



April 1, 2021

Hillcrest Questions Update

Questions raised at the March 16, 2021 online community event are addressed below. Use the Table of Contents or simply scroll down to view.

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Q: Can parts of one finalist scenario be incorporated into the other one? Can the scenarios be combined?

A: We expect that the final recommended master plan scenario will be based on either the Hilltop scenario or the Jobs Focus scenario, or perhaps a combination of the two. There are numerous ways that the two scenarios could potentially be combined, if desirable. For this reason, we hope to learn what people like or are concerned about in both scenarios, regardless of which scenario they prefer overall.

Q: Will there be a police substation, fire station, daycare or school built to serve the population?

A: Saint Paul Public Schools is continuing to monitor our process and analyze their enrollments to ensure that its existing facilities will be sufficient to serve this site’s anticipated population. The Saint Paul Fire Department is confident in its ability to serve the development with its existing facility at 1624 Maryland Ave East and has proposed staffing and deployment plans to account for the proposed development. The Saint Paul Police Department is aware of the potential development and will take it into account for future facilities planning. Any private daycare is a possible component in the small amount of commercial space anticipated on the site, although individual buildings and tenants will be determined by the developer after the master plan phase.

Q: Will Tax Increment Financing or other City subsidy be used for this development?

A: “TIF”, or “tax increment financing”, is a way to finance development by essentially borrowing against its future value with the assumption that the value will increase due to the additional investment. Unlike Highland Bridge, which was a privately owned site, the Hillcrest site already has public subsidy, in the form of \$10 million in Port Authority bonds to finance the purchase of the site. The ordinance allowing that bond issuance in 2019 set the expectation that land sales will pay for all site infrastructure, excepting only “advanced sustainability systems” such as solar or geothermal, which are being explored. The site does not meet the qualifications to establish a typical Redevelopment TIF district such as the TIF district established for the Highland Bridge development. The site could be eligible for an affordable housing TIF district, although those funds could only be used to benefit the affordable housing projects. The actual infrastructure costs and how the development is to be funded – including any public subsidy – are yet to be determined.

Q: Do the plans abide by the City’s tree preservation regulations? Is it possible to plant trees to replace the ones that will be removed for contamination cleanup?

A: The City’s Subdivision Ordinance requires that “Existing natural features, such as trees, significant slopes and similar irreplaceable assets, shall be preserved in the design” of the site (per Sec. 69.509 of the City Code). However, remediating the site’s substantial and widespread pollution will require that many trees be impacted. It is hoped that some of the more significant trees will survive the remediation and be able to be incorporated into the final development. There is no Tree Preservation Overlay or other similar regulation that applies to the site. Tree replacement plans will be part of all development projects within the Hillcrest site, and they will all meet or exceed City requirements.

Q: What is the plan for treating runoff from impervious surfaces?

A: We have conducted a high-level stormwater analysis that determined the site can handle water runoff as required by City and State regulations. The analysis also generally suggested where on the site the water could flow, be stored, and infiltrate into soils. After the master plan, the more specific development plans will need to show exactly where and how stormwater is being accommodated on the site. The goal is to ensure that less water runs off the site after development than current levels by retaining and infiltrating water on-site.

Q: Do the plans abide by the City's tree preservation regulations? Is it possible to plant trees to replace the ones that will be removed for contamination cleanup?

A: The City's Subdivision Ordinance requires that "Existing natural features, such as trees, significant slopes and similar irreplaceable assets, shall be preserved in the design" of the site (per Sec. 69.509 of the City Code). However, remediating the site's substantial and widespread pollution will require that many trees be impacted. It is hoped that some of the more significant trees will survive the remediation and be able to be incorporated into the final development. There is no Tree Preservation Overlay or other similar regulation that applies to the site. Tree replacement plans will be part of all development projects within the Hillcrest site, and they will all meet or exceed City requirements.

Q: What measures might be part of mitigating the environmental impact?

A: There will be an environmental review conducted separate from the master plan that analyzes environmental impact and proposes mitigations. These mitigations could include wetland clean-up and replacement, habitat restoration, traffic calming measures, dark sky-compliant lighting, and renewable energy generation. Also, a sustainability policy will be developed for inclusion in the master plan document that will be available for public review and comment later in 2021.

Q: Could the master plan be changed in a few years if economic conditions change?

A: The master plan will allow for a certain amount of flexibility for responding to changing economic conditions through administrative-level changes, as will be specified in the final draft master plan document. There is also a lot of flexibility built into the zoning for a range of building sizes and uses. More significant changes that exceed that specified amount of flexibility will require a public hearing process to amend the master plan.

Q: Will the existing roads remain "as is" – with no widening?

A: The transportation analysis of the finalist scenarios does not show a need for widening any surrounding roadways.

Q: How will the master plan impact the commercial area on White Bear Avenue near Larpenteur? Why can't this development go there instead?

A: The 112-acre former golf course that is the subject of this master plan is a vacant, polluted site that needs a financially viable plan for its redevelopment. Care is being taken for planned uses to be complementary (and not competitive) with the commercial on White Bear Avenue – a point emphasized in the Community Priorities affirmed by the Hillcrest CAC. The +/- 1,000 jobs and +/- 1,000 households planned for this site will boost the potential number of customers for White Bear Avenue businesses (existing and future).

Q: How much will the residential units (of whatever density and type) cost compared to others in the area?

A: We do not know yet what housing purchase prices or rental prices will be, either at market-rate or for any subsidized housing.

Q: Where can we find the zoning that is proposed for the property?

A: We anticipate that the zoning districts used on the site will be Transitional Industrial (IT) for the light industrial areas and Traditional Neighborhood (T1, T2, T3) for the lower-, medium-, and higher-density residential areas, perhaps with modifications under a “master plan” (M) designation. One likely modification is disallowing commercial uses (normally allowed in Traditional Neighborhood Districts) along the site’s western and southern edges. All of the City of Saint Paul’s base zoning information can be found on www.municode.com, particularly in Chapter 66 (zoning district uses & dimensional standards).

Q: Can solar panels go on the residential roofs, like is planned for the industrial roofs?

A: It is hoped that solar panels can be placed on many of the residential roofs, as well. The industrial buildings’ roofs are larger and will be under more control by the Saint Paul Port Authority, and so have been the primary focus. The full sustainability policy is still under development.

Q: Will there be restrictions on on-street parking?

A: Plans for where on-street parking will be within the development will be part of the final recommended master plan. All new parcels will be required to supply adequate parking facilities for their proposed use. The master plan is not expected to address on-street parking outside of the development.

Q: What is the anticipated process for recruiting employers?

A: *(This answer provided by the St. Paul Port Authority.)* The Port Authority is actively engaged in both the business and commercial real estate communities and will broadly market the site pursuant to the Master Plan. Marketing will occur through conventional channels (ie. real estate, business associations and community organizations) as well as specific and intentional outreach efforts to recruit BIPOC owned firms, as well as companies that can further Carbon Free, sustainable design, and circular economy strategies on the site. In addition to aggressive sustainability requirements, successful buyers will agree to a 10-year Workforce Agreement, incorporating required job density, living wage, wealth creation, local hiring, and other workforce development requirements and goals. The next iteration of Port Authority Workforce Agreements are currently being developed and will be vetted with key stakeholders and community partners over the next several months.

Q: Will these jobs go to East Siders?

A: *(This answer provided by the St. Paul Port Authority.)* The Port Authority has partnered with local community workforce service providers to create pathways for local recruitment and customized job training opportunities with the businesses we attract to our sites. Our partners at the East Side Employment Xchange, represent 12 different community and cultural organizations working together, with philanthropic organizations and the Port Authority, to streamline these connections with businesses in Port Authority business centers. While we cannot dictate which employees a company hires, we will continue to amplify these partnerships and the value they add to a company looking to relocate to the East Side. Access to the local workforce is one of the main reasons we are successful in attracting companies to these infill development sites.

Q: Does the “1,000 jobs” goal include temporary construction jobs?

A: No, that goal and the estimated numbers on the finalist scenario slides are permanent jobs only. Temporary construction jobs would be in addition to those numbers. Approximately 1,700 temporary construction jobs are anticipated.

Q: Is there a draft sustainability policy for the site?

A: A sustainability policy is expected to be included as part of the final recommended master plan text document. Ahead of general public review, we anticipate the Community Advisory Committee will review it and provide feedback in the April-May-June timeframe. Also, subject to confirmation by the St. Paul Port

Authority, the development aims to achieve LEED Platinum Certification within the LEED for Communities program and is anticipated to include sustainability strategies related to natural systems and ecology, transportation and land use, water efficiency, energy and greenhouse gas emissions, materials and resources, and quality of life. The Port Authority's development team is exploring the potential for the community to achieve net-zero energy and net-zero carbon emissions.

Q: Will there be any indoor community gathering spaces?

A: A community center is not planned as part of the development. It is not yet known whether there will be any smaller indoor community gathering spaces incorporated into the residential developments.

Q: What is the area on the maps that juts out to the west, north of the St. Paul Regional Water reservoir at Hoyt/Winthrop?

A: This is the former driving range area, which was part of the golf course property.

Q: Can the existing clubhouse building be kept?

A: The existing clubhouse is not consistent with the master plan and will be demolished in 2021. It has attracted nuisance activity and is in poor condition.

Q: Will there be public art?

A: Design and placement of any public art will be determined as part of the development phase, after the master plan. It is anticipated that public art will be integrated into both private developments and publicly-accessible open space along major pedestrian corridors

Q: Is this site in a federally designated Opportunity Zone?

A: No.