

Patty Partridge

John Mountain and I discussed the Ford site parks today. My thoughts are as follows:

1. I would like to see the parks site that border on Ford Parkway and River Road act as a visual entry point for Saint Paul. This would include art and signage, etc that becomes identified with the city. Right now there is very little that identifies this as an entry to the City. I also see this area as a resting point for people who are using the area for recreation (walking, biking, etc.) I think the amenities of this area should support that.
2. My understanding is that the skate park will be located in this section of the park as well. Was this a highly ranked item? If so, I feel that it would be better placed away from the parkways.
3. Would it be possible to have a graphic that indicates placement of the parks (with proposed amenities), with proposed housing types? This would help in understanding where amenities will be best placed.
4. I hope that we make sure that the parks and their locations will support the needs of the residents of this site (multi-generational housing).

Mac Alberts

From: Michelle Doyle Nelson <michelle.j.doyle@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 11:31 PM
To: Mac Alberts
Cc: andytrcka@gmail.com; Colleen Zuro-White; Stewart, Ellen (CI-StPaul); Nick Koch; Terry Minarik
Subject: Re: Ford Site Redevelopment - PAC Conversations - Group C

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Hello all,

Here are my thoughts on the current park designs based on my conversation with Colleen.

Park A

The priority for this park should be on community gathering spaces, public art, and open spaces. Spaces for all ages, including seniors from the nearby senior buildings to gather and socialize. We like the idea of table games. The skate park adds an attraction for young people and seems to fit well into this park space.

This is a great park to incorporate public art in and it would be great to see something like an interactive musical art/activity feature.

I think the climbing feature will draw lots of interest and activity. Of the ideas presented, I like examples number 3 and 4 as they provide a variety of features. It is important that children of different abilities and ages can use the climbing structure. These types of climbing structures are usually best suited for older kids (ages 5 and up) so the addition of a toddler specific area or climbing feature should be considered.

Natural landscaping should be used, particularly to buffer Ford parkway. Pollinator gardens would be a nice compliment to open space in this park.

Park C

Critical features for success include the pavilion for a gathering space and emphasizing natural spaces and natural landscaping. There is high interest for a nature play area. I'd like to see more examples of the types of equipment being considered. It would be wonderful to recapitulate climbing features found in nature, such as tree roots and large boulders for climbing and natural fort structures. The example shown of the large stepping stones are great in this regard. Trees with the large root structures found along the river at Hidden Falls are very appealing climbing structures for kids. It would be nice to have this type of horizontal climbing available. See my attached pictures for inspiration (I only have pictures with my kids in them).

There is a wonderful opportunity for an educational component in park c that has not been discussed. One example that comes to mind is the simple signs with questions at Dodge Nature center.

I was unsure of the broad appeal of adult fitness equipment so I gathered some feedback from the neighborhood. Overall, there was interest and enthusiasm for this type of feature. People preferred the ninja

style course (like example #5) or something like example #1. Some specific considerations include making it accessible to mixed age groups. Many people expressed that their kids would also be interested in this type of feature. Equipment should be senior friendly. I heard positive comments about the location near the running/walk path.

Are there any plans for a large open group exercise space?

There was also support and interest for a sand volleyball court. Do we have idea of demand based on use in Minneapolis?

Park B

We like the X shape design of the park with the ample open space and courts. Do we know what the anticipated demand for different types of courts are? I heard from multiple people in the neighborhood expressing interest in the pickleball court.

Can we see some images of other playgrounds in St. Paul? It would be great to have an unique and creative playground that also has ADA accessible components. I will be sharing more on playground ideas in the future.

One thing to consider adding adjacent to the playground are elliptical machines or other simple exercise equipment so parents can use this equipment and watch their children on the playground. I heard of a successful example of this at a Seattle park.

Missing features

Restroom facilities including drinking water have not been specifically discussed but should be included at all parks.

I have not seen splash pads prioritized for any of the park space. There are few splash pads in St. Paul and none on this side of St. Paul. Although St. Paul ranks well in the Trust for Public Land's 2020 Park Score, splash pads rank in the 55th percentile. This is something the neighborhood consistently wants.

There are multiple places that would be suitable for a splash pad. I think a fountain, or spray style are more appealing to a wider range of families than a wading pool. I think a splash pad that is natural looking, compliments existing water features or civic spaces or incorporates public art would be preferred to a more playground type. This could fit in well along the water feature in park A or adjacent to the playground in Park B or also in the central civic space. I will send some examples from my research later this week.

Parting thoughts, I like that we are thinking about who the users of the parks will be and working towards including a large variety of amenities to include as many people with varying ages and interests as possible. I would encourage everyone to be creative and think beyond the traditional neighborhood park. We have a unique opportunity to build several parks from the ground up which can be unique and interesting.

Thanks!
Michelle



On Mon, Jun 8, 2020 at 11:44 AM Mac Alberts <Mac.Alberts@ryancompanies.com> wrote:

Hello Andy, Michelle, and Colleen,

Please see the attached presentation from our meeting last week. The last few pages describe the Conversations homework. Please work with each other to find a time that works with you to chat. When you have completed the discussion, please send me the notes from your discussion. Just as a reminder, we are asking each of you to summarize the conversation individually. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out.

Mac Alberts

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 10:14 AM
To: Mac Alberts
Subject: Re: Ford Site Redevelopment - PAC Conversations - Group A

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Hi Mac:

Thanks for the heads-up! It appears totally fine on my Mac, and I had thought that PDFs are usually a fixed medium, so I'm not sure what happened. Sorry about that. I have pasted the text from my Google Doc below. Grazie mille!

[REDACTED]
Ford Site Parks Advisory Committee | Breakout Group A
Sun. 6/14/20 10:00-10:40 am via Zoom [REDACTED]

Attendees: Frank Jossi, [REDACTED], Karen Welle (no word from Eric Weiss)

Ice Breaker: Fave Activity in City Parks

- All three of us love tennis. We could see the pickleball court becoming two tennis courts (since pickleball lines fit within the tennis lines). This would be more versatile.
- We all enjoy walking trails. Native plantings and water feature sound lovely for this.

Q1: Activities and Amenities: Top Priorities

- Consensus regarding the value of adult strength equipment, particularly in the post-COVID era. Many people are now leaving their indoor gyms due to recycled-air concerns, so there could be some natural drift of folks from Lifetime and JCC nearby.
- Agreement that Park B is like a little “pocket park” that will be physically beautiful, and that Park D by the baseball fields is an especially good spot for basketball.
- Agreement that design of Park A is really smart since the skate structures are physically attractive to all, and since skating can be a loud activity, making it sensible to place it by the busy Ford Parkway thoroughfare.

Q2: Most Critical Feature in the 60% Plans

- Amenity choices matter, but people will only be drawn there if the greenery is done right: native plantings, a mix of tree species, and hopefully some that will fill the canopy over time. The greenery will be the magnet that creates an inviting environment around those amenities.
- We like the general mix of items and it feels like there’s real diversity and texture to the A-D amenity choices.

Q3: Community and Connection in the Design

- Ditto regarding mastering the greenery and landscaping. That’s essential.
- Adirondack chairs for people to socialize in flexible, malleable, open spaces.
- Keep loud activities like the skate park in A (by busy Ford Parkway) and D (baseball and basketball, and quieter and more introspective activities in the interior parks.

Q4: Park Features that Resonate Most

- Adult strength equipment, pickleball, skate park, basketball, etc.

- The kind of balance achieved in Park C presents a beautiful and inviting environment that would pull a broad cross-section of folks in.
- Agreement that it needs to be low-maintenance because City budget is limited.

Q5: Park Features Missing

- Need some parking if people from the outside are going to take advantage of these spaces

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

On Mon, Jun 15, 2020 at 10:08 AM Mac Alberts <Mac.Alberts@ryancompanies.com> wrote:

[REDACTED]

Mac Alberts

From: John Mountain <mountain@macalester.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, June 16, 2020 9:00 AM
To: Mac Alberts
Subject: Re: Ford Site Redevelopment - PAC Conversations - Group B

EXTERNAL EMAIL: If unknown sender, **DO NOT** click links/attachments. **NEVER** give out your user ID or password.

Mac,

Patty and I had a good conversation. Here is my summary.

A quick run down of my answers to the prompts, many of which are similar in theme, so there is some repetition.

1. My top priorities vary between each park. Not each park can be everything to everyone, but as a complete site, the wide variety of people that will live/visit the area will need to find areas of interest
2. I think a critical aspect is that the individual parks complement the area adjacent to it. So the amenities might change if by more retail/high traffic areas vs residential vs close to Hidden Falls, which might have a more natural aspect.
3. I think making sure we weave in gathering /open space to the parks, so it does not feel like we are trying to get as many features crammed in as we can
4. For me, the Ravine feature and building up the falls will be a great addition. While not a focus of the 60% plan, the central water feature will also be spectacular.
5. This is less of a missing feature, but one I think should be swapped out, is the Skate Park. I don't think it makes sense to have it in Park A, given that is the entry point to the development and to complement it with kids play/climbing structures in the same area seems problematic. I think it will be hard to contain the skaters to that particular area and with a lot of foot traffic and young kids around, that does not seem ideal. If a Skate Park is moved forward, I would recommend in Park D, where you could add other active sports and would be adjacent to the Highland Ball fields which better ties into the demographic for the skaters.

It was a lot of information to absorb in the last meeting and being virtual makes discussion a bit more difficult, but I am curious how a skate park rose to the top of our list? Prior to having the presentation at our first meeting from the two local youth (who by the way did a great job and appreciate the courage it took to do that), I don't remember hearing skate park be a priority. I wonder if having that presentation so close to us providing our priorities, skewed the results? In looking back at the kickoff meeting presentation, skate park was the lowest rated activity based on community feedback.

Thanks again for all your work on this project. Happy to talk more.

John

JOHN MOUNTAIN

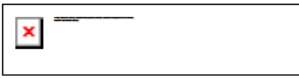
Director, Student Engagement and Career Counseling
Career Exploration

651-696-6729 | mountain@macalester.edu

1600 Grand Avenue

Saint Paul, MN 55105 USA

[Learn more about Macalester's response and resources for Covid-19.](#)



On Mon, Jun 15, 2020 at 4:32 PM John Mountain <mountain@macalester.edu> wrote:

Mac,

Sorry, I thought I had sent you an earlier reply indicating we are meeting today and might not have our feedback to you until tomorrow.

John

JOHN MOUNTAIN

Director, Student Engagement and Career Counseling

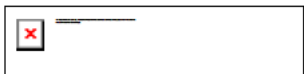
Career Exploration

651-696-6729 | mountain@macalester.edu

1600 Grand Avenue

Saint Paul, MN 55105 USA

[Learn more about Macalester's response and resources for Covid-19.](#)



On Mon, Jun 15, 2020 at 11:03 AM Mac Alberts <Mac.Alberts@ryancompanies.com> wrote:

Hello Patty and John,

Just a reminder that we are asking each member of the group to submit a summary of your conversation by today. Let me know if you have any questions!

Mac Alberts

From: Karen Welle <karenjwelle@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:01 PM
To: Mac Alberts
Cc: Stewart, Ellen (CI-StPaul); Nick Koch; Terry Minarik
Subject: Re: Ford Site Redevelopment - PAC Conversations - Group A

EXTERNAL EMAIL: If unknown sender, **DO NOT** click links/attachments. **NEVER** give out your user ID or password.

Hi Mac

Once we figured out Frank Jossi's correct address (frankjossi@comcast.net - no period between his first and last name!), we got a meeting set up for yesterday. All of us were able to attend except Eric, who was busy on home projects and didn't have a chance to get to his email. and our last-minute time change We filled him in so he'll know what we discussed. Which was basically:

- 1) Even though we're being asked for approval on the "60%" plans for A and C, we want to make sure that we keep the totality in mind, including how B and D might function. It turns out all three of us are tennis players, so we had some discussion about how perhaps two tennis/pickleball courts in B would make sense, placing the BB court in D. And although there are other tennis courts around, perhaps the two tennis/pickleball courts would be used and appreciated by seniors (like me) and others in the Ford community. Just part of thinking about it all as a totality.
- 2) Very happy to see the emphasis on trees and natural scape all through the park areas, but especially A and C.
- 3) We all liked the skateboard feature in A, and think it's cool and fills a community need, both for teens and for young adults..In addition, it's it adds a sort of public art /sculptural feel. We also think A and parts of C would benefit from more straightforward public art/sculpture scattered around.
- 4) We liked the adult strength training station in C, and while I was the one that brought up, during our last Zoom meeting, the distributed stations I saw in Rabat, Morocco, my personal focus group (my husband, a long-time strength trainer) was in favor of the plan you have to cluster that activity in one spot, so I'm good if he's good. The others felt similarly.
- 5) We all agreed that whatever we place or build as amenities should stand the test of time and not be "faddish". Examples being play structures, adult fitness. But we acknowledge that those granular decisions will come later. Right now you're looking for general placement of things in A and C, and we think they all make sense as suggested so far.
- 6) We all agreed that other amenities in A and C, including climbing and adult fitness, are nice-to-haves, but the **"jewel" of the property**, and what is really going to draw folks from both within and outside of the site, is the water/stream and accompanying drops in elevation that will create natural places for folks to just enjoy the outdoors with their friends and family, sitting on limestone shelves and rocks. Kind of fits with the "timeless" concerns. Water and rocks and natural spaces never go out of style. That's where our investment should focus.
- 7) We talked about having adequate off-street parking (10-12 spaces x 2or 3) that would help the non-Ford site community users access the parks and their amenities: open space/water/rocks, skateboard park, BB court, dog park, play structures, strength training, etc. We noted that there will be some parking off Ford for commercial use, but weren't able to read the plans adequately to know if they exist elsewhere. We thought it would be good to have some parking available off Cleveland for D and off of E River Road for C and A.

We were uniformly excited by the really great work that you all have done so far to create thoughtful, vibrant community spaces in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for St Paul. And in addition to getting our work done, we found out that we have friends in common, and we got to know each other a bit, which was great.

I hope this was helpful to your team, and really appreciate being able to provide input.

Thanks, and talk to you all soon! (Hopefully in person sometime!)

Karen Welle

On Mon, Jun 8, 2020 at 11:42 AM Mac Alberts <Mac.Alberts@ryancompanies.com> wrote:

Hello [REDACTED] Frank, Eric, and Karen,

Please see the attached presentation from our meeting last week. The last few pages describe the Conversations homework. Please work with each other to find a time that works with you to chat. When you have completed the discussion, please send me the notes from your discussion. Just as a reminder, we are asking each of you to summarize the conversation individually. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out.

Thank you!

Mac

Mac Alberts

Project Manager

(c) 507-272-1268

Ryan Companies US, Inc.

533 S 3rd Street, Suite 100

Minneapolis, MN 55415

ryancompanies.com



Frank Jossi

Questions Answered

What activities and amenities did you select as your top priorities?

I believe in a strong component should be part of every park. I want each to have a varied forest canopy that prepares the Ford Site for global warming by offering heat mitigation, rainwater absorption, carbon sequestration, beauty and an intrinsic connection to nature in a relatively dense development. Nature, water and landscape – elements of great parks since Olmsted – should inspire park designers. Also, as much as possible, and within ADA compliance, please keep nonporous surfaces to an absolute minimum. The development will have plenty of pavement, let's avoid paving the parks, too. Wood chip trails, etc. could work just fine.

2) What do you see as the most critical feature in the 60% plans that will make the parks successful?

Flexibility is key. Even with the Neighborhood Park (B-4), I would like to see the sports areas capable of transitioning to serve various audiences. Can we have two tennis/pickleball courts available during the day that also serve another sport at other times? Seems like this is doable, or will be. I know the skateboard park will be permanent, and I like that option. But other fields could be made to accommodate more than one sport.

3) Community and connection are intended to be a part of the design. How do we best accomplish this goal in the parks?

Simple answer – signage, and lots of it. Kiosks on Ford describing where the parks are and how to best get to them. I still find it hard to believe

how many millions we spend on the nation's best bicycle trail system and how little is devoted to allowing riders to know where they are, along with trail names, etc. I have apps, but we should not have to depend on them – the parks should be a place where we leave the phone at home and still find our way around.

4) What features or amenities that are shown in the 60% parks plans resonate most with you?

I love the natural playground in the Headwaters area, the daylighting of the trail underneath River Road and the maintaining of the WPA flavor. I was a bit skeptical of the adult play area because I see so few of them being used here and in other cities, but if the investment isn't huge I say add it. People's desire to exercise during COVID outside will likely grow. I love the hammock area, too, it's a great addition, forward-thinking. The play area in A is great. My advice is to please pick activities that allow for plenty of creative play.

5) What features of amenities do you feel are missing from the 60% plans? Wayfinding, as noted. I assume the two baseball fields the neighborhood wanted will be maintained. And although I see one strong connection to the river via the Headwater park, I wonder, will Park A have access, too? Connections to the river perhaps could be emphasized.

I was a member of the District Council for a decade and we spoke about embedding art into the parks. That's a conversation for a later time, perhaps, but I do want to see what we can do to create parks with artistic installations.

I want to note that I focused more on the naturalistic elements and less on sports, perhaps because Highland is well served by many sports

facilities already (I use many of them to play tennis, basketball and other games). My thinking takes into account existing amenities and those being considered in the future (the nine-hole golf course as a sports center). The Ford Sites does not have to be all things to all people.

Mac Alberts

From: Eric Weiss <eric.weiss@tpl.org>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 3:16 PM
To: Mac Alberts
Subject: RE: [External] Ford Site Redevelopment - PAC Conversations - Group A

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1) What activities and amenities did you select as your top priorities? Discuss why.

See my #2 answer. Ultimately, a balance of activities and amenities is the top priority. If I were to add to that, year-round interest and activity is also important. And this goes beyond activities requiring special equipment. I'd really like to see the trails and gardens maintained through the winter, with gardens being manicured in a way that adds color, height, and interest in the winter and perennials left until mid-May to support pollinators and animals.

Climbing Structure – 6, 2, 7

Skate Park – 5, 9, 4

Adult Fitness – 5, 1, 6

Park C Amenities – 5, 4, 1

Park C Amenities II – 5, 2, 1,

Ravine – 1, 3, 5

2) What do you see as the most critical feature in the 60% plans that will make the parks successful?

The most critical feature is balance. Too many parks are focused on athletics, active recreation, and turf grass. I'm happy to see some notions of active recreation and open lawns balanced with walking paths, gardens, water features, and gathering spaces. Additionally, parks are too often designed for group activity and don't provide respite and relaxation for the introvert. I do think there are opportunities to create smaller "rooms" within the park for relaxation/rejuvenation.

3) Community and connection are intended to be a part of the design. How do we best accomplish this goal in the parks?

My sense is that this can be accomplished through a delicate balance of design, programming, rules/policy, and organic community interactions. Again, it's a bit difficult to understand how the site works cohesively because our task force is not tasked with reviewing streetscapes and plazas – or really even receiving much information on these amenities. Because the parks are being designed in a manner that is well balanced, I'm hopeful that these spaces will be used by all segments of the community. I do think it will be critical to regularly program the site with a mix of events, festivals, passive recreation/education, active recreation, and cultural celebrations. I'd strongly recommend a diverse "Friends Of" group be established to help navigate this complex eco-system once the park/neighborhood are established. In regards to people feeling welcome, I think this needs to be the utmost priority. We'll need ways to subtly and overtly make it clear that all people are welcome, including rules, regulations, policing, and community policing.

4) What features or amenities that are shown in the 60% parks plans resonate most with you?

I'm personally excited for the water-based and natural features. Regardless of background, we all have a deep innate connection to water and nature, and as city dwellers we're often disconnected from both. I'm also very excited for the plaza spaces. We lack an outdoor night culture in the Twin Cities and the US, and I'd love to see an active space take shape that is not too sterilized.

5) What features of amenities do you feel are missing from the 60% plans?

I think it's about the right mix. I look forward to the details – signs, policies, programs, etc.

From: Mac Alberts <Mac.Alberts@ryancompanies.com>

Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 11:42 AM

To: [REDACTED], Eric Weiss <eric.weiss@tpl.org>; frank.jossi@comcast.net; karenjwelle@gmail.com; frankjossi@comcast.net

Cc: Stewart, Ellen (CI-StPaul) <ellen.stewart@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Nick Koch <Nick.Koch@RyanCompanies.com>; Terry Minarik <tminarik@thinkconfluence.com>

Subject: [External] Ford Site Redevelopment - PAC Conversations - Group A

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Hello [REDACTED], Frank, Eric, and Karen,

Please see the attached presentation from our meeting last week. The last few pages describe the Conversations homework. Please work with each other to find a time that works with you to chat. When you have completed the discussion, please send me the notes from your discussion. Just as a reminder, we are asking each of you to summarize the conversation individually. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out.

Thank you!

Mac

Mac Alberts

Project Manager

(c) 507-272-1268

Ryan Companies US, Inc.
533 S 3rd Street, Suite 100
Minneapolis, MN 55415

ryancompanies.com



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