

**Richard Gilyard Oral History Interview**  
**Southeast Seniors Neighborhood Stories & Memories Oral History Project**  
**November 17, 2018**



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## **Abstract**

Architect Dick Gilyard has been heavily involved as a volunteer in the planning and development of the area around the Prospect Park light rail station and the area north of University Avenue. He has served on planning and development committees of the Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association (PPERRIA) and was instrumental in the founding of two broad-based planning organizations, Prospect Park 2020, Inc. and Towerside Innovation District. Dick grew up in North Minneapolis and studied architecture at the University of Minnesota. He practiced architecture in Minneapolis and Duluth and worked with the U.S. federal courts from 1991 to 2009 on the design and reconfiguration of federal courts throughout the Midwest. He was recognized as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects for his work on federal courthouses.

The main topics covered in this interview include the Dick's path to the study of architecture at the University of Minnesota in the 1960s; his move to Prospect Park in the early 2000s; how his involvement with the PPERRIA Land Use Committee led to work on planning for the Prospect Park light rail station; the formation by PPERRIA of a master planning committee for the station area that Dick chaired; the formation of Prospect Park 2020, Inc. involving the University of Minnesota, private developers, and other stakeholders; the vision for a Green Fourth Street with higher density housing, a grocery store, and other amenities; the Towerside Framework for Planning and Development prepared in coordination with adjacent St. Paul neighborhoods; the importance of the Surly Brewing project to development north of University Avenue; a vision for the future that includes completion of the "missing link" in the Minneapolis Grand Rounds parkway system; and Dick's views about the kinds of resources that neighborhoods need to be effective in determining the path of their own development.

# Southeast Seniors Neighborhood Stories & Memories Oral History Project

Interview with Richard Gilyard

November 17, 2018

Matt Seltzer, Interviewer

Matt Seltzer: **MS**

Richard Gilyard: **RG**

*Track 1*

*00:00*

**MS:** I'm Matt Seltzer. Today is November 17, 2018. I'm at the home of Richard Gilyard at 194 Malcolm Avenue Southeast in Prospect Park. Good morning Dick.

**RG:** Good morning.

**MS:** Looking forward today to talking about your community involvement in Prospect Park, especially in the planning and framework activities along University Avenue and north of University. Before we get into that though, I wonder if we might just get a little background on you. In particular, I wonder if you could tell us a little about the neighborhood where you grew up.

**RG:** I grew up in North Minneapolis north of Lowry Avenue, attended Bremer Grade School, Jordan Junior High, North High School, graduated North High. My neighborhood was a collection of very relatively small homes, several duplexes—very tidy, well-manicured neighborhood, sprinkled primarily with Lutheran churches and Boy Scout troops in the basement. Grew up shoveling walks for my neighbors, cutting their lawns in the summer, painting their houses when I got a little older, heavily involved in boy scouts at the time and, ultimately, in high school, got involved in writing for the newspaper—the high school newspaper and the almanac.

**MS:** What do you see as some of the similarities and differences between the neighborhood where you grew up back in the day and Prospect Park today?

**RG:** I would say that there wasn't the neighborhood kind of organization that you see here in Prospect Park and probably throughout the city now. The organizations were the churches and the kind of projects that maybe the neighborhoods take on now were centered around the churches more. And there were less of the kind of organization we see today. On the other hand, I think there was also a strong neighborhood—there was a real cohesiveness probably

strengthened greatly by the fact that all of us walked to the same schools and our parents attended the same PTA meetings. So there was this cohesiveness. And there was a lot of neighbor-to-neighbor support—somebody's sick, somebody's away, cakes, hot dishes, all that sort of stuff delivered back and forth. And it was just a wonderful place to grow up.

**MS:** Now, you went to the architecture school at the University of Minnesota and, during that time, did you perhaps come over to or perhaps have some awareness of Prospect Park?

**RG:** Well first, I should say, I started out in journalism. I started out in journalism and, one day, after—because I'd done a lot of writing in high school and the arts programs had disappeared. I really loved to draw, but I had gotten into journalism because folks thought I could write well and I'd done that in high school. And, one day, I'm in the main engineering building and I happened to go up to the 4th floor and saw this fantastic drawing about 30 feet long as I remember it now—probably about 12 on butcher paper, rendered in pastels. And it was a team project—a weekend team project—and I thought, my God, how is this done? This is fantastic. Where have they been keeping this? And Monday morning I was up there in the school of architecture and, within ten minutes, I was talking to Ralph Rapson, told him I hadn't taken drafting in high school and he said, "Do you like to draw?" And I said, "I love to draw." He said, "Well, fine. You're in."

**MS:** (Laughter).

**RG:** And then Ralph lived in Prospect Park. We were over here at Ralph's house. There were several other architectural critics that lived in Prospect Park—John Meyer. There were some architectural homes here, modernist homes, so we were over visiting—of course the Willey House. So I became aware of Prospect Park when I was in the school of architecture.

**MS:** When did you move to Prospect Park?

**RG:** We moved here in about the early 2000s. We lived in downtown for a very long time. And so we moved here just about the time light rail was coming to—or light rail or rapid bus was being discussed when I came to Prospect Park, and I think that was around 2001-2002.

**MS:** And what attracted you to Prospect Park?

**RG:** We lived in downtown, and we didn't want to be far from downtown. My wife worked at the StarTribune. I had been at an office in downtown Minneapolis for a great deal of my career and we didn't want to be far from downtown. But my wife had not had a home of her own before and wanted a house, and we wanted some pets, and that wasn't part of the scheme of downtown living at that time. So Prospect Park was where we had to be.

**MS:** Tell us a little bit about your house where we're sitting and meeting today.

**RG:** This is a small home built in 1922, essentially a single-story house and neat little plan, lot of windows. But I thought it needed a little bit more so, after living in it for two-three years and kind of thinking about what we wanted to do, we developed a new scheme that involved adding a vertical element to the house and some exterior—new retaining walls to give it a different—keep

what was there, respect what was there, keep all the masonry openings, everything the way it was, but make it a fresh, more contemporary statement.

**MS:** And what do you mean by a vertical element?

**RG:** We added a little study. It's really kind of a lighthouse wrapped in windows on the second floor and that opened up some planning opportunities on the first floor, and so it's a nifty little reading room. I've turned it into a drafting room, which I have to get rid of that (laughter).

**MS:** Tell us a little bit about the setting of the house as it relates to the street and the neighborhood and the views from the house.

**RG:** The house has windows on almost all sides, and the way the street curves—Malcolm [Avenue] curves, so it's almost like—Malcolm is almost like a river. And we're sitting like a house on the river. So there's the stream of pedestrians and their dogs and the neighbors coming by. And we don't have any window coverings, so we're really kind of living on the banks of Malcolm Avenue and watching the world kind of go by all the time, night and day. And, of course, they see us too.

**MS:** I gather from that that you have some liking for an urban setting with people and activities. Is that fair to say?

**RG:** Oh, yeah. We love the urban city, and we can't imagine living in the suburbs.

**MS:** I want to talk about how you sort of came to community involvement in Prospect Park. What was the initiation of this both in terms of your thinking or desires, and then the sort of particular events that brought you in.

**RG:** I had a great deal of involvement with governance when I lived in a very large condo in Downtown Minneapolis. And I thought I would be done with committee work for a while and I avoided it initially when I came to Prospect Park because I was working for the U.S. courts and for traveling a great deal, but it was also the time when the decisions were being made about light rail, stationary planning, and the issue of light rail was being debated in Prospect Park. And a number of people actually thought that the line should be bent at the point that it entered the city of Minneapolis from the east and be tracked up and be routed along the railroad yard, and I couldn't imagine that you'd want to put this new transit line up on the edge of the neighborhood versus on University Avenue. So I started attending meetings and ultimately got involved in the neighborhood a little bit, serving on the Land Use Committee. And, as I got involved there, I realized that, in Prospect Park, because almost every lot is sized or shaped differently, opening a window here requires a variance. And we were dealing with a lot of rather small—important—but small things related to existing structures, small additions and so on. And it just seemed that there was going to be tidal wave of development coming with the Green Line.

09:54

And it seemed like the normal activities of the Land Use Committee were not in a position to address those because we only dealt with projects that were already somewhat underway, and we'd really have to get ahead of that.

And I'd had the experience quite a few years before in the 70s when my office was in Duluth, at that time—I had lived there. And that was a time when the freeway was being planned along the shore of Lake Superior and going through the downtown along the shore of Lake Superior. And I got recruited at that time by a group of neighbors who felt that it was not the right design and ultimately protesting that design in a stop-the-freeway effort. I was appointed by Mayor Boo along with the head of the Chamber of Commerce to come up with an alternative. And there were a couple of three steps there involved but, ultimately, the consultant that was hired didn't produce a design that we felt was satisfactory either, and ultimately my office did the design that is the basis of what is built today.

The important thing was what it showed me that a very small group of people with a vision for what should be and some capacity of staying power could really make a big difference. And it showed me that it was possible to make these really big moves if you were clear about what you were trying to do and could assemble the team to keep up the pressure and be clear about what you wanted. It's not enough to say what you don't want, but what do you want. And that, I think, is the heart of effective community engagement.

**MS:** Now, initially, was your engagement through the existing neighborhood organization?

**RG:** It was. At the time, a good friend and a really critical player, Dick [Richard] Poppele, was the president of the Prospect Park Association, at the time Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association [PPERRIA]. I pointed out to Dick and discussed with Dick that the Land Use Committee—it was not positioned to deal with these problems. We needed a master planning committee looking at what was likely to happen, what we wanted to have happen versus reacting to what was being presented. So Dick formed a master planning committee. I was the chair of that committee and really the ground work for what evolved was done in the master planning committee in developing a vision for the station area which we ultimately grew a lot, but it started around the station area and welcoming a much higher level of development than had been part of what Prospect Park had experienced to date.

**MS:** Now that was around 2005, wasn't it?

**RG:** Yeah. Right.

**MS:** And by station area, what are you referring to?

**RG:** Oh, we meant the four or five blocks on either side of University Avenue right around the Prospect Park Station at 29th. So, for example, we envisioned that block where the old Kemp's Creamery was, which had been converted to office space. We envisioned that as really becoming the signature redevelopment, and we campaigned for a very long time to get a Hennepin County Library there as an—get a cultural element as the anchor. And then also add commercial and housing to that. And we also envisioned much higher density along University Avenue—principally north of University Avenue because, by that time, the south side of University

Avenue, starting just inside the one-lot-deep commercial-zoned lot—the rest of that had become a historic district. So a big part of our conversation with the neighborhood always was that we would preserve, protect the historic district. And the impact of the development we were talking about would not in any way be harmful to the historic district—the existing fabric. So that was sort of the heart of the idea around the—in the beginning as we talked about the higher-intensity development. It also would be accompanied by being aware of what that would mean to the south side of University Avenue, and protecting that existing neighborhood from traffic and development that was impactful on the existing neighborhood.

**MS:** And, by this time, was the alignment of the light rail and the station area worked out?

**RG:** That had been determined. That had been determined. It was at that time the 29th Street Station. Ultimately, we campaigned and the whole neighborhood campaigned to get that renamed to Prospect Park Station, and that little kink in the line, where it leaves University Avenue to go up north of 4th and along the transitway, we saw that as a real opportunity. That was a real opportunity to do a different kind of planning and bring the development deeper into what had been the industrial area. So that work was all done through the master planning committee. And the neighborhood, through a series of meetings—and we built a giant model to demonstrate what that would look like. Well, actually that came a little bit later, but we did a number of drawings to show what that would look like, and the neighborhood supported that.

**MS:** And there was a particular product in the form of a 29th Avenue Station design objectives document. Is that correct?

**RG:** Right. That came out of the next step. The master planning committee was composed strictly of neighborhood Prospect Park members of the association. We said this idea is much bigger than just the homeowners. It must involve the businesses. It must involve the University. And so we set up then what we called the steering committee.<sup>1</sup> And the steering committee was composed not only of members of the master planning committee, but we brought in representatives of the University, Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, the University District Alliance. So we had members from the Cedar Cultural Center, and from Seward Design, we brought in the head of the Seward Redesign Offices, a development entity.

And so that began to transition to say that this is more than a home-owner's effort, this is a much broader, much bigger idea. And we presented—and then in that period is when we built a very large model of everything from [Highway] 280 to the stadium and held another series of meetings and began to grow the idea that this would be more than just the station area. It really would be this whole sector along University Avenue, essentially one lot deep on the south side and all the way to the railroad tracks on the north. And really began to formulate the—well, out

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<sup>1</sup> Prospect Park 2020 Steering Committee consisted of these members:

PPERIA members Richard Adams, John DeWitt, Dick Gilyard, Tamara Johnson, Dick Poppele, Henri Keshi; Tom Tierney, Tierney Brothers; David Barnhart, Prospect Park Properties; Renay Leone, Textile Center; Patrick Connoy, Hennepin County; Miles Mercer, Minneapolis CPED (Community Planning Economic Development); Brian Miller, Seward Redesign; Mark Johnson, University District Alliance; Monique MacKenzie, University of Minnesota Planning office

of that came the report, and we got money—we got funding from the Central Corridor Funder’s Collaborative to support that effort because, at that point, we knew this idea is going to have to have—we want to bring some credibility to this notion of ours that this could work. So we went to the Funder’s Collaborative which was a coalition of funders—McKnight Foundation and others who were providing resources to communities to do smart transit-oriented development. And they thought we had a good idea and gave us some resources, and then we were able to hire major consulting firms to help us put the numbers around what we were talking about. And this became more than just a bunch of guys sitting around a kitchen table thinking these ideas—this began to have some reality to it.

**MS:** And just to back up here a minute, I had referred previously to a 29th Avenue Station Design Objectives Document which I believe was around 2006.

**RG:** Ah, right.

**MS:** You’ve taken us up, if I’m right, into about 2011 where you’re then working on a central corridor light rail line 2020 development framework, is that correct?

**RG:** That’s right.

**MS:** And maybe, with regard to sort of both activities because they blend into each other, give me a little sense of what your role was in that sort of process in developing these frameworks over that period of about five years.

**RG:** We looked at the earlier studies, and they were—they talked a lot about sort of the detail of individual projects—how to do a six-story building and step back the top three floors. They talked about materials. They talked about design features of projects.

*19:52*

And that—all important, but really wasn’t talking—those reports were really not talking about planning at the level of intensity and density that we thought was possible and really needed here, deserved here. So our approach evolved to this can’t be thinking about just how do we just deal with the individual project to get that to be a nice-looking project, this whole idea of greater density, higher intensity really depended on the concept of district-level thinking. And so that meant how do we think about the public realm? How does the public realm knit all of this together—parkways, greenways, trails and so on? Shouldn’t this be served by parking, not in individual sites, but by district-level parking reservoirs? Shouldn’t we really be thinking about district storm-water management and district energy? How does this place? Isn’t this the place—because of our proximity to the University—isn’t this the place where there should be a living laboratory for how urban redevelopment ought to happen?

So it evolved from just how do we make this a better development to how do we really make this a replicable model of what should be? And, along the way, we sort of attracted the attention of

some others who said, “Wow, that’s a really great idea, but it’s too enormous. You guys are really dreaming.” In fact, city planning told us we should forget this idea. The city has already done a plan and all we’re doing is making the landowners believe their land is worth more than it is. And we got some great support from Hennepin County for some additional funding and we were able to sell that idea and everybody said, if this is going to work, you’re going to need other partners—bigger partners, the University, the city and so on. And we knew that; we believed that.

And so the steering committee brought that concept to a much higher level of district thinking and it moved from—and it also meant that it wouldn’t be enough just to have this idea, to have this model, to have this record of community endorsement, to have these drawings, this analysis that showed there was a market for office space here. There was a market for higher density housing. We knew that just to have that report wouldn’t be enough. We’d really have to be very proactive about it. We’d have to go out and find the people, find the developers, find the investors, the partners whose record of accomplishment was in sync with what we were talking about in terms of quality, and who could get this idea. And our idea was that, if we could invite them here, if we could say if you’re interested in doing what you are talking about, then we’ll do all we can to help you to move this project forward more quickly than it might otherwise. If we invite you here, we’ll help you facilitate this.

**MS:** Who were some of the neighbors that worked with you on the steering committee?

**RG:** Key people were, of course, Dick Poppele, John DeWitt were the early key players. Much of the early thinking took place around Dick’s or John’s or my dining room table and evolved from that. Along the way, we picked up, in the steering committee, we had Richard Adams was a part of that. And then, as it grew, we brought in local businessmen like the Barnharts—Jeff Barnhart and the—Tom and Jim Tierney and we brought in the University and it grew.

**MS:** And I realize that it must have varied from time to time over a period that might have been five years or more, but how frequently would you say you were meeting with the steering committee and others?

**RG:** The steering committee met—all of that work was done in about a year—a little over a year, I think. And we met every two weeks. There was a tight little group that met more often than that. We’d hired architects. We’d hired market analysts, so we’d met with those folks on a more frequent basis. And, out of that, as that idea evolved from the steering committee, we did our report to the Funder’s Collaborative in 2012. We knew that for this thing to continue to grow, if it had any chance of a life and being successful, we would need folks who could really continue to tell this story, market this idea in the 8-to-5 period of time when things get done in a work week. So we would need a committed group of folks who could do that. And neighborhood committees are not really set up to work that way. So, in that period, Prospect Park 2020 was

formed with Dick and John and myself as really the founders of that. And that evolved and became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.<sup>2</sup>

And so we were the folks—and that was early—and then we added board members.<sup>3</sup> We added Ray Harris as a developer. We added Margaret Miller as the Executive Director of the Textile Center. Tom Tierney stayed on from the steering committee, and that was the heart of our working group to begin with.

**MS:** So again, during this period, you're devoting a lot of time and energy, and you're working very closely with some others. What were some of the factors that in effect drove you to make this investment of your time and energy and talent?

**RG:** I've had a great good fortune of being able to work on some projects that are—some architectural projects that are going to endure for a long time, but a lot of architecture projects have a—are not there forever. This scene, this place, this area was a blank slate. This whole geography between the University and 280 was this—had been zoned industrial and really overlooked by everyone for a great period of time. And it seemed there was an opportunity here to do a redevelopment at a scale that was available nowhere else in the Twin Cities. So here you had this 100 acres right in the heart of the city, on the Green Line next to the University, served by the freeways and Highway 280. It had every possible asset and blank land. And we thought, this is just too great a thing, just too great an opportunity to lose this to what normal market forces will do here. And we felt that, just left to market forces, this would just be a lot more student housing. If you live in Prospect Park, you're not opposed to student housing; you love students. But this was a rare opportunity to do something else in the way of residential. This was a place where we could demonstrate some of the ideas that were being talked about in other parts of the country and the world where we could sort of erase zoning and mix living and working and learning altogether. And this was a place where we could really demonstrate how district systems were done. How do you do district heating and cooling? How do you get multiple buildings collecting storm water and bringing it to a single place? And it was going to be a steep climb, but this was the only place where this was possible.

So we felt that just the whole idea of it was so exciting and the opportunity was so great that we thought, God, if we can find get some people to share this idea, we can really do something of importance and lasting value here. The real value of this doesn't flow precisely to Prospect Park or, now that the area has grown to St. Anthony Park, the real value of this is a model. This could be done in Blue Earth or Duluth or how do you do redevelopment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that really speaks to, demonstrates, and incorporates the kinds of systems we know we're going to have to

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<sup>2</sup> Prospect Park Board Members at the time of founding: Richard Gilyard, president; Richard Poppele, treasurer/vice president; John DeWitt, secretary; Nan Skelton; Nan Kari; Margaret Miller; Ray Harris; Brian Golberg; staff/project manager.

<sup>3</sup> Prospect Park 2020 2018 board: Brian Anderson; Ray Harris; Mark Johnson; John Kari, Board Chair; Dick Poppele, Treasurer; Karl Reichert; Mike Tenlen, Secretary; Brita Veitenheimer; Richard Gilyard.

get to if we're going to survive on the planet? Just the opportunity itself was so great and to be a part of that—if we could influence that kind of thing was just very powerful idea.

**MS:** Now you mentioned a concern on the part of the neighborhood for historic preservation south of University. Were there other specific neighborhood concerns about what you were talking about north of University?

**RG:** We talked about specifically in our meetings with the neighborhoods, and we had a series of Saturday morning meetings over the course of this project. And they were attended often by 100 folks, mostly association members, with the broader community.

30:05

And we said very clearly that we imagined 2,500 to 3,000 new units of housing. We imagined a million and a quarter square feet of office, lab, studio space. We imagined maker space, industrial space. And the neighborhood said, if that's north of University Avenue and that brings some of the amenities we don't have like a grocery store—mentioned at every meeting—if a grocery store is a part of that, and if some of the other things—a coffee shop, maybe a florist, dry cleaners—if some of those things are a part of that which we believed density would help support, then we're in favor. They were nervous about parking and nervous about traffic through the neighborhood. And we said that we would be pushing for reservoir parking north of University Avenue and the neighborhood, working with the city and others should be able to help discourage traffic through the neighborhood to serve the district and it really wouldn't seem like the natural place traffic would want to go anyway, but those were the big concerns.

And protecting the seam—how does this high-density development meet the existing scale of the neighborhood? And in our models we show at how, as you get to the south side of University Avenue, the buildings would step down and be behind the higher density of the now, but in the main would be respectful of what was there.

**MS:** Now, you've mentioned systems and environmental systems. In 2014, there was a district systems and Green 4th concepts document. Just give us a little flavor of the thrust of that thinking and what your role was in it.

**RG:** Fourth Street was really sort of the first piece of this whole idea that land north of University was really zoned industrial. But we said, if this development that the station and this location deserves, we need to create places to live. And, if we're going to do that at a higher density, let's reimagine 4th Street not as a part of a commercial-industrial district, but let's say 4th Street becomes a residential avenue. And this is where those apartments and condominiums and housing occur along 4th Street. And we need to raise it. It's got to be much higher density. So, in our models, we show that as a very intensely developed street and we said this street—this avenue—shouldn't be just an ordinary city street; this should be a new kind of street where cars

are guests. This should be heavily landscaped; it should have special lighting, special paving, special street furniture to really make it distinctive from an ordinary artery avenue.

And, again, we were able to sell that idea and, with that idea we brought a developer, a major developer came to the site of the Boeser Sheet Metal site and Cornerstone Properties— Cornerstone Development Group bought that site with the idea that they would be the very first developer on this green avenue which we were promising would be done. And, ultimately, that idea was sold to the city and to Met[ropolitan] Council which provided funding for that, and it's been a tough battle to get it done the way we envisioned. It's not everything we envisioned, but it's going to be a very, very different street from most. The idea was that, not only would it be heavily landscaped, we would use that as a place to capture the water on that street—capture the storm water from those buildings to support the landscaping, and then to go beyond that to do other things as well.

So this was really the first piece of systems thinking, and how do you do a different kind of avenue, a different kind of street where the people were—and say that this is a place where people will want to be walking and strolling and shopping and all that sort of thing.

**MS:** And you say it's been challenging. Why in particular has it been challenging to achieve?

**RG:** The concept was really bought in total by Met Council and they provided a million dollars of funding for these special features. The City of Minneapolis and Public Works basically said, "We do curbs and gutters and streets. All that fancy stuff that you're talking about, we're not so sure about, but do know for sure we won't pay for it. You'll have to pay for the design. You'll have to pay for those materials. You'll have to pay for that lighting. You'll have to pay for all of that and you'll also have to tell us who's going to take care of all of those special features forever." So that's been hard to do. The city, for example, to this day the design does not allow us to capture their water. We can capture the water of all of the buildings along the avenue, but we can't capture the water that falls on the street (laughter). The departments of the city—and I understand this—if everybody—if every district, every neighborhood starts to do their own thing, this becomes a nightmare. And that's also a part of what's evolved here.

When we first presented this bigger idea to the city and, as the partnership grew, it grew from a neighborhood enterprise to a neighborhood-endorsed enterprise, being marketed, pushed, advocated for by Prospect Park 2020. Prospect Park 2020 grew to the Prospect North Partnership. That brought it in the University and Hennepin County and ultimately 30 partners who signed a shared memorandum of understanding about what this place could be. And it was essentially the single paragraph that we had written about how this could become a living laboratory, high-density place where living, learning, the arts all come together. So that evolved to Prospect North. As we presented that to the City Council in a special meeting about this whole idea, the city said, "We can't have all these different ideas, and we have other priorities, and if we're going to do anything here, we're going to have to call this something." And we agreed that

we would call this an innovation district. And, ultimately, the city designated this geography that we've been talking about as an innovation district.<sup>4</sup>

And, along the way, the City of St. Paul had been very interested in this idea because of all of our drawings showed everything going over to 280. They said, "We like that idea." And they passed a matching resolution, so the whole territory became known, no longer as Prospect North, because St. Paul said, we're not so sure of being named this district—being named after a Minneapolis neighborhood. It became Towerside. And the Towerside name is a reflection of our tower, the KSTP tower, the tower over on the Court International and so on.

**MS:** Now there's in 2018 something that's come along that's called the Towerside Framework for Planning and Implementation. What is that?

**RG:** There are two documents. There are development guidelines that works at both a district level—describes what should happen to the systems at a district level—district energy, district stormwater, reservoir parking, and then it's also a set of guidelines on what happens—what individual buildings should do in terms of performance, what their contribution to the neighborhood is and so on. So those are the guidelines. Then this is also the period when the Met[ropolitan] Council has called for the cities to submit their updated comprehensive plans. So there's a 2040 comprehensive plan. All the partners of Towerside which has now become a 501(c)(3) corporation as well—not a developer, but a facilitator of development, in alignment with these principles. The partner said we should make clear—or we should be very clear that on the key points here of transportation, level of development, what the nature of development is, that we, the partners, the two neighborhoods, the University, Towerside are all saying the same thing.

So we commissioned the Minnesota Design Center to work with us in preparing a coordinated set of documents that we submitted as a neighborhood. We submitted the same document as Towerside and the City of St. Paul—or the neighborhood of St. Anthony Park submitted the same document to the City of St. Paul. Most of what we have advocated for is incorporated in the 2040 plan.

**MS:** So, I guess, to put some specifics on it over the course of the last year, 2018, what has been your particular role, individually, personally in the Towerside framework?

40:03

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<sup>4</sup> The city of Minneapolis passed two resolutions, one establishing the Innovation District designation that could apply to multiple locations; two, the second resolution established Towerside as the first Innovation District.

**RG:** I'm a founding board member and, at this stage of the game, I'm in many senses a connector between a lot of the pieces. And the challenge right now is, because new partners are coming to the table—very important partners—is to make sure that the history of this is clear and the neighborhood role is clear, and to help be the connection between the neighborhood and what they believed was going to happen here, and what Towerside is doing. And that's an interesting role in that you're stretching the neighborhood. And some of what's happening is maybe they never thought it really would happen, but now it's happening and there is second thoughts about some of it.

And the challenge with all of it is that, [what] once was a totally overlooked area where land was worth \$30 a square foot when we started, all of this is now worth well over \$100 a square foot, and we're seeing a tsunami of development. And the challenge is can the development—will the district systems—can the district system development get ahead of the development, stay ahead of the development, and how do we stretch—how do we get marketplace developers to do the higher-performance buildings, better design buildings that we're after?

And so there's a tremendous amount of effort now—how do we stretch these developers to do more? It's designing the tools to maybe help them designing incentives to make it easier for them to do it? How do we say no when the city is probably happy to endorse it but we're aiming higher than the city is?

**MS:** So, as a volunteer, how much time do you think you're spending a week now on this activity?

**RG:** I spend at least 20 to 30 hours and often more.

**MS:** And, in terms of tasks or activities that, just briefly, how would you characterize the different kinds of settings in which you might function or be involved?

**RG:** At the neighborhood level, or as a member of the Land Use Committee, I'm very involved in the individual projects because the projects—development projects—do not come to Towerside. We hope the neighborhoods are using the tools we've developed. And I'm an architect as well. So I'm very interested in the highest level of designs, so I'm contributing my experience and thoughts about design at the Land Use Committee level. I'm representing the neighborhood often at City Planning Commission meetings in support of projects that we feel are in sync with what we are doing. I'm meeting with the architects and developers to individually—outside of those meetings—to talk about how we'd really like to see this. It's meeting with Met Council on issues like the district stormwater where there are some issues that they are not going along with. It's meeting with the politicians: Cam Gordon our council person, Hennepin County Commissioners. It's meeting with funders. It's working to sponsor things like Eco District which is a national effort to get more tools, more funding, more support, more credibility to what we're doing. It's enormously exciting and I enjoy it because I'm working with really smart people doing things other than—a little different than I do, so I'm learning. And it's sort of being a full-time advocate for the idea.

**MS:** Let's talk about some particular projects, both how you see their significance within this broader planning framework, but also your role. And one of the first and highly prominent projects was the Surly Brewing project. Tell us a little bit about what you see as the significance of that project within the district and, again, also your role with respect to it.

**RG:** We had listed a number of things we'd liked to see there. A brewery was not on the list, but we read early on about Omar Ansari's attempt to change the state law, and we sent him a letter right away before the law was passed saying, "If you pull this off, you ought to think about being over here." And Omar brought his team over and we talked and we showed him what existed north of University Avenue and told him what we thought—what a great opportunity it was—and Omar said, "Well, we're looking for a little more land than this, but we'll put this on the list and we'll be working through an agent—". They hired a firm to do the search. Ultimately, they looked at 70-some sights, and they came back about a year later saying you're on a very short list. And, by that time, the city and the county got very interested as well and, ultimately, Omar called me one night to say that we're coming to Prospect Park, and can you guys write us some letters and can you help us with this and that and the other things—funding and so on for clean up.

So we were very, very excited. And I think it—Surly does so much. First of all, they hired a very good architect and they've got tremendous design. The scale of the project is a big—that's a big project. And Surly alone—the importance of Surly just can't be underestimated. It's brought so many people to this area who have never, ever been north of University Avenue. And it's pretty—not so much now—but in the first few years of operation, I would get calls—thousands of people go there—and most of them are just going for the evening and enjoying the beer, and the terrific setting and the garden, but we get calls all the time from folks, "Gosh, I've never been back here before. What can you tell me about what's going on here?" It's really—he's put this area on the map more than anything else we've been a part of.

**MS:** And you mentioned a state law just briefly. What was the state law that was changed that allowed this?

**RG:** Brewers could not sell their product where they brewed it. And he changed that law—got that law changed and then had a vision for this brewery. His vision was even larger than what he's done. But he doesn't have to do that; at the time, when he first talked to us, he had visited a number of European breweries and he was talking about his own hotel and a number of other things. But I think he's going to let others do the hotel now, and that's happening. He's been a great supporter. He's continued to support us—Prospect Park 2020 and Towerside and he's just—I don't think he could be happier, nor could we.

**MS:** There's another project—Green on 4th. What is that?

**RG:** That's the—oh, you're talking, not about the street, but the apartment development. That's the Cornerstone Development. The Cornerstone Company has bought that site and had plans for that. Ultimately, they were not able to develop that or not able to secure the financing. The Barnhart Prospect Park Properties took that over, and they've essentially done exactly what the Cornerstone Company had originally proposed: a mix of affordable housing and market rate

housing. And a really nifty part of that, Colleen Carey, the head of Cornerstone, had dedicated the west end of the site to be a public park. In the interim it's been turned into a community garden. But now that parcel is actually being conveyed to the park board. And adjacent to that, also again, is a part of Colleen Carey's thinking—that is the first piece of the stormwater. That is the stormwater park which is also the first module of the district stormwater system. In that stormwater park is buried a very large, almost 300,000-gallon tank that gets the stormwater from four properties. This is not an engineering or technical breakthrough in any way—this is done often in Europe—not done anywhere here where you have multiple properties being served by a common stormwater reservoir. But we see that as the first module of a district system that the big goal is to capture every drop of water that falls on the district and reuse it and ultimately to treat it.

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And the district stormwater management—Mississippi Water Management Organization—was instrumental in making this happen. They've been part of the planning since the early stages. They came into the party when we were doing the Green 4th study in the early days of Prospect Park 2020, and they saw this as an opportunity to demonstrate how something they'd been dreaming of. And so they front-end funded that system. But ultimately that system is being purchased by the properties it serves, and that will become owned by those property owners, ultimately. And ultimately this idea—this much larger district system is not owner-managed by a public entity. That will be owned by those it serves. And the same is true of the district energy thinking—that ultimately that will not be Xcel or that will not be some public entity—that will be owned and throwing off profit to—if Towerside, for example, were the owner of the district energy system or the district stormwater system, that would be creating jobs and also be creating income to support the Towerside organization.

And the Towerside organization going forward is to just be the facilitator of these things—to help, and if a developer comes to town and is interested in developing here, Towerside's self-appointed role is to educate them on what we're trying to do here, show them the tools that we have to help them do what they want to do, be their advocate for that project and help them with funding and, ultimately, could be maybe a management organization for the care and feeding of the district. Or that may evolve to a different entity as well, but that's the potential of that.

**MS:** With regard to the Green on 4th, previously Cornerstone Project, give us just an example of what—an instance perhaps of your personal role with regard to that project, how you might have personally been involved in that project.

**RG:** Well, we're personally involved in bringing Colleen Carey to the project. We visited with every developer in town when that was a blank slate up there. And I brought Colleen Carey to this site multiple times when she finally said, "Yes, I get it. We'll do it." So there's that very early involvement with the developer of talking about the potential in the district, which is

probably the most important part of that. Since then I've been very involved in the design of those projects. I think they're respectable. I think they could be more, but have been very hands-on in the development of those projects.

**MS:** One of the other projects that's received a lot of attention recently is the Art and Architecture building residential project. Tell us a bit about that project, how it fits into the district and maybe some of the issues that have arisen around it.

**RG:** I think that's a very exciting project in that the scale of it is practically a whole city block on the south side of the avenue. And, of course, this is the first project of the original vision that is occurring south of the avenue. It replaces two—really three auto-oriented facilities—former Super America site and two existing auto repair sites. It includes a concrete framed building that had many uses over its life, is currently an architectural salvage and a collection of studios, artist studios and crafts workers. It's not on the historic register, but it's a building that has a distinct character and kind of a gutsy, raw character to it that I like, that I think others like as well.

The development is a follow-on developer to United Properties project who had envisioned the whole block—this and almost the whole block—but it doesn't include the Tierney site. It includes a great deal of commercial along the avenue. It includes really three apartment structures beginning at Bedford and then wrapping on and over the Art and Architecture building, preserving the Art and Architecture building. And then there's a condominium—a tall condominium structure at the western end of that property adjacent to the Tierney site. I think it's a terrific project in that it's an assemblage—appears to be four-five different buildings. They're cohesive and yet they're distinct. It provides a mix of uses: commercial, studio, restaurants, and things that we think are going to enrich the neighborhood. It's high-density—what the city is looking for along the Green Line, along all the transit lines. It's well-designed. The height has been an issue for some, and it's not just the height, it's the scale of development. Some believe it's too much, but I think it's a handsome project and it's just—

So those of us who've been working with the developer worked with the development team for over a year. The project had the support of the task force committee assigned to work with the developer. Ultimately, the Prospect Park Association Board approved this project. It has the continued opposition of some folks quite close to it, as well as some others who feel that it's just too much density—too tall and too dense. I just disagree with that and think it's what should happen along the avenue, and it's going to be a very—I think it's going to be an excellent project, and I think it's going to greatly enrich the neighborhood.

**MS:** Do you have any particular comments about the relationship of that project to the tower and some of the issues that have arisen in that particular sort of design aesthetic discussion?

**RG:** I do. I very much agree with everyone that the water tower is an iconic—it is a symbol of Prospect Park and it shouldn't be diminished by what happens with development near it. The building that is proposed is really within the tree line. And I don't think that it has any negative impact on the tower itself. I think we need to be very careful about that, and out of that has come some design guidelines that recommend a sphere or a view corridor concept that preserves both

views to the tower and from the tower. So I think it's led to some really good thinking about how to do that. I don't think this project is in any way negative in terms of how it affects the tower.

**MS:** I'd like to turn a bit to the future and, in your mind's eye, envisioning the area along University, and north of University, 10 and 20 years out. What do you see?

**RG:** I think it will be—it will take a while but I think, within 20 years, it will be fully developed and perhaps sooner because of the many, many assets to this location. It just seems that now that the world knows that this is an available piece of geography that there is going to be intense development here. I think that one of the really, really great things that has come out of the activity of the last several years is that all parties have agreed from the beginning that the public realm has to be part of the framework that knits this all together. The public realm is the framework that everything plugs into—is the main asset.

And this geography has often been—represents what city planners have called the missing link of the Grand Rounds and the City's Grand Rounds system. And that system, which circles the city in both vehicular route and a bike-hiking trail goes all around the city except it doesn't go from Northeast Minneapolis down to the River. And so this has been missing for a very long time.

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Just within the last few months—and we have been, in Prospect Park, Prospect Park 2020, the partnership, the Prospect North Partnership and now Towerside—we've continued to draw a series of concepts of how that Grand Rounds comes through this area. And now, within the last few months, the Park Board, the Wall Development Company who owns a great deal of the land south of the railroad down to University Avenue, and the Mississippi Water Management Organization have all signed a memorandum of understanding that shows how the Grand Rounds comes through this area. And the key to that is that the Park Board has signed that document and they've made it a priority, so I think that the completion of the Grand Rounds through this area with the larger parks that are a part of that—major signature green spaces at the base of the elevators—that is going to be—once people come to believe that that is really going to happen that way—this is going to be a powerful magnet that this area's going to develop

And I hope we can achieve this mix of uses that we're making some headway with the city. They still want to separate these uses, but we think there's a real opportunity here to demonstrate to do these kinds of live-work buildings all in this area. So we think it's going to—I think (laughter) it's happening—what has happened to date I like to think is a great deal different than what would have happened. And I think if we can continue to be firm about our standards and find a way to really hold off development that doesn't measure up and encourage and invite—twist arms to get the development we're seeking, I think this really can become something very close

to the model we envisioned. So I'm very excited about where we are and that Towerside has become a real organization with money in the bank, with an executive director and the chances of this actually happening are greater today than they ever have been.

**MS:** Any quick insights on what it will take to bring affordable housing and a diversity of population to this area?

**RG:** It's such a challenging—I really don't. We're all wrestling with that. How can you do affordable housing when the land has increased that much in value—when the material cost stays the same, when labor gets paid what it should be paid—how do you do that? And it's obviously going to take some form of support. How do we somehow think of affordable housing as infrastructure? Isn't it just an integral piece of the public's responsibility to provide? Until we get to that level, I don't see any way. I mean, it's not going to happen just in the normal marketplace. The other piece of that is—and also, I think just as important is how do you maintain affordable business space. If this is going to be a place where creativity—a place of innovation and creativity where the arts thrive—you have to have affordable housing. You also have to have affordable business space, studio space, laboratory space. So the challenge of—and at the city—and if the city values that, and if the greater public think that that has value, to have those kinds of districts and that kind of activity, and that kind of job creation going on, how are we going to create the—how are we going to help foster and maintain affordable spaces for that to occur. That is the great challenge.

**MS:** Summing up, any specific lessons you might draw about community involvement, the activity of being a community activist, when and how this kind of activity is effective—just general thoughts or lessons.

**RG:** The chance to work on things that don't come into an individual architect's office is rare when you have this kind of—see this kind of opportunity and have a chance to be a part of it. I think that's enormously exciting. I feel very lucky that I was here with people like Dick Poppele and John DeWitt and other people who had the time—but not just the time—the talent and connections and the commitment to stick with this over a very long period of time is—. And to me it demonstrates that this can be done, and other people have looked at it as a model. It's hard to replicate this up and down the Green Line. For example, we have been asked if this should be a model. It's hard to replicate it because the ideas, the thinking—we were lucky to have some of the talents that were important—experience was important to the task—to the opportunity available in one place.

This could be done in other places, but the biggest thing would be it's rare that people—you have a core of people with the time. And so what I've come to believe is that somehow, if cities think this kind of involvement is important and leads to good things, perhaps there has to be something like an equivalent to a public defender made available to neighborhood groups who have ideas so that they have a place at the table from the 8-to-5 time when things really happen. And someone who really has the experience to deal with planners, developers, city bureaucracy—all that sort of thing. Otherwise the neighborhood is just out of their depth. And so we were very, very lucky,

but I do think this can be—this kind of involvement is really important. It's just going to need a little—they can't do it exactly the way we've done it perhaps.

**MS:** Anything else you want to add today that I haven't asked you about or that seems important to add?

**RG:** All I can say is I really—it's such a lucky thing to have come to Prospect Park at just this time and been a part of this, and there are all kinds of challenges here, but the whole idea of working with this broad a sector of people on this broad a sector of projects has really been a really terrific experience and this kind of work is way more important than any individual building that I've been a part of—way more important to me, but I'd like to think to the city and ultimately to the people who will live and work in places like this.

**MS:** Thank you very much Dick.

[End of Interview]

Total Interview Time: 01:08:15