

## Area Plan Summary

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### **Loeb Lake Small Area Plan and Forty-Acre Study**

Addendum to The Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul

Recommended by the Planning Commission – April 7, 2006

Adopted by the City Council - [date]

*This summary appends to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan the vision and strategies of the **Loeb Lake Small Area Plan**. The **Loeb Lake Small Area Plan** consists of five major areas of focus, including (1)Introduction, (2)Goals for the Plan, (3)Market Conditions, (4)Strategies and Action Programs (housing, commercial, and public realm and amenities), and (5)Zoning Recommendations.*

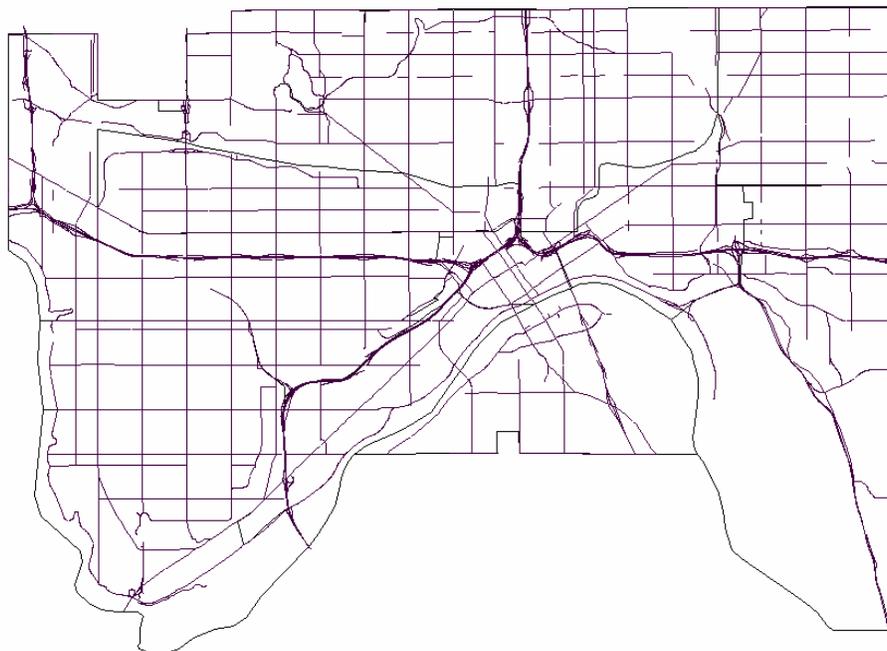
*Copies of the full-length plan are available for review at the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development and the office of the District 6 Planning Council.*

### **Location**

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The Loeb Lake study area is located approximately four miles northwest of downtown Saint Paul, in District 6. The study area is bounded by several distinct features - Burlington Northern railroad tracts to the northwest, Willow Reserve on the northeast end, and the former Union Brass site (now owned by Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church) to the south. Dale Street acts as the Study Area's western border, and the parcels west of Dale at the Maryland and Dale intersection are also included.

Study Area



## **Vision**

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Loeb Lake will be a safe, attractive and vibrant community that retains its distinctive character with a focus on preservation and enhancement of the area's existing natural amenities. Residents will have a diverse choice of housing options that are affordable to a range of income levels and family types. The commercial base along Maryland Avenue will be enhanced through increased investment in the area and an increasing population base. Natural amenities such as Loeb Lake and Willow Reserve will be enhanced to provide more recreational and bird and wildlife observation opportunities. Residents in the community will have improved access to parks, schools, and jobs.

## **Specific Strategies and Action Programs**

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The natural environment is an integral part of the assets and identity of the neighborhood. All new development should closely observe the Capitol Region Watershed District's regulations and storm water requirements.

## **Housing**

1. Explore new housing development on the 5.5-acre Jefferson Smurfit site. Complete environmental remediation to meet the necessary government requirements on pollution cleanup for housing. Encourage owner-occupied housing in the forms of single-family development, cluster development, townhomes, or condominiums to provide housing options to a variety of lifestyles, ages, and incomes. The designs of the buildings should be attractive and create a sense of neighborhood. The developer should consider the District 6 Residential Design Guidelines, green building technology, and energy efficiency in the design of the buildings.
2. Develop new housing on the Larson Nursery site along Maryland south of Willow Reserve. Due to its prominent location on Maryland, this site can be redeveloped into owner-occupied townhomes or low- to medium-density condominiums. The development should consider sensitive wetland soil conditions and be non-intrusive to the wetland. A walking path from the development to Willow Reserve would provide a highly desirable amenity.
3. Explore redevelopment of the area bounded by Maryland, Arundel and the railroad tracks. The triangular area is host to a mix of industrial, commercial, and residential uses. Much of the area is underutilized. In the long-term, this area could potentially be developed into a mixed housing/commercial building with a public/private park or recreational uses.
4. The vacant lots along Mackubin east of the Jefferson Smurfit site should be redeveloped into single-family homes, townhomes, or low-intensity condominiums that are compatible with the rest of the neighborhood.

5. Encourage neighborhood residents to take advantage of low-interest rehabilitation loans and grants made available through the City of Saint Paul and Sparc. The District 6 North End-South Como Plan identified an area for concentrated improvements to the south and east of Marydale Park.
6. Market the area to prospective buyers. The community identity of “Marydale Park” can be used as an effective branding tool.

### **Commercial**

1. Redevelop the southeast corner of the Maryland and Dale intersection into commercial, housing, or a mix of the two. The new building(s), preferably two to three stories, should “hold the corner” with parking on the side or in the back. The design and scale should be oriented towards the street, relate to pedestrians and bicycles, reduce the number of driveways, and enhance the intersection. The size of the development will depend on land availability, but would ideally be at least one acre to provide efficient usable space, parking and driveway. If housing is included, its design must consider the proximity of the railroad tracks and their impact on the land use.
2. The business currently occupying the southwest corner, Conny’s Creamy Cone, has overwhelming popularity among neighborhood residents. Redevelopment of this corner is not likely in the near future. If Conny’s Creamy Cone were to go away in the future the site could be rezoned to TN2 to allow for a mix of uses. There are no immediate plans for this corner. Any redevelopment should seek to keep Conny’s Creamy Cone and incorporate it into the new development.
3. The northeast corner is occupied by an auto repair shop. Redevelopment of this corner is unlikely in the near future due to the small parcel size and recent investments to improve the building. The plan encourages the property owner to improve the appearance of the building and the lot with the possibility of grants or low-interest loans from the City or Sparc. In the long-term, the site could be developed into general commercial or a mix of commercial and housing.
4. Redevelopment should take into consideration intersection improvements, including turn lanes, lighting and new sidewalks and curbs. More landscaping and planting is encouraged.
5. The community has identified a number of service, restaurant, or retail businesses desired in the neighborhood. These uses should be incorporated into the new developments to the extent supported by the market.
6. The study area, and the North End to a larger extent, has high number of automobile-oriented uses. The plan encourages existing, viable auto businesses to stay, upgrade their appearance, and continue to serve the neighborhood, but discourages the growth of new auto businesses.

## **Public Realm and Amenities**

### Streets, Sidewalks and Public Rights-of-Way

1. The plan recommends improving the Maryland and Dale intersection by installing right turn lanes, a left turn signal on Dale, clearly marked crossings, center medians, and traffic calming devices to slow down traffic.
2. Improve the pedestrian environment along major streets by adding pedestrian-level lighting, planting more trees and hedges, and repaving sidewalks. Reduce the number of curb cuts on the southeast corner of Maryland and Dale if the parcels are redeveloped. Increase bus stop amenities.
3. Increase pedestrian connections across the neighborhood, especially connections to Marydale Park. New developments, including the Jefferson-Smurfit site, the Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church site, and the vacant parcels along Mackubin, should include sidewalks as a part of the development. Traffic calming devices and stop signs should be considered on Norton, Arundel and Cumberland to reduce vehicular speed.
4. Encourage planting, such as hedges or flower boxes, near outdoor seating areas for commercial establishments.
5. Create pedestrian paths between Norton and Mackubin on the Cook Street right-of-way, and at Jessamine if land can be acquired. The paths allow a large number of neighborhood residents to access Marydale Park on foot.
6. Improve pedestrian crossings on Maryland at Mackubin and Arundel, especially if the industrial/commercial parcels along Maryland are to be redeveloped.
7. Cut back overgrown vegetation and remove buckthorn on the railroad berm. Renovate the railroad bridges on Maryland and Dale and improve lighting under the bridges. The bridges should appear safe and pleasant to pedestrians.
8. Study the potential of bike lanes along or on Maryland that connect Como Park to the Gateway trail and future Trillium trail.

### Marydale Park

9. Improve the walking path, picnic tables, playground equipment, and lighting at Marydale Park. Expand the playground area. Determine the need for or use of a community center at the park.
10. Complete a Loeb Lake and Willow Reserve management plan, and research strategies to improve the water quality and plant health in Loeb Lake.

11. Add directional signs along Maryland Avenue and Dale Street to provide better access to the park.
12. Install interpretive boards in the park to educate visitors and school pupils about the history and ecological system.
13. Work with Crossroads Elementary and other area schools to better utilize the park for school programming.

#### Willow Reserve

13. Protect the natural environment at Willow Reserve. Preserve it as a habitat for bird and other urban wildlife by improving the pedestrian paths, or providing other non-intrusive equipment for human activities. Preserve the wetland for stormwater retention and surface water filtration.
14. Make Willow Reserve a low-intensity, non-programmed bird and wildlife observation area. Limit pedestrian activities to designated paths. Preserve the habitat and quietness of Willow Reserve.
15. Provide directional signs to Willow Reserve along Maryland, Arundel and Virginia.
16. Provide educational signs about the flora, fauna, geology and ecology of the area.

#### Park Connections

17. A park and greenspace connection between Marydale Park and Willow Reserve would enhance both amenities. The most logical place to provide this connection would be the triangular area bounded by the railroad tracks, Maryland, and Arundel, which hosts a mix of commercial, industrial, and multiple-family residential buildings. A historic wetland map from 1940s indicates that the Willow Reserve wetland was much bigger than it is today. The public space in this area could include parkland, restored wetland, and/or partially day-lighted stream with water from the storm sewer lines that lead to Willow Reserve (See Recommendation 3 under “Housing”).

#### Schools and Institutions

18. Encourage Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church to provide sidewalks on Mackubin and Kent as a part of the Church development.
19. The Church and the neighborhood should work together to mitigate potential parking problems.

## **Zoning Recommendations**

21. The Plan recommends rezoning the former Jefferson-Smurfit and Union Brass (purchased by Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church) sites on the south side of Loeb Lake from industrial (I1 and I2) to RM2 (multiple-family residential) to facilitate redevelopment into housing. The Plan also recommends rezoning all four corners of Maryland and Dale from B3 General Business to Traditional Neighborhood (TN2) to encourage greater flexibility of uses and allows for a mix of residential and commercial businesses. The northeast corner of Arundel and Maryland should be rezoned to RM2 to allow new housing construction. Please see the attached map for details.

## **Priority Actions for City Participation**

The following actions have been identified as priorities of the community that require leadership or significant participation by city government. Community groups and city departments should 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.

## **Planning and Economic Development**

1. Rezone properties in the study area as recommended by the Loeb Lake Small Area Plan.
2. Work closely with developers and the community to redevelop the Jefferson-Smurfit site, the southeast corner of Maryland and Dale, and the nursery site near Willow Reserves with particular attention to surface water management.
3. Encourage neighborhood residents to take advantage of low-interest rehabilitation loans and grants made available through the City of Saint Paul and Sparc.
4. Assist in the development of other parcels, including the vacant lots on the east side of Mackubin, through site plan review and/or public financing.

## **Public Works**

5. Improve the Maryland and Dale intersection by installing right turn lanes, a left turn signal on Dale, clearly marked crossings, center medians, and traffic calming devices.
6. Improve the pedestrian environment along major streets by adding pedestrian-level lighting, planting more trees and hedges, and repaving sidewalks. Reduce the number of curb cuts on the southeast corner if the parcels are redeveloped.
7. Create pedestrian paths between Norton and Mackubin on the Cook Street right-of-way, and at Jessamine if land can be acquired. The paths allow a large number of neighborhood residents to access Marydale Park on foot.
8. Study the potential of bike lanes along or on Maryland that connect Como Park to the Gateway trail and future Trillium trail.

9. Explore an improved pedestrian connection across Dale to provide better access to Marydale Park.

### **Parks and Recreation**

10. Improve the walking path, picnic tables, playground equipment, and lighting at Marydale Park. Expand the playground area. Determine the need for or use of a community center at the park.
11. Add directional signs along Maryland Avenue and Dale Street to provide better access to the park. Install interpretive boards in the park to educate visitors and school pupils about the history and ecological system.
12. Work with Crossroads Elementary and other area schools to better utilize the park for school programming.
13. Protect the natural environment at Willow Reserve and make it a low-intensity, non-programmed recreational area. Preserve it as a habitat for bird and other urban wildlife by providing pedestrian paths, or other non-intrusive equipment for human activities. Limit pedestrian activities to designated paths.
14. Provide directional signs to Willow Reserve along Maryland, Arundel and Virginia. Provide educational signs on the flora, fauna, geology and ecology of the area.

### **Licensing, Inspection, and Environmental Protection**

15. Encourage the inclusion of sidewalks in all new development and outdoor/sidewalk seating for commercial establishments during site plan review.
16. Actively enforce conditions attached to licenses and conditional use permits.

### **Planning Commission Findings**

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The Planning Commission finds that the Area Plan Summary of Loeb Lake Small Area Plan is consistent with the *Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan* and *North End/South Como District Plan*.

### **Planning Process**

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The Planning Commission initiated the Loeb Lake Small Area Plan in February 2005 and appointed a task force for the plan, consisting of representatives from community organizations, a school, a religious institution, the Capitol Region Watershed District, area businesses, residents, and developers. The plan also received a grant from the Metropolitan Council's Livable Communities Demonstration Account and obtained consultant services from Landform Engineering, Peer Engineering, Maxfield Research, and the St. Paul on the Mississippi Design Center. The Task Force met monthly between March and December of 2005 and held four large community meetings.