepreneurial businesses to join, host a conversation, and share ideas. Dan noted that he has worked hard to make connections with the Minneapolis Downtown Council. Three EDC members participate on and are engaged in the planning initiatives of the MDC's 2025 Plan subcommittees to: catalyze connections to U of MN; and add 15,000 new housing units, 1,100 hotel rooms, 3 million square feet of Class A, multi-tenant office space. East Downtown is considered the last great pallet where development can be done with intensity.
- By capitalizing on the new stadium development, whether you love it or hate it, so that this time when it's built it benefits the most people surrounding it.

Dan then urged the audience to, if they themselves did not have the time but know someone who is interested in urban development and enjoys attending EDC's business forums to contact him directly at dcollison@1stcov.org or the EDC Executive Coordinator Christie Hantge at christie@hantge.com. He believes that we can help build a 21st century Minneapolis that would have made Daniel Burnham say, "now THAT is a big plan!"

- **7th Ward Q&A.** Lisa Goodman advised that one of the first jobs she had in Minneapolis was for the EDC, then known as the Elliot Park Business and Professional Association, and had led a greening effort on behalf of the organization. Then she noted that due to the redistricting process in 2012 and the upcoming 2013 municipal elections, love it or hate it, representation for this area will change: a portion will be in the newly configured Ward 3, a portion will be in the newly configured Ward 6, and a couple blocks will be in the newly configured Ward 7. In Lisa's opinion, having more council members represent an area is a positive thing if they're the right people who have a vision in alignment with those they serve.

Then responding to questions, Lisa advised that:

- She is running for reelection for Ward 7, i.e.: all Lake of the Isles neighborhoods, Bryn Mawr, Loring Park, and Downtown south of 7th Street on the west and south of 4th Street on the east. To date, she has no opponent.
- She and a number of people at CPED were instrumental in getting the City to lease the land that is Gold Medal Park on a 10-year basis that will expire in 3 years. Providing the Guthrie agrees to include the one-third portion of the land it owns in another 25-year lease, the City, who is ready and willing to turn it into permanent parkland, will do the same. The City is working with Dr. William McGuire and the McGuire Family Foundation along with others to fund a more permanent type of endowment (e.g., a long-term lease, land sale to entity that does this for a living) and is waiting to hear from the Guthrie. Lisa is committed to getting this done before the area is no longer under her purview. Since the representation for this area will change, Lisa advised that she would be strongly supporting Jacob Frey.
- Since redistricting is complete there is no longer a need for public input; however, citizens did have an opportunity to testify before public hearings and submit written testimony during the process. Lisa stated that part of the focus for redistricting was to create opportunity districts for various groups that had not been previously involved to enable them to win a seat on the City Council. You'll see that playing out in the newly configured Wards 3, 5, 6. For more information about the redistricting process, visit <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/redistricting2012/>.
- Hennepin County is responsible for deciding whether or not bike lanes will be added to Washington Avenue and she is confident one will be added in some form and suggested contacting them directly. <http://www.hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47ccf06498/?vgnnextoid=488e2e058f408310VgnVCM10000099fe4689RCRD>.

Tom thanked Lisa for coming and commented that one of the benefits of EDC membership is to hear from and be able to speak with our elected officials.

- **Election of board directors.** Tom asked board members to introduce themselves and tell what organization they represent. He then asked for nominations from the floor, but none were offered. Thereafter, when he asked the membership to fill out and submit the ballots provided to them,

Dale White moved and Varun Kharbanda seconded a motion to accept all the candidates on the ballot as submitted. The motion passed.

- **Opportunity sites presentation.** David Fields explained that he first put together his PowerPoint presentation for the SIC's Planning Subcommittee a couple months ago pursuant to a request to conduct a survey of the DEEP opportunity sites. During the process he discovered that all of these sites with very few exceptions are surface parking lots, prompting him to give the survey a subtitle of "a review of surface parking lots." His intent today is to tell what he knows about the individual lots, many of which are not represented on the EDC, as background on what opportunities for development exists.

Fields began with an aerial view of the DEEP/Stadium district as it looked shortly after the Metrodome was built (see attached Fields_DEEP_Survey) and explained the continuity of the urban fabric prior to it being torn up by the construction of the freeways. It looks similar today except that most of the parking lots along Washington Avenue have been developed and, as we try to understand the potential for development on the other parking lots, we'll find that unlike most of the others the City does not own these and that makes it much more difficult in terms of land cost to get them onto the market.

Fields continued his aerial tour at the stadium site (area enclosed by the red line indicating what the Vikings and the MSFA have control over), then circled through the adjacent neighborhoods describing the character of the various land uses, the impact large institutional landowners have (they are not a

source of property taxes), how parking lots pot mark the cityscape, and listing what properties are potentially in play for future development (e.g., First Covenant Church; all five of the Star Tribune blocks, one of which will be integral to stadium discussions for a recreational plaza and potential shared parking with the Vikings; Thrivent; and the Armory which has a 90% deal for a multi-use event center and approvals from the Heritage Preservation Commission) and what properties are not in play. Fields noted that once a decision is made for the disposition of the properties in play, our work as a community starts by reviewing the development proposals and determining whether it is appropriate for what we want in our neighborhood.

Minneapolis CPED and its Principal City Planner Beth Elliott, in consultation with surrounding neighborhoods, drew a wider planning district around the stadium site (area enclosed by the yellow line) that includes Downtown East, much of Elliot Park, and Cedar Riverside. This planning district is the area he and the Planning Subcommittee are most concerned with for future development. He believes we must use this stadium development opportunity to leverage building a new urban neighborhood in the DEEP district.

Additionally, Minneapolis CPED with Beth Elliott as its lead has hired HR&A Advisors to conduct an East Downtown parking lot forensics of what drives parking lots, what are their economics and what can be done to encourage development. During their investigations they identified three types of surface parking lots — the accessory corporate (e.g., Thrivent); standalone commercial (e.g., Smith Brothers); and legacy lots (e.g., Gacek) — and determined some of the resistance the owners have to moving or selling for development (e.g., unfamiliarity with the development market; indifference in the respect that these lots are cash cows for them; inflated expectations of market prices they can receive). A discussion will need to be had with the parking lot owners about cooperating with and joining the EDC / EPNI / DMNA to bring development to their properties.

Fields, who served on a mock jury for the 2013 ULI/Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition and rehearsed with the four finalists, advised that each of their designs featured the Armory as a focal point of Downtown East and had some interesting and very compelling visions. He encouraged the audience to visit www.ulicenter.org/programs/awards-competitions/hines-student-design-competition/ to learn more about the designs.

Fields recapped on some of the obstacles to development: the mega structures, and the wide one-way network of streets that make them inimical to neighborhood level circulation. He noted as a reminder that the EDC has been one of the most active forums in terms of helping to promote the DEEP 2100 vision that EPNI put together with some very visionary urban designers and planners (e.g., Bob Close, Mick Johnson, Jon Commers) 3 years ago that perfectly outlines the enclosed yellow area shown in his Opportunity Sites presentation as a planning district. This document and the resulting marketing brochures is available at EPNI's website <http://elliotparkneighborhood.org/community-planning/>.

Now, as then, the next step is determining who's going to execute the vision because none of the money in the stadium bill is going towards neighborhood development or infrastructure except within the strict footprint of the stadium site. This is a once in a generation opportunity to build a leadership authority — between the EDC/EPNI/DMNA, public/private institutions in coordination with the SIC's Planning Subcommittee and the 2025 Plan Development Committee — to direct development within DEEP to become a premier and unique neighborhood. For further discussion, Fields can be reached at davidfields@elliotpark.org.

- **Conclusion.** Tom thanked Fields for his presentation and encouraged the audience to look within their organizations for individuals/resources they have available to contribute to forming a leadership authority and to forward this information to the EDC.

Tom then recognized and thanked Christie Hantge for bringing to the EDC the skills it sorely needed (financial expertise, organizational skills and community contacts) since she was hired in November 2012.

Lastly, Tom thanked the audience for attending and announced that the next business forum is scheduled for Thursday, May 16, 2013, 11:30 a.m. at a location to be determined. The topic will potentially be a stadium update with MSFA Chair Michele Kelm-Helgen and the Vikings.