**West Side Flats Master Plan Project**

**Project Team Design Charrette**

**May 1 & 2, 2013**

**Summary Notes**

**Attendees:**

Lucy Thompson (PED), Marie Franchett (PED), Betsy Reveal (PMT, WSF Community Task Force Chair) Jeff McMenimen (HKGi), Jeff Miller (HKGi), Gabrielle Grinde (HKGi), Todd Johnson (Design Workshop), Brett Emmons (EOR), Brad Aldrich (EOR), Jack Becker (Forecast Public Art), Kevin Flynn (EcoDEEP), Antonio Rosell (CDG), Kevin White (CDG), Gjerry Berquist (WSF Community Task Force)

The following comments were captured in response to the draft pre-design work, including the WSF vision, guiding principles, and urban design analysis, on Day 1 of the project team design charrette.

**Vision**

1. Broaden the notion of sustainability.
2. Aspire to leaving a legacy:
   1. Environment
   2. Economics
   3. Community
   4. Art
3. History of WSF as a welcoming place that bridges between cultures.
4. Opportunities for locally-owned businesses that generate prosperity for local residents.
5. Be more explicit about providing affordable housing.
6. Urban agriculture statement is too strong.
7. Speak to interim land uses, as part of phased development of the WSF, such as community gardens and public art.
8. Potential for phytoremediation in WSF.
9. “Traditional” neighborhood design – consider better words to describe this concept, such as “proven” neighborhood design or livable community. “Best practices”?
10. Vision should be based on forward thinking rather than backward thinking – looking forward as much as looking back.
11. The vision has got to be part of the WSF story.

**Guiding Principles**

***Principle #1***

* “Working” aspect should encompass the future of the Riverview industrial district

***Principle #2*** – No comments

***Principle #3***

* Consider removing the word “traditional”
* Not recreating the past
* Consider using the word “compact”

***Principle #4***

* Use the word “framework” instead of “armature”

***Principle #5***

* Storm water system should be an aesthetic system not just a functional system
* Storm water can be a defining element and provide identity for the WSF
* Visual, above the surface, rain gardens, etc.
* Make language more positive
* “Living streets” concept
* Be explicit about storm water management best practices. Storm water system should also be proactive in design. Think of storm water as a resource/asset and the potential for “reusing” rather than “managing” storm water – use more positive words. WSF has a history of “managing” water – flooding, levee – rather than using the water.

***Principle #6***

* Articulate need for cycling, walking and vertical circulation elements (bluffs to flats, flats/riverfront to water)
* Add ecological connections
* Varying quality, character and use of river’s edge
* Riverfront – address boat access and marina

***Principle # 7***

* Variety of building heights, building heights that offer interesting views, create new views, framing views along public corridors
* Progressive, energetic, positive language
* Create architectural interest

***Principle #8***

* Are Principles #6 and #8 redundant?
* Replace “convenient and attractive” with “safe, comfortable, convenient and balanced”

***Principle #9*** – No comments

***Principle #10***

* Say more about mixing uses in the WSF; potential for adding a principle re: employment, such as “Increase land use diversity in the existing employment district”
* Address the industrial landscape more directly
* What is the new industrial park of the future?
* What are the needs that people who will live/work here have?
* Potential for a creative enterprise zone like Hwy 280/Como Ave?
* Production/enterprise/innovation district
* Job opportunities “especially” for West Side residents
* Address other non-residential needs/services

***Principle #11***

* Site elements – potential to be created by the arts community
* Link art to community’s cultural character
* Need to be explicit about arts and artists
* Public art program – blend the industrial elements
* How does the neighborhood generate/create/own the public realm?

**Urban Design Analysis**

***Community Identity***

1. Redevelopment of the West Side Flats offers the opportunity to reconnect the West Side to the river.
2. The Flats location along the river is central to its identity.
3. The river should be seen as a seam, not an edge – “A river runs through it”
4. Sustainable community

* Economically viable
* Environmentally responsible
* Socially equitable

***Land Use***

1. 3 distinct sub-districts within the West Side Flats district

* Wabasha – Robert: predominantly residential
* Robert – Eva: transition zone between predominantly residential and jobs district (residential/commercial mix)
* Eva – Highway 52: predominantly jobs district (commercial/industrial)

1. Identify civic/institutional uses on key sites/locations
2. Riverfront – amenity laden, green space, vibrant esplanade, public art

***Public Realm***

1. Street and park system hierarchy
2. Role in creative placemaking
3. Multiple objectives – gathering, recreation, stormwater management, etc.

***Public Art Concepts***

1. Water Treatment

* Water features
* Pop-jet plaza
* Temporary events (model boat race)
* Ice sculptures

1. Gateway Entrances

* Archways
* Signage
* Historic markers
* Landmarks
* Art that frames views
* Wayfinding elements

1. Parks

* Seating sculptures
* Artful plantings
* Paving stones
* Groundwater drinking fountains
* Intimate gathering spaces
* Art park

1. Streetscapes

* Poetry in sidewalks
* Artist-designed fixtures
* Signage
* Seating
* Bus stop shelters
* Pop-up storefronts
* Street art
* Vendor carts
* Food trucks
* Street music

1. Esplanade

* Artistic functional elements
* Railings
* Paving patterns
* Planters
* Awnings
* Light fixtures
* Performers, street artists
* Vendor carts

1. Public Realm

* Open-air amphitheater
* “Open Field” type programming (Walker Art Museum)
* Gathering spaces
* Seating
* Gardens
* Arts and crafts markets
* Concerts/films
* Café spaces

1. Interim Building Uses

* Vacant or under-utilized store fronts
* Warehouse/industrial space used to host artist studios
* Co-op workshops
* Performance venues
* Meeting space
* Music recording studio
* Use walls as canvases for murals
* Projections
* Community voices, etc.

1. Vacant Lots

* Temporary festivals
* Street painting
* Concerts, pageants
* Flea market
* Community gardens

1. Artists in Residence

* Match artists with area businesses
* Create cast fixtures at Pier foundry
* Create “Flats” cable show at Comcast
* Create sculptures using recycled materials at Rexam
* Consider themes of cultural diversity, water, sustainability

1. Arts & Culture Master Plan

* Assist WSCO to create plan to ensure community cultural development opportunities – engaging artists in all aspects
* Map talent, knowledge and spaces
* Host cross sector and cross cultural dialogues
* Develop governance and management systems
* Incorporate plan with West Side Arts Center in mind
* Ensure that plan leads to authentic, sustainable program guiding an organic growth

**Considerations:**

Create incentives for artists to move into the area by providing live/work space, barter for time spent in community or working with young people, etc. Artists can activate social space, visually enhance underutilized walls and vacant space. Consider getting Artspace Projects involved (the Rexam building could be a giant, subdivided, cooperative work space surrounded by residential housing (affordable rate) for all kinds of artists).

There isn’t much of a daily life yet, so it makes sense to focus on temporary visual and performing activities and plan the long-term, sustainable program, attracting and retaining creative people and industries.

Public art concepts and strategies should be consistent with the city’s public art policies and ordinance guidelines, including engagement of artists on design teams, and art integrated into public improvements. Take advantage of the artists-in-residence at the city to help plan and design aspects of the program; likewise, the city’s RSVP streetscape program.

Consider the Walker Art Center as a partner in programming the Triangle Park site near the river, as if it were an extension of their Open Field program. 2015 is the Walker’s 75th anniversary. They may wish to bring renowned artist Mel Chin back to town (he’s famous for his “Revival Field” done in 1991 at Pig’s Eye Landfill in St. Paul).

Consider inviting Northern Spark Festival to take over the area for one night in 2016 or beyond. Or Forecast could manage a grant program design to focus on the project area and see what projects artists would create on their own.