



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Melvin Carter, Mayor

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February 21, 2020

Mayor Melvin Carter
City Council President Amy Brendmoen 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 2019 Annual Report. A few notable highlights follow.

The fourth year of work on an update of the City's Comprehensive Plan continued throughout 2019. After extensive community and interdepartmental input in 2016 and 2017, draft documents and public input during 2018, and public hearings at the Planning Commission and City Council in January and June of 2019 (respectively), the City Council adopted the plan on June 25, 2019, and forwarded the document to the Metropolitan Council in July. Staff is now working through final comments from the Metropolitan Council, largely technical in nature.

This year, the City evaluated a set of Ryan Companies' proposed amendments to the *Ford Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan* and parallel zoning code amendments, reviewing and approving a set of amendments in April. The City acted as Responsible Government Unit for the environmental review in 2019 (an Alternative Urban Areawide Review), and in September adopted design standards for the Ford site to support the development of a walkable, pedestrian and bike-friendly built environment. Following redevelopment agreement negotiations with the City, Ryan Companies closed on the Ford property at the end of 2019.

Working with representatives of Minnesota United and partners such as Saint Paul Police, Metro Transit, and MNDOT, Planning staff helped develop the Allianz Field Transportation Management Plan (TMP) to ensure safe and efficient transportation for game attendees and for people living and working around the stadium. The TMP's success in facilitating transit usage and pedestrian and bicycle access helped to limit private vehicle traffic in the immediate vicinity of the stadium.

An example of how the Planning Commission and staff worked to implement the Comprehensive Plan at the local level is the Stryker Ave Zoning Study, a 14-block long, neighborhood-scale commercial corridor on the West Side. The West Side Community Organization championed this study which aimed to revitalize commercial and mixed use development, and support greater housing, including senior housing and small mixed-use projects already in progress.

The Planning Commission looks forward to working with Mayor Carter and the City Council in 2020 as it moves to finalize and begin to implement our 2040 Comprehensive Plan to guide future development – *Saint Paul for All*.

Sincerely,

Luis Rangel Morales, Chair

SAINT PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



FORD SITE ZONING AND PUBLIC REALM MASTER PLAN AMENDMENTS

Ryan Companies submitted amendments to the Ford Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan in October of 2018. Ryan proposed changes with slightly different land uses that encourage more housing on the southern end of the site and retail and office on the northern portion of the site and small changes to the street grid.

After months of working with the community, key stakeholders, and City staff, the Planning Commission recommended revisions to the Plan, and the Plan was amended by the City Council in April of 2019.

FORD SITE DESIGN STANDARDS

Similarly; design standards for the Ford Site were reviewed and recommended by the Planning Commission and were adopted in September of 2019 by the City Council as an addendum to the Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan. The standards support the development of a walkable, pedestrian and bike-friendly built environment, and encourage a sense of place by guiding how buildings meet the street and what materials should be used on buildings and in the landscape.



SNELLING - MIDWAY DEVELOPMENT

Allianz Field, home of Minnesota's Major League Soccer team, Minnesota United, opened in 2019. The Planning Commission reviewed the Master Plan and site plan for the stadium and surrounding areas in 2016. Leading up to opening day in April 2019, Planning staff also participated in planning for game-day transportation, one of the key issues identified by the stadium planning process.

Working with representatives of Minnesota United and partners such as Saint Paul Police, Metro Transit, and MNDOT, Planning staff helped develop the Allianz Field Transportation Management Plan (TMP) to guide game-day operations. The goal of the TMP is to ensure safe and efficient transportation for game attendees and for people living and working around the stadium. The TMP facilitates transit usage and pedestrian and bicycle access, helps to limit private vehicle traffic in the immediate vicinity of the stadium, and includes provisions for traffic control and safe access to transit facilities.

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 and 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 2019.



COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

PEDESTRIAN PLAN

The Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan identifies City priorities to support safe and comfortable walking for all abilities. The Plan was recommended for adoption by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Council in June. The Plan was forwarded to adjacent jurisdictions for review, and was sent to the Metropolitan Council in December 2019. The Pedestrian Plan will be an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan.



EQUITY PRIORITIES

The Planning Commission held a retreat in May to discuss how to begin to actualize the 2040 Comprehensive Plan's focus on social and racial equity. Supported by staff from the Departments of Planning and Economic Development, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Safety and Inspections, Commissioners ranked their top 15 policies related to equity of 45 policies in the plan. Priorities included policies promoting equitable public investments in areas of concentrated disadvantage; efforts to minimize displacement in neighborhoods close to high-frequency transit facing increased redevelopment pressure; place-based economic development focused on increasing access to needed goods/services; removal of unnecessary hurdles to small-scale commercial and residential development; and emphasizing safety and equity in transportation projects. The Commission sent a letter to the Mayor and City Council highlighting these priorities.

To signal to zoning applicants the importance of equity to the Commission, the Zoning Committee held a follow-up workshop in August to discuss providing some guidelines around equity as well as requiring a new question to be answered by each applicant about how their application would further equity. Planning staff has developed a draft question and guidelines that will be considered by the Zoning Committee in early 2020.



“SAINT PAUL FOR ALL” 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Work on the 2040 Comprehensive Plan began in 2015, and the Planning Commission's role has been to ensure that the Plan responds to the regional mandate for growth, maintains a city-wide perspective, is consistent across chapters, and reflects the City's core values. The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee of the Planning Commission has acted as the Steering Committee, providing oversight of and coordination throughout 2016 and 2017.

Extensive community engagement in 2016 supported the project by connecting with 2300+ residents at almost 70 events.

Between March and August 2018, City staff also met informally with all of the district councils and many interested stakeholders, and held two public Open Houses to present key ideas in the draft plan.

The Commission held its public hearing in January 2019. The Planning Commission received 1200+ comments in writing and through public testimony at the hearing. The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee spent several hours over four weeks going through the comments and recommending changes to the draft Plan in response to those comments.

The Planning Commission approved a revised draft of Saint Paul for All: 2040 Comprehensive Plan on March 22, 2019.

The Plan was approved by the City Council on June 25, 2019 and sent to the Metropolitan Council for final review.

CLIMATE ACTION AND RESILIENCY PLAN

The City is creating its first Climate Action & Resilience Plan as a framework for the community to address the impact of climate change. Planning staff assisted Mayor's Office staff with community engagement for the draft plan during the spring and summer and created a climate action game to get people talking about policies, priorities, and trade-offs.

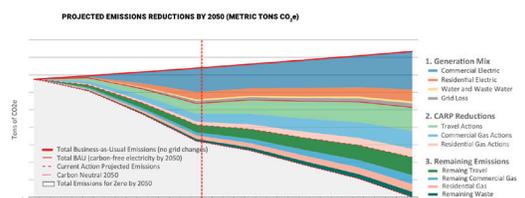


Figure 1: Projected and planned emissions reductions from Business-as-usual scenario. Data sources: Xcel Energy natural gas and electricity use (2015), Minnesota Department of Transportation vehicle miles traveled (2015)

The Path to Carbon Neutrality by 2050





TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

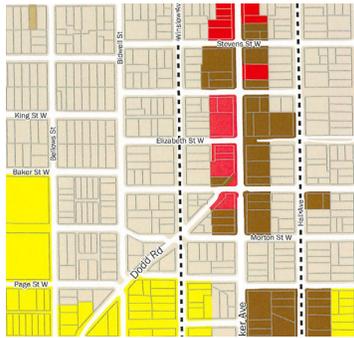


GOLD LINE BUS RAPID TRANSIT PLANNING

Metro Transit released an environmental assessment for public comment in October/November 2019 based on 15% plans for the planned BRT line between downtown Saint Paul and Woodbury. Design is progressing towards 30% plans, with anticipation of entering the Engineering phase in 2020. Staff has continued to provide input as guided by the Gold Line Station Area Plans (which were amended in 2019 to move the preferred White Bear station location to Hazel Street) and other City policies. The line could open in 2024.

RUSH LINE BUS RAPID TRANSIT PLANNING

Ramsey County is leading an environmental study for a planned BRT line, generally within a dedicated guideway following Phalen Boulevard, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-way (Vento Trail) and Highway 61, extending approximately 14 miles, and connecting Downtown Saint Paul to its east side neighborhoods and to Maplewood, Vadnais Heights, Gem Lake, White Bear Township and White Bear Lake. The line could open in 2026.



STRYKER AVENUE ZONING STUDY

The Stryker Avenue Zoning Study was initiated by the Planning Commission in November of 2018 and recommended for City Council approval in August of 2019. Stryker Avenue is a 14 block-long, neighborhood-scale commercial corridor in District 3. The West Side Community Organization served as champions for a rezoning to allow revitalized commercial development, greater housing opportunity, and to publicly set the stage for property owners and developers to pay attention to this corridor. Adopted by the City Council in October of 2019, the rezoning will accommodate senior housing and small mixed-use projects already in progress.

DISTRICT PLANS

HIGHLAND PARK DISTRICT 15 PLAN

In 2019 the Planning Commission recommended updates to District Plans for Districts 7 and 15, which were subsequently approved by the Mayor and City Council as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Highland Park District 15 Plan provides a 10-year vision to guide neighborhood growth, investment, and development. The plan was created by neighborhood volunteers, informed by robust community engagement efforts, and reflects the Highland District Council's mission to foster opportunities for the people that live, learn, work and play in Highland Park to engage and connect with neighbors, businesses and local government and to help build a more vibrant, welcoming, and safe neighborhood.

FROGTOWN SMAPL

In 2016, the Frogtown Neighborhood Association, community members, CURA, and City staff began working on Frogtown's Small Area Plan (SMAPL), or District Plan. Over the course of year, the SMAPL team engaged an estimated 2,500 Frogtown residents in order to produce Saint Paul's first ever graphic novel neighborhood plan. The intent of creating a plan in this graphic novel format was to demystify often times complex planning processes by creating a document to which the community could relate and see themselves represented in. The graphic novel contains all of the elements that you would typically see in a neighborhood district plan, but these elements are uniquely presented in this graphic novel format by having the characters represent the policy chapters in the plan. The dialogue of the characters was taken directly from community members discussing various issues and goals that the plan seeks to address. Ultimately the dialogue and issues in the plan lead to 7 policy chapters, with the policies crafted around the plan's big idea, which is to transform Frogtown into a mixed use and mixed income, arts, education, and entrepreneurship centered Urban Village.

Implementation of the plan is already underway, with SMAPL team working on an implementation plan for the housing and land uses section. As part of the implementation plan, staff and the neighborhood association will request that the Planning Commission initiate a neighborhood wide zoning study, specifically to explore how T1 zoning can be used to help further the Big Idea of transforming Frogtown into a mixed use urban village.



The Frogtown SMAPL is written in the style of a graphic novel

CITYWIDE ZONING

SUSTAINABLE POWER (WIND & SOLAR) ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS

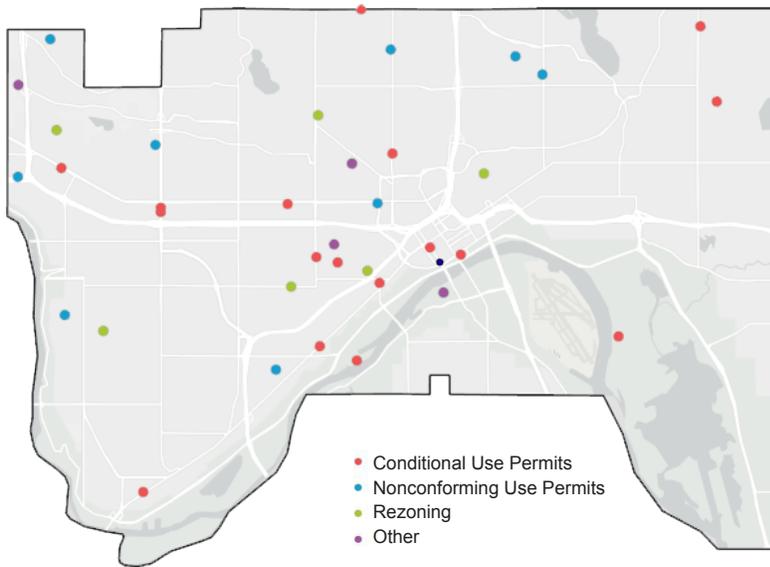
The Sustainable Power zoning text amendments, adopted by City Council in June 2019, establish community solar energy generation facilities (small solar gardens) and small wind energy generation facilities as land uses, and regulate hybrid (wind/solar) lighting fixtures. First initiated by the Planning Commission in 2011, this zoning study underwent several permutations due to updates in state regulations and community recommendations. The Planning Commission reviewed the study along the way, working with staff to refine regulations on height, setback, safety hazards, noise, effect on plant and pollinator habitats, and other considerations.

“HOTEL” LAND USE DEFINITION

The City Council initiated the Hotel Zoning Study to create a definition of hotel because the zoning code does not define the use. The Planning Commission expanded the scope of the study to include motel and inn uses. The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee guided staff work on the study and the Planning Commission recommended zoning code amendments pertaining to hotel, motel, and inn uses.

SIDEWALK SIGNAGE ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS

The City Council initiated the Sidewalk Signage Zoning Study to permit sidewalk signs on public sidewalks and boulevards in response to a request from the Business Review Council (BRC). The BRC noted that it is common for businesses to place such signs on the public sidewalk or boulevard to direct customers to their business, even though they were not previously allowed, and the regulations were enforced on a complaint basis so enforcement across the City was uneven. The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee guided staff work on the study and the Planning Commission recommended zoning code amendments pertaining to sidewalks signs.



The Zoning Committee of the Planning Commission reviewed 40 cases in 2019, down 35% from 2018. In addition to the rezoning cases 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.



DOWNTOWN OVERNIGHT SHELTERS ZONING STUDY

In October, following the Planning Commission’s recommendation, the City Council approved this zoning study to all overnight shelters to be considered in the B4 zoning district on the periphery of downtown, just as is already allowed in the B5 zoning district in the downtown core.

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

Melvin W. Carter III, Mayor

Dr. Bruce Corrie, Director, PED (Jan - Aug)
 Kristin Guild, Interim Director, PED (Aug - Present)
 Luis Pereira, Planning Director
 Sonja Butler, Secretary to the Planning Commission

2019 Planning Commissioners

Aquanetta Anderson	Christopher Ochs
Cedrick Baker	Trevor Oliver
Anne Dejoy	Adrian Perryman
Daniel Edgerton	Luis Rangel Morales
Kristine Grill	Betsy Reveal (Chair)
Nathaniel Hood	Jeffrey Risberg
Taqee Khaled	Antonio Rodriguez
Chong Lee	Wendy Underwood
William Lindeke	Lue Vang
Kathy Mouacheupao	

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