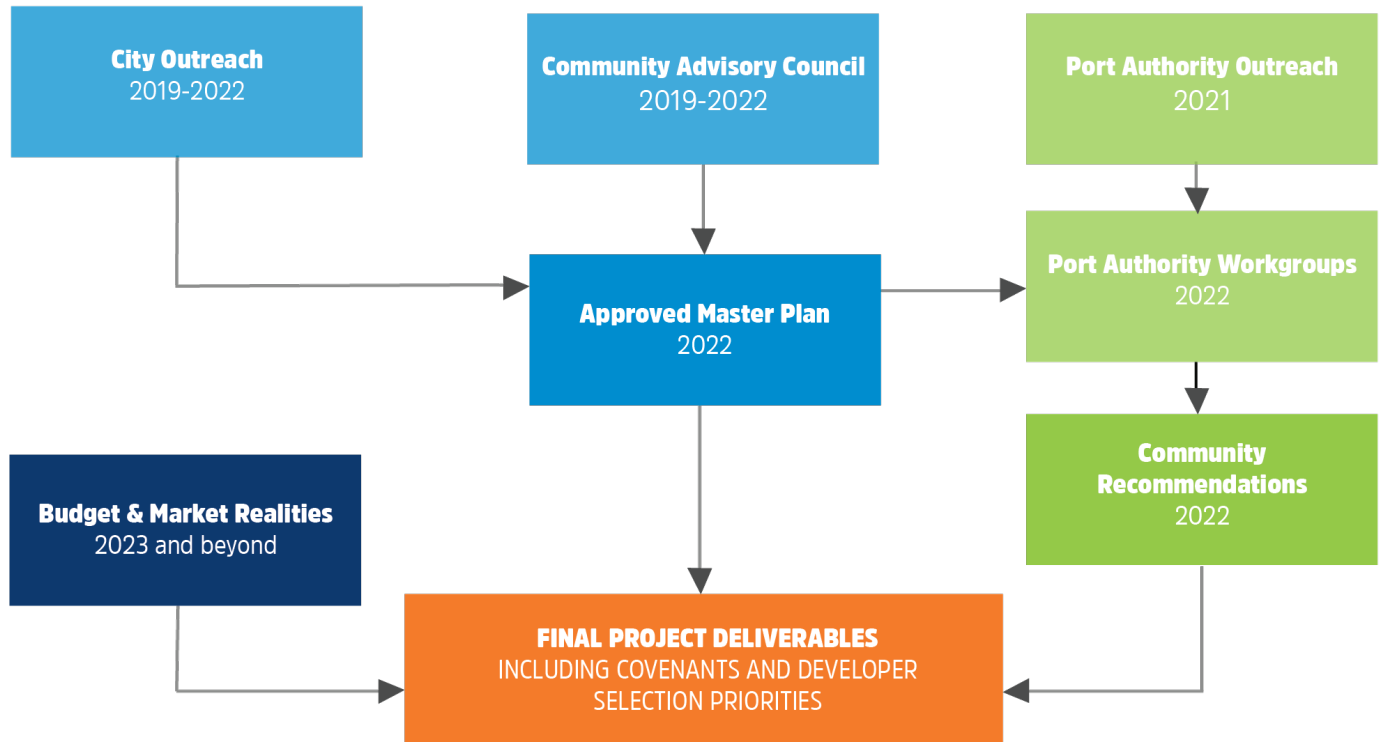


The Heights Community Engagement Recommendations

Process

The Saint Paul Port Authority's approach to community engagement is a multi-year process that builds upon the City's Master Plan and balances community input with budget and market realities.



Community Recommendations: Building Neighborhood Pride

Neighborhood Pride Recommendations

Conversations around Neighborhood Pride started with the Master Plan and continued with the Port Authority's community engagement activities. What we learned is that community members take pride in the uniqueness of the Greater East Side and future developers will be well served to understand the uniqueness of the neighborhood and submit proposals that are in alignment with residents' aspirations for The Heights. Community priorities, as they relate to neighborhood pride, include:

1. Strengthening neighborhood connectivity with outdoor community spaces. Features that residents would like to see include:
 - a. Options for multiple generations. We heard this loud and clear as we connected with residents.
 - i. Park equipment for children
 - ii. Gathering spaces for young adults and families
 - iii. Benches, water features, and exercise opportunities for seniors
 - b. When we surveyed Greater East Side residents, and conducted neighborhood focus groups, the following priorities were identified:
 - i. Trail infrastructure with benches, bike racks, and air stations
 - ii. Gardens and/or water features with benches

- iii. Playground equipment for children
 - iv. Dog parks
 - v. Outdoor exercise equipment (for adults and seniors)
 - vi. Gazebos with picnic areas
 - vii. Amphitheater (30% of residents surveyed want to see more concerts in their neighborhood)
- c. Residents also support the idea of community spaces being built around dedicated wetlands for all to enjoy the view. Popular concepts include:
 - i. Benches and/or swings
 - ii. Trail connections with loops around wetlands
 - iii. Interactive artwork placement
 - iv. Pocket parks with active-based equipment
- d. Tying back to the desire for outdoor event space: 53% of community members would like to see more festivals and fairs in their neighborhood. 45% seek more collective community building activities. In response, the following concepts have been vetted by the community:
 - i. An amphitheater that would host a variety of concerts targeting multiple generations.
 - ii. Publicly owned private spaces (POPS)
 - 1. An event-centric space, located near the corner of Larpenteur and McKnight has been suggested
 - 2. Key recommendations include safety-based infrastructure, complementary furnishings, and ambience features to improve the “vibe” (e.g., string solar lights)
 - iii. Space for food trucks and neighbors to safely come together to build a stronger sense of community and offer additional dining options (could be part of the POPS spaces and/or the Neighborhood Node)
- e. Other features including community gardens, dog parks, and courtyards with tables and chairs
- 2. Providing indoor community spaces. In almost all community engagement activities, neighbors were concerned about the lack of indoor community space. Residents are hopeful that there will be opportunities for neighborhood organizations to partner with future developers or property owners to access space for the following:
 - a. Community meetings, senior activities, education classes, and/or faith-based gatherings
 - b. A local food shelf
 - c. Accessible and affordable daycare
- 3. Celebrating the neighborhood's rich cultural heritage is extremely important to many who we talked with throughout the engagement process. Opportunities to the following should be considered:
 - a. Recognition of the Dakota tribes that came before early settlers
 - b. Recognition of the Jewish community that established the Hillcrest Golf Course
 - c. Incorporate educational signage throughout the site
- 4. Focus on Safety. Many conversations in the neighborhood led to concerns about safety. Priorities to be consider at The Heights include:
 - a. Lighting throughout the site (within light pollution controls)
 - i. Includes trails, sidewalks, and alleys
 - ii. Vandal-proofing is preferred (no strippable copper)
 - iii. Consider energy-efficient options
 - b. Use of vandal-resistant retaining walls
- 5. Transportation and Road Considerations. Community members have shown concerns about changes in traffic patterns. The following solutions have been recommended:
 - a. Bump outs to calm traffic
 - b. Increased access to public transportation (This request is outside the scope of the Saint Paul Port Authority's development plan but will be shared with Met Transit)
- 6. Cleanliness with a Focus on Upkeep. Both the Urban Design and Housing Work Groups discussed the importance of keep the neighborhood clean. While this is a neighborhood-side strategy, developers are encouraged to consider ways to promote neighborhood cleanliness.

Community Recommendations: Sustainability

Striving for Net Zero

Sustainability is important for most of the people we have talked to in the neighborhood. According to our survey results, we learned:

1. 67% of area residents are concerned about water quality
2. 62% of area residents are concerned about air quality
3. 54% of area residents are concerned about climate change

In response, the Sustainability Workgroup supports the following:

1. Features that contribute to a carbon free community and a LEED for Communities Platinum certification
 - a. Building for the future
 - b. Low-embodied carbon building materials
 - c. Extensive use of solar energy
 - d. Use of electric over natural gas wherever possible
 - e. Implementation of a district energy system (if there is an outside agency willing to own and operate)
2. Clean water features
 - a. Stormwater reuse strategies
 - i. Artistic
 - ii. "Green"
 - iii. Infrastructure-oriented
 - b. Restoration of all wetlands
 - c. Consideration of underwater storage/detention facilities
 - d. Exploration of permeable pavement to recharge subsurface water resources

Community Recommendations: Green Spaces and Public Art

Trail Connections

1. Community members are excited about new trails connecting The Heights that will connect with other city trails.
2. There is an interest in adding benches or other seating that will give people the opportunity to rest or gather along the trail

Landscape and Planting Diversity

1. Multiple workgroups pointed to the need for expansive greens space and a strong tree canopy to combat urban heat island effect
2. Multiple workgroups pointed to the need for pollinator habitats
3. Planting as many trees as possible is a strong community recommendation; multiple workgroups groups emphasized the need for a thriving diversity of trees because of the current Emerald Ash Borer situation
4. Community members value boulevards with trees in front of housing units
5. Environmentally-conscious community members prefer a minimal amount of turf grass, only to be used in "active areas"

Public Art

1. Community members would like to see local artists included in the art planning process
2. 44% of survey respondents want to see the neighborhood's rich culture reflected in public art
3. 22% of survey respondents want to see artwork that is interactive and can be used as part of public spaces
4. Urban design workgroup members would like to see artwork incorporated into the right of ways

Community Recommendations: Housing

Affordability

While some in the neighborhood are apprehensive to the idea of affordable housing, most people we've talked to are in support. In fact, many are in support of deeply affordable housing. During our Housing Workgroup meetings, residents expressed concerns over investors who are taking advantage of low-cost housing inventory on the Greater East Side and either fixing and flipping (driving up prices) or leaving vacant (leading to perceived safety issues).

Community members want assurances that new housing units coming to The Heights will be filled, and the neighborhood will remain one of the most affordable in the city. Strategies around affordability will be discussed as part of the LISC exercise.

Rental Housing Recommendations

The master housing developer at The Heights should be prepared to bring in a variety of rental options that speak to the cultural diversity of the neighborhood. Recommendations include:

1. Unit Mix. Having a variety of rental options is important to serve the needs of the neighborhood.
Recommendations include:
 - a. A mix of 1-, 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom options
 - b. Layouts for larger families
 - i. Multi-levels
 - ii. Quiet spaces for work or sleep
 - c. Senior housing options
2. Amenities. Amenities that are important to residents include:
 - a. Outdoor spaces
 - b. In-unit washers and dryers
 - c. Underground or covered parking
 - d. Dedicated workspaces
 - e. Community-activated ground floors
 - f. Pet-friendly policies
 - g. Security
 - h. Delivery boxes
 - i. Fitness centers
3. Design Concepts. Building design is important to those living in the neighborhood. Community members would like to see a fusion between existing architecture and contemporary design concepts that will energize the neighborhood without adding too much "glitz" – something that feels like Saint Paul but better.
 - a. A modern ethos is preferred but will also need to complement the surrounding neighborhood; community members do not want The Heights to feel like a stand-alone island or Woodbury 2.0
 - b. The Urban Design group would like to see higher-density housing units positioned with the park in mind
 - c. Flat roofs are preferred from both a design standpoint and solar-panel accommodation

Owner-Occupied Recommendations

1. The Missing Middle is a concept that we have talked with the various workgroups we've hosted as it speaks to the ownership goals many people have in the community while allowing The Heights to hit the 1,000-housing unit goal.
 - a. Community members are interested in smaller house options
 - i. Townhomes/Row homes (29% of survey respondents interested)
 - ii. Duplex/Triplex (23% of survey respondents interested)
 - iii. Condos (10% of survey respondents interested)
 - b. These options may also fulfill the strong desire in the neighborhood to build wealth through home ownership
2. Housing design
 - a. The community members we talked to emphasize the difference between urban and suburban living. As such, they would like to see the following:
 - i. Garages and driveways in the back of housing units where they are not a focal point (accessible through an alley)

- ii. Emphasis on front porches and other features that prioritizes front yards over back yards
 - iii. Flat roofs versus peaked roofs (except for single-family and/or low-density homes)
 - iv. Small lot sizes to keep costs down and build a stronger sense of community
 - b. Multi-floor options where feasible (except for senior housing)
 - c. Improved hip “vibe” for younger families and professionals
- 3. Specific markets. It is evident that a one-size fits all approach to this neighborhood will not work. Our conversations with the community led to the following recommendations:
 - a. Housing for large families needing 4+ bedrooms
 - i. This includes large single-families and multi-generational households
 - b. One-level homes for seniors
- 4. Pricing
 - a. There is a desire to keep home prices under \$500K

Community Recommendations: Light Industrial

Why Job Creation is Important at The Heights

Through our partnership with Monicat Data, 482 residents were asked about current employment issues. Top concerns include:

1. Low wages (22%)
2. Limited job opportunities (18%)
3. Lack of diverse opportunities (11%)

There is support in the neighborhood for light industrial jobs that speak to these challenges. For the most part, the idea of a living/working neighborhood has been well received.

“Good Neighbor” Recommendations

The biggest challenge we’ve heard when it comes to light industrial buildings coming to The Heights is how they will impact the look and feel of the neighborhood. We heard on multiple occasions that carbon copy of Beacon Bluff would not be well received.

In response, the concept of an Employment Arts District was conceived and vetted with the community. Through our community engagement efforts, we have identified the following priorities:

1. Brick red or a jewel-tone palette for building panels (goal: funky)
2. Curated murals for the outside of buildings
 - a. The Public Art Workgroup will make theme recommendations
 - b. Artists will be invited to provide drawing concepts that will be included in a portfolio
 - c. Businesses will be able to select that artwork that resonates most with them
3. Matching vestibules with a tower design with flexible signage placement
4. Light features to add interest at night (within light pollution parameters)
5. Artwork placed within amenity zones where employees are residents alike can enjoy

It is important to note that this concept has been designed to be cost-neutral to property owners and should help with the following:

1. Easier to find buildings; many manufacturing facilities look the same and are only recognizable by the suite number
2. Increased employee pride in their workplace
3. Increased goodwill with the neighborhood

Sustainability Recommendations

1. Consideration of exposed wood buildings (mass timber to sequester carbon)
2. Provide employees with access to natural light
3. Extensive use of rooftop solar
4. Bird-friendly glass (multiple workgroups recommended)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

DATE	ACTIVITY
Wednesday, August 21, 2019	Kathryn presented at D2 board meeting at Beaver Lake
Wednesday, March 17, 2021	Kathryn presented at the D2 annual meeting
Wednesday, April 21, 2021	Kathryn presented the Arts and Employment District details at the D2 board meeting
Saturday, May 22, 2021	Community Engagement Meeting: Led by the Port Authority, focus on general topics
Tuesday, May 25, 2021	Community Engagement Meeting: Led by the Port Authority, focus on general topics
Thursday, June 3, 2021	Port Authority employee canvased the neighborhood taking photos and talking to residents about the redevelopment project.
Tuesday, June 22, 2021	Community Engagement Meeting: Led by D2, SPPA presented
Tuesday, July 6, 2021	Community Engagement Meeting: Led by D2, focused on sustainability
Tuesday, July 27, 2021	Participated in D2's community event focused on housing.
Tuesday, July 27, 2021	Participated at D2's meeting focused on housing
Tuesday, August 24, 2021	Participated in D2's community event focused on jobs.
Tuesday, September 21, 2021	Reached out to community leaders to spread the message about focus groups and recruit new voices.
Thursday, September 23, 2021	Virtual focus group facilitated by Monicat.
Saturday, September 25, 2021	Focus group facilitated by Monicat at Unison.
Tuesday, September 28, 2021	Interns at Hayden Height Rec Center collecting surveys (6-7)
Wednesday, September 29, 2021	Focus group facilitated by Monicat at Cups and Cheers.
Wednesday, September 29, 2021	Interns at Aldrich Arena collecting surveys from 8-11
Thursday, September 30, 2021	Interns at Sunray Library 6:00-7:45
Friday, October 1, 2021	Interns at Cub Foods on Clarence conducting surveys
Saturday, October 2, 2021	Virtual focus group facilitated by Monicat.
Monday, October 4, 2021	Interns at Cub Foods on Clarence conducting surveys (11-2) and Sunray Center (1-2)
Wednesday, October 6, 2021	Interns at Aldrich Arena Farmers Market (8-12)
Friday, October 8, 2021	Interns at Lake Phalen Movies in the Park (4-7:30)
Friday, October 8, 2021	Virtual focus group facilitated by Monicat.
Saturday, October 9, 2021	Focus group facilitated by Monicat at Unison.
Thursday, October 14, 2021	Focus group facilitated by Monicat at Unison.
Saturday, October 16, 2021	Virtual focus group facilitated by Monicat.
Wednesday, October 20, 2021	Kathryn presenting at the District Two Annual Meeting. EPA grant will be on the agenda.

Tuesday, November 16, 2021	EPA Grant Public Meeting 1
Wednesday, November 17, 2021	EPA Grant Public Meeting 2
Friday, January 28, 2022	Sustainability Workgroup Session 1
Thursday, February 3, 2022	Urban Design Workgroup Session 1
Thursday, February 3, 2022	Urban Design Workgroup Session 3
Thursday, February 17, 2022	Urban Design Workgroup Session 2
Monday, February 28, 2022	Sustainability Workgroup Session 2
Thursday, March 17, 2022	Urban Design Workgroup Session 4
Friday, March 25, 2022	Sustainability Workgroup Session 3
Thursday, March 31, 2022	Urban Design Workgroup Session 5
Thursday, April 14, 2022	Urban Design Workgroup Session 6
Friday, April 22, 2022	Sustainability Workgroup Session 4
Thursday, April 28, 2022	Urban Design Workgroup Session 7
Thursday, May 12, 2022	Urban Design Workgroup Session 8
Friday, May 20, 2022	Sustainability Workgroup Session 5
Thursday, May 26, 2022	Urban Design Workgroup Session 9
Thursday, June 9, 2022	Housing Workgroup Session 1
Thursday, June 23, 2022	Housing Workgroup Session 2
Thursday, August 18, 2022	Housing Workgroup Session 3
Thursday, September 22, 2022	Housing Workgroup Session 4