

DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Notes from the 2020 Strategic Planning Kickoff Meeting on Tuesday, January 21, 2020

Mill City Museum Mill Ruins Building

710 South 2nd Street, 6th Floor ADM Room

I. Call to Order

Chair Pamela McCrea called the strategic planning kickoff to order at 4:50 p.m.

Other Board members in attendance were:

Max Erickson

Kevin Frazell, Vice Chair

Tomek Rajtar

Laurie Rice

Joey Senkyr

Carletta Sweet, Secretary

Dianne Walsh, Treasurer

Board Member Joe Tamburino was absent.

Staff member Christie Rock Hantge was also present.

Guests in attendance included:

L.B. Guthrie, Stonebridge Lofts

Thomas Schmid, Washburn Lofts

II. Strategic Planning Overview

McCrea explained Schmid was in attendance because he is an integral part of the Land Use Committee as its new Chair and should be a part of these strategic conversations, as well as L.B. Guthrie who is the new LUC Vice Chair. Kevin Frazell will remain on as the Board Liaison.

She convened this strategic planning kickoff to start discussing goals and priorities for 2020 and one of the topics the LUC has discussed is its structure, accountability and protocol which can be a part of tonight's discussion.

Two documents were distributed for review: the 2019 Mill City Farmers Market Survey distributed at various venues in the community including at the MCFM, within the buildings where board members reside, and National Night Out; and the internal 2020 Strategic Planning survey.

As Chair, McCrea doesn't want to preside over the same projects we've been doing over the past 4 years, i.e., funding basically the same projects out of our buckets of money with not a lot of passion about what we're doing and, as evidenced by the survey, with not a lot of people knowing who we are.

In her opinion, Joe Tamburino taught us a valuable lesson, i.e., the police substation/public service center.

He saw something, thought it was appropriate, and he did it without a lot of DMNA support. He continued to push through it and whether we like it or not we now have a neighborhood substation. If we as a group could act with the same passion that Tamburino did, we can really make a change in the community and there are a lot of different opportunities that lay before us, e.g., developing a more significant neighborhood identity à la North Loop and attracting more commercial tenants to improve economic development. If we have passion, energy and a common idea there are huge things we could do to benefit all our district. It's okay to continue to sponsor great things because we can justify that it makes our neighborhood better, but what should our buckets be going forward?

Discussion ensued wherein Schmid noted the DMNA doesn't have deep enough membership to staff another sitting committee so it makes sense to move to a *task force model* where, in any given year, they take on whatever ideas the board really wants to pursue, send out an invitation, and bring people in for a chance to speak on it whether it's a matter of public safety or greening project or neighborhood identity and attach some money to it.

McCrea noted in downtown we have a big City Council and Planning Commission, and there are a lot of nonprofits working together; the DMNA doesn't need to duplicate any of that but needs to find its own niche.

Frazell commented there isn't any other organization that speaks for the residents of downtown; if you go to those group meetings in downtown the business community is represented but a lot of those people don't even live in the city and the one role the DMNA has is speaking for the residents and he would like more focus on that. He also grapples with us representing Downtown East and Downtown West; most of the funding is for Downtown West and most of the residents live in Downtown West yet they don't really get involved.

Guthrie has observed renters often don't come to these meetings and recommended reaching out to the property managers and homeowners associations as marketing strategies to increase communication and collaboration with these two groups so that they help deliver information about DMNA meetings and events to their residents.

McCrea surveyed the group on whether there was continued interest in funding the Mill City Farmers Market, which then received unanimous support, and challenged everyone to think bigger, engage more with community organizations, and be more inclusive. Walsh noted she'd also like for the DMNA to continue to support Pianos on Parade (Erickson believes it's one of the most engaging community-oriented activities happening in the city), and Greening Lab.

To observe how the North Loop Neighborhood Association engages with its community partners, Schmid suggested attending its annual meeting (<https://northloop.org/event/north-loop-neighborhood-association-annual-meeting-2/>); there'll be food, refreshments and giveaways.

Sweet suggested upgrading the website à la how Mike Binkley (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/binkleymike/>) has done for the NLNA (<https://northloop.org/video/>).

Guthrie noted there are lots of ways to make the downtown neighborhoods more active and engaging, e.g., creating an art project similar to "Minne the Lake Creature" sculpture

(<https://mplsparksfoundation.org/projects/minne/> and <https://www.southwestjournal.com/news/parks/2015/06/minne-the-lake-creature-calls-lake-calhoun-its-summer-home/>), painting river stones and spreading them around for children to find. Walsh added Mary Altman, Public Arts Administrator who'll be at tonight's board meeting, may have some ideas.

Joey Senkyr pondered whether the City could work with Xcel Energy to use the concrete wall surface of its substation facing Samar Crossing for a mural.

Schmid noted lighting of the historic plaques at the Gateway Parking Ramp could turn that into an interesting space.

In summation, McCrea stated:

- The DMNA wants to be able to speak on behalf of residents, and in order to do so it needs to know their concerns/issues/desires. Therefore, the DMNA needs to bring together a board representative/designee from all homeowners associations and property management companies to represent their constituents.
- Develop more effective marketing strategies to increase the brand presence of the DMNA in the downtown community.
- Continue to fund the MCFM, Pianos on Parade, and Greening Lab at a level to be determined.

Another big concern of Frazell's is the Nicollet Mall; from the people he's talked to there's a sense of disappointment. What used to be referred to as Minnesota's Main Street needs some zip! We need to be better connected with what other groups are doing to make it feel safe and inviting and bring the resident voice to the conversation. Maybe with the Dayton Project (<http://www.thedaytonproject.com/>) opening it will help a lot.

Schmid commented for a lot of residents in downtown Washington Avenue is more of a Main Street, hence the talk about the bus line running to/from the North Loop and why 240 Hennepin (<https://www.tdtmpls.com/news/2019/11/18/construction-begins-on-240-hennepin>) and RBC Gateway (<https://www.uproperties.com/properties/gateway/>) are crucial for shaping that space at street level. We need to continue to work on Nicollet Mall and Washington Avenue.

Guthrie reminded everyone the LUC continues to support efforts to improve Nicollet Mall – e.g., signage for 801 Chophouse, and more recently City Center Sign Variances – but needs to do more when City staff doesn't support Variances that the DMNA does as he did in this instance by showing up and they were subsequently approved.

Thereafter,

III. Adjournment

McCrea adjourned the strategic planning kickoff meeting at 5:55 p.m.