Saint Paul Planning Commission
City Hall Conference Center
15 Kellogg Boulevard West

Minutes November 2, 2012

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, November 2, 2012 at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present:	Mmes. Noecker, Perrus, Porter, Reveal, Shively, Thao, Wencl; and Messrs. Edgerton, Gelgelu, Lindeke, Nelson, Ochs, Oliver, Schertler, Spaulding, Ward, and Wickiser.
Commissioners Absent:	Mmes. *Merrigan, *Wang, and Messrs. *Connolly, and Spaulding. *Excused
Also Present:	Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Christina Morrison, Kate Reilly, Michelle Beaulieu, Scott Tempel, Bill Dermody, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes October 19, 2012.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Reveal moved approval of the minutes of October 19, 2012. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Wencl had no announcements.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond announced that today's agenda was revised. Instead of a presentation on Open Saint Paul there will be a presentation by Christina Morrison about the Streetcar Study. A presentation on Open Saint Paul will happen at a future meeting.

IV. Zoning Committee

STAFF SITE PLAN REVIEW – List of current applications. *(Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)*

One item came before the staff Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, October 30, 2012:

- Beacon Bluff Parcel 3 North, parking lot for existing building (Plans shows 2 phases: 127 spaces and 134 spaces) located at 900 Bush.

NEW BUSINESS

#12-109-252 Hip Hounds Inc – Establishment of legal nonconforming use as a dog daycare with outdoor relief/exercise area. 1752 Grand Avenue between Wheeler and Fairview. *(Michelle Beaulieu, 651/266-6620)*

Commissioner Nelson reported that the Zoning Committee laid this case over to the November 8, 2012 meeting.

Commissioner Nelson announced the items on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, November 8, 2012.

V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

No report.

VI. Neighborhood Planning Committee

West Side Community Plan – Recommendation to release for public review and set public hearing for December 14, 2012. *(Scott Tempel, 651/266-6621)*

Scott Tempel, PED staff, said that the West Side Community Plan was started by the West Side Community Organization in 2011. They completed their plan and forwarded it to staff for review and it is now ready to be released for public review and to set the public hearing on December 14, 2012.

Commissioner Noecker asked why there would be two public hearings on December 14th when the Commission had earlier discussed limiting the number of public hearings to one per meeting?

Donna Drummond. Director of Planning, said that staff asked that of the Neighborhood Planning Committee. It's a judgment call, as to how much testimony we think there would be for those two hearings, and the committee felt comfortable that the Planning Commission could handle two public hearings on these items. This seemed preferable to having a public hearing on December 28th or delaying it until January, so that was the recommendation of the committee.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Oliver moved on behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee to release the draft for public review and set a public hearing on December 14, 2012. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

District del Sol Small Area Plan – Approve resolution recommending adoption to Mayor and City Council. *(Kate Reilly, 651/266-6618)*

Commissioner Perrus said that it does not look like there were any changes made in the resolution.

Donna Drummond, Director of Planning, said that the memo details the changes that were recommended for the plan.

Commissioner Edgerton said that this is a small area plan for District del Sol, which is part of the larger West Side Community Plan. Normally the bigger plan would have been done first to set the plan for the entire area, then the more detailed small area plan. Edgerton asked why the smaller plan is being forwarded first, before the larger plan.

Kate Reilly, PED staff, said that the District del Sol Small Area Plan was initiated by neighborhood organizations following a zoning study of that area. The plan is designed to be focused more on economic development activities, centered on three key sites in the district. Not long after the District del Sol Plan project got underway, the District Council initiated the West Side Community Plan. While developing the West Side Community Plan District Council staff researched all other relevant plans, including the District del Sol plan and incorporated the pertinent policies from those plans into the West Side Community Plan.

Commissioner Edgerton inquired into what is the point of having district-wide plans, if there are small area plans completed for similar areas.

Ms. Drummond said that small area plans are done when there is a need to look more intensively at a particular area in the city. Small area plans are typically done with more City staff support. District Councils also have a desire to do a plan that covers the entire geography of a district council area, so they do district plans. There are not small area plans that cover all of the West Side/District 3 area and they have not updated their plan for a long time, so they wanted to do a general update of the whole district plan. The District del Sol plan focused on key redevelopment parcels near Robert and Cesar Chavez that the community wanted more intensive review of and some assistance in thinking about what could happen there.

Commissioner Wickiser said in general the small area plan is guiding development and the over all District Plan is used in the context of Comprehensive Planning Committee meetings and Zoning Committee meetings in order to justify decisions in that manner.

Ms. Drummond thinks that both plans can be used in the same way. Staff have been trying to move toward - rather than updating existing small area plans when they become outdated (more then 10-years old) - encouraging District Councils to look at incorporating recommendations from the small area plans that have not been accomplished into the district plan. This was done with the District 6 Plan recently and there were a number of small area plans that were incorporated into the District 6 Plan update. This is the direction staff wants to pursue, but there will still be cases where more intensive planning work around a particular sub area of a planning district is desired, and we will continue to have both small area plans and district plans.

Commissioner Lindeke asked if the West Side Community Plan looked at and incorporates the District del Sol plan, and if the community got a chance to see the District del Sol plan as part of their process.

Ms. Drummond said that they did look at that and there were people who were active in both planning efforts.

Ms, Reilly added that you'll also fund that some of the exact policies in the District del Sol Plan show up in the West Side Community Plan.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Oliver moved on behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee to recommend approval of the resolution and forward to the Mayor and City Council for adoption of this plan. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Highland Village Special District Sign Plan Amendments – Release for public review and set a public hearing for December 14, 2012.

Kate Reilly, PED staff, said that the plan was originally drafted and adopted by the City Council in 1986. In 2011 both the Highland Business Association and the Highland District Council requested that the sign plan be updated in part to prohibit dynamic display signs. A task force and study was initiated in 2011. The task force met and discussed potential changes to the plan for nine months in 2011 and 2012. The proposed substantive changes are that the enforcement area will be expanded to include the Ford site and up to Snelling Avenue along Ford Parkway. This allows the plan to be applied to the Super America station on the corner of Snelling and Ford Parkway. The allowed square feet of sign area is reduced in the proposed amendments from (2) times the lineal feet of frontage or 75 square feet whichever is greater to (1) times the lineal feet of lot frontage or 75 square feet whichever is greater. This is the same for traditional neighborhood, office service and B1 business districts. The maximum area of freestanding and wall signs was reduced from 32 square feet to 24 square feet. Permanent window signs would not exceed 10% and temporary window signs would not exceed 20% of the store window glass area. Portable signs area was reduced from 300 square feet to 36 square feet, which is the same for other lots that have a frontage of less than 330 feet. Also note that portable signs are prohibited in the right-of-way city-wide; they must be on the business owners' property. Dynamic display signs are prohibited.

Commissioner Ward said that there was no mention about flashing signs and there are a lot of businesses on University Avenue that have flashing signs and rope lighting which is somewhat distracting, but it's not discussed in this particular part of the sign regulations. Is that going to be addressed as this moves forward?

Ms. Reilly said that flashing signs are prohibited citywide, so if you see a flashing sign contact the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) and let them know. That was part of the initial sign amendments that were done in 2009 and 2010. The rope lighting is not a sign and she has talked to DSI about how to address this, but they have not come up with a solution so they will need to address this probably in the lighting section of the code.

Commissioner Reveal asked if this is more restrictive than the citywide signage regulations considered about a year ago.

Ms. Reilly stated that this is more restrictive. In addition, she noted that there are special sign districts for almost every planning district focused around a business district. Special District Sign Plans do have the ability to become more restrictive than the general zoning code and there's probably a desire to move away from special sign districts and just have the existing new more restrictive zoning code regulations that have already been established take precedence.

Ms. Drummond thinks that special sign districts have evolved because there has been a desire by the business community and the community in general for these business areas to have different standards for signage.

Commissioner Noecker asked if this would take effect immediately, would it apply to both existing and new signs, and what the plan is for enforcement.

Ms. Reilly said that it is a zoning code amendment and has to go through City Council. This will be forwarded to City Council after the Planning Commission's public hearing and recommendation. There also will be signs that are grandfathered in, which creates maybe a half dozen nonconforming signs that are grandfathered in until the signs are rebuilt. And as for enforcement, one of the things that the special sign district adds is a requirement that the district council be notified and sent plans of the sign, when there is a new sign permit pulled. Then the district council will have more oversight for the signage and more ability to work with the applicant to come up with signage that's appropriate. Otherwise enforcement is done on a complaint basis.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Oliver moved on behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee to release the draft for public review and set a public hearing on December 14, 2012. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Oliver announced the items on the agenda for the next Neighborhood Committee meeting on Wednesday, November 7, 2012.

VII. **Saint Paul Streetcar Study** – Informational presentation by Christina Morrison, PED. *(Christina Morrison, 651/266-6546)*

Christina Morrison, PED staff gave a "Streetcar 101" presentation related to the work beginning on the citywide Streetcar Feasibility Study.

Commissioner Ward asked which lines would be studied. Ms. Morrison responded that the evaluation had not yet begun, but that the universe of options would include streets identified on the adopted Preferred Transit Network map, historic streetcar corridors, and areas designated as "Mixed Use" or "Residential Corridors" in the 2030 Land Use map.

Commissioner Ward asked if it is anticipated that businesses would be supportive given the recent hardships with LRT construction. Ms. Morrison noted the differences between streetcar and LRT construction, and that the former is generally built much more quickly, and is less impactful to businesses.

Commissioner Noecker asked about advantages to streetcar over regular route bus service or branded bus service. Ms. Morrison outlined some of the advantages seen elsewhere in ridership due to the presence and permanence of a rail investment, as well as the potential economic development benefits not typically seen with local bus service.

Commissioner Nelson noted that ridership and demand were big considerations with regards to getting LRT funded. He asked how streetcars can be funded if a primary goal is development, or future ridership. Ms. Morrison explained some of the changing goals of the Federal Transit Administration, and the increasing emphasis being put on transit-oriented development, planning, and zoning.

Commissioner Schertler noted a concern that streetcars primarily benefit adjacent real estate investment, as opposed to general economic development, and questioned if high amenity routes

help fund our transit needs in the region. He asked about Metro Transit's position on the mode. Ms. Morrison discussed that the City is working closely with Metro Transit to develop a spectrum of urban bus and rail projects to help meet our region's transit needs, noting that streetcars are one tool that can provide reliable service in the complex, constrained right of ways of an urban area.

Commissioner Porter asked who streetcars would attract to transit. Ms. Morrison noted that modern streetcar systems tend to attract non-work trips, broadening the use of transit throughout the day, evening, and on weekends.

Commissioner Ward noted that it would be helpful to see the cost benefit analysis between streetcar, bus and BRT, including operations and maintenance costs.

Chair Wencl asked if West 7th would be considered given the past opposition to transit investment in that area. Ms. Morrison noted that staff has been working closely with the district councils and councilmembers to see if there is interest for a streetcar and/or Rapid Bus project on West 7th.

Chair Wencl asked if interlining LRT and a streetcar would reduce the overall economic development. Ms. Morrison noted that the idea of potentially using LRT tracks would be for a shorter application, for example, to access the maintenance facility in Lowertown.

Commissioner Porter added that the streetcar presentation should discuss air quality and potential improvements.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, asked if Ms. Morrison could talk a little about the process. Ms. Morrison briefly outlined the organizational structure of the project, as well as some of the current work items.

VIII. Transportation Committee

Christina Morrison, PED staff, announced the items on the agenda for the next Transportation Committee on Monday, November 5, 2012.

IX. Communications Committee

No report.

X. Task Force Reports

Kate Reilly, PED staff, reported that the Near East Side Task Force met on Monday, 10/29/12. On the agenda were updates about the Hamms Brewery site and the Make it Happen on East 7th Street Initiative. The Beacon Bluff Advisory Committee also met and their update was about Building 21. Sale of the building closed on Wednesday, October 31st, so now the work will begin on that building.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, reported that the Ford Task Force met on Monday and heard a presentation on the zoning framework study that is underway. A report by the consultants will be finalized in the next few months and will be presented to the Planning Commission thereafter.

XI. Old Business

None.

XII. New Business

None.

XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
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Planning and Economic Development Department,
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Respectfully submitted,

Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved November 16, 2012
(Date)

Daniel Ward II
Secretary of the Planning Commission

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