

Walking Minneapolis

Life connected with Style



What is it?

Take any portion of this 10 mile journey through downtown Minneapolis to experience the history, culture and energy that is the City. Become an integral part of this privately led initiative that makes the downtown area one of the truly great walkable cities in the world. Experience world-class design in the public realm and exciting events and activities; all operated, maintained and programmed to a standard of excellence. Join the 265,000+ people who already work, reside, or play in downtown as they expand their experience by walking through their City. Welcome to Walking Minneapolis.

Walking Minneapolis is the private sector's determination that Minneapolis will be a world-class City into the future.

Walking Minneapolis is a way to connect important places with equally important experiences of discovery along the way.

Walking Minneapolis is a way to celebrate the City's historical and cultural amenities.

Walking Minneapolis is designed to make the city more livable to residents, and more attractive to employers, employees and visitors alike.

Walking Minneapolis is an international model of healthy social and physical engagement.

Walking Minneapolis is a long-term solution that has cooperative relationships with the public sector but is not subject to the short term funding and leadership cycles of the public sector.

Walking Minneapolis is engagement of existing stakeholders in the vibrancy and quality of life of their City.

Walking Minneapolis is a sustainable, cleaner, safer, better, more active, more vibrant, more connected, downtown.

Walking Minneapolis is a connected series of walking paths and places that will extend throughout downtown, enhancing the urban landscape by offering a pedestrian experience that is unique in the world.



THE WAY THINGS ARE

265,000 + Pedestrians are already in Downtown Minneapolis on a daily basis. Downtown Minneapolis is home to a rapidly expanding population of more than 30,000 residents. An additional 160,000 people work downtown, and 75,000 people visit the city center for a variety of reasons on an average weekday.



Although all City sidewalks are ‘walkable’, pedestrians walk the streets of a city that was not designed to accommodate their needs as engaged pedestrians. Downtown Minneapolis has not emphasized street level pedestrian corridors, and it lacks integrated and complete way-finding information for those who travel on foot. Existing public green space is deficient in providing pleasant and functional outdoor attractions for residents and visitors. And, the often praised skyway system which connects in excess of 30 blocks in the core has created alternate routes for those familiar with the skyway system (i.e., the downtown workforce and resident populations) without an emphasis on connecting the skyway system to the street. In the late 1990s, Minneapolis received the ‘James Brady Award’ for accessibility – an acknowledgement that, unlike many other densely populated Cities, Minneapolis is accessible to people with disabilities – an advantage that has not been leveraged into any plans for pedestrian movement. Meanwhile, traffic grows worse, Minneapolitans grow heavier and more sedentary, disrepair continues and new construction proceeds with little concern for the pedestrian experience in between these new structures. The problem isn’t unique to the Twin Cities. It exists in virtually every urban area in the United States of America.

THE WAY THINGS CAN BE

By nurturing pedestrian traffic throughout downtown, Walking Minneapolis will spur additional economic development, both private and public. In an era of increasing obesity and rising health care costs, the project will also provide people a powerful impetus to engage in healthful physical activity. Moreover, it will raise the city’s profile as a progressive, forward-thinking urban environment. No city has, as of yet, dedicated itself to the joys of pedestrian travel. Minneapolis can be the first in the Country.

What makes Walking Minneapolis so innovative is its interest in pedestrians, and its primary focus on the journey, rather than the destination. Thus it seeks to enhance the experience of walking – how to make it more engaging and rewarding, more efficient, more comfortable, more integral to the fabric of life in downtown Minneapolis.

Among the project’s features: clear way-finding signage and other elements that guide pedestrians, inform them of key destinations, and preserve and enhance their sense of place downtown and within the walking system itself; and elements that commemorate historical Minneapolis along the path, describing some aspect of the past and relating it to the present day and possible future, drawing pedestrians to journey out and discover the City.

Aesthetic features will include shaded areas for rest, such as parks, plazas and fountains. Kiosks and retail functions will provide shelter, refreshment and entertainment. Upgraded building and street materials, specialized landscaping, public art, dedicated lighting and other capital improvements will elevate the corridors above the regular sidewalks and boulevards, making the journey more enjoyable. Increased pedestrian population, available activities, optimal lighting as well as police call boxes and other security measures will also enhance security, making the system attractive even during off-hours.

Programmed spaces will be critical to the journey. Leveraging the private sector to open businesses along the walking path will create additional reasons for the pedestrian to journey out. But, as important will be the programmed uses of the public spaces: artists and farmers markets, festivals, events, community forums and the like will create an atmosphere that encourages people to engage with each other and take an ownership in the City.

The city and its businesses should emphasize the long-term economic value of an aesthetically pleasing and active environment and the resulting advantages of increased property values, desirability of attracting new employees/residents to the city, of reduced employee turnover and other benefits.



Key Issues

Improve Physical Space

- Improve deteriorating public realm
- Continuity, not homogeneity
- Way-finding
- Street furniture, public art, fountains, plazas, markets, landscaping, lighting, etc.
- Skyway connections
- Storefront connections

Improve Operations

- Standard of excellence
- Supplement public budget
- Sustainable funding; diversified sources
- Year round, day & night activity
- Efficient processes: procurement, labor, and approvals
- Pedestrian/Bicycle conflict
- Community participation
- Public sector baseline services
- Cooperation with Special Services Districts

Improve Image

- Improve security & safety
- Address panhandlers, homeless, crime
- Celebrate cultural, historical and entertainment aspects of City
- Employer commitment and employee retention
- High activity level
- Events, vendors, competitions
- Street performers
- Healthier lifestyles

Step I: Set up the Process for Success

- Establish key issues and guiding principles
- Establish scope of work and deliverables
- Establish coordination and facilitation process
- Establish Lead Private Sector Funding
- Establish Board and Working Committees



Guiding Principles

In order to achieve a sustainable higher standard for the public realm, Walking Minneapolis must:

Improve upon the current methods of maintaining, repairing, marketing and managing the downtown environment.

Be led by a group created solely for this purpose with leadership engaged in activities connected to, and concerned for, the downtown core. The group must be self-sufficient through revenue generation and not reliant upon any one source of income.



Be viewed as a 'whole' rather than a series of disconnected activities and elements, thus, requiring an overall identity with a coordinated physical plan, clearly identifiable paths and public spaces, programmatic plan, and marketing and communications plans.



Engage and integrate the resources (funding, efforts and knowledge) of the public, private, philanthropic and neighborhood sectors.

Have an unwillingness to accept anything but the highest of standards in aspects of design, marketing, programming, use and maintenance.



Be charged with control of all aspects of the public space design, program, marketing and management within publicly pre-established parameters.

Gain efficiencies through expedited procurement, contracting, labor utilization, planning of spaces, marketing and communications, and programming of events and activities.

Step II: Planning (What, How, When)

Activities include:

- Form entity
- Funding plan
- Communication plan
- Public sector coordination, approvals and processes
- Private sector opportunities identified
- Baseline physical condition assessment
- Phasing Plan
- Physical design
- Long term maintenance: vendor, procurement, labor, etc.
- Identity, branding & way-finding
- Programmatic/Events plan
- Marketing & PR plan
- Long term committee roles



Organizational Chart



For further information:

Sarah Harris
612.366.7830
sharris@eberhardtadvisory.com

Ray Harris
612.672.9590
rhharris@mn.rr.com

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