



West Bank Business Association

1420 Washington Ave South #2

Minneapolis MN 55454

612.326.9652

thewestbank.org - members: wbba.thewestbank.org

Lot A Redevelopment - Ad Hoc Meeting

Thursday August 1, 2019

10:00am

Red Sea Bar & Restaurant

Notes

I. Greetings, Introduction (5 minutes)

II. Project updates

A. NRP / Other orgs

- Sent a letter also

B. CPED / CITY

- Sent a response to our letter

III. Discussion - City Response Letter (10-20 minutes)

Questions (Q) / Concerns (C) / Answers (A)

Facilitated discussion with a speaking limit of 2 minutes per speaker. Please plan comments accordingly.

Q. David: Is there a package proposal for the African Village that describes the details?

- A. Emily: No, not yet.

Q. David: And this idea (the overall idea of the African Village), is it coming directly from Council?

- A. Emily: Yes

Q. David: (In response to the letter) This says nothing about the limited parking, which has been one of the big concerns among businesses and residents,

- A. Emily: It does address that. There are 2300 spaces within a half mile radius. Commercial, public parking spaces (some in ramps, some are privately owned.)

Q. David: Does that include parking within Riverside Plaza?

- A. Emily: I don't believe that was one of the parking areas.

Q. Jamie: Can we get a list of what criteria from our recommendation was included?

- A. Emily: Yes, a majority are being included. The RFP has not yet been made. Commitment are consistent with what the city's goals are. But likely won't be able to guarantee 1 to 1 ratio of parking to replaced parking.

Q. Jamie: (Conversation with Emily about the process so far) This was announced and there was a lack of engagement before the onset of this announcement. Even if the RFP criteria follows the community recommendations letter for letter, the whole process got off to a rough start (because there was no process before an announcement was made.) It seems like there needs to be some repair work done by the council to address this.

- A. Emily: We are, with Louis/ Cedar Riverside Partnership's help, going to convene partners of key institutions within the partnership group, the Park Board, someone from the county, someone from CR NRP, business association, etc. So that moving forward we have a working group, a smaller group, and make sure that key partners are there. Then we can do it in a way that's productive and inclusive of the neighborhood.

C. David: One of the most striking things about the meeting where this was announced was that there were several women and mothers who immediately stood up and opposed the proposal. Stakeholders are not just organizations and institutions, they are also people from the neighborhood.

- A. Emily: Lot A has been a magnet for these types of problems already. Council Member Warsame was very adamant that that's not the model (the other malls), this is a much bigger vision. It's also about branding the entire area.

C. Jamie: That's another concern that has come up. In an ideal world this type of proposal could catalyze the things we've been working on for some time: wayfinding, signage, safety. But if we're using this as a key to branding the district, that becomes immediately not inclusive of other businesses in the neighborhood that don't fit that "brand." (Discussion about cultural corridor.) Does this model inclusivity for other businesses, even other businesses of color?

- A. Emily: This is not meant to be exclusive. We understand there's a global market already. The African Village is not meant to be exclusive.

C. Jamie: There seems to have been some communication breakdown. People are being told different things.

- A. Emily That speaks to the process so far and we plan to be very different moving forward. We plan to be very inclusive moving forward. I think council member Warsame's letter reflects that. There are going to be many touch points moving forward.

C. Jamie How can we encourage council to help rebuild relationships that have been fractured as a result of this?

- A. Emily: The council and the mayor share the overarching vision of the African Village and that this is the best location in the city for that. Beyond that and even within that there's lots of room to work - none of the fine grained details. We're thinking through operational models.

(Discussion about operational model, cooperative options, and building local wealth).

C. David: It's very clear the council member and the mayor decided to do this and the overall plan is not negotiable.

IV. Impact Mitigation / Updates (5-10 minutes)

a) B-Tap Retention (available immediately- we have confirmed with the city we can offer this specifically for Lot A / retention / marketing and planning for businesses that may be displaced.

b) City options: What should WBBA request from the city to mitigate displacement, replace parking, wayfinding, signage during construction?

c) Funding: Forgivable, low-interest, and other loan funds: what to fundraise for?

Q. Jamie: If there's anti-displacement is the value of the City, what infrastructure options could be put in place to help with this?

- A. Emily: The goal / the main market would provide opportunities in the neighborhood to have, to open a space or to move or to have a second kiosk (this has happened in Global Market. Like La Loma, etc.)

Discussion about displacement in the neighborhood and how to navigate that.

- A. Emily: We certainly want to work within our existing programs. (B-Tap, etc.) That said this is a very different animal than the light rail project. And in that case it was actually the Federal Government and the Met Council to further mitigate the construction impacts. It was a three year construction period. We are looking at 12-18 months here. Met Council was basically told they had to do something. Forgivable loan program was roughly 2 million. Most likely we won't have a large pot of money but we do have CPED business support and finance programs. We can certainly leverage what programs are already available, and see if there are other resources in the city. But we don't want to make any false comparisons.

- Jamie: We're not saying this is the same scale, but we can also look to lessons learned. what worked, what didn't, and what can we try to duplicate here to displace.

- Emily: even the simplest things like signage, way-finding, things like "businesses open during construction." There are lots of ways we can approach the mitigation that doesn't involve a large infusion of new money. Until we get closer to construction it gets harder to know. (Quick side discussion - with the light rail planning we were out in advance long before, but it wasn't until construction started that the urgency became apparent. Jamie: Are you saying we're starting too early? No, just a timeline comparison.)

C. Susannah: A note about the 2300 parking spaces, that it's disingenuous to use that figure as it includes very high-cost, further distance parking. Where are all the people going to park? Is it reasonable to assume they will go to other spots? A half mile is a far walking distance.

- Emily: As part of the RFP criteria we're going to encourage and give added weight to proposals that include some available parking. I don't believe we can commit to the 1:1 replacement.

C. Susannah: Realistically, honestly, Is it even going to be close? Or a realistic amount for the businesses? This is critical for businesses and for our cultural and destination venues - for the Cedar Cultural Center, Mixed Blood.

C. Jamie: High density is something that is part of the city's plan, and we know that. But some of our least cared for and overgrown areas are the places owned by (Met Council?, County, Underpasses, grassy areas near the light rail, etc.) Things like increasing pedestrian traffic from the rail to the businesses, and building up additional traffic that's not vehicular, these are things we want and are trying to do. But it feels like there is a missing component here between government and these other transportation entities. For example: we had to fight to get any wayfinding and we can't have any on the platform areas. How do we get the people with power, resources, and sway to actually connect those components?

- A. Emily: Overarching concept is that the African Village is not going to be a single building but it's going to be the entire business community but he anticipates having way-finding signage, strong connections to the light rail.

- Jamie: If this mall is not just going to impact lot A but is going to be connected to the branding throughout the district, then how do we navigate our Southeast Asian, Hispanic, and other businesses that will feel displaced by this? There are other locally owned businesses of color here, how are we being inclusive?

C. Susannah: It feels like we're being told about the vision that the council made up for our neighborhood. This seems problematic.

Discussions about other restaurants: Keefer Court, Malabari, Lucky Dragon.

Tom: How do you guarantee within this development that the places will be affordable to people that have small businesses and need the space? (Grandmarc has empty storefronts. it's too expensive.) This new space in one of his descriptions of it. He said it would be an incubator space. How do you guarantee that? How are they going to afford to build it

A. Jamie: It seems like it would need to be a nonprofit or cooperative like NDC.

A. Emily: It would also have other revenue generating uses on the site that would help offset some of the costs and revenue needs of the mall.

A. Jamie: I will say from our brief experience with the night market, that incubation and mentorship is critical.

Others to keep in the loop / add to the loop.

- Korean Service Center
- Lucky Dragon
- Biju / Malabari
- Michelle / Red Sea
- Mixed Blood

Q. Tom - How will tenants for the building be selected?

- And what is the accountability for who is let out and let in? What do you already know? how granular of a detail can you give us, and anyone that's already been pre-selected? I think that is more pointedly an area of your concern than under-representation of the other businesses. That this comes to you not with the intention of being *West Bank* centered, it's *African Market* centered.

Q. A question about the developer again, and who is the developer.

- A. Emily: What I can say is we encourage proposals and developers from all over to look at the RFP. We intend for this to be a competitive RFP processes. RFP is not set in stone.

Emily - Goal is not to displace small businesses but we need to be intentional about how we get there. If we're not intentional that could be an unfortunate consequence. How are we going to ensure the space is affordable, is accessible. How do we make sure that we're not excluding the Asian and other non East African communities in Cedar - Riverside? How do we think about signage so it's an eco-system.

V. Next Steps (10-15 minutes)

a) Jamie to draft a letter, will share with exec committee prior

b) Next meeting:

Prior to the WBBA Board meeting Thursday August 15, 2019, 2pm
At the Cedar-Riverside West Bank Safety Center
1601 S 4th St, Minneapolis, MN 55454