

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the West Bank Business Association's (WBBA) July 2 meeting. I want to respond to many of the issues, questions and concerns raised in WBBA's July 2 meeting minutes and July 8 letter.

The idea of redeveloping Lot A has been around for years. The lot has been the subject of numerous studies, including the 2008 Cedar Riverside Small Area Plan, the 2010 West Bank Station Area Implementation Study, the 2012 Vision and Planning work led by the WBBA, and the recent Minneapolis 2040 Plan. The WBBA's Lot A Vision and Planning document developed criteria for an eventual RFP. The City's 2010 Small Area Plan and recent 2040 Plan both call for intensive redevelopment of the site.

The guidance from the [2040 Plan](#) calls for:

- Large-scale mixed-use development, with commercial uses fronting on major streets.
- Commercial retail spaces that are typically smaller, in order to generate pedestrian activity – they are often a destination for customers coming from outside of the market area.
- Single-use residential development is not permitted – at least a portion of the site must provide uses that are accessible to the public such as office, food service, retail, or medical establishments.
- Buildings on some portion of the site must be a minimum of 10 stories, but no more than 30 stories.

The [Cedar Riverside Small Area Plan](#) (2008) and West Bank Implementation Study (2010) also encourage mixed use redevelopment of the site to both improve the pedestrian environment, particularly along Cedar Avenue, and to support and enhance the business district.

One reason for this guidance is Lot A's transportation connections. The Lot A area is uniquely served by two light-rail transit stations, many bus lines, and abundant bike and pedestrian connections. We understand that losing parking is a concern. However, within a half-mile radius there are at least 2,300 parking stalls in ramps, lots and on the street. When Cedar Avenue was reconstructed, the City added an additional 25-30 parking spaces on the west side of Cedar. Moreover, according to the City's Traffic and Parking Services division, which manages Lot A, the hourly rates are well below market. The lot barely cash flows on an annual basis.

The development of Lot A has the potential to benefit the Cedar Riverside community and the city more broadly. The City will seek to create a new "Africa Village" cultural area and public market featuring a range of retail and professional small businesses serving and accessible to African and non-African communities. Not only will the market provide a place for people to shop, it will also provide economic opportunities to rising entrepreneurs to grow their businesses. The Africa Village area and public market has the potential to become a regional destination that generates customer traffic and other resources for the broader West Bank business community. The Africa Village vision and public market is aligned with the City's goals around economic inclusion.

A development will also likely include housing, at least a portion of which will need to be affordable as required by current City policy. The project will include beautification improvements to the public realm including new sidewalks, lighting, a public plaza space and additional greenery. The development will include some level of parking open to the public. Development can turn this lot, which already faces serious crime and public safety problems, into a greater asset for the community.

This project is in its early stages. The City intends to issue an RFP for development of Lot A this fall. The RFP will draw from WBBA's Lot A Vision and Planning work as well as the City's 2010 Small Area Plan and 2040 Plan.

As with other development projects, City staff will engage with the WBBA, the Cedar Riverside Partnership (CRP), and the neighborhood during the RFP process and beyond in these ways:

- First, staff will incorporate the key elements of the RFP criteria listed in WBBA's Lot A Vision and Planning document. Staff will present and share a draft of the development objectives – the heart of the RFP -- for the site with WBBA, CRP and the neighborhood. Staff will invite you to provide feedback on the development objectives.
- Second, after receiving development proposals, staff will invite the development teams to present their proposals to WBBA and CRP meetings for feedback.
- Third, I expect the selected development team to interact regularly with the community during the development process.

Once a development team is selected, staff will work with this team and the community on shaping the project to address community needs as well as on outstanding questions, such as potential options for mitigating parking loss during construction.

I look forward to working with the WBBA and CRP throughout the RFP and subsequent development process. Please feel free to contact me at any time.



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