



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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Feb. 18, 2014

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 2013 Annual Report.

Transportation planning continues to play a prominent role in the Commission's work with major progress on two significant studies occurring over the past year. As part of the Complete Streets project, the City will have a new Street Design Manual, which will be used to guide the design of street reconstruction projects to better meet the needs of multiple users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and vehicle drivers. The Manual and Complete Streets Action Plan will be recommended to the Mayor and City Council this spring. A Planning Commission recommendation on the Streetcar Feasibility Study, which identifies a long-term streetcar network and starter line for the city, is scheduled to be acted on by the Commission this winter. The Commission's Transportation Committee served as the steering committee for both projects.

The growing interest in locally grown foods was the impetus for the Urban Agriculture Zoning Study. Zoning code amendments, approved by the City Council last fall after Planning Commission recommendation, will make it easier for farmers markets to operate throughout the city, and will clarify and facilitate the use of vacant land for agricultural uses.

Economic development and support for local businesses is a goal of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Consideration of needed changes to zoning regulations to facilitate business growth to achieve this goal is an on-going job of the Commission. The Alcohol Production Zoning Study resulted in new regulations that will make it easier to open craft breweries, wineries and distilleries in non-residential zoning districts throughout the city.

Plans and studies were also completed to respond to neighborhood specific issues, including the West Grand Zoning Study, District 9 Area Plan Amendments, and Highland Village Special Sign District Plan. As usual, the Planning Commission considered these plans and zoning amendments within the context of the Comprehensive Plan to assure consistency with citywide policies, goals and objectives.

Finally, there are Planning Commission-led community task forces for the Ford Plant Site, West Side Flats, Shepard-Davern Area, and the West Midway Industrial Area that are providing community recommendations for future redevelopment in those areas.

These are just a few highlights of the Planning Commission's work in 2013. On behalf of the Planning Commission, we thank you for the opportunity to serve the City and engage the community in the important work of planning for the future of Saint Paul.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Wencil
Planning Commission Chair

Saint Paul Planning Commission

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE SAINT PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission is a 21-member advisory body made up of citizen volunteers appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. The Planning Commission and its Zoning, Comprehensive Planning, Neighborhood Planning, and Transportation Committees take on municipal planning issues as required by law. It reviews and makes recommendations on comprehensive planning and zoning recommendations, studies and amendments. It also 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 2013.

Completed Projects

Urban Agriculture Zoning Study

Through the Comprehensive Planning Committee, the Planning Commission approved the Urban Agriculture Zoning Study, which includes new zoning provisions for farmers markets and revisions to existing agricultural regulations. The zoning amendments will facilitate establishing farmers markets and agriculture uses, such as community gardens, throughout the City with the goal of increasing access to locally grown food. The zoning amendments were approved by City Council and went into effect December 25th.

Ford Site Zoning

The Ford Site Zoning Framework Study, funded by the Metropolitan Council Livable Communities Fund, was completed in 2013. The Study evaluated how current city zoning districts can implement redevelopment goals for the Ford site and identified additional zoning tools for the city to consider utilizing. All buildings on the upper campus of the Ford site were demolished in 2013, with the exception of the former office showroom corner façade (shown below), which is being disassembled and stored by Ford for reassembly on the future site. In 2015, Ford will remove all building slabs, in conformance with the Master Site Plan for decommissioning approved by the Planning Commission in 2012.

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District 9 Area Plan Summary Amendments

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In 2011, the City Council, at the Planning Commission's recommendation, rezoned several properties along West 7th Street to T2 Traditional Neighborhood. While T2 zoning requires compliance with urban design standards, there was a desire on the part of the West 7th/Fort Road Federation and Little Bohemia Neighborhood Association to create more specific design guidelines for the West 7th commercial corridor. Throughout 2012, PED staff worked with representatives from the two organizations to prepare design guidelines that would be adopted as an amendment to the District 9 Area Plan Summary. The Planning Commission completed its work in June 2013 and recommended amendments that address storefront design, windows, exterior materials, cornices, roofs, signage and graphics, awnings, color, street furniture, parking and building scale. The City Council adopted the amendments to the District 9 Area Plan Summary in July 2013.



Facade of the Ford Building, to be reused on the future site.



Corresponds to map on page 2

West Grand Zoning Study

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Grand Avenue is one of Saint Paul's signature streets. In 2013, the City Council adopted zoning changes affecting the western end of Grand Avenue that provided for mixed-use development at several commercial nodes, put in place development design standards, and slightly reduced the maximum allowed height and, for 3- and 4-bedroom units, density for multi-family residential development. The changes were recommended by the Planning Commission in response to a zoning study requested by the City Council. The Council asked the Planning Commission to determine what zoning designations are most appropriate for West Grand Avenue and how the City should best balance development goals while preserving the character of adjacent established neighborhoods.

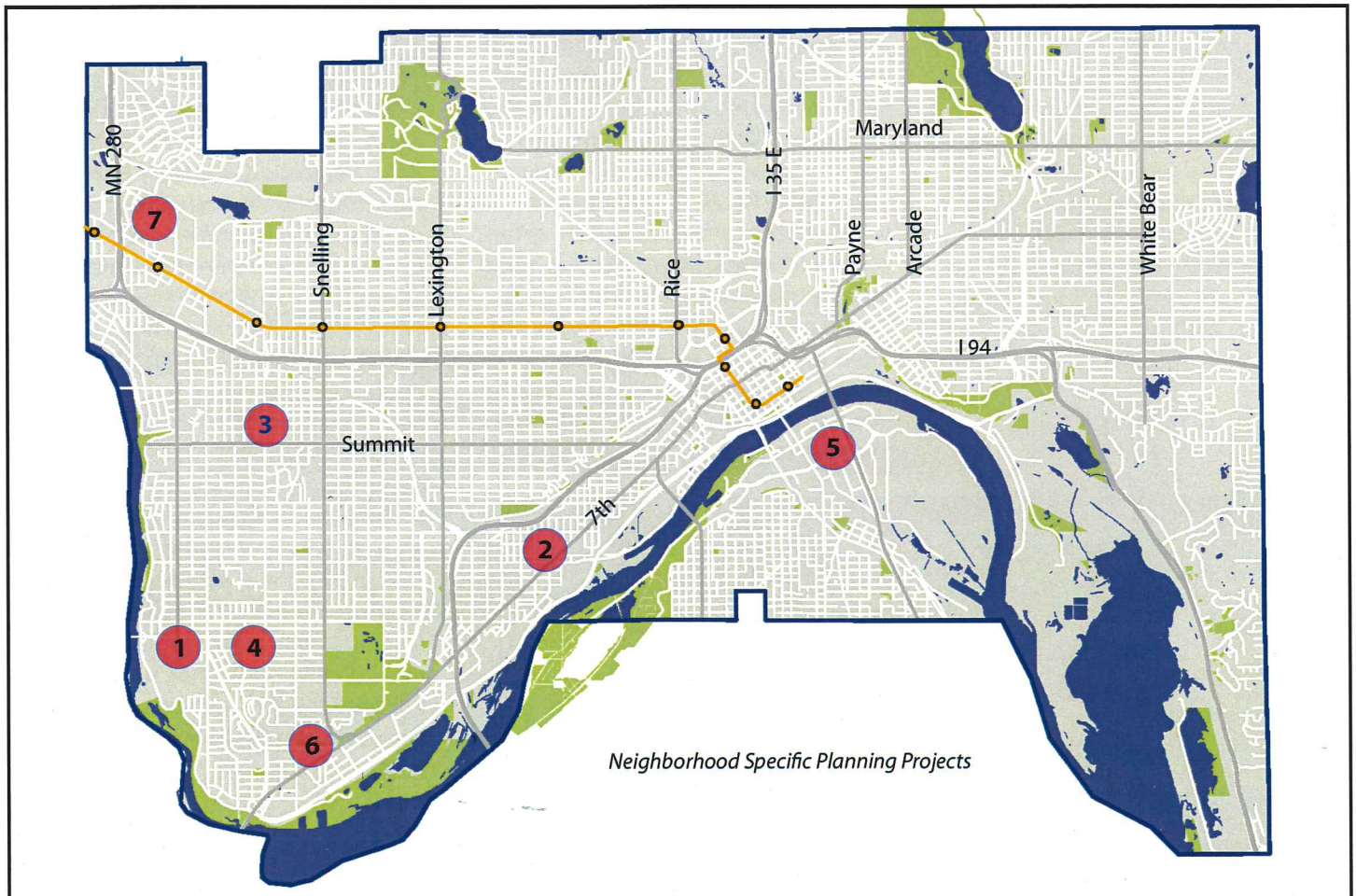
Highland Village Special Sign District Plan

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Responding to a request from both the Highland Village Business Association and the Highland District Council (District 15) in 2011, the Planning Commission initiated an update to the 1985-adopted "Highland Village Special District Sign Plan." A citizen-led task force reviewed the old plan and made recommendations for the amended plan based on current Traditional Neighborhood zoning in Highland Village as well new sign technologies. Key changes to the plan included a reduction in total allowable sign area and a complete restriction on signs with dynamic display. The plan was adopted by the Planning Commission in mid-2012 and adopted by the City Council in December 2013.

Alcohol Production Zoning Study

After receiving review and recommendation from the Neighborhood Planning Committee and the Planning Commission, the Alcohol Production Zoning Study was adopted by City Council in two parts: a small text amendment passed in March that allows breweries in Business and Traditional Neighborhood Districts to have taprooms, and a larger text amendment passed in December that (a) permits small distilleries and small wineries in most non-residential zoning districts, and (b) provides a Conditional Use Permit option for breweries in Business and Traditional Neighborhood Districts to exceed a brewing capacity of 5,000 barrels per year (up to 20,000 barrels). The amendments position Saint Paul to take full advantage of an expanding market for local alcohol production facilities and protects neighborhoods.



Auto Body Text Amendments

During the first phase of the Central Corridor Zoning Study ABRA Auto Body and Glass on University Avenue was classified as an illegal use and operated under an interim use permit enacted by the City Council in 2009. That permit expired in 2012, pending changes to the zoning code. In order to enable this successful and important neighborhood business to remain on University Avenue, a series of text amendments were proposed to permit auto body shops as a conditional use in T4 - Traditional Neighborhood and B3 - General Business districts. The issue generated a good deal of public input and discussion, particularly around allowing auto body shops to operate in B3 districts. The Planning Commission elected to prohibit the use in these districts, opting instead to allow them in the B5 - Business Service district. The City Council ultimately voted in November 2013 to allow auto body shops as a conditional use in T4 districts, which is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and recommended its adoption as an addendum to the City's Comprehensive Plan.



Better Block Event on East 7th Street

Ongoing Projects

Complete Streets

The Transportation Committee oversaw major progress on the Street Design Manual, which will be a valuable tool in implementing Complete Streets policies and designing balanced streets. Five pilot street design workshops were held over the course of the year as well as the East 7th Street Better Block event, which built on the Make It Happen initiative of Dayton's Bluff Community Council and showcased multimodal infrastructure on a temporarily redesigned East 7th Street. The Transportation Committee will initiate the approval process for the Street Design Manual and Complete Streets Action Plan in early 2014.

West Side Flats Master Plan

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The Planning Commission created a community task force in January 2013 to advise staff and a consultant team on an update of the West Side Flats Master Plan and Development Guidelines. The Plan was originally adopted by the City Council in 2001 to guide future public and private investment in the area bounded by Wabasha Street, the Mississippi River, Robert Street and Plato Boulevard. The 2013 update expanded the study area to include the area bounded by Robert Street, the Mississippi River, Hwy. 52 and Plato Boulevard; pursued a more flexible planning and regulatory approach to guide future land use and development; explored an integrated stormwater management system; and investigated the impact of proposed development on the existing sanitary sewer system. Throughout 2013 the task force met and reported to the Neighborhood Planning Committee. A full first plan draft was completed in October. A recommendation from the Planning Commission is anticipated in early 2014.



Modern Streetcar (Courtesy Nelson/Nygaard)

Streetcar Feasibility Study

The Saint Paul Streetcar Feasibility Study, begun in late 2012, has developed a set of citywide streetcar corridors that would improve local circulation, support economic development, and complement existing and planned transportation systems in the city. The study has identified a potential starter streetcar line and will prepare Saint Paul for long-term success in financing and implementing a comprehensive network. The Transportation Committee of the Planning Commission serves as the Steering Committee for the project, as a final report is being prepared by a consultant team from Nelson-Nygaard, HDR Engineering, and Richardson-Richter & Associates. The Planning Commission will be holding a public hearing on this item on January 24, 2014, before making a recommendation to the City Council.

Shepard Davern Area Plan

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The Shepard Davern Area Plan Update was initiated by the Planning Commission in December 2012, and is currently in the drafting stage. The goal is to create a cohesive community vision for an area that is the focus of both redevelopment and transit improvement efforts, and to identify goals to improve quality of life in the area. A task force, with co-chairs from the Planning Commission and the neighborhood, has been meeting since March 2013. Recommendations will be brought to the Neighborhood Committee of the Planning Commission in mid-2014.

West Midway Industrial Study 7

The Midway Industrial Strategy work began in 2010 in an effort to foster reinvestment and redevelopment in the area west of Fairview and north of I-94. The Strategy is predicated on the idea that industrial business is the engine that drives the city's growth in livable-wage jobs, and helps stabilize the property tax base. In 2013, the West Midway Task Force completed its work and the draft Strategy was produced. During

review of the Planning Commission's Comprehensive Planning Committee, it was determined that the Strategy be the basis for three products: Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan; a work program among City departments and the Port Authority; and a report to initiate broader discussions about the future of industrial redevelopment in the City. Those three products will be produced and acted upon in 2014.



An active building in the West Midway Area

The Planning Commission is staffed by the Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED).

Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

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

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The Zoning Committee reviewed 49 cases in 2013, down 12 percent from 2012.

