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Midwest mayors discuss the politics and payoff of walkability

Former Mayors John Norquist of Milwaukee and RT Rybak of Minneapolis will discuss the challenges and benefits of making cities more walkable and bike-able in a talk on May 4 as part of The Tomorrow Plan 2016 Speaker Series.

The talk, titled “Walkability: The Politics and Payoff of Putting Walkability into Action,” is the second annual walkability event hosted by the Urban Land Institute Iowa, continuing the conversation started last year with speakers Jeff Speck and Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett. This year’s event coincides with several initiatives to improve walkability, notably the downtown Des Moines walkability study kicking off this spring. The free event is 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, May 4, at the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, 100 Locust St., Des Moines. To register, visit iowa.uli.org.

John Norquist served as mayor of Milwaukee from 1988-2004. Under his leadership, Milwaukee experienced a decline in poverty, a boom in new downtown housing, became a leading center of education and welfare reform, and developed a 3.1-mile riverwalk. He also led the conversion of Milwaukee’s downtown street network from one-way to two-way streets.

RT Rybak started his work in journalism and business prior to being elected the mayor of Minneapolis. During his time as a mayor he was a critical champion of improving the biking culture in Minneapolis and put \$25 million of federal funding into bike and pedestrian infrastructure. The city of Minneapolis now holds the coveted gold status from the League of American Bicyclists.

The Tomorrow Plan Speaker Series is an implementation strategy of The Tomorrow Plan, a plan for the sustainable development of Greater Des Moines, as a resource to community leaders to learn best practices from some of the country’s leading thinkers. The 2016 Speaker Series will touch on a wide range of topics related to creating a high quality of life in metropolitan areas, including the sharing economy, the effects of transportation and housing on public health, walkability, water quality, public transit and more. For more information, please visit www.dmampo.org/the-tomorrow-plan/2016-speaker-series/.

The Urban Land Institute (www.uli.org) is a global nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Established in 1936, the Institute has more than 30,000 members representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. ULI Iowa is the District Council serving the State of Iowa.