

HILLCREST REDEVELOPMENT URBAN DESIGN WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes | Thursday, January 20, 2022

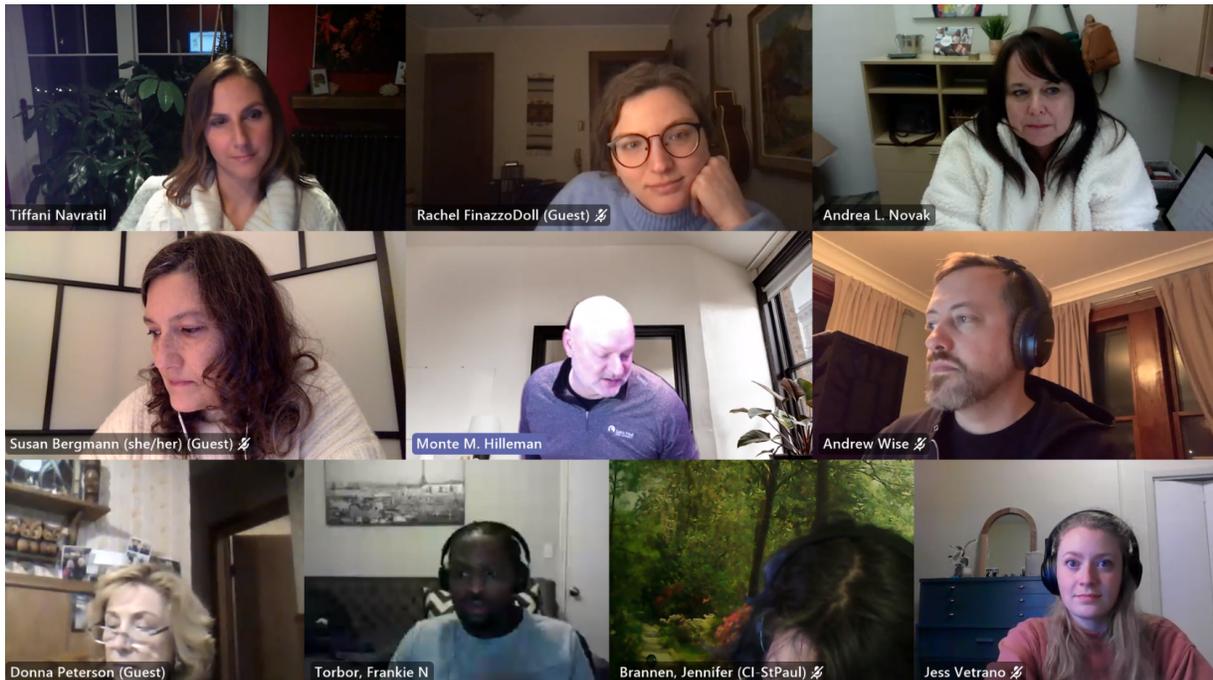
Attendees

- Andrew Wise
- Donna Peterson
- Frankie Tabor
- Jennifer Brannen
- Serenity Jones
- Susan Bergmann
- Rachel Finazzo-Doll
- Monte Hilleman
- Andrea Novak
- Jess Vetrano
- Tiffani Navatril

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Team Introductions

After a brief introduction by Andrea Novak, each member of the facilitating team and the urban design workgroup provided a background on their story and what brought them to this team



- Donna Peterson is from White Bear Lake** but now resides in Maplewood just blocks from the Hillcrest property. She worked as both a teacher and a real estate agent.
- Susan Bergmann has been on the east side of St. Paul for 25 years** and now lives southeast of Lake Phalen. She recently received her master's degree in urban and regional planning from the U and is very excited to apply this knowledge to something so close to her home. She was drawn to earth, science, and people description that Tiffani provided at the beginning.

- c. **Andrew Wise is a transplant from the east side of Philly**/the east coast in general and went to RISD for architecture. He now works in Minneapolis on multifamily housing. He lives less than a mile north of the Hillcrest site in North St. Paul near the Goodrich Golf Course and drives past the site almost every day. He's lived in the St. Paul area for over 5 years and is married to a Minnesotan who said St. Paul was their only option. He is also a Planning Commissioner in North St. Paul.
- d. **Jennifer Brannen lived in St. Paul for 10 years** before leaving for North Carolina but then returned. She now works at the St. Paul Public Library and has been for the past six years. She is the branch manager on Hayden Avenue which is in the thick of this site's impact. She loves the eastside neighborhood and would love to learn from past mistakes to reknit this corner of the community. Her branch of the library is going through their own redesign process right now and wants to make sure that process responds to what is happening on the Hillcrest site.
- e. **Rachel Finazzo-Doll was a CAC member for the master plan process**, so she is very familiar with this site already. She acted as the liaison between the CAC and the great eastside council. She was an urban studies major at the U before moving to St. Paul six years ago. She understands the impact of the built environment and wants to reverse the negative impacts urban design has had on the eastside neighborhood in the past.
- f. **Frankie Torbor has lived on the eastside of St. Paul for a little less than a year** and was drawn here due to his girlfriend. After growing up in the western suburbs of Minneapolis (Brooklyn Park/Center), he went to Iowa for urban planning. He saw a master plan published by Cunningham Group and was excited to learn more about urban design and apply it to his own new neighborhood.
- g. **Serenity Jones has been in the eastside neighborhood for 2 years** and was motivated to join this group to find out more about what's going on in her community.
- h. **Julie Guzman lives in Maplewood** about a block in a half away from the Hillcrest site and has been here for 28 years. She loves the neighborhood and community and wanted to join this team to address her fellow neighbor's concerns about how this site is being developed and ensure it is a positive for the community.
- i. A couple of committee members are renters and business owners in the community but were unable to make it to this evening's meeting.

2. Overview of Project, workgroup role, and timeline

- a. Overview of the Port Authority and the Hillcrest Site
 - i. A main goal of the Port is to expand the community's tax base, and advancing sustainable design and equitable development – specifically for Hillcrest, the Port aims to bring 1,000 new jobs to the eastside and establish it as a carbon free community

- ii. This group will look at the urban design aspects of reaching these goals, while a separate work group will look specifically at sustainability
 - iii. The Port bought the Hillcrest site in 2019, after it had been a private golf course originally established for the Jewish community
 - iv. After establishing the site was heavily contaminated with mercury due to a fungicide that had been applied through the 80s
 - v. A Market study established that this site had the potential to provide 1,000 jobs and 1,000 housing units, and that figure was based on previous figures for what can be delivered based on building square footages
 - vi. The master plan is currently going through the Planning Commission, and will be presented to the City Council in May – this document is the roadmap/broad strokes of what is possible at a land use level and how these spaces relate to each other
 - vii. Does contain some aspirational language regarding stormwater and sustainability
- b. Role of the Urban Design Work Group
- i. Take what has already been established and guide decision making to make this development appropriate for the eastside community
 - ii. The group will establish three major projects: design guidelines that inform the Hillcrest covenants, establish additional documentation recommending the groups findings and priorities, have documented conversations that are publicly available on the Port's website (minute minutes and recorded conversations)
 - iii. A google doc will be shared with the group to help guide the process and collect deliverables
 - iv. Unlike a typical, text heavy/legal lingo covenant document, we hope to create something that is more graphically forward and understandable
 - v. Public covenants are not bound to time restrictions, and are therefore very durable, and are above city zoning code requiring better design, more sustainability, etc.
- c. The L-1 zoning code was re-written with the help of the Port Authority to be a transitional industrial zone that elevates the required level of design and construction
- d. Allows the public and the private to meet in the middle and provide better design

3. Master Plan Objectives

- a. Driven by the City's Comprehensive Plan, which is a long-term planning and land use document required by the Met Council once every 10 years, a Master Plan is required for opportunity sites ripe for redevelopment

- b. Mercury remediation is the most pressing priority for this property, as the chemical is present at levels and quantities that are unsafe to both people and the environment
 - i. Clean-up is regulated by the MN Ag Department and the MN Pollution Control Agency
 - ii. There is contamination from other chemicals and incidents as well
 - iii. The State of Minnesota has led the country in finding tools and processes that assist in cleaning up these contaminated sites
- c. Identifies goal of 1,000 jobs and 1,000 dwelling units (55 acres of Light Industrial and 25 acres of housing)
- d. 15 acres of passive open space and 5 acres of city park are also required on the site
 - i. These figures are based on established Floor Area Ratios (FARs), which are the typical unit of measure development potential of site.
 - ii. Wetlands across the site must be cleaned and returned, all of one of which are contaminated, present both a major challenge and an opportunity when laying out the site
- e. The MP community engagement process touched over 1,000 people over the past three years, and engaged a variety of advisory committees and public agencies
- f. LEED for communities was identified as the most important sustainability criteria to follow and achieve for this site – a topic that will be covered at a greater length by the Sustainability Workgroup
 - i. This site is aiming to achieve Platinum certification
- g. Arts and Employment District
 - i. Industrial buildings want to be big, dumb boxes from a functional standpoint, and previous efforts have aimed to dress these boxes up architecturally – this concept challenges that by focusing the resources on art and landscape that better activate the space and connect it to the community while keeping the building itself simple and efficient
 - ii. Activation of the surrounding properties with housing and businesses appeal to business owners
- h. Street Design Standards
 - i. Defined both by the St. Paul Street Design Manual and the Hillcrest Master Plan
 - ii. Much of the ROW sequence/sizing/safety is already established, but there is still design available within these parameters based on this group's input
- i. Timeline
 - i. Master plan approval by April/May, which will allow site preparations to begin (grading/remediation)
 - ii. Late 2023 could be when building/site construction begin

iii. Occupancy as soon as late 2024

4. Basic Principles of Urban Design

- a. Learn from what has gone wrong in the past
- b. Basic guiding principles to keep in mind
 - i. Not too chaotic, not too ordered
 - ii. Excessive disorder lacks relationships, wayfinding, sense (Houston, TX has no zoning code, resulting in a skyscraper next to a strip mall covered in pavement)
 - iii. Excessive order lacks character and results in a soul-less space (Lingshui County, China example, where you can't distinguish your house from the next)
 - iv. Goal is to find middle ground (Stockholm, Sweden example), with consistency yet character
 - v. The zoning code already aims to regulate this appropriately – goal for this group is to understand the existing requirements, and how/if we want to go above and beyond
 - 1. Example would be regularizing the setback that is allowed to be between 10-25' but could be made more strict
- c. Visible Life
 - i. Lifeless areas lack human-scaled elements, doesn't invite gathering, often designed for cars first and foremost (City Hall, Boston example)
 - ii. Putting people/activity/life on display at all times of day is more inviting (Grand Ave Example)
- d. Compact
 - i. Density is always more successful in the long run as opposed to sprawl, for both energy efficiencies and human interaction
 - ii. Density does NOT always mean tall
 - iii. Missing middle housing is a huge problem nationally, and Hillcrest is an opportunity to provide it
- e. Scale
 - i. Optimal density lies at 5-6 stories, where they can still speak to both each other and pedestrians, but offer the density needed
 - ii. New York example shows how vastly out of scaled buildings can make you feel dwarfed and out of place/not welcome, while the Paris example shows how the cohesive scale speaks to both each other and humans
- f. Make it Local
 - i. Potentially the most challenging
 - ii. Most suburban development could be from anywhere and found everywhere

- iii. Using local materials, building practices, materials individualize a development to it's place and create local pride
- iv. Beacon Bluff salvaged limestone from original development and reused it throughout interpretive elements
- g. Cost is an umbrella factor: how can we strike a balance between requiring a high level of design without pricing these parcels out of the market
- h. Design Scale Framework
 - i. Four different scales to think in mind as we establish our guidelines: Streets, Blocks, Lots, Buildings
 - ii. All these scales are defined by a variety of regulatory documents, that should be familiarized to understand what our roll is in this process
 - iii. While Streets and Blocks are pretty set in stone based on the Master Plan, Lots and Buildings have not yet been established

5. Design Standards

- a. Ford Site provides an example of what design standards look like on a local level
- b. How can we use these standards to illustrate the neighborhood we want to live in/interact with?

6. Community Engagement So Far

- a. $\frac{3}{4}$ of those surveyed want to own
 - b. Mix of housing types desired at affordable rates with opportunities to increase home values and support family development
 - c. Trail amenities was the most sought-after neighborhood landscape amenity, with gardens/benches/water, park equipment, gazebos/picnic tables following
 - d. Public art should reflect the neighborhood's rich culture, and would like some to be interactive/usable
 - e. Sustainability was popular in access to parks/open space and opportunities to reduce energy impacts
 - f. Residents want access to living wages, many job opportunities, adequate staffing, and racial equity in the workplace
7. Eastside funders group has created the eastside employment exchange made up of 12 organizations that develop the work side of the equation providing the opportunity for local development/recruitment
- a. Building more employment centers near existing workforce centers feeds into the existing economy (unlike amazon, etc. building out in Shakopee)

8. Homework

- a. Spend some time thinking about a place (building, landscape, etc.), find a picture of it, and explain why you find it inspiring and where it might fit in with Hillcrest – dream big!
- b. Think about the node!
- c. Email to Tiffani at tiffani.navratil@lhbcorp.com

This constitutes my understanding of items discussed and decisions reached. If there are any omissions or discrepancies, please notify the author in writing. Jess.Vetrano@lhbcorp.com