

Area Plan Summary

Merriam Park Community Plan

Addendum to the Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul

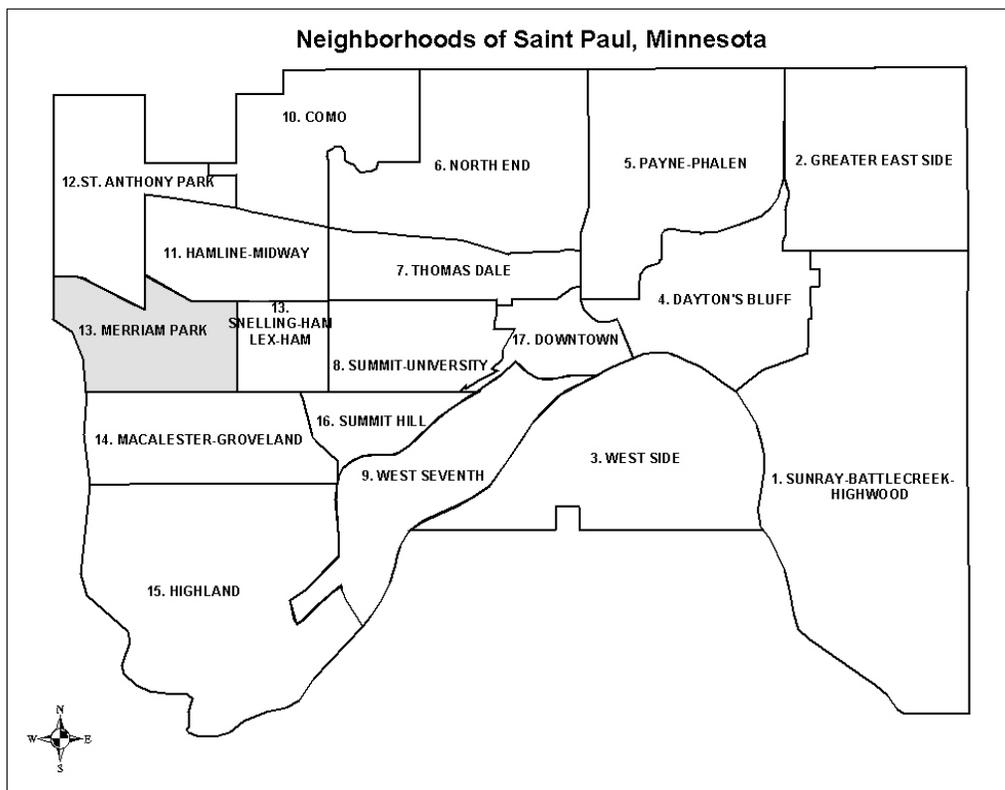
Recommended by the Planning Commission on November 21, 2003

Adopted by the City Council on February 4, 2004

This summary appends to the Comprehensive Plan the vision and strategies of the Merriam Park Community Plan and replaces the Merriam Park portion of the District 13 Plan, adopted in 1978. The plan addresses five major areas, including land use, economic development, infrastructure, environment, and transportation.

Copies of the full-length plan are available for review at the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development and the office of the Merriam Park Community Council.

Location and Current Land Use



Merriam Park is located on the western edge of St. Paul, bounded by Summit Avenue on the south, the Mississippi River on the west, Interstate 94-Cleveland Avenue-University Avenue on the north, and Snelling Avenue on the east. The community includes the four neighborhoods of Merriam Park, Desnoyer Park, Shadow Falls, and Iris Park. The primary land use is low-density residential, with commercial nodes located along Marshall, Snelling, and Selby Avenues. A larger concentration of commercial and industrial uses is located along University Avenue, and a portion of the University of St. Thomas campus is located north of Summit Ave. between Cretin and Cleveland Avenues. The parkland

along the Mississippi River bluff is the community's primary recreational area.

Vision

Merriam Park is a mature community with established transit, commercial, and housing uses that complement each other. The commercial uses serve Merriam Park's residents well, but are not significant regional draws. The recreational opportunities, the walkable nature of the neighborhoods, and the balance of uses give the community an "urban village" feel that makes it a great place to live, raise families, and invest. The plan is a community effort to adopt policies and recommendations that will help strengthen and maintain this unique, stable, and livable community.

Policies and Recommendations

Land Use

1. Merriam Park should maintain its neighborhoods as predominately residential. The community enjoys the environment of walkable neighborhoods with light commercial uses that exist throughout most of the community.
2. Major new development should be mixed-use and located along transit routes or on underused or inappropriately developed sites.
3. Large, or regionally-oriented developments are not appropriate for the scale of the community.
4. The character of the neighborhood as primarily one of owner-occupied single-family homes needs to be maintained while supporting opportunities for newly constructed rental housing.
5. Rehabilitation of existing housing will be given priority over new construction of housing. Incorporation of energy-efficient technologies will be encouraged.
6. The Iris Park area should grow as a residential area with supporting commercial uses. Reconsideration of industrial zoning in this area to facilitate proposed new residential and commercial development would benefit the community. However, the community does not want to discourage existing businesses by proactively rezoning property prior to receiving development proposals.
7. Land along University Avenue should support new mixed-use developments that include affordable housing units, locally-oriented commercial uses, and small to medium-sized employers.
8. Consideration of zoning changes to facilitate new mixed-use or residential development will be tempered by the desire not to negatively impact land values or business investment.
9. Design of new housing units should be appropriate to the surroundings. The community does not favor strictly "retro" or "traditional" design. Urban design and architecture is most pleasing when it adds to the multi-layered fabric of the community.
10. Rental housing is a significant part of the Merriam Park community. Landlords and universities will be encouraged to be more accountable in property management. The City should help the community create a forum for finding solutions and aid for troubled properties.

Economic Development

11. Development that includes small to medium-sized commercial uses that contribute to the local environment will be encouraged. National retailers that promote big-box retail development will be discouraged as simply too big for the area.
12. New development should not damage the pedestrian environment or add significant traffic to residential streets, with the exception of new mixed-use developments. Preserving the pedestrian environment is critical to the character of Merriam Park.
13. New development should emphasize mixed uses. New mixed-use development is encouraged in Iris Park and at the intersections of Cleveland and Marshall, Fairview and Selby, and Snelling

- and Selby.
14. Business parking will be protected, but additional parking for existing businesses will only be approved if it will qualitatively improve the neighborhood.
 15. Merriam Park should be a friendly, encouraging place for small to medium-sized businesses to grow. Expansion of existing businesses will be favored over the establishment of new businesses, particularly those that would have a negative impact on the community because of congestion, character, or use.

Infrastructure

16. The City should support updating technological infrastructure for businesses and homes, particularly high speed cable wiring for communications. All new construction should be required to be built with current technology in place, with the capacity to accommodate future adaptations.
17. New external technologies, such as cell phone towers, should be incorporated into existing structures if possible. This is for aesthetic reasons and also because of the quantity of obsolete external infrastructure currently in place.
18. Overhead utility lines should be buried whenever possible, particularly when new construction is proposed.

Environment

19. The Mississippi River corridor must be maintained as a premier recreational area for the neighborhood. Changes that increase daily vehicular commuter traffic along the river will be opposed. The river as a park and green space must be maintained.
20. All parks and green spaces must be protected from non-park related development and/or neglect, particularly Aldine and Iris Parks.
21. This plan supports the St. Paul Land Use Plan's definition of green spaces, parks, and the river as urban amenities. Green spaces and corridors should be encouraged in the community wherever possible, such as along railroad tracks and roads.

Transportation

22. The Merriam Park community does not support a connection between Ayd Mill Road and Interstate-94. A future connection would negatively impact Merriam Park and the Snelling-Hamline neighborhoods. The community opposes the expansion of Ayd Mill Road for any purposes. *Note: This recommendation expresses the position of the Merriam Park community and Merriam Park Community Council. The Transportation Policy Plan, Policy 20, states: "The City should complete environmental assessment of alternatives for the future of Ayd Mill Road and implement the resulting recommendations." The final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Ayd Mill Road is scheduled to be completed in 2004. Adoption as City policy of a recommendation against any connection or expansion of Ayd Mill Road is therefore premature.*
23. Speeding on residential streets, and an increase in overflow traffic from Marshall, Cretin, Cleveland, Fairview, and Snelling are increasing problems. Traffic calming measures should be considered to reduce speeding and cut-through traffic on residential streets.
24. The community supports initiatives that promote biking, busing, and other means of transportation as alternatives to single-occupant vehicles. Bike lanes, and bikes racks in commercial areas and on buses should be added. Connecting St. Paul to the Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis is supported when feasible.
25. Bus service throughout the neighborhood needs to be improved. Merriam Park is ill-served by mass transit options. Improving transit will help address existing traffic problems resulting from increased traffic. The City should facilitate reassessing how the neighborhood can be better served by transit.

26. University Avenue is the desired corridor for the development of light rail transit. LRT must be designed to contribute to the neighborhood rather than just shuttle people through.
27. The Mississippi River Boulevard is a recreational asset to the community and to the City of St. Paul. It should be protected from transportation changes that would increase motor vehicle traffic or otherwise negatively affect the boulevard's recreational and residential value. __

Actions Requiring City Leadership

Public Works

1. Implement traffic-calming measures to reduce speeding and cut-through traffic on residential streets.
2. Support the addition of bike lanes where feasible, and installation of bike racks on buses and in commercial areas (Public Works, PED, LIEP, Parks).
3. Advocate for improved bus service for Merriam Park (Public Works, PED).
4. Promote the development of light rail transit on University Avenue. Ensure that LRT design contributes to the neighborhood rather than just shuttles people through (Public Works, PED).
5. Protect Mississippi River Blvd. from transportation changes that would increase motor vehicle traffic or otherwise negatively affect the boulevard's recreational and residential value. __

Planning and Economic Development

6. Encourage new mixed-use development along transit routes and on underused or inappropriately developed sites, particularly along University Ave., in the Iris Park neighborhood, and at the intersections of Cleveland and Marshall, Fairview and Selby, and Snelling and Selby.
7. Require design of new development to be pedestrian-friendly (PED, LIEP).
8. Promote the rehabilitation of existing housing with the assistance of City-sponsored programs. Encourage incorporation of energy-efficient technologies.
9. Encourage all new development to include high-speed cable wiring for communications (PED, LIEP).
10. Encourage incorporation of technology infrastructure (such as cell phone antennas) into existing structures if possible (PED, LIEP).
11. Encourage new development to bury utility lines whenever possible (PED, LIEP).

Parks and Recreation

12. Protect all existing public parks and green spaces, particularly Aldine and Iris Parks, and Mississippi River Blvd., from non-park related development and/or neglect.
13. Discourage transportation system changes that increase vehicular commuter traffic along Mississippi River Blvd.

Actions Requiring Leadership by the Community Council

1. Support new mixed-use development along transit routes and on underused or inappropriately developed sites, particularly along University Ave., in the Iris Park neighborhood, and at the intersections of Cleveland and Marshall, Fairview and Selby, and Snelling and Selby
2. Promote the rehabilitation of existing housing with the assistance of City-sponsored programs. Encourage incorporation of energy-efficient technologies.
3. Recommend design of new development to be pedestrian-friendly.
4. Support design of new housing that is appropriate to the surroundings. Designs other than "retro" or "traditional" will be supported if it adds to the multi-layered fabric of the neighborhood.
5. Encourage all new development to include high-speed cable wiring for communications.
6. Encourage incorporation of technology infrastructure (such as cell phone antennas) into existing

- structures if possible.
7. Encourage new development to bury utility lines whenever possible.
 8. Establish a rental housing forum that is a service for landlords, tenants, neighbors, and universities to find solutions and aid for troubled properties.
 9. Advocate for improved bus service for Merriam Park.

Planning Commission Findings

The Planning Commission finds that the summary of the Merriam Park Community Plan, as amended, is consistent with the *Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan* and other adopted City policies.

Planning Process

The Merriam Park Community Plan is the product of a series of public meetings held between 1998 and 2000. Three community meetings attended by over 100 residents and business were held to gather input and generate ideas about the future of Merriam Park. The Building and Land Use Committee of the Merriam Park Community Council developed the draft plan based on the community meetings. The plan was reviewed and approved by the Community Council in 2000, but then lay “dormant” as major challenges and transitions in the council occurred. When new Council leadership was established in 2001, concern for formally adopting the plan as part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan was raised again. After further review, the Merriam Park Community Council approved the plan at its April, 2002 board meeting, and revised it again in August 2003 in response to City staff comments.