

*Jon Commers, Chair***CITY OF SAINT PAUL***Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor**25 West Fourth Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55102**Telephone: 651-266-6700  
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February 24, 2011

Mayor Christopher B. Coleman  
City Council President Kathy Lantry and Councilmembers  
Third Floor – City Hall  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of the Saint Paul Planning Commission, it is my privilege to send you and the citizens of Saint Paul our 2010 Annual Report.

The final adoption in early 2010 of the City's ten year update of the Comprehensive Plan served as a springboard for planning work that took place over the past year and continue into 2011. A significant accomplishment in 2010 was approval of new off-street parking requirements and design standards. The amendments simplified and reduced many of the City's parking requirements to better balance parking needs with transportation, land use, and environmental goals in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The development of updated neighborhood planning guidelines and creation of a new plan template will improve the quality, accessibility, and consistency of small area and district plans with one another and the Comprehensive Plan. The St. Anthony Park Como 2030 Plan, approved by the Planning Commission in early 2011, was the first neighborhood plan to use the new plan template. Substantial work was also completed during the year on the Smith Avenue Transit Corridor Revitalization Plan, which focuses on Smith Avenue between the High Bridge and Dodd Road in West St. Paul. The plan, guided by a citizen task force co-chaired by a Planning Commissioner, marks the first time the City has undertaken a formal joint planning process with another city.

Preparing for Central Corridor light rail transit continues to be an important focus of the Planning Commission's work. A community steering committee completed its work on plans for the Western, Victoria, and Hamline Avenue station areas, and the Planning Commission began its formal review of the plans in December. Recommendations for the Central Corridor/Traditional Neighborhood Zoning Study, which recommends changes to zoning regulations along University Avenue that will implement the *Central Corridor Development Strategy* and station area plans, were the subject of Planning Commission public hearings in November and December. Final Planning Commission action on the zoning study is expected in March of this year.

These are just a few highlights of the Planning Commission's work in 2010. The enclosed annual report provides other examples of the important work of planning for Saint Paul's future. As commissioners, we thank you for the opportunity to serve the City during these exciting and challenging times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Commers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Jon Commers  
Planning Commission Chair



# SAINT PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION

## 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

[www.stpaul.gov/ped](http://www.stpaul.gov/ped)

### ABOUT THE SAINT PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission is a twenty-one member advisory body made of up of citizen volunteers appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. The Planning Commission and its Zoning, Comprehensive Planning, and Neighborhood Planning Committees take on municipal planning issues, as required by law. It reviews and comments upon Comprehensive Plan and Zoning

Code recommendations, studies and amendments, and holds public hearings where members of the public can be heard.

This Annual Report provides a summary of the Planning Commission's major activities and accomplishments in 2010.

all plans. The revised Guidelines provide a more detailed explanation of the planning process from start to end, and clarify expected roles and outcomes. Under the revised Guidelines, City staff will be more engaged with the community throughout the planning process, offering assistance and oversight.

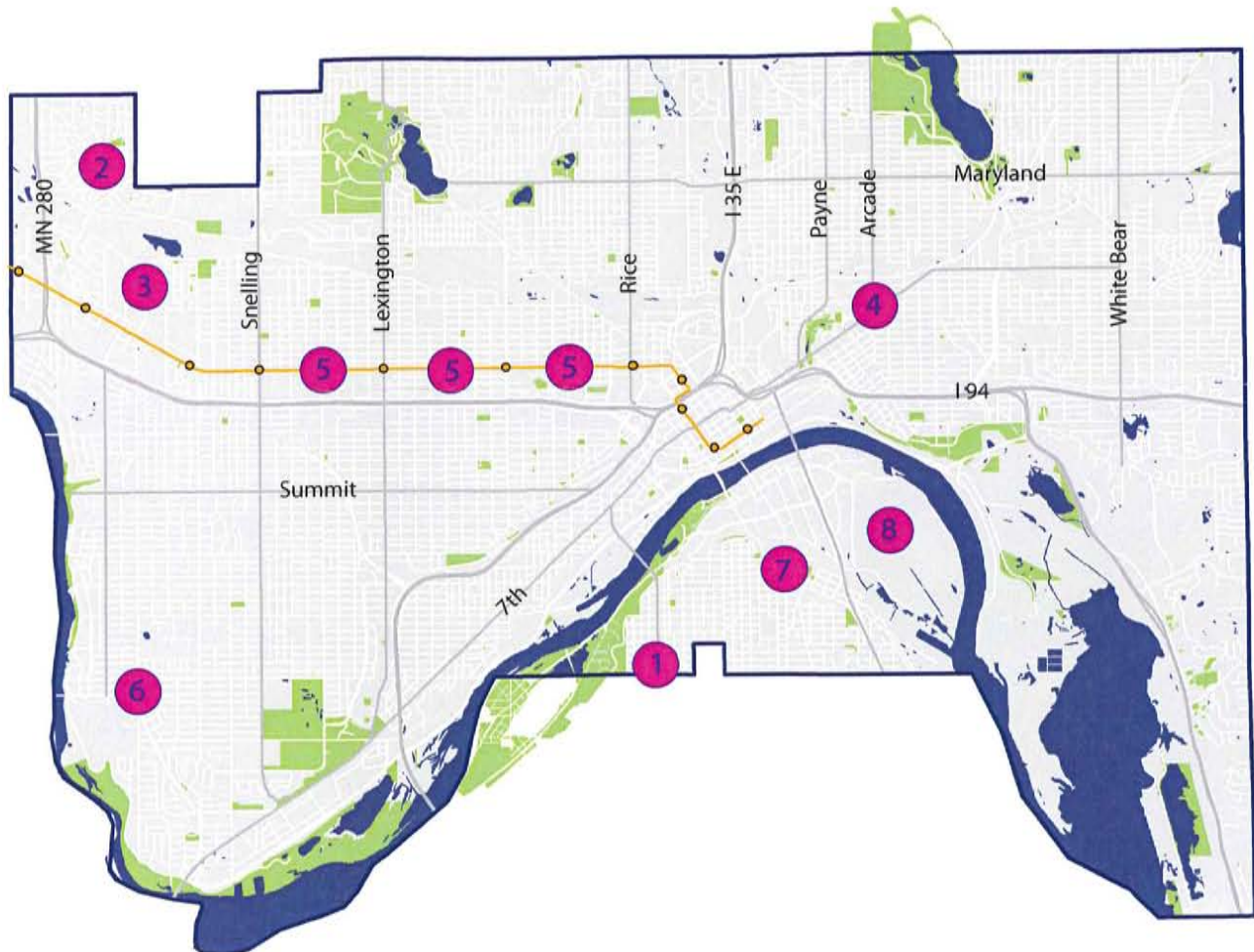
### NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

#### Small Area and District Plan Guidelines Update

In order to improve the quality and consistency of small area and district plans with one another and the Comprehensive Plan, the Area Plan Guidelines document was revised and a plan template document was crafted to outline a clear format and content for

#### 1 Smith Avenue Transit Corridor Revitalization Plan

Through a joint planning process with the City of West Saint Paul, a task force made up of residents and business owners on both sides of the border drafted an updated plan for Smith Avenue between the High Bridge and Dodd Road. The process was guided by staff at both



cities as well as three neighborhood organizations: NeDA, REDA and WSCO. Funding for the project was provided by the cities of Saint Paul and West Saint Paul as well as the Dakota County Economic Development Authority. The plan envisions Smith Avenue as a thriving mixed-use thoroughfare that supports the needs of residents and offers affordable office and retail spaces that encourage a vibrant local business community.

**2** **St. Anthony Park Como 2030 Plan and Zoning Study**

The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended approval of the St. Anthony Park Como 2030 Small Area Plan and Zoning Study, for property along Como Avenue between Highway 280 and the University of Minnesota Transitway. The plan focuses on maintaining essential community assets: community character, commercial vitality, housing options, transportation choices, and environmental sustainability. It was

developed at the request of the St. Anthony Park Community Council by a neighborhood task force co-chaired by a Planning Commissioner and a member of the community council.

**3** **West Midway Study**

The West Midway has been a vital element of Saint Paul industry since its beginnings as a rail center more than 150 years ago. Construction of light rail transit will spur changes to this area, the largest contiguous industrial district in the city. The study area is located north of Interstate 94 between Snelling Avenue on the east and the Minneapolis boundary on the west. The community-based task force is focused on such issues as the types of businesses that historically and most recently have thrived in the area, the types of industries likely to grow in future decades, and the amenities needed to support these businesses, such as pedestrian and bicycle connections, open space, and design.

**4** **3M Site Redevelopment Planning**

After a Community Advisory Committee approved two development concepts for the 3M site on the City's East Side at the end of 2009, a programmatic agreement was developed and approved, which stipulated how historic resources will be treated on the site as it is redeveloped. The programmatic agreement also stipulated a minimum two-year marketing period for the historic core of buildings, with the site subsequently re-branded as "Beacon Bluff" by a marketing team that was hired by the Saint Paul Port Authority. A "design workgroup" was convened during 2010 by PED and Port Authority staff to develop recommendations about urban design standards for the site. These recommendations were incorporated into the Port Authority's site covenants. In addition,



The rendering illustrates one possible long-term build out of the Western station area. It describes a vision for the Western station area as a traditional "main street" neighborhood of stable residential areas organized around a strengthened and attractive "main street" with a mix of small restaurants and businesses.



in December 2010, the design workgroup and historic workgroup began their review of the draft historic mitigation and landscaping plan for the streets within the site's historic core.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

### Creation of the Transportation Committee

In early 2010, the Planning Commission and City Council approved resolutions to establish a new Transportation Committee of the Planning Commission. The committee will help the Commission better integrate land use and transportation decisions as they relate to zoning, neighborhood and comprehensive planning, and major infrastructure investments. The twelve-member group will also monitor and advance the implementation of the Transportation Chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan, advise the City on regional projects, and advocate for improved coordination with regional and federal transportation planning in order to position Saint Paul as the multi-modal hub of the East Metro region.

### Central Corridor/TN Zoning Study

The Central Corridor and Traditional Neighborhood Zoning Study began in January of 2010 and is an important step to implement the Central Corridor Development Strategy and individual station area plans. As part of the study, current zoning requirements along the Central Corridor were evaluated to determine changes needed to facilitate the type of development envisioned in the plans. Planning staff recommended greater use of Traditional Neighborhood (TN) zoning districts along University Avenue and creation of a new TN4 district to allow greater height and density where appropriate. Updates to the requirements in the existing TN districts, which are used citywide, were also recommended. Staff spent the summer holding public meetings, and meeting with various business groups

and community organizations to gather input on the proposed code changes. The Planning Commission held public hearings on the staff recommendations in November and December, and expects to finalize its recommendations to the Mayor and City Council early in 2011.

### 5 Hamline, Western, and Victoria Station Area Plans

Station area planning for future LRT stations at Hamline, Victoria, and Western began in late 2009. In 2010, under the guidance of the Station Area Planning Steering Committee, staff developed three draft plans that were presented to the Planning Commission in December. The plans are similar in format and scope to the previously adopted University Avenue Station Area Plans, and address mobility, public realm, land use, and built form. The draft plans were developed through an extensive public engagement process that included a series of roundtable discussions, numerous public workshops, and several open houses.

## ZONING

### Off-Street Parking Requirements and Design Standards

In 2009, the Planning Commission initiated a study of Saint Paul's off-street parking requirements and design standards. After extensive research and a series of community and stakeholder meetings, a comprehensive set of parking code amendments was proposed to the Planning Commission. The amendments simplified and reduced the City's parking requirements, where justified, to better balance parking needs with transportation, land use, and environmental goals in the Comprehensive Plan. The amendments, which received broad business and community support, were forwarded to and approved by the City Council in mid-2010. A follow-up study on parking for establishments serving alcohol was requested by the City Council and will be brought to Planning Commission in 2011.

### 6 Highland Village Zoning Study

The Highland Village Zoning Study was initiated in August 2010 to examine potential property rezonings within a study area along Ford Parkway and Cleveland Avenue in Highland Village. The study is evaluating Traditional Neighborhood (TN) district zoning as a possible means to allow more mixed-use development and enhance design standards in the Highland Village commercial area. The study and proposed property rezonings will be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council in 2011.

### Currency Exchange Zoning Study

In December 2009, the City Council requested a study of Currency Exchanges and the effectiveness of the current Saint Paul zoning code in regulating such businesses. A draft ordinance was approved by the Planning Commission in September and by the City Council in October. The text amendments included a change from the use "currency exchange" to "alternative financial establishment," which encompasses more businesses operating in a similar manner, as well as including businesses known as "payday lenders." New distance requirements were added as well as districts in which the establishments are conditionally permitted.



## 7 District del Sol Zoning Study

For more than two decades, the West Side Citizens Organization (WSCO), Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) and Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA) have collaborated to create a strong commercial district at the heart of the greater West Side neighborhood. This vision has been heartily embraced in several plans supported by the community and adopted by the City Council. In 2008, at the request of the three community organizations, the Planning Commission initiated the District del Sol Zoning Study to make zoning consistent with adopted plans. After two years of careful study and intensive community and business owner input, the Planning Commission recommended to the City Council the rezoning of 85 parcels, most of them to TN2, along Wabasha, Robert and Cesar Chavez streets. TN2 is a perfect fit to preserve and strengthen the pedestrian-friendly, transit-supportive, small-scale, mixed-use character of District del Sol.

## GIS Zoning Maps

The City of Saint Paul official zoning map was recommended by the Planning Commission to transition from a set of 44 mylar and paper panels to an electronic, geographic information systems (GIS) based file to improve clarity, customization options, analysis capabilities, and ease of use. The new GIS zoning maps became the official zoning map on January 5th, 2011.

## 8 Holman Field Airport Zoning Requirements

Under the guidance of the Joint Airport Zoning Board, which includes a planning commissioner, PED and Metropolitan Airports Commission staff drafted airport zoning overlay districts for the Downtown St. Paul Airport in 2010. The preliminary draft is under Mn/DOT review and draft ordinances are expected for Zoning Committee, Planning Commission, and City Council review in 2011.

The Planning Commission is staffed by the Department of Planning and Economic Development

Christopher B. Coleman, *Mayor*

Cecile Bedor, *Director*  
 Donna Drummond, *Planning Director*  
 Sonja Butler, *Secretary to the Planning Commission*

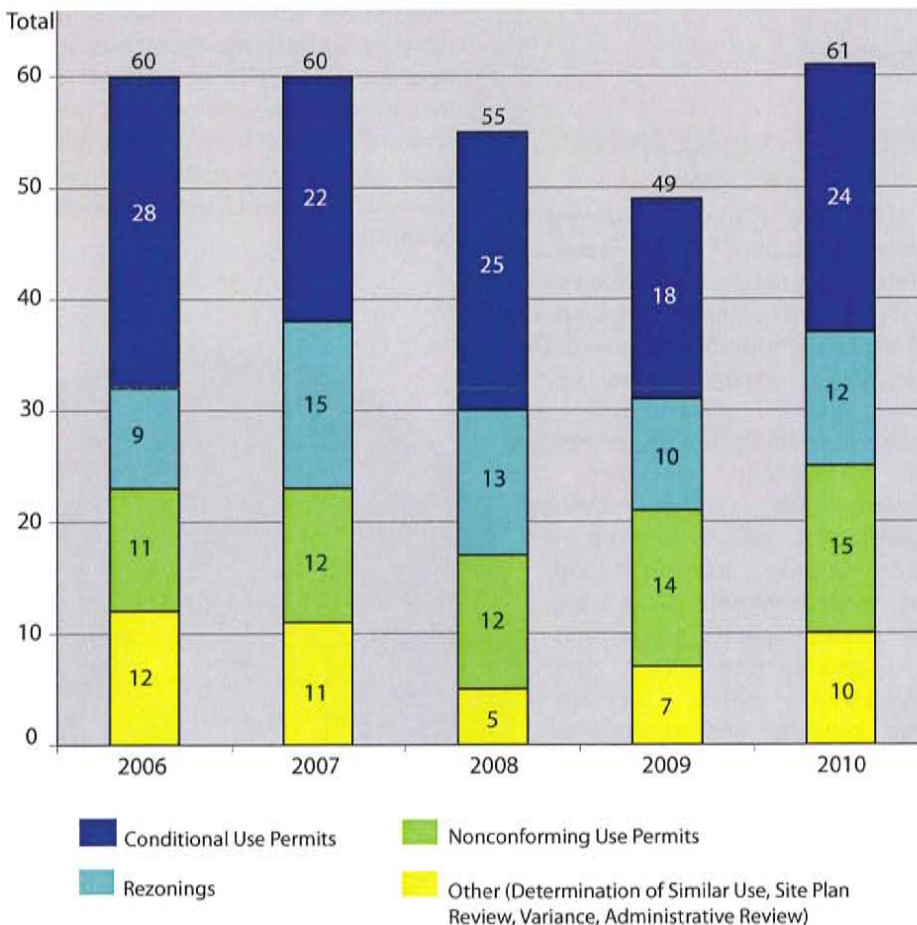
### 2010 Planning Commissioners

Kathi Donnelly-Cohen, *Chair*  
 Brian Alton  
 Jon Commers  
 Pat Connoly  
 Carole Faricy\*  
 Anthony Fernandez  
 Gene Gelgelu  
 Erick Goodlow\*  
 Stephen Gordon\*  
 Bree Halverson  
 George Johnson\*  
 Richard Kramer  
 Michael Margulies\*  
 Paula Merrigan  
 Gladys Morton\*  
 Gaius Nelson  
 Marilyn Porter  
 Anthony Schertler  
 Kristina Smitten\*  
 Robert Spaulding  
 Terri Thao  
 Jun-Li Wang  
 Daniel Ward II  
 Barbara Wencil  
 David Wickiser  
 Roxanne Young  
 \*Served for part of 2010

For more information:  
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The Most Livable City in America



The Zoning Committee reviewed 61 cases in 2010, up 24 percent from 2009.

