



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

The West Side Flats Master Plan and Development Guidelines Update will express a vision and roadmap for future development in Saint Paul's West Side Flats. The Plan will provide the City with an update to the 2001 *West Side Flats Master Plan and Development Guidelines*, incorporating an expanded site area (east of Robert Street) and offer a more detailed stormwater management plan. Implementation of the Plan may take decades to accomplish and require ongoing political dedication and community support.

Establishing community support to implement a long-term plan effectively begins with meaningful involvement of the community in the planning process; hearing what the community has to say and infusing the plan with prevailing interests and values. The approach and strategies used to encourage community participation in the West Side Flats planning process is the subject of this technical brief.

This project offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to guide the development of the largest area of downtown land in any city on the Upper Mississippi. The choices made in this project will have a lasting impact on the health and vitality of Downtown Saint Paul and the city in general, while also serving as the foundation of a more vibrant, connected, sustainable and prosperous Westside.

Given the project's potential to produce highly local, as well as more geographically dispersed benefits, and its importance to the local community as well as the city as a whole, it is vital that the project's community engagement strategy recognize and respond to these two scales in its approach. A process that offers appropriate methods and materials to address both of these scales and that provides timely and relevant information, encourages participation, and lays a foundation for continuing civic engagement will also be one that leads to successful project outcomes.

Strategies for community participation are built around two fundamental components: outreach and community involvement. **Outreach** is defined as reaching out to the community with project information, updates, key findings, recommendations and most importantly, invitations to participate in the planning process. **Community involvement** is defined as active participation of the public and project stakeholders in helping shape plan outcomes. There are several community participation strategies suggested in the planning process that accomplish either outreach or involvement and many that accomplish both.

**Outreach:** The West Side Flats master planning effort is organized to reach out to the full spectrum of Saint Paul residents. However the majority of effort expended in outreach will be targeted to key and impacted West Side constituencies, including communities underserved by mainstream media.

**Community Involvement:** The master planning approach has been devised as an iterative process that combines the project team's incremental development of the plan with ongoing feedback loops with the community. A series of open houses, workshops, focus groups and on-line tools allow the community and stakeholders to help establish the fundamental

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principles that will form the basis of plan initiatives while at the same time offering stakeholders the opportunity to react to ideas as they evolve.

The proposed outreach and community involvement techniques include the following:

#### **Community Task Force:**

The Community Task Force (CTF) will consist of representatives from the community, including residents, business owners, property owners and advocacy groups. The CTF will generally meet together monthly with the planning team throughout the course of the planning process. While its' primary role is community involvement (providing direct project feedback to the planning team), the CTF is also expected to provide project updates to a broad base of constituencies and bring back any feedback to the CTF.

#### **West Side Community Organization:**

The West Side Community Organization (WSCO) is the organization that represents the interests of District 3 (where the project area is located) to the City of Saint Paul through its district council framework. City staff will meet monthly with the WSCO Riverfront, Development and Land Use Committee throughout the planning process. The purpose of these meetings will be to provide general updates on the planning process and bring concerns, issues, etc. back to the planning team. The planning team will join City staff and meet two (2) times with the WSCO Riverfront, Development and Land Use Committee to present and receive feedback on planning progress and recommendations. The planning team will meet with the WSCO Board two (2) times during the planning process to gain important input on the West Side community's vision, goals, values, objectives and desired plan outcomes, and to receive feedback on plan progress and proposed recommendations. WSCO will also be an important project partner in reaching out to West Side residents and businesses through the duration of the project.

#### **Stakeholder Interviews:**

Conduct interviews with "key stakeholders", such as City & business leaders, business owners, landowners, residents, artists and arts organizations, Community Task Force members and City staff to determine perspectives and insights regarding the West Side Flats development strategies, business improvement needs, access and connection needs, physical improvements, views, business mix, business opportunities, residential concerns, retail issues, public art and public space needs, environmental concerns, infrastructure needs, etc. It is anticipated that stakeholders could include, but would not be limited to the following:

- West Side Community Organization (WSCO)/Riverfront, Development and Land Use Committee
- Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA)
- Saint Paul Port Authority
- Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization (LMRWMO)
- Saint Paul District Energy
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Railroad Companies
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation

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- Public Art Saint Paul
- Great River Greening
- Friends of the Mississippi River
- National Park Service/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA)
- Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA)
- MN DNR
- Metro Transit
- Ramsey County/RCRRA
- MnDOT
- Neighborhood House
- Hispanic Chamber and other West Side neighborhood organizations

#### **Listening Sessions/Community Focus Groups**

Conduct Listening Sessions / Community Focus Group meetings with West Side groups, organizations and citizens who may not be regularly involved in public planning processes. The goal is to reach out to underrepresented groups in the West Side that may not be comfortable or have the ability to attend more traditional planning input forums. We'll conduct several focused listening sessions to gather the comments and ideas of civic groups, institutions and businesses at their customary meeting places and begin two-way conversations with citizens and institutions that allow us to learn about their concerns and ideas for the future of the West Side Flats. The planning team will deeply explore recent West Side community engagement and planning processes to discover guidance that has already been received from community members for the West Side Flats area and identify issues and objectives specific to the West Side Flats that can build on prior community input. We will work closely with WSCO to contact, reach out and engage West Side residents and businesses and set up project listening sessions and community focus group meetings.

#### **Public Open Houses:**

Three (3) public open houses will be scheduled throughout the planning process. The first open house will initiate the process and seek input from the local, as well as the broader Saint Paul community, regarding their wants, needs and aspirations for the future of the West Side Flats. The second will be held at the draft master plan stage when key initiatives and design directives are established but need community vetting. The third and final open house will be held near the end of the planning process to gain community feedback about master plan and development guideline recommendations proposed by the project. The open houses will be significant public events that will both present project information and request community feedback. Information and invitations will be distributed across both local and wider communities. For local outreach, project allies, including WSCO, community boards, and local / ethnic media, will be key partners. Outreach for the wider community will include web, social media, and press releases. Feedback techniques used at the workshops will include comment cards, dot voting, notes on display boards, mapping activities, and direct conversation with the project team. The open houses represent significant project milestones and transitions between the major stages of the planning process.

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#### **Developers Roundtables**

Conduct two (2) Developer's Roundtable discussions during the project. A panel of development professionals/experts will be convened to provide the planning team and City staff with valuable input from the developer's perspective. The first of the roundtables will offer the opportunity to identify issues with the current plan and discuss market forces that might influence planning decisions as well as opportunities for creative planning and design solutions. A second roundtable will be conducted midway through the project to review the preliminary master plan alternatives with a select number of urban development professionals, who represent the types of redevelopment desired in the West Side Flats, to gain the development market's perspective on the strengths/weaknesses and viability of the alternatives and development guidelines.

#### **Design Charrette**

Conduct a two-day design charrette involving members from the Community Task Force, WSCO staff, PMT and the planning team. The charrette will be an intense, on-site, collaborative workshop between the client and the planning team. The charrette will accelerate the planning process by creating an interactive environment with major participants working together without the normal interruptions that delay communications. It will also provide an opportunity to achieve consensus on the worthiest approaches to master plan alternatives.

Drawing from a diverse set of skills and knowledge useful to the master planning process, the planning team will lead the charrette participants through a creative process that will lead to the development of sketch plans and vignettes for the West Side Flats project area.

The planning team will conduct a pin-up review of concepts developed during the charrette at the end of the second charrette day. This will be open to a broader audience to provide feedback on ideas generated during the charrette.

#### **Neighborhood Planning Committee**

Conduct one (1) meeting with the Neighborhood Planning Committee (of the Planning Commission) during the project. This meeting will be conducted as an informal review meeting to present and seek input on the Draft West Side Flats Master Plan and Development Guidelines.

#### **Project Website**

The City's website will feature the West Side Flats project to provide project information and solicit community input. The website is both an outreach and a community involvement tool. From an outreach standpoint, the website will be routinely updated to contain a broad range project information including background, interim and final products, community feedback, project contacts and information about community participation opportunities. The website will house the most comprehensive set of project information available to the public. For this reason, all project media should drive website visitation. From a community involvement standpoint, the website will allow visitor comments about the project, utilizing *Open Saint Paul* to conduct on-line questionnaires to solicit input.

#### **Social media**

Creation of a Facebook page and Twitter channel will help drive visitors to the project website so they can view project updates and information as they are uploaded.

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Similarly, Facebook and Twitter can be used to share information about upcoming in-person workshops and increase participation at those events.

### **News Releases and Media Alerts**

News releases and media alerts will be authored and submitted to media contacts, including community newspapers, ethnic media, local and regional news outlets, websites and public access outlets. News releases and media alerts will be issued to update the public on major project milestones, community meetings, significant findings and recommendations, and overall project successes.

### **Community Newsletter Articles**

Articles about this project can be written and submitted to West Side community newsletters. We will work closely with WSCO to establish this list of contacts.