



**CITY OF SAINT PAUL**  
*Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor*

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**DATE:** November 26, 2012  
**TO:** Neighborhood Planning Committee  
**FROM:** Michelle Beaulieu, Planning Staff  
**SUBJECT:** Shepard Davern Area: Planning Update and Zoning Study

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### **Introduction**

The Shepard Davern area is at the southern-most edge of Saint Paul, just across the Mississippi River from the MSP International Airport and the Mall of America, and easily accessible from Downtown Saint Paul via Highway 5 / West 7<sup>th</sup> Street or Shepard Road. This strategic location has been the focus of many planning efforts in recent years, as summarized below.

### **Shepard Davern Small Area Plan (1999)**

- Includes the Shepard Davern Commercial and Shepard Davern Residential Overlay Districts.
- Plan elements include: design guidelines; mixed-use districts; streetscaping; housing goals; a reconfigured Shepard Road including increased access; and a new “gateway” into the city.

### **Shepard Davern Special Sign District**

- Limits billboards; places stronger restrictions on nonconforming signs.

### **Fort Road Development Plan (2005)**

- Includes transit- and pedestrian-oriented development standards, and encourages a mix of uses along the Fort Road corridor.
- Nodes are identified for denser residential development opportunities. The Gateway and Rankin nodes are both in the Shepard Davern area.

### **District 15 Neighborhood Plan (2005)**

- Recommends amending the Shepard Davern SAP and overlay with two modifications: reducing the maximum allowed building height to five floors (from six) or fifty-five feet (from sixty-five) while continuing to enforce the forty-foot height limits in the Mississippi River Critical Area, and; eliminating convention facilities as permitted uses.
- Recommends a TN3 Master Plan to replace the design guidelines in the Shepard Davern overlay areas.

### **Great River Passage Plan (awaiting adoption)**

- Three overarching themes: More Natural, More Urban, More Connected.
- Promotes increased access to the Mississippi River, with traffic calming and enhanced grade interactions along Shepard Road between Rankin and Highway 5; creating

multimodal park access routes (green connections) between West 7<sup>th</sup> and Shepard Road; encouraging river-oriented redevelopment along Shepard Road; and creating new recreational facilities at the river's edge.

With the profusion of planning documents covering the Shepard Davern area, as well as the two Shepard Davern overlay districts, the vision for the area has become muddled and development work is difficult. The *Shepard Davern Small Area Plan* is outdated, particularly in light of the more recent plans for the area. City staff, along with the Highland District Council, have identified key issues that should be addressed by a renewed planning effort for Shepard Davern.

### **Insufficient zoning/overlay districts**

The existing Shepard Davern Overlay Districts (see attached map) exclude a number of commercially zoned properties along West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and do not include the full area discussed in the Shepard Davern Small Area Plan (1999). These districts also include certain standards that have made it difficult to attract development, and may be prohibitive to the redevelopment of some of the properties in the area.

Since the creation of these overlay districts, the City has adopted new Traditional Neighborhood zoning districts which include many of the pedestrian-friendly qualities and design standards that are included in the Shepard Davern Overlay Districts. TN zoning districts may be a more straightforward and comprehensive replacement for these overlay districts.

### **Roadway issues**

The Shepard Davern Plan of 1999 included a number of roadway adjustments for the area, including new pedestrian intersections on Shepard Road and West 7<sup>th</sup>. Circulation issues still exist, including issues with access to businesses along West 7<sup>th</sup> (both for pedestrians and motor vehicles), and with access to the river and Crosby Farm. The high levels of traffic on both West 7<sup>th</sup> and Shepard Road continue to create barriers between the residents and businesses in the area.

### **Greenspace and landscaping**

There is a shortage of recreational and public green spaces in the Shepard Davern area, particularly with the high number of children living in the area. Many of the area's open spaces are either located in quasi-private courtyards or are largely inaccessible due to the traffic on Shepard Road.

To address these ongoing concerns, staff recommends initiating a zoning study and a district plan amendment to update the policies and development guidelines for the Shepard Davern area.

### **Geographic scope**

The geographic limits of this zoning study and planning effort should include the whole Shepard Davern area. The existing overlay districts do not cover all of the area included in the Shepard Davern Small Area Plan from 1999, nor the whole area looked at as the "West 7<sup>th</sup> Street Area" in the District 15 Neighborhood Plan.

The Shepard Davern Special Sign District applies to "*the area beginning at a point where Shepard Road, Mississippi River Boulevard and West Seventh intersect, northeasterly along West Seventh Street to Edgumbe Road, north on Edgumbe Road to St. Paul Avenue, east along St. Paul Avenue to West Seventh Street, northeasterly along Homer Street, southeasterly*

*along Homer Street to Shepard Road, southwesterly along Shepard Road to the point of the beginning.*” This roughly corresponds to the area included in the 1999 Small Area Plan, and to the “West 7<sup>th</sup> Street Area” as identified in the District 15 Neighborhood Plan. Therefore this is the recommended area for study under this planning and zoning study.

### **Document scope**

Using the City’s Traditional Neighborhood zoning districts, most of the elements of the existing Shepard Davern Overlay Districts can be streamlined through a zoning study to create a more straightforward framework for the area. Because of recent planning efforts on the Great River Passage Plan and the strength of the Highland Park/District 15 Neighborhood Plan, City staff recommends that the new Shepard Davern plan be composed as an amendment to the existing Highland Park/District 15 Neighborhood Plan rather than as a stand-alone Small Area Plan.

### **Task force formation**

City staff will take the lead in the zoning study and writing the Neighborhood Plan amendment or Small Area Plan. A task force should be convened comprised of neighborhood representatives to guide the process, led by two co-chairs, one from the community and one from the Planning Commission. The full task force should be approximately 12 people, and will meet roughly once a month.

### **Staff recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Neighborhood Planning Committee forward the attached resolution to the Planning Commission with a recommendation for approval. The resolution formally initiates the planning process and zoning study, and authorizes the formation of a neighborhood task force.

city of saint paul  
planning commission resolution DRAFT  
file number \_\_\_\_\_  
date \_\_\_\_\_

**Shepard Davern Area Plan Update and Zoning Study Initiation**

**WHEREAS**, the *Shepard Davern Gateway Small Area Plan & Saint Paul Gateway Project (Shepard Davern Small Area Plan)* was adopted in 1999 to guide the development of the area bounded by the Mississippi River on the south and west and by the Highland Park bluffs on the north; and

**WHEREAS**, the *Shepard Davern Small Area Plan* was a collaboration of a Small Area Plan Task Force of community members, the City of Saint Paul staff members, and a Small Area Plan Urban Design Team; and

**WHEREAS**, the *Shepard Davern Small Area Plan* utilized the ten principles laid out in the *Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework* to specifically address the Shepard Davern area; and

**WHEREAS**, the *Shepard Davern Small Area Plan* contains a plan for the Gateway area, for the major West Seventh Street and Shepard Road corridors, for the redevelopment of existing industrial properties around Davern Street and Shepard Road, and for the development of new housing within existing residential areas; and

**WHEREAS**, Sections 67.302 *SDC Shepard Davern commercial redevelopment overlay district* and 67.303 *SDR Shepard Davern residential redevelopment overlay district* were amended to the Saint Paul Zoning Code in 1999 as mechanisms to accomplish the goals of the *Shepard Davern Small Area Plan*; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2011, the *SCR residential redevelopment overlay district* was amended to reduce the minimum required parcel size for developments from two acres to one acre; and

**WHEREAS**, experience with the *Shepard Davern Small Area Plan* and the zoning overlay districts in recent years has led staff to question whether it is providing the right type and level of direction for the area; and

**WHEREAS**, the overlay districts were written prior to the City adopting the Traditional Neighborhood (TN) districts into the Zoning Code, and have many of the same standards and goals as the TN districts; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2005 *District 15 Highland Park District Plan* has a detailed plan for the entire West 7<sup>th</sup> Street area, and more closely aligns with present neighborhood goals for the area; and

moved by \_\_\_\_\_  
seconded by \_\_\_\_\_  
in favor \_\_\_\_\_  
against \_\_\_\_\_

**WHEREAS**, the 2005 *Fort Road Development Plan* includes urban design guidelines and building typology recommendations as well as concept plans for two key nodes in the Shepard Davern area; and

**WHEREAS**, the *Great River Passage Master Plan*, currently being considered as an addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, contains recommendations for the Shepard Davern area; and

**WHEREAS**, to both update and simplify development guidelines and policies for this area, City staff recommends decertifying the existing *Shepard Davern Small Area Plan* and writing an amendment to the *Highland Park District Plan*; and

**WHEREAS**, City staff and the Highland District Council wish to expand the zoning study area to include the areas covered by the existing overlay districts as well as those additional areas included in the *Shepard Davern Small Area Plan*.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Planning Commission hereby initiates a planning update of the *Shepard Davern Small Area Plan* as an addendum of the *Highland Park District Plan* for the area that follows Shepard Road from the Highway 5-West Seventh Street bridge northeast to Homer Street, north to West Seventh Street, southwest to Saint Paul Avenue, west along Saint Paul Avenue to Edgcombe Road, south to West Seventh Street, southwest to the Highway 5-West Seventh Street bridge; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Planning Commission also hereby initiates a zoning study for the area covered by the existing commercial and residential overlay districts as well as the entire area described above; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Planning Commission authorizes the creation of a community task force to advise the work of City staff, to include representatives of residence owners and renters, commercial property owners and business operators, parks and recreation interests and local non-profits; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this task force shall be appointed after review by the Planning Commission, and shall be co-chaired by a Planning Commissioner and a community representative.



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**DATE:** November 28, 2012

**TO:** Neighborhood Planning Committee; Highland Park District Council;

**FROM:** Michelle Beaulieu, Planning Staff

**SUBJECT: Shepard Davern Task Force Selection Process**

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The Planning Commission may soon initiate a Shepard Davern zoning study and district plan amendment, in response to a formal request from the Highland District Council. The intent would be to develop a plan amendment to the Highland Park District Plan (2005) and to complete a zoning study of the existing Shepard Davern Overlay Districts and adjacent blocks in the Shepard Davern area.

When initiating a plan and study of this scope, the Planning Commission will typically recommend the establishment of a community-based task force. In this case, a Shepard Davern Task Force will play a crucial role advising City staff and the Planning Commission on the forthcoming zoning study and district plan amendment. The task force, with assistance from City staff, will oversee the planning process, create an updated vision for the Shepard Davern area, and ensure consistency with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Creation of a Task Force begins with an application process. Notice of the application process will be sent to all property owners and residents in the area, and organizations with particular interest in the Shepard Davern area will be reached out to individually. Individuals who are highly engaged in the community and are interested in guiding development and urban design in the area are encouraged to apply. City staff, the Planning Commission task force co-chair and the Highland Park District Council chair will review applications, and select members representative of the area in terms of geography, constituencies, and areas of expertise and interest.

After applications to the task force have been reviewed and members selected, the task force will meet monthly to address issues such as density and form of development, parks and recreation and open spaces, the pedestrian environment and bicycle network, traffic and circulation conditions, parking management, and streetscaping.

cc: Councilmember Chris Tolbert