

Area Plan Summary
District 9 Area Plan

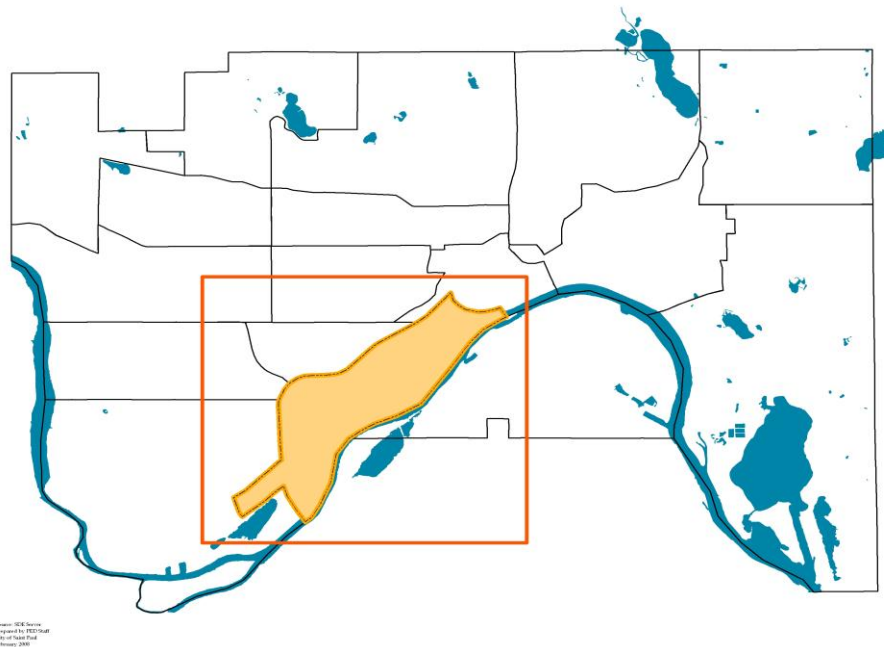
Addendum to The Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul
Recommended by the Planning Commission – 7/10/2009
Adopted by the City Council – 7/7/2010
Amendment recommended by the Planning Commission – 6/14/2013
Amendment adopted by the City Council – 7/17/13

*This summary appends to the Comprehensive Plan the vision and strategies of the **West 7th Street/Fort Road District 9 Area Plan** and replaces the District 9 Plan adopted in 1980. The plan addresses the area centered on West 7th from downtown to Homer Street. It contains an overview of the current conditions of the area, visions and goals, strategies, and implementation steps. The plan addresses several key areas of focus: 1) housing; 2) jobs and economic development; 3) community development; 4) mix of land uses; 5) historic preservation and aesthetics; 6) environmental quality; and 7) transportation and circulation. Strategies are presented for each of these key areas. This summary highlights those strategies for which the City has primary implementation responsibilities.*

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 West 7th/Fort Road Federation.

Location

The study area is generally bounded by Downtown to the east, the Mississippi River to the south, and Interstate 35E to the north and west.



Vision

Over the next 10 years, more than 4,000 new housing units will be built in District 9. The challenge in the community is to planfully integrate these new units into the existing density of the community, maintain the existing housing stock, and retain the character of District 9. New housing units and households will impact adjacent land uses, social concerns and support, traffic and transit demand, retail demand, pedestrian and bicycle safety, design standards and the market for diverse and affordable housing options. Each section includes trends, key issues, and actions to realize the community envisioned for the next 20 years.

Through the realization of a new district plan for District 9, the District hopes to:

- Maintain a diversity of households in regard to income, age, and race/ethnicity.
- Maintain existing housing stock while developing new housing to meet the diversity of households' needs.
- Link the neighborhoods within West 7th more strongly to one another.
- Link the community of West 7th to the amenities and opportunities within and outside of the community.
- Develop job opportunities through retail, services, entertainment, and clean industrial development.
- Wisely reuse industrial sites consistent with the plan.
- Respect the Mississippi River as a community asset, limit new building on the river and seek opportunities to connect the neighborhoods to the riverfront.
- Improve environmental quality for a sustainable future.
- Promote aesthetic values in rehabilitation and development efforts.

Specific Action Strategies and Implementation Steps

Housing

The plan emphasizes the need to preserve and improve existing housing stock while allowing new, large housing developments in specific geographic areas. The neighborhood's housing stock spans 150 years, and new construction should respect and complement the character of existing housing in the community. Housing stock, both new and refurbished, should continue to provide a mix of incomes with affordable places to live. Additions to the housing stock should take place near transit. In addition:

- Neighborhood sub-areas such as the Jefferson School area, Uppertown and Butternut neighborhoods, the area north of West 7th bordered by I-35E and St. Clair, Nugent Street and the Kipps Glen neighborhood need to be preserved.
- Key sites identified for major housing developments are: 1) the Gateway Area; 2) Schmidt Brewery site; 3) Randolph/Shepard/West 7th; 4) Victoria Park.
- Key sites identified for redevelopment include: 1) Jefferson School area; 2) Uppertown and Butternut neighborhoods; 3) area north of West 7th bordered by I-35E and St. Clair; 4) Nugent Street; 5) Kipps Glen neighborhood.

Key strategies for Housing are:

Preservation and improvement of existing housing:

1. Maintain the character of existing residential areas by keeping zoning appropriate to residential neighborhoods.
2. Encourage retention of ownership of properties through owner-occupant home loan programs, and enforce residency of owners who claim homestead property designation.
3. Study rezoning the area of District 9 bounded by Grand Avenue to the North, Interstate 35E to the Northwest, Smith Avenue to the East, Shepard Road to the Southeast and Grace Street to the South to assess the impact of the conversion of single family homes to multi-family residences and consider downzoning with the intent to prevent future conversions of single-family homes and require deconversion of homes designed as single-family when the property has been vacant for 365 days.
4. Study rezoning the area of District 9 bounded by Randolph Avenue to the North, Shepard Road to the Southeast, Otto Avenue to the South and West 7th Street to the Northeast to address changing land use patterns.
5. Enforce current ordinances regarding accessory housing units.
6. Enforce current ordinances or develop new housing policies to ensure the fair dispersal of residential facilities and transitional housing, and enforce ordinances regarding sober houses in St. Paul.
7. Enforce the Property Maintenance Code equitably and reasonably throughout the community to stave off deterioration of the housing stock.
8. Reinstate low interest loans and/or grants for rehabilitation (like the Houses to Homes program) and other finance programs designed to rehabilitate older homes.
9. Market existing housing through the City of Saint Paul sponsorship of the Home Tour.

Additions to the housing supply, especially near transit:

10. Study rezoning the Chestnut/Exchange area to develop medium-density housing adjacent to Irvine Park. Innovative plans to screen the Xcel Energy Center parking ramp (along Eagle) should be part of the development.
11. Ensure that the new Victoria Park development is integrated and connected with the existing Randolph and View neighborhoods.
12. Promote those stretches of West 7th between key nodes as the appropriate location for higher-density residential use, in order to add diversity to the housing stock while preserving the traditional neighborhood fabric and supporting existing and future transit investment.

Housing additions and improvements to complement existing housing:

13. Investigate ways to require site plan review of all housing by the City to ensure that new construction is sensitive to the context of the neighborhood in which it is developed.
14. Enforce building codes to ensure that infill housing maintains integrity of the foundation and structure of the building, due to the geology of the area.

Housing additions and improvements at a cost/income mix to meet market demand and the City's housing policy:

15. Identify strategic areas to incorporate mixed-use and higher-density development in context with existing structures.

Jobs and Economic Development

The District is in favor of bringing in new “clean” industries, with the caveat that they operate to improve the environment and meet the employment needs of the community. The main artery, West 7th, needs to thrive as the major commercial corridor. While there may be satellite commercial areas, e.g., the Randolph, Shepard and Chestnut intersection, they should not compete with businesses on West 7th. The plan endorses effective reuse of industrial, polluted and under-used sites, and identifies priority redevelopment sites.

Key strategies for Jobs and Economic Development are:

Preservation of business and jobs in the area while complementing housing objectives:

16. Support “nodes” of retail businesses at the intersections of West 7th and Kellogg, Smith, St. Clair, Jefferson, Randolph, and Montreal/Lexington, rather than a continuous strip of retail throughout the length of West 7th.
17. Require site plan review by the City to ensure that new construction is sensitive to the context of the neighborhood in which it is developed.
18. Investigate ways to incorporate the Fort Road Design Guidelines for commercial areas into city code, including as a city-wide requirement or as an overlay district.
19. Study the potential to widen sidewalks when new structures are built on West 7th, while maintaining street width.
20. Determine appropriate locations for permit parking expansion in those areas impacted by Xcel Energy Center and RiverCentre event attendees and hospital complex employees.
21. Encourage flexible parking strategies such as shared parking for commercial and institutional users, and parking behind structures.
22. Develop a parking management plan as recommended in the *Seven Corners Gateway Plan*.

Effective reuse of industrial, polluted and under-used sites:

23. After demolition of the Xcel High Bridge coal power plant, maintain the site as open space, such as a soccer field.
24. Complete the full build-out of the community's plan for Victoria Park.

Priority redevelopment sites:

25. Support the adaptive reuse for limited retail/commercial of the Head House at Chestnut and Shepard, creatively planning for adequate parking.

Community Development

Community gathering places and access to community initiatives are important to the District 9 Council and highlighted in the plan. Opportunities for community gathering places must be realized in redevelopment plans of former industrial properties. Continuing to improve institutions serving families and children, particularly local schools and libraries, is important. District 9 has two community centers, St. Clair and the Salvation Army, and one small recreation center, Palace. The two public gathering places are inadequate for the needs of the community. Over the last 35 years, District 9 has fought for preservation of school options in the community. Redevelopment sites need to allow for public access to amenities in the community. District 9 has always been endowed with facilities of various faith traditions which contribute to the quality of life in the neighborhood through worship and outreach programs. District 9 is perceived as safer now than it was several years ago; however, community policing activities should be strengthened. Quality of life in District 9 is compromised because of a lack of park space in the neighborhood. The plan endorses the National Great River Park planning effort, as well as a coordinated, integrated plan of parks development throughout the neighborhood.

Key strategies for community development include:

Recreation and community centers:

26. Incorporate programming for community youth that is more diverse than only sports activities.
27. Replace the Palace playground building, and upgrade the grounds and recreation center; work with the community to identify needed improvements.

Libraries:

28. Maintain a library facility in the community to meet the expanding and evolving community needs.
29. Continue to work with the libraries to ensure that facilities meet evolving community needs.

Community gathering places and public access:

30. Incorporate green space and other public spaces in major redevelopments such as the Brewery, Randolph/Shepard/West 7th, and Victoria Park developments.
31. Maintain and improve public access to streets, parks, green areas and the river.

Public safety:

32. Provide appropriate lighting and visibility for the recreational bike trail along I-35E.
33. Develop new West 7th lighting, utilizing the historic lantern style in all of Area 1, the area of West 7th from Kellogg to Grace Street.
34. Add signage throughout the neighborhood to provide information for connecting trails. Maintain consistency with Parks signage.
35. Develop traffic calming strategies along the major arteries in the neighborhood, such as

West 7th, Montreal, Victoria, Otto, Randolph, Lexington, St. Clair, and Smith.

36. Increase the enforcement of traffic laws, especially regarding speeding and pedestrian rights.

Parks:

37. Improve connections between parks to create a system of greenways.
38. Identify areas for off-leash dog parks, particularly because of the expansion of housing in the community.
39. Assess the Uppertown neighborhood's needs to be sure that Dousman Park serves the children in the area.
40. Prioritize areas of higher-density housing and apartment units for new play parks.
41. Identify areas for park/green space in the large residential areas on both sides of West 7th between Shepard and I-35E and Randolph.
42. Study the need for additional parking at the East entrance of Crosby Farm Park.
43. Improve access to the river by better and more vertical connections from the bluff (especially at the end of Walnut and at the High Bridge) and a pedestrian tunnel under Shepard Road.
44. If Island Station is not redeveloped preserving the original building as housing, consider reuse of the site as a public park property and the building as a park facility.
45. After demolition of the Xcel High Bridge coal power plant, maintain the site as open space, such as a soccer field.
46. Pursue acquisition of riverfront property for public domain easements for access.
47. Monitor and, where necessary, remove and replace dead, dying, or diseased boulevard trees.

Land Use Mix

District 9 has a broad variety of land uses. It is desirable to encourage compatible residential and business uses in new development. The commercial land use along West 7th should be confined to the block "face" and not extend into residential neighborhoods. A mix of land uses should be integrated within the community while stressing the fact that compatibility is the keystone in maintaining this land use diversity in a dense neighborhood.

Key strategies include:

48. Inventory residential character on West 7th and evaluate where it might be appropriate for higher-density residential infill.
49. Concentrate commercial activity at key nodes along West 7th to improve viability of businesses. These include the intersections of West 7th with Kellogg, Grand, St. Clair, Jefferson, Randolph, Otto, and Montreal.

Historic Preservation and Aesthetics

New development should complement the existing community. Specific areas that have

sustained their character for more than 100 years need special attention to ensure that they are not lost to development and gentrification during the next decades. Urban design guidelines need to be enforced. New construction, particularly along W. 7th, should have the scale, proportions, colors, rhythm of solids and voids, and expression in character with adjacent buildings.

Contemporary design is supported if sympathetic to the streetscape. The first floor should be active and have a strong relationship to the sidewalk. Where original storefronts remain, their character should not be altered. Existing historic elements should be repaired, preserved and maintained. When possible, storefronts that have been altered should be restored to, or close to, their original character. In some cases, the original building fabric may be found behind the alterations. In all cases, as much original fabric should be maintained as possible. The back of commercial buildings should not be neglected from the perspective of shoppers or residents. Mechanical systems should not be located in public view. Street furniture along W. 7th should provide continuity and a welcoming pedestrian scale. Historic lanterns should be installed along the entirety of W. 7th. Examples of appropriate designs are included in the Appendix.

Strategies highlighted under historic preservation and aesthetics include:

Historic character of the community:

50. Pursue local and National Register designation for the Schmidt Brewery historic buildings.
51. Pursue local designation of the Leech/McBoal and Butternut neighborhoods, either as individual buildings or as districts.
52. Pursue local and National Register designation of the original limestone residential and commercial buildings in West 7th.

Urban design:

53. Utilize Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines to guide improvements to the physical environment to reduce crime (i.e., develop defensible spaces) and improve the aesthetic environment.
54. Encourage green roofs and compliance with sustainability standards in commercial buildings.
55. Enforce the *Victoria Park Master Plan* guidelines.

Environmental Quality

District 9 has a strong connection to the Mississippi River, a connection that must be preserved both physically and psychologically. In addition, the community has been affected by air, water, ground and noise pollution. The plan recommends that development and related activities minimize the environmental effect on residents today and in the future. In conducting new development and redevelopment activities, following the guidelines of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is important in maintaining a healthy environment.

Key strategies for preserving environmental quality include:

56. Identify formerly-polluted sites for clean-up, e.g., at Randolph and Milton, James and Randolph, and at the end of Drake at Shepard, and determine appropriate mitigation.
57. Encourage the use of rain gardens and green roofs in new development.
58. Integrate transit planning into new developments.

Transportation and Circulation

The community is bounded by major thoroughfares providing ample vehicle access throughout the community. However, the number of trips made on these roadways increases each year. The plan includes provisions for pedestrian and child safety, balancing the needs of transit users with those of drivers, and maintaining provisions for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Key strategies for transportation and circulation include:

Vehicular circulation:

59. Investigate a redesign of the intersection of West 7th and Smith Avenue (including McBoal between Smith and West 7th and the alley between McBoal and Goodrich behind the tire company) to ensure enough room to make a safe turn onto Smith by large semi-trailer trucks.
60. Investigate an interchange at Shepard and 35E to remove through-traffic from neighborhood streets.
61. Investigate redesign of the intersection of West 7th Street, Montreal Avenue and Lexington Parkway.
62. Explore the redesign of Shepard Road from Homer Street to Davern Street with a planted median and ornamental lighting.
63. Construct new street segments within the Brewery site to connect to neighboring streets and break up the site into urban block increments.

Pedestrian and child safety:

64. Improve bridges to encourage pedestrian and bicycle use, e.g., West 7th overpass between St. Clair and Jefferson.
65. Improve timing of lights for trains to improve safety and access for pedestrians.
66. Promote traffic-calming features to slow down traffic, e.g., bump outs, marked crosswalks, street trees, and pedestrian lighting along the following: West 7th at key nodes; Smith Avenue between the High Bridge and West 7th; Osceola between West 7th and Jefferson; Otto from Shepard to West 7th; Jefferson, Canton and Victoria for access to West 7th.

Public transit:

67. Promote new development that will fully utilize existing transit services, and encourage continued and improved transit facilities.

Bicycle and pedestrian options:

68. Provide access between West 7th and the Mississippi River, e.g., at the street level from Chestnut and Shepard and vertically, Irvine Park at Walnut, Uppertown at the High Bridge.
69. Connect the bike path between West 7th and Crosby Farm Park.
70. Encourage the City of Saint Paul Department of Public Works and Division of Parks and Recreation to provide consistent and regular maintenance of the bike path along I-35E.
71. Improve the condition and, where possible, widen sidewalks throughout the community.
72. Improve pedestrian access and safety at the intersection of West 7th with Lexington.
73. Develop a bike trail on Jefferson to Schmidt Brewery and Shepard Road along Duke.
74. Establish a bike lane on Otto between West 7th and Shepard.

Priority Actions for City Participation

The following actions have been identified as priorities of the community that require leadership or signification participation by City government. Community groups and city departments should implement the projects identified in this summary by applying for City resources in competitive processes such as the Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) and Sales Tax Revitalization program (STAR), and working though the regular operating programs of relevant City departments.

1. Maintain the character of existing residential areas by keeping zoning appropriate to residential neighborhoods.
9. Study rezoning the Chestnut/Exchange area to TN2 to develop medium-density housing adjacent to Irvine Park. Innovative plans to screen the Xcel Energy Center parking ramp (along Eagle) should be part of the development.
15. Support “nodes” of retail businesses at the intersections of West 7th and Kellogg, Smith, St. Clair, Jefferson, Randolph, and Montreal/Lexington, rather than a continuous strip of retail throughout the length of West 7th.
23. Complete the full build-out of the community’s plan for Victoria Park.
24. Support the adaptive reuse for limited retail/commercial of the Head House at Chestnut and Shepard, creatively planning for adequate parking.
26. Replace the Palace playground building and upgrade the grounds and recreation center; work with the community to identify needed improvements.
32. Develop new West 7th lighting, utilizing the historic lantern style in all of Area 1, the area along West 7th between Kellogg and Grace Street.
33. Provide appropriate lighting and visibility for the recreational bike trail along I-35E.
48. Pursue acquisition of riverfront property for public domain easements for access.
60. Investigate an interchange at Shepard and I-35E to remove through traffic from neighborhood streets.
61. Investigate redesigning the intersection of West 7th Street, Montreal Avenue and Lexington Parkway

73. Improve pedestrian access and safety at the intersection of West 7th with Lexington Parkway.
74. Develop a bike trail on Jefferson to Schmidt Brewery and Shepard Road along Duke.
75. Establish a bike lane on Otto between West 7th and Shepard Road.

Planning Commission Findings

The Saint Paul Planning Commission recommended the District 9 Area Plan to the City Council on July 10, 2009. The Planning Commission made no changes to the document approved by the Neighborhood Planning Committee. In 2013, the Planning Commission considered amendments to the District 9 Area Plan Summary recommended by the W. 7th/Fort Road Federation to address on-going concerns about the impact of commercial development along W. 7th Street on adjacent residential areas. In June 2013, the Planning Commission recommended approval of these amendments, and forwarded them to the City Council for final adoption.

Planning Process

The District 9 Area Plan updates the 1983 District 9 Area Plan previously adopted by the City Council. This plan was developed by the West 7th/Fort Road Federation through a planning committee. The committee began meeting in July 2004 and continued through the summer of 2005. The draft of the plan was presented at the 2006 annual meeting of the West 7th/Fort Road Federation. The plan was adopted by the West 7th/Fort Road Federation in summer 2006.

In 2012, the W. 7th/Fort Road Federation worked with City staff, business owners and adjacent property owners to address a wide range of urban design issues of concern to residents adjacent to the W. 7th commercial corridor. The result was a set of proposed design guidelines to illustrate how new commercial construction and building rehabilitation should be designed so that they are compatible with the scale, proportion and character of adjacent buildings, and to generally lessen the impact on adjacent residential uses. The proposed amendments to the District 9 Area Plan Summary were approved by the Planning Commission in June 2013 and the City Council in July 2013.

Appendix

Examples of successful and not so successful designs for commercial development are included in this appendix. By providing design examples mostly from the community, aesthetic preferences of West 7th will be clear to commercial owners as they work with the community and the St. Paul city staff in developing their properties. The guidelines will help to retain the uniqueness of West 7th. In general, these guidelines strive to support developments whereby adjacent buildings create a common street character (unifying) but also allow diversity and individual expression to avoid monotony (diversifying).

Shop Fronts

Shop fronts should emphasize pedestrian scale along the sidewalk. There should be a strong sense of entry, frequently recessed, and windows should allow pedestrians to view inside. Windows should be kept at their original scale in old buildings. In the 1870's, innovation in storefront design was possible because of the development of large plate glass windows and cast iron for frames. Over time, many of these storefronts were bricked in and large signs attached to attract automobile drivers, ignoring the pedestrian shopper. Newly constructed buildings should have a similar proportion (width to height ratio) of the facades of adjacent buildings. The new facades should be consistent in the number of bays, size, and proportions and number of openings with that of neighboring buildings. New commercial structures should be generally consistent with the height and setback of adjacent structures.

DO:



This block of buildings has maintained the entries and windows at the street level to appeal to shoppers. Keeping the original windows on the second and third floors, as well, maintains the structures' historic character.

DON'T:



These pictures show buildings that have lost their original integrity through the blocking up of the store fronts, and elimination of original building details (such as cornices).



Windows

Next to the material of a building, the size, shape, placement, and trim of windows constitute the major character-creating element of the building. In restoring an historic building, the practice of “blocking-up” or “blocking-down” existing window openings to fit a smaller than original window should be avoided because it does more than any other single element to change the basic appearance of a building—seldom for the better. Use of an interior sloped or boxed soffit can allow the window to retain its full height. In new construction, windows should provide character and evidence of human occupancy.

DO:



In the first picture, windows were restored at the street level in this series of commercial buildings (however, cornices are missing).



In this newly constructed building on the left, appropriately-sized windows at the street level and in the second floor residential units are designed to be functional and reflect proportions of older structures.

DON'T:



Windows in this large office building are monotonous and lack interest.



In the building to the left, original first floor windows were removed and replaced with windows that do not conform to the building's historic character. The rectangular horizontal orientation of the first floor windows is incompatible with the age of the structure. Finally, the shutters on the second floor are decorative, not original replacements, and would not cover the windows even if they were functional.

Exterior Materials

Existing masonry should not be covered with other materials, but should be maintained in a manner that will preserve it. Waterproofing, water repellent coatings and sandblasting should be avoided as they can accelerate deterioration of the masonry. When tuck-pointing the joints, new mortar should duplicate the original mortar in composition, color, and joint profile. In new construction, materials should be used that complement other nearby structures that have kept their original materials, such as stone and brick.

DO:



Maintenance of the original brick, stone and other materials makes this a successful historic structure.



Use of two color tones of brick horizontally delineating commercial and residential floors is effective in this new construction.



Use of blocks of material types creates visual interest and a sense of entry.



Use of brick and metal reflecting an industrial physical form is appropriate for this new construction in a former industrial area.

DON'T:



The first floor of the building to the left was covered with materials inappropriate to the materials used in the original structure. The first floor has since been rehabilitated.

Cornices

Cornices are projections from buildings that help to keep rainwater away from the front of the structure. They are most often at the top of a building, creating a “crown” effect, but they may also be above a lower floor as well, creating a more human scale to the building. Historically, each building usually had a distinct cornice style, and when combined in a streetscape they had a unifying effect. Cornices should be restored to their original appearance as much as possible. A new, sympathetic cornice could be used to replace a cornice beyond repair. Cornices can be applied to structures to help unify the façade of the streetscape when the building is out of character with the rest of the streetscape and when there is a break in the cornice flow.

DO:



In the picture to the left, cornices were preserved on an historic office building. At the first floor level, the cornice contributes to making the building pedestrian friendly. At the top of the building, the cornice “finishes” the façade setting off the architectural elements of the structure. The topmost façade can also hide mechanical systems.



In this newly constructed building, a cornice at the top of the building is complementary to other cornices in the area.

DON'T:



The cornices at the tops of the buildings are still somewhat intact, but the cornices above the first floor have been changed over time.

Roofs

Roofs retaining their original shape should be maintained and preserved. Deteriorated roof coverings should be replaced with new material that matches the old in color and texture. Roofs can help in hiding mechanical systems from the street and from other viewpoints of the building. All architectural features which give the roof its essential character such as dormers, cupolas, cornices, brackets, chimneys, cresting, etc., should be preserved or replaced where necessary.

DO:



Each of these structures has kept its original roof line and features, including a residential structure that is now used for commercial purposes.



Graphics

The use of graphics on buildings should be kept in character with the age of the building. Signs should be pedestrian oriented in size while also allowing for identification from vehicles. Signs should be simple and bold, attracting the passerby, both driving and walking. Signs should not be above the sill of the second floor unless it reflects a different occupant than that of the first floor. Graphics painted or stenciled in shop front windows were common, historically. The clutter and chaotic diversity of signs can be a problem, and is compounded by large signs and lighting techniques. The resulting visual environment is extremely confusing to one not familiar with the area, making it difficult to find a particular store or place. Paper and vinyl signs attached to store windows and buildings should be discouraged unless they are for a temporary public notice.

DO:



Each of these examples displays signage appropriate to the era of the building. The signage is clear, easy to read from the sidewalk and from a car, and the signage does not restrict views into the building. Note that graphics painted on an awning is also traditional for historic buildings. Lighting of signs should be similar to the period.



DON'T:



The material, lettering, and size of the sign at the left are not complementary to the age and integrity of the building. Additionally, plastic display signs, backlit with fluorescent lamps are inappropriate for the majority of existing commercial structures, particularly for those buildings built before 1970.

Awnings

Awnings provide shelter from the natural elements, and create a feeling of protection and human scale. People are drawn to walk beneath them and view shop front displays, an important factor in increasing sales. Colors are encouraged when complementary to the building. The size and scale of the awnings should be appropriate to the building openings and care should be taken not to cover any fine details on the façade. Awnings at the second and third floor levels should not be used unless documentary evidence shows that they existed on that building.

DO:



The awnings in the three pictures on the left are simple, protective, and help to orient pedestrians to the buildings.

DON'T:



While the awnings in the picture to the left are simple and colorful, they have no purpose in relationship to the function of the building.



The “awning” on the lower picture overwhelms the pedestrian scale at the sidewalk.

Color

Color is an extremely important element in the street environment. Inappropriate colors and misuse of them can destroy the image of a building. Exterior colors should harmonize with other colors on the same building and with the colors on the street in general. Pastels were not a color tradition in the history of this community and should be avoided.

DO:



The use of variations in color can break up a large structure into smaller units, making it more interesting.



Paint colors selected for wood components of buildings should complement the other exterior colors and be appropriate to the age of the structure. Historic color palettes are carried by most major paint manufacturers. The National Register of Historic Places can also provide resources.



Sometimes, a burst of color on a building or on awnings can be effective, such as on the buildings on the left.

DON'T:



Given the number of bleak months during the year in St. Paul, plain concrete is not an effective color choice.

Building Rear

The design guidelines focus primarily on the front streetscape of commercial buildings along West 7th. But, the back of buildings should not be neglected when shoppers have access to them from parking lots. Space for delivery and trash and recycling can be developed to allow room for pedestrians. Landscaping and identification graphics should be used to improve the rear of buildings. Additionally, because West 7th transects the street grid, the front door of many residences faces the rear of commercial buildings; for others, they may share an alley. Below are some examples of how businesses have dealt with “their backdoor” in relationship to their shoppers and neighbors.

DO:



These three examples solve different parking and access situations, but each is attractive to shoppers and to neighboring properties.



DON'T:



Many residential properties face this fence and the large expanse of asphalt. Additional vegetation would soften the view for the residential and pedestrian community.

Street Furniture

Street furniture, both publicly and privately owned, provides necessary services to a pedestrian environment, as well as providing a continuous element on the street. Benches and waste receptacles should be carefully placed for convenience of use, and to not interfere with pedestrian walkways (maintain 6 feet clear for walking). Historic street lighting (lantern style) should be installed along the entire length of West 7th. Trees should be carefully placed so that they don't obscure business fronts. In the west end of West 7th, many more trees should be planted; in other areas, they should be used to fill in the massing of the facades. Parking lots should be screened by a fence or a masonry wall and landscaping. A standard form of street graphics, with a single lettering style and a limited and consistent number of colors, should be used for identification of the community of West 7th/Fort Road. After the original design guidelines were adopted by the West Seventh/Fort Road Federation, such a graphic was integrated into sidewalk imprints and signage. This should be integrated into new developments to strengthen the identity of West 7th/Fort Road.

DO:



Street furniture can be used to accommodate and encourage healthy means of transportation. The bicycle rack allows for bikes to be parked without interfering with the sidewalk.



The trees were planted so that they do not block the entrance to this business. For additional greenery, large planters are used.

DON'T:



The fence material is appropriate to the streetscape, but trees should have been planted behind the fence to soften this edge and to fill in the void between commercial buildings.

Parking

Parking in West 7th needs to be addressed on a block by block basis. An area for potential parking development may be found in underutilized spaces behind existing commercial buildings. These areas have the potential of meeting the need for more and convenient parking. An alternative solution to parking is for businesses and adjoining properties to share parking when the uses occur at different times of day and different days of the week. For example, a retail store and a restaurant/bar have parking needs at different times of the day. A similar situation could occur with places of worship and restaurants. Another example for large parking is to create green space parking pods for overflow parking. Development of any parking should be coupled with an up-grading of the entire area including creation of a walk area having safe and attractive features, landscaping, benches, adequate lighting and well designed and effective signage for directions and identification.

DO:



On the left, access to a row of parking is narrow and the parked cars are partially shielded by vegetation and neighboring buildings.



The picture on the left shows the parking solution at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis. Each green parking pod accommodates four additional parking spaces when necessary.



The view on the left is of parking located behind a commercial building, accessed through the alley. Decorative fencing and vegetation border the sidewalk.



In the picture below, an alley, access to underground parking and access to surface parking are each accommodated from a side-street. The way these are integrated provides a buffer between the back of residential structures on the left and the back of the commercial structure on the right.

DON'T:



There is no delineation between the busy street, the sidewalk, and the parking lot for the businesses, making it a vast expanse of pavement. Wide driveways into the lot also contribute to pedestrian and automobile safety concerns.

Scale

The relationship of the size of structures to one another and to pedestrians is a concern of “scale.” New construction does not have to be exactly the same size as adjacent buildings, but its height and setback should be generally consistent with that of adjacent structures. In summary, we want the commercial strip to be “pedestrian friendly.”

DO:



The series of residential structures along West Seventh are each different in the number of stories, but they are acceptable in scale to one another because of the overall height of each.



The commercial structure on the left has incorporated full height windows on the first floor and trees, and shrubs along the sidewalk to make it pedestrian-scale friendly.

DON'T:



The height of the structure towers over its historic neighboring buildings. It is too tall compared to its adjacent buildings. It is more similar to heights of buildings in the central business district of St. Paul.



The sidewalks along the two parking garages on the left are brutal environments for pedestrians. The building structures overwhelm the pedestrian scale of the street and provide no refuge for pedestrians, albeit one lone bus stop bench.

