

NLX/DEPOT COMMITTEE MEETING

February 20, 2024

Location: County Commissioners Conference Room, St. Louis County Courthouse

Present: Commissioner Harala, Commissioner Boyle, Commissioner Nelson, Brian Fritsinger, BreAnn Graber, Mary Tennis, Katie LaPlant, Darren Jablonski, Jim Foldesi, Brooke Wetmore (support), David Montgomery, Roger Reinert

Convened: The meeting convened at 1:00PM

☐ **Approval of Agenda**

Boyle/Nelson moved to approve. The motion passed. (3-0)

☐ **Approve of February 6, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

Nelson/Boyle moved to approve. The motion passed. (3-0)

☐ **MnDOT Station Design Discussions Updates**

Director Foldesi has spoken with MnDOT's District 1 office regarding the future design and reconstruction of 5th Ave W. During their conversations, District 1 agreed to work in tandem with these efforts to ensure redesign considers a future NLX Station at The Depot.

Director Foldesi has reached out to MnDOT's Rail Service Improvement Program Manager (without response yet) to discuss the possibility of St. Louis County leading station design and development with MnDOT as a contributor.

☐ **Master Plan Request For Proposals Updates**

Director Jablonsky came in with a draft Scope of Work for a proposed Request for Quotes (RFQ) based on the 2009/adopted 2010 site plans and masterplans.

Mayor Reinert made a request that the Site Plan area should include the area up to Superior St. to include the current library lot for consideration of possible residential, commercial/hotel developments linked to the station. Fritsinger noted that the site and masterplan boundaries were directly influenced by greater downtown area planning efforts. Jablonsky noted that the masterplan portion of the RFQ would specifically request direct integration or connection (indoor access) to immediate vicinity. Therefore residential and commercial planning could be done through the masterplan rather than the site plan.

Commissioner Nelson is approving of use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for adjacent area.

Mayor Reinert reiterated his goal to make downtown the fastest growing neighborhood. He notes that post-covid downtowns have become predominantly residential, Duluth has excess downtown commercial space but lacks housing, and residential development in downtowns revitalizes commercial and increases public safety. The City of Duluth is adding a staff person to serve as the downtown point-of-contact responsible for "moving the needle" on downtown development goals.

Requested additions to the RFQ included the "County Built on Iron" exhibit from the St. Louis County Historical Society, "coordination" with MnDOT especially regarding 5th Ave W connectivity concepts,

ability to/evidence of working collaboratively with other consultants, rail expertise, and a public participation process.

A timeline of the process will be brought to the next NLX/Depot Committee meeting.

☐ **Partner Updates**

City of Duluth has appointed Councilmember Terese Tomanek to the NLX Alliance.

City of Duluth will appoint staff from Public Works, Economic Development, and Councilmember Tomanek.

The Rail Authority staff (Bob Mansolene specifically) should be invited to the next NLX/Depot Committee meeting.

☐ **Other**

The next meeting should be held March 5th.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:35pm