

**Excerpt from the
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

**Minneapolis Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED)
Planning Division**

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 14, 2007

TO: Steve Poor, Planning Supervisor – Zoning Administrator, Community Planning & Economic Development - Planning Division

FROM: Jason Wittenberg, Supervisor, Community Planning & Economic Development - Planning Division, Development Services

CC: Barbara Sporlein, Director, Community Planning & Economic Development Planning Division

SUBJECT: Planning Commission decisions of November 13, 2007

The following actions were taken by the Planning Commission on November 13, 2007. As you know, the Planning Commission's decisions on items other than rezonings, text amendments, vacations, 40 Acre studies and comprehensive plan amendments are final subject to a ten calendar day appeal period before permits can be issued:

Commissioners Present: President Motzenbecker, El-Hindi, Huynh, LaShomb, Mains, Nordyke, Norkus-Crampton, Schiff and Tucker – 9

Not present: Williams (excused)

Committee Clerk: Lisa Baldwin (612) 673-3710

1. Minnesota Urban Ballpark ([Barbara Sporlein](#)) ([Jason Wittenberg](#)).

A. The Ballpark Implementation Committee has forwarded a recommendation to the City of Minneapolis to approve a request by Hennepin County to construct an open-air major league baseball stadium with approximately 40,000 seats, subject to conditions and mitigation measures, in the area generally bounded by 5th St N, the BNSF railroad right of way, 7th St N, and I-394; and off-street parking between 7th St N and 12th St N.

The City Planning Commission will review the recommendation of the Ballpark Implementation Committee and make an advisory recommendation to the City Council.

Action: The City Planning Commission forwarded 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 non-game 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.
3. Hennepin County and the Minnesota Twins are encouraged to work with the City's Public Art Administrator on public art for the ballpark and adjacent public spaces and is encouraged to include art that is not sports-related.
4. Staff review the pedestrian safety plan along 7th St.
5. As noted in the BIC recommendation, consider extending the 6th St pedestrian plaza from 2nd Ave N to 1st Ave N.

Staff Wittenberg presented the report.

Commissioner Mains: The picture you have up there, what is the big square of rust colored stuff on the 7th St façade?

Staff Wittenberg: That is the wood element that I referenced. It will be a lattice, essentially, that will allow for viewing into and out of the facility. It's a partial screen to a ramp that carries people and down within the facility.

Commissioner Mains: My next questions relate to the Cedar Lake Trail. You said it isn't necessarily a tunnel. I don't know if you've been in Union Station in Chicago; it reminds me an awful lot of the train level at the Union Station in Chicago which is as close to a tunnel as it can be without being a tunnel. I can't tell from the plans, it looks like there may be continuous barriers that are six feet high between the train tracks and the trail with just light above the six foot level. Is that correct or am I misreading the plan?

Staff Wittenberg: My understanding is that there is not a solid, completely opaque barrier there, but that is an open barrier that's simply for protection but is not something that you can't see through.

Commissioner Mains: Was there any discussion of doing any sky lighting of the trail in any place? I know a lot of it goes under stands, which would be impossible, but at least on the two ends.

Staff Wittenberg: That's correct; a lot of it does actually go under the ballpark. I am not aware of any discussions having taken place about whether there was a possibility of allowing light to filter through the promenade above the trail.

Commissioner Mains: I don't think we can require it, but I'd like to note that that's a concern, at least of mine.

Staff Wittenberg: Certainly the city intends to provide adequate lighting down in that area so it's not a dark space.

Commissioner Mains: I understand, artificial lighting, but it is a nature trail at both ends and it'd be nice to have some more lighting. Landscaping seems rather sparse. There is like eight trees on the 7th St side. There doesn't appear to be any landscaping on the 5th St side. Am I reading this correctly?

Staff Wittenberg: Yes. Part of the issue is that you're planting trees on bridges and there are concerns about the ability to where you'd be able to structurally handle trees. There is also some concern about, sort of the conflict between the needed pedestrian space to have a large crowd empty out of this facility and sort of a conflict between that and a lot of landscaping. In terms of the streetscapes themselves, my understanding is that that largely relates to structural capacity...

Commissioner Mains: Landscaping doesn't necessarily mean trees. Ideally it means trees, but it doesn't necessarily mean trees. Some more green growing things there would be appreciated. I understand that we have a budget constraint that we can't require this, but this is another request. Finally, what is the closest skyway connection to the Northstar Rail terminal?

Staff Wittenberg: Essentially there would be two ways to enter the skyway system. The skyway runs approximately in this location. You could walk through, presumably, the public concourse, and access the skyway here. There is an at-grade walkway through the B Ramp that you could enter here.

Commissioner Mains: But that is also on the area that could be closed in the current planning, correct?

Staff Wittenberg: This actually will be open to both vehicles to get on the freeway as well as pedestrians to continue to access this space. They could get into an enclosed space and access the skyway system through here or walk through this way.

Commissioner Mains: Thank you.

Commissioner Schiff: Can you trace the pedestrian walkway movements for people who get to site by lightrail versus getting to it from the parking ramps? How do they maneuver to the entrance so we can see where pedestrian movement is in direct competition for space with any potential landscaping? It would help us to know where that conflict exists and where it doesn't exist.

Staff Wittenberg: First you asked about accessing the site via light-rail. You would essentially disembark the platform either in this location or in this location. Your nearest entrances would be there and there and there if you're arriving by train. I honestly don't know whether the Twins

intend to have on their tickets, as they do now at the Metrodome, telling you which gate you're supposed to enter. If that is the case, I suppose it could be possible that if you're coming from the A Ramp, for example, that you would have to come down and enter at the gate nearest to where your ticket is located. Otherwise, you would presumably come in one of these areas from the A and B ramp.

Commissioner Schiff: The area on the west side of the site, who walks along that pedestrian plaza?

Staff Wittenberg: This space here? Presumably patrons getting to and from their seats or vehicle and rail. If you're coming out in this location and hoping to get on light-rail, I suppose one of your options would be to go around like that rather than trying to get through a crowded concourse. It's also anticipated that residents of the North Loop would use this as one route to get in and out of the downtown core.

Commissioner Schiff: High competition for space, particularly before and after game times.

Staff Wittenberg: Particularly before and after game times. Also, another point, along this side over here, that is a fire lane over there as well so we have to minimize obstructions in that area.

Commissioner Schiff: As people are walking along 7th St, is it just a wall of people walking against a curb line or is there anything else there to protect pedestrians from the moving traffic?

Staff Wittenberg: I believe it's essentially paved to curb. I'm not aware of any other barriers other than the sort of clumps of trees that you see in a couple of locations.

Commissioner Schiff: It is pretty bad now. We know that as those walkways become overcrowded people just walk in the street and that affects traffic. Looking at that 7th St area, I'm wondering if there's any options that the Implementation Committee talked about to particularly protect pedestrians from that moving lane of traffic and if there's... as Commission Mains said, landscaping could include trees optimally, could also include planters or something else.

President Tucker opened the public hearing.

President Tucker closed the public hearing.

Commissioner El-Hindi: I'd like to start out by saying, I think I speak on behalf of all of us, I'd like to commend the Zoning and Planning staff, Public Works staff, the Ballpark Implementation Committee and everyone that worked on the ballpark up to this point for working on a fine report and a comprehensive report that the Ballpark Implementation Committee put together. I also want to say that this, obviously, is a major complex project within a major complex urban context so all of us should bear that in mind. I think given all of these circumstances that we definitely commend everybody's effort in the design and all of the recommendations up to this point. With that, I guess I'd like to move the staff recommendation with one additional condition and an additional comment. The condition, which would be in addition to condition one and two from the staff, would be that Hennepin County and the Minnesota Twins are encouraged...and I want to underline "encouraged", to work with the City's Public Art Administrator on public art, and not all necessarily baseball-themed art for the ballpark and adjacent public spaces. As far as the comment, one of the comments that I have, and this comment is really just to reiterate one of the

Implementation Committee's conditions, which would be to approve the pedestrian plaza footprint as shown in exhibits K and K.1 and subject to additional funds, designate extending the 6th St pedestrian plaza from 2nd Ave N to 1st Ave N as the number one priority for supplemental infrastructure investment.

Commissioner Huynh: I'd like to second Commissioner El-Hindi and I just had a couple comments. I'd like to second Commissioner El-Hindi's comments on the progress of the participation from everyone from Hennepin County, the City, from the design team and the owner in terms of trying to make this project work. I also wanted to note that through all the process in terms of reading the EIS, the pedestrian analysis, the traffic analysis, in addition to reviewing the project, it's nice to see that LEED still stayed on as a project goal in terms of meeting another criteria, which is very difficult and I think in terms of everyone that's done sustainable design or a LEED building, I think it's a great goal marker for the city. I think that it will encourage a lot of pride. I just wanted to commend the project team for that.

Commissioner LaShomb: This is a difficult issue for everybody simply in the sense that there has been a lot of political division about this. I just wanted to point out for the record that when I ran for reappointment for the Planning Commission two years ago, two of the commissioners that supported me were strongly in favor of the stadium and two of them were less than strongly supportive of the stadium. I always felt a little bit of here and there on both sides. When we had this in front of the Committee of the Whole some time back, I know there was a lot of concern on the part of Planning Commissioners to make sure that this was not just a destination but a thoroughfare. That it was easily accessible and connected to downtown, that it made the Northstar Commuter Rail project a viable project to a greater extent because it had a great destination among other destinations. I think all of those things seemed to have been realized in a situation where state law and other things have constrained some of that dialogue. I think this is a good plan and I do think public art does contribute to the quality of a stadium facility. I think Commissioner Schiff has raised some good questions about 7th St. I used to work at the MTC office building and used to walk on 7th St all the time and it's a busy street. Overall, I think the staff work and the work of the Ballpark Implementation Committee and the hard work of the County Commissioners, whether they are on one side or the other, they spent a considerable amount of time over there talking about this issue and putting the staff through the paces. I'm going to support this because I think it's in the public interest to do this and to have these recommendations be implemented.

Commissioner Nordyke: Given the motion about requiring the art to be public art and that they work with the Public Art Administrator, why can't we make that a requirement as opposed to making a strong recommendation since it doesn't change the timeline or budget?

Staff Wittenberg: Commissioners, you could consider that. Arguably, requiring public art would increase the overall cost of the project.

Commissioner Schiff: All of the City's public art money is tied up on our capital budget as a percentage of our capital budget and since we're not likely spending any capital funds on this ballpark, then it wouldn't be eligible and so there's no way to compel the city to spend more money on this project through a motion like that.

Commissioner Nordyke: I hadn't intended to make it City spending money. I thought maybe requiring that they at least had the committee review it for the purposes of aesthetics.

Staff Sporlein: I understood Commissioner El-Hindi's additional comment, which could be a condition, is that for any public art component, to consult with the City's Public Art Administrator on that component, either on the building or in the surrounding area. I think that's fine.

President Tucker: I believe he did add that as a third condition.

Commissioner Norkus-Crampton: I'm really glad to see, under number nine, for bicycle and pedestrian paths, talking about continuing to encourage Northstar to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian connections to integrate the Cedar-Lake trail with transit. I think that there are a lot of opportunities on game days, certainly, when families are going to come downtown from points south and points west. There are plenty of people who would bike if they had a safe way to get down there. I think that making sure there are some appropriate bike storage, some parking locations in the design. I think that could really take some burden off the surrounding streets and roads if people felt safe doing that. That goes along with the lighting that was mentioned earlier. Sometimes on bike trails people feel a little isolated, especially if they're partially enclosed. There's a little bit of fear that you might run into something unexpected on a trail. Anything we can do to help people feel safer and feel like that's a really usable and friendly place to be and safe for families is going to make it more of an enjoyable outing for everyone and take some of the pressure off the parking and on the roads. The other question I had for you, Jason, I didn't see exactly here...I wanted to be reminded on what exactly the accessibility to the concourse, the hours that you were suggesting that we might recommend being open on game days and non-game days to make sure to ensure some kind of public access to the site.

Staff Wittenberg: I believe that is in the recommendation; recommended condition number two, that those hours be from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. on non-game days with the possibility of extending to 3 a.m. subject to completion of a funded security plan by the City.

Commissioner Schiff: I just want to add a fourth request that staff review the pedestrian safety plan along 7th St and consider options to help prevent pedestrians from when the plaza gets crowded from walking into the traffic lanes. That can be accomplished by a number of ways. It could be more landscaping, something other than a curb, but something that helps protect pedestrians from moving traffic and vice versa.

President Tucker: Commissioner El-Hindi, will you accept that?

Commissioner El-Hindi: Yes.

President Tucker: Any other comments? Being none, I think we're ready to vote. We have staff recommendation with two conditions plus a third condition about public art and a fourth condition about pedestrian safety on 7th St and a strong endorsement of extending the 6th St pedestrian plaza from 2nd Ave N to 1st Ave N. Any further discussion? All those in favor? Opposed?

The motion carried 7-0 (Tucker resided, Motzenbecker abstained).