

HILLCREST REDEVELOPMENT URBAN DESIGN WORKGROUP

Meeting Minutes | Thursday, February 3, 2022

Attendees

- Andrew Wise (partial)
- Donna Peterson
- Frankie Torbor
- Jennifer Brannen
- Susan Bergmann
- Monte Hilleman
- Andrea Novak
- Jess Vetrano
- Tiffani Navatril

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Matt Finn introduced himself as a guest presenter – Senior Architect from LHB with a career focused on a vast scale of housing projects in St. Paul
2. Homework Overview

HOMWORK

Represent history

- + Celebrate and preserve key aspects of the golf course's history.

Lively and complex programming

- + "More than just a walking path," like at Mears Park.

Expressing the inside, outside

- + Create buildings that let passersby know what's going on inside the building.

Reallocate space that would be typically devoted to cars – give it back to people!

- + Explore options to reduce overall neighborhood dependency on cars.

Community Unity Art Sculptures

- + Celebrate community identity and community pride.

Urban Design Work Group Hillcrest Redevelopment Community Engagement
February 3rd, 2022 | St. Paul Port Authority Technical Team

- a. Ties to the history of the site are important to carry forward, both as a golf course in general, and as a gathering place for Jewish community members that were not allowed to enter private golf clubs
 - i. When Hillcrest was a community amenity with members, it was a vibrant place, and with golf courses going away everywhere and particularly with this history of being a place that is welcoming to all cultures, it is important to represent that history and carry the spirit of this place forward
 - ii. This neighborhood being on the very edge of the city means that it should speak to the Maplewood neighborhoods as well as East St. Paul
 - iii. Even before the golf course usage, how can we tie to the Dakota tribes that originally owned this land?
- b. Mears Park with areas for events, music, and gathering – more than just a walking path

- c. Homeless indigenous youth shelter on University Ave is colorful and expresses cultural motifs
 - i. Location along the green line highlights importance of responding to transportation
 - ii. Size/scale ties to surrounding buildings, but façade allows building to stand out and act as a unique and inviting part of the urban environment
- d. Arizona development that prioritizes the pedestrian experience by not providing car infrastructure for any residents – highlights how much space vehicular storage and circulation takes up, and how much space is freed up for other uses when cars are left out
- e. Sculpture created by community tiles showing how the community unified to create a shared representative piece – could be replicated in a multitude of ways within Hillcrest
- f. Infill projects that either fit in or drastically stand out from the surrounding neighborhood – what is the appropriate architectural aesthetic and scale for this development?
- g. Materials like brick and wood are warm, human-scaled, and welcoming. Where brick adds a sense of permanence to a structure, wood that is allowed to weather/patina embeds the sense of time into the structure.
- h. Nodes could be created in ways that are not specifically programmed as one thing
 - i. Gent in Belgium has a canopy that feels like a building and is flexible enough to host different uses throughout the day/year and is a sculptural element in and of itself
- i. Illumination (like a plaza in Boston that has illuminated structures tied to the wind velocity – tying urban elements to a place’s weather conditions)
 - i. A way to make the invisible, visible
 - ii. A similar translation could be valuable with community vitality
- j. Development in Berlin – representative of mixed use including light industrial (which perhaps is defined very differently in Germany) and appears to be modern and plays with color
 - i. Retail incorporation is in response to the light industrial element, where craftsmen can directly sell their products within the same development within storefronts – supporting creativity and creators with more than just public art
 - ii. Lack of parking lots was appealing, but using bricks and paving stones in the hardscape break up the flat expanses and are physically warmer than traditional pavement – “asks to be walked on”
 - iii. Mix of natural and structure – invitations to sit and gather – people are more likely to want to sit, places where there are places to sit

3. Lots

- a. Working with a blank slate is extremely difficult, and regulations from zoning codes to watershed requirements help define what a site can and should be
- b. Plotting process has two different layers: as streets/ROW are established, “out-lots” need to be locked in across the different land use categories, which is followed by the subsequent subdivisions of the larger out-lots
 - i. As speculative land developers, the Port Authority’s role is to make these lots buildable, and therefore try to make the largest out-lots possible to attract the maximum amount of future developers/owners
 - ii. Lots were established by the Master Plan which guides the platting, but the subdivision of that still must occur

- c. This meeting and next will focus on the residential side of the development, bordering the northern and western edges of the site – saving the more special case of Light Industrial for meeting 5
- d. Marketplace interest drives the size of buildings and therefore the lots – driven by economic sense and initial building layouts aim to appeal to 80% of buyers and are just educated assumptions
- e. Lowest development assumption – 15 dwelling units/acres, medium – 3 story buildings, high – 6 story buildings
- f. Regulations that apply to Hillcrest
 - i. St. Paul Zoning Code: Zoning types have been laid out and adopted in the Master Plan, and are defined in the St. Paul Zoning Code (Section 66 – traditional neighborhood zoning)
 - 1. Dense document but is very useful in guiding development
 - 2. It generally aims to foster development and growth of compact, pedestrian-oriented urban villages
 - 3. T1, T2, and T3 have slightly different density and transportation priorities
 - 4. Code is broken into quantitative (density, lot size, setback requirements) and qualitative (Land use diversity, anchoring the corner, landscaping etc.) requirements
 - 5. Floor area ratio (FAR) is the relationship between the scale of the building and the scale of the lot (a FAR of 1 could be achieved with a 1 story building covering the whole site, or a 2-story building covering ½ of the site)
 - ii. The Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District adds another layer of regulations regarding the protection of existing water resources and the cleaning of stormwater runoff
 - iii. Operations and maintenance are inherent to many decisions and should be considered when making them (i.e., landscapes from mowed turf grass to native prairies have maintenance needs for their upkeep)
 - iv. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a philosophy that aims to increase safety through how the landscape is designed (i.e., eyes on the street, defining spaces, illumination, etc.)
 - 1. What is perceived as public and what is perceived as private is deeply engrained in our community and our urban environment (cue Tiff’s hilarious engagement story and her fateful stoop)
- g. What can we (the workgroup) influence?
 - i. Setbacks – how far should the building be from the street? The alley? The buildings on either side?
 - ii. Yards – How should a front yard be used? Driveways? Landscaping? Gathering?
 - iii. Ecological Value – Turf grass is the largest single irrigated crop in the country and has zero ecological value and is considered by some as an impervious surface, how can native grass, trees, etc. be incorporated instead
 - iv. Parking – Many implications, such as cost: structured parking is much more expensive than surface, but surface takes up a lot of space
- h. Observations/Comments/Questions about lots
 - i. Stormwater management system – it is at the discretion of the owner whether they do surface or subsurface stormwater management, but the Master Plan talks about the preferred stormwater

concept is district or regionally-based – a cooperative/efficient use of resources to manage public and private stormwater

1. Port Authority team would love to amenitize stormwater management and add it into the setback of buildings, particularly light industrial, viewing it as a resource and not a waste product
2. City has a new Green Infrastructure District – used at Allianz field and Ford Redevelopment Site – that is a way to permit/construct/charge users for a district stormwater system
3. Ideas about what this shared stormwater system would look like would be a great item for this group to produce

4. Building

- a. Buildings of different sizes are treated differently within the various codes that drive them
- b. Codes and requirements
 - i. City of St. Paul zoning code drives physical elements like height, density, etc.
 - ii. The Minnesota Building Code sometimes address uses, but mostly informs the form of buildings based on their use/scale to insure consistent and safe construction methods
 - iii. Sustainability requirements will be established by the Sustainability work group
 - iv. Operations and maintenance apply to buildings as well, such as the façade material being choosing for side is initially cheap but requires painting/cleaning, while brick has a larger up front cost but lower maintenance costs
 1. Embodied energy is another component that can apply to material selection
 - v. Quantitative metrics include allowed building type, density and building height, which have different requirements across zoning designations
 1. For example, in T1 single family dwelling units allowed, but this group could determine that should be stricter and only allow duplexes and higher
 2. Minimum and maximum building heights are unique for St. Paul, and might need to be tuned up to meet our goals as well
 - vi. Qualitative metrics include building façade continuity, articulation, entries, materials, etc.
 1. This are flushed out in the site plan review as a dialogue between the project team and the City of St. Paul
- c. What can we (the workgroup) influence?
 - i. General form and scale – step backs result in a different ground relationship than buildings that maintain the same façade from ground to sky. Different rooflines also impact this relationship to the sky. Density can vary wildly from attached and stacked (apartment buildings) to detached (single family homes).
 - ii. Entries – entries to individual units from the street result in different circulation/use than buildings with a single, main entry
 - iii. Materiality – city zoning classifies materials into groups based on durability (durable like masonry, metal, glass to less desirable like vinyl), and what materials are chosen/allowed impact how buildings look, relate to surroundings, how they can be maintained. Different facades have different materiality requirements.

- iv. Transparency – balance is required between indoors and outdoors and a percentage is required by zoning. Zoning also allows tinted/reflective/opaque windows in some instances (i.e. industrial buildings).
 - v. Articulation – include canopies, awnings, balconies, cornices/parapets, material articulation, railings/windowsills and can help make a scale more relatable to pedestrians
 - vi. General programming – buildings that convey their use can tie to the community and assist in wayfinding
- d. Observations/Comments/Questions about buildings
- i. Want to avoid chilly, unfriendly looking buildings – which is one of the goals of the zoning code
 - 1. With long winters, importance of curvy/warm buildings become more important
 - ii. Zoning and building codes were generally new to the group
 - iii. Lots of categories/parameters to sort through – what we cover will be driven by what this group wants to cover, and will really start to come to light in our design charrettes
 - 1. Establish goals and establish language that adds onto the zoning code and helps enforce those goals
 - 2. Andrea will send out a survey gauging interest in different topics and how that evolves as we learn more about this process
 - iv. Meeting 3 will zoom out in scale and look at streets and blocks
 - v. A separate task force will look at the park space and public space specifically, but we should still explore it as urban design aims to look at the whole fabric of the site
 - 1. What we define here will be fed to the public space group as a starting point
 - vi. Neighborhood surveys can be completed if we think there is an area that needs more directed feedback – driven by Andrea
 - vii. Surrounding neighborhoods are so much older, so how will new development blend in and not be stuck in the middle of a different character
 - 1. Residential buffer is intended to help with this concern
 - viii. How much will this group influence the buildings? Will all building types be addressed or just one use? Building exteriors and the relationship between them and the public realm will be defined by the outcomes of this group, and will apply to light industrial, commercial, and residential building types.
 - 1. Goal is that this site and these units represent an active urban character due to the site's location within the City of St. Paul, and product should speak to future residents both functionally and aesthetically – so this group will help strike a balance between the past and future
 - ix. St. Paul's "Traditional Neighborhood" zoning classification is unique and aims to maintain and blend with neighborhood characters
 - x. Industrial parcels and high density residential are of concern to surrounding neighborhoods
 - 1. Share information about industrial zones in Meeting 3 and shorten residential discussion accordingly next week
 - 2. Phalen Blvd. shows the evolution of industry over the past 20-30 years which was also led by the Port Authority

3. Goal is to take this contaminated, unproductive, inaccessible land and return jobs, housing, and vitality to the community – this is the eastern most extension of the trend for industrial development in St. Paul
- xi. Donna is interested in learning more about the history of the site and the country club members that Monte can connect some items with
- xii. Homework is to collect more imagery or expand on previous imagery that might have been sparked by today's discussion