



CITY OF SAINT PAUL

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DATE: January 5, 2021
TO: Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee
FROM: Menaka Mohan, Principal City Planner
SUBJECT: Intent of Zoning Code – Feedback on Scope of Study

Purpose

[Chapter 60.103](#) describes the intent and purpose of the zoning code with sixteen statements, while Chapter [61.402 \(c\)](#) describes the findings that must be met for City approval of site plans, and [61.501 \(a\)](#) describes the general standards that conditional use permits (CUPs) must meet for the Planning Commission to approve them. [Section 62.109](#) describes the findings for Non-Conforming Use Permits, and [62.104](#), Non-conforming uses of land. The purpose of the study is to review and update these sections of the code to align with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, with a focus on equity, people-centered development, sustainability and resiliency, and growth and prosperity through density. Additionally, this zoning study will propose amendments to zoning applications where the zoning code requires consent petitions from nearby property owners.¹

Background

The Comprehensive Plan (Plan) is Saint Paul's "blueprint" for guiding development for the next 20 years, 2020-2040. It outlines policies that address citywide physical development and contains chapters on Land Use; Transportation; Parks, Recreation and Open Space; Housing; Heritage and Cultural Preservation; and Water Resources . The Plan not only addresses Saint Paul's physical landscape —streets, roads, housing, business, and public infrastructure — it includes other core values and cross-cutting themes such as racial and social equity, aging

¹ Zoning applications in which State law requires petitions – i.e. rezonings from a residential district to a commercial/industrial district – will not be included in the proposed petition amendments.

in community, community/public health, economic development, sustainability/resiliency and urban design.

The initial impetus of this study was to update current zoning code language to reflect the values and priorities of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan more accurately than it currently does. However, as the year 2020 progressed, first with a global pandemic and then with civil unrest, there is the opportunity to take a broader lens with this study. As endemic and systematic racism is further uncovered in our everyday lives — especially in Minnesota — every field is examining past and current injustices and forging pathways forward to build a more inclusive and resilient economy.

This zoning study provides an opportunity to review the intent of the zoning code, and CUP and Site Plan Review (SPR) findings in this context — using the core values and themes in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan as the basis in this study. In addition, it is important to examine the history of how the intent statements, CUP findings, and SPR findings were written, who wrote them and whether and how State law shapes them (i.e. both opportunities for additional flexibility and constraints). Additionally, the study could provide strong background and history for future zoning studies such as the 1-4 unit infill housing study.

Proposal

Staff is proposing to assess the history of zoning code, both generally and of the specified code sections previously described. Research would include reviewing prior zoning codes, and developing a key informant guide to conduct interviews with current and former staff, community organizations, business groups, and current and former Planning Commissioners, and reaching out to different community organizations.

Additionally, staff is proposing to do a series of focus groups with current DSI and PED staff to understand how the current code sections are used. Research from this portion of the study could provide beneficial for the upcoming 1-4-unit infill housing study by providing valuable history and background.

Staff also hope to engage the community by developing a survey that could be based on the key informant guide, posing general questions such as: what does zoning mean to you, how do you engage with land or place?

After initial research and engagement. staff will propose a series of amendments for Chapter 60.103, 61.402 (c), 61.501(a), 62.109 and 62.105 for the Planning Commission and the community to consider.

Possible Preliminary Timeline

January-February 2021: Background research, finalization of scope

February-March 2021: Community outreach/public input

March-April 2021: Initiate Zoning Study at Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee (CNPC)

April-May 2021: Public Hearing at CNPC

June 2021: CNPC Recommendation to Planning Commission

June/July 2021: City Council Action

Feedback

The proposed zoning study is large in scope, so staff is looking for feedback from the CNPC on the following:

- Content
 - Breadth of the study
 - What is missing?
 - What are key questions to pose for key informant interview guide?
- Effective tools for public engagement?
 - Key informant interviews, focus groups, virtual platforms?
 - Questions we should ask?
- Resources to help in the study
 - Organizations/individuals to interview – both within urban planning, community development, and other adjacent fields, and outside of them
 - Books/other resources (e.g. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, but also resources relevant to the local Minnesota/Twin Cities context)