PLANNING COMMISSION

Betsy Reveal, Chair

CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

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February 28, 2017

Mayor Christopher B. Coleman
City Council President Russ Stark 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 2016 Annual Report.

Zoning studies to address changes in the marketplace or technology, and changes to streamline the Zoning Code and make it simpler to use are always a centerpiece of the Commission's work. A major rewrite of the City's requirements for various types of congregate living was recommended by the Commission in March, the first update of this section in 24 years. Eleven facility definitions were consolidated into four, clarifying and simplifying the requirements for housing that serves a variety of essential needs in the community. The Outdoor Commercial Uses Zoning Study, recommended by the Commission in late 2016, resulted in changes that will make it easier for businesses to add vibrancy to City life with food trucks and outdoor markets.

Planning for redevelopment of the Snelling-Midway site, with a new Major League Soccer stadium as the centerpiece, was a focus of work for the planning staff and Commission in early 2016. A master plan, stadium site plan, and zoning amendment were recommended by the Commission in July, followed by City Council approval in August. Stadium construction will get underway in earnest this spring, with the hope that private redevelopment projects north of the stadium will soon follow.

There is continual interest from the City's neighborhood district councils in periodically updating their neighborhood plans, which are part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Plan updates for District 1, District 6, Union Park, and Macalester Groveland were reviewed and recommended during the year. The Union Park plan was the first to consolidate into one plans for the three neighborhoods, Lexington-Hamline, Snelling-Hamline, and Merriam Park, that comprise Union Park. The Commission's role in reviewing neighborhood plans is to ensure they are consistent with the citywide chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. In 2017 plan update processes are underway for Districts 4, 5, 7, 8, 15, and 16.

Major work will continue throughout 2017 on the Ford Site and the update of the citywide chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects and many more are aimed at making the city ever more vibrant, a place that supports existing residents and businesses and attracts new residents, jobs and investment.

Sincerely,

Betsy Reveal

Betsy Reveal, Chair

Rendering of the Snelling-Midway Development, courtesy of S9 Architecture

SAINT PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

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 issues, 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 2016.**

COMPLETED PROJECTS

CONGREGATE LIVING ZONING STUDY

In March, the Planning Commission recommended approval of a comprehensive update of the Zoning Code's congregate living section. This was the first update to this section in 24 years. The amendments consolidated 11 definitions into four to provide clarity, consistency and independence from any minor changes in state regulation. The consolidation required addressing issues such as separation requirements, parking requirements and maximum numbers of residents. Public testimony and debate centered on regulations for sober houses.

GREEN LINE ADUs

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are a second, smaller housing unit added to a larger single-family home, which can be added internally or detached. After a public hearing in February, the Planning Commission forwarded a recommendation to permit ADUs within one-half mile of University Avenue from Emerald Street to Marion Street. Based on community input, the City Council decided to not allow ADUs in the area east of Lexington Parkway. In November, ADUs became a permitted use in the smaller area between Emerald Street and Lexington Parkway.

STREET DESIGN MANUAL & COMPLETE STREETS ACTION PLAN

The Transportation Committee of the Planning Commission served as the steering committee for the Street Design Manual, which encourages consideration of all modes of transportation, including walking, biking and transit. The manual is a toolbox that provides a clear framework focusing on complete streets principles. The accompanying Complete Streets Action Plan includes recommendations to improve the street design process in Saint Paul, based on issues identified during development of the manual.

OUTDOOR COMMERCIAL USES ZONING STUDY

The study recommended creating a new definition of what constitutes an outdoor commercial use, added a size limit and increased the number of zoning districts where outdoor commercial uses are allowed to occur. Under the new outdoor commercial use provision, most accessory outdoor commercial uses would now be permitted by right, while

Artist's rendering of the River Balcony

larger scale outdoor commercial uses would require a conditional use permit. The amendments affect any outdoor commercial use that is not already specifically regulated in the zoning code, including food trucks, donation boxes, accessory plant sales and outdoor markets. The City Council approved the amendments in early 2017.

1 SNELLING-MIDWAY MASTER PLAN, STADIUM SITE PLAN AND ZONING AMENDMENT

In July, the Planning Commission recommended the Snelling-Midway master plan, stadium site plan and zoning code amendment for approval by the City Council. These recommendations followed an extensive community engagement process. The master plan for the Snelling-Midway superblock will guide the eventual redevelopment of the Midway Shopping Center and the Metropolitan Council bus barn site. They will become a new mixed-use neighborhood with office, retail, residential and entertainment uses, anchored by a new Major League Soccer stadium. The planned new street grid and park spaces will provide the framework within which the private redevelopment will occur. Construction of the stadium is anticipated to begin in spring, 2017.

DISTRICTS 1, 6, 13 & 14 PLAN UPDATES

In 2016 the Planning Commission recommended updates to district plans for Districts 1, 6, 13 and 14, which were subsequently approved by the Mayor and City Council as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

2 The **District 1 Community Plan** update addressed a wide range of issues including using the Gateway Corridor transit project to leverage transit-oriented development and improve connectivity of the existing transportation network, branding District 1 as an eastern gateway to the city, and improving access to and along the Mississippi River for recreation.

3 The primary driver of the update to the **District 6 Plan** was the 2014 change in the District Council's boundary that shifted the South Como area to the Como District Council. The plan update includes mapping and demographic changes, elimination of policies specific to the South Como area and new policy language recommended by a Natural Resource Inventory funded by Capitol Region Watershed District.

4 The **Union Park Community Plan** is the first district plan since the merger of the Merriam Park, Snelling-Hamline and Lexington-Hamline Community Councils. The key goal of the plan is to find a balance of competing land uses and transportation modes to preserve the desirable assets and neighborhood character while evolving to meet present and future needs.

5 The District 14 **Macalester Groveland Community Plan** was informed by robust community engagement efforts, with outreach to more than 10,000 people throughout the process. The plan incorporates strategies from existing, older small-area plans within the district and provides a 10-year vision for growth, investment and development.

ONGOING PROJECTS

6 FORD SITE

Ford planning work moved into high gear, with the preparation of the Ford site zoning and public realm concept plans. Studies completed in 2016 include a Ford Site Tax Increment Financing Plan, a Ford site market study, a site infrastructure cost study, a storm water plan for the redeveloped site, an Aquifer Thermal Energy Storage feasibility analysis and a Ford Site transportation study. Environmental remediation and site planning will continue into 2017.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

More than 50 community engagement events were held in 2016, starting with the kickoff open houses in May. City planners reached over 1,900 people to inform them about the planning process and learn about their priorities for the Comprehensive Plan update. Engagement was geographically and demographically representative and will provide a building block for developing draft plan policies in 2017.

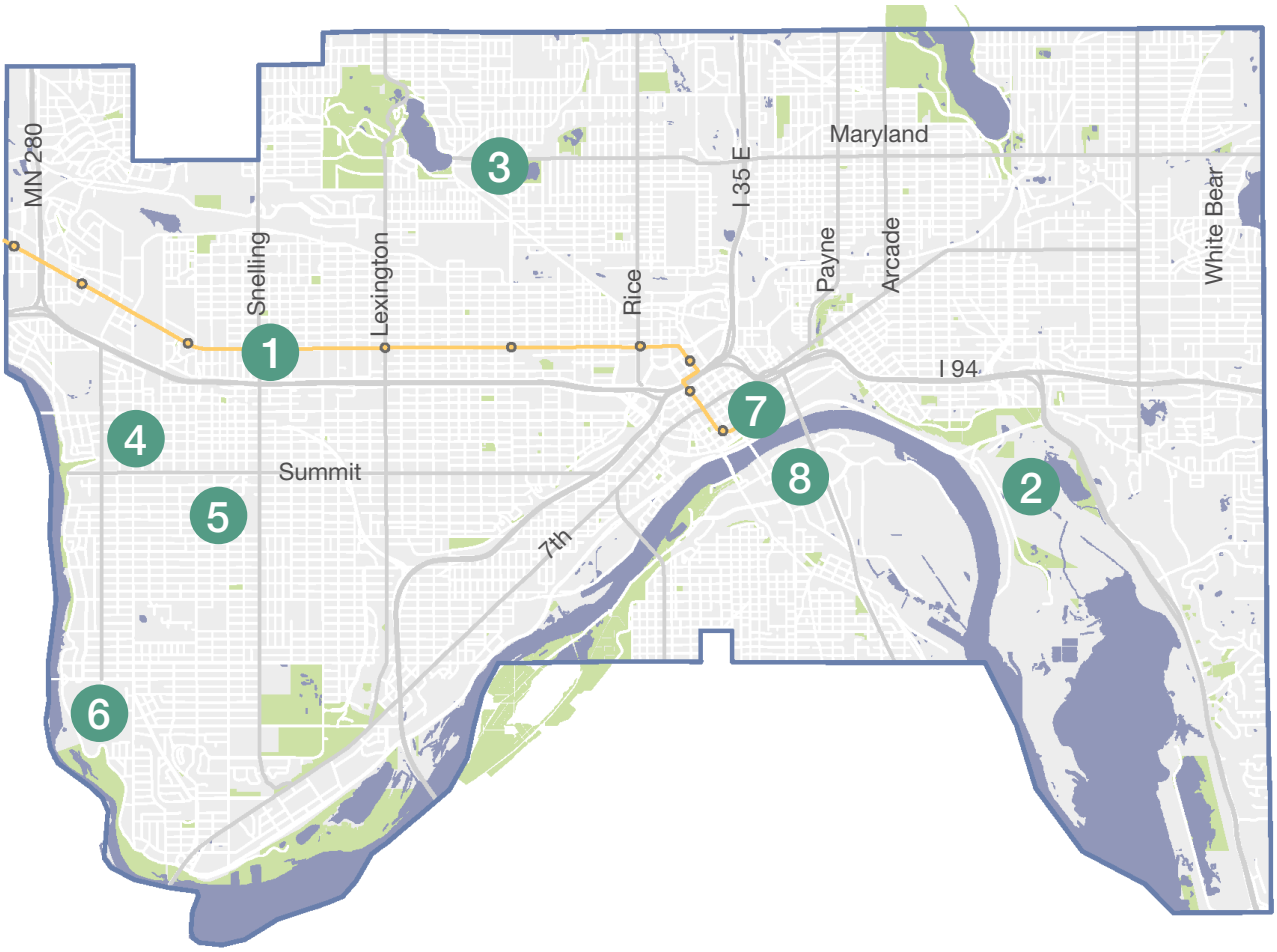
7 RIVER BALCONY MASTER PLAN AND PHASE 1 DESIGN

The River Balcony was first envisioned in the 2013 Great River Passage Master Plan. It will be a 1.5-mile elevated pedestrian pathway along the downtown bluff from the Science Museum to Union Depot. An important part of the downtown public realm network that will better connect downtown to the Mississippi River, the River Balcony will also be a catalytic investment for new private development along the bluff. Planning staff worked with a task force comprising City and County staff, affected property owners, and community representatives. They oversaw the work of the Minnesota Design Center at the University of Minnesota and BKV Architects as they prepared a master plan, including design guidelines and Phase 1 schematic design. In 2017, the Master Plan will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and recommended to the City Council for adoption as an amendment to the Great River Passage Master Plan.

8 WESTSIDE FLATS GREENWAY IMPLEMENTATION

In 2016 there was significant activity around the implementation of the West Side Flats Greenway, a key recommendation of the West Side Flats Master Plan. Using $400,000 awarded by the U.S. EPA in two separate grants, with additional HRA support, the City retained Barr Engineering to develop a conceptual design for the greenway and American Engineering Testing to undertake environmental assessment work. Community outreach and education have been key elements of this project with additional events being held in winter 2017. Three departments within the City (PED, Public Works, and Office of Financial Services) are working together with an infrastructure financing coach who is helping identify creative ways to fund the development of stacked green infrastructure systems. In 2017 a concept plan will be finalized, construction documents developed and a financing strategy put into place.

NEIGHBORHOOD SPECIFIC PLANNING PROJECTS



ONGOING PROJECTS, CONTD.

SOUTH SNELLING ZONING STUDY

In 2016, Planning Commission staff, with guidance from the Neighborhood Planning Committee, substantially completed work on draft findings and recommendations for the Snelling Avenue South Zoning Study. The study area includes all blocks with frontage on Snelling Avenue between I-94/Concordia Avenue on the North and Ford Parkway on the South. It also includes blocks along major cross streets within one quarter mile of that stretch of Snelling Avenue. The study was initiated by the Planning Commission in response to requests in the district plans for this area, as well as in response to the beginning of operations of the A-Line arterial bus rapid transit line along Snelling Avenue. The Planning Commission anticipates releasing the study for public review and comment in early 2017. Any recommendations for zoning changes made by the Planning Commission after public review of the study will be forwarded for consideration by the Mayor and City Council.

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

Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

Jonathan Sage-Martinson, Director, PED
Donna Drummond, Planning Director
Sonja Butler, Secretary to the Planning Commission

2016 Planning Commissioners*

Barbara A. Wencl (Chair)
Anne DeJoy
Daniel Edgerton
Kris Fredson*
Gene Gelgelu
Taqee Khaled*
William Lindeke
Kyle Makarios
Melanie McMahon
Paula Merrigan
Kathy Mouacheupao*
Gaius Nelson
Christopher Ochs
Trevor Oliver
Julie Padilla*
Betsy Reveal
Emily Shively
Terri Thao
Wendy Underwood
Jun-Li Wang*
Daniel Ward II
David Wickiser

*Served partial year

For more information:
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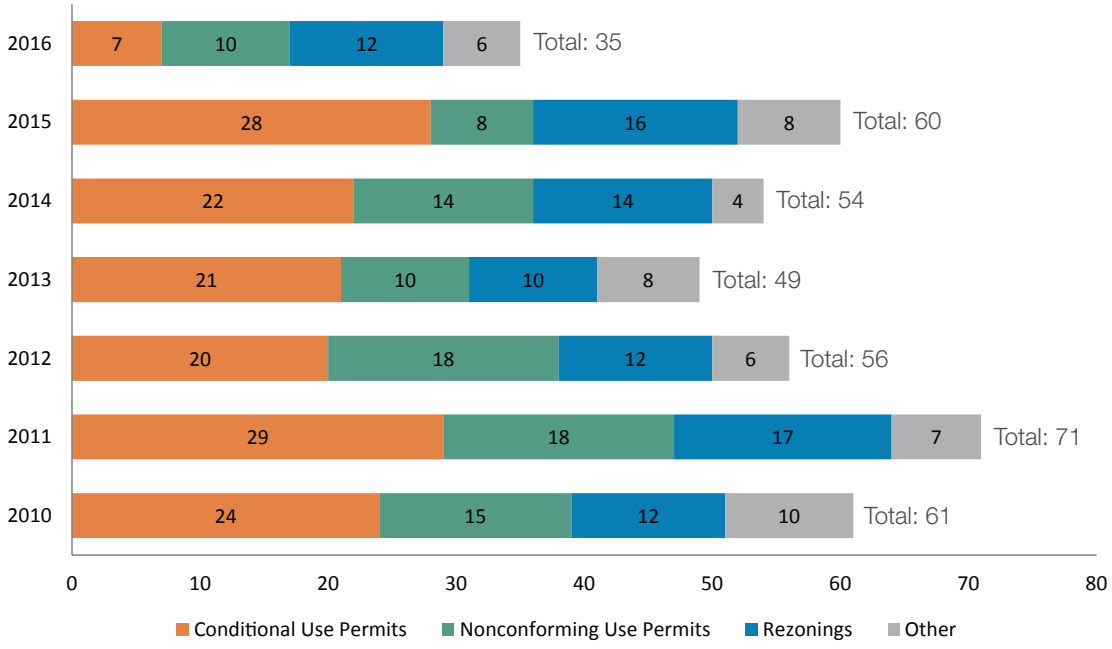
The Zoning Committee reviewed 35 applications in 2016, down 42 percent from 2015. Zoning applications are not necessarily an indicator of overall development activity. Past Zoning Code amendments have often streamlined requirements, which has reduced the need for special approvals. In addition to the rezoning applications initiated by property owners, the Department of Planning and Economic Development and the Planning Commission proactively rezone properties by developing small area plans and conducting zoning studies.



COUNCIL 14
AFSCME
UNION LABEL