

HILLCREST REDEVELOPMENT URBAN DESIGN WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes | Thursday, May 26, 2022

Attendees

- Andrew Wise
- Jennifer Brannen
- Julie Guzman
- Donna Peterson

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Port Authority offered their perspective on the Letter of Consensus, regarding the feasibility of each of the items
2. Group priorities
 - a. Modern ethos
 - b. Public property/ROW is a different conversation/enforcement than private – the covenants/consensus letter will be best enforced on private land
 - c. City council meeting on May 25th regarding interior wayfinding signage – Councilmember Yang expressed support
 - d. POPs identification is helpful – will be information provided to prospective buyers
 - i. Community amenities including language regarding space in the ROW puts some onus on the city to provide some of these preferences
 - ii. Maintenance push and pull between private and public owners
 - iii. Parkland dedication forgiveness comes with POPs
 - e. Number 10 and Number 4 are duplicated – condense into one
 - f. Wayfinding and interpretive signage throughout the ROW also ask City to contribute the same level as private to make this a special place
 - g. Green infrastructure district (GID) is a property tax assessment tool is another item the Port is tracking (in addition to Common Area Maintenance Fees)
 - h. Ecological function has been enhanced since previous covenants – has helped to have landscape architects leading this process
 - i. Retaining walls – including a list of example helps guide owner and design team on what is appropriate and what is not when initiated site design
3. Solar panels – sustainability community is very vocal in Saint Paul and dove tails nicely into this effort
4. High Density Residential
 - a. Questions regarding what the demand is for high density in general
 - i. Demand for senior housing has been expressed in market study
 - ii. Housing workgroup received over 70 applications, from which a group was selected in a similar process as the urban design workgroup
 - b. Dwelling unit variety
 - i. Requesting 4 different types of units within the building is not a guarantee due to lack of understanding/knowledge of if the marketplace will support it
 1. Was not flagged by housing development experts
 2. Regardless of if these items can be incorporated exactly as written, they will inform the development in invaluable ways, and will be carried forward in a multitude of ways
 - ii. Artist housing makes sense with the designation of arts and employment district
 - c. Building orientation
 - i. Makes sense to orient buildings toward the park

- ii. Building facades visible from public ROW should have high quality architectural treatments was specifically included in cases where there are blocks that require buildings that don't really have a "backyard"
 - d. Step backs
 - i. Unit count and unit financing is key to housing developments and losing half of the floor plate to a required step back might reduce development ability. will have to see how marketplace responds
 - e. Parking
 - i. Structured parking bonus makes a lot of sense
 - ii. Decoupling strategy might receive pushback from marketplace, but goal was to reduce total parking spaces going unused
- 5. Low Density Residential
 - a. Missing Middle Housing
 - i. Difference between medium scale multiplex and apartment building language is unclear – multiplexes are generally smaller/less units
 - ii. Visuals will help flush out confusion and in marketing to developers/owners
 - b. Dwelling Unit Variety
 - i. Math surrounding determining the mix of housing types might pose problems with phasing, funding, etc., but is in keeping with the overall goal of establishing a mixed block that isn't monocultural
 - ii. Thinking about how this variety spans ROW might need to be fine-tuned in the covenants
 - iii. Covenants are the rule of the land, and private developers will have to convince the Port to receive any variance from what is outlined
 - iv. Different colors/designs might also pose problems, particularly in affordable housing, due to efficiencies in replicating the same materials within the development
 - c. Front Yard Setback
 - i. Proposed by housing development expert but is in service to canopy tree and planting diversity establishment, but might be negotiated against in design review process
 - d. Front Yard Amenities
 - i. Have been required of commercial spaces for decades – only makes sense to translate to residential and activate that space as well
 - e. Alleys and Driveways
 - i. Phrasing of screening needs to consider CPTED requirements and ensure that it doesn't deter from the "eyes on the street" quality of urban spaces – neighbors able to look out for each other
- 6. Light Industrial
 - a. Building Orientation
 - i. Businesses want main entrances off of the parking lot for employees/customers, and other building considerations (loading docks, circulations, etc.) also dictate where entries can and can't go – will be consideration and likely will receive push back but "should" is a good word
 - b. Yard Setback
 - i. 25' wide landscape buffer could land in ROW or on private land – also will likely get pushback but will be a great amenity
 - ii. 15' landscape buffer around publicly accessible trail is a rule intended for primarily one condition, and intention is giving bikers another opportunity to go westbound or eastbound and potentially loop around wetlands – will require further conversations with City/County
 - c. Yard Characteristics

- i. First thought of Port was a precedent built by Opus that has a great patio/rest moment oriented toward Bruce Vento Trail – transparent access and interpretive signage
 - d. Arts and Employment district has heard nothing but support over the past two years
 - i. Hoping that money saved from lack of articulation requirements can go directly to mural implementation – allowing it to pay for itself
 - ii. Exterior building colors were intended to provide a bright and interesting façade even without murals/landscaping – again will spark pushback, but including a couple similar colors will offer variety even within the recommended palette
 - 1. Room for negotiation should be thought through – might be good to stick strongly to consistent palette to achieve cohesive feel
 - iii. Tower vestibule or white box around windows – could be opportunity for business to incorporate their own brand colors/feel. Building is often considered a billboard or extension of their brand.
 - iv. Mural percentages are good goals
 - e. Water Features
 - i. Can be problematic just due to Minnesota climate
 - ii. Appreciate noise mitigation qualities
 - f. Parking
 - i. Testing and feasibility required with site civils prior to covenant approval
- 7. Public Space
 - a. Community Amenities
 - i. Site furnishings help build the character of this place
 - ii. String lights – reflective of many main street treatments – 365 days a year
 - 1. Fargo project “The Lights”
 - iii. Wetlands as an accessible item is important to note – amenities for the public
 - b. Programming
 - i. “Varying levels of intimacy” – Silverwood Park on Silver Lake has this mix and is appreciated
 - ii. Walking loops might trigger some LEED for Communities points around active lifestyles
 - c. Traffic Calming Measures
 - i. Exceptions to the bump outs might be needed along Howard as well to accommodate truck radiuses for vehicles – alter language to accommodate all truck routes that ultimately exit on McKnight
 - ii. Tabled intersections with crosswalks will catch flack – is heartache for maintenance/public works but Port wants to leave it as it is a good goal
 - d. Planting Strategies
 - i. 18”-30”/36” is a big jump, but appreciate second bullet that defines 18” above curb not above grade allowing for taller plants in the stormwater installations
 - ii. Edible landscapes have never been done by the Port, but willing to explore
 - iii. Will be an open spaces workgroup that specifically engages Native voices
 - e. Stormwater
 - i. Engineers love “artistic” stormwater requirements
- 8. Other/Related Actions/Entities
 - a. Met Transit is aware but can’t act until site development begins
 - b. Parks Department inclusion of high point and complementing programming with topographical variation are both contentious

- i. Much discussion has been around the high point being considered a commendable natural feature, and important to point out that the language is inclusion not preservation
- 9. The housing workgroup will focus on all aspects of housing – physical structure, ownership model, etc. – and is a mix of property owners/developers and renters who represent a diversity of backgrounds but prioritized Saint Paul residents
 - a. First meeting will be June 9th
 - b. Guest facilitators/speakers across a myriad of development types (affordable, habitat, market rate, etc.) will be invited throughout the workgroup span and hopefully provide checks and balances from all perspectives
- 10. The Open Spaces workgroup will begin this fall
- 11. Site development hasn't begun yet but will soon – priority will be on demolition of the buildings
 - a. ROW along Winthrop has been treated like yard space for adjacent houses, but has always been City property. No homes will be impacted, but that land will be used to complete the Winthrop connection
- 12. Way for workgroup members to stay engaged – Port will ensure email lists will continue and further workgroup outcomes will be published/distributed
 - a. Future workgroups will be largely additive to previous materials – cannot contradict previous work
- 1.