

Meeting Notes

November 16, 2023

COLUMBIA HEIGHTS MEDTRONIC SITE

CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

MEETING DATE: 11/16/2023 | TIME: 6 PM

LOCATION: COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CITY HALL

- Consider lower density housing near Sullivan Lake and higher density housing as you move away from the lake (townhomes → high density residential)
- Apartment buildings – 6 stories max. 6 is probably the magic number with parking structure.
- Discussion on the pedestrian crossings on northern side of the site. Is it hostile for pedestrians? New roundabout construction places two designated crossings on the far east and far west of the roundabout.
- Comment about combining the bottom part of concept #4 with concept #2
- Comment about adding a restaurant on the south side by the lowest stormwater feature in concept #4.
- Public access to the lake edge is a goal. There is a desire to invite as much activity to the water feature/lake.
- Having stormwater incorporated into the street does a good job at integrating public and private.
- Concept #2 and concept #4 were well received.
- Desire to have a view to the woods from rental apartments (4 stories) that could be placed in the northwest corner of concept #3.
- Comment about having a curve-less street. Possibility of introducing a woonerf. A shared street could take place in concept #3, in the stormwater street area.
- Positive comment about the ability for the public to enjoy the water feature. Let it be interactive, as active as possible – Concept #2 does this the best.
- The idea of having a public gathering amenity like an amphitheater or a space for performances has potential, although in St. Anthony Village, the amphitheater does not get used – CC and PC do not want to see this happening here.
- What is the right program for this park? Sometimes it feels like spaces like this are owned by the apartment buildings and are not welcoming to the public.
- How can soundproofing or noise reduction be achieved?
- Comment about having more walking and biking access through the site – this is a desire CC and PC want to accomplish.
- Does the increase in dwelling units require more park support? How are we accommodating the public spaces for all the new people that will live here?
- Desire to have more meditative spaces for people to relax and gather.

- Desire to add an art component to the park.
- Potential for little nodes along the trail to incorporate active components.
- Comment about liking more housing than more retail as in concept #1.
- Concept #3 seems very intense from a fire access perspective.
- The patio restaurant idea was well received. Has potential to become a destination.
- Comment from the City staff about expensive costs for renting retail space. \$5/SF vs. \$22/SF (vacant coffee shop next to City Hall).
- Are food halls a possibility on the site? Not really feasible since it needs to serve a much larger area. Conflict with delivery component, access to and from site.
- Can the site have a public tenant like at Sea Salt? A park version of a popup
- When thinking about opening up the street system, the city has gone with these being private not public. Having them being public will require further conversations.
- Comment about having vertical lit elements to draw people's attention to the site – a beacon.
- Comment about Concept #2 feeling already like a second iteration which takes some of the ideas from Concept #4.
- Water interaction is what makes the lake attractive – Consensus on making the lake accessible.
- Desire to improve the environmental condition of Sullivan Lake – this should be a must. Using stormwater treatments for this purpose.
- Comment about all concepts bringing importance to Sullivan Lake, while they also turn their back on Central. They belong to the lake and the community – lake-focused, which CC and PC really liked.
- Comment about connecting bike access from Central – very tricky, switch backs?
- Comment about the eastern access to the trail in the easement area – trail ends at a retaining wall. This needs to be looked at.
- Consensus on the restaurant idea – a sticking point. Let's not forget about the delivery component and what that entails from an access perspective. The type of restaurant is key for this to be successful.
- What is the backup plan if it is not a restaurant? It needs to be an “outside attraction”, something that brings people in and does not feel private.
- Is Sullivan Lake Park a community destination or a neighborhood destination? Parking lot is always half full.
- Desire for more picnicking and shade areas. Be mindful of parking needs. Park users will need designated parking spaces. Incorporate more parking to the park component.
- Desire to have a northern access point to Sullivan Lake Park from 53rd.
- How can the site look good when under drought periods? This is particularly for those stormwater treatment areas. Think of ways to interact with the stormwater features when in periods of drought, like Central Park in Maple Grove?
- Consider snow storage!
- For next iteration of concepts, include southern portions of the park to better depict extent of park.

- Comment about having a grocery store option on the site. People will have the option to jump on the F line and go to Cub Foods and other.
- Mayor does not really see an amphitheater idea here, but rather an open space for people to program themselves
- Concern with open lawn and chemicals.
- General comments on concepts:
 - o Concept 1 – too much on north side.
 - o Concept 2 – good balance.
 - o Concept 3 – too much, intense.
 - o Concept 4 – reconsider NW corner, too many street rows, push density of apartment building.
- Consider uses for different generations – childcare, senior living, etc.
- Consider a clinic, a hardware store... an anchor store!
- The townhomes give more of a community feel.
- Comment about moving the townhomes from concept #4 to concept #3.
- 400 units min for apartment buildings – this will be a benchmark.
- Comment about converting the SE corner to apartment building in concept #4 – an L-shaped building coming from the north.
- Tax base – retail/commercial vs. housing.
- Look for liner residential precedents to better depict the scale of buildings and their variability.
- Desire to move away from the “Lego aesthetic” for buildings.
- Desire for a residential feeling along corridors.
- Look for streetscape precedents to better depict stormwater treatments and feel of space.
- For next round of concepts, pinpoint precedents to specific areas on plans.
- Comment about asbestos presence in green lot north of the site (Fridley property).