



Great River Park
more natural • more urban • more connected

The Most Livable
City in America

MEETING NOTES

Great River Park Master Plan – Community Task Force Meeting

Wellstone Center, Saint Paul, MN – January 11, 2011

Meeting Purpose and Format:

A Great River Park Community Task Force meeting was held at the Wellstone Center on January 11, 2011. The purpose of this meeting was to review ideas developed during the three Community Design Workshops in October and November. Due to the complexity and number of issues identified in the planning process thus far, the Design Team decided to structure their presentation into two parts. The first presentation on December 14th focused on the interrelationship of recreational use, natural area preservation and recreational access within the overall GRP. The January 11th meeting focused primarily on issues related to access, circulation and the interface with redevelopment opportunities in the corridor.

This meeting was structured around a Powerpoint presentation which included drawings of relevant project subareas from the recent workshops, along with key unresolved questions or issues pertaining to each respective area. The following notes reflect comments received from the audience on these subarea topics, followed by the Design team's recommendations as interpreted from the public comments.

Review of December 14 meeting summary:

(Comments from Community Task Force members are bulleted. Design Team comments are italicized) Recommended approaches to park planning described in the December 14 meeting minutes were accepted with the following comments:

Watergate as Interpretive Center:

- Pig's Eye could be the main environmental education center
Watergate has good access to Crosby and has infrastructure in place that Pig's Eye lacks. It is more centrally located and accessible to the St. Paul community-especially schools. One central location is preferable to multiple locations to reduce duplication of services/facilities and find best location for environmental education.
- Island Station would be a good place for the main Environmental Education facility
Island Station has limited potential due to cost of restoring the building and less than desirable access to natural areas along the river.

Crosby Farm Access

- provide for better Parking and access at the northern Crosby connection (Elway/Crosby trail and road connection – re-establish the trail head and roadway to help resolve some of the safety issues i.e. cars being broken into).
One concept shows a park access road looping under I-35 and reconnecting at the power line road on the east side.

Island Station issues

- Consider creating a center of development node at Randolph and West 7th with Island Station at the edge rather than Island Station being at the center of development.
- Consider climbing walls at Island Station
- Easements through Island Station limit buildable areas within that property.
- CIB project should be proposed to develop sidewalk from West 7th to Shepard Road along both sides of Randolph Avenue.
- Consider urban camping at Island Station

General Comments

- One item lacking is marking of the connections we already have – better signage
Signage is part of the program for this Master Plan
- There need to be connections within the park, not just to it – for example an NPS -run shuttle for paddlers, dog walkers to get from one end of the Park to the other without driving.

New Items for January 11 meeting:

Again, the following discussions are focused on access, connections, and redevelopment issues. Parks and natural areas were covered under the December meeting agenda.

Shepard Road

What are the criteria for parkway treatment?

Confirm neighborhood access

Can we overcome bluff barrier challenges?

Comments:

- Remove extra roadway pavement where there is a frontage road: yes, but also consider adding more park along the top of bluff rather than only increasing development area.
- Traffic calming is good
- Consider dividing the parkway in some locations
- Can Shepard Road be tunneled at Elway?
- Highland and Davern small area plans both support having Shepard be more parkway-like
- Hathaway would be a great point to have access across Shepard Road
- If truck traffic that has been relegated to Shepard Road is now slowed down, will that cause issues?
Truckers will grumble, but there will be little if any impact on truck traffic volumes.

- Does the recommendation change the “finish” of the road? Road surface causes noise currently. Noise impacts use and enjoyment of the park.
Noise is directly related to velocity, and concrete is louder than bituminous, but it lasts longer. Reducing speed will reduce noise.

Design Team’s Recommendation:

1. *Shepard Road should be a pedestrian and bicycle friendly parkway with reduced speeds and regular crossings to the river corridor. Take advantage of adjacent redevelopment and public works projects to incrementally implement improvements to accomplish these goals.*

Confirm Downtown Connections

Comments:

- Concern about investing in improvements in floodplain areas – need to minimize economic impacts of inevitable flooding
- We need to connect visually and physically through Lowertown
- What about connecting the Smith Avenue bridge to the River? Something needs to connect the tip of the High Bridge
It’s on the list.
- Consider “Current Ferries” – novelty drives people to use them – a large cable over the river and rudder and force of current moves it across without power – Basel, Switzerland

Design Team’s Recommendations:

1. *Take advantage of limited opportunities to improve the riverfront walk along Shepard/Warner*
2. *Add connections to Lowertown at Union Depot and Broadway*
3. *further evaluate opportunities to get across the river by boat and by providing vertical connections at each end of the bridges.*

Kellogg Improvements/Connections

Is there value in creating a downtown Mounds to Eagle Chestnut boulevard connection?

Comments:

- Connections need to be made horizontally i.e. Kellogg Boulevard from Science Museum through Wabasha Street.
- Programming Kellogg Park would help connect downtown to the River
- Rather than building a structure between Kellogg Park and the River, take the Pioneer Press site, raise the grade and add a staircase down from Wabasha.
- Provide amenities that pull people along the bluff from the Science Museum to Wabasha
- Create an urban loop trail – with restaurants at both levels
- Eagle to Exchange through parking garage
- Consider bike access between the river and Downtown. It is currently not very accessible
- Helsinki has a watering hole much like Kellogg Park which could be looked at as a precedent

Design Team's Recommendations:

1. *Turn Kellogg into a more pedestrian oriented street between Wabasha and Robert with enhanced pedestrian crossings and amenities*
2. *Look for redevelopment of buildings along the bluff and potential infill areas to provide river access and activation at the river's edge.*
3. *Enhance existing ramps at Eagle/Exchange and Second Street to Jackson for river connections*
4. *Further refine concepts for enhancing the Kellogg/Fourth Street connection as part of a downtown River Parkway*

Trout Brook Parkway/Blvd/Local Street

What is an acceptable character and function of the Trout Brook corridor?

Comments:

- Trout Brook – why do we need a road?
It activates the edge creating a safer park environment, creates an “address” along the restored creek corridor to enhance redevelopment opportunities, connects Lowertown to the river.

Design Team's Recommendations:

1. *Show the Trout Brook connection as a regional trail (only) to the Riverfront trail.*
2. *Daylight Trout Brook as an urban stream corridor where possible, understanding that the ability to daylight Trout Brook in the downtown area is not considered feasible (See the 2008 report, Historic Waters of the Capitol Region Watershed District which says; “Without question, Trout Brook, as St Paul’s major historical subterranean stream, is the largest potential scale daylighting/restoration project in CRWD. But this statement applies only to the segment of the stream upstream from the downtown area”).*
3. *The Design Team believes that a roadway connection between University Avenue and Warner Road with a signalized intersection at Lower Landing Park, would provide a more direct and safer connection to the river for residents of Lowertown, Railroad Island and Daytons Bluff. A signalized intersection at Warner Road also provides an important means to slow traffic along this stretch of Warner Road. However the GRP Master Plan will primarily focus on providing a regional pedestrian and bicycle trail connection (only) to the river within the Trout Brook corridor. A separate public process is recommended to determine if a roadway is required in the Trout Brook corridor.*
4. *Acknowledging there is some support in the larger community for a roadway connection in the corridor between University Avenue and Warner Road, the Design Team recommends that if others pursue a road connection, that it be a minor slow speed parkway or local street. The team further recommends that design of a street in this corridor should not be at the detriment of the proposed regional trail.*

Warner Road – Battle Creek

What is the level of access at Childs Road?

Comments:

- Connection to Mounds Park needs to be addressed

Design Team's Recommendations:

1. *Modify existing Pigs Eye access at Childs Road to provide primary Park entrance to Pigs Eye Lake and open space area.*
2. *Maintain and support river-oriented industrial facilities but look at potential relocation(s) to support improved Park access.*

Lower Pigs Eye Lake Connections

Where are trail connections most appropriate?

Comments:

- Need better connections and access – need to connect the edge of the river and Pig's Eye Lake and need a hub
- Need entrances on the north and south – do not create a dead end
- Ramsey County currently is working on a connection from McKnight to Lower Afton Road
- Superfund site in the floodplain has been said to be the single largest contributor to pollutants in the river through leaching and leaking contaminants. This is an opportunity for funds to clean this up.

Design Team's Recommendations:

1. *Provide new regional trail connection over RR at Lower Afton to extend County's connection from McKnight. Partner with Regional Rail station proposal for Red Rock station.*
2. *Look at alternatives for future access to the River and to Lower Pigs Eye at Red Rock Road.*

Urban Development and Redevelopment

To what degree can redevelopment connect to the River?

How can adjacent development benefit the Park?

Comments:

- Redevelopment opportunities should be noted east of the Lafayette Bridge.
- Greening the river, trails, access, urban villages, smaller blocks residential, commercial, mixed use – the river doesn't end downtown.
- We need to have a handle on the constraints of the Critical Area Plan and other policies and overlays.

Design Team's Recommendations:

1. *Address potential conflicts with the Critical Area Regulations to support the goals of the GRP.*
2. *Study impacts of regulations on proposed Park oriented development at West Side Flats (river promenade), Island Station (reuse and marina) and Watergate Marina (education/interpretive/marina support center).*

3. *Encourage infill of adjacent redevelopment sites that can better connect neighborhoods both physically and visually to the River.*
4. *Provide/improve connections at Broadway, Union Depot, Kellogg Park, County and Pioneer Press buildings and improved access between the Science Museum and Wabasha.*
5. *New development in the GRP shall be planned to provide both visual and physical open space connections to the river.*
 - a. *between Shepard Road and West 7th support mixed use redevelopment with a street grid that improves pedestrian and bicycle access to the River.*
 - b. *At Island Station support mixed use redevelopment along Randolph that support activity and provide major connection from West 7th to the GRP*
 - c. *At Kellogg Blvd improve and extend continuous promenade along top of bluff and provide destination overlooks between the Science Museum and Jackson*
 - d. *At West Side Flats support mixed use redevelopment between Harriet island and Lafayette that creates a river level promenade supported by shops and restaurants; explore alternatives for developing natural buffers between development and the levee that support both urban and natural area goals.*
 - e. *From Lafayette downriver support river oriented industrial and commercial uses . Balance the needs of industry with the needs of open space and recreational use of the river and shoreline; explore options for providing controlled pedestrian access to view/interpret industrial activities.*

New development in the GRP shall help solve regional stormwater needs by incorporating best practices for stormwater management, on site water quality treatment, implementation of green practices that support reduced runoff.

Prepared by C Coronato, E Stewart, draft 1/17/11