

ZONING FRAMEWORK STUDY for the FORD PLANT SITE

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PREPARED FOR:



City of Saint Paul



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FORD SITE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ford Site Zoning Framework Study follows previous redevelopment planning studies for the site and considers whether or not the City's current zoning districts can effectively provide for:

- 1) the range and mix of uses and scale of development contemplated in the five redevelopment scenarios;
- 2) economic, social, and environmental sustainability that relates to the surrounding neighborhood; and
- 3) flexibility to respond to market changes that are likely to occur over the years it will take to fully redevelop the site.

The report includes an analysis and evaluation of the City's current zoning tools; a brief summary of zoning approaches used on other large, urban development and redevelopment sites around the county; and recommended options for a Ford Site zoning framework. Unlike previous studies, which focused on exploring and identifying goals and ideas for the site's future, this study aims at analyzing and identifying how available zoning tools may be used to achieve the collective redevelopment vision.

Review and Analysis

The consultant team reviewed the City's zoning code, subdivision ordinance, stormwater regulations, licensing requirements and other regulations, in relation to the previous planning studies. Based on identified goals for the site and likely redevelopment scenarios, Saint Paul's current zoning districts that would be most applicable to the Ford Site are the Traditional Neighborhood Districts (T Districts) and the IT Traditional Industrial District.

The T Districts offer opportunities and challenges in terms of their use for the Ford Site. The opportunities are based on their familiarity and widespread use across a range of sites in Saint Paul, while the challenges can be attributed to the large size and unique characteristics of the Ford Site. Of the T Districts, T3 and T4, appear to be most applicable, with IT for light industrial and R&D areas, and perhaps T2 as a transition zone along some edges. Preparation of a Master Plan to accompany zoning for a site as large as Ford (+120 acres) will be an important step towards realizing the complex elements of site redevelopment, such as infrastructure systems and phasing.

Zoning case studies analyzed for the Ford Site include seven projects that address parameters of urban form, land use mix, administrative processes and performance metrics similar to those expressed in the "Phase I Planning: Five Redevelopment Scenarios" report and the "Roadmap to Sustainability" report. The case studies include a range of projects and zoning approaches, from redevelopment of post-industrial

waterfronts and urban industrial districts to new approaches in sustainable development.

Of the seven case studies examined, six utilized alternative types of zoning, typically form or design-based regulations rather than use-based zoning. More details including lessons learned are described in the body of this report and in the full case studies appendix.

Dual Zoning Approaches

The Traditional Neighborhood 3 and/or 4 and Industrial Transition district (IT) zoning districts with a Master Plan are the most applicable current city zoning districts. However, analysis of them in relation to the goals and concepts illustrated of the "Phase I Planning: Five Redevelopment Scenarios" and the "Roadmap to Sustainability" reports suggest that a series of modifications could be made to improve their applicability to the Ford Site. Modifications range from increasing bike parking requirements to providing density bonuses for affordable housing. A more detailed list of suggested modifications is outlined in the body of this report.

As an alternative to using the City's existing zoning tools (with modifications), a transect-based zoning approach has also been developed. Transect districts (or zones) are administratively similar to zoning districts used in conventional zoning, but in addition to regulating use, density, building heights and setbacks, they address private and public frontages, public spaces, block types, and building design. The Ford Site transect identified in this study builds upon detailed analyses of site area context, patterns of use and form depicted in the five scenarios, and the standard rural to urban transect template as originally developed by the Congress for the New Urbanism. Five specific transect zones or districts were calibrated (adjusted for local site conditions) for use within the Ford Site:

- D-1 Natural
- D-3 Mixed Residential Village
- D-4 Mixed-use Village
- D-5 General Urban
- D-6 Workplace

The five proposed transect districts provide a range and mixture of uses and built form that increase in density, intensity and complexity from the natural park-like areas closest to the Mississippi River to a tightly interconnected urban grid of mid-rise, multi-family residences, shops and workplaces.

Based upon the research and analysis undertaken within this study, two applicable zoning approaches for implementing the vision and goals of the “Phase I Planning: Five Redevelopment Scenarios” report and the “Roadmap to Sustainability” report emerge:

- 1) use the City’s current tools with modifications; or
- 2) prepare an new, alternative set of Ford Site-specific zoning tools.

These two approaches offer a choice between modifying several of the City’s existing zoning districts and using them to regulate site development and developing a new set of contextual tools, configured specifically for the redevelopment of the site. Either approach will require additional resources (time, money, and planning expertise) to ensure that the zoning applied to the Ford Site integrates into the City’s current regulatory system while serving as one of several critical redevelopment implementation tools.

Both of the zoning framework approaches address fundamental components of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) such as reducing carbon emissions and reducing auto-dependence by requiring more compact, walkable, mixed-use and transit supportive development. There are other aspects of sustainability, such as building energy, materials and solid waste, that are typically outside the purview of zoning regulations and more effectively addressed by building codes and other federal, state and municipal regulations.

The two zoning approaches present an array of advantages:

City Zoning Advantages:

- Familiar to city staff, neighborhood stakeholders and local developers.
- Administration of code is already well established and generally understood.
- Revisions to existing zoning districts, overlays, and Master Plans can be drafted to apply specifically to the Ford Site or to other locations within Saint Paul.
- Master plans can provide for a finer gram of urbanism within the structure of existing zoning districts.
- The design-oriented nature of the Traditional Neighborhood Districts, as modified to better serve the Ford Site, could serve as a model for use on other large redevelopment sites in the City or other communities in the Metropolitan region.

City Zoning Disadvantages:

- City code may not be as understandable or user friendly to national developers who are more familiar with transect-based, design oriented models of zoning.
- Leaving design decisions to the master planning process may make some people nervous, since master planning is a less understood than zoning and has uncertain outcomes.
- Revisions to existing zoning districts may not be very applicable to other locations within the City - thus requiring a new district or districts specific to Ford.

Transect-based Zoning Advantages:

- Establishes specific, place-based regulations in response to Ford Site planning studies and neighborhood context.
- Provides for a finer grain of urbanism; diversity and mix of block, building, street and public space within the zoning districts.
- Transect-based zoning is well-regarded nationally by developers of more complicated, mixed-use projects.
- Transect-based zoning can be readily adapted (calibrated) and applied to other large redevelopment sites within the City and region.

Transect-based Zoning Disadvantages:

- Creating a new code format versus tweaking existing code will require more resources (time and money).
- Learning curve for City staff and neighborhood/ community stakeholders.
- Potential administrative complexity—depending on how new provisions are integrated into existing code.

Role of the Master Plan

The use of a Master Plan (through its public preparation process and multiple components) provides increased levels of study, detail and predictability to the development planning, approvals and build-out process. Previous site planning explorations conducted and documented in the Phase I Planning - Five Redevelopment Scenarios report illustrate a range of redevelopment possibilities. However, once a buyer/ developer for the site has been identified, more in-depth analyses, planning and design (including a rezoning) are likely to commence.

The level of complexity and specificity addressed in a future Master Plan may depend upon which zoning framework path is followed.

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