

NORTH LOOP PLAN UPDATE
Community Advisory Committee Meeting #4

Wednesday, August 19, 2009
City of Minneapolis Public Service Center
3:00 – 5:00 PM

MEETING SUMMARY

Committee members present: Karen Rosar, Adrienne Hannert, Ryan Kronzer, Erin Fitzgerald

Committee members absent: Paul Adelman, Mary de Laittre, Bob Schmitz, Bruce Rubin

City staff present: Beth Elliott, Joe Bernard

Others present: Jeff Miller and Bryan Harjes from HKGi

Development Guidelines

Guidelines for private/public development are an important tool to complement any future land use guidance. Staff is working on the direction for general and private development (site-based) while HKGi has been tasked with analyzing the public realm and connectivity issues in the neighborhood.

The main impetus for the Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan was the introduction of light-rail transit in Downtown along the 5th Street corridor. That plan is essentially a large transit station area plan with particular focus at the Downtown East and Multimodal station locations.

This update to the plan further emphasizes the need to:

- Articulate the market potential inherent in underdeveloped districts of Downtown.
- Promote vertical mixed-use “complete communities.”
- Capitalize on rail transit and encourage a less auto-dependent Downtown.
- Encourage the design and delivery of high quality public spaces and streetscapes.

Broad policy and public support for increasing development intensity exists to perpetuate the existing character of this Downtown neighborhood and to capitalize on opportunities to further the goals of transit-oriented development to support the multimodal station and other transit stations in the North Loop neighborhood.

In order to provide guidance for the scale of new buildings and infill development within the neighborhood, the Development Intensity map categorize sites into three Intensity Districts – Downtown Transit-Oriented, Downtown Urban-Oriented, and Downtown Neighborhood Oriented. Each district corresponds to a level of development intensity and density related to current and anticipated uses in the North Loop in all categories – residential, commercial, industrial, and public. The Transit-Oriented District is located around current and anticipated station areas and is the most intensive, from a development standpoint, of the three districts. The

Urban-Oriented District supports land areas that are developing in a pattern consistent with medium density building types of up to ten stories. The Neighborhood-Oriented District is intended to support new development that is compatible with the existing density and pattern of an area. Because the North Loop is a Downtown neighborhood, intensity will be reflected differently than it would in neighborhoods outside of the Central Business District. The Development Intensity map covers areas included in the Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan and is consistent with that existing policy.

Density and intensity is frequently measured using parameters like floor area ratio, or dwelling units per square foot of property area. These density measures are not very intuitive, in part because they do not lend themselves to being depicted visually. This plan attempts to make the proposed density levels more intuitive by correlating each district with a mix of compatible development types that are common in Minneapolis and will be easily recognized by most Minneapolis citizens. New development should offer a mix of development styles, and larger sites should consider site designs that provide a mix of development types within the development.

Committee members thought properties like the Jaguar site on Hennepin Avenue should be in the most intense category, consistent with the previous proposal on the site. They also requested a more nuanced, site-by-site approach in and around the historic district. Staff explained they do not want the Development Intensity map to conflict with the historic guidelines but there was definitely space to be more nuanced to allow more intensity right outside of the historic district. The group also wants to see more intensity allowed in the 5th Street corridor near the viaduct. Otherwise, they generally agreed with the location of the three Development Intensity districts.

The committee also reviewed development guidance for general and private development. This guidance will build on the laying of site policy with direction related to land use and development intensity. In many cases this guidance for sites reiterates existing site plan regulation that emphasizes how a specific site and its use can integrate more seamlessly with the public realm.

The plan will have basic guidance for:

- Frontage
- Off-street parking
- Fencing and landscaping
- Building facades

On properties located within the historic Warehouse District, direction should be taken from its design guidelines.

HKGi Connectivity Analysis

Hoisington Kogler Group has been hired to accomplish three main items:

- Review Access Minneapolis street types and recommend changes in the North Loop consistent with the planning process – this may include new street types.

- Create a graphic illustration of the visionary scenario for the Lower North Loop that exhibits the new street connections, transit station, improved Farmers Market, and possible development.
- Create a graphic illustration looking underneath the viaduct that may exemplify new development opportunities along 5th Street as well as positive use of space underneath the viaduct.

Jeff Miller began to explain the process of analyzing the street types. They started by examining the existing neighborhood features such as designated land use features, gateways, physical barriers to connectivity, and the open space system. These features help to provide a clear picture as to the opportunities and limitations for improving the public realm and connectivity. They then explained the existing and planned transportation system, including the current street types found in the neighborhood.

Their recommendations include revising the street types on Glenwood and 5th Street to Community Connectors which will better represent possibilities for improved emphasis on connecting into North Minneapolis. It also recognizes the plan's draft recommendation for future commercial uses on Glenwood as well as more bicycle and pedestrian accessibility. They also propose following the direction of the plan so far to use 10th Ave N as the new main connection through the neighborhood from 2nd St south to Glenwood by re-identifying the street type as a Neighborhood Connector. 5th St near the multimodal station would be an Activity Area Street, mainly continuing that designation into the North Loop from the office core. While Olson Hwy will always likely carry a heavy amount of traffic, there are opportunities to make the street more of a Neighborhood Connector – this would continue a 6th Ave N Neighborhood Connector to the intersection of 7th St with Olson.

Jeff and Bryan are proposing a new street type – a Heritage Street. This street type would actually act as an overlay and complement the primary street types. It would be applicable to 3rd St and 5th/6th/7th/8th/9th Aves N. They explained a possible cross-section for 3rd St that would basically keep character of the historic street wall with the wide street but add street trees, more pedestrian lighting, and an improved paver system.

The avenues, or secondary streets, are trickier because of all the ways they are used. Many still have functioning loading docks, and even for the non-functioning loading docks, it is important to preserve them. The loading docks, however, make pedestrian travel through these corridors difficult, particularly for pedestrians with disabilities. The City is also required to bring its streets up to ADA standards over time. One idea HKGi explained is to allow a street-level walking area adjacent to the loading docks. This walking area would not be an elevated sidewalk but would still need to be separated from the traffic lanes by some vertical mechanism – a short curb/bump, bollards, etc. This solution would keep the loading docks as they are and allow enough space for the driving lanes and parallel parking.

Staff reiterated some concerns expressed by Public Works in earlier discussions. Public Works staff are concerned about making sure snow plows can differentiate the driving lanes from the lower pedestrian walkway, as well as snow being plowed into that space and making it unusable. They are also concerned about stormwater ponding in the walking area – one solution is to angle

the street up from the middle so water drains into the center of the street. Overall, though, both Public Works and Preservation staff believe the concept is sound and its just the details that need to be worked out.

CAC members liked the propose solution. One member wants the plan to acknowledge the pressure now and in the near future on 5th Ave N and that it is in poor shape. Staff explained that HKGi's work on the Heritage Street concept is more of a case study and therefore transferable to any street in the neighborhood with similar challenges.

HKGi then explained their concepts for the Lower North Loop and 5th Street/viaduct corridor. The Lower North Loop illustration will be a birds-eye perspective looking toward the center of the neighborhood from International Market Square, generally. It will emphasize the visionary street connections being proposed. It will show an expanded Farmers Market connecting with the proposed Southwest Transitway station on Royalston, articulating one possibility for improving access for people using the train to get to the market. Finally, it will show development opportunities if the private sector starts to see interest in the Lower North Loop. CAC members expressed enthusiasm for the creative solution of designing the Farmers Market to connect with the new transit station.

The 5th Street/viaduct illustration would be the view from street level. It would include a proposed street connection underneath the viaduct at 8th Ave N with some opportunities for green space. As articulated in previous land use discussions, they will show development opportunities on the north side of 5th Street in this illustration along with a possible Bottineau Blvd alignment. As requested by both the plan's TAC and CAC, this illustration is meant to show how the viaduct can enhance the neighborhood rather than be seen as a liability.

Next Meeting

Staff has set up a community meeting for the end of September. Since this will be the only large community meeting in the planning process, staff will make a big advertising push with mailings to all North Loop property owners and tax payers as well as email blurbs to adjacent neighborhood groups and other stakeholders. The meeting will be used to present the plan's draft recommendations.

Community-wide meeting: Thursday, September 24th from 4:30-6:30pm
Currie Maintenance Facility, 1200 Currie Avenue North

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00pm