**Tuesday, February 21, 2013**

**West Side Flats Master Plan and Development Guidelines Update**

**Community Task Force Meeting**

**Attendees:**

Community Task Force (CTF) Members

Attending:

Betsy Reveal (Chair), Michelle Grosz, Irene Jones, Tony Kuechle, Benjamin Mike, Jessica Treat, Ted Schmidt, Rebecca Noecker, Carol Swenson, Karen Reid, Kelly Jameson (for Lorrie Louder), Mason Wells (for Elena Gaarder), Gjerry Berquist

Absent: Matt Grilz

Project Staff/Consultants

Lucy Thompson, Eriks Ludins, Anne Hunt, Jeff McMenimen, Jeff Miller, Brett Emmons, Kevin Flynn, Antonio Rosell, Bob Lunning (for Jack Becker), Tim Griffin

Guests

Emily Shively (Planning Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission)

**Meeting Notes:**

The following questions, suggestions, issues and ideas were discussed at the first Community Task Force meeting:

* How much creativity are we looking for from the community task force? How much thinking outside-the-box? For example, one idea was to put a Ferris wheel on the river. It was agreed that task force members should be visionary, but there must be an element of practicality to ensure implementation.
* Transit options should be considered in updating the plan.
* Large surface parking lots should be considered underutilized properties.
* The process should include follow-up listening sessions that bring project update info back to the groups involved in the upfront listening sessions. The current project scope includes one set of listening sessions at the beginning of the project.
* Discussion about the appropriate time horizon for the plan’s vision. Staff suggested at least 20 years out, but we could also think about what the West Side Flats should be like 50 years in the future. Suggested that it would be good to have a phased vision – short-, mid- and long-term.
* Questions about how much soil contamination analysis will be done as part of this planning effort, since many of the WSF sites are polluted. What are the impacts for stormwater planning? Staff indicated that the scope-of-work does not include any new contamination analysis, so conclusions as to developability of parcels will be made based on existing information, much of it gleaned from previous environmental studies.
* Will the project look at the number of existing jobs in the project area? Staff responded that some job numbers are available from the Port Authority, and that other numbers can be gathered from secondary data sources.
* Discussion about how the task force might prioritize elements of the vision? This could help identify small intermediary wins/achievements along the way.
* It will take attracting people to live in the West Side Flats to achieve real ownership of the area, e.g. the new housing development that is under construction (West Side Flats Apartments) will be the start of it.
* The concept of “7 generations” is relevant to the long-term vision for the WSF but we also need small intermediary wins/achievements.
* The current WSF Master Plan does not include any cost/funding estimates. Where will the money come from to invest in the necessary improvements and development?
* Until there are residents who live on the WSF, how can you truly have a vision for it?
* The plan needs to look at a phasing strategy for build-out of the full vision.
* The Mayor’s Office is really excited about this project and wants the project to think long-term and big picture, e.g. climate change, multi-modal transportation, adaptive reuse of buildings, sustainability, etc.
* Think about the jobs of the future from a big picture perspective, e.g. if jobs keep moving to the suburbs, driving out to jobs in the suburbs is not ultimately sustainable.
* There has been a loss of jobs in the WSF. How can jobs be retained, since they are an important asset to the neighborhood and city? How do we help businesses stay and expand? Barriers exist today for businesses to expand within the WSF.
* Consider having a focus group for existing employees. What would attract them to move nearer to their jobs and possibly to live on the WSF?
* Currently there are very few reasons for most people to come to the WSF. Lack of community destinations, e.g. restaurants on the riverfront.
* In what ways could the WSF be a unique/innovative place in the country, e.g. Silicon Valley (high tech), Hollywood (entertainment), etc. Think of ways the WSF could attract unique business sectors.
* The river is a huge barrier. Other barriers are the bluffs and wide roadways on its border. It is difficult to get people to go beyond visiting Harriet Island Regional Park.
* WSF is different from the upper West Side neighborhood area, which is already an urban village. The WSF needs a different identity.
* Downtown doesn’t have a true river connection, since it sits at the top of the bluff. The WSF does have this connection. At Harriet Island, for example, you can get right down to the river’s edge.
* How wild can the plan’s vision be, e.g. canals reaching in from the river? How do we truly embrace the river?
* Importance of “green fingers” extending between the river and the bluffs to reconnect the Flats to the river.

Best day/time for future meetings: Thursdays (except 3rd Thurs) at 6:00pm. We’ll meet at NeDA so there is more room for the task force and guests.

If possible, staff/consultants will send out meeting materials to CTF members prior to each meeting.

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, March 14th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm at**

**NeDA Office (481 Wabasha Street South)**