

MBA BOARD ALLOCATES \$1 MILLION FOR DISTRICT ENHANCEMENTS AND PUBLIC ART



Finding additional funding partners to extend the 6th Street plaza (seen above) along Target Center to 1st Avenue North is one of the MBA's top priorities.

The Minnesota Ballpark Authority (MBA) approved the creation of the Ballpark District Enhancements and Public Art Incentive fund at its April 18 Board meeting. The MBA Board authorized the allocation of up to \$1 million from the MBA's interest earnings on construction bond proceeds to fund this effort.

MBA Chair Steve Cramer says the money will go toward off-site district enhancements that reach beyond the ballpark site's "footprint." Cramer also says he hopes the Board's actions prompt other interested public and private parties to make similar investments.

"The Ballpark District Enhancements and Public Art Incentive fund allows us to work with others to encourage a coordinated development of amenities that serve the long-term interests of the ballpark and this emerging area of the city around the ballpark," Cramer said. "We're excited about leading these discussions."

The MBA is seeking additional funding partners and plans to convene a group consisting of representatives from the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, the Minnesota Twins, the Downtown Council, the Warehouse District and the North Loop neighborhood.

On March 21st, the MBA Board held a Work Session where Commissioners discussed potential off-site opportunities for investment prior to Opening Day, 2010.

The MBA identified the following priorities:

- Extension of the pedestrian bridge along 6th Street from 2nd Avenue to 1st Avenue North
- Streetscape and wayfinding enhancements along 5th, 6th, and 7th Streets from 2nd Avenue North to Hennepin Avenue
- Public Art/Ballpark District Gateways

MBA Executive Director Dan Kenney says there may also be opportunities to partner with other agencies and private parties to pool resources to enhance the look and feel of projects already in the planning stages. Those projects could include the city of Minneapolis' reconstruction of 3rd Avenue North and Hennepin County's plans to upgrade the exterior of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) waste-to-energy facility.

"Our goal is to start a process that will help create a unified identity for the new neighborhood that will be built adjacent to the ballpark," Kenney said.

Under the terms of the resolution, MBA Board approval is required to authorize any expenditures from the Incentive fund.