EXPLORATION SESSION: CONSOLIDATION OF FINDINGS

PROJECT: The Former Publics Work Site, 5146 Eden Ave, Edina MN
PROJECT #:14029 MN
DATE: January 15th, 2015

INTRODUCTION AND MEETING DESCRIPTION:

On January 15th, 2015 Confluence took part in leading multiple Exploration Sessions for the Grandview Public Works Site redevelopment.   The sessions took place at Edina High school amongst 90 students. The sessions took place over four separate class periods for two separate courses. For the purpose of this sessions, two separate methodologies were used for periods 1 & 2 (Digital Electronics), and 3 & 4 (Civil Engineering & Architecture).

The 1st and 2nd class periods were Digital Electronics, a more advanced curriculum with the prerequisite class of Civil Engineering & Architecture. This course was taught by Tim McManus over the 1st period (8:25-9:21am) and 2nd period (9:28-10:45am) and consisted of 42 total student participants. Most students in this class had knowledge of the former Public Works site, from a previous project done last school year. For this session, the efforts were focused on image polling. The project introduction, image polling, opportunity discussion and closing Q & A took up the entire class period.

The 2nd and 3rd class periods were Civil Engineering and Architecture, an introductory class offered to students of all grade levels. This course was taught by Jodi Ramirez over the 3rd period (10:32-11:29am) and 4th period (11:36-12:33pm) and consisted of 48 total students participants. The project introduction, the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities activities and the closing Q & A took up the entire class period.

The sessions were held in classroom #220 at the Edina High School.

The following is an outline of the studies/exercises conducted and an overview of the suggestions and comments made. The summary also compares these comments and results to the results of the previous Exploration Session done December 4th, 2014.

OUTLINE:

A. INTERACTIVE IMAGE POLLING
B. DESCRIPTIVE WORD WARM-UP
C. SITE STRENGTHS ACTIVITY
D. SITE WEAKNESSES ACTIVITY
E. SITE OPPORTUNITIES ACTIVITY
F. DISCUSSION / Q & A
G. WRITTEN RESPONSES
H. GENERAL SUMMARY

CORRESPONDING FILES:
14029MN_Development_Student Polling Results.pdf
14029MN_Public Space_Student Polling Results.pdf
14029MN_Streetscape&Parking_Student Polling Results.pdf
14029MN_Uses_Student Polling Results.pdf
14029MN_Strengths.pdf
14029MN_Weaknesses.pdf
14029MN_Opportunities.pdf

*14029MN_Exploration Session 120414_Final
(Summary file for the December 4th, 2014 Exploration Session)

A. __INTERACTIVE IMAGE POLLING__

The Development team prepared a slide presentation illustrating a variety of mixed use development projects illustrating development types, associated uses and activities. This was the same interactive polling presentation used for the December 4th, 2014 Exploration Session. The student participants were shown the images one image at a time. Each participant was given a digital response card (clicker) that captured their reactions to the images. Participants were given approximately 10 seconds to respond with a ranking from a number one (Extremely Positive) through five (Extremely Negative) - three being neutral. A quick look at the results was shown to the group following each image polling before proceeding to the next image. The participants were asked to look at four main categories of images. The first category was "Development: Mass, Form and Character", followed by "Public Space", "Streetscape and Parking", and "Uses".

Scores were averaged out for each image and placed in order by average (low to high). Lower averages were most preferred and higher averages were least preferred. Each category was then organized using the low to high averages. Information gathered from the interactive group activity is valuable in determining what development types, activities and uses the participants prefer. This preference information can be used as a benchmark in the design criteria to assist in the development of District concepts moving forward.

- Results are shown with pictures of most favorable photos first and least favorable pictures last. Results are separated by polling category (Development, Public Space, Streetscape & Parking, and Uses) Results were calculated using polling information from 42 student participants. (reference documents:
  14029MN_Development_Student Polling Results.pdf,
  14029MN_Public Space_Student Polling Results.pdf,
  14029MN_Streetscape&Parking_Student Polling Results.pdf,
  14029MN_Uses_Student Polling Results.pdf).

- General Assessment: Development results amongst the student participants were shown to be fairly similar to the December exploration session responses, with the students more neutral in their responses. Similar to the December session, it appears that the student participants also prefer the pictures that included a bigger portion of green space, with open plazas and buildings that are set back from the road. Unlike the December participants, the students are more open to buildings with 4+ stories and generally disliked forms that were strictly residential.

  The Public Space category was overall most preferred as a whole category. The students seemed to prefer public spaces with more green space. This category didn't prove to be as conclusive as the others.

  The results for Streetscape + Parking Category pin-pointed a strong desire for safe bicycle and pedestrian access, including a designated protected lane and defined crosswalks. There was also a lot of support for ample parking. Unlike the previous session, the student participants preferred ramped parking, but did not like the idea of on-street metered parking. It was also observed that the students liked streets with more green elements or pedestrian only corridors.

  The uses category showed different preferences than the December exploration session. Instead of mostly passive activities, the students preferred a mix of passive and active. The

ice skating rink was most favored, followed by outdoor sessions areas (public wifi) and cafes/restaurants, and food trucks. The students also seemed to prefer evening uses, including lit up fountains and outdoor concerts. This was then followed by games.

B. DESCRIPTIVE WORD WARM-UP

The students in the 3rd and 4th periods used the descriptive word exercise as a warm-up exercise following the project introduction and prior to conducting the Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities activities. For this warm-up, the students were to think of descriptive words to describe the site in its current condition (or "today") and descriptive words to describe the site as they might see it in the future (or "tomorrow"). This exercise got the students thinking and actively participating in discussion.

C. SITE STRENGTHS ACTIVITY

All students were given a worksheet to record their thoughts about the site including the site strengths. The 1st and 2nd period students were allowed to fill the sheet out freely with little to no direction, while the 3rd and 4th period students were walked through the process, given examples, allowed a couple of minutes to write down their answers, before sharing and discussing ideas with the class. Regardless of method, all collected worksheets were reviewed and used to formulate the word cloud and general assessment.

- Word Cloud Results: The strengths were tabulated by frequency from participants' worksheets and developed into a word cloud. Larger words indicate words that were more frequently used by the participants.

FORMER PUBLIC WORK SITE - Edina Grandview District
EHS student response - opportunities

- General Assessment: The student participants expressed that the location of the site was one of its greatest strengths with over 23.3% of the supporting that statement. In addition, even more students (28.9%) noted that it was in central Edina, accessible (20%) and near the highway (15.6%). The students also like the size (38.9%) of the large lot and the fact that it is currently open (17.8%) and undeveloped (12.2%). It was also generalized that the surrounding area (14.4%), and surrounding businesses (12.2%) were seen as strengths. Some other points noted, were that the site is well-known and that it showed a lot of potential (17.8%). (*All collected strength responses can be referenced in document (14029MN_Strengths.pdf)*)
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D. SITE WEAKNESSES ACTIVITY

The students used the same worksheet to record their thoughts about the site weaknesses. Again, the 1st and 2nd period students were allowed to fill the sheet out freely with little to no direction, while the 3rd and 4th period students were walked through the process, given examples, allowed a couple of minutes to write down their answers, before sharing and discussing ideas with the class. Regardless of method, all collected worksheets were reviewed and used to formulate the word cloud and general assessment.

- Word Cloud Results: The weaknesses were tabulated by frequency from participants' worksheets and developed into a word cloud. Larger words indicate words that were more frequently used by the participants.

FORMER PUBLIC WORK SITE - Edina Grandview District
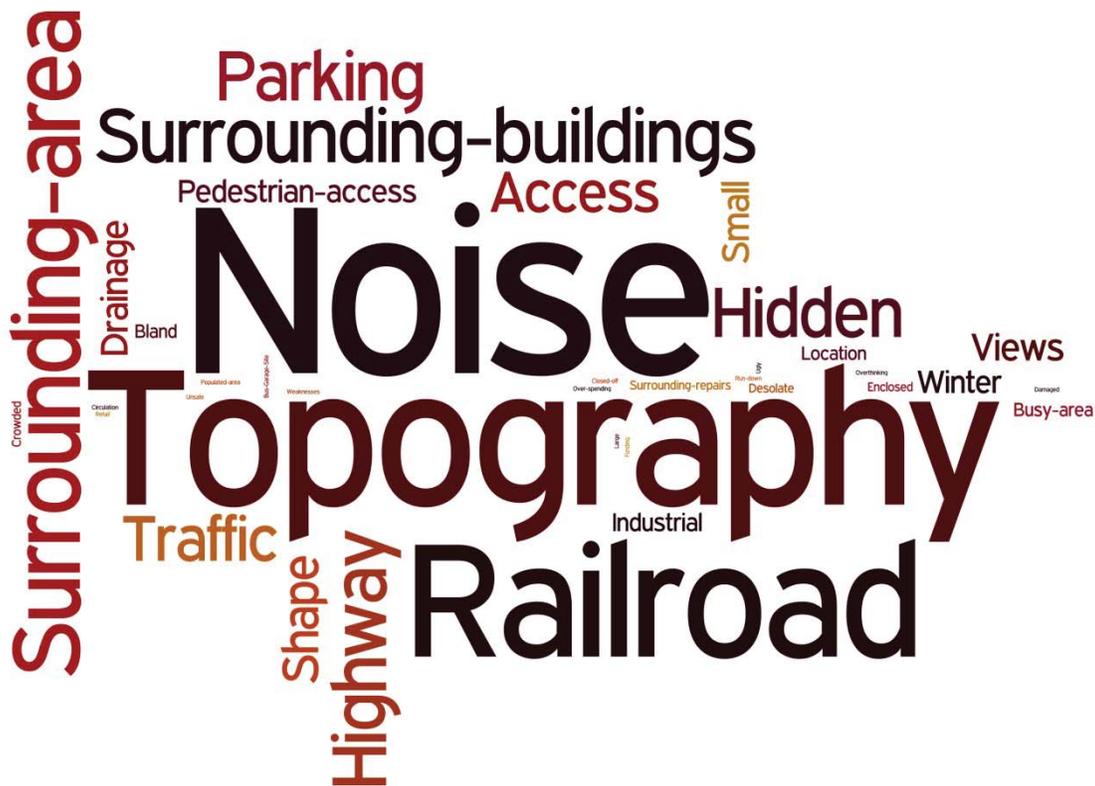EHS student response - opportunities

- General Assessment: A large portion of participants expressed a concern with the noise from the adjacent cars and freight train (41.1%) and specifically with the railroad (27.8%) or highway (13.3%) near the site. This was shown as more of a concern with the student participants than with the adult/mixed-age participants. The students also seemed to think that the topography (33.3%) as well as drainage (6.7%) was also a big weakness. The surrounding area (16.7%) including the surrounding buildings (13.3%) parking (12.2%), traffic (11.1%) and access (10%) were also noted as weaknesses.
  (*All collected weaknesses responses can be referenced in document (14029MN_Weaknesses.pdf)*

E. SITE OPPORTUNITIES ACTIVITY

The students used the same worksheet to record their thoughts about the site opportunities. Again, the 1st and 2nd period students were allowed to fill the sheet out freely with little to no direction, while the 3rd and 4th period students were walked through the process, given examples, allowed a couple of minutes to write down their answers, before sharing and discussing ideas with the class. Regardless of method, all collected worksheets were reviewed and used to formulate the word cloud and general assessment.

- Word Cloud Results: The opportunities were tabulated by frequency from participants' worksheets and developed into a word cloud. Larger words indicate words that were more frequently used by the participants.

FORMER PUBLIC WORK SITE - Edina Grandview District
EHS student response - opportunities

- General Assessment: Similarly to the adult/mixed-age participants, the student participants expressed the desire for this site to include a community focus, with community/rec-center component (24.4% of participants support). The student participants had more focus on sports and recreation (11.1%) and also expressed the desire for an ice rink (13.3%). The most supported idea was for there to be more restaurants (36.7%) in this area, with more emphasis on fast-food or fast casual dining. This was by far the most frequent response. It was also expressed that the site could become a park (15.6%) or communal space (8.8%) with an art/music performance space (8.8%) as well as improved walking/bike paths (11.1%).   The student participants brought up suggestions for many teen-based recreational amenities including a movie theater, skate-park, bowling alley, laser-tag, go-karts, archery, flag-football, skating rink and even a dance club. There is an age-specific recreational need that isn't being fulfilled. The student participants expressed this during the discussion, when prompted on the issue. (*All collected opportunity responses can be reviewed in document (14029MN_Opportunities.pdf)*

F.   DISCUSSION / Q & A

Following the group activities, all class periods were given a couple of minutes in which they could ask questions, or make comments to the group. It was also expressed that student participants were invited to continue to participate in the Grandview development and were given upcoming meeting dates.

G.   GENERAL SUMMARY

The following are key notes or desires observed by the December 4th Explorations Session:

1) A portion of the site is to be retained for public use, by the community of Edina.
2) The site should be built with sustainable design and principles in mind, like reduced impervious surfaces, native planting areas, storm water management, and improved access to alternative transportation options.
3) An outdoor plaza or gathering space is to be built with all seasons in mind and with flexibility to adapt to different uses.
4) The building is to be mid-low density mixed use with a café or small restaurant in mind and a public meeting place included.
5) Parking is needed on or near the site and is to be hidden or concealed.
6) Multimodal transportation is to be supported through design.
7) The site is to become a hub or destination for the Grandview community.
8) The site is to be a catalyst for future growth and development in the Grandview district and is to be designed with "big picture" plan in mind.

In addition to the notes above, it was observed and further emphasized through the input of the student participation session that the following are additional key notes:

9) The design should support the use of the site for the young-adult/teen community and help provide this age-group with a safe, inviting gathering space.
10) An indoor recreation or fitness component is desired by several age groups.
11) Arts and performing arts activities are of interest to several age groups.
12) Fast-casual dining is desired on or near the site.

APPENDIX

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E.H.S. STUDENT RESPONSES

January 15th, 2015

STRENGTHS:

Size (35)	
Central (26)	Schools (2)
Location (21)	Transit (2)
Accessible (18)	Trees (2)
Open (16)	Blank-Space
Potential (16)	Catalyst
Highway (14)	Connected
Surrounding-area (13)	Culture
Surrounding-businesses (11)	Access-Points
Undeveloped (11)	Multiple-Access-Points
Large (9)	City-Hall
Populated (9)	Proximity
Well-Known (6)	Public
Opportunity (5)	Shape
Spacious (5)	Unique
Possibilities (4)	West-Side-Connection
Topography (3)	

E.H.S. STUDENT RESPONSES

January 15th, 2015

WEAKNESSES:

Noise (37)	Bland (3)
Topography (30)	Location (3)
Railroad (25)	Desolate (2)
Surrounding-area (15)	Enclosed (2)
Highway (12)	Surrounding-repairs (2)
Surrounding-buildings (12)	Bus-Garage-Site
Hidden (11)	Circulation
Parking (11)	Closed-off
Traffic (10)	Damaged
Access (9)	Funding
Shape (8)	Large
Drainage (6)	Overthinking
Small (6)	Over-spending
Views (6)	Populated-area
Busy/Crowded (5)	Retail
Pedestrian-access (5)	Run-down
Winter (5)	Ugly
Industrial (4)	Unsafe

E.H.S. STUDENT RESPONSES

January 15ᵗʰ, 2015

OPPORTUNITIES:

Café/Restaurant (33)	Bowling Alley (4)	Commerce
Community-center (22)	Laser-tag (4)	Enclosed
Park (14)	Meeting-space (4)	Factory
Ice-rink (12)	All-ages (3)	First-robotics-workshop
Retail (12)	Archery (3)	Flexible
Sports/recreation (10)	Community-garden (3)	Garden
Walking/Bike-paths (10)	Connecting-businesses (3)	Gun-range
Communal-space (8)	Entertainment (3)	Homeless-shelter
Green (8)	Go-Karts (3)	Housing
Performance-space (8)	Gym (3)	Ice-rink (enclosed)
Mixed-use (7)	Multi-season (3)	Lake
Apartments (6)	Plantings (3)	LGBT-space
Attraction (6)	Storage (3)	Monument
Hub (6)	Air-purification (2)	Offices
Movie Theater (6)	Arena (2)	Open-area
Public-space (6)	Farmers-market (2)	Outdoor
Skate-park (6)	Gathering-area (2)	Private-development
Sustainable (6)	Lighting (2)	Revenue
Teen-recreation (6)	Multi-use (2)	Rock-climbing
Indoor/outdoor (5)	Museum (2)	Social-space
Parking (5)	Public-transit (2)	Zoo
Plaza (5)	School (2)	
Unique (5)	Sculpture-garden (2)	
Wifi (5)	Wellness (2)	
Art-Center (4)	Colorful	