

My thoughts on mixed use projects in the park system

< [Newer \(2XU9Ce9uSOMdOs3JptOzt5\)](#) [↑ \(/groups/mps/\)](#) [Older \(6NuzZ5nLUEkEcP97cSXvbw\)](#)

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• Last post (</groups/mps/messages/topic/7sqdg9IbGinSbmPB1vGqRn/#post-7sqdg9IbGinSbmPB1vGqRn>) by Adam Fairbanks (</p/4BgydlkFGwfhsYLbr1bLQB>) at 8:52pm, Jun 26

Keywords: park, reconstruct, build, rebuild, could

[Chris Meyer \(/p/chrismeyer\)](/p/chrismeyer)

Posted at 4:33pm, Jun 26



Good morning everyone. I wanted to start a new thread to share some of my thoughts on the potential for mixed use projects that I discussed at the last Park Board meeting.

First let's clear up a few things. The Park Board does not have any funds available for affordable housing and I am not proposing to divert any toward that. But we could potentially partner with entities that do have such funds, such as the City, County, or nonprofit organizations, to create mixed use spaces where the park facilities would be on the first floor of a building with other uses above that.

The Park Board would not need to own the upper floors. We could simply "condo-ize" a building. This is something Vancouver, Canada has done--they put housing above rec centers, which helps cover the costs of building those facilities. Closer to home, Carver County has multiple government buildings with housing above them. The library in Waconia for example has senior housing above it.

My view is that when there's a location close to high quality public transit, it's wasteful to build just a one-story building. The most expensive parts of a building are the foundation and the roof. It doesn't cost much to add a second or third floor once you've already committed to the first.

I am extremely dedicated to preserving and expanding our green space. I view that as a solemn responsibility. It is only when a land use has already been forfeit to a structure or parking lot that I believe we should take a closer look at how we might be able to make better use of the space.

Indeed the value generated from a mixed use building could enable us to acquire a lot MORE green space. Lola's has gotten all the attention thus far, but the other building that the Park Board is likely to reconstruct in the near future (if we can come to agreement with Pillsbury United Communities) is the Brian Coyle Rec Center. What I would love to see happen there is for the Park Board to buy Lot A (the ghastly surface parking lot behind Red Sea) from the City, reconstruct the rec center on Lot A with mixed use above it, and transform the existing Brian Coyle building and the remainder of Lot A into new green space. If we allow a taller building to be built above the new rec center, that could generate all the funds to cover every amenity on the community's wishlist. New green space, additional gyms, multipurpose rooms, community kitchen, you name it.

I believe we should consider these possibilities every time we reconstruct a building. Lola's just happens to be the first building we are reconstructing this term. I put the idea of housing out there because it was the first thing that came to mind, and housing for Native Americans in particular was at the forefront of my mind due to the debate over the name of Bde Maka Ska and the plight of those going through homelessness at the Hiawatha encampment.

If people feel that housing wouldn't work well at that site in particular, there are other uses we could consider there. For example, we could put classrooms for the sailing school on the second floor. Or perhaps a second restaurant or coffee shop above Lola's. We could have patio seating on the roof, which would have gorgeous views of both the lake and the skyline. I'm not committed to any particular use there, but I do strongly believe that if we rebuild the structure at all, we should rebuild it with more than one story.

The question of whether we should actually rebuild it or not in the first place is itself not firmly decided. The insurance payment will not cover the cost of reconstructing what was there before. To rebuild it as it exactly as it was, we would need to divert significant funds from some other project, or come up with a different source of revenue. A multi-story building could generate the revenue to make reconstruction self-sufficient.

If we do rebuild, there's no particular reason we would need to do so at that precise location. The existing plan for the area calls for a new building to be built for sailing classrooms on the north shore, to the west of the Lola's site. President Bourn has suggested that perhaps we could rebuild at that

location instead, with Lola's + sailing classrooms + ??? there. The existing Lola's site could be transformed into a broader plaza. This option would prevent obstruction of views of the skyline.

The Park Board also owns a massive parking lot nearby, adjacent to the Calhoun Executive Center (which needs to be renamed). I definitely believe we could make much better use of that land than surface parking. A mixed use project there could generate the funds for any number of things, while preserving parking availability for the public (just moving it underground). We could build a land bridge with green space over Lake Street for example, to better connect the lakes together without needing to wait at a stop light. Or there could be a new rec center on the first floor of a new building there.

I reject the notion that it's out of my "lane" for the Park Board to be considering these ideas. First, as I have described, by making better use of land, we could generate the funds to provide park amenities with tremendous public benefit. But more than that, the housing crisis has a huge impact on our park system. When I went on a bike-a-long with our park police, they spent nearly all their time that day addressing issues arising from homelessness. Park police are evicting people from the parks constantly, often without having anywhere to send them when shelters are full or people choose not to use them. The housing crisis is in fact one of the biggest problems affecting the Park Board right now. I am well aware that the Park Board can't possibly solve that problem its own. But I believe there are ways we could do our part to help, and we should do what we can.

I am not remotely concerned about any Charter violation. First, as John Hayden and Zach Wefel explained in the previous thread, there is nothing in the Charter that excludes the Park Board from being involved in housing. Second, even if there was such a restriction, it would not be relevant, because to my knowledge no one is proposing that the Park Board should own or operate any of the housing that might be built as part of a mixed use project.

In the unlikely event that someone was able to somehow successfully sue us over that, they would presumably force us to evict the Superintendent and his family. They live in a house in the middle of a park. So do the residents of Nicollet Island.

I welcome feedback about how we can make the best possible use of Park Board spaces. Feel free to email me at <email obscured> with any opinions or ideas you would like to share.

Chris Meyer
Park Commissioner District 1

[Jeffrey Skrenes \(/p/hawthornehawkman\)](#)

Posted at 4:40pm, Jun 26



If you continue to invoke Native or Indigenous peoples as part of this idea, you should get their input before you say one more word publicly about this.

[Liz Wielinski \(/p/lizwielinski1\)](#)

Posted at 5:32pm, Jun 26



The lot next to the Calhoun Exec Center has a share use agreement attached to it where the parking during M - F business hours is for the building and evenings and weekends are for park users. It is a regional park used by folks from all over. A new agreement may be a few years out when SWLRT is up and running which would give the site a chance to be other than parking....but with all the other increased density in the area wouldn't transitioning it to green space be a better idea. Liz Wielinski
The past Commissioner for Chris' district
Sent from my T-Mobile 4G LTE device----- Original message-----From: Chris Meyer
Date: Wed, Jun 26, 2019 11:34 AM
To: mpls@forums.e-democracy.org; Cc: mpls@forums.e-democracy.org
Subject: [Mpls] My thoughts on mixed use projects in the park system
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Chris Meyer
Park Commissioner District 1

Chris Meyer

Marcy-Holmes, Minneapolis

About/contact Chris Meyer: <http://forums.e-democracy.org/p/chrismeyer> (<http://forums.e-democracy.org/p/chrismeyer>)

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If you think a member is in violation, contact the forum manager at

<email obscured> before continuing it on the list.

2. Don't feed the troll! Ignore obvious flame-bait.

► Rest of post

[Matt Steele \(/p/mattsteele\)](/p/mattsteele)

Posted at 8:43pm, Jun 26



We could definitely plan for a future where MPRB paves, plows, sweeps, and maintains far less parking for cars. That seems like the biggest opportunity to increase green space and reduce the environmental impacts of impervious surfaces and automobiles. We're moving forward with significant new transit investments to bring people to the doorstep of our regional parks. The Green Line will serve Cedar Lake Beach and the northwest corner of Bde Maka Ska. The E Line will serve the other side of Bde Maka Ska and Harriet. The Blue Line will serve Wirth Park and already serves Minnehaha Falls. Advocates are pushing for a C Line extension through South Minneapolis that would connect Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park. Those are all wonderful investments that bring people to our parks. Meanwhile, most of the car storage spaces on our parkland are so overabundant that we don't even charge for parking. If we're not charging, than surely there's a vast oversupply.

[Adam Fairbanks \(/p/4BgydIkFGwfhsYLbr1bLQB\)](/p/4BgydIkFGwfhsYLbr1bLQB)

Posted at 8:52pm, Jun 26



Greetings, ~~Jeffrey~~ Skrenes.

I'm a White Earth Tribal Member and healthcare consultant for the Red Lake Nation. The Secretary Treasurer of the Tribe, Sam Strong, asked me to approach Commissioner Meyer as soon as we heard about his idea.

Last week I sent Chris a text inviting him to a new Native housing development kickoff event that same evening.

I appreciate your comment above. As a Native person, I don't like people

