

TARGET FIELD PUTS OUT THE WELCOME MAT FOR THE TWINS AND THE MBA



Target Field project team members meet with the media to discuss the ballpark's official transformation from construction site to the Twins' new home.

Three months from now, Target Field's clubhouse will be filled with ballplayers suiting up for Opening Day. But on January 4, the clubhouse welcomed key players of a different sort, at a press conference to mark the ballpark's official transformation from construction site to the Twins' new home.

Against the backdrop of a line of Twins jerseys, representatives from Mortenson Construction, the Twins, the Minnesota Ballpark Authority (MBA), and Hennepin County symbolically traded hard hats for baseball caps to commemorate Mortenson's formal turnover of the project, right on budget and a remarkable two months ahead of schedule.

Also present were a handful of the many construction workers who built the ballpark from the ground up over the last 28 months. John Wood, Senior Vice President for Mortenson Construction, paid homage to them and the rest of the project's workforce. "The ballpark reflects tremendous work by 3500 women and men of Minnesota's construction trades, who invested their energy and talent in producing a building of the highest standard of craftsmanship," he said.

Dan Mehls, Construction Manager for Mortenson Construction, agreed, pointing out that the project involved 82 individual contractors; thousands of on-site craftspeople, architects, engineers, and other professional staff; and thousands more workers who fabricated parts and materials off site. Jerry Bell, president of Twins Sports Inc., highlighted both the ballpark's generous use of Minnesota materials like Mankato limestone, and the tremendous quality of the finished product.

"Traveling around the country, the Twins see a lot of ballparks," he said. "But none are better than what's been done here."

Hennepin County Board Chair Mike Opat took the opportunity to thank his fellow Commissioners Mark Stenglein, Peter McLaughlin, and Randy Johnson, who together voted for the 0.15 percent county-wide sales tax that helped to fund the ballpark. He also singled out the extraordinary work by the public sector to incorporate new infrastructure, streetscape improvements, and public art into the surrounding district. Because of those efforts, he said, "Target Field is part of a neighborhood, and not just a ballpark in the middle of what had been a tired urban area."

Opat described the successful outcome of the project as the ballpark's first victory, even before the first game has been played. "We're 1 and 0 with many more to come," he concluded.

The evident mutual respect and admiration between all of the project partners is a testament to why such a complex and large-scale project came together so smoothly.

MBA Board Chair Steve Cramer highlighted the Twins' and the Pohlad family's extraordinary financial commitment to making sure that the ballpark was done right. Their total contribution to the \$550 million project is approaching \$200 million—an amount that the team willingly increased by \$55 million during construction to accommodate various enhancements.

After running down the list of the ballpark's positive impacts—thousands of people employed during a tough economic time; workforce participation goals not just met, but exceeded; a sustainable design that is on track for LEED certification; and the promise of a barrier-free baseball experience for fans with disabilities—Cramer ended on the kind of optimistic note that any Minnesotan could appreciate on a frigid January morning with the mercury far below zero. "On a day like today," he observed, "with 98 days to opening pitch,

it's certainly comforting to think that soon we'll once again be experiencing outdoor baseball in Minnesota."

In the short term, the early finish means that the MBA will be moving into its new offices at the ballpark ahead of schedule, on February 1.

MBA Administrative Manager Susie Helget says that she welcomes the task of packing up the office and settling into the MBA's permanent location. "After years of construction and months of anticipation, we are really excited to join the Twins in our new home at Target Field," said Helget.