



ASLA 2025 Conference on Landscape Architecture

Field Session Example Submission

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Session Title

Revitalizing Modernist Public Space through Public-Private Partnerships in Downtown Minneapolis

Session Marketing Statement

The adage "if you build it, people will come" doesn't always ring true—especially for originally successful projects in need of upgrades and modernization. This session explores the revitalization of Minneapolis' Peavey Plaza and Nicollet Mall, and the challenges (and successes!) of bringing vibrancy back to these historic projects.

Session type (select one)

Field session

Track (select one)

Design Implementation

Target Audience (select multiple)

Public Practitioners

Emerging Professionals

Small Business/ Sole Practitioner

Firm Leader

Project Manager/ Mid-Career Professionals

Design-Build

Health, Safety, and Welfare (select one)

Yes

Panel Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

The field session includes a diverse range of specialists who were involved in the design and construction of two complex urban infrastructure projects:

- Landscape Architects—those integral to the design and construction of the featured projects share design and technical solutions.
- Historic Preservationists—Originally opening in 1968 and 1975 (respectively), the Nicollet and Peavey Plaza teams each approached the historic design with a specific lens.
- Specialty Fountain Designer—challenges of upgrading the 10,000 SF reflecting pool into a fully accessible water scrim that doubles as a plaza to develop a solution that meets preservation and accessibility standards.
- Activation and Programming Directors—Green Minneapolis and DID representatives highlight ongoing strategies for fostering vibrant, inclusive downtown spaces.
- Public Art Administrators—Nicollet is home to the second largest collection of public art in Minneapolis—art curation of existing works plus new commissions are key aspects to the design.
- Owners—Members of Public Works share their creative approaches for reinvigorating these historic landmarks.
- Engineers—close collaboration with engineers on the landscape-led teams played a critical role to the project success.

Content Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Public spaces are, by definition, public—but history has shown that “public” does not always equate to equitable inclusion for all populations. The main thrust of these two projects is on creating vibrant, inclusive downtown spaces for people from all social backgrounds to interact and enjoy. We will explore the challenges associated with breathing new life into these two legacy projects through lenses of robust community engagement, overcoming significant accessibility issues, and updating aging designs to be relevant and beloved for generations to come.

Attendees will learn about the strategies used in Peavey Plaza to ensure representation was equal across many voices, with a focus on equity through access. Both Peavey Plaza and Nicollet Mall are maintained and operated in collaboration with the DID (Downtown Improvement District). The presentation from DID will include how these two projects intersect with their Tactical Urbanism Initiative – such as the movable seating pilot project initiated with JCFO; or the 100 Restrooms Project, a critical infrastructural component providing dignity to all persons.

Learning Outcomes

- Develop an approach to understanding the history and context of significant spaces that are ready for a refresh—informing an inclusive redesign strategy that maintains each project’s original spirit.
- Hear multiple points of view in managing project goals, public expectations, and public-private partnerships to build consensus, secure funding, and build meaningful relationships with stewards of the space.
- Analyze different strategies for activation and maintenance to support long-term project success, as informed by lessons learned from these two projects.
- Explore creative solutions to two major technical challenges—redesigning a scrim pool while staying within preservation guidelines and navigating utilities overhaul with robust street tree planting and maintenance.

Session Outline

1. Introduction to Nicollet Mall | Peavey Plaza *Classroom at Conference Center (50 minutes)*

- a. History of each project developed in the post-modernist era and why these are significant landscapes.
- b. Design Goals – each project team developed a list of key objectives that defined the decision-making process.
- c. Public landscapes with complex group of stakeholders – consensus building was key part of the design strategy.

Nicollet Mall

Nicollet Mall has been Minneapolis’ civic “Main Street” for more than 100 years. Originally a car-centric corridor, struggling with the advent of suburban shopping malls, the City reimagined and reinvigorated Nicollet as a pedestrian mall, with the iconic sinuous street designed by Lawrence Halprin in 1968. Its comprehensive remodel led by JCFO has enhanced the experience for visitors, downtown businesses, and the area’s residential population.

2. Nicollet Mall

The start of Nicollet Mall is two blocks from the Convention Center. Attendees will walk from Convention Center down Grant Street. The design of Nicollet will be presented through several lenses, including designation of character zones (woods, groves, city center), demonstrating the design strategies to promote and enhance pedestrian experience, greening, and activation.

- 1. Design Overview (JCFO Design Leaders) *Walk from Grant to 10th Street (20 minutes)***
 - a. As the attendees walk down Nicollet, Eric Becker and Megan Born will share the competition winning strategy that includes the character zones of Nicollet, that support the three key design goals
 - i. Greening – nearly 250 trees planted, with flexible layouts to accommodate unknowns of hidden below-ground conditions
 - ii. Pedestrians – clear walk zones, elevated intersections
 - iii. Activation – from markets, moveable furnishings, events
 - b. As a heavily used site, with harsh conditions, the landscape architecture team shares the ongoing challenges of maintaining a vibrant pedestrian mall.
- 2. Communication Strategy (Nicollet Project Management Team) *Pause in front of The Local, at 10th (10 minutes)***
 - a. Peter Brown and Justin Gese will share stakeholder coordination and communication for a project funded largely by the business district it served – building consensus was critical for the project's success.
 - b. Community engagement was ongoing throughout construction – through local businesses affected by street closures, to managing onlookers during the day-to-day of the construction process.
 - c. From a project website as means of sharing information and expectations to coordinating construction banner & marketing campaigns – the public relation was front and center for this extensive and exhaustive project.
- 3. Construction Strategy (Minneapolis Public Works) *Walk from The Local to the City Center (10 minutes)***
 - a. Justin Gese and Rick Kreuser will share construction strategy, including the bid package break down and mediation strategy, staggered and phased installation, and challenges of building a street project through the lens of a high-quality architectural installation.
 - b. Construction timelines included private utilities coordination and upgrades prior to the City's construction effort.
 - c. Strategies for enabling businesses to stay open and accessible during an extensive construction period.
- 4. DID Minneapolis (Downtown Improvement District - DID) *Gather at the DID Pop-up Storefront (20 minutes)***
 - a. Members of the Mpls Downtown Improvement District (DID), a business-led, non-profit organization, will share their role in the design collaboration and ongoing activation of Nicollet.
 - b. DID will share how they are continuously working to activate Nicollet, from maker markets to farmers markets, their innovative Street Show busker program, and cultural programming along Nicollet.
 - c. From the DID Ambassador program to the tactical urbanism strategies to the initiatives supporting BIPOC businesses, DID will share how their programs are focused on equitable, safe, clean downtown spaces.
- 5. Public Art Integration (City of Minneapolis Public Art Administrators) *Gather at the Theater in the Round / Nimbus Sculpture + Walk to Sculpture Clock (30 minutes)***
 - a. As the attendees gather at Theater in the Round, Mary Altman and Regina Flanagan will share how public art became to be part of public policy and City's place-making efforts, with Nicollet a culmination many years in the making.
 - b. The group will head south back down Nicollet – during the walk, the public art will be highlighted, including curation of existing pieces and the commissioning of several new pieces for Nicollet's redesign.
 - c. Members of the design team will also be available for answering questions during the walk down Nicollet.

Peavey Plaza

In 1975, landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg conceived Peavey Plaza as the “living room” of downtown Minneapolis and a dynamic complement to the newly completed Nicollet Mall. The iconic sunken plaza balanced the tranquility of a large central reflecting pool with a cascading concrete fountain and active programming that filled the plaza throughout the year.

C+P and New History led the rehabilitation with key improvements to accessibility and safety.

3. Peavey Plaza

Peavey Plaza borders Nicollet Mall, on the block between 11th and 12th Streets – sharing the block with the Sculpture Clock – for a seamless transition from Nicollet to Peavey. Peavey Plaza is on the National Historic Register. By placing Coen+Partners as co-leaders with New History, the team ensured that the preservation strategies were on equal footing with the design.

1. Technical Team Integration + Consensus Building Strategy (Minneapolis Public Works) Enter Peavey through the newly constructed sloped walkways, gather at the historic amphitheater seating (20 minutes)

- a. Jennifer Swanson and Peter Brown will share the efforts leading up to the contentious rehabilitation of Peavey Plaza, establishing a review process with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) that placed preservationists, accessibility representatives, and various stakeholders together.
- b. The project approach linked accessibility, safety, long-term sustainability and maintainability, activation, and rehabilitating character defining features in a unifying strategy that was hailed by TCLF as the new precedent for historic rehabilitation projects.

2. Accessibility + Integrated Design Solutions in Historic Plaza (C+P and New History Design Leaders) Walk around site to specific ramps and terraces (20 minutes)

- a. Laura Kamin-Lyndgaard and Quentin Collette will share the project strategy to preserve character while identifying opportunities for new interventions – with a focus on solutions that add value for the largest number of people.
- b. Accessibility and safety were primary considerations; attendees will see the strategic and precise methodology for nesting new concrete within the old with interventions that appear subtle but transform the space.
- c. Materials, site elements and planting palette will be discussed in term of strategy for replacing “in kind” or “in spirit”, and the design approach to differentiate new from existing.

3. Fountain + Technical Design (Fluidity and Barr Engineering) Access to the pump room, walk around site to scrim pool and fountains (20 minutes)

- a. Karen Adhikari and BJ Siljenberg will share the technical challenges that went into raising the basin and rehabilitating the cascading fountains. Of particular note these technical experts will share how the perfectly level scrim interacts with, and transitions from, the existing pool coping in a fully accessible connection yet is reversible and preserves the existing conditions.
- b. Water conservation played a critical role in the design – from the ability to capture and infiltrate the 10-year storm event, retaining the 100-year storm event on site, to holding the water volume within the existing system needed to activate the scrim and fountains when the scrim is drained for events or the fountains shut down overnight.

4. Activation + Maintenance (Green Minneapolis) Gather at new amphitheater along 12th Street (15 minutes)

- a. Peavey Plaza is a true public-private partnership. David Wilson will share the critical role that Green Minneapolis played during the design process, both as

leading the fundraising and as managers of the operations + maintenance as the plaza moved from design to completion.

b. Green Minneapolis continues to operate and program Peavey Plaza on behalf of the City. David will speak to the critical role and partnership Green Minneapolis holds with the City, including ongoing fundraising to support activation of 100 free performances planned for 2023 – maintaining a goal of free and open to all.

Field Session Timetable

1:00 – 1:50: History and Project Background: Classroom at Convention Center.
1:50 – 2:00: Restroom break & mobilize: Walk to Nicollet & Grant (2 blocks).
2:00 – 3:00: Grant Street to 4th Street (9 blocks): Various members of Nicollet Mall Project Team present during walk north on Nicollet with stops along the way.
3:00 – 3:10: Pause at Theater in the Round, with access to restrooms at Public Library.
3:10 – 3:40: 4th Street to 11th Street (7 blocks): Curated public art tour on return walk south towards Peavey Plaza.
3:40 – 5:00: Peavey Plaza tour. Walk back to the Minneapolis Convention Center

Field Session Planning Questions

Classroom Component: Yes

Classroom Component PT 2: NA

Equipment Required: NA

Transportation Needs: This is a walking tour and does not require a passenger bus

Restrictions: No

Distance: Less than 1 mile

Catering: No catering required, this session is less than five hours

Do any of the sites that will be visited during the session require advanced security checks? If so, please describe below.: NA

In addition to the field session co-leaders, how many presenters will be riding the bus with the group?:
NA

Field Session Fees

Park Entrance Fee: 0

Park Permit Fee (for entrance or park use): 0

Museum Entrance Fee: 0

Tolls: 0

Public Transportation Costs: 0

Other Fees (ex. bike, kayak, or other equipment): 0



Speaker(s) (each speaker is required to complete an online biography)