



Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 16, 2012

1:30 - 3:00 pm

St. Louis Park City Hall

Meeting Attendees

Steering Committee Members & Alternates

Gail Dorfman, Hennepin County Member
Jan Callison, Hennepin County Member
Mary Brindle, City of Edina Alternate
Molly Cummings, City of Hopkins Member
Anne Mavity, City of St. Louis Park Member
Kathy Nelson, City of Eden Prairie Member
Don Samuels, City of Minneapolis Member
Terry Schneider, City of Minnetonka Alternate
Jennifer Munt, Metropolitan Council Member
Dick Miller, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Member
Jeff Casale, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Alternate
Caren Dewar, ULI-MN Member

Other Attendees

Phil Eckhert (Hennepin County), Adele Hall (Hennepin County), Carol Lezotte Anderson (Hennepin County), Lisa Middag (Hennepin County), Mark Fuhrmann (Metro Transit), Amanda Arnold (City of Minneapolis), Meg McMonigal (City of St. Louis Park), Kevin Locke (City of St. Louis Park), Adam Fulton (City of St. Louis Park), Sean Walther (City of St. Louis Park), Louis Smith (Smith Partners), Donna Drummond (City of St. Paul), Cathy Bennett (ULI-MN), Karen Lyons (Metropolitan Council), Kersten Elverum (City of Hopkins), Elise Durbin (City of Minnetonka), John Crawford (URS Corporation), April Manlapaz (URS Corporation), Larry Blackstad (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Kathie Doty (KLD Consulting), Kerri Pearce Ruch (Hennepin County), Janet Jeremiah (City of Eden Prairie), Barry Schade (Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association), Jeff Peltola (resident), Elizabeth Ryan (Family Housing Fund), Tim Johnson (Pro Source Technologies)

I. Welcome & Introductions

Chair Gail Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

II. January 19, 2012, Meeting Minutes

Chair Gail Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) asked for review and action on the minutes from the January 19, 2012, Steering Committee meeting.

Mary Brindle (Edina Alternate) moved to approve the minutes; Jan Callison (Hennepin County Member) seconded this motion, and the minutes were approved on a voice vote.

III. St. Paul Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines

Chair Gail Dorfman introduced Donna Drummond, Planning Director at the City of St. Paul to present on the City's TOD guidelines.

Ms. Drummond explained that in preparation for LRT, Mayor Coleman in 2006 identified the Central Corridor as the City's main priority and wanted LRT to be a great community building opportunity. The City embarked on a process to establish a long-term, community-based vision that included task forces, open houses, interviews, and roundtables. The vision was adopted in 2007 and station area planning commenced. Once the 11 station area plans for the St. Paul stations were complete, the City began working on the zoning to facilitate the vision, as current zoning was insufficient. For example, there was a 30 foot building height limit on University Avenue. In 2011 the City rezoned almost all of University Avenue to "Traditional Neighborhood", which has varying levels to allow for increased densities, makes it easier to do mixed use development, and includes design guidelines to make development pedestrian and transit-user friendly. The City also considered parking in the corridor, looking at affected areas and opportunities for sharing. A bicycle and pedestrian action plan to access the corridor from the neighborhood was completed. The station area plans, rezoning, parking, and bicycle and pedestrian plans are synthesized into the TOD guidebook. The guidebook has three sections: The first section is targeted toward existing businesses and property owners and describes how things are changing and how to work with the changes and prepare for the new environment. The second section contains basic information from the plans and a summary of each plan. The third section has illustrations of the design standards that are in the Traditional Neighborhood zoning category. There are also links to more information. The guidebook was created with the help of the St. Paul Riverfront Corporation and has been distributed to business owners and developers. When a developer proposes a project along the corridor, they come into the design center and meet with parks, public works, planning, and economic development staff. Staff review and provide feedback on projects early when they are conceptual. Development in the corridor is picking up and project proponents seem to like the process because it identifies issues early. The TOD guidelines are a tool for that process.

Chair Dorfman asked if the intent of the guidelines is to attract and ease the process of developing TOD along the corridor and if staff helps developers navigate the city process for development. Ms. Drummond said yes to both points. The early review process is a way for projects and developers to get an early introduction to key staff that they'll be working with throughout.

Don Samuels (Minneapolis Member) asked if the City has information for developers on how much pedestrian traffic passes by sites. Ms. Drummond responded that the City did a market study in tandem with the plan that includes demand estimates and capacity planning and this is referenced a lot. Mr. Samuels asked if the guidebook deals at all with present construction issues. Ms. Drummond responded that the guidebook is mostly geared toward post-construction and the new environment in the corridor. There is information on the City's website regarding parking solutions and have other programs and loans that are meant to help with construction impacts. Terry Schneider (Minnetonka Alternate) asked how the City has addressed the issue of gentrification and its implications for existing businesses. Ms. Drummond answered that while this deals more with the form of new development, there has also been a lot of work around identification of tools and strategies to deal with gentrification. The City does not want to force people out of the neighborhoods. There is a small business loan program and a major effort to consider affordable housing along the corridor. There are many initiatives by other groups, as well. Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) asked if business impacts have been different than anticipated and if there are any strategies to encourage existing businesses. Ms. Drummond responded that much of the first section of the guidelines is devoted to small businesses. A successful small business program and lots of promotions, specials, and coupons have helped some small businesses stay in the corridor. The impacts are not as bad as was feared; few businesses have closed because of construction.

Mr. Schneider asked how the City dialogues with leasers that have different expectations than their owners. Ms. Drummond responded that tenants and landlords sometimes have different priorities and the City has yet to see how it goes. Local community development corporations are working on a buy program so that some small businesses can buy their space and have more control over their future.

Chair Dorfman commented that new development and small businesses can co-exist and work together. Ms. Drummond agreed, stating that the City does not envision a time when our small businesses are gone. There are lots of small lots and buildings along University and site assembly is very difficult because of that. We want to retain this character of the avenue and market it to create destinations.

Mary Brindle (Edina Alternate) asked about the state of accessibility of the central corridor from other gathering places. Ms. Drummond responded that the intent is for people to bike, walk, or take transit to the corridor. Metro transit is currently doing a sector study to work on transit connections and improved transfers. There are many bicycle and pedestrian improvements to make and the City will need to have on and off street parking management, too.

Chair Dorfman asked Ms. Drummond if she would recommend this development tool for Southwest, or if she has recommendations for doing it a different way. Ms. Drummond noted that the City is still working things out, but she recommended identifying where along the corridor redevelopment is desired, and where stability and reinvestment is desired, then craft policy and zoning to support it. The guidelines are a summary of that work and helps developers understand what is wanted. Jeff Casale (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Alternate) noted the zoning changes the City made and asked about projects that have come along. Ms. Drummond commented that zoning is a tool to implement the vision. The former zoning was not appropriate for our vision. It was auto-centric. Over time as new development occurred, the City wanted it to adhere to the vision. Over 600 housing units on the west end of St. Paul are currently under development; market strength has been working west to east. Three historic warehouse buildings are being renovated near Raymond, and Frogtown Square, a mixed use development at Dale, is finished with local businesses in the ground floor.

IV. Community & Business Outreach

Kerri Pearce Ruch, Hennepin County, gave an update on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), noting that Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council have together invited new members to the CAC, which will advise both the Community Works and LRT projects. Invitation letters were sent at the end of January to cities to confirm their existing members and appoint an alternate, and to new organizations to appoint a representative, with a response requested by March 8. Steering Committee members were referred to a handout with the expanded CAC membership. CAC membership originally included representatives from along all four of the alternatives, and these members are still on the committee because the DEIS is ongoing.

Chair Gail Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) referred committee members to a handout and noted that three groups are taking shape with regard to business participation. The Southwest Alliance is the business advocacy arm composed of the Minneapolis, Edina, Eden Prairie, and Twin West Chambers. The Alliance is playing a significant advocacy role at the capitol and in Washington, DC. The Business Advisory Council (BAC) will serve both the SC and CMC. Staff from Hennepin County and the Southwest Project Office has been working with the Chambers to start identifying potential members of the BAC and the group's charter. Businesses affected by the construction of the line will be involved. Invitation letters will be sent in March or April. Mark Fuhrmann commented that the Central Corridor LRT BAC has about 15 standing members. Chair Dorfman said that the third piece of business involvement is the investment partnership proposal, which Louis Smith, Smith Partners, will present.

Mr. Smith reminded the committee of his charge to engage senior business leaders in focusing on long-term investment in the Southwest corridor. Mr. Smith distributed a handout and described his

proposal of an independent partnership composed of senior executives from major employers and corporations in the corridor who would attend three or four meetings a year, with work groups convening as needed. This group would not be part of the Steering Committee, but Mr. Smith recommends connecting the group by having the chair of the Steering Committee attend as an ex-officio member and maintaining a staff connection to the group. Mr. Smith referred to a revised organizational chart that showed the investment partnership connected to the project via Community Works. Mr. Smith proposed five charges for the investment group: embrace and contribute to TOD vision; advise on the development of the Transitional Station Area Action Plans and investment framework from the private side; identify demonstration projects; create an investment pool of funds; orient employees toward transit and use of the line. The goal is to convene the partnership by June.

Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) asked if cities recommended businesses. Mr. Smith said yes, cities recommended. The complete list of businesses is not on his handout. Jan Callison (Hennepin County Member) clarified that the criteria is that the company have 500+ employees, and own land. The focus of the group is investment in the corridor, not impacts on businesses. Chair Dorfman noted that a company like United Health Group would belong in the investment partnership, but they might also want their government relations staff to participate in the Southwest Alliance and their facilities staff to participate in the BAC. Mr. Smith commented that he believes the list of companies is a strong one, and he has had enthusiastic response. There are some companies he has yet to interview; those businesses are listed in italics on his handout.

Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) commented that she sits on the workforce investment board that is looking to do a pilot program with one of the companies along the Southwest LRT line. This is one way to make connections along the line. Terry Schneider (Minnetonka Alternate) asked how we translate companies' future investments and growth into physical development. Ms. Nelson stated the need for a written report or a way to track what the business group is talking about. Chair Dorfman agreed that it will be important to have the Steering Committee chair sit on investment partnership to keep the link, and added that there will also be a BAC representative on both the Steering Committee and the Management Committee. Don Samuels (Minneapolis Member) asked how communities can stay connected to the partnership, too, to know what kinds of jobs and opportunities are being created. This is an important part of, for example, the Harrison Neighborhood's support and engagement in the LRT project. Chair Dorfman noted that some connections should be facilitated through Corridors of Opportunity. Ms. Nelson added that people should be able to search for jobs by using the LRT website. Jennifer Munt (Metropolitan Council Member) added that she attended ISAIAH's equity summit on Sunday. There were many people from the Somali community who were successful business owners who wanted to move closer to the line. Where do those folks plug in? Ms. Mavity agreed that we need to begin to make the connections and explore tools to attract local businesses to the corridor. Caren Dewar ULI-MN Member commented that ULI-MN has been working with Brookings Institution on how to support a local economy. Resources for small businesses are not transparent; it would be good to work with the TIC to do a job generator tool that would identify empty spaces/sites to connect them with searching businesses. Dick Miller (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Member) asked if there was a parallel experience with Midtown Community Works. Chair Dorfman responded that major corporations made some large investments, in addition to locating on the corridor. Mr. Schneider added that we need goals and visions for each of the station areas to avoid encouraging certain uses if they are not part of the vision. The Steering Committee approved of Mr. Smith's approach by consensus.

V. Corridor Housing Strategy

Lisa Middag, Hennepin County, gave context to the proposed Corridor Housing Strategy within the regional Corridors of Opportunity initiative and introduced Cathy Bennett, ULI-Minnesota, who presented a draft Corridor Housing Strategy which includes data gathering, setting parameters on affordability, housing choice, and geographic areas, grounding the data in the market research, and performing a gap analysis of housing needs and tools and financing options. The strategy

would align with other planning efforts in engage with stakeholders and use the data to inform the Transitional Station Area Action Plans to accommodate housing in the station areas. This is the first time that a housing strategy will be done on a corridor level and is part of the systems change the region seeks.

VI. Project Funding Applications in Support of 2012 Workplan Items

Hennepin County/ULI-MN: Housing Strategy Phase I

Cathy Bennett referred Steering Committee members to the memo on the Housing Strategy and presented a short synopsis of Phase I of the Housing Strategy, which will be an inventory of affordable housing in the corridor. Hennepin County would apply on behalf of Southwest LRT Community Works for a HUD Sustainable Communities Local Implementation Capacity grant of \$25,000. Applications are due on March 8 due and notified May 12 which, if successful, would fit in well with TSAAP development, as data gathering could be done in a couple of months. Elizabeth Ryan, Family Housing Fund, added that the FHF has worked with ULI and RCM for several years on housing issues. This is a great opportunity to start from the baseline of information. A prosperous community will contain a range of housing. [Kathy Nelson \(Eden Prairie Member\) moved approval of the housing strategy application, Anne Mavity \(St. Louis Park Member\) seconded the motion, and the application was approved on a voice vote.](#)

City of Minneapolis: Bassett Creek Valley

Amanda Arnold, City of Minneapolis, presented the City of Minneapolis's LCDA TOD grant application for \$100,000 for preliminary engineering to connect the Van White Bridge to the station area below, because there currently are no vertical circulation elements designed for the bridge. Chair Dorfman asked if by supporting this project the Steering Committee is supporting the rail layover facility. Ms. Arnold responded, no, the facility is on the other side of Linden Yards

City of St. Louis Park: Ellipse 2, Trail Construction and Geotechnical Work, Stormwater

Meg McMonigal, City of St. Louis Park, presented three applications from the City of St. Louis Park. The first is for \$253,000 of LCDA pre-development funds for Ellipse 2 at Excelsior and France. Ellipse 2 is mixed use residential/retail; the same developer has an approval to build a second building. Grant dollars would be used for remediation and stormwater construction. The second application is for \$1.9 million for acquisition of a development site in the Louisiana station area. The City is applying for funds for trail construction and geotechnical surveying in the station area as well. Chair Dorfman asked if the work can be done before the freight rail is resolved. Ms. McMonigal said yes. The final application is for an LCDA pre-development grant of \$40,000 to stormwater planning in the greater Louisiana station area, as stormwater issues are often an impediment to development.

City of Hopkins: 8th Avenue

Kersten Elverum, City of Hopkins, presented the City of Hopkins's application for LCDA TOD funds to connect LRT to Main Street with a gateway on 8th Avenue. The current conditions are not very welcoming; the City is applying for \$1.04 million for design work on pedestrian amenities, site work on the Park Nicollet site, and additional parking capacity within downtown. The City would like to acquire the Snyder building for a ramp to free up additional parking land on 8th for development; most of the requested money is for acquisition.

City of Minnetonka: Opus

Elise Durbin, City of Minnetonka, presented the City of Minnetonka's \$100,000 LDCA TOD pre-development application to study the transportation system in Opus. The study would consider traffic issues outside the scope of Preliminary Engineering and TSAAPs. The trail system in Opus is great, but it doesn't connect to buildings, and there is a need to analyze the 1970s infrastructure capacity.

Eden Prairie: Town Center

Janet Jeremiah, City of Eden Prairie, presented the City of Eden Prairie's \$45,000 LCDA pre-development application for stormwater analysis in the EPTC. The lack of stormwater solutions deters development especially on small redevelopment sites. The study would look at the highest density redevelopment plans to determine potential stormwater solutions and their costs, then would prepare a stormwater management guide for developers.

Chair Dorfman commented that there is a tight window for finding funding for projects, so our cities are moving quickly on these projects. If approved, the Steering Committee would provide a letter of support for each of these projects. Terry Schneider (Minnetonka Alternate) asked how large the fund is that projects are competing for. Ms. Jeremiah responded that the projects are competing for new TOD funds, which are \$32 million over three years. The maximum request is \$2 million.

Dick Miller (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District) moved approval of the projects, Chair Gail Dorfman (Hennepin County) seconded, and the projects were approved on a voice vote. A letter of support will be sent to the cities and Hennepin County for inclusion in their project applications.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm. The next Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, March 15, at 1:30 pm at the St. Louis Park City Hall.