Community Planning and Economic Development

350 South Fifth Street, Room 210 Minneapolis, MN 55415-1385 (612) 673-2597 Phone (612) 673-2526 Fax (612) 673-2157 TDD Public Works Department
50 South Fifth Street, Poor 20

350 South Fifth Street, Room 203 Minneapolis, MN 55415-1385 (612) 673-2352 Phone (612) 673-2410 Fax (612) 673-3565 TDD

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 13, 2007

TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Barbara Sporlein, Planning Director

Jason Wittenberg, Planning Supervisor Beth Grosen, Senior Project Coordinator Lisa Cerney, Senior Professional Engineer

CC: Pat Born, Chief Financial Officer

Steve Kotke, Public Works Director Mike Christenson, CPED Director

SUBJECT: Minnesota Urban Ballpark – Site Plan and Design Review

On May 26, 2006, Governor Pawlenty signed legislation authorizing a new ballpark in downtown Minneapolis' North Loop neighborhood. The legislation included provisions whereby the State established the Ballpark Implementation Committee (BIC) and an alternative process for municipal land use and development review related to the Twins Ballpark. The ten-member BIC included equal representation from the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, with both elected officials and citizens.

At its meeting of October 31, 2007, the BIC acted to forward a recommendation to the City of Minneapolis to allow construction of an open air professional ballpark with a seating capacity of approximately 40,000 people. (See attached BIC action and related attachments.) The ballpark, which is in the early stages of construction as authorized by statute, will be located in the area generally bounded by 5th Street North, the BNSF railroad right of way, 7th Street North, and I-394; with accessory off-street parking between 7th Street North and 12th Street North.

The list of issues in the attached BIC action (ballpark design, public infrastructure and related improvements, etc.) coincides with the specific language in the ballpark statute. The BIC's recommendation advances to the City Planning Commission, which then makes a recommendation to the City Council for final action. As mandated by Minn. Stat. 473.758 subd. 2, "construction of a ballpark within the development area is consistent with

the adopted area plan, is the preferred ballpark location, and is a permitted land use." Further, the City "shall not impose any unnecessary or unreasonable conditions on the recommendations of the implementation committee, nor take any action or impose any conditions that will result in delay from the time frames established in the planning and construction timetable or in additional overall costs." Failure of the City Council to act on the recommendations of the Ballpark Implementation Committee within 45 days of the submission of the recommendation to the City Planning Commission is deemed to be approval. (The City received the BIC recommendation on November 5th.)

Staff from various City departments have played an active role in the ballpark process to date. A twenty-five member ballpark team with representatives from all pertinent city divisions met for over eight months, and a core team continues to meet to collaborate and advance city positions for the ballpark project. The ballpark project was presented and discussed at the City Planning Commission's committee of the whole on several occasions.

Project Description

The ballpark exterior will feature a combination of large expanses of glass and native Minnesota limestone, as well as steel, and wood. The primary street elevations will rise to approximately 70 feet above the adjacent sidewalks, with the scoreboard and light structure rising higher near the 5th Street elevation. With the pedestrian experience in mind, staff has worked with the project architects to strive to minimize blank walls at the pedestrian level to the extent practical.

The site, which includes former rail yards, is essentially located in a trench. Bridges will serve as the principal public access to the ballpark. The main entrances are aligned with 6th Street North and near the corners of the ballpark. The most heavily used entrances are expected to be from the 6th Street plaza and the southernmost entrance along 7th Street, which is also the location of the main ticket area and team retail store. The plaza that aligns with 6th Street provides public open space adjacent to the ballpark and would feature landscaping, benches, decorative lighting, and access to the skyway between Ramp B and the Target Center. Current funding will allow the plaza walkway to cross over 2nd Avenue and extend to a stairway to the east of the Target Center loading dock. Extending this public walkway along the Target Center to 1st Avenue North has been identified as a top priority subject to available funding.

A detailed study of likely pedestrian movement was conducted, with a range of potential mitigation options, as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) referenced below. Due to the site's unique geography, the ballpark is not located within an extensive, intact street grid (and one street segment will be removed as part of this project). Not only are the number of available pedestrian routes somewhat limited, but existing infrastructure in the vicinity was not built with the ballpark in mind. The project designers have worked to maximize the width of the walkways adjacent to the ballpark. The project provides a public pedestrian connection between 5th Street and 7th Street along the northwest side of the site (the left field line). In addition, the BIC process generated a substantial discussion about appropriate hours of public access to a segment of the ballpark concourse connecting 5th Street to the 6th Street plaza as mitigation for the loss of 3rd Avenue North. In discussions with the City Planning Commission to date, commissioners have emphasized the

importance of connections to, from, and through the site. One focus of this open concourse section is to provide a good pedestrian route for rail commuters to and from the downtown core. Parties have earlier agreed to a 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. open concourse on non-game days, extended up to 3:00 a.m. with completion of security plan completed and funded by the city. Access between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 am on game days was recommended by the BIC. With this regular public pedestrian traffic, the public plaza is not a "dead end" but rather a new enhanced link between the North Loop and the downtown core.

As part of the Northstar commuter rail project, the Hiawatha LRT line is being extended along 5th Street and will include a stop immediately adjacent to the ballpark and the proposed commuter rail line. The Northstar commuter rail station is being integrated into the north end of the ballpark, which includes vertical circulation to and from the commuter rail platform located below street level. The administrative offices for the Minnesota Twins will also be located near the Northstar station.

The City has been working to extend the Cedar Lake Trail to the Mississippi River. The ballpark project team has provided space for the Cedar Lake Trail at ground-level through the ballpark site. The trail will run beneath the ballpark, adjacent to the BNSF and Northstar railroad tracks. A segment of BNSF main line was shifted to the northwest in order to allow the ballpark and trail to coexist on the site.

Interim accessory parking and loading will take place to the southwest of the ballpark, extending underneath the 7th Street North and 10th Street North bridges. Parking in this area will be primarily for the Twins (players, coaches, personnel, etc.) as well as media vehicles. The Minnesota Ballpark Authority (MBA) has an agreement with the team to develop this property. If the property is not developed within 15 years, the MBA may market the site to other developers.

Hennepin County is requesting that the City vacate a segment of 3rd Avenue North between 5th Street and 7th Street. The formal vacation request is forthcoming and will include additional rights of way that do not function as public streets. Application will also be made to replat the property.

The ballpark, which will be owned by the MBA and operated by the Twins, will open in April of 2010.

Environmental Impact Statement

The project triggered a state mandated EIS. Hennepin County was authorized by statute as the responsible government unit and deemed the final EIS to be adequate in June of this year. While the EIS addressed a wide variety of potential environmental consequences, issues related to transportation and parking were analyzed most extensively. The ballpark site offers excellent opportunities for fans to arrive by multiple modes, but the site context also poses significant challenges for users of all transportation modes. The final EIS identifies a range of potential mitigation measures and notes that a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) will be developed by representatives from a range of stakeholders, including the Minnesota Twins, the Minnesota Ballpark Authority, Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Federal

Highway Administration, Metro Transit, local law enforcement and representatives from local neighborhood and business groups. The City of Minneapolis and MnDOT are studying modifications that can be made to the A, B, and C ramps to facilitate their utility and smooth egress. Converting 2nd Avenue to a two way street seems to be an important approach to facilitate traffic movement in the area.

Relevant City Land Use Policies

State statute identifies the ballpark as consistent with adopted plans for the area. In terms of specific guidance in adopted City plans, the recommended land use plan in the *Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan* identifies the site as "cultural/entertainment" in anticipation of a ballpark at the site. Further, *Downtown 2010*, the comprehensive plan's downtown element, includes the following policy guidance: "Maintain downtown as the location for the region's professional sports teams, and ensure that future sports facilities are located where they can complement the existing retail and entertainment districts, take advantage of existing parking and transit facilities and maximize direct econonomic benefits to downtown."

Changes to Approved Plans

Given that the ballpark legislation did not address a procedure for reviewing changes to the project following the BIC recommendation, the BIC adopted an alternative process allowing the co-chairs (Council President Barbara Johnson and County Commissioner Mark Stenglein) to determine whether changes are substantive enough to require the committee to reconvene. The solution does not address the issue of changes to the plans following completion of the ballpark. Staff recommends that it be made clear that such future changes (e.g., additions to the facility) will be subject to applicable City regulations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Community Planning and Economic Development Department and Public Works Department recommend that the City Planning Commission forward a recommendation to the City Council to **approve** the recommendation of the Ballpark Implementation Committee, with the following additional recommendations:

- 1. Following completion of the improvements referenced in the action of the Ballpark Implementation Committee, subsequent changes will be subject to the City's zoning ordinance and all applicable City regulations.
- 2. Public pedestrian access shall be granted using the concourse level from the corner of 5th St. and 3rd Ave. to the 6th St. Plaza as shown on Exhibit I and shall be open on nongame days from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.; and public pedestrian access shall be extended to 3:00 a.m. upon completion of a funded security plan by the City of Minneapolis.