

Water Works Frequently Asked Questions and Comments

June 7, 2017

Overall Park Design

- 1. The park seems over designed with too much activity in one small area. Why can it not have less lawn, less hardscape, and more trees and natural areas?**

A common complaint about Mill Ruins Park is that there isn't much to do. It is largely a park that people pass through, and visitor support such as restrooms, food, shelter, and seating are often requested. Creating a park that invites people with diverse interests and needs to spend time demands a range of amenities that are appropriate to a downtown riverfront landscape. A variety of seating areas, safe and accessible circulation, flexible park spaces, and visitor support areas are key components of a multipurpose recreational area.

Water Works is intended to be the hub of visitor activity and support for the downtown riverfront area. Some of the nearby park areas have less intense uses, and larger natural areas. When examined in context, the Central Mississippi Riverfront plan in downtown Minneapolis is largely composed of trails and green space.

- 2. It is good that the revised concept preserves more of the outdoor park area and the hillside with existing trees. Nature, green space, and the river should be emphasized here. How will the design encourage people to enjoy the outdoors?**

A key goal of an indoor pavilion with a food vendor is to activate and support enjoyment of the outdoor park. Providing a variety of activities, spaces, services and a welcoming atmosphere are key ways to encourage extended visits

- 3. How will the river be protected? Will there be raingardens, pervious paving, or other methods to prevent runoff?**

An innovative strategy for rainwater reuse is part of the Water Works concept. The strategy is to capture rainwater from surrounding rooftops, cleanse the water and reuse it in the park. Infiltration of rainwater that falls on the park will also be incorporated into the park design as it progresses.

- 4. How many trees will be protected? As many existing trees as possible should be saved.**

The proposed concept revision will preserve as many healthy and existing trees as possible. Most of the existing trees are along the First Street hillside where we identified roughly 55 trees over six inches in diameter (32 cottonwood, 18 boxelder, and 5 Siberian elm). There are also numerous trees under six inches, mostly boxelder and ash.

The revised concept allows more of the hillside to stay intact, especially nearest to the Third Avenue Bridge. A healthy, signature cottonwood near the bridge will remain undisturbed as well as several trees on the slope above the accessible walkway from First Street to the woonerf. However, many other trees are growing from the base of historic mill ruins that will be restored as part of the project. Tree roots destroy foundation walls, especially stone walls. Two large cottonwoods, one that is in decline, and approximately twenty other trees are believed to be seriously impacting mill ruins.

As the design progresses, the team will seek to (1) replace lost trees with hardy, high habitat-value trees, and (2) look at detailed design and grading strategies to preserve trees that are not damaging historic mill ruins.

5. What will children do at the site? Play is important and currently lacking in the downtown.

A custom play area will be incorporated into the hillside just upstream of the city steps. The intention is that the play area will support use by children of a wide range of ages, and provide both physical and active play, as well as imaginative play. The lawn area and games that can be checked out, such as bocce ball, badminton, or bean bags, may also appeal to children.

6. Will people actually be connected to the water? Will they be able to access the water with kayaks and canoes? It appears that there is little done to address the shoreline.

The goal is to allow for water access, both for passive users who want to be able to reach the water, and for people using canoes and kayaks. The access will not be a traditional launch where people would expect to drop off a watercraft and park nearby. The pool in front of the Riverside Phase is enclosed at this time so access at Water Works would be limited to very short trips near the site.

Originally a canoe/kayak outfitting area and guiding service was to be included in the Water Works pavilion. Given budget and site constraints, and outfitter will not be located inside the building, however outfitting and tours may still occur at the site.

The extent of river access will be influenced by a proposed private hydropower plant at the lock & dam. If the plant is constructed, the safety of river access is in question.

The shoreline area between West River Parkway and the river is part of the Riverside Phase and any conceptual design work was completed during the 2012 – 2015 design process. Development of this area will occur when the Riverside Phase is initiated in the future. Two launches are planned, one upstream at the flagpole plaza and one in Lower Mill Ruins Park at the flagpole plaza.

7. How will the park be made safe at night? Will there be good lighting and security?

Lighting will be provided as part of the park project. MPRB is also working with MnDOT as the Third Avenue Bridge project progresses to see if lighting under the bridge can be included.

The park building will have an MPRB staff member at a public desk during most of the park open hours. Activating the park is the best form of security, and basic open sight lines and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) will be followed.

8. How will MPRB prevent dogs from damaging the park? Dog relief areas are needed at key places to intercept dog walkers before they enter the park and cause damage the grass and plants.

In the interest of minimizing damage to the park, the design team will look at logical locations for dog relief areas as the design progresses. Dogs will not be allowed on the pavilion roof. As with other parks, dogs must be kept on a six foot maximum leash length in the park and owners are required to pick up after their dogs.

Park Circulation

1. Where will people park? Lack of car parking limits users and will overburden the surrounding parking facilities. How is MPRB addressing transportation to the site without providing parking?

The vast majority of people arrive at the riverfront on foot or by bike. On-site parking will inevitably only serve a small fraction of the 2.3 million (and growing fast) annual visits to the central riverfront. Water Works proposes removing in-park parking in favor of more recreational space. There are currently three parking lots at the Water Works site.

- Roughly 42 stalls owned by the U. S. Army Corp of Engineers at the lock & dam accessed under the Stone Arch Bridge will not be changed by the Water Works project.
- Roughly 30 gravel stalls flanking the former Fuji Ya building were for contract parking only and were not available for general use. These 30 stalls are now closed and will be removed.
- Roughly 34 stalls along West River Parkway on top of the buried gatehouse and inlet canal (near the Stone Arch Bridge) will eventually be removed with the Riverside Phase.

The woonerf added over 70 new stalls on private property adjacent to Water Works. MPRB has a permanent trail and parking easement with the woonerf property owner to allow public evening/weekend parking. The woonerf is slightly farther from the riverfront than existing parking but is roughly 500 feet from the proposed pavilion entrance.

2. First Street lacks good sidewalks and crosswalks. What kinds of pedestrian improvements can be made?

First Street is a city street and not under the jurisdiction of the MPRB. As part of the Water Works project, MPRB staff has explored possible street modifications with the Minneapolis Public Works department. First Street is a complicated puzzle of space constraints and broader traffic circulation demands. The street width is constrained and so sidewalks cannot be widened. However, power poles in the sidewalk will be removed as part of the park project. The

MPRB will continue to work with Public Works on crossings, signage and other pedestrian strategies that make First Street safer.

3. West River Parkway traffic is busy and currently unsafe for crossings. How will MPRB address traffic calming and safety for the crossing shown? Is it possible to eliminate the parkway through this site, or to bridge over the parkway?

The crossing areas shown in the concept will have traffic calming and crosswalk design strategies applied to them in the next stage of design. The Water Works design team includes bicycle and pedestrian transportation planners and traffic engineers to develop strategies. More dramatic measures such as relocating or closing the parkway were explored in earlier stages of design but determined infeasible or undesirable.

4. What are the accessible routes from the upper First Street level to the lower park and parkway level? Where will accessible parking be?

There are three accessible routes from the upper First Street level down to the lower park level. Accessible walkways are provided either end of the project and an elevator allows access through the building.

There are three accessible parking stalls in the woonerf with universal access to the park. On-street accessible stalls are also being explored for First Street and West River Parkway.

5. How will bicyclists get from the downtown to the river? Will bicyclists still have a connection from the Fifth Avenue and First Street intersection?

Second Street is a dedicated bikeway through downtown. The woonerf will be a new dedicated bikeway linking Second Street with the riverfront trail through Water Works. This new link through the woonerf will replace the ramp currently used by bicyclists along the Crown Roller building, which will be removed for safety purposes. In addition to the new dedicated through-route, bike parking stations will be established at locations near the park perimeter to establish a park interior that is safe for pedestrians. Design cues, signage, education, and where necessary, enforcement will also be used to encourage appropriate use of bikes in the park.

6. Where will bicyclists park? There is not enough bicycle parking shown.

The amount of bicycle parking will be determined in the next stage of design. The concept uses symbols to illustrate the location of bike parking stations but is not intended to depict amount. MPRB staff and design team anticipate high volumes of bike parking demand at Water Works and will design for it.

7. How will pedestrians get to the site from the Third Avenue Bridge? This connection should be a priority.

A future pedestrian connection to the woonerf/park level is shown on the concept plan. MPRB is working with MnDOT to make sure that any upcoming bridge construction work considers this future connection. Pedestrians will be able to take the sidewalk on First Street, but it will be across First Street from the park, on the City side of the street. Due to grading, a desire to

preserve existing trees, and budget constraints a full pedestrian connection cannot be provided along the entire First Street edge of the park.

8. Will there be separated bicycle and pedestrian routes? How will MPRB create safe areas for pedestrians without bicycles flying by?

The bicycle route through the park is along the edge near the Third Avenue Bridge and there will be a separate pedestrian pathway. Within the park the team will use design controls to discourage rapid bicycle traffic on accessible pedestrian routes. Signage and wayfinding will also be a critical part of establishing bicycle routes.

Pavilion (park building) location, size, and layout

1. Sinking the building into the existing mill walls is preferable to building an entirely new structure by the Third Avenue Bridge. How will the new building be blended with the existing stone?

The Water Works building is essentially a glass box and interior rooms inserted into the existing stone walls. The historic stone will be the face of much of the building, however the new walls are designed to let light in as much as possible. Designs for the new building and treatment of the existing walls must be approved by the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office (MnHPO). MPRB cannot know whether MnHPO will approve of the designs until they are developed further, but based on work over the last year, anticipates approval.

2. A building at this site seems excessive. Why not just an outdoor area that emphasizes nature and not the built environment?

The concept for Water Works has unfolded over five years with the benefit of deep and broad forms of community engagement. One of the fundamental objectives that has emerged throughout the process is the need for an interior, four-season space to meet, gather, get out of the weather, use restrooms and enjoy refreshments. The presence of a building at Water Works makes the downtown riverfront an attractive public destination and place to spend time throughout the year.

3. Why is MPRB taking the former Fuji-Ya building down and putting a new building in its place? Why not reuse the old building?

The former Fuji Ya restaurant building has fallen into severe structural disrepair to the point of it not being viable to rehabilitate. The Fuji Ya building was designed to have many levels, sunken rooms, elevated platforms and a split-level entry. This approach to construction makes contemporary universal access requirements practically infeasible to overcome without demolishing the building and starting over. Also, from a building program standpoint, placing new building uses up at the First Street level rather than down at parkway level is not viable without causing substantial traffic and circulation conflicts. The proposed concept minimizes the presence and visual impact of a park pavilion by embedding it into historic mill walls that are built into the topography.

4. The elevator and stair lobby on the rooftop obscures views and provides a barrier to the riverfront. Can this be removed or minimized?

Providing universal access from the main floor of the proposed building to its rooftop, one floor above is essential to visitor circulation. The rooftop lobby will be as small as functionally possible and designed as open and airy as possible through use of glass.

5. Will MPRB guarantee that the building will remain one story and not be higher in the future?

Guaranteeing what might be decided by future MPRB Boards of Commissioners is not possible. The commitment that is made through approval of the proposed Water Works concept is to carry out the park design strategy depicted in the adopted concept and described as a pavilion with a main floor set roughly at parkway grade that is embedded into historic mill structures with a rooftop plaza, green roof and indoor circulation lobby above the main floor and possible access to a basement below the main floor. If deviations from this approach were proposed in the future, a revised concept would be taken through a community engagement process with the concept and public comments brought back to the MPRB Board of Commissioners for approval.

6. The rooftop plaza seems excessive. How will be made safe and visible? How will MPRB control noise and appropriate use of the rooftop?

The proposed rooftop plaza occupies a historic floor slab of Bassett Mill. Preservation of the mill floor has been deemed a required action because of historic significance. The options would be to either block access (seldom a successful approach in a public space) or celebrate use and enjoyment of the space (proposed). Although the plaza elevation is four to eight feet above the directly-adjacent First Street elevation, there are good sightlines to the plaza from other parts of First Street as well as from surrounding residential windows and balconies. As with any public space, the best approaches to safety and security are activation and “eyes on the park”. This space will receive both. A security strategy will also be designed for the park that will include lighting, signage and other features.

7. Can a portion of the rooftop be used to grow food for the café or a local market?

Growing food in the park will be explored further as part of discussions with the selected food vendor.

8. How was the number of restrooms determined? Will it be sufficient for park use?

The number of restrooms will be based on building code requirements and MPRB experience in other parks with similar visitation levels.

9. Why is it necessary to have a food vendor in this park? How will waste and service be managed so they don't negatively impact the park?

Food is a primary activation tool and a core service in high-visitation Minneapolis parks as well as parks around the world. Water Works is one of the top three park destinations in Minneapolis and food service will play a critical role in creating a positive visitor experience. Food service will

also be the primary source of operating revenues for the park, allowing the park to be exceptionally maintained and programmed.

Service for the food vendor will be to the north end of the building off of West River Parkway and will be limited to times where park use is anticipated to be low.

10. Can food trucks be allowed? Is it possible to have food trucks rather than a stationary food vendor?

Food trucks can be allowed and will continue to be explored with the selected food vendor. A food truck-only approach has been analyzed and ruled out for multiple reasons including the inability to influence food quality and menu, the inability to ensure predictable service at preferred times and seasons and across any weather conditions, accessibility concerns, health code and permitting complexities and revenue potential.