



January 12, 2022

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Comprehensive & Neighborhood Planning Committee and
Luis Pereira, Director of Planning
SUBJECT: Hillcrest Master Plan & Associated Actions

INTRODUCTION

The 112-acre Hillcrest Golf Course site is located at the southwest corner of Larpenteur Avenue and McKnight Road, at Saint Paul's northeast boundary with Maplewood. The golf course began operation in 1921 and closed in 2017. Previous anti-fungal treatments have left substantial soil contamination throughout the site, especially on the former greens, tee boxes and fairways. The site contains the city's highest point among hilly topography, and also contains 10 designated wetlands. In 2019 the site was purchased by the St. Paul Port Authority (SPPA) using bonding authorized by the Saint Paul City Council via Ordinance 19-39.

In order to promote the site's redevelopment in accordance with City policies and priorities, the following are proposed:

1. A master plan;
2. Rezoning of the site from R2 One-Family Residential District to T1M, T2M, T3M, and ITM (Traditional Neighborhood Districts and Transitional Industrial District, respectively, with a master plan), to allow for the master plan and to implement its land use designations;
3. Zoning Code amendments to:
 - a. Clarify allowable flexibility via a master plan;
 - b. Update allowable industrial building materials;
 - c. Allow for freestanding monument signage to serve an entire business park, not just the lots on which signs are located; and
4. A Comprehensive Plan amendment to allow for larger block sizes in industrial areas on the site



The following memo provides background on Ordinance 19-39, the master plan process, related processes, and the site itself. It then goes on to describe the proposed master plan contents and its associated rezoning and amendments. Finally, the memo provides analysis of conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and other City plans, and a recommendation.

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ORDINANCE 19-39

The June 2019 ordinance that authorized bonding for the site’s purchase by SPPA also established key expectations for the site’s development, including:

- SPPA will prepare the site for development, including design, engineering, construction and delivery of environmental remediation, public infrastructure, and development-ready pads;
- Outside of affordable housing and advanced energy infrastructure, the project will pay for itself;
o SPPA will not request tax increment financing (TIF) for infrastructure for the project;
o SPPA will not request further financial assistance from the City to complete the project;
o SPPA will be responsible for the cost of any reasonable off-site improvements to public infrastructure required to serve or support the project, specifically including but not limited to the sanitary sewer identified in the Port’s briefing letter that throttles before connecting to the Metropolitan Council interceptor;
- Parks and open space will be provided;
o The City’s parkland dedication requirements will be met;

- SPPA will deliver approximately five (5) acres of active improved park area within the site, including remediated and rough graded land and \$2.5 million for improvements (note to Committee: the full cost to develop this acreage will be estimated to exceed the SPPA contribution);
- Approximately 15 acres of publicly accessible passive open space, buffers, and stormwater retention space to be owned and maintained by SPPA or a third-party;
- A mix of uses, including substantial light industrial;
- A capacity to produce approximately 1,000 jobs and 1,000 housing units.

MASTER PLAN PROCESS

In 2019, a professional master planning consultant (Cunningham) was hired by the City to create a draft master plan and recommended zoning controls for the Hillcrest Golf Course Redevelopment Site. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a [Community Advisory Committee](#) (CAC) were established to aid in the creation of the master plan. The consultant team also provided preliminary infrastructure analyses on the topics of [water](#), [sewer](#), [stormwater](#), and [transportation](#) to inform the plan and future detailed infrastructure planning.

The TAC consisted of staff from the departments of Planning & Economic Development, Parks & Recreation, Safety & Inspections, Public Works, and Financial Services, as well as St. Paul Regional Water Services, the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District (RWMWD), Ramsey County Public Works, Metro Transit, and the City of Maplewood. SPPA staff, SPPA's consultants, and the City's consultants also attended the TAC meetings. The role of the TAC was to provide input to the formation of the Plan and to review draft layouts and text prior to community engagement for technical and regulatory feasibility. Topics covered in the 22 TAC meetings included land use layouts, street and trail layouts and design, wetlands, transit needs, stormwater design, park needs, ownership and maintenance expectations, art, economic development trends, code interpretations, review of the preliminary infrastructure analyses and more.

The TAC's work was complemented by a stormwater workshop in September 2020 to guide the master plan's stormwater design and policies. The workshop was funded by RWMWD, and the results of the workshop were incorporated into the stormwater infrastructure analysis report. The workshop established a consensus that the master plan should explore integrated or district stormwater solutions which could be one of the defining features of the site, promoting stormwater management practices that

have a “light touch,” and maximizing co-benefits beyond stormwater such as wildlife habitat and passive recreation.

In addition, the Saint Paul Transportation Committee reviewed the transportation analysis in February 2021 and provided feedback, including recommending that connectivity for all modes should be improved within the site and to the surrounding area, and that Arlington and Ivy Avenues are logical east-west bike routes because they have signalized intersections with White Bear Avenue to the west.

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed in 2019 through an application process. The composition of the CAC included residents from both Saint Paul and Maplewood, as well as representatives from the business community, and individuals with a particular expertise in housing and multimodal transportation. The role of the CAC was to help shape the master plan and to provide input on the public engagement process. Early in the process the CAC adopted a set of 20 community priorities to guide the plan. In late 2021, the CAC reviewed the draft master plan and provided their comments in a letter attached to this memo.

There have been three phases of broader community engagement to inform the master plan:

- Phase 1, in January/February 2020, engaged approximately 220 people via online surveys, an in-person community forum at a local elementary school (advertised by 4,000+ postcards mailed to area residents), and three pop-up meetings in order to inform “community priorities” that would be formally affirmed by the CAC and guide the contents of the master plan.
- Phase 2, in July/August 2020, engaged approximately 178 people about four potential design alternatives via an online community meeting and four pop-up meetings, and received 480 online comments via a survey and the Social Pinpoint tool that attached comments to site layout images.
- Phase 3, in March/April 2021, engaged approximately 312 people about two finalist scenarios via an online community meeting and eight popup meetings. In addition, 136 online survey responses were received.

Pop-up meetings in all engagement phases were designed to reach BIPOC communities and improve the demographic representativeness of community input. Phases 2 and 3 also included equity-focused conversation circles convened by Councilmember Nelsie Yang to engage additional voices. BIPOC input, to the extent it was different from general population input, put more emphasis on deeply affordable housing (both rental and ownership), larger housing units (3+ bedrooms), jobs, and local hiring. Summaries of each engagement phase are linked within the master plan document.

PENDING RELATED PROCESSES

Besides the master plan and associated actions before the Planning Commission, several other processes will need to be implemented prior to physical development of the site.

Environmental Review

State law requires environmental review of this project, either through an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) or an Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR). The City is the responsible governmental unit for this process. SPPA's consultants have begun work on an AUAR for this project, overseen by the City.

Environmental Contamination Remediation

Remediation and management of the site's extensive soil contamination will be regulated by either the Minnesota Department of Agriculture or the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, who will ensure that the contamination is properly contained or disposed of.

Wetlands Impacts and Mitigations

The site contains 10 designated wetlands, according to a [wetland delineation report](#) and an [existing conditions inventory](#). Any wetland impacts and mitigations must be approved by two agencies: the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District (RWMWD) and the City of Saint Paul. The City is the responsible governmental unit for enforcing the State of Minnesota's [Wetlands Conservation Act](#) (WCA), as informed by a Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) of wetlands professionals. The WCA requires persons proposing to impact a wetland to demonstrate their attempts to avoid impacts or, where not avoided, to minimize impacts. Any impacted wetlands must be replaced (mitigated). SPPA has informally consulted with the TEP about the proposed wetland impacts and mitigations to inform this master plan. The RWMWD [reviews applications](#) based on their own district rules and standards. SPPA has also informally consulted with the RWMWD board.

Subdivision

The City's [subdivision regulations](#) require the site to be platted prior to development. The plat creates lots for development, dedicates parkland, and dedicates public rights-of-way. It is a critical point to establish

infrastructure and operations/maintenance expectations. The plat must be approved by the City Council upon multi-departmental review and a recommendation from the Planning Division.

City Park Design

The master plan establishes the location for an approximately 5-acre City park, but does not establish the physical components of the park or how it will be programmed. Prior to development, the City's Parks and Recreation Department will conduct community engagement to inform design of the City-owned park. Capital and operations funding will need to be allocated. Per Ord 19-39, SPPA is expected to contribute \$2.5 million for capital costs, which will only partially fund the capital costs. The parkland will be formally dedicated through the subdivision process.

Development Agreement

A development agreement between the City and SPPA is not necessarily required for the project. If future City subsidy is provided for the development – whether for affordable housing, advanced sustainability infrastructure, or for any other purpose – a development agreement between the City and SPPA or another developer is a likely means to establish the details. A development agreement may also be needed to establish ownership and maintenance expectations or handle other issues between SPPA or another developer and the City.

Infrastructure Permits/Site Plan Review/Building Permits

City permits will be required for infrastructure, detailed site plans, and building construction in accordance with requirements applicable to all private development in the city, as supplemented by the master plan. Per the master plan, a comprehensive site-wide preparation and infrastructure plan that addresses water, sewer, stormwater, surface transportation elements, energy systems, gas, and electrical must be approved through the City's Site Plan Review process prior to any vertical development, excluding any development related to the energy infrastructure. The purpose of this site-wide plan is to ensure such infrastructure elements will be logically implemented and function as intended on full build out and at all interim development phases. Site plans must conform with the master plan and zoning regulations, as per [Legislative Code Sec. 61.401](#); building permits must conform to the building codes applicable to the various forms of development on-site (e.g. Minnesota Building Code, etc.).

SITE OVERVIEW

The 112-acre former golf course contains the highest point in Saint Paul, substantial topography, mature trees, and 10 designated wetlands. Substantial mercury pollution is present throughout the site as a result of anti-fungal treatments to the golf course over the years. The site is located less than two miles from the interchange of McKnight Road and Highway 36, and less than three miles from the interchange of McKnight road and I-94. Additional site context is available in the master plan document on the topics of area demographics, site history, topography and wetlands, soil types, pollution, transportation networks, utilities, climate, surrounding land uses and housing density/types, and more.

MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

The master plan contains policies, site layouts, and other graphics that will apply to development of the site. Certain plan elements, including district stormwater, advanced sustainability infrastructure, public art, full development of the City-owned park, and affordable housing are dependent on funding availability, as described in the master plan document. Following an introduction and background, the master plan contains the following chapters:

- Land Use, Art and Placemaking
- Transportation
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Sustainability
- Housing
- Zoning
- Phasing
- Other Implementation

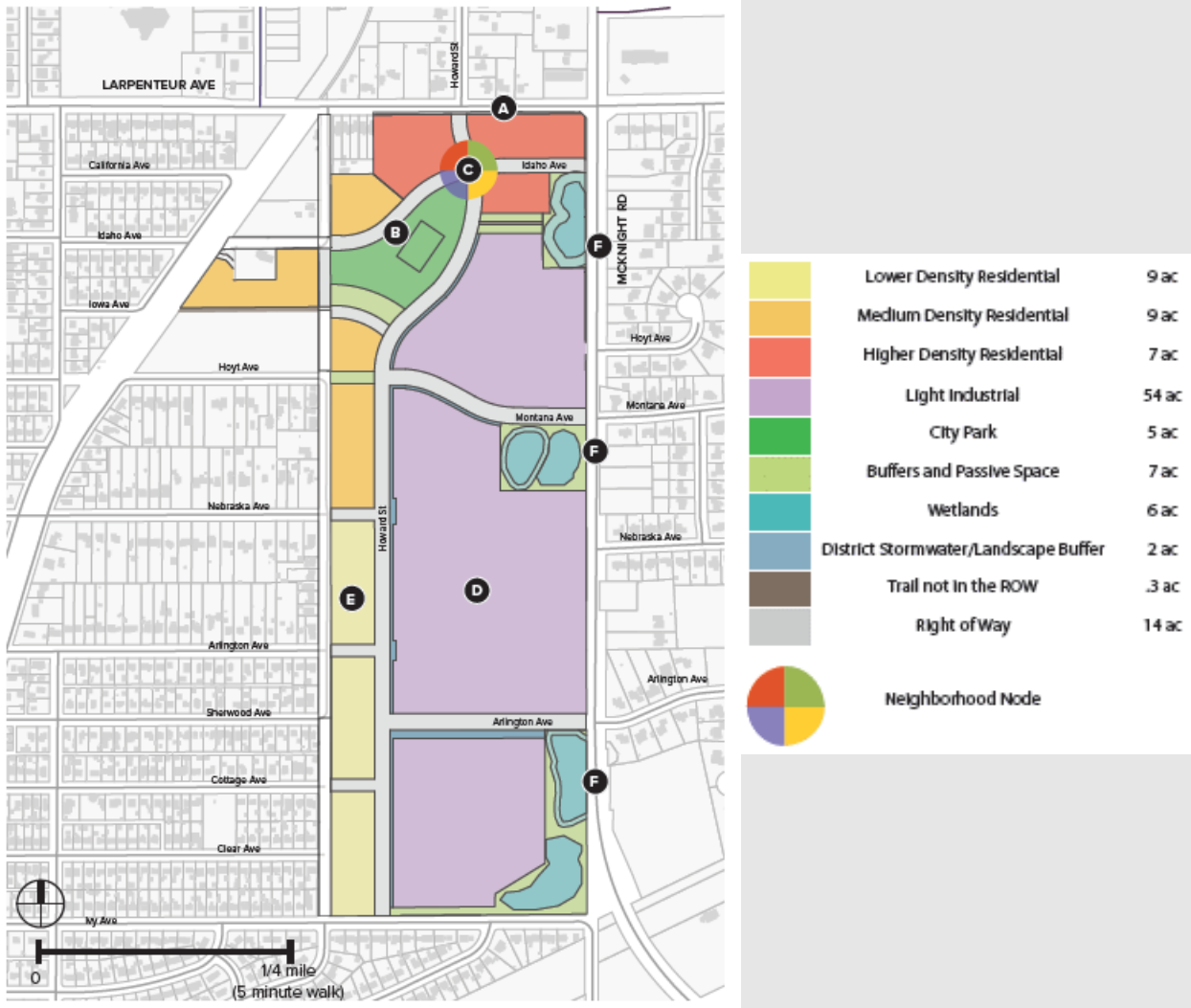


Figure 1: Master Plan Land Use layout

Land Use, Art and Placemaking

The master plan designates 54 acres for light industrial uses, 25 acres for residential/mixed uses, 5 acres for a City Park, and 15 acres for wetlands, district stormwater, and passive open space. These allocations are estimated to provide for approximately 1,000 jobs and 1,000 households.

The site's land uses are arranged with light industrial uses close to McKnight Road to take advantage of its truck access to the regional highway system and maximize business visibility. A neighborhood node is planned for the site's northern portion, close to Larpenteur Avenue and McKnight Road, where intense

land uses such as higher-density residential, mixed commercial/residential, active, improved park area and job-heavy commercial-industrial are in close proximity. The site's west edge contains lower-density and medium-density residential that will serve as an extension of the adjacent residential neighborhood into the site, and a transition from old to new.

The master plan establishes guiding principles for and identifies key locations in which public art could contribute to placemaking in the project. Although City ordinances do not require public art, public art at street intersections is one way to meet zoning requirements in light industrial areas (per Leg. Code Sec. 66.542(a)(1)) and the master plan establishes that wall murals can satisfy zoning requirements for façade articulation (in Leg. Code 66.542(a)(2)). SPPA has done conceptual planning for public art within the project, including a variety of building murals and pedestrian-oriented sculptures in the light industrial areas. Additionally, although none are currently proposed for the project site, certain City-funded and City-operated capital projects are required to dedicate 1% of eligible project costs.¹ For all of these reasons, public art is likely to be a component of development at this site..

The topography of the site will be impacted by the land use layout. Although the site is expected to still contain the highest point in the city, the hills will be leveled off to facilitate development, including light industrial pads which need to be large and relatively flat. Yet, a drop of more than 50 feet will remain from the high point in the north-center of the site to the low point in the southeast corner – generally a gradual decline along streets, and more likely stepped (with retaining walls) through the light industrial land.

Transportation

The transportation network within the site includes several key components. A new north-south street (Howard Street) through the length of the site connects Larpenteur Avenue to Ivy Avenue. Industrial-type streets (Montana and Arlington Avenues) connect truck traffic directly to McKnight Road. A generous number of off-street multi-use trails connect to the regional network. Offset intersections along Howard Street discourage cut-through east-west vehicular traffic (while still providing connectivity to the adjacent neighborhoods).

¹ Eligible funding sources for public art generally include but are not limited to: local general obligation bonds/notes; other local financing sources; state grants and aids; and federal grants and aids. In order for the requirement to apply, the funding source must not prohibit public art. Eligible capital projects include but are not limited to the construction or renovation of new or existing city-owned facilities such as traffic calming; streetscapes; bikeways; stairs, walls and other structures; parks; tot lots, play areas; and trails. More information is available here: <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/financial-services/public-art-ordinance-program>.

McKnight Road and Larpenteur Avenue are Ramsey County-owned arterial streets designed to convey regional-level vehicle travel. With average daily traffic of over 11,000 vehicles per day in 2019 and access to the regional highway network, it is anticipated that McKnight Road will convey most vehicular traffic to and from the site. The master plan provides full vehicular access to McKnight Road at Montana and Arlington Avenues (aligned with streets in Maplewood), and right-in/right-out access at Idaho Avenue just south of Larpenteur – locations identified in consultation with Ramsey County staff. Montana Avenue curves moderately northward as it heads into the site from the east, to facilitate access to the neighborhood node area. Montana and Arlington include multi-use trails.

Access to Larpenteur Avenue is provided via Howard Street, which aligns with Howard Street in Maplewood. On the site, Howard Street divides light industrial uses from residential uses, and features a multi-use trail along its west side. Larpenteur Avenue is a Ramsey County road with average daily traffic of over 5,000 vehicles per day in 2019.

Along the west edge of the site, Winthrop Street is extended south from Sherwood Avenue to Ivy Avenue, and north from Hoyt Avenue to Larpenteur Avenue (Winthrop exists between Sherwood and Hoyt today). Several existing streets to the west are extended into the site, beyond Winthrop Street, including Nebraska Avenue, Arlington Avenue, and Cottage Avenue. No east-west streets go straight through the site from the west edge to the east edge; rather, all east-west streets are offset at Howard Street in the center of the site, so as to discourage cut-through traffic.

Multi-use trails are provided for bicyclists and pedestrians through the site and beyond, including connections to the Furness Trail, the existing trail along the west side of McKnight Road, and a future connection to Beaver Lake County Park to the south. Within the site, the north-south trail along Howard Street connects to the new City park, to trails heading west at Iowa Avenue and Hoyt Avenue, to trails heading east at Montana Avenue, Arlington Avenue, and Ivy Avenue, and to a new trail along the south side of Larpenteur Avenue that will extend westward to the Furness Trail.

Street and trail layouts, including minimum and typical dimensions, are provided in the master plan. On-street parking is generally expected near the neighborhood node and in front of new residential developments, but not in front of light industrial developments.

Parks and Open Spaces

The master plan calls for approximately 20 acres of parks and open spaces, including a 5-acre City park, 6 acres of wetlands, 7 acres of wetland buffers and other passive open space, and approximately 2 acres of district stormwater. The City park is located in the northern portion of the site near the neighborhood node, with trail connections in all directions. Four of the site's 10 existing wetlands are preserved in place, including three near McKnight Road. The impacted wetlands will be mitigated elsewhere on the site at a 1:1 ratio; if any additional mitigation is required, it will be provided off-site.

Sustainability

The Hillcrest Master Plan aims high in its sustainability policies in pursuit of carbon neutrality, integration with the ecology of the site, responsible material and waste stream management, and effective, integrated, and visible stormwater treatment. The carbon neutrality aim for this site will help the City reach its goals to reduce carbon emissions citywide by 50% from 2019 to 2030, and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The policies in this chapter expand on current requirements and do not duplicate existing state and local regulations that contribute to sustainability. Some of the more costly policies are noted to be dependent on funding, including district-scale ground source energy systems and meeting the City's Sustainable Building Ordinance. (SPPA has been actively pursuing potential funding sources for these elements, as well as on-site solar energy generation.)

Housing

The Housing Chapter references citywide affordability goals for developments supported financially by the City/Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and presents the following housing type priorities:

1. Rental housing, non-age restricted
2. For-sale homes
3. Age-restricted housing

Affordable housing generally requires public funding or financial assistance.

Zoning

The site will be rezoned from R2 One-Family Residential to several zoning districts via an ordinance that accompanies the master plan (see "Rezoning" section below and memo attachments). The Zoning Chapter

of the master plan outlines adjustments and clarifications of zoning code requirements as applied to the site, and provides parameters for any future administrative modifications to the adopted master plan. (Larger master plan modifications could always be considered through a public hearing process.) The zoning code adjustments and clarifications address such topics as building setbacks, landscaping, floor area ratios for standalone commercial buildings, design standards, and amounts of front yard surface parking. Allowable administrative modifications include reduction or expansion of widths of rights-of-way, travel lanes, trails, sidewalks, and boulevards; reduction or addition of trails; and movement of a street or trail, under certain conditions including that the changes are found to be consistent with the intent of the master plan.

Phasing

The Phasing Chapter outlines expectations for phasing of transportation infrastructure in order to ensure a functional system, and requires a “comprehensive site preparation and infrastructure plan” that addresses water, sewer, stormwater, and other relevant infrastructure to be approved by the City prior to any development.

Other Implementation

Zoning and phasing are elements of the implementation of the master plan. The Other Implementation chapter addresses additional implementation issues primarily related to funding for certain plan elements, including district stormwater, sustainability measures, affordable housing, public art, and design and build out of the the City park. It is recognized that the plan cannot be fully implemented without additional financial resources.

REZONING

The site is proposed to be rezoned to implement the master plan’s land use designations, as shown in the attached draft zoning map and generally corresponding as follows:

<u>Master Plan Land Use</u>	<u>Zoning District</u>
Light industrial	ITM Transitional Industrial, with a master plan
Lower-density residential	T1M Traditional Neighborhood, with a master plan
Medium-density residential	T2M Traditional Neighborhood, with a master plan
Higher-density residential	T3M Traditional Neighborhood, with a master plan

The zoning districts each include a “M” master plan designation that indicates there is a master plan in place to guide development, in addition to the applicable zoning code provisions. The City park and other open spaces in the master plan, which are permitted uses in all zoning districts under consideration, are proposed to be grouped with the zoning of adjacent land.

The Traditional Neighborhood districts allow for certain commercial uses (e.g. general retail, etc.) in addition to residential uses. Based on market studies conducted for the property owner, only a small amount of commercial uses are anticipated, which will likely be located along or near the McKnight Road and Larpenteur Avenue frontages rather than near the western or southern edges of the site.

The following paragraphs describe the intent of the proposed zoning district designations, as relevant to this site.

- The IT Transitional Industrial District is intended to provide sites for commercial, office and light industrial uses that are compatible with nearby residential and traditional neighborhood districts, parks, and parkways.
- The T1 Traditional Neighborhood District is intended to provide for compact, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use areas of limited size, with a variety of residential, office and service uses that primarily serve neighborhood needs. It is also intended to serve as a transitional use of land along major thoroughfares, between commercial or industrial districts and residential districts or other less intensive land uses.
- The T2 Traditional Neighborhood District is designed for use in existing or potential pedestrian and transit nodes. Its intent is to foster and support compact, pedestrian-oriented commercial and residential development that, in turn, can support and increase transit usage. It encourages, but does not require, a variety of uses and housing types, with careful attention to the amount and placement of parking and transitions to adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- The T3 Traditional Neighborhood District provides for higher-density pedestrian- and transit-oriented mixed-use development. It is designed for development or redevelopment of land on sites large enough to support:
 - (a) A mix of uses, including residential, commercial, civic and open space uses in close proximity to one another;
 - (b) A mix of housing styles, types and sizes to accommodate households of varying sizes, ages and incomes;

- (c) A system of interconnected streets and paths that offer multiple routes for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists, and are connected to existing and future streets;
- (d) A system of open space resources and amenities; and incorporation of environmental features into the design of the neighborhood.

The above elements may be found within the T3 district or adjacent to it; the intent is that all would be present within a reasonable walking distance.

ZONING CODE AMENDMENTS

A set of zoning code amendments is presented in conjunction with this master plan to address three topics:

1. **An amendment to Legislative Code Sec. 66.344 to authorize master plans to provide flexibility from certain zoning code requirements under certain conditions.** Permitting flexibility from certain zoning code requirements via a master plan can make it easier for a project to achieve Comprehensive Plan policies. Rather than having to abide by rigid variance requirements if a specific exception from code were requested separately, incorporating it into a master plan allows a big-picture analysis where other factors and additional master plan zoning requirements can be taken into account.
2. **An amendment to Sec. 66.542(a) to update allowable building materials in IT zoning districts.** Advancements in materials technology and architectural design have made the current code outdated with regard to allowable industrial building materials. Namely, visual quality has improved for concrete panels, and corrugated metal is more frequently used nowadays as a stylish architectural highlight. Corrugated metal is still inappropriate as the primary cladding material, but it can be aesthetically pleasing and durable as an accent material.
3. **Amendments to Secs. 64.103 and 64.401 to allow monument signs to include business names from throughout a business park, not just those located on the same zoning lot as the sign.** The current zoning code regulations for freestanding monument signage are unduly restrictive in business park settings. The proposed amendments would allow freestanding signs to include business names from throughout a business park, which will reduce signage clutter (fewer monument signs needed) and improve truck wayfinding within a business park – e.g. for this development, guiding trucks headed to a certain business to the right street (Montana Avenue or Arlington Avenue).

The full proposed amendments are attached. Note that, although Sec. 66.344 is located in the section addressing Traditional Neighborhood district master plans, a cross-reference in Sec. 66.544 states that Sec. 66.344 also applies to ITM Transitional Industrial district master plans.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT

In order to accommodate this development, it is proposed that Policy T-31 in the 2040 Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan be amended as follows:

Policy T-31. *Outside of areas being developed for industrial uses, ~~Es~~ establish (or re-establish) the right-of-way grid with block lengths of 300 to 600 feet as redevelopment occurs on large sites in order to increase neighborhood connectivity and accommodate pedestrian-oriented, higher-density development.*

Although some light industrial developments, including a few dozen in Saint Paul, can fit on 600-foot blocks, many other light industrial users require larger block sizes. In order to allow the property owner flexibility to pursue a wide range of potential users and related building footprints, surface parking and loading zones, including users who may provide especially well-paying jobs with low barriers to entry for local workers, the master plan shows block lengths of up to 1,440 feet. A Comprehensive Plan amendment is needed to allow for blocks larger than 600 feet in industrial areas such as proposed for this site.

ANALYSIS: POLICY CONFORMANCE

As might be expected for a 112-acre redevelopment, many City policies are relevant to the draft master plan and associated zoning actions. The following section reviews conformance with many of the most significant and relevant policies from the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted policy documents.

Comprehensive Plan

The [2040 Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan](#) (Comp Plan) contains relevant topical chapters including: Land Use; Transportation; Parks, Recreation and Open Space; Housing; and Water Resources. Conformance of the project with relevant policies from each Comp Plan chapter is discussed below.

LAND USE- COMP PLAN CHAPTER

The Comp Plan designates the site as an “opportunity site” with a “neighborhood node” in its northern portion, as well as an underlying “mixed use” designation for the site’s northern portion and an “urban neighborhood” designation for its southern portion. “Neighborhood nodes” are compact, mixed-use areas that provide shops, services, neighborhood-scale civic and institutional uses, recreational facilities such as parks, and employment close to residences. Comp Plan Policy LU-2 calls for the redevelopment of designated “opportunity sites” including Hillcrest for higher-density mixed-use development or employment centers with increased full-time living wage job intensity – the proposed development is both higher-density mixed-use and employment center. Comp Plan Policies LU-30 and LU-32 call for focusing growth on neighborhood nodes with increased density toward the node’s center and transitioning in scale to surrounding land uses and establishing public parks close to neighborhood nodes. Comp Plan Policy LU-34 is to provide for housing in urban neighborhoods that diversifies housing options, such as townhouses, courtyard apartments and smaller multi-family developments, which are allowed in the T1M and T2M zoning proposed for the site’s western edge. Comp Plan Policy LU-6 calls for fostering equitable and sustainable growth by facilitating business creation/attraction, supporting family-sustaining jobs, and growing the tax base (among other aims), as is being encouraged through the provision of 54 acres of light industrial, with much of it anticipated to be subject to SPPA workforce agreements. The proposed master plan land uses and layout express all of these Comp Plan land use policies.

Other Comp Plan land use policies refer to environmental impacts, such as Policy LU-8 (“Ensure that zoning and infrastructure support environmentally and economically efficient, resilient land use development”), Policy LU-21 (“Identify, preserve, protect and, where possible, restore natural resources and habitat throughout the city” via certain City ordinances, including the subdivision regulations), and Policy LU-19 (“...achieve a long-term increase in canopy coverage citywide, with general goals of 40% tree canopy coverage in all neighborhoods outside of downtown”). The master plan promotes efficient land use, with accommodation of approximately 1,000 jobs and 1,000 households on the 112-acre site. Its provisions for district stormwater and encouragement of tree trenches promote environmentally efficient and resilient infrastructure with regard to water resources, while various provisions in its sustainability chapter promote energy efficiency, including support for LEED-certifying all buildings greater than 5,000 square feet, restricting natural gas service in many cases, and pursuing ground source energy systems. Although many existing trees will be lost due to pollution remediation and development, the master plan calls for both retaining existing healthy native trees to the extent feasible and for planting trees that will meet the Comp Plan canopy goal at maturity.

Another Comp Plan land use policy, LU-30, calls for improving access to jobs by prioritizing development with high job density in neighborhood nodes. Although light industrial jobs can be a range of densities (typically 15-23 jobs/acre), the master plan contains a policy that encourages a preference for the higher end (20+ jobs/acre) of that range in light industrial areas, and the land near the neighborhood node is where such job densities might be most likely to land.

Comp Plan Policy LU-16 encourages the equitable spatial distribution of community food assets including community gardens. With no large grocery store within 2 miles of the site and no significantly sized community garden nearby, lack of community food assets is an issue in this neighborhood. The master plan's Policy POS-5 encourages provision of community garden space either on the site or nearby.

TRANSPORTATION- COMP PLAN CHAPTER

The master plan furthers numerous Comp Plan policies that support multimodal transportation. Following the Comp Plan's modal hierarchy in Policy T-3, the master plan's transportation network has been designed to prioritize the safety and comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists, with its generous provision of off-street multiuse trails to traverse the site in all directions and reach key destinations on the site and nearby. This multiuse trail network, along with relatively higher land use intensity and encouragement of higher-level public transit service, furthers Comp Plan Policy T-21 to reduce citywide VMT by improving transportation options beyond single-occupant vehicles, Comp Plan Policy T-22 to shift mode share towards walking, biking, and public transit, and Comp Plan Policy T-27 to improve public transit mode share through strategic establishment of transit-supportive land use intensity. The master plan provides sidewalks and/or multiuse trails on both sides of all its streets, in accordance with Comp Plan Policy T-26. The master plan calls for a multimodal hub at the neighborhood node, as supported by Comp Plan Policy T-28. To improve pedestrian and bicyclist comfort, the master plan establishes principles to limit the number and negative impact of curb cuts, as called for by Comp Plan Policy T-12.

The master plan also furthers Comp Plan transportation policies that address environmental sustainability. The master plan sets a goal of 2% of public and publicly-accessible parking spaces having Level 2 chargers and requires private parking structures to be EV-capable if the equipment is not installed when built, measures that address Comp Plan Policy T-4 to develop infrastructure that supports vehicle electrification. In the landscaped boulevards along streets, the master plan encourages tree trenches or other means of visible green infrastructure that can perform stormwater functions, as called for by Comp Plan Policy T-39.

The master plan's street design seeks to make it easy for trucks to access McKnight Road and discourages truck traffic on area local streets, as called for by Comp Plan Policy T-38.

A Comp Plan amendment to allow for larger block sizes in industrial areas accompanies this master plan. The master plan abides by Comp Plan Policy T-31 in the site's non-industrial areas by establishing block lengths of 300 to 600 feet to increase neighborhood connectivity and accommodate pedestrian-oriented, higher-density development. Additionally, the existing 1300-foot-long dead-end streets of Cottage and Clear Avenues to the site's west are connected to the transportation network through an extension of Winthrop Street along the site's west edge (in existing right-of-way). (Also, the Subdivision Regulations in Sec. 69.501 of the Legislative Code, which will be applied at platting, require cul-de-sacs to be no longer than 600 feet.)

PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE- COMP PLAN CHAPTER

The master plan provides for about five acres of City park, in accordance with Comp Plan Policy PR-18 to ensure that investment in public parks accounts for planned increases in development density. Also, the master plan encourages privately-owned public spaces (POPS) at key locations, per Comp Plan Policy PR-31, and community gardens per Comp Plan Policy PR-32. The master plan creates connections through and beyond the site for bicyclists and pedestrians between the new neighborhood node, the new City park, other nearby parks and recreation facilities like Hayden Heights Recreation Center, schools like Mounds Park Academy and The Heights Community School, and other destinations, as called for by Comp Plan Policy PR-38. Many of the on-site connections are off-street trails, which enhance the safety and comfort of users in line with Comp Plan Policy PR-39. The master plan also calls for an off-street trail along the south side of Larpenteur Avenue that connects the McKnight Road trail and the Furness Trail, and a trail along the north side of Ivy Avenue that could connect to a future trail south to Beaver Lake County Park.

HOUSING- COMP PLAN CHAPTER

The master plan supports a variety of Comp Plan policies related to housing affordability. Although the master plan does not set a target number of affordable housing units, it encourages affordable housing and sets targets for types of affordable housing to prioritize. The Comp Plan affordable housing goals set forth in its Policies H-32 and H-33 are repeated in the master plan. Provision of affordable housing at this site would further Comp Plan Policies H-16 (increase housing choice across the city to maximize housing and locational choices for residents of all income levels) and H-31 (support the development of new affordable housing units throughout the city). The master plan's top two affordable housing priorities,

rental housing (non-age-restricted) and for-sale homes, are both suggested to include units for large families, which would further Comp Plan Policy H-7.

If the master plan's provision of approximately 960 housing units alongside light industrial parcels includes affordable units, it would advance Comp Plan Policy H-37 to encourage the development of affordable housing in proximity to employment centers.

The master plan's Sustainability Chapter furthers several Comp Plan housing policies related to environmental sustainability, including H-10 (encourage energy efficient mechanical systems and building products, as would occur if the City's Sustainable Building Ordinance were triggered) and H-14 (encourage native landscaping and rain gardens).

WATER RESOURCES- COMP PLAN CHAPTER

The master plan requires a green infrastructure stormwater system at a district scale (if funding can be acquired) per Comp Plan Policy WR-2 (and Leg. Code Sec. 81.08.1). It also promotes visible green infrastructure landscape features, as called for by Comp Plan Policy WR-3, in several ways: using existing wetlands that are being preserved as a stormwater feature for rate control, encouraging tree trenches along streets, and through a green infrastructure stormwater system that is integrated with trails, passive open space, art, and other amenities.

Climate Action and Resilience Plan

The Saint Paul [Climate Action and Resilience Plan](#) (CARP), adopted by the City Council in 2019, contains several strategies to achieve a citywide goal of carbon neutrality by 2050, that are supported by this master plan, including the following that are not covered by the Comp Plan:

- Improve the ecological functionality and resiliency of open space through green infrastructure, best practices for stormwater management, and increased plant diversity and pollinator-friendly habitat;
- encourage the use of low-impact landscaping to reduce consumption of water and chemicals in yard and lawn maintenance, improve permeability to reduce stormwater runoff, and sequester more carbon in soil;
- reduce residents' energy burden; and
- encourage electrification of natural gas appliances.

Other CARP strategies regarding building/built infrastructure sustainability could be implemented through the City's Sustainable Building Ordinance (if triggered) or the developer's pursuit of LEED for Communities credits.

Pedestrian Plan

In its provision of sidewalks on both sides of streets and off-street multiuse trails, the master plan furthers several goals and strategies of the [Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan](#), including making walking safe for everyone, connecting pedestrians to destinations, and accelerating completion of the sidewalk network in areas where the potential for use is highest. Although the Pedestrian Plan does not identify this area as a high priority area for walking investments, this development is a prime opportunity to cost effectively install pedestrian infrastructure integrated with the full package of site infrastructure. The Pedestrian Plan was adopted in 2019 as an addendum to the Comp Plan.

Bicycle Plan

The master plan proposes to fill a gap in the bicycling network between the trails along Furness Parkway and McKnight Road, and prioritizes all-weather bicycle storage near the neighborhood node – both encouraged by multiple action steps in Chapters 7 and 9 of the [Saint Paul Bicycle Plan](#).

District 2 Plan Summary

The [Greater East Side District 2 Plan Summary](#), adopted as a Comp Plan addendum in 2009, calls for providing trails where missing links now exist, particularly along Furness Parkway, which is addressed by the master plan's provision of two trail connections between the Furness Trail and the McKnight Road trail across the site. The Greater East Side District 2 Plan also calls for promoting redevelopment of the stretch of White Bear Avenue between Montana Avenue and Larpenteur Avenue, including the vacant Hafner's site. Although the master plan and rezoning will allow for commercial uses at the Hillcrest site, the master plan uses are expected to complement rather than compete with commercial uses and infill opportunities along White Bear Avenue.

COMPREHENSIVE & NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Comprehensive & Neighborhood Planning Committee reviewed and discussed the proposal on January 5, 2022. No changes were recommended from the staff recommendation.



RECOMMENDATION

The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee and staff recommend that the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt a resolution that initiates the Hillcrest Rezoning Study;
2. Adopt a resolution that initiates the Hillcrest Zoning Code Study; and
3. Release the draft Hillcrest Master Plan, draft rezoning maps, draft Zoning Code amendments, and draft Comprehensive Plan amendment for public review and set a public hearing for March 4, 2022.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Hillcrest Master Plan
2. Hillcrest Community Advisory Committee comments
3. Draft Planning Commission resolution to initiate Hillcrest Site Rezoning Study
4. Zoning maps: existing and proposed
5. Draft Planning Commission resolution to initiate Hillcrest Site Zoning Code Study
6. Draft Zoning Code amendments
7. Draft Comprehensive Plan amendment