



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Melvin Carter, Mayor

25 West Fourth Street, Ste. 1400
Saint Paul, MN 55102

HILLCREST REDEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

Co-chairs Anne DeJoy and Linda Martinez-Higgins

Meeting #11 Summary January 19, 2021, 5:30-7:00pm via Skype

CAC members in attendance: Linda Martinez-Higgins, Rachel Finazzo Doll, Ethan Osten, Tiffany Scott Knox, Tong Thao, Que Vang.

Others: Bill Dermody, Luis Pereira, Mike Richardson (City of Saint Paul staff); Andrew Dresdner, Mo Convery, Jeff Mandyck (City's consultants); Kathryn Sarnecki, George Hoene, Monte Hilleman, Andrea Novak (Port Authority staff) James Soltis, Tom Goodrum (Port Authority's consultants)

Welcome/Roll Call/Meeting Protocol

Co-Chair Linda Martinez-Higgins called the meeting to order and laid out protocol for questions and comments, including asking that only CAC members participate due to the limited amount of time for discussion today. She suggested that community members could send any thoughts to Bill Dermody. Bill took attendance, and also noted that there will be community engagement opportunities in March.

Context Overview

Bill thanked everybody for their patience over the last few months of delay. He described the process for how we got to today's finalist scenarios, including: community engagement on the front end, the CAC's affirmation of community priorities, the Technical Advisory Committee's and Port Authority's establishment of policy and technical priorities (which came from sources like wetlands law, the City's Comprehensive Plan, and the ordinance that approved the bonds for the Port's purchase of the property), four site approaches based off of those priorities, a directive (upon urging from the district council) to look at options without a hilltop, stormwater analysis, and much wetlands and economic feasibility analysis. The expectation is that one of the finalist scenarios – or both of them in combination – will form the basis of the final staff-recommended master plan, unless we get a surprise. The City doesn't know what any surprises may be, but they're keeping an eye on wetlands in case the final wetlands rulings are more restrictive than the initial informal guidance received that these are realistic approaches. He did note there has been a third scenario partially developed that avoids impacting

wetlands, so we have that in our back pocket if we get a wetlands surprise, but it does not pass muster on the economic feasibility side (far too much open space) and so is not being presented today.

Bill asked, how can these finalist scenarios change going forward? There is infrastructure analysis happening over the next few weeks that could cause changes in site layout. Community engagement in March will impact them – we want to hear if there’s a preferred scenario, and also how they should change. After engagement there will be a decision from City leadership on the direction to go for the final draft master plan, including decisions on some of the key “tensions and challenges” we will be talking about today. Then the full master plan – including text, like housing policy, sustainability policy, and zoning specifics – will come to the CAC, tentatively in August, for your feedback before it goes to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Finalist Scenarios

Andrew Dresdner presented the Finalist Scenarios and associated analysis (see [presentation slides](#)). With regard to the challenge of creating a “sense of place,” he noted that a location has a strong “sense of place” if you know you’re there, such as in the Stillwater examples shown. What works best is building on the site’s unique and distinguishing assets. If people fail to create a real “sense of place” they sometimes build a clock tower – that is not what we want here.

Bill Dermody noted that certain aspects of the scenarios are fundamental to each of them, while other aspects are more flexible. For instance, the division of medium-density versus high-density residential is fairly flexible. So, keep that in mind when evaluating the two scenarios.

CAC Questions, Discussion, & Input

Bill Dermody asked a series of questions to the CAC to spur discussion.

Q: How well are the west-edge treatments reflecting the community priority about “respecting the quiet nature of the adjacent neighborhood”? Any other initial thoughts on the scenarios?

Ethan Osten expressed a concern that trail connections to the west might be dropped. He asked if there’s a mechanism to make sure they happen.

Bill explained that you’ll see more trails going through industrial areas than roads, because they are more flexible in their location. He said the final master plan will have text that makes clear how much flexibility there is for administrative changes in the amount of trails or their locations.

Ethan asked if the northernmost east-west street shown will continue west through Furness Parkway. Bill explained that it would dead-end. He also noted that there is a crumbling roadway there today that would probably need improvement eventually, if not through this project.

Tong Thao said that the Jobs Focus accomplishes our goals and has a nice balance. He likes denser housing near the Larpenteur/McKnight existing commercial node. He likes how the Jobs Focus transitions from the neighborhood to the west toward the industrial with some lower-density housing.

Tiffany Scott-Knox asked what the lower-density housing’s property values would be? Security issues?

Bill responded that it is hard to say what the values will be, but the lower-density housing layout is conducive to townhomes and single-family homes – you could check other comparisons in the area.

Linda Martinez-Higgins said the light industrial areas on the Jobs Focus map seems massive. She asked if we know what the aesthetics will be like.

Bill said they intend to bring a few 3-dimensional renderings to the CAC in February that will give a sense of what these could look like from three external locations. He said the light industrial area in Jobs Focus is probably large enough for buildings to face both east to McKnight and west to the central spine

road, with a truck court in between. He suggested looking at the Light Industrial photos in the presentation, and also Port Authority projects along Phalen Boulevard and Energy Park Drive. Monte Hilleman suggested looking at the new Vomela building at Arcade/7th. He said they don't know how much acreage their users will need – some may be larger sites and some may be smaller. Linda asked, what if we don't want a Vomela?

Bill responded that the City has base design standards that will apply. There is an opportunity to consider additional standards through the master plan, if desired.

Que Vang is leaning towards the Jobs Focus scenario, with an increase to its housing amounts. She likes the lining of the west side with lower-density housing. She would like to see some shift from lower-density to medium-density, and maybe medium-density to higher-density, in order to have more housing units. She thinks the Port Authority does an excellent job with design.

Tiffany said that the investment in single-family or townhomes is significant, and there may be concerns about security and traffic.

Bill said the City addresses security through design standards that avoid designs that cause crime problem. Also, the Police Department is aware of the project and is ready to provide adequate police service to the area.

Monte noted that businesses near residences can be a security benefit – someone to keep an eye on the homes near the day, and vice-versa at night. He said they have quantitative data showing a crime decrease near their Beacon Bluff development since they built it. He said they look at Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) when designing their sites.

Rachel Finazzo Doll asked why there are more street connections to the west in the Jobs Focus scenario compared to the Hilltop scenario?

Bill responded that it's due to the land uses. It is generally easier to put streets through a residential area than through an industrial area, because industrial needs larger lots and more need for flexibility in lot size. Residential is more flexible in how it's divided up, so it can work with more streets.

Q: How well will the Neighborhood Node be used? Is there a better placement or a better way to connect to the surrounding area?

Linda noted that there are no sidewalks on Larpenteur Avenue.

Bill said that a new trail is shown on the south side of Larpenteur from Furness to McKnight, which will partially address that problem.

Que thinks we're doing a great job on walkability. She says it makes sense to have the node close to the higher-density housing. Lower-density housing will have more of a yard to use.

Tong said it would be great to have a good connection from the existing Furness Trail to the new active park. He said the Jobs Focus scenario does that better, currently.

Rachel agrees with Que's and Tong's comments.

Q: What are your concerns and hopes for the industrial areas and how it integrates with the neighborhood character?

Linda realizes that pollution will necessitate some impacts to the land, but wonders how flattened the site will be? It would be great to build within the terrain that exists, to the extent possible.

Que is concerned about the transition between light industrial and the lower-density residential in the southwest part of both plans, where there is no street between the uses. It could be dark and dangerous back there.

Monte said that there will be a site plan review process after the master plan that will get to the details of lighting and transitions between uses.

Q: Knowing we may have some spare agenda time in February, what else would you like to know more about as background for these two scenarios?

Rachel asked if questions could be emailed in order to allow her district council's involvement.

Bill said they can accept comments through the end of the week.

Tong would be interested in what the housing units (of all types) would look like. Commercial, too.

Bill mentioned that there will be a limited amount of commercial near the node, probably towards the Larpenteur/McKnight corner. It's not called out specifically because its location will be flexible within the orange or red areas on the maps. There will probably be an upper limit on the amount of allowable commercial square footage.

Bill said that the CAC's targeted end date is now penciled in for August. He said that one or two of their meetings might be canceled, depending how the agendas line up.

ADJOURNED at 7:00pm