

## **BE2- Community Driven Land-Use Planning, Advocacy, and Development**

### **Intros/what each is working on, interested in**

Eric: Development at Lake Street light rail stop. Advocating for other goals: fixing a house, bike lanes, get solar, get safer pedestrian crossing.

#### Attendees:

South Minneapolis- get vacant foreclosed properties turned over to a land trust, using a cooperative model. Setting up collective businesses for underemployed and underhoused people.

Little Rock- using vacant lots and homes. How low income neighborhoods can work together to revitalize without gentrification

GA Minn- policy and government and how that dictates abandoned homes and vacant lots.

Jim- cooperative food sharing and housing

Joe- community solar. How to get things turned over to people and have them be tax exempt

Working on preserving Midtown farmers market.

ARISE

Cathy- food justice ministries

South Minneapolis - specifically came to hear about that project

Greenbuilding systems. How public interest design can be a platform for changing infrastructure and bringing communities together.

Southeast Minnesota- affordable workforce housing and community investment capital markets

Eric: Sharing the story of Midtown Farmers Market. 11<sup>th</sup> season of Midtown Farmers market. Corner of Lake Street and Hiawatha. The land we use is 432 parking stalls. Owned by Minneapolis School Board. 3<sup>rd</sup> busiest light rail stop and 5<sup>th</sup> busiest transit stop in Twin Cities. Located right next to YWCA and Sports Center.

Wanted to have a plan for the space instead of reacting to some other plan. We created a Small Area Plan with a local planning firm. Wanting the community to articulate but also have as much credibility as possible. Brought it to the city and gave it as much legitimacy as possible.

Citizen built, citizen run farmers market. We made it happen ourselves the year after we made our plan. Received a free lease from Minneapolis School Board. Over 12,000 volunteer hours since 2003. 11<sup>th</sup> season. 60,000 people to the sight. 48 market days/season. Emphasizes local growers and artists. Prepared foods. Underserved neighborhoods. Middle class mixed income part of town.

Market for us is about food justice. First market in MN to accept EBT. Drew 632 new users through this program.

Environmental justice. Neighborhoods were contaminated with arsenic. People couldn't grow their own food so we could become their access point to healthy local food.

Public space for public activity.

School board announces plan to sell the piece of land. We held an open house and invited people of influence. Including the mayor, city council, school board, county board, senate, house, park board... and everyone running against them. Lined up farmers market signs in the snow banks. Chance to speak about protecting the market and hear from candidates.

Important to have someone on your team to understand technical things, zoning, city's plans for the land, what's legal for the piece of land, economics of the area, what's being built around you, assets you have in your geography. With help of student from U of M, found research and precedence of farmers market by transit centers to present to development community and local decision makers.

Held meeting of all developers interested in the land, so we could present our ideas. Let them react.

Held a film event at Riverview Theatre. "The Garden" got us talking about public spaces. Press from public radio.

Developer said they wanted to put the project forward. Ultimately got support from the neighborhood. School Board rejected the plan.

Advocacy continues to this day.

Attendee questions: Farmers market does not exist?

Eric: It exists. Every Tuesday and Saturday from May through October.

Attendee: How do the two markets differ in entertainment value.

Eric: Less concerned about entertainment value. We are all local, so you have to be patient for those ripe tomatoes. The Minneapolis market can import. Theirs is bigger, it's been there for many many years. Ours is aimed at serving our immediate community.

Attendee question: Impressed with what you've been doing holistically. Please share more about the other aspects. Please share with attendees about how we aren't afraid of having a complex multifaceted program.

Eric: We have had sustainability campaigns as well. We try to put our goals for sustainable development in development terms, on a single page, and line it up with local policy. We are trying to align ourselves with what the city requires, but pushing to the edge. We have Billy Weber who runs the sustainable building design at U of M, helps the community figure out how to make things sustainable. Sustainability and performance goals. They seem out of date after four years already because standards are changing so rapidly. Storm water, energy use, jobs etc.

Attendee: only concern I have is what impact is this going to have on site and nearby in generating family sustaining jobs. What impact would that have on some market rate housing, possibilities for integrating gray water, etc. It's the kind of plan that when you have only one or two gaps it feels glorious so good work.

Eric: We haven't focused much on jobs, we probably should have or would have.

Attendee: What is the ownership and management structure of market?

Eric: Originally founded by 6 or 7 neighborhood orgs that came together. Ended up as a program of our organization. Vendor fees give us half of what runs the market. It has benefitted by being part of an established nonprofit. Corcoran Neighborhood Organization.

Attendee: Food desert?

Eric: Just outside.

Attendee: Any plans for solar power or powering that part of the light rail?

Eric: You're beyond my technical expertise. I don't know. The challenge would be convincing the transit authority to have that discussion. We may be near the transit but it is separate. They should have a stake in it being safe and pedestrian friendly and well lit.

Attendee: School board stance at this point?

Eric: That's been part of the challenge. When they put the land up for sale, the building was empty. Then they sold another piece of land a few miles away and moved programming here as temporary use. Now Adult Based Ed program loves the location and don't want to move. Became more difficult for the school district to go forward with selling. The other tension is that for them it's already paid for, so it costs them nothing to keep their program and cars there, even though the current use of that surface parking is inconsistent with the city's planning policy. Current position is they are intending to sell the property.

Attendee: Process of accepting SNAP and EBT at farmers market?

Eric: At that time it was a lot of technical legalistic stuff to sort out. Now it is more set. Department of Human Services is in charge of that. To equip all vendors would be impossible because they'd need a POS system to swipe cards, need account with state to transfer funds. We've chosen to instead have market management be that POS for SNAP. We then swipe cards, give tokens, and give them to vendors. Creates alternative currency. That POS terminal is the most expensive and burdensome part of accepting SNAP EBT.

Attendee: Local food? What about healthy food?

Eric: We emphasize healthier food, especially in the prepared foods. We could have powdered donuts and fried chicken wings at food trucks, but we've chosen to emphasize a little healthier options. We have a requirement that it has to be primarily locally based and sourced food.

Attendee: still a rub between high priced healthy food and low income people.

Eric: I forget to say that we have done outreach about changing the perception of farmers markets. Also been trying to debunk some myths about the cost difference of grocery stores vs. farmers markets. I also want to say that the state of MN has a market bucks program that gives benefits to EBT people using EBT at a market. I think the key is to get people to experience a farmers market for the first time and make up their own mind.

Attendee: Is that market bucks program also available in food coops?

Eric: As far as I know, just farmers markets

Attendee: Neighborhood info. How many people are actively engaged? How did you develop consensus.

Eric: Way back to start of story, when we knew light rail was on its way, we did the small area plan. This was building off a plan local government was creating. Residents were able to get involved in that.

Attendee: I was there. That was the meeting where the actual idea of a farmers market at the light rail stop came about. It was a decent crowd. City public meetings don't normally get a huge crowd. Very dedicated land-use committee in the neighborhood keeping an eye on developers. Affordable housing all over the neighborhood. Attempting to fix them up. We are now worried about fixing them too much and raising rents. It's tricky with a lot of people living within two blocks of this area potentially getting kicked out. The neighborhood organizer is knocking on apartment buildings and creating leadership there. I'm impressed with the amount of time they are spending to do outreach. But it's hard to get low-income renters to stay in the neighborhood.

Eric: We have emphasized we want a mix of housing. Housing for people who don't want to own a car, seniors, lower income folks, middle income folks, families, larger family structures. I think that's an important piece that we're going to have to keep fighting for.

Attendee: There's a discussion that needs to happen about getting jobs that are family sustaining to support market rate or other forms of housing is not gentrification. Often times that's what people say and that dampens economic development. Low income is not static. I feel very passionately about the creation of good family sustaining jobs as the basis of a development like this. I caution people against the idea that that can't happen.

Attendee: 1000 retirements in the next 10 years. Trying to get young people to get degrees to fill these positions. On the other side of the railroad tracks we have a lot of empty warehouses. Indoor hydroponic growing? Vodka distillery going in. Are there any thoughts about how to generate better jobs in underused properties along Hiawatha?

Eric: My gut reaction is to advocate for the kind of development that supports those kind of jobs. If they are zoned appropriately. If they're zoned residential that is hard.

Eric: They key for us has been advocating for a vision that is feasible both economically and politically. The alternative vision is to preserve the 6.5 acre land as green space. Sounds great to me but there is so much interest from development sectors and the city wants housing. It feels unlikely that anyone could purchase the land and then set it aside unless we found a land trust or land bank. A key for us has been to instead of opposing development, be within what the local government and development communities are going to do, and then shake that. So we're setting the table for that conversation. If we're so outside the ideas that will move forward, it will be easy to push us aside.

Attendee: It might be nice if part of it could remain public space. Problems of low income people living in apartment building. A lot of people here are interested in cooperatives. How could some of that be looked at creatively as far as incentivizing landlords to turn some of that property over to nonprofits or cooperatives.

Eric: Been tenant organizing for living conditions and future housing. The current landlord has been talked to about energy efficiency and even storm windows/retrofitting energy and heating and cooling system, he is just not interested. I think the alternative is finding nonprofit mission-driven housing operators. But you still need the current landlord to sell the property.

Attendee: instead of the alternative you were suggesting about the apartment building, someone was talking about a restaurant family that was interested in doing energy efficiency things to the restaurant. It wasn't feasible monetarily so the community came together to support the owners to get it done.

Eric: There's a tension between do we do it for him, but shouldn't he step up and invest? One thing we're exploring in those apartments, the state building code says you have to have a high efficiency storm window on every window, and these buildings don't. So we're

trying to push that and see if we can get the city to enforce the state building code. They say they don't do that. We're trying to take a legal angle to challenge through city requirement.

Attendee: There's a lot of balancing that goes on in this type of planning. I think there are some really good aspects to this, but with discussions we're having at the ford site. To your point, when you sprawl or use moderate density you begin to minimize what is available for active and passive open spaces. Higher density increases tax breaks, open space, increases ridership for mass transit. Don't just make assumptions about densities.