



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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To: Planning Commission
From: Comprehensive Planning Committee
Date: November 1, 2013
Re: T1-T2/Transit Street Zoning Amendment Initiation and Draft for Public Review

Background

“*Transit street*” is a term defined in Zoning Code as “those streets or segments of streets where there is high volume transit service and/or a minimum level of 10 minute peak frequency as follows: University Avenue, Robert Street between University Avenue and Concord Street, Concord Street between Wabasha Street and State Street, and Wabasha Street between Twelfth Street and Winifred Street.” It was added to the code in 2004 along with Traditional Neighborhood zoning districts, applies only to T1 and T2 districts, and applies to only two provisions in these districts:

1. In T2 the Planning Commission may approve a conditional use permit to allow slightly more building height, up to 45 ft. from normal 35 ft. maximum height, “when the structure is within 600 feet of an existing or planned transit stop on a designated transit street.”
2. In T1 and T2 districts, for properties within ¼ mile of a transit street, the minimum required off-street parking for residential uses may be reduced by 25%.

In 2004 it also applied to a 25% reduction in the parking requirement for nonresidential uses in T1-T2 districts along transit streets. This became redundant and was deleted in 2010 when commercial parking requirements were generally reduced more than this city-wide.

The reduced parking requirement for residential uses in T1-T2 districts along transit streets became largely redundant in 2011 when the Central Corridor Zoning Study eliminated all parking requirements within ¼ mile University Avenue. It’s also redundant along Wabasha and Robert Streets downtown, where there is no parking requirement. It only affects the parking requirement for residential uses on a few T2 parcels along Cesar Chavez and Robert Streets, where current use of T2 parcels is almost entirely nonresidential.

Analysis

T1-T2 districts are specifically intended for use along transit routes where compact, mixed-use T1-T2 development supports transit use, and where the availability of transit would generally justify a 25% reduction in the residential parking requirement for T1-T2 development. The minimum parking requirement for residential uses in T3-T4 districts is reduced by 25% generally, not just along transit streets. It is equally appropriate to do this in T1-T2 districts.

Making T1-T2 consistent with this would both simplify the code and be consistent with the intent and purpose of T1-T2 districts.

The Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, in Policy LU-1.3, calls for study of T districts to determine how they can accommodate more intense residential development, focusing on density and other development standards including height, scale and massing. It would be consistent with this to consider providing authority for the Planning Commission to approve a conditional use permit to allow slightly more building height, up to 45 ft. from normal 35 ft. maximum height, in T2 districts generally (rather than just within 600 feet of an existing or planned transit stop on a designated transit street) when this would meet general conditional use permit standards related to the character of the particular area and conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and applicable subarea plans. The provision in Zoning Code Sec. 66.331(f) for a conditional use permit for a maximum height up to 65 ft. in T2 districts in certain locations along University Avenue became irrelevant in 2011 when the Central Corridor Zoning Study rezoned these areas to T3 and T4, so this provision can be deleted.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt a resolution to initiate a Zoning Code amendment to delete the definition of “transit street,” reduce required residential parking in T1-T2 districts by 25% generally, and provide for a conditional use permit for slightly more building height in T2 districts generally; and that the Planning Commission release the following draft amendments for public review and set a public hearing for January 10, 2014.

Draft Text Amendments

Sec. 60.221 T. ~~Transit Street.~~ ~~Those streets or segments of streets where there is high volume transit service and/or minimum level of 10 minute peak frequency as follows: University Avenue, Robert Street between University Avenue and Concord Street, Concord Street between Wabasha Street and State Street, and Wabasha Street between Twelfth Street and Winifred Street.~~

Table 66.331, Traditional Neighborhood District Dimensional Standards

(f) ~~A maximum height of forty-five (45) feet may be permitted with a conditional use permit when the structure is within six hundred (600) feet of an existing or planned transit stop on a designated transit street. A maximum height of sixty five (65) feet may be permitted with a conditional use permit for property along University Avenue within six hundred (600) feet of an existing or planned transit stop, except on the following blocks, where heights greater than forty five (45) feet would generally be incompatible with the surrounding neighborhoods: north side of University between Aldine Street and St. Albans Street, and between Kent Street and Galtier Street; and south side of University between Oxford Street and St. Albans Street, and between Mackubin Street and Galtier Street.~~

Sec. 66.341. Required conditions in T1-T2 traditional neighborhood districts.

(a) ~~Amount of parking. For properties within one quarter (¼) mile of a transit street, as defined,~~ The minimum amount of required off-street parking for residential uses specified in section 63.207 Parking requirements by use, may be reduced by twenty-five (25) percent. This provision applies to principal and secondary dwelling units and units in mixed-use buildings, but not to live-work units.