

Thomas – Dale (District 7) Plan Area Plan Summary

Addendum to the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Saint Paul

Recommended by the Planning Commission – **April 20, 2007**

Adopted by the City Council – **August 1, 2007**

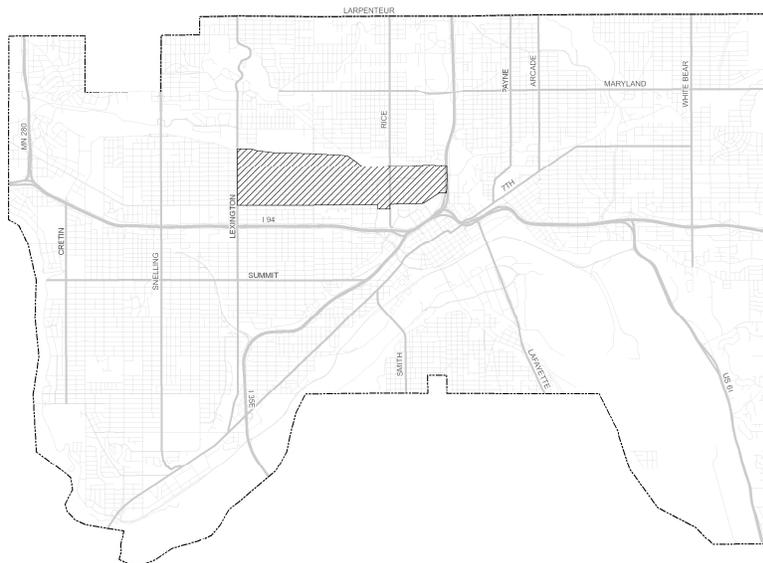
*This summary appends to the Comprehensive Plan the vision and strategies of the **Thomas-Dale (District 7) Plan** and replaces the **1983 Thomas – Dale /District 7 Plan** and **Thomas-Dale Small Area Plan Summary (1997)**.*

Copies of the full-length plan are available for review at the City of Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development and the offices of the Thomas-Dale Planning Council.

Location

Thomas-Dale (District 7) is located northwest of downtown Saint Paul. It is bounded by University Avenue on the south, the Burlington-Sante Fe Railroad on the north, I-35 on the east and Lexington Parkway on the west (see Figure 1). According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the district has approximately 17,425 residents. The district includes the following neighborhoods: East Midway, Thomas-Dale/Frogtown, Capitol Heights and Mt. Airy.

Figure 1. Location of Thomas-Dale (District 7)



Source: City of Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development

Framework

The key goals of the Thomas – Dale (District 7) Plan includes:

- *Recreation options will meet the leisure desires of residents, and enhance the visual appeal and natural resources of the neighborhood.*
- *Community members will be involved in caring for each other and their shared surroundings, contributing to the diversity, safety and vitality of the district.*
- *The land in the district will be used to reflect the area's history, its role in the City of Saint Paul and the residents' pride of place.*
- *A variety of quality housing options will help the community be diverse and an inclusive part of Saint Paul.*
- *A variety of transportation options will increase the mobility of all residents.*
- *Education will be a lifetime process that focuses on capacity-building skills, personal development, citizenship and civic engagement, and workforce development.*
- *A mix of businesses will fulfill the needs of residents and contribute to meaningful employment in the area.*

Vision

Thomas – Dale (District 7) will continue to be a community that contains a mix of uses, including commercial, industrial and residential. The vision for the Thomas-Dale (District 7) area is to continue to be racially, economically and culturally diverse. The community will work to maintain and attract high-quality development that provides jobs for residents, ensure safety, protect green space, and increase housing choices and services for the community. New construction and/or rehabilitation will be compatible with the existing neighborhood character.

Specific Action Strategies and Implementation Steps

The Thomas-Dale (District 7) Plan recommends action strategies in seven areas: recreation, community, land use, housing, transportation, education, economic development and zoning.^a

Recreation (R)

Recreation options must be expanded to meet the leisure desires of the residents, and enhance the visual appeal and natural resources of the neighborhood. The plan calls for more green space for recreation and public use, as well as natural landscaped areas. Recommendations for Recreation include:

^a The recommendations are a summation of the full plan and they are not arranged in order of priority. Furthermore, they are the desires of Thomas-Dale Planning Council and the community and not to be assumed to be the full responsibility of the City of Saint Paul.

- R1. Work with sponsoring entities to ensure that the proposed Kroc Center meets community expectations for openness and cultural sensitivity as well as having programming that meets the needs and interest of residents.
- R2. Explore viable uses, such as pocket parks and community gardens, for vacant lots smaller than 40 feet width and ensure that there is adequate planning and funding for maintenance.
- R3. Increase the number of recreational opportunities that reflect the diversity of cultures, resources and ages in the district. This would include more soccer fields, programmed activity for adults and meditative space.
- R4. Connect the neighborhood to Saint Paul's park system by extending existing bicycle lanes and paths.
- R5. Connect the Central Corridor to Como Park and the River with bike and pedestrian trails.

Community (C)

The plan calls for immediate strengthening of community connections and marketing the district as a great place to live, work and play. Community members will be involved in caring for each other and their shared surroundings, contributing to the diversity, safety and vitality of the district. Recommendations for Community include:

- C1. Explore methods by which residents can become aware of community activities and involved in decisions made by governmental entities.
- C2. Continue to work with the Saint Paul Police Department to fight crime in the neighborhood.
- C3. Work to engage business and property owners in community issues and activities.
- C4. The Thomas-Dale Planning Council will work with the area's health care providers to ensure that the needs of residents, particularly those who are uninsured are met.

Land Use (L)

Land use in the Thomas – Dale neighborhood is somewhat segregated. Light industrial use runs along the Pierce Butler Route, commercial use tends to congregate along the major transportation corridors (e.g., Dale, University Avenue), and residential uses can be found in the middle. The community foresees the melding of these uses in the coming years in order to meet the needs of businesses and residents. The following are recommendations for Land Use:

- L1. Encourage the full utilization of the Dale Street Shops site (located at the corner of Dale Street and Minnehaha Avenue) and the Minnehaha Mall (located between Chatsworth and Milton Streets).
- L2. Orient businesses to address pedestrians, making the street experience more pleasurable for walkers.
- L3. Improve parking by encouraging parking in back of buildings and underground and, by permit parking in the neighborhoods.
- L4. Create safer spaces through lighting and thoughtful design.
- L5. Intensify development on major transportation corridors in order to bring in more jobs and housing units.
- L6. Thomas-Dale Planning Council desires a forty-acre study to determine the

- appropriate zoning along major thoroughfares in the district.
- L7. Continue to support the Pierce Butler realignment and extension.

Housing (H)

Housing in the Thomas – Dale neighborhood is primarily small-lot single family residences mixed with duplexes, triplexes and large apartment buildings. The community supports quality housing for residents of all income levels. Recommendations for Housing include:

- H1. Preserve the existing housing stock by rehabilitating units to accommodate future use.
- H2. Adopt design guidelines so that new development and redevelopment are consistent with the existing character of the neighborhood.
- H3. Encourage the development of affordable housing units via new construction and infill.
- H4. Encourage the development of houses with three or more bedrooms to accommodate larger families.
- H5. Encourage the development of housing for elderly residents living in the district.
- H6. Increase the level of home ownership and rental property for people with a variety of income levels and housing needs.
- H7. Encourage the creation of a community land trust to mitigate gentrification.
- H8. Thomas-Dale Planning Council encourages the Saint Paul Public Housing Authority to maintain publicly-assisted housing in the district, both physically and financially.

Transportation (T)

Safe, timely and accessible transportation options benefit both residents and visitors. Thus, the community desires a variety of transportation options that increase mobility for all residents. The following are recommendations for Transportation:

- T1. Encourage the construction of traffic-calming methods (i.e. traffic islands, speed bumps, stop signs and bump-outs).
- T2. Encourage Metro Transit to increase bus routes and extend bus schedules, specifically in the western half of the district, to serve residents who rely on public transportation.
- T3. Create a task force to follow the development of Light Rail Transit (LRT) along University Avenue.
- T4. Make streets in the neighborhood safe for pedestrians, bike and other non-auto travelers.
- T5. The Thomas-Dale Planning Council will work with various entities to ensure that the community is involved in planning for Light Rail Transit (LRT) line proposed to go along University Avenue.

Education (E)

Education is a lifetime process that focuses on capacity-building skills, personal development, citizenship and civic engagement, and workforce development. Recommendations for Education include:

- E1. Connect residents to education providers to ensure that they have the skills required for employment.
- E2. Support the expansion of technology resources, such as computers in schools and libraries.
- E3. Advocate for the creation of internships and more after-school programs.

Economic Development (ED)

The economic vitality of the district depends on businesses providing meaningful employment and residents supporting these businesses. Furthermore, commercial centers must be kept attractive and safe. Recommendations for Economic Development include:

- ED1. Maintain and attract a mix of businesses that will fulfill the needs of residents and contribute to meaningful employment in the area.
- ED2. Encourage companies that locate in the district to hire directly from the community.
- ED3. Work with responsible entities to determine how commercial property can be restored to productive uses.
- ED4. Thomas-Dale will work with businesses to initiate a “buy local” campaign to highlight the goods and services available in the district.

Zoning Recommendations (Z)

- Z1. The plan recommends that the Department of Planning and Economic Development conduct a forty-acre study of the entire district in order to evaluate zoning in the Thomas-Dale neighborhood. The following are specific desires of the Thomas-Dale Planning Council and the community:
 - The community encourages higher density residential development along major transportation corridors specifically, University Avenue, provided that it meets the following standards:
 - Its scale is consistent with the surrounding character of the neighborhood.
 - Its design and orientation to the street are consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.
 - Parking and traffic issue are adequately addressed
 - Study the feasibility of creating another TN category, such as TN4 which would provide for more density and height on University Avenue.
 - Rezoning of properties for higher density new construction or rehabilitation on the south side of Sherburne will be considered on a case by case basis. The District Council will support those applications that represent high quality development that keeps with the character of the neighborhood. Pedestrian scale homes, such as town homes and small apartment buildings, are preferred.
 - Extend the TN2 zoning along Dale Street from Thomas up to Minnehaha on both sides of the street.
 - Rezone the north east and north west corner of Western and Thomas to TN2.

- Rezone the south east and north east corner of Victoria and Thomas to TN2.

Priority Actions for City Participation^b

The following actions have been identified as priorities of the community that require leadership or significant participation by the City of Saint Paul. To promote development that is consistent with the recommendations of this plan, the City of Saint Paul and community groups should work to implement the projects identified in this summary by applying for City resources in competitive processes, such as the Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) and Sales Tax Revitalization program (STAR), and working through the regular operating programs of relevant City departments.

Public Works (PW)

- PW1. Extend Pierce Butler Route along the exiting BNSF railroad east to connect with Phalen Boulevard.
- PW2. Extend the bike lane down Lexington Parkway and connect Como Park to the Mississippi River's edge trail system.
- PW3. Study extending the bike lane from Como Park along Como Avenue and connect it with the Gateway Trail that runs along 35E.
- PW4. Improve the bike lane on Pierce Butler Route by marking it well and extending it east onto Minnehaha Avenue West.
- PW5. Enhance the character of Como Avenue from Rice Street to Como Park to reflect a parkway (i.e. trail, signage, lighting, landscaping etc).
- PW6. Encourage the construction of traffic-calming methods (i.e. traffic islands, speed bumps, stop signs and bump-outs).

Planning and Economic Development (PED)

- PED1. Conduct a forty-acre study of the entire district to determine the appropriate zoning for the district.
- PED2. On University Avenue, combine high-density multi-family residential with high-density commercial uses.
- PED3. On Dale Street, create a pedestrian-friendly environment by increasing the density of commercial uses, particularly at the intersections, and adding high-density multi-family residential units.
- PED4. On Como Avenue, increase the density of commercial uses that respond to the area's commercial and institutional character.
- PED5. Maintain and attract a mix of businesses to the district.
- PED6. Prepare a small area plan for the lower Rice Street area in conjunction with North-End (District 6) Planning Council.
- PED7. Prepare a small area plan for the Minnehaha Mall area to determine the best socio-economic use of this parcel.
- PED8. Increase the number of housing units in the district.

^b The recommendations and actions in this summary are not arranged in priority and/or funding order.

Parks and Recreation (PR)

- PR1. Ensure that the Kroc Center proposal meets the expectations of the community.
- PR2. Convert vacant lots smaller than 40 feet in width into pocket parks or community gardens with adequate planning for maintenance.
- PR3. Extend the bike lane down Lexington Parkway and connect Como Park to the Mississippi River's edge trail system.
- PR4. Extend the bike lane from Como Park along Como Avenue and connect it with the Gateway Trail that runs along 35 East.
- PR5. Improve the bike lane on Pierce Butler Route by marking it well and extending it east onto Minnehaha Avenue West.

Police Department (PD)

- PD1. The Saint Paul Police Department, and in particular, the Western District Patrol Division, will continue to work closely with the District 7 Community Council in efforts to promote safety and overall community involvement in crime reduction strategies.
- PD2. Continue to host monthly community meetings to address crime/safety issues.
- PD3. Relationships between Police, Parks and Recreation and youth activities will continue to be fostered.
- PD4. The Police Athletic League will continue to be a crime reduction strategy at both Scheffer and West Minnehaha Recreation Centers.
- PD5. Creative "crime reduction" strategies, will be shared/developed in cooperation with the Thomas-Dale Planning Council, area residents and local business owners.

Planning Commission Findings

The Planning Commission finds that *Thomas-Dale (District 7) Plan Summary* is, generally, consistent with the *Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan* and other adopted City policies.

Planning Process

The Thomas-Dale / District 7 Plan was prepared via a series of nine focus groups held between September 2004 and March 2005. The focus groups consisted of residents and business owners. Utilizing this initial research and community input, a graduate student from the University of Minnesota Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs drafted the plan's seven goals along with action steps. Subsequent plan drafts were reviewed and modified by a committee of residents, business owners, and employees of the City and non-profit organizations. The final draft of the plan was reviewed at an open neighborhood meeting and adopted by the District 7 Planning Council on July 29, 2005.