

Recap of the East Town Business Partnership Business Forum
Thursday, February 16, 2017, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Open Book, Target Performance Hall, 1011 Washington Avenue South
Downtown East Neighborhood of Minneapolis

- **Welcome, Introductions and District Events**

Paul Mellblom, President for the East Town Business Partnership, welcomed the audience to the February business forum, thanked Open Book for hosting, and the membership for attending and bringing a guest. He's particularly excited about today's topic on Place-based Value Creation and Tactical Urbanism because both speakers will be talking about something that will affect all of us, i.e., how to make this a really great district that is active, visually beautiful and compelling.

He announced there will be a 5-minute SurveyMonkey sent out next week seeking input from the membership that will help the ETBP develop its strategic plan for the next 4-5 years, and requested it be completed by March 1st. Thereafter, the audience introduced themselves.

Dan Collison, Executive Director for the ETBP, also thanked the audience for attending and lauded the ETBP platinum members who help provide the resources for staffing and programming of the forums:

- Allied Parking, Inc.
- CenterPoint Energy
- Clear Channel
- Community Housing Development Corporation
- ESG Architects
- Hennepin County Medical Center
- House of Charity
- Izzy's Ice Cream
- Kraus-Anderson
- Minnesota Vikings
- Mortenson Construction
- Neka Creative
- NRG Energy
- PadillaCRT
- Thrivent Financial
- U.S. Bank
- Valspar
- Wells Fargo
- Xcel Energy

Collison announced the following upcoming events and encouraged the audience to submit their district-related activities:

- ETBP Joint Forum with the Minneapolis Downtown Council on March 16th: Reflections on Leadership and Philanthropy with R.T. Rybak at Day Block Brewing Company's Event Center;
- The ETBP Membership Survey soon to be emailed;
- Downtown Families Minneapolis' 3rd Annual Fancy Pants Winter Dance on Saturday, February 25th, 4-6 p.m., at 514 Studio (<http://downtownfamiliesmpls.org/event/fancy-pants-winter-dance-2/>);
- Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership's Riverfront Forum: Water Over the Dam on Tuesday, February 28th, 5:30-7:00 p.m., at the Mill City Museum Commons (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/riverfront-vitality-forum-water-over-the-dam-tickets-31529487546>);

- Cynthia Froid Group's 2017 State of the (Real) Estate on Wednesday, March 1st, 6-7 p.m., at the Mill City Museum ADM Conference Room;
- The DMNA's Crime & Safety Forum on Monday, March 20th, 5:30 p.m., at the New Century Theatre;
- MnDOT's I-94 Improvement Projects (<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/i94brooklyncntr/>);
- For Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association meetings/events, visit <http://www.thedmna.org/>; and
- For Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc. meetings/events, visit <http://elliotparkneighborhood.org/>.

Collison noted that available on the tables were copies of the ETBP brochure, and business forum flyer that contained the following updated topics:

- *April 20th*: The Commons Park in East Town: Now and in the Future with The Commons staff and Green Minneapolis leadership at the Normandy Inn;
- *May 18th*: Women in Business and Education featuring Becky Roloff, former CEO of the YWCA and current President of St. Catherine's University at St. Olaf Catholic Church; and
- *June 15th*: The Growing Mission of MEDA and the Business Case for Regional Equitable Development with Gary Cunningham, the President and CEO of The Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA) at TBD.

ETBP's Membership, Marketing and Communication Chair Chris Fleck then encouraged those who needed information about becoming a member to see him after the forum. The ETBP is one of the best kept secrets in this geography. As members, they know how great these venues and informative sessions are like, and ask that they help spread the word.

Dan then introduced the guest speakers, Max Musicant (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/maxmusicant>) and Ben Shardlow (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/benshardlow>), by providing a brief biography on each.

- **Place-based Value Creation**

The Musicant Group Principal and Founder Max Musicant began his presentation with a placemaking exercise by asking the audience to (1) move their chairs so that they could be alone; (2) move their chairs so that they could be next to one other person; (3) move their chairs back to their tables and introduce themselves; and (4) move their chairs to where they can best listen to his presentation. Movable chairs is a great metaphor and tactic they use to create place; it is about adapting and shaping the environment to be conducive to the types of things we want to feel, do and experience. He forced the aforementioned configurations onto the audience, and every time they adapted it to work for themselves and it would be difficult to do so if the chairs were bolted to the ground. A lot of our environment is similar to a stationary bench that is optimized for a single situation. As a society, we need to transition from the bench world to a world of movable seating.

Why is placemaking important? Because macro trends are reshaping real estate, the foremost of which is mobile technology has eliminated the ability of businesses and organizations to force people to be somewhere. People can now do anything from almost anywhere. At the same time, people are increasingly demanding more human interaction and experiences. The meaning of access is transitioning from the open road to open data, walking, and biking.

How can commercial agents and community actors adapt to these emerging demands? By creating spaces where people want to be. To remain competitive and profitable, organizations of all kinds must create places that people seek out and demand.

TMG's underlying strategy of place is if people consistently have positive, useful experiences in a

place, they'll use it more and establish habits and routines around the place. Those habits and routines are the foundation upon which to support enterprise and social relationships between people. Once relationships are made between people and places, and there's an emotional connection to those places, it has value to them and is the essence of real estate value, i.e., a place that can support new buildings and buildings with higher leasing rates and property values.

Placemaking is not just a nice thing to do; it's a fundamental strategy for economic development and reweaving of our social fabric. To create placemaking follow the desire lines for ourselves and our community, i.e., getting in touch with what we and people want to do in a given place whether it's in a corner of your living room up to an entire neighborhood or a region in and of itself. It is also:

- A lens through which any activity related to the built environment goes through;
- An ongoing iterative holistic process of community engagement; data collection and evaluation; and communications with internal and external partners out of which adaptable, meaningful and useful places are created;
- A balancing act between the physical improvements; stewardship and management capacity; and activities, uses and events;
- The proper processing of ingredients (e.g., seating, bathrooms, activities, water); and
- A reintroduction of upside and learning into design and capital projects.

As an example of placemaking in the software industry, Musicant described the horrible versions of Windows that were released in response to bugs in the system. Now software has gone through a much more iterative development and unveiling process; they are running a cycle of feedback and constant improvement and the same can be done in the built environment rather than just focusing on building big new stuff.

How can placemaking be put in action? Musicant displayed a list of TMG clients where their approach and process has been applied. Then he displayed a map of TMG's current and future projects in East Town and Downtown Minneapolis which included:

- 333 South 7th Street
- Capella Tower
- Water Works Park.

Musicant then described how the placemaking process was applied to:

- *333 South 7th Street* (<http://www.333southseventhstreet.com/home.axis>). Although an attractive space and well maintained, it wasn't being used except as a pathway to the building, smoking area, and venue for 2 to 3 tenant events per year. The client, CBRE, brought them in to help make it a more value amenity that drives leasing activity. TMG's process involved tenant engagement and research which helped to establish a brand and marketing platform, the result of which is an increase in tenant satisfaction, tenant recruitment, retention, and development within tenant organizations.
- *Living Room Station at South 6th Street and Nicollet Mall* (<http://www.minneapolisdid.com/livingroomstation>). TMG responded to an RFP issued by the Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District to re-imagine four bus stops in Downtown and was awarded this busiest stop that lacked a shelter. To determine what people wanted, they employed their placemaking process and made small improvements – places to sit, warm material, signage, a clock, branding, attractive bus schedule, games, art supplies and books – that created big change, i.e., an increase in bus riders who felt this station improved their experience downtown, made them feel safer downtown, and made them want to catch a bus at this station.

The success of this project opened up new conversations around transit facilities both here and at St. Paul's busiest bus stop in downtown which has been a vacant lot since the LRT opened up.

Musicant then entertained questions from the audience.

- **Tactical Urbanism**

MDC/DID Director of Urban Design Ben Shardlow commented Musicant gave a great overview of placemaking, and that he'll spend most of his time discussing East Town and the typology for the different kinds of spaces where placemaking may be a useful strategy to get the community and economic development outcomes desired.

To orient the audience, he displayed a map of downtown Minneapolis with a red line delineating the area embraced by the 2025 Plan, and a green line delineating the 120-block DID special service district. Less than half of East Town is within the DID.

There are four typology for placemaking opportunity sites:

1. Destination Spaces: Nicollet Mall, The Commons
2. Other Public Parks
3. Streets
4. Sidewalks, Alleys, and Pocket Parks

There are three key elements of destination spaces:

1. Enhanced facilities;
2. Active daily management and staffing; and
3. Dedicated staff for activation.

An example of a destination space would be the 700 block on Nicollet Mall. Shardlow then described elements of the design that will help it be successful (<http://www.nicolletmallproject.com/design>) and enhance placemaking potential:

- Emphasis on streetscape elements that will add a sense of space, uniqueness and not take up a lot of space (e.g., the Art Walk and Light Walk);
- 12 feet clear walkways against the buildings to support retail; and
- A large flexible space at the street for different types of seasonal activation (Lisa Maddag, Director of Nicollet Activation, was brought on to work on partnerships and programs).

Then he showed an image taken during The Great Northern (<https://www.thegreatnorthernfestival.com/>) where a construction site on Nicollet Mall was treated as a placemaking opportunity.

Another example of a destination public space is The Commons (<http://www.commonsmpls.com/>) which has enhanced fixtures and spaces, daily staffing and management. In 2016, the park was managed by DID which had the budget to maintain the space but none for programming. Now, Green Minneapolis (<http://www.greenminneapolis.org/>), formed to operate and actively program parks and green spaces throughout downtown Minneapolis, has taken over management; expect to see a higher level of activity going forward.

Shardlow also showed images of how The Commons has been used as a destination space since its opening last summer.

The second type of public space in East Town for placemaking opportunities is other public parks. Their key elements are:

1. Large, existing public spaces mostly owned and managed by MPRB (e.g., Elliot Park, Franklin Steele, Gold Medal Park, Triangle Park);
2. Range of staffing models (e.g., some have community centers with staff, others are visited only by maintenance staff); and
3. Two drivers of activation: Use of existing facilities, and community partnerships. Outside of The Commons, most of the activation of public spaces will happen through grassroots community energy.

The third type of public space in East Town for placemaking opportunities is streets. Their key elements are:

1. Repurposing function of existing right-of-way
2. Permissible time, place, manner; and
3. Passionate community partners.

And there are examples of community groups/members who repurpose the function of an existing right-of-way to use it as an event space. There are pathways to shutting down the street by working with the City or County in terms of managing traffic. In East Town, most streets are not busy most of the time so there are opportunities to use the right-of-way, e.g., in North Loop during The Great Northern, Bachelor Farmer held a dinner on North 1st Street for 100 people. Closer to home, Friends of the Mill District sponsored carriage rides celebrating the winter season (<https://www.facebook.com/events/614382702096943/>).

The third type of public space for placemaking opportunities is sidewalks, alleys, and pocket parks. Shardlow believes these are the most fertile ground for small, everyday community-driven projects. Their key elements are:

1. Smaller public space;
2. Can be publicly or privately owned; and
3. Opportunity sites for small, everyday, community-driven projects.

Examples of this type include: the Living Room Station at South 6th Street and Nicollet Mall Musicant discussed earlier; a temporary business center at the Government Plaza; a space to eat on Marquette Avenue near food trucks; a parklet outside of Espresso Royale; alley next to Bachelor Farmer converted into a public gathering space.

In closing, Shardlow urged the audience to think about placemaking as a strategy to address livability and safety concerns they may have. Rather than sitting back and observing a space that isn't working, think about using placemaking to improve community and economic development.

- **Closing Remarks**

Mellblom thanked Musicant and Shardlow for their presentations, each of whom agreed to stick around to answer questions. Paul then encouraged the audience to become involved in the speakers' initiatives to help improve the district's public spaces.