

Recap of East Downtown Council's Business Forum
Thursday, January 15, 2015
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Padilla CRT, 1101 West River Parkway, The Falls Conference Room
Downtown East Neighborhood of Minneapolis

- ***Welcome, Introductions and Announcements***

EDC Executive Director Dan Collison welcomed the audience to the January business forum and advised he is also Director of East Downtown Partnership for the Minneapolis Downtown Council (MDC). It is a privilege for him to serve both organizations, but his heart and sole is in the East Downtown district and EDC's role is to help serve this area so the businesses here will flourish at a time when there is more than \$2 billion of development taking place.

Dan extended gratitude to the audience for attending and to its newest member, the University of Minnesota School of Nursing Practitioner Clinic that will be opening in March 2015. Clinical Assistant Professor Jane Anderson advised that this clinic will be staffed by nurse practitioners in primary care and will be located in the Emanuel Housing complex located at 814 South 3rd Street.

Dan also gave a special thank you to the platinum sponsors whose resources help pay for staff, marketing and communications:

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

Dan explained as the stadium is being built and a whole new center for the district is being created, the EDC wants to understand the narratives its membership has undergone and the anxieties they're wrestling with regarding the future of the district. He then gave the feedback received from the 1-page survey distributed at the December 2014 business forum wherein the key question posed was "Given the major construction initiatives in our district, are there things you have concerns about, e.g., parking, crowd control, access, respect for private property and so on?" The distilled responses received thus far include:

We need a better connection between Elliot Park and the River. Perhaps a walking / biking loop that connects the Walker, to the Convention Center, to Elliot Park, to the Commons, to the Mill City area, and back down Hennepin Avenue would be something worth looking into.

With the eventual move of taking the exit off of I-94 onto South 5th Street and moving it to 7th Street, it will be nearly impossible to exit 10th Avenue South. Some major consideration needs to take place regarding crossing South 7th Street from 10th Avenue South.

I would suggest an expansion of the current gameday monitoring concept with the convening of a standing body of district-wide residents, stakeholders and city/county representatives to collaborate, oversee and monitor the impacts of all events and activities on a year-round basis.

Our request would be to receive notification of events scheduled to occur in the area that

would impact street closings, parking access to ramps or our building. People going to events currently park randomly behind our building. The City currently has barriers to deter public parking in that area, however we would suggest improved 'No Event Parking' signage as well.

Dan invited the audience to continue to send in their comments, after which the EDC will synthesize them and report back.

Thereafter, the audience introduced themselves during which Chris Fleck, Development Officer at North Central University, gave a brief update on their community fundraising effort for the soccer field in Elliot Park (<http://www.northcentral.edu/soccer-field>). The goal is \$1 million; they have raised \$675,550 leaving a gap of \$324,450. He thanked those who have contributed. This is being done in partnership with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Hennepin County.

Dale White, ProBid Managing Partner, announced that they are conducting Minnesota Department of Labor accredited continuing education classes for building contractors and subcontractors in computerized estimating, QuickBooks, and interest-based negotiations from now until the end of March 2015. For information visit <http://www.probidtraining.com/>.

- **Stadium Construction Update.** Lynn Littlejohn, Director of Community Affairs at Mortenson Construction, advised that the overall project is about 31% complete. The concrete work is 62% complete and will be totally completed this spring; the structural steel is ongoing; the metal panels work over the substrate will start this spring; the long span structural steel work for the roof takes place during the day; and the non-long span structural steel work takes place during the 4:30 p.m. to midnight shift. Ongoing work taking place within the bowl consists of masonry, drywall, mechanical and electrical underground conduits. Upcoming activities include the installation of the metal panels in April, the glass in June, followed by the clear transparent roof material. They anticipate having the building totally enclosed by this fall then to complete the finish work in time to turn the building over to the MSFA by July 2016.

There are about 750 workers onsite everyday. As they grow, they will maximize and peak out at about 1,150 workers this summer then it will gradually diminish thereafter towards completion of the project.

They do not foresee any upcoming road closures over the next several months that would impact the neighborhood; however, what's in place now regarding access around the site will continue. After the April 1st closure of South 5th Street, they will return to give a further update. They are in discussions with the City regarding the communications plan and the alternate routing of that traffic.

Thereafter, Littlejohn responded to questions from the audience during which she advised that the MSFA has meetings with the Audubon Society and 3M about creating some film to apply on the glass to make it more bird-friendly.

- **Outdoor Urbanism at its Best**

Dan commented that Minnesotans are hearty people who celebrate opportunities for outdoor activities every season of the year then quoted meteorologist Paul Douglas who said "there's no such thing as bad weather - just poor clothing choices." So whether hot or cold, we tend to adapt, but how does it play into these more hardscapes and urban centers which can at times feel a little rough when it comes to outdoor activities? Think tank Project for Public Spaces (<http://www.pps.org/>) states:

"Great public spaces are where celebrations are held, social and economic exchanges take place, friends run into each other, and cultures mix. They are the "front porches" of our institutions and when the spaces work well, they serve as a stage for our public lives."

This is why this forum is focused on how downtown Minneapolis is envisioning, creating, and programming parks, greening, and placemaking in outdoor spaces. Dan then introduced who he considers the two best voices in this business community to share how this is being done well: Steve Cramer, President and CEO of the MDC and Downtown Improvement District, and Peter Brown, architect, planner, and urban development consultant to the City of Minneapolis.

Steve Cramer then led the audience through the *2025: Intersections Plan* Greening and Public Realm initiatives (<http://www.downtownmpls.com/page/show/423275-2025-plan>). Of the 10 goals within the plan, 3 related to this effort: #2, *transform Nicollet Mall into a must see destination* and extend the period of time people feel they can spend here during the year due to the attractive nature of the streetscape; #3, *build a gateway park* to strengthen the connection to the river from the core along Nicollet Mall; and #7, *create and sustain a green infrastructure and showcase the riverfront* by establishing tree canopy, green corridors, green downtown freeways, and creating a greening nonprofit/parks conservancy to help drive this agenda forward.

Downtown today is very different from what he experienced when he first came to attend the University of Minnesota in 1979. All these years later we have a very dynamic and growing downtown and the challenge is making sure there are strong connections to all these different parts of downtown and there are great opportunities to do so by moving towards the riverfront and across downtown connecting the new Vikings stadium and Target Field via the 5th Street transit corridor.

One of the guideposts for shaping outdoor urbanism at its best is connectivity throughout downtown; it is critical and enhances along the way the pedestrian experience. And to be able to double the residential population from 35,000 to 70,000, the pedestrian experience is essential to achieving that goal. Making downtown more green is an important function of the DID operation and more so going forward.

Other guideposts include improvements to the public realm such as wayfinding and public art; activation and programming of space strategies in a positive manner to extend the season of street level vitality; engagement with the community to create these strategies; and recognition of the fundamental importance of this work to our economic growth and posterity.

Ongoing work that exemplifies these efforts include the MPRB's update of the St. Anthony Falls Master Plan (SAFMP), the RiverFirst initiative and Water Works Park that is heading into its fundraising phase. Additionally, the Gateway vision and proposals received for the Nicollet Hotel block project. Under the SAFMP, the Gateway boundary would be expanded and include the USPS's parking ramp to make a strong connection to the riverfront at that site.

Cramer extended kudos to the City and the MPRB for their joint Public Realm Framework / Downtown Service Area Master Plan effort that has significant participation from the downtown business and residential community. Many of these issues he's talking about can be addressed through this joint effort.

This past winter Peavey Plaza was used for the new Holidazzle Market and there's additional potential for event programming and the greening conservancy, working with the City, the historic preservation community and other stakeholder, will play a role in determining what more can be done there.

Lastly, Cramer advised that work is about to begin on the Downtown East Commons. All the projects he's mentioned are at some stage of development, but the one they are certain will break ground in 2015 by putting into practice many of the guideposts mentioned is the Nicollet Mall redesign project.

Peter Brown stated that it is a privilege for him and the rest of the team to work on this once in a generation project and he wants the audience to understand the big ideas from a year ago down to the

details and process of how to get this project accomplished because urban design is an experience of being in a place and being able to touch, feel and smell.

Brown then led the audience through Minneapolis's first main shopping street (1880 to 1960), to when the flight to the suburbs began and the business community hired then up and coming landscape architect Lawrence Halpern to redesign it and became a national model for a pedestrian transitway (1960s), to when it was redesigned and reconstructed as a result of deterioration (1990), to the 2025 Plan goal for it today.

This project is a private/public partnership led by a Nicollet Mall Implementation Committee that came up with two basic guiding principles: it has to be a place for people (pedestrian friendly year round, active and integrated with transit modes), and it has to be an elegant and durable street (climate appropriate and sustainable).

Brown explained the scope of the project (12 blocks from Washington Avenue to Grant Street), schedule (the design competition and consultant selection was held in 2013, will complete detail design fall 2015, and hope to complete construction by end of 2016/early 2017), and budget (\$50 million). Soon they will be talking with property owners about how the assessment process will work.

Brown advised that the winning firm was James Corner Field Operations who designed the High Line elevated pedestrian park in New York. Then he explained the framework plan from Loring Woods to the south, to the Groves, Nicollet Center to the Mississippi Woods to the north and going back to what Lawrence Halpern did with a through walk zone. He also discussed plant and paver materials, lighting, furniture, and public art then gave a slide show walking tour of the final project.

Lastly, Brown entertained questions from the audience.

For more information visit <http://www.nicolletmallproject.com/>.

- **Conclusion**

Dan thanked PadillaCRT for hosting, the guest speakers, the audience for attending, and EDC Executive Coordinator Christie Rock-Hantge. Then he announced:

- The next business forum will be on Thursday, February 19th, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at aloft Hotel. The topic will be *Access and Equity: The Convergences of Economic Vitality and Human Flourishing* with guest panelists Mayor Betsy Hodges, Alan Arthur of Aeon, Pam Costain of AchieveMpls, and Alex Tittle of MSFA.
- Next Monday, January 19th, the DMNA will have a community forum entitled Downtown 2015 Projects and Priorities Forum. Visit <http://www.thedmna.org/> for details.
- Izzy's Ice Cream at 1100 South 2nd Street is celebrating 13 days of giving during the first couple weeks in February. There are flyers available to pick up on their way out and are looking to the EDC to help get the word out. Jeff Somers advised that they donate \$2 for every cone sold and all proceeds go to the representative organizations. For more information, visit <http://izzysicecream.com/2014/02/01/13-days-of-giving/>.