

REPORT / RECOMMENDATION



To: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Agenda Item #: IX. A.

From: Debra Mangen
City Clerk

Date: June 4, 2013

Subject: CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED AFTER PACKETS

Action
Discussion
Information

Action Requested:

Attached is correspondence received after the packets were delivered to you.

No action is necessary.

Edina City Council,

Thank you for the
lovely flowers.

*During a time
like this*

*we realize how much
our family and friends
really mean to us. . .*

*Your expression
of sympathy will always
be remembered*

*The Van Valkenburg
Family*

Susan Howl

From: Lynette Biunno on behalf of Edina Mail
Sent: Monday, June 03, 2013 3:11 PM
Cc: Susan Howl
Subject: FW: The City of Edina Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan



Lynette Biunno, Receptionist

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lbiunno@EdinaMN.gov | www.EdinaMN.gov

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From: WESTERDAHL WILLIAM [<mailto:westyw2@gmail.com>]
Sent: Thursday, May 30, 2013 12:19 PM
To: Edina Mail
Subject: The City of Edina Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan

5/30/13

Dear Mayor Hovland,

In 2007 Edina adopted "The City of Edina Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan" Since 2007 there have been a number of significant events which will impact the use of bicycles for transportation in Edina. Among these are:

The designation of OPUS and CITY WEST as stations on the Southwest Light rail line. Both of these stations are likely to draw significant numbers of bicycle commuters, are within one half mile of Edina's west boundary, and will likely be used by Edina residents.

The establishment of a west campus for United Health Care at the SE intersection of Shady Oak Road and the Crosstown highway. According to some newspaper articles, approximately 6700 employees are to be located on this campus. This campus is 3/4 mile from Edina's west boundary and will likely be used by Edina bicycle commuters.

The adoption of a creek route for the "Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail" through Edina to be constructed by the Three Rivers Park District. This trail is likely to be primarily for recreation, not transportation, unplowed during the winter, unlighted, and having limited access as it passes through the Nine Mile Creek wetlands.

My questions are:

Is the "The City of Edina Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan" still operative?

Who is responsible for monitoring/implementing the 2007 plan?

Are there plans to modify the 2007 plan to include the effect of the Southwest Rail Stations, the new United Health Care Campus, and the Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail?

Sincerely,

Wm Westerdahl
westyw2@gmail.com

KIMBERLY MONTGOMERY
8300 EVANSWOOD LANE
EDINA, MN 55436
952-931-2119

June 3, 2013

Edina City Council
West 50th Street
Edina, MN

Re: GrandView Process

Dear City Council Members:

CC: Edina City Manager Scott Neal, Edina City Economic Development Director Bill Neuendorf

As a follow-up to my letter dated April 17, 2013, I am enclosing an article from yesterday's NY Times: "A Streetcorner Serenade for the Public Plaza". I would ask you to pay particular attention to the point that cities leaving public redevelopment to private developers end up with public spaces that are unusable afterthoughts, not the vibrant life-filled, connected places envisioned by the Framework.

The article also mentions the Hayes Valley neighborhood in San Francisco. In my 4/13 letter, I referenced examples of public spaces spurring private redevelopment and provided the links. Hayes Street was one. Church Street in Burlington, Vermont was another. The Framework always used the Montreal Town Green as an example on which members of the Steering Committee all agreed.

The process as it has been designed going forward gets it backwards. It asks developers to define the land use before public spaces are defined.

I would ask the Council, Manager Neal and City Economic Development Director Neuendorf to spend time with the following:

Gil Penalosa's TED Talk: <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxCarlton-Gil-Penalosa-Creati>

Dan Burden's Walkable Communities: <http://www.walklive.org>

These two embody the spirit and intent of the Framework. They demonstrate how public decisions regarding land use create the type of spaces our 2-year process laid forth. I would ask, once more, for the Council to define a process that honors the Framework and would be pleased to discuss my thoughts at your convenience.

Respectfully,



Kim Montgomery



A Streetcorner Serenade for the Public Plaza



The New York City Department of Transportation

Left, Pearl Street Triangle in Dumbo, Brooklyn, as it previously existed as a parking site and, right, as the city's Department of Transportation remade it in a renovation plan. [More Photos »](#)

By MICHAEL KIMMELMAN
Published: May 31, 2013 62 Comments

In Brooklyn, the No. 3 subway line ends at New Lots Avenue, where passengers descend from the elevated tracks to what used to be a nasty intersection, trafficked by prostitutes, drug dealers — “You name it,” as Eddie Di Benedetto, the owner of Caterina’s Pizzeria, put it the other day. Not long ago, a coalition of local merchants and community leaders turned to the New York City Department of Transportation, which runs a program to make traffic circles, triangles and streets into pedestrian plazas.

Multimedia

The department brought in some potted trees and chairs, closed off a short street and voilà, what had been a problem became a boon. Since the plaza opened last summer, crime has plummeted, Mr. Di Benedetto told me, crediting the local police precinct. He heads the New Lots Avenue Triangle Merchants Association.

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Readers' Comments

Tell us about your favorite public plaza.

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“People use the place all the time now, meaning the area is watched and safe,” he said. “I’ve had my pizzeria since 1971, so I can tell you, this is a renaissance.”

Cities need public spaces like plazas. For years they have mostly been planned from the top down. In New York, zoning laws have carved many of these spaces from commercial developments, which have been given bonuses to include them. Mayor Bloomberg is pushing a new proposal to rezone east Midtown, near Grand Central, that is a variation on this same old trickle-down theme.

But fresh thinking has focused on cheap, quick, temporary and D.I.Y.-style approaches to creating public space — among these, curbside “parklets” in San Francisco and a communal farm on what had been a derelict parcel in the middle of Phoenix. “Small steps, big changes,” as Janette Sadik-Khan, the New York City Department of Transportation commissioner, described the logic of plazas like that at New Lots.

And guess what? A beer garden made out of freight containers on an empty plot turns out to be a lot more popular and better for a city than a sad corporate atrium with a few cafe tables and a long list of don’ts on the wall.

As more and more educated Americans, especially younger ones, are looking to move downtown, seeking alternatives to suburbs and cars, they’re reframing the demand for public space. They want elbow room and creative sites, cooked up by the community or, like the plaza program, developed from a democratic mix of top-down and bottom-up governance.

The other day I visited Michael Bierut, whose design firm, Pentagram, has drawn the maps that accompany the new bike-share program. Pentagram’s New York office faces Madison Square Park. Mr. Bierut remembered when the plaza program started to take over the pedestrian-unfriendly territory where Broadway crosses Fifth Avenue, just next to the park. Traffic patterns improved, but he still thought the city was nuts to create plazas from concrete islands marooned between busy boulevards when there was already, right there, one of the most gorgeous parks in the city.

“Was I wrong,” he said, laughing.

The plazas outside his building are mobbed on warm days, with people even toting Shake Shack burgers out of the park to sit next to all the traffic — partly for the view (the Flatiron building one way, the Empire State Building the other) but also for the reason people gravitate to Trafalgar Square in London or the Piazza del Campo in Siena, Italy.

To be in the middle of things.

“It’s why we congregate near the kitchen at a dinner party instead of in the living room,” said Andy Wiley-Schwartz, who directs the Department of Transportation’s plaza program. “That’s where you see people coming and going to the fridge to grab a beer and watch stuff happen.”

Nationwide, people moving downtown want to be in on the mix, too; they want pedestrian-friendly streets, parks and plazas. And smart cities are responding, like Dallas, whose Klyde Warren Park opened downtown last year atop the Woodall Rodgers Freeway, where it burrows for a few merciful blocks below ground. The place was buzzing when I passed by one recent weekend. In Phoenix, where nearly half of all city lots are vacant, the mayor, Greg Stanton, lately chose an empty 15-acre parcel — an eyesore in the heart of town — for an urban park and garden where nearby residents, mostly immigrants, can grow vegetables, for their own tables or to sell at local farmers' markets.

And in San Francisco, the city government has been renting out curbside parking spaces, long term, on the condition they be turned into parklets. Most involve little more than benches and shrubs. But the best have become elaborate interventions, with landscaping, platforms, even mini-mini-golf. I spent a morning watching kids play and adults sunbathe in a parklet outside Fourbarrel Coffee on Valencia Street. Los Angeles and Philadelphia, among others, have recently started parklet programs. New York is trying it out, too.

In the Hayes Valley neighborhood of San Francisco, I also came across a project called Proxy, which recovers the land left behind where a highway had been. After the Central Freeway was taken down, residents petitioned the mayor to do something with a few of the vacant lots it left behind. Douglas Burnham, a local architect who runs the firm Envelope A+D, proposed Proxy: a shifting, temporary campus of modified shipping containers hosting retailers, art galleries and cafes.

Crowds flock to hang out at the Suppenkuche's Biergarten, a scene at night. The architecture is simple. The vibe is friendly. The changing layout conforms to a neighborhood in flux. Local merchants feared Proxy would steal customers away. Instead, it has brought people to the neighborhood.

Back east, retailers in Times Square saw a similar influx after the plaza program closed Broadway to cars. Carmageddon didn't happen; business boomed. Commercial rents in Times Square have doubled during the last year alone.

All these New York plaza projects haven't come up roses. Neighborhoods mostly request plazas with an agreement to look after them; poorer communities, without Business Improvement Districts, have sometimes had trouble with the maintenance.

To aid them, Ms. Sadik-Khan said, the Transportation Department is working with the Horticultural Society of New York and the nonprofit ACE Programs for the Homeless to develop a jobs initiative in which ex-convicts and homeless people provide horticultural services and general upkeep. Communities pay on a sliding scale for the help. It remains to be seen if it delivers.

The process of construction is that the department first lays out the plazas (Pearl Street in the Dumbo area of Brooklyn, for example) with temporary materials. Then the city's Department of Design and Construction takes over, as do outside architects, including well-known and young firms like Snohetta (Times Square), RBA GROUP and DSGN AGNC (Corona, Queens) to consult with local representatives on the final results.

Not surprisingly, bottom-up design usually works better than trickle-down. That east Midtown rezoning plan I mentioned, which the Bloomberg administration is trying to ram through the City Council before the mayor's term expires, would be a bonanza for commercial developers who want to erect giant office towers on Park Avenue and around Grand Central Station. But even as it portends to radically reshape the neighborhood, it treats the public realm (mass transit as well) as an afterthought.

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There's a half-baked idea to transform some of Vanderbilt Avenue into a pedestrian street and a plan for public space being drawn up with consultants. In return for the right to build extra big buildings, developers would contribute to a city-run fund that, someday, might act on that plan. It remains a backward approach to addressing public needs.

We've seen what happens the old way. During the early 1960s, zoning codes in New York created privately owned public spaces, or POPS. There are now more than 500 of these plazas, arcades and atriums — spaces that often nobody wanted, least of all the developers who built them in exchange for gaining millions of extra square feet and other valuable zoning concessions.

I spent a day last month touring sites with Jerold Kayden, an urban planner and Harvard professor. The City Planning Commission has tried in recent years to improve standards and upgrade certain locations, working with outsiders in some cases. Mr. Kayden took me to what had been an especially grim atrium near 62nd Street and Broadway that, with Lincoln Center's patronage, has been turned into the David Rubenstein Atrium, expertly redesigned by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien. There are regular concerts and cafe tables next to gadget-charging outlets. I chatted with four women running a small dance company in Inwood who meet there every week for the usual reason: to feel in the middle of things, they said.

These public spaces more or less operate on the honor system, so owners take advantage. At Trump Tower, public benches that the building is obliged to provide have been replaced by a sales counter hawking Trump merchandise, and there was no furniture, though promised, on the public terraces. J. P. Morgan Chase, which owns 383 Madison Avenue, has blocked off a lobby that is a public through-space, claiming security concerns. Guards shooed me out the door when I asked whether the building's owners had obtained permission from the city.

Since Occupy Wall Street took over Zuccotti Park, another POPS, owners have drawn up ever more restrictive lists of rules. At 120 Park Avenue, across from Grand Central (years ago the Whitney Museum had a branch there; now it's desolate), a guard stopped me from taking a photograph; at 590 Madison Avenue, formerly the IBM Building, the nicest of the indoor sites, you can't play cards.

New Yorkers deserve better, and have paid for it. As with the rest of the public realm, the priority ought to be public service. Ms. Sadik-Khan is right: Improving public space doesn't always take much. It's good for business. It's good for people.

It's common sense.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: June 2, 2013

Two captions this weekend with an article about D.I.Y.-style public spaces describe incorrectly the Pearl Street Triangle shown in Dumbo, Brooklyn. The photograph of a parking lot shows what the triangle used to look like — not its current state. And a photo illustration shows the triangle's renovations; Pearl Street Triangle is not awaiting renovation.

A version of this article appeared in print on June 2, 2013, on page AR1 of the New York edition with the headline: A Streetcorner Serenade for the Public Plaza.

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