



Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development

Date: May 24, 2012

To: Council Member Gary Schiff, Chair of Zoning and Planning Committee

Referral to: Zoning and Planning Committee

Subject: Resolution for Supporting the vision of the Minneapolis Riverfront Development Initiative Entitled RiverFIRST; and Engaging in Close Coordination with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to Update and Implement the Above the Falls Plan So That It Incorporates Key Elements of RiverFIRST and Reflects the Findings of the City's Above the Falls Policy Review and Implementation Study

Recommendation: Approval of resolution

Previous Directives: Comprehensive Plan adoption (10/2/08), with condition: "Your Committee further recommends that staff be directed to include the following considerations as part of the Above the Falls rezoning study to be conducted after adoption of The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth: (1) Explore policy and regulatory strategies for providing existing property owners clearer expectations about the phasing of long-range land use transitions; and (2) analyze and report back to the Council on the potential impacts of the land use guidance in the Above The Falls study area related to the extent and phasing of the proposed long-range transition from industrial to nonindustrial development."

Department Information

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Supporting Information:

In 2010 the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board initiated a design competition and subsequent planning processes to update the vision for the park portion of the Above the Falls plan. The exciting vision that emerged for parks, trails, and connectivity to the river is called RiverFIRST. The RiverFIRST concept, and the process that generated it, have renewed energy around the public realm elements of the Above the Falls plan, and have accelerated the implementation of some parks and trails projects. The MPRB is now seeking to amend the original Above the Falls Plan, and make corresponding amendments to the City's comprehensive plan amendment.

During the same period, in response to the above referenced Council directive, City staff has undertaken a course of research and analysis to evaluate the need for updates to the Above the Falls plan, prior to pursuing rezoning or other implementation strategies. The initial

findings of the City research also suggests that an Above the Falls plan amendment is needed, in order to adjust for changes in conditions since the plan was originally adopted, and to allow for a more feasible implementation path. Some of the major findings include:

- Job creation and retention are important goals for this area and the city as a whole, and there is currently limited space available for expansion of job-generating uses. There are unique advantages to some portions of the study area, including the Upper Harbor Terminal site, for this purpose. For City-supported projects, providing job linkages for area residents is a high priority. At present, there is significantly less land available for expansion of job generating uses than there is for residential/mixed use development citywide.
- The expansion of quality housing and mixed use development options in North and Northeast Minneapolis can strengthen community connections to the riverfront and further important City goals related to community stabilization and livability. Effort needs to be made to evaluate feasible ways to accommodate residential/mixed use development within the overall study area to enhance the existing housing supply and provide options for existing and new residents.
- The City's current community development programs, and customary use of development tools and authorities, are not adequate to implement the most ambitious elements of the 2000 plan – such as large-scale conversion of industrial areas to residential. Additional support and resources (both financial and human) will be needed, or the vision will need to be modified to a more incremental approach.
- Phasing of development will be an important consideration. Certain areas may have different recommendations in the short and long term, especially if more ambitious redevelopment plans are pursued.
- Park and trail development is an important precursor to high value redevelopment of all types. The City will continue to work with MPRB on the implementation of the open space vision for the upper riverfront – especially around sites that offer shared opportunity for both public open space and redevelopment.

Next Steps

An update to the Above the Falls Plan will allow the incorporation of the RiverFIRST concept into the plan, and the adjustment of aspects of the development vision of the plan to reflect what has been learned through the Above the Falls Policy Review and Implementation Study. City and MPRB staffs are committed to working collaboratively on this plan update so that the refined vision for the upper riverfront could be comprehensive and integrated. Staffs of both organizations already have been working closely together in the process – joined by City Health and Family Support staff, which is adding health-oriented analysis and insight to the plan review process.

The attached resolution affirms the City's support for the MPRB RiverFIRST concept, and the Above the Falls plan update process. It commits to ongoing coordination – at both the staff and policy levels. Additionally, it supports joint meetings, community outreach, and documents in an effort to present a unified vision and strategy for both parks and private development in the upper riverfront.

To ensure ongoing communication and support around this planning effort, it is proposed that policy-level coordination will be facilitated through a joint committee of City Council Members and Park Board Commissioners. Details of composition and scope of this committee will be determined jointly by leadership of both bodies. This will be in the context of a larger public engagement strategy.