

Recap of the East Town Business Partnership Business Forum Crime and Safety, Sentencing and Restorative Justice

(<https://easttownmpls.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/May-16-Business-Forum-Crime-and-Safety-Sentencing-and-Restorative-Justice-Email-Version.pdf>)

**Thursday, May 16, 2019, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Sawatdee Thai Restaurant, 607 Washington Avenue South
Downtown East Neighborhood of Minneapolis**

I. Welcome, Introductions, and Announcements

John Campobasso, ETBP President and Vice President/Manager of Business Development at Kraus-Anderson, welcomed the audience to the May business forum and noted he was newly appointed to this position after half a dozen years under the helm of Paul Mellblom who stepped down because his firm, MSR Design, relocated to the CBD. Campobasso was also the first President of the organization when it was known as the Elliot Park Business and Professional Association (EPBPA). Then he asked the audience to introduce themselves:

Kathleen Anderson, North Star Lofts
Marc Berg, J Selmer Law
Jacquie Berglund, Finnegan's
Charles Carlson, Metro Transit
Robert Clapp, Bridgewater Lofts
Garfield Clark, Garfield Clark Commercial (601 Chicago Avenue)
Rick Crispino, Bridgewater Lofts
Chris Fleck, North Central University
Kim Forbes, Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc.
Kevin Frazell, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
Daniel Gumnit, People Serving People
Vanessa Haight, Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc.
Laurel Hanson, Metropolitan Alliance for Connected Communities
Christie Rock Hantge, ETBP Staff
Cyndy Harrison, Sawatee Thai Restaurant
Supenn Harrison, Sawatee Thai Restaurant
Daniel Jacobsen, Unleashed Productions
Kory Kingsbury, Residence Inn and Renaissance Inn at The Depot Minneapolis
Julia Lauwagie, Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge
Pamela McCrea, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
Christine Novotny, Mill City Farmers Market
Rdonn Robinson, Best Western Normandy Inn
Carletta Sweet, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
Dianne Walsh, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
Matthew Weiland, Clear Channel Outdoor

Dan Collison, Executive Director of ETBP, thanked and introduced the Presenting Sponsor, Cyndy Harrison, who welcomed the audience and gave a brief history of their restaurant and services offered (<https://www.sawatdee.com/our-story>). Of their five locations, this one is considered headquarters; it opened in East Town in 1986. She thanked the community for its support and coupons were made available at everyone's table.

Collison then welcomed Jacquie Berglund and her Finnovation Lab team for becoming new members of the ETBP. The Lab, a social business incubator and accelerator (<https://finn-lab.com/>), is located on the top floor of Finnegan's House & Brewery at 817 5th Avenue South.

Then he extended gratitude to the platinum sponsors who enable the organization to build capacity and infrastructure to accomplish its goals:

➤ Allied Parking

- American Academy of Neurology
- CenterPoint Energy
- Clear Channel Outdoor
- Community Housing Development Corporation
- Delta Dental
- ESG Architects
- Hennepin Healthcare
- House of Charity
- Kraus-Anderson
- Minnesota Vikings
- Padilla
- People Serving People
- Sherman-Williams
- Thrivent Financial
- U.S. Bank
- Wells Fargo

The ETBP is a convening, champion, and celebrator of the neighborhoods of Elliot Park and Downtown East which includes the Mill District, and always thrilled to invite more people to its forums, which are sometimes shared with the Minneapolis Downtown Council and take place at various venues throughout the district. Collison invited the audience to participate by either serving on the Board – it recently elected five new directors at the April annual meeting – or by participating on one of its committees (e.g., Business Forum Development and Events; Membership, Marketing and Communication) that meet every other month.

Following are some upcoming Wheel of Fortune events:

- *Thursday, June 20, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.:* Joint Forum with MDC|Toward an Inclusive Downtown at Ryan Companies, 533 South 3rd Street (<https://easttownmpls.org/etbp-mdc-joint-business-forum-on-june-20-at-ryan-companies/>). This will be the last ETBP forum of the season and it will be about what was learned from the year-long Inclusive Downtown Think Tank held with the YMCA at its Equity Innovation Center, and Impact Lives.
- Should have received the 2019 Final Four Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey. We want to improve as a downtown so please fill it out at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZKKQ6W9?fbclid=IwAR3LCTsLs22NtqloHWzsVSPwZAI2Gvha4qJhfCsE8HpkX_S7TBLrA7Vn35s.
- *Saturday-Sunday, May 18-19, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.:* Doors Open Minneapolis, free, behind-the-scenes access to more than 110 buildings across Minneapolis (<https://www.doorsopenminneapolis.org/>).
- *Tuesday, June 11, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.:* In partnership with the DMNA and EPNI, a Personal Safety, Awareness and Self Defense Training at The Commons with Minneapolis Police Department Crime Prevention Specialist René Allen, and Gail Boxrud and Dante Pastrano of Krav Maga Minneapolis (<https://kravmagampls.com/gail-and-dante>).
- *Sunday, June 2, 8:30-11:30 a.m.:* Downtown Run Around 5K by Mile in My Shoes at Father Hennepin Park (<http://www.mileinmyshoes.mn/2019-downtown-run-around>).
- *Spring & Fall:* Plan It! Entrepreneur Training Classes by Neighborhood Development Center in partnership with Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc., at Impact Hub MSP (<http://www.ndc-mn.org/what-we-do/business-training/>).
- *Wednesday, June 19, 9:00-10:00 a.m.:* 1 Million Cups Minneapolis, a bi-weekly event that brings together entrepreneurs and the Minneapolis community over coffee and conversation at Impact Hub

MSP (<https://www.1millioncups.com/minneapolis>).

- *Wednesday, June 5, 5:00 p.m.:* Coffee with Ward 3 Council Member Steve Fletcher at Five Watt Coffee, 816 East Hennepin Avenue (<https://www.facebook.com/events/2274702022552134/>)
- Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Events. Visit <http://www.thedmna.org/> for information on the Board meeting on May 28th, Land Use Committee on June 10th; monthly Saturday cleanups held jointly with the North Loop Neighborhood Association through September 28th; and DMNA Days at Mill City Farmers Market.
- For help in navigating City Hall with your business questions, visit the Minneapolis Business Portal at <https://business.minneapolismn.gov/> designed to connect entrepreneurs and small business owners to the information and resources needed to plan, launch and grow a business.

II. Spotlight Presentations

- A. Why We Love Elliot Park Neighborhood.** EPNI Executive Director Vanessa Haight advised they have a Master Plan that was created in 2003 (http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/planning/cped_elliott-master-plan), and with all the development that's happening in the neighborhood it's outdated, so they're doing a new community vision and encouraged everyone to participate in an interactive survey at https://www.elliottpark.org/community_vision.

EPNI President Kim Forbes thanked the ETBP for allowing them to share why they ❤️ Elliot Park Neighborhood (<https://easttownmpls.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/051619-ETBP-Presentation-We-Heart-Elliot-Park-Email-Version.pdf>). She focused on the history of EP by giving a visual tour of its location, boundaries within the newly branded East Town district, and how it transitioned from a once fashionable place to live to a struggling neighborhood due to the construction of freeways, flight to suburbia, and the loss of 54% of its population by the 1970s. Following this population loss and disinvestment, a group of dedicated residents came together in 1979 and formed Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc., which focused primarily on revitalization to bring the neighborhood back to life. In the 1980s they began the Neighborhood Improvement Company (NIC) which allowed them to build and renovate 500+ units of housing, e.g., Old Town in Town Housing Cooperative (<https://oldtownintowncoop.org/>) and Elliot East Flats. And in 1990, the City of Minneapolis established the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (<http://www.nrp.org/>) which funded the type of work EPNI had already begun. She described how those funds were invested, which was the beginnings of its renaissance today.

Haight then described their priorities going forward:

- 1. Influencing development.** Take the community vision survey.
- 2. Improving safety.** Arranged a Personal Safety Training at The Commons in June; working with CM Abdi Warsame on pedestrian crossing at 11th Avenue.
- 3. Addressing community issues.** Could use our help in finding similar businesses to occupy space CVS will vacated. Working on food access and have secured a grant from Head Waters.

Thanks to a grant from the City, they're planning an Elliot Park Block Party on Saturday, September 21st, 12:00-6:00 p.m. with the businesses along South 10th Street featuring live music, food and art (https://www.facebook.com/ElliotParkArtsQuarter/?ref=py_c). However, they are seeking sponsorship so we'll hear from her soon.

Lastly, she described the ways in which to become involved: sign up for monthly e-news; volunteer; introduce others; and make a donation.

Collison advised, as the ETBP celebrates its 40th year, Elliot Park will be a key feature presentation in

the next business forum cycle.

B. Bus Rapid Transit in East Town. Charles Carlson, Director of BRT Projects, advised in less than a month they'll be launching their next BRT (<https://www.metrotransit.org/brt>), the 8-1/2 mile, \$37 million C Line from Brooklyn Center into downtown Minneapolis at South 7th Street and Park Avenue. The first BRT was the A Line on Snelling Avenue which was very successful, and the D Line on Chicago and Emerson-Fremont Avenues is right around the corner.

After displaying a night photo of the restored and relit Blossoms of Hope bus shelter at Penn and Broadway taken at an event last week (<https://easttownmpls.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Met-Transit-Presentation-2019-05-16-EastTown2-Email-Version.pdf>), he gave an overview of the BRT system and its goals. It's a big upgrade to today's bus service in usability and attractiveness, not a tear everything out and start over like an LRT project. The way they're executing their goals is by having less frequent stops, pre-boarding fare payments, work with traffic signals for fewer red-light delays, use higher-capacity buses with boarding through all doors, enhanced stations, and frequent all-day service. This combination is what was brought on the A Line resulting in a 32% increase in the first year after it opened and have since grown to around 42% before BRT.

Service, deploying all electric buses, begins Saturday, June 8th at 10:00 a.m. Then he extended an invitation to all to spread the word and join in the festivities.

III. Crime and Safety, Sentencing, and Restorative Justice

Collison stated crime and safety is a topic that's frequently on the minds of downtown residents, workers and visitors and we're privileged to have three remarkable voices who are working on a national-, citywide-, and neighborhood-level scope. Then he introduced the panelists by providing a brief biography on each:

- Mark Osler, Professor of Law at University of St. Thomas (<https://www.stthomas.edu/media/schooloflaw/facultystaff/cvpdf/OslerCV.pdf> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Osler).
- Mary Ellen Heng, Deputy City Attorney for the Criminal Division at the City of Minneapolis (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/news/employees/WCMSP-194605>), received her Juris Doctor degree at Indiana State University in 1995. After working briefly as legal editor at West Publishing, she joined the City's Attorney Office in July 1997 as a Prosecuting Attorney for the Criminal Division, and in 2012 was appointed as the Criminal Division Deputy.
- Tina Sigel, Program Manager at Restorative Justice Community Action (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tina-sigel-pcc-a929623>).

Osler explained the mega-narrative with crime in the United States between 1993 and now is violent and property crimes have been cut in half. There's been a dramatic, nationally consistent, steady drop in crime and that's been seen in a lot of different places – urban and rural – and there's a lot of debate as to why that's happening. What's fascinating to him is Americans don't perceive there's been a drop; what's masked is what has gone right. In terms of the national discourse, starting 10-15 years ago there's been a break from what had been a consistent model of retributive, i.e., harshness in punishment and turning away from rehabilitation. In American history, much of our current network of criminal law grew up in a time of social movement that emphasized rehabilitation and why they're called "correctional" facilities; however, in the 1960s and 70s we moved away from that and gave up on the idea of rehabilitation.

Osler read that former VP Joe Biden said the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violent_Crime_Control_and_Law_Enforcement_Act) didn't cause less incarceration, and Biden's right. This Act, one of many, and others that have greater impact, caused an increase in incarceration mostly at the state level. The deeper tragedy is this particular Act eliminated Pell Grants for higher education for those incarcerated. There's nothing that correlates to the reduction in recidivism more strongly than education in prison, but because we didn't want to give college to those imprisoned Pell Grants were cut.

What we've seen more recently is an opening to rehabilitation as a model, and the truth is we've seen a reduction in incarceration nationally in the last 5 years; we peaked about 2.3 million and now we're down about 1.8 million, so things are getting better. There's a lot of rhetoric and demography coming out of Washington about murder rates in Chicago; in 2017 it was half of that in Baltimore. However, this is a time of opportunity. Although he didn't get around to it until the last 3 years of his administration, President Obama focused on police practices and presented models for communities to follow; began to work towards an educational model within prisons; and a significant clemency initiative.

There is reason for hope even as much as we hear from the Trump administration very tough on crime form of rhetoric, if you look at what they do it's different from what they say, e.g., we'd have a lot of federal cases leaking down in states where marijuana was legal, and that just didn't happen. In fact, in January 2019 the First Step Act passed (<https://www.brennancenter.org/blog/how-first-step-act-became-law-and-what-happens-next>), and they are having productive talks with the White House about how to reform the clemency process. Additional reasons for hope with this administration include there's a significant advocate within the inner circle who is a criminal justice reformer, Jeremy Cushing. And the break on reform has always been the Department of Justice and when it weighs in it's always with the status quo or for tougher sentences; however, this administration doesn't care what the GOP thinks and in Osler's advocacy group they've seen what a difference this can make and it's important to make it a part of the dialogue with those running for president.

Heng advised in her 22 years as a prosecutor she could corroborate what Osler has presented. In the early 2000s, her office was prosecuting over 40,000 adult-only petty misdemeanor, misdemeanor, and gross misdemeanor criminal cases. The Hennepin County Attorney's Office prosecutes felony level criminal cases, or cases involving juvenile offenders (person under 18 years of age). The crimes Heng's talking about in reform work, for the most part, are at the nonviolent lower level. In the early 2000s when she was younger and had more energy, they were handling 40,000-45,000 cases with about the same number of attorneys they have today, i.e., 30; however, the case load has steadily gone down in the past couple years to 15,000, which she attributes to how they changed the way they look at crime.

In 2016 she was asked to be a part of the adult detention initiative; she was skeptical because she thought they'd talk about a lot of great things but would walk away with nothing done. Much to her surprise, it was a very collaborative group with all the major players in the criminal justice system. They met privately and educated themselves about the system; if you don't practice in the misdemeanor world you don't realize how complicated it is. In some ways, felonies are much simpler and cleaner. Through this work with Hennepin County they looked at some serious issues (<http://www.startribune.com/in-new-push-hennepin-county-aims-to-keep-low-level-nonviolent-offenders-out-of-jail/391510311/>), and she was charged with looking at bench warrants (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@attorney/documents/webcontent/wcmsp-216118.pdf>). It doesn't do any good if police are enforcing crime, citing people, issuing tickets, even bringing them to jail and being released because if they don't show up for court the County Attorney's Office staff can't do their job, so they're motivated to look at why people aren't coming to court and how to get them to court. They discovered between the time of getting the ticket and the court date going out, over 70% of the summonses came back as returned mail so people had bench warrants and didn't know they had to come to court. They initiated sign release forms so if you don't come to court under summons, when the police encounter you, instead of taking you to jail to post bail, they give you a court date for 3 days later. Because of this practice, 73% began to show up at court; it's a simple change to help avoid the dire consequences low income individuals encounter when they're incarcerated and fail to make bail.

Heng recalled when they went to NYC to study some of their behavior health initiatives, and while there they visited the Midway Community Court (<https://www.courtinnovation.org/programs/midtown-community-court>) which started this whole process and what struck her group was how it used social workers, instead of probation officers, who reported to the court what happened. When Heng's group returned, because of MCC's success, it began a similar program informally and have had success. Now this nontraditional model has been established formally as Restorative Court (<http://www.startribune.com/hennepin-county-creating->

[restorative-court-to-help-people-charged-with-minor-crimes/502881731/](#)). It's a different approach and they're hoping to get some of these people that they see repeatedly out of the criminal justice system.

Sigel described what RJCA is, a nonprofit providing community-based restorative services throughout Hennepin County that focuses on the needs of the victims, the offenders and the involved communities to identify solutions that promote repair, reconciliation and rebuilding of relationships. This is accomplished through the Community Conferencing Process (<https://www.rjca-inc.org/637-2/>) with system and community partners.

Last year, offences in the 1st Precinct were down. From February through December they saw a total of 46 referrals, 37 of which were misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor drug court, and 9 were in the interact program where those that are charged with obstruction of police officers performing their duty have the opportunity to sit across the table from a representative from the MPD. Thirty-five of the 46 adults enrolled in their program, 30 attended the conference, 22 successfully completed, 2 are still in process, and 6 were unsuccessful.

Thereafter, the panelists responded to a few questions from the audience. For more information, contact Osler at 651-962-4852 or Mark.Osler@stthomas.edu; Sigel at 612-746-0780 or tsigel@rjca-inc.org or visit <https://www.rjca-inc.org/>

IV. Closing Remarks

Collison thanked the audience for attending, the Sawatdee for hosting, and the panelists for presenting and reminded everyone to attend the June 20th joint forum with the MDC at Ryan Companies.