

HILLCREST REDEVELOPMENT OUTDOOR SPACES WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes | Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Attendees

- Joan Huneke
- Melanie Richards
- Patty Gumbulsky
- Christopher Bauleke
- Sharon Wynne
- Ashley Torres Gurrola
- Mai Xiong
- Monte Hilleman, SPPA
- Andrea Novak, SPPA
- Laurie Siever, SPPA
- Ellen Stewart, City of Saint Paul
- Tiffani Navratil, LHB
- Lisa Theis, District 2
- Commander Kurt Hallstrom, SPPD

MEETING SUMMARY

1. The meeting kicked off with introductions
2. SPPA reacted to the workgroup's thoughts about The Hub and Beacon Bluff.
 - a. The Hub was SPPA's first Publicly Owned Private (POP) space and what was learned through this process will improve the process/results at The Heights.
 - b. What worked: Partnership with the Eastside Arts Council and local artists
 - c. What worked: Reuse of limestone found at the site
 - d. Challenge: The purpose of the site is not apparent, including the connection to 3M. *The original 3M campus was considered a historical site. Adding the interpretive panels, detailing the company's history, was a requirement for removing the buildings. The 3M Foundation paid for the printing.*
 - e. Challenge: The location makes it difficult for residents to park nearby and the proximity to downtown Saint Paul makes it susceptible to vandalism.
 - f. Lessons learned: At The Heights, accessibility and safety concerns will be discussed in greater detail.
 - i. SPPD has a staff member who provides this service to individual residents and businesses
 - ii. Resources may be tight for a project the size of The Heights
 - iii. LHB will be able to incorporate safety strategies into the landscape design as this is a standard practice
3. SPPA led the group through a conversation about the outdoor amenities that had been suggested in previous meetings. Lisa Theis was available to share insight on neighborhood activation and Commander Hallstrom focused on safety and security concerns associated with various topics.
 - a. Cafés or restaurants with outdoor seating
 - i. This has been documented as being a neighborhood priority
 - ii. The result will depend on the marketability of ground floor spaces within the high-density housing properties with the master housing developer bearing the responsibility to secure.
 - b. Outdoor amenities for high-density housing
 - i. Committee members recommended gas grills, community gardens, and playground equipment
 - ii. This information will be shared with the future master housing developer, who will be responsible for investing in and maintaining outdoor amenities on their property.
 - c. Public art
 - i. SPPA is confident that philanthropic contributions will be available for artwork
 - ii. Commander Hallstrom recommended using art to give purpose to blank, flat spaces. The example used was a plain bench near a fence, which provides a blank canvas for someone

with a Sharpie. He shared the success Minneapolis has had by wrapping their utility boxes. Monte Hilleman also pointed out that graffiti artists don't want to touch someone else's art. Tiffani Navatril pointed out that rougher surfaces also play a role in preventing vandalism.

- iii. It was also requested that public art be looked at the from a child's perspective; if it's going to entice kids to come up to it and touch it, or climb it, make sure it's safe.
- iv. These conversations will continue with the public art workgroup, which is planned to kick-off in February 2023.
- d. Life size outdoor games
 - i. This was talked about as a fun addition to the neighborhood
 - ii. Property owners would need to own and maintain
 - iii. Theft is a concern
- e. Musical play structure for kids
 - i. This idea was discussed
 - ii. Opinions varied; sound was a concern and natural materials that create less sound were recommended
- f. Gateway signs
 - i. There were varied opinions on what these should be
 - ii. From a vandalism standpoint, they should be set-back away from the road
 - iii. They should represent the development while still fitting in with the neighborhood
 - iv. Natural resources, including trees from the site, could be used
 - v. There was a recommendation to use a vertical design that would represent "height"
 - vi. The final product will need to be considered in relationship with other SPPA signs
 - vii. These conversations will continue with the public art workgroup
- g. Trail amenities
 - i. Bike racks, benches, and lights are the most desired amenities
 - ii. There could be challenges with water fountains and people can bring their own water
 - iii. Maintenance and out of service issues were the biggest challenges sited for bike repair stations
- h. Dog park
 - i. Provide bags or stations for disposing waste
 - ii. Who would maintain?
- i. Nature play
 1. There was significant support for nature play options
 2. Per Tiffani, the log example was the most feasible (reusing logs from the site). The recommendation was to avoid complex play structures.



- j. Dog park and compost
 - i. These were grouped together because of the desire to place these types of amenities in tucked-in, remote spaces
 - ii. Dog parks continue be a frequently requested amenity

1. For safety reasons, signage, significant lighting (per Commander Hallstrom), and cameras were all recommended
- iii. There are other compost sites and upcoming opportunities
- k. Rentals
 - i. Kayaks wouldn't make sense because there will be wetlands but no ponds
 - ii. Ice skates would need to be taken up by a neighborhood group (rentals, shoveling, etc.)
 - iii. Bike and scooter rental stations could be feasible



- l. Charging stations for cars, bikes, and scooters
 - i. Implementing charging stations is already part of the infrastructure plan and point system for becoming a sustainable community
 - ii. There was discussion about the limited need today but potential for significant need in the future (being future ready...build it and they will come)
- m. Amphitheatre
 - i. There continues to be interest in putting an amphitheater on the site (if funding becomes available)
 - ii. The biggest obstacle is not having a group that would own/activate the space. Without this, the programming opportunities are limited
 - iii. An alternate idea that was brought up at this meeting (and others) is a rentable gazebo
- n. Seating for relaxation
 - i. There was significant consensus on the value of seating throughout the space and support for all options presented (charging station counter/benches, swinging benches, artistic benches, Friendship bench)



- ii. Commander Hallstrom pointed out that hammocks, which were discussed at the last meeting, were concerning from a safety and security standpoint. Placing hooks in trees is not allowed but the City provides hammock holes
- iii. Commander Hallstrom also pointed out that in privately owned spaces, you can tell people they cannot pitch a tent. In publicly owned spaces, you cannot. It was also pointed out that unsheltered persons are not the problem, but a symptom of a larger issue.
- o. Ownership
 - i. The conversation was side-tracked a bit with an important conversation about ownership and perceived ownership.

- ii. Commander Hallstrom referenced a book title *Broken Windows*. The premise is that if you have areas that don't appear to be owned by anyone, they are the most likely areas to be vandalized and used for tent cities. His recommendation is to be sure that anything that has value be placed in an area that is well lit and heavily traveled.
 - iii. Tiffani added that the interpretive signs, maintained landscaping, and other amenities will create the sense of ownership.
 - iv. Activation was once again referenced as a key to success. The recommendation is to build a plan, let people know what's coming, and find people to take ownership. This may need to be done on an annual basis as organizations change staff, focus, and other things over time.
- p. Multigenerational space
- i. Sensory garden
 - 1. Space where people can hear, touch, smell, see, and possibly taste (near food forest?)



- ii. Activities
 - 1. Multigenerational swings



- 2. Exercise equipment



4. Top Priorities

- a. Workgroup members were divided into three teams to talk about their top priorities from all ideas discussed.
- b. The first group is interested in a walking trail going over the wetlands, which would allow the area to stay walkable when the ground is wet.
- c. The second group talked about alternate locations for a restaurant. It was explained that this would be challenging as the zoning is in place and the master housing developer will most likely want to rent out space on the first floor of high-density buildings. They are also in support of food trucks. Lisa Theis mentioned that managing food trucks can be challenging.

- d. The third group is interested in safe bike trails that would be welcoming for families with children.

5. Site ecology

- a. Tiffani walked the group through the ecological considerations for the site. All ideas are conceptual based on what the site could look like once remediation is complete.
- b. The goal is to take a holistic approach to reestablishing multiple biomes including vegetation, soil, microbes, and everything that lives in the soil. With biomes, biodiversity within those biomes, different plants and animals will live there. This in turn will create a more resilient site.
- c. A best practice in new urban forestry management is to use different types of trees so that if you lose one tree to a certain type of bug, you don't lose them all.
- d. The biomes that make sense for this site include wetlands (in passive spaces), prairies (in dry areas), oak savannahs (in passive recreation areas), and deciduous woodlands (for visual screening and shade).
- e. Strategies to reduce carbon emissions: build things to last, leverage energy-efficient electricity, use locally-sourced materials, use recycled materials, and establish native/adaptive vegetative communities