

FOR MBA, HOME OPENER IS A TIME TO CELEBRATE THE LITTLE THINGS



Mortenson Construction workers unfurl a giant American Flag during the National Anthem on Opening Day at Target Field.

In the midst of the pre-game events that paid tribute to former Twins' players and past team championships, many fans who filed into Target Field on Monday April 12, 2010 for the historic home opener said they were struck by the beauty of the ballpark and the amazing architectural design of the facility. Bill Jensen of Big Lake, MN was one of the hundreds of people who watched the Twins unveil Kirby Puckett's bronze statute on Target Plaza several hours before the first pitch and wondered how in the world a ballpark this size could fit in such a tight space. "It's pretty incredible and pretty cool," Jensen said.

Minnesota Ballpark Authority (MBA) Commissioner John Wade agrees. He said Target Field is a 12-acre site built on an eight-acre parcel of land. To make that math work, the ballpark's architectural firm Populus, formerly known as HOK Sport, designed Target Field to be built over train tracks and the I-394 freeway.

"Today is a true testament to the amazing work of Populus as well as all the project partners who took the beautiful design and transformed a site that many people said was too small into a world-class venue," said Wade who pointed out that Target Field's site is about the same size as Fenway Park in Boston. "I am proud to say I have been a part of the process."

Wade and his fellow MBA Commissioners say they're also proud of the work they did on the "smaller" features of the ballpark project that may go unnoticed - especially in the excitement of Opening Day - but will play a big role to enhance the overall fan experience and even protect the environment.

For example, the MBA recently committed more than \$2 million to pay for additional streetscape and pedestrian improvements that will improve connections and aesthetics around Target Field. That investment includes funding for the widening of the 7th Street sidewalk that runs along the south end of Target Field. "The goal of all the pedestrian enhancements is to improve the flow of fans on game days and connect walkers to the neighborhood that will be created around the ballpark," MBA Vice Chair Michael Vekich said.

On the north side of the ballpark, the MBA's investment of an additional \$200,000 paid for the 5th Street Panels, one of the ballpark's first two major public art projects. MBA Commissioner Barb Sykora chaired the Public Art Steering Committee that selected the two artists and their designs. "We are very proud of the fact that thousands of Minnesotans can now enjoy the 5th Street Panels and the public art suspended from the ceiling in Target Field Station," Sykora said. "Both pieces are wonderful works of art. It's very satisfying to know the hard work of the Steering Committee has helped beautify the areas around the ballpark."

Inside the ballpark, the thousands of fans who disposed of their plastic cups and utensils in the recycling collection points on Opening Day were probably unaware that their actions were part of

a much broader project initiative in sustainability. MBA Chair Steve Cramer said building an environmentally friendly ballpark was always one of the project team's goals. That's why the MBA and the Twins invested a combined \$2.5 million dollars to obtain LEED Silver Certification. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a rating system that was designed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) to guide and distinguish high performance buildings that have less of an impact on the environment, are healthier for those who use the building and are more profitable than their conventional counterparts. [Click here](#) for more green design elements of the Target Field project.

"We are pleased that our investment will pay dividends for years to come as fans learn more about the importance of sustainable design when they visit Target Field," Cramer said.

The ballpark project team's commitment to sustainability extends to the environmentally friendly transportation options available to fans, which include light rail, commuter train, bus and bikes. On Opening Day, the trips to and from Target Field went smoothly. However, the MBA, the Twins, Hennepin County, MnDOT and Metro Transit will continue working to refine traffic patterns the rest of the season. The group has created a plan that closes or redirects some Minneapolis streets, adjusts the times of traffic lights at close to 60 downtown intersections, posts traffic police at an additional 20 street corners and provides walking directions on about 50 electronic signs.

"We need to communicate to fans that there are convenient, safe and fun modes of transportation to and from Target Field for everyone," said MBA Commissioner Joan Campbell who reminds Minnesotans to check out www.destinationTargetField.com for more transportation information. "We continue to urge spectators to use transit, plan ahead and arrive early."

Thousands of fans did arrive early for the home opener (some as early as 5 a.m.), and they witnessed pre-game festivities filled with nostalgia and national pride. Twins alumni raised the team's championship pennants dating back to 1965, the 148th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard in Duluth performed a stunning military flyover with F-16s and workers from Mortenson Construction, the ballpark's general contractor, unfurled a giant American Flag during the National Anthem.

Kirby Puckett Jr., the son of the late Twin's great, took part in what some fans called the most memorable pre-game event. Kirby Jr. welcomed fans by opening Gate #34, his father's uniform number, on Target Plaza and ushered in a new era of major league baseball in Minnesota.

"We'll always remember those World Series wins inside the Metrodome," said a smiling Kelly Gleason of Mahtomedi. "But it's about time we've finally moved outside to a first-class stadium like this. The team deserves it. Minnesotans deserve it. This ballpark is a beautiful thing."