

**PARK COMMITTEE**  
Thursday, October 17, 2013  
4 - 5:30 p.m.  
Room 333 City Hall

*Meeting Minutes*

**Committee members present:** Chairs: Tom Fisher, David Wilson. Members: Lester Bagley, Bruce Chamberlain, Dan Collison, David Fields, Lisa Goodman, Brent Hanson, Diane Hofstede, Barbara Johnson, Michele Kelm-Helgen, Eric Laska, Aron Lipkin, Brian Pietsch, Mike Ryan, R.T. Rybak, Matt Tucker, Trent Tucker

**Committee members excused:** Hussein Ahmed, Penny Hunt, Peggy Lucas, Peter McLaughlin, David Miller, Jim Norkosky

**Guests:** Jeff Anderson, Minnesota Vikings; Lynn Regnier, Elliot Park Neighborhood; Josh Grenier, Fox 9; Tom Lyden, Fox 9; Varun Kharbanda

**Staff/consultants present:** Hilary Dvorak, Beth Elliot, Peter Ginder, Heidi Hamilton, Steve Kotke, Kjersti Monson, Jennifer O'Rourke, Brian Schaffer, Marsha Wagner

1. **Welcome and Introductions.** Mayor Rybak called the meeting to order at 4:07. He invited Park Committee members and guests to identify themselves and their affiliations.
2. **Mayor's Comments on the Park and its Role in the Broader Vision for Downtown East.** Mayor Rybak began by saying that it takes a lot of different brains and a lot of different ideas to get this project done. There are two realities: (1) we live in a city that has the greatest park system in the country, and (2) we have the Grand Round, but the problem is that it's around, not through. Downtown has not benefited; we need parks in the center of town.

There will be two big public gestures right now: Nicollet Mall, which we want to be a greener experience, and the other is this project. There has not been a chance to do a grand park like this in the Mayor's lifetime. He encouraged the Committee to make no small plans; this is not the time to think small. He envisions a park with open, flexible space that will operate 365 days a year, not just on game days. The responsibility and challenge is to do that within a realistic budget.

3. **City Council Resolution** [Appendix A]. City Council President Barbara Johnson was pleased to see that the meeting packet included the Stadium Implementation Committee's Vision and Principles. [Appendix B] The Resolution creating and appointing representatives to the Park Committee, dated July 19, 2013, charges the Park Committee to achieve the following goals: (1) guide plans for the development of a new park in Downtown East, and (2) participate in review and comment periods at milestone moments during the Downtown East Small Area Plan update process. Even though Council Member Goodman initiated a moratorium on surface parking lots, there are still a shocking number of parking lots in downtown Minneapolis. She is looking forward to this exciting project, especially how it involves increased light rail traffic with the Central Corridor coming online.
4. **Legal Aspects: Review of City Policies on Data Practices and Ethics.** Peter Ginder, City Attorney, reminded the Park Committee members that this falls under the purview of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13, which allows public access to certain government data. That includes but is not limited to meeting notes—handwritten, on an iPad, in any form—and written communications. If a request for data comes in, that data must be provided and

must not be destroyed. Also, the Ethics Ordinance applies to Park Committee members. Mr. Ginder said that all city employees go through ethics training. He provided a link to the online training [<http://mpls-ethics.appspot.com/main>], and suggested that Committee members take the training and get certified.

## 5. Existing Conditions and Planning Overview.

- a. Kjersti Monson, Director of Long Range Planning, Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED), presented an overview of the park site, context and encumbrances. [Map-Appendix C; Park Site and Context-Appendix D] The site includes the Mill District, Elliot Park and Cedar-Riverside. Relevant infrastructure improvements are planned on Fourth Street and Seventh Street before the Stadium and Ryan/Wells Fargo development are completed in 2016. Fifth Street will be freed up, and Fourth Street will be narrowed. Mayor Rybak added that the exit from St. Paul will be on Seventh Street, not Fifth Street, and will connect to the West Bank. The Ryan Project has been approved, a park usage agreement will soon be reached with the Vikings, and additional development is expected in the near term.

The project area, including light rail and the Stadium, is 3.4 acres total (1-2/3 blocks). Each block is 330x330 feet, or approximately 2 acres per city block. To give a sense of scale, Bryant Park in New York is 6 acres; Rice Park in St. Paul is 2 acres; Post Office Square in Boston is 1.7 acres. Bryant Park contains a great lawn, canopy of trees, is highly programmed and money generating; it sits on top of the library vault. Rice Park is primarily hardscaped. Post Office Square is built on top of below-grade parking.

The context of the park is that it will abut buildings, the mixed use towers (300+ feet tall) of the Ryan/Wells Fargo project and other development. Abutting buildings with ground floor activation will enhance the park. Mayor Rybak mentioned that the owner of the Armory has plans to make it more of a public space for entertainment, concerts, other events. Residential development includes restaurants and other public use spaces, bringing more people into the area day and night. The prime site is the corner of the Stadium and the LRT station.

- b. Beth Elliot, Principal City Planner, CPED, presented on relevant existing plans and the Small Area Plan update process. [Appendix E] For policy guidance, she cited the comprehensive plan for the City, the [Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth](#), which will help the Committee make good decisions. Additional guidance will come from Small Area Plans.

Some of the plans envisioned a new Vikings Stadium, but not the Ryan development or a park. The three plans – [Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan](#), [Historic Mills District Master Plan Update](#), and [Elliot Park Neighborhood Master Plan](#) – all talk about connections. These plans, along with the [East Downtown Parking Lot Study](#), offer a lot to work with, and to make them a reality the Committee must eliminate surface parking, focus on public realm improvements, and reduce demand for parking. The Ryan Project is making their numbers work by including a parking garage, and lowering the need for parking will come through public transit improvements.

## 6. Objectives and Deliverables.

Tom Fisher and David Wilson, who jointly led the inaugural meeting of the Park Committee, explained that moving forward they will trade off chairing the meetings.

Co-Chair David Wilson said the first thing the Park Committee must determine – in accommodating a stadium and mixed-use residential/office space – is what do we want Downtown East to be? It gets complicated: uses, costs, winter as well as summer, public safety, constraints environmentally with

streets cutting through the park, programming, amenities. The other thing is how to build and maintain amenities. There are some funds for building out the park, but are there other sources: grants from environmental organizations, philanthropic funds, City of Minneapolis, and others? The last consideration is maintenance. We can build a beautiful park but will it deteriorate and become unsafe, like Peavey Plaza? It needs to be long-term sustainable. The Stadium Implementation Committee's (SIC) Vision & Principles [Appendix B] will be a good first step as we move forward.

- 7. Committee Roundtable.** Co-Chair David Wilson invited the Park Committee members to tell the others why they agreed to join the Park Committee.

**Matt Turner** – Happy to be on the Committee to develop a great open space within Downtown. Can share experience and knowledge of other great spaces in the United States where he has had boots on the ground during construction. Suggests working the schedule backward: 2016 game day, milestones, construction schedule.

**Brian Pietsch** – Creating more open spaces where they can meet with friends and kids. Viability, maintenance.

**Kjersti Monson** – This is a huge global event and amazing civic moment. Wants to see densification of this district, from conception to completion. From a city planning perspective, this is a pilot project for livability, looking at growth, competing for jobs and residents.

**Aron Lipkin** – He was 21 years old when he met with the owner of the armory, and had a vision of two lacrosse fields in that facility. Wants to see more playable space in Minneapolis. Lacrosse connects with kids from outside the city, and connects different people. This is an opportunity to celebrate how diverse our community is, and create a vital space Downtown.

**Michelle Keml-Helgen** – Wearing her Stadium Authority hat, she has had meetings with the NCAA about Final Four and other events. The park space was of huge interest and excitement, and it would also be a huge advantage when competing for international events. It will make marketing easier. Speaking as a resident, she thinks Bryant Park feels urban and cool and wonderful, with restaurants and coffee shops abutting the park. In talking to fellow residents, the possibility of a cross-country ski loop around the Stadium has come up. None of this is terribly expensive; there are lots of possibilities.

**Eric Laska** – His family moved Downtown when they could rent out to others their house but not their condominium. Believes that density will save the City. This area is their backyard. Moving downtown has brought about lifestyle changes; they walk to work, entertainment. They would love to see a park for families.

**Barb Johnson** – Would like to see the park replace what is there. This is the first project to allow high buildings outside of the Downtown core. This development and LRT complement work being done on the riverfront, brings everything together.

**Diane Hofstede** – The SIC's Vision and Principles is a good first step. Minneapolis is competing with other cities for conventions, Super Bowl. It needs something that distinguishes us, separates us from other cities. Minneapolis has always been a leader; this will set us apart from others.

**Brent Hanson** – Opportunity to create destination in Minneapolis. Stadium will be awesome on game day, but is interested in what happens the other six days a week. What can we do 12 months a year?

**Trent Tucker** – Has lived in New York City, and believes this park will take us to the next level. The NCAA loves Minneapolis; this will bring in Final Four and other events, making Minneapolis a first class city.

**David Fields** – On the park, offered his observation that he hopes it doesn't get carved up trying to satisfy too many constituencies. Would like to see it having "rooms" for different activities, i.e. tables with chess boards. He is ambivalent about closing Park and Portland, losing connections from Elliot Park to the River. The largest assignment is that the public realm goes beyond the park. He proposed that this district be referred to as East Downtown; Downtown East is a neighborhood.

**Dan Collison** – Sees a benefit from creating a district field, with microparks from the River to Elliot Park. On an emotional level is drawn to this space like he is to Father Hennepin Park, which is used for movies, weddings, bike paths. Should be as flexible as possible. How can we think of maneuverability: skyways, new Wells Fargo campus, greening initiative, interact with Armory both indoors and outdoors. It's about making connections in unique ways.

**Lester Bagley** – Lots of exciting ideas around the table; great ideas, balance. We have the space to make this an exciting experience. With a modest budget available, we need to raise money. Create year-round space that is programmable. Connectivity – Elliot Park to the riverfront.

**Mayor Rybak** – Wants to see this be a common ground, for the richest as well as poorest people. Minneapolis has the largest Somali population in the country, a growing Latino population, there's a private college with a religious base, the University of Minnesota is nearby, and the Downtown workforce. Where does that come together? This is a phenomenal opportunity for common ground.

**Tom Fisher** – Parks are successful, but you have to look at the edges. Outsiders will have first vision of Downtown Minneapolis from the LRT station.

**David Wilson** – Works for a technology consulting company, but his passion is cities. Grew up in Detroit, which in the 1950s was the most successful city in the United States but has now failed. One challenge is getting people to move to Minneapolis, and a wonderful downtown core is essential. Very focused on Downtown, how it connects to broader city, schools. Involved with Greening and Public Realm in the Downtown Council's Downtown 2025 Plan. Minneapolis is underinvested in parks Downtown; wants to see more investment in public realm Downtown.

To sum up, each Park Committee member was asked for a brief phrase or word to describe what they see as most important:

Matt Tucker – schedule

Aron Lipkin – connecting kids across region, different types of people

Michelle Kelm-Helgen – how to help Stadium compete nationally and internationally

Erik Laska – family-friendly

Barb Johnson – density

Dianne Hofstede – help us compete for conventions

Brent Hanson – destination

Lester Bagley – game day experience (65,000 people are downtown for a typical game; most not from the city)

## 8. Staff Recommendations on Committee Meeting Schedule Through End of Year.

Thursday, November 14

Thursday, December 12

**9. Next Meeting.** Bruce Chamberlain, Assistant Superintendent for Planning, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, will be speaking next month.

Co-Chair Tom Fisher gave the Park Committee members the assignment to read the SIC's Vision and Principles before the November meeting.

**10. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 5:42 p.m.