

HENNEPIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA

Meeting Notes **Bottineau Community Works Steering Committee** **September 18, 2023 – 10:30 PM – 12:00 PM** Brooklyn Center

1. Welcome & introductions

Members present: Irene Fernando & Jeff Lunde, Hennepin County; Reva Chamblis, Metropolitan Council; Hollies Winston & Nichole Klonowski, Brooklyn Park; Aaron Wagner, Robbinsdale

Staff present: Andrew Gillett, Kerri Pearce Ruch & Ryan Kelley, Hennepin County; Kathryn Hansen, Metro Transit; Paul Mogush & Kim Berggren, Brooklyn Park; John Sutter, Crystal & Rattana Sengsoulichanh, Minneapolis

Others present: Kyle Mianulli & Cathy Gold, Hennepin County; Kjerstin Yager, Metro Transit; Bethany Turnwall, Minneapolis; Jeff McMenimen & Rachel Blaseg, Damon Farber; Andrew Dresdner, Bolton & Menk;

2. Administrative items

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Jeff Lunde moved approval of the July 17, 2023 minutes; Councilmember Nichole Klonowski seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Partner updates/announcements

Commissioner Fernando informed the group that at the last Corridor Management Committee they voted for one updated alignment for the Blue Line Extension. The alignment will move forward through the environmental and the project continues to move forward.

Kerri Pearce Ruch provided some background information on Bottineau Community Works as a refresher for the steering committee. Since its establishment, Bottineau Community Works has undertaken a number of activities and made investments in corridor communities. This work was largely funded by Hennepin County, as well as an FTA Advanced Planning for Transit Oriented Development grant and grants from the McKnight Foundation. Hennepin County's commitment to Bottineau



Community Works totals \$19 million to date. This includes site acquisition, façade improvements, landscaping and investments in affordable housing, infrastructure projects and cultural assets.

Over \$3.2 million dollars in Covid recovery grants went to 353 small businesses in the Bottineau corridor. This year, Hennepin County has invested \$175,000 in updating station planning for Robbinsdale and Crystal as well as \$30,000 to connect corridor businesses to Elevate Hennepin and \$500,000 to support affordable commercial development in the corridor.

Pearce Ruch concluded her update with mentioning four upcoming events for Elevate Hennepin to held October 5, October 26, November 16, and December 7. The events are a mixture of in person and online events with the topics being marketing for small business, tech solutions for retail success, business finance basics, and legal services for small business.

Commissioner Fernando stated that the Community Works represents long term programs and staff and have a strong tie-in to anti-displacement work.

4. Presentation: Hennepin County predevelopment assistance

Ryan Kelley presented on this item. Hennepin County provides predevelopment assistance for TOD projects. The goals of these efforts are to expand and diversify the pool of local real estate developers, support emerging developers, build capacity of community-based developers, and advance the goals of the TOD program in alignment with the county's disparity reduction efforts.

In 2022 the county invested \$190,000 in TOD funding to support nine emerging developers, all of which were either people of color or women. The projects include a missing-middle housing 6-plex in North Minneapolis, a single-room occupancy building, a mixed-use live-work and commercial building, and a health and wellness business incubator. The projects are anticipated to create 152 housing units, including 88 SRO units, and support at least 33 local small businesses.

For 2023, \$120,000 supported four emerging developers. All are people of color with one being a woman. There were four mixed-use housing and commercial developments in North and South Minneapolis. The projects are anticipated to create 200 housing units and support at least 13 local small businesses.

5. Presentation: Station Planning – Robbinsdale/Crystal

Ryan Kelley introduced this item. Station area planning was completed for Robbinsdale and Crystal in 2016, but changes in the BLRT alignment have made updates for those earlier plans necessary. The stations in Brooklyn Park are relatively unchanged and the stations in Minneapolis are totally new and just now having locations identified. Kelley introduced Jeff McMenimen and Rachel Blaseg from Damon Farber who led the team completing the Crystal plan update and Andrew Dresdner from Bolton & Menk who led the team completing the Robbinsdale plan update. These consultants then presented on each respective plan update.

The Damon Farber team had a three-part process that examined existing conditions, station area improvements, and station area redevelopment potential. Existing conditions included station area destinations and amenities, and the pedestrian and bicycle network. The station area improvements portion looked back at earlier planning efforts and determined what had been completed, what was yet

to be completed, and what may have been missing. With the change in BLRT alignment and a potential for Bottineau Boulevard to bridge over Bass Lake Road, the consultant team also explored streetscaping and enhancements to the underpass area around the proposed station platform. For the final section on redevelopment potential, the consultant team identified five separate sites within the station area and evaluated them based on size, geometry, proximity to amenities, and current use.

Commissioner Lunde asked if the Crystal airport would ever be considered for redevelopment? John Sutter responded that the airport is not likely to be closed in the short term, but if it were to be redeveloped, some kind of job center would be desired.

Commissioner Lunde commented that due to the pandemic, the federal government has changed its opinion of the role of small airports.

Commissioner Fernando commented that transit access is important, as is art, lighting, and tax capacity of redevelopment sites. Walkable development sites with first floor grocery may be what's missing.

Council Member Chamblis mentioned that while the station areas in Brooklyn Park have not changed, the plans are older and may need to be updated from a community engagement perspective.

The Bolton & Menk team started the planning update for Robbinsdale by compiling primary city goals, county goals, and BLRT project goals. From there they compiled four comprehensive goals that are: grow the diversity of experiences, places, customers, and residents in the downtown; transform Bottineau Boulevard from a barrier into a valued front door to the community; ensure the introduction of LRT serves the long-term interests of Robbinsdale; and build an efficient and amenity-rich public realm. These goals served as the basis of the planning update work and from there key study areas were created: connectivity, development, and place.

Connectivity includes making local multi-modal connections to and through downtown from all parts of Robbinsdale and enhancing the safety and comfort of Bottineau Boulevard and its crossings. The team examined ways to make Bottineau Boulevard easier to cross and more pleasant to be on by making it a more urban boulevard with a lower design speed, eliminating right run lanes and frontage roads, and other enhancements.

Development includes encouraging redevelopment on underutilized properties to strengthen the broader downtown and establish a district parking system that simplifies access to parking and allows people to park once and walk to multiple places. The plan suggests directing growth to under-utilized properties and focusing retail at corners, away from strips. Also dividing the super blocks with multiple buildings on each block. The development goal also includes promoting soft growth in markets beyond downtown.

The final study area of place includes establishing a civic campus that improves delivery of and access to public services and create new public spaces that elevate economic activity and quality of life value for all who visit, live, and work in downtown. This area of the plan calls for a prominent and connected public realm to meet the needs of downtown. Elements include 41st Avenue promenade and plaza, a civic green, improvements to Spanjers Park, and platform and transit plaza.

Commissioner Fernando stated that public realm improvements and amenities are important.

Commissioner Lunde spoke in support of making West Broadway more pedestrian friendly.

6. Partner Highlight: Brooklyn Park Small Business Center

Kim Berggren presented on this item beginning with the history of the project. It began with community members calling for a small business center/market, including in 2016 station area plans. The EDA identified it as a strategic priority in 2019 and applied for and received a LCDA pre-development grant from Met Council which served as a catalyst for the project and hired a commercial broker, architect, and civil engineer to help identify potential locations for the small business center.

The EDA considered several lease options, but chose to buy Northwind Plaza because it offered better a financial deal long-term, allowed the EDA to control its destiny, and had future benefits of anti-gentrification/displacement, in-fill opportunities, and community ownership models. The EDA purchased the site on Oct. 8, 2021 and the Small Business Center opened August 2023.

The site currently has eight businesses of which four are BIPOC owned and seven are locally owned. The separate former CVS store is still vacant since CVS still pays rent and controls future tenants until 2035. The small business center itself is 25,000 square feet and is in the building elbow. It provides attainable co-working and retail space following a membership model. There is room for approximately 60 small and growing businesses. It also provides business technical assistance and business advising and networking.

Total budget included \$7M to purchase Northwind Plaza from an EDA General Fund interfund loan and \$5M to construct the Small Business Center. Grants included \$1M from the federal government, \$500K from Hennepin County, and \$100K from Met Council. There over \$200K annually in Northwind cash flow to pay back the EDA General Fund for purchase and the EDA approved a \$300K year one operating deficit for Small Business Center startup costs and to keep rents affordable.

7. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM