



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

*25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102*

*Telephone: 651-266-6565
Facsimile: 651-228-3261*

DATE: July 19, 2012
TO: Comprehensive Planning Committee
FROM: Lucy Thompson, Principal City Planner
SUBJECT: Great River Passage Master Plan

BACKGROUND

The Great River Passage Master Plan is the City's long-term plan for unifying the entire length of Saint Paul's Mississippi riverfront (17 miles of river, 26 miles of shoreline) into one grand and comprehensive vision to be realized over the next 30-50 years. The Great River Passage Master Plan sets the stage for sustainable parks and open spaces; ecological restoration; economic development; and connection of the city, its neighborhoods and people to the Mississippi River. It builds on 15 years of Saint Paul's efforts to fully realize what an incredible environmental, recreational, physical, economic, cultural and historic resource the Mississippi River is. Starting with the *Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework* (1997), these efforts include the Mississippi River Corridor Plan (2001), the Great River Park chapter of the *Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework* (2007), and various district and small area plans.

Over the course of nearly two years, the Great River Passage (GRP) Master Plan was prepared by a multi-disciplinary consultant team headed by Wenk Associates, based in Denver, CO, working with an inter-departmental City staff team and a 56-member task force/technical advisory group that included representatives from district councils, City Council offices, National Park Service, MN Department of Natural Resources, Ramsey County, Friends of Saint Paul and Ramsey County Parks and Trails, Friends of the Mississippi River, and Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation. Community direction and feedback were gathered at 29 public input sessions, including focus groups, community task force meetings and open houses.

THE GREAT RIVER PASSAGE MASTER PLAN

The GRP Master Plan contains goals, objectives, strategies and projects based on three core principles for riverfront public and private development, established in the *Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework*:

- More Natural
- More Urban
- More Connected

The Master Plan explores the application of these principles in four sub-areas, or reaches, of the Mississippi River as it travels through Saint Paul:

- The Gorge
- The Valley
- Downtown
- The Floodplain

The Master Plan is primarily a parks and open space plan that envisions the river corridor as an interconnected system of parks and trails. However, the Master Plan also envisions a river corridor that connects public space along the river to private development in neighborhoods adjacent to the river. It recognizes that the river corridor is Saint Paul's most significant environmental and recreational amenity, while also recognizing that it serves urban development just beyond the river's edge.

A PLAN IN TWO PARTS

Adoption of the GRP Master Plan will occur along two parallel tracks:

- adoption by the Saint Paul City Council of the entire document, including potential projects and a proposed administrative structure to staff the effort; and
- adoption by the City Council of certain sections of the Master Plan as an amendment to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan.

A graphic of the approval process is attached.

Adoption of the Entire GRP Master Plan

This track consists of a recommendation from the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission directly to the Mayor and City Council. The full document goes beyond what is appropriately part of the Comprehensive Plan, in that it contains very specific parks projects and a strategic plan to organize the Department of Parks and Recreation to focus on the GRP. The Parks and Recreation Commission recommended the full document to the City Council on June 20, 2012.

Adoption of Certain Sections of the GRP Master Plan as Part of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan

This track consists of a recommendation from the Planning Commission (at the recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Commission) to the Mayor and City Council. Certain sections of the GRP Master Plan are being recommended for adoption as part of the Comprehensive Plan in order to:

- align the goals and objectives of the GRP with those of the other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, especially land use, transportation, and parks and recreation; and
- ensure that the GRP Master Plan is official City planning policy, and therefore guides public and private investment within the Passage.

The sections of the GRP recommended for adoption as part of the Comprehensive Plan include:

- general goals and objectives, by principle (more natural, more urban more connected) and reach (Gorge, Valley, Downtown and Floodplain);
- graphics that illustrate key planning and design concepts; and
- goals and objectives related to regional park vision plans, with corresponding graphics.

SAINT PAUL PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

On June 20, 2012, the Saint Paul Parks Commission took three actions regarding the Great River Passage Master Plan:

- forwarded the full Master Plan, with changes, to the Planning Commission and City Council for final approval;
- requested that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council adoption of appropriate sections of the Master Plan as part of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan; and
- requested that the City Council adopt the entire Great River Passage Master Plan as official City policy to guide public and private investment within the Great River Passage, plan implementation, and administration of the Great River Passage program.

A copy of the Parks and Recreation Commission's resolution is attached.

ROLE OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The next step in the approval process takes place at the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will recommend to the City Council adoption of appropriate sections of the Great River Passage Master Plan as amendments to the City's Comprehensive Plan. The role of the Planning Commission is to review the broader vision, goals and objectives in the GRP Comprehensive Plan document for consistency with the chapters of the larger Comprehensive Plan, and recommend adoption of those that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. It is not the Planning Commission's role to evaluate whether the projects being recommended in the Master Plan are the right ones for the Passage, or whether the implementation strategy is the right one. Where the vision, goals and/or objectives are not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the Commission may recommend amending either the GRP Comprehensive Plan or the relevant existing Comprehensive Plan language to achieve consistency.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Comprehensive Planning Committee:

- send the public hearing draft of the Great River Passage Master Plan/Proposed Amendment to Saint Paul's Comprehensive Plan to the full Planning Commission; and

Comprehensive Planning Committee
July 19, 2012
Page Four

- request that the Planning Commission release the public hearing draft for public review; and
- request that the Planning Commission set a public hearing date of September 21, 2012.

Attachments:

- GRP Master Plan Approval Process
- Parks and Recreation Commission Resolution

The full GRP Master Plan and the shorter version that will be considered as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan are available on-line:

Full document at <http://www.greatriverpassage.org>

Comp Plan amendment at <http://www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?nid=3429> (Comp Planning Committee web page)

If you are not able to download the Comp Plan version and would like a printed copy, please let Lucy know right away at 651.266.6578.