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

Minutes February 27, 2015

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, February 27, 2015, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present:	Mmes. DeJoy, McMahon, Merrigan, Noecker, Padilla, Reveal, Shively, Thao, Underwood; and Messrs. Gelgelu, Lindeke, Nelson, Ochs, Oliver, and Ward.
Commissioners Absent:	Mmes. Wang, *Wencl, and Messrs. Connolly, Edgerton, *Makarios, and Wickiser. *Excused
Also Present:	Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Reuben Collins, Department of Public Works, Lucy Thompson, Josh Williams, Hilary Holmes, Michelle Beaulieu, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes February 13, 2015.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Noecker moved approval of the minutes of February 13, 2015. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

II. Chair's Announcements

Commissioner Reveal, the Commission's First Vice-Chair, chaired the meeting. She announced that the room was available only until 10:00 a.m. and encouraged the commission to conduct its business as efficiently and quickly as possible even though there were some important topics on the agenda.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond announced that the City Council approved the Minor Zoning Amendments to the B, T and I Districts. They also upheld the Planning Commission decision approving a conditional use permit for additional height for the Dominium Senior Housing project on East 7th St., denying the appeal that had been filed.

IV. Zoning Committee

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

Two items came before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, March 3, 2015:

- Iris Park, site improvements to north end of existing park at 1894 University Avenue.
- Prior Crossing, 44 studio apartments at 1949 University Avenue.

One item to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, March 10, 2015:

- Highland Village Mixed Use Development, new 4-story building with 53 apartments, commercial space and 109 parking spaces at 735 Cleveland Avenue South.

NEW BUSINESS

#15-002-935 Jerry Walczak – Reestablishment of nonconforming use to construct a new duplex. 1438 Edmund Avenue between Pascal and Albert.
(Josh Williams, 651/266-6659)

Commissioner Nelson said that there are some guidelines that the Commission has developed with regard to duplex and triplex conversions. Under item 2 in the report items A through E are required to be met, otherwise staff is required to recommend denial of the application. Not all of those items were met, and that is one of the reasons for the Committee's recommendation of denial.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Nelson moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to deny the reestablishment of nonconforming use. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Nelson announced the item on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, March 5, 2015.

V. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Outdoor Commercial Uses in B, T and IT Districts – Approve resolution initiating a zoning study. *(Hilary Holmes, 651/266-6612)*

MOTION: ***Commissioner Oliver moved the Neighborhood Planning Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution initiating a zoning study. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

West Side Flats Master Plan and Development Guidelines and Proposed Rezonings – Approve resolution with recommendation to the Mayor and City Council for adoption as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan and adoption of Zoning Code map and text amendments. *(Lucy Thompson, 651/266-6578)*

Commissioner Oliver said that the Neighborhood Planning Committee met after the public hearing to consider the public comment. Two issues were discussed: the streets and park proposed for Implementation Phase IV, and proposed building heights. Regarding Phase IV, staff prepared two recommendation options, A and B, for the Committee. Option A is to leave the Plan as it is, showing new streets and a park in Phase IV, which is the industrial/jobs area today. Option B recommends removing the proposed street and park in Phase IV, which would also remove it from all plan base maps, and adding language that expresses broader goals for that area when redevelopment occurs. The remainder of the recommendations (on building heights,

Zoning text amendments and proposed rezonings) are the same for either option. The Committee was split 2-2 between Option A and B.

Commissioner Noecker stated that, for her, Option A doesn't go far enough, and Option B goes too far. She presented a third option, Option C, which would keep everything the same except move the proposed location for Eva Street Park so that it does not impact Rexam. She feels it was a mistake to show the park on Rexam's property. Commissioner Noecker's second recommended change is to insert the eminent domain language suggested by the Chamber of Commerce. While she is aware that the City Attorney has recommended this language not be added to the Plan, she feels that the proposed language does not prohibit the City from using eminent domain should a property owner desire its use in order to receive relocation benefits. Commissioner Noecker also noted that the proposed streets and parks should stay in the Plan, and that the time frames indicated for each implementation phase should be retained

Motion: ***Commissioner Noecker moved Option C, keeping everything the same except moving Eva Street Park to a location where it does not impact a major employer, and inserting the eminent domain language suggested by the Chamber of Commerce. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion.***

Commissioner Ward proposed a friendly amendment to the motion to remove the timelines for each implementation phase. Commissioner Noecker accepted the friendly amendment.

Commissioner Padilla stated that she does not support Option C, and that she prefers Option B. Removing the timelines creates more vagueness. Her concern with including a future plan map showing streets and parks is that it creates the impression that the City is adopting an Official Map, which carries the weight of regulation. The Illustrative Plan looks too detailed to be "aspirational," and could be very confusing to the public.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, clarified that this would not be considered an Official Map. There is language in the plan that says property owners are allowed to use their property for any use that is legally allowed under the Zoning Code until such time as the City has the resources to acquire these properties.

Commissioner Oliver is uncomfortable with the eminent domain language, as he feels that saying eminent domain will not be used completely "submarines" the case when and if it should ever be necessary. At Committee, he supported Option A, because having implementation phases with clear direction might create some momentum to get things to happen. He would support changing the park location to a zone as opposed to a specific location.

Commissioner Ochs supports Option A. He is concerned that people are not fully understanding what the master plan is designed to do. It is a vision to see how the City and community would like to develop this land in the future.

Commissioner Ward likes Option C, as it retains the work that has been done but gives more opportunity to expound on that work. It opens up the entire palette of options and allows development to happen fluidly over time. Option C would not narrow or limit a developer's ability to implement the plan.

Commissioner Lindeke suggested a compromise of removing the Illustrative Plan.

Commissioner Padilla said that Commissioner Lindeke's suggestion might help the Plan be more aspirational than specific, yet still reflect the vision of the task force.

Commissioner Underwood said that the Plan intent is to support mixed-use development, jobs, and the great employers in that space already. The Plan as it is now creates the perception that the City does not want Rexam to remain. She stated that the City needs to make it clear that the City supports Rexam and we appreciate their value to the community right where they are. She supports Option B.

Commissioner Shively also supports Option B. She said it would be nice to have other options to show what that area could become, since she believes the proposed bulleted language is not as provocative as an image.

Commissioner DeJoy said that plans throughout Saint Paul are fluid and flexible, and they respond to the market and development opportunities. She does not read the West Side Flats Master Plan as anti-business.

Motion: ***Commissioner Noecker restated the motion to recommend Option C, keeping everything the same except moving Eva Street Park to a location where it does not impact a major employer, inserting the eminent domain language suggested by the Chamber of Commerce and, through Commissioner Ward's friendly amendment, removing the timelines for each of the implementation phases. The motion failed 3-12 (DeJoy, Gelgelu, McMahon, Merrigan, Nelson, Ochs, Oliver, Padilla, Reveal, Shively, Thao, Underwood) on a roll call vote.***

MOTION: ***Commissioner Padilla moved to recommend the resolution supporting Option B as well as the Zoning Code text and map amendments. Commissioner Shively seconded the motion. The motion carried 8-7 (Oliver, Lindeke, Ochs, Merrigan, DeJoy, Noecker, Ward) on a roll call vote.***

Commissioner Oliver announced the items on the agenda at the next Neighborhood Planning Committee meeting on Wednesday, March 4, 2015.

VI. Transportation Committee

Saint Paul Bicycle Plan – Approve resolution with recommendation to the Mayor and City Council for adoption as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan. *(Reuben Collins, Public Works, 651/266-6059)*

Commissioner Lindeke gave an overview of where they are now with the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan.

Commissioner Ward said that a compromise has been proposed by staff between what is included in the draft plan and what the Committee recommended. He asked Commissioner Lindeke to elaborate.

Commissioner Lindeke said an example would be the map on page 8 of the memo showing 7th Street. A major concern of the Committee was the lack of a bikeway to get from the east side to downtown and recommended that 7th Street from Fort Snelling to White Bear Ave. be identified as a major bikeway. The staff has recommended that 7th Street be identified as a corridor for

additional study, but just to Margaret Street. The plan has acceptable alternatives east of there. So that is an example of a staff compromise from the Transportation Committee's original suggestion to make all of 7th Street in the city into a major bikeway. He thinks this is a reasonable compromise.

Commissioner Padilla thanked Reuben Collins and all the other staff who worked on the plan. This is one of the most exciting things that the City has worked on recently and this is really a great plan for the future.

Commissioner Merrigan wanted to be sure that it is clear in the plan that the images of the downtown bike loop are just examples and as we go through the design process and get more feedback from businesses and residents in the area that there is room for these to evolve. So are we clear in this plan that these pictures may evolve or is this locked in?

Reuben Collins, Department of Public Works, said that the intent in drafting the text in the plan was certainly to communicate that at this point there is more unknown about downtown than is known. There are some conceptual renderings that are intended to be interpreted as conceptual renderings. If that is not clear he is open to friendly amendments to the plan that would clarify that they are intended as conceptual renderings. Jackson Street will be reconstructed in 2016 what they know about that project right now is that the entire street, building face to building face, will be reconstructed and that the intended cross section will include some sort of bike trail as identified in the bike plan. Exactly what it will look like, and what the impact will be is still unknown right now.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, asked Mr. Collins to talk about the planned community engagement process that will be part of planning for the Jackson Street project.

Mr. Collins said that the 8-80 Vitality Fund was created by the Mayor with the intended purpose to prioritize projects that would improve public spaces. The Mayor felt that this downtown loop was a perfect example of project to do this. Part of the 8-80 budget did include some money to conduct a planning study and they are just weeks away from having a consultant on board. They have solicited proposals from various consulting firms and are weeks away from having a signed contract with a consultant firm. That consultant will be tasked with helping City staff run a public process. There will be a public advisory committee with representatives from various organizations downtown and various groups that have an interest in how the project moves forward, both from the business community, downtown residents, the Capital River Council and other organizations downtown. There are still some details to be worked out on the public involvement process but it is intended to be very extensive. There will be numerous open houses, numerous opportunities for businesses, property owners, and residents downtown to weigh in on that process. He is hoping the process will begin soon.

Commissioner Noecker said that she is a huge supporter of this plan and biking in general and a huge supporter of downtown businesses along Wabasha. However she has serious concerns about the public engagement going forward from here. Moving towards a transit oriented society is always a chicken and egg thing, and just because you put in a bike plan doesn't mean that everyone is going to start biking. Most people are still car dependent and most businesses are still car dependent. She is not sure about other planning commissioners but there are some cold mornings where she does not park in the River Centre ramp and parks on Wabasha instead. It was mentioned that a downtown parking study is going to be going on concurrently and then the

public engagement process is happening. By approving the plan today we're not saying a bike path is going down Wabasha knocking out parking spaces tomorrow but she does want to know what the process is going to be. She asked Mr. Collins if he could talk about the parking study that's going on and how that's going to interface with the consultant who is working on the public engagement part of this plan.

Mr. Collins said one of the key tasks the consultant will be doing is establishing a process by which we can make decisions, a process for collecting data and understanding what criteria are important to us and one of those is clearly going to be parking. We are waiting for the results of the parking study. It will provide a lot of useful information about which parking spots are more heavily used or less heavily used, where the City gets more revenue, what turnover rates are for those parking spaces and that will help inform how they make the decisions. The Bike Plan includes a map in Chapter 6 that very clearly says we are not sure of what the alignments for the downtown loop will be and does not express any preference for any route over another route with the exception of Jackson Street.

Ms. Drummond added that the parking study is underway and will be concluding at the end of March so it will be available as part of the consultants work on the bike loop.

Commissioner Underwood thanked the chair and staff for all their great work on the Bicycle Plan. She actively advocated for including 7th Street in the plan to recognize it. People are riding their bicycles to the businesses on 7th Street whether or not there's a plan for it so we need to be smart, healthy and safe about it. She also appreciates in the staff recommendation the acknowledgement of the Riverview Corridor Study, which doesn't cover all of 7th Street but is an active part. Also to acknowledge that the Riverview Corridor Study includes bicycle transit and be smart about it and know that it is a priority of this plan. She really appreciates that acknowledgement and bringing those things together.

Commissioner DeJoy also appreciates all the work that has been done and she supports the plan, but she does have some serious concerns regarding Wabasha Street and the nature of the businesses on Wabasha Street that are park, go in, and get out. This is unlike St. Peter Street, where you would park and spend a period of time. The response to those concerns is that, we're going to do a parking study and very likely the parking study is going to be, we have a shortage of parking along Wabasha Street so what do we do about that. And in a built up environment like that she's not sure what the solution is. She doesn't feel that this issue is addressed, the concerns along Wabasha Street and also the letter we received from Bill Hosko, Wabasha Partners, that we have not addressed some of their concerns in that letter.

Commissioner Ochs said that the plan is great. He does not think that the Wabasha Partners issue was fully addressed and the elevated bike trail on Jackson is being perceived as something that is going to occur. He thinks that some language that would stress that these are conceptual and that it's just a vision to be considered is important. Maybe that is something we can put into the plan as it changes.

Commissioner Thao said that when it comes to parking she would like them to remember the lessons they learned from Central Corridor as they embark on this work. There are some great lessons we can learn as we build up on the work.

Commissioner Lindeke encouraged PED to bring the parking study to the Planning Commission. The data in the study would help us get a full picture of what's happening downtown.

Commissioner Noecker suggested that they add another Whereas clause to the resolution to say: a further parking study will be completed shortly and further public engagement will be taking place to understand concerns of residents and business owners downtown. Or something to that effect because she thinks that the staff comments have indicated that but it's not actually in the resolution and it sounds like people are in favor of that.

Commissioner Lindeke said in addition to residents and business owners, he would broaden those categories to include everybody that is downtown, including people who are visiting or working downtown or taking the bus and changing buses downtown.

First Vice Chair Reveal said that the motion in front of the commission is to include the additional whereas clause in the resolution and that the resolution incorporates by reference the recommendations in the staff report.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Lindeke moved to approve on behalf of the Transportation Committee the resolution with recommendation to the Mayor and City Council for adoption as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.***

Highway 5/Shepard Road Access Options Study – Approve resolution initiating a study. *(Michelle Beaulieu, 651/266-6620)*

MOTION: ***Commissioner Lindeke moved the Transportation Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution initiating a study. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

VII. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Merrigan announced that the next Comprehensive Planning Committee meeting is on Tuesday, March 10, 2015.

VIII. Communications Committee

Commissioner Thao had no announcements.

IX. Task Force/Liaison Reports

No reports.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved March 13, 2015
(Date)

Daniel Ward II
Secretary of the Planning Commission

PlanningTeamFiles\planning commission\minutes\February 27, 2015